



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe

*The Loop*

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58 Fraser Street, Sedgefield, 6573, South Africa

## **NEWSLETTER NUMBER 8 – JANUARY 2013**

**A very happy New Year to all our Members. Is it me, or are the years getting shorter?**

**The highlight of the past year must be the placing of the trolley at the Waterfront. It has attracted a lot of attention and much favourable comment. It has put us firmly in the public eye. We have also been provided with covered accommodation at the Waste by Rail site and we are grateful for this. There are a few “snags” to be sorted out on the trolley, but they are mainly cosmetic and the vehicle is operational (or would be if we can get permission to operate).**

**We did not attend the Oyster Festival this year but we did go to the Leisure Isle Festival. It gave us more welcome exposure. The management of Woodmill Lane has offered us a site in a shop window when a shop becomes vacant. The only proviso being that the exhibit is “professional”.**

**There have been a number of contacts with various bodies concerning the rehabilitation and reopening of the line over the past year. Some of these have been positive and some have been, shall we say, not exactly positive. But at least no one has been totally negative!**

**As always, we would like to hear your stories on railways, so if anyone has an interesting anecdote to relate, please get in touch.**

**Julie Jenkins.**

### **Membership.**

**It is that time of the year when memberships need to be renewed and a renewal form is attached. Completed forms can be returned to the addresses below. We do value your continued interest and support because it shows a commitment to seeing our line up and running again. And if you can persuade your friends to become members, so much the better. For those of you who are not yet members but who would like to join us, I have also attached a membership form.**

Please consider making a subscription/donation every month. Several Members are doing this already. Contact Allan Waterston at [friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net](mailto:friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net)  
Colin Jenkins(membership)

### Petition

Our petition has now passed the 9500 mark, thanks in no small measure to the trolley at the waterfront. We would like to get it up to the 10,000 mark and then we will close it. A petition form is attached, and if you feel like helping with the final push, please, please get all your like minded friends to sign and send your completed forms to the addresses below. We are almost there. With your help, we can do it!

### Advertising outlet

The Friends have been granted permission by the Woodmill Lane Shopping Centre to advertise our Association and its aims in a vacant window at the centre.

We need a display to be prepared in advance.

If anyone would like to be involved in preparing such a display please contact Fraser on 044 382 4012.

### Developments.

It looks as if positive things could shortly happen with regard to the future of the George to Knysna line and the 'Friends' need to be able to contribute to this development.

Our Annual General Meeting will be happening sometime in the first quarter of 2013 and this would be a good time for those who would like to be involved in these developments to step forward and offer their expertise and commitment to ensuring that we see the resuscitation of the Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe.

We need you!

Please contact our Secretary, Kees Estie, to offer your services.

### Recovery of railway items from Botrivier

On 11 October 2012 Allan Waterston, Colin Jenkins and Fraser Howell set off in Allan's 4 X 4 from Knysna at 05h00 to load up a semaphore signal and two chimneys at Botrivier in the southern Cape. Allan's brother Richard had kindly lent us his 4.5m double axle flat bed trailer for this operation.

We arrived in Botriver at about 10h00 and immediately set to work to disassemble and lower to the ground all the working parts of the signal. This left the bare mast that was secured by 5No 20mm dia bolts at the base. To lower the mast without damaging it, (or the adjacent building!), we had arranged for the loan of a tractor from the Beaumont Winery (kind permission of Sebastian Beaumont) with a fork-lift attachment to help with the heavy work.



The most difficult part of this operation was removing the 5 holding down bolts of which 2 had stripped and had to be cut off by hacksaw. Only a couple of knuckles were skinned in this process neither of which required an "injured on duty" ticket to be issued!

The 6m long mast, signal ladder, semaphore arm, counterweight and other miscellaneous parts plus the two locomotive chimneys were loaded up and tightly secured.



The chimneys had been purchased from Transnet Millsite in 1985 and were previously carried by Class 19D and 15AR steam locomotives.



We left Botriver the following day just after midday and arrived back in Knysna at about 6pm. Unloading was successfully completed by 7pm.

Another few items of railway memorabilia have been saved and added to our growing collection.

Acknowledgement and thanks to Richard for the use of his trailer and to Allan for making his vehicle available and doing all the driving.

Anyone out there able to help with refurbishment?

Fraser Howell (Chairman)

### Franschhoek Tram.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> November, your editor and membership secretary travelled on the Franschhoek Winery tram. This was during an introductory offer period and was being used as a shakedown period.



The trip starts from just outside Franschhoek near to the Wine Cellar where there is a small platform. You also buy your tickets from here although there will shortly be an office in town. There will also be a bus built along the same lines as the tram which will deliver you to the tram in addition to taking in the wineries of Dieu Donne and La Corbiere on the other side of town.

At present, the tram stops at two wineries, those of La Provence and Rickety Bridge. The Rickety Bridge stop is just before the main road from Paarl to Franschhoek and

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this is where the line ends. However, the lease is for the whole line up to the junction with the main line at Paarl, and future plans see an extension over the road to La Motte and possibly other wineries. There are also plans to build another (double deck) tram and run it from the Paarl end. How quickly these plans can be put into operation will depend on the success of the present operation.

