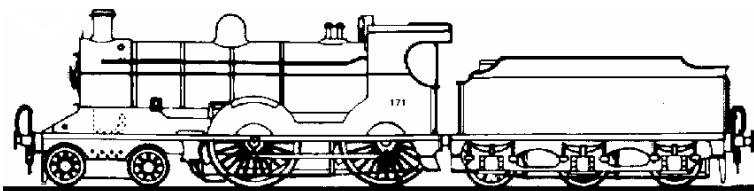


# Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



*August 2015*

# NEWS LETTER

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## QUEEN'S AWARD

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**Award:** The Railway Preservation Society of Ireland has capped its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations by being named as a winner in this year's Queen's Award for Voluntary Service scheme.

The Queen's Award is the highest accolade given to volunteer groups across the UK and has been described as the "MBE for Volunteer Groups".

Lord O'Neill, who has served as RPSI President since the Society was formed in 1964, said he was delighted that the Society had received this recognition.

"The Society has always been an all-island organisation open to all, but the volunteers have been the secret of our success," he said. "Those who give up so much of their free time to keep the trains running fully deserve this recognition."

The RPSI relies on its volunteer workforce to keep the wheels turning in terms of everything from maintenance and marketing to steam-raising, checking tickets, operating the buffet car and acting as coach stewards.

Dr Joan Smyth, Vice-President of the RPSI, said: "We are hugely encouraged to have received this prestigious honour but all the credit must go to the Society's 150-strong volunteer workforce in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

"Thanks to the efforts of our volunteers and the willing co-operation of the railway companies, a new generation is able to enjoy the sound and sight of a real-life steam train.

"This year our trains will visit most of the Irish railway system - from Portrush to Cork and from Dublin to Galway. Steam trains still turn heads - and are a valuable part of our transport heritage."

The RPSI is poised to develop its base at Whitehead as a heritage centre and museum where visitors will be able to see restoration work in progress on the carriages and engines, some of which were originally built 100 years ago.

Chairman Denis Grimshaw, who was Secretary when the Society was first established in 1964, said membership now stood at around 1,000, with a roughly a third each from Northern Ireland, the Republic and Britain.

Mr Grimshaw said: "Over the years the role played by the volunteers has been

crucial to the Society's development and success and we are thrilled to have received this award.

"We are particularly encouraged to see a new generation of volunteers coming forward and this augurs well for the future of the Society. They are not afraid to get their hands dirty or work unsociable hours to ensure that the train leaves on time.

"The RPSI is now an important player in the tourism field, and we regularly have visitors from Britain and further afield coming to Ireland specifically to travel on our trains and perhaps building a holiday around that."

The Lord Lieutenant for Co. Antrim, Mrs Joan Christie, presented the award at a ceremony at Portrush after the Flyer arrived there on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July.

## TRAINS & EVENTS

**Private Charter:** On Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May, No.461 operated a charter from Greystones to Dublin for O'Reilly Tours. The set consisted of two open Cravens, Bar Car, Dining Car, 1508 and the newly out-shopped BR Van 3173. And, of course, No.461.

The 145 passengers, French tourists, arrived and boarded the train at Greystones, having arrived by coach from Kilruddery House.

**Balbriggan Festival:** On Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May, because of an incident involving a Dart at Harmonstown, the nominally empty carriages had to run 'wrong road' from Connolly to Howth Junction behind No.461. At Balbriggan, passengers were picked up and the train departed for Drogheda, being routed through Mosney Loop, non-

stop; this loop has since been removed! A smart run round at Drogheda made for an on-time departure for Balbriggan. Passengers were dropped and the train proceeded to Skerries Loop for running round. Another group of passengers was picked up at Balbriggan and the whole process repeated. A successful day out.

