

FIVE FOOT THREE

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Editor: Gavin Martin

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Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the Council of the Society.

Front Cover: In a scene reminiscent of a 1930s local, ex GS&WR 0-6-0 No.184 prepares to leave Killucan with the second Santa train to Mullingar on the 14th December 1985. (W.S. Boomer)

EDITORIAL

Better men than I have remarked that familiarity breeds contempt, and indeed if the RPSI has any major failing it is that we simply do not capitalise enough on our successes. I am well aware of the endless hours John Friel puts in as Publicity Officer, but yet the Society as a whole seems to be rather bashful about trumpeting its success stories. This is particularly disturbing when one views the triumphs of 1986 - a fully-booked two-day tour weeks before the final date (one participant even cornered Operations Officer Ernie Gilmore en route and booked his party for next year - and this is before the final destination had been decided!), Portrush Flyers operating at full capacity and, as I write, there seems every prospect of a record season on the Steam Enterprise. Especially gratifying has been the acceptance for traffic of GNR(I) compound No.85 "Merlin" by both Northern Ireland Railways and Coras Iompair Éireann. On the volunteer front new faces are turning up all the time to work at Mullingar or Whitehead - but this is a particularly dangerous time: we

must not allow ourselves to wallow in success. If anything, even more work is required to maintain the already high standards. Anyone who would like a job to do (it doesn't matter where you live - there is a surprising amount of work essential to the smooth running of the RPSI that can be carried out from the comfort of your own home) can, in the first instance, contact me and I will pass your details on to the relevant department. DON'T FORGET that by paying a yearly subscription you are performing perhaps one of the most valuable tasks possible by helping us to say "yes, the RPSI does matter, and we have over 800 members to prove it!" The steady growth in our membership list can only be an encouraging sign.

Finally, it remains for me to advise you that "Five Foot Three" is under new management. Alan Edgar, who for many years masterminded both publications and our carriage restoration programme, has now decided to concentrate his efforts on the carriage front due to the ever-increasing workload presented by the continual improvement in the standards of the train. I should like to express my thanks to Alan for all his help during the change-over. As always, if you have a point to make or perhaps a love of one particular facet of our hobby which you would like to share, then Five Foot Three exists in order that you may do so.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Sullivan Boomer

As I sit down to write these few thoughts it is now the middle of June, and various activities are either imminent, or just past. Still large in everyone's mind will be the Clew Bay Railtour, which was once again a great success for those involved in the organisation. The fact that shortly before the tour wooden bodied coaches were banned from the Cork main line, which meant a reroute out the Midland, and some rescheduling and a review of the coal situation; that the weather for the first time in many years let us down (and those responsible for coaling and servicing the locomotive at Claremorris know that only too well!); that for the first time we had two sets of coaches to worry about over servicing; and that the Dublin - Belfast section was very nearly blocked before the empty stock went down by a derailed fertiliser train; all seemed to add to the event and made it more satisfying. The performance of No.4 on the main tour, particularly on the section out to Athlone and back, is legend; I understand from the timers that it is probably an all-time best for the Midland.

The most satisfying aspect, however, for many of us, was the number of passengers who stayed with us back to Belfast on Sunday night, and then finished off the trip on the Monday return to Whitehead. A full coach (road touring type this time) on Tuesday for a visit to Shane's Castle and the Transport Museum, finishing at the Folk Museum, was marvellous to see. One worry we do have now concerns next year; already we have quite a few bookings, but we don't know where we are going!

[PHOTOGRAPH]

No.85 "Merlin" pauses in Portrush station on the 19th July, having worked the inaugural Portrush Flyer as part of her running-in programme. No.4 was brought along in case of emergency, and No.85's performance up the Monkstown bank was all the more remarkable considering she pulled an 8-coach train loaded to capacity and pushed eighty-odd tons of Jeep! (C.P. Friel)

In this respect the ban from the Cork line is very serious, but already I am in correspondence with the Inspecting Officer of Railways about the matter, and we hope that we may be able to resolve the problem in a mutually satisfactory manner.

The other feature of the tour which was very important was the use of the Mullingar based set. In spite of a problem with No.184 on the empty stock back to Mullingar, which has laid her up for a few weeks pending some repair work, this set will be very busy this year. Although we had to postpone the first "Maynooth Shuttle" operation, we still hope to run the "Claddagh" at the end of July to Galway, with the shuttle operations taking place in August and September. Hopefully in the foreseeable future a larger locomotive will be available for Dublin based operations, and then we should be able to expand our operations to fill the market available.

To provide the support necessary at our maintenance base we have been involved in an ongoing dialogue with CIÉ about a lease for Mullingar, and there have been some developments in that area. Although I cannot report that anything is yet signed, sealed or delivered, it does appear to be getting nearer.

