

**1). INTRODUCTION :**

Howdy ya' all.

Some of you will already have seen a part of this photo essay as I sent it out as an email in previous weeks. However, emails with 40 picture attachments are not easy to print and definitely not easy to host on a website. Thus, I converted that email, which I originally did quickly under time pressure, into a more traditional Reefsteamers photo essay which you now have in front of you. This was done for Steam in Action to provide some downloadable media content for their newsletter. Naturally, the pictures now have captions. As the pictures have been double sampled - they're not of particularly good quality but they do serve to show what we got up to.



The Country Music event had problems both at the depot and at the picnic ground – but in spite of these, the event was a great success. The three artists were down-to-earth and happily performing casually on the train as well as at the venue. Certain items, like chairs. A water slide and a jumping castle weren't provided at the picnic grounds. And the water pressure was too low to operate the toilet cisterns, as it frequently is. But although Marketing Manger Les Smith's blood pressure initially went up, the event rollicked along to a unique blend of South African urban cowboy tunes.

ESKOM had a say and the power went out at noon. Dead mike special. But being the Reefsteamers and having a plan (upon which Boers do not have a monopoly.), we shunted the power van off the train and alongside the picnic grounds to throw a wire full 'o hertz over the fence. But with great irony, when the janus coupler bounced off the precast panels, the mains power went back on. Maybe we just had to threaten ESKOM with an alternative...

There was a more serious problem back at the depot. During the week, someone sabotaged our day-trip train by damaging the electrical wiring that spans between the coaches. We have a suspect, but no proof, so we just have to take our lumps on this one.

This vandalism was repaired during the week but one of the staff who was tasked to tie up the cable splices with cable ties left a section hanging loose. We ended up with a major electrical fault as the hanging cable ground off against a steel wheel, with smoke and flames lighting up the undercarriage. We managed a quick repair on-route, as there was an electrician on the train. Unfortunately he couldn't do a perfect job and we had intermittent power failures all the way to the destination. Still the fridges remained cold and the musicians were using acoustic guitars enroute in the bar car, so there were no issues there.

We ran both the kitchen car and the bar car on the train with volunteer crews. Unlike previous runs, they were operated at Reefsteamers' profit and handsomely paid off their YQ costs. We are charged roughly R1200 per coach to run to Magaliesburg and back. Imile Wehmeyer, ably helped by his friend Philip, did a sterling job as his first stint as a barman.

The train was just about packed out with rail-bourne humanity and brought in some much needed moola to cover the desiccated moths lying supine at the bottom of our coffers. We even had Geoff Cooke on board with a small rail tour group out with us for the day. They were easy to identify – frothing at the mouth at the sight of plain old Class 34 diesels and chasing them with rather phallic looking cameras.

We would like to make this Country Music run an annual event. Matt Hurter, JJ and Katryn are extremely talented, playing and singing from a repertoire of over 60 songs upon request. (Including Afrikaans and a special in Zulu.) And they were singing about subjects as diverse as fried chicken, auctioneers, hand lotion, memorial crosses, a tool shed and a girl called Babba-lou. Some of the songs were hilarious – in amongst the country and western staples of pining after a women and dealing with a broken heart. I didn't get any good photos of the Stetson people because they were constantly moving.

Susie the Class 12AR ran a treat and nothing fell off onto the tracks or inside the cylinders. The repaired valve spools appear to be holding out. She ended up with two loose pipe unions, one of them on a lubrication line but that was fixed by the fireman on route. You'll also see in the photos that someone is trying for a new look by polishing the wheel spokes but leaving the rims painted black. (Yuck.) As is common these days, we only used one driver to tweak the tiger tail there and back, but we had different young firemen and third men on both legs. Andreas Mathee fired for most of the way back. He is fast approaching the time that he will undertake regular practical training to pass as a fireman.

So read up and check the pics – for in the midst of doom and crisis, there are still steam trains to be run.

Yeehawwww!

**P01 – Lubing up at dawn.**

Driver Chris Saayman is almost finished with the morning oil round as he lubes up the rear driver's axle horns. Chris is one of two currently active drivers who still drive modern traction for Transnet as well as driving old steam locomotives for Reefsteamers. (The other being Piet Mollentze.) Chris drives commuter trains, so the first part of our Magaliesburg route he knows exceptionally well, being his 'home rolling' ground.

