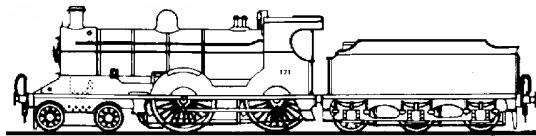


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



July 2011

NEWS LETTER

GARRET FITZGERALD

Sad Loss: On 19th May it was announced that the Society's Vice-President, Dr Garret Fitzgerald, had died in hospital after a short illness. He had been Vice-President for 20 years.

The Society was represented at the Lying in State at Dublin's Mansion House, and at the Funeral Mass at Donnybrook Church, Dublin.

Our sympathy to his family circle and to all who knew him.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT

Apology: It has been a while since the last News-Letter, and apologies for that. But it was felt better to wait until the outcome of discussions with the Railway Safety Commission (RSC) in Dublin was known.

We are pleased to report that the Society was the proud recipient of Safety Certificates from the RSC at a ceremony at their offices in Blackrock, Co. Dublin on Friday 1st July.

This was a historic event, leaving the way clear for continued operation over the larnróid Eireann network into the future.

A huge amount of work went into compiling the safety management system (SMS). Denis McCabe, Safety Officer (Dublin), assisted by a small committee, undertook what proved to be a major task. Sincere thanks are due to Denis, in particular, for his dedication in ensuring that the project was completed by July, thus ensuring that operations can resume from Dublin.

The Society is now one of only a small number of heritage operators in Europe to have achieved this level of approval, and this augurs

well for continued operation into the future.

It is important to record the excellent co-operation received from the RSC and larnróid Eireann in achieving our goal. This was much appreciated.

TRAINS & EVENTS

Easter Eggspres: The first runs of the season passed off very successfully on Easter Monday.

No.4 was in action with 6 Mk2 coaches, hauling three trains from Belfast to Whitehead. The first two trains were sold out in advance, and the third filled up with a last minute rush on the day.

The weather was fine, and all went according to plan. So everybody was happy.

Easter Steam: It was a fine day at Whitehead on Easter Tuesday and a healthy crowd visited to see No.3BG "Guinness" in action on the train rides - nearly 200 tickets were sold.

The heritage stock was in use, with GNR 81 (Ivan) and NCC 68 on the train. NCC 87 was on museum/catering duties at the platform. These vehicles have been recently restored by the youth squad at Whitehead, and all looked splendid. It was 68's first day in operation since overhaul.

Bangor Belle: All tickets for the 28th May trip were sold two days before. It was a good day operationally, with 233 passengers carried to Bangor.

Private Charter (1): 148 passengers from Nike UK (ladies and gents in their finest evening wear) were transported from Belfast Central to Cultra on Thursday 9th June. Drinks and nibbles were served on board at the start of a journey which took less than 20 minutes, but required nearly 4 hours of Society time to

do this!

Steam & Jazz: This year's dates were Fridays 10th, 17th and 24th June, and 1st July, all of which were booked out. The 'mystery' destination was Ballymena, with a stop also at Antrim.

No.186 hauled the first train on what was reported to be the one of the best ever Steam & Jazz nights. No.4 was in charge thereafter.

It was a pleasant surprise on all the trains to discover passengers from outside the usual catchment area; visitors from Dublin, Dundalk, Dungannon, Edinburgh, Omagh and Sligo joined the locals to make sure the usual mix of regulars and first timers was maintained.

Portrush Flyer: No.4 hauled a full train to Portrush on Sunday 12th June, the first Flyer since 2006. It was good to be back!

Everything went well and No.4 more than kept to schedule all day.

The main surprise was the appearance of a large tractor with a slurry tanker at the north end of the platform on arrival at Ballymena. As NIR are contractually responsible for the maintenance of the existing water facilities, and as the Ballymena tanks are out of service for repair, the company arranged the provision of the tanker to supply water. Once the 8-inch pipe had been carefully inserted in the locomotive's tank, the crew gingerly called for the pump to be started. The device proved to be a very quick method of filling, only a couple of minutes being needed! The same arrangement was in place on the Up platform on the return journey.

Likewise, the tanks in Portrush are currently not usable, a broken valve and 6 inches of accumulated gunge in the bottom making the water unsuitable. The Society lads were up to the job though, and soon had the tank drained and were attacking the sediment with shovels. A bit of a wash and brush out will probably still be needed before the tank can be used again.

