



September 2011

NEWS LETTER

PROVINCE OF LEINSTER

Thursday 8th September: NIR's 113 hauled the Mk2 set from Whitehead to Dublin and a number of intrepid enthusiasts made the trip.

Friday 9th September: The Silvermines diesel trip kicked off at Connolly station behind 072. Onwards to Ballybroughy, where the whole train shunted across to the Limerick bay. The northern section of the branch is severely restricted and it was a very sedate trundle to the first stop at Roscrea. Another stop, at Cloughjordan, was followed by arrival at Nenagh where the Mayor, Councillor Virginia O'Dowd, was waiting to greet the train. Following the usual 'meet the public' photoshoot the train was off again to Birdhill and Castleconnell before arrival in Limerick.

After a break, 080 came on the train and, apart from a crossing at Dromkeen, it was non-stop return to Connolly.

Saturday 10th September: No.186 was the star for the rest of the weekend, and those who had their doubts about the little locomotive on three days of steam were very pleasantly surprised.

After departure from Connolly, and following a check in Phoenix Park tunnel, the crew were taking no chances with the Gullet and it was a spirited run across the Liffey, around Islandbridge junction and up to Inchicore.

It was gratifying to note that the train was routed via the fast line on the 4 track section south of Inchicore, and Kildare was soon reached for the first stop, and water.

Following a crossing at Athy, the tour arrived in sunny Kilkenny for a short break which gave participants sufficient time for a wander into the city centre. In the meantime 082 had

come light engine from Waterford to shunt the carriages - Kilkenny is not the station it once was!

The return trip was again routed by the fast line and No.186 proudly made good use of it (until held for a service train coming on the slow line!).

The day ended with the locomotive being turned (reluctantly) on the DSER turntable in Connolly.

Sunday 11th September: This was an interesting day, with two new sections for steam. The first was a non-stop run from Connolly via Clonsilla to M3 Parkway. Although there is a run-round facility at M3P, to save time the train was hauled back by GM 081, which took it direct to Dublin Docklands. It was strange to be in a completely locked station with no access to the public roads - Docklands operates a 5-day week! After a short wait, No.186 arrived tender-first from M3P.

There were fears from some that No.186 would not be fit for the climb to Liffey Junction, and the diesel was kept ready. No such worries. Those in the north Dublin suburbs surrounding the line who had hoped for a late lie-in were (literally) rudely awoken. It was a stirring sight and sound to experience the fantastic climb through the low-level route past Croke Park and on to Glasnevin - one not to be easily forgotten!

And from there it was a non-stop run to Mullingar - no mean feat!

Some signalling delays at Mullingar meant a late departure, but it did allow for another non-stop run to end off a superb day (apart from No.186's continuing reluctance to turn at Connolly).

Monday 12th September: And so back to

base. It had been difficult to arrange a path to Whitehead for such a slow engine on a weekday, but it is to the credit of planners in Irish Rail and NIR that they managed it, and No.186 and crew didn't let them down, maintaining, and even beating, section times on the way.

Those who stayed to Whitehead were rewarded with views of No.461 in its new green livery.

Tuesday 13th September: The traditional heritage coach tour took participants to two little-known Belfast industrial attractions. Firstly, the preserved steam engine and fans at the Royal Victoria Hospital which drove the world's (reputed) first mass air conditioning system as the term is understood today.

Onwards to the Belfast Metropolitan College's heating and ventilation system, again operated by steam engine and huge fans. But this system is not preserved; indeed it is in use up to the present day!

After lunch the party visited the preserved Carrickfergus Gasworks.

In summary, locomotive performance was excellent throughout the weekend. The diesel locomotives performed well up to the standard one expects of the class 071, but No.186 put in an exceptional weekend. Sustained running at speeds well up to best J15 performance, given the load. On four sections No.186 ran in excess of 80 minutes without a stop at very respectable speeds. One would have to dig deep into the log books to find this quality of running repeated over such a short time. This is down to the expertise and enthusiasm of the crew, helped no doubt by the coal which seemed to burn well, although leaving its mark on the countryside, crew and participants!

