

## Introduction :

Reefsteamers got to celebrate Heritage Day (Wednesday, 24 September) in unique style, just by doing what we love best running steam trains! South Africa is a racially and culturally divided country but the one thing the various culture groups have in common is the outdoor BBQ. (Or, "Braai", as we call it.) So a national initiative is to specifically arrange to have a braai with family and friends. Amongst the South African whites, in the seventies and eighties, braais used to be very common, but with the increasing pressure of modern life, the ever smaller homes and the rise in costs of the meats, the weekend braai has become something special.

We were probably the only people in the entire country enjoying our Heritage Day braai at a railway station in the country and sitting casually along the platform next to our very own steam train!

Our usual Magaliesburg locomotive, our Class 15CA, has been moved to the workshop for repairs. Dave Shepherd's 15F No.3052 "Avril" is boxed in by its own tender rebuild project. The Class 25NC No.3472 was running but an injector got bent on a piece of scrap rail poking from a bush. (Repaired at the time of emailing.) So that left the Sandstone Heritage Trust's GMAM Garratt No.4079 "Lyndie Lou". We were debating running this engine anyway, but now didn't have a choice. The big Garratt handles the work with ease, but requires a bit of extra shunting to prepare the three water tankers that we take along to slake her thirst. This, of course, cuts into the payload as we are allowed a maximum of twelve vehicles behind the locomotive on a day-trip. But the extra work aside, the big green machine ran quite well and it was good to see her out and about again.

I've put together a collection of photos from three different people, and between the three of us, we've gotten pretty much every stage of the trip. I was on board the train so I didn't get line side shots, and because of the overnight loco minding session, I inconveniently fell asleep during the run around and servicing time. I was woken by two class 34 Diesels and a petrol train rumbling by to Tarlton and in my disoriented state, I was puzzled as I was sure the Magaliesburg Hotel Stop is only a single track! It felt like I'd only just closed my eyes for a few seconds but I'd snoozed right through moving the empty train to the multi-track Magaliesburg Station, and the runaround, although a just-arrived Patrick Ackerman caught the shunting sequence. Unfortunately, we all missed the actual locomotive servicing itself.

The photo credits are as follows. (LG) = Lee Gates. (PA) = Patrick Ackerman and (AMC) = Aiden McCarthy.



FP01 - Coaling is under way on a hazy Tuesday afternoon. The GMAM is challenging to coal up fully as the coal bunker sides are higher than those of a conventional tender. Because the "Yumbo" coal grab's arms have to be straighter to reach over the high sided bunker, it cannot reach far enough to dump coal neatly on the opposite side - hence the need for a coal trimmer to manually shift the coal over. (PA)



FP02 - The (slightly scruffy) Hadfield Reverser. On the Garratt it is back-to-front with the Lock Cylinder (Green) facing forward and the Actuator Cylinder (Red) facing the cab. Between the cylinders, notice the ingenious scotch-yoke arrangement that operates the drop-lever that, in turn operates the full-lengthed tubular actuating rod that runs alongside the massive boiler frames. (PA)



FP03 - Double Blow Down. Duty Shunter Shaun Ackerman takes advantage of the open waste ground next to the forge house for a blow down on the left side, while the opposite valve is still partially open. Note that the blow down drums on the GMAM are under-slung halfway along under the boiler and not astride the throat plate as on conventional locomotives. (PA)



FP04 - As she rolls downgrade into the reception track, we get a good comparison between the size of a road going motor car and a large ex-SAR Garratt locomotive. The narrowness of the Cape Gauge becomes obvious.

The shunting crew trail in tiredly after the locomotive, each holding a radio. The GMAM Garratt doesn't have front and rear steps at the buffer beams and so isn't an easy locomotive on which to hitch a ride while shunting. That's "Oom" (Uncle) Attie de Necker on the left and trainee shunter, Lex Wehmeyer on the right. (PA)



FP05 - An almost mono-chromatic shot of the locomotive at rest over the reception track's ash pit. The reflective spill water is from when the water tank on the front engine unit was filled earlier in the day. (Before the locomotive was turned) Injectors normally puddle a bit, but they are both under slung on the opposite side of this particular locomotive.

