

HERITAGE RAILWAY ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA – MARCH 2010 – PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE REPORTS

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MONTHLY PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE REPORTS: MARCH 2010

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SUB-COMMITTEE: HRASA CORPORATE LIAISON REPORT

Team Leader: Chris Janisch **Members:** Dudley Smith, Nerina Skuy and Elize Lubbe

Following on from our discussions with Transnet Foundation in January/February, we have been advised that the Disposal of Assets process will be decided upon shortly by Transnet Exco. The Transnet Heritage Committee (THC), which was formed to make recommendations on the assets, has finalised and submitted their proposals based upon HRASA's recommendations. This, of course, will not amount to an ideal situation for preservationists, but will reflect the reality of the current environment. The THC has been strengthened by the addition of further persons of influence in Transnet, and we are of the opinion that a new realisation of the value of heritage preservation is starting to dawn. It takes many years to create a new mindset, and HRASA is concurrently often accused of not making progress; however, our constant presence and voice of concern is starting to be listened to. There are now individuals within Transnet who see the value in our presence, and are able to grasp the bigger picture and see that the company can benefit through good positive exposure.

HRASA's suggestions for the celebration of 150 years of railways in SA are starting to gain attention. Transnet are most interested in the running of special train(s) to commemorate the occasion, and this will involve steam haulage. There are also other projects centred on KwaZulu-Natal, where the first train ran in 1860, and they too have stimulated interest. This is the year when steam train travel can be invigorated in the eyes of the public and authorities.

A meeting was recently held with a senior advisor to Transnet. It was stressed to us that economics are of the utmost importance in the disposal process. Because Transnet have effectively decided to get rid of heritage assets, it will be market-driven forces and not goodwill which will dictate the future of rail preservation. We will need to raise significant funding and investment if there is to be a future for the industry. Clubs will only be able to hold out for so long before attrition kicks in; thus we need to convince government and investors of the benefits of our activities. This is of course easier said than done, and we maintain that Government departments e.g. Tourism, need to grab the rail tourism baton and run with it. Sadly our attempts to meet with the National Tourism Authority have not borne any fruit yet. A meeting between Sandstone, HRASA and Tourism was scheduled for March, but then postponed by the authority for unknown reasons. We will continue to agitate for this interaction.

A most successful meeting was held recently with the Rail Safety Regulator. It has become necessary to develop a set of standards for the heritage rail industry. The meeting plotted out the way forward and methods that will be used to set the standard. I must make a personal comment here that I find the attitude of the RSR to be refreshingly positive and co-operative. The spirit of the MoU signed with them persists and HRASA's knowledge and experience will be used to full effect in the forthcoming exercise. This is an example of the usefulness of the national body to draw up an important future policy, which is precisely what HRASA should be doing.

We have had further discussions with SIA as to the future of the overseeing authorities. SIA have decided to withdraw from the scene, subject to HRASA showing capacity to take over. At the moment they are unconvinced as to our ability to do so. It is obvious that there will be no perfect world for the South African rail preservation fan. The future will be dictated by socio-political factors in the new South Africa. It is up to HRASA to adapt to this set of circumstances and make the best of what is on offer. This means that we will have to double our efforts, as hard as this might be; but a small window of opportunity is still open and we must strive towards what we desire.

Chris Janisch

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SUB-COMMITTEE: HRASA OPERATIONS PORTFOLIO REPORT

Team Leader: Ian Pretorius **Members:** Coen Pretorius, Chris Janisch, Mike Du Plooy, Dylan Knott and Steve Smith

The responses from the Operations SC have been disappointing and therefore I can only report on what I have been directly involved.

Atlantic Rail is in discussion with the Railway Safety Regulator to have its RSR permit reinstated. Atlantic Rail intends to start operating by the end of April 2010. Once the permit has been issued, Atlantic Rail will supply a schedule of operations until the end of the year.

After a lot of exaggerated complaints regarding the condition of the *Red Devil*, Andy Selfe from Elgin Valley Railway was kind enough to manufacture and fit a screen and the cab is now secure. On Monday, 29 March, the loco is to be moved to a more prominent position which is away from the overhead electric wires. This will allow the loco to be cleaned up. A volunteer team have agreed to do this cleaning job on Saturday, 10 April.

A meeting was held between EVR, HVR and AR regarding future operations and co-operation between the Western Cape members. At that meeting, the Transnet attitude towards lease-lend was discussed. It was felt that if Transnet insists on the sale of vintage equipment and those prices are market related (scrap value) a very large part of the existing vintage fleet would be lost forever.

