

FIVE FOOT THREE



No.60 October 2014



THE MAGAZINE OF THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

FIVE FOOT THREE

No.60

October 2014

Editor: Edward Friel

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Front Cover: On 26th March 2014, No.85 breaks through a banner suspended from the new Whitehead Excursion station building to mark the start of a series of events celebrating the RPSI's 50th Anniversary.



Nos. 186 and 461 meet at Whitehead while making test runs between there and Belfast on 17th March 2013.



No.186 shunts Ulster Folk and Transport Museum No.85 Merlin for certification of her new electronic systems on 9th September 2013.

EDITORIAL

Well folks, here it is - the milestone we've all been waiting for - the hotly anticipated Five Foot Three No.60! Oh, and apparently it's also the RPSI's 50th Anniversary year.

In this issue you'll find that current affairs - or at least as current as we can manage - are still at the forefront, since even preservation societies can't afford to live in the past. Press on, though, to page 50 (of course), for some reflection on the RPSI's first half-century. I am indebted to Robin Morton for organising the production of these articles. Many thanks to those who have contributed historical articles which have not yet been printed - the anniversary pieces have necessarily jumped the queue.

Today, we live in an era of significant investment in the railways, with new rolling stock appearing, a few closed lines reopening, and passenger numbers in many areas on the increase. It is hard for those of us who were not there to imagine the scene 50 years ago. Then, too, there was investment in new motive power, but as part of a ruthless drive for economy that also saw the network slashed and much rolling stock - not to mention staff - left redundant. The disappearance of steam engines, though long anticipated, must have been a startling development, removing sights, sounds and smells that had been synonymous with rail travel ever since 1834.



On 24th June newlywed members Mark Walsh and Ruth Mackie met her Majesty the Queen at a Royal garden party at Hillsborough. Her Majesty expressed a preference for steam traction over diesel. Don't write to us about it! (Harrison Photography)

And yet, in a way, we should be grateful for this crisis. What if, for example, the Northern Ireland government of the early 1960s had given the railways the investment they deserved? If the UTA had not been short of diesels, No.171 would have been scrapped before the RPSI was even formed. Instead, York Road continued patching up steam engines right through to 1970, long enough for Nos. 171, 4 and 27 all to be secured for preservation.

And what if the old railway had just gone quietly into the night? Had the change not come so suddenly we might not have realised what we had lost. Nos. 186 and 184 - each over 80 years old even then -

must have been near the end of their natural lives anyway. Even if steam had continued, they surely would not.

What if the unstoppable force of this crisis had not come up against that immovable object, the ‘Baby Boomer’ generation? From the start, the RPSI’s backbone was formed of boys in their late teens and early twenties. What other generation would have had the freedom, the confidence and the commitment to take a dream like this and make it work?

Yes, we should be grateful for that crisis. Out of it emerged a fleet of locomotives, carriages and wagons that not only survived the upheavals of the 1960s but continue today to defy time itself, to remind us of another age, and to continue doing what they were designed to do, far later than their designers could ever have imagined.

In selecting historical photographs for this issue I have tried to find pictures that are pertinent, attractive, and preferably unpublished. I have shied away from using too many ‘people’ shots - much as I would like to, it just isn’t possible to do justice to the hundreds of volunteers who have worked so hard over the last five decades.

Only you, volunteers, know all the little things you go and do because you know they need done. Only you know how many late nights and early mornings you have had to keep the wheels turning. Only you know the dirty, unpleasant and tedious things you have done. People with other hobbies do not understand. Serious musicians or artists or athletes tend to get at least a little money or fame from what they do. Serious, passionate railway enthusiasts will put themselves through trial after trial without thought of reward, often paying for their own tools and materials to get the job done, remaining for the most part unknown and unrecognised.

We do it because it should be done, and because we enjoy it, and because we can’t let down our friends who are doing the same. So thank you, and congratulations, to you all, for carrying us on this remarkable journey.

The future is far from certain. With grants and other investments coming in we have enormous opportunities to lay firm foundations for the next fifty years. Yet there are also great opportunities to make mistakes; we can have no room for complacency or lethargy.

We have a successful main line steam operation that we must continue to build, and bring to a point where it can not only pay for itself but pay for the investment in vehicles and buildings needed to sustain it in the long term.

We have a promising fleet of diesel locomotives which we must strive to bring into action, to keep alive a different chapter of our history, to tap into new markets, and to make greater returns on the work we already put into our carriages.

We have a huge and unique collection of vehicles, much of it now useless for the main line, which must nonetheless be looked after and wherever possible shared with the public, if we are to stick to our core principles of preservation and education (one version of which you will see on page 54).

Above all we have an important heritage of our own, a duty to keep going, to maintain everything that we have built, to stay true to all those railwaymen and volunteers, many no longer with us, who did their bit to put us where we are today.

Will our engines still be steaming their way across Ireland in the year 2064? Well, why not? Fifty years ago, the thought of main line steam in 2014 was just as easily written off!

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Denis Grimshaw

The delay to the last AGM, held on 11th January 2014, has led to an extremely short “year” for the

RPSI, as we endeavour to catch up and get back into our traditional annual business pattern.

Despite this, a great deal has happened in a very short period. To misquote the well-known expression: “never mind the width - feel the quality (and the quantity)!”

I had the honour of being appointed as Chairman in January this year - a mere fifty years since my first period as Secretary! During the intervening period, however, I was absent from the Society’s Committee/Council/Board for a total of some 36 years, due either to living outside the island of Ireland or, during my time with Northern Ireland Railways, to avoid a conflict of interest.

So just what have we all been up to?

Our Whitehead station building has now become an intrinsic part of our Northern area activities, from its use by our passengers on Steam & Jazz, Santa and Easter trains, and a regular influx of organised groups and individual families or passers-by. How did we ever manage without it? Our visitors’ book and souvenir sales have benefited accordingly.

Following generous grants from GROW South Antrim, we have been able to undertake an initial portion of the extension of the current carriage shed, as well as construction of part of the workshop extension in the wheel-drop area and beyond. Initially the carriage shed extension will also serve as a carriage workshop, but in the future, when both buildings are completed, a separate “lean-to” carriage workshop will be provided at the Larne end of the new carriage shed. The contract also includes the construction of a car park and access ramp on the higher-level ground opposite our workshop entrance laneway. The car park is a mandatory requirement of our Planning Permission for the main development phase.

The GROW grants have also enabled us to undertake the overhauls of our S Class No.171, and a first-time restoration of GNR(I) Q Class 4-4-0 No.131, which few of us had ever expected to see in operation again. Whilst our in-house Engineering Company - Heritage Engineering Ireland - won the contract for 131, they did not have the capacity to overhaul 171 as well, within the very tight timescale available.

Despite some reservations about the risk of losing direct control of the restoration work, we placed the contract with Rail Restorations North East at Shildon in Co. Durham in north-east England. The alternative would have been to reject a grant of some £750,000 - equivalent to at least 15 years of fund-raising at current levels. So far the contract appears to be going well. In the past, both 171 and 85 were overhauled by outside contractors, Harland & Wolff in Belfast in those cases.

Another GROW-funded project was the construction of an ash-pit below No.1 Shed Road approach track, and a concrete “apron” (a section of track embedded in a concrete slab at rail level) on the adjacent No.2 Shed Road approach. Both facilities have greatly improved access and working conditions for locomotive preparation and disposal.

Finally - how are we now placed with the “main” development phase?

(This comprises the full extension both the existing and new carriage sheds, carriage workshop, the main part of the workshop extension, conversion of the “stables” building to an education centre - mainly for school and other youth parties, new staff and visitor facilities, paving of most of the external areas, and the provision of a locomotive turntable and an operational B&NCR-style signal box towards the Belfast end of the platform.)

In order to obtain a “match-funder” for our provisional £1.644m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, we have been discussing and negotiating with a prospective main funder for well over two years.

Fortunately, these deliberations now seem to be coming to a decision-point, and if we are successful (which is not at all certain) we will be able to start the ball rolling for the main phase of the transformation of our Whitehead site from an industrial workshop and storage area to a working, living

railway museum, heritage and education centre.

However, the above scenario only relates to Whitehead - we still need comparable facilities in the Dublin area, albeit without the “heavy engineering” facilities for locomotive overhauls, which will continue to be done at Whitehead. Whilst we are extremely grateful to Iarnród Éireann for the use of their premises in Dublin for our carriages and Dublin-based locomotive(s), we cannot provide the level of staff and maintenance facilities which we really need.

We have therefore set up a Dublin-based “2020 Committee” headed by our Vice President Robert Guinness. This committee is actively investigating potential Dublin-area sites, and researching planning, financial and rail-access issues for a number of possibilities.

Meanwhile, both our Belfast and Dublin Operating Committees have been hard at work, with an extensive programme of trains planned for 2014. With J15 No.186 now retired (at least for the foreseeable future), our GNR Compound is now back in traffic.

2015 should see us with at least four (and potentially even five) locomotives in traffic, when NCC 2-6-4T No.4 and S Class No.171 return to service - hopefully joined by a “new” engine to ourselves - our GNR(I) Q Class No.131.

This may be just as well, as our Dublin Area has already agreed in principle to provide a charter train next June for Steam Dreams - an English-based railway tour operator - for an extensive programme of trains to Galway, Killarney, Waterford and Belfast over several days.

We are also in discussion with another British-based tour operator for another similar venture in April 2015.

On top of all the above, our ongoing programme of event planning, safety management, carriage refurbishment and maintenance, locomotive running-maintenance, fund-raising, and the day-to-day administration and financial control of the Society has to continue unabated, usually by the unseen and unsung volunteers who keep the whole show on the road. We owe them all our gratitude.

Finally - this is our Golden Jubilee Year - having set up shop in 1964.

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

Paul McCann

2013 was another busy year for the Society, with a continuation going on in much the same areas as in the previous year.

RPSI 50: 2014 is a significant year for the RPSI, being its 50th anniversary year. Over those fifty years the Society has been dealt many severe blows but has come good each time. The managing Committees, Councils and Boards over the years have been instrumental in handling the crises, with support of the volunteers and members and, when the celebrations are over, we will deal with the next 50 years in a similar fashion!

The celebrations have kicked off and have been much in evidence in all trains and events during the year so far.

Board: The AGM at Whitehead in January 2014, in the new building, attracted around 80 members, but whether it was the new premises or the promise of an election is not clear. The election was a close-run thing and resulted in three new directors.

A couple of vacancies were not filled, namely Vice Chairman and Treasurer. These are vital posts, the latter especially, and in circulars after the AGM members were asked to consider volunteering instead of expecting the ‘same old faces’ to take on more and more work - to no avail.

With the vacancies remaining through the early months of the year, Board member Bill Garrioch offered to serve as Treasurer and he was appointed in August. So the governing Board now looks like this:

Chairman: Denis Grimshaw

Vice-Chairman:

Secretary: Paul McCann

Treasurer: Bill Garrioch

Directors: Mervyn Darragh Phillip Newell
Mark Healy Tony O'Shaughnessy
Dermot Mackie Francis Richards
Fergus McDonnell Peter Scott
Joe McKeown Mark Walsh

The RPSI 50 Committee has set itself the task of getting 50 new members and 50 new volunteers during 2014. So again, why not make their job easy and volunteer your services today? We still need a Vice-Chairman!



Adam Lohoff applying black edging to the tender of No.85 Merlin on 2nd March 2014.

2020 Project: Significant visible progress has been made in the development of facilities at Whitehead, the first being the opening of the station house during the year. It started to see service with the Steam & Jazz trains in June and July, and with open days later in the summer. The official opening was in October. It has now established itself as a vital part of the visitor attractions at our headquarters. These culminated in the AGM in January 2014 and the RPSI 50 Launch in March of the same year. A number of external bodies have already held meetings there.

The contractors for the building, Cleary Construction Ltd, carried out further work during the year, namely the concrete pit and apron in front of the original locomotive shed which was completed in the autumn, and the shed extensions to the rear of the existing buildings and car park on the land above the lane acquired a few years ago. The latter work commenced in March 2014 and continues at the time of writing with the car park being tackled first. By the summer the car park and extensions to the carriage shed and workshops were much in evidence.

In the previous report it was stated that match funding for the proposed Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant had been delayed; this remains the case and has exercised the minds of the Board and Whitehead 2020 Committee throughout the year.

The wholly-owned subsidiary company, Heritage Engineering Ireland (HEI), continues to operate and is extremely busy on the GROW project to overhaul GNR(I) No.131.

Another GROW project, to overhaul No.171, had to be awarded to an external body, Rail Restorations North East Ltd in Shildon, Co. Durham, in the north east of England. This decision was not undertaken lightly but the Board felt that with an offer of funding, which couldn't be transferred to another project and which had deadlines which HEI couldn't meet as well as the No.131 work, the RPSI could not be seen to turn down major funding and yet continue an appeal to members for money for the same locomotive. Also, it was considered that current and future funders would not look kindly on the Society as a result, plus the ministerial departments to which some of the funders are responsible. The Board let this contract to RRNEL in January 2014 and work is progressing at the time of writing.

A Dublin 2020 Committee was set up during the year, under the chairmanship of Society Vice-President Robert Guinness, primarily to identify suitable premises for an operating depot in the Greater Dublin area and to seek funding to develop appropriate facilities there. The Committee has had a frustrating year, but have also had several encouraging meetings with CIÉ and Irish Rail representatives. Their vital work continues as, for various reasons, it becomes more and more difficult to maintain an operating locomotive in Dublin.

Finance: The Finance Committee was further strengthened during the year and the ongoing task of improving the Society's finances, and the procedures by which they are maintained, continued. That said, it was due to a combination of financial circumstances, not the Committee's fault however, which led to a delay in filing the 2012 accounts and which in turn delayed the AGM which was pushed into 2014.

Guardian of Newtownards were appointed during the year as the Society's new accountants.

A couple of bequests during the year helped ease the burden of cashflow, and locomotive projects benefitted as well.

Once again thanks go to Karen McLaverty of Marsh for her continued help in arranging our insurance cover; we wish her well as she moves on after a long stint as our broker. It should be noted that it was once the case that we could rely on membership subscriptions to match the cost of insurance. This has not been the case in recent years, the subscription income being approximately £27,000 whereas insurance cost in the last audited year was £64,000, and this is expected to be at least £70,000 in the year just past!

General: Following advertisements in Irish Rail weekly notices early in 2014, 13 candidates were selected for interview to become trainee firemen. Two have since been trained and passed out; another two should follow in 2015. Fireman training continues on NIR.

The Society's website has had significant value added during the year, including archive issues of Irish Railfans' News, Irish Railway News and the Irish News pages of Steam Railway being made available. Rather than list all the changes here, you are recommended to visit the Contents page and spend some

time having a browse of the various pages.

The email News-Letter now has over 670 members availing of the facility. This means a significant saving in printing, packaging and postage, as the smallest 20g letter now costs 97p to post outside the UK and, when a heavier News-Letter is mailed this rises significantly. Many thanks to all who agreed to take part, and to those on email who haven't, please consider it.

The Steam Train News email information list for the general public now has over 4,500 participants being advised of train and ticket information.

Perhaps a more 'acquired taste' for a lot of members, but we do have a presence on Twitter with 800 'followers'. Late in the year an official Facebook page was also set up. All grist to the mill in getting news of our trains out to the wider public.

