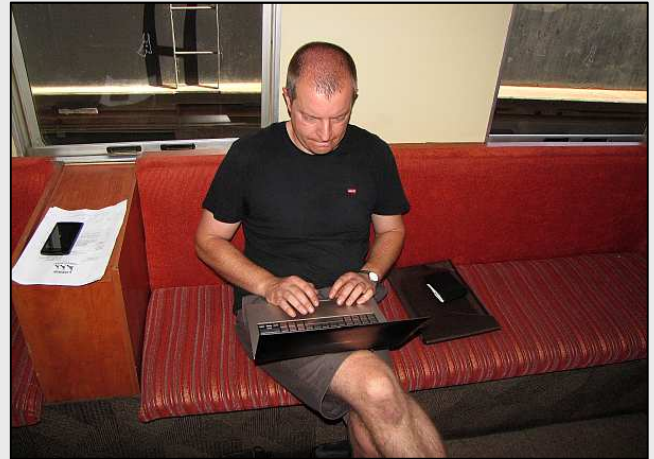


1). PRE RFS 2013 TOUR PREPARATION – THUR, 14 NOV. 2013:



P01 – There were actually 4 teams on the train. Feedem Pitseng (Catering), Crystal Cleaners (Cleaners), Footplaters (Volunteers) and Hospitality Staff (Volunteers). Here, the 4 cheerful ladies that would service the coaches and assist with the linens are being introduced to the train.



P02 – Looking a bit tense, the 'Swiss Bank Manager' chases up last minute issues and queries from passengers. Philipp Maurer provided over R250 000 of up-front funding to upgrade the coaches, as well as handing the marketing & bookings via established European steam networks.



P03 – The entire sleeper coach set was given a circus-elephant style scrub down and all the exterior windows cleaned. There wasn't enough time to redo the cobra wax polishing, however, but it was still quite an improvement.



P04 – This side of the train still shows the effects of Attie's last polishing. The sleepers nearly always end up parked one way so only one side really gets baked by the sun. The green reflection is from our tenant's storage container.



P05 – Coenie updates the long out-of-date web site address on the side of the coaches, changing the obsolete co.za to 'com', using printed letter 'M' on adhesive vinyl. Matching the fonts proved to be a bit difficult.



P06 – We had been using decals stuck onto the vestibule door glasses to ID the coaches. But they never last very long and the adhesives leave a mess on the glass. The coaches are now permanently identified from the outside.



P07 – The drinks arrived mixed in with the new chairs on the buffet trolley Shongololo Express's row of coach axles prevented further shunting movement on the spur track, so we all had to muck in and do laden walks to the bar coach.



P08 – Just a small part of the drinks loaded on board. The overall consumption was LESS than expected as the crews did not use up their allocation of four daily free drinks. They found that water or 'Oros' fruit juice to be more refreshing.



P09 – Here is a neat little touch that made its way onto the train ... a sample of a miniature bottle of still water, printed with the SAR Steam Tours Logo. In black and white, it isn't far off from the old SAR&H logo.



P10 – With both skin and brain mercilessly roasted by the sun, Jeandre drinks the condensate water from the first test of the new ice-cube machine. The compact machine would go on to serve 'ice bullets' throughout the entire tour.



P11 – Resting on the old washout station approach tracks, the Staff and Baggage Van had been coupled up to the drinking water tanker and most of the loading of service items already done by today. A freezer would be changed out for a larger capacity unit and sundry items loaded.



P12 – A one-Jeandre-powered wagon had made its way to the S&B van, with nine bottles of fresh loco traction sand on board. We don't normally use these bottles, so they were a bit rusty and encrusted with old sand. Before being loaded, the bottles were given a quick cleaning with a stiff brush.



P13 – Some of the kit with traction sand and oil bottles on board. There was about 900 litres of diesel in that tank, with 500 litres already loaded into the John Deere Genny's tank. The diesel ran out 1 ½ days before the tour ended with the original estimate being 100 litres burned per day.



P14 – <Sings> Cruisin' down the trackwork on a Summer Afternoon! Jeandre coasts gently back downhill with one sand bottle left to be filled.



P15 – A view of the cleaned and emptied kitchen of 'Kango the Katering Koach.' The variety of Feedem-Pitseng-built meals that came out of this confined space was amazing. The big extraction fan behind the stove's hood is a recent modification added by Hott-Nutts.



