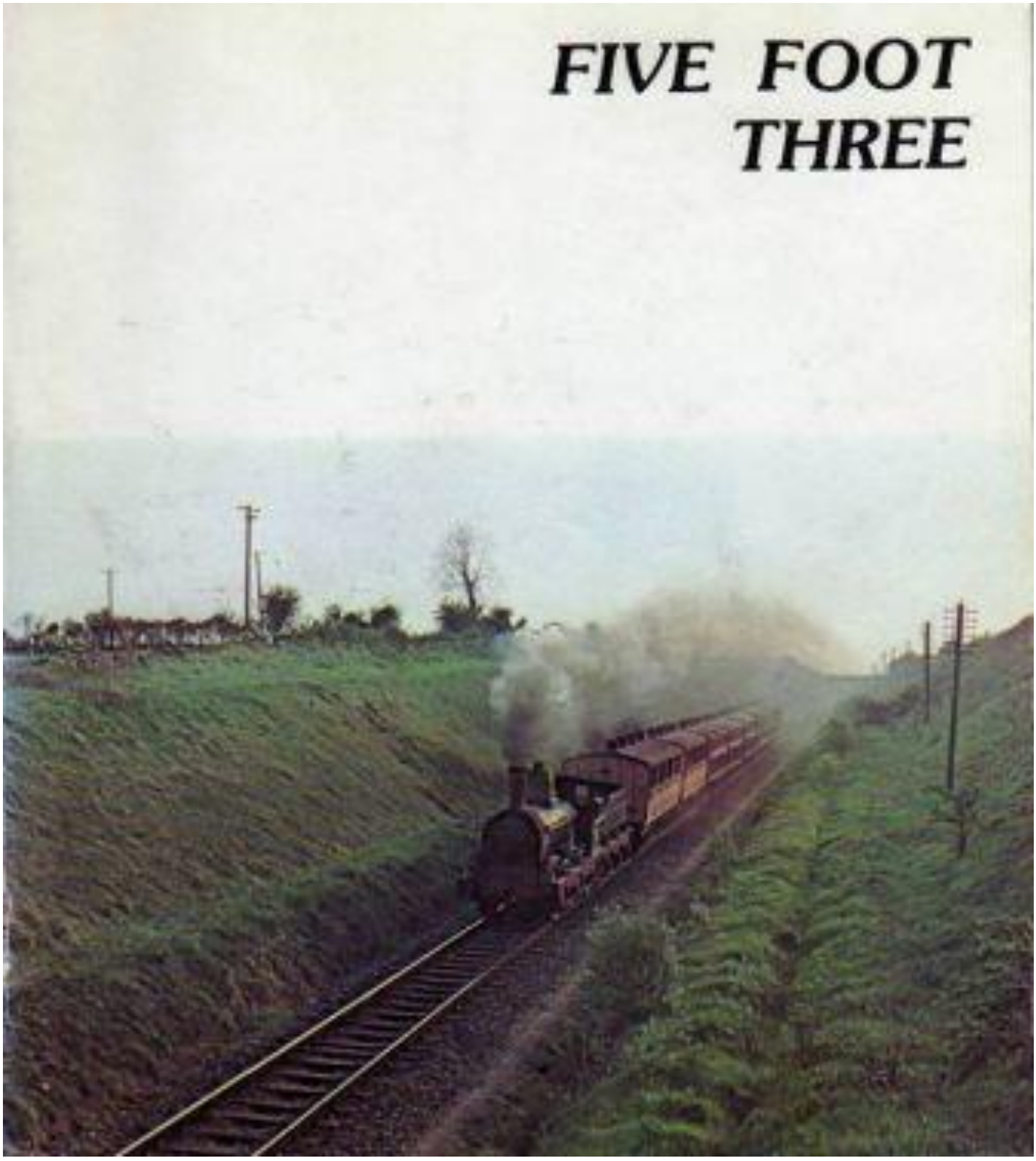
FIVE FOOT THREE



FIVE FOOT THREE
No.23
Spring 1979

A special issue to mark the successful completion of the Society's first major film contract.

Editor: Alan Edgar

CONTENTS

Front Cover Photograph: No.184 at speed on the film train near Moate. (C.P. Friel)

EDITORIAL

Although it is a year since the Society took part in the filming of "The First Great Train Robbery", the project is of a magnitude that can best be seen in retrospect. Seeing the finished product screened in the cinema is a world apart from that first cold Saturday morning when we cleaned out the smokebox of a derelict No.184 - part of a survey to assess repairs required. Yet it is only now that we can raise a glass (or breathe a sigh of relief) that it all went so smoothly.

From the earliest days of the Society, the possibility of taking part in a film has been a topic of conversation. Sometimes it has been more than just talk: No.186 was originally earmarked for the filming of "Around the World in 80 Days" and some restoration work was paid for by a film company - but in the event the engine was not used. Mention could also be made of No.184's appearance in "Darling Lili", although this was not under RPSI auspices. More recently came some minor roles. The BBC filmed No.171 at Moira for a programme on industrial archaeology. "Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man" used footage shot on the Seandun railtour (complete with gricers!) also with No.171 and the 4-4-0 featured yet again when RTÉ filmed scenes for "Lady Gregory" at Whitehead platform.

None of these were in the same league as "The First Great Train Robbery", with its budget of several million pounds, a specially built train, and large terminal stations meticulously modified to Victorian appearance. Not the least of these acts was the phoenix-like restoration of No.184, an engine which few of us thought would steam again for a number of years. Although the work was financed by the film company, it was carried out by RPSI volunteers and RPSI representatives were also with the engine at all times during the filming.

Credit must also be given to CIÉ, in particular the locomotive inspectors and crews involved, who coped admirably with the sometimes curious requirements of the filmmakers. Neither should No.184 herself be forgotten - in the words of her crew "a remarkable little engine".

