



February 2000

## NEWS LETTER

### AGM

**Annual General Meeting:** As you will see from the accompanying notice, the AGM is to be held on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March in Dublin.

**Vacancies:** Due to ill health our Chairman, John Creaner, stepped down from the post before Christmas. Our best wishes to John in the hope that he is well enough to travel with us in future.

There is now a vacancy for Chairman, and also for Treasurer, Dublin Operations Officer, and both Carriage & Wagon posts. Members are invited to submit nominations for these posts - indeed, for any post.

### OPERATIONS

**Ghost Train:** Too late to include in the November issue was the Ghost Train in conjunction with the Wexford Opera Festival in October. Full details are included in "Five Foot Three".

**"Coleraine Shopper":** The Christmas season started with a run to Coleraine. We had a surprisingly large number of people on board for the outward leg - about a 50% loading. Fortunately there were no major mishaps on the way and the train ran to time. Castlerock was a popular destination with the train about full. In contrast the trip to Ballymoney was only lightly loaded. We need to give more thought to this part of the day. We had two new recruits for the red and white robe who did a great job.

Once again after a period of standing this time at Coleraine the fire gave trouble. On the return run there was insufficient steam for proper speed resulting in our being

passed at Carrickfergus by the following service train. This prompted a decision to try an alternative coal, a supply being obtained from the Ellington pit in the North of England. Cawood's are to be thanked for shipping the coal at a time when they themselves were very busy.

**"Santa Special":** We were able to use the new coal on the last weekend of the Santa operation. Due to popular demand No.85 ran both days and with the new coal gave no trouble steaming. There was a little clinker in the firebox at the end of the day but not enough to give trouble. This coal has a higher volatile content than the Polish and besides the possibility of annoying the neighbours with vast amounts of black smoke will result in more rapid deterioration of the boiler due to its higher sulphur and chlorine content.

As usual there was a slow start to the Belfast trains with 46% and 68% loadings on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The trains on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> were already selling well, then came David Dillon's presentation "Keeping Up Steam". The ticket outlets were inundated. In response we decided to put on an extra train on the 19<sup>th</sup>, a 16:45 departure to Carrickfergus.

Once again our Santas did splendid work, with the children being well pleased and enjoying the trip. The shop at Whitehead was well patronised.

The most atmospheric trip was probably the 16:45 departure. As Noel Playfair opened the regulator the safety valve lifted. The steam from the drain cocks being lit by the lamps, the loco was silhouetted against a cloak of white. With a powerful and regular beat from the exhaust, No.85 sure-footedly hauled the train under the station

buildings and out across the Lagan. The train was warm and the windows clear. From their snug compartments everyone could see the lights of Belfast and the Lagan Weir reflected in the dark waters below. We then sped into the night, eagerly awaiting a visit from Santa. The cold at Carrickfergus gave a Christmas feel to the well-kept Victorian station. As No.85 ran round she passed through the station like a spirited dragon, her breath left hanging in the night air as she disappeared into the darkness with a friendly whisper. With everybody happy in their seats we returned to Belfast, on time for a late tea.

**Steam Enterprise:** This much-missed train will be returning to the RPSI calendar on 15<sup>th</sup> April. Members are asked to support this operation, the fare of which has been set at a very low rate. Due to the high running costs, it is vital that sufficient passengers travel to make the train viable, and to allow it to be run again in the future. To gauge support, an early booking form is included with this News-Letter. No payments will be processed until dispatch of tickets nearer the time, but we ask that you book early to show your commitment to the idea of a regular "Steam Enterprise".

**Schools Days:** Last year over 200 primary school children visited our Whitehead site for the educational and enjoyable RPSI Schools Days. This year primary schools will be able to visit the site, ride on a steam train and stand on the footplate on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June. If you know a primary school teacher then please encourage them to get in touch. Or, if you are interested in having your school attend then please contact Philip Lockett, 16 Mount Merrion Gardens, Belfast, BT6 0FW, or telephone (028) 9050 4924 for a booking form and details. Early booking is recommended.

**All Stations:** The Ulster Architectural Historical Society, in association with the RPSI, will be running a guided tour on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June visiting all Dublin Stations (open & closed). The tour will include a steam-hauled section from Heuston to Dun Laoghaire and back to Connolly. Members are welcome to join the tour. Full details and costs with next News Letter.

