

JULY 1979 NEWS-SHEET

SUNDAY BEST: The Sunday afternoon steam train rides continue to attract a large number of people each week. So far our unpredictable climate has been providing us with a series of reasonably fine Sundays and many families out for a drive have followed our distinctive sign boards along the main road from Carrickfergus to Whitehead. As reported in the June News-Sheet, 186 kicked off the season on 17 June. On subsequent Sundays 0-6-0ST "R.H. Smyth" has been on train ride duties. Whenever possible 186 has been positioned at the platform on these occasions in order to allow our visitors the opportunity of inspecting this century old locomotive at close quarters. This year the Sunday trains are formed with side-corridor Bredin 1335 and B.U.T. brake 562.

CHIMNEY SPOT: J15 No.186 will be back in action on Sunday train rides later in the month but just at the moment it has temporarily retired from the limelight in order to have a new chimney fitted. The new chimney has had a somewhat unusual history. While it is not unusual for a locomotive chimney to travel considerable distances, this travelling is normally carried out with a locomotive bolted to the underside of the chimney, However, due to 186 being frequently on the move during the film contract last year, the new chimney, which had been cast in Larne, followed the engine on a long rail journey from Whitehead via Dublin, Limerick Junction, Waterford, Cork and Mullingar before finally arriving back at Whitehead and being fitted to 186.

SUMMERTIME BLUES: Meanwhile 4-4-0 No.171 "Slieve Gullion" is receiving the final coat of its repaint in GNR(I) blue livery and will make an impressive site at the head of this year's "Portrush Flyers". It will be pleasant to see 171 arriving once more at the North coast resort after an absence of several years.

OFFICE PARTY: While loco 171 is receiving its blue livery, two of the Society's running coaches are in the process of being repainted in maroon livery. These are 861, the composite twelve-wheeler, and 342, an ex-LMS(NCC) side-corridor vehicle. Both these coaches will be appearing on the "Flyers".

READY FOR TAKE-OFF: While on the subject of the "Portrush Flyer" - these are almost upon us once again. So if you haven't already got your booking in make haste to do so. Don't forget that the "Flyer" is one of the most authentic steam trains operated by the Society with a mainline run between two points operating on a strict schedule. After the success of a similar venture last year the possibility of extending one of the later "Flyers" to Castlerock is being considered.

INTERCITY 125: No, we don't have any engines which can outpace British Rail's famous High Speed Train but an interesting point about the "Lough Foyle" railtour (Whitehead - Belfast York Road - Londonderry and back) on September 1st, is that the Coleraine - Derry line was completed 125 years ago this September. Of course, 186, our 100 year old J15, will be operating this tour. Full details of the "Lough Foyle" tour are included with this circular.

BANGOR AND BACK...: Not for a bob perhaps, but the proposed running of a tour in a set of, now rare, Multi-Purpose diesel railcars, which was mentioned in an earlier News-Sheet, is now being considered for October 20th. It is hoped that two power cars hauling the RPSI diner will operate a tour from Belfast, York Road via Antrim, Lisburn and Belfast Central to Bangor and

return, MPD railcars have only travelled on the Bangor Line on extremely rare occasions in the past.

ON THE SIDELINES: Work has started on improving the trackwork on the long carriage siding at Whitehead. During the excavations of the bank beyond this siding it proved necessary to drive heavy excavating vehicles over the siding from time to time and the track is now in the process of being lifted and realigned into a more even formation.

PROMOTED: Six members of the operating grades have been upgraded. Mark Stanley and Patrick Kelly have been promoted from Assistant Shunter/ Guard to Shunter/Guard, Brian Hill and Sullivan Boomer from Steam Raiser to Fireman and Charles Friel and Robert Edwards from Fireman to Driver.

YOUNG PASSENGERS: As this is International Year of the Child it was thought that it would be a pleasant idea to arrange for a party of deserving youngsters to visit the site at Whitehead. Plans are in hand for such a visit to take place during August. Of course, an engine would be in steam to give train rides during this event.

BRANCHING OUT: The Council has recently set up a sub-committee to look into the feasibility, from engineering, cost and local authority approval points of view, of reopening a closed rail-connected branchline in Northern Ireland. A request for the RPSI to carry out such an exercise was received from the Irish Branch of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies. Such a feasibility study will, of course, be essentially long term in nature. Meanwhile on a much shorter timescale, the negotiations with Carrickfergus Borough Council, the Department of Commerce and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board on the proposed extension of the Steam Train Rides to Carrickfergus with the co-operation of Northern Ireland Railways are continuing. Hopes are now high that this important expansion of the Society's activities will be inaugurated in the summer of 1980.

TOURIST ATTRACTION: An attractively produced summary of railway attractions around the country has been brought out by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in association with the Irish Branch of the Association of Railway preservation Societies. This document gives details of the locations and activities of several railway preservation schemes in Ireland and the RPSI receives a prominent mention. It is to be hoped that this will attract many more people from both home and overseas to visit our site on Sundays and to participate on our tours.

STICK 'EM UP: Just a reminder that if you want some more Train Rides car stickers there are still a few available from Alan Love.

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