

On Track

**RAILWAY SOCIETY OF
SOUTHERN AFRICA
REEF BRANCH NEWSLETTER
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From the Editor

There was a report in Railways Africa of TFR equipping a number of Class 34 diesel locomotives with cab air conditioners. This is to improve the working conditions of the crew working the locomotive. It makes me think of how soft our society has become. The locomotives are 40+ years old and for 40+ years the crews have operated the locomotives without air conditioners (the correct term is air coolers as they just cool the air in the cab and do not condition the air) in the hottest parts of the country and before the diesels came it was the foot plate of a steam locomotive that the crews had to work on, with a 1000°C firebox in front of them.

So am I right our society is getting soft?

However I am the first to admit that for the last 10 years I have had air conditioners in my cars and I can't imagine doing without one.



Sandstone

It costs a great deal of money to run the Stars of Sandstone' note the following

This is the fundamental arithmetic that we are grappling with:

- 1) The Rail Safety Regulator has declared that we have to carry out improvements to our 26kms Narrow Gauge line. We currently have a railway construction team on site carrying out improvements to the line, repairing points, removing kinks and bolts and adding additional materials. There are 8 men involved and they have been there since the beginning of December. They will be there until the end of March. Total cost – R 363,000.
- 2) Additional ballast required in order to meet these requirements (in our opinion not necessary but we are having to adhere to a Gautrain specification). 100 tons – Total cost R 28 000.00.
- 3) Public Liability Insurance for R10 million. Total cost R 25 376.00 (based on what we paid last year for R5m cover X2 – awaiting quotes per the above for this year for R10m)

- 4) Volume of coal consumed during the week – 200 tons. Total cost R 258 990.00.
- 5) Amount of diesel consumed during the week – 20,000 litres. Total cost R 255 800.00.
- 6) Amount of petrol consumed during the week – 5,000 litres. Total cost R 66 900.00.
- 7) Cost of Aviation fuel supplied to Vintage and Classic Aircraft for the event. Total cost R 42 750.00.

These are some of the less well understood overheads that we have to put up with. Obviously you are aware that we have significant wages and salaries to pay, as well as to pay the fees of quite a wide variety of specialised subcontractors who are coming in to assist us.

Source Sandstone Estates

Gautrain

The Gautrain Management Agency (GMA) has not yet undertaken a detailed feasibility study to assess the planned expansion of the present R32 billion, 80km standard gauge railway by adding almost 150km of route. It is intended to appoint consultants to do this soon, GMA chief executive Jack van der Merwe says, to determine whether the scheme represents “value for money”. Work on the study is expected to cost around R20 million. He is quoted saying the new lines could be operational within five years provided the necessary funds are made available but declines to suggest what the extent of these would need to be.

The proposed new lines – linking Mamelodi east of Pretoria to Soweto south of Johannesburg, form part of the 25-year integrated transport master plan for Gauteng. Branches are included in the plan – from Johannesburg’s Park station to Westgate (underground), Sandton to Randburg (underground) and Rhodesfield to the East Rand.

The feasibility study will look at possible sources for additional rolling stock. The existing 1,435mm gauge fleet was supplied by Canadian manufacturer Bombardier but an alternative might be someone like France’s Alstom, which is to deliver a large number of new coaches to the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa). Vehicles for Gautrain would not be identical, however, as Prasa uses 1,067mm gauge, and its rolling stock loading-gauge is different.

Transnet Freight Rail

The first domestically assembled Class 20E unit was scheduled for delivery by the end of January and

All 95 locomotives would be deployed into Transnet Freight Rail (TFR’s) general freight business operations before the end of March 2015.

TFR CEO Siyabonga Gama lauded the speed at which CSR ZELC had moved to design, develop and manufacture the prototype and the final vehicle, describing the process, which took less than 12 months, as “remarkable” when benchmarked against the global norm of between 18 and 24 months.

The group’s engineers had also been impressed by the performance of the dual-voltage locomotive, which were able to operate on 3 kV direct current networks, as well as 25 kV alternating current traction supply systems.

Gama said the early delivery of the initial locomotives was supportive of its fleet modernisation drive, which was designed to raise TFR’s volumes from 207-million tons a year to 300-million tons



by 2020 and transfer rail-friendly cargo off the roads and back on to rail. Gama indicated that many of the Class 20E locomotives would be deployed on the manganese line, where TFR was aiming to raise capacity from 7-million to 16-million tons over the coming six years.

