



June 2010

# NEWS LETTER

## WHITEHEAD

**Station:** On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May the Society was granted planning permission for the proposed new station building on the Whitehead Excursion platform.

The building is part of a package of works which are being funded through a £225,000 grant from the European Regional Development Fund administered by GROW a body set up by Carrickfergus, Larne and Antrim Councils to administer the European Funding. The RPSI has worked closely with Carrickfergus Council on this bid and are very grateful to the Councillors and Council staff who have been so supportive throughout the past year.

The works not only include the building of a replica Edwardian station based on that once at Whiteabbey but also full security fencing of the whole site together with the laying of tarmac on approach roads, car parks and the platform surface.

As with all European Funding the RPSI must adhere to strict guidelines in the use of the grant and is now proceeding to appoint a Project Co-ordinator as a first step. This will be followed by the preparation of tender documents for prospective architectural teams and contractors.

It is unlikely that work on site will begin before the Autumn. Construction should take between 9 and 12 months.

The new facilities will include: ticket office and reception area, shop, cafe, toilets, office, cleaner's store and lift. The building will be fully disability compliant.

It will form an excellent visitor centre for our operations.

**Track:** Recently there has been some concern that the approach track to No.1 Loco Shed, near to the water column, was spreading. As this is held together with very old wooden sleepers which, when buried in ash, tend to rot it was decided to replace 16 of these with concrete ones.

Preparation in mid-April included bringing the sleepers from the store (opposite the platform) on a modified bogie and exposing the fishplate bolts, which were liberally coated with diesel oil to ease their release.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> April a good squad of volunteers, together with both the JCB and the Atlas, removed the old rotten wooden sleepers and, after hand digging the slit trenches, slotted in the concrete replacements. Bolting up the fishplates and replacing the rusty and badly corroded keys now means that the track is ready for careful initial use.

**Bits & Pieces:** Some tasks around the site:

- The Sealink 20ft container has been painted, and finished in black with yellow stripes. It will be used for storage of paint and sundries.
- The Whitehead joiners have

machined some Irish oak timbers for the frame of Donegal railcar 15.

- In preparation for the Dalriada Railtour, the Mk3 sleeping coach was washed out and polished internally.
- The exterior of the sleeping coach is also receiving some attention. Joe Galbraith has washed it down and applied the first coats of a 5-coat paint job.

**Visit Of Dundalk Railway Men:** For some months, there has been a railway reminiscence project running in Dundalk.

Entitled "The Way We Were", the programme is organised by the Netwell Centre and Diversity Challenges. The Netwell Centre is an interdisciplinary research centre within Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) specialising in research linked to ageing and later life. Diversity Challenges aims to facilitate a shared understanding in diverse cultural groups and is organising the funding of the project through a project supported by the PEACE III Programme which is managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by a consortium of the Community Relations Council and Pobal.

Society member Charles Friel has been working principally with Brendan McQuaid who was Station Master in Dundalk until recently. So far, they have interviewed 25 people from all grades and the job is still continuing.

Many of those interviewed wanted to know more about the Society's activities. One result was that the EU Peace III Programme funded many of them to travel from Portadown to Dublin behind No.4 on the Monday of the Dalriada International Railtour.

Another outcome was on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May when a party of 18 came to Whitehead to see both what the Society has of the old GNR and how the RPSI does things. Eleven of the party had worked on the GN (4 of them as fitters) while the others had fathers on the railway.

After lunch in the Whitehead Tea Rooms, they were shown around the site by Eddie Creamer, Henry Ritchie, Sullivan Boomer and Charles Friel. Transport at Whitehead was provided by the guide's cars and most of the party caught the 16:32 back to Central - but some had to be brought back to Belfast by Eddie!

Peter Scott and Francis Richards helped make the visit go smoothly and the arrangements worked very well. The visitors' applause at the end showed how much they had enjoyed it all. Some were a bit overwhelmed at what we do - it seems that even professionals can overlook what preservation involves! They were delighted to find No.85 under repair, an intact No.171 and the bits of No.131. They got inside the Directors' Saloon (rarely allowed in the old days) and were very impressed by the restoration of Ivan (some thought that it should visit Dundalk again!). Finding the cutaway SG3 fully restored in its glass case was a particular favourite. All of this will, hopefully, prompt more memories for the record.

Before leaving, Brendan McQuaid thanked the Society on behalf of the group - and he later got in touch to say that "everyone had a great and memorable day".

