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FIVE FOOT THREE

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Railway Preservation Society of Ireland*



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FIVE FOOT THREE
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COVER: Our latest centenarian, 3BG, on Train Rides duty, 17th August (Photo: N Lawrence)
INSIDE FRONT: No.4 on home turf, “Portrush Flyer”, Kellswater, 11th August (Photo: N Lawrence)
INSIDE REAR: Portrush so near yet so far, No.131, closed Coleraine cabin, 18th August (Photo: J Cassells)
REAR COVER: No.85 makes memories for a small boy, “Sea Breeze”, Wexford, 26th May (Photo: A Campbell)

Greta Thunberg, the teenage climate change activist of school-strike fame, stood before the UN Climate Action Summit in New York in September 2019 and ended her somewhat blunt speech with “change is coming, whether you like it or not.”

Greta, eh? The Editor can sense the eyes rolling and possibly hear your magazine ‘thunk’ off the front of a sizzling firebox. Yet whatever may be thought of an emotional schoolchild telling us to behave responsibly, it seems to the Editor a very bad idea to dismiss David Attenborough who now openly says very much the same thing as Thunberg but in a more calm and collected manner. Attenborough has held his tongue remarkably well until he is absolutely certain that the climate change story so far is true.

Climate change, CO₂ emission levels and calls for action can be uncomfortable reading for those in a steam train Society where coal burning is “what we do”. We perhaps all hope such speak will go away. The Editor has news for you, dear reader, he agrees with Greta’s quote but would be a bit more generous and amend her line to “change is *happening*”.

The Editor changed ‘coming’ to ‘happening’ because he has clocked up a decent number of miles in the Leeds – Hull area of Yorkshire during 2019 and from the motorways there several of the UK’s giant coal-fired power stations, including Drax, Eggborough and Ferrybridge, can be clearly seen. Ferrybridge in particular makes a striking sight as it pretty much encroaches on the

A1(M) and M62; coal-burning industry on the big scale. Or at least it was until 2016, for now Ferrybridge presents that forlorn starkness only silent unwanted steam can; and demolition is underway. Likewise Eggborough is silent, and Drax while apparently alive, burns 2/3 biomass with the rest of the coal use scheduled to go in 2023-24. With Ferrybridge went the nearby Kellingly ‘Big K’ Colliery which supplied it, demand and supply intertwined. If you read this magazine in April 2020 here is a stark fact regarding attitudes to coal use; from a total of twenty-one active coal-fired power stations in the UK in 2012, there are now only FOUR remaining. One of these is our very own Kilroot in County Antrim.

So that is the ‘happening’ bit. Regarding “whether you like it or not”, giant power stations are just the low hanging fruit. They offer government quick results and are pain free to the general public (if you don’t work in one). Next in line will be fossil fuel transport [diesel’s card is very much marked], home heating systems and requirements to thoroughly insulate houses. The Editor does not mind these at all, if alternatives are feasible, but he will mind very much if the baby, in the form of coal-fired steam trains, were to go out with the bathwater of giant power stations and home heating.

Retaining some small-scale – and we are VERY small-scale – coal burning for education and recreation needs its case made sensibly; it should certainly be possible to retain coal supplies, public and government support to continue to



Sunset on coal power: No.461 passes Kilroot Power Station on 28th October 2018. All dates in this edition are for year 2019, unless a different year is given. A year with '19' in it again was refreshing! (Photo: M Crockett)

operate in the new environmentally aware age.

As the ultimate fans of rail transport, shouldn't we be broadly supporting an environmental movement that promises to be an extremely positive game changer for the railways? Passenger numbers, usage and perhaps even track mileage can only increase!

A more pressing concern than future coal supply is the current inability to operate more than one train into Portrush in the same direction. For the NCC Tyer's tablet signaling system, removed in 2016 as part of line upgrade works, appears to have been replaced with... precisely nothing. Now our Portrush Flyers are curtailed at Coleraine, where passengers must transfer to a service railcar to proceed to the

terminus, where two of the three rejuvenated platforms are left superfluous. Portrush Flyers are our flagship train and now we must attempt to sell them with a proverbial hand tied behind our back. At a meeting of senior NIR and the RPSI personnel, where this was raised, NIR suggested putting pressure on local politicians may help. So, if anyone knows any local politicians, step up and direct them to the problem!

Thanks, as always, to all the volunteers and staff of the RPSI and HEI as well as those in Translink and Irish Rail who help and support us from the very top down.

In 2019 we unfortunately lost a steam colossus of our own, the inimitable Tony Renehan. Fond memories remain.

It is hard to believe that it is a year since the Editor last asked me for a letter for 'Five Foot Three'. It has been a busy year in the life of the Society and one which brings a realisation of what an amazing organisation it is. I'll return to look at some of our many activities and actions during 2019 but first I want to reflect and comment on an email I received a couple of weeks ago from a member who said 'The RPSI I joined in 1978 is no more, it has become the WRM'. Nothing could be further from the truth!

There is a sense in which the writer was correct; the RPSI of 1978 was a very different organisation to the RPSI of 2020. In those days we could use heritage rolling stock on the main line, health and safety rules were not as all pervasive as they are today, and we had neither computers nor worries about data protection. We didn't need legal compliance and strategy documents for everything we did and we weren't required to have formal procedures in place to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Today we have to operate in a plethora of rules and regulations and we also have to comply with Companies' House and Charity Commissioners regulations in two jurisdictions. None of this is as much fun as restoring locomotives and coaches or running trains, but without ensuring that we are complying, the RPSI simply couldn't function at all.

Where my correspondent was totally wrong was when he stated that 'The RPSI is now the WRM'. The WRM – the award

winning 'Whitehead Railway Museum' is the child of the RPSI and it owes its very existence to far sighted decisions made by Board years ago to create something that was necessary to maintain our primary purpose of preserving steam and the railway heritage for future generations. Today the WRM is a facility of which we can all be justly proud and it is kept vibrant by teams of volunteers and tour guides who make it a 'must see' visitor centre for local people and tourists alike but the RPSI is much, much more than the Whitehead Railway Museum. It is, in effect, the tip of the iceberg of all the Society does.

For a start, it is the Whitehead Railway Museum and Workshops. It is the latter in which the impossible is achieved quickly and miracles just take a little longer. Our star performer this year has been ex GNR Q-Class 4-4-0 No.131 which was restored to life after sixty years of decay to become a 'really useful engine' and a thrill to see in action. Alongside all this, our regular fleet of steam locomotives is maintained and refurbished on a regular basis at Whitehead and in full view of our visitors, as well as work for other heritage railway facilities. A highlight this year was seeing the ex-County Donegal locomotive "Meenglass" returned to the Derry Railway Museum after extensive cosmetic restoration in Whitehead. Our fleet of coaches both for display and mainline running also need regular care; even our newest coaches are old but they have to be maintained in tip-top condition to carry passengers to fund the Society.

Similar work is carried out in Dublin in



The Society's first Chairman, John Harcourt, helps the present one, John McKegney, to cut the cake to celebrate the 100th year of the Guinness Engine on this planet on 06th April. The Editor found a note that 3BG also got a cake on her 90th birthday. Good engines get more cake! (Photo: C Friel)

premises generously made available by Irish Rail. Our southern rake of Blue and Cream liveried Cravens' coaches make a fine sight behind ex-GNR No.85 "Merlin" in its splendid blue livery. An exciting project nearing completion in Dublin is the restoration of General Motors 121-Class single ended diesel locomotive 134 both to full working order for use on the mainline and to its original distinctive grey and yellow livery. For my own part I look forward to seeing 134 pulling the Cravens into our Whitehead Excursion Station but before that can happen 134 has to be certified for mainline running both by the CRR (Commission for Railway Regulation)

in Ireland, plus Translink in Northern Ireland for whom the coaches have to have electric-lock release mechanisms fitted to their doors. These are examples of the regulations by which we must abide if we are to continue to operate on the main lines of this island.

Mention of Iarnród Éireann / Irish Rail and Translink reminds me of the great debt we owe to both companies for without their cooperation and encouragement we simply could not operate. We appreciate deeply the positive relationships we enjoy with these companies who have a few more things to worry about than steam

trains! What may not be generally realised is that, whereas we operate under the control of Translink in Northern Ireland, in the Republic we are a separate TOC – Train Operating Company with all the responsibility that comes with that role. Thankfully we are fortunate in having highly professional and dedicated Dublin based members who see that all our paperwork is in place and that we comply with all the necessary regulations as laid down by the CRR.

2019 will go down as a year of change on what we must now call the Human Resources front. Having project managed the whole WRM project, Siobhan Dillon stepped in as acting General Manager in early 2018. Quite honestly without her clear guidance and work with our funders, especially the HLF, I don't know how we would have coped. Many thanks go to Siobhan, who continues to take a keen interest in the Society and WRM.

In the spring, after a highly professional appointment process overseen by Sector Matters, we appointed our new General Manager, Lisa Adair, who took up office in April. Lisa brought with her a wealth of experience, as she outlines in her own letter, but, more than that, she has a way of both relating not only to members and volunteers, but with partner organisations while also being a wellspring of new ideas. I have been amazed at how quickly she has grasped the intricacies of heritage railway terminology. She is currently tightening financial controls and management systems as we approach the end of our Heritage Lottery funding.

Lisa is one of a team of three. Rebecca Laverty has been in office since the autumn of 2018, first as Museum

Administrator but now as our Education and Outreach Manager, a job she combines with working for Museums NI. We were delighted that she was able to continue to be part of the team. Zoë Latimer was appointed in the autumn of 2019 as our Events and Marketing Manager and very quickly began to make an impact. All three ooze an infectious enthusiasm which is reflected in their work for the Society. I think of them as the 'RPSI Supremes'! *[Note NOT WRM Supremes, although by default they are that too. The Editor seconds what the Chair has been saying. Now the dust has settled on the 2020 project, FFT brings home to the Editor how small a part WRM is of the Society as a whole – five pages out of 80 in here. He can assure readers that the most important aspects of the Society, not least the fully functional steam locomotives, are very much still there once you get beyond the new entrance hall... what's changed is you don't get away with clomping through said hall in your smokebox-fresh washout boots anymore! – Ed]*. As a Society we have moved into a new era of professionalism in which a small number of staff members facilitate a huge team of volunteers; it's the way forward. Our management team in no way replace the need for active committed volunteers who are the bedrock of the RPSI but what they can, and do, is greatly enhance its effectiveness.

This Society is all about people, our active volunteers drawn from across Ireland, North and South; those who get their hands and overalls dirty and those who use other skills including drawing up protocols and safety documents, tour guiding, staffing trains, working in the



The Suits and the Boots on 28th February. The Chairman, Siobhan Dillon, Councillor Robert Logan and Robin Morton meet the Site Squad. They are Roy Thompson, David Orr, Willie Hollinger, John Williams (kneeling), Dermot Mackie and Gordon Hunt. Robin has defected to the upper level! (Photo: C Friel)

dining car or tearoom, editing Five Foot Three (!), organising events, distributing flyers and all sorts of background work, including drawing. All are part of the RPSI family, and all contribute to making it effective. We are especially indebted to the IE and NIR staff who crew our locomotives on our many mainline trips. As I write, negotiations are underway to train more crews in the wonder and delight of steam locomotive operation.

The RPSI has many committees overseeing and managing the myriad of activities that occur as part of the life of the Society. In the past year the Board has been attempting to streamline the organisation in the light of the Courtney report, which was received a few years

ago, so that there is effective communication and harmonised activity throughout the Society. To this end the Belfast and Dublin Management Committees have been established to look after day to day practical matters north and south and to make recommendations and reports to the Board. The Board itself has been strengthened with two external directors through a trawl conducted by CO3. We are now well advised at Board on health and safety matters by Michael Guest and HR by Dermot O'Hara. More recently we co-opted a new Treasurer, Ian Eagleson, who is already tackling our finances with great effectiveness. We thank Ian for taking on the role and wish him well as he joins the team. We are grateful to Séan

Clancy who had to resign due to pressure in his day job, but who paved the way for Ian to take over the reins.

No mention of the Board is complete without recognising the tireless work our Secretary, Paul McCann, does for the Society. He is meticulous in keeping all the Society's details and record up to date and he does it with quiet efficiency. Thankfully your Board always operates without rancour and with the best interests of the Society foremost in members' minds. The Board has received a vital report based on interviews conducted by Marsh Risk Management. Acting on this report should greatly increase the effectiveness of the management of your Society.

At the UK and Ireland Heritage Railway Association Awards held in Birmingham in February one of our volunteers, Matthew Wilson, became the first recipient of the new 'Young Volunteer Award'. Congratulations to Matthew. This year the Society has been nominated for a Special Events Award for '50 Years of the Two-Day Tour'. We are up against distinguished competition, but we live in hope!

Many of the Society train trips and events are recorded elsewhere in this publication but I wish to highlight a few which illustrate the nature of the modern RPSI.

In February Councillor Robert Logan, on behalf of the Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Council, formally opened our replica signal cabin at Whitehead by pulling the newly connected signal on the platform, which came from Castlerock and was kindly donated by Translink. This cabin is a very popular attraction for visitors who take our tour of the Museum site.

In April Whitehead Excursion Station was

the setting for a 100th Birthday Party for the Society's first locomotive No.3BG, an 0-4-0 saddle tank, presented to the RPSI by Guinness after years of use at St. James's Gate Brewery, and today in regular use at Whitehead. Unfortunately, our first President, Lord O'Neill, who prompted the donation, was unable to be present so our first Chairman John Harcourt and I cut a cake with the help of children from the local primary school. It was a very happy event.

In November we were delighted to receive a new large forklift truck donated by the Port of Larne and handed over to our president Dr Joan Smyth by the Larne port Manager Roger Armson. This is prime example of working together with other companies and organisations in the wider community. The new truck has already been dubbed 'The Beast' such is its effectiveness for heavy lifting around the site.

An innovation this year has been afternoon teas in carriages at Whitehead and this has proved an extremely popular new attraction alongside our well established schedule of Easter Bunny, Sea Breeze, Steam and Jazz, Portrush Flyer, Halloween and Santa trains which operate from both Whitehead and Dublin and are, for many, the public face of the RPSI. It is wonderful to see the expressions of unsuspecting people by the lineside as a steam train thunders by. Congratulations to the dedicated teams who work, often through the night, to enable these trains to operate to delight our passengers. On one of the Steam & Jazz trains we entertained members of the European Fedecrail Council who seemed to be thrilled by their evening especially their President, Jaap Nieweg, who turned out to



The Chairman, Roger Armson of Larne Port and GMgr Lisa Adair at the handing over of the forklift on 21st November. To the Editor "GM" = 142 and his head melts at the new meaning. (Photo: C Friel)

be brilliant saxophonist and who joined our Guinness Jazz Band for the evening!

A real highlight for the WRM this autumn was our first Model Railway Day on the 9th November when our sheds were transformed, and our stock moved to house a large variety of excellent model railway layouts. Despite atrocious weather people, turned up in their hundreds for a most enjoyable experience and one to be repeated in the future.

