



Stars of Sandstone

2ND-12TH APRIL 2015 NEWSLETTER NO:2

STARS OF SANDSTONE 2015

Since announcing the dates of Stars 2015 we have had a very good response from different parts of the world. The first group of Australians and Belgians have booked and individual bookings are coming in from quite a number of countries.

We find that there is a trend developing where people are tending to organise themselves into groups so that they

can rationalise their transport and accommodation requirements to best advantage. We urge people who are thinking of coming to consider who they would like to have join them because typically people interested in Preservation or in anything historical very often have likeminded friends and associates.



The main Sandstone complex – April 2014

VISITOR FEEDBACK

We will eventually reach the point where we have critical mass, i.e. as many people would have registered as the site can support so we do urge people to book rather sooner than later. We are asking for deposits and we would ask people who book to do so in a serious vein rather than just in order to secure a place that they may not ultimately require.

Here is feedback from one of our Australian visitors which pretty much summarises the many communications that we have been receiving:

I went to my first Stars of Sandstone at Easter and have to say that it was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life - all 79 years of it.

My railway and military experience and qualifications were found acceptable and during the ten days I drove military gun tractors and armoured personnel carriers many times, drove a 1910 BSA rail car, was a train guard several times, a fireman on a couple of days and even got my hand briefly on the controls of a Garratt.

In between I saw vintage planes stunting and conveying visitors, oxen hauling farm wagons, and steam traction engines and heritage cars, trucks and farm tractors doing exactly what each was designed to do.

All this against a background of a narrow gauge railway with 25 or so kilometers of track stretching an incredible 15.6 kms. from end to end on a vast farm at an elevation mostly over 1600 metres growing a variety of crops in a sustainable manner and with magnificent sandstone outcrops in the background.

With three meals a day provided and a convivial beer or wine available at days end it was all truly magnificent.

Terry Boardman



Photograph by: Jiri Strecha

OUR NEW STARS 2014 DVD HAS BEEN RELEASED

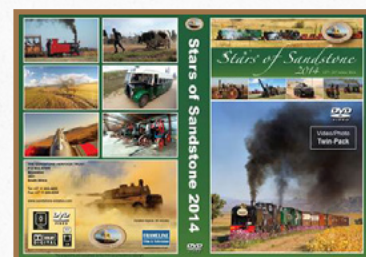
The first of two productions from Stars 2014 is now available on the market.

This double disk set including a video DVD and the photo DVD is available to buy for R240 / £15.00. A Blu-ray set is available for R260 / £16.00.

SA orders:
Babita Hira,
E: babitan@sandstone.co.za

UK order:
Joanne West,
E: joannewest@btinternet.com

We strongly recommend this DVD – Ron Nell and his team always seem to lift the bar year on year.



SEEING SANDSTONE FROM THE AIR

Our lives have been revolutionised by remotely controlled drones which are able to hover above us and take photos. Oliver Wetmore has put some excellent aerial coverage of the event in 2014 on YouTube.

Our new DVD is significant. It has wonderful coverage of the entire Stars of Sandstone 2014 event with excellent Military, Railway, Traction Engine, and Agricultural coverage. It is also the first time that our Mountain Wanderer train has been properly featured so that people really get a feel for the what our trains look like.



EXPANDING OUR MANAGEMENT & RESPONSE CAPABILITIES

Going way back to the Great 100 Working in 1999 Sandstone has always had a rather home-grown approach to public events. Over the years these have grown and the farm staff have in many cases been pushed to the limit in terms of their ability to cope. However, with an expanding agricultural footprint in the Eastern Free State it is becoming more difficult to allocate people from the farm to assist so we have adopted a new approach.

Lawrence Clayton is going to act as Event Director and he will coordinate the entire programme. Apart from Events Lawrence will also be liaising with film companies and group visits. There have been quite a number of films which have been shot at Sandstone during the year including

a Bollywood movie and a documentary for the UK, together with a South African production. We will provide details of these films when they are released. Liaising with film companies is extremely complex and requires high service levels from all concerned. It is certainly an added reason why we need professionals on the job.

