

WHAT A SCORCHER: Our veteran 4-4-0 No.171 Slieve Gullion turned in one of her best performances for years at the head of the Belfast to Dublin and back Steam Enterprise on September 4. The run bore comparison with the performances of the stronger class VS and Compound engines. One experienced timer has described it as one of the top three or four steam performances on the Belfast-Dublin line in the last 18 years. On the way to Dublin the train touched 72 mph on the way down the Wellington Bank into Dundalk, and arrived at Connolly virtually spot on time after hitting 69 mph down Rush bank. On the return run the train ran non-stop for the 55 miles from Drogheda to Portadown, and with a load of eight bogies, including the 12-wheeled Rosslare brake, the train held 35 mph up the Wellington bank, accelerating from 35 at the border to 39 mph at Adavoyle. Now the loop at Goraghwood has been removed, 171 got a run through Jerretspass and touched 69 mph there. The time of 26 minutes from passing Dundalk to passing Goraghwood was two to three minutes inside the standard steam schedule - and that was despite a 20 mph restriction at Bessbrook. First class stuff, and a real tribute both to the NIR footplate crew and to the RPSI loco maintenance department who have toiled long and hard to get 171 in such fine condition.

TAKE YOUR SEATS: About 180 passengers travelled on the Steam Enterprise, but to cover our costs we needed around the 200 mark. At time of writing bookings are coming in steadily for the September 18 train, but it all goes to underline just how much we rely on the fund-raising operation to keep the whole Society moving.

BYE BYE FLYER: The Portrush Flyer completed another successful season on August 21 with a total passenger complement of 360 on the last train. The Castlerock extensions were also well supported, but overall the Flyer operation only covered its costs cry around the £150 mark - although there was in addition the income from shop and diner. For the record, 171 performed well on that Flyer.

QUICK RESPRAY: Quick work by RPSI members avoided 171 getting an unexpected and unwanted re-paint on the Belfast Central railtour of August 30. Some vandals who were perched on a footbridge on the Central line near Botanic tipped a pot of bright red paint over the engine as the train went under, with the result that the dome and part of the top of the boiler were in a totally new livery. But the engine was quickly taken off to Central Services Depot and the loco was given a quick scrub-down with lashings of diesel which stopped the paint hardening. Incidentally, it was not thought the RPSI train was a particular target for the vandals - such incidents are not unprecedented in that area.

LEAVING OUR STAMP: The fame of the RPSI obviously knows no bounds. When the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Mr Jim Prior, was looking round the Belfast Stamp and Coin exhibition on September 11, he was presented with a set of RPSI stamps as a special souvenir. The presentation was made by RPSI philatelic agent Peter McBride, who organised the exhibition and escorted the VIP party round.

THE THIRD ESTATE: The RPSI is moving into a new market on September 25 with the chartering of our train to a group of lawyers. The legal eagles are making the trip to Dublin and back behind 171, and will have exclusive use of the three-coach train on the way back to Belfast. The train to Dublin is the standard eight bogie rake and we are leaving five bogies at

Connolly for transfer to Mullingar. 171 leaves Dublin again at 15.15 if you want to get a picture of steam under the wires, which are up between Clontarf and Howth Junction.

SANTA TRAINS: The summer's just about over, so it's time to turn our thoughts to the next big steam event of the year - the Santa Claus steam train rides. Full details will be circulated with a despatch in November, but here are the outline plans:

Whitehead - Train rides in the site with loco 3 on Saturday December 4 and Sundays November 28, December 5, 12 and 19.

Mullingar - Mystery trips around Mullingar on Saturday December 11 and around Athlone on Saturday December 18, all with loco 184.

It will be the usual format - a train ride, a chance for the children to meet Santa, and a glass of Christmas cheer for the mums and dads.

A CAPITAL IDEA: The London area of the Irish Railway Record Society has asked us to give details of its meetings - all RPSI members very welcome. All the get-togethers are at the Fred Tallant Hall, 153 Drummond Street, London NW1 (a five minute walk from Euston, Euston Square and Warren Street London Transport Underground stations) and they start at 7.15 pm prompt. Dates are:

October 21	21st anniversary slide show, arranged by Lance King. Followed at 9 pm by the AGM.
November 18	"Railway Steamships in the Irish Sea", an illustrated talk by Dr A.W.H. Pearsall.
January 20	To be announced.
February 17	To be announced.
March 17	A St. Patrick's Day Special, an illustrated talk by Lance King.

Keep an eye on Railway World and Railway Magazine for details of the January and February meetings.

BELFAST MEETINGS: Don't forget the Belfast area meetings, details of which are included on the enclosed meetings card.

A NEW LINE: Irish Steam Scene has recently taken delivery of the RPSI's latest train, but don't expect it to be taking a turn on the Steam Enterprise or the Portrush Flyer. It's a 7½" gauge model railway which comprises a diesel loco and carriages which children sit astride on. There is also 220 ft of track and the outfit has been a regular attraction at recent Steam Galas at Whitehead. Now Irish Steam Scene will be hawking the new train around the country where it will not only gain us admission to a wider variety of sales events but will also prove to be a useful fundraiser on its own.

STEAM TRAIN RIDES: The Whitehead Steam Train Rides completed another very worthwhile season on August 29. The Train Rides are now a very regular tourist attraction and something that Whitehead takes in its stride. Many thanks to all those who helped on all fronts.

PILOT SCHEME: As you will note from the report of the EGM (enclosed), the go-ahead has been given by the Society for the setting up of a limited liability company to construct and operate the Banbridge Junction Railway. The first tangible sign of this is likely to be the establishment of a pilot scheme at Laurencetown, at which a Whitehead-style steam train ride operation will be started using 3BG "Guinness" and a six-wheeled carriage. All help will be appreciated, and if you can lend a hand, contact Peter Scott.

WHITEHEAD WORK: The project outlined in the last news-sheet to install the wheel lathe at Whitehead has now started and work is in progress every Saturday and Sunday. There is a lot of unskilled work involved, so please come down and help - even if it's just for an hour or two. Another big job at Whitehead which is planned for this winter is the installation of the shear-legs for lifting carriages.

FINALLY: Don't forget to get those ballot tickets sold in time for the Whitehead Railwayana sale on October 16. See you there!

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