

# NEWS LETTER

*June 1996*

## FINANCE

**An Announcement:** Our Treasurer would like to inform the membership of the long awaited news that the Society has been successful in its submission for a second round of financial aid from the European Regional Development Fund.

Council had been informed that funding was unlikely to be available for more than £50,000 to £60,000 in total, so five possible options of varying cost were submitted in the hope that at least some would be funded:

1. Completion of Locomotive No.4
2. Construction of Locomotive Workshop
3. Installation of turntable at Whitehead
4. Luxury Coach
5. Workshop Coach

In the event the ERDF authorities have agreed to fund all the projects, totalling £160,000, at 50%, unlike the first tranche which was at 75%. For every £2 that we pay out for one of the five designated projects ERDF will refund £1. Spending on the projects is expected to commence at the start of June.

In the case of the first three projects, they are self-explanatory. The luxury coach will be a heritage restoration job on a vehicle which will be of use for promotional, film or special usage, for which funds would not otherwise be available. The final vehicle, the workshop coach, will be designed to support crews away from base, an increasing necessity due to the gradual rundown of traditional servicing facilities.

It should be stressed that the two carriage projects will not be undertaken unless it is clear that the benefiting vehicles will be allowed to operate over at least some of the routes where our investment in them will be recouped.

The approval of the funding carries with it a responsibility. We need to be able to find the total cost of all these projects,

£160,000, *in advance*. We get our half back *after* we have made initial payments, to the extent of 50% of what we spend. The first round of ERDF aid worked in the same way, and basically it means that far from being awash with money, we need to find more than usual to start with in advance of our claims each month for half of what we spend. If we cannot find the full amount in the first place, we cannot reclaim all of what is on offer.

Thus, we are faced with finding half of £160,000 on top of our normal maintenance costs, which already swallow up the majority of what we spend on our locomotives and coaches. With the period of this round of assistance being 5 years, some £1,333 per month needs to be spent if we are to complete the designated projects. It is worth pointing out that we are in the process of preparing a case for the (British) National Lottery Heritage and Millennium Funds as well. Further news will be published as it comes.

## OPERATIONS

**Running In:** No.171 & No.85 enjoyed a few pre-season running in trips recently. On 30<sup>th</sup> March Helen's Bay Golf Club (near Bangor) had a day-long celebration for their centenary and the party got off to a good start with a run to Belfast behind No.171. All the participants dressed in Victorian and Edwardian costume and they were definitely intending to enjoy themselves.

On 4<sup>th</sup> April both locomotives were in steam for a number of trips on the Larne line in connection with filming for a coffee advert, to be shown in Israel. The production was a multi-national effort, with an Israeli cast, a Czech director and production team, input from a production house in Dublin, and filming in Israel, Morocco, the United States and Ireland.

**"Easter Bunny":** Following last year's poor turnout, this year's operation may well have been cancelled but for the

Locomotive Department's need to ensure that No.171, and to a lesser extent No.85, was run in for the railtour in May. Whether it was the good weather or better publicity is not certain, but we carried over 600 passenger on the day and in the event the only worry was whether or not there would be enough Easter eggs to go round.

**Titanic Visit:** 60 visitors from the Titanic Historical Society were at Whitehead on the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> April and despite the miserable weather they seemed to enjoy themselves.

**"Knocknarea":** The railtour already seems so long ago now, but its memories will linger on. The highlight of the tour for most must have been the superb running of our three locomotives, No.171 and No.461 to Sligo, and No.85's magnificent run back to Belfast was second to none. For those of you who missed out this year, it was one of the best.

The damp start on Saturday morning seemed foreboding but when you start at the bottom the only way is up. The train splitting generally worked well, giving passengers on the front portion of the train a good runpast at Edgeworthstown. One or two minor hiccups made it impossible to have the main runpast at Ballymote - it was a choice of dropping it or arriving nearly two hours late. Hopefully the right decision was made.

The glorious sunshine on our arrival in Sligo stayed with us for departure the next morning at what was the start of a long day, but the only way a visit to Great Victoria Street station could be fitted in. The growing popularity of railways in this country makes weekday paths ever more difficult to find, hence the need to return to Belfast on the Sunday evening and the short stop in Portrush on the Monday. A shame as it is a lovely spot when the sun is shining.

