

Cab-side plates of the SAR NG/G 13 by W. Garratt Bucher and Robert L. Bucher III

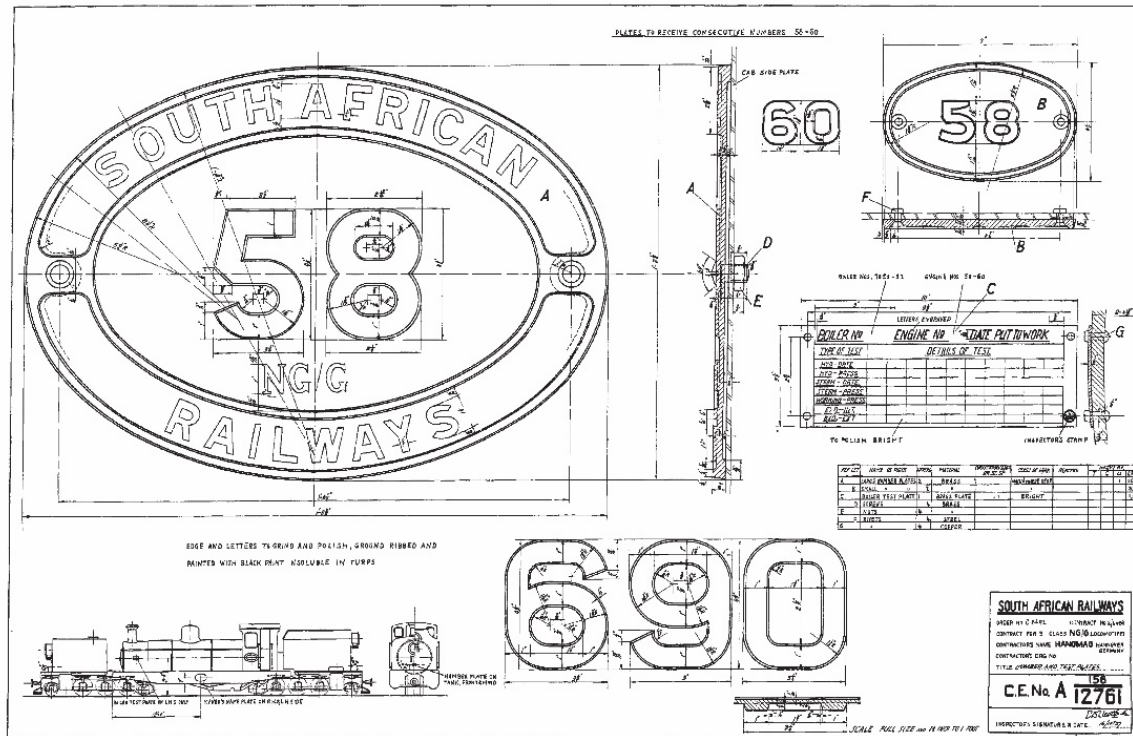
This photo essay is to provide a history on the many cab-side plates used by the South African Railways on the NG/G 13 steam locomotives built by Hanomag in 1927 and 1928. It was found that some of the locomotives have had as many as three sets of plates during their service life and all having had at least two sets. While the authors have tried to provide the most accurate document possible some items discussed below are still up for debate. It should be noted that any additional photographs, drawings, comments, or documents are welcome.

Setting the standard - NG/G 13 (1927) Nos. 58 -60

The first batch of NG/G 13 locomotives was delivered to Natal where the locomotives would spend their entire working lives. Upon initial delivery it should be noted that these locomotives were only classified as NG/G and that the SAR had not yet developed a class system for the narrow-gauge locomotives. It is believed that the 13 class designation was applied sometime shortly after the locomotives entered service. This would explain why all the drawings only state NG/G and why all the original plates do not have a class number on them.