Grindrod

Grindrod Limited, the integrated freight and logistics business, announced yesterday (Monday) the establishment of a new rail leasing entity to provide innovative and cost-effective leasing solutions to the expanding African rail industry.

Grindrod's subsidiary Grindrod Freight Services (GFS) has teamed up with the Pembani Remgro Infrastructure Fund (PRIF) in a leasing joint venture. The new company, called GPR Leasing Africa Limited (GPR Leasing) will be based in Mauritius and will be 55% owned by GFS and 45% by PRIF.

"The joint venture company will be instrumental in providing funding options for customers looking to buy or operate wagons and locomotives manufactured or refurbished by Grindrod, as well as other OEM's," said Dave Rennie, CEO of GFS.

GPR Leasing has already secured orders for 31 locomotives, all of which have either been built new or refurbished by Grindrod. "Grindrod locomotives are 30% to 50% cheaper upfront than other diesel-electric locomotives in the market. The proven track record of the locomotives and their exceptional performance mean that funding institutions are keen to finance them," said Rennie.

"In addition to this, Grindrod's track record of successfully maintaining our locomotives in Africa's most challenging environments, makes our offering robust."

Grindrod's rail customers, which include mining companies, state railways and private rail operators, can access operating lease solutions through GPR Leasing for main-line locomotives, shunting locomotives and wagons – all for the freight market. Rolling stock leasing is a cost effective option and opens doors to new opportunities throughout Africa for customers looking to keep debt off their balance sheets.

"We have been able to leverage the strong relationships of the stakeholders to access competitive

funding,” said Herc van Wyk, CEO of PRIF. “This translates to competitive lease rates for competitively priced locomotives. It’s an exciting proposition.”

Van Wyk said the transaction represents an integral part of PRIF’s strategy to be the infrastructure fund of choice for private companies looking for a partner with whom to invest in opportunities that have arisen as a result of Africa’s fast economic growth.

Grindrod Rail has a presence in several African countries through its joint ventures and investments. The service offering now includes manufacturing; refurbishing; maintenance & leasing; mainline operations; short haul and branch line operations; rail track engineering and construction; and rail technology, signalling communication and rail systems.

Rand Merchant Bank has been appointed as the mandated lead arranger and funder of the debt package in support of GPR Leasing’s activities.

In the world’s developed rail markets, up to 60% of rolling stock is leased. Rennie says that GPR Leasing aims to replicate this on the African continent via this joint venture as well as a similar entity targeting the local South African leasing market.

Extract from Ports and Ships

Thanks to Harry Clare for this

Mozambique

REPAIR OF SENA RAILROAD COMPLETE

THE REHABILITATION of critical stretches of the Sena railway line, linking the Moatize coal basin to the port of Beira, has been concluded, according to a report in Thursday’s issue of the Maputo daily *Noticias*.

The state-owned ports and rail company, CFM, undertook the work to ensure there would be no repetition this rainy season of what happened in February 2013, when the Zambezi River flooded, washed away ballast on part of the Sena line and interrupted rail traffic.

This was a serious blow to the coal mining companies Vale and Rio Tinto, which accounted for most of the cargo on the 12 trains a day that used the line at that time. Coal exports were interrupted for three weeks while repairs were undertaken.

CFM says it is determined that the same thing will not happen this year. At three points along the most vulnerable stretch of the Sena line, new drainage pipes have been installed to ensure that storm waters are channelled away from the tracks. The base on which the rails rest has been strengthened, and all the ditches running alongside the line have been cleaned.

In addition, CFM has placed teams on the ground who permanently monitor the line, particularly the stretch from the Zambezi to Moatize.

Sancho Junior, director of the Sena Line Reconstruction Brigade, told the paper that heavy equipment is available to open more drainage ditches, and will be operating in the critical area until late February.

Meanwhile, work is under way to increase the capacity of the Sena line from the current 6.5 million tonnes a year to 20 million tonnes a year by February 2015. The work is intended to raise the maximum length of goods trains from 42 wagons pulled by two locomotives to 100 wagons pulled by six locomotives.

The contract for these improvements was won by the Portuguese companies Mota Engil and the



Visabeira group, which plan to spend €162.7 million (about US\$ 223 million) on the improvements.

But plans to raise coal exports to 100 million tonnes a year mean that alternatives to the Sena Line are required. Vale hopes to free itself from dependence on the Sena line by building a new railway across southern Malawi that will connect with Mozambique's existing northern line, and carry the coal to the port of Nacala.