Also getting nearer is the installation of the turntable in Coleraine, due to take place within the next couple of weeks. I hope that by the time you read this (and that the magazine is not delayed) not only will the turntable be in position, but that it will also have been tested, passed for traffic, and used!

In the same timescale as the turntable is the official launch of No.85 "Merlin", which should take place at Whitehead on Monday 30th June. This will, we hope, attract considerable publicity and if all goes well the locomotive may well see service on at least one "Portrush Flyer" in the course of the summer. I know that there are many people who want to know when it is going to work an "Enterprise", but I cannot answer that; turn to the Locomotive Report and see if there are any clues there!

Those of you who have been at Whitehead will know that the Larne line resignalling has had a slight effect upon us, but thanks to the co-operation of NIR everything is working smoothly, and with the pending replacement of the King's Road overbridge, the view from the shed will soon change out of all recognition. We are currently investigating the possibilities of the Whitehead Station buildings, as the company will be demolishing them in about a year's time unless we can find a use for them. No doubt we can, but the deciding factor will be economics, and unless we can afford the development, then the bulldozers may just have to move in. Hopefully we will be able to find some grant aid or other source of revenue to restore these original Belfast and Northern Counties Railway buildings which were designed by Charles Lanyon.

This next capital project at Whitehead is to be a Carriage Shed, which is now urgently required; if you care to examine some of the recently restored coaches you will see the horrifying damage that the sun, wind and rain can wreak on good bodywork that has been well restored, painted and waterproofed! The building is being planned along the lines of Whitehead Railway Project's workshop, a hay-shed type building, which can be built in a modular fashion. This will allow us to build as much as we can possibly afford, and then extend as more money becomes available. Ideally we would build the whole shed at once, but that will require a sum approaching £100,000. Apart from robbing a bank, has anyone got any ideas? At the same time we would hope to erect the sheer legs for the heavy lifting

area, and possibly start on a proper carriage maintenance workshop. The 2001 plan lives again!!

LOCOMOTIVE MAINTENANCE

Peter Scott

3, Ex-Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners 0-6-0ST

In traffic.

3BG, Ex-Arthur Guinness and Sons 0-4-0ST

Awaiting overhaul.

23, Ex-Irish Shell 0-4-0DM

In traffic.

27 “Lough Erne”, Ex-Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway 0-6-4T

Awaiting overhaul.

85 “Merlin”, Ex-Great Northern Railway (Ireland) 4-4-0 compound

In traffic.

171 “Slieve Gullion”, Ex-Great Northern Railway (Ireland) 4-4-0

Renewal of right driving axlebox. Hydraulic test. Repairs to superheater elements. Trailing drivers re-profiled, right trailing bearing re-metalled or refitted. Wheelset fitted to loco. Driving wheels re-profiled, right driving journal skimmed off. A new right driving axlebox has been cast since the old one was beyond economic repair. Machining to final shape of the new axlebox is underway.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

The joint RPSI/Belfast East Rotaract Club “Charity Flyer” departs Portrush for Belfast on the 5th July. Now running as an annual event, the train produces a contribution to both the upkeep of the Society’s historic rolling stock and a charity of Rotaract’s choice. Recent beneficiaries include Dr Jack Lyle’s medical work in Zambia and Lord Dunleath’s Children’s Cancer Trust. (C.P. Friel)

184, Ex-Great Southern and Western Railway 0-6-0

Boiler repairs. When working the empty coaches back to Mullingar after the “Clew Bay” railtour No.184 ran low in water and the fusible plug in the firebox crown melted. This is the first such occurrence in the Society’s history, and as the consequences could well have been very serious it is hopefully the last. The cause of the incident is still under investigation but suffice to say that there were no injuries to personnel and damage to the locomotive was minimal, and indeed will have been rectified by the time you read this. Repairs to the smokebox have also been undertaken.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

The double-headed Portrush Flyer of 19th July passing Greenisland. As the plume of exhausted steam testifies, Merlin is doing all the work - No.4’s fireman must be quite glad of the opportunity for a rest! (C.P. Friel)

186, Ex-Great Southern and Western Railway 0-6-0

Awaiting firebox repairs.

461, Ex-Dublin and South Eastern Railway 2-6-0

General Overhaul. Refitting of eccentric sleeves to axle. One eccentric requiring some brasses. Driving wheels have been re-profiled, also de-scaled and painted. Repairs to the tender are proceeding with the re-instatement of the shovel box, drag plate and other corroded metalwork.

Ex-Comlucht Siucre Éireann Teoranta 0-4-0DM

Work on the “Carlow Engine” is proceeding as time permits.