On the farm Larissa Clarke is now handling all the enquiries. Babita Hira, whom many of you have dealt with, will be going on Maternity Leave shortly and we hope to see her back in due course. Should you have queries of any sort please direct them to **Larissa (E: lclarke@sandstone.co.za)** with a copy to **Lawrence (E: lawrencec@sandstone.co.za)**.

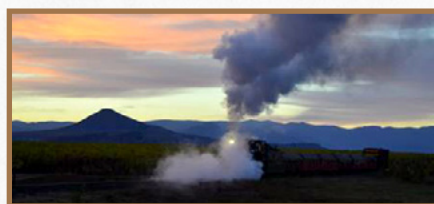
WILL NEXT YEAR'S SHOW BE DIFFERENT TO PREVIOUS YEARS?

The answer is yes. We always change our approach and we always have different and new items available for people to enjoy. Much of what we do is volunteer based. In other words, we need people to step forward and offer their services, i.e. mechanics, drivers, or whatever, not just with regard to steam locomotives but with everything that we have such as Agricultural machinery, Military vehicles etc.

We do believe that those visitors who actively participate do extract value from our shows and we do appreciate their help. So if you are the sort of person who likes taking pictures then we certainly have a programme to accommodate you. If you have a particular mechanical

background, say, for example, in the Earth Moving business, we will accommodate you as well. It is just important that you communicate with us in that regard.

Because we announced the show so much earlier we have much more time to take advantage of all the options available to us.



Neil Wetmore

BOLLYWOOD MOVIE SHOOT

A very successful Bollywood movie has been shot at Sandstone since our last newsletter. We have published a letter of appreciation from the producers with a photo providing a glimpse of the work that they were doing.

"We are writing to say a huge thank you for all your hard work, focus and PATIENCE leading all the way up to the shoot.

The entire team is exhausted in the best possible kind of way. We're thrilled, grateful, humbled and deeply proud to have the privilege of collaborating with such a fine group.

Sandstone is such a wonderful place that the crew is still in awe of the location.

We express our sincere gratitude to Mr Michael Myers, Mr Clayton, team at Sandstone (Lez, Dez, Laresa, Fireman). Kindly pardon us if we have missed any names but all of you we very cordial to work with.

Rushes look amazing, and to say that we were happy would be an understatement. Everything looks fantastic – and we think this will cut together beautifully.

We'll share some working stills soon so keep the energy on.

We look forward to working with you all again very, very soon.

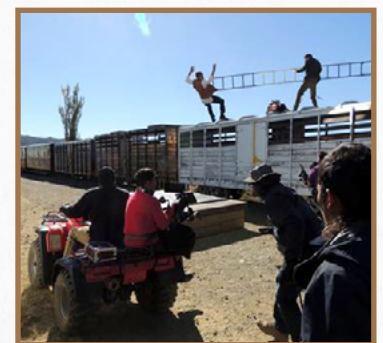
Thank you so much, dear friends.

A Big HUG & Dankie

PS – Trains in Sandstone have gained a special place in the hearts of the entire crew. Thank you for the wonderful memory."

Kalpesh Damani

Please mention us to advertising agencies and film companies as an interesting and unique location for this type of activity.



CHILDREN

We really try and encourage more children to visit us. They see things and do things they will in all probability never do anywhere else on the planet. Here a little girl changes the points. We wonder how many children even know what points actually are.

Kindi Pre-Primary School recently visited Sandstone Estates for a train trip and picnic. 36 excited children all gathered around Garratt, No. 153, pulling two open Ratanga wagons, two closed passenger coaches, and the guards van for a quick lesson on the Garratt given by Mrs. Barrett, the teacher and principal. She explained to them how the loco steams. After the train trip and picnic the children broke up into groups and each group sang a song to the Sandstone staff in the Waenhuis.



BSA Rail car standing by.



