

On Track

**RAILWAY SOCIETY
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
REEF BRANCH NEWSLETTER
December 2008**



From to Editor

The results of the RSSA Reef Branch photographic competition are as follows.

Slides

1 Jean Dulez - UP container train with AC4400 diesels at Echo Canyon, Northern Utah, USA

2 David Eades - class 15F on ex Magalies special at Three Sisters (near Battery station)

3 David Benn - class GMA 4076 at City View, Pietermaritzburg on SLST special

Digital

1 David Benn - Class 19B 1412 on Knysna causeway with daily Choo Tjoe train

2 Tony Attwell - Double headed class NG6 Lawleys with consist, sunrise silhouette at Sandstone Estates

3 Jean Dulez - Peru Rail metre gauge diesel train at Aqua Calientes, Macchu Pichu scenic railway

RSSA trophy will be shared by David and Jean, so congratulations to the winners. It was pleasant to see a complete variety of railway subjects covered in this year's competition, from traditional SAR steam, modern Transnet traction, industrial equipment to various overseas topics and scenes.

Many Thanks to Eugene Armer for the judging and to David Benn for providing and operating those bits of electronic gubbins that somehow magically shone the digital images onto the big screen.

We have received this invitation to ride the Friends of the Rail train on the 16 December.

To all RSSA members,

FOTR would like to invite you to ride on our Tshwane Explorer train on Tuesday 16 December, which is a public holiday. This will hopefully be 15F 3117's first proper trip since restoration so it promises to be a special occasion. We will meet at Hercules depot from 11am onward for a bring and braai, following which the train departs at 13h30 and is back just after 4pm.

I am copying our marketer Arno Victor on this one so that you can contact him for directions and further details. His number is 012-5484090.

Chris Janish

Come on guys lets have a big RSSA turn out to celebrate the return to work of another great steam locomotive.

Friends of the Rail

This past Monday, a set of coaches painted in the Kei Rail colours, and with the addition of the "paddy wagon", mobile lock up police coach for people that don't pay for their coffee or tea, was supposed to run to Cullinan behind diesels, for a trial run. Train was due to leave Koedeospoort at 09:00, but delays in finding motive power, resulted in the train being hauled by units to Rayton. The diesels that were available, were on a shunt trip out at Bronkhospruit/Forfar and by the time they were available, the train was unified all the way to Rayton and back, so no Cullinan on this one. Eugene Armer was out for this rainy day event.

Talking of the historical village of Cullinan, it has been very busy with steam trains operated there over weekends by FOTR. Class 19D and 24 have been used on the section, and with the reinstated water column, it is a pleasure to see the trains run without feeder tanks. Have a look at their website for more details but there will be a double header out there in late November.
trainman

Reef Steamers

Cherry Festival Train

On the evening of the 20 November my wife and I arrived at Boksburg East Station to see the full rake of the red and grey Reefsteamers sleeper coaches standing waiting for us to board. This was to be the steam hauled Reefsteamers annual Ficksburg Cherry Festival Train. As normal with Transnet Rail Freight the arrangements change from year to year and this year we were scheduled to leave early in Friday morning and be electric hauled to Bethlehem. This is because Transnet have deemed that this line is one of their core main lines and our train with two steam locomotives hauling it would cause congestion if it went slowly and held up their freight traffic. Needless to say we saw very little freight traffic that we could have held up.



The two engines that were to be used on the trip were 25NC 3472 and 15F 3052 which was the engine owned by the famous artist and train enthusiast David Sheppard, who was on the train. The locomotive carried the number plates of another Reefsteamers locomotive 3046. It had been planned to use 15CA 2056 but leaking super heater flue tubes had meant that the 25NC had to be substituted.

Extensive work to the tender and tender bogies to the 15F has been undertaken by Reefsteamers during the few months previously and had been finally reassembled and given a trial run the previous weekend. This had turned out to be a bad trip due to very poor coal.

Reefsteamers run with A grade locomotive coal but had been sent C or D grade which had insufficient calorific value and caused the F to stall on the return from Magaliesburg and had to be towed in buy modern traction. This made the train very late returning.

The coal had to be exchange for A Grade and the last of the coal was only delivered late on the evening of the 20th so when we got to Boksburg East only the 25 was simmering at

the station.

In true Reefsteamers fashion they sorted out the problem and the F arrived in time for the scheduled 1 am start.

Well that was the schedule but we only left at 04:50 due the TFR taking their time to supply the 2 x 6E1 electrics need to haul the 20 coach train to Bethlehem.

The run was very pleasant and went with out a hitch. Only a couple of greasing stops were required to keep the F in cool lubricated condition. The 25 of course had roller bearings and mechanical lubrication. Breakfast and lunch were served in the dining car and it is one of the most wonderful experiences a person can have, to eat and at the same time riding through the beautiful countryside of S Africa looking at all the farmlands and scenery.

On arriving at Bethlehem the electrics and steam locomotives detached and went to the loco depot for servicing and water top up.

About an hour an a half later the steam returned, were attached to out train and we were off to the line to Ficksburg. The locos worked well but the weather was closing in and heavy rain came down.

There was a small lineside fire started by one of the locomotives but we reversed and the fire was quickly put out with the spray pipe.



On the steep climb to Iona the locos got down to a slow walk with the slippery 25 frequently losing its feet but the F just kept plodding along and we never came to a stop. Absolutely awesome.!

Ficksburg was reached in the dark and the rain and we popped across the lines and visited the Wimpy for something to eat.

The following morning we after breakfast in the dining car we were taken together with a small group of enthusiasts to Sandstone Estates farm where we were royally entertained by Wilf Mole and his team. We were given a complete ride of the system in a mixed train with an open carriage behind the NGG13 Garratt No 49 including photo stops.

After a most pleasant lunch the two Lawleys were brought out and we were taken on a half tour of the system.

What a contrasting pair they make one in Beira Railways green and the other in SAR black, as it was in the days it work on the SAR as No 97 before been sold to Zebidela Estates.

It was another wet night at the train so we stayed hunkered down in our cabin with just nipping along to the bar car for cups of tea!

We were to move off again at 1:00 but we were still standing was 2:30 in the morning. But when I awoke we were on the move and what a beautiful sight beheld our eyes.