Throughout the year a diverse range of activities occurs such as film contacts and corporate events. These raise our profile and provide vital income and our Management team is working on several new projects. Watch out for Liam Neeson at our Whitehead site in his latest film 'Ordinary Love'!

For many of us the regular 'Second Wednesday of the Month Indoor

Meetings' now held in Orangefield Hall are a highlight of the winter. Congratulations and thanks to Charles Friel for organising these gatherings for almost forty-six years. Month by month he produces a never-ending stream of excellent speakers to entertain and inform us. The regular 100+ attendance speaks volumes for the level of appreciation. If you know of speakers, or have a talk you feel you could share, please do not hesitate to contact Charles. Finally, not because there's no more to say but I've already gone on far too long and this magazine isn't infinite I simply want to express my warmest thanks to all who make the RPSI the unique organisation it is and to suggest that if you wish to become an active volunteer member you will be most welcome to play your part in an Ireland wide family that brings joy to thousands.

May 2020 be a vintage year for the RPSI!

2019 was a further year of business and governance consolidation, with two new directors and a treasurer appointed from outside the Society.

Board: During the year the Board said goodbye to Seán Clancy, who stepped down as Treasurer for personal reasons. Likewise, we said goodbye to Dermot Mackie (although he retains the Whitehead Site Officer post). We welcomed Ian Eagleson, a retired accountant - we are grateful to him for stepping in. He has been co-opted to act as Treasurer.

Thus, at present, the governing board is:

Chairman:	John McKegney
Vice-Chairman:	Vacant
Secretary:	Paul McCann
Treasurer:	Ian Eagleson
Directors:	Eileen Armstrong Mervyn Darragh Mark Kennedy Fergus McDonnell Joe McKeown Phillip Newell Peter Rigney Peter Scott
External:	Michael Guest Dermot O'Hara

Developments: Since May we have had a new General Manager, Lisa Adair, and she certainly has hit the ground running. Her team consists of Rebecca Lavery (Education & Outreach) and Zoë Latimer (Events & Marketing), backed up by Ivan McAteer as Engineering Consultant.

The Museum has been marketed heavily

during the year and several events have been run in conjunction with the traditional Saturday train ride days. The Edwardian Tea Room continues to get excellent reviews, so well done to Sam and his staff. However, with the departure of chef Martin Black to pastures new, the menu has been much simplified.

Governance: As the Chairman explained last year, we planned to recruit new directors with experience in specific areas, and we are pleased to welcome Michael Guest (Health & Safety) and Dermot O'Hara (Human Resources) to the Board.

Finance: As always running the Society is not cheap and now, with a team of professional staff to provide for, it is imperative that all events are run at a profit - a significant one. Along with wages, a major outlay is insurance, and in November the annual bill of £70,000 had to be paid! The current fundraising appeal (No.171 Completion) is recommended to all members, with a request to give generously if you can. *[The Editor was locomotive budgeting and the money required jumped considerably a few times with ever more work required by No.171 being uncovered as the engine underwent triage following return to Whitehead. But No.171's future will yet be rosy... and that will come sooner for every donation given - Ed]*

Volunteers: The most essential asset of the Society is our pool of volunteers and we were delighted to welcome more new faces this year, some in response to a successful Volunteers Day held in September.



Sam Millar, Catering Supervisor at the Edwardian Tea Room, is carving a pumpkin for display at Halloween, 24th October. (Photo: R Morton)

At present we are without a Volunteer Co-ordinator and we would appeal for someone who thinks they could help in this area.

General: The big announcement of the year was the confirmation that the RPSI was proceeding with the build of a new LMS NCC W-Class Mogul locomotive - numbered No.105, the next in the series. A name will be decided in due course. The construction of the boiler parts and frame will be described elsewhere.

No.131 has completed its first full season in traffic and it is hoped that it will soon get cross-border approval.

Work on diesel B134 in Inchicore took a

back seat for most of the year, but progress is starting to be made again.

On the website the new Members section has expanded significantly with a lot of progress being made in adding value to its content. Suggestions to how this facility may be further developed are welcome.

Marketing now relies heavily on the separate Twitter pages for the RPSI and Whitehead Railway Museum. Facebook pages exist separately for the main Society, Dublin Operations and the Museum. Plus, the public email list, with over 6,000 email addresses, helps to sell our trains without paid advertising. With a marketing officer now in post it is expected that this will be expanded

significantly with improved results.

The excellent new Museum Guidebook, published late in 2019, is a recommended read for all members and may be obtained from the Society Shop.

As always, well done to the officers and volunteers of the operation committees in Dublin and Belfast for another year keeping steam on the main line! Probably the main disappointment in this regard is the failure, once again, to reach Portrush. We remain committed to returning the "Portrush Flyer" to its rightful destination just as soon as we can.

Congratulations are due to all who were involved in organising November's inaugural Model Railway Day at Whitehead. More please!

Members: Membership numbers fell back from 1,020 to 1,007 in 2019. Again,

hopefully marketing will increase this in 2020.

Thank You: As always, thanks must go to all who have served on the Board throughout the year. A lot of non-train running work goes on behind the scenes so thank you to all who served on one (or more) of the various sub-committees. The Events committee has been particularly busy this past year!

The Posts of Special Responsibility to the Secretary for the year were: Charles Friel (Belfast Meetings); Mark Kennedy (Curatorial Adviser); Ciaran McAteer (Legal Advisor); Barry Carse (Dublin area membership queries).

Once more, thank-you to the management and crews of the railway companies, NI Railways and Iarnród Éireann, for their help.

It seems to be no time at all since I accepted my appointment to take over the General Management of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland and that is mostly because of the frenetic activity that has taken place over the last eight months. Often hectic and never boring, I have entered a very different world than I had been used to in my previous life as a public servant. I can't profess to having known an awful lot about the world of steam and I certainly was not a railway enthusiast when appointed, knowing nothing about bogies, cones, injectors, the Permanent Way or boiler tubing. So, I'm quite certain that many of you reading this are questioning the efficacy of my appointment. Perhaps this submission will provide you with some comfort.

When appointed as Director of Community and Leisure for Carrickfergus Borough, I assumed responsibility for a wide range of services, including the Maritime areas and the Leisure Centre. Other than enjoying the use of these services, I had little knowledge of them, rather like the knowledge I had of the heritage stock. What I could bring to the table was the ability to develop service areas into viable businesses which could generate income and service a defined market. Business planning and strategic development has been in my blood for twenty years and I have a proven track record in achieving substantial change. I am not only trying to assuage any concerns that my lack of base knowledge of our services could stymie our move into sustainability, but I am assuring you that I am here for the long haul to ensure

that any business acumen that I have will be used to make the organisation a success and one that rivals or trumps similar operations elsewhere. Further, and following eight exhausting and informative months, I can tell all reading that I am proud to have joined your ranks as a fledgling enthusiast who is eager to learn more about heritage rail and the events that excite us.

All that said, I thought it of import to let you know what I have been doing and what remain my priorities going forward. Having secured a bundle of capital and revenue funding from a number of sources which has expedited the works to create a unique offering at Whitehead, I have spent a good deal of time ensuring that relationships with our last live funder, National Heritage Lottery Fund, are positive and productive. With works still to be complete with five restoration projects, it has been very beneficial to have negotiated a short extension to the end of the project to ensure that we complete satisfactorily. In this regard, and in partnership with our NHLF liaison and an independent business consultant, we were tasked with undertaking an Operational Readiness Review which plots our actions over the next four months and equips us with the tools to develop the foundations for a functioning and thriving business. One of the most important features of this piece of work is the requirement to tender for a thorough evaluation of the Whitehead Railway Museum Project. This tender has now been awarded and, for the next three months, Blue Moss Consultants will be



On No.85 on 08th December are (L-R) Lisa Adair in the driving seat, Keith Farrelly, Rebecca Lavery, Zoë Latimer and Lar Griffin. Robbie Jolley and Gerry Mooney on platform. (Photo: c/o Z Latimer)

pulling together all associated information with a view to completing a detailed report which will be used to assess our final round funding application.

Another vital piece of work has been completed by our insurance company, Marsh. The completion of a comprehensive Risk Register for the organisation has given the Society a structured map of considered risks which we are able to mitigate against. Technically, this should mean that we are more acutely aware of internal and external challenges and can plan more knowledgably for the future. Alongside this, I have developed Key Performance Indicators and business priorities for the Society, mirroring issues raised in Marsh

and the previously commissioned Courtney Report, which are designed to keep us focused on business priorities. I am confident that these pieces of work are beginning to provide steadfast foundations as we move towards sustainability and viability.

Other works include a thorough examination of governance and compliance. I have reviewed policies already adopted by the Society and have developed some new policies to assist with requirements now that staff have been employed. I have also built relationships with our main partner, Translink, who I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to for their support and encouragement. I am thoroughly looking

forward to the continuation and growth of this relationship in 2020 and am confident that members will see significant change over the course of the year in terms of crew training and operational planning.

I have just touched on it, but perhaps the most significant development for me in 2019 has been the introduction of new, vibrant and enthusiastic staff members. Rebecca was already in post as Museum Administrator when I took up post and has been a complete rock in helping me pick through the minutiae of the organisation. I owe Rebecca an enormous debt of gratitude and was devastated when she announced she

would be leaving. But every cloud... Rebecca is still here and taking on a more pivotal role as Education and Outreach Manager, albeit part-time. By October, more changes were afoot when we advertised for a Marketing and Events Manager. Zoë Latimer joined the team and has contributed in an extraordinary way with innovative and exciting plans. Watch this space! To cap off a fruitful recruitment campaign, Ivan McAteer returned to assist with technical planning, also in October. With Ivan's previously garnered knowledge of HEI and a thirst to rationalise works and provide project management, I am confident that the team now in place will be proactive and hard working for a long time to come. Do



Lisa has been getting down and examining everything in the Society. No.171's boiler is doing similar here on 06th October. It was most surprised to find a mogul in the workshop! (Photo: Editor)

come and see us or ask for advice – that's what we are here for.

I'm not going to talk about the events that we have organised and enjoyed this year, as other contributors will give you a taste of what has been achieved, other than to say something profoundly important. Without volunteers, we could achieve virtually nothing. From raising money to embarking on skilled heavy engineering projects, to providing catering and running trains, I am humbled by the efforts made. North and south, I have been welcomed and supported from day one and I appreciated that. With continued support, who knows how much more can we achieve. As a well-known sportswear manufacturer would say, why don't we 'just do it'!

And now... A word from Zoë!

Well, the first three months in post were a bit of a blur. Finding my feet while

accommodating the RPSI's busy events calendar, I certainly hit the ground running. With no plans on slowing down for 2020 I am excited to deliver an upgraded calendar and multiple marketing campaigns to raise awareness of WRM and the RPSI.

If you're attending the member's dinner you will get a first look at what is to come for the year ahead! If you can't make it, I'm sure Paul will circulate some information in the e-bulletin.

If we still haven't met, pop your head in the office at Whitehead next time you're down and introduce yourself, I am always available for a cuppa (and can be bribed with chocolate...)

I just wanted to thank everyone who has welcomed me into the society so far, the support has been really encouraging and I look forward to working with you all a little more closely as the year goes on.

No.4 LMSNCC WT-class 2-6-4T mixed traffic loco, 1947.

No.4 had all its tyres renewed (pony, bogie and coupled wheels). This was the most extensive job undertaken during the past year. Most time consuming was the boring of the new tyres, which had been ordered in with a generous machining allowance to take account of likely variations in diameter of the wheel centres. For those interested in the practicalities, the locomotive had all its wheelsets removed at the wheeldrop. This vital, but normally little used, piece of equipment was built by Society members in the late 1970s and was recently enclosed by the new sheds built as part of the 2020 project. First the motion, brakes, sanding gear, hornstays and springs were disassembled, and then each wheelset in turn was lowered into the wheeldrop pit before being pushed to one side and hoisted up into the Dunleath workshop. The wheeldrop is an entirely manually operated device – the hand powered hoists kept gave volunteers who helped an excellent New Year workout.

In the workshop, the old tyres are removed by first removing the set screws, then turning the wheelset on end with the tyre to be removed downmost. The wheelset is placed on stands to support the wheel centre and leave the tyre clear. The tyre is then heated using a gas ring, positioned so as to heat the tyre but avoid heating the wheel centre as much as possible. Approximately half an hour is needed to expand the tyre sufficiently to loosen it. Most tyres dropped off readily, although one or two needed an

encouraging smack with a sledgehammer. The new tyres are heated in the same way and are supported on stands to ensure enough clearance for the crank pins.

Heating the new tyre takes longer because it is so much heavier, although there is now the advantage that the wheel centre is away from the heat. Temperature is kept below 250°C, so as not to upset the heat treatment of the tyre. The diameter can be checked as it expands, but really the essential is to have the machining done to give the correct interference fit when the tyre cools. The wheelset is lowered into the heated tyre by the workshop crane – having first checked that it is hanging true, since misalignment could cause jamming. *[A certain someone, I think after a pre-Christmas evening in the Dirty Duck that featured plenty of 'Rudolph's Revenge' but I can't quite remember, once told the Editor the following – 'God does not generally take much interest in locomotive maintenance, but one thing He certainly does like to do is fit tyres. We spend ages heating the old tyre up until it falls off and then heating the new tyre up until the wheel fits inside. Then we turn off the gas, go for lunch, come back and find ... He has been and fitted it for us' – Ed]*

No.4 is now back at Whitehead for boiler work. The small boiler tubes, which have seen five years' service, were showing up leakage at the firebox end; they are to be renewed. The new tubes will then have 5 years life bringing them to the end of the ten-year boiler ticket.

No.4 suffered driver's injector trouble on

a Portrush Flyer on 11th August and this subsequently failed her from operating that on the 18th August, regardless of some of the cones having been swapped for new ones. Some still-serviceable cones were in the store from ex-LMS 'Black 5' No.5025, which had had them replaced as part of its ongoing overhaul at Aviemore shed, Strathspey Railway, Scotland. Insertion of some of these cured the problem and No.4 was able to set off to work Steam Dreams. A wholly new full set of cones has since been purchased and await fitment.

No.85 GNR(I) V-class 4-4-0 compound express passenger loco "Merlin", 1932.

No.85 has been based in Dublin and has just completed the "Santa" season. This loco is well capable of the heavy trains demanded by Santa [*Editor takes his hat off to the performance there*] and has worked reliably during the year – albeit with several hiccoughs. The loco is fitted with "by-pass" valves – these place the front and back of the high-pressure cylinder in communication with the low-pressure steam chest when the regulator is shut. The idea is to avoid compression in the cylinder and assist free running. Which presumably it does – except that one of the by-pass valves was found to be choked with carbon and jammed open, which must have rendered 50% of the HP cylinder ineffective and could not have been improving the performance. Rectification of this got a "much improved" response.

No.131 GNR(I) Q-class 4-4-0 express passenger loco, 1901 rebuilt 1920.