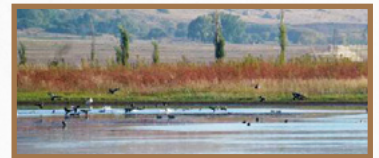
Staff and pupils from Kindi Pre-Primary School

OTHER ACTIVITIES

We will be publishing many different programmes in our newsletters. This month we want to feature our Bird Watching programme.

Once more Keith Wetmore will be coordinating a programme where visitors can spend time bird watching at Sandstone. These pictures give you an idea of our wonderful wetlands on the farm. Sandstone works very hard to protect its wildlife in all shapes and forms. There has been quite a dramatic increase in the bird population in recent years and visitors who are interested in birds might like to devote a few hours to joining one of the bird tours.

Please contact **Keith Wetmore** (keith@somtim.co.za) if you are interested in participating.



COSMOS

It is a feature of Sandstone Estates. Here's a picture from a previous event.

We did well in 2014 and we are sure we will do even better next year.



FOOTPLATE RIDES

If you are interested in a footplate ride during Stars 2015 please advise the train controller, **Peter Mole**, at Peter.Mole@btopenworld.com.

We are already taking bookings. The costs will be the same as at Stars 2014. The cost is R500.00 + VAT for approximately one hour's ride.

CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS

If you are interested in being part of our photographic group next year please notify **David Benn**

(E: david@shrinks.co.za).

Photograph by Jiri Strecha >



PANDORA POND – A FAVOURITE WITH PHOTOGRAPHERS

For those of you who are familiar with the Pandora Pond the picture on the left from the past might be of interest. There is simply nothing there except a dam full of water.

The Pandora Pond is a favourite spot for photographers. The picture on the right was taken in May 2005. However, look at the dam now. David Benn's picture of the same piece of water taken in 2013.



Photo credit: Dick Manton



Photo credit: David Benn

ACCOMMODATION

This year we will be far more active in assisting our guests to find accommodation and we have been meeting with different B&B's and guest houses. We suggest that if you want good accommodation you consider booking early because we are in a rather

remote part of South Africa and the options are not huge. We also continue to build accommodation on the farm but that is quickly taken up mostly by train crews who book immediately once we announce the dates for the event.

For all accommodation queries please contact **Larissa Clarke**

(E: Clarke@sandstone.co.za).

We feature the Bella Rosa Guest House below:

THE HISTORY OF BELLA ROSA GUEST HOUSE

Mr. Keyter built the sandstone house that stands at 21 Bloem Street in 1899. Mr. Keyter was the first Member of Parliament for Ficksburg. During the early 1900s, Mrs. Keyter took on a few boarders. Mrs. Miems Dusing later bought the house and opened it up as a boarding home to schoolchildren. An in-house bathroom was then built onto the rear side of the verandah (Room 3's present bathroom). For many years the house had tenants but no owners and a lot of damage resulted from neglect.

In the 1980s, Mr. David M Grewar bought the house and made improvements to the property i.e. a garage was added, the pantry was turned into a guest bathroom, etc.

In 1991, it was sold to Mr. R Du Toit who lived in the house for approximately 3 years.

In 1994, Ms. J Eilers bought the house with the vision of starting the first Guest House in Ficksburg. Huge improvements and major renovations were made to restore the home to its former glory. The house then consisted of 4 en-suite bedrooms; a library/lounge, a restaurant and kitchen with the former garage turned into a warm and hearty pub for the guests. The gardens were replanted to resemble a traditional English country garden. 19 Bloem Street, known as the White House, was also purchased by Ms. Eilers and renovated and incorporated into the Guest House, thus adding a further 3 en-suite rooms and a family unit.

Lyndsey King moved down from Johannesburg and bought the Guest House in 2001. An owner's cottage was built to the left of the sandstone house and an additional cottage was built at the far end of the garden on the 19 Bloem Street property



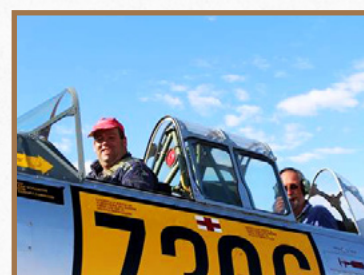
HOW'S YOUR VOCABULARY?