Class 12AR No.1535 'Susie' is still running well after her recent spool valve rebuild and gives us nice, even quadratic beats. Ironically, just after Susie was fixed up, the Class 15F No.3046 'then-nameless' went down with the same kind of failure – probably caused when a cotter pin for the combination link failed on the first run, the upper pin fell out and the leading valve spool on the RHS must have just contacted the cylinder head.

**P02 – Responsibility.**

According to railways lore, it is the driver's responsibility to lubricate his locomotive, although at Reefsteamers, it is the usually the fireman and sometimes even the loco minder who fills the hydrostatic lubricator as well as the two or sometimes more displacement lubricators. The driver is the senior person so he carries the can ... literally as well as figuratively, if the locomotive suffers through lack of slippery stuff.

It does seem a bit unfair on the drivers, but the system prevents unnecessary damage by a crew member just being human and sometimes just assuming that his counterpart will do the work.

Today's fireman was Dawie Viljoen. He finished up his footplate chores early and undertook the extra work of wiping the dusty engine down.

**P03 – Back End.**

One of the easier lube jobs on the 12AR is the exposed spring leafed suspension on the rear Bissell truck.

That yellow box on the right is actually a deflector chamber for close range steam blow down and for a change, the locomotive is parked almost exactly correct. The box is empty and discharges the steam harmlessly up the short chimney. However, this box isn't bolted down (yet) and is currently not being used.

**P04 – A drum of a different kind.**

Here's the blow down drum with charismatic leaking steam from a less-than-100% sealed valve. Even the tiniest leak in the bronze valve seats results in much drifting steam – and I really do mean tiny. The solar back-lighting and the cool air makes the leak look much worse than it is though.

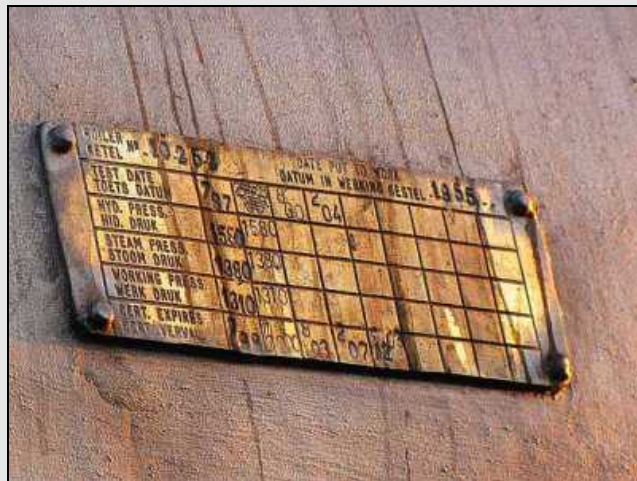
The lower converging edge of the drum, as happens quickly on the SAR kettles, is corroded and letting the condensate water just fall right through. However, the crudely planar scuttle profile can be easily cut off and a new one fabricated in a railway mechanical shop.

**P05 – Drama Drift.**

The 'little' engine looks quite dramatic amidst smeared steam and smoke drift. However, this isn't a pull off.

The 12 class family have disk wheels with four cast-in access holes at quarters. This means that the bogie wheels, while stronger than old fashioned spoked wheels, also often require that the locomotive be nudged a bit to align one of the four wheel holes to the bogie axle box covers for lubrication. This is a skilled movement of literally just a few inches and usually on rails wet and slippery from steam drift.

It is often a three-hand task with the driver needing to hold a lamp, lift the axle box lid and insert his oil feeder through one of those little holes.

**P06 – Boiler Plate.**

Here is Susie's 'Dog Tag' – her (dirty) boiler plate.

Our Class 12AR locomotive is not only the last survivor of her kind, but is also the oldest intact and operating cape gauge steam locomotive in South Africa. She's a sprightly 86 years old this year, if I get my numbers correct.

