

DECEMBER 1979 NEWS-SHEET

TOURIST ATTRACTION: RPSI members will have been pleased to learn that the Society has received a Certificate of Commendation in the recently announced 1979 British Airways Tourism Endeavour Awards. The certificate was awarded for the Society's efforts in "caring preservation of Ireland's steam railway heritage and for the promotion of steam-rail tours - i.e. the Portrush Flyer - which have attracted visitors from abroad and given enjoyment to enthusiasts and tourists alike." It is certainly gratifying to see the Society's activities acknowledged in this way. The Society was represented by Bob Edwards and John Richardson at the Northern Ireland Tourist Board Gala Banquet on Friday 30 November when the awards were announced.

PLANET BACK IN ORBIT: Members who work at Whitehead at weekends will welcome the return to service of the Society's only diesel locomotive - the Planet diesel shunter, No.23. The diesel suffered a series of break-downs earlier in the year which resulted in it having to be taken out of service for several months, including the entire operating season. While the Planet is probably not noted for being one of the Society's most glamorous or speedy locomotives and is possibly not one of the attractions which draw enthusiasts and tourists to Whitehead, it is nevertheless, an extremely important and hard-working member of the Society's active locomotives. When it is necessary for rolling stock to be moved from one part of the Whitehead site to another, or on the eve of a tour or Flyer when the train has to be made up the diesel can be started up and be available for shunting immediately. While the diesel was out of action during the summer it was necessary to use a steam locomotive for each shunt which involved at least two hours steam raising on each occasion using precious coal and taking up time which could have been spent on maintenance and restoration work. The diesel returned to service on 24 November having had new pistons and cylinder linings fitted.

FILLING A VACUUM: One of the more interesting jobs currently being carried out by the locomotive maintenance department is the fitting of vacuum brake equipment to ST No.3 "R.H. Smyth". An ejector suitable for this type of industrial locomotive has been delivered and is at present being fitted to No.3. "R.H. Smyth" has been handling the bulk of Sunday afternoon train rides over the past three summers, as well as substituting for the diesel in shunting work in recent months. The fitting of vacuum brake equipment, thus allowing the loco to provide continuous braking when working with the Society's vacuum braked coaching stock will greatly improve the efficiency of these operations. Other jobs which are currently being carried out on the Society's locomotives include the setting of the valves on J15 0-6-0 No.186 while S-Class No.171 is awaiting several small jobs such as the patching of the smokebox and replacing of the tender brake blocks 2-6-4T No.4 has currently got its driving wheels removed and is undergoing major overhaul.

ROOF UNDER THE ROOF: The first coach to be worked on in the new shed since the roof was completed is the North Atlantic Brake 472. This coach is being prepared for having new waterproof roofing material fitted by having the old roofing material completely stripped from the timbers. This type of work is an excellent example of the usefulness of the shed roof as previously such work would have had to have been confined to the summer months to of minimise the effects of exposure of the roof timbers to the elements (to say nothing of the effects of the exposure of the coach squad

to the elements). Defective timber in the vicinity of one of the corner posts of 472 is also being replaced.

WANDERER RETURNS: Ex-GNR(I) BUT brake coach 114 has arrived back in Whitehead after travelling extensively around Ireland. 114 left Whitehead in April 1978 to serve as a service vehicle in association with the Society's locomotives during the filming of "The First Great Train Robbery" and visited Waterford, Cork and Mullingar, among other places, before returning to Whitehead last month.

SITE LINES: Now that operations have finished for the season work is proceeding to alter and improve the track layout at the Whitehead site with a view to simplifying shunting and train rides operations in the future. This work is planned to continue through the winter at weekends.

OXY-GEN: On Saturday 1st December at Whitehead a Portapak oxy-acetylene unit was donated to the Society by BOC Ltd. This useful piece of equipment was presented by Mr Silcock to Lord O'Neill, who accepted it on behalf of the RPSI.

LONDON DATE: There will be a joint Irish Railway Record Society (London Area) / Railway Preservation Society of Ireland meeting at 19.15 on 17 January 1980 at the Fred Tallant Hall, 153 Drummond Street London NW1 (5 minutes from Euston, Euston Square, Warren Street stations). London Agent, Leslie McAllister will be giving an illustrated talk on the RPSI in 1979.

BELFAST DATES: Just a reminder that the Belfast Area meetings continue each month at St. Jude's Church Hall, Sunnyside Street. The next of these will be the Model Night on Tuesday 18 December when the Ulster Model Railway Club, the Model Engineers and several other societies will be taking part. Then on Tuesday 15 January Charles Friel will be featuring a selection of interesting slides from the Watson Collection. Tuesday 19 February gives us another opportunity to see more of the cine from Derek Henderson's collection and finally on 18 March a senior executive from Northern Ireland Railways will be talking about the latest developments in that organisation. There should be something for everybody in this varied programme of meetings. By the way, all meetings start at 19.30.

NEWS-SHEET EXTRA

RAINY DAY? Don't forget that the Rocket 150 Rainhill exhibition, near Liverpool, is taking place in less than six months' time, on May 24, 25 and 26. That's the bank holiday weekend - a week after the RPSI South Kerry Tour. In connection with the event, P&O Ferries has asked us to point out that it is offering day and weekend trips from Belfast using the Belfast-Liverpool ferry (ticket for the event NOT included).

Day excursion: £18.00 1st class, £13.50 economy.

Weekend excursion (ferry fare plus one night's accommodation bed & breakfast): £34 1st class, £28.00 economy.

Sleeping accommodation on board ship at normal prices.

If you're interested, please contact the Group Department of P&O Ferries.

SCREENING: The projection of a Northern Ireland Tourist Board colour slide of 4 on the Portrush Flyer at Monkstown at the British Airways/NITB tourism endeavour award gala banquet was the cue for chairman Bob Edwards to collect the certificate of commendation the RPSI won in the event at the Belfast Europa Hotel on Friday November 30 (see page one of the news-sheet). Lord O'Neill, RPSI patron and NITB chairman, kindly picked out the RPSI for special mention in his speech at the dinner. Now it's hoped that the certificate, complete with frame, will have a special place of honour in the RPSI dining car. The actual citation said the RPSI was being given

the award for the "caring preservation of Ireland's steam railway heritage and for the Promotion of railtours such as the Portrush Flyer". Congrats all rounds!

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