



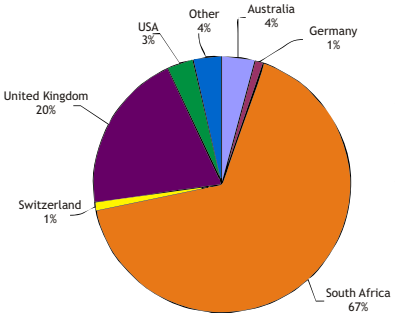
# steam in action

south africa

EDITION 15 KEEPING TRACKS FEBRUARY 2009

## Welcome

*to the February newsletter.*




Steam-in-Action Membership by Country

So many monumental developments have taken place over the past month that we are going to change our format in order to communicate what is happening on the ground as effectively as possible to our growing list of SIA members. During February 2009, we passed the 700 member mark. At the same time we took a moment to check the demographics of our membership. It is very interesting. We expected support to come mostly from South Africa, which it does, but with the UK also in a very strong position in terms of the number of people joining SIA. The rest of the world is also very well represented, which is pleasing. We will update these demographics from time-to-time.

During February and March we hope to explain to our members in great detail what is happening with respect to Transnet, HRASA, and the various links that exist in the chain that has long since drifted into a position of absolute impotence.

With SIA having entered its second year we have concluded that Transnet in particular (and with HRASA's unwitting compliance) is determined to continue to scrap the National Railway infrastructure in order to acquire short-term revenue. This will place Railway Preservation into some sort of no man's land where no one is accountable.

We believe however that there is a relatively simple solution to the dilemma. It is all about rebranding. Forget the phrase 'Heritage Preservation' and replace it with 'Tourism Promotion'. Replace 'Heritage Railway' with 'Tourist Railway', etc. The promotion of tourism is politically correct, and is generally accepted as a necessary strategic objective for South Africa. We believe that we have not yet played this card strongly enough. Furthermore we have concluded that the bigger SIA gets and the more it can demonstrate its ability to raise funds the more likely it is that the officials who currently hide behind locked office doors will begin to rethink their strategies.

We know that there is immense talent and knowledge in the SIA membership base. For many members apart from their registration details we do not know much about their background. As we move towards becoming a more effective lobby group we would like to draw on some of this talent on a case by case basis.

**We would really appreciate a short e-mail from each member telling us why they have a specific interest in steam and also what their current activities involve**.

Obviously this information is entirely discretionary. Each e-mail will be answered by one of the Advisory Board members personally.

You will notice that there are very few photos in this newsletter. The reasons are that there is a great abundance on the Internet and we frankly need this space to work with our members to develop our strategic objectives.

## This Month's Edition ...

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## New Advisory Board

Steam in Action will be coordinated by some very effective people and it will also be managed democratically. Ultimately the choice of who will represent SIA will rest with the members and in order to get things moving we have approached a number of individuals who have come forward and have been extremely responsive. Ironically it is very often foreigners who know more about what is happening than the South Africans do on the ground. That is often the case because they come here on holiday and they have the time to do their homework.

The individuals who have accepted our invitation to join the Advisory Board are as follows:

Robin Taylor - Umgeni Steam Railway, Natal: *"I started with steam from the age of 3 years. My family had two steam trucks. We lived abroad and worked with locomotives. I am a member of the Royal Society of Southern Africa and the Umgeni Railway. I worked for a company that fixed locomotives before retiring. I will be 79 years old in October."*

Andy Selfe - Grabouw, Western Cape: *"Although my main interests are in Stationary Engines and Mills, I was early on 'infected' by the steam bug. We lived in Pretoria and went to school in Cape Town, so we travelled 8 000 miles a year on trains; mostly, particularly in the earlier years, behind steam.... dear dead days! (R15.75 return, with scholars' concession!). I currently sit in on meetings of Helderberg Vintage Rail / Elgin Vintage Rail. We had a meeting this week where we decided that we need to get the ball rolling, making a start with the Trolleys, soon!"*

Patrick Ackerman - Reefsteamers, Johannesburg: *"My late Grandfather, Patrick Thomas Ackerman once worked for the South African Railways in the signalling department. He developed a great passion for anything railways and in particular the locomotives. He joined the Rand Society of Model Engineers and started constructing lives-steam models in his free time. Before he passed on he had constructed no less than eighteen models ranging from ½ inch to inch and a sixteenth to the foot and that is quite a feat considering this was done in just over forty years.*
*Then I came along and ever since I can remember I would join my grandfather in his workshop while he was working. I got to know and appreciate the steam locomotive through a hands-on approach and as time went by so I developed a passion for steam and the skills involved to keep them on the rails. This love of steam has carried me to my eventual signing up at Reefsteamers where I offer my time as a volunteer member to help keep our steam locomotives alive. Everything I know about the wonderful world of steam and railways can be credited to my grandfather."*

