

NEWS LETTER

November 1994

OPERATIONS

"Portrush Flyer": This year's season has been one of the most successful we have ever run, and it's been an extremely satisfying one for everyone concerned. Trains were all well filled, the running was excellent, time-keeping was sharp as a tack, and No.1097 entered service carrying wheelchair passengers for the first time on two Flyers. It was also very nice on a Castlerock Excursion to be able to tell a passenger at Portrush that we could carry him in his wheelchair. No.171 performed to perfection, and the NIR crews seemed to enjoy themselves as well.

"Sea Breeze": The few weeks leading up to this operation on 20th August were fraught with worry and uncertainty. It was bad enough that we were running with a reduced number of coaches on the Dublin based set, but following an inspection by Iarnród Éireann, we were informed of a number of repairs which needed to be carried out on the remaining coaches. Fortunately, things were remedied in time, everything was to the railway company's satisfaction and the set operated successfully to Rosslare and back.

"Greystones Shuttle": Prior to Sunday 11th September it became apparent that there were more serious problems with some of our Dublin based coaches, notably 91 and 238 having bogie defects. Rather than carrying out emergency repairs, a set was hired from Iarnród Éireann for the day - the only RPSI coach to run was Park Royal 1419 - and it is hoped that this didn't spoil the trips for the large crowds which travelled. As usual No.461 performed in its own slow but sure dependable fashion.



"Atlantic Coast Express": The Atlantic Coast Express was our last run of the summer and was also chosen to be our 30th Birthday train as it was running very close to the Society's official anniversary. Our thanks go to the Society Locomotive Department, who pulled out all the stops to

get No.85 ready in time for the operation. Prudence dictated that we shouldn't rely solely on her, however, so the train was double-headed, the compound running as train engine while "Slieve Gullion" ran as pilot. The train was well filled and featured some superb running, particularly for two engines together. The highlight for many people

closely involved in Society operations was the passing out of Noel Playfair as a steam driver. Noel has been on our locomotives for quite a few years now, and is the first of the new generation of NIR men to be trained for steam operations. We hope to see a couple of his contemporaries join him in the next couple of years!

To celebrate our birthday we asked a few old and good friends to join us for the day, including some founder members of the Society and representatives from Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways. On arrival at Waterside Station the party gathered in the Directors' Saloon No.50 for the cutting of the birthday cake, which was enjoyed by many of the passengers on the return journey.

"Santa Special" (1): These trains will be operating from Belfast to Whitehead on 4th, 10th, 11th, 17th and 18th December. On Saturday 4th you can make your first journey over the new cross-harbour line as we will be operating for the first time out of Central Station - half of the train will be reserved for members on that day so no need to worry about a visit from Santa. The

trains, at 11:15 and 14:30 on all dates, will also call at Yorkgate to pick up (5 to 10 minutes later) and set down. The operation on the 10th is a private charter, so lineside photography only on that day. Those who received posters please try to have them displayed in a public place. Tickets are available from the Alliance & Leicester in Wellington Place and from the Carrickfergus Tourist Information Centre.

Please don't delay in offering yourself for roster on the above dates. While last year's operations were very successful, they were hard work because of a shortage of help on most days. See the enclosed form for rosters.

"Santa Special" (2): Our Dublin trains will be operating from Pearse on Sundays 4th and 11th December at 10:45, 13:55 and 16:15, running to Maynooth and back. Tickets can be obtained from the usual Iarnród Éireann outlets. All members are encouraged to help out and/or travel.

Railtour: The advance booking form for the 1995 tour to Cork is included with this news-letter. Note that the date is later than normal due to the success of Ireland in winning the Eurovision Song Contest. Next year's contest is scheduled for Dublin on the weekend on which we would normally run. The cost and availability of hotel rooms would be such as to make the tour inadvisable on that date.

GENERAL

Get Well Soon: Our Vice-President, Dr Garret FitzGerald had to undergo an operation for a heart by-pass back in September. Our sincere best wishes go to him and we hope he makes a full and speedy recovery.

Welcome On Board: Since the death of our Vice-President Lord Dunleath a few years ago, the Council has been debating a replacement. We are now pleased to announce that Sir Myles Humphreys, retired chairman of Northern Ireland Railways and former Lord Mayor of Belfast, has kindly agreed to join Dr FitzGerald as a Vice-President of the Society. We look forward to a long and rewarding association.

Council Nominations: Any proposals for the 1995 Council should be notified to the Secretary using the enclosed form, for receipt no later than 1st January 1995.

Expulsion: It is with great regret that the Council announces that it has had to invoke Article 9 of the Society's Articles Of Association. For a variety of offences, best not stated for legal reasons, a member has been removed from the Register of members. The Council would like to apologise to those members who have suffered as a result of his activities.

