



February 2001

OPERATIONS

"Santa Special": The Society's Christmas trains out of Dublin on 10th December, scheduled to run to Greystones, were restricted to operating to Dun Laoghaire because of a landslide between Dalkey and Killiney which closed the line for the best part of a week, following weeks of very heavy rain. Apart from this, all eight Dublin trains operated successfully, with about 2,700 passengers being carried in total.

The Belfast trains also had a very successful season, with each of the main day-time trains being fully booked, and the evening runs to Carrickfergus taking up the overflow. The latter operated on 3 of the 4 days, carrying 150 to 175 passengers, and have been a worthwhile addition to the programme, resulting in less of a trauma at the station barrier for those disappointed at not being able to travel on the main trains.

However, the Belfast operation was also affected by a landslide, this time at Downshire on 23rd December - thankfully after the last public train had operated but before the set could make its final journey home. No.171 and train were stored at York Road over the holiday period and it was not until 12th January that the locomotive and train were hauled to Whitehead by an NIR GM.

Charter (1): The first operation of year will be a charity breakfast special in aid of Cancer Research on Saturday 3rd March.

The train leaves Great Victoria Street at 09:15. The fares are £10 adult, £5

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concession. The destination is Whitehead, with a stop at Carrickfergus. Attractions on board are Julian Simmons (of UTV fame), possibly a jazz band, and breakfast. Tickets will hopefully be on sale at the usual tourist offices, but for the moment can be ordered from Cancer Research at (028) 7136 1146.

The event is being sponsored by Kellogg's All Bran. So come along and get 'moving'!

"Steam Enterprise": The first of two planned operations to Dublin takes place on 7th April.

The first Dublin trip last year was a great success, being the first for very many years. The second, in September, wasn't just as popular, however. Please remember that if this train isn't supported it will disappear off the RPSI calendar again. It is important that every seat is filled as the operating costs are very high. On Friday evenings, except for the Arklow set which is needed on Saturdays, all Dublin Cravens depart to either Ballina, Sligo, Tralee or Waterford. So we have to pay for their haulage from one of these outposts in the very early hours before transfer from Dublin after 05.00 hours!

Easter: Three operations again this year: Good Friday - the usual trip to Mullingar; Saturday - "Bangor Belle"; Monday - "Easter Bunny". Tickets are available through the usual outlets.

Charter (2): This short run on 25th April will be from Botanic to Cultra.

"Northern Belle": Locomotives No.171 and No.461, currently in Whitehead and

Dublin respectively, are due to be swapped to allow No.461 to be taken out of traffic for her scheduled boiler review. A public operation, based on Dublin, has been organised around the event on 28th April.

It will run from Dublin to Belfast with No.461, and on to the Society's base, giving our southern members a chance to visit Whitehead. Return will be with No.171.

Contacts: Due to continuing efforts to streamline our administration process, the general contact and northern railtour address for the Society has changed, and is now:

RPSI Railtours
PO Box 171
LARNE
BT40 1UU
Northern Ireland
(028) 2826 0803

Also, a reminder of the contact details for Dublin-based operations:

RPSI Railtours
"Ashgrove House"
Kill Avenue
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin
(01) 280 9147

Tickets for northern operations: Phone or collect - Tourist Information Office, Carrickfergus to pay by credit card (028) 9336 6455.

Pay and collect from:

- Northern Ireland Tourist Board Office, North Street, Belfast.
- Bangor Tourist Information Centre, Bangor, Co. Down.
- The Linen Centre, Lisburn.

For southern trains:

- Educational Building Society in Dun Laoghaire, Malahide, Drumcondra and Castleknock.
- Iarnród Éireann in Travel Centre (Abbey Street) and Pearse Station.

Turn For The Worse: The turntable at Drogheda is due to be removed to allow the construction of a maintenance shed for diesel railcars. It was hoped that the Society would have been able to obtain

the table for installation elsewhere on the IÉ network in a suitably convenient location for Society operations, and indeed it was offered to us.

It now appears that it has fallen foul of a conservation scheme in the area and has been identified as a heritage item. The local authority has proposed that it be mounted as a display item in the station car park!

Representations are being made explaining that if the turntable is a heritage artefact the best way to display it would be as a working piece of railway machinery albeit at a different location than Drogheda.

MEMBERSHIP

Renewal: Annual subscriptions are now due, and this will be the final News-Letter until renewal. Thanks to those who have already paid, and to those who included a donation.

If you haven't done so, please send with your renewal a note of the year you joined the Society.

Gift Aid: A reminder - Could all UK members who already have a Covenant in place in the Society's favour please change this to a Gift Aid?

If you don't have a Covenant, please consider getting involved in Gift Aid. The Society benefits with an extra 28% of what you pay.

If you have lost the form sent out with the August News-Letter, please write in to request a replacement.

Standing Order: If you usually pay by this method and don't receive a membership card before the end of February, check that you have changed your standing order authority to the new bank account as given on the renewal form. The old account is being closed.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3: Some repairs may be funded from the money this locomotive earned, possibly the bearings among other items.

No.4: The ashpan, damper and drop gear are being completed. The pistons and

glands are fitted. Assembly of valve gear is virtually complete. Side tanks assembled and in the process of being fitted. Bunker repairs mainly complete.

No.184: Cleaning and protection taking place.

No.186: Initial dismantling continuing.