P16 – A view into the walk-in refrigerator, which was being pre-cooled for the tour. Although functional, the cooling plant wasn't quite up to the load and the Feedem people had to be careful about selecting cool storage. An extra deep freezer was loaded onto the S&B van to add capacity.



P17 – Transferring the chairs from the shunter to the Gold Class Coach wasn't so bad as they are small and light. These chairs were custom-built to order with their dimensions intended to fit through a typical coach window.



P18 – Somehow, 10cm had been added to the chair dimensions and they would not fit through the windows! O boy! The fellows are seen trying desperately to load through the doors ... but no dice.



P19 – The windows were measured and it was found that by removing the glass panes altogether and taking the feet off from the chairs that they would JUST about fit through the windows. Here the discoid feet are being removed.



P20 – This meant that every gold and silver compartment needed to have one window pane removed before the chairs could be loaded. That caused some extra cursing but with typical RS stubbornness, the job was completed.



P21 – The effort was worth it. The new chairs are of suede material and were chosen to compliment the planned new carpets for the next tour. The extra chairs placed in the Lounge Coach proved to be very popular through the tour.



P22 – Gordon applies the opaque window film to the bathrooms. He struggled at this time of day, as the warm afternoon sun was prematurely drying out the slippery detergent upon which the plastic film would slide.



P23 – Smudge Ackerman completes some last minute sealing work on a sink splash back. He was getting a bit stressed at this point as there was still a silver class coach in the 15M shop which was waiting to have the toilets fitted, and the sands of time were running free and loose!



P24 – The little details that help. Each compartment was provided with a two-pin adapter to ease the charging of cell phones and cameras. Luckily the familiar CEE7/16 two-pin design is also used in both Switzerland and England from whence most of our guests came.



P25 – The low light through the stored coaches shows that the evening was getting on by now, but the tour train preparation work would continue through into the late night.



P26 – Coenie-raad got assigned to complete all the door label decals for the various compartments and here, the small store rooms (ex-toilets) for the Dining Coach.



P27 – Look at those grim faces! Fitting new curtains proved challenging as the previous rails were mounted over stainless steel plates which baulked the self-drilling screws. We had no decent drill bits of the correct size either.



P28 – Mounting the dining coach curtains required scraping the paint and plaster back to find the original holes. We later got a three man 'assembly line' going to fit and decoratively knot the new tie-backs.



P29 – The ever-patient Coenie-raad thus had even more sanding and paint touch ups to do around the remounted curtain rails. He had been painting for four weeks by then and was heartily sick of it.



P30 – When the night is long, it takes two steam people to thread a curtain. Unfortunately the liners were protruding into the rail cavity and the rails themselves (actually chromed towel rails) had not been properly de-burred.

2). PRE-TOUR PREPARATION – FRI, 15 NOV. 2013:



P31 – I had packing to do on Friday followed by a slow congested drive to the depot, nursing a overheating engine. The sun was already sinking and casting a brazen light after a long and very hot day – for me and the depot crew.



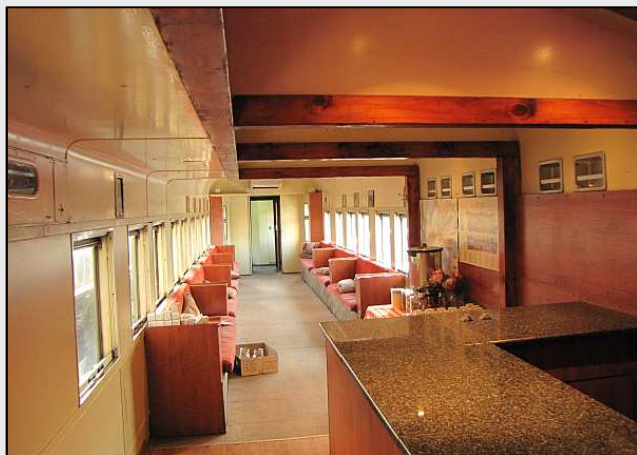
P32 – The bedding had arrived and was being loaded a bit late. (Those packages off to the left.) The beds would all need to be neatly made on Saturday morning before the guests would arrive from the airport.