Errol Ashwell - Gauteng and Natal: *"I was fortunate to grow up in southern KwaZulu-Natal, living on farms at Jolivet and Umzimkulu, and then at Hlutankungu. My early school years were spent at Highflats. All of these places have one thing in common: They were all situated on the Umzinto to Donnybrook narrow-gauge railway system. I grew up fascinated with the little trains, and with the perspective that real railways are narrow-gauge! Three of the four 2ft narrow-gauge lines in KwaZulu-Natal are no more. Although a realist, I live in hope that one day, when we succeed to convince the majority of South Africans that there is real potential in railway tourism and preservation, we will once again see trains running on at least part of the Port Shepstone to Harding narrow-gauge line."*

Lee Gates - Reefsteamers, Johannesburg: *"Unlike many, I had no contact with steam in my formative years. The first railways I ever encountered close up were the electric-hauled services at Kelvin PowerStation in 1978, at age 10. By age 20, I had developed a general interest in railways first and then late, by age 23 in steam locos as evocative and responsive machines. Having put time and resources into that interest while enjoying the privilege of being involved with the Reefsteamers locos and 'their' people, that interest has since become a passion. Presently, I am the Reefsteamers Webmaster, proposed to serve as a secretary on the Board and a Shedman in the early stages of training."*

Mike Myers - Johannesburg: *"Wilfred Mole and I have been associates for many years and while I was not directly involved in the early days I watched with interest as Wilfred became more and more involved with Steam preservation. About five years ago Wilfred asked me to get involved with Sandstone Estates and it was inevitable that I would also become involved with the Sandstone Heritage Trust and I welcomed the opportunity to be a part of preserving our heritage. Today I am involved in every aspect of the Trust's activities which included negotiating with organisations such as mines to save steam locomotives and if possible to have them donated, the procurement of other rail heritage items such as wagons either through donations, direct purchases or tenders, dealings with Transnet and other heritage organisation, it's tourism activities and so on. I am the first to admit that some of the technical aspects are sometimes beyond me but I believe that I bring valuable corporate and financial expertise to the organisation and with 5 years knowledge behind me I have a very good understanding of the difficulties faced by Rail tourism and preservation in South Africa."*

Wilfred Mole - Eastern Free State: *"Having the world renowned Bloemfontein – Bethlehem line running through our farm sparked real interest in the possibility of a Tourist Rail Renaissance. However despite almost constant attempts to engage Spoornet, Link Rail and then Transnet in a constructive discussion on the subject since 1995, it has eventually dawned on us that the people and the ever changing organisations were acting in bad faith and had neither the interests of the country or their children at heart relative to this iconic issue. I have therefore offered to assist SIA in any way possible to lift the profile of Rail Tourism countrywide and to do what we can to save what is left after a decade of neglect and corporate vandalism."*

Les Smith – Reefsteamers, Johannesburg: *"My Dad was the Manager of the old Railway institute in Smit street,Braamfontein, Johannesburg; and later at Sturruck Park. Our family of course made use of the annual free pass, and travelled extensively behind steam traction in those years, hence my love for steam. I'm currently the Marketing Manager for Reefsteamers."*

Ian Pretorius, Atlantic Rail: *"My father was a captain with SAA in the early 1950`s and had to move to Johannesburg. Not to interfere with my schooling I stayed behind with Gran in Cape Town. The result was every school holiday I travelled by train to Johannesburg (virtually all steam). I also had an uncle in East London, and aunt in Lusaka. I was fortunate to experience Class 15E's out of Cape Town, Class 23 up the Hex River Pass with 14CR banking behind, the Class 25 Condensors in the Karoo, and non-condensors north of Kimberley, GEA Garratts up the Montagu Pass, 15F's from Port Elizabeth to Cookhouse, 14CRB's double headed from Cookhouse towards East London, Malletts shunting at Cambridge and the many branch line locomotives at the various stops en route. Steam train travel and I became one."*

Phil Mortimer Snr (UK): *"My involvement with trains and railways goes back a long way. I think I inherited the interest from my father (he was a signalman on the old LNER in Yorkshire) and my uncle who was fireman on the GE lines out of London to east Anglia. His claim to fame was losing his shovel when firing a loco up Brentwood Bank and having to pay for the replacement!"*

Phil Mortimer Jnr (US): *"I'm too young to have experienced daily steam traction, having been born after daily usage of steam traction was eliminated in the UK. But I've always had a strong interest in rail transportation and steam traction in particular. My experience has come from visiting and working with preserved/heritage railways. I have a fascination with machinery in general, especially rail equipment, and have a particular fascination with narrow gauge garratts!!. I also believe that updated and modernized steam technology still has something to offer and that modern steam rail traction has not reached it's zenith. In addition to preserving some magnificent and important heritage items, by saving AND utilizing some of South Africa's redundant steam locomotive fleet, it is possible for a new generation to develop the skills and experience necessary to work with this technology and for new generations of engineers to develop modern alternatives to oil based technologies, not just in rail transportation, but also in power generation and other fields.*

*Presently, I earn my living as a scientist in the US and have been away from the active rail heritage scene for a while. But with the inspiration of organizations such as Sandstone Trust, Reefsteamers and the like, who believe and demonstrate that older technology is by no means defunct and can still play an important part in daily life, it is time to return to the fold. My most recent active contribution to the rail heritage scene at present is being involved with the saving and hopefully eventual restoration of the Phil Girdlestone modified NGG16A garratt, # 141, the "Red Dragon."*

In addition to the above Shaun Ackerman, Reefsteamers, Johannesburg has also confirmed his acceptance as Board member and we await details of his background.

