

PROJECT : Perimeter fencing project – new gates :

By Depot-Day, 2nd August, the 5 new gates had been fabricated. Andre van Dyk spent the day welding and supervising his brand new fencing team. Newly joined Reefsteamers members Miles Burton and Richard Marshall were put to work – probably a bit surprised at it not being locomotive work, but they did the job in good spirits. Two gates had already been built and by the end of the day, three more gates had been fabricated from scratch and stacked against the walls.

As usual, the gates are being fabricated from scrap super heater elements. However, stocks are running a little low and some conventional scrap piping (from a compressed air line) was used for cross braces. Cutting of the main frames was done on a semi-mass-production basis with Miles wrestling the grinder and Andre acting as a highly skilled self-propelled work-weight. (Pic F01 below) The ends of the tubes were flattened for welding in the 50 ton press and welding done with an inverter welder. The vertical sections were left circular but the horizontals and the diagonal braces all have flattened ends. (Pic F02 below)

Welding is thus along the full length of the flattened end that butts against the sides of the cylindrical verticals – these gates are going to be tough! (Pic F03 below) However, these gates won't be locomotive proof. But they won't sag under their own weight – which is definitely irritating when you have to lift a sagging gate off from the rail heads to swing it around. It's even more irritating when a sagging gate tends to swing closed again, just as you are trying to roll a hundred tons plus of steamed steel between the gate posts.



F01 – A bundle of scrap tubes being cut at one go – Miles Burton enjoys his first Reefsteamers project.



F02 – A fresh super heater element end just about to be flattened under 50 tons of hydraulically generated pressure



F03 – A lower gate corner, with the weld still cooling and showing the wide welding area at the butted joints.

The gate gang were careful to get the gates square – using the diagonal measurements to proof and square the gates. The fact that the other guys didn't have welding masks slowed the job down a bit as they had to frequently stop work and face away from the welding arc. (Pic F04 below) The gate joints and diagonals were seam welded along one side and then, after confirmation of squareness, the gates were lifted on end and welded on the opposite side, especially at the braces. (Pic F05 below)



F04 – Andre left the depot with a good ultra-violet tan on his knees. Notice the feet of the other guys, facing the opposite direction as they didn't have welding masks.



F05 – Vertical welding to get both sides of all the joints tightly buttoned up. Here, Andre van Dyk is actually finishing up the welding of the latch frame



F06 – 'Pops' van Dyk cuts up pre-stamped angle iron to fabricate the latch frames.

'Pops' Frans van Dyk fabricated the three latch frames from a length of the pre stamped angle iron that were made as conductor carriers. He was working at the main machine shop vice and usefully so, for he was also fabricating a seriously delicious chicken curry and was in close proximity to the kitchen. The latch frames are not of welded sections. They were slit down a web at 45 degrees and then bent in the vice. (Pic F07 below)

Miles and Richard had the repetitive job of mounting the insulators – using 90 of them – 15 per pole. As these poles weren't stamped, they marked a master pole with engineering chalk, drilled it out and then used the poles to transfer measurements. (Pic F08 below) These poor schnooks, on their first day at the depot, had to drill at least 90 small bore holes in circular section high grade steel. The number of broken drill bits is off the record. (I didn't dare ask!)



F07 – Using a vice as a bending brake, Frans has just finished this latch frame and is making fine adjustments.



F08 – Keep going Mr. Burton! Seven holes drilled and 83 more to go! You can see the chalk markings on this fence frame. Naturally these fellows took turns with the drill.



F09 – An almost completed gate gleaming (not) on the assembly floor. Only the bobbin insulators for the latch frame remain to be fitted.

The insulators were mounted with cadmium plated self-threading pins – and were applied with the drill. It would have been dreadful work tapping the bolt holes by hand. Even so, the drill worked jolly hard and some of the holes ended up with stripped thread, so fresh holes has to be made. It's not the fault of our guys, or the bolts, for that matter. It's just that the steel of the tubes is harder and thicker than the mild steel that you would normally find being used by electric fencing contractors. The five gates were completed by sundown and stored next to the grinding station. (Pic f11 below)



F10 – Two new insulators fitted with modern self-tapping mounting pins.



