

# A Whisp of **STEAM SUPREME**

Newsletter from the National Steam Centre



## Mens Shed

## Visit



Warwick's 1925 Chev  
brough back  
memories of the good  
old days for many of  
the visitors from the  
Men's Sheds

### In This Issue



Visit by Men' Shed



Volunteering at an African Rally



*Group photo of the Steam Team at “ Stars of Sandstone “ rally in South Africa . Of the 35 only about 7 are Sandstone staff with the rest Volunteers from around the world. We will take a look at the crucial role volunteers play in putting on the show , covering some of the tasks they take on and their background*

**The Railway People** The most visible people at Stars of Sandstone would have to be the locomotive crews . What few people realize is that the crews are often all volunteers and let alone most are from Australia . These are usually a mixture of enthusiasts from Steam train groups around the country as well as a few professional train drivers . Smaller contingents from the Little Trains of Wales , Belgium and the Czech Republic came for a shorter time. As Sandstone falls under the South African rail authority all operations need to be carried out professionally so it is essential that the key volunteers are fully competent in their field . To this end there is a core group of enthusiasts who regularly volunteer at Sandstone .

**Typical Train Operation** A meeting is held the previous evening to discuss the next days activities and establish the drivers rosters, time tables and consists as well as any special requirements dictated by the days program such as photographic run bys or ceremonies .



*Above Simon Major , head down frantically shoveling coal into the boiler for the impending assault on the mountain loop while Simon Meade perched on his seat 1/2 out of the cab to see around the Garratts water tank keeps his hand on the throttle giving it just as much as he can without slipping . Some people may consider the Volunteer crews working the double headed Garratts to the limits are the real Stars of the show.*

Locomotives are collected from the depot on the lower level at about 5 am if it is a sunrise photographic special . The engines are already prepared and steamed up by the four permanent staff who have been up since 2 am . The engines are turned at the triangle , to suit the direction of the trip as they are brought up to the station. .

Here the consist , which will have already been made up , will be coupled up and the brakes checked by the Guard . Any special details for the run such as co ordination with other activities will be discussed between Drivers Guard and Controller . Once passengers and special guests are on board the train will get underway with perations and other train movements being co ordinated by the Controller via two way radio to all concerned. D.Rawlins



**Above** Chief driver and long time regular volunteer at Sandstone Bob Baker right discusses the trips requirements with Simon Meade , both from Bennett Brook in WA . Controler Peter Mole from the UK briefs the guard while the consist is being coupled up. All are regular volunteers and highly competant in their field.

**Left** Wim at the controls of Sandstones 1915 Henschel 0-8-0-TT on the run down to Grootdraai . He is from a preserved line in Belgium



### Road Steam

As everyone knows portable steam requires a fair bit of regular maintenance particularly if it has just been left sitting since last years show. Seeing this on his previous visit Robin Gibb came over 5 days before the show to get everything in order . Actually Robin has a farming background in the Wangaratta district and has a long involvement with steam including a collection of about 40 engines a number of which have been restored from just pieces in his well equipped farm workshop.

Wilf obviously recognized this talent and did not hesitate to put Robin in charge of the mobile steam as a Specialist Volunteer.

The job on the first day was to get the mobile steam out of the shed , boilers closed up and fires lit to see what items needed attention .

**Right** The need for a bit of maintenance often showed up after a bit of running. Here Robin tightens up the big end gibb of the Colonial Marshall traction engine which came loose on a run down to the bottom of the airfield . Other volunteers who had come down by steam roller , vintage tractors and a 1915 truck , as part of the display, stand by if help is needed .



The next day spent was putting these right then moving the engines out to the display paddock adjacent to the compound . After that it was ensuring all the paraphernalia to run engines such as coal oil water kero , tools and even red gum kindling were on hand. to run engines for the next 10 days .



*Left With the first 2 engines out of the shed Robin and Dave Rawlins survey the surroundings while waiting for steam to rise , the bosses house is behind the trees . This soon showed up things like leaking feed water pipes and a throttle valve that had to be adjusted before steam could be fully shut off.*

*Although a locomotive driver Dave lent a hand with the rollers before the trains started running. He is a regular at Sandstone and his claim to fame is the driver of flying Scotsman on its visit to Australia in the 1970,s . Today he is retired to Queensland.*

### Specialist Volunteers

With such a large and varied collection of heritage equipment obviously Wilf cannot get involved with the fine detail of it all so has what he calls Specialist who are responsible for the care and maintainance as well as operation of the particular department . These are people he can trust and are experts in their field be it steam , tractors , military vehicles or vintage cars . For Stars of Sandstone these people arrive early to direct the waking up and setting up of the machines . Once the show is underway they are responsible for co ordination the regular volunteers who turn up to help with operating the machinery during the event . I get the impression most of the Specialists are from South Africa and also play a part in aspects of the general management of the collection throughout the year.

