



June 2019

NEWS LETTER

APPOINTMENTS

New Directors: In April the Board announced the appointment of two external directors to strengthen the work of the Board, especially in the areas of Health & Safety and Human Resource management.

The Board is mindful of its responsibility to ensure good governance and to be fully compliant with all current, and indeed future, legislation. It is intended that it will enhance its capacity through these appointments.

Through the good offices of CO3** and on its recommendation Michael Guest and Dermot O'Hara have been co-opted to the Board.

Both of them have experience of wide-ranging managerial matters and of the need for robust measures to be in place. While they will serve the Board in all areas, Michael's focus will be on H&S matters and Dermot's on HR matters.

*** Chief Officers 3rd Sector O3 (CO3) was established in 1985, and is a leading membership-based organisation that focuses on supporting, developing and connecting third sector leaders in Northern Ireland.*

General Manager: Also in April, the Board announced the appointment of Lisa Adair

to the post of General Manager.

Lisa, who has a background in local government and management, was most recently Planning and Performance Executive at Belfast Metropolitan College. Prior to that she held the position of Director of Community and Leisure at Mid and East Antrim Council, where she was closely involved in the upgrading of Carrickfergus Marina.

Her role will be to direct and oversee the development and operation of the RPSI as a whole. She will be responsible for staff and will liaise with volunteers. She will be answerable to the Chairman and will report to the Board.

A native of Armagh, Lisa was educated at Armagh Royal School and Dundee University, where she secured a law degree. After working for a while for HM Prison Service, she completed a Masters course in Criminal Justice Management and in 2012, she was awarded a post-graduate diploma in Human Resource Management by Queen's University.

A mother of two, with two stepsons, she now lives with her husband Peter in Ballyclare.

HEI Manager: In May, Heritage Engineering Ireland announced the appointment of a new manager for its workshops in Whitehead.

Darren Graham (50) from Islandmagee

has a background in the heavy engineering and production sectors, and was most recently a Group Operations Manager in an international aerospace supplier, having previously been involved in engineering/specialist construction and production management.

HEI is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland. It carries out engineering work for the RPSI and outside contract work for a wide range of external customers. The company currently employs several full-time staff along with a number of part-timers, and provides training for engineering students from local Technical Colleges. Darren will be the sole contact for any work that is required of HEI for either RPSI or external customers.

Darren, a first class honours engineering graduate from the University of Ulster, was also awarded an MBA from UU and an MA in History at the University of Leeds. As well as being a qualified engineer, he is a published author, having written several books on some of the forgotten figures of Irish history (under D.P. Graham) and is currently in the throes of a part-time PhD. He has also lectured on a part-time basis at Northern Regional College in Whiteabbey as part of the Institute of Leadership and Management courses.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG "Guinness": A design is being drawn up for a steam heat connection.

No.4: On Sunday 12th May the last set of wheels with new tyres, the trailing driving wheelset, went back under the locomotive. It was one day short of four months since the first wheelset was removed on 13th January.

The latest milestone was reached when, after just over 6 months of work, the largely reassembled loco was quietly

steamed on Sunday 9th June. It moved very briefly under its own power just to ensure everything was free.

There is still some work to do to complete the locomotive before it can be released to traffic, and approvals and paperwork to finish before it can run on the mainline, but it is a major step forward.

Next up, the loco will be weighed and adjusted to ensure each wheel is carrying the correct weight, a major split-pinning session and recommissioning of the TPWS/AWS before the loco goes forward for its annual NIR inspection.

No.4 last ran on the Mince Pie train in December 2018, and stripping down for removal of all wheels began the next weekend. New tyres, ordered from South Africa, were machined and fitted, and should last another 50 years before replacement is necessary.

This has been a very big project, and a big pat on the back goes out to all involved so far - it's a tribute to the skills and hard work of the RPSI volunteers and HEI staff.

A photo gallery has been added to the Members web area showing some of the work which has been going on since the start of the year.

No.85 "Merlin": Has received new tender brake blocks.

After the Midlander in March, No.85 was due to return to Whitehead - a Brexit requirement as it is an artefact of the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum and the UFTM, like most British museums, is seeking to have all its items on loan in Europe recalled to within the UK before the UK leaves the EU.

