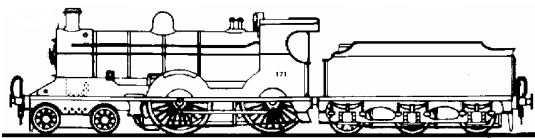


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



September 2002

NEWS LETTER

NIR AGREEMENT

Latest: There have been no developments regarding the agreement since the July News-Letter. However, the repercussions of the proposals regarding steel carriages are starting to take effect. See the details elsewhere about the Extraordinary General Meeting.

NO.4 LAUNCH

It's Official: After a painstaking 10-year overhaul of LMS(NCC) 2-6-4T No.4, RPSI Vice Chairman Johnny Glendinning arranged a belated re-launch event for the locomotive at Whitehead on 31st July 2002. Chairman of Translink and the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, Dr Joan Smyth was the guest of honour.

The guests were received in 1097 where they were issued with lapel name badges, and served with tea, coffee and scones in the diner. A number of members gave conducted tours of the workshops, etc.

With No.4 gleaming superbly, Frank Dunlop demonstrated to Dr Smyth how to drive No.4. When everyone had a bucks fizz in their hand the engine eased forward and through the ceremonial ribbon and back again. When she stepped down from the engine, Dr Smyth was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Anna Friel.

No.4 and train then carried the guests to

Carrickfergus for lunch and speeches.

OPERATIONS

"Steam & Jazz": On the morning of Wednesday 26th June, No.4 and train finally returned to Whitehead after the layover at York Road following the "Steam & Jazz" train on the previous Friday. The delay was due to very wet weather causing line closures. The whole train was hauled home by GM 111.

Friday 28th July saw the second of the trains charging out of Belfast with a compliment of 190+ revellers. No.4 had a spirited run up the bank through Monkstown and Mossley - one passenger commenting that it sounded like the locomotive was in the coach with him!

On arrival at Antrim the band were not disappointed as passengers made good use of the platform 'dance floor'. Similarly at Ballymena, whilst the crew filled the locomotive with water, the platform and our dining car did good trade. An atmospheric stop over at Antrim on the way home, complete with steam oozing across the platform and some lively jazz-fuelled dancing, brought the evening to a close.

A Fair Swap: The swap of locomotives No.4 and No.171 between Whitehead and Dublin took place on Monday 1st July. No.171 arrived in Whitehead around 19:10 on what was her final run before temporary retirement. It had been hoped she could have been got back in time for the last "Steam & Jazz".

Since 1968, No.171 has been like a wayward child, throwing up all manner of problems but gradually settling down to be a worthwhile and dependable engine (shades of Thomas!).

Many is the Whitehead volunteer who cut his teeth (and head, and banged his thumb, and whatever else the learning curve involves) on No.171, and not having her about will be hard to get used to. If other locomotives come on stream as planned, she could be out of traffic for 10 years. However, this chapter has still to be written and the authors are yet to emerge. As always, it is difficult making predictions, especially about the future!

"Strawberry Fair": On Saturday 6th July, No.4 operated the "Strawberry Fair", her first train from Dublin since overhaul.

It was a welcome return, as it was the arrival of No.4 in Dublin in 1988 that started the successful Dublin market. Of the eight coaches which made up the 'green' train that ran with No.4 then, only two now survive in traffic - brake standard 1916 and open 64 seater 1463 (snack car 2422 still exists in the Rail Gallery in Cultra).

The main trip to Enniscorthy was sold out, while the side trip to Rosslare was 60% full. A feature of these trips is the small but growing group of UK enthusiasts who travel with us.

Northern Enterprise: Our new venture, the Dublin to Belfast "Steam Enterprise" operated on Saturday 27th July. Apart from a very late arrival in Whitehead following a minor technical problem and a large number of slacks on the line, the day was a complete success with a crowd of over 300 travelling. Of those, about half continued to Whitehead for a visit to our depot where they were able to photograph No.4 on the newly-arrived train alongside No.85 waiting to take over for the return to Dublin.

