



December 2018

NEWS LETTER

BOARD

RPSI Governance: The Board of the RPSI has been working in response to the Governance Report produced last year by Dr Roger Courtney. This involves some restructuring of the way we are organised.

The Organisation Chart (see Members Section on website) should make this clear but the fundamental principle is that Board is to be primarily concerned with Financial, Legal, Health and Safety, Human Resource matters, etc., as indicated on the chart. Management Committees, based in Belfast and Dublin, are now looking after day to day and operational matters and they are responsible to the Board.

The Dublin Management Committee is actually the Dublin Area Operating Committee - renamed both for clarity and consistency. It has an elected Chair, currently Joe McKeown.

Health and Safety Risk Management: Marsh Insurance have begun a major review and training exercise for the Society to make us aware of risks and how to overcome them through training and procedures. Along with this, a sub-committee has been established to look at Values and Behaviours within the Society. This to ensure we all treat one another with respect and work together as a team dedicated to restoring, operating and preserving heritage trains throughout Ireland as well as promoting and managing the work of our Museum.

New Board Members: The Society does not have every necessary skill to carry out all the required functions of the Board, so with the help of the resource charity CO³ (Chief Officers

Third Level), we hope to recruit two new extra Board members with H&S and HR skills respectively.

Staffing: Siobhan Dillon is doing sterling work as our acting General Manager. However she is anxious to move on to other work at the end of the year. The Board, being mindful of problems in the past, is in discussion with CO³ to provide us with a short term interim Chief Executive to advance our restructuring and to pave the way for a permanent General Manager.

In November we welcomed Rebecca Lavery as our new Administrative Assistant based in Whitehead.

TRAINS & EVENTS

Just Go Charter: This was another very successful operation:

Day 1 - Monday 3rd September, (No.85) Dublin Connolly to Killarney.

Day 2 - Wednesday 5th September, (No.85) Killarney to Portarlington; (No.4) Portarlington to Westport.

Day 3 - Friday 7th September, (No.4) Westport to Dublin Connolly.

European Heritage Open Day: 432 visitors availed of entry to the museum, and 340 took train rides, on Saturday 8th September.

The Boyne: On Sunday 16th September No.4 was due to make the trip from Dublin to Whitehead; the locomotive was required to haul the Steam Enterprise on Sunday 23rd September (No.131 is not yet certified south of the border and No.85 was in Dublin).

Unfortunately, the Connolly turntable, which was being used to turn No.85 for the Boyne

trips to Drogheda, got stuck when partially turned, so No.4 had to operate the trips instead of going to Belfast.

Steam Enterprise: No.4 was transferred light from Dublin on Saturday 22nd September, the day preceding the operation.

The train itself operated without a hitch, with fine weather and a great crowd on board.

With the turntable problems at Connolly, it was expected that No.4 would return north again. However, the locomotive team managed to have No.85 turned in advance and it was able to operate the return leg.

Volunteers' Day: The Museum hosted the event on Saturday 28th September and, thanks to excellent publicity, there was an excellent turn-out.

Two information sessions were held at in the Education Room of The Stables and around 15 people attended each. A number of department heads made presentations.

Steam Saturday: Trains rides and afternoon teas were on offer on 27th October and 24th November.

Broomstick Belle: On Sunday 28th October No.85 hauled the two trains out of Belfast, and No.461 was coupled up at Whitehead for the return leg of the afternoon train.

Given the problems experienced in recent years with No.461 it was decided that a test run was in order and pressure gauges were fitted to its cylinders.

Haunted Express: No.4 hauled these fully-laden trains from Dublin to Drogheda on Monday 29th October.

However, on the outward leg of the afternoon trip issues arose with the injectors at Skerries. Rather than risk delaying traffic on the busy main line the decision was taken to request diesel haulage back to Dublin.

Santa Special (Dublin): Tickets went on sale at noon on Sunday 14th October, and all 7,500 tickets, steam and diesel, were sold out within 38 minutes!!

At the time of writing, the season, successful so far, is still under way with No.4.

Santa Special (Belfast & Portadown): All trains sold out within a couple of days.