There was dawning a beautiful clear sunny morning, the overnight rain had washed all the dirt from the atmosphere the field sparkled with the sun catching the dew on the fields. The fields were green and fresh and the animals were looking or running away from the train and as one looked forward there were two magnificent black beasts at the front of the train moving in and out of sight as the line wound its way through some of the loveliest countryside in S Africa, and the sound, was awe-inspiring.

We were being treated to the events that train travellers of bygone years experienced on a daily basis when the dear old SAR ran its numerous passenger trains before its steam engines succumbed the modern traction technology.

We had the most memorable hour of this till it was time to stoke our inner fires with breakfast.



At Bethlehem the locomotives detached and were serviced in the rather empty depot and the train was made up with the same two electrics that brought us from Johannesburg and after a bit of effort by the driver, the electrical gubbins inside the front loco was persuaded to operate almost correctly and we were off on a steady run with a speeds up to 70 kph. I should note at this point the Reefsteamers chief engineer Andrew King had spent the whole trip looking perfectly clean. This was due to him not having any problems with our motive power, which is a tribute to the Reefsteamers team that maintain there locomotives in tip top mechanical condition. However this was to change! We noticed there were no lights and the beer was getting a bit warmer which meant we had power problems in the generator car.



Two generator cars were taken one being borrowed from Shongololo and Reefsteamers had brought their own. The Shongololo one had been used on most of the trip, as it is more powerful but used a lot of diesel. So as the electrical load was light on the return journey it was decided to save some money by using the Reefsteamers one. This, just before Kroonstad had stopped in a cloud of smoke. As this was rather terminal, the train was stopped at Kroonstad Station and diesel was transferred from one power car to the other and some more diesel was obtained from a local dealer.

That took about an hour and a half and then we were off again with cooling beers and water from the electric pumps. The rest of the journey was uneventful with only seeing meaningful other train traffic after we had passed Vereeniging.

At President we came to a standstill while the electrics were detached so the driver and assistant could finish their shift on time at Germiston and it was left to the Reefsteamers drivers and firemen to gingerly pilot their magnificent steeds around the twisting lines around Germiston and the loco depot before opening up for a final thrash down the straight lines towards Boksburg.

A brilliant finish to a wonderful trip.

Many thanks to Reefsteamers management, staff and volunteer members for a most enjoyable and safe trip. Remember folks that the train was pulled by locomotives that are 50 and 60 years old and their technology is a 100 or more years old.

The only disappointment was that myself and Dennis Eager were the only RSSA members on the trip.

Where are all of you?

This is your interest why don't you take advantage of an event like this?

The bookings for next year's Cherry Festival trip are now open and I hear that there is a possibility of longer steam haulage. Contact Les Smith 072 227 5335

Editor Thanks to Dennis Eager and Sandstone for the pictures.

SANRASM

The three steam locomotives due to be auctioned off at Greenside Colliery have been given a stay of execution. These 3 locomotives will now be moved to SANRASM's site as originally planned. The locomotives are: 1) 14R 1701 - the first of it's class.

2) 14R 1908.

3) Class 1 number 1301

Efforts to save the other 3 locomotives at Landau were unsuccessful.

These were ex R.R. 16A Garratt number 605, Industrial 12A And 3BR number 1481.

Les Smith.

There you are something good came out of the attempt by Anglo Coal to clean up its site by auctioning these historic locos. It is now up to SANRASM to preserve these properly and not let them become a source for income for the metal thieves that inhabit Krugersdorp. Editor.

The sad news from South Africa is that former RR 16th Class Garratt 605, a long time slogger on Witbank's Landau Colliery post RR days, has been auctioned off for scrap as the South African National Railway & Steam Museum (SANRASM)-based in Krugersdorp - was unable fiscally to

relocate this and two 'straight' locomotives prior to a late October deadline.

John Batwell.

Stop Press

The locomotives (19BR and 16CR's) at Freegold in the good old Free State will also shortly be moved to SANRASM's site.

Sandstone

Letter to the Editor.

Dear Stewart,

I draw your attention to this paragraph in your recent editorial following on from Geoff Pethick's information on the Landau disposals.

"How many of you or societies you are members of have done something to preserve these? I do accept that not every rusting steam hulk can be preserved for future generation but we should at least try and keep the ones that have historic value or are useful to pull trains in the future.

I hope by the next On Track issue there is something positive to report."

From a Sandstone perspective we do take exception to such comments. Sandstone has invested close to R15M on saving and restoring locomotives and other items of rolling stock in South Africa. This encompasses both narrow and Cape gauge items. In addition via our membership of Steam In Action we have been instrumental together with Reefsteamers and Friends of the Rail from halting the scrapping at Millsite. You answer your own comments by stating that not everything can be saved. In this instance and there will be more, attention should be directed to SANRASM whose policy of collecting everything in sight and then leaving it to rot should be questioned. Please do not denigrate the other clubs and organisations that have made every effort to save what they can within the bounds of economic reason and the resources to relocate such items to a safe environment.

Kind Regards

Dave Richardson

Sandstone

I don't quite understand what Dave is getting at, but Sandstone has done a wonderful job of preserving S Africa's railway heritage and my comments were no way directed towards Sandstone. My comments were directed at my readers to get involved and do something positive for railway preservation instead of just writing to the SAR-List and moaning they are not kept informed. Don't wait to be fed, get out there and do something positive.

Editor

Around and About



Seen at Pyramid South yesterday, in the low light of a thundercloud backdrop, are two new diesels: SDD20003/A001 in powder blue and white with yellow and red trim, labelled Anglo Platinum; and SDD20004 in powder blue with white trim, labelled "AssMang Manganese". Type SDD2 diesel-electric locomotives owned by ARTS. Hire locos. Destined for Anglo Platinum Rustenberg and Black Rock Hotazel. They were built by China South Loco Group or CSR South.

Probably see more of these soon. Two more at work at Douglas Colliery.

All info courtesy of John Middleton.

Four of us left Riebeeckstad at 10h00 for Kroonstad via Hennenman this road, follows the railway line.

We met the retired Section Manager, who took us on a tour of the CTC, C90, [North/South sections] & RTW, [To Harrismith & Sandveld branches plus Welkom ore haulage]. C90 two small screens & keyboard, which shows section being worked. The large board & control panel no longer required.

Whilst in the CTC building we missed train no. 1142, the fast container train Northwards. We were told that two other North bound trains would follow later.

