

1). INTRODUCTION – REEFSTEAMERS DEPOT OPEN DAY:

The Reefsteamers Depot Open Day was originally conceived as an idea to earn some revenue in the mid-winter months, as well as sharing our work and abiding passion with the people of South Africa, of course. Income at that time is badly needed as we are not allowed to run revenue earning on our usual country side routes due to the risk of the steam locomotives causing fires in the dry grass.

The Open Day has since become an annual tradition and we are striving to have different exhibits and to increase the scope every year. We are also bringing in partners and friends of steam, such as the modelling community, the heritage car groups, and assorted small businesses. Open Days are a tremendous amount of work to arrange – the grind stone starts spinning well over a month before the event for several people.

Apart from the number of exhibits and stalls that need to be arranged, there are usually several steam trains that need to be organized and staffed, as well as the technical displays and getting the yard shunted properly and cleaned up. Safety is also a primary concern with many people sharing a yard with ponderous moving equipment. The Depot, is, after all, was built as an industrial site and not really built with visitors in mind.

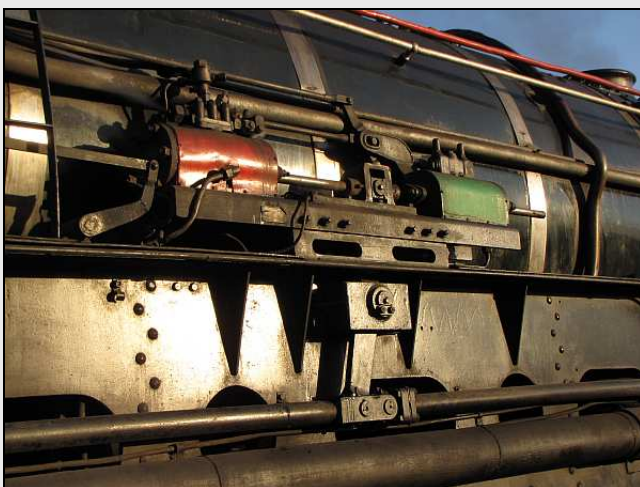
These photos show a bit of what Reefsteamers and their guests achieved for the day!



P01 – Upon arrival to do my evening preparation work, I was lucky enough to catch the Big Green Machine busy shunting in the Western Yard. I didn't sign in at the guard house – I stopped Moose the Ranger in a cloud of dust and was heading west before the turbo charger wound down!



P02 – Old drivers don't get much respect in our place! The Mienie-Mienie cheerfully gives our oldest buffer-bender a playful scratch on the brain case cover, and with coal-mine-black hands too. Turns out that I didn't have to rush, as they were waiting for the keys for the west gates anyway.



P03 – The GMAM was given the shunt for a chance of a shake down as she hadn't run in about a year. I didn't envy the firefighters the tasks of refilling the oil and priming the lubricators again. You're looking at the Power Reverser here, with the lo-o-o-o-o-ng rods that go to the engine units.



P04 – The keys have been released and the Western Gates opened. You don't realize how big the depot is until you have to run to let a waiting loco through the gates! Time to get on with the shunting moves before the sun sets. In the foreground are the remains of the old turn-table pit.



P05 – Approaching the outskirts of the gaunt steel forest in the wild lands outside our reservation, the frightened little Garratt is led back to safety by Hott-Nutts George. Even though he had a walkie-talkie radio, he was properly staying in view on the driver's side.



P06 – A few seconds later and you get to see how a GMAM is articulated as she rumbles and chunters over those points.



P07 – Framed by the tree, the GMAM 4079 'Lyndie Lou' ambles in towards the old boiler washout area.



P08 – Close up of a lubricator's quarter, in this case, the right motion of the front engine unit. Although the rods got a bit rusty in storage, the oil leaks and slow siphonage from the pipes kept the working surfaces nicely oiled.



P09 – Detail of the GMAM's crosshead and slippers. The 'extra' pipe just above the cross head is a part of the 'H' shaped pipe network provided to bring in auxiliary water from dual pipe couplings fitted to the buffers at either end.



P10 – We aren't going anywhere for a bit. The short goods train has a vacuum leak and we can't get the brakes off. Attie is holding the brake lever in the run position and the ejector can't keep up. (Left half of the RHS duplex gauge.)



