



Contents

Our Regular Features:

From the Ed	Page 1
How Green is our Garden?	Page 1
Letters from our Members	
- <i>The Zambesi Sawmills Railway</i>	Page 2
- <i>Scottish Support</i>	Page 3
- <i>Vesconite Follow Up</i>	Page 3
Steam in Action and Transnet Meet	Page 4
Obituary: Lesley Lowe	Page 4
Loco News	
- <i>Australian Garratts</i>	Page 5
- <i>The DE2 Project</i>	Page 5
- <i>TFHP Locomotives stored in Cape Town</i>	Page 6
- <i>An Australian Experience</i>	Page 6
Acquisition News	
- <i>Acquisitions</i>	Page 7
- <i>Class 6C 4-6-0 SAR No 544</i>	Page 7
- <i>Another New Acquisition</i>	Page 8
STOP THE PRESS!	Page 9
- <i>The Simmer & Jack Locomotives</i>	Page 9
Upcoming Events	
- <i>Geoff Cooke Narrow Gauge Tour</i>	Page 9
Club News	
- <i>Reefsteamers Depot Report</i>	Page 10
- <i>Free State Explorer</i>	Page 10
- <i>Steam & Cosmos Festival</i>	Page 10
Blasts from the Past	Page 11
Visit our Founding Members	Page 11

Your comments, queries and suggestions are always welcome!

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www.steam-in-action.com

From the Ed

Welcome to our April Newsletter, there are no April Fool jokes, just Steam In Action!

We have a mixed bag this month but following on from March we have begun to receive donations to our fundraising appeal and input from members to the SIA White Paper to be submitted to Transnet on the future of Heritage rail operation in South Africa.

We are certainly moving into exciting times. Our acquisition programme is in full swing and we have just run our first tour train with Reefsteamers.

The Sandstone Steam & Cosmos Festival has come and gone with 20 locos in steam over 5 days and next month sees the Geoff Cooke narrow gauge tour of South Africa.

On a sad note we have to report the passing of Lesley Lowe in Port Elizabeth. Lesley was the driving force behind the Apple Express with Peter Burton and we hope they will be able to continue with Lesley's legacy.

There are a few controversial comments in our editorial but we feel totally justified at SIA in stating what we have said. As ever feedback from members is always encouraged and we welcome your comments.

Finally we would like to thank Dennis Mitchell of Australia and the Outeniqua Railway Society of George, South Africa for their kind contribution to the work being undertaken by Steam in Action.

I am sure that by putting our best foot forward you will in fact encourage many more people to help us do a better job of saving, stabilizing and hopefully developing South Africa's rail and steam tourism potential

Enjoy the read!

How Green is our Garden?

Steam in Action started in October 2007 and during March we passed over 400 members. We are proud of the fact that composition of our membership is not only global but includes many influential people who by their support enhance the stature of the entire structure.

We have been going long enough to measure our achievements and among these are the following:

1. The establishment of a good working relationship with virtually all of the key organisations who influence Steam and Rail Preservation in Southern Africa. This includes HRASA, Transnet, the Department of Transport and others. The senior management of Steam in Action are continuing to seek a dialogue with anyone who has the best interests of South Africa's Rail Heritage at heart, and it is perhaps because of that that we are making many new friends on an ongoing basis.
2. Our physical programme of saving and moving locomotives to safe havens is ongoing. The SIA web site and the web site of some of the major operators bear testimony to that.
3. We have launched our fundraising programme which will provide us with the means to extend out current programme. We have already received tremendous support from individuals and the clubs and operators who put their best foot forward by giving of their time and their expertise. Very often difficult locomotive moves have come about because of a team effort where anyone who felt that they could make a contribution showed up on the day ready to put their shoulder to the wheel. We know we can continue to call on this type of support in the future.
4. Our steam hauled trains continue to operate and as we gain experience and as we acquire higher levels of understanding from the organisation who control the right of way so we believe that this programme will continue to grow in terms of interest and diversity. Certainly the indications are from Transnet that they are rethinking their heritage strategy and are now more committed than ever in ensuring that this country's remaining branch lines remain open, either to be used by themselves or to be contracted out or concessioned through the creation of public and private partnerships. It is early days but the indicators are encouraging.

There is however one area of major concern which we believe that all Steam in Action members should focus their minds on. This concerns SANRASM (South African National Railway and Steam Museum). This was started with the very best will in the world by people who genuinely thought that they would be able to establish a national collection of key locomotives but something went badly awry.

