



March 2019

NEWS LETTER

CARRIAGE & WAGON

81: On Friday 15th February, the GNR(I) brake van No.81 'Ivan' had a new spring fitted.

This will allow it to return to Whitehead train ride duties in the forthcoming season.

Winter Season: Work continues in both Dublin and Whitehead attending to a myriad of jobs, big and small, to make sure the carriages are in prime condition for the new season of trains.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG "Guinness": It is hoped that steam-heating can be fitted to the locomotive for testing and pre-heating of carriages.

No.4: After its return from Dublin the locomotive had its boiler washed and cleaned out, and the frames steam washed. It is now in the wheel-drop shed, where the wheels have been dropped out and brought to the workshop to have new tyres fitted.

The work on re-tyring is going ahead apace, with old tyres removed and new ones being machined and fitted. Included are tyres for the spare set of driving wheels which are in store.

No.186: The J15 has been given a well-deserved clean. John White has spent many days removing the grime of decades to expose the wonderful brass-work as well as the cream painted cab roof. No.186

provides a very important job on the visitors' tour of the museum at Whitehead. It is here that visitors learn of the work of the driver and fireman of a steam locomotive. John has been experimenting with various methods of removing the dirt and showing the cab off to the best advantage. He has certainly brought a sparkle back to the footplate which is very much appreciated by our visitors.

B142: The GM was in operation on Saturday 5th January for the first time since August, having been stopped for further bodywork repairs, including a new floor in No.2 Cab.

It started at the first attempt, and ran for 5 hours performing a small shunt and splitting the Mk2 rake for their annual inspection. This was also a good opportunity for crew training, with two trainee drivers at the controls during the shunt. The locomotive is still mostly in undercoat, further painting on hold until warmer weather.

Unilok: Some work has been carried out to revive this vehicle. It is hoped it may be able to help with shunting No.4 in the wheel-drop shed to assist the re-tyring process.

The Unilok is a small road/rail shunting machine powered by an air-cooled petrol VW Beetle engine. The machine hasn't been used for some years, so needed some work to the fuel system. Almost every rubber or plastic part of the fuel system had rotted or rozed including the fuel pump. Replacement parts have been

obtained, including a fuel pump rebuild kit.

No.4 "Meenglas": The Donegal locomotive has returned to the Foyle Valley Railway Museum after more than a year being cosmetically restored by the Society's engineering subsidiary Heritage Engineering Ireland.

A welcome home ceremony at which the locomotive was unveiled took place in Derry on Wednesday 30th January.

Destined, the Derry-based charity for adults with learning difficulties which now owns the railway museum, will be launching a video and a booklet with information about the railways in the North-West to herald the start of a new railway preservation society in Derry.

Steam Training: Over the past year or so, member Adam Lohoff has been preparing PowerPoint training presentations for prospective steam-raisers, firemen and drivers.

His material has been painstakingly researched and includes many corrective actions that can be taken in a myriad of situations in which footplate crew may find themselves; and over the years our footplate crew have certainly found themselves in some situations.

The Fireman presentation was the first to get an airing. On 2nd March trainee firemen Alastair Campbell, Jonathan Clinton, George Ebrill and Stefan Wagner were the guinea pigs.

The PowerPoint presentation was conducted in the Stables by Adam and took about 2½ hours to work through. Many of the slides generated in-depth discussion and everyone left very satisfied.

Having heard the theory, it was outside to the waiting No.131 for some hands-on practical experience of injectors, lubricators, fire cleaning, oiling and more.

Everyone was extremely positive about the PowerPoint, it was a credit to Adam and shows how much he has learnt in his 12 years around the engines.

The whole day revealed a promising template for future training, especially

Adam's great work in giving a well-presented and paced talk. The Stables is a very good training space. Having a big locomotive in steam too is a great learning bonus.

The immediate plan is to make the presentation available for reps in Dublin.

TRAINS & EVENTS

Santa Specials: Saturday 15th December must have been one of the wettest in Santa train history - miserable! So bad was it that at Whitehead most folk didn't get off the train to get photos with Santa or to avail of the facilities.

On the same day there were steaming issues with No.4 on the second trip out of Dublin. As there were a number of extra trains running due to a rugby match at Lansdowne Road, the decision was taken to divert the train to M3 Parkway to avoid further delays. The advantage of a large station building for the photographs was welcome. As the engine is now prohibited from running around at M3 Parkway a diesel came out and brought the train back to Dublin Connolly.

It just remains to thank everyone, north and south, for the great effort put into making 31 separate trains a great success. These include, in no particular order: stewards, catering/café team, window cleaners, fire-raisers, seat allocators, shunters, footplate and carriage reps, ticket checkers ... and Santa and his elves.

Mince Pie Special: On Sunday 30th December the weather was grey but mild on leaving Belfast, and No.85 was in great form, keeping time well with its full train all the way to Dublin. One of the highlights of the run was the train being followed by not one but three light aircraft from around Poyntzpass to Dundalk. Hopefully, they got some great photos.

It was sunny and pleasant in Dublin for the passengers as they made the way to their diversions of choice.

After departure on the return trip No.4 was

steaming poorly. Unfortunately, various delays resulted in a 40 minute deficit by the time Belfast was reached. However, all was well inside the train and a great atmosphere prevailed.

