



## SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL RAILWAY AND STEAM MUSEUM

(Registered non-profit organisation NPO 003-922)

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### NEWSLETTER NO 1 of 2011 – 28 Mar 2011

Dear SANRASM member

It's become almost a standard opening at the moment for me to apologise for the fact that I haven't met my commitment – in this case to send out the SANRASM news as frequently as I would like. Unfortunately, our human resources are very limited, and have had to be largely concentrated on getting on with the job in hand. There are still many problems to be resolved, but now that the site clearance is virtually complete, we should have more time to communicate with our members.

#### **Randfontein site**

The clearance of the site of those items not considered to be on our preservation list is almost done.

The supervision of this project was in Geoff's capable hands, and the following report is his summary of what has happened and of some of the lessons we have learned.

My involvement in the SANRASM saga started as a result of a visit to Sandstone in the Free State. A chance remark from Gert Jubileus revealed that he and Lucas Nel had been requested to visit Chamdor on the following day. Because I live only a short distance from Chamdor (5kms) Gert asked if I could help him and Lucas find the Chamdor site as they were sure to get lost. They had an unguided tour of the West Rand before I met them on the road and took them to Chamdor.

What we found at Chamdor has been well documented and the total futility of leaving steam locomotives, some more than 100 years old, unprotected and seemingly abandoned in the veld, was quickly evident.

We quickly decided that there was that nothing could be done with these so had a diversion to SANRASM's North site, somewhere I hadn't been for several years.

Here we found the NGG 11, second oldest surviving Garratt in the world, dumped outside the gates, in company with narrow gauge hoppers and a few main line locos. The site itself was seemingly crammed with a dozen or so 14Rs in various stages of disintegration and the whole place was a mess.

Steam in Action then alerted Mike Dyke of the SANRASM Committee, a meeting was called and an

action plan developed. Partly because of my previous SANRASM involvement, partly because I live out west and partly because I was available, I was asked to try to put a solution together.

Dave Richardson and I put together a list of locomotives we thought could be saved. This was added to and amended by people such as John Middleton, Allen Jorgensen and Sandy Buchanan. This was published and it seemed to fit the bill as there was little feedback at all.

In the meantime the Chamdor scrapping continued and a last minute appeal from some preservation worthies resulted in the Class 14 loco boiler and cab being removed and sent to Sandstone for safe keeping.

An inspection of both sites was carried out and a very sorry picture was found. There was no electricity to North or South site, South site at least had water, at least for a while. The two sites are separated by about 500 metres and there was one security guard shared between the two sites, both night and day.

Reclam were awarded the contract to cut up the scrap so their contractor, who had 'officialled' at the official Chamdor scrapping, got the job. We first identified the items to be retained at both sites and work got going at North. It quickly became obvious that the place had been gone through very thoroughly indeed. There was no brass or copper fittings, pipe work, turrets, loco rods, safety valves in sight, or even on site. Many axlebox covers had been welded closed, supposedly to prevent theft, but on opening them there were no white metal bearings inside.

It quickly became apparent that there would only be a few items that would be saved and eventually only the English Electric shunter, the Grafton steam crane, the Ruston and Hornsby, and Davenport diesel shunters, the drop sided wooden wagon and the old underground mine loco have been or will be moved to South site. Kitson, Avonside, La Moye and Henschel were returned to Eskom's Rosherville facility. The large Eskom fireless is due to go to USR in Pietermaritzburg and the small four wheeled van to the Chamber of Mines for display.

We suffered one major calamity when late one afternoon a fire started on a coach roof. The malthoid covering, which is bitumen based started to burn and the Fire Brigade were called. They attended quickly but, remember, there's no water on site. The 6 000 litre tank on the fire truck started to make a difference just as it ran out and the nearest hydrant was 5 kms away. This happened twice and it was only once the Krugersdorp Fire Brigade arrived with reinforcements that it extinguished at 11.30 pm. It restarted again at 4 am but was brought under control fairly quickly. The coaches had been partially or almost completely stripped and were destined to be scrapped anyway but it was a most unpleasant and emotional experience to see coaches that I had organised for SANRASM years ago coming to a fiery end.

