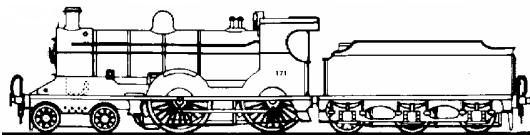


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



April 2000

NEWS LETTER

AGM

Hello & Good-Bye: Following what was a very heated meeting in Dublin, there have been a few changes on Council.

Brian Gillen and Mark Kennedy, respectively, retired from the Southern and Northern Carriage posts. Long-serving Treasurer, John Beaumont, made his final appearance in office. Evan Pamely also declined to stand again for the Northern Operations post.

Norman Foster has moved from vice (?) to Chairman. After a number of years away, Nelson Poots returned as Treasurer (brave man!). Finally, the only totally new face is David Dillon (he of the beard and TV camera) who joined as the new Vice-Chairman.

So 'Welcome Aboard' to the new men, and 'Many Thanks and Happy Retirement' to the old.

MEMBERSHIP

Thank You: Our thanks to members who renewed promptly, especially if a donation was included - keep them coming.

Covenants: It is important that members who received covenant forms return them as soon as possible. This is the last year (up to April) that new covenants can be initiated as the UK Government is replacing them with a new Gift Aid scheme for charities.

Existing covenants, or those dated before April for payments made this year, will still be valid for the foreseeable future. More details in forthcoming News-Letters.

OPERATIONS

Correction: Note that, contrary to the poster included with the February News-Letter, the "Steam Enterprise" train will depart from Great Victoria Street station and NOT from Central station.

"Steam Enterprise": Don't forget, we are looking to the members to turn out in strength for this operation on 15th April for our return to the Dublin main line after an absence of 11 years. Not only that, but we are back in Great Victoria Street too - how many years since that has happened?

"Easter Special": The season out of Dublin will open on Good Friday, with the trip to Mullingar. These trains have been continually very popular so early booking is recommended.

"Bangor Belle": Easter Saturday sees the first of what looks to be a regular number of trains to Bangor each year.

North Down Borough Council are to be congratulated on their dedication to helping the Society attract visitors to Bangor.

"Easter Bunny": The Bunny makes her (his) annual visit to the RPSI on Easter Monday.

"American Mail": Bookings are coming in well for our railtour to Cork, Cobh,

Waterford and Lavistown. Hopefully, the prospect of having two of the three participating locomotives in shiny new liveries will help the undecided among you to book soon.

"Steam & Jazz": The first of our two (yes, two!) operations this year is on 26th May. These operations are ideal for large parties and works outings. Please encourage your friends and colleagues to support us.

"Greystones Shuttle": Our return to Greystones this year on Sunday 28th May will be under the wires and between the Darts. As this is being written, the new Dart service is due to start operation between Bray and Greystones.

Whitehead Train Rides: Sunday afternoon operations commence this year on 4th June.

Schools Days: The parents and teachers among you are asked to point your school in the direction of Whitehead for an educational day out on either 6th or 7th June. The Society's web site shows some photographs from last year and a selection of drawings and letters from the children of one school who attended.

"Atlantic Coast Express": In case you aren't aware, the Derry operation this year will be moving from its traditional slot in September to the earlier date of 10th June - so put it in your diary.

"All Stations": Advance notice of an operation in association with the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society on 17th June. A combined bus and steam tour of Dublin stations, including those no longer rail connected. £53 from Belfast, £38 from Dublin (lunch included). Booking form with next circular.

Booking: Tickets for northern operations can be obtained using the booking forms provided, or from Carrickfergus, Bangor, and Lisburn Tourist Offices. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board in Anne Street, Belfast, now also sells tickets.

Tickets will be available from the usual Building Society outlets in Dublin, and from Ashgrove House.

Latest details and booking forms can also

be obtained from the internet pages.

Film Work: A new film contract will be completed shortly. Entitled "Rebel Heart", it deals with the 1916-23 period, and is a BBC production. Dublin's Iveagh Market has already been turned into Belfast's Great Victoria Street station.

Filming took place at Dublin's Pearse station on 26th & 27th March.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: The locomotive is coming to the final stages of what is, effectively, a rebuild.

