

AUGUST 1982 NEWS-SHEET

AN EVENTFUL DAY: Few of those closely involved in the operation of the Portrush Flyer on Saturday August 7 will forget the day quickly. No.4 made her inaugural run on the Flyer after a four year overhaul, but because the 2-6-4T was still running in after the repairs, it was decided 4-4-0 No.171 should be put in light steam at Whitehead during the morning "just in case". Unfortunately No.4 ran a hot box on the way to Portrush and through the good efforts of the RPSI loco maintenance team and the NIR loco crew, the tank engine managed to get the eight carriage train through to Portrush, albeit about two hours late due to being out of path. Meanwhile, word had been got to Whitehead to prepare 171 for the road, and one of the NIR crew was ferried by road from Antrim to Whitehead, the car picking up a second NIR driver at Whiteabbey. Using the emergency cross-over at Bleach Green, 171 managed to reach Portrush at 14.30, just in time to work the "Castlerock extension". 171 hauled the train to Castlerock and back, arriving in Portrush again around 16.00 and, incredibly, the train was ready for the scheduled 17.00 departure. Arrival back in York Road and Whitehead was spot on time, and the Flyer overtook 4 at Ballymoney. The 2-6-4T eventually got back to York Road under her own steam at close to midnight, and on Tuesday August 10 was hauled dead to Whitehead by NIR. So, sterling work by both the RPSI volunteers and the NIR staff saved the day. The sight of 171 arriving in Portrush to take over the Flyer stirred memories of the day in 1974 (August 17, to be precise) when 4 performed a similar service after 171 failed through bad coal. And the last time there were two steam engines in Portrush on the same day? Perhaps July 14, 1969, when 4 and 53 were there.

THE NEXT STEP: Sadly 4 is ruled out until, probably, next spring, with 171 operating the final Flyer and both Steam Enterprise trains. No.4 was still regarded as being in the "running in" state, and had completed two light engine trips and two trips with carriages on the main line for test purposes. She had also operated the Sunday train rides twice, and shunted Whitehead, but of course in no way could this compare to standard railway company running in, which involved weeks of shunting, then a progression to ballast trains and banking duties before moving to local passenger turns. The overhaul involved the re-metalling of 14 bearings in all - six main boxes and eight side rods and big ends, and only two of these caused serious trouble - the right driving box and the left big-end. Now the plan is to install the ex-York Road wheel lathe in the autumn at Whitehead, and to machine the journals before the engine enters traffic. Installation of the lathe is a job where many hands will make light work, so if you want to see 4 back on the road, come down to Whitehead this weekend and there will be a job waiting for you.

STANDING ROOM ONLY: At the time of writing it looks as though the August 21 Flyer is heading towards a sell-out, with a full 350 passenger load in the eight bogie train. On July 24, when 171 deputised for 4, we had 200 passengers, and on August 7, there were 300 on board. On the first Castlerock extension, on August 7, about 170 were carried.

HIGH PROFILE: The Flyer was featured on RTÉ's Countrywide programme on August 5 and was the subject for a full page feature in the Irish News on July 26.

STEAM ENTERPRISE: Enclosed in this circular you will find your Steam Enterprise booking form, and, if you live in Northern Ireland, a poster which we

would be grateful if you could have displayed in your local shop. More booking forms are available from the Steam Enterprise officer. So spread the word, get together a group of friends, and make a proper day out of it on the Steam Enterprise.

STEAM TRAIN RIDES: The Steam Train Rides at Whitehead are enjoying a good season with big crowds rolling into the Excursion Station week after week. The train itself, and the dining car and the shop have all been doing brisk business, and our thanks to all the helpers concerned. Because loco 3 "R.H. Smyth" is in need of some attention, it looks like 171 will be on train rides duty until the season finishes on August 29.

SEPTEMBER 25: Plans are still a bit uncertain for the proposed Dublin outing on September 25, so don't arrange anything definite. In any event, time could not permit the planned run over the Howth branch, so that is out for sure. Watch this space.

A TENDER MOVE: Plans are afoot to move 186's tender by road from Mullingar to Whitehead on the weekend of August 14, using the RPSI lorry for the job. The idea is that sheet metal on the tender can be replaced by our ACE worker at Whitehead. Meanwhile, work is proceeding on having 184 re-tubed at Mullingar.

THE CORK GROUP: Recently a group of RPSI members from the Cork area approached the Council with a proposal that the Society should set up a Mullingar-style base at Mallow engine shed. The idea was that the first project would be carriage restoration, perhaps moving on to loco work as expertise was gained. Chairman Robert Edwards visited Cork in July to speak to both the local members and CIÉ officials, and was given a very warm welcome by both. However, at its meeting the Council decided reluctantly not to embark on the project at this stage. The Council's concern was over the practicalities of administering and supervising a scheme at such long range. Already the administration of Whitehead and Mullingar proves to be very time consuming and the workload falls on only a few shoulders. So it was with regret the Council turned down the Mallow idea.

YOUR DEADLINE: Five Foot Three editor Alan Edgar announces that the next issue of the magazine is due out before Christmas. So if you have an article in mind, put pen to paper now and have it with Alan by the end of September.

BELFAST AREA: Plans are under way for the winter series of meetings at St Jude's Church Hall, Sunnyside Street, Belfast, starting time 19.30. The dates, for the autumn are October 19, November 16 and December 14, and so far we have arranged for a cine film show by Derek Henderson in October, and an inter-departmental railway quiz for the December meeting. The meetings card will be put in the next circular.

RAILBUS: Our thanks to NIR for laying on a trip for the RPSI on board the new BREL/Leyland railbus. Unfortunately accommodation was limited to 52 members, so word was spread by way of a notice at Whitehead instead of via a circular. The trip, from York Road via Antrim and Lisburn to Bangor, on August 6, was very successful.

TRANSPORT OF DELIGHT: When you're next down at Whitehead, don't forget to pop your head round the corner of road number five in the new shed to catch a glimpse of the restoration work in progress on ex GSR all 1st 1142 (built 1912). External paintwork is in the course of completion, and recently a sign-writer added the lettering. Well done, the RPSI coach Squad and the ACE workers.