



July 2018

# NEWS LETTER

## PRESIDENT

**Retirement:** The Railway Preservation Society of Ireland has appointed Dr Joan Smyth as its new President following the decision by the Lord O'Neill of Shane's Castle to stand down at the Annual General Meeting on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July after a record-setting 54 years in post.

Dr Smyth, who had been Vice-President, is a former chairman of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company and has just retired as Vice-Chair of Eirgrid, the grid operator for Ireland.

She told the Society's AGM at Whitehead: "I am honoured to succeed Lord O'Neill after his tremendous period of service to the RPSI."

Lord O'Neill, who will continue in the role of Patron, was appointed as the Society's first Patron and later President when the RPSI was formed in Belfast in October 1964.

RPSI Chairman Canon John McKegney said: "We believe that having the same person serve as President for such a long innings is unrivalled in the railway heritage sector in Ireland and Britain. We owe Lord O'Neill a tremendous

debt of gratitude."

Lord O'Neill was instrumental in helping the RPSI to secure its first steam locomotive - No.3BG "Guinness" which was presented to the Society in 1965 when it was retired from shunting duties at the Guinness Brewery in Dublin.

No.3BG, which was built in 1919, is still operational and is to be seen on Saturdays in July and August running train rides at Whitehead Railway Museum.

At the Society's AGM, Lord O'Neill recalled happy memories of travelling on many of the Society's special steam trains throughout Ireland over the years. He said it had always been important to him that the RPSI should be an all-island body.

He added: "I think it is time for me to stand back and I am delighted that I have such a capable successor as Dr Smyth, with whom I have worked closely in the RPSI for several years."

To mark Lord O'Neill's retirement, the RPSI is holding a Presidential Dinner at the Ulster Reform Club in Belfast on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October. Bookings may be made using a form on website, or by post - form on request.

## TRAINS & EVENTS

**Heatwave:** Beautiful weather lately? Definitely!

However, the downside for steam train enthusiasts is the possibility of lineside fires. With no rain in recent weeks the vegetation close to the tracks has dried out and is waiting for a stray spark to set it alight.

While there is a small risk, it would be irresponsible of us to take that chance. Across the UK the authorities have put a ban on the operation of steam locomotives, and while it hasn't happened in Ireland, the Society has decided it would be irresponsible to continue running steam and there is no option but to cancel mainline steam locomotive operations until such times as there has been adequate rainfall.

As an aside, the vegetation around Bray Head has recently been on fire which resulted in a line closure - and there were no steam trains near it!

Planned steam trips are being kept under review before tickets can be released for sale.

To date, diesel has substituted for steam on two occasions (Sea Breeze and one Jazz train - tickets were already sold out). Rather than put tickets on sale, it was decided to cancel the Boyne (Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July) and Steam Enterprise (Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July) trains.

We apologise if you have been affected by any of these alterations to trains.

**Balbriggan Festival Express:** On Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May No.4 and train departed from Dublin in sunshine,

destination Balbriggan. This connecting train was well patronised but not full.

The first Festival train was held outside Drogheda for 23 minutes owing to the Down 10:00 Enterprise having failed in the station. The delay meant that, after the locomotive had been serviced and changed ends, departure from Drogheda was 78 minutes behind schedule. The weather had changed too, and it was now wet and miserable.

The Operations Manager decided to pick up the passengers at Balbriggan for the second train and bring them to Skerries Loop, instead of running empty and picking them up on the return. Thus Drogheda was reached again, now only 44 minutes late, and left there only 8 minutes down - a great feat!

Back at Balbriggan, the morning's passengers were picked up and enjoyed a great run back to Dublin Connolly for an on-time arrival. Not a bad finish to a tricky day.

**Steam Enterprise:** Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June was a beautiful early summer day, and No.85 "Merlin" and crew performed spectacularly throughout.

Dublin arrival was near to time. The return journey was to the highest standard, with a perfect start-to-stop timing between Dublin and Dundalk. No.85 proved what a capable engine it is in the hands of experienced crews.

The only disappointment was that the planned return of No.4 to Whitehead did not happen. During the day, an on-shed inspection found a problem with one of its pistons. It was an unfortunate repeat of the failure on the Cork & Kerry railtour, and once again No.85 had to be unexpectedly turned, coaled and prepared for the

run north. The RPSI volunteers did this in record time.

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

- Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June: Dublin - Rosslare - Dublin - Kilkenny (passengers set down at Rosslare Strand)
- Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June: Kilkenny - Waterford - Limerick Junction - Cork (passengers picked up at Thomastown)
- Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June: Cork - Cobh - Mallow - Killarney (passengers picked up at Cobh)
- Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June: Killarney - Mallow - Limerick - Athenry - Galway - Athlone - Claremorris (passengers set down at Ennis)
- Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June: Claremorris - Westport - Dublin (passengers picked up at Westport)

As always, this was a busy week for the RPSI volunteers and thanks to them for a job well done.

