



**Foreword from Lee Gates. (Reefsteamers.)**

This is a photo essay created from the recent successful Maluti Magic event. It was hosted by our good friend and partner, Wilfred E. Mole of the Sandstone Heritage Trust, and it was a treat to work with many unique, attractive locomotives in the beautiful countryside. As always, it was refreshing to be amongst other people with the same interests, and encouraging for the South African Steam Enthusiasts to realize that other people out there are interested in our cause.

Quite a few high profile and very experienced preservationists were invited from England and Europe to join the event. The main thrust was to showcase the possibilities for South African Steam – using the unique rail net work of the Sandstone estates to show what can be done. A secondary aim was to showcase the Reefsteamers – being a unique, close knit ‘Steam Team.’ Through these people and via the medium of Steam in action, we hope to raise lobbying and financial support. These high profile individuals have worked successfully with their home governments and are also experienced in promotion the tourism side of the business, a focus which Steam in Action has decided to adopt.

Reefsteamers were appointed to run the railway side of the event in terms of maintenance, scheduling and the operation of the locomotives. In spite of some mechanical issues, we did ourselves proud. Although the details are still in the early stages, Reefsteamers is to be contracted to take over the maintenance and the operation of the Sandstone Heritage Locomotive fleet. Not only do our guys have the technical skills, to the point of fabricating parts from scratch, and the operating skills to run even an unfamiliar locomotive safely and efficiently – we have the flexibility to be able to send a full team at fairly short notice to service and operate several trains on a weekend at Sandstone should this be required. This is the start of a hoped for era of ‘steam teams’ whereas Reefsteamers can provide a turn-key-solution to professional steam train operation.

As has become customary for my Steam Adventures with the Reefsteamers, my main role was that of the Steam Team photography – but to lend a hand with servicing and maintenance when able to do so, if not rostered. Thus, I made sure to get some footplate time in. Steam locomotives are dirty things to work on and the soot and oils quickly foul up, not only camera lenses, but camera controls too. And cameras get knocked and dropped when trying to work and take photos at the same time. We’ve found it better to have one appointed photographer who can then share their photos via electronic media. A full selection of photos from myself and others is being collected and is to be cut to DVD.

There are 80 pictures included in this document. They were originally taken at high resolution and have been rendered down to 400pixels wide and at 76dpi for screen display. This was necessary to cut the document size down from 3.7MB to a more manageable 1.8MB. The quality of the resulting images isn’t too bad but obviously the originals are cleaner and sharper.

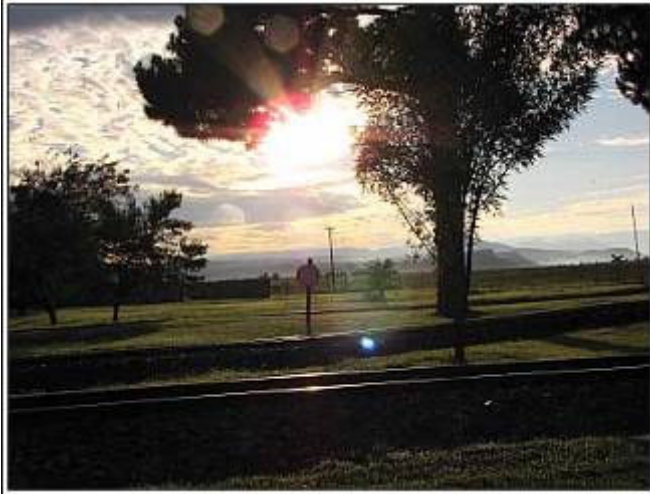
My photography job came with an extra mandate from Wilfred Mole himself. Could I please focus on the workshops and the depots? Most of the photographers would tend to be out on the rail system, either riding on the trains or lying in wait at preselected vantage points for that elusive perfect shot. Although all the photographers visited the workshops at least once over the weekend, most of them were not there in the mornings, during meal times and through the night – so I managed to get some unique pictures. Unfortunately the evenings were rained out so I couldn’t get any external night time shots as I had hoped.

Nonetheless I trust to have obtained an interesting variety of photos and annotations for your enjoyment.

Because this is a private commercial farm and not open to the public, scenes like these depicted here and more on the Sandstone Web site, are unique. Remember that privilege, as well as the hard work and logistic arrangements that went into the rescue and the preservation of these engines, some as far afield as Mozambique and Angola.

Lee Gates

PS : For a menu of excellent photos from the different official photographers, copy this URL into your web browser :  
[http://www.sandstone-estates.com/interim/Maluti\\_Magic/index.html](http://www.sandstone-estates.com/interim/Maluti_Magic/index.html)



Pic 1). The early morning walk from the Reefsteamers Tent to the steam depot to report on duty. There's been much said in books about crisp fresh country air, but at Sandstone you really do get to experience it ; fresh, moist air laden with the scents of the grass and of the surrounding fields, the grass juicily wet with the previous night's rain and those 2 foot rail heads awaiting a weekend of polishing with lots of little flanged wheels.

A part of the photographic charm (and challenge) of the Sandstone Estates is the big open sky, a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of moods and weather patterns. From the deep blue, fading to milky pearl of a high summer's day, or approaching over the Maluti mountains, the massed armada of solid looking cloud banks, escorted by isolated cruisers of dark clouds, the dramatic purple-grey thunder storms and here, the rising sun shyly greeting the new day behind a veil.



