

THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1989

THIS YEAR'S CRISIS ...

You will no doubt remember that at this time last year we were faced with the problem of negotiating a new operating agreement with Northern Ireland Railways, and had to find our own insurance cover to the level of £15 million. This year we are faced with a ban on wooden bodied coaches on Irish Rail, which has arisen as a result of media reaction to the recent spate of accidents. In two cases wooden bodied coaches were not involved, and in two cases no blame could be attached in any way to Irish Rail; only the derailment of the empty push-pull set appears to be a totally internal matter for the company. Your Council has met in emergency session on the matter, and a sub-committee is actively pursuing negotiations to try to resolve the problem. A number of operations are in Jeopardy as a result of this policy imposed by the Minister for Transport and Tourism, Mr. Seamus Brennan, primarily because of the cost implications; it will be virtually impossible to market a public excursion like the Steam Enterprise if we have to charge a fare of around £22 to break even with a full train! In spite of these problems your Council plan to operate a full season of trains in 1990, and the organisation of "The Comeragh"

International Railtour is going ahead! WE ARE NOT DOWNHEARTED! We will keep you informed of developments as they occur. And by the way, both sets of coaches will still see traffic over the next couple of years at the very least!

PHASE ONE DONE ...

Work on Phase One of the new £90,000 Carriage Shed development at Whitehead has been successfully completed and the contractors have moved off site. The work involved removing earth, erecting a new fence, and laying a large area of hardcore, and: our thanks go to McKitterick Contracts for carrying out the work so speedily and

to such a high standard. A sod-cutting ceremony was held at Whitehead on 4 October and Mr. Joe Knox of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board formally cut the first sod for the project. Also present were Mr. Roy Beattie, Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Railways, Mr. Denis Grimshaw, General Manager of NIR's Intercity Sector, Mr. Don McQuillan of Kirk, McClure & Morton, our consultant engineers, Mr. Stephen McKitterick, Managing Director of McKitterick Contracts, and Mr. David Roulston of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, who are administering the grant aid. The whole event attracted a good deal of media attention and helped to get the scheme off to a good start. The bill for phase one amounts to a total of just over £40,000 and 50% of this comes from the International Fund for Ireland, the remainder coming from Society coffers and the special Appeal Fund. This just about cleans out the fund, so now is the time for all members to have a think about how you can help replenish the account, which will enable us to carry on with phase two next year. What about a film or slide show, or a wine and cheese evening in aid of the Carriage Shed? Remember, it's up to you!

MEMBERS' DAY OUT ...

We're proud of what has been achieved in phase one of the Whitehead Carriage Shed and we're eager to let members have a look at the progress which has been made to date. We would also like to give members a chance to see why they should come to Whitehead to help with our restoration efforts. Saturday 27 January has been set aside as a members' open day at Whitehead and this is your chance to see what has been done and what is currently going on. It'll also give you a chance to update yourself on the major restoration project involving DSER 2-6-0 No.461, and what's new on the carriage front. The site will be open from 11 am to 4 pm so feel free to drop in at any time during the day. If you

want to come early and bring old clothes or overalls, we'll even find you a useful job to do! Members in the Republic may like to join an official RPSI party from Dublin to Belfast on the Enterprise and thence by local train to Whitehead. Contact David Humphries for details of the special reduced party fare on offer.

ENTERPRISING STEAM ...

The Steam Enterprise concluded a very successful season with some sparkling running on the Belfast - Dublin line in September. Three of the four planned trains ran without incident, although as reported in the last Newsletter the train on 2 September had to be diverted to Coleraine because the main line was closed. Train loadings have generally been good and the Malahide Castle excursion has also shown a promising start. Our thanks to all those members who supported the Steam Enterprise season - we're looking forward to seeing you again next year.

ANNIVERSARY TIME ...

The RPSI celebrated its Silver Jubilee in fine style with No.85's first ever trip to Londonderry on Sunday 8 October. The weather was a little inclement (why does it always seem to rain in Derry?) but the crack was excellent and the runpast at Downhill was superb - thanks to Frank Dunlop who really knows how to do it! The event was very well supported and the slices of Birthday Cake on sale raised around £68 for the Carriage Shed Appeal. The Foyle Valley Railway Museum laid on an excellent show for us, and our thanks go to all those people who made our 25th birthday celebration such a success.

EXTRAORDINARY ...

The Extraordinary General Meeting called on 8 November received the recommendation from Council for an increase in the Annual Subscription, and for the first time the subscription has been priced both in Sterling and Punts. This has been done to take account of the differential postage rates for mail in the UK and Éire, and to allow for the exchange rate, which appears to have steadied a little over the last year or so. Perhaps a Euro-currency is what the Society needs - we must be about the only preservation society which operates across national frontiers! The meeting

unanimously passed the increase, and it now requires only final ratification at the Annual General Meeting, which will be held early in 1990. The new rates will be effective from 1 February 1990, the start of our membership year.