Never forgetting that the motives were good and many of the locomotives that were saved would most likely have been cut up for scrap, the fact remains that what is left after so many locomotives were gathered together in one place is embarrassing, pitiful, and in many ways scandalous. Within their own inner domain very valuable locomotives, even national monuments, have been desecrated and their vitally important components have been stripped, removed and lost forever. The "new" storage facility at Chamdor, which is next to an informal settlement, houses locomotives that are literally being cut up piece by piece until undoubtedly almost nothing will be left. There appears to be no attempt to do anything about it.

Steam in Action has therefore decided to do what it is good at, namely taking action. The true state of what is happening at SANRASM is featured in this newsletter in some detail and no doubt the current state of affairs will resonate with many SIA members who may have had previous experience of SANRASM. We have to try to save these locomotives and we have to unfortunately draw attention to their plight in order to overcome the state of denial that SANRASM is presently in.

If SIA members have any history, have details of locomotives that have been donated to SANRASM, or if they have pictures of what these locomotives looked like when they first arrived we would appreciate them.

Due to a conspicuous lack of cooperation by SANRASM themselves they need to be reminded of how serious the situation has become.

If Steam in Action can turn this situation around then it will be another good reason to celebrate its creation in the first place.

Finally, on a more administrative note, we have had requests from quite a number of our members to be issued with membership numbers and this we have attended to. You will receive your membership certificate by e-mail shortly and if you would like a printed and laminated hard copy please do not hesitate to e-mail us.

It is going to be another hectic month and undoubtedly a month full of surprises, most of them good.



The sorry state of affairs at SANRASM ...

Letters from our Members

THE ZAMBEZI SAWMILLS RAILWAY

This branch line runs from Livingstone to Mulobesi in Zambia and was originally a steam operated line to haul timber from the forests in the Mulobesi area to the sawmill in Livingstone. It used a wide variety of ex SAR and RR/ZR locos.

Robyn Heathfield sent in the pictures:

"Joanne

These trains are in fact the very last trains to Mulobesi - there they are, at the station in Mulobesi.

Regards

Robyn Heathfield"

These are all ex RR then Zambian Railways locos:

75 ZR 8th class

154 (green engine) ZR 10th class

Also believed to be there are ex ZR 8th 76, 9th 112 & 10th 155. Certainly worthy of investigation by Steam In Action.



SCOTTISH SUPPORT

Richard Niven, well known to South African enthusiasts as fireman to John Gilberthorpe in Kimberley sent us the following letter on his views of Steam in Action. To add to the action he also sent some pics of his model SAR 16E in the snow in Edinburgh. Thanks for your positive thoughts and ideas, Richard.

“Steam in Action has been around for several months now and is now getting people interested in South African steam locomotives from every corner of the globe.

In the years gone by people from all around the world would travel to SA simply to travel on one of the many wonderful steam safari tours around the country. Unfortunately all these tours came to a grinding halt in the late 1990s. Since then steam has taken a big downward dive and many of the once famous and preserved locomotives have been cut up for scrap or are sitting stored with many parts being removed by thieves.

All around South Africa there are a number of steam and railway preservation sites working very hard to save whatever they can from being destroyed but without international support of tourists it is becoming very difficult for these hard working groups to keep the steam locomotives alive. This is where I feel Steam in Action can hopefully help. So far it has appears to have got all the individual groups talking together as one group and has also got the international world interested in South African Steam. What is needed now is to get all the groups working together and running tour trains around South Africa just like it was in the past. These trains should not simply be for railway enthusiasts but for anyone who is interested in seeing a country as a whole. Sightseeing trips away from the trains can be organised to such places as mountain passes, lakes and general places of interest. This should attract the more general tourist to SA.

In UK people pay a lot of money to drive and fire steam locomotives on private lines, but this is only preserved steam and not quite what SA could have to offer. People are paying a lot of money and travelling to far away places such as Poland simply to drive steam on the mainline.

Here one gets to fire a large steam loco on one of Poland's regular steam worked trains. How about Steam in Action aims to get something like this up and running in SA? Advertise the world over for people to come and drive or fire a 15F or a 25NC on a line such as Bethlehem to Ficksburg. It may sound like madness now but so did it before Poland started doing such things.

Another thing I believe Steam in Action can achieve is to keep a good feeling between all the groups. I have heard rumours in the past that some folk wont talk to others. Hopefully now we can bring all together and forget any bad feelings between people and simply get on with saving whatever we can. When it comes to bad politics the only thing to suffer are the trains etc.

With Steam in Action acting as a whole for all steam groups etc hopefully we can get the word out to the world that South Africa is serious about saving steam and that the main rail operator Spoornet will listen to us and take an understanding in what needs to be achieved to attract the international tourist to South Africa.

