

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

NEWS-SHEET - MARCH 1992

GENERAL

Many thanks to all those members who paid their subscriptions promptly, and extra thanks to those who added a donation. Remember, a donation can be given at any time - perhaps Life members and those who pay by standing order would consider contributing a little extra to the Carriage Shed fund.

The 1992 Annual General Meeting was held in Dublin on 22 February and was deemed a great success by all who attended. Our thanks to the Irish Railway Record Society for allowing us the use of their premises, and to our Vice-President Dr. Garret Fitzgerald who chaired the meeting, minutes of which are enclosed.

The AGM ended with no candidates for the posts of Northern Commercial and Northern Carriage Running being forthcoming. Suitable members can still be considered for co-option on to Council to fill these posts.

NIR Chief Executive Roy Beattie is retiring in April to become a railway consultant. To mark his retirement, and for the help he has given the RPSI over the years, Council has decided to make him an honorary member of the Society. Best wishes for a long and happy retirement, Roy.

The RPSI has now become the owner of a railcar! Ex-LMS(NCC) No.1 has been donated by the trustees of the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum. Many people may have thought it belonged to us anyway as it has been stored in various corners of Whitehead yard for umpteen years. This vehicle, dating from the 1930s, is another example of how Irish railways were in the forefront in the application of the internal combustion engine to rail transport. Yet another example, demonstrating a different approach, is, sad to say, being allowed to rot away outside the Transport Museum in Belfast.

OPERATIONS

Irish Rail chartered No.461 and four of the Mullingar set of coaches to operate a repeat of last year's Presidential train from Westland Row to Dun Laoghaire to launch their 1992 Weekend Break campaign. Thursday 5 March saw the train successfully turned out by the Dublin squad after less than a week's notice from Irish Rail. The Republic's new Minister for Transport and Tourism travelled and much publicity and goodwill was gained by the Society.

No.461 had a successful light engine running-in trip between Whitehead and York Road and Larne on 5 March. The next operation is planned for 12 April when it is hoped that she will haul a full train to Coleraine and back.

The frantic activity to get the carriage shed built and to get a full set of coaches in order for the International Railtour in May has meant that the Easter Bunny operations planned for Whitehead have reluctantly had to be cancelled.

Those members who are hoping to travel to Westport on the "Grainne Uaile" railtour and who have paid their £10 deposits should by now have received their looking forms. If you have not returned these by now you risk not getting a place on the tour as seats are in great demand and are likely

to be over-subscribed.

Dates proposed for 1992 so far are:

13 & 14 June - "Royal Canal Festival", Connolly - Enfield & return (x2)
20 June - "Midsummer Night's Steam", Dublin - Mullingar (barbecue) & return
27 June - "Hills of Donegal", Belfast - Derry (bus tour to Donegal) -
Belfast
4 July - "Strawberry Fair", Dublin - Enniscorthy - Rosslare & return
18 July, 1 & 15 August - "Portrush Flyer"
22 August - "Sea Breeze", Dublin - Enniscorthy - Rosslare & return
13 September - "Maynooth Shuttle", Dublin - Maynooth & return (x3)

All enquiries to: RPSI Railtours. Phone (09603) 53567 for latest details on any operation.

WHITEHEAD SITE

Once started, the carriage shed has proceeded at a fine pace and the structure is now almost complete. Mackie's Men have followed up with their prefabricated track panels and two lines are now laid for about half the length of the shed with the result that on 21 March a coach was observed inside the shed. More of this will probably be revealed in the "Bogieman's Gazette".

The next phase involves getting the new heavy lift area set up. This will be situated in the triangle between the carriage sidings and the loco shed roads. Until recently no-one was sure how much earth could be excavated from the mound surrounding the water tower in case it might topple on to the loco shed. However, the contractors on site cut a narrow trench which revealed brickwork going down to rail level. Since what seems to be the ground floor inside the tower is level with the top of the mound, removal of the mound will mean that the tower would resemble the Irish round towers whose entrances could only be reached by a ladder!

A thought regarding the Planet diesel, No.23. In times past, the locomotives used by contractors in the building of a railway were quite often sold to the railway owners on completion of the work and eventually found their way into industrial use. However, No.23, having started life with Irish Shell, now finds herself involved in railway construction!

LOCO REPORT

No.4	Dismantling in preparation for boiler lifting continues.
No.23	As mentioned above, the Planet is busily employed on site operations which appear to impose a considerable strain on the loco's horn! Whilst safe operation is all-important, it is almost certain that this could be achieved less noisily and at less risk of antagonising our neighbours.
No.85	Much thought went into possible methods of dealing with the firebox problem. One option was a complete new steel inner firebox. Although few Irish locomotives were so fitted, the idea was attractive, steel being cheaper and easier to work with. However, the issue was resolved by the Museum who stated that when the loco was eventually returned to them they would wish it to have the same type of firebox as when it left, i.e. copper. Thus work is proceeding on cutting out the defective sections - in sections. This involves the drilling out of

several hundred stays. The loco's rear driving springs have been removed for rebuilding.

