



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe



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NEWSLETTER NUMBER 20 – JANUARY 2016

A new year, 2016 marks the tenth anniversary of the closure of the iconic line between George and Knysna and we live in hope that 2016 will see the reopening.

The last post from the Friends on our Facebook page was in March 2015; the question has been and continues to be asked, what is going on? The fact is that there has been very little to report from the Friends in terms of activity other than keep an ear to the ground and maintaining contact with the various players.

Notwithstanding, there has been a fair amount of activity going on behind the scenes. As the Friends are not directly involved we have adopted a low key approach to sharing and publicising these activities which have been spearheaded by a private individual. Of significance is that during 2015 the Western Cape Provincial Government commissioned a feasibility study into the viability of the line and a public participation meeting was held in Knysna on 23 November prior to finalisation of the report. This report to the best of our knowledge is not as yet available.

It is our understanding that the business case that has been put forward has been accepted in principle by the relevant stakeholders and it is now a question of commitment of the necessary financial resources, once this takes place the reopening should be given the Green Light.

Renovation of steam locomotives at Voorbaai (Mossel Bay) is in full swing and it is wonderful to hear and see the activity. The renovation and return of these locomotives to operation is currently being undertaken for the Ceres line; one locomotive has already been completed and delivered. There are a few more standing on the roads waiting their turn, including locomotives for the George Knysna line; we are still hopeful that all is not lost. Visit the Ceres Railway facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Ceres-Rail-Company-797616363694064/?fref=nf> and you will find loads of information and pictures.

Our Wickham Trolley that we sold to Diaz Express continues to see regular service, providing enjoyment and pleasure to all who ride in it. If you are in the Mossel Bay area make some time to take a short rail trip with Diaz Express.

Our AGM will take place on 7th of March in Knysna at the Knysna Public Library.

We remain hopeful that the line will be reopened and your support and interest even via facebook is appreciated.

In this issue you will find a letter from FEDRAIL (FSA). This is a new organisation that has been set up to try to coordinate preservation in South Africa, similar to organisations in other countries. FSA is affiliated to FEDECRAIL (European Federation of Museum and Tourist Railways) and WATTRAIN (World Association of Tourist Trams and Trains). Several members of your committee have joined as individual members and we have applied for FCT to become a corporate member.

There is also a follow up to the story of the Waverley line reopening in Scotland.

Finally, the story of the restoration of Great Western carriage 650 at the Severn Valley Railway is concluded.

Julie Jenkins

Membership

Can I ask members to complete the attached renewal form for 2016. Please return completed form and proof of payment to the addresses at the top of the form. The cut off point for this year will be 1st April. Remember, your membership is important. Payment by EFT is preferred and the account details can be found on the bottom of the form,

Colin Jenkins

FEDRAIL SA.

Letter from FEDRAIL

Re: Heritage locomotives for sale.

We have been advised by Transnet that a large number of steam locomotives will come up for sale in February 2016. These locomotives were previously classified as Heritage and to be retained. They still have a chance to survive if they are purchased by the Preservation sector. If no bids are made from people to preserve them then they will be sold to the scrap industry.

As many are valuable as a source of parts these would have to be sourced from the scrap industry and from our experience the scrap industry cannot be bothered with people taking items off scrap locomotives. Alternatively they demand unrealistic prices for the spares.

The best possible solution is for people to purchase them. That of course does create yet another problem in terms of the logistics involved in moving them somewhere safe. There are various locations in South Africa, such as Reefsteamers, the Sandstone Heritage Trust and possibly others where free accommodation could be made available in the interests of Preservation. We will be canvassing the Preservation sector to see how many such storage sites might potentially be available.

These locomotives will only be sold for the scrap price which at the moment is fairly low. Bearing in mind the exchange rate to the South African Rand (R24:£1 or R16:\$1 etc.) the amount of money required to buy them will actually be minimal for foreigners in particular. There is no reason why foreigners cannot bid for these locomotives and FEDRAIL SA will in any event assist with the process. It should be borne in mind however that the transportation cost of getting these locomotives to a safe location could be more than the cost of the locomotive. FEDRAIL SA will be in a position to provide estimates of cost as long as we know well in advance that someone is interested in a specific locomotive. We will seek out the best solution to its longer term storage.

FEDRAIL SA will issue regular bulletins regarding any developments that are taking place.

In the interim we would ask interested parties to study the attached list to see whether they can make a contribution. One idea is for people to form consortiums to acquire these locomotives and certainly foreign railway enthusiast groups could add one of these locomotives to their collection as part of a longer term strategy to make a contribution to Steam Railway Preservation. After the loss

of the SANRASM collection it is unthinkable that these locomotives should be lost.

Let's not see this happen again!

We invite interested parties from around the world to join FEDRAIL SA to strengthen ties with Southern African Railway Heritage. To become a member, contact membership@fedrailsa.com or call Dave Richardson on +27 (0) 82 447 9167.

NPC Registration Number: 2015/450741/08 Directors: Lawrence Clayton, Dennis Edgar, John Middleton, David Richardson

Locomotives at Kroonstad.

