

IRRS Annual Report

1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022

Hon. Chairman's Report

During the year under review the Society has moved into the digital age.

Journal

The journal is available in digital format. Produced to the usual high by the journal team.

Programme

A successful programme of lectures was offered to the membership. All branches of the Society are thanked for their work throughout the year.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of myself and the Board to thank the membership for their loyalty and support throughout the past year.

Tony O'Shaughnessy (Hon. Chairman)

Finance Report

Alan Hyland was Hon. Treasurer until 31 December 2022. Tom Buckley has taken over as Head of Finance from that time. See annual accounts to year-ended 31 August 2022 available separately on www.irrs.ie.

Hon. Secretary Report

The year has been an interesting one with a lot of necessary change. The Society's Board met with the Chief Executive and senior management team of Iarnrod Eireann in November. This had led to a closer working relationship, highlighted by our Hon. President, Dick Fearn, in Society News of Journal 210. The other major development was the agreement signed with

Ancestry.com for the digitisation material in the Society's archive. This is also covered in Society News.

Willo Roe and Tom Buckley have joined the management of the Society as Head of Membership Services and Head of Finance respectively. We look forward to working with them both.

Journal design, printing and production was contracted to Printbureau.ie late in 2022 to provide a single sustainable solution to the Society for these operations.

Mark Merrigan

Hon. Archivist's Report

There have been a number of important developments in regard to the Society's Archives in the year under review.

The Board has contracted Ancestry.com to digitise the genealogical records in our possession, and this work was undertaken in the spring of 2023. This work will enable many researchers to access the records from abroad through the Ancestry.com website while at the same time enabling free personal access to the documents which all remain in our possession.

Ancestry.com will point out to its users that a personal visit to the archives will enable researchers to place the records in the wider context of daily life on the railways. The digitisation process will also mean that a back up copy of this vast and invaluable collection will be available in case of the unthinkable happening such as fire or other destruction. The work was undertaken following consultation with IE who are the actual owners of many of these records.

We also welcome the appointment of the first CIE Group Archivist. The person appointed has an excellent record in the field and part of his brief is to work with us and support the work we have been doing for over half a century. We congratulate the Board of CIE in bringing this long overdue position to reality, and members should remember that the care of the railway archives will only be a part of the Archivist's responsibilities.

We have also made an agreement with the National Library Family History Service who receive many genealogical enquiries that enquiries will be forwarded to us as a partner organisation. They have visited the Archives and like so many other visitors, were amazed at the extent and depth of the collection.

All these developments are public recognition that we have an invaluable role, and will also open us up to new sources of aid and assistance. It is a tribute to the work done since Joe Leckey began the Archives development began at Drumcondra in the early 1970s and have grown in. to a collection unrivalled by that of other railway societies in these islands. We owe a

great deal to Joe, and his successor, the late Brendan Pender, not just for the size of the collection, but for our reputation as its custodians.

Since reopening after Covid, the Librray has been open on Tuesday afternoons by appointment, and is also open when the Library is open. We have also undertaken a steady flow of enquiries by post and by email. I thank those who give support as members of the Archives team, Herbert Richards, Gerry Beesley, Richard MacLachlan, Siobhan Osgood and John Martin, and Mark Merrigan who passes many of the enquiries on to the Archices team for response. New members with an interest in the collection will be warmly welcomed!

We also welcome members who might like to do research usin g the collection. The Hon Archivist has in recent years published some articles based on files in the collection and would encourage any member to do likewise.

(Rev Dr) Norman E Gamble BA, PhD, H.Dip.Ed

Hon. Programme Organiser's Report

Following the success of online meetings during the Coronavirus pandemic, indoor meetings continued to be available online, via Zoom, for the season. Dublin, London and the Manchester branch held such meetings, while the Cork branch remained closed for the period under review. A total of 21 meetings were held online between the three branches between September 2021 and April 2022, nine before Christmas and twelve after, usually occupying three out of four Thursdays each month.

There was one outing during the period (Sept 2021 – Aug 2022); a round trip by service train from Dublin Heuston to Limerick Junction and Waterford, returning via Kilkenny on 16 th July. A total of 31 members and guests travelled.

The Annual Dinner, normally held in November each year, was once again cancelled in 2021 as a result of the pandemic.

Shane Roberts

Hon Librarian's Report

The library opened on the 8th of March 2022 for the first time since the pandemic closure. We held 22 library nights up to the end of July with revised opening hours from 18.30 to 21.00 hours each evening. Attendances were disappointing. The average attendance was 10 members and some evenings this dropped to single figures. The usual library services were provided.

Tim Moriarty

Hon. Editor's Report

The usual three issues of the Journal were produced including two under the current editorship. Each issue contained the usual features and railway news plus a variety of special articles.

Tim Moriarty

Hon. Photographic Archivist's Report

The following collections, which comprised over 3,900 digitised and processed photos, were made available via the IRRS online photo-archive during the latter half of 2022; Michael Costello, Norman Gamble, David LG Hunter, Seán O'Brien, Brian Green, James Fraser, John Davis, Tony Price, Make Jose and Alan Sprod. These were augmented with the remaining slides covering signalling subjects by James R Currie, giving a total of over 19,000 images which can now be accessed by members. Four further collections are being processed for uploading in spring 2023, covering the late 1950s and 60s period. I politely request members to exercise patience during this process and to refrain please from querying material not yet available online. I wish to acknowledge thanks to my colleagues, both in Dublin and London, who have kindly arranged further donations to the Society during the period under review.

Ciaran Cooney

London Area

The London Area offered a full programme of 7 speaker meetings, delivered online due to Covid risks. Our audiences included many who would not have been able to attend live meetings for geography and other reasons.

The Area has referenced and digitised some significant collections of Irish railway material, gifted or bequeathed to us by members living in GB, usually with a previous association with the Area.

We continue to support and fund Richard McLachlan's work in digitising drawings and other documents already in the archives, with the aim of preserving these in

digital form and making them digitally accessible.

Tim Morton (Chair – London Area)

Manchester Area

As 2022 comes to a close, and the Manchester Area Branch approaches its 3rd anniversary in February 2023, we can review the year very positively. The IRRS Manchester Area Branch, has, I feel, had a superb year, with:

- An excellent hybrid programme of speakers – with more to look forward to in 2023.
- Continuing very worthwhile attendance figures in person and online (albeit slowly rising from low personal attendance).
- Wonderful outings – from trams to miniature railways.
- Newsletters – a unique part of our Branch offering. No. 5 has just been published.
- A unique and very worthwhile start of our own photographic and other archive.
- A good stock of donated books available for sale.
- Branch finances on a reasonable footing – more would be nice, but we are in the black!
- I must record my thanks to the Manchester Area Branch Committee for their combined efforts. They work together as a great team.

Roy G Chapman, Chairman, IRRS Manchester Area Branch

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