Pic 2). The morning sun greets the small yard of the Sandstone Loco Depot. The Bagnal Diesel would soon be away and busy shunting the train consists at Hoekfontien. Hidden behind the diesel, the NGG16 No.153 is being steamed up by the Sandstone Crews for a long day's shunting – operated by Reefsteamers, shunter's radio included.

The diesel had already been moved by this time but one of the vacuum brake pipes needed to be replaced – so now it waits with the engine ticking as the hot steel contracts.

The Reefsteamers took a little time to assess the coffee supplies and also to get the layout of the unfamiliar workshop in mind. It was to be the last moment of calm before a very busy day for everyone involved in the workshop.



Pic 3). The unsuspecting open coach gets a jolly good steam out as the NGG16 No.153 makes a move back over the workshop inspection pit for greasing and undercarriage checks. Garratts have four cylinders, each with a double acting piston. This means eight cylinder cocks discharging steam into the cool morning air – twice as much discharge as from one of the Reefsteamers' big uns.

Photographers standing close by soon learn to cover their lenses when the whole locomotive has wheezed by, rather than just waiting for the front mounted cylinders of a conventional locomotive to pass. Compared to the camera lens-spotting, say-it-and-spray-it nature of Sandstone's BIG Garratt moving off from cold, the GMAM No.4079 'Lyndie Lou' in the care of Reefsteamers, the little NGG16 Garratts don't pass on much condensate from their boiler-length steam transfer pipes.



Pic 4). The Bagnal diesel, operated by Sandstone crew members, finally has a working brake pipe at both ends and has left the scene with a cheerful honk at the 'wagon road', leaving the shed tracks clear.

Wreathed in the abundant steam of a crisp, still-cool morning, NGG16 No.153 shuffles forward with cylinder cocks wheezing, to take her stand under the water tower and to fill up her almost empty water tank. Notice the laminar effects of the air flow alongside the square bulk of the water tank.

Reefsteamers Attie de Necker (Driver) and Michael Thiel (Fireman) were the shunting crew and they stuck to their task for the entire day, Michael somehow managing to find time to polish the entire locomotive to a show room finish.





Pic 5). Watering under an unsettled morning sky. The NGG16 No.153 is fed and watered for a long day's work. Using that water tank all day took some planning as the pumped water pressure is low.

To take advantage of the theoretical; high volume water delivery of the tank, the tank needed to be left alone to fill up – otherwise one may have well just used a hose. Wrestling with those hoses took me right back to the Reefsteamers carriage shed piping – with leaking coupling s and joints blowing apart and needing to be screwed down tight and in a desperate attempt to deliver water, tying the jubilee hose clips together with wire!

Water pressure issues aside, this is one of the half dozen or so surviving and survivable water towers left in the country – this one being even more unusual being sized for narrow gauge use.



Pic 6). Is this a forest or a farm? The designated shunter, Patrick Ackerman of Reefsteamers, sneaks a ride on the NGG16 No.113's boiler-side platform steps. This is the first shunting move of the day, the cold Kalahari (Of which the low slung tender can be seen.) and the cold NGG16 are being pushed into the wagon yard to free up the depot tracks to bring the smaller locomotives out for fire lighting. The Kalahari's low-slung tender almost suits the Garratt, doesn't it?

That already shiny dome, complete with the gothic Bismarck finial, was re-polished during the day, courtesy of fireman Dawie.

Those wet railheads took a while to dry out with the patchy sunshine of the morning and there was some mild slippage when shunting over those points.



Pic 7). The impending magic of Maluti – five great little locomotives wait to be pulled out one by one and have their fires lit. At this time of the day, the underside of the cavernous shed roof is still clearly visible but would soon be hidden by roiling Mount Doom style clouds of smoke!

Behind these historic machines, three more of similar size wait and two little un's wait hidden away right at the back. Only two of these engines would be failed and booked off duty for the following day.



Pic 8) The Sandstone Locomotive fleet does not have a standard livery but is mainly painted in black or various shades of green. These locomotives are the baubles of the fleet, standing out in their different colours. In front is Sena Estates No.4 Peckett, then the blue ex-SAR NG4, then the red ex-Tonga Sugar NG1 'Barclay.' The pale turquoise Peckett at the rear didn't run at it is still being reassembled.

That is the ex-Ratanga Junction Fowler No.6 'Sandy' visible to the right – the open back cab making her popular with passengers as they can see the crews at work while they enjoy a train ride.





Pic 9). One of a largely un-noticed team of workers who leant their hands to the Maluti Magic event – a team of half a dozen indigenous ladies were tasked with the wipe down of all the waking locomotives – some of them a bit, er, chubby and quite a comical sight with their heads down and their rear ends wagging to and fro amongst the locomotives roofs and boilers.

One of the girls is balancing on 'Little Bess's' left coal bunker while Tony 'Shakey' King applies coal to the radius rod slides of the unusual Hackworth Valve Gear. (This slide block takes the place of the expansion link on a Walshearts valve gear set.)  
 Pic by Errol Ashwell.



Pic 10). By contrast, even the diminutive Garratts (well, to us main line Reefsteamers, anyway) comprise of a lot of warm steel that needs cleaning. There are three fellows giving No.113 a rub down.

