

NEWS LETTER

June 1995

OPERATIONS

"Easter Bunny": Following last year's poor showing, it was decided to have another attempt at running a successful operation, but using the well-tryed Christmas formula. On Easter Monday we operated four trips from Belfast Central station, to Carrickfergus and Lisburn alternately. The morning trains were well filled although the crowds tailed off towards the last train of the day. The aim is now to make it even better next year.

VE Day: North Down Borough Council chartered our train to help in their celebrations for the 50th anniversary of Victory in Europe on 6th May. In conjunction with Northern Ireland Railways, they operated a shuttle between Belfast and Bangor, taking the crowds to the day's events at the latter venue. No.85 worked the morning runs with No.171 taking over in the afternoon.

Greystones Shuttle: The Dublin season got off to a good start on 7th May with three return trips from Dublin, each filled to about 70% of projected train capacity. The only sour note was the stoning of the second train at Shankill. There was one broken window but no injuries, due in the main to the safety glass which is standard on ex-CIÉ stock.

"William Dorgan": Despite the failure of No.171 in Dublin prior to the weekend, and her substitution by No.461, the railtour was a great success. The weather could have been better but it did nothing to dampen the spirits of the participants as they watched No.85 and No.461 pounding out of the tunnel from Cork on the Sunday morning. Our thanks are due to all who made the tour the success it was, with a special mention for Norman and Bill from the Bluebell Railway for whom nothing was any trouble where

locomotive preparation was concerned.

"Big Breakfast Express": A very early start on a beautiful Tuesday morning, the very next day after the railtour, saw over 150 passengers supporting the fundraising efforts of Cancer Research. The services of NIR, their drivers and the RPSI were given free for the day. The RPSI volunteers operating the train to Ballymena were mainly those who had been working hard all weekend on the railtour and it is a tribute to them that they were prepared to forsake their beds to operate a train from which the Society derived no financial benefit.

Schools Days: Unfortunately, due to the lack of offers of help in organising this event it has been cancelled for this year. We desperately need somebody to take on the complete job in 1996.

"Hills Of Donegal": We are returning to our usual format on 10th June with a train to Londonderry's Waterside station, followed by an optional coach tour to Donegal's splendid Glenveagh National Park.

"Mid-Summer Night Steam": Our summer evening barbecue operation will run on 17th June this year.

"Steam & Jazz Night": Dust off your suits from the 1940s - that is the theme for the train to our mystery destination on 23rd June.

Whitehead: The train rides will be operating on Sunday afternoons in June, July and August from 2pm till 5pm. Although a useful publicity attraction, the main purpose of such a long season is to give an opportunity for all our operating crews to climb the grades or to refresh their knowledge of their current grade.

Rosslare: The "Strawberry Fair" operation takes place on 8th July and the "Sea Breeze" operates on 29th July and 19th August.

"Portrush Flyer": Bookings are already

high for our excursions on 15th & 29th July and on 12th & 26th August.

Latest: Bookings for all the summer excursions are unusually high so get your booking in as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. As always, for the up-to-date news, check with the telephone numbers or addresses given on the reverse of your membership cards.

Ticket Outlets: Further to the last circular, the Educational Building Society have confirmed that tickets for southern operations will be available through their branches in Blackrock, Drumcondra, Malahide, Terenure and Blanchardstown. Tickets will continue to be available through Iarnród Éireann at Pearse Station and Abbey Street, Dublin.

Summer Brochure: Travellers on the Dublin-based excursions this year will receive a souvenir brochure. It includes articles, a quiz, Society information, etc., and was compiled by David Humphries at no cost to the Society as advertising revenue covered all the charges.

Crew Training: It has been reported that 12 diesel drivers have applied to join the steam training scheme which IÉ are hoping to start in near future.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.27 "Lough Erne": Currently having a protective coat of paint applied.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": The major repairs to the tender have been successfully completed.

No.186: Will also receive a paint job when No.27 is complete.