Well done to all concerned, both RPSI and railway company staff, for making the weekend what it was. And to all our passengers, thank you.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: The locomotive retired following the Flyer operation of 31st July and prompted some facts and figures:

No.4 has travelled 31,400 miles since her last overhaul.

Her first running in trip was on 28th April 2001, and her last run was on the 31st July 2011, near enough 10 years 3 months.

She has had approximately 270 days in steam over those 10 years, and using the normal formula for coal consumption she burned approximately 920 tons.

Of those 31,400 miles travelled, 14,900 were under Belfast ops and 16,500 under Dublin ops.

In case you think that the mileage run seems high, Jeep No.57's total miles worked out at an average of 290,000 for 10 years, while No.5 managed 339,000 for 10 years. However, they got overhauled when required, more frequently than every 10 years! In comparison, No.60163 Tornado has run 25,000 in 2 years, so she is being worked 4 times the miles No.4 covered year on year.

Now for some semi-spurious facts and figures. In 10 years and 3 months, No.4 has consumed:

- 1 piston head
- 1 piston valve head
- 1 snifting valve
- 1 blastpipe nozzle
- 2 prickers
- 3 sausage sodas
- 3 sets of batteries
- 8 piston rings
- 19 pots of foliac graphite grease
- 20 firebars
- 54 valve rings
- 300 pallets (lighting up)

When withdrawn from traffic a number of jobs have to be undertaken to keep the locomotive in good order pending commencement of overhaul. The tasks (most of which were completed over the weekend) include:

- Drain boiler, remove as many washout plugs as practical and wash out boiler, then leave plugs and door off to allow air to circulate and the boiler to dry out.
- Drain water tanks and all pipes, etc., that contain water to prevent frost damage (it will probably be a winter or two before a fire is lit again). Open up manholes on the tanks to allow air to circulate and to let the tanks dry out.
- Paint, grease, or oil bare ferrous metal surfaces to prevent corrosion while in storage, particularly on the rods paint with hot cylinder oil which, when it cools, should provide a reasonably tenacious coat.
- Empty coal bunker and brush out as much coal as possible - when it gets wet the

water absorbs sulphurous bits from the coal and rusts steel.

- Remove batteries for use in No.461.

No.85: Tender lifted off wheels and placed on trolley for steam washing and blast cleaning of rusted areas as appropriate. Work continuing on fitting patch screws to lap seams in firebox.

No.171 "Sieve Gullion": In mid-July the locomotive took up No.461's vacated position in the workshop. By early September the locomotive was separated from its tender to allow dismantling work to continue.

No.461: On 20th July, for the first time since overhaul, the locomotive moved under its own power. The team had some fun tentatively moving the engine up and down the length of the sidings and doing a bit of light shunting. A week later and the engine had passed its inspection by an external assessor.

During August and into September it was being repainted in CIÉ green livery. Electric equipment (speedometer, lamps, etc.) being fitted. Shortly to recommence steam tests and running in.

For the record, No.461's last public outing was on the Easter Bunny trains to Bangor on 16th April 2001.

Contract (1): Machining of big end journals for Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway locomotive.

Contract (2): Overhaul of Orenstein No.1 for DCDR. Boiler now fitted to this locomotive after frame repairs. Pistons and valves being overhauled.

Contract (3): Diesel locomotives Hunslet 102 and Sulzer B113 getting cosmetic overhaul for Transport Museum at Cultra.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Mk2: The external assessor has approved 303 (ex Irish Rail Mk2 open standard) and 463 (ex BR Mk2 corridor first brake, now fitted with generator) for submission to NIR for an operating certificate. Some more work needs to be undertaken on both carriages so the submission has been delayed.

TRAINS & EVENTS

Portrush Flyer: On Sunday 10th July, No.4 hauled the second Flyer of the season.

The loadings were slightly down on the

previous train - perhaps a result of the traditional Northern Ireland holiday exodus? However, the afternoon train to Coleraine was full to bursting. A welcome sight indeed!

A Society first was the First Class package whereby coach 180 was reserved for parties of couples, each receiving a picnic lunch hamper, bucks fizz reception and waiter service.