The tanks are beyond economic repair and will be used as patterns for completely new specimens - to be manufactured in the new workshop. The driving wheels have been turned. The wheel sets and boiler are about ready to go into frames. The cab has been dismantled and is being repaired and refurbished.

No.4CSÉ: The brake tanks on the Carlow diesel have been insurance tested and the main starting air reservoir is to be tested soon. Re-fitting of the brake tanks is taking place at the moment on Tuesday evenings. Diesel enthusiasts out there are invited to help.

No.186: The locomotive has been dismantled and no major problems likely to prevent a standard overhaul have come to light, provided of course that the money can be found. Fairly extensive boiler repairs will be required but the firebox has been judged fit for further service.

No.171 "Sieve Gullion": The locomotive is being made ready for the new season and it is hoped a re-paint into GNR blue will be completed in time for the Millennium railtour in May.

No.461: The locomotive is in the ramps in Inchicore. Boiler inspection for this year has been completed, and a re-paint for the launch of 351 was completed, much assisted by IE's Paint Shop squad.

B&CDR Crane: The overhead crane is currently being commissioned and, as

part of its load testing, it assisted in the dismantling of No.186.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Dublin: 1142 is in Inchicore, awaiting bogies. State coach 351 is close to completion. Arrangements for a suitable launch event involving both vehicles are under way.

Following a major overhaul, it is hoped that Park Royal 1383 will leave Mullingar on the return leg of the Good Friday operation.

Whitehead: LMS (NCC) 238 has had new water tanks fitted to the toilets.

New Coaches: In an interesting development, NIR recently indicated that they intend to phase out all but a core selection of their Mk2 coaches. Any of the rest are available to the Society, if required.

The future carriage policy has not yet been confirmed but rather than have potentially useful additions to the fleet scrapped prematurely, it was felt best to secure a selection for possible future use.

Earmarked are dining car 547 and 31 seater brake 916. The latter was one of the Hunslet driving brakes and has a large non-generator van.

Vacancies: As the Carriage & Wagon Department at Whitehead no longer exists, having no Officer, nor indeed any workers, it is important that members are aware that operations from Whitehead are in serious danger of ceasing as coaches come up to their annual inspection deadlines.

No.186 - A HISTORY

Of the few preserved Irish locomotives virtually all are single surviving representatives of once numerous classes. The sole exception is the pair of six coupled goods engines - No.184 and No.186. These remarkable engines were introduced in 1866 and were still standard on Irish Railways 90 years later - from 1873 to 1963 they were the most numerous class in the country.

Both locomotives saw long service with successive railway administrations in Ireland - the Great Southern and Western Railway, the Great Southern Railway and, finally, Coras Iompair Éireann (CIÉ) - before being withdrawn from service. Popular with crews, the J15 class worked everything from pilgrimage trains to substitutes on occasional express passenger services, to sugar beet specials, and since starting their life anew on the preservation scene their versatility and popularity have remained undimmed.

No.186 was born in 1879 and reboilered in 1932 with a superheated Belpaire boiler, which she still carries today. She operated out of Waterford shed prior to withdrawal and worked her last 'Beet season' of 1962/63 hauling sugar beet trains in the area. She was subsequently withdrawn in March 1963 and retained by CIÉ in Dublin's Inchicore depot along with her class mates No.130, No.183 and No.198. Together the four locomotives worked the Irish Railway Record Society promoted week long 'Grand Steam Railtour' over the entire CIÉ system in June 1964.

At the ceremony in Dublin during which the Society's first locomotive, 'Guinness' was handed over, the then chairman of CIÉ, Mr Frank Lemass was approached by RPSI representatives to see if there would be any chance of obtaining one of the last remaining of the class. A written request followed and the reply from CIÉ (virtually by return of post) was that No.186 would be donated.

The engine was subsequently hauled north on 11th December 1965 by CIÉ General Motors diesel No B163 to Adelaide yard. CIÉ initially charged £27 1s 4d for the move although the costs were subsequently waived!

In December 1966 No.186 went into the York Road works of NIR to have some work done. This work was to make the locomotive fit for a filming contract which never bore fruit. It appears that NIR (still regularly using steam at that time) occasionally used the locomotive as the York Road pilot engine. Indeed, on 11th May 1967 No.186 worked 2 NIR ballast turns between Magheramorne,

Carrickfergus and Ballycarry on the Larne line.

