

**THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND**

PATRON: THE RT. HON. THE LORD O'NEILL

# FIVE FOOT THREE



No. 8

December, 1969

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Editor: A. Donaldson

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

*Front Cover: G2 No.659 on 5:40pm special ex-Kilfree at Island Road on Good Friday 1957. The loco was formerly MGWR No.13 "Rapid". (A. Donaldson)*

#### RAILTOURS

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In September, we had to cancel our St. Canice tour through lack of support - the first time in the history of the Society that such a decision had to be taken. The same fate befell the Colmcille in October. The earlier failure of the charter trips to Bray and to Antrim was quite unconnected with the RPSI, but the Sorley Boy Tour in June only just "broke even" by dint of an energetic sales drive by John Richardson and his helpers.

Few are probably aware of the battle which was fought to save the St. Canice from fatal last-minute alterations to its path and increase in its fare; it had certain drawbacks for cross-channel participants, but there was no obvious reason why local members should not book. The failure of support from this quarter is even more clearly seen in the other two - in fact there is no longer any obvious reason for planning one-day Belfast-based tours at all, especially as we are assured by NIR that the shorter the tour, the higher is the fare per train-mile; while cross-channel participants, on whom we must now increasingly rely, cannot be expected to come long distances unless promised two full days of steam.

Late booking has been another bane. When the Committee met on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October, the official closing date of the Colmcille Tour, bookings were far below the viable minimum, so it was decided to wait till Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> before finally cancelling the trip. In actual fact, the number of bookings which came in hopelessly late might well have made it worth the Committee's while taking a chance on running the Tour - had they been received in time. As it was, the deferment of the already late closing date would have made it almost impossible to complete the additional arrangements.

As for the practice of waiting to see whether a tour will run before you book - it is just too daft for comment.

The relatively high recent fares have been partly due to the preparations needing to be done by NIR to our engines. This part of the cost may be expected to decrease, though it must always be remembered that steam-hauled rail travel is bound to be an expensive luxury in years to come. The second reason is that we are now charged at normal rates for the transfer of engines between Whitehead and the starting point of our tours. Admittedly Whitehead was/is convenient to York Road; but we shall henceforth be paying for the decision made in the past to plump for Whitehead when other more central sites, now lost for ever, were still available. Those who are enthusiastic about Whitehead, while not necessarily feeling moved to work there, might remember to channel their enthusiasm into a willingness to pay in fares for the extra expense it involves.

It would also appear that many people's interest in steam is so feeble that they cannot contemplate a second run over a given line until x years have elapsed - there being no way of determining x.

In case the "Troubles" are advanced as a reason, the number of cars on Belfast streets in the evenings would seem to indicate that its citizens have been going about their evening entertainment almost normally. Why railway "enthusiasts" should be so much more chicken-hearted than their fellow men is far from clear.

The attractive 1970 railtour programme will be found elsewhere in this issue; should there be a further series of cancelled tours, we shall have to stop and ask ourselves whether it is time to wind up the RPSI. There is no point in the loco men knocking their brains out preparing engines which are not going to run; nor in the site staff labouring to provide accommodation for engines which will only lie about a shed; nor in the magazine sub-committee producing a publication about steam running when so many members will not bestir themselves to make such running possible. The "sights and sounds of steam" (over-worked phrase) can be much less laboriously and more cheaply preserved for posterity (or whoever they are to be preserved for) through the media of photography, cine, tape and models.

So far we have been unable to ascertain what the bulk of our inert members do want. Let them speak up now.

## **VIEWS ON PRESERVATION**

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A couple of contemporary organisations have recently expressed themselves on this subject. First came an editorial in the Journal of the Irish Steam Preservation Society. While the basic idea of seeking to attract tourists to Ireland by a combination of railtours and museums is sound, the article was somewhat gauche in many of its expressions. Much of it concerned relations between the ISPS and the Transport Museum - not really our business - but it is hard not to comment on the references to No.800 "Maedhbh", in particular to the idea of transferring her to a "native" museum - a phrase which surely has overtones of either colonialism or parochialism. If the ISPS wishes to be all that "native", why not start, for example, by spelling Maedhbh's name correctly? And what is the point in moving her to her original area - the Cork main line never went through Stradbally, anyway.

More serious - the RPSI engines are clumsily lumped together with those of the Transport Museum, though the appended list gives the ownership more or less correctly.

More serious still is the expressed intention of "collecting" all possible engines from CIÉ (!) (apparently to Stradbally) to form static exhibits. RPSI policy, of course, is to save engines from scrapping with a view to running them, and this could - unnecessarily - well come into conflict with ISPS policy, as stated in the leader referred to. We hope this problem can be resolved before any irrevocable step is taken.

More constructive is the Editorial in the “Irish Railfans’ News”, Vol.15, No.4, advocating co-operation between the RPSI, ISPS and IRRS. On the face of it, this seems a good idea, but unfortunately both the RPSI and IRRS have so much on their respective plates that they cannot be expected to afford more than a very little financial help to each other. The most painless way for members of other societies to help us, at any rate, is to book on our railtours.

We would, by the way, point out that the proposed acquisition of a WT class has nothing to do with completing a “foursome” at already overcrowded Whitehead, but is intended to provide a second express engine badly needed for our long distance railtours.

When all is said and done, there do seem to be very good reasons for a “summit level” conference between the three societies in the near future, if only on the principle of “Ní neart go cur le chéile” [*no strength without unity*].

## LOCOS I HAVE KNOWN

J. O’Neill

---

The steam loco in Ireland never boasted of a speedometer and so many a record run with steam was not timed. Recalling some of the runs I fired on, it’s probably just as well that the locos didn’t carry a speedometer and certainly there wasn’t an opportunity for a fireman to bother with speed. His entire attention was devoted to the hungry firebox and the thirsty boiler.

In driving a diesel the speed can be accurately observed and it’s often on a run I recall locos Nos. 3, 60 or 95 making better time in a section than a diesel loco with a wide open throttle. When I first knew these small 4-4-0s they were sixty years old and like the ad for Johnny Walker Whiskey - “still going strong”. What a pity it is that one of these remarkable little locos wasn’t preserved for posterity and that can be said for all the different types and varieties that graced Irish railways, for every loco man and enthusiast had his own favourite type, though the loco man didn’t always agree with the choice of the enthusiast.

The engineman, being a practical fellow, looked for a loco that was free steaming, light on coal and water and with a hidden reserve of power which he could call on in emergencies such as a heavy train or time lost due to slipping or delays at stations.

The enthusiast, on the other hand, liked perhaps the shape of the smokebox or the footplate arrangement and in many cases he favoured a loco which would be dismissed by the engineman as a heap of scrap on wheels and this difference of opinion has at times led to argument, with disastrous results for the entire society to which the argumentative enthusiast belonged. Fortunately, this was a rare occurrence and by and large the enthusiast was accepted as a fellow railwayman in every way except his not having a trade union card.

There is a particular loco which for some strange reason most enthusiasts raved about. I refer to 2-6-2T No.850. Writing as a footplate man who has fired and driven this engine between 1951-55, I find little to make her memory pleasant. She was a photographer’s dream come true for she looked beautiful at the head of a train; but looks are no use for making steam and this was something that 850 seemed incapable of doing. Had she been a reliable loco, she certainly wouldn’t have spent all of her working life between Dublin and Bray - a distance of fourteen reasonably easy miles. I recall a Canal Street driver say of her, his voice dripping with contempt, “That yoke, she wouldn’t heat water for a barber and wouldn’t run to keep herself warm.” Such was 850, beloved, of the enthusiast but despised by the engineman.

She refused to steam, though she was light on water (fortunately); her slide bars ran hot constantly and with steam shut off down Killiney bank she became an “ambling Alf” and there was little danger that the 30 mph speed restriction would be exceeded. She was conceived of a conglomeration of parts and was one product of which Inchicore didn’t boast. No engineman would have fought for her

preservation - may she rest in pieces.

