

# Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



August 1999

## NEWS LETTER

### OPERATIONS

**Whitehead Train Rides:** On Sundays during June and August we have been operating the train rides at Whitehead. Our ex-Londonderry dockyard Avonside saddle tank has performed well and as usual either delights or terrifies our young visitors. Everyone involved enjoys the event and it provides useful opportunity for crew training and is an incentive to tidy up our Whitehead depot.

The shop particularly is a great asset. The new pitched roof makes it look much smarter and more authentic. The inside is now dry so that items can be stored without fear of water damage. The shop and diner sales make a valuable contribution to the atmosphere of the train rides as well as swelling the coffers.

Thanks to all who have helped run this event, which of course continues through August, and on 12<sup>th</sup> September for a special event run in conjunction with European Architectural Heritage.

**Schools Days:** On 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June the once annual Schools Education Days were resurrected, with 200 pupils from Northern Ireland primary schools attending over the two days. The Schools Days format was much

as in previous years - the pupils arrive for an informative presentation followed by an extensive guided tour of the Society workshops and sheds.

No.171 was on hand for 'in steam' footplate experience and R.H. Smyth provided the most popular attraction - the train ride!

The schools attending came from as far afield as Fivemiletown, Banbridge and Donaghadee, as well as Whitehead itself. All who attended found it a useful and exceptionally enjoyable event and all were amazed by the size and extent of the Society's site and operations.

Thanks to all those (including some much welcomed new faces) who volunteered to help guide the pupils, man No.171 and shunt the site to pull out so many historic vehicles. With success fresh in the mind, the School Days will run again on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June 2000. Please pass this information on to any primary school teachers you may know and encourage them to visit the Schools Days web site.

**"Steam & Jazz":** On 18<sup>th</sup> June we steamed out of Belfast into a glorious summer evening. The weather was warm, the company congenial and the music superb. A few members set out to enjoy the evening in style, bringing brimming hampers of good food for their supper. The programme for the

evening was a series of short runs with stops of 20 - 30 minutes. At these the Apex Jazz Band left the train and played on the platform.

The first leg of our journey went to Carrickfergus and here, as elsewhere, the band quickly attracted a large group around them to listen and dance to their excellent music. The relaying of the track in the vicinity of Central Station meant that we could not run round. Instead NIR provided a GM locomotive to haul the coaches out of the station to release No.171.

Our second journey was to Bangor. We had some difficulty climbing through Cultra, possibly due to a dragging brake on 238 which was discovered later (and has now been rectified). At Bangor we ran round and took water which gave a good opportunity for the revellers to listen to the music. Though the disappearance of the train into the gloom at the bridge outside Bangor station caused some people slight concern.

On our return to Central Station we waved a cheery goodbye to the merry crowd. It was a very successful evening, enjoyed by all our passengers.

The Apex Jazz Band have been booked again for next year. Put 23<sup>rd</sup> June into your diaries.

**"Mid-Summer Night's Steam":** A miserable wet cold night did nothing to dampen the spirits of all who travelled to our annual barbecue in Mullingar. As always, a sincere thanks to all who helped make the operation possible.

**"Strawberry Fair":** Another successful operation sees this event firmly established in the calendars of both the Society and the town of Enniscorthy.

**"Sea Breeze":** Another generally successful outing for the Society's Dublin set.

It is important to note that Iarnród Éireann have asked for the second operation, scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> August, to be deferred until 4<sup>th</sup> September for operational reasons.

**Ballykissangel Charter:** On 15<sup>th</sup> July Raitours Ireland hired the Society's train for a tour to the famous town of Ballykissangel (Avoca). The train ran from Connolly to Arklow, and returned from Rathdrum, the participants travelling by bus in between.

**Whitehead Open Day:** A very successful day despite not being run in conjunction with the Whitehead Festival this year. The fine sunny weather certainly helped!

**"Bangor Belle":** The first in our series of Bangor trains ran on 7<sup>th</sup> August with three return trips to Bangor from Belfast. The event was run in conjunction with North Down Borough Council who provided balloons, sweets and a clown to entertain our passengers.

The second date will be 28<sup>th</sup> August when four return trips will be operated to coincide with the Annual festival in Bangor.

**"Atlantic Coast Express":** A booking form is included for travel on the annual trip to Derry. A telephone number is included to allow cross-channel participants to make hotel arrangements.

**Halloween:** The Operations Committee have come to recognise the importance of running themed trains and this year are planning to run a train at Halloween. On 31<sup>st</sup> October, if all goes well, we will be inaugurating the "Broomstick Special". It will probably operate to Whitehead in a similar way to the Santa Specials. But instead of a benign Santa there will be an ugly witch to hand out Halloween gift bags to the children. Hopefully it will be a fun day for all.

