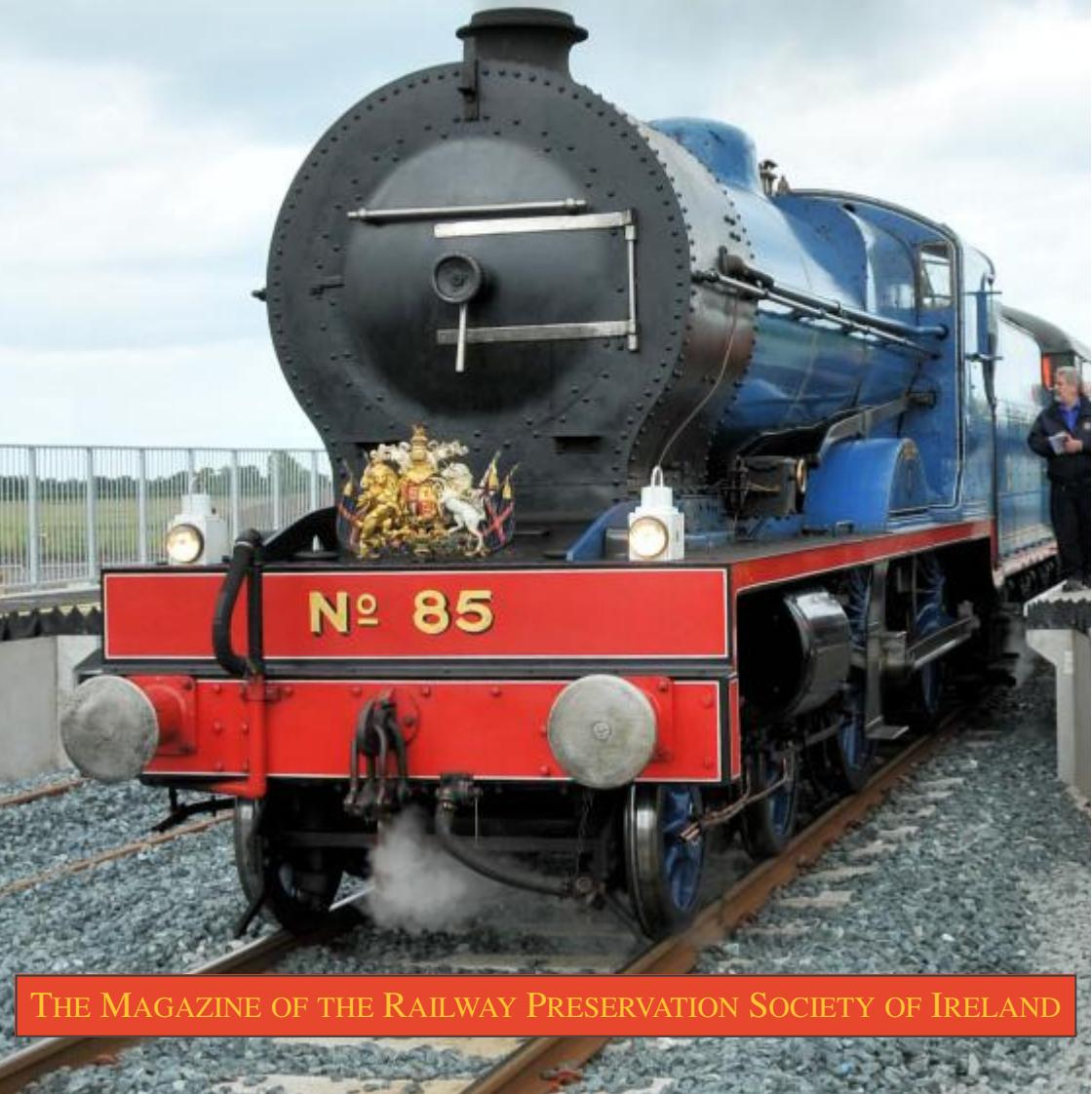


FIVE FOOT THREE



No. 62 March 2017



THE MAGAZINE OF THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND



ABOVE: No. 4 and the Cravens carriages departing Claremorris on Saturday 14th May 2016, with the Dublin - Westport leg of the 'Croagh Patrick' railtour. (Photo: G Roose)

FRONT COVER: No. 85, complete with Royal Crest, at the new Bellarena station on 28th June, having conveyed Her Majesty the Queen there for the official opening.

FIVE FOOT THREE No. 62

March 2017

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Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Board of the RPSI.

2016 can safely be categorised as yet another busy year. I fully expect 2017 to be just as busy, but we may hope that this time next year the turmoil of change will have settled down and we will be settling into the new 'normal' way of doing things.

The most obvious manifestation of the changes in the RPSI is, of course, the bricks and mortar at Whitehead. The number of building contractors about the place is finally dwindling now, and volunteers are getting better at finding their way around the labyrinth. The next big test is coming up in March, when we open our doors to the public.

Back in 1964, our first Chairman, John Harcourt, announced the formation of the

RPSI and stated its aims in these words:

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.

To satisfy these aims, our main activity has always been in the running of main line steam, and yet there has always been a little more to it. Our first item of rolling stock, the Guinness engine, was never going to be



RPSI education and interpretation, 1972 style! Bringing people into our premises has always been part of the RPSI's activities, but until now it has been impractical apart from occasional open days.

suitable for such events, and other items have followed; goods wagons, departmental vehicles and even machine tools - worthy of preservation as 'historical Railway relics', but rather difficult to 'display to the public'. More recently we have had to add a large part of our wooden-bodied carriage collection to this category. Once, they could be experienced as their makers intended, with long distance steam-hauled trips all over Ireland, but today the opportunities for their main line use have become very limited. What, then, can we do with all these items?

The answer, or at least part of the answer, is Whitehead Railway Museum.

The whole RPSI is, of course, a museum, and has been for 15 years now, although not in the conventional sense of being a big building one can visit on a rainy bank holiday. We are a museum in the sense that the whole institution has been examined and found to be competent and well-intentioned about looking after our uniquely historic collection. Museum status in that sense is a qualification that shows we are a good Preservation Society.

That qualification has opened up great opportunities for us, including grant support which has now allowed us, for the first time, to open a more conventional type of museum. Whitehead has been transformed into a place suitable for the casual visitor to come and browse, to see and find out about not only the working main line locomotives, but also those under overhaul and those in storage, as well as those goods vehicles, vintage carriages and other machinery.

Whitehead Railway Museum will be unique in allowing the public to see not only preserved railway equipment, but the processes and skills involved in their maintenance. Visitors will be able to see what goes on in the workshops and, hopefully, many of them will

come back again with their membership cards and overalls to get involved on the other side of the safety fences!

I say we have done this for the first time; it may not be the last. Being a museum, the RPSI may well establish permanent public exhibitions at other places in the future - after all, we have far more historic vehicles than we can display, even now.

The change has not been limited to the construction of buildings, either. We have now, for the first time, employed staff to work on the organization and promotion of the RPSI's activities - not only at Whitehead Railway Museum, but more broadly too. This is a change for us, but not such a radical one as it may seem considering the examples set by successful preserved railways the world over. We stand to benefit greatly from the experience brought by Ruth, Séan and Claire, not to mention their ability to dedicate far more time to the RPSI than the average volunteer. For them to help us, though, they are going to require support and cooperation from all of us, as we continue to work for a stable and sustainable RPSI to be passed on to future generations.

This issue of *Five Foot Three* attempts to cover everything we've been up to over the past year. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed reports, articles and photographs - many of which are simply superb. As usual it has been a challenge to keep the page count down!

I hope the magazine answers any questions you might have about what's been going on and, perhaps, gives you as a member ideas about what you'd like to do to contribute to those three noble aims this coming year.

Here's to another productive, successful and enjoyable year in 2017.

The biggest and most disruptive event in the Society's operation over the past year has been the main construction phase of the Whitehead development programme and the associated contractors' programmes. It is a huge relief that our train operations and the overhaul, maintenance and servicing of our locomotives and carriages, together with the successful completion of (at least) our normal level of train operations has proceeded apace. Vehicles and equipment have been moved around our Whitehead site to clear areas for our contractor as the works progressed, and later moved back to their previous or new locations.

These works are now effectively complete, and we are beginning to reap the benefit of much better and more extensive premises and facilities – not the least being our 60ft turntable – which is being used rather more than anticipated (or maybe that's just the novelty effect!).

The unseen work, however, has been the enormous amount of effort from our Curatorial Committee and others in writing and illustrating the extensive visual display and information systems which our new state-of-the art museum and interpretation systems will make available to our visitors. Anything you want to know about our trains and railways will be explained by our multi-layer touch-screen display systems. This didn't happen by itself, but only from thousands of hours of work by our Curatorial Committee and other working members.

To manage the very substantially increased administration and operation of our enhanced activities – principally the opening of our premises to (paying) visitors on a 7-day week basis, together with a hugely increased administration workload, we have recruited a General Manager, an Events and Marketing

Co-ordinator and an Education and Interpretation Co-ordinator to run the administration and day-to-day management of the greatly enhanced workload. Our new staff are Ruth Harper (General Manager), Séan Conlon (Events and Marketing Co-ordinator) and Claire McAuley (Education and Interpretation Co-ordinator). We welcome them, and wish them every success.

By the time this report will be in the hands of our members, the opening of our Whitehead Railway Museum will have happened, with hopefully a steady stream of visitors to our greatly extended and enhanced premises. Our museum will, of course, be open to RPSI Members too – not just to others – so come down to Whitehead to see for yourself just what has – and is being – achieved.

In the background, however, our ongoing programme of locomotive and carriage restoration and overhaul works has continued apace. Likewise a very full programme of main line steam trains has been planned for both Whitehead and Dublin – the latter including another charter operation for the Surrey-based "Steam Dreams" company. This will mainly use our Dublin-based Cravens carriage set, now all in its blue and cream livery.

A new venture in our Dublin Area has been the evolution of a "Diesel Group" which is (initially) planning the early overhaul of a CIE/ IÉ GM Diesel-Electric locomotive to main-line running standard. Watch this space!

The agreement from Iarnród Éireann for the use of Connolly Locomotive Shed in Dublin has been enormous benefit to our Dublin-based operations, and for the servicing of steam-hauled trains from visiting from the Belfast area. Our Dublin Area volunteers have undertaken significant repairs

and improvements to the building and its facilities and equipment. Our ex-CIE diesel locomotives are also now shedded there.

The possibility of restoring one or more of our diesel locomotives to main-line running condition is being actively progressed. The market for tours hauled by diesel locomotives is quite different to our established steam tour clientele. Overall we have had an extremely busy and vibrant couple of years, with every intent to build on what has been achieved - not just from our (greatly appreciated) external funding.

Most important of all – little or none of this could have been achieved without the on-going work and commitment of our

volunteers.

Our job now will be to maximise the benefits of our new buildings and equipment to ensure a safe, secure and high quality of train operation for all our future passengers – hopefully in even more numbers.

On behalf of the RPSI Board I would like to sincerely thank our two mainline railway companies (Translink and Iarnród Éireann) for their continued support and assistance, and to all our volunteers and supporters, for their skills and sheer hard work.

BELOW: At the opening of Whitehead Railway Museum on 1st March 2017, Claire McAuley, RPSI President Lord O'Neill, Ruth Harper and Séan Conlon .



I opened last year's report by noting that the running of trains was now well down the priority list for the Board in terms of time spent at meetings (however, we do have two excellent teams taking the strain). And so it was again in 2016, but even more so. The administration of the grants to fund the development work at Whitehead, and the careful eye being kept on the overdraft was the year's main concern. Having so much money to spend rapidly became a very heavy burden.

Board: We ended the AGM in Whitehead in February with a vacancy for Vice-Chairman and one other director.

Gratifyingly, David Houston, who had rejoined the Board at the AGM, took up the Vice-Chairman post in May, thus creating another director vacancy. At the same time Johnny Glendinning re-joined the Board, being co-opted to represent the Curator (Charles Friel) and Curatorial Committee. In October, Stephen Comiskey stepped down due to personal reasons but was able to take up the post again early in 2017.

Thus, at present, the governing board is:

Chairman: Denis Grimshaw

Vice-Chairman: David Houston

Secretary: Paul McCann

Treasurer: Bill Garrioch

Directors:

Eileen Armstrong

Mervyn Darragh

Johnny Glendinning

Dermot Mackie

Fergus McDonnell

Joe McKeown

Phillip Newell

Peter Scott

Mark Walsh

Developments: The 2020 Project has seen

Whitehead transformed as the Society's headquarters. Together with the station building of a few years ago, we now have unrivalled premises - offices, workshops, signal box, turntable, education centre and vastly improved staff and visitor facilities. The cash-flow problems alluded to last year came to bear in no uncertain terms and the overdraft and loan facility were made much use of; we are deeply grateful to those members who responded to the appeal for loans (and donations) to cover the period of maximum expenditure.

While the building work is complete, significant fitting-out work continues with a view to a public opening of the museum in spring 2017.

Elsewhere, in Dublin Connolly shed considerable work has been undertaken to make the shed safe and secure for use. A considerable amount of finance has been put into this project by the Society. This has resulted in a very safe and secure location in which to prepare, service and store the locomotives in Dublin.

In May the Society's Dublin-based fleet of GM locomotives (B141, 175 and 134) were moved from Inchicore to take up residence in the shed. Such is the excellent nature of the premises that work was carried out apace and 134 was started for the first time in preservation in August.

The former valeting plant at Dublin's Heuston station has also been made available for storage of RPSI stock, and 8 vehicles of the wooden-bodied 'heritage' set were moved from Inchicore in early December.

Finance: Money problems have already been mentioned in the context of developments at Whitehead, and this was compounded for

most of the year by a misunderstanding by the UK VAT authorities whereby they thought the intended operation of the new museum meant we could not reclaim VAT. This problem was sorted by December, but it meant that by then we were owed well over £90,000 - and that didn't help the cash-flow! Once more, it was gratifying to have the Steam Dreams and Railtours Ireland income, plus the knowledge that once again most of our regular trains were sold out well in advance.

Volunteers: The need for new faces will become even more apparent in the coming year when the regular opening of the museum will require staffing by a roster of volunteers as visitor guides. Application forms for these posts were circulated in January 2017, and it is hoped to hold a number of open days in advance of the official opening to let members see what they could be volunteering for.

Volunteer Co-ordinator, Alastair Maxwell, is encouraging as many of our members as possible to join the ranks. Don't forget, with the new premises at Whitehead, Connolly and Heuston the facilities for working members have never been better.

