



APPLE EXPRESS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT ELIZABETH APPLE EXPRESS
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GOOD NEWS – 1

The Eastern Cape MEC Thobile Mhlahlo for Road & Transport made a commitment to the Narrow Gauge when delivering his Budget vote speech in the Provincial Legislature on 15th March 2007. Extract from speech:- “We have allocated R10 million for the upgrading of the Narrow Gauge line (Port Elizabeth – Avontuur) and we intend to commence the operations in 2008. This year the Department, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture, will ensure that we bring back the Great Train Race to this line”. This is good news especially in line with the other article in this newsletter entitled “Station Buildings Vandalised”.

GOOD NEWS – 2

Also following on from the vandalism report, plans and discussions are underway to provide an inspection pit for the steam locomotives at the Diesel Depot. An environmental risk assessment has been done and the site recommended is alongside the diesel loco maintenance shed where there is already a shallow pit. It is sufficient for this pit to be deepened by only one meter. In the meantime it seems that Spoornet are making moves to demolish some of the buildings at the steam depot. It has been suggested that the Apple Express retain its lease on the current station buildings so that if there is any future upgrade of the site the station complex would have to be included in the developments. The water tower and ash pit would be included. We understand that there is a private developer, who also being interested in

steam preservation, is willing to put a lot of money into the tourism side of the train. It appears that all he requires to move forward is the assurance from Government that the line will still be operational in the future.

STATION BUILDINGS VANDALISED

During the past year or so the Humewood Road workshop area has been vandalised to the extent that the workshop crew have had to move down to the Diesel Depot and set up shop there. Up until now the station buildings have escaped the attention of vandals but unfortunately over the past few weeks this has changed with vandals targeting the station toilets and office. All the buildings have been forced open regardless of the steel grids covering all the windows and doors. The men’s toilet has had its wash basin and toilet bowls smashed. The office has had all its light switches and main power switch-board stolen, ceiling boards removed furniture destroyed and trashed. There is no longer a water supply to the complex as some of the (plastic) water pipes were ripped apart resulting in a lot of water wastage before the damage was discovered.

As a result of all this carnage various options are being considered as a departure point in the future.. The “Apple Tavern” is already being used as a temporary ticket office on train departure days.

It has also been reported that while the train is out and the ‘car guard’ who looks after the passengers vehicles, is able to watch groups of vandals openly removing items from the area. The Guard is not able to intervene for fear of his life. In the past two weeks Spoornet Security and the

Development Agency have made a number of arrests.

Recently vandals or crime syndicates removed a number of large items and used an inspection trolley to move the items further down the track. Fortunately an observant train driver taking a load of timber to the harbour noticed the trolley on the track and was able to stop in time.

This is a sad time for the Apple Express which, has since its inception in 1965, seen many happy departures from the Humewood Road station with its quaint period style ticket office and buildings.

COACHING NEWS

Because the train has to stand outside the coaches are at the mercy of the elements which results in paint work fading, wood rotting and steel panels rusting. To try and keep the train looking good, attention to these weather faults has had to take priority before a another major restoration project can be undertaken like the recently completed Coach No.58.

Currently having a “make over” is coach No.100 which is nearing completion.



Coach No.100 in the workshop

VOLUNTEERS

Welcome to all our new volunteers who have already put their shoulders to the wheel - Sheila, Lynette, Kobus & Ronel, Dolf & Gwynneth, Fred & family & Margaret.