Her first RPSI duty was on 13th May 1967 when she worked a series of shuttles on the Portrush - Coleraine branch along with LMS(NCC) 2-6-4T class No.53 and No.55 (both of these engines were still owned and regularly operated by NIR at this time). On 9th September 1967 No.186 became the first RPSI owned locomotive to be in steam on CIÉ metals.

She was a regular performer on Society railtours both before and after her first re-tube in 1973.

With the Society now in a position to properly house our locomotives, on 7th February 1968 No.186 ran light engine from York Road works to Whitehead to take up residence there for the first time.

Not too many years after arrival the RPSI obtained a bigger tender for No.186 which has given greater capacity and allowed the engine to travel all over Ireland. Unfortunately, the tender is not a proper J15 example (not sure but we think it's from a 400 class). It does look slightly out of proportion from the rest of the locomotive. By April 1971, No.186 was the only steam locomotive in the British Isles both capable of and permitted to run on a main line.

On 5th July 1980 No.186 dropped her fire for the last time after running shuttles to bring passengers from York Road station to Whitehead in connection with a steam and vintage transport gala. She has not been steamed since that date, largely because she was deemed too weak for the long haul, all day tours which became part of the RPSI's bread and butter running during the 1980s and 1990s.

Nowadays the RPSI is adapting to the 'quick fix' leisure market by offering travellers more short hauled runs based on central population areas, e.g. shuttle services around Dublin, Belfast and Coleraine. No.186 is seen as an ideal engine for these duties and her day is coming round again!

After a stay at Inchicore lasting a few years, No.186 most recently returned to Whitehead on Saturday 2nd October 1999

to begin the long process of overhaul. Since that date her boiler and firebox have been lifted from the frames and inspections have been carried out to see the extent of work needed.

Peter Scott, the RPSI Locomotive Officer has detailed the findings so far (apart from the odd rodent in the boiler!):

Boiler and Firebox

Working from front to back. No.186's chimney will not need replacement, but the smokebox and front tubeplate will both require renewal. The boiler barrel itself appears to be fine. Obviously all the tubes will require replacement as will all the superheater elements. The outer firebox has some wasted areas which will require attention.

The best news is that the inner copper firebox is in good condition and although the longitudinal stays will require replacement, the water space stays will be fine. Repairs to the boiler and firebox will require the replacement of approximately 300 wasted rivets.

The results of the boiler and firebox inspection are largely as expected - though the good condition of the inner firebox is a bonus. There will be the usual general overhaul of cab fittings, injectors, regulator valve and steam stand, etc.

It is the RPSI's Locomotive Department's intention that No.186 will be restored as near as possible to its condition ex-CIÉ, with retention of the superheated boiler making for an efficient steamer. In time it is hoped that sister engine No.184 will similarly be restored to as near as possible original condition complete with saturated boiler sloping smokebox and 'oven' style smokebox doors.

Incidentally, No.186 was the first locomotive which the RPSI re-tubed in 1973. A seemingly mammoth task then, many of the same people will be involved in the (then) seemingly impossible task faced now!!

Frames and Motion

Thanks to regular greasing and oiling by the RPSI Locomotive Department, the frames and motion have been kept in a

reasonably restorable condition. The cylinder block has been inspected and found to be in good order (unlike that of sister engine No.184 whose cylinder block is badly wasted and will require expensive repair/renewal).

Mechanically, No.186 is sound and will hopefully require a fairly standard overhaul. The wheels will be re-profiled on site at Whitehead in the RPSI's wheel lathe and there is some work required to bearings.

The opportunity will be taken to investigate the valve settings of the locomotive. In the past these seem to have been slightly out, resulting in the engine missing a beat when notched up. There is supposedly an old Irish engineman's theory that a J15 steamed better if the valves were out of line! As with all the J15 class, No.186 was seen as a reliable performer. Working best with a saucer shaped fire and running at 30% cut-off and three quarter regulator.

No.186 has a curious vacuum cylinder arrangement with a rubber diaphragm instead of a rolling ring in the cylinder and a rubber bellows arrangement instead of a gland where the rod comes into the cylinder. Replacement of this to original condition will require a new mould and the cost may run to £2,000.

