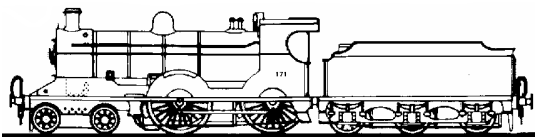


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



February 2005

NEWS LETTER

No.461 APPEAL

Auction: Due to the generosity of one of our members, we are fortunate to have been offered the nameplate from ex-GNR "U" class 4-4-0 No.202 "Louth". This is to be used for fund raising for the Appeal.

The RPSI's railwayana experts believe that the plate has a market value of between £4,500 and £5,000, and the reserve price is to be £3,000. Traditionally, the best prices available for Irish railwayana are to be found at various auction houses in England, so the plate is being offered to RPSI members (and your friends!) first. Should a price above the reserve fail to materialise this side of the water, the plate will be auctioned off to the highest bidder elsewhere. The ultimate beneficiary will be the Society's 40th Anniversary Appeal for No.461.

We are sure that amongst our membership there may be someone who will want to invest in this unique chance to obtain a valuable piece of Irish railway history. If you are interested, please contact:

No.461 Appeal
9 Kenilworth Avenue
Lisburn
BT28 3UG
Northern Ireland
jhb171@aol.com

The auction was launched in the email Bulletin as the owner was anxious to get the process started. The highest bid now stands at £4,000 - can you beat that?

The auction will close after the "Suir Valley" railtour in May.

Thanks: To all who have contributed to the Appeal so far, our sincere thanks. Your donations are very much appreciated. The work continues on No.461, due to your help. To those who have not yet donated, we

would ask that at this stage you consider making a donation, however big or small. We can also accept railway artefacts for resale, as above, which can be collected from you in the greater Belfast, Carrickfergus, Whitehead, South Down, Louth, or Greater Dublin areas.

We look forward to hearing from you!

JOHN COILEY AWARD

Presentation: The Award ceremony took place at the HRA's AGM in Swindon on Saturday 29th January.

Chairman Norman Foster and Francis Richards, representing the Locomotive Department, accepted the award on behalf of the Society.

See separate form for details of a celebratory function to mark the event.

OPERATIONS

Santa Special - Belfast: No.186 had a very successful outing on Sunday 5th December, hauling 3 full trains - two to Whitehead and one to Lisburn.

A further successful weekend of operations followed. At least one family travelled from Dublin to take part, having failed to get tickets for the trains there. Such is the popularity and attraction of our operations!

There was a half-page colour photo on the front page of the Belfast Newsletter on Monday 13th December, plus fine coverage in the same day's Irish News.

Another year of operations was successfully completed on Sunday 19th December.

Unfortunately, it was not without its problems as a signalling fault on the Larne line meant the departure from Whitehead on the first public train was about 30 minutes late. On the second trip, the train was cut short at

Carrickfergus as NIR had only one pilot man available for the single line section between Kilroot and Whitehead, and a service train in the same direction was given precedence.

It all ended that evening with No.186 making an excellent run in from Lisburn on the final train of the day, following the Down Enterprise. The train left Lisburn wreathed in a very atmospheric cloak of steam, carrying the last of our happy passengers back to Belfast. The very clear cold air ensured that the steam remained long after the train departed and the exhaust barked its way down the line.

Santa Special - Dublin: The Dublin 2004 season concluded on Saturday 18th December with the final Santa train behind locomotive No.4.

Fifteen trains ran over three weekends with each train booked to capacity, some being filled since August!

The train formation was seven of the usual coaches of the Dublin set, together with an Irish Craven in replacement for the fire-damaged 1416, plus a Dutch van to provide train heat and space for presents.

The ticket revenue from this operation is quite substantial and is a significant proportion of the Society's income. There seems to be no problem at all in filling 8 and 9 coach trains at this time of year in Dublin.

Four of the coaches in the train are now painted green, i.e. both of the catering vehicles, the remaining Park Royal and the Bredin. Expect further moves towards a green train in 2005.

Santa Round-Up: A very big thanks to all those members in Dublin and Belfast who responded so well to the plea for help to make the "Santa Special" trains all that our passengers have come to expect.

Special thanks are due to railway company footplate crews for working the long hours for the Society.

