

NEWS LETTER

January 1995

OPERATIONS

La Touche Hotel: On 19th November, a charter ran in connection with the 100th birthday of this famous Greystones hotel. Our passengers from Dublin were conveyed from Greystones station to the hotel by preserved buses of the Transport Museum Society of Ireland. Two trips with filled trains were run to Wicklow in the afternoon. It was the first venture to serve this market and our customer, the La Touche Hotel, was very well pleased and is looking at ways of repeating the event.

"Santa Special" (1): Ho! Ho! Ho! - Santa has been and gone. During our Christmas season he got to meet 4,000 children and parents over the five days we operated from Belfast Central to Whitehead. The steam trains across the new Dargan bridge certainly proved an added attraction. The original plan was to operate on four days with a private charter on a fifth day, giving 8 public and 2 private trains. In the end one of the private trains was not required and was therefore successfully advertised as an extra public train.

Yes, Santa was good to us this year, but at a cost. Please remember for next year that it takes minimum of 24 staff, excluding carriage and loco crews, to be comfortable on a Santa run. Let's be good to Santa next year.

Our thanks to Pat Catney of the Kitchen Bar in Belfast who sponsored the champagne for the Society's guests on the first steam train across the new link on 4th December. Thanks also to Stewarts Supermarkets who were very helpful with the supply of presents.

"Santa Special" (2): Similar success was achieved on our Dublin trips from Pearse to Maynooth, with 2,500 members of the public travelling. Special thanks to

Joe Fitzpatrick for his efforts in organising the events.

"The William Dargan": All our members are reminded that an advance booking fee of £20 is required to ensure a place on the 1995 railtour to Cork.

Thank You: At the end of a successful year, the Operations Officers would like to thank our volunteer staff who gave so generously of their spare time; our various sponsors; the staff at all levels of Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways. Without their co-operation we simply could not run, and their help ensures that what, for Society members, is a hobby is carried out in a safe and professional manner.

1995 Programme: The dates for this year are being finalised and a booking form should be included with your next circular.

FINANCE

National Lottery: Members can hardly have failed to notice that there is now a lottery running in the United Kingdom. Five years ago we were fortunate enough to receive £5,000 from National Heritage which administers the funds raised from the Republic's Lotto. If possible, in the near future we will be endeavouring to seek funds from a similar source in the UK - so keep buying those tickets.

Donation: "The Syndicate", a group of members from England, have just made the latest in a series of donations to Society funds. Many thanks to them for all their hard work.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": In traffic at Whitehead but drained for frost protection.

No.4: The boiler overhaul is progressing as time and manpower permit.

No.23: Noted back in traffic on Christmas Eve on a restricted basis.

No.85 "Merlin": Currently undergoing a boiler washout, having operated successfully at Christmas.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": Having some work done to its boiler and valve gear. The tender repairs are well advanced.

No.461: In traffic in Dublin, needing minor attention to firebars, glands and stays.

Carlow Diesel: Still awaited are gear wheels to complete the overhaul of this shunter.

Locomotive Availability: We are now in the fortunate position of having three mainline locos available for traffic. But before we rejoice too much, it should be noted that we are attempting to impose on ourselves a 5 year cycle for each of our boilers. No.461, having officially returned to traffic in 1991, will be due to have a serious boiler examination at the end of the coming season. Likewise, No.171 will be in a similar position at the end of the 1996 season. It is possible that both locos could be out of traffic for up to 2 years. Under these circumstances it is important that No.4 is returned to traffic in 1996. At the present rate of progress, this is highly unlikely without a major injection of cash and/or volunteer labour.

Farewell CSD: The opening of the Dargan bridge in December saw the transfer of NIR's Central Service Depot to the new site at York Road. The event heralded the descent of the RPSI vultures to strip from the old depot whatever was not needed by NIR, the most significant item being the B&CDR overhead crane which it is hoped will eventually be installed in the locomotive workshop at Whitehead.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Park Royals: Our latest acquisitions are 1383 and 1416, each adding 70 much-needed seats to the southern set. Brian Gillen's small team managed to have the vehicles in traffic in time for Christmas with only £27 worth of materials, but with priceless hours of hard work. Re-

panelling work on 1419 has revealed the number 2423, thus indicating a previous incarnation as a snack car. As limited catering facilities have been restored, a re-numbering is under consideration.

