



December 2009

NEWS LETTER

GOOD NEWS WEEK

Extension: The land which runs parallel to the RPSI site on the seaward side and which is between the fence and the NI Housing Executive houses on the Islandmagee Road was put on the market in late October with an asking price of £125,000. The land for sale is 0.82 hectares (2 acres).

The Council considered that this land could be very useful if it could be obtained at the right price. The extra space would enable the provision of improved access to the back of the site, installation of a turntable and the building of stores and other much needed accommodation.

The hope was to use the money which had been invested on the stock market a number of years ago. However, during the time we were bidding for the land two members offered money totalling £90,000, one in the form of a loan and the other as a straight donation towards the purchase. On Thursday 26th November it was learned that the Society had been successful and had acquired the land for £154,000, subject to successful conveyancing, etc. The plan now is to have the new site surveyed to see how much is useful (not all of it is) and if the remainder can be sold on to recoup some of the outlay.

Station: Earlier in the year the RPSI applied for a Rural Development grant from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). In the Carrickfergus Council area these grants are being administrated by a group called GROW.

Our application to GROW was for financial assistance to fence the entire site at Whitehead, tarmac the roadway into the site

and to build a replica on our platform of the Lanyon station building at Whiteabbey. This building, which has been designed by RPSI member Tony Dean, will have a ticket office, souvenir shop and a café.

On the afternoon of Friday 27th November a telephone call was received from GROW to confirm that our application for £225,000 had been successful, subject to the Society getting planning permission for the scheme.

Many thanks to everyone for the input to this project during the last five months or so. Now the work begins!

Double-Header: During the same week, a member came forward and offered substantial assistance towards the purchase of a second Irish Rail 141 class locomotive. The Council agreed to accept this generous offer and, subject to it being adequately funded, 142 may soon be joining 141 on the Society's stock list.

And There's More: And last, but by no means least, the Council has just been informed that Iarnród Éireann have agreed to transfer their last remaining Mk2 coach, Presidential Saloon 5408, to the Society for preservation.

TRAINS & EVENTS

European Architectural Heritage Day: The fine weather certainly brought the crowds to Whitehead on Sunday 13th September.

No.3BG was on the train with Mk2 and brake van, carriage 460 was at the platform where teas and coffees were served, and No.171 was also at the platform as the hands-on display.

The tour guides were extremely busy, not

stopping until 6pm, an hour after the official finish. 274 passengers were carried.

Country Comes To Town: Over a couple of nights prior to 19th September there were disturbances at Lurgan which, unfortunately, left the railway line blocked on the Saturday morning.

Society representatives were in constant contact with NIR right up to departure time from Whitehead but at that stage railway staff were still being advised by police that the line could not be cleared. Hence it was impossible to allow our train to operate as planned to Portadown.

It was very disappointing for all those who had worked so hard to prepare the train and sell tickets that this should happen, especially so for those who were at Whitehead early to light up No.4.

Our thanks to NIR officials and crew for making the efforts they did to help us out on the day.

Ghost Train: The fully-laden operation to Mullingar on 25th October proved to be a creepy event - there were lots of scary looking passengers, and some members too.

Adhesion conditions for No.186 came into the scary category, particularly for the climb to Clonsilla where wet rails and fallen leaves caused some anxious spells on the footplate. Not surprisingly some time was lost, and this, unfortunately, had a knock-on effect throughout the remainder of the day.

With a late arrival at Mullingar, the detraining of almost 250 passengers to face the ghoulish events planned for them at Belvedere House, and the loading of approximately 200 passengers for the shuttle to Enfield, departure was 20 minutes late.

Tender-first, with no sanding proved to be another challenge for our locomotive crew, but they persevered and only lost a couple of minutes on the trip - a commendable effort.

However, arrival at Enfield was just that bit too late for us to be permitted to depart on time, and a prolonged wait was endured while two passenger trains cleared the single line section. Departure was finally 52 minutes late, with arrival back in Mullingar 54 minutes down.

The next scary event was that the water supply to the station and its environs had been cut off by the local council as a major leak had occurred. This meant no water for locomotive or coaches. Luckily No.186 has a

large tender so an additional water stop at Enfield got over that problem. Our passengers had already been made aware of the difficulty, and were most understanding. A lively run home, departing Mullingar 37 minutes late, brought a fitting end to the day which appears to have been enjoyed by all who travelled.

The Society's other Dublin-based locomotive, GM 141, was in action on the day transferring the coaches between Inchicore and Connolly.

