

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



September 2013

NEWS LETTER

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

No Date: Increased auditing requirements due to the RPSI/Heritage Engineering Ireland split, new auditors and a change to the financial year have all added to a delay in producing accounts. While no date has yet been set for the AGM, preparations are otherwise underway. Please be aware that there are a number of Board vacancies coming up for the incoming year:

- Vice-Chairman
- Treasurer
- General Directors (2)

Members interested in getting involved with grants administration, finance or museums are especially sought.

These positions are open to all paid-up Society members. Contact us for a nomination form.

GENERAL NEWS

Irish Railfans' News: In early September, with the uploading of Volume 19 (1973), the task of completing the project to make all copies of Irish Railfans' News available online was completed:

www.steamtrainsireland.com/IRFN

No doubt all enthusiasts will join in the thanks to the IRFN committee members over the years for giving permission for a very worthwhile project.

Museum Award: In July the Society was very pleased to report that Whitehead volunteer, Nathan Lightowler, one of the famed "Youth Team", was the winner of the 2012 "Marsh Award for Museum Learning". The British Museum and the Marsh Christian Trust present the awards for volunteers engaging museum audiences. The award recognises best practice and the innovative

ways in which volunteers work in museums and galleries to engage the public with collections.

Applications are judged against the following:

- Making a difference to their museum.
- Improving the museum experience for visitors.
- Positive feedback from museum visitors and staff.

The award is in recognition of Nathan's dedication to the task of overhauling and the returning to steam of GNR(I) locomotive No.85.

2014 Calendar: This full-colour calendar is now on the sales form. As before, all money raised will go directly to the No.171 Appeal.

Help Wanted: The Society's Museum Committee would be very interested in obtaining display boards. Ideally, these would be:

- Felt/Velcro surfaces
- Free-standing
- Interlockable (if possible)
- Large display area (6ft x 4ft)
- Quantity 5
- Free or cheap

WHITEHEAD

Whitehead Development: As part of the overall Whitehead development programme, a contract has been awarded to Cleary Contracting Ltd (who also recently built the new station house) for the construction of an ash pit on Shed Road No.1 and a concrete 'apron' around the track on the adjacent No.2 Shed Road. This has been funded by GROW South Antrim.

As well as enhancing the area concerned, this will greatly facilitate the pre-trip preparation (inspection and oiling) of locomotives, and the disposal of ash at the end of the trip. Hopefully the days of our

volunteers lying on their backs in the mud in wet weather whilst doing some of these tasks will soon be at an end!

Some lifting and packing of the approach tracks will be necessary to achieve a level area just in front of the shed and a satisfactory gradient profile between the gantry turnout and the shed, over a distance of some 60m.

Excavations in front of the shed commenced on 4th September. The work is expected to last for a period of six weeks.

TRAINS & EVENTS

Mystery Train: On Sunday 9th June, No.461 hauled its train to the mysterious destination of Kilkenny. Almost 200 passengers from both Dublin and Sallins enjoyed a leisurely run in glorious sunshine.

Arrival was earlier than planned thanks to the use of a water tanker and pump in Athy - eight minutes to fill up! There will probably be more use of this sort of facility in the future as most local authorities around the country are reducing pressure on water mains during weekends to save costs. What may have been good on Friday when tested cannot be guaranteed on Saturday or Sunday!

Steam & Jazz: The first train of the season, on Friday 14th June, was a great success, despite the abysmal weather - it was a downpour all night. The crowd and band were in great form, however, and in the process managed to break the champagne on the new Excursion Station!

21st June was another wet night (not as bad as the previous week). But over 200 passengers enjoyed another successful train. Again the new station house was put to good use.

It was another successfully night of steamy jazz (or jazzy steam!) on 28th June - and it was dry, so the band set up outside on the Whitehead platform for the first time.

The 5th July train was blessed with glorious summer weather - it was a great night out! What a difference good weather can make.

An article in the Belfast Telegraph Magazine of 29th June was very complimentary (and didn't rely too heavily in the "Full Steam Ahead" school of journalism!).

Bray Shuttle: Sunday 23rd June was a very successful day of trains to Bray and Wicklow.

Starting off, No.461 had to shunt the train at Connolly in the absence of a working 201 class loco. The train left from Platform 5 after the Down Rosslare. Departure was a few

minutes late but arrival in Bray was on time. This positioning train was about half full.

Of the two trips from Bray to Wicklow, the first was well-filled and the second was packed. Timing was good throughout, as was the weather (it didn't rain). The dining car did a brisk trade and the bar trade was fair. In total, over 700 passengers travelled on the three trains.

