

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Belfast Boat Club, Friday 27th February 1987

Lord Dunleath, the Society's Vice-President, presided, and 82 members were present.

Apologies were received from: Lord O'Neill, Leslie McAllister, Johnny Glendinning, Neil Hamilton, Henry Beaumont, John Lockett, Brian Hill, Henry Jack, John Taylor, David Humphries, Tim Morton, Thomas Davidson, Sam Carse, Stuart Agnew and Douglas Ferguson.

The minutes of the last AGM, which had already been circulated, were agreed and signed, on the proposal of Derek Carter, seconded by Michael Henderson.

The minutes of the December 9 EGM, which had already been circulated, were also agreed and signed, on the proposal of Dermot Mackie, seconded by Gavin Weatherall.

The Chairman, Sullivan Boomer, then read his report and it was adopted on the proposal of Derek Carter, seconded by Alan Love. There was some discussion on the question of provision of a sales shop on board the tour train. S.Boomer said that the Council had still to formulate a policy on this matter, and that firm proposals were awaited from the Commercial Department.

The Secretary, Robin Morton, read his report and it was adopted on the proposal of Ernie Gilmore, seconded by Derek Carter.

The Treasurer, John Richardson, then presented his report and copies of the audited accounts. The report was adopted on the proposal of Alva Brangam, seconded by John Harcourt.

A discussion on the financial position was opened by Irwin Pryce, who inquired about the costs involved in the proposed purchase of redundant diesel locomotives from CIÉ. R.Morton said that the costs given to the council were IR£250 for each of two E class shunters, and IR£750 for a Sulzer locomotive. In addition, there would be road transport costs, estimated at £600 in each case.

Paul Newell paid tribute to the Council for its careful handling of the Coleraine turntable project. He said it was a remarkable achievement to have the table installed at a cost to the Society of just £6,500.

Bill Scott asked whether it was worth, in view of the Society's current overdraft, trying to restore wooden-bodied coaches which were not worth saving. J.Richardson said the costs of restoring historical vehicles were considerable. William Coates urged a cost-cutting programme on all fronts and J.Richardson said that the Council had agreed to progressively reduce its overdraft with the Northern Bank. The overdraft had already been reduced from £15,000 to £12,000 and the objective was to further cut it by £3,000 per annum.

Bob Hunter suggested that the Council should scrap the system of complimentary travel for working members. John Friel stressed that members who qualified for this scheme did so on

the basis that they were not occupying a seat which could be taken by a fare-paying passenger - working members were accommodated in the workshop coach. Ernie Gilmore said that with increased operation of both the Flyer and Enterprise, there was more pressure on a small band of working members who kept the whole operation moving. It was not realistic to expect such members to pay a full fare every time they were on duty on the tour train; however, he suggested, it might be worth investigating a system of reduced fares for working members as no-one should travel free on any train.

Malcolm Halliday urged cheaper fares on empty stock trains but E.Gilmore said this would not be realistic as a full NIR charge still had to be met.

Jimmy McBride asked why commercial operations were raising less now than several years ago. J.Richardson said some of the proceeds had gone into the purchase of two new posters at £900 a batch which were available for sale. In addition, he said, Henry Beaumont, the Commercial Officer, needed a lot more help from the membership.

Joe Cassells argued that the RPSI operations provided the best value for steam mileage in Europe.

Gavin Martin asked what had become of the Financial Committee. J.Richardson said he had devolved several aspects of his work to various people.

John Harcourt asked whether any film contracts were on the horizon. J.Richardson said there were no immediate prospects, but the facilities offered by the RPSI were now well known in the film world.

Turning to the appointment of auditors, R.Morton proposed that Coopers & Lybrand, who had given the Society excellent service again over the past 12 months, should be re-appointed. This was seconded by Derek Carter and agreed.

