



June 2004

## NEWS LETTER

### 40 SHADES OF STEAM

**Published:** Hot news on the Forty Shades front! Our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary book has now arrived back from the printers at Colourpoint Books in Newtownards and we're delighted to say, slightly biased though we may be, that it is absolutely brilliant. The book "Forty Shades of Steam - the Story of the RPSI" (Colourpoint Books £12) is by Society stalwarts Joe Cassells and Charles Friel. It extends to 160 pages and contains 120 colour photographs of Society activities and personalities down the years.

There is also a compendium detailing all 2,500 mainline movements by Society trains since 1964, and recording some of the magic moments - and the mishaps - along the way. Our President, Lord O'Neill, has penned a superb foreword and there are valuable contributions from our first chairman, John Harcourt, former secretary Robin Morton and former publicity officer John Friel, plus a look to the future by Phil Lockett and Gerry Mooney. And last but not least, a comprehensive stock list of locomotives, carriages and wagons, prepared by Charles Friel's son James, along with a list of all the movies in which the Society has been involved, compiled by Paul McCann.

In short, a book no member or friend of the Society will wish to be without. An entertaining read, pictures that are a joy

to behold and a reference book which will be an invaluable source for years to come. Relive those memories from bygone two-day tours, Portrush Flyers and Sea Breezes as you are entranced by the highlights of 40 years of mainline steam. Look to the future with confidence.

Lucky passengers on the first "Steam & Jazz" train were the first to get their hands on pre-launch copies. Pre-ordered copies either from Colourpoint or RPSI Sales have been posted. So how do you go about getting your own copy? Simply send your order to:

RPSI Sales  
103 Wynchurh Road  
Belfast  
BT6 0JJ

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

The book is a credit both to the authors and to Colourpoint. Special thanks to Colourpoint MD and RPSI member Norman Johnston for all the effort he put in to ensuring that everything was right. His attention to detail was much appreciated, and his publishing know-how has brought the whole enterprise(!) to a highly satisfactory conclusion.

Watch out now for the official launch which is to take place at Central Station towards the end of June. This function, which is being generously hosted by

Translink, is by invitation only but will be widely covered, we hope, in the media.

So don't be left in the shade - place your order for a copy of this exceptional book now!

### RPSI 40

**There's More!**: As members will be aware, a series of special events is being planned to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society. The RPSI was formed at a meeting in the Presbyterian Hostel in Belfast on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1964, at a time when steam had finished in the Republic and was on the wane in Northern Ireland. In those days nobody could have imagined that we would still be going strong, let along operating mainline steam, 40 years on. So this is really a cause for celebration!

Your first chance to get a slice of the action will be to buy a copy of our new book which has just been published.

Also being planned at present is an official re-launch of No.186 which is due to take place at Whitehead in July. Our veteran 0-6-0 was built in 1879 so she will be celebrating her 125<sup>th</sup> birthday by returning to traffic. Again, this will be an important publicity opportunity for the Society, so watch this space.

The celebrations will climax, of course, with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Grand Gala Dinner which is taking place at the Irish Railway Collection in the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum on the evening of Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October. We are indebted to the UFTM for agreeing to allow the Society to hold this important function at such an appropriate venue. The £40/59 a head ticket includes travel by special steam train from Whitehead via Lisburn and Belfast to Cultra and back, plus a reception at the museum and your three-course meal and tea/coffee. Dress code: Jacket & tie.

The bookings have been rolling in from members and supporters in Northern Ireland, the Republic and Britain, but there are still some places left. While a

number of the tables of 10 have been booked by groups, the rest of the places are being taken up by individuals. So don't be afraid to book a ticket just for yourself - we will guarantee you some convivial company on the big night.

Among the speakers are Lord O'Neill, who has been patron/president of the RPSI for its entire 40 years, our two vice-presidents Dr Garret FitzGerald and Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, and David Morgan of the Heritage Railways Association. Taking a look to the future will be the next generation of RPSI stalwarts - Council members Phil Lockett from Belfast and Gerry Mooney from Dublin.

Booking forms were circulated earlier this year but details are available on the RPSI website or by writing to:

RPSI 40 Gala Dinner  
13 Sharman Gardens  
Belfast  
BT9 5GE

Postal bookings payable to "The RPSI" - don't leave it too late as we are limited by capacity at the Folk Museum. But what a prospect - having your dinner with No.800 "Maedhbh" looking over your shoulder. Magic!