Summer Barbecue: Due to a very poor take up of tickets (shame!) the barbecue train to Mullingar on 6th July had to be cancelled.

Irish Railway Record Society: The IRRS's diesel trip to Cork on Saturday 20th July featured GM 071 haulage throughout, with 5 RPSI Cravens coaches and a van.

Enthusiasts got very excited at Dublin Heuston on Saturday morning when 073, coupled to 071, backed on to the train. Hopes were dashed though when it was noticed that there were no control cables for multiple working connecting the pair. The route took in Cobh and Middleton, and both locomotives were used, as facilities at neither place allow for running round a train.

The whole day ran according to plan and very much to time. And while the scorching weather was very welcome, it did mean a great demand at the bar, which subsequently ran out of all beer about half way home!!

Whitehead Folk & Food Fest: It kept dry for the first public event at the new station on Saturday 3rd August.

The adjacent playing fields were populated with food tents, animal stalls, folk music tent and beer tent (to which one or two RPSI stalwarts subsequently adjourned!).

But back at the platform, it was a very busy afternoon for the train rides and over 450 admissions were taken. It was admissions rather than fares as the premises are better cordoned, and all visitors have to pass the ticket office to gain access to the platform.

The new premises proved their worth, although there are a few snags to be ironed out. Members of the public were much impressed by the whole set-up and favourable comments were passed.

Great Northern Getaway: The originally planned trips to Maynooth on 11th August were postponed due to pressure on Dublin Connolly from GAA specials. Instead, the train kept to the GNR main line away from Dublin on this date.

No.461 was on train in good time and made a punctual start from Connolly. Great running resulted in an arrival slightly ahead of time at Drogheda, where there was a large crowd on

the platform, both passengers and onlookers. The first train was very well filled and the few minutes' late departure increased to 5 minutes late into Skerries. At Skerries all passengers had to vacate the train as it had to reverse into the loop to do the run round. The weather was good with plenty of sunshine and passengers watched an empty railcar, light engine and the Enterprise movements.

A prompt return to Drogheda; engine again watered and run round. There was a delay of 10 minutes departing due to a light engine returning from Drogheda to Dublin which went after the up Enterprise and before the special.

The second departure from Skerries was on time, as was the final departure from Drogheda; back in Dublin Connolly 6 minutes early.

In all, well over 700 passengers were carried. The bar and buffet did a great trade and the raffle team ran out of prizes.

Bangor Belle: On Saturday 17th August, along with members of the fare-paying public, the Society was delighted to host representatives of a number of the organisations which have been involved in funding recent developments at Whitehead - including the Heritage Lottery Fund, GROW South Antrim and Ulster Garden Villages. Councillor Andrew Muir, Mayor of North Down, joined the train for the run back from Bangor to Belfast. It was a useful opportunity to let the funders see what an RPSI steam train trip is all about, and there was much favourable feedback.

Our thanks go to Dr Joan Smyth, the RPSI vice-president, and Robin Morton who were on hand to meet and greet the guests.

The Society also played host to a film crew from BBC Newsline for the trip from Belfast to Lisburn and back, and the coverage was aired that evening. The Co Down Spectator sent a reporter to travel on the afternoon trip from Bangor to Belfast and back.

The event was repeated on Saturday 24th August, but didn't go entirely as planned.

A very slight delay in reaching Carrickfergus in the morning led to further delays which accumulated into a one hour late departure from Lisburn. That meant that the departure of the 'local' trip from Bangor to Belfast was also one hour behind, but the railway crew generously moved their break to facilitate the anxious passengers at Bangor. Thank you to them!

The return from Belfast was more or less on

time and remained so thereafter.

As if the above was not enough, a power failure in 547, the diner, meant that there was no hot water for tea or coffee, only gas-cooked snacks and bottles and tins being available.

Marble City: On Sunday 25th August, No.461 with seven Cravens and 3185 took 335 passengers to Kilkenny. Almost a full carriage of passengers boarded at Sallins. Arrival was punctual, and the weather was dry, if dull. As is now usual, an 071 GM assisted with the run-round.

The train seemed set for a punctual arrival but congestion in Connolly meant that it was held at Cabra while GAA specials cleared. Arrival was about fifteen minutes late.

Fire-damaged enterprise locomotive 230 was added to the train for the transfer back to Inchicore.

