

1). INTRODUCTION :

I got the short straw and the big loco on Friday night on 24th of June, and Auntie Winter stalked the yard with refrigerated glee. Her son, Jack Frost, was nowhere in evidence, so it was a cold but dry winter's night. And yet the cold contrasted with the flaming heart of my charge, as well as a veldt fire that clawed at the open land behind the workshops. 'Fire & Ice' is a cliché in many themes and writing, but was certainly true of my evening.

Louis Le Roux is a present day instructor for Transnet and has recently been recertified as a steam driver. This would be his first run for Reefsteamer after certification. What was a bit unusual was that he prepared the fire on his own locomotive the day before, whereas the shedman would normally do it. I met him for the first time on Friday night as he was wrapping up and booking off. With what little I know about steam locomotives, I was impressed with the old boy's handling skills as big sister Janine was laying down her own rail-top ice while breathing on the sub-zero degree rails – and she moved with nary a wheel-slip. They say that 'Those that can, do, and those that can't, teach.' But Louis broke those rules and I bet he has a lot to teach the trainees. Andre and Johan, get your butts into gear, your noses into your rule books and grab the regulator while it is still warm!

Class 15F No.3046 'Janine' behaved well overnight. I was a bit overconfident with the hard-coaled fire bed staying aglow for me as it did the previous week and I ended up over-shooting a bit with the bank, as you see in the second pic. (I had over-estimated the thickness.) But the grandly porky old iron sow soaked up all that errant heat energy in her capacious bellyful of hot water and hovered at about 1200kPa for most of the night. ☺



P01 – EX-SAR 15F's are good for something! They make seriously bully coal-fired heaters. Yours truly is keeping toasty warm on a clear, cold winter's Friday night at minus two degrees and wind-chill factor of minus seven degrees.



P02 – Deep Heat. Oom Louis left me with an incandescent firebed and bubbles at the whistle. No extra raking or blow up required. I had to ladle out careful portions of coal to get the bank up without the boiler running too far away with me.



P03 – Another naked flame. The area alongside the wheel shop and the store rooms of the 15M shed were wrapped up in this crackling conflagration during the night. This fire was odd as the flames were spreading INTO the wind.



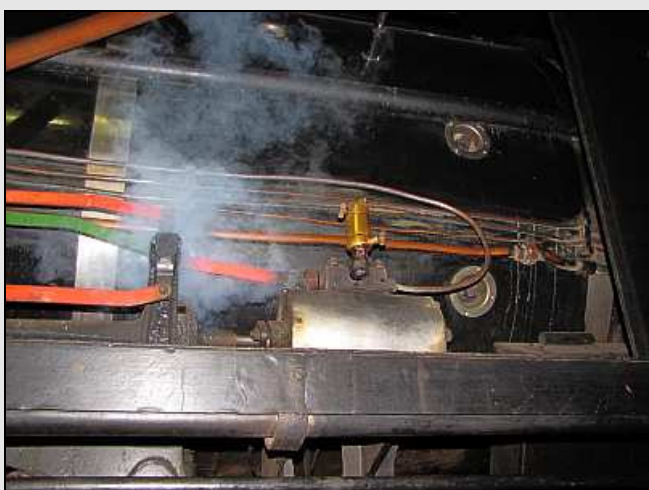
P04 – The burning bush. A nice little biblical metaphor set out in the bleak industrial heartland of Germiston. The Scriptures mention a burning bush as being where Yahweh commissioned Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.



P05 – A rarely-used knuckled points-tumbler is backlit by the flame-licked sky. The points lead to the 15M shop's headshunt and divert to a partially-lifted siding upon which two manky old DZ's and a burnt-out coach are stranded.



P06 – A spare 15F cab alongside the old stores track (now the coaling dock) bears silent witness to the flaming veldt. It was one of two here, but its mate has gone to FotR to help patch up their chewed choo-choo. (15F No.3117)



P07 – The reverser's power valve's gland packing was blowing a bit. This is a somewhat unusual sight during loco minding as the reverser steam is normally switched off, as are the vacuum brakes, lubricator and the grate shaker.



P08 – The 32V Romanian-made incandescents of a loco cab always add an attractive warm glow to the proceedings. No.3046 'Janine' has done well with three out of four cab light globes intact and functioning for two runs in a row.