Dawie Viljoen was the somewhat frustrated fireman that wasn't able to get his boiler to the same shine as that of Michael Thiel's ridiculously shiny No.153. It wasn't for the lack of polishing though, it was just the fact that the paraffin was getting into short rations!  
 (Pic by Errol Ashwell.)



Pic 11). The anticipated triple header NGG16 Garratt hauled train would be the highlight of the weekend. But Sandstone Estates is the only place remaining where even two NGG16 Garratts can be operated simultaneously. Here, No.49, with the oval 'Orange Express' headboard, has been shunted in from where she had been temporarily shunted to the side track and is now being lit up and lubricated, while the No.153 pauses while pulling the little locomotives out of bed.

The 'big' Sandstone engines, the three Garratts and the NG15 Kalahari normally sleep in the left hand road – so with a minimum of shunting moves, the four relatively large locomotives can be moved and serviced, leaving the right hand tack and its side-line free for withdrawal of the smaller engines. .



Pic 12). The two Lawleys have been withdrawn from the workshops and are now being pushed into one of the wagon roads for lighting. They are not the most powerful locomotives in the fleet but would be amongst the most reliable and responsive of the little locomotives. The black liveried No.116 'Jimmie' tended to be forgotten, being tucked away in the wagon shed and his fire almost died twice.

At the workshops, the Sandstone staff handled most of the fire lighting tasks while the Reefsteamers concentrated on the engineering and road-worthy checks, as well as operating the shunting NGG16. The Sandstone chaps were spread over three tracks of locomotives requiring to be lit up.



Pic 13). Usually one of the most cheerful and chatty of all the Reefsteamers (I felt like braining him with my four cell MagLite in the Reefsteamers tent on Friday night when he just wouldn't shut up yapping.) Attie de Necker here wears an unusually serious face as he handles an unfamiliar locomotive with link and pin couplers instead of the sprung draft gear and buffer plates (coaches) with which he is more familiar.

Oom (Uncle) Attie has just cleared 71 years of age and is still quite capable of driving and firing an engine – he can show the 60 year old youngsters a thing or two about aging dynamically and the benefits of keeping an active mind in an active body.  
 (Pic by Errol Ashwell.)



Pic 14). And here is what a hard day's shunting followed by another day's worth of driving can do to a seriously talkative locomotive driver – he flopped into bed and was out like a busted light bulb within five minutes! He was too tired to even snore!



Pic 15). This would be the last of the Garratt-powered locomotive moves from within the shed. The NGG16 No.153, with its front unit sitting clumsily on the points, is being hooked onto four stored locomotives. They had been shunted in but not coupled, so a number of fine movements had to be made to engage the link and pin couplers.

Our favourite Irish shunter reports that he still has all ten digits on his hands!

Notice how the unvented roof is filling up nicely with steam and smoke.



Pic 16). Here is the other end of the story, within the Wagon Shed, a rusted out NGG16 (No.12) awaits restoration and it really stands in stark contrast to the three running units.

Safe from the scapper's torch and in a dry shed away from the corrosive coastal or sub-tropical climates, this locomotive can wait almost indefinitely.

That is a characteristic Kalahari tender just to the right, with the unusual inset shape designed to assist in rearward visibility. The haze in the air is courtesy of the just-lit Lawleys parked in the entrance of the Wagon Shed.





Pic 17). Oom Stoom and Lukas Nel display a phenomenon that many railway men display – finding sitting, lying or squatting on trackwork comfortable and somehow drawing a sensing of belonging from the steel. Reefsteamers do it too, sometimes lying across the tracks and using the rail heads as a pillow – not as uncomfortable as it sounds.

Notice the neat way that Lucas Nel (right) has his knees flat on the rail heads and his heels beautifully braced.  
 (Pic by Errol Ashwell)



Pic 18). Four seriously clean little locomotives are coupled up and ready to be moved in the smoke filled shed. They would be pulled out together which would also clear the points and leave the side road free as spare space.

The vertical pipe-like contraption standing in the middle of the floor, next to the compressed air line, is a blower ring that is inserted into a chimney to put a draft on the fire while the locomotive is standing still.



Pic 19). Little Hayley was grunting and squealing at her front end during the move. The shunt was stopped and the locomotive inspected. The valve chests were found to be dry (And presumably, the cylinders too) and the lubricator incorrectly filled with MH Oil instead of the proper compounded steam oil. MH, or most other forms of oil, would be thinned and dispersed by the steam and just be blown through the cylinders and valve chests and out the exhaust, without adhering to and lubricating any of the mechanical parts.

The steam delivery pipes were uncoupled at their unions just above the valve chests and here, Reefsteamers' Tony 'Shakey' King is feeding much needed oil directly into the valve chests.



Pic 20). Inspired by a grubby cab-plate, Michael Thiel starts confidently on what would turn out to be a day long polishing project – but he sure had No.153 come up in shiny ex-shop condition! And it all started with polishing the dull badges, which became a full wipe down and then a thorough application of paraffin, subsequently polished to make this the 'glintiest' locomotive of them all.





Pic 21). By the end of the weekend, fire-lighting wood was becoming a scarce commodity around the Sandstone workshops!

