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[Wed, 9 April - Passengers at Boksburg East.](#)

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Introduction :



FP01 Our large main-line steam train is dwarfed by the magnificent scenery through which we ran.
(Pic by Aiden Mc. Carthy)

Bad news sells.

Ever noticed that?

This trend is why most newspapers tend to be text-based drama queens, blowing up current issues out of all proportion in an attempt to appeal to our base human nature in reveling in bad news and perhaps, to rejoice in the ills, misfortunes and downfalls of others. (Especially the famous) Who cares about the pratfalls and trials of Britney Spears, Angela Jolie or Tom Cruise anyway? I mean, get a life! But amongst clubs and fraternities, the bad times, the struggles and the discomforts always seem to end up being remembered as amusing stories and retold over and over again. And usually, those stories are retold with much relish and not a little embellishment, especially when the beers and the klippies n^o coke begins to flow, with an inevitable bit of spicing up on the facts to make things sound even more exiting.

I have noticed this amongst third party articles written by others about the Reefsteamers, and even amongst stories verbally told by the Reefsteamers themselves. A few incidents in an otherwise successful trip are mentioned world wide. For instance, practically the whole steam preservation world probably knows that our vintage generator packed up on our 2007 Dave Rogers Tour. (As if no other elderly generator in the world has ever blown a gasket on heavily-loaded 24/7 duty.) So the electrically pumped plumbing and the lighting didn't work until Fred Sewell hooked up temporary external generators a day later big drama. But not much mention was made of the spectacular scenery; the clear, cold ideal-for-steam-photography weather; the trio of beautifully performing locomotives 460km from their home base, including the then recently completely re-tubed and recertified Class 15CA No.2056 Dorothy ; the many successful photo run-bys, with many of them additional to the schedules, even with the crews battling with poor coal and clinker.

The generator blewoh crikey!

The discomforts, weariness and trials make good stories. But the good times generally get forgotten.

If we stick to this formula, then this will end up being a pretty boring report, as there are no major incidents or real discomforts to highlight. We, quite simply, had a great trip. My photos don't do the trip much justice.

The starring locomotive of our free State Explorer train to the Steam and Cosmos Festival, Dave Shepherd's Class 15F No.3052 Avril , ran like a somewhat dusty Rolex. She didn't miss a beat and the only minor repairs required was to clean out a cylinder cock valve and to adjust the cylinder cock linkages. Otherwise the grand old engine ran flawlessly, steaming proudly through the Free State scenery. One coach's water pump failed to switch off, which blew some of the piping apart, and the same pump later tripped itself out while stubbornly cycling against back pressure but that was the finicky 25 year old original spec pressure switch misbehaving, rather than the pipes or the pumps themselves. One pump in the entire train and so far as I know, it didn't kill anyone to use the hot and cold running water on tap in the adjoining coach. No unwashed corpses (with bars of soap clasped in their cold dead hands) were found in the corridors or gangways anyway.

We did have two failures out on the main line both of them involving the electric locomotives behind which we had to be ignominiously hauled due to the current ban of steam power on the Transnet core lines . These core lines were mind blowingly busy and it really justifies the banning of steam operations on the main lines. In a 920km round trip of main line running we encountered two Shosolozza Meyl passenger trains, a coupled pair of Class 38 diesels idling as light engines, a single Class 6E1 running light, one mixed freight train and a rail inspection vehicle on the busy main lines. And the only sign of Transnet during our 3 days at Ficksburg was a converted Toyota truck road-railer chugging through on the center irons.

And that's it. We had a great time and a truly fantastic run. The weather was mild with warm sunny days, and brisk, but not unpleasantly chilly mornings. There were some brief cold snaps on two afternoons, with ominous clouds oozing over the Maluti Mountains but that never amounted to much. And trimming coal is a great way to keep warm. (Just ask Andrew not me) Many of us who had cleverly packed extra blankets in anticipation of the biting Eastern Free State autumn cold ended up sleeping on top of them, instead of under them. The food was superb and the ladies in the kitchen did themselves well working non-stop to prepare three delicious meals a day. They, in fact, put in the longest working hours out of anyone on the tour. The footplate crews had it relatively easy as we had originally planned to crew two engines, and there wasn't the heart to kick some people off the crew list just because we eventually went down to one engine for economy reasons. We wanted every crew member who are regular contributors at the Depot to share in the experience of the Free State Explorer \ Steam and Cosmos Festival. So nearly every crew member only had to work two or three shifts. Some of them even volunteered to do extra work.

