



December 2006

NEWS LETTER

AWARD

Another Win: The HRA has identified the Society as the recipient of its HRA Annual Award (Large Groups). The commendation reads:

"for investing in the Whitehead infrastructure to ensure the future of railway preservation in Ireland and for the provision of a steam locomotive and crew for the rebuilding of the NIR line between Bleach Green and Whitehead".

Congratulations to all involved.

OPERATIONS

Portrush Flyer: The summer season finished off with a cracker. No.186 hauling a full train to Portrush on Sunday 24th September.

The rain earlier in the day meant that loco performance suffered a bit on the way out, but running soon picked up and sectional times were maintained.

About 25 hardy souls braved the Giant's Causeway, and thanks are due to the Causeway Hotel for offering luncheon discounts to the participants.

It should be recorded that a Fire Brigade crew rolled up at Portrush station at 4pm, after some busybody reported that there was a fire on a train in the station (literally true, of course!).

The weather improved for the return journey and a sparkling run was enjoyed by all.

Broomstick Belle: Two trains operated from Belfast Central to Whitehead on Sunday 29th October. The first train was about two thirds full, and the second more or less full.

As always, there was a great turn-out of

younger passengers in a range of scary costumes (along with a few mums and dads too), not to mention the RPSI footplate crews who always look scary!

The weather stayed dry which allowed visitors to mingle on the platform or visit the shop at Whitehead. It also meant that the prize-giving for the best costumes could be carried out in a relaxed way.

No.186 did the honours on the day - it had been hoped that No.4 would be in traffic but the hydraulic boiler test had yet to be carried out.

Delighted visitors from the second train were also treated to the sight of a grinning Peter Scott noisily driving No.90 up and down the loop track as part of the testing of the locomotive which was then in the later stages of overhaul. No.90 also did a bit of shunting with Hunslet 102, which dwarfed the diminutive 0-6-0.

Private Charter: Despite it being a very wet and miserable night on 15th November a charter to Cultra for clients Invest NI ran as planned with No.186 and 5 coaches.

No.4 Transfer: Following boiler repairs, No.4 is scheduled to return light engine (and bunk first) to Dublin on Sunday 26th November.

Santa (Dublin): The trains, which were sold out since October, run on 2nd, 3rd, 9th, 10th & 16th December.

Santa (North-West): Trains from Ballymena and Coleraine, connected by the "Coleraine Shopper" from Belfast, run on Saturday 2nd December.

Santa (Belfast): The trains to Whitehead run on 9th, 10th, 16th, 17th & 23rd December.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead: Work on carriages has virtually

ceased due to work on external projects.

Dublin (Wooden): 88 - New work tops, sink and fridge have been fitted. A new water heater has also been commissioned.

1142 - This coach is currently undergoing major overhaul and restoration. Quite a lot of work has been completed and the ends have been replaced. Undercoating at the moment.

1335 - Withdrawn, awaiting major overhaul.

1383 - Some of the damaged seat cushions have been recovered and replaced.

1419 - Some final work to be carried out before it can run for Santas. In the event that it is not available 1529 is in reserve.

1463 - New upholstery has been ordered as the original had suffered considerably. This is due to be completed for the Santa runs.

1916, 1949, 2421 - In running order for Christmas. A new filtration system has been fitted in 2421 to eliminate breakdowns in hot water while in operation.

Dublin (Cravens): 1529 - This coach is held in reserve for Christmas. Following completion of 1541 work will commence to convert to a bar car.

1539 - This will be the third coach to receive attention and will be running for Christmas.

1541 - This carriage is in the ramps. The body work has been filled, sanded and undercoated. The top half and the two ends are now completed in gloss. The section below the windows remains to be finished in two coats of gloss. After Christmas attention will be given to the vestibules and toilets.

'Ivan': Work is continuing at Whitehead on the restoration of GNR(I) brake van No.81. This project is being wholly implemented by the "youth team" who are learning restoration skills that will be invaluable in ensuring that the RPSI continues into the next generation.

Following an email request to members for a stove for the brake van, one has been identified and hopefully this will yield patterns to copy when the time comes.

The Belfast end veranda metalwork is largely cleaned and given its first coat of paint.

Emptying the ballast tanks produced around 100 brake blocks. The tanks are in very good condition and can now be cleaned and painted. It is not intended to refill them completely as the adhesion force for braking heavy trains is not required.