However, with the Brexit delay, No.85 was able to remain in Dublin for the Easter trains.

No.131: Having IÉ radio fitted. Approval process under way with CRR for operation south of the border.

No.171 "Sieve Gullion": Overhaul completion spec and costing under way. Appeal launched - please support it if you can.

G824 boiler rebuild: Working at throat plate flanging arrangement.

Mogul Project: Preliminary work on drawings, patterns and frames continues.

TRAINS & EVENTS

St Patrick's Steam Saturday: For several hours on Saturday 16th March it was all out, hectic activity with No.131 on train rides duties, with 281 train ride passengers and 56 museum visitors.

The Midlander: The first mainline train from Dublin in recent years has been the trips to Maynooth, run as part of the Saint Patrick's Day weekend festivities in and around Dublin City.

The train for the Monday 18th March runs was No.85 "Merlin" and BR Van 3173, Cravens 1523, 1506, 1541; Dining Car 1522, Bar Car 1514, 1532 and 1505.

The first departure was on time at 11:00 with a full load of passengers. At Leixlip the special caught up on a Down suburban passenger train, and arrived in Maynooth at 5 minutes early.

Return departure was 12:20, followed by steady running, arriving at Platform 3 at 13:05.

During the shunt to release the locomotive advantage was taken of having the carriages put through the wash - so much easier that doing it in Inchicore. The set was then propelled back onto Platform 4.

Passengers for Train 2 started loading at 14:30, departing on time at 15:05 with another full train. The weather was still very kind and the passengers enjoyed a fantastic run to Maynooth. The train departed on time from Maynooth at

16:16 and arrived back on time onto Platform 2 at Connolly - unusual as it is the Enterprise platform.

Guinness 100 Steam Saturday: On Saturday 6th April the Society celebrated the 100th birthday of No.3BG "Guinness" at Whitehead. The sun shone and several hundred people enjoyed the birthday party as No.3BG spent the afternoon happily operating train rides.

Freshly repainted No.3BG was decorated with bunting, along with LMS NCC side corridor 68 and brake van 81. Special souvenir tickets with an image of 3BG 100 were provided for all passengers.

The Tea Room was busy from early on and staff and volunteers worked flat out to cope with the steady demand for meals, coffees and teas. Museum tours operated to their usual programme but were augmented by extra workings. The self-guided option also proved popular.

Four performances of a pop-up play called "The Dining Car" were put on by Big Telly Theatre Company in former UTA diner 87 in the Museum's Carriage Gallery.

More drama was on offer in the Education Room of the Stables, where a face painter and a balloon modeller were hard at work. This proved to be a major attraction for the children present and in no time at all a lot of excellently decorated faces were appearing back on the platform.

The RPSI's first chairman, John Harcourt, was there to pose for photographs with the birthday cake, together with current chairman John McKegney. John Harcourt was among those who negotiated the original arrangement for No.3BG to be presented to the RPSI.

Thanks to the good weather, it was possible to carry out the cake cutting at a table on the platform. The Chairman was joined by Jacob Linton (7) and Freya Fenton (5), the winner and runner-up of a

colouring-in competition organised for the occasion by Whitehead Primary school.

No.3BG (broad gauge) spent its working life from 1919 until May 1965 shunting wagons between the Guinness Brewery at St James' Gate and the goods yard at Kingsbridge (now Heuston). When the brewery decided to switch to lorries, it kindly offered one of its two steam locomotives to the newly-formed RPSI.

A small party of members were in Dublin for the final train out of the brewery on Saturday 15th May 1965 and, following an inspection of the locomotive's records, they decided that No.3BG would be a better bet than sister No.2BG. Apart from anything else, No.3BG had the newer boiler which had been fitted at Inchicore in June 1951. The brewery kindly furnished us with a number of spare parts as well as the "GUINNESS" nameplates from its Hudswell Clarke diesel locomotive. These were fitted to the saddle tanks of No.3BG in time for the RPSI's famous tour of Belfast Docks in 1968, in which passengers were carried in open wagons.

