

FIVE FOOT THREE

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Editor: Nelson Poots

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

EDITORIAL

Two quotations from our last issue's News from Council and Editorial respectively: "A year of massive expenditure ... 2003 ..." and "Wouldn't it be nice just to have a few years of quietly running trains". As far as the former was concerned, for 2004 choose your own word for more than massive. We did run trains more or less quietly - if you ignore the cries of protest from passengers who found that their Portrush Flyer times weren't what had been advertised, and the groans of Society activists (not least a certain Treasurer) at the series of loss-making proving and gauging outings required of us. Aggravating the situation - and not unconnected with the latter outings - was the fact that we were unable to run some of the public excursions we had planned for the earlier part of the year, while Dublin operations have also been, and continue to be, affected by the work in connection with the up-grading of the DART system.

So is there light at the end of the RPSI's tunnel, arguably the longest in Ireland? Well, we now have five Mk2 coaches operating, and we managed to get through the Santa season without any passengers suffering hypothermia or getting lost in the dark - see Carriage Report. Another Mk2 open coach is ready to run but is as yet uncertified, a brake coach (with generator!) should arrive from England in the not too distant future while a diner is being renovated at Whitehead, this latter being eagerly awaited to replace the present far-from-ideal facilities.

One of the pleasant surprises of 2004 has been the re-emergence of No.186, at the potential performance of which some - including the writer - may have tended to look askance. How wrong we were: the little J15's exploits have amazed even its most dedicated supporters and it has now satisfied NIR that it can traverse their system without doing harm. A simple soul, who abhors what he perceives as unnecessary complication, the writer has often wondered why No.186 should be required to demonstrate its harmlessness in places already successfully negotiated by the much larger No.85, but that seems to be how the world works nowadays. We must hope that negotiations will produce a system of co-ordinating known facts and relieve us of the need for endless costly running around the countryside.

Those who have got the excellent "Forty Shades of Steam" may have thought that all had been said about all the running of all kinds but no, as you will see in this issue, operations have been updated to the end of 2004. The other aspect of Joe Cassells' article must be rather frustrating to an author, i.e. that until you publish you don't find out lots of things you'd like to have known before you published. Perhaps the book should have included a pouch for amendments, as skilful production had ensured that it doesn't have any blank pages at the back for "Notes"!

Your Editor somewhat disloyally allowed himself to be tempted away to China to witness the final glorious flowering of steam over the legendary Jing Peng Pass and thus missed the delights of our 40th Anniversary function at Cultra. However his non-railway wife produced a glowing report, so it must have been very good indeed - congratulations to all concerned. And, to paraphrase a certain public figure, "They haven't gone away, you know"!

NEWS FROM COUNCIL

Paul McCann

"A year of massive expenditure is probably how 2003 will be viewed." Look back at last year's report - that's how it began.

Little did we realise then how much expenditure there would be in 2004, seemingly for so little return in the way of light engines and empty coaches running around the Northern Ireland countryside. It was a frustrating time for those involved in Operations as it was, perhaps naively, envisaged by some that the certifying of the new Mk2 coaches would be carried out in the same way as for our vintage rolling stock. It is probably fair to say that NIR were also finding their way in the early stages of the new process, but as matters progressed and locomotives and carriages started to be certified it became clear that, despite the Society's initial misconceptions, the Company had ensured that our approach to the Review/Approval process was nothing but professional. Our thanks to them. The trials and tribulations are given in detail elsewhere.

The arrival of the new coaches put the Whitehead depot under pressure for space. In the light of this, Council had to give consideration to a number of requests from other societies

that were interested in buying or leasing some of the vintage carriages at Whitehead. Approaches were received from Downpatrick, Belturbet, Fintown, and also from Peak Rail and Embsay & Bolton Abbey in England. LMS NCC 238 has already departed to the latter. Requests for other coaches are in various stages of the approval process. 1097 and 9 are earmarked for Dublin to replace Park Royal coach 1416, unfortunately damaged by fire at Inchicore in early November 2004.

To be honest, he should have known better, but when Robin Morton suggested late in 2003 that something was required to celebrate the Society's 40th Anniversary year he had no option but to take up the reins himself. And what a job he did! Again, there is a more detailed separate report, but the Society's thanks must be given to the RPSI 40 Committee for so capably: (1) co-ordinating the publishing of the book "40 Shades Of Steam" by Joe Cassells and Charles Friel (have you got your copy yet?) – the help and interest shown by the publishers, Colourpoint, was also a major contribution to the success of the book; (2) persuading NIR to host the book launch so superbly; (3) arranging the re-launch ceremony for No.186; (4) organising the magnificent celebratory Gala Dinner in October. Undaunted by these feats, the Committee, with a change of name, has asked to remain in operation to organise occasional events for the Society.

One of the outcomes from these events was the contacts we have strengthened with the railway companies and local politicians, and other bodies, and it was gratifying to have such a response to the invitations which were sent out. Hopefully, this will stand us in good stead in the future.

Council's main preoccupations this past year were to ensure that the spending on Mk2 coaches was kept well within the Society's means, and to try to ensure the Operations teams had the locomotives needed to operate the pattern of trains dictated by the unique circumstances pertaining, i.e. the closure of Dublin's Connolly station at weekends and the certification process in the north.

It had been hoped that grants for putting extra Mk2 coaches into traffic (bar car, diner, generator) and for extending the carriage shed would have been in place during the year. By early January 2005, these had still not been confirmed. So spending on the Mk2 set had to be curtailed, and operations suffered as paths had to be re-worked to allow for an early evening return to Whitehead to conserve battery power for lighting as the autumn and winter approached. Moves are afoot, however, to address the generator issue as soon as possible.

I wrote last year that the insurance bill was expected to be around £40,000. In fact, it was over £47,000 and the bill for this year is similar! So the more profit we get from trains the better, with every avenue of income having to be explored. To that end, a few key members have been approached to help with the task of identifying ways in which the Society's profile can be raised, especially in upper end of the leisure and conferencing market.

The usual worries over driver training remain, although within NIR a good deal of progress has been made, and it is hoped that early in the new year there will be the start of an assessment and certification process for existing steam footplate personnel. A shortage of drivers generally in Irish Rail has meant that crew training could not be progressed in 2004. Indeed, a scheduled trip in May had to be cancelled due to availability problems with steam crews. Our Chairman has met with Dick Fearn of Irish Rail to discuss this and other matters

of concern to the Society, the loss of two turntables in recent years being one of those concerns.

Behind the scenes there has been a lot of work to address the safety legislation requirements of both jurisdictions, and work is on-going. This is not exactly 'hobby' work and the dedication of those involved should be recognised.

Grant applications made to upgrade the facilities at Whitehead to museum standard remain in place, without confirmation as yet. Johnny Glendinning and Mark Kennedy remain hopeful.

Locomotive-wise, we have gained No.186 on the swings, but lost No.85 on the roundabouts as her boiler certificate finally expires in the new year, although her last operation was almost certainly the "Santa Special" in Coleraine at the end of November 2004. Currently, the plan is to have No.461 as the next locomotive to return to traffic, and an Appeal has been launched to fund her overhaul. Obviously, No.461 is not viewed as 'sexy', to use a modern term, as the Appeal has been a lot slower than that for No.186 a few years back. Or perhaps it is appeal fatigue. No matter, please consider making a donation, as the Appeal will remain open until the locomotive returns to traffic.

The year finished off very nicely, with the announcement in November that the Society had won the HRA's award for locomotive restoration. The citation reads: "*The John Coiley Award for Locomotive Preservation for 2004 is awarded to the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland for the restoration and return to steam on the main line of Class J15 0-6-0 locomotive No.186 which was built by Sharp, Stewart & Co. in 1879 for the Great Southern & Western Railway of Ireland.*" This is a well-deserved triumph for the Society and in particular for the Locomotive Department.

Apart from the problems of arranging them, there is probably not a great deal of note to report on the operations in 2004, except to say that those that ran were very successful in the main. However, the surprise event of the year was the "Thursday Excursion" from Dublin to Belfast in September. This first attempt at a mid-week operations was fully booked! The first advertised public outing for the new carriages was on the "Steam & Jazz" train on 18th June.

Difficulties in operating will continue into 2005 as Connolly is due to remain closed at weekends until the summer at least. More worryingly, the Belfast to Larne line is due to be closed completely for most of March to December for relaying work. Discussions have commenced with NIR with a view to finding some sort of accommodation, in both senses of the word, for a Society train.

The political and legal wheels, as many others, tend to turn slowly and so it is that the negotiations to purchase from Carrickfergus Borough Council the lease of the Society's Whitehead depot continue. Bill King-Wood leads the RPSI team on this one, and a successful conclusion is hoped for before long.

Another year, another quiet AGM, this time in Dublin, with no changes in Council faces. However, this coming year things may change as the statutory term for some Council posts nears an end. If you are interested in serving on Council, don't be shy about sending in a nomination.

The Society's web site continues to be a useful news tool for the general public to find out more about what the Society is up to. Members with access to computers are more likely to receive their news through the email Bulletin. The Bulletin has very quickly become established as a part of Society life, and encouraging comments are regularly received. The number of recipients seems to have stabilised around the 470 mark. Sometimes the news can be a bit biased towards events at Whitehead so members from the Dublin area, and indeed further afield, are invited and encouraged to send in their own news for inclusion. Major contributors with news items and newspaper reports are: Tim Casterton, Robin Morton and Peter Rigney.

Phil Lockett has been investigating the setting up of an on-line ticket booking system via the website. There are numerous ways of doing this and Phil is being cautious in ensuring the system best suited to the Society is the one selected, if and when a definite decision is made to provide the facility.

Another Society milestone was reached during the year, when Charles Friel marked 30 years of organising the Belfast meetings. Ironically, one of the best attended meetings in many years was in December 2004 when Charles was not available. His sons, Edward and James, ably filled his shoes. A lesson there, Charles? The rear of the hall now more than ever resembles a book fair and if the stock on sale increases at the same rate as it has been doing, the hall will not be wide enough! A big thanks is due to the Sales Team for the excellent display.

When the overall smoking ban was introduced in the south it was agreed that the Society should extend this to the north so that a consistent stand was taken on all our trains, but also to help maintain the condition of the Mk2 coaches.

Throughout the year there was a threat over the future of the lines north of Ballymena and Whitehead (now hopefully settled) and in July the Society made a submission outlining our concerns to the Department of Regional Development's consultation process.

We now come to the much-loved membership statistics, and to aid those who love to carry out trend analyses, I will this year present a number of years in table format (just to be different).

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
NI	380	379	378	383	383
RoI	375	388	371	347	346
GB	284	305	277	279	276
Overseas	32	38	38	31	31
Adult	696	748	728	721	716
Senior	247	227	207	196	195
Junior	24	28	25	22	17
Student	5	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Family	21	25	23	18	26
Life	59	61	62	64	64

Societies	5	5	6	5	5
Honorary	15	15	13	13	13
Totals	1,071	1,110	1,064	1,040	1,036

That's enough statistics! Enough at least for you to see whatever trends there are, so I won't comment further.

What the table doesn't show is the number of members who fail to renew their memberships each year. And, as in the previous year, by far the worst region is the Republic with half as many again lapsing as the total for NI and GB. Why?

The number of UK members with Gift Aid forms in operation remains high at 499 (but not all do it yet!), realising £4,367 of extra income!

The usual thanks go to those who helped Council cope with the management tasks: Michael McLaverty of insurance brokers, Marsh Ltd; Ashgrove House - ticketing and phone service; Wilma Cairns - ticketing, book-keeping, phone answering and general secretarial services.

Within the Society, the Posts of Special Responsibility to the Secretary for 2004 were: Charles Friel (Belfast Meetings); Nelson Poots ("Five Foot Three" Editor); Johnny Glendinning (Museums Curator); Mark Kennedy (Curatorial Adviser); Philip Lockett (Web Manager). Ciaran McAteer has been assisting with Whitehead site legalities. Barry Carse has been processing membership payments from the south for more years than I can remember.

Thanks also to those who serve on the various sub-committees.

And finally, our thanks to the management and staff of Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways for making it all possible - the latter especially are probably very wearied by all their dealings with the Society in 2004.

LOCOMOTIVE REPORT

Peter Scott

Locomotive Position

No.3 LP&HC 0-6-0ST shunting loco. In store, Whitehead.

The Derry Engine is now out of use pending 10-year boiler exam and mechanical refurbishment. Some funding should certainly be due to this loco after its valiant efforts on the Bleach Green - Antrim relay - we should not lose sight of it in the midst of other projects as we never know when it might be needed again.

No.3BG A. Guinness, Son and Co 0-4-0 ST shunting loco. In traffic, Whitehead.

At the time of writing, Guinness loco No.3 spent the day shunting - part of the job was to move and lubricate locos 171, 3 (LPHC) and 85. This procedure takes place every few months with stored locomotives, to try and combat static bearing damage and other corrosion problems. The other job was to move machine tools out of the engine shed and either into the new workshop or into store.

No.4 Ex LMS NCC 2-6-4T. In traffic, Dublin.

Since the withdrawal of No.461 for overhaul there has been considerable swapping of Nos.4 and 85 between Whitehead and Dublin due to restrictions on route availability. On some occasions this has been by way of running a Dublin-Belfast train but on others light engine movements were required. The latter are unwelcome, being expensive and requiring the use of scarce NIR/IÉ crews on unproductive work. After No.4 had been brought north, via a Dublin-based “Enterprise” on 24th July, to work the “Flyer” season it was found that clearance trials could not be completed in time and No.85 had to be brought north again to work the first two trains!

After a series of gauging and clearance trials during which, due to expiration of driver’s hours, she spent a few nights as an unexpected guest in Coleraine, No.4 eventually got to work the final Portrush Flyer. Meanwhile, No.85 had returned to Dublin (again light engine!) to work the “Slainte” excursion. The two changed places yet again on 2nd September, happily this time on the well-patronised “Thursday Excursion”, thereby - as least as far as No.85 is concerned - hopefully bringing to an end such costly gallivanting, although Nos. 4 and 186 may be exchanged at some time in the future.

All locomotives and carriages that the Society wishes to operate on NIR lines must be approved using the NIR “Guest Operator Rolling Stock” procedure. Basically this involves demonstrating that the locomotive or vehicle is not going to present a risk when it runs on the system. Various basic information is required, e.g. dimensions, weights, maintenance plan etc and practical tests are carried out where appropriate, e.g. to establish that braking performance is compatible with the signal spacing. It is important that the Society’s operation is seen to stand on its own feet under present day conditions. Of course, the procedure is simplified in the Society’s case because of well-established operating history. All the Society’s locomotives and carriages are “preserved vehicles” which by definition operated successfully for many years - otherwise they wouldn’t have survived to be preserved!

No.27 Ex SLNCR 0-6-4T. In store, Whitehead.

No.85 Ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 compound express passenger loco. In store, Whitehead.

The NIR Guest Operator Approval Process has also been carried out, which has seen the loco approved to Portrush and Castlerock as well as Bangor. No.85 is now out of traffic, since the end of her 10-year operational period is imminent and repairs are required which would be uneconomic in consequence of this. This locomotive’s recent history has not been characterised by any spectacular performance - possibly not the loco’s fault since, after all, it is a long time since her mechanical overhaul. If No.85 is to be returned to traffic it will be a good opportunity to address such issues. If the amount of carbon removed from the ports of Nos. 186 and 461 is anything to go by, an improvement on that score alone can be expected for No.85. *[Experience of this process suggests that boneless arms would be an advantage! - Ed.]*

No.171 Ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 express passenger loco. In store, Whitehead.

Apart from lubrication and occasional movement up and down the sidings to try and keep her bearings and valves free of corrosion damage, No.171 has remained out of use in the engine shed. Her tender was cleared of coal and cleaned down - and now doubles as a store for boiler tubes and other items destined at some stage for loco No.131.

No.184 Ex GSR 0-6-0 standard goods loco. Reassembly, Whitehead.

