

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

NEWS LETTER

November 1998

VICE-PRESIDENT

New Vice-President: It is with great delight that we can announce the appointment of the Society's new Vice-President, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield.

Educated in Belfast and Oxford, Sir Kenneth's first appointment was in the civil service in 1952 at the Ministry of Finance. His posts have included service to three successive Stormont Finance Ministers, and in 1960 he was posted to New York as the senior Ministry of Commerce representative in North America.

After the introduction of direct rule from Westminster in 1972, Sir Kenneth was an under-secretary in the central secretariat of the Northern Ireland Office. Positions in the DoE and the Department of Economic Development followed, before being appointed head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service in 1984.

Sir Kenneth served in this position until 1991 and in that role he lent a considerable amount of weight to the case for funding the Rail Gallery at Cultra.

As part of the 'peace process', Sir Kenneth was appointed Victims Commissioner in 1997. He is responsible for highlighting the plight of the victims of the troubles, and addressing their concerns.

He is currently the BBC's national governor for Northern Ireland and chairman of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council.

He was knighted in 1987, and received an honorary doctorate from Queen's University in 1991 for services to public administration.

OPERATIONS

Northern Operations: The summer of 1998 has been marked by a substantial return of our usual operations to the metals of NIR, but it hasn't been the easiest or most predictable.

"Midsummer Steam": The operation was planned around a Country & Western evening, but it drew no real support and had to be cancelled - it seems jazz attracts more passengers.

"Portrush Flyer": The season was most unpredictable. After the infamous incidents early in the month, the latter half of July was the quietest ever, with virtually no 'tourist' events happening anywhere. The July operation was cancelled as only a handful of bookings had been received. (Ulsterbus cancelled most of its coach tours for the same period!)

The August trains were quite well supported, although scheduling difficulties prevented the "Castlerock Excursion" trains from operating.

"Sea Breeze": The 6th September operation was marketed as an Arklow - Wexford trip. Moderately loaded from Dublin, the train filled to capacity out of Arklow. Many thanks to our friends in Arklow for their help.

"Atlantic Coast Express": Interest from 'across the water' was high as usual, and numbers were better than we had expected. A year of no mainline running had put significant stress on our marketing, and with the political uncertainties earlier in the summer, both the Society and the railway company had to do a fair amount of 'flying by the seat of our pants'. Hopefully next year will be

easier.

"Mullingar 150": This year marks the 150th anniversary of the opening of the MGWR. A local committee intent on maximising the heritage potential of Mullingar's railway connections has been in existence for over a year, and they contracted with the Society to run 2 return trains from Mullingar to Killucan. The trains ran on Saturday 3rd October. The positioning runs from Dublin were marketed and were moderately well filled.

On arrival, the train was met by Mary O'Rourke, the local TD and Minister for Public Enterprise, and by a number of other dignitaries, including Joe Meagher, managing director of Iarnród Éireann. The 2 trains were filled to capacity and all those involved in organising pronounced themselves well satisfied with the event.

The outward leg from Dublin was with 9 coaches. TPO 2979 contained a shop and exhibition, and 1383 was worked empty to Mullingar for repairs. This coach was shunted to the Society's shed by an IE 141 locomotive, and work on it has since commenced.

ITG Charter: It had been agreed that No.171 would operate the Larne and Bangor legs of the Irish Transport Group's railtour on 3rd October. As luck would have it, a number of days before the event, a landslide occurred at the notorious location near the White Harbour between Carrickfergus and Whitehead, and the line was closed for a number of weeks as repairs were made to track and cliff face.

"Coleraine Shopper": On 28th November there will be a repeat of last year's trip to Coleraine, with a Santa operation to Ballymoney.

"Santa Special": The Christmas operations will be running from Belfast and Dublin on the advertised dates. These operations are extremely manpower intensive and additional help is always required. Now is not the time to say that some other member can do it. The fact is that the other member probably won't do it!

Filming (1): In August a week of filming

was scheduled on 2 projects. Firstly, No.461 and 4 carriages (1463, 88, 1142, 1916) went to Malahide for a day's work on a film entitled "Her Own Rules".

The following day the train went to Rathdrum for a planned 3 days of filming on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. The film is "Durango", based on a short story by John B. Keane. The train was based in Arklow and travelled to Rathdrum each day.

In the event, the director was satisfied that he had enough footage by the Thursday evening, and the Saturday's work was cancelled. The coaches returned to Dublin with the empty set of coaches from the evening Dublin - Arklow working. (If anyone has a photograph of this working we would appreciate a copy.) No.461 remained in Arklow for a number of days but returned to Dublin in time to operate the Rosslare train.

Filming (2): At the time of writing, preparations are under way for a day's filming on "Angela's Ashes", based on the book by Limerick man Frank McCourt. This will take place in Pearse, and the platforms which masqueraded as Kingsbridge for "Michael Collins" will become Limerick station. Filming will involve No.171 and at least 2 coaches from the Whitehead set.

