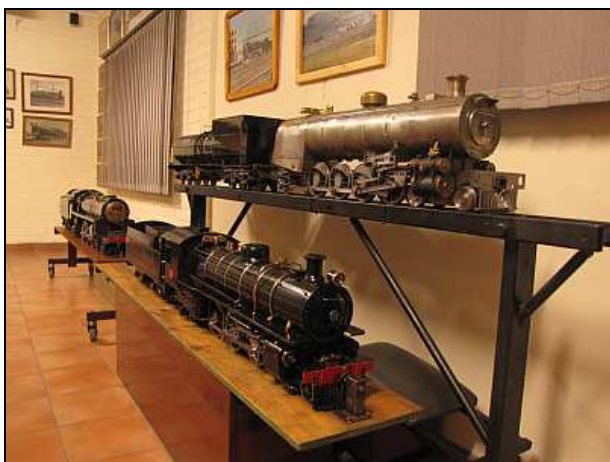


**1). INTRODUCTION :**

Our second Germiston Depot Open Day was a success and even the weather cooperated after two weeks of miz, rainy days. Reefsteamers traditionally doesn't run trains in early to mid January because of the risk of being committed to running under-loaded and thus, loss making trains. It is an expensive time of the year for many people with Christmas just past and the kids starting a new school year – and leisure outings are lower in their priority lists. As many know, we are operating under a rigid debt payback plan and cannot afford incidental losses right now.

It is hard work hosting such an event – and it involved more people and for longer hours than running a standard Day Trip would do. However, we made a few thousand rand more than we would have done with a day train and also managed to advertise ourselves. To all the people who helped, in the club house, on the catering coach, shepherding within the grounds and on the footplates, you deserve a twelve whistle salute! (Although, we had to settle for four whistles!)

We outdid ourselves getting four main line locomotives into steam and they drew comments and admiring gazes. Sometimes a steam locomotive can be her own best ambassador. Depending upon the advertising and availability of staff, we will probably adopt the custom of hosting an Open Day twice a year - but certainly once on an annual basis.

**P01 – Quite a spread.**

The right hand side of the displayed model locomotive collection, featuring a nearly completed Class 19D (Top), a Class 10BR 'Little Empress' (bottom), and a Britannia Class 'John Milton.' (rear) My little 10BR isn't the biggest or the most detailed – but she is certainly the prettiest of the lot!

**P02 – Testing.**

While loco minding, I set up my media stand by 10pm and let it run through the night. I needed to test the cooling of the computer continuously running videos. The computer is a 'fanless' design for presentation work and is integrated with the monitor – so you have to watch the temp.

**B03 – At ease.**

Uncle Wilfred's GMAM No.4079 'Lyndie Lou' was left in my grimy hands overnight and parked conveniently with the cascade-hatch under the water tower. I was using water from the front tank – as no 'torpedo' tanks were connected.

**B04 – Down to the crumbs.**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> loco under my watch, Class 15F No.3046, hadn't been topped up with coal and I was definitely running low by the morning. The stoker tunnel had been run empty too. I sprang-out my back scraping the bottom of the tender and was cursing the shedman with every stiff shovel stroke.



**P05 – Early Smoke.**

It is close to 4am and the 12AR No.1535 is the fourth loco put under steam tonight – having been thoughtfully shunted so the chimney cleared the workshop roof. This would be her first steam-up with her replacement valve rings.



**P05 – Two Cru.**

'Sakana' (Left) and 'Hott-Nutts' (Right) came on duty at 2am. They staggered the early lighting of their two locos as the air compressor struggles to keep up with two blower rings. Here, they've just spread the fire out on the 12AR.



**P07 – Class 24.**

Greg's Class 24 is finally in out of the weather but now gets smoked out. The loco had just been stripped and primed



**P08 – Looking better.**

You don't notice the cow catcher until it is not there. Note that the dome cover is serving duty as a chimney cap.



