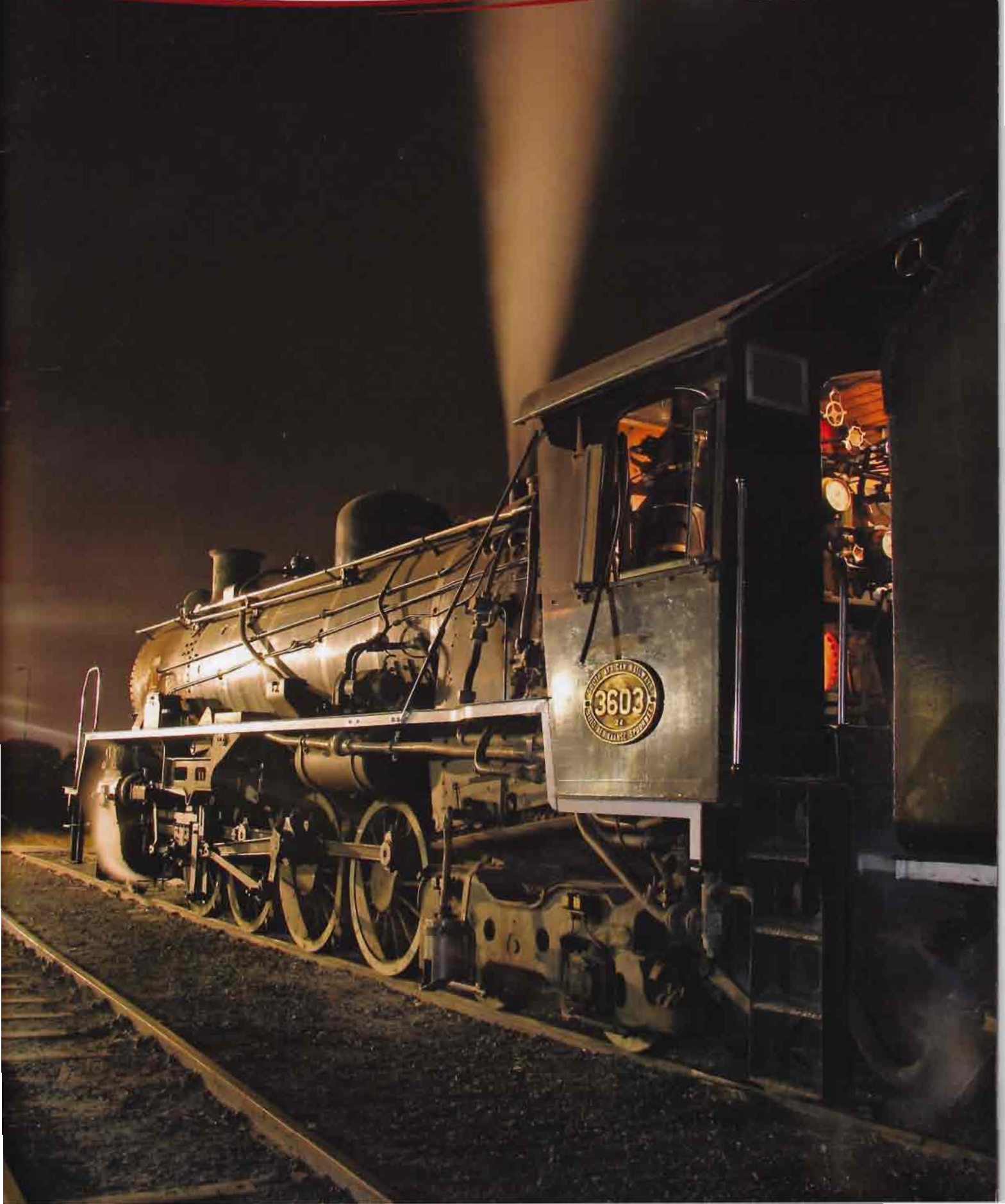


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BOOK REVIEWS

STIMELA: Railway Poems of South Africa

Selected and introduced by Laurence Wright

98 pages A5, soft-cover, B&W photographs,
ISBN: 978 0 620 41938 3.

Published by Echoing Green Press, P O Box 22233, Fish Hoek 7974, South Africa, priced at R140.00 (Including VAT, but excluding P&P). Obtainable through telephone +27 21 782 2943 or Cell +27 84 550 9688 or Fax: +27 086 689 6986 or at email ringer@echoinggreenpress.com Website: <http://www.echoinggreenpress.com>

Who would have thought that trains and poetry could be winning combination? As one who has been penning poems from the tender age of seven years old – not me! However, Laurence Wright has put together a collection worthy to grace any heritage and steam enthusiast's bookshelf.

This collection covers a wide spectrum of poets/writers and completely dispels the school of thought that steam railway is the bastion of "colonialism" as he launches with the stirring poem *Shosholozza*, which in 1995 captured the hearts and voices of South Africa to become the sport anthem to spur their teams onto victory whether on the rugby, soccer or cricket field.

The introduction, which covers 30 pages, is so much more than that, with Wright examining and giving his own insight on various works under headings such as *Imperial Ambition, African Reactions, Railways and Wars, Steam-power, Train Travel and Railway life, and Stations and sidings.*

Steam trains may be fighting to survive, but it is a living legacy worth the battle... the echoes of the steam whistles across our country as locomotives unleashed their power, the bustle in the rail yards, the unmistakable smell of steam that emanates burning coal and water and the 'heart beat' of the wheels as they roll along the tracks – these are the memories that time may dim, but never erase.

These are the memories that have inspired men and women to put pen to paper and capture them for eternity.

From the mythology surrounding Cecil Rhodes's cherished vision of a 'Cape to Cairo' railway and how Africans responded, based on works that include an unattributed Hurutshe poem, to the part played by rail in the South African wars and the relationships and experiences with the railway at the heart and foundations.

My only criticism is that it has only four B&W photographs. I suppose that it is not sold as a collection of visuals, but the subject does lend itself to wonderful photographic possibilities.

It is a book that needs to be read many times, because each time you will have new insight into what has been penned.

Bookshops and retailers can enquire for the trade discount and can order this book through Owen Early (+27 82 338 5078 or bacchus@telkomsa.net of Bacchus Books or phone +27 21 448 9839 (ask for Nisa) or Fax +27 21 447 9879 or email nisa@stephanphillips.com.

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