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**351 At Utrecht:** The "Royal Class - Regal Journeys" Exhibition opened at the Spoorwegmuseum, Utrecht on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

The opening ceremony was performed in the presence of Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, who arrived on board the royal train from Den Haag (The Hague).

After a welcoming address from Paul van Vlijmen, Museum Director, the large invited audience were treated to a tableau with actors, in full costume, representing the various royal houses of Europe. The Queen was then taken on a conducted tour of all the exhibits. As well as Ireland, countries represented were: Belgium, Czech Republic,

Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden.

Included in the distinguished gathering were the Ambassadors of the 'lending' countries. Iarnród Éireann were represented by CEO Dick Fearn and Heritage Officer Gregg Ryan. Representing the RPSI were George Dempsey and David & Breda Humphries.

The RPSI can feel justly proud of its participation in this prestigious event. 351 looked splendid and thanks should be recorded to George Dempsey, Chas Meredith, David Seymour, Fred Andrews and Peter Fletcher for their labours in preparing the carriage at Inchicore and to Gregg Ryan and George Dempsey at the Utrecht museum.

The exhibition will run until the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

**Volunteers Needed:** With the summer season upon us, the time has come to consider the round of activities on the carriage front. Carriage cleaning is an ongoing but not very glamorous task, but there are a number of additional tasks that are required to be done at Whitehead.

Dutch Van - Remove and re-hang the sliding door on the 'sea' side. Remove and re-hang the guard's doors so that they do not scrape the floor.

Commission the 'B' Boiler.

Coach 303 - Test steam heating system. Install and test secondary door locking and train line.

Coach 304 - Clean flooring (chewing gum remover has been obtained!). Fit seat cushions and install seat frames. Commission electric heating and assess air conditioning running requirements. Clean internal surfaces and paint or varnish as required. Fit secondary door locking and train line.

Coach 181 - Remove redundant alternator.

Much of this work can be easily learned. Would you like to be part of a regular carriage working day as the site team

do? If so, then please come along any weekend.

**Dining Car Appeal:** The last News-Letter contained an appeal for objects to display in UTA Dining Car 87, currently being refurbished.

There were a number of responses and the quality and quantity of items offered has been good. However, more is needed. In particular the team is keen to hear from anyone with:

- Cutlery or crockery from a dining car, station refreshment room or railway hotel, especially anything marked with the railway's name or crest.
- Paperwork such as menus or advertisements from dining cars.
- Photographs of dining cars, especially of dining car staff and customers.
- We would be especially keen to find an original dining car attendant's uniform.

## DALRIADA RAILTOUR

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May:** The first planned weekend railtour to Northern Ireland started off with NIR GM 113 arriving at Whitehead on Thursday morning to collect the train of 5 Mk2 carriages and the Dutch van.

The ensemble headed off to Dublin in fine weather with a healthy number of passengers, some also, like the train, positioning themselves in Dublin for the weekend, others just having a relaxing day out with the Society.

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May:** Irish Rail's GM 081 was at the head of the train all day, and looked well with the Mk2 set. The train was fully booked, many passengers anxious to take this last chance to sample locomotive haulage on the Rosslare to Waterford route.

The scenic line to Wexford never ceases to please and this was no exception. There was an hour's layover in Wexford to allow a service train to cross, and many of the passengers took the opportunity to see what the town

had to offer.

Good running all day meant that the schedule was maintained, apart from a hiccup at Kildare when the local to Dublin got away ahead of the special. A number of passengers had hoped to catch the service train straight into Heuston to make their travel to the IRRS meeting that evening easier.

Once again the Society's thanks are due to the IRRS for hosting an evening's entertainment for tour participants, and a large number availed of the chance to see Norman Foster's excellent slide show.

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May:** No.186 was the engine for the trip from Dublin. It has been a while since a Dublin (or Cork) crew operated a train to Belfast and they were no doubt happy to breast the summit at Newry with such a small engine.

At Belfast there was just time for a quick photograph as the Belfast crew took over for the remainder of the day, the first stop being the Excursion Station at Whitehead. Time there was short so it was unfortunate that the chance was missed to have No.186 photographed next to No.4. The latter was sporting one of the headboards that were carried on the last spoil train 40 years ago on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1970.

No.4 soon took over and, complete with headboard, it was a return to Lisburn for water before a reversal and a quick visit to Ballymena. The water tanks there have suffered somewhat over the years and now need serious patching or renewal before they can be used again (NIR have promised repairs in time for the 2011 season), so it was a slower fill from hydrants.

Tanks filled, it was a quick return to Belfast Central for most, and on to Whitehead for others. There the sleeping coach was in great demand, about a dozen stewards, shunters, cleaners, firemen, drivers and steam-raisers making use of it.