My career on the railway began in Mullingar as a cleaner in late 1945 and here I fell in love with the Midland 2-4-0s - which, for their size, were the best locos I have ever worked. In 1945-46 they were used exclusively on the turf trains from the west to Dublin and on such a train I had my first firing run - No.656 was the engine, piloted by 660. These trains consisted of old six-wheel Midland coaches with the roofs removed and battens nailed across where the windows had been. They were tubed and the running was fast, with the best available coal on the tenders. They were always double-headed and care had to be taken by drivers that slipping didn't occur when starting; for sparks from the exhaust could, and often did, set fire to the tinder-dry turf in the coaches behind, making an awe-inspiring sight in the quite dark countryside. Many of these little 2-4-0s ended their days on the DSE suburban service and 660 spent over two years on the Wexford Mail. She is still talked about with affection by the Wexford men who worked on her, and to her and her sisters they pay a rare tribute saying "they (the 2-4-0s) were as good as any DSE engine".

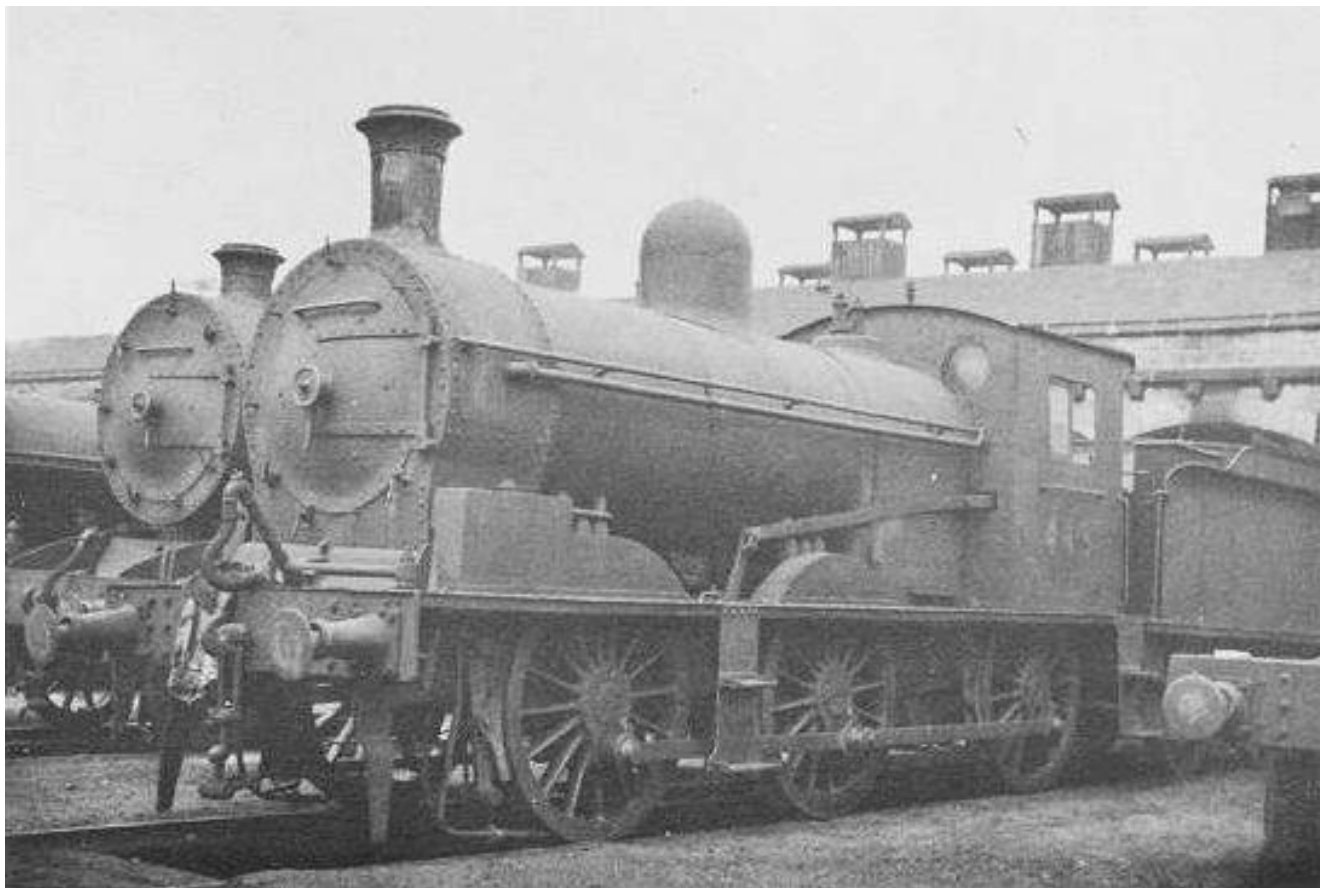
Many of the locos I knew at Mullingar I never met again after my transfer to Waterford in 1946 and there were a few I would have liked to work on outside their Midland environment - in particular 619, 620 and 621 which were built for the WD&LR, but when delivery was not accepted the Midland, always on the lookout for a bargain, bought these machines and, so far as I know, never regretted it. Bob Clements has written a very fine history of these locos which was published in the Journal of the IRRS, so any remarks of mine about them would be superfluous. They were a fine engine, but definitely, not built for speed.

Waterford was the meeting place of four former small railways amalgamated into the GSR (later CIÉ) and the locos of these small companies survived well into CIÉ days, being used mainly on the routes of the owning companies. Of the survivors my definite favourites were the DSE locos, four of which were based on Waterford. Only one of the four I actively disliked and my dislike was shared by all I worked with. This was 448 and if profanity can cause damnation then 448 has a lot to answer for. This engine began as an 0-6-2T and was later rebuilt as an 0-6-0 tender loco. She had a sloping fire grate which made cleaning out difficult and a drop grate was never fitted to her. She possessed enormous stuffing boxes on her piston glands and many a fireman seriously thought of resigning in preference to packing these monstrous glands. Going under a bridge on her footplate was the same as travelling through a tunnel and she was heavy on both water and coal though terribly strong. It was possible and often necessary to stop on a bank to fill her boiler and at her full pressure she lifted the train without effort. She had her good points but I'll never forget her glands and the hours spent packing them, inhaling the pungent smoke of the duck burner. She was scrapped in 1950 without regret.

DSE 443 and 446, on the other hand, were lovely machines, free steaming, easy on coal and water and fitted with intelligent cabs - a feature on all DSE locos. The comfort of the engineman was apparently a primary consideration on the DSE and their cabs enhanced the appearance of the locos. They were large and fitted with sliding windows, warm in winter and delightfully cool in summer. They ran smoothly, mainly because they were fitted with volute springs and oscillation was unknown - rather was their motion at speed a bouncing one. They worked exclusively on the Waterford-Macmine-Wexford line with the goods, and the local passenger trains from Wexford to Rosslare Harbour. One of the class was based in Enniscorthy and worked the "Day goods" to North Wall, having her moments of glory on Sunday excursions; while every 15<sup>th</sup> August she worked a heavy passenger excursion to Waterford for the Tramore races, loaded with 600-700 friendly Wexford people determined to put the bookmakers on the racecourse on the Bankruptcy list.

443 was scrapped in 1955, followed in 1957 by her sister loco 446. They were amongst the first victims of dieselisation and I often wondered why less reliable and comfortable locos survived for longer. Perhaps it's because 443 and 446 were a small group. There were only two others in the class, 444 and

445, based in Canal Street. There was one slight difference in 444 and it was in her cab. She didn't have side windows but had instead sliding side plates as are found on preserved 461, the best (without exception) loco that ever ran on Irish railways - North or South. I probably won't be able to show my face in the North for this heretical statement but I'm sticking to it.



*J8 No.443 at Inchicore, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1954. Former DSER No.14. (A. Donaldson)*

This beloved engine, preserved in DSE livery at Inchicore, was built in 1922 and delivered with her sister 462 and promptly sent to Belfast for safety; for here in the south a civil war was raging with particular concentration on the railways. Trains were wrecked and the DSE decided that their latest purchase was safer in Belfast, so there they remained until 1923. 461 was allocated to Wexford and 462 to Canal Street. These locos were as unlike as chalk and cheese. 461 steamed freely, 462 did not. 461 ran like a hare, 462 was sluggish. They were both easy on coal and water and could work any train, passenger or goods.