Over the last few years all those who have been involved in steam preservation in SA have done a wonderful job but now with Steam in Action hopefully we can hopefully get many more people across the globe interested in what goes on in SA. Perhaps we can even start a loco sponsorship system or shares in locomotives etc simply to save some of the once preserved locomotives.

To all the groups in SA, your doing a wonderful job, keep it up.

Regards
Richard Niven (Scotland)”



VESCONITE FOLLOW UP

Following on from Glenn Harris's enquiry from South Australia about Vesconite, Reefsteamer's Shaun Ackerman sent this reply:

“Dear Glenn,

I am quite familiar with your railway and you have a wonderful setup. We are using the Hi - Lube Vesconite that does not actually need lubrication as the lubrication is built into the material but we still insist that our crews grease the locomotive as it is good practice and it does not do any damage to the material. Many types of plastic or nylon material have been tried throughout the world but non have come close to the proper Vesconite product. It was developed in South Africa and it has been used for many years in the mining industry and by the railways with huge success.

Remember that you can use the vesconite for most applications but it is not recommended for the coupling or the connecting rod bushes due to the massive forces placed on those bearings and the surface area of the bearing itself. It is also ideal for wet and dirty environments.

As you know, we have massive locomotives and we have rebushed most of them to Vesconite but we have tried a small end pin bush on one of our class 15F's just to see the wear or destruction rate and I will admit it has now been in that locomotive without any problems for over eight years but as Vesconite don't recommend it we don't go that route throughout. I would suggest you make contact with the professionals at Vesconite South Africa who will gladly assist you with your technical requirements as to help you get a better understanding of the size bearings you can go to with the forces exerted on each bearing. The man to contact at Vesconite is Basil Bushby - bushby@vesconite.co.za.

About the boiler tubes, that is quite an odd size and the man to assist you there is Tom Roach who is the commercial manager for Surtees Railway Supplies in South Africa. He will either source them for you or will have in stock. He can be contacted in SA on (011) 626 - 3516 or fax (011) 626 - 1171. If you don't come right with this then let me know and we can look into it further for you.

Glenn, on another note. Please see attached the Manifesto for Steam in Action - South Africa. It clearly explains what we are trying to do to assist with steam and railway preservation in SA and everyone who is interested should join, it is after all free and you will be kept up to date with what is going on with the massive developments in SA since SIA came into action. Please get as many of your fellow members to join also.

I hope this helps?

Br,

Shaun Ackerman
Reefsteamers Association for Steam in Action - South African"

Steam in Action and Transnet Meet ...

It was inherent in the responsibility of Steam in Action to engage with anyone who might influence, particularly in a positive way, the work that we are doing. During March we made a point of expanding our communications programme to engage with organisations that have influence or control of different aspects of South Africa's rail heritage programme.

Many of these discussions are confidential and it is premature to advise what has been achieved. However in response to the valid points made by many members, that until we engage adequately with government we are not going to achieve much. We are pleased to advise the following:

1. We met with a very senior Transnet official recently and the newly appointed Head of the Heritage Foundation Susie Mabie was in attendance. While the meeting was not specifically called to discuss Transnet heritage assets she was very positive about the work that we were doing and agreed to appear in our new Steam in Action promotional DVD. Perhaps her attitude can best be summarised by the following extract from the interview:

"The story and evolution of steam locomotives in South Africa is an integral part of the story and history and evolution of our company Transnet. We would like to point out that Transnet is committed to finding a positive resolution to these assets. We acknowledge that these assets are both assets of our company and our country, so we would like to ensure that these steam locomotives are preserved and treasured."

Steam in Action is greatly reassured by this because the Heritage Foundation has a huge role to play in deciding the future of South Africa's most valuable locomotives and rail assets.

2. During the meeting a very wide range of subjects were covered and we were assured that Heritage and steam tourism was very much on the minds of Transnet's senior management and as a result of our discussions we have been invited to submit a white paper on what recommendations SIA would like to put forward that would improve the position. This meeting was open and it was readily admitted that rail heritage had been in limbo for some time. Steam in Action is currently working on a submission. In this regard we have already reached out to SIA members asking them to provide us with details of what their vision is concerning the future. Obviously there are practical issues but we would like to quote liberally from the SIA membership because after all it is a constituency of the most knowledgeable people who have the best interests of South Africa's Rail Tourism at heart.

Finally, it is becoming clear that the bigger SIA becomes in terms of membership the more influential we will become and therefore we would urge each of our members to look beyond their own membership and to approach like minded people to support us.

