

IRRS Annual Report

1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024

Hon Treasurer Report

The financial records have been reviewed by an external accountancy firm which prepared the annual accounts.

During the 2023/2024 membership year there was a deficit of €3,190 down from the previous year's surplus of €7,936. There are a number of factors leading to this, the main one being the payment of the first instalment for the development of a new society website – referenced elsewhere in the honorary secretary's report.

Also on the expenditure side, inflation has had an impact with an increase in heating costs for the premises in Heuston although we carried over an amount of oil into the new financial year. Premises costs also increased due to a continuing cleaning programme. A deep clean was overdue. Insurance costs also increased.

Membership subscriptions were down on the previous year and subscription rates may need to be addressed again. Book sales showed a healthy increase.

The sterling account in Belfast continues to work well and has reduced the amount of cheques being handled. I would request that, where possible, subscriptions be paid electronically.

Tom Buckley
Hon. Treasurer

Hon. Secretary Report

The Society continued to strengthen its membership base and the depth of experience of its Board during the year. Expert volunteers have emerged to strengthen our resources, especially on the premises, website and archives during the year and we are grateful for their kind assistance. There was ongoing contact with the railway companies on the island of Ireland especially with regard to Journal distribution, sharing of news items and the many positive projects now ongoing on the rail network. We enjoy a close relationship with Irish Rail up to Board and Executive levels.

We have also built a strong relationship with Translink, TransDev and Transport Infrastructure Ireland during the year. Our tenure in Heuston remains secure and we plan to engage in greater maintenance of the premises, something which had been on hold due to uncertainty relating to redevelopment. The Journal, our flagship production, has been evolving as our changing membership base alternates towards the future of railways as well as celebrating their past. The Society's website and its overall digital offering is with a project team and contractor for a complete rebuild which is likely to have an impact on much of our operations in the coming years. We thank all of our existing and new members for their support and for bearing with us as we make all of these changes and plan for a sustainable future for the Society.

Mark Merrigan
Hon. Secretary

Hon. Archivist's Report

The most important development in the year under review was the digitisation of the large amount of genealogical material in the archives by Ancestry.com. This has now become available on the Ancestry.com website. While this is a pay website, the material is available to members through the Archives. This was an enormous job, and we thank Rhona Murray of Ancestry.com and her team for undertaking a task which will give us far greater reach, and also ensure that our collection is duplicated in the event of any catastrophe!

The Archives continues to be open to members and the public, and also contains very large quantities of files, especially relating to the GS&WR, MGWR and GNR(I). Some of those files have already been used as the basis of Journal Articles, and I would encourage members to do their own research.

We currently open on Tuesday afternoons (by prior appointment with the Hon Archivist) and also on Tuesday evenings when the Library is open, and the Archives sees a steady stream of visitors researching a wide range of topics. I am assisted by Herbert Richards, Dr Peter Rigney, Dr Siobhan Osgood and John Martin, but would welcome offers of assistance, and will provide training to any volunteers who would like to join the team. Well handled, this has the potential of creating an income stream for the Society through donations and new members, as well as a new and wider awareness of our work in this regard.

It should be noted that while the Ancestry.com website contains a vast amount of genealogical details about former railway workers, we are in a unique position to inform about the political and employment circumstances in which railway staff worked through material in both our Archives and the Society's Library

The CIE Archivist, Kevin Forkan is a highly experienced professional in the field, both in Ireland and abroad, and we have been in touch with him, and when required he supports us. It should be noted that Board Minutes of the companies that came to comprise the GSR and CIE have to be legally retained in their possession, and Kevin is willing to grant access if feasible to genuine researchers. It should also be noted that he has responsibility for the records of all CIE constituent companies.

We continue to receive from private collections, and we have recently received the Irish railway material amassed by the late member Mr. G.M. Thomson of Winchester. He was especially interested in the Schull & Skibbereen Railway, including documents and photographs and we thank his family and Dick Fearn for collecting the material in England and transporting it to us in Dublin

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

Hon. Programme Officer's Report

The first railtour operated by the IRRS since 2017 was arranged to operate on Saturday 23rd September 2023. Named the "Token Exchange" the tour operated from Dublin Heuston to Waterford and across the South Tipperary Line to Limerick. After a break in Limerick the tour returned to Dublin via the Nenagh Branch. 100 bookings were received for the tour.

The Annual Dinner scheduled for 20th November 2023 at Wynns Hotel had to be deferred to 22nd January 2024 due to the civil unrest in Dublin a few days before the dinner was scheduled. The revised date had 69 bookings from members and industry professionals.

On the 16th March 2024, we organised an outing to Mallow to visit the LCCC and Listowel for the Lartigue Railway. 28 people booked out the outing with a varied selection from our Dublin and Cork branches.

