



1) Preliminary programme.

Our preliminary programme will be released this week. It will change and it will improve. This document is a work in progress and we are also happy to receive comments and recommendations. The final programme will only be published the day before the event and copies will be freely available to visitors.

2) Calling all photographers.

If you are a photographer please consider the following. We have so many locos and so many freight and passenger consist options that it is sometimes difficult to know where to start.

We have a large number of flats that can be loaded with interesting items, and we now have a set of coco pans for Little Bess, which is new. Apart from this you know what is available in terms of locos, tankers, fruit wagons, ballast trucks etc.

Before we issue a preliminary programme this week we really would like to know what your particular preference would be in terms of how trains are configured. We are not doing anything fancy this year, i.e. no 4 Garratts working together etc. In fact, we are going to try and avoid double headers because of the high expense involved. However, this is less of a problem with the smaller locos.

So if you can think up your “dream” photograph let us know what it is.

3) Participation in the event.

If you are booked to come to our event you do need to communicate with us regarding your special interests and special skills. We have a vast amount of equipment that is unlikely to even appear because we do not have people with the skill to manage them. To be slightly more accurate we do have people who understand them but they have other things to do and they cannot do all of it. A good example is our big Emerson Brantingham Big 4-30 and our Rumely Oil Pull. Both are majestic machines but a bit of a handful, which means they need at least a 2-man team who know what they're doing, per item.

4) Geoff's Trains special offer.

One of the features of this year's event is that the annual Geoff's Trains SA tour will be an event within an event. Their group consists of dedicated photographers with very specific requirements for which they pay a premium. However, our own guests are invited to join the group as per the suggestion below.

Geoff's Trains is offering a package that includes transport from Johannesburg's OR Tambo Airport, accommodation and entry to the Sandstone Festival. Many of Geoff's clients are keen photographers, with some having visited Sandstone previously, they are keen to know that photographic trains with runpasts will be included. Geoff asked us if this was possible and we concluded that it was feasible to run such trains in the early morning and afternoon that will be far enough away from other Festival activity to avoid interruption. These extra trains will incur additional costs and both Sandstone and Geoff's Trains agree that this should be borne by those who participate. We have calculated that Rand 250 per person per morning or afternoon session will be appropriate and Geoff's Trains has agreed to administer this on our behalf. There will be three morning and three afternoon sessions and in each the trains will use a mixture of ex SAR wagons. Some may have coaches and others will be goods only with transport to photographic locations by motor coach.

Monday, 06 May.

Morning: Double headed NG6 ex - Beira Railway Lawley 4-4-0's.

Afternoon: NGG16 2-8-2+2-8-2 Garratt.

Tuesday, 07 May.

Morning: NGG13 2-8-2+2-8-2 Garratt.

Afternoon: Two German built tank locomotives.

Wednesday, 08 May.

Morning: NG15 2-8-2.

Afternoon: NGG13 and NGG16 Garratts double headed.

Space is limited to 25 on each session and booking in advance is recommended.

5) Classic and Vintage Aircraft.

A feature of past events has often been classic and vintage aircraft. Unfortunately because we are a long way from the main centres the cost of arranging for these aircraft to participate is enormous. This is particularly true of the very thirsty but very gutsy Harvards which are living legends in their own right. Because of the strong Military component at Stars of Sandstone this year we specifically wanted to have a Harvard present. You will be pleased that with the support of the Harvard Club of South Africa this has been arranged. The pilot is no less than Laurie Kay, the man who flew the massive Jumbo low over Ellis Park Stadium minutes before the commencement of the 1995 World Cup Rugby confrontation between South Africa and New Zealand (which South Africa won). This feat of flying received worldwide coverage. You will also remember that this was the event at which Nelson Mandela greeted the crowds in a Springbok T-shirt – a diplomatic coup which settled the nerves of millions. Laurie Kay is photographed below with a commemorative rendition of the event. I know he is looking forward to meeting many of you.



In order to subsidise the enormous fuel costs Laurie will be offering 20-minute flips in the Harvard throughout the time that he is there. He will not be there for the whole event so if you are registered you need to book now. The cost of this flip will be R2,500.00 (two thousand five hundred Rand).

To fly with a pilot of his experience and expertise in an aircraft of this historical significance will be a spine tingling experience for those of you who are interested in such matters.

Should you wish to book please e-mail Mike Myers at mikem@sandstone.co.za and you will be allocated a time slot nearer the event.



