



November 2001

NEWS LETTER

No.186 APPEAL

The appeal for funding to restore locomotive No.186 has now been launched and I am glad to hear that the immediate response has been a good one. As the guy who organises the work that needs the money, I would like to take the opportunity to add my encouragement to all who might feel inspired to contribute. The locomotive has now been dismantled and the extent of her problems revealed. As well as the defects that were obvious from the start, several unexpected ones have reared their heads, not the least being frames out of line and cracks in the cylinder block. The result of this was that the cylinder block, motion plate and stretcher had to be removed, leaving the locomotive in rather more of a kit form than had been intended. A positive response to the appeal will let us progress this work promptly, rather than hang back wondering if we can really afford it.

We are still planning on an early return to traffic for No.186, which will give us not only an engine of outstanding historic significance, but one which can go anywhere and has the merit of being extremely "user friendly" - an important issue when the training of a new generation of enginemen is becoming a pressing requirement.

To anyone who has doubts as to the hauling capacity of the J15s, I suggest they talk to the timers or historians in our midst who will recount some of the exploits of No.186 and the class in general. And the sooner we get funding together, the sooner we can put the loco through its paces and

find out in practice!

*Peter Scott
Locomotive Officer*

OPERATIONS

"Portrush Flyer": The first Flyer season for 3 years was very successful and was marked by full trains to Portrush and Castlerock ("Atlantic Coaster").

In all, the Society has carried 800 passengers to Portrush, and a further 800 to Castlerock - not a bad performance after a long absence. Hopefully, next year will be bigger and better!

No.4 has proved herself well since April and congratulations must go to the Locomotive Department for the excellent job done in returning her to traffic.

"Sea Breeze": The operation on 11th August saw over 300 people carried to Wexford and about 150 collected at Wexford for Rosslare Strand and Rosslare Harbour.

Unfortunately, during the night before, the bar was broken into and some stock stolen. However, damage was slight - there were also two other Irish Rail dining cars broken into on the same night.

Dublin Shuttles: The trains ran on Sunday 2nd September - two to Maynooth and one to Greystones, the latter being by far the most heavily loaded.

Diner 88 ran a hot box on the first Maynooth and was taken off the train before the return to Connolly. The second Maynooth train was marred by a stone

throwing incident at Liffey Junction - a window in one of the Park Royals was smashed and a female passenger slightly injured.

"Steam Enterprise": The operation on 15th September ran successfully and was very well patronised despite earlier misgivings. For the first time, tickets were sold from Dundalk and a good sized party boarded there.

No.85 performed well and all on board the train had an enjoyable journey.

"Atlantic Coast Express": Although the train of No.4 and 6 coaches was lightly loaded, there was a full complement on the local service from Derry to Coleraine, and a comfortably filled coach tour into the hills of Donegal for the Glenveagh National Park.

The only disappointment on the day was a series of late-running and failing railcars which continually delayed the train during the latter part of the day. Despite keeping to the sectional timings (and an NIR team with a radar speed gun was out checking that we did), we arrived back in Belfast 70 minutes late.

It would appear that there is just not enough spare track capacity on the Derry line to allow for recovery from late running - even on a Sunday!

"Broomstick Belle": A great day was had by all and, despite slacks all over the Lame line (in both directions), the two well-filled trains managed to keep roughly to time.

The vast majority of the children were in fancy dress and everyone had a wonderful time. The travelling magicians did good work producing a seemingly endless supply of balloon hearts, dogs and goblins, and also handing out prizes for best fancy dress.

"Santa Special": For the first time ever, the Society is operating "Santa Special" trains from Londonderry. On 2nd December, and replacing the "Coleraine Shopper" of previous years, there will be a return trip from Derry to Castlerock. All the usual Santa and Christmas facilities will be included.

Due to pathing difficulties, the outward train to Londonderry will be on the Saturday. Members are welcome to travel on the (nominally) empty carriages to and from

Derry. If you wish to travel on these, there are NIR connecting trains at 15:30 from Derry on Saturday and 10:20 (connect Derry) or 14:10 (connect Castlerock) from Belfast on Sunday.

Booking forms are included for all the usual Christmas trains from Dublin and Belfast.

Charters: A private charter with coaches 351 and 1142, operated to Greystones on Monday 3rd September.

A charter operated on Sunday 14th October for the Leixlip Town Commissioners. There were two well-filled trains from Leixlip to Enfield. No running problems were encountered and No.171 took it all in her stride, even on the wet rails up the bank at Glasnevin.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": The locomotive is in poor mechanical condition and its boiler is approaching the end of its 10 year life.

No.4: Heating equipment is to be fitted before the Christmas operations. Electrics for lights and speedometer also to be completed.

No.171 "Sieve Gullion": In traffic until summer 2002.

No.186: General overhaul progressing on "essentials only" basis. Removal of defective stays complete, new stay material received. Replacement of seam rivets by copper patch screws under way. Boiler now stood up on end to facilitate fitting of new copper ring patch and tube plate. Dismantling and cleaning of components progressing. Cylinder block removed due to breaking of frame bolts and heavy corrosion between block and frame. Several cracks in block, repairable. Motion plate and stretcher plate in very bad order, slack rivets, frames out of line, re-riveting under way. The frames have been sand-blasted and painted in bauxite-coloured undercoat. The driving wheels have been profiled on the wheel lathe. Machining of crank pins under way.

No.461: Some preliminary boiler dismantling has been carried out to assess condition. Known major items are copper firebox plate-work, seam rivets and stays. Tyre thickness to be assessed.

Carlow Diesel: The first ever RPSI rostered use of the 'Carlow' diesel occurred on the morning of the "Broomstick Belle" operation.

