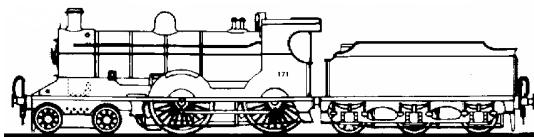


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



February 1999

NEWS LETTER

AGM

Annual General Meeting: As you will see from the accompanying notice, the AGM is to be held on Saturday 13th March at Whitehead.

At the time of writing there have been no nominations from new faces to serve on the incoming Council. Currently, there is a vacancy for the post of Belfast Area Operations Office.

To find out more about what the Society was up to over the past year, or to help decide any contest, attendance at the meeting is recommended.

Attendance: Members who came to last year's meeting will remember there was considerable heated debate about the door policy at the meeting, i.e. the lack of rigid checks on membership and who should have gained admittance. A decision was made then to adopt a more rigorous policy this year. To that end, members seeking entrance to the 1999 AGM will be asked to produce a current (white) membership card. There will be no exceptions to this rule which will be strictly enforced.

OPERATIONS

Back On The Tracks: Following time out due to the Damhead Derailment, RPSI operations were as far as possible back to normal last year. A proving run to Castlerock (6th June) set the scene, providing sectional times between Belfast and the Northwest.

(1)

Pathing difficulties for operations to Coleraine and beyond meant a 30 minute delay at Antrim (where we were supposed to take water) and the cancellation of the Castlerock extension. In practice on the outward run we took water at Lisburn and Ballymena (no problem) but were prevented by conflicting movements from taking water at Ballymena on our return. This meant running 66 miles from Portrush to Lisburn for our first and only water stop.

On the return journey from Londonderry (12th September) the 94 miles to Lisburn left 1,300 gallons in No.171's tender giving a water consumption of 23 gallons per mile with 5 bogies. A word of caution here, figures of nearly 50 gallons per mile have been recorded on other runs. To save time on the outward run we did not turn the locomotive at Coleraine and our thanks must go to the NIR Traction Inspectors and the staff at Coleraine, who arranged for us to run into the Up platform at Coleraine on our return and from there into the loop and the turntable. Turning was smartly done and enabled our arrival in Ballymoney before our booked departure time.

No.85 has not been used since Easter 1998, No.171 having performed all duties since being re-tubed for the May Tour. No.171 has proved to be a capable loco running some 2,165 miles this year with what would be described as routine maintenance. Her work on the May Tour was steady except on the return from Dublin which was a sparkling performance, showing what this class of locomotive was capable of. During the

summer and on the Santa Specials out of Belfast she has operated with only minor difficulty and re-established RPSI credibility with the public and NIR.

Apart from the usual hazards, we were this year affected by two unfortunate acts of nature. A wasp stung NIR Traction Inspector Barry Pentland as we arrived in Antrim on 22nd August. Being allergic to wasp stings he was whisked to hospital for a suitable antidote. Barry was warmly welcomed on his return as we were going nowhere without him! On the 3rd October we were to have used No.171 to haul an ITG Railtour in the Belfast area. All was ready when two days before part of the cliff over Whitehead tunnel fell on the line. The line was closed and we were not able to leave Whitehead.

This year we were reduced to one NIR Steam Driver, Noel Playfair. He did sterling work but is now to be joined by Michael Hamill. We hope that other NIR Firemen will soon be promoted to Steam Driver to further strengthen the team.

Following the submission of the Halcrow Transmark report entitled "Operation of Preserved Locomotives and Carriages on Northern Ireland Railways", we have had very positive feedback from the highest management levels within Northern Ireland Railways. We have been assured of a continuing positive attitude toward our operations by NIR. A good example of this is the proposed inclusion of steam paths in the next NIR working timetable.

"Coleraine Christmas Shopper": After encouraging signs in 1997, and again with support from Coleraine Chamber of Trade who supplied a 'goody bag' of discount vouchers for every passenger, we were disappointed that the passenger load out of Belfast and Lisburn was no better this year. We had increased the "Coleraine Santa Specials" from 1 to 2 trains, but in the event there were problems associated with the distribution of the posters in the area and with the sale of tickets, so a relatively poor level of support resulted.

Film: The last weekend in November saw the Dublin set in Pearse filming for "Angela's Ashes", from the award-winning book by Limerick's Frank McCourt. It was

not possible to complete filming in the allotted time so a further day was booked for 19th December.

"Santa Special" (1): On Sundays 6th & 13th December three well filled trains operated to Greystones (under the new but not yet energised wires from Bray). The normal Maynooth destination was not possible due to PW work.