This loco has continued to perform well, particularly following recent attention to the injectors. Our late member Pearse

McKeown who, while employed by CIÉ, was instrumental in contriving to have No.131 preserved, described how he was detailed to go around other withdrawn locomotives and kit out No.131 with a set of boiler fittings and other controls. This implies that most, if not all, were missing by that time. The injectors may well not have been those fitted when the loco was last in service.

Various trials with internal parts had slightly improved performance, with a quantum leap being made following very temporary substitution of No.131's cones with those from ex-Caledonian Railway 0-6-0 No.828 of ... Aviemore shed, Strathspey Railway in Scotland. Suitable replicas were duly machined at very high speed, by Bob Skingle, and a Happy Christmas was had by all who travelled on her. Nathan Lightowler, now Aviemore Shed Foreman, provides the much-needed cross-pollination!

In early 2019, No.131 was fitted with the Irish Rail Train Radio. This latest piece of electronic kit has further reduced storage for tools, crew bags etc in the cab, but is an essential item if No.131 is to work on Irish Rail.

At the time of writing, No.131 is still going through the acceptance process for operation on the Irish Rail system.

Failure of the TPWS/AWS system during the pre-trip inspection of 14th December both provided some key learnings about failure diagnostics and, more importantly, about upkeep of a system that, being electrical, is not naturally compatible with a bouncing, hot, damp, oily, gritty environment.



2019 was the Year of the Injector for more than one of our engines and, prior to the Steam & Jazz of 21st June, Colin Stewart has a go at starting one of No.131's. Inside the injector is an arrangement of cones which turn the pressure of the steam into velocity whilst combining it with water which enables the injector to deliver the water into the boiler, against the pressure! The cones shown are No.4's, the black ones having come out and the clean new ones ready to go in. They are (L-R) 2xsteam cones, new delivery cone, 2x fixed combining cones, old delivery cone. (Photos: J Clinton, Z Latimer)

No.171 GNR(I) S-class 4-4-0 express passenger loco "Slieve Gullion", 1913 rebuilt 1938.

The interrupted overhaul of No.171 has got under way again. The boiler has been lifted out and is now in the workshop, on the "boiler rotator" which means that it

can be readily turned to whatever way up is best for access, especially to the inner firebox. The main job is renewal of the crown stays. The S-class boiler has a round top firebox, with a series of girder stays slung underneath, which support the inner copper firebox crown by means of stay

bolts. There are 128 of these, and they were all showing fire wasting and corrosion next to the crown sheet. Renewal is not easy – many of them break off rather than unscrew and need drilled out and re-tapped. A similar job was done on loco No.131. Some attention to firebox lap seams is also necessary where the edge is fire wasted and rivets need renewed.

The frames have been lifted off the wheels for inspection and repair as necessary. The coupled wheels have had the profile trued up, which should ensure a good many years' service at our rate of annual mileage, but the tyres are close to

scrapping size and will need to be renewed at the next overhaul. Some bearings need attention and possible renewal of brasses.

The overhaul of No.171 is the subject of our current appeal for funds, and the target is by no means met so please be encouraged to contribute!

No.3 Guinness 0-4-0ST shunting loco, 1919, aka "3BG"

In traffic as Whitehead shunter and "train rides" loco. A steam heating connection is being fitted for the latter operation and, as a well-earned 100th birthday present, lining-out was completed courtesy



On 05th January 2020 a newly-cast (in Scotland) motion bracket sits in place on the frames of No.105. See inside cover photo of No.4 for identical motion bracket. Behind them, No.171's boiler is sideways on the rotator. Nathan Lawrence prepares to drill holes in the rear of the frames. [Photo: Editor]

generous donations from members of the operating roster. Donations were so generous the leftovers purchased a new oil pump for the shed.

The loco carries large "Guinness" nameplates, but these were originally fitted to a diesel shunter and may have indicated the owning organisation rather than be intended as a name for the loco. Its actual number was BG3 to differentiate from the Guinness narrow gauge loco No.3, but somehow in today's parlance the "BG" has migrated to the opposite end of the "3"!

Boiler G8.24

Work is continuing as time permits. The copper plates for the inner firebox are nearly ready for assembly and riveting, together with the foundation ring. The outer firebox door plates and throat plate are well advanced, and the front tube plate is complete. The main boiler shell is under way. This boiler is basically the same as boiler No.G8.29 fitted to loco No.4 and could act as a spare for No.4 or for the Mogul project. There are some differences – No.4 (NCC "tank engine" or "jeep") was designed some 15 years after the Moguls and at a time when labour saving, and loco availability, were clearly more pressing concerns than in the 1930's. The tank engines were equipped with rocking grates, hopper ash pans and self-cleaning smokeboxes. These made life easy for enginemen and shed staff but not so good for the engineer!

NCC Mogul project

Now known as No.105, the project is to reinstate an NCC 2-6-0 W-class loco or "mogul" based on existing parts. Work is progressing as time and funding permits on the wheelsets, frames, cylinders,

motion brackets and horn stays. Thanks to all who have contributed to this project and allowed it to progress so far in advance of formal publicity.

[‘Mogul’ as a term for an engine has been puzzling the Editor for a while and tonight he has remembered to Google it. Answers don’t seem categoric, but there was apparently an engine in England or America, named ‘Mogul’ itself, from which the name carried over to anything with the 2-6-0 wheel arrangement. He did know Moguls ruled India and thus exerted great power and influence, eminently suitable for a particularly impressive steam engine that presumably left its predecessors looking underpowered. To the Editor, a thrilled-with-its-Empire Britain in the C19th would seem much more likely to come up with the exotic “Mogul” name for impressive technology than America, but he does not mind correction. In modern times the term is used to describe someone with great power and influence in their chosen area, for example Rupert Murdoch is a ‘media-mogul’-Ed]

Locos in store

No.461 DSER K2-class 2-6-0 goods engine, 1922.

Investigation into No.461's apparent poor steaming continues. Several potential factors have been identified, including the single ring piston valves and the N-class boiler which has a significantly reduced heating surface compared to the boiler the locomotive was built with.

No.186 GSWR J15 class 0-6-0 goods loco, 1879, rebuilt with Z class boiler.

Moved briefly for the first time in over two years in November out of the

museum section of B-Road and into the old section of carriage shed to clear space for Model Railway Day before being replaced a week later. As a museum display, No.186 has seen considerable attention from some WRM volunteers who have polished up the brasswork and labelled the cab fittings. Someday maybe the call will come again...

No.184 GSWR J15-class 0-6-0 goods loco, 1880.

On display like her sister but is the scruffy member of the family.

SLNCR 0-6-4 mixed traffic loco "Lough Erne"; (UTA No.27)

Hidden from engine shed visitors behind



Having been lifted from her transporter 'Lowmac' wagon, cosmetically restored No.4 "Meenglas" dangles from the sheer legs as a lorry reverses in to take her back to Derry on 28th January. [Photo: J Clinton]

No.184, No.27's amusement these days comes on sunny days when the shed doors are opened and she gets to watch the visitors coming and going from the Stables, or the Site Squad in action.

No.3 Londonderry Port and Harbour 0-6-0 shunting loco, 1928. (Popularly "Harvey")

Heritage Lottery funding and a small squad of relative youngsters led by Sam Hall has enabled the loco to be painted and lined out and it is occupying pride of place in the museum section. No.3 spent a long period of time at the far Larne end of A-Road which seems to have become an unofficial painting area. A-Road can hold in the order of 8 ½ MK2s and in the normal order of things this is taken up by the 7-coach train, train rides coach 68 with brake van 81, and something short being painted, such as No.3 or, now, the grain van 504.

County Donegal Railway Class 5 2-6-4T locos 1907.

No.4 "Meenglas" – Returned to the Foyle Valley Railway Museum in Derry following completion of "cosmetic" repairs and painting.

No.5 "Drumboe" – It is hoped that further restoration work can be carried out to enable the loco to be reassembled and returned to Donegal for display purposes. Rebuilding of the cab and coal bunker would be essential. All work carried out to Drumboe to date has been to operational standards. *[Although the time when that work was done is receding somewhat into the distance as the discombobulated loco has been with us now for fourteen years, no less, it arrived 30th April 2006, taking up two wagons of space, an area of ground and shunter's time.-Ed]*

Locomotive B134 started the year with work on the restoration taking place in 'The Ramps' facility in Inchicore Works. Due to the refurbishment of the running shed in Inchicore, the Ramps were then taken over for the day to day maintenance of Irish Rails service fleet. As a result, 134 was scheduled to be moved to the Lifting shop. Although visible progress was slow over the first few months of the year, a lot of fabrication and sourcing material was underway. This involved a lot of work from the drawing office in Inchicore, providing drawings for items that were no longer available on the records system. Existing items required used as templates or drawings complete from scratch. Yet again the skill and expertise in Inchicore came to the fore.

The locomotive was made ready to be moved and it was transferred to the lifting shop. Once there, physical work recommenced on the structure and body where there are a number of areas that suffered from the years of service and all manner of weather conditions. These areas were totally removed and replaced with new material. All work is taking place to the same standards achieved with the recent 071 overhauls. This will ensure 134 will be in the best possible condition for many years to come.

While work was continuing on the lower end of the loco it became clear that the locomotive would have to be repositioned in order for the work to continue in a safe manner. A better suited final location within the lifting shop was identified and a bespoke work platform

was requested to ensure the work continued. Fortunately for the Society there is an approved contractor who supplies such platforms around the system for Irish Rail, making acquisition of a safety-approved platform system much easier. 134 was placed in its new location and measurements etc. taken, the new platform arrived soon after allowing work to resume on the upper half of the locomotive in a fully compliant and safe manner.

The purchase of this essential work platform and all the materials would not be possible without the continued support of our passengers travelling on the dedicated diesel railtours which are run for this project. In 2019 we ran two such railtours, each one a 'first' for diesel haulage enthusiasts. In April, 'The West Awake' featured double-headed 071's in action for the first time west of Portarlinton as far as Claremorris and then subsequently on to Ballina and Wexford with a single 071 before returning to Dublin with the pair from Claremorris. The second railtour, 'The Cobh Rambler' in October, witnessed another 'first' with the pairing of a 201 and 071 class working in multiple. This saw the pair running to Cork, with the 071 taking the train forward to Cobh and Killarney, before returning to Mallow where the 201 rejoined for the run to Dublin. These railtours raise vital funds for the continued work and supply of materials to 134 and shows the great co-operation the RPSI are afforded from the CME department of Irish Rail. Particular thanks are due to Philip Clampett for his unending positive attitude when asked



Locomotive 134 surrounded with its bespoke work platform in the lifting shop of Inchicore Works on 04th December. (Photo: G Mooney)

about the possibility for a raitour that some would see as impossible.

The latest work has seen the cutting out of pillar sections and new sections welded in. The area around the cab steps and door on the driver's side were in particularly bad condition and the whole area has been replaced with new material. The bonnet end has also had considerable structural material replaced. The badly corroded floor under the radiator has been replaced with a new section.

The next area for attention will be the structure in the cab which supports the

floor. Following that, the main outer plate which forms the cab front will be fabricated and fitted. This will start to give 134 back its familiar front-end appearance and the locomotive will then have the various refurbished mechanical items fitted before work centres on bonnet doors and grilles.

Continued thanks to all who continue to support the fundraising trips and the Irish Rail CME staff in Inchicore Works under Chief Mechanical Engineer Peter Smyth and Stephen Campbell who make it all possible.

23 'Planet' – ex Irish Shell, built by FC Hibberd & Co. In store.

Locomotive needs work to engine, gearbox, bodywork, wiring and finally painting.

No.1 ex-COMHLUCHT SIÚCRE ÉIREANN (Irish Sugar) 'Carlow Diesel', 88DS built by Ruston Hornsby. In traffic.

Since my last report some minor repairs were performed, and the engine started. The locomotive moved under its own power and on initial tests the gearbox seemed to be working. Some work was performed on the air compressors as it

proved difficult to maintain air pressure.

Locomotive is available for use, but due to limited time has had little use so far. Crew training required. Ideally needs vacuum braking facility added to allow shunting of Mk2 coaches.

142 – ex CIE/IE, built by General Motors Electro-Motive Division (EMD) La Grange, Illinois. In traffic, (yard only).

142 has had a thoroughly uneventful but very busy year, some small repairs to the bodywork around the windscreens, including getting custom rubber seals made. This work is ongoing at the time of



142 has here taken a spot in 4-Road for painting in orange undercoat. On 17th August it is between Nos.184 and 131. Due to No.4's failure with injector problems following 11th August Portrush Flyer, No.131 will work tomorrow's 3BG is out working Train Rides as per cover photo and will later pull No.131 out, thus not troubling the 'Not to be Moved' board on 142's far cab. (Photo: N Lawrence)



ESB No.1 (left) is now in far more suitable hands at Stradbally, where it has met its sister No.4, having been brought there from Whitehead where it spent something like 12 years because.... (Photo: S Cain)

writing. Otherwise the locomotive is in very good condition. Painting should be done by Easter 2020.

Unilok Road/Rail shunter. Overhaul.

The Unilok road/rail shunter has had significant work this year. After nearly a decade of disuse, the machine needed quite a bit of work to get running. Thankfully the machine has a 1960s-era VW Beetle engine and gearbox, so is quite easy to work on, and parts are very readily available and cheap.

To date, we have replaced the fuel lines; rebuilt the carburettor; replaced the fuel pump, starter and dynamo; and fitted a new voltage controller. The final major job is to split the engine and gearbox to replace a severely worn starter gear on the flywheel.

It will also need a little work to repair the roof and seat, which both have lost their fight with iron oxide and gravity.

2019 Diesel Operations Report

As with other years, progress has been slow with our various projects, mainly due to personal commitments and the number of operations, both on the diesel side for shunting and on the steam side.

We had many shunts this year, which allowed two new diesel drivers get through the new driver assessment process. There was also a refresher and reassessment process introduced for new and existing drivers. I would like to congratulate Jonathan Clinton and James Robinson on being passed out as our new GM Drivers. This new assessment procedure should ensure our drivers are ready to be effective Loco Reps when our

GM diesels return to the mainline.

Long-term resident of Whitehead reunites with workmate

ESB Allenwood No.1 Ruston diesel locomotive of 1950 was reunited with ESB Portarlinton No.4 in the past year. The significance is that these two locomotives have consecutive works numbers (326051 & 326052 respectively).

No.1 went into preservation with the Cavan & Leitrim Railway at Dromod, later moving to Co. Donegal in the '90s. Co. Donegal sent the locomotive to Whitehead, where it sat for over a decade - the original intention of this move and why it remained with us for so long are now lost in the mists of time. The locomotive, nicknamed "Donald" due to

it's yellow and red livery, [and later "DoneDonald" by Francis Richards when it stopped working - Ed] sat out the back at Whitehead on a short piece of narrow-gauge track. It was then set on a flat wagon and stowed in the Larne siding for several years to facilitate the building of the museum.

In July 2018, fitters and engineers from the Stradbally Woodland Railway visited Whitehead and inspected the loco with a view to purchase from Donegal. Summer 2019 saw the locomotive moved from the siding, and duly collected.

