

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

NEWS-SHEET - AUGUST 1991

COUNCIL NEWS

Our first cheque - for around £14,000 in respect of No.171's boiler work - has been received from the European Regional Development Fund. Some people from the Department of Economic Development, who administer the Fund, came along on the 17 August Portrush Flyer to see what it was all about and it was suggested that Treasurer John Beaumont should produce the cheque for all to see. It is reported that a prolonged rummaging ensued, with furrowing of the Beaumont brow, before the cheque was triumphantly flourished. Was it all just to build up tension or did John really think he lost it?!

The Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, recently in the news with their own development plan, have agreed to continue the lease of No.85 to the RPSI for a further 15 years from 1992 with a possible 15 years after that. When not in RPSI service the loco is to be displayed at Cultra.

Alan McRobert has been appointed PSR for carriage cleaning at Whitehead and Peter Rigney PSR for carriage maintenance at Mullingar.

SOUTHERN NEWS

Irish President Mrs. Mary Robinson has accepted the Society's offer of honorary life membership.

After many years Mullingar shed, leased from Irish Rail, now has its own electricity connected.

The Mullingar carriage set now includes a Park Royal on loan from Irish Rail. This coach will probably remain in the set for the remainder of the season and has been painted in RPSI green livery, complete with "flying snail".

Santa trains, three each day from Mullingar to Killucan, are planned for a Saturday and Sunday this Christmas; more details later.

SOCIAL CLUB

John Mathews reports: In the aftermath of springtime enthusiasm the active members of the social club have been trying to catch up with neglected domestic responsibilities during the summer.

The building work is all complete and we have a most pleasant clubroom with a snooker table and new toilets which are available to all members and visitors to the site. The new facilities have been little used during the summer but we are planning a programme of events for the long dark evenings and hope to have the building open on Friday nights throughout the winter.

There have been a few events on an experimental basis and we believe that a regular table quiz will be well supported, once or twice a month, and the first one is planned for Friday 30 August, so if anyone wants to get a table of four together please join us.

We would be grateful for suggestions as to how we could be of assistance to the Society in a more positive manner, in running events to assist in fund-raising and recruitment of new members. It seems that

there is great interest in steam rail travel among the general public, but a lot of people are dubious about becoming involved with Society activities because of their own lack of knowledge of the technicalities. Could the Social Club be of help in this direction at weekends by introducing timorous volunteers gently to the rigours of the coal-face? We should be well qualified in this as hardly anybody knows what a "clack valve" is among our own members.

The Social Club membership now stands at 26, all fully paid up members of the RPSI. To save postage, new membership cards are left in addressed envelopes on the mantelpiece in the clubroom.

The RUC have been informed of the Club's existence and have assured us of their help and advice if required.

There is no shortage of goodwill but we will find it difficult to contribute without input from the RPSI policymakers and activists, to help give the social side of railway preservation some direction. Anyone interested in Social Club activities should contact John Mathews.

#### SITE REPORT

The impending transfer of NIR's Central Service Depot to York Road meant that CSD's modern turntable would be surplus to requirements and also in the way of the civil engineering works already under way in connection with the cross-Lagan link so the company offered it to the RPSI at a reasonable price. The offer was taken up with alacrity and Whitehead now has a turntable in kit form. The pieces were worked round on wagons from CSD on 5 July, thereby adding a freight working to No.461's running-in programme.

With the Planet diesel, the JCB and the hand crane all operational, site work at Whitehead has taken a modern turn with Dermot Mackie and his team assembling concrete-sleepered track panels for use on the site and in the carriage shed.

#### CARRIAGE & WAGON

A donation of £2,000 from Bass Ireland has helped work to proceed on diner No.87 and it is hoped to have this useful vehicle back in service in September or October.

Coach No.1097 is currently being fitted with ramps, wheelchair clamps and special toilet facilities for use by disabled passengers.

#### LOCO REPORT

No.4 Will complete Dublin-based summer operations before returning to Whitehead for major overhaul.

No.23 Returned to traffic as Whitehead shunting loco.

Carlow Diesel Progress slow and dependent on persons not being required for other work. Air compressors have recently been fitted.

No.85 Negotiations re firebox repairs continue.

No.171 Boiler work almost completed. It is hoped that the boiler will be hydraulically tested and reinstated in the frames within the next few weeks.

No.461 Running-in proceeded satisfactorily and the loco was considered fit to operate Portrush Flyers. These ran on 3 &

17 August with no problems other than a troublesome injector on the latter date. This has since received attention.

#### OPERATIONS

Unfortunately we begin with two non-operations. The first is the Limerick Treaty 300 which has had to be cancelled due lack of sufficient support. Bookings seemed to be coming well and by early summer had reached around 100 but then they stuck there and to have run the train with that loading would have resulted in a heavy loss.

