



October 2014

NEWS LETTER

APOLOGY

Delay: Apologies for the delay in getting this News-Letter issued. It has been a frustrating time recently waiting for things to happen, which were often promised but are still awaited. In the end we could wait no longer.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG: Renewal of smokebox tubeplate rivets to be done when set up for riveting of similar job on No.131. The locomotive is currently the subject of an appeal.

No.4: Bolting up of boiler following steam test and lifting into frames. Awaiting completion of No.131 before much else can be done.

No.131: Over the weekend of 30th/31st August a milestone was reached in the overhaul, when the frames were placed onto the wheels. This is an important stage since it marks completion of repairs to the wheels, bearings, main frames and bogie. Many thanks to all who toiled to get this work completed - it involved shunting to clear the yard (which is congested due to the building work), then moving the

frames with care on their temporary bogie to the gantry road, followed by the driving wheelsets, each of which was shunted in turn using the hand crane. Even with extreme care taken with all the measurements and machining, it is always a relief when the wheels actually fit - which they did in this case with satisfying ease. The assembled locomotive was then shunted back into the workshop, where the coupling rods were fitted.

Not content with that, on Sunday No.131's boiler was turned "right way up" - for some time now, it has been supported on a rotating frame which enabled it to be turned either upside down or onto either side, depending upon the requirements of the work on stays, rivets, etc., in progress. This is another milestone, since it marks completion of the heavy boiler repairs and will enable assembly of pipes and tubes to proceed.

Since then the boiler has been removed again for fitting of tubes and preparations for hydraulic testing.

Overhaul of No.131 is being undertaken by Heritage Engineering Ireland Ltd, the engineering subsidiary of the RPSI. HEI relies on RPSI volunteers to assist with many of the supporting tasks, and there is always plenty for volunteers to do.

So will we see you in Whitehead soon?

No.171: Work continues in Shildon. May return to Whitehead around end of October.

Help: Note, the Society must supply a lot of volunteer labour to keep the Society's part of the bargain for grant aid of the 131 project. So dust off the boots and overalls and get to Whitehead - please!

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Cravens: During mid-September, as part of the preparations for the Railtours Ireland "Emerald Isle Express", it was necessary to get the two remaining black and tan carriages painted to have them looking their best. With huge thanks to Iarnród Éireann, the bar (1514) and dining (1522) carriages were sprayed in the Paint Spray shop in Inchicore Works, completed 25th September.

The livery chosen is not an exact railway company livery but more so reflects on our past railway heritage. It is a blue waist, cream window band and black ends - and it looks particularly well!

TRAINS & EVENTS

Steam & Jazz: There were 4 fully-booked trains which ran on Fridays 13th, 20th & 27th June and 4th July. All ran very successfully behind No.85.

Marble City (1): On Sunday 15th June, No.461 worked a full train to Kilkenny. Unfortunately, soon after departure, the locomotive lost steam pressure and the set came to a halt at Adamstown, this was due to a new delivery of coal which had different steaming characteristics to the

previous delivery from the same supplier. It was decided on approach to Carlow that No.461 would be unhooked from the set and an 071 class GM would haul the Cravens into Kilkenny, with No.461 following light.

On the return journey, it was steam all the way!

Fireman Training: A series of footplate crew training runs took place between Dublin and Mullingar over three days, 23rd, 24th & 25th June, to facilitate the training of new Irish Rail drivers, William Ferns and Keith Farrelly, to act as fireman on RPSI operations.

This was part of a very intensive programme which began at the end of April when the trainees went over to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway to begin their training. The purpose of the runs was to bring the skills they had learned in Yorkshire and apply them to No.461. On board the footplate over the three days was Ron Smith from West Coast railways who was overseeing and monitoring the trainees. After completing their written exam on the Wednesday Ron gave them the news that he was more than happy with their level of knowledge and performance and that they were now officially passed as firemen.

Bray Shuttle: On 13th July, No.461 hauled a train consisting of four open Cravens, Bar Car and Dining Car with the BR generator van. As before, on the May railtour, one carriage had to be dropped due to the new signalling system in Wicklow.

It was a full train on the run to Wicklow. Timing was good and the locomotive performed well. A Whitehead team crewed for the RPSI

along with the Dublin rep.

IRRS Charter: On 19th July the IRRS operated a diesel charter with the RPSI's carriages, the route being Dublin Connolly to Waterford, change locos in Waterford, Waterford to Limerick, change loco again in Limerick and Limerick to Dublin Connolly via Nenagh and Ballybrophy. The set consisted of seven Cravens carriages and BR brake van. Locomotives 078, 079 and 071 did the honours.

