



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe

The Loop

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This will not be a long newsletter; there is little to report since the last one was sent out. It is an attempt by your editor to get the Loop back to its normal dates.

First, a reminder that the AGM will be held on Tuesday, 4th March at 1630 hrs in the Sedgefield library hall. Everyone is invited to attend, but remember, only paid up members will be eligible to vote. Our membership is important as it gives us more credibility when dealing with the authorities.

It is impossible to know for certain, but your committee believes that the constant pressure we have brought to bear on Transnet, coupled with the petition we have been running, could well have had a bearing on Transnet's approach to the municipalities of George and Knysna with a view to coming up with a plan to restore traffic to the line.

Concerning the petition, it is interesting to see who signed and why. As you would expect, a good number of locals signed. Of these, a significant number were coloured or black. Perhaps the biggest proportion of signatures has come from holiday makers both home grown and from overseas. Quite a number of people have come up to us and asked when the next train was leaving not even realising that the line was no longer open. These were mainly people from up country who were visiting for the first time or returning after an absence of a few years. Most of the overseas visitors who spoke to us bemoaned the fact that the line was closed because it had always been a part of their itinerary when they were here. Quite a number of black people from up country also spoke to us. Perhaps the most telling comment came from a family who said they had never been to the Garden Route before and had not realised how much it had to offer. This would suggest a potential market for the future.

Julie Jenkins

Membership

Can I ask those members who have not already done so, to complete the attached renewal form for 2014. The cut off point for this year will be 1st April. Remember, your membership is important.

Colin Jenkins (membership)

Carriage restoration.

A little while ago, a friend of mine asked for some advice about how to tackle a dry rot problem in a dining car belonging to SANRASM, the preservation group in Randfontein. It was a little difficult to ascertain exactly what the problem was over the phone so I offered to go up to the site and see for myself. Well, a flying visit turned into a fortnight while a whole host of other problems came to light.

The first problem was the dry rot in the centre rail of the dining car (SHASHI). There was no chance of patching this particular piece so it was cut out over a distance of about twelve feet. As luck would have it, there were several old coach bodies awaiting scrapping and these yielded up a good quantity of well seasoned teak (80 years old!) From this a new section was formed and duly inserted into the carriage.



The rotten centre rail



The old rail removed



New rail spliced in

It was then discovered that the floor was also riddled with wet and dry rot. The floor was removed in sections and replaced with best bongowood, well treated and coated in creosote. The main frame of the carriage was teak and this fortunately had escaped the rot. It too was well treated before the boards went down. The boards were delivered from SA Timber, cut to size; except they weren't! So a considerable amount of planing had to be done before they were laid down. Another problem was that if they were not immediately screwed down, they took on the shape of bananas or barley sugar twists. Much use was made of wedges and large hammers!



Wet rot in floor



Removing the old floor



The new floor goes in



The new floor

My visits became more frequent as the problems increased.

The next task was to remove the ceiling which was soaking wet. The decorative hardwood trim was first removed (where it had not already fallen off) and then the ceiling panels were removed, again in sections. Once all the old screws and nails had been removed, any rotten timber was replaced and the whole lot treated.

To make up the new ceiling panels, several formers had to be made. The method for producing the panels was to take two sheets of hardboard, wet one of them and wrap it round the former. When this had dried in it's new shape, the other piece was similarly treated. The two halves were then coated in glue and clamped up to the former until they were dry. This produced a curved piece which could then be cut to size and attached to the ceiling.



the rotten ceiling



The former



Glueing up the panels



Preparing the template



Installing the ceiling panels

The tricky bit was where the end met the side. Here there was a compound curve and a template was produced using a thin piece of hardboard, sprung into place and trimmed until it fitted. This template could then be laid on the required panels and the panels marked out for cutting. Once the lads had got the hang of it, there was no stopping them and thoughts could turn to other problems.



New ceilings and wall panels with the restored trim being replaced

To be continued.

Colin Jenkins