Requires major repairs. Now in carriage shed. The loco is being cosmetically re-assembled in order to keep everything together and as secure as possible.

No.186 Ex GSR 0-6-0 standard goods loco. In traffic, Whitehead.

In company with Nos. 4 and 85, No.186 has been approved to operate under the NIR Guest Operator procedure. I am glad to report that No.186 has been operating in a most encouraging manner following overhaul. Although the load has been limited to the 5 Mk2 coaches available, No. 186 has handled these in a most brisk and competent manner between Whitehead, Lisburn and Bangor. The ease with which the loco lifts the train out of Central and onto the viaduct has been most gratifying. To use a canine analogy, No.186 is like a little eager fox terrier, ready to tackle anything and only wanting to be pointed in the right direction. (I suppose by the same analogy No.4 could be a collie - no prizes for a suitable comparison for No.85 but "eager" does not spring to mind.) *[Is there one which is sullen, exasperating and makes its owner dirty? - Ed.]*

No.461 Ex DSER 2-6-0 goods engine. General overhaul, Whitehead.

Following removal of the inner firebox plates as reported last year, substantial corrosion and cracking damage was discovered on the outer steel plates. As a result, it has been decided to renew the sides and lower part of the throat plate and doorplate. The doorplate itself actually consisted of a large riveted patch, and is now being restored to original condition. Although more time and expense is involved in replacing the outer plates as well as the inner, it is a "swings and roundabouts" situation since the original small stay size can now be used with consequent savings in copper - the most expensive material in a loco boiler. Most of the materials for the repair work have now been purchased, thanks to the generosity of members who have already contributed to the "461 Appeal". The repair details have now been agreed with the Boiler Insurance Co, and progress should now be more rapid.

Mechanical repair work is proceeding as well, with renewal of valves, pistons, rings and glands as required. The wheels have been re-profiled and the bearings skimmed or polished as required.

No.23 Ex Irish Shell "Planet" diesel shunter. In store, Whitehead.

The Planet needs engine and gearbox repairs.

No.1 "Carlow" Diesel. Ex CSE "Ruston" Diesel Shunter. In traffic, Whitehead.

Starting of the Carlow loco is now more of a routine and less of a mystery. It is still not so handy as the "Planet" No.23, but pre-lubing and barring the engine round to the "start" position, etc. is now taken for granted. The only complication arises when the compressed air starting reservoir sometimes mysteriously leaks away. This means starting of the petrol "donkey" engine to build up the air again - an operation which is not 100% predictable and involves swinging a starting handle together with the employment of industrial terminology. The donkey engine in question was built, according to the maker's plate, by the "Wolseley Sheep Shearing Co." - the relevance to railway locomotives being not immediately apparent. *[Small stationary engines of this type were once common on farms so it would have been convenient for Ruston to buy them in from the makers as required - Ed.]*

Unilok ex UTA road-rail shunter. In traffic, Whitehead.

The Unilok has again performed its ritual of moving No.74 out of the Transport Museum - the most recent occasion was the Society's "40th Anniversary" Celebration. The turntable referred to in last year's report has been re-instated, so the Unilok can now be driven onto the track at right angles and then swung round, thus avoiding the previous awkward manoeuvring.

No.101 Hunslet Bo-Bo diesel-electric loco. In store, Whitehead.

Severely cannibalised Hunslet No.101 together with some spare parts is in store.

No.102 Hunslet Bo-Bo diesel-electric loco. In store, Whitehead.

This loco, the last of its class to work on NIR, is now also in store at Whitehead pending a decision on its future.

No.131 ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 express passenger loco. Preparation for overhaul, Whitehead.

The boiler of No.131 has been cleaned down and given a protective coat of paint. Further work is awaiting funding.

Foundry Work

The foundry continues to make cast iron locomotive parts like firebars. Outside contract work is also carried out, the most recent job being for the NIR Signal and Electrical Department - NCC-pattern finials for the signal posts at Portrush. (For the uninitiated, the finial is the object on top of the timber post; it protects the end of the timber from rain and rot, deters the birds from perching - and looks interesting). GNR finials were just plain caps but the NCC pattern involved a thing like a Grecian urn in cast iron, terminating in a vicious conical spike made of sheet aluminium. Doubtless elaborately designed for a purpose - anyway, I never saw a bird perched on one! Six finials were made to replace the originals which were badly cracked and missing their spikes.

The Whitehead Foundry is getting closer to being the last in the country - the Irish Rail foundry has now ceased to produce iron castings. One of its last jobs was to produce new brake blocks for No.186's tender.

CARRIAGE REPORT

Paul Newell

The Mk2 set finally got clearance to run in May 2004, after some test runs. They run very smoothly and have been well received by our passengers. The difference, of course, between these and the Gatwick coaches is that ours have sliding top-lights, thus doing away with the air conditioning.

At present we have five vehicles up and running and a sixth, 301, ready at Whitehead. Some who travelled last year may have noted the number gap between 300 and 302; all three are 64-seater TSOs. No.301 arrived too late for the NIR acceptance process but hopefully will appear in traffic over Easter. The set was painted in UTA green and lined out. The numbers are in the UTA carriage range, my thanks to Irwin Pryce for supplying the information on this. Still to be applied are the carriage crests which have been drawn up by Jonathan Beaumont and James Friel. The work on the crests is being done by a Dublin company and a side-benefit is that the crest can be reduced to go on sales items and the Society notepaper.

To date the carriages have run to Bangor, Newry, Portrush and Castlerock, leaving the line between the latter station and Londonderry and from Whitehead to Larne still to be cleared.

Steam heating connections were fitted by the Loco dept, and No.300 (formerly NIR 934), which relied on electric heat, had a new steam heat system fitted using spares from withdrawn Mk1 coaches in England. Brake coach 460 which, according to its history, seems to have run over the East Lancs Railway and the mid-Hants line after retirement from BR, had some of its steam-heating equipment missing and this was duly replaced.

One of the more unusual purchases during the year was an ex-BR Mk3 sleeper to replace 1287 which was damaged by fire and has since gone to Downpatrick. Another departure was 238 to the Embsay and Bolton Abbey railway at Skipton in Yorkshire, and 241 is to follow in due course. These two coaches are of a now rare LMS type and were brought over during the last war to replace vehicles destroyed in the 1941 blitz, so it is appropriate that they should be returned. No.1097, which was modified at Whitehead to cater for the needs of handicapped people, will probably go to Dublin to join the other rare GSWR coaches there. Ex-NIR diner 547 is in the loco workshop for overhaul and will shortly move to the carriage shed for final outfitting. The entry into traffic of this vehicle is eagerly awaited by our bar and catering staff - and no doubt by their customers - as the present facilities are poor in comparison to the popular No.87.

Like our old coaches, the Mk2s are steam-heated but with the important difference that the latter are pressure-ventilated, i.e. instead of radiators under the seats the steam goes to a heat-exchanger unit from which warm air is circulated by an electric fan. As the Mk2s do not have dynamos and our running set does not yet include a generator, there was some concern as to whether the batteries carried could cope with the demands of both heating and lighting on the Santa trains, but happily there were no problems. However, we look forward to the arrival in the not too distant future of a second brake coach, No.463, which does have a generator and is currently being overhauled in England.

As regards 2005, we are currently negotiating with Irish Rail to obtain approval for our Mk2 set to operate over their system. Unfortunately, due to the relaying of the Larne line we may have to park our set away from Whitehead for most of the second half of this year.

In closing, my thanks to Peter Scott and members of his Loco team, also to Dermot Mackie and his Site Squad who are always ready to suspend their healthy outdoor activities to come to the assistance of other departments.

NORTHERN OPERATIONS

Mervyn Darragh

A shrill of the whistle, a cold dark evening with a smattering of snow on the ground on Sunday 21st December brought the 2003 operating season to a close as No.85 eased the last Santa train of the season out of Antrim bound for Belfast. Everything was as it has always been but everything was about to change! As No.85 bustled her way to Belfast the ambience of the electric bulb-lit wooden-bodied carriages hosted a trainload of 300 passengers, while the dining car dispensed a range of drinks to cater for all tastes. This was to all to end forever, suddenly that evening. Under a new joint operating agreement between Translink NIR and the Society all wooden-bodied carriages were to be withdrawn from mainline service from 1st January 2004 and Mk2 carriages, already being worked on, were to be introduced for the 2004 season.

As a guest operator of Translink, NIR Society locomotives and the refurbished Mk2 carriages had to undergo an acceptance process established by that company. This involved brake testing trials and platform gauging for our vehicles. This unfortunately has accounted for around half of the 35 operations carried out in 2004, which is a rather unwelcome record for an operating season. To apprise members of what has happened Johnny Glendinning has added a report chronicling what was required in respect of the non-revenue trains and loco movements.

As Easter approached it became evident that progress in official circles to commission the Mk2 coaches was not being made as speedily as envisaged and unfortunately a number of public trains and charters had to be cancelled. Belfast City Council had been in discussion with the Society from the autumn of 2003 about organising steam trains in connection with their Titanic Made in Belfast programme. Every effort was made to run this operation and through the help of the NIR and Irish Rail operations people a set of Cravens was secured, although only half the Sunday programme was possible, as the vehicles were required to be back in Sligo on the Sunday evening! Belfast City Council declared the event a success and it is to be repeated on 2nd April 2005. Loco 85 worked both days between Lisburn and Bangor.

The Slieve Kinalta Railtour over the weekend of 8th and 9th May was a success, with strong numbers again participating from Great Britain for a railtour which on paper may not have seemed the most stimulating. This, as readers will know, was a railtour pulled together at short notice once it became clear that our intended destination of Waterford would not be available in 2004. The highlight seemed to be when the train's entire passenger loading appeared to descend on the small Signal Box public house at a sun-drenched Ballybrophy on the Saturday afternoon. A personal thanks to all those who supported the Society by participating in the railtour to Limerick. We again lacked our own coaches but by this time the Mk2s were out gauging and being subjected to brake tests. Thanks again to the co-operation of Irish Rail we were able to additionally secure Cravens on Monday 10th May with steam off Dundalk to Bangor and Whitehead. A late temporary speed restriction on the locomotive, which worked light tender-first from Whitehead, and the late arrival of the Cravens meant that we lost our path, but thanks to NIR perseverance the itinerary was completed as planned, albeit a little late. For the record, No.4 operated the railtour within the Republic, with No.85 being used on the Monday.

During the week commencing 14th June the Society got the news it had been waiting for: five Mk2 carriages had been passed to operate by NIR within the greater Belfast area, with the rolling out of other routes as the acceptance process progressed. This enabled the Steam and Jazz trains to operate on Fridays 18th and 25th June. Suffice to say that both trains were full; the evenings went down a storm, with great music, atmosphere and crack. No.85 performed the duties.

The Portrush Flyers ran on 31st July, 7th and 21st August. The trains were well loaded but the only hitch, which spoilt the day for some, was a late requirement to operate the train strictly within the driver's 11-hr rule. Traditionally with around a "3 hour booking off" period for the NIR crew at Portrush, this train had operated slightly outside the driver's 11-hr day. A delayed Belfast departure and earlier return from Portrush required some judicious explaining to our customers. No.85 operated the first two Flyers and No. 4 was used on 21st August.

The Bangor Belle on 28th August saw the first advertised public operation for GS&WR No.186. To facilitate the speedy watering of the locomotive the trains commenced from Lisburn. The Lisburn Tourist outlet could not get enough tickets and, along with Portadown, has been an untapped market of late. The first departure off Belfast Central was somewhat delayed but after some running adjustments to the locomotive, not unexpected for a locomotive still effectively running in, the remainder of the day passed marvellously. The locomotive is a credit to Peter Scott and his team.

The Atlantic Coast Express scheduled for Sunday 26th September could not be pathed within the driver 11-hr rule. and consequently it was cancelled. However, as the NIR crew had made themselves available, a late decision was made to operate to Portrush with a coach tour from Coleraine to the Giant's Causeway. This train was healthily loaded for a "first" and there is potential to build on this for the future. No.85 was the train engine and it was surprising how many elected to travel to a bracing Portrush on a stormy autumn day.

The highlight of the year was the Society's 40th Anniversary bash at the UFTM, Cultra on Saturday 2nd October. The train looked magnificent, with many complementary comments. No.186 performed well, getting our guests to their destination on time. The train had started from and returned to Lisburn after the departure of the last passenger train from Bangor.

The ever popular Halloween trains, of which there were three this year, operated on Sunday 31st October - two to Whitehead and the third to Lisburn. The formula of a quality present for each child along with on-train entertainers ensures a successful package. No.186 accumulated more mileage as the booked engine.

With the changing of the clocks a mammoth Santa Train programme loomed, starting on Saturday 27th November with the Coleraine Shopper, which put the train in position for the Coleraine Santa Trains later that day. This year the marketing of this train was stronger and just under 100 ticket-holding passengers enjoyed around four hours shopping while two Santa trains operated off Coleraine to Ballymoney and Castlerock respectively. Perhaps due to the early hour, the first train had a disappointing loading but the second was full - something to think about for 2005. This operation proved to be No.85's last pending a decision on her future. No.85 has latterly been somewhat below her best, having lost her zip; an engine telling all that she is in need of a rest. To her credit however, she always kept going and to many she will be missed. Let us hope there will be a future for her. From Ballymena homeward the crew encouraged the best out of the engine so, to the end, she did not let the traditions of the GNR down and made a spirited run to Belfast.

The Belfast Santas performed faultlessly on 5th, 11th, 12th, 18th and 19th December. The early afternoon train on 19th December, which happened to be chartered, unfortunately could not proceed beyond Carrickfergus due to a signals failure. 13 trains operated over the 5 days, the train engine on all occasions being No.186.

What does 2005 hold?

1. The Larne Line relay will take place. The line will effectively be closed to special through traffic from around 25th March to early June when there will be total line closure until December 2005. NIR has agreed to facilitate a number of workings for the Society during March and April. This will involve private charters and two public trains. The train will be out-stabled over this period. The public trains planned are:
Easter Bunny - Monday 28th March 2005,

Titanic, “Steam over Belfast Lough” - Saturday 2nd April 2005.

2. If we can agree a secure out-stabling location on NIR then hopefully our proposed 2005 programme should proceed subject to the agreement of NIR.
3. Movement is taking place to facilitate and develop the continuance of NIR crewing of our trains. More information will be released as and when arrangements are firmed up.
4. The Society has a badly needed sixth carriage (64-seater) ready to be accepted by NIR into traffic. The present 5-carriage rake with only 241 seats left many families who wished to travel at Christmas disappointed.

In conclusion, may I thank NIR and Irish Rail (for Slieve Kimalta Raitour and the release of Cravens to the Society at short notice) after a difficult year. Also, it takes an awful lot of people volunteering to make our trains operate so to one and all a sincere thank you.

[Once upon a time, before Health & Safety was invented, a railway employee used to come down each year and check over our vehicles. Rather than reams of paper, he brought with him long experience upon which he based his assessment. Nowadays, thanks to the blame and claim culture in which we live, all aspects of life are governed by masses of legislation, the possession or use of common sense cannot be assumed and the risk of putting one foot past another must be assessed. Here, Johnny Glendinning gives some idea of its impact on the Society, already struggling under the burden of the carriage replacement programme - Ed.]

The Government are introducing legislation which requires NIR to write, and comply with, a railway safety case. Part of that safety case states that guest vehicles which operate on NIR's railway must have been registered with the company via the guest operator acceptance process. The following are some of the key features of that process:

- 1) The scope of the proposed operation, i.e. vehicle type, proposed routes and frequency of operations etc
- 2) The inherent safety of the vehicle design. We employed RESCO to give NIR the information they needed about the inherent safety design of our vehicles
- 3) The compatibility of the vehicle with NIR infrastructure i.e. braking system, stopping distances, sight-lines, speeds, gauging, wheel/rail interface and fire precautions, etc.
- 4) The compatibility of the vehicle with NIR operations, i.e. rescue and recovery arrangements, etc.
- 5) The ongoing safety management of the vehicle, i.e. the RPSI Safety Management Policy, management of change control process and also our ongoing inspection and maintenance activities.
- 6) Joint hazard identification and risk assessment. We provided a hazard log for our trains to identify hazards and subsequent risk and to demonstrate how these are controlled.