P33 – Oops! When the neat new brackets were made for the bunks, no one thought to include the original squab spacer board that allows the center bunk to fold down. The results made the Silver Class bunks too narrow for a mattress. Warren and Phillip got busy shifting all the bunks outwards to centralize them under the new mattresses.



P34 – As some of our staff hadn't been able to keep up with their finishing work during the week, the good ladies of Crystal Cleaners gamely got stuck in with cleaning paint runs and splats from the bright work. Technically, it wasn't their job. Pictured here is an Economy Class Compartment intended to sleep two with the top bunks used as shelves.



P35 – The re-upholstered, carpet-cleaned and painted bar looks neat without the extra clutter and mismatched décor.



P36 – The just-completed dining car with the chairs repacked. Crystal Cleaners did a great job on the carpets.



P37 – 12AR 'Susie' was just topping off her steam and she would take us alone to Hermanstad the following day. The 15F would join us on Sunday. The Hermanstad run had the bonus that the loco would not need to be turned today.



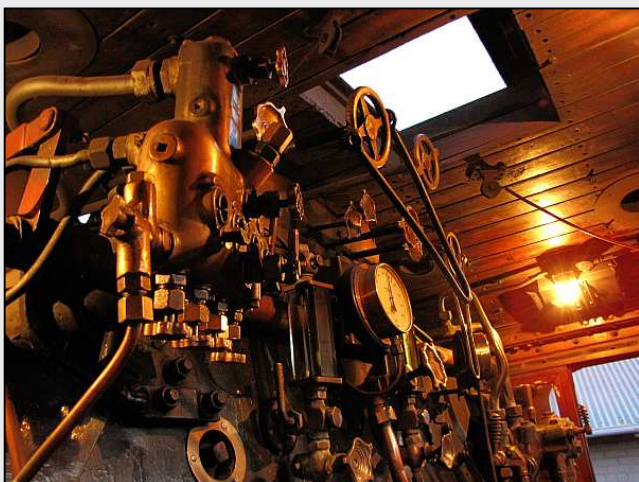
P38 – Being a creaky old gal, Suze appreciates a bit of soothing sunshine on her ... bum. Although we lost the steam effects doing a summer tour, we had ample daylight, long afternoons and late sunsets – ideal for a casual tour.



P39 – We had some surprise shunting to do, AFTER I had banked the coal bed and over-filled the boiler for the night. George is thus VERY carefully backing off from the ash pits. We would blow down standing at the Eastern Gates.



P40 – This long-leggidity creature is Hott-Nutts George, our newest shedman. He was valiantly trying to grow a 'mo for 'Movember.' The abundantly bearded Davie Viljoen spent the whole tour trying not to snigger at the gingery fluff.



P41 – A seated fireman's eye view. I rarely get to fire on a moving engine, so this was a treat of a learning experience for me. We were asked to move both the trains slightly to enable the connecting of shore-line power cables. However, coupling up was awkward on the curved track.



P42 – There was quite a bit of faffing about lining those coaches up and it was getting dark by the time the mixed train was properly placed. Our resident 'Energizer Bunny', Shunter Jeandre, is finally out of drum beats and he sneaks a quick nap on our way back.



P43 – One of the electrical phases had gone down, which meant no lights in the 15M shop – just IDEAL for last minute prep. Undaunted, Aidan is seen using a file to dress the square shank of a bathroom door handle.



P44 – A silver class compartment with one window pane removed to allow the loading of a chair. The beds still needed to be adjusted outwards and Shaun Ackerman was then-currently installing the porcelain toilets.



P45 – Lauren 'Smidge' Ackerman managed to finish the fitting and the hanging of the silver class curtains. The camera flash effect is a bit misleading. The curtains are a crushed burgundy colour in day light.



P46 – Coach work in the dark. Shaun Ackerman would continue working alone through the long night to install the toilets and bathroom fittings on this coach. Most of the other guys were sent home to be able to do their packing.



P47 – The bad electrical phase was energized later on, leading rise to this scene in the old 15M workshop. It looks quite busy – but there isn't a single person in sight.



P48 – The sleeper train waits in the washout area. It was shunted here for ease of access and boarding, but incidentally in clear view of the guard house. The gen-set had been run all day for testing and we were now on shore power. Some of our members slept over for the night.



This Depot Report was compiled by Mr. Lee D. Gates on behalf of Reefsteamers Association NPC.
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