Compared to the big main-line locomotives that the Reefsteamers are used to, lighting up these little engines is a breeze, one or two smashed up planks and half a dozen sugar scoops of coal being all that is required. The small boilers are less prone to expansion damage too and can be driven harder than the large main line boilers in proportion to their size.

It was downright weird working on a firebox while standing on the ground NEXT to the locomotive, and just leaning over the cab footplate to pop on some wood or a scoop of coal.



Pic 22). Here's a collector's item – an original cast Sandstone Steam Railroad cab-side plate. Unusually, it only shows the locomotive class and not the number.

This is the cab-side number plate NG1 Barclay which would only run on Sunday but was kept hopefully warm throughout the weekend. Being at the back of the locomotive line, and kept under cover at the entrance of the workshop shed, this was the only small locomotive not to get drenched in the copious weekend evening and night time rains. Naturally, with the dry, warm cab, it got the most attention from the loco minders.



Pic 23). One of the challenges in operating the Sandstone fleet is the mismatched coupler heights and types on locomotives that come from the neighbouring states as well as different areas within South Africa. The NG4 is pulled forward with an extended coupler, while a relaxed looking shunter, Patrick Ackerman talks driver Attie de Necker forward.

Behind Patrick is the one of the Pecketts, of the former Sena Sugar Estates and displaying their encircled elephant logo.



Pic 24). Tractor crossing. The traction engine boys were facing their own challenges and our shunting work was interrupted by two tractors gamely towing this big lump back to the vehicle shed.

I understand that an oil wick pot came loose from its brackets and it fell between a pair of intermeshing gears. As it passed through the gear-nip, it bent the shafts upon which they run. The plucky Field Marshall Tractor in front drew most of the attention in this impromptu little convoy.



Pic 25). At about 11am, the little French lady has been run out under her own power to build up full steam pressure out of the way under the water tower. (Otherwise she would end be trapped behind the bigger locomotives being lit up on the two shed roads.)

She's about to be run out light-engine to the turning triangle for some steam trials, followed later by 'Little Bess' with her two converted sugar cane wagons – so the shed line would be the domain of the tiny locomotives for a while.



Pic 26). One of the charms of the narrow gauge is the tremendous variety of the forms and sizes of the locomotives – more so than those for the SAR main line. The three NGG16's are the largest of the Sandstone Fleet and the pretty little Decauville (2 tons) is the second smallest.

Like a Great Dane and a Chihuahua, the two locomotives stand in stark contrast and yet they run on the same gauge track. (Pic by Errol Ashwell.)



Pic 27). The Sugar-Plum Express tears through the crossing, raising the dust shaken out from the ballast and line-side litter whirling playfully in the slip stream. Not. Sarcasm aside, the tiny locomotives, The Wren Class 'Little Bess' and 'Bathala' (the Decauville), show a surprisingly good turn of speed and acceleration in proportion to their own weight and size.

This Wren Class Kerr Stewart, 'Little Bess' is coming back home from her first steam test with two converted sugar cane wagons and is heading for a drink from the water tower ash pit hose and half a 25kg bag of coal for mid-morning brunch.



Pic 28). Close quarter depot work. There isn't much space between the locomotives at the end of the two shed roads. The wide, angled drain channels eventually becomes dangerous to walk in as dropped and discharged oil tends to collect there as well. But the scent of hot steel-tinted steam and the crisp scent of coal smoke as one walks in that narrow alley...

The Peckett Locomotive on the left is raising steam while the coal in the blue NG4 has just started to ignite, as you can see by the smoke column turning brown. It gradually turns light brown and then grey as the coal fire catches properly and the fire-lighter's wood is just a memory.



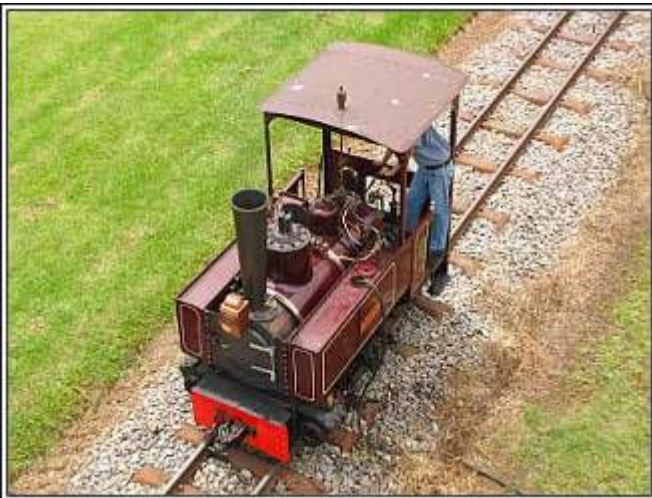


Pic 29). With a little more space at hand, Oom Stoom gets to work giving a Lawley Smokebox a quick wipe down.



Pic 30). With her saddle-tank filled up and cylinder cocks open, a top-heavy 'Little Bess' starts to trundle along the Shed Lead to clear the water tower tracks and to be in convenient vicinity of a much needed half a bag of coal.

The colourless overcast sky was an annoyance to the photographers but the cool day was a blessing to the crews. Operating locomotives is hot work – but operating a locomotive with an open cab like this one is literally, a breeze.



