



September 2006

NEWS LETTER

HUNG(A)RY!

Congratulations!!: For second year the Dublin catering team has entered the International Steam Grand Prix And Dining Car Convention in Budapest. And, for the second time, the team have won First prize in the Catering category.

'IVAN'

The Beginning: Spurred on by one of Peter Scott's 'Work Party' emails, Ben, James and Mark (they of the 'youth set') set off on Monday 10th July to start work on GNR(I) brake van No.81.

Francis Richards (Northern Carriage and Wagon Officer) had declared most of the wood in the brake van rotten, especially the floor in the cabin, which he described as dangerous. He also said it would be an advantage to remove the dangerous floor before the brake van was moved from the very rear periphery of the site, so that the wood could continue to rot out at that far flung corner.

The floor was pulled up without much difficulty, as most of the planks were nearly earth anyway. Two young trees were carefully extracted and replanted elsewhere on the site. The two middle planks which held up the brake standard were left in place. Photographs were taken to show the construction of the floor. Basically two "L" shaped pieces run the length of the van along each side, the 8" wide x 2½" deep tongue and groove planking runs cross-wise and the ends are shaped to match the 'L' shaped side

pieces. Then everything was secured with liberal quantities of nails.

Subsequently, attention turned to the even more severely rotted roof, half of which had already been burned away. Once it was removed the condition of the roof girders could be ascertained. Perhaps surprisingly the parts of the girder which had retained a roof for longest had suffered most from corrosion - presumably the wood trapped moisture between itself and the steel girders. However, none of the metalwork encountered seemed beyond redemption, a needle gunning or wire brushing and then painting would be sufficient to bring it back to its former glory.

The vegetation around the van was beaten back sufficiently to allow access all the way round it, and sleepers were brought to provide a firm base to jack from.

It wasn't long before the van was extracted, and it now resides in front of the tarry where it is much more convenient to work on.

More: The squad expanded over the summer to include Chris, Edward and Michael, and various combinations of the team are usually at Whitehead at some stage each weekend to work on the newly named 'Ivan'.

Some generous funding has been secured to aid the overhaul, and work continues apace, i.e. undercoating of exposed metalwork, and emptying of the well where all manner of scrap metal (brake blocks, locomotive big end) has been discovered as the job progresses.

PhotoNews pages have been added to the website to give more information on the van itself and to illustrate some of the work

being carried out:

www.rpsi-online.org/photonews

WHITEHEAD

Sleeper: A major shunt took place on Saturday 22nd July, in which the Mk3 sleeping coach and the GNR brake van were extracted from the bowels of the 'in reserve' stock at the back of the site.

The Mk3 coach will be re-bogied with old GSR bogies before its final positioning as a dormitory coach.

Ongoing: Work continues on various jobs:

- Relining the small furnace in the workshop with new fire-bricks.
- On Saturday 2nd September there was a scrap drive for old batteries which are to be recycled. The site has had its second application of weed-killer.
- Work is almost complete on the fifth carriage siding which will be used to store the Mk3 sleeping coach and other long term stock. The plan is to temporarily slew a connection rather than go to the expense of installing a proper turnout.
- Undercoating of Mk2 brake 463 both inside and outside.
- Last minute jobs on 6-wheeler 62m before move to Downpatrick.
- Rebuilding of CDR coach 5 in carriage shed.
- Many questions have been asked about when the Mk2 diner/bar will be in service. A related question is - why are you not at Whitehead working on it?

Turntable: On Saturday 2nd September, away from Whitehead, but as part of Site team work, three of the Under-30 Brigade spent a weekend in Coleraine working on the Society's turntable there. Work included the replacement of 6 worse-for-wear decking timbers with new ones carried up on the August Flyer (was No.186 a mixed traffic engine that day?), removal of rust and repainting of the table's handrails.

OPERATIONS

Summer Steam: Sunday 23rd July saw the

first train rides of the season and very successful the event was too. No.186 was the engine in steam.

