



**Introduction :**

We had a quiet day at the depot, with not many Reefsteamers present, although we were busy the entire day. The primary work involved the Big Coal Hunt (more later) and getting the Class 15CA No.2056 'Dorothy' ready for a run for the next day. Many of the Reefsteamers took the day off, as they had gone with the train to Magaliesburg the previous day. We had taken the pupils of the Muldersdrift Laerskool to the Magaliesburg Picnic Grounds for a day out in the sun. (Pics T01 and T02)



Shaun 'Smudge' Ackerman, Andrew King and Michael Thiel spent their Saturday working on two steam and one vintage diesel locomotive to be moved from Ficksburg to the Germiston depot this coming weekend. (Pic T03) All three locomotives are privately owned and are being moved to our depot for safe keeping but also to be used in the spirit of **Steam in Action** that is, being shared and put into use rather than just standing around in storage. We're sending a team of 8 people to fetch these locomotives on the weekend of 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> November. [You can read the report of this event by clicking here.](#)

So, initially it was just Oom Attie, Piet Steenkamp and myself at the shed although others came to keep us company later on.



T01 A coach of kids on the way from Krugersdorp Station to the Magaliesburg Picnic grounds. According to Train Manager Attie de Necker, most of them had never been on a train before and couldn't get their head around the basic concept of a steam-driven engine. It shows how steam is fading into the history books, and gives us impetus to keep steam alive.



T02 Magaliesburg is green! The kids had a great day out in the countryside



T03 Coming soon to a depot near you! Class 15F No.3052 'Avril', owned by David Shepherd, is being tested and prepared to haul a Class 25NC, a DE2 Diesel and 4 coaches on a transfer run from Ficksburg goods shed to their new home at the Reefsteamers depot.

[She has arrived. You can read the report of this Project by clicking here.](#)

**The Great Coal Caper :**

**Piet Steenkamp was in one of his gruff 'Buffels' moods and I prudently stayed out of his reach until I was sure it wasn't me with which he was annoyed. It wasn't. He had good reason to be annoyed, actually, as an expected coal delivery for Friday didn't pitch up. We had a locomotive to fire up today and we had hardly enough coal to melt the cheese in a toasted sandwich.**

Well, we had enough coal to put fire back in the belly of Class 15CA No.2056 'Dorothy', especially as the water was still warm from when the fires were dropped on Friday night. But we had nowhere near enough to make another run to Magaliesburg and back on Sunday. We spun our wheels a bit and blew off some steam, especially when Piet was phoning the coal merchant and was just getting voice mails.

We suspected the coalie was avoiding us and I eventually called the merchant from my cell phone, hoping he would answer a cell number that he didn't recognize. The coal merchant fell for the bait and answered the phone and I gleefully handed the poor unsuspecting slob over to the tender mercies of Piet. (Pic C01)



C01 Waar's my kool? Actually, Piet is talking to Andrew King in Ficksburg, who'd arranged for a direct delivery from a colliery in Witbank for 6pm. (Guess what they didn't pitch either.)



C02 A 12AR stripped for tube replacement is pulled out alongside the coal grab (visible through the gate) to transfer coal from the tender.



C03 The first scoop of coal, which is dusty grey from long storage. This photo was taken from standing on top of the 12AR Cab.

The merchant said that he'll deliver some coal later. Seeing that steam locomotives don't exactly start with the turn of a key, we out our heads together about where to get some coal. The 25(NC), tucked away at the back of the top shed, had some. But more convenient to reach was the 12AR No.1535 in Track No.1 of the workshop, patiently and quietly waiting for new boiler tubes. She has a tender of large chunked, very dusty but good quality coal. So the poor dozing locomotive was unceremoniously hauled backwards out of her bed and raided for coal. (Pic C02) We had a weird little train during the shunting operation, a 'DeeZed' (DZ), then the tea tray, then the valiant little Hunslet and then the coal grab.

