



Stars 2014 - the build-up has begun!!

It is about this time of the year that we start updating guests and potential guests as to what is likely to happen at next year's event, The Stars of Sandstone 2014 which is going to take place from 12th-21st April 2014.

1) Information on costs.

The tariffs for Stars of Sandstone 2014 are now available. This year we are offering a family full event rate and family daily rate as opposed to a per person and discounted rate for children as was the case for Stars of Sandstone 2013.

To receive the tariffs for the event please contact Joanne West at joannewest@btinternet.com (International) or Babita Hira at babitan@sandstone.co.za (SA). You will at the same time receive a registration form, a list of accommodation available around Sandstone and a map to the event.

Once you have registered you will then automatically receive updates regarding the event and newsletters.

2) Locomotives.

There are 5 2 Ft Narrow Gauge locomotives under restoration in Bloemfontein. They are as follows:

- (a) Class 11, 3'6" locomotive, No. 929
- (b) Ex-SANRASM Avonside locomotive, No. 1624.
- (c) NGG11, No. 52, with water tanker wagon.
- (d) O&K, No. 12149.
- (e) O&K, No. 11112.
- (f) O&K, No. 12140.

Avonside loco, No. 1624, will be ready for our 2014 event barring unforeseen circumstances. Lukas Nel and his team have done an outstanding job of delivering at least one completely new rebuilt locomotive year in, year out for many years now and he seems determined to do this yet again! In addition he has turned out a pump trolley with two wagons behind it, as well as a rail bike for those that want to chase steam in the early mornings under their own motive power. If these are popular we will make more of them.

So, steam will be as robust as ever with the largest number of locomotives in steam we have ever deployed.

Ex-SANRASM Avonside, No. 1624, is very advanced as can be seen from the photos below.



For those who are interested in the technical side of locomotive restorations you might want to review the detail that goes into rebuilding a loco.

The pictures below show a close-up of the steam regulator which has been built virtually from scratch. All the different components have had to be separately fabricated.



Much the same applies to the whole locomotive.

Here is a picture of the smoke box from the front with still a lot of work to be completed.



The fire box door however is now complete.

To provide some perspective as to how quickly things can come together when the components are ready to be assembled this picture of the boiler was taken on 30th August this year.



Of course none of this happens by itself so for those of you who have not been to Bloemfontein here is a picture of the team.



***From left to right: Leon, Tinus, Isak, Lukas, Anna, Gertude, Simon, Manual, and John.
The UNSUNG HEROES!!***

3) In-country representatives.

To those who have been to visit Sandstone in the past and who are thinking of coming again, would you like to be one of our in-country representatives?

If so, we would like to take a moment to share some thoughts with you.

Last year a group of enthusiasts from the Western Cape decided to coordinate their efforts and travel together to our event. There were many advantages to this. Firstly, they were able to rationalise their travel arrangements and they had a good time travelling up by road. Secondly, there were people in the group who had been before so they were able to act as unofficial guides and mentors for those that were there for the first time. You will agree that Sandstone can be a bit hard to digest on arrival and because it is a relatively informal programme people can actually be there for the whole event and still miss things that are happening. The more experienced visitors know these things and know how to get the best out of the event.

We are approaching you because you may be able to assist us as a country/regional area coordinator for next year's event. We would ask you to consider receiving calls from people who have never been to Sandstone but who are interested in attending in order to obtain more information on the type of thing we do, in order to receive some third party endorsement that the long trip and the many days of participation are worth it, and finally to discuss issues like logistics and cost.

We are mindful of the fact that many people are quite nervous about coming down by themselves and we are creating this concept because people will always feel more comfortable in a group.

In broad terms there is what we will do:

- A) Promote our event vigorously.
- B) Direct all people from your area to yourself to talk about the event and to possibly join a group rather than to come as an individual. There are many advantages to this, not the least of which is cost, particularly relating to transportation. Also you may share a common language.
- C) However, directing people to you is only partly what this is all about. We would ask you to use your experience, expertise, and creativity to review the possibility of making contact with clubs, groups, and individuals enthusiasts in order to suggest that they put their own mini groups together. The group from the Cape were actually car enthusiasts from the Crankhandle Club. They were likeminded and enthusiastic and found that their Sandstone experience resonated very well with their own particular interests.