Steam Saturday: As well as on summer Saturdays, it is hoped to run Whitehead train rides once a month in the off-season between March and November. The first of these is 16th March, then 6th April, and possibly 27th April if a crew can be spared from work on No.4's tyres.

The Midlander: The first mainline trip of the year is two return trips to Maynooth on the 18th March bank holiday. At the time of writing the first train is sold out.

The West Awake: On Saturday 13th April the next diesel excursion will be from Dublin to Ballina and Westport.

Double-heading of 071 locomotives between Dublin and Claremorris has been confirmed.

Easter: As Translink are this year treating Easter Tuesday as a normal working day, the second Easter Bunny day will be brought forward to the Saturday, i.e. trains are now running on 20th & 22nd April.

In Dublin, No.85 is possibly coming north because of Brexit, leaving no locomotive to operate the Easter Eggstravaganza trains planned for Easter Monday - to be confirmed. No.131 is not yet passed for operation south of the border.

Waterford & Limerick: Preliminary bookings are coming in for the May 2019 weekend. Don't forget yours if you wish to travel on our 50th Railtour!

Full booking form expected in early April.

MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions: Now overdue for 2019. There should be a reminder along with this circular if your payment is outstanding.

Thank you to those who have renewed (check envelope for your card), especially to those who included a donation.

Don't forget, if you are sending in a cheque

for payment of any of membership, sales or the railtour, please send individual payments for each category to the address given on the relevant form. For instance do not send a single cheque for membership and railtour booking.

WHITEHEAD RAILWAY MUSEUM

Afternoon Tea: These popular events took place on 29th December and 14th & 23rd February.

Thanks to Sam and all the team who made these possible. They are an excellent idea if you wish to celebrate a birthday or a wedding anniversary, and are an ideal treat.

It is hoped in due course to dedicate a table carriage to be placed at the platform to add extra seating.

Visitors: Things are getting busier at the Museum and Saturday 9th February was a case in point, with several group bookings to the museum.

At lunchtime on Tuesday 12th February we took the opportunity to facilitate a group of photographers from the Ashton Community Trust in north Belfast. The group are members of an amateur photography project and during their tour of the museum they found plenty of subject matter. We look forward to seeing the results. Monday and Tuesday are of course not usually operating days for the museum, so special thanks to those guides who responded to our appeal for extra help.

The Museum played host to a party of 20 volunteers from the Volunteer Now organisation from Belfast on Friday 22nd February. The party was welcomed by Siobhan Dillon, who gave the visitors a PowerPoint presentation and safety briefing in the Stables.

Then it was time to roll up the sleeves and get down to work. The squad, supervised by Volunteer Now staff and RPSI personnel, divided their resources between Coach 50, the Great Northern Railway (Ireland)

Directors' Saloon, and Coach 68, the 1922-built Midland Railway side-corridor coach. The volunteers set to and gave both vehicles a thorough clean and brush-up. On Thursday 28th February, Councillor Robert Logan, who sits on Mid & East Antrim Council's Economic Growth & Tourism Committee, said during an official visit to the museum that he was delighted to see the attraction going from strength to strength and he was there to help celebrate a 50% increase year on year in visitor numbers.

During his visit, Councillor Logan pulled a signal lever to officially commission the newly installed 100-year-old signal, which came from Castlerock and which was donated to the RPSI last year by NI Railways.

GENERAL

Website: Available once more is the Projects page, which previously existed on the old website, and is now added to the Membership page.

Mk2 carriages 180 and 460 now have their own pages in the Collections section.

Also in this area, the page for GNR(I) Directors' Saloon 50 has had a significant makeover - thanks to Joe Cassells, Charles Friel, Michael McMahon, Tony Ragg, Ian Sinclair and Ian Wilson for their input.

All the available News-Letters from 1965 to date have been added to the Members' area. If there are any missing issues which you have in your collection we would appreciate a copy.

Members' Section: This area of the website is password protected, and instructions of how to access it have been issued a number of times in the Bulletin. Note - you do not use your own email address!!

Bulletin: If you have an email address and do not receive the email news from the Society, please do contact us using the details at the end of this News-Letter.

Congratulations: Whitehead volunteer Matthew Wilson (23) has won the Heritage

Railway Association's first ever "Young Volunteer" award. It was presented to him by Lord Faulkner at the HRA's annual ceremony in Birmingham on 9th February.

Now Available: Now on the Shop page:

- The Tracks Of My Railway Years, Volume 2, by Roy Carlisle, £19.99.
- Henry Eoghan O'Brien, An Engineer Of Nobility, by Gerald M. Beesley, £20.
- Narrow Gauge Album 1950-1965 In Colour, by Michael Whitehouse, £25.
- Irish Railway Memories, A Decade of Change - 1984-1994 In Photographs, by Paul Heywood, £10.95.

General Manager: An advert for the post was published in February. A very healthy number of applications have been received.

Extraordinary General Meeting: The Society's President, Dr Joan Smyth, presided at the EGM in Dublin on Saturday 16th February when the 2017 accounts were adopted.

The meeting was followed by the annual safety forum for volunteers on Dublin trains.

Many thanks to the IRRS for hosting.

BELFAST MEETINGS

9th January: The theme of the meeting was films made by Macha Film Studios in the late 1960s and in the more recent, digital, age.

13th February: This was a return visit by Andrew Waldron whose topic was Irish Port, Harbour and Military Railways.

Andrew dealt with the port and harbour lines in the first half, and focussed on military railways in the second.

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