F11 – In-house Fabricated gates wait safely out of the way for wiring and installation.

PROJECT : Catering :

People that love steam engines .will often put other talents into use apart from the footplate and the mechanical work. Andre van Dyk is one of these, and he has proven to have a talent for bunk-house style cooking. He also gets good deals on 'bosveldt' foods, particularly the meats. Andre has, in fact, been cooking lunches for the Reefsteamers over the last year and a further fact that not many have realized, he has been feeding the entire club at his own monetary cost.

Thanks, Andre!

After a hard morning's work, it's pleasant to have a hot lunch to look forward to. The arrangements were initially rather casual, which meant that we often went the whole day on a few biscuits. This had been discussed and it was determined to properly feed the depot teams on Saturdays – but that it's the least the club could do is provide food for those volunteers who have given freely of their own time. It was determined then by the board to put a part of the monthly budget towards lunches and Andre van Dyk has committed to arranging ingredients and doing the cooking. So we'll be getting a warm meal every Saturday and usually a BBQ (Braai) on Sundays. We usually do this on a bring-n'-braai basis or give Andre 20 bucks or so for the meat n' bread. Reefsteamers lunches are usually very social occasions!

For the benefit of overseas readers, a typical Reefsteamers meal, shown below in CS01, is what we call 'wors and sous.' ('Wors' is pronounced 'v-w-orr-s') The sausages are what we call 'Boerewors', which is a spicy coarse grained 'farmer's sausage.' There are many inferior knockoffs out there, but good quality Boerewors is hard to beat. The white stuff is 'pap', a stiff maize meal porridge. It is the staple starch of the African population but popular as a casual meal ingredient amongst the whites too. In of itself, it can be stodgy stuff with little flavour. And badly cooked 'pap' can be used to seal brake vacuum lines and smokebox leaks. But its neutral flavour goes well with everything and it's great accompanied with gravies or stews. The sous, literally 'Sauce' or more correctly, 'gravy' is Andre's speciality – sometimes curry, sometimes savoury, sometimes sweet n' spicy, and sometimes blow-off-the-top-off-your-cranium chilli. This kind of food cooks with little supervision, so this chef can leave the kitchen to do some work in the depot while lunch is going! (Pic CS02 below)

It's worth coming to the depot just for Saturday lunch!



CS01 – Typical Reefsteamers lunch – Boerewors, pap and sous.



CS02 – The master chef at work. You see by his clothes that he's been at work at the depot too – but as long as the food is good, we don't worry if the chef isn't dressed in formal whites!



CS03 – Manual stoking. Don't forget to put some in the back corners Mr. King. Ultimate endorsement – Andrew King having seconds.

Although we've seen a lot of Andre lately, as he's the Project Manager for the fencing, his ability to be available on depot days is a bit cyclic. Andre has a demanding IT job and is one of the few Reefsteamers with a young, growing family. (Most of us are either single or widowed.) It's been frustrating for him, and for us, who need every pair of capable hands we can get. But with the catering job, he can still be involved even on days that he has to be at home, or doing IT work. He sometimes cooks at home and brings the food in at about mid day. So our Mr. van Dyk is fast becoming one of the most popular men at the Depot over the next few months.

Actually, Frans van Dyk, Andre's dad, made lunch last week – a piquant sweet fresh chicken curry and rice. It was fantastic and I felt sorry for the 12AR boiler tube boys who took too long to extract themselves from the loco's innards and pitched up while nearly everyone else were nearly finished. Even Andrew King, who usually eats like a budgie on a hunger strike, had seconds! (Pic CS03 above) It's clear to see where Andre got his talent from, as Pops Frans van Dyk has the same

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PROJECT - Sandstone Coach Re-Wiring (220V) :

Fred Sewell is cool!

A bit crusty at times ... but generally cool.