**Schools Day:** On Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June the annual Schools Day at Whitehead proved to be a highly successful and enjoyable event. There were groups of pupils from Dunmurry PS and from nearby Whitehead PS. The Society's announcement about the Queen's Award earned a spontaneous round of applause on all occasions! Great to see the level of interest and enthusiasm from the young people, who asked loads of probing and original questions. By the way, Whitehead PS badge features a steam locomotive coming out of Whitehead tunnel.

The programme started with a presentation in the station by Alastair Maxwell, outlining the role of the RPSI and how Whitehead has changed over the years. Also a full explanation of how a steam engine works. Henry Ritchie then gave the children an entertaining insight into the impact of railways on society - speeding up journey times, establishing standard time, etc. The guides took the groups on a tour around the engine sheds, where they were able to inspect the overhaul and maintenance work on the engines. The walkway had been roped off to keep everyone safe.

Then it was up to the platform where loco crew Phil Lockett and Ryan Downey had No. 85 "Merlin" looking very clean, and in charge of a train of

two Mk2 carriages. After a look at the engine and a chance to see the footplate, the children were taken for train rides.

**Steam Enterprise:** Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June was a wonderful operating day, with on-time running throughout, a full train, great passengers and fine weather.

The train drew into Connolly Platform 2 exactly on time at 12:15, despite a permanent way slack at Skerries.

The return journey was equally fine. A large crowd gathered around the locomotive at Dundalk, soaking up the atmosphere while watering took place; this in fine early evening sunshine capped a grand day out.

**Test Train:** On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June, following its recent overhaul, the Society's NCC 2-6-4T tank locomotive No.4 operated a light engine test trip from Whitehead to Carrickfergus and return.

This was deemed successful so the locomotive was coupled up to the Mk2 carriages and ran a further test to Belfast Central and back.

**Steam & Jazz:** The trips on 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> June and 3<sup>rd</sup> July sold out in advance. The four trains operated successfully, the only issue being the haulage by diesel of the 19<sup>th</sup> June train. This came about because No.85 was needed in Dublin to work on the Steam Dreams trains. It had been hoped that No.4 would be available but its operating certificate was not yet signed. So the first train was hauled by No.85, the second by an NIR diesel, the third by No.85 (back from Dublin) with No.4 making an appearance on the second part of the evening (its

certificate was received that afternoon) and the final train by No.4. The itinerary was: Belfast Central - Lisburn - Whitehead Excursion - Carrickfergus - Belfast Central. The Apex Jazz Band entertained for the first three dates and the Bourbon Swing Jazz Band on the final date.

**Steam Dreams:** RPSI locomotives No.85 and No.461 handled the week-long tour, and the Cravens set, which had been significantly upgraded for the occasion, was used for all but the Belfast leg.

**Day 1 (18<sup>th</sup> June):** Unfortunately the diesel element of this trip (Dublin to Belfast) had to be cancelled when NIR locomotive 111 developed a fault at Poyntzpass while hauling the early morning transfer of the Mk2 set from Belfast, heading for Dublin. The locomotive was declared a failure and GM 112 was dispatched from Belfast to tow the whole train back to York Road.

The steam section of the "Emerald Isle Explorer" got off to an impressive start in the evening, with participants much enjoying a spirited run from Belfast Central to Dublin Connolly behind No.85 "Merlin" on a stunningly sunny evening. After leaving at 19:05, it was a non-stop run from Central to Dundalk for water (the first time since the non-stop 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Enterprise in 1987 that Lisburn and Portadown were passed without stopping). With Gary Moore driving, Barney McReynolds firing and Inspector Mickey Hamill in charge, the engine was never short of steam and made sound ascents of both the Newry bank and Kellystown. South of Drogheda, the hot-box detector caused a couple of unplanned stops and the crew had to check the train

and report back to CTC before being allowed to proceed. As a result, arrival in Dublin was delayed. No.85 was turned and left ready for the Friday morning run to Portarlington.

