

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

NEWS LETTER

February 1997

LOCOMOTIVE WORKSHOP

Philosophy: The size of the proposed building is 71m x 24m. It will be similar in construction to the carriage shed but including the 1897 overhead crane recovered from the old "fitting shop" at Belfast Queen's Quay sheds. It will be sited to the left of the existing locomotive shed behind the water tower and extend towards the Larne end of the site. There will be one railway track into the building, offset to the left side, leaving the right for machinery and equipment.

The main purpose of the project is to improve the effectiveness of our maintenance of locomotives and other items, especially:

1. To re-site the machine tools away from the dirt and damp of the locomotive sheds;
2. To greatly increase the covered work area;
3. To improve our capabilities by providing floor space for better and more versatile machines;
4. To provide the much needed facility of an overhead crane;
5. To improve safety by improving conditions and procedures;
6. To attract more volunteers by offering a more pleasant working environment;
7. To provide safe and effective facilities suitable for the eventual employment of staff or sub-contractors;
8. To preserve period machinery (e.g. the crane, wheel press and blacksmith's equipment) as a working museum of the steam era, and to allow public access to work in progress;
9. To release locomotive shed space for accommodating locomotives under cover and permit proper access to them for running repairs and servicing.

OPERATIONS

Cancellations: The fourth quarter of last year was notable for cancellations rather than operations, that of the "Greystones Shuttle" being due to the date, 20th September, clashing with the holidays of most of the steam drivers.

A film charter for a company working for the BBC, scheduled for 22nd September was cancelled on a Friday despite the fact that final details were agreed the previous day! As a Society we do try to be professional, especially when dealing with such bodies, but the film company's behaviour might charitably be described as unprecedented.

A charter to Rathdrum scheduled for mid-October was cancelled by the hirer, a travel agent.

"Santa Special" (Belfast): A vast improvement on last Christmas's performance saw most of the trains running at 100% full.

NIR placed a temporary restriction of 25mph on No.85 but this did not impede the operation as running any faster gives Father Christmas insufficient time to visit all the children on the train. There are ongoing discussions with NIR about the future of No.85.

"Santa Special" (Dublin): Despite a wrong date being given in the last News-Letter, these operations passed off successfully and all trains carried capacity loads. Revenue generation should at least match the 1995 operations.

Easter Operations: Both the Belfast and Dublin areas will be running at Easter this year. On Good Friday, 28th March, there will be a train leaving Dublin at 2:30pm for Mullingar, with a possible extension to Edgeworthstown. On Easter Monday, 31st March, there will be the usual "Easter Bunny" trips from Belfast Central.

"Slieve Mlsh": Preparations for the 1997

railtour to Tralee are progressing well. Operations Officer, Heather Boomer, reports that the advance bookings are coming in at a rate not experienced for quite a number of years so, if you are planning to travel, get that form in!

Driver Training: A priority for 1997, particularly in the south where it is hoped that some progress can be made at an early date.

GENERAL

Stars Again: The film "Michael Collins" has finally hit the screen. There has been the expected controversy locally, but most of the critics agree that it is a very well made film and an excellent example of cinematography. Members viewing the film will see both No.171 and No.461 in action, with material from each of the four days shooting in 1995 being used.

Wanted: An 009 gauge model railway is being built at Whitehead as an extra attraction for the Summer Train Rides. It will have continuous running and full landscaping. If members could donate spare model railway items of this gauge, it would be much appreciated. We would also like to raise money for the Society by selling surplus model railway equipment of any gauge. Contact Paul Maxwell (01960 353591) or Evan Pamely (01232 656432) for further information.

Evan is also anxious to hear from any member who might be free to help with the Train Rides at Whitehead on one or more days this year.

Steering Committee: Enclosed with this News-Letter is the report by the steering committee set up at the 1996 AGM to look at the structure and operation of the RPSI Council. The report will be discussed at the forthcoming AGM.

Members are asked to carefully consider the recommendations made in the report and to decide whether they wish to accept them fully, to accept them in part, or to reject them entirely.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: Boiler - Making and fitting of stays and crown stay nuts continuing. Water-space stays all fitted, tooling over continuing. Longitudinal stays in place. Top feed trays and internal pipes fitted. Front

tubeplate fitted and riveting complete. Reaming of firebox holes and spinning down of flue tube ends in progress.