A second new line is going to be built from Moatize to Macuse on the coast of Zambezi province, where a new mineral port will be installed. Contracts for the railway have already been awarded to a Thai company.

Source – AIM

Zambia

Grindrod Limited, the South African freight and logistics service provider is partnering with Northwest Rail Company Ltd (NWR) to build, operate and maintain a new 590km cape gauge (1067mm) railway from Chingola in the heart of the old Zambian copperbelt, to the Angolan border.

This new railway will link with the Benguela Railway in Angola which has been returned to service after many years following the Angolan civil war. The Chinese builders of that railway recently reached the DRC border at Luau but a spur from the town of Luena to the Zambian border still needs to be built.

Exclusive rights were granted to NWR, a Zambian company, by the Government of Zambia in July 2006. The agreement signed this week will enable Grindrod Ltd, through its wholly-owned Mauritius- registered subsidiary Grindrod Mauritius, and NWR to conclude the bankable feasibility study which is currently underway.

The railway is to be built in two phases – Phase I extending from Chingola to the Kansanshi, Lumwana and Kalumbila mines (290km of track), and Phase II to connect with the Benguela line on the Zambian-Angola border near Jimbe.

Phase I is intended to service existing ore and finished copper traffic, and Phase II is intended to open up a direct corridor to Lobito which would allow landlocked Zambia to import oil directly from Angola, and to stimulate further mining activity in the Western Copperbelt region.

The estimated capital cost of Phase 1 is US\$489 million while Phase 2 of the NWR project is estimated to cost US\$500 million.

KPMG's Infrastructure and Major Project's team have successfully developed the project with NWR over the last twelve months and facilitated the closure of the deal.

Subject to the conclusion of the Phase 1 bankability feasibility study, construction is expected to commence during 2014. "I have been developing this project for a number of years and the synergies with Grindrod's Rail businesses, makes Grindrod an ideal partner in the joint venture and means we will be able to bring this project to being in the shortest possible time", said Enoch Kavindele, the founder/owner of NWR and a former vice-president of Zambia.

Grindrod's Rail division operates railways and builds, refurbishes and maintains locomotives and wagons, provides rail signalling systems and constructs and maintains track infrastructure.

"We have spent the last few years developing our rail capabilities and growing our capacity to participate in the growth in the Africa rail sector. It has meant we are perfectly placed to take up opportunities like this on the African continent," said James Holley, Grindrod Rail's divisional chief executive.

According to Dave Rennie, CEO Grindrod Freight Services –Ports & Rail, the investment will enable Grindrod to extract synergies from its existing investments in the North South rail corridor and its port operations in Maputo, Richards Bay and Durban.

"We also see great potential in creating an Atlantic gateway to Central Africa through Lobito and look forward to playing our part in making this a reality with the development of Phase II," he added.

The Copperbelt straddles the border of Northern Zambia and the Southern DRC and is amongst the richest under-developed geological regions in Africa. Current production of copper in this area accounts for around 8% of the world's production, and BMI International forecasts sustained growth in the Zambian copper industry at 5% per annum over the next decade.

"We like the economic fundamentals of the copper market. We have previously been highly focused on the coal and iron ore markets so this gives us a good opportunity to diversify our bulk commodity mix," said Rennie.

Existing copper mines are located in the Eastern Copperbelt and are serviced by smelters located near to Chingola (Zambia) and Lubumbashi (DRC). New mine developments have started, and more are planned, in the central and western Copperbelt area of Zambia where ore has to be transported up to 300kms for processing. Road infrastructure is poor, and the cost of road transport is becoming prohibitive. An alternative rail transport solution will be both more economic for the North Western province of Zambia and much less damaging to the local environment.

"Grindrod has proven itself to be a good custodian of state assets elsewhere in Africa and I believe that as Zambians, we can be pleased to have them as our partners in this important project which will create thousands of jobs in the country in accordance with government policy," said Kavindele



*Zambia and the copperbelt, with approx route of new railway to Angola marked in thin red line
Thanks to Harry Clare for this*

Kenya

According to reports in the Kenya press, members of parliament have objected to the way the standard gauge railway construction contract was awarded without following legally prescribed tender processes. Alfred Keter MP claims the procedure was flawed and suggests that the total cost was "inflated". Hezron Awiti MP has called for the project to be suspended until "graft claims" have been fully investigated. He is quoted saying: "I request the Speaker to follow Parliamentary law and if there is a fault, Kenyans must know".

