

# On Track

RAILWAY SOCIETY  
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA  
REEF BRANCH NEWSLETTER  
May 2008

## **From to Editor**

Well it's that time of the year again, membership renewal. There will be some among you that will say "I have only just paid!" That was because we had let slip chasing members who had not paid for 2007/8 now that is over, we now need your commitment for the next membership year that is March 2008 till February 2009. Should you not have received the renewal details in the last (excellent) issue of SA Rail you can find them at the end of this news letter.

Your editor has just spent two weeks in Cape Town and must comment that it is a very nice city, much cleaner than Joburg and does not have those terrible advertising signs that desecrate the environs of Joburg. However there was one quirk that I found most amusing because it was so sad.

I went to Cape Town Station, as any rail buff would do and when I went to take a photograph of Blackie, built by Hawthorn and Co Engineering Works of Leith Scotland to the standard gauge of 4ft 8½in in 1858 for the construction of the Wellington Railway, I was told by a sweet little security lady that taking of photographs was prohibited.

How stupid, Blackie is a national monument and belongs to the nation and that means it belongs to you and me, surly I, any South African and any international tourist can take a photographic record of this historic locomotive.

So I cannot include my photograph of this engine but thanks to John Batwell here it is.



I also must comment on the lack of trains I saw or didn't see on the cape main line, 3 in fact. Despite riding close to the line for 8 hours, yet the N1 road was full of trucks with loads that should be on rail.

When will the Ramos/Gama double act get their act together and get this business onto rail?

10 May is National Train Day in America sponsored by Amtrak. Would Transnet take note and have one here. We could do with getting the populace more rail orientated.

### **Sadly another of our kind passes on**

REMEMBERED for her passion and dedication, Nelson Mandela Bay DA Councillor Lesley Lowe refused to let one of the city's premier tourist attractions, the Apple Express steam train, fall into disrepair and saved it from being dismantled.

The 64-year-old mother of three and hardworking Ward Two councillor also refused to let her constituents down and worked from her bed right up to her final days before she died earlier this week after battling cancer for three years.

Lowe, who died on Monday night, originally had a mastectomy, but the cancer spread to her liver and her death was attributed to organ failure.

According to her husband of 34 years, Mike, it was her "bombshell" looks which had originally drawn him to her when they first met. Lesley was not only a wonderful mother and caring wife, but she was extremely hardworking, he said.

"Up until her last days Lesley kept her laptop and cell phone with her on her bed. For her last month she was unable to walk, but she kept working.

"We even bought her a reclining chair which she then used as her office'. She didn't like to have spare time - she wanted to use it to help others rather than to serve herself."

In the early 2000s the then-ailing Apple Express train, a beloved icon of the Bay, faced certain closure. Had it not been for Lowe's quick and dedicated intervention, it would have stopped operating for good, friends and colleagues said this week. "Lesley was instrumental in making the Apple Express an icon of our tourism industry," said colleague and friend, DA Ward One councillor Stanford Slabbert. The two met when Slabbert was captain of the Kings Beach surf-lifesaving club and Lesley was the club's 'secretary. Her children attended the, club's nippers programme.

Lowe roped in Bay business sponsors who then nominated her to head the Section 21 company board." She'd always been interested in the Apple Express and she roped me into sitting on its (governing) board. She spent many weekends on the train as the hostess, making sure everyone was happy."

Slabbert said it was Lesley Lowe who introduced him to politics and was his role model as a ward councillor." I was always astounded by how passionate and hardworking she was," said Slabbert.

Lowe was so committed to the train's success that, after having been diagnosed with cancer, she arranged her chemotherapy sessions around the reintroduction of the train's steam-engine trips.

"The trip was about two years in the making and she said she'd make it, come hell or high water" said Mike.

Mike Lowe said his wife threw herself into every activity. Before she became a councillor, she was the Kings Beach surf-lifesaving club's secretary and later the secretary for Eastern Cape Surf-lifesaving. Later, when Mike became chairman of the Westview Soccer Club, she joined as the club's secretary.

*Weekend Post April 19, 2008*

### **Friends of the Rail**

Friends of the Rail are getting closer to the full restoration of 15 F 3117 by joining the tender to the engine.

## Future Trips

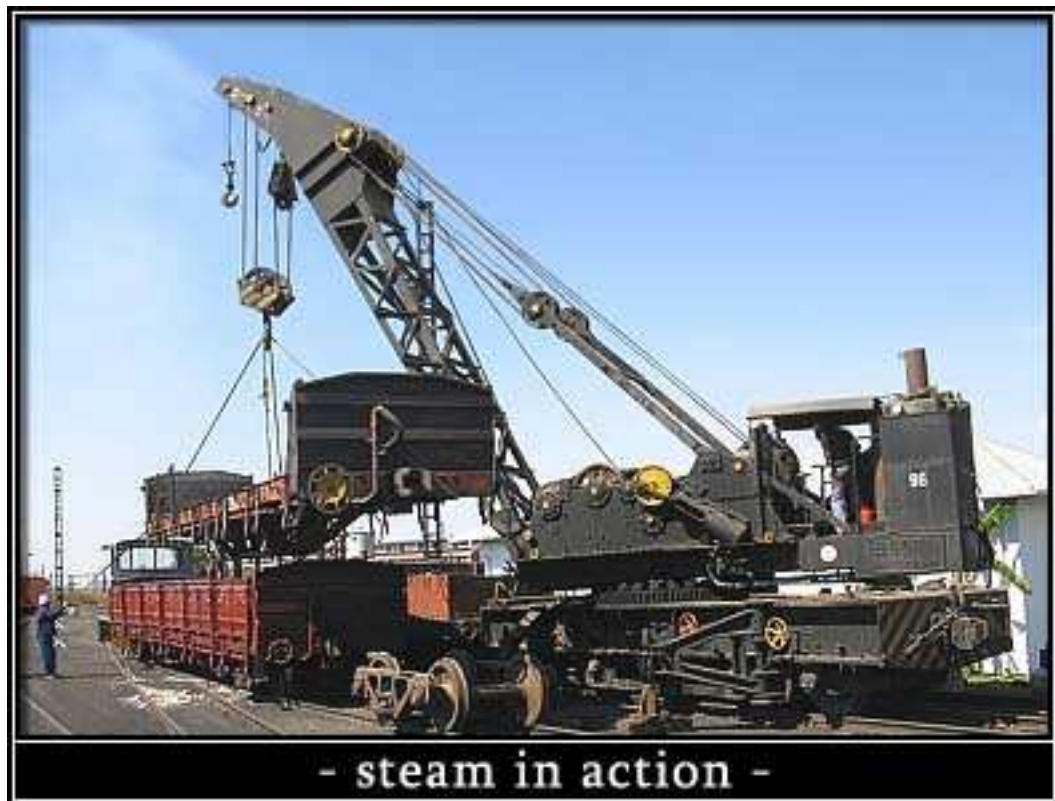
<b>May 2008</b>	11	Cullinan	Mother's Day Diamond Express (in place of Bela Bela)	
	25	Sunday	Tshwane Xplorer	
<b>June 2008</b>				
	15	Sunday	Tshwane Xplorer	Fathers' Day
	16	Monday	Tshwane Xplorer	Youth Day
	29	Sunday	Tshwane Xplorer	

## Reefsteamers

The next day trips at to Magaliesburg on the 10, 11 and 31 May.

The AGM will be held on Saturday 17 May at 10h00 at the new member's room at Germiston site.

Reefsteamers have been tidying up their site and removing all the heavy lumps old scrap steel with the Booth steam crane (run on compressed air). The plan is to clean up the crane and re-certify the boiler so it can be a useful addition to their works.



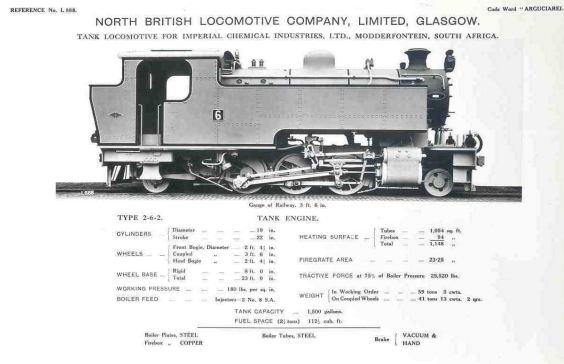
## HISTORIC NORTH BRITISH INDUSTRIAL SAVED

The Sandstone Heritage Trust, Reefsteamers and Friends of the Rail, Pretoria, have combined forces to rescue a rare 2-6-2 Tank Loco that was built by North British in Glasgow for South Africa's Simmer & Jack Gold Mines in 1948. The locomotive concerned, Hyde Park Works Number 26242, was based on an original Springburn design for ICI and entered service with Simmer & Jack at Germiston as their No. 5.

