



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe



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There is little to report this quarter. There are rumours of the N2 bypassing Sedgefield; the bypass to run behind the railway, along the railway, to start next year or not at all depending on who is telling the story. Of course Sedgefield already has a bypass; it runs through the middle of the village.

Quite where the departure of Mr Molefe for ESCOM leaves the negotiations concerning the reopening of our railway is unclear. However the fact that the new CEO Mr Gama and the new CEO Freight, Mr Nair have both confirmed that they intend to carry on with the road to rail and diversification policy injects a note of hope. A report is included in this edition.

Also included is a report on a near miss on a main line in the UK. The rail regulator is still investigating this incident and criminal charges could well be laid. Generally the safety record of private railways is extremely good and the number of injuries or fatalities can be counted on the fingers of one hand. It is a record that has been inculcated from the early days of preservation. It stresses the need for ALL personnel, no matter what their position to adopt safe working practices.

Julie Jenkins

Addition to the Transnet Transport Museum

On Tuesday, 24 March 2015, diesel 91-001 was delivered to the Transnet Transport Museum in George. It was offloaded early morning and it took the rest of the day to move it into position. This was achieved with the use of skates and a heavy duty fork lift. It had to be moved around several exhibits which required a fair amount of jacking and repositioning of the skates. It was finally placed on short section of track in line with the "Kalahari" steam locomotive. Contrary to some reports, it arrived with it's engine. .

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Unloading in the yard



On the skates



Negotiating the obstacles!



In it's final resting place

Pictures courtesy of Kobus Volschenk.

Near miss in UK

Most enthusiasts will be well aware of the several accidents that have befallen railways in America (high speed derailment), Germany (level crossing) and the two recent ones in South Africa (end-on / head-on) in the last couple of weeks but the near-miss heritage train incident in the UK has to rank as one of the all time "Wow, that was close" incidents in railway history and we make no apology for including the following, fairly lengthy, report from the British press;

2015.04.12 Daily Telegraph ; Off the rails - Future in doubt for West Coast steam trains 'run like private toy train

The future of main line steam trains in Britain is in doubt as a leading charter train operator is on the verge of losing its licence over serious safety breaches with the Office of Road and Rail (ORR) looks set to ban West Coast Railway Company from operating after one of its steam engines narrowly avoided a crash with a 100 mph high-speed train, in what is described as one of the most serious incidents on the railway this year.

The regulator has found "significant weaknesses" in West Coast's safety procedures and if the company is found to have breached the Health and Safety laws it could face criminal charges.

West Coast is Britain's largest operator of heritage steam trains, accounting for 90 per cent of the charter trains on the main line, meaning if it goes out of business the majority of the journeys could be in jeopardy. It runs over 500 trains a year including the famous Jacobite service from Fort William to Mallaig which featured in the Harry Potter films and, were the company to lose its licence and a sale is not agreed, the rolling stock to operate the trains will not be available. A new licence would also be required, which could be looked upon unfavourably by regulators in light of the safety issues and the fact the ever-increasing demand for track space.

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West Coast is already suspended from operating on Network Rail's infrastructure, after the company took the unprecedented step of withdrawing the track access contract following a string of safety incidents and the final straw was the near-catastrophe at Wotton Bassett in Wiltshire on [March 7](#), when the steam engine pulling 13 coaches of passengers came to rest on a track junction just moments after a high speed train had passed after it failed to stop at a red light.

The Rail Standards and Safety Board (RSSB) is leading an investigation into the incident, which has focused attention on what some insiders have described as West Coast's *laissez-faire* safety culture and poor operating procedures in the company which is privately owned by David Smith, a Yorkshire farmer, who it is claimed by some of his former employees and stakeholders runs it in an authoritarian manner and treats it "like his own private train set", however Mr Smith has defended his company's safety procedures and vigorously denied the criticisms aimed at him.

Details have emerged about the near miss.

The driver of a steam train travelling from Bristol to Southend along the main Great Western line isolated a safety device that had just applied the brakes after he failed to acknowledge the audible warning device alerting him to a temporary speed restriction ahead. It is understood that he did not see a yellow warning signal and with the safety device isolated, was unaware that the following signal would be at danger.