Kenya's parliamentary public investment committee and the transport committee are said to have denied suggestions claiming that they are "in conflict" over the "controversial" tender.

Railways Africa

Kenya train crashes into homes in Nairobi's Kibera slum



The BBC's Moses Rono, at the scene of the crash, says it is not known if anyone is trapped **At least 10 people have been injured by a freight train that crashed into homes in the Nairobi slum of Kibera.**

The train derailed while passing through the slum - one of Africa's largest - on its way to Uganda. Rescuers cleared space in the crowded settlement to bring in cranes to lift rolling stock and reach anyone who may have been trapped.

There had initially been fears that scores were trapped in their homes, but many residents were out at the time.

Local people suggested that they had left for church or gone back to their villages for Christmas.



Police officer: "So far we have removed about six victims who are still breathing but so far they are in stable condition"

The Red Cross, quoted by the Associated Press news agency, said seven people had been rescued and taken to hospital. Another three had slight injuries.

Fire department spokesman Johnson Mia said: "Most of them were crying out from the structures that were crushed and they couldn't move, but we managed to dig out and rescue them."

There are no reports of anyone else missing.

There were also reports that a tank containing flammable fuel was leaking on to the tracks.

Kibera is estimated to have a population of around 250,000.

Mr Kamau said residents had long been warned not to put up houses next to the railway line.

"We have always warned people against encroaching on the line," he was quoted as saying.

BBC report

DRC

On 21 December, minister of transport and civil aviation Rodolphe Adada in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) signed an agreement with China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCCI) director general for African French-speaking countries Chang Xuehui. In terms of which the Congo-Océan Railway (Chemin de fer Congo-Océan – CFCO) is to be rehabilitated. Both the Pointe-Noire-Brazzaville main-line and the Mbinda-Mont-Belo branch are to be overhauled. CRCCI is to carry out technical and financial feasibility studies and then arrange the necessary funding. CFCO director-general Jean-Francois Cotin acknowledges that “significant investment” is needed.

Railways Africa

DR CONGO: Chinese manufacturer CNR Beijing February 7th Railway Transportation Equipment Co is to supply 18 diesel-electric locomotives to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The order has been placed as part of the World Bank-backed national Multimodal Transport Project. This was launched in 2010 with the aim of restoring the financial and operational viability of national railway company SNCC's 1 067 mm gauge network.

The locomotive contract was signed in Kinshasa on December 5 by representatives from CNR, Bank of Congo and a Chinese export consortium.

CNR February 7 said it is the second-largest locomotive export contract it has won, after a contract to supply 112 locomotives to Cuba.

Thanks to Bruce Evans for this

THE DAY I WAS TOO TIRED TO ENJOY A TRAIN RIDE.

By Eric Samuels.

The day I was too tired to enjoy a train ride, was the day my family and I traveled with the LILIPUTIAN narrow gauge train from Weenen to Estcourt and back. That was the first time and also the last time in my life I did so, as I never again had the opportunity to travel in it again. It is too late to do so nowadays as it does not exist anymore!

That particular day was the Friday following a public holiday, namely Ascension Day in May 1977. I was granted a day's leave to do this trip and the children also did not have school on that day. So it was an ideal day for such a trip. An additional reason was that this train did not run on Saturdays.

That was also the day I met the world famous Billy Bester, the driver of this train. I also met his stoker and his guard, but regretfully their names were lost in the mists of time! Billy allowed my sons and I to travel on the locomotive over certain stretches of the line; for which I am extremely grateful as my sons had received an experience that many of their contemporaries could only dream of.

I was tired because, due to work commitments, I only got into bed just after 23h00 the previous night and I had to get up at approximately 02h00 the next morning to drive from Durban to Weenen over roads that I had never traveled over before and I did not know Weenen at all. I also did not know where the station was. We had to be in Weenen before 06h30, as the train was due to depart at 07h00, according to the timetables. .

Just after 06h00 we arrived in Weenen after an uneventful trip. It was a brilliantly clear day with touches of mist at places and a bit on the cold side- especially for Durbanites!

Traveling along the road to Ladysmith from Weenen, I noticed a railway track, near the side of the road, which was running parallel to the road. This was a tremendous discovery as I had only to follow the track to get back to the station. The track went around a ninety degree curve to the right and led up to the station complex.

