

# NEWS LETTER

*September 1997*

## NIR OPERATIONS

**Latest Position:** First the bad news - this News-Letter has been delayed for nearly a month to allow inclusion of the latest information on the consultant's report. To those expecting a circular in August we apologise.

Now the good news - we are operational again following a meeting between our representatives, NIR, the consultants (Halcrow Transmark), and the DED Health & Safety Executive.

**The Report:** All the participants at the meeting have broadly accepted Transmark's report. To summarise, there is a general overall speed restriction of 50mph for locomotives (45mph for No.461 and for wooden bodied stock). Lower limits will apply at specified locations where track conditions dictate. The position on the speed limit from Lisburn to the border is being clarified and it is hoped that it will be set at 60mph, with steel coaches obviously.

Other restrictions mean that where trains are passing, if one is composed of wooden bodied stock, either must be stationary. Also, double block signalling will be applied to the operation of trains of wooden stock on all tracks, but this is a formalisation of NIR's current operating procedures. All locomotives will be fitted with speedometers.

There is a requirement that formal maintenance schedules be introduced and a system of record keeping put in place, to be available for audit by a certification body which will be agreed by the Society, the railway company and the H&S Executive.

On NIR's part, the company will be including steam paths for our regular trains in their working timetables.

To conclude, the foregoing will place a heavier workload and financial burden on the operation of steam trains, but it should

mean that trains to Portrush and Londonderry can operate in paths little changed from those which previously applied. To try to alleviate the dearth of steam in the north this year, a "Steam Enterprise" is being given consideration, and current thinking is for a shopping special in mid-November. More news as it becomes available.

## OPERATIONS

**"Mid-Summer Night's Steam":** The barbecue proved to be as popular as ever when No.461 hauled a capacity train on 21<sup>st</sup> June. Around 400 barbecue steak meals were served during the evening.

Our thanks to the Guinness Jazz Band, Dawn Farm Foods and the Army Catering Corps, without whom it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to run this train.

**"Strawberry Fair":** Despite anticipated problems arising from the destruction by fire of the Ballygeary signal cabin at Rosslare on Christmas day last, we did get to Rosslare with No.171 on 6<sup>th</sup> July. On this occasion we took coal as well as water at Gorey.

The train operated satisfactorily but with somewhat lower numbers out of Enniscorthy than last year. In compensation, however, the numbers boarding in Dublin were higher.

Dan Walsh, our contact in Enniscorthy writes: "The Strawberry Fair trip was another great success. Nothing but good public reaction, and when the 6 Strawberry Princesses were asked during their interviews before a packed attendance in Market Square on Saturday night 'What was your most enjoyable moment of the week?', 4 replied: 'The trip from Arklow to Enniscorthy on the steam train today!'"

**"Sixties Steam":** Our attempts to develop a second Mullingar-based event have proved to be less successful for the second

year running. The train on 26<sup>th</sup> July ran with only around 150 passengers, although No.171 put up a good performance with the seven coach consist.

Although not as successful as we would have hoped, the operation should cover itself financially. The event is still "young" and it will be reviewed to see what improvements can be made for the future to make it more attractive to the travelling public.

**"Greystones Shuttle":** Unfortunately, for the second year this operation has had to be cancelled. Last year the lack of a qualified footplate crew was the problem. However, this year Iarnród Éireann have advised that a number of GAA football specials earlier in the summer resulted in a backlog of engineering works in relation to the Bray to Greystones electrification scheme. As a consequence, they are unable to operate our specials on 24<sup>th</sup> August, or indeed on any other Sunday in August or September.

**"Sea Breeze":** A well-filled train operated on 6<sup>th</sup> September and a good time was had by all, especially a number of northern Council members who were very well treated. No.171 performed flawlessly on what should be her last operation before overhaul.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.3BG "Guinness":** Still out of traffic in Downpatrick. Awaiting a decision from the DARS as to whether they want the RPSI to carry out the repairs at DARS expense.

**No.4:** Boiler - Machining and fitting of expansion brackets complete. Fitting of tubes complete, beading over under way. Making and fitting studs. Blast cleaning and painting under way.