The 2013 membership round-up comparison is:

| | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| NI | 398 | 389 | 408 | 411 | 413 | 411 | 399 |
| RoI | 332 | 363 | 384 | 408 | 403 | 403 | 387 |
| GB | 263 | 269 | 285 | 290 | 291 | 303 | 299 |
| Overseas | 24 | 25 | 26 | 30 | 30 | 31 | 35 |
| Adult | 451 | 523 | 589 | 650 | 653 | 679 | 688 |
| Senior | 461 | 413 | 391 | 370 | 350 | 339 | 298 |
| Junior | 8 | 6 | 11 | 14 | 21 | 19 | 33 |
| Student | 11 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 15 | 13 | 8 |
| Family | 6 | 71 | 13 | 10 | 21 | 19 | 14 |
| Life | 53 | 56 | 56 | 56 | 57 | 57 | 57 |
| Societies | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Honorary | 19 | 20 | 19 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 18 |
| Employees | 6 | 7 | 7 | | | | |
| Totals | 1,017 | 1,046 | 1,103 | 1,139 | 1,137 | 1,148 | 1,120 |

Hopefully, the RPSI 50 goal to increase the membership by 50 will come to fruition and we look forward to having 1,100 members again.

As always, thanks must go to all who have served on the Board throughout the year. The burden remains onerous so thank you to all who served there or on one of the various sub-committees.

The Posts of Special Responsibility to the Secretary for the year were: Charles Friel (Belfast Meetings); Mark Kennedy (Curatorial Adviser); Philip Lockett (Web Manager); Ciaran McAteer (Legal Advisor); Barry Carse (Dublin area membership queries); Mary Glendinning (answer-phone); Johnny Glendinning and Joe McKeown (Child Protection Committee). Charles Friel has taken on the role of Museum Curator on a temporary basis and a permanent replacement is being sought.

If the RPSI 50 celebrations in 2014 can increase the volunteer pool by 50 it would be hoped that some of those would take on some of the work of those just mentioned, a significant number of whom are involved in two or more roles.

The self-certification of all working members, reported on last year, has been on-going through the year, and is mostly complete.

As usual, thanks to the railway company management and crews for their forbearance.

While the RPSI justly celebrates 50 years of achievement, I am starting my locomotive report in a somewhat reflective mood, since it is likely to be my last as RPSI Locomotive Officer. I have informed the RPSI Board of my intention to retire. I have used the term “retire” intentionally, since I have no intention of reducing my commitment to the Society or the time devoted to its activities. Nor do I like the term “resign”. If recent events in the political arena are anything to go by, it has implications appropriate to headlines in the popular press and an underlying suspicion of disagreement and scandal - nothing like this is the case, only a realisation that I suffer from “too many birthdays” and the growing awareness that the post should really be taken over by a younger person. I have been Locomotive Officer since 1972, and by any standard I can claim to have done my share. I need hardly say that whoever I throw the torch to will have my support and the benefit of my experience if it is considered worth having - I sometimes feel that I know every nut and bolt on our locomotives by name, especially the loose ones.

My aspiration is to take on a less demanding role, possibly project work for example overhaul of a loco for longer term future use, and leave the day to day pressures to someone else.



Visitors were fascinated by the removal of tubes from the Guinness engine's boiler at the open day on 3rd August 2013.

Before moving on to the customary run-down on the position of our locomotives, two matters are worth special mention. The first is also a retirement, for at the end of 2013 we bade farewell to our old friend loco No.186. Most often seen at the head of our trains both in Dublin and Whitehead over the last 10 years, No.186 can definitely go down as a success story. This small 0-6-0 goods engine could be relied upon to tackle everything asked of it, and in sporting terms certainly punches above its weight. No.186's last run was the “Mince Pie” special to Lisburn and Bangor. In the words of the driver, Noel

Playfair, "I want a last crack at the Holywood Bank with 186" and proceeded to do just that in spectacular style!

The second matter concerns loco No.131 - the ex GNR(I) Qs class 4-4-0 which was taken over by the Society some years ago, in partly dismantled state. In last year's Magazine Report, I commented on the absence of the larger locos and outlined where we were with overhaul plans. No.131 was included in the list - pretty far down - the comment being "future project requiring extensive restoration" with poor boiler condition and missing parts identified as two of the problems. Little did I imagine that less than one year later, we would have embarked on the overhaul of No.131 - but that is indeed the case. The Society's engineering subsidiary Heritage Engineering Ireland Ltd. has undertaken the contract to restore No.131 to working order, the Society having secured funding for the project. At the time of writing, restoration is well advanced, with the boiler close to hydraulic test stage and much of the missing equipment ready for action.

At the same time, funded partly by the membership appeal and partly by an external source, locomotive No.171 has been sent to Rail Restorations North East at Shildon for overhaul. This was an RPSI Board decision after HEI felt unable to handle the overhaul in the time allowed due to being already committed to No.131.



No.4's boiler under steam test on 6th February 2014. It is carried on a boiler transporter wagon constructed by the GNR(I) for use at Dundalk, which arrived at Whitehead from Mullingar the previous December.

Steam locomotives:

No.3 LP&HC 0-6-0ST loco "R.H. Smyth". Whitehead, in store.

No change for this extremely useful loco. From shunting wagons at Londonderry, No.3 became the Whitehead "train rides" and shunting loco, followed by two main line ballast contracts and a spell at Downpatrick. Like No.186, another success story, and a loco which should not be lying out of use.

No.3BG Arthur Guinness, Son and Co. 0-4-0ST shunting engine. Whitehead, overhaul.

The Guinness engine is undergoing overhaul with a view to operating at Whitehead once the newly reconstructed site is open to accept visitors. Repairs have started but, as reported last year, have proved more extensive than anticipated. Some work has continued but meaningful progress must await availability of both full time and volunteer staff when No.131 contract is completed.

(For anyone puzzled by the “BG” in the engine’s number, this was the designation given by Guinness to their Broad Gauge locos, to differentiate between them and the fleet of narrow gauge engines. The “BG” was never actually carried on the loco, just “3”, but we use it in documentation because it avoids confusion with the other No.3, the “Derry engine”.)



This issue's obligatory shear legs shot features No.4 being reunited with her boiler on 8th March 2014. On the left No.186 is engaged in shunting to clear the back of the yard for building work, while, just visible on the right, No.85 is also in steam for testing.

No.4 LMS NCC 2-6-4T mixed traffic engine. Whitehead, 10 year overhaul.

Usually referred to as “the tank engine” (not just “a” tank engine), loco No.4 has had its boiler steam tested and re-fitted, and is awaiting both volunteer and paid time to get it re-commissioned. As well as reassembly work, there is some minor mechanical repair to be tackled. Possibly the RPSI’s most versatile loco, No.4 can be returned to traffic fairly promptly once more pressing business is out of the way. No.4 was the first of our locos to be fitted with AWS and TPWS equipment, permitting operation at the higher speeds now essential for operation amidst the increasing traffic now handled by NIR.

On a sad note, the TPWS equipment was designed and fitted by my old friend and colleague electrician Mark McClements, whose untimely death occurred recently. On a positive note, James Friel, who

handles loco running matters, ably stepped into the breach, as the TPWS equipment fitted to No.85 has justified.

No.186 GSWR 0-6-0 goods engine. In store, Whitehead.

As mentioned in the opening remarks, No.186 is now in store awaiting a decision on future loco requirements.

No.461 DSER 2-6-0 goods engine. In traffic, Dublin.

No.461 has suffered mixed fortunes. Like the little girl of the nursery rhyme with the little curl right in the middle of her forehead, No.461 has recently done the “horrid” bit with not quite enough of the “very very good”. She has been known to steam competently but often with reluctance. Can walk away with a heavy train or else stick annoyingly in centres. This has been investigated without any obvious reason coming to light. Further investigation is planned. Problems with big end lubrication continue to be monitored closely.

The loco does not have the original Beyer Peacock boiler, but is fitted with a GSR “N” class boiler which operates at 160 psi instead of the original 175 psi - No.461 could probably do with the extra few pounds.

For anyone interested in locomotive design, examination of No.461 is interesting. The locomotive is extremely lightly constructed, with weight saving everywhere. Doubtless on the D&SER of 1922, the civil engineer’s views were being forcefully aired, in the face of the commercial people’s delight at the prospect of a bigger locomotive pulling more wagons. Examination of the GNR(I) locos reveals a massive “drag box” casting forming the rear headstock of the locomotive. Instead, No.461 has two bits of half inch plate held to the frames by riveted angles.

No.85 GNR(I) 4-4-0 compound express passenger loco “Merlin”. In traffic, Whitehead.

Now back in action, No.85 has been approved for 60 mph operation and has featured on the GNR(I) main line and to Portrush, with the return of the “Portrush Flyer”. The loco has generally performed well, apart from an irritating big end bearing which threatened to run hot during the May Tour and resulted in the loco being taken off the train at Drogheda and returned to Whitehead in disgrace. The problem was expeditiously rectified and it is a pity that arrangements could not be made in time for the loco to resume its Railtour duties.

However, I am glad to report that “Merlin” operated the Steam Enterprise on 12th October and more than adequately redressed the balance with a lively run back in the evening.

No.85 is the property of National Museums Northern Ireland and we are indebted to them for the loan of the locomotive.

No.171 GNR(I) 4-4-0 express passenger loco “Slieve Gullion”. Overhaul, Multi-tal, Shildon.

Last year I reported that the overhaul of No.171 had been held back pending external funding, and that No.4 was being progressed instead. Now events have overtaken. No.4 has certainly progressed, but is now held back awaiting further resources, while No.171 has been sent to Multi-tal (formerly Rail Restorations North East) at Shildon for overhaul.

Because of time constraints and other commitments, it was not possible for HEI to undertake this work, having already embarked on the overhaul of No.131.

No.171 and tender were packed off to Shildon in February, followed by boiler fittings and pipework some time later. The website has carried pictures of progress.

No.171 did not stand in need of major renewals, just basic refurbishment of wearing parts. The locomotive of course operated for many years for the Society, and all parts were available although the

boiler had already been removed and dismantled. Some problems have been encountered, for example a cracked valve liner and a blast pipe in a wasted and cracked condition which is to be replaced by a steel fabrication.

One problem highlighted was the condition of the driving wheel tyres - these are close to scrapping size and would not have stood re-profiling.

Fortunately the profiles are reasonable, having been recently machined, so no action was taken. New tyres were investigated, but having them delivered and fitted in time would have been doubtful. This raises an issue which the Society will have to face - as well as No.171, Nos. 4 and 461 also have tyres close to scrap size. Not a difficult job, but substantial funding needs to be provided sooner rather than later if increased mileage is to be contemplated.



*No.171 leaves Whitehead for Shildon on 22nd January 2014
(Picture: J Adams)*



*The frames of No.171 in primer and her tender in undercoat at Shildon in June 2014
(D. Grimshaw)*

No.131 GNR(I) express passenger loco. Overhaul, HEI, Whitehead.

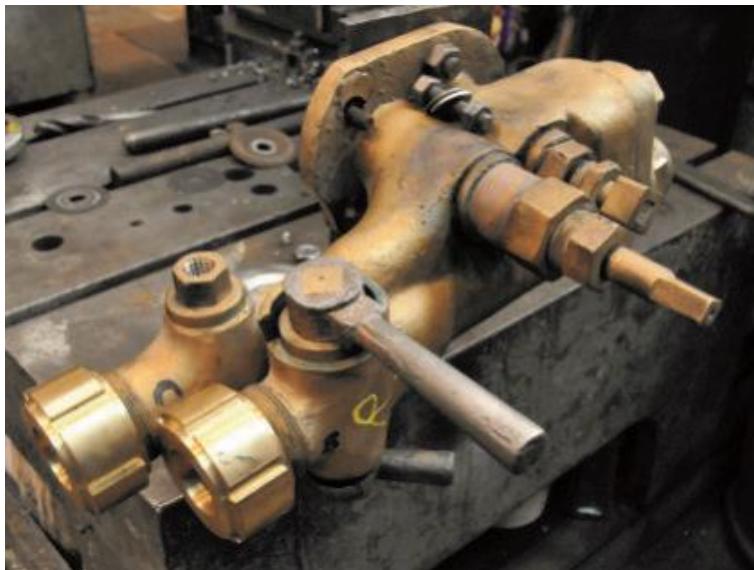
Again as outlined in my opening remarks, No.131 has gained funding for restoration at the same time as No.171, and in this case the work is being done by HEI, the RPSI Engineering subsidiary. HEI is of course based at Whitehead, with all the attendant advantages. No.131 is more of a "restoration" job than an "overhaul" job - the main difference being that many parts were either badly corroded or

missing altogether. Machinery that has lain out in all weathers suffers from corrosion damage to the very parts that you want to be in good condition - principally bearings. For example, when dismantled, the main journals looked to be in perfect order - which they were, for 90% of the circumference. The rest consisted of a deeply pitted oval crater, where the journal had lain in contact with the oil groove. The result was major re-machining of all the axle journals and crank pins, all for the same reason.

Parts that come into the “missing” category range from the regulator and blast pipe to mundane items like boiler cladding and handrail knobs. It is ironic that more time can be taken up with boiler cladding than big ends, and I am sure any locomotive restorer will tell the same story.

An unusual feature is the superheater, which is much like that fitted to No.171, except that the superheater tubes are expanded into the header rather than bolted. It is the only RPSI loco so fitted, and required a special expanding tool to be sourced in consequence.

Having mentioned No.171, a positive circumstance that has greatly helped with the restoration of No.131 has been the number of parts that are identical to both locos. Examples are the missing reverser lever and the regulator, to name but two. It makes life a lot easier when you have something there to copy. The “Q” class locos were built at the start of the last century (No.131 dates from 1901) and the “S” class followed in 1913 so it is logical that successful parts of the design became common - though what is originally S class and then became part of the later rebuilt Q is less clear. The frames of the “Q” class locos were very light and notorious for cracking - No.131 shows all the scars of welded repairs and additional stiffening plates that bear testimony to this. On the positive side, No.131 will be a joy to oil up, as opposed to No.171 or No.85 where the driver needs to be an acrobat to get between the deeper framing and the boiler. Much of the work on No.131 has taken longer than anticipated due to defects that continually came to light as work progressed. At the time of writing, HEI is working flat out to get the contract completed within the funding time limit.



131's right injector under refurbishment.



The new blastpipe, which was cast at Whitehead.

And then there is the need for a tender, provision of which was unfortunately outside the funding capability. We have the roller bearing tender which was latterly paired with No.131, but it needs major overhaul and complete renewal of the body (which was not worth keeping apart from a few fittings). One possibility is to build the new body to the GNR(I) “B4” design, which would be appropriate for No.131 and for which we possess the drawings.