General: The website, along with the Twitter and Facebook pages and email list (over 5,400), continue to sell our trains successfully without resorting to paid advertising. We would hope this trend will continue, especially now with full-time staff to help. As part of the development project, it is expected that the website will be upgraded to make it more accessible across differing online platforms.

Members: After a few years of stable membership numbers, 2016 saw a significant fall - down from 1,030 to 969. It is hard to explain this other than more information is now available online without the need to take out a paid subscription. Certainly, it has never

been a more interesting time to be a member, so the downturn is extremely disappointing. Hopefully, this is just a 'blip'. Interestingly, or worryingly, 53% of members are now in the Senior category, whereas 5 years ago it was 36%. We need new Junior members! To that end we hope to have a 'youth fair' in the coming year.

Thank You: As always, thanks must go to all who have served on the Board throughout the year. The burden remained significant in 2016, so thank you to all who served on one (or more) of the various sub-committees. Members of the Curatorial Committee have been especially busy this year preparing the interpretative content of the new Whitehead Museum and no doubt they'll be glad finally to see the public opening.

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).

As usual, thanks to the railway company management and crews for their indulgence, especially when things don't go quite right! And last, but not least - the event of the year - the Royal Train on 28th June 2016, on which travelled Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. The full story and photographs appear elsewhere.

No. 3 LPHC 0-6-0ST shunting engine

“R H Smyth”. Whitehead, in store.

Needs boiler repairs. Could be overhauled to take the place of the Guinness engine in several years' time.

No. 3BG A Guinness, Son and Co 0-4-0ST shunting engine. Whitehead, in traffic

Now returned to traffic after minor overhaul, for shunting and on-site passenger train duties. Being painted.

No. 4 LMS NCC 2-6-4T mixed traffic engine. Whitehead, in traffic.

Has been based at Connolly loco shed as the locomotive for main line steam from Dublin, but returned light engine to Whitehead on 8th January 2017 for fitting of an larnród Éireann train radio. This locomotive will soon need tyres and valve liners. Re-painting is proposed as soon as possible.

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

Major overhaul required. Potentially could be given a cosmetic restoration for display in the new museum at Whitehead.

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

Repairs to pistons and glands are currently under way. This is an interim repair until time and funding are available for major overhaul of cylinders, pistons and valves.

No. 131 GNR(I) 4-4-0 express passenger loco. Whitehead.

Tender No. 37 is being refurbished for this locomotive and is nearly ready. This involved rebuilding tank, repairs to running gear, renewal of missing and corroded pipework. Fitting of AWS-TPWS and OTMR is under way which would allow No. 131 to enter traffic for main line passenger operations.



No. 171 GNR(I) 4-4-0 express passenger loco "Sieve Gullion". Whitehead, overhaul.

Overhaul partly carried out by contractor, awaiting completion. This has been postponed because of the funding obtained for No. 131 and the requirement to complete the work within the funder's timescale. No. 171 should be the next in line - work should proceed as opportunity offers, but return to traffic will await current locos coming out for overhaul - otherwise there are too many locos available and not enough in the works getting prepared for action.

No. 184 GSWR 0-6-0 goods engine. Whitehead, in store.

Like No. 27, No. 184 could be given cosmetic restoration for museum display. A return to steam would also be possible following a major overhaul including repairs to - or renewal of - the wasted cylinder block. The tender would need major rebuilding of the tank. Note that No. 184 is close to original condition with original frames and "101" class saturated boiler.

No. 186 GSWR 0-6-0 goods engine. Whitehead, on display.

On display to museum visitors in the carriage shed. Needs boiler repairs and general overhaul. Unlike No. 184, No. 186 has extended frames and "Z" class Belpaire superheated boiler.

No. 461 DSER 2-6-0 goods engine. Dublin, minor repairs.

Minor repairs, Dublin. No 461 has suffered steaming difficulties which are the subject of investigation.

OPPOSITE: No. 4 at Cork Kent station on Saturday 18th June 2016 during 'The Emerald Isle Explorer' railtour .
(Photo: N Cox)

NCC Locomotive Project

This has been discussed for a number of years now and has recently been the subject of speculation in the railway press. In its most basic form, the project is to find the necessary funding and to provide strategic spares to keep NCC 2-6-4T loco No. 4 available with the minimum of time out of traffic for overhaul or unplanned work.

Taking this further, the second stage is to reconstruct a second boiler shell, based on existing parts, again to minimise down time for loco No. 4.

Further ahead still, by employing this second boiler, reactivation of a second 2-6-4T loco would be possible, again based upon existing parts.

A recent twist to this has been the suggestion that this loco should be an NCC class W 2-6-0 'Mogul' instead of a tank engine - favoured by some as an iconic locomotive and more likely to command support. Either loco would be appropriate to our operational requirements, which now call for larger trains capable of fitting in with intensive DMU services. The cost would be considerable and progress would depend on the support and financial backing forthcoming.

It should be noted that a major factor in making such a scheme possible is the existence of significant remaining parts of an NCC locomotive (tank or mogul) – to consider any other class would be to start with a blank page, so we are unlikely to tackle a GSR 400 class or a GNR(I) VS, however attractive that might appear!

To bring all this up to date, the RPSI Board has now approved the first stages of the project and work has actually started on the firebox of the reconstructed boiler.

2016 was a very eventful year for our Dublin based diesel fleet. Following many years of outdoor storage in Inchicore Works, an action plan for their transfer to the drier environment of Connolly shed was drawn up. First of all the three locomotives, 134, B141 and 175 had to be extracted from various locations in Inchicore Works and put together for the purpose of examination of the braking system on each locomotive and also to establish brake continuity through all three locomotives. Once complete, the locomotives were transferred to the running shed for a full fitness to move exam.

The locomotives transferred in two moves from Inchicore on 19th July hauled by retro liveried 071. First B141 and 175 were transferred in the morning followed soon after by 134. B141 was placed on the middle road with 175 and 134 placed on the first road inside the shed.

Straight after arrival in the shed, exploratory work was carried out on B141. This was a very thorough exam led by the expert eyes of Philip Clampett (Irish Rail CME dept) and our own Bob McGuirk. The main engine, generator and a start to finish electrical examination was carried out which threw up some curious results that were soon rectified. The engine was barreled over manually to check for any unwanted material in the cylinders and to ensure all parts were moving as they should and nothing was seized following the years outdoors. The battery compartment and its contents had seen better days and all connections along with the batteries themselves were replaced.

Following the transfer to Connolly a lot of people were interested in the GMs and their new home. Sunday 8th August was a steam operating day, but the opportunity was taken in the morning to line up all three GM

locomotives outside the shed. The situation also allowed 134 to be turned before all three were put back inside. While most people that day were busy with the steam operation, Philip Clampett and Bob McGuirk had other things on their mind. When 461 returned to the shed for disposal, the crew were met by the sound of B141 ticking away like a sewing machine, over six years since it last ran. Needless to say, social media sites were busy that evening!

Not content with the success with B141, 134 was moved and placed on the same road as B141. The same procedure was repeated with 134 in terms of examination and preparation. 134 was not as fortunate as B141 and had suffered damage from the elements. The main radiator needed repair and the water pump was consigned to scrap and replaced following serious frost damage. Then the event many thought would take a while took place on 20th of August when the locomotive was successfully started.

While all this was going on, the RPSI were in negotiation with Peter Smyth, IÉ Chief Mechanical Engineer. The plan under negotiation was to get the GMs back at the head of our trains. The enthusiasm and encouragement from Mr. Smyth to the RPSI and this project has to be acknowledged and thanked. A full and detailed plan was drawn up and this resulted in the return of 134 to Inchicore for the full mechanical and body overhaul of the locomotive. Many suppliers to IÉ have been approached for their assistance and all are more than happy to support the RPSI with this project, for this we most sincerely thank them.

To part fund all of this work, a number of diesel hauled railtours were drawn up. All of the proceeds from these railtours will go directly to fund the overhaul. The first of

these took place on 22nd October, 'The Western Explorer' with 071 at the front went on a circular route from Dublin to Athlone/Athenry/Ennis before arriving in Limerick. The return journey was via the main Cork/Dublin mainline and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

2017 is set to be a very interesting year for the Dublin based GM locos and hopefully the report next year will have details about the next locomotive to return to Inchicore. This can only continue with your support so please support the railtours for these locomotives.

On behalf of the RPSI, I would like to pay particular thanks to IE CME Peter Smyth, Philip Clampett and all the CME staff and shunters in Inchicore, as well as the inspectors and drivers for facilitation of the moves as well as the Resources and Station staff.

The former running shed in Connolly has become a vital part of RPSI operations. Not only does the shed afford covered accommodation for our Dublin based steam and diesel locomotives, but provides a dedicated service facility for Belfast to Dublin excursions. When first acquired, the shed was in pretty poor condition. Following financial investment, the shed was rehabilitated to provide a safe and secure depot.

With a shed of this size there are always things in need of attention. The main priority at the start was to get the shed up and running and also provide reasonable facilities for our volunteers. This work is continuing and gradually improvements are carried out to tailor the facility to our needs. As always, new volunteers are always welcome to join in with the upkeep and maintenance of our locomotives.



RPSI Dublin based diesel fleet, 141 class 175 and B141 alongside 121 class 134, stand outside their new home at Connolly shed in Dublin following their move from open storage for many years in Inchicore Works. (Photo: Gerry Mooney)

No. 23 'Planet' – ex Irish Shell, built by FC Hibberd & Co.

In store. Currently investigations under way to revive this useful shunting locomotive for use in the depths of the carriage and museum sheds where steam and bigger diesels are less suitable. Needs head gasket replacement, rewiring, and minor bodywork. Work hopefully to start this spring/summer.

B142 – ex CIE/IE, built by General Motors Electro-Motive Division (EMD) La Grange, Illinois.

In traffic, Whitehead yard. B142 has proven reliable and performed most of the constant shunting this past year.

The diesel squad has been busy with mechanical and electrical repairs, and some bodywork repairs.

Reliability has improved drastically after clearing blocked hood drains which has almost totally solved water and damp ingress to 55 year old electrics. Damp electrics

meant B142 was grumpy when cold and often refused to take power until warmed up, but this is now no longer an issue.

We have also rescued AWS/TPWS equipment from ex-NIR Castle Class 455 for use in B142, which is a major step forward in bringing it back to mainline use in the near future.

The diesel squad is very much working towards getting B142 back to mainline standard – it is now a goal which is very much in sight.

No. 1 ex CSE 'Carlow Diesel', built by Ruston Hornsby

In store. Needs gearbox repairs.



Andrew Davidson changing a headlamp bulb in B142, 29th October 2016.

Looking back over the last year, 2016 can probably be summed up as tiresome but ultimately enjoyable. There were a number of challenges that appeared, some at short notice, that were thankfully all catered for due to the commitment of an unfortunately very small but dedicated band of volunteers.

A lot of work this year has gone into buildings as well as carriages. The overrun of the development phase of the 2020 project, and the need to amend previous designs to something workable was a time consuming process. Numerous errors that came to light during construction also had to be corrected, which will hopefully work out to be a worthwhile exercise in the long run.

After the annual inspection period, work continued through the year with great gusto on the Dutch heating van 462, which has caused a great deal of hair pulling and frustration. However, having now rewired it,

replaced 80% of the fuel lines, sourced new filters, washed out the boilers, replaced nearly everything capable of being replaced we had at one stage 2 operational boilers. In the end it turned out that both boilers failed their steam tests and the vehicle did not perform due to a variety of reasons, however the big blue thing on the front of the train appeared to do a perfectly adequate job of heating the carriages instead.

Prior to the special for the Official Opening of Bellerena Station, (which I am sure is mentioned elsewhere), was the tour and the Steam Dreams charter. Unfortunately the train developed an electrical fault (now rectified) that led to the cancellation of the last leg of the Steam Dreams trip. In addition to the disappointment this created, it was marred further by the usual naysayers spouting forth untruths and unhelpful comments in front of the customers, which as the reader can imagine was not productive. In



Alastair Campbell, James Spurle and Ryan Downey fitting windows to ex-IÉ Mark 2 carriage No. 303 on 2nd December 2016.



The main line running set on the morning of 10th December 2016, before another day of Santa operations with No. 85. For the time being it continues to live outdoors, here at Whitehead Excursion platform.

the end, the failure turned out to be an excellent learning exercise and has improved electrical trouble shooting procedures. The following month, the Royal Train ran, with great thanks due to Translink who facilitated a great deal including the cleaning of the train to a standard previously unknown – the number of comments I received that began with “I didn’t realise the floor was that colour” was amazing and a credit to the cleaning staff at Fortwilliam.

One greatly welcomed project this year was the restoration of oil wagon 602, one of several vehicles generally regarded as a dilapidated nuisance. This is an NIMC funded project which has involved the general overhaul of the wagon for display in the new museum area. My thanks are due to Mark Walsh and Mark Kennedy for their input into the application making it a successful one.

Work continued through the year with the removal of the tank, shot blasting, repainting, location and fitting of her original bearings. It was pleasing to see some of the new machines being used in the new joiner’s shop. At the time of writing the tank has been placed back into the frames and is now ready for painting.

Another breakthrough this year was the long overdue review and rectifying of the heating in the Mark 2s which had started to misbehave themselves somewhat in the last 2 years. Some explorative work with the help of Thomas Charters, Alan McKnight and James Friel soon transformed the heating abilities of carriages 180, 300 and 303, which between them had generated a fair amount of negative feedback.

During the last year we had to say goodbye

to Guinness Grain Van 2518 and Ex LMS NCC open Wagon C355. Both vehicles unfortunately succumbed to the inevitable having been stored outside for years – however, parts of 2518 have been retained for possible use in the restoration of its sister 504, and the remains of the open wagon may also be reborn into something else. Watch this space, as they say...

At the moment the general emphasis is on increasing the length and flexibility of the running rake. Currently we are aiming for a return to traffic of both the brake No. 460 and all first No. 181 in 2017. Due to the efforts of David Chambers great progress has also been made on overhauling No. 304 and it is hoped it that it will feature during the 2018 season.

In May we launched the 861 appeal to support the restoration of our 1906-built GSWR brake tri-composite. The appeal has to date received a warm response, however much more is needed to overhaul the vehicle. Currently the majority of the dismantling has taken place and we are creating a shopping list of new material. Unfortunately the coach is riddled with dry rot though we are now at the stage that we have taken enough off the coach to start the rebuilding process. So if you can I would urge you to donate towards the appeal so that we can complete the overhaul to the highest standard possible to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the RPSI Carriage and Wagon Department.

