

Friends of the Choo-Tjoe

The Loop

Editor, Julie Jenkins.

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The AGM has come and gone and the minutes are attached to this newsletter. There is still no positive news although behind the scenes, things are still happening. As no other serious players have come forward, we are giving all our support to Classic Rail in their bid to get the line up and running again. Should their bid be successful, we must then decide in what way we can be of assistance. This could take the form of looking after a station or manning a small museum/information point. We will ask the members for their suggestions at a later stage. We must all hope that the negotiations bear fruit. There could be exciting times ahead!

Julie Jenkins

Membership

Membership has increased this year despite the apparent lack of progress. So big thank you to all of you who renewed for your continued support and to those new members. If there are any others who wish to renew their membership, the deadline is the 25th of March; after which I will be overseas.

Colin Jenkins

Diaz Express

The Diaz Express is currently operating from Hartenbos and Mossel Bay on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, four trips per day. It is also operating charter type trips from Hartenbos to Klein Brak (for farm stall and wine tasting) and Groot Brak (for lunch at the Transkaroo restaurant). If you wish to travel on the Hartenbos-Mossel Bay trips, do not forget to take your membership cards with you to obtain your discount. Details can be obtained from Diaz Express by phone, 082 450 7778 or email info@diazexpress.co.za

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Carriage restoration continued.

Having got the truss rods on, the carriage was no longer in danger of sagging in the middle. The next jobs to be tackled were the replacement of the draw gear and buffers. With this gear in place, the carriage could safely be moved. This was followed with the replacement of the brake rigging. With this gear in place, the carriage could safely be stopped.

The draw gear was fairly straight forward. The draw hook was slid into it's slot, the spring slid onto the shank and the retaining nut was screwed up. The buffers were a bit more complicated as there is a heavy bracket behind the headstock which takes the spring. The buffer shanks were bolted into position first with a shim of linoleum between the shank and the mainframe. (on certain carriages, this is replaced with timber about one inch thick cut in such a way that it can be removed when life expired without removing the shank)



Left above. Buffer shanks. Right above. Buffers and shanks. Draw hook in place.

Left below. Buffer being inserted.

Right below. Buffer being compressed.



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Below. Showing the back of the drawbar with nut at upper right. The buffer spring bracket assembly at lower left (showing black in picture)



The spring and the bracket were placed roughly in position behind the headstock and a spring compressor made from an old buffer, inserted through the shank and the spring and bracket assembly. This was then tightened up until the holes in the bracket lined up with the holes in the mainframes. The brackets were then bolted up. With the compressor removed, the buffers were then slid down the shanks and through the spring assembly. Using the buffer compressor, the buffers were squeezed up enough to insert the cotter pin thus making a complete buffer assembly. (before the acquisition of the buffer compressor, the method employed for removing and replacing buffers was to run a wagon into the carriage that required a buffer to be changed thereby compressing the spring and someone would be behind the buffer ready to pull out the cotter; or replace it. Not something you really want to do.)

The next task was to sort out a set of brake rigging. The various vee hangers had already been cleaned up and rebushed ready to take the layshafts. These too had been cleaned up and had the ends skimmed so they were a snug, but not tight fit in the hangers. Some extra work was required on some of these shafts to alter the position and the angle of the actuating arms. The arms had also been rebushed. The brake rods were cut to length or extended as necessary. Once again, all holes had been rebushed. New pins were turned to use in the rigging. The hand brake was coupled up and the vehicle could then stand alone.

Below. Vee hangers and trunnion
Brackets cleaned and bushed. Right.
Vee hangers being fitted, vaccum cylinder
In place for trial run.