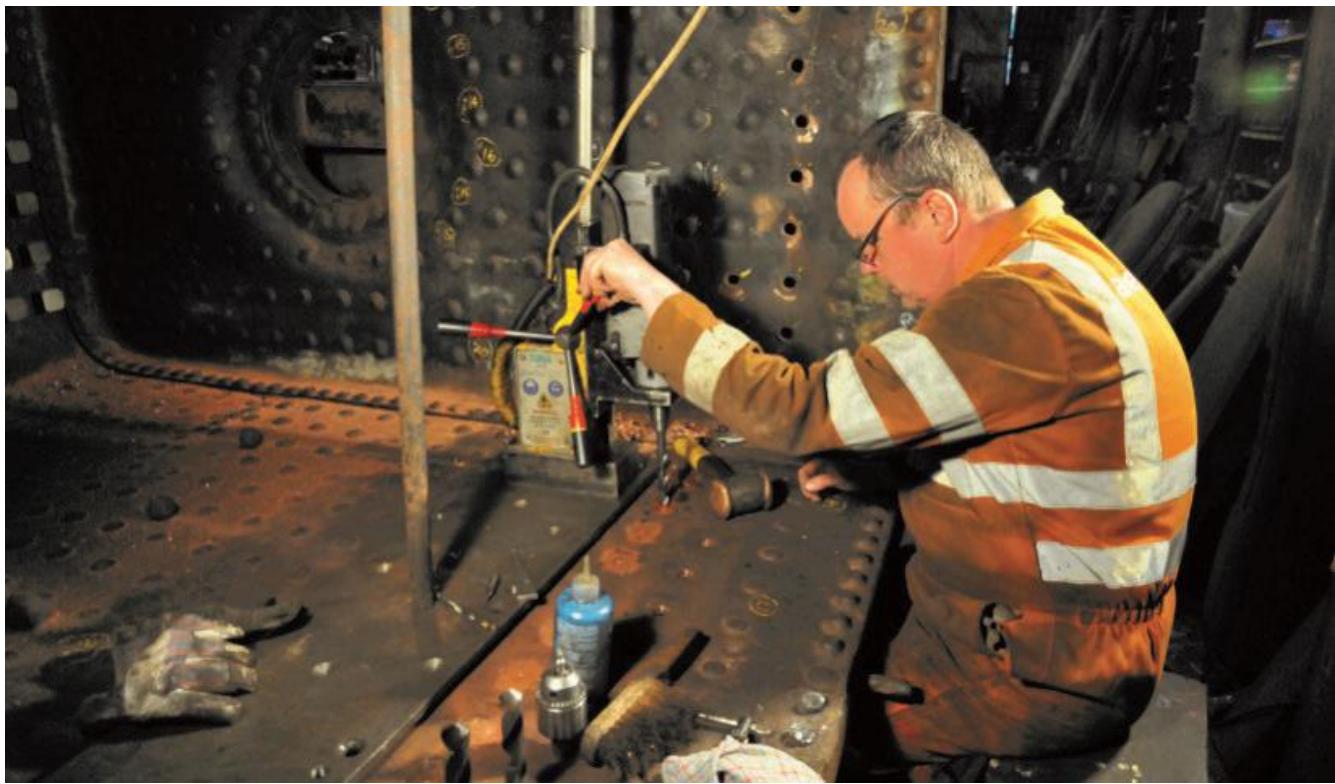
The whole story is for a later date - my memoirs, for example, or an RPSI film show!



This component, newly cast in the Whitehead foundry, forms one half of the regulator



On 26th April 2014, No.131's frames were rotated through 180 degrees to face the same way as the boiler. The locomotive is being assembled with the chimney facing Larne.



Jim Adams of HEI drilling stay holes in 131's firebox in May 2014.



In September 2014, No.131 is seen having the boiler, along with the new smokebox, temporarily test fitted. It is vitally important that this project is completed on time so all volunteers are welcomed!

No.184 GSWR 0-6-0 goods loco. In store, Whitehead.

No.184 is of course a sister loco to No.186, but differs in being closer to original condition with round top firebox and archaic but attractive tender. Again awaits future decision and funding.

No.27 UTA 0-6-4T loco “Lough Erne”. In store, Whitehead.

I have changed the heading to say “UTA”, since the number 27 was only allocated after the Ulster Transport Authority acquired the loco following the closure of the SL&NCR in 1957. The SL&NCR did not number their locos - names only. As No.27, “Lough Erne” finished its days as York Road shunter - a mundane existence only enlivened by its appearance on an RPSI Railtour to Antrim, and the less desirable derailment where it ended up in the York Road ashpit.

As with loco No.184, No.27 is not appropriate to the RPSI current main line activities - but maybe there will be an opening forthcoming somewhere for both of these interesting engines.



B142 shunting the Mark 2 running set at Whitehead on 11th January 2014.

Diesel locos:

No.23 Irish Shell “Planet” diesel mechanical shunter. In store, Whitehead.

Yet another small (very small) but very useful engine. Spent many years as Whitehead shunter - easy to maintain, since there really isn’t much of it. Was eclipsed by the “Carlow” engine. Now out of use needing various repairs.

No.1 CSÉ Carlow Ruston and Hornsby diesel mechanical shunter. In store, Whitehead.

The Carlow engine needs gearbox repairs, which have not happened since there was a steam loco available and more recently No.142. The loco was recently re-commissioned but not used in anger - it could be pressed into service but gearbox "fade" is a real problem making extensive shunting impossible.

Unilok UTA Road-Rail shunter. Whitehead, in store.

Again could be returned to service, but currently there is no requirement for this useful if grotesque machine.

B134 IÉ General Motors Bo-Bo diesel electric loco (single end). In store, Inchicore.

B141 IÉ General Motors Bo-Bo diesel electric loco. In store, Inchicore.

B142 IÉ General Motors Bo-Bo diesel electric loco. In traffic (yard only) Whitehead.

B175 IÉ General Motors Bo-Bo diesel electric loco. In store, Inchicore.

Other Locomotives:

No.5 CDRJC 2-6-4T "Drumboe" (3ft gauge).

The frames are currently on the transporter wagon, in order to clear the workshop for No.131 and the Guinness locomotive. Requires funding mainly for boiler rebuilding.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all who have taken part in maintaining, servicing or operating the locos over the last 50 years - including those doing the essential background work like rostering or organising driver training. I include our full time staff, now employed by HEI. Both full time and volunteers are too many to mention by name, some sadly no longer with us. Thanks to you all and best wishes for the future!

GM DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE REPORT

Mark Healy

In our last update in Five Foot Three No.57, the Diesel group had outlined our plans to acquire B134 and B175 and to work towards recertifying all three Dublin based locomotives for main line operations.

Whilst we have been successful in purchasing 134 and 175, and have so secured their long-term future, I have to report that we have, to date, made no progress as regards starting restoration work.

The lack of a Dublin base lies at the root of the problem. Unfortunately, it is not an option for the Society to expand its current operations at Inchicore to include work on the diesels and we have, as yet, not been able to secure an alternative location. Negotiations were at an advanced stage with a view to securing a licence to use Connolly Shed but that option was withdrawn when Iarnród Éireann secured funding to convert the shed for an expansion of the nearby CTC control centre.

So for now, all three locomotives (141, 175 and 134) will remain in store at Inchicore until something can be done about a Dublin base. The Board and the Dublin 2020 Committee are working hard to find a solution to this problem which of course affects all departments. 142 remains in use for shunting duties at Whitehead.

DUBLIN AREA CARRIAGE REPORT

Niall Kelly

2013 has been and gone, and we're now well into the 50th anniversary year that is 2014. Looking back, we've come a long way from the early days, when the Society hired carriages from the railway companies, to now being the only operator of traditional locomotive hauled carriages in Ireland. Indeed, just 10 years ago we had to hire carriages from IÉ to operate on the Cork or Belfast lines. Now

we are not only in a position to use our own rolling stock, but to hire out stock to other organisations looking to provide a traditional rail travel experience

Cravens Set

As has been the case since 2011, the Cravens set was the backbone of Dublin Operations in 2013. The set continues to perform well, but nonetheless demands constant attention to maintenance and new issues can arise out of the blue at any time. This of course is only to be expected when operating heritage rolling stock. Our small team of volunteers continue to beaver away in the background, unclogging drains, changing brake blocks and generally keeping the set spick and span. These are tasks that go unseen - ironically were they not done it would no doubt become noticeable! Recently a small delegation committed themselves to giving an extra hour every Saturday to cleaning the internal lights, and it's amazing what a difference this task makes to the interior appearance!

Restoration wise, the overhaul of 1508 continues, major work having been done on the body and recent weeks have seen work focus on sprucing up its interior. It is hoped that she will re-enter traffic during 2014, looking better than she has in many years. Meanwhile the Mullingar team are in the final stages of the overhaul of BR Van 3173, which will hopefully return to Dublin later in the year.



Open standard Cravens carriage 1523. (I. Sheane)

Some film work took place during the year, with 3185, 1532, 1505, 1522 and 1514 travelling to Boyle in August so as to provide an early 1990s style train for Sky TV's "Moone Boy" series.

As an aside, it's worth pointing out that 2014 is also the 50th Anniversary of the Cravens coaches entering traffic on CIÉ - their first public run was the 18:30 Dublin-Cork on 10th April 1964. This must be a surreal thought for those who were around at the Society's formation!

Heritage Set

As in the previous year, lack of manpower and suitable facilities as meant that our Heritage vehicles were not used during 2013. With the exception of State Saloon 351 and All 1st 1142, all vehicles remained stored out in the open at the Cork end of the yard. November was marred by a graffiti attack. However, as the old Irish proverb goes, “Is olc an ghaoth nach séideann do dhuine éigin” (it’s an ill wind that doesn’t blow good for someone). Shortly after this incident, IÉ offered us the use of former Valeting Plant in Heuston as a short term storage facility for the heritage set. In January 2014 the set was made up, and volunteers set to work to get the set ready for transfer. At the time of writing the transfer arrangements are being finalised, and it is hoped to move the set shortly.

Site and facilities

We are of course very grateful to IÉ for the use of Heuston Valeting Plant to store the Heritage set. However, it is worth pointing out that this is NOT seen as a long term solution to the Dublin site question, despite what may have been reported in the railway press. It still leaves most of the Cravens set outdoors, along with all the regular maintenance that goes along with it. This means external maintenance work must be tailored around weather conditions, and severely limits the amount of restoration work that can take place. Thankfully, a Dublin 2020 Committee has been established in the last year and they continue to review potential solutions to the site issue.



Carriage volunteers Nicky Cox and Lukas Tomiczek in Cravens buffet car 1508. There is no shortage of carriages - or work to be done - at Inchicore and Mullingar. Please get in touch if you'd like to help out! (S. Comiskey)

Volunteers

Society reports generally seem to have a common theme of calling out for new volunteers to join our ranks. It's pleasing the report that during 2013 we did gain a few extra volunteers at Inchicore. A big thanks to them and, of course, all the existing volunteers who continue to keep the wheels turning. But the quest never ends and, as always, we need more. Skilled or unskilled, there are tasks to suit all. One

often comes across enthusiasts bemoaning today's railcar-ised railway, and the perceived lack of 'real trains'. Well, guess what? There are still real trains, and you can be involved with them every weekend! Not only that, but you can learn new skills, have a bit of craic, and it's not the worst thing for the CV either! So please do consider volunteering, and get in touch if interested!

Unfortunately 2013 also saw us lose two of our active volunteers. Long-time volunteer Chas Meredith, instrumental in many areas but perhaps most noticeably the restoration of GS&WR State Saloon 351 and All First 1142, passed away in October. Joe Gallagher, who joined us in recent years and was very active in stewarding and carriage presentation, passed away in August. May they both rest in peace.

Finally, it occurs to me that many members may not be aware of, or have forgotten, exactly what carriages are based in the Dublin area (effectively encompassing Inchicore and Mullingar). It's been a while since such a table has been published, so for the issue that's in it, here follows an up-to-date version:

| No. | Original Operator | Builder | Type | Seats | Status |
|------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------|---|
| 88 | GNR(I), UTA, NIR | GNR(I) 1938 | Diner | 24 | Awaiting transfer to Heuston VP. |
| 351 | GSWR, GSR, CIÉ | GSWR 1902 | State Saloon | 25 | Stored under cover at Inchicore. On lease from IÉ. |
| 813 | GSWR, GSR, CIÉ | GSWR 1910 | 3 rd | 60 | Used as a mess coach at Mullingar. Owned by a syndicate of members. |
| 837 | GSWR, GSR, CIÉ | GSWR 1902 | 3 rd | 72 | Stored under cover at Mullingar. |
| 1142 | GSWR, GSR, CIÉ | GSWR 1921 | Corridor 1 st | 56 | Stored under cover at Mullingar. |
| 1335 | GSR, CIÉ | GSR 1936 | Corridor 1 st | 56 | Awaiting transfer to Heuston VP. |
| 1383 | CIÉ, IÉ | Park Royal / CIÉ 1955 | Open 3 rd | 72 | Awaiting transfer to Heuston VP. |
| 1419 | CIÉ, IÉ | Park Royal / CIÉ 1956 | Open 3 rd | 58 | Awaiting transfer to Heuston VP. |
| 1463 | CIÉ | CIÉ 1958 | Open 3 rd | 64 | Awaiting transfer to Heuston VP. |
| 1506 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens 1963 | Open Standard | 64 | In traffic, Inchicore. |
| 1508 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens 1963 | Buffet | 47 | In traffic, Inchicore. |
| 1514 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens / CIÉ 1964 | Bar | 28 | In traffic, Inchicore. |
| 1522 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens / CIÉ 1964 | Diner | 24 | In traffic, Inchicore. |
| 1523 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens / CIÉ 1964 | Open Standard | 64 | In traffic, Inchicore. |
| 1529 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens / CIÉ 1964 | Open Standard | 64 | Stored out of service, Inchicore. |
| 1532 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens / CIÉ 1964 | Open Standard | 64 | In traffic, Inchicore. |
| 1539 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens / CIÉ 1964 | Open Standard | 64 | Stored out of service, Inchicore. |
| 1541 | CIÉ, IÉ | Cravens / CIÉ 1964 | Open Standard | 64 | In traffic, Inchicore. |
| 1916 | CIÉ | CIÉ 1957 | Open Brake / Generator 3rd | 24 | Awaiting transfer to Heuston VP. |
| 1949 | GNR(B), UTA, NIR | GNR(B) 1954 | Open Brake 3rd | 72 | Awaiting transfer to Heuston VP. |
| 2421 | CIÉ | CIÉ 1958 | Diner/Bar | 39 | Awaiting transfer to Heuston VP. |
| 2977 | CIÉ, IÉ | CIÉ 1958 | TPO | | Stored out of service, Inchicore. Owned by An Post. |
| 3173 | BR, CIÉ, IÉ | Charles Roberts 1956 | Brake Generator / Steam Van | | Under overhaul at Mullingar. |
| 3185 | BR, CIÉ, IÉ | BR (Derby) 1952 | Brake Generator / Steam Van | | In traffic, Inchicore. |
| 5408 | CIÉ, IÉ | BREL 1972 | Presidential Saloon / Diner | | On lease from IÉ. Transferred to Whitehead 19/5/2014. |



Brake / Generator 3rd 1916 and Open 3rd 1463 of the (for now) disused Heritage Set.

DUBLIN AREA OPERATIONS

Niall Kelly

The 2013 Dublin Operations season started on Easter Monday 1st April, with No.186 and the Cravens operating an “Easter Shuttle” outing to Wicklow, along with a local trip from there to Greystones. Despite her small size, the J15 took the seven carriages in her stride, storming up Bray Head on the outbound run. Despite the presence of the Easter Bunny, the trip will be remembered for operating in temperatures more normally associated with the Santa season! So cold was the day that 186 had to be used to preheat the carriages prior to departure. On 21st April 186 was out again, this time working two return “Royal Canal Shuttle” trips from Connolly to Maynooth, running to Grand Canal Dock in between to run around. This operation was notable in that it was the last outing of 186 on a Dublin Area operation.

