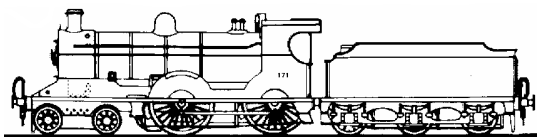


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



January 2011

NEWS LETTER

ANNUAL RAILTOUR

Province Of Leinster: The Society very much regrets having to advise of the postponement of the International Railtour until later in the year.

This has become necessary as the Society is, under recently introduced EU legislation, required to obtain approval from the Railway Safety Commission (RSC) to operate its trains. This approval applies to all operators over the main line infrastructure, and specifically to the Society's activities based in Republic of Ireland.

Whilst much work has been done towards reaching this objective, the RSC has naturally had to concentrate its efforts on Iarnród Éireann's application and so it cannot be assumed that approval will be obtained in time to operate any RPSI trains in the first half of 2011. Consequently, it has been decided to re-schedule the railtour until later in the year when it is expected that all formalities will have been completed.

The above applies to all Dublin-based operations. The RSC asked that no trains be marketed to run before 1st July. However, it is hoped to have certification in place before then if possible.

It is understood that prospective passengers may already have made arrangements for the tour, which have now been upset. But the true nature of the RSC requirements only became clear after the tour had been publicised - there was no option but to postpone.

It is hoped that the majority can travel in September when the revised dates are:

Thu 8th Steam positioning, Belfast to Dublin.
Fri 9th Diesel railtour from Dublin.
Sat 10th Dublin Connolly - Kilkenny -

Dublin Connolly.

Sun 11th Dublin Connolly - Dunboyne - M3 Parkway - Dublin Docklands - Longford - Dublin Connolly.

Mon 12th Dublin Connolly - Belfast - Whitehead.

Tue 13th Coach tour from Belfast.

Members who have submitted a provisional booking please note that no cheques or credit card payments have been processed. It will be assumed that all bookings will be carried through to the revised dates in September. If that is not the case then please contact the railtour team asking for return or shredding of cheques and cancellation of card payments. Contact either of:

rpsitrains@hotmail.com

RPSI Province Of Leinster, PO Box 461, Newtownabbey, BT36 9BT.

BELFAST MEETINGS

8th December: Despite the very wintry weather, there was an audience of about 60.

The Newsreel covered Autumn Leaves, No.85's blast-pipe casting, snow at Whitehead and the first weekend of the northern Santa trains.

The plan had been to have the second half on Dundalk Barrack Street. However, there was just too much material from the Smith pictures and Barrack Street was left until another time.

Tony Hillman, from the Bluebell Railway Museum introduced the audience to John J. Smith and the huge collection of his photographs now in their archive. Charles Friel took over and showed about 110 of his Irish pictures, taken between 1951 and 1965, less than 1% of his Irish material.

There was just enough time to screen a short

video that John Richardson had shot on a trip over the Harz narrow gauge system.

12th January: The usual Newsreel covered the Steam & Carols train, the Whitehead Santa trains and the Mulled Wine train.

Derek Henderson was the night's presenter and he treated the audience to his film of ex-GNR Big Ds (SG3s) and SG2s working goods trains between Portadown and Dundalk. The film began with the making up of the train in Portadown - with the RPSI's own "Ivan" marshalled next the shunting locomotive! Once on the road, there was a mixture of lineside and footplate shots of the train in low winter sunshine - and fog! The coverage was comprehensive and included the return journey. Lengthy goods trains, a huge variety of wagon types (and loads), engines working hard and some spectacular smoke effects all contributed to an unforgettable film. Regular RPSI meetings attendee Jimmy Donnelly was to be seen as the fireman on many of the locomotives.

Derek completed the first half of the night with a short film of the Victoria Falls and Garratts.

After the break, there was a compilation of a huge number of different classes of steam locomotives at work in Scotland in the mid-1960s. Appropriately, Derek's final scenes were of No.461's first trip when painted black and he looked forward to seeing this locomotive back in action soon.

LOCOMOTIVES

General: The Santa trains this year were run in wintry conditions, disturbingly reminiscent of last year's Coleraine train where the crews ended up digging their way through an ice field to get to the turntable. Praise is due to all - volunteers, full time staff, NIR and IE personnel who battled to keep the Santa trains on track.

It is easy to forget the work that becomes less than pleasant when the snows start - locomotive servicing and running repairs, thawing out frozen pipes, draining tanks and other frost precautions, clearing snow from the platform, steam raising at 3 a.m., working No.186 tender-first with a tarpaulin over the open cab.