We tend to not do this too soon because interest in the event will peak too early. We will also be supported by the release this week of the first of the two DVD's covering the Stars of Sandstone event - this being more the Rail Heritage orientated DVD. The second one is largely Military and is being prepared in order to open up the Military market as a definitive target market in its own right. To obtain a copy of this award winning DVD please see further details below and attached flyer.

If you are interested conceptually in what we are suggesting then you will be on our special confidential internal mailing list where you will be asked to comment on various aspects of the event. Examples are marketing material, draft programmes etc. In the past we have tended to try and work out for ourselves what people would like to see. The whole point of this exercise is to significantly increase the level of consultation so that we are able to improve the quality of the event and the attractions by responding more to what people would like to do rather than what we would like them to do. We will see.

4) Something new.

In fact there will be lots of new distractions but one of them will be our 1942 10-12 Harley Davidson with side-car. There will be others like our Rail Bike and a new Pomp Trolley.

We love to add value to our photographers' experiences and the Harley should be out there chasing the train, waiting at level crossings, and generally getting in the way.



Bring your cycling shorts to Stars 2014!

5) Rail tourist or heritage attractions.

A number of visitors have asked us what other Rail Tourist or heritage attractions will be operating next year in April before or after our event. We have been in touch with the Apple Express who advise that they expect to be back in operation at the end of this year. For people who wish to receive information on what is happening with this world class line contact Nerina Skuy, E: bod@hrasa.co.za.

6) Cars on the farm.

We are receiving fantastic support from the Vintage and Classic Car fraternity in Southern Africa. Hans Zwets of the Crankhandle Club in Cape Town is coordinating a major effort to bring car enthusiasts to the farm and hopefully some vehicles as well. They look very much at home in the Eastern Free State landscape, as you can see from these two pictures of our Model T's below.

What we are looking for are volunteers who really understand cars of this vintage so that they can be given "ownership" during the event of our vehicles. Very few of the farm staff are familiar with them and they are too busy anyway. There is nothing better than seeing vehicles out on the roads going in every direction. This provides wonderful opportunities for the people on the train to enjoy watching these vehicles go by and adds an extra dimension to the opportunities given to photographers so if you are a classic car enthusiast please do not hesitate to contact us. If you are from the Western Cape please contact Hans Zwets on zwets@mweb.co.za.

We are slowly building up a library of evocative pictures. How about an original Model T Grain truck chasing the train?



Our vision regarding our old vehicles is dynamic but we are not sure if they are quite up to the standards demanded by this fascinating documentary entitled "Oilfield Dodge". Please take a moment and click onto it: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/nq2jY1trxqg?rel=0>. You will not be disappointed.

7) 3'6" Coaches.

One of the saddest things about a visit to Sandstone in years gone by has been the sight of our very special and very rare selection of 3'6" coaches which have been deteriorating rapidly in the tough climatic conditions in the Eastern Free State. We have made a major breakthrough however. Des Clarke and his team have moved them all under cover into our big new storage shed. This major facility, 150m x 40m in size, is designed to accommodate large numbers of rolling stock items, both 3'6" and 2-ft. Now that we have these coaches under cover we can set about bringing them back to tip-top condition. It has completely opened up the landscape and has removed the rather depressing site of these old dears fading away.

A number of prospective visitors for next year have asked if they would be available for accommodation purposes and the answer is basically yes. We do expect to do the following:

- (a) Put clear sheeting on the roof to improve illumination.
- (b) Run electric lights into the shed.
- (c) Provide some type of ablution facilities.

Obviously the accommodation will be as good as these coaches can provide but I am sure they can be made comfortable for real railway aficionados.





We have two more dining cars, identical to the one opposite which is already in use on the farm, stored in this facility.

8) New Military vehicle store completed.

