



September 2003

## NEWS LETTER

### OPERATIONS

**"Sea Breeze":** On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June there was another excellent trip. The train left Connolly on time and arrived at Rosslare at 13:45 (due in at 14:21).

Departure from Rosslare was on time at 16:10. Water was taken at Avoca instead of Rathdrum and a great run was made to Wicklow where a stop was made to cross the down Rosslare. There was another wait at Greystones for the down Dart to arrive - it was running 15 minutes late. A non-stop from Greystones to Connolly and an arrival at 20:55 (due at 21:25).

No.4 was in excellent form and ran very well. 207 passengers from Dublin and 120 sold from Wexford.

**"Steam & Jazz":** The first of the trains, on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June, was completely sold out - 280 travelled. It is a great reflection on the increasing popularity of these trains!

It certainly helped that the weather was excellent - all the participants appeared to be enjoying themselves and the band was in fine form. No.85 performed faultlessly, and time was kept throughout.

Four wheelbarrows of empty bottles were removed and recycled at the Whitehead bottle bank by Alan McRobert and his cleaning team. Fortunately, these and the rest of the rubbish were lifted by stewards on the train and put into approx 25 bags.

**"Mid-Summer Night's Steam":** This run, on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June operated successfully, with a very well filled train, as always.

After leaving on time from Platform 1 at Connolly, there was a very spirited run by No.4 to Enfield where water was taken, the passengers enjoying the sunshine and refreshments on the platform for the few minutes. Arrival in Mullingar was early and the barbecue was not quite ready, but the passengers didn't mind, taking the opportunity to enjoy more sunshine and refreshments.

**What A Weekend!:** The discerning enthusiast, basing himself in Belfast, could have had 450 miles of steam over the last weekend in June!

The "Steam & Jazz" train on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June ran in dry and mild weather despite it being very miserable during the day. 265 travelled on a nominal 250 allocation. Once again, No.85 acquitted herself well. These trains are hard work for the catering, bar and stewarding staff, so a big thank you to them.

On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June, the Dublin team had their efforts justly rewarded when a massive 9 coach train was required to operate the "Northern Enterprise" from Dublin to Belfast with 390 on board - a few dozen continued on to Whitehead where No.4 was swapped for No.85. No.4 was no stranger to 9 coach trains in the early days of the Flyer but hasn't been used to such loadings in recent times. Both locomotives acquitted themselves very well with the loads.

Despite the sadness of the occasion, Sunday's (29<sup>th</sup> June) farewell to the Antrim Branch was a fantastic day out for those who travelled. Two return trains were operated from Antrim to Lisburn, calling at Crumlin in each direction. The

demand for tickets was such that prospective passengers had to be turned away at both Antrim and Crumlin - well over 300 travelled on each train, and there were 50 all-day tickets sold. There was a good turnout at all the intermediate stations and many of the overbridges to see the train. The weather was excellent, No.4 was in great form, and everybody was having such a good time that it was all too easy to forget that it was the last day of scheduled trains on the branch. Indeed, one Society worthy (who shall remain nameless) was heard to say that they should close the branch every week!

Some interesting connections between the day's trip and previous trains:

- AEC trailer 586 (now RPSI No.9) operated on the previous "last" day of services on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1960.
- The first ever RPSI railtour on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1965 operated over the Antrim to Knockmore Junction line: UG class 0-6-0 No.149 (UTA No.49), York Road - Portrush - Antrim - Lisburn; S class No.171 and VS class No.207 double-headed Lisburn - Portadown - Great Victoria Street.
- The 1965 tour included the first ever run-past in Ireland - at Glenavy on the Antrim branch.

**Open Day:** The Society held its annual Open Day on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July in conjunction with the Whitehead Community Association's Town Festival weekend.

For the occasion No.171 "Slieve Gullion" was dragged out to the platform area and Robin Morton was on hand to give the public detailed explanations of the footplate and controls. No.4 ran the train ride service from 1pm to 5pm and a steady stream of visitors enjoyed the sun and steam.

