



May 2002

NEWS LETTER

NIR AGREEMENT

As of 31st December last year, NIR revoked the operating agreement which has been in place between the company and the Society since 1989. Under a new proposal, NIR is asking for a number of radical changes which will affect the Society quite substantially.

The main changes required are:

- Greatly enhanced insurance cover.
- Steam crews returning to NIR employment.
- Total ban on wooden-bodied passenger stock after 1st January 2004.

As a result of lengthy negotiations and subsequent delays, the new agreement has not yet been put in place, and it was not possible to operate the planned "Easter Bunny" trains on Easter Monday.

At NIR's request, a decision was taken to withhold publicising the revoking of the operating agreement. This was agreed to, as at the time it was felt that the 3 months from December until the first planned operation on 1st April would be sufficient time in which to agree terms with NIR. However, there were disappointing delays from mid-December until early March when, pushed for a response, NIR recommenced negotiations. This was not soon enough to avoid cancelling our Easter operation, however.

Negotiations between the Society and NIR continue in the hope of an early resolution to the problem - we are confident it is a matter of when, not if, a new agreement is in place, and we expect it before the forthcoming "Corrib" railtour.

AGM

Report: The AGM on Saturday 20th April passed off very smoothly under the chairmanship of our President, Lord O'Neill. However, some very serious issues were addressed:

- Vacancies remain in Belfast Operations and Business Development posts.
- Operating agreement with NIR.
- Future operation of wooden-bodied carriages.
- Railway safety legislation, north and south.
- Possible return to traffic of LMS NCC 4-4-0 No.74 "Dunluce Castle".

For the record, there were no new Council members. However, David Humphries vacated the Business Development post and took up the General Officer post left by David Houston who retires after the stipulated 3 years in that post.

No.186 APPEAL

Running Total: The amount raised so far is £34,000. Unfortunately, this is less

than half our target of £85,000. However, it is still a remarkable amount and our thanks go to all who contributed so generously.

Survey: In the poll for the livery in which No.186 should return to traffic, the final results are:

46%	Grey as in GSR days, i.e. no Flying Snail, cast plate number instead of painted one. Cast plate with grey background (or course) but letters and plate rim polished metal.
21%	Great Southern & Western lined green - based on the best historical evidence available.
9%	CIÉ lined passenger brunswick green.
8%	RPSI 1960s - 1980s plain black, red background to numberplate.
7%	Plain black with flying snail and painted number, i.e. as it would have been had it been one of the locos that CIÉ painted black in the mid 1950s. (No J15 did in fact receive this livery.)
5%	CIÉ version of grey - with painted number on cab side and flying snail on tender.
4%	Lined GSWR black, i.e. red lining.

OPERATIONS

"Easter Special": The Good Friday operation got off to a slow start as the train departure was delayed by 20 minutes and unfortunately the bar did not open until nearly Maynooth as the stock had to be put on and the whole system set up.

However, the train left Mullingar on time and was back in Dublin before 21:00. Despite the problems, it was an excellent day, with all participants going home happy.

No.171 performed well, although it was noted that the coal burned very quickly. Water was not taken at Enfield in either direction.

"Easter Bunny": Easter may have

seen us off the mainline in Northern Ireland, but there was still plenty of steam on Easter Monday! With train rides at Whitehead, the opportunity was taken to steam no less than 3 locomotives, and the Carlow diesel (if it counts), for RPSI crew training purposes. No.85, No.4 and No.3 all found themselves in steam with various crews taking the opportunity to share knowledge on loco preparation and operation.

The locos were then alternated on train ride duty making for an interesting day's operating. Despite the early afternoon rain, the public seemed to enjoy the spectacle and the train rides. The diner and shop did good business.

Plenty of interested bodies could also be seen taking guided tours of the sheds and workshops. Typically, the sun came out just in time to put the locos to bed at the end of a busy day!

"Greystones Shuttle": No.171 operated on Sunday 21st April, with two well-filled return trips to Greystones. Nearly 650 passengers were carried, the weather stayed mostly fine and all the customers appeared to go home happy.

In between trips, at the Amiens Street (Connolly) shed, for some reason as yet unknown, a "Bundoran Express" headboard was put on No.171 and she continued with it for the second trip.

TV3 did a photo-shoot and a few interviews on the first trip. This was featured on their news programme at 5:30 p.m. that same evening under the heading 'And finally'. The item was good and portrayed the Society in a very positive light.

"Corrib": Arrangements for the railtour are now well underway. If you are unable to make the main event, why not join us on the Monday or Tuesday as we head due north with steam, or in search of steam?

"Hills Of Donegal": On 4th June, we once again head to Stroke City (local joke!) and take the choice of viewing the

city or heading on a luxury coach tour of Donegal.

"Jubilee Belle": Members outside the United Kingdom may not be aware but 2002 is the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth's reign. The event is being celebrated in the first week of June, and North Down Borough Council have chartered a train in the same format as the "Bangor Belle" of recent years - everybody welcome!