Wanted: Does anybody have an unwanted RPSI blazer badge? If so, member Malcolm Lynch would like to hear from them.

Donabate Signal Cabin: A group of residents in the Donabate area of Co. Dublin are trying to preserve this ex-Great Northern cabin, made redundant by the extension of CTC to Drogheda earlier this year. Any members interested should contact the Signal Cabin Preservation Group, The Burrow, Portane, Donabate, Co. Dublin.

"Railway Works Inchicore": All members are invited to attend a lecture being given by Richard Grainger, the former Irish Rail CME. The venue is the IEI Education Centre, 22 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, at 8pm on 28th November.

Railway Letters: Our members in Great Britain may be interested in a seminar being given by the Nene Valley Railway on 24th & 25th March 1995 in Peterborough, titled "The Railway Letter Service". Phone Phil Jones on (01733) 266839 for more details.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": Harvey, currently in traffic, operated our Schools Days and Summer Train Rides this year.

No.4: Work on the boiler and firebox are progressing as and when work on the traffic engines allows.

No.23: The diesel shunter is out of traffic awaiting components for a gearbox overhaul.

No.85 "Merlin": Now in traffic following the Derry operation in September. It is planned for this engine to be used on the northern Christmas operations.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": It is hoped to substantially rebuild the tender from the waist up following withdrawal from traffic after the last Derry operation. With a bit of luck, and a lot of extra help, the rebuilt tender will be available for next season's

operations.

No.461: In traffic in Dublin, having had new firebars fitted over the summer. A number of small jobs have been attended to.

Carlow Diesel: This diesel shunter is also awaiting parts for its gearbox.

Road/Rail: The Society is currently negotiating to obtain NIR's redundant Unilock shunter. This vehicle, which can travel on either road or rail and can move small loads, may end up in Mullingar.

MEMBERSHIP

Renewal: Any members wishing to renew their subscriptions early please use the enclosed form. Life members and Honorary members might wish to send a donation to help with our current projects. Standing order and covenant forms are included and members are asked to make use of them.

BELFAST AREA MEETINGS

"Between The Wars": William Robb shows us some of his collection of slides of local interest on 14th December.

"Belfast Cross-Harbour Link": 11th January sees Denis Grimshaw, NIR's Operations Manager and RPSI member, showing us his first hand views of the planning and building of Ireland's newest railway.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

New Face: The good news is that Mark Kennedy, currently our Conservation Officer, has agreed to step into the breach and take on the job of Whitehead Carriage Officer. Mark, who was officially co-opted on to Council at the meeting on 9th September, has already made his presence felt with a very detailed set of suggestions for the future of the Society's carriage fleet.

Repairs: Following failure in Dublin, 91 and 238 will be transferred to Whitehead for repairs. Park Royal coaches 1383 and 1416 have been obtained from Iarnród Éireann to get us through the Christmas period. Brian Gillen and his team are working flat out at Inchicore to have these coaches prepared in time. Also, it is hoped that 1916 will finally emerge from Mullingar in time for Christmas.

FÁS: Following Council approval, it looks

like the proposed scheme for Mullingar will be going ahead. CIÉ have agreed to lease to the Society the extra site space at our premises there. The intention is to employ skilled tradesmen to initially turn out sufficient coaches to ensure an adequately sized set plus spares.

NCC 243: Many thanks to the members who responded to our appeal for funds to return this coach to traffic. Unfortunately, we fell a long way short of the 64 we were hoping for, but we are grateful nonetheless.

SITE

Mullingar: Due to budgetary constraints, progress on the site has been limited mainly to small repair and tidy up jobs. The much needed overhaul of the dormitory coach and its facilities is now complete and reflects highly on all those involved. Future work is likely to be in preparation for the new FÁS scheme.

Whitehead: The lack of diesel shunting power in recent weeks has restricted progress on the major site jobs. However, a tidy up and scrap drive has recently taken place.

SALES

New Products: Now available: "The Midland Great Western Railway Of Ireland" by Ernie Shepherd and three re-issues of books on the lines in the Cork area. Also, see attached advert for our latest postal auction.

Main Lines: A variety of items is always available from RPSI Postal Sales, 1(A) Carnhill Road, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim, BT36 6LA. The principal lines are: locomotive outline badges, including GSR No.800 "Maebhdh" @ £1.40; books; videos; postcards; posters; drawings of a selection of Irish locomotives, coaches and wagons; back numbers of 5'3", and various railway magazines; old tickets (mainly UTA and NIR); GNAW coats of arms. Send details of your requirements.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,
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