### OPERATIONS

**"Sea Breeze"**: It was known that runs to Wexford would be thin on the ground this year, due to the DASH (DART upgrade) project, which sees the closure of the DSE section on weekends. However, in early April it was announced that the DART would be open on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May to handle crowds travelling to the festival arranged to mark the accession of the 10 new countries to the EU during the Irish presidency.

The Society submitted a path for a "Sea Breeze", which was accepted by IÉ. Selling such a short notice trip was a challenge, but in the end 255 customers showed up who, together with the 100 patrons on the Wexford to Rosslare leg, ensured that the trip, hauled by No.4,

was profitable.

**"Sieve Kimalta":** The Friday (7<sup>th</sup> May) coach trip to the Shannon was a great success, with a full bus load of passengers enjoying a cruise on the river followed by a visit to Bord na Mona peat railway.

The Saturday portion of the main railtour operated as planned throughout, the only major hiccup being an unscheduled coaling stop for No.4 at Roscrea leaving time too short for further photographic opportunities on the branch. Perhaps the highlight of the day for many was the long stopover in Ballybrophy in brilliant sunshine, and the opportunity to visit the adjacent "Signal Box" hostelry. Away from the main tour, a service train failure led to a bus substitution on the late evening service to Ennis. Needless to say, none of the intending participants took up this enticing offer.

Following the previous evening's carousing at the Banquet, an enthusiastic crowd gathered at the station on Sunday morning. A late departure was mostly made up on the mainline following stops at Limerick Junction, Thurles and Portarlington due to No.4's outstanding running. After a service stop in Dublin and a water stop at Drogheda, the bulk of the passengers bade farewell to No.4 at Dundalk as she departed with train back to Dublin, the set being destined for Sligo in time for the early morning service to Dublin.

Now, a day and a half's worth of confusion commenced. Firstly, because of a delay in the certification of the Society's Mk2 coaches and because no Cravens were available to operate beyond Dundalk, an NIR locomotive and coaches were booked. And there indeed was NIR's train on the Up platform at Dundalk - a 201 and 6 'Gatwick' coaches. As everybody scrambled on, the stationmaster emerged from his office to just as quickly eject them. As it turned out, the Up Enterprise had failed and the train at Dundalk was being requisitioned as a

stand-in. Sometime later a 3 coach NIR railcar arrived and the railtour party squeezed in for the journey to Belfast. The only consolation was that the half-hour late start out of Dundalk was completely made up by Belfast.

Again on Monday, the 'Gatwick' set was to be the mode of transport to Dundalk to pick up No.85 and the Cravens set, which was now available again having been to Sligo and back. However, a further failure meant that NIR had no spare locomotive to haul their train - due to the heavy morning traffic in and out of Belfast Great Victoria Street station, the locomotive which hauled the coaches in could not be released in time. More confusion arose when station staff directed passengers to a 3 coach railcar only to change their minds and insist a different one be used just as everyone had settled in for the journey.

A late departure from Dundalk with No.85 and Cravens set the pattern for the rest of the day. Furthermore, none of the delay could be made up as NIR only on the previous Friday had slapped a 45mph limit on the train. However, having said all that, the complete programme, of a run to Bangor and then to Whitehead, was operated.

On the Tuesday, the annual coach tour took the party to the collection of old and not so old aircraft at Langford Lodge on the shore of Lough Neagh. After lunch the destination was the Sunshine Railway near Dungannon where Society member Errol Stafford operates a commercial peat extraction business. Errol's interest has encouraged him to set up a 2'10" gauge railway to help transport the peat from bog to the lorry loading area. There are a number of brake wagons converted to carry passengers, and these were pressed into service to carry a complete bus load of passengers around the bog.

Overall not a bad tour, given all the problems encountered while arranging it. Hopefully, all the passengers enjoyed themselves and will forgive the organisers for those parts of the

weekend which may not have gone exactly to plan.

Many thanks are due to those who organised the tour beforehand, and to those who put in so much effort over the weekend.

For photos from the "Sieve Kimalta" railtour, see:

[www.rpsi-online.org/wdphotonews/index.html](http://www.rpsi-online.org/wdphotonews/index.html) (RPSI)

and

[groups.msn.com/IrishRailwayNews/rpsisteam.msnw?Page=14](http://groups.msn.com/IrishRailwayNews/rpsisteam.msnw?Page=14) (IRN)

**Private Charter:** A proposed train on 14<sup>th</sup> May was cancelled due to delay in approval of Mk2 set.

**"Rail 200":** A charter for the UFTM on 22<sup>nd</sup> May likewise had to be cancelled.

**Private Charter:** On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June, a charter was operated for the Institute of Railway Signal Engineers.

