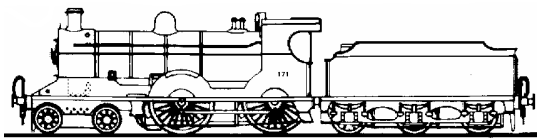


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



December 2013

NEWS LETTER

DEVELOPMENTS

No.131: Application for funding for the overhaul of this locomotive (Q class 4-4-0) has been successful and the contract has been awarded to Heritage Engineering Ireland Ltd, the RPSI's engineering subsidiary.

While this is good news, the down side is that the work must be completed within a year - normally an impossible target for RPSI overhauls undertaken on a voluntary basis. Barring unforeseen problems, HEI is confident that the target can be met.

We are most grateful to "GROW South Antrim" who have provided the bulk of the funding, in order to enhance the RPSI's ability to run its trains and operate on a satisfactory business footing.

An important part of the project is volunteer input from the RPSI - known as "Contributions in Kind". Work is already under way both by HEI and RPSI, the first move being to dismantle the locomotive and to clean all components for examination.

No.131 was built in Glasgow in 1901 and it is believed to have last been steamed on CIÉ in 1963 and although preserved and displayed since then, has basically lain out in all weathers - in consequence, the working parts are proving reluctant to come apart. It was bought by the RPSI from Iarnród Éireann (along with No.184 and No.461) in 2005.

The good news is that much of the loco is still in surprisingly good condition. It was actually one of the last locos to be

overhauled at the GNR(I) Dundalk Works. Detailed examination including "non-destructive testing" of the boiler, wheels and axles, etc., is under way and when complete will lead to a final overhaul plan - which, due to the short timescale mentioned above, will need to get under way urgently.

No.171: Good news on this front too! GROW are again funding the Society with £250,000 to overhaul the locomotive. Together with approximately £70,000 raised through the No.171 Appeal over the past 2 years, this should be enough to see the locomotive returned to traffic.

However, as with No.131, there is a time limit on carrying out the work - the end of September 2014. HEI cannot undertake the No.171 locomotive and tender overhaul at Whitehead in that time as they are fully committed with overhauling No.131 by the same date, and finishing No.4 and No.85.

One of the tenders received for the work was from Railway Restorations North East (RRNE) at Shildon, Co Durham, and we are pleased to announce that they have been awarded the contract.

Re-profiling of the wheels and journals (8 locomotive and 6 tender) will be sub-contracted back to the RPSI at Whitehead, as RRNE's lathe cannot handle 5' 3" gauge wheelsets.

Gerry Mooney, 171 Appeal co-ordinator added, "This is fantastic news not just for No.171 but for the whole of the RPSI and anyone interested in Irish steam preservation. When the campaign to raise funds for the restoration of Slieve Gullion was launched in 2011, it was met with a

great response from our members. To date, from donations and various fund raising activities, we have raised in excess of £70,000. This money will directly go towards the restoration of the locomotive and it is very important to thank and acknowledge all those who have supported the appeal so far. The work done to secure the grant funding to make this project happen is absolutely superb and full credit to all involved."

"However, we must not rest on our laurels. There will be the fitting of TPWS and various other items to be carried out to complete a return to the mainline and this will have to be paid for. I would therefore urge members and supporters to continue their financial support of the project and also appeal to those who have not yet donated to please think of doing so." [See website and most recent Five Foot Three for details. - Ed.]

"This is a fantastic opportunity to achieve what some people may have thought to be impossible - to have three GNR(I) 4-4-0 locomotives together in steam."

More Contracts: HEI has also been awarded the contract for overhaul of the Mk3 Sleeping Car.

Unfortunately, the costs were such that we have had to forego the overhaul of No.131's tender (which is a complete rebuild job from underframe up) and NCC Railcar No.1.

Tenders have been received for the Directors' Saloon 50 and the Grain Van - but not from HEI.

Urgent discussions on how these may be implemented are currently in progress. Once again, the costs are well above budget, so some decisions will be needed!

Contract preparation work is virtually complete for the first stage of the workshop and carriage shed extensions, car park and (potentially) signal box, for construction to start at the beginning of January.

