



March 2007

# NEWS LETTER

## AGM

**Notice:** The AGM notice is included with this circular.

Nominations have been received for all posts. However, any adult member can still be nominated for any post but nominations must be received by 31<sup>st</sup> March.

For a nomination form please contact the postal or email address at the bottom of the News-Letter.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.3BG "Guinness":** Repairs to its firebox at the washout door were carried out as a preparation for steam testing.

**No.4:** Before returning to Dublin the locomotive was fitted with a hydrant connection to make watering from a stand-pipe that bit easier.

**No.186:** Cleaned out, boiler drained and washed out for annual inspection.

**No.461:** New plates fitted to the outer firebox and drilled for riveting. Dressing up of big end journals is also progressing. Adjustment of new firebox outer side plates following satisfactory testing of welded repairs. Next move is to rivet the sides to the boiler back plate and throat plate. Preparation for riveting new outer

firebox sides. Making flanging block for inner firebox door plate.

**No.1 (DCDR Contract):** In December the locomotive was lifted onto stands and her wheels and axleboxes queued for the wheel lathe. Removal of worn crank pins now complete, new pins under way.

**No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL Contract):** Freed up seized parts. Survey for overhaul requirements (ongoing). Forged new valve rod. The locomotive has been lifted from its wheels and placed on temporary standard gauge works bogies. Springs and brake gear were disconnected. All wheels were left on the transporter wagon where they were pressure cleaned. Coupling rods and axleboxes dismantled. Cab and tanks lifted off. Wheel lathe being set up to handle 3ft gauge wheelsets. Trailing wheelset taken into workshop for skimming tyres and journals.

**No.90 (DCDR Contract):** Drain cock rearranged and damper levers fitted. A new regulator made, with reduced ports to avoid the locomotive giving zero response to an initial opening of the regulator, then suddenly taking off. Steam test followed fitting. Nearly ready for traffic.

**Wanted:** The Locomotive Department is seeking cast iron scrap for the foundry at Whitehead.

Old rain water gutters and downpipes, for example, plus scrap manhole covers and gratings - anything made of cast iron, preferably delivered to Whitehead.

## OPERATIONS

**Transfer:** Following the fitting of new tubes and other minor jobs, No.4 moved from Whitehead to Dublin on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> November.

**Santa Special (Coleraine):** The Christmas season kicked off with the departure of the "Coleraine Shopper" from Belfast Central on the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> December. The train wasn't filled as two carriages had been locked off to pick up passengers at Ballymena, where the train became a "Santa Special". Passengers could return from Coleraine by the next service train or opt to wait for the return steam special. All the allocated tickets were sold.

At Coleraine, No.186 and 6 coach train operated 2 packed trains to Castlerock in beautiful winter sunshine. The Coleraine market also appears to be very buoyant.

**Charter:** Another successful charter was operated to Cultra on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December. The client was SHS and, as there were less than 100 passengers, it was only a three coach train.

This is a tried and tested formula whereby the UFTM contacts the Society on behalf of one of their clients who is holding a conference/dinner in the Rail Gallery. The Society provides a train which runs ECS from Whitehead. It picks up its passengers where requested - usually Belfast Central but can be Lisburn, Great Victoria Street or Botanic. The train sets down at Cultra and runs empty to Bangor. Depending on whether the client wishes a return journey or not, the

train will either return direct to Whitehead or stable at Bangor until the agreed return time, picking up again at Cultra.

**Santa Special (Dublin):** Loading of the selection boxes, bar supplies, and catering supplies commenced at 06:45 each morning. After breakfast, final checks are carried out and the train departs Connolly to run to Pearse.

All the trains ran more or less to plan with the exception of the return 10:20 on the first Sunday when Dart services were disrupted due to fallen trees south of Pearse. As a result the train did not run around at Grand Canal Dock but instead was put in the loop in Pearse. It subsequently departed from the Down platform, requiring all passengers to change via the underpass.

On the second weekend, Park Royal carriage 1419 had to be removed from the set for technical reasons, and Irish Rail must be thanked for the loan of Craven 1510 at short notice. All the decorations and seat numberings were transferred by the carriage crew who arrived at 06:30 on Saturday morning to ensure that all our coaches were bright and cheerful for the day's passengers. 400 tickets (the maximum capacity) were sold for each train.

**Santa Special (Belfast):** The first weekend of the Belfast season was extremely busy for the operating crews and for the NIR footplate crew, with three consecutive days of running.

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December was the first of the Santa trains and it was made up to 6 coaches again following the previous night's charter.