One would therefore think that the RPSI would now be better off than ever before, with another main line engine restored, and a healthy credit in the bank from contract fees. Unfortunately life is not like that. Members who attended the AGM will have heard Peter Scott's philosophical comment when asked to relate the conditions of the locomotives. "Basically," he said, "we are dealing with worn out machinery." Indeed it is a sobering thought that almost all the RPSI owns has (sometimes more than once!) been written off as scrap. Thus even with the proceeds of "The First Great Train Robbery" in the bank, there is no room for a sense of "financial euphoria". Rather the position is that we have had a shot in the arm which was only too necessary to keep the Society going. When the Council sat down to allocate the money, it was surprising just how quickly it was all allotted. Thanks to the film contract, No.4 is receiving a much needed overhaul, which will ensure her return to traffic. The new shed at Whitehead can at last have a roof, and the track gang can have their efforts assisted by a JCB. But the old problems have not vanished. We are still chronically short of volunteers at Whitehead; no sum of money, no matter how large, can offset this. There is a growing need to establish a permanent and secure base in the South, with similar facilities to Whitehead. There is the necessity to restore more carriages and the probability of further heavy locomotive expenditure in the not too distant future. The film contract is not, therefore, some kind of summit after which we can sit back and relax. It is, rather, a helping hand on the way.

NEWS FROM COUNCIL — Robin Morton

The Council has long been aware of the value of the Society having bases on both the NIR and CIÉ systems. It increases the range of railtours and helps expand the workforce.

We now have security of tenure at Whitehead with the 25-year lease, but the site is jam-packed with coaches and locos.

Mullingar has been the Society's southern base since spring 1974. We set up there on an ad-hoc basis when the introduction of CTC meant No.186 could no longer stay at Sallins shed.

However, because the Society's continued use of Mullingar shed was not guaranteed, the Council decided against investing heavily in plant, etc., there. In autumn 1978, the Society, via Lord O'Neill, contacted CIÉ to seek to start negotiations for a long-term lease for Mullingar.

In January we heard that CIÉ had plans for a freight terminal at Mullingar and so it would not be possible to give us a lease. However, CIÉ said there was no objection in the short-term to the Society continuing to use the shed.

Now, with CIÉ's assistance the Council will be investigating various alternatives; the Council is looking for a site with a view to long-term development.

We consolidated our position at Whitehead with the arrival of the balance of the income from the hire of locos for the film "The First Great Train Robbery". A high priority list of expenditure which was drawn up by the Council in November included many items which had long been required for Whitehead. Hitherto, money had not been available but now it was possible to provide the facilities - although at that, many other desirable items had to be put on the long finger.

The high priority list deliberately excluded routine items such as loco, and coach maintenance. A low priority list was also compiled but expenditure on these items was shelved.

A further heading detailed items which would be best dealt with by an Enterprise Ulster Whitehead phase three application - a platform building, a carriage shed, an oil store and an ash pit.

Items authorised for expenditure under the high priority list included:

Whitehead

Roof for new engine shed.

JCB.

Chain hoist, machine vice, chuck for lathe.

Press, grinder, sets of spanners.

Completion of loco, stores.

Three phase sockets and low voltage lighting.

Completion of tarry.

Fire precaution equipment.

Security lighting and barbed wire.

Diesel storage tank.

Locomotives

Major overhaul for No.4.

Purchase of U class tender.

Tank filler screens.

Portable water pump.

Carriage and Wagon

Fridge and generator for diner 552.

Workbench, saw, vice.

Hopper ballast wagon.

Mullingar

Wiring and sets of hand tools.

Miscellaneous

Acquisition of Belfast Great Victoria Street turntable.

Operations typewriter.

Expenditure may be spread over many months, and providing the shed roof should be helped by a Government grant.

Also on the C&W front, £500 was set aside for fabric for re-roofing coaches. We also set aside funds for the purchase of two vacuum-braked vans from NIR - one a four-wheeled long-wheelbase 'brown van' and the other a bogie 'P van'. The former will serve as a store initially and the latter may be used as a coal transporter.

With so much day-to-day business to get through at Council meetings, it is hard at times to look too far into the future. But thinking long-term, the Council gave its blessing to the proposal for a regular weekend steam train service between Whitehead and Carrickfergus - the project outlined in my Secretary's Report at the AGM.

In January the plan took its first vital step - approval in principle from NIR. Next, the idea has to be put to Carrickfergus Borough Council through whom the required major government grant will hopefully come.

Loco. No.184 was hired in connection with the filming for American TV of "The Flame is Love" at Bray.

A sub-committee of the Council met to agree set fees for filming facilities at Whitehead. From time to time the Society is approached by a TV station and asked to provide a steam engine for a one-off day's filming. Loco No.3 was steamed early in January for UTV on just such an occasion.

While on films, it should be recorded that the Society did suggest to CIÉ and the National Film Studios that they should hold onto the underframes of the coaches used for "The First Great Train Robbery". In any case the vehicles were retained at Bray and have been used for "The Flame is Love".

The Council has been asked to finalise the loan agreement for loco No.85 with the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. A meeting was being arranged to agree some details on a 10-year loan agreement.

Thought has been given to various ways of marking the centenaries of our two J15 class locos - No.186's this year and No.184's in 1980. An approach to the Éire Post Office suggesting the event be heralded by a special series of railway stamps met with a lukewarm response, but drawing attention to the idea may pave the way to such an issue in the early 1980s.

A school of thought within the Society has been in favour of returning No.186 to her original all-black unlined livery for centenary year. At present the loco is in her film livery of green, with red and yellow lining. But majority feeling within the Council was that No.186 should main green - because this provides photographic variety.

Having assessed the success of the 1978 railtours, general feeling on the Council was that involving the general public as passengers on short-haul railtours is most worthwhile. To attract non-members, tickets have to be marketed in shops and booking offices.

Fund-raising continues to play an important role, and it was encouraging to see the Commercial Officer's seat occupied again after a gap of two years. For VAT reasons RPSI sales squads will be operating under the banner of "Irish Steam Scene".

To ease administration, a bulk purchase of railway-type souvenirs was made from the Severn Valley Railway in England. The items will be appearing on RPSI sales stands during the year.

A major investment on the sales front was the purchase of a mobile shop for £800. This vehicle will tour the various open days, traction engine rallies, etc., and will aid publicity.

As well as the new commercial officer, Sam Somerville, there were three other new faces on the Council.

