



September 2009

NEWS LETTER

LOCOMOTIVES

GM: Saturday 22nd August saw a little bit of history being created at Inchicore Works for the Society when it took possession of its first working main line diesel locomotive.

The handing over ceremony took place in glorious sunshine, in front of a large crowd, during the Staff Family Fun Day. CME Phil Verster did the honours of handing the pioneer member of class 141 over to the Society. He spoke in very complimentary terms of what the Society is achieving, and gave an assurance to further the relationship between Iarnród Éireann and the Society in any possible way.

Vice Chairman David Houston was on hand to offer the gratitude of the Society to Phil, and all those in the company who had given support, and to thank Murphy Models who have, through a generous donation, made the purchase possible.

A plaque with the following wording will be attached to the locomotive: "The Railway Preservation Society of Ireland gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Phil Verster, Chief Mechanical Engineer of Iarnród Éireann - Irish Rail, in the preservation of this locomotive."

A second plaque will state: "The purchase of this locomotive for preservation was funded by Paddy Murphy of Murphy Models Dublin."

Locomotive 141 is the first of the double-ended locomotives produced by the Electro Motive Division of General Motors in 1962 and is of national and international importance.

The locomotive was taken out of service and was expected to travel to Whitehead Excursion station at the earliest opportunity. However, this is very much unlikely to happen after a part of the viaduct, which carries the Dublin - Belfast across the Broadmeadow estuary north

of Malahide, collapsed into the sea on Friday 21st August.

No.1 (CDCR contract): Pipework and feed pump.

No.3BG "Guinness": Members of the youth squad painted the cab interior over the summer.

No.4: Out of traffic for fitting of TPWS.

No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL contract): New frame plates positioned and adjusted for welding using an optical level. Machining of driving wheel flanges. Fitting coupling rod bushes.

No.85 "Merlin": This locomotive is to be overhauled with a view to returning to traffic in approximately 2 years. The two main reasons for selecting No.85 rather than one of the other GNR(I) 4-4-0s is that most of the heavy overhaul work was done last time round and IÉ have confirmed extended route availability for the locomotive. Work has started on dismantling of boiler attachments, pipework, chimney, etc., preparatory to lifting out boiler for inspection.

No.186: A new spark arrestor arrangement has been fitted in the smokebox.

No.461: Refurbishment is continuing with drilling of rivet holes in the new inner firebox plates. Firebox lifted into boiler and checked for alignment prior to riveting. Assembly of eccentrics.

Wickham Trolley (CDRRL contract):

Refurbishment completed and vehicle tested on 3ft gauge line (all 60ft of it). Brake system to be adjusted.

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

Hunslet 102: Not much has been recorded on the history of this locomotive and its sister 101 since being acquired by the Society.

When Translink offered the locomotives for sale a few years ago the Society bid for them

because they were both at Whitehead anyway and, being realistic, no matter what other body might have obtained them they would have stayed there for some time (and might still be there now).

Shortly after the purchase, a group of enthusiastic individuals rallied round to make locomotive 102 operational. Sadly, due to a combination of bad luck and personal misfortune, they did not succeed. The locomotive has been stored in the open at Whitehead ever since.

But the idea of making it work again did not die. In January 2009 a proposal to start the locomotive was given approval and very slowly work began on 102.

The first hurdle was to get a full set of starting batteries in order. A number of cells were obtained second hand, while some of the cells that had been in 102 were coaxed back into life by gentle charging. Once all the cells were back in good condition, they were loaded into 102's battery boxes. The batteries were connected and the locomotive's lights were tested.

Inside the locomotive the air filters were changed using the filters from 101, which were much cleaner. The fuel filter was replaced, while the fuel suction strainer was found to be almost completely blocked. It was cleaned out and reassembled.

The engine's exhaust outlet had been covered and as a result the cylinders only had condensate in them when the engine was barreled over by hand. If the outlet had been open the engine would probably have seized after rainwater filled the cylinders and valves. However, it was not all good news as it seems that the outlet was uncovered for a considerable time when the locomotive was in storage at York Road; the cylinder liners have the pattern of the piston rings rusted into them. The engine oil sump was checked for water but none was found. Minor leaks were identified in the coolant system, but these were in decayed hoses and were not going to leak water into the lubrication systems.

Despite the sump being full of oil, oil pressure would not build, no matter how much the oil priming pump was pumped. After some tracing and poking, the oil return valve was found to be sticking open. It was cleaned out and adjusted, and from then on functioned normally.

Attempts were made to turn the engine over on battery power but were frustrated by a bad contact in the auxiliary cupboard, preventing the Start Control Contactor from closing. The faulty relay was cleaned, and the engine then turned over when the correct buttons were

pressed.

