



June 2003

## NEWS LETTER

### OPERATIONS

**"Greystones Shuttle"**: The two trains on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April ran in changeable but pre-dominantly fine weather.

Some time was lost on the outward leg of the first run, although the train reached Greystones in sufficient time to allow the afternoon Down Rosslare to overtake on time. There was then a sprightly run back to Connolly, passing Lansdowne Road stadium on the way - It was packed to capacity with Rugby supporters for the Leinster vs Perpignan match. It was about 3pm and there was much whistling from No.4, which presumably was heard by anyone watching on TV throughout the island!

No.4 performed well, and hauled the set back to Inchicore after the second run, making a fine sight as it headed up the gullet with eight bogies. Load factors were about 70% on the first train and about 66% on the second train - the short interval since our last trip may have had something to do with it.

**"Plains Of Mayo"**: A few light (or semi-light) engine movements took place in the weeks leading up to the railtour.

In order to allow No.4 to operate to Westport, Iarnród Éireann insisted that a gauging run had to take place. No.4 with an IE vacuum-braked Mk2 van and coach successfully operated to Westport on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April, but returned the next day bunker first as there were problems with the turntable at Claremorris. She did not run to Ballina. The need to have this test run arises from the comprehensive

relaying of the Mayo road that has just been completed. The object of the exercise was to check that No.4 conforms to the proper gauge at stations between Athlone and West-port. It may be remembered that similar runs were required between Whiteabbey and Antrim, and on the Bangor line in recent years.

Also in connection with the tour, on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May, No.85 worked light engine from Whitehead to Dublin to be in position for the Dublin - Belfast section of the tour.

The tour proper went off splendidly, with a few minor hiccups which didn't seem to detract too much from the enjoyment:

Friday - A splendid coach tour of Dublin, with a visit to Inchicore, the Howth Transport Museum, and the first ever public ride on the LUAS tram system. Many congratulations to Joe Fitzpatrick for a job well done. Unfortunately, it has to be said that a few of the group saw fit not to return their RPA provided 'LUAS' high visibility vests before departure, which cannot be condoned.

Saturday - Despite a late start out of Dublin due to a problem with the crew, the day ran very well with time caught up before too long. On arrival at Westport, the party split into three groupings. A coach party departed for Achill Sound, well entertained by John Beaumont on Saturday evening (and Sunday morning!). The second group stayed in Westport and attended the Banquet, or made their own entertainment. The last lot took the opportunity to travel back to Claremorris with the train, which stabled there overnight. There they observed the cautious use of the turntable, the same one which refused to budge on

the previous week during the gauging trial. Some excellent work by an engineering team from Iarnród Éireann in the meantime allowed a successful turning of No.4.

Sunday - Those who didn't stay in Claremorris, or take the early morning service train from Westport, had to endure a reluctant, but necessary, journey to Ballina by coach. As a gauging trial to Ballina had not been possible, the train made a very slow journey to Ballina so was fairly late in arriving. However, some good running and judicious pruning of photo stops saw the train back on time by Athlone, where a coach party which had visited the Hell's Kitchen Bar and Museum rejoined. A sprightly run into Dublin ended the afternoon journey right on time. A quick change of trains while No.85 coupled up and we were away to Belfast only 15 minutes down. For some, the trip north was the highlight of the tour due to some excellent running.

Monday - Because of restrictions on driver hours, it was not possible to begin the day with steam so a NIR GM was booked to take the train from Whitehead to Central. In the event, NIR experienced an Enterprise breakdown and the subsequent knock-on delays meant that a very late start was maintained, and indeed worsened, throughout the day. However, the complete programme was achieved, albeit rather late.

Tuesday - A visit by coach to the Flame gasworks museum in Carrickfergus and the Irish Rail Gallery in Cultra completed the week-end's events.

As usual a railtour survey was circulated. A quick glance at the returns showed that, generally, the views were very positive. The most common comments were by far:

- Our trolley dollies, Rita and Liam, got a great deal of praise for their extremely friendly and helpful manner. Well done to them!
- On a negative note, the plethora of orange vests came in for the most scathing criticism from the photographers.

