



October 2016

NEWS LETTER

BELFAST MEETINGS

Programme: The poster for the Society's 2016-17 season of Belfast meetings is now available.

The venue is again the Parke Hall of Orangefield Presbyterian Church on Belfast's Castlereagh Road. It is at BT5 6BH if you are using satnav or beside stop 464 on Metro bus service 5A to the Braniel.

The meetings are open to everyone, whether Society members or not.

There is no admission charge though folk are expected to help meet the costs by responding as generously as they can to the retiring collection.

As ever, the meeting starts at 7:30pm sharp with the usual "dates for your diary" and how you can get involved, plus a newsreel outlining what has been happening since the March meeting.

There will, of course, be a break for chat, tea and coffee and a visit to the burgeoning shop with its unrivalled range of railway books, videos, pictures and memorabilia.

The meetings finish by 10pm.

The season will bring us 14 different speakers and, remarkably, half of them will be first-timers to the RPSI lectern. We wish them all well when their time comes.

The poster, also available on the

website, has full details of the complete season and you are encouraged to print it off and have it displayed prominently if you can.

WHITEHEAD

Whitehead Development: The new premises were handed over by the contractor, MSM, on Friday 2nd September.

From now forward work will concentrate on fitting out the museum and interpretative displays.

Turntable: The first vehicle to venture onto the new turntable was the Atlas road-rail excavator. On Sunday 14th August it was used to lift the turntable's new side deck plates into position for marking out and drilling. Because of the pit, nothing else could actually reach the table itself from where the new plates were stacked at the pit edge.

The plates were lifted into place at one end of the turntable, which was then turned so that the other end was nearest. So the table actually turned with a vehicle on it, for the first time since closure of the Central Service Depot in 1993 (we think!).

Note that, as yet, the Atlas is the only machine that can reach the turntable. Anything else must await the connection of the turntable access track to the rest of the yard network.

There are photographs on the Society's

Facebook page.

TRAINS & EVENTS

Radio Train: On Sunday 21st August No.4 was on the train to Kilkenny.

The train left Dublin on time and soon the broadcasting studio in 3173 (thanks to Kieran Comerford) was in full swing. The RPSI's Tina Hand and Natasha Efole of Phoenix FM were in charge of broadcasting. Natasha had a wide range of music to cater for all tastes on board. Between the two they provided an excellent replica of the old-time Radio Train. Music, requests, interviews and "Where we are now" was relayed to all the carriages.

The train was stopped at Sallins where CTC informed the crew that the heat detecting device on the track had activated. It was then reported that there was a lubrication issue with a coupling rod bearing on No.4. The temperature was too high for the locomotive to continue and the train was shunted onto the loop and No.4 went into the head shunt. It subsequently returned light engine to the shed at Connolly. (By the end of August a team from Whitehead had visited Dublin to attend to No.4.)

Replacement diesel locomotive GM 071 was dispatched. It got the train on the move again one hour and 10 minutes late.

GM 076 arrived in Kilkenny from Waterford and transferred the carriages to the loop, and released 071 which went light engine to Waterford.

With 076 now in charge, there was on-time departure from Kilkenny and great running to Cherryville Junction where the train was held for two Up trains from 17:05 to 17:20. There were more delays at Glasnevin for specials from the day's GAA matches but Connolly was reached at 18:24, 13 minutes early.

Portrush Flyer: On Sunday 21st August a booked-out train left Belfast behind

No.85 in the sunshine. And passengers were fortunate enough to have a dry afternoon in Portrush - the rain started just as the return train departed for home.

The afternoon trip to Coleraine was also fully loaded.

Operationally everything went more or less to plan. The only snag was the failure of the water bowser to turn up at Belfast Central in the morning. This necessitated a stop at Antrim to take water from a hydrant. The subsequent delay was caught up by the time the train reached the loop at Killagan and everything was on time for the rest of the day.

Sunday 28th August saw another completely full train, and this time the water bowser did turn up at Central Station - but with a very small diameter hose No.85's tender could not be completely filled before departure time. This resulted in the hydrant being used at Antrim again. However, a delay of only about 5 minutes resulted before a great run to Coleraine where arrival was on time.

For once, the sun was out in all its glory at Portrush as the passengers headed off to enjoy the seaside, the train was shunted and another full load of passengers was taken for the short trip back to Coleraine. Unfortunately the unplanned stabling of a tamper on the turntable road at Coleraine meant the locomotive could not be turned, and it was back to Portrush with the engine still facing the seaside.

The tamper was removed at some time later in the afternoon and No.85 departed light engine at 16:28 and returned at 17:27, two minutes after the scheduled departure time. A quick splash of water, a brake test and departure was only ten minutes down at 17:35. The crew made this extra run to Coleraine late in the day to turn the locomotive during the time when they would be expecting to enjoy a Portrush ice cream. The drivers and inspector on

the day showed that they are a true top link operation.