As our preserved coaches are still not permitted to run between Dundalk and Dublin the Steam Enterprise trains have had to be abandoned for another year. Alternative arrangements, using Irish Rail Cravens, were explored but it was eventually decided that none of the options open to us would be a viable proposition.

More bad news - no Santa trains at Whitehead this year! Although it was possible that site work might have disrupted such operations, there has been such a poor response to appeals for members' help in operating trains at Whitehead in recent times that the Operations Committee felt obliged to cancel the Santa trains in any case. Whitehead events have in the past been a useful source of income, as well as being a means of getting prospective passengers interested in main line trains. Things have reached a sorry state when, for the first time, we have had to cancel an operation because our own members are not sufficiently interested to enable us to staff it.

A Whitehead manager plus assistants are urgently sought if the Easter operations are not to be cancelled as well.

One cost-effective operation occurred in July when a film company wished to shoot some material at Whitehead in connection with a forthcoming Irish historical documentary. This required very little staffing and the income was welcomed. However, such a source of income obviously cannot be relied on and is no substitute for bread and butter operations.

Only two Portrush Flyers were run this year, on 3 & 17 August, but both were fully booked - a very satisfactory state of affairs.

The Dublin-based Sea Breeze trips to Rosslare have also run satisfactorily although support from the Wexford area seems to have fallen off somewhat.

Despite the cancellations the season isn't over yet and the following operations are planned:

Sunday 8 September, Dublin (Connolly) to Greystones & return. Three trips, departing Connolly at 10.45 am, 2.00 pm and 4.15 pm. Loco No.4 + 8 bogies including the Park Royal. Fares £5 and OAP/u16 £3.

Saturday 21 September, Foyle Valley Tour, Belfast (York Road) to Londonderry & return with loco No.461. Fare (including admission to Foyle Valley Museum) £13, OAP/u16 £7, family ticket £39.50.

Winter draws on, and Charlie Friel will once again be your genial host at the monthly get-togethers at St. Jude's Hall, off the Ravenhill Road, Belfast. More information in due course, but the first three dates

are 9 October, 13 November and 11<sup>th</sup> December, starting time 7.30 pm.

The sales stand will be there, as will the customary tea and biccies. 9 October will be a cine night. Willie Coates, Paul Newell, Ian Sinclair and John Friel will be providing a miscellany including the Shandon Railtour, Great Northern Operations around Belfast and Warrenpoint, and Steam by the Indian Ocean, the latter featuring South African Railways' scenic George - Knysna branch and the spectacular Plentaga Pass

STOP PRESS

No.171 has moved another stage nearer to a return to traffic. On Thursday 29 August her boiler passed a hydraulic test, and on Tuesday 3 September the boiler and frames were reunited. A new smokebox was fitted at the same time, and the ashpan was also fitted. It's now all hands to putting the engine back together so that she can be tested, hopefully before the end of the year, and made ready for the 1992 season. As soon as she's out the next projects are Nos. 4 and 85!

We're often asked about accommodation in the Whitehead area, and have had to refer members to Carrickfergus or Belfast. But now there's some good news. If you're looking for Bed and Breakfast we suggest you contact:

Mrs. Kathleen Rigby, Crestbank Guest House, 13 Marine Parade, Whitehead, BT38 9QP.

Current price is about £12.50 per night, and you're literally a one minute walk from the station, and about three minutes' walk from our depot.

As you have heard, we have a lot of European money to spend, but we have a very major problem! The grant covers materials, tools and specialist contract work only! This means that we have got to provide the bulk of the labour, so we need lots more workers. If you live in Northern Ireland, and can get to Whitehead on a weekend, either Saturday or Sunday (or better still, both!) then you can help! Remember, no skills are required - they're welcome but not essential. At the moment Dermot Mackie is trying to build up a site team to help assemble the track for the new Carriage Shed, as well as doing a few other jobs; Jeremy Saulters and Thomas Charters are trying to build up the Carriage and Wagon squad again, and they have a lot of work to do; and of course Peter Scott is looking for help on the locomotives. So, what are YOU going to do to help the Society this autumn?

By the way, there are also some weekdays and weeknights when there is work in progress - contact the Council officers for details. All help is welcome.

And talking of the Carriage Shed, we hope to go to tender in the near future. It will be one of the biggest buildings ever put up by a preservation society, at nearly one eighth of a mile long! Yes, that's a furlong in old measure. Our development programme is probably the biggest grant aided scheme ever undertaken by a preservation group, and you should see the results taking shape in the very near future. Can you really manage to sit at home, and not help? Come on, join in!