

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

NEWS LETTER

March 1998

OBITUARIES

Sir Myles Humphreys: It is with regret that we have to report the death, on 21st February, of Sir Myles (72), who had been Vice-President of the Society since 1994.

Sir Myles, who is survived by his wife Sheila and his sons Ian and Mark, was always an enthusiastic supporter and valued friend of the Society. As chairman of Northern Ireland Railways from 1967 to 1988, and chairman of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company from 1988 to 1993, he was an important ally for the RPSI. Sir Myles and Lady Sheila were guests at many of the Society's landmark events in recent years, as well as being participants in several special train outings.

Council members were among the mourners at a service of thanksgiving for the life of Sir Myles which was held at St. Anne's Cathedral in Belfast on 25th February. Many serving and former employees of NIR were also present.

As a tribute, the funeral cortege paused as it approached the railway bridge en route to Roselawn cemetery. There, positioned on the bridge was the DEMU "Sir Myles Humphreys" which sounded its horn 3 times in a final farewell. It was a most fitting gesture, the suggestion for which came from NIR staff themselves.

As one of those paying tribute to Sir Myles at the service in St. Anne's remarked, we will not see his like again.

Geoffrey Wigham: Another recent death was that of our oldest member in early February. Geoffrey (94) was well known in railway circles for most of this century, and many members will have known him as he was a regular

participant and timer on the Society's annual railtours up until 1996.

Also Remembered: We must also record the recent loss of other long term members, Bob Collins (Belfast), Robin Convery (Essex) and Neil Pitts (West Midlands). To all the families and friends of those deceased, we offer our sincere condolences.

AGM

Meeting: This year's meeting was held in Dublin, and a large number (82) of members turned up for the occasion. Our thanks to Dr Garret FitzGerald who took the chair, and to the Irish Railway Record Society who hosted the meeting.

So Long: Outgoing Council members this year were: Sullivan Boomer, Chairman since 1984, David Houston and Dermot Mackie. To one and all a sincere "Thank You" for all the effort expended on Council business over the years.

Welcome: New Council members are John Creaner and Evan Pamely, with Norman Foster and Joe Fitzpatrick returning to the fold.

OPERATIONS

No. 1: Our first operation of the year is the now traditional (??) outing to Mullingar on Good Friday. The train departs Connolly at 14:25, and tickets demand for tickets is likely to be very high.

"Easter Bunny": Continuing our traditional Easter theme, our Easter Monday operations to Whitehead from Central set out at 11:20 and 14:20 - bunny and Easter eggs on board!

"Gall Tír": Our annual railtour is booking well, so anyone wishing to travel to Waterford should get their advance booking form into the Railtour Office or phone 01960 353567.

"Shannon Crystal": Not a Society operation - at least not this Society anyway - but an invitation from our friends in the Modern Railway Society of Ireland to travel on their "Shannon Crystal" railtour on 13th June. There are no RPSI operations that day so a dispensation is granted and members can participate with a clear conscience.

The MRSI train departs Belfast Central at 06:25, picking up at Lisburn (06:45), Lurgan (07:00), Portadown (07:10), Drogheda (08:30) and Connolly (09:30). The itinerary is: Belfast - Dublin - Portlinton - Athlone - Ennis - Limerick - Waterford - Lavistown Loop - Dublin - Belfast. Motive power will be NIR GM 113 hauling NIR Mkt coaches.

Anyone who has ever travelled on an MRSI train will tell you that they come highly recommended. Full details and booking forms are available from MRSI Tours, 54 Princes Drive, Whiteabbey, Co. Antrim, BT37 OAZ.

Booking Forms: Enclosed with this mailshot should be the booking forms for the season's trains from both the Operating Committees. Extra copies can be obtained from either of the Railtour Offices - phone (01960) 353567 from the UK or (01) 2880073 from Éire.

LOCOMOTIVES

No. 171 "Slieve Gullion": Boiler work is continuing. All tubes have been removed, new flue tube ends have been prepared, and tube holes have been true'd up. It is hoped to have the locomotive back in traffic in time for Easter.

No. 461: Repairs to bushes and pins on coupling rods were carried out at Whitehead, necessitating two return trips to Dublin with a trailer to transport the coupling rods. Repairs to tender springs have been completed - the

tender will now need to be weighed. Future work will include renewal of volute springs and the fitting of an ashpan screen.

Orenstein & Koppel: Work continues apace on the contract for mechanical overhaul of the Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway Company's locomotive No.3.

Mowlem Contract: Four of the new track panel wagons have been delivered. R1 (1328), R2 (1469), R3 (1483) and R4 (1915) were complete by late February and are already in traffic with the relay squad. R5 (231) is complete, and work on the final vehicle, R6 (227), is under way.