On the question of do volunteers get paid to come ? well if they did it was certainly not talked about but what was talked about was one who demanded a discount with the upshot of it he was not invited. I certainly paid the full entry price of about \$ 100 per day which when you think about it is not bad as it covers 3 full meals per day , beer at \$ 1. 50 per can and a full vintage machinery experience from daylight to dark and virtually unlimited train and machinery rides . There is free camping for who ever wants it and limited digs for early volunteers. Good value when you consider how much a ticket to Great Dorset or a Puffing Billy ride is let alone after you add on the cost of food and drinks.

*Below The Ladies contribution cannot go unmentioned . They ensured the men were clean and fed ready for another days early start . Leslie's Colwill's African smile shows house work was regularly interrupted by visits from tame meerkat Muska . Leslie is from UK and Ilene from Qld .*



*Above Vintage car Specialist John about to move off to the next photo location in Wilf's beloved 1947 MG TC followed by the bus of photographers and enthausiasts . ( Warwick was the bus driver ) . John an industrialist from Jo burg and MG fanatic was the only one entrusted with Wilf's more exotic cars.*



*Above A number of privately owned tractors are housed at Sandstone . This particular Minneappolis Moline with 4-270 Perkins Diesel was volunteered to give daily Modern Farm Tours of the estate in a specially constructed people mover*



**Left** Bagnell 25 ton diesel shunter as found in the workshop. Of 1961 vintage it is fitted with a Straight 8 Gardner LC 3 diesel and although looking tidy it soon became apparent it had had a hard life

**Below** First Job was to bolt down the gearbox , bolt up the flexible coupling and line up the outrigger bearing. Sounds simple but most of the first day was finding our way around the huge railway workshop and getting some tools .

**Warwick's Involvement**

**What I Did**

My general idea was to help Robin with the mobile steam but it was not long before I was seconded to help Bob Carter ( USA volunteer ) sort out the Bagnell diesel shunter which I soon found in the back of the main steam running shed . Seemed a bit unclear what the issues were but apparently the fluid flywheel had been giving trouble and had been away for repairs . A quick survey showed it had been refitted to the engine but the transmission was still unbolted and moved to the side and drive shafts were still to be connected up . We estimated 2 days work would do it. How wrong can you be ?At last a start was made only to discover some of the coupling spacers were lost . With the gearbox in we thought all that was left was to bolt up the output shaft .

**Below .** The drive shaft probably broke as a result of the loco being shunted with the gearbox end disconnected



**Below Warwick** pressed into service the old Green , Smith & Grace lathe, in the Vintage workshop in the main loco running shed to turn up some spacers that were missing from the Bagnall drive shaft coupling .



**Left** After a battle to get the flange off the final drive gearbox it was welded in the main farm workshop overnight .

With the repaired flange back we found the holes no longer lined up . Luckily Simon gave us a hand reaming them to fit . Tomorrow would be ready for a test run ! In great anticipation batteries were got and the engine started but to our dismay it would not move, only 20 psi air pressure— not enough to even blow the whistle ! I was heartily sick of it now as the show had started and the pressure was on and I did not consider air leaks were part of the deal . Still it would not fix itself and another 2 days were spent sorting out multitude pipe and packing leaks before sharp whistle blasts heralded to all we were back in bussiness. Of course this then meant a test drive out on the main line with a load of wagons which produced reports from the boys it had never gone better. In return Wilf arranged a Garrett foot plate ride over the mountain for Bob and myself and commented to the group that “Warwick can turn his hand to anything” which I took as a compliment..

**Time for Some Fun**

With the hard slog over it was time to get back to the mobile steam exhibits and help put on the show .



*Above Simon Meade in the bowls of the Bagnall loco reaming the bolt holes of the repaired drive shaft coupling . Simon is a loco driver from Bennetsbrook railway near Perth .*



*Left Warwick and Karl from Belgium taking the Colonial Marshall down to the grass airstrip for a traction engine display .*

*Below Sandstone’s S4 Sentinel steam waggon was popularly employed transporting people from the hospitality area to the near by paddock containing the mobile exhibits. John and Leslie Colwill who own a similar waggon in the UK came out specially to operate Wilf’s waggon . Warwick soon was co oped into driving it including a race with the train ..*

Time was also spent helping drive the vintage cars which would ferry the public around or pace the train then wait for it at level crossings to the delight of the public .



*Left Only a simple thing but it had always been in my bucket list to drive a T model Ford after hearing childhood stories of having to reverse up hills oand jack up a back wheel before starting so as to not get run over on a cold morning. Imagine my delight when I found volunteer Johannes warming up the engine of Sandstone’s TT truck with the back wheel spinning in the air . It did not take much to get a ride but a bit more insistence to get a drive . You see you have to change gear with your feet while adjusting the spark and throttle with hand controls without forgetting to steer .*



**Left** Special permission was granted for Warwick to have a drive of Wilf's Sherman Tank . It has been restored by Military specialist father and son volunteers including fitting a twin turbo V8 Mercedes diesel with automatic transmission in place of the original radial petrol engine.