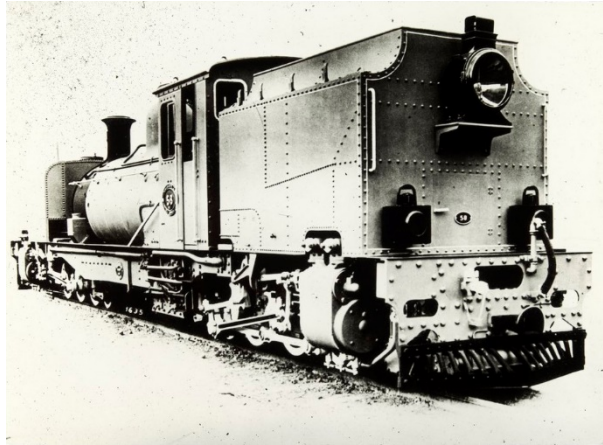
In review of the builder's photos and drawings for these three locomotives it is clear that at least No. 58 received English only plates. What is not clear is if all three of the locomotives had them and if the English only plates made it into service or not. To understand this comment, one must look to the Official Languages of the Union Act No 8 of 1925 that was passed on May 8th 1925. It is the understanding that from this point forward all locomotives were to be delivered with bilingual plates. It is believed that the NG/G 13 would be no exception to this rule.

However, the English only plate that is in the NG/G 13 drawing set 12761 is most likely a holdover from reusing the NG/G 11 drawings as a starting point which were drawn prior to 1925. As will be discussed later the first NG/G 16 batch has the exact same plate drawing as the last NG/G 13 order. However, the original bilingual plates provided with the later builds from Hanomag would also cause additional controversy and all but No. 60 would be replaced prior to retirement.



It should be noted that black is listed as the backing color. (Transnet Heritage Library, Robert L. Bucher II Collection)

Hanomag 10549 No. 58



In its builder's photo sporting photographic gray paint here, we see No. 58 with an English only plate. If this plate made it into service is unknown. (Hanomag, Transnet Heritage Library)



What is believed to be the replacement for No. 58's single "A" plates applied after the English only plates were removed. These plates would remain on the loco until its retirement in the early 80s. This pattern was also used on No. 59 and on the NG/G 11s Nos. 54 -55 and had the class number added which was not on any of the original drawings or plates. Why the single "A" plate was ever removed is unknown. The only assumption was that management wanted the spelling to reflect the accepted standards of the day. All of these plates were all likely cast in Natal in the late 1940s. (Kevin Fourie)



The double “A” plate made for No. 55 is very similar to the plate used on No. 58 and No. 59. This photo was taken at Weneen. (Robert L. Bucher II)

Hanomag 10550 No. 59



The double “A” plate made for 59 is very similar to the plate used on 58. This photo was taken at Umlaas Road. (Robert L. Bucher II)

Hanomag 10551 No. 60



The single “A” plates carried by No. 60 had a crude 13 class identification added to them sometime after 1977. The fact that No. 60 had this plate which is identical to drawing 173 of set 1344, shows the plates supplied with Nos. 77 – 83 and the known original example supplied with No. 50 gives the impression that Hanomag did make a set of these for the first order of locomotives. These single “A” plates use a very unique font (most

pronounced on the C, S, H and K) that seems to have only been used on the NG/G 13 plates cast by Hanomag and Cockerill NG/G 16s. This photo was taken at Weenen in July 1981 (Robert L. Bucher II)



The single "A" Plate in its original condition as seen in Weenen in July 1977. (Robert. L. Bucher II)