The Ruston locomotive has undergone a prolonged overhaul on an 'as time permits' basis. After much protracted head-scratching, the final problem which had everyone stumped appears to have been an oil pipe to the gearbox of insufficient capacity, leading to overflow and loss of oil.

The locomotive proved her worth during the shunt on the Sunday morning and again while shunting the carriages away in the evening. Her easy handling of five coaches is particularly pleasing - a useful addition to the Whitehead based fleet.

Incidentally, does anyone have thoughts regarding what to number the Carlow engine? It was thought it was "4" at one stage, but it was never verified. A diesel loco numbering system using the prefix "D" has some merits - it could be D1. Any suggestions welcome!

Workshop: Installation of electrics proceeding slowly. Lifting equipment (cranes and slings) now numbered in a "plant register" and identification plates fitted. A slotting machine has been donated by courtesy of Gypsum Industries at Kingscourt, through the good offices of member Charles McDonnell - machine delivered to Whitehead.

No.131: The Iarnród Éireann staff magazine, Rail Brief, featured a short report in its September issue in which it was stated that the RPSI have won the contract to restore the No.131's motion, with a view to it returning to traffic.

While this report is not untrue, it is a bit misleading. The fact of the matter is that the whole project requires substantial funding and none has yet been identified, either as to the source or how much might be available.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Vandals: Following its removal from the train with a hot box on 2nd September, GNR Diner 88 has been badly vandalised at Maynooth. All the windows were smashed and some internal damage was sustained. The coach is now back under

cover at Inchicore.

Whitehead: 91 has had a tapered shim fitted to its van end bogie to correct a misalignment. Its bearing blocks have been adjusted. Work is now progressing with GNR(I) type bogie set - needed for 9.

A wheelset was sent to Dublin for No.88 following hot box problems

On Show: To allow the general public a chance to see the fine restoration work carried out on 351, the Irish State Coach, it is planned to exhibit it and the preserved TPO for 3 weeks commencing Monday 12th November at Dublin's Pearse Station.

ON-LINE

Bulletins: If you have submitted your e-mail address to the Society and have not yet received a Bulletin, or they have ceased (there is one a week on average), please send a message to that effect to the e-mail address below (it's also on the reverse of your membership card). Don't forget to let us know if your address changes or if you no longer have an e-mail address.

Over 300 members now receive news updates this way, and the service does seem to be appreciated.

Membership and general queries can also be dealt with.

Extras: There have been a few additions to the web site, i.e. more issues of "Five Foot Three", a list of film work, a gallery page and an account of how the Society came to be set up.

MEMBERSHIP

Standing Orders: The bank accounts into which standing order subscriptions were previously paid have now been closed. Members who pay by standing order, and who have not changed the details on their mandates should now take steps to do so. There have been numerous letters and reminders in the News-Letter as to how to go about making the change.

If your payment details are not modified by 1st February 2002, your bank will still try to make the usual payment into a non-existing bank account. Most likely the

payment will simply be returned to your account but it is possible that it could go astray - you have been warned!

Euro Zone: Unfortunately, there is a very short period (about 6 weeks) when Euros and Irish Pounds will be valid alongside each other. For that reason, from the new year, all membership subscriptions (or any other payments to the Society) from the Republic should be in Euros, or Sterling.

WHITEHEAD

Summer Past: The Summer mid-week project for the Site team was to get the Carlow diesel working reliably. This required work on the petrol driven donkey engine, which drives a pump for compressed air to start the main diesel engine. This included a reconditioned carburettor and a modified fuel tank. The oil in the gearbox was changed to a heavier grade and this seemed to give the desired power.

As is reported in the Locomotive section, the problem was eventually overcome, with the help of Peter Scott, allowing a successful shunt of several coaches and an engine.

Five large crossing timbers in the turnout outside the carriage shed were replaced with 10 interlaced concrete sleepers in time for the "Broomstick Belle".

BELFAST MEETINGS

Round-Up: The season got off to a great start in October when John Laird presented his views on Ulster's railways in 1961, 1962 and 1963.

On 14th November it's Ron White of ColourRail, and on 12th December Charles Friel is looking at railways around the Dundalk area.

Don't forget the second Wednesday in each month until March.

GENERAL

EurOld Notes: A lot of members outside the Republic of Ireland may be holding a small amount of Irish pounds for future use. You should be aware that these will not be

legal tender for much longer. It seems that after 9th February 2002 only the Euro will be valid.

If you think it is not worthwhile changing what you hold to a valid currency, why not put it in an envelope and send it to the Society. As long as it reaches us within the next 3 months then, no matter how little, it will be put to a good use.

Presentation: In a short ceremony on Friday 26th October, the Society was presented with a plaque in memory of the Society's late Chairman John Creaner by his colleagues at Napiers & Son in Belfast.

The Society was represented by Vice-Chairman Johnny Glendinning and Secretary Paul McCann. Also present was John's wife Sarah, his son and daughter, and some old friends from the Society.

It is planned that the plaque will be mounted in Dining Car 87.

H&S Post: The Society's Council would like to hear from members, north and south, who would be interested in helping to give the Society's Health & Safety regime a higher profile with the railway companies and the relevant government departments.

The requirements for operation under new legislation being prepared in both jurisdictions is that identifiable points of contact are established for H&S matters, and we would like to see such posts established at Whitehead and Dublin.

If you have experience in these areas, or would like to gain some, please contact Society as soon as possible.

Wanted: (1) A Conductor's money bag; (2) A UTA ticket clipper. Contact Henry Ritchie on (028) 9181 1505.

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