

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Queen's University Boathouse, Friday 28th February 1986

Lord O'Neill presided, and 48 members were present.

Apologies were received from Johnny Glendinning, Sam Carse, Rory McNamee, Denis McCabe, Paddy O'Brien, Leslie McAllister, Arthur Wickham, Julian Durore, Barry Pickup and Henry Jack.

Lord O'Neill opened the proceedings by paying tribute to member Tommy Dorrian, whose death had taken place on January 14, 1986. The President referred to Tommy's devotion to the Society and said his passing would be a great loss to the Society. A minute's silence was then observed by all present.

The minutes of the last AGM, which had already been circulated, were agreed and signed, on the proposal of Ernie Gilmore, seconded by John Harcourt.

The Chairman, Sullivan Boomer, read his report, which was adopted on the proposal of Michael Henderson, seconded by Paul Newell.

The Secretary, Robin Morton, read his report, which was adopted on the proposal of Derek Carter, seconded by Malcolm Gunn.

The Treasurer, John Richardson, read his report, which was adopted on the proposal of Colin Holliday, seconded by Derek Carter. The accounts were presented to the meeting.

Lord O'Neill paid tribute to J. Richardson, who had announced he was standing down after 20 years' service as Treasurer of the RPSI.

Coopers & Lybrand were re-appointed auditors on the proposal of Robin Morton, seconded by Ernie Gilmore.

Two motions which had been agreed at the last AGM were then ratified unanimously without further debate. They were:

- a) Increase in annual sub to £7 adults, £3.50 U16/65+, from January 31, 1986.
- b) Empowering Council to lend, lease, or hire locomotives, stock or equipment to other societies, organisations or individuals, subject to satisfactory legal and insurance arrangements.

Reports were then presented by Peter Scott (Locomotive Department) and Jeremy Saulters (Coach Department). In his address P. Scott expressed concern about the shortage of volunteer labour at Whitehead, stating that only three members now attended Whitehead regularly every Saturday afternoon to work on locomotives. He said that because of this shortage, it was now essential for the Society to employ a full-time professional fitter under the Action for Community Employment (ACE) scheme. P. Scott also warned of forthcoming heavy

expenditure on locomotives, with a set of boiler tubes costing up to £4,000 for any one locomotive. Referring to the Coleraine turntable project, P.Scott said it had now been decided to use the former Great Victoria Street table which was in storage at Whitehead. It was 56 ft. in length, compared with the 50 ft. length of the former Londonderry table which had been the original choice. But the main reason had been that the ex-Derry table was severely corroded and would now go to Whitehead for storage. It was hoped to start excavation work at Coleraine the following week, with Enterprise Ulster then moving on site to start building the reinforced walls.

In his report, J.Saulters said the RPSI had bought 10 former CIÉ coaches at Mullingar, five of which were in running order. By this summer it was hoped that the RPSI running fleet would extend to six coaches at Mullingar and 14 at Whitehead. It was now becoming clear that the Society's operations required provision of two types of coach - high density stock for public trains, and low density more historic vehicles for private charters. J.Saulters paid tribute to Michael Henderson who had organised a squad of members to handle coach cleaning during the year. This had released the coach squad to concentrate on running repairs. J.Saulters assured Victor Corrie that the question of suitable provision for a shop on board the train was being actively pursued. It was hoped to provide facilities in an ex-CIÉ coach.

Lord O'Neill said nominations had been submitted or put forward for all Council posts barring that of Treasurer, with J.Richardson having indicated his wish to retire. No nomination for the post of Treasurer was forthcoming from the meeting. J.Richardson said he would continue to write cheques and complete returns for the next couple of months and it was agreed the Council should be left to try to fill the post. All those nominated were then deemed elected on the proposal of Michael Henderson, seconded by Malcolm Gunn. The 1986 Council is:

Chairman - Sullivan Boomer, 22 Town Lane, Islandmagee, Larne, Co. Antrim.

Secretary - Robin Morton, 79 Sharman Road, Belfast, BT9 5HE.

Treasurer - Vacant.

Loco. Maintenance - Peter Scott, 17 Finaghy Park Central, Belfast 10.

Loco. Running - Brian Hill, 63 Beechill Park East, Belfast 8.

Operations - Ernie Gilmore, 20 Chichester Road, Belfast 15.

Coach Maintenance - Alan Edgar, 17 Glenkeen Road, Aghadowey, Co. Londonderry.