P09 – The beast at bay. This hefty lump of warm-ish ironmongery had been considerably parked so the front coupler was clear of the massive west-facing shed doors so that they could be closed for (relative) warmth.



P10 – Fireman Breydenbach had rolled in a bit more coal than usual for a thick firebed with plenty thermal reserve for fire cleaning on a freezing morning. A 15F's fire is cleaned in 'quarters' as the grates, unusually, are in the middle.



P11 – This looks photogenic, but the glowing yellow trench indicate that partially burnt coal is going through the chute. Johann B. had miscalculated slightly, as he wasn't aware that we leave ½ hour earlier these days on our new YQ.



P12 – The bissell truck's yoke and the leading spring link are backlit by the tumbling inferno from the chute. Notice how the aerodynamics in the morning breeze cause the wheel to be shrouded in steam but the axle box stands free.



P13 – Smoke stack! As often happens, the copious ash pile blocked the ash chute. Louis had to creep back over the pits to clear the discharge. The sky is still clear but the vanguard of the morning cloud bank are already visible.



P14 – Photographically, this picture is a disaster and would have Reefsteamers' master photies McCarthy, Sanderson and Hloben yelping, twitching and running for the hills. I don't care 'cuz I just have a big thing about back-lit steam!



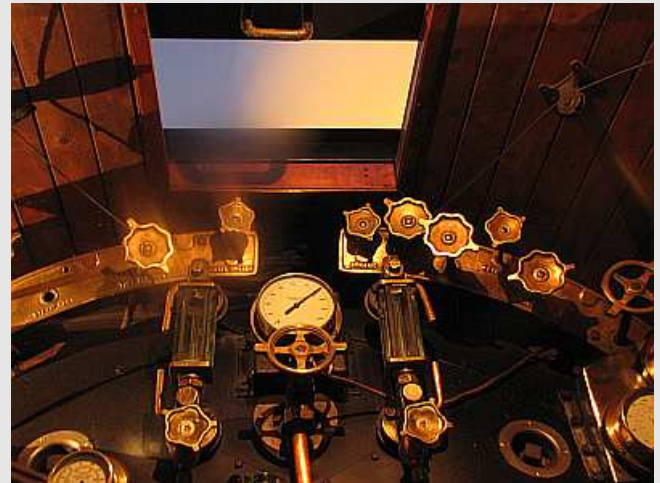
P15 – The locomotive's exhaled breath drifts 12 feet above the freezing but frost-free ground and obscures the water tower. The S&B van is now in the 15M shop having the generators switched over – that's the dining coach there...



P16 – Andrew King (pictured) and myself had shared raking and hosing duties on either side of the great ash pan. Then the truncated fire was built up and moved over. Now Andrew waits while the 2nd half of the fire is being cleaned.



P17 – Now Breydenbach cleans the second half of the firebox, note that the ash pan is aglow and the safeties are still lustily blowing! And this is after sitting with the ash pan coolers running and thus putting in fresh water in the boiler.



P18 – The needle is on the red line and the elderly boiler is creaking at the seams with 14 tons per sq. cm behind that black-clad steel. A bit scary to think of. I don't know how I managed to get the oil smeared on my lens at the top left.



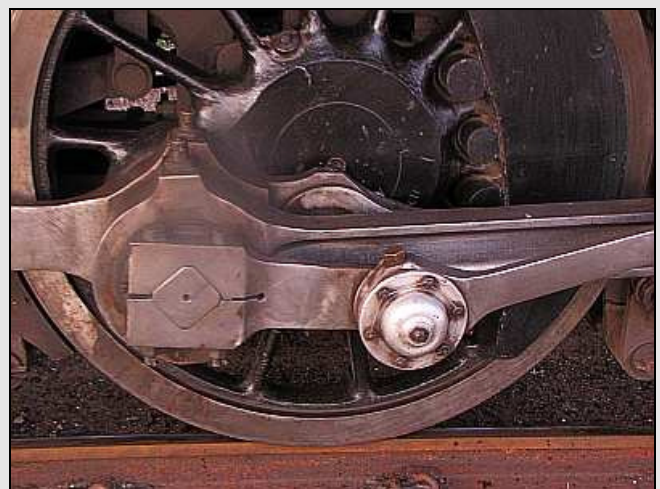
P19 – Amongst the gritty, photon-absorbing surrounds of the tender cubby decks, this nickel-plated scoff box bravely reflects the warm cast of the newly cleaned fire as fireman Johann B. takes a quick peek at his pet inferno.



