



January 2012

## NEWS LETTER

### MEMBERSHIP

**News-Letter:** The December News-Letter was the first to be distributed by email as well as by the traditional paper and postal route.

All those members who are listed as having access to email have been requested to list their preference as to which form they wish to receive their copy. Currently, over 80 have not yet replied. If this is you, or if your email address has changed, please get in touch with a reply via the editorial address/email.

**Renewal:** The flow of subscription renewals has started - and thank you to all who have already replied. Keep them coming! And don't forget that donation, if you can afford it.

A number of UK members have requested Gift Aid forms. If you didn't receive it by return of post then you have already submitted one - only needs done once.

The last News-Letter mailing also included a Gift Aid form for those eligible members who haven't already submitted one. Please do fill it in and return it as it can be worth an extra 25% to the Society.

### CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Dublin:** The set for the Santa trains was made up as follows: 3185, 1506, 1523, 1541, 1522, 1514, 1532, 1505 and 1508, quite possibly the longest passenger set on the system these days. This gave a seating capacity of 419. It was most likely the first time that three Cravens catering vehicles had been in the one formation (1522, 1514 and 1508), although 1508 was actually in use as a souvenir shop.

**1335:** It is hoped to commence the long awaited restoration of this heritage carriage in the New Year.

**1506:** The bodywork overhaul of this carriage was completed in late October, with final painting taking place over the October Bank Holiday weekend, though this process was not without some hiccups of its own, resulting in it temporarily wearing a rather patchwork brown and blue livery due to a shortage of undercoat. It carried passengers for the first time in preservation on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December Santa Specials and has performed well since, bar some early troubles with an errant steam bag. One final remaining job will be to convert the toilets from the older victory valve system to a cistern based one, as the latter conserves water more effectively. Its entry to service means

that all ten of the Society's Cravens have ran in RPSI service at one point, although 1529 has long since been relegated to the status of spares/mess coach.

**1523:** The repainting of the toilet compartments of this carriage was completed in time for the Santa season. Once a dull grey, they are now resplendent in red and cream. A final touch came on the morning of the first Santa, when the team fitted new mirrors above the sinks.

**3173:** Overhaul continuing at Mullingar.

**3185:** The boiler of this van was serviced prior to the Santa trips. Combined with the renewed steam heating pipes in the Cravens this resulted in a very warm train throughout the season. As mentioned above, it is hoped to commence the restoration of GSR carriage 1335 in the New Year. Other projects will include the next Craven to be brought in for bodywork and eventual repainting, along with the continuing task of maintaining the running set.

**Help Wanted:** The Society's NCC brown van, No.697, is now nearing the end of its sentence at Hydebank Young Offenders Centre (not that the van is young at all, or an offender!).

It's at the stage where consideration is being made to what to put into the van for display when it returns to Whitehead. This is a request from the Museum Committee for the following objects which you may have available for donation:

- Photographs of brown vans in service
- An old 1950s bicycle
- 1940s and 1950s brown luggage bags (people may have some in roof spaces and dying to clear them out!), including luggage labels!

- Wooden crates
- Milk churns

If anybody does have something suitable to donate, please email:

[davidorr22@googlemail.com](mailto:davidorr22@googlemail.com)

Or write to the editorial address.

### TRAINS & EVENTS

**Santa Special (Dublin):** The season of trains operated successfully, albeit with the non-appearance of a steam locomotive being a disappointment to all; the passengers in general took it very well. The main thing they wanted assurance about was that the man in the red suit was going to be there! And he certainly was - the star attraction in the eyes of our most important passengers - the children.

**Santa Special (Belfast):** The second weekend of trains passed without much of note.

However, Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December saw No.461's return to service on a public train. No.186 operated the train from Whitehead to Belfast Central (empty) and return on the first Santa train. No.461 was waiting to take over at Whitehead, and operated from there and return.

Back at Whitehead, No.461 was taken off and sent to the engine shed for examination while No.186 completed the day's trips.

On Sunday, No.461 was on the first departure from Whitehead and, again, was taken off for examination on return. No.186 completed the next trip. But No.461 came back on for the return to Belfast Central and onwards to Lisburn and return - in much improved form!

All in all, the weekend went off without a hitch. There were a few minor issues with No.461 which were expected for

running in and these are being dealt with.

Throughout the month, No.186 was in superb form.

**Santa Special (Thanks):** Armchair members of the Society should know that a very few volunteers put in an enormous amount of work in numerous areas to ensure the Santa trains ran (more or less) as advertised. Obviously, there were issues surrounding locomotive availability, and it has to be said that disappointed passengers were probably outnumbered by disappointed volunteers who had worked so hard for so long to produce something the Society could be proud of.