No.4: After suffering some damage in Dublin the locomotive returned to Whitehead on Sunday 16th January. Dismantling of the valve gear began the same evening while the engine was still warm. This is the commencement of its 10 year overhaul.

No.5 "Drumboe": Bogie, pony truck and

driving wheelsets are nearly ready and the locomotive should be wheeled soon. It will then be possible to move it temporarily out of the Workshop (on recently constructed 3ft gauge track) so as to clear space for mainline locomotive work.

No.85: Overhaul of bogie and driving wheels and bearings is well advanced.

No.186: Minor repairs and servicing took place before working the "Mince Pie" train to Dublin.

No.461: Fitting of water space stays is complete. Mechanical assembly is progressing. Tender running gear is being dismantled. Test fitting of the boiler into the frames has been carried out - it is now back on the shop floor for attachment of the expansion brackets and tubing.

Diesel Update: The team has been trying to encourage everyone who agreed to support the project to make a donation. The vast majority who agreed to help support the project have kindly made a donation to the fund. Roughly half the funds needed to successfully give the RPSI a working mainline diesel fleet have been raised.

GM 175 has been identified as the most suitable of the remaining 141s to join the RPSI diesel fleet. 175 is currently used by Irish Rail as a works pilot in Inchicore. It is hoped that with 134 it will be shortly transferred to RPSI ownership. In addition we have been in discussion with Irish Rail in identifying suitable spares for the fleet.

Mark Healy has also been in discussion about implementing a works programme on the Inchicore based fleet. This will include an induction for RPSI Diesel department volunteers. Looking forward to the New Year, we hope to have in place a programme of work which will allow 134 to be re-started and re-certified for main line operations as well as ensuring that B141 and 175 remain in operational condition and available to work RPSI trains. B142 continues to be based in Whitehead and used for shunting trains.

To donate to the project, please send a cheque, made payable to "The RPSI" to:

RPSI Diesel Project
16 Alderbrook Heath
Ashbourne
Co. Meath

TRAINS & EVENTS

Santa Special (Dublin): What a difference a few degrees makes! The second weekend of operations had pleasant crisp sunshine on both days. Full trains, happy passengers and

good timekeeping were the dominant features.

The freezing temperatures of the previous weekend had left a legacy of leaking plumbing in several coaches but the passengers, forewarned, were very understanding. No.4 performed well, and everybody seemed to be in good mood.

It was back to the sub-zero climate again for weekend 3, but without the heavy snow. Nevertheless, all the trains ran with good timekeeping in the main. However, train heating was erratic but our passengers were a hardy breed and coped well.

It's appropriate to record here the huge commitment our volunteers gave over three weekends - in very trying conditions on two of them - to deliver twelve trains with all the trimmings included. Well done to one and all. Not to be forgotten are the IÉ staff - both footplate and platform/traffic - who ensured too that the trains ran as advertised.

Santa Special (Belfast): The second weekend ran very smoothly throughout.

On Saturday morning of the third weekend (18th December) the Society's volunteers were determined that the wintry conditions over the north of the country would not defeat them. It didn't - it was a failed railcar which nearly did.

The train departed Whitehead Excursion Station at 10:10 as booked. It was stopped outside Jordanstown as the preceding 450 class railcar had failed at Jordanstown station with a brake problem. A fitter was dispatched from York Road and after a lengthy delay the 450 was retrieved by a rescue 450 set.

The Santa train arrived eventually at Belfast Central at 12:25. The run round was delayed until the Enterprise had departed. Eventual departure was at 12:59 - around 1 hour 40 minutes late.

Arrival at Whitehead was at 13:42. After a quick service and watering the train departed Whitehead at 14:00, with arrival at Central for 14:36. A speedy run round and prompt loading of new passengers from the station concourse to the train saw the second special depart at 14:53 (now just over 1 hour delayed from the 13:47 booked departure time). Arrival in Whitehead was at 15:34. Again speedy work saw a departure at 15:50 with a Central arrival at 16:27.

Run round was swift and enabled a 16:43 departure; now just 25 minutes down on the original booked 16:17 time.

It was a frustrating day, but ultimately satisfying in that all that was promised was

delivered. Most, if not all, our customers made the trip. Of the booked 240 for each train, 214 and 219 travelled.

The Sunday was a delight. The snow and ice remained, but No.186 and crew performed superbly and timings were kept to the minute throughout the day.

The Society's volunteers are to be commended for the commitment to the Santa season. A few couldn't make it, but willing replacements stepped in when contacted. The train was clean, warm and hospitable at all times.