STANDING ORDERS ...

No, you haven't joined the Army! But all members who pay by Standing Order should by now have received a new form which MUST be completed and returned to your own bank. If you haven't received a new Standing Order form then please contact Paul McCann, RPSI Membership Secretary. Act immediately, because we have changed our bank account details, and your subscription payment could get lost otherwise.

A REALLY GOOD MOVE ...

The Society has recently acquired the former BCDR gates and ornate railings standing at the DOE car park at Scrabo Street, site of the former Queens Quay Station in Belfast. We would like to express our thanks to Stephen Pollock from the DOE and to S. Graham from the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company for their help and co-operation in donating the railings to the Society. The total length acquired is roughly 37 yards and it is proposed to install the railings at Whitehead as part of the longer term development of the Whitehead operations. The railings will be removed early in 1990 whilst the gates will remain in use until the car park closes either in 1990 or 1991, depending on the progress of the cross harbour road and rail links. Anyone interested in helping to move the railings to Whitehead should contact Sam Somerville anytime over the next few weeks.

BRUSHING UP OUR ACT ...

Repainting of the exterior of the platform shop at Whitehead is due to start shortly after Christmas. Anyone who fancies getting plastered (in paint that is!) should contact Sam Somerville. Overalls and old clothes are strongly recommended.

WANNA JOB? ...

Most of you will be receiving a brief Questionnaire from Paul McCann concerning how you can help the Society. Interested?!

Whitehead Operations Manager Sam Somerville is keen to strengthen the team for events

at Whitehead and thus put a lesser burden on those hard working members who are doing the job on a weekly basis during the summer. If you're willing to help, are aged over 16 (for insurance reasons) and are keen to work with a small but lively team, and working with the public, contact Sam. Main areas of work include sales, ticket issue and catering; however if you're interested in other more mundane jobs, or even in learning the secrets of lighting up, firing and driving the steam locomotives used at Whitehead, give us a call.

FLYER AND ENTERPRISE QUESTIONNAIRES ...

Many thanks to all of you who completed the questionnaire distributed on this year's Portrush Flyer and Steam Enterprise. The Flyer study has been completed whilst it is hoped the Enterprise one will follow within the next few weeks. Some interesting trends are already apparent, including the fact that well over half our participants on the Portrush Flyer in 1989 were experiencing their first taste of RPSI steam and that almost 90% of our passengers are either non-users or infrequent users of NIR rail services. The full breakdown of the questionnaire will be provided early in the new year, and a report based on the findings will be submitted to the Council for their consideration.

DON'T FORGET CHRISTMAS AT WHITEHEAD ...

You will find enclosed a roster sheet for helping out at Whitehead over the Christmas period. If you've never helped out, why not give it a try? The atmosphere's good, the crack's great and when the day's over why not relax over glass or two? So come on down and add a bit more sparkle to your Christmas! Don't forget to get our Christmas posters up in shops, noticeboards in factories or offices, schools, community centres, church halls, etc. ... but don't forget to ask for permission first.

DOWN DAY OUT ...

Members of the RPSI Council were invited to attend the Downpatrick Railway Society's special invitation day at Downpatrick on Sunday 22 October. On a brilliantly sunny day the recently recommissioned RPSI locomotive, No.3BG "Guinness", which is currently leased to the Downpatrick society, was in steam for the occasion, and

very well she looked too. A cheque was presented to the RPSI to cover the first payment in the agreement between the RPSI and the Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway for the lease of the engine. All those present were very impressed with the progress made by the Downpatrick scheme and we wish the project well in the future. Our two societies will hopefully be able to co-operate in a number of joint ventures in the coming years.

THANKS JIM ...

A presentation was made by the RPSI to Mr. Jim Crozier of Mullan's Bookshop on 8 November to mark the conferring on him of honorary membership of the RPSI. Jim has been a member of the Society for many many years and was instrumental in Mullan's becoming an unofficial RPSI information centre and official ticket outlet since the inception of the Portrush flyer about 19 years ago. He was presented with a framed photograph by Charles Friel of No.85 "Merlin". Mullan's has sadly shut up shop now, but the RPSI Council wanted to pay tribute to Jim and his colleagues in Donegall Place for the valuable assistance they have given down the years. Many thanks Jim, and keep building those fine 7mm scale models of NCC locomotives!

AND CONGRATULATIONS ...

Hearty congratulations to member and dining car worker Stephen Forsythe who won NIR's recent 150th Anniversary competition for schools. Stephen, a pupil of Gransha Boys High School in Bangor, was treated to a footplate trip on board the NIR Enterprise and a slap up lunch in Dublin.

IN BELFAST ...

Don't forget the series of RPSI meetings being held at St. Jude's Hall, Ravenhill Road, Belfast, this winter. The next date is Wednesday 13 December and the title of the slide show by Charles Friel is "Those Were the '80s", a look back at a hectic decade of RPSI activities. Start time is 7.30 pm. Members and friends are very welcome.