It is pleasing to note that Phil Mortimer Jnr, Shaun and Pat Ackerman are young men with decades of steam involvement ahead of them. Many of our other members are career professionals and businessmen running big organisations like Errol Ashwell.

Indicative of what work is being handled by individuals, either in their own capacity as members of a club (in this case Les Smith of Reefsteamers) or on behalf of SIA we detail some of the points that are now being addressed across a very broad variety of subjects by a very large number of people potentially. We hope that SIA members will get a good feel for the way in which the organization is developing and the way in which we can move it towards a truly effective global lobbying organization which brings intellectual depth, real knowledge of the subject, stature and above all the interests of South Africa to the fore.

The more effective clubs and preservation organisations in South Africa such as Reefsteamers engage with Transnet on a direct basis and one of SIA's functions is to monitor this and coordinate it so that we never do anything contradictory. We have published below a number of examples of what Advisory Board members are doing and what they are currently thinking strategically.

# Communicating with Transnet

*"From: LES SMITH [mailto:momsmith@lantic.net]*
*Sent: 16 February 2009 10:52*
*To: Susie.Mabie@transnet.net, Cc: joannewest@btinternet.com; Lee Gates*
*Subject: Expression of Interest - Purchase of second hand coal stage at Millsite Locomotive depot.*

*Dear Ms Mabie,*

*Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Les Smith, and I'm responsible for Marketing and related matters at Reefsteamers. Reefsteamers are of course a section 21 association nor for gain, and the principal reason for our existence is to promote rail tourism, with a special emphasis on using steam traction.*

*Transnet Freight Rail have recently called for expressions of interest (EOI's) for the purchase/removal of the old coal stage at Millsite locomotive depot. Unfortunately, there is a class GEA steam locomotive, which has been earmarked for preservation standing right next to the coal stage. Our concern here is that if the coal stage is indeed scrapped, the chances are of.the GEA locomotive getting damaged in the process is highly likely.*

*What we are asking is that you use your considerable influence in having this locomotive moved out of harm's way. It should not prove to be too problematic, as the diesel loco shunter could be easily used to move the GEA to a spot where it would be safe from suffering any further damage.*
*On another note, surely the coal stage itself should be saved for posterity.*

*Thank you for taking the trouble to read this e mail, hopefully you'll be able to assist us in this regard?*

*Kind regards,*
*Les Smith."*

No response received to date.

There can be no more passionate and motivated individual in support of SIA than Lee Gates. Lee has readily agreed to be an Advisory Board member and has sent us the following comments.

At the time we asked Advisory Board members to come up with a description of the Management Board if you like. We have taken the liberty of calling it Advisory Board for the time being but that is not cast in stone.

*Having been challenged by Wilfred E. Mole to come up with a succinct, descriptive name for the team that he is currently assembling to guide SIA forward, I initially went into a mental morass of scatty acronyms and wrestled with cumbersome structural terminologies. Nothing really seemed right. Some of the acronyms were almost cute … but SIA is not about being cute or having fun, although we can enjoy the heritage steam that will be saved. This is a serious business and it is time to get to work.*

*The name that I suggested for the SIA team is 'Focus Team.'*

*Yes, it isn't not cute or even eye catching but let me explain the reason for my suggestion. 'Executive Team' is a bit too stuffed shirty and arrogant. As for a 'committee', well, there is the saying that if you want to slow a process down, put a committee in charge. Neither are we delegates or board members. We are not to be in charge …. we are to guide.*

*The role of the strictly volunteer and democratic team that is being put into place is that of focussing the strength and the corporate voice of you, the members of the ever-strengthening SIA network, into specific projects and drives. We are to function rather like a magnifying glass held in a sun beam, focussing and concentrating the invisible infra-red energy into one very potent point.*

*As you read elsewhere, SIA is to focus on lobbying, raising support and directly challenging those who are hindering steam preservation.. We will research the 'targets' the communications and support that SIA needs ; but we need you to allow your obvious concern for South Africa's remaining steam heritage to converge through our lens, and so provide the focussed heat to challenge these people and burn away the hindrances. To those that we need to challenge, you are invisible, just like those infra red beams – as they don't know who you are and don't care anyway. But what a dramatic effect when all that energy merges into one, bright, focussed spot!*

