



NG EXPRESS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT ELIZABETH APPLE EXPRESS

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THE GEOFF COOKE 2010 TOUR

A report by Peter Burton.....



The double header Tour train leaving Port Elizabeth.

Day 1: It had been planned that we have an early start from Humewood Road, to coincide with sun rise, having the sun just on the horizon and the train leaving the station, but that day saw a heavy mist, so this was out.

The make up of the mixed train was passenger coaches and the "Tuck Shop" now newly painted in the past railway colours of maroon and grey, together with the water tankers for the locomotives, 3 coal bogies and a selection of goods wagons.

NG 15 No.119 was headed by the small NG 6 Lawley, on loan from Sandstone, as we left the station for the first photo run-by at the pedestrian bridge, then onwards through Emerald Hill and the western suburbs of Port Elizabeth to Chelsea for the first stop and then run-by's on the way out to Van Stadens. Here it was necessary to withdraw the NG 6 Lawley and let her return to Port Elizabeth with our 'Pilot' as it was felt she was far too light to continue on to Loerie or the rest of the trip all the way to Assegaibos.

The usual crossing of the Van Stadens bridge took place with the Tour Group stationed on the rocks on the west side of the bridge for the

photo run-by. Then it was on to Thornhill and down to Loerie for the first stop-over. Here the Group left for their accommodation while the locomotive was serviced and made ready for the night, being looked after by Manie and his assistant.

Day 2: It was decided, that without the NG 6, it would not be necessary to haul all the wagons, so the empty coal DZ and one water tanker was left behind. This day we had been permitted to run up the Patensie branch line as far as Hankey, with photo run-by's organised along the way. We then returned to Gamtoos with a run over the Gamtoos bridge, before returning to Loerie for the night stop-over.

Day 3: On leaving Leorie with the necessary false starts and run-by's we ran on to Gamtoos and across the bridge towards Jeffrey's Bay and on to Humansdorp for a service stop. Then on to Bilson and Howley for more photo stops, finally arriving at our destination, Assegaibos late in the afternoon. Here the Group left for their accommodation, while 119 was serviced and prepared for the night. The crew and staff then left for 'Plasswerf' in Kareedouw for a well deserved nights rest.

Day 4: Here we ran back to Humansdorp with the usual photo run-by's at various spots. On reaching Humansdorp it was found that a NG 91 had arrived with empty timber trucks, much to the pleasure of the Group to then recorded NG 15 No.119 and a NG 91 standing together. It was a latish departure from Humansdorp for a relaxing run back to Assegaibos.

Day 5: Here the Geoff Cooke Group left us to continue on their trip on to Mossel Bay, with very pleasant remarks from all in our 'Visitors Book', more so from a line-side photographer who was very impressed with the return of the old coaching colours. He was busy compiling a DVD of his trip around the southern Cape, but mostly featured the train during the five day trip.

The return trip from Assegaibos was scheduled for a stop over at Loerie where the

goods wagons were to be left behind. The staff returned to Port Elizabeth for the night.

Day 6: Saw the train returning to Port Elizabeth with only the coaches.

All in all, this trip covered 426km. Where in the world is there an opportunity like this to travel on 2ft. narrow gauge over this great distance.

On its return NG 15 No.119 was returned to the workshop for a good check-over.

Geoff Cooke was very satisfied with the trip in general and will be back in September this year to partake in a 'Day Trip' to Loerie with another group of steam enthusiasts.



NG15 no.119 and NG6 (BR7) at Van Stadens siding.

IN THE WORKSHOP

The restoration of passenger coach no. 83 is progressing well. Coach builder Piet Van Rooyen and his team have put in a lot of effort into the restoration of this coach. She was in a bad state after the lengthy time she had spent neglected and exposed to the weather on one of the loop lines at the diesel depot. After months of careful work she is slowly coming together sporting a new interior seating plan. All that remains now is the fitting of the cushion seats and the steel cladding on the outside. Once complete she will rejoin the rest of the coaching fleet with pride.



Interior of Coach 83 taking shape.

Undergoing maintenance and repair at the moment is NG 15 No. 119. After her five day trip into the Langkloof, during May, she was brought into the workshop for repairs and maintenance. Some superheater tubes needed repairing, new cylinder rings were fitted and

new brass bearing bushes needed to be replaced. Most of the work has been done with only the brass bushes being awaited from the manufacturers. Once fitted she will be taken on a test run to Loerie station and, if all goes well, should be ready for a busy September schedule of trips.



The dismantled driving gear awaiting the brass bushes.

THE HUMEWOOD ROAD YARD

With the big 'clean up' of South Africa in preparation for the recent 2010 FIFA World Cup, the Humewood Road Yard was also given a once over. All the unsightly half collapsed buildings were demolished and removed. Only the buildings with historical value were saved and sealed. The depot now looks clean and neat but rather bare and a bit sanitised.



The sealed historical buildings in a clean steam depot.

During the cleaning process some old railway lines were uncovered. One wonders if these lines were laid when the depot was first built.



Editor: Clive Fife.