

**1). FRIDAY NIGHT - 22 JULY 2011 :**

Well this WAS a busy Friday night with a lot of action, under the winter-night sky, that the 'normal' people would not get to see. The rails resounded to multiple locomotive movements and there were tantalizing streamers of steam and puffs of back-lit smoke jetting up beyond and between the old buildings. I had to set up a computer-based media stand and ensure everything worked. What a frustration, stuck in the clubhouse, messing with computers (of all things) ☹, with a whole HERD of prehistoric steam monsters sniffing around outside. YUCK!

However, it meant I couldn't get the whole sequence of the photogenic afternoon and evening work – but I least got a steam-laden sniff at the action and such that I got I share with you below. The next day (Saturday) would be our third Reefsteamers Depot Open Day and again we were able to field four operating locomotives for the event. We would have the GMAM No.4079 spooling out on the passenger run to Boksburg East, and the Class 15F No.3046 pottering around the yard for the public driver experiences. The 25NC No.3472 and the 12AR No.1535 (And the Diesel Class DE2 No.1207) would be standing idle and doing their best to look ornamental.

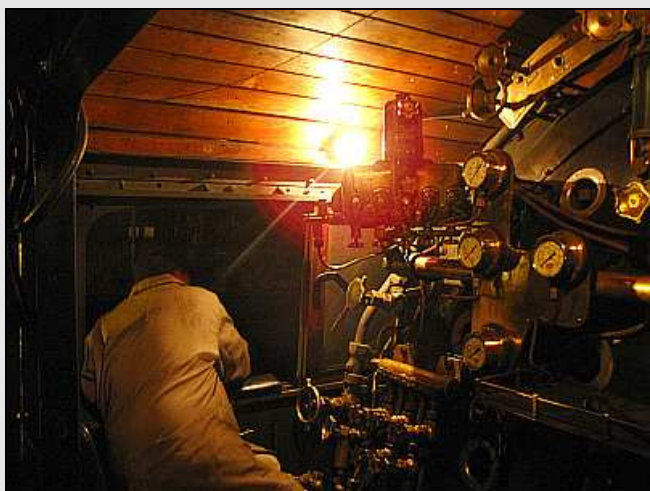
The locomotives would need to be ready to move by 6am (for the dawn photo shoot), which meant a fairly early fire cleaning. So a short but energetic night of loco minding lay ahead for the minders. The rest of us ghosted at about 10pm, but most of us would be back amongst the steel n' steam between 5-7am in the morning.

**P01 - Quite a train set.**

Two ex-SAR power vans are being shunted to the head-end of the photo-freight standing at the west end of Road No.1. (Behind me) The 25NC in the background provides fill-in lighting for the dark flanks of the passive GMAM.

**P02 – Of myths and metals.**

The power van shunt was a failure as the brake lines turned out to be rotted. So, they were put away again, leaving the foreground clear. That dark bipedal blur is the Tokeloshe, a mythical creature that haunts the African Highveld.

**P03 – Scoping the Steam Scene.**

Relatively new member, Simon Bennett, leans out to watch the rods as 15F No.3046 'Janine' retreats through the 'Top Shed' after spotting the two power vans. I didn't have to see his face to know that he was grinning from ear to ear!

**P04 - Alloyed Authenticity.**

Driver Le Roux gains points for wearing an analogue watch and cloth cap, but loses points for painted overalls and a forehead lamp. Most drivers either switch off or shade the bulb on their side of the cab to preserve their night vision.



**P05 – Cursive it ain't.**

The stenciled sign for Attie de Necker's new office, right next to the library. (It is hanging on an aircon's brackets.)

Said office is useful as a bolt-hole, which the mischievous old rascal frequently needs. But it also serves as safe storage for documents and forms, which have a way of migrating to places unknown within the workshop canteen.



**P06 – Well bedecked.**

The sparsely furnished boiler backhead of a Class 25NC – not many more fittings than USR's veteran Class 3BR and not at all intimidating to look at. ☺

However, like in most steam locomotives, the backhead always seems more crowded when it is seen at an angle.



**P07 – Power at Pause.**

You don't often see the rear end of this impressive GMAM in steam without a great big water canteen coupled on. We usually 'tank her up' even for over-night loco minding – to ensure the water transfer valves and pipes are set properly.

GMAM No.4079 'Lyndie Lou's' safeties have gotten a bit out of whack and they are lifting early. Some enterprising person had marked the early blow-off point with a match stick jammed under the rim of the pressure gauge.

For the relatively light run on the morn, the lower maximum pressure would be of little consequence. And contrary to popular belief, a 'red-lined boiler' is detrimental to a loaded pull-off anyway. Because the regulator chest relies upon steam flow to create a pressure drop, a steam loco's regulator is LEAST sensitive when the loco is standing with the pistons still. Very high boiler pressure makes the situation worse. The drifter valve gets the pistons moving, and thus incidentally allows some steam flow before the regulator can be modulated without skinning the wheels.

She's already feathering at the pops here with a ¼ banked fire, a nervous loco minder and a glowing bed of coal.