Here's a word for you – steampunk. It is a new word only added to the English language in 2014. It means “science fiction dealing with 19th-century societies dominated by historical or imagined steam-powered technology”.

If there are any steampunks at our 2015 event can they please report to the Train Controller, Peter Mole, at the main station!

AVIATION

Andrew Dix (E: andrew@dix.co.za) has again kindly agreed to coordinate our Aviation activities for Stars 2015. The contribution of the Harvard, Tiger Moth, and Chipmunk this year were immeasurable. We believe this is a fantastic opportunity for owners and collectors of classic aircraft to come and enjoy their time with us and to enjoy the magnificent flying conditions which exist in the Eastern Free State at what is an almost perfect time of the year. Stable air, clear air, friendly people, and great food. Can any classic aircraft collector even begin to resist the temptation?



SANDSTONE ITEMS ON THE WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY

It is not that well known that we have a very good working relationship with the Welsh Highland Railway and in fact we are twinned with that iconic and unsurpassed 2-ft Narrow Gauge experience in North Wales.

Peter Lemmey from the UK has kindly put together an article which we know will be of interest to many people, particularly those who are familiar with the Welsh Highland Railway.



MODERN FARMING UPDATE

Harvesting of maize has been underway for some weeks now at Sandstone Estates and the surrounding area. The Free State Maize bunker installation installed at Sandstone Estates nearly 2-years ago is feeling the strain. Trucks are coming in day and night and offloading white and yellow maize. However, due to the calibre of the staff from CMI (Collateral Management International (Pty) Ltd) who actually manage the silos, things are proceeding smoothly and the maize mountains continue to grow.

Our photos tell the story:



Yellow maize being discharged into the yellow maize bunker.



Almost full and ready for covering and if necessary long-term storage.



Our Soya Beans did very well this year and we have become a recognised producer of this commodity. We have increased our Soya Bean planting for 2014 to 1,000 ha. This is what our Soya Beans should look like in April next year all being well.

<http://www.sandstone-estates.com/index.php/modern-farming/48-modern-farming/2965-maize-harvesting-sandstone-estates-june-2014>

SOUNDS OF THUNDER

Andy Stead, a freelance journalist who was at this year's event, wrote an excellent article for Classic Military Vehicle Magazine in the UK.

This type of publicity is very important for us because we need to normalise people's approach to the Military to the extent that they appreciate that this is just another branch of preservation. Military History and Military Heritage is very mature in many countries and we are very pleased at the approach being adopted by authorities in SA in this regard. However, more people need to be aware of the fact that collections, such as the Sandstone Military convoy capability, even exists. As those who attended Stars 2014 will confirm we did receive enormous support from the Armour Museum in Bloemfontein. Their personnel were professional and tireless in their efforts to please our visitors. It is good to see them receive this type of recognition.

While our railway is iconic and interesting we believe the growth and stature of our Military Vehicle Preservation programme is moving in the same direction. We therefore wish to make the point that our Military collection is beginning to attract interest from around the world and is not only recognised as a significant collection of African designed, built, and modified Military vehicles but is unique in the sense that they all operate and are always available to be used, demonstrated, rented, or in short deployed in their natural habitat on the African plains.

Show report

THE SOUNDS OF THUNDER

Every year in April the hills around the sleepy hamlet of Ficksburg in the Eastern Free State, South Africa, reverberate with the sounds of tanks and military vehicles being put through their paces. Andy Stead reports on this year's proceedings...



The occasion is the 'Stars of Sandstone' which takes place at the Sandstone Estates just north east of the town. The product of a Heritage Trust, and passionately run by owner Wilfred Mole, the military display is a major attraction and must stand out as the only one of its kind in Africa. The collection is a combined mix of vehicles located both on the estate, and those owned by the SA Armour Museum in nearby Bloemfontein. This arrangement works to mutual benefit and maintenance workshops on the estate are well equipped to handle any contingency.

