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From the Ed

2008 is drawing to a close and it is time to reflect on our preservation year with Steam in Action. There certainly was plenty of action with the main operators moving forward although a little slower they all had hoped. Reefsteamers continue to take their professional approach and with support from the local Municipality, Ekurhuleni, have rebuilt some of their coaches as well as bringing GMAM 4079 and David Shepherd's 15F 3052 up to tip top operating condition. In Pretoria, Friends of the Rail have put 15F 3117 back in steam and begun their move to their new Hercules base. Already they have run a number of trains from there. Down in Kwa Zulu Natal, Umgeni Steam Railway continue to move forward and the Paton Country Railway continues to attract large numbers of visitors. On a sad note, the future of the Banana Express looks doomed after the destruction of the Izotsha Bridge. Down in the Free State Sandstone continues to host small events although financial considerations and the fact that it is a long way from populated centres continues to inhibit the revenue potential for such tourist related activities. In Cape Town, Ian Pretorius' fledgling operation has begun running trains in the tourist mecca of South Africa while in the Eastern Cape the Apple Express has returned NG 15 No: 119 to steam but keeps quite a low profile. Probably the highlight of the year was the visit of David Shepherd himself to both Reefsteamers and Sandstone.

While we have the prospect of two International tours to our country in 2009 from Geoff Cooke and David Rodgers, the issue of steam rail tourism and its acceptance by the authorities continues to be a priority for SIA. As much as tourism is encouraged in principle we have seen negative reactions from both national government and Transnet. We were surprised then to see a BBC press release in late November where the Minister of Transport, Mr. Jeff Radebe, is quoted as saying that rail tourism is an important element for 2010 and its activities. SIA has written to Mr Radebe and you can see for yourself the conflicting signals we receive at the top level. [Click here to view PDF.](#)

Although the Department of Tourism seems to have no interest, the Department of Transport may have another agenda. We hope that we will receive a favourable reply for the inclusion of steam rail tourism in the overall picture.

Of course running trains is one thing but a decaying infrastructure does not always provide a top line product or experience for clients as you will see from the Reefsteamers letter to the Ficksburg Mayor and Transnet and Piet Redelinghuys' photo feature from the Free State. As much as we may move forward with train operations the state of some of the destinations leaves much to be desired.

Millsite and the threat to the locomotives there dominated the middle of the year and while they are safe we still await the initiative from HRASA and documentation to begin the task of movement. SIA has made it clear that we cannot, with the funds collected, move everything and in fact we are now in a bit of a stand off with Transnet and HRASA. SIA was ready but they weren't and we need to begin again in 2009. Let us hope that the momentum we created can be revived and accelerated.

You will read in our editorial this month some strong views on such momentum and they make sober reading.

Finally from all at SIA and its constituent members, enjoy a safe holiday season and we look forward to taking the preservation movement to greater heights in 2009.

Dave Richardson

Some thoughts to Ponder

Since SIA was formed we have been amazed and not a little overawed by the amount of interest displayed in South African Rail Heritage by foreigners, i.e. people with no real South African connection other than their love of steam and the fact that they recognise that South Africa was a steam Mecca of great note.

We have attached an update from Ken Livermore of the North British Locomotive Preservation Group in the UK and you can see that they are extremely active. [Click here to view PDF.](#) It is inconceivable that they should have to come in from overseas and submit tenders for rusting hulks that have been abandoned and neglected, not only by their owners who one could argue are in the business of mining and industrial activity and therefore don't really care but perhaps more importantly by the organizations charged with their ultimate preservation.

Let us not ignore the fact that there are people with official standing who draw salaries from government and other sources, whose business cards clearly say that they are in charge of railway heritage in some form or another. Apart from the government and parastatal

Your comments, queries and suggestions are always welcome!