The twins - NG/G 13 (1928) Nos. 49 – 50

It has commonly been believed that No. 49 was built after No. 50 and carried works number 10599. This theory was supported by the fact that No. 50 at the time of its retirement carried the plate for works number 10598. However, in review of the builder's photo of No. 49 taken at Hanomag it appears that this information is most likely incorrect as the builder's plate on the locomotive in the photo carries works number 10598. There are three possible explanations for this. The first and most likely is that while in service the builder's plates simply got swapped during an overhaul. The second is that No. 50 was completed prior to No. 49 and Hanomag swapped the cab-side plates for the photo. This practice has been documented among some American locomotive builders. The third and most unlikely is that the entire boiler cradle got swapped at some point. This would mean that No. 49 currently resides in Texas and that No. 50 is at Sandstone Estates. There is no reference on the NG/G 13 or NG/G 16 drawings that indicate as to which works number goes to which locomotive. However, boiler records obtained from the SAR show that the boiler originally assigned to No. 49 was 8306 and the boiler assigned to No. 50 was 8307. The plate drawings for Nos. 77-83 confirm that the road numbers should be in sequence with the boiler number. The assumption is that the works numbers would also follow this same pattern and that No. 49 is 10598 and No. 50 is 10599. The authors have thoroughly examined the cradle on No. 50 but cannot locate any works number. Parts on the power units are stamped simply No. 50 Hanomag 1928.

Another interesting item that can be seen in the builder's photo is that the cab-side plate is bilingual. However, it should be noted that in reviewing the additional drawings for nos. 49 -50 that go to set 12761 there is no plate drawing. Also, the plate carries the single "A" spelling of the word Afrikaanse. For years this was thought to be just a spelling error. However, recent research performed by Col Andre Kritzinger, suggest that the Afrikaans spelling conventions at the time were not yet set. Examples given to support this theory besides the plates themselves is that on postage stamps it was "Zuid Afrika" from 1913, "Suidafrika" from the airmail stamps of 1925 and hyphenated "Suid-Afrika" from 1933.

Hanomag 10598 No. 49 or 50



The Hanomag builders photo of No. 49. Under close magnification 10598 can be read on the builder's plate. It is also clear that the locomotive is carrying the bilingual single "A" cab-side. (Hanomag, Andreas Giller)



December 1975 the original single "A" plate still in service. (Robert L. Bucher II)



Just a few short years later No. 49 has had its original single "A" plate removed in favor of an "NG 49" plate. Why management thought these NG plates were a good idea seems strange. With the NG being used in front of the road number and for the locomotive classification it is confusing. This photo was taken in 1985 at Umlaas Road shortly before the line was closed. Why it was decided to replace this plate at such a late date is not known. The most likely explanation is theft or damage. (Robert L. Bucher II)

Hanomag 10599 No. 50 or 49



One of the original single "A" plates cast by Hanomag. This plate was acquired by Les Pivnic in 1966 for R1.91 and then kindly sold to Robert Bucher after he had purchased the locomotive from the SAR in 1976. This plate is the only original SAR NG/G 13 cab-side to still see use. The mate to this plate is also known to exist and was last sold at auction in the UK. There is also a reproduction of this plate that was made in Houston Texas in 1977 it is now in South Africa. Caveat emptor. (W. Garratt Bucher)



As if the single "A" spelling was not bad enough than there is the E-Plates (Electric) cast for No. 50. It is believed that this mistake was made only on No. 50 for the NG/G 13's however it was also made on some of the NG/G 16's from the Tsumeb order (Nos. 137-140 originally delivered to Natal). It is thought that these plates were all cast at a similar time and made in the late 1950's or early 1960's at Pietermaritzburg. Note that the plate has a dash between Suid and Afrikaanse which would indicate it was made most likely after 1950.