The second operation on Sunday 13th August (with No.3BG "Guinness") proved what a great success these days can be when organised and advertised correctly.

It was a very busy again on Sunday 10th September, it being the "European Architectural Heritage Day". No.3BG did the honours again.

This year's Train Rides were organised by an emerging youth element which is keen to show what can be done with a bit of enthusiasm.

Michael Davitt 100: The Centenary of Michael Davitt's funeral train of 1906 was commemorated on 15th & 16th July when the Society operated a special train, hauled by No.4, from Dublin Heuston to Foxford and Ballina.

Lightly loaded out of Dublin, the special picked up significant numbers of passengers west of Athlone, with over 250 on board from Claremorris to Foxford where many alighted.

A feature was the transport of a coffin (empty) from Claremorris to Foxford where it was transferred to a horse-drawn hearse for the short journey to the Davitt Museum at Straide. As an aside, coffins have appeared on Society trains before - "The First Great Train Robbery" and "The Irish RM".

A problem with No.4's grate at Tullamore, necessitating hasty repair, delayed the journey west somewhat, but most of the lateness was recovered by arrival at Ballina.

An attempt to turn No.4 at Claremorris en route proved unsuccessful, despite the turntable being tested in advance, and as a consequence the return to Dublin next day was bunker first throughout. However, timekeeping with the lightly loaded train, which carried mainly local people from Ballina and Foxford to Castlerea, was good.

Portrush Flyer: The first Flyer of the season operated on Saturday 29th August, with No.186 and a 6 coach train.

The train was fully booked which is unusual for the first run of the season. Around 35 passengers boarded at Ballymena -

another encouraging development.

Running was sedate, but more or less to time. Despite a return to traditional Flyer inclement weather, all on board appeared to have an enjoyable day.

Around 100 passengers took advantage of the afternoon "Dalriada" excursion from Portrush to Coleraine.

The second Flyer, on 19th August, took place in unexpectedly good weather. The highlights of the day were: a fully-booked train, excellent engine performance and, equally importantly, excellent enginemanagement from all on the footplate.

Unfortunately, operational reasons prevented the usual set of three trains in July and August. However, a late date was added - Sunday 24th September. This train was slightly different as it included the option to purchase a coach connection from Coleraine station to the Giant's Causeway. At the Giant's Causeway Railway it was arranged to have steam haulage, and the Causeway Hotel kindly agreed a 10% lunch discount for RPSI ticket holders.

Wicklow 400: Sunday 30th July proved to be another busy day for Dublin-based volunteers, when well over 800 passengers were carried on a number of trips to commemorate Wicklow 400.

Starting from Connolly, and picking up at Bray, No.4 with an eight coach train carried a capacity load to Arklow. Another well-filled train left for Wicklow, not without some delay, however. This was due to poor water pressure resulting in very slow watering of the locomotive.

At Wicklow, the Arklow passengers were replaced by another group who managed to fill the train for the trip to Bray. There the train reversed, and returned to Arklow where the first group reboarded, and returned to Bray and Dublin. In all a very successful day, with some delay which everybody accepted in good spirit.

There were some comments about the grey undercoat on the RPSI Cravens. It should be noted that these are very much still a work in progress and they have to be run to ensure sufficient seats for all our passengers.

Rosslare Harbour/ Fishguard 100: The weekend of 12th & 13th August was yet

another busy one for Dublin based volunteers, with the operation of a series of special trains to commemorate the opening of the line from Waterford to Rosslare.

The big disappointment was the non-appearance of No.4, which had to be substituted by diesel power due to boiler problems. Nevertheless, the number of passengers who decided not to travel was minimal, and a comfortably loaded train departed Dublin Connolly hauled by a pair of class 141 locomotives - almost veterans in their own right - with State Coach 351 and the RPSI Vintage Set.