The event runs for 10 days and attracts over 2000 visitors from all over the world. "The intention is to ensure that visitors

have access to all the working exhibits," says Mole. "This includes riding in all the trains operating during the event as well as

tractors, machinery and the military vehicles. Imagine being able to ride in or on the Trust's WW2 Sherman tank – a unique and highly significant war machine."

ECLECTIC MIX

The list of vehicles is impressive and covers not only South African military vehicles but also those captured during The South African Border War, commonly referred to

CLASSIC MILITARY VEHICLE July 2014 55

http://www.sandstone-estates.com/images/Natasha_Gartside/Sounds_of_Thunder.pdf



This Russian T72 still looks pretty menacing as it does its stuff in front of a crowd of enthusiasts.

as the Angolan Bush War in South Africa. This conflict took place from 1966 to 1989 largely in South-West Africa (now Namibia) and Angola between South Africa and its allied forces (mainly the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, UNITA) on the one side and the Angolan government, South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), and their allies (mainly Cuba) on the other. An example of one such vehicle is a restored Russian T72

main battle tank as well as a Russian Ural based Stalin's organ.

These are complimented by a state-of-the-art Olifant Mk 1A Main Battle Tank which uses the hull of the British Centurion tank

the French Panhard and is now driven by a 2.5-litre Chevrolet motor.

All in all there are over 35 vehicles all of which are active during the event. There is a daily military convoy which leaves the railway station and offers visitors the opportunity to drive in

"The intention is to ensure that visitors have access to all the working exhibits."

but with a Continental V12 diesel as opposed to the original Rolls-Royce petrol engine. Another such hybrid is the locally built Eland with a 60mm mortar which originated from

or on any of the vehicles. The choice of vehicles changes daily so there is always an opportunity to see and experience one's personal choice.



The Buffel was developed in the 1970s under the auspices of ARMSCOR (Armaments Corporation of South Africa) to meet the operational requirements for a mine protected Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) for the South African Army. It uses a German Mercedes-Benz UNIMOG Model 416/162 series 4x4 chassis and featured a Merc engine. Around 2400 were built for the home and export markets and some are still being used by the South African Army.



Above: Inevitably the SA Army received lots of British kit, including this Saracen M3.



A Canadian Ford transporter acts as a viewing platform.

Right: A Sherman chucks up the dust near the sleepy hamlet of Ficksburg. Below: Olifant Mk1A made from a British Centurian but with a Continental V12 diesel instead of the usual Rolls-Royce petrol engine.



This Rooicat Mk1 wheeled artillery vehicle has an experimental turret fitted, marking it out from the standard issue SA Army trucks.

EXPERTS ON TAP

A commander or his deputy is available on each run and a member of the Armour Museum is there to answer questions and talk to enthusiasts. A typical convoy would consist of the 6x6 Ratel 90 which was indigenously developed by Sandock-Austral and produced in volume for the South African Army in subsequent decades, a Saracen Mk111 SA original from the UK but locally fitted with larger wheels, an Eland 60 and a vintage Canadian Ford gun tractor.

As well as the Eland 60, which formed the mainstay of South African armoured units, other exhibits included a Rooicat MK 1 wheeled artillery vehicle fitted with an experimental turret, and therefore not as per those Rooicats used in the SA Army.

Apart from the daily convoy there is also a mock tank battle where several of the heavy

vehicles run an obstacle course to 'attack' a cannon placed a kilometre away.

The highlight of the event is a Military Salute which takes place towards the end of the 10 days. The General Officer

commanding the South African Army Armour formation, Brigadier General Andre Retief, under which the SA Armour Museum falls, took the salute at a special parade of all the military vehicles taking place on the airfield.



Right: The 6x6 Ratel 90mm was developed by SA defence contractors Sandock-Austral and produced in volume for the South African Army. The name is taken from the Afrikaans for Honey Badger which has a ferocious reputation for fighting. With its impressive firepower, the vehicle usually carries a crew of two or three with a seven-man infantry squad – the commander doubles up as a gun loader in the 90mm version.



A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY!