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Steam in Action - An Association
Incorporated under Section 21
Registration Number 2007/035119/08
www.steam-in-action.com

organizations such as the South African Heritage Resources Agency (who never reply to correspondence), the Transnet Heritage organization who have offices full of people with similar responsibilities all paid for by government (not to mention the Department of Tourism, Trade & Industry and others who keep issuing press release saying how important it is to encourage foreigners from overseas), then you have the industry bodies. Firstly the doyen of them all, namely SANRASM, which commendably recognized that industrial locomotives in particular needed to be saved and hauled at great expense from all over the countryside into a giant scrap yard near Krugersdorp outside Johannesburg. There for all practical purposes they abandoned them and everybody knows in his heart of hearts that these locomotives will not survive in any shape or form. Ultimately every kilogramme of steel on these locomotives is valuable and for that reason every kilogramme of steel will eventually find its way back to Japan as a result of the extensive and highly efficient scrap collection network that operates 24-hours a day throughout South Africa.

Then to oversee the industry bodies and the clubs and all the people that again put their name to railway preservation you have the Heritage Rail Association of South Africa who seemingly do not actually exist. There are people whose names appear but they do not reply to anything, never take action on anything, and seem indifferent to the fate of the very heritage assets that they are charged with responsibility for protecting.

As a result of the above one ends up with a free for all mentality. Everybody does what they can within their limitations but of course it is uncoordinated. The North British Locomotive Preservation Group buy and repatriate locomotives back to England, which is their brief and we admire them for that because those locos had no future where they were. The Sandstone Heritage Trust, if they have a good year in agriculture, might be able to allocate some funds to buying or moving items into a secure environment. Sadly this year has been a very poor one for agriculture so that programme inevitably has stalled. Reefsteamers and the clubs struggle to make money by running weekend trains and if there is anything left over after they have paid their operational expenses they also always put their best foot forward on a very selfless basis.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful world if an Obama type individual arrived on the scene, appealed to all these diverse bodies to put their petty rivalries aside and reminded themselves of what their primary mandate really is. If their grandchildren asked them in their dotage "I believe you were an important person in Railway Preservation - did you save anything?", the honest answer must be, "No, I was part of the coordinated process of neglect which resulted in the destruction of most of the things that may have been saved." How many people can truly put their hands up and say "Because of my intervention that locomotive was saved"? We know that Nick Newport and Ken Livermore of North British Locomotive Preservation Group can say that, we know that Nathan Berelowitz and Chris Janisch of Friends of the Rail can say that, we know that Shaun Ackerman, Elize Lubbe and Reefsteamers can say that. We are aware that Lukas Nel and his team at Sandstone, Bloemfontein can say that, and we know that the Apple Express who have recently been restoring an NG15 can also put up their hands and say that. However, what about those that have a slightly different story to tell, i.e. we had a good idea and we did bring a locomotive into preservation but then we left the back door open and it was lost again. SANRASM can say that, the Transnet Heritage Foundation can say that, and of course Spoornet (now Transnet Freight) who have issued tenders for the cutting up of thousands of good quality steam locomotives should be standing on the top of the Carlton Centre of Johannesburg and saying that through the loudest of loud speakers.

The problem is in South Africa that everybody lives a lie. People smugly go about their business and bank their salaries thinking that they have somehow accomplished an objective. SIA would like to be charitable and suggest that most of them don't actually know what the objective is and because the job is tough and it requires strong will, determined negotiating skills and a great love of one's country, i.e. the patriotism that says "Let's save what is worth saving so that the world can come and enjoy it with us and that our descendents can look back on the country's rich and diverse mining, industrial and railway history, not as something that is written about in the abstract but something that moves the skin on one's arms". Watching Reefsteamers GMAM thundering up on the long inclines out of Magaliesburg recently is an example of exactly what these big machines can do to one.