The motion agreed by the EGM proposing a sub increase to £8 from January 31, 1986, was then ratified, proposed by Paul McCann, seconded by Isobel Gilmore. I.Gilmore complained that the notice of subscription renewal had "jumped the gun" by giving the new rate before the EGM had taken place.

Peter Scott then presented a report on behalf of the Locomotive Department in which he stressed that all possible savings were already being made - for example by re-using locomotive boiler tubes in smaller engines. But the main way money was being saved was through use of voluntary labour. He said that recently some outside contractors had been called in for emergency work and this had cost around £1,000 for two men for 4½ weeks. Appealing for more help from the membership, P.Scott also highlighted the Monday evening metalwork class at Millfield Technical College in Belfast. P.Scott said that the possibility was currently being explored of apprentice training schemes helping with Whitehead work.

Outlining the current state of the locomotive fleet, P.Scott said that No.184 had been given just one more year to run by the locomotive boiler inspector. This was because of severe wasting on the front tube plate and it was expected the engine would be withdrawn after the May 1988 two-day tour to await major repairs.

P.Scott said that the Council was considering an Irish locomotive restoration appeal which would be aimed at providing funds for the restoration of No.461, the ex DSER 2-6-0, and No.27, "Lough Erne", the former SLNCR 0-6-4T. At present a total of £6,000 was still required for No.461's general overhaul, provided No.171's tubes could be re-used.

Following on from the Council's decision to investigate the purchase of air-braked steel-bodied stock, P.Scott said he had been asked to estimate the cost of fitting air brake equipment to a steam engine. This, he said, would cost between £10,000 and £20,000 per locomotive. Cheaper ways were being investigated.

Finally, P.Scott said he would welcome assistance from a member willing to carry out secretarial work for him in typing letters and orders.

Alan Edgar then presented a report on behalf of the Carriage Department which he started by expressing gratitude for the assistance of RPSI volunteers. He said the volunteer workforce was committed to keeping the RPSI tour train running. Whitehead Railway Project was involved in longer-term restoration and had just turned out diner 88. By dint of all these efforts the RPSI running fleet was now at the bare minimum.

Looking to the future A.Edgar said his proposal was that the Society should have three rakes of coaches in operation, each representative of the three major Irish companies. This would involve an eight-coach LMS train, a nine-coach GNR train, and a seven-bogie GSR train. In addition, he said, the RPSI should not ignore the potential market for a luxury train and to this end a set of high-luxury coaches should be aimed at.

A.Edgar said he thought the problems over provision of a shop on board the train could be resolved by having a full-length bar in a separate coach on the train; this would mean that the Sales Department could take over the existing bar area.

A.Edgar urged that the derelict coaches at Whitehead should not be written off. He said some of the coaches on the present tour train had once been in a similarly dilapidated state. He said the coach maintenance and restoration budget was currently running at between £8,000 and £9,000 per annum.

A.Edgar said that if the proposal for an interpretive centre at Whitehead got off the ground, the Society would need to provide exhibits of historical interest for this. He said this was why the RPSI needed six-wheeled coaches which, he added, would also be of use for the operation of the steam train rides.

Turning to the question of a rake of steel-bodied coaches, A.Edgar said that the historical attractions of wooden-bodied coaches were not to be overlooked. He said they were popular with public excursion passengers as representing bygone days. He warned that any steel-bodied coaches which did become available were likely to be at the end of their planned life-span. Some of the English societies had experienced problems in trying to restore steel-bodied coaches and repair might not be practical. A.Edgar said that he thought restoration of steel-bodied coaches could cost between £8,000 and £9,000 per vehicle at worst.

The locomotive and coach reports were received by the meeting.

Coming to the election of office-bearers and Council for 1987, Lord Dunleath said he had been advised that three proxy votes had been requested. R.Morton said that the RPSI solicitor had advised him that proxy votes did not apply to the RPSI as it was not a share-holding body. Alva Brangam proposed, and John Harcourt seconded, that the proxy votes should be set aside. Derek Carter argued that they should be accepted. On a vote, the motion was carried overwhelmingly, and the proxy votes were set aside.