The large concertina rubber pipe in the foreground is the water transfer pipe routed from the buffer beam of the trailing engine unit - Garratts are built valved and piped at both ends to be able to take water from an auxiliary tanker. (PA)



FP06 - Patrick wrestles with a slightly distorted bell coupling in our first attempt to make up a transfer water hose. Notice it's an old brake pipe that he's putting on. We were going to take three tankers and one hose turned out too short. We ended up with a stiff reinforced hose, a barrel and a converted brake pipe, which eventually had to be tied up with wire to keep it from sagging and swinging too much.

If we're gonna run the Garratt regularly, we'll be adding reinforced flexible water hose to our shopping list. (LG)



FP07 - The coal shovel two step - yeah, that's me discovering that this locomotive definitely ISN'T laid out for convenient hand firing with a long cab, an obstructive stoker tunnel, very low firebox doors and a high narrow hinged coal scuttle visible center left..

One could use the mechanical stoker to quickly bank the coal for the night, but the crushed coal would burn through too quickly. In the pic I'm about to slide the coal in slowly over the spreader plate and down the left-front of my coal bank. By contrast, firing right into the corners requires a lighter load in the shovel, which has to be banked to stop the coal flying out with centrifugal force as you bring the shovel in. (PA)



FP08 - 2am. Having been entrusted with and given the charge of a unique celebrity loco, with steam pressure slowly mounting to just over 1050KPA, a ¾ full water glass and a quiet stable fire dancing on soft coal. Top it off with some interesting railway magazine articles, a bag of my favourite kettle cooked salt and pepper crisps (all to myself) and a bowl of Mike Thiel's sloppy semi-melted chocolate ice cream.

Life's Good.(LG)



FP09 - Guard Dog Cam - A doggie level eye view of the eastern coach yards at night. If no one had cared about steam's passing, those rails would be rusty topped, or even lifted long ago for scrap. If you look carefully, you'll see this end of the



FP10 - What's missing?

The boiler had crept up at 1100kPA from 700kPA, when I took this photo before doing the 2:30am top up and not a trace of

yard has new concrete sleepers. (And no weeds!).

Both of these prominent floodlights were recent installations, the RHS unit being mounted on an existing old light mast.. (LG)

steam was escaping from the cylinder cocks at either end. I had just turned the dynamo off and with all valves tightened, this was an eerily quiet machine with just the steady spanking of the injector overflow drips to be heard with the occasional ladylike burp through the vacuum ejector and the constant low purr and muttering at the backhead.

What a contrast to our usual Magaliesburg locomotive, the Class 15CA, which blows noisily through the cylinders the entire night, due to a leaky regulator. The regulator issue is one of the reason why Class 15CA No.2056 "Dorothy" has recently been shopped.

Apart from the noise, the lack of blowing steam means that the buttoned up boiler can gradually gain pressure even with a calmly burning bank of coal and a dark firebed. Blowing steam, while exciting to look at and hear, is a waste of coal, water and muscle fibre. (LG)



FP11 - Will their star ever rise again? These old locomotives are stripped out and a long way from running again, but they are safe within our compound. The Class 24 (Front) (North British Locomotive Society) and the Class 14R No.1745 (Sandstone Estates) slumber on in the fading golden wash of the yard flood lamps. The 14R's fittings are safely stored at Sandstone. (LG )



FP12 - A creature of the night, just like me. I enjoy roaming the yard, sitting on top of the tanker cars to catch the caress of the night breeze and pondering, or just chilling out on the grass with the guard dogs quietly scattered around me. They act as my ears too and this alert looking midnight mutt has just heard something move in the coach sheds. (LG)



FP13 - First light - a welcome sight after an all night loco minding session. I've just finished opening the fire and giving GMAM No.4079 "Lyndie Lou" her breakfast. It's going to be a late departure today, 6:30am instead of the more usual 5:15am, because we aren't running through to Boksburg East as we usually do. Instead, we are heading straight out west to Maraisburg and then Krugersdorp. Hence, a slightly longer shift of locomotive minding and waking up the fire at dawn instead of the pre-dawn darkness. (LG)



