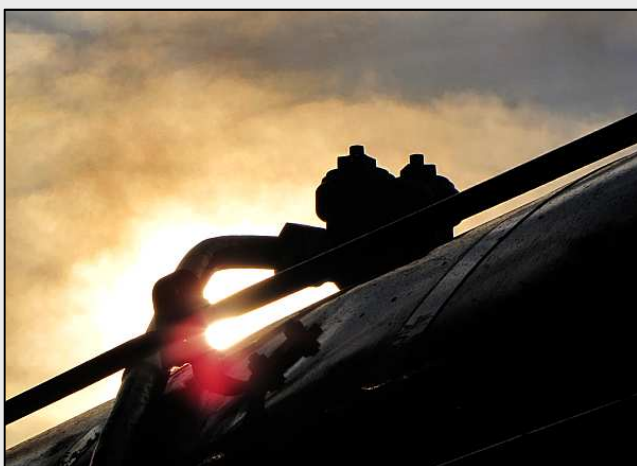




P01 – Our clanker for the day would be Class 12AR No.1535 'Susan.' This is actually an unusual shot as there would normally be a lot of activity at this time – but I only needed to hand the loco over in very light steam at 8am.



P02 – We had very inconsistent coal with a lot of dust and slack. It also had the high ignition point of high carbon (hard) coal but burnt out quickly (Like volatile soft coal) The firemen were soon making disparaging comments!



P03 – A clack valve sunrise.



P04 – As we had our work cut out to finish off the coaches as well as keeping Reefsteamers running with a limited crew, the two tour locomotives didn't get much in the way of cleaning and cosmetics. But Susan's forehead still looks dignified with green leaves reflected in the big ol' headlamp.



P05 – Our littlest and largest guys come on duty. Warren (L), although mostly on 'light duties' tending the bar, ended up working the longest hours on the tour. (A certain poor slob of a loco-minder did the 2<sup>nd</sup> longest hours!)



P06 – The first locomotive movement on Departure Date was the glamorous high speed trash train.





P07 – These two old boys were looking forward to their steam train adventure and both were in a fairly good mood! Senior Driver De Neckertjops (L) served as Train Manager for most of the tour and hardly got a sniff at the footplate – but Johann B. (R) got to run some miles in for us.



P08 – Time and motion study – quickly tying up your shoelaces while trundling past on the moving shunt. The driver had an excellent view from the back end of the cab and the points were already set. Better have tight work boots on to catch up with this high speed train!



P09 – Some last minute work on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Silver Class coach including gloss-black painting of inspection tag plates and several new PVC drains; loading chairs through compartment windows and more of the ENDLESS paint touch ups.



P10 – Two suede chairs just loaded through the windows by Warren and Jeandre – the window pane now needing to be re-installed and the chair feet re-attached. Coenie's paint bucket can be seen – he was touching up the bathroom and being very careful not to dislodge the newly mounted toilet from its curing silicone bead.



P11 – The Little Black Book. Barman Warren makes sure his entries are up to date and had just been copying the crew lists over for their daily soft-drink allocations.



P12 – Apart from the barman, Lauren (L) and Philipp were the main PR people for the tour – although Philipp had to bow out occasionally to perform his footplate duties.





P13 – We originally had about 36 RS people volunteer for the tour but it was cut down to 16 people for reasons of economy (food) and space. It was a bit harsh, but we could only take people with the skills we needed to run a tour train and the physical fitness to perform their duties.



P14 – Our guests arrived late due to late flights. The Reefsteamers people were a bit slow in response – the reality finally kicking in. SAR Steam Tours also sponsored each crew member with two black branded tee-shirts and you can see we were all wearing them for the big arrival.



P15 – Safely penned-in behind the electric fence and understandably looking a bit bewildered, our guests were also enjoying the unseasonal sunshine - considering that it is almost mid-winter where they came from!



P16 – After depositing their luggage, our guests were gently herded to the buffet and drinks table that had been set up as refreshment from their long flights. The majority of these 23 people were from Switzerland or England.



P17 – A Feedem Pitseng snacks buffet – the hard working RS crew just had to look on hungrily. The menu was cleverly chosen to reflect African themes, but also to have a touch of Europe about it. Most of the guests seemed to not know what to do with the dried bananas though...



