

# ***Railway Preservation Society of Ireland***

## **REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Queen's University Teachers' Centre, Belfast, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1977**

R.Edwards, the Chairman, took the chair, and 40 members were present. Apologies were received from Lord O'Neill, L.McAllister and J.Harcourt.

The minutes of the 1976 AGM were read. S.Boomer proposed, and D.Grimshaw seconded, that they be accepted, and this was agreed. Matters arising were:

- L.McAllister - did stand, but no commercial officer was found.
- P van or brown van - a matter of negotiation between the Society and NIR.
- 85 - to be covered by the Secretary.
- Draw - the approach had been reconsidered in that money prizes were substituted for specific items.
- Ballast wagon - R.Edwards said that attempts were being made to purchase a wooden bodied wagon.

The Secretary read his report, and it was adopted on the proposal of T.Ragg, seconded by S.Carse.

The Treasurer's report was read and adopted on the proposal of D.Henderson, seconded by D.Mackie.

The Chairman said there were no contests for committee posts, and that no nomination had been received for the post of Commercial Officer. Thus, those members proposed for the posts were deemed elected. They were:

Chairman - Robert Edwards, 9 Sheridan Drive, Helen's Bay, Co. Down.

Secretary - Robin Morton, 2 Cranmore Park, Belfast 9.

Treasurer - John Richardson, 18 Downshire Gardens, Carrickfergus.

Loco Maintenance - Peter Scott, 17 Finaghy Park Central, Belfast 10.

Loco Running - John Friel, 48 Killicomaine Drive, Portadown.

Coach maintenance - Ken Pullin, 3/366 Ormeau Road, Belfast 7.

Coach running - John Glendinning, Otterglen, Markethill, Co. Armagh.

Site - Neil Hamilton, 27 Ruskin Park, Lisburn, Co. Antrim.

Commercial - vacant.

Publications - Tim Moriarty, 76 Jamestown Avenue, Inchicore, Dublin 8.

Publicity - William Coates, 4 Kirkliston Gardens, Belfast 5.

Dublin Agent - Sam Carse, 38 Oakley Road, Dublin 6.

London Agent - Leslie McAllister, 26 Regent Way, Frimley, Camberley Surrey.

Operations - Denis Grimshaw, 14 Craigdarraugh Park East, Holywood, Co. Down.

R.Edwards expressed gratitude to the members who had served on the committee in 1977 and said it was sad that no-one was willing to take on the Commercial Officer post.

D Grimshaw outlined the provisional 1978 railtour programme. It was:

April 22 - 171, Whitehead - Poyntzpass.

May 6 - 186, Mullingar- Galway.

June 10 & 11 - 171 & 186, Dublin - Limerick Junction - Waterford - Rosslare (overnight) - Waterford - Kilkenny - Dublin - Belfast.

July 22, August 5 & 19 - 4, Whitehead-Portrush.

August 12 - 186, Mullingar - Sligo.

September 2 - 4, Larne - Bangor.

September 23 - 4, Derry - Lisburn; 171, Lisburn - Dublin; 186, Mullingar - Bray.

W.Scott asked if clashes with English tours could be avoided. D.Grimshaw said L.McAllister had obtained a copy of the British programme and at this stage it looked as if there should be no significant clashes.

D.Grimshaw said the September 23 trip would give 3½ hours in Dublin. I.Slaughter suggested making it an overnight stay, but D.Grimshaw said the North West of Ireland Railway Society, who were marketing the Derry - Dublin portion, recommended a day trip.

D.Henderson suggested that the Society was asking too much of its engines. He suggested, in the light of the two-hour delay to the departure from Dublin of the Cu na Mara, that English participants should be asked to make their own way to the departure point. D.Grimshaw said that if the train had not waited for the 120 English enthusiasts on the Dun Laoghaire ferry that day, they would have missed the first day of the tour, only being able to catch up on the train at Athenry. English enthusiasts were able to benefit from cheaper fares with party booking. Next time L.McAllister was considering the use of the Liverpool - Dublin boat.

W.Scott suggested allowing CIÉ more time for shunting manoeuvres. D.Grimshaw said he allowed what he considered-to be ample time and felt that allowing more time would not necessarily speed things up. I.Pryce asked that more information should be made available to tour participants.

W.Scott and I.Pryce complained about the quality of the Boyne Valley tour brochure:

a) it had not been distributed until Drogheda.

b) it had contained diesel pictures.

c) the line description was a straight lift from "Irish Railways Today".

D.Grimshaw said delays with the printer meant the brochure was not available at Bangor. S.Carse said that because Tara Mines was an all-diesel operation it was impossible to have steam pictures to illustrate it. T.Moriarty said he felt it was better to have an existing accurate description of the track rather than to try to rewrite it. S.Carse said the book was now out of print. T.Moriarty said costs had to be kept down. J.Friel said T.Moriarty was to be congratulated on producing the first one-day tour brochure the Society had had for three years.