MEMBERSHIP

Renewal: As usual at this time of year there is a subscription form included to allow members to renew before Christmas. A donation would also be much appreciated. Also, any member who recently received a covenant renewal reminder can take the opportunity to return all forms at the one time.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": In traffic at Whitehead. Tubes needed soon.

No.4: Boiler and mechanical overhaul.

Boiler - Steam testing.

Mechanical - Preparation for boring

cylinders and valve liners.

No.23: In traffic on light duties at Whitehead.

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

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": In traffic at Whitehead. In GNR(I) black livery pending next boiler overhaul in about 3 years.

No.184: In store at Mullingar, partly dismantled. Requires boiler overhaul and new cylinder block. Tender requires renewal of body.

No.186: In store at Inchicore. Requires boiler overhaul. To be transferred to Whitehead as soon as convenient.

No.461: In traffic in Dublin. Minor boiler repairs to be carried out as soon as convenient.

Carlow Diesel: Out of traffic at Whitehead, pending gearbox investigation.

Orenstein & Koppel Contract: Repairs to frame and renewal of tanks complete. Pistons, valves and motion complete except for valve setting and lubrication system. Awaiting boiler before further assembly can proceed. Cab repairs proceeding. Brakework being assembled.

Mowlem Contract: New leaf springs have been ordered for ex-GNR(I) wagons R5 and R6 - due shortly. Wagons to be returned to Whitehead for fitting.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Coach Bogies: A set of ex-UTA bogies are being overhauled at Whitehead. Work includes: blast cleaning, painting, renewal of worn parts, new springs. When complete, this set can be swapped with the existing bogies on a running carriage, which in turn will be overhauled for further swapping, and so on.

Dublin: Park Royals 1383 and 2423 are out of traffic for repairs. Work has commenced on 1383 at Mullingar, and it is hoped to tackle 2423 in Dublin.

The complete set is now in an all red livery, with 1335 and 2421 having been

painted at Pearse for the "Angela's Ashes" film contract. Four coaches have been painted for film work in the last year - some more than once!

Irish State Coach: Work is proceeding on 351 at Inchicore. On the adjoining track there is a coach from the BREL International set - a contrast of nearly a century in coach design. The next tasks to be undertaken are painting and interior finish.

WINTER MEETINGS

9th December: "Irish Steam Cinema" - Fred Cooper makes a return visit to St. Jude's with a selection put together as only Fred can.

13th January: "County Donegal In Colour" - Robert Robotham presents material from his new book, "The Last Years of the Wee Donegal".

MRSI: Our sister society, the Modern Railway Society of Ireland, will be holding their meetings in Dukes Hotel, Belfast, on 18th November, 20th January and 17th February.

WHITEHEAD

Summer Round-Up: The last two Wednesday evenings in August were used to drag in flat-bottomed rail for the overhead travelling crane. The mechanism for the crane has been overhauled in preparation for commissioning.

Autumn: Early September had the Site Officer up on the Stables roof doing some necessary repairs to make it watertight.

An opportunity was also taken to fill pot holes in the lane into the site.

With the help of the JCB, a new service duct, to carry electricity and compressed air, was dug and laid into the carriage shed and locomotive workshop.

A new home for both our compressors, and the electrical switchboard, is being built against the outside of the workshop, and its concrete base has already been poured.

Part of the concrete delivery was used to make a base for the large power hammer in the workshop, and the remainder was enough to finish the floor in the new foundry being built behind the engine shed (conversion of old tube store). Equipment being installed in the foundry includes a furnace and oil tank.

The power hammer is currently situated in the engine shed, and those visitors to the site on the Open Day in August will have seen it in operation and will have felt just how much a building can shake without a suitable foundation for the machine.

Demolition continues on the wheel lathe house, situated inside the workshop. The roof has been removed and the timbers, together with the door lintels, are to be recycled in the compressor house.

Lighting was being installed in the workshop in October and future work will include all the trunking and cabling for the rest of the electrical system.

Blacksmith equipment has now been situated and is in the process of being erected in the workshop.

Winter: It is planned to progress the erection of the overhead crane, work on which has already started.

It is not often that the site gang get indoor jobs for the winter months, but there is plenty of work to be done in the workshop so any volunteers over the next few months can be assured of a dry day's toil.

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 folded in cover, 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:

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|---------------------------------------|-------|
| "Irish Railways in Pictures - GNR(1)" | £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 are in sterling and include postage. Unfortunately, for the time being, we must ask that you please add 10% when ordering in punts.

GENERAL

AGM: The date of the meeting has yet to be confirmed, but as usual it will be in late February or early March in Whitehead.

Wanted Urgently: Hornby Holden Tank R099 CIÉ No.99 0-4-0 in brunswick green with brass coloured dome, number in gold and early style CIÉ logo in gold and black. Produced in 1979 as Hornby R099 or R792 Local Goods set and sold exclusively in Ireland. Good price paid. Contact Alfred Barnes, 01736 752271 (Cornwall).

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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