Sundays at Christmas now traditionally have an evening overflow train which runs to Carrickfergus, and this can be the

most atmospheric of the Christmas operations as it runs entirely in darkness, especially if the rain holds off which it did this time - just about! The importance of regular watering was brought home to operating crews when No.186 hit an errant shopping trolley at Clipperstown on the return empty train to Whitehead on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December. An injector feed pipe between engine and tender was severed and the tender began to slowly drain. The train was worked back to base using the other injector. The consolation is that the trolley came off worse.

**Easter:** The next trains are a "Sea Breeze" 7<sup>th</sup> April) and "Easter Bunny" (9<sup>th</sup> April).

**Garavogue:** The advance booking form for the May 2007 railtour is now available from the website. So if you need a replacement or know of prospective passengers please print a copy or two and circulate.

## WHITEHEAD

**Site Purchase:** See press release for details.

**Tarry:** New guttering and downpipes fitted. Repairs to ceiling, walls and toilet area.

**Trained:** On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, another successful shunting school was held at Whitehead. Following a morning's training a happy group of members where passed out as shunters, the first step on the road to footplate glory.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**13<sup>th</sup> December:** Derek Young's book "The UTA In Colour" was launched, and what a treat! To a capacity crowd, Derek presented a selection of slides - some from the book and others which narrowly missed being included. Some even had buses as

the subject. No matter if you despised the UTA, treasured it, were totally indifferent, or just want to see what all the fuss was about, this book is a must.

**12<sup>th</sup> January:** In the first half, Sullivan Boomer showed a series of slides of the Bleach Green to Whitehead relay. He included the closure and lifting of the old line and the substantial foundation work needed to prepare for the new track. Harvey featured, of course, but there was much of interest in the various phases of the work and the equipment used by the contractors.

Peter Scott kicked off his section with a few comments on his recent MBE award, saying that he was very pleased to receive it and was glad that the railway preservation movement in Ireland was being publicly recognised. He said it was very much a team effort and thanks were also due to all members for their support of the Society whether it be by simply paying, travelling occasionally or helping out either at Whitehead, on the trains or behind the scenes. Peter finished by saying that the team, no matter how successful, always had room to grow.

The evening ended with a video from Jeff Spencer showing some of the work being carried out in the workshop over recent years. It included some spectacular shots of the big hammer in operation, casting brass and iron, and re-wheeling engines.

**14<sup>th</sup> February:** A very well-attended event -there was a packed house of 170, including many folk not seen before. Desmond Coakham brought looked back to the last days of the County Down with a selection of pictures, mostly from his own camera. Des came from Dublin to work in Belfast in 1943 and lived in

Bangor. His intimate knowledge of the system shone through in an information-packed and sometimes mischievous commentary, delivered almost entirely without notes. In the first half of the night, Des gave a tour of the system and, in the second half, presented a detailed account of the system's locomotives as he knew them and a selection of carriages and rolling stock. Given Des's prodigious knowledge of Irish rolling stock, the latter was quite curtailed but none the less entertaining for that.

## MEMBERSHIP

**Renewal:** With the membership subscriptions for 2007 now due, please note the following:

- Ensure the form is filled in fully to avoid any confusion over names, addresses, etc.
- Clearly indicate on the form the membership category for which you are paying.
- Senior members are requested to notify us that they have reached the appropriate age, **especially** if they intend to keep paying the full rate. As VAT is charged on the membership amount (in the UK) but not on donations, the Society does not wish to be subsidising the government any more than absolutely necessary.
- Life members - as we don't have annual correspondence from you as is usual for other membership categories, please ensure that your address and/or email details are up to date. The renewal form can be used for this, plus it allows you to send in a donation too.
- The preferred method of manual payment is by cheque in pounds sterling or euros. While credit card payments are acceptable, they are still processed on hand-written dockets and are a bit of an overhead to administer.
- All credit card payments will be processed in pounds sterling so, depending on the conversion rate, the amount charged for membership and donation rates in euros will be approximate.
- A £1 handling charge is levied on credit card payments.
- If you need to make changes to your standing order payment then please send the details direct to your own bank. The Society only needs to be informed of standing orders being set up for the first time.
- Don't include payment for anything other than membership and/or donations.
- If you are a UK member and don't have a Gift Aid in place you will receive a form with your membership card. Please return this as it can increase the value of your payments by 28%. If you do not wish to Gift Aid, or can't for some reason, please let us know so as to prevent further requests.
- For dispatch of your membership card, a small addressed envelope (with UK stamp if possible) would be appreciated.
- Membership, Gift Aid and standing order forms can be obtained from the Society's website at: [www.rpsi-online.org/membership/](http://www.rpsi-online.org/membership/)
- Finally, a donation is always welcome.

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