



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe

*The Loop*

Editor, Julie Jenkins.

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## **NEWSLETTER NUMBER 14– SEPTEMBER 2014**

Once again, an overseas trip has resulted in a late Autumn issue. There is very little to report since the last newsletter came out and it still seems to be a case of wait and see. This is very frustrating for your committee as it must be for our members and wellwishers. Stories appear in the press that Transnet Freight wish to increase railfreight and are looking for partners. We can only hope that they will look seriously at our line.

Fraser Howell has resigned from the committee and we would like to record our thanks to him for all the effort he put in over the last few years. This does mean we are now looking for a new membership secretary. If anyone feels they could take on this job, please contact the secretary at the above address.

### **Julie Jenkins**

Members Peter Coode and Fraser Howell spent two days in early July manning our inspection trolley stand at the Knysna Waterfront during the annual "Knysna Oyster Festival".

Although there were reasonable numbers of people within the Waterfront complex, the weather during both days was not at all conducive to those visitors who may have been interested in stopping to chat to us: It was cold with a persistent wind which generally made sitting inside the trolley far more tolerable than standing outside!

Even though the weather was against us we did manage meet a few old friends and to acquire a few more petition signatures.

Maybe conditions will be better next year.

### **Fraser Howell**

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## THE TROLLEY

Our members will have received notice that the committee decided that the friends should sell the trolley to Diaz Express. This group will be operating a shuttle service between Mossel Bay and Hartenbos calling at the Langeberg Mall and Diaz beach during the summer months and operate charter type journeys in the off season. Diaz Express have undertaken to affix a notice recognising the work done by the Friends and to promote the George Knysna line. In addition, all bona fide members of the friends will qualify for a 25% discount on tickets should they wish to travel. The purchase price was R75,000 to be paid by an initial payment of R37,500 and monthly payments R3000 until the final payment. The trolley remains the property of the Friends until the last payment is made. We also have first refusal on the trolley should they wish to sell.

It was not an easy decision to make and there has been some dissent; but there has also been support for the line the committee has taken. We felt that after the concerns that were raised at the last AGM about the deteriorating condition of the bodywork and the non use of the engine and bearings, it would be in the best interests of the trolley to allow someone else to operate it



Loading up at Knysna



Unloading at Voorbaai



The Rhodesia Railways trolley



On the rails

## Colin Jenkins (Chairman)

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## FURTHER TALES OF RESTORATION



While I was in the UK, I took the opportunity to work on a carriage I had rescued back in the mid eighties. It had been built in 1940 and withdrawn from service in 1965. It was donated to the Gloucester Boys Club of whom the then chairman of British Railways Board was president. (nice to have friends in high places ) It was located at Kerne Bridge on the banks of the River Wye. It had been slewed onto the old platform and all it's running gear had been removed. It sat at the bottom of a steep embankment that became more and more overgrown as the years went by.

I had first seen this carriage in 1974 and had kept an eye on it. It had been used as a dormitory but when a new purpose built block was erected, it became surplus to requirements. I offered the club two hundred and fifty pounds for it and the offer was accepted. By this time, it was looking very much the worse for wear and being stuck under the trees had not done it any favours. However, it was unique and I thought it was worth preserving. Having purchased it, the next problem was to move it. Crane hire was too expensive and would also have entailed getting the road closed with all the red tape that involved. Fortunately, only a few miles away was the depot of the Monmouthshire Regiment (Royal Engineers), a Territorial unit. A proposal to the OC aroused his interest. (the Territorials are always glad to do something out of the ordinary for their weekend camps) So a date was fixed for the move which coincided with a move the transport company were making in the area for another railway. (it turned out to be the day of the worst storm of the year!)



**Raising the body**



**Loading up**

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**Job done!**

So bright and early (well early anyway) on the Saturday morning, the lads had turned up and had started cutting down the trees that sprung up around the carriage. By the time this was done, it was lunchtime and the cookhouse did us proud. During the afternoon in appalling weather, the carriage was slowly raised up to the level of the road using a series of cribs. By this time, it was getting dark and everyone was tired and wet. So it was decided to call it a day. The lads went back to the drill hall for a feed and some shuteye. Meanwhile I went off in search of our transport. I found them still unloading at the railway site having encountered a few problems. The weather was if anything worse. The Big Pit museum sits on top of a hill, very exposed and very bleak. I finally showed the driver where he could lay up for the night before finally crashing out in the car around midnight.

Luckily the Sunday was not too bad and the lads were back on the job by eight. The carriage was traversed across the cribs until it was standing alongside the road. While the lads had a mid morning break, I went off to get the transport moving. Once in position, it took no more than a couple of minutes to load up and get on the way. I had arranged to have the carriage offloaded at the local sugar beet depot as there was no room to store it on the Severn Valley Railway. As it happened, the carriage was only just over the fence from the railway, which came in handy later on when I had to move things from our workshops to the site. Usually, I would load everything into the tender of the loco on the last trip of the day and then the loco would stop on it's way back to the shed and everything would be passed over the fence. In this way some very large pieces of timber were moved around.

To be continued.

## **Colin Jenkins**

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## **STARS of SANDSTONE 2014**

Sandstone Estates are staging another of their steam shows during April next year. For those who have not yet experienced a visit to this centre of live steam you need to see, hear and smell it first hand to fully appreciate the extent of the collection of railway equipment, road steam, military and farm tractors. If you have already made a decision to join us at Stars of Sandstone 2014 it is essential for you to please send in your registration forms as soon as possible to Babita Hira at [babitan@sandstone.co.za](mailto:babitan@sandstone.co.za)

The attendance registration form can now be accessed live on our web site as follows: <http://www.sandstone-estates.com/index.php/stars-of-sandstone-registration>. If you have any railway related qualifications and wish to assist with railway activities these should be sent in with the registration form in order for us to arrange for your certification.

Also note that due to the event partly taking place over the Easter Weekend accommodation in the surrounding area is being booked up fairly quickly and we suggest that you start looking at booking your accommodation sooner rather than later. A list of accommodation, also sent out previously, can be viewed at: [http://www.sandstone-estates.com/images/stories/Where\\_to\\_find\\_us/Accommodation\\_2012.pdf](http://www.sandstone-estates.com/images/stories/Where_to_find_us/Accommodation_2012.pdf).

## **Trains in the Western Cape**

It would appear that ten carriages of the ex Union Limited train set, currently at Voorbaai, have been set aside for a company planning to run trains in the Western Cape. No more details to hand at present.