Our highlight of the 2023-2024 outing program was the Time's Arrow railtour held over the 15th/16th May to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the 2600 in service. We chartered set 2601+2602, which IE had repainted into a near original version of the *ARROW* livery and brought the type back to the Dublin Commuter area visiting, Heuston, Adamstown, GCD, Dundalk, Howth, Maynooth & M3 Parkway. After overnighing at Heuston, day 2 of the tour saw a nonstop trip from Dublin to Cobh before returning to Cobh. 97 bookings were received for the tour and we also had invited guests from IE and vehicle manufacture Mitsui / JTREC (Tokyu Car Corporation) travel on the tour from Dublin to Dundalk and return.

A varied program of monthly meetings, held on zoom continued this year with presentations from a mix of industry professionals and enthusiasts including talks by Sean Cain on the railways of the Isle of Man, Stephen Campbell on the 41 ICR B2 vehicle order, Kieran Marshall on the

timetabling process, Irish Rail road freight by Joe Lawton, IE in the 1990's, Annual Film show by Ciaran Cooney, Harristown Station by John O'Brien.

We also facilitated an event, hosted by Engineers Ireland "Along the Way and Across the Water - a view on railway engineering and its future in Great Britain and on the Island of Ireland" by Andrew Skinner Chairman of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers Railway division.

All of the 2023-2024 meetings were held on Zoom with the exception of Harristown & Engineers Ireland talks were we trialled in person / zoom hybrid meetings.

With the success of the above trials, we have returned to in person / zoom hybrid meetings for the 2024-2025 season.

Neil Dinnen

Hon. Programme Officer

Hon Librarian's Report

The Library was open on 36 occasions for members and researchers from September 2023 to June 2024 and the usual research facilities were provided. Attendances were poor when compared with those pre-pandemic and on most occasions were in single figures. In total there were 288 attendances by members and we had 25 visitors during the season under review giving an average attendance of just 8 per night.

The books and shelves were cleaned in January 2024 and work was undertaken on reshelving our periodicals in July. A new dehumidifier was installed during the season.

The library facility continued to be available for those who wish to pursue their railway interest in an academic setting..

Tim Moriarty, BA, MLS, Hon. Librarian

Hon. Editor's Report

The three issues of the Journal appeared in the respective months during the season and contained the usual mix of historic articles and current Irish railway news illustrated with suitably chosen illustrations provided by the Hon. Photographic editor. Our Observations and Comments section reflected the depth of railway knowledge existing among our readers and we included notices of recent publications and sadly obituaries. The Journal now includes all

relevant information about Society events without the need for separate circulars or booking forms. In addition it was sent initially by PDF to members and followed by the hard copy. By arrangement with IR the journal was distributed by PDF to rail staff.

Tim Moriarty, Hon. Editor

Hon. Photographic Archivist's Report

During 2024, the Society's online photo-archive on Flickr was augmented by four further collections, enabling their access by our membership. Comprising approximately 1,500 digitised slides/negatives, these included photos from the collections of Mike Belshaw and the late Harold Fayle, the latter containing some of the earliest pictures of Irish Railways recorded on glass-plate negatives during the late 19th century.

Further collections are in preparation for online accessibility, notably high-quality slides from our late member Patrick Flanagan and the negatives of Graham Hoare, covering the 1950s-1960s period. During the year I was delighted to receive into the archive two wonderful additions; firstly that of the late Des Scannell, featuring scenes from Dublin during the early 1960s, and secondly, the slide/negatives of Michael Messenger, who kindly donated his collection of photos documenting his travels in Ireland over 60-years ago. Both collections will be made available in the next tranche of Flickr uploads. I wish to also express thanks to my colleagues in both Dublin and London, who have also assisted with donations throughout the year and which continue to save photos for future posterity.

To date, over 380 members have been facilitated with access to the online collection, many of whom are new members availing of this benefit to IRRS membership. The revenue generated from our subscriptions continues to fund the maintenance of the premium-paid Flickr site, and importantly the upkeep of the physical collections, all of which require investment in specialised photo-materials, such as acid-free negative sleeves, folders, slide storage boxes and slide-mounts. For those members who have yet to apply for access to the IRRS Flickr site, instructions are available on the Society's website.

Additionally in 2024, the photo-archive contributed to illustrative material marking the 40th Anniversary of the DART system by Iarnród Éireann, and a commemorative booklet by Translink marking the cessation of train services into Great Victoria St, Belfast.

For any members who missed this year's 'Annual Film Show', it is now available in three-parts on the IRRS Youtube Channel. Further digitised cine-films from the archive are also viewable on the Society's Facebook page.

Ciaran Cooney, Hon Photographic Archivist

Hon. Membership Secretary's Report

Membership Status at 31st Aug 2024

Category	Count
Dublin	198
Honorary	6
Northern Ireland	110
Overseas	37
Ireland outside Dublin	309
Great Britain	318
Total	978

We are continuing to improve and document the membership administration process. In July we introduced an online for people wishing to join the Society. This has made applying for membership more straightforward.

76 people joined the Society in the year up to the end of August.