The station complex consisted of a number of corrugated iron buildings, of which the station itself and large goods shed formed the major components. At the end of the line was a triangle with a locomotive shed at one end. Plinthed within the triangle was a very old Garratt, possibly a Class NG11. A number of carriages and wagons were stabled around the station and the goods shed.

After having had explored the station complex and using the facilities, tickets were bought and breakfast was eaten.

The sound of an approaching locomotive was heard and then it appeared, completely enveloped in clouds of steam. It then proceeded to the curve near the main road, as mentioned above and stood there simmering in the sunshine just begging for photos to be taken. This was duly done.

After a while the locomotive moved back to the station and started to build up a train. One of the carriages on the train was No 4, a first class carriage. What was remarkable of this carriage was that at one end, the end facing towards Estcourt, it had a balcony with metal [for lack of better words] balustrades and pillars. It also had a glass sliding door between the passenger compartment and the balcony. It was possible to watch the locomotive battling up the slopes and not getting showered with soot etc. through this door. Naturally we made a beeline to this carriage and occupied the section with the glass door and the balcony. The center of the carriage was used for the toilets; thus dividing the carriage into two portions.

A number of NG DZ- type wagons and a NG F type wagon [a box wagon built for the conveyance of fruit and vegetables], completed the train. One of the NG DZ-type wagons carried some oblong items wrapped in plastic sheeting. It is not known what was inside.

In due course the train departed amongst clouds of steam, destination Estcourt. .

At the first halt outside Weenen the train stopped and I had to take my youngest son to the locomotive where he was safely installed on the driver's seat outside the cab. I then walked back to the carriage. Though the length of the train was just over 100m, it became a very long distance as the day progressed!

At the next halt, it was my elder son's turn. Here the locomotive took water. After departure it had to cross a bridge over as donga [a ravine] and negotiate a 90degree curve, For safety reasons my son and I had to walk over the bridge stepping on the sleepers only as there were no safety hand railings or safe pathway. [My wife had nearly a fit when she saw where my son and I had been] We had to wait at a safe spot for the locomotive to pick him up. A long walk back to the carriage followed,

At the third stop I had to fetch him at the locomotive and bring him safely back to the carriage. Then it was my turn. It was frightening to sit on the driver's seat on the brink of a precipice with nothing between that seat and rocks tens of meters below!

At the next halt I walked back to the carriage, thankful for the experience and also recovering from a bit of fright!

At another halt, where the train did not stop, was a siding with two spurs. Against one stop block was a water tank wagon. Why? I do not know and I never did find out.

The railway line then crossed the old N3 highway and ran along to a single home signal. Just past this signal the train stopped in the bare veld. The hand brakes of the carriages were safely applied and the wheels were chocked. The wagons were uncoupled and taken away. The carriages were then left alone.

After a reasonably long wait the locomotive returned and coupled up to the carriages. It took the carriages right into Estcourt station alongside the original platform. At the far end of this platform, against the stop block was a green painted van fitted with sprayers for use on a narrow gauge weed killing train.

On the way to the station, the train passed a large goods shed and a locomotive shed. Inside the locomotive shed a narrow gauge locomotive could be seen.

The very first thing we did after having arrived at Estcourt was to walk a distance of nearly a kilometer down a steep slope and up against another to the Escourt Bacon Factory to buy ham, bacon and Vienna sausages. We could have bought the same items cheaper in our home supermarkets, but the thought that the factory's products were fresher was the deciding factor. Along walk back to the station and the shops near to the station then followed. Lunch was eaten in a Wimpey. After lunch it was back to the original carriage and space in which we had traveled. This time it was at very rear of the train and we had an excellent view along the track on the way back.

Along the way my sons and I had again an opportunity each to ride on the locomotive.

Arriving at Weenen all the baggage was loaded into the car. I proceeded to greet the crew and to thank Billy again. Then back to Durban for a bath, supper and early to bed. It was a long and tiring but very interesting day! Despite what was said above at the beginning, I did however enjoy the train ride!
Eric Samuels.

From the Past

Having at last left Kimberley and its vast railway yards behind, our next logical stop is probably Vryburg. (having missed out this cattle town on our dash from Mafeking earlier) A book I have here titled, 'Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa' says of Vryburg; 'Town in Bechuanaland'. The 1st edition of this book was 1961 and the version I have is 1966! Although Vryburg was in fact part of what was known as British Bechuanaland (like Mafeking) where Bechuanaland was administered from the 'Imperial Reserve', it reverted to the Cape Colony in about 1885 and the Cape Province in 1910. How slowly grind the sands of time and change.

