

NEWS LETTER

August 1993

Operations

“Great Railway Journeys of the World”: Both operations committees have received very nice thank you letters from the BBC for our help in filming for the programme. Indications are that the series will go out early in 1994, but the BBC will keep us advised - so watch this space.

“Seán Rí”: On Sunday 11th July those members who receive RTE may have seen the long awaited television coverage of this year's railtour transmitted on the prime “Regional Report” programme. The report gave a very good flavour of the international aspect of the tour.

“The Celebration”: The Society has had its fair share of VIP trains and the most recent was one of the best. Our special guests were Ms Jane Morrice, Head of the European Commission Office in Northern Ireland, and Mrs Joan McCrum, a board member of the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). With other distinguished guests they travelled with us from Yorkgate station in Belfast to Whitehead on Friday 2nd July.

Having received over £200,000 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and almost £50,000 from the IFI it was time to say ‘Thank You’. The weather was fine, the train was sparkling, the food was excellent and the guests were impressed, not to mention the media. All the major local newspapers gave coverage and the piece on the local television programme “UTV Live” was very gratifying.

On arrival at Whitehead Jane Morrice donned a white coat, safety glasses and gloves to drive “Slieve Gullion” over 12 detonators (one for each of the EC countries) to mark No.171's return to traffic after her

£50,000 overhaul. Mrs McCrum unveiled a plaque in the new £100,000 carriage shed which she declared officially open. Several nice things were said by the chief guests and more nice things were served by the Henderson Catering Corps in the dining car. All in all, one of our high days - many thanks to all the members who worked so hard to turn the train out on time and to our 100 guests for making it “The Celebration”.

“Steam & Jazz”: It was stated on the poster, Steam & Jazz, and steam and jazz it certainly was. The Martello Jazz Band put it down to experience - something they were not short of - but would they do the gig again? Well, it would be helpful to have a little more space to flex your trombone and it would also be nice to have the drummer in the same compartment. The bass drum just missed going through the sliding door in the Directors' Saloon by one quarter of an inch - the drummer had to play in the vestibule! So, who lashed out all this money on a night's revelry? 180 flappers and dandies, most of whom were dressed in period style, caroused the night away, and rugby and Rotary clubs alike made serious inroads into the European wine lake.

This train must hold the RPSI record for the number of ladies travelling. Member Barry Quin had the enviable task of choosing the most attractively dressed and the young lady received two tickets for the “Portrush Flyer”.

The majority of travellers were new to RPSI operations and many wanted to know when the next such event would be held. So it is now up to Michael McMahon to get his thinking cap on and ‘jazz’ up his operations.

“The Shannon”: The operation on 4th July from Dublin to Athlone and Ballinasloe was a significant one for us as it marked the return of RPSI vintage stock to a section of the Dublin - Galway mainline. Certain safety restrictions were imposed by Irish Rail but

they did not inhibit the success of the operation in any way.

We look forward to further derogations in this respect in 1994 and beyond. The Athlone 302 Festival organisers, and their sponsor Telecom Éireann, expressed themselves well pleased with the event.

“Sea Breeze”: Regretfully we had to cancel, at the request of Irish Rail, our second operation to Wexford and Rosslare Harbour on 24th July. A bridge outside Wicklow was due for urgent repairs which simply could not be delayed any longer. Strong representation was made to the company but unfortunately to no avail, so our apologies to all those who had hoped to travel. A special ‘thank you’ must go to members Barry Carse, Joe Fitzpatrick, Bill Garrioch, Brian Gillen, Johnny O'Meara and Billy Walters who, at very short notice, greatly assisted David Humphries in getting the ‘negative’ publicity out.

“Portrush Flyer”: The Flyers of 17th and 31st July both operated with full trains, as did the Castlerock extensions on both occasions. The only major item of interest was the recurring problem of the engine release turnout at Portrush. On the first Flyer, No.171's tender derailed here and, although returned to the rails without major difficulty, it was thought safest to shunt the train with help from the local NIR railcar. It would seem that the turnout receives no NIR use or maintenance and as the ballast is mostly sand it is no wonder these incidents occur.