A visit to establish the existence of "*Blackie*" was conducted on Friday, 19 March. Regina Isaacs of SAHRA also attended and photographs were taken to prove that the locomotive has not been scrapped and are in secure storage until it can be placed on the new Cape Town Station concourse.

HRASA West meetings have been changed to once every two months, as we seem to be discussing the same topics repeatedly without much happening in between. The next meeting will be held on 6 April.

Ian Pretorius

SUB-COMMITTEE: HRASA FINANCIAL PORTFOLIO REPORT

Team Leader: Len Smuts **Members:** Nerina Skuy, Chris Janisch and Ian Pretorius

March saw the invoicing of the 2010/2011 subscriptions in the new membership categories. Donations of R6000 pledged at the January Board of Directors meeting has been received, while some arrear subscriptions for 2009/2010 have also been collected.

It is anticipated that the draft financial statements for the 2009/2010 financial year will be available for audit by mid-April, depending on when final bank statements are received. The HRASA cash flow is now in a healthy state and a budget will be drawn up for the 2011 financial year.

Len Smuts

SUB-COMMITTEE: TOURISM PORTFOLIO REPORT

Team Leader: Dudley Smith **Members:** Nerina Skuy, Chris Janisch, Ian Pretorius and Mike du Plooy

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It would appear that the tourism report I give on a monthly basis is limited to the activities of the Ingwe Municipality. For this I apologise, and I am aware of this shortcoming. However, having said that here is significant progress to report, for which we are grateful.

GMAM 4074

The restoration of this locomotive has been completed. This is a remarkable achievement which was undertaken by the Umgeni Steam Railway and paid for by various government grants facilitated thru the Ingwe Municipality. GMAM 4074 will be the locomotive used to haul the “Sisonke Stimela” an 11 coach luxury passenger train which will operate on the Cape-Natal branch line linking Pietermaritzburg to the Sisonke District. The train rack excluding the locomotive has been refurbished by Rohan Vos to his now world famous standard of excellence. The restoration of the locomotive and coaches is not an end in and of itself but rather a means to an end. That end is the creation of a “new” economy in the Sisonke District based on *tourism*. This destination will be based on the comparative advantages of Rail Mission and Avi Tourism products to which local government has added value creating a competitive destination.

A Breathtaking Journey

Come with us on The Sisonke Stimela as we journey through the beautiful rolling hills of Kwazulu-Natal. The Sisonke Stimela is a magnificent, luxury steam train consisting of a restored historic Garret Locomotive GMAM4074. The seven beautifully refurbished accommodation coaches accommodate 21 guests in luxury suites, with handsome wood panelling and air-conditioning. Each suite accommodates two passengers in either twin or double beds and offers a lounge area with Edwardian furnishings and en-suite bathroom with hot shower. There is a handsome Dining Coach seating 42 passengers and two Lounge Coaches, one of which includes a very popular ‘Observation Section’. The train traverses the splendour of the Umkomaas and Umzimkulu River valleys in the Kwazulu-Natal midlands and the Southern region of the Drakensberg.

Enjoy off train experiences like the Centocow Mission and Reichenau Mill.

The Centocow Mission is one of the largest mission centres established by the Trappist brothers in Kwazulu-Natal. It forms part of the complex of monasteries and missions the monks created across the province, from Mariannhill near the coast to East Griqualand and the valleys of the Midlands. Centocow is of particular significance because of the architectural heritage of the mission church built there. Not only does this building reflect the style developed by the Trappists in Kwazulu-Natal, it contains a unique record of individual’s influential in the Roman Catholic Church in Kwazulu-Natal at the time, represented in a stained-glass window in the Church. The church also houses a rare reproduction of the famous Polish icon depicting the Black Madonna of Czestochowa.

The story of the Reichenau Mill which forms part of the Reichenau Mission Complex is situated on the Polela River some 20km beyond Bulwer. It was constructed by the Trappist monks around 1896 and is a wonderful example of the late-19th century mill engineering being driven by water power from the adjacent river, which descends some 40 feet over a picturesque waterfall upstream of the mill. The power in the water was not harnessed with the classic water wheel, but by means of an axial-flow multi-bladed turbine situated at the base of the waterfall. This must have been absolute state of the art in 1896. It transmitted its power to the mill situated at the top of the waterfall by means of a steel cable passing over two large pulleys each 1.5 metres in diameter. All of this is in perfect working order thanks to the passionate restoration of volunteer enthusiasts, and well worth a visit.