GENERAL

PSRs: Following the election of the new Council at the AGM, the following members were appointed to Posts of Special Responsibility: John Creaner (Legal Adviser); Charles Friel (Meetings Organiser); Johnny Glendinning (Museums Liaison Officer); Mark Kennedy (Conservation Officer); Evan Pameley (Loco Crew Rostering); Charles Meredith (Locomotive Assistant); Paul Newell (Loco Procurement North); David Carse (Loco Procurement South); Harry Mulholland (Covenants); Caroline Stewart

(Northern Commercial); Joe Fitzpatrick (Southern Commercial); Laura Gillen (Southern Catering); Rita Henderson (Northern Catering); Isabel Gilmore (Northern Bar); David Humphries (Finance Committee); Ernie Gilmore (Fund Raising); Mervyn Darragh (NIR Crew Liaison); Peter Rigney & Alan McRoberts (Carriage Preparation); Trevor Mounstephen & Joe McKeown (Marshalling).

The Silver Screen: Observers have commented on the boom under way in the Irish film industry. Development work in this area is being spearheaded by the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht in Dublin. Following discussions with the Department, a "Who we are and what we do" brochure has been prepared for the benefit of film companies. If you think that the brochure would be of use in raising the Society's profile with a suitable contact, copies can be made available at a nominal fee (production costs are quite high).

Currently, the Society is in discussion with the production learn planning to shoot Neil Jordan's film on the life of Michael Collins, with Liam Neeson. Filming is planned for the summer and the RPSI hope to be involved.

Just to show that we cater for all sectors of the market, we facilitated some film students on 3rd March by allowing them to use the set at Heuston as part of a short film for their project work.

Missing Painting: Our carriage shed foreman, Jim Bromfield, has had a print of an LNER locomotive removed (stolen?) from the shed at Whitehead. The print was fixed to the wall so some effort was required to remove it. Jim would be grateful for any information leading to its recovery.

Catering Celebration: Iarnród Éireann are celebrating 50 years of catering by CIÉ with an event to mark the occasion on 27th July. Our own No.461, with the Great Northern Directors' Saloon, will be taking part at Dublin's Heuston station.

Stamps: As you can probably imagine the RPSI, and the Secretary in particular, receives a lot of mail. All those stamps do not go to waste as they are collected in aid of the Northern Ireland Hospice. If you

are in receipt of a lot of stamped mail, perhaps you could send the stamps to the Secretary for forwarding to the Hospice.

So Farewell Then: Visitors to Whitehead will have noted the blue tarpaulins which now cover most of our non-running coaches. These protected the new 201 class locomotives for IÉ on their journey across the Atlantic. We are grateful to the company for allowing us to reuse them in a way that maximises the Society's investment in the carriage shed.

Passengers on the railtour could hardly have failed to notice the new locomotives as they traversed the Cork main line. One impact of their arrival has been to bring to an end the Metrovick era. There are currently no A or C class locomotives in traffic on IÉ or NIR. These locomotives were the first generation of main-line diesels and they had displaced much of CIÉ's steam stock by the late 1950s. They also regularly traversed many lines which are now but a faint memory, such as the West Cork network, the Kerry branches, and the truncated stump of the Irish North which passed to CIÉ. However, the Irish Traction Group have two C class locomotives preserved at their base in Carrick on Suir, with, it is believed, an A class reserved for them.

WHITEHEAD

Carriage Shed: The shed now has sufficient reinforced concrete laid to allow an apron around a coach on each of the two roads. If anyone can sponsor concrete to extend the area of flooring, Dermot Mackie would be more than glad to talk to them.

Water Water: Whitehead once again has a column. The ex-Dundalk column has been erected near the main track at the gate and it is hoped to have it functioning in the near future.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Summary: The Secretary was recently asked what the geographical distribution of the membership was. Well, as of October 1994, the situation was: Northern Ireland, 403; Republic Of Ireland, 348; Great

Britain, 288; Overseas, 29; 1,068 in total. The overseas figure is mainly in the USA, Germany and Australia. The breakdown by membership type is: Ordinary, 788; Senior, 154; Junior, 37; Family, 20; Life, 54; Honorary, 12; Societies, 3.

