



May 2018

NEWS LETTER

GOVERNANCE

New Committee: As a result of a governance review carried out by external consultants in 2017, the Board has set up a Facilitation Committee to carry out the day-to-day running of the Society.

Its terms of reference are:

- Working with and supporting the full-time staff at Whitehead.
- Liaising with the full-time staff and RPSI committees to facilitate collaboration between them to achieve the business plan objectives for four areas:
 - Whitehead Railway Museum
 - The Edwardian Tea Room
 - Whitehead sales shop
 - The volunteers

Filing a report for each Board meeting, with the General Manager representing the committee at board meetings.

TRAINS & EVENTS

Santa Specials: The 14 Belfast and 17 Dublin trains ran without incident behind No.85 and No.4 respectively, and a very successful season was the result. It was the first use by the Dublin team of online bookings.

December was very demanding and entailed eight operating days, so a special

word of thanks needs to go all the on-train volunteers, from whatever discipline, for their time looking after the passengers comfort and their inner needs. A great effort by all involved, including the Whitehead café team.

Mince Pie Special: This was the first time ever that a Society train has operated on New Year's Eve. A full train of passengers enjoyed a cracking run to Dublin with No.85 "Merlin".

Saint Patrick's Day Steam: Saturday 17th March was a bitterly cold day at Whitehead but it stayed dry, which helped the visitor numbers. The Museum tours were in great demand, the Tea Room was packed continuously and the train rides were non-stop.

The Midlander: On Sunday 18th March, heavy snow storms in the south and midlands of the country had caused havoc with travel, one aspect of which was a problem with frozen points in Inchicore. The Cravens set was blocked in and the Operations Manager decided to cancel the first train; the intending passengers were informed that they could travel on the afternoon trip.

The set eventually arrived in Connolly in time for the afternoon trip to Maynooth. With 232 passengers on board, including 31 from the cancelled morning trip, the train was able to operate to schedule.

It wasn't a wonderful start to the 2018 mainline season, but full praise to volunteers who remained on the platform for the duration in very cold conditions.

Easter Eggstravaganza: The engine for Monday 2nd April was No.4, which hooked up early in order to heat the carriages for the run to Wicklow. The train was full, and that was repeated again for the local trips from Wicklow to Greystones and Arklow.

Easter Eggspress: The Easter Monday and Tuesday (2nd & 3rd April) trips were sold out and operated successfully. While Monday was wet, cold and windy, Tuesday was just wet. However, things were different on the train with great excitement over the appearance of No.131 on its first mainline appearance in service in at least 56 years!

As the TPWS was not yet fully commissioned the locomotive was limited to 40 mph running, but this is fine for local trips between Belfast and Whitehead. Over the two days the running was fine and the crews deemed the performance to be more than satisfactory.

The four trains over the 2 days were all full and the Easter Bunny was busy distributing eggs to all the children.

At Whitehead a secondary tea/coffee and hot sausage roll outlet was set up in the Stables to supplement the Tea Room. The latter was very busy on both days.

NIR 50: On Wednesday 4th April Translink chartered a train to operate from Belfast's Great Victoria Street to Whitehead Excursion Station to celebrate 50 years of NIR.

No.131 hauled the train to Central, where it came off and ran light to Central Junction. In the meantime NIR GM 112 coupled up to the train and hauled it over

to GVS. There, it uncoupled and No.131 backed in from Central Junction to head the train once more. Unfortunately, a delay to the GM arriving meant a late start out of GVS.

A pick-up was made at Central and then it was non-stop to Whitehead Excursion, where the commemorative tickets allowed admission to the Museum. Everything went to plan from the RPSI's viewpoint, and a full train of passengers travelled.

Branchline Explorer: The diesel railtour on Saturday 7th April was fully booked, confirming the popularity of these Dublin-based trains.

It departed Dublin Connolly with GM 071. There was a non-stop run to Kildare to pick up passengers, followed by a photo stop at Athy, then Carlow to pick up further passengers, followed by Bagenalstown. At Waterford, 074 took over for the run to Limerick, with further photo stops along the way.