Although there is strong support in South Africa itself we still have resistance to our presence from the Eastern Cape and from Natal in particular. We are working on this but we would like to send out this message - to those individuals who control their own particular rail heritage programs, please remember that Steam in Action is not an operator. We are a coordinator of operator interests and will engage with anyone who might be able to assist us to improve the national outlook for steam and rail preservation and steam tourism in South Africa. We understand the reluctance to join because rivalry is inherent in the preservation community worldwide. We only have one thing to offer and that is action and we would like to be judged on our results.

Obituary: Lesley Lowe

The sometimes controversial stalwart of the Apple Express, Lesley Lowe, passed away on 14th April after a long battle with cancer. Lesley was a Port Elizabeth councilor and combined this with a never ending effort to keep the Apple Express on track. She crossed swords many times with Transnet and HRASA but always maintained a fair attitude. She will be sadly missed by all in the heritage rail fraternity and Steam in Action extends its condolences on behalf of all our members to her husband Mike and sons, Ian, Graeme and Barry.

AUSTRALIAN GARRATTS

Anne and Dennis Mitchell sent us this interesting article ...

"Dear Joanne, Wilf, Dave & crew,

At the end of steam in Australia, [1969-1973] a number of Garratts were earmarked for preservation. In N.S.W. 4 of the 60 class garrets [1952-1956 B.P.] were saved; 6029, 6039, 6040 & 6042. In South Australia 2 of the 400 class, 402 & 409 were saved. In Victoria an A.S.G. 3'6" AND A 2'6" g class, and in Queensland a 1000 class was saved.

Currently 6029 is at Canberra under overhaul, after a spare boiler was found at a sawmill, 6039+6042 are owned by the Dorriggo steam railway and museum, [6039 is at Dorriggo but has not steamed since 1978 and 6042 is in a sorry state apparently abandoned at a failed 'vintage village at Forbes (see pics below) [approx 700ks from Dorriggo.] 6040 is at Thirlmere, under cover but in a sad state, it was selected by the N.S.W.R.T.M. because it was the last steam loco to enter service in N.S.W. It is the only single control Garratt left all others being dual control. 6040 will never run again.

402+409 are part of an order of 10 from Franco -Belge [under licence from B.P.] Garratts built in 1953 for the 3' 6" Port Pirie- Broken Hill line. This line was converted to 4' 8 1/2" in 1970. These locos are sisters to the E.A.R. 60 class.

402 will eventually run on the Lithgow zig zag in N.S.W. but 409 is in the Port Dock museum in Adelaide and is surrounded by 5'3 " + standard gauge lines. If it was restored, the only place it could run would be at Pichi Richi in the north of the state.

On a happier note, G42, after 40 years in storage, has been restored [in 2003] to working order on the 2' 6" Puffing Billy railway, at a cost of Aus\$1.7M, say R11M. I had a cab ride on her in 2004, she had the biggest train P.B. runs, 13 coaches, but was hardly taxed. even on the 1 in 30 ruling grade.

The other Garratt in Victoria, an Australian Standard Garratt, built for all 3' 6" gauge lines during WW2, and not really successful; is at the open air railway museum at Williamstown in Melbourne.

In Queensland the 4-8-2+2-8+4, #1009, runs in tourist traffic for the Queensland division of the Australian Railway Historical Society. It is a light lines type of about 30000lbs tractive effort.

As far as I know, none of the Tasmanian or Western Australian Garratts were saved.

Some stats:

The 60 class have 63360 lbs T.E. 42 were put into service, 60 ordered, but 12 cancelled +6 never assembled due to dieselisation. Some of the builders numbers were given to GMAs

The 400 Class have 43,000 lbs T.E.

The G42 has 26600 lbs T. E. All at 85% of max boiler pressure.

Hope this is of interest.

As always, BEST WISHES AND HAPPY STEAMING."



THE DE2 PROJECT

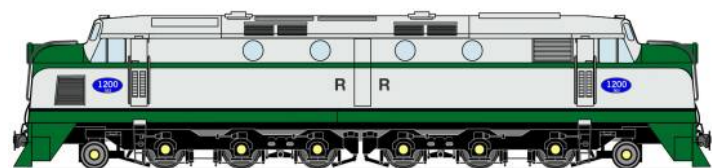
Although a complete restoration of the Sandstone Heritage Trust DE2, ex Rhodesian Railways, diesel has not yet commenced in a joint project with Reefsteamers Germiston we are inviting comment and background information from SIA members.

