

# THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

## FEBRUARY 1979 NEWS-SHEET

- GREEN FLAG** The Society's proposed Whitehead-Carrickfergus steam train service - announced at the December AGM - has received approval in principle from Northern Ireland Railways. The introduction of this service is still a year or two away, being dependent on a number of factors, not the least of which is the negotiating of a Government grant. But the agreement of NIR is a significant step forward.
- A NEW CAST** Work continues to try to solve the problems posed by 4-4-0 "Slieve Gullion"'s troublesome driving axleboxes. After endless bother with the existing axleboxes, we are going to have two entirely new bronze boxes specially cast and fitted to the engine. This is the most convenient and inexpensive way of tackling the problem. It's another job for which the new Whitehead wheeldrop is proving its worth. While the new boxes are being cast in a Larne foundry, the loco squad is carrying out repair work on 171's trailing springs. Subject to the successful running in of the new boxes, it is planned to use 171 on this year's three "Portrush Flyers".
- BITS AND PIECES** The major overhaul of 2-6-4T No.4 continues. Latest jobs have included dismantling, examination and renewal where necessary of such items as boiler tubes, superheater elements, glands, axleboxes etc. Meanwhile plans are in hand for the replacing of 4's existing set of driving wheels. The replacement set of class WT wheels was salvaged nine years ago from loco 54, which was then being scrapped. But one of the three pairs of six foot drivers has been found to have an oxy-acetylene burn mark. Fortunately it is going to be possible to replace the damaged tyre with a new one.
- CENTENARIANS** Our two sister J15 class 0-6-0s are currently being prepared for their respective centenary years at Mullingar. 186, 100 years old this year, is having its firebox rivets renewed. 184, dating of course from 1880, is having repair work carried out on its springs.
- PLANETARY PROBE** Smallest RPSI engine, the Planet diesel shunter 23, is out of service at present. The trouble has been traced to a damaged tappet, and now the engine will have to be partially stripped and possibly removed for repair. Meanwhile work is continuing on a much larger engine - V class 4-4-0 Compound "Merlin" - in the engine works at Harland & Wolff, Belfast.
- A BIG SPLASH** Some 120 intrepid travellers braved the combined hazards of flooded railway lines and snowbound roads to make the trip to Dublin on December 30 to enjoy "The First Great Train Robbery". The unexpected coach portion of the journey from Portadown to Dublin must be the longest lineside bus ever run by the RPSI! The audience echoed the favourable reviews the film has been receiving - even Barry Norman on BBC 1's "Film '79" couldn't find anything to moan about! See the accompanying sales list for details of the special colour wall-poster the Society has produced to mark the release of the film.
- COMING SHORTLY...** More film work could be on the way, albeit on a smaller scale than "The First Great Train Robbery". The Society has been approached about possible use of engines in two TV films - "Strumpet City" and "The Flame is Love". We await developments.
- DINING OUT** As mentioned in the last news-sheet, NIR allowed us to carry out restoration work on dining car 550 inside the running shops at

Belfast York Road. This meant that the coach squad could work with a roof over their heads - an unusual luxury. Full advantage has been taken of this facility, and 550's leaking roof has been completely stripped and re-covered with waterproof material. Damaged windows have also been repaired.

OIL HELP Have you any old railway-style oilcans which you don't want? If you do, they would be most useful to the loco running department. Contact Paul Newell (evenings).

BELFAST TRAMWAYS A new book to mark the 25th anniversary of the last Belfast trams will be out later this month. It's a joint publication by the Society and our friends, the Irish Transport Trust. The book traces the history of Belfast's tramway network from its inception up to closure in 1954. The book, entitled "Belfast Tramways", is lavishly illustrated and includes a foreword from Belfast's Lord Mayor, Alderman David Cook. The publication will be launched with a promotion in Belfast city centre in early March. The price is being kept low to appeal to the general public - it's just £1.20.

FOR YOUR DIARY Don't forget that there are still three more Belfast area meetings this season. The venue is St Jude's Church Hall, Sunnyside Street, Belfast, and there's a slightly later starting-time - 19.45 instead of the previously advertised 19.30. Dates are: Tuesday February 27 - Members' slide night with a varied show covering everything from Ireland to Australia with John McKegney, Brian Warrington, Brian McElherron and Alan Love. Tuesday March 27 - The hidden secrets of the film industry laid bare with the story of the making of "The First Great Train Robbery". Tuesday April 24 - Latest developments on CIÉ.

DUBLIN - Dublin area is holding its own "First Great Train Robbery" slide show on Thursday March 1 - laying bare even more hidden secrets of the film industry. It's at 20.00 at the IRRS clubrooms, Drumcondra.

INFORMALLY... You don't need a dinner jacket to attend the film shows which are being held on the second Saturday of each month at our new tarry on the site at Whitehead. These gatherings take place at 20.00, after the normal Saturday programme of loco, coach and site work and all are welcome to join in the night's crack. The next date is February 10, when Nelson Foots will be putting on a slide show. The new tarry is proving immensely popular with members working at Whitehead, who now have comfortable surroundings in which to wash, eat, or simply relax after a day's work.

CUT OUT THE JAMS Members heading for Whitehead may soon be able to take advantage of bulk purchase cut price tickets for travelling from Belfast by NIR. Anyone interested should contact Johnny Glendinning.

KEY OPERATORS Paul Newell is anxious to hear from any members of the operating staff who require keys for the Whitehead site. He would also be glad to hear from any members who are interested in getting their foot on the first rung of the ladder by starting in the operating grades as trainee shunter/guards.

NEW YEAR STEAM The 1979 operating season got off to an early start when 0-6-0ST "R.H. Smyth" was steamed on January 6 for a UTV film crew. The film was used in a schools programme broadcast on January 29. 3 was in action again on January 21, shunting 171 over the wheeldrop.

SPREADING THE LOAD The council has appointed the following to posts of special responsibility for 1979: Paul Newell, purchasing officer; John Friel,

safety officer and 85 liaison; Charles Friel, official photographer and loco stores; Lavens Steele, Ulster Tourist Development Association rep; Andrew Malcolm, addressograph plates; Derek Young, insurance liaison; Mary Glendinning, catering officer; David Humphries, Belfast area assistant; Tony Ragg, coach stores; Paddy O'Brien, Mullingar superintendent; Greg Ryan, Southern publicity; Tim Moriarty, Railtour brochures; Tommy Dorrian, bar steward; Doug Ferguson, film posters marketing; Mervyn Darragh, membership secretary.

WORLD NEWS Watch out for Railway World in coming months. We hear that there will be a number of articles of special Irish interest.

BY GEORGE! Around 40 people defied sub-zero temperatures and the petrol shortage to attend the soiree at The George, Bangor, on January 12. An enjoyable evening was had by all.

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