Mining operations at Simmer & Jack ended in 1969 and, although technically 'preserved', the remaining rolling stock started to deteriorate. Three historic locomotives were scrapped in 1987

and, with the museum site overgrown and future looking bleak for No. 5, the Steam in Action combine decided to step in. The loco will now be cosmetically restored and assessed before a decision is made on its longer term preservation.

Also included in the deal is an American-built, H.K. Porter 2-6-2 tank engine and several wooden bodied wagons. Further details can be found on the SIA website: [www.steam-in-action.com](http://www.steam-in-action.com) Many thanks to Wilfred Mole for this news item. The illustrations below show the official NBL catalogue photo of the ICI locomotive (which was works number 24218) and of Simmer & Jack No. 5 as recently rescued for preservation.



## Rovos Rail

The Railway Touring Company Tour to Zimbabwe

Not a good day for NRZ....a last minute change of plan saw 16A # 613 rostered in place of 15th Class # 414 to take out the train to Shangani en route to Somabhula (near Gweru). Scheduled departure was 0800 hrs but it was 0900hrs before the train got away and progress was slow to Mpopoma. Thereafter # 613 was failed in section after dropping a fusible plug and # 414 was called from the loco to take the train onwards...however this loco failed at Mpopoma before reaching the stranded train. Last I heard was that diesel was to take the train on. Rovos 25NCs had gone on ahead and presumably took over at Shangani or before. The train is due to come to Bulawayo tomorrow and then head north, arriving in Vic Falls on Thursday morning. The Vic Falls Safari Express people had wanted to hire # 414 for a week as their 14A is down with tube problems. This hire now looks doubtful and it remains to be seen how the RTC group will cross over into Zambia where they are due to visit the Livingstone Railway Museum.

*Chas Rickwood*

The tour crossed over in to Zimbabwe yesterday (Saturday) morning and after rewatering etc at Plumtree, the train proceeded to Bulawayo. The problem with # 3484 was a connecting rod coming loose and falling off whilst travelling at low speed (fortunately), Bolts sheared and spares were flown in from Pretoria and # 3484 has continued on the tour, piloting # 3442. I waited yesterday afternoon to photograph the train at Coldridge, first siding out of Plumtree. It was magic to hear the familiar slip of a 25NC as the train bit the grade through the curves at the "Big Rocks" and headed up to the next summit at Syringa. It was a warm late summer Zimbabwean day so plenty of photos with runpasts at Marula and Figtree. Train eventually reached Bulawayo around 8pm.

Tomorrow (Monday), 15th class # 414 is scheduled to take the train as far as Shangani en route to the night stop at Somabhula. The 2 x 25NCs will follow and if all goes to plan will pick up the train again at Shangani.

*Chas Rickwood*

We have asked Rovos Rail to supply us with accurate information with regard to the events in Botswana last week. The facts are somewhat different to the reports posted thus far.

The locomotive concerned was 3442, not 3484

The rod did not fall off - the left leading driving wheel side-rod bearing locking sleeve came

loose and the crossbar locking device retaining set screws broke off. That was the sum total of the "incident".

The technicians and the spare parts did not fly up from Pretoria - they drove up in a Rovos Rail bakkie.

The 3417 incident was a very different matter. The loco was hauling a returning Union Limited tour train and on the long up grade to Bellville through Stikland, and running at about 75 kph, the centre rod leading end on the right-hand side dropped. Digging into the ballast the rod was able to momentarily lift the right side of the loco and give the crew a major wake-up call! The damage to the rods and side of the loco can be imagined.

The writer was asked to inspect, photograph and report on the loco as it stood in Bellville depot the day after the incident for the then incumbent and Johannesburg-based Spoornet Steam Curator William Smith. I could ask permission to post these officially taken slides if anyone is interested.

*HRASA / Mark Robinson*

### **Around and About**

I visited the Heidelberg Museum this past Sunday. Yes it is sad to say in a bad state. I did a DVD a couple of years ago about WAT HET VAN GISTER GEWORD?-WHAT HAPPENED TO YESTERDAY and then the Museum was still up and running. The Steam loco was spit and polished and the dining car was neat with all the tables laid with the cutlery as we used to know it in the late 80's. The caretaker's house is still empty. The place is guarded. The old balcony coaches are still there and the chairs in the dining car as well.

The guard van is slowly starting to deteriorate as a piece of it is standing in the open sky. The locomotive still have all it jewellery on but the number plate is missing. Some of the pictures in the old sleeper coaches are still intact. Overall the station building is still in good shape. This was the first station in Heidelberg dating back to the late 18 hundreds. Does anyone know what is going to happen to this loco and the 9 coaches?

Are the railway tracks in the original place as it was during the Anglo Boer War?

*Jacques Rudolph*

### **Metro Rail**

In April, Metrorail is to introduce a premier express taking under an hour from Pretoria to Johannesburg in. The train is to be staffed with hostesses and security personnel, and refreshments will be offered - the cost included in the fare (which has not been disclosed yet). And newspapers will be distributed free of charge.

Spokesperson Sibusiso Ngomane was quoted saying: "We have taken an airline approach and each commuter will have individual seating."

A free "shuttle bus service from the destination station" is also promised.

Load shedding will not be a problem, Ngomane told the Pretoria News, "as adequate measures have been put in place to prevent that."

The train is to be named, but no suitable suggestion has been made yet. Schoolchildren have been invited to make proposals, with the winning entry in line to receive a desktop computer loaded with educational software – together with R20,000 for the school

*Railways Africa*

### **Transnet Freight Rail (Ex Spoornet)**

Having lost the Banana Express, it now looks as if Port Shepstone is losing its TFR freight service. Port Shepstone was served by a daily, Mondays to Fridays, train from Bayhead (#1892), returning as #1893. #1892 brought in the empties, whilst #1893 carried Kulubrite (a lime product) to Sappi, Geduld, in XBJ wagons (about 3-5 wagons a day) and limestone to Sappi-Saiccor, Umkomaas, in DJ/DZ wagons (6 wagons a day). There was also sand from Park Rynie to Underberg Foundry, which was brought down to Port Shepstone for operational convenience,

although there has been very little of this traffic lately. #1893 also often included empty coal wagons from Simuma. This train was frequently cancelled due to loco and crew shortages, as well as due to washaways which have occurred quite frequently of late.

However, on Friday 14 March the last Kulubrite was loaded with the traffic going over to road. The last train was scheduled for Monday 17 March (there were no trains on 13/14 March due to washaways on the line) and this came in behind two 6E1's with empty DJ/DZ wagons, leaving with 6 limestone, 13 Kulubrite and 5 empties. The plan was for the limestone traffic to be serviced by the Port Shepstone shunt locomotive (Class 36.2) which would trip 10 wagons to Umkomaas every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. However, this is believed to be a temporary arrangement with the limestone traffic going over to road from the beginning of April (the Port Shepstone staff have been offered transfers to Durban).

However it didn't quite work out as planned. The Port Shepstone shunt loco had already tripped some limestone to Umkomaas on the Monday (Saiccor were running short because of the washaway) and didn't have sufficient fuel to do any more trips (there is no fuel supply at Port Shepstone), and so #1892/1893 made another trip today (20 March) so as to satisfy Saiccor. It brought in another Class 36.2 and returned with the other Class 36.2 and 18 wagons of limestone. Power was two 6E1 locos.

No doubt the unreliability of the service and cost factors were the reasons for the loss of this traffic to road. I will keep you posted on what happens at the month end. Closure of the station will actually make a lot of people happy down here, as the station and yard were in the way of a proposed beachfront development (there were proposals to develop a site for a new station north of the Umzimkulu River which will now not be necessary).

