

Heritage Railway
of the Year (2009)



The Snowdon Ranger 70

Hydref
Autumn 2010



Cymdeithas
Rheilffordd Eryri

THE 134 UPDATE

Work continues well in the Clip Shed, with the chassis of No.134 starting to look more and more like an engine. Last week we started fitting the running boards. These will be vital for the positioning of the lubrication system. We also have had the wheels turned by Boston Lodge, so there is much visible progress. However there is a new rival on the block!

Wilf Mole (of Sandstone fame – see article elsewhere in the Magazine) has announced that the next engine he will be restoring is to be 134's sister No.136. It is reassuring that Wilf, like us, believes that they are the right engines to restore! In discussion with him the inevitable question of when will it be finished was raised. After the usual banter of well I'll do it before you and you before me, we looked at when we could do it by. We decided that it would be great fun to have a race between the teams – Lukas in Bloemfontein and us in the Clip Shed. The target completion date is 24th January 2012. Why that date? Well it is 500 days from the start, which was announced during the Society AGM and if we can raise £500 on each of the 500 days then we can finish the loco, the issue is to get it in time to beat the team down south! So now it's down to everyone to see if they can help win the race by donating to the fund.

Since the launch, we have done really well with donations coming in from all over the world (Canada for example) and some really generous one off donations. We are almost day to day on target with the £500 a day, as I write on the 24th September we are paid up to the 22nd! This is still early in the campaign and we really need to have a push to get ahead of the game, to pay for those big items we really need to have up front (Tenders and Boilers!). Please visit the Website; (either the WHR Society or the NG15 one) to donate to this really worthwhile and interesting race!

A big thank you to all those who have already given.

We need £500 for the next 489 days before January 2012 to beat the South African team, can you help us do it?

Peter Randall



136 at Sandstone in April



136 while still in service

NOTES FROM A LARGE FARM

Last year, Sandstone announced it was going to hold Mega-Power 2010. Those of us who were lucky enough to have been before were very excited. Over a pint on a cold November evening in Caernarfon, a plan was hatched to not only do the Mega-Power but also take in some of the other 2 foot gauge railways in South Africa. Straws were drawn and an "organiser" was volunteered. (Guess who!)

The plans were drawn up, but to cut a long story short, Mega-Power was scaled down, and the eager participants of that November night all, one by one, changed their minds! However having done all the work I was determined to go, even if the first bit was on my own. So on 13th April I set off for South Africa.

My first call was to Port Elizabeth, where Peter Burton and his team gave me a wonderful tour round the Diesel Depot, where the Apple Express is now based. No.119 (NG15) was in steam, No.54 (an NG11) was parked up, No.124 was under repair and a large number of Class 91 diesels were available to inspect, as well as the Apple Express stock. A trip to Humewood Road was depressing. All was dereliction and the gloomy predictions about the demise of the engines there, (a 13, 4x15s and a 16) proved to be correct with all now being tendered for scrap. While all were in terrible condition, these will be the first actual scrappings of the NG15s and included No.148, the last of the class and the highest numbered South African NG Loco. (As an aside I hear that the NG11 at Sanrasm (52) is to be saved and will be on its way to Bloemfontein very shortly!).



110 in steam at PE Diesel Depot



NG11 No.54 at PE Diesel Depot

The next day I went up to Ixopo, which is on the old Donnybrook line. Julian Pereira, the chief "everything" at the Paton Country Railway had agreed to take me round his site. However when I arrived it was to be greeted as follows: "Hi, you must be Pete, can you give me a lift up to Creighton - I've arranged to take some school-children up to Riverside behind the 19D this lunchtime!". So after a couple of very enjoyable hours on the footplate on the 3' 6", we headed back to Ixopo, and Julian said, "I suppose you still want to take 55 for a spin?" (55 is the only operational NG11, and currently wood fired.) What could I say? True NG Heaven!

NOTES FROM A LARGE FARM – continued



19D No.2669 at Creighton



NG11 No.55 at Ixopo

However when I got back to my hotel that night, disaster had struck or more correctly the volcano had erupted! While I was trapped over in SA (not too big a problem for me) all the rest of the party was stuck in the UK with no prospect of getting out. Instead of spending a day or two alone, it was to be the whole holiday! Unfortunately my rather upbeat reports of the day in Ixopo to those back in the UK crossed with their devastating news coming the other way. The tardiness of this report is due to the hope that the “death threats” subsequently issued are now expired.

So, late the next day I arrived at Sandstone, to find that all the cameramen were there – they were mainly South African, but only the shed crews and an Aussie and a Singaporean (?); Mick and Paul, from the Bennett Brook in Perth (Operators of NG15 Nos. 118 and 123) were there to run the engines ...

Wilf Mole (Owner and Creator) of Sandstone had an ambition to run every loco possible in the following week. Not too difficult one might think, until you see the size of his collection: 5 big engines (a 13, a 15 and 3x16s) 7 medium engines (2 Lawleys, a Peckett, a Barclay, a Fowler, an Avonside and a Kerr Stuart (the NG4)), not to mention numerous small engines! We had a real challenge on our hands, but one we achieved. The pleasure of being on a system that can offer such an unrivalled collection of locomotives is immense. The scene just described is only half the story because in addition there are trains that one can only dream about in the UK. Wilf has literally 100s of wagons and several coaches. At one point we used his Fowler steam traction engine with a crane attachment to load a tractor onto a narrow gauge wagon, which then had a trip round the line. Another experiment was 23 wagons and coaches over the whole line with double headed NG/G 16s. Each morning and afternoon there was a new combination of engines, and eventually on the last day, the last engine, the NG13 was steamed and ran a double header with 88 (the sister to 87) which has just come out of the Bloemfontein Workshops – another Lukas Nel quality product!

NOTES FROM A LARGE FARM – continued

There was, however, one unachieved goal. Wilf now has operational examples of all 4 builders of NG/G 2-6-2+2-6-2 types: Hanomag, Cockerill, Bayer Peacock & Hunslet Taylor. We just ran out of time to put one of each on front of a really big train; now that really would be Mega-Power! I could go on for ever, but there is a severe risk that the 'Fatwa' on my head might be renewed. However there is a point to this as well. As I was leaving, Wilf asked me how I thought the event had gone. Wonderfully, I told him; but he had a big problem, as all those who could not get there would still want to come and there would be several more who would be interested by the continued development of this superb facility (stimulated no doubt by diatribes such as this!!). There is still that quadruple header to do for a start.

To cut the inevitable short again, Wilf has announced that the next event will be between the 9th and 16th of April 2011. My short straw still seems valid (our ex-leader having retired to Scotland) so would anyone with an interest in going to visit this superb railway please contact me (details in the front cover). I intend to ballot the interested about options for the tour, and maybe revisit the other sites as well. I look forward to hearing from you.

Peter Randall



A selection of the joy of Sandstone