Friday 10th May saw the Three Day tour kick off with IÉ GM 072 taking the Cravens set to Sligo and back on the “Ben Bulben” diesel tour. As we pulled out of Connolly Nos. 461 and 186 were lined up outside the loco shed; 461 was being prepared to run light to Waterford. The diesel tour was a leisurely day out, the return journey involving many crossings against the outbound evening rush hour services. The “Golden Vale” railtour started the following day, with 072 this time taking the train to Waterford via the Lavistown curve. No.461 then took the train on to Limerick, taking water at Cahir and also pausing in the loop (since removed) at Carrick-on-Suir for photos. After overnighting in Limerick, we returned to Dublin via the Nenagh branch. Unfortunately poor water pressure contributed to delays along the way, which also affected the departure of 186 on the Connolly-Belfast leg. Participants were treated to a rare instance of parallel steam running; 461 arriving in Connolly with the Cravens just as 186 backed on to the Mark 2 set. A German film crew was in attendance throughout the weekend, with a camera being mounted on board 461 on the Waterford-Limerick leg. The documentary can be found on YouTube, search for ‘Eisenbahn-Romantik Irlands steam history’.

On the 26th May we ran to Balbriggan in connection with a local festival. Two local trips were run to Drogheda and back, carrying over 600 passengers - had we been able to run another trip no doubt even more would have been carried!

Sunday 9th June saw 200 passengers take part in a “Mystery Train” excursion behind 461 (spoiler - Kilkenny was the destination!). Some passengers joined at Sallins. An innovation of this trip was taking water from a road tanker at Athy, which avoided potential problems with low water pressure. The weather was excellent throughout as was 461’s performance, thankfully the troubles of the previous year’s trip to Kilkenny were now behind us. As is now standard for Kilkenny trips, an 071 GM came light from Waterford to shunt release 461, which availed of the Lavistown loop to turn.



072 at Sligo on the ‘Ben Bulben’ railtour, 10th May 2013 (L. Griffin)

On 23rd June 461 returned to her old stomping ground on the D&SER; firstly operating from Connolly to Bray prior to working two local shuttles Wicklow in most co-operative weather.

July proved to be relatively quiet, but we did operate a rather unusual special for our friends in the Irish Railway Record Society, who chartered our Cravens for a trip to Cobh and Midleton. It was notable in being the first planned working to involve two 071 class locos in the one consist. Class leader 071, resplendent in the IÉ’s new grey livery, hauled sister loco 073 and the Cravens from Heuston to Cork, with photo-stops on the way. On arrival at Cork 071 was detached and 073 was started up to take the train to Cobh. As Cobh is now devoid of run around facilities, 071 followed light and took the train back to Cork.

073 then worked the special on to Midleton, being the first loco hauled passenger train on the former Youghal branch since March 1988. Again 071 followed light engine prior to working the train back to Cork, where 073 was shut down and placed behind 071 for the run back to Heuston. A good day was had by all, with plenty of firsts being achieved, and the summer heat wave contributing to a fantastic day out for all involved. Incidentally this was the first RPSI working to use Heuston since the 2009 Three Day tour.



No.461 on arrival at Limerick on 11th May 2013. (Bill Allen)



Ken Fox, Robbie Jolley, Tony Cooke and Gerry Mooney at Clonmel during the "Golden Vale" railtour on 11th May 2013.

August was much busier. On Sunday 11th 461 worked our “Great Northern Getaway” trip from Connolly to Drogheda before working two shuttles to Skerries and back. At Skerries the train was propelled from the station to the loop in order to run around. This was originally planned as a Maynooth shuttle but was amended to the former GNR line as a GAA fixture in Croke Park meant there was insufficient capacity on the Maynooth line on that date. The trips were well supported and an excellent performance saw us arrive back in Connolly’s platform 1 six minutes early. The 25th saw us return to Kilkenny with the “Marble City” operation, using the same paths as the earlier “Mystery” trip. The train was a sell-out, the sun shone, performance was good and indeed the only problem was a delay at Cabra on the return journey due to a plethora of GAA specials using Connolly. A few days later saw our first filming operation in many years. On Thursday 29th August IE GM 072 hauled orange & black liveried carriages 3185, 1532, 1505, 1522 and 1514 from Inchicore to Boyle so as to provide an early 90s style train for Sky TV’s “Moone Boy” series, starring Chris O’Dowd. The train stabled in Boyle overnight, with filming taking place early the following morning, before heading back to Dublin.

After all this intense activity, operations quietened down for the next few weeks, with another set of Maynooth shuttles operating on 29th September. Between trips water was taken at Grand Canal Dock, courtesy of a Civil Defence tanker. During the lull between the summer and Christmas season, 461 ran light to Whitehead for attention, returning to Dublin in late November.

The Santa season started earlier in 2013, on Saturday 30th November, continuing for the following two weekends. As an experiment, we changed the format slightly this year: three return trips to Maynooth would operate on Saturdays with the third being advertised as diesel hauled. Two steam trips ran on Sundays. While the steam trips sold out first, diesel haulage didn’t seem to be a huge deterrent, with all trains being sold out well in advance. Despite some delays, the season went more or less as planned, the exception being Saturday 14th December when the second steam trip was diverted to M3 Parkway due to a fallen tree preventing access to Maynooth. Notably, these were the final trips to use Grand Canal Dock as a layover location; the track layout here is now being redeveloped and does not include run-around facilities. After the final trip, on Sunday 15th, GM 080 hauled 461 and the Cravens from Grand Canal Dock to Inchicore for storage over the winter, thus bringing an end to a successful year for Dublin Area operations.

And so onto 2014. Having spent the winter at Inchicore, 461 was returned to Connolly by Enterprise GM 8208 on Wednesday 19th March, with 3185 acting as a brake van. This was in advance of “The Midlander” excursion on Sunday 23rd, the first run of our Jubilee year. 461 hauled seven well-filled Cravens and the van to Mullingar and back. Despite a slow climb up Glasnevin bank on the outward run, performance soon improved and our destination was reached on time. The carriages were then shunted into the rarely used ‘Cavan Bay’ platform before the loco went for turning, with water being taken in the former up Galway platform. A spirited run was put in on the return journey, a fine start to our 50th anniversary year.

April saw two operations. The first, “The Boyne”, took place over the weekend of the 12th/13th, organised in conjunction with the Dundalk Railway Heritage Society. Proudly bearing the new “RPSI 50” headboard, 461 hauled the set tender first to Dundalk on the Saturday. Two well supported local shuttles operated to Drogheda and back on the Sunday, prior to the train returning to Dublin. The last leg included a visit to the now rarely traversed Mosney loop. Just over a week later saw a well patronised Easter Monday outing to Wicklow, along with a local trip from there to Greystones. Unfortunately a combination of signalling difficulties and a long train meant some complicated shunting delays; this resulted in a 45 minute late departure on the return trip. We returned to Connolly non-stop, an excellent performance by crew and engine saw us arrive back just 20 minutes down.

The next operation was the “Saint Canice” International railtour. The Dublin team’s involvement kicked off with the “Galway Bay” diesel tour on Friday 16th May. GM 074 took the van and seven

Cravens on an excursion to the west. GM 082 preceded the train light engine, but was not in the best of health so was not used for the return trip. The “Saint Canice” tour proper kicked off the following day. It had been hoped to use 85 on the Dublin-Howth leg, along with the Enfield and Kilkenny trips; unfortunately this was not to be after the loco developed big end problems on the positioning run from Whitehead. GM 074 worked the Connolly-Howth leg; 461 followed light engine and then proceeded to haul the train to Wicklow, where water was taken prior to heading back to Connolly. A break was then taken during which the loco was turned and watered, before heading out to Enfield and back.

Following this some passengers headed to the Davenport hotel, where the first of our 50th anniversary dinners was held, ably organised by Joe McKeown. A great evening was had during which key speakers from the railway community looked back at what the Society has achieved and its role in rail tourism today. Each of the tables was numbered after a Society locomotive, from 3BG through to B142. They were decorated accordingly with matching prints designed by volunteer Stephen Comiskey.

Next morning it was off to Kilkenny, with timings adjusted to account for the lower speed of 461. A good performance was put in, although the inclement weather resulted in the support crew getting more water than the engine! On arrival back in Connolly the set was shunted into the Valeting Plant to collect 1523, which had been removed from the train on Saturday in order to avoid the previous difficulties encountered with a long train at Wicklow. The Mark 2 set was stabled alongside resulting in the now rare spectacle of two traditional carriage sets in Connolly simultaneously! The following day 461 worked the Mark 2s north to Whitehead, complete with State Saloon 5408 in tow.

Following attention at Whitehead, 461 returned to Dublin light on Thursday 29th May in time to work our ‘Balbriggan Festival’ trips on Sunday 1st June, the first RPSI operation for trainee fireman Keith Farrelly. As in 2013, two local trips operated to Drogheda and back, with the train running empty to Skerries loop between trips to run around. Difficulties with the fire hydrant at Drogheda resulted in the local fire bridge’s assistance, and several crew members being drenched! Fortunately an alternative supply was located near the Navan branch siding prior to the return trip.

15th June saw trainee fireman William Ferns making his RPSI debut on a ‘Marble City’ excursion to Kilkenny and back. Steaming difficulties resulted in GM 084 hauling the train from Carlow to Kilkenny; the diesel was on its way from Waterford to Kilkenny anyway to assist with the shunt release. The problem was soon sorted and 461 followed the train light, ready to work the return trip without further trouble.

Following these trips, an intensive three days of fireman training workings were held from 23rd to 25th June. Each day involved an empty working from Connolly to Mullingar with 461 hauling a short five bogie set. Water supply problems led to some delays but the trips were nonetheless successful, culminating in our two new firemen being passed out - congratulations to all involved! This expansion



The steam heating adds to the atmosphere of the Cravens set on 30th November 2013, the first day of the Santa season. (L. Sheehan)

of our Dublin based steam crew allows us to look forward to the next 50 years with confidence.

Naturally none of the above could have been achieved with the out the dedication and enthusiasm of the Society's volunteers and IÉ staff involved. And as always if more would like to get involved we'd love to hear from you!



An example of Stephen Comiskey's artwork, used as table titles at the 50th Anniversary dinner in Dublin.



No.461 at Mullingar on 23rd March 2014. (S. Comiskey)



No.461 and the Cravens rounding Bray Head on 21st April 2014. (G. Gallagher)



082 and 074 at Galway on 16th May 2014. (L. Griffin)



Ken Fox, Robbie Jolley, Tony Cooke, Gerry Money and Nicky Doyle at Kildare on 18th May 2014.



Catering volunteers Honer Travers, Fiona Lee and Rita Henderson in Buffet Car 1508 during the 'Saint Canice' railtour.



No.461 at Belfast Central en route to Whitehead with the Mark 2 set on 19th May 2014. The leading carriage is empty Presidential Saloon 5408. (G. Gallagher)



303 - formerly IÉ air conditioned Mark 2 5203 - has been in service since March 2013. A near-sister is also at Whitehead, which once overhauled will enter service as 304.

Another year of running completed with no problems (OK, so there were a few minor ‘events’). The biggest change this year has been the replacement of inverters and fluorescent tubes in 547 by LED assemblies. No change required to tube holders and diffusers and only minor wiring alterations but more light and a 90% reduction in in electrical demand. The technique is transferable to other vehicles if required.

303 has found a useful role as the ‘Larne End’ brake vehicle pending the return to service of 460 with new flooring and its generator even though it was said “I have seen larger guards’ compartments on the narrow gauge in Wales!” As part of the grant money, the dormitory coach (Mark 3 sleeping car) is losing its previous identity and assuming a new coat of Midland Railway Crimson Lake. With limited access in C&W at present much of the remainder of the work may have to be undertaken in the open in order to paint ‘the other side’. If only we had a turntable...

304 interior is in good shape but window seal rubber strips need replacing and also several of the plywood panels. This needs to be done under cover so it is queued behind the sleeping car.

BELFAST AREA OPERATIONS**Mervyn Darragh**

The Belfast Area Operations Committee, even without a Portrush Flyer season, had a very busy operating year in 2013. Excluding the May International Railtour days, operated solely by an Irish Rail crew, there were 33 NIR crew train days for the Society.

It was a limiting factor that the two steam locomotives available in 2013 were basically goods engines and this prevented our normal range of more distant destinations of Portrush, Londonderry and Dublin being organised. No.186 was effectively the Whitehead locomotive. While working out her last boiler certificate year, she proved reliable and in many ways “punched above her weight” in respect of performance right to the end.

The operating season started unexpectedly on Sunday 3rd February when a Winter Enterprise was organised at short notice. To facilitate the temporary return of No.461 to Whitehead for attention, a passenger operation was incorporated into the move, but it required the hiring in of an NIR diesel. GM 112 was used, working passenger south and light engine return. Not a cheap option. No.461 performed admirably, only being slightly down on the booked time on return to Whitehead. The train was surprisingly well filled for a mid-winter Sunday.

A number of trial trains open to the public, organised to assess No.461’s performance operated on Saturday and Sunday 16th and 17th March [*see last issue for photos - Editor*]. On Saturday there were 3 return workings to Belfast Central, with the runs extended to Lisburn on the Sunday. No.186 operated twice and No.461 once on the Saturday with the reverse happening on Sunday. The opportunity was taken too to evaluate the trainee firemen and Barney McReynolds was formally passed out on the Sunday.

To facilitate Royal Canal shuttles on Sunday 21st April, No.186 was despatched light engine to Dublin on Sunday 24th March.

Two return Easter Eggspress trains using No.461 worked on Easter Monday and Tuesday 1st and 2nd April. All trains were full. Each child got an egg and a modelled balloon. The trains operated to schedule. The NIR steam driver assessors were themselves subject to an independent assessment; required every second year. Ron Smith of West Coast Railways performed the assessment.

To help facilitate the development and progression of the new firemen a decision was taken to operate a Bangor Belle on Sunday 5th May. The train picked up passengers on route via Lisburn. Unfortunately the train loading was rather light, probably due to a “new train” slot and limited advance warning it was

happening. It proved useful mileage accumulation for No.461 prior to the May tour.

Nos.186 and 461 worked the Golden Vale Railtour long weekend with No.461 working the Mark 2 set from Whitehead to Dublin on Thursday 9th May. The following day Irish Rail's 071 class 072 powered the Ben Bulben diesel railtour to Sligo hauling the Cravens set. The Saturday and Sunday again using the Cravens featured No.461 from Dublin Connolly, with steam joining the train at Waterford, then to Limerick (overnight), Nenagh, Ballybroy and Dublin Connolly. Due to water pressure issues at Cloughjordan and, particularly, Portarlington, we lost our path, being badly delayed at the latter. A quick cross-platform transfer planned for Dublin Connolly unfortunately could not happen, having lost the planned platform availability slot. Instead a bit of a hike from Platform 5 to 3 was needed; Dublin arrival being around 90 minutes down. The passengers were taken forward to Belfast by No.186 using the Mark 2s, having been stored at Inchicore since Thursday. The NIR train crew made a valiant effort to keep to time but at Portadown we were held to permit 2 trains to overtake; with a consequential arrival in Belfast around 2 hours down on schedule.



During the 'Bangor Belle' of 5th May 2013, No.461 passes through Adelaide station in Belfast en route to Lisburn with Gary Moore at the regulator.

On Monday the day got off to a late start. This was entirely due to crew hour issues following our late arrival on Sunday. Uncertainty prevailed for a while until it became clear that we could not traverse the Antrim Branch; it being easier to operate to Bangor on the booked path and operate to the schedule

thereafter, rather than operate over the Branch and “make it up as you go” for the rest of the day.