No.186 is seen as the ideal locomotive for these times. She is easy to operate and maintain, reliable and easy to fire, economical and free steaming. The locomotive was, and remains, a versatile engine capable of up to six carriage loads on railtours throughout Ireland.

J15 Details (Superheated)

Class:	J15
Wheels:	0-6-0
Company:	GS&WR
Designer:	McDonnell
Builders:	Beyer Peacock Sharp Stewart Inchicore Works
Dates Built:	1866 - 1903
Boiler:	101 & Z

Boiler Diameter: 5³/₄"
Cylinders: 18" X 24"
Tractive Effort (lbs.): 17,170
Total Weight (tons): 37.65
Axe load (tons): 13.00
Numbers: 101-200, 223, 229,
232, 240-243, 253-
256

Note: No.186 is a Sharp Stewart built engine - Inchicore was too busy to make her and contracted the work out.

Members of the J15 class carried either black or grey in company service. As the latter colour is not aesthetically pleasing, it is the intention that No.186 will be restored to its authentic black livery.

Summary of Work Completed

All cab fittings and all external steam and lubrication pipes and fittings have been stripped down.

The chimney, smokebox, cab and boiler cladding has been removed.

The boiler and firebox have been detached from frames and lifted clear for inspection.

All parts, especially boiler and firebox have been carefully examined.

Summary of Work Remaining

Remove front tube plate.

Strip down motion and valve gear and withdraw pistons and slide valves.

Dismantle all brake gear and brake cylinders.

Dismantle suspension.

Lift frame off wheels.

Boiler and firebox:

- Overhaul boiler and firebox and renew all longitudinal stays and possibly some firebox stays. Replace defective rivets where required. Renew studs and nuts to hold safety valves and main steam manifold and hold all face plate cab fittings.
- Make new front tube plate and rivet to front boiler flange.

- Renew all boiler tubes.
- Make and fit new smokebox.
- Repair and partially renew and refit boiler cladding.
- Repair and partially renew cab roof and side sheets.
- Replace any loosened rivets in main frames.
- Overhaul pistons and valve gear, renewing piston rings and re-metalling bearings where necessary.
- Overhaul outside coupling rods, re-metalling bearings where necessary.
- True up crank pins if required.
- Overhaul brake gear, renewing worn pins and bushes where necessary.
- Overhaul buffers and draw gear.
- Overhaul vacuum ejectors.
- Overhaul both injectors.
- Overhaul regulator rodging and valve faces, renewing pins and bushes where necessary.
- Overhaul lubrication.
- Overhaul sanding gear.
- Reassemble locomotive.
- Hydraulic test boiler.
- Steam test boiler.
- Testing and running in.

Tender work:

- Overhaul buffers and draw gear.
- Dismantle and overhaul all brake gear.
- Dismantle and overhaul suspension.
- Cut out and renew corroded tank sections.
- Overhaul wheels and bearings.

A version of this article appears in the current issue (No.243) of Steam Railway magazine.

GENERAL

Web Site: As reported in the last issue, we have been trying to establish a permanent address for the Society's

internet site. We are pleased to announce that this is now at:

www.rpsi-online.org

This is mainly due to the hard work of Philip Lockett (with a lot of hounding and nit-picking by the Secretary).

The site contains full up-to-date details of the 2000 programme, and allows booking forms to be printed for forthcoming operations. It allows e-mail contact, and contains many historical details of the RPSI's locomotives, carriages, wagons, sites and tours.

WINTER MEETINGS

Summer Again (!!): Another successful season ended in March with very well received talks on the past and future of the Giant's Causeway Tramway.

As usual Charles Friel will be trying to round up anyone anxious to take part in the next season's programme. Now, don't be shy!

SALES

New Products: By the time you read this the new book from Mark Kennedy, titled "The LMS In Ireland", should be available.

Main Lines: A selection of branded RPSI items is always available from:

RPSI Postal Sales
45 Drumacanvy Road
Portadown
Co. Armagh
BT63 5LX

The principal lines are: locomotive outline badges, videos, postcards, posters, pencils, rulers, etc.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,
Co. Antrim, BT36 6HJ.

Internet: <http://www.rpsi-online.org>

E-mail: rpsitrains@hotmail.com