Not many people can rewire a coach in one afternoon – including tea breaks!

He's done so many coaches in his time at the Steamreefers that he confidently approached this old creak box with a fully laid-on pre-prepared coach wiring kit and had the interior cabin lighting circuits all tested and running on 220V by the time evening came around. Our own coaches, sleepers and day-sitters alike, have all gradually been converted to 220V mains power, from the original 24V DC power. The SAR coaches used to run with massive lead-acid battery racks under-slung from their bellies, and self tensioned dynamos driven by belts running from one of the inner bogie axles. Thus, the trains would switch from generator power while moving to battery backup when standing still.

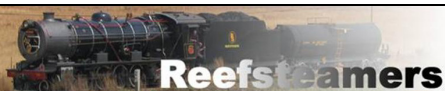
The systems had inherent problems. Firstly the weight of the generators and wet-electrolyte lead-acid batteries added materially to the weight of the coaches. The batteries, their terminals and their external cell bridges all needed maintenance. The dynamos and belts themselves would be maintenance items with the bearings, commutators and brushes all needing attention. And just like the dynamo in cars of that era, there would also have to be an electromagnetic regulator for over current, over voltage and the cut-out contacts. The cut-outs were fitted so the electric current from the batteries would not be able to turn the dynamos over like a motor, when the dynamo voltage dropped under that at the battery terminals with the train at standstill.

The lights themselves were prone to trouble. The open type coaches, such as dining cars and day sitters, had their 24V inverters mounted inside their DB enclosures but some vehicles had local inverters inconveniently hidden behind panels. The older discrete-component transistorized units were prone to failure, and an inverter driven lamp uses more energy anyway. (Due to the extra losses involved in driving the inverter's oscillator and transformer set.) Lastly, a low voltage system inherently requires higher currents to transmit a decent wattage – so in respect to the power actually used for lighting and circuits, the inter-coach electrical connections had to be over-engineered to handle the extra amperage. A faulty connector would materially reduce the voltage on all the coaches downstream of the poor joint, due to the series voltage drop across the coupler. And when you've only got 24 volts to play with in the first place – the two or so volts lost is already a tenth of the capacity.

The new AC powered mains system has the advantage of being able to use common domestic and industrial fittings and wiring. It's also easily compatible with the depot buildings and is ideal for coupling up to ground power. With the modified coaches of both Reefsteamers and Shongololo Express, it's not too unusual to see the train's lights burning but the generator van is silent. It also means that in the event of a generator van failure, standard retail or industrial generators can be used to power the train. The electrical connections must have thicker insulation to withstand the voltage – but the current draw relative to the wattage is much reduced. Thus, a bad connector won't have such an effect on the coaches downstream. (Less current through the resistance of a bad joint means a lower voltage drop.) The elimination of the inverters and in some cases, transformers, improves both the reliability of the electrical system (less components to break) and also the efficiency, as you've eliminated the inverter quiescent and oscillator losses, as well as the hysteresis and impedance losses of the transformers. As our trains are wired for three phase power – a failure on one line doesn't black out the entire train.

Anyway – lecture over and onto the practical stuff.

There are two of the Sandstone-ex-Stilfontien Mine day-sitter coaches standing in the open area of the eastern Workshop Yard. Coach No.25163, in the No.2 road, was the coach being rewired today – 2nd August. (Pic CW01 Below) The sister day-sitter coach, No.25206, is in a bit of a mess with all the seats unbolted and stacked, and the badly delaminated floor covering completely removed for re-laying. So Fred got to start his sparky work on a reasonably intact coach. He had already prepared his inter-coach plugs and the fly leads during the week, and you can see the coach wiring kit in Pic CW02. (Below)



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CW01 – An ex-Sandstone Coach just after having obsolete fittings and the unused dynamo removed. (26 July)
The characteristic Stilfontein Mine 24V tail markers and headlamp shields are still present at the roof ends.