In the meantime work had started cutting the six locomotives up near the old REGM workshop site. Five of these had had axleboxes cut away, in similar modus operandi to Chamdor. Some cutting was going on in South site as well. The top site was difficult to access so the tracked loader had to travel up and down the track, which did damage a number of sleepers. Such was the difficulty of access that on some occasions scrap had to be left there overnight. All too quickly this turned into a 'scrap takeaway', culminating in me finding a five ton truck loading scrap in the middle of the afternoon just before Christmas.

This was just the tip of the iceberg and the ensuing weeks were an ever increasing struggle against the thieves. We even arrested a driver and a bakkie full of our scrap in a Randfontein scrapyard. Unfortunately the driver and bakkie were out again a few days later and were seen loading oxygen bottles and heading off towards Carletonville. End result was that both police and our security company forbade me to chase scrap thieves for a very real fear of physical violence.

Stock at South site, being rail connected and therefore movable by rail, escaped the cutting to a

greater extent but it was still necessary to cut up a number of coaches and locos. Overall condition and wheels of a number of locos meant they would not be passed to travel on Spoornet thus the GFs, GMAM and unfortunately the GM were cut up. The 15F suffered from intruders over the Christmas holidays and after five axleboxes were stolen we were left with no choice but to scrap it. This theft resulted in the dismissal of five security guards. Fortunately their successors are more honest.

We also had asbestos inspectors on site and a quantity of this material was removed from Locos and coaches under safe conditions.

Where to from here? Andrew King of Reefsteamers did a technical inspection recently and it transpired that all the steam locomotives are missing parts such as bearings, underkeeps, tender bearings etc which will prevent them moving. Obviously these will have to be replaced before any rail journey is contemplated. The coaches are in much the same condition, all the white metal bearings have been stolen and there are brake parts missing from some as well.

All the remaining coaches show signs of extreme neglect and there's only one or two that don't have a leaking roof. We ordered six new tarpaulins, which arrived last Friday, and these will be used to cover the worst leaky roofs. Shashi is in a particularly bad shape, there is virtually no malthoid on the roof; all the dismantled and rotten tables will be stripped out and the vehicle dried out before replacing the malthoid roof covering and fitting new interior ceiling panels.

Other coaches will also be dried out and cleared of rubbish before being assessed to see if there is any further damage and, common to all, to see if the many missing fittings can be replaced. We have a 40 ft container at North site, soon to be transferred to South, which is chock full of fittings, tools etc.

The lack of electricity is a major handicap so a portable generator has been purchased to power garden tools, power tools and the like for maintenance and restoration. We plan to repaint a few locos as well, 454 being the first.

So there we have it. A traumatic experience for all of us involved. As for the future well who knows? SANRASM will still exist hopefully at a new home at Reefsteamers with funds available for restoration of loc0os and coaches

Finally a vote of thanks to all those who have assisted us in the project. Mogale Gold for loan of a big crane, TLB, fixing South site's water supply and staff. Rand Uranium for filling in holes in the site and no pressure to move out. Sheltam for assistance with rail matters and giving our Ruston & Hornsby shunter a once over. Eskom for understanding our problems and moving their locos to Rosherville at no cost to SANRASM. Chamber of Mines for agreeing to take some stock as exhibits. Steam in Action without whose prompting and involvement the whole collection would have been lost. Sandstone for prompt action in moving items under threat to the safety of the Free State and help with logistics.

Geoff Pethick

There is really very little I can add to this - just a few items which Geoff didn't mention.

Geoff didn't report that we now have our own bakkie – carrying the Magaliesburg Express logo – which has attracted quite a lot of attention. The bakkie has been invaluable in collecting materials and moving things around the site. The return to action of the R & H shunter is well under way and it will soon be added to our useful assets in organising the assets remaining on the South Site.

It has become increasingly clear that, even without the drama we have experienced in recent months, the Randfontein site is no longer a viable option. The cost of adequate security is prohibitive – about R30 000 a month at the moment. Natural hazards are becoming apparent – Geoff has mentioned the fires, and the heavy rains have caused damage to the site (which was originally established on a landfill),

aggravating the appearance of sinkholes. 454 almost disappeared into the ground, and there have been several places where we have had to move locos and coaches to avoid damage. Once again, those who have provided assistance with equipment to help with the moves have proved to be good friends and deserving of our gratitude.