The process is controlled by two panels the first is the Guest Operator Review panel which meets with the guest operator and gathers all the information necessary to make a recommendation to the Approval Panel.

In February the NIR acceptance process was dealing with its first application, that in respect of Irish Rail's 2700class railcars. By early March our application for loco Nos. 4,

85, and 186 in addition to five of our Mk2 carriages was lodged but it was mid-April before we were able to give all the information necessary for us to get approval to test No.85, No.186 and the coaches.

The first test took place on the weekend of 1st/2nd May. Unfortunately the braking performance of the Mk2s was below the required standard. This took some time to cure but was eventually resolved and we were allowed to retest the braking performance on Sunday 6th June. This time all was well and on 16th June we got our approval to operate No.85 and the five Mk2s from Whitehead to Belfast, Bangor, Newry and Ballymena. Their first passenger working was the Steam & Jazz train on 18th June.

Further gauging was necessary to allow the Mk2s to operate to Portrush and Castlerock and on the Antrim Branch. Approval was also awaited in respect of the other two locomotives, that for No.186 being received on 22nd July and for No.4 on 18th August. Thus our three operational main line engines are now approved for the whole of NIR but the Mk2s still need to be gauged between Whitehead and Larne and between Castlerock and Londonderry. Unfortunately, No.85 did not have long to enjoy the benefits of acceptance as her last working before withdrawal for overhaul was on the Coleraine Santa trains in November.

I would like to thank Ian Campbell and his review panel for all their work, often well outside normal office hours. Also to thank Mal McGreevy and the approval panel for their help and patience.

Below is a list of eight gauging/test trains which were operated as part of the approval process.

Sat. 1 May - Gauging/brake test train: WD-CS-WD 186 (LE); WD-BA-WD, 85 + Mk2s.

Sun. 2 May - Gauging/brake test train: WD-BR-NY-WD, 85 + Mk2s.

Sun. 6 June - Brake test: WD-YR-WD, 85 + Mk2s.

Sun. 20 June - Gauging train: WD-PH-CK-WD, 85 + Mk2s.

Sun. 4 July - Gauging/proving: 4/186 WD-CS-WD & 4 WD-LB-GVS-BR-WD.

Sun. 1 August - Gauging: WD-PH-LY-CE, 4 (light engine)

Thu. 5 August - Gauging: CE-WD, 4 (light engine)

Wed. 6 October - Gauging: LB-CN-LB & GVS, 186 + Mk2s

To enable us to have No.4 approved and keep trains North and South running the following light engine movements were required:

Sat. 3 July - Loco swap 85/4 (WD-DN-WD) for 85 to work the Dublin-based Steam Enterprise and for 4 to come North to start approval process.

Sun. 25 July - As No.4's approval process was not completed 85 came back north to work the first two Portrush Flyers.

Mon. 15 August - 85 had to return to Dublin to work the "Slainte" excursion to Cork.

[Footnote: The Treasurer will tell you that when all is said and done none of the above outings leaves much change out of £1,000, to which can be added loss of income from public trains which had to be cancelled - Ed.]

The main event was the 40th Anniversary of the RPSI. It is also the 40th anniversary of the Grand Steam tour of Ireland, whose last day was covered in the Irish Times with a photo of two J15s arriving in Connolly. The caption for that photo was “the last ever CIÉ steam train arrives in Dublin”. How nice it is to prove the newspaper of the record wrong! The climate in which the Society was founded was a grim one for the rail industry. At the time, the public debate was what line would close next or could we do without railways altogether. Now the debate is what line will be reopened next.

The report for this year will take a somewhat different format from that of previous years for a number of reasons. Most reports since 1988 have been of the same format: Dublin local trips, two or more trips to Rosslare, two Mullingar trips, the Santas and whatever out of course operations were undertaken. This year has been somewhat different in that operational constraints forced us to change our proposed season quite radically, and a significant number of trips were undertaken in relation to the anniversary of the arrival of the railway in various towns.

The operational constraints were caused by what Dubliners have got to know as DASH, the acronym for the upgrade of the DART system to take 8-car trains. This involves the weekend closure of parts of the Dublin rail system. For six months commencing December 2003, the line south of Connolly was closed from Friday night to Sunday night, while since June 2004, Connolly and the lines north and west from it have been closed for the weekend. It will be seen that this plan prevents the running of a traditional Dublin programme. So in 2004, we didn't get to Rosslare, but we did get as far south as Arklow.

The challenge was to put together a season which would concentrate our running into the periods when the line was open to us. This meant that the two Mullingar trips emerged relatively unscathed, although we had to hire a marquee for the barbeque trip. The Enterprise market was developed, with two trips northward. One of these was in July behind No.85, and consisted of a Mk2 set, our Cravens set having being commandeered to take Laois football fans to an unexpected replay. The train on this occasion lay over in York road, as IÉ Mk2s are not cleared for the Larne line. The second Enterprise was an experiment as it took place on Thursday 6th September - after the schools had gone back and thus outside the conventional holiday season. We were very gratified to see the eight coaches almost full. This thinking behind this operation was to convert a cost, i.e. a light engine run into a break-even proposition. This was achieved, and the small profit was a luxury.

The main feature of this year's events were special trains - three for anniversaries of the arrival of the railway and one for the Institute of Railway Signal Engineers. The first special operated to Kilkenny on a bitterly cold Saturday in March. After a run down the main line, we operated a special to Thomastown and return - the last time this would be possible as Thomastown ceased to be a block post later in the year with the Waterford line re-signalling. Our next special was diesel-hauled, due to crew holidays, and saw a pair of GMs, including a 121, take the IRSE to Arklow and back. In June, the commemoration was in Tullamore, where we ran three very full specials to Clara, while in September we ran the train to Grand Canal Dock station on the Friday in order to be in place for a series of Bray commemoration specials on the Sunday.

November was marred by a vandal attack on Park Royal 1416 in Inchicore. Repairs to this coach will depend on the business case made, and the comparison of cost of repair with that of bringing a coach from Whitehead. In the shorter term, a Cravens coach was substituted for the very ambitious programme of five days running on the Santa trains which, as usual, were packed to capacity and had been sold out since October. A particularly encouraging aspect of this operation was the number of new volunteers who were out on some or all of the five days.

It is always difficult to put a finger on the highlight of a year: contenders for this year would be the three packed trains run between Tullamore and Clara, the full nine coaches on the Thursday excursion in September - especially as it crossed the top of the bank at Cloghogue at 39 mph - or the fifteen Santa trains run over three weekends in December, carrying over 7,500 people. To put that last statistic in context, this is roughly the same as the number of people who have travelled on all the two-day tours run to date!

The railway system is changing at a pace unknown since the days of the foundation of the Society. Mini CTC was commissioned on the Waterford line in 2004, and will follow to Tralee and Sligo in 2005. During 2004, reopening to Midleton was announced, and a government task force was set up to consider options for the Ennis to Collooney line. As this is written, the options for Clonsilla to Dunboyne are being considered. All this presents challenges as well as opportunities - where will steam paths be found in an era of clockface timetables? There are now no paths to allow a return trip to Ennis, for example. However, these challenges can and will be faced as the Society heads towards its half century.

WHITEHEAD SITE REPORT

Dermot Mackie

We started the year by replacing a crossing timber on our first Saturday but finished the day by swapping the bogies under a Mk2 coach, something we would do quite often as the year progressed. Later in the month two bogies were put on a lorry to be sent to England for refurbishment. February began with a scrap drive, which netted £170 and continued with painting coaches. One Saturday we had eight people, including Johnny Lockett, Rob Davison, Robin Morton and Irwin Pryce beavering away on this important job. A new recruit at this stage was Joe Galbraith who has been a tower of strength on the coach painting front, where his professional expertise is especially useful.

The approaching Easter season meant that more coach painting was a priority in March and a monster shunt of the new coaches, as part of a No.186 familiarisation day, was a glorious sight at the end of the month. On the day of the AGM in Dublin some of us, including Thomas Charters and Alan McRobert, had a day scrapping old bogies, which brought in £200. A complete vacuum brake test of five Mk2 coaches using No.186 happened at the end of April. When the new rake with No.85 went on a proving run to Bangor and Newry, on the first Sunday in May, I got a good chance to spray the site with weedkiller. The following Saturday we had a team finishing the coaches with Joe Galbraith on the outside doing the tricky job of lining out and lettering while Howard Robinson worked wonders internally with a vacuum cleaner.

As the evenings lengthened, we started our Summer mid-week programme with the consistent help of Simon Marsh and Maurice Moore. The main task was to paint the new enclosed access ladders to the heavy lift's winding gear, which had been made by our own

permanent staff. Fortunately the weather in May and June was ideal, allowing the application of primer, undercoat and top coat without any rain! The pits in 4 and 5 loco shed roads have had a problem with flooding for some time, which has made their use very unpleasant. The movement of the big lathe and milling machine from the back of these roads to the loco workshop gave me an opportunity to clean out accumulated muck and dirt. This highlighted blocked gully traps which, following professional pressure-hosing, solved the flooding problem and restored the now dry pits to full use.

It was around this time that we realised we needed more space for Mk2s and it was decided to scrap some old underframes. Before we could get this done we needed to remove the body of 532 and, over the next few weeks, Jeff Spencer accomplished the breaking up of this, almost single-handedly. The aluminium cladding was salvaged and brought in £160.

July was a busy month with preparations for the official launch of loco No.186. A general tidy of the site was required and our ferrous skip was emptied for the second time. The big day arrived bright and clear and everything went off without a hitch. We even used the opportunity of an engine in steam to move No.184 to the carriage shed and the old Mk2 NIR diner 547 to the loco workshop. August saw Johnny Glendinning, Ken Pullin and Tony Ragg reach a milestone in their excellent endeavours when they completed the electrics in the loco workshop.

The impending arrival of a Mk3 sleeping coach meant plenty of activity for the site squad in September helped by new recruits James and Edward Friel. However when the beast appeared later in the month, it and its transporter proved too long for our access facilities. The old oil store and part of the bank had to be removed in a hurry, with hired help. The store was later cut up for scrap and, together with some copper materials, was worth almost £400 when recycled.

A very wet Saturday in October saw Trevor Mounstephen, John Wolsley and myself putting a complete set of new brake shoes into TSO 301 in the carriage shed. This coach had arrived from England, after some refurbishment, but still required all her exterior to be re-painted. Several of us helped out on this job although most of the work, and the specialist tasks of lining and numbering, was done by Joe Galbraith.

An upgrade of the intruder alarm system was installed in November and the Guinness engine BG3 was used to do a shunt which involved the changing of bogies below coach 923. The electrics trio mentioned earlier repaired the yard lights, which greatly facilitated the safe execution of our Santa train ride programme in December.

As you will have gathered by now, we have had a very varied and interesting year of activities, although as one young member mentioned on one occasion, some of it is the less glamorous side of railway preservation. Without it however we could not function, so why not come down and give us a hand. All volunteers will be made most welcome.

THE WIRING OF THE LOCO WORKSHOP

Johnny Glendinning

In January 2001 Tony Ragg and I commenced the electrical installation in the new workshop. The first task was to build up the switchgear in the switch room and provide light and power. Our next task was to pull in the heavy 200 amp feed from the old loco shed to the new switch room through the cable ducting provided by Dermot's site squad.

Owen Collins, without whom Tony and I could not have undertaken this job, came down and connected up this cable at both ends. We felt we were really making progress as we now had power in the switch room.

Our next task was to install the first four fuse boards, two of which were in the switch room and two in the machine shop area of the workshop. Dermot's site squad came to the rescue again by running two 100 amp cables high up along the workshop wall for us. Tony and I had only to tie in the vertical runs down into the fuse boxes and the switch room.

The re-wiring of the wheel lathe was next on the agenda. Before being swallowed up by the new workshop the wheel lathe used to be outside in a house of its own and some of the wiring was fed along the roof timbers. The wheel lathe house became like some sort of Wendy house. The roof and most of the walls have now gone and all the wiring is now fed on the remaining wall or is under the floor.

Until February 2002 Tony and I had been working on one or two Saturdays a month and progress had been slow. When Tony retired and my working hours with BT changed we were able to work at Whitehead every other Friday so the pace picked up. In March 2003, just when we thought that we were making progress, we had to move to the carriage shed and carry out some urgent rewiring. It was September 2003 before we got back to the workshop but our work force had expanded by 50% as Ken Pullin had joined us. At last we were now wiring in machines and giving Peter Scott new equipment to work with. The first of these was the 7-cwt hammer and then the roller. At the beginning of 2004 we installed all the machines on the left-hand side of the workshop.

In March I retired and every other Friday became every Tuesday and even more progress was made, especially when Tony's son Christopher joined us. Then during the school summer holidays James and Edward Friel increased the squad to six.

By 24th August all the machines that were in place and assembled, and all power sockets, were wired up and working. Throughout the whole job Owen Collins was never very far away, always ready to advise and help. Owen ordered all the materials required and advised on installation methods and practice. He also came down and inspected all our work and pointed out things that needed improved, altered or re-done - not too many I am glad to say! The job is now considered completed; in all we had wired up over 30 machines and provided 20 power sockets.

Finally I would like to thank Tony, Ken, Christopher, James and Edward for all their hard work and Owen for his advice and help.

A FEW MORE SHADES OF STEAM

Joe Cassells

Sharing in the gestation of "Forty Shades of Steam" was an immensely satisfying experience, not only because of the chance to work with Charles Friel, Robin Morton, Norman Johnston and many of my other friends of the last four decades, but also because of the amount of interest generated by the whole project. Delighted as Charles and I both were at the reception of the book, we were rather humbled by the serious way in which professional railwaymen past and present studied the book, and the care that some of them took to send us their comments and corrections. So, relieved as we are that the number of mistakes was relatively small, we are still more pleased to be able to shed a little more light

on the history of the Society from the feedback received. As a further bonus, the 2004 chronology has now been completed, and an additional 43 operational items are appended to this article!

Factual errors turned out to be mercifully few - though we had our legs pulled quite a bit on the transformation of Foynes into Fenit. The more sharp-eyed were also able to put us right on the Boyne rather than the Leinster Aqueduct on page 50 (the latter is of course near Sallins where the Grand Canal crosses the Liffey). On page 94, we would appreciate some guidance from the shipping fraternity, as we are informed that the vessel behind No.171 at Larne Harbour was certainly not the "Ailsa Princess". [*Probably "Antrim Princess" - Ed.*]

In relation to photographic captions and credits. our apologies to John Friel, who should have been credited with the picture on page 95, and Barry Pickup, who took that most dramatic lower photograph on page 108. In the photograph of Society fund-raising, on page 43, the third seller was Kenneth McAlpin. The picture on page 11 of 85 storming past Clohogue chapel was taken on the Steam Enterprise of 20th September 1986, rather than on her proving trip to Drogheda a week earlier, and on page 86 the Mullingar Santa Train was headed by No.184 rather than No.186.

It took a real discerning professional, though, to amplify and correct some loco-men's names. Thus on page 62 the man to the left of Joe Murphy was Inspector Mick Shine of Limerick. Mick joined the railway in 1953, and did have some experience of firing local trains and Knock specials in the last days of proper steam on CIÉ. On the following page, the three men standing beside Dan Renehan were the Cork trio of John Collins, Inspector Charlie Coogan and Tommy Connell. Participants on that tour will remember the gusto with which these men handled No.85 on the Kerry Road. They thoroughly enjoyed their weekend on one of the most unlikely engines ever to work into Tralee, and I remember John Collins' amazed cry of: "Grand engine! Sure the harder we hit her, the more she steamed!" A personal memory of that tour is photographing No.85 quietly sitting at Farranfore in the golden sunset of the Saturday evening in the course of her light engine run from Killarney to Tralee after the events described in the book. So much for correction, now for some amplification.