Mechanical - Cleaning and painting of frames continues. Pony truck has had wheels replaced and one axlebox re-metalled. New friction pads being fitted to side bearers. Roughing out of new piston rods.

Bodywork - Riveting of new left side plate complete.

**No.23:** Only for light use - gearbox in worn condition. Re-training of drivers nearly complete.

**No.85 "Merlin":** Bogie wheels have been

re-profiled and fitted. The weights are being checked. Driving springs to be renewed.

**No.171 "Slieve Gullion":** Minor boiler repairs being carried out. It is still the intention to return to Whitehead at the end of the Dublin summer season for major refurbishment.

The locomotive is based in Connolly shed, having been "detained" in Dublin for a variety of reasons following its arrival to co-star in the "Michael Collins" film in 1995. Since then it has visited Kildare, Kilkenny, Mallow, Mullingar, Rosslare and Sligo, as well as covering the crew training sessions earlier this year. Its presence has eased the pressure on No.461.

**No.186:** Remains at Inchicore.

**No.461:** Minor mechanical and boiler repairs. Boiler approved by inspector until September, after which a re-tubing is planned in time for December.

The locomotive has had a visit to the wagon weighbridge at Dublin's North Wall. Although no major flaws were detected, selected pairs of springs are being removed for inspection by IE's chief chemist. Our thanks to IE staff for their help.

**CSÉ:** While no mechanical progress has been made with this locomotive, it has received a splendid coat of paint. The livery is green with red lining.

**Orenstein & Koppel No.3:** Work is proceeding on replacement of corroded frame plates, repair of wheel sets and renewal of bearings. Blast cleaning took place at the same time as No.4.

## FINANCE

**Locomotive Workshop Appeal:** Since the previous News-Letter our Treasurer has had a chance to measure the success of the Appeal. He was so impressed that he decided to go into print himself. The results are included on a separate news-sheet.

**Awards & Donations:** The Society recently entered our Irish State Coach restoration project for the AIB Better Ireland Awards. Out of an initial group of 1,000 entries we were successful in the regional Heritage/Environment category, winning a £1,000 prize and being highly commended. Further, our entry qualified for

the national finals and we have just learned that our project is one of 24 (6 in each of 4 categories) to have received an additional prize of £4,000. To mark the occasion, there was a presentation ceremony on 29<sup>th</sup> August at the FAS premises in Cabra, Dublin, where our coach is currently undergoing restoration. Well done to all those in the Society and in FAS who have worked to make the project so successful. More news is awaited, as our project is one of 6 in its category which will be hoping for a prize of £20,000, to be presented in January 1998!!

Also in regard to 351, we have received a donation of £100 from Fyffes plc and timber to the value of £300 from Noyeks Timber Merchants. Other sponsorship deals we have recently organised are: the cost of repainting No.3 "R.H. Smyth" by Landguard Agencies; repairs to our photocopier by Minolta agent, IBS (NI) Ltd. Perhaps our members would consider patronising these companies should the occasion arise.

An entry has been submitted to the Guinness Living Dublin Awards - fingers crossed.

**Grants:** Applications for grants have been made to The British Council and Carrickfergus Borough Council. We have been unsuccessful with the latter, but we have been offered a grant of £500 by the British Council. There are no further indications of possible grants from the British Lottery or Millennium Fund.

## STRATEGY COMMITTEE

**Society Future Strategy:** Following the report of the Steering Sub-committee earlier this year, Council has decided to look further than its own role and structure. Accordingly, a Council sub-committee has been set up with a view to examining all aspects of Society policy and how these could affect our future.

With the travel consultant's report last year, and the release of the operating consultant's report this year, there is a lot to be considered. Other topics which will be investigated include: carriage policy; museum status; branch lines; funding; rules & regulations, attracting new members.

Three Council members have already been

appointed to the sub-committee, and Council is considering the appointment of a number of other members. If you feel you have something to contribute in the form of submissions to the committee please contact the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible.

Further news will be reported as it becomes available.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**New Season:** Autumn time can mean only one thing for the Society - the start of a new season of meetings in Belfast, arranged by Charles Friel. The venue and times are, as usual, St. Jude's Church Hall, Ravenhill Road, Belfast at 7:30pm on the second Wednesday of each month, October to March.