Portrush Flyers: There were 4 trains this year, 27th July, 10th & 31st August and 14th September, all with the afternoon local trip from Portrush to Coleraine. On the first trip the train started out from Belfast Great Victoria Street as it was expected that Central would be unable to cope owing to a number of specials for the (subsequently cancelled) Garth Brooks concerts in Dublin.

The first two trains operated in foul weather, and the others in dry conditions. Full trains and very heavy bookings out of Coleraine were a pleasing feature of the trips, all successfully hauled by No.85.

On the final date, a storming run to Portrush was followed, on the platform, by a cake-cutting ceremony both to mark the 50th Anniversary and to recognise driver Noel Playfair's 25 years on the RPSI footplate - featured in Steam Railway magazine. At the ceremony were the NIR crew (Mark Buchanan, Barney McReynolds, Gary Moore, Noel Playfair), most of the footplate men from Irish Rail who were the Society's guests for the day (Tony Cooke, Keith Farrelly, Willie Ferns, Ken Fox, Lar Griffin), and also Vice-President Joan Smyth, Chairman Denis Grimshaw and Translink Manager of Rail, Mal McGreevy.

Another blistering run got the train returned to Belfast before time; it was one of those occasions when you just didn't want to leave the train.

The late date for this train was to allow participation by Heritage Railway Association delegates - in Northern Ireland for their annual conference and to attend the 50th Anniversary dinner in Belfast.

Water was taken at Ballymena from water tankers in both directions on each date.

Marble City (2): On Sunday 27th July, No.461 was again the motive power to Kilkenny, this time suffering no steaming problems. Unfortunately, the return trip was marred by a fatality linked to a preceding train and there were major delays to all following trains, the steam train being the last to be allowed through.

Great Northern Getaway: On 10th August No.461 was in action again with two return trips from Drogheda to Skerries. A service train failure caused some early delays, but all operated otherwise successfully.

Marble City (3): A train planned for Sunday 24th August was cancelled because of industrial action scheduled for that day by the railway company unions.

Limerick: No.461 was in Limerick for the City of Culture celebrations. The locomotive ran light engine there (4th September) and back (5th September).

European Heritage Open Day: The afternoon of 13th September was a busy one for the crews and guides at Whitehead as visitors took the opportunity to visit the Society's historic buildings, one of many sites open to the public throughout the

country. Train rides were in operation, as was the sales stand, with many bargains to be had.

Grand Gala Dinner: On 13th September it was Belfast's turn to host members and guests at a celebration of the Society's achievements over 50 years.

The event took place in the magnificent Great Hall in Belfast City Hall. After a tour of the building, the guests were welcomed by Belfast's Lord Mayor, Councillor Nichola Mallon, following which dinner and further speeches took place.

It was, without doubt, a great night for networking and congratulatory back-slapping, but perhaps it was more so an occasion for old friends and colleagues to meet up again, some separated by many years and in, a few cases, many continents.

Emerald Isle Express: Railtours Ireland chartered Society carriages for an exclusive week-long trip on the Irish Rail system. Featuring the newly liveried coaches 1514 and 1522. The small complement of passengers was attended to by uniformed RPSI volunteers and overnighted in luxury hotels.

The itinerary was (ECS = empty coaching stock):

- Dublin Connolly - Rosslare Strand
- Rosslare Strand - Waterford (ECS)
- Waterford - Limerick Junction - Cork
- Cork - Cobh (ECS)
- Cobh - Cork - Mallow - Killarney
- Killarney - Mallow - Limerick - Ennis
- Ennis - Athenry - Galway
- Galway - Athlone - Westport (ECS)
- Westport - Dublin Connolly

Superheroes Steam Express: On a cool but bright, sunny Saturday 4th

October two trains ran from Belfast to Whitehead for the NI Hospice.

Train 1 left at 11:03, and on arrival at Whitehead they enjoyed about 45 minutes to take in the sights. Some stayed at the RPSI station and watched No.85 "Merlin" being serviced. Some went to the new playground, at Castleview Road, just finished this year and some just sat in the sun. All too soon it was back on the train to Belfast.

Train 2 passengers had as good a time as those on Train 1. On the return to Belfast there was a delay at Yorkgate for about 40 minutes due to problems at Central. However, this did not seem to spoil the afternoon for those on board.

A good day for all concerned; a successful fundraising event for the NICHI and a good showcase for the RPSI.

Steam Enterprise: No.85 "Merlin" returned to its traditional Enterprise route on 12th October, a fine sunny day.

The locomotive and crew were in fine form all day, with some excellent running. However, a number of hitches contributed to a late arrival in Dublin. Firstly, a bizarre decision to let a ballast train run in front from Lisburn to Poyntzpass produced a delay at Portadown of 10 minutes, not helped by allowing the locomotive of the ballast to run round its train at Poyntzpass before the special could pass.

