



January 2021

## NEWS LETTER

### APOLOGY

**Late News-Letter:** Apologies for the lack of circulars in recent months.

Firstly, there was not much to report!

But mainly we were waiting on the annual audited accounts. They were late anyway owing to an unexpected change of auditor mid-year, but their publication date kept being pushed back and back. If we had known, a News-Letter could have been issued in the autumn.

### LOCKDOWN TIMETABLE

**17<sup>th</sup> June: General Manager:** I have been completing preparations to begin a gradual reopening of restricted activities on site. I have also been engaged in numerous partnership meetings to ensure that our plans mirror what others are doing.

I am completing a cost/benefit analysis and a previous customer survey to try to vaguely establish what numbers we can expect and how many people we need to cap at to be confident that we can enforce social distancing. Guides will need to be brought back for re-training. Cleaning regimes have been developed and our cleaner will be the first staff member to be taken off furlough before being inducted back to site.

**26<sup>th</sup> June: Chairman's Letter:** Several

members have been asking whether we are having an appeal similar to those launched by some other heritage railways. The Board consensus is that at a time of financial flux for many people this is not the time to announce a major appeal. That would be best left to when we are 'back in action' and aimed at the public as well as members.

This does not mean that anyone who wishes to donate to the Society to increase its resilience in the present crisis cannot do so now. We are most grateful for those who have already done so. Giving to the RPSI is really easy and I am sure you would find it a most satisfying experience! You can simply go to the website and click on Appeals/Donate on the homepage and it will take you there.

**General Manager:** We are now in a position to consider how we may re-open in a measured way. The Board met recently and agreed that we would establish what needs to be done with a view to opening the Museum at some point in August. Preparatory work is intense and we want to get everything just right. Other Museums are being equally cautious. The general consensus is that the sector will keep a watch on what others are doing prior to opening our doors. It is certainly exciting that we can begin to anticipate income streams before the end of the year but it is by the same measure slightly terrifying in terms of the work and the responsibility.

**1<sup>st</sup> July:** As a test case to establish if any of the 'new normal' at Whitehead worked on the ground, the task of putting No.3BG "Guinness" through its annual boiler exam was chosen as suitable and conducted over the course of a two-week period.

No.3BG's boiler was opened up and washed out with short visits from two personnel at a time at several-day intervals between 18<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June. It then underwent and passed its cold boiler test on 30<sup>th</sup> June and its steam test on 1<sup>st</sup> July. It was re-dosed with water treatment at this time following positive indications from the washout that sludge and scale was indeed being reduced. Indeed, the boiler inspector commented on what a clean boiler it had and how "tight" it was in general.

**4<sup>th</sup> July:** No.3BG performed a shunt on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July to move the Mk2 running coaches and Nos. 4 and 131 to counter static bearing damage and to test locomotive crewing social distancing risk assessment (its footplate is 2.7m across!).

Much was learnt from this compact project. Mainline trains still seeming to be out of immediate sight - the next steps at Whitehead were working towards making the site safe for re-opening to volunteers and visitors and perhaps even train rides.

**9<sup>th</sup> July: General Manager:** The green shoots of recovery are beginning to show through with many businesses in Northern Ireland now permitted to reopen, visitor attractions such as our Museum and Tea Room being one. The announcement was finally made on 2<sup>nd</sup> July that we could reopen on 3<sup>rd</sup> July so, like so many other businesses, we were given no time to complete preparations.

I took a detailed Roadmap to the Belfast Management Committee for consideration and debate. The Roadmap sets out week by week the preparations necessary for bringing public back to site

including the production of a bespoke Risk Assessment, the signing up to Industry Standards, the requirement to unfurlough staff, the provision of food and beverages, the recalibration of the Tea Room, the development of merchandise on site.

The scoping of this has brought me to the conclusion that, if I maintain momentum and nothing changes in terms of Government advice, we will be in a position to open to the public in August with a date yet to be agreed.

