

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

North Star Hotel, Dublin, Saturday 20th April 2002

Lord O'Neill presided. 57 members were present.

Apologies

Dr Garret FitzGerald, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, H.Beaumont, A.Black, C.Boomer, C.Boomer, H.Boomer, T.Casterton, R.Chambers, P.Cox, J.Darling, J.Fitzpatrick, E.Gilmore, I.Gilmore, J.Harcourt, M.Harding, D.Houston, D.Humphries, B.King-Wood, P.Lockett, D.Mackie, C.Meredith, R.Morton, J.O'Meara, A.Richardson, I.Ritchie, Spurle Family.

Minutes of the 2001 AGM

The minutes were adopted on the proposal of B.Hill, seconded by W.Walters.

Chairman's Report

The report, previously circulated, was adopted on the proposal of H.Ritchie, seconded by B.Mullally.

Secretary's Report

The report, previously circulated, was adopted on the proposal of J.McKeown, seconded by S.Boomer.

J.Glendinning made a statement on the current position regarding the NIR network agreement: *In light of the increased Public Liability insurance which train operating companies now carry and the new railway safety legislation, NIR required us to review our network agreement with them and they did not wish us to continue operating under the old agreement after the end of December 2001. We have had meetings with them since September and are now close to completing the new agreement. Translink/NIR are keen to have us operating again and I am confident we will be able to operate our two-day tour this year.*

Treasurer's Report

N.Poots read his report:

Last year, by the time I took my first faltering steps in Treasuring, the financial year was almost half over, so there was a considerable input from my predecessor, John Beaumont. In fact, most of the report was John's, with a bit from me tacked on at the end. Unfortunately, while my computer still contains his input, I seem to have managed to mislay my own contribution. Thus I may have shot myself in the foot since, although I have no record of what I said, there may be those amongst you who will be able to quote my words back at me.

To begin with the Balance Sheet, the bottom line might suggest that we are awash with money. However, as you are no doubt aware, the bulk of this came from the NIO award in respect of malicious damage to carriages at Whitehead. That money was put on deposit and has accumulated interest since then, albeit at a decreasing rate due to the steady lowering of interest rates. This will be referred to later, as will the eventual deployment of the NIO money.

Our activities over the past financial year showed a surplus of just over £17k, compared to £12.5k for the previous year. Whilst this is an increase of about 40% on the previous year, it represents well under 10% of our total income and, but for the NIO nest-egg, would not on its own permit us to engage in the major expenditure which seems to be imminent.

As you will be aware, our wooden-bodied coaches have a limited main-line future, i.e. the end of 2003. This is not because they have been shown to be defective but is due to what might be termed the "What-if" syndrome, which leads to apparently interminable Health & Safety requirements. Whilst there are others better qualified to speak of the technicalities of this, the net result is that, like it or not, it seems that we will have to acquire a rake of Mk2 coaches, several of which are already in store at Whitehead in what could be described as a holding operation. It is not yet known how much NIR will want for them but it is known that they all suffer to a greater or lesser extent from a congenital body defect which will require repairing.

Barclays of Kilmarnock charged NIR some £50k per coach for this remedial work, which could be carried out at Whitehead for substantially less but would still involve a sizeable sum. The project would almost certainly require the employment of outside labour, partly due to the fact that volunteer carriage workers are almost non-existent, but mainly because such as there are would not have the necessary technical skills. In addition to this it must be borne in mind that Mk2 coaches are air-braked, so appropriate equipment will be required for our locomotives. Looking at a worst-case scenario - and given NIR's problems with rescuing their own failed trains - the thought of a vacuum-braked train marooned in the midst of an air-braked railway is not a pleasant one, so it will be appreciated that, in addition to being unable to carry our customers in the vintage stock which they prefer, we will be involved in major expenditure to enable us to run at all.

