

R.P.S.I. NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 1992

COUNCIL NEWS

For some time past the feeling has been gaining strength that Council had grown to an unwieldy size and that too much time was being spent on matters which could more appropriately be dealt with at a lower level, leaving Council to concentrate on broader issues of policy, etc. Since the Society's constitution authorised the Council to increase itself to a certain level - which it did over the years - it followed that it could also reduce itself again and this is what it did decided to do at a special meeting on 11 October.

Although some tidying up of details remains to be done, the plan to have about an eleven man (sorry, person) Council. Survivors from the old Council structure will be Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Loco Maintenance Officer, Carriage & Wagon Officer and Site Officer, the latter two offices both having a Northern and a Southern officer.

In keeping with the increasing complexity of the Society's finances the Treasurer will have an assistant, and will be responsible for fund-raising. The remaining two posts will be those of Area Operations Officers (North & South). These officers will chair committees comprising the hitherto autonomous departments involved in marketing and operating trains. The Secretary will oversee such "non-operational" matters as legal advice, insurance, overseas agents, publications, membership and Belfast winter meetings.

The Council is now considering the revised structure - a pause for mature reflection away from the hurly-burly of a formal meeting - and a final decision will be taken at the December Council meeting. Full details of the proposed new structure of the Council and its sub-committees will be circulated to all members well before the 1993 Annual General Meeting. Council meetings had become something of a test of stamina and it is hoped that the changes will lead to more efficient and effective management of the Society's ever-increasing activities.

In addition to the election of the new Council there will be a lot of other posts to be filled - some of them already vacant - so if you feel that you could be helping in some department by all means get in touch with the appropriate Officer.

All that heavy stuff and still not a word about money! Well, here it comes; our Secretary, Paul

McCann, makes his annual appeal to members to consider paying their 1993 subscriptions early. It's easier now than at Christmas or New Year when other things are making demands on your pockets and the Treasurer would be delighted as it will help him to master his cashflow problems. And it's still only £10 Stg / IR£12. Non-UK members should get in now in case the Pound should take a turn for the better!

The Treasurer would also like to thank all those who sent in donations, including those who supported the recent coach appeal. Several hundred pounds were contributed. If you haven't got round to it yet, it's never too late.

OPERATIONS

First, the bad news. The steamy events proposed for the Belfast area in September and October proved impossible to operate, mainly due to the amount of engineering work going on in the York Road area. Uncertainty as to when the Civil Engineer would require total possession meant that no firm plans could be made.

Also out for yet another year were the popular Belfast - Dublin Steam enterprise trains. Part of the problem was that since the commencement of works in connection with the new Lagan bridge Belfast's Central Service Depot has become very cramped and can just about accommodate the company's own trains. That old enemy, the wooden coach ban, meant that we would have had to hire coaches for at least that part of the route south of Dundalk and this would have been uneconomic - something we cannot afford at present.

Despite this, operations continued elsewhere with a successful "Sea Breeze" outing from Dublin to Rosslare on 27 August, while the Dublin - Maynooth Shuttles carried over 1,000 passengers on 13 September with some unfortunate would-be travellers turning up only to find the trains full.

A joint Radio Telefís Éireann / European Broadcasting Union charter was operated satisfactorily over the Dublin South Eastern line on 2 September.

Meanwhile, people in pursuit of real sea breezes fitted the final "Portrush Flyer" on 15 August. It is said that the present run-down look of Portrush is because NIR are going to re-signal it. If they don't do it by next summer wouldn't it be nice if someone could arrange for the somersault signals

there - among the last of their type in the British Isles - to get a lick of paint?

Last steam of 1992 will be the Santa trains: Dublin Connolly to Maynooth on 6 & 13 December and Belfast Yorkgate to Whitehead on 6 & 20 December - see enclosed details. To ensure that our passengers are well looked after we'll need plenty of helpers so if you can tend a hand please get in touch with David Humphries or Michael McMahon, Operations Officers. As the trains' steam heating systems have been overhauled, layers of lagging should not be required. For those in the North 5 December will have the added attraction of seeing the first steam train to use the new Yorkgate station, only brought into use in October.