**16<sup>th</sup> July: General Manager:** The Board met recently and some very significant decisions were made. Agreement, with certain caveats, was reached to reopen Whitehead Railway Museum on 6<sup>th</sup> August. This is dependent on completion of some necessary works on site, the provision of PPE yet to be delivered and a comprehensive deep clean being undertaken. To aid public confidence, we also need to trial and implement a booking system, the trial of which will commence next week and hopefully go live a week before we reopen. I am completing a video of measures we have taken to assist public confidence and this will be uploaded onto the website when complete.

Rebecca Laverty will return to work next week and will be responsible for much of the coordination of Tour Guides and other volunteers and the training required for them. Other staff will remain furloughed for the time being.

**25<sup>th</sup> July:** No.3BG "Guinness" was steamed to perform another small carriage shunt for the purposes of their maintenance and to test the footplate risk assessment with a second, different, crew to the first time on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

**30<sup>th</sup> July:** It was announced that with the ongoing restrictions due to the Coronavirus pandemic, our Belfast meetings will not be resuming in October.

The hall's owners are reluctant to see large groups of people, especially those in the vulnerable age groups.

**3<sup>rd</sup> August:** UTV's "Ulster Giants", a programme on iconic engineering locations in Northern Ireland, screened its feature on the RPSI at Whitehead. It was filmed on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March, the last day of opening prior to the long closure.

**5<sup>th</sup> August:** *General Manager:* I am really pleased to be able to announce that Whitehead Railway Museum will reopen to members of the public on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> August.

It has been a long time coming and there has been a great deal of preparatory work undertaken to ensure that both volunteers and visitors feel comfortable when they come to site. We have reconfigured our offering so that the public are able to book at 15 minute intervals via Visit Belfast.

**13<sup>th</sup> August:** Almost five months after the gates closed, Whitehead Railway Museum reopened for business.

The risk assessments had all been completed, the hand sanitisation points installed, and new signage put up to keep visitors safe. Staff and volunteers interfacing with the public wore visors, and visitors were invited to don face masks. Rostered volunteers had all undergone induction and training, we had received our 'Good to Go' industry standard ... and it was time to re-open the doors.

A number of online advance bookings had been received, and we also had a number of walk-ins. Our Day One visitors had come from as far as Dublin, Killybegs, Sligo and Strabane. In addition we were able to accommodate a number of people who simply wished to visit the Tea Room. While visitors were making their way around, the site squad was busy on this sunny day assembling heavy wooden

picnic tables out on the platform. The tables, including one designed for wheelchair users, will enable visitors to spill out of the Tea Room and enjoy al fresco dining.

**29<sup>th</sup> August:** After almost six months of little activity No.3BG "Guinness" was in steam in public with NCC coach 68 and GNR(I) brake van 81. In a trial, with no passengers, it was judged that Steam Saturday train rides could commence again in September.

**5<sup>th</sup> September:** Steam Saturday train rides re-commence at Whitehead with No.3BG, carriage 68 and brake van 81.

**26<sup>th</sup> September:** Q Class No.131 had its first and only outing of the year on the train rides.

**29<sup>th</sup> September:** *General Manager:* The major news is that we were incredibly fortunate to receive grant assistance from the Communities Fund to the tune of £75,000 to assist with income loss and fixed expenditure. I, on behalf of the Society, am indebted to the funders. This cash injection will most certainly allow us to continue to work on priority projects with a view to being shovel ready when the time comes to return to steam on the mainline.

The Steam Saturday train ride days have been extended into October.

**6<sup>th</sup> October:** *General Manager:* With increases in Covid 19 cases reported locally, we reviewed the risk assessment previously drawn up to address members of the public coming to the Museum and Steam Saturdays. We came to the conclusion that, as things deteriorate and further restrictions begin to be introduced, allowing public access to the site in numbers, even with the mitigations we have put in place, is a higher risk now than it was several weeks ago. This too places volunteers at greater risk.