In early November the van was moved to the workshop and was lifted off its wheels for overhaul of wheelsets, bearings, suspension

and brake gear. Replacement springs will be required. One damaged bearing journal has already been trued up in wheel lathe.

CDR: Meanwhile, in the carriage shed, County Donegal carriage 5 has been re-roofed.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1: The Orenstein and Koppel is now in the workshop for dismantling and overhaul on behalf of the Downpatrick & County Down Railway.

No.3BG "Guinness": Being prepared for annual boiler inspection.

No.4: Work carried out includes new tubes, boiler hydraulic test and steam test, plus fitting the superheater elements and building the brick arch in the firebox. It was planned to have the locomotive available for Halloween, and then on a private charter train to Cultra on 15th November, but neither date was possible. Returned to Dublin in late November.

No.5 "Drumboe": Undergoing partial refurbishment for County Donegal Railway Restoration Ltd. New tanks well advanced, also renewal of chimney, smokebox door, valve gear and other items. All work is being done to a standard suitable for eventual restoration to working order. Forging of valve gear return cranks is completed and machining is proceeding.

No.90: Undergoing refurbishment and painting for Downpatrick Railway. Following adjustments to the valve gear, now performing in a highly satisfactory manner. Locomotive was steamed and in operation for DCDR familiarisation in late November.

No.186: Slight leak from valve glands has been attended to.

No.461: Preparation of new copper plates for repair of firebox. Overhaul of big ends progressing, locomotive wheeled (following completion of wheelset and axlebox overhaul) and coupling rods fitted, firebox plates set up for welding in new sections, new door plate section set up for welding.

BELFAST MEETINGS

So Far: The first meeting of the season was held on Wednesday 11th October in St. Jude's Hall, Belfast. Liam Mooney and Tony Price very kindly travelled from Dublin to present cine films from the Irish Railway Record Society archives. What they showed

included: beet trains between West Cork and Mallow in the 1950s, footplate views on the Waterford - Mallow line in its last year, Clones, Cavan, Dungannon and the GNR Antrim branch in the 1950s, the Loughrea branch in its last days, the Society's "Burma Road" tour from Claremorris to Collooney - and more.

The second meeting in November was a look at the Letterkenny & Burtonport Extension Railway, presented by Frank Sweeney. Not so much a railway presentation as a social history of the area of North-West Donegal where the railway took a starring role. The talk nevertheless had a wealth of fascinating detail with much of interest to the railway historian.

WHITEHEAD

Shunts: Various movements have taken place recently:

- A flat wagon was retrieved from the rear of the site to be loaded with salvaged steel plate plus container for use as wood-working store.
- After some work in October by the Site Squad the fourth carriage siding was finally slewed and joined onto the previously constructed fifth road. It was with some trepidation that the Mk3 sleeping coach, on temporary bogies, was towed over the section by the JCB but all worked so well that the Carlow diesel was used to move coach 114 over the track and place her behind the sleeping coach. This has freed up some space at the front of the site which should make life a lot easier for Santa operations.
- On Sunday 5th November, as part of its post-overhaul testing, No.90 was in steam to move: (1) No.461 and 6-wheel coach 62M from the workshop; (2) O&K No.1, No.461 and GNR brake van 81 into the workshop; (3) Hunslet 102 and Mk2 coach 923 to the rear of the sheds.

Water: In mid-November a trench was dug for renewal of the water pipe from the tower to the column in the yard and a new section of pipe has been installed.

HUNG(A)RY

Update: More information on the 6th International Steam Grand Prix And 2nd Dining Car Convention held in Budapest on 16th & 17th September 2006.

The members of the Dublin Catering and Loco crews who competed in Budapest this year arrived in Ferihegy Airport laden with smoked salmon and black and white pudding and travelled to their hostel by minibus. The experienced members of the crew, being aware of Hungarian driving standards, opted to belt up tightly in the rear seats, leaving Fergus McDonnell as co-pilot with the enthusiastic driver.

The next morning, while awaiting the arrival of the technical team from Liquid Gold Kft to install the cooler for the draught Guinness, it was off to the stores in the roundhouse where despite the language difference all of the pots, pans, plates, glasses, tablecloths, etc. were organised.

A lengthy shopping expedition was hampered by a lack of language and the strange layout of Hungarian supermarkets. The rest of Friday afternoon and early evening was spent preparing all the ingredients for Saturday morning.