In Dublin: The set now comprises: 1335 (Bredin), 238 (NCC), Diner 88 (GNR), 1383, 1416, 1419 (Park Royals). A brake vehicle is currently provided by IÉ but, pending attention to a bogie, 91 (NCC) should soon be available. When 1916 (CIÉ) finally emerges from Mullingar this spring, it is hoped that 91 will return to the Whitehead set. 1327 (Bredin) will be the next coach to enter Mullingar shed for repairs.

At Whitehead: The coming season will see 1097, 1142 (GS&WR), 68, 241, 411 (NCC), 87 (UTA), and 9 (GNR) as the running set. If 91 returns, it will replace 411 as the main brake coach. 50 (GNR) will also be available for special parties. This present rake is a passenger coach short, so please come to Whitehead to get 243 (NCC) into traffic as soon as possible. At present, attendance on this project is virtually nil.

FÁS: Our intended unemployment relief scheme at Mullingar is still progressing, however slowly. Currently, the lease negotiations are at the stage where solicitors are checking the proposed agreements. More news should be available shortly.

Green Rubbish: After each operation the carriage cleaning crews dispose of a large number of bags of aluminium cans and cardboard. Any member involved with charity and wishing to remove same for recycling is welcome to contact either operations committee.

MULLINGAR

Pigeon Problems: The shed, being old and draughty, has always been plagued by pigeons making an entrance through the many holes and depositing their unwanted calling cards. Recently, high technology came to Mullingar when a bird blaster was obtained. This is a device that emits a high pitched noise, inaudible to humans, but which supposedly scares birds away. Surprisingly, it actually seems to work and the shed is now a much

cleaner place to visit.

WHITEHEAD

CSD Two: The clear out at CSD also benefited the site with the acquisition of a complete 1 in 8 turnout plus many specialist check and crossing chairs.

Progress: The heavy lift winding gear covers are now complete. Attention will soon be turned to the carriage shed which will receive a general tidy-up. The central trench, which was opened for water and power conduits, will be refilled and levelled.

MEMBERSHIP

Early Birds: Many thanks to those members who paid their subscriptions early, and to those who included a donation - a double thank you.

1995 Subscription: 1st February is the date for this year's renewal. Please use the enclosed form if you haven't already paid. If you have, why not pass the form on to any prospective members you might know.

When returning the renewal form, please ensure that all the appropriate boxes are ticked or filled in as this enables us to keep the membership records up to date.

No further news-letters will be mailed without the 1995 subscription being paid.

Covenants: It is never too late for members in the United Kingdom to take out a covenant in the Society's favour. Please use the form enclosed with the previous news-letter.

SALES

New Books: Midland Great Western History, 144pp, £20.99; West Clare Railway, 223pp, £27; Irish Steam Loco Register (lists 2,300 Irish locos), 144pp £15.95; The Newry Railways In Pictures, 48pp, £5; Irish Railways, Traction & Travel, £11.95.

New Videos: Steam and Scenery (new RPSI video of 1994 footage). 1 hour, £10.95; Irish Railways Volume 4 (Twilight Of Steam In Ulster), 1 hour, £16.99. The prices for books and videos are in

Sterling and include postage & packing.

Main Lines: We have most of the current Irish railway books and videos in stock. We also keep: coloured locomotive badges, including GSR No.800 "Maedhbh"; old tickets; timetables; tour brochures; magazines; postcards; GNRB coats of arms; drawings and posters. Send details of your requirements to: Henry Beaumont, 148 Hillsborough Road, Lisburn. Co. Antrim, BT27 50Y.

Branded RPSI Items: Pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, rulers, key-rings, notepads, bookmarks, etc., specially produced for the Society. Write to: Caroline Stewart, 1(A) Carnhill Road, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim, BT36 6LA.

BELFAST AREA MEETINGS

8th February: Bill Scott and Irwin Pryce remind us of the much-regretted closure of the GNR's Derry Road exactly 30 years ago.

8th March: Fred Cooper's annual film show - need we say more?

GENERAL

Addresses: When corresponding with the Society would members please use the appropriate addresses for sales, membership, tickets, etc? For instance, please do not send a single cheque when paying your subscription and ordering tickets or sales items.

Sincere Thanks: Member Will Glendinning would like to thank those members of the Society who expressed their sympathy on the death of his wife Pip in early January. Will and his daughter Olivia were deeply touched by the number of members, too numerous to thank individually, who attended the funeral, or who wrote or telephoned with their condolences.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,
Co. Antrim, BT36 6HJ.