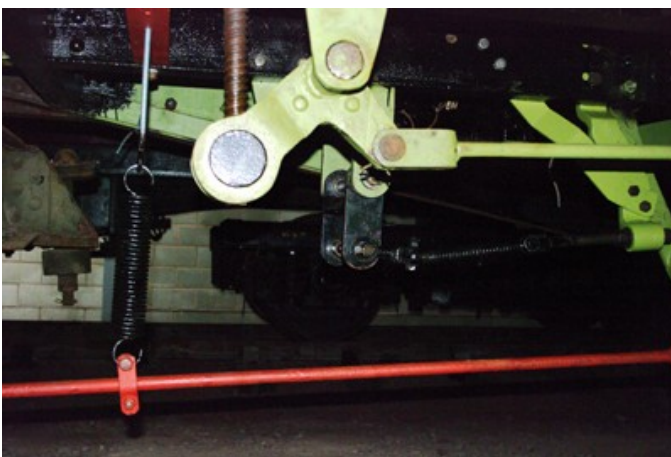
Below. Actuating arm being realigned



Below. Handbrake in position



Below. Hand brake coupled up.



Below. Brake rigging coupled up.





Above. Dynamo bracket in place.



Above. New step and stepboard brackets.

Other fittings secured to the frames at this time were the battery box brackets and the dynamo bracket. The vacuum cylinders were temporarily placed in position so that the brake rigging could be lined up. These were then removed and a set of overhauled cylinders would eventually replace them. New stepboard brackets were also made and bolted into position along with new endsteps.

This pretty well completed the mechanical side of things and the carriage was duly moved out of the works to await a slot at the restoration centre, a couple of stations up the line.

To be continued.

Colin Jenkins

Minutes of the 4th Annual General Meeting of the *Friends of the Choo-Tjoe* held at the Library Hall, Memorial Square, Knysna on the 9th of March 2015 at 16:00

1 Welcome:

Colin Jenkins, Chairman of the *Friends of the Choo-Tjoe*, welcomed all to the Annual General Meeting.

2 Attendance:

As per the attached attendance register. 11 members signed the attendance register.

Apologies:

17 apologies were received, namely, Murray Douglas, Les Smith, Andrew Stevens, Andy and Shirley Pedrick, Dave Jones, Philip Caveney, Nicola Welch, John Archer, Rordan Tait, John Potter, John Hammill, Mike Blundell, Wendy Prall, Hennie Pranger, Chris Cutting and Peter Coode.

Proxies Received in favour of the Chairman:

Les Smith.

There being a quorum present, the meeting proceeded.

3 Minutes of the 3rd AGM:

The minutes were taken as read. Proposed: Willem van Zyl. Seconded, Dirk van der Zeyden.

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4 Matters Arising:

Paragraph 7.4, on the loss of sleepers, the Chairman said that Transnet had been informed but it would seem that they were not concerned about the theft.

5 Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements:

Allan Waterston highlighted the main points in his report and added that consideration had been given to putting the additional funds into a higher interest-bearing account. This was being investigated further as higher costs may offset the higher interest rate. On a question from the floor, Allan said that labour costs had not been a component in calculating the cost of refurbishing the trolley and its resale value. A copy of the Allan's report is attached as **Addendum 1**. The report was accepted. Proposed, Julie Jenkins. Seconded, Jimmy Harcus.

6 Chairman's Report:

6.1 Colin Jenkins read his report and asked if there were any questions on his report. (A copy of the report as attached as **Addendum 2**.)

6.2 Fraser Howell said that his recollection was that there was no consensus decision on selling the trolley to Diaz Express as certain conditions were not met - though he was not against the decision *per se*. The price paid for the trolley, Fraser said, should have been in the order of R100,000. However, the final price of R75,000 agreed to in negotiations with Diaz Express, was a compromise between Fraser's higher value and what was thought initially by others on the committee as a fair price. Colin pointed out that before the proposed sale of the trolley, Classic Rail had been approached to find out if they were interested in acquiring the trolley, but they declined the offer, while Allan had discussed the issue with some of the *Friends'* donors in town who said they were not against the sale.