Photos of the Coleraine trains with No.85 and operations between Belfast and Whitehead with No.186 have been added to the RPSI section on the Irish Railway News Gallery:

<http://groups.msn.com/IrishRailwayNews>

Does anybody out there have shots of No.4 performing in Dublin?

Colley Award Special: To celebrate winning the Heritage Railway Association's John Coiley Locomotive Award, public trains were operated on 29th January from Lisburn to Bangor, with the award winning locomotive, No.186, at the head.

The 150 passengers who travelled had a great day out - fine weather and excellent running. Return trips from Lisburn to Bangor continue to be very popular and are a format to build on in the future.

Northern Operations 2005: Due to the uncertainty of operations out of Whitehead this year because of Larne line closures, it has been decided only to publicise operations when they are confirmed by NIR. Currently, that means that only the "Easter Bunny" and "Titanic" trains in March and April have so far been agreed, along with a couple of private charters to Cultra.

Discussions are ongoing with NIR regarding the use of a stabling location for the duration of this season of trains. Adelaide had been suggested as two extra sidings are to be laid there. However, later in the year, the arrival of more new railcars will mean that storage space will be at a premium and NIR are not guaranteeing that the Society's train can be accommodated. The new railcar depot at Fortwilliam is not expected to open until July.

The confirmed operations are:

- 20/03 "Easter Warm-Up"; Whitehead - Portadown - Lisburn
- 28/03 "Easter Bunny"; Lisburn - Belfast - Antrim & return [x2]
- 31/03 Private Charter; Belfast - Cultra - Bangor - Belfast
- 02/04 "Titanic Festival"; Belfast - Bangor - Belfast [x2]
- 06/04 Private Charter; Belfast - Cultra - Bangor - Belfast

The trip on 20th March is a public operation, flat fare £10. Departure times are: Whitehead (13:50) - Central (15:05) - Lisburn (pick-up) - Portadown (16:55) - Lisburn (set-down) - Central (18:20) - Lisburn.

Tickets for the "Titanic Festival" trip must be purchased in advance - only from the Belfast Welcome Centre as the train is being organised by Belfast City Council. Fares are £7/£5 and include entrance to the Transport Museum at Cultra. Trains depart Belfast at 10:35 and 13:05 for Cultra and Bangor.

For the record, NIR plan to close the line between Bleach Green and Larne from 25th March, except for 3 morning inward trains and 3 evening outward trains. From the start of June until December there will be a complete closure.

Southern operations 2005: Due to similar uncertainties surrounding DART area weekend upgrade work, operations out of Dublin have not yet been confirmed.

Therefore, the following dates are

aspirational and are subject to change or cancellation:

- 25/03 "Good Friday Special"; Dublin - Arklow/Gorey & return
51/04 "Northern Enterprise"; Dublin - Belfast & return
22/05 Private Charter; Dublin - Wicklow & return
07/07 "Mid-Summer Steam"; Dublin - Mullingar & return
13/08 Dublin - Sligo
14/08 Sligo - Dublin

Tickets: Apart from the booking addresses on the Society's web site, tickets can usually be obtained from:

DUBLIN TRAINS - EBS, Drumcondra; EBS, Malahide; IE Travel Centre; Dublin, Pearse Station, Dublin.

BELFAST TRAINS - Belfast Welcome Centre; Carrickfergus Tourist Office; Bangor Tourist Information Centre; Lisburn Tourist Information Centre.

Suir Valley Railtour: The Railtour Office has asked that it be made known that preliminary bookings received so far for the "Suir Valley" railtour are now standing at 80% of train capacity - an unprecedented demand at this stage, and before the final booking form has been sent out.

It is recommended that all members who wish to travel fill in the Advance Booking Form as soon as possible, as only then will they receive the main booking form. If demand remains high it is unlikely that the main form will be made public on the website as has been the case in the last few years.

If the train books out, it will be strictly first come, first served, i.e. final bookings will be dealt with in order of receipt.

