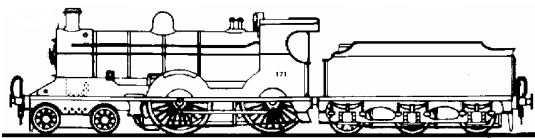


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



November 2002

NEWS LETTER

NIR AGREEMENT

Good News At Last: The negotiations regarding the new operating agreement were concluded on Friday 8th November with a special signing ceremony at Belfast's Central Station.

The signing, which took place in full public view on the main concourse, was attended by Translink directors Ted Hesketh and Jim Aitken, NIR managers Seamus Scallion (Operating), Mal McGreevy (Engineering), Granville Lavin (Safety) and Edwin McMillan (Administration). The Society was represented by Norman Foster (Chairman), Johnny Glendinning (Vice-Chairman) and Paul McCann (Secretary).

Copies of the agreement were signed by Ted Hesketh, Jim Aitken, Norman Foster and Paul McCann.

At the conclusion of the event, Ted Hesketh presented Norman with a specially mounted model of NIR locomotive 208 "Lagan" in Enterprise livery. He said that much hard work and many long hours had been put in to bringing the agreement to fruition and he hoped to see the Society operating on NIR tracks for many more years to come.

Norman thanked Mr Hesketh and those who had put so much effort into the final document.

It should not go unrecorded that the Society was well represented in the negotiations, mainly by Johnny Glendinning for whom the final signing

has come as a great relief!

CARRIAGE & WAGON

EGM: 42 members turned up for the Extraordinary General Meeting on Saturday 28th September in Dundalk - we didn't know how many to expect as there has been no EGM in about 20 years! The turn-out seemed about evenly divided between north and south (and 1 from England!). The outcome is that the release of NIO compensation funds for steel coaches was approved.

Mk2 Update: 13487, a corridor first, the first of the two Mk2 coaches from Heysham, which are being swapped for two of those at Whitehead, eventually arrived on the morning of Sunday 13th October after two delays due to difficulties in loading it onto the low-loader at Heysham.

It came on 4ft 8½in bogies, but these were put under ex-NIR 924 and this latter coach was sent off to Heysham in return.

The bodywork of the new arrival has been completely overhauled but will require some internal renovation. The currently livery is a red/brown undercoat.

The next coach, ex-BR brake standard 9382, was due at the end of November and it will be exchanged for 926.

4 bogies from the Mk2 carriages at Whitehead have been sent to Heysham for overhaul - there were already 2 there from a previous NIR vehicle. The first 2 will return to Whitehead at the end of November. These will be swapped for

another 2 for overhaul.

When work starts on the coaches at Whitehead in the new year, it is intended that the order of work will be: 13487, 934, 9382, 547.

Whitehead Set: North Atlantic brake 91 is in the workshops having a wheel flat attended to.

OPERATIONS

European Architectural Heritage: This event took place at Whitehead on Sunday 8th September. The idea is that sites of architectural heritage provide free access to their premises for the public. The RPSI format is train rides and guided tours of our depot. A satisfying steady flow of visitors took part.

Running-In: A running-in trip for No.4 on 22nd September was always going to be a leisurely affair, from a running point of view. The destination was Lisburn via Antrim.

No.4 is still in her probationary period and the Locomotive Department is keen that many more incident-free miles are recorded under close scrutiny.

Tesco Charter: On 25th September, the Society supplied a train, consisting of No.85 (out of steam) and coaches 1142 and 1916, in connection with Tesco's Charity Of The Year event at Connolly station.

This year's winner was the Downs Syndrome Association, and a photoshoot with the national press was held to promote the occasion.

Stena Charter: On Friday 27th September, the owner and 150 of the senior managers of the Stena Group (in Belfast for their annual conference) were conveyed from Central station to Cultra by No.4 and specially chartered train.

The train arrived at the platform in Central at 18:30. From then until departure at 19:00, the guests were entertained to a drinks reception. On arrival at Cultra they were met by a small group playing traditional music before making their way to the Rail Gallery for dinner.

Leixlip Charter: The charter by Leixlip Town Commissioners, which was scheduled to operate on 13th October between Leixlip and Enfield, unfortunately had to be cancelled.

It was originally hoped that No.85, then based in Dublin, would be operating the train but she didn't receive clearance to traverse the newly relaid Midland line. Due to the work being carried out on No.4, it was not possible to use her as a standby locomotive.

"Steam Enterprise": It was with great disappointment that our passengers turned up at Great Victoria Street Station on the morning of Saturday 19th October to be informed that No.85 would not be able to operate the return leg of the Belfast to Dublin "Steam Enterprise".

With less than 24 hours' notice, NIR had informed the Society that the day's schedule was too long for their only steam driver to operate. In line with the new operating agreement, the Society, where possible, gives NIR at least 60 days' notice of all operations, so it was highly frustrating to be informed of last minute tampering with the operation. To be so treated when the officers of the Society try to deal in a professional manner with the railway company is annoying, especially as NIR generally have become very helpful in recent times.

It is recognised that there is a problem with drivers' hours and the Society has been pushing for a steam training and certification programme for quite some time now to ensure a larger pool to draw from.

No.85 performed well on the outward leg of the trip, arriving 5 minutes early in Dublin. Unfortunately, that's where we said goodbye to her as the crew had to return to Belfast in the first available path. The train and passengers returned in the scheduled path hauled by NIR GM 208.

"Broomstick Belle": The "Broomstick Belle" trains on Sunday 27th October ran to plan, with No.4 doing the honours. The only eventuality not allowed for was a massive downpour of hailstones at Whitehead during the visit of the first train.

