

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

NEWS LETTER

August 1998

NIR OPERATIONS

Latest Position: Discussions between NIR and the Society are nearing a conclusion and will provide a sound basis for the way forward.

However, it may be some time before we regain the ground lost in the past two years. Apart from the loss of income and the inevitable drop in our public profile, most worrying is the current dearth of volunteers in the Carriage & Wagon Department at Whitehead.

Currently, paid contractors are carrying out even simple maintenance. If this situation is to continue then the Society will have to generate even more revenue, especially as a major programme of bogie overhaul has now commenced.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": Operating Sunday train rides and shunting duties.

No.4: The boiler has passed its hydraulic test and is being prepared for steam testing. The mechanical overhaul is due to resume shortly.

No.85 "Merlin": In traffic.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": In traffic and operating Belfast based trains.

No.461: Undergoing minor repairs and operating Dublin based trains. The locomotive continues to perform well. Observant photographers may have noticed blue strips on the axle ends. These are disposable temperature strips, and are applied in order to monitor the heat of axle and big end bearings.

Orenstein & Koppel: Overhaul and renewal of frame sections, bearings and

other working parts nearly complete. Side tanks progressing. Awaiting delivery of boiler before further reassembly can commence.

OPERATIONS

Whitehead Train Rides: After a slow start in July due to the poor climate (both environmental and political), the Sunday Afternoon Train Rides at Whitehead have taken off well with around 100 passengers on a good day. It's a great opportunity to enjoy steam up close and to take a few good photographs without dozens of people walking between you and the engine.

Dublin: Operations run since the last News-Letter have been the "Mid-Summer Night Steam" barbecue special to Mullingar, the "Strawberry Fair" to Enniscorthy and the "1798 Bi-Centennial" to Wexford. All ran successfully and were filled to almost capacity. The next scheduled trip is the "Sea Breeze" on 5th September.

Portrush Flyer: Unfortunately, the annual political upheaval in the province meant that the first scheduled operation on 18th July had to be cancelled due to severe lack of interest. Most other summer events were similarly affected, and it would seem that people now either go on holidays or do not cross their own doorsteps during this period.

The second train was also slow to book, but it did run and, despite a serious delay due to pathing difficulties on the outward journey, it otherwise operated successfully. This train was the first to operate under the new agreement with NIR arising from the consultant's report of last year. The teething problems experienced were investigated but were

ironed out for the following operation which ran without trouble.

"Atlantic Coast Express": Following an ultimately satisfactory Portrush season and a slight re-draft of the original schedule, an acceptable path was arranged for the Derry operation, and it will be running on 12th September.

Autumn Operations: We are in the final stages of agreeing a charter of No.171 to haul the Irish Traction Group's train over two sections of their operation on 3rd October. The itinerary is to be Larne Harbour to Belfast Central, with a visit to the RPSI site at Whitehead, and Bangor to Great Victoria Street.

Consideration is also being given to running operations on 31st October and/or 1st November to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the initial section of the Belfast to Bangor line.

Film Work: Because of the demands of the GAA calendar on normal services, we do not now normally operate out of Dublin in August. However, three days' film work will take place late in the month, involving No.461 and 4 coaches. Brake 1916 and laminate 1463 were taken to Pearse and repainted over a weekend in July. In the case of 1916, this means that the coach is in its fourth livery in less than a year!

WINTER MEETINGS

Autumn Again: Details are included of the new programme of winter meetings, to be held on the second Wednesday of each month from October to March. As usual, there will be a sales stall from which you can pick up your copy of the latest book and video releases, a number of which are recently issued or expected soon.

Members are asked to give their support, both by attending and by publicising the meetings.

GENERAL

"SCHEMTRAIN": We have been approached by a friend of a member to see if there is any interest in this

computer program.

The program is being developed to enable the user to specify a rail network and a timetable, and then sit back and watch a graphical simulation of the train movements concerned.

As a first step, a simulation of the NIR weekday timetable in force from September 1997 to March 1998 has been produced. To gauge the level of possible interest in such a product the programmer would be pleased to send a free copy of the demo disk to any member who would like to write to him:

John McGuigan
24 Delafield Close
Fearnhead
Warrington
WA2 0AJ

The demo disk shows a 'picture' of a day's train movements throughout the system. The program is not recommended for a PC with a clock speed lower than 25 MHz.

The full program, which will have map and timetable editing facilities, is due for completion within two to three months.

WHITEHEAD

Locomotive Workshop: Doors and alarms have been fitted and some machines and locomotive parts have been moved inside for storage. A concrete floor has been installed at one end of the building for machine tools. The fitting of electric lights will commence when the service ducts are provided. The blast cleaning equipment has been installed.

The overhead crane belt drive bearings are being overhauled prior to lifting into place - it will require a mobile crane to fit this and the other machinery associated with the overheads. When the crane is on site, it will also lift the long travel rails and other heavy machines such as the power hammer and wheel press.

Late in June the concrete sills at the doors of the locomotive workshop were poured using our own cement mixer. In July the new turnout to the workshop was

ballasted with 40 tonnes of stone and is now passed for traffic.

A pit for the deep foundations required for the power hammer have been dug at the Belfast end of the workshop.

Around The Site: Unfortunately, the first Wednesday evening session had to be cancelled because of a downpour, but since then a small gang of stalwarts has managed, with jacks and the JCB, to move and realign the carriage sidings.

A final clean up on the scrap front, on Saturdays, filled two skips with iron and a trailer with aluminium, which together netted a very useful £250.

The "summer" weather, while not much good for holiday-makers, has been ideal for weeds and the site has been given a second spraying of weedkiller.

Future work includes the dismantling of the old wheel lathe house, now inside the locomotive workshop, and the provision of service ducting to the workshop and the carriage shed.

Site Help: Whitehead Scout Group has expressed an interest in helping out at the site. This would be a part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. It is not yet clear what the scouts might be able to safely tackle in a few weekends, but the Society is keen to encourage anything mutually beneficial with the local community groups.

Brick Certificates: The Treasurer reports that several members have mentioned that they have not yet received certificates for donations made to the Locomotive Workshop Appeal. The last of these were posted before Christmas, so presumably any missing must have got mislaid in the post. If you have yet to receive a certificate, please contact the Treasurer at:

9 Kenilworth Avenue
Lisburn
Co. Antrim
BT28 3UG

SALES

New Products: Video "From Baltimore to

Belfast", colour and b&w GSR and GNR steam from the 1950s, £17.70.

Also available are: Railway Clearing House 1927 maps of Ireland are now available, folded in colour, priced £3.90; "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 (this is being reprinted and will be supplied against orders when available). 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 Drumnacanvy Road
Portadown
Co. Armagh
BT63 5LX

The principal lines are: locomotive outline badges, videos, postcards, posters, pencils, rulers, etc. All prices are in sterling and include postage. Unfortunately, for the time being, we must ask that you please add 10% when ordering in punts.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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