

NEWS LETTER

November 1997

OPERATIONS

"Return To The Main Line": We are happy to report that, after a summer spent waiting anxiously while our independent consultants looked at the question of safe operation on the lines of Northern Ireland Railways, we have received from Halcrow Transmark a clean bill of health. Most importantly, the report has been accepted by Translink, as NIR's new masters are called, and also by the Department of Economic Development's Health & Safety Executive (the local equivalent of the Railway Inspectorate).

However, further to the item in the previous News-Letter, the Society has been criticised for poor record keeping. Although our standards of maintenance were found to be quite satisfactory, we could not show written records of work carried out, or a written programme for maintaining our locomotives and coaches to the standard required.

We are now preparing data systems which will allow the proper recording of all work carried out on each vehicle, with traceable records of material suppliers and of those responsible for carrying out the work. This is all part of the requirements under what is termed 'Safety Critical Work'. We are also establishing the standards to which we will work, and are presently awaiting advice from NIR concerning their written maintenance schedules and standards. In the meantime the company has agreed that we can recommence operations in accordance with the recommendations in the report.

Film Charter: On 16th & 17th October 3 RPSI carriages set off for Castlereagh and Westport on the Mayo line for some filming work on a joint BBC/RTÉ

production. The coaches were repainted for the film company in the CIÉ 1950s livery of light green. The film set was coupled to the Irish Traction Group's ex-CIÉ locomotive A39, also in a livery from the 1950s, i.e. the original silver which the A Class carried when they were first delivered from 1955. This is the first time that the RPSI and the ITG have collaborated on such a project.

"The Christmas Shopper": There had been some hopes that our return to the main line would have been a "Steam Enterprise" operation to Dublin, but for a variety of reasons this was not possible. Availability of Craven coaches, the cost of hiring (£3,500) and moving them, the logistics of getting access to the water supply in Drogheda, the time available to market the train, and the delay in agreeing some operational details between Transmark and Translink (doesn't it get confusing!) all persuaded us that something a little closer to home was a better idea.

And so, with the support of the Coleraine Chamber of Commerce, we are running "The Christmas Shopper" to Coleraine on Saturday 29th November 1997. We depart Belfast Central at 08.50 and reach our destination at 12.10. After turning and servicing the locomotive, and preparing the train, we will be running a "Santa Special" to Ballymoney, leaving Coleraine at 14.00 and arriving back at 15.00. Then at 16.20 we depart for Belfast, and get to Central at 19.10. Fares are £15 and £12, and £5.50 for the Santa train.

We hope members will understand that nothing less than a triumphant return to the Dublin main line will do.

"Santa Special" (Belfast): The dates will be Sundays 7th, 14th & 21st, and Saturday 20th December. As usual there will be a

train leaving Belfast at 11:30 and 14:30 on each date for a round trip to Whitehead of approximately one hour. We strongly recommend that you book early, as already there is a considerable level of interest.

Tickets for the Belfast based trains are available from Carrickfergus Tourist Information Centre, Heritage Plaza, Carrickfergus (in the Knight Ride!) - phone (01960) 366455 or fax (01960) 350350. They will take credit card bookings, but remember we have to charge 5% extra to cover bank fees. Alternatively, you can book by phoning or faxing the RPSI on (01960) 353567 (you'll probably get an answering machine), or by post from RPSI Tickets, c/o 22 Town Lane, Islandmagee, LARNE, Co Antrim, BT40 3SZ.

"Santa Special" (Dublin): Operating dates are Sundays 7th and 14th December. Interest has been very strong with some of the trains booked to over 50% capacity already. Tickets can be obtained from the usual outlets, and further information can be obtained from (01) 2880073.

For these trains to operate successfully and to give the public a quality product a greater involvement than normal is required from our members to man the train on the day. It is especially important that we have two suitable volunteers to take on the role of the man in the red suit for each train. The operations staff can only plead, as they have done in the past, for members to come forward with an offer of help. Please don't leave it to the other members - get in touch with the relevant Operations Officer now.

International Railtour: We are now taking advance bookings for next year's tour to Waterford and the South East - only those who return the booking form will receive the full details nearer to the event.

Following requests from participants to have more time at wayside stations, we have decided this year to run 100mph non-stop to Limerick Junction by a special IE train to allow us to delay longer over the more interesting sections of the

route.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: Boiler - being prepared for hydraulic testing.

Mechanical - Cleaning and painting of frames continues. Making of new piston rods is progressing. New friction pads are being fitted to side bearers of bogie and pony.

Bodywork - Repairs to bunker and tanks are on-going. Two sub-contractors, have been engaged for a period of approximately 6 months to work on the mechanical aspects of the Downpatrick locomotive contract but it is hoped that some of their experience can be turned to progressing the return to traffic of No.4.

No.85 "Merlin": Investigation and fitting of suitable speedometer continues. Our locomotives are reluctantly being dragged into the 1990s by the fitting of speedometers - previously such refinements were never a feature on Irish railways. There are practical difficulties in fitting a suitably robust instrument but it is hoped that this can be achieved without unreasonable cost.