From Limerick the locomotive was 086, which stopped at Birdhill, Cloughjordan and Ballybrophy, before proceeding to Thurles where it ran round its train. From there it was full speed back to Dublin to end what was a very demanding day for all concerned.

Dublin Riviera: On Sunday 29th April No.4 operated to Bray, then hauled two sold out trains to Wicklow and back. A very successful operation.

Cork & Kerry: Tralee was the ultimate destination this year.

Thursday 10th May: The weather was fine and No.85 and crew were in top form. The traditional positioning run took the 6 Mk2 carriages of the Whitehead set to Dublin.

It was a well-filled train, helped by the tickets sold in Dundalk by the Dundalk

Railway Heritage Society.

Friday 11th May: It was wet, windy and a generally miserable morning for the “Second Strand” trip to Rosslare, reminiscent of the original “Strand” railtour a few years back.

071 in retro CIE livery was the motive power and provided a great run. After Gorey the clouds suddenly disappeared and it was fine and sunny for the rest of the day.

At Wexford some passengers left the train, to be picked up on the return, while others remained on the train to sample the delights of Rosslare Strand.

While all this was happening, No.4 was running light to Mallow to be in place for the weekend’s trips.

Saturday 12th May: No.85 was the motive power from Dublin to Mallow, and some great running was had, in dry and mostly bright weather.

At Thurles No.85 went ahead light to Limerick Junction to turn on the triangle there. Diesel 085 took over and hauled the train to the Junction where No.85 resumed her duties, tender-first to Mallow.

At Mallow, No.4 was ready and took up position in place of No.85. She was running bunker-first for this leg of the trip. Some more fine running was experienced on the way to Tralee.

Sunday 13th May: This was a more leisurely day and some participants took the opportunity to explore the local attractions, either in Tralee or from Killarney.

No.4 was chimney-first for the trip to Mallow, where No.85 again took over. She was tender-first so the running was more sedate.

While No.85 was returning the train to

Tralee, No.4 headed to Dublin in anticipation of operating the next afternoon’s run to Belfast and Whitehead.

Monday 14th May: It was a very early start, with well over 300 miles to cover before the day was out.

Things went well until a few delays built up, leading to being looped and overtaken at Limerick Junction and Portarlinton. In the middle of this, word came from Dublin that No.4 had suffered firebar problems and would not be able to make the trip to Belfast.

No.85 and train eventually arrived in Connolly about 45 minutes late. However, speedy work by the crew had the locomotive at the shed very quickly indeed, where the new crew and the RPSI volunteers had the locomotive turned, coaled and prepped again within 90 minutes, a remarkable feat given the circumstances.

Departure for Belfast was about 90 minutes down, but scheduled running time was maintained throughout.

However, the late running created a further problem – the crew would not be able to operate the following day’s trip to schedule because of the 12 hour rest period required. The passengers on the train were informed that the morning’s run would start an hour later than planned, and an email was sent to all who were travelling just on the Monday.

Tuesday 15th May: The day started out fine and very warm and all was looking good as the delayed train, headed by No.131, travelled from Whitehead to Lisburn and then on the closed Antrim branch.

On the approach to Antrim there was a 5 mph permanent way restriction followed by a gradient into the station. The combination of this and the rusty

unused rails led to No.131, running tender-first, struggling to reach the station. A delay ensued while manual sanding of the rails was resorted to.

The train eventually reached the station and after running around and taking water a further hour had been added to the delay.

Unfortunately, on the journey back to Lisburn the railway company control office decided that they couldn’t allow the train into Bangor as the rush hour was approaching, and running around at that station does require use of both tracks.

It was a very frustrating end to the tour weekend and naturally the passengers on the packed train were disappointed at the outcome.

After reaching Lisburn again, the train ran direct to Whitehead, where a significant number of the participants were to take a tour of the museum.

Despite the disappointments, it was an enjoyable tour and the usual thanks must go to all the volunteers and crews involved.