*Peter Bagshaw*

### **The Simmer & Jack Locomotives**



The name Simmer & Jack is a reminder of the frontier days of the Witwatersrand and the gold rush of the 1880's that led to the birth of Johannesburg. The gold reef that ran from Randfontein in the west to Springs in the east was to lead to the birth of the east/west rail system on the Reef that exists to this day. The discovery of coal in the Boksburg area soon led the pioneers of the area to realise that the ox wagon transports of the day could not keep up with the supply of materials that were needed for the booming

Reef mining area.

The town of Germiston is the oldest in the Witwatersrand community being established in 1886 when John Jack and August Simmer purchased the farm Elandsfontein. They prospected for gold and registered the Simmer and Jack mine. The town was laid out in 1887 to house the workers, the name being chosen after a farm in Scotland near to Glasgow in Scotland where John Jack was born. After the railway reached Germiston in 1892 it was logical that the Simmer & Jack would become rail connected. Sadly the mine was closed in 1969 but a number of companies continued on site to process the old Simmer & Jack dumps as mining extraction technology progressed. It remained as a museum in the early 70's but is now derelict.

A total of six locomotives operated on the mine. Numbers 1 & 2 were built by HK Porter of Pittsburgh, USA in 1896 and were 2-6-2 tank locomotives. They were followed by Number 3 of a similar design; being a Porter 15"x20" model, in 1902. (Porter 2443/1902)

1 & 2 were sadly scrapped in 1987/88 along with Number 4 which was an ex SAR A class tank. Number 3 is very interesting as, although it was new to Simmer & Jack, it appears to have been used as a Porter demonstrator and worked at City Deep in 1915 and also on the Zambezi Sawmills Railway in Zambia before returning to Simmer & Jack in 1921.

Number 6 also survives being a NBL 2-6-2T (NBL 26242/48) as does number 5, an NBL 4-8-2T (NBL 24598/1939) which went to St Helena in 1956 and then to Vryheid Coronation in 1972. It is now preserved at SANRASM.

After years of display and then being dumped, the final two survivors on the mine, numbers 3 and 6 have been saved by Sandstone as part of the Steam in Action programme. They will be moved in the near future 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.

*Dave Richardson*

## **Kwa Zulu Natal**

### **Future trips**

*Sunday, 25 May 2008: Running Day: Kloof – Inchanga (08:30 and 12:30)*

*Sunday, 8 June 2008: Running Day: Pietermaritzburg – Baynesfield (10:00)*

*Monday, 9 June 2008: General Meeting at Inchanga (19:30)*

*Sunday, 29 June 2008: Running Day: Kloof – Inchanga (08:30 and 12:30)*

## **Free State**

### **Sandstone**

Another NG15 joins the Sandstone line up.

Class NG15 No: 136, the last NG15 built by Societe Franco Belge of La Croyere, Belgium as works number 2686 of 1952 has been acquired by Sandstone Heritage Trust from its previous Swiss owners, the Schinznacher Baumschull Bahn (SchBB). This Swiss narrow gauge railway had previously acquired and restored Class NGG13 Garratt No: 60 and proposed a similar restoration for No: 136. Sadly this did not come to fruition and the loco was offered for sale. Swiss enthusiast, Phillip Maurer, well known to SA rail fans, negotiated the sale on behalf of Sandstone and the loco is now on the water from Antwerp to Durban.



No: 136 was delivered to South West Africa to work on the Otavi railway, being based at Usakos. As the SWA system was re-gauged it was transferred to Port Elizabeth in 1961 and based at Humewood Road. After a major overhaul at Uitenhage in 1986 it suffered a hot box failure and was withdrawn in 1987 and dumped at Humewood Road Depot. In 1997 the SchBB was looking for a suitable NG15 for restoration and Phillip Maurer visited SA in 1997 and purchased the locomotive on behalf of the SchBB including a vast number of spares. The loco arrived at

the SchBB in 1998 but languished until April of this year when it was bought by Sandstone. It is in excellent condition and the large spares inventory that was originally acquired will return with the engine.

After arrival in South Africa it will be delivered to Sandstone's Bloemfontein facility where Lukas Nel and his team are expected to conduct a fast track restoration.

The images from Phillip Maurer show No: 136 being loaded at the SchBB, on the dock at Antwerp while Robert Horlacher has sent us the shots of 136 at work in the Langkloof on the Avontuur line.

*Dave Richardson*

### Sandston Steam and Cosmos Festival 2008

Sandstone's Steam and Cosmos Festival concluded on Sunday afternoon, 13<sup>th</sup> April, after a very successful and exciting four day event. Visitors were treated to a variety of attractions over the period. 20 different narrow gauge steam locomotives were in service during the event together with numerous vintage tractors, earth moving equipment and vintage vehicles. The highlight was the launch of the newly rebuilt Sherman Tank. Sandstone Heritage Trust restored the vehicle as part of their ongoing partnership with the SA School of Armour Museum in Bloemfontein. The museum also brought a number of other military exhibits for the event. A 34 vehicle military convoy preceded the launch after which the Sherman was put through its paces to the delight of the many spectators.

Demonstrating its sheer power and strength, the Sherman demolished two old kombis as if they were matchwood! A specially assembled military train carrying various weapons and vehicles and double headed by Class NGG16 Garratts Nos: 113 & 153 accompanied the convoy to a dedication ceremony for the Sherman at Grootdraai. To add to the excitement, eight vintage aircraft had flown in to Sandstone including two Harvard trainers who offered spectators stomach turning rides.



Over forty volunteers attended the event to enable the many activities to take place, from loco crews to tractor drivers and steam road vehicle drivers.

A special train, The Free State Explorer, steam hauled from Johannesburg, brought many visitors to Sandstone who were picked up by a narrow gauge train from Vailima Siding or by vintage bus from Ficksburg Station.

*Dave Richardson*

### Cape

Article from Die MATIE, Woensdag 19 Maart 2008

Slyabonga Africa

In all his years of experience in the field of construction, Claude Pretorius has never done a project that was run solely by women – until now. Garden Route Rail Cable Way Ltd is in the process of building the highest cableway in Africa, at the base of Cradock Berg outside George. When completed, in 2010, the cableway will measure 2,22km and will transport tourists to the summit which supersedes Table Mountain's 1,07km summit. According to Pretorius, the project manager of GRRCW Ltd, the cableway will operate 24 hours a day offering tourists the opportunity to see areas such as Mossel Bay at night, a sight which he described as "fairy land of light." Yet this is not the most interesting aspect of the project, because in the true spirit of empowering women, the project will be constructed by women. Running the show as the chairperson of the GRRCW Ltd is Irene Vermeulen. Vermeulen says that a Swiss Cableway Company has trained the women, who are at the heart of the construction team. The purpose of this training is to enable the women to be of international standards, in terms of cableway construction, in order them to be employable overseas. Vermeulen is one of six business women who were invited by Pretorius to invest in the project. The other five businesswomen include

Darcelle Acer, Nthabiseng Lichaba, Malinda Niehaus, Zainub Ramjan, and Desireé Szucs. They all bought into GRRCW Ltd. Vermeulen says that all these women hail from the Southern Cape and are committed to the project that aims at building several cableway gondolas. According to Pretorius the cableway gondolas, which the workers are in the process of building, will seat four people. Thirty of them will be operational at a time which means less waiting for tourists. A part of the project also entails the construction of a railway to transport tourists from Campher and George to the base of the cableway. The diesel hydrokinetic rail coaches will use hydraulics to lift up and turn 180 degrees so that more trips can be squeezed in at a time.

A Cape Town firm completed a scale model of a "Rail bus" to be used from a point in George to the lower cable station and from the upper cable station to Campher railway station - both on specially built tracks. This model is at their office in George.

Bogies, under frames and motors will be imported from Europe [Fly wheel type propulsion to be used] Bodies to be produced in RSA. The "Rail bus" will have a central elevated driving cab, controls on both sides, a seat that can be moved to face the direction of travel. No need for turning "Rail bus" around. CCTV will show rail track in front of the vehicle.

*Jacques Wepener*

*I won't hold my breath to see if this will be built. Ed.*

This interesting item appeared on the Travel News Now website, 8th April. Perhaps an attempt to create a new Choo-Tjoe??!!

Plan for railway tourism in E Cape

RAILWAY tourism in the Eastern Cape will be re-introduced after plans were announced to refurbish railway lines between Grahamstown, Alicedale and Port Alfred.