NOTE: For those members who have misplaced their advance booking form for the railtour, or who wish to advise others of it, a copy is available for download from the Society's website:

www.rpsi-online.org/rpsimay.htm

A reminder of the dates:

- 12/05 (Thu) Fringe; Dublin - Waterford
14/05 (Sat) Dublin - Rosslare - Waterford
15/05 (Sun) Waterford - Limerick - Waterford
16/05 (Mon) Waterford - Kildare - Dublin - Belfast

17/05 (Tue) Fringe; Waterford - Dublin
The usual coach trips in the Dublin area on Friday 13th May and in the Belfast area on Tuesday 17th May are can be booked

separately.

NIR Steam Crews: The opportunity was taken to make use of the Coiley Award train on 29th January to progress the official status of the current NIR steam personnel: Noel Playfair (Driver), Stephen Glass, (Fireman) and Gary Moore, (Fireman):

Although all of the NIR crews have been doing the job very successfully for many years, it is necessary to have their continuing competence verified for every type of traction at regular intervals.

At the request of NIR, we have employed Merlin Rail to carry out this task and also to progress the training of additional potential volunteers to the agreed industry standards.

The cost of the programme will be considerable, but if we wish to build a core team of professionally trained men it is unavoidable.

We have been fortunate to obtain the services of Peter Kirk who is to be found at the regulator of rather younger locomotives than No.186 on many steam charters in England. Peter travelled on the footplate and he was impressed by both locomotive and crew, and has given us a clean bill of health.

As usual, the operation involved a great deal of behind the scenes work by the Society, and thanks are due to all who assisted, notably Irwin Pryce who is responsible for organising training. Not always appreciated is the work by many NIR staff who also make things happen. Apart from the men on the day, Stephen Leaman, Brian Murphy and Richard Knox have all contributed to advancing the project. Our thanks to them also.

RPSI Steam Crews: Ashley Black, Denis Campbell, Eddie Creamer, Bob Edwards, Mervyn Fleming, Edward Friel, James Friel, Johnny Glendinning, Ben McDonald, Alan McRobert, David Orr, Evan Pameley, Francis Richards and John Wolsley all attended a Training and Assessment day at Whitehead on Saturday 22nd January.

Several were passed as shunters after practical and written theory tests under the supervision of Dermot Mackie.

A number are beginning on what will hopefully be a progression through the operating grades to Driver (Locomotive Representative for main line work).

Others were taking part in the now routine assessment of anyone engaged in safety critical work in the operating grades.

Thanks to all who took part in what was a long (and cold) day. It is not generally

appreciated how many put in the effort behind the scenes needed to keep things running. Pity the steam raisers and shunters!

Anyone wishing to join the legions of the tortured is very welcome. Contact Irwin Pryce via the Editorial Address below.

PTS: Certification of Society personnel for trackside safety, a requirement for all crew who work on locomotives and coaches on the main line, is ongoing in Belfast and Dublin.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.461: Work on the locomotive continues. The flanging block for the boiler plates have been made and the flanging job has started. 'Creep flanging' involves heating 16mm thick boiler plate to red heat and then belting it around special formers using large wooden mallets. It has to be tried before the full effects can be appreciated!

The full effects include being completely drained physically and emotionally. (The mallet takes some lifting never mind hitting anything with it.) Sweat glands work overtime - who wants to pay money for a sauna or health club?

Two small plates have now been formed - the big one (the new door plate) has still to be done.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead: Joe Galbraith, our carriage painter, is looking for posters and photographs, preferably in colour and of a reasonable size, that could be made available for display in suitable locations in the Mk2 carriages.

Members are asked to have a rummage through their collections for items depicting Irish railway scenes which they might care to donate to this cause.

Dublin: A major job of painting has been recently completed on 1335 and 1383 of the Dublin set, the results of which were viewed on the Santa trains. Thanks to all who helped out, including: Barry Carse, Joe Darling, Don Gallagher, Jim Hewson, Joe McKeown, Rory McNamee and David Seymour. Also thanks to Peter Emmett and Paddy O'Brien who helped with preparatory work, providing paint, and organising locations for the coaches.

ON-LINE

Website: Phil Lockett has pulled together a selection of the photographs, articles and movie clips from 2004 and put them in the Gallery section of the website.

The Irish Railway Bibliography has been updated with details of recently released books.

There is now a full description of many of the items available from the Society's Sales Team.