We spotted the coal grab outside the workshop, where the tracks converge and then pulled the Class 12AR 'Susan' out and carefully spotted the locomotive on the convergent tracks with just a few inches clearance. (So the coal grab can reach.) We then whistled up Sakkie Kekana as the most experienced coal grab operator that we currently had and got him to start transferring the coal for us. There was a bit of a scramble to find the coal grab's battery as we remove it when it's not in use but the hydraulic grab fired on the third attempt. Sakkie operated the grab while Lee got some morning exercise trimming the coal and guiding the clamshell scoop. The idea was to transfer the coal to one of the grab car's bunkers and then transfer either to the coal docks or perhaps directly to the 15CA which already had enough coal to be put into steam.

The promised coal delivery didn't arrive. We ended up dumping the coal at the coaling dock, and when the

## Lighting up an engine :

Got to do the honours, much to my surprise. Piet Steenkamp simply issued instructions and reminders and we both went over to the back of the Forge House where a collection of rotten old railway sleepers is slowly being broken up for fire wood. The appointed labourer hadn't been on duty so we doubted that there would be enough wood. It turns out there was enough wood regardless and I just had to look for a treasured and very rare resource in the Reefsteamers Depot - a functioning wheelbarrow.



F01 - The chipmunk run. A salvaged barrow waits for a choice load of firewood. I learnt an important strategy - put the fine stuff and kindling at the bottom and the big stuff on top - so one can get the big stuff out first.



F02 - A fresh bed of fir starting coal in a Class 15CA firebox.



F03 - Fire starter kit. Soiled cotton waste is being soaked in paraffin in the shovel and being stored in the bucket. We just keep forgetting the matches as only a few Reefsteamers smoke.

The process of lighting up the engine went without a hitch - a smooth light layer of coal over the entire grate and then a pile of wood and paraffin soaked waste piled in the center. I was quite happy just pottering away with the shovel, while Piet got on with his project of sorting out the hardware shelves and putting new containers and trays into commission.

There's something about mucking about with your rostered steam engines that occupies the mind and lifts the soul.

I did almost take some totally unintentional revenge on the match bandit. Two of the old boys were up in the cab on a casual basis and were receiving impromptu lessons in fire lighting from André van Dyk - who'd come on duty to prepare the locomotive's lubrication for the next day's trip. One of the fellows, unthinkingly, took a match and applied it to my soaked waste-in-a-shovel concoction and lit the fire. I'd used too much paraffin and he almost lost his magnificent mutton-chop whiskers in the flare up. Serves him right for lighting another man's fire. It did flare up quite dramatically though - I guess I need to cut down on the juice.



F04 - Piet Steenkamp tidies up the hardware racks within easy reach of the learner firelighter, in the single road - Top Shed. That green gas in the background is the Reefsteamers clean cotton waste and oil rag store.



F05 - Now, the green oil goes into which jug? The decades old ritual of topping up the oil bottles for the road - the green cans being for the viscous green steam oil. We already had an oil can heating up on the flame plate - as this treacle-like stuff is otherwise too thick to flow into the lubricators.



F06 - The bane of the fireman - the bent, worn shovel lip. This adds to thrust required to pick up scoops of coal, particularly when stirring the coal around the tender and one doesn't have a flat surface to scoop against. A few minutes in the vice straightened things up.

The engine warmed up without incident or breakdown, but with a surprising amount of condensate within the lubricators from an overnight cool down. We took the opportunity to get some extra oil on board and I took time out to straighten up and dress the worn shovel lip.

I was looked at a bit strangely for wearing gauntlets while using the irons to spread the fire. But someone as clumsy as I am needs all the protection from incidental burns I can get! I did accidentally switch off the turret valve instead of the reverser when Andre was battling with a recalcitrant lubricator, and over-fired the front of the firebox by blind-throwing coal through gaseous sheet-flames during the first stages of combustion. And the left rear pocket could have done with a few more scoops - but the experience is part of the fun and satisfaction of learning how to boot up and eventually how to fire a steam locomotive.



F07 - Avalanche! Fireman Andre van Dyk doesn't look amused at having more coal on the footplate than in the tender.