Paul Newell took over from John Friel as Locomotive Running Officer, Alan Edgar succeeded Tim Moriarty as Publications Officer, and Publicity Officer is Alan Love, who followed William Coates.

The willingness of more members to serve on Council has been a heartening sign and the load has been spread by the appointment of a batch of members to posts of special responsibility.

The Council was pleased to again lend the Society's name to the Williames Travel "Romance of India" railway holiday. The venture, in February, was fully booked and is becoming a regular event. Still, for the rest of us not long now until the Portrush Flyer.

LOCOMOTIVE REPORT — Peter Scott

It is possibly best to take each of the engines in turn and outline the work in hand at present, and that proposed for the near future.

No.3, Whitehead. In traffic.

Acting as the Whitehead shunter during the present period while diesel loco 23 is withdrawn for repairs. Recent minor repairs completed include replacement of two boiler tubes and attention to the draw gear.

No.3BG, Whitehead.

In store pending retubing and other repairs.

No.4, Whitehead. Undergoing general overhaul.

The following work is in progress:

Manufacture and fitting of new driving springs.

Overhaul, remetalling and fitting axleboxes.

Manufacture and fitting of new tyre to replace damaged tyre.

Fitting new bolts, left hand cylinder to frame.

Refitting driving wheel keep-plates, and fitting new bolts.

Overhaul of steam heating apparatus.

Fitting new piston and valve rings.

Manufacture and fitting a half set of new superheater elements.

Renewing the complete set of superheater flue tubes.

Machining piston rods.

Making new gland parts.

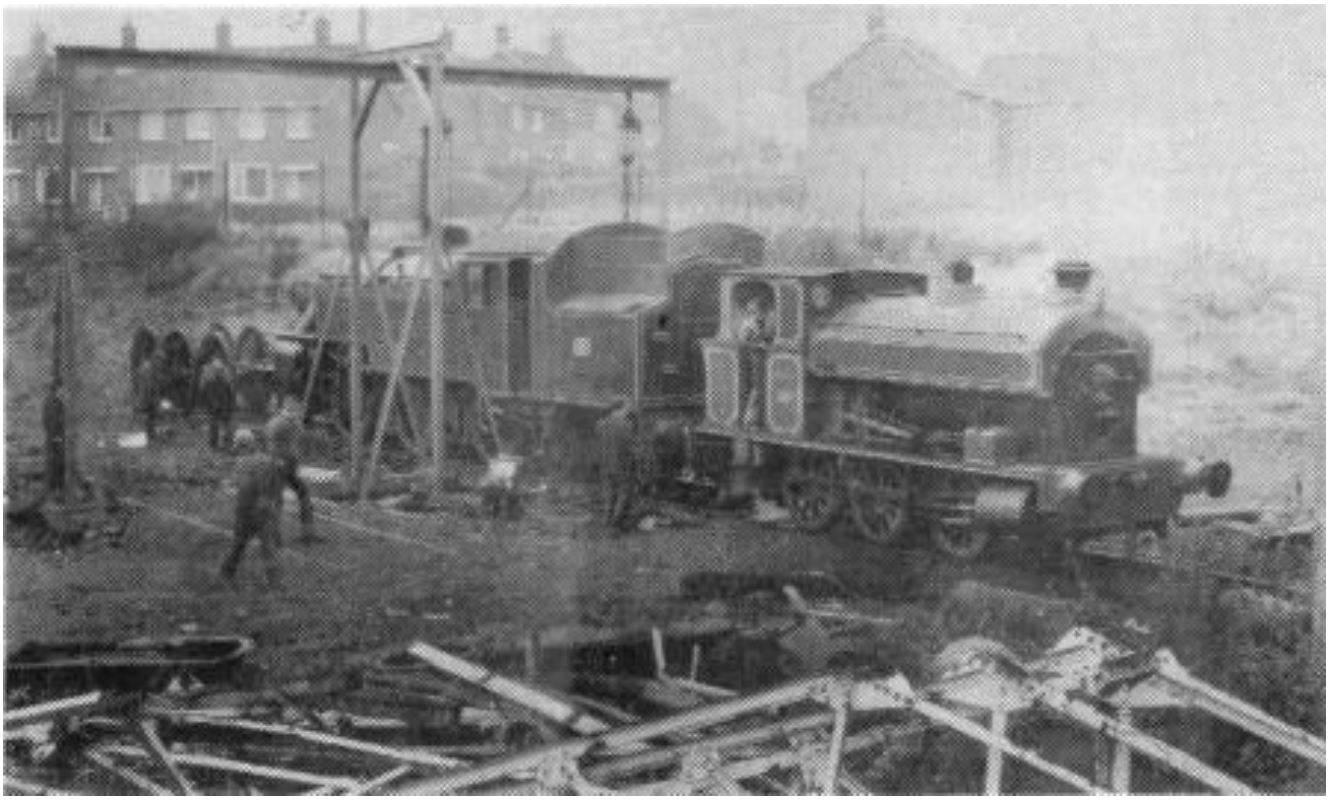
The following further work is proposed:

Fitting new set of driving wheels.

Repair of bunker.

Overhaul of steam brake.

The new tyre referred to is required because a tyre of one of the replacement wheelsets was damaged by an oxyacetylene cutter, rendering it unsafe to run. The damage is assumed to have been caused inadvertently when loco No.54, from which the wheelsets were obtained, was being broken up. The cost of fitting the new tyre is not unreasonable, and it is still considered the best course of action to replace the existing wheelsets, which are now worn to scrapping size.



"R.H. Smyth" shunts No.4 over the wheeldrop. (C.P. Friel)

No.23, Whitehead.

The engine (a Dorman 3 cylinder diesel) blew a head gasket at the end of the summer. This was replaced, but further trouble occurred with a damaged tappet. Repairs will now involve a more extensive stripping of the engine, possibly requiring its complete removal from the locomotive.

No.27, Whitehead.

In store pending general overhaul.