Running ahead of the steam special was NIR locomotive 112 which was to return the Mk2 set to Whitehead, where it was needed for the next evening's Steam & Jazz train. One notable feature of the ECS run home was being looped at the soon-to-be disconnected Mosney loop. The train got back to Central at 02:15! The catering staff had been on duty since 06:00 - Eileen, Rita and Fiona plus Tony. Even though they had little to do early in the day due to the locomotive failure, it was still a very long day.

Day 2 (19<sup>th</sup> June): No.85 Looked splendid on Dublin Connolly's Platform 2, sporting an "Emerald Isle Explorer" headboard, with a train of magnificently turned out Cravens carriages.

At Portarlington No.461, which had gone ahead and was already watered, replaced No.85. The latter took water and headed off to Limerick.

At Geashill there were slight problems with the fire but these were rectified by the footplate crew, but resulted in a 60 minutes delay leaving. Further running to Athlone was good, and there the passengers took a two-hour cruise of the River Shannon while the locomotive and carriages were serviced.

At Galway, the train was met by the Mayor, local politicians and a representative from Fáilte Ireland.

The RPSI stewards and Steam Dreams staff then worked for the next three

hours getting the train ready for Sunday's run to Killarney. Also, RPSI staff spent all Saturday morning vacuuming and cleaning toilets and window, etc., to have the set to the usual high standard.

Day 3 (21<sup>st</sup> June): No.461 and train departed Galway for Athenry, where there was a change of direction for Ennis. Water was taken from the tanker in Gort and arrival in Ennis was at 11:57. The special operated from Ennis to Limerick as a service train due to the shortage of paths in this section.

In Limerick the train was shunted and the carriages serviced. Departure from Limerick was behind No.85 at 14:30 and a good run was had, non-stop to Mallow. Water was taken here. With a crossing in Banteer, Killarney was reached at 17:12.

The Station Inspector was very helpful and he allowed the set to remain on the main platform for loading of food and drink and the removal of rubbish and dirty linen, etc. Steam Dreams were shadowing the train with hired vehicles carrying the luggage of passengers and food stuffs, also taking away the rubbish. No.85 was placed in the adjoining siding for servicing.

Day 4 (22<sup>nd</sup> June): As the turntable in Tralee was inaccessible due to the presence of freight wagons it was necessary for No.85 to travel to Limerick Junction to turn, arriving back at 15:41. It was straight onto the set and a departure from Killarney for Tralee at 15:55. The sight and sounds of No.85 climbing up the bank out of Killarney was magnificent. Tralee was reached at 16:35, with a departure again at 17:48 and arrival back in

Killarney on time.

Day 5 (23<sup>rd</sup> June): Departure from Killarney was at 08:45 followed by great running by No.85 into Banteer for water. It was excellent timekeeping all the way to Charleville where the loco was serviced. Limerick Junction was reached slightly ahead of time. No.461 hooked up on the end of the set and No.85 proceeded to Kildare and then on to Kilkenny to stable.

The next stop was at Tipperary and many of the passengers scrambled out of the train to have their photographs taken beside the station name board. As in all stations visited, there were large groups waiting on the arrival. Following a water refill the train set off again and ran non-stop through Cahir and on to Clonmel where there were over 120 people on the platform. The train arrived in Waterford at 15:20.

Day 6 (24<sup>th</sup> June): After leaving Waterford, No.461 suffered steaming problems on the bank at Ballyhale and had to stop for a blow up, so Thomastown was passed 43 minutes late. After a good run into Kilkenny many of the passengers were transferred to Kilkenny Castle. No.461 then proceeded light to Dublin Connolly. After receiving a full load of coal, No.85 took up position at the front of the train. Great running to Athy for a water stop, then more excellent running through Cherryville Junction. Unfortunately a hot box detector was triggered and the train had to stop. After the engine and carriages were checked the train was back running again. Some excellent running followed and the whole tour came to an end in Dublin Connolly at 19:28.

Steam Dreams Chairman, Marcus Robertson, noted his gratitude to the RPSI for work and effort put into getting the train to such a high standard and for the whole tour to run so efficiently. He made a presentation to Fergus McDonnell and Joe McKeown of the RPSI, and to Cormac Downes of Irish Rail beside No.85 at Dublin Connolly on arrival.