Having subsequently spoken with our

Health & Safety adviser, we are all in agreement that we suspend all operations to the public with immediate effect for a short period until the end of October.

I believe that this is the responsible thing to do. We will review this position in 3 weeks, taking on board all government advice as it is delivered.

**17<sup>th</sup> October:** *General Manager:* It now looks like we have taken a very prudent and correctly cautious approach to opening to the public. We closed to visitors on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October, before any guidance from Stormont was received. The guidance came out on Friday to let us know that we should close from 6pm that evening for 4 weeks. It gives us no pleasure to have to close the Museum but it is reassuring to know that we are not alone.

**20<sup>th</sup> November:** *General Manager:* I have been frantically trying to salvage some form of Christmas at Whitehead. We thoroughly risk assessed a very socially distanced Santa event, including train rides, at Whitehead and tickets for the last weekend in November went on sale yesterday. However, today, with the announcement of tighter restrictions, much more akin to the first lockdown, we have had no choice but to cancel the event and the other planned weekends in December. This is devastating, but the advice is clear.

**7<sup>th</sup> December:** *General Manager:* I am sure that you all share my optimism now that tremendous progress has been made on the vaccine front. And what does that mean? You guessed it ... TRAINS (and hauled by steam, no less).

The next number of months will see us completing inspections and getting fully prepared for operations. We will also develop a calendar of events for 2021, both mainline and static in Whitehead. I suspect that there will be a good appetite for home grown attractions and, with a

good marketing push, we could start to recoup losses suffered as a result of Covid. For the first time in a long time, some hope.

**18<sup>th</sup> December:** With a 6-week lockdown announced for NI, it was agreed that Whitehead would close to all volunteers from Christmas Eve until such time that the regulations change.

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## CARRIAGE & WAGON

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**Social Carriage:** In anticipation of train rides, NCC coach 68 underwent three (socially distanced) days of maintenance work to allow it to operate when the call came.

**Day 1 (13<sup>th</sup> July):** An elusive vacuum pipe leak was finally traced to a corrosion hole in the out-of-view portion of the junction between the main pipe and that to the passenger communication valve at the Larne end, and repaired. The neck seal around the Larne-end vacuum cylinder was replaced, brake gear was greased and the axleboxes drained and re-filled with new oil. The latter two were also carried out on brake van No.81 'Ivan'.

**Day 2 (1<sup>st</sup> August):** Some loose door screws in the two former first-class corridor-side doors were removed, the wood behind renewed and left to set, the doors being left suitably restrained from falling down in the interim. A snapped droplight strap was replaced. A compartment door droplight that liked to very firmly stick open was investigated and, on removal of the interior panelling, the problem was traced to a sort of rubber-cased bumper-strip inside the bottom of the door onto which the bottom of the window was supposed to rest when open. The woodwork in this had rotted at either end and the strip had turned sideways so the window could slip between it and the outside panel of the door... and jam solid. A new strip was

made and inserted and the window now no longer jams open. A (hopefully legal) rave in one of the gardens next to the back of the carriage shed - in which the extremely loud music did not seem to change away from the same boom-boom tune for the 6-hour duration of the evening's work - ensured ear protection was popular, whilst 68 presumably thought it was back in the war.

*Day 3 (8<sup>th</sup> August):* The doors were fully re-screwed back on again and a further troublesome droplight attended to.

**Cravens:** Whitehead took delivery on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October of two Cravens carriage wheelsets from Inchicore. The wheelsets were transported north by metal merchants Thomas Hamill & Sons from Ahoghill.

Upon arrival the wheelsets were unloaded by the lorry's crane, and gently set down on Five Road. Then the Site Squad used the Atlas road rail machine to shunt the wheelsets safely into the siding opposite the platform.

**504 Guinness Grain Van:** As members will be aware, the RPSI is a regular participant in the annual awards run by the Heritage Railway Association.

Participating in the awards is a good way to raise the Society's profile and to measure our achievements against the activities of the wider preservation movement throughout the British Isles. It also provides an opportunity to recognise the hours of effort put in by volunteers involved in specific projects.

