

JANUARY 1987 NEWS-SHEET

MY GOODNESS

No.3BG "Guinness", the Society's 0-4-0 saddle tank loco now has a new home - for the next five years. The engine has been made the subject of a loan agreement with the Downpatrick Ardglass Railway Society, the group backed by Down District Council which has plans to re-open the Downpatrick-Ardglass branchline. The Guinness engine was moved by road low-loader from Whitehead to Downpatrick on Saturday January 10, just before the big freeze: The transfer went smoothly and No.3BG (BG for broad gauge) arrived in Downpatrick by mid-afternoon. Now the DARS will be busy recommissioning and re-tubing the engine, a project which is expected to take several months. Under the terms of the agreement a licence fee of £200 per annum is payable to the RPSI as soon as the DARS commences a train ride operation. Such train rides - albeit with diesel traction - could be on the cards for later this year.

The Guinness loco, built in 1919 by Hudswell Clark, was presented to the Society by the Dublin brewery in 1965, after a lifetime's work shunting wagons between the brewery and Kingsbridge station. The arrival of the loco was a major boost for the Society, which had been formed in 1964. For many years the Guinness engine was the regular shunting and train rides engine at Whitehead and many of the Society's present-day drivers and firemen learnt the ropes on the Guinness loco. But in 1978 the Guinness engine was superseded by a new No.3 - the ex-Londonderry Port & Harbour Commissioners 0-6-0ST, "R.H. Smyth". "R.H. Smyth", which had been recently overhauled and put back into traffic, was a stronger engine for Whitehead operations and when she took over the Guinness loco was sidelined. Since then she has been in store at Whitehead. As the Society had no immediate plans for the engine, the RPSI Council agreed to a request from the DARS to make the loco the subject of a loan agreement, and now we look forward to seeing the engine "back in business". Wide-ranging safeguards have of course been built into the loan agreement, which was the subject of lengthy negotiation.

END OF THE ROAD The King's Road bridge at Whitehead, a familiar landmark at the RPSI site, is no more. Its demise took place over the weekend of January 10, and now it is due to be replaced by a super new bridge which is to be in situ by Easter. In the meantime road access to Whitehead is via the narrower Slaughterford Road bridge. For some time weight restrictions had been placed on the King's Road bridge and the DoE had been planning to replace it. The RPSI's part of the deal had been to remove trackwork to allow the contractors free access and Johnny Glendinning's eager beaver track squad accomplished this task in double quick time on December 27 - talk about working off the turkey! The RPSI site is to be disconnected from the Belfast-Larne line until April but everything will be put together again in time for the Easter Bunny train rides. And the new track formation will give the RPSI a headshunt so that train rides are not subject to interruption by NIR trains which have to lie over. Trackwork continues most Saturdays at Whitehead and Johnny Glendinning would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to lend a hand.

EGGS-PECT TO SEE YOU Work is continuing at Whitehead to have GNR(I) class S 4-4-0 loco No.171 "Slieve Gullion" back in traffic in time for the Easter Bunny train rides at Whitehead. The Easter trains will be operating on Easter Sunday, Monday and Tuesday (April 19, 20 and 21). Help to spread the word - and come along yourself.

AGM Formal notification was given in the last circular of the Society's AGM so this is just a reminder. It takes place at 20.00hrs (8 pm) on Friday February 27 and the venue is the Belfast Boat Club, Lockview Road, Stranmillis, Belfast. This is a new location - the Boat Club is beyond, the Rowing Club where we have met in the past. It is at the end of the Lockview Road car park. Unfortunately Lord O'Neill is unable to be with us this year as our president had a prior engagement but Lord Dunleath, our vice-president, has agreed to step in and chair the meeting. Following the business part of the meeting, members are invited to sit back, relax, and watch some of John Friel's outstanding video film of the RPSI in 1986 - including loco 85 "Merlin" in all her glory on the-Belfast-Dublin line. We are borrowing the Boat Club's large video screen, so everyone will get a good view. So, please be there and hear all the latest news.

LONDON CALLING Members living in the London area are invited to attend meetings held by the local branch of the Irish Railway Record Society. They take place in the Fred Tallant Hall, 153 Drummond Street, London NW1 - five minutes from Euston Station. All meetings start at 19.15.

