



April 2001

NEWS LETTER

FOOT & MOUTH

F&M: Unfortunately, due to the foot and mouth disease scare, and the severe restrictions recommended for those leaving and returning to the Republic, it was felt best to postpone the AGM until such times as the scare abated.

We apologise to those members who turned up on the designated day but, while we did our best to get the postponement notification to as many members as possible, the short notice made a written notification out of the question.

Company law dictates that an AGM must be held within 15 months of the previous meeting, so the latest valid date on which to re-schedule is 9th June, but because of an operation on that day the revised date will be 2nd June.

"Steam Enterprise": Another foot and mouth casualty was the 7th April operation to Dublin.

This was very unfortunate because there had been a bit of uncertainty from those who were booking and they were being reassured by the Society as Iarnród Éireann had confirmed the operation. However, only a week after confirmation they informed us that we had to cancel.

Again apologies to those who booked -

any information given out was done in good faith.

"The Corrib": At the same time as we were informed about the "Steam Enterprise", we were told that the railtour could not operate either. This information was not released straight away as it was felt that it would be better to announce a revised tour rather than a cancellation with a new tour to be announced later.

The delay before the announcement was spent furiously trying to come up with a viable alternative based wholly in the north.

It would be the intention to operate "The Corrib" as publicised next May.

"Northern Belle": Not one of our normal operations, but an attempt to recoup some of the cost of swapping locomotives No.171 and No.461. We were not made aware of the intention to cancel this operation until a letter to that effect arrived from Iarnród Éireann in the second week of April, but at that point the decision had already been taken by the Operations Committees that No.171 would be required for the revised May railtour and wouldn't be going to Dublin just yet anyway.

OPERATIONS

Cancer Research Charter: The train on 3rd March operated as planned

(hauled by NIR GM 111) despite the fact that No.85 couldn't run because of a tube leak which appeared during lighting up.

"Easter Special": The usual good day was had by all, especially No.461 which excelled with a 9 coach train to Mullingar. Only 8 on the way back though as Park Royal Snack Car 2423 was left behind for some attention by our Mullingar squad.

"Easter Bunny": Because of some work being carried out on No.171's bogie, No.461 was brought north on Easter Saturday to operate these trains. On arrival from Dublin she covered the Bangor line for the mandatory "proving" run before proceeding to Whitehead.

Monday was a very successful day with huge crowds making their way to Bangor for the Easter entertainment. The only slight problem was when No.461 was unable to take water at Central before operating the second train to Bangor. The normal hydrant was out of action - presumably due to the construction work currently taking place. No.461 was despatched to the depot at York Road for water, and her place on the outward leg was taken by NIR 111. No.461 followed light engine and was able to take up her place on the return trip.

British Fertility Society Charter: An evening run is scheduled for 25th April from Belfast Botanic to Cultra and return for delegates to a conference.

"Belfast & Northern Counties": The replacement May railtour will be operated solely in the North, and based in Belfast. It was hoped to stay in Portrush or Londonderry on the Saturday night but due to the short notice this wasn't possible.

However, what looks to be an interesting tour has been arranged and it is hoped that sufficient members and friends of the Society will travel to make it a success.

"Steam & Jazz": All being well, it is planned to operate on 25th May to the usual mystery destination format.

"Dublin Shuttle": Fancy a trip to Greystones or Maynooth? You can do either or both on 27th May with two trains to Maynooth and one to Greystones.

MEMBERSHIP

Thanks: To all members who renewed promptly, a big thank you. Also to members who had the hassle of changing their standing order authority, sorry for the inconvenience, but we now have daily access to the accounts and that means a quicker turn-around in converting your payments into membership cards.

Some members have asked why not use the Direct Debit system rather than standing orders. Well, the answer is that our bank has told us we do not have the volume of transactions to qualify. Sorry!

Gift Aid: A big push has been made by the Secretary to get as many UK members as possible to join up to the Gift Aid scheme. Nearly 350 participants is over 100 more than the old Covenant system, but it is still only about 50% of those eligible. If you still have the form you were sent last year, please fill it in and return it. If not write in for a new one.

Remember, for each adult paying the standard £20 subscription, the Society can claim back £5.60 from the Inland Revenue - more if a donation is included.

WINTER MEETINGS

St. Jude's: Wednesday 14th March saw the last indoor meeting of the season. Charles Friel presented a selection from his recently acquired collection of the slides of E.M. Patterson. What was on show spanned the years 1946 to 1973, and most of these have not been

previously published.

During the meeting a large format photograph (Charles on No.3 "Harvey" during the ballast contract) was presented to Charles as a thanks for all the hard work he puts into organising the meetings.

One meeting of the next season is already arranged, but if you have any requests or suggestions for the other five please contact Charles or send a message to this address as soon as possible - the final programme needs to be finalised by the end of July.

WHITEHEAD SITE

Carriage Shed: The train's absence from Whitehead on Saturday 3rd March was taken advantage of by Dermot Mackie's site team, and two loads of concrete were laid in the carriage shed to further increase the area of floor now completed.

SALES

New Products: The latest release from Society video producer, Alan McRobert, is "Great Steam Journeys In Ireland". It costs Stg£12 or IR£15, including post and packing.

The GNR No.171 is seen hauling the ACE to Londonderry where passengers visit FVR. It hauls a charter train for Helen's Bay Golf Club on the day that a preserved trolley bus is delivered to the transport Museum. It also hauls a Strawberry Fair Special to Rosslare, stopping at Ballykissangel (Avoca).

Both No.171 and No.461 haul the 1996 International Railtour to Sligo with a stop at Dromod to see the C&LR.

Merlin hauls a special on the Dublin line and then the Portrush Flyer. On the return journey we stop at Ballymena to see the ancestral home of Timothy Eaton who founded Eaton's Stores in Canada and travel behind steam in

Canada.

Both No.171 and Merlin travel to Dundalk to celebrate its 150th anniversary as a railway town in 1999.

Finally, R.H. Smyth hauls ballast wagons on the Antrim to Bleach Green line.

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

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

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

GENERAL

FFT On-Line: Issues 1 - 8, 14 and 45 of the Society's journal are now available on our web site.

NCC Matters: The newly restored NCC main line between Bleach Green and Antrim is finally due to open with the new timetable on 10th June. The Lisburn to Antrim line will remain open for the time being with a much reduced service of three trains each way per day.

Look out for a Society/NIR special to mark the restoration of the entire NCC main route.

Bangor: At the time of writing, relaying is due to commence on the Bangor line in July, hence no August bank holiday trains this year.

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