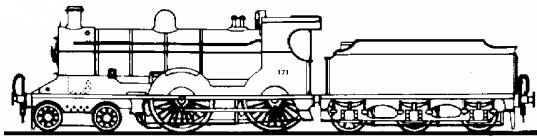


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



October 2007

NEWS LETTER

OPERATIONS

Sea Breeze: On Sunday 26th August, No.4 left Connolly with just over 200 people. Another 100 passengers were picked up in Rathdrum.

In Wexford, approximately 200 local passengers boarded for the return trip to Rosslare.

This was probably the last visit of a steam locomotive to Rosslare Pier. The station there is due to be moved to the landward side of the pier, and the pier itself redeveloped.

The operation was unique in another way too - as there were no RPSI footplate representatives available in Dublin the locomotive was crewed throughout by Whitehead members.

European Architectural Heritage Day: The annual event took place at Whitehead on Saturday 8th September.

It is part of a Europe-wide heritage week which provides a rare opportunity, free of charge, to see inside buildings, many of which are not normally open to the public. It offers a chance see inside a jail or courthouse, walk around a stately home or a 200 year old gate lodge, come aboard a WW1 battleship or, in this case, visit a 100 year old steam depot.

There was a high turnout of visitors - matching anything from previous years. It included a coach-load of visitors from Queen's University Archaeology Society and over a dozen vintage cars finishing off on Whitehead platform after a rally in the area.

Steam Enterprise: As the cancelled "Northern Enterprise" (originally scheduled for 25th August) was essentially a locomotive swap, another operation had to be arranged to transfer No.186 to Dublin (for Irish Rail driver training) and No.4 to Whitehead.

This was a leisurely day out to experience steam travel with two locomotives on the GNR main line - a day to travel rather than to arrive. Despite this, support from members was extremely disappointing.

Those who did travel were treated to performances no less than would be expected from both locomotives. Efficient working of No.4 on the return journey meant that water usage was not a problem, allowing the Dundalk water stop to be omitted, resulting in a 30 minute early arrival in Belfast.

The Irish News newspaper of Monday 10th September carried a beautiful colour shot of No.186 and train heading south over Craigmore viaduct.

Charity Special: On Friday 14th September No.3BG "Guinness" and brake coach 460 were used to provide train rides at Whitehead for a party of 8 disabled children and their 5 carers from Roddenvale School in Larne.

The party arrived in two buses, unloaded and waited on the platform as the locomotive collected 460 from the siding and came to the platform to travel up and down the site.

Country Comes To Town: No.4 performed well on the shuttles between Lisburn and Portadown on Saturday 15th September.

While the trains were marketed and sold from both centres, it seems to be that the trips were viewed as an extra event for the

Portadown folk as the majority of passengers boarded there, both departures being full.

Significant numbers also boarded at Lisburn, Moira and Lurgan, but not enough to fill the train.

A good day out, though! And good to see at least 3 retired GNR drivers on the train.

Private Charter: On Sunday 23rd September, a charter, with No.4 and crew in cracking form, operated from Bangor and Seahill to Whitehead for a local school PTA.

236 passengers were carried and they enjoyed a variety of fun and games en route. The day's atmosphere was superb, no doubt helped by the beautiful early autumn weather.

Broomstick Belle: The usual two return trips to Whitehead are due to operate on Sunday 28th October. For the first time ticket ordering is available on-line through the RPSI website. If a success, it will be used for future trains.

Santa Special (Dublin): All trains have been sold out. Dates of operation are 1st, 2nd, 8th, 9th, 15th & 16th December, an extra date having been added due to demand.

Santa Special (Belfast): Two new Santa trains have been added this year:

- A morning train from Ballymena to Antrim and back on 1st December (to compensate for the enforced cancellation of the Coleraine Santa trains).
- A morning train from Portadown to Lisburn and back on 8th December.

The usual Whitehead trains will also operate on 1st, 8th, 15th, 16th, 22nd & 23rd December. Tickets will go on sale immediately following Halloween.

A full turnout of volunteers is requested for all Christmas trains (north and south) to ensure the public will want to travel with us again.

Driver Training: The latest round of footplate crew training on Irish Rail started on Monday 15th October and is due to last five weeks. So if you see a 128 year-old steam locomotive pounding away on the GNR main line you will know what is happening.

The first crew training run from Dundalk (where the locomotive will be based for the duration) was on the following Wednesday.

The Society crew in attendance has locomotive No.186 in steam and oiled by

08:30 in time for the Irish Rail crew and trainees to arrive off the first ex-Dublin Enterprise.

