



Steaming CHERRY!!!

The last week the Eastern Free State was really steaming, with 2 NGG 16 Garret Locomotives as well as the Reefsteamers Class 25NC and 15F.

It was this time of the year when we had the annual Cherry Festival in Ficksburg and we had special running passenger trains on the Sandstone Estates.

All in total we had 10 trains over the 3 day period and everyone had a time of their lives.

Thursday – 10H00 – 12H00 – 14H00

Friday – 10H00 – 13H00 – 15H00

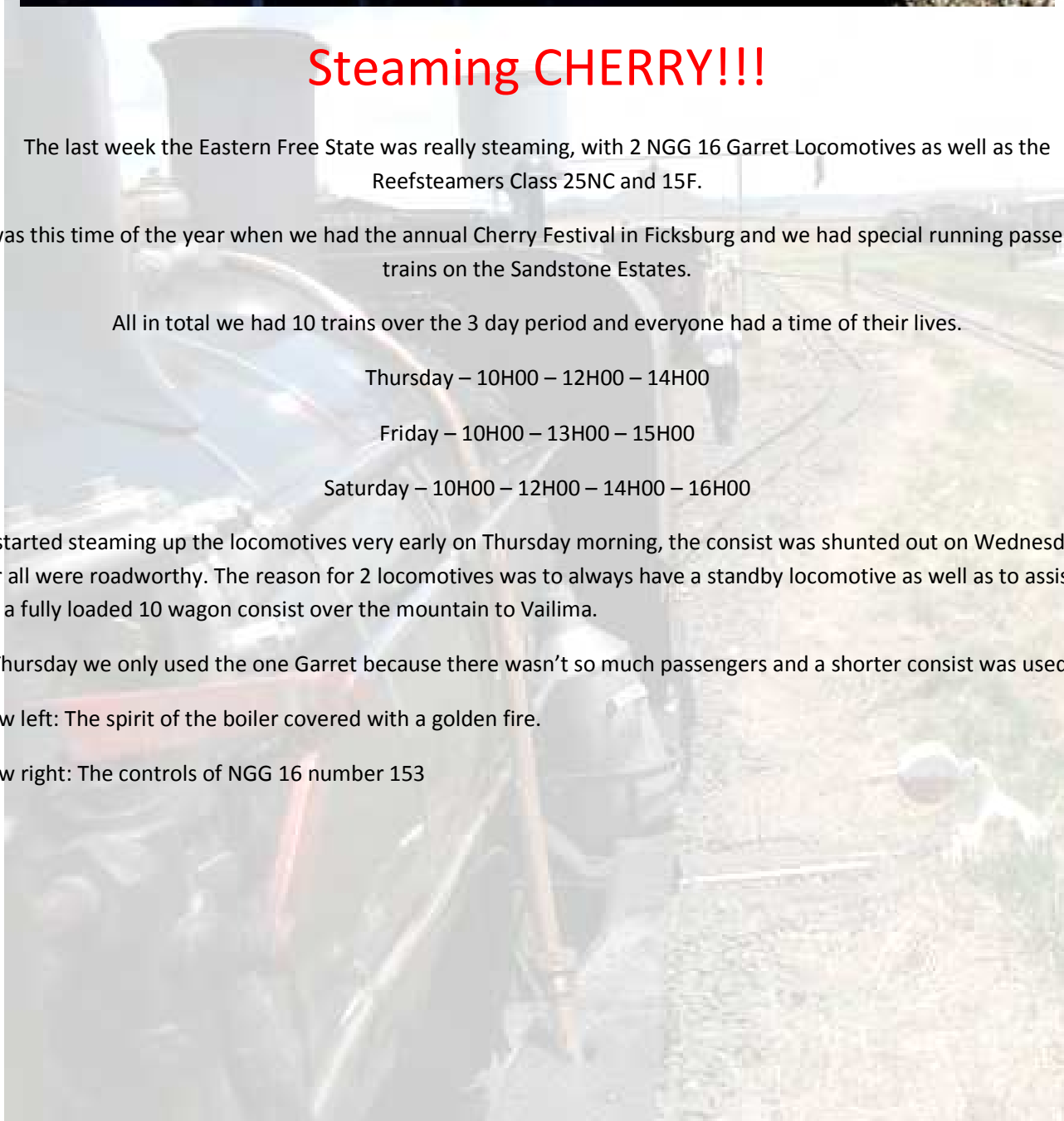
Saturday – 10H00 – 12H00 – 14H00 – 16H00

We started steaming up the locomotives very early on Thursday morning, the consist was shunted out on Wednesday after all were roadworthy. The reason for 2 locomotives was to always have a standby locomotive as well as to assist with a fully loaded 10 wagon consist over the mountain to Vailima.

On Thursday we only used the one Garret because there wasn't so much passengers and a shorter consist was used.

Below left: The spirit of the boiler covered with a golden fire.

Below right: The controls of NGG 16 number 153





Below left: Derrick van Zyl, our fireman on 153.

