



Stars of Sandstone

2ND-12TH APRIL 2015 NEWSLETTER NO:1

STARS OF SANDSTONE 2015

You can see from the above that the dates for next year's show are 2nd-12th April 2015. Based on the level of interest, which is substantially higher than in previous years, and bearing in mind that we only have a limited capacity, people need to book early. We are therefore going to put in place the booking mechanisms within the next 2-weeks. We strongly recommend that if you are serious about booking you follow the administrative procedures.

Last year we had quite a few last minute cancellations after we had closed the bookings but we were not agile enough to rebook those places. This year we will be asking for people to register early, to pay a deposit early, and to confirm their booking by paying the balance of the entry fees by no later than the end of January 2015. This is in order to streamline our administration which can get quite hectic in the months before the show, as well as to ensure that those people who are keen to come feel confident that they have secured a place at Stars 2015.

Despite our best efforts to optimise our revenue for the 2014 event we fell far short of what was needed to cover our costs. Our actual loss as per our auditors was R323,388.54. Sandstone's agricultural business acts as the shock absorber that handles these sort of deficits but

being in a business which is reliant on nature and global pricing factors our revenue streams are never guaranteed. Commodity prices fluctuate violently and after the 2014 event they went down dramatically and are likely to remain that way for the foreseeable future. This is as a direct result of excellent harvests across the globe. However, we are optimistic that with a small increase in entry price and with a higher average of people per day we will do better in 2015.



Photo credit: Jiří Střecha from Czech Republic



These two pictures taken by Rod Hering from South Africa (above) and Jiří Střecha from Czech Republic (top) show the grandeur of the landscape. We are sure everyone who has experienced our Mountain Wanderer train will agree that this is a true Out of Africa experience.

By far the biggest problem is the cost to maintain the railway infrastructure which needs constant attention. Although we have had a contractor on site since December 2013 through to the end of April 2014, which is when their contract ended, we have already identified more than 8-weeks of work that needs to be done on the line due to subsidence and the need to improve many of the curves etc. Anyone with a Narrow Gauge railway anywhere in the world knows how dynamic these things are – they literally move constantly and to run a safe and reliable railway one just has to be very methodical and check every single centimetre of that line before any major utilisation takes place. Because we do not have the privilege of running daily passenger trains for a large locally based urban population which would more than offset these overheads we have to put the entire cost of the railway maintenance essentially into

one event because that is the only revenue generator we have.

We are proud of what we achieved in 2014 and we think it is very well summarised by one of our real stalwarts, Hannes Paling, who has hardly ever missed an event at Sandstone who said:

A short note to thank you for the splendid week on the farm, the engines were clean and polished, they looked terrific, the cosmos was spectacular the timing was spot on as far the flowers are concerned, I had a great time, met old friends and made plenty new ones, everything was on time and seemed to run smoothly, in my opinion the best event ever.

Best regards

Hannes

[Click here to see Hannes Palings photographs on flickr](#)



This picture summarises what it is all about at Sandstone's annual event. An NGG16 with a passenger train, a Military convoy heading for the border, a very rare Sentinel Steam lorry against the background of Soya Beans and Cosmos. All under sunny skies.



Photo credit: Jean Dulez

A HOST OF THANK YOU'S

We would like to say a big thank you to all of those who took the time and trouble to visit us for Stars 2014. Many overseas visitors arrived up to a week early and helped us tremendously to prepare our old machines for their special time and place in the sun. Thanks to all of you who have written to us. Your feedback and comments are invaluable. We would also like to say a special thanks to those who donated clothes for the local community.