**P09 – Greeting the dawn.**

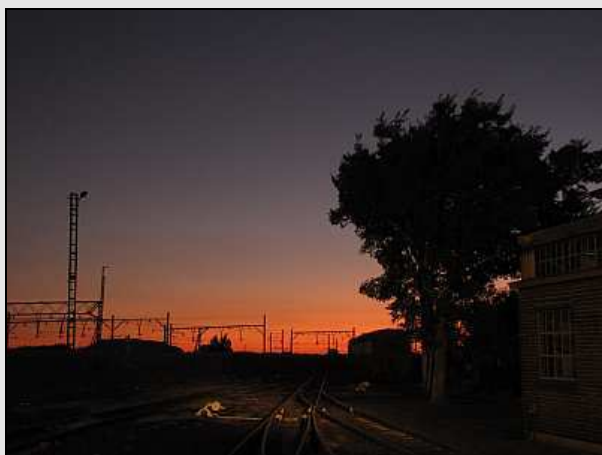
I was glad to be shot of this mechanical abortion. I could only fire well-spaced half-shovels with my sprung back and there's no way you're gonna raise steam in a 15F's large firebox with a scraggly bank of coal. Still, she looks good.



**P10 – Trickle Charging.**

I didn't bother banking this one – ran her on a flat fire with feather-light touches on the stoker. The steam went down to under 600kPa because I was focusing on the stupid F – but I got the GMAM gently back up to 1400kPa by sunrise.





**P11 – Cantenary Sunrise.**

That magical moment you always get at Germiston Depot when the dawn breeze picks up briskly amongst the contiguous open spaces – fresh, cool and just a tint of cyanide-flavoured gold mine dump.



**P12 – Fresh Face.**

Class 25NC No.3472 has just backed out of the shed and is crossing over to the yard, with her freshly graphited face starting to reflect the sun. We had a group of photies visit us in the morning before the gates opened to the public.



**P13 – Distant Cousins.**

The Class 15F (left) and the Class 12AR (right) are lined up and would stand here all day in steam. There are about 20 years worth of main-line development between them. The high pitch of the 15F's boiler is quite noticeable in contrast.



**P14 – Active Stage.**

The Class 25NC then takes her slot on today's stage. It is about 8:30 and the sun is already high above the stacks and bleaching out the pictures. The photographers' morning 'magic hour' is over.



**P15 – At the coals.**

Oom Frans van Dyk (left) tends to a different type of fire as he readies the charcoal to get a head start on the day's braai fire. That braai looks primitive, but it burns very well.



**P16 – Portal.**

The rarely-used subway gate was opened and the entrance stand set up. They had the luxury of some shade this year, while last year it was a totally solar affair.





**P17 – Arrival.**

We had 2-footed guests arriving before 9am, but this special 14-wheeled guest attracted a lot of attention. This is the Armstrong-built Class 15F which normally graces the tracks of the Rand Society of Model Engineers.



**P18 – Ticket Snatchers.**

Theunis (left) and Coenie are still settling in before the daytime visitors arrive in force. We included the train ride in the gate price to reduce admin – but these fellows were kept busy. We also took on new members here as well.



**P19 – Paper Work.**

Safety Officer Clifford Matthee is in for a VERY busy day and is finalizing the train's paper work in the peace of the empty canteen. He's having an early lunch, being some unidentifiable organic protein-based material in a sandwich.



**P20 – Action Attraction.**

They're busy shunting today's five coach n' tanker train to the left and the yard is filling up with people. It was funny seeing the photies (foreground) starting to get annoyed with the guests in the way, but they should have come earlier.



**P21 – Warden.**

James lends a pair of safety-jacketed eyes at the footway crossing. He wouldn't hear the whistle if you tied his head to the turret manifold – but he was keen to help regardless.



**P22 – Box Parade.**

Quad 6E1's in four different liveries. Vanilla late-Spoornet Hi-Vis, de-branded SATCOR, snipped whiskers n' maroon and an amazingly filthy Spoornet blue with outline numbers.





**P23 – On the prowl.**

Iain Carter (left) and Peter Labuscagne have a chat. Although many people helped rebuild 15F No.3046, Peter did most of the final assembly and recommissioning work. He feels protective of the delicate 15F and stayed close.



**P24 – Chorus Line.**

3 Locos are lined up around the waiting train. That new graphite stands out, but it was a rush job as the 25NC was rusting scruffily beneath the old, cracked stuff. If we had time, she would have been black-faced, like the other girls.



**P25 – Bulky.**

The slim, gamine form of GMAM 'Lyndie Lou' impresses as she reverses onto the crossover track to take station at the end of the first train. That is newly qualified fireman Andreas 'Bob-Tail' Matthee hanging out of the door.



**P26 – Symbolism.**

Showing the special blend of insanity and gritty stubbornness it takes to really love steam trains, fireman Michael Thiel gives me a strange grin in passing. (Or maybe he was just passing gas onto the driver's seat.)