The locomotive is now more pleasantly nicknamed "Sparky", and was started and moved under it's own power in 2019. As of writing, restoration of the locomotive continues at Stradbally.

The year 2019 proved to be a most challenging and at times difficult year all in. As alluded to last year, and every year since 1972, there is a crippling shortage of C&W volunteers*, which means that it is getting harder and harder to undertake overhaul tasks within reasonable time frames, which is disappointing to say the least.

Thankfully, we were able to field a rake of either six or seven Mk2 coaches, depending on requirements, throughout the year. The coaches also generally behaved themselves with nothing of any real interest to note.

As we all should know, preservation never takes a break and I am currently in the process of drawing up an action list for the next three months so that we can continue to operate without issue. The slack period from early January to mid-March is when the lion's share of the overhaul/ maintenance for the year ahead is undertaken. For example, work can vary from replacing a seal on a steam heat bag, to replacing a vacuum cylinder, re-upholstering a cushion, renewing a light bulb or repainting an entire vehicle. Coincidentally if anyone is interested in lending a hand please make yourself known.

The HLF 'Activity Phase' funding is now coming to an end. Over the last three years or so, this funding has facilitated the cosmetic restoration of LP&HC No.3, LMS NCC Side Corridor Brake No.91 and GNR(I) Guinness Grain van No.504, to augment the 'displayable' rolling stock in the public gallery area of the running shed. In

addition, open coaches 301 and 302 were given a full overhaul to ensure another ten years' service in operation on the mainline.

Work to 91 included replacing rotten timber, renewing several panels of cracked glass and a full repaint into LMS NCC livery. My thanks go to Robert, Ian, Joe, Mark, Paul and Mervyn, who mostly assisted with the overhaul of this vehicle. The lining out was undertaken by John Gray of Air Force One Artwork which, as always, has produced an excellent result, No.91 being no exception. Coincidentally John has been responsible for the lining on carriages 68, 87, 91, locos No.3 LPHC, 3BG, GNRI 202 and the lettering on the oil tank wagon and ballast wagon in recent years.

Work to date on Mk2s 301 and 302 has included bodywork, repainting, new flooring, electrical improvements, re-varnishing and re-upholstery, in addition to a full mechanical overhaul. Upholstery work is usually undertaken by our friends in Dunmurry Upholstery, whilst we arrange to remove the seats (not an easy task), clean and paint the interior and seats, then re-instate the whole lot again. This process usually takes an age, however by organising set working weekends this was achieved in no time with the assistance of Joe, Paul, Adam, David C, David A, Sam, Bobby, Charles and Andrew.

With the completion of the re-upholstering of 301 and 302 and the pending re-upholstery of the other half of 300, the current running set will have very presentable seats to start the new decade. As always, my thanks go to Joe and Ian (plus assistants) who work their magic



Ian Wilson gives HLF-funded North Atlantic brake coach No.91 a final polish before Model Railway Day, on 07th November. Airforce One lettering and lining is prominent. (Photo: C Friel)

mid-week on the Mk2s to ensure that they are in very good order both internally and externally for our passengers.

The electrical squad have been kept busy with our other Mk2D 304 over the last twelve months, rectifying a few little odds and ends within the lighting circuits and are now, all being well, getting to the bottom of the air conditioning and electric train heating circuits, which will be retained as part of the overhaul.

We have also been very busy on the mechanical side of things, with several volunteers now familiar with the delights of the B4 bogie. During the year we took delivery of new bolster springs and at the time of writing are awaiting the delivery of new brake shoes – after a 3-year search

for a supplier!

This coming year, our 'Heritage' projects will hopefully involve giving the ex-NCC handcrane some much needed TLC and cosmetically restoring ex-GNR(I) open brake third 114. Both these projects will be reasonably straightforward and, as noted, you will be more than welcome to assist.

Progress is now visible on our most significant item of rolling stock, ex-GSWR No.861. Work to date has largely been undertaken by our engineering sub-contractor HEI, with limited volunteer input, though I am keen to increase this, so that the funding collected to date goes further. So far, the corridor side has been 90% clad in new timber and we have started to replace key elements of



Grain Van 504, another HLF project, is resident at the back of the carriage shed for woodwork and painting, on 11th November. The curved top end piece is original, charred and sound! (Photo: C Friel)

structural timber on the compartment side. We have also taken delivery of a significant volume of new timber to assist in repairing the flooring and internal compartment walls where water ingress has been most unkind. Within the roof structure we have discovered a section that will need to be replaced in its entirety – so if you have a few spare Acro props (Or a few notes of the plastic/paper variety!) kicking around gathering dust we would love to hear from you. Fortunately, the existing floor and associated sub-structure of the vehicle is sound with only a few minor issues around the usual suspect areas.

As always, I would like to thank all those who have assisted in the overhaul, maintenance or presentation of our carriage fleet throughout the year. Without their valued assistance, the

Society would not have been able to operate its northern based trains.

*[the Editor interjected here last year too as this is important. The Carriage Officer is right. His critically important department is likely the most hamstrung for volunteers and if you can assist him please do so. Revenue-earning Mk2 Carriages have rightly gone right up to the top of the agenda with the new GMgr and her team who are most anxious that the production rate increases.

Now, for want of anywhere else to put it, here is a seat-related loco dept calculation, based on fuel consumption of locos and their own cars. A typical Santa train with 250 passengers emits 131.4g CO₂/Km, comparing favourably to the output of their medium sized cars, 151g/Km/passenger, i.e. them on their respective commutes. Burning 100T of

coal from WDX each year emits 215T of CO2. By comparison a ferry plying Belfast Lough burns about 3.5T of fuel per hour.

In the course of a day's sailing one ferry produces more CO2 than our trains in a year! - Ed]



James Spurle had been working at 861 when Lord O'Neill called by on 07th November. Precious few pics of Mk2 work have been submitted for consideration, perhaps highlighting the background nature of carriages, but just perhaps also, the lack of people to take them! (Photo: C Friel)

The 2019 operating season largely followed the established programme of repeat seasonal trains. An exception was late on Sunday 7 April - a test train comprising No.131 and six carriages performed a speed trial on the line to Antrim.

With NIR operating a normal weekday service on Easter Tuesday, it was decided to bring forward the trains originally scheduled for that day to Saturday 20 April. Easter Monday was not affected. Both Monday trains were full but, perhaps due to the change to the day of operation, the Saturday trains were about 80% full.

With the Waterford and Limerick International Railtour on 9 to 13 May, looming fast and no indication of No.131 being approved by the Irish authorities, that necessitated the return of No.85 light engine from Dublin on Sunday 28 April to work the 9 May public stock positioning train to Dublin. The next week saw frantic activity to get No.85 opened-up, washed out, closed up and boiler inspected.

The May railtour on paper should have been one of the easier to organise but circumstances dictated only No.85 was available. No.4 was in the process of receiving a full set of new tyres. A request to get No.85 approved for the Waterford to Limerick Junction line (submitted in October 2018) was regrettably turned down in March due to an underbridge close to Waterford being unable to take No.85's axle weight. The railtour was therefore worked by No.85 to and from Waterford, with a GM diesel substituting for the Sunday run to and from Limerick.

On the Saturday morning 11 May, No.85 was discovered to have a broken brake block. Frantic activity saw a repair team arrive from Whitehead but too late to permit the planned steam departure to M3 Parkway. This was covered by a GM diesel. On return to Dublin a replacement brake block had been fitted. The train was now out of path but left Dublin on a good alternative steam path. As planned, it called at Kilkenny for water, and then worked tender first to Waterford for a teatime arrival.

Sunday, as mentioned, was a diesel-hauled day. Monday 13 May was steam all the way with No.85 from Waterford, with an evening return to Whitehead.

No sooner had No.85 returned than the locomotive went back to Dublin light engine on Thursday 16 May to enable the summer season of trains to operate to Rosslare and Kilkenny.

No.131's non-availability to work south of the border has prevented Steam Enterprise trains operating and has incurred the Society some costly light engine transfers.

The Steam and Jazz train season (part 1) operated on four consecutive Fridays from 14 June. No.131 worked the first three trains. No.4, having completed a successful full wheel set re-tying (6-wheelsets, 12 new tyres), worked the 5 July train without issue.

Although Portrush remains out of bounds due to no approved signalling, the Society persevered with the Portrush Flyer on three consecutive Sundays from 4 August, with steam to and from Coleraine and a diesel connection onwards. No.4 worked



Easter Eggspress crew on 22nd April (L-R) Gary Moore, Philip Lockett, Editor, Noel Playfair, Jim Donaghy, Barney Cunningham... and three passengers. (Photo: C Friel)

the first two trains while No.131 operated the last. The trains were well loaded showing that there is a market for Portrush tourist trains waiting to be developed. Oh, for the appropriate signalling infrastructure to be in place; a fine new 3-platform station having to be worked on a One Train Operation!

The Steam and Jazz season (part 2) operated on Fridays 23 and 30 August with No.4 and No.131 consecutively used.

As No.4 was required for the Steam Dreams charter in early September to work in conjunction with No.85, it moved light engine to Dublin on Sunday 25 August. Following the charter, No.85 returned light engine on Monday 16 September.

The only Steam Enterprise of the year operated on Sunday 29 September with No.85. No.85 was then set to stay in

Northern Ireland (it being a third-party UK Museum asset) as the new Brexit date of 31st October approached but...

Following a local charter out of Dublin, No.4 was found to need attention. It was decided the work could only be done at Whitehead. With the Dublin Halloween programme of trains fast approaching, and there being no suitable locomotive, a further transfer was required at short notice with the quick support of both railway companies. Unfortunately, due to a mix up, the first attempt for Friday 11 October did not happen. This was to involve No.85 working south and No.4 north using both an Irish Rail and NIR crew, swapping locomotives at Dundalk. Eventually, No.85 worked south on Friday 25 October.

There had been plans drawn up at relatively short notice to operate gin

promoting trains on 11 and 25 October.

These unfortunately did not happen, but the rostered crews were substituted to the aborted light engine movements on 11 October and the 25 October transfer.

Both Halloween Broomstick trains on Sunday 27 October were successfully worked by No.131.

No.4 however still required to be returned to Whitehead for attention and came north on Wednesday 30 October, a date that had been pencilled in at short notice to bring No.85 back north for Brexit following her unexpected call back south. The further Brexit extension to 31st January 2020, and subsequent UK deal with the EU, has removed the uncertainty that has compounded(!) difficulties with allocating locomotive to Dublin for the last couple of years. Since then, No.4 has had attention to a motion bearing and should now be undertaking a re-tube before returning to traffic in the spring.

The Santa Train season operated over seven weekend days, Belfast Lanyon to Whitehead, commencing on Sunday 1 December, with a morning and afternoon train each day. An exception to this pattern was Sunday 15 when the train worked from Portadown, with two return workings to and from Lisburn. The trains were worked by No.131.

Regrettably on the morning of Saturday 14 the locomotive was failed on shed while undergoing its pre-trip inspection. The TPWS/AWS electrics were found to be faulty; a corroded contact wire was the culprit. This was rectified during the day. A request was first made for the loan of a GM locomotive but this was not possible. A conversation between our General Manager and a NIR senior manager was thankfully able to secure, at very short notice, the use of a CAF diesel set. All the other trains operated to schedule with no issues. Thanks NIR!



No.85 performs at Dunleer, southbound, at 1239 on 09th May. Wonderful! (Photo: M Crockett)



No.131, with the second of the 27th October Broomstick Belle trains, passes Jordanstown. On the bufferbeam is a pumpkin on the lamp bracket, complete with electric light inside. (Photo: C Friel)

The Mince Pie scheduled for 29 December unfortunately could not operate due to a crew availability issue. But had a crew been available the issue of using No.131 south of the border still had not been resolved, a most disappointing situation.

In conclusion a special thank you to both railway companies for their continued support, plus the small team of drivers and firemen and all the volunteers in their different roles for assisting in making the trains operate.

TRAIN RIDES NOTES (a Roster Officer)

The number of in-house Train Rides continues to increase, thirteen in 2018 became twenty in 2019, which makes one wonder at what point overkill comes in. Somehow the number that operate without a sudden heavy squall appearing about 1pm seems to remain stubbornly in the very low single figures. Operations crew continue to step up magnificently,

and the roster officer remains grateful to them, but would not mind some doing just a little bit more so that others can do just a little bit less.

All that said, Train Rides did seem to run smoother in 2019 and a big factor there was the re-availability of brake van 81 ('Ivan'), after it had the spring replaced that had failed it for most of 2018, and consequently of LMS NCC 68. This separate heritage train means no messing about with buckeyes and cables, splitting and re-forming the Mk2 train, to get some mainline carriages for Train Rides.

An informal survey of the operations crew was carried out at the start of 2019 and one of the more regular comments received was 'More Engine Variety Please'. Now 3BG is the current Train Rides stalwart and is very economical, so if we want these days to feature maximum revenue, planning to use 3BG is a good start.

But other factors come into play and this explains why 3BG spent large chunks of her centenary year snoozing in the shed with her proverbial feet up. Of the twenty days which featured a Train Rides type operation (one was actually a Sunday Charter), 3BG worked ten, No.131 worked six and No.4 worked ... four, so variety was certainly achieved.

A big engine can be used more economically, with no earlier start for the steam-raiser, if it has worked a Steam & Jazz the night before and is therefore hot to start with. This was done on four occasions. Another reason is the very satisfying one that three trainee Firemen required assessed on a big engine, and No.131 performed this task on 16th March, 27th April and 26th October. On these

days Jonathan Clinton, Sam Hall and George Ebrill were passed out respectively and we can expect them to start knocking on the Driver's door in 2020, a big help to these operations and yard shunts.

Steam heat also features in big engine use, On November 30th ability to heat the train was why No.131 was used. Fitting to 3BG is underway. Train Rides can also be a way to utilise an engine which would have to be steam tested anyway, and No.4 worked a Train Rides on 13th July as part of a steam test and on 17th August to test an injector that had failed the previous week... with no luck. The 10th use of a big engine was on European Heritage Open day which was opened up to No.131's funders to come and have a footplate trip.