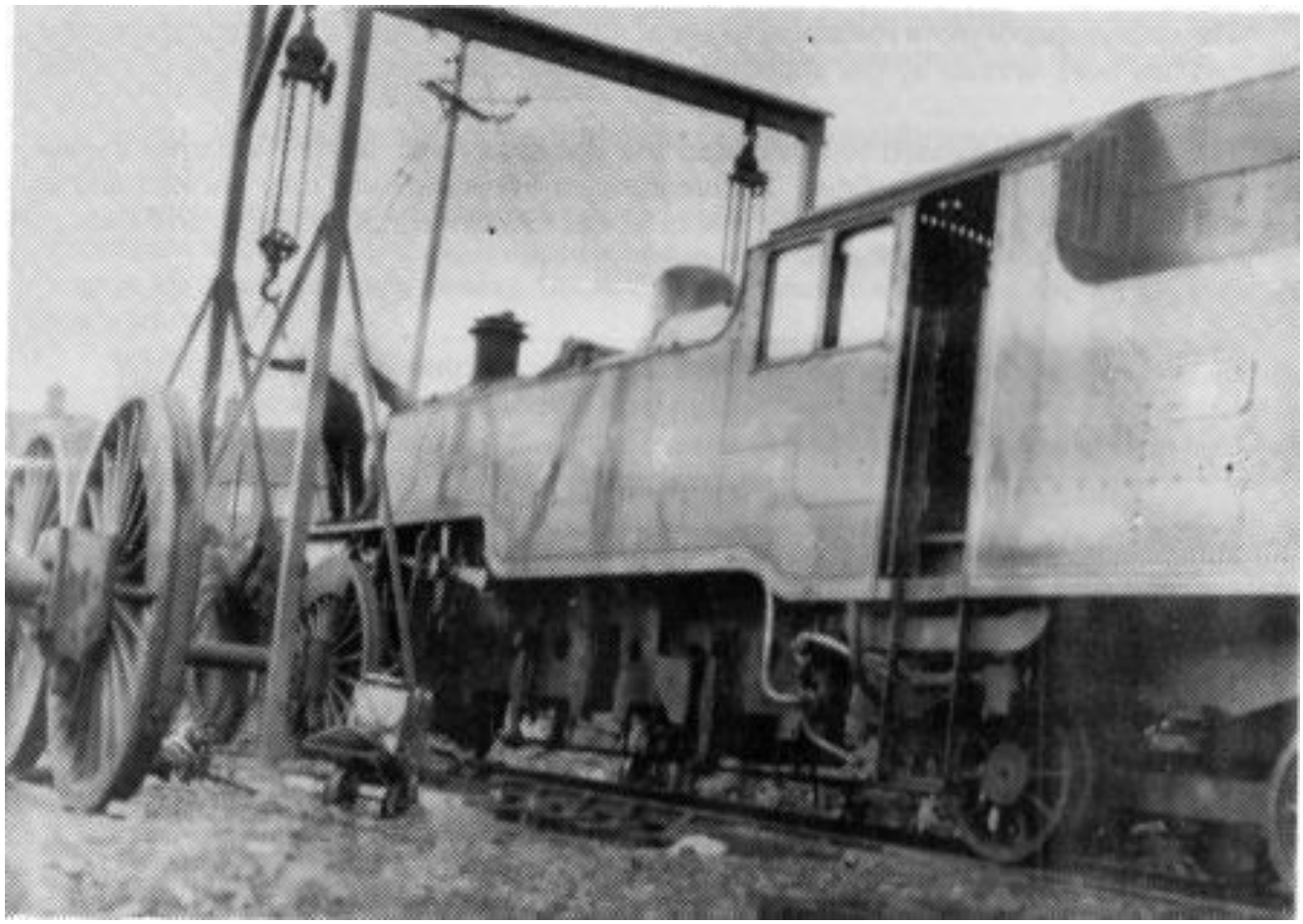
No.85 "Merlin", Harland and Wolff.

Undergoing major overhaul. Work on the locomotive has unfortunately been delayed, mainly because of the boiler tubes required are not yet available. Most mechanical work has been completed, but no re-assembly has been done.

No.171 "Slieve Gullion", Whitehead.

Manufacture and fitting of new driving axleboxes. Rather than recast the brass crowns of the existing axleboxes (which would be an unpredictable and costly job needing patterns) it was decided to make two completely new axleboxes as brass castings. This has the merit of being reasonably straightforward in both casting and machining, but the material cost is high. The use of solid brass axleboxes was fairly

common on the Great Northern (e.g. the VS locomotives), so no precedent is being set. To facilitate the marking out of the new axleboxes the trailing wheels have been removed from the loco. New wear-plates are being fitted to the trailing axleboxes to remove excessive clearance, and the opportunity is being taken to reset the trailing springs at the correct height.



Ireland's first 2-0-4 tank engine. The wheelsets have been lifted out of the pit and can be seen on the left. (C.P. Friel)

No.184, Mullingar.

Minor repairs. Leading and driving springs are to be repaired.

No.186, Mullingar.

Boiler and other repairs. The vertical seam rivets in the fire area of the firebox are being replaced. The method is to remove the existing wasted steel rivets, ream out the thread holes, and fit copper screwed rivets. The lower part of the front tube-plate, which is seriously wasted below the lowest tubes, is to be repaired. This is a defect apparent to some extent on all the locos, and most noticeably on the two J15s.

No.461, Mullingar.