Alan Paton, in the novel Cry, The Beloved Country, said:

‘There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it. The road climbs seven miles into them, to Carisbrooke; and from there, if there is no mist; you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa. About you there is grass and bracken and you may hear the forlorn crying of the titihoya one of the birds of the veld. Below you is the valley of the Umzimkulu, on its journey from the Drakensberg, to the sea; and beyond and behind the river, great hill after great hill; and beyond and behind them, the mountains of Ingeli and East Griqualand.’

The “Sisonke Stimela” will be launched on Friday 23 April 2010. You may well see some images on TV – let’s hope so.

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South African Steam Tour 2010 – 21 May to 07 June

This is the only international steam tour planned for this year and organiser, Geoff Cooke, been hard-pressed due to cost. The tour will comprise of three legs, with hosting as follows:

1. Gauteng: Friends of the Rail and Reefsteamers (3 days)
2. Free State and KwaZulu-Natal: Sandstone Estates (2 days) , Creighton's Sisonke Stimela (2 days) and Paton's Country Narrow Gauge (1 day)
3. Eastern Cape: Apple Express (5 days)

Geoff returns with a tour group later this year, 29 August to 13 September, for the *South African Trains and Treasures Tour*.

Dudley Smith

SUB-COMMITTEE: MARKETING PORTFOLIO REPORT

Team Leader: Nerina Skuy **Members:** Dudley Smith, Charles Phillips, Kevin Wilson-Smith and Jamie Hart

A rather pleasing report is the fact that HRASA has secured sponsorship for the production of the 150th Commemorative Calendar, a joint venture with *SA Rail*, and a Commemorative HRASA Heritage Rail Map. Both will be developed over the next month and be ready for distribution and available at both *Africa Rail* and *Indaba 2010*.

1. RAIL-RELATED TRADE SHOWS/EXHIBITIONS – UPDATE

(a) **Africa Rail 2010 (Johannesburg) – 1-2 June 2010:** Presentation topics will be advised under separate cover. 150th commemorative calendar and HRASA map to be distributed.

(b) **16th International Wheelset Congress (Cape Town – 14-19 March 2010):**

Mark Robinson volunteered to attend in order to evaluate if this exhibition would be of any value to HRASA. He reports that he went to CTICC on Thursday, 18 March (the dates on the front on the brochure clearly say 14-19 March) only to find the exhibition in "break-down"! He found a young lady, apparently the event's official photographer, who was just as surprised at its status. He says they should both have looked a bit further down the brochure, where it does say that the exhibition was only on until the 17th, although there is no indication as to what was supposed to happen on the 18th and 19th.

So, unfortunately, no report. With the assistance of the aforementioned young woman, he did get into the hall and was able to look at the rather scanty array of stalls. He reports that he is not sure we missed much and that Transnet in various forms seemed to be the main exhibitor – TRE in particular.

(c) **Indaba (Durban) 8 – 11 May 2010**

HRASA map requirements to be requested from members for production and distribution at Indaba.

2. HRASA WEBSITE

Delay in launch to ensure all material correct – scheduled to go live shortly.

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3. Report back

- Eastern Cape Freight and Logistics Forum (ECFL) Meeting

Bay Steamers have been requested to present their business plan at next meeting, to be held in East London during May.

- Humewood Station

Applications to Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality and SAHRA/PHRA in process, with assistance from NMBHT.

4. National Heritage Trust meeting 13 March

Well supported gathering at Liliesleaf, with about 30 attendees representing more than 20 organisations. HRASA represented by Charles Phillips, Steve Appleton and NS. Outcome was that the Trust a definite and to be known as National Heritage Trust of SA, with Interim Council to be formed and national conference scheduled for November 2010 to elect full-time council. Copies of *SA Rail* presented to leadership, including Min Asmal. NS nominated to represent HRASA.

NERINA SKUY



To be the recognised representative body for the benefit and support of its members and oversight of the heritage rail preservation and heritage rail tourism industry in Southern Africa”



(Front left) Cynthia Mjijima (CEO, TF) and Chris Janisch (Chairman, HRASA), sign the Transnet Foundation-HRASA MOU, witnessed by (left to right) Charles Phillips (HRASA), Martha Ngoye (Transnet) and Nerina Skuy (HRASA)