- No.171 A running-in trip was successfully completed on March, only minor matters requiring attention.
- R.H. Smyth The defective sections of the inner firebox have been removed. Electrolytic action between the copper stays and the steel outer firebox, as well as repeated caulking of the stay heads, has led to considerable wasting of the outer firebox plates and this is being made good prior to re-tapping of the stay-holes.
- Carlow Diesel Work on various items proceeds whenever men can be spared from other work. Will the acquisition of Railcar No.1 bring about the influx of diesel enthusiasts which this loco has not!?

SALES ITEMS

In addition to the items listed in the January Newsheet the following can be obtained from Henry Beaumont; prices include post and packing:

- (1) Supplement to NCC Saga (1973) by R M Arnold. 36 pages of details of locos, coaches & timing of trains £1.50
- (2) Rail Freight Today - Ireland. Colour video, 50 mins £19.80
- (3) The GNR(I) In Co. Tyrone. 14 pages of b&w photos and maps, 6"x8½" £1.80

WANTED

Copies of past newsletters and Council minutes have been deposited with the Public Record Office. In trying to preserve the RPSI's archives for posterity it is felt that a full set of "Five Foot Three" magazines should be placed in the vaults. If any member is prepared to donate past copies, or knows of a source, please contact Secretary, Paul McCann. PS: Old newsletters of the 1960s are also required.

BELFAST AREA MEETINGS

At the end of March we can look back on yet another successful series of informative and entertaining evenings presided over by your genial host, Charlie Friel.

The statistics: A total of 18 speakers took part over the 6 evenings. Joe Curran's "County Donegal Revisited" drew the largest audience of 250, closely followed by 225 for Fred Cooper's "Irish Steam Cinema". A total of 934 people attended, the average being 156, and the tea ladies collected £134 for Romanian Orphans.

Most of us sit back and enjoy and applaud the visiting speakers perhaps without realising just how much work Charlie Friel puts into these evenings - much more than just arranging for someone to come and talk to us and maybe also seeing to transport and lodgings. A "Fred" night would be fairly easy as would one where the speaker had a fine collection of colour slides but in other cases considerable digging into archives could be required and could include making transparencies from black and white negatives or prints -and ours are not the only meetings Charlie goes to.

So, a big vote of thanks to Charlie for his work over the years and, at the risk of incurring the wrath of Christine, let's hope that rumours of his intention to retire from the scene have been exaggerated!

MULLINGAR COACH & SITE NEWS

Recent Newsheets have given only a brief glimpse of the goings-on at Mullingar. The following report which was circulated at the AGM should help to put other members in the picture:

Our main task was to produce a 4-coach set with a standard of finish appropriate to a state train. Four coaches were selected for the launch of No.461. These were 1915 (brake), 2422 (diner) and 1469 & 1470 (64-seater open coaches).

The work specification was full external repair and upgrading of interior facilities. This involved some replacement panelling in 2422, which received the greatest attention outside. Included was the application of red floor paint which will be applied to other coaches in due course. The work commenced in November and intensified in January, when the coaches moved to Mullingar.

The loco shed there provided cramped, if adequate conditions for exterior repainting. The paint was brushed on, as opposed to the sprayed finish on 1988 and a coat of varnish was applied. After an intensive period of work the exterior work was completed and the coaches moved to Dublin behind No.461. There, further interior work was carried out at Heuston and our particular thanks are due to the staff of the valeting plant, who allowed us access during a slack period on a Sunday morning.

At the conclusion of No.461's launch we were faced with the daunting task of turning out another three coaches in two months. It became obvious that if we did not paint the three remaining coaches the train would look distinctly piebald. Coaches 1483 and 1916 were next for attention, with the van section of 1916 receiving some attention to improve crew facilities. These two coaches were moved to Dublin on 12/4/1991 and made up a six-coach set for the Enfield Shuttle. The remaining coach, 1445, required a lot more internal work including $\frac{2}{3}$ of its ceiling panels as well as a repaint. It was moved to Dublin on 15/6/1991 and travelled on the first "Sea Breeze".

During the last year the electrics on all the coaches have been upgraded and a solid state control system installed. Further refinements in this area are planned.

We have encountered problems with roof sealing and the application of liquid rubber is only a short-term solution, the long term one being the application of a one-piece plastic roof. The first coach to be so treated will be 1463, currently undergoing a major re-fit.

The operation of the Santa trips provided us with the additional challenge of commissioning the steam heat - unnecessary for daytime standard running but vital if we are to offer ourselves for evening charter work, or indeed any charter work in the Spring or Autumn.

Our set is almost at its optimum size, although one other 64-seater would give us more comfort for maintenance cover. At present we are in negotiation with FAS, the state training authority, for a venture in coach restoration. We are also planning a major work programme on our bogies - all thankfully of Commonwealth type on roller bearings.

On the site, our work programme has been restricted by the fact that we do not have a lease. This year we took the decision that some work was vital if we were not to run the risk of getting a lease on a heap of rubble.

Between September and January the south side of the roof of the shed has been renewed. This involved replacement of wall-plate, beams and sheeting over the full length of the shed - unfortunately in the depths of winter. Additional work has been undertaken in preparing road access.

Our priorities for next year will be the repainting of both sides of the southern shed wall and attention to the windows. We hope that the lease will be finalised during 1992.

Our thanks are due to all the Society members who turned out during the year and to all grades of IR staff at many locations for their co-operation.