**P27 – Here comes the lump.**

GMAM's are strange-looking beasts and this one drew a lot of attention as she drew in. That's 'Honeyball' in the center-ground, busy guarding the pedestrian walkway



**P28 – Another arrival.**

Another (slightly smaller) GMAM arrives courtesy of Mr. Armstrong and with her own entourage too. It literally does take a minimum of six people to lift this model.





**P29 – Centerpiece.**

RSME Class 15F and GMAM stole the show in the clubhouse. But the fact that they are actually modeled after real examples amazed most visitors. That's Pat slightly Junior giving the thumb-printed GMAM a quick wipe down.



**P30 – Staple Diet.**

Drywerwors on the grate – this is about the third load and our intrepid chefs could barely keep up with demand. Putting them on the braai-drill is a great way to keep 'Oud Spoories' out of trouble and keeps them productive too!



**P31 – Busy!**

Looks like a yard full of tenders doesn't it? The GMAM is just visible drawing up to her train. Most of the guests were on the other side, as they were forbidden from crossing.



**P32 – Line-up.**

A magnificent sight of four ex-SAR main line locomotive in steam. Our last record was the Dave Roger's tour in 2007 when we ran 15CA 2056, 15F 3016 and 25NC 3472.



**P33 – 28 Wheel pull-off.**

I've scandalized a number of steam lovers by stating that I don't find Garratts very pretty. Impressive, yes. Pretty, no. And this GMAM is a LOT of impressiveness pulling away.



**P34 – A lotta bottle.**

Even on a short trip, the 33 000 litre water canteen comes along. The water in the GMAM's front tank (trailing here) is kept to add its weight for adhesion for the engine unit.



**P35 – Cheerful.**

Do I really look like a people person to you? Oh well, I suppose I'd better wave back. It is always interesting, and often amusing, watching passengers getting excited at the first nudge and rumble of the coaches.



**P36 – Rolling off.**

With the smoky GMAM out of sight on a curve, the train heads into the turning balloon. There is no proper head-shunt on this, the east end of the yard. The train would have to make a switchback move to head out westwards.



**P37 – Left behind.**

The formation now has a gap while the train is in the loop. Each locomotive had a minder, of which two were volunteers and one was rostered.



**P38 – Back Rank.**

Class 25NC No.3472 takes her ease alongside the water tower in the sunlight of a classic high-veldt summer's day.



**P39 – Talk-back.**

On the switch-back move, Safety Officer Clifford Matthee talks the reversing train out through the cross-over track. He is the driver's eyes at the moment. It is at times like this that you really need the walkways guards.



**P40 – Cross over.**

Johann Breydenbach is chucking carbon as the coaches rumble downgrade into the forge area. Stoking at slow speeds results in dramatic smoke effects out of proportion to your coal loading, because of the relatively low draft.





**P41 – A tale of two buffers.**

The robust front ends of a 15F and a 12AR in angled comparison. Notice that the 15F has the characteristic angle iron under the prow rail, whereas it was not fitted on the 12AR. It is the SAR equivalent of the horn irons of colonial railways.



**P42 – They do.**

Aesthetics wise, smoke deflectors rule in my opinion. I prefer the well-framed business-like front end they create on the larger machines. But the first 15F's (foreground) were originally not supplied with deflectors and that boiler looks impressive even without the ear flaps.



**P43 – Bogie Boogie.**

Behind the barricades, the staff of the Shongololo Express get on with a bogie roll-out and removal of several under-belly water tanks. Note the washing strung across the line.



**P44 – Run-past.**

The GMAM pulls off in fine style, from a red eye in front of the cabin. The light train of five coaches and two tankers were flounced along like a bucket of polystyrene peanuts.



**P45 – Rumbling Welcoming.**

Our latest visitors get to see the 10am train departing, probably with mixed feelings. But it doesn't stop the staring. (I wonder what she sounded like in the subway.)



**P46 – Popcorn Alley.**

Going into a quieter afternoon, these two settled down and watched most of The Great Steam Trek No.1.





**P47 – Centerpieces.**

With few people in the club house after the departure, the centerpiece models are unobscured by pelvi. The magnificent GMAM is strapped down as the home-made stand flexed under the weight of the heavy engine units.