In November after much negotiation and through the kind offices of the IÉ Heritage Office we purchased former CIE LowMac wagon No. 23652 that had been stored for years in the headshunt on the Abbeyleix branch at Portlaoise Permanent Way depot. This arrived at whitehead in November 2016,

3 years after I first heard of its existence on an online forum.

In other news the society in the last year or so has purchased the former Gatwick Express Mark 2f coaches from NIR. These have been purchased as insurance and to eventually replace one or two of current fleet due to their superior design and condition. There are several challenges associated with these vehicles such as heating, general electrics and brake gear, however we shall see what happens. The first four vehicles arrived last year, however were unfortunately removed off site to Dundalk where the inevitable has happened. The same fate has befallen the set at Lisburn as well, which will only add to the eventual refurb costs. Finally, I would like to thank Peter, Mark, James, Andrew, David, Alan, Paul, Thomas, Bobby, Sam, Dermot and the rest of the Site squad, and the Electrical squad for all their help throughout the year, which allowed the RPSI to operate its Northern based operations.

On that note, if you are tempted to volunteer in the C&W Dept please speak to either myself or Alistair Maxwell who will provide information on how to get involved. There is a wide range of tasks that are undertaken by volunteers ranging from painting, electrical troubleshooting, joinery, sheet metal work, welding, glazing and general odds and ends, where you would be more than welcome. As regards projects for the next year, if Mark 2s perhaps aren't your thing, based on the success of the oil wagon I am currently investigating the feasibility of another standalone project.



Before and after views of tank wagon 602. ABOVE: 17th July 2016. BELOW: 25th January 2017, beside the public displays under construction in the carriage shed.



With Easter falling early, time was limited to carry out the normal essential stock maintenance work before the Easter Eggspress trains which operated on Monday and Tuesday 28th and 29th March from Belfast Central to Whitehead. These popular trains - two each day - sold out with 1,047 passengers in total. The Easter Bunny distributed eggs to all children. The train was operated by former GNR(I) No. 85 "Merlin".

For reference, all trains were operated by No. 85, except where otherwise stated.

The May International Railtour was very successful and operated over the extended weekend from 12th to 16th May. This proved a very dry warm weekend that ultimately affected pathing later in the weekend. The itinerary was:

Thursday 12th May: Positioning train Whitehead to Dublin Connolly.

Friday 13th May: 40th Anniversary diesel railtour with pioneer GM diesel No. 071 specially painted in orange and black by Irish Rail for the occasion; Dublin Connolly – Waterford - Limerick Junction - Dublin Connolly.

Saturday 14th May: Croagh Patrick Railtour (operated by No. 4, Dublin to Westport); Dublin Connolly – Athlone – Westport.

Sunday 15th May: Croagh Patrick Railtour; Westport – Claremorris – Ballina – Westport (No. 4). The sections to Castlerea and Ballyhaunis unfortunately could not be worked due to pathing issues on the day.

Monday 16th May: Croagh Patrick Railtour; Westport – Dublin Connolly (No. 4); Belfast Central and Whitehead.

Now settling into a traditional early Sunday slot the first Steam Enterprise of the season



No. 85 at Point Vantage, between Downhill and Castlerock tunnels with the 'Emerald Isle Explorer' on 21st June.

operated on Sunday 5th June; again a fully loaded train. The Dundalk Railway Heritage Society continue to support the Society through ticket sales bookings. The day was fine with an exhilarating outward run. The return journey was equally good with an on time Belfast Central arrival.

Earlier in the year under strict confidence the Society was approached by Translink about a joint venture to provide a steam train for a VIP party in June. This progressed and as can be noted later that operation along with other trains at that time ensured June was a very busy month.

The Society was informed nearer to the time the VIP train, as some thought, was for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. It is understood the steam train was requested by Her Majesty and was part of her 90th birthday tour. The journey replicated part of her June 1953 train journey from Lisburn to Lisahally near Londonderry on her coronation tour of the United Kingdom.

There is a separate article on the behind the scenes activity to ensure the operation worked to plan in this publication.

The key dates were:

Saturday 25th June: Five selected Mark 2 carriages were GM diesel hauled from Whitehead to Fortwilliam Train Care Depot for a deep internal and external clean.
Monday 27th June: No. 85 worked light engine Whitehead to Belfast Central and onward with the empty Mark 2 carriages to Coleraine for stabling under strict security.
Tuesday 28th June: No. 85 and Mark 2s worked the Royal Train. The Royal Party and dignitaries boarded at Coleraine for the 13.25 mile journey to Bellarena for the official opening of that new station. The train worked on to Londonderry. Invited passengers had the option to be bussed back to Coleraine, or continue to Londonderry and make their own return arrangements. Some opted to do the latter.
Wednesday 29th June: At 23.30 the train departed from Londonderry empty to Whitehead.



The 'Emerald Isle Explorer' pauses at the semaphore signal at Castlerock on 21st June.



No. 85 on arrival into Dublin Connolly with the 'Steam Enterprise' of 5th June.

It was an honour for the Society to be involved with Translink in a very successful operation that attracted much positive publicity for both organisations. The steam train featured prominently in the BBC News Channel Royal Review of the Year programme that was shown daily between Christmas and the New Year.

June, as mentioned, was a very busy month. There were two legs of the Steam Dreams Irish tour. On Tuesday 21st June the train operated Londonderry – Portrush – Belfast Central. This was a most successful day with excellent running. The positioning train operated to Londonderry on Sunday 19th June for stabling. Wednesday 22nd June was to see the train work from Whitehead to Dublin but very regrettably the train was failed prior to departure due to a faulty door locking mechanism that despite best efforts could not be fixed in time. This was the ultimate failure. The possibility of a diesel hauled substitute to help retrieve the

situation could not be considered.

The Steam and Jazz trains worked on Fridays 17th, 24th June, 1st and 8th July. Due to their popularity a fifth train was arranged for Friday 2nd September. Each train worked to Portadown and all were sold out. The popular Bourbon Swing Jazz Band provided the platform musical entertainment each evening.

The summer highlight are the Portrush Flyer trains, operating almost continuously since 1973. Four trains were planned but unfortunately during July and August extra summer trains were added by NIR to the timetable so pathing slots over the 6-mile Portrush Branch to facilitate turning at Coleraine were virtually impossible (one train every two hours). This did allow for a customer-friendly day out, or for keeping within permitted train crew's hours.

Reluctantly it was decided to substitute with



Nos 4 and 85 meeting near Castlebellingham on 24th July, at a closing speed probably around 100mph.

a Steam Enterprise on Sunday 24th July. It proved a great day out with good running and a full train. The Enterprise, though, is not geared for the family market. Co-incidentally colleagues in Dublin had organised an operation on this date featuring No. 4 which included Drogheda and Dundalk. The trains passed each other near Castlebellingham, and Swords in the evening. This is the first time for such a passing since two NIR steam trains crossed each other in the summer of 1969 - and that on the Larne line, not here on the Great Northern main line.

There were two in-house train operations at Whitehead. The first took place on Saturday 30th July in association with the Whitehead Food and Folk Festival, held on the adjoining sports field. This was a very useful operation bringing the Society closer to the local community. There was much attention to the

train activity and around 520 passengers, mostly families were carried during the afternoon in the two-carriage train.

Thankfully a solution was found to operate the Portrush Flyers and two were arranged at short notice for Sundays 21st and 28th August. All Flyer tickets were sold out quickly as were the afternoon trains to Coleraine. It was great to see the Portrush platform busy with well-wishers and people travelling on the Coleraine (locomotive turns) and return option. In excess of over 1,000 passengers travelled over the two operating days.

The next operation was a Steam Enterprise on Sunday 25th September. The locomotive was in great form and to the crew's credit timings were kept throughout the day, enjoyed by a full complement of passengers.

The Halloween Broomstick Belle train operated on Saturday 29th October. Two full trains ran from Belfast Central to Whitehead. On the outward journey each child received an appropriate seasonal goodie bag from the “wicked witch” while on the return each child received a modelled balloon.

The following day Sunday 30th October saw the running of the Semaphore Finale train to Castlerock, before the passing loop was decommissioned the next day and the signal cabin closed on the evening of 2nd November. The train was well filled and it was a pleasure to see so many enthusiasts travelling to mark the occasion. On the return there was a lie-over in Coleraine while the locomotive turned and was serviced. It was a great old-fashioned day out.

The second in-house operation was in connection with the Whitehead Community Association’s Victorian Street Fair on Saturday 26th November. This was a success with the train providing short train rides from lunch time to the onset of darkness. The highlight was the return to service after an overhaul of former Guinness Brewery broad gauge locomotive No. 3. This locomotive is well suited, and financially economical, to

operate such days.

The Santa season operated over three consecutive weekends beginning on 3rd and 4th December, most worked to Whitehead with the exception of Sunday 11th December with two trains working between Portadown to Lisburn. In total 14 trains operated with a passenger loading close to 3,900. The passenger numbers were unfortunately restricted due to a limitation on carriage availability. The trains sold out within two weeks of the tickets going on sale. A special word of thanks to those who made a full commitment to ensure each operation worked smoothly.

Unfortunately the proposed popular Mince Pie train to Dublin at the end of the year did not proceed due to crewing issues.

In conclusion, may I once again express the Society’s thanks to the good co-operation received from NIR and Irish Rail. Also, very importantly, to the Society volunteers, too many to mention, who assist in all manner of ways, and without their commitment and time provided, the trains would not happen.

During the Santa special on 10th December, some people couldn’t get enough of the man himself!



Dublin Area Operations Committee (DAOC) is pleased to report another challenging, busy but rewarding year. A big vote of thanks is due to all those volunteers who made it possible for us to operate our programme. And thanks to word of mouth and the power of social media – Facebook and Twitter – we operated fully loaded trains every time. In total, trains run by DAOC in 2016 carried 11,370 passengers.

As ever, January saw the Carriage Presentation Team in action preparing the Cravens set for the first operation of the year. The first task was to remove Christmas decorations and carry out a deep clean.

We kicked off earlier than usual in 2016. The first trip was 'The Midlander' which ran from Dublin Connolly to M3 Parkway and Maynooth on February 7. Dublin Loco

rostered No. 461 for the day, in order to assess the locomotive after recent maintenance. There was a noticeable improvement in steaming, and 354 passengers were on board.

Our second trip was 'The Shannon', which ran with No. 4 from Dublin Connolly to Carrick-on-Shannon on Sunday March 13, with a local trip to Boyle in County Roscommon. This location was selected in preparation for the upcoming Steam Dreams charter in June. A minibus service was provided by the local Chamber of Commerce to ferry passengers to and from the station. The Boyle extension proved popular and all in all, we carried a total of 647 passengers on the day.

On April 3 we were closer to home with The Dublin Riviera from Connolly to Greystones.



Westport station on the evening of 15th May. The passengers of the 'Croagh Patrick' railtour having disembarked at platform 1, No. 4 propels the train out of the station before coming back in to platform 2 to stable overnight. (Photo: Roger Joanes)



No. 4 rushing through open countryside near Foxford on the way from Westport to Ballina on Sunday 15th May 2016. (Photo: G Roose)

No. 461 was in charge and, although the weather was disappointing, we carried 607 passengers.

Our first charter of the year was with our friends from The Irish Railway Record Society, and attracted 280 passengers. This railtour was to celebrate the 40th birthday of the GM Class 071 Locomotives and ran on the weekend of April 9. The route was Dublin Connolly to Limerick via Ballybrophy and Nenagh with 083 on the Saturday. Next day we were hauled through snow-covered countryside by 076 to Killarney and Tralee. From Tralee it was back to Limerick Junction and on to Waterford, where 077 took over as far as Kilkenny. Finally, 079 took charge for the run back to Connolly.

Next up was the RPSI's International 'Croagh Patrick' Railtour to Westport on the weekend of May 13. DAOC provided and manned the Cravens carriages for the legs from and to Dublin.

On May 29 we operated 'The Fingal' from Dublin Connolly to Balbriggan with two trips

from Balbriggan to Drogheda. Locomotive No. 4 provided the motive power and we carried 495 passengers.

And if we thought things were busy, they were about to become busier still. Immediately after 'The Fingal' the Carriage Presentation Team set to, spending several days getting the Cravens rake up to a Pullman Standard. This involved placing antimacassars on all seat backs, fitting carpets and curtains, equipping the tables with lamps and, of course, a thorough clean inside and out. This major operation was to facilitate the 'Emerald Isle Explorer' charter by GB-based Steam Dreams. The tour began for us on June 16, when the train operated from Dublin Connolly to Rosslare Harbour. A little bit of history was made as the fireman for the day on No. 461 was Noel Playfair from Belfast York Road, the senior steam driver on NIR. He fired to Connolly-based Robbie Jolley, and all went well. As far as we know, the last time a Belfast driver worked beyond Dublin with steam, it was the GNR's Robert Bruce, who brought his engine No. 113 Neptune for trials on the GS&WR in April 1911.

The next day, Friday June 17, it was Waterford to Cork via Limerick; on Saturday the 18th we had No. 4 from Cork to Killarney and back to Cork. The next day was a long haul from Cork to Sligo, beginning with No. 4 hauling the train to Dublin, with GM No. 078 taking over for the trip from Connolly to Sligo. There the passengers left us by bus, going to Derry to join No. 85 and the Whitehead-based carriages. No. 078 brought the empty Cravens set back from Sligo to Dublin on June 21.

After a short break, the Carriage Presentation Team met up again to prepare the set for the 'Western Gateway' which ran on July 10 from Dublin Connolly to Athlone with a local trip to Ballinasloe. No. 4 hauled the train which ran in poor weather and we were late arriving in Athlone because of an issue with the fire, which also delayed the departure from Ballinasloe. We carried 561

passengers but this was not one of our happiest days.

On July 19, 071 hauled the three RPSI GM locos, Nos B141, 134 and 175, from Inchicore to Dublin Connolly shed, which was by then in use by the RPSI. The new location will enable restoration work to begin and will also provide safe storage.

On July 24 we were back on the Dublin-Belfast main line with 'The Boyne'. This involved a run from Dublin Connolly to Drogheda and two local trips, one to Dundalk and the other to Skerries. No. 4 was in charge of our train and it proved to be an historic day as we crossed in mid-section No. 85 heading to Dublin with the Steam Enterprise from Belfast.

Between the local trips and the main trip, we carried 723 passengers.



No. 4 crosses the river Blackwater at Dunkitt Junction, Waterford, with the 'Emerald Isle Explorer' to Limerick on 17th June. (Photo: M Crockett)



No. 071 in its original livery at Tullamore on 23rd October pulling the 'Western Explorer' (Photo: F Brown)

No. 461 was back in operation on its home territory of the DSER on August 7 for our second 'Dublin Riviera' excursion of the year. The engine performed well and we carried 538 passengers.