Irish Rail crew for the whole tour was Tony Cooke, Keith Farrelly, Willie Ferns, Ken Fox, Lar Griffin, Robbie Jolley and John Sinclair.

However, the main thanks must go to all the Society volunteers who kept the show on the road for a whole week.

**Light Engine:** No.85 returned to Whitehead light engine on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June.

**IRRS Charter:** The itinerary for the annual Irish Railway Records Society diesel tour, on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July, was Dublin Connolly to Ballina, Claremorris, Westport and return. Apart from the appalling weather in the west and a locomotive failure in Westport, the trip ran successfully, although it was a very long day for the RPSI crews, especially in the bar and dining cars.

**Empty Carriage Movement:** Building work is due to re-commence at Whitehead in September as part of the ongoing lottery and tourism funded development there. In preparation for the work most, if not all, of the rolling stock at the rear of the site has to be moved to the front. This was made more difficult by the arrival at the start of the year of the four ex Gatwick Express Mk2 coaches previously stored at Belfast York Road and Ballymena. A request was made to Irish Rail and they

kindly agreed to provide temporary storage for the vehicles at Dundalk for the duration of the building work (about a year). So very early on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July NIR's 112 arrived at Whitehead and the whole rake was coupled up and despatched to Dundalk at a sedate pace.

**Whitehead Food & Folk Fest:** Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July was a busy day at Whitehead for the annual festival on the playing fields next to the RPSI station.

A constant stream of visitors ensured that the surprise train engine, No.131, was busy on its first public trains in well over 50 years.

**Bray Shuttle:** Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July was a wet miserable day but the trips between Bray and Wicklow operated successfully despite some delays owing to track circuiting difficulties. On both arrivals in Wicklow the train was met and entertained by a group from Wicklow Gaol, all dressed up in period costume and a local musician playing music.

**Portrush Flyer:** The first train of the season on 26<sup>th</sup> July operated throughout in miserably wet weather. Nevertheless, the train was fully booked and all appeared to enjoy themselves.

On arrival at Portrush there was a short ceremony on the platform when the official presentation of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service was made by Mrs Joan Christie, OBE, DL, as Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Antrim. Society President, Lord O'Neill, and Vice-President, Joan Smyth, accepted on behalf of the RPSI. This was followed by a reception in Diner 547, with a splendid spread

provided by the Catering Team. The local trip to Coleraine was well supported.

The second date (9<sup>th</sup> August) was a super day out; good steady running all day with the train on time literally to the minute due to skilfully thought out train pathing. Apart from a slight delay at Antrim for a crossing and the usual wait for the branch set to clear, the special was held at Killagan for a late running service train on the way home. A very full train to Coleraine in the afternoon topped a fine day.

The third train, on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, is sold out.

**Locomotive Transfer:** No.4 operated light engine from Whitehead to Dublin on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August. The engine was sent south to operate the Great Northern Getaway and Marble City trains.

**Great Northern Getaway:** Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August was a busy day with No.4 - the Dundalk and Skerries trips had sold out in advance, and a healthy number also made the connecting trip from Dublin, the figures helped by the Malahide Lions club who took 100 seats.

Operationally the day was a bit fraught at times. After a one minute early arrival in Drogheda some problems arose. By the time these were cleared it was necessary to delay the departure to Dundalk until Up and Down Enterprises had passed; departure was about an hour late. All the standing around had done nothing for the fire which clinkered badly leading to more lost time. On the trip back to Skerries the special ran wrong road to Balbriggan. The passengers were an understanding bunch and seem to

have had an enjoyable outing.

**Marble City:** Kilkenny is becoming a regular destination on the RPSI calendar, and the next train is on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August.

