

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



May 2003

NEWS LETTER

CREW TRAINING

Outline: The Good Friday trip to Mullingar is normally the curtain raiser for the Dublin season. This year, however, Good Friday was only the conclusion to a four-week crew training programme.

Four trainee firemen, two from Inchicore and two from Connolly, participated in four weeks of intensive training. The first two weeks, from 24th March, were in the training school in Inchicore, and covered the theoretical aspects of steam locomotive operation. Also included in this phase was a trip to Whitehead where No.85 was in steam and where the trainees had the opportunity to view locomotives in a dismantled state.

The second phase commenced on Monday 7th April with an 08:30 departure from Connolly. No.4 ran to Mullingar with 5 coaches from the Dublin set, the two Park Royals and the Bredin being left in Inchicore. The train then returned to Enfield where it stabled for the duration of the programme. Security was provided by a security firm, supplemented by working members. The pattern of operation was a departure after the passage of the up Sligo, with either two round trips to Mullingar, or a long trip to Mullingar and a short trip to Killucan if taking coal.

This pattern continued uneventfully for two weeks, until the train returned to Dublin on Thursday 17th April, where it was made up to full strength for the Good Friday trip.

Our thanks are due to all concerned in Irish Rail at all levels who made such an effort to see that this programme ran and ran well. Special thanks to former locomotive inspector Tony Foley who came out of retirement to oversee the training.

Negotiations have also commenced with NIR with a view to passing out a number of firemen as drivers.

OPERATIONS

Charter: The first operation of the year ran on Sunday 9th March - it was the deferred charter by Leixlip Town Commissioners, postponed from 13th October due to the non-availability of a suitable locomotive.

Departure from Connolly was at 09:35 - No.4 and train ran empty to Leixlip Confey station where the passengers were picked up for a trip to Enfield. At Enfield, the Sligo passenger was crossed, followed by a return to Leixlip. The train ran empty again to Clonsilla to cross the road and run around. The whole process was repeated, and the train was back in Connolly, on time at 16:05.

"Easter Special": The Good Friday trip ran to capacity in unseasonal sunshine, more appropriate to a summer than to a spring trip.

The normal pattern of operation was observed and, for those with Internet access, may be seen in the photo gallery pages of the Irish Railway News web site along with shots of the driver training runs.

A signal check at North Strand Junction delayed the arrival back somewhat, but all the customers seemed happy with the experience.

"Easter Bunny": The weather returned to its seasonal norm for the "Easter Bunny" trips to Whitehead on Easter Monday. That didn't deter the crowds, however, as No.85 hauled two full trains to her home depot.

The Easter Bunny, magicians, clowns and balloon benders all put in an appearance to the delight of a willing audience.

"Plains Of Mayo": It was always well known that Westport was a popular destination for Society tours, so it was no surprise that the tour has booked up so quickly. Added highlights this year booked out at surprising speed - the opportunity on the Friday coach tour to have a run on a LUAS tram, and the coach trip to Achill Sound on Saturday after the main tour reaches Westport.

Dublin Spring & Early Summer: With No.4 currently in the south, the Dublin Operations Committee are taking the opportunity to make intensive use of the locomotive before she heads north for the summer season there.

27th April - "Greystones Shuttle"

24th May - "Sea Breeze" to Rosslare

7th June - "Sea Breeze" to Rosslare

21st June - Mid-summer barbecue train to Mullingar

28th June - "Northern Enterprise" to Belfast (essentially a locomotive swap

with No.85 going south)

All members are asked to support this ambitious programme - see separate booking form.

"Hills Of Donegal": With No.4 in Dublin there is no suitable locomotive to operate to Londonderry as NIR will not permit No.85 to run on the line. It is with regret that this operation, planned for 7th June, has had to be cancelled.

"Steam & Jazz": It is hoped to repeat these successful trains on 20th and 27th June.

Plans: It was reported on 9th April that rail services on the Lisburn - Antrim line are to be axed at the end of June. The Society is investigating the possibility of running steam on the last day, 29th June.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": Recently taken out of traffic for overhaul following the expiry of its boiler certificate.

No.3BG "Guinness": It was reported at the AGM that it is hoped to have the locomotive available for the summer.

No.186: Overhauling boiler fittings and pipework. Injector overflow pipes extended to footsteps. De-carbonising cylinder block. Big ends, small ends and connecting rods assembled. Valve gear assembled for checking valve timing, one valve rod length altered. Repairing cab, which has suffered corrosion damage. Refurbishing boiler cladding straps and renewing cladding. Tender tank (at Inchicore) re-plated. Tender wheelsets transferred to Whitehead for skimming journals and overhaul of axleboxes. Tender brake cylinders and pipework being overhauled at Whitehead. Buffers being overhauled. The last tender repair undertaken in Inchicore was in 1961, when two ex-Dundalk boilermakers rebuilt the tender of ex-MGWR 602!

A reminder that the No.186 Appeal is

still open for donations. If you wish to make a donation, see the web site page for details.

