



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe

The Loop

Editor, Julie Jenkins. julie.j@cytanet.com.cy
58 Fraser Street, Sedgfield, 6573, South Africa

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 11 – DECEMBER 2013

Nearly Christmas again! Where does the year go? It has been a year of two halves. The first half saw us getting little response from the powers that be, but then there was a thaw towards the middle of the year when Transnet approached the municipalities of George and Knysna requesting them to look into ways of providing traffic for a reopened line. It was emphasised that the justification for reopening was dependant on there being enough freight traffic. (A passenger service *might* be started at some point!) Not a full commitment to reopening, but it is a toe in the door.

We had a good two days at the Leisure Isle festival, the weather being kinder this year. A report follows.

It only remains for me to wish all our members a very happy festive season and let us hope the new year brings some good news.

Julie Jenkins (editor)

Leisure Isle Festival.

The festival took place over the weekend of 26th/27th October. It looked as though we might have been rained off again but the sky began to clear and we duly got our stall open. The morning was easily the busiest time and we answered a lot of questions from interested members of the public. (we also had **one** person who did not want the railway back at any price!) We continued collecting signatures on our petition and had a successful raffle. The raffle was drawn by Kirsten, from one of the adjacent stalls and the prizewinners were duly presented with their prizes. Apart from myself, Fraser and Colin, thanks must also go to John Knowles, Michelle Nisi, Jimmy Marcus and Colin Burgess who helped man the stall.

Julie Jenkins



Manning the stand



Kirsten and Julie draw the raffle

Visit of Dutch Delegation (DDD)

RECENT VISIT TO SA BY JAAP NIEWEG (DDD)

In order to receive an update on the progress to reopen the George to Knysna line Jaap Nieweg from Holland (De Dutch Delegation - DDD) made another week long visit to SA during November 2013. This was his third visit to SA in under 3 years.

Jaap, who is closely involved in the management of the Medemblik to Hoorn preserved line in northern Holland, has considerable experience in all aspects of present day steam railway preservation. He also has extensive links with many other preservation bodies in mainland Europe and the UK. (The Medemblik Hoorn railway is twinned with the Bluebell Line in Sussex which a few years ago celebrated its 50th birthday).

An extensive schedule was arranged for Jaap by the Friends and FOCT/DDD member Jan Burger in order for Jaap to introduce himself to the various role players, interested parties and stakeholders and to familiarise himself with the progress achieved to date by those parties who are working to see the resuscitation of the railway.

The parties with whom talks were conducted included, amongst others, representatives from local municipalities, local Circle of Business, local radio and various stakeholders who have their own ideas on how best to make use of the line.

Postal address:

PO Box 846, Sedgefield, 6573 Republic of South Africa

e-mail:

friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net

Website:

www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za

During these discussions our small delegation comprising Jaap, Jan and Fraser were well received and we left all the meetings with a strong positive feeling for support for the reopening of the line.

During the week we were informed that a business plan was in the course of preparation and this would probably be submitted to the authorities sometime in the New Year.

If the submitted business plan is accepted the next logical step could possibly be for a concession to be issued and a service operator appointed. Before this occurs, however, several large hurdles remain, not the least being the question of how the finance for the repairs and upgrading to the line can be secured. This aspect is receiving attention both in SA and in Europe.

Jaap also met with representatives of Stellenbosch University to discuss the desirability of a cost/benefit analysis of a George to Knysna railway reopening. Further discussions will be held before a decision is made to proceed with this aspect.

It is anticipated that the line would be used for both freight and heritage rail tourism with a possibility of a local passenger service being introduced if suitable diesel railcars can be located.

After all the discussions had been completed the general impression felt by Jaap, Jan and Fraser was very positive about the future of the line and its reopening, and that the interested parties and stakeholders were committed to achieving that goal.

It is planned that Jaap will make a further trip to SA sometime in the early 2014 to contribute, if necessary, to the finalisation of the business plan.

Fraser Howell

Re-opening of the Lootsberg line

During a recent trip to Johannesburg, we drove alongside the Lootsberg line. We had heard a rumour that this line was being re-opened to give more capacity on the line to Port Elizabeth.

We passed the site of Dwaarsvlei station on the Saturday afternoon and saw two ballast wagons with a tractor unit on the mail line. The following Friday we passed the site again. Two more ballast wagons were there with a different tractor unit; this time standing in the siding. So it seems the rumour is true. Who knows, some time in the future, it may *just* be possible to travel over that fabulous pass again.



Colin Jenkins



Membership

It is nearing the end of the year and membership subscriptions will be due on 1st Jan. I hope all of you who are currently members will renew and a renewal form is attached.

Colin Jenkins(membership)

This year's Stars of Sandstone festival will be taking place from 12th to 21st April 2014. This event attracts visitors from all over the world and is a non stop steam extravaganza. In addition, there are military vehicles, farm vehicles and visiting aircraft to make it a truly memorable occasion. Full details can be obtained from Barbita Hira, babitan@sandstone.co.za

Colin Jenkins