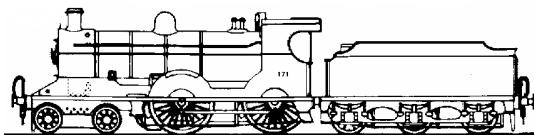


# Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



April/May 2004

## NEWS LETTER

### RPSI 40

**Gala Dinner:** The invitations to the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner have created quite a stir, with a number of party tables already booked.

Numbers are limited, so don't leave it too late. Already we have had at least 10 bookings for entire tables, along with quite a few for smaller groups, couples and individuals. Some groups of members are travelling over from England for what promises to be a very special night in the Society's history.

For your guidance, the following railway company names are already spoken for:

Great Northern Railway of Ireland

Great Southern & Western

Midland Great Western

Londonderry & Lough Swilly

Banbridge Junction Railway

Belfast & County Down

Sligo Leitrim & Northern Counties

Waterford, New Ross & Wexford Junction

**Coming Down The Line:** To further mark the anniversary, a special book is being published that no member or friend of the RPSI will want to miss!

It is called "Forty Shades of Steam - The story of the RPSI" by Joe Cassells and Charles Friel (Colourpoint, £11.99/€18) and it is due to be published in May. The 144-page book will be a collector's item, containing as it does a brief history of the Society, recollections of the early days, the

story of the Portrush Flyer, a check-list of the highlights of each of those 40 years, and a comprehensive chronology of every (and we mean every!) RPSI mainline movement from 1964 to 2004 - complete with details of locomotive, route, and points of interest.

But there's more! Charles Friel has assembled a dazzling collection of around 125 colour shots of the RPSI down the years drawn from his own extensive archive and from the work of other leading Irish photographers. In addition, the book will contain a stock list featuring every locomotive, carriage and wagon that the Society has ever owned. The foreword to this fascinating book has been written by our President, Lord O'Neill, who has been in that office ever since the Society was founded in Belfast on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1964.

This book is a celebration of the achievements of the RPSI over 40 years and will be a unique souvenir for all who have travelled on an RPSI train or marvelled at the sight of one passing by. Roll back the years with this absorbing book but also dare to dream of the future, now that the Society is such a well-established operation and steam is such a recognised attraction in the tourist and leisure markets.

### MK2 PROJECT

**Painting:** The Site Team at Whitehead are currently trying to help push forward the Mk2 project and help is needed from as many members as possible to help with painting the coaches.

Following a request at a St. Jude's

meeting, the team was boosted and good progress was made on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February on gloss painting the coaches. A larger than average turnout of volunteers at Whitehead on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March made possible the application of another gloss coat on three of the Mk2 coaches. One of the coach roofs was also painted.

The extra help from the members who responded to the plea was very welcome. Anyone else interested? This is an easy job which most members should be able to help with. However, it is time-consuming and labour-intensive.

**Current Position:** As members will know, the Society is in the process of putting the set of Mk2 carriages into operation. To this end, they were certified to run by Resco in January.

As part of the acceptance by the railway companies, the coaches were put forward to an NIR approval panel on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April. The Panel stated that some of the paperwork needed re-submission, along with some extra items of documentation. Those involved were hopeful that, following a trial run of No.85 with the new coaches, certification would be approved in time for the "Easter Bunny" trains on 12<sup>th</sup> April.

Subsequently, on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March NIR indicated that, given the outstanding information and timescale to convene a further Review Panel and Approvals Panel prior to road testing, they did not believe it would be possible to have the coaches in service by 12<sup>th</sup> April. Therefore the Easter mainline trains were cancelled.

However, despite disruptions due to infrastructure closures over Easter on the Bangor line, NIR arranged to obtain a set of Irish Rail Cravens coaches to operate a gauging run to Bangor in preparation for the "Titanic Festival" trains.

At the time of writing, the Mk2 coaches are still awaiting approval and road testing by NIR. Furthermore, the operations proposed from May onwards are dependent on that approval being obtained.

