



April 2014

NEWS LETTER

TRAINS & EVENTS

Running-In (1): After 10 years out of traffic, No.85 "Merlin" commenced a series of running-in trips to York Road and Carrickfergus on Sunday 9th March. The light engine test run went well.

IRRS Visit: A party of 90 visitors from the Irish Railway Record Society visited Whitehead on Saturday 15th March. In glorious sunshine, they were shown around the site by RPSI guides who had to cope with questions from the most knowledgeable of guests.

Running-In (2): No.85 "Merlin" had the second set of running-in trips on Sunday 16th March, this time between Whitehead and Belfast Central with a rake of carriages.

The Midlander: Sunday morning, 23rd March, was a fine sunny day in Dublin and the train was full. Departure was at 10:05. It was slow up through Glasnevin but after that the running was good. A stop was made in Maynooth to check No.461; it was here, apparently satisfied that all was well, that the Locomotive Officer departed and took the service train back to Dublin.

A crossing with the Up Sligo was made at Enfield, with an on-time arrival in Mullingar at 12:00, just as

the church clocks were ringing.

As passengers left for the town the train was shunted by No.461 from the loop platform into the bay platform. No.461 then proceeded to the turntable. The RPSI Mullingar Team had done tremendous work in cutting back the grass and bushes which left the whole area looking great, giving easy access to the table.

After the evening Up Passenger had departed, No.461 took her place at the head of the train. Departure was at 15:40, with crossings at Killucan and Enfield. Excellent running back to Dublin Connolly showed that No.461 and crew were in fine form.

Running-In (3): With 5 carriages in the train No.85 had an easy enough time on its first passenger-carrying turn on Sunday 30th March. Everything went according to plan and the footplate crew professed themselves well satisfied. The small number of members who travelled helped to defray the costs of this necessary running-in and so thanks to them.

The Boyne: Two return trips from Dundalk to Drogheda on Sunday 13th April, with one-way connecting trips from Dublin on Saturday and to Dublin on Sunday evening.

Running-In (4): Further public trains

are scheduled for Sunday 13th April, between Portadown and Lisburn.

Easter Shuttle: On Easter Monday (21st April) there will be a return Easter egg trip to Wicklow (tickets from Irish Rail, Dublin Pearse, and Mark's Models, Hawkins Street, Dublin) and a local trip to Greystones (tickets from Track One Music Store, Fitzwilliam Square, Wicklow).

Easter Eggspress: The traditional Easter Monday and Tuesday trains (two each day) are operating from Belfast to Whitehead. Tickets from the website and Belfast Welcome Centre.

Sieve Gullion: Not the engine, but a railtour to Dundalk on Sunday 4th May as part of No.85's running-in programme. Please support this train as it is otherwise an extra expense on the Society. Tickets from the Belfast Welcome Centre.

Saint Canice: The full prospectus and booking form have been sent to all who submitted a preliminary reservation. Full details are also available from the Dates page of the Society's website

Galway Bay: The diesel trip to Galway on 16th May is also open for bookings.

Steam & Jazz: The traditional Friday evening trips from Belfast Central to a Mystery Destination, via stations which could be anywhere on the Northern Ireland railway network, are now available for booking from the Belfast Welcome Centre. This year's trains will be running on 13th, 20th & 27th June and 4th July.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead: 9 vehicles have received operating certificates for the coming season. Diner 547 has received new fridge and freezer units. Its roof has

been patched pending more extensive work in due course. 300 is to have a replacement end dome fitted following damage. Work is progressing on refurbishing the Mk3 sleeper.

Dublin: A sales shop is being built in 1508. The BR van is progressing at Mullingar.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: Successfully passed its first boiler steam test on 12th February. Most of the expensive work has now been undertaken and it will be down to volunteer labour to re-fit and re-assemble the locomotive. Are you up for it?

No.85: The compound is currently undergoing mileage accumulation trips. The testing of the TPWS installation, involving a full after hours possession on the Larne line, took place on Sunday 6th April.

No.131: Undergoing GROW-funded overhaul at Whitehead.

No.171: Undergoing GROW-funded overhaul at Rail Restorations North East Ltd in Shildon, County Durham, England.

No.186: The loco steamed for the last time under its current boiler certificate on 15th March on the occasion of the IRRS visit to Whitehead.

WHITEHEAD SITE

2020 Shunts: Early March saw a very successful end to the series of 9 monster shunts which started the weekend before Christmas to clear the portion of the yard from the Larne end of the carriage shed back 100 feet across 5 roads for the next phase of Whitehead 2020 development work.