RPSI 50

50th Anniversary: As many members will be aware, the RPSI was set up at a meeting in the Presbyterian Hostel in Belfast on 30th September 1964. This means that next year, the Society will be

celebrating its 50th anniversary. A committee was set up earlier this year; its remit is to draw up proposals to mark the occasion. It will be an opportunity to celebrate the Society's achievements to date, to take stock of where we are, and to look forward to the next 50 years.

It is proposed that all RPSI events and operations during the year will be badged as "RPSI 50" occasions and a special, distinctive logo has been devised to signify this. In addition, Charles Friel will be presenting a talk about the Society's first 50 years to audiences in Belfast, London and Dublin during the year.

Two prestigious dinners are also planned - the first in Dublin on Saturday 17th May which is the weekend of the international tour; the dinner will be open to all, not just railtour participants.

We are delighted to be able to announce that the main celebration will be a gala event on Saturday 13th September at Belfast City Hall, the use of which has been generously granted by Belfast City Council. The date has been chosen to coincide with the staging in Belfast of a Heritage Railway Association conference, and because it is so close to the actual date of the first meeting. The City Hall is an ideal venue, being located only a couple of hundred metres from the venue of that first tentative gathering, at which, incidentally, our President the Lord O'Neill kindly consented to be appointed as patron of the RPSI.

It is hoped to launch the year of celebrations with an event at Whitehead in March, of which more details will emerge shortly.

Marking this important anniversary is designed to help to raise the Society's profile throughout Ireland and to acknowledge the assistance of so many people and organisations. But it will also be an opportunity to thank the members for their support and to give all members a chance to celebrate the RPSI's achievements to date. We hope that among the specific outcomes will be:

- The recruitment of 50 new members (at least).
- The conversion of 50 existing members into working members.

For now, all we ask is that you put the

dates of the dinners into your 2014 diary - 17th May in Dublin and 13th September in Belfast. But watch this space for more details as the events unfold.

TRAINS & EVENTS

European Heritage Open Days: The weekend of 14th & 15th September was one of contrasts at Whitehead - mainly due to the weather forecast.

Saturday was forecast to be good, and it was; in fact it was glorious and the visitors came in their droves.

Sunday was forecast to be very wet and windy, and it was - but only in the morning. While the afternoon was blustery, it remained dry throughout but the visitors, while numerous, were not as many as on the previous day (about half).

Once again, the station house proved its worth with ample circulating space for the shop and book sale. With seats outside, visitors were able to relax while enjoying the sun and steam.

Down in the workshops there was plenty to be seen, including machining of wheels and axles for the new locomotive for the Isle Of Man's Groulle Glen Railway. All that, and train rides and afternoon teas in the diner!

A large number of volunteers were involved in putting on this event and to them - well done!

Portadown 400: These charter trains on 21st September were operated by the Society on behalf of Craigavon Borough Council, who marketed the tickets. The tickets were free, and perhaps this wasn't such a good idea - all the tickets got booked very quickly but in the end the trains were never more than about two-thirds full. Presumably, free tickets are easy to discard if there is no value invested in them. On the plus side, the RPSI was paid a fixed rate for the trains regardless.

The day went very well, with Driver Moore in charge and Fireman McReynolds assisting.

A few passengers were on board from Whitehead, and a few more from Belfast, before the train set off for Lisburn, where the main complement was to be loaded.

However, on the way it became apparent that things were not right with the Down Enterprise, which was listed as 85 minutes late, i.e. a failure! In the event the steam special was held for 30 minutes at Lisburn while a replacement railcar for the failed Enterprise was put together and loaded in Belfast and allowed to overtake at Lisburn. At one stage Lisburn had a train on each platform destined for Portadown. Platform 1 had the Enterprise railcars, Platform 2 had the steam train and Platform 3 had a local, also being overtaken by the Enterprise. Plus there was a Down train waiting outside for Platform 1 to clear!

When allowed to proceed, running was excellent and, after a very quick turn-around at Portadown, departure to Newry was only 5 minutes late. From there on sectional times were maintained, if not slightly bettered, for the rest of the day, i.e. a return trip to Lisburn and the evening return to Whitehead.

