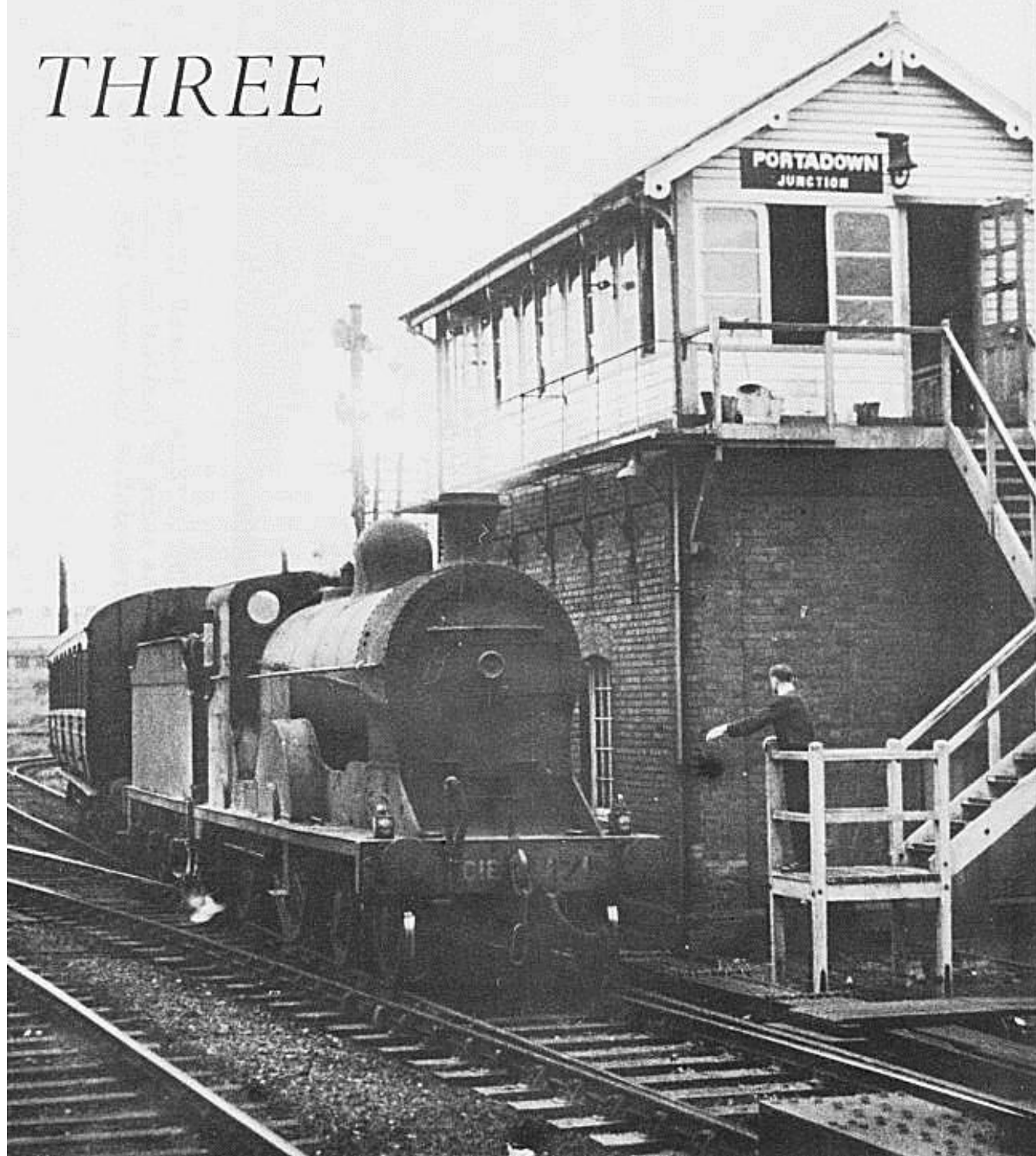


# FIVE FOOT THREE



# **FIVE FOOT THREE**

## **No.14**

### **Summer 1973**

**Editor: Charles Friel**

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

*Front Cover: No.171 "Slieve Gullion" eases off the Derry Road and Signalman Graham collects the single line tablet at Portadown Junction on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1963. The train is the 10:25 ex-Derry. (D.A. Idle)*



***JUST TEN YEARS AGO - S class 4-4-0 No.60 "Slieve Donard" (formerly GNR 172) at Aghnamara on the shore of Carlingford Lough with the 2pm Belfast to Warrenpoint on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1963. (D.A. Idle)***

### **SUMMER PROGRAMME 1973**

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<b>7<sup>th</sup> July</b>	STEAM GALA at Whitehead Excursion Station. Noon - 6pm. Three locos in steam plus attractions for all the family.
<b>Sundays In July &amp; August</b>	STEAM TRAIN RIDES at Whitehead 2pm - 6pm.
<b>28<sup>th</sup> July, 4<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> &amp; 25<sup>th</sup> August</b>	PORTRUSH FLYER See separate leaflet for details. On 18 <sup>th</sup> August we hope to run No.171 and have an afternoon run to Derry and back. Ask for details.
<b>15<sup>th</sup> &amp; 16<sup>th</sup> September</b>	THREE RIVERS RAILTOUR Two engines and 300 miles of steam for about £7 basic Dublin - Wexford - Rosslare - Waterford (overnight) - Kilkenny - Dublin, with New Ross and Ballinacourty goods only branches. Plenty of photographic opportunities with runpasts, lineside buses, train splitting, etc.  Connections from English centres, hotels booked, etc.

**... NON-MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ALL RPSI EVENTS ...**



*Saturated J15 0-6-0 No.134 on 12:30 Port Laoise-Waterford goods on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1955. The Three Rivers Railtour will include this station. (R.M. Arnold)*

## EDITORIAL

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All through its history our Society has been very different from most societies across the water - indeed we seem to be an amalgam of several features of other bodies. We don't have a line of our own but then the lines all over this island are open to us whenever we wish (within reason). For many years we were the only body operating main line steam on main lines but recently our contemporaries in England have been allowed the freedom of the open road. Or have they?

Thanks to a much more sensible attitude by BR many excellent events have already taken place using the cream of preserved steam.

But for those from Ireland who sampled some of these tours last year there was a marked lack of the facilities normally taken for granted on this side of the Irish Sea. There were no runpasts, lineside buses or train splitting, no false starts or posing on viaducts, while the photo stops were few (if at all) and seemed to be decided upon with a minimum of imagination. Now while these tours are excellent in themselves, they did bring home forcibly just how grateful we in Ireland should be for the facilities so readily made available. That our members and friends in England do appreciate the opportunities to be had on Irish tours is evidenced by the large, faithful contingent who make the long journey to each of our trips; indeed without their patronage many of our tours would not have run.

If our tours are out of the ordinary, then surely this year's running of the Portrush Flyer should make us even more 'unusual' for here we will have not only a complete preserved train on the main line but operating a timetabled train as well!

However, if we are to carry out this ambitious plan we will all need to work pretty hard winning bookings and laying some solid foundations at Whitehead in the form of carriage sidings and a coaling ramp as well as getting together a competent team to clean and maintain the coaches required. This will be everyone's chance to play a really active part in running the nearest thing to a 'proper' steam train yet attempted by preservationists in these islands - recreating perhaps the most flamboyant facet of steam operations in its last years, the public excursion.

It only remains now for all of us to pull together well enough to make the venture the success it surely deserves to be.

## NEWS FROM COMMITTEE

J.A. Lockett

The rapid expansion of the Society's activities in the running of the Portrush Flyer, as well as the 'normal' railtour programme and in the acquisition of coaching vehicles has given the Committee much to discuss and act upon.

Dates and prices for the Flyer have at last been finalised with NIR and a brochure was circulated to members and interested parties. All that remains is for members to sell the seat space to their friends, families, work-mates, etc.

On the tour front negotiations are in hand for the running of a connecting steam train to the Steam Gala on 7<sup>th</sup> July.

The imminent purchase of coaches from CIÉ has led to the launching of a coach appeal among the members, the money to be used in the purchase, restoration and protection of suitable vehicles. Sam Carse, our Dublin Representative, is taking charge of the discussions with CIÉ. Meanwhile, NIR offered us the Directors' Saloon No.150 for purchase. Subsequently, the Northern Ireland Tourist Development Association kindly bought the vehicle and donated her to the Society, and she arrived in Whitehead on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> April.



***GNR Directors' Saloon No.50 with U class 4-4-0 No.67 "Louth" (GNR 202) above Goraghtwood on the Benson inspection train in 1963. The steam in front of the loco is from a goods going down the Point line. (I.C. Pryce)***

The Committee have been very worried about the lack of protected track space at Whitehead especially following the lucky escape of 861 from serious damage. It has now been agreed that the fence should be extended to include the cutting between our track and that of NIR. It has also been decided that one siding should be laid in the cutting, 330 feet long to hold up to five coaches.

A programme of tree planting, mentioned in the last News-Sheet, to improve the amenity value of the Site is under consideration. Due to reorganisation of local government it is hoped that our twenty-eight year lease with an option to renew will be settled in May.

A general reassessment of our insurance policies has been found necessary and D.J. Young has given a lot of time to the matter. In connection with this, and to improve the safety of workers and visitors alike, the Committee has appointed I.C. Pryce to be Safety Officer. It has also been decided that all

members should sign an indemnity form. These may be obtained from the Secretary or completed at Whitehead.

All locos passed their boiler tests but it is felt it will be necessary to re-tube No.171 next winter after the summer tour programme. It is felt that No.186 will be available for the Three Rivers.

Other plans under consideration are the publishing of a Supplement to Mac Arnold's "NCC Saga" to be published later this year - members will be circulated soon about a special offer involving the Saga and the Supplement. The purchase of a van for the carriage of coal from Whitehead to the South for railtours is also being considered.