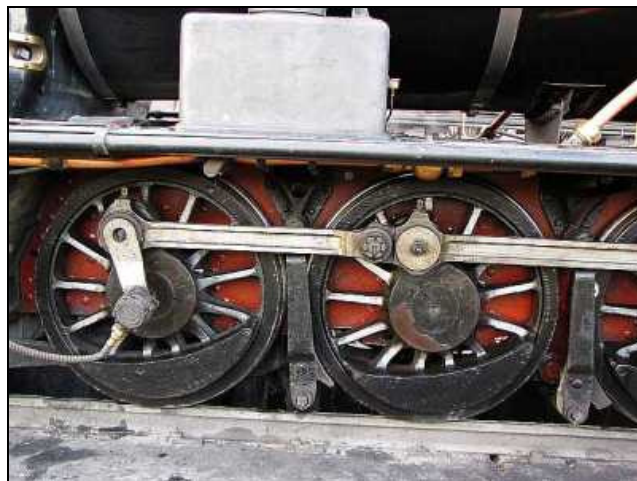
The numbers don't add up at the boiler date at the top right of the dog-tag. But this is when the original Class 12A received a new boiler in 1955 and was reclassified as Class 12AR. The plate is in current use and the most recent stamp is for March 2012 for expiry of the current boiler certificate. It is an ominous date as her front tube plate is a bit wasted and will probably cause the boiler to not be re-certified for March 2015. If we cannot come up with funding by then, this brilliant 'little' locomotive will be shunted to join others in the 'waiting for repairs' dead-line.

**P07 – Nutcases.**

Well, not nutty enough just yet to be committed to a padded room, but definitely getting a bit crunchy!

That is Engineering Manager Andrew King with the smiling cat-nap look and the piggy tails, getting cozy with senior driver Attie de Necker dairying to wear a piebald cow cap and milking the situation to the full. Udderly nutz.

The cow head cap went along with us, laid aside in the power van. The leather cap with added porcine-rudders found a home on the head of first-time Reefsteamers barman Imile Wehmeyer for most of the run.

**P08 – New Sandals.**

Well ... sort of, with the shabby paint having been ground off from the wheel spokes. I don't know if I like this new look myself, but I didn't hear any other comments on it.

We are gradually dressing DOWN the locomotive fleet for a more authentic utilitarian workaday look. And It also makes them easier to keep clean – an important consideration in a perennially short-staffed organization. So you will find less white rims and contrasting trim painting, fewer painted wheels as the months roll by, accompanied (or not) by fewer brass ornaments and less 'heat resistant' graphite. (Yes – the quotes are sarcastic.)

**P09 – 50 Ton canteen.**

At the opposite end of the train and not nearly as glamorous as the locomotive, our fire-pump equipped tanker gets to go on every run. Even though we are supposedly entering the Highveld rainy season, trackside is still quite combustible, being as dry as Hell's salt cellar.

Even if the water tower was functioning at Magaliesburg, we'd take the tanker along any way. The water pressure there is so low the water sometimes stands defeated, halfway up the pipes to the picnic ground's toilet cisterns – not making it the last couple of inches into the tanks. It definitely ain't gonna make it up into the water tower's tank.

**P10 – Enthusiasts.**

Well, you gotta be to put up with the long hours involved in running real steam trains. The sun is normally down and long gone by the time we arrive back home, and we still have to shunt into our siding, decomm the train and drop loco fires before pointing our radiators towards our homes.

For the footplaters and the senior staff, a typical day-trip is nearly always a pre-dawn to Venus-rising affair.

The two new barmen, Imile and Philip, are receiving last minute instructions and chatting with today's Train Manager, Lex Wehmeyer.

**P11 – Shy guy.**

Driver Chris Saayman is universally respected for his skill in driving and he is an absolute wizard at firing both hand-bombers and mechanically stoked engines. He is the master of the minimally-stoked 'pizza' fire – flat, light and bright with just a hint of carbon in the 12AR's back corners, thank you very much. He often comes home with barely enough ash to motivate an ash tray and tugging along a ton or so extra coal.

Although he is quite a civil person, he isn't a particularly talkative or demonstrative chap, even in his mother-tongue Afrikaans. And it is easy to get the wrong impression of him. But here he shows a completely different side. What was funny here was that the little guy posed naturally and casually for me, but only burst into a fit of giggles when Chris told him to 'Still bly vir die Oom met die kamera.'