But the reason why I mention this is that the Rhodesian Railways which served the then, Bechuanaland Protectorate (the 'BP') cast its influence as far south as Vryburg which was their southernmost point of operation where RR stock could still be seen in the late '50's. (See Les Pivnic's Photo Journal, volume 1 No 2)

My earliest trip through Vryburg was in about 1949 where all I do remember was catching the train to Johannesburg with an 8th class in charge but on a later journey to Rhodesia in 1954 I noticed a lot more than I did at a mere 6 years of age. One particular observation was that of the

bolted smoke box doors of the RR locos sticking their noses out of Vryburg's shed and of custard and chocolate coaches which contrasted so with our richly named 'Imperial Brown' (but usually utterly dull k-k brown) ones. Looking back today, I now, in a flush of perversity actually love the old browns in all their different shades far more than the multi-hued experiments. The chocolate and silver and black of an ex shops coach was a sight for sore eyes and magnificent in its simplicity. Couple that to a black locomotive and you had railway perfection.

Of course Vryburg was cattle country. It didn't have tsetse fly like its neighbour, Bechuanaland. Grazing was good as was underground water and the large markets of the Reef were but a night's journey away. So the cattle barons moved in and the railways were offered a brisk trade in moving beef. The cattle loading sidings were just north of the station on a spur which was always full of silver cattle trucks while the main line to the Rhodesias curved away



northwards up a testing incline. Vryburg's engine shed curved off from the station nearby, much like Upington's and Mafeking's did which I found attractive. For many years class 8's did the shunting and 19's the main line but in the '50's I would think the RR 10th and 12th classes probably also saw duty. As far as I know RR Garratts didn't operate as far south as Vryburg but this has to be confirmed.

In later years (1970's and '80's) Vryburg featured again and again and each time proved to be interesting with Garratts finally making their appearance but from the South African side. But by then they were run down and somewhat of an afterthought and so more of a curiosity rather than anything else. Yet right through to the end of steam, Vryburg managed, like Mafeking to retain its air of being a border town, isolated, on the way to the far flung Kalahari and the huge uninhabited expanses of Botswana and Namibia. Here you could sit at the railway station in the evening and listen to the 19D shunt and see lightning flicker to the northwest and know that you would have to travel hundreds upon hundreds of kms in a straight line before reaching a town of any importance. The railway line still remained all the while, the connection to civilization for most, until the taxi.

To end off, another night time glimpse on a train north of Vryburg in the 1950's. It was the Rhodesian Mail and we were running late. It had been a very hot day and the Western-facing compartments were still baking after our beds had been made. So we moved out into the corridor as so many of us have done, standing with bums against the doors and corridor panels, our hands on the stainless steel handrails, windows wide open with a myriad lineside crickets chirping and the beat of our 19D's exhaust carrying back along the train to us. On the contour-following track, there was a lot of hard work being done by the locomotive, twisting and turning to left and right in its efforts. The Northern Cape scrub and its red earth came up at us as the night air dampened it and wafted through our carriage, cool and relieving.

Up front the engine's fire flared intermittently, illuminating her smoke as the fireman stoked while the big headlight swung this way and that, panning across the veld. Our train followed sedately, a string of lights in the darkness.

It was magical stuff.

Pierre de Wet

Bell & Knuckle Couplers

When I was about 5 or 6, a Sat morning treat was being taken to see shunting in the Wynberg goods yard - and with luck get a ride on the 6th class 4-6-0.

It had bell couplers, as did all the 4-wheel (mostly wood-bodied) wagons, including the type W guards van, used on the Cape Town suburban line. Occasionally a bogie wagon might put in an appearance, like when the circus train stabled in the yard. These would have knuckle couplers, and yes - the knuckles had horizontal slots to accommodate the steel hoops used to couple the bell units. There were always spare hoops lying around in the yard, also the odd vacuum brake hose. In those days, nobody seemed to steal anything.

When coupling bell couplers, the shunter had to secure a hoop on one wagon using a drop-through steel pin, then lift the hoop as the loco approached, guiding it into the other bell. As the two couplings met, he dropped another steel pin to hold the hoop in the other bell.

Change-over in SA took place gradually over at least five, maybe six, decades from soon after 1900. Knuckle couplers were used side-by-side with bell link-and-pin during all this time. Over the years, the bell couplers gradually disappeared. One's impression was they tended to stay in use till the wagon itself was scrapped - i.e. I don't think many of the older ones had their bells replaced with knuckles. It was a different matter with passenger coaches and the bigger locos - notably at the tender end.

