



Friends of the Choo-Tjoe



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## **NEWSLETTER NUMBER 21 – APRIL 2016**

The Annual General Meeting has taken place and a copy of the minutes is included in this issue.

Our petition was handed over to the Western Cape Minister of Transport, Donald Grant and it has now been included in the discussions taking place among the various ministries. We still await the report from Stellenbosch and Cape Town universities.

In this issue there is a report on the trip organised by Ceres Rail to collect their second locomotive from Voorbaai. The next issue will include an article by Sandy Buchanan about his experiences when we still had a train service.

If you have not visited George museum lately, pop in. You will notice a few changes.

**Julie Jenkins**



The Chairman hands over the petition to the Minister of Transport, Donald Grant at Sedgefield station

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## **Annual General Meeting**

The 5<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting took place on 7<sup>th</sup> March at the library hall, Knysna.

A copy of the proceedings is included below.

## **Membership**

Just a reminder to all members and those who would like to join us that membership for 2016 is now due. If you have already paid, ignore this piece. A renewal form is included and this should be returned to our new membership secretary, Dirk van der Zeyden. [mvdzeyden@gmail.com](mailto:mvdzeyden@gmail.com) Any queries concerning membership may also be addressed to him.

## **From Ceres to Hartenbos and back.**

For some time now work has been going forward on loco class 19B No 1412 at Voorbaai. This locomotive was to join loco class 19D No 3321 at Ceres for use on the Ceres to Wolseley tourist trains. 3321 had been steamed successfully and moved under it's own power to Ceres where it has been hauling tourist trains twice a day on Saturdays.



Willie machines a new piston head.



David lags a steam pipe.



The team struggle with a steam dynamo



Lighting up. 3.00am

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Raising steam



Ockie tends the fire

Thanks to Bobby Rudman and his team, 1412 was repaired and steamed; and with the last few snags finally sorted, it was ready, in the middle of March, to be despatched to Ceres. It reflects great credit on the professionalism of the whole team who have beavered away in less than ideal conditions that two locomotives are now earning their keep providing enjoyment to many people.

To get 1412 to Ceres, it was decided to run 3321 with four carriages from Ceres to Hartenbos. The trip was advertised on the web with 40 places being offered at a return fare of R4500. I immediately booked two places and other members of the friends also booked. *(In my opinion the trip was too cheap for what we got)* Admittedly, we were guinea pigs and things did not always go according to plan, but that did not spoil the sense of occasion.

Having travelled up to Ceres on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> and stayed overnight, we were at the station at Demeter by 7.00. The sun was shining as if to welcome us. Once booked in and our luggage stowed aboard, we were at liberty to watch 3321 move off and attach itself to our train. We finally set off, a little late, for a sedate descent of Michell's Pass. Once down at ground level, we retired to the restaurant car for coffee/tea and muffins.



Descent of Michell's Pass



Time for coffee and muffins

We were soon at Worcester where we branched off the main line onto the Port Elizabeth line. That we were no longer on the main line was evident from the "interesting" motion of the carriages! A stop was made at Robertson where some minor adjustments were made to 3321. Robertson station yard was not an attractive site with the remains of the burnt out carriages lying on the ground. We were soon on our way again to our next stop at Ashton. Here 3321 was watered. This took longer than was anticipated and by this time the weather was closing in with a rather cold wind. The climb up Bonnievale bank was made in fine style and we soon came to a halt at Bonnievale Golf course. During the trip to Ashton, the on train staff had been round taking orders for lunch and these were handed out at the golf course. The picnic atmosphere was rather spoilt by the wind and it was a relief to get back on the train and into the restaurant car for a cup of tea. The weather continued poor all the way to Swellendam where the train staged overnight. The tour

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participants were taken to the Swellengrebel Hotel apart from those who stayed to watch a freight train pass. We did wonder who was driving this train as the whole crew were busy taking photographs of our train.



Relaxing in the saloon



Who is driving the train?

At the hotel there was time for a wash and brush up and a pre dinner drink in front of the fire before going to the buffet. Then it was an early night ready for the next day.



Servicing the water tanks at Stellenbosch

After a buffet breakfast we made our way to the station to watch proceedings there before the train set out. The day was once again damp and cloudy and 3321 had some trouble getting up the bank with plenty of slipping in evidence. But once up the hill we set off in fine style and as if getting into spirit of things, the sun came out. There then followed a leisurely run to Heidelberg where a stop was made to take on water. It seemed as if the whole town had turned out to greet us. There was a chance to get out and stretch our legs and see 3321 being prepared for the next leg to Riversdale and another water stop. It was a bit sad to see the state the fine old station had fallen into. The loco shed yard was no more but you could almost sense what it must have been like in its glory days when the Garretts were changed on the mail trains. We stopped again for our picnic at Resiesbaan but this time we made use of the restaurant car.





