The only all-narrow gauge railway magazine in the shops today!

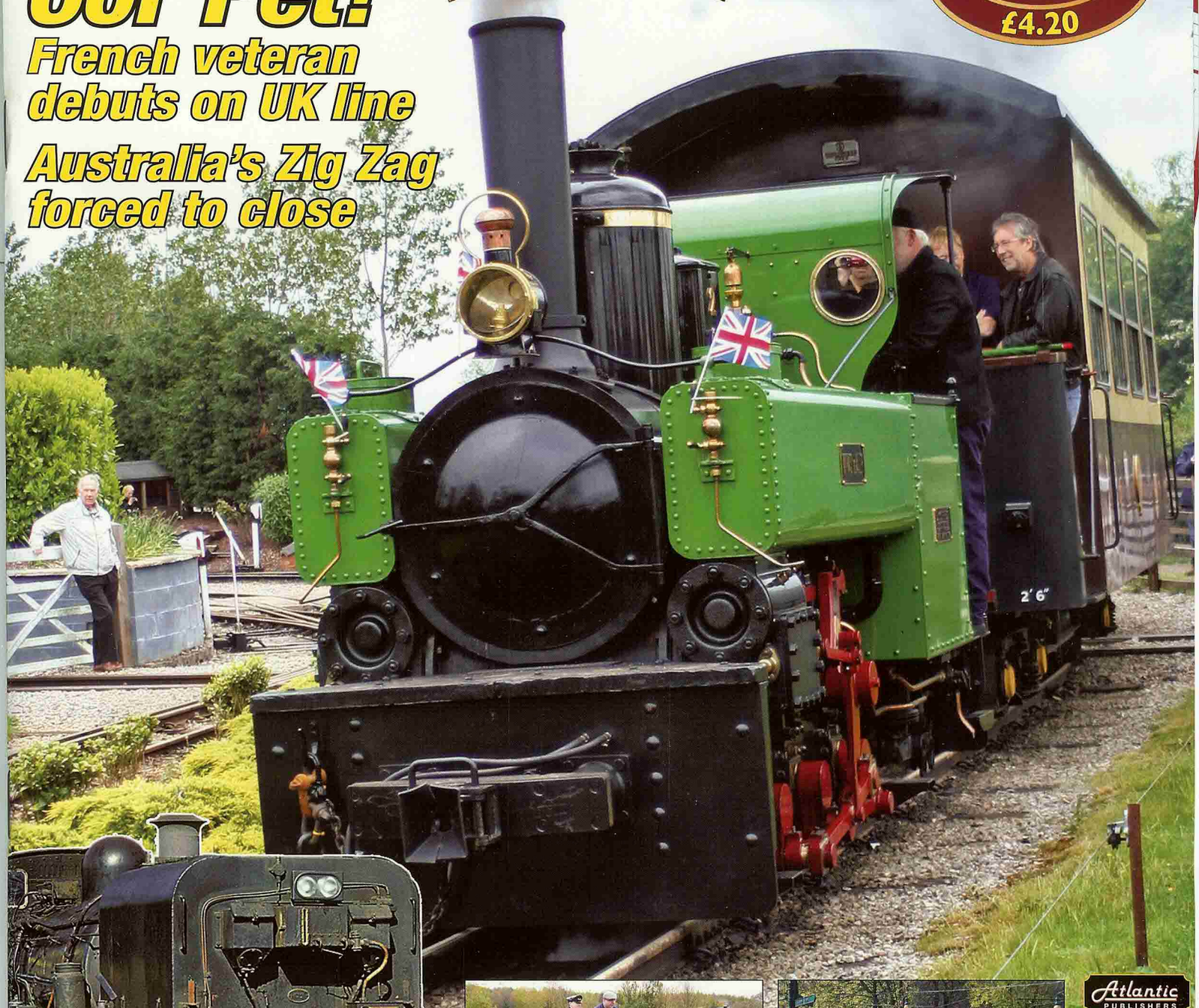
NARROW GAUGE WORLD

JULY – AUGUST 2012
№82
£4.20

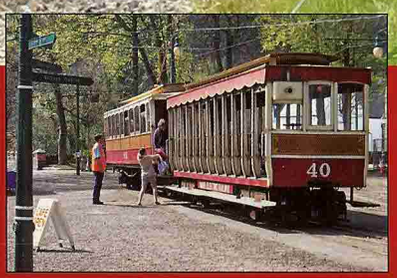
Cor Pet!

