



April 2012

## NEWS LETTER

### VICE-PRESIDENTS

**Nora Owen:** Once again, the President and Board would like to extend a welcome to a new Society Vice-President.

Nora Owen has been a politician in Ireland for more than 20 years, starting with her election to the Dublin County Council in 1979. She was elected to the Dáil in 1981-2002 where she chaired the Joint Committee on Co-operation with Developing Countries for 7 years and vice-chaired the Foreign Affairs Committee. She also served as Spokesperson for the Opposition in a number of portfolios - Health, Overseas Aid, Foreign Affairs, Enterprise and Employment. Ms. Owen was appointed Deputy Leader of the Fine Gael Party in 1993-2001 and was Minister of Justice from 1994 to 1997. In 1996, she was the President of the Council of Justice Ministers during Ireland's presidency of the European Union, and was a Member of the National Forum on Europe established after the Nice Treaty.

Ms. Owen has extensive experience in giving parliamentary training and Election Monitoring in many countries in Africa, in Eastern Europe, in Philippines, Cambodia and

Afghanistan. She was an executive member of Trócaire, an overseas development agency. She was for several years a Vice-President of AWEPA, an organisation of European parliamentarians for Africa and currently still remains a member of AWEPA.

After volunteering for CONCERN in Rwanda in 1994 where she was responsible for the welfare of returning refugees, she is now a member of Concern Council in Ireland and the UK. Ms. Owen has also served on the Democracy Commission, an organization established to study the reasons for electorate apathy towards politics. She is currently the Chair of the Justice Group of the Irish Institute of International & European Affairs and was a member of the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime 2005-2010.

Ms. Owen holds Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and Biochemistry, a Diploma in Microbiology from University College Dublin and a Certificate in Business Corporate Law with distinction from the National College of Ireland.

The Society is very fortunate indeed to be able to welcome a member of such great experience to be one of its number.

### CARRIAGE & WAGON

**State Coach:** On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January Chairman David Houston officially accepted Mk2 State Coach 5408 into the care of the Society on a 50-year lease.

The lease agreement is similar to that which is already in place between the RPSI and Iarnród Éireann for the older State Coach, 351.

**Bogies:** Scrapping of most of NIR's 80 class railcars has taken place and the Society has acquired B4 bogies. These were delivered to Whitehead in February in exchange for bogies in poor condition and other scrap items.

The yard was subsequently shunted by No.3BG and the bogies stacked in pairs and put into a siding.

**Dublin:** The main project early in the year was replacing worn gangway curtains in some of the Cravens. The first task was to identify which of the running vehicles were likely to need new gangway tunnels fitted. A survey was conducted and it was found that 1506, 1522, 1514, 1532 and 1505 were all in need of renewal.

The dismantling of the gangways was quite a protracted task, with many days spent removing old nuts, bolts and screws in order to free the old leathers. This allowed the opportunity to sand down the gangway metal (and floor plates) otherwise obscured by the leather. In some places this was found to be quite rusty; after sanding down these areas received a protective coat of Hammerite. Once this was done, the newly designed gangway curtains could be fitted. Despite the weather being far from pleasant or suitable for outdoor work much trojan effort by many saw the installation of the new material completed in just over a week, with the final Craven, 1506,

being finished on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February.

Members probably don't realise the working conditions that the Dublin Carriage Crew toil under. If power is needed for tools, the only readily available source is BR3185, and then extensions are run through the train to reach wherever the work is being carried out. This means that the work party must bring extensions, tools, and all else required, from the container to the work area. Quite a hike on a warm barmy summer day, but imagine on a cold windy winter day!

Other tasks undertaken, or in hand, include:

**1505:** Wheels re-profiled.

**1506:** Wheels to be re-profiled.

**1532:** Door repairs.

**1541:** Repairs being carried out to the Dublin end bogie.

So is help needed? Yes!

- More volunteers capable of helping with the jobs in hand.
- Suitable facilities, shed, etc., all in the Dublin area.