Because of driver holidays it was not possible to operate by steam. However, the interesting motive power was Irish Rail's 187 and 124, the latter one of the last operational examples of the GM 121 class. The 9-coach set included State Coach 351.

The special left Dublin at 17:00, ran to Arklow, and was back in Dublin at 21:00.

**"D-Day Diamond Jubilee":** A proposal to operate to Portrush on 5<sup>th</sup> June in connection with D-Day celebrations was also cancelled.

**"Steam Enterprise":** The decision to drop the 12<sup>th</sup> June trip was taken due to delays in approval of our Mk2 coaches and crewing difficulties.

**"Steam & Jazz":** On 18<sup>th</sup> June, 210 fare-paying passengers on a sold-out "Steam & Jazz" train were the first to sample the delights of our new Mk2 rake, hauled by No.85 "Merlin". Apart from a few last-minute timetable changes by the railway company, everything operated smoothly.

The ability, for the first time on our

Whitehead set, to make PA announcements was regarded as a major enhancement to the service provided to passengers.

It was agreed by all that the coaches looked splendid and were ideally suited to the "Steam & Jazz" format, giving the majority of passengers a table at their seats. This facility will be expanded when the next coach (arrived 20<sup>th</sup> June) is added to the fleet.

**"Tullamore 150":** To celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the railways to Tullamore, Irish Rail chartered No.4 to operate a series of three trains from there to Clara on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June.

The trains consisted of No.4 hauling 6 Cravens and a van, and all were filled and ran to time. Even though the distance is only 8 miles between the two towns, running has to be to time to ensure that there is no hold-up to service trains. For that reason, and because there is only a single platform at Clara, passengers had to remain on the train there.

Before the third and last train departed, local TD Brian Cowan happened to be strolling along. The opportunity was taken to invite him on board. This he did and enjoyed the Society's hospitality for the trip.

A novel feature of the day's operations was taking water at Tullamore from a mobile tanker supplied by the Offaly Fire Brigade -both locomotive and coaches availed of this service.

**"Mid-Summer Night's Steam":** No.4 will be operating to Mullingar with the traditional barbecue train on 26<sup>th</sup> June.

**"Summer Steam":** Sunday afternoon train rides commence at Whitehead on 27<sup>th</sup> June, operating between 1:30pm and 5pm.

Note that trains will not operate on days following a Portrush operation, nor on 11<sup>th</sup> July.

There will also be an Open Day in conjunction with Whitehead Community

Association on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August.

**"Northern Enterprise"**: The successful Dublin-based train from last year will operate again on 24<sup>th</sup> July when it is hoped that No.85 and No.4 will be swapped, No.4 to operate the Portrush trains and No.85 the Cork trains.

**"Portrush Flyer"**: This year's season will be 31<sup>st</sup> July, and 7<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> August.

**"Sláinte"**: For those wishing to make connection arrangements, the preliminary timings for the operation to Cork (21<sup>st</sup> August) and return (22<sup>nd</sup> August) are:

Dublin Heuston	11:10
Cork	17:25
Cork	09:00
Dublin Heuston	14:50

**"Bangor Belle"**: A series of shuttles will be run to Bangor on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> August.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**Round-Up**: Unfortunately, the majority of members continue to adopt the principle that the work at Whitehead is to be done by others, not them!

However, locomotive work continues slowly. No.461's boiler has now been repositioned on its right side to facilitate removal of stays. Once this work is complete, the inner firebox will be removed and the remainder of the outer firebox shell inspected to finalise the extent of repairs required.

The cost of repairs will be substantially greater than earlier estimates, which were based upon retaining the outer boiler plates and replacing only the lower part of the inner firebox.

On Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June the locomotive shed was shunted and machine tools (lathe and milling machine) moved from there to a new position in the workshop. No.186 was used for the shunting to make sure that everything was still in working order for a forthcoming test running-in trip to Carrickfergus.

No.85 suffered damage to firebars and the Foundry was casting new bars as quickly as possible to enable the locomotive to operate the "Steam & Jazz" trains.

No.186 successfully completed the first running-in trip of her overhaul, operating a single light engine return trip between Whitehead and Carrickfergus early on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June. We will now start to see the fruits of the donations kindly made to our No.186 Appeal!

Following No.186's return to Whitehead, No.85 and the 5 Mk2 carriages departed for a gauging approval run to Portrush and Castlerock. This proved equally successful and hopefully NIR will approve operation of the carriages to those destinations at an early date.