Photo credit: David Benn

TO OUR FRIENDS IN THE MILITARY

A particularly massive thank you to the Armour Museum in Bloemfontein for their huge contribution. They supported us in a way that was almost unimaginable. A very strong team of professional soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Hohls was there throughout the show supporting us, talking to the public, giving them rides on some of the awesome machinery that they brought with them from Bloemfontein. We are sure that many of the people who took advantage of the opportunity to ride on an Olifant tank or a Rooikat Armoured Fighting Vehicle will never forget the experience. It is not something that happens every day. So to Brigadier General André Retief, Officer Commanding of the SA Armour Formation who took the Salute and his team of Officers and NCO's, we say thank you. You have no idea how much your contribution

was appreciated by well over 1,000 people. We have had lots of requests for updated news stories from international publications and we believe that your support and activities will resonate throughout the Military Heritage world for a long while to come. We appreciate that the team had to transfer immediately to Bloemfontein after the event to set-up and host the impressive Armour Exhibit at the Bloemfontein Show which the Sandstone Heritage Trust participated in. We contributed our 1910 Peerless Truck from World War One, together with a Saracen with its 90mm gun and our Eland 60.

This relationship with the Armour Museum is genuinely synergistic because both parties give generously to the relationship. It is indeed sad that similar relationships could not have been developed with other like-minded organisations, particularly in the Railway Heritage arena.

TO OUR FRIENDS IN THE MILITARY II



Armour Museum heavy transport arriving at Sandstone with a Rooikat, SANDF's current armoured fighting vehicle.



Heavy Armour Russian T72
Photo credit: Rod Hering



Sandstone's very own Mk IV Sherman which saw service in the Second World War
Photo credit: Rod Hering



Our 1915 Feldbahn locomotive from the First World War being guarded by the Wehrmacht (Capt. Charl Ihlenfeldt) with a very casual American GI Vietnam War retiree in attendance (WO1 Sieg Marais).

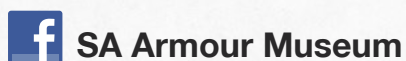
Photo credit: Gary Barnes



Sandstone Estates Ratel, a machine capable of reducing many people to tears for various reasons.
Photo credit: Rod Hering



An impressive line-up of Armoured Fighting vehicles
Photo credit: Rod Hering



www.saarmourmuseum.co.za

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

We ran more than 80 individual trains during the event without any serious technical mishaps. The crews worked incredibly hard and for those many drivers who came to us from the UK, Belgium, Australia, and the USA we believe that they got the exposure to the Sandstone Steam Railroad that they were looking for. We ran the most number of Mountain Wanderer trains we had ever run. In fact we ran two on the final day around the entire circuit for the benefit of the local community and once again it went very well. Our volunteers, particularly our train crews, work very long hours and are exhausted at the end of the event. Without them we could not operate and we want them to know that we appreciated their commitment to our cause.

THANK YOU TO OUR DEDICATED PHOTOGRAPHERS

We have also started to receive photographs from the many people who had their cameras at the ready. These include our photographic group under the inspired direction of David Benn who was with us for the entire duration of the event ensuring that the photographers were well looked after and well organised, and also those of you who we refer to as amateur photographers. We appreciate you sending them and

please remember that we are going to produce a photographic DVD of about 1,000 pictures representing the best of the best from those who would like to share their photos with us and the world. Please put your best photos on a CD and forward them to Joanne West if you are based internationally or in SA please send to Babita Hira. Their addresses appear at the bottom of this newsletter.

EARLY MORNING PHOTO SHOOTS

We will be doing these once again. They are becoming increasingly popular and the quality of the photographs is breathtaking. David Benn coordinated our 2014 event with great skill and aplomb and he has volunteered to do it again.

If you would like to register as a photographer please notify **David, E: david@shrinks.co.za**, and copy Joanne West, **E: joannewest@btinternet.com**.



This wonderful picture is one of many showing the NG15 leading an NGG16 Garratt
Photo credit: Jiri Střecha

THANK YOU TO OUR STAFF

A big thank you to our unsung heroes, Lukas and Anna Nel and the team from Bloemfontein. They have achieved the extraordinary miracle of being able to take a very derelict locomotive every year and have it ready by the next show. That happened with Avonside, No. 1624, "Xanthe", which was unveiled in 2014.



AND TO THE LADIES.

