



February 2002

No.186

So Far So Good: Donations have been coming in steadily for the No.186 Appeal and we would like to thank all those who have contributed so far. Your generosity is much appreciated. Could we urge you to donate if you have not already done so as we are still a long way from our target of £85,000?

Livery: There has been some debate about which livery No.186 should carry when she returns to traffic. During her lifetime she has carried a number of variations, although those in the latter years were not necessarily authentic.

The RPSI has always painted her (and No.461) black, even though the correct livery was actually a dark battleship grey - smokebox included. In GSR days, the cast number plate was the only relief - no badge, no lining; but in CIÉ days the plate was removed and replaced by a painted number, usually (but not always) accompanied by a flying snail on the tender. Thus there is a choice (if we want to be strictly authentic) of removing the cast plates, painting the number (as in early RPSI ownership) and painting a snail on the tender or leaving the cast plate and having the engine just plain dark grey.

In the very late 1950s, a very small number of locomotives were actually painted black. Most of these were so treated in Cork, and consequently were seen around there or on the main line to Dublin. However, at least two "Woolwiches" received the black treatment, one of which, uniquely, received red lining as per the recent Bachmann model. This one locomotive was a Cork

engine, painted thus for the Rosslare Express.

One J15, again based in Cork, received the grey livery, but with the smokebox painted black - there's a picture of it in one of Tom Ferris's books.

And finally, some mainline locomotives (of 400, 500 and "Woolwich" class), one or two mainline 4-4-0s, a handful of Dublin suburban tank engines, and of course the three 800 class, were painted lined green by CIÉ. The GSR only ever painted the three 800s green - a much lighter shade than CIÉ's. No.800 in Cultra is incorrectly finished; it carries GSR markings, but is in CIÉ brunswick green. It was painted in this manner by Inchicore before it went to Cultra in the early 1960s. Some years ago, a group of RPSI members painted No.184 in lined green. While it looked very well, it was as accurate as painting it NCC maroon - no J15 was ever green since the very early GSWR days, pre-1905!

The most authentic option would probably be for No.186 and No.461 to be in all over grey, No.184 too for that matter! There is in the Society's possession a small sample of accurate grey paint which was obtained by a long-time member from Inchicore when he was a child.

However, a poll of the membership has been suggested, so if you are interested, some of the possibilities are:

- GSWR original lined green (even though the locomotive would have been in original condition when it carried this).
- GSR all over grey, with cast number plate (which is technically accurate).
- CIÉ all over grey, with painted number

(1)

and flying snail (also technically accurate). The painted number in CIÉ days was a pale yellow colour, but the "snail" was in a nondescript light green colour, called "eau-de-nil".

- Black with GSWR number plate on cab side and unmarked tender.
- Black with painted CIÉ white/cream number on cab side and flying snail on tender.
- CIÉ lined green - livery never carried.

Donations and livery suggestions to:

No.186 Appeal
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OPERATIONS

Apology: Just after the November 2001 News-Letter was printed, it was announced that the Dublin "Santa Special" trains were totally sold out. It is regretted that members did not get a booking form in time - we hope to do better in 2002.

"Santa Special" (1): It was a very successful day for the first ever "Santa Special" out of Derry. Sunday 2nd December was a crisp winter day which saw a full train depart on the return trip to Castlerock behind No.4.

Unfortunately not many members took the opportunity to avail of the connecting trains to Derry, but those who did enjoyed a very convivial atmosphere in the dining car - the company was small, but the craic was great!

Our thanks must go to those of the crew who stayed overnight on Saturday to be available to operate the train on Sunday morning, especially those who spent the night on the train in Waterside station.

"Santa Special" (2): The popularity of the Dublin trains means that they sell out by early November. However, another day's operation was fitted in on 15th December. The first train of the day was a charter by the Inchicore Works Sports & Social club. This gave sufficient critical mass to run a second trip and thus eat into the waiting list. Unfortunately, there were only

sufficient paths for two trips on a Saturday. A new feature this year was a system whereby each customer got an allocated seat, which allowed faster departure of trains. For example, on one special No.171 went through Tara Street with a Dart 2 minutes behind but did not delay it. Another innovation, thanks to Charles McDonnell and Donal Murphy, was a PA system throughout the train. Park Royal 1383 had two bays of seats converted for serving teas and cakes.

Bray proved to be an excellent destination, with enough platform space for children, young and old, to get a look at the locomotive - not always possible in Maynooth and Greystones.

In all, 8 trains operated, all filled to capacity.

"Santa Special" (3): With more trains being operated out of Belfast, they tend not to be as crowded as those in Dublin. The number of tickets sold is 10 - 20 less than the total number of seats available and with the extra evening trains there tends to be few disappointed travellers.

On the first day it was intended that only the two trains to Whitehead would be operated, with the evening train to Carrickfergus only running on the other 3 days. However, a last minute enquiry from the Sargent Cancer Care For Children resulted in the train being run on Sunday exclusively for the children and families helped by the charity.