This time round the awards are being held in virtual format in York on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and, once again, the RPSI will be vying for honours. Our nomination, the Guinness Grain Van 504, has been shortlisted.

504, which was built by the GNR(I) at Dundalk in 1911, is one of our most historic items of rolling stock and its restoration has been funded by the

National Lottery Heritage Fund, to whom we are immensely grateful. 504 came within a whisker of being destroyed in a malicious fire at Whitehead in 1978 but now it is looking much more like its old self. You can check out the information on our website.

Once 504 is completed the plan is to put it on display in the Museum.

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## LOCOMOTIVES

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**No.3BG "Guinness":** Regular Whitehead shunter. Now equipped for train pre-heating. Acting as trial loco for boiler water treatment. Repairs to the left-hand rear sandbox.

**No.4:** In September a decision was taken to withdraw for overhaul. The original intention to keep the loco in traffic for a short period has been overtaken by Covid.

**No.85 "Merlin":** Based in Dublin. Has passed annual steam test. Several minor repairs are required before the locomotive operates again.

**No.131:** Available for traffic, and only waits for something to do! Boiler capacity was being calculated in preparation for water treatment.

**No.171 "Slieve Gullion":** Overhaul continuing as first priority. The coupled axleboxes were re-metalled before COVID kicked off, and since the return to work at Whitehead have been aligned in frames and are now being bored out on the former Harland & Wolff horizontal boring machine. These are the "critical path" items in project management speak, once they are bored and scraped to the wheelset journals the locomotive can be placed back on its wheels. The bogie was dismantled, inspected and reassembled before the lockdown and is waiting patiently to go back under the engine. The eccentric straps have been adjusted and fitted to the driving axle. The cylinder

block is being cleaned out and checked for corrosion damage - sounds like a quick job when you say it like that, but there is a serious amount of carbon to come out of the various passages. Corroded studs are being removed for replacement.

Some specialist welding was carried out in the firebox during the summer, and the follow up work of drilling and tapping new patch screws is underway. Firebox crown stays bolts are being renewed by the HEI team.

The electrical fitting out is also proceeding. No.171 gained her TPWS antenna back in 2018 so that she could undergo some certification testing on the same day as the completed No.131 - for the afternoon, No.171 was paired up with No.131's tender to power the antenna. Drilling holes for conduit is underway.

No.171 arrived back from Shildon with some overhaul work carried out and partially complete records of that work, so we must verify what was carried out as we progress the overhaul. Along those lines, the front buffers were removed for inspection of their internal rubber springs.

Some of the locomotive team stayed at home because of the infection risk, so they were sent 'homework' in the shape of small parts to clean, overhaul and reassemble. One example is returning oil boxes to their intended brass finish - Shildon painted almost everything (at one stage the coupling rods were a fetching shade of post office red).

Speaking of paint, the wheels have been receiving their gloss blue topcoat. Once the coupled wheels are back under the locomotive, you can only get at half of a wheel at any one time, and that's not considering the coupling rod which also gets in the way. So they are getting painted now, after their time in the wheel lathe and before the engine sits back on them.

The driving axleboxes have been re-

metalled, marked out and machined, and are now being bedded in. The frames of the loco should soon go back onto the wheels.

There was a magnificent response from members to an appeal to fund tubes - 120 were needed at £25 each, and funding was raised sufficient for 168. In November a substantial unsolicited grant from the Keith Robey Trust in England was gratefully received.

In September No.171 was identified as the Society's priority locomotive and work really got underway to further the overhaul. The appeal is still open and you are asked to donate, if you can, to keep up the momentum!

**B142:** The GM was shunted out of the wheel-drop shed to the heavy-lift area on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December. There, No.3BG positioned it so that the engine hoods could be removed by the gantry cranes. The locomotive was returned to the same shed, where work will be carried out on it over the winter months.