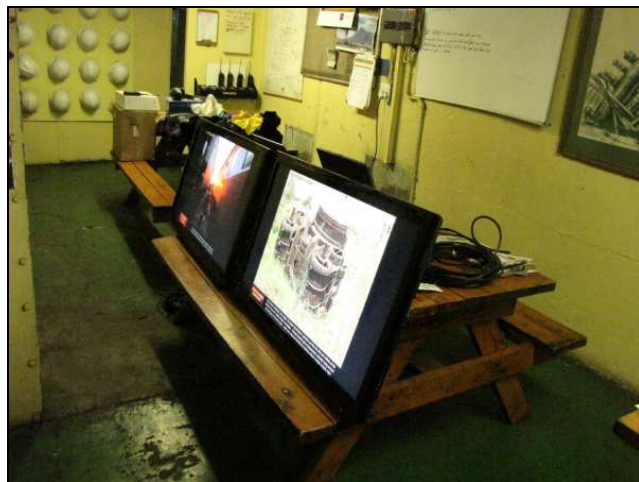
P11 – The Appletizer Can Trailer – the cool drinks would be sold by some of our youngsters the following day. I very nearly ‘popped the top’ off from this can when reversing eagerly to go home – guess I was tireder than I thought!



P12 – Setting up the model steam display. This is the first year that we did this in the old forge, as normally the lil’ engines go to the club house. Since the forge was cleaned out, access for the heavy models is much better here.



P13 – Jeandre get to do some very light duty coaling for a change, topping up the tender of a certain ‘Little Empress.’



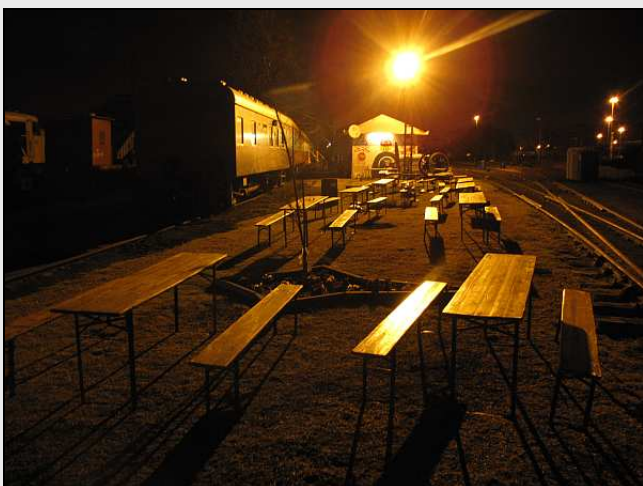
P14 – These are the two big-screens and a pair of laptops undergoing testing. This was my assigned job and everyone just assumed I’d know how to set up the external media displays. (I’d never done that before.) Fortunately it turned out to be dead easy, as simple as falling off a boiler.



P15 – The toilets arrived in the evening as promised and were picked up 24 hours later as promised. We ordered twice as many porta-loos this year and set them up in two groups on opposite sides of the depot.



P16 – 8:30pm and a last round of tea from Warren after setting out 3 coaches onto the oval track. Dr. Smudge (LHS) would be staying until past 2am to do two locomotive road-worthies. Jeandre had worked his butt off all day.



P17 – A whole new look for the ‘big’ lawn with the hired tables already set out the night before. This area proved to be very popular during the Open Day as people could settle down with their nosh and still watch the steam action.



P18 – We had three steam locomotives simmering away overnight, and two minders to tend them. The big stew pots were parked in the order of departure from the Top Shed and as the GMA/M would just be pottering around the yard, she was parked away in the back slot. (Eastern end)



P19 – Bracketed by an accidental constellation of stars thanks to a grease-smear camera lens, the dozing 12AR No.1535 ‘Susan’ was quite comfy in the middle spot. She would be leaving with the second train of the day to bring the passengers in from Johannesburg.



P20 – The surliest 15F this side of Glasgow, Class 15F No.3046 ‘Janine’ had to wait out the night outside over the ash pits, as she would be the first iron to roll out. She was just being woken up by Cousin Rob at this very moment – the headlamp’s turbo-dynamo hardly had time to warm up.



P21 – With three big anvils in residence, the loco minders had a scramble to find hoses to trickle charge their tenders. This hose topping off the 12AR’s tender is coupled to one of a pair of droppers that are actually gravity-fed from the water tower just outside, rather than from the water mains.



P22 – Michael Thiel arranged for his locomotive’s water in classic ‘e’ Texi’ style!



P23 – It takes more than a night's loco minding to knock the cheek out of this muscular little nugget. Michael tries to zap ME with his handset's flash while I aim a floodlight at him. He musta put some hoodoo on my caddy though, as the floodlight's battery clamps shorted out 20 seconds later.



