

# NEWS LETTER

*February 1998*

## MOWLEM CONTRACT

**Contract:** Yes, it's official - the contractor for the relaying of NIR's Central Junction to Lisburn line has agreed to hire 6 rail wagons from the Society.

An approach was made by John Mowlem Construction before Christmas regarding the possibility of the Society providing wagons for the relaying contract. During the negotiations over the Christmas holidays and into the new year, it was agreed that the Society would, at the contractor's cost, overhaul the underframes from 6 redundant coaches and bring them up to the standard, as stipulated by NIR, to operate as rail flats. This will entail demolition of any remaining bodywork, provision of suitable decking, and fitting of a hand brake to each wagon. Four wagons are required by the start of March, with the other two to follow as soon as possible thereafter.

As the wagons are being overhauled at Mowlem's expense the monthly rental, for approximately 9 months, will not be substantial. Further contracts (Bleach Green - Antrim, and City Junction - Central Station) will, however, be subject to separate negotiations if the Society is approached again.

The underframes being converted are 227, 231, 1328, 1469, 1483 and 1915, all being chosen in preference to others because they are the required 60ft length. The eagle-eyed will have noticed that 1469 is included although supposedly sold to Cookstown Council. As no money has yet changed hands, nor any attempt been made to remove the vehicle, it was decided that Cookstown were no longer interested.

The new locomotive workshop has already been put to good use as 1328 was shunted in for fitting out and completion of the decking.

The others will similarly follow.

## AGM

**New Council:** As you will see from the accompanying notice, the AGM is to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> March in Dublin.

At the time of writing there have been no nominations from new faces for the incoming Council. However, there may be more nominations received after the date of printing, possibly in opposition to sitting members but also hopefully to fill the vacancies. Currently, there is a vacancy for the post of Dublin Area Operations Officer, and possibly for one of the General Officer posts. The only way to find out, or to help decide any contest, is to attend the meeting.

## OPERATIONS

**Film Contracts:** Autumn 1997 saw an unprecedented amount of film activity, with four projects under discussion at one time. One of the projects has been concluded, one is on-hold, while the other two are still under discussion.

As previously reported, the Society provided three coaches for filming at Castlerea on the Westport line in October. The film is a production of John McGahern's "Amongst Women".

Another film proposal was to involve 1916, 88, 1142 and TPO 2981. The project has been postponed, but may proceed in the spring. If that should happen, it will involve a run probably to Wicklow. In this context, the "territorial claim" of the Site Department to TPO 2981 - set out in the September News-Letter - is refuted by the Carriage Department!

**"Coleraine Shopper":** The return to the main line ran successfully on 29<sup>th</sup> November. The main train to Coleraine

was about half full and it was especially gratifying to see such a high percentage of members supporting the operation. The 'Santa' portion of the operation, from Coleraine to Ballymoney and return, carried over 200 passengers, and a good time was had by all. Our sincere thanks to the Kingsgate Newsagents in Coleraine for selling the vast majority of the tickets for the local trip. In fact, the total operation was sufficiently successful for our Operations Officer to be thinking in terms of something similar for next year.

**"Santa Special" (Belfast):** The 8 trains between them carried over 2,500 happy passengers over the 4 days of operation. A good time was had by all. Thanks to all those who helped out or bought a ticket.

**"Santa Special" (Dublin):** The trains from Dublin only operated on 2 days but 6 trains ran, all of them fully booked - surely a tremendous achievement for those who organised and operated the trips.

We must also thank Father Christmas, without whom none of the trains in Belfast or Dublin could have operated.

**"The Gaultier":** You may well ask where the name comes from - no doubt the local history books were minutely examined to find this one! However, you will have to travel on the railtour in May to find out. So don't forget to send in your advance booking forms.

## MEMBERSHIP

**Renewals:** Time now to renew your membership for 1998.

Our thanks to members who paid early and also to those who included a donation to the Locomotive Workshop Appeal.

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.

Overseas members, if paying in their local currency, are asked to include the equivalent of at least £3 extra to cover conversion charges.

As in previous years, 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.

**Credit Cards:** Payment by credit card is acceptable but we must insist that 5% is added to the total to allow for the commission we are charged.

**Covenant Renewal:** All members who recently received covenant renewal forms are asked to complete and return them as soon as possible.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.3 "R.H. Smyth":** Boiler inspection completed. May soon need new tubes.

**No.4:** The outcome of certification negotiations with NIR and our insurers is awaited before further significant mechanical work on the overhaul is carried out.

**No.85 "Merlin":** Boiler inspection complete. The digital speedometer operated successfully during the Christmas operations, although an analogue display is to be investigated.

**No.171 "Slieve Gullion":** New flue tubes are being prepared - the old ones will see further use on No.461. Work will continue over the next few months to have the boiler re-tubed.

**No.461:** After No.171's return north in October, Dublin reverted to a one loco operation for the first time since 1995. No.461 spent the time before Christmas being re-tubed in the Lifting Shop in Inchicore. Following a successful Christmas season, the locomotive was returned to the ramps in Inchicore for work to the tender springs. The side rods have been removed and the bearings examined.

**Contracts:** Work continues on the Orenstein & Koppel locomotive from Downpatrick. The Mowlem contract will also keep the Locomotive Department busy for the next few months.

## BELFAST MEETINGS

**11<sup>th</sup> February:** "Local Railways On The Small Screen" - Andy Crockart delves into UTV's video archives for vintage footage.