A total of 12 trains operated, all behind No.4, and all filled virtually to capacity. A special thanks to those few members who turned out to help, especially if they did it more than once - or on every train in a few cases. Well done, you helped to show the Society in a very favourable and professional light.

"Easter Special": The traditional jaunt to Mullingar on Good Friday (29th March) will be the first public operation of 2002.

"Easter Bunny": Northern Ireland Railways have officially informed the Society that they will not be able to operate our planned trains to Bangor at Easter (1st, 6th & 7th April) due to the relaying scheme being projected to over-run. The first was the "Easter Bunny" sponsored by North Down Borough Council. The others were

(2)

charters by Belfast City Council in connection with their "Titanic Festival".

It is intended to re-schedule the "Easter Bunny" operations to run to Whitehead; it is hoped the "Titanic" operations may be run next year.

Dublin Shuttles: Two trains will be operated to Greystones with No.171 on 21st April.

Corrib:: Planning for the May railtour continues steadily and we would ask that all intending participants return their advance booking forms to allow the organisers to book the relevant facilities.

DIESEL SPECIAL

Diesel Data: Some members may not be fully aware of the existence, history and capabilities the Society's diesel fleet as they come a poor second to the higher profile steam locomotives.

Railcar No.1: This could be said to be on the back burner, being an example of a vehicle which it is desirable to preserve but which, for the time being at any rate, does not have a role in the RPSI's field of operations. Some dismantling of mechanical parts took place a few years ago, and replacement bus engines were obtained, but since then the position has remained fairly static.

No.23 Planet 4wd, ex-Irish Shell: Over the years this puny machine has earned its keep on all manner of odd jobs around the Whitehead site where its frequent companion is the ex-NCC hand crane. A tendency to mingle its engine coolant with lubricant has not yet been fully overcome. Only the lowest of its three gear ratios is usable at present but since it does not travel far this is not really a problem. Although it will now play second fiddle to the Ruston it has the advantage that, batteries permitting, one can just step on and start it like a car. It is believed the number comes from Shell's system for the whole British Isles.

No.1 Ruston 4wd (RH382827/1955): In the news recently because of its return to traffic, this is an ex-Comhlucht Siúrc Eireann shunter from the Carlow sugar factory. The overhaul of its engine was carried out a few years ago by the Government Training Centre at Felden

House, Newtownabbey, the remaining work being done on an "as and when" basis at Whitehead. Current work is basically a general tidying up, although there could be a plan to fit it with a vacuum brake exhauster to make it more suitable for carriage shunting.

There was some head-scratching as to what its running number should be but, as far as can be ascertained, none of the diesels at the various sugar factories appear to have had one. Since it was felt desirable that it should have some appellation other than "the Carlow Diesel" the number '1' has recently been applied to it.

Unilok: Formerly employed at Adelaide yard, this quaint machine was donated by NIR and lay out of use at Whitehead for a couple of years until overhauled and repainted as a generous gesture by Coastal Containers in Belfast. It has a VW Beetle (not the modern poser-car) engine. Since its road/rail capability was obviously designed for a paved yard its scope of activity at Whitehead is limited to the shed area. It incorporates a hydraulic lift intended to engage with the buffers of wagons, thereby increasing its adhesion. Unfortunately, locomotives and carriages have attachments which prevent the Unilok's body going far enough under them to achieve this. However, it also has a drawbar and has shown itself, even without the extra weight, to be capable of moving locomotives within the shed which could be much appreciated by those who would otherwise have to labour with pinch bars.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG "Guinness": After a 12 year stay at Downpatrick, the locomotive was returned to Whitehead on Friday 28th December.

A team of about 10, led by Peter Scott, started to gather at Downpatrick from early morning. Being the time of year it was, not everybody was on time - were there many sore heads? However, those waiting were very pleased to find that the adjoining Safeways cafe did a splendid Ulster Fry for only £1.50. Suitably replenished the team set to work and soon had "Guinness" on a low-loader, with the help of one of Downpatrick's diesel shunters and an

intermediate flat wagon.

Safely back at Whitehead, the locomotive awaits assessment as to what work needs to be done to put her back into traffic. It is hoped that the repairs will be less than those required for our other No.3, "R.H. Smyth". So it may be that "Guinness" will be seen first on the train rides, etc.

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": In work-weary condition at Whitehead.

No.4: Currently the main engine for operating northern trains.

No.171 "Sieve Gullion": Currently shedded at Inchicore.

No.461: Being dismantled at Whitehead as time permits.

Carlow Diesel: In traffic, with painting and cab floor complete.

Workshop: Installation of electrics proceeding. Tool store and elevated office being built at Larne end.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

351: The Irish State Coach was on display at Dublin's Pearse station for 3 weeks in November. The coach was located in the bay platform on the northbound platform with the TPO, and next to the OHLE train. The TPO was complete with mailbags and mock mail in the carefully labelled pigeon holes. There was a video presentation from RTÉ's 'Nationwide' programme with some of the restoration workers, which also showed the pre-restoration state of the coaches - in a very bad condition.