The Sandstone Steam and Cosmos Festival itself was a bewildering grassy-buffet board of action, alive with movement and living mechanical history. We were treated to three narrow gauge trains running non stop through the day, military vehicle convoys, a Sherman tank demonstration, constant overhead fly bys and acrobatics from military and civilian aircraft, a vintage bus, a vintage fire engine, tractor drawn ploughing and a host of steam and vintage diesel and gas powered engines on display, as well as combine harvesters, modern and vintage tractors, traction engines and the oval-stickered infrastructure of the Sandstone Estates itself. The infrastructure and equipment alone is impressive, on this modern, commercially operated 8 500 Ha farm.

Not to mention, of course, the unusually richly coloured Cosmos flowers!

So yes, this was a great trip and a credit to all those involved and kudos too, to the Sandstone Heritage Trust and their varied partners in preservation in putting on the festival. This trip was also a credit to the good spirits of the people on board our train it was great to see the crew and the passengers naturally mixing it up.

If it is stories of bad times and drama that you're looking for, I'm afraid you will find this report, as long and as detailed as it is, to be somewhat dull reading and you won't have any stores to tell around the braai (BBQ) fire.. But otherwise, read on and see how a transprovincial steam tour can be successful at unavoidably short marketing and booking notice, read of the functioning of a tightly knit steam-team, and at how a beautiful old machine relived some of her golden days, taking herself and the people on board back in time, sprinting enthusiastically along the high iron.

9th April Wed Last prep and short haul to Boksburg East Station :



FP02 The GERMISTON Wing Heralds remind us of our home 460km away once we've arrived at our destination.

The departure day of our trip dawned mostly clear skied and cool with dry rails and no problems loading coaches. The weather would show off the freshly cleaned engine to advantage, particularly the newly polished valve gear and coupling rods. One had to be careful of walking around though as the soil around the depot has been disturbed by the current track sleeper upgrade project, and a distracted Reefsteamer could easily stumble or twist an ankle on the liberally scattered ridges, humps and hollows. The Depot Day started with everyone busy within the Top Shed, which we generally use as our running shed (Pic W01 below), the engine quietly building up steam and submitting to the last minute preparations. For, no matter how thorough one is in the pre-trip preparations of the previous weeks, there always seems to be about a hundred more jobs to be done.

Some of the work that had been done on this locomotive over the last 4 months includes :
(In Summary form)

- 1). Replacement of Stoker Jet Manifold Valve with shop assembled rebuilt unit.
- 2). Replacement of Stoker Feed and Stoker Jet Gauges with brand new units.
- 3). Re-plumbing of Stoker related gauges and of the stoker jets themselves..
- 4). Removal of obsolete Steam Heat Gauge and associated piping.
- 5). Repair of ash-grate peg and custom fitting to grate shaker lever.
- 6). Replacement of worn and loose driver's seat.
- 7). Painting of entire frames, all wheels, buffers and the front end.
- 8). Locomotive brake slack adjuster rods repaired one was seized and one was stripped.
- 9). Full undercarriage, suspension and brake gear lubrication.
- 10). Axle keeps and bogie bolster pins serviced and lubricated.
- 11). Turbo-Generator's governor adjusted and generator lubricated.
- 12). Tender coal-space corner braces completely re-fabricated and welded.
- 13). Rear tender deck weather-sealed in poly-urethane paint.
- 14). Temporary cab number plates and wing heralds sourced and fitted.
- 15). Commemorative plaques custom made and fitted.
- 16). The reverser's lock cylinder's rear chevron seals replaced.