Apart from planting grass when it rains on the approaches our Military Store is now complete. Here are some pictures of the vehicles being put in position.



9) New Stars DVD now in stock.

The latest DVD covers our successful May 2013 “Stars of Sandstone” event. This is a DVD for the whole family and no one will fail to be moved and absorbed by it. Pricing is as follows:

DVD: £10.50 / R130.00
Blu-ray: £13.50 / R170.00
(Add £1.50/R20.00 to above prices for NTSC)

To order your copy please contact Joanne West (UK) or Babita Hira (SA). Their contact details appear at the foot of this newsletter and on the attached flyer.

10) Food, entertainment, ambience, and a few drinks.

We are working hard to continuously upgrade our facilities in this area. The most significant contribution is the investment in human capital. Our team of ladies who work for Leigh Sanders are doing more catering for ever more groups and we are very proud of their dedication and their skill.

Visitors to the 2014 event can look forward to some very exciting and hopefully different culinary experiences.



Chasing trains all day and being chased by a Mark IV Sherman tank can make you tired, hungry, and thirsty.

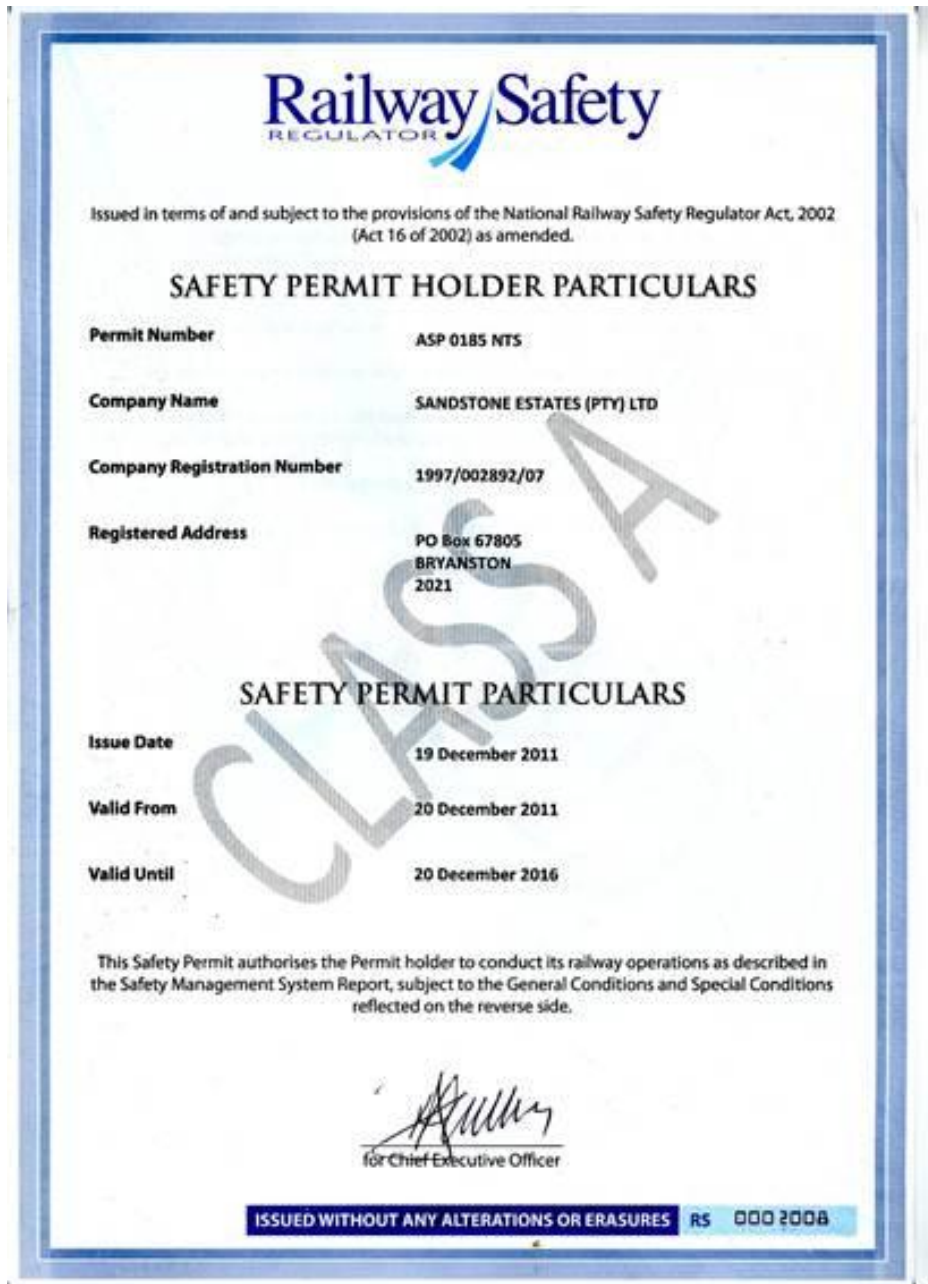
11) Aircraft at Stars 2014.