The train passed the red signal protecting the junction at 75mph (120 kph) just as a high speed passenger train from Swansea to London passed ahead at 100mph (160 kph)

Nigel Harris, Editor of Rail magazine said: "It doesn't get much more serious than this. Seconds earlier and these two trains would have collided and hundreds would have died causing one of Britain's worst train crashes".

The incident has prompted Network Rail, the ORR and the RSSB to launch investigations into a number of safety concerns at West Coast and Network Rail summoned the operator into an urgent meeting to discuss the severity of what had happened, attended by Mr Smith and James Shuttleworth, the company's Commercial Manager.

Network Rail took the unprecedented step of suspending the company's Track Access Contract, the first time ever that a train operator has been kicked off the network. And the ORR has launched formal proceedings to revoke the licence.

A spokesman said: "The rail regulator has notified the West Coast Railway Company that it is reviewing the company's safety certification - needed to operate trains on the rail network. Our initial investigation has found significant weaknesses in the company's safety management systems."

The ORR is carrying out further assessments and met West Coast Railways on [Friday](#) afternoon at the company's headquarters in Carnforth, Lancashire, to determine whether health and safety laws were breached. If so "appropriate enforcement action including potential criminal charges might be required" they said, adding that "We don't take these decisions lightly".

The revival of steam over the last 20 years means Britain now runs more steam trains than in any other country in the world. And tourists are willing to pay up to £2,500 (R45 000) for a ticket on a 10 day private steam train around Britain and West Coast also charts its trains to third party tour companies.

Marcus Robertson, founder of one such company Steam Dreams, says that the industry will not be jeopardised by the outcome of any investigation against West Coast. He pointed out that although it is the biggest operator there are other companies with licences to run steam trains on Britain's main lines including German, Deutsche Bahn. "In the short term there will no doubt be issues, but longer term I'm sure this thriving and popular industry that employs up to 2 000 people will survive" he said.

The Scottish government recently announced that the new Scotrail franchise would include a number of regular steam hauled tourist trains on key routes and West Coast railways had been shortlisted as the preferred bidder by franchise operator Abellio but it has now hastily withdrawn. A Scotrail spokesman said "we were absolutely shocked by the recent revelations and are urgently looking at other options to fulfil our summer steam operations".

The potential demise of West Coast Railways could prove a major blow for main line steam which has grown in popularity over the past two decades. ***(By the 20th May the ban had been lifted but the consequence will reverberate within the industry for a long time to come.)***

Article courtesy of CREA news

Gama's Transnet agenda

Acting Transnet CEO Siyabonga Gama, who was appointed to the position following the surprise secondment of Brian Molefe to ESKOM, has placed revenue diversification at the top of his list of immediate priorities, with the weak commodity outlook seen as having the potential to undermine the State-owned company's future prospects.

In an interview Gama said Transnet's current reliance on a few commodities, such as coal and iron-ore, had increased the urgency to implement the group's road-to-rail strategy in non-commodity sectors. He also confirmed that seasoned

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railways man Ravi Nair, who had been overseeing the road-to-rail strategy, had been appointed acting CEO of Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) in his absence.

Molefe had been appointed to temporarily strengthen an ESKOM executive team decimated since mid-March by the three-month suspension of four senior executives, including CEO Tshediso Matona. But Public Enterprises Minister Lynne Brown had indicated that she expected Molefe to remain at ESKOM for at least a year and possibly longer. For this reason, Gama stressed that both he and Nair have been given full authority over their respective portfolios and that both would seek to balance the longer-term imperatives of the R300-billion-plus Market Demand Strategy (MDS) with immediate pressures associated with the weak economic climate. Gama emphasised that the MDS remained strongly intact and that he would continue to drive and consolidate it. "But we are working in a context of very depressed commodity prices . . . and as Transnet we are reflecting on how this might affect us . . . for the longer term; we are convinced that need to diversify our sources of revenue, because we are probably too mining dependent."

The road-to-rail action plan was viewed as core to the diversification strategy, with Transnet keen to leverage its new, more reliable, rolling stock to raise container volumes and capture higher levels of market share in the transport of manufactured and fast-moving consumer goods.

