

Annual Report of the Officers of the Irish Railway Record Society CLG for the year ended 31 August 2021

Hon. Treasurer's Report

The annual accounts show a surplus of €14,351 for the year ending 31st August 2021. This is up by some €2,800 on the previous year's accounts despite the effects of the covid pandemic which started in March 2020 and ran throughout this financial year.

Income was down by €14,520 with Subscriptions marginally increased at €49, 361. There was no income from Railtours, Donations, or the Transport Collectors Market Due to covid this year.

Expenditure was reduced by €17,453 on the previous year with reductions on Meetings, Maintenance, Library and Secretarial expenses. Profit on the exchange rate was up by €504 to €1,153. May I express my thanks to the Treasurer in London for his assistance during the year.

Alan Hyland, Hon Treasurer

Hon. Membership Secretary's Report

Membership Report.

	<u>2020/21</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Dublin	250	248
Ireland	429	365
Britain	359	347
Overseas	35	38
TOTAL	1,083	1,058

Alan Hyland, Hon Treasurer

Hon. Secretary's Report

A former Board member and long-time member, I was co-opted to the Board in May 2021 in order to replace Pat Mangan. It was a busy and interesting year with many challenges. An exhaustive report on activities and correspondence would be too long for this Report and so I will focus on the main challenges which were the status of the premises in Heuston and the continued production of the Journal, followed by some thank-yous and recent events after the year-end.

The premises dates from 1884 and, although it has been well cared-for and upgraded by members since we were granted a licence to occupy it in 1983, it is beginning to show its age. It is also quite swollen with books and archive material to the extent that IE had insisted on some redistribution of weight. Iarnród Éireann has been very helpful, assisting us with a late-pandemic re-commissioning and clearance of the premises towards the end of 2021. Thankfully, as a result, we were in a position to hold the 2020 and 2021 AGMs in November 2021. A special thanks to Joy Murray, John Boyle, Conor Gorman, Alan Judge and Anthony McMenemy of Iarnród Éireann for their kind assistance. A special thanks also to our member Eamonn Greville for valuable advice in relation to the proposed Heuston Masterplan and its possible impact for the IRRS. I'd also like to thank Tim Moriarty for arranging a team to deep clean and sanitise the main areas within the building.

The Journal (covered elsewhere in this Report by Tim) was ably edited by our colleague Gerald Beesley. Regrettably, Gerald was forced to resign from this demanding role, due to ill health. This was a big loss and the assembly of the resources to continue to deliver the Journal has been a considerable challenge. Fortunately, Tim Moriarty, our Hon Librarian also assumed the role of Hon. Editor in an acting capacity. To assist Tim, I assumed the role of Managing Editor, dealing with production and design management aspects. The production team has worked hard to bring members Journal 207, February 2022. I would like to thank every one of them for their time and dedication - all of it voluntary. We hope members enjoy this Journal and we look forward to constructive feedback. We have discussed the idea of providing members with the option of digital Journals, in high-resolution

pdf format, as an alternative to the printed version. The printed Journal will be with us for many years to come however the idea of a digital version delivered by e-mail and watermarked for the recipient is worthy of discussion at the very least. It is something the Board will examine during the course of 2022 as printing and postage costs have risen steeply.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues on the Board who have been incredibly supportive since I re-joined it in May. It has been a privilege and always enjoyable. The Board members all work very hard to keep the Society, which has a large and growing membership, going. I would like to pay a special thanks to Alan Hyland. Aside from looking after our finances as Hon. Treasurer and the membership system, Alan also looks after Journal print co-ordination and postage / packing. Until recently, he was also responsible for the premises in Heuston. This is a considerable amount of voluntary work and dedication and we are lucky to have it, akin to a full-time job. Without Alan, the Society could not function anywhere near as well as it does today.

I would like to mention the 'Meet the Board' Zoom webinar held in January 2022. It seems to have gone down well with members and was to provide them with an overview of the team which volunteers to keep the Society running. We hope it was useful, we did receive good feedback at the time with some useful ideas discussed. We thank all of our members for their support and for entrusting us with their subscriptions to deliver a quality voluntary service.

Mark Merrigan, Hon. Secretary

Hon. Archivist's Report

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it has not been possible to open the Archives to members of the wider public during the period under review. However, thanks are due to the members of the Archives team and in particular Dr Peter Rigney and Richard McLachlan which have enabled us to respond to postal and email enquiries during these difficult times, and this has been much appreciated by enquirers. Naturally, this has involved delays as the work has been undertaken during visits to check on the state of the collections and computer, heating and dehumidification systems in order to comply with the often onerous government regulations applying at times during the pandemic. The beginning of September will hopefully see a move towards more normality, with visitors allowed on a 'by appointment' basis, thus enabling the general public to visit in person as was possible before March 2020.

