



What is happening to our steam locomotive?

Home of The Downs Explorer

Locomotive C17 - number 971 built by Walkers Engineering of Maryborough Qld - 1951

After another busy season of hauling our trips around the Darling Downs, our faithful steam loco is having a make-over. Current works involve a thorough inspection of all the mechanical components.

The locomotive was lifted off the large driving wheels and these were then sent away for machining.

Whilst these are removed everything can undergo cleaning and assessment for wear and tear.



History

The locomotive was well known to the Warwick locals for being used regularly on the Dirranbandi (Thallon) Mail when working from Warwick, and Toowoomba Depots.

Number 971 was retired from service in February 1969 and was donated to the Chinchilla Historical Society where it remained until May 2000 when the SDSR brought her back to Warwick.

Restoration of 971

C17 971 was acquired in May 2000 from Chinchilla Historical Society.

Work commenced on the stripping of the locomotive for complete overhaul and restoration in July 2000. For the next 3 years, the process of dismantling and cataloguing the locomotive was undertaken. Fund raising with the capacity to providing sufficient funds to purchase and install a brand new boiler and the refurbishment of running gear (pistons, sleeves, bearings) also occurred during this time.

It was SDSR's goal to fully restore this locomotive back to original running condition.

By this time, a group of up to 10 retired gentlemen formed themselves "Dad's Army", and ably led by ex QR Fitter John Brady, completed most of the restoration progress.

With the boiler on order, the frame was inspected and sand blasted, and work began in early 2004 to start to rebuild the locomotive. The new boiler was fitted July 2004, and work continued to restore the locomotive.

This process took many months, and was not fully completed until March 2007, when the locomotive was fired up for the Open Day. Many years of work had gone into the project, and the movement of the locomotive on the Open Day was a huge successful event.

We all wish the old girl a speedy return to her duties

Southern Downs Steam Railway, preserving our railway heritage