



April 2011

# NEWS LETTER

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.4:** While No.171 is undoubtedly our most popular locomotive, the NCC tank engine is also our most versatile. Now approaching the end of her current boiler ticket, we hope to return the locomotive to traffic reasonably quickly since, like No.85, the major restoration work was completed at the last overhaul. This included extensive firebox repairs similar to the work now nearing completion on No.461.

If future traffic commitments increase as hoped, a 2-6-4 tank locomotive will be essential to our operations, and to this end we intend to put more emphasis on 'strategic spares' so that the locomotive will be out of traffic for the least time in the event of both planned and unplanned maintenance.

**No.5 "Drumboe":** The frames were placed on the wheels in January, and the locomotive was ceremoniously moved for several yards (pushed by the wheeling team). This is the first move by "Drumboe" on its own wheels on proper track since about 1962, and as such is a major step in the eventual restoration of the locomotive to working order. The locomotive is now outside the workshop to make space for No.4. Work is continuing on overhaul of slide valves, etc. when time permits.

**No.85 "Merlin":** The GNR(I) compound, which is on loan from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, has been out of traffic since expiry of her boiler ticket. Following indications that her route availability could be

extended due to track relaying, it was decided to return this locomotive to traffic after a general repair - the latter involving dismantling, inspection and renewal of parts as required rather than complete restoration - that having been completed last time round. So, after No.461, No.85 should be the next to return to traffic, and this should take place within two years.

**No.171 "Sieve Gullion":** An appeal was launched in late February, both to members and to the general enthusiast community via Steam Railway magazine. The desirability of returning to traffic our most popular locomotive goes without saying. The timing of the appeal has been brought about largely by the initiative of our Dublin member Gerry Mooney, together with the interest shown by Steam Railway magazine - the project has already been advertised in their most recent edition.

The target date is 2014, which will see the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the RPSI. Whether or not we meet the target will of course depend upon the support received!

No.171 received a basic mechanical overhaul in the Belfast Shipyard in 1968, and since then has seen on-going mechanical and boiler refurbishment. This will all contribute to her eventual restoration, but still leaves a lot to do.

Major dismantling work will not start immediately (at least not until No.461 is complete) since there is literally no space available in the Workshop. However, depending upon funding, a start can be

made on some of the lighter work, for example overhaul of boiler fittings.

Gerry Mooney would like the opportunity to thank those who have generously supported the restoration: "This is only the start of the overall restoration. We have a very long way to go before we reach sufficient funds to ensure it will be completed in time for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our society in 2014. I would ask all members who can, to consider giving support to this project. Every single donation, no matter how big or small, will make a difference and ensure we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> year in fine style."

**No.461:** The DSER 2-6-0 goods locomotive has been the major long-term project, and was the subject of an appeal for funding a number of years ago. The major work has been rebuilding the boiler, with extensive platework renewal to the inner and outer firebox. This work is now nearly complete, and the boiler is at present being re-tubed. The next stage (hopefully later this month) will be hydraulic testing of the boiler.

Mechanical repairs to the locomotive are well advanced and re-uniting of the boiler and the frames should go ahead immediately.

Some tender platework is also required.

No matter what target dates are set, they always seem to be optimistic, but formal application has been made to NIR for approval of No.461 to operate some time this year.

**Audit:** The annual audit of maintenance procedures and vehicle condition has been successfully completed.

## TRAIN & EVENTS

**Easter Eggspress:** There will be 3 trains operating on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April from Belfast Central to Whitehead. The usual Easter Egg and Bunny business will be taking place.

Tickets are available from the Belfast Welcome Centre or via the Society's Website.

**Easter Steam:** There will be train rides and site tours at Whitehead on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April.

**Bangor Belle:** Two return trips from Lisburn to Bangor will operate on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May. Tickets on sale shortly.

**Steam & Jazz:** This year's dates will be Fridays 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July.

**Portrush Flyer:** This year's dates will hopefully see a return of steam to Portrush after a number of years absence - Sundays 12<sup>th</sup> June and 10<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> July.

**Dublin:** The Society's Safety Management System (SMS) is currently undergoing evaluation by the Railway Safety Commission. Until such times as it is approved there can be no steam trains originating in Dublin. The aim is still to re-commence operations in July.

With the uncertainty this process has raised, and with the general economic situation, the Society will this year more than ever be relying on its members to support what trains do run. Can we ask that you make a special effort for your Society - starting at Easter?

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**68 (NCC Compartment 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>):** The brake refurbishment is now complete, with the Larne end bogie's brake shoes replaced and tensioner adjusted. The re-upholstered seats in first and second class have been fully installed. Also, the floor lino. The exterior lettering and lining has been completed. It is hoped that the coach will feature on the Easter train rides.

**303 (Mk2 Open):** Work completed includes greasing of pins on Belfast end bogie, coating Belfast bogie brake gear in diesel and freeing it up. Source correct pin for linkage assembly on Larne bogie between bogie and pull rod. Connect up brake gear on Larne end bogie. Coat Larne end brake gear in diesel to free up brake gear. Fit release valve to Larne cylinder. Connect release valve to DA valve. The coach has been submitted for NIR approval along with

No.461 and coach 463.

