



June 2009

NEWS LETTER

TRAINS & EVENTS

Carrowbeg Railtour: Following the transfer of No.4 and the Whitehead set to Dublin on Thursday 7th May, the main events started on Friday morning with the diesel-hauled trip to Waterford and Limerick Junction.

With the threatened demise of the GM 141 and 181 locomotives, haulage by this class had been requested. The response by Irish Rail was that 141 or 181 power was unlikely and 071 haulage would be used, hopefully with a different locomotive to be provided on each of the tour's three legs - Dublin Connolly to Waterford, Waterford to the Junction, and the Junction back to Dublin Heuston. This state of affairs had been communicated to the prospective passengers at an early stage. In the event, nearly 200 booked anyway.

Sure enough, 078 was on the train at Connolly and did the honours as far as Waterford, keeping more or less to time throughout. As the train entered Waterford, window-hangers gazed longingly at 141 and 171 sitting in the yard - if only! Well, surprisingly, it was to be! After a lunch break 141 and 171 did indeed couple up to the train - raptures all round!

After a sedate trundle along to the Junction, and a very long wait to enter (only one mainline platform now in use), the train set off again for Dublin driven by Lar Griffin on what he expected would be his last locomotive-hauled turn before promotion to District Traction Executive (fancy name for locomotive inspector). Time lost at the junction was recovered and a happy bunch of gricers duly left the train at Dublin.

Friday was rounded off at the IRRS premises at Heuston where, to a full house, Michael Walsh gave a very entertaining presentation

of views from previous Society tours.

Saturday morning at Heuston, and it was steam and rain - an unhappy combination. Not to worry, in the Dublin Cravens set (which included the superbly restored kitchen car 1522) the passengers were content to sit back and watch the weather slowly improve, and by Portarlington and points west the rain had died to a very occasional shower, and it stayed dry for photo stops. All the way to Westport the running was never more than a few minutes either side of the scheduled times.

With two nights' stay in Westport, Sunday was more leisurely and a lineside bus chased the train all day. The itinerary for the bus had to be hastily re-jigged as Irish Rail had changed the schedule for the day as late as Thursday. But all the planned photo locations were visited - just not in the correct order! The revised train itinerary was Westport - Claremorris - Ballina - Ballyhaunis - Westport.

Claremorris turntable, having allegedly been tested in the previous week by a 071, was visited in anticipation. Remember that during the Society's last visit to Claremorris the turntable could not be made to work. And so it was again! Despite very delicate manoeuvring of the locomotive, even coming off and moving the table through a half turn before another try, it would not budge. But it made an interesting spectacle for onlookers! A dejected crew returned the locomotive to the train.

Bright and early on Monday morning the party set out for Dublin once again, the locomotive operating bunker first. This didn't seem to curtail the running and again time was kept throughout.

During a break at Dublin Connolly the Cravens were lifted off the locomotive and hauled to Inchicore behind a diesel, the latter

returning with the Mk2 set which had spent the weekend at Inchicore. The train departed for Belfast following a DART (naturally!) and crawled out to Malahide. After that the running improved and the lost time had mostly been gained after a very quick water stop at Drogheda.

Weary passengers were finally dropped at Lisburn, Botanic and Central to make for home or hotel.

For most that was the end of the trip, but for 34 brave souls there was another day of fun and games on Tuesday. First stop on this year's coach tour was Patterson's Spade Mill, a National Trust property near Templepatrick. There, a very interesting display of spade making by hand was enjoyed. Possibly even more interesting was the very splendid beard sported by one of the spade-makers - a marvel of facial cultivation, including its own ponytail!

Then on to Ballyronan on the north-west shore of Lough Neagh where lunch was taken before a splendid, but choppy, cruise around the Toome Bay region of the Lough.

The railtour post mortem, as is traditional, was held in the Crown Liquor Saloon on return to Belfast.

The splendid weather more or less throughout no doubt added to the enjoyment of the weekend, but it would never have been possible without the effort of many Society volunteers, some working on the project since the previous summer. So to all who lent an organisational or operational hand, whether large or small, a very big "Well Done".

Strawberries & Steam: This had been in the events calendar for some time, but it was only on Tuesday 19th May, 5 days before the train, that news of NIR's certification of No.186 was received thus allowing marketing to commence. As a consequence, only half of the available tickets were sold.

Nevertheless, it was a great day out! No.4 and crew were on fine form and got the 5-coach train into Dublin before time.