Bulletins: A number of members have missed copies of the Bulletin because of emails bouncing. Missing issues can be picked up by visiting:

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/rpsi>

Note: A Yahoo login and ID are required to view the archive. Just follow the on-screen instructions. Obtaining a Yahoo login would also make it easier to change your email address for Bulletins on-line should you need to in future.

MEMBERSHIP

Reminder: The start of February heralded the start of the new membership year and subscriptions are now due. If you received a renewal form with this News-Letter then, at the time of mailing, the Society has not received full payment for the year.

Kindly note that credit card payments are processed in pounds sterling so please use the sterling rates when renewing by card. And please don't forget a donation !!!

Life/Honorary members and members who pay by standing order, i.e. those who would not normally be making payments direct, are invited to send in a donation only. The membership renewal form can be used for that purpose.

WHITEHEAD

Washed Out: About a month ago, a washing machine mysteriously appeared outside the shop on the platform at Whitehead. At first it was thought that it had been dumped. However, on closer inspection it appeared to be in good order and had been placed carefully rather than just tossed off a vehicle. It was decided that it must have been left by a benefactor who was aware of our recent appeal for an operational second hand machine.

Anyway, it was duly brought inside the compound and placed in storage.

However, it remains a mystery. But thank you to whoever donated it - we would like to know who to thank personally.

Incidentally, that appeal resulted in 3 machines almost immediately, followed by this one. So no more at present, thanks very much!

Weekend Clean-Up: Over two weekends in February there was a full-scale tidy-up of the site. Many thanks to all who turned out in the cold.

Not that all the time was spent cleaning up - other useful jobs were tackled as well.

By Saturday 12th February a lot of the tidying had taken place and the Site crew were able to relocate a lot of materials for the Locomotive Department. They also managed to paint some of the steam pipes below the Mk2 coaches in the morning, while a good break in the showers in the afternoon allowed a squad to replace two sleepers on the track.

BELFAST MEETINGS

December: There was an excellent show in Belfast on 8th December, with a selection of colour cine films by Macha Film Studios. An enormous crowd of 140 attended.

The footage was shot between 1966 and 1972 - some with sound - and included Portadown to Portrush, ballast and special trains on the GNR, and some of the Society's early days at Whitehead plus a look the earliest 3-day tour to Athlone in 1969.

Our usual MC, Charles Friel, couldn't be present but he has now got competition from his sons - Edward, who handled the introductions and announcements, and James, who handled the projection. Well done!

As an aside, the history of Macha Film Studios is interesting. It was the combined filming of several members who had Standard 8 cine cameras - Charles Friel, Johnny Glendinning, John Friel and Sullivan Boomer. They were ably assisted by Will Glendinning, Mary Friel, Aldo Magliocco and Michael Henderson, who worked the (reel-to-reel) tape recorders, and with the occasional help of Norman Johnston, and of Barry Carse and Peter Cuffe in the Dublin area.

For the Society's earliest railtours, Macha was usually able to have three cameras chasing the train by road and still have one on board the train. With a lot of careful

planning, the three road teams were able to leapfrog the train (and each other!) to compile a comprehensive film record. Synchronising the pictures and the sounds later was something of a marathon - for a 20 minute film, it sometimes took about 10 hours' work to get the soundtrack right! The results, though, were impressive for their time and showed what could be done with basic equipment and a lot of patience.

Macha stopped making films in 1972 as everyone got more and more involved in the work at Whitehead and in the Society generally (their last big effort, the North Kerry, is still unfinished!).

January: On 12th January Derek Henderson was in fine form as he introduced his cine films.

The first was a fantastic compilation of steam operations between Portadown and Londonderry over the last few years of the GNR Derry Road. It included goods as well as passenger, the Omagh Markets branch, sundry specials for the loyal orders, an overflow goods stabling in Pomeroy and even a big shunt on the remains of the Irish North at Omagh. Although there was no sound track, Derek provided a well phrased and delivered commentary throughout, peppered with the identification of many an engineman. Brilliant stuff!

The second film was only around 25 years old and it featured the Dublin - Bray trips of the late 1970s and early 1980s with No.184, which seemed to need a third safety valve most of the time! This film had its own sound and was a heady reminder of how No.184 had been transformed in our care into such an energetic engine. Apart from the "First Great Train Robbery" film (now on DVD from the RPSI Sales Team), it is rare enough to see footage of this busy little engine.