So far the schedule has been to depart for Mosney at 11:00 and return by 14:30.

It is likely that No.4 and No.186 will swap over during this time, possibly on 6th November.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Diner 547: Positioning of central door locking equipment.

Ivan: Wood for the upper structure of the GNR brake van was delivered in early September. Cutting and fitting is well under way.

B4 bogie: Axle re-fitted to spare bogie under overhaul - it had been dismantled for crack detecting. Repair and preparation of axleboxes.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": The locomotive remains at Downpatrick, and in August some of the Whitehead visited there. The lease agreement with the DCDR allows for RPSI crews to work certain scheduled services at Downpatrick and this arrangement is being taken advantage of.

No.4: While in Dublin during the summer some minor work was undertaken to the right-hand cylinder. At Whitehead an overhauled lubricator was fitted, loco steam washed, part firebars replaced. Loco in steam for annual audit for Irish Rail operation. Springs adjusted.

No.186: In late August a major job was carried out to renew the oiler pads in the axleboxes. The leading pads had already been renewed following a 'hot box' incident in May, the cause of which was found to be corrosion of an oiler pad frame, resulting in the pad failing to contact the journal.

Replacement of the remainder of the pads involved dismantling the coupling rods and other parts of the locomotive to enable it to be partly lifted off its wheels, using the heavy lifting gantries. The work was done in extremely unpleasant weather conditions.

In Dublin, the valve glands were packed, plus other minor jobs in preparation for the start of

Irish Rail crew training.

No.461: Rebuilding of the firebox is ongoing. Machining of big end brasses.

Carlow Diesel: Compressor overhaul.

No.1: A contract job for the Downpatrick railway, the locomotive has had 2 new crank pins made and 'shrink fitted' - the remaining two had suffered less wear and are being trued up. Crank pins skimmed. Assembly of wheelsets and axleboxes for wheeling of locomotive, after overhaul of crank pins.

No.5 "Drumboe": Renewal of valve gear items for the narrow gauge engine. Springs dismantled for recovery of buckles and making up new springs - several new buckles required. Truing up of connecting rods for fitting of bearings. Machining of new valve rod. Cab removed, preparatory to completion of frame repairs. Machining return cranks.

No.90: Last minute work in preparation for transfer to Downpatrick, with cab windows and other minor items completed. Transported by road to Downpatrick on 30th September, tested light engine to Inch Abbey and with train of 4 coaches on 'South' line. No.3 "R.H. Smyth" was also in steam at Downpatrick to assist in the manoeuvres.

BELFAST MEETINGS

10th October: Charles Friel gave his usual excellent rendition of the well-rehearsed Enniskillen presentation. The show was topped and tailed by recorded news announcements and poetry readings relevant to the closure of the lines in the area 50 years ago.

14th November: IRRS Cine Film Archive by Liam Mooney and Tony Price.

12th December: Locos Of The NCC by Bill Scott and My Boyhood Belfast by Colin Weatherup.

How It Works: St. Jude's Church Hall is on the corner of St. Jude's Crescent and the Ravenhill Road in Belfast. Meetings start at 7:30pm and finish around 10:15pm, with an interval for tea or coffee.

There is no entrance charge but visitors are asked to make a donation on leaving. At least £2 is suggested - even at this very cheap price it is noticeable that some make little or no donation. Please pay up as there

are considerable costs in running the meetings and it's very good value for a night's entertainment.

GENERAL

Posters: There are usually printable posters of forthcoming trains and the Belfast meeting season on the website. If you have access, please print a few copies for display in appropriate public locations.

WHITEHEAD

Sleeper: The area behind the locomotive shed has been cleared and the bank trimmed back to allow the Mk3 sleeping coach to be moved into its permanent position, i.e. bogies to be removed and body placed on a permanent base to be used as a dormitory coach.

Blast: There has been removal of spoil preparatory to building a blast-cleaning installation (between the gantry road and the water tower).

Drains: Following repeated flooding episodes (Whitehead summer weather), the drain outside the locomotive store ("Stables") was located and unblocked.

Delivery: On Friday 21st September four pallets of chequered NCC platform tiles were collected by a haulier and unloaded at Whitehead by way of the lorry's tail lift and a pallet truck direct onto the R3 steel-decked flat wagon which recently bore Ivan's wood to the carriage shed.

The tiles were kindly donated by the DOE Roads Service depot which comprises the old station and yard at Magherafelt. Just the former Down platform main building and toilet block survive there, complete with urinals. The stones covered the platform surface but were recently removed in favour of tarmac.

There should be enough to pave an area of the platform should the opportunity allow.

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