P24 – Little 'Andrew', the 100HP Hunslet Taylor Shunter, waits patiently at first light. He would get plenty of opportunities to heat up the carbon on his piston crowns during several calls for shunting duty during the coming day.



P25 – The great gold paintpot in the sky is only starting to gild the old depot. But we already had early-bird members doing their assigned morning duties while keeping an eye out for Boss Smidge to call the morning meeting sometime.



P26 – Banana and Liquorice. Sandstone's DE2 growler faces the sun. He had been shunted out for display and we allowed folk into the cabs and engine room – but we had no formal tours this year.



P27 – The old steam hammer and the outer forge in the stripped-out forge shops catch the rising sun as well. That orange safety netting, although ugly, was quite effective in keeping people out of dangerous areas. It is much better than stripy tape and we will definitely use the idea again.



P28 – The 15M workshop looked distinctly odd with three bays just stuffed full of coaches. We had to have two tracks clear up at the top end. The opportunity was taken to get the rest of the Silver Class Sleeper Coaches down here for their upgrades for the November Steam Tour.



P29 – A sleeper coach in 15M Road Number 2, as seen from the windows in Rat Run Alley.



P30 – Lauren Ackerman and Simon Bennett discuss the job roster in center field of the members coming together. These two were responsible for organizing most of the events and invites – this was the first open day with a crafts market, mechanical bull, four train trips with mixed locos, the strong man pull, the PA system and other innovations.



P31 - About 3/5 of the Reefsteamers members that turned out to assist us on the Open Day. (The rest are sitting behind me and others were working on the engines) My photographic interest and focus is usually in the workshops, so you now get to see a lot of different faces who are normally on the coaches, as well as the RSME. But a hearty thank you is owed to everyone who got involved.



P32 – The first move of the day was to back the 15F No.3046 up to clear the ash chute from the ash pit walkway plates. The official meeting was still in progress but I already had my jobs to do, so I snuck out to catch this locomotive before she disappeared on the morning run out to Johannesburg.



P33 – As seen from the cab of the eastward-facing 15F loco, the Germiston Steam Depot's last surviving blowdown deflector box. I wonder how far that shovel will fly if any one of our drivers really lets rip with the blowdowns now?



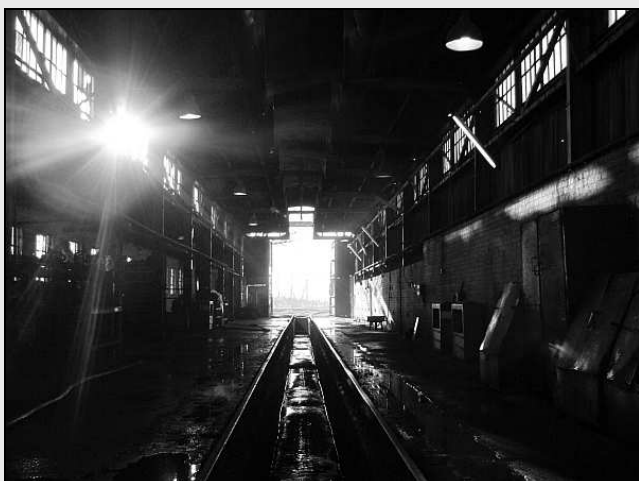
P34 – In spite of the careful ordering of the locomotives overnight, the GMAM was out into her position before the 12AR was. 12AR 1535 was shunted out to the forge to let the big green machine out. She wasn't in full steam either.



P35 – Peekaboo! The front engine unit and its on-board water bunker of GMAM No.4079 peeks shyly around the abluition blocks, with more than ¾ of this great machine still hidden out of view behind the brick walls.



P36 – She's big, she's green, and she likes to think that she's beautiful. Lyndie Lou the Garratt is still easing her ponderous length out over the ash pits. Like Gloria the Hippo (Madagascar), this big girl casts a lotta shadow.



P37 – The disembodied spirit of a departed Reefsteamer hovers uncertainly before it realises that it is no longer of this world, and gradually moves towards The Bright Light at The End Of The Line.



P38 – After a brief session of fire cleaning and lubrication, the GMAM rumbles away to the crossover points. She's quite light-footed for such a big engine and made little noise. The ash pile in the pits was getting high by now!



P39 – After traversing the points, the GMAM switches backwards over the crossover line to head into the Eastern Yard. Due to a shortage of coal in the bunker, she would primarily be a stationary display piece for the day although she did manage get some extra shunting rolled-in during the late afternoon.