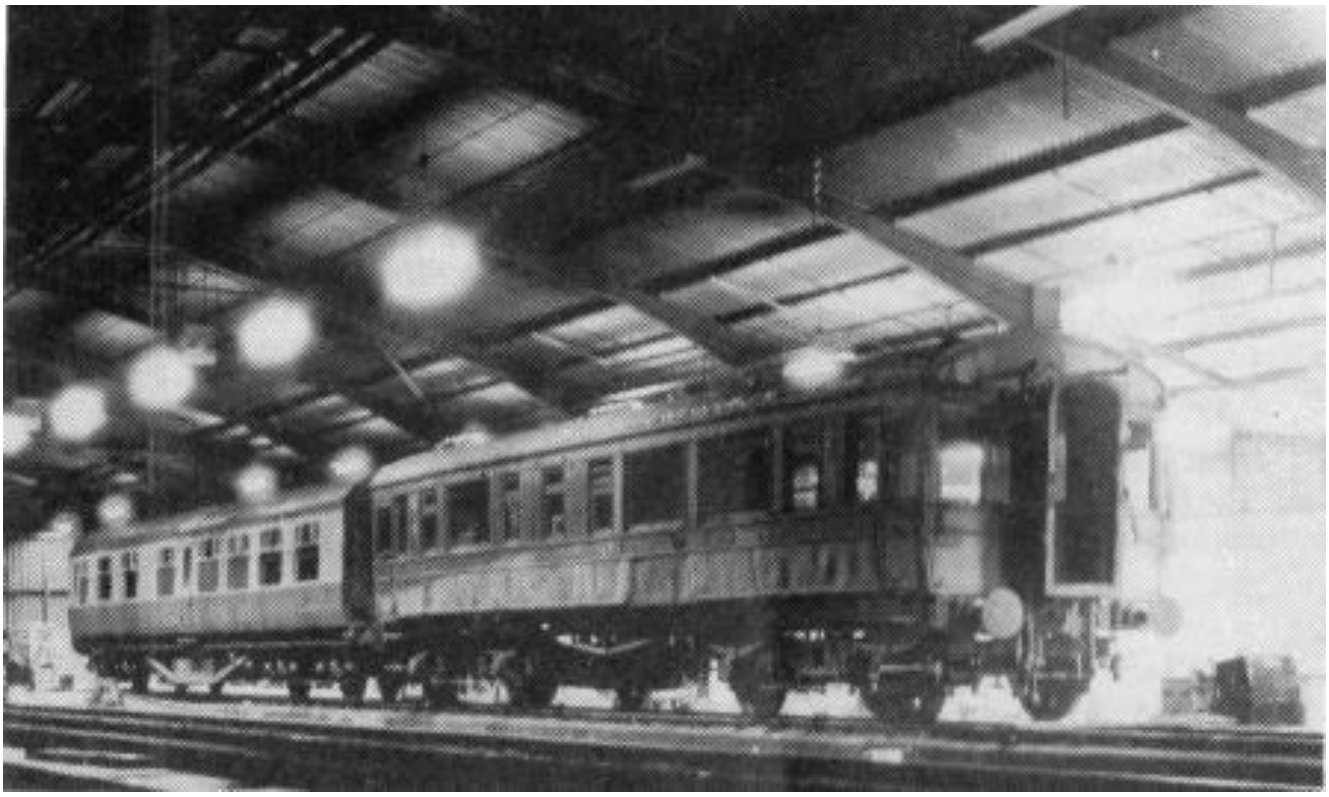
In store pending overhaul.

Plant

A 25 ton hydraulic press has been built, incorporating a hydraulic locomotive jack. The press had been planned for some years, but finally became essential for pressing out bearings from No.4's axleboxes and side rods.

CARRIAGE AND WAGON REPORT — Alan Edgar

You will recall that the months before the 1978 operating season saw us engaged in something of a struggle to fulfil operating requirements, due to the loss of two coaches from traffic by fire damage. The gap was eventually filled by resurrecting NCC side corridor third 340, bringing two of this class into traffic. Although North Atlantic brake 91 (UTA 472) had been prepared for re-roofing, we decided that in many ways 340 was a better prospect for return to traffic. 340's roof fittings were therefore hurriedly dismantled and she was shunted inside the loco shed over a weekend to receive the new fabric {originally bought for 583). The other major work in restoring 340 to traffic involved reglazing the internal compartment windows and refitting of the original door furniture on the internal sliding doors. This work was finally completed on the Friday night before the first Flyer, but was not, in fact, the last job before the coach ran. In the early hours of Saturday morning, when most of us were just getting up, Robbie McFarland, an apprentice upholsterer with Ulsterbus, was repairing a slashed seat. We are thankful to him for doing the job at such short notice. Robbie has also put in considerable work on the upholstery of the other coaches, notably centre corridor Bredin 1333. The external appearance of this coach was improved considerably by repainting her to match the other GSR coaches as the original dark maroon had faded badly.