461 was transferred to Waterford each beet season from 1952 to her withdrawal from traffic in 1964 and worked the beet trains from Waterford to Thurles via Fethard with crews from Limerick (who were loud in their praises of her) and Waterford. She was never known to fail during the entire beet season and many were the subterfuges adopted by drivers in an effort to have her allocated to their particular train. Some even tried bribing the foreman with cigarettes and soft talk and a tip for "a sure thing" in tomorrow's 2:30 race - for this engine could assault a bank with ease and run like a greyhound on the level. Her last great run was on the All-Ireland steam tour of 1961, run jointly by the SLS, IRRS and RCTS.

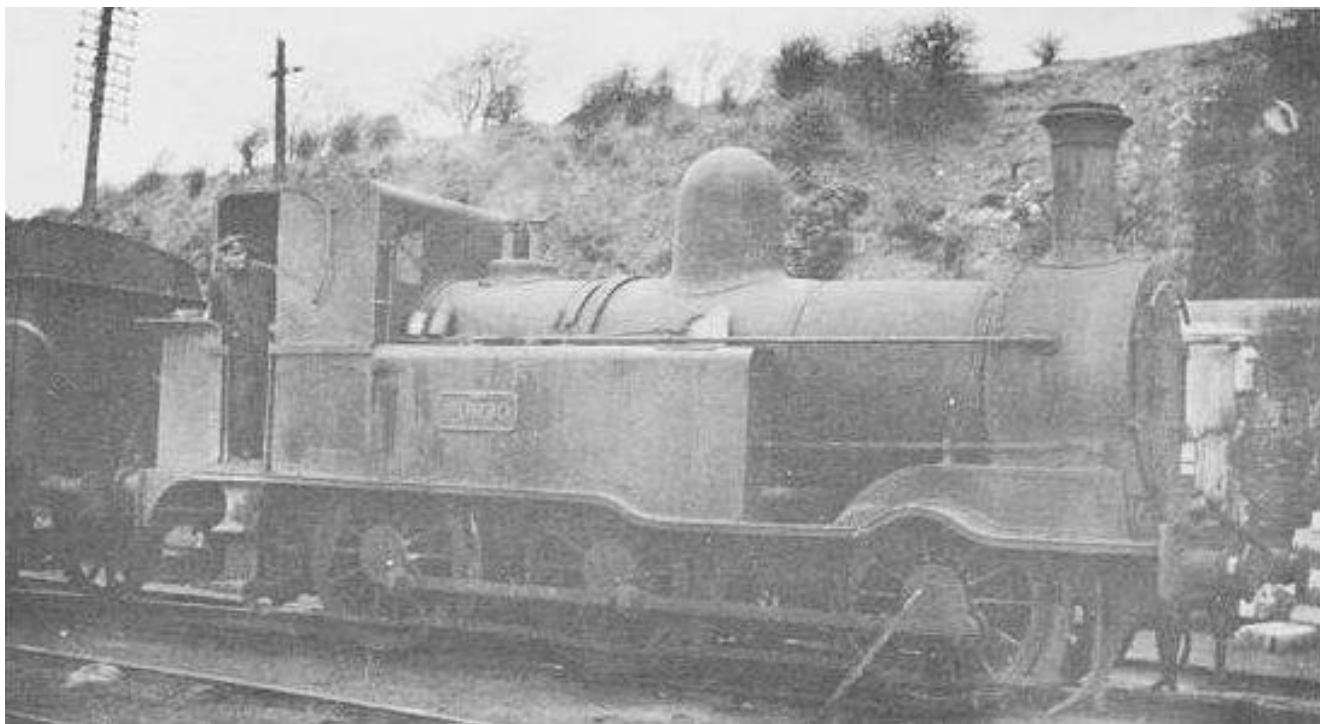
Maybe she will run again; I sincerely hope that she does.

Every fireman at Waterford for the last sixty years began his career on the one and only "Jumbo", the

humble yard shunting engine whose footplate gleamed from constant polishing and scouring. It was a grave and mortal sin for a fireman to allow Jumbo to blow off steam for she emptied the boiler and went from 150 lbs pressure to 75 lbs at each safety valve discharge.

Jumbo was built at Inchicore in 1876 as an 0-6-4T and later rebuilt as an 0-6-0T. She arrived at Waterford some time in the early 1900s and remained there until 1957 when she was scrapped. She was as much a part of Waterford as the River Suir is and generations of boys rode her footplate (illegally) as she shunted the goods yard or the station - many of the boys later mounting her footplate legally.

When she was withdrawn and replaced by a "C" class Metrovick diesel she was placed at the end of the engine shed on a road appropriately named "Cripple Road". Here she received VIP treatment from the cleaners prior to her last journey. She left Waterford in the company of 4-4-0 314 hauled by 0-6-0 158. She left to the sound of exploding detonators and, believe it or not, there were a few dewy eyed old drivers watching her go. She was a link with their youth and now the link was being severed. Sentiment for a machine is perhaps hard to understand but it used to be quite common on railways before the demise of the steam loco, for they were personal things and as temperamental as Prima Donnas. The diesel, on the other hand, is an impersonal machine and so affection cannot be felt for it.



***"Jumbo", inevitably at Waterford, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1953. (A. Donaldson)***

The passenger trains from Waterford were dominated by 4-4-0s of varying size. The Dublin line was worked by 334, 335 and 340. These locos had been built especially for the Rosslare-Cork express and were a very powerful loco and free steaming. They were equipped with four very large square sand boxes, necessary on the heavy banks of the line they had been designed for. They had 5'8½" driving wheels which was small by Irish standards for passenger locos and because of this small wheel they rarely slipped. They were a steadily running engine but inclined to drop time on the level, regaining it uphill and they handled heavy excursion trains with ease, making particularly good time on DSE routed excursions. Relief for these locos was provided by the 321 class which were an extraordinary fast loco capable of speed of well over 70 mph and there was one driver at Waterford who delighted on being late leaving either Dublin or Kilkenny, Up or Down, and going "all out" to be on time. His favourite loco was 327 and I well remember leaving Kilkenny one evening with him in charge of 327, fourteen

minutes late and being on time passing Lucan. He was a highly skilled engineman who could get speed out of a wheelbarrow. He is now retired and like most retired enginemen, spends his time gardening and having a few relaxing pints in the evening with his brethren, and over the pints they relive “the good old days” of railways.

The Waterford-Limerick line passenger was worked by 301 and 302 and the Night Mail by either a J15 or 4-4-0 338, the strongest and most powerful 4-4-0 on CIÉ at that time. This was the only 4-4-0 classified as a J class loco and she certainly hauled enormous trains on the Night Mail.

The goods on this line were formerly hauled by the ex-WLWR 0-6-0s, beautiful-running engines fired from the opposite side to the GSW locos. The locos I remember on this goods are 222 (known as the three little ducks), 236 and 237. They were a popular engine and the cabs were comfortable and all fittings very well arranged. Oiling them was not the messy job it was on other goods locos for the boiler was well suspended above the frame and the axle boxes were oiled inside the splashers where a brass oil box containing two tall trimmings was placed for each wheel. They lasted until 1951 being withdrawn the day the last survivor (a driver) of the WLWR was retired. They were fifty-six years old - he was 65 - one of the very few occasions when the driver outlasted the machine.

The Wexford line (via Macmine) was worked by 4-4-0s Nos. 3, 11, 14 and 87 and the goods by the DSE locos which I mentioned earlier. 87 was by far the fastest of these locos and survived up to 1957. This line is now lifted save for a short spur, fifteen miles long, to New Ross and all Wexford traffic is by the South Wexford line, the Rosslare Harbour route, which in steam days was worked entirely by Woolwich locos.

