



May 2015

# NEWS LETTER

## WHITEHEAD

**Loan Appeal:** The Chairman would like to bring to your attention the Loan Appeal form which was circulated with the November 2014 News-Letter, and again with this one.

He would urge members who are in a position to do so to give some consideration to helping the Society's cashflow during the forthcoming development work at Whitehead.

**Whitehead Development Day:** On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March an Information Day at the Station Building was organised to display up-to-date plans for the next phase of developments at Whitehead. These were the latest drawings for the overall site, the loco shed and the carriage shed extensions as well as for the signal cabin.

The site layout plan, the loco shed plan and the carriage shed plan were mounted on boards at eye level while two other site plans, the signal cabin drawings and a model of the locomotive shed area were on the tables for inspection. They were supplemented by A4 copies of the site plan which people could take away.

Also on display, on the large screen, were three videos - the 8-minute 3D flying graphic of the planned developments, a 5-minute outline of the

3D Scanning project so far and a 4-minute update on the On-Train Apps. The first came from GBDM and the other two were supplied by CMC Associates. These three videos ran in a continuous loop during the day. The three videos were silent, so Charles Friel provided a commentary on each as often as he could.

Refreshments were organised by Eileen Armstrong and Fiona Gault, while Henry Ritchie encouraged folk to sign the visitors' book and manned the shop which has been relocated to allow for the cafe area to be developed by Eileen and Richard Armstrong.

The morning session was aimed at working members and there were quite a few before the advertised start time of 10:30. There was a continuous trickle of visitors throughout the morning and it was busy enough without feeling crowded.

The general membership was invited for the afternoon session and, again, there was a healthy level of interest.

The next, and biggest, development at Whitehead will include:

- the extension of all four roads in the Carriage Shed by a further twelve 20-foot long bays, making the complete shed a staggering 600 feet long,
- the building of a Carriage Workshop alongside Road D of the extended

## Carriage Shed,

- the building of new workshop space across the back of Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 Loco Shed roads,
- new space for our foundry,
- new volunteer facilities above the new workshops,
- new visitor facilities and exhibition above the new workshops,
- a public viewing gallery into the Henry Dunleath Workshop,
- a turntable,
- the conversion of the stables building into a visitor reception centre,
- the provision of a visitor walking route around the site and through many of the buildings,
- access to some vehicles,
- full disabled access to the visitor areas,
- a phone app guide for the walking tour,
- displays of artefacts, information panels and themed displays in several buildings,
- a cafe in the new station building,

and much else besides.

**Storage:** In late February a new rack system, which was funded by GROW, was delivered and assembled in the new carriage and workshop extensions.

**Clearance:** Now that the final phase of construction at Whitehead is in sight, the Site squad have been tasked with clearing the area at the back of the sheds before the contractors arrive.

The initial task was to remove all the wheel sets from the old carriage E road, unfortunately now no longer track connected. It was decided that the best place for these items would be the new car park.

On Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April the first job was to lay rails on their sides to protect the tarmac. These were dragged into place by the old JCB and the Tele-handler retrieved the wheel sets from the siding and moved them to their new resting place. The most difficult lifts were the 3 massive driving wheel sets, and once these were in position a further 9 smaller sets were shifted.

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**1508:** The body of this Cravens carriage was undercoated in brown primer on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February. On the Sunday the cream band was applied. The blue gloss was applied on the following weekend. The first of the reupholstered seating was also delivered. A dark blue pattern, the intention was to go for something that harkened back to earlier CIÉ carriage moquette.

By mid-March the carriage floor had been given a thorough clean followed by a polish. Fitting of the newly upholstered seat cushions (paid for using funds from the on-board raffle) was tackled next, while on the outside crests were applied - all set for a return to service on the "Marble City" excursion to Kilkenny.

Having been under restoration since 2012, it only remains to thank all the volunteers past and present who have contributed to her restoration. Special thanks also go to IÉ's John Gray for accommodating the carriage in the former Carriage 1 building in Inchicore, and all the other IÉ staff who helped along the way.

**3173:** On the wet Wednesday morning that was 11<sup>th</sup> March the other BR van, which has been based in Mullingar since acquisition in 2007, was shunted to the former up Galway platform in Mullingar. That afternoon, IÉ GM 071 arrived light from Dublin to collect it, with regular steam driver Bobby Jolley driving. A quick run-round in Connolly and 3173 was back to Inchicore for the

first time in nearly eight years.

