

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 1993

Operations

Changes are in the wind in the Operating Department with the increased emphasis on safety and the qualification of those engaged in carrying out various duties. One step in this direction took place on Saturday 28th March with the revival of the "Shunting School" at Whitehead, aimed at refreshing those have been involved for some time and instructing those who have not.

In recent years the number of persons in the operating grades has remained more or less static. However, several of the "old hands" have become less available - usually due to domestic commitments that they didn't have in days of yore - so now is the time for some fresh blood - metaphorically speaking, of course. If you are interested in starting training (oh dear!) for the operating staff please contact Paul Newell.

Alan McRobert, our PSR who looks after the cleaning of the Whitehead set, reports that his squad is still very small, i.e. himself. On the positive side, the problem of the seemingly permanent dirt on the outside of the carriage windows has now been overcome by use of fine steel wool instead of brushes to apply the cleaning solution. As a result we had clean windows, for a change, on our trains in 1992. By hiring a carpet shampoo machine at Easter 1992 all of the seats in our running rake had a thorough clean and choking clouds of dust no longer rose from them on administration of a sharp smack. On the negative side, carriage cleaning is slow work. One person could take 2 days to clean 7 carriages. With help, this time can be greatly reduced. It was disappointing that no one volunteered to help clean the train for the Santa Specials. Some people had to give up other work at Whitehead to help out. Surely there must be some members who could help with the clearing and who live within reasonable travelling distance of Whitehead. Dirty carriages present a bad image to the public and will deter them from travelling again. Clean carriages and satisfied passengers are our best advertisement. Currently the Whitehead set is being shown up by the well-presented Mullingar set - we need to change this. If anyone is interested in helping out please contact Alan.

Whitehead Site

The word from our Whitehead Site Officer, Dermot Mackie, is that he should be able to hand the heavy lift area complete with pit and ex-NIR sheer-legs over to the Carriage & Wagon Department by the end of March or early April. The sheer-legs have spent some time in the carriage shed where they were cleaned and painted ready for erection. The turnout to the heavy lift area has now been very nearly completed, and the bolting down of the track on the concrete base will also start very soon. This track is held by small metal plates drilled to fit over a stud, and well over 100 had to be made. Dermot and Charles Friel spent several weeks at the "Tech" class on this slow but essential task! The re-alignment of No.3 carriage siding will be the next task for the team from the permanent way department, and the normal routine maintenance will, of course, still have to be done on the rest of the site. Dermot is always glad to welcome a new face to his team.

Other news reaching us from Whitehead is that our vintage JCB excavator and all round four-wheeled dogsbody has reached its quarter century. The event was celebrated with bubbly (after the day's work we hope) and a cake baked by Dermot's wife. Does years qualify the JCB as a museum piece in its own right?

Locomotive Report

No.3 "R.H. Smyth" (Avonside 0-6-0ST): Work on the firebox and smokebox is almost complete as are repairs to the saddle tank. Although the loco would be capable of operating once reassembled, this would mean putting a reconditioned boiler onto worn machinery and it would be much more convenient to carry out axlebox and motion repairs before the boiler is replaced in the frames.

No.4 (LMS-NCC 2-6-4T): The boiler and firebox were sand-blasted to permit a thorough

examination and a start has been made on dismantling the outer firebox, much of which is in poor condition. Work is being carried out in the open air, weather permitting, as there will be no room in the loco shed until No.85's boiler repairs are completed.

No.85 "Merlin" (GNR(I) 4-4-0 Compound): The firebox foundation ring has been fitted and the manufacture and fitting of over 1,000 stays is now under way. The staying process was complicated by the fact that stay holes in the new inner plates had to be drilled and tapped in alignment with the existing holes in the outer wrapper plates. Although not altogether surprising, it was inconvenient to find that some of the latter holes had become enlarged, necessitating the manufacture of stays in non-standard sizes.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion (GNR(I) 4-4-0): In traffic. Some minor repairs may be carried out before its next outing on Michael Palin's Great Railway Journey on 25th April.

No.461 (DSER 2-6-0): At Whitehead. Following examination of driving axleboxes and other minor repairs, the loco was road tested on 28th March. A slight knock in one big-end will be attended to before the locomotive is returned to Dublin between now and the beginning of May.

Carlow Diesel (Ruston 4-wD): No further progress pending the arrival of air compressor parts.

No.23 (Planet 4-wD): In traffic, on light duties.

Carriage & Wagon

Saturday 13 March saw a busy day at Whitehead, when Irish Rail and our insurance inspector both examined the first four coaches to be put up for running certificates this year. It's very comforting to be able to report that all the vehicles passed first time, and as a bonus we had all the axles tested ultrasonically as well, since this hasn't been done for a few years. The remainder of the train is to be ready for inspection on Saturday 17 April, so please, if you can spare some time over Easter, come down to Whitehead and help out.

This summer was to have seen an all NCC Flyer train, and full brake 411 has been repainted and refurbished to be available for duty. Likewise coach No.255 was moved into the Carriage Shed some months ago for restoration work to begin, and this is just about to get under way in earnest. The vehicles at Magheramorne were to be moved back to Whitehead last November, but the non-availability of a diesel locomotive, due to engineering work at weekends, plus the ongoing work at Whitehead on the heavy lift area, delayed their return. Coach No.243 was to be restored for Flyer duties, while new bogies have been bought from Irish Rail for coaches 1333 and 1328, which were to be refurbished for use out of Mullingar and Dublin. A couple of weeks ago, however, we were the victims of a most wanton piece of theft, when someone stole almost all the bearing brasses from the vehicles. That would have been bad enough, but the removal method used in many cases was a sledgehammer! Many of the axleboxes have been damaged and fairly expensive repairs will now be necessary. Recovery of the vehicles is now in hand. The police have been put on the trail, but we are not optimistic that they will get a result.

New recruit to this department, Colin Smith, is looking to build up a team to work on the ex-LMS(NCC) railcar No.1 which was given to the Society by the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum last year. Colin is an Ulsterbus employee (another convert!) and so knows a thing or two about diesel vehicles. He has already started its restoration and hopes to have it complete by the end of the year. To all those diesel enthusiasts out there, why not come to Whitehead and show the steam men what you are made of?

Wanted

Two items from our Treasurer, John Beaumont. Has any member got photographs of the ex-NCC dining car No.87 in their possession? If so, John would like to hear from them, especially if they feature the vehicle's interior. John has acquired a supply of BT phone cards. Any interested members, especially those working at Whitehead, should send a cheque for £2 plus SAE.

General

With the Society's application to become registered as a museum currently under consideration, it has become more important that we maintain archives and historical data on all our locomotives and rolling stock together with any other artefacts or documents in the Society's possession. To qualify for museum status we must also allow access to the public to view our premises and provide stock lists, histories and general educational information. This is a fairly large undertaking but Johnny Glendinning has offered to take the task on, and he will be looking into the setting up of a museum team, or sub-committee, to get our museum organisation off the ground. Any members who wish to be of help, either by getting involved or by providing material, should contact Johnny through the Secretary at the usual address.

See the enclosed minutes of the recent AGM for the new Council for 1993.

And finally, the item which all members have been waiting for - the announcement of the "**Great Easter Work-in**". No excuses accepted, all members are asked to attend Whitehead on any day of the Easter holidays to lend a hand in getting the locomotives, carriages and site into a respectable, and hopefully first class, condition for the coming season. In particular, the carriages need to be thoroughly washed and cleaned for the BBC's "Great Railway Journeys" shoot in late April. Please make an effort to come along.