



Stars of Sandstone

2ND - 12TH OF APRIL 2015 NEWSLETTER NO:7

We have reached the detailed planning stage for Stars 2015. A provisional programme is included and of course the recent announcement that we will be holding a Public Day on Saturday, 11th April 2015 is now starting to gain traction. A major advertising campaign has been launched to encourage people to come on that day. Traditionally the general public do not find what we do particularly interesting because it is by nature a specialist event for people with real interest in Narrow Gauge railways, Military vehicles etc. However, we hope that the historical significance of what we do and the fact that we have a live rather than a static collection will appeal to people. Our only regret is we cannot be live every day of the year but that would be impractical.

It is time now for suggestions from our experienced past visitors on the content of our event and it is also time for those that have not been to see us before, to let us know what their expectations are. We can be enormously flexible and creative and can often accommodate even the slightest preference if communicated to us.

In the final newsletter, which will appear in March, we will publish the names of all our officials with their cellular phone numbers as well as provide details of the control points where other visitors can go, should they have queries, or should they wish to find out more about the programmes. Our team of university graduates will be on hand to update the daily bulletin board and we are pleased to advise that Hayley and Lauren and their friends will once again be managing the bar throughout the event.

We would still like to hear from any potential Train Control assistants to help Peter Mole during the event and from anyone else who would like to be more than a spectator. Our train crews are in place but we still need drivers for our military vehicles. If you have experience with older forms of motor transport drop Dave Richardson a mail on daver@sandstone.co.za.

Finally, our newsletter is not so much about what to expect but really reflects what we do on a month by month basis. We continue to save assets, restore them, and put them through their paces even

for our own enjoyment and even an event as big as Stars 2015 is sadly not able to showcase everything. That is why it is important that our visitors tell us what interests them because we might well change the mix of working exhibits based on the level of interest shown.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS STARS OF SANDSTONE 2015

Below is a link to our provisional programme for the event. Our final version will be published just prior to the event in March. As mentioned in our editorial, we are open to suggestions from our guests to make any improvements to this programme that may enhance the experience for our visitors. If you have any comments or suggestions e mail Dave Richardson on daver@sandstone.co.za.

For our Provisional Programme for Stars of Sandstone 2015, click [here](#).



A coke, a smile and a steam train ride.



Shoo! Where are the Easter eggs?



Smile!

VINTAGE CARS AND CLASSIC VEHICLES

Sandstone has a small collection of vintage cars and they form an integral part of our Heritage experience. Tom Kirkland, a good friend of Sandstone, is currently working on bringing our 1933 Morris 10 back to life and will be seen around the estate and in many photographs of the event. We will also be featuring our Ford truck which went to the equator some years ago driven by Wilfred Mole and his daughter, Tamara, as well as our 1928 Chevrolet and 1950 S1 Land Rover.

Of course we can expect visits from various car clubs such as The Crankhandle Club from Cape Town and The Model A Club. In fact we encourage car clubs to join us and add to the ambience of Stars of Sandstone 2015. Julian Wills from the Model A Club sent us the following article.

THE MODEL A CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA (MACOSA)

MACOSA is home to folk who are addicted to the world's most popular vintage car - the Model A Ford, built from 1927 to 1931 (Model B and Model T devotees are included too).

We encourage the driving, preservation and enjoyment of these amazing machines as we explore the historical treasure-trove that is South Africa.

Our events are designed to cater for all models represented in the club, so that the humble Model T can attend the shorter-distance runs, whilst the more able Model A and B versions can tackle the longer runs. Events are impromptu and are open to all members even if they do not own one of these fine vehicles, the interest and enthusiasm is always evident.

The club was formed in late 2012, after a large number of potential members calling for such a club to be formed. Amazingly, the club has since swelled to 54 members, representing more than 70 cars. Interestingly, previous versions of the club were formed during the 1970s - one in Natal, and one in the Cape. Both clubs died slowly, although one of them transformed into the Early Ford Club. Judging by the enthusiasm displayed by the current members of MACOSA, this club will be around much longer than its predecessors!

More information can be found on our website:
www.modelclubofsouthafrica.com.



