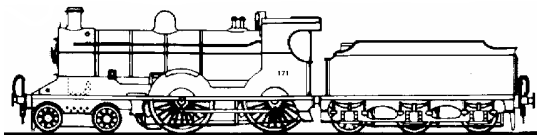


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



November 2000

NEWS LETTER

SAVE OUR RAILWAYS

Update: The campaign to save the NIR network has continued all summer, with some success. The Railway Task Force reported in mid-September with a number of options, the most likely to be taken up being the consolidation of the present network, with the existing lines being brought up to standard and 23 new railcar sets purchased.

Subsequently, the Finance minister of the new Assembly made allowances in his budget proposals that would suggest this is the option he will be choosing. The final decision on the budget is not due to be made until December.

The main item of immediate concern to members is that no cuts to the network are expected - hence Whitehead is safe as the Society's base.

IRISH STATE COACH 351

Launch: Wednesday 18th October saw the long-awaited launch of Irish State Coach 351. In the absence of Dr Garret FitzGerald, RPSI President Lord O'Neill hosted the event on behalf of the Society.

Guest of Honour was Mary McAleese, President of Ireland. Also present was Minister for Public Enterprise Mary O'Rourke, along with guests from all the bodies associated with the restoration project, most notably FÁS and Irish Rail.

At 2:40 p.m. the President arrived at Pearse station in Dublin and greeted guests. At 2:45 a whistle sounded and No.461, carrying the state and presidential flags, arrived at the platform, hauling 351, partnered with 1142. Two other coaches from the Dublin set were included in the train.

The President then unveiled a plaque to commemorate the occasion and, following a noisy photocall, the entire party boarded the

train and set off along the coast for Dun Laoghaire. At the Restaurant Na Mara (part of the old station building) a reception was held at which Lord O'Neill officially welcomed the President and thanked her for helping to launch 351. The full text of the President's reply will hopefully be posted on the Society's web site.

Following the customary photographs, meet and greet, etc., the President left by road. The rest of the party returned to Pearse and Connolly with No.461 and train.

BALLAST WORKING

Harvey: No.3 has been hard at work since June laying ballast on the old NCC main line between Muckamore and just north of Bleach Green viaduct for Henry Boot Railtech. By mid to late November the job should be complete

The locomotive worked from a number of ballast loading points and stabled mainly at Dunadry, Templepatrick loop, and Kingsbog. The train consisted of three 20 ton wagons, each holding 40 tons of ballast.

The ballast is laid in 3 sweeps - an initial drop which allows the tamper to do its job, followed by a top dressing, and a shoulder dressing.

What was surprising about the project was the very small number of photographers spotted. Here was a real train doing a real job on a real railway - and nobody was interested!

Now, where's that contract to relay the Bangor line?

OPERATIONS

"Bangor Belle": Our third series of operations to Bangor, on Saturday 26th August, were a great success - No.171 performed well pulling packed trains all day! The event was operated in partnership with North Down Borough Council as part of their annual August festival. Many thanks are due to them and their staff

who entertained our travelling public so well.

An Ulster Television crew were filming on the train. Chairman Norman Foster was interviewed, and a very embarrassed Secretary was filmed standing at the bar - with no drink in front of him!

Thanks are due to NIR who brought forward by one week the replacement of the bridge over the Connswater between Belfast and Sydenham. The line was broken for a week and had there been an over-run for some reason on the original schedule, we would have been unable to operate these trains.

"Atlantic Coast Express": The "Atlantic Coast Express" on 9th September was a great success. We could have had a few more passengers on the main train, but that from Derry was standing room only!

For those who chose the "Ring Of Errigal" coach trip, tour guide Tom McDevitte was in sparkling form.

The time-keeping problems of last year were left well behind, with prompt departures and arrivals throughout. The highlight of the day was probably the non-stop run between Derry and Ballymena on the return leg.

Congratulations to all the crew for performing so well on what was a very long day! Unfortunately, the event was marred by a number of windows in 1097 being smashed at Crumlin on the return journey.

Rathdrum Charter: On Sunday 17th October, No.461 hauled a 5 coach train to Arklow and back for a Dutch incentive party. The train consisted of 1916, 1463, 2421 and, for the first time, newly refurbished state coach 351. GS&WR first 1142, freshly painted to match 351, completed the set.

The party boarded at Rathdrum, but a run to Arklow was necessary as the party were under the impression that they were getting a service train back to Dublin!