Coach Running - Jeremy Saulters, 3 Ashley Park, Dunmurry, Belfast.

Site - Johnny Glendinning, 23 Beechdene Gardens, Lisburn, Co. Antrim.

Publications - Gavin Martin, 57 O'Neill Road, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim.

Publicity - John Friel, 103 Wynchurch Road, Belfast 6.

Commercial - Henry Beaumont, 148 Hillsborough Road, Lisburn, Co. Antrim.

Mullingar - Denis McCabe, 12 Greystones, Mount Merrion, Dublin.

Dublin - Sam Carse, 38 Oakley Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.

London - Leslie McAllister, 26 Regent Way, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey.

S.Boomer paid tribute to two Council members who were also standing down, Neil Hamilton who had served as Coach Running Officer, and Rory McNamee, who had been Mullingar Officer.

Ernie Gilmore then gave a run-down of the plans for the 1986 operations season. He said that already 200 advance bookings had been received for the three-day international Clew Bay railtour. Train capacity was 300, and he appealed to members not to leave it too late to secure their places. Of the advance bookings, 150 were from outside Ireland, including a party from West Berlin.

Following a meeting with Dublin-based operations staff, three dates had been pencilled in for proposed operations involving No.184 and the Mullingar coaches. These were: June 7 and August 23 - Maynooth shuttles; July 26 - Claddagh railtour to Galway.

E.Gilmore appealed for suggestions as to how to turn the September 28 “Larne Lough” tour into a more interesting one-day trip.

On the charter front, E.Gilmore said there were three possibilities:

June 14 - Possible Lions International steam special from Belfast to Balbriggan.

June 28 - Civil Service Benevolent Fund Centenary Portrush Flyer.

To be arranged - Charity Portrush Flyer.

E.Gilmore also expressed thanks to Michael Henderson’s coach cleaning squad who he said had significantly upgraded the appearance of the train.

Discussion then took place on a proposal approving the continuation of discussion with Steamrail Victoria Ltd. over a request for the loan of locomotive 171 to operate in Australia in 1988 as part of the country’s 200th anniversary celebrations. R.Morton explained that a request had been received for 171 to be sent to Australia from March until December 1988. The RPSI Council had replied indicating interest in principle, but subject to several conditions, and suggesting that Steamrail fund the restoration at Whitehead of 171 to tip top condition prior to departure, so that on return to Ireland the RPSI would be able to enjoy the use of the engine for the next five or six years. S.Boomer explained that among the RPSI’s requirements were a firm guarantee that the locomotive would be returned safely, probably involving insurance cover of at least £500,000, and that transportation arrangements would be supervised. It was also essential that RPSI personnel were present when the locomotive arrived and was tested in Australia, and during the operating period. P.Scott said the project would only be pursued if the RPSI stood to gain financially or in terms of having 171 fully overhauled at Steamrail Victoria’s expense. Several members warned the Council to be wary in view of mishaps which had happened when British engines had been sent overseas in similar exercises. William Coates proposed that the Council be authorised to continue discussions, subject to an AGM before any final decision was taken. Seconded Derek Carter and agreed.

Under any other business, Paul Newell asked for details of the revamped ACE scheme. S.Boomer explained that this allowed for an increase in the work squad to 10, and provided for 100% government funding for the workers and for a supervisor. The average weekly wage permitted was £84 but more could be paid to skilled workers if they were balanced by unskilled or part-time workers who would get a lower wage. The Council was exploring all the possibilities, but one factor was that the RPSI would continue to be responsible for the bill for materials.

John Friel outlined the work of the publicity department during the year. He said Bord Fáilte had produced a free advance booking form for the two-day tour, while Carrickfergus Borough Council had provided 5,000 copies of a promotional leaflet detailing the Society's public excursions during the year. Bord Fáilte and the NI Tourist Board had sponsored the editors of Railway World and Railway Magazine who had been the Society's guests on the two-day tour, while the NI Tourist Board had helped fund the advertising for Irish Steam Weekends. The RPSI had produced 10,000 leaflets for the Flyer and Enterprise, and thanks to the efforts of Max Erwin, one of the ACE workers, these had been distributed far and wide to shops and businesses. Only the Steam Enterprise had proved to be a disappointment in terms, of bookings.

The meeting was then declared closed, and those present watched a ciné film of locomotive 85 "Merlin" on mainline RPSI duties, presented by John Friel.

Signed: _____ *Chairman* *Date:* _____