

Apple Express & Diaz Express News

**THE APPLE EXPRESS SOCIETY**



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**SOUTH AFRICA**

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**NEWSLETTER JULY – SEPTEMBER 2002**

A lot of water has gone under the bridge of late for the Apple Express and it had nothing to do with the inclement weather we have been experiencing in the Eastern Cape!

The few stories placed in the local printed media, highlighting the plight surrounding the future of the Apple Express, have indeed worked. By talking to local politicians, Tourism personnel and corporate businesses I have opened an awareness program that has now borne fruit.

Firstly, a private financial donation was made to secure our assets stored at the Humewood Railway Station as the Society's funds had run out. Following this several meetings and committees were set up to plan a future for the Apple Express as an asset to Port Elizabeth's Tourism, Trade and Commerce. I personally made a propionate plea to the members of the Nelson Mandela Municipality Metro and had a positive response to the effect of financing the security at Humewood Railway Station for a further six months.

Together with 'major interested players' I sat with a delegate of the mayor of our fair city and for our efforts was awarded a very generous financial 'prop' to assist in getting the Apple Express well and truly up and running.

My vision stretched further than just the steam preservation. I wanted the complete narrow gauge system. Short of "dotting the i's and crossing a few this has now been accomplished. Port Elizabeth will soon boast the longest narrow gauge in the world that will be run commercially with both steam and diesel. A special thank you has to go to the entrepreneur that is to 'privatise' the diesel function of this venture.

Likewise another major player Sandstone Estates will be totally involved as part of the team by assisting with the engineering needs of the steam preservation by continually maintaining and 'swopping' locos of various types and styles to make the

Apple Express a world wide recognized attraction.

The future is extremely positive. The Apple Express will be lodged as a company with the Society still functioning as a partner in the venture. I insist you all recruit further members, as Society members will receive special privileges in our new business plan.

A monthly brochure will be published, in future, with all the Apple Express excursions and costs featured. This will include our future runs up the narrow gauge to Avontuur in luxury coaches hauled by diesel over a four-day period stopping off at various places of interest and staying at Bed and Breakfast establishments.

The Humewood Railway Station is to be turned into a 'working' rail station to include a steam/rail museum and many 'mini' businesses to visit on those rainy days. The workshops will operate to refurbish rolling stock and other equipment.

A revamped web site is to be designed for the net via Port Elizabeth's Tourism Board, watch out for this!

The latest run for the Apple Express was the "Great Steam Train Race" which proved yet again to be a great success with the train pulling in to Loerie just ahead of the leading runner. The 'high jacking' of the train by a band of 'Indians on horseback' nearly cost the Apple Express its victory! The train was packed and several parties were turned away, unfortunately, but our loading was to the prescribed maximum. The great strength of the Garrett, up front, made little effort tackling the few steep inclines on the way to Loerie and breezed back to Port Elizabeth without missing a beat.

This great engine is now undergoing boiler testing for certification and Sandstone Estates will take on the repairs of our loco soon with a replacement loco (Kalahari) loaned to us for this period.

I will ramble no further but to extend to those who have stood by the Apple Express a heartfelt thank you. Through your insistence that the Apple Express must continue I have worked on that mentioned above and feel now that we can all reap the rewards and enjoy steam preservation.

Yours

Graham Macfarlane

Chairman

Keep-on-Track

p.s. We need volunteers to help with information desks during fundraising for Apple Express. Please contact me on 083-275-6164

NOTE: Our next Members Meeting will be held on Saturday, 28 September at 1 Mackay Street, Richmond Hill – time 2.00pm