

THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

OCTOBER 1981 NEWS-SHEET

ALL IRELAND: Yes, we did it. On Saturday September 26 171 Slieve Gullion and the gallant 184 steamed through a ceremonial tape at Collooney Junction outside Sligo to mark the completion of the Irish railway network by RPSI steam tours. It means our special trains, which started back in 1965, have now completed coverage of all the railway lines left in Ireland ... for the first time, we hope. The occasion was the Ben Bulbin railtour and our president, Lord O'Neill, took over 171's regulator for the last lap from Collooney Junction. There to meet us were various dignitaries from Sligo, including the Mayor, who at a dinner in Sligo that evening paid handsome tribute to the work of the RPSI.

SECOND TAKE: The Ben Bulbin tour itself was an outstanding success. We had some 175 enthusiasts on board - 40 down on the numbers who had booked for the original tour in May. It was 184's moment for stardom when she took over the seven-carriage train single-handed and hauled it from Longford to Ballymote. 171 had been temporarily taken off the train for some attention to the right-hand injector and later caught up to head the train into Sligo. Centrepiece of the train was the ex Great Northern Directors' Saloon which was having its first railtour trip. On the Sunday we were given a rousing send-off from Mullingar when Mullingar Town Band, complete with majorettes, gave a short performance on the station platform. The weather was kind, and all in all it was a highly successful weekend.

LOOKING AHEAD: Provisionally we are considering running the 1982 two day tour on the weekend of May 15/16 with Limerick and possibly Foynes the destination. Loco. 184 and 171.

MANY TANKS: To Denis Grimshaw for his railtour organisation, 1976-1981. Denis has now reluctantly had to give up his Council post due to business commitments, and to mark his "reign" he was presented with a specially engraved tankard at the Sligo dinner. Thanks to Denis; and good luck to his successor Ernie Gilmore.

WINTER HOLDS: Not that it's likely to be any warmer, but five of our tour train carriages have migrated south to winter at Mullingar. The hope is that having carriages based there over the winter will enable a number of steam train tours to be run on an economical basis - CIÉ carriage hire charges have recently been making it difficult to cover costs on our Republic-based tours. Plans include Kingscourt in March, Bray in April and the Claddagh to Galway in early May. Watch this space.

SEASONAL CHANGE: Because of the CIÉ electrification work, it was in the end impossible to operate the Dublin Bay tour provisionally planned for October 3. We hope this cancellation did not disrupt anyone's plans but apologise for any inconvenience which may have been caused. Instead, 184 operated a new venture, the Shannon Railtour, from Mullingar to Athlone and back on Saturday October 10. The tour, which was advertised by poster and through the grapevine, proved very worthwhile.

NEW CLIENTELE: In line with the above moves, the following PSR appointments have been made:

Paul Walsh - Republic locomotive running assistant.

Rory McNamee - Republic coach body maintenance.

Rory is organising work parties at Mullingar to attend to the carriages_- anyone who can help out the odd weekend should contact him.

FILM SHOW: Still on activities in Dublin, an RPSI film show, presented by Liam Mooney, is being held in the IRRS hall, Drumcondra, at 20.00 on Thursday January 21.

MAGIC: Merlin, the GN class V Compound 4-4-0 on loan to the Society from the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, is nearing the end of its 3-year overhaul at Belfast shipyard. Boiler work has been completed and tested, reassembly continues, and the loco leaves Harland & Wolff to be transported to Whitehead during the next month.

PACKING 'EM IN: Hardly qualifies as news to say that the Portrush Flyer has had another successful season - but it did. We carried around 1,000 passengers on the main Flyer and the Castlerock extensions were extremely well supported. The only disappointment was the weather, which was a combination of rain and cloud

The Steam Enterprise was also very worthwhile. The venture was expanded to two trains, on September 5 and September 19, and while the first was only filled to about the 200 mark, the second was a sell-out with virtually all 350 seats taken. We would hope to repeat the Steam Enterprise, but perhaps in June 1982 when the evenings are longer.

TV STAR: UTV cameras joined us on the second Flyer to prepare some footage for an adult education series to be screened during the Autumn. BBC's Scene Around Six had covered the first Flyer, and the Ben Bulbin was filmed by RTÉ.

FESTIVE TIME: The Belfast Festival being run in November has a feature of railway interest. Nick Lera, the BBC cameraman, will be showing films of Irish railway interest at the Queen's Film Theatre, 6.45 pm and 9 pm on Friday November 6.

NO ANSWER: Try ringing Whitehead 78567 and you can talk to the newest member of the Society's fleet - the new ansaphone. Of high IQ, this electronic marvel will talk to you and then soothingly record whatever message you wish to leave. Something to write home about?

WEEKENDING: Unfortunately the NI Tourist Board/RPSI Irish Steam Weekends did not end up with the hoped for coachloads ... more like a pillion load. Spread over four weekends we had a total of seven visitors, but all of these who did come thoroughly enjoyed themselves and we have received a number of most complimentary letters.

A GOOD CAUSE: Many thanks to all those who contributed to our special appeal to help the Limestone project. So far more than £300 has been raised and we are most grateful to all those who helped. More is still required, however, and any further donations should be sent to John Richardson.

SIX-WHEELER: The Society has just taken delivery of its first six-wheeled coach - an ex-Midland Great Western coach dating, we believe, from the 1890s. The coach was being used on a CIÉ breakdown train and has been gutted inside. But it will be an asset to the Society and will be particularly useful on the Sunday train rides at Whitehead. The six-wheeler, which has still got its "Ladies" compartment window, was picked up by the Ben Bulbin tour train on the way home at Drogheda.

WHATEVER NEXT: Recent visitors to Whitehead will have noticed that we have acquired another diesel shunting engine. It is an 0-4-0 Ruston & Hornsby, built around 1954, and given to us by the CSÉ (Sugar Board) in the Republic. The shunter last worked at Carlow and it arrived at Whitehead at the end of August on a low-loader. It will require some attention before it is able to operate, but it will be a useful member of the fleet, helping the Shell diesel shunter 23.

MODEL EVENT: If you're in Dublin on the October Bank Holiday weekend (October 24/25/26) and you're not practising for the marathon, drop in at the model railway exhibition at 'Wesley College, south Dublin and see the RPSI stand. All help would be welcomed at the stand, too.

MAKING TRACKS: Recently there has been some press publicity about the Scarva-Banbridge scheme. The Banbridge Junction Railway Company has been licensed as a trading name in a legal move preparatory, to setting up a company, as part of the promotion of the scheme. Meanwhile, land negotiations are continuing.

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