It should be noted that this plate recently sold at auction in June 2019. An attempt was made to purchase the plate so it could be reunited with the locomotive but it was not successful. It is believed that both E plates are still in existence. One being sold to a man in Nebraska in 1976 and the other being sold some time later to an enthusiast in the UK. This one is likely the latter. Hopefully one day this oddity will be reunited with No. 50. (Great Central Railway Auctions)

The apple haulers - NG/G 13 (1928) Nos. 77- 83

These 7 locomotives were all originally assigned to the Avontuur railway and all but two (77 and 78 transferred in either 1965 or 1966 in exchange for No. 54 -55) would spend their entire working lives on the line. In reviewing the photographs taken by Robert L. Bucher II between 1974 – 1988 all of these locomotives received new plates at some point replacing their single “A” cab-side plates with new double “A” plates. The pattern used for these plates do not appear on any of the Natal locomotives (except 77 and 78) and can easily be distinguished in that the locomotive classification is simply listed as NCG. The belief is that these plates were most likely cast at Uitenhage prior to 1950. The reason for believing that they were cast prior to 1950 is that the 1939 build of NG/G 16’s did not have the dash between Suid and Afrikaanse were the 1950 build drawings did. All later drawings also contained the dash.

Hanomag 10629 No. 77



Photo taken at Weenen. (Robert L. Bucher II)

Hanomag 10630 No. 78



Photo taken at Weenen in 1976. (Robert L. Bucher II)



For unknown reasons in 1980 No. 78 was cast new cab side plates. Now having an “NG 78” plate with Afrikaanse on top. The fireman’s side plate would have the languages reversed. According to Phil Girdlestone this practice was started around 1960 and a general arrangement drawing for all cab-side plates (steam, electric, diesel) was made by the railway at this time. If anyone has this drawing please send it to the authors. These plates are likely cast out of aluminum. (Robert L. Bucher II)

Hanomag 10631 No. 79



Photo taken at Humewood Road, June 2002. (W. Garratt Bucher)

Hanomag 10632 No. 80



Photo taken at Joubertina. (Robert L. Bucher II)

Hanomag 10633 No. 81



Photo taken at Patensie. (Robert L. Bucher II)

Hanomag 10634 No. 82

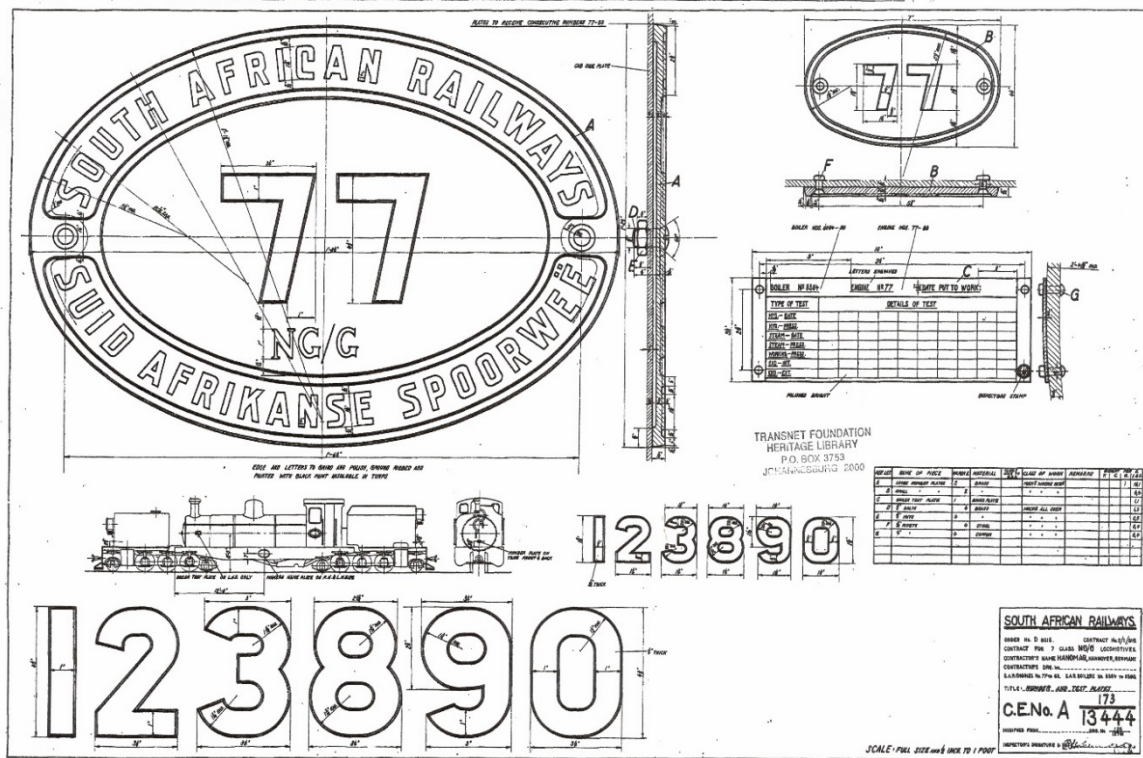
Unfortunately, No. 82 had been set aside for disposal in 1973 and no photo is available.