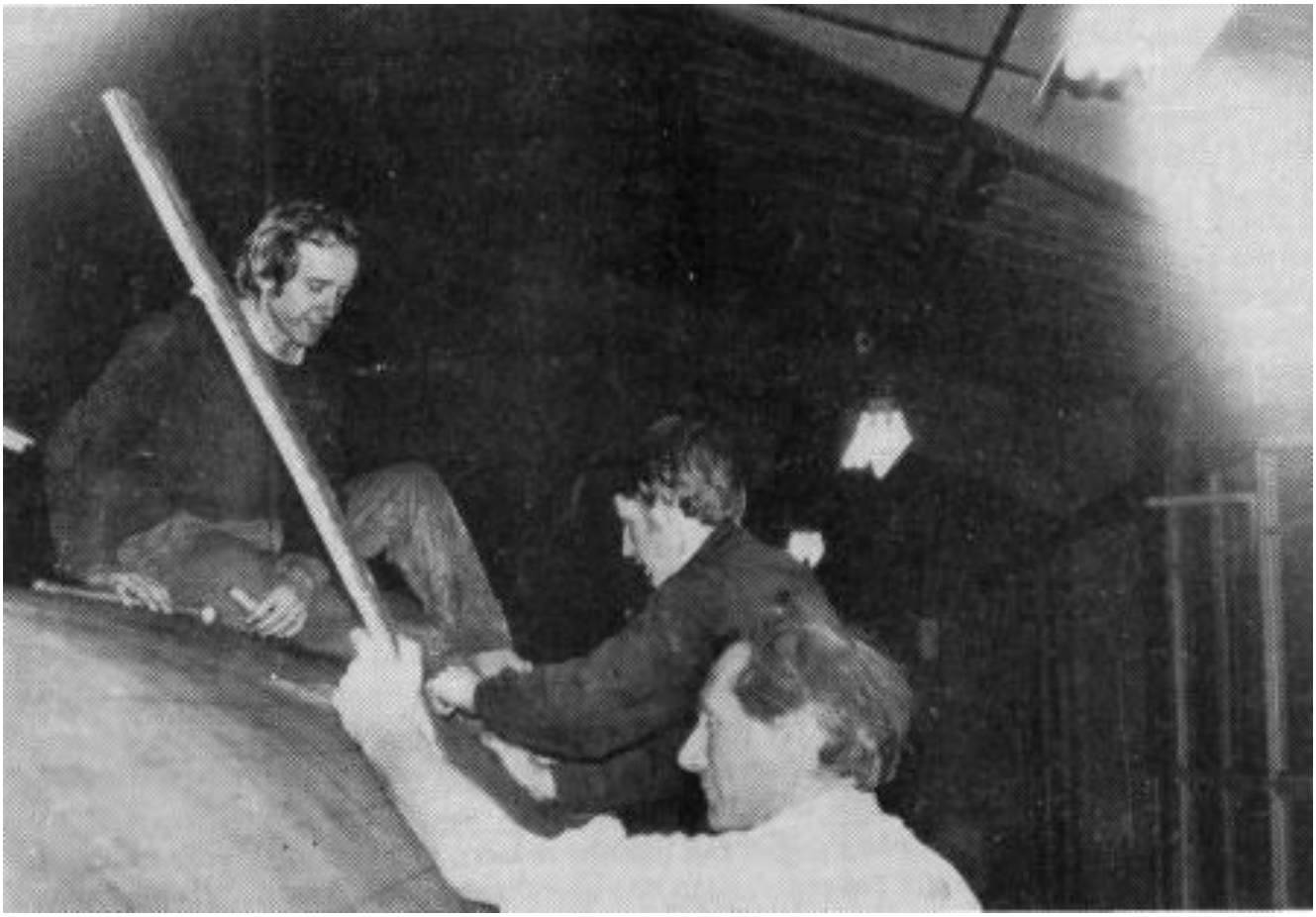


Diner 550 and director's saloon 50 in the running shed at York Road. (C.P. Friel)

Most of the operating season passed uneventfully, with only one droplight window having to be replaced, due to the wooden frame being rotten rather than to vandalism! Unfortunately things changed on the last Flyer, when passengers were surprised to see a large portion of coach 342's roof covering sail past their windows near Antrim. 342 will thus require re-roofing before re-entering service.

After the operating season the emphasis changed on carriage work. MPD trailer 533 had been made available for removal of spare parts by NIR, who wished to use the underframe, and it was agreed that we would remove the body and return the underframe to them. This was done by jacking the body up and supporting it on sleepers while the underframe was run out from underneath. The body is now

grounded near to the wheeldrop. Following this the charred remains of 583's body were removed from her underframe and have now been largely chopped up for lighting-up timber.



Replacing rotten timber on 550's roof. Left to right: Paul Newell, Dermot Mackie, Ken Pullin. (C.P. Friel)

Due to continuing delays in providing the new shed roof, carriage restoration has been severely curtailed, and no re-roofing has been possible. A small amount of panelling has been completed on the exterior of North Atlantic brake 91, including wooden mouldings which had to be made to match the originals, for which we are grateful to Curran Sawmills Ltd. of Larne who agreed to do the work. By this time the winter weather had brought a stop to virtually all carriage work at Whitehead, but work continued inside the running shed at York Road, Belfast, on diner 550 (formerly 87), for which we are grateful to NIR. RPSI work parties were arranged on weeknights and on Sundays. To anyone involved in coach work at Whitehead (in particular the re-roofing of the other diner, 552, outdoors over a winter) the shed at York Road in unbelievably luxurious: sheltered from the elements, liberally supplied with power points and trestles, and heated! In a remarkably short time 550 was transformed. The old roof covering was removed and, following the replacement of some rotten timber, recovered with the PVC-roofed nylon material mentioned in the last issue. The windows were reglazed, using glass of the correct dimensions from withdrawn railcars, and six years' accumulation of dirt inside the coach also received attention. Thus 550 has now been transformed from a sorry mess into one of our most eminently serviceable coaches. Following this work NIR replaced the vacuum gear at a reasonable cost in the workshops. Although now weatherproofed and mechanically ready to run 550 may not enter service for some time, as the interior requires refurbishing. The possibility of covering the cost of this by sponsorship is being investigated.

Shortly after 550 moved into the running shed, she was joined by ex-GNR directors' saloon 50. This vehicle had caused us much soul-searching; her condition was deteriorating due to leaking from the roof, and yet we were fully occupied in keeping the serviceable coaches in traffic. Fortunately Lord O'Neill stepped in with an offer to finance considerable work to the coach (notably repair of the roof) being carried out by NIR. Before this is started the coach will be partially stripped down and inspected to see what restoration will involve, and this is being done at the time of writing.