For instance, two couples were on the train to celebrate special occasions - a birthday and an anniversary. They had both simply searched the internet for special ideas in Northern Ireland and had seen our First Class option as worth paying extra for as a present. All expressed themselves well satisfied with the experience.

One disappointing note on the day was the reliance on staff from the Dublin catering team to man the bar and kitchen. Our thanks to them, but is no one in the Belfast area willing to get involved?

On Sunday 31st July, No.4 was in steam for its last outing before withdrawal for its 10-yearly boiler lift.

The weather was a bit disappointing, but mostly the rain held off.

This was the second time for the First Class package and such was the demand that both 180 and 181 (Mk2 corridor firsts) were needed. So, the rest of the train also being full, it was an 8-coach train that set off for Portrush.

The First Class experience certainly seems to have caught the public's imagination. Here's what one First Class passenger had to say: "Just a quick word to congratulate all involved in today's Portrush Flyer - I took my mother for the day out and we treated ourselves to the opulence of first class! The whole venture was very well organised and the lunch package was an excellent touch. Staff were constantly attentive, friendly and efficient so definitely full marks to all involved. Surely a model of how a volunteer railway society should run a train. Looking forward to my next RPSI outing!"

Here's what one other First Class passenger had to say to his young lady on the way to Portrush: "Will you marry me?" Young Lady: "Yes!" Congratulations to both. Is this a Society first?

The afternoon trip to Coleraine had 200 on board. Unfortunately, the return from Coleraine, and later from Portrush, was delayed by about half an hour due to a late-

running 6-piece test train of NIR's new CAF 4000 series units which had visited both Portrush and Londonderry during the day, complete with bits of high-tech equipment (polystyrene foam blocks taped to the outer corners).

Private Charter: Wednesday 20th July was a busy day at Whitehead.

No.186 was in steam following some boiler work. But it was deemed to need a bit more attention so No.4 was also lit up to operate the charter. But here's the interesting bit - No.461 was also in steam for the first time.

After the excitement abated a group of 200 from the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons partook of the short journey from Belfast Central to Cultra. No.4 was at the front, and good work by the crew saw an early departure from Bangor on the return journey.

Mystery Train (1): All tickets for the train on Saturday 23rd July were sold out in advance. This was an excellent result for the sales team given the short notice of ticket availability.

The day itself was wonderfully sunny as the Society re-created the mystery trains of old. Passengers took pot luck for a day out at an unknown destination - it turned out to be Kilkenny, but the internet being what it is this became known in advance and photographers were ready along the route!

The tour allowed passengers to spend nearly four hours in the city before returning to Dublin in the afternoon.

080 worked to Kilkenny and 076 did the honours for the return trip.

In preparation for the trip the Cravens set had a test run a few days earlier, hauled by GM 218.

Light Engine: No.186 transferred to Dublin on Tuesday 2nd August.

Private Charter & Arklow Shuttle: The first steam operation as a 'railway undertaking', took place on Sunday 7th August 2011. It was an event of two parts.

No.186 plus 5 Cravens and the BR van departed Malahide at 10:45 with a full train of 275 on board. Initial concerns about one of No.186's firebox stays necessitated an unscheduled but necessary precautionary stop and inspection at Dublin Connolly. The locomotive reps were satisfied and so the train proceeded to Wicklow where arrival was 25 minutes late.

While the Lions group made their way to Wicklow town, the train filled again with public passengers and proceeded to Arklow. Again, another full train. Arrival at Arklow was 25 minutes late but following a smart run round the return, at 14:15, was only down by 15 minutes on the schedule. An excellent climb to Rathdrum, tender first, was a credit to the 'new' team of Bobby Jolley and Ken Fox.

Passengers were exchanged at Wicklow and the train proceeded back to Malahide where arrival was 31 minutes late - due mainly to being trapped behind a northbound DART.

Both sets of passengers were in great form and it was a good day out for all.

Trinity Express: The charter operation for Trinity College on Sunday 28th August was a very successful operation despite some operational hitches relating to turntables - plural.