7 Election of a management committee for 2014:

It was announced that only one member had responded with nominations (current members of the 2014 committee) for the 2015 committee - and after inviting nominations from the floor (there being none) – it was proposed that the 2014 committee be elected to the 2015 management committee. The new committee will therefore consist of the following members: Colin Jenkins, Julie Jenkins, Allan Waterston, Dirk van der Zeyden and Kees Estié. A Chairman will be elected at the first committee meeting. Proposed, Willem van Zyl. Seconded, Rita Wiid.

8 Other Business:

8.1 On a question, it was confirmed that Transnet had not in recent years corresponded directly with the *Friends* on any issues involving the Choo-Tjoe or the refurbishing of the George/Knysna railway.

8.2 Allan stated that the objective of the *Friends* was to support any organisation wishing to re-open the line and re-instating services.

8.3 On a question, Colin confirmed that many organisations in the region and the municipalities from George to Plettenberg Bay were in support of the re-opening of the line.

8.4 Colin read a letter from an ex-member who had requested that the content of the letter be read to members at the AGM.

9 Closure:

In closing. Colin thanked members for their attendance and support, said that he hoped that 2015 would bring better news. The meeting closed at 16:55.

Chairman:

Date:

Addendum 1: Financial report for the year ended 31 December 2014

I have pleasure in presenting the financial position of the Friends of the Choo-Tjoe for the year ended 31 December 2014. This financial report has been prepared on a cash basis and does not take into account certain income (subs paid in advance) or expenditure incurred in 2014, paid in 2015, the impact of which is not material.

A quiet year was experienced and other than a few meetings there was not much activity and consequently there was very little demand placed on the resources of The Friends. Income, other than the sale of the Wickham Trolley, was made up largely through membership fees, general donations and the sale of bumper stickers and licence holders. The sale of the Wickham Trolley added significantly to our cash resources; the transaction was based on an initial payment of 50% of the agreed purchase price with the balance being paid by way of monthly instalments. To date all monthly instalments have been met and we have no reason to believe that this arrangement carries any risk for the Friends.

As a result of the above our financial position at year end was healthy.

Income for the period totalled **R 54 340.06** (R19 853.61) as detailed below.

	2014	2013	2012
General donations	4 962.98	10 524.80	9 242.00
Membership fees	4 290.00	8 210.00	6 515.00
Disposal of Wickham Trolley	43 500.00		
Sundry income	990.00	20.00	500.00
Raffle		805.00	670.00
Interest	497.08	293.81	148.53
	54 340.06	19 853.61	17 075.53

Over the year the Friends incurred expenses amounting to **R3 801.84** (2013:R3 364.45).

The breakdown of these expenses is as follows:

	2014	2013	2012
Bank charges	723.35	574.55	570.15
Website hosting	526.00	556.00	212.92
Trolley repairs/refurbishment			5 602.66
Postage/Stationery/Sundry expenses	2 552.49	2 233.90	1 341.69
	3 801.84	3 364.45	7 727.42

Bank charges were up on 2014 mainly attributable to fees charged in respect of cash and cheque deposits to our account. Postage and stationery expenses, which include the cost of printer cartridges, were in line with the previous year.

A surplus of **R50 538** (R16 489) was reflected for the year under review.

At year end cash and bank totalled **R82 701** (R32 162).

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 Friends is available on request.

Allan Waterston
Treasurer
10 February 2015

Addendum 2: Chairman Colin Jenkins' Report for the AGM 2015.

This year has proved once again to be one of wait and see. You will remember the flurry of activity in the press late last year when it was announced that the line would be reopening shortly. As we all know, this proved to be premature. Following on from this, we were asked by Classic rail if we would put out a statement to our members and other interested parties to the effect that what was stated in the press was not in fact true. The worry was that Transnet could, if they thought they were being pre-empted, walk away from the discussions. The statement was duly issued.