The Makana Municipality, Spoornet and the provincial Department of Transport are in talks "to set a plan in motion that will see railway tourism as a prominent product offering to tourists".

"The plan entails increasing the daily number of trains travelling between Grahamstown and Alicedale, and conducting feasibility studies for the reopening of the railway line from Grahamstown to Port Alfred, which was closed 10 years ago," says Cecil Nduna, local economic development officer Makana Municipality.

The railway link between Grahamstown and Alicedale has been earmarked as a potential tourist attraction as the train travels through a game reserve and along the highlands ridge.

Nduna says: "Increasing service frequency between Grahamstown and Alicedale will allow for day trips from Grahamstown to Alicedale. In addition, tourists visiting tourism facilities such as the Bushman Sands Resort in Alicedale will have the opportunity to travel along the scenic rail route to Grahamstown and explore other attractions in our area."

The Port Alfred route is also a potential tourist attraction, because of the route through the Bloukrans gorge.

*Eugene Armer*

Five of us went on a journey to Welgelee, between Virginia and Theunissen stations, much to the surprise of the lady folk. "Julle is gek" [You are nuts it's COLD and RAINY] But at 09h30 off we went, got two orange light 6E1's on the bridge at Hennenman at 11h10.

Quick stop at Whites, informed us of trains for the day. On entering the station gate, a new large red lettered sign stated, among a lot of reading. "Entry at own risk, no liability on the part of Transnet" We were told of new "IN"/"OUT" boxes at the door. Soon to be introduced for the T.C.O.'s to book on/off duty, by means of an identified finger print and swiping of an I D Card through a scanner, all being watched by a CCTV camera connected to Head Office. Said to cost R22,000.00 each, being installed at all open stations, countrywide, not with standing that by 2009 if not earlier, C.T.C. is to be introduced Vereeniging to Bloemfontein.

Also talk of closing the "Down" line from Vereeniging to Bloemfontein. [Lack of traffic]. In August 2008. How is rail going to get traffic back from road, if double lines are being closed?

Whilst visiting Whites a very long container train sped past Southwards behind 2x orange 6E1's, leading E1204.

A quick stop at Kalkvlakte - destroyed.

Then onto the 5 x Steel Girder Bridge on the old main line, now to Glen Harmony, finding 1982 laminated sleepers on the bridge - thicker than normal sleepers.

Before getting to Welgelee, went under the 1956 built rail bridge, opened on the new alignment, then we stopped at the old "OVSSM", Sandstone Bridge, over the Sand River, 3 x beautiful sand stone piers, standing majestically on the river bank.

On arriving at Welgelee station we got 2 light orange 6E1's passing at speed. Welgelee station is a ruin; the Cabin is in good clean condition. Being used for short periods only, when the Silo is being shunted. Silo yard electrified. We found a "CSAR" 1903 rail being used to support the old station name board - which is very rusted -, the new Transnet sign the only legible name board. Old blue Spoornet sign lying against station wall.

Silo has 15 large tubes plus 4 smaller ones in the centre, being open on Saturday, farmers bring in their maize.

At 15h05 6E1's E1612 & 1543 SAR maroon went past with only two Beer trucks on this train, Whites had told us was to leave Kroonstad yard at 14h00. Seeing the signals to Virginia being green, some of us climbed onto the flat station roof, by means of the permanent ladder, and spotted another train to the right of Theron's Kop. 2x orange 6E1's on a short container train. On seeing our cameras/notebook and warning vests, one could hear the driver notching down. Possibly saying to his assistant, "Hier is probleme" [Here are problems]. The same happened at Whites with the long container train, the T.C.O. telling us, the crew would be saying, "Officials on the platform".

A lovely but, COLD/WET day was had by all, the braai wors/chops warming us up a bit. Braaied on our portable braai, under the old station stoep, giving us a bit of wind/rain protection.

We left at 16h00. Arriving home before 17h00.

Two interesting points, we were told that 17 de-railments have taken place within two months.

On our usual stroll around the Station we found an old 1990 Train Register [T412] lying in the old goods shed. On perusal we found the following interesting entry:-

10th October 1990,

DOWN; Spl. Train 55993; Code 3-1; Arr. 07h24; Dep. 07h24; YQ,  
[On Time].

UP; Spl. Train 55994; Code 3-1; Arr. 20h04; Dep. 20h04.

This was the "ITHUBA" special run on "Kruger Day" from Bethlehem, via Kroonstad. Hauled by 16E 857. Returning behind green 15F "Johan Uys".

We were on that trip at R1.00 a return ticket.

In 1991 we went on the "ITHUBA" special again, this time hauled by Electric traction, at R5.00 a return ticket, we still have these tickets.

Cold/Wet greetings,

*John , Jacque and friends.*

### **Kei Rail**

In 1998 the Eastern Cape Government made plans to upgrade the (closed) Transkei line to curb the number of accidents and deterioration of the condition of the N1. The project formed part of a plan to develop the Kei Development Corridor and increase investment and economic development along the railway line.

As job-creation was one of the main aims of the project most of the work was done by hand.

Work started in 2003 and a total of R127 million was spent by the time the 281km branch line was ready for service. From the outset it was clear that Spoornet was not interested in providing any services over the line.

The Eastern Cape Department of Roads and Transport (EDCORT) initiated a passenger service

with SARCC Metrorail (selling tickets), Sheltam Grindrod (traction) and Rail Focus (traffic control). Initially passenger coaches would be supplied by Shosholoza Meyl while Transnet Freight Rail would remain the owner of the infrastructure, on loan to EDCORT.

This agreement was a watershed in South African transport history as Transnet agreed for the first time to privatise passenger rail transport.

The media release divulged the following regarding the new passenger service:

Six carriages per train

Bus-style seating

Toilets and showers as well as a few sleeper units

36 passengers per carriage (or 216 per trip)



New carriages to be delivered in May 2008

Food trolleys available to buy refreshments

The newly established railway police will provide security Intensive testing and driver training, both on simulators and the line itself.

Testing empty sets of test trains to ensure safety and integrity of the tracks.

A one-way ticket costs R30 per person and offers the following:

A bus trip on Saturdays from East London and/or Kingwilliamstown to Amabele (at 06:00)

Departure from Amabele at 07:00 Duration of the trip to Umtata is ten hours (arrival 17:30)

Return trip starts on Sundays at 07:30 in Umtata.

Trip ends in East London at 19:10

The service was inaugurated with three coaches on Saturday 1 March 2008 but more carriages will be added according to passenger needs. The coaches are painted in bright yellow, green and white and the green Sheltam diesel units add to a colourful display never before seen in South Africa. A trip through the lush green Kei Valley should really be an adventure not to be missed.

A freight service is planned to start operating later in the year.

*David Forsyth*

The newly restored "Kei Rail" (Amabele-Mthatha) passenger service was popular over the Easter weekend, the government information service Buaneews reports. "One of the three 60-seater train coaches had already been fully booked for a trip from East London to Mthatha on Good Friday," the Eastern Cape province's Department of Roads and Transport spokesperson Ncedo Kumbaca was quoted saying. During the weekend, trains departed from Amabele and Mthatha stations at 07:00 and 07:30 every day from Friday until Monday.

The service, complemented by a bus link between Amabele and East London (76km) runs at present at weekends only. It is "part of a wider plan to stimulate socio-economic development in the Border Kei region and has cost the provincial government R117 million."

The 20 coaches currently being rehabilitated by Transnet rail Engineering comprise 10 Economy Class sitter vehicles, two "Business Class", four Sleeper-six (old second class) and four Sleeper-four (old first class).

According to MEC Thobile Mhlahlo, freight service is to commence during the 2008/09 financial year. The department is "in discussion with various interested organisations and companies, who want to collect or deliver their goods at the Mthatha station.

"Through our agreement with Transnet Rail Engineering, we will be able to provide container wagons to move the goods.

"Through a process of internal reprioritisation," MEC Mhlahlo added, "the department will increase its R52 million allocation to Kei Rail by R10 million, thus to R62 million."

A study is being undertaken to guide the province in its back-to-rail strategy, and provide insight into the tourism potential of various lines. It will be followed by an action plan.

#### *Railways Africa*

A few weeks ago Rollo asked when the last train ran over the Transkei line.