Returning to the NIO money, it was suggested at the last AGM - and indeed, in Council - that a better rate of return could be obtained. It was decided that about half of it should be invested elsewhere and the advice of Bank of Ireland Financial Services was sought. The result was that £100k was placed on a 5-year deposit, predicted to earn around 10% p.a., and £100k in a managed fund. Unfortunately, the latter took place shortly before the events of 11 September which brought about a world-wide fall in share prices, the result of which was a loss of about £2k at Jan 2002.

From the Income & Expenditure accounts, it will be seen that, although income has fallen by about £14k, our expenditure has fallen by around £19k.. Significant drops in income are in donations, outside contract work and film work. The fall in donations may be attributed to our having been "between projects", in that No.4 had been substantially completed while the 186 appeal only got under way around the end of the financial year. That appeal, organised by John Beaumont, is now approaching about half of the target figure of £85k. While film work is totally unpredictable, last year's income from contract work was greatly boosted by the Henry Boot contract, about which doubts were initially expressed. Unfortunately, even if it had been pronounced fit, no interest was expressed in the employment of a small green engine on the Bangor line relay although subsequent events would suggest that, as on Bleach Green-Antrim, it might well have done better than some of the machinery which was employed. Commercial/Fund Raising showed a substantial increase which reflects credit on those concerned - John Friel's offerings at the St Jude's meetings must rival many a bookshop!

A large part of the reduction in expenditure is due to the completion of the State Coach project. Other areas showing a significant reduction are Telephones - why is my bill consistently more than that of our Larne office? - and Whitehead Coaching, the latter being a reflection of the lack of activity in that department. Loco Maintenance, always a major expense, shows a small but welcome reduction, whilst the increase in the cost of general administration and postage is almost balanced by the reduction in our phone bills. Happily, although we are by no means out of the woods as regards insurance, our costs in that field remained substantially the same, thanks in no small measure to our brokers, Marsh UK.

To conclude, whilst the accounts show an improvement on last year, with major expenditure imminent we cannot afford to be complacent and if there is anyone out there who is skilled in obtaining grants and the like I would very much like to hear from him/her. Meanwhile, my thanks are due for the help and guidance of the Finance sub-committee of David Humphries, Barry Carse and John Beaumont, also to Adrian D'Arcy of our auditors, Dunne & Partners, for his tolerance and for not charging us as much as he might! To our untiring Secretary, Paul McCann, who looks after membership subscriptions, including all the standing order and Gift-Aid complications. Last, and by no means least, to Wilma Cairns in our Larne office for taking so much weight off my shoulders and for doing a lot that doesn't appear in her time-sheets - her husband doesn't get paid at all but is by no means uninvolved!

The report was adopted on the proposal of B.Mullally, seconded by S.Boomer.

Appointment Of Auditors

Dunne & Associates were re-appointed on the proposal of J.McKeown, seconded by N.Foster.

Reports Of Operations Officers

The reports from the Operations Committees, previously circulated, were adopted on the proposal of D.Henderson, seconded by B.Mullally.

J.Glendinning told D.Henderson that he was confident that the May railtour and all proposed operations thereafter would run as planned. S.Boomer was told that contingency plans for the railtour should mean no changes other than diesel haulage from Belfast to Dundalk or Dublin.

Reports Of Locomotive And Carriage Officers

P.Scott updated his previously circulated report by stating that the No.186 Appeal stood at £34,000. Money was still slowly coming in but at a rate not likely to meet the £85,000 target. This would mean that some items marked for replacement would now have to be repaired to extend their life. However, he thanked all those who donated what was still a very significant amount. The recent survey of members has concluded that No.186 should be returned to traffic in GSR grey. No.461 is being dismantled for mainly boiler repairs, hoping that no unwanted surprises will emerge. No.3BG is being worked on as a standby job.

P.Scott announced that negotiations have been on-going with the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum for some time with a view to returning No.74 "Dunluce Castle" to traffic on the same basis as No.85. Agreement in principle has recently been reached. The project was prompted by a Society member who is willing to provide a proportion of the funding. Once agreement is reached, an application will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for further funding. The Society will have to provide locomotives on a rotating basis to fill the Museum space vacated by No.74.