Crossing the Gouritz River bridge

On arrival at the Gouritz River, we left the train which was then reversed back over the bridge before coming back for a photo runpast. Then it was all aboard for the final run into Voorbaai to see 1412 which was looking very smart. Bobby and his team were on hand to show everyone round. We made the final run to Hartenbos where we were to spend the night at the ATKV rondavels. Dinner was provided by the local Spur restaurant.

The next morning at around 6.00, we were ferried to the Wimpy for breakfast after which we were taken back to Voorbaai to join the train. As it turned out, fuelling and watering took a bit longer than planned but that gave us all a chance to see 1412 steaming out of the works and turning on the triangle.



Fuelling and watering at Voorbaai



3321 moves off shed



1412 and 3321 ready to depart

The weather had again turned damp and cold but this did not deter the crowds that had come to see us off. Even the local police were there to give us a wave. This in fact was a feature of the whole four days; people all along the way were really pleased to see our train. The train finally left Voorbaai and climbed up the hill overlooking Mossel Bay. There was a fair bit of slipping on the wet rails until we reached the top of the climb and then both locomotives got to grips. We stopped at Albertinia to collect some stores and there was a chance to look around the station. The station building has been heavily vandalised and it is a pity some use cannot be found for it before it is a total write off. The train was travelling through some wonderful countryside and it was just a pity that the weather was so poor. In the days of the Port Elizabeth – Cape Town train, this section would have been traversed in darkness so this was a rare opportunity to see parts of the country you would not see by road. We had a stop at Riversdale once more to take on water (and another coffee/tea plus lunch). As usual the local population all turned out to watch proceedings. Then it was on to Heidelberg where once again we took water. The locomotives were split to make watering easier. This was quite a long layover and once again the station area took on a carnival atmosphere. One enterprising couple were busy selling jars of honey to the passengers; the train having stopped right outside their front door. Some of the local kids were putting pennies on the line (remember that) for souvenirs. Families were having their photos taken in front of the locomotives.



Approaching the Goukou river



The Honey sellers

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Happy snaps



Bobby, David and Chris offload the car at Stellenbosch

We left Heidelberg to cheers and waves from what seemed most of the town although one group of well wishers got a soaking when 1412 primed rather badly. But they seemed to laugh it off: I hope it did not put them off steam trains. The final run of the day to Stellenbosch passed off without a hitch. At this point, Bobby and his team offloaded their car from the DZ and took their leave of us as they were satisfied that all was well with 1412. So it was back to the Swellengrebel Hotel for a quick tidy up before going in for our evening meal. A vote of thanks was given to Derick du Toit and the staff for providing such a splendid opportunity to experience rail travel once more. He responded by thanking the members of his staff for the way they had performed.

After a leisurely breakfast, we made our way back to the station. It was a beautiful morning with the clouds forming a tablecloth over the Langeberg. Coaling took a little while because the capacity and reach of the front loader was not ideal and a lot of coal ended up on the ground from where no doubt, it was later harvested. Eventually we got under way only to be brought to a halt in at Jubilee to cross a freight train. We made a spirited ascent of Bonnievale bank before coming to a halt at Ashton.



Coaling at Stellenbosch



Taking water at Ashton

Here the locomotives were split, 1412 going over to the goods yard for watering while 3321 was watered in the platform. The pressure from the hydrants seemed to be quite low and watering took a lot longer than planned. So long in fact that it was decided to fetch the fuel tanker from Robertson to refuel 3321 at the same time thus avoiding the Robertson fuel stop. A number of passengers took advantage of the prolonged layover to take a trip into town for refreshments. We were about two hours late leaving Ashton but after the briefest of stops at Robertson, we made good time to Worcester. Again there was a brief stop before we set off main line. Speed rose steadily on the better track and we thought we were in for a fast run. But then we were checked by a number of red signals before finally getting in a last dash to Wolseley where we dropped our pilot. By this time it was dark and as the train had no electricity, we had a very good view of the stars

and the glow from the locomotives. All too soon we arrived at Demeter where we said our farewells expressing our hopes that this was just the first of many trips out on the main lines.

**Colin Jenkins**

### **Developments at George Transport Museum**

First of all, I must correct an error in a previous Loop. The Diesel that was delivered from Humewood Road depot does indeed have an engine, but it is incomplete.