CW02 – Coach wiring kit, sans instructions. There are 8 inter-coach connectors here, enough for the two Sandstone day-sitters.



CW03 – Modern conduit for an old coach – the two PVC conduit pipes are still hanging loosely as Fred works his way up to tighten up the hangars and pull the cables through to the final positions.

The job started with the unraveling of the new wire and the cutting of four coach-length conductors – being 3 phases and a neutral. For all these phase conductors, Fred only had red wire on hand, but made sure to mark the ends in phase colours (red, white and blue), and neutral colour (black) with wrappings of insulation tape.

He fished the wire through the PVC conduits while they were still lying on the ground and only then hung the conduits loosely on the coach underpinnings. (Pic CW03 above). This allowed flexibility to make adjustments to the conduit positioning. As you can see, the main electric run was temporarily suspended on the convenient brake vacuum pipe but would eventually be snugged up behind that pipe and out of sight. This also avoided the chore of having to route new conduit around and through the chassis, with elbows and diversions, and a nasty wire drawing exercise to follow.

The connectors went on with little trouble but much attention to detail – much of which isn't obvious. (Pic CW04 below) The wiring was hydraulically crimped ... no twisted copper connections here! The wiring is hi visibility orange and is rated for rough exterior service. The bright orange colour is unfortunate for the photographers who may prefer original black or gulf red painted cables, but it is a safety spotting feature for shunters and pilots unfamiliar with our coaches. If photographers insisted, we could temporarily put adhesive rubber tape around the leads, or insulation tape – but what a chore that would be. You'll notice that the ends of the conduits are weather sealed as well. Each plug's cable entry cavity has been filled with silicone for weather proofing. There are two connectors at each coach end, each with two conductors. Inside they have sliding terminals with a current capacity of 50 amps each. The blue connector carries two phases, while the grey connector carries a phase and the neutral. (The generator is star wound – hence four conductors.)

Notice that the fly leads are of different lengths. (Pic CW04 below) The plugs are arranged so that should the coaches become uncoupled either by accident (highly unlikely) or perhaps a careless or unaware shunter not uncoupling the wiring first (more likely), the neutral connection will stay intact while the phase connections start pulling apart. Those familiar with three phase electrical systems will know what happens if the neutral goes open circuit – the out-of-synch phases are essentially put in series in sets of two across the load. The resultant out-of-synch voltage across all the electrical equipment and lighting ends up being an aggregate average of 380 Volts (not 440V) instead of the rated 220 Volts and electrical overload will occur. Bang! If a Reefsteamers coach is accidentally electrically uncoupled, the red and white phases go dead first, and when the longer grey connector is pulled, the blue phase and the neutral are disconnected simultaneously. Half the train goes dark downstream of the pulled connector, but the connectors themselves aren't wrenched off from their wires and there is no electrical damage to the coaches.

The only hurt would be to the shunter's ego.

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CW04 – Newly installed coach inter-connections strapped to the vacuum brake line. The diagonal cable and the suspended pipe is a cut-cable for opening the coupler.



CW05 – Riveted bar-frame bogies provide a convenient built in tool table on the full-elliptic transverse spring set. (The primary suspension.)



CW06 – A vintage DB complete with coach-dynamo monitoring ammeter.

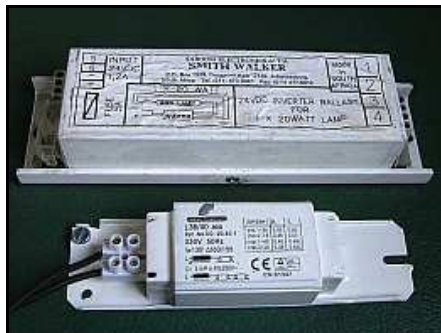
With the two coach-length conduits loosely suspended and all four inter-connectors and fly leads attached (Pic CW04 above), it was time to sort out the mains incomer. Although the coach originally ran on 24V DC, the wiring and the distribution board are all of typical 220V mains standard, including the vintage Heinemann breakers and the bus-bar combs. This vintage equipment could all be re-used. (Pic CW06 above) Note that this board also acts as a local switch panel – with only the original tail lamps being fitted with local switches. It also has a center-zero ammeter (Scale = -100 to +100 Amperes) which indicates current moving in and out of the batteries, but is now out of use.