Fuel was bled up to the injector pumps, and attempts were made at starting the engine; more cylinders fired at each attempt. However, they refused to fire more than a few times consecutively, meaning the engine would not run under its own power. A supply of clean diesel from a 5 gallon drum was set up in the engine room, but it quickly became clear that unless the return line was routed into this drum our clean diesel would be emptied into the locomotive's fuel tank in a matter of seconds.

While trying to do things with injector pipes, two stuck exhaust valves on separate cylinders were identified. This of course meant that these two cylinders could not be expected to fire.

The correct course of action, given more manpower, was to take the affected cylinder heads off the engine to free the stuck valves. The other possible course of action was to complete the clean fuel supply and try starting the engine again, despite the stuck valves, and rely on the other 6 cylinders to function correctly.

The decision was taken to mothball the project while more important jobs at Whitehead were tackled. However, before the decision became official, the first attempts to start the engine on the clean diesel were tried. To everybody's amazement the locomotive sputtered into life, firing on two cylinders (out of eight) only. It ran for about a minute, until the uneven vibrations shook the suction pipe from the temporary fuel tank, and the engine stopped due to fuel starvation.

102 again faces an uncertain future, with a long list of defects, and the people who worked on it with a list of things to do even longer. However, the group are keen to get the engine running one more time, perhaps with a more secure suction pipe arrangement, to see if maybe more cylinders would start to fire as it warms through.

While there may well be a future, however uncertain, of some sort for 102, possibly outside the RPSI, Council has decided that there is definitely no future for 101. To that end the locomotive is due to be offered for disposal and interested parties are asked to register that interest with the Society as soon as possible.

Being a registered museum, the RPSI has an Acquisitions & Disposals policy which dictates the procedures to be followed when seeking to dispose of artefacts from the collection. That is why the Hunslets were advertised for sale in the museums journals a year or two ago, and why some societies were contacted direct, but not others which were not museums.

A number of expressions of interest were received at that time - some ridiculous and some serious.

With no feasibly serious response, the time has come to offer to all comers. If this approach comes to nothing then scrapping of locomotive 101 can not be ruled out.

TRAINS & EVENTS

Steam & Jazz: The 2009 season was completed without hitch, all 4 trains being at or near maximum capacity. The evening of Friday 19th June was notable in that No.186 was, for the first time, solely in the hands of the newly qualified drivers Gary Moore and Stephen Glass.

Sea Breeze: No.4 and the Cravens set headed to Wexford and Rosslare on 21st June and 5th July - both successful events.

The second train had an extra coach to convey one of our active members, his fiancée, family and friends to Wexford to celebrate their new betrothed status. By all accounts they thoroughly enjoyed the day basking in the splendour of Presidential Saloon 351. Best wishes to Gerry and Marita with every happiness for the future.

Schools Day: Over 130 pupils from Whitehead Primary School attended on Wednesday 24th June. In brilliant sunshine, the pupils and teachers took a train ride behind No.3BG "Guinness", before being given a hands-on tour of No.85 "Merlin".

Bangor Belle: The weather stayed mainly dry for the trip from Portadown to Bangor on Saturday 1st August. Despite a delay in departure from Portadown, the operation ran more or less as planned and a fine day was had by all.

No.186 was accompanied by 5 coaches and the Dutch van.

It was a long day for the RPSI and NIR crews due to the connecting empty train mileage from Whitehead to Portadown morning and evening, plus the light engine run from Bangor to Belfast Central Junction to turn the locomotive.

Kingstown Special: The trains on Sunday 2nd August, with No.4 and Cravens set, ran without a hitch, despite the large numbers travelling, and the weather was kind. 1,750 tickets were sold over the 5 trains and time-keeping was excellent. It is a long time since Dun Laoghaire Station had that many people on its platform.

Steam Enterprise: 9th August was the last Whitehead based mainline operation for a while, as No.4 returned north for fitting of TPWS.

No.186 still struggles a bit with the 100-mile trip and had to stop for a blow-up at Cloghoge. But then how many 130-year-old engines wouldn't?

It was a sell-out train which evoked some of the atmosphere of Steam Enterprises of the past. The bar staff were caught out and extra supplies had to be obtained in Dublin. Despite that, several products sold out early on the return trip!

The number of positive comments from passengers as they left the train at Belfast was certainly very encouraging. Another positive feature was a large contingent from the Whitehead populace - they definitely had their money's worth!

Finally, a word of appreciation should be given to the hard-pressed kitchen staff. They were very busy and carried on manfully (and womanly) in very hot and stuffy conditions.

