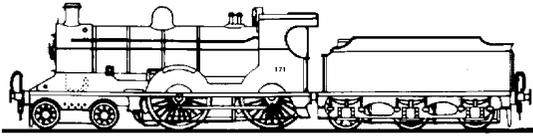


# Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



September 2005

## NEWS LETTER

### HARVEY ON THE BALLAST

**The Rumour:** There has been a rumour circulating since the spring-time regarding the Society getting involved in laying the ballast on the new track on the Larne line. It can now be confirmed that this is actually happening, a contract with the contractors, AMEC SPIE Rail, being only recently signed. The work involving the Society started in early August, having an expected duration into October.

**The Move:** The locomotive was transferred from Whitehead to Greenisland by road on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August to take up ballast duties on behalf of the contractors relaying the Larne line for NIR. It appeared in its new smart green livery, although the lining was not 100% completed.

Around 5:30pm the ramp had been constructed and "R.H. Smyth" was ready to be unloaded at the temporary siding on the site of the old 'back line'. There was the usual small team from the Society under the direction of Peter Scott, several spectators outside the fence waiting for photographs and a fairly large group of spectators from the contractors, who were all trying to look busy while they watched the proceedings!

**The Train:** On the Friday night / Saturday morning an NIR locomotive moved the six NIR ballast hoppers and they were stabled on the new Down line at Greenisland. All six were fully loaded when received. Later in the day, the loco was steamed and brake tests were carried out on the wagons, which were split into two rakes of three. One wagon was shunted to the other end of its rake so that an operator platform was always at the opposite end of the train

from the locomotive. Emergency brake valves were fitted by the RPSI to these platforms as trains are required to be propelled over significant distances.

**The Facilities:** The former 'back line' at Greenisland has been temporarily reinstated as a loading siding. Messrs Amec have constructed a coal bunker - using old concrete bridge sections - and provided a storage container for RPSI use. Coaling is carried out by the stone loading excavator.

Ballast loading takes place with the wagons positioned both in the siding and on the Down line.

**The Job:** By the early afternoon of 6<sup>th</sup> August the first ballast was discharged through Greenisland Down platform and over the siding turnout, and by teatime the empty wagons were stabled on the siding and the Down main line beside the ballast pile.

To date No.3 has proven itself capable of hauling the required loads and up to 900 tonnes of stone have been laid per day on the Up and Down roads from Bleach Green to Greenisland. Despite being only half the weight of a loaded wagon it is proving to have colossal tractive power. Pulling the three loaded wagons up the hills around Greenisland is no mean feat!

Over the first 2 weeks, the locomotive and wagons worked loaded from Greenisland to Bleach Green, discharging taking place on the return before working empty back to Greenisland. Only minor problems have been encountered - the locomotive was overhauled prior to starting work (part funded by Amec) and bearing problems which dogged the previous contract are hopefully a thing of the past.

At the time of writing, the first drop of top

ballast has been completed from Bleach Green to the Carrickfergus station area. It is planned to have at least one line opened for service as far as Carrickfergus in advance of project completion.

**The Publicity:** Both the Belfast Telegraph and Rail magazine gave substantial coverage to the Society's part in the relaying project.

**The Evidence:** Some photographs of Harvey with the NIR ballast hoppers can be viewed in the RPSI pages on the Irish Railway News website - see from page 53 onwards.

### OPERATIONS

**Steam & Jazz:** On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June, due to an unfortunate delay, No.186 was not available in time to work its train from Lisburn to the official departure point at Belfast Central. However, thanks to the efficiency of NIR Control and the platform staff at Central, all passengers were despatched on the 19:28 to Portadown service train, arriving at Lisburn at 20:00. There, the band started playing and the rest of the evening went according to plan, no passengers suffering any ill effects from the unexpected diesel trip!

The organisers are indebted to NIR for the excellent help rendered.