We then went to Jordaan, knowing that we could have a lovely braai under all the eucalyptus trees. But alas on arrival they had all been cut down. [On 14 12 2004, the "Algoa" derailed at Jordaan, with coaches rolling down the steep embankment, 15 passengers were injured & hospitalised. Report in Volksblad of 15 12 2004}. Report of accident enquiry found that the TCO had set the signals/points for the loop, which he was allowed to do. The driver only noticed that the semaphore signals/points had been set for the loop at a very late stage. The train sped over the points at full speed & the above accident resulted. The loop was never replaced and still lies in a mangled/twisted state. Two years later this station closed.

We had our braai on the platform, under cloudy conditions, with flashes of lightning and thunder towards Koppies. We had just finished braaing and down came the rain. The station building roof is still intact, due to it's remote setting. So we took shelter here from the rain.

On phoning CTC we were told that the 1st train would leave Gunhill at 15h00 and the other one a bit later. We waited the sun shining again. Another call & we were told that all trains had been delayed for a 18h00 departure, no reasons given.

We left & arrived home at 16h45 after a lovely outing.

Braai greetings,

John & Jacque Wepner.

This morning we left at 10h30 again via the Hennenman road. Kept in contact with Les Smith, "Reef Steamers". Train running over 2 hrs late.

Took the "Suidrand" turnoff & waited for the train, phoned Les who said just passed the Featherstone demolished station.

Got a lot of good photos as the train went towards Gunhill over bridge. Quick trip using back roads & parked next to platform 1. Not a long wait & the 2x6E1's 1737/1376 & 15F 3046 & 25NC 3476, stopped next the Land Rover & Jeep. The five of us took a walk down the platform met Dennis, Les, Joseph & many others. A lot of SAR List members.

On enquiring why platform 3 not used, were told that generator in RS van had packed up, the "Shongololo" one had run out of fuel, we offered to take cans for fuel, told a 2,000 litre tanker on it's way. A while later & the fuel arrived.

The Defender group moved off to Westleigh, whilst the Cherokee chaps awaited departure Asking driver Johann [15F] & Hugo [25NC] to give a "Hanekraai" [Cock Crow} whistle on departure & to whistle at all the crossings where the two vehicles would stop for photos.

First stop Westleigh, Serfontein, Rooiwal & old now closed level crossing before Koppies.

Both drivers giving us the necessary whistles, at all photo spots. Thanks to you chaps.

We rendezvoused at Rooiwal, went to the open station, only to find no one on duty, A perusal of trains register showed train 57564 through at 14h19. Now about 6 hrs late. On leaving the station, staff member & friend coming from the nearby railway houses, with lunch. Station very clean parquet blocks shining.

On crossing the line Hennie mentioned that a certain station foreman, had mentioned he had heard strange goings on in the "British War" cemetery, just behind the station. We popped into the little rural shop for some cold drinks. The elderly woman, mentioned a group of British war graves persons, arranged to have the place cleaned. But unfortunately many a brass cross/name plate had already been stolen. We can mention that this road has many signs pointing to routes to take for places where battles took place, 1899 - 1902.

She also mentioned that a while ago, the "Bombela" from Queenstown stopped at Rooiwal due to power outage. She mentioned that almost all her stock was sold that day to the train passengers. Busses were arranged passengers & luggage loaded, when power came on again. Passengers refused to get back into the train. Busses left full & train left empty.

We returned to Riebeeckstad, via Geneva & stopped there to show one of our group a "Ballast Tamping Machine" [Matiza], which he had not seen before.

John, Jacque Wepner

Mainline Passenger Services

Spotted in Braamfontein north yard yesterday evening: 18 405 (the highest number of its class I've seen so far). In overall Shosholozu purple with large yellow numbers and the words "Shosholozu Meyl" in small letters stencilled along the middle of the bodywork. I like the numbers - solidly painted in and not in outline like the other 18s so far. The purple will take some getting used to, though. Does this mean dedicated locos for Shosh? We'll see!

Vaughan

Looks like the purple 18 fleet is starting to come together. In Braamfontein North yard at five this afternoon (27 November): 18 403+409+406. Three in a row look far more impressive than just a single loco. While semi-dedicated locos for passenger work are nothing new, this seems to be the first time that the brand has actually been painted on any loco. Will be interesting to see how they are programmed. So far, 18s have been used only north, east and south of Johannesburg. Will be

interesting to see the first ones (purple or not) on the Trans-Karoo.

Vaughan

GARDEN ROUTE PREMIER

CLASSE

Santie Bekker of Sartravel replied to an enquiry about the new Cape Town-Port Elizabeth Premier Classe train as follows:

"Spoornet will launch the new Premier Classe between Cape Town – Port Elizabeth on 05 December 2008:* Cape Town depart Fridays at 15:00 - arrive in Port Elizabeth the next day at 15:57.

Port Elizabeth depart Sundays at 08:45 - arrive in Cape Town the next day at 09:20

Introduction cost R1,250.00 per person single fare until further notice.

Cost from Cape Town to Oudtshoorn will be R600 per person single fare. Arrival time in Oudtshoorn will be 07.12 and departure time will be on Sundays at 17:14 "They will only be able to transport cars by January 2009 "The Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth route and the Victoria Falls route is postpone (sic) until further notice.

Contact details as follows:

Santie Bekker - Cell number +27724322950

Transnet Rail Freight

State-owned Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) last week moved 1,4-million tons of coal for export through the Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT) on its coal line.

This was improvement from the prior weekly average of about 1,3-million tons.

"If we can remain at 1,4-million tons a week until the end of the financial year, we will reach financial close in excess of 65-million tons for the year," said TFR coal export line manager Bertie Maree.

The efficiency, explained Maree, was owing to quicker turnaround times and fewer incidents on the coal line, as well as higher availability of coal from mines at better turnaround times at RBCT.

The coal line has a capacity to transport 72-million tons a year although the actual tonnages transported through the export channel were less.

This was owing to high rainfall in the beginning of the year, which meant that miners could not supply coal, as well as handling and infrastructure-related derailments along the coal line.

Disruptions because of the RBCT expansion were also a factor.

TFR was implementing its turnaround strategy, which would see the rail company spending some R12-billion on capital expenditure (capex), of which it was estimated about R7,2-billion had already been spent.