WHAT'S IN A NAME BOG FARM HALT

Travellers on the Apple Express narrow-gauge railway are often intrigued and amused at the name "Bog Farm" displayed at one of the halts on the line just beyond Walmer. (The signboard has recently been removed. – Ed.) The name arises from the fact that there really was a bog or marsh on the farm which once existed near this halt. A brochure of 1904 put out to promote the sale of plots for the housing estate of "Springfield" which was proposed on the farm, states that there was "a basin to which all the water in this part of the district seems to converge". It is here that the 'Bog' is, from which the old name of the farm is derived. "Here are wells and ponds from which water is lifted and pumped by two windmills and an old oil engine, through a line of pipes to a brick-built reservoir near the boundary fence.....From which the water has been distributed to various parts of the estate.....There is no evidence that this water supply has failed during past years, in spite of many seasons of extended drought....." The original owner of Bog Farm was Adam Guthrie, a former Mayor of Port Elizabeth, who acquired the land towards the end of the last century. The farm house, which was demolished as recently as 1972, was occupied by the farm manager, Mr John Martin, with his wife and ten children in 1896. The farm was run as a dairy and poultry farm. Martin Road in Springfield is named after John Martin. The brochure extolling the advantages of the proposed Springfield Estate shows a picture of the "lake" surrounded by luxuriant vegetation. The plan however shows that the lake was a mere 150ft by 50ft with a smaller pool nearby. It was intended to keep that area as a 'water reserve' to supply the estate, by means of windmill pumps, with water to be distributed to the erf-holders by gravitation.

(Extract from "Looking Back", newsletter of the P.E. Historical Society – June 1978)

BEST WISHES

Our best wishes for a swift recovery go to Clive Nel our coach builder who will shortly undergo major surgery.

LOCOMOTIVE NEWS

Boiler tubes for locomotive NG 15 No.119 & 124 have been ordered and are expected to arrive in May. Once received, they will be sent to the Mossel Bay workshops where they will be 'swaged'. In the meantime preparation work for the fitting of the tubes is being done on the Kalahari. Stalwart Garratt No.131 has had to be taken out of service because of a cracked and holed fire box. This is a major repair job which will be undertaken once a boiler inspector has done an inspection of the damage. In the meantime the train will be hauled by diesel power.

NGG 11 No.54 staged at the Humewood diesel depot and a good prospect for restoration, first arrived at Humewood Road destined to be used by the then Narrow Gauge Museum as the motive power for the "Diaz Express". This locomotive is unique in that she is still original, just as she was built by the Beyer Peacock Co.

The original order for the Class 11 Garratts was placed with the Beyer Peacock Co. in 1914. However the First World War intervened and the locomotives were only delivered in 1919 and entered service on the Avontuur line in 1920. They proved successful and a further order of two was placed and delivered in 1925. They differed from the first order in that they were superheated and incorporated piston valves. They also had a more protective cab than the first order. The class NG/G 11 (2 – 6 – 0 + 0 – 6 – 2) locomotives were the first narrow gauge Garratts used in S.A.



NG/G 11 No.54

Technical Details

Traction effort:- 15 876lbs.

Weight in working order:- 48 tons.

Coal capacity:- 2 ½ tons

Water capacity:- Rear tank - 380 gals.

Front tank - 970 gals.

Builders details:

Beyer Peacock 1919 Locos 51–52–53

1925 Locos 54 –55

INVESTIGATION INTO RAIL BASED TOURISM

The Eastern Cape Development Corporation will be funding a high level investigation into the feasibility of developing a rail based tourism industry in the Eastern Cape.

The terms of reference for this investigation has been completed and the project will be advertised in the next few weeks.

EXCURSION WITH A DIFFERENCE

During the month of February a special excursion was arranged by the Nelson Mandela Development Agency to Gamtoos Junction via Loerie.

Special guests, Developers, Department of Transport and Municipality officials enjoyed a showcase day on the narrow gauge. Several stops were arranged for the passengers to see possible tourism opportunities. After turning at Gamtoos Junction the guests enjoyed a fabulous finger lunch at the Loerie Station. Our thanks also go to Spoornet and the MBDA who made this trip possible.

RAILWAY SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AUDIT REPORT

After undergoing a three day compliance and verification audit by the Railway Safety Regulator the final report reflects that the Apple Express is fully compliant with all regulations. Extracts from the report:-

"The Apple Express does serve as a role model for the Railway Tourism Industry".

"As these operations normally struggle for survival, the effort they have put into the total safety of the operation in its entirety is commendable."

"The Apple Express is managed and run by a dedicated team of people".

OUR CONGRATULATIONS GO TO ALL OUR STAFF, MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS AND SHEL TAM WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS EXCEPTIONAL REPORT.

THANKS to everyone who submitted articles for this newsletter.