3173 will enter traffic after the May railtour, with that operation being the swansong for the faithful 3185 ... for now!

**Blue & Cream:** And the good news doesn't end there - through the kind co-operation of IÉ, 1505 and 1532 (the last remaining orange & black Cravens coaches) were repainted by their Paint Spray facility in Inchicore in early April. Many thanks to all in IÉ for facilitating this. It will mean that all operational Cravens will be carrying RPSI livery.

Following the repainting of 1532 and 1505 the seating was dispatched for re-upholstering. The interior panelling has also been given a stain treatment by the mid-week team.

The "South Munster" railtour saw, for the first time, a complete set of RPSI blue & cream liveried Cravens, comprising 1532, 1514, 1505, 1522 and 1508.

Getting the set ready in time for the railtour was a major undertaking and grateful thanks go to the following:

- All the Carriage Department volunteers who laboured long and hard to clean, examine, remove seating, re-fit seating, stain, paint, service and test the coaches.
- IÉ CME Peter Smith, John Gray, John Barrett and all the staff in the paint shop.
- The IÉ shunting staff in Inchicore who helped marshal the train in the desired order to achieve our full blue & cream train, despite it being a rather awkward shunt!

**Dublin Running Set:** PA system tweaked to improve audio quality.

## TRAIN & EVENTS

**Private Charter (1):** On Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March, Laureate na nÓg (of the Young),

Eoin Colfer brought 5 storytellers and 300 schoolchildren on a steam train journey from Dublin to Drogheda as part of the Laureate na nÓg's, "Once Upon A Place" programme for young readers.

The train journey was one of a series of one-off events bringing stories to children in extraordinary and memorable settings, sparking their imaginations and bringing the magic of stories and books to young people.

As a keepsake, each child who took part received a souvenir train ticket from the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland, a copy of Warp Book 1 by Eoin Colfer, and each school class got a souvenir poster designed by member Stephen Comiskey.

**Marble City:** Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March was beautifully sunny, and a large crowd gathered to board the train.

There was a brilliant run to Sallins where a stop was made to check the locomotive. All being well, Kildare was the next stop where the Inchicore pilot-man boarded the locomotive. Athy was a water-stop, followed by another great run to Kilkenny.

Due to earlier crewing issues the booked paths had been missed and the special departed Kilkenny 2 hours late. Water was taken at Athy; two watering crew members had gone ahead on the regular passenger with the gear and were ready when the train arrived. A good run back to Dublin Connolly pulled back half an hour.

**Easter Shuttle:** Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April was a beautiful sunny morning in Dublin and the train was totally sold out.

The Easter Bunny was on board distributing eggs to all the children under the careful eye of the Mad Hatter. There was also a lion loose on the platform in Wicklow, where the train was greeted by a band and people in period costumes handing out sweets.

With the train unloaded and cleaned the

next batch of passengers set off on another sold-out train. No.461 was in fine form and the train kept to time.

**Easter Eggspress:** Four full trains ran between Belfast Central and Whitehead Excursion Station over Monday & Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> April.

With glorious sunshine throughout, conditions were ideal for the Easter Bunny to entertain the passengers, both on and off the train. They were also good for the two NIR firemen who were facing their regular re-assessment from Ron Smith of West Coast Rail. So congratulations to Anto Dargan and Barney McReynolds who passed with flying colours.

**Private Charter (2)/Maynooth Shuttle:** A charter on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April ran for Joe O'Reilly Tours, Dublin Connolly to Greystones with a group of French tourists.

For the occasion Cravens carriage 1508 was upgraded with curtains, antimacassars, table cloths and flowers on each table, with tea, coffee and water provided.

The group was met from their bus on Amiens Street by an RPSI representative and escorted to Connolly's Platform 5, where No.461 and train were just arriving. The steam crew was driver Ken Fox, fireman Keith Farrelly and DTE Tony Cooke.

There was a quick run-round in Greystones for an on-time departure empty to Connolly. Problems with the injectors caused a slight delay at Dalkey. From there it was straight through Platform 6 at Connolly to the Wash Road, from where the train was propelled into Platform 3. No.461 uncoupled and went to the shed for servicing and turning on the GNR turntable. The carriages were cleaned and the opportunity was taken to wash the windows on the platform side.