Over 1 000 new wagons would be built under the new capex programme to accommodate increased tonnages.

Transnet Rail Engineering had already started building the first 300 wagons, which would go into service in March 2009.

New locomotives would also be procured, signalling systems would be improved and formation (the ground beneath the tracks like a foundation) would be reinforced.

With the RBCT having outlined plans to expand capacity to export 91-million tons a year of coal, this meant TFR would need to boost its capacity to transport the required amount of coal from the mines inland.

The ten-year contract between TFR (formerly called Spoornet) and the coal mining industry players came to an end in 2004/5, and a new fixed contract was still in the process of being negotiated. In the interim, a fixed tariff was applied. A number of elements of the contract pricing were under discussion, some of the fixed elements worked into the pricing structure would be the distance to the RBCT and time taken to load wagons. This meant that if a coal-miner invested in efficient loading facilities and could load wagons quicker, a lower tariff would be paid. The average time to load a 100-wagon train was about 4,6 hours, including front-end loading, and slow-speed loading. With efficient loading facilities, such as the slow-speed mechanism found BHP Billiton's Douglas colliery in Mpumalanga, a 100-wagon train could be loaded in 2,3 hours.

There are 28 200 wagon set trains in operation on the coal line at any given day. These trains are 2,4 km long, and carry some 16 800 t of coal.

The seven major shareholders now making use of the coal line are, Anglo Coal, BHP Billiton, Xstrata, Sasol Mining, Total Coal, Exxaro and Kangra Coal.

About four-million tons a year was transported on the line for black economic-empowerment miners, which export coal through a RBCT stake held by the Department of Minerals and Energy.

Engineering News

The five class 39 diesel locomotives completed by Transnet Rail Engineering (TRE) are being used on heavy cement trains to Pretoria. Later it is intended to deploy them on the Thabazimbi line. These are to be the last of this series. Already, TRE has commenced work on a 39-200 group. Both series involve extensive rebuilding of existing units.

Meanwhile, problems have surfaced on the new class 19E dual-voltage electric locomotives, which have been on test north of Pretoria. Several reports, not officially confirmed at this stage, mention cracked frames and difficulties to do with clearance at the sides.

Engineering News

Transnet CEO Maria Ramos announced today that she will be leaving the parastatal in February next year to take up the top job at banking group Absa ([JSE: ASA](#)), replacing incumbent Steve Booyesen.

Ramos was appointed to Transnet at a time when the organisation faced enormous challenges. During her tenure, Ramos oversaw a major restructuring of the once-unwieldy business. Non-core assets were shed to allow the parastatal to focus on its main business, freight transport via port, rail and pipeline.

Ramos had South African Airlines transferred out of the Transnet fold (and off its balance sheet), and also oversaw a large staff rationalisation process which led to many retrenchments.

Thanks to her efforts, Transnet has gone from a R6,3bn loss in 2004 to a profit of R4,3bn for the year to March 2008. No replacement has been appointed.

Moneyweb

Gautrain

As you may have seen in the press, the first two coaches for Gautrain built in the UK and been off loaded in Durban and will be brought up to Union Carriage in Nigel.

Cape

Apple Express

It was a momentous occasion for the few spectators and proud staff of the Apple Express when Hennie Van Rooyen carefully opened the regulator valve and steam surged into 119's cylinders and she moved under her own power for the first time in many years. It had been a long time with plenty of sweat and tears to get her going again and what a joyous occasion it was. The previous week, she was fired for the first time but understandably steam started escaping from every conceivable corner and loose joint there was and it was decided to drop the fire once the problem areas had been noted.

A week later her fire was lit once again and this time around she held her steam better, much to the relief of everyone watching. After setting her safety valves and tightening a few joints she was let loose on her first run. It was brief but majestic. The loco staff were by now so fired up with enthusiasm, they swarmed over her with renewed energy like worker bees attending their queen. It was a grand occasion and the smell of coal smoke and steam added to the excitement of the day.

It is a pity that there was not a bottle of bubbly to hand as breaking this across the smoke box would have been the ultimate to the re-launch of a rejuvenated lady.

In a few weeks when the steam fitter is satisfied that she is capable, she will be taken out on a lengthy test run to Chelsea Junction.

Then once again the long awaited sound of a steam whistle will resound around the suburbs of Port Elizabeth.

Once No.119 is complete and has been roadworthied, it is expected that work will commence on repairing the Garratt NGG 16 no 131 which has been patiently waiting for attention.

NG Newsletter

Free State

We have not been near the OFS main line for quite a while, but took a quick trip to Hennenman to inspect a staff training caboos which was involved in a runaway accident a while back, of which we only heard of on Thursday.

As often takes place a caboos is attached to the goods train serving the Goldfields & Sandveld, training the "two minute noodle drivers" !!!

At Hennenman it had to shunt the Silo. The caboos was attached to the front of the air braked FZL grain trucks, why is not known, [Laziness?, Stupidity?, Lack of any Knowledge?, "Why worry"] during shunting movement.

Unfortunately none of the train staff, including the staff receiving section training, or training official, checked to see that the, coupling pin had properly engaged & locked. All cabooses have vacuum brakes only, therefore no brake connection could be made with the rest of the air braked load? With the result, the caboos came loose from the, FZL trucks during shunting movement.

Buffer knuckles not locked in position & ran away for a few kilometre's to the silo's small yard, picking up speed along the track.

It crossed a public level crossing [No protection], fortunately no vehicle, or person was on the crossing, when the runaway shot over it. In the silo yard it came to a very abrupt stop. It collided with the silo's small shunting diesel locomotive. Which was written off.

Transnet has since supplied a small yellow "Funky" looks like a Transwerk locomotive. The four trainees who were in the caboos were injured & hospitalized.

On approaching the staged caboos we saw two "Scotch Blocks" under a set of wheels, but not wedged in correctly! also noticed the six large "Excide"- "SAS/SAR" marked batteries had their cover missing. The two gas cylinders and cover are also missing from their compartment, also the stove - stolen ????

We climbed into the caboos, still standing at Hennenman. Truck card - " Not to be used for shunting". Not to be moved. It is badly damaged. Here we found the battery box cover, must have broken loose on impact. The kitchen is wrecked, some of the compartment, bunks have smashed through to the adjoining compartments completely demolishing the wall between them. Toilet & shower still intact, due to small & robust design. In the office area the tables & chairs are smashed. All fluorescent fittings are on the floor.