Last night I watched a DVD on our trip to Butterworth and the date was 19 March 2000. This could have been the last trip as the line was already showing disuse for many months. (According to the media press release the Eastern Cape government already decided in 1998 to rescue the line so it is possible that it was already out of service for more than a year. The track manager also confirmed at that stage that nobody warned him that the tracks were to be used).

We encountered a rock fall in front of the first tunnel east of Eagle siding and passengers helped to clean the line. The three 33's then slowly pulled away the sixteen coaches but the bogie of the second coach came off the rails when the steps of the first coach (the van) hit a rock which was not far enough from the tracks. This happened at 08:30 and we were stuck until 23:30 that night. There was not even space for passengers to get off the coaches, except at the ends. Our video photographer walked around and captured the line on the other side of the tunnel on video. It is clear that no trains have been running over the line for many months as there were more rocks on the line and even trees growing through the sleepers! I couldn't believe that the train manager or drivers did not scout the tracks ahead and suggested we turn around. If I knew this at that time I would not have opted to continue as we could push back to Eagle and returned to East London.

When the bogie derailed our Spoornet electrician fortunately jumped and broke the vacuum between the two coaches or else the train could have fallen down the ravine as we had no radio contact with the drivers!

In the end the re-railing gang had to travel as far as Eagle siding, walked about 5 km to the train and through it to see what they needed to re-rail the coach. They arrived at 14:30 and I suggested they could rather take the van (our kitchen), which was in front of the derailed coach, with the locomotives to fetch the jacks, etc what they needed. So, off they went as it would be easier to bring the necessary equipment by rail than by road (and carry it!).

Meanwhile our cook went on preparing supper and both he and the Spoornet guys were very welcome when they arrived back just before 18:00.

At 23:30 we resumed the trip to Butterworth, turned around at 01:10 and by sunrise the next

morning we were at Cathcart. We were scheduled over the Reverses this day but unfortunately we only reached 6th Reverse when the sun went down and had to abandon the rest of the trip to Barkly East.

Re-living the trip thanks to Hendrik Coetzee's video again last night, it brought back memories of a great trip and a wonderful day in the Kei Cuttings.

Although we couldn't get off, we listened to the streams of water cascading onto the line from the slopes of the cutting, the sounds of the large water fall on the other side of the ravine and watched birds and butterflies getting on with their daily chores amongst the lush vegetation and brightly coloured flowers. Many passengers (even years later) said they cherished this as one of the best days of their lives!

I would love to do the trip again, may be there will be a chance to do it with Kei Rail.

Congratulations to RAILWAYS AFRICA where the Kei Rail train was pictured on the latest issue (Vol 6/2007). There is more information inside and I regard this issue as the best and most informative even issued by Barbara, Rollo and their team.

The latest SA RAIL (Volume 46 1/2008) also arrived today and can also be recommended. The complimentary calendar was an unexpected bonus.

So members, while many of you will enjoy the trains in the Eastern Free State we less fortunate can at least page through some excellent articles.

*Regards Boon.*

### **Apple Express**

The Apple Express people have employed a steam fitter who worked in Uitenhage on permanent basis. His first job is to do a water test on the NGG15,

*Gilbert*

It has been announced by the Eastern Cape province's Department of Roads and Transport that an agreement is being concluded with the Apple Express, to support operations on the narrow gauge line running west from Port Elizabeth.

This agreement will see heritage rolling stock being refurbished to provide tourism services and also public passenger service catering for the rural communities of Patensie and Humansdorp.

*Railways Africa*

### **LOCO NEWS**

Work is progressing on the rebuilding of NG 15 No. 119. All the boiler tubes except for the super heater elements have been fitted and soon a pressure test will be carried out to test for leaks. Also some weak spots on the smoke box have been repaired. The loco now needs to be moved to the steam depot where there is a pit deep enough to allow the boiler makers to do some under frame work.

An interesting observation made while watching the boiler makers fitting the tubes. Some of the tubes had been cut a few millimetres too short at the factory. To overcome this problem one man sat in the firebox side of the boiler and heated the fastened tube with a blow torch. The other person in the smoke box waited for the tube to expand and when

it emerged through the boiler plate, he expertly burred the end and fastened it to the plate.

Heat expanding a boiler tube from inside the firebox

The AE Company has been plagued with the problem of securing the services of a qualified steam fitter. Over the past few months the Company has had to put up with firstly, Sandstone Estates poaching a willing candidate, then secondly another, after agreeing to begin work, declined



when his current company offered him a better deal and thirdly another not liking the working conditions at the Diesel depot, also declined the position.

Finally yet another candidate has been found and is keen to start work as soon as he has completed his notice period with his current Company. It is hoped that he will begin work at the beginning of April. Let us hope that we can now see work moving on the restoration of No.119.  
*Narrow Gauge Newsletter*

## MAY 2008 TOUR

The Geoff Cooke rail tour into the Langkloof is still on, even though the proposed trip all the way to the terminal station at Avontuur will more than likely not materialise. Because of storm water damage that occurred some months ago, a shortened run as far as Louterwater is envisaged. It doesn't seem likely that NG Spoornet will go to the expense of repairing the damaged track, as the upper reaches of the line is very seldom used.

Because the time of the steam tour is fast approaching (May), pressure is mounting to get the Kalahari No. 119 fully restored and 100% fit for the trip. There is going to have to be a monumental team effort to have the loco ready by May.

See [www.geoffs-trains.com](http://www.geoffs-trains.com)

## OTCC

Knysna in bid to return Choo-Tjoe to full steam

Katherine Wilkinson GARDEN ROUTE CORRESPONDENT

WESTERN Cape Tourism MEC Lynne Brown met with Knysna mayor Eleanore Bouw-Spies and other role-players yesterday to discuss the future of the Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe.

The train service, which used to run between Knysna and George, was changed to a route between George and Mossel Bay when extensive damage was done to the line at Kaaimans Pass during flooding in 2006.

“We will get our report in to Transnet as soon as possible, as we are aware of tourism losses to people in the area,” Brown said after the meeting.

She said that Transnet, as the owner, had to make a decision on the service, but it was the job of the province and the Knysna municipality to put together the best possible business plan for the Choo-Tjoe.

Brown said Transnet had received its allocated share from the disaster relief fund and this would be one of the financial resources available when investigating options for the future of the train service.

Bouw-Spies said a committee comprising all stakeholders would be formed and a cost benefit analysis of the various options would be completed. Brown would then engage with Transnet. Neither Brown nor Bouw-Spies could say how long this process would take and did not elaborate on how much money had been allocated to Transnet from the disaster relief fund.

Brown said the Choo-Tjoe had run at a loss for many years before the floods, and that a way needed to be found to make it sustainable.

Last week, the standing committee on finance in the Western Cape legislature rejected a feasibility study that said it would cost between R100-million and R120-million to repair the service. The study said it would cost another R16-million to R18-million a year to keep it running.

*Is this a glimmer of hope for the line to be reinstated.*

It was good to see a class 24 (No. 3668) on the Choo-Tjoe the other day, instead of the usual 19D. It would seem that they now have at least six locos available - the others being 19Ds 2460, 2640, 2649, 2749 (on the train again today) and 3324



The attached shot was taken yesterday as 3668 on the George-bound train whistles for the Southern Cross Drive level crossing at Great Brak River.

The Choo-Tjoe runs daily (ex Su) George to Mossel Bay and back and is usually fairly well patronised. It certainly could take more before reaching the comfort limit of about 50 passengers per coach, but it is hard to accept a statement in the Cape Times recently that it is carrying only one-tenth of what it did on the Knysna run.

By and large, I believe that the TFHP is doing good work in maintaining an almost daily mostly steam service, and running a fine museum in George, to boot. I believe that they deserve more recognition than they are getting.

*Stan Brown*

Regarding the Knysna line, the "about 5 kilometres" is a bit of an over simplification as there are a number of aspects to the existing damage;

The major wash-away between George and Victoria Bay at kilometre 8 The as yet unresolved Kaaiman's Bridge / Dolphin Point land slip The extensive rock falls between Kaaimans and Wilderness

The flood damage around Sedgfield The landslips on several of the outside curves in the Goukamma Valley And now, after the long period without attention, the need to replace a high percentage of the sleepers

It should be noted that, had the repairs to the major washaway and the lesser problems been undertaken at the time, the line would still not have been allowed to be opened because of the Kaaimans problem (and, by the way, TFHP did look hard at taking a train set and locos through over temporary track so that an isolated Knysna - Sedgfield or Wilderness service could be reinstated. This was nixed by the engineers working on the Dolphin Point problem as being far too dangerous to any crew involved and also because they were not convinced that the passage - even very slowly - of even one train would not cause the land slip to become catastrophic).

