

OCTOBER 1980 NEWS-SHEET

BETTER LATE: During September the Society operated what must have been the first-ever eleven day railtour in its history. The original plan was for S-Class No.171 to work a one day special steam excursion, 'The Steam Enterprise', from Belfast Central to Dublin Connolly and back on Saturday 13 September. At first everything went as planned with 'Slieve Gullion' and the RPSI coaching stock for the special running from Whitehead to Belfast Central on Friday 12 September. However Saturday morning brought the news that the Belfast - Dublin line had been temporarily closed by an explosion on the Portadown - Dundalk section and there was no alternative but to postpone the 'Steam Enterprise'. Quite a number of prospective passengers heard about this on early morning radio news bulletins and therefore saved themselves the journey to Central Station. Fortunately, the line was quickly reopened and 171 and the coaches, which had spent the intervening week at Belfast Central Service Depot, turned out at Central Station on Saturday 20 September at the start of what turned out to be a memorable steam run, recalling many of the steam hauled excursions of the past on the GNR(I) main line. The vast majority of people who had booked for the previous Saturday were able to rearrange their plans and substantially more than 300 passengers all but filled the train. 'Slieve Gullion' put in the performance that we have come to expect over the past year and the day was fine and sunny (a bonus since Saturday 13 September had had most unpleasant weather). One incident had marred the otherwise smooth operation of the postponed 'Steam Enterprise', when the train was broken into during the week of its lie-over in Belfast and some damage was done to the coaches - mostly broken windows - but fortunately this damage was repaired in time for the excursion. Otherwise the Society's first experiment at a "Portrush Flyer" type of operation on the Belfast - Dublin route was a tremendous success and a great day out was had by all. 171 and the train finally returned to Whitehead on Monday 22 September.

SNOWBALL IN SUMMER: The 'Steam Enterprise' was the second visit paid to Dublin by 171 in the space of a month. The negotiations for the loco to take part in a TV commercial mentioned in the last news-sheet having been successfully concluded, 171 left Whitehead for Dublin on the morning of Monday 25 August. The filming took place in the Malahide area on the 26th and 27th. 'Slieve Gullion' widened its international associations (remember Nagaland?) by playing the part of an Iron Curtain steam loco (probably GNR(USSR)) and was liberally sprayed with genuine imitation snow for the occasion. Much of this snow remained when the loco returned to Whitehead on Thursday 28 August, but after this year's summer nobody expressed surprise. Brake coach 114 accompanied 171 on this trip, providing the usual loco service facilities.

LOUGH ERNE UPDATE: Since the last news-sheet the 'Lough Erne' fund has reached the £5,000 mark, meeting the full purchase price of the loco. All further contributions will now go towards the restoration of the 0-6-4T to working order.

I'M DREAMING OF A WHITEHEAD CHRISTMAS: Plans are in hand to operate a series of 'Santa Special' train ride days this coming December. Although the details have yet to be finalized the provisional dates are Sundays 7, 14 and 21 December. Perhaps we'll see the loco crews in festive tinsel covered boiler suit while the guard replaces his green flag with a silver fairy wand. Further details of these train rides will be given in the next news-sheet.

GOING INTO AUCTION: The popular bring and buy auction of Railwayana will take place this year at Whitehead on Saturday 18 October. There are always lots of interesting items at these events from old posters and timetables to heavy items of old railway hardware fetching anything from 10p to £100+ so come along and join in the fun. And don't forget if you need a bit more space at home John Richardson will be glad to receive your unwanted railwayana for the auction.

MEETING CHANGES: There has been a slight alteration to the order of the Belfast Area Meetings although the dates, times and venue remain as already published. All meetings are in St. Jude's Church Hall, Sunnyside Street, Belfast at 19.45. The new timetable is as follows:

Tuesday 21 October: Some of the best of Maca Films.
Tuesday 18 November: Railway Yarns by Barney McDevitte
Tuesday 16 December: Illustrated talk on CIÉ

So don't forget to come along and bring your friends. It a great way to introduce people to the Society.

APPEARING IN PRINT: Keep your eyes open for the November edition of Railway World which will include an article on the South Kerry Railtour. Mr. Mike Harris, the editor of Railway World, travelled on this tour last May. The October edition of Railway World, which is currently on sale, has a colour frontispiece, by Charlie Friel, of 171 hauling the tour train through Banteer. Meanwhile, Mr. Peter Kelly, the editor of Steam Railway, has written an article on the 'Portrush Flyer' on which he travelled on August 9 as a guest of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, This illustrated article is due to appear in the November/December edition of Steam Railway, so the activities of the RPSI should be noted by enthusiasts from all over the British Isles over the next couple of months.

PACKAGED UP: Many members will have noticed the recent items in the press, radio and TV about Steam Train Package tours to Northern Ireland, which are being planned by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. It is hoped that these tours will commence next year. They will be aimed at the railway enthusiast and be timed to include an RPSI mainline steam tour or excursion in addition to visits to Shanes Castle, the Transport Museum, etc.

CAMERA: If any member found a camera on the South Kerry Railtour please contact any Council member.

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