If you want more information about the engine and its history, have a look at Edward Friel's brilliant eight-minute video recording on No.3BG's web page.

Edward has carried out further research and discovered that the locomotive was delivered to Dublin on 30th September 1919. The engine was actually ordered during the Great War - on 24th February 1915 - and the list of drawings shows some work being done then but nothing between late 1915 and 1918 when the production of detailed drawings resumed.

Hudswell Clarke went on building locos, of course, through the Great War though many of them seem to have little direct connection with the war effort, so the oft-mooted theory that work on Order 1152 was suspended to allow for war work

seems doubtful. Edward's opinion is that the brewery was probably happy to wait for No.3BG and maybe even asked for a deferred delivery.

Arthur Guinness, Son & Company was very patriotic and encouraged its staff to join the colours - and continued to pay them half wages while serving! Output at the brewery was reduced during the war for several reasons - the brewery had a depleted workforce, grain for stout was in short supply and there were Government-imposed limits on brewing. So the brewery was not in full production anyway. Things were so light at the brewery that the existing locomotive No.2BG could even be spared to shunt at a Dublin munitions factory where material was being finally checked by the War Office before despatch to the front.

It could well be too that the Great War was a significant drain on Guinness' finances and they were probably in no hurry to pay for another broad gauge locomotive for which they had little need until peace returned.

The West Awake: On Saturday 13th April two 071 class Locomotives were in operation for this diesel outing - 082 started her career in traffic on 23rd May 1977 and sister Locomotive 075 in traffic since 2nd June 1977. Both locomotives working in multiple.

The set consisted of Van 3173, with 1523, 1506, 1541, 1522 (diner), 1514 (bar), 1532 and 1505. Because of the multiple working it was necessary to have a minimum of 8 vehicles for braking purposes.

The train departed Dublin at 07:53, and the first stop was at Portarlington for a pick-up only. Crossings were made at Geashill and Clara before arriving in Athlone at 09:42. After a change of driver here the run to Claremorris departed at 09:52.

After a crossing at Roscommon (10:20 to 10:25) Ballyhaunis was reached, a photo-stop here from 11:11 to 11:20. It's a great spot for photographs as the station is on a curve. At Claremorris (11:32) 082 and 075 were uncoupled and replaced by 071, still in her retro livery, for the run to Ballina (12:40). It was necessary to shunt the train to the freight yard to allow the local railcar set to operate. The opportunity was taken to water the carriages.

Back in Claremorris (15:09), the loco ran round and departed for Westport at 15:45 and arrived in Westport at 16:19.

The weather had now broken, it was extremely cold and the rain had started to fall.

Some passenger issues delayed departure from Claremorris and the train passed Castlerea (18:22, 10 minutes down), Roscommon (18:42, 12 minutes down), Knockcroghery (18:47, 11 minutes down), arriving in Athlone at 19:09. Departure was at 19:11, 12 minutes late. A stop at Clara (19:30 to 19:38) allowed two Down trains to pass. A set down stop was made in Portarlington (20:02 to 20:05), followed by a great run getting back to Connolly at 21:02, just 5 minute late.

Easter Eggsspress: No.131 was in fine form both days (20th & 22nd April).

Unseasonably fine weather over the weekend made the trips (two each day) extra special.

With children on all 4 trains receiving an Easter egg the logistics were tricky, but the well-practised team of stewards were more than up to the job, as was the Easter Bunny who distributed the eggs.

All trains ran to time and passengers were able to enjoy a relaxed wander around the station at Whitehead or a visit to the adjoining park.

Easter Eggstravaganza: Because of the signalling and points layout in Wicklow we had to remove one of our carriages for

the Monday 22nd April train. The carriages selected by were 3173 (van), 1523, 1506, 1541, 1522 (diner), 1514 (bar) and 1532.

No.85 was running tender-first on the outward as the Locomotive team wanted her travelling chimney-first on the return journey for the bank between Killiney and Dalkey.

The sun was shining and the weather was a picture postcard for the 10:45 departure, and all along the Dublin coastline. Each child on the train received an Easter egg.

A hot box detector put a stop to the gallop outside Bray. The train was checked and the all clear given and arrival at Bray was only 3 minutes down. However, a late-running Dart and Up Rosslare caused a 23 minutes late arrival in Wicklow.

