

1). FENCING AND LAND CLEARING – EARLY DECEMBER:



E01 – A view of the relocated fence that had been moved out to right next to the Transnet yard access road. The edge of the grass marks the original fence line. This area is for visitor parking and for long distance train passengers.



E02 – The existing poles were tapped in (no foundations) for speed. When you have a steam depot with four scrapyards in the vicinity and bracketed by squatter camps, you don't dare leave your perimeter open even overnight.



E03 – This is the visitors' entrance gate. You can see the original line of the fence along the sleeper on the ground, and the still-standing corner post next to 25NC No.3488's worshond tender. This gateway is not original to the depot.



E04 – A cleverly designed ratchet turnbuckle which doesn't have a separate pawl. The barrel fits in a slotted hole and can move sideways. It uses the weight/tension of the wire itself to engage the ratchet cam into the integral pawl teeth.



E05 – Looking east along the North Fence, the Saki Salon's Paddock is almost completely gone. The pedestrian gate has been removed and all the caboose's wiring and the toilet facilities were cleared out before the fencing project started. This is the outer track that is going to be put back into service as a storage track.



E06 – The fence poles seen on the right side originally ran up the center of the track. Being the thrifty skinks that we are, the poles and insulators are being reused but all the strand wiring is being replaced. The trackwork and surrounds were cleared and levelled a week previously via a combination of front-end loader and man power!



E07 – These long-disused points survived 100% intact, even with the tumbler outside of the original fence. They need to have the point rodding trench dug out and the slide-pads cleaned n' lubed before going back into service.



E08 – The gang were using the tea coaster as a supplies trolley. Since being used to transport concrete sleepers for the head shunt, those wheels are even more buckled. The hand writing on the red EOT marker says 'Boiler Empty.'



E09 – Here is the very useful TLB that we had been using on site for a few weeks. (Not for free but we did get a good deal!) The three gents are in the background, not in the bucket! The operator is pictured filling a ditch that has long been an ankle twister and a parking space waster.



E10 – The existing car park wasn't altered much, but the collected soil and ash was being used to level the old paddock which occupied the corner. This area is currently being covered with our locomotive ash, which works well at stabilizing raw ground and as a high-traction ground cover.



E11 – The recently planted foliage is already adapting along this original fence along the coal dock approach track. Note the fence has been cleared on the opposite side too – all the perimeter fences are to have levelled patrol foot paths on both sides.



E12 – Alan gets to (gloved) grips with installing new jumpers on an existing pole at the members' driveway entrance. With the removal of the paddock fence, some of the alternating polarities of the fence strands were incorrect. Note that one of the gate braces is a boiler tube!



E13 – We were once pondering the use of this area for rail sidings to store rescued rolling stock, but it is too far out to be secure. However, the ground has been levelled to fill in the several dozen fox-hole coal ‘mines’ that were dug out here last winter. The flat ground will help eliminate hiding places for people checking us out for ‘affirmative shopping.’



E14 – Looking past the corner king post, roughly along the line of the new fence. (Since erected.) The ground had to be flattened out along the route so the lowest strands of the fence run as close to the ground as feasible. It discourages crawl throughs. (You can just see the retaining walls of the recessed ash wagon tracks for the coaling stage.)



E15 – Although the turning balloon area is technically industrial wasteland, some aspects are not all that unattractive to look at. The fence-way has been cleared but there is also a contiguous pathway inside of the balloon track as well for guard patrols.



E16 – If the viewer didn’t know better, they’d hardly know that this used to be a bustling steam depot and that there were once buildings here. None of us hunt, so once the fence is up n’ energized, this area might become a bit of a wildlife sanctuary, particularly as a place of safety for the local guineafowl. (Which ARE hunted by the locals.)



E17 – Once the unearthed storage siding is re-instated and all the new yard lead points tumblers reinstated, the check rail on the turning balloon track needs attention as many of the chairs are working loose. Notice the similarly bent bolts in this picture – somebody had derailed a locomotive long ago and the wheels had run on the inside of the check rail.



E18 – So new that the wires are still shiny. Notice the asymmetrical spacing of the lower two wires, the lowest one being earthed. It makes for a more difficult fence to crawl under, but makes the fence prone to weed trouble. The solid-strand wire is more prone to expansion trouble than braided or composite wire, but it is less susceptible to arc cutting during a short circuit.