Below right: 153 running around the train at Vailima.



Below: Nostalgic moments, number 113 taking water after a exhausting trip over the Mountain.







On the Cherry event we traverse the Sandstone Estates mainlines many times and each time the passengers could see the Springboks at the Airstrip as we steamed towards Grootdraai. Every trip was exquisite, clouds and shadowed Mountains changed the atmosphere completely.

Below: Number 113 at the head of the train heading towards Grootdraai with Springboks only a couple of meters ahead.



Below: Number 113 taking a turn near the border.





Below left: One of the short passenger trains on day 1 with 113 at the helm of the train.

Below right: Number 113 and 153 just before departure out of the Hoekfontein sheds on Friday morning.



Below: Number 153 and 113 in Hoekfontein Station.

Below right: Number 153 and 113 on the way with the Cherry Express.



Below left: Henk taking water in Hoekfontein South column.

Below right: Number 153 taking water in Hoekfontein northern column.



Our first train on Friday was to meet the Reefsteamers passenger train at Vailima at 11H37. We departed a few minutes later and arrived just in time at Vailima.

Below: The Reefsteamers double header passenger train rolling into Vailima exactly on time.



The Reefsteamers Passenger train made a brief stop to allow passengers to climb over onto the narrow gauge train.

Below: Number 153 about to couple to its consist at Vailima.



Below left: The Sandstone Passenger train just arrived at Hoekfontein.

Below right: The time schedule was tight and servicing of the locomotives were done at great speed to have the trains on time in Hoekfontein Station.



Below: The Cherry Express standing in a beautiful Hoekfontein Station.



Below left: Henk, our driver on the rear locomotive.

Below right: Number 113 and 153 ready to depart again.



Below: The Cherry Express.



