



February 2003

NEWS LETTER

ÍÉ AGREEMENT

Second Agreement: Following the recent announcement of the signing of an operating agreement with NIR, we can now announce that the Society has, under the new legislation in the south, become the first accredited guest operator on Iarnród Éireann.

In a ceremony in Dublin on Friday 29th November, Society Chairman Norman Foster was presented with a certificate to mark the event. It reads:

Safety Management System Certificate Of Approval

The Railway Preservation Society Of Ireland has been considered in accordance with the Iarnród Éireann Standard Railway Safety Standard No.32 on 27th June 2002 and 25th July 2002 with the result that Iarnród Éireann is pleased to accord it the status of Guest Operator.

Well done to the southern representatives on the Society's Safety Sub-Committee who laboured so hard to put together the package which addressed the requirements of the rail-way company.

OPERATIONS

North-West Santa: Members who were able to travel with the Society on Saturday 30th November, would have had a leisurely run to Coleraine behind No.4, followed by 2 return trips to Castlerock, both of which were fully booked out. One family came all the way from Dublin to take part as they hadn't been able to obtain tickets for the trains running there - dedication indeed!

If that were not enough, the complete show moved to Derry, where a few hardy souls stayed overnight ready to repeat the performance the next day, taking the lucky participants on another fully booked train to Castlerock - it could have been sold twice over!

The train home to Belfast and Whitehead on Sunday evening was poorly patronised - why? Surely there aren't many better ways of spending a winter Sunday afternoon than on a steam train in full flight with a cosy train and sing-song going strong?

At this point a big thank you must be given to all those members who turned out to help - it made all the difference.

Dublin Santa: During the week following the Derry operations, No.4 moved south to haul the Dublin trains.

The public operations started after a week of intense preparation. Diner 88 was reunited with the set after a successful trial run to Hazelhatch on the previous Tuesday, hauled by a 201 and with a "Dutch" van in tow. Some of the extra seats were allocated to those on the waiting list for tickets. On the Friday, No.4 was hauled by an 071 to the new Grand Canal Dock station for gauging trials. This clearance trial was due to the fact that we were running around in a platform face there which is not in use as a passenger platform.

Over the Christmas season, the 5 days of operation saw trains filled to capacity, with four open to the public and the fifth and last being the regular charter from the Inchicore Sports & Social Club. In all, the trains carried in the region of 3,500 passengers.

Maynooth is a convenient location, with

water easily available for the locomotive and for the carriage toilets. Running was to time throughout.

Loading and unloading 350 people would be a lot more difficult were it not for the in-train PA system, and the process of allocated seats backed up by notices on the platform corresponding with the coaches.

Belfast Santa: Both trains on Saturday 7th December were private charters, the first by Sense NI - a cross community group from Newtownabbey, and the second by the Sargent Cancer Care charity. The latter occasioned a brass band on the concourse at Central to greet participants.

The first public trains operated on Sunday. The morning train was about two thirds full and the afternoon fully booked.

Passengers arrived from as far afield as Fermanagh, Coleraine and Ballymoney. One family from Omagh were on their sixth Santa trip!

It was bitterly, bitterly cold on the footplate - most passengers stayed on the trains at Whitehead. No.85 performed well on the day - water was taken via a fire hydrant at Whitehead due to happenings elsewhere in the yard.

Over the past few years, on certain days, there has been an evening train to Carrickfergus to allow those who couldn't get a ticket for the earlier trains to travel. This year is no exception, but because of repairs to the underpass at Carrickfergus, the bay loop has been disconnected while excavation takes place. The evening runs on 15th and 22nd were therefore extended to Whitehead.

Over the final weekend alone, 1,450 passengers were carried on 5 trains, probably half of those being children given a present by Santa.

Many thanks to all who turned out in Dublin and Belfast to lend a hand - your efforts made all the difference.

"Plains Of Mayo": The advance booking forms for the railtour in May have been coming in at a steady rate, so much so in fact that the places on the Achill extension have all been taken up.

However, there are still plenty of seats on the train.

MK2 CARRIAGE UPDATE

Publicity: In a comprehensive article in the Business Telegraph of 26th November, the Society's plans to introduce a Mk2 set were set out. There was an accompanying photograph of Norman Foster and Paul McCann at the signing ceremony for the new agreement with NIR.

Bogies: All the Mk2 bogies sent to England for overhaul have been subcontracted out to Barclays of Kilmarnock. It is hoped to have sufficient reconditioned bogies and buckeye couplers for five carriages shortly.

Arrivals: Santa operations on the morning of Sunday 8th December were slightly complicated by the arrival of our second carriage (in Network South East livery) from Heysham (9382, 31 seat, vacuum braked, brake second). Offloading began at 9 a.m. and was complete by 12:15 p.m. when the low-loader departed with ex-NIR coach 926.

Progress: A bogie swap for one of the carriages was carried out on the Saturday between Christmas and the New Year (28th December), and a monster shunt took place on the weekend of 4th and 5th January to correctly position vehicles for the impending work.

Volunteers have removed all of the seats from ex-NIR 934, and most have had the headrests and back cushions removed. Luggage racks were also removed. The rotten carpets and vinyl floor covering were removed, doing away with the damp smell. However, this revealed some holes in steel floor.

All of the seats have been removed from Mk2 920 so that it is ready to go to Heysham.

934, 13487 and 916 are now in carriage shed.

LC&WC: Neill and his 2 helpers, Mick and Matt, from the Lancastrian Carriage & Wagon Company started work in the carriage shed on 3rd February. Their task is to bring our rapidly increasing rake of Mk2 coaches up to a level of safety and comfort acceptable to our insurers and the railway companies.