A lot of tidying up has been going on outside with three locomotives getting a cosmetic restoration. They are NGO 2575, GEA 4023 and GF2401. The travelling crane has also been the recipient of a makeover and the two tank engines, class A 103 and class G 221 that were delivered some time ago have been dismantled and de-rusted. The work will be carried out in phases with 103 now in the process of undergoing repainting and rebuilding of certain sections. Next in line will be the G class. The eventual aim is to get them into a fit state to be exhibited in the museum. At some point in the future, the locomotives will be moved into the museum. This will entail disconnecting the sprinkler systems from certain carriages which will become redundant. So it makes sense to carry out all these moves at the same time. Quite a number of projects are scheduled for the new financial year and tenders will go out via the internet. There will be cosmetic restoration of the tamping machine, the G class, steam boiler and water pump; all at the museum in George.

The remainder of the locomotives still at Millsite will relocate to Bloemfontein in four phases.

**Colin Jenkins/Kobus Volschenk**

On a more dismal note, scrapping has commenced at Voorbaai with two class 24's getting the chop with more to follow. The fate of the stock at George does not look too rosy either.



Class 24 being cut up at Voorbaai. Sic transit Gloria.

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Minutes of the 5th Annual General Meeting of the *Friends of the Choo-Tjoe* held at the Library Hall, Memorial Square, Knysna on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2016 at 16:00

1 Welcome:

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

2 Notice of the Meeting:

The notice of the meeting and the agenda were read by the secretary.

3 Attendance:

As per the attached attendance register. 20 attendees signed the register.

Apologies

:

4 Apologies were received, namely: Les Smith, Andrew Stevens, Chris Cutting, Duncan Trollip, Charles Ware and Alister Gibb.

Proxies Received in favour of the Chairman:

Nil.

There being a quorum present, the meeting proceeded.

5 Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> AGM:

The minutes were taken as read. Proposed: Jimmy Harcus. Seconded: Willem van Zyl.

6 Matters Arising:

Fraser Howell expressed concern that his views expressed at the meeting regarding the disposal of the Trolley had not been properly documented in the draft minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> AGM. However, after reading his inputs to members and what had been recorded in the minutes, Fraser was satisfied that his inputs had been adequately minuted (in paragraph 6.2).

6 Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements for 2015:

6.1 Allan Waterston highlighted the main points in his report. Of note is that:

- the full purchase price of the trolley had been paid by Diaz Express and that they had honoured the sale agreement exactly as documented
- a higher interest-bearing account had been opened with ABSA. Surplus funds will be invested in this account
- there were still outstanding claims resulting from the refurbishment of the trolley which members who had incurred these expenses, could request to be refunded
- it would be beneficial if membership fees could be paid electronically or deposited in cash into the association's account as cheques attract very high banking fees.

A copy of the Treasurers' report is attached as **Addendum 1**. The report was accepted to acclaim by all.

6.2 On a question, Allan confirmed that the association was not registered with SARS. The meeting was informed that the Outeniqua Railway Society had been through this process and that contact details could be provided. After further discussion on the subject, Allan agreed that he would consult on the matter and if necessary, would register with SARS.

7 Chairman's Report:

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

Comments of note on the report were:

it would seem from excerpts gleaned from the draft report (*George - Knysna Rail Revitalisation Feasibility Study for the WCG - Reference no: L005/15*) commissioned by the Provincial Government (final report not yet available to the public) that rail tourism would be the main motivator for the re-opening of the George - Knysna railway line;

Waste-by-Rail would likely be financially beneficial for municipalities in the area but there are doubts about timber freight as long-term contracts for the cartage of timber by road have been signed;

most funding for the refurbishing of the line was in place and Transnet are supportive of the reopening initiative;

a holistic approach is needed by the tourism sector which is presently fairly fragmented; and

it was suggested that a train service between Sedgefield and Knysna for commuters would be viable.

8 Election of a management committee for 2014:

The Chairman announced that no nominations had been received for the 2016/17 committee - and after inviting nominations from the floor (there being none) – it was proposed that the 2015 committee be elected to the 2016 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: Terry Cockcroft. Seconded: Rita Wiid.

9 Other Business:

9.1 Colin expanded on the a recently created structure, FedRail, which will promote heritage rail in South Africa. FedRail is affiliated to organisation overseas with similar objectives. Colin will email the web address of FedRail to members

9.2 On a question, Colin confirmed that the Dutch Group were no longer partners in support of the reopening of the George – Knysna railway line

9.3 Colin provided additional information about CeresRail and the steam train trip between Ceres and Hartenbos in the coming week.

9.4 On behalf of his son (an avid Choo-Tjoe supporter), a member offered congratulations to all involved in the collection of 18,200 petition signatures.

10 Closure:

In closing Colin thanked members for their attendance and support, said that he was optimistic that 2016 would bring better news. The meeting closed at 16:55.

