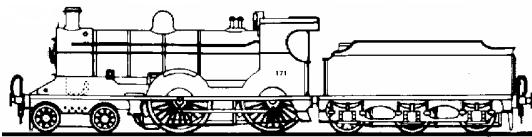


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



June 1999

NEWS LETTER

NATIONAL TRANSPORT MUSEUM

Proposal: Those members who buy the Irish Times newspaper may have read, in mid-May, the article on the proposed National Transport Museum in Mullingar.

It is planned that a museum will be set up under the auspices of the Mullingar Arts & Railway Group, a body based in Mullingar and on whose board sits a Society Council member. CIÉ are making available a large portion of the Galway side of the station to be used as a working museum, which will include aspects of road, rail and canal operation (the Royal Canal runs nearby).

Obviously, if the plans go ahead, the Society will be affected as the locomotive shed there is used to store No.184 and a coach undergoing restoration, currently 1383. In fact, the Society has been asked to become involved, and there is no doubt our expertise could be required if the planned local operations to Moate or Athlone come to fruition.

Although there is some urgency to get the scheme started, and the necessary finance does appear to be available, it is still early days yet and participation by the Society, if any, could be some time away.

OPERATIONS

Good Friday: The annual trip to Mullingar is useful in fulfilling the role of a

proving run, testing both locomotive and coaches before the season proper. The train was moderately well filled. Good Friday is a peculiar day, being halfway between a working day and a holiday. Many businesses are closed, but for the railway it is business as usual. On the return from Mullingar, three west-bound freight trains were crossed at successive locations before our early arrival in Connolly.

"Easter Bunny": Another very successful Bunny train, with two well-filled trains having run.

"Dundalk 150": This fell on 24th April, and was a very successful operation indeed. The Dundalk Stationmaster, Brendan McQuaid, a railway enthusiast if ever there was one, put together a local committee which organised a very professional event.

No.171 travelled light to Dublin in advance of the operation, and then hauled five IÉ Cravens and a heating van to Dundalk where it met No.85 which had just arrived from Belfast with a similar train.

The two trains from Dundalk to Drogheda and Poyntzpass were filled to capacity, mainly with local families.

Such anniversary events are clearly popular and bring the Society to a wider audience. In fact, there are tentative plans for a Cork 150 event, possibly in September.

"Saint Munchin": The tour, on which all three of the Society's operational

mainline locomotives operated, was run successfully over the weekend of 8th/9th May.

However, the events commenced on the Friday with bus visits to Inchicore and the Fry Museum.

Saturday, saw No.85 start 5 coaches out of Dublin Heuston, bound for Ballybrophy. For many participants the weekend started here where No.461 and the Society's own carriages awaited - many were knocked over in the rush to the bar. A sedate trundle down the branch to Limerick followed in so-so weather. After a quick turn round, the train headed off again this time to Ennis, with a number of local passengers for the return trip from Limerick.

On Sunday, due to Iarnród Éireann requiring the line for engineering work, the tour commenced again at Limerick Junction. There, in driving rain, No.85 started out again for Dublin where, after a quick service, she headed on to Belfast.

No.171 joined the tour on Monday with the Whitehead coaches on a turn to Castlerock. The return journey was made in sparkling form, showing what can still be done on the NCC.

Those participants still not utterly, exhausted were treated to a coach trip on Tuesday which took in a linen mill, a brewery, a sewage treatment plant, and a coal-fired power station, no less!

Film Special: No.461 and coach was required for a day's shooting for the film "Norah Barnacle" (concerning the wife of James Joyce). On this occasion, 23rd May, Pearse station was masquerading as Galway.

Greystones Special: A party of Dutch visitors chartered a one-way special from Dublin to Greystones on 28th May.

"Greystones Shuttle": Because of the filming on the Sunday followed by the charter to Greystones, it was found difficult to roster sufficient crew to prepare the train in time to run these trips on 30th May. Reluctantly, the decision was taken to cancel the operation.

Whitehead Train Rides: A reminder that

operations will continue at Whitehead every Sunday afternoon in June and August. Members are asked to have the poster displayed in a public place.

"Steam & Jazz": The operation makes a return this year, at a very reasonable fare. Members are asked to support this train after the failure of last year's operation to run. The Apex Jazz Band will be playing, so a very entertaining evening should be had by all.

"Mid-Summer Night Steam": The annual barbecue train to Mullingar will be operating on Saturday 19th June.

Open Day: The now annual Open Day at Whitehead will be on 31st July.

Coach Stewards: Operations Officer, Evan Pamely, is keen to set up a pool of stewards to serve on northern based trains. Requirements are for mature responsible members to carry out duties which can include, for example, checking doors and generally communicating with passengers. Complimentary travel is part of the deal!

Ticket Outlets: The following have kindly agreed to sell tickets for northern operations: Belfast - Bryson House, Bedford Street; Lisburn - Linen Museum; Carrickfergus -Tourist Office; Bangor - Tourist Office. Extra outlets are also being arranged for Dublin.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Maintenance: Following the Good Friday operation to Mullingar 1142, the 56 seat compartment coach, went to Inchicore for attention to timber and paintwork. Our thanks to FAS for supplying labour and to our foreman, George Dempsey, for looking after an additional RPSI vehicle.