The Europa Hotel's penthouse function room was the venue for the railtour

dinner for over 60 of the tour participants, and Vice-Chairman John Lockett gave an interesting speech taking in such varied themes as community differences, local Nobel prize-winners and inventors, Belfast engineering, and RPSI future plans, to name but a few.

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May:** A bright but chilly morning saw No.4 leading the train for Coleraine. After a repeat of Saturday's stop for water at Ballymena, it was a spirited non-stop run to the destination. While the engine was turned and watered the local chip shop seemed to be doing unexpectedly good business!

On the return, a stop at the down platform at Ballymoney gave a rare chance to have a look at this interesting, if somewhat neglected, station. After that it was another water stop at Ballymena before a return to Belfast Central and then Whitehead.

But far from the day being over, No.186 again took the strain and a late afternoon run to Bangor to give passengers the view from the other side of Belfast Lough.

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May:** No.4 once more took the head of the train and a fine run was made from Belfast to Dublin. After a short stay there, GM 113, which had had its own weekend in Dublin, came on the train and returned the whole show to Belfast and Whitehead.

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> May:** The traditional Tuesday heritage coach tour this year visited the preserved corn mill in Annalong, Co. Down. There, the visitors were shown the operation of this traditional water-powered mill, which was in operation up to 1965.

After lunch in a local hostelry, the party departed to the nearby Silent Valley and Ben Crom reservoirs where a very interesting conducted tour explained the history and workings of these fine structures.

**Acknowledgements:** The organising of the annual railtour is a mammoth task involving numerous Society members from Dublin and Whitehead, and without

their great dedication it just would not happen. So too is the dedication of the NIR and IE footplate crews deserving of thanks as they also are prepared to go that extra mile, both literally and metaphorically, to ensure the tour's success. But most of all thanks must go to our participants from Ireland, the ever-faithful GB regulars and, this year, to the 19 visitors from the United States, one from New Zealand and two from Norway.

## TRAINS & EVENTS

**Light Engine (1):** No.186 moved to Dublin light engine on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March.

**Easter Eggspress (Belfast):** On Easter Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, the threatened wet weather didn't arrive so it was a pleasant day's steaming which was had by all.

It was No.4's first outing with TPWS in operation, and it all appeared to work OK - at least, there were no sudden stops at signals!

The two trains between Belfast and Whitehead ended up fully booked so it was a good atmosphere on board.

**Easter Eggspress (Dublin):** Also on Easter Monday, No.186 hauled a train to Mullingar where there were further festivities at Belvedere House. A great day out for all the family!

**Maynooth Shuttle:** Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April No.186 operated two return trips from Dublin to Maynooth.

With a healthy contingent of passengers travelling, the train set off from Platform 3 in relatively good weather, only for a downpour to erupt on arrival in Maynooth resulting in the carriage watering crew getting drenched!

Watering completed, the train returned to Connolly where passengers were, unusually, set down at Platform 6 - normally only used by suburban trains.

The train then ran empty to the unused loop platform at Grand Canal Dock to run round - a location frequented by No.4 during the Santa season but rarely

visited by No.186.

The locomotive took water via a hydrant located on the street several feet below. Reaching this necessitated a rather circuitous hike from the high level station through the streets.

Returning to Connolly, another load of passengers was picked up at Platform 5 for the second run. No.186 again gave a good account of herself with a brisk run out to Maynooth. This time it wasn't necessary to water the carriages at Maynooth, so logically enough the rain held off! After a quick run round, the shuttle returned to Connolly where passengers disembarked at about 15:40. No.186 retired to the yard, with the carriages remaining at platform 5 until an 071 returned them to Inchicore later that afternoon.

These short trips have proven to be ideal for families with young children, with an average journey time of two hours, including time to have a look at the locomotive at Maynooth. A repeat is planned for September.

The occasion was also driver Ken Fox's birthday, and a number of the party conspired to ambush him on the footplate with a birthday cake. It's not often that Ken is lost for words!!

**Light Engine (2):** The Society's latest acquisition, diesel B142, moved light engine from Dublin to Whitehead on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April. Regular steam driver Noel Playfair acted as pilot from Belfast to Whitehead for the Dundalk driver.

The decision to send the locomotive north came as a bit of a surprise and was made by the Irish Rail authorities in Inchicore as they, apparently, needed the space.

**Light Engine (3):** No.4 returned temporarily to Whitehead on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May to facilitate some NIR tests.

