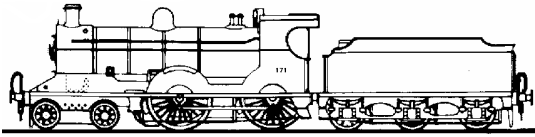


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



January 2009

NEWS LETTER

H&S COMPLIANCE APPEAL

Update: Donations received so far are approaching the half-way mark.

The aim is to raise funds to cover the costs of complying with safety legislation which has recently come into effect in Northern Ireland. The costs of compliance are large (estimated at £50,000). 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.

As an example, No.4 has recently had to move to Whitehead for repairs following damage to her pistons which only became apparent while in Dublin. Such moves are expensive and are usually organised around a public outing, i.e. the Autumn Leaves train of 16th November. Operating a public train without the required locomotive and carriage safety equipment will be impossible and hence such moves, if they are allowed at all, will not result in income to cover their costs.

The Gift Aid scheme is very valuable to the Society as it can increase by 28% the value of donations made by UK tax-payers.

Please note that all payments to:

RPSI Safety Compliance Appeal
9 Kenilworth Avenue
LISBURN
BT28 3UG

OPERATIONS

Ghost Train: On Sunday 26th October, a new venture was tried in association with Belvedere House. Around 200 passengers were carried, and a similar number on the local trip from Mullingar to Enfield.

Broomstick Belle: On the same day, the

Whitehead trains were successfully operated by No.4. Both trains were fully booked, with over 520 passengers travelling.

Autumn Leaves: With No.4 in Whitehead and No.186 in Dublin, the situation had to be reversed before Christmas so a locomotive swap took place on Sunday 16th November.

Santa Special (1): Due to a delay in confirmation of the new NIR timetable, it was not possible to operate the advertised Ballymena train this year. In the end, one day's operation was from Portadown and five from Belfast - all booked out. All trains operated successfully, and the only major problem was the filling of the on-train roster, with most of the same members having to turn up every day. On a brighter note, the Sales Team was out in force - thanks to JR and crew.

Santa Special (2): Similarly, the Dublin trains were all sold out and operated successfully over six days but, similarly, they suffered from the same pressure on the passenger service teams. Please, if you can only give one day per season it would ease the burden considerably - don't leave it all to the dedicated few!

Mince Pie & Mulled Wine: The RPSI year drew to a close on Sunday 28th December with the locomotive swap run to Dublin.

Unfortunately, right from the start No.186 struggled with her train, having to stop to have the fire cleaned and steam raised on four separate occasions. Initial word from the footplate blamed coal which would just not make steam - although this has to be officially confirmed. The NIR crew struggled manfully on to Dublin - where arrival was two hours late - and we are indebted to them for continuing.

A quick turn-around in Dublin gave a departure about 50 minutes down. Unfortunately, cautious signalling decisions

at Dublin and Drogheda meant that delays increased and, despite No.4's best performance, arrival in Belfast was about 90 minutes down.

Top Link: The weekend tour planned for 31st January and 1st February is filling up well, with ticket sales around the 66% mark.

Driver Assessment (NIR): On Thursday 30th October NIR divers Gary Moore and Stephen Glass successfully completed their NIR Steam Driver Training Course.

This course was organised by the RPSI and NIR, delivered by West Coast Rail and part Funded by Awards For All (a Lottery Grant for Local Groups and part of the UK National Lottery).

As well as a number of 'classroom' sessions there were three days of live steam experience, with No.4 plus 3 Mk2 coaches and a van:

28th October: Whitehead - Lisburn - Whitehead

29th October: Whitehead - Lisburn - Crumlin - Ballymena - Crumlin - Lisburn - Whitehead

30th October: Whitehead - Lisburn - Whitehead

Driver Assessment (Irish Rail): Two driver training runs ran on Sunday 23rd November; first from Dublin Connolly to Maynooth returning to Dublin Pearse, then back to Maynooth and finally to Connolly.

At the time of writing, the unofficial word was that two trainees had been positively assessed over the Christmas season.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1 (DCDR contract): Work continues on a part-time basis on this locomotive.

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": The locomotive continues to plod away reliably at Downpatrick.

No.4: Work was carried out to remove the right-hand piston head so that it could be turned to compensate for severe wear. The locomotive was assembled sufficiently for testing on Sunday 19th October. Some work on fitting AWS equipment was progressed before return to Dublin for Christmas. The locomotive is now back in Whitehead, and barring the Cork trip, will remain until TPWS is fitted, tested and approved.

No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL contract): Minor jobs carried out as time allows.

No.186: On the last run of Sunday 14th December, the left big end was found to be

carrying more heat than is healthy. It was dismantled for inspection and, although the journal was in good condition, the white metal of the bearing was found to be damaged. It was decided that the better option was to re-metal and machine it - just about possible in the time. The bearing was remetalled on Tuesday, machined on Wednesday, and bedded in on Thursday. The bearing was carefully watched during the Santa runs over the weekend of 20th and 21st.

No.461: Smoke tubes delivered. Welding of firebox wrapper plate now complete. During December the inner firebox was lifted into the boiler for marking out the new plates (the boiler is positioned on its back for this work).

Wickham Trolley (CDRRL contract): Repair and recommissioning of small powered track trolley for Donegal. New engine mounting.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead: The main focus of work is preparing Mk2 coach 303 for external painting and, internally, priming of table and seat frames.

Dublin: The Christmas season saw the welcome return of GS&WR 1142 to the running set. Although its splendour is not best appreciated on such trains, the extra seating was much needed.