At a recent Belfast meeting, Charles Friel revealed the difficulties he had in paring down literally thousands of slides into the 120 which eventually comprised the central section of the book. Slides so carefully chosen could, of course, have generated stories running into pages, and once again we were indebted to 'insiders' for some fascinating insights. Thus for example, No.186 coming off shed for the "Slaney" tour (page 74) was manned by Inspector Arthur Toner, Driver Mickey Dixon and Fireman Sean O'Cinneide who, as a youngster relieving in Thurles during the beet season, had the fearful experience of firing 801 from Thurles to Cork following the expiry of a diesel on the down Mail. I wonder how many other enginemens involved in our trains had direct footplate experience of an 800?

We can also put a few further names to faces - or in the case of page 99 to the back of diesel driver Pat Ryder of Ballina, the pilotman seen handing up the ETS at Claremorris. On the opposite page, the man leaning out of No.461's cab to do the same job at Arklow is Ray Kearns of Connolly. At one time a steam regular on our Dublin-based trains, Ray is now confined to shed duties on health grounds. That vigorous picture on page 105 of No.186 turning at Bray features two RPSI stalwarts and two familiar men from the new steam age. Peter Rigney and Paddy O'Brien (both involved these days in the essential but

often unsung work of connecting engines to water hydrants in the course of Dublin-based railtours) are assisting Tony Renehan and Nicky Moore. Going further back in time to Drew Donaldson's wonderfully evocative picture at Portrush on page 13, Derek Henderson has identified the two anonymous Adelaide firemen as Willie Shaw and Joe McDonald.

Moving into the chronology of the Society's activities, the "Lough Ree" tour of 30th July 1988 featured Driver Dick Millea, with Frank Shine as his fireman. Frank was an Athlone man, who did have some steam experience, but this was his only RPSI turn. The "Boyne" tour, a few weeks later, also featured a once-only steam experience for two ex - GNRI drivers. Gerry McKeown of Drogheda was a last minute replacement for the rostered Driver Billy Pickett who was involved in an accident the day before the tour, and he was relieved in the middle of the day by Driver Gerry Walker, also of Drogheda.

On 11th May 1989, I recorded No.85 as working light engine to Dublin, with Inspector Barney Curtis and Driver Mick McGuinness on board to familiarise themselves with the engine. What I did not know was that this was the also the day that Driver P.Colbert ('The Heeler') Dunne - who handled No.4 so expertly on her first run to Cork in 1969 - retired from railway service. On the subject of other last steam appearances, the Midsummer Steam Special of 18th June 1994 was driver Nicky Moore's swansong, while the July 1995 "Michael Collins" film contract was Driver Mick McGuinness's steam finale. Mick, Gerry Kenaghan and Tony Foley were close friends throughout their railway career, as they worked up through the links together. So it was highly appropriate that when No.171 came back from Kilkenny on 10th August 1996 in the hands of Driver Gerry Kenaghan, again ending his career on steam, both Mick McGuinness and Joe Murphy were on board the train to enjoy the run. At the other end of the scale, I am delighted to record that the "Knocknarea" tour to Sligo was the first two-day tour to be worked totally by enginemen of the post-steam era. Dan and Tony Renehan, both of whom we were delighted to welcome at the book launch in Belfast, also had with them a non-steam inspector, Dinny Minogue of Athlone.

Some further detail has come to light about No.186's charter to the IRRS in September 1968. The crew out of Dublin on that day was Colbert Dunne and Gussie Leonard, and Pearse McKeown, who assisted on the footplate, recalls the inspector as Joe Canning, an ex-Great Northern man formerly of Enniskillen. This is a bit of a puzzle in some ways, since the three regular Inchicore inspectors at that time were all Southern men - Mick Brophy, Brendan Flynn and Johnny Maguire. On the other hand Joe Canning was indeed on No.171 on the 1969 "Brian Boru" Tour to Cork! What is indisputable is that Pearse had hold of the shovel for part of the run, firing to Jack O'Neill of Waterford, and that on the train was CIÉ rail hostess Kathleen Kirwan!

Sadly, no-one (to my knowledge anyway) ever kept a complete list of every engineman to drive and fire our engines on the main lines. But I did turn up such a record for 1984 which reveals the names of eleven NIR and twenty two Irish Rail men who worked our engines in the course of that year. A sobering reflection of the relentless pace of retirement over the ensuing twenty years!

On the issue of dates, the encyclopaedic memory of retired Inspector Frank Dunlop filled in a gap in No.4's early movements after the end of steam by identifying 17th November 1970 as the date when DH3 hauled her dead to Carrickfergus goods shed.

One date that eluded us all, though, was 24th April 1971, the day when Lord O'Neill invited Society members to be present for the first steaming of his recently completed railway at Shane's Castle. Brian Hill reminded me that the all-in fare for the full afternoon of steam was the princely sum of fifty pence, and I well remember that the rain poured incessantly. Certainly the circular advertising this event was headed "Shanes Castle Railway" and "RPSI Steam Railtour", so this date can legitimately be inserted at the bottom of page 115! It is a happy coincidence that in September 2004 the two engines which featured on that day also worked a double-headed train on their current home track at the Giant's Causeway.

A final comment about the recently-concluded Belfast Santa operations, which as well as featuring a totally new engine, also marked the tenth anniversary of Santa operation from Belfast Central station. Many members will remember that those 1994 Saturdays coincided with some of the heaviest cross-border traffic carried for many years, with the 07.55 Dublin Belfast running in three portions on one of the Saturdays.

In preparing this article, my thanks are due to all those who sent us comments and observations, in particular to 'Spare Link', who over the years has contributed so much to our International Railtour brochures, Pearse McKeown, Derek Henderson and Frank Dunlop. Peter Rigney and Brian Hill very kindly checked and corrected the 2004 operational chronology, and Charles Friel supplied some additional comments and corrections.

1st June 2004. IÉ 187+124, Private Charter for Institute of Railway Signal Engineers

IÉ 187+124 & 9 RPSI Dublin set, including State Coach 351, Dublin Connolly - Arklow - Dublin Connolly. Due to be steam operated, but this proved impossible due to drivers' holidays.

6th June 2004. No.85, Braking Trials

No.85 light engine Whitehead - Carrickfergus - Whitehead. No.85 & 5 RPSI Mk2 Whitehead - York Road - Whitehead.

18th June 2004. No.85, Steam and Jazz

No.85 & 5 RPSI Mk2. Whitehead - Central - Ballymena - Central - Whitehead. First public tour to run with the Mk2 set.

19th June 2004. No.4, Tullamore 150 Charter for Iarnród Éireann.

No.4 & 6 IÉ Cravens set Dublin Heuston - Tullamore, then shuttles Tullamore - Clara - Tullamore - Clara - Tullamore - Clara - Tullamore - Dublin Heuston. Engine watered at Tullamore from a mobile tanker supplied by the Offaly Fire Brigade.

20th June 2004. No.186, Test Run and Clearance Trials

No.186 light engine, Whitehead - Carrickfergus - Whitehead. First main line run for No.186 since overhaul.

No.85 & 5 RPSI Mk2, Whitehead - Central - Portrush - Coleraine - Castlerock - Central - Whitehead.

25th June 2004. No.85, Steam and Jazz.

No.85 & RPSI Mk2 set, Whitehead - Central - Carrickfergus - Central - Lisburn - Central - Whitehead.

26th June 2004. No.4, Midsummer Night Steam

Dublin Connolly - Mullingar - Dublin Connolly.

30th June 2004. Forty Shades of Steam Launch!

Book successfully launched in Belfast by Dr Joan Smyth of Translink. Not the least important in the august gathering were all three current main line steam drivers and such retired railwaymen as Frank Dunlop, Peter McCann, Pearse McKeown, Alec Esdale, John Johnston and Harry Mulholland.

3rd July 2004. No.85 and No.4, Engine Repositioning

No.85 worked Whitehead - Central - Dublin Connolly and No.4 Dublin Connolly - Whitehead - Central to reposition engines for the Whitehead-based summer season. (Due to weekend engineering work no July Rosslare trains were possible this year).

4th July 2004. No.186 and No.4, Test run and clearance trials

No.186 & RPSI Mk2 set, Whitehead - Carrickfergus - Whitehead as proving and brake-testing run.

No.4 & RPSI Mk2 set, Whitehead - Carrickfergus - Whitehead proving and brake testing run.

No.4 light engine, Whitehead - Central - Great Victoria Street - Lisburn - Central - Bangor - Central - Whitehead for route clearance to comply with NIR six-month track access rules.

24th July 2004. No.85, Northern Enterprise

No.85 & 8 IÉ Mk2, Dublin Connolly - Belfast Central. Due to special train commitments, IÉ provided an 8-coach Mk2d set instead of the usual Cravens. While this was of interest in being the first ever visit of a steam-hauled Mk2d set to Belfast, NIR refused to permit the set to work from Central to Whitehead. No.85 and the Mk2 set thus ran empty from Central to York Road, following which No.85 ran immediately York Road - Central - Great Victoria Street - Central - York Road to turn. Passengers were taken by special six-car 80 class DEMU set (power cars 82+68) Central - Whitehead Excursion - Central. No.186 was in steam at Whitehead on this date.

22nd July 2004. No.186, Official Launch

No.186's official launch at Whitehead, by Keith Moffatt, Chief Executive of Translink.

25th July 2004. No.85, Engine Repositioning

Dublin Connolly - Central - Whitehead.

As there were problems in relation to No.4's route clearance for the Portrush Flyer, No.85 was brought back light engine from Dublin to begin the Flyer season on 31st July.

31st July 2004. No.85, Portrush Flyer and Ballymoney Extension

No.85 & RPSI Mk2, Whitehead - Central - Portrush - Coleraine (turn engine) - Ballymoney - Coleraine - Portrush - Central - Whitehead.

1st August 2004. No.4, Clearance Run

No.4 light engine, Whitehead - Central - Londonderry - Coleraine - Portrush - Coleraine. Engine stabled at Coleraine as late departure led to driver's hours running out before the end of the scheduled day. No.4 remained here until 5th August - the first steam engine to be 'shedded' here since 1968!

5th August 2004. No.4, Light Engine Movement

No.4 lit up in Coleraine and worked light engine Coleraine - Central - Whitehead. (Modern traction enthusiasts could have noted No.4 in the company of IÉ GM 218 which became the first of its class to appear in Coleraine on an engineer's train on 3rd August.)

6th August 2004. No.85, Light Engine Movement

Following refusal of permission for No.85 to run light from Central to turn on the Blythefield triangle on the morning of the Portrush Flyer, No.85 worked light engine Whitehead - Great Victoria Street - Whitehead to turn in preparation for Portrush Flyer of 7th August.

7th August 2004. No.85, Portrush Flyer

No.85 & RPSI Mk2 set, Whitehead - Central - Portrush - Central - Whitehead. More restrictions on crew hours led to the issuing of a further revised schedule, based on a later departure from and earlier arrival back at Belfast, and the reduction of the afternoon 'extension' to Portrush - Coleraine and back. Due to severe disruption on the NCC main line the extension was cancelled, and No.85 ran light engine Portrush - Coleraine - Portrush to turn.

15th August 2004. No.186, Clearance Run

No.186 & RPSI Mk2 set, Whitehead - Central - Lisburn - Bangor - Central. (Clearance trip, not open to the public), then with passengers Central - Lisburn - Central - Bangor - Central - Whitehead. No.186's first public run since 1980, and only second ever appearance in Bangor. (See the entry for 12th September 1979, when she came to Bangor with the all-Great Northern crew of Jimmy Donnelly and Billy Croft.)

16th August 2004. No.85, Light Engine Movement

No.85 light, engine Whitehead - Central - Dublin Connolly. Diesel-hauled Connolly - Inchicore.

21st August 2004. No.4, Portrush Flyer

Whitehead - Central - Portrush - Coleraine - Ballymoney - Coleraine - Portrush - Central - Whitehead. Reversion to path of 31st July.

21st August 2004. No.85, Slainte

No.85 & 5 IÉ Cravens, Dublin Heuston - Cork. The Dublin-based summer season was constrained by DASH project work which at various times closed the sections from Dublin Connolly to Malahide and Maynooth at weekends. This operation, and the Thursday excursion of 2nd September were useful substitutes for other summer operations.

22nd August 2004. No.85, Slainte

No.85 & 5 IÉ Cravens, Cork - Dublin Heuston.

28th August 2004. No.186, Bangor Belle

No.186 & RPSI Mk2 set, Whitehead - Central - Lisburn - Central - Bangor - Central - Lisburn - Central - Bangor - Central - Whitehead. All trains stopped to pick up and set down at Cultra, and ticket prices included admission to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

2nd September 2004. No.85 and No.4, Thursday Excursion

No.85 & 8 IÉ Cravens & van, Dublin Connolly - Belfast Central - Whitehead RPSI. No.4, Whitehead RPSI - Belfast Central - Dublin Connolly. The main purpose of this operation was to change the locations of both engines. Reminiscent of the famous Thursday 'smugglers excursions' in the 1950s and 1960s, this train could not be run on any winter Saturday due to continuous weekend engineering possessions of Connolly station.

17th September 2004

No.4 (out of steam) & 7 RPSI Dublin set towed from Inchicore to Grand Canal Dock by diesel. (The line north of Dublin Pearse was closed for engineering work on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th September.)

19th September 2004. No.4, Bray 150

No.4 & 7 RPSI Dublin set. Empty carriages Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Pearse, then Pearse - Bray - Wicklow - Bray - Wicklow - Bray - Wicklow - Bray - Dublin Pearse - Grand Canal Dock.

20th September 2004

No.4 (out of steam) & 7 RPSI Dublin set towed from Grand Canal Dock to Inchicore by diesel.

26th September 2004. No.85, Causeway Express

No.85 & 5 RPSI Mk2 set Whitehead - Central, and light engine Central - Great Victoria Street triangle - Central to turn. Then Central - Coleraine (turn engine) - Portrush - Coleraine - Central - Whitehead. This very popular train had pick-up stops at both Antrim and Ballymena.

29th September 2004. No.186, Empty Carriages

No.186 & 5 RPSI Mk2 set empty, Whitehead - Central - Lisburn - Adelaide, where a steam locomotive was stabled for the first time since November 1966!

2nd/3rd October 2004. No.186, RPSI 40th Anniversary Dinner

No.186 & 5 RPSI Mk2 set, empty Adelaide - Lisburn, then private charter to the RPSI 40 Committee (for guests attending the Anniversary Dinner): Lisburn - Central - Lisburn - Central - Cultra - Bangor - Cultra - Central - Lisburn - Adelaide. Final arrival in Lisburn was at quarter past midnight, making this technically a two day tour! This train was originally booked to work through from Whitehead, but this became impossible due to an engineering possession on the Larne line. Guests from Whitehead were conveyed by Gold Liner bus from Whitehead to Central and back.

6th October 2004. No.186, Clearance Run

No.186 & RPSI Mk2 set, empty Adelaide - Lisburn - Crumlin - Lisburn - Great Victoria Street - Central - Whitehead. Train shunted at Great Victoria Street by GM 224 (first haulage of the Mark 2 set by a loco of this class?). First RPSI train to visit the Antrim

branch since closure. The intention had been to continue to Larne Harbour, but this part of the run was cancelled as the ground frame at Larne Harbour could not be operated to allow a run-round.

31st October 2004. No.186, Broomstick Belle

No.186 & 5 RPSI Mk2, Whitehead - Central - Whitehead - Central - Whitehead - Central - Lisburn - Central - Whitehead. No.186's debut on the annual Broomstick Belle workings. First train from Central delayed 30 minutes at Kilroot due to engineer's possession at Whitehead, but otherwise a punctual day's operation.

27th November 2004. No.85, Coleraine Santa

No.85 & 5 RPSI Mk2, Whitehead - Central - Coleraine - Ballymoney - Coleraine - Castlerock - Coleraine - Central - Whitehead. Customary north-west Santa train, billed as No.85's last run before expiry of current boiler certificate.