An excellent day out for those who travelled, and shame on those who booked tickets and didn't use them, thus depriving others of the experience.

Having said all the above, none of it might have happened at all - contractors at Whitehead had, on Friday evening, left a dumper truck across the tracks at the coaling point. Only strenuous effort by the volunteers, aided by an antique loading tractor, saved the day!

Private Charter: BT held a special event for a selection of long-service local employees on the evening of Friday 27th September.

The guests were told to gather at Belfast Central from 6:30pm. There, one half of the concourse was roped off, decorated with 'stand-up' tables and with a traditional band in session. As guests arrived they were treated to drinks.

At 7:30pm, the announcement was made to proceed to the platform. There, a photograph was taken of each couple on a red carpet, with No.186 as a backdrop.

On board, more drinks and canapes were served by the caterers hired by BT.

On the dot of 7:50pm, the train departed, with guests still not knowing their destination. The train was timed deliberately slowly to allow the atmosphere

to be experienced - it was a warm calm night.

The all-too-short trip soon deposited the guests at Cultra, where it was on to the Rail Gallery for further festivities (or to McDonald's as one on-board wit told them!).

The train ran empty to Bangor, ran round, and was soon back in Belfast after a stirring run.

One lucky enthusiast from Australia couldn't believe his luck. He happened to call at Whitehead for a visit, and was invited to take the run to Bangor and back.

Maynooth Shuttle: It was a beautiful sunny morning in Dublin on Sunday 29th September and No.461 was on its train 25 minutes before departure time.

The journey along the Royal Canal was magnificent with what appeared to be an organised walk along the banks by almost a hundred walkers all waving as the train passed.

At Maynooth, after the local suburban trains arrived and departed the run-round was completed and an on time departure was achieved. Water was not taken in Maynooth this time as arrangements were made with the Dublin Civil Defence to take water at Grand Canal Dock Station.

Arrival in Connolly was on time and after unloading the train proceeded to Pearse Station where it was discovered that the train was signalled into the passing running loop on the left (Down road). This was not as planned as the Civil Defence team were on the Up Road side. The IE Weekly Circular stated that the train was to go into Pearse Yard. However, there was a railcar parked in the Grand Canal Dock Station loop platform (out of use for passengers), and this was the road that our train is always serviced in. After contact with CTC, etc., the train proceeded into the Down running loop, the loco was detached and ran forward and back into Pearse and forwarded in to Pearse Yard, up against the stabled railcar set. Water was taken as arranged.

This caused a 10 minute late departure for Connolly. However, quick boarding was arranged which resulted in a departure from Connolly only 5 minutes down.

Another great run out to Maynooth followed and a quick run-round, brought the train back to Connolly on time.

Larne Lough: On Sunday 13th October No.186 was in fine form and proudly hauled the first public steam train since 2006 into Larne Harbour.

It was very gratifying to have the train fully booked well in advance. And the weather was favourable!

Across The Tracks: On Sunday 20th October the Across the Tracks charter ran (mostly) to plan with 270 passengers carried. However, it was very unfortunate that No.461 previously suffered trouble with big ends heating up and this recurred on the light engine working (19th October) from Dublin to Dundalk

A decision was taken to replace No.461 with the NIR diesel (GM 113), which had hauled the (nominally empty) carriages to Dundalk.

No.461 moved to Whitehead for attention on 21st October.

Broomstick Belle: All three trains of Sunday 27th October had booked out by mid-afternoon of the previous day.

Unfortunately, the day itself started off with electrical problems with coach 303 and it had to be left behind at Whitehead, with the train departing from there significantly behind time.

However, at Belfast Central, passengers were understanding as they had been kept informed by the good work of the RPSI stewards stationed there in advance. As there were a number of 'no shows' it was possible to fit the 303 passengers throughout the rest of the train.

Arrival back at Whitehead was about 50 minutes behind schedule. Passengers were then treated to a shunting display involving No.186 and the Atlas road/rail excavator, which between them managed to return 303 to the rear of the train. The coach had been successfully attended to in the meantime.

Departure from Whitehead was 15 minutes late, but time was caught up subsequently.

Passengers entered into the spirit of things with many, children and adults alike, dressing in Halloween costumes. This was

especially true on the second train.

