



Established 1986
STEAM TRAIN EXCURSIONS,
LOCOMOTIVE RESTORATION AND RAILWAY CLUB.

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JUNE 2006 NEWSLETTER

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR.....



Photo: Eugene Armer

The month of June saw the return to steam of class GMAM Garratt no. 4079, in service with Rovos Rail while on lease from Sandstone. Resplendent in the green Rovos livery, the locomotive is seen here at Capital Park on Friday 16th June, ready to work the Cape Town train as far as Centurion. The loco also worked the Railway Touring Co. charter from Springs eastwards to Witbank, and again from Tzaneen to Pyramid.

It is ironic that the operation of this train was taking place while news reached the media about Spoornet's decision not to make locomotives available for contract or tourist trains in 2007. This has placed the whole issue of rail tourism under the spotlight and media reports indicate that the matter has already reached ministerial level. What the eventual outcome will be is anybody's guess. We can only hope that sanity will prevail and that the rail tourism operators will continue to be significant contributors to South Africa's tourist industry as a whole.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING.....

The monthly meeting on Wednesday June 14th was attended by about 20 members. After a short special general meeting to approve the budget for this financial year, those present enjoyed a video presentation by Chris Janisch of steam in motion over the past 12 months. Thanks Chris, a great show!

HO MODEL OF THE NEW SITE

Steve Appleton reports:

Cellphone pics taken last night (11th June) of the Hercules 1:87 HO site model kindly being built by Chris Becker. He has done an excellent job in my view. When completed and professionally photographed, this certainly will provide a concrete depiction of our dream that will help to sell our cause (and raise money and convince SpoorNet to allow us to relocate some trackwork, etc). Still to add are some fine details, like grass and trees. The representation of the existing buildings and the relocated CSAR shed from Pretoria station number 1 yard are stunning.



Unfortunately the same cannot be said of my photography. The low light combined with a lack of close up focus on a cell phone camera has created some pretty blurry pics. Still, this is good enough to show the general effect. Whilst the model has been slightly shortened to save space (the width is exact), one thing that becomes evident from the model is the (over?) emphasis on maintenance facilities and a consequent lack of rolling stock storage lines. I think we need to take a look at this aspect very soon, particularly if we intend to stable additional coaching stock.

In the model, Chris has stabled clerestory coaches on the platform, but in practice this road should normally be empty, except for departing or arriving trains.

Cheers,
Steve A

FATHERS DAY HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Miemie Wolmarans reports:

Early morning sunrise. Winter 2006, Fathers Day. Everyone is up and running at the shed in Capital Park, doing the necessary preparations for the privileged people who are coming out to the Park to get the real feel of a steam locomotive. Not only the feel, but also the experience, a real live experience of how to drive one of these big ladies.

Nathan and Spikkels looked after the loco through the night and she was ready to move around six, when John Ashworth came to do the necessary oiling and grease. Mike Haslam handled the duties inside the cab – and made sure that the footplate was nice and tidy - all in preparation for the "drivers" that had booked before hand.

On the subject of Nathan and Spikkels on fire lighting duty.....one can only wonder! If we must judge by the sound clip Nathan made when they moved the trolley from one track to another - they had a huge party - and just between the two of them. Spikkels singing "Tran Karoo" at the top of his voice and Nathan Toooot toot in between, "blowing the whistle".

All was ready when the first "driver" arrived. As soon as they arrived, Eric was ready to greet and welcome them with a lekker story and direct them to Steve. Steve took him to the 24 class to teach him the controls etc, whereafter Mike and John Ashworth took over on the 19D class. Steve Appleton did the train safety officer duty in the last coach - helping the "drivers" to stop at the correct place and changing of the points.



The smiles on these faces show that boyhood dreams certainly came true at the Fathers Day "Hands-On" experience!
Photos: Miemie Wolmarans

Quite a few men went through these capable guys' hands and all's well that ends well. The men were very happy with what they experienced, donations came in for the club and they are very proud of the certificate they earned.

The Hands-On is a very good way of making Friends of the Rail more well known – and personally I feel that once a year is not enough. This can be done more often - what about something for the ladies - or a challenge to the radio stations to send their presenters - something BIG!

This experience is a privilege - and more people should know about it.



With the imminent closure of the Friends of the Rail site at Capital Park, I thought I would send you this photo I took with a "Mik and Druk" (pont & shoot) camera on 24th July 2004, at 08h00 in the morning.

I was really surprised at the result of the photo, with the sun's rays and loco steam playing along together.