If you are interested in military vehicles and fancy a trip to Africa why not make a date in your diary for Sounds of Thunder 2015. You will not be disappointed! For more information visit www.sandstone-estates.com



Left and above: A Russian URAL based Stalin's organ represents a fair amount of firepower.



Above: The Eland 60mm mortar originated from the French Panhard but had a 2.5-litre Chevrolet engine and was assembled in South Africa during the Bush War. It formed the mainstay of South African armoured units.



Above: This Oshkosh eight-wheel M911 tank transporter is minus its trailer.
Below left: A Saracen Mk111 SA originally from the UK but modified with bigger wheels for farm use.



Above: Jan and son Francois with the Sherman they maintain and drive.

NEW JOHN DEERE COMBINE HARVESTER ARRIVES



The 31st July was a big day for the farm when a brand new John Deere S670 Combine Harvester arrived. It was deployed within an hour to the lands and made a massive contribution to the harvest in a short time. Two of Sandstone's John Deere combine harvesters are 20-years old and our two STS combines are 15-years old so we are inevitably having to upgrade the fleet.



Our big Chaser Bin on its way to relieve one of the combines of its top heavy load of maize. If you look carefully you will see the combine in the very far background.



It only takes 20-minutes to fill a 30-ton truck with maize.

In addition to the John Deere combines we have a State-of-the-art Case IH Rotary Combine that is specifically used for combining Speckled Sugar Beans but can be deployed to do Maize if we come under pressure, which is exactly what we were under this year.

RESTORATION OF THE BRILL BUS

We have a Brill Bus in very good condition that we would like to restore for use. Most of the people who work on our equipment, whether it be Military vehicles, Railway equipment etc., say they are not familiar with buses so if you know anyone who would like to help get a very iconic old bus back into tip-top working order please have them contact us.

For information 113 inter city C.C.F. Canadian Brill coaches were ordered by the South African Railways and Harbours.

The first shipment of 13 coaches, built in Fort William in Canada, left Montreal on 6th June 1947. The remaining 100 were delivered during 1948. This was an amazingly modern looking bus for its time.

Ours is in very good condition and while by no means derelict, we are seriously considering however putting in a more modern diesel engine.

So bus enthusiasts if you are looking for a project why not contact us?

WALKING TOURS AT SANDSTONE ESTATES:

A simple walking tour of all our Heritage assets.

This involves approximately a 2-hour tour. We walk you through all the buildings including our tractor collection, 2-ft Narrow Gauge workshops, Traction Engines, Buses, Cars, Military Vehicles and many other items of interest.

The costs are as follows:

R171-00 inclusive of VAT per person for the first two people

R114-00 inclusive of VAT per person thereafter

R57-00 inclusive of VAT per child (under 10 years)

Please contact Larissa Clarke for bookings at :

051 933 2235 / 076 024 6188



THEN AND NOW

We are very fortunate to have tremendous support from individuals who send us incredibly interesting original archive photographic material. We also have our own Library which is stocked with quality material.

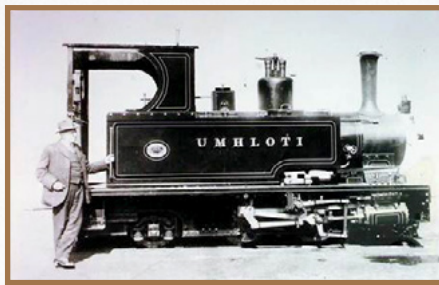
Here is a picture of our Barclay loco, Model No. NG1. In this particular case the locomotive, as a result of the time spent working on the Mines was fairly heavily modified and now looks somewhat different although it is a very effective locomotive. We might consider taking it back to the original so that it looks exactly like this picture entitled "Umhloti". In fact we would like to give it its original name as well.

We are supported by a number of very experienced people with superb archives like John Middleton, Hannes Paling and others, who often bring these matters to our attention. Please keep up the good work, we do appreciate it.

Lukas Nel and his team work very hard to follow exactly what these locos should look like based on original works drawings.

This locomotive was recovered from a private owner in Pretoria. The pictures below are typical of the many that we have which provide the recovery history of locomotives.