No.85 operated the first weekend. Ron Smith, West Coast Railways A1 Assessor, was on the

footplate both days. Noel Playfair, Gary Moore and Anto Dargan were duly accredited for a further year.

No.131 took over for the second weekend, including its first visit to Portadown for around 60 years!

Mince Pie Special: This trip, on Sunday 30th December, attracted great interest - tickets sold out in two days!

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Five Star: In September the Mk2 diner 547 was awarded a 5-Star food hygiene rating by Carrickfergus Borough Council. Well done to Eileen and team!!

Dublin Heritage: The Society's carriages from the heritage set were moved back to Inchicore on Tuesday 13th November.

They had been in temporary storage in the valeting shed at Heuston, but Irish Rail need the shed again for their own use.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG "Guinness": Whitehead. The locomotive is available for shunting and train ride duties at Whitehead.

No.4: Dublin. It has passed its annual steam test and has also been thoroughly examined following the reported performance problem at Skerries.

It is due to return to Whitehead on the "Mince Pie" train, after which the plan is to fit new tyres and attend to other minor jobs. The new tyres, which came from South Africa, are now on site - they have been partly machined but this can only be completed once the old tyres have been removed and the exact diameter is known.

No.85 "Merlin": Whitehead. Having some minor attention to firebox stays completed.

No.131: Whitehead. Passed its annual boiler steam test on Tuesday 27th November, and was available for the later Santa trains.

By Saturday 8th December it had operated 1,000 miles in RPSI service.

No.461: Whitehead. Coming out of traffic at the end of December. Future plans to be decided, i.e. whether to overhaul or retire for a

period.

Contracts: The other No.4 (2-6-4 tank loco "Meenglas" of the County Donegal Railway), which is being given a cosmetic overhaul by Heritage Engineering Ireland, has now been moved out of the workshop for final blast cleaning and painting before return to the Railway Museum in Derry.

B134: Work on the overhaul of this locomotive continues apace at Inchicore.

A1 Assessor Training: In September James Friel, Philip Newell and Mark Walsh underwent training and assessment for their Level 3 Award in "Assessing Competence in the Work Environment". The process was conducted over three days at Whitehead, using the Stables as the main training room.

The candidates all passed and received their certificates in early December so that they can now join Brian Hill, Dermot Mackie and Peter Scott in assessing candidates for the operating grades.

WHITEHEAD SITE

Signal: In October the LMS NCC somersault starter signal was installed at the Belfast end of the platform at Whitehead Excursion Station. In November it was wired up and operating from the signal box.

Ground Frame: In December the installation of the new ground frame at the entrance to the platform roads at Whitehead was completed. This moves and locks the turnout.

Movement: On Sunday 25th November No.3BG "Guinness" was in steam and conducted a shunt to put the Guinness grain van in the workshop for further bodywork.

The CDR locomotive No.4 "Meenglas" was placed under the gantries. It will be lowered to ground level, blast cleaned and primed. Then back on its wagon and into the workshop for final attention, although it may prove possible to do all that outside. Then hopefully away to Derry to look attractive.

The shunt also involved the move of many bogies for storage.

WHITEHEAD RAILWAY MUSEUM

In Fashion: Northern Woman is not usually the

sort of magazine that ardent steam train enthusiasts might choose to put on their shopping list. But this time it could be different - the November issue of the leading fashion magazine featured a range of shots taken at the Whitehead Railway Museum on 25th September. The five-hour shoot involved a photographic session with model Enya Sullivan.

International Railway Safety Council: On Sunday 14th October, the first ever NIR CAF set to visit the Whitehead Excursion platform was 4007. It was a gauging run for a visit by International Rail Safety delegates on 25th October.

On the latter date, CAF 3004 edged its way gingerly along the Excursion Platform having arrived from Belfast Lanyon Place (formerly Central) with the guests.

Around 20 international delegates disembarked to a welcome from President Joan Smyth, Chairman John McKeown and General Manager Siobhan Dillon.

Afternoon Teas: On Saturdays 27th October and 24th November there were teas on board the train rides carriages.

It is hoped to have these events on the last Saturday of each month, in the Tea Room out of season, and on board the train when train rides are running.