Sandstone's 1947 Ford V8 pick-up which travelled to Nairobi (and the Equator) and back in 2006



The 1950 S1 Land Rover which sees everyday use on the Farm. This vehicle was purchased by the current owner in 1961 and has been in continuous use ever since.



Tom Kirkland at "work" in the 1928 Chevrolet. Photo by Alex Reichle.



The 1933 Morris 10. Photo by Keith Wetmore.

Tom Kirkland has had the carburettor of this little car completely overhauled and every attempt will be made to get it running for the event. Tom and a number of other enthusiasts are coming down a week before the show to help us prepare items and if people have an interest in doing this they need to contact us.

THE MALUTI MOTOR SHOW

Bethlehem, some 80 kilometres from Sandstone, will be holding a spectacular motor show on Sunday 14th March. Well worth a visit if you are in the area.

For further details click here: http://www.maamc.co.za/images/2015_03_14_Maluti_Motor_Show_Legends_of_Yesteryear_poster.jpg.



A line up of Model A's.

Recently we featured the appeal to save Grahamstown Station. Philip Machanick has sent us this update.

From: Philip Machanick

Sent: 21 January 2015 03:14 PM

To: undisclosed-recipients:

Subject: Grahamstown Station update from Grahamstown Residents' Association

There has been some movement since we submitted out petition to Transnet.

DA MP Andrew Whitfield has had a response on a written question to Minister of Public Enterprises, who more or less said there was no problem. We have had a reply from the acting Transnet CEO Karl Socikwa essentially acknowledging the problem but claiming nothing can be done unless the building is occupied. We have nonetheless scored a name of a responsible person to whom we can direct the police, who previously claimed they were powerless because they could not prosecute if the owner would not appear in court. We are planning a public meeting in February, and looking into further actions to follow up, including identifying anyone with an interest in taking over the lease on the building.

Meanwhile we have a Makana Civil Society Coalition of over 50 organizations that is trying to work with the Administrator appointed to get our municipality back on its feet; it has a Facebook page that will contain announcements and news. If you do Facebook, please go there and like it:

<https://www.facebook.com/MakanaCivilSocietyCoalition>

Thanks again for your support.

Philip Machanick

<https://www.facebook.com/SAwinActive>

THE HERITAGE PORTAL

This fascinating web site has a varied content on Heritage matters in South Africa, including an ongoing series on South African railways.

Have a look on this link:

www.heritageportal.co.za/article/big-fiery-giant-story-beyer-garratt-I which includes an article on Garratt locomotives.

Narrow gauge is covered in this excellent article by Peter Ball:

<http://www.heritageportal.co.za/article/interlude-narrow-gauge>

THE BATTLE OF SANNASPOS. 31ST MARCH 1900

The Eastern Free State is rich in South African history, particularly that relating to the Boer War. Just over 200 kilometres west of Sandstone and some 28 kilometres from Bloemfontein is the small railway station of Sannaspos. On the line from Bloemfontein to Bethlehem, it was the junction for the now abandoned line to Aliwal North. In March 1900 it was the scene of a pitched battle between the Boers and British where no less than five Victoria Crosses were awarded. It was also the first major use of guerrilla tactics by the Boer forces.

Earlier in the year British forces under Field Marshal Lord Roberts had occupied Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, and were preparing to drive north to Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. Roberts believed that the capture of Pretoria together with that of Bloemfontein would bring the war to a close. The Free State Boers, under Christiaan De Wet, had other ideas and were prepared to continue the conflict using unconventional tactics.

A small British garrison (Q Battery) was stationed at Sannaspos next to the Modder River to guard the Bloemfontein Water Works. De Wet with a force of 2000 men was advancing westwards and learned of this encampment. Early on the morning of 31st March his men advanced into the ravine of the Modder River while a secondary force under his brother, Piet De Wet, set up artillery positions on some small hills just to the north of Sannaspos. At first light, artillery fire rained down on the British position throwing them into total confusion. As De Wet had surmised, the British withdrew towards the railway station and came across the Boer troops (who had been ordered to hold fire) concealed in the ravine who ordered them to surrender. Approximately 200 British were captured together with 6 guns. One British officer took quick cognisance of the situation and ordered the rest of the troops to retreat at speed towards the station. The Boers then opened fire from the ravine. The returning fire from

the British eventually pinned down the Boers. However the British were running short of ammunition and eventually withdrew to the south. Although relieved by another British force some 3 hours later, De Wet's men consolidated their position and the Bloemfontein Water Works remained in Boer hands. The British suffered heavy casualties with 155 men killed or wounded and 428 captured together with much artillery. The Boers, on the other hand suffered 3 dead and 5 wounded.