A big event was our annual 'Radio Train' to Kilkenny on August 21. We were accompanied by Church Hill Silver Band from Fermanagh, who entertained the passengers on the platforms and on the train. Sadly all did not go well for No. 4, which was stopped and failed at Sallins on the down run with a hot coupling rod bearing. A replacement diesel arrived in the form of 071 itself which completed the run to Kilkenny, with 076 bringing us home. We had 285 passengers on board.

Our third charter of the year was with Railtours Ireland. The diesel-hauled 'Emerald Isle Express' started from Dublin Connolly on September 26 to Rosslare Harbour with 078. Then it was empty stock via Dublin and down to Waterford, again with 078. On September

27, 078 brought the train ran from Waterford to Cork, with 083 taking over the following day to bring the empty stock to Cobh before operating from Cobh to Killarney. Coincidentally, we met the Belmond 'Grand Hibernian' train at Killarney, and it was a unique experience to see both platforms occupied by privately owned trains.

On September 29 we travelled from Killarney to Ennis with 083, then worked empty to stable at Limerick. The following day it was Limerick to Galway behind 078, thence empty stock to Westport. On Saturday October 1 the 'Emerald Isle Express' completed its journey with a run from Westport to Dublin Connolly, during which RPSI volunteers prepared and served a four course meal to all passengers at their seats. The food was cooked in kitchen car 1522. No mean feat! The 'Western Explorer' diesel tour ran with 071 from Dublin Connolly to Limerick via Athlone, Athenry and Ennis on October 22. Appropriately, the locomotive was adorned in its original black and tan livery of 40 years

ago. At Limerick, 084 took over for our return run from Limerick to Dublin Connolly via the direct curve at Limerick Junction. The outing attracted 220 passengers.

October brought something different. The carriages were used for filming at Inchicore Works for a film called 'The Professor and the Mad Man', starring Mel Gibson.

For Halloween the carriages were decorated in suitably spooky style by the Carriage Preparation Team. Maynooth was selected for both trips on October 30 because engineering works were in progress on the DSER. No. 4 hauled both trains and we carried 632 passengers.

The last operation of 2016 was, as ever, one of the biggest. We operated 16 Santa Trains between Dublin and Greystones over the first three weekends in December and carried a total of 5,826 passengers. Such was demand that we operated three trains each Saturday, with the final run being diesel-hauled, and on the final Sunday we rounded things off with a third diesel-hauled train.

Our two Connolly based steam locomotives shared duties. On December 3, No. 4 was on the first trip, No. 461 was on the second trip and GM 075 was on the third. The following day No. 461 was in charge but on the second trip there were steaming issues with the locomotive and it was declared a failure at Grand Canal Dock. GM Loco 075 arrived and brought the train to Connolly.

On December 10, No. 4 operated the trains but after the first trip it was noticed that there was a problem with the brick arch and the engine was replaced with GM loco 080 for the next two trips. On the 11th it was all diesel, with 080 in charge.

But we finished on a high note, with No. 4 back in operation on December 17, hauling

both trains to Greystones without incident. As planned 072 handled the final train. No. 4 covered the first two trains on the final day, December 18, while 072 looked after the concluding diesel run.

A popular feature of our trains has been the Everyone's a Winner raffle run by volunteer John Richardson. During the year the fundraiser produced income of €18,425, €8,830 of which was raised on the Christmas Trains. Proceeds are going to the restoration of the diesel locomotives in Connolly Shed.

As the years go on the volunteers bond ever more closely together and so it was with much regret we bade farewell to two long-standing volunteers. John O'Meara, who passed away on September 23, was well into his 90s. He had been a railway enthusiast all his life and contributed significantly to the IRRS in the form of research and articles, and to the RPSI as part of the on-train team. John worked in the carriage department in both Mullingar and Dublin before he became our ticket inspector.

Frank McAllister, who died on November 23, had volunteered for many years in the locomotive department and in the carriage department, and was a carriage steward in later years.



IÉ locomotive No. 084 preparing to leave Limerick with the 'Western Explorer' on 23rd October (Photo: F Brown)

Dublin Carriage Report

During 2016 we made further progress on the Dublin carriage front. As part of our safety improvement plan we have been gradually replacing communication cord apparatus with internal emergency handles and this programme is now complete. Work will now commence on reupholstering the remaining Cravens carriages with new moquette.

At Inchicore, only three of our vehicles are kept under cover: 351, 1142 and 1539. Work on the Cravens set is carried out outdoors on the so-called oil road at Inchicore. Apart from regular maintenance, the main programme this year has been the elimination of steam heat leaks. Most of the work is carried out between October and March, and thanks are due to the carriage crew for all the work carried out in all weathers.

A noteworthy move took place on 3

December when 072 hauled eight heritage set vehicles (Park Royals 1383 and 1419, brakes 1916 and 1949, diners 2421 and 88, Bredin 1335 and Laminate 1463) from Inchicore to Heuston valeting plant for indoor storage.

The following is the details on a coach-by-coach basis, with the accumulated end of year mileage in brackets. All Cravens carriages underwent ultrasonic tests on their axles.

Heating Van 3185: was used after the 2016 May International Three Day Tour during a short movement from Inchicore to Dublin Connolly to act as a brake vehicle with No. 4. No. 3185 is now awaiting overhaul. (11.5 Miles)

Heating Van 3173: Before the Santa Operations, its steam heating boiler had been dismantled, inspected by a certified boiler inspector and kept the train warm and cosy for our passengers. She has been extremely

reliable throughout 2016. (6033.27 Miles)

Open 1508: With 47 seats, it is our spare coach and can act as general or catering car. Was used as a staff/catering facilities coach during the Railtours Ireland 'Emerald Isle Express' rail tour this September. (2496.8 Miles)

Open 1505: In Traffic. (6033.27 Miles)

Open 1506: Repainted with the assistance of Irish Rail's Paint Spray Facility in Inchicore into the new Blue & Cream RPSI livery. In Traffic. (3682.62 Miles)

Bar Car 1514: In Traffic. (6033.27 Miles)

Dining Car 1522: In Traffic. (6033.27 Miles)

Open 1532: In Traffic. (5029.17 Miles)

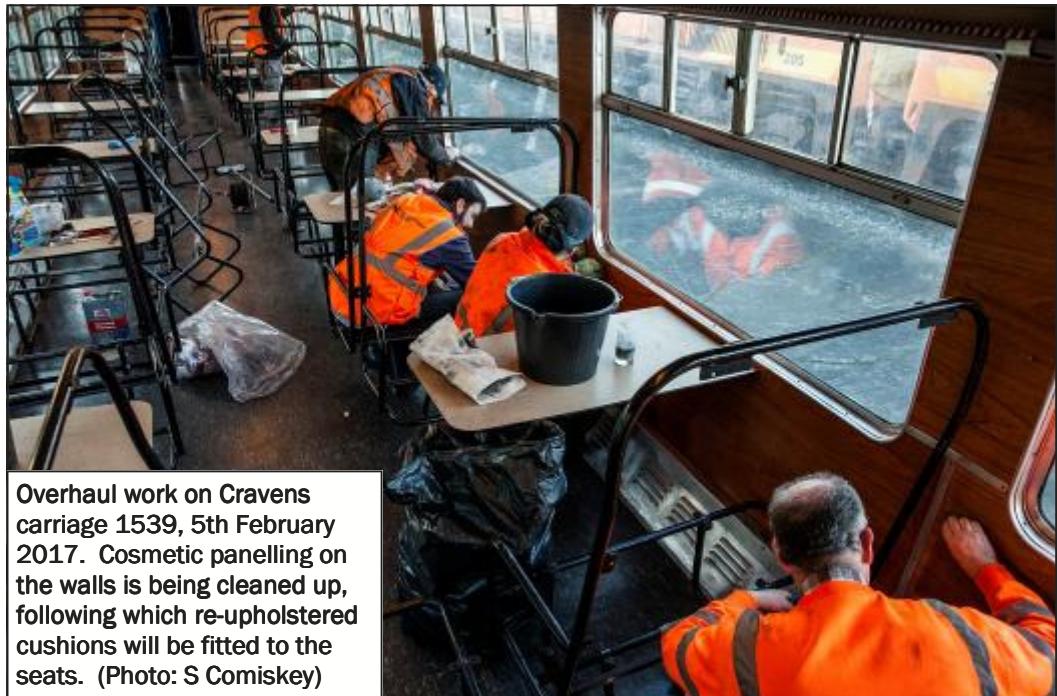
Open 1523: Repainted with the assistance of Irish Rail's Paint Spray Facility in Inchicore

into the new Blue & Cream RPSI livery. In Traffic. (4717.75 Miles)

Open 1529: In storage. Used for replacement parts for the running set.

Open 1541: Repainted with the assistance of Irish Rail's Paint Spray Facility in Inchicore into the new Blue & Cream RPSI livery. In Traffic. (3965.25 Miles)

Open 1539: Currently in Inchicore Fleet Casualty Repair shop, awaiting an overhauled set of bogies to return from Whitehead. Removal of lining etc on the exterior and sanding has started. Interior has been stripped out. Cushions have been upholstered in red moquette. Internal aluminium on the windows and the heater grills has been cleaned. Door brasses were cleaned and polished. Fluorescent lighting and lenses have been removed. Heating radiators have been pressure tested. Hole in vacuum pipe has been repaired. Steam heating pipe



Overhaul work on Cravens carriage 1539, 5th February 2017. Cosmetic panelling on the walls is being cleaned up, following which re-upholstered cushions will be fitted to the seats. (Photo: S Comiskey)

has been completely replaced. Work has been suspended until it is replaced on its bogies. It is unsafe to work on it in its present position on the stands. (0 Miles)

Our Carriage Officer, Stephen Comiskey stood down temporarily during the year but we are delighted that he has agreed to resume his duties in January 2017. Great to have you back, Stephen! Our thanks are due to Peter Smyth, Irish Rail's CME at Inchicore for all his help, also to John Grey, and in particularly John Barrett and his team in the Paint Shop.

Dublin Connolly Shed

Since the RPSI was granted use of the former Great Northern running shed at Connolly in March 2015, a considerable amount of

investment has been made in the facility. The result is that instead of being exposed to the elements – as was the case since the Society first stabled an engine in Dublin in 1988 – volunteers have a dry, clean and warm shed in which to maintain and service locomotives.

The shed is now an integral part of RPSI operations in Dublin. It provides clean, safe and secure accommodation for the Dublin based locomotives, and makes the overnight preparation and subsequent disposal of locomotives a lot more enjoyable for our volunteers. In addition, it has made the operation of Steam Enterprise trains from Belfast to Dublin a lot more manageable, thanks to having appropriate servicing facilities available.



Nos 461 and 4 in Connolly Shed, both being prepared for Santa duties on 4th December 2016. (Photo: N Cox)

When the building contractors, MSM, took their two week mid-winter break over Christmas 2015 and the New Year, this gave us a great opportunity to get a number of jobs done on the site.

First was the removal of over 100 tonnes of ash to the spoil heap, with the contractors' permission, which is the first time we have been able to do this completely. With the car park empty of MSM personnel we were able to access our storage containers there, and large amounts of carriage spares were moved from the old container outside 5 shed road. In addition loco spares were also re-located to the workshop extension.

Pieces of turntable bogies, together with the hand crane, were also shunted up close to the blast house in 1 shed road and the ferrous scrap metal skip was emptied.

By early January all the sheds had been roofed, as had the signal box. (Editor's note: we're calling it a 'box' because it is supposed to represent an NCC structure. Other companies preferred the term 'signal cabin', but research indicates that the NCC used 'signal box'.) Floors in the workshop extensions had been poured as had half the floor in the carriage shed. The flat bottomed rail and fish plates for the latter had been delivered. The stables had reached the first fix stage with all electrics, heating, ventilation, plaster board and windows in place.

On 16th January I held a shunter training course for 4 new recruits and I am pleased to report that all passed both the practical and written examinations. As part of the training day we split the Mark 2 running set and left space at the signal box for the signal rodding tunnel excavations. At the end of the month the 30ft container outside 5 road was removed for scrap and this allowed the

cladding and new gutters to be fixed onto this wall. We helped fit two newly refurbished brake cylinders to carriage No. 460 and moved old cylinders into the new carriage shed. Early in February we lifted the rails and walkway decking off the turntable, using the Telehandler, and the following week we chipped and cleaned the decking between the rails of surface rust.

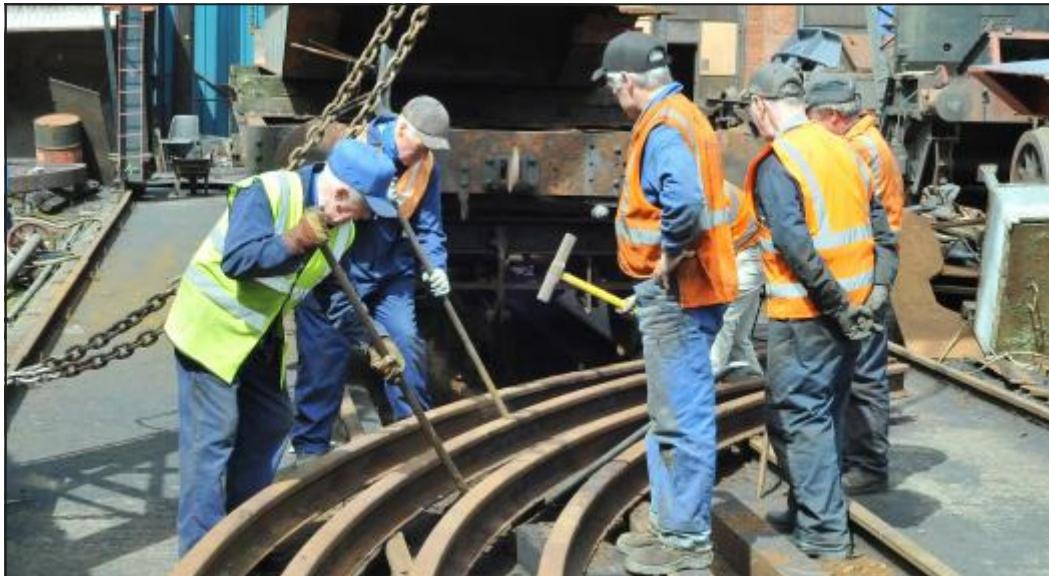
February saw the floor in the new carriage shed completed, the roller doors fitted and the electrics started. At the signal box the rodding tunnel under the platform was installed, the wall rebuilt and only the coping needed to be poured. Within the workshop extension the dry lining wall partitions in the upper floor were in place and a lot of the plaster board was mounted and the stairs at both ends were in place. The foundations for the turntable reinforcing wall were also poured.