Now these were a horrible engine, loved on the Midland but hated on the Southern. They had a small, cramped dusty and uncomfortable footplate where it was said “You couldn’t swing a cat”. A fireman really worked on these engines and they had to be fired with skill. A wrongly placed shovel of coal into the firebox of one of these nightmares made her as cold as a widow’s fireplace and it took coaxing to get her warm again. When they steamed, they really ran, but let the pressure drop by 25 lbs and the running became a funeral march. The injectors wasted water and at night it was necessary for the firemen to make periodic inspections with the duck burner to ensure that the injector wasn’t watering the weeds of the PW. They are the only good reason I can think of for dieselisation. They made some great runs but, try as I might, I never liked them and would prefer to forget them.

In Waterford there was a unique little seven mile self-contained line running to the premier seaside resort of the south - Tramore. This line was also swallowed up by the GSR and was closed in 1961. The line was worked by 0-6-0Ts of the MGWR, Nos. 553, 555 and 556, and the enormous trains hauled by these locos had to be seen to be believed. A half-hour service operated between Waterford and Tramore for the entire summer and on Sunday evenings the 7:20 usually had a load of 2,000 passengers; this was known as the drunkard’s train. The pubs closed in Waterford at 7pm but Tramore had an extension to 10pm for the Summer season and this was the time of the “Bona Fide” so the passengers on the 7:20 were legally travellers and therefore entitled to drink to their hearts content at Tramore, which they did.

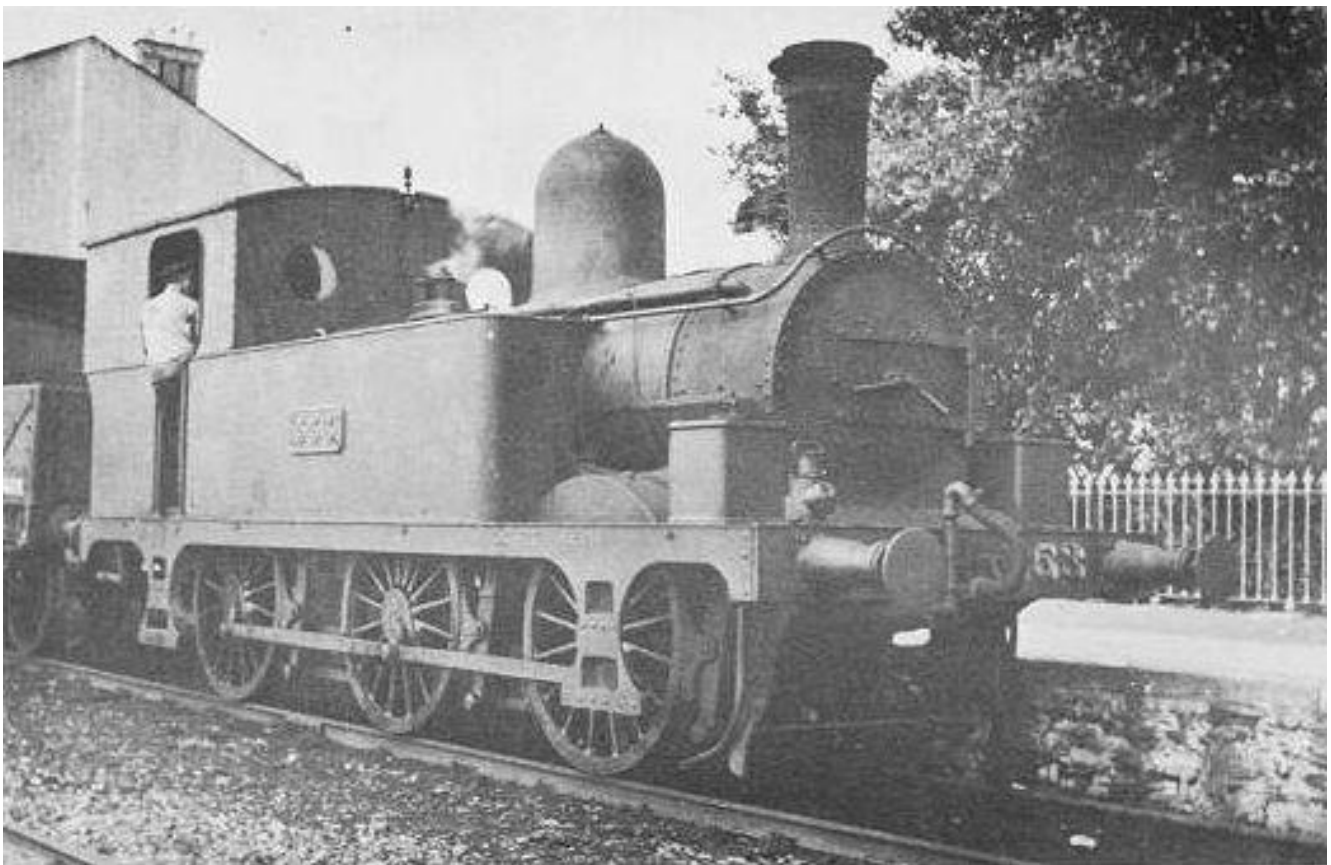
There were three drivers nearing retirement working the line in 1950 and I spent six weeks there relieving their firemen for holidays. There was terrible rivalry between them and they were three contrasting characters. All loved the engines and their idea of heaven was a transfer of the entire branch, engines, coaches and all to the home of Saint Peter. One was a practical joker and nothing worried him. His opposite number was the complete reverse, taking everything seriously and coming in hours before his time to check the engine and sometimes carry out minor repairs - to the annoyance of the fitter. The third man was a quite inoffensive person who in his younger days had been one of the most ruthless guerrilla fighters in the South and now that he considered that what he had fought for was achieved, he was content and happy to work towards his retirement. He was the most gentle man I have ever worked with.



My fourth week on this line was spent with the joker and he and the serious one had a row over his (the joker's) handling of 553 which loco they were sharing for that week. The serious one lived three miles from Waterford close to the railway line where he farmed ten acres of land and he had accused the joker of flogging 553 and trying to set fire to his field of oats. We were on the evening runs, booking on at 4:30 and off at 12:30am; the serious one booked on at 5am and spent his evenings (in between weeding his vegetables) watching his rival's performance with 553.

"When we're going out with the 10:10 tonight," said the joker, "I'll give him something to talk about. I forgot more about engines than he'll ever learn."

I wondered what he had in mind. He filled the firebox with lumps before leaving with the 10:10 and filled the footplate with cartons of wood wool. Night was falling and it was a beautiful clear evening with a full moon bathing the city and the countryside with its soft light. We started for Tramore, the joker laughing to himself and I wondering what he had planned. I had enough coal in the firebox to get to Tramore so I sat down and 553 steamed away merrily. Half a mile from the serious one's house, the joker opened the firebox and stuffed the cartons of wood wool in, having first eased the regulator.



***J26 No.553 at Tramore in August 1949 - former MGWR No.108 "Swallow". (A. Donaldson)***

Passing the house we could see him standing at the door and the joker opened the regulator full and left out the lever to the pins. The night was filled with sparks and 553 and her train was bathed in them. It looked like hell.

A very irate driver had to be forcibly restrained from attacking the joker later that night. He had cycled in, his bicycle propelled by his rage.

"You villain," he said to the joker. "You engine destroyer, you're not fit to drive an ass and cart and the man that made you a driver will have a lot to answer for." He paused for breath and then launched into

an account of the joker's ancestry which was anything but complimentary to his parentage, but the joker laughed, and continued to laugh.

Well, they are dead now, the three on that little branch. Maybe they have their heaven, a branch line all their own that will never close. I feel sure they have.

I have left to the last the great and wonderful J15s. There was never anything like them. You have one of them in the North - 186 - by no means the best of them but still a good engine.

They worked everything, goods, cattle trains, passengers, excursions and expresses, nothing was too tough for them and in Waterford we had thirty six of them. A book has been written on them - "Steaming Through A Century" - and there is little I can add to what has been written in that book.

I have only scratched the surface of the locos I have known, space would not permit me to write more and I'd hate to be accused of monopolising Five Foot Three. *[No-one would object to that, Jack. - Ed.]* A book could safely be written on each loco on Irish railways for they were like the men who worked them - individuals each one of them.

Ní fheicfidh muid a leithéid arís *[We'll not see their like again]*.

