

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Irish Railway Record Society Premises, Dublin, Saturday 26th February 1994

Dr Garret FitzGerald presided and 63 members were present.

Apologies

C.Boomer, T.Casterton, P.Emmett, J.Fitzpatrick, I.Gilmore, C.Holliday, D.Mackie, T.Mounstephen, Lord O'Neill, D.Wiles.

Minutes of the 1993 AGM

The minutes, which had been circulated, were adopted on the proposal of P.Booth, seconded by E.Gilmore.

Chairman's Report

Adopted on the proposal of N.Foster, seconded by B.Mullally.

Secretary's Report

Adopted on the proposal of B.Mullally, seconded by P.Bowen-Walsh.

Treasurer's Report

W.Coates was informed that the telephone expenses were mainly composed of hire and service charges. I.Pryce said that some abuse of the phone had been reported last year, and was told that the cost of unauthorised calls had been recovered. W.Scott was told that the electricity costs relating to a member remaining on the site overnight were negligible, especially when the increased security factors were considered.

P.Rigney was told that the proposed locomotive workshop would be depreciated over a longer period than the carriage shed. R.Hunter was told that the proportion of the carriage expenditure used for paint was very small. I.Pryce was told that that the Whitehead Social Club and its bank account were dormant and that the sum of £112 held in cash would be passed to the Treasurer shortly.

R.Hunter asked if the "Derry To Kerry" train had been hired by the BBC and was told that it was an RPSI operation which had been underwritten by the N.I. Tourist Board. S.Boomer told R.Hunter that the recent circular to N.I. members advertising books from Blackstaff Press had been paid for by that company. The reason RPSI envelopes were used is that the Society will not release membership lists to third parties but we are willing to charge them for sending out a mailshot.

M.Halliday said fares should be set so as to give good value for money. J.Beaumont replied that a recent survey had shown 95% of customers agreed that RPSI operations were good value.

P.Bowen-Walsh said that most of the points raised so far were nothing more than nit-picking and members should have more faith in a Council whose members had stood the Society in good stead over the years.

B.Gillen pointed out that dining car income had doubled since last year. J.Beaumont replied that, as detailed in his report, there had been an increase in donated or cost price stock. He said the wholesale price of draught beer was 30% higher in Dublin than in Belfast.

T.Gray was told that the spending on ERDF was 99% on target to date. D.Henderson said that too much of the ERDF budget was being spent on carriages and the figures had doubled since last year. J.Beaumont said the money had to be spent to ensure availability of coaches which in turn earned the revenue for the Society to finance the ERDF package.

The Treasurer's report was adopted on the proposal of C.Smith, seconded by P.Bowen-Walsh.

Appointment Of Auditors

J.Beaumont reported that the auditors, Dunne & Associates, continued to give a good service at a very reasonable cost. They were reappointed on the proposal of P.Rigney, seconded by J.McKeown.

Reports Of Operations Officers

M.McMahon read his report of the operations in the Belfast area. He had very little to report on other than the operations were all successful operationally and financially, although some more so than others. He said more thought must be given to the transfer of coaching stock between our two centres of operation as this was an operational and financial nightmare which ate into the profits from tours.

On the subject of the forthcoming railtour, he said that Irish Rail were dragging their feet in confirming approval for the chosen route despite having had the details since last June.

G.Bracken was told that the problem was that all official contact with Irish Rail must be made through one person. P.Rigney said we should be grateful to Irish Rail as we need them more than they need us, and we have some very good friends within their ranks.

W.Scott asked why RPSI representatives were banned from the footplate by Irish Rail.

S.Boomer said it was on safety grounds and the matter was under discussion.

R.Hunter asked why the details of the movements in relation to the opening of the new Railway Gallery in Cultra in October had not been publicised. M.McMahon said that such operations were not always geared towards accepting and depositing passengers at convenient stations, i.e. Belfast Yorkgate. P.McCann said that it was not always possible to prepare and issue circulars for what are in effect private charters at short notice and, with the cost of each issue starting at £500, fares would have to be very high because of the low numbers which usually patronised such operations.

D.Henderson pointed out that it was unsafe, in his opinion, to operate "Portrush Flyer" trains via Bleach Green this year as the track condition between there and Antrim was deteriorating. S.Boomer said the Society always followed the guidance of the railway companies on safety and NIR had approved the route for operations although at a reduced speed. It was noted that

this would be the last year of operation on this route as the cross-harbour link would be available from October.

When asked about operations on the Belfast to Dublin line, M.McMahon said the hire of Irish Rail coaches would at least double the fare to around £35. I.Pryce said the Council should be aware that the present watering facilities at Dundalk could be under threat by the current upgrading of that line.

The report from the Dublin area was given in “Five Foot Three”.