**Steam & Jazz:** These trains sold out well in advance - 6 trains this year!

The first train of the season kicked off on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June with No.85 at its head. It had been hoped to have No.131 but the results of its braking trials had yet to be confirmed - the derogation to run at 40 mph without TPWS expired on 31<sup>st</sup> May.

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> June was another great night - and what weather! It was what the Jazz trains are all about, great summer evenings, beautiful steam locomotive (No.85) and the passengers enjoying themselves.

On what was possibly the most perfect weather ever for a Steam & Jazz evening, No.4 was at the head of the train on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June.

Despite no steam on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July, there was a minimal number of 10 refunds requested. It was a great evening's entertainment and all went off without a hitch behind NIR's diesel locomotive 112.

**Summer Steam:** The Saturday afternoon train rides (July and August) kicked off at Whitehead on 7<sup>th</sup> July, behind No.3BG "Guinness".

Hopefully the Whitehead Railway Museum marketing will be effective and make these trains a great success.

**Sea Breeze:** Due to the extraordinarily hot weather, and in particular the lack of rain or any forecast for significant rainfall, the decision was taken to operate the Sea Breeze excursion on 8<sup>th</sup> July using a diesel locomotive.

It was a pity not to see No.85 "Merlin" make her first appearance on the route, but passengers still experienced some heritage rail in 1960s Cravens carriages hauled by Irish Rail locomotive 072.

The day was hot and clear. Departure was at 10:42, seven minutes late due to being blocked. It was a slow run to Bray, then on to Greystones where we crossed the Rosslare-Dublin. We got away on time, and had a good run to Wexford arriving at 13:25, three minutes down. We left Wexford at 14:05 and arrived at Rosslare Strand at 14:19. The train carried on to Rosslare Harbour for servicing.

Back at the Strand, departure was at 15:50 and at Wexford passengers for Dublin were picked up at 16:15 and a good run was made, with one set down stop at Gorey, for 2 minutes, arriving back at Connolly Station at 18:53.

A good job by all the volunteers in

considerable heat.

**Rockin' Food Festival/The Slaney:** On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August, if the dry weather allows, there will be an outing to Enniscorthy in conjunction with the food festival there.

And, as it is hoped to use No.85 "Merlin" for the first time on the D&SER, the trip is being extended to Rosslare Strand (for turning the locomotive at the Harbour).

**Portrush Flyer:** These trains (12<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> August) were late in being confirmed as there were a number of factors in play, i.e. the fact that Portrush station is being rebuilt for the Open Golf tournament there in 2019 and the loop is currently inaccessible; also the request by NIR to produce risk assessment documentation for use of the Coleraine turntable and watering facilities.

Due to the former, there will be an NIR connection between Coleraine and Portrush.

**The South-Western:** This is the latest in the series of diesel railtours aimed at raising funds for the overhaul of our diesel locomotives will feature a mix of both 071 and 201 class haulage on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October.

On the day the train will depart Dublin Connolly with a smart run down the mainline to Cork. Here we will have our first loco change for the run out to Cobh where we will regain our original locomotive for the next stage to Limerick. This stage will involve a first for diesel railtours with non-stop run through Cork via the avoiding line up to Limerick Junction and then arrival into Limerick.

At this stage there will be a break for

just over an hour to allow for servicing of the train and our next change of locomotive.

Departing Limerick we then head up the Western Rail corridor via Ennis and Gort before we join the Galway to Dublin line at Athenry. We then make our way back to Dublin via Athlone, Portarlington and the mainline before arrival back into Dublin Connolly.

A number of photo-stops are planned for the day including less visited stations on the Cobh line and along the Western Rail corridor.

Tickets are on sale by post or online.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.3BG "Guinness":** On Whitehead train ride and shunting duties.

The locomotive's webpage has been updated with a video of its history.

**No.4:** The locomotive was failed twice in recent months, although it has operated very successfully during that time too.

However, it was moved from Dublin to Whitehead on 24<sup>th</sup> June (with No.85 taking its place) for minor repair jobs. It needs new tyres, which have been ordered and are expected soon. Other work is outstanding, e.g. valve liner renewal.

**No.85:** In Dublin. Next move is planned brake tests, to establish braking performance including light engine and hopefully increase speeds. It is important that the locomotive can fit in with normal traffic. These tests have been delayed because of the recent dry conditions.