**105 Mogul Project:** Cylinder blocks have been cast and the two castings were returned to Whitehead. Various steel castings are under way (spring hanger brackets, etc.). Driving wheelset journals being trued up.

Drilling of main frames nearly complete. Work progressing on attaching parts (horn guides, spring and brake brackets, etc.). Cylinder blocks being sent out for machining.

In some ways this project has been the least affected by the year's pandemic, since it is as yet far from being operational! During the past months, advantage was taken of the "lockdown" and the continuing restrictions to do machining work and make patterns. The mogul uses many steel castings, some quite intricate like the motion brackets and some smaller items such as horn guides and spring hangers. All of these

need new pattern equipment, often requiring a different pattern for the right and left side. Some photos of pattern equipment have already been circulated (see website) - prompting one person to ask were we building a mogul out of wood.

This is not totally ridiculous - of course the loco itself is not made of wood, but much of the work goes into the patterns, and they certainly are.

Recent major progress has been on the cylinder blocks, which have been cast and are being machined, also the frames which have been drilled for attaching the cylinders, motion brackets, etc. The wheelsets which have been re-tyred are now having the bearings trued up. The first of the axleboxes has been cast and is being machined.

**Boiler G8.24 Rebuild:** The inner firebox has had its crown sheet welded to sides. Next move is to fit the door plate and tube plate. These plates have been flanged and the tube holes bored. The firedoor opening needs to be formed.

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## WHITEHEAD RAILWAY MUSEUM

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**Period Atmosphere:** The Society's Curatorial Committee has been busy during the summer adding to the period atmosphere at the Museum. Several historic enamel signs advertising the likes of Wills cigarettes, Walls Ice Cream and Colman's Mustard have been erected on the exterior walls of the station building.

Curator Mark Kennedy said the signs, some of which date back to pre-war days, others of which are from the 1960s, had been donated to the Museum by RPSI members and the public.

Such signage used to be commonplace at railway stations throughout Ireland and beyond and they will evoke a lot of memories for our visitors. We are grateful to our benefactors and would love it if

anyone who has such a sign in their garden would like to donate it to us.

The sites at the various railway stations were managed by Dublin-based Easons. The company typically charged the advertisers £1 a year for the pitch.

**Renamed:** In October, following a request for suggestions, the Whitehead café was renamed "Platform 3".

**Brighter Whitehead:** The platform at Whitehead Railway Museum is looking a lot more cheerful following a visit by the volunteers from Brighter Whitehead on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November. Even though it was a chilly morning, 10 green-fingered gardeners got to work tidying up the planters and the raised flowerbeds, which add such colour to the platform.

The RPSI's thanks go to Bill and all the team at Brighter Whitehead. We are grateful to them for their work at Whitehead Railway Museum and also throughout the town.

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## TRAINS & EVENTS

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**Steam Saturday:** Train rides operated on Saturdays 5<sup>th</sup> September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

**Mainline Charter:** The Society ran a special film charter train to Galway on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October. It started from Inchicore and returned on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October to Platform 6 at Heuston Station.

There were no passengers on board, only the basic RPSI service crew and stewards along with the film company personnel. All followed a strict protocol of social distancing and masks where appropriate. Carriage 1506 was selected for the filming. Sliding windows had to be removed on both sides and tripods mounted on the floor.

The film is loosely based on the old film "Brief Encounter".

**Annual Railtour:** With mass vaccination on the horizon, thoughts may well be

turning to the railtour in May.

To be on the safe side, the Railtour Committee is thinking later in the year, perhaps September, may be a better option.

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## BELFAST MEETINGS

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**9<sup>th</sup> December:** Following the success of online meetings from other societies (MRSI and IRRS), it was decided to give this a go via the online meetings application, Zoom.

It was good to get back again!

67 members logged in, and they enjoyed a great trip up the Derry Central line from Cookstown Junction to Coleraine.

Presented by Charles Friel, the show was amply illustrated by fine views of the line.

