

THE NARROW GAUGE

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O&K 1112 'Ermyntrede' ready for steam trials (Lukas Nel)

PRESERVATION PROGRESS AT SANDSTONE

Dave Richardson

Sandstone Heritage Trust has completed the complex restoration of two locomotives and is well on the way with a third. The Sandstone Heritage Trust is a private preservation initiative established on a commercial farm in the eastern Free State in South Africa; a 2ft gauge line is at the centre of activities.

Rescued from the Companhia Do Assucar De Angola (CAA), Fazenda Tentativa near Caxito in Angola in 2003, O&K 11112 has been steamed. As in South Africa most sugar estates had a rail system, generally of 600mm gauge but Fazenda Tentativa uniquely operated on 500mm gauge and No: 11112 was one of four locomotives acquired from the location.



Left: the O&K locos as they arrived from Angola.
Right: O&K 12140 in bright green livery (Lukas Nel)

Originally delivered in September 1925 to Fazenda Tentativa, it is of the 30hp type and believed to be their No: 5. It was last reported in service in 1969. The area was the scene of much guerilla warfare and was riddled (and still is) with landmines. While being a curse on agricultural development in the area until finally cleared, the landmines protected No: 11112 and its sisters from vandalism.

Many O&K locomotives of the period had keyed axles so that a change of gauge was possible and this has been done with No: 11112 which is now 600mm. Having been left in the African bush for many years the loco's condition was believed to deem it beyond repair. However it was decided to attempt a restoration at Sandstone, which commenced in 2010. The cab and tanks had to be remade and all the boiler mountings and fittings have been fabricated from scratch. The damaged frames were straightened and the cylinders rebored. The boiler was repaired to such an extent that it is effectively new and the locomotive reassembled.

It has been painted in a bright yellow colour which highlights the black boiler and frames. The locomotive has been named "Ermyntrude" after a Queen of the Valkyries who was a particular lover of children. Being a small locomotive "Ermyntrude" will be used extensively on children's trains at Sandstone and at the 2017 Stars of Sandstone event.

Sister locomotive, O&K 12140 of the same type as 'Ermyntrude' and also from Angola, was released from the paint shop in another bright colour for use on Sandstone's children's trains. Sandstone is proud to have completed the restoration of two locomotives in the same week.

Hot on the heels of the two completed O&K locomotives, Lukas Nel and his team have made great progress with Garratt NGG11 No: 52. The two engine units have been reunited with the main frames after serious issues with frame damage were discovered. Whilst the Sandstone team were always aware of misalignments at both ends, they turned out to be more serious than originally thought. Large cracks and serious distortion of the frames at the engine pivot points have been repaired using a hydraulic press and modern welding techniques. With the Sandstone philosophy of "nothing is impossible" top of mind, Lukas Nel and his team have worked a miracle to move the restoration forward. The locomotive is now looking like the real thing. Further work is required on the connecting rods and valve gear together with the main steam piping over the next few months.



NGG11 52 in September 2015 and derelict in 2010. (Lukas Nel)