The ever-popular Steam and Jazz trains again operated on four consecutive Fridays from 14th June. The new Whitehead station building was put to good use when the train stopped over at the station for a musical interlude. All trains were worked by No.186.

With no summer steam to Portrush, two Bangor Belles were slotted into the programme on Saturdays 17th and 24th August which proved popular. No.186 was again the motive power.



The view from the Cravens set on 12th May 2013 during the Golden Vale railtour. As No.461 arrives into Dublin Connolly, 186 can be seen in the distance reversing onto the Mark 2 set.

On Sunday 1st September, the Society’s President Lord O’Neill hired the train for a very special birthday party. All had a great afternoon travelling from Whitehead to Ballymena by the Antrim Branch line from Lisburn to Antrim - now a diversionary route with no regular service. To facilitate speedy watering of the locomotive, a water tanker was provided at Ballymena by the Company before the train returned via Templepatrick. A good operating day with No.186.

Once again the Society provided a train for the annual Country Comes to Town event in Portadown on Saturday 21st September. However, as it was also the ‘Portadown 400’ festival the local Council chartered the train and took responsibility for its marketing. The operational format differed with the first of two return trains operating to Newry and back and then onward for the second to Lisburn and return. It was a long but worthwhile day. No.186 steamed well with 6 bogies on the climb to Newry. Translink provided welcome support for the event including assistance to the Society.

A private charter for British Telecom operated to Cultra on the evening of Friday 27th September.

Although virtually on the Society’s doorstep, Larne had not seen steam since the ‘Larne Alive’ Charter on 3rd June 2006. So it was time to return. No.186 and 5 bogies, fully loaded, worked the Larne Lough Railtour on Sunday 13th October. The operation featured a direct run to Larne, then Carrickfergus and

back to Whitehead RPSI for a return to Belfast; a good day out in favourable dry weather.



No.186 waters at Drogheda en route to Belfast on 12th May 2013.



No.186 at Bangor on 13th May 2013.

A charter was arranged for the Dundalk Railway Heritage Society to operate to Whitehead on Sunday 20th October. This involved both steam for passenger travel and diesel traction for what were effectively empty carriage workings from and to Whitehead. To facilitate a heavily loaded train No.461 was rostered to work from Dundalk to Whitehead and return. No.461 therefore worked light engine from Dublin to Dundalk on Saturday 19th October but upon arrival at Dundalk was carrying heat in a bearing. At short notice the NIR diesel, GM No.113, was regrettably rostered to work the full Sunday itinerary with the consequential significant unplanned increased costs to the Society.

No.461 worked light engine to Whitehead on Monday 21st October for attention.

The following week was Halloween and the now traditional Broomstick Belle geared for the young family market operated on Sunday 27th October. Both trains were worked by No.186 and, as is now traditional, both were sold out.

Following attention No.461 returned light engine to Dublin on Sunday 17th November, in time for the Santa Train season.

Operating on 6 days over three pre-Christmas weekends the Santa trains, operating from 30th November (one day operating out of Portadown), were all sold out within a very short time. We do need to see how we can manage either more trains per day or add the vacant weekend immediate to

Christmas to our programme. This would need additional input from some other (sleeping) members. The same dedicated volunteers unfortunately cannot carry the additional burden of extra trains alone. They too have domestic commitments which they are prepared to work around to make the trains happen. No.186 performed very well throughout the Christmas season.



As consolation for not getting on the Lisburn-Antrim branch, there was a surprise awaiting railtour participants at Whitehead on 13th May 2013. Partly painted No.85 was in steam to shunt away No.186's train, and supervised photography was allowed from the sunny side of the track. (Max Birchenough)

To round off the year what is now the traditional post-Christmas Mince Pie train, fully booked, operated to Bangor via Lisburn on Sunday 29th December. This was No.186's last public train within its 10-year boiler certification. The locomotive with 6 Mark 2s bowed out in resounding style with a magnificent climb of Holywood Bank.

While No.186's boiler certificate did not cease until 24th March 2014, the locomotive was used on a series of weekends in January and February to do much needed Whitehead stock shunting, essential for the new building work to proceed. A welcome site visit was organised by the Irish Railway Record Society on Saturday 15th March. The opportunity was taken to steam No.186 for the visitors. This proved to be the locomotive's final steaming.

With thoughts turning to the 2014 operating season, No.85 Merlin awaited out road trials. Good news was received on 28th February 2014 when NIR granted the locomotive a Licence to Test. This involved, on the morning of 9th March, a crew familiarisation session with the locomotive followed by a light engine working to Carrickfergus and return, then a further light engine run to York Road and return. No major issues were identified. On the following Sunday 16th March the locomotive worked two test trains with empty carriages to Belfast Central and back.

Word was received from NIR on 21st March that No.85 had been added to the Company's Approval to

Operate Certificate, albeit temporarily still at 40 mph. This enabled passengers to be carried on a programme of proving test runs.



No.186 traverses the Bessbrook (or Craigmore) viaduct on 21st September 2013 with the 'Country Comes to Town' train from Newry to Portadown.



It's unusual to see an RPSI train passing Whitehead Excursion station, but such was the case on 13th October 2013. The 'Larne Lough' was billed as 186's last main line run, although as it turned out she was still needed until the end of the year.

The first public trains with No.85 operated on Sunday 30th March with 3 return workings between Whitehead and Belfast Central followed on Sunday 13th April with two return workings between

Portadown and Lisburn.

The locomotive had been fitted in-house with a Train Protection and Warning System and associated equipment which had passed all the tests possible within the confines of Whitehead. NIR arranged that, under a full possession of the track, the system would be tested on the main line on the night of Sunday/Monday 6th/7th April. The tests were deemed successful and a new Approval to Operate certificate was issued on 14th May 2014. This permitted No.85 to operate at 60mph; most welcome news.

Easter arrived with the normal format of two passenger workings, both fully loaded on Easter Monday and Tuesday 21st and 22nd April; more mileage without issue.

To fully satisfy ourselves that No.85 was satisfactorily run in, an operation to Dundalk on a beautiful Sunday 4th May - the Slieve Gullion Railtour - was arranged. Following a very successful operation the locomotive was deemed run in having completed over 700 trouble free miles.

The Saint Canice Railtour extended weekend ran from Thursday 15th to Monday 19th May 2014. The railtour was to heavily involve No.85 who would work as a first to Howth, Enfield and Kilkenny. No.461 was to feature, but in more of a cameo role.



Rita Henderson and Eileen Armstrong getting into the spirit of things in dining car 547 for the Santa train on 7th December 2013.



NIR and RPSI footplate crew on No.186 during Santa operations on 8th December 2013.

**Back row: Noel Playfair, Michael Hamill, Mark Walsh;
Front Row: Philip Lockett, Edward Friel, Barney McReynolds, Mark Fletcher.**

Thursday got off to a fine start with a spectacular climb of the Wellington Bank. Unfortunately at Dundalk No.85 was found to be carrying some heat in the right big end. A decision to proceed at caution was taken but on arrival at Drogheda the bearing was carrying unacceptable heat and reluctantly the locomotive had to be declared a failure. Arrangements were quickly made to return the locomotive light engine to Whitehead under its own steam. Luckily, earlier a 201 locomotive had passed our train working a train of condemned Mark 3 carriages to Dundalk. On its return the locomotive transferred our train's carriages to Dublin, thus freeing up a busy Drogheda station.

No.461 was thus substituted for No.85 for the weekend and a magnificent job the locomotive did. No.461 worked from Howth to Wicklow and Enfield on the Saturday, and Kilkenny on Sunday; ending up at Whitehead on Monday 19th May. While there was much disappointment that No.85 did not

feature as expected, the itinerary was mostly covered by steam as planned, except for Dublin Connolly to Howth which GM 074 worked.

A final word about No.85. The big end received attention on Friday 16th May and was fit for a return to a role on the railtour that evening. Many within NIR went the extra mile at the weekend to get the locomotive out and featured on at least the Monday of the railtour. Sadly, in the end NIR was not in a position to create and issue the necessary paperwork in time.



No.85 departing Lisburn at the start of a splendid run to Dundalk on 4th May 2014.

INSET: The NIR footplate crew on that day: Noel Playfair, Barney McReynolds and Mark Buchanan.

The Galway Bay diesel railtour operated on Friday 16th May in glorious sunny weather. GM 074 was the train engine. Arrangements had been made to have GM 082 at Galway to assist with the shunting. It had been hoped the latter would have returned to train to Dublin but on the day GM 074 was found to be in better running order so this locomotive did the complete railtour.

In conclusion a special word to all who volunteered to man the trains, or worked in the background; particularly Henry Ritchie who is always there, now spreading the load, as others assume important roles.

To NIR and Irish Rail as ever a big thank you for your support and understanding.

Good progress has been made on the Station building with all external brickwork completed by early January 2013. New wooden sash windows and the two external main doors and their windows had been installed. All the roof trusses were in place and the ply board for the main roof was attached by the middle of the month. On Monday 21st the local contractor was on site and started the removal of the soil for the third platform road. Employing someone locally was very fortunate because the heavy snow, which adversely affected other parts of the province, was not experienced at WDX. However, the snow did badly delay the delivery of stone for the ballasting, as the roads in Glengormley were very treacherous and our regular quarry was closed for two days. The spoil was removed internally onto our recently acquired ground, obviating the need for transport and landfill charges. Work was completed by Thursday afternoon with all ballast down and the spoil tidied up and levelled. Following on, the Site squad including Peter Lindsay and Robin Morton were then busy fabricating the turn out for the siding. Despite a very wet start we made good progress, with the end of February seeing all the digging out done, all the crossing and switch timbers in place and the interlacing concrete sleepers set in. In addition, the crossing and the check chairs and rails were positioned. Once alignment and gauging was set up we were ready to drill and screw down all the chairs. Ballasting and point lever connections were the last jobs of this phase of the project and allowed reuse of the two platform lines at Whitehead before Easter.



The new siding opposite the platform is now an impressive 550 feet long, and carrying out a vital role in freeing up space at the back of the site to allow building work to proceed.

Other Site activities at this time included a scrap drive with a full ferrous skip going for recycling for £550 and the use of the JCB to remove the superheater elements from No.4.

Good progress was made in March on the turnout for the 3rd road siding. The crossing and the switches were in place by the first two weeks, complete with check rails. Interspaced track was then cut to reconnect all of the main road and once gauge alignment was checked, we started to drill and screw down both the crossing and the switches and install the switch tie bars. This was completed in time for the busy weekend of driver and firemen training and the swopping of locos 186 and 461. Both of these came onto the train during changeovers by traversing the newly laid straight part of the crossing and no

problems were experienced. On the Friday before this hectic weekend, I used the Atlas to put in the concrete foundations for the station canopy. In addition, we replaced and repaired all the crossing point mechanisms which were removed or damaged during the spoil removal and this greatly speeded up subsequent shunting manoeuvres.

At the end of March, Philip Newell and I collected one ton of fishplates and 500 keys from IE's Portlaoise PW depot using a hired van. I would like to thank David Humphries for making these purchases possible. These materials were quickly used to extend the siding to over 200 feet of track. The jacking and packing with ballast of both the switches and the crossing was completed with help from Alan McRobert and Geoff Moore. The Atlas and the small bogie wagon made the first successful traverse of the point work onto the new siding.

The first week in May was glorious sunny weather and I was able to give the Site its first weed killing treatment of the season. We also put down another 100 feet of track with help from Thomas Charters, Alastair Maxwell and David Thompson, while the contractors put on the final tarmacadam around the new Station building. The following week we lifted all the surplus rail and turnout pieces off the platform and placed them neatly between the lines of the newly laid track. In the third week we were able to finish laying the track almost as far as the old gate fence, a total distance of some 150 yards and then started to remove surplus sleepers from the platform.



Denis Campbell, Trevor Taylor and Dermot Mackie at work on the carriage shed points on 14th November 2013.

I was able to give the Atlas a well-earned annual service in the last week of May and on the final Thursday of the month Trevor Taylor and the squad put in a fully operational point lever for the third road and removed the last of the sleepers from the platform. Maybe just as well as the siding was then used to store 14 Mark 2 bogies, all neatly lined up! Early June saw problems with the power steering of

the JCB, but following an overhaul of the hydraulic ram and other adjustments, ably helped by James Adams, the 45 year old stalwart was back in action and was used to lift bags of sand for the foundry.

D Day was celebrated by the handover of the keys for the Station building on time and the afternoon was spent cleaning, adjusting, greasing and oiling all the points in the yard in time for the Steam and Jazz season. The job was finished the following week and the opportunity was taken to cut down a number of bushes which had grown up between the sidings at the back of the site.

The Site gang had a couple of weeks off at the end of June 2013, although we were quite busy over the more traditional July holidays. The third road had been shunted a couple of times, unfortunately having to remove all of the fourteen Mark 2 bogie sets to retrieve a pair at the Larne end. In addition, as part of a tidying exercise in the yard, two 60ft flat wagons were now also in the siding, which meant it was almost full! The Site was given its second weed spraying, in ideal sunny dry weather, and with the help of Denis Campbell, most of the old wooden sleepers were cut into handy, fire box sized, lumps using a chain saw. These had been moved to an end of the coal bunker, as part of the tidy up required of the area, in preparation for the third siding, before Christmas.

To fulfil the fire exit requirements for the sleeping coach an additional set of steps was installed at the Larne end of the vehicle. As the ash pile was almost full we moved large quantities with the Atlas wagon and spread it as ballast on the third road. As part of an extensive survey of all the yard in front of the sheds, and partly to facilitate the job below, we had to do a complicated day-long shunt with the Atlas machine. In addition Richard Armstrong and the squad put all the old 3BG boiler tubes into the ferrous skip and then did some jacking and packing of the track. The contents of the skip were swapped for 120 feet of heavy flat bottomed rail which was required for the top of the ash pit wall.

The month of September 2013 was a hectic one on the Site at Whitehead because at very short notice RPSI was awarded a GROW funded, civil engineering project to install an ash pit outside number one shed road and to include a concrete apron outside number two shed road. As part of the grant the Society was to carry out the removal of all the old wooden sleeper track and replace with concrete sleepers. On the first Thursday of the month the track in one road was removed by Philip Newell and the Atlas ably helped by Denis Campbell and Tom Mathers, allowing the contractors to excavate the ground for the ash pit. This was poured in the second week when the track was removed from number two road. Following completion of the drainage for the pit, the Site squad laid 40 concrete sleepers and most of the refurbished track, including flat bottomed rail on the pit walls, on Thursday 26th and Friday 27th. Levelling and screwing down of the flat-bottomed track to the concrete pit with rawl bolts was completed the following week. All was then keyed up and levelled and partially in-filled with compacted ballast. Mass concrete of number one road was poured on Friday 11th October while the area along two road was finished on the following Monday. The contract was almost complete by the 16th October, the day the Station building was officially opened! The next day was spent tidying up which included the contractor levelling the laneway into our site. The last two weeks of October had the Site squad jacking and packing the number one shed road approaches which were reconnected.