Readers possible know that, on the recommendation of the engineers, the line has been physically

disconnected at three points on and adjacent to the Kaaiman's Bridge so that, should Dolphin Point come down and sweep the line away there would not be collateral damage to the bridge by having the rails ripped off it.

Regarding the future of the line, HRASA (represented by Ian Pretorius, Jamie Hart and the writer) is involved with the process and acting as consultants to the Western Cape Government. There are 7 proposals on the table at present which range from "close the line, up-lift and forget" to "WC Government to spend the R110 million needed and re-open the line as before". Neither of these are realistic, but there are some interesting ideas amongst those tabled which would see partial reopening.

The reality of the situation regarding long-term solutions for the two major problems are; Kilometre 8 washaway problem - this has its roots in the building of the line in 1927/8 when the engineers came up with the idea of laying the line in the bed of the river and diverting the river to run alongside its former course thus saving a 1,6 kilometre section of line. This worked fine for around 75 years but now there is a problem (as we all know) and the problem is not about global warming and extreme weather but all to do with the development and expansion of George, particularly vigorous on the south side of the town where a once small informal settlement has become a large low-cost housing suburb over the past 10/12 years.

This has meant the removal of nice water retentive grasslands and forest areas, to be replaced by roofs and tarmac roads with large storm water drains taking a huge extra run-off straight into the river - Oh, and keep in mind that since the floods there has been another large development in the shape of the new shopping mall that is now adding its roof and parking area run-off to the problem. And it gets worse, because around the new mall all the forest has been cleared for housing developments!

Jamie Hart is the only person who has, to our knowledge, come up with a realistic (if expensive) long-term solution - canalise the river over a 10 kilometre stretch. That would fix the problem, but the costs would be huge.

Regarding the Dolphin Point land slip, the engineers say this has been stabilised but none are prepared to sign a piece of paper saying that it would be safe to run trains again. And the poor guy with the house on the point is still unable to access the property!.

Having said all that, rest assured that the future of the line is under intense scrutiny and discussion with a very rail-tourism friendly Western Cape Government.

Hope the above clears up a few misconceptions as to the problems and possible solutions them.

*HRASA / Mark Robinson*

## **Botswana**

According to New Era (published in Windhoek), "the multi-billion-dollar electric Trans-Kalahari railway line is going ahead as planned and may be operational by the end of 2009.

"Due to problems with electricity supply in the region, plans are that Falcon Resources Holdings, the holding company of the consortium of companies involved in the project, will build its own power station. Falcon Resource Holdings chief executive officer Mihe Gaomab 1 told New Era that this power plant would guarantee electricity supply."

The project is being undertaken by a consortium of companies from Namibia, South Africa and Canada, including Sekunjalo, Kumba Resources, Siemens Transportation Systems and Energem Resources. It involves the construction of a 1,600km electrified railway from Morepule Colliery in east central Botswana to a harbour at Shearwater Bay, 30km south of Lüderitz. The line is to pass Namibia's new coal mine south of Aranos.

"In Botswana, the railroad will connect Palapye, which is directly linked to Bulawayo in Zimbabwe, through Francistown in the north and with Mafikeng in South Africa through Lobatse. The railway line will come through Morupule and Kang in Botswana, and Mariental, Maltahohe and Aus in Namibia".

It will be the first electrified railway in Botswana and Namibia, the first heavy haul- line in either, and the longest heavy-haul line on the continent.

The project is at pre-feasibility study level, New Era learned, prior to a full feasibility investigation being undertaken. “Having been provisionally allocated land in 2006, Gaomab said negotiations are ongoing because the route passes through commercial farms, and some owners are resisting the development.”

The proposed harbour at Shearwater Bay, New Era points out, will provide SADC countries with shorter distances for cargo destined to the Americas and Europe, while providing access to importers, exporters and mining houses and guaranteeing access to mining companies of resource cargo such as copper, zinc, coal, iron ore, manganese and crude and refined oil products.

*Africa Rail*

### **Tanzania**

Nine of the 25 reconditioned diesel locos being leased by Tanzania Railways Limited (TRL) from India have arrived in Dar-es-Salaam, where they were offloaded from an Iranian registered vessel which brought them from Mumbai. TRL managing director Narasimhaswami Jayaram said the units are being taken to the Morogoro workshop for servicing and are to be used in traffic shortly. The deal was arranged by Rail India Technical and Economic Services Ltd (Rites), the major shareholder in TRL.

Rites is to provide maintenance and spare parts for the locos as part of the lease, which is in the amount of \$US6 million per annum.

Tanzania’s Surface and Marine Transport Regulatory Authority (SUMATRA) was represented on a delegation which travelled to India for pre-shipment inspection of the units. According to an East African Business Week report, another five locomotives are “stranded at Sharjah port in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).”

TRL board member Siraju Kaboyonga explained that leasing is “trendy” and less expensive than outright purchase. Not only would a new locomotive would cost about \$3 million – delivery could take more than two years from the time of placing an order.

*Railways Africa*

## **THE THREE PROVINCES TOUR 2007 (Part 3)**

By Jean Dulez

### Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June

The second leg in Kwa Zulu Natal was due to commence today. We had overnighted in Bethlehem hoping to follow the two returning Reefsteamers trains part of the way to Kroonstad. Meanwhile, the passengers were disembarked from the train after breakfast for the first of many bus journeys, in this case a long one down to Creighton, outside Donnybrook. This is the normal base for the steam operations on this branch, which originates in Pietermaritzburg.

The weather was still partly cloudy, so we linesiders obtained various sequences until Valsrivier, after which the line diverges away from the small district road out of Bethlehem. The mixed train (headed by No.3016) preceded the main train (2056 piloting 3472).

This occupied about two hours, after which we returned to Bethlehem for breakfast and checked out of the lodge. This resulted in our group being about three hours behind the tour busses. The trip proceeded over the main road as far as Harrismith, where the route joins the N3 toll road.

At Howick, there is a turn off to Bulwer where we had to make an unscheduled stop at the local Post Office. One of our group had forgotten his lodge room key in his jacket pocket, the subject of an agitated cell phone call en route! The Speed Services parcel now duly directed back to the lodge address in Bethlehem, we headed down to Creighton, arriving around 15:00.

The first excursion of the Kwa Zulu Natal leg had already got away under cloudy skies. We were only able to catch the train, piloted by Umgeni Railways Class GMA No. 4074, at runpast No.14, at the exit of the Ngwangane Gorge.

There was a final gloomy shot at the Umzimkulu level crossing, following which passengers boarded their busses back to their respective hotels. We headed onto Riverside to film the shunting operations. This was the only occasion that we would see a full passenger train of about nine coaches on this leg of the tour.

The level crossing at the far end of the station had been subjected to several cm of mud from passing cars, indicating that no rail traffic had been over this section for a few days. Fortunately, the Umgeni crew had anticipated the problem and one of the staff was despatched to clear the crossing rails with a shovel.

We then made our way back to Creighton our usual B&B, run by Gail and Malcolm Gemmel. This is the only such establishment in Creighton, and is better known as a birders' stop over guest house. Malcolm is well known in the area as a knowledgeable nature and birding expert.



### Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

The weather had fortunately lifted the following morning and a full double header was scheduled with mixed train for the scenic climb to Donnybrook. The Creighton based class 19D, No 2669, piloted GMA No. 4074 (bunker first) on the first section.

Again, as linesiders, we left the train behind after sunrise at one of the dirt road level crossings outside Creighton, and made our way to the Ixopo – Donnybrook main road to a well known 'Eternal Hills' vantage spot.

Meanwhile, runpasts 106 & 108 were conducted near Mjila halt. From our view point this was rather distant in the valley. Next, closer in sequences on the horseshoe below the main road (some sequences were completed with the 19D separated from the train).

Finally, runpast No112 at another well known location close to the main road, about 5km before reaching Donnybrook.