Mechanical - Brake frame being assembled. Coupling and connecting rods dismantled for examination. Several bushes to be re-metalled. Bogie slack rivets replaced and cracked welds ground out. Horn liners fitted.

Bodywork - Bunker and tank plate are dismantled for fitting of new plates - found to be in very poor condition.

No.85 "Merlin": Boiler inspected and fusible plugs renewed.

Investigations have revealed no faults in the tender which would have caused the derailment near Coleraine on 7th September. The tender was uncoupled, springs removed tested and refitted. The leading wheelset was skimmed to remove derailment bruising. The right leading roller bearing was found to have been damaged by the derailment and a replacement was obtained from the old 4,000 gallon tender No.31. The tender weights and side control of axleboxes were checked.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": At Connolly shed in Dublin being prepared for a boiler inspection. A return to Whitehead is awaiting a decision on boiler repairs to No.461.

No.461: At the "ramps" in Inchicore. The boiler tubes are approaching the end of their life and may be renewed in advance of other planned boiler work to secure several more years' traffic. The work may be done in Dublin, depending on the availability of tubes.

DARS Locomotives: The Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway Society have invited tenders for the restoration of one of their Orenstein & Koppel locomotives plus a second boiler. The Society is tendering for this work and the Locomotive Department have prepared and submitted the relevant documents. If successful, it is intended that the work will be carried out entirely at Whitehead.

MEMBERSHIP

Renewals: Time now to renew your membership if you wish to be part of the RPSI in 1997.

Our thanks to members who paid early and also to those who included a donation to

the Locomotive Workshop Appeal.

The majority of the standing order payments are now in, and around 50% have NOT been updated to reflect the new £16 adult rate. As this will be the last News-Letter received without renewing, all members who pay by standing order are asked to check with their banks that the correct amount has been paid. If not, please amend the standing order and send in the difference to ensure continuity of membership. No membership cards will be issued until the full payment is received.

Members in Éire should note that it is not necessary to go to the expense of obtaining sterling cheques – IR£ postal orders or cheques are quite satisfactory. Overseas members, if paying in their local currency, are asked to include at least £2 extra to cover conversion.

Could we ask members not to send combined cheques intended for more than one address, i.e. Membership, Sales or Railtour - this can really confuse the accounting records for each of the departments concerned and results in increased workload for those involved.

Don't forget to return your covenant forms.

BELFAST MEETINGS

12th March: (1) "Midland Great Western Review" - Charles Friel visits the lines of the west of Ireland. (2) "An Introduction To Signalling" - Johnny Glendinning tells you all you ever wanted to know about signalling.

MULLINGAR

Engine Shed: Following an inspection, dry rot has been found in some of the timbers of the shed roof, and repairs will have to be made.

Tidy Up: Work continues in tidying up and developing the site. Work is progressing on the scrapping of coach bodies suffering from the ravages of time and vandalism. Important components are, of course, being salvaged and retained for spares or templates.

Museum: There have been preliminary discussions with the Mullingar Arts & Railway Group, a body hoping to develop the Mullingar station area under LEADER (the EU rural development programme) in which it is proposed to establish a working

museum. David Humphries has been elected a director of the Group in anticipation of closer liaison with the RPSI.

Lease: After a number of years of stagnation, discussions have recommenced with CIE and they have hinted that some progress may be possible on agreeing a lease for the site.

WHITEHEAD

Illuminations: With the completion of repairs to the trackwork, attention turned to the platform itself. Any member who travelled on a Santa train will have noticed the new station name-board and the platform lights to which power has been re-established.

Clearance: Work is now being concentrated on removing any obstacles on the site of the proposed locomotive workshop.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Mullingar: Laminate coach 1463 is now having a timber roof attached to the new steel framing.

Dublin: Park Royal 1416 is in the Inchicore coaching shop for attention to end panels. Bredin brake AM13 has had some weather-proofing work. Running maintenance continues, mainly concentrating on interior upgrading of 1335 and 1383, with electrical work on 1335, 88, 1142 and 2423. Four coaches now have photo-electric light controls. It was announced in the last issue that protective safety film was being proposed. 88 and 1142 have already had the coating applied to their windows.

Cabra: Work on continues on the Irish State Coach 351. A new batch of trainees is currently being recruited.

Whitehead: Estimates are being sought from various British societies as to what values should be placed on the coaches destroyed or damaged at Whitehead in May. Those received will be passed to the Northern Ireland Office who are considering our claim for damages.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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