Early in November we jacked and packed the approaches on two shed road to ease the gradient to the new concrete apron. With the help of the electrical squad, we installed two platform lights in time for the Victorian day. Later in the month we replaced two crossing timbers on the access to the carriage shed and the following week we shunted parts of the yard with the Atlas to allow for a coal delivery and the sending of 4 Mark 2 bogies to West Coast Rail. The last Thursday of the month saw a start made on putting in temporary, tram type, track to reconnect the sleeping coach to the workshop road. David Lowry recycled aluminium scrap which had been stored beside the coach and made £100. About this time the Dundalk boiler transporter wagon arrived with Thomas Hamill who, in exchange, removed the old white, steel, yard gates with his lifting lorry. December was a busy month putting in the remainder of the standard gauge track to the sleeping coach, a task slightly complicated by the need

to also keep some 3 foot gauge in situ. On Thursday 12th with help from Gordon Hunt and John Williams we took the old signalling equipment off one of the long flat wagons and placed it up on the embankment. We also did some more shunting with the Atlas on Saturday 14th, when the train was away on Santa duties. This allowed us to put the above boiler wagon in the workshop and bring out the Drumboe transporter wagon from a siding. All these moves were helpful for the later large shunts for the forthcoming GROW shed works. The first Thursday in the 2014 we were able to pull the sleeping coach on the temporary track to the back door of the workshop. We also offloaded a lot of old Hunslet spares from the flat wagon that holds 131's boiler and this was used to store the Guinness saddle tank and cab.

All in all a very busy and varied year of activities. If you fancy good exercise in the great outdoors why come along and join us?



The Site squad was hard at work in September and October 2013 lifting and then relaying track for the new concrete apron in front of the engine shed.

This was the scene on 5th October with the new track in place ready for the contractors to pour concrete around it.

DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Denis Grimshaw

Whilst most of the principal plans and events connected with our development plans and proposals have been alluded to in the Chairman's Report, some of the details, rationale and background may be of further interest to our members.

Strictly speaking, this report should only cover work undertaken in 2013, but all of such work was part of the overall longer-term project, and it is impossible to explain the logic for most of the construction undertaken in 2013 without making some reference to the ongoing work which is continuing during 2014.

Whitehead Works

Most of the activity in 2013 was in connection with the major projects now underway at Whitehead. The overall aim for Whitehead has been to increase and improve our maintenance and other engineering facilities, provide better working conditions and facilities for our employees and

volunteers, provide much better storage facilities (for equipment, machinery, tools and stores items) and to enable all our Whitehead-based locomotives and carriages to be stored under cover, both for security and for weather protection purposes. Most importantly, all these facilities must incorporate safe segregated visitor access routes, with the provision of extensive interactive audio-visual and other display and information facilities for visitors to our “working museum”.

To this end we have secured major funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, GROW South Antrim, Carrickfergus Council and Ulster Garden Villages, as well as contributions and legacies from our members. Unfortunately, our £1.64m grant from HLF cannot be accessed until we receive further comparable funding from another external source.



Marking the launch of the GROW-funded project in March 2014 are Colin Robinson of architects Ostick & Williams; Denis Grimshaw, RPSI chairman; Councillor Mark Cosgrove of GROW, Pat Cleary of Cleary contracting; Vera McWilliam of GROW; and David Logan from consultants RPS.

Whilst we have been negotiating with a potential additional funder for almost three years, this process has still not been finalised, although it has recently moved on significantly, albeit outwith the period covered by this report .

The station building was completed and handed over to us in June 2013, although much of the internal equipment and facilities (café and interactive interpretative information displays and equipment) are still awaited, pending further funding.

No sooner had the station been finished before work on the ash pit and concrete apron outside the locomotive shed was started, again financed by GROW.

The three items in the next stage of the (mainly) GROW-funded programme, were the cosmetic restoration of our Sleeping Car, and the overhaul of GNR(I) 4-4-0 locomotives 171 (S Class) and 131 (Q Class).

The sleeping car project is being tackled mainly by our volunteer workforce at Whitehead, with

additional input as required from our engineering company, HEI. This project includes the provision and fitting of the correct type of bogies (Mark 3), as well as repainting and lining-out in LMS-NCC crimson lake livery, and lettering as “LMS-NCC Camping Carriage 27” - following on from the original NCC fleet numbers for such vehicles. This carriage will be located in a very prominent position on our future visitor tour route - hence the rationale for its refurbishment.

Our Engineering Company submitted a successful bid for the overhaul and return to main-line working order (after an absence of some 52 years) of GNR(I) Q-Class No.131, and this work is well underway at Whitehead.



This is the extension to the Whitehead Carriage shed funded by GROW, giving us an additional 240 feet of covered accommodation in our first 4-road shed. More details of this and other building work next issue!

However, HEI do not have the workshop space and capacity, and enough trained engineering staff and volunteers to carry out two major locomotive overhauls at the same time, and all within a “non-negotiable” timescale of less than a year. Therefore, to avail of the offer of very substantial funding, we had to put 171’s overhaul out to tender. These works also had to be advertised to comply with funders’ procurement requirements.

Consequently, 171 (and tender) were transported by low-loader to Rail Restorations North East Ltd at Shildon in Co. Durham. We have been able to call on the inspection and reporting assistance of a well-qualified and experienced locomotive engineer (one of the principal engineers involved in the new-build A1 “Tornado” 4-6-2 and P2 “Prince of Wales” 2-8-2 projects in Britain).

It also proved possible to make up a further package of building extension and other works (including a new car park - which is a condition of our planning permission), which would allow most of the remaining GROW grant to be accessed. This work comprised the further extension of carriage shed roads 1 and 2, the first couple of bays of the new carriage shed Nos. 3 and 4 roads, the construction of new coal and ash bunkers (the existing coal bunker was blocking the future visitor access route), and part of the planned extension to the locomotive workshop. This work is now well under way - but that’s a story for next year’s Five Foot Three!

Dublin Area Facilities

The absence of secure covered accommodation for our Dublin-based locomotive(s) and carriages is causing increasing concern and difficulties. Whilst we greatly appreciate the assistance and forbearance of Iarnród Éireann in the storage of our locomotive(s) at Connolly, and our carriage fleets at Inchicore, our facilities for inspection, cleaning, maintenance and upgrading works are severely limited.

Whilst our Dublin-based volunteers have done a superb job in keeping us “on the rails”, we could do a lot more with the benefit of secure covered accommodation, where we could provide much more equipment and other facilities.

We have been discussing with CIÉ for a lease or similar arrangement for the former locomotive shed at Connolly station in Dublin, which could one or two steam locomotives, and two or three of our diesel locomotives.

Our Dublin Area has now set up a Development Committee to explore various options and possibilities for a site which could securely house all our Dublin-based vehicles, with public display facilities.

Dundalk Site

This project is still in abeyance, as we did not receive the funding for which we had applied. The objective was to set up a museum which could house (inter alia) some of our wooden-bodied carriages, as well as the provision of steam locomotive facilities (secure storage for one or two engines), an inspection pit, water supply, and a turntable, to enable Dundalk to become a regular destination for steam-hauled trips from both Belfast and Dublin.

The site is the former Ardee Road goods yard, between the passenger station and the former Dundalk West Junction. It is fully rail-connected, with modern track and signalling, but no longer used by IÉ. We have also obtained outline Planning Permission for our plans, and have been discussing acquisition possibilities with CIÉ Properties.

This proposal is not intended as an alternative to a Dublin base for the Society, which remains our prime objective. It could, however, store and display some of our historic wooden-bodied carriages, reducing the size of a possible Dublin site.

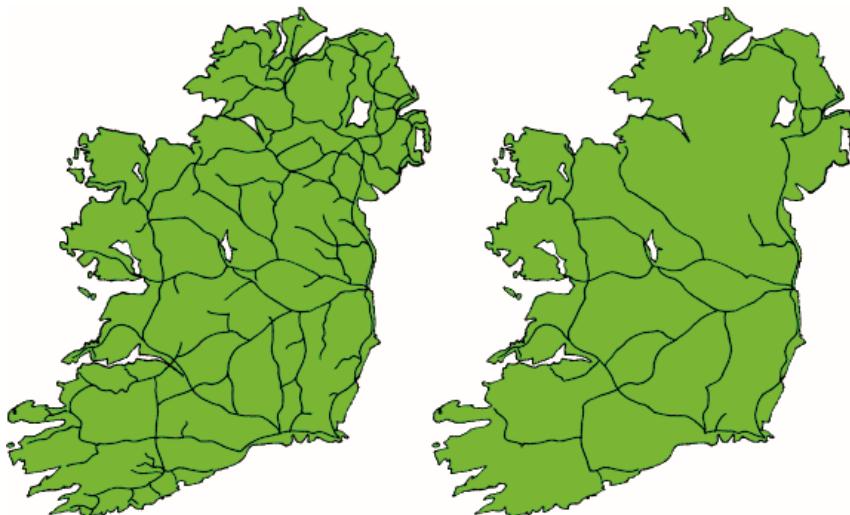


RPSI Vice-Presidents Joan Smyth, Robert Guinness and Nora Owen with Chairman Denis Grimshaw (second right) at the 50th Anniversary dinner on 17th May 2014.



Fifty years ago the Irish railway network was in the throes of a crisis that would change it for ever.

It was out of this crisis that the RPSI was born...



The Irish Railway network at its peak in the 1920s (far left) and today (left).

Once central to Irish society, the network became a shadow of its former self with rapid cutbacks in the 1950s and 1960s.



The line from Navan to Clonsilla, which had operated since 1862, being lifted at Bective on 18th July 1964. (E.M. Patterson, EMP108D)



As routes and services were cut the railways were left with a surplus of rolling stock - and scrap metal was a vital source of funds. UTA No.76, a PP class built for the GNR(I) in 1898, being cut up at Queen's Quay, Belfast, 18th August 1959. (E.M. Patterson, EMP061J)



Former GNR(I) locomotives being scrapped at Dundalk Junction on 28th July 1960. (E.M. Patterson, EMP080N)



This was the last 'real' steam passenger working from Bangor on 28th July 1965. UG class No.49 survived long enough to pull the first two RPSI tours, but sadly was not preserved. (E.M. Patterson, EMP119A)



A scene of carnage at Mullingar on 11th August 1965, strewn with the remains of locomotives, carriages and wagons. In Ireland, rolling stock could be in service one day and in pieces the next, so preservationists had to move fast, with whatever resources they could scrape together. By contrast the scrapyard at Barry in Wales sold its last steam engines into preservation in 1990! (E.M. Patterson, EMP120L)

Massive and fundamental changes were taking place to the railways in Ireland throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Most such changes were bad news in the form of line closures, but there was some investment in “new trains” of various types, although many diesel railcars and trailers were converted from some of the more modern carriages, whilst CIÉ’s new diesel-electric locomotives often hauled much older carriages or even older goods wagons.

The list of closures greatly escalated during the 1950s, with entire systems vanishing - the Irish North (Dundalk - Clones - Enniskillen - Omagh), the Ulster Railway from Portadown to Armagh, Clones and Cavan, the entire DNGR, the entire BCDR system other than the Bangor line, the NCC’s Derry Central and Cookstown lines, the entire West Cork network, the Dublin Harcourt Street line, numerous secondary routes and branches, and the entire narrow gauge network - although the West Clare got to see 1960 - and even a month of 1961.

If that was not bad enough, the Benson Report of 1963 proposed the closure of all the remaining lines in Northern Ireland, other than (Dublin) - Border - Belfast Great Victoria Street, York Road to Larne Harbour, and Queens Quay to Bangor - as well as the cessation of all freight traffic.

Whilst the NCC Derry Line was eventually reprieved, CIÉ implemented another huge round of line closures in the 1960s - Portlaoise to Kilkenny, Limerick - Athenry - Claremorris - Collooney (for Sligo), the North Wexford line, Mallow - Dungarvan - Waterford, and the North Kerry line - *inter alia*.

A by-product of the massive reductions in railway route mileage, and associated passenger and freight traffic, was the ability of CIÉ to completely abolish steam traction at the end of March 1963, as the remaining traffic could be handled by diesel traction.

Similarly, the impending closure of the “Derry Road” and Goraghwood - Newry - Warrenpoint at the beginning of 1965, and the demise of goods traffic on the UTA system, other than CIÉ’s Dublin - Derry (for Donegal) freight traffic, would come very close to ensuring the elimination of all remaining steam traction on the UTA system as well. This was before the inception of the Magheramorne Spoil Train contract, which was to extend the availability of an NCC WT Class locomotive for preservation as late as 1971.

Whilst the small band of railway enthusiasts throughout Ireland had probably become conditioned to this ever-downward railway scene, some of their younger - and perhaps rasher - colleagues began to wonder if this one-way process could be stopped, or at least a semblance of steam traction and locomotive-hauled trains retained and operated for the education and enjoyment of future generations.

Whilst the politically-directed line closure policies were considered to be too well ensconced to be seriously challenged at that time, a potentially more viable option was thought possible, in the form of privately acquiring and “preserving” a small number of main line steam locomotives, and coming to some sort of arrangement with the UTA and CIÉ to use these on occasional special trains.

In particular, a group of three young men in their late teens, who had some experience of setting-up and managing voluntary railway or other transport societies, specifically considered how they could establish a railway preservation movement.

Derek Young was the Secretary of the NI Road and Rail Development Association - a body set up to promote a fair balance between road-based transport and railways, and to improve and integrate public transport where possible and appropriate.

Denis Grimshaw had founded the Royal Belfast Academical Institution Railway Society, which ran four steam railtours between 1962 and 1964. He also established the NI Railway Societies Joint Committee to plan joint activities on behalf of the RBAIRS, NIR&RDA and FBTM. The NIRSJC ran a railtour from Belfast to Loughrea and back in April 1964.

Prestige not reason enough to keep line open, says Minister

BELFAST - -

RAIL LINK QUERY *Retention plea* IN STORMON Link with Steam *say*

"Irish Independent" Reporter
A TELEVISION interview given by the Northern Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. W. Craig, in which he gave his views

Age is severed *d*

Four steam engines, two from over

Four steam engines, two from Wexford and two from Water- over the
-st-Dublin
their way Stormont

U.T.A. at last confirms our story of rail link cut at Border

THE railway system in the North must be virtually closed and the Dublin-Belfast rail link cut at Goraghwood on the Border if the Ulster Transport Authority is to pay its way by September, 1964.

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

Dear Sir/Madam,

At present we are faced with the loss of most of our Railways, those remaining are being modernised and steam traction is rapidly becoming extinct. Consequently we feel that the time is now arrived to take the necessary steps to form a Society with the aims of:-

- (1) The acquisition of historical Railway relics and their restoration to working order and original condition.
- (2) To display the preserved vehicles etc. to the public, particularly under the conditions for which they were designed.
- (3) To give persons interested in all aspects of Railway history the opportunity of playing an active part in restoring all classes of relics.

It is proposed to hold an inaugural meeting of the Society on Wednesday 30th September at 7.45 p.m. at the Smiley Hall of the Presbyterian Hostel, Howard Street, Belfast. The chair will be taken on this occasion by the Rt. Hon. The Lord O'Neill who has agreed to become a Patron of the Society.

Everyone interested is cordially invited to attend. Your support is earnestly requested as the success or failure of this important venture depends on a large and active membership.

If you are unable to attend, but would be interested in further information concerning the Society please write to undersigned.

Yours faithfully,

J. R. HARDCOURT

Chairman/Provisional Committee.

Michael Shannon was the Secretary of the Friends of the Belfast Transport Museum (FBTM) - a voluntary group which assisted in the operation of the museum and the restoration of the exhibits.

The coordination resulting from the NIRJC venture provided much of the impetus for the formation of the RPSI a few months later.

Right from the start, it was decided that to attract enough support - and thus passengers - for possible steam trains, this would have to be on an Ireland-wide basis, which would also provide a larger source of membership.