E19 – This section of the fence doesn't appear to guard much, as there already is an existing fence out of view to the left, guarding the Members Car Park and the Coal Dock. However we tend to get a lot of trespassers on this land to use the old pedestrian subway to get to the PRASA Germiston Station. This keeps them far enough away so that criminal elements can't recce and check out the weak spots in the inner fence. This fence also protects our own substation, and the Transnet substation in that building, as well as their cables. This area is where the lions are going to be paddocked, so trespassers must beware!



E20 – The electric fence around the turning balloon is structurally complete. It is later to be upgraded by having zone resistors spliced in so we can locate break-ins and faults faster. The existing fence runs on Merlin energizers. This one is going to run at about double the Joule (Energy Delivery) rating of the existing energizers.

The existing fence actually leaves burn marks in your skin at the entry and exit points of the electric current, so this one is going to hurt! Notice how the solid strand wires are sagging in the day's heat as they expand.



E21 – This is the recycled Pedestrian Gate from the now-dismantled Saki Salon Paddock from the north side. (Pic E05). This gate is easily accessible from the turning balloon and now functions as the 'Midden Gate'. We are using the recessed, concrete-lined ash wagon tracks as a non-ferrous and rubble dump.

Our leased land actually extends up to the main line visible in the background, so we are not using public land.



E22 – The land clearance project yielded a good pile of bonus concrete sleepers from derelict track and lying loose amongst the foliage. Most of these sleepers are still in usable condition for our lighter service requirements. Notice the protruding side bolts for the Pandrol type rail clips – the western half of the turning balloon use these sleepers.

These sleepers cannot be used in the tight part of the curvature as they are not suitable for the use of the check rail saddles. So our check rail sleepers are of traditional; wood – which makes them vulnerable to theft for firewood and railway sleeper furniture, hence part of the motivation for the fencing project in the first place.

And with that last point, the reasoning has been brought to a full circle.

2). A FEW WORKSHOP PROJECTS:



L01 – Newly painted in red oxide primer, the man cage for the Hyster LPG-powered Fork Lift is ready for action. This cage was obtained as surplus by Shaun Ackerman and would probably have otherwise been scrapped.



L02 – If you have to put them in a cage, throw them some cooked wots once in a while to keep them calm. Gordon (L) and Alan try the floor out. You can clearly see the two holes in the floor, which bolt it down to the fork lift's tines.



L03 – After a week of service, here's the Hyster Forklift dozing away with the man cage fitted. The forklift itself has been recently returned to service. Some poor Schmuck had ruined the rubber seals in the brakes and steering rams by accidentally putting in the wrong type of hydraulic oil.



L04 – One of the new CFL lamps installed in the 15M shop, replacing the aged mercury vapour Lights in a complete workshop re-lighting project. New member ESKOM Lucas is doing this work as a volunteer during the week and the new forklift mobile-ladder set-up is working a treat.



L05 – The unused machine tool store at the east end of the work bay of the 'Top Shed' has now been demolished. Apart from releasing unused space, the intent was to reduce hiding places for theft and to help encourage conglomeration of tool storage into one area.



L06 – A view from the old elevated wooden floorboards, right through where the top machine shop used to be and down through to the lubrication store. We will be using the floorboards to store spare stokers, dynamos and the like, to get them out of the working aisle for the east-end loco bay.



L07 – The inner bench of the oil store shows the broken coal shovels, which are used as spill-sand scoops while awaiting new handles for coal duty. The dustbin lid has been adopted as a spill tray for decanting oil bottles. Note the green colour of the compounded steam cylinder oil.



L08 – Oil on tap, with clean and empty drip trays and no sand on the floor, the way it should be. The oil drum labels can be a nuisance as they aren't always intuitive. Reefsteamers normally puts the steam oil on the left and the MH on the right.



L09 – As befits a large depot, we still have a good collection of oil pots, including the half-height paraffin cans. Souvenir and train room décor hunters – keep out! The oil feeders themselves are assigned per footplate crew member and are not pooled. The 'mop head' in the top left corner is a bundle of spare wicks for the multitude of oil cellars in the vicinity.



L10 – This is the Tube Swager that was rescued from the closed SANRASM site. This machine will be going next to No.8 bay (Where the Booth Rodley Crane is) and is to be restored to operation. Apart from the size of the machine, it was incorporated into the roof structure of the building it was in, which delayed its move. You can see the extra roof strut brace still present halfway along the tube channel.



L11 – I know a certain beard-faced Rhodesian DE2 enthusiast who is going to seriously like this maker's plate!