**"Carlingford Express":** The operation on 9<sup>th</sup> June still has some places available. This could be your last chance to see Great Northern semaphore signalling at Poyntzpass - the colour lights are currently being installed there as has already happened at Dundalk.

**Charter:** For lineside photographers, we have a private charter running from Rathdrum to Dublin's Lansdowne Road on 5<sup>th</sup> June.

**Steam & Jazz & Barbecues:** Enquiries for

our Belfast based operation on 21<sup>st</sup> June and that from Dublin on 22<sup>nd</sup> June are very healthy indeed and those hoping to travel should book as soon as possible. Talk to anybody who travelled on either trip last year and they will tell you that it is an evening not to be missed.

**Summer Steam:** Our normal summer excursions will be operating in July and August: "Strawberry Fair" - 6<sup>th</sup> July, "Sea Breeze" - 29<sup>th</sup> July, "Portrush Flyer" - 6<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> August. Later in the season (24<sup>th</sup> August) there is the "Sixties Steam" running from Dublin - get your flowers, beads, flares and kaftans out!

**Tickets:** In Dublin, tickets can be obtained from IE main booking offices, the EBS and Tea Time Express. In Belfast, the Alliance & Leicester Building Society in Wellington Place is the main outlet. Otherwise use the booking forms included with the previous News-Letter.

**Train Rides:** The Belfast Area operations Committee is still awaiting a reply to the request for an organiser for either the Schools Day or the summer train rides.

**Crew Training:** After a false start a number of months ago, the first NIR driver with no company experience of steam locomotives was officially passed out as a steam driver in time for the railtour. Noel Playfair, on his first passenger carrying turn since promotion, celebrated in fine style as he took No.85 and the tour train from Dublin to Belfast on the Sunday evening. The stopwatch men agreed that his performance was as good as anything seen in GN days. It is hoped that possibly two more drivers and firemen will be passed out over the summer.

The new IE firemen were also out over the tour weekend as they fired both No.171 and No.461 all the way from Dublin to Sligo and back.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.3 "R.H. Smyth":** Steam brake repairs required.

**No.3BG "Guinness":** Now out of traffic at Downpatrick awaiting assessment of tubes and other boiler work.

**No.4:** Bogie removed for overhaul. Tapping of water-space stay holes complete. Making and fitting of stays continuing - 1,500 stays using 2 lathes over 3 months. All firebox riveting completed. Corroded

cross members being replaced under footplate. The tubeplate flange has been welded and the tube holes have been bored. Our thanks to NIR for their help in allowing this work to be carried out at York Road Works.

**No.85 "Merlin":** Severe problems have been experienced with dirt coming over with steam into the vacuum ejector and valve lubricators - after cleaning of the internal steam pipe there was a major improvement. New injector cones have been fitted. Boiler inspection passed.

**No.171 "Slieve Gullion":** The recent operations to Bangor and at Easter indicated that the big ends and cylinder lubrication were in order. The boiler has passed inspection but the inspector recommended re-tubing for the next inspection. On its way to Dublin on 8<sup>th</sup> May with the empty coaches for the railtour the right hand big end was carrying some heat and the locomotive was taken off and returned to Whitehead as a precaution. The big end was examined, dressed up and fitted, and the locomotive performed successfully on the railtour.

**No.461:** Boiler inspection passed for another year. Some minor repairs were carried out, including renewal of ferrules and seam rivets. Poor steaming has been reported but this could be due to a leaking steam pipe joint.

**Unilok:** Has been lifted of the track at Whitehead to allow moving of No.4 and No.186. Needs general repairs and may be required if No.23 has to come out of traffic.

**Spark Arresters:** No.85, No.171 and No.461 have been fitted with devices similar to those on locomotives in Britain. Following last year's dry weather it was thought prudent to be seen to be taking steps to limit the risk of fires, although it has never been proven that any of our locomotives has been responsible for lineside damage. The devices do not seem to affect performance but lighting up problems have been experienced.

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Southern Set:** In traffic: 1416, 2423 (needs some work to finish service area), 88 (minor frost damage repaired), 2421, 1335, 238, 1916. Out of traffic: 1463 (a steel ribbed roof using pre-formed sections has been made and fitted to replace the only remaining laminated sections), AM13,

1327, 1445, 2981. 1383 (interior renovation is nearly complete - should be in traffic for May or June operations).