**Portrush Flyer:** On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August, the first train of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Flyer season, hauled by a gleaming No.4, arrived at Central Station to face the press. UTV Live, BBC Newsline and the Belfast Telegraph had turned out to film the cutting of the 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday cake by Rita Henderson, long serving Northern Catering Manager and Norman Foster, RPSI Chairman.

For some reason, numbers travelling on the first train are always lighter than for the later trains. This time was no exception, with about 220 passengers on board. Running was good despite a late departure on the return journey. The "Dalriada" extension to Ballymoney operated again this year as the current timetable does not allow time to run to Castlerock.

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August saw No.4 out again, with a full train, everything going well to plan. The final train of the season operated on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August. Again, No.4 hauled a full train and operated very much to time throughout. Stewart Elliott, who was a 5 year-old boy at the time his picture appeared on front of the Belfast Telegraph in 1973 as a passenger on the first Flyer, was the Society's guest on the train.

It must surely be a record that in 30 years of operation all the trains in the season operated in such splendid weather.

The loadings on the "Dalriada" trains were lower than would be preferred, but these are a bonus anyway. Hopefully we'll get to Castlerock again next year.

A notable change this year was the use of the Down water column at Ballymena on the return journey as the Up column is (hopefully temporarily) out of action. This hasn't delayed proceedings as the train can run into the Down platform to detrain passengers.

**"Northern Enterprise":** No.85 was out on the GNR main line again on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August, hauling 7 Cravens and a van on the second "Northern Enterprise" to Belfast. A most enjoyable trip, with No.85 clearly enjoying her last few outings!

**Train Rides:** Summer Sundays continue to see train rides at Whitehead, ably managed by Henry Ritchie and his team. However, due to the difficulty in finding sufficient crews, the event had to be cancelled for Sundays 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> August.

It is disappointing to have to cut Train Rides for lack of crews, but our small band can't be there on every occasion - they have holidays and family commitments to attend to as well.

Perhaps this would be a good opportunity

to invite members with no past operating experience to come along and try a start on the operating grades. Apart from maintaining our links with the general public, these operations are intended to be a training ground for those members hoping to progress through the grades. Why not give it a try?

**Cork:** No.85's swansong on the GS&WR on 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> September was filling up very nicely at the time of going to print. More details in the next issue.

**"European Architectural Heritage":** Whitehead will be open for train rides and site tours on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September.

**"Atlantic Coast Express":** As NIR will not allow weekday operations on the Bangor line with wooden-bodied stock, and with the Mk2 coaches not yet available, a charter scheduled to run to Cultra on 15<sup>th</sup> September has had to be cancelled.

Also, as no progress has been made on passing out a second NIR steam driver, the "Steam Enterprise" on 27<sup>th</sup> September cannot operate - the length of operating day means that it cannot be covered with one driver.

Instead, an "Atlantic Coast Express" to Londonderry will operate on 28<sup>th</sup> September. This will probably be the last return mainline outing with our wooden-bodied set so a large turnout of members would be expected. There will be an optional bus tour into Donegal.

**"Greystones Shuttle":** Due to the popularity of the "Northern Enterprise" operations from Dublin to Belfast, and because No.85 is in Dublin otherwise doing nothing, it has been decided to drop these trains, planned for 19<sup>th</sup> October, and instead substitute another Enterprise operation on 18<sup>th</sup> October.

**"Broomstick Belle":** This year it is 26<sup>th</sup> October and the format will be the same as always, with morning and afternoon trains to Whitehead. There will be prizes for the best fancy dress.

## LOCOMOTIVES

**No. 1 "Carlow":** There is a continuing problem with loss of gearbox pressure which may require removal and

dismantling of the gearbox to rectify. This work is lengthy and is not proposed until after the Guinness loco is available as a shunter.

**No.3 "R.H. Smyth":** Loco now out of traffic due to deteriorated tube condition. Loco is in need of general repair.

**No.3BG "Guinness":** Hydraulic test complete. Mechanical repairs complete, reassembly well advanced. Saddle tank has been given extensive platework replacement due to severe corrosion, nearly complete.