P20 – Pulling off in fine steamy style. They caught me out with the early movement and I had to sprint to get this photo! The tracks had been sanded the night before, so with this morning's sand added, the loco didn't slip once.



P21 – How a fiery hearted creature can still look cold and forbidding. The usual pre-dawn mine dump wind picked up late and the sheets of cloud rapidly blotted out the morning light, making this a bleak, cold-stiffened knuckle morning.



P22 – Oom Louis had managed to park with his rods and return crank very nearly in line. You can clearly see that the valves are almost at forward TDC while the wheels are almost at rear. The planar difference is the valve lead.



P23 – Is preserving these rusty old sleds a pointless exercise? This pressure gauge has dropped its pointer. It is the old passenger steam heat pressure gauge and isn't actually connected any more anyway – so ... no problem...



P24 – Newly re-certified driver Louis Le Roux lost a lot of rail-credit early in the morning. He brought shame onto the footplate by handing out coffee in a PLASTIC thermos. Victor drank the tainted stuff, not knowing any better.



P25 – Grandfather & grandson tie-down the hose clamps. I had previously misheard or misunderstood a story and had mistakenly reported that Louis had been rostered onto to the great loco shed in the sky. He is still around!



P26 – The rubber rings in the hose couplings had hardened with the cold and were making an even worse seal than usual. The inevitable water drips formed this impressive stalagmite in less than 10 minutes! (Temp was -1 deg.)



P27 – On the main irons at last. As she laid down her own ice with the load strung out on an up-grade curve, she was rather skittish on the wheels but only 'broke away' once. But it was a ponderously ticklish start nonetheless.



P28 – No matter how many times you look, there's always something new. See how the counterweight on the intermediate driver is differently sized from front and rear drivers? And the main's counterweight 'trails' the others.

2). 'RANDOMS' FROM PREVIOUS WEEKS :

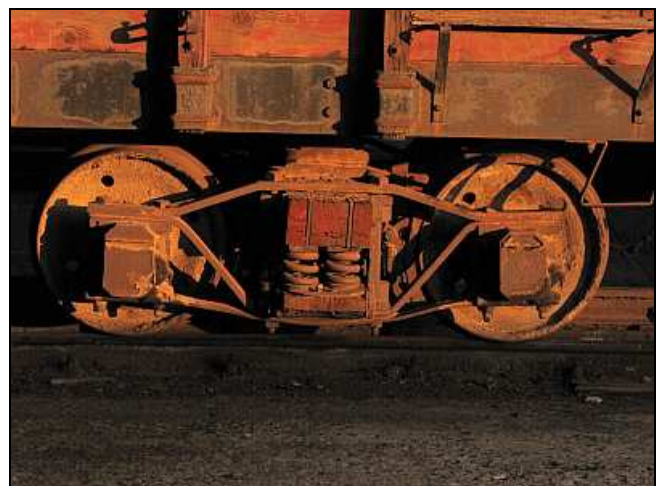
P29 – Derelict 15F No.3042 has a good boiler and reasonable axles. The EW type tender optional extra! She was assigned to us in an exchange deal for previously assigned Class 15F's that were mistakenly cut up in 2006.



P30 – These are the 4-line isolator frames that supply the 3000V DC traction current to the adjacent section of the main line. In the cantenary in the background, you can see two mid-span section breaks in the traction wire.



P31 – A sunlit axle on a commonwealth bogie. Note the one piece cast perimeter frame as compared with the old-fashioned multi-piece frame as shown on the right.



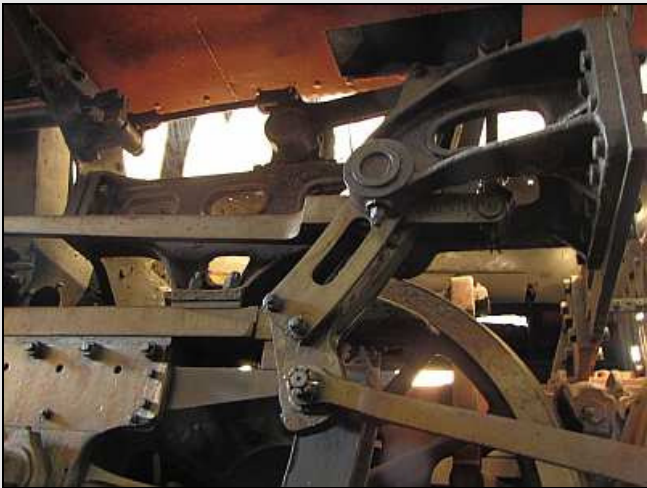
P32 – Another sunset bogie pic – the quaint looking archbar 'trucks' on Uncle Wilfred's ex-Simmer and Jack ore hoppers. Note that the bolster beam is actually of wood!



