

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

YMCA, Belfast, Saturday 8th December 1979

Lord O'Neill presided, and 30 members were present. Apologies were received from Sam Carse, Leslie McAllister, Henry Jack, John Harcourt, Paddy O'Brien, Dermot Mackie, David Humphries, Neil Hamilton and John Glendinning.

Lord O'Neill opened the meeting by congratulating the Society on having won a certificate of commendation in the recent Tourism Endeavour Awards.

The minutes of the 1978 AGM, which had been circulated, were taken as read and adopted.

The Secretary read his report, and it was adopted on the proposal of Laurence Morrison, seconded by Paul Newell. The Treasurer's report was read and adopted on the proposal of Nevin Hamilton, seconded by William Coates.

A resolution from an EGM proposing that the annual subscription be raised to £5 adults and £2.50 (U16 & 65+) was adopted on the proposal of Alan Love, seconded by L.Morrison. The minutes of the EGM, circulated to the meeting, were adopted.

Lord O'Neill said nominations for the 1980 council had been received for all posts except Commercial Officer and London Agent. No nomination was forthcoming for the former post, but Leslie McAllister was proposed for the latter post by Robin Morton, seconded John Lockett. There being no contests, those members nominated for the various posts were deemed elected, on the proposal of Ian Slaughter, seconded Peter Scott. Thus the 1980 council was:

Chairman: Robert Edwards, 61 Ballynahinch Road, Saintfield, Co. Down.

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

Treasurer: John Richardson, 18 Downshire Gardens, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim.

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

Loco. Running: Paul Newell, 15 Barnhill, Donaghadee, Co. Down.

Coach maintenance: Alan Edgar, 152 Cavehill Road, Belfast 15.

Coach Running: Neil Hamilton, 10 Lintagh Park, Magheraconlue, Hillsborough.

Whitehead Site: John Glendinning, 23 Beechdene Gardens, Lisburn, Co. Antrim.

Commercial: Vacant.

Publications: Alan Edgar, 152 Cavehill Road, Belfast 15.

Publicity: Alan Love, 12 The Close, Marino, Holywood, Co. Down.

Dublin Agent: Sam Carse, 38 Oakley Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.

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

Operations: Denis Grimshaw, 14 Craigdarragh Park East, Craigavon, Co. Down.

R. Edwards paid tribute to Ken Pullin, who was standing down from the council.

D. Grimshaw outlined the provisional 1980 railtour programme as follows:

March 22 171, Belfast - Dublin day excursion.

May 17/18 "South Kerry" two-day tour. Dublin - Dun Laoghaire - Dublin (184); Dublin - Mallow - Tralee (overnight); Tralee - Mallow - Dublin (171); Dublin - Dun Laoghaire - Dublin (184); Dublin - Belfast (171).

July 26, August 9 & 23 - Portrush Flyer, 171, Castlerock extension Aug. 23.

September 20 Whitehead - Dundalk - Dublin (- Mullingar), 186; (Mullingar -) Dublin - Dundalk - Whitehead, 184. Two trains to cross in Dundalk, locos. to swap stock, thus providing day trips from Belfast to Dundalk and Dublin to Dundalk.

D.Grimshaw said two constraints had to be borne in mind - the non-availability of 4 and the increasing railway company charges. He said the use of 184 on the Dun Laoghaire "boat train" part of the two-day tour was aimed at cutting down light engine overheads - it was cheaper to use 184 at the Dublin rather than the Tralee end of the trip. It was hoped the Londonderry turntable would be relocated at Coleraine. The September tour was designed to swap 184 and 186 around.

I.Slaughter asked about the delay in getting the Carrick Castle Express operation off the ground. R.Morton said modifications had to be made to trackwork at RPSI Whitehead and signalling installed before it could go ahead and this had stretched the timescale. In addition, it was hoped that the "CCE" project would be a lever towards getting tourism grants for improvements to RPSI Whitehead. Experience had shown these took some time to arrange. However, both Carrickfergus Borough Council and NIR were interested in the venture and a meeting with NIR to discuss costs was being arranged.

A.Love agreed to take up I.Slaughter's suggestion that the South Kerry tour should be publicised to European enthusiasts who wanted to build the tour into a British Isles holiday in connection with Rainhill. D.Grimshaw told N.Hamilton that the two-day tour; had been attracting 180-200 passengers, and that there was accommodation for 300.

P.Scott outlined the locomotive position as follows:

- 3 Due for five-yearly hydraulic test, which involved replacing some boiler tubes. Vacuum ejector being fitted to enable engine to operate continuous brake system on train.
- 3BG In store.
- 4 Undergoing overhaul. No completion date fixed, because of manpower shortage. Work proceeding on standby basis. High cost items such as flue tubes had been purchased.
- 23 Back in operation.
- 27 In store.
- 85 Still in Harland & Wolff, where work was proceeding very slowly. Not possible to estimate completion date. When moved to Whitehead, the loco would receive a new lubrication system from RPSI, tender would be made serviceable, and the whole loco repainted.
- 171 In traffic, only running repairs being carried out. New driving axle boxes.
- 184 In traffic, only running repairs being carried out.

