



The Sandstone Volunteer

The newsletter of the Sandstone Volunteers Association

March 2023

Welcome to our first newsletter for The Sandstone Volunteers Association. We are in the process of forming this association and would like to invite you to join us. Volunteers have been an integral part of our operation since we ran our first event, The Great 100, in 1999. It's hard to believe that was almost 24 years ago. The Sandstone Heritage Collection has grown considerably in all areas since then.



Where it all began! Sandstone's first event in 1999. The Great 100 gets underway with volunteer tractor drivers.

Worldwide, volunteers have become an essential part of Heritage events. The sheer number of people required versus the returns from such events would simply not allow sufficient

traditional paid employees although, Sandstone, as with Heritage organisations elsewhere, does have a number of paid staff for everyday management.

Of course volunteering in itself has changed dramatically in the last few years. Generally it is much more formalised and volunteers are basically regarded as unpaid staff. Volunteer attitudes have also had to change. In the early years of railway preservation worldwide volunteers basically chose what they wanted to do (which is no issue) but would not even consider other tasks. Effectively they would not follow instructions from a senior employee. Those of you who have been volunteering for a long time may remember those days, a lot got done but a lot did not get done! There was also a lot of dissension between people seemingly getting the “best” tasks. Today it is different and volunteers now must follow instructions and be part of a cohesive team.



Volunteer crews work a photographic run past with NG15 number 17 and NGG16 number 113 at Stars of Sandstone 2017.

At Sandstone, as with most organisations, our volunteers are divided into specific groups, each with a team leader, who may or may not be a volunteer. The key element at Sandstone is safety. We have a variety of disciplines with varying levels of competence required but all have the same safety risk attached. Whether you are driving a tractor or working on a steam locomotive safety is Number1.

Competence is also paramount. On the steam railway footplate and operating staff cannot even be considered without an appropriate certification from the South African Railway Safety Regulator. Our visiting aircraft crews are also certified in the tasks they undertake. In other areas experience and ability are top of the list of attributes required.

Why volunteer?

Simply put the first requirement is to have fun but volunteering has a number of positive side effects that have been investigated in a number of studies on volunteering.

The UK Government website details volunteering as a rewarding and a great way to

- meet new people
- gain new or use existing skills
- get experience

A study conducted by the University of East Anglia highlighted the following:

The international evidence overwhelmingly suggests that volunteering can be good for volunteers' wellbeing, and that volunteering can be particularly positive for the wellbeing of people who may experience lower prior levels of wellbeing, while happier and healthier people are likely to volunteer already.

Positive wellbeing effects are particularly associated with

- happiness,
- life satisfaction,
- and reducing feelings of depression and anxiety.

Sustaining Regular and more frequent volunteering is associated with more wellbeing benefits, whereas fewer wellbeing effects are associated with one-off or very infrequent volunteering. Wellbeing is also associated to volunteering that engenders feelings of:

- self-efficacy - a person's belief in their abilities,
- social connectedness,
- sense of purpose.

In a nutshell: Volunteering is good for you!



Sandstone's 1901 Fowler B5 would not run without a volunteer crew.

The value of volunteers

Although Sandstone is a working farm with a number of employees, apart from the Sandstone Steam Railway, the Sandstone Heritage Collection does not have many full time employees. Outside of public events this is a manageable situation but during our open days and special events we simply could not put on the show without volunteers. The railway needs operating and passenger staff while other disciplines need operators to make them happen. Volunteers are the lifeblood of such events and actually are instrumental in them taking place at all. Heritage events and operations are quite limited in South Africa but so is the pool of potential volunteers for our events. What we are also looking at though, is extending our volunteer operations to tasks outside our special events whereby candidates can visit us for a few days or more and assist with essential work required with the Heritage Collection. We will provide accommodation and meals for such work groups whilst you are at Sandstone. At present this type of volunteering is in the planning stage and a programme will be put together and announced in the near future.

Our volunteer groups and opportunities

The Sandstone Steam Railway

The Sandstone Steam Railway is a 2ft Narrow Gauge Railway of roughly 15km track mileage although an extension is planned to replace the washed away mountain section. We have a selection of steam and diesel locomotives from South African Railways and from industry. We also have over 150 items of rolling stock including passenger coaches and goods wagons. We have qualified drivers and firemen but always require other qualified footplate staff together with train guards. Qualification is by certification for the position via the South African Railway Safety Regulator. We also need for any event Train Control officers to manage boarding and disembarking of passengers plus if possible to also travel on the train.

We also have opportunities for volunteers to assist with locomotive repairs and maintenance outside of events.

The railway manager is Mr Gert Jubileus



A vintage tractor, with a volunteer driver, is the prime mover for the mobile photographic grandstand during a steam event. The 1934 Chevrolet leads the way.

Vintage Tractors

Our collection of Vintage Tractors numbers nearly 200 of which many are in working order. Although some are used in daily farming activities, the majority only see use at special events. We have a core of volunteers who are available to drive and demonstrate these vehicles together with applicable farm implements but we can always use drivers and put more tractors on the road at events.

The vintage tractors are managed by volunteer Chris Wilson who also runs his own tractor maintenance and restoration workshop in Kwa-Zulu Natal.



The very damp Easter event in 2022 did not deter our volunteers!