John Batwell has sent us an e-mail which reads as follows:

"Having read about the DE2 possibly seeing action again in 2009, I do hope SIA/Reefsteamers will consider putting the loco into its original of the four liveries these splendid diesels carried in their forty odd years service to RR/NRZ. A bigger pic of the paint scheme can be gleaned from Sue Lawrence at: selaw@optushome.com.au

Regards

John Batwell"



Before we opened this project, Peter Odell from Steamnet 2000 had something to say! (along with a few other matters)

"Dear Editor, SIA launches DE2 Project- "any thoughts from our members will be welcome please" Well this one wont be but I'm still going to say it!!!

I am always disappointed [that's a very polite way of putting it] at British preserved "steam" lines that provide a haven for preserved diesels and magazines with titles like "Steam Railway" when they include diesel pictures. Now we have "Steam in Action" targeting a diesel as its first major restoration project!!! Either change our name to "Rail Preservation in Action" or start "Diesel in Action" If these things had never been introduced and taken over the worlds railways we would still have the pleasure of daily steam in regular service making our efforts at preservation superfluous.

Carbon Footprints- Yes I feel guilty at burning coal as we should for driving cars. As for black smoke for photos, it wastes coal, fills up the firebox, is the incorrect method of heating up a boiler and pollutes, but some photographers want it. Put an environmental tax on it and pay 50% of it to the person delegated to haul out the clinkers! But my main concern is Spoonet's bragging about their record capacity and profiteering on the Richards Bay coal line when in fact the more they carry, the more Global warming....

Yours P J Odell"

TFHP LOCOS STORED IN CAPE TOWN

There has been some concern over the condition of these locos, Ryan Fincham sent us a mail and pics of 3450. SIA is already on the move to put a plan in place to improve the security of these valuable items, especially The Red Devil, a South African locomotive icon.

"While in Cape Town last week, I was able to track down the "RED DEVIL" parked next to the station by the train lodge. It was sad to see these 4 loco's in near perfect condition, just parked there. Security around them isn't that good and there are still gauges and brass fittings on them but some have disappeared already. I took photo's of which would like to pass on to you.. Is there and long term plans to restore these beauties??"



"Hope these pictures give you guys an update of how they looked a week ago, these photo's cover the Red Devil. They looked really good compared to what's left in Durban which have been looted. Any further developments of these loco's, would be appreciated..

I really enjoy the news from your website and what you guys are trying to achieve as well as the other steam groups, keep up the great job!!!

Regards.
Ryan"



AN AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

Dennis Mitchell sent a word of caution from Australia after initial promises were made to preservationists by their national network. Something to bear in mind for the future.

"Dear Joanne, Dave & crew,

Many thanks for edition 4 of steam in action; at last a plan has emerged to save some of the greatest 3 '6" locomotives ever built. During the 70's&80's I visited South Africa 4 times, and was always amazed by the 'action' and the way the locos were thrashed along."

A word of warning, re Germiston loco, Capital Park Voorbaai etc. Whilst I understand these depots were 'given' under the old THF, a similar agreement was given here in N.S.W. Australia in 1972 in regard to the Enfield Loco Depot in Sydney. During 1973, Phillip Shirley became Commissioner for Railways and being one of Doctor Beeching's henchmen, set about getting rid of all things steam. His first target was Museum locomotive 3813 [a green pacific express loco], stripped down for major overhaul at Eveleigh works. 'Get that thing out of here Now!' were his words, and he promptly applied a steam ban on all steam trips which lasted for two years. His next step was to tell the N.S.W. Rail Transport Museum ; that the Enfield loco depot was required for a container terminal 'GET OUT NOW' were his words. The museum had about 60 locomotives and various items stored serviceable & unserviceable to be shifted 75 kilometers south west to a new site on a branch line at Thirlmere where they are today. Much time expense, and labour was thus required, all because the agreement about Enfield was only a verbal one between a commissioner who had a love of railway history and the R.T.M. The container terminal was never built, because the streets were too narrow for the container trucks.

3813 has never been rebuilt, and is now at Dorrig as a gigantic jigsaw with several parts missing!

Enfield was the perfect place for a museum, being able to house 91 locomotives under cover with another 35 roads open in its three round houses.

Thanking you again, you have given me hope to take my children to see something of what once was the greatest Steam show south of the equator.

Dennis MITCHELL"

The situation in South Africa, of course, is slightly different with the operating clubs that run on Transnet premises all having lease agreements in place. Nevertheless there are moves afoot at Transnet to move stored steam locos off their property where there is no such occupation. SIA is aware of these developments and is drawing up contingency plans for alternative storage should this be required.