SOUTHERN NEWS

Negotiations have resulted in coach No.1445, based at Mullingar, being included in a FAS (Government training) scheme which will greatly assist the refurbishment programme.

Over the years. Southern Operations Officer David Humphries has been compiling a scrapbook. No, it's not about old coaches (that'll get me into trouble!) but contains press cuttings about RPSI activities. David would like it to be continued but as he has many other things which keep him busy he is on the look-out for someone to take over the scrapbook. So if you would like a nice clean tittle job that you can do in your own home please contact David.

SITE REPORT

Negotiations continue with a view to arranging a satisfactory leasing agreement with Irish Rail for our Mullingar site.

At Whitehead, Dermot Mackie has returned to traffic after repair of the collision damage described in the last News-Sheet. Also restored to health is the JCB which has had a new clutch assembly fitted.

Trackwork in the Carriage Shed has been completed, making it possible to proceed with the casting of concrete sills for the rear doors. A water system has been installed but is not producing much water. The loco shed supply is also unsatisfactory due to low pressure and the problem is being investigated.

The hand operated crane has been kept in regular employment in recent months, so much so that its repaint has had to be left partly completed. In addition to moving track panels it pays regular

visits to the loco shed to hoist No.85's boiler into various positions for the fitting of new plates.

In preparation for the Santa trains the old track panels on the platform are being dismantled as part of a tidying up operation.

LOCO REPORT

No.4 (LMS NCC 2-6-4T): All boiler tubes have been removed as has the cab roof. Some preliminary jacking of the boiler will be carried out to ensure that when the hired crane arrives we are not embarrassed by the boiler being stuck in the frames. The boiler cladding has not been removed as it conceals a disagreeable type of asbestos insulation which will require specialised attention after the boiler has been lifted out.

"R.H. Smyth" (Avonside 0-6-0ST): The new sections of inner firebox plate have been fitted, along with the foundation ring, and work on riveting and staying is proceeding.

No.23 (Planet 4wD): In traffic, being kept busy by the Site Department.

Carlow (Ruston 4wD): The sound of the donkey engine is now heard regularly in the shed as our recently arrived diesel squad go about their business. This single cylinder engine drives a compressor which charges a pressure cylinder which, hopefully, will start the main engine. This hasn't happened yet as efforts are being concentrated on the overhaul of the air system.

No.85 "Merlin" (GNRI 4-4-0 Compound): Welding in of the two replacement side sections of the inner firebox has been successfully completed. The replacement section of the tubeplate and the complete door plate are in the final stages of fitting so the monster mallets, etc., may soon be redundant - depending upon what examination of No.4's firebox reveals. Another time consuming operation involves superheater flue tubes, which are of 5.25" diameter for most of their length but need to be reduced to approximately 4.5" for around 12" at the firebox end. They used to be supplied like that by the manufacturers but don't any longer so a means of doing it ourselves had to be devised. This involves setting them up in the lathe, with a gas torch for heating at one side and a roller mounted on the tool post at the other. After much juggling of amount of heat, angle of roller, depth of cut, speed of chuck and rate of feed a satisfactory combination was arrived at and tubes are now being dealt with at the rate of about one per hour. Though somewhat tedious, this job is not without its rewards now that winter is approaching!

No.171 "Slieve Gullion" (GNRI 4-4-0): In traffic.

No.461 (DSER 2-6-0): In Dublin. Attention is being given to some leaking firebox stays.

POSTAL SALES

How do you fill 70-odd pages with a half mile line? Well, Norman Johnston has done so in his new book "The Fintona Horse Tram", and very successfully too. Great value at only £5.95 + p&p.

A bit dearer but first in its field is "Irish Railways in Colour" by Tom Ferris, covering the years 1955 – 1967, £16.40 inc. p&p.

A variety of books, badges, posters and drawings for modellers is available from Henry Beaumont. If you would like a copy of the general list or the list of drawings please let him know your interests. A SAE would be appreciated.

FIVE FOOT THREE

Should be with you early in the New Year. Quite expensive to produce so a moderate amount of advertising - £50 full page or £30 half page - helps to keep down costs. Would you like to help by putting in an advert? If so please drop a line to the Editor saying what you would like or, better still, enclosing an existing ad which can be copied.