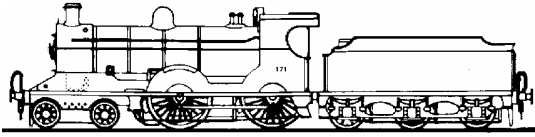


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



July 2002

NEWS LETTER

NIR AGREEMENT

Latest: On 7th May the Society agreed in principle a new operating arrangement with NIR. The main outcome was the lifting, with immediate effect, of the suspension of RPSI trains running on NIR metals which was in place since 1st January this year.

The first movement under the new agreement took place the same day when No.85 ran light to Dundalk to be in position for the "Corrib" railtour operating that coming weekend. The locomotive returned to Belfast Great Victoria Street in the early hours of Saturday morning, 11th May. The movement was made to insure against the possibility of bomb scares closing the Belfast to Dublin line and blocking the locomotive on the wrong side of any obstruction.

One effect of the delay in negotiating the agreement is that it was too late to put into effect a path north of Ballymena for the train scheduled for 13th May.

The full agreement has yet to be signed, and is currently with NIR for some minor rewording.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Future Plans: One of the requirements of the agreement with NIR is that the Society will work towards having our wooden-bodied carriages replaced by steel vehicles by 1st January 2004 for all trains carrying passengers.

Despite assurances from various sources that Cravens will be available from Iarnród Éireann by 2003, it is apparently now being reported that three-quarters of them are to be put through a refurbishment programme, and that the first vehicles (presumably not the best) may not be available before 2005, and most not before 2008.

That being the case, and the NIR deadline

looming day-by-day, Council has decided that urgent action is needed. A new Council Member, Paul Newell, has been co-opted to take responsibility for progressing the acquisition and return to traffic of a suitable set of steel-bodied coaches for operation with Society locomotives. The creation of the post is seen as an important step in securing our future ability to operate on the main lines of the NIR network in the short term, and on Iarnród Éireann in the longer term. This has come about as a result of negotiations with NIR and their determination to ensure nothing but steel stock runs on their network. While on a visit to NIR to inspect the vehicles involved in the recent accident at Downhill, representatives from the Lancastrian Carriage and Wagon Works of Heysham were invited by the Society to examine the Mk2 vehicles at Whitehead to assess what work might be required to put them into service on Society trains. Unfortunately, at present these coaches still belong to NIR, but the feasibility of purchase is being investigated.

Dublin: Reglazing of Diner 88 has been completed at Inchicore, and new light fittings have been acquired.

The coach is being lifted in Inchicore and the remetalled axle bearings are being fitted. Plans are in place for a trial run before its first passenger carrying run.

The internal restructuring in coach 2421 has now finished. A store has been fitted in the vestibule end of 1383 but it has still to be fitted out.

OPERATIONS

"Corrib": This year's railtour has come and gone. It operated in mainly sunny weather. No.85 hauled the Belfast to Dublin portions, and No.171 operated to Galway, and Knockcroghery on the Mayo line. No.171 had

some heat in the tender axlebox which has given trouble in the past and some sectional times suffered, but not to the extent that it wasn't pulled back later.

Apart from the wholly northern tour due to the 2001 foot and mouth crisis, this was the first tour for nearly 30 years to begin and end in Belfast!

Unfortunately, the Monday trip, which was to go to Castlerock or Portrush, suffered from the lack of planning time due to the delay in finalising the operating agreement with NIR. The train only made it as far as Ballymena and passengers have since been offered a substantial refund.

However, the successful bus tour to the Giant's Causeway & Bushmills Railway on the Tuesday made up for it for those who took part.

On the whole, another successful Society international railtour.

Charter (1): The downpours of that weekend impacted in a number of ways on our charter operation on Sunday 19th May.

The Society was chartered to take 320 scouts and parents from Booterstown to Wicklow. The train departed Connolly somewhat late due to signalling restrictions. These were caused by the flooding of Pearse relay room on the Friday. Pilot men were stationed at signals between Pearse and Sandymount.

Despite the rain, the atmosphere on the train proved attractive for the passengers. Although the weather was dull and wet when we arrived in Wicklow, it brightened up thereafter.

On the return trip, things got complicated - the need to have a full service on Monday meant that the line had to be closed, with suspension of DART services between Pearse and Sydney Parade. While we could in theory have delivered our passengers to Booterstown there was nowhere to put the train. Our passengers were detained at Bray and placed on a six piece DART, while the train then backed out and waited until 19:30 when we departed. After a brief stop at Sydney Parade, we headed into Connolly, the first train over the reopened road.