All Fred had to do was to uncouple the original incoming mains wires and tie them to a new length of surflex. He then got out the coach, opened up the draw plate on the rising elbow, cut the riser cable and pulled it through the several feet of vertical conduit under the old DB board.

As the old cable withdrew, the new surflex cable would be automatically fed through the existing vertical conduit. (Pic CW07 below) After trimming, the mains power cable could be connected right back on the original connections. Thus, there was no drilling or routing required above the corrugated under-floor plating.



CW07 – Newly drawn incomer cable (White) protruding from the opened inspection elbow.



CW08 – A 24V inverter for a hot cathode lamp compared to a modern 220V series ballast. Notice how the adhesive label has been heat-puckered on the old inverter.



CW09 – Activating the coach aisle lamps for the first time on 220V. Fred is actually standing on the three seater benches in this picture.

Within the coach, all the lights in the center strip were dismantled, and the individual 24V inverters removed and replaced with modern lightweight 220V series ballasts. (Pic CW08 above) Note that these inverters are not what the coach was originally fitted with when it was built back at Union Carriage and Wagon in 1971 – coaches of this era used to have a centralized inverter and transformer set. The left double pole breaker in Pic CW06 (above) was the original inverter-side main switch. This coach's electrics have already undergone partial modernization in the past, probably by Stilfontien Mine, although still running on 24V 'train power.'

Fred did the tests as the sun was setting. (Pic CW09 above) Ironically, although this was the lightest work in terms of lifting and operating of tools, it was hard on the electrician's back working above head height. These coaches are surprisingly high in the center aisle. There were a few glitches, mainly in the tube carriers.

At the time of wiring, the water pump hadn't been connected – so, no operating toilets or sinks. However, the wiring is ready. A new 220V pump and pressure switch will be installed before this coach enters revenue service. The toilet, gangway and external vestibule lamps still need to be converted.

Here's the interior for day-sitter coach No.25206. (Pic CW10 below) The delaminated floor (Marley Tile Sheet) a type of semi-flexible vinyl, has been chipped off from the 28mm marine ply subflooring. The day sitter seats were simply unbolted and stacked at either end of the coach. It makes for more work, but we don't really want loose coach seats stacked and piled around the workshop. At the time the floor was stripped, the Grease Store was still a mess. But now that the store and the accompanying workshop have been cleaned out, we now have undercover storage space for those seats should we wish to remove them. Most of our coaches need floor repairs and the power car has rotted floor substrate, so the woodwork needs to be replaced as well as the sheeting.



CW10 – Yes ... it's a mess. The hardened vinyl sheet has been labourously chipped off from the sub-floor of Sandstone Coach No.25206.



CW11 – Here's an original SAR spec coach heating system. These covers enclose a series of straight steam-filled heating pipes, with circular radiating fins. Heating steam used to come from the loco boiler and is the source of the photogenic steam leaks you see rising between coaches in movies. (Hogwarts Express, Polar Express, etc.) None of the steam heating systems are in current use.



CW12 – Traditional coach capacity decals. I counted the seats and the capacity truly is 98 sitting hip-to-hip. (3rd class coach) For insurance and capacity purposes, Reefsteamers allow for 75 passengers seated and none standing on our day trips and tours. These old coaches don't have strap hangars – standing passengers must brace themselves against seat backs or by holding onto the parcel shelves.

PROJECT : Some Depot improvements :

There are many more recent minor improvements to our Depot - the place is becoming gradually more comfortable, professional and civilized. We Reefsteamers dream of establishing Germiston as a national restoration and storage center for South African steam treasures, for the benefit of the nation as a whole. Wouldn't it be grand to get the stripped out workshops gradually functioning again? Imagine the steam trip hammer and the boiler brake running, the various forges burning hot and along the lines of benches, men (and perhaps a few women) of all races working side-by-side at the vices and queuing at the spinning lathes, fabricating and repairing locomotive and rolling stock parts.