Lord Dunleath said there were contests for two positions - Treasurer and Publications. Charles Friel and Alan Love were appointed tellers and a vote took place. There were 82 votes cast, one of which was spoiled. The result was:

Treasurer - John Richardson, 59 votes; Paul Newell 22 votes.

Publications - Nelson Poots, 53 votes; Nevin Hamilton 27 votes.

The rest of the Council was deemed elected on the proposal of D.Carter, seconded by A.Love. The 1987 Council therefore is:

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

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

Treasurer - John Richardson, 18 Downshire Gardens, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim.

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

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

Coach Maintenance - Alan Edgar, 56J Sunningdale Gardens., Belfast 14.

Coach Running - Neil Hamilton, 49 Ballylintagh Road, Hillsborough, Co. Down.

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

Publications - Nelson Poots, 115 Orangefield Avenue, Belfast 5.

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

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

Mullingar - Vacant.

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

London - Leslie McAllister, 22 Landsdowne Road, Frimley, Camberley, GU16 5UW.

It was agreed to leave it to the Council to seek someone to fill the Mullingar post.

Ernie Gilmore, Operations Officer, then outlined the proposed programme for 1987. He first of all said that several approaches had been made to the Society about possible private charters, but as invariably happened, the costs involved had put off the promoters.

However, one which looked as if it would be going ahead was the NIR hire of locomotive 85 and the RPSI train for a special non-stop run from Belfast to Dublin on August 11 to mark the 40th anniversary of the Enterprise.

Plans were in full swing for the Lough Gill three-day international railtour. Already deposits had been received from 266 would-be passengers, but it was hoped that the train capacity would be 320 seats.

Because of the success of the Flyer and Enterprise, it had been decided to increase operations to four Flyers and three Enterprises. E.Gilmore paid tribute to Alan Love, who was standing down as Flyer officer, and wished success to Michael McMahon, who was taking over.

E.Gilmore said he had been assisted by the Operations Committee during the year and said the northern committee numbered 14 people and the southern committee nine.

An early meeting was expected with Irish Rail following the splitting up of CIÉ. NIR had asked the Society to tighten up on a couple of aspects of public excursion operations and these points, which included crowd control and track trespass, were being taken up by the Committee.

E.Gilmore concluded his report by expressing sympathy to Mr Harry Ramsey's family on the death in January of the well-known and popular NIR engine driver who had frequently been on the footplate of the Portrush Flyer.

Under "Any Other Business" Lord Dunleath said that for him 1986 had been a very special year indeed as it had been the occasion of No.85's return to traffic. He said that probably not enough tribute had been paid to Peter Scott and the others concerned, and he said it was particularly noteworthy that No.85 had performed with so little trouble during the year.

Responding, P.Scott thanked Lord Dunleath for his patience and forbearance throughout the project. He said he had found the No.85 restoration a very worthwhile and satisfactory scheme in which to be involved.

Then Charles Friel presented Lord Dunleath with a framed colour photograph of No.85. Later John Friel presented Lord Dunleath with a video film of No.85 on the Belfast-Dublin line in 1986.

In view of the shortage of time, Ian Slaughter suggested that consideration of the important subject of diesel preservation should be deferred to an extraordinary general meeting, to take place within the next few months. This was seconded by P.Scott.

It was agreed that the Council should call an EGM to discuss the following issues:

- 1 - Diesel preservation.
- 2 - General RPSI policy.
- 3 - RPSI coach policy.
- 4 - Proxy votes.

It was agreed that the decisions reached by such an EGM would, be binding on RPSI Council.

The meeting was then declared closed, and those present watched a video of No.85 Merlin on the Steam Enterprise, presented by John Friel.

Signed: _____ *Chairman* *Date:* _____