



January 2008

NEWS LETTER

OPERATIONS

Advance Notice: A number of members expressed concern about the lack of information on the annual railtour in May. The "Barrow Bridge" is scheduled for the weekend of 10th and 11th May centred on Waterford, with fringe activities proposed on either side of that to create the extended weekend our customers, many travelling from Britain and further afield, are looking for.

A proposed itinerary is with Irish Rail who have raised no issues regarding steam workings to and from Waterford. We are currently awaiting confirmation from our railtour team in Dublin that Irish Rail have confirmed the full itinerary package.

The usual advance booking form is enclosed to allow members to indicate their hotel requirements, but please note that the listed details are as yet aspirational.

Broomstick Belle: Following a widespread advertising campaign, which included a roadside trailer (thanks to Peter Marsden), the trains booked out in advance of the date. No.4 worked the two fully-loaded trains between Belfast and Whitehead on Sunday 28th October.

The 6-coach train was loaded with scary looking children, some scarier parents and downright frightening RPSI crew!

Despite it being a very windy Saturday night, leaves on the line didn't bother No.4 and time was kept throughout.

The operation was interesting in that tickets were sold through a single outlet, the Belfast Welcome Centre, thus availing of their internet booking facility. And very successful it was!

Driver Training: No.186 with 3 Irish Rail Mk2 coaches and a BR heating van moved from Dublin to Dundalk on 16th October. Dundalk was the base for 17 days of operations (until 8th November) to Mosney. The train returned to Dublin on 9th November with No.4, it having swapped with No.186 on 6th November. The trainees gained further experience with No.4 over the Santa season and it is hoped that they will be certified as drivers in the new year.

The training days were taxing to organise as most of the Society crews were Whitehead based and had to travel every day.

Santa Special: With the final train (to Carrickfergus) on Sunday 23rd December, the season came to an end after 18 trains in Dublin and 14 in the north. All were full which was great for the Society, but left some disappointed prospective passengers. In the north, at least, they were pointed in the direction of Downpatrick where the DCDR were also operating.

As in previous years all the Dublin trains were sold out months in advance despite there being an extra day of operation. All trains ran without incident; all that could be reported was some late running - nothing serious - caused by over-running engineering works at Connolly on Sunday mornings, and signalling glitches which also caused minor delays from time to time.

No.4 performed faultlessly, and the four trainee drivers got plenty of experience of working 9 bogies trains over a difficult road. As has been the case in recent years, far too many people were turned away - there was just no more room - but the operation has now reached a level of activity beyond

which would place too much strain on men, women and machines. In all, approximately 7,000 passengers were carried.

The majority of the northern tickets were sold through the Belfast Welcome Centre and, whether because of this or the major publicity push, they sold out in advance.

No.186 also operated without incident, a new brick arch notwithstanding. The two new ventures, trains from Ballymena and Portadown, were a successful replacement for the Coleraine trains of previous years. An estimated 3,400 passengers were carried over the 6 days.

It only remains to thank all the volunteers who turned out throughout December, and hope that all Society members are grateful that among them are those who are willing to:

- negotiate with the railway companies
- clean toilets
- sweep floors
- clean out dirty smokeboxes
- dress up in red suits
- steward passengers
- allocate seats
- produce posters
- crew steam locomotives
- check tickets
- provide catering
- write press releases
- decorate carriages
- charge batteries
- collect presents from suppliers
- light up locomotives in the wee small hours
- distribute advertising leaflets
- give their weekends before Christmas
- lodge cheques
- be cheerful to passengers
- AND MUCH MORE

Well done to one and all!!!

Santa Special - Special: Unusually, No.3BG, the Guinness loco, found itself involved in the Society's Christmas line-up. It had been chartered, together with 460, to do Train Ride style runs on Monday 17th December for the special needs children of Roddensvale School in Larne.

On a crisp and sunny morning around 20 pupils and minders (not forgetting Santa!) arrived and were given a spin whilst presents were handed out. The whole event lasted under an hour.

The opportunity was then taken to push No.186 into the shed before the second

booking of the day - little 8-year old Alistair (who suffers from Crohns disease) was thrilled that his Aunt Louise Walker had arranged a run on the engine for Christmas! Wanting to be fair to all departments he unexpectedly insisted on a trip in 460 too!

Mince Pie Special: The Locomotive Department has identified a need to return No.4 to Whitehead for some attention, including boiler inspection, running repairs and operational enhancement work. So No.4 and No.186 were swapped between Dublin and Whitehead on Sunday 30th December.

To offset the costs, the train was advertised to the public during the Santa season as an end of year special with complimentary mince pies and mulled wine. The tickets sold out within a week!

CARRIAGE & WAGON

81 (GNR Brake Van): Work continues on fitting and painting of woodwork (5 coats). The list continues to grow with yet more jobs being added. The NIMC are keen to launch the van in July 2008. There is an awful lot to do before then so any help is greatly appreciated.

462 (Dutch Van): An adaptor vestibule is being manufactured for coupling to Mk2 coaches. Repairs to brake gear.

547 (Dining Car): Installation of train line and central door locking equipment. By mid-November the new cooker and fridge were installed. Both were too large to fit from the narrow corridor through the kitchen door and so had to be lifted through the outside window, from which the frame and glass had first to be removed.

B4 Bogies: The first of the spare bogies has now been assembled after overhaul. The second Mk2 bogie is now in the workshop and dismantling, descaling and painting is under way.