For the trip to Maynooth, the sun was still shining, there was a full train, and

the running was again superb. Another great run back to Connolly followed, arriving at 15:55.

A great day out!

**South Munster:** The 2015 International railtour had plenty of highs and a few lows, the latter of which included the weather on two days and a small spot of poor loco performance.

The 'weekend' started at Whitehead on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May with a splendid run in fine weather to Dublin behind No.85. The drivers, Noel Playfair (to Dundalk) and Bobby Jolley (from Dundalk), excelled themselves as did the fireman Barney McReynolds and the RPSI footplate crew.

Retired driver Tony Renahan was on hand from Dundalk to keep an eye on things for the rest of the weekend, as indeed was his brother Dan from Saturday.

On Friday, it was a chance for diesel enthusiasts to get very wet at photo stops, as 084 hauled the train from Dublin to M3 Parkway, Rosslare Strand and back, with a longer stop at Wexford. The less said about the weather the better, other than many fewer photographs than normal were taken.

Saturday was a fine day for the start out of Dublin and No.85 was in magnificent form; the running the whole way to Cork was brilliant, marred only by the inexplicable pathing of a rail machine ahead of the special between Kildare and Cherryville Junction which left the timetable a bit redundant for a while.

After Cork, Midleton was the destination and an added surprise for many was the use of the avoiding line as No.85 and train came out of the tunnel at Cork. It also gave a great photo opportunity as No.461 was in full steam in the loco yard there.

The trip along the branch was taken at a sedate 25 mph and No.85 scored a first as the train trundled into the terminus.

With the carriages emptied the whole train moved as far as possible into the headshunt to clear the level crossing. Soon afterwards No.461 arrived tender-first and coupled up to the train, drew forward and left No.85 behind. The latter followed tender-first back to Cork.

Around 90 passengers attended the railtour dinner at the Metropole Hotel in Cork on Saturday evening.

Denis Grimshaw, RPSI chairman, welcomed everyone to the function and reflected on the importance of the support for the international tour year after year from GB enthusiasts. He said their loyal support was much appreciated by the RPSI. He paid tribute to all those involved in the planning, preparation and execution of the tour. He also invited anyone with suggestions about tours in the future to speak to him.

Bill Allen from Essex, a regular on RPSI railtours, said he wished to thank all those volunteers who worked so hard to give passengers such a great weekend. Mr Allen said that travelling behind No.85 on the Dublin-Cork line when the engine was in such sparkling form was a sheer delight. He joked that RPSI tours operated to RST, railtour standard time, which was roughly an hour behind BST. This had proved to be the case on the trip from Dublin, but it had not impacted on anyone's enjoyment of the day.

John Hatton from London said it was important to remember on such an occasion those who have departed. All present raised their glasses in a toast to absent friends.

The rain descended again on Sunday, but not before No.85 had hauled the train to Cobh, where No.461 was already waiting. The latter then coupled up and ran non-stop through Cork and up the tunnel to Mallow. After a water top-up in the pouring rain, and a wave to No.85 as it passed light engine to turn at Limerick Junction, the special set

off tender-first for Killarney.

As the participants enjoyed a break, the loco crew were fitting a "Radio Train" headboard to commemorate the tourist trains that ran to Killarney, and other destinations.

On the return trip the loco struggled quite a lot, so much so that on arrival in Rathmore the train was shunted twice to allow 3 service trains to cross or overtake. After that, however, performance was much better and significantly good running was had back to Mallow and Cork, despite the lateness of the hour (just over 2 hours behind schedule). Such was the demand in the kitchen during this period that the kitchen ran out of supplies and the bar used up all their draught beer (all though stocks were replenished by 2:30am the next morning)!!

On Monday, No.85 was coupled up for the standing start out of Cork, the railway enthusiast's star turn. A good climb was made and once the summit was reached after Rathdrum, running was excellent for the rest of the run to Dublin, despite a delay due to setting off the first hot axlebox detector up the line. The train arrived in fine weather, just in time to meet the Enterprise with the NIR crew for the trip north.

Following a break for servicing and turning, No.85 set off with the train for home. And the crew kept up the level of excellent performance with a stunning run, arriving in Belfast early.

The traditional Tuesday coach tour this year visited the Bushmills Distillery and the Bushmills & Giant's Causeway Railway.