In view of the conspicuous gallantry of many members of Q Battery, 5 were awarded the Victoria Cross. The station at Sannaspos was declared a National Monument in 1985 and contained a small museum, sadly now closed with the station building bricked up, but the bullet holes can still be seen all over the outside of the building. Close by is a memorial to the men who fought there. So for all you visitors to Stars 2015, a visit to Sannaspos is a worthwhile experience and the site of an important piece of South African and military history. Why not stop over and spend some time there on your way to or from Stars of Sandstone? You will find it well worthwhile.



The War Memorial



Sannaspos Station today, somewhat derelict, but intact.



Sannaspos Station when the small museum was still open



Peter Mole, our train controller, hard at work. Photo by Hannes Palling

STARS OF SANDSTONE ON YOUTUBE

Alan Middleditch, a visitor to last year's Stars event, has put together a thirty minute version of his extensive video footage from Stars 2014. Remarkably, apart from selected clips from the official Sandstone DVD of 2014, no other footage has been posted on Youtube.

Alan has remedied this with a great production shot from a visitor's perspective and has captured the spirit of the Stars event. For new visitors it is a must see as you will experience the true spirit of Stars. For returning guests it is a pleasant trip down memory lane.

You can watch Alan's production at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol25YQKocEo>



Ex-Angola O & K 12691 has its steam trials

To be launched at Stars 2015, our 1936 O&K locomotive recently had its steam trials at Sandstone prior to entering service at the event.

AVIATION NEWS

We will have a full programme of aviation attractions this year and the ever popular Harvard flips will be available. Just get down to the Sandstone airport and you could be flying to the moon!



The ubiquitous Harvard's never fail to give people goose bumps as they fly past.



The steam engine in this photograph was built 20-years after the pre Second World War Tiger Moth in the background. That is unusual.

ANOTHER FRENCH LADY, THE GAZELLE.

Eugene Couzyn has sent us some more information on his ex-French Army Gazelle helicopter to be featured at Stars 2015.



- First helicopter to use composite main rotor blades
- First helicopter to use a fenestron tail rotor
- First helicopter to use SAS (Stability Augmentation System)
- First helicopter with single pilot IFR capability

More than 40 years later, it is still the fastest helicopter in its class and is still in service in numerous military forces around the world.

- Seats 5
- Cruise speed 264 kmh
- Max speed 310 kmh.
- Range > 700 km
- Service Ceiling 16405 ft
- Empty Weight 908 Kg
- Max Gross Weight 1900 kg

It was produced in various formats and carried combinations of 20mm canon, HOT wire-guided anti-tank missiles, and rockets and was used extensively as a gunship in numerous theatres of conflict around the globe. My Gazelle was produced in 1977, and was used most recently for training at the Army base in DAX, France. It was retired in 2011 to make way for the incoming Eurocopter Tigers, but was kept in climate controlled storage in Montauban on 4 hour standby.

There are many Gazelles still in service in the French Armed forces, although these will be phased out over a period of time.

Kind Regards,
Eugene Couzyn

MILITARY NEWS

In preparation for our event, our partners at the SA Armour Museum will be visiting Sandstone in early March to conduct inspections and servicing of our military vehicles. Although we have competent mechanics on our staff we appreciate the expertise from SA Armour in assisting us to get these vehicles in to tip top condition for the event where the annual highlight is our Military Parade on the last Saturday. This is also our Public Day developed in conjunction with the School of Armour who will also be making a great promotional effort for this day



Lining up for Stars of Sandstone 2015. Our thanks to the School of Armour for their kind assistance. Photos by Alex Reichle



M4 Marines



M4 with winter camouflage and soldiers in Riedwihr France January 1945

SANDSTONE'S M4 SHERMAN TANK

Sherman's have been very much in the news lately, particularly as a result of the outstanding film starring Brad Pitt entitled 'Fury'. For those of you who have not seen it, it is well worth making a trip to the movies.