*We need to remember that the railways are not really our target as they have no legal or financial legal obligation to provide for heritage steam operations. In fact, the railways are somewhat willing to allow steam to continue to run and be preserved, but they won't put any of their own resources into the issue, and for the sake of convenience, only recognize the existing moribund heritage bodies. In so doing, they are doing right in their own eyes. The focus team will focus your voice and passion to raise fires under those obstructive heritage bodies who are either passive, paranoid, uncommunicative, unaccountable, fearful or just plain self-serving. SIA will hold these bodies and people therein accountable to the whole wide world as well as to the South African government in terms of the social, tourism, employment and financial opportunities that are being lost forever. Let them feel the heat and by the light of the rising flames, showing them up for everyone to see what they really are.*

*Yes, this year's planned activism will make people uncomfortable and will raise up enemies as no one likes to be challenged and have their fell deeds and ulterior motives exposed within the light. They will almost certainly retaliate in an aggressive fashion, be pompously insulting, claiming an authority they don't really have. The focus team will certainly take unpleasant knocks and will probably end up being accused of motives impure and of being trouble makers. SIA as a whole will be attacked in turn. That's fine – we, the members of the Focus Team are prepared to take heat in return as we have more SIA heat to deliver. We will put up with being scorched ourselves to save what is left of the steam machines that belong to all the people of South Africa, not just the so-called heritage groups.*

*So, now you have the focussing lens before you … who's with us?*

# News from Around the Country





Dylan Knott of the Helderberg Vintage Railway and the Elgin Valley Railway has sent us the following:

*"We are currently negotiating with Transnet Freight Rail for a favourable lease agreement in connection with the Elgin Station site.*

*Rolling stock has been acquired, but is currently stored off site with the exception of the four motor rail trolleys.*

*A restoration program will shortly be implemented for the two Trackmaster trolleys and hopefully a service will be possible towards the end of the year."*

SIA is currently carrying out a detailed survey of what exactly the collective state of Rail Preservation is in South Africa and we will publish a special report on that as soon as we receive all the information.

# The SANRASM Issue Revisited



For some time now the Sandstone Heritage Trust has been communicating with SANRASM regarding the state of valuable locomotives that have been moved to a preservation centre. The essence of the correspondence is that the items are not being preserved and are suffering terrible attrition.

The communications that we have received have either been non-existent or dismissive to say the least. It would appear that SANRASM is in denial and simply will not accept that there is a problem. An ever growing number of SIA members are expressing outrage at the present situation, more particularly due to the fact that when presenting themselves to mines and other locomotive users in the past they provided an unconditional guarantee that the items would be looked after.

We certainly have not reached the stage where we begin to appeal to the original owners of the locomotives who have either donated them or leased them or put them on some sort of long-term trust lease arrangement with SANRASM but we certainly will consider going down that road. A number of our SIA members are senior mining executives in their own right and they have volunteered to assist in this regard when we have reached that position.

In this edition of the SIA newsletter we therefore again appeal to SANRASM to take the interests of the country and to take the interests of the locomotives to heart and put them before their own feelings of pride and protectionism. We all suffer attrition, we all suffer theft, and we all suffer from the vagaries of the scrap industry so nobody should be ashamed that they are on the receiving end of that. What they should be ashamed of is the fact that they refuse point blank to acknowledge that these risks and difficulties exist. Time is not on our side. Here is a report just in from a concerned SIA member with photographs which places the situation in sharp relief.

***EMAIL TO MR LAWRENCE POSNIAK, SANRASM FROM SIA***

*Sent 15 February 2009: "As you know Steam in Action has over 700 members, many of whom are very concerned about the valuable locomotives at Chamdore which falls under the SANRAM umbrella. You might be interested in an extract from a report by one SANRASM member which reads:*

*"I spoke to the so called security guard who was on duty, who told me he was too scared to chase off the "Affirmative Action Shoppers" as they had threatened to slit his throat if he tried to stop them. He also said they told him his life was not worth it for looking after the White man's things. This facility is not at all secured, there are no fences, and an informal settlement is a mere stone's throw away. He said he walks around first thing in the mornings, and picks up the bits and pieces the shoppers have left behind. He showed me what he had collected this morning which included one chimney and several small connecting rods!*

*I did not feel safe at all being there, and cut my visit short after taking a couple of photos."*

*The following input was also received.*

*"I hope you got the photographs.*

*One of the biggest losses to my mind is that all the coupling rods from the sole S class have now been stolen. These were intact at my last visit."*

*This simple, no nonsense information and the accompanying photographs make nonsense of the claims being made by SANRASM. The fact is that there will be nothing left because the attrition is constant and the security non-existent.*

*Was it your intention to offer a safe haven for these locomotives to the many organizations that donated them to you with the certain knowledge that they would be destroyed in their entirety?*

*Your sincerely,*
*Michael C. Myers"*

SIA member Mike Myers commented: In reviewing this very up-to-date information we can verify its accuracy.