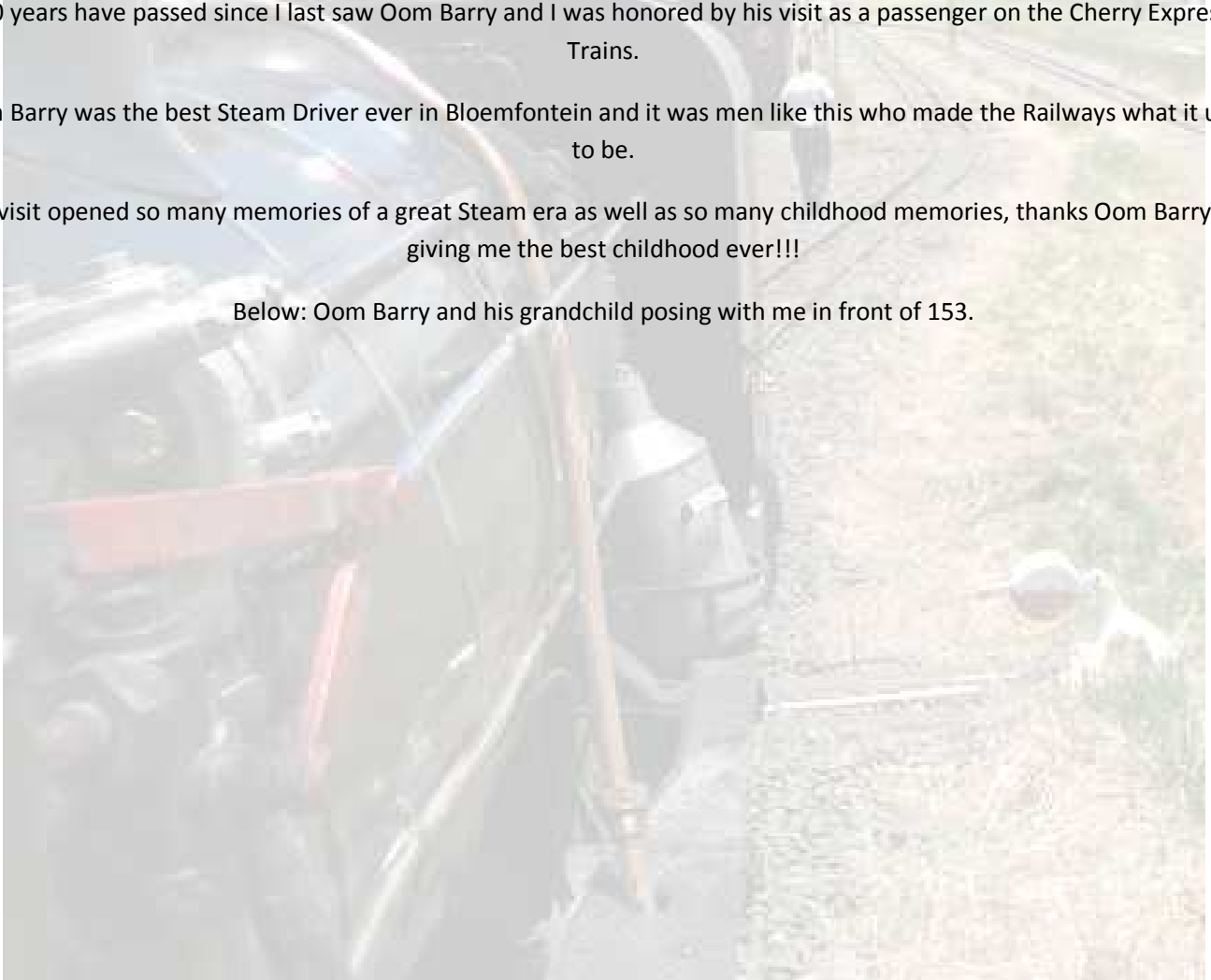
REFLECTIONS

Below: The best present in my Life I could ever wish for was to see Barry Parkin again; 31 years ago I was as small as the little boy when Barry Parkin lifted me onto the footplate of a 19D in Theunissen. He taught me everything I know of a locomotive and raised me on the Footplate. Most of the children have heroes like superman, but my hero was Barry Parkin. Whenever I played with my trains I always played that my name was Barry Parkin. Time have slipped us bye and 20 years have passed since I last saw Oom Barry and I was honored by his visit as a passenger on the Cherry Express Trains.

Oom Barry was the best Steam Driver ever in Bloemfontein and it was men like this who made the Railways what it used to be.

His visit opened so many memories of a great Steam era as well as so many childhood memories, thanks Oom Barry for giving me the best childhood ever!!!

Below: Oom Barry and his grandchild posing with me in front of 153.





Below: Class 19D number 2692 May 1979 in Winburg Station.



Below: Coaling the NGG 16's



Below: The 2 Class NGG 16's in Hoekfontein Station.





The trains were fully booked on Saturday and the two narrow gauge Giants were working their hearts out.

Below left: A view over the boiler of 153.

Below right: A view back as the train pulls out of Grootdraai on the way to Vailima.



Below left: Ready to depart back to Hoekfontein.

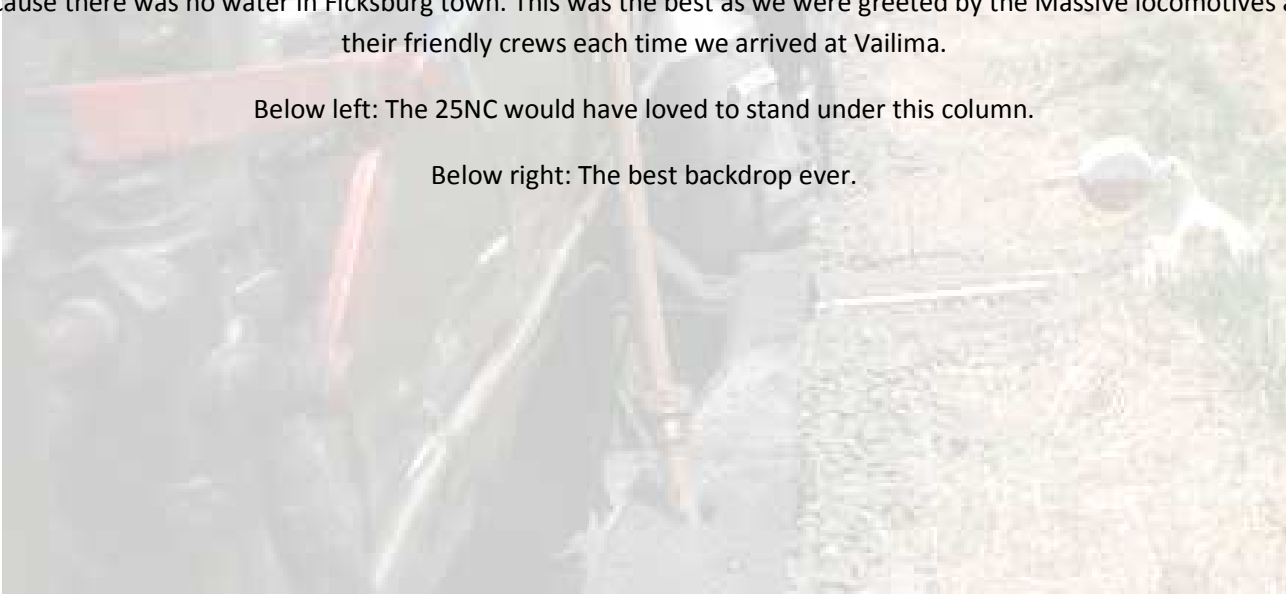
Below right: A quick fire cleaning at Hoekfontein ash pit.



The Class 25NC and 15F were standing at Vailima all day to fill their massive tenders with water from Sandstone Estates because there was no water in Ficksburg town. This was the best as we were greeted by the Massive locomotives and their friendly crews each time we arrived at Vailima.

Below left: The 25NC would have loved to stand under this column.

Below right: The best backdrop ever.





Below left: The Class 25NC at Vailima just after they moved all the locos from town to Komandonek siding on Sandstone Estates Farm.