Reports Of Locomotive And Carriage Officers

P.Scott said there were all sorts of problems in maintaining locomotives on what was a shoestring budget, even with ERDF help.

No.3: The boiler is largely repaired and reassembled. The loco should be ready by the summer.

No.4: This is taking a major work effort which was more than expected, and has swallowed the ERDF budget for No.184 and some of that for the loco workshop.

No.85: The boiler has been steam tested and is due to be replaced in its frames during the first weekend in March. As the old tender was unsuitable, and that from No.171 was deteriorating, it was decided that a new tender would be required. Running in should commence in the summer.

No.171: Cylinder lubrication problems have made repairs to the pistons necessary, and much work will be needed to have the engine run in for the railtour.

No.461: C.Meredith said that, further to the report in “Five Foot Three”, noises from the big end bearings have resulted in these having to be re-metalled. The firebox stays need some work and the firebars need grinding to allow more air to the fire.

Carlow Diesel: This loco has moved under its own power for the first time recently.

P.Scott said the loco workshop, or an otherwise substantial improvement in facilities, was urgently needed at Whitehead, especially under the present health and safety climate on Irish Rail and more recently on NIR. Also, on the subject of safety, it was necessary that the RPSI had a representative on all trains of our stock. Another safety matter involves alcohol and it must be made quite clear that no crew member with alcohol taken will be tolerated anywhere near a locomotive footplate. C.Meredith agreed with the need for this ban and said there had been problems in the past and this was no longer acceptable.

S.Boomer confirmed that the RPSI was involved in continued discussions with Irish Rail on the matter of training their drivers for steam.

D.Henderson asked why some of the running set of carriages at Whitehead were being kept in the open when there should be space in the carriage shed. J.Bromfield replied that some space was allocated for vehicles under restoration and some vehicles were being dried out prior to restoration.

Reports Of Mullingar And Whitehead Site Officers

No points were raised further to the report in “Five Foot Three”.

Election Of Council and Office Bearers For 1994

P.McCann reported that there was one contest, for Mullingar Site Officer, and nominations had been received for all posts except Belfast Area Operations. Dr FitzGerald called for nominations from the floor for the Operations post and H.Boomer received a nomination from R.Rigney which was seconded by L.Gillen. On a card vote M.O'Brien defeated J.Fitzpatrick for the Mullingar Site post by 33 votes to 19.

The 1994 Council is:

<i>Chairman:</i>	Sullivan Boomer
<i>Secretary:</i>	Paul McCann
<i>Treasurer:</i>	John Beaumont
<i>Assistant Treasurer:</i>	Barry Carse
<i>Locomotive Officer:</i>	Peter Scott
<i>Carriage & Wagon Officer (Southern):</i>	Peter Emmett
<i>Carriage & Wagon Officer (Whitehead):</i>	Gavin Martin
<i>Belfast Area Operations Officer:</i>	Heather Boomer
<i>Dublin Area Operations Officer:</i>	Joe McKeown
<i>Mullingar Site Officer:</i>	Murrough O'Brien
<i>Whitehead Site Officer:</i>	Dermot Mackie

1994 Operations

T.Gray asked what the Council felt the RPSI's future might be in the light of the recent and future extensive technology changes within the railway network and the reduction in the number of experienced steam drivers. Dr FitzGerald said there did seem to be a need for a medium term review of the situation. S.Boomer said the major problem was that the plans of the railway companies are not as definite nor as far-sighted as they could be, mainly for political reasons, and this reflected in the plans that the Society could make. He said it was encouraging, however, to be told by senior management from both companies that they see a future for steam into the 21st century.

J.Mckeown said the reason for only operating on two days at Christmas was due to lack of volunteer manpower to run the trains.

Any Other Business

R.Hunter said that the fundraising effort needed to be increased as the present income from that source was not satisfactory. J.Beaumont said that this subject was always under review.

G.Bracken said there exists a turntable at Westport but it is in a derelict state and could be removed at any time. He asked could any ERDF money be obtained to retain and renovate it. S.Boomer said this would not qualify for ERDF funding, but the Society was in constant contact with Irish Rail on the matter of facilities, including turntables, which need to be retained for steam operations.

S.Boomer told D.O'Murchú that the RPSI had no connection with the attempts being made to save the Waterford to Dungarvan line.

M.Halliday was told that the content of the recent "Derry To Kerry" programme was solely the responsibility of the BBC.

P.Bowen-Walsh said it was time that both the political and railway company top levels were informed that the Society was not a group of amateurs playing with trains, but a highly dedicated and experienced body which was a major cultural and tourism asset to the whole of Ireland. These people should be told that there are certain aspects of railway operation which need to be retained both to ensure future steam operations and to be preserved for new generations.

Signed: _____ *Chairman* *Date:* _____