Appointments during the period:

Safety Officer      I.C. Pryce

Approved expenditure during the period:

Building of coaling ramp      £6

Extension of fence and laying carriage siding      £620

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## **SITE REPORT**

**J. Glendinning**

Very little work has been done on the Site since the last report as all the available manpower has been focussed on the coaching stock - a separate report of this activity will be found elsewhere in this issue. Within the next few weeks, however, we will need to greatly increase our manpower if we are to alter the fence and get the carriage siding down in time for the expected arrival of coaches from CIÉ.

The new siding will be laid in the old cutting at the Larne end of the site and will be some 300 feet long. It is expected that it will accommodate up to five bogies and this will greatly ease the shunting required to make up a train, whether for the Flyer or a tour. When time and money permit some time in the future a second siding will be added and, very far in the future, there may be a carriage shed. However before any of this can come about we will need a lot more help from members who are able to spend even a little time at Whitehead, be it once a week or a month. Please do make an effort.

Work on the preparation of the cutting should be well under way by the time this appears as Mr John Duff, the contractor at present working on the new playing fields, has kindly agreed to do the clearance work at very reasonable cost to the Society.

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## **LOCOMOTIVE REPORT**

**P.A. Scott**

Over the last three months, work has been concentrated on getting No.171 into a fit state for traffic. Most of the work involved the tender which has lain out of use in all weathers since 1966, and from which many parts had been removed to keep the 4,000 gallon tender running. A lot of the work was straightforward, like replacement of brake gear and patching of corroded plates, but inevitably some jobs turned out to be more involved than anticipated.

For a start, the sheet metal turned out to be in a much worse condition than supposed as was soon revealed when the rust was chipped away. In the end, it was found necessary to replace or patch most of the bottom of the well, the front plate, the sloping coal plate, shovel plate and sides and large areas of the top!

Then it was discovered when coupling up the engine and tender that sufficient compression of the springs would be impossible due to wear in the intermediate buffers. In the end it was decided that the only satisfactory solution would be to make two completely new buffers. The job was done on the lathe and took nearly two days' work. The new buffers have the added advantage that they are a good fit in



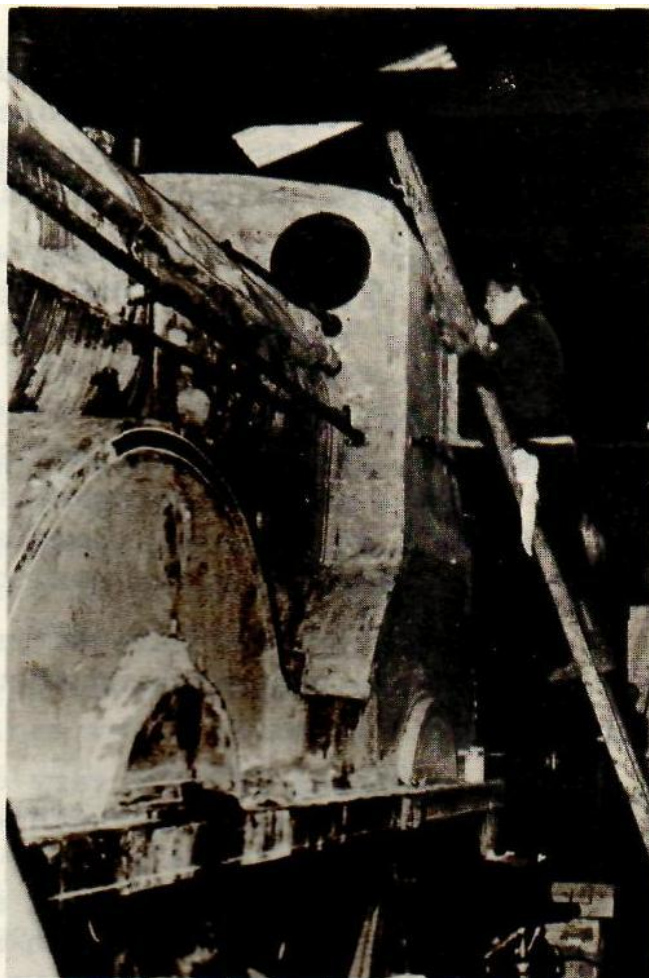
the guide holes and will reduce the play between engine and tender.

While on the subject of buffers, thanks must be expressed to the Transport Museum for “lending” us a set of GN type buffers for the back of the tender. The original set was cannibalised for No.186.

On the credit side, we were pleased to find the tender brake cylinder in working order and a set of brake blocks which, after a lot of head-scratching and adjustment, could be made to bear on all wheels.



*Inside No.186's firebox, Bob Edwards works at crimping the ends of the old tubes. This work is done under supervision. (C.P. Friel)*

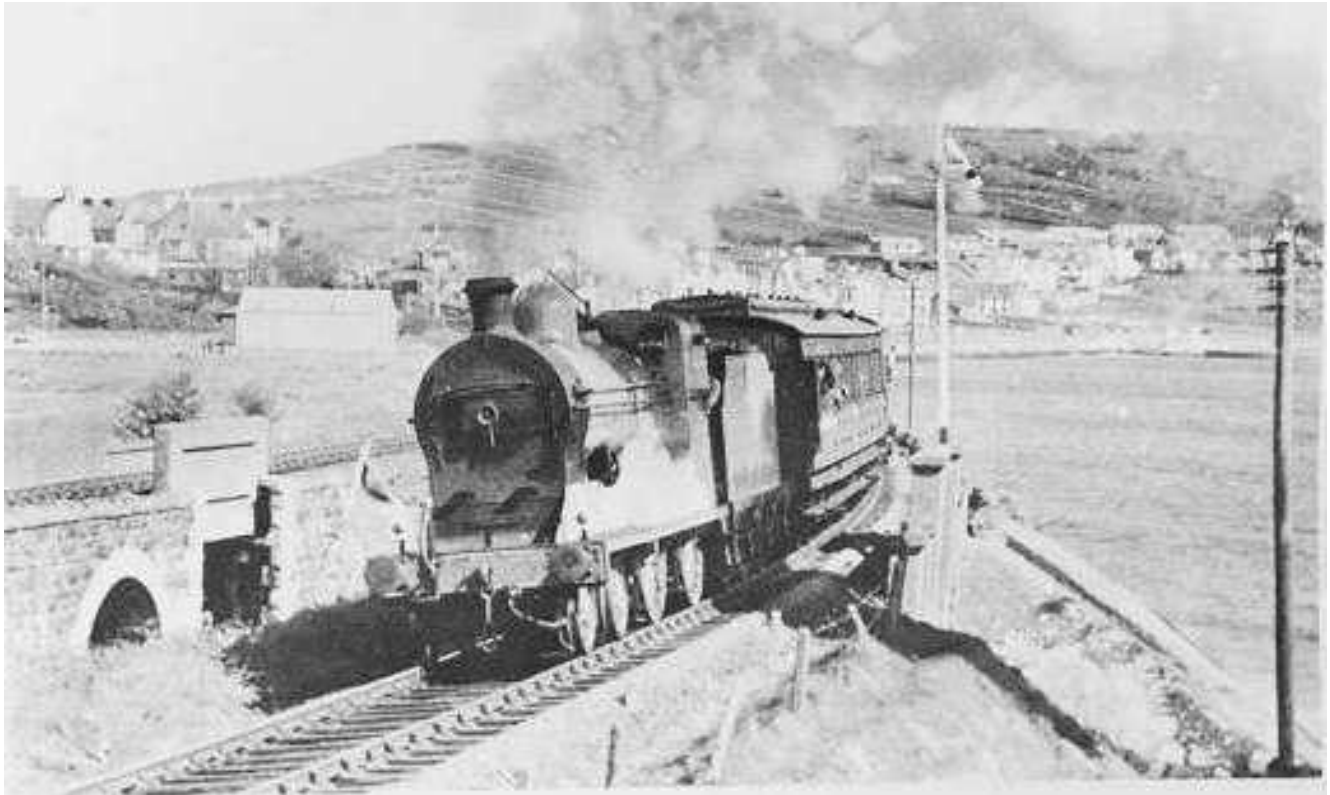


*Undoing the ravages of a winter out of doors, Craig Robb begins the lengthy job of preparing No.171 for her new coat of paint. (C.P. Friel)*

It was mentioned in the News-Sheet that No.171 would soon require to be re-tubed and in the first steam test three small tubes were found to be leaking. Indeed, on this particular occasion, the engine was in a very sorry state - tubes leaking, compression valve joints burst, vacuum ejector not working, cylinder covers blowing and innumerable joints blowing. Since then matters have improved greatly; the leaking tubes were plugged in a similar manner to No.186, the blowing joints were remade and the trouble assailing the vacuum ejector was found to be dirt carried over with the steam clogging the cones. On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April, No.171 spent the day shunting the Site and with the proper tender, a good brake and good coal, she seemed like a different engine. Many people remarked on the better appearance of the small tender; if looks were anything to go by, No.171's problems would be solved! Unfortunately, it will require much easy running and adjustment before the gland, axlebox and tube problems can be confirmed as cured, and before No.171 can be considered a reliable machine and not a continual source of worry.

No.186 is now inside the shed, where the boiler repairs are getting under way. Work has started on fitting ferrules to the smokebox end of the large tubes, in an effort to squeeze a few more years' service from them, and the ashpan is being generally repaired and patched. It was found that the front firebar support had collapsed, thus unintentionally providing the firebox with a sloping grate - not an improvement since it made the drop gate very difficult to operate. Complete renewal of the ashpan will have to be undertaken within the next couple of years.

The tube suppliers have advised that the new tubes are ready for despatch and the re-tubing should start before this appears in print.