The operators are very concious of safety and the tram stops at every crossing while flagmen close the road off to allow the tram to pass. While we were there, it was quite obvious that this operation is essential as despite the provision of new stop signs, cars took no notice of the railway.

The trip itself is quite leisurely and takes about fifteen minutes to reach Rickety Bridge where a converted lorry transports passengers to the winery. Here you can taste five wines of your choosing. On the day we went, this was free but we did buy a plate of cheese and biscuits to soak up the wine. We also returned on the tram two days later when we had lunch in the restaurant.



The truck then delivers you back to the tram which then takes you back to La Provence where a tractor and trailer transport you to the winery. A word of warning ladies; wear a sports bra! At this winery, we tasted four wines but we had to pay. Once again the tractor takes you back to the tram. You can do the wineries in any order.



All in all, a very pleasant day out and one can only hope that this venture succeeds; it has been ten years in coming. More information can be obtained at [info@winetram.co.za](mailto:info@winetram.co.za)

### Accommodation

The Knysna Municipality has given permission for Friends of the Choo-Tjoe to temporarily garage their recently renovated rail inspection trolley at the 'Waste by Rail' facility.

In order to better secure this garage space Garden Route Steel Works (GRSW), a local steel supply and fabrication company, have very kindly sponsored the fabrication and erection of a security gate.

Mr. Graham Poynton of Garden Route Steel Works said "We support the efforts of everyone who is working towards the resuscitation of the Choo-Tjoe".

"Friends of the Choo-Tjoe very much appreciate this very significant gesture by Garden Route Steel Works and Knysna Municipality; it will go a long way to ensuring that our trolley is adequately protected." commented Friends Chairman Fraser Howell. The below picture shows, from L to R, John Jaftha (Knysna



Municipality), Graham Poynton (GRSW Sales), Carey Jones (GRSW Technical) and Fraser Howell (Friends of the Choo-Tjoe) at the handover.

Following on from this, steps were taken to improve security on the building by filling in the gap between the rails and the doors.

Denron sponsored the sand and gravel and we supplied the cement and labour. Allan and Fraser made up the shuttering with the help of Fraser's gardener. Allan then collected a couple of labourers and we set about mixing and pouring a concrete threshold. By lunchtime the job was done. Our thanks are due to Garden Route Steel, Graham, and Denron, Andrew, for the supply of the materials.

### Colin Jenkins

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**The concrete team**

## Knysna Leisure Island Festival – 20 and 21 October 2012

On Saturday we pitched our gazebo, with one eye on the gathering rain clouds. A lot of stallholders did not bother to attend due to the weather forecast which predicted rain. We carried on and spoke to a lot of local people who were happy to put their signatures on the petition as well as sell a few raffle tickets. Unfortunately the weather forecast proved to be accurate and we had to give up at lunchtime as we were spending most of our time pushing the rainwater off the gazebo roof. Thanks to Berndt Rohloff who came and helped us man the stand.

On Sunday we had a much better day with the sun shining, all the stallholders had pitched up and there were many more visitors to the Festival. We managed to spread the word about our hopes and aims to a lot more people and again no one objected to signing the petition, sometimes queueing up to sign. Over the weekend we managed to enrol another 5 members. Our thanks to Colin Burgess, Jimmy Harkus, who did a sterling job on approaching visitors, chatting and getting their signatures and thanks to John Knowles who was a master at selling raffle tickets, he was a joy to watch.

The raffle raised R670, with the bottle of whisky won by Roger Chapman and the box of chocolates by Claudia Thielbeer, well done to them.

This was the second year that we attended the Festival and I think it will be an annual event for us as it proved to be a useful conduit for us to spread the word about the Choo-Tjoe and letting non members know that we had not gone away but are still beavering away.

**Julie Jenkins**

## Sandstone Steam Festival, 4 -12 May 2013.

The Sandstone Heritage Trust is pleased to announce its annual Steam and Heritage gathering will take place from

4th-12th May 2013. We will be celebrating the centenary of the Kerr-Stuart NG4, a well-designed and very iconic

tank engine built specifically for the Alfred County Railway and delivered in 1913. Our NG4 will play a prominent

role in the activities and celebrations throughout the festival.

This will include a round the clock programme of 2-ft Narrow Gauge steam throughout the festival, accompanied by traction engines, military vehicles, our world-renowned teams of Afrikaner oxen, classic vehicles, tractors, steam lorries, as well as some surprises that will catch photographers off guard.

This event will see the inauguration of our night train “The Starlight Express”

This is a specialised gathering which typically attracts people who have an in-depth knowledge and interest in the subject. We have, as always, set an upper limit on the number of people who may attend. This is to provide a more relaxed atmosphere and to provide those people who have come a long way with an opportunity to have unobstructed access to view the things that most interest them.