**P12 – Starting in style.**

It is worth sprinting with stiff knees clicking and twanging and with your unclipped camera bag bouncing and shedding lens caps, cloths, batteries and such over the scruffy lawns to get a few shots like these.

Chris is of the toot-and-move variety of driver and you don't get much fore-warning. But I should have known better than to stand there as dumb as a fence post when I saw Dawie 'Swak Hart' Viljoen adjusting the lubricator's oil feed.

This start looks quite dramatic but it is just the cylinder cocks wheeshing away abundantly in the cool dawn air. The smoke column tells us that Susie is just gently rolling uphill from the Reception Track – with clean stack too after having the skinned fire topped up at just the right time.

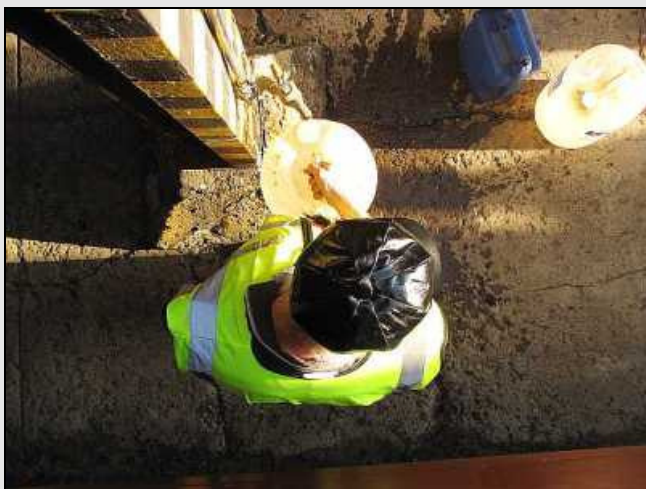
**P13 – Coach alleyway.**

The morning sun is just starting to get a ray-hold in the deeply shadowed alley between the waiting and the stored coaches.

Actually there was much activity here with the usual last minute prep, the brake vacuum test and getting the repaired coach wiring all plugged up and back together. Someone had forgotten to uncouple the energized 'land line' from No.127, 'Kango' the kitchen coach and that could have been pyrotechnically interesting if the train had rolled over it.

**P14 – The Light.**

At the end of the life-long iron road, a deceased Reefsteamer walks The Path of Memories in The Great Loco Shed in the Sky – irresistibly drawn by The Light. Once you step past the shunting limits, there's no turning back.

**P15 – Lex gets jugged.**

Here's a top view of chairman Lex Wehmeyer, who is currently wearing the infamous piggy-tail hat, filling jugs with water. Although our depot is supplied with potable water – the tanks on the coaches are not designed to keep the water clean and sealed. In an emergency hydro-shortage, we could boil coach tank water but it would still a bit tainted from the uncoated water tank interiors and possibly from the pump seals and valve elements.

We take drinking water on board in water jugs and barrels. This tap was barely running and Lex is just turning his head to called instructions to use a better-flowing tap just two bays down. Of course, this meant a hike with full, sloshing 15kg water jugs, so Lex wisely assigned the work to his son, Imile, and subtly disappeared for lighter duties!

**P16 – Cabeese.**

This trio of neat orange shunter's cabooses were gracing the Germiston shunting yard right opposite the passenger station.

They aren't a common sight but they still get used on some of the more local trains. The closer two stayed put and were still there when we chuntered through at night.

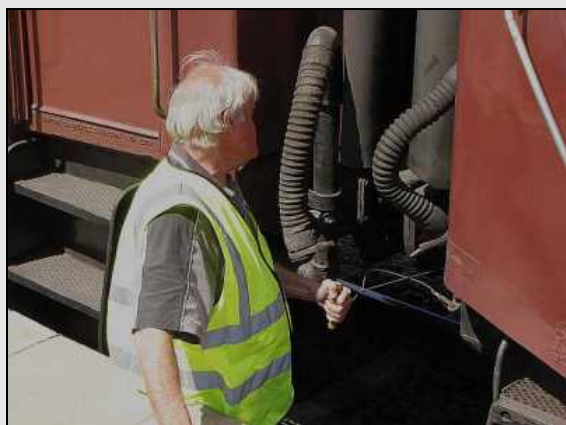
Notice the water tower still standing in the background.