Rudi Kruger

A unique shot Rudi, thanks for sharing it!

FROM OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....

Dear Members

The Board is happy to announce the appointment of Billy and Polla Victor to the Friends of the Rail Sales position, which has become vacant because of the resignation of Joy Hodgson, who is moving to Warmbaths.

They will work as a team, with IT support from their son. Billy and Polla are both retired and live in Montana. Billy was a life-long employee at Transnet, where he retired as Senior Manager for Housing, while Polla spent her working life as a teacher. They lived in Uitenhage for most of their married life, where they raised a family of five.

The handing over process is taking place during the last two weeks of June and their formal appointment will be as from 1st July 2006, when the Friends of the Rail office will move to their home. They may be contacted on (012) 548-4090 at the moment. Should a dedicated FOTR new office number become available, this, as well as all other relevant contact details, will be communicated to all members in due course.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Submitted by Nathan Berelowitz

This month we sadly bid farewell to the services of Mike and Joy Haslam from our Board of Directors, as they are relocating to Warmbaths. We now welcome Billy and Polla Victor to the position of Marketing and booking of trains. They will carry on with the good work that the Haslams began, and endeavour to take the club further along the main line of success.

Kevin Wilson-Smith, as well as the rest of the committee, help with marketing and will be there to assist the Victors, until their feet are firmly on the ground.

On the home front, we have been busy once more assisting Rovos Rail, with our loco being used to shunt their stock and posing on their train, while all their locomotives were in use on the Railway Touring Co. steam safari from the U.K. It was great to see their GMAM freshly painted go out on trial trains, and finally run. This safari has seen Rovos run in all directions, and reports will no doubt appear elsewhere.

John Dadford was away on leave, and now that he is back, we will be working hard on getting the bushes done on our 24 class, as she will be hauling the Witbank Marathon train, with the 19D in August. All help needed down at the site again, folks.

We now have four Honourary members of FOTR, they are Robert Dadford, Mike Haslam, Joy Hodgson and David Shepherd.

During this last month, we have had a most successful two days with the Driver Hands-On experience at the site. This was well handled and thanks to all who got stuck in. Much revenue was raised.

At the new site, the platform and future parking area have been graded and look good. Work on track lifting will have taken place by late June, but there is still no lease signed from the Spoornet end.

And so we trek on through the dusty, leafless winter months. The site is slowly being packed up and away, work goes on, but we would so love to see more help down there. Evening classes for the Train Assistant's refresher course are ongoing every Thursday night at the home of Cliff Avis, and two budding future firemen, are rearing their heads - Dewald Heydenrych and Johann Bronkhorst.

Thats all folks, CU at the meeting!

Nathan

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Joy Hodgson

Mention is made elsewhere in this issue of my resignation from FOTR's Board of Directors. My partner Mike and I are moving to the bushveld near Warmbaths on the Thabazimbi road, where we will be establishing "Paradise Regained" a place to come and find yourself once more.

We envisage a retreat and rejuvenation centre, rustic bushcamp, organic gardening, vegetarian meals, drumming, courses in the art of living healthily, herb growing, aromatherapy and Indian Head massage etc. In short, a rustic getaway, where you can get back to nature and refresh your soul. Paradise will only be 2 hours from Johannesburg, one hour fifteen minutes from Centurion and 20kms from the hotsprings resort in Warmbaths. Developing our property has necessitated resigning from FOTR as from 30th June 2006.

Should you wish to know more about what courses and facilities we are planning to offer and when we will be up and ready to start receiving guests, please send your request to paradise4joy@gmail.com. Take care of yourselves and live in the moment!

Kind regards
Joy

I am sure all FOTR members join me in wishing Joy & Mike all the very best in their new venture! – Ed.

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Richard Whitehead (3rd); Kevin Wilson-Smith (4th); Chris Koch (8th); Allen Snow (13th); Sherrie Mansour (25th); Nathan Berelowitz (30th) and Alec King (31st). Best wishes to all these members!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

MEETINGS

Wednesday, 12th July 2006:

Nathan Berelowitz will present a video show titled "Over the rails of far away - Foreign steam and trains as seen through my lens". It will include French electrics at 160kph, German preserved steam in Holland, Polish steam, Trams, Czech steam. Train Tattooing, Canadian metro, French Metro, etc. It should be good, so don't miss this one!