There is something magical about finding something in a hedge or behind a shed in a very incomplete condition, recovering it, moving it to Bloemfontein, and then seeing it standing in steam at the Hoekfontein Station ready to pull its first passenger train.



Umhloti, ex-factory, in 1916.



*The Barclay as she is now in 2014.
Photograph by: John Lyas*



OUR 2-FT NARROW GAUGE BIG BROTHERS, THE 3'6" LOCOMOTIVE STOCK IN SOUTH AFRICA, IS IN TROUBLE

Hennie Bresler sent us these sad pictures of an abandoned Garratt standing near White River.

We have tried to stay abreast of developments for some time now regarding the future of South Africa's surviving iconic locomotives which in every way were world class and because of the number that have been destroyed they are now becoming ever rarer. They are literally scattered all over South Africa and if anyone knows of locos in a similar plight please let us know.

Steam in Action, an organisation that we are involved in (see www.steam-in-action.com), actively lobbies on their behalf. Locomotives like this are in theory under the custodianship of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (see www.sahra.org.za), as well as the Transnet Heritage Foundation. We have been told for some years now that they are "working on a plan". As far as this loco is concerned it doesn't look as if there is a plan.

Our thanks go to Hennie for forwarding this information. He is one of many concerned people out there.



MEDIA

LOST PROPERTY FROM LAST YEAR

If you came to Stars 2014 and you lost any of the following please contact **Larissa Clarke** at lclarke@sandstone.co.za:

- 1 pair of spectacles
- 2 caps (one colour of pink/grey/white & one with the logo Mercury Junior Angler)
- 1 bush hat with logo "Rogue"
- 1 pair of Jay Cerva gloves
- 1 bottle suntan lotion (Soltan)
- 5 camera lens covers – Samsung/Sigma/JJC (two with no name).

LOOKING FOR CHAMPIONS

Hans Zwets from the Crankhandle Club, who worked tirelessly throughout 2013/14 to encourage members of the Vintage and Classic Car community to come to Sandstone, has asked us to publish the following appeal:

To date I have attended 3 Stars of Sandstone events – 2011, 13, and 14 and am getting more and more excited about the Stars spectaculars.

At the end of last year and the beginning of 2014 I visited various Clubs in the Western Cape, and on one of our travels I visited the George Old Car Club as well as the Eastern Province Vintage and Veteran Club to promote Sandstone participation. It is wonderful to meet so many like-minded people united in the ideal of conserving our transport heritage

for future generations who enjoy the pastime as much as we do.

We now need volunteers in other Provinces to promote the 2015 Stars of Sandstone events. What worked for me was to speak to interested groups for about 10 to 15 minutes on the event, and then show a short ($\pm$ 30 minute) DVD of the most interesting points especially stressing that Sandstone has one of the best and biggest narrow gauge and steam engine collection in the world. At the end of the day we managed to get over 90 people interested, many of them going to Sandstone this year again. International participants have told me that they consider Sandstone the steam heaven of the world.

Wilf Mole and his organising team put a tremendous amount of work into planning and running the event and really deserve all the participation they can get.

It would be wonderful if we could have a "Champion Volunteer" in each of our Provinces. Please do not hesitate to contact me – **Hans Zwets, on 021 782-6297 or 083 222 9111** - if you are interested.



HISTORICAL FACTS – SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS 2-FT NARROW GAUGE

The wonderful 2-ft Narrow Gauge railway line from Port Elizabeth to Avontuur is currently not operational and there is great concern that it may never operate again. The line is significant. Its centenary was in 2007. The construction of the line began from Humewood Road in Port Elizabeth and progressed to the Van Staden's river gorge by 1902, construction continuing on the far side of the gorge whilst the steel viaduct was built over the gorge. The line was opened as far as Humewood in 1905, and construction continued up the Langkloof Valley via Assegaaibos, Joubertina, Louterwater and Misgund, finally reaching the terminus at Avontuur in December 1906, with the completed line opened to traffic in January 1907. While it was operating it was the longest Narrow Gauge railway in the world exceeding 300-kms and crossed the highest Narrow Gauge bridge in the world over the Van Staden's River.