There were remarkably few hiccups, only overshooting slides - which is frequent enough in normal times anyway! So the technology is proven and we will be hoping to repeat it in the new year. Hopefully, more notice will lead to a bigger audience.

Chairman John McKegney opened and closed the meeting, which also featured a lengthy recap by our General Manager on the travails of the year.

**13<sup>th</sup> January:** Peter Scott gave an update on No.105, the Society's NCC Mogul project. A very successful online meeting with 150 participants.

**10<sup>th</sup> February:** Joe Cassells on the evolution and operations of the Magheramorne Spoil trains.

**10<sup>th</sup> March:** Michael McMahon on his recently-published book "Locomotives of the Great Southern."

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## WHITEHEAD SITE

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**A Bit Of A Shunt:** On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August No.3BG "Guinness" was in use for a fairly extensive shunt to achieve a couple of

tasks.

As Covid-19 levels in general appear to be on the rise again across the island, to say nothing of Mid & East Antrim, it was decided it would be prudent to move the current mainline-approved stock against static bearing damage (i.e. if something with a perfectly machined round bearing, e.g. its axle, sits still for too long, said bearing can begin to microscopically squash and flatten; moving will also help keep it oiled and stop corrosion). This is something which needs to be done at a maximum of 3-monthly intervals and thus the clock was re-set from the last move on 4<sup>th</sup> July as a guard against any near-future local lockdown. So No.3BG began the day by shunting No.131 up and down the yard for two trips before putting it back in the shed. Next it was No.4's turn for the same treatment before attention turned to the Mk2s; in A-Road order - 301, 463, 303, 547, 300, 460, 180, 181; and Dutch Van 462 from under the sheer leg gantries.

Planning for train rides took a step forward with the shunting up the shed of 68 and 81 (these were behind 181 in the A-Road line-up above; the only vehicle in there not to be moved being Grain Van 504, which it came to mind may like to be christened 'Gráinne'; we will see if that sticks at all) for easier access. When outside, 68 was turned on the turntable to put the 8 compartment doors towards the platform, which it is intended will help minimise the mixing of train ride passengers as they now do not all need to pass through the same aisle to get to their seats.

The steam-raise at 07:30 meant completion at 15:45, during which the new platform picnic tables were used for lunchtime al-fresco crew dining.

The short supply of turns during 2020 is just about keeping our crew competency ticking along and an example of this

scarceness is as follows. On signing-on for a turn in the Bothy on Sunday, which happened to be in the last of the 22 boxes on the page, one initially wondered why most of the 21 turns above were very faintly recorded in pens which had clearly run-out. Closer inspection showed these faint turns were actually recorded back in March and had in fact been subjected to 5 months of sunlight via the Bothy window (remember that lockdown good weather?). Filing the page to the back of the sheaf, to uncover a new one, revealed only one other at the back to have been completed in 2020 (for January and February). This equates to only 44 turns having been recorded in the whole of the year so far ... less than 10% of the 480 recorded for the whole of 2019 and only 8% of the 547 recorded in 2018. There'll be a few more of course before year end but one can foresee a very simple count coming in January. (480 turns in 2019 meant 22 pages to count this January past, 547 would have been 25 pages!)

**Another Shunt:** A report on a fairly heavy shunt on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November conducted for the Locomotive Department, No.3BG "Guinness" doing the donkey work as usual.

The shunt had been in the planning for some time, awaiting certain criteria being fulfilled, but ended up being delayed for approximately a month due to a combination of increasing Covid-19 restrictions in the Republic unexpectedly removing the Diesel Officer (recently appointed Jonathan Clinton) from the equation at the last moment, and the steam locomotive representatives on their part having other long-standing commitments.

The shunt was to happen if it became clear there would be money allocated to attempt to resuscitate B142 following its major failure last December, and at the point when progress with No.171's

axleboxes meant she could leave the wheel-drop shed, the hoists in there having been being used to lift up and down axleboxes into the frames of the engine for measure and re-measure during the process of truing them up. No.171's frames, as they are minus their wheels, sit on the well wagon for transport.