We know how extraordinary difficult it is to keep these items in good condition but if part of the budget was allocated to effective security, i.e. to take the items physically out of bounds so that local vagrants cannot help themselves to parts when the urge takes them, and finally if technical people could be on site throughout the working week (with good security over weekends) painting these items with diesel and carrying out the very simplest of preventative maintenance tasks the future of these locomotives would be look a lot brighter. Ironically it is the theft of the steel on an ongoing basis that is the biggest problem but those SIA members who have been successful in keeping the scrap dealer from the door will always say the same thing – thieves avoid areas that are busy. The minute locos are parked in the veld and abandoned one may as well put up a neon sign saying "Help yourself".

In closing we would like to reiterate that SIA is impressed with the commitment made by SANRASM to establishing a programme whereby locomotives were saved rather than scrapped. However if the end result is simply that they are slowly reduced to nothing by scrap thieves then all the effort, all the good will, all the transport costs that were invested in these locomotives will come to nothing. There has certainly been an omission on SANRASM's part in the way in which it honoured the commitments made to the original owners of these locomotives when they offered to take them into safe custody. It might be worth revisiting what SANRASM's original ideals were. The attached brochure refers (click here to view PDF).

## Media Publicity

***There is no doubt that people are becoming very agitated about the state of our rail network. Ever more articles and letters to the leading newspapers in the country are appearing. In this section we detail some of these which I am sure most SIA members have not come across.***

## *Letter to the Business Times 8 February 2009*

### *DESTROYING OUR RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE*

*I agree that in many respects Maria Ramos has been very successful in much of what has been put at her doorstep.*

*Regrettably though, as chief executive of Transnet, she also has managed, or at least helped, to destroy an entire rail transportation infrastructure in the form of the passenger services.*

*Of course, the responsibility does not lie at her doorstep alone; it's government policy — via the minister of transport — that decides on the parameters and issues the brief of her job description. In that sense, Ramos has been, and is, very effective and efficient.*

*The end effect of her and the state's actions is that our long-distance and metro rail transport has gone from bad to worse over the past few years, while the historical steam trains have been destroyed for all intents and purposes.*

*South Africa was known worldwide for its wonderful steam trains, which attracted many tourists over the years, and it is extremely unfortunate that a short-sighted policy should have destroyed this heritage.*

*Just a few weeks ago, it was decided to scrap many ageing steam locos and coaches, instead of allowing interested parties to salvage as much as possible. It is amazing when the national railways of a small country, like Austria, can produce a 60- page catalogue containing timetables of train excursions of all descriptions through the year, many of which are privately run but supported by the state, with the aim of attracting tourists, and at the same time sad that South Africa destroys a large part of its heritage.*

*If that were not enough and, especially when one considers the persistency given to the Gautrain project, one wonders how the powers that be expect the less affluent masses to travel from A to B, be it in and around cities or overland.*

*Transnet has demolished almost all the small stations around the country, closed most of the depots and junctions, and has not in any way responded to the needs of the masses. The old engrained thinking of the previous government has not changed. Until the much-needed rolling stock is in place and functions efficiently, the tracks alone are of little use.*

*Government, the various ministers and Transnet have destroyed much of what took more than 100 years to build, and Ramos, with the stroke of a pen, has unfortunately contributed to this situation, just to square the books.*

*Ultimately one must, of course, put the accountability at the doorstep of the minister, who keeps telling the public at large to make more use of public transport instead of private cars, but fails to provide the necessary infrastructure to support his continued pleas.*

*And instead of taking away or reducing affordable long-distance train services, he and his predecessors should have seen to it that these services were improved and increased. The state's actions over the years are a direct cause of the horrendous increase in the number of both freight and private vehicles on our roads, many of which are un-roadworthy.*

*All the lamenting by the minister and others about motorists and the relatively unsafe road traffic is just camouflage to hide their continued inefficiencies and inadequacies. It is a great pity that the only person close to this government who seems to have any kind of understanding of how mass public transport should function — in my view Jeremy Cronin — is unable to persuade the ones in higher places to take the necessary actions. All his pleading and proposing the right remedies over the years has obviously just fallen on deaf ears.*

*Peter Smulik, Rugby, Cape Town*

# Our Dialogue with Government and the parastatals and Transnet

In one word this is the biggest problem. There appears to be no mechanism or culture of response. At the beginning of the year the active members of SIA decided on a programme to try to persuade the relevant organization in charge, namely the Transnet Rail Heritage Division (previously Transnet Heritage Foundation) to at least listen to us. The file is massive. We have been receiving repeated requests from Maria Ramos' office to please deal with Vuyo Kahla. Vuyo Kahla's file is over 6" thick but he has never responded. We then started by phoning his secretary almost daily with a request that we be given a chance to have an appointment. One should remember that four SIA members visited Vuyo Kahla on 11 March 2008. During that meeting which went extremely well we were promised various documents detailing the soon to be released Branch Line strategy etc. We in turn volunteered to put a white paper together detailing in which direction Rail Preservation should go in South Africa. Within days however of that meeting we heard that the scrap dealers were officially on site at Millsite cutting up part of the National Collection of heritage steam locomotives.