**305 (Mk2 Open):** Removal of all air brake equipment. Sourcing two release valves. Sourcing 2 DA valves.

**463 (Mk2 Compartment Brake):** Fitting of generator ancillaries continues. Sourcing replacement brake application valve. Calibration of old vacuum gauge.

**861 (GS&WR 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Compartment Brake):** Work is now complete on the removal of all the rotten timbers. The job of replacing with new timber will shortly commence. We are extremely fortunate in having this work privately funded by a member.

**Cravens:** After a brief break over the Christmas period, the Carriage Crew returned to work at Inchicore in early January.

Carriage 1506 is the first project of 2011. Of the ten Cravens owned by the Society, this is the only one that has yet to operate in RPSI service. It had been sidelined due to a brake defect, but this has now been resolved and it is hoped that it will enter traffic during the coming season.

On recent Saturdays there has been a lot of work on sanding down body panels and window frames on 1506. Some filing and riveting work will be required before giving it a wet and dry sanding prior to application of undercoat.

The frames too have seen some work; much of the old paint has been chipped away and this will then be sanded prior to receiving a coat of "Hammerite" followed by a coat of black gloss. The bogies will undergo the same process.

1506 is notable in that it was part of the last ever locomotive-hauled Ballina branch train on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2006, along with BR van 3173. The overhaul of the latter vehicle, also in Society care, will commence at Mullingar in the near future.

## WHITEHEAD

**Site Work:** The Site Squad has completed

the replacement of 20 old wooden sleepers under the platform turnout with concrete sleepers. The job required 3 Thursdays of intense work and was quite difficult, as the area required a lot of excavation and flooding was a major problem.

**Blast Cleaning Hut:** Cladding and fitting out continues.

**Shunter Training School:** On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March it was pleasing to experience the successful culmination of the latest round of shunter training. Six candidates volunteered for the programme and had been busy over the previous 2 weeks with a lot of homework and preparation. All braved the elements on the Saturday morning for a range of practical tests with No.3BG "Guinness" in steam.

These included signals, point work, loose couple shunting, vacuum brake operation and the correct making and breaking of buck-eye couplings on Mk2 sets. The morning was finished off with a detailed written examination.

All 6 candidates passed both their practical and written examinations with excellent marks.

## MEMBERSHIP

**Renewal:** This circular is the last you will receive for the membership year ending 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011. If you have renewed your subscription and if you haven't already received it then your membership card will be inside the envelope - have another check inside!!

A renewal form is enclosed if payment is still outstanding.

There have been a number of standing order payments received without an accompanying name. If you have paid by this method and have not yet received your card then please contact the address below.

If you are in a position to do, please include a donation with your renewal payment. Don't forget that it is quite a few years since there was a rate increase!

Please note that it is especially important that you renew if you wish to volunteer to work for the Society or to be rostered on any of the forthcoming mainline operations. That will not be possible until full payment is received.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**9th February:** An excellent night with Bill Scott and Joe Cassells serving up a two-dander. Scotty reviewed his 60 years of railway photography all around Ireland. That was followed by Joe who gave his personal views on the NCC in the 1960s.

**9th March:** Fred Cooper presented his annual film show - now computerised!! The usual excellent fare of past Society tours and vintage service trains made for an enjoyable evening.

**News-Reel:** This feature of 10 minutes of photographs and video of current Society activities has proved to be very popular and is now an established introduction to each evening.

**Thanks:** With another successful season complete, Charles Friel is, as always, seeking suggestions for topics for next autumn.

## AGM

**Council:** There will be significant changes taking place in the management of the Society - see separate documentation.

As a result there are opportunities for new recruits to the management team, opportunities that some members may have felt were not open to them previously.

What qualifications do you need? None other than an enthusiasm for our Society and a willingness to participate fully in all aspects of Society governance.

However, with the developments taking place at Whitehead and elsewhere, and also with an increasing need for financial management, there is a specific need to recruit a number of new members to the financial management team. We currently have three

members involved, with a fourth person just joining us. There is work for at least three more. We aim to reduce workloads by involving more people and spreading the load - so do not be afraid of being drawn into too much work!

Volunteers should preferably have a background in business and/or accountancy. If you feel you have the right background and want to be involved at a dynamic time for the RPSI, please reply for the attention of John Lockett. He will then meet to discuss matters with you before you have to make a final commitment.

If you are seriously keen then the post of Treasurer is still vacant.

Come and join us; it can be great fun and is very rewarding.

Nominations to the new Board are now open, but time is short! Please reply by return (post or email) to request a nomination form.

## GENERAL

**Peter Marsden:** It is with great sadness that we have to announce the death of our retired Treasurer.

Peter died early on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February following a long fight with motor neuron disease.

Our sympathy to Peter's wife Sylvia and to all his family circle.

**Email:** If you have an email address and would like to receive our ad-hoc news Bulletin then simply send an email to the address below. Similarly, do likewise if you wish to change an existing address.

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