The Society's thanks as always must go to our passengers who remain so loyal to the RPSI through thick and thin. Also to the railway company crews of: firemen and Barney McReynolds, driver Noel Playfair and inspector Mark Buchanan of NIR. On Irish Rail we were privileged to have drivers Ken Fox and Bobby Jolley, firemen Keith Farrelly and

Willie Ferns, with DTEs Tony Cooke and Lar Griffin, plus guard Mark Tyrrell.

However, our volunteers should not be forgotten and an immense effort was put in by so many, too numerous to mention individually - well done all for a very successful tour!!

**Bangor 150:** A series of 3 return trains operated to Bangor to commemorate the arrival of the railway there 150 years ago.

As part of the proceedings there was a short ceremony on the platform at Holywood.

A pleasant day out!

**Private Charter (3):** On Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May there will be another private run for O'Reilly tours, this time from Greystones to Dublin.

**Balbriggan Festival:** Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May will see two return trips from Balbriggan to Drogheda.

**Steam Enterprise:** A welcome return for a steam excursion to Dublin from Belfast on 7<sup>th</sup> June.

**Steam & Jazz:** Fridays 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> June, plus 3<sup>rd</sup> July will have the traditional jazzy trip to a mystery destination. Note that these trains are already booking extremely quickly.

**Steam Dreams:** The luxury touring company have hired the Society's trains and locomotives for 5 days of travel between 18<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> June, visiting Dublin, Belfast, Galway, Limerick, Killarney, Tralee and Waterford.

**Portrush Flyer:** The first train of the summer will be on 26<sup>th</sup> July.

**Bray Shuttle:** This will be running on 26<sup>th</sup> July.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**Connolly Shed:** It is gratifying to be able to announce that the Society has

recently been granted a licence to use the former locomotive shed at Connolly station for our locomotives stored in Dublin.

During April 2015, a big clean up took place before the shed could be used.

Over the 2015 May Day weekend, No.461 became the first RPSI locomotive to use the shed, with No.85 also shedded there on the "South Munster" railtour.

Gerry Mooney was instrumental in getting the shed into service, but David Carse has the 'honour' of being the new Connolly Shed Officer.

**No.3BG "Guinness":** Work continues on a standby basis on the boiler of this locomotive.

**No.4:** Coming to the end of overhaul and nearing return to traffic.

**No.131:** Yes, it's the news that many have been waiting years for, and which few thought would ever happen again. On the evening of Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, No.131 once more ventured on to the main line, with a test run to Carrickfergus.

It took place after the last train had departed from Whitehead to Larne. This was done under a special licence to test, as No.131 is not yet fitted with the on-train monitoring and signalling equipment which will be required for mainline operation. Many thanks to NIR for facilitating this test run.

On 18<sup>th</sup> March, a 'Thank You' event was held at Whitehead to show the Society's appreciation to Carrickfergus Council and GROW South Antrim for the funding support for development projects at Whitehead. It included an official launch ceremony for the locomotive.

Electrics and a tender are still required, and an appeal is being put in place to fund these.

**No.171:** Early in the year Multi-Tal

(previously Railway Restoration North East Ltd) in Shildon, Co. Durham, went into administration.

The Board, being concerned about this development, urgently arranged for the repatriation of locomotive No.171 "Sieve Gullion" from Shildon. In the meantime a lorry was dispatched to collect the various parts which had been removed from the locomotive during overhaul, and these were returned to Whitehead on 25<sup>th</sup> February and unloaded with the help of the Site team.

The locomotive returned to Whitehead on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March.

The Board regrets the lack of comment up to now, but it was owing to legal advice and a reluctance to make anything other than a factual statement until the locomotive was actually back at Whitehead. Recovery of the locomotive and all detached parts was clearly the Board's primary concern when the contractor got into difficulties. This has now been achieved.

Obviously there is disappointment that the locomotive could not be completed by RRNEL as planned. While much was achieved, some work still remains to be completed, together with commissioning. A programme of work is being drawn up to attend to the outstanding requirements.

Those who have been generous enough to contribute to the 171 Appeal can be assured that the restoration will proceed and that their funding has been ring-fenced for this purpose, to be applied when work on No.4 is finished. The latter is well along and will hopefully be complete by the summer.

