

FEBRUARY 1988

Up to now news from the Carriage and Wagon Department has come once or twice a year in Five Foot Three. Carriage work goes on twelve months of the year, however, and by producing an occasional news sheet we can keep members better informed of progress as it occurs. Did you know, for example, that as most people were clearing away the Christmas decorations and finishing off the last of the sandwiches, the coach squad were beginning their most hectic period of the year, preparing for the "Two Day" Tour in early May.

This year an unprecedented work programme is planned. The train for the main part of the Railtour with 2-6-4T No.4 will be an eight coach set from Whitehead, while 0-6-0 No.184 will be accompanied by five of the Mullingar based carriages. The Mullingar squad are working towards a fully restored eight coach rake, including a Buffet Car, for the Dublin Millennium celebrations in June.

So, sharpening our paintbrushes and softening our chisels (I think) we are off to work. This is what is planned.

BOGIEMEN or women for that matter are much in demand at Whitehead as we prepare for the annual inspection by NIR. The LMS Dining Car No.87 was withdrawn at the end of last season with worn axlebox horn guides. We are investigating ways of substituting an overhauled set of bogies before the Tour, thus releasing her own bogies for reconditioning. Following this all the coaches will need their brakes adjusted and tested. Anyone who would like to learn the basic engineering skills involved (and doesn't fancy working on those dirty old steam engines) will be more than welcome to assist, especially as our regular Carriage Running Officer, Neil Hamilton, is recovering from illness at present and cannot assist us as much as he would like to.

On the subject of LMS carriages, we hope to have a set of five available this year. These are No.91 ("North Atlantic" brake), Nos. 238 and 241 (ex Midland Railway thirds), No.68 (ex Midland Railway composite) and No.87, the Dining Car.

Meanwhile at the house of the **FLYING SNAIL**, steady progress is being maintained on our 1950 CIÉ carriages. Open second No.1470 has recently had her running gear overhauled and the bodywork is now being refurbished. As most of these coaches have run high mileages since last overhauled, the Mullingar C&W squad have adopted a policy of completely stripping brake rigging, cylinders, etc. All parts are reconditioned before being refitted. Also in Mullingar shed at present is Buffet car No.2422. The bodywork of this coach was restored by AnCo (the equivalent of the Northern YTP scheme) and it is hoped that they can be involved in further work in the future. In the meantime work proceeds on No.2422's running gear. Both sets of bolster springs are being replaced.

BRIGHT SPARKS have been in evidence recently in a concerted effort to sort out problems in the train lighting which left passengers in the dark on recent occasions. Although little maintenance had been possible in the

recent past (due to other jobs having to take priority) we discovered that the electrical system in the train was basically sound. With a few minor repairs we will have working lights in all carriages. Moves are afoot to put the train on line - that is, I will explain, to fit a cable along the entire train which could be plugged into the mains when the train is stored and would keep the batteries fully charged via small battery chargers.

Would you admit to having **WATER ON THE BRAIN**, or have you ever thought of **TAKING UP THE PIPE**? If so you might like to join the small band of merry persons who are inspecting the plumbing - literally! There are a number of minor faults in the water supply in the train which need correcting if our passengers are to enjoy the convenience which they deserve.

This year's **DEBUTANTES** on the train will include LMS Third No.241, after a complete refurbishment. Our regular mid-week squad have been working wonders on the interior, most of the panelling now being complete, ready for the re-upholstered seats to be fitted. Audrey Smyrl, an Art graduate, who rashly came home at Christmas, was hijacked to apply the lettering to the exterior. The identity of the second debutante we will conceal for the moment, but if you are on the "Shannon" Railtour, look out for the coach behind No.85 "Merlin" when the main tour arrives back in Dublin on Sunday evening.

A happy (but slightly mad) bunch are we, the general dogsbodies of the coach squad. There are always 101 little jobs to be done throughout the coaches. Our greatest reward is the appreciation of our passengers of our continuous efforts to improve the standard of our coaches. After all, the coaches are for many the first windows through which the Society is judged.

IN BRIEF: "Coming soon" are ex GNR all first No.227 being overhauled by Whitehead Railway Project YTP Scheme, ex GNR Dining Car No.88, also being overhauled by Whitehead Railway Project and nearing completion.

If you are interested in helping in any of the jobs listed above, why not give Heather Boomer a ring or David Humphries for details of when the next working session is taking place, **or turn up at Whitehead any Saturday or Sunday.**