Newly introduced with the 10th & 31st July trains was a First Class package, featuring: reserved compartment seating in first class accommodation; a complimentary glass of Bucks Fizz or fruit juice on joining the train; a "Picnic Box For Two" luncheon delivered on the outward journey; steward service from the bar and diner during the journey. Such is the popularity of bookings for these tickets that a second First Class coach has had to be added to the train.

Father's Day Steam: Apart from a downpour in the late afternoon of 19th June, it was a generally fine day at Whitehead. Good PR in the local newspapers and radio resulted in a

steady stream of fathers, their children, and some mothers too, to Whitehead Excursion Station.

The Guinness engine was on duty at the head of the train rides, with NCC 68 and "Ivan" the GNR(I) Brake Van. The Dining Car, No.87, was serving teas, coffees and cakes as well as housing our excellent museum of railway dining. The shop was open. No.4 was available for guided footplate tours. The sheds were open for tours, with the added attraction of three mainline diesels on show.

If all of that wasn't enough, Jim Adams had brought his London Routemaster double-decker bus along. Everyone enjoyed the view from the top deck and 'dinging' the conductor's bell!

Around 150 passengers travelled on the train rides, whilst others just sampled afternoon tea in the Dining Car or took a shed tour.

The Open Days at Whitehead are an important showcase for our older stock. They make a modest income, which helps towards the overhaul of more non-mainline items. But they are a good training opportunity for our footplate crews. They are also a great way for the public to get close to our trains, talk to the Fireman and Driver, feel the weight of Ivan's brake wheel and see the workshops.

13 volunteers were required to run the open day so we hope that you can support us for the rest of our summer dates and maybe consider joining us as a volunteer.

Summer Steam: Whitehead train ride operations are planned for 16th, 17th, 24th & 30th July, 7th, 14th, 21st & 28th August.

Private Charter (2): Another charter to Cultra is due to run on 20th July.

Mystery Train: The first trip in the SMS era is due to be a diesel-hauled mystery trip from Dublin on 23rd July. Why not try it? There's complementary tea and coffee all day!

Private Charter (3): A charter will operate from Dublin to Wicklow with No.186 on 7th August. During the afternoon a public train will run from Wicklow to Arklow and return.

Posters: Most operations have a poster available on the Dates page of the website. It would be a great benefit to the Society if as many members as possible, who are in a position to do so, printed a number of copies of each for display in appropriate public locations.

Help Wanted: The Whitehead catering team is keen to start expanding its operations. The guys are looking to hear from anyone who would like the opportunity of a start in this field. Please do get in touch if you feel you have

something to offer. The team would be delighted to have you!

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Dublin: Despite having no operations so far this year the Dublin team has nonetheless remained busy with carriage maintenance and restoration, with work taking place several days a week.

1505: The underframe of this carriage has had its old paint chipped away and a protective undercoat applied. It's done in sections so that any exposed metal can be undercoated the same day - important as the carriage is currently stabled outdoors and is thus vulnerable to the threat of corrosion posed by the elements. The bogies are currently being cleaned of accumulated grease, etc., prior to undergoing the same process.

1506: The frames, vacuum cylinders, bogies, shackles, buffers and gangways of this carriage have all received a coat of "Hammerite". The top-light frames have already been painted in blue gloss. This will allow the team to mask the whole window section prior to spraying the main body of the carriage; thus avoiding the need to mask out individual sections of glass, which can quite tedious. One door (Cork end, upside) has had its interior wood panelling replaced. New running boards are also being fitted. Progress continues on the coach bodywork itself, the seams between each panel have been filled with special rubber filler, which allows for expansion to take place without causing any cracks in the paintwork. Bumps in the panels themselves are gradually being filled and smoothed out; the end areas in particular have required a great deal of filler with sanding down having revealed some particularly large dents in these areas. Part of the Dublin end roof dome will also require repair prior to the carriage entering service. Other remaining work includes the removal and sorting of the Craven and MK2 spares which have been stored inside this carriage for the past few years.

1523: The vestibules of this carriage are being repainted into blue & cream to match 1541. The toilet compartments are also getting a spruce up. The Cork end bogie is being prepared for a repaint, the other bogie already having been repainted. Society crests will be applied to the exterior in due course.

3173: The overhaul of the BR van is now under way at Mullingar. Work being carried out includes the replacement of bodywork panels and the installation of crew facilities.

Cravens: Following frost damage sustained last winter, plumbing repairs to the toilets and catering vehicles in the operational Cravens set have been successfully completed. It is intended to use the Cravens set for the 2011 operational season.

Other recent tasks have included rearranging the interior of our container. The layout is improved and this makes our spares and supplies more readily accessible than before, which in turn means that jobs can be carried out faster and more efficiently.