Departure from Whitehead was with No.85 tender first, and there was a delay at Central as the locomotive ran to Central Junction to turn. Departure from Belfast was 30 minutes or so late, but arrival in Dublin was on time after quick stops at Lisburn and Dundalk for water,

and at Drogheda from where 60 people had chartered a coach.

The train operated to and from Belfast with its regular Irish Rail crew, Tony and Dan Renehan, and in Tony's case this was the first Inchicore driver to reach Belfast since 1911!

Gauging Run: Following the conclusion of the rebuilding of the greater part, and total relaying, of the Bangor fine, an empty gauging train, sought by the Civil Engineering Department (whatever happened to the Irish Railway Gauge Specifications?) and comprising No.4 and six carriages, successfully performed platform clearance tests at each Up and Down platform on the line on Sunday 28th July. The test which was carried out in increasingly inclement conditions, necessitated close visual inspection from the platform as the train proceeded at walking pace. The clearance now enables steam train operations to once again be operated on this line.

"Portrush Flyer": Saturday 3rd August saw the first train of the season with No.4 at its head. Operationally, everything went according to plan although passenger numbers were not as high as would have been liked with just over 150 on the train and nearly 140 on the "Dalriada" extension from Portrush to Ballymoney.

The second (17th August) train with No.4 got off to a slightly late start but after some further delays managed to regain some time. There were nearly 300 travelling on the train but again the Ballymoney extension trip was rather lightly loaded - obviously less popular than Castlerock.

Unfortunately, 24th August was not to be a good one for the Society as there was a disappointing end to the "Portrush Flyer" season.

Following some complaints regarding the coal, a stop for a blow-up was required at Dunloy on the return journey. However, it is believed that a modification of firing technique to adapt to the new coal may solve that.

A further problem became apparent at Cullybackey when the crew noticed that

something was not quite right about the locomotive. After examination at Ballymena and a slow crawl to Antrim, a decision was taken to detrain the passengers and they were returned to Belfast on the following service train (unusually a 450 class).

As the nature of the problem was suspected, but not confirmed, it was unfortunately not possible to give departing passengers very much information as to the reason behind the failure.

The loco and train continued slowly to York Road yard, the loco ran round the train and continued to Whitehead, where the whole show was finally put to bed at about 2 am.

After Antrim the engine had been very heavy on one beat and also had a light knocking which had increased somewhat by journey's end. It was suspected that there was damage to a valve ring and that was later confirmed following preliminary dismantling for investigation.

"Slieve Namon": It was with regret that we had to announce that the train planned for 24th August from Dublin to Kildare, Portlaoise, Thurles and Limerick Junction had to be cancelled.

It was out of the control of the Society. Availability of the Irish Rail carriages in Dublin, required to run on the Cork line, is never easy and never guaranteed. Unfortunately their hire was not possible for this trip.

"Bangor Belle": The three trains on 26th August were operated as scheduled, with NIR's GM 113 doing the locomotive honours on the first two round trips from Belfast Central to Bangor, with 111 doing the final trip. Our thanks to NIR for stepping in at such short notice.

European Architectural Heritage: As part of this event, the Society will be operating train rides and site tours from 2pm - 5pm on Sunday 8th September.

"Atlantic Coast Express": With No.4 out of traffic, the Society has no option but to cancel the "Atlantic Coast Express" operation. While No.85 is available in Dublin, there is no point in bringing her to

Whitehead as she cannot operate north of Ballymena due to restrictions imposed on her by NIR.

Autumn Dates: 27th September - private charter to Cultra. 13th October - public charter from Leixlip. 19th October - "Steam Enterprise". 27th October - "Broomstick Belle".

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1 (Carlow): In use for shunting - OK for about an hour then gearbox pressure fades. Had to be rescued by lighting up No.3 on Sunday 28th July. Problem to be investigated.