- * Thursday February - "The RPSI in 1985 and 1986", an illustrated talk by Leslie McAllister.
- * Thursday March 19 - "Ireland in the 1950s", by Neil Sprinks.
- * Thursday April 23 - "A railway Tour of Ireland in the 1930s", featuring pictures from the Hewison collection. Presented by Lance King.

BELFAST TOO The Belfast area meetings in Jude's Hall, Sunnyside Street, Ormeau Road, are also enjoying a tremendous winter season with the usual attendance well in excess of the 100 mark. Still to come:

- * Tuesday February 10 - "Life on the Three Foot", Bill Scott.
- * Tuesday March 10 - "Irish Steam Cinema", Fred Cooper.

Both meetings start at 19.30 - come early to get a good seat!

SOUTH & WEST A reminder, while we're at it, that Bill Scott is due to address the RPSI Dublin area at a meeting in IRRS headquarters at Heuston Station on Thursday March 19 (20.00).

And don't forget that Charles and John Friel will be at the Ardhoven Theatre, Enniskillen, on Saturday January 31 to deliver an illustrated talk on railways in the Fermanagh area and the RPSI.

WORLD LEADER Members who do not already subscribe to Railway World should make a beeline to the magazine shop to purchase a copy of the February 1987 issue. It contains an excellent feature on No.85 "Merlin" entitled "Irish Compound revival - the first year" by RPSI member Joe Cassells. Illustrations include a colour plate by Charles Friel of 85 at Dunleer on the Steam Enterprise in September.

And your attention is also drawn to the logo Railway World now use for "Preservation Scene" - yes it's a block of the RPSI's No.4 at

Magheramorne on the Larne Lough railtour in October, taken from a photo by Charles Friel.

SNAP HAPPY An appeal for anyone with photographs of our ex D&SER 2-6-0 No.461 to step forward. Publicity officer John Friel is currently collating an article on 461's restoration for inclusion in one of the railway magazines and he would like to hear from anyone with photos of the loco when in company service, for possible use with the article. Meanwhile the RPSI Council is planning to launch an appeal for funds to complete the restoration of the loco which is in progress at Whitehead. At the last count it was estimated that a further £6,000 was needed for materials and parts, so watch this space!

SAN-TASTIC Anyone who was down at Whitehead over the Christmas season will not be surprised to learn that it was a record season for the Santa trains! Treasurer John Richardson advises that the total turnout came to 1,480 children and 1,600 adults - the best ever!

The total turnover for Santa, train rides, shop, diner and photographs was £6,000 so the operation provided a major boost for the RPSI bank account as well as being a tremendous success on the public relations front. Many thanks to all those who helped.

MOVIETIME Looking back a little further, it should be recorded that the involvement of loco No.85 "Merlin" in the making of the television film "Remington Steele" in Dublin on November 23 was also an outstanding success. The train worked down from Whitehead to Dublin on November 21 and then, because filming ran on longer than expected, did not make the return trip until the morning of Monday November 24.

For the occasion Connolly Station was dressed up to resemble Paddington Station, London, and it was a bizarre scene to see 85 and the train dressed up in modern day BR "zig-zag arrow" motifs. The film makers told operations officer Ernie Gilmore that although it was supposed to be a present-day scene, a steam engine would look more attractive for the American audience. Let's hope BR don't spot it!

Anyway, it seems that the episode of Remington Steele, which included a fight scene in the Connolly foyer, is not being screened here for couple of years.

FIVE FOOT THREE Included in this circular is the latest copy of the RPSI magazine, Five Foot Three. Although it was actually produced by the printers in early December, it was decided to hold the magazine until the preliminary information about the Lough Gill tour was to hand to avoid extra expenditure on two postings. We trust that members will understand the reason for the further delay and we apologise for the late appearance of the magazine. Still, we hope that you will find the contents of interest.

JANUARY SALES Some items from the commercial department. Orders to Henry Beaumont:

Colour poster of loco No.85 "Merlin"	£1.00
Great Northern Railway (Ireland), E.M. Patterson	£6.90

ORDER, ORDER A reminder from membership secretary Paul McCann to those of you who pay by standing order to amend your January 31 subscription payment from £7.00 to £8.00 (or more, if you like) following the decision of the EGM, minutes of which are enclosed. Paul also

appeals for more members to help the Society by covenanting their subscription.

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