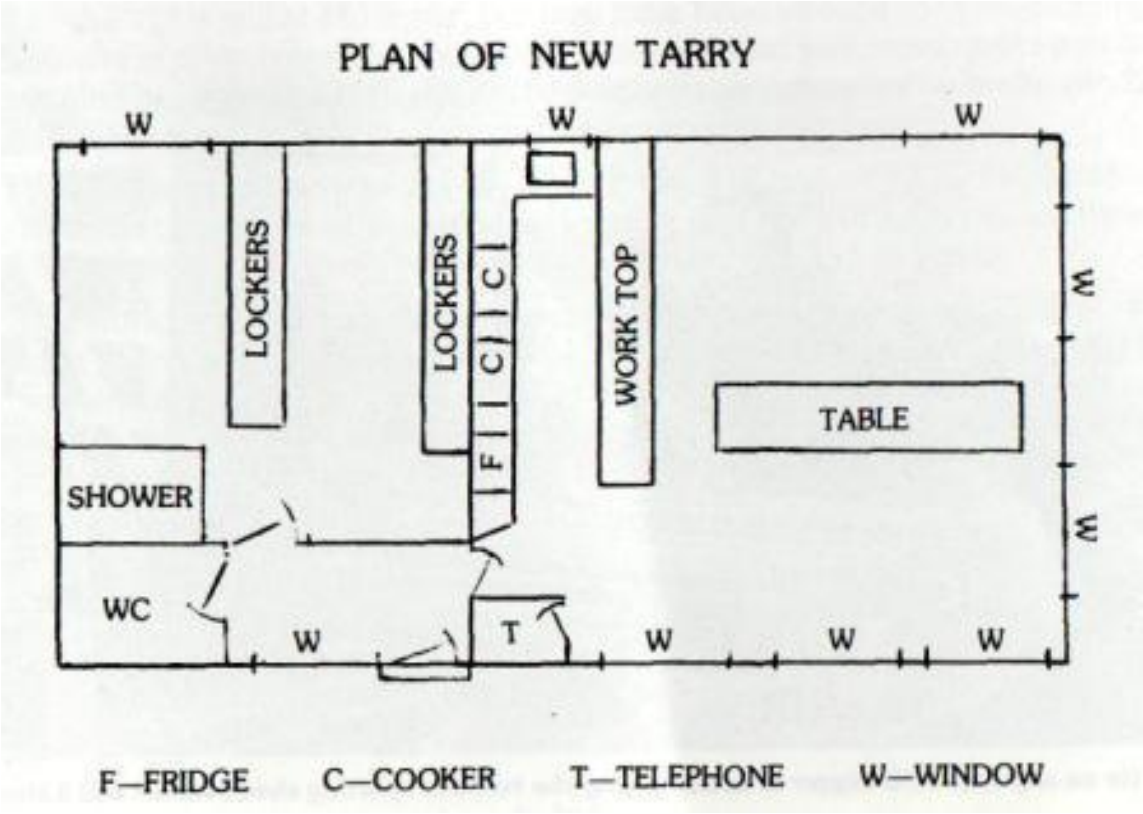
GNR brake 114 is still at Mullingar, but may have been worked to Whitehead by the time this appears in print. Her cavernous van has been loaded with coach parts purchased from CIÉ, and in her journey north she will hopefully be accompanied by brake van 23574 and ex-GNR ballast wagon 8112N which we have recently purchased.

Recent arrivals at Whitehead are ex-GNR P-van 618 and ex-NCC composite 274. Contrary to what was reported in the last magazine, and the IRRS journal, we have not been able to purchase MED trailer 526, which NIR have decided to retain.

Carriage work in the near future will depend on the appearance of a roof over the new shed. When it is on, the C&W department will occupy one of the roads, where safe from the weather we plan to re-roof several coaches immediately. If anyone can come down to lend a hand with this, do not hesitate to contact us. Help is also needed to restore the North Atlantic brake, and at Mullingar the ex-WLWR coach needs attention to make her weatherproof.

SITE REPORT — Neil Hamilton

Last winter saw the majority of site work concentrated on the fitting out of the new tarry at Whitehead. This project was started at the beginning of last year when the old mess room at the rear of the locomotive shed was demolished to make way for the track to the wheeldrop. The tarry started life as a chandlery and then as a changing room at Bangor Boat Yard until it was sold to the Society at the end of last year.



The building is a sectional wooden structure, measuring overall 36ft long and 16ft wide. There are six sections to each side, and of these six have windows. Two of the four end sections also have windows.

Once the building was erected the plumbing was installed, and thanks must go to member Tony Ragg who undertook to organise and carry out this task. There is a standard hot water system using an immersion heater, controlled by a day-omitting switch. Two wash basins and a shower are installed in the changing room. There is a WC separate from the changing area. As soon as all plumbing was complete, wiring for both heating and lighting was installed.

The heating system comprises two 3kW fan heaters and a small radiant heater. These are thermostatically controlled and worked by a day-omitting time clock. The heating will thus come on automatically on a Saturday morning and then switch off that evening. If heating is required on another day it can be switched on manually and will switch off again that evening, reverting to automatic switch on the following Saturday. Internal fitting out was the next task, and this consisted of sheeting the walls with plasterboard and making partition walls to divide up the available space as required. A false ceiling was also erected as the building has a pitched roof. The roof space above was insulated with expanded polystyrene chips which were originally used as packing material.

New (to us anyway) JCB digger in action laying the turnout splitting shed roads 4 and 5 shortly after arrival. (C.P. Friel)

The layout of the tarry is shown on the outline diagram. The dining area has a sink, two electric cookers, fridge and worktop. There is a phone booth containing both payphone and an instrument to the NIR signal cabin, which is used by operating staff.

Ease of cleaning was the main criterion when the internal decoration was being considered. It was

decided that vinyl wallpaper was the best taking into account a limited budget. The floor of the main room was covered with heavy duty linoleum.

Now that the tarry is more or less complete, track work has resumed. This is being aided by the newly acquired JCB excavator, which will be modified for use in lifting rails and sleepers also. Its first task involves the laying of No.5 shed road into the new shed and its turnout from No.4 road. If this siding can be installed quickly I hope that work can start on upgrading No.2 carriage siding before the running season. This will involve packing, and in some sections relaying the track.

The film "The First Great Train Robbery" has been released by United Artists and directed by Michael Crichton who wrote the original novel, first published in 1975. The novel, entitled "The Great Train Robbery" is based on an actual robbery in 1855 when gold bullion was stolen from a South Eastern Railway train travelling from London Bridge station to Folkestone. The film's stars are Sean Connery, Donald Sutherland and Lesley-Ann Down, but, for many, the real stars are the two RPSI locos used, No.184 and No.186.

Why should a film company come to Ireland when so many English preserved lines are so well practised in the art of film making? One answer lay in their desire to represent London Bridge and Folkstone by large stations with overall roofs. No preserved line could offer these, whereas in Ireland, the film company found stations which were suitable and a railway company, Córas Iompair Éireann, willing to co-operate.