4th December 2004. No.4, Santa Specials

No.4 & 7 RPSI Dublin set + 1 Cravens + heating van.

Empty Dublin Connolly - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Connolly. On arrival at Pearse each time, the train ran empty to Grand Canal Dock for loco run-round. On this and future trains, an IÉ Cravens coach was used to replace RPSI Park Royal 1416, damaged by fire at Inchicore on 4th November.

5th December 2004. No.186, Santa Specials

186 & 5RPSI Mk2 Whitehead - Central - Whitehead -Central - Whitehead - Central - Lisburn - Central - Whitehead. This marked the beginning of the tenth anniversary of Santa trains operating from Belfast Central.

5th December 2004. No.4, Santa Specials

No.4 & 7 RPSI Dublin set + 1 Cravens + heating van.

Empty Dublin Connolly - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Connolly. On arrival at Pearse each time, the train ran empty to Grand Canal Dock for loco run-round.

11th December 2004. No.186, Santa Specials

No.186 & 5 RPSI Mk2, Whitehead - Central - Whitehead -Central - Whitehead - Central - Whitehead.

11th December 2004. No.4, Santa Specials

No.4 & 7 RPSI Dublin set + 1 Cravens + heating van.

Empty Dublin Connolly - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Connolly. On arrival at Pearse each time, the train ran empty to Grand Canal Dock for loco run-round.

12th December 2004. No.186, Santa Specials

No.186 & 5 RPSI Mk2, Whitehead - Central - Whitehead -Central - Whitehead - Central - Lisburn - Central - Whitehead.

12th December 2004. No.4, Santa Specials

No.4 & 7 RPSI Dublin set + 1 Cravens + heating van.

Empty Dublin Connolly - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Connolly. On arrival at Pearse each time, the train ran empty to Grand Canal Dock for loco run-round.

18th December 2004. No.186, Santa Specials

No.186 & 5 RPSI Mk2, Whitehead - Central - Whitehead -Central - Whitehead - Central - Whitehead.

18th December 2004. No.4, Santa Specials

No.4 & 7 RPSI Dublin set + 1 Cravens + heating van.

Empty Dublin Connolly - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Maynooth - Dublin Pearse - Grand Canal Dock - Dublin Connolly. On arrival at Pearse each time, the train ran empty to Grand Canal Dock for loco run-round. This concluded the largest Santa operation yet undertaken in Dublin, with a total Santa-train route mileage of almost 600!

19th December 2004. No.186, Santa Specials

No.186 & 5 RPSI Mk2, Whitehead - Central - Whitehead -Central - Carrickfergus - Central - Lisburn - Central - Whitehead. Due to a signal failure at Whitehead the second special from Belfast ran only to Carrickfergus.

RPSI 40

Robin Morton

As I recall, it all started with a chat over a pint in Westport during the May railtour weekend in 2003. The fact that the following year would mark the Society's 40th anniversary was remarked upon and I was foolish enough to ask some RPSI worthies how we proposed to celebrate this momentous occasion. The response was: "Well, what are you going to organise?" and so the RPSI 40 committee was born.

Ernie Gilmore, John Lockett and I met at my house in Belfast in October 2003 and at a series of meetings over succeeding months embryonic plans were hatched for three events. The first was the launch of "Forty Shades of Steam", the Colourpoint book by Joe Cassells and Charles Friel, which took place at Belfast Central station on Wednesday 30th June. Then came the launch of class J15 locomotive No.186 at Whitehead on Thursday 22nd July. The climax of the celebrations was the RPSI's 40th anniversary gala dinner which took place on Saturday 2nd October at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum's Irish Railway Collection.

It was a busy year, but hugely rewarding. Over the months our committee increased in size and the willing involvement of Anne McMullan, director of marketing, UFTM, Louise Willis and Ken Gillen from the museum's marketing department gave our plans a professional edge. A group of RPSI stalwarts also put their shoulder to the wheel and

thanks should be recorded to Mervyn Darragh, Charles Friel, James Friel, John Friel, Isabel Gilmore, Dermot Mackie and Henry Ritchie for their involvement. Countless other members also contributed to the success of the year, so thanks to all who were played a part.

The fact that the Society has survived - and prospered - for 40 years now is a cause for jubilation. I have vague memories of attending that first meeting in September 1964 and have been a member ever since, but in those early days it seemed the odds were stacked against us. Lines were closing, engines were being scrapped, money was scarce and we were a very young and inexperienced band. But as those of you who have read “Forty Shades” will know, the Society has gone from strength to strength.

The objectives of marking our 40th anniversary were to raise the profile of the Society, say thanks to friends and supporters, create networking opportunities which would be useful to the Society and to give members a feelgood factor. I think we succeeded on all four fronts, and I hope that the contacts which have been made over the year between the Society and Translink, Iarnród Éireann, the UFTM and many other government bodies will be to enduring and mutual benefit. The publicity which flowed from the various events was remarkable, and reminded the public that the RPSI was alive and well.

The Book Launch

The idea of publishing a book to mark the 40th took shape during the autumn of 2003 and I quickly found I was pushing at several open doors. Joe Cassells has a list of all 2,500 movements by RPSI trains on the main line over the entire 40 years; Charles Friel had an incredibly comprehensive collection of more than 30,000 colour photographs of the RPSI in action; and in Norman Johnston, the managing director of Colourpoint Books in Newtownards, we had a friend and a professional publisher who had an encyclopaedic knowledge of Irish railways and was willing to take on the project at his company’s own risk. This meant that the RPSI was not exposed to any financial commitment, which was important. But thanks to the generosity of Norman and the two authors, the Society stands to receive a sizeable boost to funds as a result of the project. The authors have waived their usual royalties and asked them to be passed onto the Society, while Colourpoint has agreed to donate a proportion of its usual profit to the Society. We are most indebted to them all.

The launch itself was generously sponsored by Translink, which laid on refreshments for our 100 guests in the concourse of Central Station. We were delighted that Dr Joan Smyth, chairman of Translink, agreed to carry out the official launch, and that Lord O’Neill, the RPSI’s president since its foundation, was able to chair the ceremony. Passing passengers must have wondered what was going on, but the buzz was superb as our authors and publishers made short presentations. Events were wrapped up by Mal McGreevy, General Manager (Rail) of Translink, who was most generous in his praise of the Society.

The Loco Launch

Although the date of Thursday 22nd July was chosen to fit in with the diary commitments of Translink chief executive Keith Moffatt, it proved a real bonus. Reason being that the Government set 23rd July as the closing date for submissions to its railway review, and for weeks beforehand the publicity about the threat to the Londonderry and Larne lines had been building up. Hence when we told the media that Mr Moffatt would be at Whitehead to

re-launch what we could claim was one of the oldest steam locomotives in the world, we were almost knocked over by the rush of media interest.

Not only did we have a live broadcast on Radio Ulster's Talkback programme but we had camera crews from BBC and UTV, both of which covered the event in their news bulletins. The local Press also covered the story and the pictures of No.186 bursting through the "125 Years Young" banner were featured far and wide. Our expenditure of £175 on the banner, which caused so much deliberation for the RPSI 40 committee, proved to be a sound investment. We had our moment of impact for the cameras. The icing on the cake was that UTV featured the little boy from Ballyclare who had been brought down by his grandfather the day before and invited to come back for the ceremony. One very contented Thomas the Tank Engine fan and excellent PR for the RPSI.

The weather was kind, the sun shone as the formalities took place on the platform, with No.186 simmering in the background. RPSI chairman Norman Foster introduced Lord O'Neill and Mr Moffatt to our 100 guests and the Translink chief paid a warm tribute to the Society. As he commented, even in this modern era, steam trains still turn heads. Mr Moffatt then presented Lord O'Neill with a certificate to indicate that No.186 had been formally accepted by NIR to operate throughout the system.

Then Lord O'Neill invited Mr Moffatt onto the footplate to drive No.186 through the aforementioned banner to a round of applause and a buck's fizz toast. Many visitors took the opportunity to inspect the Society's new Mark II carriages which were at the platform or to go for a conducted tour of the locomotive and carriage workshops. They came away suitably impressed.

A Goldliner coach (kindly provided by Translink) conveyed guests to Whitehead Golf Club where the Society hosted a lunch. Events wound up with closing speeches by Lord O'Neill and Mr Moffatt. Again, many useful contacts were made, both with Translink and local Assembly members and councillors. The Society created a most professional image for itself.

The Gala Dinner

While the two earlier events were in progress, bookings were coming for the 40th anniversary gala dinner, and many meetings were held to sort out the detail. Until this, I had not appreciated the complexities of organising a dinner, but we spread the load and the members of the committee took responsibility for various aspects of the event. We had a gut feeling that the event would be well supported but were delighted when a grand total of 250 bookings were received. We were delighted with the strong showing from Britain and the Republic, some of whom made a long weekend out of the trip.

Firm commitments were entered into in August and arrangements made with caterers, string quartet, sponsors, publishers and the 101 other interests that need to be factored in. One disappointment was that because the Whitehead line was closed for engineering work, the steam train had to be curtailed, with No.186 and train stabling at Adelaide and operating from Belfast Central to Lisburn and back to Cultra, picking up guests at various stations en route. The atmosphere built up as every new group boarded the train and met up with old acquaintances, enjoying a complimentary glass of wine along the way. The train lay over in Bangor and then ran through to Lisburn, leaving guests off at local stations. Our thanks to

the RPSI operating department which had to overcome many obstacles to make sure that we at least had some steam mileage.

A full account of the dinner appeared in the RPSI e-mail circular, so I can be brief. Charles Friel excelled as master of ceremonies, and we were honoured to have not just Lord O'Neill but his two vice-presidents, Dr Garret FitzGerald and Sir Ken Bloomfield as speakers. We were also delighted by the address given by David Morgan, chairman of the Heritage Railway Association. But the show-stealers, by common consent, were RPSI council members Phil Lockett and Gerry Mooney, both of whom can claim to represent the RPSI's "next generation". They reminded us of some home truths but inspired us with their vision of the future. Compelling stuff!

We were delighted to have as the Society's special guests for the night, accompanied by their spouses, Dr Joan Smyth, Keith Moffatt and Mal McGreevy (Translink) Dick Fearn, Gregg Ryan and Jimmy Doody, (Iarnród Éireann) and Marshall McKee (UFTM).

There were so many magic moments. The music provided by Grosvenor Grammar School's string quartet greeted guests as they emerged from the entrance lobby of the Irish Railway Collection to gaze down on the turntable area, filled not by No.74 "Dunluce Castle" but by 25 immaculately decorated tables for 10. Lord O'Neill in his MR(NCC) pre-1922 station master's outfit. Dr FitzGerald clutching his collection of 1940s airline timetables as he came to the rostrum. The cutting of the 40th anniversary birthday cake jointly by current chairman Norman Foster and the Society's first chairman, John Harcourt. The sight of No.186 and her train sitting in the darkness at the platform at Cultra with the steam heating gently hissing.

Guests went home not just with a good impression but with a goodie bag filled with a souvenir menu, a miniature of Bushmills, a Translink Parker pen and a presentation pack of luxury chocolates. And we did not forget the NIR and RPSI crews who were in charge of the train, and who had to wait in Bangor while we enjoyed ourselves. They were all furnished with meals and their own goodie bags as a token of our thanks.

The table ballot, which was for prizes put up by generous sponsors, proved highly successful and raised £1,950 for the No.461 restoration fund. Just for the record, the proud winners were: Jimmy Doody, Evans Hamilton, Neil Faris, Alan Marshall and David White. And had there been a prize for the best-dressed table it would have gone to the gents from Lady Victoria Rowing Club, Belfast, who were replete in boaters and blazers. A real touch of class!

A memorable night for all who attended. Thanks to those members who took the trouble to send us notes and e-mails saying how much they had enjoyed it all. Most gratifying of all was that the event was a hit with non-members and members' wives alike. The only disappointment was that the evening flew by far too fast, and the most commonly asked question was: "When are we going to do this again?"

What's next?

And while RPSI 50 is still 10 years distant, the good news is that the RPSI 40 committee has agreed to remain in being, in a bid to organise a couple of events in 2005. Under consideration at the time of writing are an official opening of the RPSI loco workshop at Whitehead in June, and a barbecue for RPSI members and friends at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum in July. Watch this space!

In 1903/04 an Act of Parliament empowered Belfast Corporation, with effect from 1st January 1905, to purchase and electrify the former undertaking of the horse-operated Belfast Street Tramway Company.

The electrification of the tramway system was carried out by the firm of J G White & Co. This also necessitated the re-laying of most of the track and the purchase of 170 new tramcars, as well as the conversion to electric traction of 50 of the horse car fleet - this in addition to the similar conversion of the depots at Sandy Row, Falls Park, Antrim Road, Knock, Mountpottinger and Ardoyne and the establishment of a new electricity generating station at East Bridge St to operate the system.

The work was completed in two stages: the southern routes, which included Balmoral on the Lisburn Road, were opened on 29th November 1905 and the remainder a week later, on 5th December. The Corporation had good reason to be satisfied that the whole transition took place within 11 months while normal services were still being operated by horse traction.

In 1910 the Cavehill & Whitewell, a former steam tramway which operated from the City tram terminus at Chichester Park on the Antrim Road to the village of Glengormley, was acquired. With it came the properties at Bellevue, later to become the Zoological Gardens and an amusement park in 1934. Added to this were the Floral Hall - once a famous venue for visiting dance bands - and Belfast Castle, the gift of Lord Shaftesbury.

Omnibus and trolleybus services were later introduced, in 1926 and 1938 respectively. However, despite their replacement by these, it is significant that the trams almost survived the first 50 years of the Corporation Transport Department's existence - the last tram left in traditional style (surrounded by a band of shipyard workers) from the Queen's Road in the heartland of the Belfast shipyard of Harland & Wolff and made its way to Ardoyne depot via the Shankill Road on 27th February 1954.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Corporation Transport Department the then Belfast Municipal Museum and Art Gallery (now the Ulster Museum) promoted a special exhibition in three parts and in three different locations which was opened in each venue on the same morning, Saturday 2nd July 1955, by the Lord Mayor, Alderman R J R Harcourt.

1. The exhibition at the Museum took the form of Irish rail and road models and a pictorial display depicting the growth and development of transport.
2. That in the old Holywood rail-motor shed of the former Belfast & County Down Railway (secured on a short lease, courtesy of the Ulster Transport Authority) consisted of full-size vehicles, including a "Chamberlain" fully enclosed tramcar, an open-top converted horse tramcar and a horse-car bogie which later received a body from two ladies in Co. Monaghan! Also on display here were a passenger coach from the Dublin & Kingstown Railway (the first in Ireland), a passenger coach of 1873 from the Dundalk, Newry & Greenore Railway (in LNWR livery), a "toast-rack" trailer from the Giant's Causeway tramway of 1883, former Larne Aluminium Co loco No.2, a gipsy caravan and a miscellaneous collection of road vehicles.

At one stage there had been the intention to secure a mate for the DNGR carriage, in the shape of 0-6-0ST No.1 "Macrory". This stalled due to interest expressed by its

birthplace of Crewe. This interest appeared to wane when someone remembered the difference in gauge and, through a series of misunderstandings, the engine found its way to Hammond Lane Foundry in Dublin where it was scrapped.

3. At the third location, Belfast Castle, an excellent display of ship models, both passenger and cargo, was staged.

All three exhibitions were opened to the public for the duration of the summer months and were included in the City bus tours which ended at Belfast Castle for light refreshments.