Renewal notices continue to be issued in the Journal with all necessary information

Last year we harmonised membership rates so that everyone pays approximately the same amount allowing for currency fluctuations. No change in rates is proposed this year.

Willo Roe

Munster Area

The 2023 to 2024 Season kicked off with a show presented by Richard Lee themed Railscenes around Cork . Then we had an outing to Portlaoise visiting both Laois Train Care Depot and PW Dept Rail Depot on Sat September 30th. We then had our AGM in October followed by a members show where 5 members got a 15 min slot to present their offerings . Tony Cooke had his regular slot in November with more from the 1980s. December had a Christmas Social in the Wilton Pub. 2024 started with a show from Cork member Tom Ryan . The Annual Dinner in February was in the Metropole Hotel and our guest was Christy Maher from Irish Rail talking about future developments . Ciaran Cooney presented more from the Joe St Ledger Collection in March . In April Alex Duggan presented a show featuring his career as a working RPSI member to date . And finally London based member Gerry McMahon had a show More from the Kerry Road in May.

I would like to thank the committee and presenters for all their hard work and the following Irish Rail staff Jim O' Donovan, Paddy Doran, Sean Cain , Kieran Marshall and Neil Dinnen without whom our outing would not have taken place .

Ken Fox

London Area

The London Area provides a presence for the Society in London, as well as supporting the Parent Body in some of its archival work.

The Area delivered 7 monthly talks from Oct 2023– April 2024 covering a wide range of Irish railway topics, historic and contemporary. As the risks associated with Covid declined, the Area has reverted to delivering as many talks live as possible, as well as making them available to a wider audience via Zoom. Live audiences were usually 20-30, with an additional 70-80 people watching by Zoom. Our Zoom audience is truly international, mainly from the UK and Ireland but also from Canada, Spain, Australia etc..

We have been struggling a little with the IT for hybrid meetings, and both live and remote audiences have had to be patient on occasion. Nevertheless, we are working on the matter and hope that in due course, our meetings will be delivered simultaneously and smoothly to both audiences.

We have a new venue for live talks at The Alan Baxter Gallery at Farringdon, and 6 of our 7 meetings were held there. This is not only a very comfortable room but also extremely accessible following opening of the Elizabeth line. Do come along if you are in London on any of the dates of our live meetings, and enjoy some live socialising afterwards. Full details of all our meetings are on the London Area website : www.irrslondon.com

The Area continues its work in referencing and digitising 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. And 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

The IRRS Manchester Area Branch will be 4 years old on 6th February 2024. In those four years, the presence of the Manchester Area Branch and its activities has further expanded the reach of the IRRS and has been a good way of maintaining close links between the Society and members living in the north-west of England. The Branch has also developed and consolidated links with other railway societies in the region.

2022-23 can, mostly, be reviewed very positively. We have:

- Held a programme of 7 hybrid meetings, with excellent speakers.
- Had excellent visits.
- Published three Newsletters - a unique part of our Branch offering. These mostly comprise current news covering Irish railways of all gauges, the national network, Bord na Mona, heritage lines and railway modelling.
- Made further progress on our own photographic and document archive.
- Generated sales revenue thanks to a good stock of donated books.
- Maintained Branch finances on a reasonable footing, despite pressures on costs. We end the year with a small reserve.

However, there are some issues and challenges.

The biggest challenge with meetings post-Covid 19 is that attendance is much less than it was.. Generally, we have between 10 and 18 attending in person, with between 40 and 100 plus online. Given venue hire costs and other expenses, the Branch finances are under pressure. The sales from books, mostly donated, are vital. However, with small attendance numbers (and usually the same faces!) revenue is limited.

We receive positive emails concerning the Newsletter. Given the content, it compliments the IRRS Journal. The Newsletter is mainly compiled by Andrew Waldron, thanks to a wide circle of 'correspondents' and his own research. The quality of the Newsletter could be improved by enhanced use of publishing software etc., but I cannot ask more of Andrew.

The Manchester Area Branch is the custodian of a collection of photographs we have purchased, and some original documents donated to us. The plan is to eventually offer published material and photographs to the Parent Body in Dublin. In the case of slides and

photos, our aim is to digitally record and reference these before sharing them. Obviously, this can be a long process, but we will persevere.

The present Committee comprises: Ernie Godward (Secretary), Richard Ellis-Hobbs (IT and Website Officer), Danny Vaughan (Treasurer), Ted McAvoy (Committee Member) and Andrew Waldron (Programme Officer and Current News Editor). I must record my thanks to them for their combined efforts. They work together as a great team.

I am also very grateful for the superb encouragement, and support of the IRRS Board, our Hon. President, Tim Morton (Chairman of the London Branch) and others.

For more information on the IRRS Manchester Area Branch, see our website at:
[tps://irrsmanchester.wordpress.com/](https://irrsmanchester.wordpress.com/)

Roy G Chapman, Chairman, IRRS Manchester Area Branch