Turntable

Installation of the ex-Great Victoria Street turntable in Coleraine has received high priority since it is required if No.85 is to operate to Portrush. The construction of the turntable pit has been carried out by Enterprise Ulster. However the table itself required considerable refurbishment and this has kept our ACE employees busy at Whitehead since January. The table for Coleraine is the one from Great Victoria Street, which has been in store at Whitehead since the early 1970s. The Londonderry table, which was originally to be sited at Coleraine, was found to be badly corroded and was rejected in consequence; its future is still to be decided. The Great Victoria Street table has been lengthened slightly and will accommodate any locomotive - although if anyone ever wants to turn No.800 the only means of balancing the locomotive will be by adjusting the level of water in the tender! A brief outline of the mechanical work is as follows:

1. Complete de-scaling and painting of steelwork.
2. Addition of an 18” extension at each end.
3. Overhaul of locking mechanism and provision of missing parts.
4. Renewal of missing adjusting nuts.
5. Provision of deck timbers.
6. Freeing up of race wheels.
7. Fitting of additional stretchers at each end where existing castings are cracked.

Locomotive Plant And Machinery

A Butler 18” shaping machine is being installed. It requires some minor repairs, however it is needed for part of the overhaul work taking place on No.171 “Slieve Gullion”.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

Memories of the ‘brave new era’ of the multi-purpose diesel train. This is a view of the van-end driving position of dual-ended power car No.64. (Photographer unknown)

[PHOTOGRAPH]

Waterford Central signal cabin in 1924. Note the engine release signals (looped) removed in 1948. (Jack O’Neill)

LOCOMOTIVE RUNNING

Brian Hill

To close the file on 1985, locomotive mileage for 1985 was as stated below:

Locomotive	Train Miles	Light Engine	Total
4	1,306	122	1,428
85	342	42	384
171	1,060	184	1,244
184	358	378	736
	3,066	726	3,792

From these figures it will be seen that a more even-handed use of locomotives No.4 and No.171 was possible during 1985, although No.171 would have, in fact, exceeded No.4's mileage but for her failure on the first "Steam Enterprise" of 1985. A new entry in these statistics is, of course, the mileage for locomotive No.85 "Merlin", which can be mainly attributed to the running-in trips satisfactorily performed in October/November 1985.

The Santa Train Rides of Christmas last at Whitehead were a notable success with locomotive No.3 "RH Smyth", and her crew, being kept busy shuttling passengers up and down the yard. The locomotive has given sterling service since being introduced into RPSI service in 1977, but is showing signs of requiring some mechanical attention rather than mere running repairs.

Santa also put in an appearance at Mullingar, but despite a good showing by the locomotive and carriage squads, a clash of dates and marketing prevented the full benefits being reaped.

Operations in 1986 commenced with "The Three-Day International Rail Tour" to Westport (the title gets longer even if the train length does not - Operations Officer please note!). The running of the tour to Athlone along the MGWR via Mullingar on the Saturday morning, instead of the intended path along the Great Southern by way of Portarlinton, caused only minor amendments to locomotive planning. Indeed this late change as a result of the CIÉ ban on wooden-bodied carriages running on the Dublin - Cork mainline was understood by the tour participants, except a few timers. At least the carriages and not the locomotive were the target for a change (no offence C&W). However, this ban obviously has far reaching consequences as regards the running of RPSI stock over any portion of the Great Southern main line; a successful resolution of this matter is being actively pursued.

The most noticeable problem on the tour took place on the Sunday morning when the Tuam 'branch train' was late returning to Claremorris, resulting in locomotive No.4 and main train being held to cross the Down Westport at Claremorris instead of Ballyhaunis. An alternative run to Ballina had been ruled out on operational grounds, the trip to Tuam being the only feasible attraction possible, and on a tight schedule that on the day proved too much. A good attempt was made during the rest of the journey to recoup the lost time, but further delays outside the control of the RPSI precluded this and resulted in a later onward path to Belfast.

Although locomotives No.4 and No.184 acquitted themselves well during the tour, both gave cause for concern for differing reasons. The tank engine (No.4) developed an

unhealthy appetite for coal which gave rise to concern on one particular occasion; it would appear a badly perforated smokebox was the culprit, and that the whole smokebox will require replacement in the very near future. Locomotive No.184 was a more serious matter. Returning to Mullingar on the Sunday evening with the five Mullingar-based carriages, the fusible plug core in the firebox crown melted causing loss of water and pressure. Subsequent examination showed there to be no detrimental damage and investigations are underway to pinpoint the cause; no injuries were sustained.

Certain carriage work of relevance to working members rostered for mainline operations was completed in time for the 1986 May tour to Westport. Operating Staff accommodation in service coach 114 was improved by the provision of bunk beds in the former train-heating boiler room - such a facility has long been needed. At the other end of this coach, the 'entertainments committee', in the 'shape' of Heather Boomer, Isobel Gilmore and Karen Cameron, have renovated the washing and lavatorial arena used by staff. Their efforts were greatly appreciated, and of encouragement to other Society ladies to become actively involved; flushed with success the trio are to set about the rest of the coach (what about a shower?).

