



August 2008

NEWS LETTER

H&S COMPLIANCE APPEAL

Appeal: At the start of the summer the latest Society appeal was posted to members.

When viewed, the appeal documents are not very attractive from an enthusiast's point of view (with apologies to Francis Richards) - no No.461 following the Slaney on a Sea Breeze, no No.171 pounding up the bank out of Portrush.

However, this is probably the most important appeal that the Society has issued for many years. While we all wish to see our favourite locomotives overhauled and are prepared to dig deep to fund them, there are more fundamental issues which need addressed and this latest appeal is an attempt to do just that.

The aim is to raise funds to cover the costs of complying with safety legislation which has recently come into effect. To continue to operate our steam trains on the main line we must comply with the new rules. At the recent launch of Ivan and 547, the Chief Executive of Translink commented on the number of such hurdles which the Society had encountered - and had successfully negotiated. But it is becoming increasingly expensive and time-consuming to do so.

Although this is an NIR network issue, it affects all our operations on the island

as the main overhaul facilities are in the north, and without access to Whitehead there will be no Dublin-based trains.

The good news is that the appeal has had a healthy start. The total now stands at around a third of the requested £50,000. To all who have generously donated, a big thank-you.

Members of the Society have a love of steam trains and, no doubt, a desire to see them continue to operate in Ireland, so please consider donating to this vital appeal.

All donations should be sent to:

RPSI Safety Compliance Appeal
9 Kenilworth Avenue
LISBURN
BT28 3UG
Northern Ireland

Full details can also be found at:

www.steamtrainsireland.com/appeal

WHITEHEAD

Sheer-Legs: Work has progressed throughout the summer on stripping, repairing and reassembling the storm damaged gantries. The opportunity is also being taken to upgrade the equipment operationally and health & safety wise.

Locomotive Shed: Renewal of door head on No.2 road.

Project Planning: Our consultants have been hard at work over the spring

and summer months consulting on the Society's behalf, including:

- Setting up the on-line questionnaire.
- Visits to the UFTM at Cultra and the DCDR at Downpatrick.
- Discussions with the RPSI's paid staff.
- Meeting volunteers at Whitehead and Dublin.
- Talking with members and public visitors at the recent Sooty Face event at Whitehead.
- Taking an inventory of all rolling stock on the site.
- Meeting with Whitehead Community Association.
- Interviewing local politicians.
- Asking senior management in NIR and Irish Rail how they view the Society.

As can be seen, the net was cast far and wide to ensure all the Society's external 'stakeholders' had an input into the consultants' report on what options they see for the future of Whitehead.

The report is due to be submitted to Council in September.

OPERATIONS

Steam & Jazz: The train on 6th June was a first on a number of fronts: first public train to operate in the North this year; first public operation with secondary door locking; first outing in Society ownership of Mk2 diner 547; first use of a 'Dutch' van.

The last 3 trains were fully booked, that on the 20th June operating with the first 8-coach train in the north for many years.

The first 3 trains were operated by No.4 and the final one by No.186.

Strawberries & Steam Enterprise: On Sunday 22nd June, as No.4 had to return to Dublin, this train was arranged around the locomotive swap.

No.4 performed competently but was delayed by single-line working at Newry and between Malahide and Howth Junction.

No.186, however, had a more difficult time on the way back north, having to stop in section on a few occasions for a 'blow up'.

Despite the delays, the full train of passengers was in good form and were fully appreciative of the strawberries and cream - thanks to Katherine in the catering team who single-handedly prepared hundreds of strawberries. Also thanks to the award-winning Corcrain flute band from Portadown who travelled on the train and kept up a steady stream of entertaining airs throughout the day.

Schools Day: On Tuesday 24th June the two local Whitehead primary schools turned up in groups of 20 every 15 minutes or so over 4 hours.

All seemed to enjoy their visit despite the poor weather. A successful day! Well done to the Youth Team who organised the whole event.

Narnia Express: On Saturday 28th June, No.4 and train left from Dublin Connolly Platform 1 on time. Approximately 120 people travelled to Mullingar - some were staying overnight while others were getting a bus back to Dublin after the show.

On arrival in Mullingar, passengers were taken to a private showing of "Prince Caspian" in the local cinema. In the meantime, a local trip took around 250/300 people from Mullingar to Enfield and back.

The passengers who stayed overnight were taken to an outdoor show of "King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table" in the magnificent grounds of Belvedere House.

On Sunday, the train was scheduled to leave at 15:05 but due to a misunderstanding with the drivers of the two buses, they thought they were taking the passengers back to Dublin by bus. Fortunately, a passenger on one

bus realised what was happening and had the bus turned around for the station. The other bus went all the way to Dublin as no contact could be made with anyone on board.

The train left 10 minutes late, did not take water in Enfield and arrived on time into a very busy Connolly - because of a match in Croke Park.

Sea Breeze: The trains on 13th July, and 3rd & 24th August were all heavily booked, with large numbers also boarding at Wexford.

Due to the new station at Rosslare Harbour not being as convenient, either for passengers or for servicing, it was decided to terminate the trains at Rosslare Strand for the public, No.4 and train running empty to the Harbour.