A second delay occurred just after Dundalk where a hot box detector stopped the train. After a quick inspection all was found to be well, but the authorisation to proceed was not given immediately and a total delay of 13 minutes resulted.

Another hot box stop had to be made south of Laytown and, again, it was quickly established that nothing was amiss, yet there was a delay of 26 minutes before the train was allowed to proceed.

A further stop was made before Malahide where a Dart was occupying the Up platform, but instead of routing the steam train through the unoccupied Down section, a 10 minute delay was suffered waiting for the Dart to depart.

Not the finest hour for those involved in decision making.

The return journey, by contrast, produced good timing despite a short signal stop at Malahide.

Maynooth Shuttle: Two return trips will run on Sunday 19th October.

Broomstick Belle: There will be 3 return trips from Belfast to Whitehead on Sunday 26th October.

Haunted Gaol Express: On Sunday 2nd November there will be a steam special to Wicklow, including bus transfers to Wicklow Gaol. Once at the Gaol there will be a treasure hunt and face painting activities. Why not dress up for the occasion and add to the atmosphere?

There will also be a local trip from Wicklow to Greystones.

Santa Special (Dublin): The trains went on sale in mid-July and the 12 steam trips sold out within weeks. Some availability remains for the 3 diesel-hauled trips.

Santa Special (Belfast & Portadown): Tickets for these trains will go on sale as soon as the new NIR working timetable is confirmed.

Mince Pie: The current proposal for

this year's post-Christmas outing on 28th December is for a Belfast to Dublin train.

BELFAST MEETINGS

8th October: John Friel presented "Macha Film Studios' Encore", a trip through the ciné archives of the mid to late 1960 - brilliant stuff.

12th November: (1) "Sunday School Excursions" by David Seymour. (2) "Rails around Greenisland" by Charles Friel.

WHITEHEAD SITE

August: This was a busy month for the Whitehead Site Team:

20 concrete sleepers moved from the bridge end of the platform for the workshop extension track replacement.

Temporary repairs to a very leaky tarry roof, replacing some badly damaged internal ceiling plaster board.

A complete bullhead turnout, together with all its sleepers, received from Coleraine, a generous gift from NIR. It was originally lifted last year in the refurbishment of the yard there.

The roof put onto the workshop extension.

A complete skip of ferrous scrap recycled.

Laying the new concrete-sleeper track in the workshop, which was completed over two weeks. Also reconnection of the third road carriage shed extension at the Larne end.

September: The first week saw the laying of the concrete floor in the

workshop extension by Cleary's, the contractor.

The track squad carried out minor repairs.

October: Trackwork continues as the construction work comes to an end (mid-October).

GENERAL

Museum: In early October the Society has had its accreditation for full museum status renewed again. Congratulations to Tony Ragg and the rest of the Museum Committee for the enormous amount of work which was required to ensure re-accreditation.

Board: Since the last News-Letter, Bill Garrioch has been co-opted to serve as Treasurer until the AGM, and Tony O'Shaughnessy has resigned as Carriage & Wagon Officer (Dublin).

Portrush: In July an RPSI party met with an engineer from NIR to examine the watering facilities at Ballymena and Portrush.

The company has undertaken to refurbish the columns at Ballymena. At Portrush, however, more drastic action was required. It was noted that the newer of the twin tanks there was sitting on concrete supports that were decaying badly. So bad was the damage that it was decided that the tank should be demolished.

And so, when the Flyer arrived on 10th August, the cast iron tank panels were sitting neatly stacked on pallets beside the signal cabin, ultimate destination Whitehead. The concrete supports remain in situ for the present.

This does not affect watering of RPSI trains as the feed to the original tank

is used. The twin tank set-up is a relic from days long gone when there were umpteen tank engines and more than umpteen carriages stabled there awaiting the summer evening exodus home.

Facebook: The Society now has an official presence on Facebook.

What you are requested to do is visit our page (address below) and click the little 'thumbs up' Like button on the banner photograph at the top.

If you have never visited Facebook before, then have a look around. You don't need a Facebook account to view the RPSI page.

Don't forget to share the link with your friends (real and Facebook) and help spread RPSI publicity.

Archive: A significant number of historic Society documents have been added to the Research & Archives section of the website Contents page.

If you have any documents of the same ilk from the past 50 years that you believe should be made available please get in touch.

Norman Johnston: Society members will be saddened to learn of the recent death of Norman Johnston. He will be fondly remembered as a long-time member, an author and publisher of the popular Colourpoint books.

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