The second train of the season operated successfully on 24<sup>th</sup> June. An excellent crowd made full use of the tables for food and drink and, at the station stops, also took every opportunity to try a bit of fancy footwork as the band performed. Despite a threatening day, the evening weather was very fine and helped the atmosphere considerably.

On board, Dr Joan Smyth CBE was celebrating her retirement as chairman of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company in style by hosting a party. Dr Smyth is standing down after serving for six years as chairman of the Holding Company, which is the parent company of Northern Ireland Railways, Ulsterbus and Citybus.

Society Chairman Johnny Glendinning and his wife Mary made a surprise presentation to Dr Smyth as a token of the Society's appreciation to her for all her assistance and support over the past six years. The presentation was of a framed photograph

of Dr Smyth taken by RPSI photographer Charles Friel during a visit she made to Whitehead on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2002. The photograph showed Dr Smyth alongside former NIR chief locomotive officer Frank Dunlop on the footplate of the RPSI's class WT 2-6-4T steam engine No.4, which was being launched after a successful 10-year overhaul at the RPSI's headquarters in Whitehead.

Dr Smyth, who responded to the presentation by expressing thanks and paying a warm tribute to the work of the RPSI, was also presented with a bouquet of flowers.

The third train was considerably livened by a party who were obvious jazz enthusiasts, not only wearing authentic jazz gear but carrying out some nifty dance steps. As well as dancing among themselves they made sure that as many onlookers as possible joined them.

Once again, what had been a day threatening bad weather turned into a very fine clear warm evening and everyone enjoyed it immensely.

As always No.186 and her crew performed perfectly.

**Charter - 1:** The Permanent Way Institute chartered No.4 to head their special train to Galway on 21<sup>st</sup> June. The loco operated light from Inchicore to Athlone the previous evening. Upon arrival in Athlone it waited for the following 17:15 service to arrive which was providing the stock for the following day's operation. Upon arrival, the 071 returned to Dublin and No.4 came down onto the stock ready for departure the following morning.

On Tuesday the train (5 Cravens plus a BR van) set off on time at 09:25 with about 140 delegates on board. The weather was overcast with occasional drizzle but this lifted as the day went on. No.4 brightened the morning up with a storming run up Woodlawn bank with Tony Renehan on the regulator. The 11:00 from Galway was crossed at Athenry before a booked arrival into Galway.

After the passengers departed for a sight-seeing tour of Galway, the train propelled out into the loop, ran round and the loco was coaled in the still existing but non-operational freight yard.

Departure from Galway was on time at 15:20. A stop in Athenry was omitted and

not wanting to be outdone by his older brother another fine run up Woodlawn was provided by Dan Renehan. The afternoon passenger from Dublin was crossed in Ballinasloe before arrival in Athlone. The run back to Dublin was a very drawn out affair with numerous crossings in Clara, Tullamore and Geashill. After Portarlinton it was a case of following the delayed 19:25 from Portlaoise before a booked arrival in Heuston at 20.55 some 5.5 hours after departure from Galway.

**Mid-Summer Steam:** On 2<sup>nd</sup> July No.4 ran to Mullingar with the barbecue train in a steady drizzle. Despite that, as per previous years, the train was totally booked out.

This was the first time the Dublin set had been back in one piece since the multitude of operations with different combinations of stock since the "Sea Breeze" to Rosslare on 30<sup>th</sup> April. The train had every available item of stock in the train (9 coaches) as the consist also had the former State coach 351 with 15 passengers which was chartered by RPSI Council member Gerry Mooney who had organised a surprise retirement party on board for his mother.

Departure from Connolly station was delayed due to an insufficient brake but this was rectified before a somewhat late departure at 17:30.

Running to Enfield was bright until a delay for the Down evening Sligo to overtake before onward progress to Mullingar. As the train arrived in Mullingar the skies darkened and before long what could only be described as a deluge came down from the skies. However this did not dampen the spirits of those on the train.

Departure from Mullingar (bunker first) followed after passengers enjoyed the Jazz band in the marquee which had to be erected in the car park of the station as the roof on the Up Galway platform is giving some concern.