**P17 – Cage of wires.**

The complicated cantenary always makes a stark contrast to the clean geometric lines of the steam locomotive as she rounds the curved station throat west of President Station.

**P18 – Tickets, please!**

Train Safety Officer Clifford Matthee and his son, Mike, as trainee, are punching tickets within the bar car. Mike Matthee is currently a toaster bucker for Transnet.

**P19 – Pulling the cut cable.**

The picnic grounds have the walkway directly in the middle of the main station platform. When we run a picnic train, the parked coaches are split into two sets to facilitate safer and ballast-less crossing for the passengers. Chairman Lex patiently holds the cut cable while Clifford radios thru it and instructs the crew hooked on the west end.

**P20 – Dance Steps.**

The Magaliesburg portable steps are a bear to wrestle into place and have to be fitted within narrow parameters to avoid rolling or tipping off the platform. Like most of the track-side facilities at Magaliesburg station, the steps are a bit neglected and blooming with a patina of fresh rust.

**P21 – Beware. Humans Crossing.**

After Susie has uncoupled and run around her train, we let the passengers cross. Notice the two train staffers standing opposite each other in hi-vis vests. They are generally looking over each other's shoulders, especially behind my point-of-view, which is a curved track.

**P22 – Good timing.**

A mismatched pair of eastbound 34's cautiously round the bend. They had just gone over a level crossing but because the view is clear, they are normally accelerating out of the s-bend by this point. Most of our guests were already in the picnic grounds by the time this train arrived.

**P23 – Guarded crossing.**

A last few stragglers are held back as the container train approaches the pedestrian crossing.

**P24 – The Music of Steam.**

This was an unposed shot – the guitar and the shovel symbolizing our Country music on a Steam Train. Now, the only country musician I know that sang of a steam train was the C.W. Mc. Call – who sings of The Silverton. Come on Stetson guys – please explore the topic!

**P25 - Taking the crossing.**

A quadruple header westbound coal train powers upgrade and is just taking the points. As this line is still active it is fairly well maintained, so we benefit as well. The Magaliesburg line is single track and this station is one of the relatively few passing places – and we happen to be standing in the primary passing loop. However, Transnet tends to operate their freights from opposite directions on this line as they're too long for the passing loops anyway.

**P26 – Contrast in Power.**

The four diesels powering upgrade drowned out the country music with their own throbbing, deep-throated song. More than half of their train of bulk crushed coal is still rolling downhill so they aren't really stressing just yet.

Ironically, the 12AR was originally intended to haul coal from Witbank to Germiston and here she sits with a split train of empty coaching stock.

**P27 – Quadraphonic Class 34's.**

8080kW produced by 48 turbocharged cylinders. The lead unit is a GE U26C2, 2<sup>nd</sup> one is a EMD but all have dynamic braking. Cummon boys, open 'em up! (Max engines revs = 1050rpm, but sounds awesome regardless! ☺ )

**P28 – Vesconite Pan Shot.**

This one is for Julian. (He knows who he is and why.)

The entire quadruple 6-axle (Co-Co) oil-can set was equipped with Vesconite axle horn bearings.

**P29 – 12AR at bay.**

She looks like she's standing at the goods shed but is actually standing one track in on the main line. The goods shed track is derelict and parts of the track have been lifted.

Fireman Dawie Viljoen bailed as soon as decent and took off back to home-town Potchefstroom with other things to do – driving feather-foot and being careful not to get dust on his blingy new bakkie.

Fireman Michael Thiel is now doing some mid-day loco minding with new member George Hoddinott just taking it all in. Andreas Matthee would be third man on the way home so Michael would have things a little easier.

**P30 – Highlight.**

They say old and water don't mix – but steam oil does. Steam loco injector dribble has mixed with oil droplets and the residue from the Transnet diesels to form the characteristic spring-onion n' cream of chicken soup colour.

I thought it was ironic to see how the old Spoonet Logo was so clearly highlighted on their tracks, by locomotives no longer operated under their name.