Hanomag 10635 No. 83



Photo taken Humewood Road 1974. (Robert L. Bucher II)

Plate Drawing from Set 13444

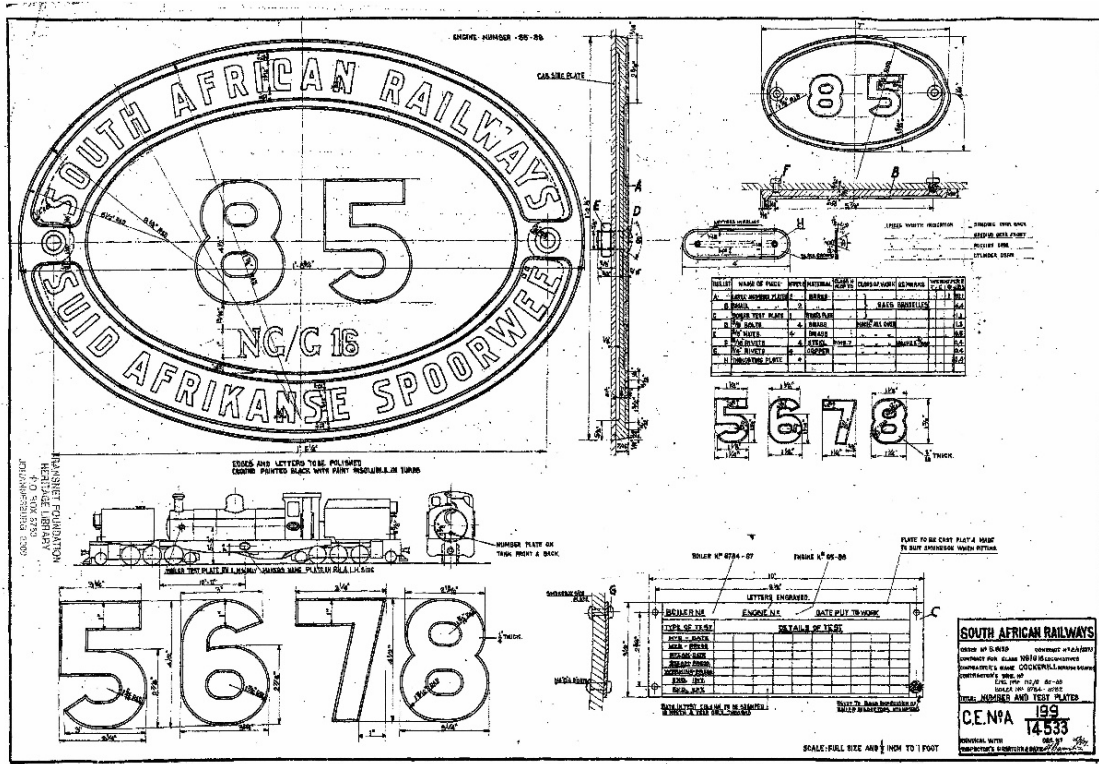


The single “A” plate drawing for the final order of NG/G 13. Unfortunately, no photos of these plates have been located. In review of the replacement plates and the photos taken by F. Neave it is likely they were removed in the 1940s or possibly the 1930s. It is unlikely any of these plates survive. Black is listed as the correct color for the backing. (Transnet Heritage Library, FR/WHR.)