Jonathan Clinton has just been assessed Competent as a Fireman, and consequently loco rep, by James Friel, with clipboard, on 16th March Train Rides, which used No.131. Jonathan holds Adam Lohoff's personal, prized, expensive and engraved-with-his-name custom-made firing shovel, which he only lends to people whom he trusts not to let go of it into the firebox at the end of their firing swing. As a Trainee, Jonathan was certainly unlikely to have held it before this moment! (Photo: A Lohoff)

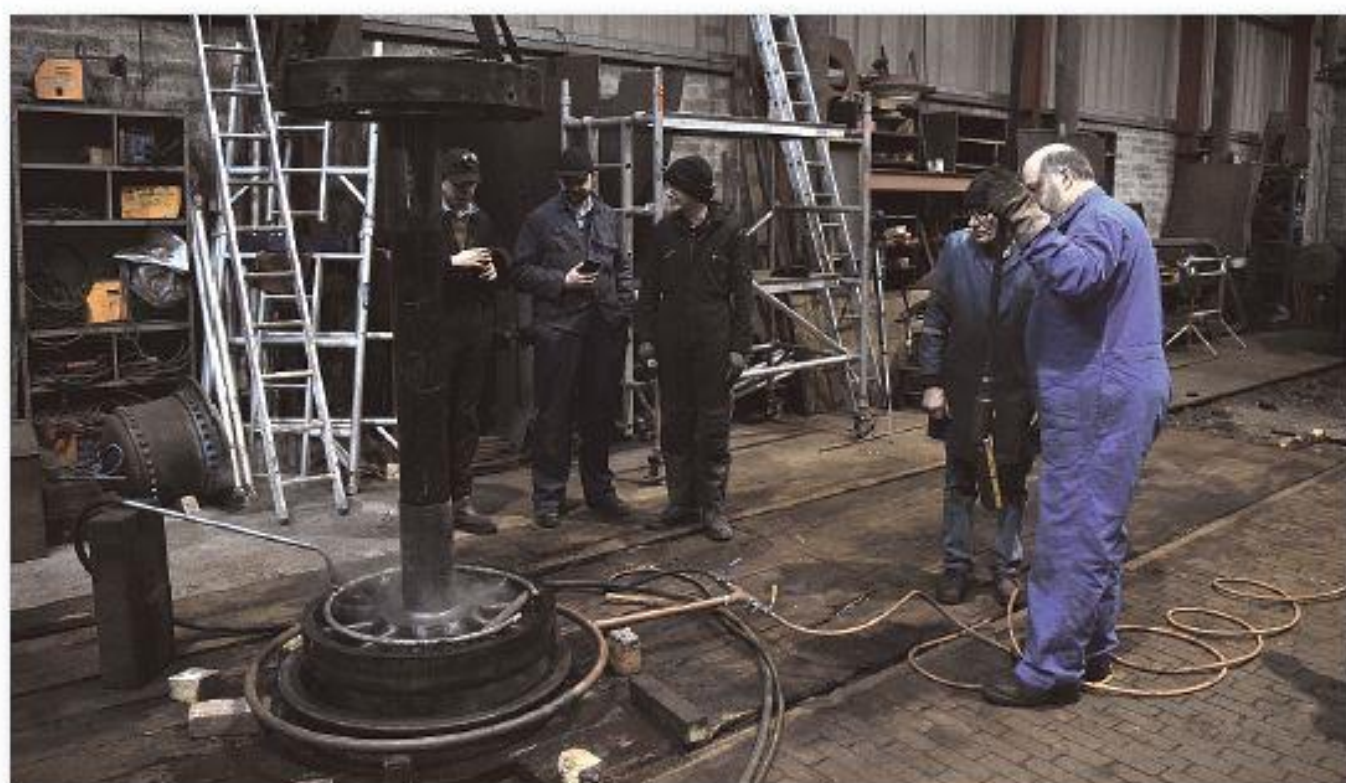
NO.4 RETYRE CENTREPAGE PULL-OUT & KEEP SPECIAL



Above – Jonathan Clinton and James Friel lower the 3' pony wheels into the pit, 13th January. A spare wheelset will then be hoisted in to support the engine. (Photo: A Lohoff)

Below – (L-R) Adam Lohoff, Sam Hall, Jonathan Clinton and James Friel in the wheeldrop pit, having lowered out a set of 6' diameter driving wheels, 19th January. (Photo: Editor)





Top – James Friel, Adam Lohoff, Peter Scott and Jeff Spencer watch as a pony tyre is heated until it falls off the wheel. The top wheel has already had its tyre removed. (Photo: Editor). Bottom – The tyre having fallen off, the gas ring which heated it runs around it and the lower wheel. Above the lower wheel, a second ring of pipe sprayed cooling water over the wheel to keep it contracted. Editor, Matthew Crockett, James Friel, Peter Scott and Bob Skingle watch. Both 27th January. (Photo: A Lohoff)



Top & Inset- Brian Hill at the wheel lathe which kept him captive for most of the first half of 2019, 03rd March. He is machining the inner surface of a new driving tyre until it will fit the wheel. Once the tyres were fitted to the wheels, back they went into the lathe to turn the outer surfaces to railway profile! A lip is machined into the inner circumference of the tyre, to bite over a rim around the edge of the wheel. Neither Brian, nor lathe, flinched once during the process. It took one week per side of each tyre, although the inner surfaces of the smaller wheels were able to be machined in a smaller lathe, in parallel to Brian, by HEI. (Photos: A Lohoff).

Bottom- Peter Scott and Mervyn Fleming heat an ex-Brian tyre until it has expanded enough to lower in the wheel, which has been balanced to hang true, at top left, 03rd February. Once in and with the gas turned off, God does His work! (Photo: Editor)



Top- Phillip Newell watches James Friel winch a completed driving wheelset up a few inches, 24th April. Once off the ground, the wheelset is rotated 90°, lowered into the pit and pushed under No.4 on a tramway mounted cart. Then a second winch on the opposite side can be attached to the far wheel and TWO people can hoist the wheels into position, which is where Phillip will come in. Thus, the process of inserting wheels in the engine was easier than putting them in the workshop in the first place as, at that stage, only one person could winch, requiring multiple people to take turns. Bottom- The first wheelset is in, although still suspended. James will next attempt to reinsert the running rail, which will result in the unfortunate discovery that the whole engine now needs manually jacked up because the tyres are a couple of inches thicker... check mate for that week! (Photos: A Lohoff)

A busy year ended on a high note in December when the RPSI's licence to operate as a Railway Undertaking in the Republic was renewed for a further five years by the Commission of Railway Regulation in Dublin. This gives the Society continued status until 2024 as a railway undertaking under Irish and EU law, meaning we can plan the future with confidence.

During the year our operations and staff underwent many audits by the CRR, the final one taking place on our Santa train on December 14. Our internal audit process had itself been audited by the CRR and was found to be satisfactory with a number of good practices identified. I am delighted to report this positive outcome, which reflects well on our volunteers.

Dublin Ops itself underwent a name change in 2019 – when DAOC (Dublin Area Operations Committee) is now known as Dublin Management Committee (DMC). This change was agreed by the RPSI Board and brings us into line with the newly formed Belfast Management Committee in Northern Ireland.

Despite the new name, the year revolved much as per usual, although there are always extra events and new challenges. Our routine is to compile a draft list of trips in November the previous year and share this with Irish Rail for their consideration. They can advise in advance if the list is likely to be affected by engineers' possessions.

Safety is paramount in everything we do,

and we held our annual Safety Forum for volunteers on February 16. This very useful session was held in the premises of the Irish Railway Record Society at Heuston Station.

In addition, volunteer Stephen Comiskey organised two Personal Traffic Safety (PTS) Courses during the year. These were run by the Irish Rail Training School at Inchicore.

With everything in place, our first outing for 2019 was The Midlander which involved two round trips with former GNR(I) Compound No.85 from Dublin Connolly to Maynooth on Bank Holiday Monday March 18. These trips are part of the St Patrick's Day weekend festivities in Dublin City and were well supported, with 772 passengers carried during the day.

Diesel Tours have developed into a huge attraction for enthusiasts from both Ireland and GB, and our The West Awake tour on April 13 was no exception. A total of 270 passengers enjoyed a day out from Dublin Connolly to Ballina and Westport behind two Irish Rail GMs (082 and 075) working in multiple.

Easter time usually finds us on the Dublin & South Eastern Railway. On April 22 we had No.85 on our Easter Eggstravaganza from Dublin Connolly to Wicklow with two local trips from Wicklow to Greystones. The only problem with Wicklow is that we are limited by the short run round facilities to six Cravens and a van. But even so, we still managed to carry a total of 903 passengers for the day.



No.85 at Waterford on 11th May, having turned on the Lavistown triangle at Kilkenny on the way. Not a steamheavy May Tour, but it did still break some new ground for the Compound. (Photo: C Friel)

As part of Belfast Ops' Steam Heritage Weekend, the Dublin Cravens Carriages and Volunteers were used both for the diesel and steam tours within the Republic on the weekend of May 12.

Back to the DSER on May 26 when No.85 performed brilliantly on the Sea Breeze from Dublin Connolly to Wexford, with an extension trip from Wexford to Rosslare Strand and Harbour carrying 544 passengers.

Our Dublin Riviera Steam trips are always a big attraction. On Fathers' Day, June 16, we ran from Dublin to Bray – with all seats having been sold a week in advance. As is our usual practice, we combined the main trip to Bray with two local excursions to Wicklow. This maximised our seat

occupancy and we had another great day of steam with 882 tickets sold.

Things don't always run smoothly, and July 7 was a case in point. No.85 was in charge for another Sea Breeze but unfortunately, due to problems with the injectors and other steaming issues at Gorey, Irish Rail driver Robert Jolley declared the engine a failure.

Our 323 passengers were informed as quickly as possible that we were going no further and invited to spend the afternoon in Gorey. A rescue engine was sought from Dublin Connolly and 074 arrived to bring us home. The steam engine was left in the siding and we headed north again, reaching Dublin just 22 minutes behind schedule. We had no

option but to cancel the proposed afternoon excursion from Wexford to Rosslare, which was most unfortunate. No.85 was recovered on July 12 by diesel loco 207 'Boyne'.

Happily, No.85 was back in action on July 21 for The Boyne trip on its home patch of the Great Northern main line. This involved a run to Drogheda and then two local trips, one to Dundalk and the other to Skerries Loop. The turntable at Connolly was out of commission and this meant No.85 had to run tender first to Dundalk. We carried 957 passengers in total.

We had planned to go to Enniscorthy on August 4 for the "Rockin Food Festival" Express, but it was not to be. Due to a major signal issue during the morning between Dublin Pearse and Dalkey, no trains were running beyond Pearse Station. This meant we had to cancel the fully booked Enniscorthy trip but thanks to co-operation with Irish Rail, we were able to offer our passengers a steam trip to Dundalk instead. Those who did not wish to take up this option were offered refunds. Passengers waiting in Enniscorthy for an afternoon trip to Rosslare were advised of the cancellation, and refunds were offered. Some 182 passengers stuck with us for the trip north.

We had a more enjoyable day on August 24 when we were off to Kilkenny with The Marble City special. Thanks to the Civil Engineers Department the Connolly turntable was back in action and No.85 was greeted at the platform by music from the Sir Henry Inglesbury Fife and Drum Corps from Carrickfergus. The band serenaded our 278 passengers again upon arrival at Kilkenny, where their selection of

music chimed well with a World War One re-enactment on the platform which involved a local historical group dressed in period clothes with soldiers kitted out with rifles. To create the atmosphere, carts with boxes and suitcases were displayed on the platform. A splendid day, both with the weather and locomotive performance.

Our next big event was the Emerald Isle Craic Express charter for Steam Dreams in the UK. It was a six-day tour train which ran from September 6 to 11 and involved Nos.85 and 4, which had arrived light engine from Whitehead.

The carriages had to be shunted into the order requested by Steam Dreams. Two Pullman style Cravens (1505 and 1532), kitchen car 1522, Premier Dining style Cravens Carriage 1506, bar car 1514 and buffet car 1508. Pullman Style consisted of carpets, table lamps, curtains and antimacassars. Premier Style involved carpets, curtains and antimacassars.

A huge amount of work went into preparing the set for this prestigious tour. All our Irish Rail steam crew were involved and our guard for the duration was Noel Enright from Ballina. The route involved No.85 taking the train from Dublin Connolly to Killarney on the Friday, then Killarney to Cork return on the Saturday. On Sunday September 8 we headed from Killarney to Galway, with diesel 081 taking over from No.85 at Limerick Junction for the last leg. No.85 ran light engine to Dublin Connolly, unfortunately failing at Sallins due to a vacuum brake issue.

Monday was a rest day for the train but not for us. While the passengers were sight-seeing on the Wild Atlantic Way, the RPSI volunteers gave the carriages a



No.85 at Kilkenny on 24th August. It has been a long time, if ever, since No.85 was last the workhorse for Dublin. One hears her greater coal capacity than No.4 is most welcome! (Photo: S Comiskey)

washing and a complete servicing. No.4 meanwhile ran light engine to Westport.

On Tuesday the 10th we had GM Loco 071 in retro livery for the trip to Westport. No.4 then brought the train back to Galway later that evening. The final leg was on September 11, when No.4 brought us home to Dublin in fine style.

This was a fantastic tour. In total we covered 880 miles, 726 of them by steam. Our route took us through 13 of the 26 counties of the Republic. The RPSI's reputation was enhanced and we look forward to welcoming Steam Dreams back in 2021.

Our Santa trains have always been popular, but the speed of ticket sales was something of a record. Within 30 minutes of the tickets going on sale on September

28, all the seats had been sold.

But before Santa arrived, we ran out second diesel tour of the year. The Cobh Rambler from Dublin Heuston on October 5 involved multiple working by GMs 078 and 232, which is something of a rarity. This certainly appealed to our 272 passengers, some 60% of whom were from Britain and further afield.

Our next foray was a private charter for Joe O'Reilly Tours from Dublin Connolly to Greystones. This was a fairly straightforward and very successful venture. We carried 120 passengers and returned empty carriages to Connolly. One helpful biproduct was that the Safety Department of Irish Rail were able to usefully trial a shunting radio in the course of this trip.



A panorama of Galway on 11th September, perhaps from the signal cabin. No.4 is being readied to work to Dublin. The Editor puzzled for a minute over where the Cravens are; behind No.4 under the trainshed roof, with a Rotem railcar. A 2800 railcar enters the station on the right. (Photo: M Crockett)

Halloween is always an occasion we like to mark with a steam operation but this time round there was a bit of a hitch over our plans to run a spooky train on October 26. Happily, No.85 had returned light engine from Whitehead on October 25 but it only then that we were advised that because of a rostering error we did not have an Irish Rail fireman available. The day was saved, however, when NIR driver Noel Playfair agreed to make himself available at very short notice.

So it was that our footplate crew consisted of Irish Rail driver Robert Jolley from Connolly shed in Dublin and NIR driver Noel Playfair from York Road. Thanks to their combined efforts, our 672 passengers had an enjoyable day out on the trips from Dublin to Drogheda and Dundalk.

We made a presentation to Noel at Drogheda for responding so willingly to our request for a fireman.

But that was not all. The same issue arose on the following Monday, October 28. Thanks to the assistance of Irish Rail and NIR management, arrangements were again made for Noel Playfair to work on the footplate for the series of trips from Dublin to Maynooth. Again, we are indebted to Noel for his readiness to assist. The end result was that 719 passengers had a great day out. Noel was back in Dublin on October 30 to work No.4 light engine north to Whitehead.

In tandem with this, the RPSI Cravens were chartered for "Storytime Express" - a joint venture between An Post and Children's Books Ireland. This was aimed at



Adam Lohoff and pupils Stephen Corniskey, Nicki Cox, Zachery Westhelle Hartfiel and Cian Scanlon, Whitehead Stables building for Adam's fireman training presentation, 23rd November. (Photo: N Cox)

promoting reading among schoolchildren during the midterm break and involved the coaches being hauled by diesel round to Heuston for the exercise.