**Diesels:** It is hoped that 134, B141 and 175 will be moved to Connolly Shed soon.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**11<sup>th</sup> February:** A very large attendance of 125 saw Fred Cooper's footage of the

Derry Road, before and after closure, plus some other goodies from Warrenpoint, Annaghmore Turf Railway, West Clare, Antrim and Larne.

**11<sup>th</sup> March:** The speaker was Richard Lyons who gave a tour of the Wee Donegal. He started with a brief history of how the system was built up and had some amusing comments on the shortage of subscriptions. He then toured the system with pictures, mostly in colour, and identified many of the staff pictured.

After the interval, Fred Cooper made his third contribution of the season with a video compilation of the Wee Donegal in action.

## GENERAL

**Locomotive Officer:** As has been previously reported, Peter Scott, our long-serving Locomotive Officer, intends to stand down in the very near future.

Peter has given many years of excellent service in the post, but now he wishes to pass on the role to someone else.

That being the case, the Board is seeking expressions of interest from members who believe they have what it takes to carry out the job, with the full backing of an experienced team.

**IHAI:** The Industrial Heritage Association of Ireland Awards were presented on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February at a function in Dublin at which the Society was presented with the "Outstanding Leadership Award" for their outstanding leadership role in promoting all aspects of the history and heritage of railways on an all-Ireland basis for the last fifty years.

**Donations Request:** Members are requested to consider doing some spring cleaning, with making donations to the RPSI in mind! In particular, model railway items are most welcome. The sale of these has been a good source of income to the Society in recent years.

By prior arrangement, items can be collected from anywhere in Northern Ireland, or (in portable quantities) from any main railway station on the Irish Rail system. Please contact us if you can help.

**Website:** The Carriage pages have been updated with new entries for a number of the coaches at Inchicore and Whitehead. Other carriages now require similar information, specifically the GNR(I) coaches in Dublin, 9 and 88, and the remaining heritage vehicles at Whitehead. Submissions are invited from anyone who may be familiar with these vehicles. The standard format of information can be viewed on the Carriage pages.

**Sales News:** The much anticipated final book to be written by the late Norman Johnston is now available from the Online Shop.

Parting Shot - Railway Photographs From 1964 To 1973 by Norman Johnston, Colourpoint, paperback, 26 x 21 cm, 198 colour and 37 b&w photos, 160 pages, £16.

Norman Johnston is widely regarded as one of Ireland's foremost railway historians, who has meticulously photographed and recorded the changing world of Irish railways from the early 1960s.

This book draws from his remarkable collection and showcases some of what Norman regarded as the best, most interesting and significant images that he took during the pivotal period between 1964 and 1973. The pictures are presented in roughly chronological order and include some CIÉ as well as UTA and NIR. All are accompanied by extended captions filled with detail, anecdotes and personal reflection.

Norman began writing the book during the last two months of his life, completing the manuscript just seven days before his death on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014. This book is both a fascinating record of Irish railways during this

formative period, and a fitting tribute to a man who has contributed much to both the transport heritage scene and the lives of those who knew him.

The book is published by Colourpoint Books, the company which Norman founded in conjunction with his wife, Sheila, and which contributed so much to our knowledge of Irish railways in terms of books published. Norman's sons, Malcolm and Wesley, now run the business and continue to publish books of railway and transport interest.

Norman requested that the author's royalties from the sale of this book be donated to the RPSI for the ongoing restoration of locomotive No.131.

**Farewells:** David Seymour (steward) and Francis Richards (director and Carriage & Wagon Officer) both died in early March, followed by Chris Bowman (Whitehead Catering Manager) at the end of the month.

While these passings were not totally unexpected there was shock to hear of the death of Sullivan Boomer (past Chairman and current Health & Safety Officer) in mid-April. Our condolences to the friends and families of each of these valued members.

Finally, regular May railtour participants will miss Fred Heide, New Jersey, USA, who died in January. Fred had been on tours since 1991, a formidable record! Those at the RPSI 50 dinner in Dublin on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014 will recall Fred's speech about his travels with the Society.

## EDITORIAL ADDRESS

148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,  
Co. Antrim, BT36 6HJ.

[www.steamtrainsireland.com](http://www.steamtrainsireland.com)  
[rpsitrains@hotmail.com](mailto:rpsitrains@hotmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/steamtrainsireland](http://www.facebook.com/steamtrainsireland)