Sherman's from private ownership in the UK as well as the Tiger Tank from the Tank Museum at Bovington were all deployed to produce an outstanding movie which resonates with originality. The experiences that these men went through were not pleasant as graphically portrayed. Bearing in mind that Sandstone has a resident Sherman Mk IV tank on the farm we were very inspired to relook at it in the context of its battle credentials and how it may have looked when it was in combat in the Second World War. Our Sherman was brought back from Italy after the Second World War and therefore we can assume that it must have looked very similar to some of those featured in the photographs below.

Our plan is to upgrade the Sherman in such a way that it looks a lot more authentic and battle scarred.

For those of you attending our event you will find a different looking Mk IV in the Military convoy.



45th Infantry Division M4 Sherman Blasts Snipers from House Aschaffenburg 1945



1st Armoured Division M4 Sherman in Piazza del Duomo, Milan, Italy 1945

NEWS FROM SANDSTONE

WALKING TOURS

A popular attraction for our visitors are the walking tours of our Heritage Collection. At Stars 2015 we will be conducting free walking tours departing every 2-hours (depending on demand) with the first one at 09h00 and 11h00 in the morning and 14h00 in the afternoon. There will be a total of three tours per day. The tours will commence from the Waenhuis.

BIRDING AT SANDSTONE

Keith and Heide Wetmore have produced an excellent guide to the bird life at Sandstone as another added attraction to our Stars of Sandstone 2015 event. [Click here to access the list.](#)

OUR NEW WALL

On an estate called Sandstone it seemed incongruous to have a plastic fence around our office area! So we have built a sandstone wall. Completed just recently, it has added great ambience to the first point of contact we have with our visitors.



Our new wall

THE OXEN TRAINING PROGRAMME

As featured in our last Newsletter our oxen are now well in to their training and are being used on our daily collection of grass and garden cuttings.



"I'm ready for Stars, are you?"
Photo by Alex Reichle

THE AEC BUS

In our last newsletter we featured the export of the AEC bus. It has now arrived safely at its new home at Barry in South Wales. The pictures from Mike Taylor show it arriving on the low bed from Southampton Docks and parked inside the Cardiff Transport Preservation Group's depot alongside Bedwas & Machen double decker Leyland sister, No 6.



The AEC started on the button after its long voyage before being driven in to the depot.



People wandering around this bus depot must wonder in which part of Wales they will find Hoekfontein Station?

PREPARATIONS AT SANDSTONE

Although our event is some time away, Sandstone is in full swing preparing the Estate for our visitors.



These areas have been replanted with new cosmos seeds which should start flowering by the event.



The sandstone edging along the main entrance road has been repaired.



2015 was designated as the year of the trees and our nurseries are overflowing with young trees planted and nurtured on the farm.



The loco depot gardens are looking magnificent.



The quiet before the storm. We have many storage lines and they are very difficult to keep clean and tidy. However that work has been done and they sit quietly waiting for the action to begin.



Our smaller locos will be hard at work at Stars 2015.

MODERN FARMING.

Whilst we tend to stay clear of political issues in our Newsletters we have decided to feature two recent articles from Landbou Weekblad (Farmers Weekly) as they relate to the viability of farming in the modern South Africa. It is the economic viability of Sandstone Estates as a modern highly mechanised farming enterprise that has sustained the Sandstone Heritage Trust and its preservation efforts over the last few years. Such political rumblings as detailed in the articles are a cause for concern for farmers in South Africa.

Both articles are in Afrikaans but can be easily translated by clicking the Google Translate button. Have a look at the links below.

[landbou-ekonomie](#)
[oneerlik](#)

Sadly we have entered a drought period and our summer crops comprising mostly maize and soya beans are taking severe strain at the moment. Unless we receive rain in the next week the outlook will not be good for this year.

