



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe



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Another AGM is over. The meeting was quite well attended and thanks to those who turned up at the Sedgefield library hall.

A number of changes have taken place on the committee; Fraser has stepped down as chairman and has taken on the role of membership secretary. Colin has taken over as chairman. We also have a new member, Dirk van der Zeyden, who was elected from the floor.

One of the problems we face is the falling off of membership. I suppose it is not surprising as nothing much seems to be happening and people naturally get disheartened. The good thing is that there is hard core who have stuck with us and our thanks are due to them.

It was explained in Fraser's report that there is movement and this was borne out at a business forum we attended at Knysna last month, where we were informed that a survey of the line to determine the true cost of rebuilding had been completed. So do not give up hope!

A copy of the meeting minutes is included in this newsletter.

Julie Jenkins

At the AGM, Fraser stood down as chairman and I took over. I would like to place on record the committee's thanks for the way he has steered the Friends over the last three years. A thankless task at times. He has taken on the role of membership secretary and henceforth any membership queries should be addressed to him. howell@telkomsa.net or 044 382 4012. We welcome on board Dirk van der Zeyden and hope he finds his time well spent.

Under any other business, the question of the trolley was raised. The principle concerns were that the paintwork was deteriorating in the open, the electrics had yet to be completed and the engine had not been turned over for a while. At our subsequent committee meeting the question was posed as to whether the trolley had fulfilled its purpose. It was generally felt that it had been worthwhile having it at the waterfront where it had generated a lot of interest, not only in itself but more importantly, in the future of the line. The drawback was that unless someone was almost in daily attendance to explain to the public what was going on, it was just an exhibit. The decision was therefore taken to look into getting a qualified motor electrician to clear up the remaining niggles,

and to get it repainted before moving it under cover until such time as it may be used on the line. Dirk has kindly offered to pursue this.

We would also be able to run the engine up from time to time.

As mentioned in a previous copy of the Loop, The Municipalities of George and Knysna have been asked to come up with a plan for reintroducing freight to the line and a third party is in discussions with them. This is a serious proposal and your committee is prepared to back it. But already a full survey of the line has been carried out and Knysna municipality is awaiting the results. So, as they say, watch this space!

Colin Jenkins(chairman)

Minutes of the 3rd Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Choo-Tjoe (FOCT) held at the Municipal Library Hall, Sedgefield, on 4 March 2014 at 16:30

1 Welcome:

Fraser Howell, Chairman of the *Friends of the Choo-Tjoe*, welcomed all to the Annual General Meeting – and noted that there was a fairly good attendance.

2 Attendance:

As per the attached attendance register. 15 members signed the attendance register.

Apologies:

15 apologies were received, namely, Murray Douglas, Les Smith, Ed Parfett, Andrew Stevens, Gill Woolf, Andy and Shirley Pedrick, Christopher Durrant, Allan Waterston, Oliver Davis, Mike Barber, Mike Reddy, Dave Jones, Philip Caveney and Jeannie Taljard,

Proxies Received in favour of the Chairman:

Philip Caveney, Ina Engelbrecht and Les Smith.

There being a quorum present, the meeting proceeded.

3 Minutes of the 2nd AGM:

The minutes were taken as read. Proposed: Mark Taljard. Seconded, Colin Burgess.

4 Matters Arising:

Nil.

5 Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements:

In the absence of the Treasurer, Allan Waterston, Kees Estié read the Treasurer's Report. A copy of the report is attached as **Addendum 1**. The report was accepted. Proposed, Mark Taljard. Seconded, Jimmy Harcus.

5.1 In view of the fact that only minor work is still needed on the Inspection Trolley - in reply to a question if there were other projects coming on line soon - Fraser commented that three assets, namely, the pump trolley, a semaphore signal and a ganger's trolley, were stored at the Waste-by-Rail site and needed attention but a lack of manpower (volunteers) to restore these items was a problem.

6 Progress Reports:

Colin Jenkins, Membership Secretary, reported that membership numbers had decreased the past year. Current membership is: Ordinary Members: 38, Family Members: 9 and Overseas Members: 10. 7
Chairman's Report:

Fraser Howell read his report. A copy of the report is attached as **Addendum 2** to the minutes of the meeting. The report was accepted. Proposed, Colin Burgess. Seconded, John Webb.

7.1 On a question whether the Western Cape Provincial Government has registered interest in the refurbishment of the George/Knysna (G/K) railway line, Fraser responded in the affirmative but had received no confirmation that Transnet had registered this interest.