The coach was given a temporary finish on one side to allow it to be used in the "Norah Barnacle" film, being shot on 23rd May. The purpose of the work is to have 1142 as a presentable companion coach to 351 at the latter's launch, hopefully in the autumn.

Work continues on Park Royal 1383 in Mullingar. Structural work is complete,

and re-panelling is under way. A one piece fabric roof will be fitted.

Award: The work on 351 has been recognised by an award from The Henry Ford European Conservation Awards scheme. The text of the certificate reads:

National Award Heritage Category

Irish State Carriage No.351

The jury of the Henry Ford European Awards would like to recognise your outstanding contribution to the conservation of our natural environment and cultural heritage.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": In traffic at Whitehead. Requires re-tubing soon.

No.3BG "Guinness": In store at Downpatrick.

No.4: Undergoing heavy overhaul at Whitehead.

Boiler - Steam testing complete. Repairing, renewing and assembling cladding. Casting of firebars complete.

Mechanical - New piston rods machined. Preparation for boring cylinders and valve chests. Valve heads and ring material cast, machining under way. Re-metalling and machining of crossheads complete. Renewal of all con rod and coupling rod bushes -bushes being machined. Overhaul of fittings under way. Pony wheel bosses being machined. Driving spring shoes built up and fitted.

No.85 "Merlin": In traffic at Whitehead. Will be re-tubed to keep in traffic for foreseeable future.

No.186: In store at Inchicore. Preliminary plans are under way to have the

locomotive assessed with a view to returning it to Whitehead for dismantling prior to overhaul.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion": In traffic at Whitehead.

No.461: On 15th May the locomotive was towed from Inchicore to Connolly shed where it will be based for most of the season. Minor boiler repairs completed. A complete set of volute springs received and fitted.

O&K No.3: Repairs to frame and renewal of tanks complete. Pistons, valves and motion complete except for lubrication system. Boiler returned - to be fitted soon. Manufacture of cladding complete.

Mowlem Contract: The rail wagons have been hired again by Mowlems who have won the contract for renewal of the Belfast Central Line. The line was closed to all traffic from 23rd May. The published opening date is 29th August.

GENERAL

AGM Minutes: The April News-Letter should have included a copy of the minutes from the 1999 AGM. It has come to the Secretary's attention that some members may not have received the 4 page leaflet (yellow) on which the minutes were printed. If that is the case, contact the Secretary at the usual address and a copy will be sent.

Phoenix Park Tunnel: Member, Maurice Hatch of Green Haven, Main Street, Geashill, Tullamore, Co. Offaly, is interested in learning about the history and use of the tunnel under Phoenix Park in Dublin. If anyone can help, Maurice would be grateful. Particularly welcome would be information on passenger services through the tunnel in the 19th century, and what use might be made of it today.

WHITEHEAD

Spring: The new pitched roof, NCC style, on the platform shop was finished in time for the "Easter Bunny" operations.

In early April the cast iron chairs were salvaged from the rotting sleepers that were replaced on the platform road. These will be melted down in the new foundry to make brake shoes, etc.

The end of April saw very good weather so the opportunity was taken to spray the tracks with weedkiller.

In three Saturdays in May the site team were busy with preparations and final concreting of a large part of the central passageway in the carriage shed. Initially 42 tonnes of hard core was laid, followed by tamping, the laying of a waterproof membrane, and reinforcing steel. The concrete was poured on the 22nd May, and it is now possible to walk safely from the side door, halfway along the shed, to the front doors! This will initially benefit the carriage work but it will also be of benefit to the guided tours around the site, the first of which will be during the forthcoming Schools' Days.

Workshop: March saw the completion of the triple foundations for the wheel press in the workshop and meant that we could pour the concrete. Assembly of the press must wait until the overhead crane is in operation.

The crane is nearly ready - it and the compressor house, which is complete, are awaiting electrics in the workshop.

Back To Work: Now that the railtour is successfully over and the summer season has begun the weekly evening squads get to work again. This year the team will meet on Tuesdays, and the first project is to paint the inside of the platform shop. Surely a task that most any local member could help with!

MULLINGAR

Tidy-Up: Plans are under way to clear some of the debris away from the shed doors. Presently the tender from No.184 is stored outside the shed, and the track has to be cleared before the tender can be moved inside.

SALES

New Look: Please note the new format for sales items. As previously requested, please order only items from the specified address. Remember those dealing with your orders are volunteers working from home, and the easier their lives are made the more likely they are to continue offering their services to members.

HISTORIC ITEMS

- Back numbers of Five Foot Three and tour brochures.
- Outline drawings of locomotives, coaches and wagons.
- Old railway tickets.
- Second-hand books (see separate list).
- Timetables, notices, etc.

For details of historic items only, list your interests and requirements write to:

RPSI Collectors Shop
148 Hillsborough Road
Lisburn
Co. Antrim
BT27 5QY

Note: All prices are sterling and include postage. For the time being we must ask that you add 10% when ordering in punts.

All second-hand or vintage items are available from the "RPSI Collector's Shop" address as given under Historic Items and the Used Book List. New books, videos, etc. are available from the "RPSI Sales" address on the separate sheet.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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