It is our stated aim to assist and support anyone who wishes to get the line reopened. This in effect means Classic Rail and in furtherance of this aim, we sent a letter, through Classic Rail, to Transnet indicating our support for their proposals. The Dutch group also sent a letter of support and have since indicated that they feel they have taken things as far as they can and their input is no longer relevant. We now keep in regular touch with Classic Rail. Whilst we cannot talk about the discussions, we feel more than hopeful of a successful outcome. It is a bit like the SAS; you know it is involved, but you don't know how and nobody will admit to it! All a bit secret squirrel. That said, we are feeling more upbeat about the reopening.

At the last AGM, concern was expressed about the state of the trolley, standing as it was out in the open at the waterfront. It was pointed out that the paintwork was suffering and rust was beginning to show through. With no movement, there were fears for the bearings and for the engine. It was also pointed out that there were a number of minor issues of an electrical nature that needed to be attended to. The committee discussed these issues at the next committee meeting and decided that as there was no help coming forward, the only way to remedy the situation was to use local businesses to fix the electrics and to repaint it. This would have entailed moving the trolley to the industrial estate for this work to be done.

We had always known that we were on dodgy ground having the trolley on the track; indeed we had been warned that we could be taken to court if we were not careful. In addition to this, it seemed there was little hope of running the trolley on the line as there is a prohibition notice on it and Transnet did not seem to be interested in our proposals, so, in all probability, the trolley would have gone into the Waste by Rail shed.

Not long after this meeting, we were approached by the fledgling Diaz Express organization. They were setting up an operation to run between Mossel Bay and Hartenbos during the high season and run charter type operations the rest of the year. We were asked if we would sell them our trolley, to operate with another two that had been purchased from upcountry. The committee discussed this request and the consensus was that if we could not use the trolley, it's future would be better served if it was operating elsewhere. Plus it saved us the problems of completing the work on it, and the expense of moving it, and getting it into a decent condition. Before taking a decision, we approached Classic Rail to see if it could be of use to them in whatever capacity. They could see no use for it in the short or intermediate term. Eventually we negotiated a figure between what we wanted and what Diaz Express wanted to pay, namely R75,000. The sale is by way of being a hire purchase agreement so the trolley is still ours until the last payment is made. The trolley moved to Voorbaai where it joined the other vehicles. All trollies had to have a new braking system fitted to comply with Rail Safety requirements. They were repainted in Diaz colours. They are kept under cover when not in use.

Following trial runs, it was found that the engine of our trolley was overheating. Therefore, the other motorised trolley runs round the train at the end of each run and acts like a locomotive. One of the wheel-sets on our trolley has a small flat that will need to be attended to when the much bigger flat on the trailer is fixed. Even after a late start, due to hold ups by Transnet, the takings over the holiday period were encouraging.

We have continued to collect signatures on our petition and the total now stands at 17500 plus and I would like to thank in particular Andrew Stevens and Rodney Glaysher both of whom have been very active. All the sheets have been saved to disc and we are hoping a database can be made of the contacts on those sheets. We would like to present this petition to the body most likely to be able to use it to persuade Transnet that there is overwhelming support for the passenger service. This may be for example, the municipality, Western Cape government or Classic Rail; we will decide at the appropriate time.

Membership has increased over the last year with some old members returning to the fold. Ordinary membership now stands at 50, an increase of 12, family membership down 1 to 8 and overseas membership unchanged at 10.

In December, 14 carriages from the Union Limited set, were sold to a group setting up on the Wolseley-Ceres line. There are also plans to operate longer trips from Cape Town to Ceres. It has taken three years to get to this point.

Members of the Committee visited the Apple Express in Port Elizabeth earlier this year. We were made very welcome and joined the staff for a potjie. It is an impressive set up and a great deal has been achieved renovating the stock in readiness for a reopening. As with our own line, this is taking time with a number of hurdles to overcome. However, the people there are hoping it will not be too long before trains are running again. If you get the chance, go and have a look.

Finally, I would like to thank all our members and well-wishers for their continued support and here's hoping we will have some positive news this year.

Colin Jenkins

2015/03/09