There was a recent documentary on the History channel giving the life and times of the most famous war ship in the US Navy, namely the USS Enterprise. It fought and survived dozens of tough battles in the Pacific arena during World War II. Men died on her and men became heroes on her. Despite that the US Government in their wisdom decided to scrap the ship after the Second World War because it was no longer State-of-the-art. The old men who served on her and who spoke about her demise cried when they thought of the indignity that she suffered. She was majestic, she was honourable, she was resolute and she fought on the side of the good guys so why then did they prematurely terminate her existence? Can we not say the same thing of our collective steam railway preservation in South Africa? Whether it be a pair of Lawleys going about their business on rural branch lines, whether it be giant 15F's, GMAM's or 25NC's escorting international celebrities on steam hauled specials or whether it be a happy group of visitors enjoying a special trip on the longest preserved Narrow Gauge railway in the world, namely the PE to Avontuur line, it all adds up to the same thing. There is a special type of magic there which has obviously never occurred to those people who set about the destruction of the great railway tapestry that might well have survived. SIA will continue to work hard to make this point demonstrably.

Class 1A No: 1301 and the North British Locomotive Society

As mentioned in our editorial the North British Preservation Group has been active in saving South African locomotives. Following on from our feature last month on the scrapping of locomotives at Greenside Colliery, SIA was pleased to receive a copy of the NBLs proposal for the preservation of 1301. As you will see a very professional approach but, with a difference. The enthusiasm of Scotland and its community and relevant government department to preserve the locomotive, is somewhat at odds to the approach of our South African authorities.

[Click here to read the Class 1A Plan \(PDF\)](#)

The State of the Nation

While we still strive at SIA to further steam rail tourism, our major operators are very conscious of delivering a product that meets all expectations. Sadly this is not always possible as many elements lie outside their control.

The disgusting state of Ficksburg Station on the arrival of the Cherry Festival tour train with David Shepherd aboard was a very unexpected curved ball. Reefsteamers with their ever present professional approach were not prepared to let this matter rest as the attached letter to the Mayor of Ficksburg (and Transnet) shows.

[Click here to read Reefsteamers' Letter \(PDF\)](#)

Man on a Mission

Recently we featured some pictures of plinthed locos from Piet Geldenhuys, well it should have been from Piet Redelinghuys. Our apologies. Nevertheless Piet is a dedicated heritage lover and has been touring South Africa looking at all sorts of artefacts, many rail related. Although he is new to SIA he has amassed a library of photographs on rail items and we feature some recent ones from some station visits in the Free State. Following on from the Reefsteamer's letter regarding the dreadful condition of Ficksburg Station, many of these images are a heartbreak for lovers of our once beautiful railway heritage.



Belmont Station



Koffiefontein Station



Kroonstad Station



Kroonstad Station Building

As part of his mission Piet wrote to Mark Robinson of HRASA:

*"Dear Mark,
According to my records you received my email sent on November 04, 2008 4:30pm but I haven't received any reply from you yet.*

In my letter I tried, very briefly, to explain about the Heritage Foundation project at Doornbult near Hopetown and what we intend to do. In my letter I begged your support, advice and help and said our commitment is to work in close partnership with all roll players - alas Mr. Robinson, and I hope my info is wrong - but the picture I get of the Steam Heritage in South Africa is getting more dark each day. Take for instance the mail that came through on 04.12.2008 of 13 wooden coaches over 60 years old of both main line and suburban style that have been sold by TFR for scrap at Port Elizabeth, without any referral to or contact with the preservation movement. And so it goes on and on it seems - with devastating effects/results.

Please I beg you once more: Advice me, help me to get going in the right direction before it is too late.

MARK my words: THE WRITING IS ON THE WALL!!!

*Regards
Piet Redelinghuys"*

Inhambane-Inharrime

Following on from our letter to CFM (to which we have received no response) and Paul Ash's reminiscences from Xai Xai in the November issue, Paul sent us these pics of this isolated line, north of Maputo. The Porter locomotive, No: 572 is one of two built in 1941 for this line and was the last locomotive in working order. The line has been closed for at least 10 years now.



Porter 2-6-2, No. 572 near Inharrime in 1996. The photo was taken from a boxcar packed with fuel for the loco. The loco had been steamed-up to take a few DZs to the end of the line to fetch sand for the football pitch at Inhambane. 572 and her sisters survive at Inhambane.