Photo by Aron Frankental



Photo by David Benn

6) Water Tower.

This is turning out to be a tough job. It was in much worse condition that we first realised having really been knocked about. It is obviously very old too. The castings look ancient, and many of them are cracked so they have to be reinforced.

However, the guys have the bit between their teeth and they are confident they will get it up and running by the event, where it will certainly turn out to be very useful.



7) Job creation project at Sandstone.

We have become worried about the number of unemployed people who live in various villages on the farms. Many visitors to Sandstone will be familiar with the Vailima bank up past the school. There is a small village behind the school. During a recent survey it was revealed that 19 people lived in that village and were unemployed. We have therefore created a project whereby they have been given tasks. One of the most important things is to clear the bush debris, grass etc. on both sides of the line. This is a big job and ironically the worst area is immediately adjacent to where they reside. The 19 have been broken up into four teams. Two of the teams head away from the school downhill and the other two teams head away from the school uphill split into two groups, one either side of the railway line. We are confident that they will have the line cleaned and therefore made safer in terms the fire hazard by the end of April. We hope to find additional projects for them.

We do have one request which we will ask our visitors to bear in mind. Winter is shortly upon us and it gets very cold in the Eastern Free State. 15 of the unemployed are ladies and the rest are men. We would be very grateful if all visitors could bring one or two items of redundant clothing with them if possible. Coats, jerseys, or warmer clothing that might have accumulated in your homes would be gratefully received. We will distribute these to this group of unemployed. We will also supply them with various items from our own inventory.

Unemployment is a huge problem in South Africa and if everybody does their bit the situation can be improved.



8) Something very special and very interesting has arrived at Sandstone Estates.

Here is a photograph of our new 90mm Ratel model 656 MK3 Infantry Fighting Vehicle. It is literally brand new and will be playing a leading part in the daily activities of our event. This is not by any means new technology although it looks it. If you are interested in Military vehicles and if you would like to participate in some of the activities relating to this and other great Military machines like our Mk IV Sherman please let Andy Selfe, our Military Coordinator know. His e-mail address is as follows: aselfe@mweb.co.za.



9) Sandstone's Unimog fire fighting unit undergoes a ground-up restoration.

Following an accident which did some damage to the Unimog we decided to strip it completely and rebuild it. Because it is on the same chassis as the durable and famous Buffel we decided to restore it, not as a civilian fire fighting unit but as a Military vehicle.

Our Military vehicle collection comprises a number of vehicles which are either in private ownership or which are on loan from the School of Armour in Bloemfontein. The Unimog has an interesting history because it has been on the farm for nearly 30-years having been used by the Wille family who sold the farm to the current owners in 1996. A brief history of the Unimog, as prepared by Gerhard Wille, appears below:

I bought the Unimog, brand new in 1985. It was used to plough and to transport crops to the co-op. In the late 80's and early 90's the Unimog and trailer was used to do game drives for big groups of ±50.



10) Weather conditions.

We had exceptional rains rather unexpectedly from 25th to 30th March; a total of 73mm fell. This has given a tremendous boost to our grazing, to the cosmos, and has assisted our Soya Beans.

We are confident that our visitors will find the Eastern Free State in good heart in May.

It is fortunate that we did not hold our event during the first week of April, which is when we normally convene it. We had 135mm of rain in March and we have already had 31mm in April. However, the sun is out, the skies are clear, and apart from cleaning up after the rain we are on track. Getting the cosmos to flower at the right time has been tricky this year but the signs are that some of it should come into flower just before the event, unless of course the frost gets to it first.

We currently already have snow on the Maluti mountains but to be fair that is at 9,000 ft. This means night temperatures have dropped and will continue to drop right through to May. We have super warm fleeces in stock so if you do not have the right garment do not worry, Agnes will make sure that you are kitted out to cope with these high altitude conditions.

The snow came early this year but the daytime temperatures are still very comfortable and we expect it to continue to be like that throughout May. It is just in the evenings you need to be properly dressed.



11) Soup... yes, it is in demand.