- 17). Brake Ejector totally overhauled.
- 18). Cylinder cocks cleaned and linkages serviced.
- 19). Several rotted cab floor boards replaced.
- 17). Failed grate shaker repaired.
- 18). Grate shaker condensate valves stripped and cleaned.
- 19). New access hatch fabricated for tender stoker gearbox and drive shaft access covers.
- 20). New mechanical stoker trough slides fabricated and fitted.
- 21). Entire tender coal-space interior rust proofed.
- 22). Rusted and holed tender rear scuttle plate patched.
- 23). Tender water chute lids repaired. (broken hinges)
- 24). Turret valve packings serviced.
- 25). The Sellers valves serviced and seats ground on RHS.
- 26). Bell Coupling fitted for water transfer to rear of tender.
- 27). Missing oil pipes fitted to Bissel Bearing Pads. All oil boxes fitted with new trimmings. (Wicks)
- 28). Newly black-painted Smoke Deflectors were re-painted grey upon request.
- 29). Newly black-painted tender frames and bogies re-painted grey upon request.
- 30). Rusted holed train brake pipe replaced behind wind deflectors.
- 31). New latch fabricated and fitted for the firebox doors.
- 32). Brass heralds mounted on cylinder covers.

So yeah, I'd say that we've done a bit of work on this loco



W01 A very busy Top Shed. There are three teams represented here. The cleaning \ painting crew the locomotive roadworthy inspection (standing in pit) and the helmeted firefighter high-stepping in from the right.



W02 Cleaning off the recently painted cow-puncher. It took a team of five people three weekends to get this locomotive looking clean and sharp.



W03 The distinctive management coach (No.42) looks much more dignified after the delaminated paint job has been repaired.

The cleaning of a steam locomotive can be easily written off as a waste of time, because they get dirty again so quickly. This is especially true of the coupling rods, valve motion and wheels after one or two service stops with the inevitable grease and drips, and airbourne oil condensate from the cylinders. But it's a matter of pride for a depot to present a clean locomotive for her first foray out on the main irons. Shorty and Fielies were on the job of cleaning and painting the front end. (Pic W02 above) The wind deflector plates, front steps and the brake pipe stand were freshly repainted and the coupling rods and valve motion had been painstakingly polished with fine grit sandpaper.

The management coach, o/n No.42, occupied the crossover track, to be able to utilize ground power for the on-board electrical system especially for the refrigerators. (Pic W03 above) This coach was repainted back in 2006. However, the sub-zero (-6 deg Celsius) temperatures experienced during the 2007 Dave Rogers tour caused the sheet metal work to contract and the embrittled, thick coated paint cracked and lifted off in slabs. The exposed metal underneath then began to rust. This old coach was repainted last week, fixing damaged areas on both the Gulf Red and French Grey sides, as well as the application of polyurethane paint onto the roof. Because the existing paint from last year has just begun to fade, you can see the fresh patches but the coach looks a whole lot more presentable now.

Shaun Smudge Ackerman got into his element, duck-walking amongst the cool greasy, gritty undersides of a locomotive. He was seemingly just pottering around with an oil can but was actually giving the engine a very thorough road worthy inspection and a simultaneous light-lube job of the undercarriage. (Pic W04 below) As we were only taking one loco with us, there would be no backup in case of a breakdown or simple lack of steam. No problems were found apart from some slightly loose bolts and a couple of split pins that needed replacement.

During this work, the coaling dock was busy with Sakkie Kekana filling up the 40 ton capacity DLJ type gondola which we would be using as a coal wagon. We were at a premium concerning the costs and the weight of the train. But the approx R26000 charge requested for hauling coal down to Ficksburg by articulated truck was just too much. We'd pay less on the YQ, and burn up less fuel money, hauling our own coal with us, right behind the usual auxiliary water tanker a steam locomotive equivalent of a lunch pack. Shaun was anxious right through the planning and beginning stages of the trip concerning how much coal we'd use and how tight the supply would be. But the genteel old iron lady doesn't eat that much we came back with about a third of the gondola's coal load still unburnt. Of course, if we had been allowed to do a proper steam hauled run all the way from Boksburg East to Bethlehem, the coal consumption would have been much higher. Maybe next year



W04 A freshly oiled spring hanger bears testimony to the thoroughness of the roadworthy and preparatory lube work.