No.461: On Saturday 12th April the boiler and firebox were lifted out of their frames for examination.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead Set: 68 has been lifted for attention to the side bearers. 238 requires spring changes or repairs on bogies.

Dublin Set: The public address system on the train has now been completed, with the fitting of speakers and a control booth in Diner 88.

1142 has been reupholstered, the third coach to be so treated in the last two years.

MK2 Set: An ex-railway electrician is working on the coach electrics.

547 (ex-NIR diner) - On 26th April, two refurbished bogies arrived from Heysham. Using the hand crane they were lifted off the lorry. 547 was lowered onto them on the sheer-legs and the old bogies were loaded onto the lorry to go to Heysham to be refurbished.

934 (ex-NIR open) - A new floor has been fitted. Wall panels to England for new ones to be cut. Vacuum pipes have been fitted -brakes 90% complete. Overhauled bogies to be fitted.

9382 (ex-BR brake) - Brake blocks fitted, adjusted and balanced. One vacuum cylinder changed. Floor repaired. Saloon repanelled in new timber. Corrosion on sides repaired. All doors and sliding droplights opening and closing properly. Seats dismantled, cleaned, primed and painted.

13487 (ex-BR corridor 1st) - Floor panels repaired. Brake blocks fitted, adjusted and balanced. All doors opening and closing properly.

13475 (Ex-BR corridor 1st) - Now in

Heysham workshops. Corrosion repairs in hand. Reglazing and repairs to floor to be carried out as required. Seats covered in red moquette.

916 and 935 untouched as yet. Two further 6 door open coaches purchased from Scotland.

The 2 'English' Mk2 coaches were hauled up and down the yard at Whitehead by Harvey on Saturday 29th March. A successful vacuum brake test was carried out. It was hoped to have a test run of the first vehicles in late March but this hasn't happened yet. On Wednesday 2nd April, the 2 coaches were certified as fit to run by our insurers. Although this is a significant milestone, we still require approval by both NIR and IE before we will be allowed to operate them on the main line.

WHITEHEAD

Break In: At about 6:30pm on Monday 17th February, there was a break-in at the site at Whitehead. Intruders set a fire on some old seats in the shell of a carriage lying outside with no doors or windows.

A fire crew was on the scene fairly quickly and no major damage was reported.

We have installed a brand new state of the art fire detection system in the carriage shed to prevent such an occurrence there.

Workshop: Office and toolstore are being fitted out. A new air compressor arrangement under way. The timber block floor has been extended.

Winter Past: On Saturday 8th March the site team laid 4 new sleepers at the crossover where the gauge was starting to spread. It is now correct gauge.

BELFAST MEETINGS

Round-Up: The last indoor meeting of

the season was on Wednesday 12th March. In closing, Andy Crockhart paid a glowing and deserved tribute to Charles Friel. Charles gives so much time and effort to produce so many railway-related lectures each winter as well as his on-going work with the steam movement in general.

Get your suggestions in for next year - the programme needs to be put together by the end of July! The next meeting is on 8th October, and details will appear on the web site, email and postal bulletins later in the summer.

ON-LINE

Bulletins: The bulletins are carrying on successfully. However, the annoying bouncing of emails continues, so please, please let us know if you change address or discontinue your internet access.

GENERAL

AGM: There was a very quiet AGM at Whitehead on Saturday 5th April. The meeting was over in an hour exactly, dealing with little more than approval of the various reports and election of Council for the incoming year.

Contentment or apathy??

Publicity: the current issue of Steam Railway magazine has a very good illustrated article by Gerry Mooney on No.85 "Merlin".

Sales: A message from RPSI Sales Maestro, John Friel:

The sales stand at the six St.Jude's meetings brought in £3,050, of which roughly 40% is profit to the Society. This figure is up by 50% on last year's season. Income was greatly boosted by the publication of "The Wee Donegal Revisited" and "35 Years Of NIR".

Many thanks to all our purchasers and to those who donated books and magazines. I still do not know the

answer to the most commonly asked question at the sales stand: "How do I explain to my wife why I am bringing home ANOTHER railway book?"

See the separate form for a list of available items.

DVD: For those members who did not see The First Great Train Robbery on TV at Christmas, the film has recently been issued on DVD. One shop in Belfast had it priced at £7.99.

Some scenes have been cut from this DVD version, compared with the cinema original, but it seems to be mostly intact.

Compared to some DVDs this one has very little additional material. The only additional item is the Original Theatrical Trailer for the USA version of the film (which, of course, was titled "The Great Train Robbery").

The DVD catalogue number is 17308DVD.

Note: This is not one of the Society's sales items.

Lobby Group: A reminder of the new national rail lobby group, Platform11, whose web site is:

www.platform11.org

Model Rail: The First Bangor Model Railway Club are holding their annual exhibition at the First Bangor Church, Main Street, Bangor.

Friday 16th May 7pm - 10pm

Saturday 17th May 10am - 4pm

Further details available from:

www.firstbangormrc.btinternet.co.uk

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

148 Church Road, Newtownabbey,
Co. Antrim, BT36 6HJ.

www.rpsi-online.org

e-mail: rpsitrains@hotmail.com