**Steam Enterprise:** The second train of the year from Belfast to Dublin will run on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

**Autumn:** At present the next scheduled public trips are the "Broomstick Belle" from Belfast (31<sup>st</sup> October) and the "Halloween Shuttle" from Dublin (1<sup>st</sup> November).

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**861:** This coach was built for the Rosslare - Cork Express in 1906. When built initially it had 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class compartments as well as a rather generous brake van and is the last remaining twelve-wheel coach on the island. She is fondly remembered as she retained her gas lighting right to the end of active service and throughout RPSI life and was the first of approximately 100 carriages acquired by the Society to date. You may even remember riding in it on RPSI railtours in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 2005 a generous benefactor offered to fund its restoration and this was duly started. Currently the timber cladding and structural elements are largely dismantled, to reveal the unfortunately extensive rotten parts that need replacing. While being dismantled photos and video clips were taken, to ensure that everything went back in the right place.

Whilst we do have a certain amount of information to hand, this is a request for photos - external and internal,

especially internal.

For example you may have been on board with a group of friends and someone took a group photo. We don't especially want to see the people, but the fixtures and fittings in the background could show something crucial such as a certain panel detail or section of architrave.

If you have anything at all, please contact us and we'll make appropriate arrangements for copying. Needless to say all original photos/slides will be treated with great respect and returned once copied.

Please contact Phillip Newell via email or post using the editorial contacts.

**1539:** Out of service for a number of years, this Cravens carriage is now indoors at Inchicore and is the next project for restoration and overhaul.

**3173:** Painting of the generator van was completed in Inchicore in May and it joined the running set for the first time since acquisition from IÉ in 2007, debuting on a private charter from Greystones on 29<sup>th</sup> May, with its first public outing being the Balbriggan Festival trains on 31<sup>st</sup> May.

The John Deere generator is performing well and the van's maroon livery has been well received.

## WHITEHEAD SITE

**Whitehead Development:** Following the recent extension work on the carriage shed the road to the siding which held the GNR steam crane was badly misaligned, which meant it could not be moved to clear the rear of the site for the forthcoming building work.

The Site squad built an extension to the siding and this allowed the crane to be moved away from the shed and some realignment was possible. However not enough to safely move the crane towards Belfast.

Following a super shunt on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August, the hand crane was positioned in the adjacent siding. This allowed an old wagon to be removed from the front of the crane which allowed movement further towards Larne. The siding was straightened out using the Atlas machine, sufficiently enough to allow the crane to be moved right into the carriage shed.

This, together with other works that either moved or scrapped containers, now means that the area to the rear of the sheds will be clear for the contractors.

## GENERAL

**Charity Commission NI:** Under Section 17 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 the trustees of all charitable organisations operating within Northern Ireland are required to apply to join the register of charities. Prior to this the Society was simply registered in the UK with HMRC as a charity for tax purposes.

It is estimated that there are between 7,000 and 12,000 charitable organisations currently operating in Northern Ireland so registration is a managed process with charities called forward to register in tranches. The Society got the call early in 2015 with a deadline of March to submit the application. It was a time-consuming exercise, but the deadline was met - just!

Following that, there was some backwards and forwards correspondence with CCNI to ensure that our submission met the requirements in all areas.

The Board is delighted to announce that our registration was approved in late May and the Society is now a charity as laid down by the Act.

**Board:** Thanks and best wishes to Niall Kelly who has stood down from the Board and from the post of Carriage & Wagon Officer (Dublin). This creates a vacancy so nominations invited!

There are also a couple of General Officer posts vacant on the Board and nominations are invited for these too.

**Health & Safety Officer:** There is a vacancy for the post of Health & Safety Officer at Whitehead. Expressions of interest are invited from members who feel they could help out in this area.

**Help Wanted:** We have lost a few volunteers recently from the team who are available to show organised groups of visitors around our premises at Whitehead. We need people to join the team who know the history of the RPSI and Whitehead Excursion Station, or who are willing to learn. Not an onerous way to help the Society!

If interested, please contact Henry Ritchie using the editorial contacts.

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