W05 Road-worthy of another kind. The guest footplate crews were tested on their knowledge and their paperwork checked.



W06 Loading up Kango, the Catering Car, through the distinctive corridor hatch.

While the locomotive was being prepared and checked, the guest footplate crews were being put through their paces in the club house. (Pic W05 above) Vice chairman Coen Pretorius handles the training and safety related issues as our vice chairman, and

although he looks like a friendly barefooted old softy, he holds to high standards. He was ready with the paperwork for four additional crew members.

The kitchen crew arrived in the mid day and the all-important food was gradually loaded (Pic W06 above) and nothing got broken, although one bag of mince did get dropped in transit. I washed it off and no one would know any better the bag didn't split anyway. Some food was stored in the kitchen of the Management Coach No.42, especially the meats in the chest freezer, and the club house refrigerator was moved in as well to expand the cooled storage space. It sounds a simple exercise but the refrigerator had to be loaded via the gangway doors as the side doors are too narrow.

In the midst of all this activity, with the Reefsteamers quite literally forming foot trails through the soft inter-track dust like worker ants carrying their seeds, the locomotive was rolled out to the Reception Track for improved lighting, ventilation and a good blow down later on. (Pic W07 below) A harried looking Patrick Ackerman suddenly came in bearing a pair of gifts, like a somewhat pressurized wise man seeking the holy abode. The gifts were the seriously nifty custom made CNC engraved aluminum commemorative plates which credit Dave Shepherd with handing over the locomotive to Sandstone Estates for use for Steam in Action. They are beautifully made and were mounted almost immediately. Shaun and Patrick had designed, commissioned and paid for those plates themselves.

Patrick Ackerman then disappeared again in a roiling cloud of dust and centripetic gravel, leaving the plaques to be mounted on the locomotive's cab sides. (Pic W08 below) The mounting holes had been carefully marked centrally and pre-drilled in the cab sides symmetrically under the oval name plates. But the catch came in that the pairs of pre-drilled mounting holes are actually drilled through UNDER the wooden floor board levels of the raised platforms upon which the fireman and driver's seats are fitted. Shaun Ackerman had the task of lifting those floorboards without damaging them undoing shallow screw heads with the slots long filled in with compressed ground coal. It's an awkward job with the seat still in place and it took over an hour and some gritted teeth just to get the plaques mounted.

The cab-side holes had been predrilled to dimensions separately given to the plaque maker but the two sets of dimensions matched up. The plaques mounted with a minimum of wriggling. The freshly mounted plates look great, although you can see the text just about fitted in the allocated space on the fourth line. (Pic W09 below.) They were made to fit within the width of the oval SAR number plate and it was a close fit. We were concerned about the effect of lineside thorn bushes on those plates as we often end our trips with long lines of scrapes and scratches on the coaches. But because the plaques are so difficult to remove and then remount, we decided to leave them on the cab sides, at least until they would be unveiled on Friday. As it turned out, they only got slightly scratched during the trip. We plan to remove them at leisure and remount them in a higher and more recessed, protected location.



W07 Class 15F Avril has just rolled the first few meters on her journey to the Free State chuffing out to the Reception Track. Note the lamps set out on the buffer beam.



W08 Piet Cuffels Steenkamp holds the plaque straight as the mounting screws are blindly applied from the other side. Shaun was justifiably nervous of the delicate plaques falling and getting damaged.



W09 This locomotive has been entrusted to the SANDSTONE HERITAGE TRUST by its owner, David Shepherd OBE, to be used as part of the STEAM IN ACTION initiative.