L12 – So here is a quiet Saturday afternoon view of a real steam depot that closed to steam just over 20 years ago and should have long since been stripped for scrap steel and left in ruins. Not bad, Reefsteamers, not bad at all.

3). NEW WEST-END GATES – SAT. 29 DECEMBER 2012:



G01 – This is the railway gate that was fabricated the previous week, complete with painting and the insulators mounted. Smudge (L) is marking the gate post for the new hinges. Gabriel Blore is trying to get out of camera range.



G02 – For economic reasons, all of the new west gates use simple bobbin insulators at both ends. Once the wires have settled in service and re-tensioned via kinking, the chaps will then fasten extra bobbins onto the diagonal braces.



G03 – This is the complicated junction wiring between the new balloon fence (left) and the existing western yard fences. This area will later be rewired to incorporate the new gates into the western yard wiring, and to terminate the already-long balloon fence at the other corner. Thus, a fault at the complicated gate wiring won't compromise the new, longer fence protecting the Turning Balloon.



G04 – Aidan and Nicholas (Background) were the painting and transportation guys. Some jobs at Reefsteamers end up restricted due to lack of skills, space or one set of tools. But by the end of this day, we had six people working simultaneously on sections of fencing or gates at different stages. Although it was hot and humid outdoors, it was a companionable time and we achieved our goals for the day.



G05 – End view of the team at work. Hott-Nutts George (blue) was working alone in the 15M shop to drill out the jig for the 15F 2914 firebox patch. He was about to get tasked with making a round of tea when we later called a time-out.



G06 – The Smudge at work, winding the wires back with the only reasonably decent set of linesmen pliers we had available. I ended up using vice grips as a substitute for my crap pliers – and will be getting better quality replacements.



G07 – Gabriel Blore (Stepson of The Smudge) has a go at the other end of that fence strand. He is just discovering how stiffly uncooperative that galvanized mild-steel wire can be, and you go twice around those little bobbins. The Y-Standard bar is welded on – the tie wires now unused.



G08 – Alan takes over to put Gabriel out of his misery. Notice the little 'pip' on top of the gate hinges. That is a grease nipple which were tapped in the previous week. As the gate barrel hinges are counter-hung (So you can't just lift the gate off), the pins cannot be exposed for lubrication.



G09 – Here is a close up of the hinges that were 'nipped-up' the previous week by Aidan Mac Cee. They were pre-welded full length to mild-steel base plates by Gordon, with a TIG welder, for easier and stronger welding against the circular posts out in the field.



G10 – 'Smudge' Ackerman takes a quick break in the wheelbarrow. He is currently battling with an upper respiratory system infection and with pleurisy. (Inflamed linings within the chest cavity.) And yet still willing to come out and do physical work – and during holiday time too!



G11 – It is tea time (made by GEORGE!) and it is time to pack up the rolling mule and get our tools out of the way of pedestrians who might accidentally find them in their pockets. Gabriel wasn't quite fast enough to get out of this shot...



G12 – A living enactment of 'throwing an anchor overboard.' The coils of fencing wire fell off and tangled with each other. (Luckily not with the wheels.) It was enough to bring the free-coasting trolley to a full stop.



G13 – By George! Tea under de tree! The recently moved steel chairs have become quite popular for the depot team, especially on those hot summer days. They do screw up the locomotive photography options a bit though.



G14 – After tea, it was time to prep the poles for the road vehicle gates. Here, Smudge has just been welding a temporarily tied-on Y-Standard pole. The corner pole is a boiler flue pole that was originally erected by Andre v. Dyk.



G15 – Moose the Ranger does good service as a combination generator n' tool truck. Farm-style Bakkies rule, even if they are a bit slower than certain Subarus, Mitsubishi's, Yari and other assorted funny-looking vehicles.



G16 – A close-up of one of the older-style turnbuckles, complete with a simple ratchet mechanism. We found the following day that once these have been fully tightened-up, there is no undoing that tensioned wire without cutting it.



G17 – While Gabriel enjoys his new mountain bike, The Smudge manipulates his mask to flip off the phlegm and bits of coughed-up alveoli and tracheal cartilage. Notice the Y-Standards look taller than the tubular corner pole. It is because they are not partially buried like the others are.



G18 – Nicholas (L) and Aidan trundle along to the western horizon with the first leaf of the new road vehicle gate and more work for the rest of us! The gate is actually balancing on extension poles shoved into the braces for the manual brake on this old man-powered rail inspection trolley.