FP14 - Well, at least one of us is awake! I opened up the fire ½ hour early, figuring the day's footplate crew would arrive early as they often do. This motley bunch arrived right on time, and so they were presented with a locomotive with a bit too much sizzle! I didn't bother adding water to shut the GMAM up, just opened the firebox doors and let her blow her head off and drop the water a bit. (You don't want a fully pressurized boiler blowing off with water at the top-nut, as the safety valves then spray and it makes quite a mess.) (LG)



FP15 - Lyndie Lou's matching water tanker, also painted in dark Brunswick Green, catches the low morning sun as just-arrived coaching crew walk in from the new Reefsteamers car park. This tanker had a good helping of rust within the 33 000 litres of water and that rust would cause water feed problems on the way home. But for now, all is innocence. (LG)



FP16 - An acrobatic fireman, Sakkie Kekana wipes down the cab after shaking the grates and laying a biscuit of a fire (Hot but very thin). The union on the front Seller's valve has started leaking again, even though Michael Thiel tightened it up slightly the previous evening. (LG)



FP17 - Driver Chris Saayman stands astride the steam pipe that feeds the rear cylinders, while shaking out some waste. Chris was unable to reach a hard to service oil pot feeding a swivel pad, right in the corner of the smoke box and had to climb up to get in there. It was cleaned and serviced on the spot. (LG)



FP18 - Fireman Sakkie Kekana gets his Reefsteamers pride on - voluntarily wiping down the entire boiler jacket. Isn't it great, 17 years after the club's inception, to still be able to see steam wafting up in front of our Reefsteamers Depot sign? (LG)



FP19 - Unlike Wilfred's Lyndie Lou., who is a petite, gamine young lady, THIS Lyndie Lou is a hefty girl with a hearty appetite. Not wishing to take chances, the crew put in several extra scoops of coal to top up the bunker once more. Michael Thiel is working on tidying up the just-disconnected water transfer line. A water tanker was on this end, but was dropped off on the Forge House track before coaling. (It turns out the extra coal wasn't necessary.) (LG)



FP20 - Beware of moving (steam) trains. They will take your heart captive and whisk it away to the nearest iron bound horizon, they will make your soul restless with a never dying fire, their steel heart beat will pulse forever in your veins and they will set your spirit soaring aloft and free amongst the climbing steam exhaust. (LG)



FP21 - Today's Safety Officer Tony "Shakey" King tries hard not to put extra bubbles in the water stream as he tops up the expansion tank of the diesel generator, prior to starting it up. (LG)



FP22 - Boarding at Maraisburg. It was a bit chaotic as there were two day sitters on the SANRASM booking list that were actually the lounge car and the bar coach respectively. We don't normally run those two vehicles on a SANRASM train, but with our sleepers away in Cape Town on the Sitemela train, we bundled those cars in for their assistance in seating capacity. (LG)



FP23 - The refitted Sandstone Day sitter No.25163 is pretty full with its second revenue earning load. The coach did its first post refit run on the previous Saturday, pulled by the 25NC No.3472 "Elize." (LG)



FP24 - A cheerful pair of firemen wait in the cab while the train is boarding at Krugersdorp and we are waiting for the pilot. Recently qualified fireman Sakkie Kekana (Right) has already developed much talent for firing and is fast becoming a popular trainer for working with the trainee firemen, such as Michael Thiel. (Left) (PA)



FP25 - Why can't more stations be like this? We're pulled up to a clean platform, with a preserved locomotive alongside a preserved signal, at a neat modern commuter station. (PA)



FP26 - Reefsteamers assigns a club cell phone to the locomotive crews, but the phone, which Chris Saayman is holding, (Right) is having issues today. Shaun Ackerman (Left - off-duty homeward bound driver) calls for the pilot with his own phone, while Attie de Necker (2<sup>nd</sup> left - Train Manager) considers the offset in his schedules. Michael Thiel is amused at Attie's comments. Note the reflections in the shiny coal bunker. (PA)



FP27 - Leaving the last gold mine dump behind, Lyndie Lou rolls out into the beginning of the open countryside under a clean stack and the safety valves just starting to perk. There are some nasty grades on this route but this section (Outbound) is a down-grade doddle. (PA)