The main man in the organisation of the tour was Mervyn Darragh, ably helped by colleagues on the Belfast and Dublin Operations teams. Well done to all who helped over the weekend, especially the

catering and bar staff who rarely see the light of day. A special word of thanks to Charles Friel for his excellent brochure, without which it wouldn't be a proper railtour. Finally, the highest praise must go to Wilma Cairns in our Railtour Office who dealt efficiently with queries leading up to the tour, and worked long and hard into the night, single-handedly processing bookings and sending out tickets in the preceding week.

Can we make a plea for those taking lineside photographs during the tour weekend to help further our cause by sending their good shots to both the UK railway magazines and to ourselves for inclusion on the web site?

**"Sea Breeze"**: No.4 operated successfully on 24<sup>th</sup> May, and very enjoyable it was too! Despite a very late departure from Dublin, most of the time was caught up by Rosslare. Indeed, on the return journey, arrival was early.

A repeat performance was due on 7<sup>th</sup> June.

**"Steam & Jazz"**: Operating on 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June. Please remember to display in a prominent position the poster sent out with the May News-Letter.

**"Mid-Summer Night's Steam"**: No.4 will be operating the annual barbecue train to Mullingar on 21<sup>st</sup> June.

**"Northern Enterprise"**: As in 2002, this trip on 28<sup>th</sup> June will mark the swapping of locomotives, i.e. No.4 to Whitehead and No.85 to Dublin.

**"Antrim Branch Farewell"**: The Society will be operating a steam service over the Antrim - Lisburn line on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June. This is due to be the last day of public services on the line. From then on it will be available only for emergency stock transfers.

**"Portrush Flyer"**: Due to be operated by No.4 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> August. It is also hoped to return to Castlerock this year.

**Cancellations**: The ambitious programme of operations which existed at the start of the year is now being gradually thinned out.

Following the cancellation of the "Hills Of Donegal" due to non-availability of a suitable locomotive, the 4-day charter by the Railway Touring Company, scheduled for July, has also been cancelled. While

agreement had been reached to operate the NIR sections of the tour, there were some problems reaching agreement for those planned for IE. In the event, the RTC decided to pull the plug on the whole tour.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No.3BG "Guinness":** More problems than expected have arisen. Repairs now required to coupling rods, crosshead, saddle tank.

**No.186:** The tender moved from Inchicore to Whitehead on 30<sup>th</sup> May. Inchicore Works carried out overhaul work funded by the Heritage Council. The RPSI must now complete coupling up of engine and tender and commissioning.

**No.461:** Boiler blast cleaned. More dismantling then boiler inspector to examine and report on repairs required.

**No.131:** The rumours were doing the rounds for some time but yes, it's true, this locomotive, tender and boiler excepted, moved to Whitehead on 31<sup>st</sup> May. Nothing has been finalised yet but the Society has agreed to carry out preliminary cleaning, dismantling and inspection of the engine in advance of funding being in place.

## MK2 CARRIAGES

**General:** Up until now, our wooden-bodied stock was inspected annually by a representative of our insurers. If everything was as it should be then a certificate was issued and passed to NIR - this allowed the carriage to operate for a year. However, NIR have now changed the rules for the Mk2 coaches. The new requirement is that they must be inspected by a recognised vehicle approval body (VAB). There are a number of these VABs in GB and we are trying to organise a meeting with NIR so that the Society's preferred VAB can be approved.

Apart from the added expense of bringing a VAB from GB, it appears to be necessary to turn out an entire operational set for approval at the one time, i.e. there must be a system by which the electrics and brakes can be tested and this can't be done without a generator vehicle available. The vehicles for inspection must also be in a finished condition with the bodywork and

final livery complete.

It had been hoped to have two coaches passed for operations on NIR by now but certification will be delayed until the most of a full set is available. Obviously, this won't be in time for the "Bangor Belle" operation planned for Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August so the BAOC have cancelled that trip - wooden stock can't operate to Bangor Monday to Saturday.

There is now an urgency to get more vehicles to Whitehead, and into a finished state as soon as possible. To that end, members are invited to come and help out. You need be able to do no more than wield a hammer, screwdriver or paintbrush as all the major tasks are being carried out by our contractors, the Lancastrian Carriage & Wagon Company.