**No.131:** The locomotive passed the final stages of commissioning her

electrical systems on the 21<sup>st</sup> May, with a day of electronic testing carried out at Whitehead. Thales Ground Transportation Systems UK sent two test engineers to Northern Ireland to issue a 'First in Class' certificate for the Train Protection and Warning (TPWS) systems. It was the end of a marathon electrical installation for the Society, which has been working on the overhaul of No.131 since mid-2014.

The locomotive had suffered badly from lying out of use in all weathers - first as a stationary boiler at Irish Rail's main workshops at Inchicore, then on display on a plinth at Dundalk, and finally in a partly dismantled state at various locations.

A lot of parts were missing, and had to be manufactured by RPSI volunteers and the RPSI's subsidiary engineering company, Heritage Engineering Ireland. Most of the wheels, valve gear, motion and pistons were intact, but the boiler fittings, boiler cladding, and most of the tender were missing - long since lost to the ravages of time and rust.

One of the bigger jobs was making a brand new tender tank. We had the wheels and frames of the tender, but the entire bodywork, the tender tank and coal bunker, were missing. The wheels were re-profiled in our wheel lathe, and the bearings refurbished. Then we began to rebuild the tender tank using sheet steel, and using both riveted and welded construction.

The locomotive had its wheelsets, axleboxes, bearings and leaf springs overhauled. The bearings were in good condition - apart from where water had sat in the oil groove in each axlebox, and corrosion had occurred on the steel journal below, which

meant that skimming the journal was required.

As is often the case, not all the axleboxes carried the number 131, indicating that parts had been swapped with other engines, and "make do and mend" at the end of the loco's life in traffic. The wheel centres were blast cleaned for thorough examination and it was interesting to find evidence of the original green paint under the later layers of black and grime.

Boiler repairs included renewal of several hundred water-space stays in the firebox area, renewal of the lower part of the front tubeplate, and renewal of all foundation ring rivets. New smoke tubes, flue tubes and superheater elements were made and fitted. The blast pipe and main steam pipes were missing, and the design had to be estimated from a general arrangement drawing, which was the only information available.

The Qs class locomotives were well known for suffering from cracked frames, which are noticeably shallower than the otherwise very similar S class. It was clear that the GNR(I) had gone to some lengths to correct the problem. Substantial additional plates had been fitted together with stiffeners at vulnerable plate edges. Even so, during the overhaul there was a lot of non-destructive testing for cracks, and reworking old welds that were showing their age.

Another interesting replacement job was making the new dome cover for the engine. When we acquired No.131 all the boiler cladding was missing, including the distinctive dome cover. Making a replacement was a tricky job,

using the age old skills of metal spinning and panel beating.

An unusual job was replacing the front buffer beam, which on GNR(I) locomotives is made from wood. The buffers also received attention, with new rubber springs which had to be reverse engineered from an old part, as no drawings were available.

The final jobs to be completed were the complex electrical systems - which were entirely new to No.131. The RPSI had previously fitted identical systems to No.85, the youngest of the three GNR(I) 4-4-0s still existing. This meant that the design of the electrical gear had been proven on a similar locomotive.

However, it was a struggle to hide the wiring conduits which run from the front buffer beam to the cab. No.85 is built right out to the loading gauge, so there was plenty of room to put the conduit inside the splashes and under the running plates. No.131 is much narrower, which required some lateral thinking and a lot of reaching into confined spaces to complete the job.

Getting the locomotive back in passenger service required the new systems to be tested and commissioned. This is where Thales came in. For every new class of locomotive fitted with their brand of TPWS, they must perform a 'First in Class' test which confirms that the TPWS antennae are fitted correctly and will receive signals from the grids mounted between the rails under all conditions. Fortunately for the RPSI, Thales were keen to help with this landmark project.

Normally testing like this would run into five figures, but Thales had

indicated that they may be able to offer us a reduced rate, and they came back and offered to carry out the tests for free! It seemed that as the RPSI was a charity, and that the work on the TPWS installation was being carried out by volunteers, fitting equipment paid for by donations, that they wanted to make a contribution too.

NIR gave the locomotive its licence to operate at 60 mph on 29<sup>th</sup> June.

Portrush here we come!

**No.171:** Overhaul partly complete, some minor work under way as time permits. Intention is to resume shortly with a view to having loco available as others come out of traffic.

**No.461:** Approaching the end of its boiler ticket. Would like to get loco out again for comparison/test purposes, to assist in any action needed to improve performance.

**58 Project:** Rebuilding of boiler under way as time and funding permit.

**No.4 "Meenglas" (HEI Contract):** The ex Donegal Railway locomotive is getting a cosmetic overhaul for display at Foyle Valley Museum in Londonderry.