### TRAINS & EVENTS

**Rabbie Burns Haggis Special:** This was a return trip from Belfast to Portrush on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January, the first scheduled passenger train for No.461.

It was probably the worst sort of day possible for a steam outing - cold, wet and miserable. And it was certainly the case that that those intrepid passengers braving a windswept Portrush were glad of the sustaining qualities of their haggis, neeps and tatties.

All said, though, it was a successful

day out and the locomotive behaved reasonably well - it had a few mid-section stops for inspection which caused a few delays, but not too much!

**Cultra Move:** Sometime after 11 o'clock on the evening of Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January, NIR diesel locomotives 111 and 113 rumbled slowly into Whitehead excursion station to collect an unusual train - preserved diesels 102 and B113. Both locomotives, now owned by the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, were to be brought from Whitehead to their Rail Gallery at Cultra.

Earlier the previous year 102 had been cosmetically restored at Whitehead, while B113 was brought by road to Whitehead where it too received some cosmetic restoration work. Both locomotives had their bearings checked over and lubricated, and many other jobs performed to make them fit to move again. 102 was sporting newly cast "Falcon" nameplates, to replace the long-gone originals.

Preparations by NIR were in hand too; while the Operations and Fleet Engineering people worked out how best to perform the move, the Infrastructure department reinstated some missing track components at the Cultra turnout - borrowed for another job at Central many years ago - or so the story goes!

The train was scheduled to leave Whitehead at 00:15, run to Central arriving at 01:35, and then proceed to Cultra on the Bangor line which was under possession for the morning. So it was that the unusual train left Whitehead pulled by 113, and tailed by 111. The idea was to disrupt passenger trains as little as possible, so the move was scheduled for a time when there weren't any.

The speed was kept below 15 mph in

deference to the ancient Sulzer, suddenly back on the main line after a break of nearly 40 years. Only a handful of photographers tailed the train, possibly the easiest train to chase ever, with the likelihood of it overtaking the chasers almost negligible. Some of the chasers, relying on station lights staying on through the wee small hours, gave up in frustration after being defeated by the carbon savvy railway company who turns off platform lights at most stations after the last scheduled train. Others kept at it, and the climb from Holywood produced some good results as the streetlights on the dual carriageway illuminated the train. Contrary to rumours doing the rounds on the internet, the lights were not turned off at the RPSI's request specially to prevent photography - they always go off at that time of the morning, as RPSI crews will know from the eerie run home through darkened stations after a Steam & Jazz train.

The train arrived at Cultra just before 2am. The gates, catch point and point onto the Bangor line were made ready by staff from NIR's PW department.

The rail gallery had been rearranged the previous week by a team of RPSI and UFTM staff. On the spur was RPSI CIÉ carriage 2422 and BCDR 4-4-2T No.30, with the stock on the Bangor side of the turntable in the museum previously shunted to allow this night time move to take place with utmost expediency.

111, having left the Sulzer and Hunslet in the care of sister locomotive 113, entered the UFTM spur and collected 2422 and No.30, and then coupled them to 102 and B113. Then 111 propelled the four vehicles up the siding until B113 just mounted the turntable. 2422 was then pulled from the spur for the last time. 113 coupled to the other end of 2422 before the

one coach train left for Whitehead - this time with a less severe speed restriction of 30mph.

The gallery was then rearranged again, the shunt lasting until about 6am. BCDR No.30 now has pride of place on the turntable, while No.74 occupies the road recently vacated by 2422. 102 is now at the head of the goods train at the goods platform, B113 sits in the space left by the NIR railbus RB3, and the little GNR railbus lives between B113 and the turntable.

And so, at about 6am, with the turntable once more locked in position, and the RPSI and UFTM staff making their way home to bed, the move was over.

And all that while sensible members were still in bed!

**Transfer (1):** No.461 was on its way light engine to Dublin on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> February when, during a routine servicing stop at Dundalk, it was found that the left big end was carrying a bit of heat.

Rather than proceed, the locomotive was stabled there while the big end was dismantled and examined. No serious damage was found.