15F	2996	Good for spares
15A	1970	Last 15A. Preserve
15F	3153	Good for spares

Locomotives at Witbank

G	----	Poor condition
H2	249	"
7A	1019	"
19A	679	"
GEA	4003	Good for spares
GM	2304	Only two survive

Locomotives at Queenstown

4AR	1560	Good for spares	
14CRB	1778	"	One cylinder broken
15AR	1798	"	Retain one 15AR
15AR	1966	"	
15AR	2012	"	
15AR	2093	"	Flared chimney/ retain
15AR	2100	"	
15BR	1832		Retain/ Not on TF list
16CR	809	"	Ex Royal train loco
19AR	693	"	
24	3667	"	

Locomotives at Bloemfontein

6B	524	Good for spares
11	928	Poor condition
15F	2928	Festival loco
25NC	3479	Good for spares
GMA	4080	Poor condition
GMA	4129	"

Locomotives at Worcester

15F	3156	Good for spares
25NC	3407	"
25NC	3417	"

Locomotives at Voorbaai

24	3606	Good for spares	Retain one 24
24	3632	"	
24	3635	"	
24	3693	"	

14A	508	Ex Rhodesia Rlys.	Examples in Zimbabwe
16A	615	"	

We would urge all our members who have the interests of South African railways, and particularly our own line, to become members. Information can be obtained from Dave Richardson at Dave@fedrailsa.com or membership@fedrailsa.com We understand that the response so far has been overwhelming.

Carriage restoration concluded

The carriage was duly returned to the mechanical workshops where the final fitting of missing underframe gear was carried out. There then followed steam heat test and a vacuum test. The steam heat test consists of coupling the carriage up to a stationary boiler and checking for leaks in the main steam pipe and the heaters themselves. Extra pressure is used so leaks soon become apparent. The Severn Valley Railway is fortunate in having amassed over the years a huge amount of spares; vacuum cylinders included, from scrapped vehicles and the equipment to test and refurbish them. So the vacuum test is mainly to see that the vacuum can be created and held in the pipe and that everything moves as it should. Then a test run usually follows and all being well, the carriage does not end up in a ditch!



On the lifting jacks



Replacing Dynamo

The carriage was finally released to traffic and it made its debut on a special train for members and friends, along with another carriage, 3930, which was celebrating its hundredth birthday. On Sunday Oct 11th, these two carriages were joined by three other veterans (one, 9055, 103 years old. I should live so long!) for a trip up the line. The weather was very kind to us with blue skies and not too hot. The train was hauled by a Great Western loco, 4566, adorned with a suitable reporting number on the front. We had a guided tour of the loco works at Bridgnorth and then it was back to the Engine House museum at Highley for lunch.



At Bridgnorth



Special train at Highley

A stop was made at Bewdley where we all had a piece of celebratory cake and a glass of champagne. I made a short speech (I did not know I was going to make one until I read the programme for the day!) and then the train did a runpast. Finally, we made the short trip back to Kidderminster rounding off a perfect day.



The Centenarian 3930



The birthday cakes



The run past at Bewdley



If you wish to look further at the work of the Great Western (SVR) Assoc, visit www.gw-svr-a.org.uk Another interesting site is www.gw-svr-a.org.uk/7960/ or look for it in the links.

Visit to the Waverley line

Whilst in the UK for the launch of 650, We took the opportunity to visit the newly opened Waverley line from Edinburgh to Galashiels (Tweedbank). We drove up from the midlands and spent two nights in Gala. Getting accommodation was not easy as it seems many other people were doing the same thing. Getting seats on the steam specials was a no no; they had been sold out months before. We decided we would have a trip on a service train. The large car park at Tweedbank was overflowing and we decided to move on to Stowe station. Every train was standing room only so we never did get our trip.

There has been a fair bit of comment in the press about this reopening. Everyone agrees that the reopened line is much needed and a great success for the group who have been pushing for it's reinstatement for the past 25 years. (Indeed it should never have closed in the first place) The group pressed hard for an extension to the platform at Tweedbank to take 12 coach steam hauled trains. This they succeeded in doing. Unfortunately, no run round was provided (although the space is there and maybe a belated rethink will see it laid) The next logical step is to extend the line on to Hawick, the largest town in the borders and ultimately on to Carlisle where it would join the West Coast mainline.

The biggest gripe has been the overcrowding of trains. Originally scheduled for two car units, three car units were very quickly substituted. These were still not enough and ironically led to the cancellation of some trains to be substituted by buses! The reason was that the volume of traffic was causing delays as people got on and off at stations. This delay accumulated through the day to the point where the single track

line could not cope with any more trains. A spokesman for the pressure group said that the situation was entirely predictable and could have been avoided if Scotrail had provided five car trains. The fact that the line is single for much of it's length does not help either as trains have to wait for a clear section before they can proceed. This not unique to the Waverley line. The same problem was experienced on the Oxford to Worcester main line where delays were almost accepted as the norm. Once again it was down to a pressure group to work with the rail operator to reinstate very largely double track. The result was very few delays, an increased timetable and an increase in passenger numbers. Another example was the old Great Western line from Birmingham to London. This at one time had been a major trunk route but was downgraded and singled between Banbury and High Wycombe when the West Coast line was electrified. In this case, it was a forward looking rail operator who persuaded railtrack to relay the second line. The results were the same, with the added bonus of some new more comfortable and faster trains on the route, a trend that seems likely to continue. It just proves that if you provide the services people want, rail has a bright future.

Colin Jenkins



Contractors train at Goukamma