That aside, it was still a tremendous effort from all involved; from those who slaved to get the SMS completed earlier in the year, through ticketing and marketing, news releases, and then to the nitty gritty of locomotive and carriage preparation, and finally to the on-board catering and stewarding staff taking care of passengers. The latter are the on the front line when issues arise and are to be doubly congratulated in ensuring a smooth operation.

Well done!

**Steam & Carols:** After the success of last year, Cregagh Presbyterian Church Choir once again chartered No.186 and the Whitehead set for an evening of bell-ringing and carols on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December. Although it was cold, there was no repeat of the heavy snowfall which marked the 2010 outing.

Around 250 passengers packed the train and enjoyed festive refreshments of mulled wine and mince pies as it travelled from Belfast Central to Newry.

Before they boarded the train at Belfast, choir members entertained

commuters to a carol service in the concourse of station. Adding to the festive atmosphere, they were accompanied by a hand-bell choir playing what is thought to be one of only two hand-bell sets to exist in Northern Ireland.

On arrival at Newry Station they were greeted by Mayor of Newry and Mourne, Councillor Charlie Casey and Transport Minister Danny Kennedy, the MLA for the area. Following the hearty welcome at Newry the high-ceilinged station became somewhat of a cathedral for the night when passengers from the train joined with the choir as they raised the roof during another uplifting performance.

The innovative fund raising event was organised by Lisburn member David Thompson. Speaking of the event David said, "Last year we laid on the event as a fundraiser for the church and it worked out really well and this year's event was even better - thanks to all who gave their support."

**Rabbie Burns Haggis Special:** A running-in trip for No.461 is due to operate to Portrush on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January.

As it's near enough Burns Night, haggis and tatties will be on offer.

Tickets from the usual Belfast Welcome Centre address.

**Spare Link:** This will be a weekend trip (24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> March) to Rosslare, Wexford, M3 Parkway and Howth to mark the retirement of the Society's friend and steam driver Dan Renahan.

**Easter:** There will be two days of "Eggspress" trains to Whitehead on Easter Monday and Tuesday.

There will also be an "Easter Bunny" train to Mullingar.

**171 For 171:** This will be a diesel-hauled outing from Dublin to Cork on 21<sup>st</sup> April.

**South Clare:** The 2012 International Railtour will operate over the extended weekend of 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> May. The now traditional diesel railtour will be on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May.

If you intend to participate then please return the Advance Booking Form as soon as possible - it aids planning of hotels requirements, catering, train make-up, etc.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**7<sup>th</sup> December:** Roger Weatherup presented the first half of the evening on the Clogher Valley Railway which closed just about 70 years ago. Roger outlined the origins of the line and its financial reliance, after a few successful years, on the rate-payers of Tyrone and Fermanagh. He then brought the audience on a tour of the line in about 60 remarkable pictures, some seldom seen in public. Roger's talk was followed by contributions from the floor, including one gent who had travelled on the line!

After the break, Denis Grimshaw described the origins and activities of the Inst Railway Society, including its first steam railtours when costs and fares were truly remarkable by today's standards. A fare of 37.5p (or 7/6<sup>d</sup> in old money) for a service train from Belfast to Drogheda and then a GNR locomotive and two bogies to Oldcastle and Kingscourt. Denis illustrated his talk with pictures of the general railway scene at the time as well as the actual outings. The Inst Railway Society fostered the interests of many who have become prominent in the RPSI - and the London Area of the IRRS remains largely Inst 'controlled'.

## GENERAL

**Five Foot Three:** This year the reins

of Editorship are being handed to Edward Friel. Many thanks to Nelson Poots for his sterling work over many, many, years.

As well as the usual Society reports, Edward is keen to hear from members who may wish to contribute an article, letter or photographs. He has set up an email address specifically for this purpose:

[5ft3magazine@gmail.com](mailto:5ft3magazine@gmail.com)

Or use the postal address below if you don't have email.

**No.171 Appeal:** The appeal fund has been greatly helped by a generous donation from "The Syndicate", that trusty band of GB enthusiasts.

The guys were busy at the Warley Model Railway Exhibition in November, and their donation is the proceeds of fundraising there - plus, they got the Warley Model Railway Club to waive their charge for the sales stand.

Well done, and thank you!

**No.171 Calendar:** By the end of the Christmas season only about 40 of the 1,000 calendars printed had been left unsold - a brilliant effort from all involved, from on-train sales and Belfast meetings to the backroom team.

Who knows, maybe this could become an annual production; but it will only happen with your support.

## EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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