One steam enthusiast who worked for Virgin Trains in the UK donated a number of obsolete train uniforms which were worn proudly by the ladies many of whom you met in the Waenhuis and who supported our event so strongly.

MODERN FARM TOURS

These were very popular during 2014 but we weren't that organised. We were combining Speckled Sugar Beans and Sunflowers during the event and we expect to be doing something similar in 2015. We will be setting up a special programme where people can book a farm tour. Many people were as interested in riding in a combine harvester as they were in anything else, which is something that we didn't really come to terms with because to us these are routine activities.

People who are interested in modern farm tours should indicate their interest when they book. There was a valid complaint that people didn't know when these tours were, which is correct, because they were being organised somewhat informally. We will have a much more formal programme next year.



The machines work late into the night and are supported by heavy vehicles to transfer the crops to the silos.



Harvesting Sugar Beans



Harvesting Soya Beans



Harvesting Sunflowers

Photo credit: Alex Reichle



WHY APRIL?

Many people ask us why we have our event in the early part of April. The reason is that it combines the wonderful Autumnal climate, it is cold enough for the steam to condense and make photographs more dynamic, not to mention the railway experience itself. It is harvest time which is always a happy time on the

farm, and finally it is Easter so people have time to get away.

For those who have not been to Sandstone the pictures below will provide you with a feel for what Autumn is like in the Eastern Free State.

Tessa Joughin, a very highly competent local photographer, took the following pictures.





ROAD MAKING MACHINERY, CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT ETC.

This is a somewhat undiscovered area of our activities but we are going to concentrate on improving it in 2014. Here's one of our steam rollers doing a normal day's work at Sandstone improving our road network.



AVIATION

The Chipmunk, Tiger Moth, and Harvard were very popular this year. We will be working with the Aviation guys to do the same again next year. The picture below will provide people

who have not been to Sandstone before with the sort of view that you would have if you took a flight in one of the classic aircraft operating from our runway.

A Harvard coming in to land with some friends of similar vintage.

Photo credit: Rod Hering



OUR WONDERFUL SELECTION OF ROLLING STOCK

We were able to put together an enormous variety of consists involving freight only, passenger only, or mixed freight and passenger.

We can even take our cattle along for a ride if we so desire.

The photographs below give an indication of some of the train configurations that one can expect.



*Who is taking who for a ride...
Photo credit: Alan Middleditch*



*The interior of our wonderfully compact 2-ft Narrow Gauge Dining Car
Photo credit: Jiri Střecha*

CONSISTS



Sometimes we keep it simple. Our Bagnall Diesel with a consist of B-Bogies

Photo credit: Marc-Henri Andre



Our trusty old Fowler Tank Engine with a mixed industrial and passenger load



A full agricultural consist comes rushing by the airstrip with an MGTC standing at the level crossing.

Photo credit Gary Barnes

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

(Top Left) When you have ridden in a Military vehicle and been on many trains you have not run out of things to do. Try a trip down the line in our wonderful sedate and dignified 1910 BSA Rail Car. Book trips at the Station 3 passengers at a time.



Photo credit: Gary Barnes

(Top Right) This is the centre of all our Railway activities. Our Station building originally built new by the British Imperial Railways at Kommandonek Station on the Bloemfontein-Bethlehem line in 1907 was found derelict on a local farm and restored.



Photo credit: Hannes Paling

(Bottom right) If you really want to slow down the pace of your life go for an ox wagon ride.



If you miss the train you can always catch the bus.

Photo credit: Jiří Střecha



Photo credit: Alex Reichle



A REMINDER

Please remember if you are planning on visiting in 2015 and are keen to donate some clothing start putting clothes aside now. In the cold Free State winters a warm, woolly jumper can make someone very happy.

CATERING

We are continuing to upgrade our facilities. For those people who were seriously concerned about whether they would go through the floor while carrying a large plate of pap and potjie back to their table they may rest assured that it has been sorted out. A new concrete base and a new wooden floor have been installed.



Our 1920 Pillared Dining Car continues to be very popular.