**Transfer (2):** No.186 arrived safely in Dublin on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> February, sent there as a stand-in for No.461.

**Maynooth Shuttle:** On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, the day's events started out on a disappointing note. Difficulties with turning No.186 at Connolly resulted in a significant delay to the departure of the first Maynooth Shuttle - the locomotive had to be sent to Inchicore to be turned!

However, No.186, with 6 Cravens and a van, finally departed Pearse station some 75 minutes late. Passengers had been kept informed of the reason for the delay and were very understanding of the situation.

Some time was caught up during the lie-over at Maynooth, and further lateness was pulled back on the reduced lie-over at Pearse before the second Shuttle departed just 20 minutes late.

Full marks to all concerned for retrieving a difficult situation, and to the passengers who seemed to enjoy the day despite these difficulties.

It was ironic that an operation specifically organised to allow further running-in and crew familiarisation on No.461 should end up hauled by No.186!

**Transfer (3):** Following attention to the left big end at Dundalk, No.461 left for Dublin on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March. The schedule was an hour down because of a faulty GM locomotive ahead, also running light. The GM eventually arrived at Drogheda and was stabled in the Platin line. No.461 arrived at 13:25 (just ahead of the 13:00 Down Enterprise) where water was taken. The Enterprise operated from Platform 2 on the Up line as No.461 was occupying the Down line at the water crane.

Departure from Drogheda was at 13:50 and Dublin was reached without further incident.

The train (7 carriages) from the previous day was attached and a return proving (locomotive) and familiarisation (Irish Rail crew) run to Maynooth was operated.

**Spare Link:** It was a weekend (24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> March) of mixed fortunes. There were serious delays on both days - a significant contribution being the number of stops due to hot box detectors in hilly terrain. To the disappointment of some the train never made it to Rosslare Europort due to the late running.

On the plus side, No.461 was looking

good, complete with flying snail on the tender, the weather was fantastic, everyone on the packed train appeared to be having a great time. And - the first steam in Howth since 1980!

The Saturday morning run to M3 Parkway started the ball rolling without incident. However, a hot box detector was tripped along the way and the train was held subsequently at Grand Canal Street for inspection - nothing untoward was found. Thus began the delays, which only got worse as another couple of stops for the same reason were made on the line south.

At Wexford some passengers detrained but a significant number stuck it out, going to Rosslare Strand where No.461 detached and ran to the Harbour to turn.

The evening's activities took place as planned, with a packed function room in White's Hotel gathering to belatedly mark the retirement of Dan Renahan. Charles Friel presented a slide show which gave a flavour of Dan's steam career from the early days until his recent retirement. Some of the more interesting shots were the older examples, which included some very familiar steam drivers from the Society's past. One in particular stood out - a shot from the mid-1970s showing Joe Byrne and Morgan D'Arcy with a youthful(ish) Dan between them, complete with long(ish) hair! The organiser of the weekend, Gerry Mooney, paid tribute to Dan's help to the Society over the years and to the encouragement he gave to the younger crews, both RPSI and railway company. Chairman David Houston said a few words in a similar vein, having known Dan since he started on steam. Gerry then presented Dan with an Honorary Life Membership of the Society and with tickets for a mainline GB steam tour. Asked to say a few words, Dan (no shrinking violet) took

to the podium and entertained the audience with a few anecdotes before thanking everyone for coming and for the grand weekend. He offered his encouragement to the Society and to the new Irish Rail steam drivers following in his footsteps.

Sunday was an even better day of glorious sunshine. Judicious driving managed to avoid triggering all but one of the hot box detectors, but it was enough to start delays accumulating.

Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of returning steam to the Howth branch was achieved. While it was the first time for 30 odd years since a steam locomotive was in Howth, it was also the first day that a 201 Class locomotive hauled a passenger train on the Howth Branch, with 217 sent light engine to Howth to haul the tour back to Dublin Connolly. Not the first 201 on the branch though, as apparently one went out during the previous week for driver familiarisation.