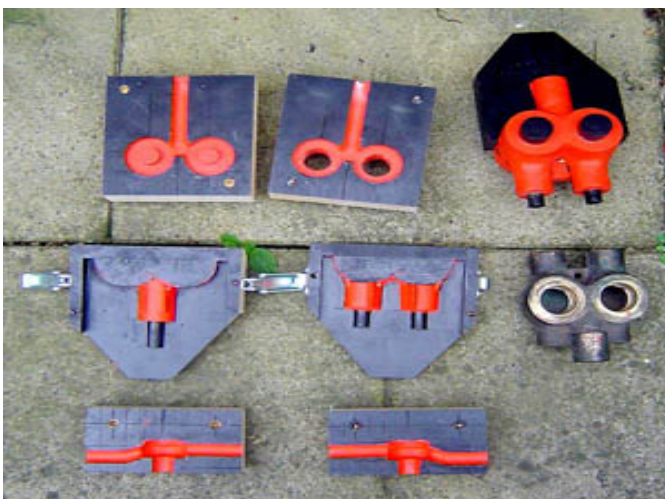
TFR, which had hitherto also focused primarily on the transport of import and export cargo, would now also pay closer attention to "point-to-point" inland-market prospects – many of these opportunities that would be pursued in alliance with other private logistics providers. In the coming months, for instance, the utility would begin piloting a road-rail solution on the Cape and Natal corridors, whereby vehicles capable of operating both on rail tracks and on roads would be tested. The aspiration was to improve the interchange between modes, as had been done in countries such as the US and Canada. Should it prove successful, Transnet would be looking to implement the technology more widely across its network in the coming years.

In taking over the reins at the 61 000-employee-strong freight logistics group Gama said he would continue to draw inspiration from Molefe's tenure, which had been characterised by "bold" decision-making and a diligent execution of strategy. "[Molefe] showed a lot of courage in saying that we should go for the MDS. He was always dedicated and committed to our cause . . . and did not turn back at the first sign of turbulence. He was always resilient, saying: 'Guys, as long as we know that the strategy is the correct one . . . we must push ahead'," Gama

Article courtesy of CREA news

Carriage restoration continued

With the underside now pretty much complete, the carriage went into storage. However work continued on the fittings that would be required to complete the interior. The carriage was pretty well devoid of brasswork and as this was a unique vehicle, very few spares were available. We had managed to retrieve a few bits and pieces from carriages that went to the breakers yard, but nowhere near enough. Therefore patterns had to be made for all the missing items and in this respect we were lucky to have pattern maker on site. Although self taught, his work was of a very high standard and he produced all the patterns we needed. The missing items were then cast in brass or cast iron depending on what the item was to be used for and put into store to await machining or polishing.



Pattern and core boxes for tap



Rough casting of tap and inset

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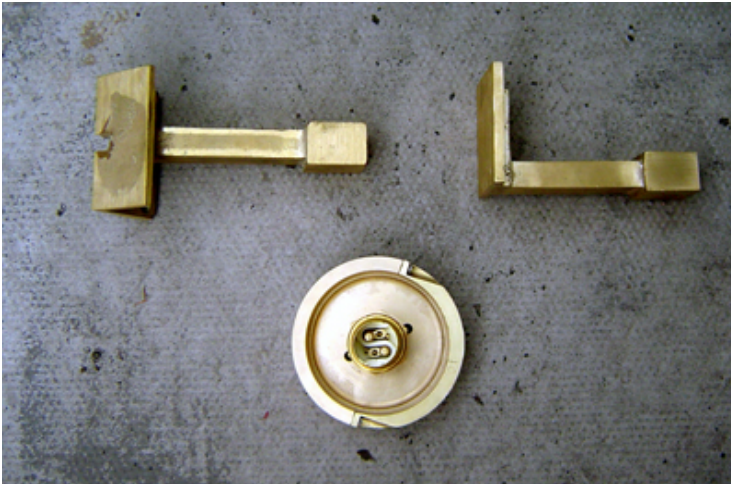
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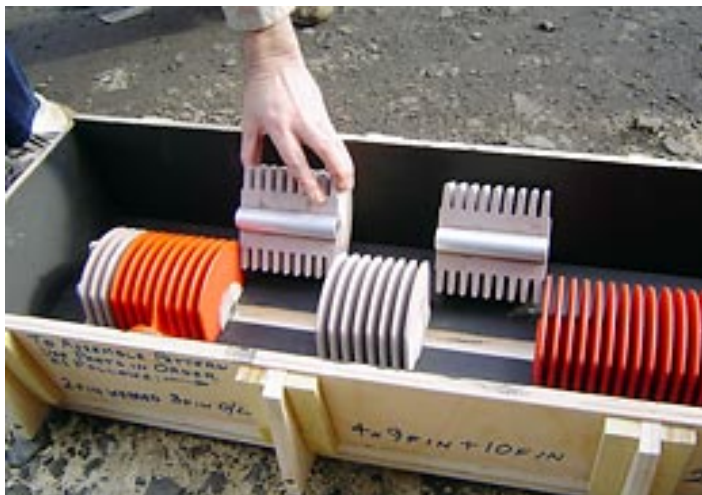
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Castings for light fittings