The first local trip to Greystones got away only 13 mins late, and time was made up with the run round and departure at Greystones.

The second return trip from Wicklow to Greystones also ran on time.

The departure back to Dublin was at 16:44, 4 minute late, delayed at Greystones for a late-running Down Dart, but with clear signals all the way back, arrival at Connolly was at 17:54, just one minute late.

Steam Saturday: In contrast to the weather over Easter, No.131 worked the Saturday 27th April train rides in wintry conditions! In addition, five fine vintage buses brought visitors to the Museum in the afternoon.

Locomotive Transfer (1): As No.85 was required in Whitehead for steam tests and to work the Thursday leg of the May railtour, it ran light from Dublin on Sunday 28th May.

Waterford & Limerick: See separate report.

Locomotive Transfer (2): No.85 "Merlin" returned to Dublin on Thursday 16th May to be available for the Sea Breeze train.

Afternoon Teas: These events ran on Saturdays 18th May and 15th June in a carriage at the platform. It is hoped to run a few more dates over the summer.

Sea Breeze: On Sunday 26th May the train was hauled by a superbly turned out No.85 "Merlin".

A stop was made at Avoca for water, with another at Gorey, this time provided by the Civil Defence tanker.

Arriving in Wexford, the passengers left to enjoy the town. We were joined by people going to Rosslare Strand, and departed at Wexford at 14:10, arriving at the Strand at 14:26.

The empty train departed for Rosslare Europort, where the engine was turned and serviced, and the carriages watered.

Passengers were picked up from Rosslare Strand, and set down in Wexford, where the passengers for Dublin re-joined.

Leaving Wexford at 16:35, approximately 20 minutes down, the locomotive put in a good run to Gorey and, after watering again by tanker, set off for the next quick water stop at Avoca. There followed a fine run and Connolly was reached 3 minutes early at 19:30.

Steam & Jazz: The first jazz train of the season ran on Friday 14th June, and as No.131 and train steamed into Belfast Lanyon Place it was met by a torrential downpour.

Those hoping to hear some introductory New Orleans jazz were met instead by the thumping beat of dance music coming across the river from Ormeau Park where a concert was in full swing. One could only sympathise with the soaking those concert-goers were getting!

However, at the first stop for the steam

train, the weather had dried and the band and passengers were on the platform to make the best of it.

On the way to the second stop, No.131 experienced a problem with its injectors, necessitating a stop in section at Greencastle for about 15 minutes. Some attention by the RPSI footplate rep and the offending injector was coaxed into action.

The weather stayed dry, if not very warm, for the rest of the evening and the usual Steam & Jazz festivities ensued.

The next Friday (21st June) was blessed with better weather, being both dry and reasonably warm.

Dublin Riviera: This Father's Day train (Sunday 16th June) got off to a slow start.

The set was due in Dublin Connolly at 09:54 for a departure at 10:40. However, it appears that the driver rostered for the transfer reported sick that morning and a phone call was made to the fireman of the day, Connie O'Gara to report for duty early. Fair play to Connie he arrived and proceeded to Inchicore in a 201 GM. The set arrived onto Platform 5 at 10:37.

The train was GNR(I) Compound No.85 with 6 Cravens and a van.

The full train departed 35 minutes late, and was in Bray 38 minutes late. The Dublin passengers were set down here, and another full train departed at 12:09 (-39 minutes) but made up a few minutes by Wicklow (-36 minutes).

The engine ran round the set and was watered, departing 23 minutes late.

By the second departure from Bray the deficit was down to 24 minutes. Unfortunately, on leaving the station, a signal stop was made awaiting a Down local Dart. The steep incline here proved a little difficult for No.85 tender-first and there was a short stop midway up to rectify the issue. Wicklow was reached at

15:02, 42 minutes late.

The weather had been good all day, but now began to rain at the Wicklow stop. The train departed Wicklow at 16:05, 45 minutes late.

After leaving Bray for Dublin a bit of a run recouped some time, reaching Connolly at 17:22, 41 minutes late.

Steam Saturday: These events will run on 29th June and on each Saturday in July and August.

