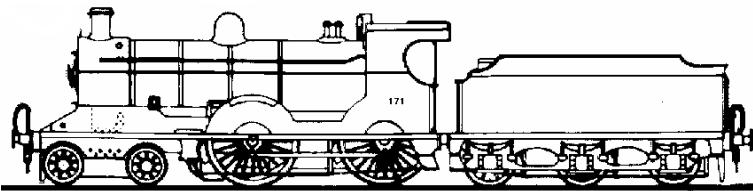


# Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



**January 2013**

# NEWS LETTER

## STATION BUILDING

**First Brick:** On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October the first brick was formally set in place on the Society's new £270,000 period-style station building at Whitehead Excursion Station, which is due to open next summer.

Funding for the new station building has come from three bodies - GROW South Antrim, Carrickfergus Borough Council, and Ulster Garden Villages. Cleary Contracting from Randalstown is in charge of construction.

Vera McWilliam, Local Area Group Chairperson for GROW South Antrim laid the first brick to enthusiastic applause.

Guests included local politicians, railway company officials and representatives of the various funding bodies.

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Brown Van:** On the same day as the brick-laying ceremony, a ribbon was cut to mark the return to service of an historic parcels van which has been rebuilt by young offenders at Hydebank Wood as part of a re-training project.

The so-called 'brown van', 697, was rebuilt by trainees at Hydebank Young Offenders Centre in Belfast as part of their rehabilitation programme.

The £10,000 restoration project was funded by the Big Lottery Fund, delivered by Opportunity Youth and carried out under the

auspices of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

**Dublin:** Recent months have seen the team busy preparing the Cravens set for its annual exam. A range of tasks was undertaken: door renewal, replacement of worn steam heating bags, greasing of axleboxes, etc. The latter is quite a tedious task - 72 axleboxes!

This year there was a greater urgency than usual to get the set serviced, as a train was needed as part of No.461's test runs in early November.

Other work carried out includes:

- **1508:** Bodywork overhaul proceeding. At present work is concentrated on door frame repairs and the application of filler as required on the panelling.
- **1514:** This carriage returned to service on the first Santa trains following door refurbishment work. The floor in the Cork end vestibule has been renewed.
- **1541:** Some brake blocks have been replaced. Door repairs undertaken.
- **3173:** Overhaul well advanced at Mullingar. Bodywork is being prepped for initial application of undercoat.
- **3185:** Boiler serviced prior to Santa season. Repairs to steam heating undertaken. Some running boards have been renewed on this vehicle.

What's becoming apparent is that more and more tasks are being carried out by fewer and fewer bodies. The small team at Inchicore must look after both running maintenance of the Cravens set, restoration work, and any out of course jobs that crop up in between. With a bigger team the

individual work load could be lessened, and perhaps even more could be achieved. Bear in mind that the Dublin carriage fleet consists of over twenty vehicles across both the Cravens and Heritage sets; although the latter is out of service at present, it is the intention to return it to use at some point as manpower allows. But regardless of which set is being used, more manpower is needed. If you are interested in getting involved why not get in touch?

**Whitehead:** NIR have added the following to the RPSI Approval to Operate Certificate:

- **303:** Mk2d Open, 64 seats.
- **463:** Mk2z BFK (Corridor First Brake), 24 seats.
- **5408:** Mk2d. The Irish State Coach is also approved pending the fitting of secondary door locking.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.1:** The DCDR locomotive was on test at Whitehead on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October and made itself useful doing a few shunt moves.

**No.3 "R.H. Smyth":** On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November it was transported from Downpatrick to Whitehead, using a low loader and RPSI ramp. At Whitehead, No.3 was off-loaded using No.186 and carriage 2422 as a barrier vehicle to avoid the loco climbing the ramp.

DCDR No.1 was then loaded and transported to Downpatrick.

**No.4:** The boiler is being dismantled for lifting out of the frames. This work is being undertaken because at the moment there is Workshop capacity available prior to commencing the overhaul of No.171, for which funding is being sought.