The examples of the Bluebell Railway in England, and the Welsh narrow gauge railways were noted, but the potential cost of acquiring a railway line of our own was considered to be completely prohibitive. Instead we planned to buy two or three steam locomotives, and come to a financial arrangement with the UTA and/or CIÉ to (initially) store them for us, and undertake running repairs as required. Our initial, and seemingly ambitious, aspiration was to keep steam going for another ten years.

Special trains would be operated on various UTA and CIÉ routes, with the fares collected contributing to the maintenance and storage costs. Fortunately, both the UTA and CIÉ had lots of locomotive-hauled carriages which we could hire on a per-trip basis for use on our trains as required.

In the longer term, we had aspirations of acquiring our own "depot" - or "base" or "site", where we could undertake some of the less technical servicing and minor maintenance work ourselves.

Two possible "sites" were initially considered, where disused goods yards or other similar depots were still "rail-connected" in terms of track and signalling. These were Moira Goods Yard and Whitehead Excursion station, both 15 miles from Belfast, albeit on different routes.

Moira had the major advantage of being directly connected to the Belfast - Dublin main line, but the site was very narrow and had a busy public road level crossing half way along it. As there was no run-round provision on the main line at Moira, all trains entering the site would have to come from Portadown, and then propel into the site, whilst all departing trains would have to run initially to Lisburn.

Whitehead was much more spacious, although until relatively recent years all trains arriving from Belfast had to run through the station onto the single line towards Larne, and then propel back into the "Up" platform, before running forward again into the site. More serious, however, was the 64-mile run with three reversals, to get from Whitehead to Lisburn en route to Dublin - or 75 miles to future Central Service Depot. We certainly never envisaged that this particular difficulty would be eliminated almost exactly 30 years later with the opening of the Belfast Cross-Harbour Rail Link.

Nevertheless, the size of the self-contained site at Whitehead, its proximity to York Road Locomotive Works, and the absence of a main road through the middle of the site won the day.

Meanwhile, back in 1964, the three initial proponents of the RPSI contacted as many other known railway enthusiasts as possible to enlist their support. Naming names is always risky, as some people are invariably left out, particularly so when the extent of each individual's involvement may have varied considerably. However, prominent people who got involved at the pre-inaugural meeting stage were (Councillor) John Harcourt, Laurence Liddle, John McGuigan (Senior), Harry Frazer, Craig Robb, Sullivan Boomer, Graham Nevin, John White, and - of course - our President then and now, The Lord O'Neill.

A public inaugural meeting was arranged for 30th September 1964, in the Presbyterian War Memorial Building in Brunswick Street in Belfast - a widely-used public meeting room - some 150 yards from Great Victoria Street Station.

And the rest, they say, is history! Little did we envisage the scale of operations we take for granted today, the development of our Whitehead premises and our ongoing quest for a Dublin equivalent, the size of our locomotive fleet and of our own carriage fleets, the sheer extent and complexity of the engineering work on our locomotives and carriages - or that the RPSI would still be thriving 50 years later - somewhat exceeding our initial ambition!



The RPSI's inaugural outing pauses at Moira on 11th September 1965. No.171 Slieve Gullion is piloting No.207 Boyne. 171 is not yet a preserved engine and 207 sadly never would be - this was her last day in steam. Chartering a train from the railway company was nothing new - but it was the start of so much more...

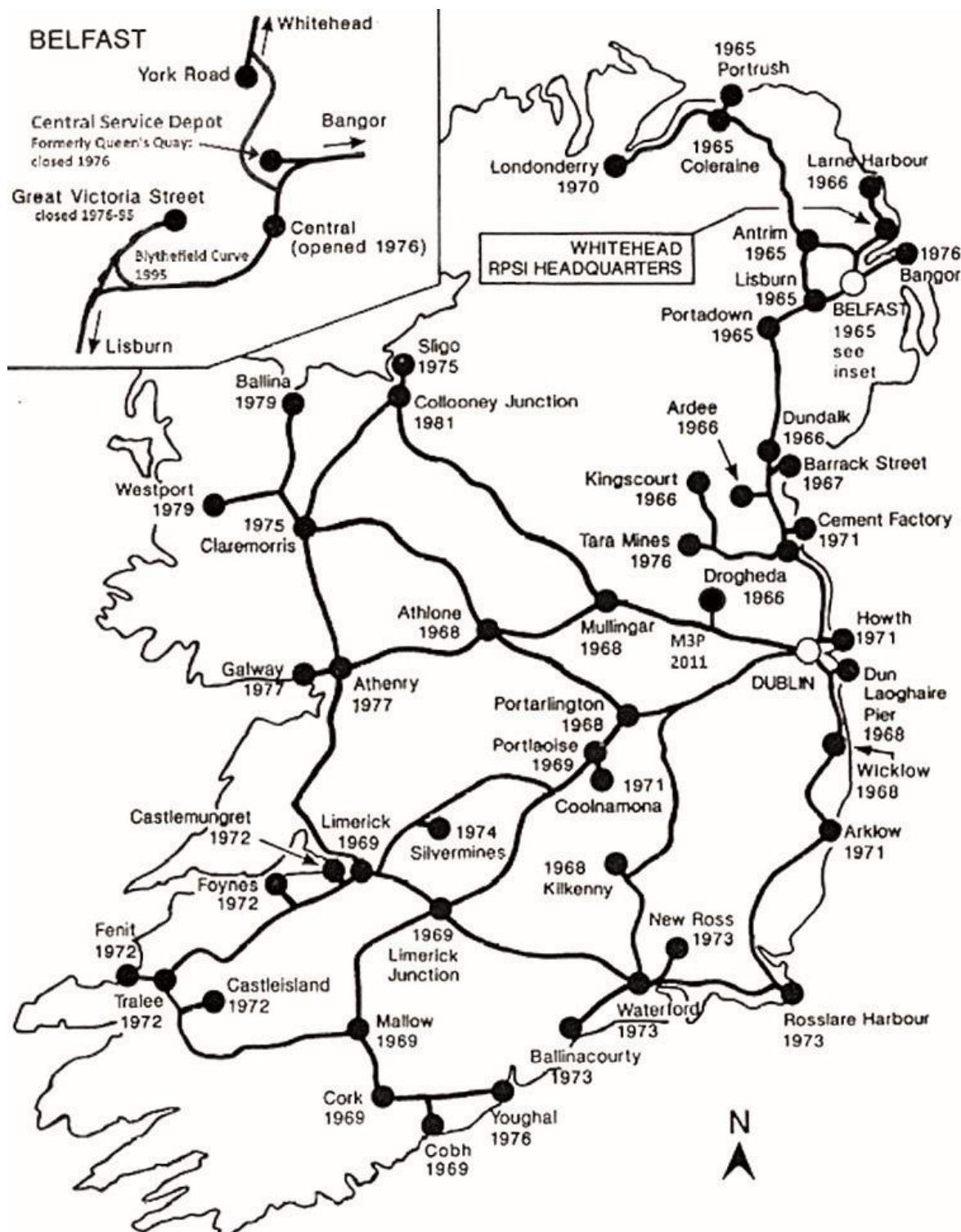
FIFTY YEARS OF BREAKING NEW GROUND

Joe Cassells

In our foundation year there already was a Transport Museum in Belfast, there were railway societies in Ireland, and there had been a great all-Ireland tour, as well as several steam day trips. So what new ground have we broken since? What we offer is quite simply a unique package: our engines and coaches, maintained by our personnel, working our trains over the Irish railway network. A pipe dream in 1964; realised time and again over the following half century.

We began on a shoestring, thankful for such gifts from their owners as Guinness 3BG and J15 186 in 1965, Irish Shell diesel 23 in 1973, the CSÉ Carlow diesel in 1981 and the NIR Unilok (most lucrative of all our 'engines'?) in 1985. In 1972 LPHC 3 - "Harvey" - was ours for a nominal £1, paid to its owner the Rev L.H. Campbell. Leasing arrangements brought us 171 from the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company and 85 from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, the latter's overhaul funded by the late Lord Henry Dunleath. 184 and 461, loaned by CIÉ in 1977, were acquired from Irish Rail in 2005, along with 131, the most recent addition to our stock. In 2009, private funding supplied us with our first two main line diesels, ex- CIÉ GMs 141 and 142 - ground breaking in another way! The

only serious money paid up front has been £1,275 for 4 in 1971 and a similar sum for 27 in 1980. Maintenance of course is another matter, not to speak of the installation of TPWS and OTMR, the administration of main line crew assessment, and the recent Railway Safety Commission certification procedures for Irish Rail. We climb mountains as well as breaking ground!



*This map shows the year in which RPSI trains reached key destinations on the network.
(Tim Morton)*

Maintenance broke more ground - in some cases literally. Our Whitehead headquarters was leased in 1966, was bought outright in 2007 and is currently in course of major expansion. Our founders, limited in experience, relied on sympathetic experienced professionals. York Road, Adelaide and Inchicore men did us many favours in their own time. 171 and 85 had their first heavy overhauls at Harland & Wolff, but the hope was that some day we could do it ourselves. Selfless commitment began early, as working members learned new skills at Millfield Tech. The range gradually expanded: hand tools acquired, or manufactured by the inventive Peter Scott; hand ratchets for retubing, electric drive for tube expanding, grit blasting by air compressors, swaging boiler tubes using an old Swift lathe, wheel turning on the great lathe from York Road, then the wheel drop in 1982 and the sheer legs from York Road and Central Services Depot ten years later.



Perhaps the first time we really broke new ground was the 'Dalriada' railtour on 13th May 1967, when No.186 was the first engine owned by a preservation group to operate passenger trains on the main line in Ireland, shuttling back and forth between Coleraine and Portrush. She is seen here with UTA No.55 at Portstewart. Author Joe Cassells is on the far right. (David Lawrence, Photos from the Fifties)

Forging, casting and flanging became possible as a foundry was established in 1998. A shearing and punching machine came from Limerick works: 'ponderously awe-inspiring' was a comment on its operation! Today's Dunleath Workshop, including the 1897 BCDR overhead crane, is the base for Heritage Engineering Ireland (our engineering subsidiary, created in 2011). With valuable assistance from Society volunteers, HEI maintains our engines and handles work for heritage railways of all gauges, including contracts from Britain, the Isle of Man and the Republic. Most important, we have brought to maturity the first 'post steam' generation of young locomotive engineers.

Open Days and Schools Days have given the younger generation an insight into the transport world of their grandparents. As yet we have no comparable southern facility, but 461 has been lifted, and much coach maintenance done, at Inchicore. Since 1977 we have done occasional repair work at Mullingar.

A third ground-breaker is operation. At first our engines with NIR and CIÉ steam crews hauled vacuum braked 'company' coaches - though by 1986 we owned enough carriages to form Whitehead and Dublin-based sets. The catastrophic derailment of a CIÉ train at Buttevant in 1980 cast the first shadow

over traditional carriages. By the end of that decade wooden bodied stock was effectively restricted to the Rosslare and Sligo main lines and some of the secondary cross country routes. The era of traditional stock ended on NIR in 2003 - allowing two of our ex LMS coaches, 238 and 241, to be 'repatriated' to Embsay in 2005. By 2004 we owned Mark 2 carriages from NIR, IÉ and British Rail for our northern operations, and four years later a set of Cravens for trains in the south. Along the way came coaches of historic importance, particularly the last two Presidential Saloons from Irish Rail and the ex-GNR Directors' Saloon. The next problem was secondary door locking, compulsory on NIR after 2007. Our in-house designed mechanism solved this one, becoming the envy of the professionals! However, this and other regulations also mean our Cravens carriages are currently restricted to Irish Rail. Our mainline engines must be TPWS/OTMR fitted for NIR, and our operations volunteers must have Personal Track Safety certification for trackside and depot work north and south. In addition, much hard work was required to achieve 'guest operator' status on Iarnród Éireann. Breaking new ground is no straightforward task!



Derek Henderson contemplates the next move as Guinness No.3 welcomes LPHC No.3 to Whitehead on 10th June 1972.

Breaking new ground geographically was a foundation aim, and when 184 and 171 steamed over Collooney Junction on 26th September 1981 the complete Irish network was finally covered for the first time by RPSI trains. Sadly, some of that network no longer exists, so it's as well that we first covered Ardee and Kingscourt in 1966, the Belfast Harbour Commissioners lines and Dundalk Barrack Street in 1967, The Murrough Station at Wicklow Goods and Dun Laoghaire Pier in 1968, the Drogheda Cement branch, the North Wall, the Curragh Siding and the stub of Port Laois - Kilkenny in 1971, the Broadstone stub, the North Kerry line, Castlemungret, Foynes, Fenit and Castleisland in 1972, New Ross and Ballinacourty in 1973, the "Burma Road" from Claremorris to Sligo and the branch to Sligo Quay in 1975, Youghal in 1976 and Athenry to Claremorris in 1977. No RPSI train ever quite entered the platforms at Queens Quay, but we did cover York Road, the original Great Victoria Street, Larne Harbour and Londonderry Waterside stations, and the stub of the 'Back Line' at Greenisland. Although it has not officially closed, we probably did run the last passenger train over the Mullingar to Athlone line in 1994, and we can only hope that the South Wexford and Nenagh routes will not be added to this

list. Sadly there were two that got away. Passage of the Cork City Railways was vetoed shortly before the June 1976 'Seandun' railtour, and the Loughrea branch was deemed too light even for 184 during the June 1981 'Claddagh' tour.



No.85 Merlin leaves Harland and Woolf after her first overhaul in preservation in February 1982.

More positively, in 1976, 4 worked the last steam train into the remains of Queens Quay - and then brought the first one into Belfast Central. In 1992, 171 traversed the Cultra 'branch' whilst delivering B1a 800 to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. She broke further new ground in being 'shedded' there for a week. 85 led the way over the Belfast Cross Harbour Link in 1994, and the following year brought steam back into the resurrected Great Victoria Street by way of the new Blythefield Curve. In 2011 steam penetrated the new Dublin Docklands Branch and the old Clonsilla - Navan line now reopened as far as M3 Parkway. In 2012 186 was hired by NIR for the official opening of the new Adelaide railcar depot, and 461 was detoured via Laois Train Care depot in 2013. As well as covering ground, we have created it: in 2010 we laid 80m of narrow gauge track on the bed of the CDR Killybegs line for a small preservation scheme. One total ground-breaker, now unlikely ever to be repeated, was the takeover of the Portrush branch for a full day of steam branch trains on 13th May 1967 using NIR 55 and our own 186. At that time, of course, the Portrush branch only had a regular summer service.

Our operations too have been ground-breakers. Best known is our May tour, run almost annually since 1968, with a smaller number of enthusiast-focused day trips. One of the finest was the Belfast - Dublin nonstop Enterprise re-enactment in August 1987. It slightly bettered the 1947 timing of 2 hours 15 minutes, all the more creditably since the run from Central Station to Dublin Connolly is a mile longer than the original route from Great Victoria Street. Non-enthusiast trains though, have become our real earners. Private charters have celebrated many events, including two birthdays, two real weddings, one mock funeral (commemorating Michael Davitt's, at Foxford), and even the 1996 Irish Derby at the Curragh. This was an IÉ charter, and 171 hauled a train of Mark 2D air conditioned stock, using the now closed Curragh Main Line platforms. Regular operations, in particular to Portrush, Bangor,

Rosslare, Kilkenny, and Mullingar have reinforced our public profile. In 1981 we pioneered main line steam Santa trains, initially from Mullingar. Today our well-established Belfast and Dublin Santa, Easter Bunny and Halowe'en trains still have no counterpart on Network Rail! We have created 'niche' markets, most notably the summer Jazz trains. Two other RPSI institutions have driven publicity: 2014 marks the 40th anniversary of Charles Friel's Belfast Meetings, while this edition of "Five Foot Three" will be our 60th. While NIR still had steam crews 4, 171 and 186 all did 'company' work whilst running in after overhaul. Steam veterans Davie McDonald and Harry Ramsey had 4 for a week of ballast work in February 1984, enjoying themselves immensely. As they returned reluctantly to normal duties, Davie's famous comment must be recorded: "If Harry and I had this engine for another week, she'd burn no coal at all!" In more recent years LPHC 3 "Harvey", driven and fired by RPSI crews, was hired to Henry Boot in 2000 and Amec in 2005 as the Bleach Green-Antrim and Bleach Green-Whitehead lines were renewed. More glamorously "The First Great Train Robbery" in 1978 was only the biggest and best-known of a huge number of film, television and advertising contracts.