Charter (2): At 19:00 on Thursday 30th May, a six coach charter left Dublin Connolly to pick up passengers at Lansdowne Road. The customer was Iarnród Éireann, who were hosting this year's convention of European Railway Human Resource managers. The fifty delegates and guests were going as far as Wicklow, where coaches took them to a restaurant after a group shot beside the

locomotive, No.171. The other star attraction was State Coach 351.

The six piece train (1335 and 1383 of the usual set were left behind) then went on to Arklow taking water at Rathdrum. This arrangement was caused by the regulations surrounding the crossing of Ammonia trains. The guests were picked up again at midnight, with steam heating being an unusual feature of May activities. Arrival back at Lansdowne Road was only slightly delayed by a hot box detector stop at Greystones.

"Hills Of Donegal": Saturday 1st June saw No.4 haul her train to Derry. On arrival at Waterside station, two coaches were waiting to take passengers on a tour of County Donegal. The rain managed to stay off for the afternoon so a satisfactory day was had by all.

A late-running railcar meant that the Society's train was able to leave Ballymena early so arrival back in Belfast was actually before time.

Charter (3): Unfortunately, the Jubilee charter organised by North Down Borough Council, and planned for Tuesday 4th June, had to be cancelled due to delays in completion of engineering work on the Belfast - Bangor line. With so many changes to the infrastructure, a gauging run is required (as happened when the Bleach Green - Antrim line opened in 2001) and this will not be possible while work continues on the track.

For reasons outside our control, we have now lost two confirmed and one potential charter this year in the north. It is very disappointing, as charters are much easier to organise than public trains - they have no marketing costs and hire charges are agreed in advance and are guaranteed.

Following the cancellation of this trip, it is hoped to run a similar operation with North Down Borough Council on the August bank holiday (26th).

"Cooley": This operation scheduled to run on 8th June from Dublin to Dundalk was re-routed because Iarnród Éireann were unable to provide Cravens that weekend.

"Sea Breeze": Not originally planned, this operation was slotted in to replace the cancelled "Cooley" trip. It was possible because we are permitted to run our own coaches to Rosslare whereas we would have to use Iarnród Éireann Cravens on the Belfast line.

The trip ran successfully to Wexford and Rosslare. There were over 200 passengers,

hailed by No.171 on her penultimate main line passenger run from Dublin prior to her withdrawal for boiler overhaul in July.

A local trip was operated from Wexford to Rosslare Europort with about 200 passengers - the entire stock of 50 tickets at Wexford being sold in the 30 minutes before departure!

The day was spoiled for some passengers when a stone smashed a window in the snack car as the train left Wexford for Dublin at 17:00. Gardaí were seen interviewing a group of youths in the area shortly afterwards.

Schools' Day: Some members may be wondering (or maybe not!) what happened to the operation planned for 11th June. Unfortunately, there was extremely little interest shown this year and the event was cancelled.

Charter (4): Saturday 15th June saw a charter run on behalf of Newtownabbey Borough Council as part of their celebrations for Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee.

The day consisted of two return trips to Ballymena, calling at Mossley West (adjacent to the Council offices) on each leg. Given that there was football on television on the day, there were very respectable crowds. They were entertained by a brass band at Mossley West, and by a Jazz band at Ballymena for over an hour, as they enjoyed their complimentary strawberries and cream.

"Steam & Jazz": With about 200 passengers on board, the train with No.4 left Belfast on the evening of 21st June in the worst thunderstorm and downpour in many years. The return from Bleach Green to Central was under caution due to fear of flooding.

However, our passengers cavorted happily at Antrim, Ballymena and again at Antrim. A signalling slip-up on the return to Antrim put us into the rather cramped Up platform. However, there were smiling faces and cavorters still cavorted. The band were well pleased with their reception - said it was the best ever and were looking forward to doing it all again the following week (28th June).

"Mid-Summer Night's Steam": Another full train hauled by No.171 to Mullingar on 22nd June, the only disappointment being the need for steam heating.

Locomotive Swap: With No.171 due to come out of traffic by July, it was evident that the locomotive would have to come north from Dublin to Whitehead. It is planned that No.4 will take her place for the early part of the summer, i.e. up until the start of the

"Portrush Flyer" trains.

To avoid the cost of a light engine swap, it was planned to run the "Cooley" operation on 8th June, whereby No.171 would operate a train of Cravens to Dundalk and run light engine from there to Whitehead. The crew were to transfer to No.4 and take her to join the train again at Dundalk. In the meantime the passengers would be treated to a bus tour of the Carlingford area.