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": Boiler reprieved for 3 months from July. Steam test to be carried out.

No.3BG: Dismantling continuing preparatory to boiler and mechanical repairs, especially slack tyre. Tubes ordered.

No.4: Piston dismantled for repairs following failure on third Portrush train. Out of traffic until further notice.

No.186: Hydraulic test completed. Boiler now to be set into frames for checking alignment and erecting new smokebox. Tender in Wagon Shop at Inchicore, being assessed, hopefully repairs to start soon.

No.461: Cab removed, dismantling progressing preparatory to lifting boiler.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Mullingar: Work continues apace at Mullingar on the coaching front. One side of Park Royal 2423 has been sheeted. Work will now commence on the roof, following which work will commence on the interior.

The 3 coaches in this class ran as suburban 90 seaters, with 20 seats in the two end vestibules. These seats are not sold on our trips, and provide some circulation space. However, they are gradually being converted to other uses.

Purists would dispute the numbering of 2423 - 24xx was the numbering system

for catering vehicles. As this vehicle will not be a catering vehicle should it revert to its old number, 1419, or should it be given a number in the 19xx series as a brake vehicle?

Dublin: Diner 88 is out of the shops, and looks well in shiny new paint outside Inchicore carriage sheds.

Bredin 1335 is now under cover at Inchicore, and will receive attention to body and a repaint.

1383 - One end converted to a toilet. It is planned to convert the other end to a shop.

1416 - One end recently converted to a store room for cleaning materials and hoses.

2423 - Planned to convert one end to a brake compartment and the other to a wheelchair accessible toilet.

WHITEHEAD

Summer Past: The Whitehead Site gang has shunned the rainy summer and been augmenting their usual bi-monthly Saturday gatherings with the usual smaller summer gatherings every Tuesday evening.

Work completed so far this summer includes the complete relay of a 60ft stretch of track immediately outside Carriage Shed Road No.1. This section of wooden sleepered track was probably originally put down in the 1970s. Having been liberally spread with ballast for the official opening of the Carriage Shed in 1992, the track had split under the weight of locos and carriages and the split was finally noticed on the evening of the first "Steam & Jazz" train this year. Temporary restraints in place, the second "Steam & Jazz" passed off without incident and the July break was used to replace the whole section with concrete sleepers in just two days. Well done to all involved!

In August the team replaced the gate to the locomotive shed roads with the old level crossing gate from Antrim station. The gate can now be opened by one person.

GENERAL

"Small Ads": Some of you who travelled on our Whitehead-based train at Christmas may remember some filming being done, especially No.4 with a camera attached to her buffer beam.

Well, the results of the filming are ready for broadcast. It will be part of a series of short 'filler' films for the BBC by Iain Webster, entitled "Small Ads". Look out for them on BBC NI.

CD Glory: Member Denis Keenan has put together a CD of locomotive recordings from the "Corrib" railtour in May this year.

The track list is:

- 1 No.85 leaving Belfast
- 2 No.85 on Wellington Bank
- 3 No.171 leaving Heuston
- 4 No.171 climbing to Geashill
- 5 No.171 climbing to Woodlawn
- 6 No.171 leaving Athenry (return journey)
- 7 No.171 leaving Portarlinton
- 8 No.171 leaving Heuston for Connolly
- 9 No.85 Drogheda to Kellystown
- 10 No.85 climbing towards Adavoyle
- 11 No.4 leaving Belfast
- 12 No.4 climbing to Kingsbog
- 13 No.4 arriving at Ballymena

The recordings have been produced on audio quality CDs, not computer discs, which should mean that they will play on any CD player.

The CD costs £8, including post and packaging, and can be ordered from:

RPSI CD
18 Runtlings
Ossett
West Yorkshire
WF5 8JJ

Please make payments (no credit cards) payable to "The RPSI".

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