Central Door Locking: For those who may be unaware, this is the latest Health & Safety requirement and NIR have informed the Society that no trains may operate on their network after 31st December 2007 without CDL installed. Diner 547 is the first coach being fitted out and when complete it is hoped that the other Mk2 coaches can be progressed before the 2008 season. Brake 460 had CDL fitted to one door for

testing over the Santa season.

Hand Crane: Repairs to jib.

Mk3 Sleeping Coach: In early December temporary rails were laid from the workshop to allow movement of the sleeper to its final position at rear of yard. It will be plumbed and wired as the dormitory coach for those attending Whitehead for late night and early morning operating turns.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1 (DCDR Contract): Overhaul of big end, coupling rod and connecting rod bearings. Remetalled and machined coupling rod bearings. Setting up driving wheels for truing up crank pins.

No.4: Minor running repairs - rectification and testing of lubricator fault, completion of weight adjustment. To have TPWS fitted at Whitehead.

No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL Contract): Bunker and side tanks lifted off. Boiler lifted out to enable completion of frame and other repairs. Frames lifted off wheels and mounted on stands. Machining of return cranks, spring pins and buckles. Machining valve gear items. Removal of corroded frame angles. Manufacture of valve gear parts and bearings. Preparation for forging coupling rod.

No.90 (DCDR Contract): Although the locomotive is back in Downpatrick there were still some minor finishing off jobs to be completed, e.g. the lamps and number plates.

No.131: Painting of cab, etc. to combat corrosion.

No.186: Minor running repairs, including new brick arch.

No.461: Firebox repairs progressing. Preparing tube plate for welding. Caulking of firebox seams. Big end overhaul.

GENERAL

Project Planning Grant: Thanks to the ground-work done by a number of members during the last two years, but by Grants Officer Derek Young in particular, resulting in Strategy and Vision documents for Whitehead, an application was submitted to the UK Heritage Lottery Fund in April 2007 for a Project Planning Grant. A 90% grant has been approved, and the

first instalment of 50% has been received. The grant will enable a number of documents to be prepared by consultants which will inform any decisions going forward about the shape and scope of any subsequent projects for Whitehead.

The plans to be prepared are:

- Conservation Management Plan
- Access/Audience Development Plan
- Training Plan

The latter was approved for inclusion by HLF, they saw it as key to preserving the heritage skills we will need looking forward, and they were very enthusiastic about this element. The Grants Officer responsible for our application paid a visit to Whitehead and was most impressed.

Phil Lockett will be acting as RPSI Project Manager to liaise with the consultants - this will be a very important and invaluable post.

The next step is to appoint the consultants, with a view to having their report by Easter 2008. Once consultants are appointed, they will be talking to Council, Committees, and individuals to obtain information and background, etc. They will also talk to many other groups and 'stakeholders' such as the Whitehead Community Group.

Museum: In late November the Council of the Society announced that the RPSI, which has been a Registered Museum for some 5 years, had been informed that full Museum Accreditation status has been granted by MLA (Museums Libraries Archives Council).

Congratulations to all involved in achieving this excellent result.

Publicity: Edition 104 of Heritage Railway magazine (25th October – 21st November) carried an article on the Society's activities at Whitehead. Despite a couple of glaring errors it is an excellent tribute to the RPSI's achievements as an engineering base.

Treasurer: In November Stephen McAtee stepped down as RPSI Treasurer. Council asked Peter Marsden to accept the post as a co-option until the next AGM, and he agreed to do so.

Membership: Subscriptions for 2008 are due shortly and members are asked to renew promptly. Please note the following:

- Ensure the renewal 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.
- As always, the Society is very grateful for those UK members who Gift Aid their subscriptions and donations.
- Members who have filled in a Gift Aid form for the benefit of the Society must pay an amount of UK Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax the Society reclaims on the donation, e.g. currently 28p for each £1 given (for a standard tax rate of 22%).
- Should your circumstances change such that the above is no longer applicable then the Society must be advised not to

treat future membership payments and donations as eligible for Gift Aid.

- 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.
- Replacement Membership, Gift Aid and standing order forms can be obtained from the Society's website at: www.steamtrainsireland.com/membership
- Finally, a donation is always welcome.

WHITEHEAD

Blast Cleaning Facility: An area has been dug out in preparation for the concrete base.

BELFAST MEETINGS

14th November: Tony Price and Liam Mooney delivered an excellent selection of films from the IRRS. There was steam, diesel and dog (!) power in evidence. Steam included Great Northern main line, CIÉ in Wexford and Waterford, RPSI railtours from 1980 and 1982, amongst others. Diesel appeared in interesting sequences from the Ballinacourty magnesite trains (gone 25 years!). Dog power featured in some scenes from Ardrahan in the 1960s where the signalman's Alsatian delivered staffs from the cabin to footplate and vice versa.

12th December: The meeting was a two-parter. Bill Scott kicked off with a teasing glimpse of the locomotives of the NCC, but left the audience waiting for more as the planned book on the same subject has been delayed until the new year. Colin Weatherup, similarly, had to rush through his photographs of (nearly) all the existing locomotive classes working in the Belfast at the time of his boyhood in the 1950s. Both presentations were excellent but, of necessity, tantalisingly brief.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,
Co. Antrim, BT36 6HJ.

www.steamtrainsireland.com
rpsitrains@hotmail.com