Pic 31). This little gem takes a drink at the water tower – but via the hose stand at the neat concrete lined submerged ash pits.

This locomotive was booked to work double-headed with 'Little Bess' on Sunday but the double header was cancelled as to get photos of a single locomotive working alone. As she wasn't in good enough shape to haul a load all on her own, the poor 'Little French Lady' never got to run officially over the weekend. .



Pic 32). After her one man-power 12kg coaling, Little Bess waits next to the whistle board, with a calm fire for her next round of duty.

This photo, taken from the unnervingly rickety steps of the water tower, clearly shows the neat back-to-back seats that have been put into these converted sugar cane wagons. These four wheel wagons, with some flat spots on those wheels, ride rather roughly, but they are great fun and the individual hand-wheel brakes recall the individually braked freight cars of early American railroading.





Pic 33). The other Steam Machines. You get a good vantage point of the truck shed from the water tower. The engine to the extreme left is a stuffed-n-mounted display piece. The crane in the middle, the Sentinel Steam Lorry and the Fowler Traction engine to the right were all runners over the weekend, operated by a different and independent Steam Team.



Pic 34). Gleaming in the mid-morning sun at the wagon shed entrance, little Hayley waits for her fire to be lit up. This O&K locomotive was officially failed on Friday afternoon and never ran over the weekend due to poor fitting work that had been previously performed on the safety valves – they were leaking continuously at 50% boiler pressure and the calibration was suspect.

Hayley might be familiar to many Jo'burgers for this is the locomotive that was displayed outside 'The Train' restaurant in Midrand. (Painted orange and grey) Behind Hayley the green Lawley No.BR7 (restored in Beira Railway Colours) waits for a fire too.



Pic 35). Steam powered United Nations. The French Decauville (rescued from Angola), the grey German Feldbahn and the blue British built NG4 all steam side by side.

Due to the remote location and the commercial but private nature of the Sandstone Estates Farm, but also due the lack of support and recognition from the official heritage Bodies of South Africa, unique scenes like this are lost to the South African public. This is the largest 2ft narrow gauge steam collection in the world and it doesn't even appear in the guide books. (Thus, making a private invitation quite a privilege.)



Pic 36). My favourite looker in terms of the medium sized engines, the blue NG4 No.16 ended up in a pickle.

The locomotive was stuck in neutral gear with the regular jammed open. The live steam pressure was forcing the D valve block down tight against its port plate and the locomotive couldn't be put into forward or reverse, even with crowbars applied to the valve linkages.

Eventually, a gentle but firm nudge from behind, courtesy of the red Barclay NG1, knocked the valves loose, and the NG4 spun her wheels madly, rocking from side to side as if in pain, until the regulator freed up. Although a short steam test was attempted, the NG4 was also failed and never ran over the weekend.





Pic 37). The closest I got to a landscape picture – this is a view of the locomotive shed and its tracks, seven steam locomotives and the characteristic expansive Free State sky. I'm standing next to a vintage Mazda Truck, amongst the tractors, ploughs and bulldozers within the restoration project storage shed.

Yes, the evening thunder storm is already brewing – the classic solid looking cloudbanks over the Maluti mountains forming an interestingly dramatic backdrop.



Pic 38). The dark side of Beira Railway No.BR7, the Ackerman restored green Lawley, stands in contrast to the shining wagon shed shining as the sun slips down well past its zenith.

For this event, the NG15 Kalahari would be used for the night time photography posing at Hoekfontien Station, whereas the popular Lawleys normally take the spot. Their work is done for the day – they would make one more move to the tracks of the workshop to get all the locomotives together for the evening's locomotive minding shift.



Pic 39). Is this the early 20<sup>th</sup> century?

Apart from the flood lamp, and for the observant, the IBR cladding on the shed, this could have been a well maintained loco shed on a prosperous Sugar Plantation. Little Hayley, the 1907 O&K parked on the left road, was blowing mildly through her damaged safety valves at only 50% boiler pressure.



Pic 40). With her steam plume and a juicily wet stack discharge backlit by the late afternoon sun, this Orenstein & Koppel No.4202 meanders through to settle just outside the wagon shed for the evening. She would be moved back to the workshop tracks though at last light and join the rest of the sleeping locomotives for the night.

This locomotive, was built new for West Rand Consolidated Mines service in 1910 and is quite unusual for a narrow gauge engine, being a 'Well Tank' – that is, she carries her water in a tank under the boiler – even on the limited space available between the narrow gauge wheels and frames.



Pic 41). We've heard of Haley's comet and now we get to enjoy Haley's sunset. The O&K No.4202 in the previous shot has been moved back to the locomotive shed, leaving Hayley alone to go to sleep as her fire dies down.

The Beira Railway Lawley No.7 was 'howling at the pops' and the injectors 'coughed out' as the tender water tank had run dry. I had just asked Patrick to move the engine under the water tower for a refill – you can see the safeties are still making a racket in the distance – highlighted against the dark trees.



Pic 42). After a long day's shunting, the NGG16 No.153 is serviced by her Reefsteamers crew before being staged for the night. Those clouds are forerunners of the rainy night that would come – luckily after MY volunteer loco minding shift. (Altruistic soul that I am .. poor Dawie and Andre.)