The 29th June event will feature a Teddy Bear's Picnic, with children encouraged to bring Teddy on the steam train. There will be a quiz for museum visitors (with prizes at end of the day) and a face painter.

Summer Season: The programme of trains from Dublin is:

- 7th July Sea Breeze
- 21st July The Boyne
- 4th August Rockin' Food Festival
- 24th August Marble City

Trains from Belfast include:

- 28th June Steam & Jazz
- 5th July Steam & Jazz
- 28th July Portrush Flyer (TBC)
- 4th August Portrush Flyer (TBC)
- 11th August Portrush Flyer (TBC)
- 18th August Portrush Flyer (TBC)
- 23rd August Steam & Jazz
- 30th August Steam & Jazz

Cobh Rambler: Tickets are on sale for the next diesel trip on Saturday 5th October.

Starting from Dublin Heuston station the train will first make its way down the mainline to Cork hauled by a mixed pair made up of an 071 and 201 locomotive operating in multiple. In Cork, the 071 will go light engine to Cobh with the train following on behind hauled by the 201. In Cobh the 071 will join the rear of the train for the run back to Mallow (via the station avoiding line in Cork) and then down the Kerry road to Killarney.

While all this is going on, the 201 will return light engine from Cobh to Cork and will exchange with another member of the class. This locomotive will then go forward to Mallow and wait for the train to return from Killarney. The 201 will join the head of the train with the 071 for the return to Dublin Heuston once again operating in multiple.

An event not to be missed!

Model Railway Day: The Museum team have announced a model railway day at Whitehead on Saturday 9th November.

Interested exhibitors are asked to email in with their requirements.

WATERFORD & LIMERICK

Issues: Brexit aside, this railtour should have been one of the easier to organise, but it proved the opposite!

There had been a slight over-run on the full re-tying of No.4 so it could not feature.

While No.131 is approved to operate by Translink, approval in the Republic is still awaited at the time of writing.

Therefore this year's railtour had to be based around No.85.

Furthermore, a request was made to operate No.85 from Waterford to Limerick, but the locomotive's axle load is 14% greater than a 201 class and this prevented it from crossing the bridge at Dunkitt on the Limerick side of Waterford. It was too late for alternative tour arrangements to be made so, reluctantly, a 071 class diesel had to be requested to operate the Sunday trip to Limerick and back.

Thursday 9th May: No.85 and the Mk 2 Whitehead set (463, 301, 547, 300, 303 and 460) had a great run from Whitehead to Dublin. The fully-booked train included a party from Dundalk.

The train arrived 10 minutes early onto Platform 1 at Connolly, from where the carriages were transferred to Inchicore Works for storage over the weekend.

Friday 10th May: The carriages selected for the Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday morning were BR Van 3173. Dining Car 1522, Bar Car 1514, Open Standards 1532 & 1505 and Shop/Buffet Car 1508.

The Knocknarea diesel railtour departed 12 minutes late behind GM 074 with 175 passengers on board. Driver Gordon Walter was on the footplate, accompanied by Inspector Lar Griffin. The Guard on the train (and throughout until Monday mid-day) was Noel Enright.

Following excellent running along the Royal Canal the first photo stop was at Longford, departing on time at 12:27.

Dromod was next, and here the passengers had the opportunity to visit the Cavan and Leitrim Railway. The recently-restored narrow gauge steam locomotive "Nancy" was in steam.

A short stop in Boyle followed, with arrival one minute early in Sligo. The set was then transferred to the former arrivals platform, now out of use, for servicing. The shunt to put the set back on to the main platform was delayed due to a railcar stabled there and departure was at 16:41, 6 minutes late. Sheep on the line near Boyle added a delay of another few minutes.

Following crossings in Carrick-on-Shannon and Longford the special was back on schedule, allowing the booked photo stop at Mullingar. As a bonus, the last photo stop was at Navan Road Parkway. But still the arrival at Connolly was one minute early.

The carriages, which remained on Platform 3 overnight, were watered and serviced.

Saturday 11th May: A call was received from the Locomotive team at 06:45 informing Operations that No.85 was failed due to a broken brake block. This was discovered during the pre-trip examination. A plan was put in place to have a replacement brought to Dublin from Whitehead. The trip to M3 Parkway would have to be diesel.

