

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

NEWSHEET - JULY 1990

OPERATIONS

Bookings for this year's 2/3/4 day Railtour were somewhat down on last year's. Doubtless this is partly due to our present inability to use the Society's historic rake of coaches for other than a small part of the tour. However, the main reason appeared to be the fact that only one loco, 2-6-4T No.4 was available for use and that that loco, despite her by now legendary exploits, bears a resemblance to others operating in England whilst the rest of our motive power is uniquely Irish. As it turned out, those who came were able to travel behind four different classes of locomotive although three of these were diesels! As most will now know No.4, after another sparkling run on the Cork main line suffered a boiler tube failure near Tipperary on the return run from Carrick-on-Suir and took no further part in the proceedings. An A class diesel which had crossed the tour train with cement tankers at Carrick-on-Suir was hastily summoned back from Limerick Junction and took our stranded train on to Limerick, dropping off No.4 at the Junction. With some rapid re-thinking by Operations Department and the co-operation of the railway companies the remainder of the tour ran as planned, with the bonus of extensions to Galway on Sunday and Londonderry on Monday, made possible by the lack of need for turning or servicing the diesel loco. Although the failure of No.4 was undoubtedly a disappointment the tour participants - for the most part enthusiasts - tended to be understanding as loco failures are by no means unknown elsewhere. Some indeed were kind enough to write to the Operations committee to say how much they appreciated the 'rescue' arrangements.

As you will see in the Loco Report, No.4 was soon back in business on the 'Ennis 750' charter, working four return trips to Gort on Saturday 9 June and another two the next day, before returning with the southern coach set to Mullingar. The organisers of 'Ennis 750' reported a very successful operation and congratulated the Society on its professionalism.

Escaping from the restrictions of working over a goods line, No.4 proceeded to give everyone an excellent run from Dublin to Sligo and back on 23 June.

COUNCIL NEWS

Not unusually, there is a pre-occupation with money. The action necessary to save the Comeragh tour and subsequent operations has, as you might expect, upset previous calculations. The financial belt has been tightened and the bulk of current expenditure is being directed towards locomotive work to ensure

that we do not again find ourselves in the situation of having only one main line engine available for traffic. The bombshell which the boiler inspector dropped on No.85 had wide repercussions as No.4 was scheduled for major boiler work at the end of the 1990 season. The Council found itself with the problem of trusting that No.4 could complete the season's operations with no back-up or else cancelling the entire main line programme. Her failure on the tour led to an even more stark choice - immediate and expensive repair or cancellation of everything. The former was deemed to be the lesser of two evils but has dealt a further blow to our finances.

Are you a director and, if so, would you like to treat your clients/staff/friends to an unusual day out? The Northern Bank recently said "Yes" and took out a corporate membership of the RPSI. So did consulting engineers, Kirk, McClure & Morton. It costs Stg£250/IR£300 and benefits include the complimentary use of one eight-seater compartment per year on any selected RPSI operation. If you can persuade any other company to participate please contact RPSI Secretary, Paul McCann.

Another means of helping the Society funds, which can be used by any member, is 'Give as you Earn' which is explained by Bob Hunter under Commercial Department News.

Secretary, Paul McCann, would like to thank those members in the Greater Belfast, Dublin and Mullingar areas who took the trouble to return the questionnaires sent out with their membership cards. They should soon be hearing from a Council member or PSR dealing with the activity in which assistance was offered.

Strange as it may seem, this is the present Publications officer's first attempt at producing a Newsheet. For a long time it was done by one more fluent in 'journallese', with its puns and catchy headlines so connoisseurs of such may find this issue disappointing. However, here goes:

'CHIP OFF OLD BLOCK BREAKS NEW GROUND!'

With this mixture of metaphors we congratulate Paul Henderson, son of well-known old block Derek, on being appointed the Society's youngest ever PSR. Paul has been assisting Bob Hunter for some time in his sales campaign and is now in charge of postal sales. So get your orders off to him for the goodies Bob has been advertising, not least the handsome GNR crests.

A Workshop sub-committee has been set up to oversee loco, coach and site activities at Whitehead. If you would like to get involved contact Jim McBride.

THE CARRIAGE TRADE

Due to the present emphasis on loco work no major coach projects are likely to be embarked on in the near future but there is still plenty of work for willing hands on the coaches currently in traffic. Whilst all are in running order there are lots of

little jobs which would make them even better and which would not cause great dirtiness or fatigue so why not give it a try?