We are already talking to the Aircraft enthusiast community and we are very confident we will have aircraft operating out of our very traditional grass airstrip which is currently being fertilized.



12) Rail Safety Regulator permit awarded.

Our annual Rail Safety Regulator operating permit allowing us to operate well into next year has been authorised.



13) Visitor information.

All administration for this event is coordinated by Mike Myers (E: mikem@sandstone.co.za) and Babita Hira (E: babitan@sandstone.co.za) in South Africa, and Joanne West in the UK (E: joannewest@btinternet.com). For those who are seriously considering coming to spend time with us next year attached is some useful car rental and accommodation information, as well as a registration form.

14) Cosmos.

Once again this will be a challenge. Of course it is weather dependent but to remind those of you who have not seen the Cosmos in all its glory below are two pictures from Tessa Joughin.

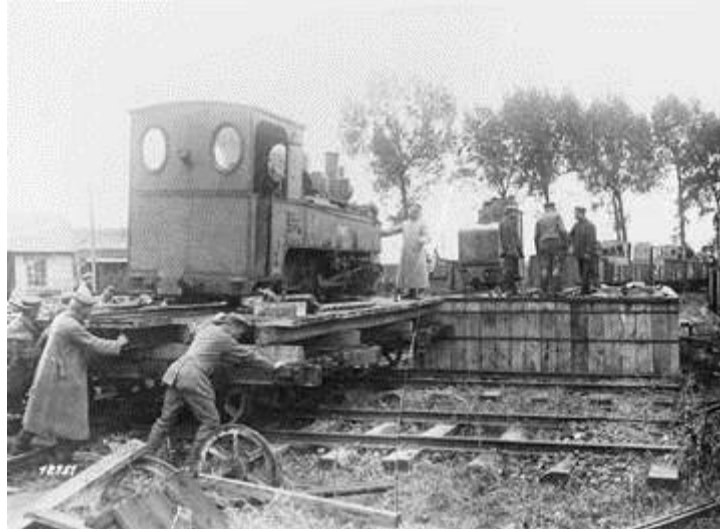


15) Photo archives.

One of the great advantages of having so many friends around the world is that we receive a constant supply of first class archive material which constantly improves our insight into the history of many of our locomotives. A good example is the e-mail below which we have just received from Kim Winter who has taken an interest in researching World War One locomotives. Providing we can find enough people to dress up like German troops we should have no difficulty replicating the Troop Train.

However, to offload a train full of Feldbahns is going to be slightly more tricky as we only have one.





We are particularly interested in photos of original consists because it gives us ideas for our annual event.

16) We are currently improving our signage.

Here are some suggestions!! Any recommendations?



Photo credit: Statfold Barn Railway, UK.

17) Interesting links to click onto.

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/life/travel/2013/05/03/trainspotters-get-their-choo-tjoe-on.>

Useful guide to Narrow Gauge locomotives shipped to South Africa:

http://sellhigh.com/bigtoys/rail/units/south_africa.html

***The Sandstone team
Wilf and Mike***

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"Preserving the best of our past for the future"