Balbriggan Festival Express: On Sunday 27th May two return trips from Balbriggan to Drogheda are scheduled in conjunction with the Balbriggan Summer festival.

Steam Enterprise: On 10th June the first Enterprise of the year will operate, probably with No.4 throughout.

Steam & Jazz: Trains will run on Fridays 15th, 22nd & 29th June, 6th July, 24th & 31st August. The June and July dates are on sale, and two of them are sold out already.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Volunteer Appeal: As part of our Heritage Lottery Fund projects, there is a need for

a significant amount of work on wooden-bodied wagons.

We would be very interested to hear from members interested in woodworking to help progress these elements of the project.

8309: Thanks to a grant from the NI Museums Council, the GS&WR ballast wagon is now restored and displayed in the Museum in full GS&WR livery.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1 “Carlow”: In late April the CSÉ diesel shunter was returned to traffic at Whitehead after 8 years in storage, complete with new paintwork depicting its sugar company livery.

No.3BG “Guinness”: The locomotive performs the important function of Whitehead train rides and shunting locomotive.

No.4: A concentrated effort by Heritage Engineering Ireland, with welcome volunteer assistance, meant that the flue tubes were renewed just in time for the important Christmas operations.

Significant overhaul work will be needed soon, including renewal of tyres - the first of our main line locos to reach this requirement.

No.85 “Merlin”: Reliably operated the Christmas season trains. The locomotive has recently been re-tubed. It is due to undergo running-in trips before the annual railtour. It is hoped to base the locomotive in Dublin for the early summer.

No.131: Following satisfactory trials and brake tests between Whitehead and Belfast, No.131 has had its mandatory TPWS and other electrical equipment fitted.

No.131 was out on the Larne line early on the morning of 29th April (after the last Saturday service trains) to carry out some nocturnal braking tests. The intention is to have the locomotive approved to run at speeds up to 60 mph. A requirement for this was the fitting of AWS and TPWS, which was completed earlier this year.

The tests proved two things; firstly that the TPWS system did in fact intervene and bring the train to a stop when required, and secondly tested the stopping distance of the train at speeds greater than 40 mph.

No.131 and five Mk2 carriages left Whitehead Excursion shortly after midnight, and headed towards Belfast. Four tests were carried out; a stop from 40 mph on the approach to Kilroot, and a duplicate 40 mph test at Clipperstown.

Then, the signal protecting the approach to Bleach Green Junction was deliberately passed at danger, and the TPWS brought the train to a stand. This tested one of the two functions of the TPWS - applying the brakes when passing a signal at danger.

The final test was to approach another signal showing a danger aspect. This signal, on the approach to Fortwilliam depot, is fitted with an “overspeed” functionality which applies the brake of an approaching train if its speed is too high. With this aspect of the system, the brakes are applied before the signal itself is passed. Again, the train came to a halt without the driver’s input.

Having learned the hard way on previous occasions, the dining car was carefully checked over before the braking tests began, and any glasses or crockery which looked vulnerable was safely stowed away.

After completion of the tests, the possession which had been specially set up for our train was removed and the

train proceeded to Central Station. An eerily deserted station, with no staff, passengers or lights was the backdrop to No.131 running round her train.

No.461: The locomotive is near the end of its current boiler ticket and needs tube renewal and other repairs. Currently available if required.

B134: Work continues at a great pace on the restoration of the single cab GM Bo-Bo locomotive in Inchicore Works. The axles which were removed were found to be life expired and not suitable for further use. This presented a major obstacle for the project. Following detailed examination of dimensions and specifications, suitable new axles were located in Inchicore and these were machined to ensure they met the exact dimensions of the originals.

The wheels and bull gear were pressed off the original axles and subsequently refitted to the new axles. This was a tedious exercise with very little margin for error. To do it for one axle would be a big task but to do four in one go presented a huge amount of risk for damage to the existing wheels and gear.