LOCOMOTIVE REPORT

Apart from Nos. 4, 461 and the Carlow diesel, the loco position is much the same as reported in the March newsheet. Some work has been done on the firebox of No.171 but the main effort is to get No.461 ready for traffic. The Planet diesel still totters gamely around, performing its vital duties when something needs to be moved.

CSE 0-4-ODM: The 'Carlow diesel', as it is commonly known, is an example of something which will need to be moved very soon. At present it has a 0-2-0 wheel arrangement and is sitting immovably over the wheel drop pit which is required for the fitting of the ashpan to No.461. One of the grotesque wheel sets described by Peter Scott in the last 'Five Foot Three' has been turned to more appropriate dimensions in the wheel lathe. The other was undergoing the same treatment when a bolt in the lathe sheared and the piece which broke off, with every opportunity to fall to the ground, perversely made its way between two gear wheels, cracking one of them. This caused some delay until repairs were carried out but the second wheelset is now almost ready to be replaced in the frames, enabling the loco to be moved.

LMS (NCC) 2-6-4T No.4: It had been hoped that this loco's boiler tubes would see her through the 1990 season prior to boiler lifting and overhaul during the winter of 1990/91 and the loco had been steam tested at Whitehead and had had a run to York Road before proceeding LE to Dublin. Yet again, Sod's Law was seen in action as the subsequent tube failure took place almost as far from home as was possible. However, the loco was promptly towed back to Inchicore. When one boiler tube goes it is only a matter of time until its contemporaries will follow so nothing less than replacement of all the small tubes in the boiler could ensure the loco's fitness for traffic. A concerted effort by Dublin members led by Rory McNamee saw this work completed in time for No.4 to fulfil our obligation to the organisers of 'Ennis 750' and our thanks are due to those responsible.

DSER 2-6-0 No.461: Work on this loco is being progressed as rapidly as possible with a view to her return to traffic in late summer. To use a local saying, the engine is now a lot more like herself - not least by reason of having her chimney restored to its rightful position. By and large, the bulk of the remaining work consists of plumbing and painting. Vacuum and oil piping have still to be replaced, along with brake rodding, cab floorboards and boiler cladding. The new hopper ashpan, once the Carlow diesel has been removed, will be lowered into the wheeldrop pit, No.461 placed over the pit and the ashpan hoisted into position.

The provisional running-in programme involves trips of increasing distance and load from Whitehead during August and it is hoped that members will be able to travel on some of these before a Portrush train and official launch in September. It must be stressed that this is provisional and entirely dependent on the remaining work and steam-testing going according to plan. This in turn depends to a large extent on sufficient manpower. One welcome new face appeared recently. He didn't have much company as it was Sligo day but he just put on a boiler suit and got stuck in. It's as easy as that!

SUMMER STEAM IN THE SOUTH

Saturday 8 July: Bray Seaside Festival (3 returns, Bray-Greystones-Bray)

Saturday 21 July: Longford Express (Dublin-Longford-Sligo and return)

Saturday 11 August: Sea Breeze (Dublin-Wexford-Rosslare and return)

In the North, this summer will see a new venture - not entirely, unconnected with our current loco situation - in that the Society will be operating diesel-hauled excursions using our coaches and NIR locos. (See separate literature.) Diesel enthusiasts may even manage yet another last run behind Hunslet No.101, currently getting plenty of exercise between Portadown and Bangor!

Don't forget the Sunday Train Rides at Whitehead in July and August (No.3 "R.H. Smyth" and maybe No.461).

Unfortunately it looks as though there won't be any 'Steam Enterprise' trains this year as our wooden-bodied coaches aren't allowed south of Dundalk and the cost of hiring steel-bodied stock would be prohibitive.

For up-to-date details please contact: RPSI Publicity.

POINTS OF VIEW

Following publication of the last Five Foot Three the point was made that if anyone disagreed with something which was in it there was no means of reply - at least not for a year, by which time it was hardly worthwhile. So, without expanding the Newsheet into a mini-magazine it mightn't be a bad thing if anyone with a point of view or query were to drop a (brief) line to the Publications Officer, c/o RPSI Whitehead. If urgent or topical it could be included with a reply if necessary, in the next Newsheet.