All vehicles are fitted with hand brakes and wooden decking. They have been certified to 15 tonnes, and each is inspected by NIR before release for traffic.

GENERAL

"Shaping Our Future": This is the title of a discussion document published by The Department Of The Environment (NI). It outlines possible future developments in Northern Ireland, with transportation issues forming a major element.

Submissions from the public are welcomed and if any member wishes to put the case for rail transport in the province, they should write to:

The Director
Regional Planning Division
D.O.E. (N.I.)
Windsor House
9-15 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7LT

"New Irish Lines": That is the title of a news-letter being produced by the Irish Railway Modelling Circle, a group of about 50 modellers interested in Irish prototypes, who have come together to share information on their hobby.

The group's aim is to include historical and contemporary modellers, broad and narrow gauge, fine scale engineers and adapters of proprietary equipment. For

membership details, or to contribute a suitable article to the news-letter, contact Patrick O'Sullivan, 49 Clarence Road, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN16 8PF.

MEMBERSHIP

Renewals: Thanks to all those members who responded so promptly to the recent subscription renewal request. There were a gratifying number of donations included with subscriptions and, unless indicated otherwise, these will be used to help fund the fitting out of the locomotive workshop.

Apologies: A number of members who paid by standing order did not receive their membership cards until after the AGM. This was due to a bank statement being temporarily mislaid.

BELFAST MEETINGS

All Over: Another season finished, and our thanks must go to Charles Friel for organising the meetings single-handedly. At the end of the final meeting Charles received a thunderous ovation from those present - that says it all!

As always, Charles is looking for new faces, or old faces with new ideas, for the meetings. So if you know of a likely candidate, or indeed yourself, please contact Charles by early summer.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Dublin Set: The usual 8 coaches: 88, 1335, 1916, 2423, 1383, 1416, 2421 & 1142 remain in traffic.

1416 is the vehicle which received most of the attention during the past year, receiving a new aluminium roof, end, and side panels.

Craven 1549 has been returned to Iarnród Éireann as the cost in money and manpower to return it to traffic would not be recovered before more serviceable units became available.

The set is has become very dependent on the generator - as well as charging

batteries, the tea/coffee system, cooler and microwave all derive their power from it. The thought of the consequences of a failure during an operation is driving the current investigation into providing a reserve system.

DATES

Dargan Legacy Conference: If this News-Letter is published before the event, members are invited to attend a conference, run by Bray Heritage Centre, to be held in the Royal Hotel, Bray, Co. Wicklow on 24th & 25th March. Booking details can be obtained by phoning (01) 286 7128, (01) 286 4000, or E-mail braytour@indigo.ie.

B&BR: As you may know, Saturday 11th April 1998 is the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Belfast & Ballymena Railway in 1848. Ballymena Borough Council, in association with the Mid-Antrim Historical Group, will be marking the anniversary by unveiling a plaque at the old railway station at the Railway Yard, Railway Street, Ballymena. The unveiling will be preceded by a reception and historical talk in Ballymena Town Hall, commencing at 10am on the same date. All members are invited to attend.

WHITEHEAD

Site Environment: Anybody who has visited the Society at Whitehead will be aware that landscaping is not high on the agenda. Obviously, it is in the nature of the beast that there will be a lot of mess around but that is not to say that improvements cannot be made. The Workshop Committee which oversees the engineering aspects of Whitehead are keen that action should be taken to make the site more attractive.

Some suggestions are: improved drainage on the access road, a pond and wetland area at the rear of the sheds, planting the bank between the site and the NIR Larne line, and much more.

We have appealed in the past for volunteers to help with engineering tasks. Now is the chance for those members who feel they cannot contribute in that way to help in a different manner, i.e. gardening and landscaping. We have identified a possible source of grants for such schemes and we are looking for a self-contained team to take on the project. The Natural Pioneers Millennium Awards are seeking to help groups who have *"an exciting idea for improving your local environment, but don't know how to get it off the ground. Whether it's wastelands to wildlife reserves, recycling schemes, pollution control or beautiful beaches - whatever your dream, we could help to make it happen."*

Any member interested can send for an application pack from:

Natural Pioneers Millennium Awards
Unit BTCV
36 St. Mary's Street
Wallingford
Oxfordshire
OX10 0EU

Alternatively, ring Mark Kennedy on (01247) 275674.

We would be keen to get the scheme up and running by the summer, so if you would like to help the Society in a way that is different from the usual, and contribute to improving the environment, we would like to hear from you as soon as possible.

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.

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

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