The piece of glass protecting the emergency brake handle has been knocked out of its fitting & lying on a table, still intact.

[The "glass cutter" - "X" mark visible but not broken-this "X" was cut on the covering glass to make for easy braking of the glass cover, in case of emergency use, of the brake application handle]. It would have served no purpose to have pulled this silver plated holder/handle brake lever. [Normally the holder, painted red], as no vacuum was available to be destroyed.

On the road to the silo's, we went past a private railway contractor's yard. He had the contract to remove parts of the old Seeheim to Luderitz line & the station name board the road. [Fibre glass type].

The TCO told us that he was expecting only two trains today, [Saturday], one in twenty minutes, [12h00] we travelled towards Kalkvlakte & met the train from the South with a load of FZL grain trucks, with 2 x 6E1's up front.

The entire Virginia to Glen Harmony track has been repaired with hundreds of sleepers being replaced with new concrete ones, the track has been "Thermit welded", many lengths of discarded track still lying along the line. This done for only one train on weekdays! On enquiring, were told it was

"Op die lys", [on the list]. The Westleigh to Vierfontein line to be done next, but no mention of, the repair of the section Vierfontein to Milner/Vaal bridges. [Not on the list]?

In the last few days we have seen RRL/Sheltam ore trains & the Friediesheim Spoornet timber train on Spoornet & minetracks.

"Neotel" busy laying an underground fibre optic cable from Welkom "Old Transtel" exchange to main cable at Whites, due to frequent theft of old catenary "I" beams which now support the open fibre optic cable. Thieves cut through a section of "I" beam, then using a cable & vehicle pull the

mast over it brakes easily, then carted off to scrap merchants. Leaving the fibre optic cable, almost touching the ground.

Gunhill yard has been reopened, seems working from the North yard only was a flop.

Talk again of Vereeniging staff working trains to Bloemfontein, Kroonstad will then close.

Bethlehem already closed. Many staff want to resign & join mines in Welkom area.

Staff fed up with 150 km per day travelling from Welkom & Riebeeckstad to Kroonstad, were stationed at the old Mothusi depot. With only one diesel fitter left, when he leaves, Kroonstad will close even earlier.

The mine line from Friediesheim to Freddie's 5# which has been lifted is to be relayed, RRL is to haul Phakisa shaft's ore from this shaft to the gold plant just beyond Welkom show grounds - RRL "poaching" Transnet drivers - better pay - no need to travel to Kroonstad. (This is what we have heard - rumours)

Recently a female driver failed to stop in time at Vierfontein, now dead end station. Demolished stop block, damaged locomotive. Suspended, working as Yard Master. Also at Featherstone female driver had to put off an unit in the loop, she did not stop her train in the clearance mark, ran back into her own train !!!! All depressing news items!

John & Jacque Wepener

We went back and had a proper look at the line from Friediesheim, that is being re-laid. Yes it is going to old FSG 5 shaft. The line is following a new shortened alignment from the road - over - rail bridge and plenty of new concrete culverts are being cast as well as lots of earth works being done. The new route will shorten the line somewhat.

To those of you familiar with the mines systems the line runs from Friediesheim exchange yard at Mondi timber (old HL&H). In the eighties we used to see the North British tank loco shunting here as we passed in the passenger train. From there it runs towards the Welkom - Odendaalsrus road (Bloemfontein - Bothaville road) R 30 and underneath it. This is where the old loco sheds used to be and where the dumped steam locos are including a 19BR and sidedoor coach. Access is very difficult nowadays as a private firm has bought all the old workshops and now has security and some of the roads are closed.

The line used to run past and behind the loco shed close to the slimes dams, it now runs between the old hostels and mine offices along the road and joins the old line near the security training offices.

We know this does not make much sense but some guys have photographed the steam here

long ago and should ring a bell. In the early 1990's 15CA's on hire from Spoornet used to pound the rails here.

RRL will operate this line.

We don't know when the line will be opened but will share any news with you as we get it.

John & Jacque Wepener

Australia and New Zealand - 2005



Wednesday, 7th September

We had arranged to travel to Melbourne over the course of today, passing by a steam operation further south. Although I had to fly out to New Zealand on Friday, 9th, Trevor hoped to nevertheless film some Melbourne steam specials in the area during the weekend.

We departed early in the morning, leaving Christine to cope with ranch, house, kids and horses (and possibly fences!). Well now, I know why he has little time for trains these days!

After travelling south in the Interstate for about 60 km, we diverted to a little town called Glenrowen to film a northbound standard gauge freight heading north behind a 'G' class.

After this, we diverted to Bendigo, a large gold rush town in the northeast region of Victoria (getting a shot of another northbound 'V' line Victorian Railways passenger service en route).

Further on, we caught a glimpse of a diesel hauled south bound freight on a broad gauge bulk line, the first Victorian State Railways freight I had seen thus far.



The objective of our trip was the Victorian Goldfields Railways operating between the group's base, Maulden, and Castlemain, a junction town on the State Railway intercity link.

By chance, midweek Wednesday was the designated steam day, outside of weekends. Motive power was a broad gauge 'K' class 2-8-0 and a few coaches.

Line side access is via tracks through the blue gum plantations, so access is not easy. Fortunately, Trevor knew his way around, and we were able to

obtain several video sequences of the morning and afternoon trips. In fact, this would be my

only example of broad gauge steam that I would see on the trip. Still another gauge awaited us in Melbourne.

Thursday, 8th September

My last full day in Australia was to be spent photting the famous Puffing Billy narrow gauge (2' 6") operation. We arrived in Melbourne early evening the previous day and overnigheted at Trevor's parent's house in the Eastern part of the city.

The next morning it was up further into the Dardenory Hills on the Eastern end of the city to line side the Puffing Billy train. The weather had turned very windy and occasional rain showers (it appeared that the Cape Town weather was catching up with us again).

Puffing Billy is the most successful preserved steam operation in Australia, and runs virtually every day of the year (excluding two or three public holidays, like Christmas day). On this day there was a long distance train that was scheduled right to the end of the line at Gembrook. The stops are: Belgrave; Menzies creek;.Emerald;Gembrook: Dardenory Hills, a total distance of 20km from the depot at the eastern end, Belgrave.