**P48 – Disembark.**

Passengers disembark after their mid-day trip. There is something about the sight of railheads that irresistibly attract kids and there are two of them trying out their sense of balance on this set of points.



**P49 – Drinks rush.**

Because of a set of points that wouldn't switch over, and interlocking issues, the first train was out for over three hours. We had no refreshments on board, so the disembarking passengers went in herds to the kitchen car!



**P50 – The Galley.**

Our catering ladies took the victuals-rush in stride as they handed over pancakes, boerie rolls, toasted sandwiches and tuck-shop goodies at a prodigious rate. I'd rather be on the footplate than the kitchen. Humidity there = 100%.



**P51 – Loose Dining.**

It is not economical for us to provide tables and chairs so we sold finger foods. But one of the lounge cars was put to use with loose furniture that could be placed as desired.



**P52 – Bar Keeps.**

These chaps tended bar all day. The bar looks rather empty, but that is because we chose not to sell 'hard-tack' spirits this day. Most of the stock was eventually sold.





**P53 – Diesel-powered Hitching Post.**

Mr. Hunslet, our plucky little green critter (and his tea trolley), served humble duty as a tape-hitching post. You will see that he is guarding the inspection pits of the old boiler washout area.



**P54 – Steam Enthusiast MkII.**

Gabriel Blore, a young steam enthusiast, has gotten a good start on the family tradition of collecting badges on his cap. Although, why his mother, who is usually fairly bright ☺, let him wear a WHITE tee-shirt to a steam shed is beyond me.



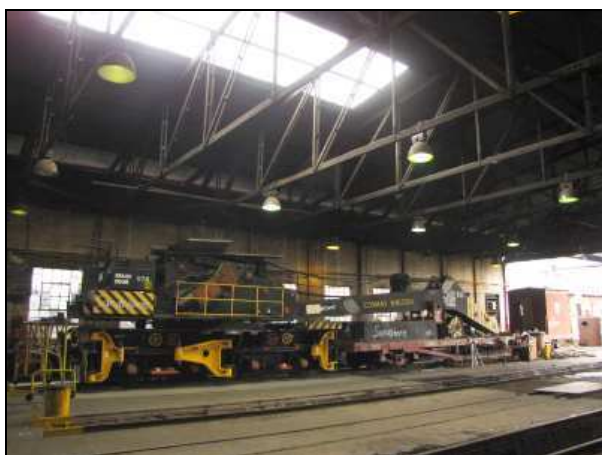
**P55 – Mercantile.**

A table laden with assorted DVD's and a few books. Set up in the middle of the day, the table missed the 10am crowd and didn't make many more sales through the day.



**P56 – Chasing the shade.**

Johannesburg had just had two weeks of rainy weather. To have a warm dry day like this suddenly appear was a major blessing ... even if shade is a bit scarce in the depot grounds in the early afternoon.



**P57 – Tonka to the max.**

In a rare unobstructed shot, the entire length of Sandstone Heritage Trust's steam-powered 60t Cowans Sheldon crane is visible in the number one road of the 15M shed.



**P58 – Front Lines.**

Quite comfortable amongst the divergent rails, Smidge Ackerman watches Smudge Ackerman getting locos ready for shunting over the ash pits.





**P59 – Precious Cargo**

At the end of a long day, three precious little engines are packed cab-by-jowl on Miss Wobbly. Aidan McCarthy (Right) looks amused as he seems to note that I'm not looking impressed at my 10BR's angle!



**P60 – Mush!**

Driver Shaun Ackerman enjoys a one-Gabriel-powered shunt up to where the cars are parked. The 'Little Empress' had been demoted to a bread bin and I apologized to her later on. (Gabriel volunteered to push.)



**P61 – Guide.**

Robbie gives his family a guided tour into a 15F's smokebox. (No.3052 'Avril') Smudge and I had just demonstrated how to shift a loco with a pinch bar and startled them on the buffer with the intermittent motion.



**P62 – Look out.**

Financial Manager Andre van Dyk looks out from the compartment where the day's take was just counted. He's fairly calm and confident – so obviously things worked out.



**P63 – Pancake Pan-handler.**



Time to clear out the leftovers from the kitchen and Michael is trying to get rid of the last batch of pancakes. He's got a bag of hot dog rolls handed out as bachelor donations.



**P64 – Down and out.**

The surviving crews relax before Andre gives us a run down on the day's costs and profits. We did well and made a little more money than we would have done on a trip.



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