Presidential 80th: RPSI President Lord O'Neill celebrated his 80th birthday in style on Sunday 1st September - by hiring the Society's train for a run from Whitehead via Lisburn to Ballymena and back. Some 80 guests were on board for the special trip, which also marked Lord and Lady O'Neill's 50th wedding anniversary, which occurred in June.

Lord O'Neill looked very dapper in a most appropriate Midland Railway Northern Counties Committee stationmaster's uniform, complete with peaked cap, while around his shoulders he wore a Great Northern Railway (Ireland) guard's satchel, including a clock which was still keeping perfect time. The uniform itself is an original, dating from around 1912.

A welcome aboard pamphlet provided a description of the route, and gave some details about the locomotive, carriages and the Society's history. Catering on the train was provided by the RPSI catering crew, which excelled.

Passengers were welcomed on board with a glass of champagne and then, as the train headed for Lisburn and on to Antrim, served at their tables with a lunch of salmon or chicken with salad and potatoes, along with red or white wine. This was followed by a dessert of strawberries and cream, and then tea or coffee.

This was the first steam-hauled train to use the Lisburn-Antrim line since the Steam & Jazz specials in June 2012.

European Heritage Open Days: This annual event, on 14th & 15th September, will feature the Whitehead Excursion station and

depot open for train rides and site tours.

Portadown 400: On Saturday 21st September, Craigavon Borough Council have chartered No.186 and train for trips from Portadown to Newry, Portadown to Lisburn and a return ticket from Lisburn for a day in Portadown. The tickets were free and, naturally, were snapped up within days of going on sale.

Private Charter: BT have chartered the train for an evening one-way special to a function in Cultra on 27th September.

Maynooth Shuttle: The trains, postponed from 11th August, will now run on Sunday 29th September, with two return trips from Dublin to Maynooth. Tickets are available from the website and Pearse Station or Mark's Models (Hawkins Street) in Dublin.

Larne Lough: A visit is planned to Larne Harbour with No.186 on Sunday 13th October - the last significant outing for the locomotive, which comes out of service at the end of 2013.

The plan is for No.186 to work to the Harbour, the first public visit since June 2006. No.85 may be involved in the day's proceedings if passed for passenger traffic by then.

Broomstick Belle: Tickets are on sale from the Belfast Welcome Centre for the annual Halloween outing on 27th October. Three trains to Whitehead this year.

Santa Special (Dublin): Demand for these trains has always been high so 3 extra have been added. These are diesel-hauled as driver hours and availability just doesn't allow for extra steam trips. Within 7 days of going on sale, the 12 steam trains had sold out. The 3 diesel trains are still available for booking (at the time of writing).

Santa Special (Belfast & Portadown): These trains will go on sale at a later date.

No.85 Trials: It is hoped that No.85 will commence trials in late September or early October. Keep an eye on the website for details.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG "Guinness": On Sunday 7th July the boiler was lifted - this is a necessary part of its "10 year" overhaul. The boiler was subsequently opened up for thorough examination, and the tubes removed. Unfortunately, more work than was originally anticipated will be required.

Overhaul of the Guinness engine is a project to provide a suitable locomotive for shunting

and short train operation at the Whitehead site - now looking much more like a passenger station with the new building.

No.4: Also undergoing 10 year overhaul, the locomotive has had its pony wheels removed. This has been found necessary due to minor damage to one of the bearings. The boiler is to be examined shortly and a scope of work decided - once the extent of repairs is known (plus the cost!) a likely date for return to traffic can be estimated.

No.85: TPWS/AWS was commissioned and tested in the second week of September with a view to trials as soon as approved by NIR.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Dublin: The running set of carriages since the May railtour has been formed of:

3185, 1505, 1522, 1514, 1506, 1541, 1523

Work undertaken on the running set in recent months includes the replacement of several brake blocks, along with the renewal of several stone damaged windows. The status of other carriages is:

1508: Panelling repairs are well underway in Inchicore. Both door frames on the down side of the carriage have been refurbished. Once panel repairs are completed some further work will be required around the Heuston end of the coach but we are optimistic that carriage will be completed sometime during 2013.

3173: Interior refurbishment (including the installation of crew facilities) is advancing in Mullingar shed. The water tanks of this van have been renewed. The exterior of the vehicle is now undercoated in brown primer.

3185: Generator serviced. The wheels of this van are being re-profiled.

We are fortunate in gaining two additional volunteers in recent months. However, more are always needed, particularly those skilled in wood or metal work. However, even if you have no particular skill but are willing to lend a hand and learn there will be a place for you too. So please do get in touch.

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