One item which has relevance on future May tours and other Mullingar-orientated operations is the future of the Mullingar - Athlone section. Traffic is being rerouted from this line and possible closure could be on the cards; the effect of closure on the RPSI would be to make access to Athlone (and thence the west and south) only possible via Dublin. No mention of possible closure has emanated from CIÉ, but the route is clearly seeing less traffic as time progresses. It is possible that the line will be retained, for occasional traffic requirements and to give the Athlone pilot engine access to the Sligo line for emergency purposes, much as the Bleach Green - Antrim line is kept by NIR.

This year's charter trains have largely failed to materialise as a result of price or other reasons outside the RPSI remit; only the "Charity Flyer" looks likely to operate, and that on a date later than intended. The lesson in this particular case is not to plan a trip to run shortly after the May tour when personnel and resources are already overburdened.

Planning for normal RPSI operations is proceeding; the choice of locomotive to haul the "Portrush Flyer" and "Steam Enterprise" trains depends to a certain extent on further trials for locomotive No.85 "Merlin". It is proposed that locomotives No.4 and No.85 will haul the first "Portrush Flyer" of 1986, when it is hoped that Coleraine turntable will be available for traffic. At Mullingar plans are being formulated to operate the "Claddagh" to Galway after a lapse of two years, with No.184 hauling the RPSI's rake of southern-based carriages, as well as a "Maynooth Shuttle".

The first day of June saw locomotive No.85 officially launched with a 'bang; it was also my last duty as RPSI Locomotive Running Officer as I must relinquish the post to fulfil a 2-year professional posting to the USA. The most memorable aspect of my 5½ year stint has been involvement in railtour planning, especially the close relationship with Ernie Gilmore, Sullivan Boomer, Jeremy Saulters and Neil Hamilton which will be sadly missed. Indeed the removal of such a large facet of daily life leaves something of a vacuum.

Looking back it is interesting to see how RPSI steam workings have evolved from being enthusiast based to become reliant on public support. This has resulted in train interior presentation and marketing attaining prime importance to attract the discerning punter.

Indeed that Americanism 'corporate image' (a spin-off from importing GM locomotives?) must be applied to the RPSI; a unified, professional outlook is a must for the Society, and a more business-like attitude must prevail throughout the organisation. The revamped Operations Committee has gone some way to meeting this, and it is hoped the much-needed financial restructuring will follow suit with full dissemination of data to permit proper management. Although a non-profit making entity, the RPSI has expanded to the equivalent status of a small commercial company, perhaps a change in Council structure, or even its replacement by a different hierarchy, may be due to match this growth.

The RPSI remains to all intents and purposes a volunteer institution, however the number of volunteers actively involved has gradually declined over the years. It is hoped that the continuing introduction of a committee structure for day-to-day control of Society affairs will release the Council to deal with policy only. The advantageous effect of this is to give each person involved a more acceptable workload better suited to their individual availability. Where applied so far (principally the Operations Committee), this strategy has worked to attract new faces, but there is no apparent solution concerning recruitment for work at both Whitehead and Mullingar. Unless additional bodies are forthcoming, a combination of externally-funded schemes (such as ACE) and reduced work programmes may have to be regrettably adopted.

The RPSI is a conglomeration of individuals with the objective of railway preservation as a hobby(!). There are one or two 'empire builders' within the upper echelons, but they must learn that it is only as a TEAM that the Society will prosper. To quote a well known advert - "we should be talking to each other", it is only in this way that an effective and economic (in terms of finance and manpower) performance will be feasible.

To round off this verbal amble, I would like to acknowledge all those individuals and companies who have assisted and worked with me over the years. In particular I must mention Paul Newell, Ernie Gilmore (known to all as "OM"), Sullivan Boomer, Jeremy Saulters, Neil Hamilton, the staff of NIR and CIÉ, and everyone who has made the RPSI Ireland's only successful mainline steam operation. Thank you!

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Alan Edgar

1986 is proving to be a year of mixed fortune for the Carriage & Wagon Department. The good news is an unprecedented fifteen carriages passed for traffic, with the likelihood of the number increasing to twenty or so within the next year. It is particularly significant that five of the vehicles are Mullingar-based, forming a second running train. The possibilities this opened up were first explored on the "Clew Bay" railtour, when two trains operated simultaneously.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

Work advancing on the interior of GNR(I) Open Third No.9. (C.P. Friel)

Passed for traffic at Whitehead are the following vehicles:

Ex LMS (NCC)

68 composite

87 dining car/bar
91 "North Atlantic" brake third
238 corridor third
411 bogie parcel van

Ex Great Southern Railway

1327 corridor third
1335 corridor third

Ex Great Southern and Western Railway

1142 corridor first

Ex Great Northern Railway (Ireland)