**The Juggie:** In early June a major movement of coaches is planned.

Using a single low-loader, a continuous operation will start at Tysley, Birmingham, where a TSO, given to the Society by Wessex Trains for helping them with open firsts, will be taken to Heysham for overhaul.

The lorry will then depart 'light engine' for Longtown military depot in Scotland to move the first of our two recently acquired 6-door vacuum-braked TSOs to Heysham. This move will be repeated for the second coach.

A corridor first, complete in Heysham workshops, will then be loaded for transport to Whitehead.

At Whitehead, ex-NIR 920 will be loaded for dispatch to Heysham and disposal.

**Status Report:** The current situation is:

547 Ex-NIR diner - Interior stripped for overhaul. Seats re-upholstered. This vehicle is next in line for bodywork overhaul.

934 Ex-NIR standard open - Exterior glazing complete. End and side corrosion repairs well in hand. Further corrosion has appeared in one end of the roof and it is being dealt with. Door locks have been sent to England for overhaul. Interior walls in saloon are complete except for the bulkheads. New timber floor 90% complete.

9382 Ex-BR half brake - Awaiting repair to

arm rests, then the seats can be bolted down. This coach will have a generator fitted to provide power and water heating.

13487 Ex-BR corridor first - Interior decor nearly finished. Special PVC primer paint had to be obtained to cover the yellow paint in the vestibules - it blends in well with varnished woodwork. This should also cover the orange vestibules in the NIR coaches. Vestibule ceilings are white. Plumbing still incomplete as some parts were stolen from this vehicle in GB. It was hoped to lay corridor and floor coverings by the end of May.

13475 Ex-BR corridor first - Originally in poor condition, now complete in Heysham workshops.

As reported above, 3 further coaches will be moved to Heysham shortly for overhaul.

Bogie overhauls for these coaches are continuing. Three pairs have been received and a further three pairs are in Heysham for attention. We are hopeful of acquiring more from Irish Rail later in the year.

## CARRIAGE & WAGON

**Whitehead:** Current position:

87: Brakes pulled up.

241: Attention to a leaking brake cylinder.

1097: Damper on one bogie replaced, spare came from one of the rail wagons used on the Mowlem contract.

## WHITEHEAD

**Workshop:** 4 cubic metres of concrete were laid on the locomotive workshop floor at Whitehead on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Included is a narrow gauge railway track through the side door for moving heavy objects.

**Summer Beckons:** With recent and imminent deliveries of Mk2 coaches, it will be seen that Whitehead is becoming very crowded. More siding space is required and steps are being taken to provide it.

Sufficient spoil has been removed by a contractor and a fifth carriage siding is being installed at the back of the site. This is the Summer Tuesday night project, supplemented by Saturdays, when help is

available.

In late May the team started the installation when they got most of a 60ft extension to the unconnected Carriage siding completed. The sleepers are laid and one 60ft length of rail is in place, the other is yet to be fitted.

## GENERAL

**Council:** Having stood down at the AGM, following the end of his term on Council, Bill King-Wood has been co-opted back for the duration of negotiations with Carrickfergus Borough Council on the purchase of the Whitehead site. Bill has been dealing very successfully with these negotiations but because of the length of time taken to achieve any progress, it was felt that he needed to be on Council again to see them to a conclusion.

**Articles:** The April/May issue of Steam Railway magazine has a very good illustrated article by Gerry Mooney on No.85 "Merlin".

In the May/June issue there is a further 5 page article on the Society by Tony Streeter.

**Steam Facilities:** The turntable at Galway, on which No.171 turned last year, has been disconnected as part of the 'rationalisation' of Galway station, being part of the resignalling of the line from Ballinasloe.

This is a major setback to the Society's plans for future visits to Galway as there is no operational turntable between there and Dublin.

The Society will be writing to Irish Rail to request the reinstatement of this turntable and to ask for a commitment that none of the remaining turntables or watering facilities will be removed in future.

Turntables exist at Claremorris, Connolly, Cork, Drogheda (table only), Inchicore, Mallow Beet Factory, Mullingar, Rosslare, Sligo, Tralee.

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