A squad of volunteers from Dublin Loco took part in a Firing Course in Whitehead on November 23, hosted by Adam Lohoff. This involved both theory and practical involvement and feedback suggested it was an excellent course with considerable knowledge gained.

And suddenly it was the Santa season. With all tickets sold ages beforehand, we operated on November 30, December 1, 7, 8, 14 and 15. No.85 handled 13 trips while a GM hauled the remaining four.

The carriages were beautifully decorated for the Christmas Trains. A magnificent effort was put in by all the volunteers to provide a magical experience for children and adults alike. Musicians playing, a full bar, mulled wine and mince pies and Santa Claus meeting each child in their seat and giving them a selection box. An

opportunity was provided on the platform at Maynooth for children to have their photo taken with Santa and his elves. Over the three weekends we carried no fewer than 7,112 passengers.

I must express thanks to John Richardson and his team for their fundraising efforts. They travelled on all our trains and their "Everyone's a Winner" raffle gave our passengers a lot of fun and brought in a staggering €30,292 for the restoration of No.171. The Society is indebted to John's efforts and his amazing fund-raising team. John and Gerard Owens focused on selling RPSI Calendars on all our trains and raised an incredible €10,920, which has also gone to the No.171 fund.

And so ended another year. Our total for 2019 was 14,082 passengers, an increase of 992 on the previous year. Already we are gearing up for 2020 – but without our volunteers none of this would be possible. So many thanks to one and all.



TOP: A Connolly cleaning crew of Stephen Comiskey, John Cummins and Zachery Westhelle Hartfeil have done good work through the night of 14th December. It is 0426 and No.85 appreciates the effort! Never forget, we can, and often do, run operations that cover the whole 24hr clock. Note too, that despite the fire in No.85's belly, it is unlikely to have been warm for them at such a time and date! BOTTOM: Steam Raisers, such as Glen Murphy on No.85 in Dublin Connolly on 07th December, have been putting the 'PSI' in the 'RPSI' since 1964. (Both photos: S Comiskey)



It is now ten years since RPSI operations in Dublin switched over to a wholly Cravens operation. The fleet consists of ten coaches and two vans.

Two years ago, transponders were fitted to each vehicle to interact with the trackside wheel and bearing monitoring units located at Inchicore, Killester on the Belfast line and Monard near Limerick. The results are monitored after we pass them.

The standard train consist is six or seven Cravens plus van 3173. This is extended to eight and a van for Santa trains, giving a train seating capacity of approximately 400.

Standard 1539, the first Cravens acquired by the Society, is currently undergoing a refit in Inchicore. It has been fully rewired and re-plumbed and sits on a pair of bogies overhauled in Whitehead. Cravens coaches run on an early version of the B4 bogie which is different from the B4s under our Mark IIs. Our two vans run on the heavier B5 bogie.

In addition to routine maintenance in Inchicore, projects are undertaken as part



Transponder under 1506. (Photo: P Rigney)

of the safety improvement plan and as part of the general upgrade of facilities. This year the 24v DC emergency lighting has been upgraded to LEDs which give a better standard of illumination and a considerably improved lighting time. In 2019 half of the train toilets were resprayed with industrial standard acrylic paint which gives a cleaner and more durable finish.

We continue to be grateful to Irish Rail for facilitating us at Inchicore and permitting us to store carriages there.

Carriage number	Status	Mileage since 2009	Mileage in 2019
1522	Diner, 24 seats	28,347	4,357
1505	64-seat Open	26,224	4,241
1541	64-seat Open	24,484	2,787
1514	Bar car, 28 seats	24,484	4,357
1532	64-seat Open	22,598	4,357
1506	64-seat Open	19,957	3,675
1523	64-seat Open	18,652	2,501
3185	Van	16,697	0
3173	Van	14,345	4,357
1508	Snack car, 47 seats	9,630	2,860
1539	64-seat Open	7,637	0
1529	64-seat Open	1,043	0

Mileages accumulated by Cravens and vans in RPSI ownership.

Early January saw the Site Squad shifting three tonnes of coal out of No.4's bunker and pulling out the Unilok, all in preparation for the planned tyre work. For the rest of the month we concentrated on replacing four rotten, long timbers from the main crossing in the middle of the platform road. This entailed unbolting and lifting the frog, removing the old material and replacing with good timbers, which were ably drilled into place with help from Tom Mathers and George Smyth.

Following on from the departure of Meenglass at the end of January we dismantled the rails and platform that had been assembled on the low loader. After

a storm at the end of the month we retrieved what had been the hut for the weighbridge equipment from the end of the platform and, after some necessary repairs, it is now in the inner yard and has made a good dry store for lighting up timber.

February started with two tonnes of crusher run stone being wheel barrowed into the gap between the rails of A road in the carriage shed. The two skylights in the Dunleath Workshop, which had been broken by an earlier storm in December, were finally replaced; apparently, they were of an odd design and had to be specially made.



A hedgehog rescued from the turntable pit on 05th May, with thick gloves. Not the first and not the last. If you can build things for hedgehogs to get out of pits, please apply! (Photo: Editor)

A derailment of a wagon bogie while entering the Larne siding on 09th unfortunately spread the road and broke three chairs. The repairs were carried out the following week and on 21st the Atlas was used to shunt generator van 4602 and flat wagon C310 into the siding and the Carlow diesel into B-road. This maximises the room we have. The following weekend I gave the site its first application of weedkiller, the unseasonably mild weather having caused a burst of growth. Normally I do this in April!

Close inspection of the track revealed poor and damaged crossing timbers at the bridge point. The track was lifted on the hottest February day since records began with eight new timbers installed and track replaced.

The final stages of the big track repair at the bridge crossing, which included drilling and bolting down the chairs and levelling and packing were completed in time for the Saint Patrick's Day train rides. We pulled out No.131 for this event and the whole day went off very successfully. We also lifted six lengths of Annaghmore Peat Railway light rail from beside the third road and moved them to the back of the workshop. These were needed for the ring rail for the Blarney turntable which HEI were making. Later in the month, we replaced two large tie bolts in the frog of the crossing beside the signal box and jacked and packed the timbers. Inside the signal box we installed uprights for the instrument shelf for the signal indicators. This was quite a tricky job, ably assisted by Roy Thompson, as it meant drilling through the concrete floor.

On the first Thursday in April we pulled out 3BG in time for her 100th birthday party, put up lots of coloured bunting and

David Orr fixed the slumped wicket gate beside the Station. Some copper scrap was sent for recycling, which netted £80, and the by now usual weekly bin round up of rubbish was put into 2 large blue skips for disposal.

In the middle of April, I purchased three 30-metre hoses for watering the carriages, a great success. We used the Atlas to pull out No.131 for the Easter mainline trains and topped up its tender with coal from a new 30-ton batch using the Telehandler.

Both pieces of plant then burst hydraulic hoses; thankfully after their respective jobs, but we got the pipes fixed the next day. On the last Thursday in the month we again pulled out No.131, this time for the by now regular Saturday train rides. Before each of these public trains we carry out a full inspection of the running tracks.

The first week in May saw us weeding the verges in the car park and replacing 3 sleepers in one of the middle road switches. The following week Colin Stewart and I gave the Atlas its major annual service, replacing all the filters and engine oil. Believe it or not we have now had the Atlas machine for 10 years and it has been a tremendous boon for all our site activities.

More track repairs, including the jacking and packing of low rails joints in the platform road was our next priority. On Thursday 16th May we helped turn 85 before her light engine trip to Dublin and shunted the flat wagon back onto the turntable with the Atlas. Two bags of scrap cast iron were retrieved from the car park for the foundry and we replaced sleepers at the Larne end platform turn out.

A scrap drive in the middle of May netted £900 for six tonnes of iron and steel and

David Lowry got £310 for a small amount of copper, aluminium and lead batteries. I spent some of this money on an electrically powered rock hammer which has proved to be an excellent tool for the packing of ballast. In the last week of the month we replaced two wooden sleepers in the switches at the Larne end of the platform and lifted and moved the Unilok out of the wheel drop road. This was to allow movement of No.4 to finish the fitting of driving rods on her left-hand side. On D-Day we replaced two rotten wooden sleepers in the switches on the middle road and a further sleeper in the switches at the Larne end of the platform road was also replaced.

In the middle of June, I did a second weed spray and we pulled out the Gatwicks in C-road to allow the sand blasting of the Blarney turntable. We repaired the steps to the water column and the following week replaced the Gatwicks and pulled

out No.131. On the last week of June, the telehandler lifted the CDR cattle wagon body off flat wagon R3 with guidance from Willie Hollinger, in preparation for its return to Donegal.

On US Independence Day we pulled out No.4, which was rostered for its first main line trip, after new tyres had been fitted, on a Steam and Jazz outing. We raised the profile of the track on the approaches to 1 shed road and the following week we re-aligned the approaches to A carriage shed road. The latter was a major job requiring help from Gordon Hunt and Robin Morton and involved ballast excavation with the Atlas and track slewing; the latter needing both chain hoists and jacks.

At the end of July, we cleaned out the ash bunker of 14 tonnes of material. In the past this has been an inexpensive job but unfortunately ash is now categorised as hazardous waste and costs £100 a ton to



More ex-Donegal stock left what sometimes resembled 'RPSI Strabane' site on 29th June, having arrived some time nearer the late Cretaceous, leaving several kilos behind viz decomposition. Due to the efforts put into craning, sheer-legging, telehandling and shunting this cattle wagon down the years, as with "Donald" it acquired several nicknames. More printable ones include 'Tee Chest' [SIC], 'Mycologists' Delight' and - inexplicably but possibly music related - 'Tongue & Groove Armada'. (Photo: Editor)

dispose of. This is something we will have to factor into future running costs.

After a couple of weeks holidays at the start of August we jacked and packed the A-road approaches to the carriage shed. I also visited the Lurgan relay and on Friday 23rd received sixty good-quality, second-hand wooden sleepers from there thanks to the generosity of NIR. The end of the month saw a combined lift of the very long new mogul frames using both the Telehandler and the Atlas.

In the first week of September the Site squad took down all the Summer Steam signage and posters and helped in the test assembly of the Blarney turntable. At this time we also took delivery of a large ten-ton forklift machine; a gift from P&O Larne port. The following week saw a wet and bedraggled track squad, including Peter Lindsay, jack pack the point switches beside the signal box. By contrast the third week was bright and sunny and we gave the newly acquired forklift a complete service. We also were called upon to fix toilets in the stables and the bothy.

On Saturday 21st September the public running tracks were inspected by two engineering colleagues from Dublin as part of an independent assessment of the system. I am pleased to report that there were no major problems, but the lack of adequate drainage and poor ground conditions on site is continuing to be a serious concern. This is something we plan to address in 2020. At the end of the month we pulled out 3BG for the Volunteers Day and replaced a sleeper in one of the switches. I am pleased to report that both the Atlas and the Telehandler passed their annual Allianz insurance examination at this time and that the new Lansing forklift was also

deemed fit for use by the inspector.

October was a busy month with preparations for the Halloween trains and the Model Railway Day. Early in November, we serviced the Telehandler in time for the busy Santa Season, and said goodbye to our old faithful JCB 3C MK1 which was bought by a collector in Blarney. We put up the Christmas tree and moved Santa's sleigh into the stables after some serious modifications to get it through the doors!

At about this time three of us passed our theory and practical exams for the P&O forklift.

December was a busy month loading and cleaning out the Santa trains, helped by Roy Wilson, and we took the opportunity to recycle a lot of the old timbers from this year's track work. On our last Thursday on site for the year and after pulling out No.131 again with the Atlas, John Williams gave all the group an excellent first aid refresher course including practical CPR on a life like dummy. We then retired to the Edwardian Tea Room for our, by now, traditional and very enjoyable Christmas monster fry and apple tart.



An edible Atlas and Site Officer presented by Site Squad for Dermot's 70th birthday. (Photo: Editor)

It's been yet another busy year for HEI in 2019. Around a third of the workshop time was spent on RPSI loco and Mk2 carriage maintenance, with the biggest jobs, counting by hours, being the carriage set. Locomotives No.85 and No.4 were not far behind, and No.131 took about half the attention of either of these. 3BG was hardly looked by HEI.

The major RPSI restoration projects were carriages 302 and 181, and bogie overhauls work for Mk.2s and Cravens. The only major locomotive project was supporting the volunteer led retyring of No.4 during the first half of the year. Other RPSI work was on the G8.24 boiler rebuild for the mogul project, and restoration work on the Guinness grain van, both the frames and the body.

There was one major project undertaken for external customers, the design, fabrication and installation of a new 3ft

gauge turntable for the Blarney Castle Estate, at the site of Blarney station on the old Cork and Muskerry railway.

The Bessbrook tram remains at Whitehead and is awaiting further funding to progress. Other external work included a steam wagon chassis, some gates and a small marine steam boiler.

It was decided to advertise internally for the position of workshop foreman, which resulted in the appointment of Jim Adams, with Ivan McAteer managing the prioritisation of projects from a RPSI perspective. Jodie McKee started an apprenticeship in September, spending 3 days a week in the workshops. At year end there were a total of seven paid staff, both full and part time. A change to the HEI board was the resignation of James Friel as director. We thank James for all his hard work during his tenure.



Jim Adams on 27th March fitting set screws to one of No.4's driving wheels to secure the new tyre in place. (Photo: B Hill)

While the regular Thursday to Saturday visitors are our staple diet, it has become increasingly clear that we need a menu of special events to add the icing to the cake – and to produce income to sustain our organisation.

Key to the success of such events is the Edwardian Tea Room which, although housed in a new-build station building, successfully replicates traditional railway station refreshment rooms – a perfect “Brief Encounter” ambience with which many visitors identify. The Tea Room is the hub for activities during the year ranging from Afternoon Tea to Murder Mystery. These are all aimed at the general public and always prove popular. This is in line with our strategy of trying to broaden the market and extend our appeal to people who are focused more on an enjoyable outing than the museum.

Tearoom staff also handle sales of souvenirs and of tickets for the museum. They are very much in the front line – conscious that first impressions create lasting memories. Thanks to them for the contribution they make.

A newly introduced sales item is the WRM souvenir guide, which is aimed primarily at the non-enthusiast market. Full of glossy photographs and easily digestible information it covers a wide range of museum and RPSI related points of interest. Thanks are due to the Curatorial Committee for steering the project through from the drawing board to publication. The guide is already proving popular with visitors and a formal launch is planned to provide recognition of this valuable work.

The highlights of our 2019 programme

were the surprisingly popular 100th birthday party for No.3BG, a Teddy Bear picnic in June, our Model Railway Day in November (a soaraway success) and of course the ever-dependable Whitehead Victorian Street Fair.

Last year’s report started with a reference to the winning by WRM of a top trophy at the Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards. This success was emulated in February 2019 when Matthew Wilson from WRM landed the newly introduced award for “Young Volunteer of the Year”. Our congratulations to Matthew – a worthy winner.