186 Operational, but valves being re-set to eliminate irregular beat.

461 Long term job. Money had recently been allocated for work on the engine, the main task being overhauling the main axle bearings so that the loco could be towed from Mullingar without damage being caused.

P.Scott said the Society was considering acquiring an ex-GNR 2,500 gallon tender to run with 184. This had 50% more water capacity than the present tender and would increase 184's range from the present 30 miles which was too small. He said that although there might be objections to this proposal from the aesthetic point of view, the top priority was to run trains. P.Scott told I.Slaughter that consideration was being given to the use of a road water tanker to alleviate the problem, but said the difficulty was that such a project involved RPSI personnel in what was a non-railway operation, and as such one which was not appealing. P.Scott told Irwin Pryce that there was a large amount of work outstanding on 4, but stressed that work would continue on a standby basis.

Nevin Hamilton asked about possible alternative sites to Mullingar. R.Morton said that as a result of correspondence between Lord O'Neill and the CIÉ chairman, Mr Liam StJ Devlin, CIÉ had suggested a goods shed at Portlaoise as an alternative. This had offered no scope for development and so the RPSI had suggested Wicklow. But this was ruled out by CIÉ because the goods area was required for possible long-term development by CIÉ. The latest suggestion from CIÉ was Malahide, where there were sidings, but no shed. It was close to Malahide Castle, which was a tourist attraction. R.Morton said the RPSI's main requirements were for a site with security of tenure, scope for development, existing rail connection and road access.

D.Grimshaw told N.Hamilton that it did not appear that CIÉ's plans for overhead electrification of the Dublin - Bray line would threaten occasional steam operation. But one effect had been the removal of Bray turntable, to make way for developments in connection with the electrification.

W.Coates said members had been surprised to read recent press reports about discussions the RPSI branch line feasibility sub-committee had been having with Banbridge Council, in connection with investigations over the Scarva - Banbridge line. He said members would appreciate an interim report on what progress had been made. R.Edwards said the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (Irish Branch) had asked the RPSI, the North West of Ireland Railway Society and the Belfast & Co. Down Railway Museum Trust to prepare feasibility reports on various branch line possibilities. He said the RPSI study was still inconclusive, but that a report would be given to the RPSI council in the Spring. If at that stage the council decided such a scheme was viable, and suggested proceeding with it, an EGM would be called to discuss the idea with the membership. R.Edwards said members had been advised of the setting up on the sub-committee by the news-sheet. Laurence Morrison asked what the view of Carrickfergus Borough Council might be towards the RPSI's name being linked at this stage with the Banbridge proposal. R.Morton said the Council had been advised in July that the feasibility study was being conducted and it had been stressed that the Society was not committed to any more involvement at this stage. Lord O'Neill said the Northern Ireland Tourist Board was keen that only one railway preservation scheme should come forward for grant aid. He said the whole proposal seemed to be five to 10 years away. R.Edwards told I.Slaughter that there was no immediate threat to RPSI mainline steam

operation because of any proposed technological developments on NIR or CIÉ, and stressed that the RPSI council was actively considering further expansion at Whitehead.

I.Slaughter said he would be interested to hear the views of RPSI members living in the Republic - particularly the Mullingar workforce - on Society policy, particularly in light of all that had been aired about the manpower shortage. He suggested an open forum meeting should be held in Dublin at which members from the Republic could be briefed by council members and could ask questions. R.Edwards said that ideas coming from the Mullingar team were regularly raised at council meetings, and said the decision to allocate money towards 461 had been taken as a direct result of such a consensus becoming known. He said, however, that the idea of such a meeting in Dublin was one the council would follow up.

J.Lockett suggested that members' days, which would be well publicised, should be held at Whitehead once a quarter to encourage more members to the site. I.Pryce suggested an approach should be made to lapsed Whitehead regulars to come to Whitehead to perform specific tasks. Derek Henderson said the manpower shortage was also reflected in diminishing attendances at the AGM. L.Morrison said Belfast area meetings attracted up to 100 and the AGM only 30.

Lord O'Neill reported that work was proceeding at NIR's York Road workshops on the directors' saloon. A.Edgar said the next issue Five Foot Three was expected to be available in January.

I.Pryce suggested that consideration be given to the running of a steam-hauled loose-coupled freight train before all such wagons were eliminated by the development of fitted trains. He also suggested 186 should be restored to its black livery. D.Grimshaw said the goods train idea had been thought about and said it might be arranged unless costs proved prohibitive.

I.Pryce requested that a set of RPSI rules be made available at Whitehead. R.Edwards said the operating rules were being revised and that a copy of them plus a copy of the Articles Of Association could be made available.

J.Richardson told I.Slaughter that the 1980 Whitehead steam gala night be held in September.

As there was no further business, the meeting was declared closed at 22:00.

Signed: _____ *Chairman* _____ *Date:* _____