No.153 is one if the few locomotives that came to Sandstone in working order (From the failed Midmar Dam project) and is a member of the last batch of Garratts and steam locos in general ordered by the SAR. Built in 1968 – she shares my birth year.



Pic 43). Evening fire cleaning provides a warmly coloured spectacle, the brimstone glow of the falling coals blending in nicely with the well lit cab and contrasting with the lingering blue of the darkening sky.

The ash pit is still empty. Within 24 hours, with all the rain, the added quenching water and the service residue, it would be a nondescript murky khaki coloured ocean with a lump, sterile island of ashes poking up through the rails.



Pic 44). It is approaching midnight and the workshop resounds to the rumble and whirr of the lathes as the Reefsteamers fabricate new parts for a failed locomotive of which it was said couldn't be fixed.

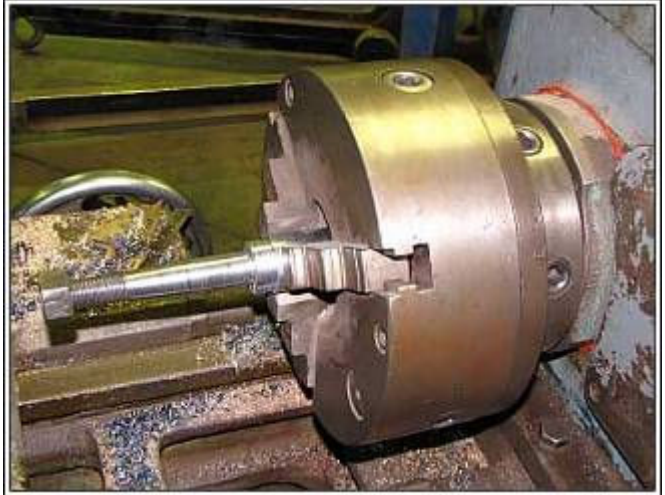
Little Bess turned out to have welded-on return cranks (very bad practice) of which the right hand crank had come off. It caused the valve gear to collapse, breaking pins and bending the radius rod. Shaun (Left), Andrew (Center) and Patrick (Right) worked right through the night and had the little locomotive reassembled by 4:30am.

She was in steam again by 10:30am. On Sunday, after a good stiff tube cleaning, the boiler was lit up once more and hauled her rostered sugar cane wagon train all on her own, with no help from the Decauville which was pulled off the planned double header for photographic reasons.





Pic 45). The hot steam whispering from the brass whistle casting rises up to meet the cold midnight rain coming down. This is the 'Barclay' NG1 locomotive parked with the dome just inside the shelter of the shed doors.



Pic 46). Some brand new spares for 90 year old Wren Class 'Little Bess'. The brand new Rear Radius Rod Pin that has been fabricated from scratch has just had the threads cut and chased. It remains to give it a final polish and to put a chamfer on the thread end, and to provide a hole for the split pin.

This is Patrick Ackerman's work reproduced from the old Rear Radius Pin which had broken into two pieces.



Pic 47). Two tracks stuffed to capacity with great little locomotives, most of them simmering gently in the persistent rain at 2am on Saturday morning. There are at least three loco minders out there somewhere in the amphibious night but they are nowhere to be seen – probably warming up in a toasty Garratt Cab somewhere.

The drain trench between the two tracks made a treacherously slippery walkway when the rain mixed with the copious oil discharge and spills.



Pic 48). 1932, somewhere in Mozambique, the Lawleys smoke off the malarial mosquitoes and almost ready to move off to the bagasse strewn shunting yard to split up and each take a short train of rickety strake wagons for the day's work of hauling in the sugar cane waste after the harvest.

That locomotive in the foreground is an NG15, commonly called a 'Kalahari' and is caught warming up for a day of trails for the pending purchase form the SAR.



Pic 49). A free bag of genuine Sandstone Estates hand-graded coal for the first person to correctly identify the locomotive in this picture. No, it's not a boiler explosion, just a copious blow down.

That water tank in the foreground is a dummy WW1 era tank mounted on stacked sleepers and packed stones. It was erected the previous day (Friday) for the Maluti Magic event.



Pic 50). The protective oxide primer painted exteriors of Cape Gauge restoration line warm up mellowly in the Saturday morning sunshine as these stationary machines whistfully watch the narrow gauge action.



Pic 51). The world's only two working Lawleys are about ready to move off from their night time resting place – as eye catching when stationary as they are when moving. They had no option but to move off first as they were blocking the engine shed's points – but fortunately they were rostered for the first of the official runs anyway. (The previous evening's loco hostlers (Patrick Ackerman and Andreas Matthee) knew what they were doing!)



Pic 52). Lawleys again. The black liveried 'Jimmie' Lawley is just backing up to squat over the inspection pit for the morning fire cleaning while ex Beira Railway No.7 (SAR No.106) waits in the foreground with an empty cab and cylinder cocks open.





Pic 53). A pensive looking Andrew King (Reefsteamers) in the driver's seat of 'Jimmie', awaits the off for the first train of the day, which will be a Sandstone Heritage Trust classic double headed Lawley Combo.



Pic 54). An interesting contrast on modern and elderly haulage machinery. That tractor's over-sized balloon tires were gentle on the ground, hardly even flattening the grass, but the iron shod wheels of the steam powered traction engine left their tracks in the turf and set up a distinct ringing clatter on the cinder-block puzzle brick paving of the farm compound roads.