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7.3 Fraser reported that shortly after the Inspection Trolley had been parked at the Waterfront, Transnet queried who had authorised this, to which a reply was given that Transnet, Port Elizabeth had been asked for permission but that (to date) none had been received. (Apparently permission given by the Waterfront Management to park the Trolley on the rails was not acceptable to Transnet).

7.3 From the floor, it was proposed that funds should be earmarked to run the Inspection Trolley between Knysna to Goukamma stations. Fraser informed the meeting that a written request to Transnet (sent more than a year ago) for in-principle approval to run the trolley, had recently been acknowledged, but permission was not granted – it seems Transnet would be more open to receiving a unified proposal rather than individual requests. Therefore it appears unlikely that the *Friends* would be given permission to run the Trolley on any section of the line in future.

7.4 Comment: The loss/theft of sleepers was a concern. Fraser commented that much of the track would have to be renewed and believed that this would not be a major concern to Transnet.

7.5 With regard to the *Friends'* current objective and its future role, Fraser said that this had not been given much thought. However, should the line be repaired and services be resumed, a different response may be required. Fraser noted that Transnet were very sensitive to the issue.

7.6 On a question raised earlier in the meeting on the role of the Dutch Group, Jan Burger responded that the group consisted of Karel Bos (founder of the international company *Bosal* and who is funding the group), Jaap Nieweg, an expert on management and technical matters regarding the running of heritage line operations (running trains on a heritage between Hoorn and Enkhuizen in Holland) and himself (managing the group's affairs in South Africa). Jan informed the meeting that Jaap had visited South Africa a number of times to assess what was required to bring the G/K line into operation again. Jaap had attended the first meeting with Transnet in Johannesburg in February 2013 and it seemed at first that Transnet were supportive, but nothing had subsequently materialised. Transnet had made it known that they would only be interested in bringing the G/K line back into operation if a solid business case and financial plan for freight traffic can be motivated (with passenger traffic a secondary supportive role). Jaap Nieweg would be coming to South Africa again during March 2014 to put a proposal, in association with local partners, to Transnet. Jaap also had contact with European partners/funders who may be interested in supporting the initiative if there is a solid business case. Jan was confident that something concrete would materialise this year from their efforts. Jan was requested to report back to members once sufficient progress had been made.

8 Election of a management committee for 2013:

Fraser said that all members of the committee were prepared to serve another term if the meeting so decided, but that additional members were needed. Dirk van der Zeyden volunteered his services. Therefore, the 2014 management committee comprises the following; Colin Jenkins, Julie Jenkins, Allan Waterston, Fraser Howell and Kees Estié. A Chairman will be elected at the first committee meeting. Proposed, Jan Burger. Seconded, Bernd Rohloff

9 Other Business:

9.1 On a concern raised earlier in the meeting about the deteriorating condition of the Trolley standing on the rail at the Waterfront, Fraser said that the Rail Safety Regulator's permission needs to be obtained before the Trolley can be moved to the Rail-by-Waste site by rail but conceded that it could be moved by road. The Trolley still had minor problems (mainly electrical) which need to be sorted out.

9.2 A proposal that the pump trolley should be placed at the Waterfront at the place of the Trolley was not considered advisable as security was a concern for such a relatively small item.

9.3 It was pointed out that a major investment had been made with the purchase and restoration of the Trolley and that the engine needs to be run from time to time – also, the wheels turned as new bearings had been installed. The new committee will attend to this as a priority.

10 Closure:

In closing. Fraser thanked members for their attendance. Fraser, in turn, was thanked for his leadership and work during his terms as Chairman.

Chairman:

Date:

Addendum 1: Treasurer Allan Waterston's Report

Financial report for the year ended 31 December 2013

I have pleasure in presenting the financial position of the Friends of the Choo-Tjoe for the year ended 31 December 2013. With the restoration of the Wickham Trolley having been completed in 2012 and no further projects having been undertaken during the year under review there was very little demand placed on the resources of The Friends. Through membership, sundry donations and takings (sale of raffle tickets, bumper stickers and licence holders) mainly at the Leisure Island Festival, our financial position remained healthy and improved over the prior year.

Income for the period totalled **R19 853.61** (2012:R17 075) as detailed below. Membership fees and donations constituted the main source of income.

	2013	2012
General donations	10 524.80	9 242.00
Membership fees	8 210.00	6 515.00
Sundry income	20.00	500.00
Raffle	805.00	670.00
Interest	293.81	148.53
	19 853.61	17 075.53

Over the year the *Friends* incurred expenses amounting to **R3 364.45** (2012:R7 727) all of which was funded from internal resources.