***Back in traffic again! No.171 hurries past Whitehead Up advance starter with the King Fergus train - 861 and Directors' coach 50 - on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1973. (C.P. Friel)***

No.186's smokebox is in a very corroded state and bears many unsightly marks of previous patches. All of our engines suffer from this problem in some degree. Perhaps a patched smokebox is less of an eyesore with No.186 than any other engine since she has a "make do and mend" appearance in any case. However, so much patching is now necessary that we are considering replacing the entire smokebox shell. This would be a major job and will be undertaken if time is available.

A recent examination revealed that one of No.186's intermediate buffers is broken and the other badly worn. Both will require to be replaced.

At the time of writing, No.4 has not yet had her leading bogie wheels replaced, but the new wheels have been taken to York Road and we expect the job to be done in the near future. At present No.4 is having her sanding gear repaired.

**STOP PRESS -** Just as this issue went to the printers, No.171 worked the "King Fergus" running-in trip on the Larne line. The loco performed well and no mechanical defects came to light though the brake problem persists.



## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

J. Richardson

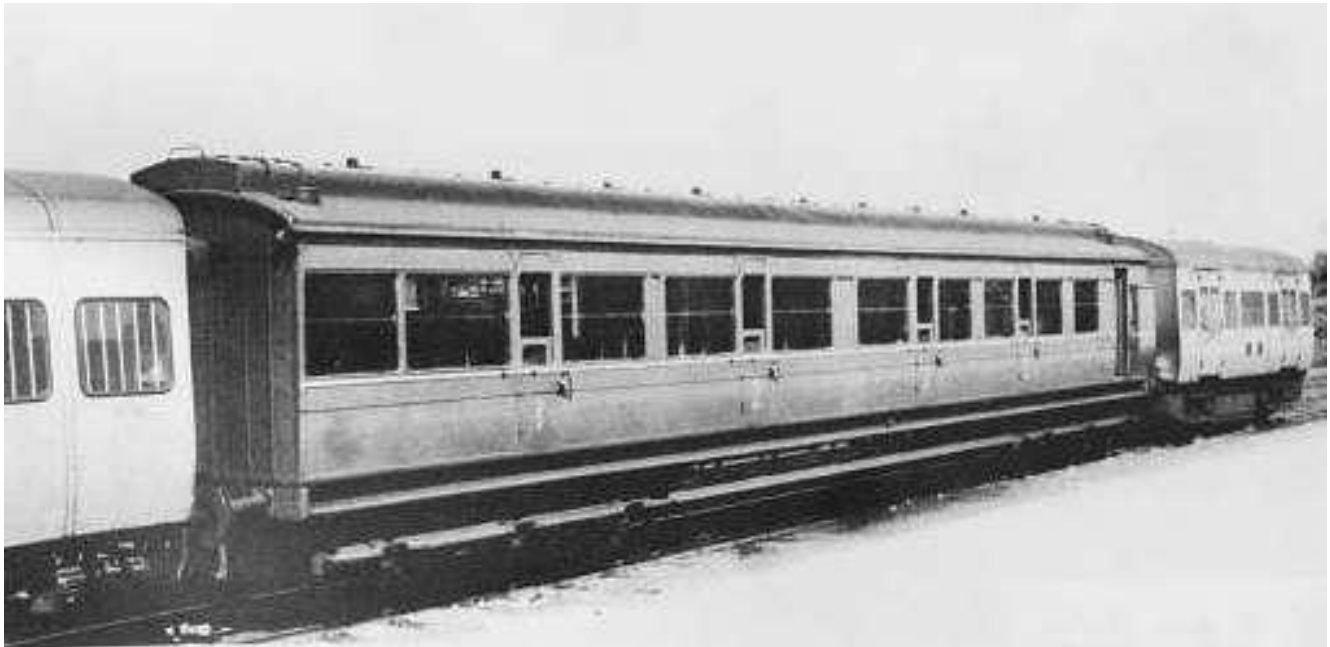
The Treasurer reports an encouraging trend in the first three months of 1973 - during this time we have added some thirty new members to our strength and only a few members have so far failed to renew their subscriptions. One of our new members is T. Dorrian of Carrickfergus who used to work for Eastwoods where he cut up some thirty engines. He assures us, however, that like Paul on the road to Damascus, he has now seen the light.

## PAINT SHOP

A.S. Ragg

With the prospect of tours in late April and early May the "paint shop" has been particularly busy. No.171 now has her two coats of gloss paint, and lining is in progress. This, however, will take some time to complete. The splasher crests are on, the numbers are on the cab sides and the letters on the tender.

Some difficulty has been found on the firebox where the paint started to bubble when the engine was steamed. One section has been stripped (again) and we found a layer of dirt underneath (and more blue paint under that again). By going right down to the bare metal, this problem has been solved. The rest of the bad patches will be tackled when time permits.



*Coach 861 marshalled in the Wexford-Rosslare Harbour 'local' set at Wexford North in July 1958. (D.G. Coakham)*

## COACHING NEWS

J. Glendinning

Our coaching stock has recently been augmented by the arrival of our second coach, the ex-GNRI Directors' Saloon No.50 (latterly UTA and NIR No.150). The vehicle is classed A3 and officially seated 22 first class passengers within a fifty two foot body weighing twenty-nine and a quarter tons. During its ownership by the UTA and NIR the vehicle appeared in a variety of hues including dark blue with a yellow waist band and a sort of SNCF vert (green). The vehicle is now in a dull grey. A preliminary inspection revealed wet rot in several places, probably due to the leaky roof which may well need re-felting. During her long periods of inactivity at York Road, Antrim and Great Victoria Street, various fittings had been removed and stolen. As a result new light fittings, dynamo and seats

were obtained from condemned vehicles. Only minor restoration has so far been tackled to allow the coach to run on the King Fergus Railtour.

All other available resources have been channelled into the restoration of the Rosslare brake, No.861, as a safer and more comfortable vehicle. As you may have heard, No.861 was almost destroyed when vandals broke in and started a fire in one of the second class compartments. It was indeed fortunate that the fire quickly burnt itself out, with damage confined to a hole in the floor.

The first major job to be undertaken was to make the roof waterproof by applying two thick coats of bituminous paint. Work then proceeded apace with refurbishing the interior. This involved thoroughly cleaning each compartment, then applying three coats of white paint to the ceiling, two undercoats and one gloss. The wooden panelling was cleaned down and then given a coat of polyurethane varnish. The seats, however, are particularly bad and the entire coach may need to be reupholstered. Negotiations are at present in progress with Calor Kosangas to have the gas lighting restored. The other major job being tackled is the conversion of part of the large guard's compartment into a shop. It was found that a commodious shop and general sales area could be constructed without blocking the corridor in any way. All the work mentioned has been carried out by a small number of members. There is a vast amount of work needed to get the vehicles into first class order and the prospect of further coaches arriving soon makes the job assume gargantuan proportions. Why not come down yourself and make YOUR contribution, however small? It would be greatly appreciated.

## **INSURANCE NOTES**

**D. Young**

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The Society has, at present, in force a Public Liability Insurance policy covering the activities carried on at Whitehead. Briefly, this policy covers the Society's liability for injury caused to any person legitimately on the Site, or damage to his property.

The liability of one member to another is not covered; that is, one member accidentally injuring another during the course of work at Whitehead. It is possible for members to effect individual "personal liability" policies covering personal injury or damage to property. Members should contact their own insurance company for details - premiums are modest. This type of cover is now also available as an addition to the "householder" type of policy covering the contents of a house, and some members might find that they already have this extension. If not, it can easily be arranged and the premium is usually less than if a new policy has to be issued.

A personal liability policy would of course cover a member at all times, and could nowadays be regarded as an almost essential addition to complete one's own personal insurance cover. If one, for instance, crossed a road carelessly and caused an accident, an action could be taken by the aggrieved party on the grounds of negligence and this policy would provide cover against the ensuing claim. The word "negligence" is very important.

The Society has a duty to take all reasonable precautions to see that its activities are carried out in a proper, ordered and competent manner, hence the appointment of a Safety Officer at Whitehead and the maintenance of accurate records as to attendance, work allocated, reports of injuries, etc. Likewise, members owe it to the Society and themselves to ensure that they work safely within the limits laid down and under proper supervision.

## **BOOK REVIEW**

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**The Northern Counties Railway, Volume One, 1845-1903, J.R.L. Currie, David & Charles, £3.95**

At long last the Irish standard gauge is receiving the attention long overdue to it and with this, the first of a promised three part work, Mr Currie draws back the veil on the origins of what later became the

Belfast & Northern Counties.

In just over 290 pages, printed with the usual David & Charles spacious feeling, Mr Currie sets out all the information any student could hope to find about the prospects, personnel and promotion of the various lines. For many, I am sure, accounts of Parliamentary Acts, share issues and dividends are interesting reading but I must say I found these topics just a little hollow when it was so easy to forget that, while the various events were going on at Board level, there were trains out there somewhere and of these we find unfortunately little mention. Of course the reason partly lies in the fact that engines and rolling stock items, inter alia, have been reserved for Volume Three. Even so the reader can find some locomotive interest in two excellent early views from the priceless Lawrence Collection.

On a somewhat similar tack, your reviewer found that the more enjoyable passages in the book came in the 'mishap' stories, probably because it is principally in these sections that we get to grips with the actual trains of the period. However, every man to his own taste and I'm sure everyone will welcome the painstaking chronicling of general events which form the main body of the book.

Many of the illustrations have not been published before and the Lawrence views (of which there are several) are a real delight despite somewhat bald captions. The station views at Derry, Castlerock and Trooperslane, however, are poorly done - surprisingly as they seem to be recent photographs.

On the whole then this very readable book fills out a well-known outline with much new and interesting material. Certainly it will be turned to again and again for information on the early NCC.

