



May 2016

# NEWS LETTER

## WHITEHEAD

**Sheds:** The new shed extensions are complete externally.

The 1970s loco shed has had its rear wall removed to allow visitors to view the work going on from the new facilities.

But that is only the first phase. Next will come the fitting out. Information boards and displays will be mounted. Modern graphics will help to tell the story of the RPSI, of Whitehead's development as a railway town, and of the age of steam.

This, we believe, will put both the RPSI and the town of Whitehead firmly on the tourist map. Visitors will also benefit from modern amenities and we hope in due course to provide a café. On selected days, it is hoped to be able to operate steam train rides up and down the site.

Once the fitting out phase has been completed, the plan is to have a "soft opening" perhaps as early as September 2016. This will mean you can bring friends and family down to Whitehead to show them the Centre in all its glory.

While some finishing touches will still be needed, we aim to give visitors a good idea of the experience that the Centre will offer.

**Turtable:** The major outdoor work is being concentrated on the new 60-foot turntable. This has involved considerable work using reinforced concrete for a retaining wall and the turntable pit.

**Signal Cabin:** On the station platform the NCC-style signal cabin is taking shape. This will be very similar to those seen at many former NCC stations, such as

Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Portrush, Magherafelt and Cookstown. In due course the plan is to equip the main running lines through the site with operational semaphore signalling equipment, giving visitors a sight of something which has now almost disappeared from the main-line railway scene.

The lever frame has been fitted, but not yet connected to any signalling or track equipment.

The platform to the front of the cabin has been laid in patterned tiles from the closed Magherafelt railway station on the LMS NCC.

**Whitehead Railway Centre:** Now that the development work at Whitehead is well advanced, expressions of interest are invited from members who might wish to volunteer in the following areas:

- Health & Safety
- Museum administration
- Catering
- Guides
- Maintenance

If you are interested in helping the Society, then could you please contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator Alastair Maxwell via the editorial address below?

**Interpretation:** In early April photographs were taken around Whitehead of the HEI employees and RPSI volunteers to prepare an exhibition of photographic panels about the Society and the role of its volunteers. These panels will grace the museum once it opens towards the end of this year.

In all, images of no fewer than 34 staff

and volunteers were captured, in a variety of guises. The aim is that each picture should tell a story of something people were doing - oiling, machining, cleaning, working in the diner, changing a point, acting as a train steward, and answering the phone to cleaning carriages, and selling books. All the myriad jobs that make the Society's wheels turn.

Dublin volunteers were captured in all their glory over the Croagh Patrick railtour weekend.

**Survey:** Good quality food and drink is important to visitors to any museum so a small cafe/restaurant is planned at Whitehead. It will also be open for people not visiting the museum.

A short on-line survey has been set up to help target the right market. Completed surveys will be entered in a draw to win two tickets on the Broomstick Belle on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October.

See the 11<sup>th</sup> May item at:

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

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Whitehead:** The building work at whitehead is currently delaying a lot of the overhaul work although thankfully the end is in sight. As always, please do give some consideration to volunteering to work on our vehicles.

**181:** Sheet metal work 95% complete and currently being prepped for a summer repaint.

**304:** Work is continuing on a limited basis. 85% of the Irish Rail vinyl has been removed. Filling and sanding work is ongoing with one side currently being prepared for painting. One section of timber floor has been lifted and the floor found to be sound underneath. New glass and window rubber has been ordered and is awaiting a suitable time to be fitted.

**460:** Mechanical work is largely complete with 95% of all sheet metal work repaired. New generator fitted and wired in. Currently being prepared for painting.

**462 (Dutch van):** Both boilers have been inspected and reassembled, though it was discovered that the pipework is in a very poor condition leading to fuel

starvation. As a result the pipework is currently being renewed. The electrical squad have been very busy and have largely rewired the vehicle. Time was also found to repaint the vehicle with thanks to the site gang. The keen eyed may spot a few detail differences.

**Mk2 Set:** Running repairs currently underway and a program of general sprucing up is progressing.

**602:** This is the former Irish Shell oil wagon which has languished around Whitehead since the mid-1960s, apart from a brief sortie to York Road as a fuel store during the fuel crisis. Thanks to the efforts of Mark Walsh and Mark Kennedy, the Society was successful in getting a grant from the Northern Ireland Museums Council to overhaul this wagon. There are still several gaps in our knowledge of its origin as some unscrupulous person removed the work plates at some stage in the last 40 years. To date, Mark Kennedy has uncovered a great deal but all information is very much welcome and required! The plan is to start during June and have the wagon complete for March next year at the latest. All help welcome.

