

Coach 57 The Story of another Royal coach.

It is 1910 and on May 31st the Union of South Africa came into being. Some months later in November, His Royal Highness, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught accompanied by his wife Her Royal Highness, Princess Louise Margaret, Duchess of Connaught, travelled aboard the Union-Castle Line ship *Balmoral Castle* to South Africa, to open the first parliament of the newly formed Union of South Africa. In Johannesburg, on 30 November, he laid a commemorative stone at the Rand Regiments Memorial, dedicated to the British soldiers that died during the Second Boer War. As part of the tour the Royal Party travelled by train from Cape Town to Bloemfontein and then to Rhodesia and back to Pretoria and Durban, departing on December 2nd.

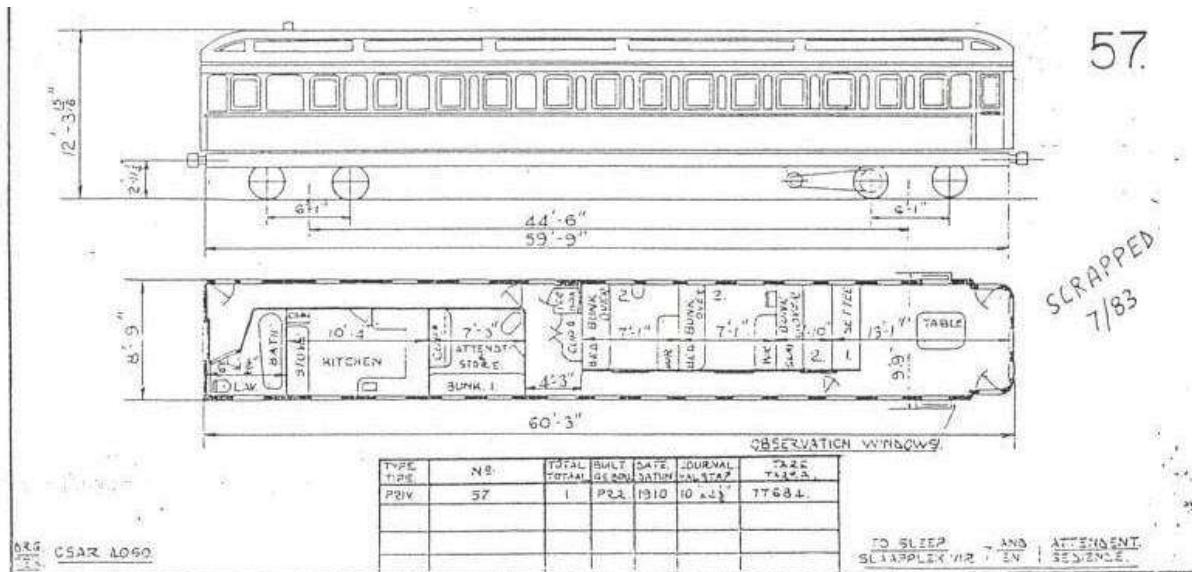


The 1910 Royal Train at Pretoria with the Duke and Duchess of Connaught in front of the locomotive. Picture courtesy of DRISA/Transnet Museum.

A special train from the newly formed South African Railways was assembled from a mixture of coaching stock from the new SAR and the older constituent companies. From the Central South African Railways (CSAR), a newly built in 1910 dining car, number 20518 of Type C7 was included in the consist. This coach became a type A 15 number 140 with the new SAR and was named "Letsani. In 1912 she was converted to a Private Saloon and renumbered 52 for the System Manager Pretoria keeping the name "Letsani".

It has a further Royal connection, as it was also used in the Prince of Wales tour train of 1925. This tour of South Africa by Edward, Prince of Wales, was a massive three-month imperial goodwill mission from April 30 to July 29, 1925. Spanning over 10,000 miles, the tour aimed to strengthen imperial ties, reconcile Afrikaner republicans with the British monarchy, and celebrate British influence in the region.

Coach 52 was then renumbered again as 57 when coach number 40 (originally R8) of the original 1947 Royal Tour White Train coaches (then in use as the State President's Train)



The SAR diagram for number 57

took the number 52 in 1969. Number 57 was withdrawn in July 1983 and sold to BIC in Industria. From there it was sold to National Flag in Kew in Johannesburg from where Sandstone Estates purchased it early in 2026.



Coach 57 at National Flag. Picture courtesy of National Flag.

On the 31st of May 2026 Mercor Transport moved on site to lift the coach clear of its surrounding fence where it had stood for nearly 40 years and place it on the low bed for transport to Sandstone in the Eastern Free State. It arrived on June 1st and was placed in position next to the two classic Dining Cars beside the Waenhuis. The line had been cleared of some freight vehicles that were on display prior to arrival. So now Sandstone has three coaches with a Royal Connection, a special moment indeed!

Enjoy the photo gallery as we move Coach 57 from Johannesburg to Sandstone. Pictures from Mercor Transport and Sandstone.



Up and over the fence!



On the road to Sandstone



Arrival at Sandstone

After some excellent shunting by the Mercor driver and Sandstone's TLB operator Coach 57 was moved into its final position.



The interior and exterior of Coach 57 have been well maintained over the years and Sandstone only needs to undertake some minor repairs on site. Just look at the beautiful condition of this coach which is now 116 years old!









And for our tailpiece, some great coverage in Die Burger.'

DIE BURGER

Oorspronklik in 1910 in Pretoria gebou



**Treinwa met
koninklike kinkel
museum toe**

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Next time you visit Sandstone have a good look at Coach 57, you will not be disappointed!