Whitehead Murder Mystery: On Saturday 24th November the Events Committee held a successful evening, which it is hoped will be the first of many.

The event took place on board Mk2 carriages 303 and 460 which were stabled at the platform for the night. It had been booked out for two weeks and the 63 guests had been advised in advance as to which character they would be playing. Most people decided to dress accordingly. Each person was then given an envelope containing a name badge, further instructions and some other essentials such as miniature bank notes.

Soon it was time for a break and all the passengers disembarked to avail of a buffet meal served in the Tea Room. Suitably fortified it was back onto the train where it soon emerged that tragically, a body had been found. The amateur sleuths examined the body and then intensified their investigation. Lots of red herrings emerged and in truth, there were still more questions than answers.

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Back in the Tea Room, the evidence was summarised and the passengers gathered in groups of 10 to compare notes. Then it was time for verdicts to be delivered and everyone wrote down their conclusion - plus a vote for the best-dressed guest and a count of the money they had ended up with after various bouts of bribery and the odd gamble.

BELFAST MEETINGS

Wednesday 10th October: "The Newry to Armagh Railway" was presented by Philip Donald who described the origins, route and history the line.

"Steam Around Goraghwood" by Joe Cassells used 64 pictures taken by Des FitzGerald to describe steam operations in the Goraghwood area in the 1960s.

Wednesday 14th November: "Irish Ambulance Trains in the Great War" was presented by Charles Friel, and began with pictures of the railway war memorials at Belfast Central (now Lanyon Place) for the B&CDR and GNR, the GNR memorial on platform four at Connolly, the NCC memorial at York Road, the MGWR memorial at the Broadstone and the GS&WR memorial on platform two at Heuston. He went on to present a fascinating tale of the history and operation of the trains.

Wednesday 12th December: "Architecture of the GNR(I)" by Siobhan Osgood was an interesting tale of the development of the GNR(I) architecture 'brand', mainly the work of the perfectionist W.H. Mills.

After the break, Peter Scott presented "Building for the Future", outlining what is happening at Whitehead to provide our 2-6-4T, No.4, with a replacement boiler. He concluded with some thoughts on whether the new boiler should go into a Jeep or a Mogul - but there is much to do before that decision has to be made.

GENERAL

Rita Henderson: We have to report the sad news that Rita passed away suddenly on 26th September.

Rita worked in the diner on Whitehead train for over 30 years, and occasionally in the Dublin diner. She will be greatly missed.

Mullingar: IÉ Infrastructure have announced plans for removal of track work in Mullingar Station Midland Yard. The work is to facilitate the disposal of lands totalling approximately 3.2 acres and dilapidated 'Protected Structures' including eight cottages at Railway Terrace, Mullingar to Westmeath County Council for use as social housing.

The project involves the removal of disused sidings in the Midland Yard and the disconnection of the shed currently occupied by the RPSI. It has been confirmed that connection is to be retained to the turntable which is a 'Protected Structure' and continues to be used by the Society on occasion of trains visiting Mullingar.

Presidential Dinner: On Friday 2nd November, the unique contribution made by Lord O'Neill in his record-setting 54 years as Patron and then President of the RPSI was recognised at a dinner held in the Ulster Reform Club in Belfast. Around 50 members and friends were present.

Museum Accreditation: The RPSI was one of 12 local museums to receive their official accreditation certificates at a ceremony organised by the Northern Ireland Museums Council. The accreditation scheme is administered by NIMC on behalf of Arts Council England and sets nationally agreed standards for museums across the UK. Accreditation has to be revalidated every four years.

Website: News-Letters from 1964 to 2003 are now available on the Members section of the website.

Don't forget to review the copies, especially from the 1960s and 1970s, to see if you can help with missing issues.

Volunteer News: Congratulations to Matthew Wilson (22) from Belfast who has been nominated by the RPSI as its "Young Volunteer of the Year" for the annual Heritage Railway Association awards.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,

Co. Antrim, BT36 6HJ.

Company Registration: NI010798

Charity Registration: NIC102389 (NI), CHY6141 (ROI)

www.steamtrainsireland.com

rpsitrains@hotmail.com

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