

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



June 2007

NEWS LETTER

OPERATIONS

Sea Breeze: Due to a delay in arranging the annual carriage inspection, the Wexford and Rosslare operation on 7th April had to be cancelled.

Easter Eggspress: Two full trains were operated by No.186 on Easter Monday, 9th April.

Despite a late start from Whitehead in the morning, everything was on time for the public departures from Belfast Central at 11am and 1pm. The weather threatened rain early in the morning, but in the event the day kept dry throughout.

Everybody seemed pleased with their selection of Easter eggs and with the on-board entertainers.

A big well done to all the volunteers who made the effort to help out.

Europe Day: This operation on Wednesday 9th May, essentially a carriage positioning run for the railtour, was hauled to Dublin by NIR GM 113 as No.186 was not ready for the scheduled departure time.

It appears that a new batch of coal was to blame and sufficient steam could not be raised in time. It seems the locomotive itself was blameless.

The day's proceedings carried on as planned and everybody got to Dublin despite the disappointing lack of steam.

Garavogue: Problems with securing permission for No.4 to cross the Shannon bridge meant that the tour had to operate with diesel beyond Mullingar to Sligo. In order to maximise steam mileage Irish Rail agreed to allow No.4 to operate on the Friday to Limerick Junction.

The tour and fringe events ran from 11th until 15th May.

Friday: The tour got off to an excellent start, running to time with No.4 hauling the RPSI

Mk2 set. The train was at Limerick Junction before the diesel option was established. A bit of GM juggling(!) eventually saw 184+189 couple up to the train for the onward trip to Limerick, and back to Dublin via Nenagh.

Saturday/Sunday: No.4 arrived safely in Mullingar on Saturday morning having hauled the Dublin heritage set, complete with state saloon 351 hosting passengers with their own waiter service.

GMs 152+190 did the honours onward to Sligo. The train was stabled on the Sligo Quays overnight. On Sunday, there was a long stop-over at Dromod to allow a visit to the Cavan & Leitrim museum. No.4 took up the reins again at Mullingar.

Monday: No.4 and the Mk2 set departed on time from Dublin Connolly and a very lacklustre run was recorded as far as Malahide. The train was due to be looped at Mosney to allow the following Enterprise to overtake but as some time had been gained by that point the signals were cleared to Drogheda. From there it was definitely expected that the tour train would be held for the Enterprise, but after a quick 'splash and dash' it was away, now 30 minutes ahead of schedule.

A concerted effort was made to ensure the service train was not delayed and a stirring climb of Kellystown Bank was followed by a steady descent into Dundalk.

The train pulled into the loop at Dundalk just ahead of the Enterprise which arrived dead on time 5 minutes later. Water was taken from a hydrant in the railcar yard and as soon as the Enterprise cleared ahead the tour train followed, now about 40 minutes early.

Constant good climbing and steady running, with another quick stop at Portadown and water at Lisburn, and Belfast Central was reached an hour ahead of schedule. A similarly quick turn-around and the hour gap was maintained for arrival at Whitehead.

There, No.90 was in steam and demonstrated the quality of its overhaul by shunting the 5

coach train to the delight of tour participants.

Tuesday: The tour wound down with a coach tour to the preserved broad gauge line at Downpatrick, followed by an afternoon visit to the Belfast & Co. Down Miniature Railway Society at Drumawhey Junction.

Charter (1): The Society's Mk2 coaches again proved themselves to be good runners and very popular with the enthusiast market, having been to Westport and back with the Modern Railway Society of Ireland's excellent Mayo Explorer tour on Saturday 19th May.

NIR GM 111 hauled the train between Whitehead and Dublin Connolly on both legs of the tour. It was Irish Rail 146+149 on the Dublin - Westport - Athlone portion, before 144+147 took over from Athlone to Dublin.

Running was brisk throughout apart from north of the border where the 45 mph restriction on Society locomotives and rolling stock turned a 20 minute early departure from Dublin into a 5 minute late arrival in Belfast.

The NIR locomotive performed very well despite the speed restriction north of the border, showing there is plenty of life left in the class. Likewise, the Irish Rail GMs put in a great performance - remember, these locomotives are around 45 years old.

Whitehead "Who Are We?": The Atlantic Coast Express/Castlerock Luncheon Special proposed for 27th May was cancelled - due to a request from NIR. However, it was still a busy day at Whitehead as No.186 was dispatched light engine to Dublin.

In addition, there was a themed train rides event when all the people of Whitehead were invited to visit the site to get to know what is in their own back yard.

Bray Shuttle: The first operation of the Dublin season was the shuttle trains to Bray with No.186 on 2nd June.

Charter (2): Fisherwick Presbyterian Church chartered a train to operate a Sunday School train to Portrush on Saturday 9th June.

Steam & Jazz: Tickets for the trains on Fridays 15th, 22nd and 29th June are now available from the Tourist Information Centres, cost £20. No.4 and No.186 will both get a crack at these trains - so why not book for two or more?