## **BUNDORAN REFLECTIONS**

---

As a result of his article in our previous issue, Mr Friel received the letter set out below from C.M. Smith with some information of the Bundoran line in the early years of this century.

Dear Mr Friel,

I have read with great interest your article in Five Foot Three - The Bundoran Line In High Summer - and indeed in the heyday of its career. I knew it at an earlier date. I lived in Irvinestown from 1902 till 1907 (aged 6 - 11). Our garden ran to within 150 yards of the station - near enough to read names and numbers with the naked eye. I had lived near a railway before arriving in Irvinestown and was already interested in railways - an interest which has continued to the present day. You may like to know what the branch was like in those days.

On the average weekday there were the three branch trains each way which was about the normal probably through most of its existence. These were worked by the little J class (115-119 and 15-21) and I must have seen most of them either on the branch or on visits to Bundoran Junction or Enniskillen. I think that two were shedded in Bundoran to provide a relief. The daily goods ex-Bundoran (quite early because she was at Irvinestown about 7:30) was operated by a Class A also shedded of course in Bundoran; about twenty five wagons.

Fair traffic usually justified a special for Irvinestown, Kesh, Pettigo and Ballyshannon. I think (from my knowledge of the Derry line) that they always went to Derry. Wagons and the van were accumulated during the week, arriving by the ordinary goods. A light engine arrived from Derry in the morning to shunt and place the cattle wagons.

In summer of course we had the Bundoran Express, I think (but am not sure) that it ran from Enniskillen only in those days and operated in conjunction with the "Lady of the Lake" sailing between Enniskillen and Castlecaldwell. I am a little vague about Sundays but I think there was normally only one train (from Derry). The Bundoran Express was also operated by a J at first but then we had a 5'6" P - probably 104 or 105.

After leaving Irvinestown in 1907 my only further journey on the branch, probably in 1909 or 1910 was on the Newtown Stewart Sunday School special. I was not a pupil but my uncle was a church warden so a friend and I travelled in great state in a saloon marshalled next to the engine. (I wish I could remember which - possibly 40 a class D similar to "Aster" class J). On arrival at Bundoran we

two were very up-stage and rushed down to bathe. But it was rough and although we could swim we were chased out by the life-guard so we returned to the station where we spent the day. Not that there was much to see!

Apart from the cattle specials and the occasional excursion of the type mentioned in the article, I don't remember much other excitement on the branch. I doubt whether there was as much traffic to Lough Derg in those days. That sort of pilgrimage by rail had not been developed. But another kind had been, and 12<sup>th</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> August saw specials carrying the band, drums, etc., appropriate to those dates.

I remember seeing a drunk on 12<sup>th</sup> July singing and dancing on the parapet of the road bridge at the station, when the special providence supposed to look after drunks saved him from crashing on the special being marshalled below him.

Needless to say the locos were spick and span and never failed. The rake for the passenger consisted of four or five six-wheelers, the end ones being guard's vans or brake thirds which saved marshalling. The vans had "bird-cages".

Sad to think it has all gone.

Yours sincerely,

*C.M. Smith*

### **Correction**

Mr Carse points out that the run referred to in the article "High Summer On The Bundoran Line" in "Five Foot Three" No.7 with County Donegal No.12 "Mourne" could not have taken place in 1948 as the loco was not used after 1941. This error arose out of a misunderstanding in a hurried telephone call just before the issue went to press. In fact the run with No.12 was recorded by P.A. O'Sullivan about 1938.

Reproduced below is a letter from Mr Curran, Manager and Secretary of the CDR, to Mr H. McIntosh, Mechanical Engineer of the GNR(I) dated 13<sup>th</sup> August 1946.

Dear Sir,

### Locomotive No.12

Locomotive No.12 has not been in service since 1941, and at the present rate of overhauls it could not be made ready for service sooner than 1953.

On referring the matter to Foreman Kelly, he states:

"I am of the opinion that if this loco was scrapped, the Committee's requirements can be met."

Inspector McBride states:

"As we have ten locos without taking this one into account and it is out of use for the past number of years, I do not think it will be required again and recommend that it be scrapped."

I attach a list of material which can be recovered from it and shall be glad to have your recommendation in course.

All our locos are in Capital at an average figure of £1,071.

Yours faithfully,

*B.L. Curran*

On the letter Mr McIntosh has pencilled the memo: "Scrap Engine and take into stock usable parts. Write engine off Books as scrap. Note value of parts retained."

Keep putting away your half-crowns and help save a Jeep from a fate similar to that of "Mourne".

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

---

Mr A.T. Newham sends the following footplate notes; we are sure that these will have a nostalgic interest for our readers who remember those engines.

Dear Sir,

All my firing trips on the 5:42pm ex-Amiens Street (originally 5:37) were with Martin White, but on the first of these, GSR No.346 was the engine.

The last time I was on 455 (ex-DSER No.20) she was in poor condition, but this was when the engines were being “run down” in anticipation of the arrival of the diesel locos. My first (and roughest) trip on 544 was between Athlone and Portarlinton prior to the line being relaid. She was working the Up “Claddagh Express” on which the IRRS were travelling. First she bounced, then she gave several sideways lurches and finally jolted. By the time we reached Clara, I knew all the tricks, i.e. when to stand up and when to sit down! Yet the trip must have been “choppy” even on the main line, because Bob Clements greeted me with the information, “If you want a rough ride you will get it!”

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## MORE ABOUT THE GNR PP

**J. Magill**

Dear Sir,

It was with avid interest that I read in the August edition of “Five Foot Three” the article on the GNR PP class, and it had me hunting out my log books to look up and relive again all the brilliant runs I timed with these engines.

For quite a long time now I have been in “weeping exile”, and I have lost touch in a great many ways with things back home, but nothing will ever dim my memories of those latter days on the Great Northern, after the closure of the Irish North, when the PPs came to Adelaide and Newry to give such stimulating performances on the main line, with a small handful of timers out chasing them at every opportunity, log books and watches at the ready.

I have sent, with this letter, accounts of three such runs which I timed and which, I think, really typify the style and class of the PPs. Could I perhaps hope that you might find enough space in your magazine to print one or two of them, so that your readers might share with me a few moments of nostalgia? There must be many amongst us who long to have those days back again. Certainly, I would come back from “weeping exile” tomorrow for another run behind a PP.

May I, in closing, offer you my congratulations on your excellent publication, and my hopes that you continue, for a long time to come, to print such stirring articles. I look forward with keen anticipation to future issues.

Sincerely,

*J. Magill*

Great Harwood, Blackburn, Lancs

### **The following are the runs referred to above:**

I should like to begin by describing a bit of a light-hearted affair.

On the morning of Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July 1958, I arrived in Goraghwood off the 8:15am express from Belfast, with the intention of spending a day taking photographs along the Warrenpoint branch.

Now the branch was booked to be worked for most of the day by Railcar “D”, and it was indeed a pleasant surprise to see, sitting in the branch platform on a train of two bogies, an immaculate PP No.50. On making enquiries I learned that “D”, poor yoke, had growled herself to a standstill in

Poyntzpass on the previous night whilst working the last local from Portadown to Newry, so I immediately cancelled my plans to take photographs and resolved instead to follow 50 everywhere she went.

It was very disappointing at first, though. Until about half past twelve, driver Herbie Patton of Newry was in charge of the engine, and whilst Herbie could show the best of them a clean pair of heels when he was on form, he was in anything but a good mood that day and passed the time meandering up and down the branch, much to my annoyance and frustration.



***PPs 4'6" No.25 at Bundoran in 1955. Originally named "Liffey" she lost her nameplates in 1914 when all Great Northern engines had their nameplates removed and the brass used in the war effort. (D.T.R. Henderson)***

So it was with some relief that, on the 12:10pm Warrenpoint to Portadown, we ran into Newry and I saw him climb down from the footplate, and the ever cheerful Frank Shevlin take over the train. Frank and I exchanged a word or two of greeting and I settled back in my seat confident that I should at last see some good running. And I wasn't disappointed.

