

AUGUST 1981 NEWS-SHEET

**HOT NEWS:** Once again, it's hats off to the Whitehead loco squad for some more excellent work on the Society's 4-4-0 express engine, No.171 Slieve Gullion. As you will recall from the last news-sheet, the loco team worked miracles with the loco's re-tubing and got 171 out again in time for the Whitehead Steam Gala on July 4. Then 171 worked the July 25 Portrush Flyer. No complaints about the boiler, but by Ballymena on the outward journey it became clear that the old hot box trouble had happened again - for the first time in two years. Undaunted, 171 worked the rest of the day as planned and none of the passengers knew anything was wrong. But the right driving axlebox had again mysteriously over-heated and re-metalling was required. In days gone by this would have ruled the engine out for the next few months but now, with the Whitehead wheel-drop, it was a case of getting the axlebox out on the Sunday, re-metalling during the week, re-assembling the next Saturday, and 171 was out on the Sunday train rides for test purposes on Sunday August 2. A test run, to Belfast York Road was planned and then the loco was rostered to be back in action as scheduled on the August 8 Flyer. Congratulations to all concerned at Whitehead!

**WE HAVE LIFT-OFF:** The Flyer took off in style on July 25 with 270 passengers on the 300-seater train. Bookings for August 8 & 22 are also very good, with the August 22 train a virtual sell-out already. The Castlerock extension proved overwhelmingly successful, possibly thanks to the assistance of some wet and windy weather. The Castlerock extension was fully booked and this augurs well for the next two trips.

**FIT FOR ROYALTY:** The former Great Northern Directors' Saloon, coach 50, made its inaugural railtour run on the July 25 Portrush Flyer. Our guests for the day were Lord O'Neill, our president and his family, along with some of the people who chipped in to help Lord O'Neill with the bill for the vehicle's restoration. Our thanks go to Lord O'Neill for his generosity. The coach took pride of place in a feature on the Flyer made for BBC NI's Scene Around Six programme and screened on July 27. The next trip for the Saloon, which has seen service on two Royal trains, is on the Ben Bulbin railtour to Sligo, on September 26/27.

**YES, MINISTER:** The Directors' Saloon's maiden trip after restoration was actually on Saturday July 4, when it was included in a VIP special from Belfast York Road to the Whitehead Steam Gala and back. NIR had borrowed loco 171 and a three-coach RPSI train to convey the Northern Ireland Office Minister of State, Mr Michael Alison, to the Steam Gala. Mr Alison, a noted Parliamentary railway enthusiast, thoroughly enjoyed the day and his first sample of travel behind steam, RPSI-style. The NIR chairman, Sir Myles Humphreys, and the NIR Chief executive, Mr Roy Beattie, were Mr Alison's hosts. Lord O'Neill headed the RPSI delegation.

**HOLIDAY TRIP:** Don't forget the special trip on Bank Holiday Monday, August 31, when 171 takes the tour train from Whitehead via Belfast (York Road), Antrim, Lisburn and Belfast (Central) to Bangor. A fare of £2 adult (£1 U16 65+) will be charged and the schedule is as follows: Whitehead dep. 11.05, Belfast York Road dep. 12.40, Bangor arr. 15.50. A mainline steam bargain!

**SUNDAY BEST:** The Sunday afternoon steam train rides at Whitehead have been enjoying a record season with the biggest crowds ever. Sunday August 2, when the train rides formed part of Carrick Festival, was a record. The

season is due to finish on Sunday August 30 so hurry along if you haven't paid us a visit yet! Our thanks to loco crews, train staff, shop staff and diner staff for all their efforts.

PS: If you would like to lend a hand in the shop for a couple of hours one Sunday please come along. The more the merrier.

BARGAIN HUNTING: The Society's sales wing, Irish Steam Scene, has been going far and wide in its efforts to keep the Society's financial wheels turning. Congratulations to the sales squad for its good work, with the Ulster Traction Engine Club rally at Shanes Castle, Antrim, on July 17/18, being particularly worthwhile. The following events are up and coming, so if you are free to lend a hand, please tell John Richardson:

Saturday August 15 - Clandeboy rally.

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Saturday August 31 - Oul Lammass Fair, Ballycastle.

NO SLOWCOACH: The coach squad, too, has been burning the midnight oil in a major effort to get Bredin side-corridor coach 1327 out in time for the August 8 Flyer. The coach has been given a new roof covering to make it watertight and inside much of the woodwork and panelling has been replaced. Well done!

AN IRISH WELCOME: The red carpet was rolled out for the pioneer of the RPSI /Northern Ireland Tourist Board "Irish Steam Weekend" holidays, a Mr Welsh from England. Our 74-year-old visitor intrepidly made his way over via the Stranraer-Larne ferry on July 24 to join the first Flyer. He was given an escorted tour of Belfast Transport Museum, Shane's Cattle Railway and the Whitehead train rides to boot and went away suitably impressed. Our thanks to those members who acted as courier. More visitors are due to follow in our pioneer's footsteps!

FOILED AGAIN: Mid-week work squads have greatly helped advance site work at Whitehead during the summer with work concentrating on a new fence and gate configuration which will see everything look much tidier as well as being secure.

READ ON: The next issue of the Society's magazine, Five Foot Three, is now expected to roll off the presses in September.

YOUR DIARY: Just to re-cap, September dates are:

Monday August 31 (Bank Holiday)	171 & train, Whitehead-Bangor.
Saturday September 5	171 & Steam Enterprise.
Saturday September 19	171 & Steam Enterprise.
Monday September 21 (provisional)	171 & train, Bangor-Dublin.
Sat/Sun September 26/27	171 & 184 & Ben Bulbin.
Sunday September 27	171 Dublin-Belfast.
Monday September 28	171 Belfast-Whitehead.
Saturday October 3 (provisional)	184 & Dublin Bay tour.

GALA SUCCESS: The Whitehead Steam Gala was a great success, and thanks to those members and friends who took part.

MAKE A DATE: Provisional dates for Belfast meetings this Autumn are:

Tuesdays October 20, November 17 and December 15. More details soon!

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