Several additions to the display in the Queen's Quay rail-motor shed then followed and included the oldest electric traction vehicle in the world, the Newry & Bessbrook tram. Other arrivals were GNR 2-4-2T loco No.93, built at Dundalk in 1895, and the famous Fintona horse tram No.381 which had operated the branch passenger service from Fintona Junction to Fintona and had been made redundant by the closure of all the lines in north-west Ulster. It was brought by rail, being towed all the way from Fintona to Queen's Quay by a steam loco and remains the only rail vehicle in the Museum to have come to life during its stay there. This happened when Lord Wakehurst, the then Governor of Northern Ireland and a keen photographer, sought to take some cine of the tram "under steam" and this was facilitated by a horse kindly loaned by Messrs John Harkness & Co, well-known Belfast haulage contractors!

By 1961 the rail-motor shed was bursting at the seams and pressure was brought on the Belfast Corporation to obtain permanent and more spacious premises. Fortunately a disused warehouse of James Mackie & Co, at Witham Street in the east of the city alongside the old BCDR main line to Newcastle, came on the market and was acquired and, about that time, Mr Bob Beggs was appointed the first curator of the Transport Museum.

On 18th June 1962 the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Lord Brookeborough, declared open the first permanent Transport Museum, with a station platform extending the full length of the building. Not long after this, BCDR 4-4-2T loco No.30 and LMS(NCC) 4-4-0 No.74 "Dunluce Castle" were presented to the Museum by the UTA. These were followed by the largest railway engine in Ireland, ex-GSR 4-6-0 No.800 "Maeve" which formerly worked Dublin - Cork expresses, together with the saloon coach formerly used by the famous Irish railway builder, William Dargan. These last two items were presented by CIÉ and the Irish Government. Ex-GNR V class No.85 "Merlin" (then minus a tender) was bought by the Transport Museum in 1964 for £600 - a sum which, by all accounts, the City Treasurer thought rather high. It was hauled to Belfast and resided at Adelaide until that shed closed and it was moved to Lisburn goods shed before finally reaching Witham St in 1969. There it remained in a rather unimpressive condition until 1977 when it was leased to the RPSI, the late Lord Dunleath having very generously funded its overhaul at Harland & Wolff. In the meantime a VS class tender had been secured for it but was found to be unsatisfactory in operation. Its present tender is from a U/UG class, rebuilt by RPSI to V class configuration.

Subsequent to the nationalisation of the Municipal Museum and Art Gallery at Stranmillis the Transport Museum remained a separate entity under the control of Belfast Corporation, but under an Act of Parliament of the late 1960s it was amalgamated with the Ulster Folk Museum to form the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

When the ground of the Dalcoolin Estate on the seaward side of the Belfast - Bangor road, opposite the Folk Museum, was purchased in 1967 to accommodate the Transport Museum, almost 30 years were to elapse before the opening by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1999 of the magnificent Transport Gallery we see today. It was well worth waiting for!

COMMENTS AND RECOLLECTIONS

Laurence Liddle

Two items which appeared in Comments and Recollections in our last issue need to be corrected. The first one, for the appearance of which there can be no excuse, was my reference to the Class 2 small 4-4-0s of the erstwhile Great Southern and Western Railway as quite likely to have operated over the Thurles - Clonmel branch "via Horse and Jockey and Bansha". Mea maxima culpa! Bansha is, or rather was before the station was closed, on the former Waterford and Limerick main line between Cahir and Tipperary. The second error appears on pages 47 and 48 where, after quoting coal consumption figures for the eight GNR S and S2 class locomotives over the period 1920-1926, I went on to say "For the first twelve years covered by these figures all the Ss were shedded in Dublin and the S2s in Belfast". What I was probably thinking about when I wrote this nonsense was that over the twelve years between 1920 and 1932, in which latter year the class V compounds came into service on the main line, the Ss and S2s had these allocations.

As regards the editorial comment about the difficulty experienced by a 201 class D.E. in starting an up "Enterprise" out of Newry I can say that in the course of somewhere around two hundred journeys between Warrenpoint and Dublin during the later 1940s, as well as numerous other GNR main line trips, I never knew a V, V s or S seriously lose her feet getting away from Goraghwood on a passenger train. The same goes for Moguls and Jeeps in UTA days, whilst these locos and GNR heavy 0-6-0s were equally sure footed on goods workings. One reason for this superiority of steam over diesel could be the availability of sand on the steam locos but there are two other factors which are probably also important. The first is the factor of adhesion (the ratio between power and adhesive weight); here the steam engines with less power but more weight on each driving axle are less likely to slip, the second is the greater flexibility of control by skilful use of regulator, available to an experienced driver

The posed photo of GNR S class No.172 heading a mail train dates from the very early days of the 170s, quite a few years before the time of the fast runs referred to by Bob Clements. The engine is in the pre-Glover green livery and still retains her bogie wheel splashers, name plates and small tender. I rather think, though the picture is not sharp enough for me to be quite certain, that she also has the original Ramsbottom safety valves. All the coaching vehicles in the picture, with the exception of the TPO have clerestory roofs, whereas by the mid-1930s the only examples of this type of vehicle to appear in main line expresses were old restaurant cars Nos. 427 and 457 which occasionally substituted for more modern cars withdrawn for repairs, or ancient tri-compo brakes providing through services between Dublin and such places as Bangor, Newcastle and Portrush at the height of summer. No TPOs ran in the mail set after 1921/22 although No.790, a high elliptical roofed vehicle built immediately after the first world war, ran regularly in the Derry Mail between Portadown and Derry until the second world war.

It is with some trepidation, for I depend upon his goodwill for publication, that I draw our editor's attention to the caption beneath the photo of BNCR 2-4-0 No.50 on page 36. By

the year 1897 Queen Victoria had been on the throne for sixty, not fifty, years. [*Oh dear, I must have got carried with the 50 theme! - Ed.*] It is said that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder; in the eye of this beholder at any rate No.50 as a 4-4-0, (lower picture on page 36), was a better looking engine than as a 2-4-0, and that not only on account of the improved cab. To me all 2- 4-0s, no matter how efficient they may be as machines, look as if they are about to fall over their own front feet. (see picture of GSR No.652 on page 30). So far as I know neither “Jubilee” nor her sister “Parkmount” ever tripped over themselves, but there may well have been a fear that they might commit this unpardonable locomotive crime, since one of the reasons given for their rebuilding when only two years old was that they were prone to “hunting”. In this connection it is interesting that several other BNCR 2-4-0s were rebuilt without being given leading bogies. However these engines may well have been pretty lively in service, since in a Railway Magazine article in 1939 the late O.S. Nock, describing a footplate journey over the Derry Central line, refers to the 2-4-0 “bouncing along”. A photo of what was, presumably, this loco is on page 73 of Mark Kennedy’s “The LMS in Ireland” (Midland Publishing 2000).

Nock did not seem to have been in any way alarmed at the antics of the little six-wheeler but he had a very different tale to tell of a trip on a Peppercorn A1 Pacific working on the former Caledonian main line between Carlisle and Glasgow, “Whereas the Great Northern Atlantics used to fling their rear ends from side to side, the front ends were quite steady, on the Peppercorn Pacific the front end was swaying as much as the rear but in the opposite way ... I was for the first time in my footplate experience genuinely apprehensive”. This journey obviously made quite an impression on Nock as he describes it in both “Four Thousand Miles on the Footplate” (Ian Allan 1950) and “LNER Steam” (same publisher 1969).

May I take Bill Scott up on a minor point in his article “Controversial Topics”? At the bottom of page 52 Bill states that at the time of Bulleid’s appointment to Inchicore the GNR had 15 new engines, five each of classes Vs, U and UG, together with eight nearly new S and S2 4-4-0s and five class V Compounds with new boilers. I suggest that if these latter thirteen locos are to be numbered among the Great Northern’s stock of relatively new engines then the five UG 0-6-0s of 1937 should also be included.

Bill also refers the GSWR/GSR 257 0-6-0s. Is it fanciful to suggest that with her N boiler (as carried by the 257s) our own No.461 is basically a 257 which has grown a pair of leading wheels? Cylinder dimensions are the same for each type of loco whilst there is no significant difference between the driving wheel diameters, 5’1” for the 257s and just $\frac{3}{4}$ ” more for No.461. I have often thought that it would have been interesting if comprehensive trials had been carried out between the 257s, the DSER Moguls (with their original boilers) and the GN SG/SG2s. All three classes had 19” x 26” cylinders and the wheel diameters of the Northern and the Southern locos were the same. The Northern led the way as regards heating surface and grate area, and also adhesive weight. The boilers of the 257s worked at 160 lb, whilst those of the other two classes each had 175. On the face of it the SG/SG2s would have scored in haulage capacity and sustained steaming on heavy banks, whilst anecdotally at any rate, the 257s and 461/2 were freer runners.

I particularly appreciated “Spare Link’s” references to the late Brian D’Arcy Patterson in “Memo to Locomotive Foreman”. I got to know Brian soon after the break up of the Great Northern; in his capacity as Rail Control Officer (Personnel) of Coras Iompair Éireann he

had kindly provided me with a footplate pass, and at the same time asked me to have lunch with him. (No doubt he wanted get an idea of what sort of a person I was). The lunch meeting was a great success; we found that that we had several interests in common other than railway matters, and from then until his untimely death some twenty years later we used to meet a couple of times a year when we would discuss various aspects of current affairs as well as developments on Coras Iompair Éireann. And plenty of developments there were too in those early days of the change over from steam to diesel. As well as being, as he once said to me, “in effect the Running Superintendent”, Brian was responsible for all Rules and Regulations, including such matters as adapting the Rule Book to diesel conditions, setting standard running times for various types of train and, eventually, liaising with the UTA in the production of a standard set of rules to cover the entire former GNR main line.

Brian had engineering in his blood, his father, at one time an international rugby player, had been GSWR District Engineer in Waterford, whilst an uncle was a Director of Harland and Wolff, a firm which in its prime was regarded by many more than just the inhabitants of Belfast as the world’s premier shipbuilders. One of Brian’s brothers was also an engineer. Patterson Senior is mentioned in Pat Duggan’s ballad “The old concrete bridge”, the bridge in question being the road bridge over the railway just to the north-east of the present Rosslare station. During the course of a fairly long life I have come to know many railwaymen, of all grades and in various branches of their profession. Inevitably I have from time to time heard criticism of this or that regulation or particular person, occasionally expressed in language too forceful for direct quotation. Never once did I hear anyone say a hard word about Brian Patterson.

It is tempting, but pointless, to get involved in further discussion on the topic of Royal Scot versus No.800. Pointless because we simply do not have sufficient evidence of the performance of “Maedbh” and her sisters as compared to the wealth of detail available about the Scots. Here however are a couple of points that occurred to me after reading Michael Rutherford’s “Matters Arising”. First: good as the original Scots were they probably would have been better had they not been designed and built as a rush job, and if more time had been available to iron out various teething troubles (can one iron out a tooth?).

I have in previous Comments & Recollections several times quoted from Harry Holcroft’s “Locomotive Adventure”; here is another piece of information from that invaluable source of information on Great Western and Southern locomotive practice and performance in the early 20th century. (It will be remembered that for much of his time on the Southern Holcroft was Technical Assistant to Chief Mechanical Engineer, R.E. Maunsell.) “One morning towards the end of 1926 Herbert Chambers, then the Chief Draughtsman at Derby, called on Clayton. (James Clayton, an ex-Derby man, who was Personal Assistant to Maunsell.) I was present and heard him say that he had been sent by Sir Henry Fowler to solicit Maunsell’s help towards the design of some 4-6-0 locomotives which had to be built in time for the summer service of 1927 ... there was no time to design a prototype and to try it out in service before proceeding with the batch. The idea which they (the motive power section of the operating department) had in mind was, broadly, to construct a 3-cylinder “Nelson”, basing the design on the boiler and introducing as far as possible parts already existing in other LMS types. What Chambers had come for was to ask for a complete set of drawings of the “Nelson”. Maunsell acceded to the request”. So there you

have it: the “Scots” were to be designed, built and put into main line service all within seven or eight months. And not only this, these machines were to be 3-cylinder adaptations of another company’s 4-cylinder type. It is a wonder that the new LMS engines were as good as they were, and no surprise that they were rebuilt (virtually replaced) at such a relatively early stage of their careers.

All this brings us to the perennially interesting topic of LMS locomotive policy in the early post-grouping years, and why it took the importation of a Great Western Railway engineer before any degree of stability was established. Had it not been for the outstanding work of a GWR “Castle” (Launceston Castle?) on the West Coast main line in 1927 would Sir Josiah Stamp have appointed a Swindon man as his CME? My guess is that he probably would have done so, realising that only a “foreigner” could impose any sort of order on the mutually jealous and feuding factions of Crewe and Derby. Not that Stanier’s appointment was universally welcomed by senior LMS loco men; there was quite a bit of discontent, most strongly articulated by J.C. Urie (son of R.W. Urie, the last CME of the former London and South Western.) who was LMS loco supremo in Scotland.

It is interesting to speculate on what might have occurred if the GWR had agreed to Fowler’s request that that they (the Great Western) should build fifty “Castles” for the LMS. How would the ex-LNWR enginemmen, reared in a very different tradition to that of their GWR counterparts, have reacted to the more sophisticated Western machines? Another point: I have always understood that at some time during the 19th century one of the English railway companies requested another to build it some engines, but that on legal action being initiated by one of the locomotive building firms the project was dropped. Presumably when Sir Henry Fowler approached the Great Western CME he was fairly confident that none of the major loco building concerns would object. The only remotely comparable action to what Fowler proposed that I know of in Irish loco history was when the cylinders for the five UG 0-6-0s built at Dundalk in 1937 were cast at Inchicore. During the second world war Dundalk did of course repair some locos for both the NCC and the BCDR, and Inchicore rebuilt a number of NCC wagons destroyed during the Belfast air raids. These however were special cases in exceptional circumstances.

And why did Collett, by all accounts a reclusive type who had relatively little intercourse with his professional colleagues in the other British companies, refuse Fowler’s request? Was the Swindon CME afraid that in the hands of ex LNWR men the “Castles” would fail to achieve their usual high standards of performance and thus reflect discreditably on the Great Western? I would be interested to hear from any reader who has more information than I have on the LMS “Castle” proposal.

There can be little doubt that the miserable position the newly formed LMS, the largest of the post grouping companies, was in as regards main line locomotives - reduced to going the rounds of other companies with the begging bowl - was due to Fowler’s perpetuation of the Midland policy of never using anything larger than 4-4-0s or 0-6-0s, even on the ‘long drag’ between Settle and Carlisle, or for the heavy coal trains between the north Midlands and London. Whatever the reason, Derby (or perhaps the Board) does not seem to have realised that the days of elderly class 3, or somewhat younger class 4, 0-6-0s, piloted by ancient outside framed six-wheelers, heading the coal trains were as surely passing as were those of the all too common sight of two 4-4-0s at the head of so-called expresses. Apart

from other factors, the long overdue reduction in working hours and increased rates of pay for enginemen in 1919 had put paid to such extravagance.

The mystery of why the Midland and the early LMS remained wedded to the cult of the small engine becomes even deeper when one remembers that larger locomotives were not entirely foreign to Derby's way of thinking. As well as the solitary 0-10-0 'Lickey banker' there were the class 7 2-8-0s built for the heavy trains originating from the Radstock collieries on the Somerset & Dorset Joint Line, the first batch of which went into service in 1914. But here is a funny thing, although the S & D 2-8-0s were tender engines, they were rarely turned, spending almost as much time in back gear as in forward. The 1914 engines originally had tender cabs but, according to Colin Maggs's "Steam: Tales from the Footplate" (Sutton Publishing 1999), these had all been removed by 1920 because of complaints by firemen that they restricted the use of fire irons (comments from former Jeep firemen please). Maggs states that the reason for the regular tender-first working was to avoid the need to install longer turntables. However, considering the short distances worked why were the 2-8-0s not built as tank engines? The Midland had no need to look further than to South Wales where the Great Western employed a number of 2-8-0Ts on coal trains between the collieries and the ports. And surely a 2-8-0T would have done the Lickey banking work just as well as the 0-10-0, whilst had half a dozen or so been built the need to employ 0-6-0Ts in pairs as bankers would have been eliminated. The Somerset and Dorset 2-8-0s were good engines, especially the later variety which had larger boilers, so why were similar locos not introduced on the Midland itself?