One cannot help feeling though that with fewer of the needless subtitles, the removal of several superfluous cross-references, the editing out of repeated information or comments and a smaller type face, we could have been provided with a concise book priced more within the pocket of the average enthusiast and the general public. It is not unimaginable that all three volumes might well have been combined in a single book for throughout there are numerous quotations which, while they add a certain 'period' flavour, do little to further the narrative. It would also have made the tale seem less removed from the actual trains which are, one may suppose, the most important part of a railway company.

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## RECOUNT

R.M. Arnold

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### A postscript to "Better Than Counting Sheep" in Issue 13

There has been some response to my request for further enlightenment on the subject of much travelled Irish locomotives. The modern idea is to look for trends in everything and I wonder what can be deduced from the situation that only one person in Northern Ireland took the trouble to comment.

From England came the comment that the last paragraph of my article was "insufferable cant". More constructive was a long letter from David Murray who took me to task, and justifiably so, for omitting the DSE main line when stating that GS&WR 4-4-0s seldom left their own territory. The only excuse I can make for this lapse of thought is that it may have been a mental adjustment to a tendency in another Irish railway periodical to give the Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford undue prominence. Certainly I now hasten to confirm personal recollection of recording performance of various Inchicore types between Bray and Wexford. As far as the 4-4-0s are concerned these included classes D4, D10 and D14 and for the record J15 of both saturated and superheated types amongst the 0-6-0s which also included some very free running J4 and J9 engines.

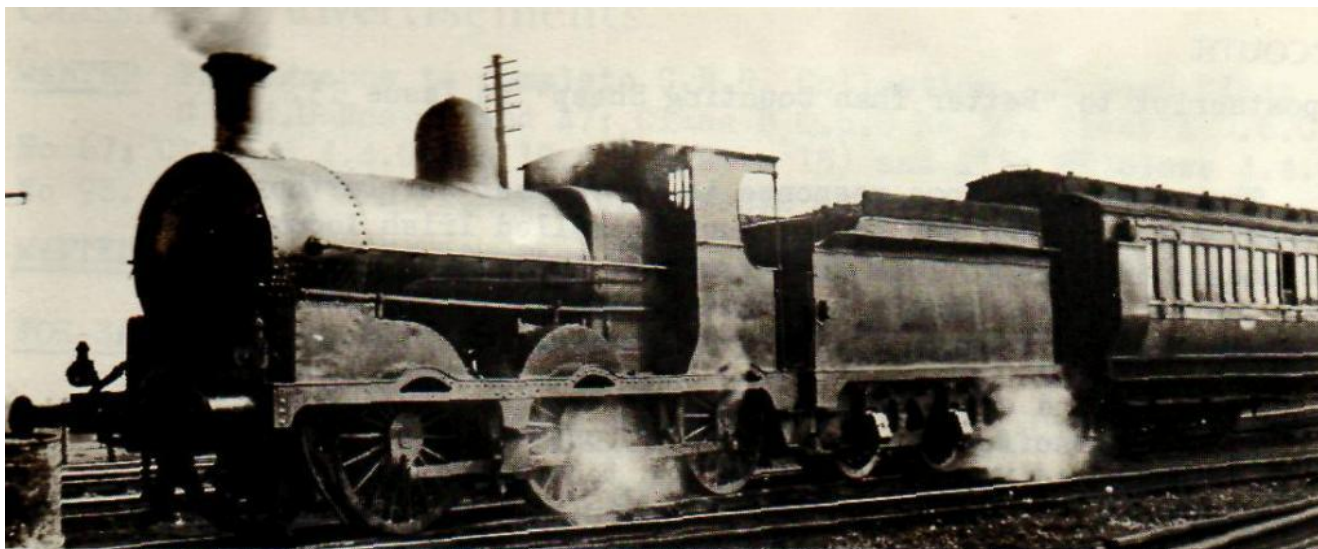
Mr Bergin, also of Dublin, cautiously doubts my conjecture about Howth and the U class and I am indeed at fault here also, though not possibly in the grand manner of one prominent Irish writer who thought all the U class had been withdrawn in the "thirties". Certainly indeed CIÉ may have been somewhat embarrassed by its allocation of four such 4-4-0s in good running order and 197, 199, 203

and 204 may all have gone out to Howth during those rather depressing days, my excuse indeed for the lapse, for I tend to think of the Great Northern as finishing in every respect after September 1957. Further on this point Mr R.N. Clements has mentioned to me that he has a run with 199 on the Oldcastle branch between the wars.

## FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH 861

Eoin Roe

The Society's Eblana Railtour on 7<sup>th</sup> October last must have been a difficult thing to organise - just how much more can one do with the Northern main line using No.186? However, the sequel to that tour has provided the present writer with enough enjoyment to spur him to record it in print.



*A coach similar to 861 (identification is uncertain) is seen above with J19 606 at Portarlinton before working the 11am connection to Athlone out of the 9:35 Dublin-Waterford (via Port Laoghise) on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1954. The loco is ex-MGWR L class 68 "Mullingar". (R.M. Arnold)*

We arrived in Dundalk very late indeed, having got out of path in the earlier stages of the day, through no one's fault really and the accumulating delays left us very late into Dundalk. There was no light and very few passengers left to make the Irish North bit of the tour worthwhile, anyway I feel it was mutually forgotten in the event. Those who really wanted it travelled on the footplate or in the Society's first coach, ex-Rosslare 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> brake No.861.

This vehicle was built in 1907 for the Rosslare-Cork express which radiated connections to Limerick and Dublin (via Kildare). It is sixty-six feet long with a clerestory roof and gas lighting. The brake end is commodious and would lend itself readily to shop duty while the compartments, of which there are seven, are entered by hinged doors, none of your modern sliding things. The vehicle spent her last years on the Inchicore works train, plying between Inchicore and Kingsbridge with another elderly vehicle at times to suit the shifts and hauled by anything handy about the yard. She is painted purple of sorts with a deep orange band along the waist and has been renumbered 484A in the Departmental Stock. Her condition is really incredibly good for a coach that has been in service for so long, some of it with the least of maintenance or care - surprisingly there is only one broken window; there are few vehicles in service in the North now with such a good record.

As I said, we arrived late in Dundalk and while No.186 shunted off the Eblana stock and slipped down past the Central cabin to pick up 861 (which had arrived there by goods train), the sizeable contingent of northern members coaled their own fires at the buffet, downing as many sandwiches, cups of tea and bars of chocolate and other refreshments as time would allow. All too soon for some, the guard came in

and announced that if we didn't look sharp and get away now, we'd have a long wait for the section.

Hurriedly the party entrained in the one-coach train, near the Customs counter on Platform One. A profusion of Tilley and hurricane lamps were persuaded to life as we bundled ourselves and our belongings aboard amid a great flurry of whistling, slamming doors and shouted farewells to some southern members on the platform who seemed to regret not being able to come with us.

With a final whistle from the stationmaster and rattle of lowered mile post windows, the train lurched away and we were off - the first complete RPSI train. With such a light load, No.186 made a very speedy departure from the platform on the start of her long journey to Whitehead. Soon the last backward waves were over, the bright lights of the station slid behind and gradually the dim light of the compartment took over.

For many of those who paid their £10 share for the coach, this was their first look at her but before they could see very much the eyes had to get used to the low lights. But before long the corridor began to flicker to life as the occupants began to get to know their new acquisition. The sheer excitement of travelling in one's own coach was at first somewhat intoxicating and the good humour of the passengers was in complete contrast to the despondent dejected people who impatiently paced Drogheda platform a few hours before, the tour falling apart as they waited for a path. The clerestory roof, the gas lights (complete with swinging pool of black water in the bottom of the glass bowl) and the upholstery all came in for attention - in one compartment we found a notice announcing that passengers could alight at Inchicore and Kingsbridge only! Over by the windows the timers were hard at work, writing and watching by the light of bicycle lamps or even candles and the twelve wheels of the coach set up an unusually rapid rattle as we bowled along in the darkness climbing through Mountpleasant towards Moyra Castle and Adavoyle.

Our speed fell away to 24 on the climb but we swooped down on Poyntzpass at an even fifty after running effortlessly through Cloghoge and rode high above the sea of lights of Newry, deep in its own valley oblivious to our passing or to the shower of red sparks that flung themselves high and wide above the glow from the open firebox door when the driver put on steam again after the viaduct.

Our progress continued uninhibited until the Pass where we were to take water. Heaven only knows what the residents of Poyntzpass must have thought when a black steam engine stopped just outside the range of the street lights and was immediately surrounded by men waving hand-lamps and carrying coils of yellow hose which were hurriedly paid out, coupled to a manhole in the road and, following shouted exchanges between men at the gates and an unseen figure on the tender, the yellow hose began to swell and straighten as the tender was filled.

Approaching Portadown we let off a long whistle coming in past Tavanagh box and another at West Street bridge - but there would be no answering whistles from the shed tonight, no wave from the fire raiser at the Derry Road goods engines in the Back Road.

Getting ourselves and the train through the Customs proved relatively painless - indeed one half of the party were round the engine while the others laid siege to the cabin (and its toilet, for 861 no longer possesses such). We even managed to pick up a passenger for Whitehead here! The staff at Portadown should be used to seeing the RPSI invade the place by now, but this coach was something different.

The departure from Portadown was one of the highlights of the trip. Once we had the signal and were finally whistled away from the platform, No.186 leapt away with new-found energy and her acceleration was more akin to a test report in Autocar than a 94 year old engine and a 66 year old coach. Swinging over the crossover onto the Down line, past the colour light signals already tripped to red by our passing, and rumbling over the Bann, No.186 barked past the scant remains of the old station towards Seagoe - again a long, long wheep that echoed, faded and died somewhere over the brightly lit but deserted town. Slowly the friendly glow of the oil lamps closed in as we raced for



Seagoe and swept under the new road bridge there, headed up through Kernan, already closed for the night, and pounded up past McCaughey's Bridge, curved gently to the right and blew for the automatic barriers at Drumnagoon.

