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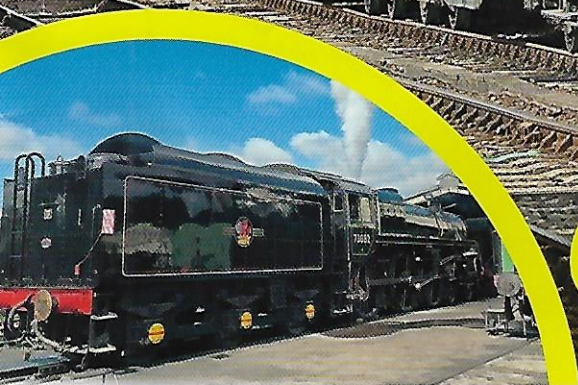
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Glasgow-built articulated GMAM Garratt 4-8-2+2-8-4 No. 4114 of 1957 on its way to permanent safety at Sandstone Estates. GERT JUBILEUS

Safe at last: South African giants moved to Sandstone

By John Titlow

FOUR 3ft 6in Cape Gauge steam locomotives have been removed from their base of more than 20 years at the old steam shed in Bloemfontein, South Africa, to the preservation bolthole of Sandstone Estates, near Ficksburg in Orange Free State.

After a journey of 140 miles by road during August, as announced in last month's issue, all four have arrived at their new home for safe-keeping. They are Krupp 19D 4-8-2 No. 2654 of 1939 and three built in Glasgow by North British: Class 24 2-8-4 No. 3688 of 1949; Class 11 2-8-2 No. 929 of 1904, which ended its days in industrial use; and the largest, articulated GMAM Garratt 4-8-2+2-8-4 No. 4114 of 1957, weighing about 190 tons. All will be cosmetically restored, with the Garratt placed at the entrance of Sandstone Estates.

Security concerns

A direct railway line between Bloemfontein and Bethlehem that passes alongside Sandstone Estates is now impassable due to a complete lack of maintenance. In steam days it used to be one of the major main lines in South Africa but is now a sad reminder of times gone by, with the majority of stations stripped and vandalised.

Bloemfontein shed has been the home to South African Railways' reserve museum collection, but vandalism and the removal of parts was causing great concern due

to weak security, corruption and the worsening security situation. There are only a couple of guards on the gate and the majority of it is unfenced. First to be stolen is the copper piping, followed by any nonferrous items sold for a pittance.

I visited the shed back in 2019 while heading to Sandstone for its 'Where Mountains Meet the Stars' event, as described in *Heritage Railway* 254, and had no problem gaining access.

Theft from the railways in South Africa is a very serious problem. Signal cables are taken for their copper, while overhead catenary and even the rails themselves have been stolen, causing derailments.

The UK has also suffered from the theft of cables, but changing the law regarding the sale of scrap has helped to seriously reduce this problem; identities must now be shown when selling scrap.

Sandstone Estates must be one of the safest places in South Africa that these important locomotives could end up. It does not have the capability to operate them due to not having any Cape Gauge running lines, but it has plenty of space, securing their future.

Preserving South Africa's 2ft gauge is Sandstone's speciality after collecting locomotives, carriages, considerable freight stock and building a complete working railway from scratch that is now the envy of the world and one of the leaders. Should there be a slight chance of restoring these engines to steam, it has the skills available.

The difficulties regarding the security of preserved steam locomotives in South Africa were highlighted by a large-scale attack of armed scrap thieves in 2010 at the Chamdor site in Krugersdorp, near Johannesburg, which belonged to the South African National Railway and Steam Museum (SANRASM), unconnected to the Outeniqua Transport Museum in George, Western Cape and Bloemfontein.

The now-defunct SANRASM was responsible for nearly 100 locomotives on its site donated by well-meaning corporations and mines, and several of the locomotives were unique.

Although some were repainted, the site was never opened to the public and security became increasingly problematic, compounded by an 'unofficial housing area' (township) expanding rapidly nearby.

One visitor to the Chamdor site in 2010 commented: "I spoke to the so-called security guard who was on duty, who told me he was too scared to chase off the 'Affirmative Action Shoppers' as they had threatened to slit his throat if he tried to stop them."

"He also said they told him his life was not worth it for looking after the 'white man's things'."

"This facility is not secured, there are no fences, and an informal settlement is a mere stone's throw away. He said he walks around first thing in the morning and picks up the bits and pieces the 'shoppers' have left behind. He showed me what he had collected this morning, which included one chimney and several small connecting rods! I did not feel at all safe being

there, and cut my visit short after taking a couple of photos."