Certainly we do not expect our visitors to see the same quality crops that they were able to view from the train throughout the length and breadth of Sandstone Estates.

So if you are going to be saying your prayers please remember that we need rain.

You will see from this picture that the maize is coping. However, we are entering a critical state in the development of the maize and if no rain falls we will definitely feel the effect when we harvest. Continuous dry conditions will result in small cob with small kernels, i.e. lower yields. That appears to be the prognosis for the whole country right now.



Soya beans are more vulnerable to drought than maize and in simple terms they need rain



RAILWAY HISTORY

There are a great number of websites covering South African railway history but for our overseas visitors we can recommend Soul of a Railway by Charlie Lewis and Les Pivnic. Still in the development stage, the site has excellent pictorial coverage including extensive 2ft narrow gauge under System 3, Cape Midland. For Stars of 2015 visitors this is a worthwhile site to browse and see the narrow gauge in its heyday and gain a greater appreciation of what Sandstone has preserved. Have a look at <https://sites.google.com/site/soulorailway/>

It's quite amazing how the railways of South Africa touched so many people, in fact the sheer number of people whose parents either worked or had a connection to the railway. As the SAR and its successors was once one of the largest employers in South Africa, this is not surprising.



David Benn, our photo coordinator



I like this train!



CLASS 6C NO: 544

Schalk De Beer wrote to us about our 6th class locomotive No: 544 displayed outside the Waenhuis at Sandstone and enclosed the picture. His father, Doppies De Beer, was a driver at Bloemfontein until 1968 and then Bethlehem where 544 was used for shunting.

Interestingly Schalk De Beer worked at Bethlehem loco as a greaser and then fireman during his school holidays in 1968/69 and fired 544 as it was used to shunt the coal stage at the depot. He also recounts that the loco once overturned while speeding but the driver denied this. "Ek het nie vinnig gery nie!!"

"I wasn't going fast at all!!" Schalk is hoping to visit us at Stars in April and be reunited with 544.



The photo appears to have been taken at the Bethlehem Museum when the loco was on display there around 1980. Doppies De Beer is on the far left and the other gentlemen were all drivers at Bethlehem loco.



An SAR Class 4E Electric locomotive on its way through the streets of Glasgow to the dock area for shipment to South Africa. Photo courtesy of William Nixon.



Class 25 locomotives at the NBL works before shipment to South Africa. Photo courtesy of William Nixon.

SAR'S SCOTTISH CONNECTION

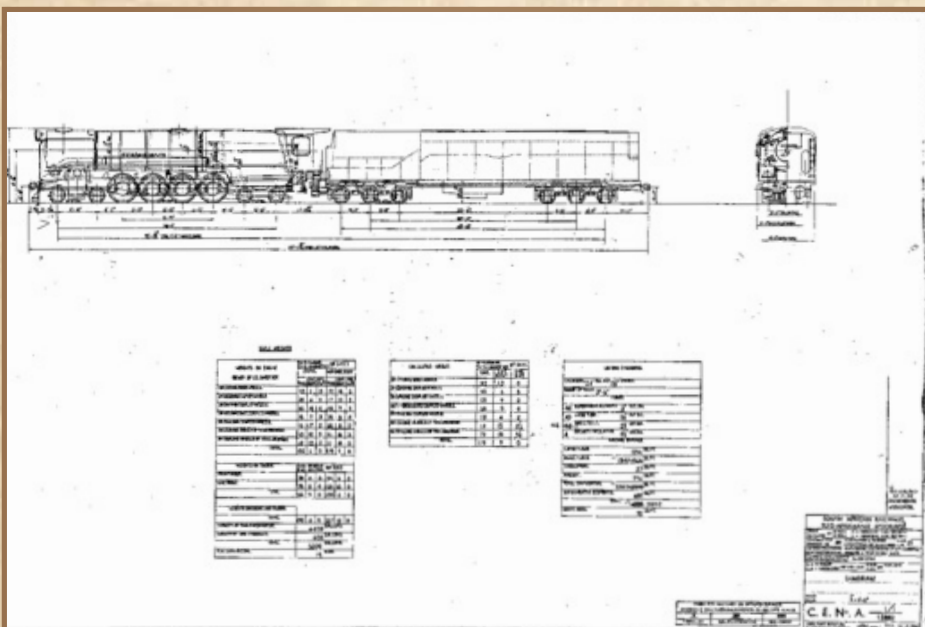
In our last newsletter we featured our Sezela locomotive and our visitor from Sezela to our upcoming event. Another visitor to this year's event, William Nixon, also wrote to us:

