

Apple Express & Diaz Express News

THE APPLE EXPRESS SOCIETY



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NEWSLETTER - JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2003

The "APPLE EXPRESS" – The World Famous (2ft.) Narrow Gauge Steam Train - as it has been known since 1965, has been completely revamped after being withdrawn from service after the August 2002 Great Train Race.

The newly formed Section 21 Company known as the "PORT ELIZABETH APPLE EXPRESS", (PEAE) will be responsible for running the train whilst the "APPLE EXPRESS STEAM ASSOCIATION" will cater for the steam enthusiasts. The objectives of the AESA are to: (a) assist with the restoration and preservation of the "Apple Express" for future generations of all South African residents and overseas visitors; (b) foster interest in the history and development of railways in Southern Africa; (c) foster an awareness of the importance of Narrow Gauge steam locomotives and carriages to the cultural heritage of Port Elizabeth and South Africa; (d) co-operate with the Port Elizabeth Apple Express (Section 21 Company) in all aspects - to facilitate the smooth running of the train and to supply volunteers to man the train. (d) apply the income and capital of the Association for the sole purpose of promoting the aforementioned objectives of the Association, as determined by the Members from time to time.

The NG Garratt locomotive NGG 16 No. 131 (Beyer Garratt 1950) had its annual boiler inspection, and was given a clean bill of health until December 2003. The fleet of coaches have been checked and renovated and given a new colour scheme. This was brought about by funding raised through The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Council and Port Elizabeth Tourism; now known as Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism, concerned businesses and Port Elizabeth citizens who have all worked hard to save this wonderful asset. Steps are now being taken to feature the train as one of the Icons of Port Elizabeth

In the meantime NG 15 No. 124, affectionately named "GRANNY SMITH" which has been out of action since 1999, has been stripped with the prospect of being restored and brought back into running condition. The boiler has been tested for metal thickness and is presently

being worked on for the pressure test.

Although the official launch of the Apple Express will only take place in April to coincide with the Splash Festival two trips have taken place. The first, a short trip with a few coaches in honour of the Heritage Rail Association of Southern Africa who held a meeting in Port Elizabeth on the 9th February, and the second on the 26th February to honour a charter commitment made by the Society last year. One hundred & sixty passengers from the cruise liner Astoria were taken to Thornhill and back on what was one of the hottest days of this summer. Our thanks go to all the members of the AESA who assisted with these two trips.

The official launch of the Apple Express is proposed for the 9th April and invited guests will be hosted by the Section 21 Company to celebrate the re-emergence of the Port Elizabeth Apple Express.

Eas-capism.com Tourist Information Centre, situated at the Boardwalk, will handle the bookings for all excursions. The contact number for further information on scheduled trips and bookings is (041) 583-2030. They can also be reached at ectour@sunint.co.za.

Potential packages have been reconsidered and have been improved to address the needs of local, domestic and international tourists, as well as the more discerning steam enthusiast. The first phase see trips to the spectacular Van Stadens Bridge as a half-day excursion, leaving from the Humerail Station at 10h00.

Trips have been planned for Friday 18 April, Saturday 19 April, Sunday 20 April, Mother's Day on the 11 May, Father's Day on 15 June, Sunday 29 June, Saturday 5 July and Sunday 6 July.

In addition to the shorter day trips, longer tours are being considered to Thornhill, Patensie or Lorie for the enthusiast, depending on the demand by prospective passengers or Tour Groups.

After the successful certification of Pierre Fourie as a driver, "Skalk" van Skalkwyk was this week certified as a stoker/fireman. Skalk a previously qualified driver, whose certification has lapsed, will hopefully be allowed to qualify as a driver again in the future.

The team at Humerail Steam Depot are growing by the day with Sydney Terblanche (the Steam Fitter), and his assistant Manie (a qualified "Fire Lighter") who are responsible for the maintenance of the steam locomotives. In addition, Clive Nel, who is a retired 'Coach Builder', is busy with the restoration of the coaching stock, ably assisted by Pierre Fourie, and "Skalk" van Skalkwyk. Once the wood arrives they will be very busy with the re-building of NG94 "The Apple Tavern". Our thanks to Sheltam who sponsored the first coach to be totally refurbished.

Not only will the locomotive and coaches be kept in a spick-and-span condition, but a great deal of attention will have to be given to the work place and the surrounding buildings. Hopefully we will be able to give this attention in the not to distance future

Training for Train Managers (inclusive of the safety side) will be our next priority. Members who have volunteered their services for these important functions will be contacted in the not to distance future. We may have to advertise for additional volunteers, if you know anyone who may be interested please advise Sandv (082-727-5588. Fax 041-373-6311 or

email tintagel@worldoline.co.za. We also need to find a panel of volunteers who are qualified in First Aid.

Negotiations are underway to develop a picnic site at Van Stadens as well as various scenic trails. This should make an outing on the Apple an enjoyable day out for young and old alike.

The next General Members Meeting of the Apple Express Steam Association is to be held at 2.00pm on Saturday 29 March 2003 at N°1 Mackay Street, Richmond Hill, Port Elizabeth.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 3 May 2003 at 2.00pm, N°1 Mackay Street, Richmond Hill, Port Elizabeth. **Please note only fully paid up members are allowed to vote at this AGM.** Local members – please make an effort to attend – this is a very important meeting.

A copy of the new Constitution of the Association is available on request.

APPLE EXPRESS STEAM ASSOCIATION

18 MARCH 2003