**Transfer (4):** As No.461 was working from Wexford, No.186 made its way back from Dublin to Whitehead.

**Easter Eggspress:** Thank-you to everybody who helped in making the 2012 trains an outstanding success.

There were fears nearing the date that the publicity for the Titanic events in Belfast would swamp the RPSI offering. Indeed, ticket sales were slow up until the week before Easter. But a massive publicity drive, mostly online, but also including press and radio contacts, came good in the end with all four trains totally sold out by the time they ran.

In total, just under 1,000 fare-paying passengers were carried.

The ever-reliable No.186 was in traffic both days and performed in its usual impeccable manner.

It was a chance for our newly-appointed trainee firemen, Barney McReynolds and Anthony Dargan, to sample footplate travel, each taking a day to accustom themselves to steam work. Both men, NIR diesel drivers, were recently appointed to undergo training in the fine art of steam locomotive operation.

**171 For 171:** A railtour, 171 miles in each direction, Dublin Pearse to Cork, will feature the RPSI Cravens set and requested 071 class motive power.

All money raised from this railtour will go directly to the restoration of locomotive No.171 "Sieve Gullion".

**Garret Fitzgerald Commemorative:** On Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May No.461 will operate a return trip from Dublin to Mullingar. This, a joint venture with the Irish Railway Record Society, is a commemorative outing in recognition of the support given to both Societies by the late Dr Garret Fitzgerald who died in May 2011.

Tickets on sale at the usual Dublin outlets or from the website. The fare includes transfers to/from, and entrance to, Belvedere House near Mullingar.

An onward trip to Longford is being separately marketed by the IRRS and Belvedere House.

**South Clare (10<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> May):** The weekend railtour to Ennis is proving very popular, with over 200 booked. However, the train will carry more and there is still time to book for either the full weekend or the allied "North Atlantic" diesel-hauled trip to Portrush on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May.

**Bangor Belle:** Lisburn/Belfast to Bangor & return on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May. Fare includes discounted admission to the First Bangor Model Railway Club exhibition. Tickets are on sale from the website and Belfast Welcome Centre.

**Sea Breeze:** The first train of the season will be on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May. On sale soon from website and Dublin outlets.

**Steam & Jazz:** This year's dates are Fridays 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup> July. Tickets are on sale from the website and Belfast Welcome Centre.

**Mystery Train:** A repeat of last year's popular diesel-hauled excursions. It might be to the same destination, but it might not!

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.1 (DCDR):** The Orenstein and Koppel locomotive is undergoing assembly of pipework, brake gear and cladding.

**No.85:** The boiler was moved from the locomotive shed to the workshop for inspection and further overhaul work. It has been successfully subjected to tests required by inspectors and work is proceeding to complete the overhaul. Mechanical work is well advanced. Removed rear middle cylinder cover and extraction of carbon build up from ports. Assembly of tender brakes and springs.

**No.171:** Minus cab, now at the front of the locomotive shed for steam washing prior to boiler removal. Preliminary examination is now taking place.

## WHITEHEAD SITE

**Development:** The Society has filed a planning application for the proposed £4m upgrade of its centre at Whitehead.

The aim is to develop the site as a heritage engineering museum.

Among the attractions will be a viewing gallery which would enable

visitors to observe work being carried out in the engineering workshops.

In addition, there are plans for a turntable, a signal cabin, station building, education centre, café and souvenir shop.

The Society believes that its Whitehead depot has the potential to become a major tourist centre, something that would boost the wider East Antrim economy.

**Maintenance:** In preparation for Easter all points were cleaned and greased and repairs were made to the point lever timbers which control 1 and 2 shed roads.

The point lever timbers for the outside carriage sidings near to the Workshop were replaced during the Easter train operations, when the running set was out in traffic.

## MEMBERSHIP

**Update:** This will be the last News-Letter of the membership year. If a renewal form is included with your circular (by post or email) then your full subscription amount has not yet been received and your membership will cease.