Broomstick Belle: It was a bright and mostly sunny day (sandwiched between two atrocious days) on Saturday 31st October.

The trains were not as full as in previous years. Could the marketing be better? Or is it a sign of the times? Or was it simply that tickets went on sale too late due to uncertainties regarding the completion of TPWS/OTMR fitting to No.4? In the event, a reasonable number of tickets were sold on the day due to contacts in local radio.

No.4 was in fine form, and had a fine display of computers, bells and whistles which all seemed to make the correct noises at the correct places!

On the train, the usual fine parade of ghosts and ghoulies was on display, and the usual good time was had by all.

Locomotive Swap: The operation on Sunday 22nd November couldn't be run as a passenger train due to TPWS not being fully commissioned, and also because of the last-minute arrangements after the re-opening of the Malahide viaduct only 6 days previously. However, No.186 and No.4 are now in Whitehead and Dublin, respectively, for the Christmas season.

WCA Winter Festival: On Saturday 28th November, a very cold day, 187 people visited as part of a train rides event for the Whitehead Community Association.

Santa Specials (Dublin): These trains were sold out by early September.

Santa Specials (Portadown/Belfast): Tickets went on sale at the start of November and were sold out by the end of the month.

Mince Pie & Mulled Wine: The train this year will operate to Coleraine on Sunday 27th December with No.186. No.4 has not yet gained a full TPWS passenger certificate so can't operate the usual Belfast - Dublin locomotive swap. Hopefully, the destination will not matter so much as the relaxed post-

festivities travel opportunity!

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Carriage Bogies: B4 bogies from 300 have had new wheelsets fitted to replace worn wheels.

Generators: Two brand new electrical generators have been delivered for fitting to Mk2 half brakes 460 and 463.

Steam!!: The steam heating boiler on Dutch Van 462 has been certified for use by NIR. It means that No.186 can retain all her puff for haulage during the Santa season!

Coach 303: The brake system has been overhauled and a refurbished set of bogies fitted. The coach has been painted and lined out. Fitting of secondary door locking and train line remains to be completed.

A Busy Week At Inchicore: The Carriage Team was working away on Wednesday 2nd September as usual, preparing the carriage interiors for the Society's train to Mullingar on 13th September in conjunction with the Heritage Railway Association's visit to Dublin for their general meeting.

The team is made up entirely of carriage stewards, some of whom go to Inchicore on Wednesdays to ensure that all is clean and ready for every trip. As a group with a good working plan it is amazing what they can achieve in four hours.

The following Saturday and the Carriage Crew were hard at work again. Taking a break from finishing Craven 1523, no effort was spared by the lads who were in Inchicore from 10:00 until 20:00 with only two breaks for tea!

With the continuing shortage of berthing in Connolly, due to railcar sets being displaced after the Malahide line closure, it was decided to prepare and water the train in anticipation of the set not being moved to Connolly on Saturday night, ahead of the next day's train.

While this is normally done on Saturday night/Sunday morning using facilities in Connolly, watering in Inchicore involves extending 10 hoses from a hydrant and then moving the lot to a different hydrant to finish the set. In addition, it is necessary to make up extensions to reach all the filling points.

With the rare availability of water close to the set, the opportunity was taken to thoroughly wash the exterior of Craven 1541.

Amidst all this water and cleaning, gangways and electrics were made up and others broken to allow for the marshalling of state coach 351 in the set.

Items on the fault list were repaired along with the normal carriage maintenance work.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG "Guinness": The boiler has been washed out, washout plugs replaced and checked. A 'sticking brake' problem was traced to the steam brake cylinder not moving freely - a dose of steam oil when next steamed is the cure.

No.4: The TPWS 'first of class' test was successfully completed in mid-October. The main elements of TPWS/AWS are now operational but the system will not be commissioned until the locomotive returns from Dublin in January.

No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL Contract): Work on this locomotive is being treated as a training exercise. New frame plates welded and assembled. Driving wheels re-profiled. New rear frame sections riveted. Valve chests and slide valves dismantled. Journals polished. Repair and riveting of pony frame.

No.85 "Merlin": The cab, smokebox door and boiler cladding have been removed and the boiler lifted from the frames.

Other small preparation jobs included dismantling the lubrication pipework, removing brake gear and numerous bolts securing the smokebox to the cylinder block and front framing. Removal of boiler fittings, tubes and superheater elements for boiler examination.