G19 - This is the view from the inside of the property. You will notice that there is not a trace of shade to be found – the fencing and gate team, including yours truly, spent two solid days sizzling gently in the sun between 28 and 34 degrees. Some of the guys worked New Year's Eve too.



G20 – In the cavernous (and a tad cooler) forge, Gordon Bennett is busy doing the fill-in welding on the 3rd new gate to be fabricated in two weeks. We had already recycled a pedestrian gate, and would be fitting another recycled pedestrian gate the next day and for the following week.



G21 – Alan Lawton marks out the spacing for the insulator bobbins, preparing for the tedious job of drilling out those poles. That is a brand new tape measure too, as the previous one died after a few days of rigorous Reefsteamers usage!



G22 – Once Shaun had finished with the welder and the corner panel clear of sparks and slag, Aidan settles down to trying out installing a few strands. We didn't bother with tensioners or turnbuckles on such a small fence panel – just a few art-deco style zigs and zags to tension the wires.



G23 – About an hour later now. (I had been wiring strands, so no photos for a while.) The corner and intermediate panels are strung as well as two of the three gates. Shaun is checking the cooling welds on a spreader bar. Not only do the opposing diagonal braces now assist each other, the latch was in better alignment. (The poles were diverging.)



G24 – As soon as the welds were done, Gordon got started on the jumper wires. We wired our western gates as a single panel rather than alternating strands. (To eliminate unreliable bridge jumpers on opposite polarity on a moving gate.) As our system has an earth connection to the neutral, it can still detect a short or leak from the gates.



G25 – While the crazy humans work exposed in the brain-poaching sun, the more sensible doggies enjoy a snooze in the grassy shade. The days of the Reefsteamers Gravel-Hounds are coming to an end, as they will eventually be going to SANRASM to guard their compound and we will use hired dog patrols along the new 1.6km perimeter. We will then demolish the dog yard and open that area for use.



G26 – Some painting for Aidan to do after the late afternoon tea – two rounds of Ceylon's best made by little ol' me. (I was in a good mood and let The Smudge continue to live after his request for seconds.) All of the gates were painted with quick-drying etching primer to protect the thinner gauge steel as well as the corners and welds.



G27 – Dr. Smudge whacks off the original hinges after grinding through their welds. We would weld on the hinge-halves already attached to the new gates – to eliminate errors. Nicholas watches the scene, before ambling off to fetch the second gate which would go onto this pole.



G28 – A relatively rare picture of me at work, busy putting bridges in. I had taken my official pictures for the day and had happily gotten stuck in, but Aidan has recently started bringing his smaller camera to the depot as well – so we cover for each other in terms of records and entries for FB.



G29 – Approaching the end of a long, hot day. Alan is busy wiring in bridges around the corner post. Vertical channels had been welded between the gates to close the gaps for the latch. The other chaps are discussing the HT wiring.



G30 – Not bad for a day's work. 2 Gates built. 3 Gates installed and strands fitted and two fence panels wired. Six Reefsteamers spending their last precious Old Year holiday weekend here can feel proud of themselves. (Pic by AMC)

4). GATE STOPPERS – SUN. 30 DECEMBER 2012:



S01 – A view of a recently installed gate stopper. Its main purpose is to prevent the plastic insulator bobbins from being crushed against the pole if the gate is swung too far open outwards. The inner swing radius is inherently restricted by the diagonal braces for the gate posts.



S02 – The Little Man gets put onto painting a recently welded gate stopper, while Long Shanks checks for other signs of rust and missed paint on the previous day's welds. This etching primer dries quite quickly but needs deliberate dabbing on the rougher surfaces and the welding fillets.



S03 – Another view of a completed stopper at the bottom of a pole full of cleats. Some of these cleats have been installed incorrectly as the hooks were too short. But they continue to do the job electrical-wise.



S04 – The way to the Midden Gate was obstructed by that lonely concrete sleeper, which we rolled out the way, and then by a pile of weeds and grass. Locomotive men can generally fire sideways and downwards, but they cannot gracefully fire clumps of grass over an electric fence.



S05 – A sun-kissed Dr. Smudge tries out possible gate-stop positions for an angled scrap steel bar, while a purple Premier Class long-distance train is seen running westbound towards Germiston and beyond.