A quick final look at "Matters Arising": Despite having greatly enjoyed reading Michael Rutherford's article I must say that I consider his speculation that the visit of the LMS engineers to Inchicore early in 1940 might have had something to do with the Cunard North Atlantic Passenger Service to be somewhat more than far fetched.

I wonder if the question posed by Paul McCann in last year's "News from the Council" as to why so many members in the Republic do not renew their subscriptions, has anything to do with the fact that, apart from main line operations, our society has a considerably more visible presence in the Belfast area than in and around Dublin. Whitehead is much closer to the former city than Mullingar is to the latter, and in any case there is much more going on at Whitehead. Dublin has nothing comparable with the train rides or the open days, nor does it have the winter evening meetings.

WHITEHEAD IN WARTIME

W.G. Harris

[The author, on reading in "Steam Railway" of the steaming of No.186, wrote a kind letter recalling that he had been stationed in Whitehead in WW2 and wondered what it was like now. My reply, with a couple of photos, resulted in a fuller account which is reproduced below. - Ed.]

In July 1940 I was serving with No.14 Ambulance Train, Royal Army Medical Corps, when we were sent to Whitehead which had been earmarked as the Ambulance Train base for B.T.N.I., using the excursion platform to stable the stock. Two Ward Coaches were provided by the NCC, together with a Stores bogie brake van and a Kitchen Car. The Staff Car, Pharmacy Car and Personnel Car were converted LMS vehicles sent from the UK mainland. To complete the train, bogie luggage vans were fitted with stretcher brackets and

earmarked for despatch to Whitehead if the need arose. However, there was no invasion of Ireland so they were not needed.

Whitehead became such a splendid station during the war and the present developments are of great interest. In our day there was an engine shed, with a camping coach for crew overnight but which was seldom used and I am amazed to see from your photograph what has come in its place - presumably having engulfed our old football pitch!

I come of a railway family - my father was a senior Stationmaster on the Southern Railway and so the references to the "Woolwichs" and to Maunsell and Bulleid are of interest. I had hoped to get into Ashford Works when I left school but the depression put paid to that and I ended up in banking - but the railway "disease" has never abated. The nearest I got to Ashford was for a couple of years after the war, when I served at the National Provincial branch in the town and was involved in assembling the cash for the weekly pay day at the works! I had known of the Woolwich "N" Class being used in Ireland but your magazine has the first pictures I have seen of them. The Ashford version was a splendid machine and after 1923 did wonders west of Exeter as well as on its home ground. The 3-cylinder version were used on Home Ambulance Trains on the Southern and glad they were to see them. They were, I believe, subject to a 40 m.p.h. limit after an enthusiastic driver went over a crossover at Guildford rather faster and caused a bit of an upset in the Ward Coaches under the command of a very regimental Medical Officer! But those whom we met this side of the Channel in the week or two after "D-Day" did a splendid job and it was a treat to get back to Brent Sidings on the way back to Horley and see a "UI" back on.

No.14 Ambulance Train was the first Army unit in Whitehead, being followed quickly by No.8 Company (Railway Construction and Operating) Royal Engineers who were based in the Royal Hotel by the railway station. No.15 Ambulance Train followed but they were moved off to a station west of Belfast on the GNR where they had to live on the train, which was not so good. One of the Section Officers of 8 Company was a Lieut. McNaughton who I believe became a Chief Inspecting Officer of Railways.

The NCC Ward Coaches and Van and Kitchen Car were at the platform when we arrived in Belfast. The Staff Car, Pharmacy Car and Personnel Car had been sent by sea to Belfast and with the two GNR Wards, Kitchen and Brake/Stores van were brought to Whitehead by the "Earl of Ulster", one of the NCC moguls. The GNR vehicles were for No.15 Ambulance Train and it was a monumental day of shunting to get them all in place.

The work of preparing the GNR vehicles was the subject of delicate negotiations between the military in Ulster and the railway works at Dundalk in Eire. Our first C.O., Major Grant, had to pay several visits to the works for consultation and had to get a set of civilian clothes sent over from home, as he could not go south in uniform. He looked more like a costermonger than an officer, to the amusement of everyone.

Our HQ and personnel quarters were at the Royal George Hotel in Edward Road - is it still there? [*Sadly, no. - Ed.*] You mentioned motor coaches - both the Royal and Royal George Hotels were involved in Devenney's Irish Tours with a lot of small rooms for single-night stays and the taking over by the military must have produced a useful income during the war years when tours were out of the question. You also mentioned the "Armoured Vehicle" - I remember it was around for a while but who devised it and what happened to it

was a bit of a mystery. I seem to recall that there were mobility problems and no one was really concerned about it and it just disappeared.

I think the highlight of my association with the NCC was a footplate trip on one of the Moguls from Whitehead to Belfast and back one Saturday afternoon, arranged by one of my local friends, a Mr. John Mitchell who worked in one of the railway offices, the permit being signed by a Mr. M. Patrick who I believe was in charge of the Loco Works. Tender-first to Belfast, a trip out to the depot, then back again to Whitehead. Going through the tunnel was quite an experience - in fact the whole exercise was most memorable. I wish I could remember the loco number. My only other footplate trip was at the age about ten when my grandfather, who was Stationmaster at Hythe (Kent) took me to Sandgate and back on an "O1" 0-6-0 No.65, still in SECR wartime black. I am delighted to find that it has been preserved and restored to the old livery, with polished dome and safety valve seating, on the Bluebell Railway.

I enclose some copies of photographs taken at Whitehead in 1940 by the Ministry of Information on the occasion of a visit by the top brass of B.T.N.I. to inspect the No.14 Train at the excursion platform. Reproduction is not very good I'm afraid but it shows what they thought loading would be like, together with shots of the Personnel Car and of an "operation" in the Treatment Room.

We remained in Whitehead until September 1943 when we returned to GB to re-form for service in France and Belgium in 1944/5, where the job turned out to be very different from the earlier demonstration at Whitehead. Our stay in Whitehead was a most happy one and my interest in the "goings-on" in Ulster remains.

Seamus Scallon

Johnny Glendinning

Last year Seamus Scallon left NIR. Seamus has been a friend and contact in NIR for many years and during my time as Vice Chairman I got to know him very well. I always found him to be very helpful and supportive of the RPSI. Being a true railway man, Seamus appreciated all the hard work that the RPSI expended in maintaining, running and marketing its trains and did his best to assist us when he could. He made sure that NIR retained the necessary procedures to enable us to operate our steam trains safely over their network.

The Society owes him a big thank-you for all the help and encouragement he gave over the years.

BOOK REVIEWS

**Off The Rails - The Story Of The ILDA by Brendan Ogle
Currach Press, ISBN 1-85607-906-6, soft-back, 352 pages, €18.99**

In the Summer of 2000, IE's passenger services were disrupted by a series of strikes. I seem to recall that in most of the media coverage that I saw at the time, the main culprits were the members of the Irish Locomotive Drivers' Association (ILDA), which was portrayed as small breakaway union, operating erratically and outside the usual methods of negotiated settlements. The IRRS Journal maintained its usual apolitical approach to reporting the

issue (although I think that the Society's constitution prevents it expressing corporate opinions on such issues).

Brendan Ogle was one of the leaders of the ILDA, and here he tells their side of the story. Mr Ogle freely admits that this is a very personal view of the dispute, and he is not afraid to name names. The result is a very detailed account of one side of a dispute, which included high level court cases, a blockade of Westport station and a brief sit-in at Heuston station board room.

The author makes the point that the ILDA at one point had as members a substantial minority of IÉ's fully trained mainline drivers, and that their dispute was at least as much with the established Union organisations as it was with the management of IÉ, as the company attempted to impose altered rosters and working conditions ("The New Deal") on railwaymen.

Although there is a little technical background information (and a few rather odd factual errors), for the reader not acquainted with railway operation, a bit more on the training, skills and daily working lives of footplate crew would help explain the issues. Essentially, this is a book about labour relations, and the ILDA's struggle for recognition and full negotiating rights. Mr Ogle stresses that for much of the dispute, the ILDA wished to talk, but was denied a voice, and that as far as possible, its members sought redress through what they perceived as the laws defining the relationship between employers, unions and individual employees. The popular view vilified the ILDA as seeking substantial wage increases, but Mr Ogle says that issues like safety, staff competence and avoiding excessive hours of duty were at least as important, and that many of his members made substantial financial sacrifices, during what he views more as a lock out by management than a withdrawal of labour.

For anyone interested in Union politics, he goes fully into the details of the trade union rules and constitutions, the interpretation of which became such a key issue of the dispute. This was a complex, and at times emotive dispute. In the final section, Mr Ogle stands back to take a more philosophical (and it seems rather old-fashioned Marxist) view of the way society works, but he does provide some thought-provoking comments on the impact of de-regulation on the public sector. After twenty years, in the UK, the Miners' Strike remains a controversial subject, and for the ILDA dispute my final view is that it is still to soon to draw conclusions about it.

AJOR

**Irish Railways Traction & Travel (fourth end) by Peter Jones and Andrew Marshall
Irish Traction Group, ISBN 0-9521496-1-3 -95, soft-back, 161 pages, photographs,
maps and tables. £13.95/€19**

It is now ten years since the last edition of this detailed and authoritative guide to Irish railways appeared, and in view of the new railcar deliveries and stock changes which have occurred in that period, a revised version is most welcome. The new volume covers the CIÉ/IÉ and NIR locomotive fleets, multiple units and loco-hauled passenger stock with detailed dates for entering service, major alterations and where applicable withdrawal. The rolling stock section also includes what details we have so far of the new CAF coaches, due to enter service in 2004/5.

Some of this information has been published elsewhere, but it is still very useful to have such accurate and up to date lists collected together. The additional sections on specialised permanent way vehicles certainly provide details which are much harder to come by, and there are brand new tables for the LUAS stock and lines opened to date. Then follow detailed mileage tables of all routes still open, which should prove most useful (especially for travellers not familiar with Irish railway geography), a summary table of closed lines, and lists of preserved locomotives and coaching stock.

A very interesting section gives a detailed account of current freight workings, again useful for curious visitors in view of the recent run-down of this aspect of rail operations.

An extensive appendix covers all other diesel, petrol or battery units supplied to the broad gauge lines, and their various fates. In addition to these useful reference lists, there is a section on rover and rambler tickets, cross-channel shipping services, airlines and selected accommodation, convenient for several stations at rail centres.

Although this information may prove ephemeral, it is very useful for anyone planning a first visit to Ireland. This is clearly a book written by enthusiasts for enthusiasts. For the 'old hands' it provides a concise and up to date reference work; for anyone new to Irish railways, it will be an ideal guide for exploration.

AJOR

Bullied and the Turfburner, and other experiments with Irish Steam Traction by Ernie Shepherd

KRB Publications, ISBN 095420385, Soft back, 99 pages with 67 photographs, map and drawings, £17.95

An old question, often debated is "Could oil-firing have saved the steam engine?" The Irish version, is could it have been peat (turf)? My own impression is that by the time CC1, the Turf-burner, started trials in 1957 it was already an anachronism: Ireland's last conventional steam engine had been built several years before and dieselisation was under way. In the medium to long run, both oil- and turf-firing would have run foul of modern legislation on air pollution. Oil firing certainly tried to address one problem of the steam engine: the fact that it was labour intensive.

Unlike the UK, in the 1950s Ireland was not short of labour, but there was a need to keep such costs down. Most oil-firing, however, kept the basic Stephensonian design for locomotives, with some alterations to the firebox design. Bullied of course went right back to square one, and re-designed the whole concept. The turf-burner had many engineering innovations: combustion fans, a new design of grate, mechanical stokers.

Some thirty years ago JWP Rowledge produced a concise booklet explaining the anatomy of this beast, and elucidating what the turf-burner was, but now Mr Shepherd has produced an extended book, breaking new ground with fresh archival material, telling the equally fascinating story of why the project evolved, and filling in some more technical details. Most specifically, there is a good account of the conditions under which Irish railways had to operate in the 1940s, and particularly the coal shortages and the various attempts (including conversions to oil-burning) to overcome these.

I was quite intrigued to see how effective the use of turf or coal-turf combinations in conventional fireboxes proved; whereas I had assumed that such low calorific fuel needed

special combustion chambers. The project also had a political driver: the need to reduce Ireland's dependence on imported fuel.

There are also some fascinating insights into late GSR / early CIÉ locomotive policy, including a summary of the merits of the remaining steam classes in 1948, from a hard-nosed operational, rather than a historical, perspective.

Before embarking on CC1, Bulleid's team rebuilt an older 2-6-0 to burn turf, and there is a detailed account of this project, accompanied by many previously unpublished photographs of the assembly of this weird contraption. The design, construction and testing of the turf-burner itself (CC1) are fully covered, with a good selection of illustrations, diagrams of the rather complex gas, water and steam circuits, and full technical detail. Finally: an often neglected aspect, there are character sketches of the main protagonists, reminding us that this was the story of a team as much as a machine.

AJOR

**Irish Broad Gauge Carriages: a pictorial introduction by Desmond Coakham
Midland Publishing, ISBN:1-85780-175-X, soft-back, 96 pages, 200 b&w photographs,
£14-99**

In general, Irish engines and narrow gauge stock are now quite well documented, although I agree that only the GNR(I) has a fully comprehensive locomotive history to itself so far. However, what went behind the tender (at least on the broad gauge) has received rather scant coverage. For many enthusiasts, the engine was after all the "life and soul" of the piece, and when photographic film was expensive, many were loathe to deliberately take picture of much else, so we have had to be content with squinting at bits of rolling stock which got into the background by accident. Luckily, there have always been a few folks who paid attention to the rest of the railway scene, and, even more luckily, one of those is as observant a student and as good a lensman as Desmond Coakham.

I seem to recall an American spokesman recently making a comment about "the things we don't know ..." which was probably not quite as oxymoronic as the news reporting made out, and to paraphrase it, there are the coaches we always knew about (like the GSWR 6-wheelers and the GNR(I) K15s); the ones we knew existed but never saw illustrated (like the CMDR's solitary bogie coach and some DSER horse boxes) and the oddities whose existence we hardly even suspected, (like carriage trucks and NCC 4-wheel full brakes) - but they're all here, some real gems of photographs! Reproduction is generally good, in many cases exemplary, but just one or two of the captions seem to have got mixed up.

Knowing how good a draughtsman Desmond is, I am a little disappointed not to have any line drawings but we have to accept that the book is aimed at a wider audience than the modelling fraternity, and there is plenty of inspirational material here to support a very ambitious coach-building programme.

The book begins with a brief review of the dark ages of Irish coaches, in the middle third of the nineteenth century, for which little material is available. The gap is, however, not as bad as we might fear as stock of this period for many companies often came from commercial builders to the same general designs and a few splendid specimens survived into the modern age to be photographed. The Waterford & Tramore is of course the classic example, but even here Desmond finds something new, by publishing side by side two Casserley shots of 1st class coupé No.1, to make its unique design clear. There is also a

fascinating shot of a GSWR full brake, an 1850's design, still serving as Thurles breakdown van a century later: even at that date, it seems that CIÉ could have assembled a mid-Victorian coach set if it wanted!

The rest of the book adopts the usual company approach, with sections for the GSR broad gauge (subdivided to cover the GSWR, MGWR, DSER, Tramore, Bandon and Macroom lines), with a review of the relatively small number of GSR-built coaches.

The next chapter covers CIÉ/IE's attempts to drag its inheritance into the twentieth century, from the "laminates" to the latest railcars. The GNR(I), NCC and (of course!) the BCDR get a chapter each to describe their distinctive approach to providing passenger accommodation, then a brief interlude on the somewhat less progressive ideas of the SLNCR and the DNGR, and a closing review of recent developments.