50 saloon
114 brake third

The major task at Whitehead in recent months has been the structural repair to workshop coach 114. This task involved virtual reconstruction of one end (the other end having received major treatment last year) in addition to replacement of a defective doorpost. These tasks were ably undertaken by ACE joiner Thomas Hill-Moore, who returned to our employment in April. Time was at a premium on this job and in just under a month 114 also received a new roof covering and a number of other repairs. The weekend before the stock working south for the Clew Bay tour saw the gangway connection re-hung on the rebuilt end of the carriage, but the absence of most of the external panelling led to dark mutterings as to whether or not the job would be finished. In fact, the last screw went into the last panel the night before the train was due to leave! Particular mention must be made of Malcolm Gunn, who set some sort of record by virtually living at Whitehead for a month, and amongst other things put several hundred screws into the external panels in the week before the stock working.

Two other innovations are worthy of mention: A recently acquired ex-dormitory carriage (more of this later) donated three bunk beds which have been installed in the space formerly occupied by the train heating boiler fitted to supply steam heat when 114 worked on BUT diesel railcars. These bunks provide comfortable overnight accommodation for locomotive support crews, and are also used during the day by weary steam raisers or other overnight workers.

The second innovation concerns a small compartment at the other end of 114 into which few had hitherto dared to venture. Sinister odours were associated with this area, and pale green light had been noted coming from under the door on various occasions. This was all changed when Isabel Gilmore, Heather Boomer and Karen Cameron (presumably working on the basis of "if you can't beat them ...") moved in and within four weekends produced an exquisitely restored loo complete with potted plants and chintz curtains. In a short ceremony, which took place between Enfield and Kilcubben on the "Clew Bay" tour, the convenience was declared open by the Rt. Hon. the Lord O'Neill, who cut a ceremonial ribbon. A bottle of champagne was then opened and consumed by those present.

114 was not the only vehicle to require attention, as ACE handymen Max Irwin and Christopher Dorrian had been seen attacking the floor of the dining car with heavy duty lino paint: it has been said of the gleaming end result that one could eat one's dinner off it, although I don't believe either of them intended such an event to take place!

Whitehead Railway Project were in the meantime putting the finishing touches to Bredin-designed coach 1335, built in the 1930s for the Great Southern Railway's Dublin suburban traffic. Although it left their workshop some time ago this coach still required new gangway tunnels and floor covering in order to finish off the restoration process. The "Clew Bay" was therefore 1335's debut in her new guise. Having two of this particular design of coach (1327 is an earlier example of the same batch) was a godsend on this operation as their large capacity water tanks and spacious interiors are ideally suited to this sort of operation.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

Exterior View of 9 showing her return to the wood grain-effect scumble finish which was the preference of the GNR(I). (C.P. Friel)

After the hectic period around the railtour, work once again settled down to a steady pace. GNR(I) open third 9 is advancing towards completion. The interior has become the current project to the midweek squad of retired members, and their usual high standard is being achieved. 9 still required gangways, attention to roof and guttering, re-plumbing and reassembly of the running gear to complete. She is an urgent operational requirement, however, being an open-type coach. Since the withdrawal of open Bredin 1333 for overhaul the Whitehead-based train has been bereft of such a vehicle.

Recently acquired from CIÉ is GS&WR tri-composite 1097, built in 1924. This carriage appears to have been designed by a committee (or indeed a council) consisting as it does of one half an open saloon, and the other containing four compartments. None the less it is an attractive and potentially versatile vehicle. Like all GSWR carriages it is very well constructed, and virtually free from structural rot. It was latterly in CIÉ departmental service as 605a, on the Inchicore breakdown train. Since arrival at Whitehead the roof covering has been replaced, as have the gutters and some exterior panels. Internally such accoutrements as bunk beds, cookers, cupboards, tool racks, roller towel machines, a kitchen sink and the clutch plates from a lorry(?) have been removed from the compartments. They were not entirely compatible with the envisaged function of seating people. Ingress of water through the formerly leaking roof has caused a considerable amount of superficial rot to the internal panelling which needs attending to.

Having completed Bredin 1335 for the "Clew Bay" tour, Whitehead Railway Projects have returned to their major job in hand, GNR(I) dining car 88. The time-consuming task of repairing the body framing is now complete, and re-panelling is under way. Progress should now be rapid, and it is hoped to move 88 out of the Whitehead Railway Project shed within the next couple of months. 88 will then be berthed in an adjacent siding for fitting out. The roof on 88 was the first to benefit from the application of a PVC proofed nylon cover. This has now been in place for ten years, and apart from one or two small holes caused by the impact of sharp objects is as good as the day it was put on.

Finally, may I thank anyone who has helped with the carriages in whatever way, and might I encourage any potential new recruits to make themselves known!