French veteran debuts on UK line

Australia's Zig Zag forced to close







Atlantic PUBLISHERS

Engines that bend...
The glory that is the Garratts

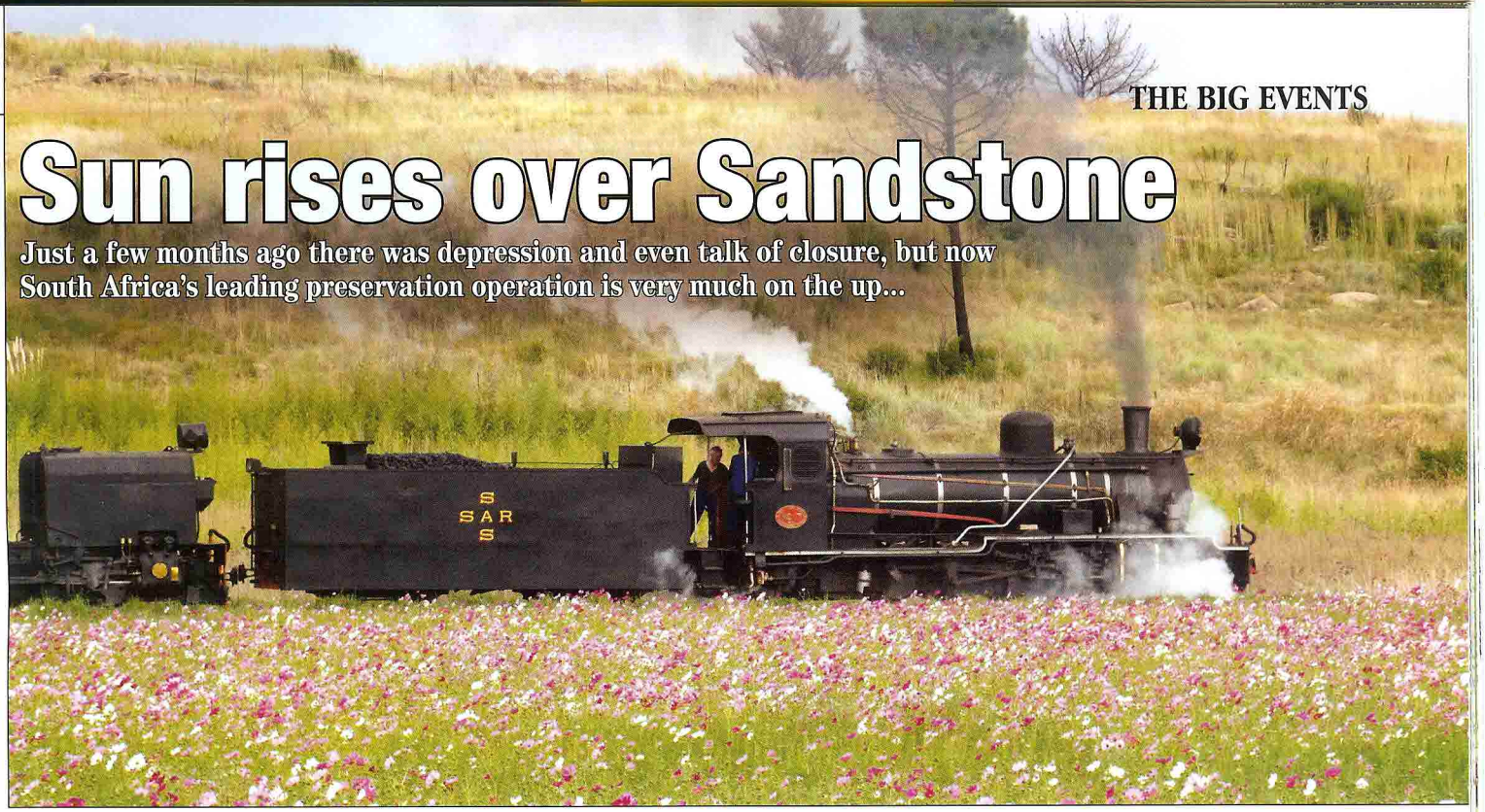
New narrow gauge – Beamish steps up

Iconic Manx scene set for total change?

9 771466 018052 07

Sun rises over Sandstone

Just a few months ago there was depression and even talk of closure, but now South Africa's leading preservation operation is very much on the up...



The centre-page photos in the last issue of ***Narrow Gauge World*** gave a good impression of the great success that was the recent Kalahari Sunrise Gala on the Sandstone Steam Railroad in South Africa. It was especially gratifying for Wilfred Mole, the line's creator, who as reported in our issues 78 and 79 had earlier been contemplating closure of this remarkable enterprise. Here he looks back at this year's Gala – and also forward to 2013.

"Sandstone's 2012 Kalahari Sunrise was the most successful event of recent years. Slowly but surely a sustainable business model is developing. The ten-day event was targeted at narrow gauge enthusiasts from around the world and a total of 350 people attended, many for the entire duration and many of them professional railwaymen.

Footplate crew needed

As 22 locomotives had to be steamed – often more than once – over the course of the event, there was a substantial demand for qualified drivers and firemen. Because of Sandstone's inability to attract crews from South Africa, arrangements were made to certify foreign crew. This was not difficult because many of the narrow gauge steam drivers do so for fun but in their normal professional lives they are full-time drivers.

A good example was the fact that two highly experienced drivers from Rio Tinto in the Pilbara region of Western Australia attended. One might think it something of a comedown to go from pulling a 30,000-ton ore train to piloting a narrow gauge tank engine with a 20-ton consist but the smiles on their faces seemed to indicate that this was not a problem.