TRAIN TRIPS



Tshwane Explorer – Sunday, 30th July and Sunday, 27th August

Bring your Sunday picnic basket and board our train, surrounded by railway history, for a nostalgic steam train trip around Pretoria, to see the city as you never see it from the road. It's like travelling back in time as you sit in our restored coaches and listen to the steady beat of the steam locomotive at the head of the train. The trip takes you to Pyramid South and around the City of Pretoria. An information leaflet (available on the train at a minimal price) explains the various sights along the route. Learn some history and interesting facts about our home city! What could be better than to relax with a full tummy and watch the world go slowly by.

Cash bar & kiosk available on train.

Prices: [Train trip] Adults R110, Children 4 to 12 years R75, children under 4 R45

Booking closes at 12:00 (noon) on the day before the trip

The Heritage Day History Fun Train – Monday, 25th September

In association with the Cullinan Historical Society we ask you to pack the kids and have a great day's getaway on our heritage steam train. Choice of three different venues for your own enjoyment. Enjoy an outing as in the golden era of steam powered transportation and let your troubles drift away like the clouds of exhaust smoke from our lovely engine.

Prices: [Train trip] Adults R120, Children 4 to 12 years R85, children under 4 R50

For more details of these, as well as all our other trains, please visit www.friendsoftherail.co.za or contact the FOTR sales department: Telephone (012) 667-4845, or e-mail sales@friendsoftherail.co.za

A RETURN TO SPRINGS

Chris Janisch

Tuesday 23 May 2006

The highveld is covered in an icy blanket as I make my way through the early dawn to the East Rand. The first pale throes of light silhouette the electric masts of the railway flyovers as I slip into Springs. I head for Largo station, the first out on the line to Bethal. The last time I was here was in 1990 when the pick-up goods was occasionally rostered for steam. It was here that I photographed 15F 3135 crossing with a class on a freight. Imagine my shock to find the platform completely overgrown with weeds, the buildings derelict and the passing loop removed. Even though this is happening all over, it never quite sinks in.

I walk up the line towards Springs, feet crunching the ballast and thick frost-covered ground. Rounding a curve the old distant home signal stands forlorn, shorn of its arms and a tree thrusting its way through the frame. A trio of light engine 35's grumble past westwards and I settle down to enjoy the view of the wetland in front of me. There is no sign of the steam train expected from Springs at 7.30, but in due course two 35's growl through with a lengthy goods to Bethal. The sun is rising above the cutting above me and is now gradually warming up the icy rails. A phone call reveals that the Rodgers train is still standing in Boksburg East!

I pack up and head towards Strubenvale, near the abandoned Grootvlei Mine Railway. On a long sweeping curve leading to an overbridge, I meet up with some other enthusiasts and after a chat we decide to do some gardening for the runpasts. Soon steam is seen rising in Springs yard and we ready ourselves. A chilly wind begins to pick up from the south, negating the warming effect of the sun. With safety valves lifting, 12AR 1535 and 15F 2914 hover into view. Two long whistle blasts and the passengers disembark for a series of runpasts. The day is getting on and the light is not so good, the breeze blows smoke back over the engines.



*12AR 1535 and 15F 2914 team up to perform a photo runpast near Springs, for the David Rodgers tour train.
23rd May 2006
Photo: Chris Janisch*

Then it is on a little further up the line for another runpast. A fire is started which is quickly obliterated by the water hose. We then chase the train eastwards to the little river crossing near Largo. From the road overbridge, we can see a dead pig wallowing in the green waters, no doubt a convenient disposal point. The locos look good smoking over the bridge, and then we move on to Endicott, reached at about midday. A protracted service stop is held here, as the short tendered locos are replenished from the feeder tanks and fires are cleaned. The crew of the F have a hard time of it, as poor coal layered up from runpasts has turned into devilish clinker. The driver and fireman work the fire-irons doubleheaded to clear the lumps. Having not slept all night this can hardly be a pleasant job. As a westbound freight ambles through, I can understand why diesels were a much easier option.

After almost 2 hours the fire is clean and the 12AR performs a solitary runpast, before the train consist is lashed together again. We wait again as a heavy freight behind triple 35's smokes upgrade towards Bethal. The shadows from the surrounding gum trees are folding over the tracks as we finally whistle up for departure. The locos are in a hurry and the train descends rapidly into Devon. This was once a pretty agricultural town with a well-kept station and watering columns. This is no more. The streets are filthy, the station overgrown and the old semaphore masts stand out starkly against the bleak windswept horizon. The train makes the briefest of pauses here before powering away under the overbridge. I last stood here 16 years ago and it all looked so different then.