Early in March we raised the dropped track in the workshop connection using hydraulic jacks and a special clamp arrangement devised by Peter. Later we did a complete survey and maintenance of the track that was to be used for the Easter trains and moved Magherafelt NCC platform tiles to the signal cabin. On St Patrick's Day we assisted the fire brigade in a fire evacuation exercise using the Mark 2 coaches which was quite spectacular with artificial smoke. Denis Campbell and I did a survey of the Coleraine turntable to estimate the repair work required and the following day the Site squad cleared the space between B and C roads to allow the installation of the visitors' platform. At the end of the month the ferrous skip was emptied again and yielded £150, quite a good return, considering the low value of scrap. We also took the opportunity of the contractors being on holiday to move a lot of rail from the back to the front of the site.

April started with more of the same and during our second Thursday workday we moved more heavy bits including the old turntable curved rails. The next week was very hectic with the contractors needing A road at the Belfast end cleared for the start of the pit excavation. This required additional Saturday working when we could get access without a squad of white vans being always in the way! This week was equally busy with the contractors needing movement of stock in A, B and C roads. While A and C was relatively easy, the visitors platform was too wide for loco 27 and had to be trimmed along its length. While this was underway, a small group of us gave the contractor instruction on how to lay 60ft of the northern rail extension outside the workshop. The contractor laid a further 60ft on Tuesday, although the third 3ft gauge rail had still to be laid. 28th April saw a reluctant group of us head to Coleraine in the driving snow to carry out necessary planking repairs on the turntable. Fortunately the forecast was correct and the day was bright, but cold, when we arrived to find

Matthew Crockett, David Lowry and Nigel Spiers. The sun shone and we replaced 12 large plank timbers which had been supplied by a local timber merchant at a very keen price. Thanks are due to Chris Dunlop, the local NIR permanent way manager who ensured that the table was free of rolling stock and power was available.

May started with some much needed maintenance on 3 sets of points which had been unreliable for a while, but soon responded to grease and oil. We also moved the turntable rails which required cleaning and painting. The following week we supervised the installation, by MSM, of the third rail to the track outside the back of the workshop, making it dual 5'3" and 3' gauge. I also gave the Atlas its annual major service. Unfortunately the Telehandler stopped working in reverse but after several hours of electrical testing by Alastair Maxwell and Colin Stewart, this was fixed by ourselves. The contractors lost two of their usual digger drivers for the third week and I was asked by MSM to use the Atlas to remove the track and sleepers from the Belfast end of A road



The site squad moving turntable rails on 5th May.



The site gang, framed in the carriage shed doorway, at work with the trusty Atlas on 5th May.

of the carriage shed to allow work to begin on the pit. This was very providential because it released 30 sleepers which were later used for the rail connection to the turntable.

On a glorious first of June the turntable was lifted into position with a very large crane and it seems to be a very good fit. Our ferrous skip was emptied again and a start was made on moving items in the car park that unfortunately were to be in the way of the re-routed new mains electricity cable.

On D-Day some of the heavy track items in the car park had to be moved by a Hiab lorry. The expense of hiring this was partly offset by MSM using it to deliver flat-bottomed rail for the carriage shed pit. At the same time the Telehandler was out of action with a flat tyre but after a puncture repair in Larne it was soon back in action. Over the last few weeks in June we were clearing space in the new carriage shed reception area, with help from Tom Mathers and Alan McRobert, to allow the floor to be painted. We were asked by

MSM to clear the northern end of the platform so that an extension and wheel chair ramp could be built. While the old JCB was easily started and moved the heavy brick furnace was a more difficult job. It had to be lifted by the hand crane, and guided by the Atlas to a new resting place between two and three roads.

Apart from the above job, and the carriage shed pit, all the rest of the major parts of the contract had been completed. A start has been made on the laneway while MSM's part of the new electrical supply went in at the weekend with NIE installing their bit later. On a slightly sad note, the Tarry was demolished on the 14th June.

July and August were quieter months, with many of us on holidays. However, we did manage to lay track at the Larne end outside of the carriage shed for A road. This was not easy, as no plant could gain access, and all materials, sleepers and rail, had to be lifted in by hand with great help from Roy Thompson

and Gordon Hunt. Similar extensions to C and D roads were laid with assistance from Neves Thomas and Richard Armstrong but, because of levels and width restrictions, they were laid without sleepers, using chairs and steel tie bars in a tram road format.

Installation of the fire detection and alarm system was finished. Thursday 1st September was handover day, with a full familiarisation of the electrics, alarms and other systems being given to key personnel by the main or subcontractors and we received building control approval.

On the second Thursday in September we tidied the car park after the departure of MSM, fixed the block wall at the entrance, which had been nudged by a delivery lorry, and dusted down 131 and 171. The following week we pulled out the old wooden sleepers of 5 road and started the relay with 5 concrete sleepers. The next week we dug out the new alignment for 5 road and, with very careful levelling, put in 18 concrete sleepers. In the middle of all of this the Allianz insurance inspection of both the Atlas and the Telehandler took place and both passed with only minor hydraulic ram leaks. In addition the Aviva inspection of all our buildings was carried out and all were deemed very satisfactory. The first two weeks in October saw the placing of a further 5 concrete sleepers, rail insertion, compacting of the ballast and full keying of all the new turntable alignment. On a glorious Thursday 13th we had a great Site squad of 13 members including John Williams and Trevor Taylor and finished the full connection and celebrated the first traverse of the new track with the Atlas by bringing in the heavy duty railings for the turn table from the outer yard.

Following the completion of the track connection to the turntable, both Nos 3BG and 85 were turned the following Saturday. October also saw the fitting of new roller

shutter doors on both A and B road Belfast ends of the carriage shed, while we cut up the old doors for recycling. The end of the month also had the Site squad bring in over 80 feet of old crossing timbers to the heavy lift area to allow lorry delivery of a well wagon, which was to be lifted using the shear legs. Early in November almost 90 boxes of Santa presents were stacked in the Station, following delivery, while later in the month some glorious weather allowed us to prime and undercoat the tank for the Shell wagon restoration. We also cleared space in front of the concrete bunkers in preparation for the movement of the sleeping coach. About this time the hard-working Telehandler got a complete annual service, including a new handbrake cable, which was ably fitted by Willie Hollinger. A large collection of over 40 lengths of rail had to be moved by the Atlas as they were blocking the path for the lorry which was to bring in the well wagon mentioned above. The last couple of weeks in November were very busy and we managed to empty all the spares from the green container in the car park, which together with their shelving, were moved into the new carriage shed. This allowed us to scrap this ancient container in December and clear more space in the car park, as requested by the funders. The two remaining good containers will also have to be emptied and then moved to the back of the site. Our, by now full, metal skip was recycled for £460 and the well wagon arrived and was offloaded under the careful supervision of the Phillip Newell.

We used the Atlas to demolish the old portakabin with help from Robin Morton and Peter Lindsay and put all in a long skip and the following week 12 of us had a well earned hearty lunch of an Ulster fry in the Old Tea House café.

All in all a busy year and many thanks to all those who made it possible.



The RPSI first employed full time staff just over 30 years ago, with an "ACE" (Action for Community Employment) scheme. Since then, the full time staff have been an integral part of activities at Whitehead. Examples of their work can be found in several major projects, including the conversion of a GNR(I) U class tender to 'compound' style for No.85 in the early 1990s, the contract restoration of Downpatrick's No.3 in the late 1990s, the extensive overhaul of No.4 completed in 2001, and in most other restoration or overhaul jobs carried out at Whitehead.

These full time staff were employed directly by the RPSI. However, this changed in 2011 when a wholly owned subsidiary company, Heritage Engineering Ireland Ltd, was formed.

The major reason for setting up this company was to allow the RPSI to apply for grants for projects that it could not tender for itself. For example, when we obtained funding for No.131's overhaul, the conditions of the grant would not allow the RPSI to employ its own staff directly to carry out the work. Another advantage was that HEI was able to apply for grants and other help that the RPSI would not have been eligible to apply for. The Dunleath Workshop gained a very useful one ton overhead crane and a number of hand tools thanks to one such grant scheme. There were some administrative and financial advantages as well.

Currently HEI employs five full time staff, one part time employee and one part time book

keeper.

As you might expect, HEI primarily undertakes RPSI work, however it also does a small number of external jobs too. Taking on these contract jobs creates an income stream to augment RPSI funds, and helps smooth out the seasonal fluctuations in RPSI fund availability which occurs during the year.

The workshop time is split between RPSI maintenance, RPSI overhauls, and work for external organisations. The split for 2016 was follows; maintenance 21.5%, overhauls 65% and external organisation work 13.5%. 2017 looks set to have a similar split. A notable trend of the past four years is an increase in the time spent on maintenance work, the number of hours on such work has doubled since 2013 which is in particular attributable to an increase in time spent on carriage maintenance.

During 2016, HEI's major work for the RPSI consisted of:

- I. Overhaul and rebuilding of tender No 37 for Loco No 131. This tender is of the standard GNR(I) length, wheelbase etc but originally had the distinctive 'hopper' shaped body of the E type, built specifically for the U class and UG class locos in 1948. The original bodywork had corroded beyond redemption before the RPSI acquired it, besides which a water capacity of 2,500 gallons is too small for current requirements. The tender has been reconfigured with the bodywork similar to the "D" type tender that runs with No 171. This included fitting a well between the frames, bringing the water capacity up to 3,500 gals. Work is nearly complete and is now progressing to fit pipework and modern AWS/TPWS safety



The Orenstein and Koppel boiler from Downpatrick under overhaul on 17th July 2016. Guinness 3BG, to the right, has already regained its freshly repaired boiler. The Guinness engine returned to steam on 9th October.

equipment.

- 2. General maintenance work, annual inspection, etc, on locos and coaches. As much running repair work is carried out by RPSI volunteers as possible with HEI called upon to do specific jobs when required, up to the value of the amount budgeted by the RPSI. HEI has attended to repairs on Dublin-based locos (Nos 4 and 461).
- 3. Boiler repairs for 3BG Guinness loco. Replacement of platework at foundation ring was found necessary, together with renewal of the smokebox.
- 4. Bodywork repairs to coaches 460, 181 and 304.
- 5. Overhaul of B4 and Cravens bogies. The first bogies have been worked on as a trial to establish requirements and procedures.
- 6. Blast cleaning, repair and painting of turntable.

The major external contract work during

2016 was the 10-year overhaul of the boiler for Orenstein and Koppel loco No. 3 for the Downpatrick and County Down Railway. The boiler and fittings received general repairs, retubing, hydraulic and steam testing.

In 2016 HEI received £133k from the RPSI and £34k from external customers (excluding VAT). The major outgoing expenses are wages and overheads - for the majority of jobs the material cost is a small fraction of the cost of the staff's time.

HEI staff and RPSI volunteers are typically found working together on projects – one example of this was in 2013 when No. 186 required a new set of brake blocks. An RPSI volunteer made a wooden pattern for the blocks, which was then cast in iron by HEI staff in the foundry. More recently, No. 85 had repairs to a piston head and new piston rings made by HEI before RPSI volunteers completed the job by fitting the repaired piston to the locomotive.

At the time of writing this report it is only 9 months since the last *Five Foot Three* was published – but it already seems years ago! Whilst most of the basic structure of the various workshop and carriage shed extensions were finished, a huge amount of finishing work, decoration, fitting of fixed electrical and other equipment, testing and commissioning of electrical and electronic information and display systems still lay ahead – and must be finished by the end of February to meet funders' conditions. This work is still underway at time of writing – but we're getting there!

Outside the main buildings the 60ft turntable (originally built as recently as 1975 for NIR's then Central Service Depot at the former Queens Quay station in Belfast) has been installed and brought into use. The main public area of our Whitehead Excursion passenger station is now being fitted out as a period-style café for the use of our anticipated visitors. We plan to franchise this operation to an external contractor, with a selection process well under way. Finally, our entire site now has substantial security fencing.

At this stage we're well into the

surprisingly complex operation of moving virtually all our Whitehead-based rolling-stock to their designated positions to suit both display/information and operational purposes.

A major clear-up of scrap and other unwanted items is also in progress. Finally, great efforts are being made to tidy-up as much equipment and stores as possible in the new bunkers and storage areas at the back of the site. Another item which will grace this area will be our Mark 3 Sleeping Car – not for main-line use of course, but as a facility for our weekend-working volunteers.

The lever-frame from Kiltimagh on the former Claremorris – Collooney 'Burma Road' has been installed in the Signal Box, but interlocking and connection to points and signals is still a job for the future.

In the locomotive workshop, the new body for our ex-GNR(I) tender underframe for use with our Qs Class 4-4-0 No. 131 is almost complete, with the installation of the electronic Train Protection Signalling Equipment well underway. They didn't have such things when 131 last hauled a public train over 50 years ago!



A trial turning of No. 85 *Merlin* on 10th October.

The *Guinness* engine was the first guinea pig and is seen here facing the opposite direction to normal.



Whitehead's new facilities are intended to protect, maintain and display our collection of vehicles. From here in the wheel drop shed can be seen the original engine shed (far right), the wheel drop pit (bottom right), the new machine shop on the ground floor (bottom left) and, above it on the first floor, some of the new public displays.

As if they didn't have enough to do, our locomotive people have completed the overhaul of our Guinness 0-4-0ST locomotive No. 3BG, which is now back in service at Whitehead.

The many and various items taken off-site a couple of years ago to create working space for our contractors and ourselves are now being gradually returned to Whitehead.

A major item in our HLF-funded grant is the design and installation of inter-active audio/visual interactive display equipment in our museum and other viewing galleries. An enormous amount of research, selection of illustrations, writing of several layers of accurate information and background and linked data and finally checking and testing, has been undertaken by our Curatorial

Committee – led by Charles Friel and assisted by a huge number of man-hours (and women-hours). This is an essential feature for the normally self-guided visitor information facilities which we will be providing.

To assist in making all this possible, we have taken on three members of staff – partially financed initially by the Heritage Lottery Fund, but expected to become self-financing as our business grows.