Rand Uranium is in the process of selling the land in the Tweelopies area; the prospective purchaser did approach us about a year ago to say that they wished us to move from the land which would be used to provide additional landfill facilities for Mogale City, as well as the development of housing and commercial facilities. It was suggested that they would be prepared to pay for SANRASM's relocation to a site near Windsor Mine station, close to the Chamdor site, but nothing further was heard of this – we think they must have reconsidered the suggestion when they worked out what it would cost.

In addition, the intensive drive by Rand Uranium and its associates to recover any remaining gold from the area means that it would have been unlikely that we would have been permitted to operate on the mine system for some time.

I said the project was under Geoff's supervision – this was something of an understatement. Geoff became fully involved (and committed), which led to the essentially successful completion of the first part of the operation – even though, as we all know, not everything turned out exactly as planned.

Geoff has retained a small crew and will continue with the preparation of the assets to be moved. Geoff has mentioned the coaches – a start is about to be made on making waterproof those we intend to keep. The locos and coaches to be moved will be prepared – although the latest review seems to indicate that most of them will have to be moved by road, as they are unlikely to receive roadworthy certificates. It is not yet clear when the additional facilities we need at Germiston will be available, so we are making use of the opportunity to do some of the preliminary work at the Site.

Geoff, your name needs to be placed at the head of the list you gave us of those who you felt had earned our most heartfelt thanks. We could not have done it without you.

## **Finance**

I reported previously that finance from SANRASM's normal operations reflects the worst year that I can remember. Preliminary figures for the year reflect a deficit of almost R300 000. This means that, without the income from the site clearance project, we would have had to close SANRASM down some months ago. The Magaliesburg Express is effectively our only source of income, and that has turned out to be a negative, as a result of a decline in passengers, largely due to the state of the economy, coupled with an increase in the cost of chartering the trains of almost 300% over the past three years.

The income from the site clearance project has not yet been finalised, but it is estimated that, after deducting the costs directly involved, we will be left with something like R4-million to invest in the future of SANRASM. It is not possible at this stage to establish in any detail the use to which these funds will be put, but an outline of our intentions is set out later in this newsletter.

SANRASM's financial year ends on 31 March. As soon as the annual financial statements have been finalised, they will be incorporated into an annual report which will be more in line with current business practice (though not competing with some companies' annual reports which I have seen recently which have exceeded 200 pages!). This report will of course be circulated to members and, as SANRASM is a registered non-profit organisation, be available to any interested party.

### **The Magaliesburg Express**



I referred previously to the Magaliesburg express as SANRASM's only regular source of income. The income for the year just ending has been a disaster – a deficit of R80 000 compared with a profit of R260 000 last year. This unhappy outcome results from a number of factors. Even if you discount the uncertainty surrounding SANRASM, the number of passengers carried declined significantly from the previous year's 5 400 by more than 20% to 4 300. Revenue from ticket sales dropped from R870 000 to R540 000. At the same time the cost of chartering a train from Reefsteamers increased from R28 000 in 2009 to the current level of R54 000.

It has not been possible to increase fares to match the increase in costs – the economic situation, particularly as it affects our customer base, in South Africa (which now appears to be improving) has made this not a realistic solution. The composition of the trains – which is largely imposed by Transnet Freight – means that we have to be close to filling a train (about 450 passengers) to make a reasonable profit.

Fortunately there appears to be a brighter light at the end of the tunnel – our Valentine's Day train on 13 February was our worst for a long time – 150 passengers resulting in a loss of R32 000; March reflected a sharp turn-around with our Human Rights Day train on 21 March carrying 368 passengers, earning us a meagre R4 000.

We have many problems with operations – almost entirely outside our control. On 16 December we experienced one of the heaviest rainfalls ever recorded in Johannesburg. Many roads were closed – even the N1 motorway next to Maraisburg station, which was under a metre of water at the bridge where the railway passes over the highway. This resulted in many of the passengers who had booked not even being able to reach the station. The train itself was delayed for over an hour between George Goch and Johannesburg.

On 5 February I did my first trip as a coach controller on the Reefsteamers' train. The day went perfectly until it came to our departure from Magaliesburg. After a two hour wait, we learned that a freight train had suffered brake failure between Battery and Tarlton, and we would have to wait until it had been repaired. We finally left Magaliesburg at 8 pm (five hours late) and broke all records by returning to Johannesburg in 1 hour and 20 minutes (the YQ operating permit shows a time of 1 hour 55 minutes). A stunning performance by 15F 3046 and her Reefsteamers crew. As usual, our passengers were very patient and understanding, and we had quite a good party on the way. This reflects the generally happy

atmosphere on the trains, which helps our efforts to spread the word around and attract more passengers.