FP28 - The combination of a GMAM Garratt and two auxiliary water tankers is too long for this platform as the level crossing is obstructed. Luckily it's a very quiet road. That disused water tower right next to the tankers symbolizes our challenge in post steam South Africa - water supplies are a constant logistic challenge. (PA)



FP29 - The world's furriest Garratt. Normally steam locomotive photo enthusiasts abhor having objects, such as light masts and telephone poles, protruding from behind the locomotive, but somehow, this green machine fits in nicely in front of a local spinney all freshly leafed out in spring-time green. (PA)



FP30 - Having just bunted a tanker into the turning triangle, the GMAM makes the first piston stroke to move off into the turning lead and to advance into the other leg. This is the beginning of a gravity-powered tanker switch. (PA)



FP31 - Taking the water tanker for a walk. It was pushed up one leg of the turning triangle and left there while the locomotive backed out and preceded up the opposite rails and spotted there. Then the tanker's brakes are unwound and it is rolled down by gravity to be placed behind the locomotive for the homeward bound journey. Shaun Ackerman is walking alongside the handbrake. That equipment on the end deck is our fire fighting pump and hoses (LG)



FP32 - There are three generations of Reefsteamers skills represented here. Andreas "Bob-Tail" Matthee (Left) as a trainee fireman, Shaun "Smudge" Ackerman (Center) as a privately qualified driver and Piet "Ou Buffels" Steenkamp (Right) as an ex-railways driver, or a "Spoorie" as we affectionately call them. We are working hard to preserve and pass on the specialist steam era skills as well as the locomotives themselves. (PA)



FP33 - As Lyndie Lou gently trundles one of the three tanks towards the train, she graciously treats us to one of the hardest shots to get of a Garratt, an unobstructed side view. Notice how much coal is left in the bunker (left) after a 96km run - but the run back is harder as it has more upgrades! (LG)



FP34 - A pair of Super-Duper Pooper Scoopers clean up the mess left over from locomotive servicing. These youngsters are Reefsteamers members but don't come to the depot due to lack of transport. They worked on service crew duties for their ticket on today's train and rode in the front guard's compartment. (LG)



FP35 - Coach Controller Michelle Coetzee is just mounting the steps as the crew settle for the afternoon. The low angle shots emphasises the large scale of this "medium" gauge locomotive. Our country's 3ft6in "Cape Gauge" is narrow by the world's standards. (LG)



FP36 - A tanker top view of the loco's water tank. The front unit's tank was filled with water as a reserve, but mainly to increase the weight on the front wheels for traction. A problem that standard tank engines face is that they lose adhesive effort as they consume their on-board water and become lighter in weight. The GMA/M series were originally built with facilities to take water from tankers, alleviating the ever lightening weight problem. (LG)



FP37 - Steam powered time machine. On the shady side of the train as locomotive is backed up to couple up to the train again, she looks almost black. Apart from the high visibility vests worn by the crew, and perhaps the head boards, this could be easily be a scene of a non-descript SAR Garratt back in the 70s. (LG)



FP38 - Shaun Ackerman is showing the closure signal during the shunting move. You wave your arms slowly like hopeful crab pinchers and show the driver relevant closeness by the resultant space between your hands. When you cross or clasp your hands, the driver brakes and ideally, the diminishing momentum of the moving equipment makes the coupling. A civilized, smooth coupling takes judgement from the shunter as well as the driver. (LG)



FP39 - Eyes front! There's something about watching a shunting move that attracts rapt attention. Apart from the two fellows closest to the camera and the man sitting right at the far end, this is about 2/3 of our team of regular coach controller, the tuck shop ladies and other coaching staff. (LG)



FP40 - As the country's rail infrastructure slowly collapses and decays, we Reefsteamers celebrate Heritage Day in fine railway style, with a line side braai next to a heritage locomotive at a disused station. (This station is a privately owned railway lodge now. They really need to get off their butts and repaint the station signs.) (LG)



FP41 - Running bunker-first and with the cylinder cocks open, the coke all drunk and the braai meats masticated, it was time to leave. We were delayed waiting for a passing diesel hauled container train, which diesel-chugged us right back into the present. The two pivoting engine units of a Garratt are independent but notice how they are almost perfectly 180 degrees out of synch here. (PA).