3450 stands at Worcester in happier times with a Union Limited Railtour in 1997

Acquisition News

ACQUISITIONS

As we mentioned in our last newsletter Steam In Action's acquisition programme has moved into gear with a narrow gauge loco returning to South Africa after 9 years in Switzerland, the last Orange Free State Government loco heading for restoration and the two remaining locos from the Simmer & Jack mine in Johannesburg saved from the scrapman.

There are many more locomotives out there, in playgrounds, museums, social clubs, outside offices, on mines and so on. We appeal to all SIA members to send us reports of what they may discover, particularly if they believe the locomotive is threatened. SIA will take action. Already we have had an interesting report from Angola from the CFB whereby a CFB 11th class has been discovered together with a large number of Garratts. This locomotive is similar to a SAR Class 19D with some detail differences but it was believed they were all scrapped many years ago. SIA is in contact with the right people to see what can be done to save some of these locos. There are many more out there. Over to you!

CLASS 6C 4-6-0 SAR NO:544. THE LAST EXISTING OVGS LOCOMOTIVE!

Sandstone Heritage Trust has acquired 6th class No: 544 from the Bethlehem Museum for restoration and proposed use on a section of the Bloemfontein-Bethlehem line.

This ubiquitous class of locomotives was originally designed by the locomotive superintendent of the Cape Government Railways (CGR), Michael Stephens, in the late 19th century and a number of variations were placed in service between 1893 and 1904. Construction was by a number British and American builders. The first examples were delivered to the CGR but in 1896 the OVGS (Orange Free State Government Railways) ordered a number of examples from Sharp, Stewart and Co in Glasgow, of which No: 544 was the fourth built as works number 4141 of 1896. The loco was numbered as OVGS no: 73. Following the Anglo- Boer war, Central South African Railways (CSAR) took over the OVGS and the locomotive was renumbered as CSAR no:349 of Class 6L-2. On the formation of the South African Railways in 1910 the locomotive was renumbered 544 and reclassified as 6C. As with many Class 6 locomotives, No: 544 has been fitted with a Belpaire boiler during its life to increase its performance.

The locomotive is now at Sandstone and awaiting restoration as the last existing locomotive of the OVGS. It is in excellent condition having received some major repairs at Bethlehem loco prior to its move to the museum some 30 years ago.

Research is ongoing into its original livery, although it is suspected as black and the type of number plates it would have carried with the OVGS.

The move from the Bethlehem Museum is documented on the Sandstone website (www.sandstone-estates.com) but proved quite a tricky one and the local newspaper thought it newsworthy as the article shows.

Steam Train sent to Ficksburg

The grand old lady of the Bethlehem Museum yard, a Steam locomotive built in 1896 by Dubs and Co. was removed last week to be relocated to her new home at Sandstone Estates near Ficksburg.

According to Gert Jubileus, the Manager of the Steam Train Division at Sandstone Estates the steam locomotive and tender weigh an astounding 82 tons when in working order!

According to Dr. Reg Engelbrecht of the Museum trust, a decision was taken by the committee to send the train to Sandstone Estates. The train has been vandalized and damaged and various

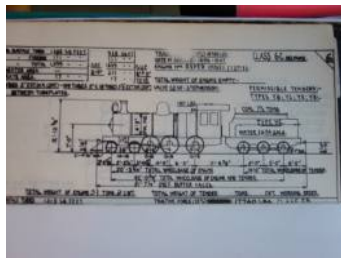
pieces of equipment and copper pipes have been stolen over the years. He believes it will be far better option to have the train in the care of Sandstone Estates.

Sandstone Estates currently has eighteen operational steam trains which have been restored.

The plan is to restore the museum's old lady and get her up and running again in time for the Cherry Festival in 2009.

Sandstone Estates has a Steam and Cosmos Festival event from the 9th to the 13th of April and the operational locomotives can be viewed in action on these days.





From left to right:
The plate fitted for the handover in 1972

The general arrangement drawing of the 6C from the SAR locomotive diagram book

No: 544 before the move
from the Bethlehem Museum

ANOTHER NEW ACQUISITION!

With the assistance of Phillip Maurer, the Swiss enthusiast well known to SA narrow gauge fans, the Sandstone Heritage Trust has acquired NG15 No: 136, originally exported to the SchBB in Switzerland in 1998. Phillip Maurer tells the story:

THE HISTORY OF CLASS NG 15 "KALAHARI" NO 136

NG 15 No.136 first saw the light of day in 1953 and was built by the "Société Franco Anglo Belge" in Belgium as works number 2686.

No 136 was the last engine of the NG 15 class ordered by South African Railways (SAR/SAS) and was delivered directly to South West Africa (now Namibia) where she was based at Usakos. The engine worked on the Otavi railway system until the re gauging of the line to 3'6" in 1960.