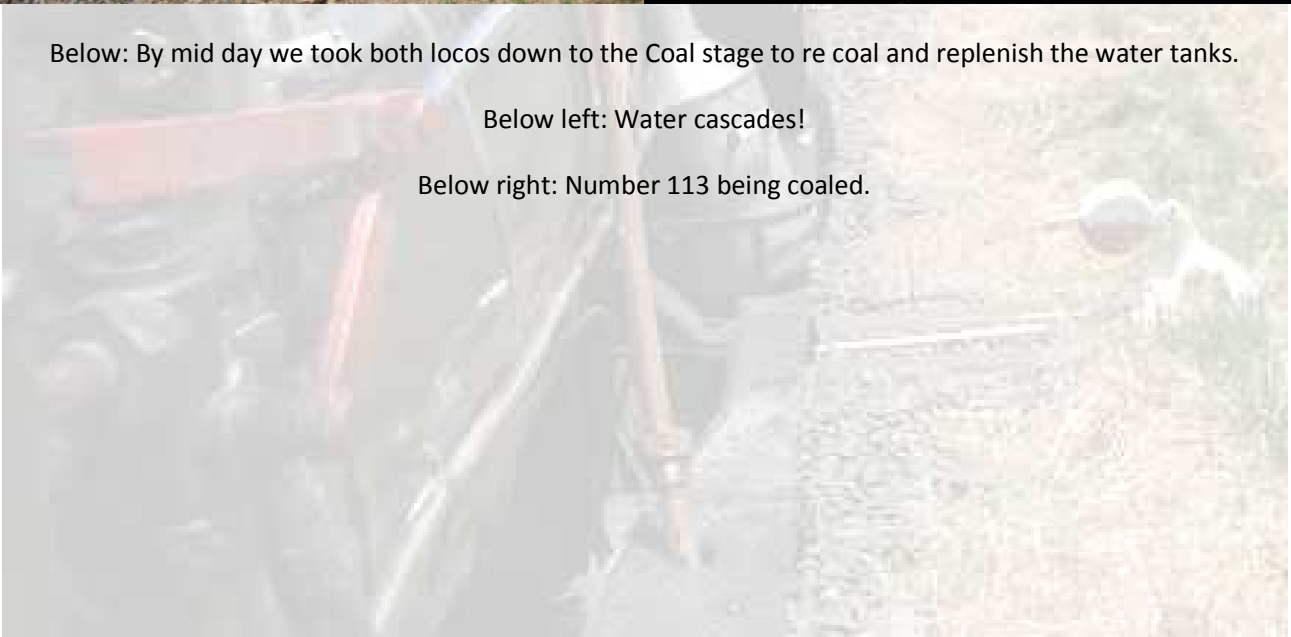
Below: Silhouettes.



Below: By mid day we took both locos down to the Coal stage to re coal and replenish the water tanks.

Below left: Water cascades!

Below right: Number 113 being coaled.





Below left: Saturday 16H35 just before departure with the last train.

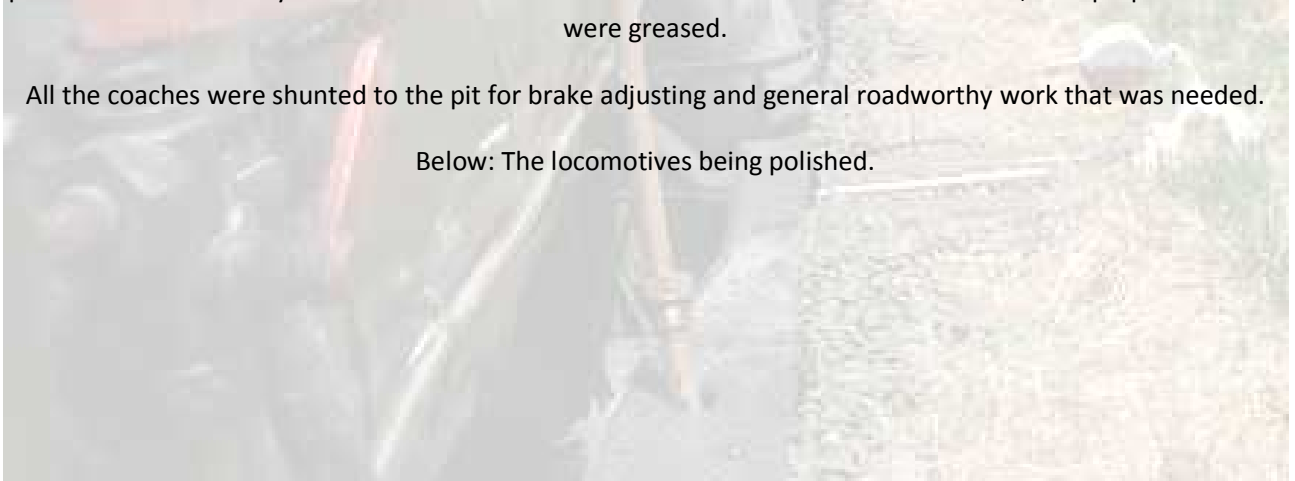
Below right: The end of the Cherry trains, the end of the day and the 2 class NGG 16's slowly crawled back into their resting place.