**861:** Currently the subject of an appeal, we must stress the importance of our GS&WR 12-wheeler and can only ask that you think about donating so that we can run our first coach again. There is a lot of work required but the result will be well worth it as a companion to the likes of 351 and 1142 in the future. The dismantling of the major elements is almost complete and once the new facilities are complete work will begin on the rebuild.

**Gatwicks:** Currently these are at the mercy of the local vandals of Lisburn and Dundalk, but it is the intention to move them sooner rather than later to new locations with a view to having them at Whitehead next year.

**Dublin:** The latest addition to the Society's carriage fleet is 7161, the saloon from Irish Rail's one-time Executive Train. The vehicle will in time be used as a mess for Society volunteers in Inchicore.

## TRAINS & EVENTS

**The Midlander:** Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February was a chance to assess recent work on No.461. The first train - to M3 Parkway - gave a fabulous run along the Royal Canal.

No.461 returned to the shed for water and servicing. No 4, which had also been lit up (just in case), was sitting outside the shed. The run to Maynooth was equally good, and the improvement in steaming was quite noticeable. Although the locomotive still requires further adjustment, the signs were indeed encouraging.

**The Shannon:** On Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March No.4 headed the trip to Carrick-on-Shannon and Boyle.

There were delays along the way, but otherwise it was a successful trip.

**Easter Eggspress:** These trains traditionally book out, but only very close to the date, and so it was again this year for Easter Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March Easter Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March. The four full trains operated with No.85 in changeable weather (sun and hail showers).

**Video Award:** A special event took place at RPSI Whitehead on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April when the President of the Heritage Railway Association, Lord Faulkner of Worcester, unveiled a plaque which had been awarded to the Society in the broadcast material section of the annual HRA Awards.

The award was in recognition of Mike Beckett's "RPSI 50" film which was produced in 2014 to mark the Society's Golden Jubilee. The award was announced in September 2015 and now the plaque has been unveiled at Whitehead Excursion Station.

It was a day of celebration for the RPSI and around 80 volunteers and special guests took up the invitation to attend the ceremony.

**Dublin Riviera:** On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April No.461 hauled 6 Cravens and the van on two return trips from Dublin Connolly to Greystones. Despite poor weather it was a great day out. No.4 was in light steam at the shed as a back-up - not needed!

**IRRS Charter:** On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April, the Irish Railway Record Society operated a two-day tour around Ireland with 071 class locomotives and the RPSI's coaches.

The tour route was Dublin Connolly to Limerick via Ballybrophy and Nenagh, to Cork to Killarney where the train stabled and people stayed overnight.

On Sunday the train worked to Tralee before continuing onto Waterford via Limerick Junction and then to Kilkenny and back to Dublin Connolly.

**Croagh Patrick:** The five days of steam and diesel haulage were marked this year by extremely fine weather.

The bookings were much in excess of recent years, both for the steam and diesel elements. Apart from the usual UK and Ireland passengers, there were visitors from the USA, Australia, Belgium, Germany, Holland and Switzerland.

On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May, No.85 hauled the Mk2 set from Whitehead to Dublin. A fine run, to time throughout, except for the usual crawl in from Malahide.

On Friday, for the 071 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary diesel trip, Inchicore turned out locomotive 071 in a very close approximation to its original 1976 livery. It was a fine looking sight, with 7 Cravens and van, on the trip to Waterford and Limerick Junction. The effort was much appreciated by all who took part, especially the photographers.

The main tour started at Connolly on Saturday, with No.4 and the same train. A great climb up the 'Gullet' to Inchicore was followed by wrong-road working between Kildare and Portarlington due to PW work. It had been intended to turn the locomotive at Claremorris but, despite recent adjustments to the turntable, it refused to budge with the loco on board. Arrival in Westport was 80 minutes late, but since a late afternoon arrival had been scheduled, this caused no problems for either hotels or the evening railtour dinner.

On Sunday morning, one or two operational issues caused slight delays, and the planned short round trip from Claremorris to Ballyhaunis and back had to be omitted, and the train ran from the

former station direct to Ballina. The railway authorities had prohibited de-training at Ballina and running round was not possible so 075 hauled the train back to Claremorris.