As part of our financial plan as agreed by our Funders, access to our premises will have to be on a paid-basis, other than for approved and designated RPSI volunteers. To this end, the visitor access to the site will be by the pedestrian gate beside the station building only. We are, however, discussing the possibility of a direct fenced-off pedestrian

route from the NIR Whitehead railway station, to be open at specific busy times,

The Society is immensely grateful to all our members and other supporters who have made all this possible, through their ongoing time, support and assistance for our '2020' project – which is still 'running to time' – like any good railway should!

Finally – the RPSI still has an option to develop the Dundalk station to the former Ardee Road area as an additional – albeit

smaller scale – base and museum for some of our historic wooden-bodied carriages and other exhibits – and as a destination for steam trips from both Dublin and Belfast. The site is still fully rail-connected and signalled, and has no other apparent use at present – but that may not last for ever.

Would anyone interested in pursuing this opportunity please contact myself or anyone else on the 2020 committee?



ABOVE: On 29th February 2017, volunteers put the finishing touches to extensive remodelling of Whitehead Excursion station building interior, led by Mark Kennedy.

RIGHT: The station is now equipped with a comfortable vintage-style café.



An aerial view of Whitehead, October 2016. Last issue featured a similar view from March of the same year. Since then, the turntable has been installed (lower left) and in this picture is turning its first engine at Whitehead, Guinness 3BG.

The muddy quagmire at the back of the site has been replaced by gravel and tarmac (to the right, with cars parked on it). The purpose-built staff car park (partly visible at bottom left) has recently been brought into use after the stores there were relocated.



As has been discussed in the Editorial, it has been a long road for the RPSI from its formation to the opening this year of Whitehead Railway Museum. I remember the very first issue of *Five Foot Three*, back in 1966, in which our then Patron Lord O'Neill wrote of the need for the Society to keep a “permanent record” of Ireland’s railways for posterity. From that germ of an idea has emerged, 50 years on, Whitehead Railway Museum.

One by one, the building blocks have been set in place. In 1966 the RPSI, after much deliberation, opted to set up its base at Whitehead Excursion Station, then a disused siding and platform accompanied by a derelict engine shed and an empty water tower. The premises expanded over the years with the construction of an additional engine shed, a carriage shed, workshops, a foundry and a mess hut.

In 2002 the Society secured registered museum status, subsequently upgraded in 2007 to become an accredited museum. In the same year, thanks to the generosity of a benefactor, the Society moved from being tenant to owner-occupier by completing the acquisition from Carrickfergus Council of the entire Whitehead site.

These two factors opened up the possibility of serious grant aid being secured. So it was in 2010 that the Heritage Lottery Fund approved an initial grant of £165,000 to enable the Society to draw up a business case and drawings for a proposed new museum at Whitehead.

In October 2011 the Society unveiled plans for a museum which would attract 20,000 visitors a year and which would include a turntable, a signal box, an education centre, a café and a viewing gallery to enable visitors to

observe the workshops.

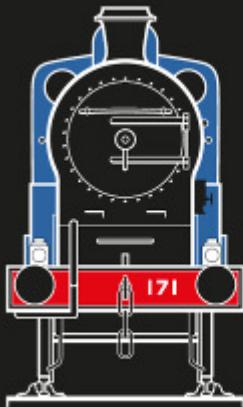
Since then a flurry of activity and negotiation has been taking place behind the scenes, spearheaded by the Society’s 2020 Committee and overseen by the Board. Tourism NI came on board to provide match funding, the designs were approved and work on site began in September 2015.

The overall funding package for Whitehead Railway Museum has been provided by Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund under the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland and administered by Tourism Northern Ireland with additional support from Mid and East Antrim Council and Ulster Garden Villages.

In a separate but related development a new period-style £269,000 station building was completed in June 2013. Replacing a temporary building, this project was primarily funded by Generating Rural Opportunities Within (GROW) South Antrim, through the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, with support from Carrickfergus Borough Council (now Carrickfergus Council) and Ulster Garden Villages.

The development of the museum has increased the Society’s footprint at Whitehead by around 50%, providing additional workshop space for the development of heritage skills and creating a visitor facility, which will help put Whitehead on the tourist map.

In many ways the opening of the museum is a game-changer for the Society. Whitehead has been further enhanced as an operating base for main line trains and, as well as operating this ‘Museum on the Move’ we will be operating a tourist attraction which will bring



WHITEHEAD RAILWAY MUSEUM

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY
OF IRELAND

people to Whitehead on a year-round basis.

This will raise the RPSI's profile, give us a new dimension, create a new income stream and also help to regenerate Whitehead. We look forward to welcoming coachloads of visitors – and perhaps even more will arrive by train! Members have the opportunity to play their part in this new venture – by offering their services as accredited guides.

A new audience will be able to see work in progress on locomotives and carriages and marvel at the display of engines, carriages and wagons. Whitehead Railway Museum will be complementary to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum gallery at Cultra and the Downpatrick & Co Down Railway museum, while offering a unique opportunity to learn about the technical aspects of the railway and see engineering skills in action.

Crucially, the HLF funding covers an 'activity phase', which means that the Society has been able to recruit a General Manager and two Co-Ordinators.

In November 2016 the RPSI appointed Ruth Harper to the newly created post of General Manager. Ruth, who is from Carrickfergus,

had been Visitor Services Manager with Ulster Rugby at the Kingspan Stadium in Belfast, and took up her new position on November 14. The operation of Whitehead Railway Museum will be her initial priority.

RPSI Chairman Denis Grimshaw said the board was delighted to appoint Ruth to the position. He said: "Although there was keen interest and a strong field of applicants for this important post, Ruth proved to be an exceptional candidate and we are confident that she will bring all the necessary qualities, knowledge, abilities and commitment to the job."

Ruth said she was looking forward to her new role with the RPSI. She said that living in Carrickfergus, and having a holiday caravan in Portrush, she had long been familiar with the Society and its steam trains, such as the Portrush Flyer.

She said: "The work the RPSI has done is a credit to the organisation and I really wanted to be part of the next stage of operationally readiness. With my previous work experience I know I can add value to the Society."

Prior to taking up her role with Ulster Rugby, where she has developed a visitor experience with a new museum and visitor experience in the Nevin Spence Centre, Ruth worked for more than 12 years as Visitor Services Manager at the W5 tourist attraction in Belfast. Before that she had experience as a function services and conference manager in the hospitality sector.

A former pupil of Carrickfergus Grammar School, Ruth is an honours graduate in Hospitality Management from the University of Ulster at Jordanstown.

In January 2017, Ruth's team was strengthened by the appointment of Seán Conlon, Events and Marketing Co-ordinator, who started on January 3, and Claire McAuley, the Education and Interpretation Co-ordinator, who took up her post on January 23. The RPSI welcomes Seán and Claire to the team and wishes Ruth and her team every success in their endeavours. Funding for the project has been provided by Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund under the European

Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland and administered by Tourism Northern Ireland with additional support from Mid and East Antrim Council and Ulster Garden Villages.

Many people have played a key role in bringing the museum project from a dream to reality, but none have been more vital than Siobhan Dillon, the Project Manager. Over many long months she has driven the project, keeping contractors and the design team on track, while acting as co-ordinator between RPSI and the funders. Seemingly insuperable hurdles have been overcome and the Society owes Siobhan a debt of gratitude.

As the finishing touches are put to the museum, the RPSI stands on the brink of an exciting new era. All those who have played a part in the development of the Society, from all parts of Ireland, over the past five decades, can be justifiably proud. Our President, Lord O'Neill, sowed the seeds all those years ago and what a marvellous moment it is to see them bearing fruit.



A visitor's-eye view: HEI staff dismantling a carriage bogie in the Henry Dunleath Workshop on 19th December, as seen through the public viewing window.

I am told that the Royal Train on 28th June was the fulfilment of a long-held ambition on the part of one particular Northern Ireland Office official, who always hoped to organise a Royal Train on this side of the water as soon as the security situation was calm enough to permit it. Her Majesty undoubtedly has a deep-seated love of steam trains. At one stage in the negotiations, as the list of issues grew and time became short, we were told directly, "The word from the Palace is that this is the main reason for her coming".

The first I heard about a Royal Train being on the cards was when the Chairman phoned in late April and said there was to be an extra special train running on Tuesday 28th June 2016; that it involved the Queen, the North Coast from Portrush to Bellarena to open the new station there.

This had already been being planned for a few weeks, and I was warned not to tell anyone else about it. For security reasons it was

very important that this was kept secret, difficult though this is in the railway community, and we were warned that, should it become general knowledge, the whole event would be cancelled. I would have loved to bring more RPSI colleagues in on it, but faced with the threat of the train not happening at all, I hope we can agree in retrospect that this was the right policy.

The secret did get out later, through no fault of ours, on Thursday 23rd June, when the Belfast Telegraph broke the press embargo and announced that a Royal visit, involving a steam train, would take place the following week. Fortunately for us, it was decided that this was late enough that the event could still go ahead.

Not much more happened for my part until the end of May while others negotiated with such bodies as Translink, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). Certain questions



NIR No. 112 collecting the carriages from Whitehead on 25th June (Photo: M Crockett)

urgently needed answered. Firstly, what carriages were to be used?

Options included using President's Saloon No. 5408 in a rake of Mark 2 carriages, or GNR Directors' Saloon No. 50 and a wooden-bodied set. This would be particularly appropriate since No. 50 had carried the Queen back in 1953, and NIR indicated they would be willing to run wooden bodied stock on this occasion.

An assessment of both Whitehead and Dublin based wooden bodied coaches concluded that No. 87 (the UTA dining car that was also part of the 1953 Royal Train) was considered a 'runner', as were the Dublin based Nos 351 and 1142, and potentially No. 9 as well. In the end No. 50 itself let the side down, as inspection revealed deteriorated spring condition and a rotten buffer spacer - easily rectified, but not within the time scale.

Therefore the Mark 2s became the preferred option. No. 5408 is, of course, the most luxurious of these, but not ideal from a symbolic point of view. In the end it was ruled out when NIR objected to the use of a carriage in IÉ livery for such a prominent event. Instead, No. 303 was selected as the Royal carriage, due to the space in and around the seats, the cleanliness and the general state of the seats and upholstery (it has the newest of the lot). The advice from London was that Her Majesty does not like a fuss to be made, so there were to be no red carpets, potted plants, etc.

There was also the question of motive power. At one stage the Queen was expected to board the train at Portrush, meaning a change of direction at Coleraine, and serious thought was given to 'top-and-tailing' the train with Nos 85 and 4. Later this was changed to have her board at Coleraine, which meant No. 85 could do it alone. Even so, steam trips in this area are

never straightforward.

The main reason that the RPSI does not operate regularly to Derry is the 29-mile single line section, with no passing loops, from Castlerock to Londonderry. Tender engines, running tender-first, are restricted to 30mph, and the hour taken to clear the section blocks the timetabled service. No.85 would be going into Londonderry chimney-first and so would be trapped there with no tender-first paths available until after the last service train of the day, the 2110 ex-Belfast, entered Derry at 2325. Waiting for this would put the Translink crew outside their permitted working hours, and so the only option was to stable the train in Londonderry until the following night, when the crew would be rested and could get the train home.

The final format was this:

Friday 17th June 2016 – Practice recovery of train by NIR GM just prior to Steam & Jazz. NIR's No. 112 duly arrived at Whitehead at 1543, coupled up to No.85 and train, blew up the brake, reapplied it a few times and then went home to York Road.

Sunday 19th June 2016 – the Steam Dreams charter serendipitously brought us on a rare visit to Derry and, during the empty stock working on this day, gauging trials for Castlerock, Bellarena and Derry platforms were carried out.

Saturday 25th June 2016 – An NIR GM was to arrive and take the five Mark 2s to Fortwilliam Train Care Depot so that they could be put in secure covered storage. NIR's Richard Noble suggested that the train could be valeted in Fortwilliam to complement what cleaning contractors had already done the previous week at Whitehead, and our thanks are due to him for facilitating this.

This required a late night shunt, since the

train was in service as a Steam & Jazz train on the Friday evening, only arriving back into Whitehead at 0021. Jazz trains are very messy at the best of times and 303 had been kept out of them for the sake of cleanliness. The formation arriving back was, from the Larne end, 302-301-547-300-180-463. Two hours of shunting with No. 85 in the small hours (quieter than B142 by looong way!) produced the required Royal Train format, which was 303-302-301-547-463. This departed hauled by NIR No. 112 at 1035 on Saturday morning.

With the coaches gone, attention turned to making No.85 as presentable as possible. When one sets to cleaning a steam locomotive, it quickly becomes clear why the old railway companies employed squads of cleaners on a daily basis. There is a lot of ground to cover and cleaning them only intermittently, as life usually permits, inevitably means that the less obvious areas remain filthy.

Four sacks of clean rags and many litres of 'clean spirit' were stockpiled for use, but after many of the rags went up to the boiler as red, green, yellow, white etc and came down as blue, someone read the bottle and the clean spirit was duly diluted from thereon in. Our usual cleaning agent – diesel – was still used for the motion, wheels and more congealed areas. There was still the positioning run to Coleraine to do, but the idea was that the engine would need no more than a quick polish by the steam raisers on the day.

Most of the smokebox was ground back to bare metal and repainted. The buffers, usually painted black, were burnished and coated in axle oil to keep the shine and prevent oxidising. This lesson was learnt the hard way, when the buffers were burnished as a trial for the June 19th Steam Dream charter. Sitting next to the River Foyle from Sunday night to Tuesday morning resulted in bright orange buffers awaiting the steam raiser. Shortly after the Royal Train the buffers regained a coat of black paint – not as



No .85 and crew at Coleraine, ready for the off. L-R: Gary Cooley, Noel Playfair, Michael Hamill, Anthony Dargan, Jamie Reid. (Photo: Mark Walsh)



Her Majesty meets Lord O'Neill and (right) Denis Grimshaw at Coleraine before boarding the train.

pretty, but much easier to maintain!

After the Steam Dreams charter, No.85 was due a boiler washout but this was deferred, just this once, for fear of something going wrong that would prevent us getting the boiler sealed again. The tender, however, was opened up and drained so the sieves could be cleaned out and the injectors as well as the brake ejector were opened up and given plenty of inspection and TLC.

Overalls were laundered or, if beyond help, new ones bought and caps cleaned and badges polished.

Monday 27th June 2016 – No.85's fire was lit at 0130 in order to be ready to leave Whitehead chimney-first at 1005 to turn at Great Victoria Street. The train was brought from Fortwilliam to Belfast Central station by GM (112 again!), where 85 was to collect it

and leave for Coleraine at 1137. Noel Playfair, Gary Moore and Paul Hoy were the NIR crew on No. 85. In the event, the run to Coleraine was delayed by an hour, due to delays on NIR making GVS more congested than usual; No.85 was run up to the buffers in Platform 3 whilst service trains came and went behind her for a while, receiving many curious looks from commuters!