Boiler washed out - scale and mud power-hosed from inside the boiler barrel which allowed the boiler inspector to have a better view. Following the inspection, which was encouraging, a repair schedule is being drawn up.

GM 141: The locomotive remains in Dublin and will probably come to Whitehead as part of a Thank-You tour in January or February.

No.186: Now at Whitehead for washing out and minor repairs prior to operating Santa trains.

No.461: Overhaul work continues. Inner firebox rebuilt. Fire door opening cut out and plate set to suit firehole ring. Inner firebox door plate 'dished' to suit firehole ring. Firebox riveting complete. Firebox

assembled for trial fit in boiler. Eccentrics assembled. Crossheads overhauled. Preparation for fitting of stays.

Wickham Trolley (CDRRL Contract): Brake rigging altered to avoid jamming of brakes due to variations in loading.

Locomotive Wheelsets (Contract): Preparation for tyre re-profiling and truing up of big end journals.

GENERAL

Sales: The following new items are available from the RPSI Shop:

Locomotive Compendium Ireland by Colin Boocock. Hardback. 30 x 22 cm, 6 maps, 136 b&w photos, 71 colour photos, 128 pages, £19.99.

A survey of every class of steam and diesel locomotive, standard and narrow gauge, that has worked on the public railways in Ireland since 1949, excluding multiple units, industrial railways and pleasure railways.

Irish Railway Review No.9, Markle DVD, 80 minutes, £18.95

A review of Irish railway operations in 2009, including Ireland's remaining freight traffic and a visit to Headhunters Barber Shop, Enniskillen - famed for its railway museum.

Tales of the Permanent Way - Stories from the Heart of Ireland's Railways by Michael Barry, hardback book, 25 x 20 cm, 180 photos (mostly colour), 160 pages, £22.

The story of Irish railways is told from the perspective of permanent way personnel - from chief civil engineers through to track gangers.

British Railway Signalling in Colour by Robert Hendry, paperback, 28 x 22 cm, 190 colour photos, 80 pages, £14.99.

This is the first all colour book devoted to all aspects of railway signalling. Portadown South, Poyntzpass, Warrenpoint, Athy, Gorey and Kilkenny signal cabins are included.

Journal: As the end of year approaches thoughts turn to the next issue of Five Foot Three, the Society's journal.

If you have considered writing a piece then the Editor would like to hear from you, but please get in touch first to let him know what you intend and to agree its suitability for publication.

Also, good quality colour or black & white photographs relevant to the year's business would be appreciated.

What A Balloon!: On the Broomstick Belle excursions the RPSI train stewards demonstrated that they have a glamorous modelling career ahead of them, albeit in balloons!

After a few short lessons by Selwyn Johnston, they quickly mastered the skill and created over 250 balloon swords, dogs and other unusual creations for the children. Swords were particularly popular and a production line quickly formed which Henry (T. Ford) Ritchie was particularly proud of!

In typical railway protocol, and not to be out done by the footplate crew, train stewards started at the lowest level of pumping up balloons, progressing onto the skilled art of tying knots before mastering the challenging technique of twisting them. We are proud to say that two train stewards have been fully assessed as balloon modellers and have promised to practise their new skills thereby increasing their repertoire for the next children's train trip!

Congratulations to them and the other train stewards who will also pass in due course (when we discover what new breed of dog they have managed to create out of balloons!).

It was true to say that fun was had by all the train stewards who have now another key skill to add to their CVs. Indeed, several were planning to officially launch their balloon modelling career at children's parties that evening!

Equally, the children enjoyed unlimited balloon modelling throughout the day and it added considerably to the overall Halloween experience.

The balloon modelling by the stewards was a pilot project. Aside from the fun there was financial benefit and if it is accepted to continue with in-house entertainment on children's train trips it will help save money which was previously paid to external children's entertainers.

BELFAST MEETINGS

14th October: The first meeting of the season, and the first in the new Parke Hall venue, was a film show by Fred Cooper.

The show opened with a slide and video

round-up of Society events and trains since the last meeting.

Fred's material included, television news reports featuring the Society, dating from about 1987, Warrenpoint, the GNR Derry Road, the Donegal and finishing with some recently-found footage of the Fintona tram.

The new hall is less than half the size of the old venue, but had adequate seating even for the customary large turn-out for Fred's shows. There were a few teething problems but nothing that will not be ironed out over coming months.