We had a month full of work that was needed before we could do the Cherry festival trains. The 2 locomotives were super cleaned and all the pipes were shining. Both locomotives were shunted over the inspection pit for proper inspection and roadworthy was done. The boilers were filled and the bunkers were coaled, fires prepared and locos were greased.

All the coaches were shunted to the pit for brake adjusting and general roadworthy work that was needed.

Below: The locomotives being polished.

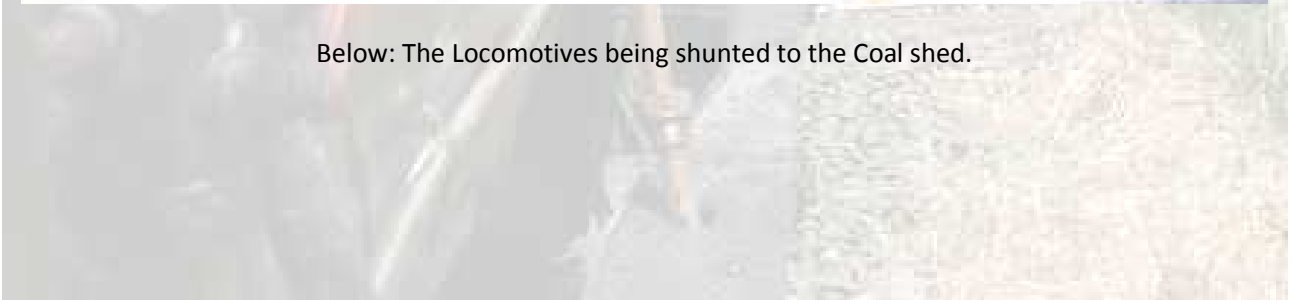




Below: A super shining number 113 in front of Hoekfontein Shed.



Below: The Locomotives being shunted to the Coal shed.





ON THE MOVE

We laid a 20 meter track at the Farm Gate and the red 3'6" Barclay from town was offloaded here.

Below: Building tracks from the lowbed down to offload the Barclay.



Below left: Derrick securing the fishplates on the ramp rail down the low bed.

Below right: The first track down.





While Henk connected the second panel the rest started to support the ramp rail with wooden sleepers.



Below: Almost ready to let her down.



Below: The Barclay rolling down to her new view.



Below: Finally the Barclay was on the ground again and we could disconnect the temporary tracks and pack up to move on to lay the 130 meter track in the ex Town shed on the Farm.

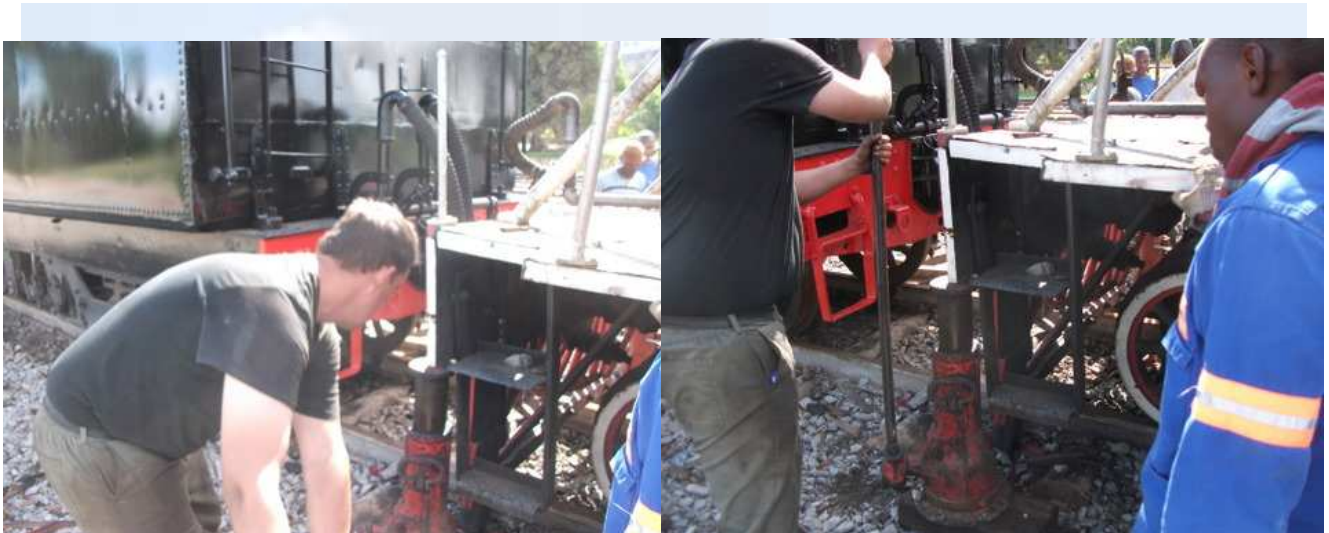


ROADWORTHY OF THE 3'6" LOCOMOTIVES IN TOWN

We completed the roadworthy that was needed on the 3'6" locomotives and wagons in Town. The 15CB had her balancing beam off the left front axle box and it was needed to jack her to get the weight off the front bogey so we easily could place it back in position with the use of a guala.