The climb away from the valley of the Bann over, No.186 settled in her stride and the warm moonlight was all around us, nearly every window on the milepost side was down, still the occasional flicker of light in the corridor and the 'crack' continued in a constant flow. Rushing past the Boilie, No.186 steadied herself for a run at Lurgan and the bank beyond while the reminiscences of previous 'big' runs with bigger trains were fondly retold and mulled over - sad to think those runs would never be repeated and think how long ago all that was. Someone asked why the world didn't stay forever at 1964, or better still 1955?

We swept past Lurgan cabin and the engine was opened just a little for the Dougher climb to Post 94. The blend of noise, smoke, darkness, speed and sheer happiness pervaded all, someone even managed to comment on CIÉ's widespread use of the re-engined C class without being scowled at. Once under the motorway bridge, No.186 was given her head and we rushed down on Drumbane gates and past the small splash of light at Moira cabin, the signalman silhouetted waving as we passed and No.186 let off the first of a series of wheeps for the automatic gates on the approach to Knockmore.

The engine was finally checked at the Down splitting signal at Lisburn and we rolled to a sedate stop at Platform Two. Here we were met by a group of members and friends who eagerly examined 861 as the engine crew were replaced. We said our farewells to Billy Croft and Cecil McAdam who handed over to Billy Gillespie and George Gaw. Another bunk of coal was shovelled forward on the tender before the loco ran round in the teeth of an approaching railcar from Portadown which came and went almost unnoticed.

Before long the Lisburn Up starter near the cabin fell silently, the guard checked the doors and we were off again. As we gained the Up line, some speculated if we shouldn't have asked for a photo stop at the new, and as yet unopened, Knockmore Halt near the Ballinderry Road overbridge - one member of the party even suggested an exposure of twenty seconds at f4 for Agfa slides, claiming to have done something similar in Germany during the summer! But such frivolity was not to be.

Threading our way onto the Antrim Branch, it was soon apparent that the familiar irregular wheel-beat of Sunday School steam days was gone - the branch was being relaid with 60 foot rails on concrete sleepers, but the Brookmount bank is still there as the sharpening exhaust of No.186 soon showed. As we made our way along we amused ourselves identifying all the locations we had photographed from during those Sunday afternoons in 1969 when the Northern ballast was steam or, for some, earlier times spent in frantic chasing of empty stock trains and Sunday School specials; Brookhill Post Office, Ballinderry, Legatariff with its battered coach body on the platform, the tree-lined cuttings near Glenavy, the viaduct at Crumlin ...

We had arranged to take water at Firmount Bridge, the last overbridge before Antrim, but after a brief halt at the bridge (much to the surprise of the young couple intent on other business at the same place) the driver decided it wasn't necessary and we made our way out onto the NCC main line where after a very snappy run round, a further inspection of convenient station plumbing and hurried farewells to a departing member of the party, we set off again, chimney first this time. It was about here that the good effects of Dundalk's buffet began to wear off and any spare grub was soon disposed of as we topped the bank, thinking of No.4's epic run up here, not falling below 64½ on the climb from an Antrim start. Our progress was not so speedy though and it was checked at Whiteabbey by a stop to set down a member of the party; even so we made a sprightly run along the Lough shore, past an oddly quiet Shore Road to arrive in a brightly-lit but deserted York Road.

Here we lost about half of the party as No.186 reversed out to a loop and again ran round. It was just

after midnight when we finally got away on the final leg of the run. After an easy, unfussed climb to Bleach Green, we ran quietly through Jordanstown and took Greenisland in our stride. We made our first stop at Downshire Park and here five more took their leave - the spectacle of oil lamps waving in the night seemed to evoke a wartime atmosphere; someone even struck up with "We'll Meet Again" as the train lurched off again along the calm waters of Belfast Lough. It was along here that we discovered that one of the company was eighteen that day, but there was only the remains of a flask of chicken soup to celebrate with.

As we snaked our way round Briggs Loop the lights of the County Down danced across the water under the starlit sky while the Copelands lighthouse flashed almost unheeded. Members of our own Loco Department began to don overalls and we finalised the arrangements for the bit of shunting we would do that night - pull the Guinness out of the shed and then park No.186 and train at the platform for the night. The Guinness would be used tomorrow to put No.186 away and shunt the stock.

Before we knew it we had run through the station, set back to the cabin and ran into our own premises. Slowly No.186 clanked the length of the Site, then the NIR crew checked her over and handed the train over to us. Soon the shunting was completed and many tired members bunked down in 861 for the night. It had been a long day, an historic day and we'd leave the shunting of the stock and boarding up the windows in 861 until tomorrow.

## **A DRIVER REMEMBERS**

**Barney McGirr**

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Like many another, ours was a railway family. My father was a passenger guard on the Great Northern and was transferred from Portadown to Belfast in 1905, where I spent half my life. I spent my first nine years in Portadown mixed up with engines and trains from an early age and travelled over most of the system in my school days.

I well remember the old small engine shed and the clutch of small 0-6-0s that came in to roost in the siding round Mary Street every weekend. They were engines with long name plates about half the length of the boiler, e.g. 29 "Enniskillen", 55 "Portadown", or 63 "Londonderry". As the drivers grew older and their beards grew longer, their engines grew older with longer funnels. In later years a clean shaven driver was likely to be asked by a joker, "If you're a driver, where's your beard?"

I joined the Loco Department at Adelaide as a cleaner in 1913, worked my way up to driving, transferred myself to Omagh in 1940 and finished my driving days there in 1962.

One of the first engines I encountered was one shown recently in Five Foot Three, No.12 "Ulster". She was one of a batch of four built in 1911 as express passenger engines with slide valves and extended smokeboxes which housed the first type of superheater on the Northern. A hot water injector was fitted on the left side of the faceplate with two control handles projecting from the side into the driver's legs. No.12 was stationed in Dublin and worked the 9:15am express from Amiens Street to Belfast, coal testing, from 1911 to 1913. The left injector gave lots of trouble and had to be 'booked' every day. It was later discarded and replaced with a combination injector the same as the one on the right hand side.

In later years all four engines of No.12's batch (42, 44 and 129 were the others) were rebuilt in Dundalk with standard size smokebox and boilers with Robinson superheaters, piston valves and a large cab.

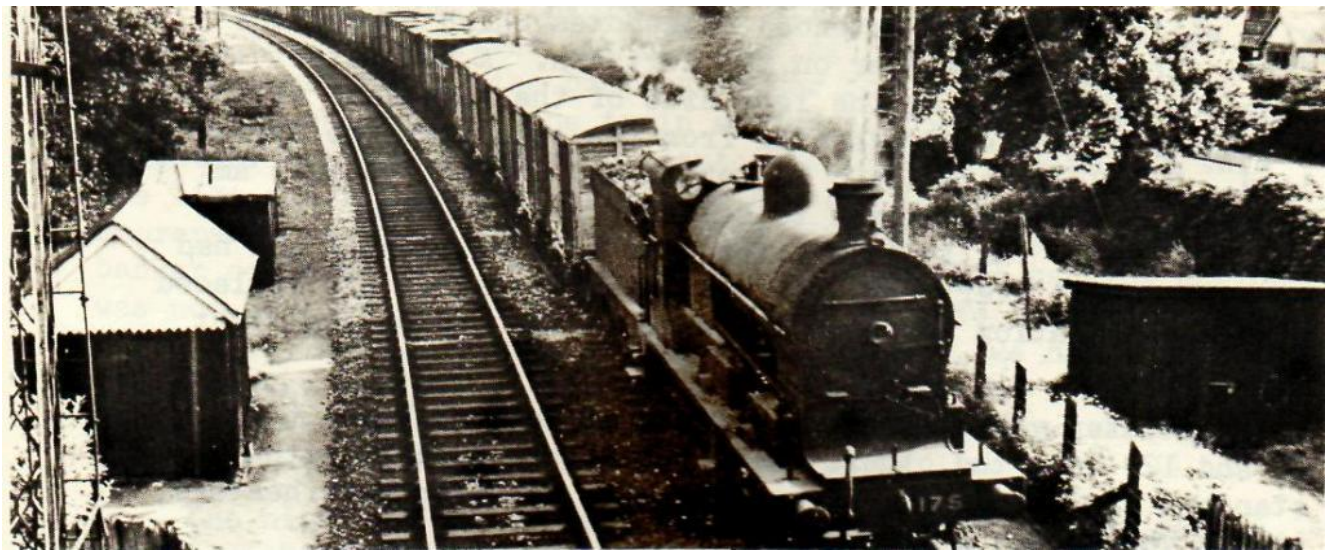
Incidentally, a beautiful model of 42 "Munster" in its 1911 livery was on exhibition in the National Museum, Kildare Street, Dublin in the mid-twenties.

One of my first jobs at Adelaide was cleaning on the night shift and the lads I worked with were a jolly lot. They had no transistor radios like nowadays, but those lads of about 20 could make the rafters (or should I say smoke chutes) ring. They sang all the music hall songs that, like myself, are now referred

to as old.

When No.171 arrived in Adelaide Shed another lad called Graham and myself were booked to clean the 'Big One' for Driver R. Fletcher. In common with the other top drivers, he had his name painted on the inside of the cab. No.171 replaced QL No.24 "Juno". Adelaide had 171 and 174 while Dublin had 170, 172 and 173. To prevent the superheater tubes being burnt when the regulator was closed, a small eye with a piston was fixed to the outside of the smokebox on the right hand side. The piston was connected to the steam pipe and operated dampers on the superheater tubes. When the regulator was open the piston was forced back and lifted the dampers. The dampers and cylinder were found to be unnecessary and removed.

