



July 2012

NEWS LETTER

FIVE FOOT THREE

At Last!: Apologies for the lateness of the current issue, but it's here now. The editor would welcome comments about the new format of the journal.

Archive: The Society's journals contain a wealth of historic information on the RPSI, and numerous articles and photographs on Irish railway history by the leading railway scholars and photographers in Ireland past and present. They are well worth a read!

A major project, which started quite a number of years ago, was undertaken to make all back issues of the journal available on-line. It involved hundreds of hours of volunteer labour. It has just been completed and the results can be viewed at:

www.steamtrainsireland.com/FFT

It is intended that all but the current issue will always be available on the website; as each new issue appears the previous one will be uploaded.

The project is complete but you can still help. A few known errors in the printed texts have been corrected, but if you find others please get in touch.

Also, if you think you can provide better scans of any of the photographs then send them in.

A list of the FFT articles can be found in the Bibliography, also on the website.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Brown Van: Inmates at Hydebank Young Offenders Centre have restored the NCC brown van 697. The Opportunity Youth organisation oversaw the restoration with £10,000 grant aid from the Big Lottery Fund's Awards for All, with the support of the prison service. The van has since been returned to Whitehead.

Cravens: The set has successfully operated the Dublin programme so far, with the vehicles revisiting places like Cork and Ennis for the first time in many years.

One consequence of the triangular routing of the "South Clare" tour was that the set returned to Dublin 'back to front', i.e. the BR van is now at the Heuston end of the set. As it is preferable for the van to be at the Cork end it is intended to arrange for a shunt to take place shortly. For logistical reasons it is also preferable that the storage end of the van is next to the carriages, and the crew end next to the locomotive, so it is intended to turn 3185 during the course of the shunt.

Bar car 1514 and standard 1532 rejoined the set for the "Mystery Train", having been removed for the May tour so as not to strain No.186.

The program of replacing running boards on the Cravens continues. It is intended to carry out this on the whole set. The opportunity is being taken to gradually train additional volunteers on this process (along with other tasks), thus increasing the skills-base of the team. Other tasks to be carried out include work on door

frames and toilet waste pipes.

1508: This carriage has been chosen as the next Craven for bodywork overhaul and eventual repaint into RPSI blue. Initial sanding down work is taking place on the Oil Road (where the running set is stabled). However, there is so only much that can be accessed from here, mainly below the white stripe. During the May tour a number of passengers enquired as to when the whole set will be blue - the simple answer is we don't know! While the actual painting process itself is a relatively quick affair, bodywork refurbishment can be prolonged depending on the condition of the carriage (the decision was taken not to repaint the carriages until after they have received bodywork attention to avoid wasting paint that would end up being sanded off again anyway). In the case of 1508 initial indications are that its panelling will be in need of considerable attention at the Cork end. Another factor to consider here is the need for suitable covered accommodation - at Inchicore we (naturally) have to fit in around IÉ's own requirements, and covered

accommodation is becoming harder to obtain. At the moment we are doing what we can outdoors, but this is very much weather dependent. This situation is likely to continue until a suitable base can be found for the Society in the Dublin area. Other jobs to be carried out on 1508 include repairs to the door frames.

1539: Worn brake-blocks were replaced in March. This carriage needs a number of tasks to be undertaken before returning to service. These include the replacement of the gangway bellows and steam heating pipes. The doors also require work. This will be undertaken as time and manpower allows.

3173: Overhaul continuing in Mullingar, with the exterior re-panelling largely completed. The interior of the van is undergoing a refit and will include crew facilities.

Boogie-Man: In June scrap merchants collected from Whitehead the bogies off Mk2 935, an old B4 bogie, the tanks from the DCDR O&K locomotive, most of the last remnants of Hunslet 101, some old rail and a redundant dynamo tester. All

this is payment in kind for delivering four good condition bogies from scrapped 450 class railcars.

TRAINS & EVENTS

171 For 171: As part of the ongoing fund raising for No.171 "Sieve Gullion", a special diesel-hauled excursion to Cork was run on Saturday 21st April to help raise funds (Dublin Pearse to Cork, 171 miles in each direction). Haulage was by GM 079 throughout and featured the Dublin-based craven coaches.