CALLING ALL TRACTOR ENTHUSIASTS

Next year we will be looking for volunteers to join our Tractor section. We have a large collection of tractors, many of which are very rare.

Here one of our happy volunteers from Natal puts a very rare Marshall MP6 tractor through its paces.

If you are interested in becoming involved in our Tractor section please e-mail

Chris Wilson

E: katbr@worldonline.co.za

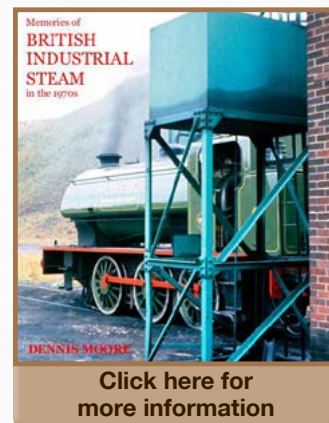
and copy **Joanne West,**

E: joannewest@btinternet.com.



Photo credit: Jiri Střecha

NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE



INTERESTING LINKS / PICTURE LINKS I

We have added a considerable number of interesting links which are Railway related or which are somehow relevant to our activities.

Here is one on how to make a steam locomotive:
[Click here to watch the video](#)

Steam in Action website
www.steam-in-action.com

Railway History Group
of Southern Africa,
18029 Howard's End, Pinetown 3605
Tel: (031) 551-1388
E-mail: wgreig@mweb.co.za
Editor: Wally Greig

For the real Railway enthusiast why not subscribe to the Railway Heritage Group bulletin. Copies can be viewed on the Steam in Action web site – see: www.steam-in-action.com. However, to receive your copy direct e-mail **Wally Greig** on
E: wgreig@mweb.co.za.

[Click here to read more](#)

Marc-Henri Andre, one of our regular visitors from Switzerland, has put together a really excellent PDF which we have asked if we can print in book form. [Click here:](#)

Marc-Henri Andre Photography II
[Click here to see more photographs:](#)

FILM CREW

A film company from India booked the entire venue for 5-days and has been and gone.

They hired 3 Garratts for most of the time that they were on the farm. Our thanks to Les Labuschagne and the team that he assembled to operate

these trains to the entire satisfaction of the Bollywood production crew. This looks to be an exciting movie and we will issue details once the movie has been produced on the circuit

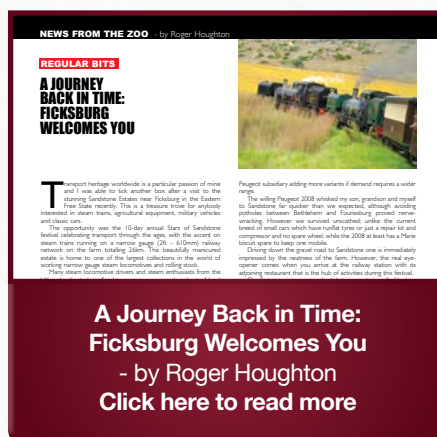
*The train crew for the Bollywood movie shoot.
Les Labuschagne (right) and Izak (left)*



INTERESTING LINKS / PICTURE LINKS II



MEDIA SECTION



AND NOW SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

If you have never believed in the power of nature read this:



STARS OF SANDSTONE 2014 - GALLERY



In April even the smoke is in Autumn colours

Photo credit: David Benn



Photo credit: Alex Reichle

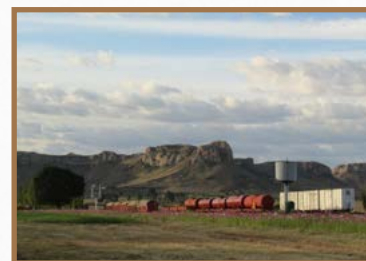


TRAFFIC JAM



Photo credit: Wilfred Mole

We are not sure if there are many places where a 1915 Feldbahn locomotive, a Casspir, Blesbok, and some Afrikaner oxen are all having to wait for the traffic to thin out so they can get moving.



Rolling stock at rest – Sandstone Estates, April 2014

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Click Here to visit
our website