Here is an enthusiastic response:

From: DEREK SMITH

Sent: 21 March 2013 14:21

To: Joanne West

Oh Yes, I'm getting EXCITED alright. Thank for the latest updates. If the cream of mushroom soup that we REALLY ENJOYED last year, can be recreated again, I FOR ONE WOULD EAT SOME EVERY DAY OF THE EVENT!! Yes, I TOO hope your late Cosmos planting comes "up trumps" too! Seems my mate will have to search elsewhere this year, as he didn't get to studying the Marshall up close and it has now 'gone' to allow the new building to be built. The Ruston Bucyrus, - marvellous that it "went" after so long. Roll on MAY!!, NOT you understand that I want to wish my life away. Regards to Wilf, Lukas, and all the STALWARTS beaver away as ever for our "Fabulous week"! Regards, Derek (SMITH, Cheltenham, U.K.)

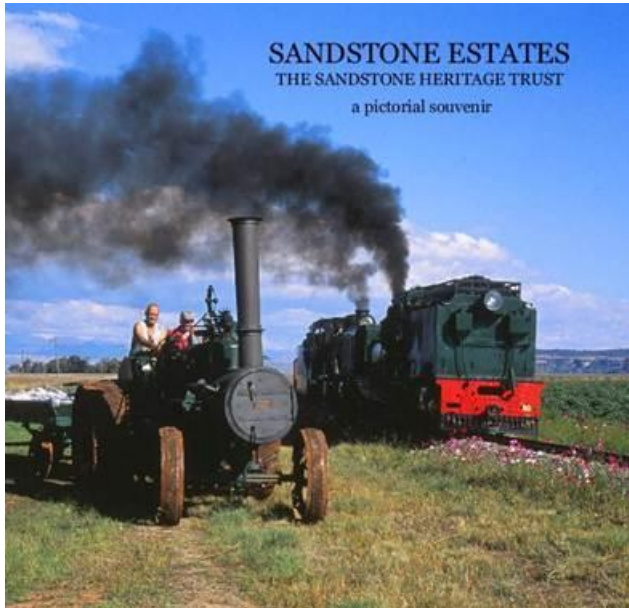
12) Evening presentations.

We are pleased to advise that we have managed to arrange two evening presentations during the event. John Middleton will present a talk and presentation on the SA Railway Heritage scene and locos preserved at Sandstone on Saturday, 4th May. The time will be confirmed closer to the event.

Fraser Howell from Friends of the Choo-Tjoe will also give an interesting presentation on Sunday, 5th May on the Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe.

Additional presentations will be announced and will be in the final programme.

13) New book on the Sandstone Heritage Trust.



Dennis Moore has advised he has produced a new book on Sandstone entitled "Sandstone Estates : The Sandstone Heritage Trust - a pictorial souvenir".

Very different from the large landscape format 'The Sandstone Steam Railway' that was published a year ago, this is an album that covers everything STEAM (+ a few other things besides) at Sandstone. So, locomotives obviously (including the little ones), but also traction engines, showman's engines, steam road cranes, it is showcased here. Even oxen and a BSA railcar and a diesel shunter (heaven forbid!).

This is all colour and a full 120 pages.

The good news is, that by utilising an 18cm square format, the price per copy of this print on demand book is under \$30, i.e. about Rand 230 for those in South Africa.

Full details, preview, ordering etc., simply go to www.blurb.com and enter Dennis Moore steam in the search engine and take it from there.

14) Another tanker completed.

Wouter and his team at the Hoekfontein Running Sheds have completed another tanker. This tanker was used as a permanent water storage facility for the workshops but it is now obsolete due to the erection of a pedestal tower.

These Narrow Gauge tankers are fairly rare and we are proud that we now have 7 on them on the fleet with the potential to build another one from various bits and pieces lying around.



15) Improved communications.

Visitors will find that we now have much improved Cellular communications. Vodacom has installed a major base station on the farm which has 2G voice with edge capabilities as well as 3G voice with HSDPA and HSUPA capabilities - this means surfing the web to stay in touch with family and friends back home will also be possible.

As data usage and the number of connected devices continues to skyrocket, Vodacom is investing more than R6 billion per year in South Africa. Part of this investment includes adding extensively to its network of 3G base stations. At current rates, the number of 3G base stations is growing at around 25% per year and is the reason that Vodacom has 50% more 3G Internet coverage than any other operator. The new base station at Sandstone Estate is just one of the many sites we're busy putting up to ensure local and international visitors can stay connected wherever they choose to explore in South Africa.

We strongly recommend that you switch to roaming on Vodacom when you arrive for good communications.

The photograph below shows the Base Station.



16) The state of the Cosmos at the moment.

We are optimistic that it will be in good heart for the event, at least in some places. It is just starting to flower now. We have planted cosmos with the intention of it flowering in May so hold thumbs!



The Sandstone team

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