**P31 – Depressed Currency.**

Here's what R10 in new R5 coins look like after having a single roll-over with four driver axles at axle load of 15 800kg . (17tons 800lbs under the old 'habour ton' system under which these locomotives were documented.)

This was done during a surprise shunt to get the power van next to the picnic grounds during a power failure.

Before certain safety people and engineers complain, the coins were placed on the track by a passenger and not by myself – ain't my hand in the pic. ☺

**P32 – Some light shunting.**

A 55 ton tanker and one 42 ton ex-crew van with two gennies on board is could be handled by this loco with one piston blocked out.

The ESKOM power went off leaving the musicians without mikes or amps, and the inflatable water slide felt rather flat. We obtained permission from our pilot who verified the line was clear after two closely spaced freight trains and she unlocked the points for us.

We were able to bring the short train alongside and borrow the very long extension lead used for the jumping castle. The mains power went on again though just before we connected up. So Mr. Perkins., our smaller generator set, couldn't join in with the music.



**P33 – Behind the limits.**

Nicely parked., I'm not what this limit marker was doing in the middle of a plain siding but it is not ours to reason why.



**P34 – Leather bootied songbird.**

Here's JJ. Well, I ain't into music and found the trains more interesting anyway. (Yes, even the diseases) But I have to include at least one picture of one of our artists.

As I said in the introduction, this young man is quite talented and was getting quite a work out with his leg kickin' and moves. But those moves made him quite tricky to photograph.



**P35 – Conked out.**

In the midst of the raucous country music, Les and Sandy Smith's occasional exuberant yee-haw's and the grumbles n' squeals of passing freight trains, this little cutie was totally conked out and oblivious to it all.



**P36 – Attie chasing chicks again.**

De Necker is not shy around the girls and he gets away with his evil designs because of his age and demeanor. They think he is innocent and harmless. We, of course, know better.

The young lady is Katryn, another member of the county music trio that entertained us this day.

**P37 – Sunset at Maraisburg.**

A typical homebound Reefsteamers sunset scene with the last of the passengers sheep-ing their way off the platform. That is Train Safety Officer Clifford Mathee sitting on his ownsome in the foreground.

**P39 – Right of way.**

In amongst the evening commuter trains, we have been given the green-lensed right of way to get moving. The points ahead (visible behind the 50kph speed sign) are set to straight ahead. We stayed at Maraisburg a while as the the musicians needed to unload their instruments. We didn't hold anyone up though as the inner eastbound main was still open.

**P38 – Tired Trainee.**

Actually, this curly haired puppy looks better that he should because he had stood the night shift doing loco minding, and straight afterward he drove Dawie's bakkie out while Dawie was firing, then he had lunch with his dad n' 'boet' and fired the 12AR most of the way home. Oh, to be young again! The overnight locomotive minding shift was a roster clerk's misunderstanding that I would not be available that weekend – but Andreas 'Bobtail' Mathee volunteered to do the back-to-back shift anyway.



This is the next Reefsteamers dude to qualify as a fireman but he needs lots of footplate practice first. Michael 'Noodles' Thiel and Dawie 'Swak Hart' Viljoen, being further along in their skilling, tended to get most of the opportunities for practical training. It makes sense as one or two qualified guys are more useful than half a dozen trainees – as tough as that can be for impatient trainees.

**P40 – Evening Commute.**

One of the last few photos I took this day as the sky was darkening. This old full lengthed 5M2A commuter set in phase-2 Metro livery rattled in on one of the inner lines, probably bound for Springs.

Originally built in 1958 (as 5M2) by Metro Cammel and later from 1962 to 1985 by Union Carriage and Wagon – these 5M2A are amongst the older design of commuter sets still running worldwide. A commuter coach only weighs 30.5 tons as opposed to the typical 39-42 tons of our main line coaches.

The motor coach pictured has a top speed of 100kph and 1240hp – to pull its own weight of 60 tons and typically the 90 ton weight of three trailers. These sets run in sets of four in configurations between 4 to 16 vehicles with four motor coaches maximum.

RS ISSUE 64	- REEFSTEAMERS PHOTO ESSAY - COUNTRY MUSIC ON A STEAM TRAIN	
		
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