**8<sup>th</sup> October:** This year's opening talk is "Last Days of the Irish North & the SL&NCR" by Neil Spinks. The author of the definitive work on the Sligo, Leitrim & Northern Counties Railway will be marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closure of the lines in the area.

## GENERAL

**IRRS London:** The London Branch of the Irish Railway Record Society invite any of our members in that area to attend their programme of meetings over the winter. A leaflet is enclosed with the GB circulars outlining the schedule for the season.

**GNR 40 Years Gone (1):** From 20<sup>th</sup> September until 10<sup>th</sup> October, the Enniskillen Library will be holding a "Railways Of Enniskillen" exhibition to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the demise of the GNR in the area.

**GNR 40 Years Gone (2):** Another event to mark the October 1957 anniversary will be an illustrated talk, "The Railways Of County Fermanagh", to be given by our own Charles Friel. The venue is the Ardhowen Theatre in Enniskillen at 8pm on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Those in the area should keep an eye on the local press nearer the time for further details.

## MULLINGAR

**Engine Shed:** There is very little to report from Mullingar except for some remedial

work to the roof timbers.

**Dublin:** OK, so it's not Mullingar, but the RPSI "site" at IE's Heuston yard does come under the jurisdiction of the Mullingar Site Officer, Chas Meredith. Our TPO is in use there as a store.

## WHITEHEAD

**"Shop":** Those members who have visited the Train Rides at Whitehead since June will have noticed the new paintwork on the platform shop. The shop received a much needed overhaul both inside and out, and Nicola Walsh and her team at Whitehead are to be congratulated for their excellent handiwork.

Outside, the shop is painted in the standard NCC/GS&WR/RPSI maroon with yellow/cream lining, complete with vintage effect "Ticket" sign hand-crafted by David Henderson.

Inside, the shop has been remodelled, with a new sales area on one side and a working model railway layout, provided by Henry Ritchie, on the other. In between is a video/TV combination which displays the Society's videos and other tapes stocked in the shop. The storage area has been removed from view thus presenting a much more attractive overall display to the public.

The felt roof still remains to be repaired, so if anyone can help with materials or elbow grease, please get in touch.

Nicola has been appointed as a PSR (Whitehead Shop Manager).

**Tarry No Longer:** The old NIACRO tarry at Whitehead has been sold and £1,950 raised from its sale. The proceeds are being allocated to the Carriage & Wagon Department.

**Around & About:** The gates to the site have been cleaned down and galvanized mesh has been fitted. Rustproofing has been applied and undercoat and top coats are awaited.

The site has received its annual application of weedkiller.

**Locomotive Workshop:** The foundations were laid early in the summer followed by fabrication of the steelwork. The erection of the steelwork is now complete and the integral fitting of the overhead crane is under way. It is hoped to have this complete by mid-September.

At that point, work will start on the access siding into the new building. It will consist of a new turnout and approximately 100m of track. It is envisaged that the trackwork will take until Christmas to complete, but as it is highly manpower intensive work, the more bodies turning up each weekend the sooner the track will be laid.

## SALES

**Main Lines:** A variety of branded RPSI items is always available from:

RPSI Postal Sales  
45 Drumnacanvy Road  
Portadown  
Co. Armagh  
BT63 5LX

The principal lines are: locomotive outline badges, videos, postcards, posters, pencils, rulers, etc.

**For The Collector:** Send details of your requirements to:

RPSI Collector's Shop  
148 Hillsborough Road  
Lisburn  
Co. Antrim  
BT27 5QY

Typical items are: drawings of a selection of Irish locomotives, coaches and wagons; back numbers of 5'3", tour brochures and various railway magazines; old timetables and tickets; etc. Railway Clearing House 1927 maps of Ireland are now available, folded in cover, priced £3.90.

Book List: The current book list includes:

"Irish Railways in Pictures - GNR(I)"	£4.35
"The Fintona Horse Tram"	£6.50
"Isle of Man Horse Trams"	£3.55
"The Warrenpoint Branch"	£5.55
"Irish Metrovick Diesels"	£5.55

All prices include postage.

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