With the Connolly shed turntable currently out of action the only option available was to turn No.186 on the 'Loop line' turntable before departure. This was achieved with some difficulty - No.186 became stuck halfway - but after applying the 'crowbar treatment' she was eventually turned, and ready for the road. This resulted in a late departure from Pearse with a load of five Cravens and van.

Some excellent footplate work, and a decision to run to Mullingar without taking water, meant that all of the late departure was recovered and a punctual arrival was achieved. Our passengers were well pleased and departed to see the sights of Belvedere House and lunch elsewhere.

Meanwhile another turntable problem had arisen - no signal man was available to facilitate the move to the turntable. However the crew were not put out (too much) and the return to Dublin was tender-first. Again a fine effort with time kept. Luckily the day was dry and the long tender first run was not too uncomfortable.

Summer Steam: The Whitehead Festival weekend took place in late July and the Society got involved by running on Saturday 30th July. No.4 was on duty, being warmed up for Sunday's train to Portrush. A steady stream of visitors in warm sunshine made for a very successful afternoon.

Despite the frequent showers Sunday 7th August was a reasonably busy day at Whitehead. It never fails to surprise where people come from, i.e. Navan, Foxford and

Magherafelt, just because they found us on the internet. Plenty of local visitors as well. It was a bit quiet on Sunday 14th August. The numbers are very hard to predict; it doesn't seem to correspond to the weather (which was dry apart from one shower). Nevertheless, it's always good as a crew training exercise.

European Heritage Open Days: On Thursday 8th September the emphasis was on getting the 'Tour Train' prepared and on its way to Dublin. It having departed, No.461 was quietly steamed at Whitehead and spent an afternoon posing for various 'works' style photos for some of those who had overhauled her.

With the weather forecast for the weekend dominated by the approaching Hurricane Katia, it was debated how successful the open days were likely to be, past experience showing firmly that wet days are much less productive in terms of income, passenger numbers and general enthusiasm than dry ones. However, in the event both days proved very much worth running. Unlike most of our open days the European Architectural Heritage Days are firmly marketed by the Environment and Heritage Service and we are incorporated in a freely available brochure and website along with the many other attractions across Northern Ireland, the object being that heritage sites should be shown off for free to the public for one weekend only (although there was a charge for train rides).

Saturday 10th dawned to find No.3BG being steamed - oh no wait, that's wrong, force of habit - No.461 being steamed, resplendent in her 95% completed CIÉ green livery. B142 was used to conduct the shunt to bring the stock to the platform, duly accomplished with No.3BG getting a slice of the action after all, as static display engine for guided footplate tours ably conducted by John Friel. An unusual move was to run brake van No.81 Ivan to the Belfast end of the train (or coach 68!) for cosmetic reasons - No.461 faces Larne! The day was sunny if gusty and nearly 200 passengers travelled in the train - not including those who had free tours but did not travel. The day certainly felt very busy. No.461 delighted all, including her crews, many of whom were on their first ever turn with her.

Unfortunately, a spread road caused the derailment of No.3BG and one wheel of Dining Car 87 outside the carriage shed on Saturday evening while being put to bed.

No.3BG managed to hit a check rail and re-rail herself, but it still resulted in most of the Team spending an unforeseen two hours jacking up 87, digging ballast and pulling the rails back together before retiring to Ivan for fish and chips, the brake van stove had been kept going with this conclusion in mind. It seems the older members used their sixth sense and left promptly at 5pm. 68, Ivan, 87 and No.3BG spent an unintended night outside, No.3BG marooned on the wrong side of the derailment site.

Saturday having been billed as the calm before the storm, Sunday 11th was overcast with patchy rain and strong gusts of wind - however nowhere near as bad as had been feared. Around 150 passengers enjoyed Train Rides, those having their free tour often found the outside parts being curtailed as the guide ushered them towards the shelter of the locomotive shed, carriage shed or workshop. No.461 again proved the subject of many kind words, photos and videos.

