



20 May 2006. It is 16:30 and the Germiston depot is a hive of activity, as last minute preparations are being made to welcome the David Rogers tour group comprising of 72 enthusiastic steam photographers from the UK. It seems they may have also brought along their infamous weather conditions, as the temperature falls to six degrees at the shed, and we hear reports of snowfall in Ficksburg - one of the destinations on this tour.

12AR putting together the trains in preparation for the tour.

Two trains are scheduled tomorrow to Magaliesburg - 12AR No. 1535 pulling mixed freight, followed later by a double header of two class 15F's Nos. 3016 and 2914.

Unfortunately, the 15CA - an engine so many people wanted to see running, had her boiler failed by the inspectors due to a crack in the safety valve area, requiring a similar repair to that of our 25NC done, in order to return her to service.

This is the first time I have seen all the loco's in steam, or shall I say at least lit up. I have also never seen to many enthusiastic members at the site, all eagerly performing whatever tasks are required to make this tour a success. While some are taking care of the engines, others are manufacturing spare greasepads, preparing the sleeper coaches, finalising the newly installed hot water plumbing and another making tea and coffee!

There is a fire under the kettle, but there is no steam yet! Even though there is a roaring fire inside, it will take some hours before we see any gauges start lifting on the 25NC. While it is possible to speed up the process, it would cause unnecessary stress on the boiler.

Heating up, while smoking everyone out the shed Even though the shed roof is designed to allow smoke to escape, it does not help when the ambient temperature is so low. As can be seen, no artificial draughting is used to speed up steaming.

15F No. 2914 raising steam One of the 15F's to be used for the double header to Magaliesburg on Sunday. Behind her is 15F No. 2914, also raising steam.

Sleeper coaches being fitted with on demand water heaters. Even hardcore steam photographers prefer hot water! These sleeper coaches are being fitted with on demand water heaters and shower facilities to make the tour more pleasurable - especially given the temperatures outside!

In case of fire - pull the cord Since most of the water towers have been broken down since the end of steam on the railways, we carry extra water in converted fuel tanks. Since tanks were never drawn behind the locomotives, the photographers want them to be coupled at the back of the train. This however proved to be an added benefit. If we should cause a fire (especially since it is now winter), chances are that by the time it is identified, the train can stop with the water tank close enough for the fire to be extinguished using this petrol driven water pump.