A sprightly run home saw the train back before 23:30 and in time for the last Dart and Bus services from the City Centre.

**Charter - 2:** Not all of our operations involve passengers as was demonstrated on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July when No.4 was transformed to represent the Hogwarts Express to promote the launch of the new Harry Potter book.

The locomotive was in steam in Dublin's

Connolly station and hauled from the yard to Platform 1 by a small GM for the photo-shoot. The shoot took about an hour or so and involved two children dressed up in Hogwarts uniforms and one of the Society's Dublin loco representatives, Gerry Mooney, in standard footplate attire. The pictures from the shoot were used by the Tesco chain to promote the book which went on sale on 15<sup>th</sup> July.

This was a worthwhile venture for the Society not only in terms of media coverage, but also a healthy contribution on the financial side to the year's operations.

**The Midlander:** No.4 performed well again on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> July, taking six Cravens and a Dutch van from Dublin to Mullingar and on to Longford. The main train was packed to capacity and the Dublin - Mullingar leg was about a quarter full.

The reason for the Cravens was a shunting derailment involving our set in Connolly the previous night. The set was re-railed and sent back to Inchicore for inspection, while IÉ provided the set of the Down evening Sligo extra, which came up from Longford in time to be cleaned and watered for a 20 minute late departure. This loan was on condition that we arrived back in Dublin by 16.00 in order to allow the train to go light to Waterford for a Sunday hurling special. This was achieved.

Congratulations to the catering staff who put on a great show despite the lack of a beer cooler, or hot water for teas.

RTÉ's "Morning Ireland" radio programme on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July featured the trip - David Humphries and David Carse were interviewed, as was Norman Foster and some of the passengers.

**Summer Train Rides:** The Sunday trains were a mixed bag, depending entirely on having the advertising boards out. On the days when nobody was available to place the boards at the main road, patronage suffered. For years now, the Operations Committee has attempted to get a 'manager' for these events but without much success. However, they are still deemed worthwhile for crews to gain experience.

**Portrush Flyer:** With only two trains this year, the demand for seats was high and resulted in both trains being sold out at an early stage.

No.186 is not a locomotive normally associated with the "Portrush Flyer", but on 30<sup>th</sup> July the locomotive performed very well with her first such train in many years.

On 6<sup>th</sup> August another successful performance was accomplished, showing that No.186 can compete with her sisters, at least on the current 5-coach train. This train was already fully booked by the time the 30<sup>th</sup> July train operated.

In recent years ticket sales for the afternoon 'extension' to Ballymoney have been lacklustre. However, this year the Society worked with Coleraine Borough Council and Coleraine Town Centre Partnership to promote the "Dalriada". This, together with a sterling effort by David Thompson in ensuring that posters were put up in so many, public places, caravan parks and railway stations, meant that passenger numbers on these trains were much improved. This is a great result and transforms the annual Flyer service from a mediocre train to a useful, profitable train.

**Charter - 3:** There were two reasons why only two Portrush trains ran this year. Firstly, the railway line was closed north of Ballymena for maintenance on the weekend that we would normally have chosen to operate our third train.

Secondly, we had the pleasure of hiring our train for a private charter on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August, taking passengers from Yorkgate station to Cultra as part of a VE day celebration - in some ways re-enacting the steam hauled trains of wartime, taking children and adults alike out of the city. Many gas mask boxes and sailor suits were in evidence!

**Tullamore:** The trip on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August with No.4 and 5 Cravens ran to time. In total, about 600 passengers were carried from Dublin and on the two return trips to Athlone.

There seemed to be a crossing at every station in what is an increasingly busy line - two crossings at Geashill and one at Clonnydonninn. Water was taken at Tullamore thanks to Offaly Fire Brigade and at Portarlinton.

**Bangor Belle:** While working the train on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August, No.186 suffered a derailment while entering Platform 3 at Lisburn with the return leg of the second trip of the day.