“Santa Special”: Yes, it is only August, but we are already planning our Christmas operations, (Belfast - 5th, 12th & 19th December and Dublin - 5th & 12th December). Apart from the railtour in May, the Christmas operations take the most planning to co-ordinate all the details, and a higher staff to passenger ratio is required on the day of operation. Roster sheets for the operations in both areas will be included in the next circular. Remember, these operations don't just happen - for instance, the Santa Specials take 6 months to plan and the railtour can take up to a year but usually 9 or 10 months are needed. So if you fancy being a Santa, fairy, elf or just a plain old helper please consider contacting us sooner rather than later.

Safety First: Could we please give a

reminder to members who travel on Society trains that only rostered on-duty personnel are permitted to wear high visibility vests, also known as day-gloves? Ever conscious of the need for safety on our trains, it is vitally important that Irish Rail, NIR or RPSI staff can easily and quickly identify each other at all times. Your co-operation in this regard would be appreciated.

Publicity

He who whispers down a well
About the goods he has to sell
Will never earn so many dollars
As he who climbs a tree and HOLLERS!!!

The poem's author is unknown but the sentiment is very real. Ask most people about the RPSI and they will reply “The Portrush Flyer”, “The Steam Enterprise” or now perhaps “The Sea Breeze”. The Society's new Belfast area publicity team, headed by Chairman's wife Heather Boomer, does not want to change this but instead intends to widen the public's image of us. We would like people to become aware that we are a working charity, helping to keep a part of our culture alive and, with the help of organisations like the European Regional Development Fund, providing a focus of employment and recreation.

Our idea is to make people aware that the Society is there for everyone, and not just for a few enthusiasts who want to “play with trains”. We can be anything from an educational activity to a different way for a company to launch a new product - and of course a good fun day out for the family.

As usual, we would ask for your help. If you know of any enterprise at all that may be able to benefit from the Society's activities, or may be able to help us - even to display a few posters, please let us know and we will follow it up. Just ring (0960) 353567 and give us your ideas. Note, so far this year we have filled the first two Flyers and the third is looking great. Let's try and work together to make the Society's image better and of course keep the pounds rolling in.

Poster Campaign: In the past we have appealed to our members to lend a hand in all aspects of the Society's activities. In return,

such offers of help may not, regrettably, always have been taken up in the way that we would have liked. However, David Humphries from our Dublin area publicity team is making a very special appeal this time around and would like to hear from members (phone evenings on (01 288 8900) who will help his poster distribution effort to office and factory notice boards. Surveys have indicated that poster publicity outweighs other forms by a factor of 6 to 1.

If YOU can spend an hour or two about two weeks before each operation to hand deliver (saves on postage) pre-addressed and pre-packed envelopes (say 20 to 25) to offices and/or factories near where you live or work this would greatly increase the coverage of our posters. Even twenty volunteers could make this simple but effective method of spreading the word a success by adding about 400 posters to our mailshot with a saving of over £100 in postage. Please don't leave it to others, get in touch with David NOW.

Press Cuttings: Those members who don't live in the greater Dublin or Belfast areas may have seen press releases or articles in their local newspapers. If so, our publicity team would greatly like copies, if possible, as this is the only way we have of gauging the results of our publicity efforts in these areas.

Locomotives

No.3 "RH. Smyth": A new smokebox has been constructed, the saddle tank has been repaired and the boiler has had a successful hydraulic test. For the uninitiated, this is done by blanking off all orifices, filling the boiler completely with water and then by means of a pump subjecting it to 1.5 times normal working pressure. It all sounds a bit dangerous but isn't since any failure will lead to the release of only a small amount of cold water. Compare this to the violent potential of a vessel filled with boiling water and steam. It is hoped to have this engine available for summer Sunday and Easter Bunny train rides in 1994.