Frank Shevlin was always a notoriously slow starter but once he had got away there was no holding him. From a typical ambling start we were out to mile post 8¼ before speed had risen into the 40s, but a mile further on 50 was racing up the bank at 47½, and we ran into the main line platform at the "Wud" in 6m 11s.

Another slow start saw us out to mile post 72¾ before speed began to rise, but I was visualising great things ahead as we raced up to a max of 63½ at mile post 74, passed in 2m 58s. Up the short bank to mile post 75, the engine never fell below 62, and all the while she was running like a sowing machine, with hardly a whisper from the exhaust. We flew like the wind down into Poyntzpass with a maximum of 66, to round the curve into the station in the marvellous time of 6m 12s.

And here, Frank strolled down the train towards me to apologise for the fact that, as we were now about four minutes ahead of time, he'd have to take it easy for a bit. The railcar schedule was ridiculously easy for a steam engine. I think "D" could only growl up to a max of 45 or so, and even that downhill, so we sat and waited for the clock to catch us up.

Even taking things as easy as possible to Scarva, with a max of only 40, and in a time of 5m 29s, we found ourselves still waiting time, and it was the same story at Tanderagee, reached in 4m 59s with a max of 42¾.

At last the road was clear for a run to Portadown. Away from Tanderagee, speed had built up to 54 by mile post 83½, and it increased over the next two miles until we were racing along at 60 to 60½. But

the chances of a fast time to Portadown were spoilt half a mile from the Junction, where a very bad signal check fetched us down to 16 mph. It turned out that something coming off the Derry road had blocked us and we crawled into Portadown behind the obstruction in a time of 9m 02s.

I rushed away to grab a bite to eat while the engine was being uncoupled and taken to the shed to be turned, and was back in time for the return trip to Newry at 1:35pm which turned out to be almost a carbon copy of the previous run, with 50 laughing at the railcar times in every section, and waiting time at every station, a situation I took advantage of to amble out at each stop, select vantage points and take photos.

But with Poyntzpass safely behind, the engine could at last be given her head and allowed to show what she could do. Again the slow start, with speed only building up to 47½ at mile post 75, but down the bank to mile post 74, 50 accelerated to 63 mph and took the climb into Goraghwood in grand style. Half a mile out she was still racing along at 56¼, to come to a stand in the station in 6m 54s.

Now for the first time on the run, 50 got away to a good start over the final section, and she was up to 51¾ at mile post 9. As speed rose to 57¾, I held my breath and entertained high hopes of clocking a 60 on the branch for the first time in my life. But, alas, it was not to be. The poor condition of the track was sufficient deterrent against high speed running, and Frank quickly applied the brake and brought the engine down to 53, and rounded off a great run with a time of 5m 32s into Newry.

This second run was a most exhilarating affair, and shows the tremendous capabilities of the PPs when they were given their heads.

The train was the Saturdays Only 1:50pm Belfast to Dungannon, an ideal train which was always loaded to three bogies and a six-wheel passenger van, and the log was taken on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1957.

No.44 was the engine, driven by a rather youngish lad from Portadown called Robert Coulter, who should never have been on the footplate at all, as the 1:50pm was an Adelaide turn. Perhaps sickness, or a mix-up over rosters, had prevented the regular men from working the train.

Another factor in Coulter's brilliant performance was probably his youth. I'm sure he couldn't have been driving for very long, certainly not long enough to have fallen into the normal way of things at Portadown where they seemed to delight in running as far behind time as possible.

I remember being at Great Victoria Street quite early that Saturday and watching rather sadly as a sorry looking Glover tank, which seemed to be in an atrocious condition, struggled out with what, for that time of year, was an astronomical load of eight bogies on the 1:30pm Belfast to Warrenpoint. As the 1:30 was booked all stops after Lisburn and my train was non-stop to Lurgan, I reflected that the run would probably be marred by signal checks all the way to Portadown.

However, dead on time, Coulter took 44 away to a nice start from Great Victoria Street and was out to Central Junction in 2m 06s. By Adelaide, speed had risen into the 40s. Passing Finaghy it was 45½. And then - calamity! Adverse signals brought us down to 30½, and we crawled to Derriaghy and the permanent way restriction for the rebuilding of the road bridge under the station.

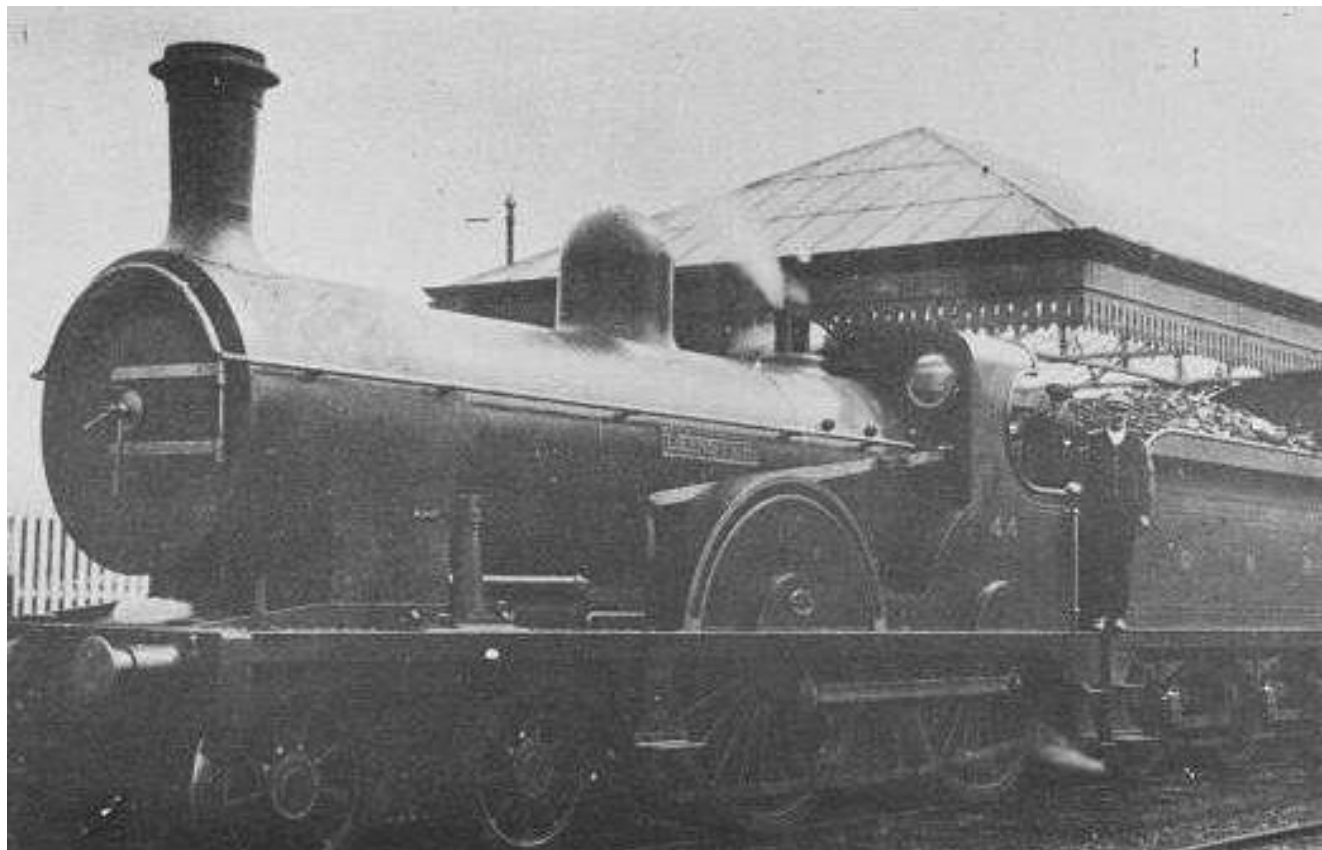
By the time we'd reached Lambeg we were really in trouble, and signals brought us to a standstill for a full 58 seconds. Needless to say, after such a promising start from Belfast, I was practically foaming at the mouth, and cursing Glover tanks, the driver of the 1:30, signalmen, timetable compilers - anyone I could lay my tongue to. But the funny thing was, I don't think any of them were to blame, though I'm sure a good few ears must have burned that day!