The engine was then transferred, around 1961 to the Port Elizabeth - Avontuur line and worked there for many years being based at Humewood Road.

After her last general overhaul in 1986 at Uitenhage, the loco returned to P.E where she continued to work on the P.E.-Avontuur system until 1987 when she suffered a hot axle box and was then withdrawn from service.

In 1985, the club Schinznacher Baumschul Bahn "SchBB" (a railway based in a tree nursery in Schinznach, Switzerland) purchased Class NGG13 Garratt No 60 from South Africa and restored the engine almost to perfection over the next 13 years. A few members of the restoration crew decided to visit the old home of the Garratt, and two of them started to travel quite frequently down to South Africa. We booked many times on the well known (sadly now no longer running) Union Limited and met a lot of interesting people. Two are well remembered by SAR railway enthusiasts: the late Alan Clarke from THF and the late Roy Mitchell, chairman of the Apple Express.

As we got nearer to the end of the restoration of No 60, we started looking for another restoration project. South Africa was the obvious choice. This is because we realized from our many visits that the narrow gauge enthusiasm was (except at Apple / ACR) not strong enough to save anything more than operating locos. Our thought was to preserve (from an overseas perspective) a unique engine from the scrap line and bring it back to steam. We knew that it was the only way to go at the time, today there are more possibilities. The owner of the SchBB also visited South Africa a number of times and learned to love the small Mikado types, which were nicknamed "Kalaharis".

During our next tour in 1997 we visited Roy Mitchell and got the message that the scrap locomotives behind the Humewood Road steam shed would go to the cutting torch very soon. We then took a chance and asked Alan Clarke for an NG15. We travelled again on the Union Limited with Alan and had the opportunity to show him pictures of the perfect restoration work on No 60. He was impressed and said "I would like to have such enthusiasts and perfect workshops down here". Before our trip on the Union Limited was finished we asked him for an NG15 engine. "Send us an offer, which includes the offered price and working/boiler numbers of the engines you would like, to our Jo'burg office and we will consider it".

Back in Switzerland we asked for a meeting with the railway owner and discussed the possibility of buying an NG15. We left the meeting with the authority to make an offer for the best engine we had identified during the RSA trip.

About one month later the fax machine was ringing and confirmation that we could buy NG15 No136 for its current scrap value, was received!

After some stressful days and another visit to P.E, we prepared the engine for transport and it arrived in Schinznach in 1998 on two heavy trucks.

It was planned to start the restoration of the engine within two years of No 60 being finished, and to the same high standard as No 60. Because of club politics, many of the old members left the club and the NG15 project came to a standstill. Last year in September, someone marked the engine as being for sale. This called for action for this Swiss-South African steam enthusiast so he asked the owner about the status of the engine. To his surprise, the owner knew nothing about a sale.....confusion on both sides!

However, a few weeks later, with a heavy heart, the owner decided that the club and the nursery workshop would be not in a position to undertake such a huge restoration project within a reasonable time, so we got the opportunity to make an offer for No 136. In January 2008 we received the O.K. on our offer. In the mean time all the questions about transport and paper work had been done.

The engine will leave Schinznach on April 16th and 21 days later she will arrive here in her old home country. At some point in the future she will stretch her legs and run free over SA rails again, hopefully with many passengers and, who knows, with freight trains!"

As the pictures show the locomotive is complete with the large number of spares originally acquired with it and will join the restoration line at Sandstone.



STOP THE PRESS!

KALAHARI NO 136 IS ON HER WAY!



THE SIMMER & JACK LOCOMOTIVES

After years of display and then being dumped, the final two survivors on the mine, numbers 3 (Porter 2443/1902) and 6 (NBL 26242/1948) have been saved by Sandstone as part of the Steam in Action programme. They have been moved in to the Hoekfontein complex at Sandstone for an initial cosmetic restoration, but the thought of returning them to working order has not been discounted. They are the last survivors of the famous Simmer & Jack mine, one of the pioneering mines of the Reef and as such have great historical value. Both are unique in that very few Porter built locos survive and number 3 is the only surviving Porter conventional style locomotive in South Africa, there being two ex ISCOR fireless examples preserved in Pretoria, while the majority of NBL industrial locomotives still in existence are of the NBL 4-8-2/4-8-4 industrial tank design.

To add to this unique historical event a number of rare wooden hoppers have also been acquired from the Simmer & Jack and will be cosmetically restored along with the two locomotives.

Their move into safe preservation is a significant milestone for Steam in Action and Sandstone.

Some interesting archive photographs emerged recently from the collection of the late Dave Parsons showing number 3 before and after a rebuild in 1949 and number 6 as it exists today.