The crew of Porter 2-6-2 No. 572 attempting to extinguish a fire in the tender, caused by flaming embers from the loco. Near Jangamo, on the 90km line from Inhambane to Inharrime, October 1993.

Goodbye Stormberg

As a professional travel writer, Paul Ash gets around and with his interest in railways is always on the lookout for a good story. This is a sad one.

*"Goodbye, Stormberg ...
Here is a scene from the Stormberg-Rosmead secondary main. The picture was taken a few months ago, showing what is said to be rail and steel sleepers from the Douglas-Belmont agri branch south of Kimberley.*

I met a local farmer who was instrumental in ensuring that when the track was torn up for the Douglas branch - they needed heavier rail to be able to run fully-loaded grain hoppers from the silos at Douglas - that the light rail would be relaid on the Stormberg line.

While this work was apparently done, thieves have since stolen much of the relaid track. There are great gaps in the line between Stormberg and Schoombee, some many kilometres long. The matter came to a head a few months ago when people reported scrapping activity to the police and I understand a court case is pending.

I doubt, however, if the track will ever be recovered and relaid.

And so another railway bites the dust.

*Cheers for now,
Paul”*

The Stormberg-Rosmead line was built in 1892 as an important cross-country link for traffic between the Eastern Cape and Cape Town. It is steeply graded and was a favourite photo location on steam tours in the past, particularly around Schoombee. The line has seen little use over the last few years hence the decision to use the track on the Douglas branch. Was there really any hope that Transnet would honour its commitment to relay the line? (Ed)



Blast from the Past



ZECO

From 1979, the then Zimbabwe-Rhodesia railway administration had given the green light to the rehabilitation of 87 Garratt locomotives of four different classes extending their working lives for up to 15 years.

Bulawayo engineering company, RESCCO (later Zeco) secured the deal, subcontracting relevant work to other local industries.

Here is a photographic record of work in progress at the refurbishment shops.

Zeco also came to refurbish miscellaneous steam locos for Mocambique and Zambia during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Class 25NC 3450

The now Class 26, 3450, began life as a Class 25NC, being built by Henschel in 1953 before its conversion to Class 26 in 1981 at Salt River. The project, under the supervision of David Wardale, was to demonstrate what could be done to uplift the efficiency of a steam locomotive by the fitment of a gas producer system to the LD Porta principles as well as a number of other modifications. This followed on from some successful tests with Class 19D 2644 in the late 1970's. Sadly the (then) SAR was on a mission to eliminate steam and although 3450 was very much a success it was not embraced by the rail administration and today remains an example of what might have been. Today 3450 stands in storage in Monument Station in Cape Town under the watchful eye of Ian Pretorius. Although it has suffered some vandalism, the possibility of a return to steam should not be ruled out.



3450 must be one of the most photographed locomotives in its “Red Devil”, Class 26 guise and few pictures seem to exist of it as a Class 25NC. Dennis Mitchell sent us this stunning shot of 3450 hammering through Modder River in 1974 with an express passenger.

A true Blast from the Past!

SANDSTONE AND REEFSTEAMERS: DAVID SHEPHERD'S VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA

Towards the end of November, Reefsteamers ran a special tour train to Ficksburg for the annual Cherry Festival.

Guest of honour was David Shepherd, the owner of 15F 3052 "Avril" in Reefsteamers care and one of the two locomotives (the other was 25NC 3472) used to haul the train.

During the layover in Ficksburg, David was guest of honour at Sandstone Estates where a number of locomotives were steamed in his honour.

Sandstone, together with Reefsteamers put together this photo essay of the trip and visit.

[Click here to read about this great occasion \(PDF\)](#)



Under supervision from a Reefsteamers driver David Shepherd took the controls of 3052 during his visit to the RS depot. The loco is carrying 3046 plates while new 3052 versions are cast.