Stephen King, in his horror thriller book 'Christine', describes how Arnie Cunningham got the clapped out barely running unroadworthy 58 Plymouth Fury home, blissfully unaware of the evil embodied within the sentient car. She suffered a puncture on the way home. Arnie dispatched his friend, Dennis, to get a brand new tire. And when Dennis put the wheel back on – he noticed the contrast between the clean virgin black rubber of the new tire's sidewalls, still with the chalk marks from the tire balancing, contrasting against the faded, rusted and badly dented rear end of the car. He found it ominous, like a part of the old and the faded had been rubbed away, revealing the awakening new underneath. It was like an old snake shedding its skin in patches, revealing the fresh new scales within.

Our steam Locomotive Depot is a bit like that. Oh ... certainly not sentient. But the slumbering old depot has been kept alive in a way with the spirit of steam, and the noise and sights of the few men working there – practicing the decades old steam age chores and repairs. We are starting to see the disuse and decay of 20 years being 'rubbed away' at various spots, and gradually the potential of the new, professional, 21st century steam locomotive depot is peeking through in various small places.

Both the compressor room and the grease store have been receiving attention. They were being used as junk rooms with only the area around the compressor and the grease pad press being reasonably clear. Both rooms had a good sort out. The compressor room has what used to be an office, which is completely intact except for one broken wall panel. (Pic D01 below) It has been cleared out and is now to be used as chemicals store – primarily for coach preparation and cleaning chemicals. (Pic D02 below) Naturally when one runs over a dozen coaches and they need cleaning, a bottle of Handy Andy isn't going to go too far with literally over a hundred windows and several hundred seats. We buy chemicals in bulk. However, the partially used and empty containers are still toxic and possibly flammable, so it's best to keep them well away from being stored and scattered amongst the coal burning machinery!



D01 – The old compressor plant. Behind the plant is the office in the corner which has been cleaned and is being converted into a chemicals store.



D02 – A pile of assorted chemical cleaners and surface preparations safely out of the workshops and behind a lockable door.



D03 – 4 of the 9 new safety signs attached to the workshop's main doors to comply with contemporary safety regulations.

Modern Safety signs have been blooming around the Depot over that last few weeks – so as to conform to contemporary safety regulations. (Pic D03 above) They may seem to be overkill when you suddenly see 8 or 9 signs all displayed at once, but steam locomotive repair and servicing work often does need a combination goggles, gloves, safety shoes, hard hats and respiratory gear – all at the same time. We have adopted as global depot rules that safety shoes and hard hats must be worn everywhere at the Depot, except at the two clubhouses, and hard hats that may be doffed when on a loco footplate. If the signs save just one person from an accident by reminding them to use safety gear, those signs are well worth it.

The tool store doors have been refurbished and painted. (Pic D04 below) The right hand door is for our current tool store and is of welded steel plate over a security gate construction with a box-shroud over the padlock. The left door leads to an old office, which was, until recently, being use as a junk room. The room has been sorted out and emptied literally from not being able to see what colour the floor is, to having only two 2 meter high racks for of light bulbs and electrical spares. This room has been stocked with the specialist Locomotive type tools recovered from the Millsite workshops. The door is of wooden and glazed construction, hence the addition of the trellis door (donated by Fred Sewell) for extra security, and the blanking of the window frames. The external widow for this little room has been blocked off simply by having the backs of the heavy enclosed cupboards pushed in front of it.



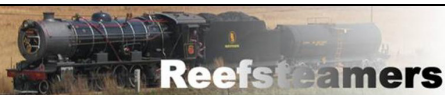
D04 – Refurbished tool store doors. Notice the new fire extinguisher and full set of contemporary and SAR era wide-view-angle fire services signs. This is the number 1 road end of the workshop



D05 – One of two heaps of signs for the perimeter fencing. The five new gates are to be clearly numbered with instructions. We have already started separating visitors from members in respect of security and parking.