## MK2 PROJECT

**Restoration**: The headrests in coach 300 (formerly 934) have been recovered - a great improvement. Painting in green and lining out in straw and red is complete.

**New Arrival**: The sixth Mk2 to be added to the running set arrived from Heysham on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June. It's numbered 301 in the new running series and is identical to 302:

RPSI Number: 301  
Previous Number: 5207  
Class: Mk2z TSO  
Built: 1967  
Seats: 64  
Doors: 6 (Central vestibule)  
Origin: BR MR

The vehicle arrived virtually ready-to-run and will hopefully be passed into traffic with the minimum of fuss.

**Testing**: Over the weekend of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> May there were two days of testing of the new Mk2 coaches.

On the Saturday, No.85 hauled the 5 carriages to Belfast and Ballymena. On the Sunday, Bangor and Newry were visited. On both days the trains

operated as planned and without problems.

The website has a short video clip of the ensemble leaving Bangor West on Sunday:

[www.rpsi-online.org/movies/85testbangorwest020504.wmv](http://www.rpsi-online.org/movies/85testbangorwest020504.wmv)

Arising out of the tests there were a few areas that NIR required further information and so they did not approve the set at that time. Unfortunately, it was a slow process, and everything had to be resolved to the satisfaction of the Society and NIR before the coaches could run.

As a consequence, two charters in May and two planned operations in June had to be cancelled.

No.85 was out again with the trial train on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June.

Firstly, in the morning, No.85 went light engine as far as Carrickfergus on brake trials.

After return to Whitehead, the locomotive took the carriages as far as York Road depot and return. This second run allowed three separate tests to be carried out:

- Braking: Involving an emergency stop from 60mph.
- Lighting: With the lack of a generator as yet, the interior lights need to be powered from the batteries on the coaches. There is a minimum period for which the batteries must be able to maintain the lights at full strength.
- Recovery: The coaches must be able to be recovered by diesel in the event of a locomotive failure. This test involved GM 208 at York Road.

These tests are required as part of the approvals process which all our vehicles, locomotives and rolling stock alike, must now go through to obtain a certificate to operate on NIR. All part of the new Safety Case legislation which will soon be introduced in the province.

In the afternoon, the locomotive and

train were impressive as they returned through NIR's Whitehead station. As No.85 barked her way past, the fully lined-out coaches made a very fine sight indeed. They are a credit to all who have worked so very hard to turn them out.

The good news - long awaited - came on 14<sup>th</sup> June when NIR granted a licence for the Society's 5 Mk2 carriages to operate on public trains.

This was just in time, and no more, to allow tickets to go on sale for the "Steam & Jazz" train on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June. No time was wasted in getting those tickets into the tourist offices!

Further route clearance, to Portrush and Castlerock, took place on 20<sup>th</sup> June.

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Whitehead Departure**: With the low-loader already booked for delivery of 301 on 20<sup>th</sup> June, the opportunity was taken of moving coach 1287 to Downpatrick, where it will be on long-term loan to the Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway.

1287 is a GS&WR compartment 3<sup>rd</sup>. It has 64 seats and was used for Dublin suburban and local trains. It was built in 1915 and came to the RPSI in 1978. It was used at Whitehead as a dormitory for those on lighting-up turns, although it sustained some fire damage late in 2003.

The Downpatrick Railway Society plan to restore it to running order to operate with their own GS&WR coach.

## WHITEHEAD

**Gantry Safety**: Access ladders and safety rails have been constructed for the heavy lift gantries, to facilitate inspection and maintenance in a safe environment.

**What A Site!**: The Site Team has been substantially deployed elsewhere with an emphasis on getting the Mk2

carriages ready for revenue earning traffic.

However, the depot has been given its first spray of weedkiller. The pits in 4 and 5 locomotive roads have been cleared of all rubbish and their drains are to be unblocked using power hosing.

**Summer Nights:** The Tuesday evening Site Squad has returned to work for the summer. Dermot Mackie would be interested in any member willing to help over the next few months.

All are welcome, and indeed encouraged, to come along. There are always a number of odd jobs that one or two people can work on for a few hours.

Maintenance, cleaning and bird-proofing of the heavy lift gantries is a top priority. This has been greatly facilitated by the construction of two enclosed access ladders.

This is crucial work, but it's better than that. This is your chance to:

- get as little or as much as you want of hands-on railway experience
- get behind the scenes at Whitehead - be a part of what we are doing
- see, touch and smell locomotives in steam (likely on Sunday) - your chance to see what volunteering in the loco department is about
- join in the fun, hear the gossip, get to know your Society from the cutting edge.