Below: Jacking the 15CB.





The Reefsteamers pulled all the locomotives and wagons from Town to the Sandstone Estates Komandonek siding. This included the 2 Class 25NC's, 15F and 15CB with 4 freight wagons. The Postal wagon in Town will be moved by road very soon and a new track for it was laid in Hoekfontein Station near the Waenhuis.

Below: The Town locomotives and wagons at Komandonek Siding where they will be guarded 24 hours a day.

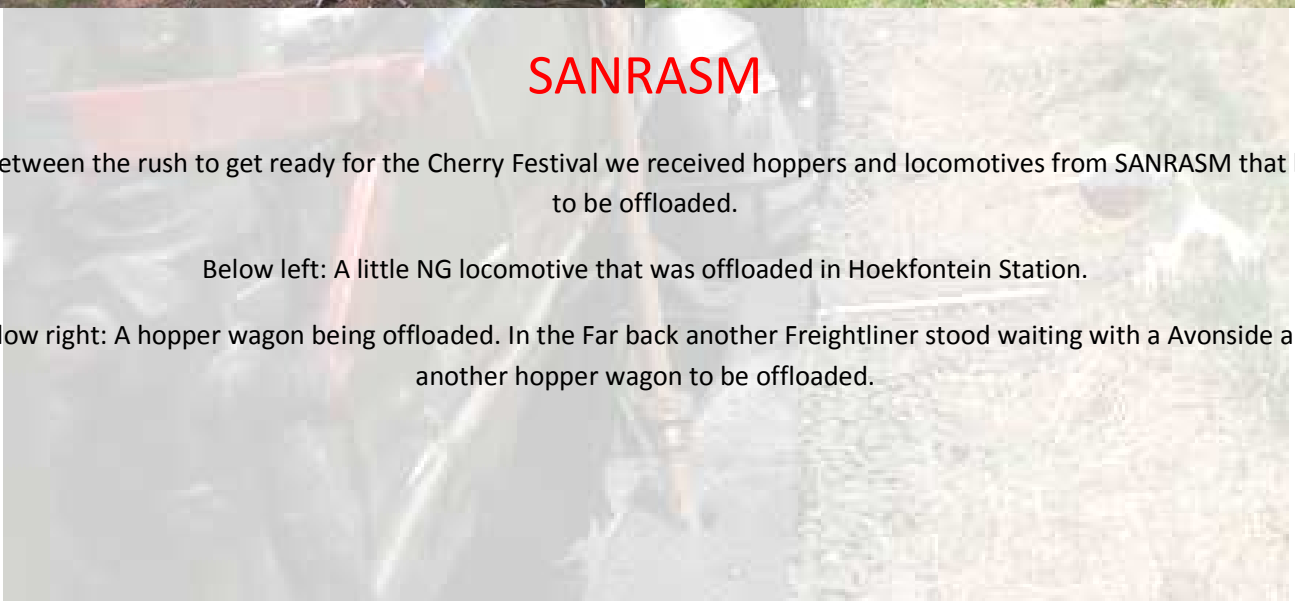


SANRASM

In between the rush to get ready for the Cherry Festival we received hoppers and locomotives from SANRASM that had to be offloaded.

Below left: A little NG locomotive that was offloaded in Hoekfontein Station.

Below right: A hopper wagon being offloaded. In the Far back another Freightliner stood waiting with a Avonside and another hopper wagon to be offloaded.





Below left: Only the one hopper came with bogeys complete, the other one was offloaded on a long NG flat wagon.

Below right: The Avonside about to be offloaded.



Below left: 3'6" Driver wheels inside one of the hoppers.

Below right: A tar mixer.





Both trucks returned to SANRASM as well as a third truck, the Grunter. They returned very quickly with another 3 hoppers, a Steam Roller and 2 x 3'6" old wooden flat wagons.

Below left: The Grunter with 2 x 3'6" flat wagons inside.

Below right: A freightliner loaded with a hopper and Steam Roller that was offloaded.



Below: The second Freightliner with 2 hoppers.



