

JUNE 1983 NEWS-SHEET

FLYER TIME AGAIN: The famous Portrush Flyer train celebrates its 10th birthday this year, the first Flyer season having been back in 1973. And there's another reason for celebration on board this year's Flyer - our trusty locomotive No.171 "Slieve Gullion" is 70 years old, the loco having been built by Beyer Peacock back in 1913. As you will gather, we are relying again on 171 for this year's Flyer, as work on 4 has taken longer than anticipated, and the engine is not now expected to be ready for the Flyer. Part of the problem with 4, in fact the major part of the problem, has been a shortage of manpower at Whitehead on Saturdays and Sundays. There are many simple jobs which will have to be done, so why not come down and lend a hand. Peter Scott will be only too pleased to welcome you onto the squad, and your afternoon's work will speed the return of 4 to active service.

* This year we have been circulating details of the Flyer to various social clubs and there has been a very healthy response. So if you want to make sure of your seat, don't delay in sending in your booking.

RAILTOUR ROUND-UP: The RPSI chalked up another major success with the 1983 two-day tour, the Port Lairge to Waterford on May 14/15. Locos 171 and 184 turned in fine performances, the carriages looked very well, the dining car did record business and we ran so well to time that at one station we left railtour organiser Ernie Gilmore behind! (He caught up by car.) We had a total of 185 full-fare passengers, the breakdown being 85 Belfast, 50 Dublin, and 50 London. Since the tour ran we have had quite a number of complementary letters from pleased participants, so well done all concerned!

The Claddagh Railtour from Mullingar to Galway (April 23) was also successful, the train being filled to bursting point for the afternoon Galway-Attymon Junction run.

ONE FOR THE DIARY: The provisional plans for the 1984 Traen 150 RPSI two-day railtour involve a weekend visit to Galway, the event being called "The Galway Bay Tour" and the date ... May 12/13.

IN THE PICTURE: Following the involvement of 171 in the BBC film "Aunt Suzanne", we have been starring yet again. This time some lineside footage of 171 on the two-day tour and associated empty coach working was taken for a forthcoming production of "The Country Girls" by Edna O'Brien.

NIACRO NEWS: The project being organised by the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders at Whitehead has got off to a satisfactory start with the squad already busy fitting out the shed in which they will undertake coach restoration. RPSI member Frank Gallagher is at the helm as supervisor, and also supervising is Jim Robinson, who "graduated" through the RPSI ACE scheme. NIACRO have bought three ex-NIR full brake vehicles in connection with the scheme, and one of these vehicles will be used as a tool-shed.

ACE CARD: Meanwhile the ACE (Action for Community Employment) scheme continues on all cylinders at Whitehead. We have three workers in the squad, and their efforts will be apparent to all who travel on the Flyer. Have a look at coaches 91 (North Atlantic brake) and 1142 (Great Southern all 1st) and see what we mean.

HALL ABOARD: Dates for next winter's Belfast meetings at St Jude's Hall, Sunnyside Street, are:

Tuesdays October 20, November 17, December 15, January 19, February 16, and March 15.

Full details of meetings with the next circular.

A CLASS AFFAIR: This year's Schools Day at Whitehead was another feather in the Society's cap. It was operated on June 7 & 8 with 171 performing train ride duties and various guides shepherding the children on a conducted tour of the site. Over the two days we had more than 600 children, including one trainload from Coleraine who came on a special diesel organised by RPSI member Arthur Wickham. Chief bombardier at Whitehead was site officer Johnny Glendinning, who masterminded the whole operation. Again, well done all concerned.

BACK IN TRAINING: The Whitehead Sunday afternoon steam train ride season got underway as planned on June 5. Our stalwart 171 will be providing motive power until re-tubing work on 3 "R.H. Smyth" is completed next month. A large crowd turned up on the opening day, auguring well for the rest of the season. It's every Sunday, 2 pm to 5 pm, so bring your family and friends down for a visit. From now until the end of August.

ONE GOOD TURN: The former York Road wheel lathe is now installed and in full operation at Whitehead, its immediate task being the turning of 4's driving wheels. The patient loco staff have already had to reassure one visitor that the machine's function is not to sharpen the wheels, although mind you it's an idea. So as new tyres can be put on the wheels at some later stage, the Society has now purchased the former York Road wheel press which was going for scrap. All the modern diesel train facilities are designed only to cope with the much smaller diameter diesel railcar wheels, so we have to become self-sufficient.

SPECIAL NOTICE: 184 was expected to do a run from Mullingar to Athlone and back on Saturday June 18 with a special which was hired by Mullingar Chamber of Commerce. CIÉ stock was to be used. Then in September there is a possibility of an RPSI steam train being used on Monday September 5 for a special from Belfast to Portadown & back to mark the Chamber of Commerce's centenary. RPSI stock, including the directors' saloon, dining car, and renovated carriages, is then to be taken on a two-day diesel-hauled tour of the NIR system.

POWERFUL IDEA: Under consideration at present by the railtour sub-committee is the idea of a "Dublin suburban steam weekend" on September 23/24. As CIÉ watchers will know, the first of the EMUs are due to enter passenger service in October, so it would be a chance, though hopefully not a final one, to cover the Bray and Howth lines behind steam. Watch this space.

BRANCHING OUT: Preliminary talks have been held with Down District Council who are trying to interest the RPSI in the preservation and operation of the Downpatrick-Ardglass branch. Meanwhile discussions are continuing with Banbridge District Council to firm up the Council's position on the proposed Banbridge Junction Railway.

WATER, WATER: Just for the record, the RPSI made history at Carlow & Kilkenny on the Port Lairge tour. It was the first time we have taken water from a fire tender. Although this is of course a common practice on British tours, we have up to now been able to have existing water columns reinstated. Loco turning etc. of course wasn't as easy - 184 had to run light engine to Rosslare Harbour to turn (no table at Waterford) and likewise 171 had to make a Marathon trip to service overnight at Limerick.

NOW IN STOCK: The Society has recently purchased from NIR three carriages - ex-NCC open 3rd 80-seater 526, ex-GNR open 3rd 72-seater 727, and ex-GNR open brake 595. All are in need of restoration.

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