The Down passenger was passed at Coleraine four minutes late. An excellent run saw an on-time train crossing at Killagan. Unfortunately, someone had not absorbed the content of their weekly notice and the train had an unplanned stop at Ballymena. A few minutes was lost there but another great effort saw Antrim being passed three minutes down. The run thereafter through Templepatrick and up the bank was memorable for the performance of the locomotive, passing Kingsbog with a full head of steam; the roar from the locomotive on a still-sunny late summer evening must have been heard for miles. A fine sprint along the lough shore saw arrival at Belfast Central virtually on time to the second at 19:15.

Steam & Jazz: On a dry calm Friday 2nd September evening the Bourbon Swing Jazz Band put in another excellent performance in front of an enthusiastic audience. The train crew of Micky Hamill and Noel Playfair did some good work throughout, but particularly of note between Lurgan and Portadown.

It was interesting that this venture, with the traditional evening outdoor elements, didn't seem to suffer for taking place so late in the season rather than the usual mid-summer.

Steam Enterprise: On Sunday 25th September, a day which was mostly dry, No.85 was in great form on the trip from Belfast to Dublin and return.

These schedules are fairly exacting, and it is to the crew's great credit that everything ran to time throughout the day.

The train was fully booked and everybody on board enjoyed the piper who played as a group boarded at Dundalk. He was in action again as the passengers left the train at Dublin Connolly.

Emerald Isle Express: The itinerary for this year's diesel-hauled charter was:

Monday 26th September

Dublin - Rosslare Strand

Rosslare Strand - Waterford (empty)

Tuesday 27th September

Waterford - Cork

Wednesday 28th September

Cork - Cobh (empty)

Cobh - Killarney

Thursday 29th September

Killarney - Ennis

Ennis - Limerick (empty)

Friday 30th September

Limerick - Ennis (empty)

Ennis - Galway

Galway - Westport (empty)

Saturday 1st October

Westport - Dublin

A great effort by all the volunteers involved.

No.131 Dinner:

Bookings for the No.131 dinner at the Ulster Reform Club in Belfast on 20th October are coming in steadily, and at present less than a third of the seats are left. Tickets are priced at £25 each and cheques payable to "The RPSI" should be sent to:

No.131 Dinner
10 Sharman Drive
Belfast
BT9 5HL

donal.wildv@ntlworld.com

Western Explorer: Tickets are on sale for Saturday 22nd October when there will be a diesel-hauled railtour from Dublin to Athenry then along the Western Railway Corridor to Ennis and Limerick and back to Dublin.

Broomstick Belle: The traditional Halloween trips from Belfast to Whitehead will be running on Saturday 29th October.

The Haunted Express: This year the

Dublin trips, on Sunday 30th October, will be operating to Maynooth due to closures on the Greystones line that weekend.

Castlerock Semaphore Finale: The loop in Castlerock is due to be decommissioned in the first few days of November. This trip, on Sunday 30th October, will be one of the last trains to use the loop and likely the last ever to run round a train there.

It will comprise a return trip from Whitehead and Belfast to Castlerock, with a lie-over at Coleraine on the return leg to turn the locomotive.

It is aimed at enthusiasts so we hope for a big turnout from members.

Victorian Street Fair: We hope to run train rides for this Whitehead event on Saturday 26th November.

Santa Special (Dublin): Twelve steam and three diesel trains on 3rd, 4th, 10th, 11th, 17th & 18th December went on sale on 23rd August and were sold out by September.

Sell Outs: In mid-August the events page of the website would have shown that 4 upcoming trains were sold out.

Why are more trains not run then?

Well, it would be great to run more and there is no doubt that it is feasible - but it needs more volunteers; those currently involved can only do so much.

But you can help - see the website volunteering page, write to the address below or contact any Society Officer.

Santa Special (Belfast & Portadown):

Trains will run on 3rd, 4th, 10th, 11th (Portadown), 17th & 18th December and tickets will be on sale by Halloween.

LOCOMOTIVES

Diesels: On Friday 19th August the Society's GM 134 was started for the first time in preservation.

The locomotive was prepared in Connolly Shed and the engine started

there.

The event was videoed for posterity.

GENERAL

Brochures: As previously reported, work continues on making brochures from early railtours available on the website. Thanks to help from a number of members this work has progressed well.

We would still be interested in brochures and timetables (if they exist) from:

Sorley Boy (1969)
Eblana (1972)
King Fergus (1973)
King Fergus II (1974)
10th Anniversary Railtour (1974)
Ballymena & Larne (1975)
Slaney (1976)
Festival (1976)
Claddagh (1977)
MPD Farewell (1979)
Carrickfergus 800 (1980)
Cork 150 (1999)
Sláinte (2004)

If any of these lie deep in your archives we would love to hear from you.

John O'Meara: We sadly must say goodbye to another respected long-time RPSI member. John passed away peacefully on 23rd September.

He was well into his 90s and had been a railway enthusiast for all his life and contributed significantly to the Irish Railway Record Society in the form of research and articles, and to the RPSI as part of the on-train team.

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