To allow the ultimate objective to be

met No.171 "Sieve Gullion" had to be re-boilered and sent to Shildon, No.131's bits amassed in the workshop including the not easy task of craning her boiler off its wagon, lifting No.5 "Drumboe" onto the transporter wagon to vacate the workshop, No.4 re-boilered, Mk3 camping coach extracted through the workshop and re-bogied, much re-arrangement of items large and small on flat wagons and the movement of items of stock which have not moved for years.

No.186 certainly proved her worth!

Site: On Thursday 6th March the Site gang carried out repairs to Carriage 5 road and then removed all stock from same, disconnected and slewed track and joined to Carriage 4 road.

On the Saturday both carriage roads 3 and 4 were emptied of the required stock for the building work. Keys and fishplates were then removed from all the parts of the track that were to be dismantled.

The contractors, Cleary Contracting, arrived at Whitehead on Monday 10th March to start clearing the siding tracks, under the supervision of Dermot Mackie.

At 12:30 on the Tuesday, all track had been removed in carriage roads 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Development: By mid-March, Clearys had work well under way on the erection of a new temporary fence along the full length of the expanded site boundary. This phase of work will include a car park and extensions to the Carriage Shed. By early April the car park was nearing completion and the steelwork for the sheds was being erected.

Shop: The Site squad assembled the new shelving and counters for the station house shop on Thursday 20th March. These are smart,

modern, pieces of furniture, colour co-ordinated to fit in with the interior decor of the building.

The shelving has five levels, which can be tilted towards the customers for display while two of the counters are glass fronted and topped for display of sales items with a single solid counter for storage and a cash register.

All of this has been made possible by a generous grant from the Enkalon Foundation.

GENERAL

Vacancies: While new volunteers are always welcome, there are specific vacancies which require to be filled, i.e. Treasurer, Vice-Chairman (Dublin area), Whitehead Train Manager and Whitehead Station Manager. If you wish to learn more please contact the Editorial address.

Website: The "How The RPSI Began" page has been updated with a timeline of Society notable events. The Irish Railway News page on the "Research & Archives" section of the Contents page of the website has been updated with the complete set of magazines. Many thanks to Tony Gray for his kind permission to allow hosting of the collection.

Five Foot Three: The Editor is appealing for photos for the journal. The subject should be any RPSI train or event from 2013 to date; preferably high resolution with little or no cropping (because they have to be cropped to fit the available spaces); not previously published (online or elsewhere). Please send to:

5ft3magazine@gmail.com

Congratulations: Best wishes to Society members Mark Walsh and

Ruth Mackie who tied the knot on Sunday 23rd March.

BELFAST MEETINGS

12th February: John McKegney spoke first on the Armagh Disaster of 12th June 1889, setting the scene in words and pictures of the fateful day when 89 people died and more than 400 were injured at Killunney, about two miles from Armagh.

After the interval, Ian Sinclair took up where John had left off. He began with a recording of one of the Armagh-Warrenpoint excursion train survivors calmly retelling what happened to him and his sister in one of the uncoupled carriages. Further recordings featured the Fintona Horse Tram, the Belfast blitz, and much more.

12th March: It was all done in 225 slides! "Fifty Not Out" was Charles Friel's review, in pictures, of the Society's first 50 years.

The first shots were of pre-RPSI subjects of everyday steam on the UTA and steam-hauled railtours run by Inst Railway Society, the Northern Ireland Road and Rail Development Association and the IRRS. The Society's early days were illustrated with pictures of No.171 and No.3BG and the first railtours using UTA locos.

The return to operation of No.186 led to many forays into CIÉ territory and there were many pictures of tours in places which are now closed (ranging from Drogheda Cement Factory to Fenit and Foynes as well as the Murrough, the North Wall and Queen's Quay).

Next came the restoration of No.171, tours with No.27 "Lough Erne" and the tour of the Belfast Dock lines with No.3BG. There followed a sequence of No.4 in UTA and RPSI service and

a lengthy look at Whitehead Excursion station through its many years of development and some of the familiar faces who made it happen. Then there was a look at carriages and Santa Trains before reviewing the wagons, some of which have not survived.

After the break was a review of the development of overhaul facilities at Whitehead, touching on crew training and glimpsing something of the arrival of "R.H. Smyth" and his (her?) return to steam. There was some coverage of the first Belfast Meetings in St Jude's Hall in 1974 and an exhibition in the King's Hall before views from the making of "The First Great Train Robbery" and a look at the overhaul and return to steam of No.85 "Merlin".

There then followed a section of 'working for a living' with locos working for Downpatrick, for the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, for NIR, and on relaying contracts.

The ARPS award of 1983 was mentioned as was "Forty Shades of Steam" before coverage of the arrival of the Mark 2 carriages and the return to traffic of No.461.

The final sequence looked briefly at No.131 then and now and the night concluded with a stunning night shot of No.85 raising steam the previous weekend.

It is planned that this talk will be delivered again later in the year - in both Dublin and London.

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