**Below** Sandstone 's Bristol 1/2 cab bus warms up in a Gardner haze as it waits for photographers to get aboard . Sunrise specials meant getting up in the dark as the old girl often took a bit of getting started in the morning . To the left is David Benn , child psychologist from Jo / burg who accepted the assignment to lead the photographer group this year . Interested members of the public were also free to come along .

Then there was the mistake of volunteering to drive the photographers bus . It seemed like a good idea at the time as driving a 1/2 cab had been in my bucket of things to do but when the regular driver got called away to work on the harvest I got stuck with it . At first it was good fun as under the direction of Specialist photographer David Benn I got to ferry them to all the secret locations and soon learned the best angles to take the shots. Also I got to witness the special train movements and consists that were done at the requests of the photographers. The down side was their liking for early morning Sunrise Specials which meant getting up at 5 am . Unfortunately the first morning they got carried away with multiple photographic run pasts and did not get back to camp till 10:30 to find breakfast was over .



A completely unexpected bonus of attending Sandstone was the opportunity to have an aerobatic flip in a vintage Harvard war bird operating from the Estates grass strip , one more out of the bucket .

*All I can say it was AWESOME !*

*Warwick*

# Around the Club

## Diesel Doings

Great progress has been made in the Diesel section recently with installation of services to the newly installed engines . The substantial cooling tanks supplied by Paul McMillan have been installed and plumbed up and fuel piped in while fabrication of the exhaust mains is well under way .

**Right** *Phil Randall at work on the exhaust main cutting a hole after welding on a stub to connect a riser from one of the engines*

Each engine will be permanently piped in to these 150mm dia main which runs overhead discharging out through the back wall. Phil Randall has supplied all the large dia pipe and associated flanges required. All is to a high standard which will ensure a totally professional installation that will be long lasting and leak free system ensuring quiet operation .

## Sugar Mill Engine Building

This gives the opportunity for us to add an attractive entrance to draw people across to the main museum , as they enter the grounds now they are often at a loss just where to go because nothing stands out . What we want is ideas of what we can do easily . The original vision for the site recognized this need but was although rather too grand . I am sure there are things the club can do quite economically to tart up the

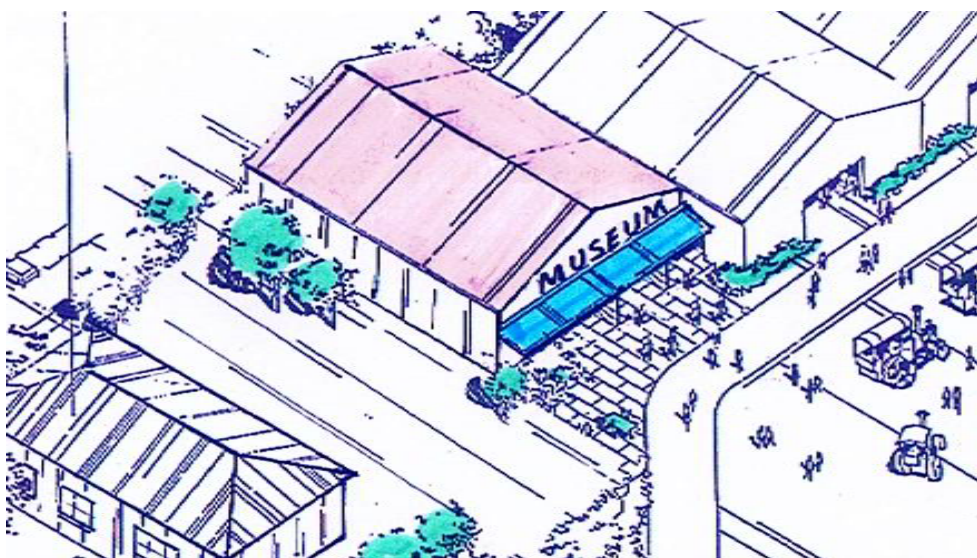


Peter Jackman Photo

## A Visit from the Men's Shed



A number of MSTEC and Emerald Club members (**Right**) put on an impressive display which was greatly appreciated by our visitors and brought in \$ 874 **Below rides were popular.**



approach to the new building independently from the sponsors contribution .

**Above** *Cut and shut version of the 1982 vision for this area which had a paved coot yard and large exhibition space .*

Ideas are also welcome on just where to put the sugar mill engine in the new building . We want visitors to go WOW as they suddenly come to face with this majestic piece of machinery slowly and effortlessly rotating . With some spare space we also need to decide how best to utilize this perhaps to display our cut-aways that at the moment are hiding

