



Stars of Sandstone 2015

I liked your article (*Stars of Sandstone* – NGW 103). It was intelligent, mildly controversial and true. Thank you for the coverage.

I think it is important that NGW does emphasise the relative precariousness of many narrow gauge railways. Ours is by no means financially threatened but in Southern Africa and probably in Africa overall we face constant political threats which could eliminate us at the stroke of a pen.

A good example is the recent announcement that they are going to cap farm sizes even for large farms at 5000 hectares. We have nearly double that and therefore we could be a victim of such expropriation. One should bear in mind that the railway covers nearly the entire farm so the expropriation of some of our land might remove a substantial part of the railway. The aggressive tone adopted by the authorities seems to indicate that they are not interested in any discussion on the subject.

The world does seem to be a touch unstable at the moment and I am sure that we are not the only narrow gauge railway faced with multiple threats which go beyond the day-to-day ability to raise sufficient finance to continue the work that we do. We are certainly blessed that we are able to encourage volunteers to visit us, to add their expertise, and to pay us as well for the privilege. Our justification is that they shovel a load of coal while having fun and so it is logical that they should contribute.

We certainly would like to hear from other narrow gauge railways who have to deal with the challenges that we face (please email: joannewest@btinternet.com). One answer may be to point out to the

authorities that the Sandstone railway is significant and it would be a great loss to South African tourism and to the world narrow gauge community if it were summarily obliterated for reasons described above.

*Wilfred E. Mole
Sandstone Estates (Pty) Ltd*

Above: It is a sobering thought that Sandstone's restoration efforts such as this could be threatened by matters totally outside the estate's control (see Wilfred Mole's letter). Orenstein & Koppel 0-6-0T (11112/1925) undergoes its first steam test at the Bloemfontein workshop on 8th June. *Photo: Lukas Nel – more details of the restoration in World News.*

Right: The 2014 Christmas card produced by the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway is a typical example of a narrow gauge painting – see the letter from Paul Towers.

Facing page right: No 200-90, a Maffei 0-4-0 on the Rheinschaeun in Austria – see Mervyn Pritchard's letter.

Andrew C replies – It's shocking to hear that such an institution as Sandstone can be threatened in such a way and a salutary reminder that we should never become complacent as to the future prospects of our narrow gauge railways. We must always be prepared to fight for them...

Narrow Gauge Paintings

I recently purchased a mint copy of Don Breckon's *Great Western Railway* at a ridiculously low price. Don whom I knew, was a painter whose work I particularly liked. This was because most of his paintings were not just of locomotives or maybe a railway scene but portrayed the countryside and scenes of people in their various activities. One popular print was *Racing the Train* which involved children running on a