There was a bit of confusion at Dublin Connolly as passengers returned for the run home, only to find the train was not at the platform. NIR's schedule showed a 16:10 departure but Irish Rail staff were working to a schedule which had 16:35. In the event, the train was quickly ushered to the platform and got away at 16:20.

No.186 had a more challenging journey given its size and coped well despite needing a short blow-up at Lurgan.

Charter (1): On the evening of Saturday 30th May 70 American travel writers enjoyed a trip to the UFTM at Cultra in very fine weather.

On their arrival at Belfast Central in 2 coaches, i.e. buses, they were pleasantly surprised to find a steam locomotive, No.186, and 6 carriages waiting to take them to Cultra. They thought they were using a NIR service train. There was even time to take photographs and videos of No.186 and to learn that not oil but coal was used.

After a quick run to Cultra followed by an efficient unloading the train was away in good time. The shunt at Bangor took very little time, and fine running from then on resulted in an early arrival into Whitehead.

A big thank you to the Team who made the night such a success and who had cleaned the train by the time it reached Bangor.

Charter (2): On Sunday 7th June 285 passengers travelled on the Malahide Lions charter from Malahide to Dundalk in a train made up of No.4 and the Cravens set. While the party was taken on a tour of the Cooley Peninsula (6 coaches) over 300 locals enjoyed a trip to Drogheda and back.

Steam & Jazz: Tickets for the train on 26th June sold out within days of going on sale, 12th June and 3rd July following not too long after. The 19th June tickets, strangely, took a lot longer to sell.

Sea Breeze: Tickets are on sale for the trips to Wexford and Rosslare on 21st June and 5th July.

Schools Day: Planned for Wednesday 24th June at Whitehead.

Summer Steam: Whitehead train rides will be operating on Saturdays 18th & 25th July and 1st and 22nd August, and Sunday 13th September.

Bangor Belle: Tickets for the trip from Portadown to Bangor on Saturday 1st August will shortly be on sale at the Millennium Court in Portadown.

Kingstown Special 1834-2009: Dun Laoghaire - Bray shuttles will be operating on Sunday 2nd August.

Steam Enterprise: It is planned to swap No.186 and No.4 on Sunday 9th August.

Volunteer Open Day: Saturday 22nd August will be a chance for members to visit Whitehead to find out exactly what is involved in volunteering for the Society. There will be an opportunity to see what needs to be done in order to keep our trains running. Plans include a film show in the classroom showing what members have

done at the site, and hopefully proving that there are tasks to suit all members. No experience required - just turn up between 1:30pm and 4:30pm.

Greystones Shuttle: Dublin - Greystones - Wicklow trains will be operation on Sunday 23rd August.

12 Counties: The MRSI are running a diesel railtour from Whitehead and Belfast to Tralee on 3rd October, using the RPSI Mk2 set.

<http://modernrpsi.webs.com>

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Mk2 303: Work continues on the pressure ventilation heating pipes and ducts. Now in green undercoat.

Mk2 Coach Spares: Collection from Dublin, storage and cataloguing on-going.

Ivan: While the vehicle itself was completed last year, the installation of the guard's stove lingered on. However, a concerted effort by the team saw it fitted and tested by late April.

WHITEHEAD

Facilities: Design and mark out base for blast cleaning facility. Fit guide and motor for band-saw.

Signalling: Overhaul and painting of signalling arms continues. The initial plan is get a starting signal located at the head of the platform just before the bridge.

Stables: Clearing building for repairs and fitting out as electric and 'clean' workshop, plus artefact store.

Narrow Gauge: The end of April saw the completion of the 3ft gauge "Burtonport extension" at the back of the Workshop. This enables Donegal type rolling stock to be moved out of the way of any large delivery lorries wanting access to the engineering works. Tram type format with a sunken road and chairs, plus tie bars, was used as before.

Atlas: The recently-acquired Atlas machine (road/rail digger/crane), travelling on track wheels, was able to dismantle three 30ft track panels opposite the platform and stack the heavy concrete sleepers (see website picture). Early in May the Atlas was given a full service with a change of engine oil, oil and air filters and replacement fuses. In addition, the hydraulic leaks were fixed and all grease points filled, air lines cleaned and bled and brakes checked. The machine was then used to transfer a range of heavy

Hunslet spares from the dilapidated, wooden-floored, flat wagon R6 onto one of the 20 ton, steel floored, flat wagons recently acquired from NIR. This job was completed in a couple of hours, a task which would have taken a whole day with the hand crane.

Bits & Pieces: May also saw the first application of weed killer to the site.