P.Scott launched an-appeal for more manpower at Whitehead. He said there was a critical lack of members willing to undertake practical work on the administrative or loco maintenance side. The problem had deteriorated severely of late. He said the backbone of

workers who came regularly to Whitehead had dropped to just five or six members, only a couple of whom arrived before midday on a Saturday. Casuals who used to augment the regulars had also dropped away. P.Scott said he had a very heavy programme of work on locomotives and plant, for which even 10 to 12 people working a full day every Saturday would be barely adequate. He said that as the workload increased, these left found things much less enjoyable. If just two or three more people were to drop out, things would become impossible.

P.Scott made several suggestions about improving the situation:

1 - Get more members to work at Whitehead. This had been tried so often before, that P.Scott said he could not make an appeal without a degree of cynicism. But he made the appeal, and asked members present and those who read the minutes to give Whitehead a try.

2 - Pay Society personnel for unpleasant work. P.Scott said he would be reluctant to adopt this approach but said it might have to be considered in certain circumstances. He said the Society might also have to consider reimbursing members who lost money through working for the Society instead of doing normal work.

3 - Pay skilled personnel from outside the Society to come to Whitehead. Already done from time to time, and a field which might have to be expanded. But P.Scott said it was unreliable and difficult to organise.

4 - Sub-contract work to outside firms. Done when the Society does not possess specialist equipment itself. But although P.Scott said it could be done more, he said it would quickly become extremely expensive. He said it would be unfortunate if the Society was forced to sub-contract work which could be done at Whitehead if the manpower was available.

5 - Employ permanent staff. P.Scott said this would be the most satisfactory solution if suitable personnel could be found. However, he said the finance would be prohibitive with wages of about £5,000 per annum to pay.

6 - Cut back activities. P.Scott said this would mean a loss of income, support and would probably make the problem worse. He said the Society would be better to close up than to cut back.

P.Scott urged members to consider what he had said. He said his continuing association with the Society depended upon a satisfactory solution emerging. He said it would be tragic if, after achieving so much, the Society was to fail at this stage by default.

I.Pryce said he would like to commend P.Scott's views to the membership. He said some of the regular workers felt a distinct lack of real involvement because they did not know what was happening in the long term at Whitehead or in general. He appealed for more communication. P.Scott said he had been totally unaware of this side to the problem.

R.Edwards wondered if sending out a watered down version of minutes to the members might be helpful. J.Mounstephen suggested a short information session at the Belfast area meetings. C.Friel said more solid news should be put into the news-sheets. N.Hamilton said the Society

should be more Whitehead-orientated with a move back to holding the AGM there. T.Ragg said he had long felt that a clubroom should be built at the site.

N.Hamilton said conducted tours should be incorporated with the Sunday train rides.

R.Hunter said he knew the difficulties of keeping members of a society informed with the pressure of business on the committee.

J.Lockett suggested a blackboard at Whitehead with that day's jobs in loco., coach, and site work chalked on it. This would help acquaint people with overall programmes. He wondered if it might be possible to attract people to Whitehead by offering them a rebate on tour fares for working there. D.Grimshaw said this would involve substantial administration. B.Hill said unless some step was taken to make work at Whitehead more attractive, railtours would grind to a halt.

P.Scott then gave a run-down on the locomotives:

85 - The loco had been lifted, the wheels and motion stripped down, piston valves taken apart, and the tubes removed. So far, nothing of a major nature which would rule out restoration had been found.

184 - Could operate again without too much difficulty. Being considered for film work in April 1978, although this matter was still under negotiation. Needed re-tubed, but a much more immediate restoration prospect than 461.

461 - Very poor condition. Some essential parts such as the blast pipe were missing, and one piston rod had been cut through. Long-term prospect.

4 - Two of the main axle-box bearings needed remetalled, the side rod bushes were loose, and the springs and rocking grate required attention.

171 - One of the remetalled axle boxes was still causing trouble. The engine would require to be put over the wheeldrop when it was operational.

186 - Operational.

3BG - Required re-tubing, low priority job with 3 in operation.

3 - Operational.

27 - Still in need of an extensive overhaul, involving the removal of the boiler from the frames. Eventual aim was to have engine restored.

W.Scott asked if eight coaches was not too heavy a load for 171. P.Scott said that from his research, experience and work - in particular the valve setting - he was satisfied the engine was now performing much more satisfactorily than had been the case previously. Crews were no longer making adverse comments. P.Scott pointed to the September 26 empty carriages run with eight bogies from Belfast Central to Whitehead.

S.Boomer asked about plans for coach 550, the second diner. K.Pullin said considerable work was involved, and said the job was not top priority.

I.Slaughter reported that the RPSI tour to India was fully booked and said the Society would be benefiting by £400 from this. R.Edwards thanked I.Slaughter for this donation.

R.Hunter asked if the 1978 Portrush Flyer would leave from York Road. D.Grimshaw confirmed that this was the case.

As there was no further business, the meeting was declared closed at 21:45.

*Signed:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Chairman*      *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_