**Twelve Counties:** The Society's Mk2 carriages were in Tralee on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May as part of the Modern Railway Society of Ireland's "Twelve Counties" railtour.

The train was hauled from Whitehead to Dublin and return by NIR 112 and by Irish Rail 081 from Dublin to Tralee and back. Running was excellent and the only delays were caused by tardy railcars on the Kerry line. Although, 112 did play up a bit on the return leg to Whitehead.

What most of the passengers probably didn't realise was that this was an extremely intensive operation by RPSI volunteers. It started at 11 pm on Friday when crews started arriving at Whitehead to steam No.3BG "Guinness". This was followed by a shunt in the early hours of the morning to put together the 8-coach train.

At 5am the Whitehead catering crew arrived to open up the kitchen and to prepare for the long day ahead. Departure from Whitehead was at 05:20. On arrival in Dublin, the diner team were joined by colleagues from there just as the day was starting to get very warm.

The weather and the carriages became very hot as the train headed south. Unfortunately, on the hottest day of the year so far, disappointed passengers were unable to slake their thirsts as the MRSI had asked that the bar facilities not be opened. However, soft drinks, teas/coffees and burgers did a roaring trade.

The train returned to Whitehead just after midnight where a very weary team of caterers, stewards and carriage reps departed for their beds. But the train also needed to be put to bed and No.3BG was in steam again for another night-time shunt, which finished around 2am.

So to service this charter, Society personnel were involved in a non-stop 27 hour marathon - it was estimated that 341 volunteer man-hours had been expended on servicing the carriages alone. Well done all!

**Testing:** After the MRSI trip the weekend still wasn't over. Late on Sunday night after the last service trains a possession was taken on the Larne

line for brake tests in conjunction with TPWS. No.4 and Mk2 coaches operated to allow TPWS stop and over-speed to be tested.

It was, hopefully, the last time that a Society train will pass a signal at danger!

All the tests appeared satisfactory and hopefully NIR will formally confirm this shortly.

**Charter:** No.4 hauled a train of 7 Mk2 coaches and the Dutch van to Coleraine on the evening of Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June on behalf of the NI Housing Executive.

Passengers were collected at Carrickfergus, Belfast, Whiteabbey, Antrim, Ballymena and Ballymoney for a special dinner at the University of Ulster at Coleraine.

After a few hours the return trip was made, setting down at the same stations.

Everything operated as planned, and No.4 and train were back in Whitehead just as darkness fell.

**Light Engine (4):** No.4 transferred to Dublin on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

**Sea Breeze:** The first train of the Sea Breeze season, on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June, proved to be another successful operation. This year, due to pathing restrictions, the nominal destination has been limited to Enniscorthy, with an 'add on' trip to Wexford, mainly aimed at the local market.

Departure from Connolly was 25 minutes late due to a delay in transferring the empty stock from Inchicore (Irish Rail 077). However, with the benefit of a not too testing schedule, and competent performance at the front end, No.4 had her six coach train running into Enniscorthy ahead of time.

Out of Dublin the train was approximately 90% full - a good outcome given that there were many unsold seats just a week before. Many of the Dublin passengers chose to go on to Wexford, while the remainder sampled what was available in Enniscorthy -celebrating 1,500 years in

2010.

Approximately 100 passengers joined at Enniscorthy for the trip to Wexford and back. With just 70 minutes at Wexford to service the locomotive and train before a 16:00 departure, there was plenty to keep the volunteers occupied, but an on time departure was comfortably achieved. A first for an RPSI operation was a visit to Wexford loop in both directions to cross passenger trains.

The return journey was notable for punctual running; in fact the lighter than normal train approached Greystones over 20 minutes early and so was allowed to proceed to Bray where an additional stop was made to set down passengers.

Further trains will operate on 4<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> July.

**Steam & Jazz:** The first of the season's trains, on 11<sup>th</sup> June, was fairly lightly loaded, but a great night was had nonetheless. Further trains are due to operate with No.186 on 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> June and 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

**August:** There will be a busy month of operations:

1<sup>st</sup> Steam Enterprise  
8<sup>th</sup> Portrush  
14<sup>th</sup> Bangor  
22<sup>nd</sup> Greystones  
22<sup>nd</sup> Portrush  
29<sup>th</sup> Portrush

## GENERAL

**AGM:** The occasion was marked by a standing ovation for outgoing Chairman Johnny Glendinning after he handed over the new chain of office to David Houston. The chain was funded by past chairmen of the Society and accompanies the badge of office presented in memory of David Dillon some years ago. The chain is in the form of linked gold railway sleepers, each listing the name of a past chairman. Former chairmen John Harcourt, Sullivan Boomer and Norman Foster were present and assisted in

passing the chain to new Chairman David Houston.