F08 - Are all the wheels still on? Loco-Minder Pat Ackerman was given the regulator for the afternoon shunt. Here, he confirms that the radius rod is lifting as he puts the locomotive in forward gear.



F09 - Class 15CA injector steaming along without an overflow pipe while Pat was busy sorting out a poorly fitting flange gasket.

We had the bonus of not having to turn the west-facing engine, as Reefsteamers normally run tender first eastwards to Boksburg. So we simply had to do some coaling. By the time the engine backed up in the coaling dock, the coal that we had scavenged from the poor old 12AR had been unloaded. The promised coal delivery for 6pm didn't pitch. The Reefsteamers coal loading dock is a sociable place and the usual late afternoon light started painting the boiler in gold strokes and sparkles off the brass within the cab. An over optimistic scoop of coal on the front of the tender buried the fireman up to his ankles. (Pic F07)

Pat Ackerman pitched up at about 4pm, ready to take over the engine for the Saturday night shift of the loco driving for the afternoon shunting as we needed to swap out one of the coaches. (Pic F09) Shunting went without incident and I was impressed by how clean the stack was running – just a trace of heat shimmer and no smoke whatsoever. Of course, the engine was just loafing along. Pat was getting annoyed with a bit of injector overflow spray and fitted a replacement overflow pipe gasket once the engine was staged for the night in the receiving track.

## Project – GMAM Garrett Parts :

The Sandstone Estates GMAM Garratt project made a bit of progress although the locomotive itself wasn't actually worked on over the weekend. The new bearings have arrived for the Mechanical Stoker (Pic S02), as well as a pair of new double taper bearings for the Bissel Truck Axle. (Pic S01) It's really neat to examine brand new bearings, snug in their coating of light grease, and to appreciate what precision devices they actually are. So far as we know, there is no remaining obstacle to getting the GMAM Garratt's donor Bissel truck in tip top shape, complete with new vesconite slide plates and an overhauled axle.



S01 – Zero miles on those rollers! A brand new double taper axle bearing, still in the original grease, for the Sandstone Estates GMAM Garratt No.4079  
Lindie Lou. A bit too heavy to be used as a paper weight.

S02 – Something old, something new, something borrowed (the GMAM Locomotive!) and something that hopefully never turns blue. (From overheating.) This is a pair of Standard Stoker's Mechanical Stoker Crankshaft Bearings.

S03 – The rear unit of the Sandstone GMAM Garratt looks out over the Bissel Servicing area. We are working on the front engine unit of Bissel truck but the Bissel truck on this rear engine unit is to be overhauled as well.

## Other Work :

**James Thomson** pitched up late as we were scratching our heads over the Reefsteamers coal shortage, and it was soon apparent why. He was sick and badly out of breath. After a coffee and biscuits he clearly couldn't face the lathe – so he pushed off to curl up and die somewhere private, probably under a coach somewhere. But eventually James was well enough to continue his turning work on the Class 12AR No.1535 – Susan's valve gear.

We appreciated the fact that he continued his work although he wasn't feeling well.



L01 – A pair of blank pins rest on a Class 12AR union Link. You can see the original pins in the background.

L02 – A professional looking epoxy filled cable splice for the new coach's ground power DB.

L03 – A stripped and cleaned distribution board prepared to be mounted in the old running shed. We are rigging the shed up to supply head-end-power, to be able to power up a parked train without having to start the generator.

A new project is the installation of a new distribution board in the old running sheds. Aside from supplying local power and possibly some lighting, the board's primary purpose is to provide a power source to energize the electrical systems of parked coaches without having to run the portable generator. This is one of the benefits of Fred Sewell's Hard work in converting the coaches to 220V power – they can be plugged directly into the mains.

An armoured cable was trimmed and properly spliced. (Pic L02) Not only do we now have a waterproof joint, there is no current de-rating required for restricted cross sectional area of conductors. The distribution board was stripped of existing contents and wiring, cleaned up and laid aside for refitting. (Pic L03)

## Pictures from around the shed :

**The approach road to Reefsteamers was scraped off and serviced again this weekend. Lee encountered the front end loader heading towards Knights Road and waited patiently in a pebble strewn lay by. (Pic M01)** The driver was a little disappointed when I didn't have cigarettes to offer him. An odd fact about the Reefsteamers Club is that very few of us smoke – which is frequently a problem because we neither carry matches or lighters for fire-lighting.