"The Cooley": There will be a number of locomotive swaps this year between Whitehead and Dublin. The first of these will be on 8th June and rather than bear the cost of the exchange it was decided to organise a tour around it. No.171 will operate a train of Cravens from Dublin to Dundalk. The carriages will be left there and passengers will have the option of a coach tour around the Carlingford Mountains and Cooley Peninsula.

The locomotive will continue light engine to Whitehead where No.4 will take over and return to Dundalk, where train and passengers will be picked up to be taken back to Dublin.

This is the first such operation out of Dublin for a number of years and members are asked to give it their fullest support.

Schools Day: The teachers among you are encouraged to consider taking your charges to Whitehead on 11th June to educate them in the ways of steam.

Summer Steam: Sunday Train Rides commence on 2nd June and run throughout June and July.

Visitors: On the evening of Friday 5th April a group of approximately 30 members of the Model Engineering Society of Northern Ireland visited Whitehead. The group were given steam train rides at the site and guided tours of the locomotive workshops and running sheds. One member drove down to Whitehead in his steam powered car! All seemed very impressed with the professionalism demonstrated in the restoration of our

somewhat larger steeds!

Tickets: Apart from the booking form on the Society's web site, tickets for Dublin-based operations can be obtained from:

EBS, Drumcondra
EBS, Malahide
IÉ Travel Centre, Dublin
Pearse Station, Dublin

Tickets for Northern operations can be obtained from Tourist Offices:

Donegall Place, Belfast
Carrickfergus
Bangor
Lisburn

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead: On 26th & 27th February, the body shells of NIR Mk2 coaches 934 and 935 were retrieved from Belfast Port where they were in storage pending transport to Britain for preservation.

The bodies, along with their bogies, have been moved to Whitehead to join the other Mk2 coaches already there.

Dublin: The worn exterior of buffet car 2421 hides a total interior refit. A new ceiling has been fitted, and the seats re-upholstered in the same fabric as used in brake 1916. One bay of seats has been removed, and the bar storage area extended accordingly. This will mean more space for standing patrons, by allowing beer kegs to be stored more efficiently.

Mullingar: Ex GS&WR coach 830, latterly Signals & Telegraph mess van 537, arrived in Mullingar from Waterford on Saturday 13th April. This coach is in good condition and has been stored under cover. Its purchase was funded by the Irish Railways & Transport Foundation, and its delivery to Mullingar by member Chas Meredith.

Redundant: TPO 2981 and Bredin brake AM15 are now on the scrap line in Inchicore, along with two air-braked Mk 2 coaches and a BR van.

The TPO recently featured in a railway

magazine query piece, by an obviously bemused enthusiast who saw a Royal Mail vehicle in Heuston. It was swapped for laminate 1470 in 1995 and served as a store in Heuston yard until recently. The stores have now been transferred to another secure location.

This is not the same TPO which was on display recently with 351 at Pearse station. That was TPO 2979, restored with the help of An Post, and currently stored in the Ramps at Inchicore.

Both AM15 and 2981 have been stripped of useful items such as glass and door fittings.

WHITEHEAD

What A Site: Spring is here and a young man's thoughts naturally turn to Whitehead on a Tuesday night! Where else would he get the romance and companionship of the Society's Site Squad?

Jobs for this summer include trackwork, gate repairs, paintwork and general tidying.

BELFAST MEETINGS

Round-Up: The last meeting of the season was the usual bundle of surprises from Fred Cooper - a record crowd attended.

Our congratulations to Charles Friel, and a reminder that he would like to hear your ideas for next season.

Books & Things: John Friel who manned the Sales Stand at St. Jude's over the winter reports:

The total takings for sales at the St. Jude's meetings for the 2001/2 season were £1,612. 33% from the sale of new books is profit. However, many of the items sold have been donated, so the true figure is probably in the 40 - 50% range. Many thanks to all those who donated books, magazines and videos. Special thanks to those who bought a video one month, brought it home and watched it, and re-donated it the next month!

GENERAL

Five Foot Three: The magazine Editor would like to do some grovelling:

Too late now to save me from censure by those concerned but please be aware of the following errors in the journal - caused by over-hasty proof reading of captions:

Page 35: Photo of 800 should have been credited to Sean Kennedy.

Page 52: Obviously not No.85 but No.171.

Page 60: Should not have the reference to corrosion. That was part of the caption of the photo on Page 12 and somehow got duplicated. No.186's cylinder block had been repaired and has since been refitted in the frames.

Several of the photos credited to John Wolsley should in fact have been credited to Irwin Pryce.

ON-LINE

Bulletins: Should you change your e-mail address or have problems with your current address, i.e. not receiving the Bulletins (nearly at No.170 now), then send an e-mail to the address below.

Web Site: Changes made recently include: a revision of the film and TV list; "Five Foot Three" No.11 added to those available on-line; the Society's Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association are now available.

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