The picnic site at Magaliesburg station has become dysfunctional. As a result, we are now using Swallows Inn as an alternative to the Magaliesburg Country Hotel. The facilities at Swallows are very good, and passengers have the extra experience of the stiff climb out of Magaliesburg. The train drops off the passengers at Swallows and parks in the passing loop at Vlakdrift.



Our closer relationship with Reefsteamers has led to an exploration of possible arrangements which will benefit both of us. The details of the new system have not yet been finalised, but for the moment we are marketing trains on behalf of us both. This arises from an appreciation of the fact that the technical expertise lies with Reefsteamers, while we are better equipped for marketing trains – we need each other. From 1 April the Northcliff office will be open all day, not just in the mornings. We are looking for someone to assist Allea with the marketing – if you know of someone who is good at dealing with people and is interested in the job (negotiable full- or part-time), please ask them to contact me.

My expectation is that the Magaliesburg Express will operate as a joint venture, with SANRASM and Reefsteamers sharing income and costs. My belief is that this arrangement will generate an appreciable increase in passengers. There will be no conflict of interest between the two parties, and we should both experience the benefits.

In addition to the Magaliesburg outings, Reefsteamers are planning sleeper trains over long weekends to Scottburgh and Port Shepstone on 28 April, 16 June and 30 December, as well as the regular visit to the Ficksburg Cherry Festival on 17 November (which incorporates visits to Sandstone Estate). Also on the calendar are rugby trains to Durban on 6 May (Sharks v Brumbies), 20 May (Sharks v Bulls) and 27 May (Sharks v Waratahs). The long distance trains are fully equipped with sleeping and dining facilities. They are generally electric-hauled, with the exception of the Bethlehem – Ficksburg section of the Cherry Festival Train. Last year this section was headed by 15F 3046 and 25 class 3472. The steam locos



were a passive part of the train on the mainline section, but the highlight occurred when the electric traction gave problems on the return journey and the RS locos took over.

They are also planning open days at the Germiston depot, which will include short runs to Boksburg East (maybe extended to Springs). These could provide an opportunity for an outing with those of our locos which are not suitable for mainline operations – like the 6s of the 14R.

SANRASM at the moment provides a support team on our own trains – Joe is the ticket inspector, while Alleeta looks after the sales of windmills and train sets which are very popular with our younger passengers, as well as providing the passengers with their tickets. Regular helpers are member Attie Strydom and his daughter Rita. Tony Attwell has also ridden with us. I find it an enjoyable experience working with our members, and the Reefsteamers crew, meeting passengers and telling them a bit about SANRASM and our railways in general. My thanks go to our own members who are involved as well as to Reefsteamers' Train Manager, Attie de Necker, and his crew.

An invitation is open to all our members to participate – if you work you don't have to pay.

We've had some free publicity for our trains. I was requested by a journalist to provide information on the Magaliesburg Express, which I did, resulting in an article which was published on the SA Tourism website on 5 March. To see the article, go to

[www.southafrica.net/sat/content/en/za/full-article?oid=347839&sn=Detail&pid=440&Magaliesburg-Express](http://www.southafrica.net/sat/content/en/za/full-article?oid=347839&sn=Detail&pid=440&Magaliesburg-Express)

(For those of you who do not receive this newsletter electronically, I have attached a copy of the article).

## **Membership**

I now have access to all the available membership details. Unfortunately, most of these do not have any reference to e-mail addresses. Those who receive this newsletter by traditional mail are asked to send me their e-mail address (if they have one) to make communication easier.

## **Subscriptions**

It has been agreed to simplify the subscription system. On the list I have, there are 163 members; of these, only 30 have paid their subscriptions for the year 2010 (and there are two honorary life members).

The executive committee have agreed that those members who have paid for 2010 will be given a free "ride" for 2011, as a mark of thanks for their support.

Other members who wish to retain their membership will be asked to pay will be asked to pay a subscription of R115 for 2011. Arrears from previous years will be ignored.

Members have been transferred to a single category. Given our focus on direct electronic communication, overseas members will not be required to pay any additional amount. All members will be regarded as family members – their families will have access to all facilities, other than the right to participate in or vote at meetings.