At Rosslare Europort, where a celebratory lunch for VIPs was held in a local hotel, a plaque was unveiled to commemorate the occasion. 351 was placed on public display, while a well-filled train departed on the next leg of the journey - to Waterford, stopping at Campile where another plaque was unveiled, this time to commemorate the opening of the nearby Barrow Bridge. On arrival at Waterford, a switch of locomotives took place, another pair of class 141s being provided for the return to Rosslare.

On the Sunday a special operated from Rosslare Europort to Enniscorthy and return, originally intended to give local people a trip behind steam. Alas this was not to be, but in the event almost 200 passengers supported the event, ably hauled by the class 141 locomotives. On return to Rosslare 351 was attached to the set, and all returned to Dublin.

Overall the weekend was declared a success, greatly helped by the positive attitude of our passengers and, of course, by Irish Rail for providing motive power.

Charter: No.186 hauled a private train for the Royal Society of Statisticians from Botanic to Cultra and return on Wednesday 13th September. Over 200 delegates travelled.

County Comes To Town: At fairly short notice, the organisers of the County festival in Portadown arranged for trains between Lisburn and Portadown on Saturday 16th September. In fabulous weather, No.186 hauled a five coach train on three return journeys between the two towns. It was standing room only on some of the trains.

Halloween: Unfortunately, owing to the

lack of a locomotive stationed in Dublin at present, and the uncertainty of No.4 being retubed and tested in time, the Dublin Area Operations Committee have reluctantly decided to cancel the Halloween trains planned for Saturday 28th October.

However, the "Broomstick Belle" will be operating from Belfast Central to Whitehead on Sunday 29th October. There will be the usual, entertainers, goody bags and prizes for the spookiest costumes.

Christmas: The first train of the season will be to Coleraine and Castlerock on Saturday 2nd December, followed by 2nd, 3rd, 9th, 10th & 16th (Dublin) and 9th, 10th, 16th, 17th & 23rd (Belfast).

Please note that 4 of the 15 Dublin Santa trains are already fully booked, so please order tickets now if you intend to travel.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": The engine has spent all summer at Downpatrick and hauled the last train of the season there on 10th September.

No.4: The engine returned to Whitehead on Sunday 27th August - there was a large crowd of interested parties gathered to welcome her home safely.

Withdrawn for boiler repairs, work done so far includes: removal of superheater elements and most of the old boiler tubes, removal of dome, washout plugs and mud doors for boiler washout and inspection, the latter to take place as soon as this is complete. Wheels and motion have been pressure washed.

It is hoped that retubing will be carried out and tested in time for a return to Dublin in November.

No.131: The boiler, lying on a wagon outdoors, has been jacked to expel lying water.

No.186: Work has been carried out on the regulator to allow easier movement. Also some repairs to the sandboxes.

No.461: Work continues on various items in preparation for reassembly of moving parts, i.e. cranks, drain cocks, etc.

No.1: Initial preparations are being made for the O&K to be moving to the workshop.

No.5 "Drumboe": Construction of side tanks is mostly complete. Work is now concentrating on the smokebox door.

No.90: The boiler has been reassembled, tested, and the first overcoat of olive green applied. Steamings to allow valve setting took place in early September.

GENERAL

Sales: You can now order and pay for sales items online using Paypal, even if you do not have your own Paypal account.

Model Railway Exhibition: The Ulster Folk & Transport Museum will be holding a Model Railway Day on Saturday 18th November in the Irish Railway Gallery at Cultra.

From A Portrush Flyer Passenger: I would like to convey my thanks and appreciation for the hard work that all members carried out during the Portrush Flyer trip on 19th August 2006. They are all a great credit to the Society. I have a put a few words together just to show how appreciative my family, friends and myself are.

Not a shudder, not a jerk,
The Portrush Flyer gently pulls away.
That distinctive loud whistle blast
Signals the start of our steam day.
Settled and relaxed,
We take comfort in our seat
Enjoying the friendly company,
Particularly the staff that we meet.

The RPSI staff members
So dedicated and sincere,
Without whom the steam train
Would undoubtedly disappear.

We take this opportunity
To thank the staff who made our day
A great memory and experience,
And enjoyable in every way.

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