WHITEHEAD

Sheer-Leg Gantries: Work continued through the autumn to repair and overhaul the gantries. They were erected again on Saturday 22nd November, using a mobile crane. It was necessary to have all the components ready in advance and attach them in the correct sequence, including electrical connections before the final covers were positioned.

Advantage was taken of the crane being on site to have four 40ft containers delivered and off-loaded - these are to provide cover for stored items, including a quantity of Mk2 carriage spares which have been acquired from Irish Rail.

Signalling: Two lorry-loads of mechanical signalling equipment from Mayo were safely unloaded at Whitehead on the morning of Friday 17th October. The Society is very much indebted to Irish Rail and to their Southern and Western Division signalling engineer and his staff.

Some of what is now in store is:

- Pole signals (some having bracket castings).
- Cast iron semaphore spectacles (the metal arms on these are all damaged to a different degree, but they're unimportant in themselves).
- Counterweights (including double counterweights).
- Ladders.
- Electrical arm-aspect detectors.
- Lamp-houses (all minus oil burners although evidence on some of electric conversion).
- Shunting dollies on concrete foundations (again all minus burners).
- 8-lever cabin frame (ex-Tubbercurry).
- Groundframes on foundations - one of which operated signals at a level-crossing gate and the other of which is believed to be from Castlebar and operated a siding by way of an Annett's Key.
- Pre-fab concrete wire pulley supports.
- Cast iron pulleys on concrete foundations.
- A-frames and rollers (for channel iron).
- Signal wire.
- New spectacle lenses.

New Track: A small highlight in early November was the completion of 40ft of 3ft gauge track outside the back of the Workshop. The track was traversed by a small shunting diesel from the Donegal group (CDRRL), which is undergoing repairs.

Carriage Officer Francis Richards reckons the last time there was this gauge of track in Whitehead was in the 1860s for the limestone quarry (unless you know differently!).

BELFAST MEETINGS

8th October: The opening night introduced a new feature - the evening opened with a couple of minutes of pictures illustrating the work undertaken recently to repair No.4. The slides showed the progress from Connolly shed to Whitehead to the dismantling of the engine's valves, with clear views of the badly clogged piston rings.

The main show took another journey - from Inniskillen on the Irish North to Glaslough on the Ulster Railway by way of Clones, all in County Monaghan. In 215 pictures, every station and halt along the way was illustrated, including the branches. In many

locations, present-day pictures were shown, giving a feel for just how much still remains in existence.

12th November: In the first half, Eddie Creamer presented his "Bray Head - from Brunel to the DART". Eddie hails from Bray and his intimate knowledge of the area gave quite an insight into this spectacular piece of line. Using aerial photographs, his own pictures and material from the collections, he identified all the landmarks on the way, pointed out the various detours that the line has taken and the steps taken to reduce or prevent erosion.

After the interval, Michael Collins of the Downpatrick and County Down Railway, brought us on a whirlwind tour of the life and times of the line. He sketched in some of the line's history and operations.

10th December: The first half of the main show had Michael McMahon giving an overview of the many and varied locomotives which made up the motive power of the Great Southern Railways. Michael is the author, along with Jeremy Clements, of a new book on the subject.

After the break, Leslie McAllister introduced Ron Pocklington (The Third Man of the title) and explained how he, after the initial design concept, was probably as much, if not more, responsible for the final version of the Turf Burner. A well-illustrated show gave a fascinating insight into the construction and trials of this individual locomotive.

GENERAL

A Model Success: On Sunday 16th November the restoration of ex-DSER locomotive No.461 took a major step forward as a result of the hand-over of over €23,250 to the restoration fund by members Gerry Mooney and Fergus McDonnell.

The funds were raised by producing a limited edition series of models of the operating Mk2 fleet. The project was the idea of Gerry who researched and commissioned the models from Bachmann. Commenting on the success of the project Gerry said, "Over the last few years there has been a huge increase in the modelling of Irish Railways and I identified models that would be suitable to represent some of our running rake. The models went into production and were delivered in April 2008."

This is a remarkable achievement and, while there was no doubt the models would sell, to have done so so quickly is a major feat.

Membership Update: The membership year ends on 31st January. 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 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, 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.
- 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.
- Finally, a donation is always welcome.

RPSI Museum Records: As you may know, the RPSI has achieved accreditation as a recognised museum, which amongst other benefits potentially opens the door to

substantial financial grants. To maintain this status we have to comply with a number of conditions, one of which is to create and maintain records of our historical artefacts to the same standards as any established museum in the country. To do this the Society has bought a professional computer software program called 'ModesXML'. I hope that ultimately the database will contain as much information as possible on all that we own, plus, perhaps, information on other preserved Irish railwayana. To make this all worthwhile I would envisage the data being made available on the Internet both as an aid for research and to raise awareness of the RPSI itself. One reason for choosing ModesXML is its capability to link' websites.

At present David Orr and myself are working on the cataloguing project. Our first task is to make an inventory of what the Society owns by physically walking round Whitehead and other locations where there are RPSI owned artefacts, recording all kinds of things ranging from locomotives to stationmaster's buttons. Objects deemed as of historical interest will be afforded a full accession number, making them official museum 'exhibits', whilst other selected items will be catalogued simply to build up an informative list of what we own.

Modes is a complex software suite, so to learn how to use it effectively I attended a two-day course in Derby at the Office of the Modes Users Association. We are fortunate that the Northern Ireland Museum Council is 60% grant aiding the cost of Modes and training for it.

I have written this to try and keep you, the membership, informed about what the RPSI has to achieve to maintain accreditation as regards the documentation of our assets. If anyone wants to help, either by giving advice or 'hands-on' assistance, do please let me know at:

musrec@tonytopshed.plus.com

Tony Ragg

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