And in March WRM itself won an award for excellence in tourism at the annual Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Business Awards in Carrickfergus. We were also short-listed in a visitor attraction competition run by George Best Belfast City Airport in May. Such events always help add to our profile.

WRM loomed large in April on the Youtube “All the Stations” series. Geoff Marshall and Vicki Pipe visited the museum on a gloriously sunny day in April and created a very favourable report which has now been viewed thousands of times.

Around the same time, we were literally put on the map thanks to the generous co-operation of Translink NI Railways. The company agreed that we could erect signage at Whitehead railway station directing visitors who arrive by train to our museum. This was a huge help and we have noticed an increase in the number of people arriving with their Translink ticket and qualifying for a 20% discount on the admission charge.

Translink has further facilitated WRM by



At the HRA Awards in Birmingham on 09th February, Matthew Wilson holds his 'Young Volunteer Award', with his mum Ellen and dad David either side of him, and Robin Morton and Johnny Glendinning of the RPSI at the sides. (Photo: c/o R Morton)

allowing us to place leaflets on the information stands of railway stations and bus stations across Northern Ireland. This is a great help, particularly as we went for a re-print of our WRM pamphlet early in 2019. In addition, the Translink social media team featured WRM on one of their "Days Out by Train" video reports on the company's Facebook site. By kind permission, we were also allowed to place pop-up posters in various station concourses over the summer and autumn.

A growing target area is school visits and this campaign was boosted by a schools' competition kindly run by Translink in May. Pupils from the winning school, Braidside Integrated Primary School in Ballymena, arrived by train on June 5 and thoroughly enjoyed their visit.

The corporate market is one we are keen to target and in September when WRM acted as the venue for a family day-out by the Belfast office of an international legal firm.

As holders of a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service we were delighted

when our friends at Whitehead in Bloom received their award in the autumn. Their green-fingered volunteers keep our platform planters and hanging basket flowers looking colourful throughout the year – a prime example of how all of us in the Whitehead community can work together. Indeed, we greatly value our involvement in Whitehead Community Association.

Our international presence was boosted in November by our involvement with a Dutch platform called Trains24.net, a subscription-based platform which features WRM among several hundred international heritage railway attractions.

Thanks to the assistance of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, WRM has been enlisted as a member of the European Route of Industrial Heritage. Along with three other local centres, we now feature on the ERIH map which covers Europe and beyond. The Council kindly published a pamphlet highlighting the presence of its industrial heritage gems – so we expect this will bring us new visitors.

Tourism NI and Mid & East Antrim Borough Council see huge potential in developing a market involving the existing cluster of visitor attractions in the East Antrim area. Close to Belfast, on the Causeway Coastal Route – the aim is to get more tourists to spend time in our area. This is something WRM is keen to support.

More mutual benefit results from the various tourist attractions in the vicinity co-operating with each other. One dynamic for this is the Gobbins Cluster, to which WRM belongs. This is a network of local attractions and accommodation providers and is a valuable way for us to make friends and raise our brand awareness.

In similar vein, we were delighted when Mid & East Antrim Borough Council selected WRM as a venue for its “Shaped

by Industry, Shared with Pride” drama festival in May. Four locations were chosen – Carnlough, Glenarm, WRM and Flame Gas Museum in Carrickfergus.

Over four weekends, short plays were presented in the venues, with our turn being on the weekend of May 24/25. The ever resourceful and hugely imaginative folk at Big Telly Theatre Company from Portstewart selected former UTA dining car No.87 as the perfect venue. They served up a four-course feast – four short plays involving two professional actors who seamlessly switched characters from waiting staff to robbers, and from dancers to Victorian travellers.

With amazing visual and sound effects and several costume changes, the pace never slackened and it was great family entertainment. This was our first taste of “immersive theatre” in which the audience



The weather could (and did) do what it liked outside the carriage shed on 09th November, for it is always dry on Tony Ragg's 'Stanfording' layout, which features some very familiar buildings and engines in miniature. (Photo: C Friel)

are part of the plot. Most satisfying of all, each of the four dramas had been painstakingly researched and all four were based on authentic railway history – such as a booking office robbery at Whitehead station in 1939.

Before the big day, Big Telly put on a dry run at the start of April at which the “diners” were a group of international tour operators. They included WRM as part of a familiarisation trip to the East Antrim area which was organised by our friends in Tourism NI. They came expecting a museum and went away chuckling. It was a welcome follow-up to WRM’s participation in the big Tourism Ireland “Meet the Buyer” event in Belfast, at which useful contacts were made.

A close relationship has also been developed with P&O at the Port of Larne which we hope will lead to more ferry passengers visiting WRM. But there has been a useful spin-off in that the Port of Larne generously made a forklift truck

available to RPSI. We hope this is the start of a mutual benefit to both organisations. As local councillor Robert Logan commented during an official visit in February, the museum is going from strength to strength. Almost three years since it opened, WRM has evolved into a recognised visitor attraction, delivering on the undertakings that the RPSI made to its funders, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Tourism NI. Comments in our visitors’ book confirm that the museum continues to engage, entertain and educate. As was clear from the outset, the museum’s reach extends beyond the railway enthusiast market and our major targets are group visits, families and international visitors. This is thanks to the efforts of so many people and all who spread the word. Tell your friends, your family, the people you meet and the organisations to which you belong – come down and visit WRM and you’ll have a day out to savour. You are our best PR representatives and our team is here to help you!



Kids' birthday parties always tire the adults out. Following 3BG's milestone birthday on 06th April, Don Wildy, Norman Close and Mary Glendinning take a 'wee breather' before tidying up. (Photo: C Friel)

The Curatorial Committee in 2019 helped WRM generate more income via development of interpretation and events, creating a souvenir guidebook which is now available from WRM or John Friel's pop-up book stall.

We provided conservation guidance for specimens and gratefully received new donations; a highlight was a nameplate from NCC loco "Glenariff".

NI Museums Council awarded a small grant to develop a Storage Plan and new small object store. Designs for a new display panel on NCC Mogul locomotives are well underway.

To rationalise rolling stock, ownership of carriages GSWR 1287 and GSWR 1097 was transferred to the DCDR. They were already on loan to them.

2020's first priority is assisting Peter Scott

and Bob Edwards to finish the restoration of HLF funded Guinness grain van 504.

GSWR short bogie open carriage 837, dating from 1902, will possibly be transferred to Whitehead along with a rare surviving Irish covered goods van if Mullingar is vacated.

We will be developing an enhanced display on Royal and State trains in GNRI Directors' Saloon 50, thanks to a generous financial gift from the Tonic Cinema Organ Society, via Ian Sinclair.

We hope to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Magheramorne Spoil Trains. The exact format is still under discussion but could be a steam excursion, a photographic exhibition or a publication.

Finally, we will assist Rebecca Lavery in her development of educational materials for WRM.



Harvey got himself an HLF-funded makeover during 2019 and went on display to WRM visitors. Here he is with Sam Hall on 19th January 2020. Sam led both RPSI regular volunteers and Duke of Edinburgh's Award participants to achieve this spectacular result. (Photo: J Clinton)

My name is Matthew, I am 18yrs old. My love for steam locomotives began when I was watching "Thomas the Tank Engine". I loved watching the little blue tank engine chuff around and from that point on I had a real interest in steam. As I grew older my passion for the real thing grew and I became very interested in preservation and restoration of steam locomotives. In February 2019 my dad took me to Whitehead for a volunteer open day, we had a look around and I was hooked, once I had the opportunity to volunteer at Whitehead, I took it.

Everyone who volunteers here is really friendly, helpful and great to work with. I have gained a lot of knowledge volunteering at Whitehead and have had the opportunity to work on the locomotives which I have thoroughly enjoyed!

My dad and I have worked on a number of tasks since joining, such as helping to repair No.4 where we have dismantled the motion so that the rods could be checked and repaired. We have also worked on No.171 "Slieve Gullion" helping the team to fully dismantle this locomotive for its next overhaul.

We travel down to the museum every other weekend and every time we go down, there is something different to do. Some days it's very tiring but it's always great fun! One of the more unusual jobs I have been asked to do is to climb inside

the firebox and remove the bricks from the firebrick arch as these were cracked and needed to be replaced. Climbing into the firebox was an interesting experience as people usually don't get to see inside a locomotive firebox.

Overall, I really enjoy volunteering at whitehead and hope to do so for many years to come.



Matthew Moreland giving a big thumbs-up to volunteering in the wheeldrop pit, underneath No.4, in the first half of 2019. (Photo: B Moreland)

As a member of the RPSI for nearly fourteen years I have worked in various departments, including stewarding and the carriage department, as well as a first aider and the wearer of a red suit at Christmas. I had the privilege of being the person trained to spray paint the first four Cravens in Dublin, three in the original corporate RPSI blue and one in the current Dublin RPSI livery. As our carriages are now painted by Irish Rail I had to find a new position and found this in fundraising. In 2016 I was approached to help on a stand

at the model railway exhibition in Raheny, I accepted and sold some calendars which generated interest in the Society. In 2017 I sold the RPSI's newly released Craven carriage models, along with calendars, at the Blackrock show stand and I also ran the first show raffle for the society. This proved such a success that it was run again in 2018 with massive interest in our first prize; four Santa train tickets! In 2017 I started to help with John Richardson's raffle and now do every trip with him.

In 2018 the Dublin fundraising team were



Here is Martin Hoey in full regalia, all smiles and ready to exchange crisp new plastic banknotes for 'merch' in the Edwardian Tea Room on 09th November, Model Railway Day. (Photo: J McKegney)

welcomed to Whitehead to work the Steam & Jazz trains. These were different to the Dublin operations as we had to be accommodated for overnight stays as travel home after the trips was difficult but Mr Richardson put us all up each time. We really enjoyed these trips, the highlight was realising that we were finally generating money for the Society to be used in Whitehead directly whereas previously it tended to be for specific items. Passengers on these unique trains really enjoy themselves and were very welcoming. Some, having heard our accents, were amazed to hear we had travelled up.

2019 was a great year for fundraising with more trips including the Steam & Jazz, Enterprise and Portrush Flyer. When the Society hosted a model railway exhibition at Whitehead, I joined John Friel in selling for this day. Between us we raised a large sum despite the day being very overcast and wet. The year was very eventful with us producing more enamel badges for sale than ever before including new No.4 and No.171 pins and even a brand-new pin of B141. Another first occurred when we did a pin of a 201-class diesel engine. This was done for the double header diesel train trip in September and was the first pin made of a locomotive that was not

owned or operated by the RPSI.

One of the most interesting parts is sourcing our stock. I had a very funny experience in the summer when I travelled to Portadown to collect about 100 Unicorn teddys for use in the raffle. Each was about 30cm long and placed into either my large backpack or a large clear plastic bag. I then travelled to Carrickfergus by train to hand the bears over to John Richardson. Along the way I had to put up with many comments of "You really love unicorns!" or "Can I have one please?" [The Editor imagines the answer was 'Yes, but for a fee' in the early stages of the journey, tending towards 'Take as many as you want, get them away from me!' in the later stages.] But this is all part and parcel of being a Society fundraiser.

Had you asked me in 2006 if I would be doing this I would have said 'no'. I thought fundraising was unimportant and boring! But working with John Richardson and the various volunteers I now realise that it is both important and makes our passengers happy. In fact, passengers come up to me and say "Have you done my carriage yet?"; Fear of missing out! I look forward to continuing in this role and maybe others in the Society will consider joining fundraising and sales.

REFLECTIONS... 50 YEARS OF FUNDRAISING

John Richardson

The last service train left Newtownbutler, Co. Fermanagh, in 1957 and five years later I was working in the town's branch of the Northern Bank with the aspiration to preserve a Great Northern Railway railbus. Badges, tie pins and cufflinks bearing the GNRI coat of arms were produced and sold amongst the small group of likeminded enthusiasts and to unsuspecting bank customers. Some £50 was lodged to an account named Railway Preservation Society of Ireland...yes, two years before the RPSI was formed in 1964. In 1963 most of the monies were used to

subsidise a trip to Ballylinan, Co. Laois, which had been organised by Mike Shannon. It involved CIE steam rather than GNRI internal combustion, but no-one seemed to mind.

As treasurer of the infant RPSI, with this early experience, pens, badges and general memorabilia were marketed on the few trains that the nascent Society organised. As the Society needed funds, a sales table was carted round Traction Engine Rallies, model shows and the like using my ex-AA motorbike and side car. A marquee was hired for a number of years. Subsequently



To prove the text, here's John Richardson having set up the Crommer van shop in Donegall Square North, Belfast, in 1979. City Hall is just to the left, its gate lamps shadow the van. Hopefully the fire engine is not en-route to some act of wanton destruction. (Photo: c/o J Richardson).



On 24th August John Richardson took a break from "Every Ones a Winner Raffle", on Marble City trip at Kilkenny, to lead "Sir Henry Inglesby's Fife and Drum Corps" to the Castle for a recital. The Society was presented with a Regimental Plaque by Band Conductor Godfrey Robinson seen here with Joe McKeown, Gerry Mooney and John Richardson... in white trousers on No.85! (Photo: c/o J McKeown)

a caravan, suitably painted in the Great Northern colours of blue and cream, was to be on the road for some time.

As our range of merchandise increased and the events to be covered expanded, I persuaded one of my customers that the mobile grocery van aspect of his business empire was not as profitable as it should be. The vehicle was purchased for £700 and the Northern Bank sponsored the repainting of this Commer classic. The same year [1979] a book "Gone but not Forgotten" to mark the 25th anniversary of the demise of Belfast Trams was produced and marketed widely. The profits on this went towards the purchase

of the Portakabin Shop which served well at Whitehead for many years.

For our younger members, 1979 was in the midst of the "Troubles", movement and activity was restricted round the Province. Undaunted, the sales team set up stall to promote the Belfast Trams volume plus another on the Bessbrook and Newry Tram, which we underwrote for the Oakwood Press. Setting up shop in the control zones of the province's urban centres was not for the fainthearted.

1979 was also the year of the film 'The First Great Train Robbery' and posters were produced of Nos.184 and 186 in their role as movie stars. Contact was made with



Someone who's a winner pays no attention to Wexford sliding by the window as John Richardson and team make both passengers and coffers happy on the Sea Breeze of 26th May. (Photo: S Comiskey).

management of the late lamented ABC cinema in Belfast and during the films run an announcement was made to the effect that souvenirs would be on sale after the show. I well recall bemused English squaddies looking somewhat suspiciously at me with the boot of my car open, Del Boy style, at 10.30 each night trying to extract £1 notes from departing cinema audiences.

On leaving an RPSI train in Great Victoria Street in 1975 very late at night, with no buses running due to bomb scares, I was anxious about getting to York Road with the large amount of cash from dining car and sales activities. I approached an RUC Land Rover patrol and explained my problem. The stalwart barman Tommy

Dorrian and I were bundled into the back of the Rover and conveyed at some speed to York Road.