A second train runs later in the morning, about half way down the line. This is effectively a lunch time service. Very often, on weekends, for example, this recently restored Class G42 Garratt of 1926 vintage (2-6-0 + 0-6-2), is occasionally in service. This locomotive is at present the only running Garratt on the continent, the only closest competitor being the one seen at Ipswich in Queensland, mentioned prior.

The normal motive power is the Na Class 2-6-2 tank locos.



After line siding the morning train most of the way to Glenbrook, Trevor abandoned me at Emerald Station, since he had to get back into town to attend the funeral of a relative (part of the reason of having come down to Melbourne with me in the first instance).

After spending some time photting the lunch time train arriving and departing Emerald (quite a nice little tourist village in itself), I had to take the late afternoon long distance service back to Belgrave, where I would meet up with Trevor again. Of course, who do I bump into on the way back, but Alan Johnson himself, being back here as driver on duty. After getting invited in the cab for a ride back (a great privilege, I would guess, as the space is as restricted as one of our own NG tank locos). Alan was very keen to talk about the old days at Vryburg on his 25NCs, which could not have been more removed from the 2'6" gauge 2-6-2 tanks he now drives.

I had by chance brought a copy of Dennis Moore's "Shimmer of Steel" book that was eagerly snapped up. I was quite surprised that no one in these parts had come across this book as yet, since it had been widely distributed in the late 1990s.

Well, that was basically the end of the 'Oz' visit. On the way back home we spent time photting the standard gauge suburban EMU service serving the Melbourne Metropole.

The following day, Friday, 9th was one of these 'lost' days driving through built up areas to airports, lengthy delays to get onto international flights, and much the same hassle at the other end. I always maintain that a local (domestic) flight loses one at least one half of a day, and an international haul most of a day. In this case the flight from Melbourne to Christchurch, South Island, New Zealand, was only 2½ hours (much less than flying coast to coast in 'Oz').

It was at least 90 min trip from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne to the airport in the northwest; en route, we were able to see several of the Melbourne trams in service. Strangely enough, this system was designed by different engineers to the State Railway Corporation, and runs on standard gauge, rather than broad gauge, as is the case on the Sydney City Metro lines. Talk about the 'battle of the gauges'! Nowhere world-wide, is this more of an issue than in Australia where gauges still range through virtually all the spectrum; 2' through to 5'3'!

Since one also loses 2 hours time zone flying from Melbourne to New Zealand, my arrival (after flying out of Melbourne late morning) in Christchurch was early evening.

As it turned out, the railway chum I was supposed to meet there, Bruce Johnstone (he had flown down earlier that afternoon from Wellington). I had not seen for many years. The last occasion had been during a visit to chase SAR steam in the late 1980's, more than 20 years prior. After managing to miss each other, then meeting eventually thereafter losing him again (when I went to pick up the rental vehicle), we managed to make it to another rail fan's house in Christchurch around 9 pm in the end.

As the largest city on South Island, Christchurch can be compared around the size of Germiston, with much smaller railway yards!

The objective of my three day visit to South Island was to chase a chance weekend steam trip from this city to over the top of the mountainous area of South Island to the small port of Greymouth, on the west coast.

Flying in by plane the previous afternoon, the snow capped beauty of South Island's Southern Alps was to be appreciated, fortunately with clear weather. I had imagined that, (given the sometimes dreadful weather experienced in most of Australia's coastal cities) the weather in New Zealand, further south at the end of winter, just had to be worse?

In fact, someone told me the weather pattern there is much different in New Zealand compared to the Australian coastal areas. True – although I later appreciated that North Island weather was also quite different to the South Island!

Getting back to the steam special – this covered one of the most spectacular mountain lines in New Zealand: over the top of Arthur's Pass (still snow capped at the end of winter). The train is

an annual excursion run by Mainline Steam, the steam outfit owned by Ian Welch. Ian is quite well-known in South Africa from his frequent trips and purchases of SAR steam loco's which should (in theory) run on the identical Cape gauge system common to both parts of New Zealand.

We overnighted at Bruce Johnson's local railway enthusiast friend in Christchurch. As may have been expected his townhouse was located right next to the main north trunk line,

which runs the length of South Island along the East Coast. The sound of GE type Cape gauge loco's reminded me of being back in South Africa, not surprising since their mainstay diesel traction the class DX is as close to a class U-26 (34) as imaginable.



Saturday, 10th September

The morning dawned totally fogged in around town. The train left on time behind 4-8-2 JB no. 1236, with water tender and 4 coaches. I was told that this type of train is totally unauthentic. To begin with, no. 1236 is a converted coal to oil burner so is an ex JA class (JBs were oil burning as built, so no. 1236 is to the purists, not a true JB!). It is somewhat like calling ex 25 C 3454 a 25 NC these days; - it really is a 25 NCC (converted condenser!)

Next, the coaches are hired from the new consortium owned railway company, TranzRail. The previous New Zealand state railway company had old style red coaches, now TranzRail have rebuilt blue coaches (well, it is like the SAR red and grey, with steam being run with orange and blue coaches or even worse, *Shosholozza Meyl* colours – sis!)

Well, I was not about to complain about a steam run over the mountains, with whatever class of steam and whatever colour coaches! My only concern was that the fog should clear to allow pictures in sunshine.

The first 60 km of line west was virtually totally straight through English style farmland, called the Canterbury plains (what else!). Springfield, a station at the foot of mountains, saw a stop for the train. Most important of all, the weather cleared, as if on cue, to reveal the mountain ranges to the west; there was a scheduled halt to also allow the regular tourist train, the TranzAlpine to pass.

For those who do not have any chance to see steam when in New Zealand, a day trip with the daily TranzAlpine express is well worth the effort. It leaves Christchurch at around 08h00 and makes it over the scenic line to Greymouth by lunchtime (about 250 km) and returns after an hour turnaround at around 17h00 to Christchurch. Our steam trip, on the other hand, would reach Greymouth only by about 16h00 and return the following day.

The next 30 km section, between Springfield and Cass (via Staircase along the Waimakariri River gorge) is quite spectacular if not the most scenic piece of railway on South Island.