In 1915 engine No.171 was herself replaced by 192 and I was cleaning her till I was passed as fireman in 1916. One of my first firing turns was on the 11pm shunt and banking engine duty in Adelaide north end. All the night goods trains had the full load and had to be banked out as far as Dunmurry. Almost the first seven years of my railway life was on night work, starting at 10 or 11pm and finishing at 7 or 8am.



*SG class 0-6-0 No.175 (later UTA 43) approaching Lambeg with the mid-day Portadown goods on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1951. (H.M. Rea)*

With loads of up to 65 wagons, it was sometimes a real wrestling match to get the train out of the dip in the yard. This operation usually involved the driver on the banker blaming the train driver for not pulling his weight and the train driver blaming the banking driver for not knocking hell out of his engine. If the train engine slipped badly the whole weight of the train was thrown on to the banking engine and this was like running into a solid stop block - if you were standing unprepared you could be hurt. A bad slip on the part of the banker could break a coupling or a draw bar. The banking engine was not coupled to the train and carried a white head light and a red tail light. Before stopping at Dunmurry, we had to let the train engine gradually lift the full weight of the train. Once the goods was safely away we crossed over to the Down line, stopped at the Down platform and reversed the lamps.

One night before we left Adelaide my driver told me he had reversed the lamps and this would save me having to do so at Dunmurry. So this dark night we got to Dunmurry and got the train away all right. Then we checked the Down signal, found it was off, and set back. But what we didn't realise was that the signal was for another Down train which was running late and that the crossover had not been changed. So we set off through the station and proceeded - the wrong way - along the Up line.

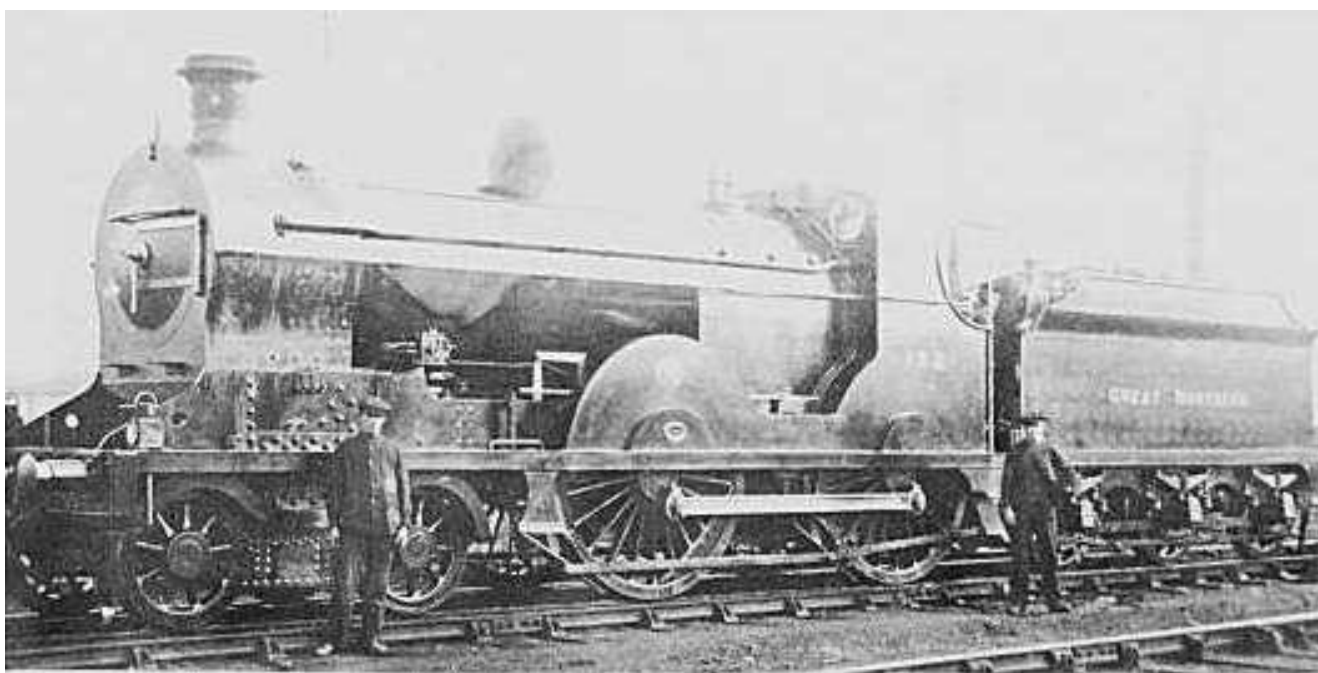
Normally I would have noticed our position when I got out onto the platform to change the lamps, but

this night there were no lamps to be changed. We passed through Finaghy without noticing anything but as we got near Balmoral I noticed two white spotlights following us. The lights got nearer and nearer and I leaned out to see what it was. It was the Down train!

As it turned out the Dunmurry signalman had been ringing and shouting all over the place and the Balmoral signalman would have stopped us anyway - but that was the biggest shock I had in all my years of experience.

In 1919 I was one of a group of railwaymen who formed the first branch of ASLEF in Belfast. Before this railwaymen were in the NUR but soon we had ASLEF members all over the country - I'm the last survivor of that group of men.

About that time too I moved from the banking loco to firing on one of the Dublin goods trains which ran to three trains every night in those days. We had extra traffic because the tramp steamer which plied between England and Dublin had been sunk in the war and all the traffic for the South came through Belfast.



***S2 Class 4-4-0 No.192 is seen here unnamed in unlined black livery at Adelaide about 1916. Barney McGirr, whose article appears in this issue, is standing in the right foreground. The blanked-off remains of the damper mentioned in the article can be seen behind the chimney. According to legend Driver Fletcher hid on the far side of the engine while the photograph was taken. See how many differences between 192 and 171 you can spot. (Isaac Griffith collection)***

The trains leaving Belfast would be anything up to 65 wagons. The first and second goods were express and the third a pick-up. Each train made its first stop in Portadown (1 hour 20 minutes) and while the pick-up stopped almost everywhere and took from 8½ to 10 hours, the expresses stopped only at Portadown, Dundalk and Drogheda.

At Portadown the load was lightened for the Wellington bank between Goraghowood and Dundalk. Up the bank was always a slow slog, going up all the time and it was usual to slip to a stand after running out of sand. We got to know several landmarks on the way up the bank - the Egyptian Arch and Father Murphy's bridge (where the line crosses the main Dublin road) so called because this was the name of the priest at the nearby chapel when the bridge was built.

The driver with me all the time was Jack Tinman from the Donegall Pass. Tinman and I got to know one another very well, being together so often. He would be talking away all the time going up the bank, which he called 'the long haul'. If the engine gave a couple of slips, Tinman would say, "That's Father Murphy and his mountain dew (poteen). When we get to Dublin I'll report him to the Archbishop and have him transferred to Tralee - or reduced."

Traffic got so heavy around this time that Glover in Dundalk was complaining about his engines being abused so much, and he demanded a banker for the goods. This made life easier for us because the engine that banked a north-bound train out of Dundalk to Goragwood came in behind us to help us up the hill. Curiously enough the name of the Dundalk driver was none other than Johnny Murphy.

If we got into difficulties on the bank, Tinman would maintain that there was some sort of conspiracy afoot. He would say, "That fella must be a brother of Father Murphy and between the two of them they're out to hang me!"

When working the pick-up goods we usually got into Dublin about eight but, if we got caught behind the local trains, it could be about nine or half nine. Then, after sleeping in Dublin, we usually would take the 11:15pm goods back to Belfast with the same engine, which was usually C class No.178.

Tinman was a great man for feeding, and in Dublin he usually bought a load of beef and onions. Then, before we set off, he put all this into a small pot and set it up on the faceplate where it was nice and warm and the meat would slowly stew.

Going across Malahide strand you could feel the spray of the salt water on your face. This made the engine slip of course and this meant more work and by the time we made our first stop at Drogheda we were ready for a feed.

At Drogheda we would pull forwards onto the Boyne bridge while the shunting engine took wagons off the back of the train. The wind out there above the river on a stormy night was fierce. The wind was so strong that it would lift huge lumps of coal off the tender and hurl them down into the Boyne but we had wooden sides screwed up on the cab sides to keep out the piercing wind.

We had half an hour at Drogheda to make the first tea of the night and we would take down the stew and have a right old feed.

After another stop at Dundalk for water and filling the bunk, we had the Wellington bank to tackle, with the aid of a banker. Jack would start away up the bank very slowly and we would be crawling with both engines working hard. At that time Guinness in Dublin were sending up a lot of porter to the North and the railway hadn't enough porter wagons for the traffic. So barrels of Guinness were loaded into flat wagons. The locals around Mountpleasant took advantage of the slow moving train to climb in to the open wagon and throw overboard a barrel to quench their thirst.

Of course with the shortage of proper porter wagons the barrels were often liable to spring a leak but there were always plenty of conscientious railwaymen around armed with beakers, cups and mugs to make sure the railway's permanent way wasn't damaged in any way.

In 1919, I remember, I was firing on the 10:0pm Belfast-Derry goods and I was with various drivers and engines. At Dungannon we would make a rush for the tunnel at maybe 15 or 20 mph and get into it and out again as quick as we could. I pitied drivers who suffered from bronchitis for they used to cough and choke terribly in the tunnel.

One driver I was with used to lap a wet handkerchief round his face and lie down flat across the footboard with his head out between the engine and tender to breathe the air churned up by the engine wheels. The whole cab would be enveloped in smoke and steam and if she slipped at all it was terrible. In fact it was nothing unusual with a small engine to stick in the tunnel. If I thought we were slipping badly I would put out my hand and touch the tunnel wall to find out if we were moving forward or



stopped. Passenger trains, of course, had no trouble in the tunnel.