When it proved impossible for IE to provide the necessary Cravens coaches, the trip changed to a "Sea Breeze" on which our own coaches could be used. That still left the problem of No.171 getting to Whitehead. The very operation which we wanted to avoid (i.e. a light engine movement) was planned for Sunday 9th June. However, following No.4's trip to Derry, some repairs to her firebars were necessary. So her transfer to Dublin was postponed until Sunday 23rd June to allow those repairs to be carried out. The transfer has been further postponed until 26th June.

It now looks like No.171's final passenger-carrying operation will be the barbecue special to Mullingar on 22nd June. Or will it?

A further swap is due to take place on the 27th July when No.85 replaces No.4 in Dublin.

"Summer Steam": Further operations during the summer and into the autumn are: 6th July - "Strawberry Fair" (Dublin - Enniscorthy - Rosslare).

27th July "Northern Enterprise" (Dublin - Belfast - Whitehead), with an open day at Whitehead.

3rd, 17th & 24th August - "Portrush Flyer".

24th August - "Slievenamon" (Dublin - Kildare - Thurles - Limerick Junction).

26th August - "Bangor Belle".

15th September, "Atlantic Coast Express".

12th October, "Steam Enterprise".

Members in NI, please display the enclosed poster.

Coach Marshals Required: This request has been made before, but due to the urgency of the situation it is repeated.

There is a full programme of trains over the summer and they all have to be adequately staffed. There are also additional requirements on the Society regarding passenger control at stations as a result of the revised operating agreement with NIR, and extra marshals will be needed to fulfil our obligations.

Henry Ritchie is trying to compile a list of

coach marshals who would be available for rostering on these Whitehead-based trains, and/or as site guides for the Sunday train rides. If you have in the past worked in either capacity, or would like to do so now for the first time, please contact Henry:

5 Beverley Mews
Newtownards
Co. Down
BT23 7YD
(028) 9181 1505
jhr.ardsrail@amserve.net

ON-LINE

Gallery: A substantial update has taken place to the Gallery pages. Several new photographs have been added. Web Master Philip Lockett would be interested in adding more detail to some of the captions. If you can provide any more information about any of the pictures, then please email (plockett@hotmail.com) and it will be included.

There is also a large number of quite excellent photographs of Society locomotives on various tours throughout the years on the Irish Railway News web site. There are over 70 shots from as far back as 1975 right up to the most recent trips. See "Preserved Steam (RPSI)" in the IRN photo gallery:

communities.msn.co.uk/IrishRailwayNews
This, and the Society's own Gallery pages, give a fascinating historic view of the Society's operations and show just how widely travelled and successful they have been.

Other galleries of interest are entitled "Preserved Steam (Non-RPSI)" and "UTA Steam".

GENERAL

Free Travel Policy: The Society's Council have asked that all members be made aware of the policy on free travel on RPSI trains.

Travel on RPSI trains is free for rostered working members. To qualify, members must be rostered in advance by the appropriate Operations Officer or Council Member, and they must not occupy a seat which would otherwise have been sold to a passenger. To comply with our insurance requirements, members are reminded that all those who are rostered must be fully paid up members.

Non-rostered working members may normally travel free on one-day excursions provided they don't deprive a passenger of a seat. Such members will be considered to be

on "standby" for any duty which may be appropriate.

In the case of the Saturday and Sunday of the Annual Railtour, or any other tour taking place over more than one day, travel is free on days when the member is rostered. However, free travel is only available to members who have been rostered in advance. In all cases, a railtour booking form must be filled in for every person intending to travel (whether or not a fare is being paid). Railtour participants must pay for all organised accommodation in advance.

The railway companies now have policies on the use of drugs and alcohol, which our members, on safety critical duties, will be subject to. All members, either rostered and preferably also those on "standby", will be required to abide by these.

Book Latest: Regular Five Foot Three contributor, Laurence Liddle has a new book published by Colourpoint. "From Connemara to Cock o' the North" tells of the author's travels in Ireland, and of a spell in Scotland.

Model Railways: Erne Model Railway Club are holding their annual exhibition in September.

10am - 5pm
Saturday 21st September 2002
St.Macartin's Cathedral Hall
Enniskillen

The Friends of Cultra are holding a model railway day in the Rail Gallery on Saturday 9th November. If anyone has a layout or models they are interested in showing, especially if they are based on Irish prototypes, they are invited to contact the Exhibition Co-ordinator:

Ian Sinclair
6 Rutherglen Park
Bangor
BT19 1DX

Data Protection Act 1998: The Society holds data about members for the purposes of establishing and maintaining membership, and for the provision of news information, and for administering tour bookings. If there is any inaccuracy in the details held for you or if you have any other queries regarding the data held, please write to the address below.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS
148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,
Co. Antrim, BT36 6HJ.
<http://www.rpsi-online.org>
e-mail: rpsitrainsghotmail.com