The final film was back on the GNR, between Goragghwood and Warrenpoint, again in the last few years of the line. There was coverage of Goragghwood in splendid winter light, No.171 struggling to leave Newry with a monster goods train and, of course, the delights of Narrow Water and Warrenpoint, but also included was an 0-6-0 working to Newry canal basin for just one wagon of coal!

February: The long-lost Derry Road was well commemorated on 9th February with 4 films from Fred Cooper, and one TV programme in which Fred collaborated. There was hardly a dry eye in the hall after the final film, which documented the workings of the demolition train and the materials recovery trains. The latter were

hailed by 2-6-4T jeeps, locomotives that were rarely allowed on the line when open due to their weight!

The Future: As always, Charles would be glad to hear from anyone with ideas or willing to present a show next season.

SALES

New Additions: "Car Ferries Of The Irish Sea, 1954 - 2004" by Justin Merrigan, £16.

"Rails Around Belfast" by Andrew Crockett and Jack Patience, £14.

"The Steam Age In Ireland - A Collection Of Railway Art" by our own President, Lord O'Neill, £30.

"Bulleid And The Turf Burner" by Ernie Shepherd, £1 8.

"Father Browne's Trains and Railways" by E.E. O'Donnell, £14.

"Luas, Harcourt Street Memories" by Brian MacAongusa, £10.50.

"First Great Train Robbery" DVD, £10. It stars our own No.184 and No.186. The soundtrack can be in English, French, German or Spanish! Also included is the trailer which was produced for American cinemas. Don't panic - it can be played in UK DVD players.

To buy these books, or any of our sales items, please go to the website, print an order form and follow the instructions on it. Or write directly to: RPSI Sales, 103 Wynchurch Road, Belfast, BT6 OJJ.

Collectors' Corner: In addition, a large number of second hand Irish railway books are on sale. These are mainly from the collection of the late William Coates, and we are grateful to his brother Howard for presenting them to us for re-sale for the benefit of Society funds. Be warned - many are now collectors' items and are priced accordingly, so have plenty of money on hand.

If you are interested in acquiring a particular book, send your requirements to:

rpsibooks@hotmail.com

GENERAL

Memories of 1964: The point of publishing the "Memories of 1964, And Later" in the December News-Letter was to stimulate others into doing likewise. It is important to record such reminiscences before they fade from memory.

Your submissions are awaited!!

TV: On Friday 31st December, and probably repeated on various other dates, the Discovery Home & Leisure Channel showed the latest series of "Trainspotting", one episode of which features the RPSI.

There was a little piece about the RPSI on BBC1 NI on Monday 17th January in "Secrets of the Lough", Irwin Pryce discussing just what madness possessed him when he decided to follow trains rather than a normal(!) interest such as football.

Errata: Page 11 of the January issue of Steam Railway magazine had some snippets of Society news. Unfortunately, it was not very accurate, containing some errors and speculation:

1. "Two wooden coaches, most likely 238 and 341, are off to Embsay." So far only one (238) has gone. Also, the other coach is 241.
2. "Seven coaches will move to Dublin." This is speculation. The only decision that has so far been made is that GS&WR 1097 and GNR 9 are likely to go to Dublin.
3. "The LMS coaches replaced stock destroyed in the bombing of Londonderry in 1941." It was the blitz on Belfast which destroyed so much of the NCC rolling stock in 1941.

Family History: Member Ron Henry has published a history of his family's motor coach services in the Portstewart area:

www.skylineaviation.co.uk/buses/henry2.html

Soon there will be a ring-bound hard copy available, which will have additional photographs and specially formatted spread sheets. Price to be advised - all proceeds going to the No.461 Appeal.

AGM: With this circular there is notice of the 2005 AGM. There will be a vacancy in the Carriage & Wagon (South) post as Peter Emmett is retiring after a number of years of excellent work in the job. There is also a potential vacancy for Chairman in that Norman Foster has served the maximum 5 years in the post. Norman, however, can continue if he wishes if there are no other candidates nominated. Nominations are invited for all the posts, to be at the address below by 25th March 2005.

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