There were around 190 passengers on the first train with in excess of 200 on the second. The numbers were not as good as last year but sales rose rapidly over the previous Friday and Saturday following a very slow start. Halloween seemed to be a lot quieter this year with not much pre-hype. Everyone appeared to enjoy themselves despite the cold blustery weather. The two entertainers did a good job with magic and balloon bending.

“Santa Special” (Coleraine): There was a scare recently when NIR had to close the line between Coleraine and Derry because of rock falls and it was originally reported that the closure would be long-term, i.e. running into the new year. However, the line reopened and we can confirm that the “Santa Special” train will be visiting the north-west.

As with last year, crew hours mean we have to spread the operation over two days, so it has been arranged that Santa will be visiting Coleraine on the way to Derry on Saturday 30th November. There will be two return trips from Coleraine to Castlerock.

Tickets (£6) on sale at Kingsgate Newsagency, 39 Kingsgate Street, Coleraine. Trains depart at 12:40 and 14:30.

All-day travel from Belfast (depart 10:05) is available for £10 (pay on the train). A service train departs Coleraine for Belfast at 15:52.

“Santa Special” (Derry): On Sunday 1st December, Santa departs Derry for Castlerock at 13:00. Tickets (£7.50) from: City Tours/Carlisle Stores, 11 Carlisle Road, Londonderry.

Final departure for Belfast is at 16:27 and the fare is £10 but travel on the special is not included and will be strictly limited to those with a “Santa” ticket. A connecting NIR train departs Belfast at 13:25 (a flat £4 go-anywhere fare applies on Sundays).

“Santa Special” (Dublin): All trains on 7th, 8th, 14th and 15th December are fully booked.

“Santa Special” (Belfast): Trains are

operating on 7th, 8th, 15th, 21st and 22nd December. Tickets: Belfast (Donegal Place), Bangor, Lisburn and Carrickfergus Tourist Information Centres. Postal and credit card sales bookings can be made through the Carrickfergus TIC (028 9336 6455).

No.4 is due to operate the Coleraine and Derry trains and then go to Dublin for operations there. No.85 will haul the planned Belfast trains.

WHITEHEAD

EGM: An agreement in principle to purchase the site was made at the EGM in Dundalk.

Summer Past: In August the Whitehead Site gang spread 40 tonnes of stone to make an approach roadway to the heavy lift area beside the carriage shed. This is part of the long term strategy to use this area to bring in and remove Mk2 coaches without the cost of hiring mobile cranes - the gantries there can do the job instead.

BELFAST MEETINGS

Round-Up: The season restarted on 9th October and to date there have two very well attended meetings.

Don't forget the Fred Cooper film show on 11th December!

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3BG “Guinness”: Lifted off wheels for firebox and tyre repairs.

No.4: Repairs to piston valves completed. Now accumulating running-in mileage.

No.186: Renewing piston rods. Superheater elements complete. Fabricating new smoke-box and door. Coupling rods complete.

No.461: Dismantling proceeding as time permits.

GENERAL

Book Shop: The Society has in stock all

the latest books from Colourpoint and Midland Publishing, plus a large back catalogue.

Details from:

RPSI Book Sales
103 Wynchurch Road
BELFAST
BT6 OJJ

Artistry: Local artist and long-time friend of the Society Debra Wenlock has recently started producing a series of coloured prints of tin-plate clockwork trains. Debra also undertakes commissions of local railway scenes, the Giant's Causeway Tramway being a recent one. For a catalogue and further information, contact Debra at:

6 West Hill
Groomsport
BANGOR
Co. Down
BT19 6JT

Donation: Due to the kind consideration of member John Richardson, the Society was able to benefit from a substantial donation from the Gills Charity of Carrickfergus.

“Small Ads”: BBC NI is running a series of short films based on the idea of small ads in a newspaper. One features the Society's 2001 “Atlantic Coast Express”, and it had its first broadcast on Thursday 7th November at 23:50 on BBC2 Digital. These films will be broadcast repeatedly so keep an eye on the TV/satellite/cable guides.

2003 AGM Nominations: Please send Council nominations to the address below by 31st January 2003. All should be signed by the proposer and seconder, and should have the nominee's permission in advance.

ON-LINE

Bulletins: The emails to members are being dispatched about twice a week, so if you are on-line let us know and you can join in.

However, those already participating are asked to pass on changes of address, or lapsed addresses, as it is quite time-

consuming to deal with the returned messages which result.

Web Site: The No.186 Appeal page has been updated with a gauge glass indicator showing how much has been raised so far. Some recent photographs showing the current state of the work are included.

SANTA APPEAL

No Not Money!!: As you know the RPSI Belfast Area Operations Committee has concentrated on enhancing our reputation as a high quality, value for money, fun and exciting provider of steam operated recreational trains. This year's “Santa Special” trains are already booking out, and advertising has only just started!

The success of all these operations came from teamwork amongst an ever-dwindling group of volunteers.

This year's Santa Specials will consist of 15 steam hauled trains from Belfast Central, Coleraine and Londonderry. Each train will hold approximately 300 people and requires two Santas to give out presents to the children.

We need your help again in this pivotal role.

Please help us now and become part of the proud team providing children with this unique way of meeting Santa.

If you can spare any time (full Santa suit and Elves provided!), or would just like to know more, then please contact BAOC member Philip Lockett, after 6pm on 028 9079 1184 (if no answer, please leave a message with your name and number and the date you would be available).

Many thanks in advance for your offer help.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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