Sponsorship for the exhibition was obtained and this went towards paying for security cover for the vehicles.

Dublin Set: Brake 1916 has had all its seats re-upholstered and 1142 has had new corridor carpet fitted.

Diner 88 is in Inchicore, and repairs on the bogies are proceeding. An opportunity will be taken to repaint this coach, where persistent problems have arisen with blistering of paint. One side has been rubbed down to metal, and work will shortly recommence on the other side. Re-glazing work has started.

Work is proceeding on roof repairs and a partial interior refit of diner 2421. This will

involve a new ceiling, enlarged bar area, and re-upholstery in the style of 1916.

Dublin Storage: Following the start of preparatory work for the extension to Heuston station in Dublin, a number of the storage sidings have been disconnected. This has resulted in the Society's southern carriage set being rendered homeless. From 17th January temporary refuge was found at Inchicore. However, this may be short-lived as there will be pressure on Inchicore when further new railcars start arriving, possibly in about 6 months' time.

Whitehead: Three of the remaining NIR Mk2 carriages were moved to the Society's Whitehead base on Sunday 6th January. There were open standards 920, 924 and 926. They join diner 547 and 31-seat brake driving trailer 916 already at Whitehead, along with Hunslet Locomotive and all coaches remain in NIR ownership.

NIR have retained one of the set to act as a barrier vehicle for shunting DeDietrich coaches at York Road.

ON-LINE

Bulletins: The e-mail bulletins continue apace, with 341 members availing of the service.

Internet: The web site had a modest tidying up before Christmas and continues to be a useful resource for those seeking information on the Society, including the first 10 issues of "Five Foot Three" and 3 later issues.

Another new section has been added - the result of a major undertaking which it is hoped will be a research resource for current and future Irish railway enthusiasts.

The project has been undergoing for over a year and there has been a period of extensive data collection to produce an extensive bibliography in which it is believed the majority of books on Irish railways are included.

Most of books listed are purely Irish in content, but those which are not will have some Irish references or be relevant to Irish railway practice. Reviews and comments are included - written mainly at the time the books were published so should be read in that context. Where references are included in the Review

boxes, these will generally be 'RPSI', where the review was taken from the relevant issue of "Five Foot Three", or 'IRRS', where the review was taken from the specified issue of the Journal of the Irish Railway Record Society. We are indebted to the latter for giving us permission to quote from their Journal.

Readers aware of books not listed are invited to submit the relevant details, in a similar format, for inclusion. It is intended that the list will be expanded to include all books published on the subject of railways in Ireland.

Hopefully, this latest addition will ensure the web site is more than just a Society information centre, but a valuable repository for those seeking information on Irish railways, both modern and historic.

MEMBERSHIP

Status: Could we remind those members who are entitled to claim the Senior rate (over 65) to let us know that they are eligible.

It is important that we are aware of your status because we are charged VAT on subscriptions, and if you elect to pay the Adult rate (or more) we than can put the extra down as a donation, which isn't liable for tax.

Standing Orders: All payments have been processed so if you have not yet received a card check that your bank has made the payment. You did remember to change the destination bank account as requested last year, didn't you?

Euro: Now that the subscriptions are starting to come in for membership renewal, we can report that the changeover to the Euro seems to have been painless. Since 1st January we have received no cheques in Irish punts.

BELFAST MEETINGS

Round-Up: With 5 of the winter's meetings behind us we can look back on what was another successful season.

Happy Birthday: At the 14th November meeting, long-time member and radio personality, Tom McDevitte, was honoured on the occasion of his 90th birthday by

tributes from Charles Friel and Willie John Carlin. A presentation was made to Tom of a painting of CDR and GNR engines leaving Strabane station.

Tom, being Tom, couldn't let the opportunity pass without a few anecdotes and lines of poetry. He also paid tribute to the brilliant work done by Charles in organising the meetings.

WHITEHEAD

Latest: The Whitehead Site team, under the guidance of Dermot Mackie, has replaced a rotten crossing timber at the turnout at the Larne end of the platform road. A panel of rotten sleepers has also been removed from the carriage shed road and this will be relaid with concrete sleepers in early February.

GENERAL

AGM: Included with this circular is the AGM notice. Vacancies exist for Northern Operations Officer, Business Development Officer and one of the General Officer posts.

Policy: As part of the arrangements for becoming a registered museum, the Society now has an official policy for the acquisition and disposal of artefacts.

Help Wanted: The Society's President, Lord O'Neill, is carrying out some research on Irish railway art and is interested in:

- a) Locations of original paintings used in covers, etc. of Irish railway books.
- b) Sources of any other Irish railway paintings.

If anybody can help, please write to:

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