"Some 65 per cent of the total number of visitors were foreign...."

Sandstone's philosophy is to create a holistic heritage experience. The wonderful old buildings, including an engine house with a 1933 National engine, lie at the heart of the experience. The Wille family, from whom Sandstone purchased the property in 1995, had resided there over many generations since the late 1830s. This means the property has only been in the hands of two owners over a period of more than 180 years. The fact that many of the old sandstone buildings are still in daily use, including the main farmhouse which sits adjacent to the 1907 railway station building, provides an excellent backdrop.

The one comment by visitors that seemed to be repeated over and over again was "world class". Sandstone is proud to have hosted an event that was characterised in this way. All in all it was an experience for preservationists with a broad scope of interests, and for people who want to see magnificent heritage equipment working under almost original operating conditions against the background of a beautiful landscape.

Global appeal

The demographics of the Sandstone event are interesting and may send a message to fellow railway preservationists. Some 65 per cent of the total number of visitors were foreign. Greater support came from Australia, Germany, Switzerland, the UK, and France. However, for the first time Sandstone was able to welcome Americans to the event.

Such was the response that bookings started to arrive for the 2013 Gala even before the dates were announced. The event will take place from 4th to 12th May. Next year's programme will be more ambitious and Sandstone hopes to cater for a larger audience.." NGW



Above: Floral scene as NG17 2-8-2 heads a Sandstone stablemate.

Right: A pair of Kerr Stuarts chasing each other? 0-4-2 Pannier Tank 'ISE 3' of 1924 leads no 16, a 4-6-2T of class NG4 built in 1913. *Photos: Michael Chapman*