When we finally got the road, 44 was away like mad, sprinting for Lisburn and I had almost lost interest as I waited for the next check.

It never came, though, and 44 ran through Lisburn in a time of 15m 22s at 48 mph, accelerating all the

way up the bank to 58½ at mile post 104, and I spent the remainder of the run whinking stopwatches like mad and rubbing my eyes in sheer disbelief.

With an incredible maximum of 69¼ before the Maze, we passed that station in 17m 59s, touched 68¼ after and stayed in the high sixties all the way up to Broomhedge. Speed fell briefly to 63½ before Damhead, but another exhilarating 69¼ before the foot of the Moira bank saw us through Moira station in 22m 00s at 67 mph.



***PP No.44 “Leinster” at Newcastle in 1913. Note the extended smokebox. (Courtesy of Major-General Sir Cecil Smith)***

The engine was left to herself on the bank and she fell away gradually to a minimum of 57 at mile post 96, but once over the top she accelerated again into the high sixties for a tremendous run down into Lurgan. Maximum here was 68¼, and at mile post 94, just over a mile from the station, we were still roaring along at 65¾! But I think our friend Robert was beginning to get the wind up a bit, and he made a very violent brake application which fetched speed down in double quick time and in fact almost brought the train to a stop at the approach ramp to Lurgan station. Somewhat sedately we crawled along the platform, where 44 came to a stand at the gates of the level crossing in 27m 44s from Belfast.

It was only then, when I could catch my breath, that I could think back to the signal checks that had marred our progress before Lisburn. What on earth could have caused them? Had it been the 1:30? And why had we not been checked after Lisburn?

I never did find the answers, and my reflections were short-lived; we shot off again for another incredible piece of running over the short stretch to Portadown, with Coulter back in top form and 44 racing up to 63½ before Boilie cabin, passed in 3m 03s. We held the 63½ for the next ¾ of a mile before falling off slightly to 61½ on the summit of the section, then fairly flew down to Seagoe with a max of 66. But our luck had at last run out and I could see signals against us in the distance, and though

we passed Seagoe cabin in 4m 58s at 60, checks at mile posts 88 and 87¾ spoilt what must otherwise have been an all time record for this section. Nevertheless, we were still into Portadown in under 7 minutes - in 6m 43s to be precise. And as I was travelling no further, I nipped up smartly to the engine to congratulate the crew on a magnificent piece of work. Coulter and his fireman were all smiles on hearing my congratulations, and both men stepped down on to the platform and the three of us spent several enjoyable minutes enthusing over the superb capabilities of the PPs. In fact, we all three got so incensed that I afterwards reflected that it would have been nice to have gone on with them to Dungannon. They must have performed some astounding work on the Derry road that day!

A few statistics of the run might be of interest:

- From Post 104 to Post 98 speed averaged 65¼ mph.
- From Post 98 to Post 96 speed averaged 62 mph.
- From Post 104 to Post 96 speed averaged 64¼ mph.
- From Post 104 to Post 94 speed averaged 64¼ mph.
- From Post 95 to Post 94 speed averaged 66 mph.
- And finally, from passing Lisburn to stopping in Lurgan a time of 12m 22s, an average speed of just over 56 mph.



***PPs 4'6" No.46 on pilot duty at Clones on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1956. Formerly named "Typhoon".  
(A. Donaldson)***

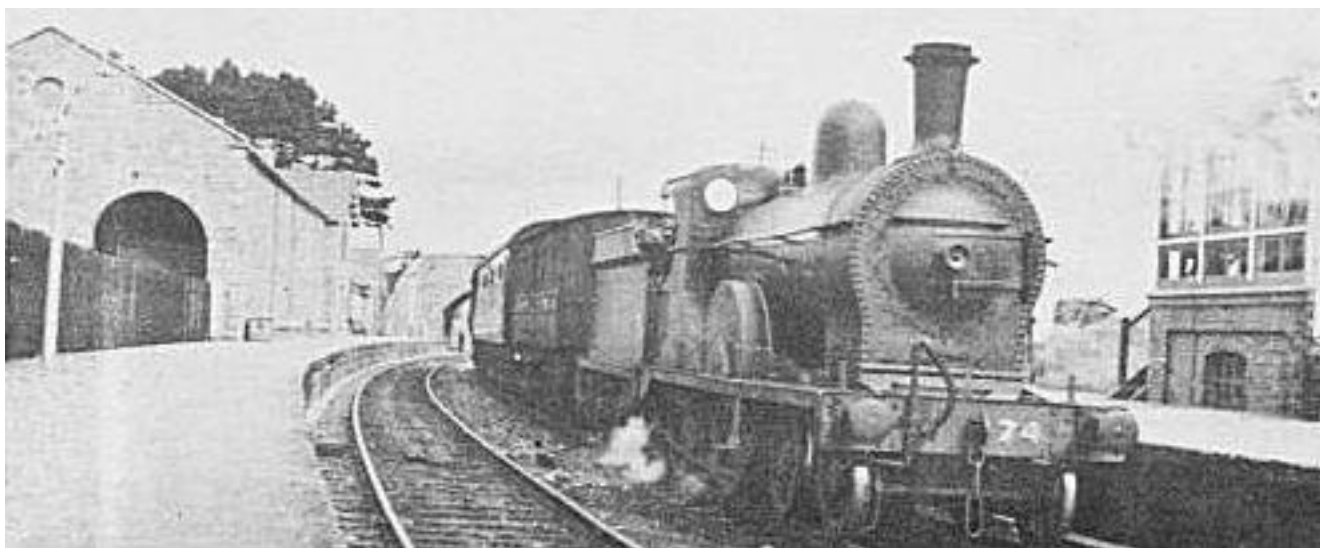
For a finale, I have kept to the end a run which I consider the finest performance I ever recorded behind any class of engine on the Great Northern and the fact that the engine was a PP has never ceased to please me immensely. Taking everything into consideration - the train, the load, weather conditions, etc. - the running was of such an unbelievably high standard that I remain convinced to this day that any other engine, with the possible exception of the S class, would have been forced to the very limit to attain the same performance.

The train was the 6:35pm Warrenpoint to Belfast, running in from Portadown on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1958. Combined at Portadown with the 6:35pm from Dungannon, this train was made up to a sometimes



quite large load, and was booked to stop at all stations to Lisburn except Damhead, and to run in non-stop from Lisburn to Belfast. This particular night it was made up to a six-wheel van, six bogies, a four-wheel van and three loaded cattle wagons, a truly astronomical load for engine No.44 and driver Ernie Thorpe (one of Adelaide's famous cloth cap brigade). The light, drizzling rain which was falling set me thinking that it was going to be an almighty struggle to reach Belfast that night with such a load. But I reckoned without Ernie and 44, though.

We got the "right away" and set off from Portadown to the most thundering, deep-throated roar I had ever heard from a PP's exhaust in all my life as 44 raced out to Seagoe in 2m 52s. Had I not seen the engine before we started, I would have sworn that a Q or an S was at the head of the train. Ernie Thorpe must have driven all the way to Belfast on full cut-off, and with the big valve fully open, and 44 responded to this punishment magnificently.



***PPs 4'6" No.74 on connection out of 10:45am ex-Dundalk at Ballyshannon on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1956. Formerly named "Rostrevor". (A. Donaldson)***

Steadily onwards we climbed to the summit of the Lurgan section, with the roaring of the exhaust dying in the sound barrier of the overhead road bridges, and crashing in the ears again as the coaches swept under the bridges in the wake of the engine.

Boilie cabin was passed in 6m 10s at 46½, and with a rousing max of 50½, we swept into Lurgan in 9m 04s.

The section from Lurgan to Moira will, I think, remain forever one of the highlights of my years of timing on the Great Northern. Not even the great Romney Robinson himself, on those tremendous runs on the 6:25pm expresses from Dublin with the VSs and Compounds, managed to surpass the sound and fury of 44's climb of the Moira bank that night.