Please return the form as soon as possible as your continued support is needed.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**11<sup>th</sup> January:** It was a two-partner from two people who had not previously addressed an RPSI audience.

John Stewart led off with a review of railway remains in County Antrim, ranging across both broad and narrow gauge, many remarkably intact so long after the last trains ran. He included some pictures of railway architecture

which has been sadly lost during refurbishments. John, who is chair of two Translink User Groups, recounted many instances of the remarkable revival of rail travel on NIR and contrasted that with what the UTA had tried to do. He concluded with some of his own pre-preservation views of steam in County Antrim and some early Society tours - and some participants who, though still active, have somewhat changed in appearance!

After the break, Richard Lyons brought the audience on an illustrated whirlwind tour of the Londonderry and Lough Swilly, tracing the route, the trains and some of the characters in pictures, quotes, poems and stories. Richard remarked on the Swilly stationmaster who was cautioned by management not to parade the band he was training or another stationmaster who asked for a uniform. The railway agreed to supply a cap so long as he provided the rest! Richard spoke in great detail and with great enthusiasm and almost without notes. He concluded by paying tribute to the many photographers who had provided the pictures and singled out the late Henry Casserley for particular praise, both for his prolific picture taking but also for his account of travel all the way to Burtonport and back in its last days - "a journey not to be undertaken lightly or without preparation".

**8<sup>th</sup> February:** The evening's show was Joe Cassells' "Last Years Of Steam On The Great Northern".

Joe led a well-illustrated tour of Great Victoria Street station and Grosvenor Road yard before venturing onto the Central line and down to Bangor before a quick visit to the dockside at Donegall Quay. There were several stops on the main line to Dublin and Joe also covered the Warrenpoint branch and the Derry Road.

Throughout, Joe included a wide range of everyday scenes; things that we found hard to believe would ever come to an end. As before, he treated us too to things that few other people thought to photograph. And it was fitting that he named almost every railwayman that we saw and alluded to the running of many of the drivers. Joe also included rolling stock, signals and station buildings in a fast-moving and very comprehensive coverage that captured the lost days of youth. It was a rich railway scene in those days and Joe did it full justice. The audience's warm response said it all.

**14<sup>th</sup> March:** At the start of the evening Colourpoint launched their new book "Rails Through the West". After an introduction by Malcolm Johnston, joint author John Beaumont said a few words about the book and how it came about. The book was on sale on the sales stand and, during the interval, both Barry Carse and John Beaumont signed copies of the book for their eager fans.

Charles Friel then presented "Rails around Craigavon". Using pictures from a wide range of sources and including many maps and diagrams, Charles made two journeys across Craigavon; one before 1965 and one afterwards. Both journeys began at Kilmore signal cabin and travelled along the main line through Lurgan to Portadown before visiting the Armagh line, the Derry Road and the main line. Included were pictures of things taken for granted at the time as well as the unusual and the unfortunate. The second half was laced with many pictures of RPSI steam at work. As Charles said at the end, "It is not over yet!"

Thanks to Charles for another successful season. As always, ideas for subjects and speakers for next year are welcome.

## GENERAL

**Resignation:** It is with regret that we have to announce the resignation, due to ill-health, of John Lockett from the post of Society Vice-Chairman.

John is keen to keep his hand in on a more casual basis and we look forward to working with him from time to time. John was one of a small number of members instrumental in driving the development of Whitehead which, hopefully, will soon start to bear fruit - work is due to start on the new station building in the late summer.

The Board is pleased to be able to announce the appointment of Denis Grimshaw as Vice Chairman.

**Board:** Included with this circular is a nomination form for election to the Board at the forthcoming AGM (date not yet set). If you are interested then please send the form by return, completed in its entirety, to the Secretary at the address below. The Treasurer's post is expected to be vacant as are a number of directorships, so please give your consideration to getting involved.

**Twits:** The Society is now on Twitter. Have a look at:

[www.twitter.com/rpsitrains](http://www.twitter.com/rpsitrains)

The Twitter tag is: @rpsitrains

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