**11<sup>th</sup> March:** "Enterprise Golden Jubilee" and Ireland's Railways Today" - Michael McMahon explores scenes from past and present.

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Thank You:** As most members already know, on-going maintenance work on our carriages is carried out in Heuston yard throughout the year. The objective of the work carried out there is to: (1) maintain the Dublin-based set of carriages in a state of readiness for the next operation, and (2) upgrade the overall standard of the carriages.

In 1997 a total of 14 members attended at Heuston and clocked up approximately 1,200 hours of work. It is quite possible that this figure should be greater as sometimes names are not entered in the attendance book (tut! tut!). There have been some very welcome new faces and their contribution is very much welcomed. A big THANK YOU to all concerned. A couple of regulars of previous years have not been able to attend as often in 1997 - in particular some of our junior helpers have been unable to be present due to studies and examination commitments, but we look forward to their return when all the swotting is over!

There is plenty of need for even more helpers. If any of our members in the greater Dublin area would like to help, your assistance would be most welcome. A commitment to make even one working visit between now and the summer operating season would be very helpful. Working days are normally Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. If you feel the need to help, se contact Brian Gillen (01 298 6278), Peter Rigney (01 492 9452) or David Humphries (01 288 8900).

**IÉ Cravens:** Anyone working on locomotive No.461 in Inchicore (or previously coach 1416) cannot have failed to notice the Cravens upgrade programme underway in the same shop. The programme includes a full running gear overhaul, new steam heat system, and full rewiring. This bodes ill for the RPSI, as it is highly unlikely that these coaches will come on the market in the near future.

**Liveries (1):** In respect of the item in the previous News-Letter regarding the painting of 1335, 1916 and 2421 in CIÉ green for a film contract, it can now be reported that 1916 held that livery for little more than a week, when it returned to maroon for another film. The work was undertaken in the Engineer's Platform in Pearse station.

**Liveries (2):** Two Bus Átha Cliath (Dublin Bus) vehicles, one single decker Alexander and a double deck Alexander, have been painted in blue and cream at Donnybrook garage. Hopefully this experiment with the GNR colours will catch on.

**Irish State Coach:** Work proceeds on 351 in Cabra under foreman George Dempsey. Exterior work is nearing completion, and painting will start shortly. Two GSR bogies, formerly under training coach 586A (the body of which has been sold to the Cavan & Leitrim Railway as a tea room), have been set aside for possible use under 351.

The coach will be returning to Inchicore in the near future for painting and the fitting of gangways and running gear.

Unfortunately, the project was not successful in the final round of the AIB Better Dublin Awards - the winner was a brewery! The ceremony, held on 12<sup>th</sup> January did, however, gain us some publicity as it featured as an item on RTÉ's Nationwide programme. Nevertheless, congratulations to all concerned in getting the project as far as it did in the Awards - we did after all win a total of £5,000 in the two previous rounds.

**TPO:** Work is advancing in Inchicore on restoration of TPO 2977. This is being funded by An Post and, when completed, the Society may have a say in its on-going conservation. If anyone knows of the whereabouts of a TPO net apparatus would they please get in touch?

**Dublin Set:** Maintenance work continues on the running set in Heuston, with effort concentrating on an interior refit for Park Royal 1416. Half of the work was completed for the Christmas operations, with the remainder to be done in the spring.

## WHITEHEAD

**Locomotive Workshop:** The new turnout into the workshop was completed just

before the Santa operations started. Over the Christmas holiday period track was laid up to the main door and in early January 30m of track with concrete sleepers was laid inside the shed. The rails for the last 20m were carried in by the hand crane, propelled over the new turnout by No.23.

It is planned to hang refurbished doors by late January and to install a concrete floor area for the heavy machinery in early February.

**Happy Birthday:** The mechanical digger spotters among the members might be interested to know that the Society's JCB is now a vintage vehicle in its own right, and if you were at Whitehead on 24<sup>th</sup> January you will have been invited to celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. The occasion would not have been complete without the cake, and we hope the JCB didn't indulge too much. How it blew the candles out, however, is a complete mystery!!

**Turntable:** The project to install a turntable at Whitehead is currently under review in the hope that work can start later this year in time to benefit from the ERDF grant.

## GENERAL

**Strategy Sub-Committee:** As reported in the September News-Letter, the Council has set up a committee to consider how best to tackle the probable obstacles that lie ahead of us, and what policies we should adopt to ensure our survival in the new millennium.

The Committee has now started its deliberations in earnest and would appreciate the views of all the members. For the present, please write to the Editorial Address if you would like to have your say. Remember, there are no restrictions on what may be submitted.

## SALES

**New Products:** Orders should be sent to the RPSI Collector's Shop address, given below.

Railway Clearing House 1927 maps of Ireland are now available, folded in cover, priced £3.90.

Copies of a special 1998 calendar are available. 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.

Another new item is the third in the "Irish Railways in Pictures" series from the IRRS, "The Cork Lines", £4.50.

**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.

We have a limited number of "NCC 1848-1948, Centenary of the Belfast - Ballymena Railway". Published in 1948, there are 72 pages, including illustrations, £12.

First come, first served - one copy of "Railway Clearing House Handbook of Stations", 715 pages, good condition, £52.

**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. Unfortunately, for the time being, we must ask that you please add 10% when ordering in punts.

**Main Lines:** A selection 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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