P40 – Both of these steamed lugnuts would be enjoying a new experience today. Newly qualified steam driver Johan Breydenbach had never driven the GMAM before. Young Jeandre has already done a lot of shunting during his week work, but never during a function. He was assigned as the shunter for this locomotive and her loads for the whole day.



P41 – The GMAM No.4079 'Lyndie Lou' trundles off under the water tower to switch over the east-end points and eventually take her place as a hot, hissing and thus not-so-static display over the center road. (Steam-powered multimedia, anyone?)



P42 – The GMAM takes her place at the head of the goods train to provide a 1:1 scale live steam display. This is a rare clear view before the crowds started coming for the day. Both the DE2 diesel and the GMA/M are entrusted to Reefsteamers courtesy of the Sandstone Heritage Trust.



P43 – With the GMAM safely stowed away and simmering with at least few spoons of water above the crown sheet, Jeandre and Johann got busy cleaning and oiling the 12AR respectively. I caught Alan Lawton descending from placing the tender filler hose to top the tender's water level up – as this engine would be standing for another hour yet.



P44 – As Jeandre incidentally demonstrates, the old fashioned side-mounted sandboxes on the 12AR No.1535 'Susan' make very handy step-ups for polishing and cleaning. This locomotive was given a Shield Chemicals Silicone Polish treatment during a boiler test a few months ago and as you can see, she is still shining up quite nicely!



P45 – On the 12AR No.1535, even the roughly painted frame plates had been cleaned and they were reflecting the yellow of the blow down box. Passed Fireman Andre van Dyk is seen washing down the ash pan.



P46 – In the cab, the 12AR's pressure was a bit low after fire cleaning. The lubricator is done and it is busy warming up before the sight glasses are blown down. The left-over steam oil was being decanted back into the green can.



P47 – Er George, that is a cell phone, not a radio! No wonder I can't hear you. <Brisk slap around the anterior cranium.>



P48 – A close up of Susan's facial make-up against the wintery clear blue sky and a skeletal T&P Tree. Susan got to wear the brass 'bökkies' as usual, but the 25NC ended up with a pair of brass lions, which caused some comment!



P49 – Simon Bennett's 'Office' for the day – this is the PA system which was running through a surprisingly long-range wireless microphone. It was placed here primarily for the electrical power and the shelter, but it turned out to be strategically close to the ER24 medical response unit too.



P50 – The ER24 Medical Response stand being set up. They were placed here for maximum visibility and would have easy access to the exit gates. To my knowledge, there were no serious medical incidents for the day and the medical people had little to do.



P51 – The car park at sunrise, with a Metro Train in the background. Facing where the coal stage ramp was, this was the first time that we have formally used this area which was cleared in Dec. 2012 during the fence extension project. This was members and exhibitors parking only.



P52 – Behind every train is a ton of papers. Although the drivers do their own checks, only a few RS people are certified competent to sign off the road-worthies. 'Smudge' Ackerman is one of the 'lucky' few and he was here until 2am to roadworthy the locos. (The 12AR needed repairs.)



P53 – The upper end of the Depot was starting to resemble a kicked-open termite’s nest while the lower end just had a few people. The work required here had been mainly done the night before and the attractions had yet to start arriving.



P54 – Management Coach No.42 (RHS) and Kango the Kitchen Coach had been pulled out as exhibits but also as platforms for Shield Chemicals to display their polishes. Notice how well the catci are doing – they’re all in bloom!



P55 – One of the changes for this year would be that the catering for hot foods would be based in the formal club house (Ex-Ablution Blocks) instead of the coaches, for ease of access and more room in which to work. The Puro Fairtrade Coffee stand (around the Tuk-Tuk Wagon) was conveniently close by for electrical power.



P56 – A view of the yard set-up over the then still-empty dining trestles on the lawn. This is the first time we’ve done this. The concept worked brilliantly as visitors had easy access to the catered food without climbing steps and navigating catering /dining coaches, and they could sit in the sunshine and enjoy a panoramic view of the entire yard.



P57 – Johann Coetzee takes on his usual role of boerwors chef. We reverted to a pair of old fashioned charcoal braais for this year. The gas braai, although quick to light up, could not keep up with the demand in 2012.



P58 – Mienies and things. Reefsteamers managed to get their stuff done by about 8am. The stalls and exhibits would be arriving generally between 8am and 9am. But members and guests alike managed to set up well in time!