Thorpe was out to mile post 94 in 3m 24s, racing up to the post at 36½, and away from it at 39. The six-wheel van was behind the engine and I was in the leading coach, a battered old centre corridor third, and this coach had flats on the leading bogie wheels. As a consequence of this I was hearing seven wheel beats at every rail joint. Through the open carriage window in the gathering gloom and the drizzling rain came the staccato rattle of wheel beats, the thundering roar from 44's chimney and the sharp hissing of the steam sanders as she fought to keep a grip on the wet rails. The light was lit with the glow from the ever open firebox door and red hot sparks and cinders flew in a never ending cascade from the top of the chimney.

We hurtled over the top of the bank at 47 mph and the pounding continued down the other side as Thorpe forced the engine up to a max of 58 before Moira and to a stop in that station in 9m 06s.

Away from Moira, and the pounding resumed, and saw us through Damhead in 3m 43s at 47½ mph. By Broomhedge (5m 06s) we were up in the 50s and with a max of 55 reached the Maze in 7m 16s.

By this time, I think, 44's boiler was beginning to run short of steam, or else the fireman was leaning on his shovel for a bit of breather, for we took it quite easy over the stretch to Lisburn and, with nothing more sensational than maximum of 42 after post 104, ran in in 5m 06s.

After Lisburn, though, our engine had obviously got her "second wind", and at a storming 42¾ mph, we were through Hilden in 2m 30s, and Lambeg in 3m 14s. Then the permanent way restriction at Derriaghy for the road bridge re-construction brought speed down to 34, but safely past the obstruction, 44 roared up to 50 before Finaghy, passing through in 7m 35s. A minimum of 51½ before Balmoral (8m 35s), and continued fast running (49½ at Adelaide, and no less than 43½ at Central Junction), saw us into Belfast in a time of 12m 26s.

Perhaps no records had been broken, but what other engine could have lived with 44 on such a night, and with such a load! She sat in Great Victoria Street glistening wet, and, I'm sure, utterly spent. And Thorpe's fireman, too, looked just about all in. I'll bet that fellow thought he'd just finished a double shift! Ernie himself was grinning all over his face in jubilation, as well he might have done. Tongue in cheek, he answered my congratulations with - "Ah, well, y'know! I could've gone faster but for them owl cattle wagons on the tail! We're restricted to 45 wi'them on, y'know!"

These, then, are some of my re-collections of the PPs. Of course, those amongst you who were fortunate enough to be around and to take advantage of the situation will have your own memories. It is to those, mainly, who were less fortunate, and who came too late, that I have tried here to convey a few impressions of what they missed, though words, I know, can never be an adequate substitute for the real thing. Still - I have tried as best I can. I leave it to the reader to decide how well I have succeeded.

## **BOOK REVIEW**

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### **Railway History in Pictures - Ireland, Volume One**

#### **A. McCutcheon, David & Charles, 50s**

This is essentially an album - by far the best Irish railway album to date, especially in the reproduction of the photographs. With few understandable exceptions - included, no doubt, for their unusual interest - they are of the highest quality and reflect considerable credit on the publishers. On the other hand, while there are undoubtedly some rare shots, such as Belfast shed, the Armagh disaster engine, Sir R. McAlpine's engine on the S&LR, the intact Owencarrow Viaduct and the CVR, most of the illustrations have appeared before, and some are extremely hackneyed - will we never see the end of "Hibernia" and "Princess"? And did the Giant's Causeway Tramway really deserve FOUR pictures with so many GSWR, MGWR, DSER and WLWR lines, say, going wanting?

The terms of reference of the book must have made Mr McCutcheon's task difficult, and one is tempted to ask if it is really worth while tackling railway history in this manner; for the result has been that the text contains practically nothing that is not common knowledge among enthusiasts; while the passages which attempt to bring out trends are very thin indeed. The author does hope to interest the layman also, but one wonders whether the book has enough colour, depth or character to achieve this, though such no doubt is the intention of the heavy emphasis on "oddities" - 42 out of 102 pages are devoted to narrow gauge lines and tramways, despite the fact that these systems have always received more than their share of attention.

Still, the actual choice of topics is well balanced, and the book could stimulate its readers to delve

further into the subject.

Two obvious, if trivial, slips are the description of the Kilnap Viaduct (p 31) as the Monard; and the failure to record the presence, in the excellent photo of Inchicore on page 60, of three locomotives even more interesting than J15s - to wit, two E3 0-4-4Ts and a steam cab.

On balance, we would say that even the enthusiast should find this book a worthwhile buy, if for the sake of the pictures alone. **AD**

## **1970 RAILTOUR PROGRAMME**

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By courtesy of Córas Iompair Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways we are able to announce the following railtour programme (subject to confirmation in certain details):

### **21<sup>st</sup> March - “Inver Colpa” Railtour**

186    Belfast (York Road) - Larne - Antrim - Lisburn - Portadown - Belfast (Great Victoria Street).

Arrival in Belfast approx 6pm.

### **18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> April - “Decies” Railtour**

(Dates to be finalised with Railways)

Saturday - 171    Belfast - Dublin (non-stop run to “Enterprise” timings).

186    Dublin - Rosslare Harbour with plenty of photographic stops, including Shelton siding, Rathdrum Viaduct, Enniscorthy bridge and Wexford Quays.

171    Rosslare - Waterford.

Sunday -    Waterford is noted for its rivers and this tour is designed to exploit the photographic possibilities of the Barrow and Suir Viaducts. Varied single- and double-headed train service by 171 and 186 to Limerick Junction with opportunity for photography on Cahir Viaduct.

Tour of Limerick Junction triangle with 186.

Fast run with 171 Limerick Junction - Dublin - Belfast.

Meals -    Saturday - packed lunches en route; high tea or dinner in Waterford.

Sunday - full service en route; evening meal in Dublin

Drinks served on board throughout the tour

Boat Connections - At Belfast (inward) and Dublin (outward)

### **23<sup>rd</sup> May - “Royal Meath” Railtour**

171    Fast steam run, Belfast - Drogheda.

186    Drogheda - Kingscourt with all our usual facilities including runpast. Photography of the train an Boyne Viaduct and visit to Cement Siding, subject to finalisation with CIÉ.

171    Drogheda - Dublin (for boat connection).

171    Dublin - Belfast.

Meals - Packed lunch on board; full evening meal in Dublin.

### **26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> September - “Sarsfield” Railtour**

Saturday - 171    Belfast - Dublin - Athenry.

186    Athenry - Limerick with full programme of photographic stops.

- 186 Limerick - Castlemungret and back - the first ever steam hauled passenger train over this industrial branch.
- Sunday - 186 Limerick - Foynes and back. (It is hoped to cover every section of line around the Thomond city in the course of this tour.)
- 171 and 186 will then work single- and double-headed train service from Limerick to Ballybrophy via the new Silvermines branch (never before traversed by steam). This section will provide many unique possibilities for still photography, cine and tape, with the use of lineside buses over the Silvermines section.
- 171 Ballybrophy - Belfast
- Meals - Full service Dublin - Athenry and Limerick - Dublin; evening meal in Limerick on Saturday evening.

Boat connections as for the "Decies" Railtour

### **17<sup>th</sup> October - "Colmcille" Railtour**

171 and 186 will again attempt to reach Derry on a new "Colmcille" railtour, as planned for 1968 and 1969.

## **LOCOMOTIVE REPORT**

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- BG3** As mentioned in the Autumn News Sheet, work has started on the hot axlebox on No.3. When the engine was jacked up and the rear wheels removed, the journal was found to be badly scored, the oil holes in the bearing having been blocked by molten brass. However, after several weeks of careful work with file and carborundum a good fit was obtained between the axle and the new brass. The engine should be ready for use by Christmas.
- 171** During the coming winter months it is hoped to improve the paintwork on 171's tender. The first attempt at applying the coats of arms was foiled by two nights' rain on the still wet varnish. We also intend to replace the missing Beyer Peacock maker's plate on the tender with a specially made replica.
- An Appeal** We would be glad to hear from any member who has, or knows where we might be able to locate, a Dundalk Works "Rebuilt" plate and who would be willing to lend it to allow a copy to be made.