There were further delays in returning No.4 to Claremorris so the planned run to Castlerea was cut, but the fine weather meant that passengers were able to explore the town. No.4 eventually got the road back to Westport and that was the end of a very relaxed day.

The running back from Westport on Monday was much better, but reports of a lineside fire caused the train to be terminated in Hazelhatch, from where a railcar took passengers back to Connolly. No.4 and train were eventually towed in light steam to Inchicore. No.85 and its crew finished the weekend by giving a great run back to Belfast and Whitehead. Thanks to all the volunteers who worked very hard to make this tour possible, and to the railway companies and crews.

**The Fingal:** Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May will be two return trips from Balbriggan to Drogheda, with a connecting train to/from Dublin.

**Steam Enterprise:** A return trip from Belfast to Dublin on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June.

**Steam Dreams:** For a second year there will be a week-long tour of Ireland (including Londonderry and Portrush) behind steam, from 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

**Steam & Jazz:** The traditional summer Friday evening trips (17<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1<sup>st</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2<sup>nd</sup> September) from Belfast Central to a Mystery Destination, via stations which could be anywhere on the Northern Ireland railway network.

Bookings are already quite high, with Train 2 nearly sold out.

**Summer Steam:** The usual programme of trains to Greystones, Kilkenny and Portrush, etc., will operate.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.3BG "Guinness":** After a lengthy overhaul, the locomotive's boiler was steam tested on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March. No major problems were found and work will progress for certification.

The next move is to complete some minor caulking of parts that were

inaccessible while the boiler was on the trolley. Then remove some of the fittings and lift the boiler into the frames.

There is some preliminary work still to do, for example repair and fit the ashpan and complete a welding repair at the front frame stretcher.

Thanks to all who responded so generously to the appeal for this to happen.

**No.131:** The RPSI was this year's runner-up for the HRA's John Cooley award (which the Society won in 2004 for the restoration of No.186). The citation was "The RPSI for the restoration and return to traffic of the once plinthed Q class locomotive No.131 for the first time since withdrawal from service in 1963, involving GROW South Antrim".

**No.461:** On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> January into Sunday, No.461 was slowly brought into life in Connolly shed to carry out some investigations into the recent below par performance from the locomotive. Driver Robert Jolley was on hand to move the locomotive in and around the shed environment. A series of movements and tests throughout the morning identified various areas which were attended to over the following weeks.

**Diesel Report:** Following the acquisition of Connolly locomotive shed, and the subsequent large financial investment by the Society to make the facility serviceable, the stored diesel locomotives (B141, 175 and 134) in Inchicore works will soon join the Dublin based steam locomotives in the dry and secure environment of Connolly shed.

The RPSI very much appreciate the assistance of the IÉ CME's department, and in particular Philip Clampett for his assistance and knowledge in making the locomotives fit for the hauled move to their new home. John Barrett and his team in the paint spray facility took B141 into their works to give the locomotive a spruce up and take off the years of accumulated dirt from the period of outdoor storage.

The shunters in the Works had their work cut out for them in extraction of all three from their storage positions. Many stored 201 class locomotives and 2700 class railcars had to be shunted, hauled or

restarted to enable the locomotives to be put together.

In early May the locomotives were moved to the Dublin end of the main running shed, where they could be viewed from the passing Croagh Patrick railtour train. The next move is to bring them in to the shed for a full examination and lubrication of vital components before the move to Connolly. That move is hoped to happen shortly.

**Coleraine Turntable:** Recently some of the planking on the Society's Coleraine turntable had given cause for concern.

Following an examination in March it was found that 12 long timbers needed replaced. These were bought from an established local timber merchant and were fitted by a small RPSI site group on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April. Travelling to Coleraine in the blinding snow seemed a mad idea, but thankfully Coleraine was cold but sunny. All is now ready for steam trains to the north-west.

## CONNOLLY SHED

**Report:** Over the past 12 months considerable work has been undertaken to make the shed safe and secure for use. A considerable amount of finance has also been put into this project by the Society.

The main items of work carried out to date:

- A very deep clean of the shed and replacement of the missing roof panels.
- Reinstatement of the extractor fans and lights in the main shed area.
- Replacement water pump for the locomotives.
- Draining and removal of 25 tonnes of debris from the water tank.
- Renewal of the rotten internal water feed pipes.
- Replacement of all broken windows with Perspex.
- Security mesh erected on all exterior windows.
- The roller shutter doors and motors on all three roads renewed.
- Missing safety chains and stanchions

on the walkways replaced.