NIR 112 also made the journey to Coleraine, to act as the Plan B back-up in case No.85 failed the next day either during preparation or, even worse, in section, in which case 112 would be called in to clear up the whole sorry mess. A Plan C was also in place: should the carriages fail, or both No.85 and 112 fail, CAF 4007 had been impeccably turned out as reserve reserve!

At Coleraine our train and 4007 were held through the night under close police guard in

a fenced green zone on the turntable road.

Tuesday 28th June 2016 – So the big day dawned, overcast but dry! The fire was lit in No.85 at 0700. The railway was to close and go to bus substitution beyond Ballymoney following passage of the 1110 from Belfast. It would not re-open to service trains again until our train reached Derry.

Driving to Coleraine with Edward Friel to light up the engine, we were struck by the numbers of police officers and vehicles in the town. Crowd control barriers lined the streets outside an immaculately painted station, and we had to explain ourselves several times before being allowed through to the engine. Lighting up a train which had a kind of personal guard was a new experience, with PSNI stationed in a Land Rover with its rear doors open directly in front of No. 85. This was soon smoked out with the steam-raise and beat a retreat down to the rail yard gates, where the occupants produced breakfast boxes and sat munching. More police were patrolling on foot, and we began to realise how small our part was in the huge operation of a Royal visit.

Lighting and oiling the engine all seemed strangely routine under the circumstances.

As steam was getting up, we set to with car shampoo to remove the sooty marks made on Monday. Later James Friel and Phillip Newell turned up to carry out final inspections of the locomotive and carriages. Finding nothing of note, they lent a hand as well to give the engine a final polish.

The appearance of the NIR crew, Noel Playfair, Anthony Dargan, Michael Hamill and Jamie Reid, from the 1140 meant it was time for the final touch. There had been talk of using four headlamps to give a 'Royal Train' head code, but research revealed that this has never actually been done in Ireland. Instead we now opened a large wooden case (cunningly labelled 'TPWS Equipment') to reveal nothing less than the headboard from the GNR Royal Train of 1903! James had arranged the loan of this from the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum via Mark Kennedy.

At 1300 No. 85 and train reversed out of the yard back beyond the home signal and then pulled forward into Platform 2; coach 303 was stopped with her rear door opposite the main platform door. 4007, the reserve CAF, performed a similar manoeuvre to get into Platform 1. In the Down Bay platform, GM 112 started with a roar and settled into its happy idle. And then we all waited. Some had



The level crossing at Castlerock as the train passed through. (Photo: Mark Walsh)



Her Majesty disembarks from No. 303 at Bellarena

lunch, some milled by the engine, some gave the carriage interiors a final look over, no-one wanted to go far. The media film crews and journalists and guests of the RPSI and Translink arrived. Noel Playfair, complete with grease top with old-style NIR badge, was the centre of their attention. One of the publications he found himself in afterwards was *Woman's Way* magazine, so steam train drivers have still got it!

No.85 gleamed with her headboard whilst crowds of well-wishers and schoolchildren gathered behind barriers on the footpaths outside the front of the station entrance, some with flowers, some with flags and some with greetings on banners. The coaches steadily filled up with government officials, press, schoolchildren from local schools, a few specially invited RPSI and Translink guests and, of course, security personnel.

The appearance overhead of the police helicopter foretold imminent Royal arrival and the meet-and-greet party, among them RPSI President Lord O'Neill and Chairman

Denis Grimshaw, assembled in a row just next to the platform door. The single line token was handed onto the footplate, the level crossing sirens blared and the gates started to come down – and went up again. The signaller roared from the cabin at the pushing crowd to stand back, police helped usher them and so the gates made it down after a few more attempts. The sirens stopped, the starter signal went green and everybody waited. Then cheering started outside the station entrance.

The departure time of 1445 had been kept ultra-secret and, bang on time, the Queen, Duke of Edinburgh and their close attendants came out through the platform door and in what seemed only a matter of seconds they had worked their way along the meet-and-greet and were stepping on board a real RPSI Royal Train!

No sooner had the door shut behind them than we were away with a blast of the whistle. Away across the crowded level crossing, with its cheering crowd all trying to

catch a glimpse or a photo of royalty. On we went through the narrow Clothworker's Bridge, with police on top, and out over the Bann Bridge with Permanent Way men and police in the central cabin and at either end - there was to be a lot of whistling at lineside personnel! Out along the river's edge ran the train, past the golf course and sand dunes towards the Barmouth and Castlerock. Every level crossing had an attendant orange-clad permanent way worker alongside yellow-jacketed police and, in most cases, crowds of the general public waving hands and flags, clapping, cheering, taking photos.

On No.85 and train went, slowing as it passed Castlerock's ready semaphore, trundling across the level crossing, its barriers packed with people, slowing further for the token exchange from the signaller ready on his wooden platform, before taking off again. It had been requested that the train was to

take the 13-mile journey at a healthy yet leisurely 40mph to give time both for the travellers to enjoy the view and, just as important, to allow the attendant motorcade to keep up! This followed the Seacoast Road, in most places only a field or two away from the line. At level crossings and gaps in hedges we caught glimpses of the convoy of black vehicles slowly overtaking us.

On into Castlerock tunnel, the cliff above lined with police, out briefly for a glimpse of more police on clifftops and back into the Downhill tunnel, emerging from under Mussenden Temple to run along the edge of the crowded Downhill Strand, the beach full of cars, everyone out watching. The weather by now was glorious blue sky; No.85 seems able to turn the sky blue just by being pulled out of the shed.

The Royal Train whistled and rumbled over the wide Umbra level crossing, with cheering



At Bellarena, Her Majesty meets Michael Hamill while, behind, Noel Playfair and Peter Scott discuss technical matters with the Duke of Edinburgh.

crowds there too, and skirted the base of Binevenagh with its tumbling waterfalls. On it went past the closed but very well kept Magilligan station, its single platform alive again for just a few hours. There were even deckchairs out and a tea party underway! All too soon, the brakes were rubbing as we slowed smoothly to a stop at the Down platform of the new Bellarena station. The whole journey had taken only 25 minutes. The new station is across the level crossing from the old one (closed in March 2016) and the Up platform and its new passing loop were not yet in use. The station was bedecked in hanging baskets and crowds thronged the level crossing.

On disembarking 303, the Royal party declared the new station open, unveiling a plaque to commemorate the event, and were given a framed photo of No.85 passing

Cloghogue Chapel near Newry, before making their way over to the locomotive where the NIR crew and Peter Scott were presented in turn.

When writing this in early December, I asked Peter Scott MBE what the Queen had said to him. Here is his answer; "To be honest, I can't remember! It was the usual small talk, lots of work in restoring old engines etc. Someone asked about the speed of the loco but that may have been the Duke. I was going to request an upgrade to OBE but thought it might be inappropriate!" Noel records his thoughts in a separate article.

Descending the platform ramp, the Royal party conducted a short walkabout amongst the crowd before boarding their Land Rover in the waiting motorcade and departing for the airport.



The Royal Train emerging from Downhill tunnel on its way to Bellarena.
(Photo: Harrison Photography)

With the Queen away, No. 85 started towards Derry, still some 20 miles distant. En route the train passed the perimeter of City of Derry airport just in time to see the motorcade pull up by a small jet plane, a green-clad figure step out of a Land Rover and start to climb the aircraft steps. The whistle was hastily sounded!

No.85 entered Platform 1 in Derry with minutes to spare before departure of the 1613. After this had gone, the train was shunted to the Freight Siding next to the park & ride car park. The boiler was filled, the fire thrown out, the headboard packed up, the ashpan and smokebox emptied, the electrics shut down, the doors all locked and, as there was more to be done yet, new steam raising gear brought up from 463 in the wheelbarrow.

Wednesday 29th June / Thursday 30th June 2016 – The fire was lit in No.85 at 1730, the first move being shunting out to the loop and running-round following departure of the 2133. As the loco was now tender-first for leaving Derry, we would then wait in the loop for the last train to arrive, allowing us to depart at 2330. Dermot Mackie came later to inspect the carriages. Noel, Gary Moore and Paul were the NIR crew.

Having not been to Derry since a gauging run for the Mark 2 carriages in 2004, and having not run a passenger train there since 28th September 2003, we were suddenly there twice in ten days in 2016, five days of which were actually doing things in Derry (two arrival days, two departure days and Monday 20th June disposing and doing some jobs for Steam Dreams). Both operations, however, were only one-way charters so the locomotive was free to do one leg tender-first out of hours, on a different day for crew hours. Maybe Bellarena will open new possibilities. Judging by the many friendly people who stopped to talk to us through the

fence on Tuesday night, there would certainly be an appetite for more steam in the area.

As we left Derry, the train was dark apart from 463 with one compartment in use for the RPSI staff and the Guard. Standing on the footplate running tender-first is rarely a picnic but that night was calm and clear and the view over the tender around the coast and through the tunnels was extraordinary, there being a total lack of light pollution. The Derry line by day offers spectacular views; by night, when the firehole doors were shut at least, we were running under a field of stars. Seventy minutes later the loco was turned and topped up with water in Coleraine before departing at 0140 for a non-stop run to Belfast Central, the first in many years.

Arrival into Central at about 0300 was followed by a quick run-round and water from a road tanker before the last leg to Whitehead, arriving as the sun came up at around 0400. The train was stabled and No.85 was finally parked outside the engine shed, her tired crew going home in daylight.

That was not quite the end of it, though, and at 1930 that evening the Royal Train was reformed into the Steam & Jazz train for the following day by addition of 300 and 180 by Phillip Newell, Andrew Davidson and Adam Lohoff using B142. On that Jazz train more than one RPSI member would give a glance to the happy party at 303's Table 12, reflect on who had been there just a few days before and reflect on a job very well done indeed.

Special thanks are due to the station and permanent way staff of Derry - Londonderry station who were so helpful to us and kept an eye on our train during this event and the previous week's Steam Dreams.

It says a lot about our Society that we managed to pull this one off in exemplary fashion.

In my thirty-three years as a train driver, I am sure that I have carried tens of thousands of passengers on my trains. To me, every single one of them are important, but from time to time, a famous face will appear on the train, usually on the 'Enterprise', but occasionally on the local services too.

There have been quite a few over the years, local and Westminster politicians, actors and other faces from the media and television. Probably the two that really made my day were footballer George Best and actor and writer Michael Palin, especially when they stopped to say hello, and have a chat.

Then, in June of 2016, a rumour began to circulate, that someone 'really' special, was coming to Northern Ireland, and would be using the steam train for part of their journey.

The railway thrives on gossip and rumours, and I thought that, if it were to be anyone coming to open Bellarena station, it would probably be First and Deputy First Ministers, Arlene Foster and Martin McGuinness. After all the new station and passing loop, had yet to be finished.

So it was with a mixture of disbelief, excitement and nervousness, that I learned the 'Very Important Passenger', would be THE most important passenger of my career.

The story hit the media about a week beforehand, so I was able to read up on Royal protocol, deep clean my overalls and to give my shoes a really good polishing, which they hadn't had before, and certainly haven't had since.

I wanted to look the part for the big day, and although I'm not normally one to wear a proper engine driver's 'Grease Top', I thought



Noel speaks to the media at Coleraine before departure.

I would relent, providing I was able to find an original Northern Ireland Railways cap badge. Matthew Crockett came up trumps and supplied the badge, and James Friel was able to find a cap to fit my head.

On the big day, Tuesday the 28th, I left home around eight in the morning, walking to the railway station just like any other day, but with a sense of trepidation.

I travelled to Yorkgate, where I was to board the train to Coleraine and meet my colleagues, Inspector Michael Hamill and Fireman Anto Dargan. It was only then that I realised the scale of the operation that I was to be a big part of.

Up to then, I had only a rough idea of timings, so a briefing by Gary Cooley and Hilton Parr on the train, and a later one in Coleraine by Billy Gilpin, prepared all of the crew for the

event.

We made our way to the siding in Coleraine, where we found our train, still protected by policemen, looking magnificent, with an authentic Royal crest adorning the front of the locomotive.

After positioning the train in the down platform at Coleraine, it was just a matter of waiting for the arrival of the Royal party.

The atmosphere in the station was electric, with a big media presence, and even though I have given interviews for television and radio, before, this day was different, and the interest in 'me' was overwhelming. Even though I enjoyed the attention, there were times when I had to take a deep breath, and hold it together.



At Castlerock, Noel exchanges staffs for the Royal Train with Signaller Martin Benson.

By the time the Queen and Prince Philip arrived, I was able to relax a bit, and get ready for the most important journey, and passenger of my life. After all, I've been driving Merlin for years, and she rarely misbehaves, so I had every confidence in the engine, myself, and Anto, my fireman.

With a short blow on the whistle, not too much noise from the engine, and definitely no wheelspin, No 85, moved out of the station serenely, and dare I say it, royally.

From the crowds standing at the level crossing in Coleraine, to the sightseers in every field, the twenty minute journey was like none other, and it was all I could do to 'hang back' and make sure the cavalcade of cars got to Bellarena before us.

I managed to arrive on time, at the appointed place, on the platform, and after a quick inspection of each other's hands and faces, we lined up in front of the locomotive, with myself, Peter Scott, Anto Dargan, Mickey Hamill, and guard Jamie Reid, all lined up and ready to meet the Queen and her consort, plus one or two other dignitaries as well.

After all of the excitement and tension earlier, I actually found shaking hands with the Queen the easiest part of the day, and after a couple of words about the short journey, she moved onto my colleagues.

And that was that. After such a big build up, so much preparation, all the media, the security, it was all over.

I'm glad I did it, and I'm glad I am able to say "I drove the Royal Train" - it still impresses many of my day-to-day passengers who know, and I've got the photographs to prove it.

A big thank you to Translink and the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland for making it happen.

THE BELFAST & COUNTY DOWN IN 1940 (part two)

Alan O'Rourke

The concluding part of an examination of the BCDR Working Timetable of September 1940, with photographs by E. M. Patterson.