**P08 – Yikes!**

The Mini-Mienie, aka 'Victor', looks a bit frazzed-out here. This was his first night's 'real' loco minding and even I could hear the splash as he was plunged into the deep end! He'd already had a few training sessions though, and Granddad 'Laroo' had given him some instructions. Qualified fireman, Saki Kekana, was on duty for two of the four locomotives as well – so the Mini-Mienie had back-up. (As young as he looks, he really IS 18 years old and of age for footplatin'.)

He was actually having a blast here (pun intended), but was concentrating with the loco about to blow off and the boiler almost full. He had adopted the idea that blowing 'orf is a Really Bad Thing. (It isn't ideal but it isn't a disaster.)

In spite of her waistline, the GMAM is the 2<sup>nd</sup> easiest loco we have to tend because she has a pronounced natural draft. Victor was used to the somewhat reluctantly static-drafting 15F and was battling with a treasure-trail fire all the way to the rear tube plate and a keenly burning bank.

I just smiled, made no comment and let him take his lumps. But as I said, he was having fun! (My first loco was the 25NC, who was a total sweetie pie that misty night.)



**P09 – Little Squirt.**

The normally high and mighty Class 25NC No.3472 sorta shrinks into a retrograde kid-sister status running along the impressive 93ft length of the GMAM. She is being moved to the number one road to facilitate watering via a hose pipe overnight. (Running four big steamers at once is too much for the water tower, even with a two-inch mains feed.)

Sandstone Estate's GMAM No.4079 would be running the day trips to Boksburg East on the morn, as the double-ended nature saves valuable time in not having to turn the engine around at the trip's end. Although not clearly visible in most 'wedge shot' photographs, the enormous coal bunker is actually narrower than the cab to assist visibility.

**P10 – Oil's well here.**

Definitely an odd mixture ratio of oil cans here – four green 'steam oil' cans and one MH. The steam oil cans would be used two each at either end of the GMAM – to top up each of the dual mechanical lubricators. The solitary MH oil can would be enough for lubrication for the un-piped bits.

Our mechanically-lubed girls have the unexpected disadvantage of wasting oil between runs. The oil gradually seeps past the pistons in the pumps and creeps through the pipes. (And the distributors on the GMAM). The 25NC and the GMAM often have sticky pools of dribbled steam oil forming under their crosshead slides if they've been unused for a while. So, we rarely fill their oil tanks to the brim.

**P18 – Rail-side Chat.**

Two bodacious rail queens simmer as 'Junior Janine' gets her wheels dirty doing the shunting through the 'Top Shed.' The somewhat plump GMAM is more than 60 tons heavier than the 25NC locomotive and yet puts 4 tons LESS onto each of the 8 driver axles – making it a very powerful machine for lighter weight rails. (They were made for 60lb rails – the lighter stuff used on branch lines.)

It isn't really a totally fair comparison though as the GMAM's capacious 14 ton coal bunker and front tank is counted in the weight, while that of the 25NC's tender isn't. On the other hand, when the 25NC gobbles n' slurps, and her lunchbox gets lighter, it does not affect her adhesive weight, whereas the lost weight of the consumed coal for any Garratt loco had to be factored into the max grade it could climb with its load towards the end of a working.

**P12 – Spectacle.**

The 25NC No.3472 is seen through the fireman's spectacle opening on 'Lyndie Lou' the Garratt. The haze on the opened glass isn't just dust n' dirt. The locomotive glasses become pitted over time with many iron-topped miles of grit and no amount of wiping gets them clean.

The crack is a souvenir of a line-side stone-throwing incident. It's happening more and more often these days, especially after night with informal dwellings by the tracks. I often wonder what would happen if we Reefsteamers pulled up in our vehicles and started hurling bricks and stones right back at them. Oh ... we'd be crucified as racist bullies.

Luckily, the locomotive glasses are laminated and the slipstream deflects the blow. The coach windows are much more vulnerable.



**P13 – In the pocket.**

She has finished her shunting chores for the night and Class 15F No.3046 'Janine' is just having a quick grate-shake and ash-pan rinse-down before being handed over to the tender ministrations of the locominders.

South African steam-stalkers are used to the proportions of these impressive machines. But the enormous overhang, the jutting cylinders and the wide firebox, all emphasized here by the deep-cast shadows, are sources of wonder and amusement for foreign steam enthusiasts. Although our trains run on Cape Gauge, the loading gauge is almost the same as the standard gauge lines in England.

The effect always blows our overseas visitors away.



**P14 – Sneeze at the bar.**

With the 25NC and the 15F put away for the night, it was time to give 'Lyndie Lou' her bed-time drink after hooking up and pulling the goods train safety within the yard so we could close the gates. They've just topped off the 21 000 gallon water tank. (The hatch is actually still open here.)

It's not a big deal if a loco blows off while you are tending – but it does waste both energy and water. It does damage the typical corrugated iron roof and enhances corrosion in steel framed structures. Victor was freaking out a tad but there was no way he'd keep her quiet as she was on the brink simmering on the No.3 road and then running under her own power to pick up our toys from the head shunt.