S06 – A general view of the work area. The fencing contractors didn't follow the instructions to maintain a 3m gap between the tracks and fence, so the outer road is just a bit too narrow for a full sized vehicle. But the outer path is to be used by security guards and later, a dog patrol.



S07 – Here's the underslung stop bar that necessitated some down-to-the-gravel welding. It serves the same purpose as for the Western Gates, to prevent the insulating bobbins from getting crushed against the gate post. The gate itself was recycled from the now-dismantled paddock for the Saki Salon.



S08 – Once the stopper cools, the Little Man does the painting. Beyond are the ash wagon pits (For the long-gone coal stage) which will be used for refuse, such as rubble. When they are filled up, they will be covered over with soil and left to blend in with the surrounds.

We are investigating getting recycling containers into the depot for glass, tins and plastics. We already recycle our metal scrap, burn scrap wood to light locomotive fires, use old car engine old on brake linkages and the ash/clinker is used for road and parkway surfacing/stabilization. We are quite an environmentally friendly organization!

5). EASTERN PEDESTRIAN GATE – SUN, 30 DECEMBER 2012:



E01 – Gabriel tries his hand at loading up sun-baked river sand with which we planned to make some concrete. He is just a minute or so from whacking himself on the temple with the spade's handle while doing those vertical chopping strokes. There were no tears, just some exclamations...



E02 – The crux of this project at the east end of the yards was to install a pedestrian gate next to the railway gate, so the security guards can patrol from our yard into the balloon area. I had just uncoupled and stripped the end panel (with turnbuckles) and Gordon (center) is stripping the pole.



E03 – Here is the reworked ratchet latch for the railway gate, complete with a newly welded pawl. Note the 'key bar' within the hole.



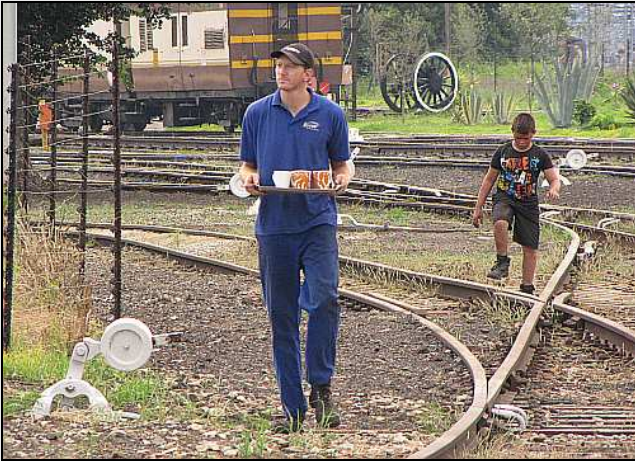
E04 – The extended East Fence has 16 strands while the new Balloon Fence has 20 strands. However, the East Fence was too low because the poles had to be knocked quite deeply into the soft ground. Shaun extends one of two poles to implement a higher 20 strand fence.



E05 – Another one of Gordon Bennett's 'favourite' goofy-type pics. A quick break after a long walk from the forge with fencing supplies. He's probably going to zap my arse with his welder after this. He will be starting as the fulltime on-site Depot and Workshop Manager from January 2013.



E06 – Measuring up the lintel beam for the now-hung pedestrian gate. This gate was a recycled one. The outer fence came in line with the leftmost step on the ladder – hence several panels on the new Balloon fence had to be stripped and the fence position adjusted before rewiring.



E07 – We sent in Gabriel as the harmless-looking messenger into the 15M shop to wrinkle George out of 15F 2914's firebox and make tea. We also felt it would do Hott-Nutts good to breath fresh air that wasn't grinder-scented.



E08 – After tea, George starts mixing some rough n' ready concrete after asking for the mixture ratios. We both got involved for the second lot which was a bigger batch. This little pile was for the railway gate's ratchet latch only.



E09 – How Reefsteamers keeps the firemen busy and trained with spade-work even when there are no trains currently running. Notice the newly whacked-in extended pole visible behind The Smudge, complete with 20 bobbins.



E10 – Suddenly the landscape was filled with migrating brown-veined white butterflies. They were so numerous that they resembled a slow-moving horizontal blizzard in the distance. Only two got stuck on the fresh black paint.



E11 – The fellows in the distance have tidied up the removed wire and are restringing the new Balloon Fence. The two extended poles have now been wired with 16 strands (four to go) and I have just done my first etching primer coating job over the various gates and poles. We are debating putting mandatory sign boards up requiring trains to stop before each gate. It certainly won't be popular amongst the drivers, but it might prevent us getting another gate under a locomotive sometime.