The Site Officer is to be congratulated for coming in early on Sunday morning to pin the track back together both to allow No.461, using 68 and 87 as barrier vehicles to keep her own weight out of the equation, to retrieve No.3BG and, at the end of the day, to allow the stock back into the shed for well-earned winter hibernation, where they will rest free of disturbance, at least until the track is repaired in the coming weeks.

Christine Friel was the usual face of Dining Car 87 throughout the Train Rides season and our thanks to her, the locomotive operating department, Tour Guides, shop staff, ticket checkers, those who drive around the countryside putting out and retrieving signs and anyone else who has given up their free time to be involved. In total over £5,000 has been raised over the summer.

Now with 3 days of green steaming around in the yard under her belt, No.461 is noticeably much improved on her first couple of outings in July (in black!). It will not be long before she makes an appearance in the big world once more.

The storm finally hit on Monday. 50+ mph winds meant it was not a day for the crew to be wearing hats of any description on loco 186, particularly on the Malahide or Craigmore Viaducts and the gallant little engine often found herself doing 30 or 40 mph and chasing her own smoke down the line to Belfast.

But that's another story!

Mystery Train (2): Following the success of the trip to Kilkenny in July, another diesel-hauled mystery train is scheduled to operate from Dublin on Saturday 1st October.

Broomstick Belle: Tickets for 3 trains on Sunday 30th October are on sale at the Belfast Welcome Centre (including by phone +44 28 9024 6609) and on-line from the Dates page of our website.

Santa Special (Dublin): Tickets went on sale in late July and were all sold within 2 weeks!

Santa Special (North): Ticket will be on sale shortly for Belfast and Portadown trains.

WHITEHEAD

Signalling (1): On Friday 8th July the Atlas road/rail digger was used to successfully plant 4 overhauled shunting dollies, donated by Irish Rail from Claremorris in 2008. This is a further step towards making the layout at Whitehead fully signalled.

Signalling (2): The RPSI is grateful to Gregg Ryan who has recently let us receive - on long-term loan from Irish Rail - some signal cabin artefacts for display at Whitehead. The items recently arrived at Whitehead where they will soon be on display.

These include 2 hand dynamos with Morse keys, 2 cabin bells, 2 lever frame locks (released when a staff is removed) a bracket and bolts for mounting an instrument on the cabin wall and two Railway Signal Co. E-Type miniature Electric Train Staff instruments. One of the instruments says 'Castlerea' on it.

GENERAL

Treasurer: Norman Foster has volunteered and is being co-opted onto the Board to act as Treasurer until the next AGM.

Catering: We also need a few volunteers to answer the call to get involved with catering on the northern trains.

A Bit Of Alliteration: The following piece was provided in response to the Society being asked to repair North Down Borough Council's miniature train which runs in their Pickie Pool play area in Bangor.

Members Francis Richards and Bob Skingle were duly dispatched on Friday 1st July, did the business, and recorded the outcome.

PICKIE PUFFER IN A PICKLE

The Pickie Puffer at Pickie Park in Bangor suffered a breakdown.

Preservationist pensioners provided expertise and procured parts with pleasing performance provided to the public.

Pickie Puffer now performing properly.

The above prompted a reply.

People, Pampering Pickie Puffer procures pennies to pour into preserving (Beyer) Peacock products pulling passengers past pleasurable picnic points - perhaps Poyntzpass, Portadown, Portarlington and Portrush.

Presently, pressure pushing pistons provides pulling power producing pleasant public pastimes.

Poop poop proud pensioners.

Great Western Green Way: It may interest readers to learn of the public cycleway along most of the route of the old MGWR Achill branch.

The new cycleway follows the railway for about 50% of the way from Westport to Newport, then almost the whole way from there through Mulranny and on to Achill. It is a spectacularly scenic route, and highly recommended.

Being a railway track, it is flat and therefore an easy cycle. There is much of railway interest to be seen along the way and by degrees they are erecting signs at locations with something of particular interest.

The Achill line closed in 1937.

Sales News: These items have been added to the Online Shop:

- DVD by Brian Stinson - Diesel Doings 2009-2010.
- DVD by Brian Stinson - Hibernian Steam Scene Volume 11.

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