The following morning began at 06:00 for the mammoth task of food and carriage preparation in the knowledge that the judging panel would arrive shortly after 11:00. It was all hands on deck with the loco crew seconded to catering. David Carse was seen to peel 3 sacks of potatoes while looking enviously out the window at a circle of steam locos, and Chas Meredith found a new career as a kitchen porter. At 10:30 Tony O'Shaughnessy was called to attend the opening ceremonies still wearing his kitchen apron. And at 11:15 the judging panel was observed in the Serbian coach next door and so the pressure was really on. Quick changes all round and the crew looked resplendent in their white shirts, bow ties and black aprons.

The judging panel was served each item on our menu. The guys were very pleased to accept the first place award in the Category Most Typical National Food". The judges departed and the visitors arrived. A blur ensued until 15:00 when the kitchen was declared closed and it was then an Irish Bar only.

At 17:00 the clearing up and preparations for Sunday began and finally at 20:00 it was off to the Grand Party in the roundhouse - food and beer were provided. All went well until there were technical problems with the draught so with the team's extensive experience they were able to assist and Fergus McDonnell took over the role of barman. This was quite an asset for the Irish crew considering the queue for a pint.

Sunday morning began bright and early, and we visitors were fed from midday. A total of 10,000 came to the museum over the two days and many came to see the RPSI team, have a pint of Guinness, a whiskey, or an Irish Coffee. At 17:00 it was time to clear the tables, wash up and restore the carriage to the condition in which it was received. All of the catering equipment was returned and the rubbish emptied.

GENERAL

Sales: Some ideal Christmas presents: Christmas Cards from paintings by Debra Wenlock. Set of 6 comprising 2 each of these RPSI scenes - £7.50.

Irish Rail Archive Volume 7 - Loco Hauled Farewell Markle Associates. 80 minute DVD - £18.95.

Railways in Ireland Part One by Martin Bairstow. Paperback, 24 x 18 cm, 8 colour and 173 b&w photos, 122 pages - £13.95. Earl of Desmond Railtour by Brian Stinson. 45 minute DVD - £12.

Steam Sounds by the Slaney by Brian Stinson. 60 minute CD of No.171 "Sieve Gullion" - £10.

CIÉ 1958 to 1962 by Jack Patience. Paperback, 20 x 24 cm, 60 b&w photos, 64 pages - £8.99.

The Swilly And The Wee Donegal by Anthony Burges. Paperback, 21 x 24 cm, 64 b&w photos, 64 pages - £8.99.

Fun Is Our Business - the Story of Barry's Amusements by James Fairley. Hardback, 30 x 20 cm, 192 b&w photos, 271 pages, 22 drawings - £16.99.

Irish Railway Review No.5 Markle Associates. 71 minute DVD - £16.95.

Irish Railway Review No.6 Markle Associates. 82 minute DVD - £18.95.

Website: The Society's website has been placed ninth in the Heritage Railway Association Websites Competition 2006. See the results at:

www.heritagerailways.com/rakomps/webcomp.html

Well done to the website team - some hints there for next year!

A Volunteer's View: I have been a member of the RPSI for well over 35 years. My only role was to travel on the railtours, more so in the beginning. Being an Emergency Nurse by profession, I never thought of volunteering my services to work at the Whitehead site.

After all, what did I know about working in a railway environment?

Boy was I wrong!! I have now been working at the site on Saturdays for six months and have got hooked.

This is an appeal to all those members who think that they wouldn't have talents to offer. To you all, I would say come down any Saturday and ask for Dermot. I have made new friends, acquired new skills, and had great craic. Dermot or any of the gang will make you feel very welcome and find something within your own capabilities to do. No two Saturdays are ever the same, and there is a wide variety of jobs to tempt you. And you never know. You may enjoy it.

*John Williams
Lisburn*

A Plea: It is now the season for buying Christmas cards and renewing your membership for the coming year.

However, please note that it is extremely inconvenient to receive a single cheque, or a number of cheques to the one address, for different services, e.g. any combination of subscription, sales items, tickets, etc.

As you can appreciate, those processing the different payments are volunteers and work from their own homes. Because of this lack of a central office, and the existence of individual accounting codes for each payment category, it becomes extremely tedious and time consuming to allocate separate amounts from a single cheque. It is for that reason that we request members not to make payments to the Society in such a fashion, but to send cheques for each payment to the correct addresses. Even separate cheques to the same address can cause problems if one needs to be forwarded to another officer of the Society.

AGM: Looking forward to next year, it appears we will have a vacancy for the post of Treasurer. So, if anyone is interested we would be pleased to hear from them.

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