In 1933 I was transferred to Clones and then to Omagh where I renewed my acquaintance with the Dungannon tunnel but this time as a driver on the Derry goods between Portadown and Omagh. One time as we entered the tunnel unprepared and we just got one engine length inside it I was overcome by fumes and practically knocked unconscious. I just had time to hit the floor and I didn't know another thing until we were out of the tunnel.

Like the driver I knew in 1919, I had bronchitis. The fireman had just put on coal before we went into the tunnel. He should have fired well before that and entered the tunnel with a bright red fire and no smoke. We were at Pomeroy before I recovered properly that night.

For a time in World War Two I was transferred back to Adelaide. I remember the very first night I was back there the bombers came over and everybody went to the shelter. But everywhere was so full up that I went to engine No.199 and although it was still warm, I climbed into the firebox and hid there until the raid was over.

With the raids, a lot of people left the city at night and I remember about 300 people crammed into railcar D at Portadown for all stations to Omagh. Next we were given an engine and train to take to Omagh. The coal was bad and it was more slate than coal, and while working this train we were stopped on the Down line on the Bann bridge at Portadown.

The fireman could not break the slab and to get rid of it he picked it up and tossed it over the side into the river. When we tossed it over, it caught a row of telephone wires which were low down outside the girders. We heard the big splash as the lump hit the water and thought no more of this. But some little time later we were ready to couple up to our train but couldn't get the signal to go. We asked the signalman what was wrong and he shouted back that there was no connection between him and the junction. The telephone had gone haywire, he said.

I suddenly thought of the slab of slate and wondered if it had anything to do with the failure but gave it no further thought. The railway, however, decided that somebody must have cut the wires and from that day until the end of the war the "B" men were guarding the bridge every night!

## **MY FRIEND MR SMYTH**

**L.H. Campbell**

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It was in February 1968 that I first heard that a locomotive was lying in the Harbour engine shed at Queen's Quay in Londonderry.

The engine concerned was the last of the Port and Harbour Commissioners' standard gauge shunting tanks, No.3 "R.H. Smyth". The engine was built by the Avonside Engine Co. in 1928 and described as "generally similar to the B6 class 0-6-0 saddle tanks, but with a wheelbase of 9 feet and a gauge of 5 feet 3 inches". The engine was supplied with an additional set of offset buffing and drawgear at each end for coupling to 3 foot gauge wagons.

The leading dimensions of the engine are as follows:

Cylinders 14" x 22"; Wheels 3'6" diameter; Tubes 126 x 1¼" diameter; Heating surfaces - Firebox 54 + Tubes 476 = 530 square feet; Grate 9½ square feet; Working pressure 160 lbs; Water capacity 800 gallons; Coal capacity 20 cwt; Weight 24 tons empty, 30 tons full; Length 24 ft; Width 8'6"; Height 11'½"; Smallest curve 150 ft radius; Tractive effort 13,141 lbs at 80%.

The engine's livery was black and green, lined out in yellow and lettered in gilt, though few traces of this paintwork remained when I first encountered the engine.

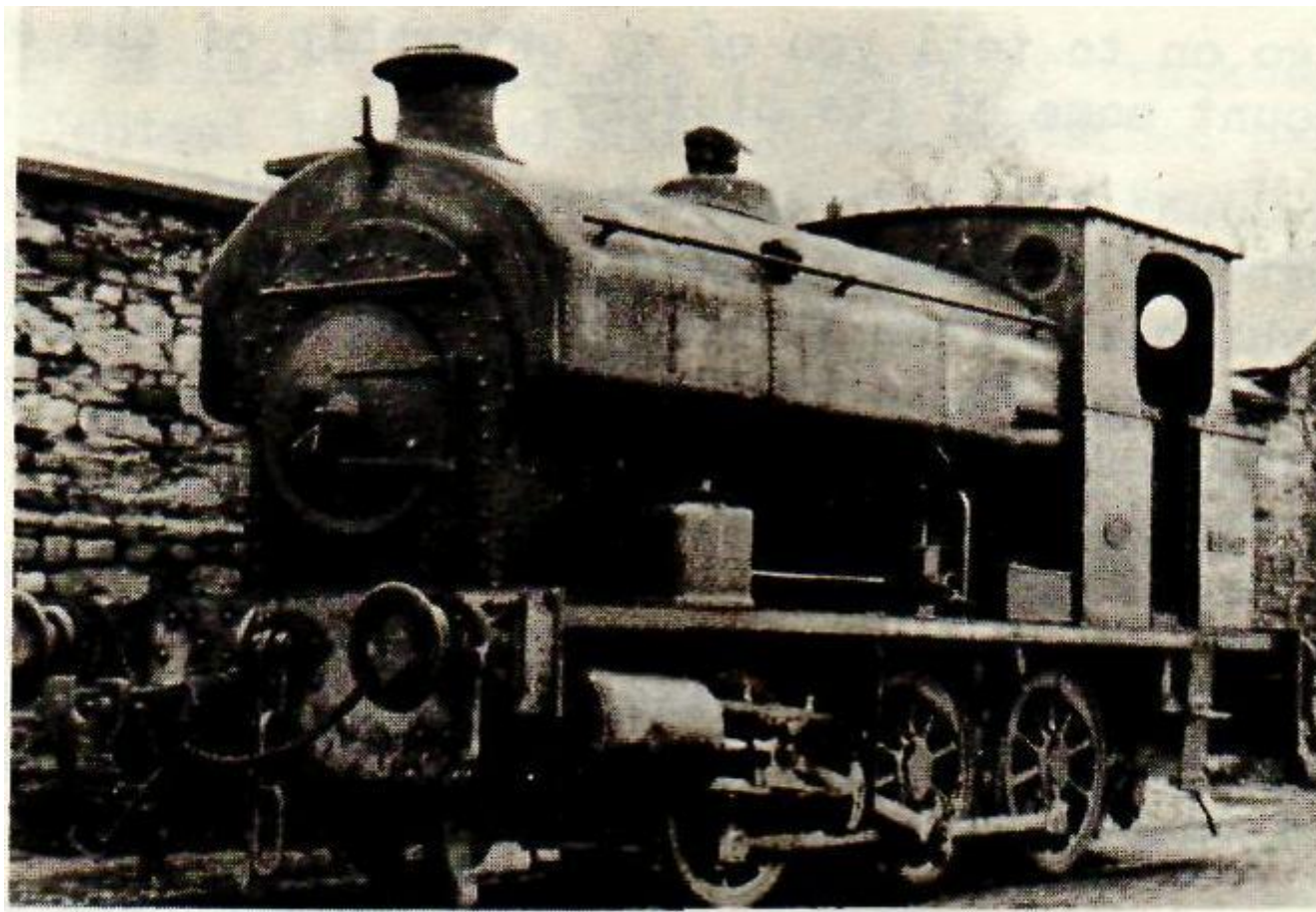
Before I go on to tell you of my ownership of the engine I had better recount some of its history.

As you no doubt know, the loco spent its working life on the Londonderry Port and Harbour

Commissioners' lines, a comparatively short railway which ran from the northern end of the quays on the west side of the River Foyle (where there was a narrow gauge junction with the Lough Swilly, immediately outside their Graving Dock passenger station) along the quayside to the Foyle Road station of the Great Northern. The line continued across the River Foyle on the lower deck of the Craigavon Bridge to the eastern bank where there was a broad gauge connection with the LMS (NCC) at Waterside station and also a narrow gauge junction with the line to Strabane at Victoria Road station.

The Commissioners' railway was unique in that the trains were made up partly of broad gauge and partly of narrow gauge wagons, a state of affairs which led to some amusing incidents at Foyle Road when the drivers forgot there were narrow gauge wagons in the middle of the train.

As a matter of historical interest, R.H. Smyth was Chairman of the Harbour Commissioners from 1927 to 1941, and his family owned Feed Stuff Mills in Strabane and did an extensive business in the North West.



*No.3 "R.H. Smyth" at Londonderry. (L.H. Campbell collection)*

By 1968, however, the engine had been out of use for several years and when I received permission to see her, I was informed that she was about to be sold for scrap. I decided to buy her myself in hopes of getting her going again. By the end of February 1968 the engine was mine and the Harbour Commissioners kindly agreed to let me keep her in their shed.

Two hectic days were spent removing as many valuable and attractive fittings as possible before I went to the Far East for fifteen months, with only a photograph of the locomotive to look at on the high seas, and lots of time to think up plans.

In May of 1969 I returned to Portstewart on leave and began to look for a permanent home for the

locomotive - a problem that I never really solved - and managed to do some work on the engine. I arranged for some work to be done by Messrs Alexander Brown & Sons of Derry. This was in the nature of cleaning the firebox and tubes and testing the boiler which led to the stopping up of some tubes and a large bill.

The original Avonside plates had been stolen from the shed at Derry but following letters in the Railway Magazine and Railway World they were eventually traced in England and restored to the locomotive - one after some interesting correspondence with a solicitor.

I finally decided to purchase a length of trackbed of the former Derry Central line near Garvagh and obtained permission to build a large shed. It was when the tenders for this shed started coming in that I began to wonder if it would be possible to carry on.

The political situation worsened and the loco was moved for greater ease of access and safety to a quarry near Coleraine in August 1971 by the Heavy Haulage Unit of Northern Ireland Carriers - more expense!

It became increasingly obvious to me that I would be unable to spend enough time or money on preserving the engine myself and so it was on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1972 that she was transferred to the Society for a nominal £1.

This short account of my efforts in the field of preservation should serve as a horrible warning to anyone who considers "going it alone" for without the basic requirements of a pit, shed and lots of help, not to mention mechanical skill and lots of cash, any such attempt seems doomed to failure.