Around 10 am the double headers reached Donnybrook, and some delays ensued whilst the 19D was removed from the train and recoaling took place on the GMA.

The GMA then continued down to Ingelnook where a water pumping stop was scheduled. These operations took about three hours, and in the meantime we made our way down a long winding road to the bottom of the next valley at Voyizana.

Clouds were forming in the early afternoon and the prospect of completing the return climb from Deepdale under sunny conditions looked remote. We took up position at the Voyizana stone arch bridge and the loco and train eventually descended from the water-stop around 13:30.

Thereafter we took the dirt road as far as Butu, which overlooked the river towards Deepdale. We observed the loco running around the train and then presumably being watered again. A long delay ensued to allow two light engine class 35's to cross. Normally this down run comprises a full timber train, but there was no traffic scheduled today. Nevertheless, this crossing consumed a valuable hour, and by the time the train eventually departed, it was getting rather cloudy.

In the end, due to the lack of sunlight, only two runpasts were conducted at the stone bridge and a further two silhouettes on a curve above Voyizana halt. Ourselves, we managed another sequence near the main horseshoe curve, rather desperate in the gathering dusk!

This year we were destined to obtain no runpast above the main horseshoe, as had been the case in 2003 and 2005. Following this, we abandoned the train whilst it was climbing to Ingelnook and returned to our Creighton guest house, a good 45 minutes away.

### Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June

Our guest house host Malcolm Gemmel, conducted our 4 x 4 down a narrow track to an access point within the Ngwangwane Gorge early in the morning.

In the meanwhile, the tour group were enjoying four sunrise sequences at the traditional Creighton "golf course" location. This was with No. 2669 and a 4 coach train.

Whilst this was in progress, we were able to obtain a sequence in the gorge of No. 4074 and mixed train, which had been sent ahead of the 19D. No 2669 followed later with its train, allowing 4 runpasts in the vicinity of the gorge at river level and from the hill side. Runpast No. 126 was at the girder bridge at the exit of the gorge and No. 127 at the Umzimkulu road level crossing, just before arrival in Riverside.

In Riverside, photographers were able to enjoy the treat of two stream trains in the station. The GMA had run around its train and departed a short while later with photographers.

Two runpasts were set up along the river bank (railway line on the left) and two more within the gorge, beyond the railway bridge which spans the cross over to the right hand bank. However, photo light angles this late in the morning were becoming rather front lit and flat.

After the lunch break, the same freight train departed Creighton bound for Donnybrook behind No.4074.

Passengers were bussed to the 'Eternal Hills' lookout point on Ixopo – Donnybrook main road. Here, two panoramic runpasts were set up with the aid of Umgeni staff walkie talkies between bus and train. We had remarkably clear views in the afternoon, allowing for even the distant Drakensberg to be visible within the scene.

The busses then ferried passengers to the curve before the houses, where the line was close by. However, afternoon shadows were already encroaching on the line.

Following two runpasts here, passengers now boarded the train for the short run to Donnybrook. At a point beyond the old narrow gauge junction, two final runpasts were organised at sunset.

I remember this location from steam days in the early 1980's when the narrow gauge line from Ixopo was still operating. This was a dual gauge section of track, about three to four km long into Donnybrook, but this unique third inside rail has since been removed.

At Donnybrook the passengers then reboarded their respective busses to their hotels, whilst the GMA was watered and thereafter run around the train for the return trip to Creighton, which took place in the dark.

### Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June

This was the final day on the lines around Creighton and all locomotives were scheduled to see some action on this day. Before sunrise, No.4074 piloted its usual cargo up to Donnybrook. A mandatory series of runpasts were held (Nos. 138 to 142) in some lovely valley locations, amidst Zulu huts, vistas and aloes in bloom. We had managed to access several tracks in the valley within our vehicle and the delays between runpasts and stops allowed enough time to navigate over several of the tracks leading to the railway line.

Two more sequences were conducted towards Donnybrook station.

After this, passengers reboarded the busses, we presumed, for the return trip to Creighton. However, we missed one piece of information whilst the GMA was being recoaled.

The Umgeni train was now effectively enroute back to Pietermaritzburg, but was still to be rejoined by the 19D, No 2685, with the Umgeni service coaches.

Coaling at Donnybrook had to be completed with the aid of a forklift, courtesy of the local Spar shop, since the crane on the coal truck had broken down. The prefilled bags of coal had to be hoisted into the Garratt's bunker. This must surely have been the Spar owner's most unusual materials handling job and he had thus come out himself to operate the forklift!

Meanwhile, RSSA national membership secretary Ashley Peter, who was directing operations, informed us that the 19D was already en route from Creighton, thus we headed back down the main road.

At the road/rail vista, above the huts, we arrived just in time to get a shot of the 19D; the passengers, who had stopped their busses a while earlier at the location, had already been waiting a while.

We then debated the issue of following the double header further down from Donnybrook. However, given likely protracted servicing delays, together with a largely down hill run to Deepdale (not to mention lengthy road detours) it did not appear practical. We reckoned the train would not even reach the top of the bank at Elandskop, beyond Deepdale, before sunset. Hence we returned to Creighton for lunch. The tour group were entertained at the municipal offices courtesy Dudley Smith and staff with a station platform buffet.

After lunch, the final scheduled trip was with the resident 19D, No. 2669, and the local train set to Riverside.

For this, passengers were taken by bus to a lookout vista over the Ngwangane gorge, as had been done in 2006. This year, no tractors had been provided and passengers had to lug their photographic gear 500m over a track to the lookout point.

When the loco eventually appeared, it seemed to have steaming problems and was unable to produce any smoke at the first runpast.

Julian Perreira and another tour passenger volunteered to wade through the river and clamber up the bank to assist the fireman.

Following all these problems, this effort was in vain since they were still unable to produce any results. Hence runpast No 147 came to a smokeless end, as the shadows were lengthening.

After seeing the 19D into Creighton at nightfall, we headed back to our B&B in Creighton for a final night.

The tour group were ferried to their customary lodges. Later, we received reports that the Umgeni train had returned to Mason Mill, but that the GMA had suffered serious boiler problems en route and was unlikely to be repaired for quite some time.

### Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> June

Today was to produce the third and another potentially serious incident during this tour.

Whilst the passengers were bussed to Ixopo for a day on the Paton Country Railway

Narrow gauge, operated by Julian Perreira, we had decided to enjoy a full English breakfast at the Creighton B & B, planning to rejoin the train at Ixopo later during the morning.

We eventually arrived at Ixopo at about 9:00 just in time to catch the first series of runpasts on the horseshoe curve climbing out of town.

Following this, there were another series of six photo stops on the climb to Stanton halt. These photos were made possible due to sections of the surrounding forest having been cleared over the past year.

Line side sequences outside of the set runpasts were effectively useless, unless one did not mind dozens of passengers riding the open wagons in between the photo stops! (this practice has since been regarded as dangerous and is now not allowed, as we shall presently note)

Around 10 am, the train arrived at the Stanton halt. Further on, it was mainly down hill to Carrisbrooke, so no more runpasts.

A number of passengers decided to call the uncomfortable ride to an end and board their waiting bus for a short ride back to Ixopo. The remainder opted to continue down the bank on board the train, with some of these passengers riding in the open wagons.

As linesiders, we decided to head down to Carrisbrooke, where the loco would be able to run around the train and then head back up the bank.

At Carrisbrooke loop we therefore had ample time to enjoy some coffee and set up cameras to film the train entering the loop. For some reason, the regular setting for the points is into the loop, rather than on the straight. Julian later explained that this was on easier entrance for the reversing operation – all the normal trains reverse at this loop. Although the line is actually open a few kilometres further, but it is not usually worth the additional time and effort to operate trains right down the bank.

We now await the train around 11 am, eventually it appears on the straight through the trees. As it approaches the open points on the loop, I immediately realise something is wrong, since the Garratt is travelling visibly in excess of the safe speed to negotiate an open point setting. I shout to my fellow video companion to mind, as we were in the path of a train in danger of derailing over the points at an excessive speed! (... He tells me to keep quiet so that he can record the sound)... I prepare in an instant to shunt my own camera and the man himself right off the side of the line. However, in a split second, we realise that the speeding train somehow actually manages to stay on the rails after having taken the facing points at speed, thus I start filming myself. ....the loco driving wheels are shockingly now running in reverse.....passengers in the open coaches realise that the train is now overshooting the level loop and heading down the steep bank to Ncala. Some passengers decide it was now time to jump off a train travelling at around 30 Km /hour.



