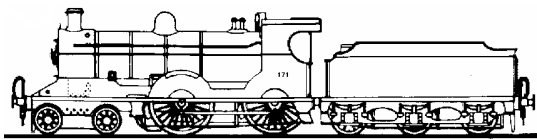


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



June 2001

NEWS LETTER

AGM

Summary: A very subdued meeting this year (Was it apathy?) saw the election of Johnny Glendinning (Vice-Chairman) and Jeremy Saulters (C&W North) to vacant posts on Council, with Philip Cox replacing Charles McDonnell as Dublin Operations Officer - all are very welcome.

Unfortunately, the post of Belfast Operations remains vacant, and with the retirement of Evan Pamey who undertook the post unofficially for the past year, the situation has become very grave, and it is not unlikely that events in the northern programme will start to be dropped.

OPERATIONS

"Easter Special": The Good Friday trip carried about 375 passengers. Arrival back in Dublin was punctual. Coach 2423 was hauled empty to Mullingar and placed in the shed, where it awaits repair.

This was the last run of No.461 from her Dublin base, where she has been the mainstay of operations since 1991. The locomotive has the distinction of being the first steam engine to enter Inchicore's main erecting shop since the end of steam. By coincidence, the previous

steam locomotive to enter there was the Guinness locomotive now owned by the Society.

British Fertility Society Charter: No.171 operated this charter from Belfast Botanic to Cultra and return on the evening of 25th April.

Prior to the charter the opportunity was taken to operate a proving run for the engine and coaches along the newly restored NCC route to Antrim. Return was via Crumlin.

Proving Runs: No.171 operated a proving run to Derry and Portrush on Thursday 26th April.

On Saturday 28th April, No.4 was scheduled to do a running in trip to Antrim. Due to work at a bridge at Muckamore this was cancelled. However, she did have a successful visit to the main line with five light engine return trips between Whitehead and Carrickfergus.

A further running-in session for No.4 took place on Tuesday 8th May. In the morning, there was a clearance trial for the lineside features, i.e. Mossley West platform, over-bridges, new canopy at Antrim, etc. The test was a necessary requirement as No.4 has the highest cab and widest cylinders of any of our engines. During the afternoon there was a run to Lame Harbour which was open for members to travel on.

"Belfast & Northern Counties": How to turn a potential disaster into a great success - that's undoubtedly what Evan Pamey managed, along with his dedicated team, on this his last operation before retiring to a more gentle pace of life in Donegal.

The weekend started with an Open Day at Whitehead on the Friday with four engines (3, 4, 85 & 461) in steam. Participants had the added bonus of a late afternoon/early evening programme of running-in trips between Whitehead, Carrickfergus and Belfast Yorkgate.

The tour proper commenced on the Saturday morning with a newly painted No.4 gleaming in glorious sunshine (which only seemed to get better as the weekend went on). Following trips to Bangor, Ballymena (via Lisburn) and Larne, No.4 retired to Whitehead where No.85 took over for the first public steam train over the newly relaid Bleach Green to Antrim section, and onwards to Ballymena again. Good use was made of the excellent piece of track between Doagh and Dunadry.

On Sunday, No.171 was the star and she took us on a non-stop run to Portrush (Dhu Varren actually, due to hand signalling at Portrush). A visit to Londonderry and the day's proceedings finished with a return to Belfast's Great Victoria Street.

The usual railtour round-up followed - on the Monday this year - with a visit to the remains of the North Antrim narrow gauge, and the Giant's Causeway Railway.

"Steam & Jazz": A lightly loaded train couldn't prevent those who travelled having a superb evening's entertainment. Members are asked to show more support for the second train which runs on 22nd June. It is an ideal train for parties, with over 4 hours of steam, music and dancing with the famous Apex Jazz Band.

"Dublin Shuttles": For some reason the Greystones shuttle loaded better than the two to Maynooth but, nevertheless, there was a reasonable turn out overall. It was

noticeable that, while we had a speedier locomotive in No.171, the extra driving axle and adhesive weight of No.461 was missed climbing Glasnevin and Coolmine.

"Schools Day": The annual event took place on 5th June with a number of schools attending for the slide show, site tour and train ride.

NIR Charter: To mark the reopening of the NCC main line between Bleach Green and Antrim on 9th June, NIR chartered a train to bring guests to the reopening ceremony. No.4 operated the special from Great Victoria Street to Antrim. From there the train returned to Mossley West station where the ceremony was held at the adjoining local council offices, subsequently returning to GVS.

The following day the same train operated twice to Antrim for the benefit of Translink staff and their families.

"Atlantic Coast Express": It is with great reluctance that the operation to Derry planned for 16th June has had to be cancelled. There are a number of reasons for this:

- 1) Because NIR were still modifying their new Derry line timetable, it was not possible to confirm a path for our train in time to allow us to arrange suitable publicity.
- 2) There is currently only one certified steam driver in the NIR ranks and he will not be available for a date later in June.
- 3) It would appear that the new timetable may not allow an afternoon trip from Derry to Coleraine. This was very popular last year and meant that the whole day's operation was more than just marginally profitable from a financial point of view. We would like further discussions with NIR to see if such a trip could be fitted into the schedule, but that would be better done when the timetable has matured and teething problems are ironed out.

Consideration is being given to a new date later in the year, possibly in

September.