No.4: The outer shell of the firebox was found to be in an unsatisfactory condition and most of it has been cut away. The inner firebox has been removed and appears to be sound.

No.85 "Merlin": Work continues on the manufacture and fitting of firebox stays. It is hoped that one of the ex-GNR tenders will soon be moved from Mullingar to be restored to a suitable state for use with the loco.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": In traffic at Whitehead.

No.461: In traffic in Dublin.

Carriage & Wagon

Mullingar Awaydays: The southern 'green set' has seen the addition this season of GNR diner 88 and GSR 1335, both sent from Whitehead to replace vehicles withdrawn for urgent repairs. In the meantime, work continues at Mullingar on the major rebuild of 1916 and 1463. It is essential to get these vehicles back into traffic and Peter Emmett would like to see a few more volunteers turn up at weekends to assist in the effort. Remember, there is a special return fare from Dublin available from Irish Rail for £6.50, and with the improved Sunday service on the Sligo line you can put in a useful day's work and still be home for tea! Peter can be contacted on (01) 821 7409.

Whitehead

Site Squad: Every Wednesday night throughout August will be a site night at Whitehead. All volunteers are welcome.

Heavy Lift: Currently we are concentrating on the heavy lift area and after having completed the turnout we are in the process of assembling and erecting the sheer-legs. The first pair were successfully lifted into position on Saturday 19th June with the help of the hand crane, the JCB and many volunteers. They are adorned with an appropriate placard and an EC flag in recognition of the financial assistance received from that source. Parts of the second pair have been sand-blasted and painted and other missing bits have been located. The preparation of the latter, plus assembly, will form the project for August.

Water Tower: The tank in the water tower has been empty for several years and steps

were taken recently to install an overhauled pump to augment the rather feeble mains pressure and enable the water column to be restored to its proper function. Unfortunately the column suffered some collision damage before the project was completed but it is hoped that it will be back in use before too long.

Sales

New Products: Now available:

"Swansong of Steam in Ulster", a one hour video of steam in Ireland in the early 1960s by John Laird, £15.50 sterling p&p inclusive.

"The Railway Town", the story of the GNR(I) Dundalk works in 212 pages of 9.5"x6" hardback, £18 sterling p&p inclusive.

Main Lines: A variety of items is always available from H. Beaumont, 148 Hillsborough Road, Lisburn, Co. Antrim, BT27 5QY. The principal lines are:

Locomotive outline badges, now including GSR No.800 "Maebhdh"; books; videos; postcards; posters; drawings of Irish locomotives, coaches and wagons; back numbers of 5'3", Railway Magazine and Railway Modeller; old railway tickets GNR(I) coats of arms; etc.

Send details of your requirements to the above address.

Wanted

Office & Shop: The Society is always on the look-out for office equipment, and with the increasing number of new products coming onto the market as technology takes over the office, there must be a lot of items out there whose only fault is not being this month's model. So to all you businessmen and office workers please think of the Society when you are replacing your filing cabinets, photocopiers, shredders, fax machines, computers, etc. We would be grateful for any redundant examples you might have - we would especially welcome a fax machine. Also, for the new shop being installed in full brake 411, our sales staff would be delighted

to obtain a source of display shelving, racks, counters and possibly one, if not two, small safes.

General

Irish Railway Collection: A press release from the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum reminds us that the new rail gallery at Cultra, Co. Down, opens to the public on Friday 1st October. This eagerly awaited development will be known as the Irish Railway Collection and will tell the historical story of Irish railways.

Lost & Found: Has any member lost a set of car keys attached to an RPSI key-ring? This item was found in the centre or Belfast around the end of May so if it belongs to you contact us through the usual address.

Oops: A mistake crept into the last news-sheet where a Family Membership was quoted as GB£35. This should have been GB£25 - our apologies if this put any members off enrolling their families.

The complete list for families is: Northern Ireland and Great Britain, GB£25; Republic of Ireland IR£30; Rest of World GB£30.

Queries / Comments to:

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