**No.85:** Boiler was given its first steam test (out of the frames) on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> January. It was brought up to about 90 psi (enough to work injectors). Several minor leaks will be attended to before the next test.

**No.171:** The appeal fund has been greatly helped by a further generous donation (£1,750) from "The Syndicate" that trusty band of GB enthusiasts. The guys were busy

at various shows during the year, the most important being the Warley Model Railway Exhibition in November, and their donation is the proceeds of fundraising.

**No.186:** After working the Belfast Santa trains and the last operation of the year (the Mince Pie Special), the locomotive is being prepared for annual boiler inspection together with minor running repairs.

**No.461:** Following repairs throughout the autumn, the locomotive began running-in on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November, with two return trips to Kildare from Inchicore. The following two days each saw one return trip to Portlaoise from Inchicore.

Whilst running round at Portlaoise on the Wednesday, the locomotive got as far as Coniberry Level Crossing. When was the last time a steam locomotive was down there? It is believed to have been 1975 when No.186 took a railtour to Coolnamona Works.

The locomotive operated the first nine Dublin based Santa trains but unfortunately a problem with an injector clack valve resulted in the last three trains being diesel worked. The problem was easily rectified and again highlights the current difficulty of trying to maintain locomotives at arm's length and without suitable facilities in Dublin.

**Diesels:** Unfortunately, progress to date whilst steady has been rather slow. We are now pleased to announce that a further milestone has now been reached in the project with the confirmation that both 134 and 175 have been purchased by the RPSI. The sale was concluded in early November.

The purchase of the locomotives has taken longer than anticipated, primarily because of the need to identify a suitable location where the locomotives can be maintained and returned to traffic as Inchicore is not an option in this regard. Also the sale needed to be formally signed off and approved by the board of Iarnród Éireann.

The Society is now working to obtain a lease on a suitable location for storing the fleet and hopes to be in a position to make an announcement in the near future. Once this is achieved, it is anticipated that B141 along with 134 and 175 will be moved there to

allow any maintenance work required to get them rectified for mainline operation to be undertaken.

In addition to the purchase of the locomotives, a reasonable quantity of spare parts has also been secured from Irish Rail which will allow maintenance of the locomotives in running order.

B142 is still based in Whitehead and has been used on a regular basis, although currently out of service.

If you are interested in getting involved or would like to support the project financially then please do get in touch.

## WHITEHEAD SITE

**Sleepers:** In September 70 old crossing timbers, which came out of the Bleach Green relay, were generously donated by NIR. They will be extremely useful and will be used extensively to facilitate the ongoing repair and maintenance of the track at Whitehead.

## TRAINS & EVENTS

**Broomstick Belle:** On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October No.186 was back to previous form and successfully operated the Halloween trains without fault, being on time to the minute at most locations.

The afternoon train had the full allocation of tickets taken, but unfortunately not the morning or evening trains. However, they were comfortably loaded and the evil Wicked Witch still had her work cut out to ensure each child was dealt with appropriately.

Because of the building work at Whitehead the destinations for Halloween, Christmas and Easter have been changed to Carrickfergus and Lisburn.

**Victorian Street Fair:** Whitehead town was alive with nostalgia on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November as it staged its annual fair. To coincide with the event, the Society operated steam train rides at the Excursion Station behind a true relic of the Victorian era - No.186, built in 1879.

**Santa Special (Dublin):** The early trains operated successfully at full capacity. The only significant disappointment was the failure of No.461 to haul the last train on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December and both trains on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>. This was due to a problem with injectors. Diesels substitutes were made.

Over the three weekends 4,115 passengers were carried.

**Santa Special (Belfast/Portadown):** 25% of the tickets were sold on the first day of going on sale in late October. Over all the trains it was noticeable that there was a significant number of passengers from south of the border, most having been on Dublin trains in the past.

Otherwise very little to report other than No.186 competently dealt with packed trains throughout in mostly reasonable weather.