- The extractor fan system reinstated.
- Interior security doors installed.
- Basic hot water facilities and shower units installed.
- The interior vandalised ceiling in the mess and changing room replaced.
- Mess, changing room and toilet area repainted.
- Flat roof cracks and drain pipes repaired.
- Security lights installed.
- Lights underneath walkways replaced.
- Internal drains of debris cleared.
- Air compressor system working again.
- A mobile gantry obtained for working on the exposed side of the locomotives.

This has resulted in a very safe and secure place in which to prepare, service and store the locomotives in Dublin.

The Society is currently working with the IÉ CME's department to move the diesel locomotives from Inchicore and store them on the first road in the shed, out of the weather which will afford them some protection.

A forklift was acquired from IÉ and this will be made serviceable and certified for use within the shed. A hydraulic bucket will also be purchased from funds already set aside. This will save the Society a considerable amount of money instead of buying a forklift outright. A number of volunteers are to receive training in operating a forklift.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**13<sup>th</sup> January:** Edward Friel presented a 1968 movie newsreel of UTA steam, including the year's football specials, excursions, ballast workings, and spoil trains, plus No. 186's first arrival at Whitehead and first railtour to Kilkenny. Also shown was a video of driver Stevie Glass and his memorable last day with No.4 in 2011.

**10<sup>th</sup> February:** Charles Friel spoke on the introduction of the GNR(I)'s Q class 4-4-0s in 1899 and the work that the thirteen locos did, almost to the end of steam on both CIÉ and the UTA. Peter

Scott described the work undertaken at Whitehead to restore the surviving Qs class loco, No.131, to mainline operation after an absence of over 50 years.

**9<sup>th</sup> March:** Alan Hyland presented the late David Seymour's exploration of the fabled Sunday School excursions, their impact on communities and the lengths to which the railways went to make it all work - usually behind steam. Ian Sinclair delved into the local BBC radio archives to bring another hearing of once-familiar voices from both regular slots and one-off feature programmes which explored the local railway scene.

## GENERAL

**Fred Cooper:** It is very sad to report that Fred, film-maker and long-term friend of the Society, died on 13<sup>th</sup> January after a short illness.

It was a rare season of Belfast winter meetings at St. Jude's or Orangefield that didn't have one night of films from Fred's archive. He will be much missed.

**Email:** If you have recently acquired email access you can be added to our Bulletin news list. Please contact:

[rpsitrains@hotmail.com](mailto:rpsitrains@hotmail.com)

**Loans Appeal:** We must again thank those members who in total made loans of over £100,000 to help the Society with its cashflow over the past months. This meant that significant interest charges were not incurred by having to borrow this amount.

The RPSI is also grateful to have received two loans from the IRRS (London Area) to support the Whitehead development.

The IRRS (London Area) commented: "Our Committee recognised the RPSI's need for short term assistance now that the major project is underway at Whitehead. We have had funds on time deposits earning extremely small amounts of interest. We felt that loaning funds to the RPSI for a short period will be a better use of our money and of significant benefit to both the RPSI, and the cause of railway preservation in Ireland. We encourage others to help as well if they feel able."

**Annual General Meeting:** The AGM took place on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February in the Whitehead Community Centre.

It was a reasonably straightforward affair. Vice-President Dr Joan Smyth chaired the meeting.

Mark Healy stood down from the Board and Eileen Armstrong, Stephen Comiskey and David Houston joined - welcome to them.

Once more, there were no nominations for the vital post of Vice-Chairman.

**Board:** In early May, David Houston offered to fill the vacant Vice-Chairman post on a temporary basis; as a result he was co-opted into the post at the most recent Board meeting.

Similarly, Johnny Glendinning has been co-opted to the Board as Curatorial Committee representative.

Due to the workload with the current developments at Whitehead, the Board would be keen to recruit a second Vice-Chairman, so if you are interested, know someone who would be, or could twist someone's arm then please do get in touch - it is important!!

**Film:** On Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May, a production company putting together a documentary on the Queen's coronation visit to Northern Ireland in 1953, filmed on the GNR(I) Directors' Saloon 50, which featured in the royal train of that year.

The actor Penelope Keith will be the presenter and she conducted interviews on the platform.

There is no information yet on a date of transmission but they seem to think that it will be around the Queen's official birthday at the end of June, on Channel 4 and maybe on Sunday evenings.

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