

OCTOBER 1979 NEWS-SHEET

THE BIG COVER-UP: Anyone visiting Whitehead in the last few weeks will have had no trouble in spotting the latest major development to be completed at the site. Yes, the new shed finally has a roof. The erecting of this most welcome structure was carried out over a comparatively short period. Preparation work was commenced on Monday 27 August - all-rolling stock in the new shed and on track immediately outside had been shunted clear on the previous day - and lasted for several days. The main contractors, Smyth Mills, Ltd., started to erect the steelwork on 3 September and the outline of the roof rapidly took shape during the next few days, the steel framework providing an impressive sight for visitors to the site the following weekend. During the following fortnight the remaining work required was carried out and the roof was virtually completed by the end of the third week in September. At present work is in progress to put doors on the shed, thereby completing the protection which can now be afforded to more items of the Society's rolling-stock. The provision of this extra covered shed space increases by approximately 150% the area in which jobs on locomotives and coaches, which would otherwise have required prolonged periods of dry weather, can be carried out throughout the year.

FOYLED AGAIN: Londonderry has seen quite a lot of RPSI steam activity during the recent summer. "Slieve Gullion" paid the city a fortnightly visit during the Portrush Flyer season when it called at the city to use the turntable at Waterside Station. On Saturday 1st September that station once again played host to an RPSI steam engine - almost certainly for the last time as it is soon to be replaced by a new terminal - when Class J15 0-6-0, 186, arrived with the Lough Foyle Railtour. This tour, part of the Centenary celebrations for 186, proved to be a great success, in spite of a departure from Whitehead in a torrential downpour, and the large number of passengers were rewarded with an excellent performance by 186 over a route not normally associated with J15s.

STAR ON THE COUNTY DOWN: Eleven days after its visit to Derry 186 was in action once again putting in a celebrity appearance on yet another unfamiliar stretch of railway line. On Wednesday 12 September a unique venture jointly organised with Northern Ireland Railways had 186 operating a special Centenary five coach special on the Belfast Central to Bangor line. Almost 200 passengers were attracted to this steam train and Transport Museum visit package. During the afternoon 186 made two round trips on the Bangor line, calling at Cultra on each outward journey to cater for those visiting the museum. The second of these runs terminated at Belfast Central at the busiest time of the evening at 17.15 causing many an eyebrow to be raised by commuters.

DUBLIN TREBLE. Completing a month of intense J15 activity, the Society's other and equally famous locomotive of this class, 184, was extremely busy in the Dublin area on Saturday 22 September. Hauling a train of CIÉ coaches, 184 operated three return excursions from Dublin Connolly to Bray. These trains proved to be extremely popular with the public and each was booked solid. 184, which will of course be celebrating its Centenary next year, put in an excellent performance on the attractive seaside route.

IMPORTANT: BELFAST AREA MEETINGS, DATES CHANGED, PLEASE NOTE: Unfortunately, due to a number of problems arising since the dates of the coming season of Belfast Area Meetings was announced in the last news-sheet, these dates have had to be changed although the times and the venue remain the same.

These meetings will now take place in St. Jude's Church Hall at Sunnyside Street, Belfast at 19.30 on the following dates. An outline programme is as follows:

- 16 October: Films featuring the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway
- 20 November: Talk by Mr Beaumont, an engineer on the former GNR(I)
- 18 December: Model Night. Ulster Model Railway Club/Model Engineers
- 15 January: Charles Friel featuring slides from the Watson Collection
- 19 February: More cine from the collection of Derek Henderson.
- 18 March: Latest developments on Northern Ireland Railways.

Don't forget to note these revised dates in your diary.

WRONG IN-PRESSION: Some members may have been concerned recently to read reports in the press which suggested that the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland was about to start restoring a branch-line. This is most certainly not the case. As was mentioned in a News-Sheet earlier this year the RPSI Council has set up a sub-committee to report on the feasibility of opening a closed rail-connected branchline, from the point of view of engineering problems, etc. This action was undertaken following a request from the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (Irish Branch). Regardless of whatever findings this sub-committee may come to, no major change of RPSI policy, such as the opening of a branch-line could take place without the fullest consultation with the Society's members.

RECORD RUN: The Society's locomotives have been featured widely in the past in books, newspapers, radio and television. So it comes as no surprise to learn that two of these locos, 171 and 186, can now be heard on long-playing record. A recent record produced by M.R. Taylor of Birmingham entitled "Mainline Steam Specials" features the two engines double heading their train on the climb out of Cork on the Seandun Railtour in 1976. The RPSI sounds are included among sounds of many famous locomotives working in England. The record is available at a price of £3.00 + 15p P&P from Irish Steam Scene.

PLENTY OF US: The latest figures on membership of the Railway preservation Society of Ireland show a healthy total of 620 members.

LAST OF THE SUMMER STEAM: The Sunday afternoon Steam Train Rides ended for the season on 9 September. The season proved to be a particularly successful one with large numbers of visitors riding behind "R.H. Smyth", 171 or 186. The afternoon teas in the dining car also proved popular, while the sales van playing fairground music and steam sounds on the platform attracted many customers. Younger visitors in particular were transfixed by the N-gauge model railway which was a regular feature beside the van.

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