### OPERATIONS

**"Marble City":** The train, which ran on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March, was a successful experiment with a new destination. No.4 hauled 7 Cravens and a van, leaving the

new Platform 10 at Heuston. A late departure was caused by delays in getting the empty train out of Connolly, but our 250 or so patrons enjoyed the event. Sixty passengers joined the train at Newbridge, now part of the Dublin commuter belt. In Kilkenny the locomotive ran to Leggetts Rath LC to take water from a hydrant.

Approximately 120 passengers took the local trip, which will be the last steam train to use the loop in Thomastown. This station will remain open but the loop will be replaced by one in Ballyhale under the mini-CTC, which will be commissioned at the end of April.

**"Good Friday Special":** The usual massive crowd booked for this train, necessitating the provision of an extra Irish Rail Cravens coach. But No.4 managed the load in style!

The event was marked by a tongue in cheek article in the Irish Times of 10<sup>th</sup> April noting the lengths which Dubliners will go to get a drink on a Good Friday.

**"Easter Bunny":** Due to Mk2 carriages not being available, train rides were operated at Whitehead on Easter Monday.

No.186 made its public debut. The locomotive was in fine form and looked good in the new GSR grey livery, although a number of people commented that it would take a bit of getting used to!

Footage shot as the locomotive shunted the yard in preparation for the train rides was broadcast on the 6:30pm news on BBC1 NI on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April.

**"Titanic Festival":** In preparation for the Titanic trains, and because No.85 had not visited Bangor since the line was relaid, a gauging run was required. No.85 performed faultlessly on the run via Whitehead - Belfast (GVS) - Bangor and return on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April. With a set of Cravens, the light train proceeded through Belfast Central and made easy work of the inclines along the Bangor line, with an engineer checking clearance at each station along the route and back.

The trains themselves operated faultlessly, with 3 return trips on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April and 2 on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>.

**"Slieve Kimalta":** There is still a chance to send in your booking for the tour. There is a full prospectus and booking form on the

Society's website.

There have been a number of requests regarding travel on the fringe events only, i.e. Friday, Monday and Tuesday. Just submit the booking form as normal with only these options selected.

**"Train 200":** To celebrate 200 years of the railway locomotive, and all being well with the Mk2 coaches, it is hoped to operate in conjunction with the UF&TM, a day of trains between Belfast, Cultra and Bangor on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

**"D-Day Diamond Jubilee":** Coleraine Borough Council have organised a fly-past by the Red Arrows at Portrush to mark the 60th anniversary of the Normandy landings. A Spitfire and other classic planes will be on show. The Society hopes to run a train to Portrush in conjunction with the events there. Passengers will be invited to dress in 1940s clothes.

**Party On:** Don't forget the summer party trains - the "Steam & Jazz" on 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> June, and "Mid-Summer Night's Steam" on 26<sup>th</sup> June.

**Cancellations:** The "Enfield Shuttle" operation scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> March has been cancelled. Although open to the public, this was a charter event not marketed by the Society. We will be talking again with the customer for a date possibly later in the season if they so wish.

The "Greystones Shuttle" on 30<sup>th</sup> May is cancelled due to crewing problems.

The "Bray 150" trains on 11<sup>th</sup> July are cancelled due to the DASH work south of Dublin.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.85 "Merlin":** A considerable amount of work was needed to adequately wash out the boiler. This is cold, damp and dirty work at the most unfavourable time of the year. Most work required to keep locomotives ready for action is well within the capability of willing volunteers. The Society should not rely on leaving it to the faithful few - the faithful few get fewer and fewer!

**No.186:** Passed her boiler test on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February. Completion of painting and some minor jobs were required before outroad testing could be contemplated, e.g. fitting of lamp irons, injector adjustment

and completion of cab.

**No.461:** Dismantling of the locomotive has shown up more firebox defects than originally anticipated. It is hoped to make No.461 the subject of an appeal to members.

**Crew Training:** On Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March there was a familiarisation session with No.186 for both RPSI and NIR footplate crews as it is well over 20 years since anyone last operated the locomotive.