From that minute on all communications with Vuyo Kahla's office ceased – they never responded to anything. We do know why the scrapping was stopped – it was as a result of massive pressure from over 300 SIA members worldwide which certainly brought about a change of heart. Undoubtedly Vuyo Kahla is embarrassed by the fact that this happened, and to be fair to him perhaps he did not even know about it. However, we do struggle to come to terms with the lack of manners in not returning our calls, not writing to us, or even acknowledging our correspondence. Correspondence has been hand delivered, faxed, e-mailed, and then hand delivered again. Vuyo Kahla is Chairman of the Old Boys' Association of a prominent boys' school in Johannesburg and we even took the trouble of sending a set of documents to the secretary who promised faithfully that she would see that they were handed to him. I think we can accept the fact that he is offended and if he is offended that perhaps he needs to tell upwards of 700 people why he is offended. Everything that has been done has been done in the interest of South Africa as a country and of course an interest in Rail Preservation.

Ironically while we are not talking to Transnet we are talking to the South African Football Union about their enthusiasm for rail tourism during the World Cup 2010. They have been put in the picture and they have promised to talk to the people that are currently blocking every tourist initiative that we come up with, with respect to the World Cup football programme in 2010 and it would appear that they aren't making any headway either.

The documentation is so substantial we could never publish it in a newsletter but we are considering placing it all on the web in the interests of transparency. Typical of the type of approach that we are adopting is the attached to Susie Mabie who one would assume Vuyo Kahla would delegate to in the event that he has firmly made his mind up that he is never going to talk to any railway related people in future. I think we can accept the fact that he is offended. If that be the case he should communicate to upwards of 700 professional people as to why he is offended. It would be an interesting response since he is an executive director of the National Railway Network.

***EMAIL TO MS SUSIE MABIE***
*Sent: 16 January 2009 09:31 AM*
***Re: Brand South Africa***

*I wonder if anyone employed by government or by one of the government parastatals, such as Transnet, have actually stopped to consider what damage has been done to South Africa's brand internationally as a result of the indifference that exists towards our national heritage. In your case it is the National Railway Heritage.*

*There are many articles and many speeches appearing where we are being exhorted to do what we can do to prepare South Africa for the World Cup 2010 and to improve South Africa's international image. The creation of Steam in Action is our small contribution to this effort. We tell people what is happening, we encourage them to support us, and above all we encourage them to come and visit us.*

*The event that we are hosting in late February at Sandstone includes some of the most influential people in Europe in this particular sector. We are proud of that and we will do our best to ensure that it is a success. Hopefully these influential people will go away with a good impression of South Africa.*
*The snag is that we are a private sector player who is not supported by the government. The refusal to deal with issues, to answer correspondence or to even make a coherent statement on the future of the assets that are threatened etc. sends a very large message to the international community that we say one thing but do another. We want people to come to our beautiful country but we do not have much respect for our heritage. We want to find compelling reasons why people should come to the World Cup soccer events and we are told that we must find non Soccer reasons to encourage them to come here because not all people are soccer enthusiasts and even soccer enthusiasts have other interests.*

*We want to leave you with the thought that Transnet may be achieving it's objectives but we wonder if Transnet is doing anything positive to enhance South Africa's brand.*

*Just a few encouraging words or even a statement that you would be prepared to work with the private sector to achieve mutually beneficial objectives would open people's eyes.*

*Br,*
*Michael C. Myers*

# Member's Correspondence and Requests for Assistance

## Line Restoration Enquiry

This is typical of the many letters we receive querying the state of branch lines. The news is unfortunately not good.

*From: Johan Janse van Rensburg [mailto:bvo@webafrica.org.za]*
*Sent: 05 February 2009 13:51*
*To: joannewest@btinternet.com*
*Subject: RE: STEAM IN ACTION - Response*

*Hi There,*
*Is there a possibility that the line`s from Wollesley in the Cape to Ceres can be restored for tourism as it is going to waste and it is a beautiful scenic line.*
*As well as the Malmesbury to Bitterfontein line to be used for tourists as it is only used for goods at the moment.*
*It is a shame to see all these good lines going to the dogs and that it can be used to generate a good income*
*Regards,*

*J.H.Janse van Rensburg*

# The State of HRASA (Heritage Rail Association of South Africa)

## Les Smith writes

*"The original concept of HRASA was a good one. The various steam clubs would be able to forward their concerns, ideas, suggestion etc to HRASA, and HRASA would in turn approach the relevant authority at Transnet. HRASA would continually follow up with the Transnet official until the issue was resolved. HRASA would then in turn inform the relevant steam club of the outcome of the discussions which had taken place.*

*All the representatives of the various steam clubs that attended the inaugural meeting held some time back at George, were quite happy with the concept, as well as having a certain Mr Mark Robinson as Chairman.*