P18 – Europeans can read! We made sure that there was plenty of introductory material to read, as well as samples of Paul Hloben's and Jean Dulez's recent books available at the bar. I think the English guests might have been amused at the Brit-style railway magazine collection!

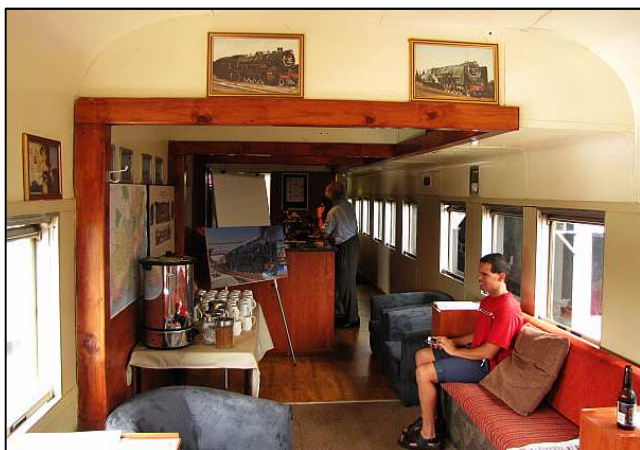




P19 – The Reefreestate Explorer train hadn't turned a wheel yet but the dining tables were already being set up for the first luncheon service. The Feedem Pitseng team worked like Trojans throughout the entire tour.



P20 – A Feedem Pitseng Menu with custom-printed inserts. As a typical sample, the first lunch while outbound to Hermanstad would be Pork Rolaude with a stuffing of dried apricots and coriander, accompanied by Baby Gem Squash, Snap Peas and Potato Dauphoise.



P21 – The lounge car's first 'customer', Carl de Campos sitting centrally to get all the audio action he could grab. The arrangement of the furniture would soon change – as the Andrew Giffen painting would only be displayed for a while. (It went up for auction towards the end of the tour.)



P22 – Although this was a special train, all the normal safety and operational rules still applied. De Neckertjops had to get all of the contracted staff members to officially sign on as crew along with the Reefsteamers people.



P23 – Eek! A SPIDER! They were actually discussing the problem in the dining coach where the tables don't line up with the windows. A future upgrade is planned with more tables in a colonial style and with the alignments rectified.



P24 – Aidan McCarthy joins the sad ranks of Facebook losers who photograph their food and post it on-line. As per most meals, the crew were served first, hence the simplified place settings and the paper serviettes.





P25 – The food was well worth photographing! Without exception, every crew member was amazed at the variety of and the detail within the foods that came from the small, steamy confines of Kango the Kitchen Koach.



P26 – Here is a more formal table setting for the guests. The table cloths were changed for every meal, which kept the on-board laundry service quite busy. However, the same uniform colour scheme was retained.



P27 – Shunting was a backup move along the greens of Hermanstad. It is not often you see our coaches parked in a dead straight line out in open daylight.



P28 – This little piggy went to the train station.... To the best of my knowledge, neither of the two resident pot-bellied pigs ended up on the breakfast menu.



P29 – The afternoon shadows were lengthening and it wasn't long before I started what would be my 2<sup>nd</sup> night shift on the ol' 12-bucket. But Hott-Nutts and I ended up with some surprise shunting to do, as Friends of the Rail still needed to shake out their train for the morrow's run.



P30 – The two trains were side-by-side so the shunting was at rather close quarters. And then there was the disagreeable sensation of your locomotive starting to roll away, when it is actually the train next to you that is moving past the cab windows.





P31 – The shunting also constituted the first impromptu photo session of the tour, with our guests getting acclimatized to the devil's thorns and prickly weeds of Africa. I was wondering if any would pick up a few ticks as souvenirs...



P32 – With the coaches lined up, Jo-anna the 24 Class got to prance about a bit and make a few runs forward for the cameras, while the elderly 12AR did not move at all for the photo session.



P33 – Even a blind man instinctively closes his eyes in concentration to track a moving locomotive by sound, while making a line-side recording. Carl was also concentrating on acting as a wind break for the microphone.



P34 – J.G. Strijdom's cup.



P35 – Even a 24 Class can look good sometimes! Here, the smartly turned out engine and tender is the backdrop for a slightly-opened demonstration blow down.



