



With the winter season upon us we have stopped running our trains due to the possible risk of veld fires. This is an agreement we have with Spoornet as they do not provide fire-breaks alongside the railway lines anymore since the demise of regular steam. It is an ideal time to do maintenance on the coaches and locomotives and get them ready for the new running season in August.

Over and above the maintenance program for the winter duration we are currently busy with the following restoration projects:

**15CA - Crack found in Safety Valve Stiffener Plate :** The class 15CA no. 2056 is near to complete and was supposed to run for the Drakensburg Explorer Tour-2 for Dave Rogers, but due to a major crack near the safety valve area which was discovered by the boiler inspector on the visual inspection the locomotive did not run as with obvious reasons he could not issue a certificate unless the boiler was repaired in the correct procedure.

With further investigation the crack appeared to have started during the locomotives running career and was previously repaired by means of welding the much smaller crack. The crack had however increased in size through the years of operation and on inspection it was found to have further cracked the safety valve stiffener plate due to the additional stress on this plate. With the crack being much larger the inspector had requested that, that section of the boiler be cut out and replaced. The procedure would mean an engineers drawing would be issued to the inspector by us which will clearly show exactly how it will be cut and the new plates be refitted before welding in by a coded welder who has the boiler code to weld the thickness plates required. Once approved the correct boiler plate will be sourced and from that the new plates cut and profiled to suit, then both the cut section on the locomotives boiler and the new plates would need to be vied for the eventual penetration and seal welds required. The new plates will also require drilling and reaming for the replacement of the six rivets which came out of the old cut plate on the boiler, which holds part of the stiffener plate to the boiler barrel. Once all of this is done and all the very necessary paperwork is complete the inspector will issue the necessary certificates and the go ahead will be given when he is satisfied with the process and welding procedure to be used. Reefsteamers will be doing all of the above mentioned work and the inspector the necessary inspections and certifications, but a coded welder is required which costs money so unless we have the funding available we cannot complete the project.

**Class 15F - Paint Preparation and Tender Work :** Class 15F no. 3046 is another locomotive which is going through a total restoration and so far the restoration has taken Reefsteamers more than ten years due to the funding available for the project and too few members being able to spend time working on the locomotive. The project did stop for a few years due to the mentioned reason but had restarted two years ago. The locomotive has had a hydraulic and visual boiler inspection and passed with flying colors.

The preparation and final spraying of the locomotive has been done and is in a beautiful high gloss black with polished wheel rims and motion work. It was decided that the locomotive would not have the smoke deflectors refitted as Reefsteamers already has a mechanically fired class 15F no. 3016 and hand fired class 15F no. 2914 with smoke deflectors, but the deflectors would be completed and stored for refitment for possible requests for photographic reasons.

We have started refurbishing and refitting the locomotive with some of the fittings but the copper pipes have become our main concern as we do not have any available to fit to the locomotive. Our only alternative would be to purchase the copper pipes from Switzerland as the sizes we require is available there but again we can only purchase the necessary piping when the funding is available. Major work was done recently on the tender and it is now totally complete mechanically. The preparation for painting was done and a thick base-coat in black has been sprayed on. The base-coat will now need rubbing down properly for the final two coats of high gloss as to match the locomotive. We are hoping to have the locomotive in steam by the end of 2006.



New tubes have been fitted and expanded



Polished wheels



3046 in gloss black

**Coach rebuilds :** We have just completed our eight day Drakensburg Explorer Tour-2 for Dave Rogers. We have rebuilt some five coaches for use on the tour. Four sleeper coaches and a private saloon for the Reefsteamers management and safety officer. Three of the sleeper coaches had two of their coupe compartments converted into showers and the hot water is provided by 11 litre on demand gas geysers. The coaches were completed just in time for the tour but in a functional state only and we now need to complete them properly to make the train more comfortable for our passengers on future trips.

Most of the aluminium fittings and trimmings need replacing inside the coaches, the showers need proper shower panels fitted to them and possible toilets also fitted in the shower compartments, and most of the compartment basins need to be made workable with hot and cold water. The existing coach toilets at the ends of the coaches may also be replaced with new standard type toilets, depending on the budget available.

We are making decisions as to what type of coach heating would be the most practical as most of the original steam heating equipment in and under the coaches are either non-existent, not in an operating condition or the steam supply piping under the coaches have been removed so it may not be practical to replace. We will also need to upgrade the pressure pumps under the coaches and refit new 220 volt pumps so they are more reliable in providing a constant pressure in the pressure feed tanks for the hot and cold water supply to the coach. Upgrading and repainting on the outside of some of the coaches is also part of the refurbishment.

- Shaun Ackerman -



One of the coaches being refurbished