With GM 074 the train departed at 08:36, 6 minutes late. The short trip to M3 Parkway was followed by a lay-over for about an hour as signalling requires that the engine must run light to the bay platform in Clonsilla to change ends.

During this movement Michael Collins, District Office Waterford, who was a passenger on the train and Inspector Lar Griffin formulated a plan that if the replacement brake block arrived from Whitehead in time a new path to Waterford could be drawn up. As luck would have it, Kieran Marshall from Irish Rail's Planning Office was also on the train. Between Kieran and Mick a path was worked out and Kieran undertook to put it together on his return to Connolly. In the meantime, Peter Scott and Jim Adams, RPSI Fitter, were on the way from Whitehead with the brake blocks.

On return to Connolly, the Cravens were shunted to the yard. Meanwhile an anxious RPSI team remained at the barrier and undertook to keep waiting passengers informed.

Instead of the 12:00 departure, the new path was 13:10. Brilliant work by Peter and Jim had the locomotive out of the shed and attached to the Cravens and propelled onto Platform 3, departing there at 13:19, with Driver Robert Jolley, Fireman Ken Fox and Inspector Tony Cooke.

Driver Conductor Nicky Doyle from Waterford was picked up at Kildare (still 8 minutes late).

Water was taken from a water tanker in Athy. The train arrived into Kilkenny at 16:09. Before the train was propelled onto the loop to run round, a commemorative photograph was taken on the platform to mark the 50th Weekend Tour. Taking part in the photo-opportunity were 13 passengers who were also on the inaugural RPSI weekend tour to Athlone in September 1968. The photo may be viewed in the "Waterford & Limerick" gallery in the Members section of the website.

No.85 was now running tender-first to Waterford, arriving at 17:48, just two minutes late. The train was then shunted to Sally Park freight yard for stabling and servicing. Due to a graffiti attack on a railcar set the week previous, it was necessary to employ security for the two nights.

Guests at the Railtour Dinner in Treacy's Hotel in Waterford that night were welcomed by Robin Morton, RPSI Events Convenor. He said the support of the GB enthusiast fraternity was key to the continued success of the International Tour, and voiced appreciation on behalf of the Society to those who regularly travelled over for the May tour.

He expressed gratitude to Iarnród Éireann and Translink NI Railways for facilitating such operations, and paid tribute to the commitment of the RPSI team and the dedication of all the volunteers who made such tours possible. It was a tremendous team effort, he said.

He said that nobody who took part in the inaugural weekend tour organised by the RPSI in September 1968 would have believed that such tours would still be taking place half a century later. Only one year had been missed - 1972 - and the event had expanded over the years from two days to six days. It was a credit to the Society as a whole that this had been possible.

Sunday 12th May: GM 071 in heritage livery was selected as the motive power, with Ken Fox driving.

We departed on time at 10:00, with photo stops at Carrick-on-Suir and Cahir. The train arrived into Limerick at 12:32, 8 minutes early. The carriages went to the yard for servicing.

With a change of locomotive (086), photo stops were made at Tipperary and Clonmel, arriving in Waterford at 16:50, 15 minutes early. The set was shunted to Sally Park Freight Yard for servicing and stabling.

In the evening, a party of 70 took advantage of a special charter on the Waterford & Suir Valley for a return trip from Waterford to Kilmeaden.

Monday 13th May: An on-time departure from Waterford at 09:00, followed by a stop in Bagenalstown where the locomotive took water from a tanker and similarly again at Athy.

The train arrived exactly on time at Cherryville but was held for 13 minutes as the main line was extremely busy. The conductor driver was set down at Kildare and a 10 minute deficit there was reduced to 2 minutes by Dublin Connolly.

Unfortunately, a serious delay in retrieving the Mk2 coaches from Inchicore, compounded by delays on the northern line because of a bridge strike, meant that departure from Dublin was about an hour late. As the train was seriously out of path it was looped at Dundalk to allow the Down Enterprise to pass. In the end, despite great running where possible, arrival in Belfast was about 90 minutes down.

