



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe

The Loop

Editor, Julie Jenkins.

friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net 58 Fraser
St, Sedgefield, 6573, South Africa

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 16 – JANUARY 2015

A Happy New Year to all our members and let us hope this is the year we get some positive action.

A number of rumours have been circulating about the reopening of the line and like most rumours, some have the ring of authenticity while others are wildly fanciful. The advice is to disregard such rumours for the time being and wait for official announcements.

It is that time of year for membership renewals and a renewal form is attached with this copy of the Loop. While numbers have dropped off over the years, we now seem to have a hard core of dedicated members. It is no surprise really that the numbers have dropped when there is very little positive news. But it is nice to be able to report that over the last couple of years, the number has been quite stable. We do not propose to actively seek new members until we have a clearer picture of where we are going.

Our trolley has been in action between Mossel Bay and Hartenbos over the latter half of the holiday period and it has been useful in showing up the various snags that need to be fixed prior to the charter trips. When details of these are to hand, we will let you know.

Julie Jenkins

Membership

A membership renewal form is attached for the year 2015. It has been decided to keep rates at their current level for this year. Remember that membership entitles you to at discount on the Diaz Express between Hartenbos and Mossel Bay. If there are non members who would like to join, please ask for a membership form at the addresses at the top of the page.

Diaz Express

The Diaz Express Has been operating over the second half of the holiday period with five trips day from Hartenbos to Mossel Bay Station. Permission to run did not come through until 24th Dec so some traffic was lost. Although according to our secretary, all the trollies were jam packed when he went and according to the operator, there were days when numbers were a positive embarrassment! Fortunately for me, things had quietened down a

Postal address:

PO Box 846, Sedgefield, 6573 Republic of South Africa

e-mail:

friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net

Website:

www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za

bit when I made my journeys. It is nice to actually start or terminate your journey at Mossel Bay station proper although it is sad to see the once smart area reduced to a cocktail bar and a fish restaurant. It is difficult to recall the days when the summer Joburg train used to arrive and depart from there or the shuttle ran up to the junction to meet the Cape Town – Port Elizabeth train. Or even the Christmas trains that ran to Knysna, GMA and ten carriages complete with dining car; and not any old dining car, but PROTEA, the only one built and used in the Union Limited and the 1947 Royal Tour relief train.



1717 at Mossel Bay



leaving Mossel Bay

Postal address:

PO Box 846, Sedgefield, 6573 Republic of South Africa

e-mail:

friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net

Website:

www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za



Beside the seaside

Anyway, the three trolleys leave Hartenbos and travel alongside the locomotive depot and freight yard, pausing while permission is received to proceed to Mossel Bay. The horn is in constant use to warn persons on the line of our approach. The train slows down for all road crossings again the horn going full tilt. It is possible to join or alight from the train at certain points although on the days I travelled, only Santos had any pick ups or set downs.

There are a number of issues that have to be sorted out and this was a good shake down period. The ex Rhodesia trolley has a flat on one wheel set and this will need sorting; our trolley has, not a flat, but a slight rumble which may wear in with careful use of the brakes. The biggest snag is that our trolley was overheating pulling two trailer cars and so now the diesel powered car runs round at both ends and is the sole power. Luckily, the inspector insisted that all the trolleys should have brake lines at both ends so this does not present a problem other than the fag of running round.

There are plans to run semi charter type trains during the off season to places further afield with side trips and experiences thrown in. Booking for these will be essential. When we have details, we will let you know.

Colin Jenkins

Carriage restoration continued

Postal address:

PO Box 846, Sedgefield, 6573 Republic of South Africa

e-mail:

friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net

Website:

www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za

Now that the carriage was back on the rails, the immediate task was to replace the missing truss rods and queen posts. These are essential to prevent the frame from dipping in the middle. Along with a colleague, I booked a week off from the day job and we set about replacing the trussing. I had previously purchased the requisite angle iron, which was cut to length and shaped, and enough rivets to complete the task in hand.



Drilling the truss rods



Heating up the rivets



Hammering the rivets

Postal address:

PO Box 846, Sedgefield, 6573 Republic of South Africa

e-mail:

friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net

Website:

www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za



Rivets in place

Rivets hammered over

The first job was to replace the four queen posts and once this was done, the carriage could be levelled with enough clearance for the trusses themselves. This was done using the carriage jacks at each corner. To allow for deflection in the centre from the full weight of the body, the underframe was lifted by one inch during the riveting process. The truss rods were then placed in position under the queen posts and a vee was marked in the four positions where they were to be attached to the queen posts. The trusses were then removed and the four vees were cut. They were then replaced in the correct positions and clamped up. Heat was applied to the area round the vees and the trusses were raised at the ends until the vees met. The bent trusses were then clamped to the main frames.

Small holes were drilled through the trusses and the queen posts and all four were bolted together. The same procedure was adopted to bolt the trusses to the main frame. The next task was to rivet the ends of the trusses to the mainframes. With the trusses firmly clamped to the frames, the old holes in the frames were used for guiding the drill through the trusses. Bolts were used to secure the frames and the trusses together. This process was repeated until all four truss ends were drilled out.

The following day we started riveting. Having double checked all our measurements, we started by riveting the queen posts to the frame, replacing bolts for rivets.. This was particularly awkward as the area to be riveted was tucked up under the body. Next the trusses were riveted to the frames. Sounds easy, but neither of us had ever done any riveting before. Normally rivets would be heated up in a furnace until white hot before being hammered over. We had to use an oxy acetylene muffler to heat up the rivets and of course, they usually cooled down before a good joint was made. So it took several heatings to get them hammered home properly. Next the four vees were welded up and the queenposts were riveted to the trusses. By the end of the day, we had a rigid underframe.



Completed trussing

When the carriage had been slewed onto the trailer, a couple of the longitudinal braces had been bent. These were cut out and new ones were made using the old ones as patterns. In addition to this, quite a lot of the steelwork that held such things as battery boxes and brake gear had been cut off when the carriage had first been slewed onto the platform all those years ago. This all had to be replaced some from stock but quite a lot made from new steel.

All the bits were made up and bolted into position and here we had a bit of luck. The locomotive department wanted some vacuum brake cylinders overhauling and testing. As they did not have the facilities to do this themselves, we did a deal. We would do their cylinders if they would bring their mobile forge down to us and finish the riveting. With the proper equipment, it only took them a day and the work was done.



Postal address:

PO Box 846, Sedgefield, 6573 Republic of South Africa

e-mail:

friendsofthechootjoe@telkomsa.net

Website:

www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za



Cutting out the bent longitudinals and the new ones on the drill

All in all, a fair weeks work and further work could be completed after hours or at weekends.

After that, it was plain sailing to fit the rest of the missing gear. Buffers and drawgear installed, brake rigging replaced and brackets provided to take the dynamo and battery boxes.

To be continued.