By contrast, Mr Janney's patent knuckle couplers were in universal use in the USA before 1900, thanks to legislation introduced to combat a frightening incidence of shunters losing fingers, hands and arms.

One-armed ex-shunters working level crossing booms were not unknown. Come to think of it, bell couplers and most level crossings disappeared from the suburban line at about the same time.

Rollo

The drop through steel pins used in conjunction with the Bell couplers were used in a totally unintended function long after the last Bell coupler had been replaced.

We used them on the class GMA's on the Zeerust line when I was a fireman there way back in 1964. We used them to re-direct the coal being fed by the mechanical stoker off the distribution plate/table to a more specific area of the fire-grate. Mechanical stokers never really performed as intended, and we had to constantly re-adjust them to avoid having heaps of un-burnt coal on one side of the firebox.

I wonder if any other retired enginemen on this list ever used them as the Millsite crews did?

Les Smith.

Interesting that you mentioned use of the steel pins on GMA's to direct the coal. At Mason's Mill we also used large steel pins to prevent too much coal going to one side of the firebox on the Berkley mechanical stokers. They were not used on locos equipped with Standard stokers because they had adjustable vanes either side of the coal table and the coal table had ribs to assist with directing coal flow. From memory, the auger screws rotated in different directions on the two types of stokers and therefore placed more coal on one side or the other of the firing table from where the steam jets blew the coal into the box. At the time I did not give a thought to the source of the steel pins we used with Berkley stokers but since Les's comment the source was obvious!

A further note regarding stokers; they were mechanical but definitely NOT automatic. They required constant monitoring and manipulation by the fireman. As a fireman, on stoker fired locos I found it more comfortable to wear sun glasses to protect my eyes from heat/glare & UV radiation due regularly looking at the fire. On a hand fired loco I knew where the coal was being placed because I put it there!

Lindsay Richard

I remember that on Rhodesia Railways, with knuckle couplers the "curled over fingertip" was divided with a gap between the upper and lower sections. Through both was a vertical hole, and a coupler link could fit between the upper and lower parts with the pin through the holes (the knuckle would be locked in the closed position). I am sure SAR stock was the same. The earliest photo I know of showing a RR loco with knuckle coupler is a 1925 photo of 10th class no.158, delivered in 1922, decorated for a Royal Train, with one, albeit covered by a box housing with a coupler link poking through (but the release bar is evident). I see no reason why the coupler would have been converted in the meantime – the first batch retained their bell couplers to the end.

Richard Clatworthy

Railway Stories

PTB: Official Definition of the Person to Blame

A Railtrack definition submitted for a lexicon of railway terms referred to a PTB. It said, "The Project Manager for any project will appoint a PTB for the project, always from another organisation and preferably without their knowledge. The PTB is responsible for all failures, whereas success is the personal responsibility of the Project Manager."

"How Long is the Next Train?"

"About 350 feet." Station attendant's response to a passenger enquiring about the late running train service at Rayleigh, Essex, UK, overheard one evening in the summer of 1975.

Cock Up

From Glen Hopkins:

The Class 150 multiple units in use by a number of different railway operators in the UK have isolating cocks for doors and suspension located under the passenger seats in the saloon. On one occasion a driver, having suffered a burst air suspension bellows, asked a lady passenger, sitting on the seat in question, to open her legs, whilst he got to his cock!

Odds and ends

Fuel Cost

Westbank report that the cost of fuel to run a car is now equal to the monthly instalment costs to buy the car.

Will this give a boost to using the trains?

There is an interesting new article where the author reports that once he took a ride on a 25NC from Oranjeriver to Cape Town and back to De Aar. In De Aar the police came to the train, not to arrest the driver, but to put a bag full of drugs into the firebox of the loco to destroy it.

It's not the same daga into a diesel tank!

IT'S NICE TO HAVE MONEY.

By Eric Samuels,'

Meet Ian Welch, a New Zealand steam enthusiast and also a man of means. He is the force behind the Mainline Steam Trust, an organization devoted to the restoration, preservation and care of especially the steam locomotives and the rolling stock of the steam era of the New

Zealand Railways. As such he arranges for tours by train behind steam locomotives through both islands and in the process visiting various places where steam locomotives are preserved. In the year 2002 he was the proud owner of two South African GMAM-Garratts, two Class 25NCs and a Class 24. These were bought in South Africa and shipped out to New Zealand. It is believed that he also purchased in the meantime a number of ex Rhodesian /Zimbabwean locomotives and also brought them to New Zealand. He keeps these locomotives in the same shed as with his collection of serviceable NZR stock

It is not known whether or not he succeeded to run the locomotives on the NZR rails, they are too large for the NZR loading gauge. His solution is to cut off or to lower the height of these locomotives by more than a foot [30cm]. He also has to make them narrower.

