

Last survivor set to steam again



Sandstone Trust's Dave Richardson describes the planned restoration of the only remaining member of an important South African class.

The sole surviving NG10 narrow gauge pacific (Baldwin 42633/1915) has been in the Sandstone collection for a number of years and has been overshadowed by the ongoing rebuild of the NGG11 Garratt. But recent examination of the loco has led to further investigations in to its condition and restoration has now commenced.

One of only four ex SAR narrow gauge tender locomotives alongside the two 'Lawleys' in the collection and the NG15, NG10 no 61 has a tractive effort of 12302lb compared with Lawley BR7 at 3000lb and an NGG16 at 18850lb – this can make it a very useful locomotive.

During the period of the First World War, the Avontuur line was suffering from a motive power shortage. No British builder could supply the requirements of the line and two classes of loco were ordered from Baldwin. The NG9 class was a 4-6-0, the NG10 a 4-6-2. Baldwin was no stranger to South African narrow gauge, having supplied three locos in 1902 and a further one in 1911. These 2-6-0s are referred to as Class NG7. The NG10 was much more stable in reverse with its rear pony truck and could operate at a higher speed making its usage more flexible – the NG9 tended to derail when running over 10mph in reverse.

Liked by their crew

The NG10s were typically American in appearance, even to having the number on the smokebox door, although the sand dome was replaced by the conventional British format of sand boxes on the running plate. The chimney had a rather ornate capping while the huge cab found favour with enginemen. In the previous Baldwin locos the firebox and ashpan had been kept clear of the rear driving wheels

and extended almost to the tender draw bar positioning the driver and fireman on either side of it. When the NG10s were eventually replaced by the NGG13s, the crews were not amused by the cramped cabs of the Garratts despite them being much more powerful locos.

Five locomotives were delivered in 1916 numbered 61 to 65, no 61 being Baldwin works No 42633. Put to work as bankers on the Loerie bank and Patensie Branch, the class survived until 1962.

Two locos, 63 and 64, spent their last days in South West Africa (now Namibia) but the gauge conversion there led to their demise along with other NG10 survivors in Port Elizabeth with the cascading of the NG15s to that location. No 61 was put aside for preservation, however, and given a cosmetic overhaul. The loco's ornate chimney cap had by now been replaced by the rather unattractive stovepipe design, but the capping was reinstated. The tender had also been modified with the original coal rails replaced by steel panels and the bunker extended in height.

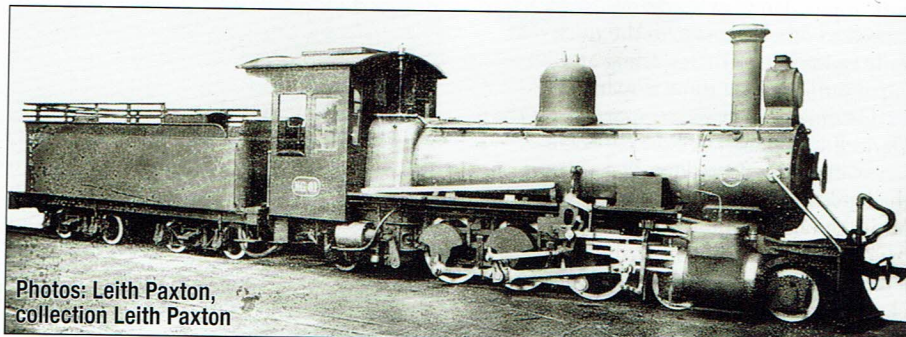
Having been exhibited at the Narrow Gauge Museum at Humewood Road, no 61 was finally moved to the Humewood

Road diesel depot after the museum's closure. Some 40 years in the salty air had produced obvious effects on the loco.

To prevent further deterioration the locomotive was moved in 2006 to Sandstone's facility at Bloemfontein and stripped for assessment. Initially the boiler was considered beyond repair but further examination has revealed that it can be reused and in September 2016 the boiler was sent to Keith Stevens's facility in Howick for rebuilding. The tender is also badly wasted and a new one will be built from scratch as the frames are badly rusted.

A similar locomotive on the Brecon Mountain Railway in Wales is sometimes referred to as an NG10. This was built in 1930, to a similar design, to operate on the EPPC line in Port Elizabeth from Chelsea on the Avontuur line carrying limestone to the EPPC cement works. This loco has also been restored to its original condition with three domes and a smaller tender, having been modified during its work with EPPC.

As the last survivor no 61 is a significant part of South Africa's narrow gauge history and the loco's return to the rails will be another milestone in the Sandstone's Trust's preservation achievements.



Photos: Leith Paxton, collection Leith Paxton