The Whitehead wheel drop pit is an example of the RPSI's developing maintenance facilities. Before it was built removing an engine's wheels needed a lot of time and patience to jack the whole engine up off the wheels! Here, it is being used for the first time in 1978 to remove No.171's driving axle. Since then this area has become nearly unrecognisable, with the carriage shed and Henry Dunleath workshop being built to the right. As we go to press the wheel drop itself is now indoors as well, the workshop being extended sideways over it as part of the GROW project.

One final piece of ground-breaking might be mentioned. The steam drivers and firemen of the 1960s have now all retired, but men whose railway service began after the age of steam have preserved the art and craft of driving and firing. Dan and Tony Renehan in Dublin in the 1970s, and Noel Playfair and

Gary Moore in Belfast in the 1980s were the pioneers. Thankfully others have steadily come along behind them as drivers, firemen and loco inspectors. Implementing training and assessment programmes is a major, and ongoing, administrative task for the Society. But without this ground being broken, there would be no trains at all!

All of us owe a huge debt to our founders for their vision, energy, determination, and willingness to learn from others. What they began has given enjoyment to a huge number of people, and set an example to the Heritage Railway movement worldwide. Some of them have now passed on, leaving behind a legacy in which their successors can take justifiable pride. Others among those young men of 1964 - now retired from paid employment - continue to serve the Society as vigorously as ever. Those they encouraged to join the RPSI have caught the vision themselves, and taken it forward equally energetically. The newest generation of active members have now worked their way through the operating grades, and are making their mark at Board level. Among their many achievements was restoration of our GNR(I) brake van, which won the 2009 Heritage Railway Association Award for Best Restored Wagon. All our activists, young and old, voluntarily work long, hard and unsociable hours, often unadvertised and unrecognised. They do it for the sake of others rather than themselves. So as we mark a significant anniversary, we can be confident that the regulator is in safe hands. There is still new ground to be broken in the years ahead!



No.3 "R.H. Smyth" propelling her train of ballast wagons during the Bleach Green-Antrim relay contract of 2000. This once-in-a-lifetime experience happened again just five years later as the RPSI brought serious, commercial use of steam to the UK in the 21st century!

Four Society stalwarts - Charles Friel, Denis Grimshaw, Robin Morton and Paul McCann - have been of great help to me in researching this article, and I must record my thanks to them. Their friendship over many years, and their willing co-operation in this venture, exemplify all that is best in the RPSI on its 50th birthday.



Frank Dunlop, Billy McCaughley and Jackie Kitchen, together with volunteer Harry Mulholland (second right) toast the success of the fortieth anniversary Enterprise on 11th August 1987, having arrived into Dublin Connolly station slightly ahead of the timings of the inaugural Enterprise in 1947. This last generation of 'real' steam men also passed on their skills to the first generation of preserved steam crews on NIR, who are still with us today. Sadly Jackie is no longer with us, and Billy also passed away in June 2014.



Nos. 4 and 171 double-heading a Steam Enterprise over the Craigmore viaduct at Newry on 3rd September 1988.



No.184 at Dublin Heuston station in 1978 for the filming of 'The First Great Train Robbery'.

THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS...

Phillip Newell

To cite the Roman god Janus, oft mentioned within these pages, our 50th year has been a time of reflection and wonder at what has been achieved so far, but also a time to look into the crystal ball and prepare for the future.

In the next five years or so our site at Whitehead will have designated visitor areas and proper museum facilities which we can use to show off our largely forgotten (?) wooden bodied fleet and locomotives. Part of this scheme will involve the long awaited and overdue carriage shed to protect the breadwinner Mark 2 rolling stock from the elements, which will dramatically allow us to improve the exterior and interior conditions of the vehicles and their security.

At the same time we will gain much needed machine and work space for ourselves and HEI as well as keeping the rot at bay in the vehicles that make up the 'rubbish rake'. Furthermore we will see the return to steam of 131 after a 52 year career break and the welcome return of 171.

The RPSI is of course an all-Ireland body and it is vital to our continued existence and operation from Dublin that we can develop our own facilities and work practices instead of operating under IEs which are suitable for maintaining modern vehicles but not heritage vehicles. There is also the extra challenge of acquiring equipment and knowledge to maintain, overhaul and operate our new diesel fleet. In addition to this there are plans for a railway museum in Dundalk that will store surplus rolling stock in a secure, public-friendly setting leaving the Dublin and Whitehead bases for maintenance and operation stock.

However, looking further ahead there are three major areas of concern which are volunteer availability, steam infrastructure and operational capability.

Increasingly we appear to be running a small railway company and this is not possible to do whilst working Monday-Friday, with other commitments that will appear with time. Can we afford to pay more people to replace volunteers who are the very fabric that the Society relies upon? This appears to be a classic Catch 22 situation, as we need to run more trains to make more money but these trains will

need more volunteers/staff to operate, plan and advertise and therein lies the problem. Currently there is a rather large proportion of retired people running the Society but it is vital that more processes are put in place to gradually transfer responsibility so that there is no major governance and organisational deficit in the future.

This major problem of transferring skills from one generation to the next (the RPSI appears to have skipped one) is not unique to us. Whilst this is slowly underway in the form of the 'youth' Guinness Engine project, it is rather alarming to note that the youngest youth is now about the age of the oldest youth in 2003 when the youth group kicked off. A well-known (former!) youth is on record as saying that the youth team are now also the restoration and operations team leaving very little time (if any) for another Ivan type project. However, it is very refreshing to see a regular youth presence at work on a Saturday afternoon and not a week goes by where someone doesn't pick up a new skill.



The illusion of three GNR engines in steam at Whitehead in 1994 - the third is merely No.186 parked in front of the disused VS class tender. But some day, perhaps soon, this could be the reality!

Steam infrastructure is of course redundant on the modern railway and in the last 10-15 years we have lost the Cork and Galway tables and a few watering points. In addition if the interconnector goes ahead we risk losing the Inchicore table as well and there is a danger we may lose the Amiens Street GN table which must be retained as the GN engines don't fit on the DSER table which will complicate steam enterprises somewhat. More worryingly perhaps, is that in a diesel railcar orientated world run round loops may become an endangered species, leading to operational difficulties and addition expense for the hire of release locos from the railway company. There is also talk in the next 25 years of electrification which, while not impossible to deal with, will make fire cleaning and watering via the traditional tanks impossible.

However it is not all doom and gloom as the upgrade of the line to the Maiden City and the possibility of NIR relocating to the original BNCR station could lead to the reinstalling of the former turntable. In addition we will hopefully see the reinstatement of water supplies at key stations throughout Ireland in the next few decades.

We continue to have a very professional and positive relationship with both railway companies however there will be more challenges to meet in the next 2-3 decades which will all be very expensive. We have successfully recruited and trained new footplate staff from NIR in the last few years to ensure a new generation of steam men for the future and it is hoped there will be more to follow on both NIR and IÉ shortly. We have successfully fitted TPWS and OTMR to the locos which highlights the in house skills and adaptability that the Society is renowned for, though inevitably there will be more complicated systems that will supersede such devices. With the train becoming more popular now the number of paths available is much reduced, though with the retirement of 186 there will be opportunities for more spirited runs behind 4, 171, 85, 131 and 58(??) which may even appear as a weekly special as part of the ordinary timetable during the summer in the future - watch this space!!

There may also be a chance far in the future for the RPSI to crew our own locos between Whitehead and Larne, similar to the NYMR setup from Grosmont to Whitby or hopefully further afield. Who knows?



At the RPSI 50 launch event in Whitehead station building on 26th March 2014, the RPSI's original chairman John Harcourt symbolically hands over the staff to current board member Mark Walsh.

One further consideration is that as time moves on our locomotives and rolling stock are not getting any younger. As a result we will need to start putting serious financial reserves in place, as there are several very large financial outlays on the horizon such as major boiler work (or replacement), new tyres for the locos, new B4 wheel sets for the coaches and engine and traction motor refurbishments for the diesels, just to ensure there are vehicles to run in 50 years' time. It is also worth remembering that

there is now no more suitable hauled coaching stock left on the Island, so what we have has to last. To conclude, it is clear there are a number of challenges ahead. However, if the new generation meet these with the same attitude, enthusiasm, drive and motivation of the founding fathers then the future of Irish mainline steam is safe for another 50 years. Remember only YOU can prevent the future of mainline steam from becoming nothing more than projected images on a wall behind a cold engine in a museum.

OBITUARIES

Charles Meredith



Chas Meredith with coach 1142 on the completion of its overhaul in November 2008. (G. Mooney)

Born in Dublin on 16th January 1933, Charles Meredith's railway interest took root while living near Foxrock station on the Harcourt Street to Bray line.

Chas' uncle, Richard Walsingham Meredith, was the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Great Northern Railway in Dundalk. Probably thanks to his Uncle's position, Chas was able to gain footplate passes from CIÉ which he used extensively in the last four years of steam, travelling by his estimate 27,000 miles on the footplate.

He thought that he had driven, and photographed, loco 354 on the very last lifting train on the Harcourt Street line on 28th June 1960. But they ran another train the next day - Chas' negatives are labelled "foiled!!!"

Chas' first involvement with railway preservation was across the water, at the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway in 1973 or 1974. He made many trips there, mainly working on Bulleid Pacific 34092 'City of Wells' to return it to the main line. The project was completed in 1978 and Chas joined the RPSI to get involved with main line steam closer to home.

As the RPSI locomotive officer in Dublin for about the next ten years, Chas organised the running of steam all over the CIÉ system. He had a particular fondness for No.461, which he remembered from his

days at Foxrock.

Later Chas turned his attention to carriages and was heavily involved in the projects to restore Royal Saloon 351 (completed in 2003) and GS&WR corridor first 1142 (completed 2008).

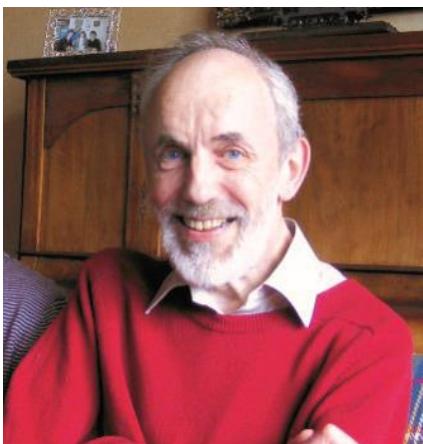
Chas also became a familiar figure on railtours, selling real ales from a keg on a tabletop to what he described as “the more discerning customers”!

Chas’ other great passion was for jazz music. He took the stage name ‘Rock Fox’ - a play on ‘Foxrock’ - and became a vital part of the Irish Jazz scene. He played the trumpet, saxophone and clarinet, and was also a band leader, appearing as ‘Rock Fox and his Famous Orchestra’, specializing in the music of Duke Ellington. Chas collaborated with many other notable musicians in groups large and small, and presented a weekly jazz programme on RTÉ Radio 1.

None of this, though, was really Chas’ day job - after a career as a solicitor he retired early at the age of 50... it’s hard to see when he would have had the time!

Passionate, determined and thoughtful, Chas is greatly missed by his friends in the RPSI.

Norman Johnston



Chas at work on 461's axleboxes in October 1993.

Norman Johnston will be best known to many members as the co-founder (with his wife Sheila) of Colourpoint Books, a source of very many books on Irish railway and transport topics.

Born in 1949, Norman was a committed railway enthusiast at a young age. At the age of 7 or 8 he was making drawings of GNR rolling stock, and in 1962 he began to photograph and collect information on steam locomotives - by then it was clear that the days of steam were numbered, and, as far as Norman knew, nobody else was interested. In 1966 he first heard of, and promptly joined, the RPSI.

Norman spent all of his career (1972 to 1997) teaching history in Omagh Academy. He published his first book, on the railways of Tyrone, in 1991. His second book was on the Fintona Horse Tram and brought much new material to hand.

Norman and Sheila founded Colourpoint Books in 1993 with the joint aims of producing quality post-primary books specially-written for the Northern Ireland curricula as well as quality books on Irish transport. Their railway books brought new standards of printing and photographic reproduction which was often the result of Norman’s eye for detail and him being on the printshop floor as the pages came

off the presses.

Colourpoint Books have covered both broad and narrow gauge railways as well as tramways, shipping, buses and aircraft and even local bread production. Colourpoint have also revised, enlarged and reissued many of the standard railway books of the late E.M. Patterson.

Norman's own main interests were steam locomotives and carriages; his book 'Locomotives of the GNR(I)' is the standard work on the subject. His other works include 'The GNR(I) in Colour' and two editions of 'Fermanagh's Railways'. Norman presented several talks at our own Belfast meetings and to the Modern Railway Society of Ireland.

Norman was very keen to see Merlin in action this year but he was really ill when the first Portrush Flyer ran and he did not get to see her. The word from Sheila was that things were drawing to a close for Norman and we braced ourselves for news of his final departure. Imagine our surprise, a fortnight later, when a dressing-gowned Norman, shrouded in hospital blankets, was seen waving furiously as the train pounded up the hill past Whiteabbey. Norman's determination had won through yet again and he was generous in his praise for how the loco looked and sounded as it swept past.

Norman got out of hospital soon afterwards and had another 17 days at home before dying peacefully in hospital on 31st August.

Even now we cannot close the book on Norman's legacy. Determined not to waste the time he had, Norman worked in his last months on one last book, based on his colour photographs between 1964 and 1972. He completed the manuscript shortly before his death. 'Parting Shot' is expected from Colourpoint before the end of the year.

Mark McClements

On Tuesday 1st July I received the sad news that Mark McClements, who carried out much electrical work for the RPSI, was tragically killed in a road accident.



Mark McClements testing the new electronics on No.4 in April 2010

I worked with Mark for many years at NIR, and remember him first as a lively youngster working along with the maintenance electricians. He later proved his worth as an electrical engineer with a thorough understanding of rolling stock electrics, and graduated to the NIR technical department. For many years he occupied the desk next to mine. Mark was one of a rare breed who could look at an electrical schematic or a somewhat outdated machine, and tell you not only what all the components were but what they were supposed to do and most importantly how the whole thing could be made to work.

Mark sorted out many of the RPSI electrical issues over the years, culminating in the fitting of the TPWS and OTMR equipment to locomotive No.4, the first of our locos to require this following the introduction of the recent railway safety legislation.

I will miss an old friend and colleague.

Peter Scott



No.85 running round the 'Steam & Jazz' train at Portadown on 4th July 2014, carrying a wreath in memory of the late Mark McClements.



On 27th October 2013, No.186 charges through Yorkgate station in Belfast with the 'Broomstick Belle'.