The breakdown of these expenses is as follows:

	2013	2012
Bank charges	574.55	570.15
Website hosting	556.00	212.92
Trolley repairs/refurbishment		5 602.66
Postage/Stationery/Sundry expenses	2 233.90	1 341.69
	3 364.45	7 727.42

Bank charges remained in line with the prior year however it is worth noting that R250 was attributable to normal banking services with the balance of R324 arising directly out of fees charged in respect of cash and cheque deposits to our account and other transaction charges. In February our website was migrated to a Wordpress platform which allows us to manage content independent of a web designer; this required a higher level of service agreement with our internet service provider which is the reason for the increase in this cost. Stationery expenses, which include the cost of printer cartridges, were up on the previous year.

A surplus of **R16 489.16** (R9 348) was reflected for the year under review.

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At year end cash and bank totalled **R32 564** (2012:R18 216).

As reported previously, various expenses (in addition to loans made on acquisition of the Wickham Trolley) have been funded by specific members who have not as yet requested reimbursement. A record of these liabilities is maintained. Details of these expenses and loans are available on request. Other than the former there were no outstanding commitments at year end.

A full list of items (assets) held by the Association is available on request.

Allan Waterston

Treasurer

10 February 2014

Addendum 2: Chairman Fraser Howell's Report.

Chairman' report for the AGM 2014.

I would like to welcome all present here today at this our 3rd AGM.

It is extremely important that we continue to attract support from our Members, Corporate Donors and all others who wish to see the George to Knysna line reopened. For this support we are very grateful.

This year has been one of consolidation. Little tangible progress can be shown for our efforts but some small successes have been achieved. For instance we have continued to build our brand by speaking to individuals and groups and to collect signatures for our Petition. We exhibited at the Leisure Isle Festival where we engaged with many people and managed to collect additional funds, petition signatures and, we hope, much goodwill. Special thanks are due to Michelle Nisi, Boet Marais, Jimmy Harcus and Andrew Stevens plus several other members who, over several years, have made great efforts in collecting over 15000 petition signatures to date.

The *De Dutch Delegation* (DDD) met with TFR in JHB in February 2013 to discuss the plan that had been produced by Jaap Nieweg of DDD. The Friends of the ChooTjoe (FOCT) was not invited to that meeting but we did receive comprehensive feedback on it and the subsequent dealings that DDD had with Transnet Freight Rail (TFR). Unfortunately this initiative appears not to have been favoured by TFR.

Jaap made a further visit to SA in mid November to speak with all interested parties and potential stakeholders about the reopening of the George to Knysna line. DDD with this writer met with representatives from the Municipalities of Knysna, George and Plettenberg Bay, a local Business Forum, Classic Rail and George Railway Museum. Jaap was also interviewed on local radio station 97.0 FM.

During October TFR advertised for interested parties to register "Expressions of Interest" for redundant equipment around SA. This equipment included mainly steam locomotives, coaches and loco spares and included all the equipment now situated at George and Voorbaai that was previously used to run the Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe. The equipment not taken up by interested parties through lend/lease/hire or sale will be sold as scrap. We are given to understand that many railway preservation groups in SA have registered their interest with TFR in acquiring some of this equipment. We have done likewise to try to ensure that sufficient stock will be available to run a service when reopening takes place.

You may recall that in December 2012 FOCT applied to TFR for a "No objection in Principle" to run our trolley from Knysna station to Belvidere. After several requests we finally received a written response from them in September 2013 stating that a unified approach from all stakeholders with freight being the core revenue was their preferred option. This stance by TFR was laid out during a meeting in early August of stakeholders, including representatives from local Municipalities, Classic Rail, TFR plus an individual proposer of a rail tourist scheme. FOCT, DDD and the Garden Route Cycling Association were present at the meeting with "observer status" only.

This writer made another nine day visit to Sandstone Estates at Ficksburg in the Southern Free State for their annual steam festival. During this May visit a talk was given on the FOCT and the attempts being made to resuscitate the line.

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The Knysna Municipality kindly gave us permission to occupy a part of their rail connected Waste by Rail site to store our trolley and other items. A security gate kindly supplied and erected by Garden Route Steel Works, which is most appreciated, has been installed. A concrete threshold, aggregates kindly donated by Denron, has been placed by the committee members to ensure that the area is secure. The area is presently being used to store the pump trolley, ganger's trolley and the semaphore signal. Our inspection trolley is still in place at the Waterfront. Apart from the items listed above we also have also received donations of two loco chimneys, some railway books and other miscellaneous items.