There is no pressure to do anything you aren't comfortable doing. Just make sure you meet the prerequisites and turn up! Don't hesitate, the future of the Society lies in its volunteer members - come down and be part of that team. The Volunteer page on the website lists forthcoming jobs.

## GENERAL

**Publicity:** There is coverage of the "Sieve Kimalta" two day tour, with an accompanying photograph, in the

current issue of Steam Railway - on sale from 18<sup>th</sup> June.

However, it appears that this is only to be a preliminary to a more comprehensive piece in the following issue (16<sup>th</sup> July) which will have lots of photographs.

**Trainspotting:** On Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May, the Society was involved in filming for the Discovery Home and Leisure channel's "Trainspotting" programme.

The programme is due to be aired in early October as part of a ten part series, with this episode concentrating on Ireland's railways past and present.

Along with the RPSI, it will feature the Cavan & Leitrim in Dromod, the West Clare Railway at Moyasta, and a look at the present scene on Iarnród Éireann.

The RPSI involvement was of No.4 in steam along with members Gerry Mooney and Chas Meredith, who spoke about the Society from the early days to the present.

**NIR Future:** The long-awaited report on the future of the NIR network was published on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

In essence, the Minister appears to be pushing the responsibility (blame?) for a decision onto the general public. He asks for submissions to be made to help him get an idea what the public opinion is.

Those submissions should be made to the Department of Regional Development (NI) by 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2004.

Members are asked to recommend that the full network be retained. Remember that the "Portrush Flyer", the longest-running preserved mainline steam train in these islands, is under threat if the lines north of Ballymena and Whitehead are closed.

## SALES

**Latest:** Please note that, as well as "40 Shades of Steam", the current sales order form includes these additions:

- 1) "Memories of Hill of Howth Trams", from Online Video, £16.

Duration 58 minutes, in either VHS video or DVD format. Produced to mark the end of operations 45 years ago on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1959, the earliest footage dates from 1950. Ride trains on the Great Northern branch to Howth, peep into Sutton depot, ride Brush-built open toppers, revel in outings on teak Milnes cars, see Work car No.11 in action, follow last day activity, see No.2 at Perris, admire restoration of No.9 and marvel at No.10 in the 1985 Blackpool centenary celebrations.

- 2) "The restoration of Great Southern and Western Railway Company Royal Saloon No.351", £10.

This 24 page booklet was produced by the Society to mark the completion of the restoration of No.351. Built at Inchicore in 1902/03, No.351 was used by King Edward VII. Later, it switched from being a Royal Saloon to being a State Coach and was used by

President de Valera. During the 1970s, it went out of use and was stored at Inchicore until 1996, when the Society began restoration work. Many organisations helped out, and the full story is told in the booklet, illustrated with 27 photographs, roughly half in colour.

- 3) "Sieve Kimalta Railtour Souvenir Brochure, May 2004", produced by Charles Friel, £3.

The route of the tour, Dublin - Limerick via Nenagh and back via Limerick Junction, is described in detail with notes on recent developments and memories of the days of steam operation. Illustrated with 34 black and white photographs, the 42 page brochure contains maps and gradient profiles.

## EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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

[www.rpsi-online.org](http://www.rpsi-online.org)  
e-mail: [rpsitrains@hotmail.com](mailto:rpsitrains@hotmail.com)

## William Coates

*Some very sad news for members in the Belfast area, and indeed for regular travellers on the annual railtour in May. Long-time member Willie Coates died suddenly on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> April, aged 53.*

*Willie, a regular on Society trains, was a member of the Belfast Operations Committee, and had in the past worked in Catering and Publicity for the Society. More recently he was to be found leading Society coach parties on the "Hills Of Donegal" excursions and the annual northern coach trip associated with the International Railtour. Anyone who ever fell into conversation with him soon found out that he had an immense knowledge on all matters relating to industrial heritage. For a recent photo see Page 5 of "Five Foot Three" No.50.*

*Willie was a founder member of the RPSI, and treasurer of the Carrickfergus Gasworks Museum. A lifelong transport enthusiast, he acted as the local representative of Scottish-based Waverley and Balmoral steamship excursions, also providing commentary on trips operated by the Waverley and Balmoral from Northern Ireland ports in recent years. He also had a close association with the Ulster Traction Engine Club and acted as commentator at rallies at Shane's Castle and Ballymena Showgrounds.*

*Willie will be sadly missed by all his friends in the Society, and in all the other societies of which he was a member.*