Both criteria having been met and a shunter who knew the aims of the day finally available, No.3BG's objectives were to carry out the below - remember with shunts there is usually a cascade effect, putting something somewhere means moving something else and so on!

1. Having previously removed No.131 from inside the shed in 1-Road. Remove the Carlow and No.171's frames, on wagon, from the wheel-drop shed and place the latter behind No.3BG in 2-Road.
2. No.171's bogie and tender which were in 2-Road were removed and the bogie positioned in 4-Road to the Belfast side of No.461, which itself was given a roll up and down the yard to help combat static bearing damage.
3. No.171's trailing driving wheels which had been trapped between the frames and the Bessbrook tram behind them where hoisted into the workshop via the wheel-drop to have their axleboxes fitted. A driving wheelset for No.105 was removed from the workshop to make room, again via the wheel-drop hoist and this was put to the Belfast end of No.4 in 3-Road, with No.3BG using the handcrane.
4. B142 was then placed into the wheel-drop shed to dry out in order to have work carried out on the Belfast end cab, and to have the various parts connected to the removable hood disconnected in comfort. The hood will eventually need to come off to permit access to the engine beneath, parts of

which the wheel-drop hoist will be used to lift out.

5. No.171's tender was then placed in the wheel-drop too.

It having started to spit with rain, No.3BG had much fun putting No.131 back in the shed again due to slips. Sometimes forgotten by her drivers, No.3BG does actually have rear sanding gear fitted but the mechanism appears to be intended to be operated by the driver's bottom and the rodding to the fireman's side pot ceased to work a few years ago. No.3BG was thus able to apply a trickle of sand to driver-side rail whilst No.131's fireman's rear sand pipe did the job for that side, and thus on the second attempt No.131 went into the shed.

**And Another Shunt:** A minor shunt for the Carriage & Wagon Department was carried out with No.3BG "Guinness" on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November.

The hand crane was used to remove an axle from a bogie under overhaul, and Mk2 303 was positioned over the A-Road pit to have a fresh vacuum cylinder fitted.

Crewing No.3BG in a pandemic is not always the easiest and this would sound like the sort of day for which B142 was more ideally suited. B142, as mentioned above, hopefully now being on the road to resuscitation.

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## WEBSITE/ONLINE

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**Members Area:** A significant part of lockdown free time has been spent in adding to the photo galleries on the website, mainly past railtours. There are still a few to be added but most of the years from 1964 are represented. Many thanks to our members who responded so magnificently to the call for photographs during the year.

**Collection:** Also much improved is the RPSI collection, in the public section of

the website, with some of the Whitehead buildings and facilities included. Again, there is more to do in this area.

If you can, please do submit material to fill any gaps in the above material.

**Email:** If you have access to email and have not yet joined up for our email Bulletins then it is recommended you do so. The Bulletin has proved marvellously effective in keeping more than 700 of our members in touch over the bleak months. And it will give you access to the Members Area of the website.

**Comments & Recollections:** Quizzes submitted by a few members during the year sparked significant debate on stations, locomotives and the longest journey possible on Irish railways without reversing (results on website).

**A Christmas Ghost Story:** Ian Sinclair has produced a spooky tale to while away the dark nights when you would otherwise be dreaming of steam trains.

The audio is available on the website.

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## GENERAL

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**Nelson Poots:** It is with sadness that we had to report the death, on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, of Nelson Poots after a long stay in hospital.

Nelson, who was 82, was a former Society treasurer. Members will probably know him better as Five Foot Three editor from 1987 to 2012. He also put in significant hours in the workshop at Whitehead, and he could always be relied on to fill in as driver on train rides when required.

He will also be missed as a sound man to have a jar with in a pub!

**Railway Undertaking Renewal:** The Society's licence to be a railway undertaking in the Republic of Ireland was renewed by the CRR with effect from 9<sup>th</sup> October.