### **A Closer Look**

When the Society 'bought' "R.H. Smyth" from Mr Campbell he kindly loaned us a file covering the engine's history from the inviting of tenders in 1928 up to the last repairs made in 1959. The following notes are based on that file.

Tenders were received in April 1928 and Avonside, of course, were successful with their bid of £1,848 which just marginally beat that of Hudswell Clarke. The other tenders came from the Yorkshire Engine Company, Hawthorn Leslie, Peckett and Robert Stephenson. The Avonside engine corresponded very well to the dimensions specified by the Commissioners - except that the cylinders were larger (14"x22") and the water capacity almost twice the required amount.

Following correspondence between the Commissioners' engineer, W.E. Huston, and the Company a few amendments were made to the specifications. Perhaps the principal of these was the substitution of steel axleboxes, guides and wedges for the proposed cast iron ones. Mr Huston accepted steel instead of brass tubes but turned down the Avonside suggestion of a steel firebox instead of the copper one originally specified.

The order was placed in June and there then followed correspondence about details and materials. Avonside tried to convince Mr Huston that delay could be avoided by using steel plate of German manufacture (by Gutchoffnungshutte A G of Oberhausen). The Commissioners, however, were determined to use British materials even though the plates had been inspected by Lloyds' surveyor in Dusseldorf.

Much of the correspondence was carried on through the boiler insurers whose requirements, at times, seemed to almost exasperate the builders, and of the ten alterations initially demanded by the insurers in the boiler alone, only one was carried into effect. This was the use of inspection doors instead of tapered plugs above the foundation ring at the corners of the firebox.

The insurers had asked for the inspection openings on either side of the firebox to be staggered but, as Avonside pointed out, this would make inspection impossible without removing the saddle tank.

Towards the end of July, when Mr Huston was waiting for the final component drawings and the makers were reassuring the insurers that the valves were properly secured to the boiler, it was decided to run the new engine the other way round from the other "ones" (sic) and the narrow gauge coupling had to be repositioned.

Eventually, then, the work got under way in late August and the last details about the paintwork and position of lamp brackets were settled. The boiler was hydraulically tested on 27<sup>th</sup> September and held 240 lbs for thirty minutes and a steam pressure of 160 was decided upon. The engine was successfully steamed the following day when she blew off at 170 lbs.

The engine was steamed again on 12<sup>th</sup> October for the insurers - the Commissioners had been invited to send a representative but declined and asked the insurers to act for them.

With the work completed to everyone's satisfaction the engine left Bristol on 19<sup>th</sup> October and was shipped from Heysham on the 24<sup>th</sup> accompanied by an Avonside mechanic. The engine was sent completely erected except for the cab which was removed for lifting purposes. The loco arrived on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1928 and one could do no better than quote the report sent to the General Manager of the Commissioners by Mr Huston.

"The new locomotive ordered from Avonside arrived here on Sunday last and was safely landed on the rails using the 50 ton steam derrick. Some fitting had then to be done and the trials were proceeded with on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> and have continued to date. On Tuesday a rake of 36 loaded wagons weighing 468 tons and about 240 yards long was hauled along the quays to the Great Northern Railway on wet and greasy rails and round curves and reverse curves. The same evening 19 of these wagons were hauled up the bridge slope - a gradient of 1 in 64. I consider these tests very severe and the locomotive carried them out satisfactorily. I also tried the locomotive around all the worst curves which were negotiated without difficulty. Since then the locomotive has being doing the ordinary shunting efficiently worked by our own men. Some difficulty was experienced at first by the fireman in the management of his fire as the firebox is lower than that of the old engine, but he has got quite used to it now. I have had to get some slight alterations made to certain fittings and I may have to adjust the narrow gauge buffers when the Engine has settled down on its bearings, but this is not a serious matter."

By mid-November all was not well with the lubricator and Mr Huston wrote to Avonside in hopes that they would recommend an oil considering that the engine normally travelled at "only about two miles per hour". He also reported that the regulator was "so stiff as to be almost unworkable" and that the engine was drawing air around pipes at the bottom of the smokebox. Mr Huston asked for advice, too, regarding the quality of coal to be used, quoting that the Commissioners used coal from Auchincruive in Ayrshire.

Perhaps not surprisingly Avonside knew little of this coal but suggested that excessive spark throwing could be cured by boring out the blast pipe orifice to  $3\frac{5}{8}$  inches. After detailing the operation of the mechanical lubricator, Avonside suggested repacking the regulator stuffing box and recommended Wakefield oil. It appears that the nameplates were not supplied until late in November when Avonside suggested where they should be mounted.

It was about the same time that the bill for the engine came to hand. The final total was £1,916.18.0 and Mr Huston queried the £16.18.0, deferring payment of it until matters had been resolved. Several alterations and repairs, apparently, had had to be made (including a defective narrow gauge coupling which broke during shunting). By January 1929 a list of the alterations made to No.3 was furnished to Avonside, the cost of these was to offset the disputed £16.18.0. Among other things the rail guards had to be altered, a fusible plug had to be renewed (it dropped at 100 lbs) and the time of the fitter dealing with the stiff regulator allowed for (nineteen hours!).

Surprisingly by April 1931 two of the tubes had failed and had to be stopped up and a sample of old tube was sent off for Avonside's comments. Unfortunately there is no further information on this subject. But by October 1931 the long series of letters about breaking springs began and continued until mid-1934 when the problem was cured by fitting "trailing springs of increased flexibility and adjustable spring hangers at the trailing end".

There is a gap in the records for the next ten years and nothing of great interest is recorded until 1948 when the engine was stopped for an overhaul which lasted from mid-March until the end of July, although time was spared for "fitting up the new stove in the shed".

In April 1950 the engine was stopped again and underwent another long period of inactivity when the motion received an extensive overhaul - part of which involved attention to the wheels in the Lough Swilly's shops. It wasn't until the middle of the following January that the engine was again in steam. After that the engine seems to have enjoyed a long period of activity with little booked against her in the way of repairs. The only entry of note in the log is on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1959 - "Removing narrow gauge buffers".

The latest boiler report is dated 21<sup>st</sup> November 1956 when it was recommended that the tubes be renewed although there is no note of this having been done.

One matter which is not really resolved in the file is the date when the engine went out of use. An outside source has quoted 1951, though it is quite clear from the notes available that repairs were still being carried out as late as January 1959 when the engine was steamed after a week-long repair job.

But one thing abundantly clear from the file is the complex nature of buying and maintaining a steam engine, even in the more favourable conditions of the 30s and 40s when spares were available and there were people to turn to with problems of oil, coal, lubricators and springs. The exacting nature of the original specifications and the lengthy correspondence with Bristol in an attempt to get things precisely right indicate a degree of care and attention now almost entirely evaporated in a world of plastic, television and diesels.

There are other things to be savoured in the file too. Who nowadays would post a letter from Bristol to Derry and expect a reply the day after tomorrow? There is a glimpse of another world in the letters from Wakefield Oil quoting "Loco cylinder oil @ 3/6d per gallon or our celebrated Triple Expansion Cylinder Oil @ 3/8½d per gallon", and again in the Avonside letterheading with the unpretentious address at "fishponds" and which warned that "All quotations are subject to Strike Clauses". In those days, too, every order was referred to as "esteemed".

**Editor**

## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

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### **Better Than Counting Sheep**

Dear Sir,

I read with interest Mr Arnold's article in Five Foot Three and noted that the author was in no doubt as to whether or not the U class ever penetrated as far as Howth, among other places.

I remember seeing a U class probably, but by no means certainly, No.199 "Lough Erne" running round her train in Howth one summer evening. It must have been around 1957/58 when I was quite young. However, I clearly remember seeing a name on the engine.

I regret I cannot be more precise; the engine might even have been taken over by CIÉ at the time. Perhaps other readers may have much more information and I myself would be delighted to buy any print of a U at Howth or Sutton.

Also, would the Society consider preserving an AEC or BUT railcar set which are fast disappearing



from the Irish scene?

As a Dublin member, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the magazine. Could someone do an article on the Bundoran Express? This train has always had an air of mystery for me, and I was surprised it wasn't mentioned in "Mr Magill's Party".

Yours, etc.,

*Frank Bergin*

Dear Sir,

In response to Mr Arnold's very enjoyable article on widely-travelled engines, I can add one more place to the list for Jeep No.4, namely, Kilrea. I saw her near Upperlands with a weed-spraying train in July 1959; the line closed three months later (sic).

Yours etc.,

*Bob Hunter*

Dear Sir,

I receive the magazines of most preservation societies and have read several in the past few weeks. I must say your latest issue is the most enjoyable by a very long way; your cover photograph, in particular, is far better than most British journals have had to offer for some time.

Yours etc.,

*D.A. Idle*

Dear Sir,

As an Englishman I have long since given up trying to understand why the Irish are always squabbling so fiercely among themselves, and unfortunately this is equally true if for "Irish" I substitute "RPSI Committee".

I guess, Mr Editor, that it was a commendable desire on your part not to stifle any criticism, however unfair, that led you to devote over three pages to that extraordinary letter from your immediate predecessor, Mr Donaldson. Pity. It is easily the most petty and unpleasant letter to appear in your columns so far; may it please be allowed to keep that doubtful distinction, for ever?

Then perhaps I, 300 miles away, shall be able to re-create my illusion of the RPSI as an organisation of enterprising and dedicated volunteers doing an enormous amount of valuable work which deserves my support. Is that illusion, in fact, very far from the reality?

Yours etc.,

*David Veltom*

Dear Sir,

Not being terribly knowledgeable about Irish railways, I find Five Foot Three gives me a good insight into the good old days of steam, and despite Mr Donaldson's remarks I think you are doing an extremely good job.

Yours etc.,

*C.J. Kenyon*