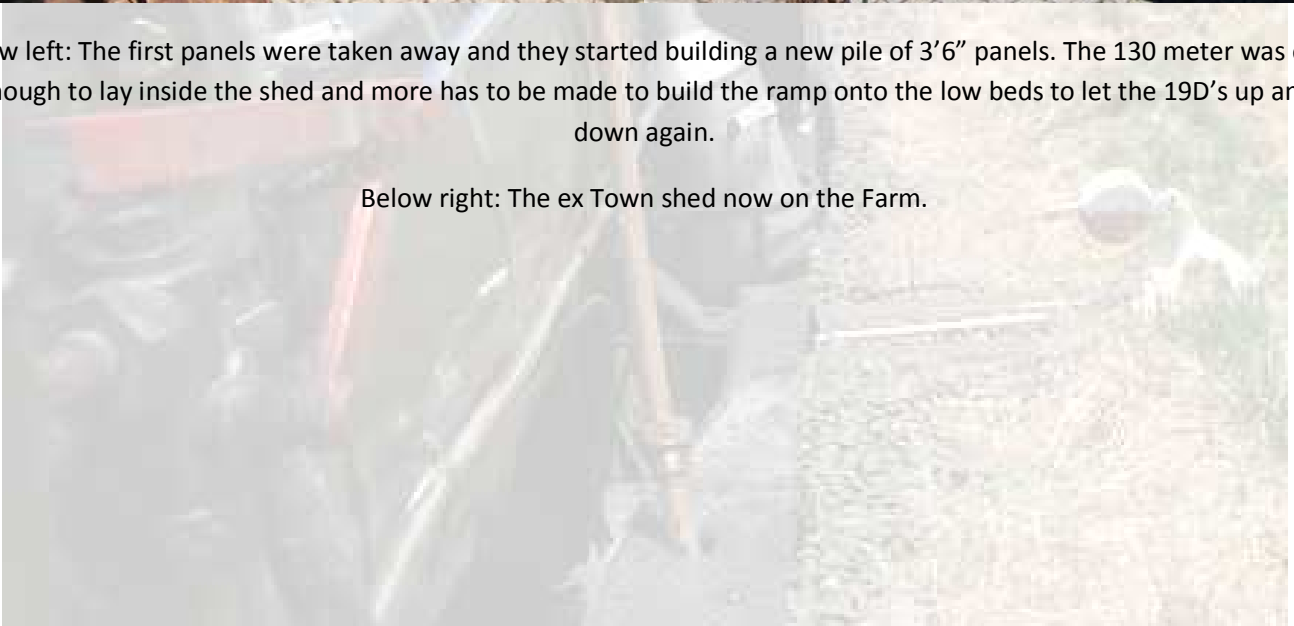


Transcor was suppose to move the 3 Class 19D's just after the Cherry festival so we had to completely build a 130 meter track into the ex Town shed before the Cherry festival. This was hectic and everyone jumped in to build ready to lay 3'6" tracks in front of the Vintage shed.



Below left: The first panels were taken away and they started building a new pile of 3'6" panels. The 130 meter was only enough to lay inside the shed and more has to be made to build the ramp onto the low beds to let the 19D's up and down again.

Below right: The ex Town shed now on the Farm.





Below: Building 130 meter track inside the Shed.



Below: The TLB hard at work to lay the tracks.



