

News Sandstone August 2004

NGG11 no: 55 passes its final test.

In an intensive two days of steaming on the 24th and 25th of July and with varied loads, Paton Country Narrow Gauge Railway's 1925 built 2 foot gauge Beyer Peacock Garratt locomotive no:55 was declared fit for its transfer from Sandstone Heritage Trust, in the Eastern Free State, to its permanent base at the Ixopo depot of PCNGR.

The loco which had been plinthed at Weenen Station in Kwa Zulu Natal for some 20 odd years, was restored from near scrap condition by the Sandstone Heritage Trust under the supervision of Lukas Nel. This intensive rebuild included the manufacture of many new parts which had long since been removed during its time in Kwa Zulu Natal. First steamed in late June no: 55 had very few problems during its commissioning trials at Sandstone and no major work was required.

Over the two days the loco operated on the full Sandstone system, including the new Vailima extension and was also double headed with its more modern sister, NGG16 Garratt no: 113.

No: 55 is one of three remaining Class NGG11 locomotives still in existence but is the only one currently in working order. Until the commissioning of the K1 Garratt at the Welsh Highland Railway, it is currently the oldest operating Garratt locomotive in the world.

It is expected to make the road journey to KZN by Sandstone's own transport early in August for commissioning at Ixopo. It will be the largest locomotive at Ixopo and is expected to see an intensive season hauling trains on the fledgling PCNGR.



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