Contributors to the purchase of the chain were: Sullivan Boomer, Sarah Creaner, Bob Edwards, Norman Foster, Johnny Glendinning and John Harcourt.

**Five Foot Three:** The Society's journal (the new all-colour version) was posted to members with last News-Letter. Please note that two caption errors have been identified:

- Page 23: No.4 is arriving in Castlebar, not Westport.
- Page 43: 1541 is pictured in the bay platform at Dundalk, not Connolly, on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

**Irwin Pryce:** Irwin, a founder member of the Society, a significant presence on trains and at Whitehead over the years, author, and well known by railway enthusiasts in Ireland and GB, passed away on 27<sup>th</sup> May.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.1:** The DCDR Orenstein and Koppel shunter has been given a boiler hydraulic test. Overhaul of boiler fittings.

**No.4:** On Easter Monday 5<sup>th</sup> April, the locomotive ran for the first time with the TPWS operational. TPWS (Train Protection and Warning System) is now a mandatory requirement following recent Northern Ireland Railway safety legislation - which mirrors the GB legislation enacted several years ago. Put very simply, it is designed to prevent trains running past red signals. The older Automatic Warning System had the disadvantage that the driver could acknowledge a restrictive aspect and then simply proceed - to pass a red signal now requires positive action on the part of the driver to override the system (having of course received authorisation to do so). One difference between the GB situation and Ireland is that steam locomotives in Ireland were never fitted with AWS - possibly an advantage since the RPSI has fitted a combined AWS/TPWS arrangement from scratch. It is based upon the

arrangement applied to the NIR GM locos, so the drivers are faced with nothing they are not already familiar with. Apart from compliance with the legislation, the object is to increase the operating speed for No.4 and it is hoped that this can now be progressed.

Minor repairs. Preparing spare parts for 10 year overhaul (due 2011).

**No.5 "Drumboe":** Work is continuing on the Donegal locomotive as an invaluable training exercise. The corroded frame members are being renewed. Assembling bogie.

**No.85 "Merlin":** A milestone was reached on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April when the locomotive was lifted off its wheels using the gantry. The bogie and driving wheels were steam washed and de-greased before going into the Workshop for further dismantling. The locomotive frames are now on temporary bogies, and still require considerable dismantling of cylinders, etc. Cleaning and examining of wheelsets and bogie.

**B142:** Now at Whitehead, and proving very useful as a shunter there.

**No.186:** In operation at Easter, from Dublin to Mullingar, having received boiler tubes, piston rings and some other remedial work as a '5 year' mid-life overhaul.

**No.461:** Work is continuing on the boiler with drilling and riveting of the foundation ring, plus overhaul of slide bars and crossheads.

**Contract:** Re-profiling of wheels for the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group's J27 No.65894 was undertaken during the spring months. Journals were also trued up.

**NIR Training:** As part of the ongoing process to ensure the Society has access to suitably qualified steam drivers NIR's Driver Assessors are being trained in the art of steam locomotive driving.

In April, assessors Stewart Andrews, Stephen Faulkner and Michael Hamill attended a 2 day theory course on working with steam locomotives taken

by Ron Smith of West Coast Rail.

Later in the month Stephen and Michael were being trained by Ron on driving and firing at the North York Moors Railway. They spent a further week there in May. It is hoped that Stewart will have similar training on the NYMR later in the year.

The training has been made possible thanks to a significant grant from HLF and the through the co-operation of NIR, WCR and the NYMR.

**New Locomotive?:** The surprise of the AGM, to those who didn't already know, was the announcement by Locomotive Officer Peter Scott that he had been mulling over for some time the construction of a second NCC 2-6-4 tank locomotive. No.58 would have been the next in the series of 18 built in the late 1940s for the LMS NCC.

The Locomotive Department has already started Phase 1 (of 3) of Project 58, i.e. to identify all existing spares which might be part of the new locomotive should construction go ahead. It was announced that a full set of wheels and most of a set of motion were already available. Obviously, the major items of frames and boiler would have to be constructed from new.

**Help Wanted:** The Society's Dublin locomotive team is trying to locate in the general Dublin area a place to store loose coal for our trains. Required is a concrete base where up to 25 tonnes of coal could be stored with reasonable road access.

If any of the members in the Dublin area has access to such a location David Carse would be delighted to hear from them.

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