**Five Foot Three:** The Editor is somewhat late in asking for this - for positive reasons - for, although he expected to be producing a lean edition due to lack of 2020 operations, he has been taken totally by surprise by members, several of whom have of their own generous volition already contributed, or offered to produce, articles on a range of interesting subjects. Plus some which have been resting on the "back burner". So he has much of what he needs already in the bag.

Articles involving steam stories or resums of engine classes or memories of railways or RPSI activities, particularly in the Republic, are most welcome. Contributors should feel free to contribute articles at any time of the year.

If you do not get included this time, the benefit of having articles to hand on the "back burner" has this year been proven!

Note that "back burner" does not mean "not interesting" ... far from it, it means waiting for the right time.

If anyone wants to submit anything for consideration please reply as soon as possible to the editorial address.

**AGM:** The annual general meeting notice is enclosed and members are asked to note the vacancy for Vice-Chairman.

This is a vital position and we hope that some among the membership with the relevant skills will see fit to step forward.

Nomination forms are available on request.

## SALES NEWS

**Book:** Riley In Ireland - A Photographic Odyssey, compiled by Michael McMahon, £12.50/€14.

Hardback, 19 x 25 cm, 82 b&w photos, 80 pages.

**Print:** London Midland and Scottish Railway Northern Counties Committee 2-

6-4T No.4, £10/€11.50.

**Prints:** Set of five locomotive prints - Nos. 4, 85, 131, 171, 461, £40/€45

**Book:** Locomotives Of The GS&WR, Jeremy Clements, Michael McMahon & Alan O'Rourke, 284 pages, 215mm x 287mm, £40/€45. Orders available only through publisher. Email for ordering details:

[books@steamtrainsireland.com](mailto:books@steamtrainsireland.com)

**Book:** The Bessbrook And Newry Tramway, by A.T. Newham, Paperback, 17 x 24 cm, 35 b&w photos, 52 pages, £10.95/€12.50.

**Book:** Irish Railways, Locomotives, Multiple Units And Trams, by Robert Pritchard, Paperback, 21 x 15 cm, 71 colour photos, 4 maps, 96 pages, £18.95/€21.

**2021 Calendar:** Features 12 pictures of RPSI trains in action all around Ireland, £11/€12.50.

**Museum Guide:** This guidebook is intended to complement a visit to the museum, £5/€5.

**B134 Model:** The model of our own diesel locomotive went on sale in late July and the models arrived in Ireland in early September. At the time of writing there are less than a dozen remaining.

Congratulations to all involved in this great project which raised much-needed income for the Society.

**Payments:** Please can we ask that you do not combine payments for Membership, Appeal or Sales? Each has its own bank account and is accounted for separately.

## EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021**

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland will take place at 7:30pm on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February online via Zoom.

Admittance details will be advised on the Members Area ("AGM Details" menu) of the Society's website prior to the meeting.

### Agenda

1. Apologies
3. Minutes of 2019 AGM (already circulated)
4. Chairman's Report " "
5. Secretary's Report " "
6. Treasurer's Report " "
7. Appointment of Auditors
8. Reports of Operations Officers
9. Reports of Locomotive and Carriage Officers
10. Election of the Board for Incoming Year
11. Any Other Business (at Chairman's discretion)

### Board Nominations

<b>Chairman</b>	John McKegney	
<b>Vice Chairman</b>		(vacancy)
<b>Secretary</b>	Paul McCann	
<b>Treasurer</b>	Graham Coulter	
<b>Directors (9)</b>	1. Mervyn Darragh	(sitting member)
	2. Mark Kennedy	(sitting member)
	3. Fergus McDonnell	(sitting member)
	4. Joe McKeown	(sitting member)
	5. Phillip Newell	(sitting member)
	6. Peter Rigney	(sitting member)
	7. Peter Scott	(sitting member)
	8.	(vacancy)
	9.	(vacancy)
<b>External Directors</b>	Michael Guest	(appointed)
	Dermot O'Hara	(appointed)

Paul McCann  
Honorary Secretary