Additionally, this year will see an aviation component with a number of visiting aircraft taking part.

Those who have visited the Festival before can testify to an interesting and enjoyable experience. Those who have not really should take the opportunity of doing so.

To that end, Sandstone have offered a discount rate to members of the "Friends". If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please contact us at the addresses below in the first instance and we will collate the figures. Remember, this offer applies only to members of the "Friends"

People who are not members can make their own arrangements direct with Sandstone.

To reserve your place at "Stars of Sandstone", or find out more contact:

UK Contact Details: Tel: +44 (0)1189 819600 E-mail: [joannewest@btinternet.com](mailto:joannewest@btinternet.com)

SA Contact Details: Tel: +27 11 805 4692 E-mail: [babitan@sandstone.co.za](mailto:babitan@sandstone.co.za)

The all-inclusive fee for the 8 day event is R8,500 plus VAT per person, including all meals but excluding accommodation.

Sandstone has drawn up lists of the accommodation available in the area as well as a list of the car hire companies at Bloemfontein and OR Tambo Airport should you require these.

To receive these or for further information please contact Babita Nathoo on [babitan@sandstone.co.za](mailto:babitan@sandstone.co.za)

For our European members, Geoff's Trains offers an all inclusive package.

Geoff's Trains has for many years run tours in southern Africa for railway enthusiasts wishing to ride behind and photograph steam locomotives. One of the first tours to include Sandstone was in 2005, when his narrow gauge tour to South Africa included both Sandstone and Sandstone's Avontuur Adventurer. Geoff has revisited us regularly since then with a number of successful charters. He has put together an interesting modular tour to southern Africa for steam enthusiasts in May 2013 and Sandstone is once more a star attraction.

More information on the Geoff's Trains package can be found on their website at: [www.geoffstrains](http://www.geoffstrains).

Running more trains calls for more crew, and Geoff's Trains is also offering his package to footplate crew who have proven qualifications acceptable to Sandstone and the Rail Safety Regulator.

Contact Geoff if you are interested in this option.

Postal address: PO Box 846, Sedgfield, 6573 Republic of South Africa

e-mail: [friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net](mailto:friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net)

Website: [www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za](http://www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za)

com. You can also call Geoff on +44 (0)156 632000.

In Germany, contact Tanago GmbH at: [www.tanago.de](http://www.tanago.de)

### For sale

**Prints of locomotive portrait paintings by railway artist David Hall-Green are available for sale approx R300 each. Size of the prints is 600 X 450mm.**

**Contact Fraser for more information.**

### Letters

We recently received a letter from a young devotee which is reproduced here. The voice of the future.

Dear Friends of the Choo-Tjoe

RE: A young supporter

For what it's worth, our family appreciates your endeavours to reinstitute the Choo-Tjoe, and by far the most enthusiastic member is our 5 year old son, Zachary. For as long as I can remember, he has been besotted with railways. He identifies every piece of track we pass while driving, often shouting, "Train Track!" (and all the more since our relocation to the Garden Route 3 years ago.)

He is a fan of Thomas the Tank Engine, has his own Thomas toy train set, and most of his drawings have something to do with railway tracks or trains (particularly steam engines). No prize for guessing what he wants to build and drive when he's 'big'.

It's no wonder then that he often verbally expresses his wish for the Choo-Tjoe to be functioning. The other night I encouraged him to write a letter and offer his services to help get it going again. In my mind, just his enthusiasm might encourage supporters. And who knows, even an enthusiastic, energetic 5 year old might be able to assist with a small task or two, if for nothing else than to bless his intentions, to reward his hopes and learn about the real world.



We insert his letter unedited. Hopefully you can make out the wording.

Sincerely,  
Zachary's father, Malcolm Cunningham (Knysna)

I Really Wech The Choo-tjoe wid workin  
I Recall Wech The Choo-tjoe wid work  
But it was working But I wish the  
Storm Didnt Break The Track So Please  
Wid You help us fix The Track my name is Zack

Please Look At The Back

P

lease Wid you help us Love Zack

I am 5 Years Old

Can I help

you in any

way if I can

Let me know

Love Zachary

**What a super newsletter! I despair of Transnet actually ever making any decision about the Choo Tjoe.**

**It is clear that their figure of R250 million includes a big chunk of profit to go into someone's pocket. I have seen Alan McVitty's figures & I think they are conservative if anything.**

**I have mentioned to Fraser that, when I was in England in July 2010, I had the opportunity to travel on the Watercress Express, from Alton for about 40 km south-west wards& return. What fun??**

**While I was in Alton, a low bed truck delivered another full loco & tender in one load. No problem at all. So anyone who tells you that moving the rolling stock from George to Knysna is a major problem is clueless??????**

**Regards**

**Terry Cockcroft**



**Sister trolley to ours at Hartebeespoort Dam the erstwhile DamRail. Your Editor on the right. The scheme was abandoned mainly because the track was being stolen week on week!**

Finally, A happy New Year to all our members and supporters.

Julie Jenkins

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