In early June Dermot Mackie and James Friel made repairs to the large water tank at Lisburn in readiness for the Steam and Jazz season.

GENERAL

Address: Please note that the Society's postal address for general contact is now:

RPSI
PO Box 461
NEWTOWNNABBEY
BT36 9BT

All enquiries, unless otherwise stated, should use this address.

The address for all enquiries regarding Dublin area trains has also changed:

RPSI
Docklands Innovation Park
128-130 East Wall Road
Dublin 3
+353 1 480 0553

Funding News: Two new grant awards have been made this year to date, from Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), to assist with funding for a small exhibits project and the next stage of all important heritage skills training for NIR personnel involved with steam operations.

The youth team, led by Mark Walsh, will benefit from £14,000 funding, shared equally by NIMC and HLF, to allow the Society's small exhibits, presently stored by members in diverse locations, to be brought together at Whitehead and made available for public display, interpretative and educational purposes. The project will entail repairs to part of the Stables block, to provide suitable and secure conditions for central storage, and work to Dining Car 87, including the creation of an exhibition area with display cases.

Initial work, to be undertaken by the youth team, will consist of:

- Removal of rubbish, photographs, curtains, bar fittings, chairs, kitchen utensils and all other items of that nature

for secure storage.

- Strip interior paintwork as necessary.
- Removal and storage of the roof vents and water tank fill pipes to allow access to the canvas underneath.
- Replacement of the interior ceiling lights and some adaptation of the electrics.

The recently completed Conservation report, one of a number commissioned by the Society last year with HLF assistance, recommended that, as an accredited museum, steps should be taken to bring our collection of artefacts together as an educational and interpretative resource, adding another dimension for visitors to the site. External displays/exhibitions with other accredited organisations could also be supported.

The Museums Committee will have the opportunity to check the record and descriptions of all artefacts held by the Society as they are moved to the central store, and it is envisaged that this initiative will encourage the donation of new items over time.

HLF have also supported further training of NIR personnel, following upon the successful scheme last year which saw the passing out of two new steam drivers. More operating personnel will be identified to undertake a programme of theoretical and practical training which will allow them to progress to the steam footplate, thus ensuring that the heritage skills are maintained and used within the current railway operating environment.

Chairman Johnny Glendinning and Irwin Pryce, RPSI Training Standards Officer, have worked closely with NIR who have supported, with considerable foresight, this important initiative.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the funders in supporting these projects, and the ongoing help and guidance provided by NIR. It is recognition of the important part we play in keeping alive part of our industrial heritage, with all the participative and educational opportunities that it provides for future generations.

Five Foot Three (1): Sharp-eyed members will have noticed that the Contents page of the latest issue showed the Chairman's Report, but the report itself was missing. This was an inadvertent omission and apologies are due to the Chairman and members.

Five Foot Three (2): Issue 17 (Winter 1974/5) is now available from the website,

complete with photographs.

Sales: These items have been added to the Sales Order Form:

"Comeragh Diesel Railtour" Brochure, Dublin - Waterford - Limerick Junction - Dublin, 34 photos, 44 pages, £3.

"Carrowbeg Railtour" Brochure, Dublin - Westport - Ballina - Dublin - Whitehead, 53 photos, 80 pages, £3.

"The Atock/Attack Family - a Worldwide Railway Engineering Dynasty" by Ernie Shepherd, paperback, 21 x 15 cm, 162 b&w photos, 264 pages, £15.95.

Free copy of "Comeragh Diesel Railtour" brochure with each order of £20 or more (while stocks last).

AGM: The meeting, chaired by Society President Lord O'Neill, was over very quickly. An expected contest for the post of Dublin Area Operations Office did not take place as the challenger withdrew his nomination at a late stage.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: Minor repairs. Make and fit electric enclosures and conduit for TPWS. Further TPWS work is on hold until the locomotive's return from Dublin in August.

No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL Contract): Marking out and drilling new frame plates.

No.461: Adjust inner firebox wrapper and fit tubeplate. Fitting new inner firebox plates to foundation ring. Firehole flanging. Assembling overhauled eccentrics. Vacuum ejector overhaul.

Wickham Trolley (CDRRL Contract): Reconstruct frame, fit new engine and drive. Brake equipment and seat frame overhaul.

G-Class (DCDR Contract): Re-profile wheels.

Loading Shovel: In early June the Youth Team (of Ivan fame) carried out urgent repairs on the hydraulics of the loading shovel. Without it, coaling of No.186 for the first Steam & Jazz trains would have been problematical!

Foundry: No.4 firebars and contract jobs.

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