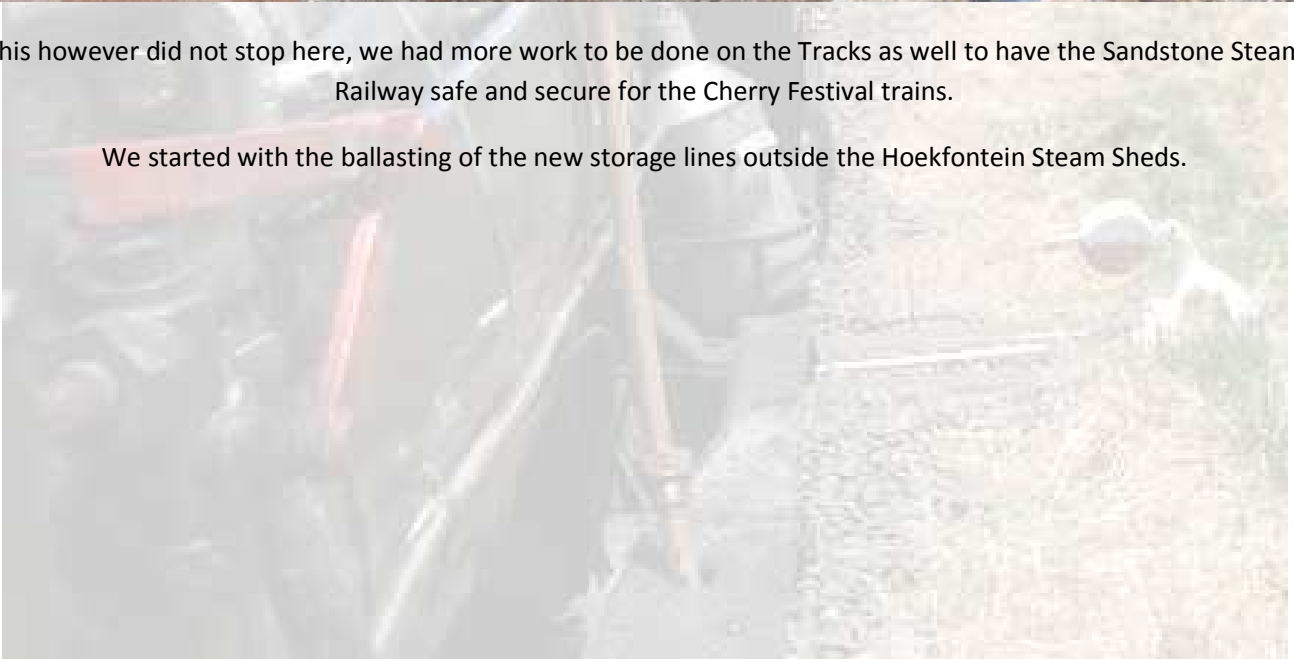


Below: Finally we reached the end and the tracks were ready to use but unfortunately the Transcor movement was postponed.



This however did not stop here, we had more work to be done on the Tracks as well to have the Sandstone Steam Railway safe and secure for the Cherry Festival trains.

We started with the ballasting of the new storage lines outside the Hoekfontein Steam Sheds.





Below: A neat line 1, the second still to be done.



Our next problem was to lift and pack the new mainline points before the Cherry festival trains and Derrick and the casuals tackled this. The points were leveled and packed as well as the first 60 meter of tracks into the new shunting yard. This was desperately needed for all the storage lines were full and we needed to shunt the wagons clear to have the mainlines open for the trains.

Below: Leveling the new points.





Below: Level ling the first 60 meter of track in the new Hoekfontein Shunting yard.



Below: The new line coming on nice.



Below: The first 60 meter almost finished. The wagons were then shunted into this line before the Cherry festival.

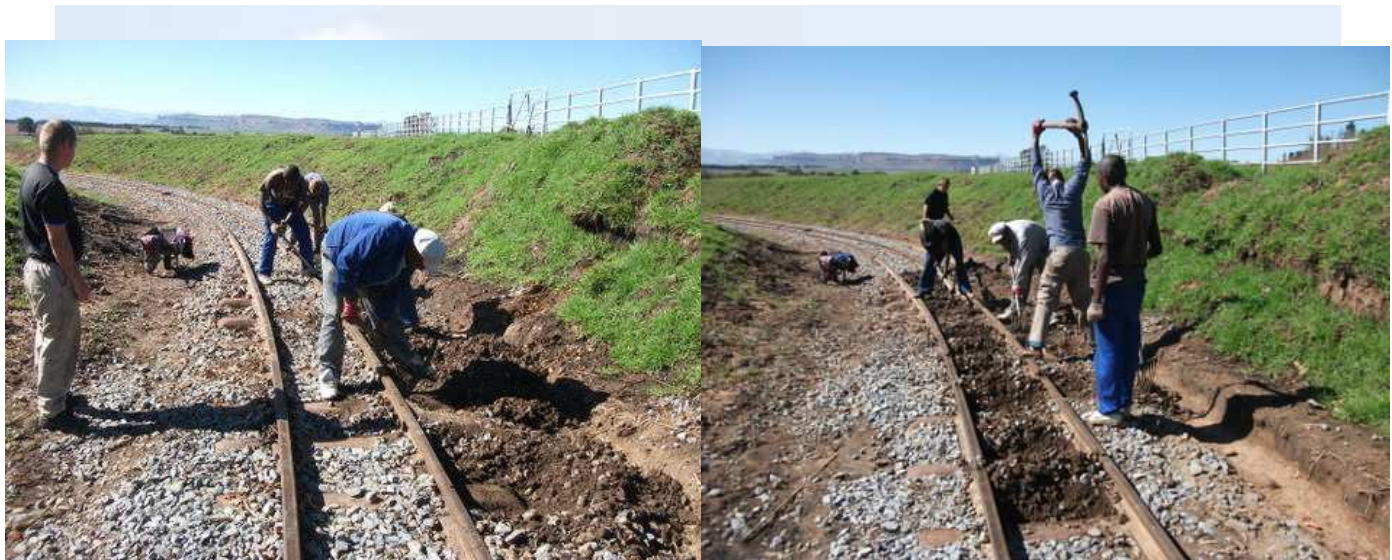


The biggest problem on the Railway line was a cross over slack on the curve at Pandora house. Derrick and the casuals lifted out 20 meter of tracks and repair the cross over slack.



Below: Sifting the mud out of the ballast.





By the end of the day the cross over slack at Pandora house was repaired and the trains could safely travel the line to Vailima.



OUTLOOK FOR NEXT WEEK

- SANRASM
- Train Trip Wednesday with the Barclay.
 - To clean all coaches
 - Brake adjustment on all coaches.
- To fix washout pump to washout locos for Boiler Inspection.
 - To lift and pack new shunting yard in Hoekfontein.
 - To clean all ash pits.
- To build 150 meter NG panels to complete Hoekfontein yard line 2.
 - To lay tracks in Hoekfontein yard 2.



STEAM GREETINGS
THE
STEAM TEAM!!!!