11th November: In the 30-odd year history of the meetings there have been a lot of very interesting presentations, but surely the "Dundalk Works" by Charles Friel must be up there with the best of them!

In the audience were several men with Dundalk connections - either they worked there or someone in the family did. It was particularly pleasing to see Pearse McKeown, late of Dundalk and Inchicore Works, who travelled from Dublin with member Joe McKeown whose own father Brian was a charge-hand fitter in the Erecting Shop. At least four other Dublin members made the trip.

Charles showed about 200 pictures of the Works, inside and out, and associated activities.

WHITEHEAD

Blast Cleaning Shop: Steelwork for the reinforced concrete base and retaining wall was prepared during October and November. By late November work had proceeded to pouring concrete for the retaining wall between the floor and the water tower bank.

The load of concrete was sufficient to also create the base for the new signal posts at the Belfast end of the platform and to extend the concreted area of the central aisle in the carriage shed by about 10 metres.

JCB: Renewal of king pin bushes was undertaken during the autumn.

Dormitory: The Mk3 sleeping coach (10651) water supply is now permanently attached. Work continues to the hot water system, and stripping out the toilets in preparation for installing a shower in place of one of the toilets, and installing a domestic cistern in the other toilet.

Super Shunt: On Saturday 17th October, a

complicated shunt was carried out at Whitehead. And why was this shunting necessary? Very simply, the storage space at Whitehead is now at a premium and a recent review of rolling stock identified a number of items that could be disposed of. The weekend's activities were aimed at extracting these vehicles from the jungle at the rear of the depot to more accessible positions.

The redundant vehicles are:

- 5 NCC bogie flat
- 101 Hunslet locomotive, spares to be retained for 102
- 916 Mk2 driving trailer
- 923 Mk2 open
- 2518 Guinness grain van, spares to be retained for 504, a similar vehicle

Track: For some time now the poor condition of many of the timbers under the turnout at the Larne end of the platform road has given concern. With the approaching busy Santa operations, which need this several times a day to run the engine round a train, it was decided to use a complete track possession to carry out the urgent necessary repairs.

In total the Site Team took 4 complete working days, over 2 weeks in November, to do the job, which entailed the lifting of both crossovers and the removal of the old timbers. On sight of the bits of these as they easily fell apart, during removal, our Carriage & Wagon officer likened them to wet compost!

Six very long timbers and three standard sleepers were replaced, the crossovers were lifted into place and after careful alignment the timbers were drilled and the track was finally bolted down on a very wet Thursday 19th November.

While the job was greatly facilitated by the Atlas machine, thanks are mainly due to all who made this possible in what was a tight deadline under far from ideal conditions.

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HRA VISIT TO IRELAND

Dublin Visit

The RPSI was well represented at the four day long Heritage Railway Association General Meeting in Dublin over the weekend of 12th & 13th September. Over 90 delegates from as far away as the Netherlands and Latvia attended the first such meeting held in the Republic of Ireland. The RPSI was represented by our Vice President Dr Garret Fitzgerald, Chairman Mr Johnny Glendinning and Vice Chairman Mr David Houston.

Wynn's Hotel was the centre of activity with study visits provided to many locations in order that delegates could learn more of the development of railway heritage activity in Ireland. They were also informed of the modern railway developments taking place in Ireland.

The comprehensive programme included:

- A visit to the National Transport Museum of Ireland at Howth.
- An excellent talk on Irish Railway History by Mr Oliver Doyle of Iarnród Éireann and a guided tour of the main heritage aspects of Connolly Station.
- An evening reception at the head-quarters of the Irish Railway Record Society including a very warm welcome

by their Chairman Mr Tony O'Shaughnessy.

- A guided visit of the Red Cow Depot. This included a talk on Luas developments by Michael Sheehy of the Railway Procurement Agency and a tour of the works by the Alstom engineer in charge of tram maintenance.
- A guided bus tour of the Red Line extension works.
- A full trip on the Green Line.
- The formal General Meeting in Wynn's Hotel.
- A conference dinner.
- A trip to Mullingar behind RPSI No.186 and the RPSI Cravens coaches. The set also included the beautifully restored GSWR Royal Saloon 351.
- A visit to Belvedere House.
- A visit to the Irish Steam Preservation Society's line in Stradbally, Co. Laois.
- A visit to Straffan Steam Museum.