The 4-wheeled 150HP Hunslet Shunter was then started up and the waiting train put back together with quite a convoluted series of shunting moves. We were to take ten coaches in total. The train was standing in two halves. And the management coach and a sleeper coach allocated for the crew were standing in the crossover track. These two coaches were hauled out alongside and past the old forge house and then placed on a running shed track, but not yet coupled. After a hard move, the two extra coaches started rolling into the shed on their own and Sakkie Kekana had to run alongside to apply the handbrake while on the move. The resulting hard coupling was unlikely to have hurt the coaches themselves, but we still had people on board in the catering car and the dining car. Sakkie stopped his coaches successfully. Then the little diesel shunter konked out, with the exhaust clapper just flopping shut and it dismally rolled to a halt. The fuel tank was found to be sucking the bubbles from the bottom. So the steam powered cavalry was called in to the rescue and Class 15F No.3052 Avril underwent the indignity of shunting her own train when a princess like her should be able to wait in the shed, roll out majestically and couple onto the waiting train in a royal garland of wafting steam.

This resulted in a very mixed train at the west end of the old running sheds. (Pic W10 below) Apart from the fact that the coal wagon and the water tank needed to be attached, the shunters had brought out the tea trolley, a clapped out but still useful short-wheelbase plain-bearing flat wagon. So that ended up in the mix too. There were no further incidents in the shunting and finally the entire train was in one piece. The brake pipes and the electrical connections were hooked up from both ends simultaneously.



W10 A very mixed freight comprising of one green diesel critter, the tea trolley, the water tanker and the coal wagon.



W11 The loved and the forlorn. Class 15F No.3052 Avril looks even more of a picture as she performs a coupling move alongside one of her less fortunate Class 15F sisters awaiting scrapping on the deadlines.



W12 Close quarters as three friends from the Umgeni Steam Railway try to select and set up their bunks at the same time.

We were planning to leave the depot at 2pm but only ended up boarding the train at about 3:30pm. There's nothing quite like setting up your compartment for a coming trip. Because of the double crewing for the non-existent double locomotive combo, we ended up with more crew than passengers. The crew compartments were generally assigned to four people each which can be

tricky when each of those four people have brought extra luggage for anticipated cold weather as well as sleeping bags and such. Bedding was actually supplied by Reefsteamers for the crews, and that took up even more space. Normally, of the triple set of bunks on each wall, the center bunk is used as a luggage shelf, as there is insufficient space between the lowest bunk and the floor. That's all well and good, but then one has the critical decision of selecting an easily accessible lower bunk but sleeping in claustrophobic conditions and barely able to turn over without your shoulders catching the base of the center bunk ; or one can select the relative open space and higher headroom at the top bunk but having to climb up and down to get there. The top bunks are effectively longer as they are on the same level as the overhead storage so the taller guys of 6ft and above generally go high anyway.

I'm a top-bunk fellow.

There was a delay in getting the train out. One of the weak points in our depot equipment is the lack of a vacuum pump, or a vacuum brake equipped diesel locomotive. This means that vacuum brake related work cannot be tested properly, unless one of the steam locomotives happen to be in-steam at the time. Right at the back of the train, the water tanker's brakes were not applying and there was an ugly ululating squealing whine of air being sucked through a small gap like someone stretching the vibrating neck of a deflating balloon. The sound alerted us to the problem even before the mandatory brake test could be done.



W13 The brake release valve being fitted. The cut down stud is the one to the left and you can just see the new washer being fed over the stud.



W14 A mild traffic jam of three people trying to pass in one narrow corridor. I say mild as there was no luggage involved. Nothing makes one aware of the need for a diet like trying to squeeze past another person in those narrow corridors.



W15 An increasingly rare sight on the neglected Transnet network, a passenger shelter still standing upright. Oos is Afrikaans for East. The young lady leaning at the right side doesn't seem to know what to think of the steam train and the crowd of umlungus (sea foam \ white people) hanging around the steam train.

Yes, even we Reefsteamers don't always get it right. The team that replaced the tanker's vacuum cylinder the previous week has made some subtle mistakes in the assembly. The brake release valve attaches to its mounting pad with two vertical studs. One of the studs was so long as to foul with the cylindrical body of the valve when the nuts were screwed home. (Pic W13 above) And the protruding blank stud shank of the same stud prevented the nuts from going all the way home. So the flanges wouldn't seal. And there were no washers fitted as the original valve hadn't any washers. Visually, it looked okay but the true test was when vacuum was applied. The problem was solved with a hacksaw to cut the offending stud down. A nut was run up and then the stud was cut off shorter and the nut re-cut and straightened its own threads upon removal. Washers were found from the power van to allow the nut to tighten up on threads. It was a dicey job, working at full arm's length over an inspection pit, which would make retrieval of any dropped fasteners and hardware a yogic proposition. The power van was at the other end of the train so several of us got some exercise fetching tools and looking for parts. The train passed the first brake test after this minor repair with ease! (Especially with the in-house Reefsteamers overhauled brake ejector.)