*Spoornet were also very happy with the concept, as they would only be dealing with one body, instead of several clubs worrying them at all odd times. This concept still is valid as far as Transnet is concerned, and is the reason none of us really get any joy out of Transnet.Transnet are even more overjoyed that Mark Robinson is the Chairman and spokesperson for HRASA; as the man is deaf, blind and has no intellect. and as such, does not bother them very much. The original "Steam Exit Plan" called for a ban on steam on core lines such as the Richards Bay line, the Durban main line, and the line between Germiston and Langlaagte. Transnet have now moved the goal posts and bans steam on all main lines. This major change was never challenged by HRASA, being the toothless Bulldog that they are.*

*What we, and I mean Steam In Action has to do as a matter of urgency, is to convince Transnet that we are actually the ball players out there, and not HRASA. I suggest we get SIA members to lobby on our behalf by feeding them the way to go about this in the next SIA Newsletter. I have also asked our HRASA representative at Reefsteamers, a certain Mr Mike du Plooy, to put me in touch with the correct person at Transnet, in order for me to attempt to get the stupid ban on steam locomotives running through Johannesburg station lifted. My original e mail to Mike was dated the 3rd of December 2008. I've also sent several follow up e mails to Mike since, all without any response.*

*These are just some of my thoughts on the current steam preservation situation, and in particular HRASA.*

*Kind regards,*
*Les."*

The spectrum virtually overheated in the last two weeks with respect to HRASA. We have to accept the fact that we are not going to be able to work with HRASA but it now appears that HRASA is on the precise of exploding, which is a pity, because we could have achieved much had they been more enlightened. Nonetheless the work has to be done and we will work with whoever the new HRASA executives are. We have certainly had numerous overtures which in broad summary say the following, "SIA was a good idea, SIA could have done a lot more and it is only because of people's personal pride and protective attitude towards their fiefdoms that no progress was made. We now understand what SIA's original objectives were and we would like to engage with them as soon as possible. Unfortunately HRASA always ends every meeting by arranging another meeting, and hopefully one of these days somebody will be courageous enough to put the real priorities back on the table and then get on with it. As always SIA stands ready to assist. We can truly say that with the number of committed members we have got and with the skills that those members have collectively we can be a formidable comrade in arms in the struggle to try and save some part of South Africa's world renowned railway assets.

# HRASA Feedback

There appears to be substantial internal disagreement at HRASA. Many of the members who are excellent people have made it clear to us that criticism is not countenanced. This is a pity because only through lively debate and by using the good offices of the directors and key officials of an organisation does it flourish. We have been able to ascertain the following. The EGM of HRASA was called for 21st February. This meeting came about as a result of generalised dissatisfaction with the performance of HRASA and the chairman in particular. So far it seems that two camps have emerged - one in favour of outright change, and another who acknowledge that change is necessary, but do not believe a vote of no-confidence is the way to go about it. The latter are also concerned about the damage this may do to our industry. BSM have resigned but legally are still members, as the board did not ratify the resignation and fees are paid up. We feel that HRASA is virtually defunct and in need of complete restructuring. The good news is that fact seems to have been accepted by most of the incumbent members who do have voting majority. The new HRASA should be talking to Government about promoting Rail Tourism, which in turn means jobs in South Africa. Furthermore such an organisation must be all inclusive, representative and transparent We would like to replace it with an organisation centred on promoting Rail Tourism, in much the same vane as Errol Ashwell's proposals. Such an organisation must be all-inclusive, representative and transparent.

# Tender Feedback

***Report on 2 important scrap tenders:***

1. ***Narrow Gauge assets, Eastern Cape (the Avontuur Line).***
2. ***Steam cranes, Danskraal, Newscastle.***

Inexplicably two tenders submitted by the Sandstone Heritage Trust to try and save as many of these assets as possible has come and gone without comment.

The attached letter was sent to Spoornet on 5th February, to which no response has been received. In purely legal terms our offers have expired, i.e. they have been time gated and since they have not been accepted one must assume that either the tenders have been cancelled or that we were unsuccessful.

We will provide an update as soon as we know more.

# STOP THE PRESS!

The following has just come in. This undated response to the offer has just been received after great pressure was applied.
Click here to view PDF.

*Sent: 05 February 2009 01:22 PM*
*To: dewald.swanepoel@transnet.net*
*Subject: Re tenders : 190/2/100/2008 and 190/2/101/2008*

*"Dear Dewald,*

*Further to our telephonic discussion regarding the Narrow Gauge Wagon tender number 190/2/100/2008 and the Steam Cranes tender number 190/2/101/2008 we note that the option dates for both of these tenders was 31 January 2009 and to date we have had no correspondence either advising that the tenders have been awarded. We have also not had a request for an extension to the option date.*

*Three scenarios may have played themselves out, one being that Transnet has awarded the tenders to other successful bidders and we were unsuccessful in our bid, Transnet did not receive any offers which it found acceptable and therefore withdrew the tenders or the tender was simply left to expire. If none of these is the case will Transnet be asking for extensions to the option date? It seems a bit late for this because the option date has passed.*