13487, which was initially worked on in Heysham, is largely complete. On 934, the

vestibule floors at the Larne end have been replaced and painted with preservative paint. They have removed seat covers from diner 547 for reupholstering. Volunteers have unscrewed most of seats in 9382 for the professionals to work on side panels.

WHITEHEAD

Foundry Update: Casting firebars and other components continues. Several small contract jobs have been carried out. Thanks to J Hamilton & Co Engineering who are closing down - they donated several items (sand screener, core boxes, etc.).

Workshop Update: Installation of electrics proceeding. Office and tool store being fitted out. New air compressor arrangement under way. Bridgeport milling machine acquired.

Carriage Shed: To facilitate work on the Mk2 coach overhaul project at Whitehead, extra wiring has been installed sufficient to provide lighting for the whole shed. However, to keep the costs down, initially only two thirds of the light fittings have been put up.

Site Team: Activities recently have concentrated on work relating to the impending refurbishment of the Mk2 coaches. A modern smoke detection and fire alarm system has been installed in the carriage shed. This will protect the shed from the risk of fire when these coaches are being overhauled by workers from the Lancastrian Carriage and Wagon Company over coming weeks.

LOCOMOTIVES

No. 186 Update: General overhaul progressing on "essentials only" basis. Overhauling boiler fittings and pipework. De-carbonising cylinder cock. New crank pin cap nuts fitted. Main steam pipe assembled. Assembling firebars and drop grate mechanism. Coupling rods fitted. Big ends, small ends and connecting rods being assembled. Sand boxes being fitted. Reverser being overhauled. Brake cylinders being assembled. Repairing cab, which has suffered corrosion damage. Refurbishing boiler cladding straps and renewing cladding. Tender tank (at Inchicore) re-plated. Tender wheels,

brakes, etc. dismantled and cleaned. Tender brake cylinders and pipework overhauled (Whitehead). Buffers overhauled. It is hoped that steam testing of this loco will start in early summer 2003.

In early January it was announced that the Society had been successful in its application to the Irish Heritage Council for a grant towards the overhaul of No.186's tender. We have been awarded €10,000 (approximately £6,500).

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead: Overhauled roller bearing bogies have been fitted to No.9. No further overhaul work on bogies for wooden bodied vehicles is planned as work will be concentrated on Mk2 vehicles.

In December, a wheelset required to be re-profiled for brake 91 after the handbrake was left on during one of the Santa trains.

Dublin: Coaches 88 and 1335 have been repainted, thus leaving diner 2421 as the only vehicle in the Dublin set which has not been repainted in the last three years.

ON-LINE

Web Site: Issues 12, 13 and 15 are now available on the "Five Foot Three" archive area of the web site.

Unfortunately, there are no photos but it is hoped to add them in due course.

Addresses: Please remember to inform us if your email address changes or expires. Also, it would help if your storage limits are not exceeded as this can cause messages to be returned. Returned messages are an enormous hassle, so to ensure that the Bulletin service can continue, please keep these points in mind.

BELFAST MEETINGS

St.Jude's: The season is nearing an end, and numbers continue to hold around the 90 mark mainly due to a continuing series varied and interesting shows.

GENERAL

Resigned: In November David Humphries announced his retirement from Council,

citing pressure of personal, work and other Society commitments.

David has been on Council for 15 years in a variety of posts, the most recent being as one of the General Officers, and his experience in that forum will be much missed.

Co-Opted: In January, Alex Richardson became our newest Council member when he was co-opted into the position of Business Development Officer.

Fame: Small Ads", featuring the RPSI, (both the 5 minute and the longer version) was featured a number of times in December and January.

More Fame: In December, there was an article in Translink's staff magazine which featured the Society.

And More: In January, Steam Railway magazine ran a large news article about the end of our wooden-bodied stock on NIR.

Look out for more Society articles in the railway press in the coming months - a number are in the planning stages.

Sales: Please note that the latest railway and transport books from the Colourpoint and Midland catalogues are always available.

We now have in stock the latest video from Cinerail, 'Northern Ireland Steam - The Final Years'. It mainly consists of the last days of the jeeps on the spoil trains, but there is also a lengthy sequence of No.171 on the Society's "Colmcille" railtour to Londonderry and Portrush. £20, including p&p, from:

RPSI Sales
103 Wynchurch Road
Belfast
BT6 0JJ

Calling All Modellers: Our member Alan O'Rourke is negotiating with a commercial source to produce a 4mm scale kit of the GNR PP 4-4-0 class.

This will be an etched brass body with nickel silver chassis and cast fittings. It should be designed so that the builder can complete it to run on 00 (16.5mm), EM (18mm) or 21mm gauge track. Delivery will probably be in late 2003, at about £65 pounds excluding wheels and motor. This will be a limited run, but the minimum number of orders to make it viable has

already been achieved.

Alan can be contacted at:

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MEMBERSHIP

Reminder: Renewal of membership subscriptions should have been taking place from 1st February. Obviously, if you are in possession of a membership card then ignore the reminder!

If you pay by standing order and you haven't yet received your card then first of all check with your bank that the payment has been made, then drop a line by post or email.

To all who are renewing, we would ask that consideration be given to including a donation as the Society will be making an enormous outlay this year as coaches come up for overhaul. Could a special plea be made to Life members and Standing Order members, who don't normally return a form, to consider making a donation? The renewal form included with this mailing can be used.

Finally, mainly to standing order and Life members, please ensure that your membership details are kept up to date, i.e. if you become a Senior member we would like to know so that we don't pay VAT on any amount you might pay over and above the Senior rate - please keep paying the higher amount though!

Please note that all credit card payments are processed in pounds sterling.

Sorry, but we can not accept payment by debit card.

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