They sound as if they are dragging chains. Such is the nature of a well tuned traction engine running under light load is that the wheel clatter is sometimes louder than the engine itself.



Pic 55). Being fired up on Saturday morning in the hopes of a run (which she never got), and to test the repairs, 'Little Bess' should perhaps be called 'Big Smoker' as the lazily burning, surprisingly long firebox produced enough smoke to fill the rafters of the entire shed – all on its own. The locomotive's tubes were quite dirty, and without a plant draft blower in the chimney, combustion was slow.

The locomotive was run light engine a short way to test the reassembled valve gear and the centralization of the valve settings but she only hauled a train on Sunday. That's Shaun Ackerman and 'Shakey' King chatting at the oil barrels.



Pic 56). In the cathedral light of the smoke-filled shed, the Decauville 'Bathala', aka, 'The little French Lady', waits in next to railway sleepers of light, and a pair of recently converted sugar cane wagons. I shunted those coupled wagons there on my own by hand. Narrow gauge certainly has its advantages!



Pic 57). The Feldbahn Loco, originally designed for wartime duties on temporary track with a very unusual swivelling system for the main axles, peacefully and gamely hauls its mixed freight up-grade to pass the coach storage sidings and to head into Hoekfontien station.

Notice the size contrast between the stored 3ft 6in Gauge (Cape Gauge) coaches and the loading gauge of the Narrow Gauge.



Pic 58). As Saturday wore on, the locomotives that had done their runs for the day were stored out of the way in a growing line on the wagon workshop track.



Pic 59). A sight to gladden the railway man's heart – A busy narrow gauge steam shed – circa 2009. There are five locomotives in steam in the background.

Notice how the shunter's driver takes a break sitting on one of the crane's feet while the fireman handles the filling of the water tank. I wonder if Michael polished the top of the tank as well as those sides? (Pic by Errol Ashwell)



Pic 60). Three tired little engines have had their fires dumped and are now drowsing as their boilers cool down – they've done their work. These little gems fit in well with the well tended garden-like surrounding of the engine shed and the wagon shed. The Peckett and the Kalahari were out strutting their stuff at the time.





Pic 61). The Boss Man – while the Reefsteamers took over the workshop and the Sandstone Crews, Reefsteamers' Fred Sewell took over the scheduling of the trains on the routes. This confident looking dispatcher had quite a challenge to keep things moving with locomotives of very different capacities to be used and some of those crossed off the duty list needing to be replaced.

Here he is talking to a Garratt that is labouring up Pandora Bank, while the Grootdraai line is occupied by one of the home bound Sugar Engines. He had a pleasant dispatching office though, out in the open air under the awnings of the Hoekfontien Station and right in the center of things!



Pic 62). Mid Day Munchies.

The NGG16 No.113 gets the coal bunker topped up. It is noteworthy that in the crazy world of steam, the locomotives usually get to eat and drink before their pet humans do and here, the locomotive gets fed before the VIP guests. However, the locomotives have done all the work, so it's only fair.



Pic 63). Reefsteamers Training Fireman Patrick Ackerman wrestles with a leaky pipe union in the steam filled interior of NGG16 No.113's cab. He wasn't able to cure the leak completely as the union itself was cracked (had been over-tightened at one stage) but he managed to throttle down the escaping steam.

Pat just need to gain a little more confidence with his practicals and get to grips with his theory exams – but he has the makings of an excellent main line fireman who consistently works to high standards



Pic 64). The sun has finally come out to stay by the time this ex-Sena Sugar Estates Peckett Saddle Tank Locomotive, No 2161 has come in for an afternoon service. The state of the ash pit will tell you that a lot of little locomotives have already run today! (Pic by Errol Ashwell.)



Pic 65). The opening stages of the Garratt ballet. A pair of NGG16's back down slowly to the servicing area, to couple up to their third (and not ugly) sister to prepare for a unique TRIPLE headed Garratt run.



Pic 66). During fire cleaning at the service point at the turning triangle, a gentle discharge of grate shaker steam outlines the counter weight on the drivers. The keeper plates and the outside frames of the narrow Gauge Garratts are obvious in this picture.



Pic 67). Wilfred Mole, he had a farm, eeyi, eeyi, oh! And on the farm he had some Garratts, eeyi, eeyi, oh! With chuff-chuff here, and a whistle blowing there, here some coal, there some steam; here. There, everywhere a narrow gauge dream, Wilfred Mole, he had a farm, eeyi, eeyi, oh!

This shot of vintage locomotives passing under the oval Sandstone Estates Logo emphasizes the unusuality of the Sandstone Heritage Trust – a haven for steam locomotives and many other vintage vehicles, all looked after on a privately owned professionally run semi-organic commercial farm.



Pic 68). One of two Reefsteamers Media Boys (the other being Aidan McCarthy) Paul Hloben is seen taking low angled shots of the loco-motion of the triple headed Garratts getting ready to trundle past the combines shed.

While Aidan normally focuses on landscape and line-side shots, deriving much enjoyment from capturing pictures of locomotives upon which he personally worked, Paul tend toward operational shots for the purpose of documentaries and the creation of movies. (He is also a volcano enthusiast – a 'Volcanologist' ... go figure!)