MULLINGAR CARRIAGE & WAGON

Aiden McDonnell & Mark Hodge

In July 1985 the Society approved the purchase of nine ex CIÉ coaches to be based at Mullingar. The coaches are as follows: six standards, one brake standard, one buffet car and one kitchen car. Within three months of purchase 1915, 1445, 1469 and 1485 were rendered serviceable and since then have completed three tours totalling five hundred miles approximately.

All of these coaches were built between 1955 and 1960 and were the mainstay of the CIÉ fleet for many years.

The current livery is green and black, this is only a temporary measure to distinguish them as preserved stock.

The following is a summary of coaches lying at Mullingar:

- 1328 (Bredin Corridor Third built 1935). This coach has been in Mullingar for the past three years. Removal of steel panels is progressing on a standby basis.
- 1434 This coach is currently being stored.
- 1445 This coach is in traffic but is intended that it will be withdrawn for repairs.
- 1463 This coach was overhauled by CIÉ in Inchicore in October 1984 but was withdrawn due to a shunting mishap, this is probably the best coach in our set.
- 1469 In service.
- 1470 This coach is currently being stored.
- 1483 In service.
- 1915 Major interior work was carried out in Mullingar due to extensive damage through vandalism.
- 2407 (Kitchen car) This vehicle is currently lying in the yard at Mullingar pending removal to Whitehead.
- 2422 (Buffet car) This coach was refurbished internally by Anco (Industrial Training Authority) in Oct/Nov 1985. It is hoped that this coach will be returned to traffic in the near future. This will be the first coach out-shopped in Mullingar.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

Buffet car 2422 is prepared for Santa Train workings at Mullingar on 14th December 1985. (W.S. Boomer)

Over the next years it is hoped to out-shop a large number of coaches and bring the standard of coach maintenance to a much higher level, this mainly depends on volunteer labour, which seems to be the hardest commodity to come by.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

Ex-Great Southern and Western Railway 0-6-0 No.184 in the final stages of preparation for the Santa Specials at Mullingar. (W.S. Boomer)

IF IT'S TUESDAY, IT MUST BE ST. JUDE'S

Charles Friel

Saint Jude used to be a popular saint for lost causes but to many Society members the name means lively railway meetings and good crack.

If you're still mystified, it will probably help if you know that the Society has its winter meetings in Saint Jude's Church Hall, Sunnyside Street on the third Tuesday of the month, October to March inclusive. We used to have meetings in September and April, but Steam Enterprises and Easter Bunnies put paid to those - and, anyway, the hall was too bright to show slides in.

The days of booking a small room in the old Presbyterian Hostel and hoping for a good turn out of maybe 15 souls have long gone; nowadays an audience of less than ten times that is considered poor!

Last winter's season was a typical mixture and I'd like to give you a flavour of what you may have missed; maybe you'll resolve not to miss our next season.

The first meeting was a very welcome return visit by Dr. D.B. McNeill - his previous narrow gauge and railway shipping service talks set a high standard, and this year's offering was no disappointment. His talk on the Mails between Belfast and Dublin over the last 250 years was chockfull of history, anecdote, detail and character. Of course, Dr. McNeill's irascible humour added another dimension to a fascinating account, well illustrated with slides. The gist of the talk appears in the latest IRRS Journal.

A foggy and uninviting night in November was totally banished when Joe Curran recreated the atmosphere of the County Donegal. Joe is a son of the late B.L. Curran and was ideally placed to gain many insights into the workings of this much-lamented system - like the real origins of Railcar 1 or what happened when the Stranorlar East signalman was temporarily replaced by the station's charlady! The night saw a capacity crowd of over two hundred, few of whom were tempted to leave even when the last buses had gone and the pubs shut!

The December meeting stayed with the narrow gauge, but 4'8½" this time - when the topic was the Belfast trams. The meeting was a joint one with our friends of the Irish Transport Trust and was addressed by Mike Maybin and Cecil Slator. Mike brought the large audience on an illustrated tour of routes and services while Cecil concentrated on some of the mechanical details with an account of each class of car in use, enlivening his fine draughtsmanship with humorous anecdotes of travel on the trams.

We saw in the New Year with a double-headed slide show. Alec Glover contributed an outstanding slide-show journey down the West Coast main line from Euston to Carlisle with a brief detour to take in his native Birmingham Snow Hill. The slides embraced a wide variety of engines and workings though with a pronounced preference for the Duchesses and Cities - and he combined slides with sound effects as well. The tea-break was unanimously postponed to take in the last stretch of the journey. Alex was followed by John Lennon who brought us back to Ireland for his 'then and now' sequence. John has copied several of the better-known Irish transport pictures from the late 19th century and,

using a dissolve system to tremendous effect, contrasted them with the identical scene today. The result was often stunning - like the total evaporation of Loo Bridge on the Kenmare line.