Steam Enterprise: No.186 will be returning to Whitehead on 17th June in a swap with No.4. This will be a Belfast-based operation and the opportunity to travel is open to all. Tickets (Adult £32, Concession £26) are on sale from the usual NI outlets.

The Midlander: On Saturday 23rd June, No.4 will be operating from Dublin to Mullingar, with a local trip from Mullingar to Enfield. Extra booking forms are available from the website.

Sea Breeze: The popular DSER excursion to

Wexford and Rosslare returns on Sundays 8th and 29th July, with ticket options from Dublin and Wexford.

Whitehead Excursion 100: This will be an Edwardian themed train rides event on Saturday 28th July at Whitehead to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Excursion Station, now the Society's premises. The local theatre group will be holding an Edwardian cricket match and hosting a refreshments tent.

Whitehead Community Festival: Another train rides event in conjunction with Whitehead Community Festival on Saturday 4th August.

Portrush Flyer: At the time of writing, there are a number of issues which may affect the operation of Portrush trains this year. The new NIR timetable is expected to have extra trains to Ballymena, reducing the number of paths available for specials. Also, permanent way slacks north of Ballymena may mean an easing of scheduled speeds, thus further decreasing available paths. Hence, dates and times of Portrush Flyer trains have not yet been confirmed.

WHITEHEAD

Preparations: The Site Team, gearing up for the start of the operating season, cleared dirt from most of the turnouts on the site and ballast from the point rods thus freeing them up. They were oiled and are now operating more freely.

Continuing: Track and point repairs and maintenance have been a focus of the activities at Whitehead of late, particularly coming up to the operating season.

There is a plan to bring in several track panels from Greenisland which will need to be stored on site.

In addition, the Summer Tuesday night sessions started in May - all help would be appreciated.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead: Work continues in the carriage shed:

547: The electrics are in progress. Batteries and a battery charger are connected for testing purposes and will shortly be installed in the new battery box. Commissioning of brake equipment for vehicle acceptance procedure continues. The bar counter has been fitted and the top surface attached. The floor surface was being applied in mid-May.

Bogies: A number of B4 bogies have been obtained courtesy of NIR, allowing an overhaul float to be created. In March one of the bogies, for generator van 463, was moved into the

workshop for dismantling. Cleaning has commenced in preparation for refurbishment.

Dublin: The status of the heritage set is:

1383, 1916, 2421: In running order.

88: Repairs to the roof have necessitated the removal of a section of the ceiling. This has now been treated and following a drying out period the section was replaced. The ceiling in this carriage was painted a beige colour for a film last year so we will use the opportunity to return it to its original white.

1419: Presently awaiting a change of the wheel sets.

1463: New upholstery has been fitted.

1949: The plastic gangway curtains have been replaced with leather salvaged from the Cravens.

351: The state coach is once again under cover. Change of axle oil and pads carried out. Ran to Sligo on the annual railtour.

1142: Work continues on the gloss painting. New laminated glass has been fitted throughout with the exception of the droplights.

1335: Withdrawn, awaiting major overhaul.

Work is also progressing on the recently acquired Cravens:

1522: Moved to Mullingar for overhaul.

1529: This coach is held in reserve.

1539: This will be the third Craven to receive attention. It is currently in the set awaiting inspection.

1541: This carriage was removed from the ramps and is now outdoors. Some problems have been encountered with the panel riveting and gap filling between the steel ribs. Progress is determined by available manpower and the weather.

'Ivan' Update: The wells in GNR brake van 81 are still not completely empty. A recent 3 hour digging session saw another big end emerging, plus the removal of 15 brake blocks and 4 barrow loads of general swarf and dust.

The painting of the van body in grey continues. The outside frames are fully scaled and have received at least one undercoat.

The Larne-end buffers have been reinstated and painted.

Some work has been carried out on tempering of the springs.

In April the team restoring the van received a visit from representatives of the Northern Ireland Museums Council who have grant-aided the project.

A letter from Chris Bailey (NIMC Director) says: "... thanks for your hospitality and the grand tour the week before last. Really impressed both with the progress of the restoration of the Guard's Van and with the enthusiasm and

depth of knowledge shown by the guys who are working on it - a grand job, as they say. [We hope to include] photographs showing the team and the progress of the rebuild in our publications (Annual report, etc.)."

BELFAST MEETINGS

14th March: An audience of 130 was in attendance for the last meeting of the Belfast season.