The comfortably filled train departed from Dublin Pearse exactly one hour late; this was due to issues with 079 prior to departure from the locomotive shed in Dublin Connolly.

The return was probably the longest ever non-stop run for an RPSI train. The run from Islandbridge to Pearse was always going to be a challenge for the non-stop element but even with adverse signals around Connolly, judicious control of the locomotive ensured that the wheels kept on turning - even if progress at one stage through Tara Street was 1½ mph! Well done Driver Fox!

Garret Fitzgerald Commemorative: No.461's performance on Saturday 5th May, along with significant delays to service trains not of RPSI making, led to major problems. The planned local trip from Mullingar to Longford had to be re-scheduled and re-routed to Killucan.

The crew, as always, were understanding and enthusiastic, but it still resulted in a late arrival back in Dublin.

Apologies to all who travelled. Not one of the Society's better days!

South Clare: Thursday 10th May saw No.186 hauling 5 Mk2 coaches and the generator van from Whitehead to Dublin. It was a good crowd of about 70 which joined at the various stops along the way. At Dundalk a further 80 joined - a special party for the single trip to Dublin. On arrival No.186 was (eventually) turned on the very reluctant DSER turntable in Connolly station.

On Friday the North Atlantic diesel excursion started out of Dublin Connolly

with GM 230. At Belfast Great Victoria Street NIR GM 111 attached to the rear of the train and hauled it away to Portrush where the passengers took in the delights of a windy Portrush during a 2 hour stopover. There were some delays on the return journey, first at Killagan then at Antrim before the tour train could get onto the Crumlin branch. At Lisburn 230 was waiting for the train and departed 40 minutes late. Solid running reduced this deficit to about 12 minutes by the time of arrival in Dublin.

On Saturday, because of uncertainty over No.461, No.186 was again in action for the main leg of the tour, but not until later in the day. It was dispatched early to Athlone light engine. In the meantime, GM 230 again took charge of the train, this time 5 Cravens carriages and the generator van. From Athlone onwards, No.186 proved how capable an engine it really is, with consistent running on the route through Athenry to Ennis. Stops were made at the 3 stations on the branch: Craughwell, Ardrahan and Gort. It was an early 08:30 start from Ennis on Sunday and there were a number of bleary eyes in evidence after the previous evening's railtour dinner and subsequent carousing. There was a sprightly run to Limerick, where No.186 ran round for the start of the tender-first trundle to Ballybophy. The train was met along the way by enthusiastic crowds. On arrival in Ballybophy, GM 230 was, once again, waiting to haul the train back to Dublin - and a lively run it was too!

Monday's proceedings got underway with the turning of No.461 on the DSER turntable. Even with a winch it was a slow process, not helped by the fact that No.461 just fits on the table and no more - the locomotive's buffers were actually rubbing the supports of an adjacent advertising hoarding on the way round.

The departure from Dublin was about 30 minutes late. But the crew immediately set out to prove that No.461 was not shy of steam, and it was only at the southern end of Drogheda station that the locomotive ran out of puff. A quick blow-up, a fill of water and the train was away again.

Apparently, different firing techniques were being tried and the changeover from one to the other was made at Drogheda. Whether that was responsible or not, the run to Dundalk proved beyond doubt that No.461 can run. The climb up Kellystown bank was not even an issue, and the run down the other side was all one would want from a locomotive of its size.

Unfortunately, upon arrival at Dundalk, the left big end was found to be carrying more than comfortable heat. In some circumstances this could be nursed with frequent stops for checking and application of oil. However, with 10 miles of 1 in 100 gradient ahead, it was felt prudent not to risk serious damage and delay by continuing. The immediate plan was to request a diesel locomotive from NIR to work the train onward, with No.461 following light as soon as possible. In practice this proved not to be feasible and passengers were reluctantly transferred to a following Enterprise.