Summer Steam: The train rides have operated successfully so far on 26th July and 17th August. Further Whitehead open days will be 31st August and 14th September, the latter being European Architectural Heritage Day.

Bangor Belle: This train has run in previous years, but always starting out of Belfast. The train on 9th August from Portadown, and the two trains from Lisburn on 24th August were all heavily booked, boding well for future trains from these stations. No.186 did the honours on both dates.

Special Visit: On Sunday 10th August, a still hot No.186 was on easier duties, operating 'Train Rides' in the yard for the Northern Ireland Disabled Ramblers.

At 13:30, 22 mobility scooters and their rain-sodden occupants descended on Whitehead Excursion Station and were given a spin in carriage 460. The people who could not walk aboard, driving their scooters up the disabled access ramp and expertly parking in a series of 3-point turns.

Country Comes To Town: On Saturday 20th September, No.186 will be operating shuttles between Lisburn, Moira and Portadown in conjunction with the annual festival in the latter

town. Hopefully, the weather will be kinder than last year. But the advantageous fare of £4 should help to make the day worthwhile.

Tickets will be available in Lisburn from NIR and the Tourist Information Centre, and in Portadown from NIR and the Millennium Centre.

Dundalk Works 50: A major event involving trains from both Dublin and Belfast will be taking place on 28th September to mark 50 years since the GNR departed Dundalk.

No.4 will depart Dublin for Dundalk, and will then operate a local trip to Drogheda. Likewise, No.186 will head south to Dundalk where another local trip will operate to Drogheda. No.4 will leave Dundalk in advance of No.186 so the two trains will cross in section. When was the last time that happened in Ireland? Can anyone capture a photograph of the two trains crossing? No.4 will then travel north, with No.186 heading to Dublin.

Tickets from Dublin will be available from Ashgrove House, and Belfast and Portadown tickets from Belfast Welcome Centre. The local tickets will be available from Dundalk station or on-board for those travelling from Belfast or Dublin.

Broomstick Belle: The usual Halloween trains will be operating on Sunday 26th October.

Locomotive Swap: There will be a train from Belfast to Dublin on 2nd or 9th November to position the engines for Christmas.

Santa Special: As always, the Dublin trains are booking up very quickly.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1 (Carlow Diesel): Servicing and minor repairs carried out.

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": Remained in service at Downpatrick over the summer.

No.4: Recent jobs include: renewal of the brick arch, ashpan repairs, new firebars.

No.5 "Drumboe": Some additional funding has been secured by CDRRL which is enabling work to continue on the frames, springs, working parts and dome.

No.17: On Thursday 17th July three wheelsets arrived at Whitehead from the Strathspey Railway's No.17 for some attention in the workshop. This will include machining of crank pins.

No.186: The locomotive operated the final Steam & Jazz train to Ballymena without problems. The delays suffered on the run north from Dublin on Sunday 22nd June were due to lack of steam and lack of adhesion - not fully explained, but dirt in the brake ejector, damp sand in the sand boxes and soot in the tubes didn't help, together with greasy rail conditions.

Recent work includes: renewal of left-hand slipper blocks; safety improvements to speedometer.

No.461: Overhaul jobs completed: firebox repairs; reducing ends of flue tubes.

Unilok: The vehicle was back at Whitehead in July for servicing and minor repairs. The 'mini' shunter provides a useful service (and income) at Cultra, hauling No.74 "Dunluce Castle" in and out of the rail gallery there whenever a function is being held which requires access to the turntable area.

Wickham inspection Trolley: As part of the CDRRL project, this vehicle is at Whitehead undergoing general restoration.

GENERAL

RTÉ TV: The "Nationwide" programme had a film crew on board the "Barrow Bridge" railtour train, so look out for this in the coming weeks.

Bachmann Mk2 Sets: Well over 400 of

the 500 available sets have now been sold.

"The Syndicate": This is a group of three members in the south of England who raise money for Irish railway preservation projects. They visit various fairs and railway events in that area selling second-hand and remaindered books.

The guys are very generous towards the Society, with regular donations. We are pleased to acknowledge the latest cheque for £2,000, being a donation towards the restoration of No.461 and other locomotive repair expenses.

Should you see the group at an event in your area, please give them every support as their profits do end up helping a worthwhile cause.

Filming: On Tuesday 16th June, a TV crew visited Whitehead to do some filming for a cookery programme(!) - Cósta Uí Chatháin for the Irish language TV channel TG4.

No.3BG "Guinness" was in steam for the occasion, and it will be interesting to see how Jeff Spencer and Michael McCann on the footplate coped with the language.

Sales News: These books have been added to the website sales order form: Dublin Northwards in the 1950s by Gaius Sutton and Keith Smith, £14.95. Ulster in the 1950s - photos from the UTA Archive 2 by Norman Johnston, £8.99.

Get Well Soon: It was good to see John Richardson back on the train again on 24th August after his recent spell in hospital. Here's wishing you a full and speedy recovery.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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

www.steamtrainsireland.com
rpsitrains@hotmail.com