Unfortunately, this piece of line is away from the main road, which takes a more direct line over the mountain route. Having done the route by road, seen pictures of the gorge, the mountains, the best way to liken the scenery is not the European Alps, but rather the Canadian Rockies. In fact, the scenery on South Island is clearly divisible into four sectors: the European 'English' type farmland along the East Coast, then a dry east facing volcanic area rising west of the plains. This gives way to the Central mountainous area (snow capped in winter) and, finally, the damp western side, which is covered in sub-tropical forest and bush.

After taking some pictures along the main road (here, I would have preferred to have been on the train to experience the ride through the gorge) we rejoined the line at Cass Station. In fact, we had the first of many crossings with the coal trains on this rather busy line. The coal mines are situated in the Greymouth area, and shipped by train to Christchurch, where the product is loaded for export, or forwarded to the north for local use.



This train was powered, I was informed, by Class DC Ex-CO class GE's, converted from an older class DA. Still they were essentially Class 34 look-alikes.

From here onwards we would parallel the train most of the way to Arthur's Pass. Along the now flatter river gorge – the scenery was admittedly stunning, but a warm winter had left snow well up on the higher peaks during this period of spring. This made snow and steam photo's difficult to line up.

The organisers held two photo stops en route to Arthur's Pass Station, one right across on the north bank of the river, and another over the bridge crossing to southern bank that line-siders could access.

After this, another two line side sequences before Arthur's Pass Station. Here the train was towed by diesels through a 7 km tunnel. The road runs over the Arthur's Pass mountain area (around 1 800 m), so that the train passengers would have seen nothing of the pass itself. The snow capped mountains in the area peak at 2 400 m. The highest mountain on South Island Mount Cooke (3 764 m) is on the Western seaboard some 150 km further to the south.

After a lunch stop at the summit village of the pass, we descended to the exit Station on the eastern side of the tunnel at Otira, where the 3 DX diesels uncoupled. There was a double headed coal train waiting to enter at Otira. These are also assisted, resulting in 5 units heading these trains through the tunnel.

The weather on the eastern side of the island suddenly clouded over, so we would have gloomy shots for the rest of the afternoon. The vegetation became lush on this side, so there was much more green landscape in the sequences.

We managed two or three shots en route to Moana, a small resort town next to a lake. The high mountains were, by now far in the distance presenting a pleasant alpine view.

The special had to again cross the TranzAlpine (by now heading back to Christchurch) at Moana.

Beyond, another 30 km into Greymouth, the weather unexpectedly cleared. The train's entrance to the town still brought out a number of locals, although a steam train here occurs a few times a year.

Late afternoon saw us at the local diesel depot, for low light angle shots of no. 1236 being serviced, plus some photo's of the diesels standing around.

We stayed overnight at a small hotel in town. The main activity in the lounge/bar area that night was watching local provincial rugby matches, accompanied by much noisy cheering. New Zealanders love their rugby (unlike Australia where the run and kick version – 'Sevens' is far more popular than the conventional game). Upon hearing that I was from South Africa, I was besieged with Springbok rugby questions, most of which I could not even attempt to answer!

Sunday, 11th September

The next morning dawned bright and sunny, but we soon traversed a foggy 10 km patch outside Greymouth. This soon burnt off, but working sequences of the train were rare, since there was such a light load. The driver would open the regulator for a few hundred metres on the flat alignments and coast for another kilometre or more. It all depended where we set up for a video.

At the same lakeside resort of Moana, we had the first of the day's crossings with a westbound coal train. We then chased the train further inland as far as Aikens, where there was another crossing, this time with the outward bound TranzAlpine. Ian Welch managed to get the okay for the passengers to disembark at the loop and stage a pleasing crossing shot with snow capped mountains as a backdrop. Thus after one or two further line side sequences, the train arrived at Otira again, on the western side of the pass. There was a protracted wait here, since there were another two coal trains crossing through; these obviously had priority.

Back over the road pass, once the train had left, we stopped to take some 'civilian' snow shots of the mountain area. Unfortunately, we wasted a bit too much time with these stops; as luck would have it, once back at Arthur's Pass Station, the steam train was immediately cleared for departure, once that the diesel helpers had been uncoupled.

In fact the train beat us back to Cass, the last point where we could get to the line by road; we thus travelled all the way down to Springfield Station at the foot of the mountains. Here ensued quite a long wait, since it would be expected run pasts were set up in the spectacular scenery around Staircase halt.

Upon leaving Springfield we were able to parallel the train with some pacing and fixed sequences.

There was another diesel crossing at Darfield, about half way back to Christchurch. The coastal fog enveloped the train after that, so videos were pretty ordinary.

A last sequence was done after the train had rejoined the main trunk line; after this the special beat us back into Christchurch itself through the built up areas.

Monday, 12th September

Bruce Johnston and I took an early morning flight to Wellington, which is situated on the extreme southern side of North Island. The fog in Christchurch had become a 20 m pea soup overnight, but since we were departing, we had no delay unlike inbound flights, which could not land at all. Wellington, unlike Christchurch was sunny today, and we made our way via shuttle bus to Bruce's house in the suburbs of Johnsonville, about 15 km north of the city centre.

Our first day was spent travelling the rather antiquated Wellington EMU network, firstly back into town, and then out on the line to Paraparaumu, along the west coast. At Paekakariki we stopped to visit the local preservation group, Steam Incorporated. This group has a few locos, plus some proper ex New Zealand Railway red rolling stock (as important there as our red and grey coaching is to us in preservationists South Africa).

Then a few stations back down the trunk line to Main Line Steam's trust depot at Parameta. Another of Ian Welch's KAs was simmering away, having been out on an excursion in the Wellington area, whilst we were down in Christchurch.

There was also a sparkling well kept Pacific Class AB no. 663. Whilst we were having a look around, Ian Welch himself appeared and offered us a beer at his house nearby.

This was most welcome (not so much the beer) but viewing his home perched on a hillside with a lovely view of the bay. However, the various railwayana inside and in the garage were really worth noting. Included was a number of large models, including a live steam SAR NGG16 model loco.

After this interlude, we took a late afternoon shot at the nearby Paramata Station of the daily diesel hauled intercity that runs to Palmerston North. Between Palmerston North and Hamilton, the main trunk line is electrified to 25 KV, the only such system in New Zealand. This was done mainly to cater for the steep grades encountered here.

Tuesday, 13th September

Today we returned to town by train in order to explore the downtown area and ride the funicular cable car that was built on a steep hill overlooking the city. This was well worth the view.