A full story of the locos and their move to Sandstone can be found on the Sandstone website, www.sandstone-estates.com.



The NBL 2-6-2T in service



The Porter after an extensive rebuild in 1949



The Porter 2-6-2T in original condition

Upcoming Events

GEOFF COOKE NARROW GAUGE TOUR

The 11th to 21st May sees the Geoff Cooke Narrow Gauge Tour in South Africa. This tour will be run by road linking to various narrow gauge destinations in South Africa plus a trip on the Creighton to Riversdale line on the Cape gauge.

The tour visits Sandstone from the 12th to the 14th, Creighton on the 15th and Paton Country Railway on the 16th & 17th. From there it is down to Port Elizabeth for three days with the Apple Express from Humewood Road to Patensie and Assegaaibos.

It is hoped to use Class NG15 No: 119 if the restoration is complete. It was hoped to run through to Avontuur but this section of the line is closed due to washaways.



Sandstone's NG15 No: 17 ambles into Loerie on "The Avontuur Adventurer" tour of 2005

REEFSTEAMERS DEPOT REPORT

Reefsteamers' latest depot report ... Lee Gates writes ...

"Easter weekend. The benefit of having a precious extra two days available for Reefsteamers Depot work were somewhat off-set by the fact that many of the Reefsteamers gang would be away with their families ..."

[Click here to read the full report ...](#)

THE FREE STATE EXPLORER

Steam in Action's first venture into rail tourism was a great success when The Free State Explorer tour train, run in conjunction with Reefsteamers, ran from Johannesburg to Ficksburg and return to coincide with the Sandstone Steam and Cosmos Festival from the 9th to 13th April. Sadly Transnet insisted on modern traction haulage from Boksburg East to Bethlehem but the run from Bethlehem to Ficksburg was spectacular behind David Shepherd's Class 15F No: 3052 "Avril".

The planned run to Bethlehem to collect the two Class 25NC locos destined for Sandstone Heritage Trust was cancelled as Transnet refused to allow both locos to be dead hauled together. To compensate for this planned steam run, 3052 hauled a special to Fouriesburg and back on Friday 11th April.

The tour passengers enjoyed this trip and two days at the Cosmos Festival while the Reefsteamers crew put their hand to some narrow gauge action and assisted with train operation at Sandstone.



Courtesy Aidan McCarthy



Courtesy Paul Hloben



Courtesy Hannes Paling



Courtesy Gary Barnes



Courtesy Aidan McCarthy



Courtesy Aidan McCarthy

SANDSTONE STEAM & COSMOS FESTIVAL

This bi-annual event took place from the 9th to 13th April and no less than 20 narrow gauge locos were steamed during the period. The festival also saw the launch of three new locomotives, Kerr Stewart 4063 (ex ISE 3) and O&K 2510 together with Bagnall diesel, RPM No: 11.

The four days were packed with not only rail action but with vintage tractors, earthmoving equipment, historic aircraft and steam powered road vehicles. The undoubted highlight of the festival was the launch of the WW2 Sherman tank, newly restored by Sandstone. During the launch it was accompanied by a full military freight train double headed by Class NGG16 Garratts numbers 113 & 153.

The traditional photographic special was run at 06h00 on Sunday the 13th in conditions of patchy cloud but when the sun did appear, magnificent shots were achieved. Truly Steam in Action!

A full report of the Festival can be found on the Sandstone web site, www.sandstone-estates.com.



Courtesy Aidan McCarthy



Courtesy Gary Barnes



Courtesy Hannes Paling

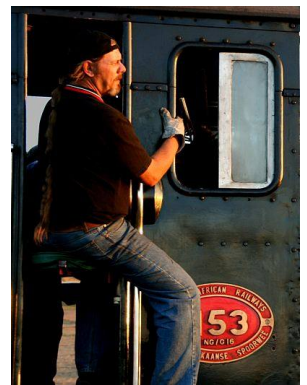


Courtesy David Benn



Courtesy Dave Richardson

Courtesy Paul Hloben



Blasts from the Past

Karyn Clarke who designs and produces the SIA newsletter found these two pics while going through some old photos for her father. They show Transvaal Navigation Collieries No: 2 SAR design unsuperheated 12A with Karyn's father, uncle and late grandfather.

Amazingly the loco still exists as John Middleton reports:

"Dave,
This is NBL 26759 of 1951 (unsuperheated 12A as you say) currently at Reefsteamers. It was new to TNC as No. 2 but was renumbered No.3 sometime between 1973-1979.

Cheers, John"



Visit our Founding Members