GM 151 (on loan to NIR) was summoned

from York Road and approached the rear of the train and removed the four coaches from the Down main line, leaving No.186 and coach 460 in the loop. GM and coaches returned to York Road.

NIR staff then carried out the re-railing after which the locomotive, under its own steam, stabled itself and 460 in Lisburn yard.

On Sunday, GM 151 returned the 4 coaches to Lisburn from overnight storage at York Road.

As an investigation is under way the Society can not comment further other than to say that it was unfortunate to suffer two derailments in one season.

**Charter - 4:** The evening of Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> September was the start of a busy weekend for the Dublin team. No.4 hauled a train to Mullingar in the path of the barbecue train on a charter for the International Police Association, who were holding their conference in Dublin. All went well, with the Army serving food in the apex between the Galway and the Sligo line platforms.

As it wasn't an enthusiasts' trip it was decided not to spend 45 minutes of crew break time turning the engine so the return run was bunk leading.

**Boyne Bridge 150:** On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September No.4 took 8 Cravens and a Dutch van to Drogheda where three return trips were run to Dundalk in connection with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Boyne viaduct.

The first trip carried VIPs which included Dr. John Lynch (chairman of CIÉ), Dermot Ahern (Minister for Foreign Affairs - and TD for Louth) and Mal Creevey (Manager Rail, Translink).

**European Architectural Heritage Day:** The annual open day ran on 11<sup>th</sup> September in conjunction with the Europe-wide event.

**Causeway Express:** The second Causeway train of the season operates on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September, picking up at Lisburn (10:25), Belfast Central (11:00) and Ballymena (12:00).

**Halloween Special:** The traditional Halloween trains are this year also operating from Dublin to Maynooth at 10:10, 13:10 and 15:40 on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October.

**Broomstick Belle:** Operating on 30<sup>th</sup> October, provisional times are: Train 1:

Lisburn 10:15 & Belfast 11:30; Train 2: Lisburn 14:25 & Belfast 14:55. The usual prizes will be awarded for best costumes.

**Christmas:** Trains will be operating from Coleraine (26<sup>th</sup> November), Dublin (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> December) and Belfast (4<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> December).

**Training:** On Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June, Irwin Pryce held an instruction day on steam raising and firing on the Guinness loco at Whitehead.

This has been part of a recent (and very gratifying) rush of recruits to the operating grades.

Six members have passed the written and practical tests for fireman, and it is hoped to have another three men passed out soon.

It is pleasing to see new blood coming through and the standard of knowledge and skill is most impressive.

**Steam Facilities - South:** The turntable at Kent Station Cork was removed on 22<sup>nd</sup> August and low-loaded to North Esk yard, also in Cork.

There have been rumours that a move to North Esk was on the cards, and now that the container depot there has just closed this may be possible. However, at this stage, it remains to be seen whether or not the turntable will be installed again.

The area where the turntable was situated is supposedly required for an overnight servicing area for the new CAF Dublin - Cork coaches.

**Steam Facilities - North:** NIR has reviewed all the steam infrastructure facilities in their territory and are in discussion with the Society as how best to maintain them for the future.

## WHITEHEAD

**Storage:** The NIR 08 tamper has been made available to AMEC for the Larne line relay work. The Society stored the machine for a number of weeks at Whitehead, and it was moved there on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June. It is one of the longest items ever delivered to the depot, and only just gained access to the yard (between the loco shed and the "stables" building) for unloading.

Ground conditions were very soft in the proposed movement area and to prevent any problems 15 tonnes of mud were

removed and replaced with hardcore by the Site squad.

The vehicle left the site on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August to take up duties on the newly laid track.

**Track:** In early September the Site Team were engaged in replacing life-expired sleepers.

**Request For Help:** The Workshop Management Committee is seeking 100 square feet of FREE covered accommodation for a number of workshop machines which are not being used at present.

Does any member have this amount of spare space, convenient to Whitehead if possible, which could be used by the Society?

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.3 "R.H. Smyth":** On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July, the locomotive moved under its own steam after overhaul. It performed in a satisfactory manner and four coaches plus the Guinness engine were moved up and down as an exercise.