Although comprehensive, coverage of the most recent additions to Irish railway stock is brief. But the technical details of these vehicles are well recorded in accessible journals now and, as the author points out, these are not specifically Irish coaches but rather standardised or customised designs running on 5'3" bogies. Overall, it seems a good idea to concentrate on the more characteristic and idiosyncratic vehicles which have graced the broad gauge over the past 170 years. And the final bit of good news: there may be a complementary volume on wagons later.

AJOR

**Forty Shades of Steam: The Story of the RPSI by Joe Cassells & Charles Friel
Colourpoint Books, s/b, 160 pages, £12**

First and foremost, let me declare an interest: I am a founder member of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland. As an eager 13-year-old and a member of the Inst Railway Society, I attended the meeting in Belfast on 30th September 1964, at which the RPSI was set up. I have been a lifelong member and have enjoyed many happy days travelling on or photographing the Society's steam trains down the years.

Hence it was with considerable eagerness that I awaited the publication of this book which has been published to mark the RPSI's 40th anniversary, and which should appeal not just to the diehard enthusiast but to a wider audience. From the foreword by Lord O'Neill, who has been president of the Society from the outset, to the compendium of trips run by the RPSI compiled by Cassells, the book exudes an infectious enthusiasm.

The text is augmented by a glorious galaxy of colour photographs by Friel showing RPSI trains the length and breadth of Ireland. Of particular interest is one of actor Sean Connery during the filming in the Republic of "The First Great Train Robbery".

As Lord O'Neill says, few people in 1964 could have imagined that mainline steam trains would still be operating forty years later. But they are, thanks both to the determination of the Society to overcome adversity and to the willing co-operation of Translink and Iarnród Éireann.

From the Santa train rides to the Easter Bunny excursions and the Portrush Flyer, the RPSI's activities now appeal to a new generation. Long may the age of steam continue, and long may the RPSI's wheels continue to turn.

**Rails Around Belfast, by Andrew Crockart and Jack Patience.
Midland Publishing, softback, 80 p.p., £13.99**

The book explores in pictures the railway network of Ireland's second largest city, Belfast. Whilst the majority of the pictures come from the second half of the twentieth century, there are some which look back to earlier times. Of these, there is a particular poignancy in the pictures of York Road station in its prime at the end of the Victorian era and in the condition to which the destructive air raids in May 1941 reduced it.

Starting with a short but comprehensive history of the railways which served Belfast, the book then devotes a chapter to each of the three main companies involved, the Great Northern, the NCC and the Belfast & County Down. A further chapter explores the Belfast Central Railway which linked the three systems. This section also covers the dock and industrial lines in and around the city. The final chapter looks at the rails which ran through the city's streets, those of Belfast Corporation Tramways and, in the words of the authors, the 'rubber-tired tram', the trolley buses which replaced the trams.

The two authors, both from the city, have done the railways of Belfast proud bringing together a range of fascinating pictures which are accompanied by interesting and informative captions.

**The Steam Age in Ireland - A collection of Railway Art, by Lord O'Neill
Colourpoint Books, hardback, £30**

The availability of all types of Irish Railway literature has blossomed in the past few years, as evidenced by the heaving tables making up the Sales stand at the winter meetings in St.Judes! However, one absence from the histories and pictorial albums has been the unique world of the railway artist. This has now been admirably addressed by a landmark volume "The Steam Age in Ireland", the brainchild of our President, The Lord O'Neill, and published by Norman Johnston at Colourpoint.

The sub-title "A collection of railway art" describes the wonderful and evocative images to be found in this Hardback delight. Some 80 paintings are reproduced, along with examples of classic posters. In his Introduction, Lord O'Neill confirms his vision of assembling a representative collection of Irish Railway Art, something not attempted before, and using works by the Guild of Railway Artists as inspiration.

Drawing initially upon his own collection, Lord O'Neill has been able to portray the scene from the earliest days through to the demise of steam. From the Dublin and Kingstown and Ulster Railways through to GNR Vs class, not forgetting Shane's Castle and Downpatrick operations, the range of images, broad and narrow gauge, is impressive.

Of the paintings featured, some were specially commissioned, the remainder being in private ownership, and a great deal of effort was expended in locating and obtaining approval for publication. The work of some 24 artists is illustrated, and many different styles and mediums are used. The ability to admire long-gone locomotive and rolling stock liveries is one of the great attractions of a painting, scenes usually only recorded in monochrome before colour film became a more accessible medium to many in the 1960s. Thus one can study a mogul at Portrush in 1936, a GSWR boat express at Waterford in 1907, and even a WLWR scene at Athenry at the end of the 19th century! The narrow gauge

is represented in equal measure, and, in addition to a full description of each painting, a smaller black and white illustration is used in many instances, to tell part of the story, or illustrate the setting.

It would be invidious to single out any particular painting; the above mentions are examples only. Everyone will have their own favourite(s), but each one can be savoured over and over again. In addition to comprehensive indexing by Company and location, it is very interesting to have biographical details of each artist, which adds yet another dimension to enjoyment of the images. Reproduction is to a very high standard, doing full justice to the original paintings.

Lord O'Neill and Colourpoint Books are to be congratulated on producing such a quality "first" - one which deserves a wide audience, including those in the Arts community. One can only hope that further paintings will come to light as a result of this volume, possibly providing material for another!

DY

LETTERS

Dear Sir,

In Five Foot Three No.50, page 46, Mr Laurence Liddle states concerning H.G. Ivatt, "In 1940 he was, I think, acting CME of the LMS, Stanier having been seconded to work with the Ministry of Supply". I beg to suggest that this is not correct.

For more than two years after the outbreak of war in September 1939 Stanier was still CME of the LMS. He went to the Ministry of Production as full-time Scientific Adviser in 1942 and was then succeeded as CME by C.E. Fairburn. When Fairburn died unexpectedly in 1945 Ivatt took over as Acting CME and, on the recommendation of Stanier, was soon appointed CME by the board of the LMS. Evidence for the chronology is to be found in J.E. Chacksfield's "Sir William A. Stanier - A New Biography" (Usk 2000), pp. 125 & 137.

My friend, Mr. William Broadbent, who was in 1942 an engineering apprentice at Crewe works, tells me that the change from Stanier to Fairburn took place in September or October of that year.

Yours faithfully,

G.L. Huxley

Trinity College
Dublin

Dear Editor,

Peter Scott has asked for information about the working model 'Big D' 0-6-0 that used to be displayed in the concourse of the former Great Victoria Street Station.

The model was, until sometime during the Second World War, a feature of the concourse at the erstwhile Amiens Street (now Connolly) Station in Dublin where, like Peter a generation later, I expended the odd penny of my pocket money to make it work. I presume

that the move to Belfast was made because, owing to the very heavy wartime passenger traffic, the engine's earning capacity was greater there than in Dublin.

I understand that this superb model was made by Jim Webster's father when the latter was still in his apprenticeship. I wonder if he was paid for his work, and if so, how much!

Yours sincerely,

Laurence Liddle.

Chatswood
New South Wales

[FRONT COVER]

No.85 approaches Dhu Varren on the return from a gauging trip to Portrush on 20th June 2004. (W.T. Scott)

[REAR COVER - TOP]

No.4 near Wicklow on the way back from a Rosslare outing. (B. Carse)

[REAR COVER - BOTTOM]

No.186, on her first publicly advertised outing, takes the Hollywood bank in her stride; Marino, 15th August 2004. (P. Lockett)

[NEWS FROM COUNCIL]

If only ... (I.C. Pryce)

[NEWS FROM COUNCIL]

Dame Margaret Weston, President of the Heritage Railway Association presents the prestigious John Coiley Award for the restoration of No.186 to RPSI Chairman Norman and Whitehead volunteer Francis Richards at a ceremony at Swindon on 29th January 2004. On the left is John Jeffrey, chairman of the judging panel. (J. Crane)

[NEWS FROM COUNCIL]

An interior view of one of our Mk2 open carriages, with Santa and his elfin assistants busy on seasonal duties. (P. Lockett)

[LOCOMOTIVE REPORT]

No.3BG, alias the Guinness engine, busily engaged on one of Whitehead's periodic "big shunt" days. (J. Spencer)

[LOCOMOTIVE REPORT]

On a wintry day in February No.186, minus dome cover and in a coat of many colours, has her first cautious outing in steam at Whitehead. (I.C. Pryce)

[LOCOMOTIVE REPORT]

To make room for the RPSI 40 function at UFTM, NCC No.74 "Dunluce "Castle" had to be moved outside and the RPSI's Unilok road-railer was despatched to do the business. (C.P. Friel)

[LOCOMOTIVE REPORT]

Whitehead employees John Ferguson, James Small, Ernie Clark and Roy Lee with six finials lacking only the spiky bits. On the ground are three patterns, the one on the right demonstrating clearly that birds are unwelcome. (P. Scott)

[CARRIAGE REPORT]

Ex-NIR snack car 547, on temporary bogies, is shunted from the heavy lift area to the loco workshop for mechanical overhaul prior to renovation of its refreshment facilities. (I.C. Pryce)

[NORTHERN OPERATIONS]

Despite his many problems and frustrations, Northern Operations Officer Mervyn Darragh seems happy as he surveys the world from a wooden-bodied carriage - perhaps reminiscing! (P. Lockett)

[NORTHERN OPERATIONS]

After a brake-testing expedition, No.186 poses at Whitehead with the five renovated Mk2 carriages. (I.C. Pryce)

[NORTHERN OPERATIONS]

The energy with which overhauled No.186 goes about her business has come as a revelation to many. Here she crests the climb into Greenisland with a Santa train on 5th December 2004. (C.P. Friel)

[NORTHERN OPERATIONS]

Yet another test train, this time to Bangor. A mile from destination, No.85 coasts through Bangor West. (P. Lockett)

[SOUTHERN OPERATIONS]

An impressive view of No.85 at the south end of Port Laoise station on 21st August 2004. (D. Reddy)

[SOUTHERN OPERATIONS]

Contrary to the view held in certain quarters, these 2-6-4 tank engines were designed to run as fast backwards as forwards - and did so during their lives in company service.

Here No.4 performs vigorously near Clara on one of the Tullamore shuttle trains in June 2004. (W.T. Scott)

[WHITEHEAD SITE REPORT]

We could do with more like these. James Friel and Philip Newell engaged in some tidying up at Whitehead. (P. Lockett)

[WHITEHEAD SITE REPORT]

“Training Days” are held at Whitehead to ensure that those involved in activity there maintain the required standard of competence. (C.P. Friel)

[A FEW MORE SHADES OF STEAM]

2-6-4T No.53’s final appearance was as a static exhibit at Whitehead Open Day in 1970 but is here getting a clean-up at York Road in 1968 by youthful RPSI persons. As they may be barely recognisable now they are: J Cassells, I Pryce, P Preece, T Morton, P Scott, D Henderson & R Morton. (J. Cassells)

[A FEW MORE SHADES OF STEAM]

Two of the Society’s most eminent members, both now sadly passed on. Bob Clements, pipe in mouth, was possibly the greatest authority on Irish locomotive development of all time. Geoffrey Wigham lived to be Ireland’s oldest train timer and foremost expert on railway operation in the steam era. They are pictured on the 1968 Two Day Tour. (J. Cassells)

[A FEW MORE SHADES OF STEAM]

The ‘missing’ event of 24th April 1971, referred to in the article. A sodden RPSI party studies the ex-Bord na Mona Andrew Barclay 0-4-0WT. In the foreground, with his distinctive raincoat and umbrella, is Craig Robb, the Society’s first railtour organiser. (J. Cassells)

[A FEW MORE SHADES OF STEAM]

A trio of timers, the train obviously stationary as Ian Wilson and Bill Scott have time to look up and smile. Joe Cassells is making notes, perhaps with “Fifty Shades of Steam” in mind! The wiggly wire at the top-light reveals that their ancient art has been infiltrated by modern technology. (W.T. Scott)

[A FEW MORE SHADES OF STEAM]

No.4 at Lisburn with the return leg of the “Thursday Excursion” on 2nd September 2004. (C.P. Friel)

[A FEW MORE SHADES OF STEAM]

“Stops to pick up only” - No.186 calls at Hilden to collect the photographer’s parents en route to RPSI 40 - presumably he also got on since he later spoke eloquently at the festivities. (P. Lockett)

[A FEW MORE SHADES OF STEAM]

For the more mature members, see how many you can name! A Belfast “Inst” Railway Society outing with J15 No.151, pictured at Ballylinan on 23rd March 1963. (D. Grimshaw, C.P. Friel collection)

[RPSI 40]

Authors Charles Friel and Joe Cassells with Dublin steam drivers Tony and Dan Renahan at the “40 Shades” book launch at Belfast Central. (P. Lockett)

[RPSI 40]

Lord O’Neill, Keith Moffatt and Norman Foster at the official launch of No.186. (C.P. Friel)

[RPSI 40]

RPSI President Lord O’Neill, in period garb, welcomes Vice-Presidents Garrett FitzGerald and Sir Kenneth Bloomfield and Lady Bloomfield to the RPSI 40 event at UFTM. (S. Matchett/Belfast Telegraph)

[RPSI 40]

Another blast from the past, possibly the “Lough Gill” railtour of 1981. l-r: A McKibbin, E Gilmore, J Martin, T Dorrian, C Charlton, R Edwards, J Creamer, I James. Many will remember Tommy Dorrian as the ever-present, ever-cheerful keeper of the bar on our trains before his untimely death. (B. Pickup)

[ORIGINS OF THE TRANSPORT MUSEUM]

From left: W.A. Seaby, Director of Municipal Art Gallery and Museum; Councillor Mrs F.E. Breakie, Chairman of Museum and Art Committee, Belfast Corporation; the Lord Mayor; G.B. Howden, Chairman of UTA and Vice-Chairman of GNR Board.

[ORIGINS OF THE TRANSPORT MUSEUM]

The oldest electric traction vehicle in the world arriving at the Belfast Transport Museum, Queen’s Quay. It was formerly used by the Bessbrook and Newry Tramway Company and is the gift of the builders, Mather and Platt, Manchester.

[ORIGINS OF THE TRANSPORT MUSEUM]

The special ‘steaming’ of the Fintona horse tram requested by Lord Wakehurst.

[ORIGINS OF THE TRANSPORT MUSEUM]

During a ride on the old Fintona horse-tram the Governor, Lord Wakehurst, and members of the party had to duck passing under the low archway.

[COMMENTS & RECOLLECTIONS]

June 1936 and a Compound in its heyday. No.83 “Eagle”, later to famously inaugurate the Belfast - Dublin Enterprise in 1947, shows how to start a train out of Goragewood. (O.S. Nock/C.P. Friel collection)

[COMMENTS & RECOLLECTIONS]

The 257 (later J4) class were arguably the best goods engines the GSWR/CIÉ ever had, although only eight were built. No.262 is seen at Glanmire Road shed, Cork, on 3rd July 1955. (L. Marshall/W.T. Scott collection)

[COMMENTS & RECOLLECTIONS]

SG class No.15 arrives at Belfast’s Adelaide shed with wagons of loco coal c.1956. (W.T. Scott)

[COMMENTS & RECOLLECTIONS]

No.80, of the versatile UG class, approaches the Lisburn Road bridge on the former Belfast Central Railway in 1936. (W.T. Scott collection)

[WHITEHEAD IN WARTIME]

Interior of the Personnel Car, converted by LMS and shipped to Belfast. (courtesy W.G. Harris)

[WHITEHEAD IN WARTIME]

NCC carriage converted to Stretcher Car. (courtesy W.G. Harris)

[WHITEHEAD IN WARTIME]

Loading a “casualty” for the benefit of “Top Brass” in 1940. (courtesy W.G. Harris)

[BOOK REVIEWS]

Partly re-assembled No.184 is shunted into the loco workshop by sister No.186, now clad in her working clothes of authentic, if drab, all-over grey. (I.C. Pryce)

[BOOK REVIEWS]

Cross-border co-operation in action - RPSI catering stalwarts Liam Walters and Rita Henderson. (P. Lockett)