I wonder firstly whether or not he had received authorization to run these locomotives as such or did he succeeded in reducing their overall dimensions? Who can tell?

A last thought: - I hope that he bought enough spares to sustain these locomotives for a long time!

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Books

Good News. My two earlier titles on "The Steel Kyalami" have been re-issued in a second edition.

Not only that, but as well as (of course) being available in the very large landscape format 33cm x 28cm size (which are unavoidably expensive) , they are, following a significant number of requests, also now available in standard landscape size (25cm x 20cm) . Priced at \$55 (softback) and \$65 (hardback + dustjacket) for Volume 1 (160 pages). Volume 2 is a little more as it runs to 178 pages.

(Courier charges and taxes (if applicable) have to be added, of course) This is excellent value for print on demand books, for which BLURB are the world leaders. The covers are the same for both sizes of the books so make sure you select the correct version in the bookstore.

If you remember Kimberley – De Aar steam and those magnificent 4-8-4s (although plenty of other classes are also covered) then these books are for you. Can you remember those volcanic starts from Orange River Station on a freezing, clear winter's morning as a pair of 25NCs get to grips with their heavy train? If you can, then these books are for you. If you can't, but want to see what you missed and see why South Africa was such a magnet to steam enthusiasts during those times then these books are for you also! Due to space constraints on the server I can only make these standard landscape versions of the two Kimberley – De Aar books available for a very limited period, probably **no more than two weeks**, so please don't delay, if you are interested.

FULL DETAILS OF ALL MY BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE, and the info, full previews, and ordering processes are very simple:

Simply go to www.blurb.com and enter **Dennis Moore steam** in the search engine, and take it from there.

If you prefer, the direct links are; www.blurb.com/b/5008989 (Volume 1) and www.blurb.com/b/5013610 (Volume 2)

Dennis Moore

RSSA Reef Branch

Last month's meeting was a super 8 sound movie show of films of the 70's and 80's taken by Tony Gerrard. It was very nostalgic to see The Red Devil running fast on a full passenger train. 15CAs running to Warmbads and Cullinan the 6A at SANRASM. Germiston shed in its heyday full of steam engines being services. The 15E and F and then the 12R on special trains. Excellent and a well-supported evening well worth the effort for finding the new class room that St Martins had moved us to.

This month's meeting has still to be confirmed but will be as usual an interesting show on S African Railways. I will as usual notify all those on e-mail a few days before the event.

Teaser

Last month's teaser was a picture of Kroonstad Station after the fire. It was correctly guessed by Mark Robinson, Les Smith, Ashley Peter and Nick Twynham.

This month's teaser is an archive picture of a small locomotive being taken to its destination in S Africa. Who can give me the business that used this locomotive and who made it?



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More Railway Stories

Time Warp?

From Glen Hopkins:

Many years ago, I was due on duty at Manchester Victoria at 22.00 hours. I was walking along what was then platform 11 towards the Train crew signing on point at about 21.45, where I was stopped by an elderly and irate woman. She wanted to know why the "boat train" to Holyhead was late, and why there had not been any announcements. I informed her that the train was not due for another 25 minutes and that announcements would not be made until nearer the time. She was insistent that the train was late as she had been told that it would depart Manchester at 20 to 10 - It took me quite a while to explain to her that the railway use the 24 hour clock!

As a further pointer to passengers (sorry Customers) not being able to understand basic information, we still get a large number of them on the wrong platforms after reading the arrivals screen instead of the departure screen.

Dent

From Glen Hopkins:

A lady was travelling to Dent, a station on the famous Settle to Carlisle railway in the UK. On arrival at Dent, she alighted and seeing nothing but countryside around her asked the guard "Where is the village of Dent?" the guard replied that is about 3 miles away, down the hill. The lady then asked "wouldn't it have been better to build the station near the village?" to which the guard replied, "Yes madam, but we thought it better to build it near the railway."

Stop Press

I have just received the first photograph of the proposed new class 21D TFR locomotive



21D where the D is for Donkey Power