We move on to Leslie, surrounded by smoke-smudged shacks for miles. Just before the station the light has improved and an impressive runpast is held with the doubleheader tearing around a curve, a smoke and steam cacophony. The once busy yard at the station contains only a few grain trucks. Upgrade out of Leslie the sun is sinking rapidly, and a suitable spot is found for the evening glint shots. Golden sunlight reflects off the train as she performs two successful runpasts, and all too soon the sun is falling into the haze-covered horizon. The train is posed while shots are taken and then gradually pulls forward to embark the passengers.

An icy chill washes over the land as the sun disappears and I am glad of my warm car. A final silhouette shot is taken further up and I watch the train hurrying on into the darkness, heading for Kinross and Bethal. As I drive home after a good day, I spare a thought for the loco crews who still have a long hard run ahead into the night.

DAMRAIL UPDATE

Colin Roberts : Director, DamRail (Pty) Ltd.

We'd of course like to call this a 'Progress Report', but that would be stretching the description.

As a reminder, the four governmental parties in the Heritage Train Task Group were told in March 2005 that the Ministry of Public Enterprises had placed a moratorium on leases of land by the parastatals (including of course, Transnet) in November 2004. It had taken that long for the news to filter through to the North West Parks & Tourism Board. The Board and its three Municipal partners decided to prepare a motivation for the lease of the Hercules - Magaliesburg line to go ahead. They dithered and dithered and did nothing. Meanwhile, in the second half of 2005, Spoornet through Transnet decided that it would itself submit such a motivation, considering that the lease of these three rail lines had already been mentioned by the Minister in Parliament and announced at Transport Conferences. So there was a motivation sitting with the Ministry of Public Enterprises. What happened to it?

To find out, I e-mailed the Minister of PE on 16th February 2006, and got a prompt response from one of the officials who said that any motivation of this kind would cross his desk. How would he identify this one among the 600 or so that Transnet had submitted? I told him how he could expect to find it, submitted much earlier than the others he could recall. It took him weeks to find - it had apparently been 'misaid'. I kept Simon Hubinger at Spoornet up to date with this, suggesting that it would be worth his while also chasing it (I don't know whether he did).

The official has been working on it ever since, intermittently I imagine, judging by the speed of the results. Yesterday (1st June) he told me that it had finally been looked at by everybody who needed to look at it and comment (and get any changes done), and submitted to the Director General who had signed it. I'm chasing him for confirmation that it's gone to the Minister for a final OK for the lifting of the moratorium, and for that decision to be advised to Transnet.

Geoff Pethick supplied an article from one of the financial papers, reporting on a decision by cabinet approving a policy of allowing the parastatals to agree 'long-term leases' of state land. We sent a copy of this to the Ministry official and to the NWP&T Board, pointing out that this should now be applied to the Lease Agreement. We have had several discussions with the Gauteng North Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who are very supportive, and had prepared a short, very readable project motivation. They say they have access to Transnet honcho Maria Ramos, and would take the motivation to her soonest. That was some months ago and nothing has happened. Friends of the Rail were given notice to move from Capital Park and are relocating to Hercules, with an official [signed] Spoornet agreement. This is very good news for DamRail, as it means there will be a credible operator, with steam locos and good rolling stock, just waiting to move onto the line from the Pretoria side. We have had discussions with them about co-operating and linking up their southern part of the Hercules Yard directly with the Magaliesburg line on the north side of the yard. This should avoid having to use any Spoornet track. They will have some influence with the Tshwane Municipality when it comes to fixing up that section of the line.

We flirted for some time with getting an Access Agreement out of Spoornet. This would be an *Interim Agreement* pending their Lease of the line to the NWP&T Board. Charles Chinyavanhu and Mike du Plooy came out to Pecanwood, and we took them out in the Funkey loco to the breaks in the line in each direction. These discussions fizzled out, with Spoornet trying to apply a major agreement to a small interim operation like DamRail. So we quietly let the idea drop. [They said they were waiting for us, and we know that we were waiting for them. That's what you get with no record of meetings.]

The North West Parks & Tourism Board has set aside R 1-million officially in its budget for the project. They will be going to Transnet as soon as they hear that the MPE has given the go ahead for the Lease. Madibeng Municipality has included the Train service in its most recent Budget and Development plans. One of our Directors is now a Representative Councillor on the Municipality, though of course she has recused herself from any discussions or decisions regarding the Heritage Train Project.

The awards for redevelopment of the areas around the dam have reportedly been made, but there may be some rethinking due to some bidders objecting on various grounds. This includes major redevelopment at Kommandonek and Oberon, and we think Meerhof near the station, with big money available.