FP42 - Viewed from the level crossing while waiting patiently at the curved, upgrade hotel stop, this mighty machine is far more dignified than the horde of humans clambering on board the coaches. GMAM No.4079 "Lyndie Lou" even tips photographer Patrick Ackerman a cheeky wink from the polished cylinder covers. (PA)



FP43 - The coaches wait all strung out around an uphill curve with their couplings stretched. It is always a challenge to make a civilized pull off here without wheel slip, or stalling the engine. These Magaliesburg day-tripper trains are growing in popularity, as evidenced here by the number of people. (Typically 350-400 per trip) They're standing 8 deep on the 1-coach long platform and more are still coming from the hotel behind where I'm standing. (LG)



FP44 - These die hard steam nuts, their hearts long ago captured, chased the train all the way through to Krugersdorp and provided much amusement for the passengers (For whom line siders are a novelty.) The fellow in the middle is Dawie "Swak Hart" Vijjoen who came all the way from Potchefstroom to spend 3 hours with us. Strange behaviour that only another steam nut would understand. (LG)





FP45 - This cutting is one of the favourite spots for the line siders although the people on the train itself get treated to the sight of the featureless rock walls on both sides. However, this is the apex of an upgrade and the cutting-confined sounds of hard steaming echoing back from up front are awesome! (PA)



FP46 - Rolling through an ungated level crossing and leaning into the curve, both the mechanical stoker and an injector are running. Our flagman can be seen rolling up his red flag to left. (PA)



FP47 - Trains and perspective go together. Here's a classic polarized sky Aiden McCarthy "wedge shot" with the entire train bowling along on straight tracks through fallow farm land. (AMC)



FP48 - A shot further down the line from a higher vantage point. The limit of 12 vehicles imposed by the steam exit plan doesn't really do the capacity of this engine much justice. With a safety chain in use, we can argue that a water tanker is part of the locomotive. However, the two extra tank cars took up the "slots" of two coaches which is why this train looks shorter than usual. (AMC)



FP49 - With an outlying gold mine dump as a background, this articulated locomotive is about to get some pivoting action going as the train approaches a truly nasty s-bend. This is what Garratts were built for! Notice the mile posts on this section of the line. (PA)



FP50 - Sprinting home amongst the still-dry foliage on the easier section to Krugersdorp. This loco is nearing the Randfontein Estates Gold Mine where she hauled gold reef for many years before being purchased by Sandstone Estates and restored. (PA)

Read the story on our website by following this web link ["Lindy Lou"](#)



FP51 - The last passenger stop on the way home, the majority of the passengers disembark at Maraisburg and a good natured human log jam forms at the narrow subway. As soon as they're gone, the humble process of cleaning up the litter and spilt drinks, flushing toilets and closing all the coach windows begins. (LG)



FP52 - Some attempts at line side water line diagnosis after the injectors were starving for water. The front tank car was empty and the rear one still had water. There was a blockage in the common water feed pipe, so it couldn't be bypassed by switching a pipe to the opposite side's water outlet and opening the valves. We got home using the "ballast water" in the front unit's water tank. (The blockage in the rarely used tank car was a build up rust and sludge ) (LG)



FP53 - End Piece. A 28-wheel treasure from another era, the GMAM Garratt is hurrying home after a long day out.. (AMC)

### END PIECE :

The sight of a revenue-earning GMAM Garratt pounding the metals once more was only possible due to the foresight of Wilfred Mole of the Sandstone Heritage Trust, purchasing this engine from years of gold mine drudgery. Although the engine was restored, the Trust is a 2ft narrow gauge operation based on a commercial farm and weren't able to keep this 3ft6in engine busy. Through Steam in Action, the Sandstone Heritage Trust had partnered with Reefsteamers and other groups to share resources and to bring steam back into the state it should be - sizzling hot and rolling along. The loco worked with Rovos Rail for a while, but was being treated as a heavy duty work horse and not a heritage item. Thus, the engine was taken out of tourist service and transferred to us for attention. We Reefsteamers are both proud and pleased to have been entrusted with this impressive, rather complicated machine and trust that she'll be a rolling monument to preservation team work for many years more to come.

- Lee Gates Reefsteamers Oct. 2008

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