Luggage rack bracket castings



Making up the moulding box for heaters



Rough cast heaters (heavy!)

It was to be a few years later, after the completion of another carriage, that our carriage moved to the body shop. As luck would have it, (or bad luck, depending on your point of view) the railway line had been closed due to massive flooding and washaways (sound familiar?) and the company could not run a normal service. They were therefore looking for ways to augment their income. We were thus able to subcontract the job of restoring the body work to the full time staff. This meant we had people working on the carriage all week and this accelerated the restoration by a fair bit. The work consisted of replacing defective timber (mostly the top and bottom rails) and producing and fitting of all the outside steel sheets. Once this was done, the windows were glazed. At the same time, the roof edges were replaced with new steel sheet. Now the carriage was water tight, it was given a coat of paint and handed back to the restoration team.



Old bottom rail removed



New bottom rail in place.



New galvanized steel sheets being fitted



A coat of protective paint applied

Now we had an empty shell which needed to be kitted out. This is always the longest part of any restoration project and to a casual observer, it might appear that nothing is happening. But as the months progress, it begins to take shape. The first job was to reinstate the electrics for the lighting in the roof and the side walls. Once this was done, the ceilings could be replaced (what a difference that makes!) and the panels for the walls and the partitions could be made up and fitted. This carriage was one of a number of vehicles to be produced in the mid to late thirties to cater for excursion traffic and the interiors were totally different from anything that gone before. So it wasn't just a case of nailing a bit of plywood to the wall. Each panel had to be hand made and fitted. Luckily, being of an art deco design, the components of these panels were geometric.



The work begins



New wiring for the lights installed



New ceiling and bulkhead wall in place



Work begins on the van

The first area to be tidied up was the van. This was pretty easy to do and gave us a workspace and provided a bit of encouragement for the team working on the interior. In tandem with this, the guards compartment was also worked on. Perhaps the biggest item in here was the replacement of the electrical cupboard which contained all the controls for the regulator and the light switches.

In the main saloon area, the internal partition was replaced and the panels were affixed to the walls. It was looking like a carriage now and not an old chicken shed. The toilets were also panelled out. I had acquired sufficient seats a few years earlier in a trade off, to equip the carriage; these seats however required some repairs before they could be installed. Along with the seats, we had to make all the tables as none were available.

While all this was going on, the brass fittings had been made ready and we could start fitting them. First up were the luggage racks followed by the communication cord gear, The guard's heaters were installed in the guard's compartment.



The van stripped down



In use as a workshop



New toilets and pipework



Luggage racks being fitted

Concurrent with this, the toilets were fitted out with new pipework and new pans and washbowls. The pans and washbowls had to be specially made as they were non domestic. Time was when you could pop up the road to the potteries, tell them what you wanted, and they would produce it as part of their normal activities.



Patterned lino from an original



new cube lampshades

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Sadly those days are gone, but luckily, some enterprising souls set themselves up as one man cottage industries to produce one off items (or in our case, twenty off) The same applied to the distinctive lampshades in the saloons. These items are not cheap, but they do make the carriage look “right”. The lino in the saloons was also specially made to an original pattern as was the carpet which runs down the middle of the aisle.



Toilet nearing completion
Completed guards compartment



Completed saloon with carpet
Going into undercoat



With the lino laid, the seats could be installed and the tables fitted. Now the carriage is back in the works receiving it's final coats of paint after which it will go back to the mechanical workshops to be mounted on it's own bogies (already restored), have the dynamo and vacuum cylinders installed and have the usual steam heat and vacuum tests carried out before it goes into service.

To be concluded.

Colin Jenkins