The heavy-ish train pulled off for Boksburg East in fine style, albeit with some delay in the zig-zag to get onto the mains, and the locomotive was running tender first as there are no turning facilities at Boksburg East. We took an easy run as because we were running 2 hours late, we'd be mixing it up with the Wednesday Afternoon Metrorail traffic anyway. So why rush? The passengers on board the train didn't have time to get impatient with the few stops, but busied themselves with packing their compartments and finishing up the packing in the kitchen.

We arrived in Boksburg East at about 5pm, rolling in much to the fascination of the afternoon commuters. (Pic W15 above) They got an eyeful of some steam action as the tender first engine was run around the train and placed at the head end and facing the right way for the outbound trip on the morrow. Unfortunately, photographic opportunities were seriously spoilt by a rail maintenance train parked between our siding and the commuter passenger platforms. Piet Steenkamp took the opportunity to get some more hard grease into the coupling rod bearings while they were still warm, even though we'd only done a short run. (Pic W16 below) The engine would have a long way to go the next day and one can never have too much grease in those vulnerable points. (Except maybe the sealed return crank bearing but you get my drift.) Andrew King, as Chief Engineer, has been hammering the drivers on regular lubrication and this practice was followed throughout the entire tour.

Les and Sandy Smith had already set up a reception desk on the bare platform of the old Boksburg East Goods Shed. (Pic W17 below) Reception was open until late - an excellent idea as many of our guests had driven a long way and some had flown up to be with us. It eliminated the risk of guests missing the train due to unavoidable transit delays and we did, in fact, have guests arriving at night. It also meant that people could unpack at their leisure and stroll around a bit after a long journey. Les was causing some amusement by handing out the first of the daily day-glo yellow smiley face stickers, insisting that these are reminders that this is to be a happy train. He's had enough experiences of rail tours and steam engines to know that tempers can flare up some times. The canting evening light was mellow and the semi derelict goods shed took on a life of its own. Our Sparky, Fred Sewell, temporarily hooked up the power car to the goods shed's lights, so we had some lighting on the platform for the evening. And as a bonus, the usually dangerous open drain pits that were in a row on the platform have all been neatly concreted in so we no longer had to stand guard lest an unwary visitor trip and hurt an ankle.

A major reason why we use Boksburg East as a departure point is the intact fencing and controllable entrances. Reefsteamers had made arrangements for four days worth of security, including a dog patrol. (Pic W18 below)



W16 📷 Piet 📷Euffels 📷 Steenkamp greases the left rear driver wheel while the bearings are still warm even after a short run. Note the beautifully shiny coupling rods.



W17 📷 The open air goods-shed reception desk is doing a brisk trade. That's Sandy Smith manning the wheel and dark shirted Les Smith standing in the middle. Note the cosmos flowers in the vase.



W18 📷 Woof! A somewhat melancholic looking guard dog, with harshly cropped ears, takes up duty next to the goods platform.

The locomotive needed watering before the next shift and fireman Sakkie Kekana set to manfully even though he wasn't actually on the crew roster for those evening hours. (Pic W19 below) The nearest working fire hydrant is inconveniently over by the derelict offices and it took three fire hoses connected end to end to reach the locomotive's water tanker. Furthermore, the clearances to the right of the locomotive were obstructed by a concrete containment dyke and much shrubbery. The shrubbery had been hacked away with machetes (Panga's) but there wasn't much we could do about the concrete. (Pic W20 below) On the plus size, we had a properly fitting key handle for the hydrant and the water pressure was quite decent.