Tuesday 14th May: Another sunny day saw this year's coach tour visiting HMS Caroline in the Titanic Quarter of Belfast. If you haven't yet seen this ship it is highly recommended that you do.

After lunch in Donaghadee the party visited the Parliament Buildings at Stormont - another interesting tour.

Thank You: Apart from the noted problems, it was still a successful railtour, greatly assisted by glorious weather throughout. Well done to all involved.

It must be recorded that the ultimate success of the tour should be attributed to Peter Scott, Jim Adams, Mick Collins and Kieran Marshall, with Lar Griffin co-ordinating everything on the Saturday morning.

WHITEHEAD RAILWAY MUSEUM

Opening Dates: The Museum will be open on Sundays during July and August from 12 to 4pm.

Tourism Award: The Museum picked up another award - by being named as top contender in the Excellence in Tourism category in the Carrickfergus Business Awards.

The presentation was made by the Mayor of Mid and East Antrim, Councillor Lindsay Millar, and Andrena O'Prey from the Carrick Times at an awards ceremony held on 14th March at the Loughshore Hotel in Carrickfergus.

Representing the Society were Museum Administrator Rebecca Laverty and Acting General Manager Siobhan Dillon.

Guides Wanted: As the summer season approaches life is getting busier at the Museum. Accordingly, we are currently expanding the ranks of our museum guides, who play such a key role in leading conducted tours around the museum. It is clear from a glance at the visitors' book that their efforts are appreciated.

At present we have around 30 approved guides but we are keen to hear from more members who might like to join our

ranks. Ideally, we want to create a pool of around 50 - something which will help to spread the load and also make it possible to contemplate increasing our days of opening, especially in the summer.

No qualifications or detailed knowledge are necessary, but to be presentable and have an ability to communicate with visitors are advantageous. At this stage we are asking for 'expressions of interest' from members who would like to volunteer. All applicants will be offered an interview at which the basic requirements will be explained.

Although we don't want to over-formalise things we are developing a Job Description and will make a uniform available to all new and existing guides. Training will of course be provided and for the first few outings new guides will shadow existing personnel. Our guides are acting as ambassadors for the Museum and the RPSI and it is vital that we maintain and develop the high standards that we have achieved to date.

Most of our existing guides attended a briefing session at the museum on Monday 25th March, at which we had an informative Q&A session with Pat Moorhead, a qualified Blue Badge guide, about good practice - and everyone got a few tips.

As our existing volunteers will testify, being a guide is a great way to interface with the public, get to know the Museum better and show off all that is best about the RPSI.

And what's more, if you are rostered, you qualify for a discount on your cuppa in the Edwardian Tea Room. So if you would like to submit an expression of interest please contact our Museum Administrator, Rebecca Laverty via the usual contacts below.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Exam: On Sunday 24th March, the Dublin set - van 3173 and eight Cravens - underwent their annual exam in Road 4 of Inchicore running shed.

BELFAST MEETINGS

Wednesday 13th March: "The End of an Era" by Derek Young looked back to changes on our local railways between 1963 and 1967, and which Derek had photographed in detail. Derek reminded us that, although the UTA often got a bad press, many traditional railway practices survived and the professional men from the former companies were still operating a safe railway while being courteous to the public and helpful to the responsible enthusiast.

Derek set the scene of what Belfast looked like in 1963 - the cross-channel ships at Donegall Quay, busy trolley buses and the traditional station fronts at Queen's Quay, Great Victoria Street, York Road and Foyle Road stations and the tram depot in Gaffikin Street. Away from the railway, there was steam on Billy McCormick's short line at Knock, the model engineers' line at the Waterworks in Belfast, the first traction engine rally at Antrim Castle and the museum's traction engine being used to move No.74 Dunluce Castle at Witham Street for oiling.

Armed with a track permit, Derek started with pictures of the excursion trains on the Belfast Central railway to Bangor from Lisburn, Portadown and even Dungannon, sometimes midweek and occasionally worked by MED railcars. He also had pictures of permanent way trains and football specials. Derek then brought us inside Duncrue Street works with railcars, carriages and wagons under repair. Then it was into York Road works where GNR and NCC locos as well as carriages were

overhauled.