**Tram Car No.6 (HEI Contract):** The Bessbrook & Newry vehicle is having its bodywork overhauled for display in a museum in Bessbrook.

**Grant-Assisted Restoration Projects:** *Guinness Van No.304:* Undergoing extensive frame, bogie and bodywork repairs and fit out for display purposes.

*No.3 LP&HC:* Refurbishment and painting for display purposes, including reinstatement of the narrow gauge drawbar.

**Diesel News:** On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May,

GM locomotive B142 received a brand new set of batteries, and had its battery terminals replaced due to corrosion on the existing connections. It was also decided to upgrade the jumper cables that connect the batteries together, as the existing ones had become very tired. The locomotive was proving difficult to start in the cold weather, as the existing batteries were at end of life.

The new batteries, which are also used in trucks and are five in number, were purchased using funds generously donated by the Modern Railway Society of Ireland (MRSI). Some of that donation remains, and will be used in due course for other ancillary items for the GM locomotive which is an important member of our fleet in Whitehead.

We would like to thank the MRSI for their donation.

**Trainees:** Each of the three NIR drivers who have undergone initial training at Whitehead has had an opportunity for footplate travel over the weekend of the Cork & Kerry Railtour. They travelled as observers, but it gave them a good handle on the crew's role.

Dominic Smyth travelled with No.85 from Belfast to Dublin on the Thursday, while Orla McGuinness was on board for the trip back north with the Compound on Monday evening. David Haire was up for the run with No.131 from Whitehead to Antrim on the Tuesday. All went well.

## WHITEHEAD SITE

**Willie The Conkerer:** The Society's site squad recently decided to go green and do something for the environment

at Whitehead.

On Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> May Willie Hollinger brought along a small chestnut tree which he had grown from a conker! (Not sure if his conker was the winner or loser!!)

There was a little planting ceremony where the tree was planted on the upper bank behind the turntable.

## WHITEHEAD RAILWAY MUSEUM

**Promotion:** Various marketing strategies are being undertaken, including Bus & Train Week in early June whereby 20% discount was available to Translink ticket holders.

Also announced in June was a triple attraction ticket in conjunction with Carrickfergus Castle and The Gobbins, meaning that in addition to the normal WRM schedule the museum will be open every Sunday in July and August.

A competition for a footplate experience day was held in early July, the winner taking up the opportunity on the 14<sup>th</sup> July train rides on the footplate of No.3BG

**Tour Guides:** Already some 20 guides are active on the rota but we need some new personnel. Because of an increase in demand and also because of the new marketing initiatives, there is a second recruitment programme for members who would like to become guides - or act as gallery attendants.

You can choose between the two roles - either taking a conducted tour around the museum or opting to act as a gallery attendant in one of the five galleries - or else you can mix and match.

We need people to act in both

capacities as this summer we are planning to launch self-guided tours, which will enable visitors to spend more time going round galleries of particular interest.

Training will be provided and you will start by shadowing one of the existing guides so you can get an idea of what the role involves. Don't worry, there will be plenty of assistance around.

The feedback from our conducted tours has been overwhelmingly positive and we are delighted that the word is spreading about the award-winning WRM.

We hope to launch our attractive new WRM brochure very shortly, so watch this space. We hope to be able to send every member a copy and if you can help by take a bundle to distribute to visitor attractions and other outlets in your vicinity, please get in touch.

If you would like to join the WRM team, or hear more about the options, please contact General Manager, Siobhan Dillon.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Hello & Goodbye:** The meeting on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July saw some changes on the Board.

Edward Friel, Bill Garrioch, David Houston and Mark Walsh stood down. Thanks to them for their input during their tenure.

And welcome back to Mark Kennedy and Peter Rigney.

## GENERAL

**GDPR:** Thanks to everyone who responded to the email request for

consent on the General Data Protection Regulation privacy issue. However, at least 60 of you have not done so. Until you do, we cannot send you the email Bulletin.

**Website - Members Section:** An enormous amount of behind the scenes work has been undertaken in recent months (and is still ongoing) to return to the website some of the features enjoyed up until March 2017.

This information was recently made available again through a Members Only section on the website (accessed through the 'Members' link at the bottom of the website's Home page).

A password is required, and rather than administer an individual one for each member it has been decided to provide a generic login and password, the latter to be changed regularly. We would ask that this information is not passed to non-members but, rather, encourage them to subscribe to the Society.

The new Members section has links to Announcements, Photo Galleries, Publications and Dates History.

The Publications area has an up-to-date list of Five Foot Three issues and a list of Society News-Letters from the early days of the Society. There are gaps in the latter and we would be grateful to receive copies of any missing issues.

Have a look and see what you think! Ideas for improvement are welcome.

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