Photo-Shoot: Whitehead experienced snow on Monday 28th October - well, it was pretend snow. Some white powdery stuff was scattered over No.186 and the platform while a young lady operated a machine that produced a mini-blizzard. This was a photo-shoot for the Irish Independent's "Mistletoe" Christmas magazine, and featured two young men and a slender young woman clad in various exotic garments in sundry positions around No.186 and one of the first class coaches.

Although the weather was mostly fine the young lady's apparel was not really appropriate for October and she required lagging during breaks in activity. Although not much movement was required, No.186's leaking glands proved that it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good as the photographer found the resulting clouds of steam very "atmospheric".

The final shoot took place about 4:30pm and all was cleared away just after 5pm. After spending most of the day on the job everybody went on their way well contented.

Victorian Street Fair: Whitehead town was a busy place on Saturday 23rd November as it staged its annual Victorian Street Fair. The streets were closed off and populated with stalls, activities, crafts, etc.

To coincide with the event, the Society operated steam train rides at the Excursion Station with a true relic of the Victorian era -No.186, built in 1879. The steam curling over the Kings Road bridge undoubtedly added to the atmosphere and attracted casual strollers to peak over the parapet into the station yard.

As a consequence, it was one of the busiest Train Rides days for very many years. Starting about 12:30, by 17:45 over 500 visitors had come through the doors to experience the new station and sample steam travel.

Santa Special (Dublin): The steam trains sold out within a week. The diesel trips took a while longer, but are now also sold out.

Santa Special (Belfast & Portadown): These trains sold out just over a week of going on sale.

Mince Pie: A leisurely trip from Belfast to Carrickfergus, Lisburn, Bangor and return is planned for Sunday 29th December. Complimentary mulled wine and mince pies. Tickets on sale from Belfast Welcome Centre.

Railtour 2014: Please note that the annual Railtour will be moved to the third weekend in May (17th/18th) for 2014 due to the Giro d'Italia bike race stages in Dublin (and Belfast) on the usual railtour weekend (10th/11th).

Safety Issues: When the train visited Whitehead during a recent trip there were a couple of instances of people known to be members ignoring the instructions of Society stewards regarding where they could and could not stand. In fact, verbal abuse was given in one case.

Please be aware that trespass upon the railway (NIR, Irish Rail or RPSI Whitehead) and abusive attitudes towards stewards are both unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the RPSI Board. The stewards are there to ensure that safety is not compromised, and their instructions should be followed by everybody at all times.

WHITEHEAD SITE

Concrete Developments: The month of September was a hectic one at Whitehead.

At short notice the RPSI was awarded funding for a project to install an ash pit outside No.1 shed road and to include a concrete apron outside No.2 shed road. As part of the grant the Society was to carry out the removal of all old wooden-sleepered track and replace it with concrete sleepers.

This £28,000 contract is part of the new funding round by GROW South Antrim and was awarded to Cleary Contracting. The new facility will greatly assist the servicing and inspection of steam engines before and after their trips on the main line.

On the first Thursday of the month the track in No.1 road was removed which allowed the contractors to excavate the ground for the ash pit. This was poured in the second week when the track was removed from No.2 road.

Following completion of the drainage for the pit on Wednesday 25th September, the

Site squad laid 40 concrete sleepers and most of the refurbished track, including flat-bottomed rail on the pit walls, on the Thursday and Friday.

The apron and the ash pit were completed on 14th October.

Subsequently, the Site gang cleared away all the old sleepers and lifted and packed the remaining tracks to the level of the rails on the apron.

Whitehead Excursion: The new station building at Whitehead was officially opened on Wednesday 16th October - almost exactly a year to the day after the first brick was laid.

A plaque was unveiled by Vera McWilliam, Local Action Group Chairperson for lead funder GROW (Generating Rural Opportunities Within) South Antrim through the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme.

The 100 guests who attended the ceremony were treated to morning coffee/tea and scones at Whitehead Youth Centre, before strolling across to the station building.