**No.4:** General cleaning of working parts and washout of boiler required. Some work carried out on leading drawbar and shackle.

**No.85 "Merlin":** Paintwork to be tidied up while at Inchicore.

**No.131:** Cleaning and dismantling is to progress on a stand by basis.

**No.186:** General overhaul progressing. Overhauling boiler fittings and pipework. Final assembly of pistons, glands and valve gear under way. Cab and boiler cladding ready for assembly, awaiting fitting of boiler lagging. Tender on stands for completion of running gear repairs. Assembling tender axleboxes. Tender brake gear and pipework being overhauled. Buffers overhauled. Sourcing suitable brake cylinder diaphragms.

**No.461:** Main items requiring attention are replacement of stays, building up of wasted plates, repair of grooving in firebox corners, repair or replacement of firehole ring patch.

**Workshop:** Installation of electrics proceeding. Office and tool store being fitted out. New air compressor arrangement under way. Plate rolls relocated on new concrete floor at iron-work end of building.

## MK2 UPDATE

**934 (ex-NIR Open):** LC&W have fitted seat wall brackets and luggage racks. All the seats and tables are installed. A vinyl floor has been fitted - blue under seats and black on the centre passage. The coach looks very well and hopefully we will have a very fine comfortable train for

next year.

**9382 (Half Brake Open):** Seats and new armrests are now installed.

**13475 (Corridor 1<sup>st</sup>):** This former Network South East coach arrived at Whitehead on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Ex-NIR 920 went to Heysham in exchange. Unlike 13487, it has a centre door on the corridor side - a useful feature. Work has started to repaint the yellow vestibules into a teak finish.

**13487 (Corridor 1<sup>st</sup>):** Vinyl floor covering has been laid in the corridor and carpet in the compartments.

## WHITEHEAD

**Summer Past:** With recent and imminent deliveries of more Mk2 coaches, 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.

## GENERAL

**Honorary:** The Society is delighted to report that Ted Hesketh and Joe Walsh, recently retired chief executives of Translink and Iarnród Éireann respectively, have been made Honorary Life Members of the RPSI.

Both gentlemen declared themselves honoured to accept membership.

**Payments:** At this time of booking for different trips, and with a few membership payments still coming in, a reminder regarding making payments to the Society.

It is extremely inconvenient to receive a single cheque, or a number of cheques to the one address, for different services, e.g. any combination of subscription, sales items, tickets, etc.

As you can appreciate, those processing the different payments are volunteers and work from their own homes. Because of this lack of a central office, and the

existence of individual accounting codes for each payment category, it becomes extremely time consuming to allocate separate amounts from a single cheque. It is for that reason that we ask members kindly not to make payments to the Society in such a fashion, but to send cheques for each payment to the correct addresses. Even separate cheques to the same address can cause problems if one needs to be forwarded to another officer of the Society.

Hopefully, you will understand our position and in future will send individual payments separately. It will help to keep costs down, reduce workloads and, more importantly for members, avoid undue delays and the possibility of payments going astray. **Donations:** Something to help you make your mind up about donating to the Society:

AIB Website Financial Pages (9/6/2003)

## CHARITABLE DONATIONS GET CREDIT

*Donors to charity who are self-employed receive a 20% tax credit on their contributions. Payments by PAYE workers to charities are treated as net of tax by the Revenue Commissioners.*

*Charities can reclaim the tax from Revenue thus boosting the real value of the donation. Contributions must be greater than €25 to qualify.*

## SALES

**New Book:** The latest book from Colourpoint, "Diesel Dawn" by Colm Flanagan is now in stock.

It consists of 184 pages, 162 black and white photos and 32 colour photos, (and not a steam engine in sight). It is available at £16.50, including postage, from:

RPSI sales, 103 Wynchurh Road, Belfast, BT6 OJJ.

## EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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

[www.rpsi-online.org](http://www.rpsi-online.org)

e-mail: [rpsitrains@hotmail.com](mailto:rpsitrains@hotmail.com)