On the previous Thursday, No.461 left Inchicore with 351, 1142, Bredin 1335 and a BR van. This latter vehicle was the only one not running in, as all three coaches were on refurbished bogies, and the loco was running in a new big end. Scheduled to run to Portarlinton, the trip was cut short at Sallins, due to heating on 1142. These problems were resolved by return to Inchicore. Some heat on No.461's big end was resolved by alteration of the trimming. The charter train set was made up in Inchicore and hauled to Connolly by an 071 class diesel on the Saturday prior to the trip.

"September Steam Saunter": This operation to Castlerock ran on 23rd September. It was fitted in at short notice to allow a light engine

proving run over the newly reopened Portrush branch. Unfortunately, such operations are now necessary if a section of track has not been traversed for some time, so the train was opened to the public to help recoup some of the cost.

"Steam Enterprise": A second Enterprise became inevitable when it was learned that there could be no "Portrush Flyer" this year. However, it was reckoned that not so many tickets would be sold for a second train, so in the end only 4 coaches and a van were required. The lighter load meant that the challenge for No.85 was not the load but the climbs along the way. Because of the current restrictions high top speeds were not achieved but No.85 attacked the banks with vigour and quickly made up time. Having taken water at Dundalk, we departed before our booked arrival time and strolled on towards Dublin.

The atmosphere on the train throughout was almost festive with everyone enjoying the splendid running, warm weather, and ample refreshments. A special word of thanks must go to the Dublin members who travelled to Belfast with the empty coaches to help with the train. They came very willingly and with great enthusiasm, contributing greatly to the day.

Church Of Ireland Charter: The charter on 7th October ran successfully, delivering 250 passengers to University Halt in Coleraine.

Leixlip Charter: Leixlip Town Commissioners chartered a train for public operation on 28th October - it ran with a consist of seven coaches. 1142 returned to the set after a year's absence looking well in maroon and cream livery. Both trains were filled to capacity, with the organisers well pleased with the loadings, and contemplating a repeat event next year.

The train ran from Connolly, picking up at Leixlip Confey. The turn-around was at Clonsilla, giving an empty journey in which the train could be cleaned. This may well be our last run on the single track section, as the second track and associated signalling are in place most of the way from Clonsilla to Maynooth.

"Broomstick Belle": The Halloween seasonal special proved even more popular than last year with two packed trains running on 29th October. The fancy dress theme was again a success. Prizes this year were awarded for best Halloween themed boy, girl and adult! Obviously a lot of effort was put in by all participants with dinosaurs, ghosts and goblins mingling happily with the usual RPSI ghouls!

All children on the train received a Halloween goody bag and a number went home with balloons created by our on-train magician As always, thanks must go to the Dining Car crew

(lots of lovely apple pie!), the on-train stewards for helping load and unload the train and hand out presents, and the locomotive crews for giving up their time.

“Santa Special”: The usual trains will be operating from Belfast on 10th, 17th & 23rd December and from Dublin on 3rd, 10th & 17th December. As usual, lots of help required - do you not think it's your turn this year?

“Corrib”: The advance booking form for next year's railtour is included, or see the web site.

NIR/IÉ Thanks: This year has been busy and the operations have generally run smoothly and to time. There have been times when it could so easily have fallen apart. Due to the goodwill and co-operation of many people within both railway companies this has not happened.

With luck and hard work the Christmas season will be successful, though regrettably we will not be able to make our customary run to Coleraine due to the commissioning of signalling at Antrim in connection with the upgrade of the line to Bleach Green. Next year looks like being a time when old friends are revisited and new horizons crossed.

MEMBERSHIP

Internet Banking: Members who pay by standing order will have received a letter requesting them to update their bank authorities to make payments to new bank accounts. It was felt that a better service could be provided if accounts were set up which allowed access via the internet.

It should be noted that the old accounts will be closed so any payments made to them will not be registered. We hope you understand that this is a change which is designed to make the service to members more efficient.

Therefore you must make this change to allow your subscription to be paid by standing order. Note: send the form to your bank - NOT to the Society.

Gift Aid: A reminder to all United Kingdom tax-payers - have you filled in and returned your Gift Aid form yet? Don't forget it is painless and, once submitted, can be forgotten about. If you've lost your form don't be shy about writing or e-mailing for another one.

Join Date: Don't forget if you joined the Society before 1980 and haven't yet responded to the request for your year of joining, please reply now!

Further to this, the Secretary would also like to have a complete set of past News-Letters, circulars, publicity notices, etc., i.e. everything that was sent out to members. Virtually

everything before 1980 is needed. If you can provide these, even photocopies, please send to the address below. Your help in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Rate Change: Unfortunately, Council have been prompted to increase subscriptions as a consequence of having to employ administrative assistance for both the Dublin and Belfast areas. With the increased burden of bureaucracy and the constant shortage of volunteer help, this step has become inevitable.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3: Earning bread and butter on ballast work Bleach Green to Antrim - contract now nearly complete. Will soon have to come out of traffic for boiler repairs and long overdue mechanical work.