No.461: Currently based in Connolly shed.

Coach Bogies: One pair of UTA roller bearing bogies nearly complete - springs and brake gear being assembled. Next bogies planned are GNR type - needed for 9, and 88 in Dublin.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Dublin Set: Normal running maintenance is taking place at Heuston. Diner 88 has been partially repainted, and is awaiting overhauled bogies. It will go to Inchicore for fitting of bogies, and for completion of repaint. In the meantime, Park Royal 1416 is in Inchicore receiving panelling repairs and a repaint. With a rushed "Michael Collins" paint job, this coach had become the ugly duckling of the Dublin set, and needed attention.

Whitehead Set: Badly in need of an exterior and interior paint job, moves are being made to have at least the inside painted. With the lineside vegetation such as it is, there is a reluctance to spend a lot of money on the outside of the coaches.

C&W Officer: The poor presentation of the Whitehead set might be academic in the near future if some help is not forthcoming to prepare the coaches for their annual inspections, most of which will fall due after the summer season. The omens are not good for filling the vacant C&W post at the coming AGM, and with no one to organise the inspections they won't happen - therefore no Autumn or Christmas operations out of Belfast! We've scraped by before but it's looking less likely this year.

WHITEHEAD SITE

On The Move: The first Saturday in January still had No.171 and the train in Belfast. This however gave us a golden

opportunity to carry out an extensive shunt of stock, with "R.H. Smyth", within the Whitehead site.

Many items were moved into more convenient positions, and two underframes, one being from the last laminate bodied coach, were brought to the front of the site and replaced with other items. The NCC open coach 255, was put into the accessible siding behind the workshop and most important of all, No.4, with her motion connected, was moved into the Locomotive Workshop.

The vacated fourth locomotive shed road has allowed us to put our two diesel engines into well-earned cover.

Later in the month the very rotten body of 255 was reduced, with the help of volunteers and the JCB, to piles of bonfire timber and aluminium scrap. The underframe, together with the two above, will probably be cut up in the near future, after salvaging the bogies and brake gear.

GENERAL

Save Our Railways: The campaign to maintain, if not expand, the current NIR network wound down prior to Christmas. It looks as if the company will get more or less what it wants to upgrade the existing track, at least in the greater Belfast area, and to replace the railcar fleet. The success of the campaign is due in no small way to our own Robin Morton and the Belfast Telegraph newspaper.

Unfortunately, a new campaign has started as public statements by NIR are indicating that the Lisburn to Antrim line will be "mothballed" when the old NCC direct route is reopened, possibly in early March. However much we regret this decision, as the RPSI is not threatened by it, we will not be getting involved in the campaign.

RPSI Online (1): The e-mail bulletin has become a great success with just over 200 members taking advantage. Nearly 60 bulletins, now averaging about two a week, have been dispatched, and a great many favourable comments have been received about the service provided.

To join up, just send a message to our e-

mail address.

RPSI Online (2): There are now 8 back issues of "Five Foot Three" on the web site, 1 to 7 and 45. If you haven't seen them before they are well worth a read!

The web site continues to improve as it is constantly being updated with news and expanded in other areas. All our locomotives, and nearly all the rolling stock, have their own description with accompanying photographs.

In Print: The February issue of "Steam Railway" magazine has an article about the history and restoration of locomotive No.4.

On Screen: Hopefully, you will have spotted No.461 and carriages from the Dublin set on your television screens in "Rebel Heart" on RTÉ on Mondays and BBC 1 on Sundays throughout January.

The content might have led to controversy and mixed reviews but that didn't detract from the excellent shots of our very own star.

Collection: On the "American Mail" railtour in May last year, there was an impromptu collection among the participants for the No.4 Restoration Fund.

In round figures, the amount raised so far is £3,100, with a further £1,750 promised from a number of donors. Because of the Gift Aid scheme, a proportion of the total will be provided by the UK Inland Revenue.

Thanks to all who contributed.

WINTER MEETINGS

So Far: The meetings have been running successfully since October, but unfortunately the free publicity seems to have been harder to come by this season, with a corresponding reduction in attendance. Charles Friel is organising a questionnaire to see if there are any ideas for change or improvement. It's up to you now!

BALLAST WORKING

Home At Last: The ballast operation between Bleach Green and Antrim ended

on 25th November and "Harvey" worked right up until the final minute when moved on to a low loader at Antrim for the return to Whitehead.

This was a very successful project for the Society, with a respectable income, good publicity, and a chance for many on the operating grades to increase their footplate experience.

The line itself is currently seeing crew familiarisation runs and will be opening to timetabled trains in the next few weeks.

SALES

New Products: The new book from Mark Kennedy, titled "The LMS In Ireland" is now available.

Main Lines: A selection of branded RPSI items is always available from:

RPSI Postal Sales
45 Drumacanvy Road
Portadown
Co. Armagh
BT63 5LX

The principal lines are: locomotive outline badges, videos, postcards, posters, pencils, rulers, etc.

IN MEMORY

Philip Booth: It is with great regret that we have to report the death, after a long illness, of member Philip Booth in late January.

Those who have travelled on either the Dublin based operations or the annual May railtour will be familiar with Philip - he was the friendly giant who separated you from your cash in return for books, postcards, raffle tickets, etc.

Philip was a great asset to the Sales team and to the Society, and he will be sorely missed.

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