Behind Paul, the vintage DH Grader is being hooked up with a chain for a tractor enabled tow-start.





Pic 69). In the 'Waenhuis' (Wagon House), the beers are flowing, the BBQ meats are smelling great, the day's catches of photographs are being compared and the conversation is getting increasingly animated.

For the Reefsteamers crews though, it is still a time of work as the three NGG16 Garratts need to be serviced, their fires cleaned and banked for the night. It was a time of quiet companionship – steam lovers being left alone to do what they do best.



Pic 70). The same scene taken a minute later without a flash. Only the water tank of the lead loco, crowned with a headlamp, is backlit by the evening sky as the rest of the outlines and details slip into the night.

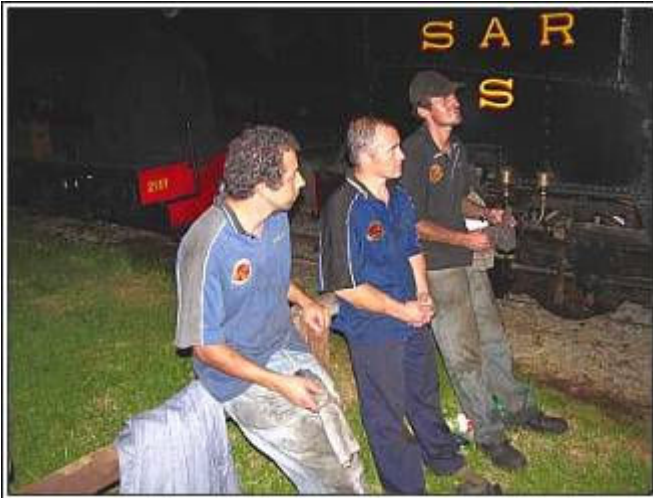


Pic 71). A sunset tipped NGG16 No.153 advances over the ash pits and soon the ash chute and the inner wheels will be backlit with the hell fire glow of the falling clinkers and coals. The Sandstone boys are to do the loco minding tonight so the Reefsteamers are looking forward to a meal, some beers (2 each), a good wash and then some much needed sleep – even if Shaun Ackerman was in a sociable party mood.



Pic 72). The day's action-packed schedule has been run and now the wagon workshop trackage is jam-packed with two lines of great little machines slowly settling down with dying fires and drowsy boilers.

It was an experience to be able to walk alongside this row of mixed engines, smell the hint of smoke and feel the remaining heat from the boilers and to know that unlike the more expected and usual dead-lines of stripped hulks, the locomotives in this line are alive and cared for.



Pic 73). A triple header of firemen.

These guys worked their tails off! From the left, Andreas, Michael and Dawie relax from their turn at the soapy bucket of warm injector water while Andrew, Shaun and Lee take their turn. Michael and Dawie are both currently qualified main line fireman and Andreas is progressing well in his training.

Rarer than the steam locomotives themselves, these fellows are special representative of a new generation who will keep steam alive in the future.



Pic 74). Tools of the trade. Sunday, apart from the morning freight train headed by the Kalahari, would be a day for the two tiny engines and the NG1.

All three of them are present here – 'Bathala' (Front) and 'Little Bess' (center) cold and waiting for service while the NG1's fire is being rebuilt (by Andreas) and the boiler brought back up to operating pressure.



Pic 75). Patrick (left) and Andrew, resplendent in matching jeans and Reefsteamers tee-shirts, and an incidentally matching pair of somewhat grubby wedge caps, perform the synchronized choreography of movements required to pass a wire brush through the boiler tubes. You can't do this so easily on a fire arch equipped locomotive!

The smokebox was leaking too and needed to have a ring of open bolt holes sealed and some packing rope placed behind the door. The induced draft is now much improved.



Pic 76). Dozing in the Sunday mid-morning sun, No.6 'Sandy' shows yellow painted plate frames that match the yellow of the vintage Automobile Association level crossing sign.





Pic 77). A backlit 'Little Bess' gets the drifted boiler tube char wiped down and a final inspection before the fire is lit up. The shunting of the little engine and the two converted sugar cane wagons was all done by man-power.



Pic 78). Our high speed main line express is blocked by a pesky branch line engine with an empty train. Driver Shaun Ackerman sits uncomfortably on the cross bar while Michael Thiel, driver of the red NG1, receives instructions at the signal tower.

The original plan was for the NG1 to back up for servicing at the triangle and for 'Little Bess' and 'Bathala' to take a run through to Grootdraai and back. 'Bathala' was held back for photographic reasons. But in general, passengers were thin on the ground though and an increasing number of drowsy guests content just to imbibe beer and tea at the Wagon House. Our Swiss friend Phillip Maurer, eventually drove this train out.



Pic 79). On the little engines you really do have to go down low to check the valve gear – Patrick gives Bathala a once over. She is just a few minutes from being called off the rear of 'Little Bess's' train for photographic reasons. – they wanted a picture of a single locomotive pulling the train rather than a mismatched double header. (These two little engines are often rostered to run together.)



Pic 80). The NG1 and her train wait across the road before the call to back into the station across the right. Luckily the road traffic is light and the steam roller is parked by the side of the road, not waiting to proceed.