The Lease Agreement between Transnet and the NWP&T Board has been agreed and signed by both parties but not exchanged. A version of the Concession Agreement between the Board and DamRail has been tabled and generally agreed by all five parties. However, it will probably be queried before it's signed, especially if any of the terms need changing because of the terms of the Lease Agreement (although we took great pains to make the Concession Agreement align with the Lease).

We still have the option to pull out at any time before we sign the Concession Agreement, selling off the assets and shutting down. We might consider this if the other parties want to change the Concession Agreement, so that on paper it would enable them to micro-manage our operations. This would be totally unworkable in practice. Or if they expect us to carry all the costs of line repairs. Or if the period of the Agreement is still short-term.

Geoff Pethick reports that our Temporary Operating Permit from the Rail Safety Regulator will not be extended beyond the end of June 2006, and we'll need to meet the standard requirements to get a proper one. This would include such things as a 'Safety Management System', which sounds like a good idea in principle, but Geoff is finding out what it will mean in practice. We suspect that it will also require all sorts of technical documentation that it will be impossible to obtain from Spoornet.

Meanwhile, on a lighter note, Hekpoort Laerskool asked if they could use part of the line to run a Quad Bike Adventure Day on 3rd June. We said 'yes', provided we're indemnified etc. Spoornet got a copy of the exchange and didn't object. It turns out that they changed the route and in the end will only run on railway land for about 200 metres - no big deal, but some goodwill for us in the local Afrikaans community.

ANOTHER RAILWAY QUIZ

Eric Samuels

The following 10 questions test our reader's knowledge of the railway line between Pretoria and Germiston. How well do you know that line? *Answers will appear in the July newsletter.*

Question 1

What is the origin of the name Germiston?

- a) it is an adaptation of the name Germishuysen, the surname of the original owner of the farm on which Germiston was built
- b) It is named after a farm with the same name that was situated near Glasgow, Scotland.
- c) It is an English corruption of the name Germishuysen's Dorp (Germishuys Town). Germishuysen was a local Field Cornet

Question 2

What is the present day name of the farm Elandsfontein that was crossed by the rails of the Rand Tram?

- a) Kaalfontein
- b) Isando
- c) Kempton Park
- d) Germiston

Question 3

Where was Droogegrond Junction situated?

- a) At the present day Knights Junction
- b) At the present day Germiston
- c) At the present day Olifantsfontein
- d) At the present day Centurion

Question 4

What is the present day name of the station once known as Zuurfontein?

- a) Oakmoor
- b) Kempton Park
- c) Birchleigh
- d) Isando

Question 5

Where would you search for the remains of a station named Ashbury?

- a) between Fountains and Kloofsig
- b) between Ravensklip and Knights
- c) between Birchleigh and Kempton Park
- d) Between Olifantsfontein and Kaalfontein

Question 6

What is the origin of the name Kempton Park?

- a) it is named after the horse racing track in England
- b) it is named after the town Kempen in Germany
- c) it is named after a plantation of eucalyptus trees (referred to as a "park" in Victorian England) that grew on the farm Kempen, that was situated within the present day borders of Kempton Park

Question 7

On which date did the first train arrive in Pretoria from Germiston?

- a) 17 December 1892
- b) 1 January 1893
- c) 1 January 1895
- d) 1 November 1895

Question 8

Which station on this line was built specifically to serve a black township?

- a) Olifantsfontein b) Van Riebeeck Park c) Oakmoor d) Sportpark

Question 9

How did Irene get its name?

- a) it is named after the estate on which the village was developed
b) it was named after Irene, the daughter of Nellmapius
c) in commemoration of the signing of the peace treaty of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902, Irene means peace
d) named after the Dutch queen Irene who reigned from 1895 – 1910

Question 10

In what year was the railway line between Germiston and Pretoria doubled and electrified?

- a) 1928 b) 1934 – 38 c) 1960 d) 1965
-



Tuesday, 9th May 2006 sees Class 24 no. 3655 "City of Cape Town" with a private charter for Stellenbosch, waiting for a Metro set to pass, before heading onwards.

*Driver - Les Labuschagne
Fireman – Nathan Berelowitz*

Photo: Nathan Berelowitz



Richard Gillatt captured this sunrise silhouette of class 19D no.2650 departing from our site at Capital Park on Saturday, 27th May 2006.

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Contributions from members are always welcome!

Deadline for contributions to the next newsletter is 21st July 2006.