Have we reached the end of the line? Some reports seen by this writer have stated that it is all over for the resuscitation of the line but your committee believes nothing could be further from the truth. Although not intimately involved, we have been requested not to divulge information regarding ongoing negotiations but we can say that attempts to resuscitate the line are continuing and are showing signs of positive progress.

If the latest attempts at reviving the line become successful, the role of the Friends **could** change from being a supporting voice on the sidelines to becoming a group which is more involved in other roles such as doing volunteer work on the line or taking on individual heritage renovation projects; hopefully in the near future the membership will be asked to decide what new direction FOCT should take. We hope that a public announcement on negotiations to reopen the line will be forthcoming in the not too distant future.

In closing I would like to sincerely thank all those who have supported, and continue to support, the reopening of the George to Knysna line. I would like to specifically thank our donors, members and committee members for all their effort, commitment and financial backing that has been given over these past three and a half years.

I will not be available for the post of Chairman going forward as I feel that with the new role that FOCT will, hopefully, be able to assume in the near future this is a good time to step aside and allow others the opportunity to take FOCT forward.

I wish the new committee and new Chairman my best wishes and hope to see and hear steam once more on a reopened George to Knysna line.

Fraser Howell

March 2014

Carriage restoration continued

You will recall from the last edition of the Loop, that I had been asked by Geoff Pethick of SANRASM if I could advise on a few problems he was experiencing with the repairs to some of the stock. Most of the problems arose from a lack of maintenance (lack of volunteers) over the years. I therefore agreed to take a look. Geoff, it has to be said, was pretty pessimistic about the state of some of the stock. But I have been involved with carriage restoration and maintenance for over forty five years, both as a volunteer and full time and I was able to reassure him that things were not quite as bleak as they seemed.



Removing old screws from the roof hoops



Peter making repairs to the roof end of Wesvaal

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Inserting new boards into the roof of Wesvaal



Past it's sell by date

He already had the major job of repairing the roofs well in hand with a small team of lads who had no previous experience. They were to prove to be quite proficient by the time the project came to an end. With the dining car SHASHI well on it's way, attention was turned to private saloon WESVAAL. This vehicle purported to be of Cape Government railway origin which it almost certainly was. We were thrown somewhat while repairing the roof as the roofline seemed to change half way down. Could it have been two separate vehicles spliced together? (an early example of cut and shut!) For no apparent reason, there was one set of windows that were two inches wider than all the others; just about half way down. A mystery which will probably remain unsolved. It is this sort of thing that makes restoration so interesting.



The old matchboarding removed from Wesvaal



New matchboarding in place

The next job was to replace a section of matchboarding that had rotted and buckled. This was a simple job: one of the old boards supplied the cross section and I made up sufficient boarding back in Sedgefield. This was fitted on the next trip north. The biggest job was the production and fitting of over 30 odd droplights (windows that lower). The carriage interior was teak so the droplights needed to be of the same material. Fortunately, (or not, depending on your point of view) there were two carriages that had already been condemned as having no hope of restoration. The main frames yielded up some good lengths of teak. At ninety years old, it was not likely to warp! Some of this was used to make the replacement centre rail in SHASHI. Geoff delivered the rest to Sedgefield and this was cut to the correct size in the garage.

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Wesvaal



Parts for the droplights cut to size



Completed toilet droplight

Of course there were a lot of screw and nail holes along with various mortises that had to be avoided. Such screw holes that could not be avoided were plugged using the same teak. This was probably the most time consuming job of all. Once the droplights had been made up they were transported up to the site in two lots. Allan Waterstone took one lot and I took the other. After some final fitting, all the droplights were replaced.

In between times, work continued on SHASHI. Quite a few of the sliding lights (ventilators above the main window) needed repairing as they were falling apart and had broken glass that needed replacing. Once the lads had been shown how to do the job, they were left to get on with it.

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Sill being bleached with oxalic acid



Sill, repaired and ready to be used



Repaired sill in place

The interior window sills were badly stained and broken. The stain was removed using oxalic acid and the defective wood was removed and new wood spliced in. The sills were then replaced.



Side sheets being removed



Completed roof

At the same time, the steel side sheets were removed to check there was no further rot lurking about. These panels unfortunately were rusting away at the edges and so they were replaced with new.

Shortly after, the project came to an end. There is still much to do but at least the carriages stand a chance of surviving until another plan can be made for their future.

Colin Jenkins

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