Steam & Carols: On Thursday 16th December, a cold evening with snow falling, No.186 and train set off from Whitehead with 5 Carriages on a new venture. A party from Cregagh Presbyterian Church had chartered the train.

At Belfast Central the train stopped to pick up the Church choir and 210 passengers. The Choir had been singing carols in the station concourse, keeping the homebound commuters entertained.

In the snow at Lisburn water was taken and more people joined the train.

The final stop was Newry and everybody moved into the new station where the choir again entertained the assembled crowd. Quite a few had come to the station just to see the train.

A late departure due to a delayed service train meant a good run home with a set down at Portadown in heavy snow. At Lisburn water was taken.

Due to the late running and the weather, singing was confined to the train, the choir visiting the coaches in turn.

From an RPSI view it was a very good night. Many favourable comments about the comfort and heat in the train was appreciated. Could this become a regular feature?

A great deal of thanks to the NI Railways crew who put on a fine display in spite of the weather, the Passenger Services Team for their work and the Whitehead Team who got the whole set ready in the midst of an already busy season.

Mince Pie & Mulled Wine: The train on Sunday 2nd January provided an interesting day:

- No.186 and a packed train left Central on time.
- The water flow from the column on Lisburn Platform 1 was very much improved from recent visits. Departed 3 minutes down.

- Word was received prior to arriving in Dundalk that No.4 was declared a failure in Dublin, apparently as a consequence of the recent severe weather - something that could not be rectified in time for the return working.
- In Dundalk the decision was taken to rebuild the fire and departure was 6 minutes late.
- Unfortunately, for some unknown reason the hot box detector between Dundalk and Dunleer was triggered. Time was lost there.
- A decision had been taken that all effort would be made to return our passengers behind steam. Diesel haulage would have meant no train heat. So with Dublin water pressure known to be very low there was a stop at Drogheda for a quick top up. Departure was now around 30 minutes down.
- Again, a hot box detector was triggered near Laytown and the appropriate checks were made.
- Progress was steady until checked by a preceding Howth DART. Arrival in Dublin at Platform 5 was at 14:58, around 40 minutes down on schedule. The locomotive was very quickly released to the shed.
- Arrangements had been made to mechanically coal No.186 and, thankfully, the turntable was free of any parked rolling stock.
- A fantastic effort saw No.186 serviced very competently.
- The locomotive was coupled up and the train departed at 16:40, some 28 minutes down on schedule. Aware that No.186 could not maintain the schedule for No.4 a determined effort was made to keep ahead of the 18:00 Enterprise as long as possible.
- Steaming was good with a quick water stop at Drogheda.
- Kellystown bank was passed with ease and skilful driving saw a purposeful climb to the border. On arrival in Portadown it was expected that the Enterprise would overtake. But no, the road was given and departure was around 19:25.
- All good things must come to an end and the train was held in Lisburn Platform 2 for up on 30 minutes to allow the Enterprise to overtake and a following local to do likewise. Once that happened the train drew forward to take water. Departure was at 20:34.

- Aware that there was a 20:50 Central to Larne working and the special could not precede it, the running to Central was leisurely.
- Departure from Central was at 21:07 just as the 19:00 ex Dublin arrived.
- Despite the setbacks all remained in good humour. The train was warm, and 547 did a roaring trade throughout the day in both food and refreshments.

2011 Operations: It is intended that the first operations will be the traditional Easter Monday trains from Belfast to Whitehead.

GENERAL

Sales: The following have been added to the list:

- "Farewell the Derry Road" by Eric Challoner, paperback, 26 x 21 cm, 35 colour and 177 b&w photos, 160 pages, £18.
- "The Trains Long Departed" by Tom Ferris, hardback with dustcover, 25 x 17 cm, 12 colour and 15 b&w photos, £21.99.
- "The Belfast and County Down Railway" by Desmond Coakham, hardback with dust covers, 29 x 22 cm, 260 b&w photos, 265 pages, £25.

Order by sending a Sterling or Euro cheque, payable to "RPSI", to: RPSI Postal Sales, 103 Wynchurch Road, Belfast, BT6 OJJ. Please add 10% for postage (UK only) or 20% (outside UK). Add 20% to the Sterling price to convert to Euro.

Pictures: If you have access to the internet then do have a look at member Roger Joanes' excellent collection of Irish railway photographs:

<http://rogerjoanes151.fotopic.net>

AGM: It is hoped to have the annual general meeting in April. In the meantime, should a nomination form be required then please email or write to the address below. Nominations should be returned by 28th February.

Note, the position of Treasurer is currently vacant.

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