P33 – A spot-lit 'turbo-mo' on Class 15F No.3016 'Gerda.'



P34 – The sun-lit dynamo on the stored 25NC No.3404.



P35 – Backlit expansion link gear, the trunnion and the hangars on 15F No.3016 'Gerda'. Notice that the 15F's curved expansion link has bolted outside runner plates to help torsionally guide the bifurcated end of the radius rod.



P36 – The adhesive stickers that Fred Sewell arranged for our coaches over three years ago are holding up very well to the weather and the UV-beaming sunshine – they are doing far better than the underlying paint, in fact.



P37 – The Hunslet Taylor at rest. Apart from occasionally running out of diesel (no fuel gauge) he's been doing well post-overhaul. Two bay doors are open to assist in cooling and to provide quick access to the battery and fuel valves.



P38 – Peaceful Saturday mid-morning scene with everyone on the train. The empty depot initially sounds quiet but has muted sounds of its own, expansion creaks and ticks, the cooing of doves and the muffled thump of loose panels.



P39 – If you service your own car like I do, disposal of dirty oil is always awkward. We will take it all, with pleasure! We use it to lube brake gear pivots, as well as for a protective coating on polished rods, rims and valve gear.



P40 – Lurking in the machine shop, a clotted oil bottle glows with a mixture of Oom Attie's secret tender-side emollient. Guaranteed to put a glow in any paintwork, de-oxide the brass and to peel back your epidermis.



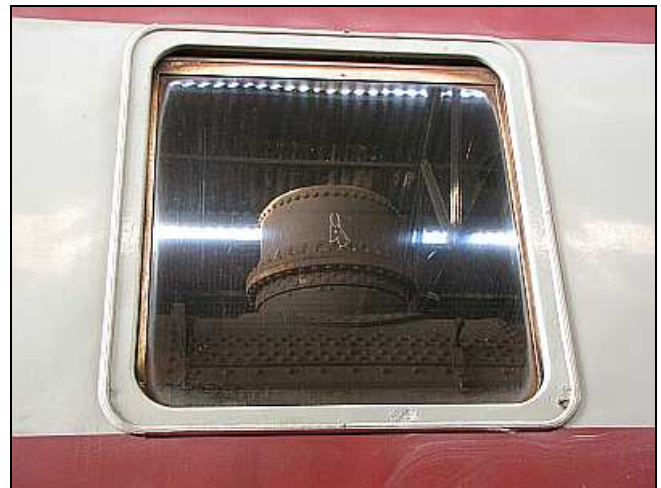
P41 – Even the depot's rats can run faster than this! But South Africa was one of the relatively few countries in the world to operate steam trains in a metricated country. This old sign still admonishes trains entering the running sheds.



P42 – Attie and a broadly smiling Aidan talk to a visitor in an early morning patch of sunlight in the dark and still-chilly workshop. Work hadn't really started yet and you can see the tool store doors are still closed in the background.



P43 – 'Filthy things, aren't they?' (Pat Ackerman.) 'Slightly Junior' was referring to locos, but coal fired stoves are as bad. As much as we romanticize vintage coal-burning power, it really is a filthy, labour-intensive form of energy.



P44 – The naked, tall, old fashioned dome of one of the scrap-yard refugees is reflected in a day-coach's window. This is the dome of the 8DW Class, similar to the recently deceased 'Puffing Duggie' which was torched at Chamdor.



P45 – Sandstone Estate's Class DE2 No.1207 gets an SAR-style cat's whisker emblazoned by sunlight with a sharp shadowed swage line beneath. You gotta admit that this chunky machine doesn't look bad in two tone + stripes.



P46 – I've 'played' a lot with light effects in this photo pack – but what when the lights go out? Standing dead still, Attie is seen here looking up older trip records by torch light. The canteen's main room has no windows.



This Photo Pack was compiled by Mr. Lee D. Gates on behalf of Reefsteamers Association.
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