FRIENDS OF THE RAIL

On Saturday 15 November, 15F 3117 made another steaming. Further faults were found and rectified but these are of a small nature, and she is very near to service. She has now received her official certification and will do a warmup trip very soon, in preparation for her first train on 16 December. With her short tender and workmanlike appearance, this engine is sure to be a big hit!

Chris Janisch



FOTR double header to Cullinan

On Saturday 29 November, FOTR ran a packed train to Cullinan, utilising all our rolling stock to accommodate over 600 passengers. The train was drawn by 24 No 3664 and 19D No 2650; drivers were Frik Boshoff and Peter Odell and firemen Gabor Kovacs, Tony Attwell and Nathan Berelowitz. The scenes below capture the mood at Capital Park as the locos prepare for duty in the early morning light; then we see scenes at Cullinan on a stinking hot day, when the water column came into handy to cool things down; and then we see shots of the spectacular train powering up to Rayton, where hundreds of passengers joined the train after a trip to Willem Prinsloo Museum.

The locos once again performed faultlessly. It was a happy but tired crew that booked off late that evening; and the next day it was all systems go again as 2 trains were due out of Hercules.

This charter season has been a very busy one for the Friends, and it still has 2 weeks to go. It will culminate in a Tshwane Explorer on 16 December, where it is hoped to use 15F 3117 on her very first train after restoration.

Chris Janisch





Steam power without rails

Latest arrival at the Hercules site, is this wonderful steam tractor and traction engine.

The machinery is on temporary loan from the Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum, and is due for some major repairs. Robert Dadford is to do the work and this will be carried out on this site. Both will return to their homes in Feb 2009.

Photo Nathan Berelowitz.

[Click here to read USR Snippets 29 November 2008](#)

[Click here to read USR Snippets 07 December 2008](#)

Locomotives in Angola - a Host of Survivors

From 1963 the state owned Caminhos de Ferros de Angola (CFA) was formed of the Luanda, Amboim and Mocamedes sections with the Benguela Railway (CFB) remaining independent. The Luanda section (CFL) was started in 1886 from Luanda and was to be a Trans Africa railway to link with Portuguese East Africa but Cecil John Rhodes, by colonising Rhodesia in 1890, defeated this aim. The line ended as a 400km line.

It is the oldest of all Angola's railways and was originally metre gauge but was converted to cape gauge in 1963. From this time all the locomotives were oil fired. In 1970 there were 26 serviceable locomotives with a further 7 stored. Four GM diesels completed the roster.

The first locomotives were small tank locos but Henschel and Armstrong Whitworth supplied more business like 4-8-0 150 and 200 series locos in 1924. Some Garratts were ordered from Beyer-Peacock in 1949 (501 series) and when further power was needed this configuration of loco was ordered from Krupp (551 series) and was much heavier and more powerful than its British counterpart. The styling was also quite spectacular on these locomotives.

In the mid 50's a line was planned from Luanda northwards to Cabinda on the Congolese border. Sadly with the independence of Congo in 1960 only 10kms were built and the 250 series locos built for the line were sent to the Mocamedes (CFM) section. After the CFL gauge conversion in 1963, 3 of the 250 series were sent to the CFL. Since the early 70's, with the Civil War in Angola, the line has been out of use and the first section from Luanda has just been rehabilitated with Chinese Assistance.



John Middleton spends a lot of time in Africa as part of his job although based in the USA and is acknowledged as the leading expert on southern African locomotives. He sent us these pics, all taken by Andy Chalmers who is working on contract in Angola of the CFL dump at Catete. As you will see from John's interpretation of the photographs, many locos of all the classes have survived out of the original 33 of 1970. John takes up the story.

"I have been sent a lot of photos taken last weekend of a dump at Catete on the CF Luanda in Angola. From the photos 19 steam locomotives can be definitely identified by type with possibly 2 or 3 more. The 19 identified are 151 class (3), 201 class (3), 251 class (3), 501 class (6 - the entire class - 501-506), 551 class (4 - probably 553-556, as 551 was reported scrapped years ago and 552 transferred to the CF Mocamedes).