Although the County Down was not a cattle carrying line in the same league as the GNR, let alone the MGVR, it did serve a number of country livestock fairs. The company seems to have avoided empty fair specials, by working out the wagons and brake vans on ordinary goods trains over the two days before each fair, and Belfast depot supplied the guards and light engines on the morning of the fairs. On Tuesdays, the Pig Marketing Board went shopping in Ballynahinch and Downpatrick, and the special started back from Downpatrick at 2.30pm, picking up stock at stations from Crossgar as required, and planned to reach Belfast at 3.35pm. Ballynahinch pigs went up on one of the branch trains, and were forwarded either by the 8.30am goods from Castlewellan, in which case a transfer working to Maysfields depot ran at 12.30pm from Queen's Quay, or on the Downpatrick pig train. On Thursdays it was the turn of Newtownards pigs and, if they were all bound for Maysfields, the special ran through over the Belfast Central Railway. Other fairs served were Crossgar (second Wednesday of each month, with a note that the return special was to "attach and detach at stations as required keeping clear of passenger trains," i.e. make itself as useful as possible and not get in the way); Saintfield (last Wednesday); Newtownards (first and third Wednesday and second and fourth Mondays, sometimes a small fair, where the stock could go on the 1.25pm up Donaghadee branch train, otherwise Belfast to be wired on the forenoon if there was enough traffic for a special); Downpatrick (first, second and third Fridays, and last Saturday: in addition to the shipper special,

up to eight wagons for stations to Newtownards and Belfast might go by the 1pm ordinary Up train, but no more than four of these could be booked through to Belfast, to avoid blocking the platform there).

Ballygowan signal cabin was normally switched out for three periods in the working day but had extended hours to expedite Saintfield fair traffic. Similarly, the North Junction cabin could be switched out to create a Crossgar-Downpatrick block section and, on the other side, Dundrum could be switched out to create a Downpatrick South Junction - Newcastle section. Ballynahinch fairs (first, third and fourth Thursdays) were provided for either by sending a light engine from Belfast or a pilot on the 7.45 am down train. This steam loco worked the early afternoon Ballynahinch-Comber-Ballynahinch round trip, stock going forward to Belfast on the 1.25pm Donaghadee service, but if the output of the fair was sufficient, a special ran through to Belfast or Maysfields as required. The timetable took little notice of the Belfast Central Railway, with one regular daily transfer working each way, and paths for pig trains on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but one assumes that much traffic was worked "as required" over that section.

There are also some signalling rules. Normally, a signalman had to ascertain that a train had a tail lamp in position on the rear vehicle to confirm that the train was complete, but to speed up passing trains at stations, the guard could convey this information to the cabin by waving a white flag out of his van, allowing the signal man to give "section clear" on the block instruments. Shunting onto the up main from the Belfast Central Line had to be preceded by the Ballymacarrett signalman sending



The footplate of UTA No. 219 (BCDR No. 19) at Donaghadee on 25th March 1950. From the photographer's notes it is unclear whether this is Driver Andy Bell or Fireman Walter Geary. Can any readers shed any light on this?

“obstruction danger” to Bloomfield and having it acknowledged, and later sending “train out of section or obstruction removed” once the it had cleared the junction. Drivers had to give three whistle blasts for guards to apply hand brakes, but at any station where the whistle code might cause confusion with this, more blasts could be given for the handbrakes. At Donaghadee, repeaters from the cabin block instruments relayed bell signals to the goods store and stationmaster’s office, presumably so that at quiet times the signalman could be deployed to other duties. So, if Newtownards failed to get a response, the signalman there was simply to repeat the message at short intervals until his colleague at the terminus got back to the cabin. Dundonald signal cabin was closed for the winter on September 23rd, the signals placed at danger and marked out of use, and the lamps removed, but a fire

was to be periodically lit in the stove to keep the block instruments dry.

Further notes covered the BCDR automatic signalling on the Bangor branch, introduced as far as Hollywood in November 1926, and extended to Bangor in November 1932. After two minutes at one of these signals at danger, the driver was authorised to whistle loudly and then proceed cautiously to the next signal, where, if it was also at danger, he repeated the process. If the second signal was at clear, he did not need to halt, but was required to proceed at caution unless he had at least a quarter mile of clear visibility showing no obstruction. During fog or falling snow, the halt at each danger signal was to be extended to four minutes. Under such adverse conditions, a flag man was provided at Ballymacarrett, about a train length in advance of the up outer home. On a train

coming to stand here, he was to affix three detonators ten yards apart about a hundred yards to the rear of the train and then exhibit a red flag or red light to emphasise the stationary train's presence. If further trains pulled up behind this one, he was to protect each in the rear by similar means, moving with his flag or lamp further along the queue. At Holywood, Craigavad and Helen's Bay, the usual position while automatic signalling was operating was to have all levers (except signals for wrong line running), pulled over in the cabins. If the track circuits were clear, the cabins could revert to manual working. The other sections of the line were signalled as follows:

Mainline:

Tyer's absolute block for Belfast (Ballymacarrett Junction) – Bloomfield – Knock – Dundonald – Comber; Downpatrick North Junction to South Junction; Newtownards - Donaghadee

Tyer's tablet instrument for Comber – Ballygowan – Saintfield – Ballynahinch Junction – Crossgar – Downpatrick (North Junction, South Junction and Home cabins) – Dundrum – Newcastle – Castlewellan; Comber – Newtownards.

Ballynahinch and Ardglass branches: Wise's train staff and permits.

Ballynoe on the Ardglass branch was also a block post, but lost this facility in the economy drive of the 1920s, and thereafter the branch was a single block section, Downpatrick South Junction - Ardglass. Each Wise's train staff had a compartment at each end, containing "permits" which were unidirectional. Such a staff could only be given to the driver when all permits for trains in the opposite direction to his train were in the appropriate compartment. For example, for a train from Ballynahinch Junction to Ballynahinch, the staff only allowed it to

proceed if all permits for trains from Ballynahinch to the Junction were in the staff. If a train was following in the same direction, the station master or another approved employee in charge of the station had to take out a permit in the driver's presence and hand it to him, the last train in that direction taking the staff. The system thus worked like the train staff and ticket method of control. For a more detailed description and an engraved illustration of the equipment see: Anonymous (1946) 'Wise's Train Staff' in The Railway Magazine 92: 214-5.

The 1940 working timetable lists the Newtownards - Donaghadee section as controlled by Wise's staff on page 29, but on the following page it is also shown as controlled by Tyer's absolute block. This may have been an emergency measure, after Newtownards cabin was burned down and it proved impossible to obtain replacement Tyer's instruments. I can't think of any reason why a section would need both Wise's staff and Tyer's. It would seem that the BCDR gradually went over to Tyer's from Wise's train staff. So, Crossgar - North Junction, South Junction - Dundrum, and Downpatrick to the two junctions were operated by Wise's staff in 1918, but had been converted to Tyer's (absolute block between the North and South Junction cabins, tablets on the other sections), by 1940.

It seems that Ballygrainey was at some stage a block post, and that after 1941 it became one again to break up the Newtownards - Donaghadee section, which was almost nine miles long, with a section running time of about twenty minutes. There was no proper signal cabin: the lever frame and instruments were housed in a lean-to corrugated iron shed on the platform but it was usually switched out. As the siding accommodation there was very limited, passing trains would have been exceedingly difficult, but at busy times with excursions or special trains



UTA No. 213 (formerly BCDR No.13) departing Donaghadee with a passenger train on 25th March 1950.

running, using Ballygrainey as a block post would have speeded up the dispatch of several trains in the same direction. For further details, see the photographs in Coakham D (1998) 'The Belfast & County Down Railway – an Irish Railway Pictorial' Leicester: Midland Publishing Ltd, p.34.

Apparatus for tablet exchange without stopping was provided at Comber, Newtownards, Ballygowan, Saintfield, Ballynahinch Junction, Crossgar, Downpatrick North Junction, Downpatrick Home, Downpatrick South Junction and Dundrum. To speed up the first down train, the 3.45am Downpatrick goods, stations Comber to Downpatrick South Junction withdrew the tablets after the running of the last trains the previous night and left them ready for the morning. The company still sent a daily time signal from Belfast booking office every morning. At 7.58am, all stations received "N" to be ready, followed at exactly 8.0am by

"RC" for regulate clocks, or where telephones were in use, six rings and then one long ring on the dot.

As with many railways, there were restrictions not only for overall speeds, but as to what could go where: the four big Baltic tanks were strictly limited to the Bangor branch, and certainly not allowed near the link with the GNR. Nos 4, 10 and 14 (the larger six-coupled goods engines) were barred from the Ardglass section, and the new tri-composites coaches 120 and 121 had to be kept clear of the cattle beach at Ballynahinch. Also, engines 8 and 16 were not allowed beyond Comber, and along with 4 and 10 they were prohibited from passenger working over the Central. Other companies' stock also caused problems: most GSR passenger coaches proved out of gauge, although goods and non-passenger vehicles were acceptable except motor and fish vans and the large goods wagons numbered 161-

182. GNR bogie stock was fine to run over the system as long as no-one tried to shunt it along the dock siding at Downpatrick. NCC stock was also banned from the Ardglass line and the Ballynahinch cattle beach. GNR engines, accompanied by a pilot driver, were allowed over the Donaghadee and Bangor lines and from Newcastle to Downpatrick. GNR and NCC engines at Ballymacarrett were distinguished by a green headlamp, while BCDR ones had a white light.

The maximum loading for the Ballynahinch diesel is given as: four six-wheelers; or two six-wheelers and four horse boxes, one of which might be one of the big double horse boxes; or a sixty-ton goods train. For the Ardglass line, the maximum loads were 100 tons of goods, or seven coaches down or six coaches up. There were also maximum loads for goods trains: 4.15am from Belfast, 34 wagons to Comber; the morning mainline goods as far as Ballygowan 52 wagons reduced to 46 if stopping at Comber; the up Newcastle goods 44 wagons between Crossgar and Ballynahinch Junction; 75 wagons for any up Comber - Belfast service.

Traffic from Donaghadee for any stations south of Downpatrick was to be forwarded in piped wagons on the 7.40pm train and transferred to the 7.55pm down passenger train at Comber.

In the days of the “common carrier” most passenger trains also conveyed non-passenger stock. Many mainline trains could include horse boxes and carriage trucks: on the Donaghadee line, the 10.30am, 1.32pm, 3.22pm and 5.48pm; the 10.50am to Castlewellan (hunting horse only); 1.50pm to Newcastle; the 6.47pm local Belfast –Comber and the 7.55pm for Ballynahinch, Crossgar and Downpatrick. Up trains from Donaghadee at 9am and 1.25pm Downpatrick at 7.40am, Newcastle at 9.35am, Castlewellan at 2.10pm and 4.20pm from Newcastle could all convey such traffic, but the last-mentioned was again restricted to hunting horses from intermediate stations. There were even five down and four up services on the Bangor branch allowed to take horse box and carriage truck traffic. Tullymurry, however, could only handle horses for the military, by special arrangement directly with the General



BCDR No. 11 with a Donaghadee - Belfast passenger train on 25th March 1950.



No. 15 shunting goods vans at Ardglass on 3rd March 1950. The further one is a 'goods and cattle' van. As shown last issue, No. 15 had brought in a mixed train from Downpatrick.

Manager's office.

Piped and 'blocked' (i.e. vacuum-braked) wagons were distinguished by being painted bauxite, those with full vacuum brakes also having a five-pointed white star over the running number. These were either "convertible goods or cattle" or covered vans, such as those used for Andrews' yarn traffic, Comber. Such vehicles could be attached to many primarily passenger services, including up mainline trains at 7.40am, 9.35am (vacuum-braked vehicles only), 2.10pm and 4.20pm (wagons from Downpatrick, Crossgar and Ballynahinch) and this traffic could go by down services at 1.50pm (no wagons for Ballygowan, braked wagons only for Dundrum and Newcastle), 4.45pm (wagons for Ballygowan, Saintfield, Ballynahinch, Crossgar, Downpatrick, Newcastle and Castlewellan only), and the 7.55pm (for Ballynahinch, Crossgar and Downpatrick only). Several trains on the Donaghadee line and all Ballynahinch and

Ardglass services could convey such traffic, and even four up and five down Bangor trains, but only for vehicles for Bangor or Helen's Bay.

Looking at this busy little line, playing such a vital rôle not just in the transport needs of Belfast city and the county of Down, but in the whole Northern Ireland war effort, and depending heavily on outdated, often Edwardian, sometimes even Victorian equipment, it would have seemed strange to those working or travelling on it to be told that a decade later, all that would be left would be a suburban branch line and a few commuter trains.

I am grateful to Desmond Coakham and Denis Bates for advice and encouragement in writing this article and supplying some additional material.

OBITUARY

Henry Ritchie



James Henry Ritchie was born on 10 May 1944 and died peacefully on 20 February 2017.

Henry was born in Belfast and lived in Bangor before the family moved to Lisnaskea in county Fermanagh and, in time, back to Belfast.

He contracted polio as a youngster but overcame that to join the army cadet force and become a noted left-hand spin bowler for Portora.

Pursuing a career in the car business, he became involved in operating the safety radios for car rallies all over Ireland, joined the RUC Reserve, became an Advanced Driver and was a District Commissioner of Scouts.

A severe car smash in November 1977 left Henry with many physical disabilities and some brain damage. He was told that he would never walk again but he fought back and, after some time attending the Josh Cardwell Centre, was able to resume running the stores in car garages and rejoin the Police Reserve. In 1981 he worked as a test driver

for the short lived DeLorean company.

He later joined the RPSI where he and his mother Ida worked in the Dining Car under the management of Rita Henderson. As well as RPSI activities, Henry was once a guard on the Giant's Causeway Railway and an active member of the Belfast and County Down Miniature Railway where he was often in charge of the platform. He was a long-time committee member of the Friends of Cultra and a member of the Modern Railway Society of Ireland.

Henry was our Train Manager for 15 years and worked on every Whitehead-based train with very few exceptions.

Henry was diagnosed with liver cancer in 2012. His determination to fight back brought him through many treatments and he was determined to continue his job with the big cap and engage with the customers on our trains. He stood down as Train Manager in September 2015 but continued volunteering as a marshal up until last Christmas.

Henry was leaving the Kaldi Coffee House in Bangor on Sunday 19 February 2017 when he collapsed and was brought to the Ulster Hospital. He was able to joke with the ambulance crew but complications resulting from his cancer could not be treated and he died peacefully at 00.25 on the Monday morning.

Henry was buried with his parents at Castlereagh Presbyterian church where, though a Methodist family, his father had been the organist. His funeral was attended by no fewer than 31 RPSI members as well as people from the miniature railway and from Downpatrick.

Rest in peace, Henry.



ABOVE: No. 85 on Santa train duties on 3rd December 2016. (Photo: M Crockett)

BACK COVER: No. 4 climbs bunker first out of Westport towards Ballina via Claremorris on Sunday 15th May. Croagh Patrick (762m), the mountain from which the railtour took its name, is in the background. (Photo: G Roosé)