No.4: Boiler fitted and loco wheeled. Rebuilt side tanks nearly complete. Bunker and tank being repaired, next move will be to place tanks in position, check alignment and make connections. Overhaul and assembly of pistons, valves and motion is well advanced.

No.171 “Slieve Gullion”: Problem with tender bearing resulted in having to re-machine journal and re-metal bearing. Oiling pads being renewed.

No.184: Tender transferred by road from Mullingar to Whitehead in June, followed by engine in October. Cleaning and protection under way.

No.186: General overhaul under way. Boiler being opened up for thorough examination with tubeplate removed for access.

No.461: Right big end trued up and remetalled after running hot on LE operation to Cork.

WINTER MEETINGS

First Off: The opening night of this season's Belfast Meetings was a journey around the railways of County Tyrone. Jim Donaghy was in great form and gave an excellent show. Derek Henderson, likewise, entertained the meeting for the second show.

The 13th December meeting will feature the ever-popular Fred Cooper and his “Irish Steam Cinema”.

WHITEHEAD SITE

Workshop: Major items of switchgear for the new electrical installation have been recovered at considerable cost saving from Sirocco Works, which are being demolished. This will enable work on electrics and commissioning of

machinery to proceed.

Also from the same source came 160m² of wooden block flooring which will be laid in the workshop.

B&CDR Crane: The commissioning of the crane is virtually complete, with only the access ladder to be seen to.

Concrete Improvement: Both sides of the running road in the workshop have had concrete laid to allow progress to be made on No.4. The carriage shed floor is now concreted for more than half its length.

AGM

Nominations: There should be a Council nomination form enclosed with this circular. Currently there are vacancies being advertised for a Northern Carriage Officer and a Northern Operations Officer.

Evan Pamelý kept both these jobs ticking over this year on a non-Council basis but he is unable to do either after the 2001 AGM, so it is vital that we secure candidates for these important positions.

Please note the requested date for nominations to be received. This date is set so that all nominees can be publicised to members in advance of the AGM, and to avoid controversy such as was seen in 2000.

GENERAL

E-Mail Bulletin: The bulletin announced in the previous News-Letter has been a great success with around 120 members signing up.

Over the summer there have been about 2 bulletins issued per week. Obviously, there has been a lot happening recently, what with the Save Our Railways campaign and the ballast trains, so it is expected that the bulletins will be issued less frequently from now on. However, it is still an excellent source of up to the minute information, and any member with access to e-mail is welcome to join up - just use the form from the last circular or send an e-mail to the RPSI's address.

Members are also invited to contribute any snippets on Irish railways generally which they feel might be of interest to other members.

FFT On-Line: A few sample issues of the Society's journal “Five Foot Three” have been made available for on-line perusal on our web site. As and when time permits, further issues will be added, starting from the earliest.

Note this will be a long term project and, initially, only the text is being made available, but it is hoped to have most, if not all, of the photographs added in due course.

The earlier issues contain a fascinating insight into the hopes and aspirations of the infant Society, and it is interesting to learn what it was hoped to achieve and to compare it to where we are now as a mature Society. Also, the articles contain much of a technical nature in regard to the history of locomotives. A round-up of what was then the current scene adds to the historical picture.

The work in putting this information on the web site is part of a commitment to give members a better service and hopefully it will be a successful one.

Turntable: It looks like Iarnród Éireann will be removing the turntable from Drogheda station to facilitate a new railcar depot. It has been offered to the Society and an alternative location is being investigated.

Navan: It is being reported that the reopening of the old MGWR line to Navan has been authorised at a cost of IR£95m. The final decision has not yet been made but it is thought that the line will mostly follow the old route. Interestingly the Trim - Athboy branch is marked on the development plan.

Modelling: Member Alan O'Rourke writes: “For anyone interested in modelling Irish railways, broad or narrow gauge, there is now a newsletter for Irish modellers. There are two issues each year, May and November, containing prototype information, reviews and modelling articles. The content covers Irish topics in general. The editor is keen to locate and publicise new sources of information for modellers, such as drawing and photographic collections.”

Enquiries should be sent to: 72 Sandford Grove Road, Nether Edge, Sheffield, S7 1RR.

SALES

New Products: Michael Stevenson's book “Steam's Last Fling - The summer of 1969 on NIR” is now available, £12.99 plus p&p.

By the time you read this the new book from Mark Kennedy, titled “The LMS In Ireland”, should be available.

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