There were speeches from Lord O'Neill (RPSI President), Denis Grimshaw (RPSI Vice-Chairman), Vera McWilliams (GROW Chairman), Alderman Billy Ashe (Mayor of Carrickfergus), Councillor Billy Webb (Ulster Garden Villages) and Mal McGreevy (Translink General Manager Rail).

No.186 was in steam at the platform with a first-class brake carriage.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG "Guinness": Unfortunately some unplanned work is required, namely renewal of part of the lower outer firebox due to corrosion, i.e. needs platerwork repairs at the foundation ring.

Details on how to make a donation to help restore this useful locomotive can be found at:

www.steamtrainsireland.com/appeal

No.4: The NCC tank engine is undergoing its 10-year overhaul. The boiler has passed its hydraulic test and is now to be assembled for steam testing. The pony

axle boxes have been remetalled and are being fitted.

No.85 "Merlin": Currently being painted and having its electrical equipment fitted. Final testing and approval to operate should take place soon.

No.131: The boiler has been inspected and the scope of work decided. The boiler is now in the locomotive shed so that work can get ahead with stay renewal and other work. The plan is to drill out defective stays, etc., on the side which is uppermost, then turn the boiler over to get at the other side. The smokebox has been removed to permit repairs to the front tube plate. The smokebox itself is a bit of a patchwork and is corroded into holes -including the door, which will be renewed.

Dismantling, cleaning and inspection of the working parts of the locomotive is progressing.

So plenty going on - note that volunteer input is a planned part of the overhaul of No.131, and is essential if the work is to be completed in time. That means you - please!

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": It is planned that the locomotive and tender will be moved to RRNE at Shildon by two low-loaders early in December. The wheel sets will be returned to Whitehead in due course for re-profiling.

No.186: The 10-year boiler ticket is up at the end of the year. No.186 has already run its official "last train" - to Larne Harbour - but will continue to figure on the Belfast Santa trains pending the return to traffic of No.85.

No.461: The big ends have proved problematic and were investigated at Whitehead following problems prior to the Dundalk operation in October.

Worked light engine from Whitehead to Dublin on Sunday 17th November, following repairs and adjustments to big ends. No problems were encountered.

B142: Awaiting oil change at Whitehead.

Tender: Our very sincere thanks to the Irish Railway Record Society - they have kindly presented the RPSI with a complete bound set (reproduced at half original size) of detail drawings for a GNR(I) Type B4 tender.

This is the type of tender-body which we will have to completely build from new in due course for No.131, although this will be mounted on our existing tender underframe (a roller-bearing version with the same dimensions as a B4). The drawings should be of great assistance for this work.

BELFAST MEETINGS

9th October: The opening night of the season saw speaker Andrew Waldron talking on the industrial railways of Ireland. He brought everyone on a tour of all sorts and sizes of industrial lines, mostly in the north of the island. The range of locomotives, wagons, traffic, gauges and uses seemed endless - and his enthusiasm inexhaustible.

13th November: Speaker Sean Patterson recounted the November 1916 collision, at the mouth of Carlingford Lough, of the inbound collier Retriever with the departing SS Connemara, a London & North Western Railway steamer heading for Holyhead.

4th December: This meeting is due to feature Fred Cooper's annual Irish Steam Cinema. What will be on show? Who knows - it's always a surprise!

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Attack: In late October the Society's rake of heritage carriages suffered a graffiti attack at Inchicore, along with a number of Irish Rail railcars stored there.

Unfortunately, this confirms the need for more secure premises in the Dublin area.

At a subsequent meeting with Iarnród Éireann in November the Society was offered the use of the former Carriage Valetting Shed at Heuston Station in Dublin.

The Valetting Shed has two tracks, each capable of holding 8 carriages in good security and under cover. There is direct access available via an underpass, avoiding the need to cross any tracks. The shed can be used as soon as we can arrange movement of the carriages, which will be done as a matter of priority, once the operational (Cravens) carriages are prepared for the forthcoming Santa Trains. Maintenance work can be undertaken there

as soon as we update our Safety Management System accordingly.

The RPSI is extremely grateful to Iarnród Éireann for this generous offer, which should secure the safety of our Dublin-based carriage sets and provide much better working conditions for our volunteers who maintain these vehicles.