After going back downtown to check on availability of New Zealand 'Railscene' DVDs (a general interest year video) at a local supermarket, we headed back to the Station. En route, I took pictures of the circular structure that serves as New Zealand's parliament building.

The rest of the day was spent on EMU travel on two of the commuter lines we had thus far not seen.

Wednesday, 14th September

This day was set aside for a flight to Auckland, in the north. Auckland is the commercial hub of the country and is its largest city, comprising about 25 % of the population of the whole of New Zealand.

I had arranged to stay with an ex company colleague who had emigrated some years ago. This was one of my only non 'enthusiast' stopovers, so the remainder of the day was spent travelling around by car to see the sights of the city.

One of the interesting features dotted around the suburbs was the small, extinct volcanic cones that the Maori's consider sacred. These sites are thus left undeveloped or merely turned into parklands.

That evening we did a tour down and then across the bay to the northern part of the peninsula. This part of greater Auckland is called Takapuna. This is a name familiar to me simply because the town house complex next to my house in Edenvale has the same name. Prior to my trip I could not have guessed that this was in fact, a Maori name!

Thursday, 15th September

Whilst everyone was at work, I was dropped off to pick up a rental vehicle that I would keep for the final two days of my stopover in Auckland.

My first visit was to Ian Welch's Parnell depot, just outside the downtown part of the city. Parnell is actually a nice suburb with many shops and restaurants, and could be considered a typical city's 'Latin' quarter.

There were a number of locomotives undergoing restoration and repairs in the mainline steam shed. The mainstay of motive power was again a JA class. It appears that, currently, no group in New Zealand has any K class 4-8-4s in service at this time.

My main focus of interest were the 3 ex SAR locos stored in at the back of the shed, 2 class 25 NCs no.s 3432 and 3508 and GMA 4088. No doubt these had cost Ian Welch mega bucks to buy and particularly ship to New Zealand. The other SAR class 24 no. 3620 is currently stored at a closed down preservation railway near Cairns in northern Queensland.

The 25 NCs and GMA have been in storage in the depot in Parnell for several years now. Ian himself states that the loading gauge of the two 4-8-4s is larger than that in New Zealand, besides problems with the locomotives being able to negotiate curves. The way out would be some costly modifications which would affect the SAR loco's identity, apart from the cost involved. Hence the restoration into service of these engines remains very much on the back burner for the present.

I spent the remainder of the afternoon videoing the various suburban trains coming in and out of the central station. Most of these are either diesel coach set powered or simply hauled by standard BOBO type diesels.

Occasionally a diesel shunter dragged trains of container wagons from the adjacent harbour area. I did not find out during my stay, where these trains were marshalled with DX or similar type mainline units for the trip south.

Friday, 16th September

This was my last full day in Auckland. I had decided to head south to the railway junction town of Hamilton, about 100 km to the south.

The 25 km line begins in Hamilton and, as mentioned before, runs as far as Palmerston North at the southern end of North Island. Hamilton is also the junction for the branch Tauranga on the Bay of Plenty.

The weather, since I had arrived in Auckland, was really dreadful. My friend had warned me that you can get 4 seasons in a day in New Zealand! (Unfortunately not enough of the 'sunny' portion, a photographer's burden).

Driving down to Hamilton through squalls of rain did not bode well for photography but south of Hamilton, there were some clear spells. I spent a few hours at a siding called Ohaupo hoping to get some electric trains in service. I missed the daily south bound passenger, but got a north bound freight hauled by one of the antiquated brush BO-BO-BO units on this line.

Later, at Hamilton Station, there was a lot more activity with a few trains passing through. A diesel freight headed up the Tauranga branch.

Eventually, I found my way to the loco depot north of town where both electric and diesel units were stabled. To get some photos, I had to cross main lines where there were warning signs displaying "TranzRail: Trespassers will be prosecuted, \$2 000 fine" (wow, nearly R10 000!). I decided that this was now or never to get my shots – when would I ever be down here again?



Heading back to Auckland in the early evening, saw two south bound trains, of which I managed to get a video of one.

Saturday, 17th September

On the way back to the airport for a late morning flight, I had a few hours to spare, so headed to the local Glenbrooke Preservation Depot, south of the city. Being the start of spring, the group

was not in operation as yet, but were servicing their own JA 4-8-2. Yes, it appears that just about every group in the country has a JA!

By coincidence, it was also general election day this Saturday. These elections in New Zealand hardly assume any importance overseas, and that was the last I heard of it, or which party had even won!

Thereafter, to the airport for rental return the car and to board the Qantas flight for Sydney. With the time loss of two hours to Sydney then another two to Perth, these two flights would take the whole day.

There was an obligatory stopover in Perth at an overnight hotel, following which I at last got on to my SAA flight on Sunday 18th, back to Johannesburg.

As had transpired during my 2004 trip to the USA and Canada, many DV tapes had been used to capture regular trains around two intercity rail net works, plus a good number of preserved steam operations. I am eventually planning video DVD production (will be supplemented by material from John Parker's trips, and Trevor Staats' own extensive coverage of trains in NSW and Victoria).

THE END

RSSA Reef Branch

Jean Dulez has a few copies at last of Pattisons 'Thundering Smoke' at R350 each; now they can contact me at 083 441 5488 since I cannot even remember who wanted these at the time.

Christmas is next month and are you thinking of something with a railway theme that you significant other can give you?

We have for sale a big 12 page SAR steam calendar at R100.

Tracks Across the Veld (Boon's book) at R260.

Steam Passion (Paul Hoben's book) at R260.

Please contact Jean Dulez 083 441 5788 or by e-mail jdulez@weirminerals.com

There is no December meeting so the last Wednesday in January the 28 will be our next.

The Editor of On Track and the committee of the Reef Branch of the Railway Society of Sothern Africa wish you all a good Christmas and holiday and all you wish for yourself and others for the new year.

If you are travelling by car please buckle up and drive safely, of course this does not apply if you are travelling by Train.

Teaser

Last month's teaser was correctly answered by Tony Jervis as a picture of the meter gauge Madagascar railways 2-6-0+0-6-2 Garratt by St Leonard in 1926.

This month's teaser

The buffer beam indicates CFA – what is this railway called today and who built these interesting looking Garratts?



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