Eventually the train is brought to a stand still about 100m beyond the end of the loop, having managed to negotiate the re entry from the loop at equally unsafe speed.

Accounts differ as to what went wrong. However, those who jumped from open wagons feared a total runaway, whilst those in the coaches were unsure what to do. It appears that the vacuum in the brake gear on the loco had been bled to zero, with little effect on the remainder of the train braking. Hence, as final desperation, the drive gear had been thrown into reverse, once it appeared that the train was entering the loop at unsafe speed. Added to this, one of the passengers applied the hand wheel brake in the final coach. All this eventually brought the train to a halt on the start of the down hill section.

In review, it seems that slippery rails due to oil dripping from the Eucalyptus trees, excessive speed and badly adjusted brake gear on some of the freight cars added to a potential runaway situation. Once the train had reversed and some of the bruised, but not seriously injured passengers on the ground had rejoined the group at the siding, David Rodgers took stock of the situation. It was decided to abandon the remainder of the train journey, since everyone was shaken and obviously concerned about safety.

The busses then took passengers back down to the lunch time buffet at the Ixopo depot. We decided to complete some video of the train returning up the bank. It took some time to get to the road under-bridge ... apparently the claim about slippery lines was not such a story after all, since the train slipped to a standstill on several occasions; nevertheless this indicated unsafe track conditions. The whole saga would now have to be put into Julian Perreira's monthly report, but for the second time this tour, passengers had been exposed to what compromised unsafe railway conditions.

In fact, the rail break at Vailima had been potentially the most dramatic, but the Carrisbrooke incident had been the most apparent.

With afternoon lunches completed, passengers boarded busses for the trip to Pietermaritzburg . We followed suit on our 4 by 4 twin cab.

*To be continued*

### **From The Past**

Reading a story about the train running into the loop and into the dead end siding reminded me of that terrible trip on 25NC 3488 from Kimberley to De Aar in about 1991. We had a massive freight and were approaching Modder River when we noticed the signals were pulled for the loop. The driver applied the brakes on the steep falling gradient on approach to the station but nothing happened. The train just went on rolling. Driver reversed 3488 and opened the sand then opened the regulator gently. The engine was now working against the train. we approached the points at about 50kph and flew into the loop. How the train stayed on the lines I do not know. We waved and whistled to the signalman trying to indicate to him to pull the points open for the main at the end of the loop but he just stood watching. With the engine in reverse and regulator slightly open it actually got the speed of the train down and we came to a stand with the front pony truck wheels just hanging off the track at the catch points. It was a rather frightening experience. After that I went along each and every wagon in the train and found nothing wrong at all. We then tested the train brakes and all appeared to work as it should. We then continued onwards to De Aar without anymore problems but both of us still did not trust that train, especially when heading down Bhershoek bank but luckily nothing more went wrong.

*Richard Niven*

Many years ago when I was based in Kimberley it was possible to hear a steam whistle from a 25NC thundering across the Karoo from many miles away. At night while I lay trying to sleep I would often hear this wonderful sound and then listen for the noise of the engine working hard across the Karoo. One of the best trains was the Cape Town bound Trans Karoo Express. One would hear it whistle as it passed Beaconsfield and then you would hear the beat of the engine getting louder and louder as it approached and hammered passed my housing estate and finally

headed into the distance and silence returned. But a few minutes later one would hear the echo of the whistle as the train approached the level crossing at Wimbledon and then all was gone.

These wonderful sounds are now long gone and are a thing of the past,

*Richard Niven*

### **Odds & Ends**

#### **CLASS 24 MOVEMENT UPDATE**

I'm very pleased to say that we received around 25 % of the funds needed to move No. 3647 to Masons Mill in the first three weeks of the Appeal. We need to keep this good momentum going so if you would like to buy further Shares in the loco or can make a short term loan we would be delighted to hear from you. Please complete the form at the back of this Newsletter. With the price of scrap going up all the time in South Africa, No. 3647 is already worth 25% more than we paid for her in 2006 so no-one will lose money even if the scheme were to fail. We need to ensure this does not happen though and get the loco safely on her way back to the UK.

*North British Locomotive Society Newsletter*

2008 is 50 years since the last new Beyer-Garratt left the Gorton Works in Manchester, England. The Welsh Highland Railway will be commemorating this anniversary with a "Garratt 50 event over the weekend of September 6-7

Both the first and last built Garratts from the Gorton works, together with a planned exhibit of 50+ other Garratts of all sizes will be on display, many in steam.

There will also be a large display of Garratt artefacts including some from the East African Railway.

*Trevor Heath*

I was just reading about the tests run in the 1950's when 25NC 3427 was fitted with a Geisl ejector. Just wondering if anyone knows where I can find any photos of 3427 when she was fitted with this?

*Trevor Heath*

*This is the first your editor has heard of this, anyone any further information?*

New Delhi: Come 2010, steam locomotives will be back on tracks in Delhi.

Indian Railways will run steam trains on the Delhi ring railway route as part of its Heritage Experience Plan for the Commonwealth Games.

The train consisting of six heritage coaches with a steam locomotive would start from Safdarjung station and travel to Anand Vihar, Old Yamuna Bridge, Old Delhi, New Delhi and Nizamuddin station before returning to Safdarjung.

"We are working out details of the project. The aim is to showcase our heritage properties by facilitating visitors to have a glimpse of these during the Games in 2010," said a senior Railway Ministry official.

Indian Railways is also trying to involve Delhi government and Tourism Ministry in its endeavour to make the steam loco experience a successful venture.

"Steam locomotives are the very heart of Railways' heritage. We will take all possible measures to promote heritage tourism through our steam locomotives," Railways minister Lalu Prasad has said in his budget speech.

*Geoff Pethick*

*Your editor hopes this will be passed on to our government. Rail and steam haulage is a tourism magnet.*

RailPersonnel, a company specializing in recruitment of employees for the rail industry (see <http://www.railpersonnel.com>), have opened an office in South Africa RailPersonnel are delighted to announce the opening of new offices in Malaysia and South Africa.

The South African office is headed up by Brian Carver. Brian has over 30 years railway experience across a wide range of disciplines. He will be looking to provide recruitment services to Transnet and to those involved in the Gautrain project, which is now the biggest rail project under construction in the world. According to some estimates, the project could employ as many as 18 000 people over the next 20 years and generate business activities worth up to R3.6-billion per annum. Brian's email address is [brian@railpersonnel.com](mailto:brian@railpersonnel.com).

*I wonder if they have any requirements for steam drivers, firemen, fitters etc?*

Good news for Gautengers who are still shooting slide film.....Beith Lab in Sandton is once again processing film. I was there this week to have a film processed, price R 35.00 incl VAT. Their film processing was out of action for about 4 months, so it's good to know they are back in business!

*Eugene Armer*



The above is an interesting picture that shows just how small a ex SAR 33 Class diesel is when up against a diesel built to American loading gauge.

### **Annual Membership.**

Annual Membership is now due. For the RSSA Reef branch it is R 345 for the next year including 4 issues of SA Rail. Without SA Rail it is R 145.

Payment can be made by cheque to

The Membership Secretary

RSSA REEF BRANCH

PO Box 75169

Garden View 2047

Or by direct deposit to

Railway Society SA

ITB Code 00051001

Account number 020123264 (Please put your name and membership number on the deposit.  
Cash to our Treasurer Jean Dulez at the next Reef Branch Meeting

### **RSSA Meetings**

The April meeting was a DVD on the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway (this incredible 15 inch railway on the south coast of England) followed by rare footage of steam in Kenya, Angola, Mozambique and Swaziland. For most of those attending was the first time of seeing the Namacurra Atlantics in steam.

The next show (last Wednesday of May) it is hoped to have a talk on Gautrain.

### **Teaser**

No one sent me the correct answer to last months teaser which was Nathan Berelwitz and Mike Haslam stalwarts of Friends of he Rail. Not being a supporter of engraving ones body with insignia I put it down to the air in Pretoria.

This month's teaser is a picture of a 6<sup>th</sup> Class, I would like to know what railway it operated on and where would you find it today?



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