What could have been - NG/G 13 /16 (1936) Nos. 85 -88

Unbeknownst to most SAR rail enthusiast is that the locomotives ordered by the SAR in 1936 from John Cockerill and delivered in 1937 were originally classified as NG/G 13. Thus, they have been included in this document. Upon close inspection of an original plate one will notice that the 3 has been ground off and 6 has been riveted on. This theory is confirmed by the builders phot of No. 86. These plates also carry the single “A” spelling of Afrikaanse and use the same exact font that the NG/G 13 plates used. The funky or corrected looking “6” on the drawing furthers the belief that the NG/G 13 drawings were the base of the set and the “3” got carried across just as the English only plates did between the NG/G11 and NG/G13’s.

Plate Drawing from Set 14533



(Transnet Heritage Library, FR/WHR)

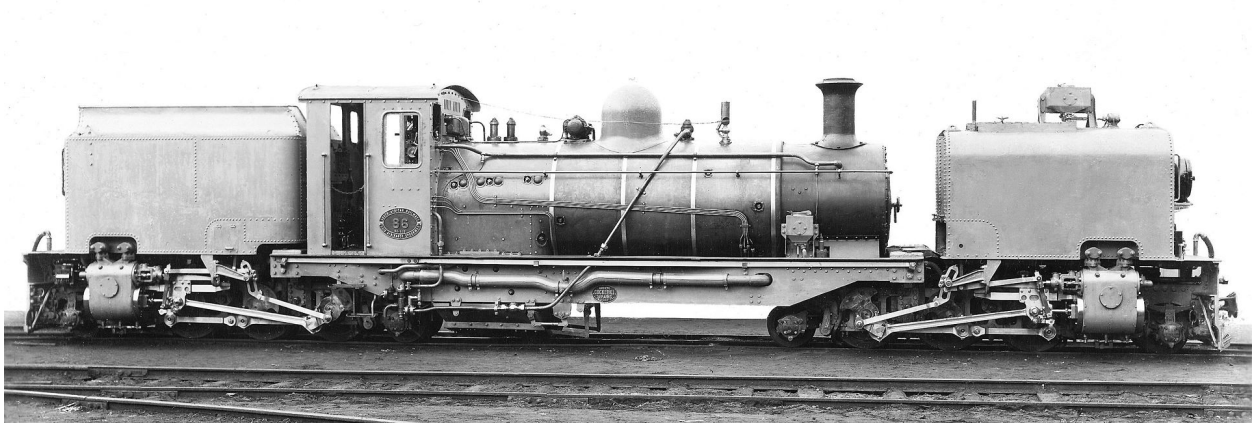


Original single "A" plate. It should be noted that on the drawings for these plates black is shown as the original backing color. Later NG/G 16 and NG15 drawings show Vermillion. (W. Garratt Bucher)



Upon closer inspection of the original cab-side plate for NG/G 16 No. 85 one can see the rivets used to attach the 6. (W. Garratt Bucher)

NG/G 16, No. 86 Builders Photo



(Leith Paxton Collection)

NG/G 13 Plate Allocations Table

Loco Number	Builders Number	English Only Plate	Single "A" Plate	Double "A" Plate	"E" Plate	NG Plate
58	10549	X	?	X NGG. 13		
59	10550	?	?	X NGG. 13		
60	10551	?	Modified			
49	10598/10599		X			X
50	10598/10599		X		X	
77	10629		X	X NGG		
78	10630		X	X NGG		X
79	10631		X	X NGG		
80	10632		X	X NGG		
81	10633		X	X NGG		
82	10634		X	X NGG		
83	10635		X	X NGG		

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