Rev. Norman E Gamble BA Mod PhD (TCD), Hon. Archivist

Hon. Programme Officer's Report

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, it was decided to move indoor meetings online, via Zoom, for the season. Dublin, London and the newly formed Manchester branch held such meetings, while the Cork branch remained closed for the period under review. A total of 19 meetings were held online between the three branches (via Zoom) between September 2020 and April 2021, seven before Christmas and twelve after, usually occupying three out of four Thursdays each month.

Highlights included:

“Railways of Iran” by Tim Morton

“Railways throughout Munster in the 60's & 70's” – film Show by Ciarán Cooney

“Great Northern Railway of Ireland”, by Charles Friel

There were no outings during the period, Sept 2020 – Aug 2021, due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. The Annual Dinner, normally held in November each year, was also cancelled as a result.

Shane Roberts, Hon. Programme Organiser

Meetings Report

The full list of Dublin events and attendances follows:

Date	Title	Presenter	Unique Viewers
22-Oct-20	From Cork to Mayo and the Suir Valley (film show)	Ciarán Cooney	116
26-Nov-20	Killarney & the Railway	Oliver Doyle	163
28-Jan-21	Railways of Iran	Tim Morton	184
25-Feb-21	With Lance King in Ireland – 1957-1963	Leslie McAllister	305
25-Mar-21	CIÉ Modern Traction on Irish Railways from the 1960's to 1970's (film show)	Ciarán Cooney	353
29-Apr-21	Bantry Branch (Drimoleague to Bantry Pier)	Oliver Doyle	245

Average “Unique Viewers” per Area were as follows:

Area	Unique Viewers per Event
Dublin	228
London	129
Manchester	91

Even these remarkably high figures do not tell the full story, as each area had one meeting capped at 101 attendees, before we paid for a “Large Meeting” licence.

For the 2021-21 season, each Society member on the e-mailing list attended between 3 and 4 meetings. While the Zoom meetings started as a necessary evil, they have been an astonishing success, and have allowed a far greater proportion of members to attend our events than ever before in the Society’s long history.

Michael J Walsh, IRRS Meetings

Library Report

The Library remained closed to members and visitors due to the Covid Pandemic during the period under review. Individual access was provided on an appointment only basis with suitable precautions in place.

Tim Moriarty, Hon. Librarian

Journal Report

The usual three issues of the Journal appeared under the Hon. Editorship of Gerald Beesley who has since had to retire from the position for health reasons.

Tim Moriarty, Hon. Editor (Acting)

Hon. Photographic Archivist’s Report

There are now four distinct strands the IRRS is using to harness the depth and quality of its photographic collection for the benefit of the membership and the Society as a whole; these being the archive photo-content of the Journal (already well established), the online Photo-archive (Flickr), the Society’s social-media pages, and now publications by way of its first photobook for many years (“Classic Irish Steam”) produced in autumn 2021.

A recent tally revealed that since 2010 over 500 photographs have been published in the Journal that were sourced, digitised and restored from the Society’s collection. Significantly, the October 2021 issue (206) contained more IRRS archive pictures than any previous Journal and I wish to thank our former Hon Editors Michael Walsh and Gerald Beesley for affording me the opportunity to showcase the photographs I compiled for each issue during the past 12-years.

Over 300-members are now availing of the IRRS’s online Photo-archive (Flickr), which features slides/negatives from 28 collections, some of which were previously never accessible. This has been the culmination of several years’ work in digitising and cataloguing. In 2020, 6,515 photos were made accessible to members and this was augmented in 2021 by a further 5,785. An additional 3,430 images will be uploaded in spring 2022, which will bring the total to over 15,300 photos available to browse. Some of this content has been showcased on the IRRS

Twitter and Facebook sites and which is garnering additional publicity and membership for the Society. During the past two years, I have also undertaken a complete reorganisation of the entire Print Collection consisting of several thousand photos to ensure its future conservation and compatibility for digitisation, the latter activity being at an advanced stage.

I wish to thank all members who purchased the “Classic Irish Steam” photobook, and to Alan Hyland in particular, who diligently processed and dispatched the orders. Much positive feedback and encouragement has been received and I am pleased to report that future publications are presently being compiled.

Aside from photographs, the archive ‘Film Shows’ presented via Zoom and available on the IRRS Youtube channel exemplify the work undertaken in digitising and editing the film collection, and members can expect more of this material to be made available in due course. The films already online have clocked up an impressive 249,000 views.