The 151 class are Henschel 4-8-0 of 1923; 201 class are Armstrong Whitworth 4-8-0 of 1923, 251 class Jung 2-8-2 of 1956; 501 class Beyer-Peacock 4-8-2+2-8-4 of 1949 and 551 class Krupp 4-8-2+2-8-4 of 1954.

In addition CFL 110 (4-6-0 Armstrong Whitworth 1924) is still preserved in Luanda with 3 coaches which were in use as a restaurant (now closed) but the loco is in good condition.

Kind Regards, John"





Deep in the Heart of Texas ★

We recently received this SIA registration from Garratt Bucher in the USA. Enthusiasts will remember that his father, Robert Bucher, bought two 2ft narrow gauge locomotives, NGG13 No: 50 and NG15 No: 18 in the 1970's and shipped them together with some items of rolling stock to his private railway, The Hempstead and Northern Railroad, in Texas. And yes, Garratt is named after the loco!

To: joannewest@btinternet.com

Subject: Steam in Action Registration

Name: Garratt Bucher

Them_Operator: YES

Them_Other_Info: My father brother and I own ex SAR NGG13 #50 ex SAR Ng15 #18 and Ex Sezela Sugar Estate Simpola.

B1: Submit



The Last Mixed Train

One of SIA's most active supporters is Dennis Mitchell, he sent us this story from the Vaalwater Branch in 1985.

"In 1985, whilst waiting for the "TRANS CAPE LIMITED" railtour to kick off; us Aussies had a few days to kill [Sunday to Thursday night] so on the Sunday after visiting the R.S.S.A. Krugersdorp preservation centre, and meeting up with John Middleton, and visiting Millsites 15Fs, we decided to chase the R.E.G.M. where we photted the G.M.A.s 15BRs, and the 1 class, and marvelled at the immaculate workshops.

We then decided a quick trip to NYLSTROOM might be in order to see the rumoured 2x 24 class running; on the VAALWATER branch. After a short trek, we stayed at the NYLSTROOM pub and set about finding 3683, on the branch where it crossed 3684 at ALMA. No 2x24 [you should have been here last week] was the normal answer to our enquiries, so after a few nice shots; we retired to the pub, for a few cleansing ales.

Some time later it was decided that the next day; some of us would ride the mixed, while some would drive to Vaalwater so we could "chase " the return run.

Next morning, at about 3A.M. we assembled in the foyer, where 'PUD' Worthington and Andrew Gordon told us they hadn't been to sleep [they had drunk the night away]. Anyway, we arrived at NYLSTROOM where the very surprised station staff agreed to sell us tickets to Vaalwater, "Hell,man why do want to catch the train, you could walk there faster" was the reply. Anyway we got our 5 tickets to Vaalwater and boarded the mixed hauled by 3684.

In the same compartment was an old Afrikaaner whose car had broken down and was catching the train to meet his Granddaughter who was going to drive him to the garage to pick up his car. He was very surprised that we were catching the train "just for the heck of it", but then asked "Man, do they still make that Coopers beer in Australia ?" After being assured that Coopers was alive and well; he told us that in the 1930s he was a jackeroo in Australia, and remembered the beer!!

After shunting for quite a few stops we arrived at ALMA where the shunt was really in earnest for about an hour, then proceeded to Vaalwater with only a quick shunt at Tweerivier. Now that we had arrived, whilst waiting for the cars to arrive, we decided to scout around for breakfast. [Those of you that have been to Vaalwater would know that the results weren't very satisfactory.]

Anyway, although I didn't know it at the time ,it turned out to be the last mixed train I ever travelled on.

All for now,

*HAPPY STEAMING
Dennis"*





FROM ALL AT STEAM-IN-ACTION AND ITS CONSTITUENT MEMBERS, ENJOY A SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO TAKING THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT TO GREATER HEIGHTS IN 2009.

Visit our Founding Members