"Santa Special" (2): On the first Sunday of trains from Belfast to Whitehead, we ran at better than 75% loadings, while the ensuing Sundays were complete sell-outs. The Saturday loadings were also in excess of 75%, and overall the operations were a resounding success. Publicity costs have been significantly reduced by a negotiated contract deal which should help to ensure that a respectable surplus will result.

A matter of very serious concern is still the shortfall in Coach Marshals and Society support staff. Unless the situation improves it may become necessary to cancel some operations due to lack of interest on the part of the members!

Certified Members: Further progress has been made on our way to setting up a certification process for our maintenance procedures and operations. To that end, Evan Pamely, Irwin Pryce and Peter Scott have been certified by ACE Engineering Insurance as Daily Examiners of Locomotives. Similarly, Thomas Charters, David Henderson and Evan Pamely have been certified as Daily Examiners of Carriages.

The certification standards are being put in place as part of the agreement between the Society, Northern Ireland Railways and the consultants Halcrow Transmark following the report into the derailment of No.85 in September 1996.

Obituary: We are sorry to have to report the death recently of long-time member and 2 day tour stalwart Julien Durore. Our condolences to his wife and family.

GENERAL

Wanted: Does any member have an unwanted copy of "The County Down" by R.M. Arnold, published in 1981 by the

(2)

Society? A long-retired locomotive driver has contacted us wanting to buy one but, as members will probably be aware, it is long out of print.

If anyone can help, please contact the Treasurer on 01846 678702 (prefix with 08 from the Republic of Ireland).

MEMBERSHIP

Renewal: The subscriptions for 1999 are now due. Again, this year there will be no increase in rates, but a donation would be much appreciated.

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 using the enclosed form 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. The number of overseas members who neglect to allow for this bank charge is quite significant and we would ask that the correct amount is sent. Note that the charge does not apply to payments made in Punts.

Combined Payments: 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. UK taxpayers who do not yet covenant their subscriptions can obtain the necessary forms from the Membership address.

Membership Status: Please be aware that the Society must charge VAT on membership subscriptions in the United Kingdom. For that reason we ask all Senior and Junior members to indicate that they are claiming the reduced rate, even if they actually pay more. VAT is only payable on the subscription itself, and not on any donation that may accompany it. We don't want to be handing any more to Customs & Excise than we are legally obliged to do.

Data Protection: Members are reminded that the Society is registered with the Data Protection Registrar in the United Kingdom. Our registration states that we are permitted to store personal details for the purposes of membership and ticket/booking administration.

FINANCE

Donation: For the second year running the British Council have responded positively to the Society's request for grant aid. As with last year, we have received £500 towards our UK/Ireland travel bill.

WINTER MEETINGS

10th March: "Railway Movie Cocktail" - Sam Bracegirdle presents an evening of his railway films from around the world.

24th March: The Modern Railway Society of Ireland are holding their normal monthly slide show in Duke's Hotel, Belfast.

WHITEHEAD

What's Been Happening: Late November was busy with track maintenance and repairs in readiness for the Santa season in December.

The site team also replaced the lights in the yard to allow ease of shunting and movements in the dark after the Santa trains returned to base.

What Will Be Happening: In January and February it is intended to start work on the electrical wiring of the locomotive workshop.

Foundations for the wheel press are also to be dug, and the continued demolition of the old walls of the wheel lathe shed will make handy filling material for this job before the concrete is poured.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Bogies: The overhaul of replacement bogies for Diner 87 from the Whitehead set is progressing well.

Mullingar: Work is progressing on Park Royal 1383. New end frames have been fabricated and will be fitted shortly.

State Coach 351: Painting is under way at Inchicore, as is completion work on the underframe.

SALES

Cine Video: As reported last Autumn, the Society has been fortunate in being able to obtain several old cine films showing main line action on the Dublin - Cork line and surrounding areas in the late 1970s. The footage also includes scenes from the lifting of track in and around Armagh station in 1958. We asked if sufficient members would be interested in having a copy of these films on VHS format video.

Happily, after a period of just two months or so, enough replies have been received to warrant having a limited run of copies made. As expected, the price will be around £10 sterling each. The copies are currently being produced, and anyone who replied over the last few months will be contacted as soon as we receive the tapes. Again, it should be stressed that this is not a full scale video production - it is a straightforward copy of the films we have. They are all in colour but are silent. Photography is of an amateur nature, but the subject matter is most interesting. The full running time of the video will end up at about 45 - 50 minutes.

About half a dozen extra copies are being made, so if anyone is still interested, please write to: RPSI, 9 Kenilworth Avenue, Lisburn, Co Antrim, BT28 3UG.

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.

Just in - "The Wee Donegal" by Robert Robotham, and "Trams to the Hill of Howth" by James Kilroy.

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 Drummacanvy 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. 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.