In those early days of the Society running four or five trains per year gave insufficient income to cover running repair and other costs [*We are well past forty-five trains a year now and say the same thing – Ed*]. Fundraising lifted cash from Cork to Donegal at every kind of event one can imagine. On one occasion the team invaded a medieval fair at Carrickfergus Castle in choir robes borrowed from church to blend in. From a cramped compartment in 861 to the open fields of a tractor rally, the sales team have plied their trade – with that single aim of keeping steam alive in

Ireland.

It was only when we ran trains aimed at the general public - Santa, Easter Bunny, Flyer and Enterprise runs - that rail related income became a major part of the income stream. Pride should be taken in the RPSI being the first heritage rail group in the British Isles to run main-line Christmas and Easter trains. Those involved will not easily forget those 1981 Mullingar based runs in 14 degrees of frost with No.184!

Perhaps the most financially successful of the activities has been the instant raffle. From the chance picking up of a ticket in Southport, many years ago, "Every One's a Winner" has developed into one of the most important sources of income for the Society. By sourcing goods when traders want their shelves cleared of seasonal stock, major successes are to be had. All this requires much travelling, and in some cases a degree of embarrassment. Earlier this year I bought a large number of

whistling monkeys. When transporting them by bus though Belfast, a jolt from a hole in the road brought a cacophony of wolf whistles from the large bags I was carrying.

Fund raising provides the oxygen of finance for many projects. Recently it has funded the 121-class restoration, with the current project being No.171. Over the last five decades I have recruited many helpers from Boys Brigade Companies, Court officials and Sunday school teachers. Many will remember the redoubtable Dorrian family as the mainstay of fundraising and in the dining car in the 70's and 80's.

I trust that these few lines will, perhaps give an insight into an area of Society activities often overlooked, but without which the wheels may not have turned so quickly as they have done over the past half century. We never did get the railbus, but two GNR 4-4-0s in steam with a third on the way is a fair exchange!

Washouts have been oft mentioned in Society Bulletins during 2019, so the opportunity is being taken to explain what they are, why they are important and how they are done. At the most basic level they involve 'opening up' a boiler by removing the washout plugs and mud-doors (on engines such as 3BG and No.4 that have mud-doors) and flushing out anything that is in there with water. The boiler is then sealed up again and returned to service. At Whitehead, we loosely use a figure of fourteen steaming days between washouts and it can be seen that with four engines conducting Society duties (mainline, shunting, train rides, steam tests) that this broadly equates to two washouts per loco per year, or about 1 every month or two. Sometimes a third washout is required should a particular engine see heavy use, or should an engine start to show signs it may need washed out early – eg silty water appearing in the gauge glass when checking water levels. One of the washouts would happen immediately before the locomotive undergoes its annual third-party boiler examination, as the boiler inspector requires to be able to see in the plug holes and mud-doors to assess the internal condition of the boiler as part of the 'cold' examination.

But what happens in the boiler that necessitates washouts? Of course, water goes into the boiler, is boiled to produce steam and the steam is taken off to produce work. But water – even tap water, even bottled water, particularly railway water tower water, like Whitehead, Connolly, Dundalk, Avoca or Lisburn – is impure, containing dissolved minerals, such as calcium carbonate, dissolved atmospheric gas (oxygen being the

concerning one), rust and suspended organic matter all the way from amoeba to pond weed, mosquito larvae and water-boatmen, which can sometimes be seen darting away when the tender tank is opened. Dissolved minerals and gasses are impossible to extract while fragments of organic matter get smashed up in churning water against sieves and vapourised in injectors and end up in the boiler [Lisburn tank is usually subject to an annual weeding around June to remove that which would actually block a sieve].

When the water boils and steam is drawn off, the concentration of dissolved impurities increases in the remaining water until it can no longer remain dissolved and crashes out as scale, which can cover any surface in the boiler; tubes, stays, structure itself. Organic sediments and rust carried in with the feed water fall, when the engine is quiet, as silt onto any suitable surface, particularly down the narrow space between the firebox sheets to the foundation ring, bottom of boiler barrel, the lovely flat firebox crown. In use, and being churned up by jolts and currents, the sediment creates a suspension, suspended solids. Suspended solids and dissolved organic matter in high concentration in such places as rivers causes foam below weirs.

Dissolved oxygen* attacks the steel in general but the relatively thin boiler tubes, with their large surface area, are particularly vulnerable (hence a reason for re-tubes) and so rust from the boiler itself is added to the mix. Exactly the same basic process happens in your home kettle (hopefully minus water-boatmen) but there is a vital difference to the



A silted-up foundation ring washout plug hole, No.4, 04th January. (Photo: Editor)

locomotive boiler. At home you decant the kettle between steamings and drink the delicious concentrate. In the locomotive, more water is constantly added to the boiler, to replace that removed as steam, and boiled off whilst the actual overall volume in the boiler remains more or less constant, i.e. hopefully always somewhere within the confines of the gauge glass. So the concentration of matter of all sorts in the boiler increases. The harder the locomotive works, the more water is passed through the boiler and so a trip such as a Steam Enterprise will result in much more sedimentation than a day shunting. [**In 2020, 3BG is trialling water treatment to scavenge this dissolved oxygen before it can rust anything- Ed*].

As well as producing steam, the boiler water has the vital function of keeping the (usually) copper inner firebox cool. As scale and mud are very effective insulators, significant build-up of them on and around surfaces can both hamper steaming and compromise the ability of the water to cool the firebox. In severe cases, sediment build-up can result in warping and damage as the fire cooks the insulated metal. One outcome can be



A mud-door hole with silt behind, No.4, 11th January. (Photo: Editor)

'quilting', crinkling of the inner firebox like a bed sheet. So the scale and sediment need regularly removed via a washout.

Strategically placed around the foundation ring, faceplate, smokebox and occasionally firebox top are washout plugs and mud-doors which are removed for washouts to allow flushing with water and hoking with bars, wires, screwdrivers etc. to remove the mucky matter. Some of the foundation ring openings can be solid with mud which, as well as the material which originated in the feedwater as described, can also comprise such delightful things as twists of swarf, sections of gasket and the occasional chisels, drill bits and screwdrivers lost during boiler work. The back of the firebox, under the firehole, is usually the worst for silt whilst, perhaps not by co-incidence, also being by far the most awkward place to access. And the sediments do not particularly want to shift.

At Whitehead, until recently, the only available options for supplying water to washout with were the lowly shed hose (quote one unenthusiastic washer-outer 'the water can just about be bothered to fall out the end of the hose') and the powerwasher which was at least warm



Zachary Westhelle Hartfiel inserts a firehose nozzle into a faceplate washout plug hole on No.85, Connolly Shed, 24th November. The same method is described later as now used at Whitehead. Dublin have the power and volume of the Connolly water tank pump behind them! (Photo: S Comiskey)

but, as Roy Walker would say, 'It's good, but it's not right'. Lack of pressure was the major problem with the shed hose, lack of volume the major problem with the powerwasher. Washouts frequently took two days with this equipment, more eroding the muck than flushing it, and with the lingering thought we were just about keeping on top of it rather than having real success. Having got cold and wet for one day, no-one ever relished the prospect of the same wet boots the second day. Increasing train operations and, for a few years, five engines on the go, meant grumbles grew whilst time was less and it got to the point something had to give... but the personnel were not to be the only ones with issues!

Around October 2018 very strange reports came in from Dublin of No.4 having a 'wuffy beat' that effectively sounded like

the locomotive was 'priming' (ie carrying water over to the cylinders) when working hard, but yet it could not be, as there was ample water space in the glasses. Whilst corrective actions in line with priming was immediately taken, heads were scratched in the background. The plot thickened as during December there were days this would happen and days it would not. On the Mince Pie of 2018, two different Whitehead loco reps reported the same noise as the loco worked out of Connolly and as it started to climb the bank out of Dundalk, both periods of hard work. Again, no obvious explanation presented itself.

At Whitehead, the boiler was drained for 'winterisation' but not without filling a 25L drum with some of the water. A sample of this, along with samples from No.131 and Connolly water tank, was sent to a laboratory for testing and came back



Mud and mess exit No.131 PDQ on 17th November, following connection to Whitehead's brand-new petrol-driven pump. (Photo: Editor)

showing that No.4 contained over six and a half times more suspended solids than either No.131 or Connolly tank. This pointed to inadequate washouts being the problem. Then someone thought to boil the water in a spare kettle, including, for humour, an additional one from the River Lagan, generally, and probably these days unfairly, taken as being the definition of filthy water. Nothing out of the ordinary happened with any sample, river included, that made it different from tap water ... until No.4's approached the boil, at which point, within the space of a few seconds, the kettle foamed up and overflowed most dramatically. No.4 was then subjected to no less than three washouts in close succession, with much debris being removed, and no reports of 'foaming' occurred in 2019.

Examination of some of No.85's pokier places with the boroscope in July 2019 confirmed build-ups of scale deep in on

the firebox crown, among the lattice of stays, that just weren't being reached.

All of the above incrementally built the case for a high-volume, high-pressure pump for Whitehead, and a petrol-powered Honda WH20X duly arrived. It has a 119Gal/Min capacity, 5-BAR pressure, delivered through a two-inch outlet to which a female fire hose fitting was promptly welded. This enables the operators to wash the boilers out with a standard fire hose and nozzle, the fitting to which of a short length of the much-maligned shed-hose allows powerful blasts to be directed all round foundation rings, over the tops of firebox crowns and along boiler barrels. While considering whether to get this pump, there was widespread concern over what exactly to use to supply such a thirsty beast and it took inexplicably long before anyone realised each engine just happens to come with a large reservoir attached...

The power of the pump took those conducting the first trial by surprise, as the hose flailed out of control like in the clip where Extinction Rebellion 'attack' the Treasury Building in London with a fire engine. Thereafter it was found that controlling the hose and pointing it in the boiler produced far better results, pleasingly successful results in fact, with great quantities of mud and solids produced out of No.131 and 3BG at little effort on behalf of the operators. Finally, it felt like something meaningful was being achieved with washouts, they were a lot quicker, did a much better job and were maybe even a bit of fun. Unfortunately they have yet to prove any drier ... not particularly because of the pump. The washer-outer no longer needs to spend ages crouched beside a spewing plug hole with a piece of wire and does



About a millisecond before it goes all over the toolstore floor, foam dramatically rises on a kettleful of No.4's boiler water, sample taken in January, in a manner similar to how it is rising on pints across Ireland on this 17th March, St Patrick's Day! (Photo: Editor)

not get wet that way, but the first time a washout was conducted the rain did not stop, and the second time the pit's drain blocked and flooded the boots that were supposed to stay dry!



17th November again and, No.131 having gone home to bed, the Guinness Engine carries on with the party; stealing No.131's drink in fact. Sam Hall oversees the new pump and watches as 3BG fails to hold her liquor. When anthropomorphised, 3BG's speeches usually start with 'Hic!' (Photo: Editor)

Gerry Mooney writes: It was with deep sadness and sense of loss that news was received on the 18th of November that our long-time friend and mentor Tony Renehan had passed away. Tony and his brother Dan were the familiar face for many on the footplate of our steam operations for many years. Tony's holidays would be planned around our operating dates to ensure a steam crew would be available.

Tony was born in the north inner city of Dublin and within sight of the steam locomotives from both CIE and GNR. Tony was in charge of bringing his brothers Dan and Paul and Dessie out to Fairview for the spectacle of the likes of No.207 departing north with the down Enterprise. The family then moved to the new suburb of Ballyfermot on the south side of the city and, conveniently, Inchicore Works was over the back wall. A life on the railways was a priority for Tony but, having successfully applied to join British Railways, the cost of getting suitable accommodation and lack of family in the UK put a halt to this adventure.

In 1964, aged 20 years of age, Tony joined the traffic department of CIE and one of his early jobs was to act as a 'snatcherman' *[operated the staff- snatcher apparatus and performed staff exchanges where / when block posts were too numerous for the driver to do it – Ed]*, he then proceeded to join the locomotive grade as a trainee driver. It wasn't long before Tony began to appear on the footplate of RPSI locomotives, keen to learn the craft and skill of steam locomotive operation.

Tony's first appearance was in 1968 with his brother Dan on a working to Kilkenny

with No.186 for an IRRS outing. Duties on the day involved filling the bunker, oiling around and generally tending to the locomotive. They were both under the watchful eye and guiding hand of Inspector Ned Comerford who made it clear that the two brothers must learn the craft as closely as possible to the way men would have learned it previously. For the next couple of years, they continued in this role and by the mid 1970's Tony was booked as fireman for steam tours. Tony was surrounded by men senior to him that had vast knowledge of steam and he never missed a chance to expand his knowledge. Tony was later passed as driver with his brother Dan in 1991 and the pair travelled the complete Irish Rail network and even managed a working to Belfast with former GNR compound 'Merlin'. Some could say events of their early childhood going to Fairview to see the down Enterprise depart had gone full circle with the two brothers taking charge of their own Steam Enterprise.

To put it mildly, Tony had a very in-depth knowledge of steam locomotives and their operation. Never one to force his knowledge on anyone he would be more than happy to discuss and explain any aspect if someone showed an interest and willingness to learn. It was a privilege for anyone to witness the two brothers in action on the footplate as it was both educational and entertaining *[very much so, time with the Renehans on a footplate, in a pub or on the cushions in a train was the type of quality time that just left you feeling better about everything – Ed]*. Without giving it a second thought or making it obvious Tony would, by the sheer handling of the locomotive or a



Tony Renehan (left) with his brother Dan and some of the next generation to whom they so successfully passed their knowledge and the future of steam. (l-r) Gerry Mooney, Lar Griffin, Keith Farrelly and Connie O'Gara. This trip to Maynooth on 18th March was Tony's last trip on an RPSI train. (Photo: B Solomon)

situation, be imparting his knowledge and technique of how to control and get the best from a locomotive no matter what form she would be in. On the other hand, it could be entertaining when the fireman would be met with a difference of opinion from the two brothers on whether or not the locomotive was to be fired. "Put a bit on" would be met with "plenty in there, I'll be shutting off" which would then be responded with "will you mind your own side, she needs a bit". This would go on and on and it was noted on one occasion for the fireman to put the shovel down and say "when you pair make up your mind will you let me know". Like all disagreements it would be finished by a comment usually by Dan accusing his brother of "driving like an aul wan"...

Tony's railway knowledge was outstanding and never ceased to amaze, not just the Irish scene but of the UK and Europe. Tony would immediately want to know if there

was mention of a 'steam man' from another country on the train. Before long the two would inevitably end up in deep conversation with Tony having a better route knowledge of lines from the area under discussion and this would include closed lines!

Tony not only had a deep knowledge of locomotives and railways but had an equal knowledge of Politics, Economics, History and was a dedicated follower of Italian opera. For all the people over the years who had the honour of sharing a footplate with Tony and learning from his endless knowledge I would like to say "thank you". The Renehan brothers have made sure knowledge of steam locomotives has been passed to the next generation to keep steam alive. We will miss the constant eye on the water gauge glass and "how's she for water" in the tank. Not to mention "will you pass me down the green bag... no, not that one, the other one".

