

THE RAILWAY PRESERATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

AUGUST 1986 NEWS-SHEET

EXTRA, EXTRA      Following certain teething troubles with No.85 "Merlin" on the Portrush Flyer on July 19, it is proposed to run an additional trip to Portrush on Saturday August 9 to make sure that everything has been ironed out with the loco. This special trip will be open to members and their friends and will involve "Merlin" in her first unassisted trip to Portrush. The schedule will be:

Saturday August 9 - Loco 85 & Flyer train

	arr.	dep.		arr.	dep.
Whitehead		11.35	Portrush		17.00
Belfast (Yk Rd)	12.08	13.10	Belfast (YR)	19.25	20.00
Coleraine	15.17	16.25	Whitehead	20.30	
Portrush		16.40			

Return fare (members & guests): £7.00, U16/65+: £5.00

Please note the following points:

- 1 - The operation of this trip hinges on the successful conclusion of various tests over the weekend of August 2.
- 2 - Intending passengers should ring Whitehead 78567 during business hours on August 6, 7, or 8 to confirm that the train is running.
- 3 - The operation is a test trip and may be cut short if unexpected difficulties arise.
- 4 - No advance booking - buy your ticket on board.

However, having said all that, all members are urged to give this outing their support in order to help defray the additional costs incurred in completing 85's return to traffic. We will have the dining car in full operation so it should be an enjoyable and interesting afternoon out!

MERLIN DEBUT      As announced in the last news-sheet, No.85 made her debut on the Portrush Flyer on July 19. She ran double-headed with our 2-6-4T No.4 and the eight-coach train was a sell-out with more than 300 passengers on board. Everything ran smoothly as far as Portrush, where arrival was on schedule, and No.4 handled the Castlerock extension in the afternoon, which was again completely sold out. Meanwhile No.85, which had run light engine to Coleraine, was turned on the newly installed turntable and a ceremony was held at which a cheque was presented to the Society by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (see below). On her return trip to Portrush, however, No.85, running light engine tender-first, derailed as she was backing onto the Flyer train at Portrush station. Only the rear tender wheels jumped the rails at the turnout and one a jack arrived the tender was quickly put back on the road. The Flyer left Portrush an hour late with 85 at the head of the train and 4 banking, and at Coleraine 4 ran round to take control of the train, leaving 85 to follow on light engine. The Flyer arrived back at York Road about 75 minutes behind schedule, but thankfully all the passengers adopted a fairly philosophical approach to the events.

Peter Scott, our loco maintenance officer has since then been investigating what went wrong and a number of tests have been carried out, including a diesel-hauled trip to Portrush for the tender. It was hoped that after various adjustments 85 would be all set for the extra trip on August 9 and then, provided all goes to plan, for the Flyer proper on August 16. In the meantime it was decided to roster No.4 to haul the August 2 Flyer.

#### TOP TABLE

As mentioned overleaf, the Coleraine turntable is now in full operation following completion of the £25,000 project. The 58 ft. table (extended from its original length of 55 ft) was inaugurated on July 19 after No.4 had successfully tested it on July 5. The table, which has seen service at Ballymena and Great Victoria Street in Belfast, was renovated at Whitehead with both the ACE squad and RPSI volunteers carrying out the work. Meanwhile Enterprise Ulster had a five-man squad busy at Coleraine. They spent 15 weeks building the turntable pit, a job which involved the excavation of 600 cubic metres of earth, and then construction work in which the requirements were 80 cubic metres of concrete, 5,000 concrete blocks, two tonnes of steel reinforcements, and 200 tonnes of stone fill. At a ceremony at the table on July 19, Mr Joe Knox, the local board member of the NI Tourist Board, presented a cheque to the RPSI vice-president Lord Dunleath, towards the funding of the materials for the project. The NITB has contributed a grant of 33 pc for materials, the total bill for which will be around the £10,000 mark. Also present at the ceremony were Mrs Gladys Black, the mayor of Coleraine, and Alderman Jim Brown, the mayor of Carrickfergus, who had travelled on the Flyer with us. We were also pleased to welcome Mr Joe Eagleson, the chief executive of EU, who was among the VIP party in the directors' saloon.

#### WINGING SOUTH

At present it is still our intention to have No.85 "Merlin" haul the Bangor Belle and Steam Enterprise trains, provided all goes well with her spell on the Portrush Flyer and provided CIÉ give us the go-ahead to run 85 into Dublin. CIÉ are currently studying the loco's weights and dimensions and we hope to have a verdict shortly. We are keeping our fingers crossed that we will be able to have the Compound on both Steam Enterprises on September 6 and 20 - so what an occasion that should be! No.85 back on her old stamping ground of the GN main line for the first time in 25 years. Again, we would appeal to members to get their bookings in as soon as possible. You can check nearer the time as to whether we are using Merlin by ringing Whitehead 78567, again during business hours. Please note that enclosed is a circular giving details of the members' "Awayday" fares and season ticket arrangements for the Enterprise.

#### BANGOR & BACK

Also enclosed is a members' circular about the Bangor Belle on August 25. This promises to be another popular event, particularly with the prospect of 85's first visit to Bangor. The directors' saloon is being used by Bord Fáilte during the morning as part of the promotion for the Steam Enterprise but as you can read it will be open for bookings by members in the afternoon.

#### MAYNOOTH SHUTTLE

See the enclosed circular for details of the Maynooth shuttle with No.184 on Saturday August 23, The Claddagh railtour on July 26 went ahead and operated as planned but support for the outing was disappointing. No.184 was in charge of the train which was made up of the five open coaches based at Mullingar. Unfortunately

receipts did not cover the CIÉ charge, let alone the coal bill, but we are hoping to redress the balance with a well-supported Maynooth shuttle.

TWO-DAY DATE Just to confirm that we have settled on May 9/10 for the 1987 two-day tour. Our proposed destination is Tralee, but this hinges on the outcome of current negotiations with CIÉ on the subject of wooden-bodied stock. Watch this space!

DATE CHANGE The Larne Lough railtour has been put back from September 28 to Sunday October 5. Details will be included in the next circular.

FIVE FOOT THREE The next issue of the magazine is currently with the printers and is expected to be ready in time for the next circular in September.

SUNDAY STEAM Don't forget to visit the Whitehead steam train rides which are having a successful season after a slow start. Every Sunday until August 24.

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