**No.461:** Following completion of the overhaul of No.3, work has resumed on the boiler repairs. The outer firebox door plate has been flanged and is now being adjusted to fit the foundation ring.

**Hunslets:** The website has been updated with details of the Society's latest acquisitions. See:

[www.rpsi-online.org/rpsilocos.htm](http://www.rpsi-online.org/rpsilocos.htm)

**Contracts:** The Downpatrick & County Down Railway have reported that Irish Rail have agreed to the loan of No.90, their last operable steam locomotive, to the DCDR. The locomotive will probably come to Whitehead for refurbishment in the near future.

The DCDR has also committed to ex-CSÉT No.1 (sister of their operating No.3) coming to Whitehead for restoration as well, somewhat later.

## No.461 APPEAL

**The Last Call:** It has been decided to close the No.461 Appeal Fund after a last call to those members who have not yet donated but would possibly consider doing so.

Please send your donation as soon as possible so that the Appeal can be closed and the final totals calculated.

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**547:** A set of B4 bogies is being overhauled for the Dining Car.

**238 & 241:** Recently shipped to the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Railway, both are awaiting bogies from the East Lancs Railway. The intention is to run the two as a pair with a suitable brake vehicle.

**463:** Work on the Mk2 brake coach, which is still at Heysham, is proceeding well. Brakes, side-bearers and buffers have been overhauled: The seats have been re-covered and a lot of glass replaced. Door locks, doors and the floor have been repaired, and for a change the former owners did a lot of corrosion repairs to the vehicle. Also surprising is that there is still life in the batteries after several years out of use.

Work in hand includes installation of the generator and associated equipment, plus internal re-panelling of the compartments and corridor.

**Grant Aid:** At the time of writing a decision was expected towards the end of September on the grant application to complete the overhaul of the Mk2 set.

## GENERAL

**Trainspotting:** In recent weeks RTÉ 2 have been broadcasting a programme called "Trainspotting" (not to be confused with that of the same name on Discovery Channel) - at 8:30 on Wednesday nights. It appears to be based on old programs made about the Irish railways in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. Items so far have included: cab views on loco hauled Rosslare trains in pre DART era, AEC push-pull stock on suburban Dublin workings in the 1970s, shots of Carlow and Thurles stations with semaphore signals in the 1970s, the closed Albert Quay yard in Cork, some shots on the closed Harcourt street line in the-1970s and many more archive shots throughout the programme at Wexford and Waterford and other places.

**Hi-Vis:** It has been commented on in the past on the annual May railtour, though it was somewhat better this year but not

perfect, on the proliferation of orange high visibility vests, especially where they are not needed. This was also noted no later than the "Steam & Jazz" train.

Members should note that it is Society, and indeed railway company, policy that the only people who should be wearing these vests are those who: (a) hold a valid PTS card; (b) are rostered staff; and (c) are actually working on the track.

No-one - not even railway company staff - needs HV gear when on a platform. There still seems to be an idea abroad that it is a status symbol.

A reminder to our members:

1. No-one wears HV gear unless they have PTS training.
2. No-one goes on the track unless they have PTS training.
3. Members of staff to refrain from wearing HV vests unless PTS trained and are actually working on the track.

**DCDR:** The Downpatrick & County Down Railway reports that quite a few RPSI members have turned up to avail of this summer's free travel for members on the railway. All has gone well, apart from one Saturday early in the season when a batch of bad coal caused many of that day's trains to run late]

Thanks to the DCDR for their generous offer.

**Willie Graham:** The ex-NIR driver, Willie Graham, who had driven and fired for the Society from its earliest days until his early retirement some years ago, died on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August after a long battle with cancer.

Willie was one of the last generation of steam men to join the railway and was a familiar face on the footplate of the stone trains and passenger workings up to the end of steam. His infectious enthusiasm for the job and irrepressible good humour enlivened many a day for Society footplate crew.

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