Everyone involved in this exercise rose to the challenge and each of the four axles were replaced with no damage whatsoever to the existing wheels and gear. The result is that B134 will have axles suitable for many years of service once the locomotive returns to the service.

Of the parts removed for refurbishment, the main and auxiliary generators are significant. These, as the name suggests, generate the electrical power needed to run the traction motors which in turn move the locomotive. The rebuilding of these components is not only vital in the overhaul process but will be another factor in providing reliable performances once the locomotive is back on the

mainline.

The generators will go to the same company in Millstreet who overhauled the traction motors. The overhaul of the traction motors is all but complete and they will return to Inchicore with the generators once refurbished.

The radiator and oil cooler went to specialist contractor, Kilcock Radiators. They searched and found original specification parts in the US which enabled the radiator to be rebuilt exactly as it was originally constructed. The oil cooler was similarly stripped and overhauled to original specification. These items are now back in the Inchicore workshop ready to be refitted back onto the locomotive.

The air compressor/exhauster was rebuilt internally by the CME staff in the Locomotive Overhaul shop. The Inchicore staff got the unit turned around without delay and in a condition ready for many years of service.

When locomotives 134 and 175 were purchased from Irish Rail, funded by a group of enthusiasts, they also secured the remaining spares for small GM locomotives.

These spares were gathered over time and were deposited in a vacant shed in Inchicore. With no real record of what was in the shed, it required that all the stock be itemised. This took place under the watchful eye of Jimmy Doody (former Irish Rail fleet engineer) and Peter Cuffe (B134 project compliance manager).

The task yielded many important parts that will not only go straight to work on B134 but will also ensure a stock of vital parts are available into the future.

The parts will be moved to the RPSI depot in Connolly Shed where they will be catalogued and safely stored for future

use.

No.4 “Meenglas”: This County Donegal Railway locomotive, which was moved to Whitehead from the Foyle Valley Museum in November 2017, is having a ‘cosmetic makeover’. The work has been commissioned by Destined, a charitable organisation assisting people with special needs, and based in the Foyle Valley Railway museum building at Derry.

Meenglas is in a sorry condition following many years of deprivation after the Donegal Railway closed in 1959. Work is being carried out by Heritage Engineering and has already started on cleaning out, removing patchwork and making appropriate replica parts for static display.

Training: Following a number of days operation with No.4 for crew training between Dublin and Dundalk in late February, the efforts of all involved more than paid off. Ron Smith, the West Coast Railway steam crew assessor, officially passed two new Irish Rail footplate crew for the operation of our steam locomotives on the mainline, one fireman (Connie O’Gara) and one driver (Keith Farrelly).

131 Launch: The RPSI’s newly restored Great Northern Railway (Ireland) Q Class No.131 was officially launched at a ceremony at Whitehead on Saturday 24th March. The locomotive, which was withdrawn in 1963, has now returned to the main line.

In front of 120 guests, Chairman John McKegney said the “resurrection” of No.131 marked the culmination of years of dedicated work and commitment by many people. He made reference to the late Pearse McKeown, a GNR(I) man from Dundalk who was instrumental in preventing No.131 being scrapped at Inchicore.

The Chairman also expressed appreciation to Irish Rail for transferring ownership of the engine to the Society in 2003, and conveyed special thanks to Gregg Ryan, the former Heritage Officer, who had helped to recover the remaining parts of the engine prior to that.

He said nothing would have happened without funding. He expressed gratitude to GROW - Generating Rural Opportunities Within South Antrim who had kick-started the project with a grant of £130,000 in 2014. The RPSI membership had then shown its commitment with a magnificent response to the No.131 Appeal, allowing the tender to be rebuilt and fitted with the requisite modern electronic equipment.

Emma Stubbs, Manager of GROW, congratulated the RPSI on its achievement in restoring No.131 to working order. She officially launched No.131 by unveiling a plaque which will be displayed at Whitehead.

BELFAST MEETINGS

13th December: "A Railway Miscellany" involved three speakers, two of them (Shaun Martin and John Richardson) making their first appearances.