*Legally, validity of the tenders have expired.*

*There are obviously budgetary issues at stake within the company with our financial year which ends on 28 February. Without knowing what is happening with these tenders we are unable to deal with the ramifications either way until someone tells us what is going on.*

*Could you please advise us what the status is on both tenders please?*

*Your assistance is greatly appreciated.*
*Regards,*
*Michael C. Myers"*

## Millsite News

Dick Manton has been one of South Africa's most loyal and knowledgeable steam supporters for many years. He tabled a suggestion sometime back which has been effectively repeated below. SIA has the following comments:

A) None of the stumbling blocks relating to the movement of the items has been removed and Dick has been sent all the correspondence from our side. The authority that we are told exists does not exist.

B) Dick's comments are valid and will form the centre portion of our strategy to save the Millsite locomotives.

*"Sent: 02 February 2009 18:42*
*Dear SIA,*

*Following recent discussions with yourself and Mark Robinson and using further input from John Middleton I have refined and prioritised the list of red-line locomotives at Millsite based on our view of uniqueness and historical importance as follows:*

*1. 5B 723*
*2. 5R 781*
*3. 12A 2111*
*4. 10C 772*
*5. GE 2260*
*6. 6A 462*
*7. 15A 1791*
*8. 19 1366*
*9. 4AR 1555*
*10. GCA 2199*

***According to Mark Robinson all or most of the stumbling blocks regarding their movement to a place of safety have now been resolved in discussions with Transnet?***

*As one of the donors of funds to move the locos, along with John Middleton, Dennis Moore and others I would like to see this money used to support the move rather than returned to donors as has been suggested. However, as only limited funds are available I believe we need such a prioritised list to drive the process.*

*I would imagine the most cost effective route to achieve this would be to move all the locos, at least in the first instance, to Germiston where I understand there is space available for their storage.*

*If Clubs want to save and move other (historically less important) locos then I believe they should be encouraged to set up their own appeals for this purpose.*

*With your departure as SIA Director, I am not sure how this could best be managed, although it may be that Reefsteamers could be approached to see if they would be prepared to project manage the exercise (working strictly in accordance with the agreed red-line list priorities)?*

*Kind Regards,*
*Dick Manton"*

A substantial amount of correspondence, 15MB to be exact, has been sent to Dick so that he can view the matter objectively. Dick, thanks for your support and interest. You are a steady hand on the tiller.

## Millsite Coal Stage



The magnificent coal stage at Millsite has been put out for tender and the scrap tender closed on 17th February.

The tender number is 190/2/05/2009 and the inspection was on 9th February.

None of the members canvassed had the finance available to bid for this Coal Stage.

What is interesting is that it was in regular use not long ago. The attached photographs refer.



## Tips for Photographers

One of our members has sent us the following which we think is very useful.
*To our photography loving friends.....*

*Alf Taylor (6434)*

*I think Autofocus is good.....*
*I think Image Stabiliser is great for us older chaps.....*
*I am not sure about Face Detection and autofocus.....*

*All the above are on most new digital cameras.*

*I have just received this notification which I think is too much...*

*I think we will have some unhappy photographers when they point the camera at the missus and it just won't fire the shutter!*

*"Capture all your happy moments. The latest camera from Sony has Smile shutter function which will detect a smiling face and automatically release the shutter. The Sony Full HD W120 Digital Camera Bundle at R2599.00 includes a Sony W120 digital camera with Smile shutter function, Sony bag, 1GB MS pro duo and a photo printer. You save R1400.00! See more great deals in the digital SLR catalogue"*

SIA fully supports the use of cameras that only capture pictures of people who are smiling. A smiling face has been a bit rare lately.

## Appeal to Members

***Availability of Coal***

South Africa is a very large coal producer and although the price has risen in line with world trends we are finding that many of the collieries are reluctant to sell the small volumes that we need. By small volumes we are probably talking shipments of 100 tons at a time.

If any SIA members are connected to the Mining industry and possibly have direct access to coal producers we might try to rationalise some diverse supply line. Please e-mail us.

## Summary

Enough material has come in over the past two weeks to produce half a dozen newsletters of normal SIA size. We have concentrated on trying to take the temperature of the marketplace at present and we will be producing a special report and member update document within the next 14-days which will move many of these issues forward.

Please consider the contents of this newsletter as work in progress. It is now time for SIA members to flex their muscles and to provide their input, criticism and general comments. We look forward to receiving your input.

## Steam in Action Information

*Our Founding Members:*
Reefsteamers: www.reefsteamers.co.za
Friends of the Rail: www.friendsoftherail.com
Sandstone Heritage Trust: www.sandstone-estates.com
Steam in Action - An Association Incorporated under Section 21, Registration Number 2007/035119/08
www.steam-in-action.com

***Your comments, queries and suggestions are always welcome! Please email: joannewest@btinternet.com***