**Autumn/Winter:** The remainder of this year's programme is as previous years with the Coleraine Shopper on 27<sup>th</sup> November and the Belfast and Dublin Santa trains during the run up to Christmas.

**New Address:** The contact address for all queries regarding Dublin-based operations has been changed from that published on the reverse of your membership card. It is now:

RPSI Railtours  
"Ashgrove House"  
Kill Avenue  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin  
(01) 2809147

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.4:** Boring cylinders and valve liners. Wheelsets blast-cleaned and inspected - no flaws found.

**No.85 "Merlin":** Awaiting repairs to spring. Following a Council decision to keep this locomotive in traffic, a full set of boiler tubes has been ordered. Superheater elements to be assessed when removed. Work to start after Open Day.

**No.171 "Slieve Gullion":** New set of driving coil springs ordered following breakage of one spring.

**No.186:** To be transferred to Whitehead in early Autumn for dismantling and assessment.

**No.461:** An experimental screen has been fitted at the damper door to prevent ashes and sparks falling onto the track - subsequently removed to allow cleaning out - removable or hinged version to be constructed.

**O&K No.3:** Boiler fitted to frame. Final assembly of pipework and fittings nearly complete.

## MEETINGS

**St. Jude's:** Annual programme included.

**Waterfoot:** Members might be interested in a meeting being held in Waterfoot, Co. Antrim, entitled "Ballymena, Cushendall & Red Bay Railway 1872 - 1940" by Gerard Muldoon. Venue is the Parochial Hall, Waterfoot, at 8pm on 26<sup>th</sup> August.

**IRRS:** Those members in Great Britain will find enclosed a list of dates for the meetings of the London Area of the Railway Record Society of Ireland. All RPSI members are welcome to attend. Indeed, the IRRS committee would be delighted if any attending members make themselves known.

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Possible Vacancy:** Our Dublin-based carriage officer, Brian Gillen, has hinted that he might vacate the post at the next AGM. So, if we can't twist his arm to stay, we will be looking for a replacement - no easy task. Thinking caps on please!

**Whitehead:** Diner 87 was fitted with a newly refurbished set of bogies in mid-June. The cooker hood was refitted after the water tank was replaced. Two panels were removed to allow minor repairs to the frames. That (landward) side of the coach will then be repainted.

NCC 238 is having repairs to its corner posts carried out in hardwood, with new steel brackets being fitted at the same time.

An enormous number of minor repairs have been carried out to the running set including: batteries, dynamos, lighting, wiring, glazing, brake adjustments, door locks, axle boxes, minor leaks and guttering,

communication cords, door straps.

A number of brake cylinders have been overhauled. This will continue when new spares are obtained.

No less than 10 windows were broken on the Monday of the railtour between Whitehead and Castlerock. These have been replaced with safety glass which is the standard for all replacements.

Problems continue with the battery charger in the carriage shed.

The site gang came to the assistance of the C&W Department when they concreted more of the shed floor and also repainted one side of the diner.

Meanwhile, a continuing lack of volunteers means that most of the C&W is now carried out by sub-contractors. But nobody seems to care that the Society has to spend its hard-earned cash in this fashion!

## GENERAL

**Sympathy:** Condolences have been passed to our Vice-President, Dr FitzGerald, on the recent death of his wife Joan.

**On-Line (1):** The Society has received a generous grant from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust which exists to help charitable organisations make innovative improvements to their administration. The grant to the Society was made to allow a web site to be set up.

For a number of years there has been an RPSI presence on the web pages of the Heritage Railway Association, and more recently a fledgling site for the Schools Days - see Editorial Address for details.

An effective Society web site is long overdue and over the coming months we hope to have this up and running, based on the current two sites but

expanded to include much more.

Obviously the current pages are a bit of a mish-mash, so the developers would be more than glad to receive any hints and suggestions, critical or otherwise.

It should be noted that, due to the development nature of the pages, the addresses given may change and/or disappear.

**On-Line (2):** The Irish Railway Record Society now has a very interesting web site. Point your browsers to:

<http://www.irrs.ie>

**Exhibition:** Society members in the Fermanagh area may be interested in a model railway exhibition being run by the Erne Model Railway Club. Venue: Enniskillen Cathedral Hall, Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September.

## WHITEHEAD

**Workshop:** The assembly of the ex-BCDR overhead crane is nearly complete. The wheel-drop gantry has been re-erected - at a slightly lower level to suit. Awaiting installation of electricity supply before moving the machine tools.

## SALES

**Book List:** There are still plenty of interesting used books on the current list. These books have been donated to the Society, are in good order, and the income from their sale is a helpful boost to the Society's finances.

## EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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