Chairman:

Date:



## **Addendum 1: Treasurer Report for the 2016 AGM**

I have pleasure in presenting the financial position of the Friends of the Choo-Tjoe for the year ended 31 December 2015. This financial report has been prepared on a cash basis.

Another quiet year was experienced and other than payments in respect of the sale of the Wickham Trolley, subscriptions, donations and internet charges there was very little movement financially. It is pleasing to note that the full purchase price of R75 000 was settled in terms of the agreement reached with Diaz Express.

The financial position of the Friends is healthy and in the absence of a decision on the reopening of the line between George and Knysna a decision will need to be made as to the utilisation of these funds

Income for the period totalled **R39 725.18** (2014: R 54 340.06) as detailed below.

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>
General donations	3 050.00	4 962.98	10 524.80
Membership fees	3 867.87	4 290.00	8 210.00
Disposal of Wickham Trolley	31 500.00	43 500.00	
Sundry income	120.00	990.00	20.00
Raffle			805.00
Interest	1 187.31	497.08	293.81
	<b>39 725.18</b>	<b>54 340.06</b>	<b>19 853.61</b>

Over the year the Friends incurred expenses amounting to **R3 123.17** (2014: R3 801.84).

The breakdown of these expenses is as follows:

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>
Bank charges	1 118.17	723.35	574.55
Website hosting	565.00	526.00	556.00
Trolley repairs/refurbishment			
Postage/Stationery/Sundry expenses	1 440.00	2 552.49	2 233.90
	<b>3 123.17</b>	<b>3 801.84</b>	<b>3 364.45</b>

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 down on the previous year reflecting the relative inactivity.

A surplus of **R36 602.01** (2014:R50 538) was reflected for the year under review.

At year end cash and bank totalled **R119 864.35** (2014:R82 701).

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

13 January 2016

## **Addendum 2: Chairman Colin Jenkins' Report for the 2016 AGM.**

2016 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closing of the line. You may recall that Transnet were quite dismissive of any suggestion to get the line up and running again quoting financial consideration as the stumbling block. Since the economic down turn, there has been a complete rethink. With the falling off of bulk loads has come the realisation that disused branch lines could actually be used to boost main line traffic and win back a share from road haulage. Mr SIYABONGA GAMA expounded his thoughts in an interview with the press last year. Among the lines being considered was the George – Knysna line, to be operated as a public/private partnership. We knew that Classic Rail had already been in discussion with Transnet and others about how the line could be brought back to life, but Transnet's new stance gave the project a push forward. Negotiations are still ongoing.

Our petition finally closed with a total of 18,200 signatures and I would like to record my thanks to those stalwarts who have helped us achieve this figure. It was felt that our case could best be served by presenting the petition to WCG. Accordingly a letter was sent to the Premier, HELEN ZILLE, and to the Ministers of Tourism, Finance & Transport. The task was delegated to the Minister of Transport, DONALD GRANT. He was more than happy to receive it. The petition was duly handed over at Sedgefield Station on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March during a flying visit. It literally was a flying visit as he had arrived late at George Airport and was on his way to a meeting in Plett. We did not know what time or where the handover would take place until he landed to unfortunately the press could not be advised.

Late last year, we were invited to listen to a preliminary report on a study on behalf of WGC conducted by the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch. The meeting took place in the Knysna library. The study did not just look at the profitability or otherwise of the line but its wider implication for the area as a whole. And on balance it was seen as a positive asset. We have asked to see a copy of the final report and we still await this. But our petition will only help the YES camp.

We have received the final payment for the trolley. It is being put to good use on the section from Mossel Bay to Outeniqua. On a recent visit, it was found that the petrol engine is still giving problems and the plan is to replace it with a diesel unit.

Some of you will have seen that the Ceres line has been re-opened. This again was a public/private partnership effort. The one big advantage they had was that the line was still intact. Transnet hauls freight from Ceres to Cape Town during the week and Ceres Rail run tourist trains from Ceres to Wolseley at weekends. Plans are in hand to run steam trains from Cape Town to Ceres and class 26 loco, the RED DEVIL is being repaired in Cape Town for these trips.

VOORBAAI depot is the scene of much activity as three locos, two 19Ds and a 19B are being put back into running order by BOBBY RUDMAN and his small team. One 19D has already been completed and made its own way to Ceres successfully. It is now running the tourist trains on a regular basis. The second loco, the 19B has also been successfully steamed and will be leaving for Ceres on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March. The 19D will be running a train from Ceres to Hartenbos which will then head back to Ceres in company with the 19B. Members of your committee have been paying regular visits to Voorbaai to observe progress. We have been informed that a number of 19D's have been set aside for our line.

10 seems to be a lucky number. It took 10 years to get the Franschhoek tram running and 10 years to get Flying Scotsman operational again. So perhaps this year could be our year.