E12 – One of those treasured 'Ah Crap!' depot moments. The existing wires turned out to be too short for the moderately relocated balloon track fencing, even with the turnbuckles relaxed as much as we dared. To avoid a fence full of HT joints, we'd have to re-string the first 10 panels. (200 insulators ... yuckity-yuck!) You can see how the new pedestrian gate now leads into the guard patrol road, which now runs around the entire Turning Balloon.



E13 – Several hours later, Gordon, Alan, Nicholas and little me had managed to rewire the end section of the Balloon Fence. Nick n' me were battling with a badly tangled coil of wire which eventually exploded into a mess that would have done a WW1 infantry trench proud! Thank goodness it isn't barbed wire or razor tape! It was the coil of wire that got messed up when it fell off the wagon the previous day (Pic G12)

Alan and Gordon were able to retain their wire in a neat coil. But the wire was so stiff and hard to work with that even Alan was fighting with the coil as it tried to twist upon unwinding.

Here, the end panels have been fully jumpered in alternate polarities. For the evening, we only ended up energizing the lower few strand of the balloon fence. All of us had bruised, aching hands and those of us without gloves were actually bleeding in a few places.



E14 – The terminator pole for the relocated and strung panels in the Balloon Fence – needing yet more bridging work. These wires will be removed – just too blamed stiff to work with!

We also need to go around all the king posts and corner pole installed by the contractors and treat the rust already starting to develop on the welds. They missed that detail while chasing their tight deadlines.

This post was later jumpered back into circuit on New Year's Eve.

We have ended up once again with the Germiston Depot's fence being wired to different standards. We plan to get our Robbie Davies-Hanniball, who is our chief 'fencer', together with a team of about four people – and to spend a day going around the entire 2km worth of fencing (Existing and new.) to get the standards consistent between the various systems and optimized for detection.

It will be up to 'Big Robbie' whether he wants to put a higher power energizer into the balloon fence and whether to implement true zone detection for the turning ballon.

6). FUN WITH A PUMP TROLLEY:



P01 – After a long but not very energetic day together, the devil got into these two to do something fun. Because the one-way ratchet was ‘pointing’ the wrong way, the trolley had to be wheeled out past the points first.



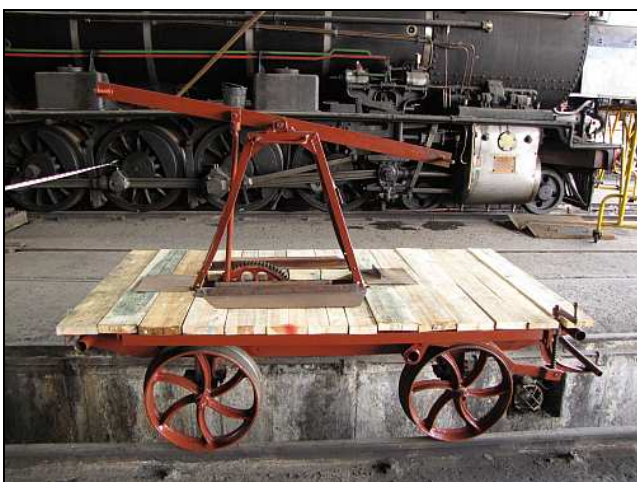
P02 – What was a bit surprising about the trolley was that in normal operation, the crank wheel only rotates through 180 degrees. So one fellow is always pulling up on his bars and one fellow is always pushing downwards.



P03 – How NOT to run a volunteer preservation group. The chairman sits on his arse while the members do all the grunt work. Actually, these pump trolleys were built as inspection vehicles so the manner in which Dennis is sitting is realistic – notice that he has his hand on the rim brake.



P04 – The chaps get into the rhythm and are pumping their way uphill to the depot after turning then newly painted pump trolley around. (The drive ratchet only works one way) This was the second last Magaliesburg Express train of the year and it was waiting for the home-road.



P05 – New decking has been cut out from planks sourced from industrial machinery palettes. (We have our sources) This wood is NOT for fire lighting – Hoor jy my, Victor! The new decking isn't rigidly attached to the frame as yet.



P06 – Here's a close-up of the custom-fabricated plate work and upper frames for the closure of the gear and rod aperture. We would hate for some curious kids to get their fingers between the gear teeth or nipped in the crank.



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