We are very concerned however at the deterioration of many of the key assets stationed along the line. These include locomotives, track, tanks, the iconic bridge and many other important items.

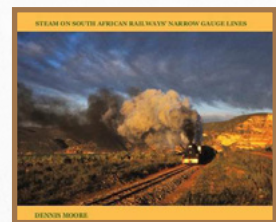
Our thanks go to Nerina Skuy for providing this information.



NG15, No. 18, approaching the Gamtoos River in 1976. Will we ever see freight trains on this line again?

Photo credit: John Talbot

If you are genuinely interested in South African Narrow Gauge you could do no better than buy Dennis Moore's magnificent book entitled "Steam on South African Railways' Narrow Gauge Lines", which is available to purchase through <http://www.blurb.com/b/5112387-steam-on-south-african-railways-narrow-gauge-lines>. It is totally comprehensive and covers the full history of the development of South Africa's Narrow Gauge railways with hundreds of top class photographs and excellent and accurate supporting data.



INTERESTING THINGS / LINKS

GALLERY



Terry Boardman has sent us a picture that he picked up on a French web site (P'titt train de la Haute Somme)



Something different

Yes we breed and train Afrikaner oxen, yes we have trains, but yes we also have mounted cavalry at Sandstone Estates.



A beautiful Autumn picture looking out from the complex across sunflower lands towards the Maluti Mountains.



A dog, a bone and a chipmunk
Photograph by Neil Wetmore



A very early Sandstone picture taken alongside the runway
Photograph by Dick Manton - May 2005



If you have a Vintage or Classic Vehicle why not bring it to next year's show



Sometimes our Military personnel try too hard to be authentic



Photograph by: Keith Wetmore

One of the great advantages of having a show in April is there is a lot of farming activity on the go. For example, harvesting Soya Beans, but we also have the wonderful Autumn colours across the landscape to compliment the photographers railway and related activity.



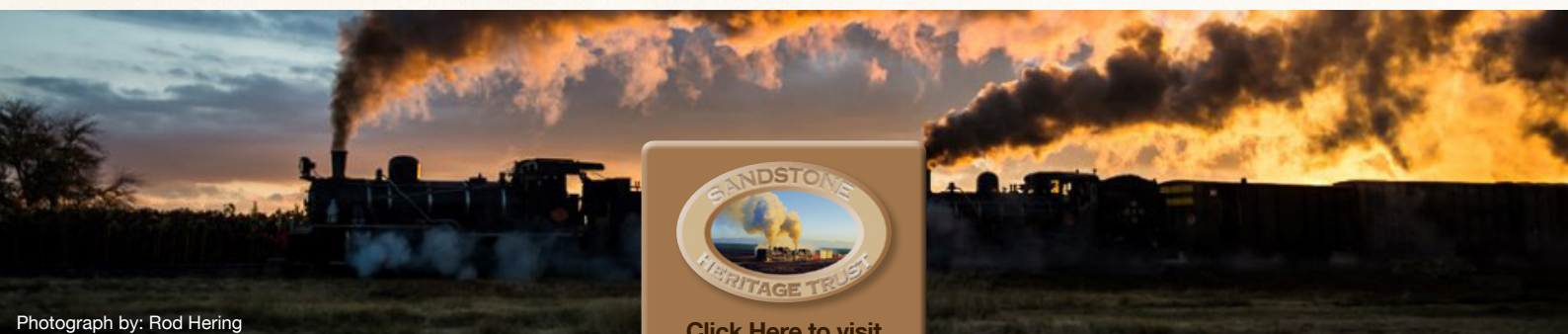
Wanderer Pic
Photograph by Rod Hering

CONTACT US

Babita Hira, whom many of you know, has gone off on Maternity Leave. We wish her well for the very short remainder of her confinement.

Finally, if you have any queries, contributions, or comments on this or any other newsletter please contact Joanne West (E: joannewest@btinternet.com).

The Sandstone Team



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