Being able to send the newsletter by e-mail will save a considerable amount; for those who do not have e-mail, we are fortunate that we have inherited a legacy of stamps with a value in excess of R2 000, so there will be no additional cost. Those members will receive the newsletter by conventional mail (air mail in the case of those living outside Southern Africa).

Please pay your subscription by direct deposit or EFT. Donations will, of course, continue to be most welcome. You will receive a receipt and membership card valid until 31 December 2011.

SANRASM's bank account details are

ABSA Bank (all branches)  
Account no : 40 4873 7756.

Please quote your name and membership number in making the deposit or transfer.

### **Books and other material**

In my comments on our trains I referred to the fact that we sell windmills and model trains, mainly to our younger passengers.

We also still have in stock a number of books which were originally acquired for sale at the museum site. Until we are able to display them at Germiston, they will be available by post.

These include the following books:

Railways of Southern Africa – Locomotive Guide (1994 edition) – John Middleton R25  
The Shimmer of Steel – Dennis Moore R150  
Steam Passion – Paul Hloben R250  
Tracks Across the Veld – Boon Boonzaier R200

The prices have been somewhat reduced as some of the books were subjected to the rain on 16 December; they include VAT and local postage.

I am in the process of compiling a full list as part of the stocktaking which will be carried out at the year end. I will send this out to those members who express an interest.

### **Other organisations**

The events of the past six months have placed us in a position to improve our relationships with other organisations with similar aims and interests.

I have already dealt with our relationship with Reefsteamers in some detail. We hope this relationship will continue to grow, and look forward to their new board being elected in April so that we can start to implement our plans. Their present management has expressed views very much in line with ours – that we must concentrate our energy on moving forward, rather than delving into our own past history. It is highly likely that Reefsteamers will become our landlords, as well as our technical colleagues and train operators. We really look forward to working with them to develop an effective organisation.



It is pleasing to see that our relationship with Eskom has also become a friendly one. Eskom is fortunate to have an enthusiastic heritage manager, Jenny Kolb, and to have acquired an engineering



team which is keen to see their locos in good condition again – even, perhaps, operational and available to other enthusiasts. The only problem we had there was that Jenny thinks she should be given the Richards Bay NBL tank, because it carries her name! We have added the Berliner 0-6-0T to Eskom's collection, as it once belonged to them and operated at Komati power station.

The Chamber of Mines Museum has also joined in. They are probably going to display the Class 1 loco and some non-railway items in the form of machinery.

We have been able to help Friends of the Rail with track for their new Hermanstad site. The attack on the 15F which Geoff refers to brought some benefit to them as we were able to assist with some parts needed for the repair of their 15F (3117) which was damaged in an accident resulting from the theft of track at Cullinan.

Other items offered to preservation groups are also noted by Geoff in his report.

I have to record our thanks (I just can't find the right words to express our feelings) to Steam In Action for activating us to save those assets which we still have. Without their intervention we would have nothing. Some of our appreciation is reflected by us placing locomotives and other equipment in the care of the Sandstone Heritage Trust. It was amazing when I visited Sandstone in October to see the transformation which had already taken place with these engines, not to mention the fantastic collection of other transport items which are there. I would strongly recommend that anyone who has the opportunity to visit Sandstone to jump at it. You won't regret the experience. My very sincere thanks to Wilfred Mole, Mike Myers, Lukas Nel, Gert Jubileus and all the others involved in helping us.

## **The future**

In short, we intend to continue SANRASM as a leader in national heritage and railway preservation. The funds which we have available will be utilised to further that aim.

Our priority is to move the remaining assets to a new site – we hope this will be Germiston, but the deal hasn't yet been finalised. The cost of moving will be substantial – as I mentioned, most of it will probably have to be transported by road.

Until we know what the transport will cost, we cannot commit any substantial part of our funds. Our intention is to devote whatever remains available to the restoration of some of our more significant items – probably Wardale 2644 would be the first. We will obviously, when we reach that stage, call for a decision supported by members.

Once again, thank you to all those members who have taken the trouble to communicate their support to the Executive Committee. Please do not hesitate to let me have your comments on any matters you feel should be passed on to the other members.

## **Mike Dyke**

Chairman, SANRASM Executive Committee

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