Mismanagement and corruption exacerbated the situation, made worse by more than a million Rand (about £450,000 at the time) of societies' funds stolen. Questions were raised but none answered. In 2014 the site was cleared and 78 historic locomotives lost. Now, no sign of anything remains.

Rescue operation

During this debacle, Sandstone managed to rescue four 2ft narrow gauge locomotives on site – SAR Class NGG13 Garratt 2-6-2+2-6-2 No. 58, built by Hanomag in 1927; Beyer Peacock NGG11 2-6-0+0-6-2 No. 52 of 1919; industrial Orenstein & Koppel 0-6-0T No. 12691 of 1936; and industrial Avonside 0-4-0T No. 1624 of 1913. All this was achieved against fierce resistance from a small group of founders who had left the country. As a plus, Nos. 52, 12691 and 1624 have now been restored to working order by Sandstone.

What the future holds for the remaining locomotives at Bloemfontein is uncertain but the way matters are going, it does not look good. Slowly, parts of value will be removed – especially the nonferrous metal, while expensive items to manufacture will be sold purely for the value of the metal and not for its real value.

South Africa must heed the previous warning signs and boost security if the remaining locomotives are to survive.



On its way to safety: Krupp 19D 4-8-2 No. 2654 of 1939 taken by low-loader from Bloemfontein. GERT JUBILEUS



North British-built Class 24 2-8-4 No. 3688 of 1949, en route to Sandstone. GERT JUBILEUS



A simple chain on the gate does not stop anyone entering through the pit at South Africa's theft-prone Bloemfontein shed. Preserved 16DA Pacific No. 876 is in the foreground. JOHN TITLOW



Class 11 2-8-2 No. 929 of 1904 on the road from Bloemfontein. GERT JUBILEUS



A4 Sir Nigel Gresley in its temporary LNER wartime black livery as No. 4498, at the National Railway Museum in York on August 28. TREVOR CAMP/SNGLT

Sir Nigel Gresley emerges from York workshop in LNER wartime black

A4 PACIFIC Sir Nigel Gresley has appeared in LNER wartime black livery – although it will not run in this guise.

Having been under overhaul in the National Railway Museum's workshop at York since 2015, No. 60007 was rolled out in late August with a coat of semi-gloss black paint, LNER transfers and the number 4498 – resembling the economy livery applied to the Gresley streamliners during the Second World War.

However, the new look was merely to protect the locomotive from the elements during its move to Locomotive Services Ltd in Crewe for the overhaul to be completed. The engine was moved from the NRM to Holgate on September 21 to be split from its tender for the road move.

Prior to this, the A4 was involved in a minor shunting collision with Merchant Navy No. 35018 *British India Line* in the NRM's yard on September 2. There were no injuries and the damage to the A4's tender was repaired by September 13.

Logical choice

The NRM had requested that the engine be moved to clear the workshop for the planned redevelopment of the museum, but delays caused by Covid meant that the overhaul could not be completed in time. With the Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Trust having already entered into a 10-year agreement with the Royal Scot Locomotive & General Trust for the operation of the A4 on the main line, Crewe was considered the best place to finish the work.

The trust stated: "Another significant factor that has arisen in our plans is the financial difficulties of the Llangollen Railway, which carried out our boiler overhaul. While we have no concerns about the quality of the work done on No. 60007's boiler, support for final boiler testing and commissioning is no longer available from Llangollen.

"Once the locomotive is in service, the agreement we have with LSL means they will take on day-to-day maintenance of the boiler, so asking them to support initial testing is logical."

Some sections and entire sheets of the streamlined casing had been renewed, but there was insufficient time before the move to properly prepare all of the bare steel for primer and undercoat, hence the need for the protective paint.

Trust photographer Trevor Camp said: "This is only temporary and 'SNG' will be repainted into BR Express Blue, as voted for by the trust members, before the planned return to traffic in the first quarter of 2022."

Other black Pacifics

Record-breaking A4 No. 4468 *Mallard* was similarly painted black in 2012, when undercoat was applied in preparation for a new coat of LNER Garter blue prior to its display with the other five preserved A4s at the 'Great Gathering' of 2013. However, no LNER transfers were applied on that occasion.

A3 *Flying Scotsman* was displayed in wartime black as No. 502/103 in 2011, and initially ran in this guise in late 2015.

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