Summer Steam: The summer season includes the usual mid-summer Jazz and barbecue trains, the "Strawberry Fair" and "Sea Breeze" operations, but after two year's absence an ambitious programme of "Portrush Flyer" trains has been organised for 4th, 18th & 25th August.

The Portrush trains return to their usual format of an afternoon at the seaside, with local trips to Castlerock. With the Bleach Green line now re-opened, the journey can now be made more efficiently. Fares have been held low and members are encouraged to spread the word as widely as possible.

MEMBERSHIP

Gift Aid: We are still trying to get as many members as possible to join the Gift Aid scheme. Over the next few weeks every eligible member (includes replacement of Covenants) should receive a form and you are asked to give consideration to filling it in. It is simple, costs you nothing, and would be worth a further £5.60 to the Society for an Adult membership payment, or £3.36 for a Senior payment - donations attract further rebates. You can join if you pay Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax. Note that the former includes tax paid on pensions and savings accounts. Let's beat the tax man here!

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: The locomotive was moved for the first time under her own steam on Friday 20th April. As was to be expected, a few minor leaks were experienced and these were attended to quickly. The locomotive was moving around the yard again on the following Sunday. A boiler inspection was passed on 23rd April.

The locomotive, although not totally finished for the railtour, looked splendid in lined out black gloss, freshly painted buffers, and newly painted numbers.

The intention is to apply the UTA coat of arms rather than the red hand crest

carried latterly.

No.171 "Sieve Gullion": Following her successful performance on the railtour, No.171 departed for Dublin on Sunday 20th May to be based there for the summer season.

No.461: The locomotive's final trip before coming out of traffic for boiler work was on the "Easter Bunny" trains when she operated to Bangor, the first visit there since the running-in trains of 1991.

However, No.461 did appear in light steam on the railtour participants' open day at Whitehead on the Friday preceding the tour.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Dublin Set: Coaches 88 and 1416 returned to the set from Inchicore after repairs and re-painting. A result of this is that coaches such as the Bredin and Diner 2421, which are still in 1995 "Michael Collins" livery, are now shown up as not being at their best. More re-painting will be carried out in the Autumn if time permits.

The generator in brake 1916 died on the Good Friday trip to Mullingar. This provides battery charging, beer cooling, microwave power, and a 220v socket in each coach for cleaning and maintenance. A replacement has been ordered from Italy which was due to be in place for the Greystones and Maynooth shuttles.

Diner 2421 will shortly return from Inchicore, where Society personnel have replaced both gangway tunnels.

Normal running repairs to the in-traffic set continue in Heuston. In addition, a PA system is being fitted to the eight coach set.

Work has commenced on 2423 in Mullingar.

Whitehead Set: Alan McRobert would like to thank everybody who came to Whitehead over the May Day holiday weekend to help with coach cleaning for the railtour. The extra help made all the

difference.

WHITEHEAD

Round-Up: Spring-cleaning has been the order of the day at Whitehead. Three new skylights have been put into the roof of the old running shed, the site has been sprayed with weed-killer and a large container was filled with scrap - all in time for the Friday Open Day before the B&NC tour.

In between times, the site team helped the Locomotive Department use the heavy lift to raise the front of No.171 for bogie repair, and dismantled No.186 and put the parts into the loco workshop for overhaul.

Still To Come: The longer evenings mean that we have started working again on Tuesday nights, with the Carlow diesel our main project. The engine has been re-started and new brake blocks, cast in our own foundry, have been fitted. The gearbox is still temperamental so any help from budding mechanics would be very welcome.

GENERAL

Models (1): The annual Erne Model Railway Club exhibition has been announced:

Annual Modellers Exhibition
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday 22nd September 2001
St. Macartin's Cathedral Hall
Enniskillen

Models (2): The Model Rail Scotland Exhibition is being held from 22nd to 24th February next. It appears that a number of Society members usually attend so, if you want to organise a party, contact the MRS Secretary:

Mr D. Boyle
80 Moorhouse Avenue
Paisley
PA2 9NY

Internet Update: The Society's web site now has a short history of how the RPSI came to be in existence. Follow the links

from the "Enthusiast Information" button on the Home Page.

Public Meeting: Translink is holding its annual public meeting at the Grosvenor Hall in Glengall Street, Belfast, on the evening of Wednesday 20th June. Managing Director Ted Hesketh is keen for as big an attendance as possible.

This will be a chance for you to ask all those burning questions about the new timetable, the future of the Lisburn - Antrim line, and the new diesel sets, not to mention the Larne Line relay (it still hasn't been confirmed that it extends to Whitehead).

SALES

In Memory: Once more we have to report the sad loss of one of the Society's very active workers. On Sunday 3rd June Arthur Wickham died peacefully after a short illness.

Arthur, for those who didn't know him, was the tall thin Father Christmas on the Belfast-based Santa trains. Remarkably he was also able to appear on the same occasions in civvies to cajole reluctant parents into spending fifty pence or a pound on some Thomas novelty for their offspring.

For as long as he was associated with the Society, Arthur involved himself with sales - in more recent years he took on the job of postal sales and manning the stall at the Winter meetings in Belfast. However, he will probably be best remembered by a generation of children as the man in the red suit leading a whole carriage of embarrassed parents in a rendition of "Rudolf The Red-Nosed reindeer".

To his family and friends we offer our deepest sympathy.

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