



# NG EXPRESS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT ELIZABETH APPLE EXPRESS

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THE FIRST TWO ARTICLES OF THIS NEWSLETTER ARE A BIT OF A CONTRADICTION BUT HOPEFULLY IT MAKES FOR SOME INTERESTING READING.

## 150 YEARS OF RAILWAY IN SOUTH AFRICA.



Wes Kruger CEO of PE Apple Express Company and Mandlakazi Skefile CEO Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism at the Humewood Road Station before departure for Witteklip.

During September this year, the Apple Express along with other heritage railway organisations around the country celebrated 150 years of railway working in South Africa.

A special train headed by steam locomotive NG15 No.119 left Port Elizabeth on its way to a celebratory function that was to be held on a farm near Witteklip station. Aboard the train were specially invited guests and dignitaries from both the tourism industry and Transnet.Rail.

Guest speaker for the day at the function was Ms Mandlakazi Skefile CEO of Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism who stressed the importance of the Apple Express train as a prime tourist attraction for the Port Elizabeth region. "The P.E. Apple Express, like the Bayworld Oceanarium, are very important heritage icons that we as tourism authorities have to protect." she said.

On 26 June 1860 South Africa steamed into the railway era with its first train service headed by a locomotive named "Natal". It ran between Market Place and Point stations in Durban, Natal, a journey of three miles. Although Cape Town had turned the first sod for a railway track in 1859 it was Natal that managed to take

the honour of being the first city in the country to start a rail service. This was the start of what was to become one of the largest railway organisations in Africa.

Cape Town followed nearly two years later with a thirty four mile track between Cape Town and Eerste Rivier Stations.



Detail of the commemorative plaque on the front of the loco.

## THE APPLE EXPRESS GRINDS TO A HALT.

It was a shock announcement that greeted everyone connected with the train that financial reserves were fast running out and all restoration work at the depot would stop with immediate effect. It is a fact, as with all heritage railways, that major restoration work cannot function without big financial support. The same can be said of the Apple Express. A few years ago representation was made to the Government for help and in 2008 the Department of Transport agreed to support the AE Company with funds that would be spread over a number of years. The funding suddenly stopped during February this year and after numerous queries by the AE Company the Government eventually declared the original fund procurement documents (contracts) were not legal and no more funding would be allocated to the Apple Express.