W19 📷 While it was still daylight, Sakkie 📷Sakana 📷 Kekana rolls out the first of three fire hoses required to reach the locomotive's water tanker and with enough slack for a direct connection to the tender. (Which we never made.)



W20 📷 It's a good thing Reefsteamers are better with locomotives than they are at gardening. This whole area was whacked down with a panga, but the concrete wall bristling with black-jacks, visible at the back still had to be negotiated in darkness.



W21 📷 A day sitter got the last spot under cover under the old goods shed roof in the mellowing sun set.

Meanwhile, within the coaches (Pic W21 above) some semblance of order was settling in and the open cash bar was already doing a brisk business. The kitchen was finally packed and stocked. But no cooking was required on our first night of our tour, as pre-made boxes of snack foods had been brought. We had originally planned to have a platform braai (BBQ) but we didn't want late coming passengers to miss out. But with the serving of cold pre-made food laid out as a buffet, the kitchen remained tidy and the ladies enjoyed a last night 📷off before the endless catering work really started. (Pic W22 below)

I, Lee Gates, got the first night shift of stopping the engine from blowing up, dieing on us or collapsing the crown sheet aka, 📷Loco Minding. Actually, the 14 wheeled gal was an absolute sweetie pie all through the night, the boiler pressure never dropping below 1000kPA, and that's without a heavy fire, with the turbo generator running non-stop through the night and no use of the blower at all. (It raises the temperature of the fire but encourages formation of clinkers.) The locomotive is such a free steamer that I didn't even bother to shut off the various turret valves, with the unusual exception of the driver's side injector steam valve, as a side-of-the-eye view of the wavering condensing steam plume kept looking eerily like someone standing next to the cab steps.



W22 📷 Snapped through one of the small side windows, the packed kitchen is ready for action starting the following morning.



W23 📷 Lee Gates adds a few more bites of coal to the leading edge of the coal bank 📷 a panoramic self portrait from the top of the locomotive's tool box.



W24 📷 A rather appropriate title for a book purchased to be read during the long night time hours. (And something to nibble on.)

It was a pleasant night for loco minding, and a pleasant cab in which to do it in. Dinner arrived courtesy of Johann Breydenbach. And set to the steady muttering of the boiler, and the snap-crackle-pop of fresh coal still in primary combustion, the time-killer Dean Koontz horror story book had some real atmosphere especially when the Boksburg East station platform lights all suddenly went out at about 11pm!. By the time Johann had arrived with the nibbles, two people and a service dog had been killed in the company town of Moonlight Cove and I hadn't even read past the first 100 pages! I never sleep off the footplate during loco minding although advised to by others for I'm too deaf to hear if something does go wrong. But I have started a tradition of buying a new book to read during the long midnight hours check out the accidentally rather appropriate title in Pic W24 above.

Actually, the night went by very quickly. A general meeting of the Reefsteamer crews was called at about 8:45pm. There was a brief but stern talk on safety, especially while shunting. Then some encouragement about teamwork and a prayer in English. (Most of the Afrikaans people can speak reasonable, if heavily accented English, but we have some English speakers who can barely speak Afrikaans.) Then the jobs were allocated, as well as an updated footplate crew roster to allow for the changed schedule for Friday seeing that we'd be no longer hauling the two rescued Class 25NC locomotives from Bethlehem to Ficksburg.

Then the train settled down for the night, the loco minder up front tinkering with the lubricator and the electrician catching up on repairs in the power car, and the bookings team making sure of final arrangements. The locomotive was handed over to the running

crew at about 2am, with the banked fire being slightly too small to cover the entire firebox area. The only issue during the night was the fact that the turbo dynamo was running a little too enthusiastically and would tend to over-drive the 32V cab ceiling bulbs if the headlamp or tail lights weren't turned on to provide a load on the dynamo. It wasn't that lonely a job as a number of people popped up into the cab through the night to explore and to chat about locomotives in general.

There wasn't much fire prep necessary as the locomotive would be hauled by electrics the following morning and we just needed enough steam pressure to couple up to and pull the train forward so the toasters could couple up and still remain under their cantenary.

The Ficksburg Explorer was under way!

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