February saw another returning speaker, Tom McDevitte - formerly an employee of the GNR(I) and now better known as a raconteur of railway anecdotes in a weekly spot on Radio Ulster. Tom's tales, both tall and true, history and anecdotal, did much to recreate scenes from the Clogher Valley and Castlederg lines as well as his beloved Great Northern where his life in the Works and, later, in the Publicity Department brought him face to face with a very human and humorous railway.

The St. Jude's season ended, like many before it, with another ex-railwayman, Fred Cooper. Fred is a highly accomplished maker of films as well as being our foremost collector of old films and his shows are a magic mixture of the old and the new. With Fred's shows, you never know what ghostly images are going to appear - be they Listowel and Ballybunion, Swilly or County Down - and this year was no exception. His Irish North material was a real gem. As usual, Tony Price travelled from Arklow to provide commentary and brought some vintage West Cork cine with him as well.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

The Portrush Flyer departs York Road Station on 5th July 1986, headed by LMS NCC 2-6-4T No.4 and Great Northern Railway (Ireland) 4-4-0 Compound No.85 "Merlin". This was Merlin's first real test, powering about 310 tons up the Monkstown bank. (The tank engine did virtually no work on that climb!). (C.P. Friel)

Our best thanks are due to each of our contributors - they all took great care with their presentations and their professionalism did much to enhance the enjoyment they provided. I should thank the audiences too - on many nights we could have run another hour on the recollections contributed from the floor. And I must thank those who were asked to propose the vote of thanks; I know some were reluctant at first but all managed to capture the essence of the evening and spoke eloquently on our behalf.

Although the meetings are Belfast-based, many of the regular attendees travel from Coleraine or Rostrevor, Armagh or Downpatrick.

So what's next? At the end of the season we distributed a questionnaire asking folk to indicate what they enjoyed most and asking for suggestions. The response was very good and always constructive.

The category with the most votes (61) was (surprise, surprise), Irish standard gauge steam with Irish narrow gauge steam second (39) and Society activities third with 38 votes. Then in fourth with 30 votes came line histories while NIR took fifth spot with 28 votes. BR steam and BR preserved steam tied for sixth position with 27 votes and there was four-way tie eighth place between CIÉ, European railways, company histories and locomotive histories, each scoring 26. Then, in order, came Irish industrial lines, GB preserved lines, overseas railways and architecture, coach histories, photography, civil engineering, signalling, reminiscences and BR diesels(?) and these completed the top 20. The comments and suggestions were helpful and several useful ideas will be incorporated into next season's programme. My thanks go to all those who took the time and care to complete the

questionnaire. I still need to find whoever ticked nine of the 30 options and nominated me for each!

I look forward to your company next winter when we hope to at least equal last season's highly enjoyable series.

CARRIAGE CLEANING

Kieran Barber

For the past couple of months there has been a very concentrated amount of effort being put in by the Carriage Cleaning Crew to keep the image of clean trains very prominent, particularly in view of more and more passengers now boarding the Portrush Flyers, Sunday Train Rides, 2/3 day Tours and the forthcoming Bangor Belle, Steam Enterprises and the Larne Lough Railtour.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

The second Portrush Flyer of 1986 preparing to depart Whitehead Excursion Station for York Road on 19th July 1986. (C.P. Friel)

[PHOTOGRAPH]

Poetry in motion? The double headed Portrush Flyer of 19th July passing Cromore Station on the way home to Belfast. (C.P. Friel)

The Carriage Cleaning Crew's duties involve:

- (a) Seats and floors to be swept
- (b) Windows (inside and outside) cleaned
- (c) Wash-hand basins and toilet bowls thoroughly washed
- (d) Mirrors and all chrome areas to be cleaned
- (e) Restocking of toilet rolls and soap
- (f) Towels to be washed between train journeys
- (g) Floors mopped

With the average crew of five it is possible to clean and refurbish carriages in approximately 3 hours, starting time being on average 7pm and finishing approximately 9:30 - 10pm.

This year has seen a few changes in the Carriage Cleaning Department in the form of hand towels, litter bins and soap being provided. The reason behind this is that the general public who have paid above the average fare to travel on the Portrush Flyer compared with a diesel haulage to Portrush will notice clean carriages and then when nature calls they enter the toilets. Prior to these new provisions they would have entered to find hard paper towels to dry their hands on which has been proven to be ideal for blocking toilets very effectively as I know from experience having to unblock them several times! So, the new hand towels kindly purchased by Isabel Gilmore on behalf of the Carriage Cleaning Department has replaced the paper hand towels and new litter bins are provided in each toilet along with the middle of the range toilet rolls, again public image. The First Usage of these new

provisions was used on the 2nd August Portrush Flyer and seemed to prove successful in the form of no toilets blocked by paper towels which have in effect been banned from usage.