Fred Cooper gave another of his Irish Steam Cinema nights with films of the Lough Gill tour of 1987 and the Clew Bay of 1986 with a day at the Model Engineers at Cultra in between. After the break there was a miscellany of material from the early 1950s. Starting at Ballymoney, there was some footage from York Road including a BCDR tank leaving for Carrickfergus, followed by a Donaghadee train at Comber and No.6 shunting Queen's Quay. There was stuff on the DNGR, Cavan and Leitrim, Tralee and Dingle, West Clare, Donegal, Lough Swilly and Bord na Mona. Back on the broad gauge, there were visits to Hillsborough, Banbridge, Armagh, Clones and Ballyhaise, plus a sequence on the Bundoran Express and much else on the Irish North, as well as plenty of Fintona Horse tram. There was some remarkable footage of the Listowel and Ballyunion and Fr Doherty's wonderful trip to Burtonport. The show finished with Dublin and Blessington and the Drumm battery trains.

At the end of the night, Johnny Glendinning made a little speech announcing that Fred was to be made an Honorary Life Member and presented him with a framed certificate.

Another season over and once again thanks are due to Charles Friel for another excellent series of shows. The first show of the autumn has already been finalised - see you on 10th October! In the meantime, contact Charles if you have any ideas for the other shows.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": Still at Downpatrick pending arrangements for No.90's movement there.

No.186: After Easter work concentrated on the renewal of flue tubes to address leakage experienced at the firebox end of tubes during recent operations. New tubes fitted and boiler hydraulic tested.

No.461: The new section of the firebox tubeplate flanged. Tube plate and inner firebox prepared for welding. Big end journal being overhauled.

Carlów Diesel: Fuel pump and injectors fitted

following calibration.

No.1 Loading Shovel: Repaired fuel pump fitted.

No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL Contract): In March the frames were blast cleaned, before the locomotive was shunted into workshop for fitting new tanks, etc. Driving wheels and pony wheels re-profiled. Straightening of bent running plate.

By mid-April, wheel turning and frame repairs saw the completion of Interreg funded refurbishment. The locomotive is to be made capable of safe lifting and transportable for display purposes.

In early May, the locomotive was being re-assembled with the new and refurbished components for display in Donegal later in the month. Other refurbishment includes the new smokebox door, chimney and side tanks - complete with new name plates. Repair and renewal of suspension, valve gear, coupling rods, etc., is also progressing but not yet ready for fitting to the locomotive.

To celebrate the restoration of the locomotive, one of the famous CDR steam engines, and its centenary this year, a special event was organised at the Railway Heritage Centre in Donegal Town. On Saturday 19th May No.5 was placed on its repaired driving wheels, pony truck and bogie and then lifted onto the low loader.

Now safely installed in Donegal Town, arrangements are being made for the locomotive to return to Whitehead in due course for further work.

No.90 (DCRD Contract): New firebars fitted. The locomotive was lit up on a number of occasions, including the Monday of the May railtour and the Whitehead Open Day on 27th May.

Contracts: Vintage bus for the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum - manufacture of wheel centres.

WEBSITE

Bibliography: A major overhaul has been carried out on the Irish Railway Bibliography on the website, and it has been brought right up to date. The more recent titles, and some vintage gems, from the Bibliography are available from the RPSI Online Shop and Sales List. Hopefully, this service will be found to be useful. Full details, in a similar format, of any omissions will be gratefully received.

Posters: To assist Society marketing, members are asked to print and display in prominent places the posters available from the RPSI's web pages which advertise a number of our trains and events. The Steam

and Jazz poster (by Debra Wenlock) is currently available.

Photographs: Full details and links to photographic reports from the "Garavogue" railtour are available from our Irish Railway Heritage Weekend webpage.

GENERAL

Change Of Life: Northern Carriage & Wagon Officer, Francis Richards, was recently the subject of a Channel 4 documentary. The show is called "Life Begins Again" and was screened on Thursday 3rd May. There was certainly plenty of RPSI footage.

Francis said: "If in the middle of the excessive excitement of the English and Scottish local elections on Thursday you find yourselves terminally bored you may consider Channel 4 at about 12:30. No promises, no complaints considered. If anyone is offended then letters of apology will be signed personally at the Whitecliff Arms Whitehead. Guinness will be provided."

On Air: Business Development Officer Fergus McDonnell and Carriage & Wagon Officer Tony O'Shaughnessy were interviewed at length on Dublin Country Mix radio.

The broadcast was on the Stevie Bolger show which is aired between 11am and 12pm on Saturday mornings and has a listenership of 25,000. The interview lasted some 45 minutes and all aspects of the RPSI were discussed.

An auction was held on air and the highest bidders paid €200 and €120 respectively for sets of 4 tickets for the Bray Shuttle trains. These passengers were given the VIP treatment on the day.

No Smoking: A long-promised smoking ban came into effect in the North on 30th April. The restrictions are similar to those introduced in the South more than three years ago. Smoking will no longer be permitted in the workplace, in enclosed public spaces and on public transport.

The ban will have minimal effect on Society trains as Council decided to impose a blanket ban on all trains at the time the southern restrictions came into being. However, it has resulted in a large number of No Smoking notices having to be posted around the Whitehead premises.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,

Co. Antrim, BT36 6HJ.

steamtrainsireland.com

e-mail: rpsitrains@hotmail.com