Shaun Martin presented "1960s NCC Memories", a series of 72 pictures by his friend Richard Whitford

Evan Connolly presented "Bits and Pieces", a diverse collection of pictures which reflected the rich diversity of the hobby, ranging from early railtours and their participants to signalling and level crossings as well as spray trains, closed stations and railway architecture.

Former Treasurer John Richardson detailed the days of his youth when, as a junior bank official, he worked in many railway-related towns, almost all of them

across Ulster.

10th January: "Portrush Station" by John Moore was a history of the station to date. "More From The BBC Archives" was another look at TV clips on a railway theme, presented by Ian Sinclair.

14th February: "Random Recollections Of Travel Through Ireland 65 years Ago" was a presentation by Michael Davies of his visits to Ireland from 1951.

14th March: Ciarán Cooney presented "Classic Irish Steam", a look at photographs from the IRRS archives by well-known Irish railway photographers.

WHITEHEAD RAILWAY MUSEUM

Staff: The General Manager resigned in March. The post has been filled temporarily by Siobhan Dillon on a part-time basis while a replacement is sought.

Opening: The Museum was open from Monday to Saturday of the Easter holiday week.

It is planned to open on Sundays during July and August. This follows intensive negotiations in which the Society secured a joint ticketing deal with Carrickfergus Castle and The Gobbins, which will offer a major boost to visitor numbers and income at Whitehead. This is a major breakthrough on the marketing front and the deal is that customers will be offered a joint ticket which can be used in all three venues over a 48 hour period. This offer will operate as a pilot during July and August, and will be marketed by all three attractions.

Video: As part of the marketing strategy for WRM, a videographer visited on 16th December, a day when No.85 was operating on Santa trains. Arrangements were made for several families to come along and pose as happy visitors. The

result is a snappy video lasting one minute 10 seconds which will be very useful in terms of promoting the Society and WRM. The video can be viewed on the Museum page of the website.

Award: The Museum received a major boost by landing a top honour from the Heritage Railway Association. The Manisty Award was presented at their annual ceremony on 10th February.

Named: The station café has been given the official name of the Edwardian Tea Room.

Meet The Buyer: On Thursday 19th April the WRM was represented at a Meet the Buyer event organised by Tourism NI in Belfast's Waterfront Hall. General Manager Siobhan Dillon and RPSI Events Convenor Robin Morton manned the stand.

During the course of a busy day they had meetings with 20 tour operators and during each of the available 15 minute slots were able to make a pitch for business for the Museum.

GENERAL

Appointment: In December Heritage Engineering Ireland (HEI), the wholly owned sub company of the RPSI that encompasses the paid workshop staff, appointed Ivan McAteer as Engineering Manager.

The need for this new position was identified to aid the management of multiple projects which HEI undertakes, the majority of which are for the RPSI, and a small proportion for external customers.

The latter are necessary to ensure sufficient cash flow and to supplement income to maintain sustainability.

JCB: On 30th January the Whitehead JCB

celebrated its 50th birthday, complete with cake!

Tony Dean: Our erstwhile barman on the Whitehead trains passed away on Friday 23rd February.

Tony, a native of Scotland who made his home in Northern Ireland, will be best remembered for making an important contribution to the RPSI, being the architect who designed the station building at Whitehead.

Board: In December Michael McMahon was appointed as Treasurer, a role he held until he stood down in April.

AGM: The annual general meeting notice is enclosed and members are asked to note the vacancies arising, especially the posts of Treasurer and Vice-Chairman.

These are vital positions and we hope that some among the membership with the relevant skills will see fit to step forward.

Nomination forms are available on request.

GDPR: This is a new Europe-wide data protection regulation and members are asked to take heed of the need to actively provide consent to the Society to allow use of email details for membership and marketing purposes.

Emails will be issued before the deadline of 25th May 2018 asking for your consent. A failure to reply, unfortunately, will result in a legal requirement to remove email addresses from the Bulletin list after that date.

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