Following refitting of the bogie wheels, axle weights have been checked and the driving springs renewed. The boiler inspection has been completed. It is planned to steam test the locomotive over the weekend of 8th/9th November and do a road test with a light train to Antrim on 16th November.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": Now back at Whitehead, it is hoped to re-tube the locomotive and have it available for the 1998 season.

No.186: At Inchicore since last year's Open Day, for which the locomotive and tender were painted by Iamród Éireann. Planned to return to Whitehead as soon as the Locomotive Workshop development releases space.

No.461: Re-tubing of the boiler and minor mechanical repairs are being undertaken in Dublin with a view to having the locomotive ready for the Christmas operations.

Orenstein & Koppel No.3: Work being undertaken under contract for the Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway. Dismantling of the locomotive is complete. Removal of corroded frame members, main crankpins and bearings is proceeding.

GENERAL

AGM: The date and exact venue have yet to be confirmed, but the meeting will be in Dublin and, as usual, will take place in late February or early March.

A Council nomination form is included with mailing, and it must be returned by the date stated. Please note the new structure as agreed at the 1997 AGM. Of special interest are the post of Business Development Officer and two posts of a general nature. It is hoped that these positions can be filled by members who will be able to contribute to the management abilities of the Council as a whole.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman can serve for a maximum of 5 years, if not deposed at a prior AGM election. Similarly, the General Officers can serve for a maximum of 3 years.

Any member wishing to make a proposal at the AGM should communicate it to the Secretary by 1st January to allow it to be included on the agenda in good time for the meeting.

IRRS Dublin: Our members in the Dublin area might be interested in the meetings of the Irish Railway Record Society. They are holding their meetings for the season on 27th November, 11th December, 8th & 22nd January, 12th & 26th February, and 12th March. The venue is the IRRS building adjacent to the car park at Dublin's Heuston Station.

MEMBERSHIP

1998: As usual we are giving you a chance to renew before Christmas. Please use the enclosed membership form. If paying in a currency other than British or Irish, please add the equivalent of £2 as this is the commission that our

bank charges to convert to Sterling.

Standing Orders: Please - this is very important! Would those members who pay by standing order kindly ensure that the payment due to be made on 1st February next is for the correct amount. If an amendment is required, fill in the details on the renewal form and send it to your bank or to the membership address. Thank you for the time taken to check your payment!

BELFAST MEETINGS

10th December: "Irish Narrow Gauge Today" - Richard Whitford reviews the current 2ft and 3ft gauge scene. "Narrow Gauge Magic" - George Haire recalls the Co. Donegal systems, past and present.

14th January: "Robert French's Travels" - Niall Torpey exhibits the work of the renowned photographer from the period 1890 - 1910.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

9: This coach has hardly been run in since its facelift of Christmas 1996 so it should prove a popular choice with Santa groupies.

91: Some rot was found in the toilet floor and the planks stretching across the whole width of the coach had to be replaced. The entire floor was treated with Cuprinol, and new lino laid in the corridor, lavatory and van. A new light switch was also fitted in the guard's van.

241: Corrosion was found in the bogie under the waste pipe! The affected part has been cut out, new metal welded and riveted in, and the bogie returned to its rightful place under the coach. The exercise will now have to be repeated at the other end.

243: The coach is undergoing restoration in the Carriage Shed. A new PVC roof covering has been purchased but remains to be secured to the roof. Three compartments have been stained and painted. Heating regulators and ceiling vents have been cleaned. The toilet cisterns have been stripped and cleaned.

The door locks are currently being stripped, cleaned and checked for safe operation. Luggage rack brackets are being sandblasted but it is a slow process due to the build-up of paint layers over the years - their original colour, unexpectedly, appears to have been dark green.

An extra worker or two (or even three) would be much appreciated in the effort to return this carriage to traffic.

Whitehead in General: Work is progressing on the overhaul of a set of slave bogies. When finished these will allow us to carry out substantial bogie repairs as required without having to take a carriage out of traffic.

Dublin Set: Following the filming at Castlereagh it was decided that, instead of returning the film coaches, 1335, 1916 & 2421, back to maroon, the cost of a repaint would be better spent on having the entire train turned out in the CIÉ green livery.

WHITEHEAD

Locomotive Workshop: The structure is now complete, including brickwork, cladding and roof. The Belfast & County Down Railway crane from Queen's Quay depot is in position. Dermot Mackie's track squad have completed the new turnout to the workshop, and hope to start laying the track into the building as soon as rails become available from NIR. Concrete sleepers will be used throughout.

See the second instalment of the Treasurer's Workshop saga for more details.

SALES

New Products: Included with this circular are a number of leaflets advertising new books. If possible could members purchase their copies through the Society as we will then benefit from each copy sold. Orders should be sent to the RPSI Collector's Shop address, given below.

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.

Copies of a special 1998 calendar will be available shortly before Christmas. The size is 14 x 20in. There are 7 sheets, the first of which gives brief details of the Dublin & Kingstown Railway, and the following 6, each valid for 2 months, are illustrated with coloured, engraved views of the line suitable for framing. Price is £3.50 inc.

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.

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

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

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

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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