

NEWS LETTER

June 1998



This year's International Railtour was named after an area of Co. Waterford known as the "Land of the Strangers", or "Gall Tir" in the Irish. The tour was a great success, and it is only regretted that a number of regular parties did not travel - they missed a great tour.

The plan for this year was to have a more leisurely tour, and to that end more photo opportunities and longer stops were included. The lineside buses especially attracted favourable comment. The initial run to Limerick Junction by diesel allowed us to visit Kilkenny. Also, the fine weather, particularly on the Saturday, helped a great deal and, overall, we think we got it right for most passengers.

Undoubtedly the chasers also had a very good tour and hopefully they helped defray the cost of running the tour.

On the ground there was an excellent atmosphere of co-operation between railway company and Society personnel, and between the operating teams north and south, the catering staff in particular. The Friday and Tuesday fringe tours ran very successfully and continue to be very attractive events for those who wish to have an extended weekend.

OPERATIONS

"Steam To Mullingar": On the Saturday before Easter, No.461 went to Kildare and back on a trial run to test weights following a visit to North Wall for spring balancing on the previous Saturday. The locomotive developed a hot box on the middle tender axle and, despite Herculean efforts by Inchicore foundry and machine shop, and by Cookson's of Navan, the locomotive was not available for the Good Friday trip.

Instead, an 071 diesel hauled the set, complete with BR heating van. Despite the last minute change in motive power not many passengers were deterred.

"Easter Bunny": Two full trains were operated to the evident delight of all the chocolate-covered faces on board.

Railtour Positioning: The non-availability of No.461 for Easter turned out to be fortuitous, as the right leading box on the locomotive was found to have run hot also. The precise cause of this heat has yet to be established.

Again, Inchicore came to the rescue and the locomotive was lifted, the opportunity was also taken to roll out the trailing wheelset and check journals and bearings. The box was re-metalled using a specification supplied by IE's chief chemist, and was fitted on the Monday preceding the tour. Wednesday saw a trial run to Sallins after which all was declared to be in order. It was only due to the generous help of those IE personnel at Inchicore that we were able to operate No.461 on the tour, and our thanks go to them.

On the Thursday both locomotives headed south, with No.171 hauling the train to Limerick Junction, and No.461 proceeding light engine to Waterford. A little bit of history was made on this trip - the first on which a female IE guard was rostered.

On arrival at the Junction, the train was turned on the triangle and stabled behind the South Cabin. (Readers can examine track plans and atlases to establish just how, having traversed the triangles at Limerick Junction and Lavistown, the train was turned on arrival back in Dublin.)

Whilst at the Junction, prior to the tour on Saturday morning, a few dedicated members took the opportunity to clean No.171, and anybody who travelled will not have failed to be impressed by the shine on the locomotive throughout the weekend.

"Royal Canal": Two trains operated from Connolly on 24th May. No.461 hauled eight coaches to Enfield and back. Patronage was good, with 260 on the first trip, and about 360 on the second trip. Arrival back in Connolly was on time - important on this occasion, as there were three GAA specials due out in the 30 minutes after our scheduled arrival.

The Maynooth - Enfield leg of the journey is a separate trip, marketed by the Royal Canal amenity group.

"Midsummer Steam" (1): Our first summer train starts from Belfast Central at 19:35 on Friday 19th June for a round trip to Larne Harbour with a break at Whitehead for a barbecue, complete with live country band and line dancing. This is a new departure for the Society so we would ask for the full support of members and any friends who are country fans.

"Midsummer Steam" (2): On Saturday 20th June we make the now traditional outing to Mullingar for our very successful barbecue night. Tickets are always in short supply so book now.

Train Rides: Our summer Sunday afternoon train rides commence on 14th June. Please call if you are passing or, indeed, why not make an afternoon of it as a guide to show members of the general public round the site?

"Strawberry Fair": Our first trip on the Rosslare line this year (railtour excepted) is on 4th July to Enniscorthy.