The occasion was also used as a general training day with members from the various grades being put through their paces, e.g. shunters, steam-raisers, firemen, drivers, loco representatives and assistant loco representatives on the mainline.

The intention is not simply to test individuals' competence but most importantly to find if they feel there are any aspects of their work where additional training would be of benefit.

Movements centred around a monster shunt in the Carriage shed, with No.186 and several drivers. The 5 Mk2s were assembled in order in No.1 shed road. This meant the swapping of "Lough Erne" and a coach to the back of No.2 road and the Director's Saloon, 861 and the Diner were then placed on top of these vehicles.

**Put That in Your Pipe:** The Locomotive Department were just about to throw the old blast pipe from the Guinness locomotive in the skip when the thought occurred that it may be of interest to someone as an umbrella stand/ flower pot holder/conversation piece. It is a square pipe about 5" across and about 30" tall, with a flanged base. We would clean it first. If anyone is interested then the first reasonable donation will secure it. Purchaser must collect.

## ON-LINE

**Bulletins:** A reminder to those who receive the email Bulletin - if you stop receiving them, please ensure that your inbox quota has not been exceeded. To ensure continuity, please inform us of any change in email address as soon as possible. The easiest way to do this is to send an email from the new address.

**Volunteer/Work Diary:** This page on the

website is regularly updated with jobs needing done at Whitehead. Why not give it a regular visit to see what is available for YOU to do.

## WHITEHEAD

**Washing Machine:** Further to the request in the February News-Letter, for a replacement washing machine for the Tarry at Whitehead, we are now in possession of a working second-hand machine. Many thanks to member David Hamilton for his kind donation. Also thanks to other members who made offers.

**New Arrivals:** On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March, NIR, in preparation for the arrival of the first of their new railcars, cleared a lot of redundant rolling stock from York Road Depot. Most of this went to Adelaide en route to the scrapyard.

As part of the clearance, a very odd train arrived at Whitehead on that morning. A 450-class railcar and GM 111 sandwiched Hunslet 102 and Mk2 carriage 923. Hunslet 102 is to be stored at Whitehead for NIR until a definite decision is taken as to ultimate fate.

## MEMBERSHIP

**Thanks:** Many thanks to those members who responded to the appeal for extra donations to be included with membership renewals. Every penny is needed.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**Round-Up:** Another very successful season of meetings ended with a look at the history and overhaul of No.186.

Any ideas for next season? Then get in touch with Charles Friel as soon as possible because the programme needs to be put together by early summer.

## GENERAL

**Smoking Ban:** From 29<sup>th</sup> March 2004 a ban on smoking came into effect in all workplaces in the Republic of Ireland. Whatever the personal convictions of members, we have to consider how the legislation will operate in regard to Society

trains.

Our train is a workplace for the guard and inspector. Therefore the law applies and we must, by law, ban smoking on Dublin-based trains. The first operation that this affected was the "Good Friday Special" to Mullingar.

To avoid confusion the Council has decided to extend this ban to all Society trains, north and south, and to all enclosed working areas.

Further information can be found in some detail at the Dept of Health and Children website:

[www.irgov.ie](http://www.irgov.ie)

In all instances, can we ask that members respect the restrictions and prevent any possible embarrassment?

**Sales:** New items:

- 1) "Forty Shades of Steam" by Joe Cassells and Charles Friel. Advance orders are now being taken.
- 2) The reprint of "The Clogher Valley Railway", by E.M. Patterson, published by Colourpoint Books. This book was first published in 1972. The range of photographs has been expanded and the text has been updated to take account of recent developments, such as the restoration of Brookeborough station.
- 3) The popular, 105 minute "Rosslare - Dublin, Driver's Eye View" is now available in DVD format, at the same price as the video, £19.95.

Order from:

RPSI Sales, 103 Wynchurch Road, Belfast, BT6 OJJ, Northern Ireland.

Please add postage and handling: 10% for UK only or 20% for outside UK. Convert to Euro by adding 50% to the total. Please cross your cheque and make it payable to "The RPSI".

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