D06 – Members parking next to the old forge house. Notice the protective bollards around the two point levers. The green box is actually a temporary rubbish skip for our scrap metal drive.



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Fred Sewell brought in a large selection of new signs for the perimeter fencing. (Pic D05 above) These are plastic signs for direct mounting upon the conductor wires. Each gate is to be clearly numbered and posted with instructions. Other signs, (not pictured) are for emergency purposes and indicate security and assembly points. We have already started directing members to park in the members parking next to the forge house, leaving the original front parking open for visitors. Both parking lots have security huts – but the visitor's lot is easily accessible, the guards have visitors' books and there are also hard hats kept in stock so visitors can be protected as they are escorted through to the Depot.

The members parking bay is looking good. The ash topping is starting to compact and firm up. There are bollards across to keep vehicles off the grass next to 'Patrys', the old green plinthed A-Class. We're trying to get the grass to grow. (Pic D06 above) There are extra bollards around the two points levers. They are there more to protect the cars as well as the points, as the white painted levers are too low to see when doing a three point turn at close quarters. If one is still clumsy enough to bump a pole, it will cause less damage to the car than running into a hard edged and unyielding points lever.



D07 – An elderly oil bin waits for refurbishment. The square plate to the right is actually the drip-grid.



D08 – The cleaned and re-primed scrap metal bin, complete with matching cover. The original oil dregs drain pipe can be clearly seen.



D09 – A donated used built-in braai (Thanks Andre!) which we'll be installing at the new clubhouse.

A solid but very scruffy oil bin was recently cleaned and primed for use as a scrap bin. The original bin (Pic D07 above) had a perforated grid that is supported part way off the bottom plate. It's meant for disposal of waste rags and containers. The oil can slowly drip out from the waste, rags and used pads, through the grid and into the lower compartment for later safe disposal or burning.

This is a very robust bin and is fitted with good quality heavy duty wheels. It has since been cleaned inside and out, primed on the exterior, the wheels serviced and it is now serving as a hoist-able roll-able scrap metal bin. (Pic D08 below) It is centrally located in the machine shop, but should be easy to wheel out to under the gantry crane, and hoisted into a DZ wagon to move the scrap.



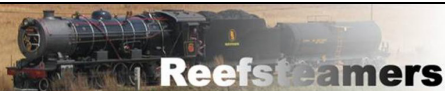
D10 – Greased steam-locomotive sized gate latches. What a pleasure not to have to hammer away at rusty steel bar to let a locomotive in or out the workshop.



D12 – The week-day work crew, with Shaun Ackerman and a 15CA Steam locomotive, pulled out this tree.



D12 – A newly fabricated and safety -red painted rainwater gully manhole cover in the future station area.



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Andre van Dyk came in with a built in 'Braai Master'TM type built-in fireplace. (Pic D09 above) It has some surface rust as expected to metallic equipment used with open flames – but is actually very solid. It took four fellows to unload it! It comes with its own matching chimney stack and a full set of original grids, trays and slide out drawers. It's going to be a work of art once it has been installed and will make the traditional Reefsteamers braai even more enjoyable – that chimney drawing up the charcoal smoke.

The open area at the eastern 8-track workshop yard has been getting some attention. Over the years, locomotive ash and clinkers have built up between the rails although we don't usually service locomotives there. This mess was scraped up and cleared right down to the bare, hard packed soil. The eight massive gates that close the tracks all had their hinges and draw bolts cleaned and greased. (Pic D10 above) The hinges haven't given us much trouble – but the draw bolts have slowed down many a locomotive movement by rusting in place and needing to be hammered open with a variety of delicately blunt instruments.

It's an example of how even a small job can add to the efficiency of a Steam Depot. The coiled razor tape mounted on top of the fences was serviced too - being tied down securely and centrally above the gate frames. A loose wire or coil can snag on a locomotive moving through the gate, hook on and drag the gate closed against the locomotive. This recently happened to our 15CA and it smashed both left side wind deflectors and buckled the rain awning above the cab window.