Summer Steam: These train ride days are a mixed batch, being very variable in patronage.

18th July - There was a visit by a film crew from Imagine Media in Belfast, making an Irish language programme for pre-school children to be shown on TG4.

25th July - A reasonably busy day.

30th July - Pupils from Larne's Roddenvale special needs school visited for private train rides.

1st August - The Society is indebted to those members who forsook the delights of the main line to help out at a windy Whitehead.

22nd August - Very busy for the first hour and then quieter after that. However, the opportunity was taken to entertain the troops and public alike when a cake was cut at 4:30pm to celebrate the 90th birthday of No.3BG "Guinness".

Greystones Experience: A very gloomy weather forecast for the East Coast did not deter passengers who booked for the Dublin to Greystones and Greystones to Wicklow operations on Sunday 23rd August.

Prior to the event it looked like we would be 'full and standing' as the expected full rake of Cravens coaches was not available. However, the late addition of 1142 from the heritage set saved the day, and No.186 set out with a load of six, including van. The day went well and even the tender-first running on the return journey did not dampen the footplate crew's enthusiasm.

One unusual aspect was that No.186 worked the empty stock from Inchicore direct to Connolly Platform 5, returning there with it in the late afternoon. Again, the crew seemed

unfazed about taking the locomotive up the Gullet to Inchicore tender-first with six on.

European Architectural Heritage Day: There will be train rides and site tours at Whitehead on 13th September.

HRA Special: In conjunction with the Heritage Railway Association meeting in Dublin, there will be a run to Mullingar on 13th September.

Country Comes To Town: No.4 will be operating the annual shuttles between Lisburn and Portadown on 19th September.

Ghost Train: Following last year's successful event there will be a trip to Mullingar and Belvedere House on 25th October.

Broomstick Belle: This year's trains will be operating on Halloween itself - spooky!

Autumn Leaves: The locomotive swap operation scheduled for 8th November is very unlikely to run due to the Dublin line closure.

Santa Specials: The Dublin Santa trains have been on sale for a while now and, at the time of writing, there are very few tickets left. The Belfast and Portadown Santa tickets will not be on sale until after Halloween.

Locomotive allocation for these trains is uncertain at present as the Dublin to Belfast line is expected to remain closed until December at the very earliest.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Cravens: 1523 is undergoing overhaul in Inchicore, and the first coat of blue paint has now been applied. The underframes and buffers are being stripped back for application of black paint.

Mk2: 303 is having secondary door locking brackets fitted. Bodyside lamp mounting under way. Pressure ventilation unit and new ducting fitted, plus steam pipes.

Storage and cataloguing of spares is ongoing.

In late July two B4 bogies arrived from NIR's Adelaide yard. These are good condition relics from the scrapping of 80 class railcars, thought to be from intermediate trailers. The bogies are being cleaned and inspected.

Two ex-IÉ B4 bogies are being overhauled, the first having been dismantled in the workshop.

Wagons: With the recent acquisition from NIR of flat wagons 309 and 310, existing flat RPSI 6 is being dismantled. The latter wagon is an old GNR carriage underframe and was one of six such hired out as part of the Lisburn to Belfast relay about 10 years ago.

Sleeping Coach: Not much gets reported

about this vehicle (10651, the ex BR Eastern Region Mk3a sleeper) but work is proceeding on overhauling and improving the electrics - extra power points have been provided.

The vehicle has 13 compartments and the plan is to make 12 available as overnight accommodation for operating crews and members visiting - from Dublin for instance. The 13th compartment is to have a shower unit installed.

BELFAST MEETINGS

New Venue: Note the change of location for the meetings - Orangefield Hall. While St. Jude's was an excellent hall, the lack of a lift to the first floor was a severe limitation for some of our more senior members. The new hall, while smaller, is on the ground floor and has off-street parking.

GENERAL

Magheramorne: For a number of years Society representatives have been in discussion with developers from Lafarge Cement UK on plans for the development of the derelict quarry and cement factory at Magheramorne near Larne.

Magheramorne is best known to railway enthusiasts as the loading point for the spoil trains which ran up until 1970, hauled by the last of the NCC 2-6-4T jeeps, including our own No.4.

The Society's involvement, if plans come to fruition, will be to operate a railway museum and short heritage railway line (connected to the Belfast - Larne main line). While the developers hope to make a substantial investment, the RPSI will be expected to raise matching funds.

WHITEHEAD

Site: On 30th July 19 tonnes of stone was delivered, to be used as part of the foundations and base of the proposed shot-blasting facility.

JCB: New king pin bearing made and fitted: to counteract the rather toed-out and jalopy-like appearance of this elderly machine.

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