It must be noted, however, that despite what impression the above might convey, it is not the permanent solution which the Society is seeking in regard to a secure facility in the greater Dublin area.

The Dublin 2020 is still actively engaged in the search for both site and funding of premises which will give the required long-term security of tenure with scope for developing a reasonable subset of the facilities enjoyed at Whitehead. They would be glad to receive ideas, but mainly practical assistance.

Camping: Members will know that the RPSI has BR Intercity Mk3a Sleeping Coach 10651 on a short length of 5'3" track at the back of the Dunleath Workshop where it is used for overnight accommodation at times.

The Sleeping Coach will be very visible when the work to extend the buildings gets under way, so the 2020 Committee hopes to have the outside of the carriage repainted.

Rather than renew the BR Intercity livery, it has been proposed that it be painted as an NCC Caravan Coach.

Every scrap of information, photograph, reminiscence or memento will help us tell the interesting story of these rare vehicles for our visitors and members alike. If you can help with any of these, please do get in touch.

GENERAL

Calendar: The 2014 calendar in aid of the No.171 Appeal is still on sale. See the Appeal page of the website or Page 27 of the most recent Five Foot Three.

Website: A number of new additions and updates have been made to the Society's web pages:

- Five Foot Three No.58 has been added.

- Some Society literature from down the years has been made available.
- A list of Society train dates starting from 1965 is under way.
- Modifications and additions to the Photo Gallery.

All can be located from the Contents page.

Annual General Meeting: Alex Richardson, the Dublin Operations Officer, has had to step down from the Board and other committees for personal reasons. Also standing down at the AGM is our Chairman David Houston. They will both be missed, and all on the Board wish them well and hope to work with them again soon.

It looks like there will be an election at the AGM as there are 8 sitting members, with 6 nominations received for the 3 vacancies.

Under the new procedures introduced two years ago, that means that all 14 are up for election as we no longer vote for individual posts (apart from the 4 top posts listed on the AGM notice) - it is a common pool.

Therefore, all members in attendance will be eligible to make 11 votes. The totals will be counted and the top 11 deemed elected.

Charles Meredith (1933-2013): It is with great sadness and deep regret that we report the death, on 9th October, of long-standing member, Charles Meredith.

Over many decades Chas (as he was known to us all) was a staunch and active member of the RPSI. He contributed on many fronts and, at the risk of omitting something, we can mention his tenure as Locomotive Representative in the Dublin Area. He participated in the Society's high profile acquisition and restoration of Irish State Coach 351. Chas was a Great Southern & Western Railway man - so it is no surprise that he also took a lead in the more recent refurbishment of 1142. When 351 had the honour to represent Ireland at a European Exhibition of Royal Coaches in Holland, guess who was to the fore with the arrangements and preparation? Also concerning carriages, he represented the Society when An Post decided to restore a TPO. In the 1980s he put much energy into the possible creation of a GS&WR train as a Society project. Unfortunately the odds

were against us at that time.

His legal background was put to great use when a root and branch review was deemed necessary on our Memorandum and Articles of Association. More recently he assisted in a review of the Society's Governance. His expertise was again at the disposal of the Society when an attempt was made to establish our presence at Mullingar on a more sustainable basis. In the end this did not materialise. In more recent times he was part of the team charged with researching locations for an RPSI base in the Dublin area.

Chas was a willing helper in whatever task needed doing. Some people's first meeting with him was as he served them a pint of real ale on the train but as can be seen he had many strings to his bow.

Outside of the RPSI he was also very active at the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway and their sister organisation the Vintage Carriage Trust. He was also a shareholder in the preserved Bulleid Pacific "City of Wells".

If all of the above is not enough, Chas had a wide range of other interests, including ornithology. He was active with Birdwatch Ireland. He was an accomplished jazz musician and played the trumpet, clarinet and piano and presented occasional jazz programmes on RTE Radio. Add to this his interest in castles and in local history.

To quote from Oliver Goldsmith's "The Village Schoolmaster" - *and still they gaz'd and still the wonder grew, that one small head could carry all he knew.*

Chas touched so many people in his own inimitable way - always kind, always ready to discuss any subject.

We extend our sympathy to his partner, Fiona Lee, also an active Society member.

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