A troublesome tree that was growing at the convergence of the Workshop access track, has been pulled down. (Pic D12 above) Just like the barbed wire on the gates mentioned above, it was snagging and catching on the coaches and the locomotives. It was also a hazard for the crews as an unwary crew member leaning their head out of a locomotive window at the wrong time might get whacked. It was decided to destroy the tree rather than pruning it – for it would ultimately be less maintenance, and also less annual leaves to fall on the track and cause slippage. They used the Class 15CA No.2056 'Dorothy' – with chains tied to the tender's coupler and the buffer beam, to pull that tree down. There are cell phone-sourced photos available for that exercise and I'll post them if I get them intact.

A general project on the go is the clearing and rehabilitating of the storm water system for the running shed and the new station area. There are many open pits, both inside the inspection trenches and at ground level, which are gradually being covered up. (Pic D12 above) Most will have solid plates, but the pits within the inspection trenches need to have perforated grids for drainage. The system itself has become blocked over the years, the manholes filling up with mud and rubbish. Furthermore, when the old 'Bantu' (Blacks) ablution block that used to stand next to the 'Blankes' (Whites) ablution block (Which is now our new clubhouse) was demolished, all the broken rubble was simply tipped into the open manholes and the inspection trenches to dispose of it. All this stuff needs to be cleared out and the drains cleared. Old disused pipes and stanchions are being cut down to true ground level – most of us Reefsteamers have hurt ourselves at times by tripping over or stubbing toes against protruding torched-off structures. A large old water gantry valve and its protruding pit walls has been cut down, the dyke walls demolished and the pit filled in.

Certainly, lifting rubble and clearing drains isn't glamorous work worthy of inclusion in coffee table steam books. But when one has just broken a leg, or fractured a wrist, by stepping into a dark open pit, one tends to forget about the steam trains...

Pictures from around our Steam Depot :



M01 – Here's the waste cupboard. We're topped up on waste but not much in the way of rags. The plastic bag in the foreground is full of fresh old clothing for rags use.



M02 – In amongst the various store room cleaning and optimization exercises, this forgotten Reefsteamers headboard turned up. The team also re-discovered a selection of locomotive name plates all now proudly displayed in the workshop club house.



M03 – Night time at the 'Sakkie Saloon.' One of Fred Sewell's new flood lamps lights this area where Sakkie Kekana and Edward Card live (conveniently) at the Depot. The section of track upon which the caboose stands is disconnected as the points were removed.



M04 – After some shunting of the Sleeper Coaches being converted to luxury sleepers by Sitemela, the under-cover locomotive restoration line is now visible. Our grand old running shed is one massive structure and the roofing is still in good overall shape.



M05 – Shaun Ackerman is busy paying off casual workers and inviting them to try out for the massive depot-wide window replacement project. Reefsteamers is starting to benefit the local disadvantaged communities by providing opportunities for paying work.



M06 – An unsuspecting Paul Hloben is about to get his right ear lobe snipped. Actually, the scissor-man is just posing but the author-man was blissfully unaware as he was studying the open smokebox of the Class 12AR.



M08 – We ate out on 26 July on a typical Reefsteamers after-depot-day meal – at a table next to a 'hen party.' Here's the bride-to-be who was challenged to kiss the bachelors at our table. An unsuspecting Shaun is just about to be invited to pucker up while the future bride looks quite exited at all the handsome single men at this table.



M08 – Here, Oom Attie de Necker has absolutely no problem at all smooching the bride-to-be. He's on the shady side of 70 but boy, he's good!



M09 – However, this pair of wimps, half his age, just about climbed up the wall to get out of the kiss.

Patrick happened to be sitting next to young Laurike, so he safely looked attached for the night and I stood well out of range with the camera. I'm deaf but I ain't stupid.

- Lee Gates -