P36 – A driver's eye view down between the two locomotives at the end of the photo shoot. I found the differences in the sandboxes to be interesting. The odd thing is Reefsteamers has found that the more old fashioned loose-mounted cookie-jar style lids on the 12AR are the best design for keeping the traction sand dry.

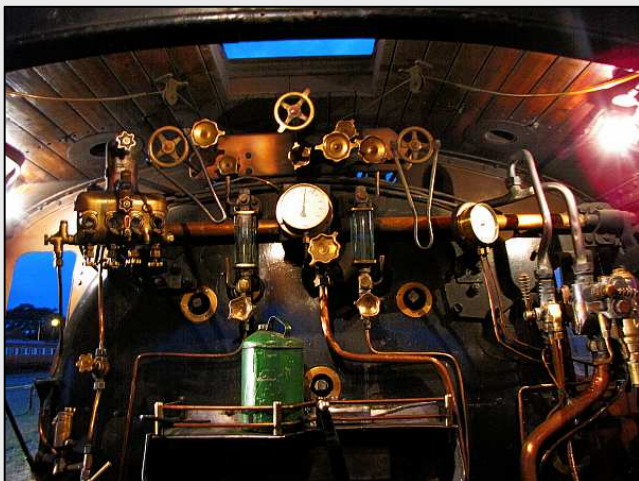




P37 – As the light is failing, the final shunting for the evening is underway. Meanwhile, the braai fires have been lit and our guests otherwise occupied with gastronomic matters.



P38 – George and I did a bit of quiet shunting to pick up a full water tanker borrowed from Friends of the Rail. In the picture the connection hardware is being assessed for what components we'd need to eventually hook the water up.



P39 – Dusk is settling, and the occasional whiff of steaks and boerewors make their way through to my office for the night. Steam pressure was still up, but this would be the first night I would be really fighting with the reluctant coal.



P40 – Two sets of dual work lamps were set up to spotlight the 12AR and where the 24 Class would later be strutting her stuff. The social action was way back by the buildings and the guests starting to eat by this time.



P41 – The 24 Class was also kept up in steam in the background and she conveniently lit up the 'dark side' of the 12-bucket. I checked the water in our tender and got some rebukes – the people in the social zone didn't notice that the outer siding has no contact wire overhead.



P42 – The moon was gradually filling up with helium and starting to rise. Seen beaded on the cantenary traction wire (Adjoining track), and right between the 12AR's safety valves, this was the second last night of full moon on the tour.





P43 – Under a three-point constellation of yard lights, Lil' Susie looks good as she waits patiently for the photographers to stop stuffing their faces with flame-cooked foods, and come out to pay her some attention.



P44 – A floodlit view into the fireman's side of the 12-bucket's cab.



P45 – Class 24 Jo-anna pulls forward to take her place in the 'lime lights.' She's still burning off the extra carbon put in for the move and is casting a beautifully coal-scented shroud across the scene.



P46 – Gabor the driver and Nathan the Station Master posed in period costume after the first round of photo shots had been fired.



P47 – A front view of the old girls standing calmly side by side and happily submitting to being the focus of attention. The differences in the pitches of the individual boilers is obvious in this shot.



P48 – The 24 Class eases forward and I caught her in her funny-wheeled entirety in the slot between the platform and the storage tracks. Coming from a depot stuffed to the soot-crusted rafters with 4-8-2 'Mountains', the 2-8-4 'Berkshire' arrangement always looks a bit lop-sided to me.





P49 – These people were having fun! Notice the two youngsters perched on top of the water tank of 'Battered Barb'; the ex-REGM GMAM R4. One of the charms of South African rail tourism is that although you have to use common sense to stay safe, we are not subject to the stifling, nanny-state safety rules that hinder railway-related fun and access in many 1<sup>st</sup> world countries.



P50 – A scene down the green. Our guests didn't last long at the photo shoot. Full of braai food and after a long day of aeroplane travel and a steam train ride, they soon flaked out and hit the bunks. The seated circle in the background is mainly that of Reefsteamers members chilling out now that the tour is finally on. Tomorrow we'd stay at Hermanstad while the 24 Class and her train would take the guests out to Cullinan. We would use the day for a bit of light-duty fault finding and correction – especially on the coaches which had not had a chance to undergo proper testing since their upgrade.



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