FINANCE

ERDF: Recent news suggests that, rather than the £1.4m of project grant aid for which we had applied, we will be lucky if we can obtain £100k, and that will be at 50% not the 75% of the original scheme. Suitable projects are being submitted for consideration.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Dublin News: The set for the season is 238 (NCC), 88 (GNR diner), 2335 (GSR), 1383 & 1416 (Park Royals), 2423 (Park Royal, ex-1419 reflecting its past and current status as a catering vehicle), 2421 (CIE diner), 1916 (CIE brake now with crew facilities and 220v generator).

Laminate 1470 left Dublin Heuston with two TPOs on 27th March for scrapping at Inchicore. Out of traffic since 1993, it was swapped for Bredin TPO 2981. This now serves as a much needed store and utility vehicle at Heuston. Interestingly, although fitted with vacuum brakes, it is piped for air brakes.

The Irish State Coach: In an important prestigious development, Iarnród Éireann has kindly agreed to the long term loan of coach 351 to the Society. The GS&WR state coach had a miraculous escape when the carriage shop in Inchicore was badly damaged by fire in 1992. Its survival on that occasion was due to the efforts of the internal works fire brigade. Restoration will be undertaken by FAS at Cabra in Dublin whose track record in the vintage vehicle field includes the restoration of a Dublin tramcar.

The Whitehead Position: News from Whitehead, and more, is given in a separate sheet.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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

CARRIAGE & WAGON STATUS (WHITEHEAD)

Mark Kennedy (Carriage & Wagon Officer - Whitehead)

The 1995 Whitehead running set is as follows: 1097 (GS&WR), 1142 (GS&WR), 241 (NCC), 87 (UTA diner), 9 (GNR brake), 411 (NCC full brake). All these vehicles are in traffic and need only ongoing running repairs, maintenance and re-decoration.

CIÉ laminate 1469 has had a lot of work carried out on it including much joinery and repainting of its roof and ceiling (undercoat). It should therefore remain in traffic for another year or more without much further work. It may be exchanged with 238 (NCC), currently in Dublin, later in the year. 50 (GNR Directors' Saloon) is available for traffic when required for special occasions. NCC brake 91 remains out of traffic in Dublin. It is currently expected to move to Whitehead in late July for a light overhaul before returning to traffic. The major restoration of 243 (NCC) is still continuing slowly. A number of new interior doors have been made to replace missing originals. Thank you to the members who donated money and time towards this project. NCC 68 has had one end successfully rebuilt, the other end needs some work. Two new corridor connections have been built and are now being fitted. Interior ceilings and lavatories are being repainted and brake gear is being overhauled. This vehicle is expected back into traffic by early June, hopefully.

Most vehicles in traffic now live indoors in the carriage shed. Those remaining out of traffic outdoors at Whitehead are now protected from the worst of the elements by tarpaulin covers. The number of carriages owned by the RPSI was assumed to be around 40 but a survey at the end of 1994 revealed the true figure to be well over 50. Some of the carriages acquired over the years had been quietly scrapping themselves with help from Mr Rust and Mrs Rot. I suggested to Council that it was time to trim the "collection".

The following list has been approved for disposal by Council:

GNR 98 (581)	(Whitehead) Body collapsed - underframe now used as mobile storage by the Locomotive Department.
GNR 127 (187/727)	(Whitehead) Disposed of, useful spares retained.
GNR 189 (595)	(Whitehead) Disposed of, useful spares retained.
CIÉ 1434 laminate	(Mullingar) Chassis only.
CIÉ 1445 laminate	(Mullingar)
CIÉ 1463 laminate	(Mullingar)
CIÉ 1470 laminate	(Dublin) Exchanged for CIÉ 2981 for use as a temporary store.
CIÉ 1483 laminate	(Whitehead)
CIÉ 1915 laminate brake	(Whitehead) Bogie to be swapped with CIÉ 1469.
CIÉ 3156 heating van	(Dublin)
CIÉ 2420 diner	(Dublin)
B&CDR bodies (2)	(Whitehead) Useful spares retained or passed to Downpatrick Railway Society.

On a more positive note, the concrete floor in the forward section of the carriage shed is making work much safer and quicker. Thank you to everyone involved in its laying. Over the summer we hope to externally repaint a couple of vehicles in the running set, and if a few more members appear we could give GS&WR 1287, the sleeping coach, a lick of paint and a new roof fabric.