

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

NEWS-SHEET - AUGUST 1990

Coming so soon after the last Newsheet, there isn't a great deal to report in this one - the main purpose of this mailing being to members' notice the operations planned for the next couple of months.

OPERATIONS

Recent trips have met with mixed fortunes. No.4 operated successful excursions to Bray on 8 July and to Sligo on 21 July. Unfortunately the "North Coast Flyer", the diesel-hauled alternative to our well-known "Portrush Flyer", was less of a success - so much so that two of the planned four trains have been cancelled. Whilst we expected a reduced level of traffic from the general public it is a matter of grave concern that support from our own members was so poor and seems to indicate a state of apathy whilst other societies make progress with healthy membership involvement and support.

This is all the more disturbing since the diesel Flyers were run to help maintain our cash flow which would go towards the costs of overhauling Nos. 4 and 171 next winter.

The only other Flyer to run this year will be on 18 August, hauled by a NIR Hunslet loco, probably No.101. This was NIR's first main line diesel and this will almost certainly be her last run to Portrush on a passenger train as withdrawal from main line work is imminent.

A special family fare of £20 for 2 adults & 2 children makes this excellent value for a day out as well as helping Society funds. Tickets may be purchased at any of our ticket outlets (see booking form with last Newsheet) or by just turning up on the day. Don't forget the afternoon excursion from Portrush to Londonderry.

So far, the Sunday Steam Shuttle train rides at Whitehead have been something of a curate's egg, with good days and not so good days, not to mention rather unpredictable weather in July with the rain tending to fall on Sundays. "R.H. Smyth" has been the regular engine to date although hopes are high that No.461 may appear on train rides in August. All trains will run from 2 pm. until 5 pm., but don't forget our "Happy Hour" - half fare on train rides between 2 & 3 pm.

COMMERCIAL & PUBLICITY

The response to our request for help in setting up a system for the planned and co-ordinated distribution of RPSI publicity material has been NIL! Would anyone interested please contact the publicity department at Whitehead? Failure to set up such a system will only result in increased postage and administration costs - money which could otherwise be spent on loco and coach restoration, as well as improving our site facilities.

Talking of sites, has anyone got access to weedkiller, a means of applying it and the inclination to do so at Whitehead? Although we have no wish to be environmentally-unfriendly it is well known that railway tracks and vegetation do not go well together so if anyone can spare a couple of hours to attend to this he or she will be most welcome.

Have you got a spare table? The commercial department is on the lookout for card tables or other folding tables for use at outdoor events. If you have which you could lend or donate please contact Bob Hunter.

Sam Somerville Seeks Slides! Or any photographs or film footage of No.461 in service or illustrating her restoration. Sam would like these to assist him in publicising her return to traffic. If you can help, please send details to RPSI Publicity Officer (NI).

Still on Sam, he is giving up his post of Whitehead Operations Manager at the end of August in order to devote more time to his Publicity post and other matters. Any member interested in taking over the job of organising Whitehead operations is asked to contact Sam at the Whitehead shop between 2 & 6 pm. on Sunday 19 or 26 August.

The Society was represented at a reunion of former GNR railwaymen at the Melmount Centre in Strabane on 24 May. Almost 500 people attended and were entertained to an evening of GNR and CDRJC films. At the end of the evening RPSI Publicity Officer Sam Somerville presented a mounted GNR crest (have you ordered yours yet?) to the organiser, former signalman Willie John Carlin. To mark the event, which it is hoped will be an annual one, a room at the Centre - on the Sion Mills road - was named the Railway Room with the GNR crest given pride of place.

Congratulations to coach cleaning PSR Alan McRobert on his marriage to Sheena Huey on 25 July - the Commercial Officer suggests that Alan will now be Mr Sheen ... Groan!! Also to Ruth Henderson, on being awarded an Enniskillen bursary which took her to Kentucky with a party of young people representing both sides of the Northern Ireland community.

LOCO REPORT

As predicted in the last report, the Carlow diesel had the remaining 50% of its wheels restored to their places and on 8 July was moved from its perch over the wheeldrop pit. Hopefully it will soon move again, into the shed to have its engine and cab replaced before No.4 returns in the autumn.

Steamraiser Jonathan Kelly set a good example on 8 July by having "R.H. Smyth" ready in time for a morning's shunting, enabling No.461 to be placed over the wheeldrop, her ashpan fitted and engine and tender reunited in the correct order in the shed, still leaving time for "Harvey's" crew to have an unusually leisurely lunch before starting train ride work.

The long awaited event came on Saturday 28 July, when No.461 was hauled out of Whitehead shed to be lit up for the first time in over a quarter of a century! Once the ceremonial match had been applied, the Chief Mechanical Engineer directed that a banqueting table be set up. One was speedily created from a wheelchair ramp and some bricks and the CME placed upon it a bottle of champagne, three cans of a beverage favoured by him and a quantity of assorted nuts (of the edible variety). Other members of the team also contributed and a modest celebration ensued. The nearest to a formal christening probably occurred when someone set their beer can on the buffer beam before climbing on to the boiler to tighten dome nuts, etc.

The first steaming went satisfactorily. Not surprisingly, a few minor adjustments were found necessary and have since been attended to. The boiler insulation is now in place (4 August) and will shortly be covered by the cladding sheets. Apart from painting, little more remains to be done before the loco is ready to once again move under her own power. When final

adjustments have been made it should be possible to try her out on train rides as part of the running-in programme (see below).

As already reported, work on the boiler and firebox of No.171 has already begun. Assuming no major problems with No.461, this will continue as will similar work on No.4 during the coming winter.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

As part of No.461's running-in programme it is planned to run trains on NIR on the following dates:

Saturday 25 August

Sunday 9, Saturday 15 and Friday (evening) 21 September

There is also a chance that Steam Enterprises may after all run to Dublin on 29 September and 13 October, using RPSI stock as far as Dundalk.

The running-in trips are being offered to the membership as obviously there will be interest in the new loco and, equally obviously, because we need money. No guarantees are given - since they are running-in trips progress is likely to be fairly leisurely, with stops to check on the loco and probably to keep out of the way of normal traffic. Timings, fares or precise destinations are not available at present, although joining points will presumably be either Whitehead or York Road.

Please keep in touch with the situation either by ringing the Whitehead answering machine or contacting a member of Council.

CARRIAGE REPORT

An optimistic title. The Publications Officer was recently taken to task by another member for the scant reference to carriage matters in the last News-sheet. The reason for that situation is twofold: (a) the financial restrictions mentioned therein and (b) the fact that those concerned have been strangely coy about revealing what is happening in their realm thereby making it difficult to relay news to the outside world. It is probably fair to say that the pitifully small number of members who can be bothered to assist in restoring coaches must make it still harder for those in charge to report significant developments.

Despite this, three of our vintage coaches were hired in July for the filming of a commercial. Believed to be about beer, the brand is not clear but it's not dark!

TAILPIECE

Not entirely accurate since the dog in question hasn't got much tail. In the case of Irwin Pryce's, the tail hasn't got much dog but maybe it was a mutual affection for the creatures that enabled him to persuade Dulux to donate a substantial quantity of their product for the re-painting of No.461. There might even be enough to do No.4 the same colour!

Seriously though, the donation is much appreciated as the fact that someone took the trouble to set about getting it in addition to being an active and regular worker at Whitehead. Surely this indicates the kind of contribution to the Society which could be made by many other members who are not otherwise actively involved. If you think you can acquire something which may be of use please contact someone in the relevant department.