

# THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

President: The Rt. Hon. The Lord O'Neill  
Vice-President: The Rt. Hon. The Lord Dunleath



RPSI NEWS-SHEET FEBRUARY 1985

Happy New Year

Traen 150 has been and gone, however there are more anniversaries to come including the twenty-first birthday of the RPSI and Cork City's 800 Year celebrations. More of this later.

Santa's Exhausted

Because approximately one thousand eight hundred and sixty folk of all ages (940 children, 920 adults for the statisticians) made their way to his grotto at Whitehead; there are even rumours of treasurer John Richardson looking out his white beard and wellie boots to lend the old boy a hand!

Night to Remember

The monthly meeting at St Jude's Hall, Belfast consisted of a series of talks concerned with GNR(I) Compound No.85 "Merlin" currently in the last stages of overhaul at Whitehead. The whole evening was chaired by Charles Friel. Fred Graham reminisced on the arrival of the first "Compound" at Adelaide shed in April 1932, Irwyn Pryce gave a talk on the practice and performance of the locos in service, John Friel provided details about the negotiations to bring "Merlin" out of the Belfast Transport Museum and Peter Scott revealed the amazing amount of work carried out both at Harland & Wolf and Whitehead. The meeting also heard from John Moore, Keeper of Transport at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, and last but not least Lord Dunleath whose generosity has made the whole venture possible. A record crowd of 150 attended the meeting which went on until 11.30 p.m. rounding off with some cine by Fred Cooper of the Compounds in service and by Charles Friel of 85 in steam at Whitehead on Christmas Eve. Lord O'Neill proposed the vote of thanks to all who had taken part.

Next Month

On February 19 at St Jude's Hall, Sunnyside Street, Belfast, Dr D.B. McNeill will be speaking about Irish boat trains.

Magic Moment

Those who missed the meeting on 15th January, will be interested to know that ex-GNR(I) 4-4-0 "Merlin" was in steam at Whitehead on Christmas Eve for the first time since Summer 1963. During the steam test 85 shunted up and down the siding, at first hauled by No.3 "R.H. Smyth" and then under her own steam. With Peter Scott at the regulator No.85 actually got into compound working. Once the test was over the corks popped and a champagne toast was drunk by all concerned to mark this historic

occasion. Now there is more work to be done and a further series of tests will be carried out.

#### Latest

A couple of updates on the latest edition of Five Foot Three (it's in the envelope that contained this circular):

Coaches: Because of ongoing maintenance at Whitehead it was decided not to send the coaches for the Cork 800 railtour down until early May of this Year.

Locomotives: New smokebox doors required for locos 3 and 171 have been made and fitted at Whitehead using a technique devised by Peter Scott and his merry men of the loco department. The new 4' diameter smokebox doors are made of  $\frac{5}{16}$ " sheet steel, with the correct shape being created through hydraulic pressure.

#### Happy Anniversary

The 58 members and guests who attended the RPSI 20th anniversary dinner held at the Drumkeen Hotel Belfast on December 1 had a most enjoyable evening. Guest of honour for the occasion was Sir Myles Humphreys, the Northern Ireland Railways chairman, who paid a very warm tribute to the Society and assured those present of continuing support and co-operation from the company. Speaking on behalf of the Society were our president, Lord O'Neill, and chairman Sullivan Boomer. After the meal we were treated to a slide show by our official photographer, Charles Friel.

#### Something to Muse On?

Readers may recall a reference at the last AGM to the RPSI's railway museum proposal. The Society's suggestion is that Whitehead would be a suitable site for the relocation of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum's Witham Street Gallery (the former Belfast Transport Museum). The RPSI Council set up a working party to further investigate the proposal and now a detailed 48-page report has been produced.

The document, which is illustrated with photos, artist's impressions and diagrams, is being submitted to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Carrickfergus Borough Council and other interested parties, including the education committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly which is scrutinising the Government's response to the Museums Review.

Our thanks for technical assistance are due to: R.C. Leith partnership, Architects. Moore, McDade Dowse, Quantity Surveyors. Gillen & Pryce, Structural Engineers. Copies of the report are available to members at £5 (including postage) from the Whitehead Railway Project, Castlevue Road, Whitehead.

#### Parting Cup

The Association of Railway Preservation Societies Annual Award has gone back to its permanent home in the National Railway Museum at York, thanks to member Malcolm Gunn who deposited it safely on his way home to London. The trophy has been on display at museums, shop windows, the NI Tourist Board and of course the two-day tour and Whitehead. Hopefully it won't be too long before the trophy returns!

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| Slap on the Wrist Time | Alright, so we were wrong to state in the last news-sheet that the DART provided the first crossing of steam and electric trains in Ireland. The Drumm battery-electric of the 1930s Dublin suburban scene are one previous example. We meant, of course, to say steam and OVERHEAD electric.   |
| Snapping up a Prize    | Congratulations to the three members who won prizes in the RPSI Christmas photographic competition held at St Jude's Hall, Sunnyside Street, Belfast, on December 11. They were Fred Graham, Aubrey Dale and Leslie Cooper. Winners of a quiz about the RPSI were Paul Newell and Colin Holliday. Well done all, and thanks to judges Ernie Gilmore and Andy Crockart.  |
| Sub Zero               | A reminder that your RPSI Subscription for 1985 is now due. The rate is £6 adult, £3 Under 16/Over 65 - pegged again despite inflation. Subscriptions go to Mervyn Darragh. An alternative for members in the Republic is to send your IR£7.50 or IR£3.50 to Sam Carse. All cheques payable to "The RPSI" please.   |
| Mullingar              | Loco No.184 and coach 1328 still occupy most of the time of the workforce - more details next time round.   |
| The Mogul Has Landed   | <p>Ex D&amp;SER 2-6-0 No.461 (D&amp;SER 15) has arrived at Whitehead for overhaul and will be the next major project after ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 No.85 "Merlin". Most of the dismantling has been effected by the lads at Mullingar, but the loco requires the use of the wheel lathe and other facilities at Whitehead.</p> <p>The loco made the 120 mile road trip from Mullingar to Whitehead in two stages, being transported by low-loader. The first was on Sunday November 25 from Mullingar to Dundalk. Then, after customs clearance 461 came North, creating history by being the first steam loco to use the Westlink by-pass in Belfast!</p> <p>The journey was trouble-free, the only incident being in Kells, where the Christmas lights had to be propped up to allow the loco underneath!</p> |
| Going Public           | Enclosed with this circular you will find a publicity leaflet produced for the RPSI by our local authority, Carrickfergus Borough Council. In addition Bord Fáilte have helped on the publicity front by issuing a colourful advance booking leaflet for the Cork 800 railtour. Finally there is a copy of the usual ARPS yellow leaflet which brings us to the attention of enthusiasts and tourists from all over the British Isles.  |

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