A number of other RPSI members attended, as well as Mr Dick Fearn - Iarnród Éireann, Mr Mal McGreevey - NI Railways, Mrs Catherine Mason - Translink and Mr John Welsey - Railway Safety Commission. Other high profile attendees included Mr Jimmy Deenihan TD, Sir William McAlpine, Mr Brian Simpson MEP (Chair of the Transport and Tourism Committee of the European Parliament) and Lord

Faulkner, who has dealt with transport issues for Lord Adonis Minister of Transport.

At the General Meeting HRA-Ireland Chairman Mr Wesley Chapman made the formal welcome to delegates. A heavy programme included the following feature talks:

- John Welsey - spoke on health and safety issues relating to heritage railways in Ireland.
- Jimmy Deenihan TD gave an enthusiastic talk on the Lartigue project (the restoration of part of the Listowel and Ballybunion railway). He also emphasised the need for all heritage railways in Ireland to co-operate more formally.
- Brian Simpson MEP - emphasised the latest threats to heritage railways by the European legislation and discussed possible derogation from some railway safety issues under the coming 3rd Railway Directive.
- Selwyn Johnson of Headhunters Enniskillen gave a lively talk on the Headhunters Museum.

At the evening dinner both our Vice President and Chairman spoke on behalf of the RPSI and Sir William McAlpine received a lifetime achievement award for his unstinting work on behalf of heritage railways and in particular his saving and repatriation from the USA of The Flying Scotsman.

Our congratulations go to HRA-Ireland for their organisation of such a unique event which will have done much to improve understanding of Heritage Railways throughout the island of Ireland. We are all indebted to Wesley and his team of Mr Richard Kenny (Secretary) and in particular to HRA-Ireland Vice Chairman Mr Clifton Flewitt. Clifton put together a fantastic programme which ran like clockwork despite the added complications of the unexpected Malahide Viaduct collapse just a few weeks prior to the event. Delegates were highly enthused by the whole event and took home some very memorable experiences. To Clifton in particular our sincere thanks.

Mullingar Visit

Sunday saw the Heritage Railway Association weekend continue when the members of the Association travelled to Mullingar on board the Dublin set, hauled by No.186. With both the loco and carriages stabled in Inchicore the steam raisers arrived to light the fire long before the sun began to shine, a deed they had not expected to undertake until the winter months! Nonetheless, spirits were high among the RPSI and IÉ crews. The set with No.186 in steam was hauled to Connolly by GM 177 exactly on schedule. Some of the HRA members were accommodated in the splendour

of State Saloon Coach 351, which was included in the set in their honour. The consist of the rest of the train was BR 3185, 1539, 1541, 1508, and 1505. Departure was a few minutes down from the scheduled time 09:10.

The 1879-built J15 didn't fail to impress the passengers and made light work of the six coach train as she easily tackled the steep incline of Glasnevin Bank. The first stop, unusually, took place at a photo location in Clonsilla. The train then proceeded to Enfield where the engine's tender was replenished and shovelling undertaken to move the coal forward, something that has to be done quite frequently, on trips.

Next stop was at Killucan loop to cross an up Sligo train. After clearance the journey continued to Mullingar departing slightly behind time. On arrival in the Midland town the passengers went to enjoy the delights of Mullingar, and some HRA members were transported by coach to visit the nearby Belvedere House. Not so though for the loco, service, and on-board crews who remained to prepare the train for its next duty, a return trip to Enfield which as usual was very well supported by the local population.

The Society, maintains a base in the old loco shed in Mullingar where major carriage restoration takes place. Unfortunately this shed, which is located on the

former Midland line to Galway, is not suitable for public visits.

Turning the Society's locomotives is one of the few activities, apart from PW trains, taking place on the line now; all other traffic has since ceased. This is clearly evident from the overgrown greenery and derelict appearance. The local trip to Enfield did not go according to plan, with an extended wait at Enfield for two trains. The return was an ill-fated 80 minutes behind time. However, the glorious sunshine of the Midlands and good running lifted the passengers' spirits and on arrival there were smiling faces all round.

While No.186 was on the turntable the two service trains which were due to be crossed, passed through Mullingar eliminating the planned crossing at Killucan and Enfield on the return journey to Connolly.

The loco's tender was loaded with a maximum capacity, 3,370 gallons, of water and a non-stop run home departed shortly before 17:00, a full 90 minutes down. Despite the unpreventable delays the set arrived into Connolly's platform one around 18:30.

The loco stabled in Connolly while the set was promptly hauled back to Inchicore, with 171 this time doing the honours. A good day was had by both passengers, HRA members and all crews involved.