"Portrush Flyer": The first trip of the year is planned for 18th July, with others on 1st, 15th & 29th August. Due to single line working on the Lisburn line in connection

with track relaying, there may be some disruption to dates and/or times, so intending passengers are asked to check with the Railtour Office nearer the time.

"1798 Bicentennial": Commemorations for the events of 1798 are taking place all year around the country, and the Society is doing its bit with a trip to Wexford on 25th July.

Whitehead Open Day: It is intended to open Whitehead to members and to the general public on Saturday 8th August. The event will be run in connection with the annual festival organised by the Whitehead Community Association. Members from outside the Greater Belfast area are especially invited to attend.

DAOC Address: Following the changes in officers at the AGM, the address for all enquiries regarding Dublin-based operations is now: RPSI Railtours, PO Box 6238, Whitehall, Dublin 9. Phone and fax on (01) 8374533.

BAOC Tickets: Tickets for Belfast-based operations may be purchased from the Railtour Office, the First National Building Society, 1 Chichester Street, Belfast (corner of Donegall Square South), or from the Tourist Office In Carrickfergus.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: Work has resumed following some clarification regarding inspection and certification procedures. Boiler undergoing hydraulic test preparations. Bunker and tank repairs continue. Also, new piston rods and piston heads. Boring cylinders and valves. Checking and overhaul of axleboxes.

No.85 "Merlin": In traffic, at Whitehead.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": Re-tubing of the boiler was completed prior to the railtour in which the locomotive operated very successfully.

No.461: Prior to Easter the locomotive had to come out of traffic as hot boxes were being experienced on both locomotive and tender. The locomotive, which has been the mainstay of the southern operations for several years, is showing its age and needs certain repairs. Work on the

bearings was carried out prior to the railtour, but a full set of springs is now required. This will be expensive - up to £3,000 is estimated, and an appeal for funds may be made in the near future.

Orenstein & Koppel Contract: Riveting of deck plates and assembly of new tanks under way. Assembling pistons and valves and fitting bearings.

Mowlem Contract: R1, R4, R5 and R6 are in traffic at the relay. In an additional contract, R2 and R3 have returned to Whitehead for further work to up-rate the frames and springs to carry a load increased from that originally contracted.

Contracts: Approaches have been made to the Society to carry out more locomotive restoration work for other preservation societies, namely West Clare, Donegal and Giant's Causeway. No firm proposals have been received, nor decisions taken as to whether any more work of this nature will be taken on.

GENERAL

Help Wanted: A request has been received for information on GNR diesel railcars A & B for publishing in a booklet. All information, especially photographs, would be gratefully received. Please contact:

Bob Brown
5 Wyncroft Heights
Banbridge
Co. Down
BT32 3QA

All costs and postage will be fully refunded.

More Irish Steam: Exciting news from a new sister organisation - it has just been announced that the newly-formed Giant's Causeway & Bushmills Railway has recently bought up the Shane's Castle Railway with a view to establishing a line on the north coast.

It is the intention to reopen the section of the line of the former Giant's Causeway Tramway between Bushmills and the Causeway.

A press release states that locomotives, No.1 "Tyrone", No.3 "Shane" and the

Simplex diesel have been purchased, together with 12 passenger coaches, a number of wagons and two miles of track.

Grant: We are pleased to acknowledge a generous donation from the Carrickfergus Literary and Scientific Society Trust Fund, to help towards the installation of the electrics in the locomotive workshop. The Fund has helped the Society in the past and its interest is appreciated.

"Amongst Women": By the time you read this RTE will have already started to broadcast the 4 part drama in which three of our carriages feature. UK viewers can see it starting on 13th June on BBC 2.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Coach Project: As part of the current ERDF funding, we have to submit a project for restoration. The Carriage & Wagon Depart is currently drawing up proposals for a suitable coach to receive the funding.

