

THE RAILWAY PRESERATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

JANUARY 1986 NEWS-SHEET

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Apologies, first of all, for the lengthy break in transmission. The last circular was in October, so there's quite a lot of news to catch up on. At that time we were looking forward to the 70 class DEMU run, the 85 running in trips, and the Santa season. All those events have now taken place, successfully, and we're looking forward to another busy operating season.

DATES FOR THE DIARY You'll note from the enclosed material that your sub is due on January 31, and that the AGM is on February 28. There is also a list of the proposed operations programme.

HALL ABOARD

Don't forgot also the Belfast area meetings at St Jude's Church Hall, Sunnyside Street, Belfast, of a Tuesday evening. Already this season the hall has been filled to overflowing to hear about Belfast trams, the Co. Donegal Railway, and the Limited Mails. Still to come are:

Tuesday Jan. 21 - Railway Reflections slide show.

Tuesday Feb. 18 - Tom McDevitte of "Day by Day".

Tuesday Mar. 18 - Irish Steam Cinema with Fred Cooper.

Make sure you don't miss the shows - it's a great night's crack. 7.30 pm start.

QUICK ON THE DRAW

If you're still holding onto your Autumn draw tickets - forget it, the winners have all been sent their prizes! They were:

1. Kathleen Hughes, Bessbrook.
2. Paul McManus, Omagh.
3. A. McMorran, Donaghadee.
4. Linda Krebel, Surrey.
5. A Robertson, Carlisle.

Congratulations to all the prize-winners and many thanks to all members who supported the event. It provided a much-needed boost for funds.

SORRY, SOIREE

Unfortunately we had to cancel the soiree planned for November 30 owing to lack of support. Our thanks to those members who did submit bookings, and sorry for the disappointment.

MODERN ATTRACTION

You win some, you lose some. The RPSI's excursion into the world of diesel traction (the 70 class DEMU farewell trip to Londonderry) was an outstanding success. A packed three-car set made the last ever non-stop run from Belfast York Road to Londonderry Waterside in record time and it was a run which will live long in the memory of all the participants!

It proved impossible, however, to make arrangements as had been hoped for an inaugural trip on board the 450 class DEMUs. However, the units are now in operation on the Larne line, and modern traction fans will already have "bagged" them.

SAN-TASTIC

Santa's now back in Lapland, no doubt with his feet up, after what must have been the most successful Christmas season ever at Whitehead and he even managed to fit in a surprise visit to Mullingar as well. All the Sunday steamings at Whitehead attracted very worthwhile crowds, some of them hitting the

500+ mark in terms of adults & children. All enjoyed their train ride and their punch, but the highlight was the visit to Santa's grotto. Loco in charge was No.3 "R.H. Smyth".

At Mullingar, Santa steam train rides were operated between there and Killucan with No.184 on Saturday December 14. Unfortunately there was not sufficient time to let the members know, and we apologise if any would-be supporters failed to hear about it through the grapevine.

MAINLINE MERLIN

Subscribers to the British railway magazines will have been able to keep tabs on the progress made over the autumn in the running in of loco No.85 "Merlin". The loco completed four day-long trips hauling RPSI coaches. They were:

Sunday October 13 - to York Road & back (twice).
Sunday October 27 to Greenisland and Larne (twice).
Saturday November 9 - to Antrim and back.
Saturday November 23 - To Belfast Central & back.

The highlight was undoubtedly the final run, when brilliant lighting conditions coincided with 85's return to Great Northern metals. Our thanks to those members who supported the trips.

The trips revealed a few teething troubles - as they were intended to do - and those were dealt with as they occurred. The loco passed out with a generally clean bill of health and now the loco department are looking ahead to the summer. We're We're planning an official launch for 85 sometime in June, with a mainline run (more details later) and then, if all goes well, and the turntable is in operation at Coleraine, we would consider putting 85 on one of the Flyer trains. More information at the AGM.

DIG DEEP

While Enterprise Ulster will be digging deep this spring to build the pit for Coleraine turntable, the RPSI Council appeals to the members to "dig deep" in their pockets to help fund the project. We have now:

- * Agreed a provisional start date of March 1 with Enterprise Ulster.
- * Estimated the project will take about two months to complete.
- * Received approval for an NI Tourist Board 33 pc grant on materials.
- * Asked Coleraine Borough Council for help.
- * Been told that the total bill for materials will be £8,500.
- * Been told by NIR that 85 cannot operate to Portrush unless there is a turntable facility.

That, in stark terms, is the position. We have received approval from the bank to extend our overdraft, but we want to pay that back as quickly as possible - and of course we have to pay interest on it all the time. In broad terms the Society will have to meet a bill of around £5,000 within the next six months if there is to be any hope of the table being in operation for the Portrush Flyer 1986. Now it is over to the membership. Thanks to those who have already contributed to

the Coleraine turntable appeal but if you haven't, please do so now.

NEW FACE

Our new membership secretary is Paul McCann, who has taken over from Mervyn Darragh. Mervyn had given us several years of faithful service but felt like a change and our best thanks go to him for his valuable assistance. Best of luck to Paul (and the computer).

MULLINGAR STOCK

The RPSI has recently purchased a number of redundant coaches from CIÉ and those are currently based at Mullingar. They saw their first revenue-earning service on October 26 when 184 operated the Maynooth shuttle, and again during the Santa train rides they were in use. The Maynooth excursions were hampered by operating difficulties not of the Society's making and sadly the final trip of the day had to be cancelled and almost IR£800 handed back in refunds.

FIVE FOOT THREE

The forthcoming 21st anniversary issue of the RPSI magazine (complete with colour cover of 85) is due back from the printers in February and will be circulated with the AGM reports in March (and that's -a promise!).

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