**P15 – Mime Time.**

Fireman Dawie is back! (Albeit slightly overexposed.) His wishbones are still bolted together and he walks like a sway-backed old plough horse with a loose shoe – but he is at least self propelled and able to handle a stoker's jets.

He would spend about the entire day jetting gravel into the 15F's firebox and quietly keeping steam up for the Open Day Driver's experience. Easy duty then, just pottering around the loop, the bypass track beyond the forge and into the rather rickety head shunt.

I was wondering how that cell-phone photo would come out

The background goofus is 'Hott Nutts' George. He, unfortunately, ended up having non-rail-bound work to do and had to disappear on Saturday, missing a lot of action.



**P16 – Wallflower.**

Mr. Hunslet would take no part in the following day's activities, but at least he would not suffer the indignity of being used as a fence post for the danger demarcation tapes as he had been for the previous two Open Days!

What is a little unusual in this photo is the tail marker – he normally doesn't carry one and, in fact, has no tail marker bracket. If you look carefully, you'll see the tail marker is hanging from a piece of wire hooked in the window slides.

Now that the Works Caboose is in regular service and the two hefty GMAM's are gone, this piece of track has been freed up and is useful for 'small stock' storage. This track is the No.1 shed road and is connected directly to the crossover, making for minimal shunting moves. Only model railroaders (table toppers and virtual) like shunting puzzles!





**P17 – Steel Wheels.**

Steel wheels rock! Class 15F No.3046 'Janine' waits mildly on the crossover and the beaming GMAM looks on.

I have come to prefer a set of clean naked steel wheel rims to a set of usually-grubby white wheels. Yard Manager, Attie de Necker cleaned these up months ago and now only has to give them a firm wipe-down, instead of having to sand or wire brush them, as he keeps them coated in oil during the week.

Technically speaking, white wheel rims are actually bad practice anyway as the countless layers of white enameled paint can mask an incipient crack, as the 'skin' of paint may stretch over a fracture. The wheels on this locomotive, unusually, have been sprayed in proper Duco paint which has resisted the friction-generated heat from braking.

The mid-ships hump in the walkways is one of the spotting features of a 15F, and here you can see why it is there. The walkway frames also support the trunnions upon which the two vacuum brake cylinders pivot, one on either side.



**P18 – Orange Glow.**

Aka, a 'peking' Loco. You normally see their not-so-dainty bustles when standing at this point in the shed. All of the conventional locomotives had been shunted and turned so their brass-spotted dials would face the rising sun.

Notice the size of the protruding cylinder covers 'peking' out from behind the buffer beam? Those cylinders are 610mm in the bore and yet still tucked in neatly within the outline.



**P19 – Steamed Snuggle.**

The winter-dry tea green and the bare Tea n' Pee tree are bracketed by some seriously heavy metal. (The only kind of 'heavy metal' that I enjoy listening to!)

That's the 15F No.3046 'Janine' on the left and the 25NC No.3472 'Elize' on the right. The GMAM No.4079 stands backstage with the double sealed-beam head lights on hi-beam. The 25NC was badly parked with the bovine-bruiser protruding over the walkway.



**P20 – Fresh Air.**

The Class 25NC looks into a smoke-filled shed, the orange wash of the yard's HP Sodium lamps contrasting strongly with the anemic green haze of the Mercury lamps and fluorescents within the 'Top Shed.'

The smoke from within was mainly sourced from a braai fire, not another loco. The 12AR No.1535 'Susan' was parked out of the way in there, athwart the eastern door with her star-lit smoke stack out in the breeze.

**P21 – Atmosphere!**

There's nothing quite like a 'braai' with good friends and fellow steamed fruitcakes after some work with the iron leviathans. This was a communal effort and they'd sent the mighty hunter, Simon Bennett, out to wrestle the meat in. The atmosphere in the shop was getting pretty thick, even with a ventilated clearstory roof – but it was grand fun braai-ing with a real locomotive sizzling at each end!

For a year and a half or so, Reefsteamers had somewhat forgotten the social aspect of loving steam, apart from the ubiquitous tannin sessions in the canteen. But the more social events are slowly coming back after the tumultuous politics of recent years have died down and no longer dampen the volunteer-based enthusiasm.

**P22 – Staple Diet.**

Apart from tea n' biscuits, the ubiquitous boerewors is the next most staple food item in the depot, although you can see some show-off brought in some big steaks here.

And some sad naff had brought in a sosatie...

Unfortunately, many chain store outlets make rather bland 'wors' which is unworthy of the name, where the gristle outweighs the meat and the spices are just a suggestion. But a well made wors makes even a Brit in Exile like me appreciate the canny Afrikaner's whose pioneer tradition this originally was.

There was enough here for everyone to have two buns.

Victor almost lost out on his as he dashed to calm down the blowing 12AR and I had my eye on the last 2 juicy pieces. But I just wasn't quick or ruthless enough.



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