Vintage Cars and commercial vehicles

In recent years we have limited the use of our vintage cars, pickups, trucks and buses as the farm roads are not kind to them but we still bring them out to play at times. They fall under the management of the Sandstone Vehicle Workshop managed by Janki Palmer.



The Bristol bus from 1955.

Road Steam

The Road Steam Division falls under the Steam Railway as the maintenance and certification of the units is similar to the railway. However, we do have a small group that has been formed to develop skills amongst new potential operators and fitters. This is being managed by volunteer driver, Shawn Spaan, with overall management by Gert Jubileus, manager of the steam railway.

Military Vehicles

Our military vehicle collection comprises a number of units that are in partnership with the South African Armour Museum plus other units owned by Sandstone. The vehicles are also under the management of the Sandstone Vehicle Workshop managed by Janki Palmer. Volunteers to this part of the collection are often ex-servicemen but many vehicles are as simple to drive as a small truck or car. Larger trucks are also similar to standard road vehicles. Specialist machines, like Armoured Cars, can easily be learned under supervision.



A military vehicle convoy.

Stationary Engines Museum

The Stationary Engines Museum is a showpiece for volunteering at Sandstone. Volunteer Curator Danie Pretorius and his small team have created an informative small museum from nothing next to the Sandstone main complex. The Sandstone Stationary Engines Collection was spread all over the farm workshops and was brought together under one roof in a building specially constructed after Danie's request for a home for all the units. Special signage was created to direct visitors to the museum where numerous engines and associated machinery can be demonstrated to visitors.

Earthmoving Machines

Sandstone has a small collection of large earthmoving machinery with a number of units in working order. Sadly there are very few volunteers who can drive these machines and

demonstrate their impressive working power. Our last demonstration was in 2019 using drivers from the Caterpillar Club in Australia. An opportunity here! The earthmoving machines fall under the management of the Sandstone Vehicle Workshop.



Dig it! An earthmoving demonstration in 2019.

Aircraft

A regular feature of Sandstone events are the vintage aircraft from Classic Flying Collection run by father and son team, Gavin and Steve Brown. They do not fall under Sandstone for management purposes but at times do require assistance from ground crew at Sandstone.

So, as you can see, there are varied opportunities to become involved at Sandstone.

Some simple rules and regulations

We have stressed throughout our newsletter that Volunteering should be fun. There is no doubt that this is so but there needs to be some simple do's and don'ts. Rather than reinvent the wheel we have drawn on the experience of UK Preserved Railways who have been honing volunteer skills and management for over 50 years. Whilst rules and regulations in the UK are certainly more structured than in South Africa we can learn from them. In particular we have drawn on the experience of the Severn Valley Railway (SVR) which was formed in 1965 and taken some pointers which are detailed below. Bear in mind the rules and regulations in the UK are much more wide reaching than in South Africa and the book must only be considered as a thought starter for Sandstone.

Here are some of the most relevant and important thoughts drawn from the handbook that we feel are valuable for consideration in a Sandstone and South African context.

Sandstone does not provide regular work or payment for any activity done in a volunteer capacity.

Sandstone regrets that it cannot reimburse travelling expenses.

Volunteers are an integral part of Sandstone contributing skills, talent and experience that full time staff may not possess.

A volunteer's experience with Sandstone should be a happy, productive and mutually beneficial.

Other than when you are in a rostered duty there is no enforcement to attend or do the tasks suggested.

Our arrangements with volunteers are an honour arrangement and not a legally binding contract.

Maintain a high standard in what you do and work within the relevant Sandstone standards and procedures.

Safeguard any confidential information about Sandstone and uphold our good image and reputation at all times.

Whatever department you may work in a nominated member of staff or volunteer will be responsible for your contribution, your Team Leader.

Maintain a good image of and loyalty to Sandstone at all times and be aware and careful of making statements, written or verbal, about Sandstone.

Sandstone maintains an Open Access policy to volunteering, there is no discrimination whatsoever. Age is not an issue except where external certification is required, for example with railway footplate and operations staff.

Attendance at all events is not compulsory and you may give as little or as much time as you wish.

We will keep you updated of all events and happenings at Sandstone.

Health and Safety is paramount at Sandstone and any concerning situations should be reported to Sandstone management.

Always deal with members of the public in a relaxed and non-confrontational manner.

These are just a few pointers inspired by the SVR handbook and we shall be developing our own handbook and volunteer policy in the very near future

The SVR document is very comprehensive and can be downloaded should you wish to read the entire book at www.svr-vlo.org.uk click on the downloads tab.

How to volunteer at Sandstone

With a relatively small volunteer base in South Africa, potential volunteers often know someone who volunteers at Sandstone but if not contact the Volunteer Coordinator, David Richardson, on e mail: daver@sandstone.co.za or via the "Contact Us" tab on the Sandstone web site, www.sandstone-estates.co.za

We will then put you in touch with the Team Leader for your interest.



The volunteer steam railway crew from the 2022 Cherry Festival.

In the meantime all of the people who have volunteered over time will automatically become members of the Volunteers Association. There are a large number for whom we have no direct contact details so if any of you can assist with details for the listing at the end of the Newsletter we would love to hear from you.

Future Events

For 2023 our major events are:

April 7th to 10th Easter Steam and Cosmos Festival

November 17th to 19th Cherry Steam Festival (dates TBC)

We also have some international tours proposed for 2023 and some local photo charters where volunteers may be needed.

Dave Richardson
Volunteer Coordinator.