Donations remain buoyant with the last two years seeing significant acquisitions, including those from our late members Tom Dowling (Dublin) and Seán O’Brien (Cork), and I express gratitude to their respective families for this generosity. I also acknowledge individual members, who in recent years, have also generously donated their own collections to the Society, some of whom are now seeing their own photos available on the online Photo-archive. These contain rich research material, much to the delight and appreciation of the membership.

Ciarán Cooney, Hon. Photographic Archivist

Cork Area Report

There were no meetings of the Cork area due to Covid restrictions.

Ken Fox, IRRS Board Member

London Area Report

While the London Area aims to promote the Society in South-East England, and provide a forum in London for those with an interest in Irish transport, particularly railways, engagement with members has been almost entirely online during the year due to Covid.

We organised 7 online meetings during the year, which were accessible to all Society members and friends. While each Area has its own distinctive style in presenting its meetings, meetings held online are essentially “Society” meetings without the strong local identity associated with meeting face-to-face in a local venue – apart from the fact that they are organised by individual Area or Branch Committees.

For the record, our seven speakers were :

Oct 2020 “From Portrush to Tramore & back by a Devious Route” by Roger Joanes
Nov 2020 “Cork – Limerick Junction 30 Years ago” by Ken Fox
Dec 2020 “With Lance King in Ulster – Part 1 – Great Northern” by Leslie McAllister
+ London Area AGM
Jan 2021 “Irish Ambulance Trains of the Great War” by Charles Friel
Feb 2021 “Railways throughout Munster in the 60’s & 70’s” – a Film Show
by Ciarán Cooney
Mar 2021 “UTA/NIR Spoil Trains of 1966-70” by Joe Cassells
Apr 2021 “Locomotives of the Great Southern & Western Railway”
by Michael McMahan

Average attendance was 130 (compared with 40 at previous live-only meetings), peaking at 180 for Ciarán Cooney’s presentation.

Committee

The London Area Committee for 2020 was re-elected at the AGM to serve during 2021 : Tim Morton (Chair), George Porter (Secretary), John Hatton (Treasurer), Alan Bowers, Leslie McAllister, Richard McLachlan

Archive Digitisation

Richard McLachlan has continued to spearhead the digitisation of the IRRS archives at Heuston, with financial support from the London Area mainly in the form of digital equipment purchase.

Bequests and Gifts

The London Area is the current custodian of a number of bequeathed collections and gifts (mainly photographs and books) from present and former members and friends of the Area. The presence of the London Area and its activities has been a good way of maintaining close links between the Society and members living in southern England, and an outcome has been generosity to the Society in terms of bequests and gifts.

We offer books and other published material to the Parent Body in Dublin. In the case of slides and photos, our aim is to digitally record and reference these before sending them across the Irish Sea, although this can be a long process in the case of a large collection.

Tim Morton, Chair of London Area

Manchester Area Report

The successful inaugural meeting of the IRRS Manchester Branch was held on 6th February 2020. Dick Fearn (Hon President IRRS), Tim Morten (Chair, London Area IRRS), 25 IRRS members and 15 non-IRRS attended. Twenty non-attendees supported the venture.

I was privileged to be selected as Chair designate. There were also 6 volunteers for the Committee. We have become a great, effective, team.

Covid 19 restrictions from March 2020 added challenges. From 8th October 2020, we held seven meetings by Zoom. The wider IRRS 'family' from Manchester, London, the UK, Dublin, across Ireland, Spain, Canada, and New Zealand have participated. Encouragingly, numbers ranged from 25 to a superb 170. Zoom has created a more engaged IRRS community. Members who have attended few face-to-face meetings because of geography have enjoyed the Zoom meetings.

We have held hybrid meetings from October 2021, capturing the camaraderie of face-to-face with Zoom live streaming. Then in December, we enjoyed a Christmas fellowship with the Friends of Irlam Station at the wonderfully restored building, signal box, signalling collection, Peckett 0-4-0ST and wagons. The Covid Omicron variant resulted in Zoom only January and February meetings, restarting the hybrid format from March.

The Branch received a donation of books from the late Andrew Wilson, who sadly died in July 2020. This wonderful legacy will be enjoyed for years to come. Book sales have provided some useful additional income.

Finally, we have issued 3 Newsletters, whilst donations and book sales have given us a small reserve. I am very grateful for the superb efforts, encouragement, and support, of my Branch Committee, the IRRS Board, our Hon. President, the London Branch and others since February 2020. The Manchester Branch can look forward to the future with confidence.

Roy G Chapman (Chair – IRRS Manchester Area)