



4th-12th May 2013

Stars of Sandstone. 4th-12th May 2013. The countdown begins...

Every year most of our guests take the time and trouble to write to us telling us what we did right and what needs to be improved. We use this advice and we deal with the issues as best we can. The following newsletter will provide some inkling of what we are planning to do next year, as well as detailing improvements we have made to the railway in particular.

1) Vailima – on-going track improvements.

Undoubtedly our Vailima section past the school is one of the most difficult to ascend 2-ft Narrow Gauge railway inclines in the world. The gradient is fine but the curves have been a problem

We have been working hard on this for some months now and the track has been lifted, realigned, straightened, and levelled. We foresee a much easier ascent in future. This work is on-going.



2) Rolling out the big guns.

Our Sherman, which is always of interest to visitors, has had a major overhaul. We have had the engine out for an upgrade, we have completely redesigned, and reinstalled a massively improved cooling system with a brand new radiator donated to us by Tombo Radiators (<http://www.tombo.co.za/>). We are grateful to the Tombo management team for having supported us in this regard.



The 12 Rollers have been taken out and are now being re-rubberised using a specialised vulcanising process. This is extremely expensive. Each wheel is costing us R7,000 to re-rubberise. The tank has done well because almost certainly the rubber that was left on these rollers dates back to the Second World War. Let's hope it lasts as well for the next 60-70 years.

3) Consists.

We really try hard to improve our consists. Let's be imaginative and if anyone has any ideas we will do our best to make their dreams come true in this regard.

One very special plan that we have formulated is to load cattle on to the railway. Wouter and his team in the workshops have completely restored two NGG cattle wagons. We will select the appropriate sized cattle and put them into these two wagons and add them to the consist. It will require us to build a cattle loading ramp adjacent to our cattle area, which is adjacent to the railway fortunately.





4) Our Diesels.



Bagnall locomotive

Our diesels have never played a very prominent part and we would like to see them out and about more often. Our ex ACR Bagnall has had a thorough health check. The injectors needed attention, the exhaust was carboned up, and a number of oil leaks had to be repaired. It is now pulling its weight. Our Hunslet diesel which has been restored for many years is tired and we are replacing the 6LW Gardner engine in the locomotive. Fortunately we had an almost brand-new engine in a Broomwade compressor which we restored many years ago which has not seen any service at all so we are going to switch engines, overhaul the Hunslet engine, and put it into the Broomwade.

5) Tractors.



We are hoping to host a number of vintage tractor enthusiasts from the Villiersdorp area at our event next year. This will give us significantly enhanced capability when it comes to getting tractors up and running. We have such a huge assortment that it will be hard to know where to start but one new addition is this wonderful White of at this stage undetermined age or history. We found it in a scrap yard, paid R3,000 for it, and had it running within half an hour. In fact it has been helping with this year's harvest.



Another recent arrival is a 1947 International Dozer. It was purchased from a farmer near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape in working order. It arrived on the farm and has been working ever since. We hope to have it working alongside the railway as part of a photographic opportunity.



Talking about old agricultural equipment here is a 70 year old Planter planting pumpkins for the event. Get used to the idea of pumpkin fritters, pumpkin soup, and pumpkin with every dish. It is very good for you too.

6) Extra vehicles.

We try to change the various vehicles and tractors that are used to support the programme. This year our Model T Ford grain truck has been fitted with a new radiator from the USA and has been brought up to a good operational standard. It is an excellent vehicle for the purpose because it was designed with an agricultural application in mind.



Model T Grain truck... during trials... with new imported radiator

7) The Waenhuis.

A couple of updates. Firstly, our dining car has had a special structure erected over it so it is protected from the weather. We will be doing some work on the dining car itself but it will remain a useful place to have a meal.



We are also refurbishing a very ancient 80-year old Aga stove which we hope to have as our main heating and cooking resource for the Waenhuis. Let's hope we get that together on time.

It is not just the machinery that is receiving our attention; it is the well-being of our guests as well. We were fortunate enough to find an Aga built in 1961 in one of the farmhouses that is no longer in use and which is probably going to be demolished. We found a couple who specialise in refurbishing Aga's and here it is in all its glory just about to be commissioned in the Waenhuis kitchen.

Guests can look forward to hot soup on demand.

8) Upgrading the ambience of the main railway complex.



We have taken another bold step to upgrade the ambience of our main railway complex. We had an isolated Palm tree on one of our outlying farms. Unfortunately the house had to be demolished due to crime pressures but the Palm tree survived. Our Arable team extracted it, moved it, and replanted it next to the railway station. Early signs are good and it is now springing new leaves.

If this continues it should look quite good by the end of summer. No self-respecting South African Railway Station should be without a Palm tree or two. We in fact have another one in mind so expect a matching Palm to appear on the other side in due course.

Leigh and her team of ladies have been doing a fantastic job on the gardens. The roses are now in full bloom. May is not the best month for flowers but we will do our best.



9) Infrastructure.



We are surrounded by sandstone. It rises above us and it is under our feet. It doesn't go unnoticed though.

Here is a picture of a very old sheep store that we have moved from an outlying farm and then complemented it with a very well built, massively strong sandstone wall. Good for a few hundred years at least.

Summary

In short our event will be different to previous years. In fact, they generally are. The loco mix will be different with the introduction of our Arn Jung No. 847, and the Fowler B5 Road locomotive is currently

being retubed and will also be back on the farm. There will be two Narrow Gauge locomotives in operation that have not been seen either ever before or in the case of the Fowler some years ago.



Arn Jung, No. 847



NGG11, No. 52

Due to numerous distractions our progress on the NGG11, No. 52, is slower than we thought. It is in fact a complete ground up rebuild because very little of the original NGG11 was useable. It is such a significant locomotive that we would probably need to host a special event with the NGG11 as the centrepiece.

Register

So it only remains for you to contact Babita Hira (Southern Africa) on E: babitan@sandstone.co.za or Joanne West (Rest of World) on E: joannewest@btinternet.com to secure your place.

We are very flexible re dates. Daily visits are possible. All you need to do is tell us what suits you.

Wilf Mole and Mike Myers



Sandstone Estates where Heritage and Farming are one.