The last time the road was cleaned, the primary focus was on getting dumped rubbish out the way. After a wet weekend, the road surface got rutted. It's a definite improvement now. Shongololo Express have expressed an interest in rehabilitating a civilized, tarred entrance road past the diesel depot for the continued use of our facilities and the occasional steam locomotive. We Reefsteamers are discussing plans to get a decent station platform set up, with a covered roof, steps, and ramps for wheelchairs. And we'll move our clubhouse there too, when the two articulated coaches are weather proofed and have been put back on the rails once more. With the continuing deterioration of the Transnet Infrastructure, particularly the older metro-stations, we cannot expect passengers to wait at unsecured and possibly even dangerous facilities. One of our regular stations, Boksburg East has had security and staff terminated and the process of stripping and vandalism of the old goods shed and the platform has already begun.

The Friends of the Rail's DZ drop-side gondola was getting in the way during switching. (Pic M02) It was facing on the wrong end and it's a schlep to run around with the running shed (now Coach Shed) lines either occupied or not in good condition. However, the little shunter train looked good with the tea tray and a freight wagon – as well the DZ providing extra grab handles and foot stirrups for certain photographers and aspiring shunters.

Railways have a way of humbling you. Senior driver Attie De Necker pushed the tool rail-trolley out of the running shed (Pic M03) and derailed on a set of points on the leading end of the yard. He looked thoroughly disgusted with himself, standing with his trademark de Necker's Poker Face, and as I approached him, I was thinking – how could one possibly miss a set of points and derail. The two of us re-railed the trolley and I confidently pushed it back up to its usual storage spot next to our caboose. The stupid trolley derailed right in front of everyone else, including a visitor. (From a guarded flangeway too.) Lesson learnt! Flanged wheels only work really well when you have, oh, about 20 tons or more on board.





M01 🚛 Road clearing again. A Transnet front end loader is heading towards Knights Road as 🚛ve pulled over. The road is remarkably improved but we are looking forward to a tarred road by Shongololo Express.



M02 🚛 An unusual visitor. A drop side gondola, colloquially known as a **Dee Zed** (DZ), even though this one is actually a **WZ**, waits in what has become our coach yard. This wagon was used to transport good quality coal from Friends of the Rail's Capital Park depot.



M03 🚛 A one-man-power shunter. Senior driver Attie de Necker rolls the tool trolley out from the old steam loco running shed. (Now our Coach Shed.)



M04 🚛 Not a common sight a steam locomotive's turret manifold viewed from the cab roof in bright sunshine 🌞 and no electric wires in the way! This is the turret manifold, valve spindles and whistle assembly of our Class 12AR No.1535 🚛Susan🚛



M05 🚛 Locomotive astrology 🚛 what happens when the planets, er, rods, all line up? The Class 15CA No.2056 🚛Corothy🚛 is resting with a coupling rod, a connecting rod and a return crank all neatly in line. (Note that this is not BDC.)



M06 🚛 This is one of the finished pair of off-set number boards fabricated by Fred Sewell for the Class 15CA. The handrails and braces on the locomotive prevent the fitting of a conventional number board directly onto the buffer beam.



M07 🚛 Diesels never go wrong, right? Our old Hunslet Taylor switcher got stuck on the back tracks when the transmission drive coupling and pilot bearings disengaged.



M08 🚛 This Reefsteamer looks as though he's scored a black eye in a scuffle behind the shed. When Lex sees this photo, he'll know what happens when you rub your eyes with coaly hands!



M09 🚛 How pleasant it is to lie in the shade of the tree, amongst the green grass of the coaling dock. (Once one kicks all the black nuggets out the way.)

**End Piece :**



The Saturday evening sun shines through the old Germiston running shed at the end of another Reefsteamers Depot Day.