There is still room for improvement in the form of redecoration of the toilet areas and provisions of replacement toilet roll holders and mirrors. This is hoped to be achieved by early 1987.

My thanks must go to all those who have participated in the Carriage Cleaning and for ideas passed on some of which have become a reality!

SUNDAY STAFFING

Kieran Barber

The work on offer on Sundays is in three basic areas:

Shop

In this area the work involves selling and restocking items to the general public who have come off the beaten track (pardon pun) to see what is going on. A price list is updated once new stock is brought in or old stock deleted and so it is very easy to actually do the selling. Currently, Bob Hunter is very much the front man in this area and I must say that without him being there the Shop may not do so well since there are times when there is a lack of staff.

Thanks must also go to Henry Beaumont who carries out shopping for the Shop both at Whitehead and at Shane's Castle and at this point it must be pointed out that help is urgently needed in the form of voluntary assistants at Shane's Castle so will all new recruits please put your name forward for help either at Shane's Castle or Whitehead.

Tickets

A straightforward ready reckoner is available to assist in the calculation of fares to be charged in the ticket booth situated in the Shop during the Summer Season and in the yellow building in the winter and Easter periods. The tickets are numbered and currently there are three types - Adults, Children and Family.

Diner

Finally, in this area the provision of refreshments to the exhausted family who have hopefully spent a fortune in our Shop, purchased tickets and have had a train ride. During Sunday Train Rides we now provide real tea and coffee with real milk as well as fresh stocks of biscuits, chocolates and minerals. The staff also act as a team to provide a prompt service and clean tables for the aforementioned customers and this has proved to be a success. Many thanks to all concerned.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

I hope you will allow me to address you as friends - I participated together with a friend from Vienna as a member of the Berlin Group on your Clew Bay Railtour 10 -12 May, and all the heartiness and warmth enjoyed throughout the trip (and at the buffet car's bar holding several pints of Guinness) made me feel like a welcome friend. As English is not

my mother tongue, I ask you to accept my apologies for any incorrect expression and/or spelling, I'm doing my best, anyway.

It started with the breakfast in the dining car - John Richardson was doing miracles and our group, just off the ferry boat, enjoyed a hearty meal before the trip started. Reading the news sheet we learned that we were not going by mainline - little difference it made to me, as it was the first time I ever set foot on Irish soil. Loco No.4 was doing a marvellous job getting us to Athlone, where No.184 was joining us with her car set. The organisation of the various line side buses was excellent - only one thing amazed me: the atrocity you call weather. But I do not want to be unfair, I seem to remember several sun rays.

Looking out of the window made me wish to come again to Ireland. Having enjoyed the gala dinner at Westport Hotel, having watched a video record of the day's events and having sampled some more Guinness accompanied by a wee bit of Bushmills made me feel sure I'd be back some day. Next day brought the very interesting side trip to Tuam, return to Dublin and the travel up to Belfast.

Monday saw us on the train again, going to Antrim, and then to Whitehead. And here I want to say "thank you" for the patience Messrs. Sullivan Boomer and Ernie Gilmore extended to us by answering all the questions which obviously only Continentals could dream up. I should like to extend my admiration to all the members of the RPSI who have done such a wonderful job in preserving and maintaining all these locos and coaches.

The evening was spent in Carrickfergus (thanks again, John) with a memorable visit to the bell tower, the church and the city hall; all this made my decision to come back to Ireland even stronger. The last day saw us again in Antrim, visiting Shane's Castle Railway, a real gem! The afternoon visit to the Ulster Folk and Transport museum in both Witham Street and Cultra was most memorable, what an amazing collection of locomotive and rolling stock - most impressing the No.800 Maeve! Mr. John S. Moore from the museum was most helpful when I tried to pronounce "Maeve", "Macha" and "Tailte" as well as giving other information about the interesting history of the railways of Ireland.

The evening saw us on the train again, this time a regular train down to Dublin where we enjoyed a last meal and the last Guinness - and a very memorable trip had come to an end.

Last not least I wish to give my special thanks to Mrs. Isabel Gilmore and Mrs. Heather Boomer, both ladies were extremely helpful and concerned about our welfare and certainly were a great deal responsible that our group was taken care of. May the day not be too long away that I'll be in Ireland again!

I should be very happy if you could print that letter in the Five Foot Three magazine and would certainly appreciate if you would forward a copy if you chose to print it. I enclose a little donation to cover your expenses and if something is left over I'd like to have it used for the restoration of No. 27 "Lough Erne", as I took a liking to this loco.

Thanks again for a memorable railtour.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Heinersdorff

Vienna

[OUTSIDE REAR]

Something old, something new. Pride of CIÉ, and indeed Dublin in general, is the DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transit system). The working shown is the 10:45 ex-Bray on 14/10/1986. (Barry Carse)