Moving to the County Down, Derek had pictures of the Slieve Donard hotel and Queen's Quay when all five platforms were still in use and the MED pictured was being by Tommy Clegg who had fired the last train out of Donaghadee in 1950. Derek then brought us to Bangor with pictures of many of the stations en route, the trains, the Radio Trains worked by B141 class diesels and the visits of the GNR's weed spray train.

Moving to the NCC, Derek started on the Back Line from Greenisland to Monkstown and then moved to Portrush with some great shots of the inside of the station building and pictures of when GNR Nos. 171 and 174 worked the Windsor Gospel Hall specials. On the Larne line we saw many steam-worked trains, the start of the Magheramorne spoil trains and, oddly, a two-piece MED set working a very overcrowded Boat Train as well as scenes of MPD-worked goods trains, up to 12 brown vans at a time from Waterside to Larne Harbour, and the pioneering diesel H&W locos which once shunted York Road.

After a busy tea break, we covered the NCC main line with a mixture of steam passenger and special trains, goods trains, MPDs, MEDs and 70 class railcars and including many now-gone signal cabins, level crossings, sheds and station buildings not to mention a staff exchange at speed.

Derek's Great Northern coverage started with a newly-shopped SG3 at York Road before moving to Great Victoria Street where Derek continued his coverage of all forms of motive power doing many things no longer possible on the modern railway. We saw 800 on display at platform 4, the only UTA-built BUT intermediate railcar, and some intriguing night-time shots before some early morning shots at Adelaide shed, the ill-fated Jeep tender

experiment, Jeep 56 after her Pomeroy runaway with the lifting train, and a B121 turning on the triangle.

Derek brought us up the main line via the Maze, Lurgan, Portadown and Poyntzpass with another mixture of the everyday and the one-off. Unfortunately we ran out of time at Goraghwood.

Derek concluded that it was hard to believe that it was all more than 50 years ago when the workings were complex and the railway was clear of trees and bushes but how fortunate were those who had seen it and been there.

Charles Friel closed the meeting by inviting ideas and suggestions for the 2019-2020 season.

GENERAL

171 Completion Appeal: Our flagship locomotive, Great Northern Railway (Ireland) S class 4-4-0 No.171 "Sieve Gullion", last steamed in July 2002 and it is planned that she will be the next locomotive to be overhauled at Whitehead. The timing of the completion will allow the locomotive to replace No.85 and ensure that we continue to have the required number of operational locomotives in our mainline fleet.

We are very grateful for donations to our previous No.171 fund raising appeal. Since our own workshop at Whitehead was fully occupied overhauling of No.131, No.171 was moved to Shildon, England for a contract overhaul. Unfortunately, the contractors ceased trading and the locomotive (only partially overhauled) was recovered to the security of our Whitehead operating base in early 2015.

Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Generating Rural Opportunities Within South Antrim (GROW) provided for cosmetic restoration and the locomotive has been subsequently on display in our

Whitehead Railway Museum.

We are now appealing for funds to complete the locomotive to modern mainline standards. We would ask that you respond with your usual generosity.

Train Schedules: There has been a request to make our mainline schedules available to members as an added bonus.

So a Timetables section has been added to the Members section of the website.

Pop-Ups: Passengers passing through the concourse of Lanyon Place station in Belfast will have noticed that the three RPSI pop-ups are back in situ for another season. We are very grateful to Translink NI Railways for facilitating this display.

The pop-ups will over the course of the next six months be completing a tour of the main stations on the Translink NI Railways network. This is the programme for 2019:

30/05 - 18/06: Belfast Lanyon Place
18/06 - 09/07: Lisburn
09/07 - 23/07: Coleraine
23/07 - 06/08: Londonderry
06/08 - 20/08: Portadown
20/08 - 03/09: Newry
03/09 - 24/09: Lanyon
24/09 - 08/10: Antrim
08/10 - 22/10: Ballymoney
22/10 - 05/11: Carrickfergus
05/11 - 19/11: Belfast Lanyon Place

We much appreciate the support of area managers and also the staff at the various stations, who kindly keep an eye on the pop-ups.

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