NCC 68: A lengthy restoration has just been completed at Whitehead. The carriage last carried passengers in 2003 on the RPSI's mainline steam trains. Since then it has been stored at Whitehead awaiting restoration.

The RPSI's youth volunteer team have co-ordinated its restoration with funding from the NI Museums Council, RPSI members and a syndicate of railway enthusiasts from England.

The restoration work has been carried out with reference to the original vehicle plans to maintain as much as possible the look and feel of a railway carriage of its era. The carriage is quite unique in being split into First and Second class compartments. First class had walnut walls and Second class had mahogany walls. First class included a smaller 2 person compartment for privacy, nicknamed "the honeymoon compartment".

The restoration team, have carefully recreated the original look, including completely re-upholstering the seating to the colour and pattern of the time. Underneath, the team have overhauled the brakes and running gear. On the outside, local signwriters have been used to line out the carriage in the Crimson Lake livery of the LMS (NCC) with ochre and black lining and lettering.

The carriage was returned to traffic on the train rides at Easter.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1 (DCDR contract): Overhauling pistons and valves.

No.4: In traffic until the end of July.

No.85: In early May the bogie was placed on its wheels in the workshop and moved to the gantry road, together with the driving wheels, which were lifted using the hand crane. The frame (on trolleys) was shunted from the locomotive shed to the gantry road, lifted and placed on wheels. Work will now progress with overhaul and assembly of pistons, valves, glands, valve gear, etc. Also, overhaul of the

boiler. Currently, work is concentrating on assembling the suspension.

No.186: Boiler repairs.

No.461: The boiler was placed on the trolleys vacated by No.85, and then was shunted to a position outside the locomotive shed for hydraulic and steam testing - successfully carried out in early June, after which the boiler was returned to its frames and re-assembly of plumbing commenced. Cleaning and repair of the tender platework is ongoing. Both locomotive and tender are in the workshop but due to be moved during July to the engine shed for final preparations.

No.202: The Society's website has been updated with a potted history of the GNR(I) scale model of SG3 No.202 (now in the Society's care). See the Locomotives page.

102 (Hunslet): The diesel-electric locomotive was shunted into the workshop in early May for completion of cosmetic repairs and painting into its original 1970 maroon livery. This is a contract job for the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. It is now in the engine shed.

B113 (Sulzer): It was an early start at Whitehead on Thursday 12th May with the arrival of a low-loader at 7am. On it was B113 from Inchicore.

The locomotive has been presented to the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum by CIÉ. It will receive minor repairs before its move along with Hunslet 102 to the Rail Gallery at Cultra later this year.

Invitation: The Locomotive Department would like to encourage as many volunteers as possible to help, especially with No.461 which is urgently needed into traffic. Volunteer days at Whitehead are usually Tuesday, Thursday and, of course, Saturday and Sunday.

GENERAL

Five Foot Three: Now that FFT No.57 has reached all of its intended readers a couple of editorial apologies might be in order. Due to an error in communication, although a nice picture of the late Peter Marsden appeared, a last-minute tribute at the end of the Editorial did not.

Also, despite an editorial assurance in No.56 that future issues would have colour photos when available, embarrassingly No.57 did not!

Despite the above, some were kind enough to voice their appreciation. Of course, there remains the possibility that those who felt otherwise were polite enough not to say so!

Projects: A new page has been added to the website - a list of the major projects currently being undertaken by Society volunteers:

www.steamtrainsireland.com/projects

Sales: The Society is now registered as a charity on eBay. This means that not only will we be selling items through our own eBay sales route, but it also means that you can do two things to help the RPSI further its aims:

- 1) You can donate/leave us items of railway memorabilia, books, railway models that you no longer want and which you would like us to sell to benefit RPSI projects.
- 2) You can sell items yourself on eBay and donate part or all of the proceeds to the RPSI.

Full instructions are provided on eBay:

<http://donations.ebay.co.uk/charity>

Survey: A major survey of the remaining railway structures in County Louth and County Monaghan is now available online:

www.louthheritage.ie/publications.shtml

The Society's Charles Friel had a significant input into the project and it is testament to his knowledge that the survey documents are so detailed.

Meetings: At the general meetings on 7th May the proposed changes to the Society's Memorandum and Articles were accepted.

This paves the way for the setting up of subsidiary trading companies to finance the Society's future plans (as required by our prospective funders, HLF, GROW, etc.).

The first step will be to create a heritage engineering company to undertake the present locomotive and carriage engineering tasks. At the time of writing this process had been started.

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