



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe

The Loop

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Your editor and membership secretary are currently on holiday in Cyprus and indulging our other passion; that of caring for over 200 abandoned cats at the local cat sanctuary. It is hard work, particularly in the heat of a Cyprus summer but worth it when one can bring a little relief to animals that would otherwise be mistreated or turned loose to fend for themselves.



TEA BREAK



JAILBREAK

The petition has been going well with over 8000 signatures so far. This is an excellent response and much of the credit must go to Messrs Geoff Pullen and Boet Marais. Boet has been in hospital recently but is now on the mend. I am sure everybody wishes him a speedy recovery. He and Fraser were interviewed by Segree Chetty at Knysna station on 7th June for SABC News. However, the interview did not go out as Transnet refused to be interviewed and SABC felt it was not right if only one side put their point of view! However, a radio interview with Fraser did go out with SAFM national news on the 5th June.

On the subject of the petition, could I ask members to fill in all twenty spaces (if possible) before returning them to the addresses below. With your help, we can pass the 10,000 mark!

We have constantly received support from Steam in Action, a group dedicated to preserving as much as possible of the South African railway scene. One of their most recent initiatives was to stop the destruction of Drew station. Even so, it was touch and go and the stores shed was demolished. They

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had been alerted to the situation by a member who chanced upon the demolition of Bonnievale station despite this building being over 60 years old and therefore protected. There was enough of a public backlash to stop any further destruction taking place at Drew.



DREW BEFORE



DREW AFTER

If you have an interest in the preservation of South African railway artefacts, why not subscribe to Steam in Action. It costs you nothing and you will be kept up to date with all that is happening (or not happening) in South Africa today. info@steam-in-action.com



BONNIEVALE, TOTAL DESTRUCTION!

Transnet have employed contractors to cut down vegetation along the George – Knysna line. The contractors were unable to say why.

The question of getting Transnet to talk to us, or anyone, remains a vexed one. Letters are being exchanged but it is a slow business. We will let you know immediately if anything significant takes place.

Julie Jenkins.

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Inspection Trolley Update as at 17 July 2012

Our trolley is finally nearing completion after its rebuild!

The new ceiling boards and internal panels to sides and doors have been fitted as have most of the door draught excluders.

Allan Waterston assisted by John Webb and Fraser have finished off the last of the electrics.

The 9 seats have been re-covered, and look very smart too, and are in the process of being re-erected ready for installation by Alistair Gibb. The floor is 90% complete, 8 of the nine fixing plates are



installed and two seats are in place. It only takes a few minutes each to install the rest.

It is intended that the trolley be taken to the Waterfront car parking area for display in the next week

Hopefully further interest will be generated in 'Friends of the Choo-Tjoe' when the public finally gets to see the trolley in its new and upgraded condition.

Fraser Howell

Latest news on our efforts to engage with Transnet.

After several letters to Transnet requesting an audience to discuss a way forward to resuscitate the line, we received a reply dated 21 June 2012.

The letter, signed by CEO Mr. Brian Molefe, said that unless we could inform Transnet how we intended raising R250m they would not talk!

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It was only 2 months previously it was reported that Mr. Molefe said they would only talk if R150m was brought to the table! This is termed inflation!

Despite this unhelpful response from the Transnet CEO we have dispatched several more requests for information to him.

We are also awaiting a response from Province regarding funding for an independent engineering survey of the line to be carried out in order to separate the conflicting and wildly differing cost estimates of line repair that are bandied about.

Fraser Howell

Motor Trolley experiences

This article caught my eye in the Outeniqua Railway Society Journal and is reproduced with the editor's permission. For further information about this Society, contact kenbetty@telkomsa.net

SA Rail. Vol.35.No.1/1995 Page 31.

Motor trolleys are used extensively by rail maintenance personnel, they came in a variety of shapes and sizes, all designed for a specific function There are open sided trolleys used by 'flying gang' teams, inspection vehicles used by their superiors, vehicles having elevated platforms for examining overhead electrification, etc. They are, however, also used by Telecommunication linesmen and technicians who use them to maintain and repair telephone routes that run alongside the track, bearing in mind that there are few roads alongside the track and in many instances, some rather inaccessible places.

The most common was the 'Wickham' model which had four doors, seating for about six persons, and a Ford V8 engine with a three-speed gearbox. It had all the other controls usually found in a motor car with the exception of a steering wheel. The wheels were driven by a chain coupled to a direction box, the latter enabled the trolley to travel forwards and backwards at any speed.

The braking system on this vehicle was however, a major disaster, this being purely mechanical, e.g. depressing the brake pedal merely pressed metal brake blocks against the wheels. For a vehicle weighing in excess of a ton you can imagine what the stopping power was like.

The biggest threat facing trolley drivers were unattended rail/road crossings; the general public often looked out for the smoke of a steam engine, or the familiar sound of unit or diesel horns. They did not appear to take notice of this silent approaching contraption, and it was also not easy to predict the speed of the motor trolley. Other hazards included animals grazing between the tracks, but they usually came off second best.

There were many other problems, e.g. the chain often broke or came off its driver gears, the wheel alignment had to be set regularly to ensure a smooth ride and the brakes required regular adjustment.

Overall it is a thrilling experience, driving along a track without having to steer and relaxing while taking in the marvellous scenery our country has to offer, mountain passes, river bridges, tunnels, etc.

In order to operate a motor trolley, one had to attend and pass a six week course in trains working and pass a practical driving test plus a certificate of competency for any particular section that would be traversed. A practical test concerning the maintenance of the trolley also had to be passed..

The last motor trolleys operated by Telecommunications personnel were those at Hutchinson – Cararvon in 1970 by Ken Brown who is now a Transtel Engineering Technician at Empangeni and at Caledon, Malmesbury also in 1970 by Bill Smith [myself], now a Senior Engineering Technician at Transtel Networks in Johannesburg. I did make one more trip up the Outeniqua Pass near George during 1972 to convey and install Van Schoor Tablet instruments at 'Outpad'. I trust readers will find this short article interesting and I look forward to any similar experiences of other trolley drivers.

Julie Jenkins

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