**Northern Set:** At present there is no spare vehicle for this set and the running maintenance is consuming the available manpower - a few new faces would help the situation. Laminated 1469 will probably be taken out of traffic at the end of the season and it is hoped that 243 will be ready as a replacement for next season although quite a lot of work remains to be done.

**State Coach:** CIÉ have kindly fulfilled their promise to provide £5,000 towards the restoration of 351. The Society is delighted with this donation as it will help to ensure that the coach remains a viable item in the national railway collection. The restoration scheme agreement with FÁS has been signed. The Society has a responsibility for insurance, Employer's Liability cover and a foreman's salary, although the latter is reclaimable from FÁS.

## GENERAL

**Inchicore 150:** The railway works of Iarnród Éireann at Inchicore (originally GS&WR) are celebrating 150 years of operation on the same site. To that effect, open days are planned on 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> June. IE are keen to have as many examples of railway vehicles as possible in place on the day and it is hoped that No.85 and No.171 will be there as will No.186 (by road low loader from Whitehead). A number of items of RPSI rolling stock (yet to be decided) will also be attending. The Society plans to have a stand for sales and publicity and any member who would like to help should contact (01) 288 0073.

**ARPS/AIR:** Following the recent merging of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies and the Association of Independent Railways, there is now a single body dedicated to looking after the interests of preserved railways. The new organisation will be known as the Association of Independent Railways and Preservation Societies. The AIRPS welcomes private members who support Heritage Railways, railway preservation in general and the aims and objects of the Association. Annual subscription is £15 or £200 for life membership.

**"Steering Committee":** Appointments have now been made to the committee set

up at the AGM to look at the structure and conduct of Council. Southern members are Chas Meredith and Peter Rigney; northern members, Willie Coates and David Henderson; Council members, John Beaumont and David Humphries.

A few submissions have been made already and the committee would welcome more, especially in the area of professional management and fundraising. You might well want to meet the committee in person or to offer your services as a future Council member or adviser.

If any member is interested in contributing to the debate, the Society's Memorandum and Articles of Association can be made available to enable the current procedures to be viewed. However, because of the number of pages involved, a sum of £1 must be charged to cover copying costs.

**Stock List:** Included with this News-Letter should be a stock list of all our locomotives and carriages. It is believed to be accurate but if you know different or can help with any of the blanks please write to the Editorial Address.

## MEMBERSHIP

**Older Juniors:** Yes its official - junior members can stay as juniors until the age of 18. Following a suggestion at the AGM, Council has decided that younger members should be encouraged and membership should be made more attractive to new juniors.

A lot of membership forms are already printed so it may be some time before the U18 limit appears in print but this can be ignored with immediate effect. Please also note that the new age limit does not apply to fares - concession fares are available only for those under 16.

**Covenants:** Those members in the United Kingdom who do not have a covenant, or whose covenant has expired, will be receiving a form and explanatory letter and you are asked to seriously consider filling this in as it costs you nothing except the effort required to do so. A great deal of expense and effort was put into the compilation of the mailshot so please don't ignore it.

## MULLINGAR

**Lease:** Our new Site Officer, David Humphries is renewing the effort to arrange

a lease of the site from CIÉ.

A certain amount of carriage restoration work is carried out at Mullingar but major spending cannot at present be justified until the lease situation is resolved.

## WHITEHEAD

**Track Laying:** Dermot Mackie's team have got the task of laying concrete panels down to a fine art. A panel can now be taken up and replaced in a single day and now only a few remain to be laid.

**Fencing:** Approximately half of the platform boundary has been refurbished with new chain link fencing.

**Summer Evenings:** The Wednesday night summer squad has returned to work with the weed spraying of the yard and track. Over the next few months it will be laying the last 40m of concrete sleepers on the platform road, erecting the remainder of the platform fence and installing palisade fencing at the back of the site. All helpers are most welcome on any summer Wednesday from 7pm.

## SALES

**New Products:** "The Works" by Gregg Ryan is 96 pages of text with b&w photographs celebrating 150 years of Inchicore works, £5.95 plus p&p. This and the usual list of books, videos, magazines, timetables. etc., is available from RPSI Sales, 148 Hillsborough Road, Lisburn, BT27 50Y.

**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); GNR(I) coats of arms. Send details of your requirements.

## EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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