He said that the Society was not at liberty to comment further on No.131 restoration other than to say that it is hoped there will be involvement in the project.

N.Poots apologised for an incorrect caption in the locomotive report in Five Foot Three, and also for a picture which was attributed to the wrong photographer.

No northern carriage report was presented, and there were no comments on the previously circulated southern carriage report.

The reports were adopted on the proposal of J.Beaumont, seconded by H.Ritchie.

Election Of Council and Office Bearers For 2002

The Secretary declared that there were vacancies for the posts of Northern Operations and Business Development. There being no nominations from the meeting, the following were elected to serve on Council:

<i>Chairman:</i>	Norman Foster
<i>Vice-Chairman:</i>	Johnny Glendinning
<i>Secretary:</i>	Paul McCann
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Nelson Poots
<i>Locomotive Officer:</i>	Peter Scott
<i>Carriage & Wagon Officer (Southern):</i>	Peter Emmett
<i>Carriage & Wagon Officer (Whitehead):</i>	Jeremy Saulters
<i>Belfast Area Operations Officer:</i>	
<i>Dublin Area Operations Officer:</i>	Philip Cox
<i>Business Development Officer:</i>	
<i>General Officer:</i>	David Humphries
<i>General Officer:</i>	Bill King-Wood

Special Resolution

The Secretary stated that a proposal to amend the Society's Articles of Association was withdrawn at the request of the Strategy Sub-Committee following a number of issues which had arisen since the resolution notification was circulated. There were no dissenters.

D.Henderson noted the use of the term 'Director' and was informed that the term is interchangeable with 'Council Member'. The Strategy Sub-Committee was named as: W.Coates, D.Humphries, C.Meredith and P.Rigney.

Any Other Business

N.Foster informed D.Henderson that there was no indication that the running of wooden stock on Iarnród Éireann would be further curtailed. D.McCabe stated that IÉ and government were aware of our situation and our needs and that heritage clauses were being included in the forthcoming legislation, but each case would be taken on merit. J.Glendinning noted that safety cases will be required north and south, and NIR are adamant that wooden stock must go by 1st January 2004.

D.Carse replied to T.Tynan to say that crew training on IÉ had been further delayed as the company was advertising for more drivers to join the scheme. He noted that steam training was considered by some to be an avenue of promotion and a number of past trainees had quickly left the scheme due to such promotion. Currently there are 2 drivers in the south and 1 in the north. J.Glendinning said that NIR have employed a consultant to draw up a training procedure, and the Society has had an input into this "Steam Standard".

D.O'Murchú suggested the Society engage with technical and professional engineering bodies to further the standing of our working members. On another question, he was informed that there had been no attempt to bring the northern and southern transport ministers together to further the Society's aims.

P.McCann told J.McBride that there had been some movement on the proposed museum at Whitehead – an application had been submitted for museum status, an acquisition policy had been agreed, Society stock had been catalogued, and a scheme had been initiated to investigate the conversion of the Stables to a museum building. D.Henderson was told that under the acquisition policy no vehicle could be sold until it is offered to other relevant museums.

D.McNamara was told that the Society too was concerned that the remnants of locomotive No.131 were lying in the open at Inchicore.

B.Mullally was told that the new Platform 10 at Heuston was unlikely to be visited by a Society train, hence no clearance trial would be needed.

Lord O'Neill asked for help in identifying examples of Irish railway art, especially very early scenes, for a possible book.

P.Scott stated that members should be under no illusion as to the type of carriages that Society engines will be required to haul, at least on some lines, in the near future. These will probably be air-braked and in a poor condition. Substantial amounts of money will be required to either convert them to vacuum-braked or to provide air brake equipment on our locomotives. He was also very worried by the total lack of carriage workers at Whitehead, and it was falling mainly to the loco department to progress the braking issue - money and volunteers will soon be needed in large amount. It is not yet certain what steel carriages are likely to be acceptable to both NIR and IÉ and the Mk2 coaches had been acquired to avoid them being scrapped and to ensure their availability should they be needed.

Signed: _____ ***Chairman*** ***Date:*** _____