"My Father, Hugh Nixon, was responsible for quality control at SAR&H in the forties, fifties and sixties. He or his department signed off on anything that was delivered to SAR&H. His job title was Chief Stores Superintendent when he retired. This included locomotives (Steam, electrical, and diesel), rolling stock, rails, tug boats and even the clothing that the employees wore. He visited factories all over the world to inspect the goods during manufacture.

In 1953/1954 our whole family went to the UK while North British Locomotive in Glasgow were manufacturing the class 25s. If you look at the attached PDF of the drawing you will see my father's signature in the block on the bottom right hand corner (Inspector's signature).

I have also included a few of the pictures that we have from that time.

He would have been very happy with the work that you are all doing to preserve this legacy."



The Class 25 loco drawing signed off by William Nixon's father.

THE LONE STAR STATE

The love and passion for 2ft narrow gauge railways is a worldwide event. To find a 2ft narrow gauge railway with rolling stock and locomotives from South Africa in a small town in Texas is not so likely. Robert Bucher, a local businessman, has a passion for SAR narrow gauge and particularly Garratt locomotives and has built his own railway, the Hempstead & Northern in the town of Hempstead some 80 kilometres west of Houston. With his two sons, one appropriately named Garratt, he has built up a collection mainly sourced from the long closed Estcourt to Weenen line in Kwa Zulu Natal.

In his collection is NGG13 No: 50, named "Billy Bester" after the long-time driver on that line till its closure. This was one of the first ex SAR 2ft locos sold out of service. Also in the collection is Class NG15 No: 18 acquired from Humewood Road, sister to Sandstone's No's 17 and 19 of the first batch of this class built in 1931.

Garratt Bucher has visited Sandstone and has been updating us on progress on the line in the last few months.

No: 50 has had a steam test after some years out of use and new track has been laid from the loco shed to the running line. No: 18 is still stored but is kept in good condition.

The railway is a private project and not open to the public but we hope to see more of its development in the near future.

(All photos courtesy of the Bucher family)



NGG13 No: 50 in steam in 2008



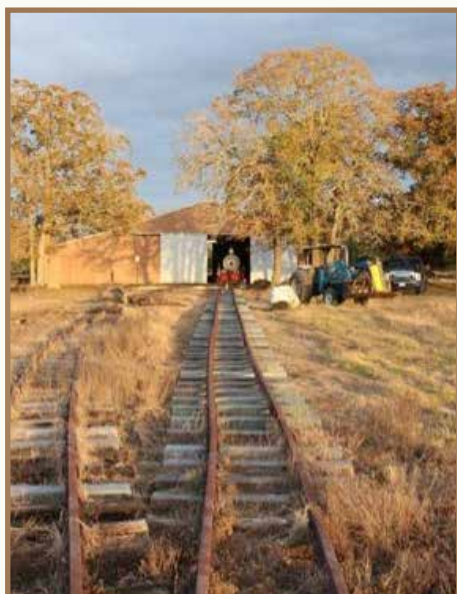
No: 50 undergoes her steam test in November 2014



Almost to full pressure!



A view of the cab of No: 50



Track laying at the loco depot



NG15 No: 18 is kept in excellent cosmetic condition

HAVE A LOOK AT WHAT THE PRESS HAVE BEEN SAYING ABOUT US.:

<http://www.gate5.co.za/read/31893/qv/31444576/133317230/5598/j>

<http://www.gate5.co.za/read/31893/qv/31444576/133317230/5598/j>

<http://www.kidzworl.co.za/family-events/gauteng-events.html>



CLICK HERE TO VISIT
OUR WEBSITE