The big end problem was disappointing in the extreme given how both Rush bank and Kellystown had earlier been tackled in most commendable fashion.

Tuesday is the traditional 'wind down' day and included a visit to the Thompson Graving Dock (where Titanic had been fitted out with propellers, etc.), the new Titanic Belfast exhibition and the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

Transfer (1): No.461 and the Mk2 set returned to Whitehead on Sunday 20th May.

Bangor Belle (1): On Saturday 26th May, it was No.461's first visit to Bangor since 16th April 2001 with a trip from Lisburn to the seaside.

MGWR Shuttles: A technical problem with No.186 meant that the trains planned for 27th May had to be cancelled.

Steam & Jazz: The trains this year all operated very successfully (No.461 - 8th, 15th & 22nd June, No.186 - 6th July). They were, however, plagued by a succession of wet or windy (or both) Friday evenings but this didn't deter the passengers from enjoying themselves.

The route this year was novel - out to Ballymena via the Lisburn to Antrim line,

returning via Templepatrick. The final train had to operate to Carrickfergus and Lisburn due to track subsidence on the branch.

Private Charter: Malahide Lions had planned a trip to Mullingar on 10th June, but this too had to be cancelled due to no available locomotive.

Transfer (2): Unfortunately, because of the lack of the necessary facilities at Dublin Connolly, a return to Whitehead was necessary for No.186. While waiting for the transfer, which took place on 17th June behind a diesel, the locomotive suffered a graffiti attack along one side while stabled in Connolly yard.

Mystery Train: On 23rd June, GM 086 provided the motive power in both directions, and with lively running got the participants to a soggy Galway.

Transfer (3): No.461 transferred back to Dublin on 9th July.

Dublin Shuttles: Local trips from Dublin are planned for 15th July (Wicklow and Greystones), 29th July (Maynooth and M3 Parkway), 12th August (Drogheda and Skerries) and 19th August (Kilkenny). Tickets from the EBS (Malahide, Drumcondra, Dun Laoghaire) and Irish Rail (Pearse Station).

Bangor Belle (2): Portadown folk get their visit to the seaside on 28th July. Tickets from Belfast Welcome Centre (+44 28 9024 6609).

Portrush Flyer: Trains will operate on 19th & 26th August and 2nd September. Tickets from Belfast Welcome Centre.

Rag Appeal: A lot of rags are used in the workshop and locomotive sheds. More are always welcome, i.e. old sheets, pillow cases, towels, shirts, etc. If you could get them to Whitehead it would be much appreciated.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG: the Guinness engine is now out of use pending 10 year overhaul of boiler.

No.85: Fitting of patch screws to replace worn lap seam rivets in firebox complete. Building up of wasted areas on tube plate. Renewal of internal steam pipe also one tube plate stay which was

removed for access. Once this is done, new boiler tubers will be fitted and the boiler hydraulic tested. Centre big end has been remetalled and is being machined. Overhaul of cylinder block fittings near complete. Renewed low pressure slide valves being bedded in. Work commencing shortly on new superheater elements.

No.171: The boiler has been blast cleaned for "non-destructive" testing, i.e. thickness of plates, defects in plates, broken stays, etc. The testing has shown that the boiler may be in better shape than originally believed.

Contract Work: Orenstein locomotive No.1 for DCDR is being prepared for steam testing. This will be done prior to fitting of cladding, tanks and cab so that complete access is possible during the examination.

MEMBERSHIP

Cards: This year, to save postage, membership cards have been sent out with the printed circulars. So, if you haven't received yours yet, it should be in the envelope with Five Foot Three.

GENERAL

Jack O'Neill: The retired Waterford steam driver, author and commentator passed away on 1st May. Many will recall Jack on the footplate of RPSI trains into the 1980s; also, the articles he wrote for the IRRS journal, plus an RPSI book and articles in Five Foot Three (all now on the website).

Craig Robb: Founder member Craig Robb died on Wednesday 20th June after a long illness. Craig was the Society's first Operations Officer and organised many fascinating tours, including the inaugural trip in September 1965 with three GNR engines (149, 171 & 207).

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