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December, there was an extra leg attached to the day's itinerary. A gauging trip was made into the new Adelaide motive power depot in Belfast in preparation for a special train the following week.

Over the three weekends 3,387 passengers were carried.

**Adelaide Depot:** The Society was privileged to be asked to provide a steam train for the official 'unveiling' of Translink's new Railcar Maintenance and Servicing Depot at Adelaide in Belfast on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December, with the arrival of the Translink management and their guests on a special train from Belfast Central station, hauled by No.186.

Arrangements were made for the special to operate right into the depot to a platform adjacent to the main maintenance building, using tracks leading from a new crossover and junction between Central Junction and Adelaide station, which will in future be used only by Translink's CAF railcars to and from the depot.

**Mince Pie Special:** It was a great way to end off the operational year – a very pleasant trundle around Belfast Lough, including visits to Lisburn.

On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> December, with a carriage less than the usual format – due to loop

restrictions in Bangor – No.186 put in a spritely performance and took the arduous Holywood bank in its stride. The passengers enjoyed a very festive atmosphere and hopefully all left the train well-contented.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**9<sup>th</sup> January:** "Steam Miscellany" by Richard Whitford.

**13<sup>th</sup> February:** "Malcolm and Stewart – an Appreciation" by Tony Ragg and "Look what I found!" by Derek Young.

**13<sup>th</sup> March:** "Rails around Fermanagh" by Charles Friel.

**News-Reel:** All shows now commence with very interesting video and still updates of recent Society events.

**Congratulations:** The RPSI is delighted to announce that Charles Friel has, in the New Year's Honours list, been awarded a British Empire Medal in recognition of his services to the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland. This is a well-deserved accolade for Charles and recognition of the tremendous effort he has put into advancing the causes of railway enthusiasm in general and the RPSI in particular over so many years.

Charles will be a familiar face to so many RPSI members in his various roles as organiser of the Belfast meetings, official RPSI photographer, regular steward on the Belfast operations, noted railway author, railway archivist and industrial heritage specialist

## GENERAL

**Departed:** Unfortunately, the deaths of a number of members have to be reported:

- **Laurence Liddle (10<sup>th</sup> September):** A former Chairman, he was perhaps better known in more recent years for his very popular septuagenarian and octogenarian ramblings in "Comments & Recollections" in Five Foot Three - from issue 35 in 1989 to issue 51 in 2005.
- **Joe St. Leger (19<sup>th</sup> September):** You may not have known Joe, a very familiar face in

the Cork area, but if you have travelled on any of the Society's May tours you will undoubtedly have seen at various wayside stations a small man in a ubiquitous brown mac with a camera around his neck. That was Joe.

- **Mike Collins (3<sup>rd</sup> October):** Author and well-known Downpatrick & County Down Railway official.
- **Des Coakham (4<sup>th</sup> October):** A well-known author and authority on railway matters.
- **Brian Stinson (12<sup>th</sup> December):** Brian was the authority behind a multitude of videos of RPSI trains, with sales all benefitting the Society (see any Sales form).

**Five Foot Three:** It's probably still not too late to make a submission to the next journal. If you have something to submit, or know someone who might, then please contact the Editor as soon as possible at:

5ft3magazine@gmail.com

**Sales News:** New items include:

- "The Syndicate" (that well-known group of Irish railway enthusiasts living in Southeast England) is pleased to publish a near reproduction of the 1944 GNR(I) Coaching Booklet, together with a supplement that contains the details of all GNR coaching stock post 1944 and (where known) the disposal details of each vehicle.
- "Across the Tracks – Reminiscences of working on Dundalk's Railways" compiled by Charles Friel. 24 x 17 cm, 41 colour and 54 b&w photos plus 3 maps, 224 pages, paperback, £15.

This illustrated book records the memories of some 28 former GNR employees. It has been compiled by Charles Friel and is part of the Across the Tracks Project between the RPSI and the Dundalk Railway Heritage Society funded by the IFI Integrating Communities Programme.

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