

THE RAILWAY PRESERATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

JULY 1987 NEWS-SHEET

- FLYING HIGH The Portrush Flyer season is now in full swing with bookings coming in steadily. The season opened on June 20 with the 50th Portrush Flyer and 171 Slieve Gullion successfully hauled a fully-booked eight coach train to Portrush. The plan is for 2-6-4T 4 to haul the Flyer on July 4 and 18, and for 85 Merlin to be in charge on August 1. Get your booking in quickly if you don't want to be disappointed - and don't forget the Castlerock extension (depart Portrush 14.00).
- To mark the 50th train Sir Myles Humphreys, the chairman of NIR, who was our guest for the day, cut a specially decorated cake at York Road prior to departure.
- Flyer booking forms and tickets are available from the Portrush Flyer officer.
- HAPPY ANNIVERSARY As you will see from the enclosed circular, it's anniversary time for the Enterprise Express as well this summer. NIR Intercity is hiring No.85 and the RPSI train for a special run to Dublin to mark the 40th anniversary of the very first Enterprise Express on August 11. The first Enterprise was hauled by 85's sister engine, the long since scrapped No.83. The special non-stop run on August 11 promises to be the zenith of the RPSI's mainline railtour operation to date, and an occasion no RPSI member will wish to miss.
- The publicity attaching to the 40th anniversary run promises to give a major boost to the RPSI's own Steam Enterprise operation, details of which are enclosed. So, get your booking in as early as possible and make sure of your seat. So far the loco roster has not been finalised but it is expected No.85 will play a large part in the Enterprise operation.
- FIRED WITH ENTHUSIASM People often ask what will happen to RPSI mainline operations when the stage is reached that the present generation of steam crews have gone into retirement. On CIÉ steps have been taken to train two diesel drivers in the art of operating steam, the two drivers concerned being the Renehan brothers who are also keen RPSI members. Now the problem is being tackled on NIR where a pool of six young diesel drivers who expressed an interest in being passed out for steam have started to learn the ropes. The trainees have already featured on the Society's outings this year under the expert eye of the NIR loco inspector Mr Frank Dunlop. The RPSI is much heartened that active steps are being taken to ensure that the future is bright for mainline steam operation.
- BRANCHING OUT Also with an eye to the future, our president Lord O'Neill took the opportunity to put down a marker with NIR as regards the RPSI's possible future interest in the Antrim-Lisburn branchline, should this section become surplus to requirements when the cross-harbour link is opened in Belfast. At a reception in Ballymena on June 10, following the naming ceremony of the new Antrim Castle train which he had performed, Lord O'Neill raised the issue in the after-dinner speeches. With the NIR chairman and chief executive in attendance, Lord O'Neill said that if the Antrim branch was no longer needed by NIR when the Londonderry-Belfast service reverted

to the main LMS-NCC line, it might well be that the RPSI could be interested in operating the branch as a tourist service. Watch this space!

LORD LYELL VISITS The Agriculture Minister at the Northern Ireland Office, Lord Lyell, paid a visit to the RPSI's Whitehead base on the afternoon of Sunday June 7. Lord Lyell, an unabashed steam buff, showed a close interest in the Society's activities during his two and a half hour visit, and the highlight was his trip on the footplate of No.3 R.H. Smyth, which was on train ride duties. Why not follow in Lord Lyell's footsteps and make tracks for Whitehead yourself this summer? The train rides continue every Sunday afternoon until the end of August.

SMOOTH OPERATOR Your chance to get your hands dirty – and have a bit of fun at the same time. The Society is currently looking for recruits to its operating grades at Whitehead and all members can apply – no previous experience required. The RPSI Council is currently considering a revision of the operating grades which would mean new recruits starting in a dual role as assistant shunters and assistant steam-raisers. That means you could be rostered for footplate duties from the word go, and this should speed up your progression to the dizzy heights of RPSI loco driver!

So if you're interested make a note in your diary:

Sunday July 26 – 11 am
Whitehead

Shunting school and information session for new recruits.

RPSI traffic officer Jeremy Saulters will be in charge for what should be an interesting session. See the train rides loco being prepared for duty and the train being shunted.

WORLD EXCLUSIVE A major article on the highly successful Lough Gill railtour is due to appear in the August issue of Railway World. Order your copy now Steam Railway is also expected to feature-the tour.

EX-SMOKER Three cheers for 2-6-4T No.4's chimney – it's given up smoking! The chimney stack, believed to be the original, dating from when the loco was built in Derby in 1947, has come to the end of the road and has been replaced by a gleaming new 1987 model. This is your chance to purchase the original chimney pot and make your front garden the envy of the street – a No.4 flowerpot. The bidding starts at £10 and proceeds are in aid of the RPSI loco restoration fund. Send your offer price to Peter Scott. Don't send any money now – just notify Peter of your bid, by July 30 at the latest. The chimney will then go to the highest bidder. Condition of sale is that the chimney has to be collected by the purchaser from Whitehead.

TIDY UP TIME A major tidy up campaign will be in progress at Whitehead over the Twelfth holiday weekend (July 11-14) with a skip on site to gather up all the rubbish. If you can spare a day or two to lend a hand, you will be more than welcome. Work starts each day at 10 am.

SCHOOLS' DAY A nice selection of letters has been received from Barrack Street Boys' School in Strabane, Co. Tyrone, following the Schools' Day at Whitehead in June. The boys obviously enjoyed their visit and their trip on the steam train. Some excerpts:

Oliver Tighe – "I thank you for getting all the things ready for us, I enjoyed going on the steam trains and watching the video."

Giovanni Vaccaro – "The trains were a very good part of the day and the guide has my thanks. The shop was cheap, terrific, and it had lots of variety."

Peter Casey – "I will be back in the summer with my family. I would recommend it to anyone. Yours happily..."

Keith Gilloway – "Merlin was like Thomas the tank engine. Give the guide my sincere thanks."

So, obviously some very satisfied customers.

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