Diner 87: The main water tanks were replaced before Easter and, due to the severe shortage of C&W volunteers at Whitehead, it was touch and go whether the coach would be back in traffic for the "Easter Bunny" trains. Happily, all went according to plan.

Bogies: Plans are in hand for removing bogies from the whole northern set (not all at once) for spring re-tempering. It only remains for the funding to be put in place for this exercise to be commenced. The first job will be to restore a spare set of NCC bogies to allow the bogies of the running set to be rotated out without the vehicles having to come out of traffic.

Southern Set: Funds have been set aside to be spent on turning the wheels of the running set. Similarly, money has been made available to paint the set.

Liveries: The first episode of "Amongst Women" contained a fine shot of A39, in silver, hauling 2421, 1335 and 1916. 1916 reverted to red for another film that did not take place but, in conjunction with the filming of a documentary on TPO 2981, was repainted to green in Connolly valeting plant on the Monday and Tuesday following the railtour. The coach has now had four liveries in less than twelve

months!

On the subject of paint, mention must be made of the arduous task of underframe painting, currently undertaken single-handedly by member Frank Dempsey.

1335: The Bredin coach now has its lights controlled by a photocell, thus completing this particular programme.

1416: This Park Royal coach has had its internal refurbishment completed in time for the railtour, and has had tables fitted.

1463: It is hoped that this coach will be able to move from Mullingar to Dublin in the near future to strengthen the set there and permit coaches to be released for heavier repair than being in the running set allows.

WHITEHEAD

Site Round-Up: The site team has finished laying the track at the Larne end of the new workshop, complete with concrete sleepers. The work had been delayed to allow the con-tractor to gain access to the rear of the building to dig out and pour the new concrete base for the heavy machine area.

The back of the site is now virtually unrecognisable without most of the scrap which came from the dismantling of burnt out vehicles and the life-expired laminate coaches. Three large containers were filled with scrap iron and converted into money. The aluminium was kept separate and it alone generated almost £300.

The site has also been given its annual weed spray.

A new updated alarm system is being installed in the loco running sheds to include the workshop. It will be operated from a touch pad control, eliminating the need for keys, and allowing a change of entry codes to be made on a regular basis.

Summer Season: Now that the rear area of the site has been cleared the team is in the position of being able to realign the carriage sidings and this will be the Wednesday evening project for the months from May to August.

SALES

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

We have a copy of the 1925 edition of the "Railway Clearing House Handbook of Stations", 715 pages, good condition, £52.

Now available are: "Irish Railways in Pictures, The Cork Lines", £4.50; "Castlederg & Victoria Bridge Tramway", 96 pages with black & white photographs, £10.60; "Fermanagh Railways, A Pictorial Tribute", 144 pages with black and white photographs, £12.90; "Londonderry & Lough Swilly Railway Visitors Guide", £6.50.

Send details of your requirements to:

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

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

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.

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

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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

IRISH STATE COACH



The Heritage Council, the body charged with disbursing, among other things, lottery money for heritage projects in the Republic of Ireland, have awarded the Society 'up to £110,000' towards refurbishment costs of 351. The spend has to be completed by November 1998.

Peter Rigney and David Humphries attended the award ceremony in Kilkenny on 27th April. The award was presented by minister of State Eamon Ó Cuív TD who, incidentally, is the grand-nephew of the late President De Valera who regularly travelled in 351.

This latest award, together with that from the AIB last year, will go a long way towards the Society's cost of completing

the restoration of this most historic vehicle and is much appreciated.

The Waterford Crystal company have generously agreed to sponsor all light fittings for 351 - the originals were all Waterford glass. In addition, the company will also be providing the toughened glass for the windows. Again, our sincere thanks must be given for the help received in materials for this coach.

Progress on the restoration of the coach is proceeding at an excellent rate. The exterior bodywork has been completed. Work is continuing on the plumbing, and on the painstaking task of interior reconstruction.

The vehicle will shortly move to Inchicore.