

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

NEWS-SHEET - MARCH 1991

COUNCIL NEWS

The Annual General Meeting took place as arranged on Friday 22 February. Despite the convenience, for members in the Greater Belfast area, and congeniality of the venue the attendance was disappointing. The report of the proceedings is enclosed for the benefit of those who either could not or would not be present.

Among the matters discussed at the meeting was the Society's rules, perhaps more correctly described as our Articles of Association since the Society is registered as a limited company. Certain recent distasteful occurrences had caused the Council to re-examine the Articles and it was found, amazingly, that the governing body of the Society appeared to lack the power to exclude or expel undesirable persons. This situation and the proposed remedy having been explained to the meeting, it was unanimously agreed that a two-thirds majority of the Council should be empowered to refuse membership to or, in the case of an existing member of the Society to require resignation from any person whose membership was deemed to be prejudicial to the best interests of the Society. The majority requirement and a right of appeal against the decision will ensure that no-one can be a victim of personal animosity.

Now for something much more pleasant. There had been talk, as they say, of the possibility of some kind of European Community grant in relation to locomotive restoration. The chance of any kind of grant immediately arouses interest and in view of the anticipated heavy expenditure on locomotive work this one sounded particularly attractive since potentially it could release money to other departments and/or facilitate loco work hitherto impossible due to lack of funds.

Not surprisingly, it was eagerly pursued and a meeting with representatives of the Department of Economic Development and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board was held on 1 February. It transpired that, due to a change in the rules of the European Regional Development Tourism Fund, the Society with its charitable status was eligible to receive support for its locomotive repair programme. This, if approved, would extend over three years and would cover 75% of any approved capital works project. The fact that we operate cross-border, with bases in both Whitehead and Mullingar, could qualify us for preference and it is possible that, after a review, some monies could be allocated to Carriage and Site projects.

All this sounds like the answer to many prayers but don't let's count our chickens until they're hatched - if we get the grant it will be the answer to many problems; if not, it's back to the grindstone!

Can there be anyone who at this late stage has not renewed his or her membership?! If so, please put matters right as soon as possible, preferably by Standing Order and Covenant. What about the Life Membership offer? At the present rate of £10 per annum that gives you 20 years, so if you aren't too ancient and intend to remain a member it's bound to be worthwhile, bearing in mind that membership fees are almost certain to rise a number of times in the next twenty years!

OPERATIONS

No.461 was to have completed her running-in programme with the trip to Dundalk on Sunday 24 February. Unfortunately her performance was far from sparkling and the resultant loss of time meant that the light engine run to Drogheda for turning had to be cut out. The forbearance of the loco crew on their tender-first journey to Belfast in wintry conditions is much appreciated. For good measure the right hand big-end bearing ran hot - see Loco report.

The next big event is the official launch of No.461 at Pearse station, Dublin, on 16 April. As it is anticipated that VIPs will be in attendance, security measures will be in operation and a permit will be required by anyone meaning to be there. An application form is enclosed (don't forget the SAE).

After that, short of a calamity or Act of Satan, No.461 will be the star attraction on the Decies Railtour in May. The tour is already fully booked, which is good news for the Society but bad news for anyone who left it until the last minute to decide - time now to overhaul cars and cameras!

A list of the attractive programme of Dublin-based trips is enclosed. Don't overlook the "Limerick 300" - a second two-day tour!

On 23 February representatives of Irish Rail and our insurers visited Whitehead and carried out an inspection of No.461 and the Whitehead carriage rake with satisfactory results. Attention was also given to the redoubtable No.4 so we may not have seen the last of her for a little while yet.

LOCOMOTIVE REPORT

Dealing, untypically, with diesel matters first, the situation is as follows:

NIR/Irish Rail: Perhaps the Hunslets should have been given feline names! Although 103 seems to have become a permanent member of the York Road museum fleet her sisters appear to have acquired yet another lease of life. If rumours that Irish Rail are covetous of usable engines from any of their withdrawn Metrovicks are correct it could be some time before main line diesels make their appearance at Whitehead.

No.23: Unusable with blown cylinder head gasket.

Carlow No.?: Ready for installation of main engine; hopefully gearbox/transmission will not require attention. Work still required on cab roof and on sundry plumbing and electrical fittings, followed by re-painting.

No.4: No change since last report; usable if required.

No.85: No change since last report.

No.171: Work on replacement of firebox stays and rivets continues. Some rivets in the boiler barrel are also being replaced. A new smokebox front plate has been fabricated and the smokebox door has been fitted to it. Work at Inchicore on the new smokebox tubeplate is well advanced and when this is returned to Whitehead a new smokebox wrapper plate will have to be made and fitted. This and the attachment of the tubeplate to the boiler barrel will involve much riveting and the fitting of a new set of

longitudinal boiler stays. The regulator valve and main steam pipe will also have to be refitted.

Once the boiler has been replaced in the frames a considerable amount of other pipework will also have to be reinstated, together with various boiler fittings currently being overhauled, not forgetting the upper half of the cab. The two halves of the cab were originally bolted together and those with long memories will recall that this led to movement, with cracking of the paint and streaks of oil down the cab sides. The remedy was to weld the joint but this meant that the two halves had to be cut apart during dismantling. This and the general deterioration of the paintwork since the early 1970s makes a full re-paint desirable.

No.184: At Mullingar. Work continues, with the boiler being opened for examination and overhaul.

No.461: The right hand big end referred to earlier has been taken down, re-metalled and refitted. The right hand driving crankpin bush has periodically and unpredictably been carrying heat. Unlike the other five, this is a plain bronze bush and it is proposed to apply a white metal bearing surface. Measures are also being taken to improve steaming, which is not all that it might be.