

AUGUST 1983 NEWS-SHEET

DOUBLE VISION: Passengers on the August 6 Portrush Flyer had a double treat in store. Not only were there two engines at the head of the train (4 & 171) but it was the maiden voyage of the restored UTA dining car 87. No.4, our class WT was on the train for running in purposes, the theory being that if anything went wrong she could come off the train leaving No.171 "Slieve Gullion" to keep the train on schedule. 4 had earlier been run in on the train rides at Whitehead and with a light engine trip to York Road on July 27 during which the loco was weighed and the springs adjusted. On August 4 she hauled a four coach train from Whitehead to Ballymena and back for more running in. 4 certainly pulled her weight on the Flyer, operating the Castlerock extension single-handed, and the double-headed train blasting its way out of Ballymena and Antrim on the return journey was a sight to behold. The six main axleboxes which had been re-metalled all proved satisfactory, but the right big end was found to be carrying more heat than was desirable. Now the big end has been re-metalled and a further running-in trip was being scheduled at the time of writing. When the results of this are known it will be decided whether 4 or 171 will work the Steam Enterprise. Watch this space.

* The double-header is thought to have been the first such trip on the NCC main line since the RPSI's Dalriada railtour in May 1967 when 53 piloted 4 from York Road to Ballymena.

FIRST SITTING: As mentioned above, the August 6 Flyer was also notable for the first appearance of our new dining car, UTA-built 87 which dates from 1950 and which was withdrawn from service around 1971. Our mid-week squad at Whitehead has been putting in sterling work on the restoration of the carriage and the job was finished off by a professional sign-writer who added the LMS NCC Dining Car-lettering to the exterior. Inside, the carriage has been virtually rebuilt with the seating area extended to accommodate 32 diners. The diner has a smaller kitchen area than the RPSI's other diner, 88 but this is compensated for by the vastly larger bar area. To avoid congestion, there is a special hatch at the dining side for the dispensing of soft drinks, teas, coffees, hamburgers and confectionery. 87 was used for the Sunday train rides afternoon teas on August 7 and now looks like being a regular fixture on the tour train while 88 receives some well-deserved attention after 10 years of regular service.

FLYING HIGH: Thanks to some good work on the publicity front, the Flyer has been enjoying a highly successful 10th birthday season. On the July 23 train we had around 250 passengers while on August 6 the figure was up to around the 320 mark - almost fully booked. The Castlerock extension has also been more popular than ever, with the passenger load over the 300 mark each time. An added attraction, incidentally, on the July 23 run was the inclusion in the train of coach 50, the Great Northern directors' saloon.

TICKET TO RIDE: As expected, our 0-6-0ST No.3 "R.H. Smyth" returned to service in early July after partial re-tubing and some attention to the axleboxes. Since then she has been a real eye-catcher at the front of the Sunday afternoon train rides (except when 4 has taken over for running-in). The train rides have been attracting a regular support and both the shop and the diner have been doing brisk business. The season ends on August 28 - so if you haven't made it so far, make tracks for Whitehead now.

ANY OLD RAGS: An appeal from loco running officer Brian Hill for fresh supplies of rags for Whitehead. If you can help, ring Brian or bring a bagful down to Whitehead. Arise and shine, as it were!

A BIT OF ENTERPRISE: Included in this circular you will find a brochure and booking form for the Steam Enterprise trips to Dublin on Saturdays September 3 & 17. With the new Dublin suburban electrification system due to come into operation later this year interest in this year's Enterprise is intense, so don't delay in sending off for your tickets. It's the third season for the Steam Enterprise, a venture which has really caught the public imagination. See the enclosed form for details as to how to get your tickets - and don't forget about the members' season ticket.

SEPTEMBER SCHEDULE: Our plans for late September are still a bit up in the air, but a circular will be despatched once things firm up. One possible format seems at present to be:

Saturday September 23 - RPSI stock to Dublin with diesel haulage, then Dublin Bay railtour with 184 (possibly also Sunday). Meanwhile - RPSI steam loco. (4 or 171) with remaining stock from Steam Enterprise train from Central Station Belfast to Whitehead (also on Saturday September 23).

It should be stressed that this is conjecture at present, but stand by for further details.

TREASURER'S NOTES: Treasurer John Richardson wishes to acknowledge a donation of £250 for coach purchase from London area - shown in last year's accounts under donations to coach fund. It is gratifying, comments John, that we receive sustained support from our cross-channel team not only in cash but in kind. A quantity of books - since turned into cash, realising almost £200 - was also donated. Many thanks to all concerned.

A FRAME-UP: We're hoping-to launch this year's Belfast area meetings with a members' slide night on Tuesday, October 18, the venue being as usual St Jude's Hall, Sunnyside Street, Belfast. Details will be confirmed in the next circular, but at present our idea is that members will be invited to bring along their best dozen slides on any railway theme. So start digging through your slide boxes now. On November 15 Cecil Bell will be showing us cine film of the days of steam on the NCC, while in December (13th), we're going to have a model railway night.

SAFETY-FIRST: Thomas Charters has been appointed assistant safety PSR at Whitehead.

KEEPING IN SHAPE: A recent acquisition at Whitehead has been a shaping machine which will be used for machining engine parts such axleboxes and crossheads. Formerly such work was performed on the milling machine but the shaping machine is much more straightforward to operate.

A TENDER TOUCH: Work is continuing on replacing sheet metal on the tender tank of loco No.85 "Merlin", on loan to the Society from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

SPREADING THE WORD: Also enclosed in this circular you will find a copy of the Steam Enterprise poster (if you live in Northern Ireland, that is). This is not designed for your bedroom wall - it's for the noticeboard at work or the window of your local garage or corner shop. This is one of the key ways of spreading the word about the Enterprise, so make use of it. Further posters and Enterprise brochures from Robin Morton.