**Contacts Update:** Belfast area, ring (028) 9335 3567; Dublin area, "Ashgrove

House", Kill Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, ring (01) 280 9147. Email: rpsitrains@hotmail.com.

### MEETINGS

**8<sup>th</sup> March:** "Long Live The Giant's Causeway!" - Michael Pollard commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of closure, and David Laing brings us the latest plans to reopen the line.

**MRSI:** The Modern Railway Society of Ireland will be holding meetings on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 15<sup>th</sup> March, 19<sup>th</sup> April in Dukes Hotel, Belfast.

**IRRS:** The Irish Railway Record Society will be holding meetings in Dublin on 10<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> February, 9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 13<sup>th</sup> April.

Also, the IRRS will be hosting a Transport Collectors' Market in: Church Hall, Regent Square United reformed Church, Wakefield Street, London WC1, 11 am - 3pm, Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March.

### CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Dublin News:** Park Royal 1383 nears completion in Mullingar. The main remaining items to be done are the fitting of a replacement bogie and some internal panelling work, along with a re-paint. This coach entered Mullingar in October 1998.

1142 has been re-painted in GSWR maroon and cream to match State Coach 351. Both coaches are in Inchicore. 351 has received 1142's bogies after a mechanical overhaul. 1142 awaits the completion of a set of GSWR bogies brought from Whitehead.

### WHITEHEAD

**Site Update:** An underground duct has been provided to allow the carriage shed alarm to be linked up with the main system.

On the same subject, a manhole and duct were constructed to bring the electrics into the workshop. The electrics being available, allowed the overhead crane to be brought into operation, and it is already earning its keep bringing wheel sets to the wheel lathe.

In the quiet (steam-wise) period between Christmas and Easter, the opportunity is being taken to renew the interlacing under

the turnout at the Larne end of the platform road. To that end, 50 concrete sleepers have been made ready.

## MEMBERSHIP

**Renewal:** The subscriptions for 2000 are now due. Again, this year there will be no increase in rates, but a donation would be much appreciated.

This will be the last News-Letter received without renewing - no membership cards will be issued until the full payment is received.

**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.

## GENERAL

**How Long?:** As a matter of interest and research the Secretary, Paul McCann, is trying to establish when each member joined the Society. Records go back to 1979 so if you joined before then a small note attached to your membership renewal would be appreciated. If you have already paid, or pay by standing order, we would still like to hear from you, even if you joined as late as 1985. Many thanks in advance.

**Inter-Rail:** In association with the Heritage Railway Association, we are pleased to announce that the Inter-Rail pass scheme operated by the HRA now extends to the RPSI.

The scheme is open to regular working volunteers and allows free travel for card-holders on the member railways of the scheme - currently only 18 of the preserved railways associated with the HRA do not participate. In a few cases, railways with

longer lines offer only a reduced entrance fee. The RPSI, running main line trains, will come into this category - events at Whitehead only will be free.

The pass, costing £20, is valid from April to March, and is well worthwhile for any member intending to make visits to more than a couple of preserved railway centres in one year.

Applications for passes to be made through the Secretary before March.

**Down Under:** Our 5ft 3in colleagues from the NSW Rail Transport Museum in Australia have tendered an invitation to all Society members to help them celebrate the new millennium in style with a week-long steam railtour.

The abbreviated details are: 9 days, 20<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> April, 3,500km standard and broad gauge luxury travel, Sydney - Melbourne - Mildura - Portland, featuring double-heading 4-6-2 3801, 3830, 4-6-4 R761, R766 and 2-8-0 J515, plus vintage diesels. Enquiries: NSW Rail Transport Museum, Box 32, Burwood 1805, Australia. Also, separate Anzac Day, 25<sup>th</sup> April specials. Enquiries: Steamrail Victoria, Box 125, Newport 3015, Australia.

**Web Site:** The RPSI pages on the internet are nearing completion. We haven't yet found a permanent home for them but, for the meantime, they can be accessed from the address given below. Feedback to the Editorial address is welcome. Members are asked to make the link available in personal web sites or pass to other suitable sites.

**Retirement Party:** At a function in the Teachers club on 15<sup>th</sup> January, a group of Dublin members and friends gathered to pay tribute to recently retired IE loco inspector Tony Foley. A crystal clock was presented to Tony on behalf of the Society.

**Films:** Negotiations are in hand for two days film work in the late spring. The customer is a company producing a Television drama based in 1920s Dublin.

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### EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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<http://website.lineone.net/~rpsi/>