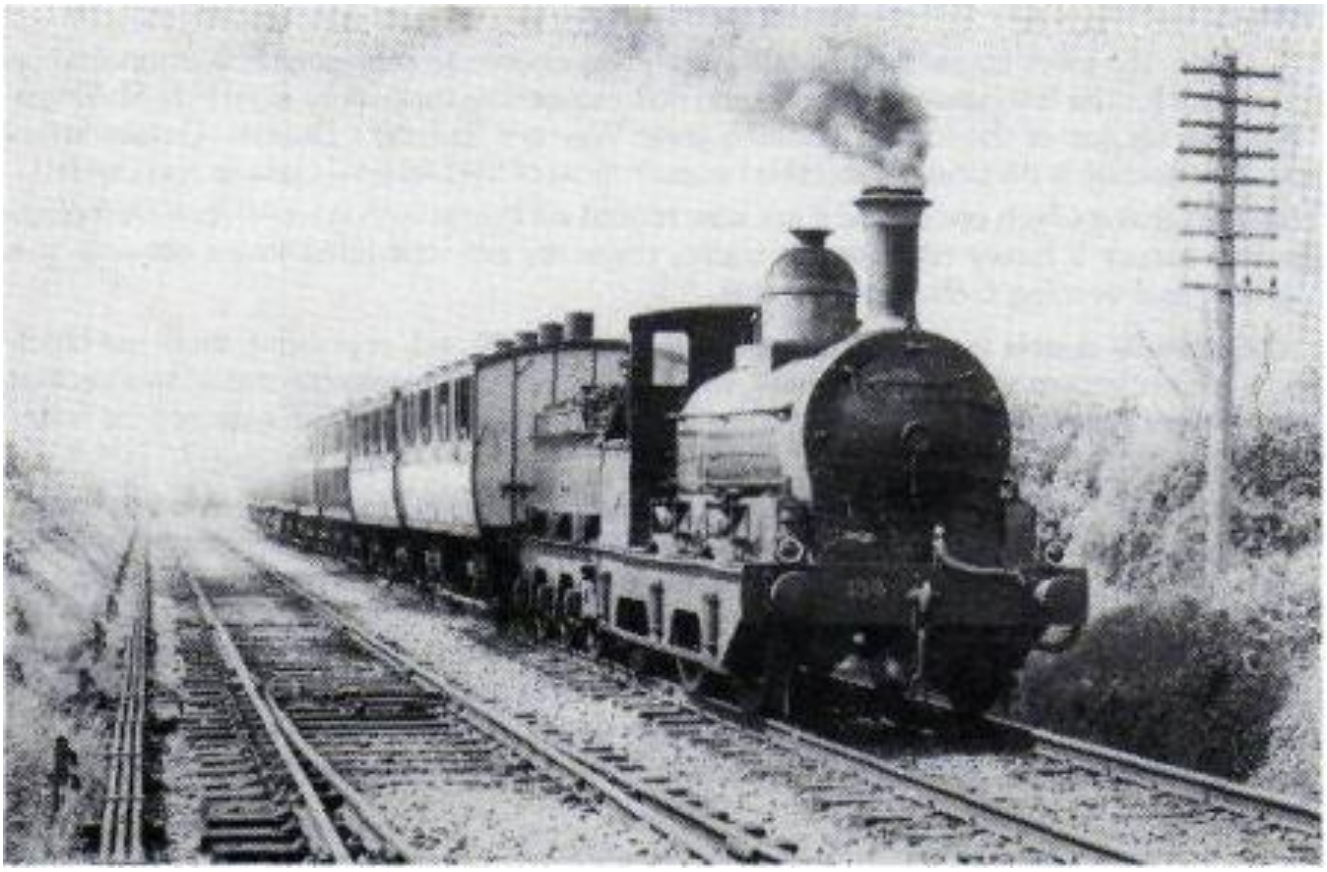
Dublin, Heuston (formerly Kingsbridge) station, whose building dates from 1844, was chosen to represent London Bridge. Although Heuston is Dublin's main terminal station for trains from Westport, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford, CIÉ didn't mind one of its platforms being transformed for the film. The transformation included several mock interior buildings being erected behind the buffer stops. At times when no filming was taking place, the platform was used for normal train services, its condition causing an understandable degree of perplexity amongst unknowing passengers. When the station's large name 'Heuston' outside on the front of the main building was replaced by 'London Bridge', the whole city started talking about the film.

Cork, 165 miles by rail to the south-west, was chosen to represent Folkestone, while the choice for the line between London and Folkestone was the twenty-eight mile Mullingar-Athlone section of the former Midland Great Western Railway's Dublin-Galway main line. This section is particularly suitable because most of the Dublin-Galway and Dublin-Westport trains which once used it are now routed via Portarlington to Athlone. Although the line carries a heavy night goods traffic, there are no scheduled trains between the morning and evening Galway mail trains.

Originally double track, the route was singled in 1929 and, at present, there are block posts at Castletown and Moate. Moate, which is still open for passenger traffic, was chosen to represent

Ashford. It was suitably converted to a period look and CIÉ restored the water tower to working order.

Craftsmen in Ardmore Film Studios in Bray built sides, roofs and, in a few cases, interiors for fourteen four-wheel coaches for the film. Two rakes were made up; the main film train of two firsts, three seconds, two thirds and a van while the background train was made up of two firsts, a third and a brake while the remaining vehicle was made up with the same roof as the others but with sides only a couple of feet high. The coach bodies were built on to four-wheel, vacuum-braked underframes recovered from scrapped passenger heating vans of Bulleid design. One of the thirds retained its diesel generator and underslung fuel tanks and it provided power for cameras and lights in or on the train.



No.184 leaves Moate during filming of "The First Great Train Robbery", May 1978. (C.P. Friel)

NEGOTIATIONS — Robin Morton

The first indications that the Society might at last be involved in a major film came with an approach through CIÉ in April 1977. But it wasn't until hopes had been raised and dashed a couple of times that things really started moving. By January 1978, the RPSI Council felt fairly certain that the film was going to happen and from then on activity continued at a feverish rate. And so, in December 1978 - 20 months after the first hint - we finally sat back to enjoy the screening of the movie - and uncork the champagne. A look back at some of the early ideas is worthwhile. Initially the film company, which was then American International, wanted to use a steam mock-up vehicle which would be propelled by a diesel engine disguised as a coach (as in "Darling Lili") with No.186 and possibly No.184 as back-ups. "R.H. Smyth", the 0-6-0ST, was also fleetingly considered.

Filming at that stage was planned to start on 1st September 1977, and American International wanted fairly low-key modification for both No.186 and No.184. On reflection, it would have probably been impossible to organise all this for 1st September, bearing in mind the busy operating season.

We obtained the advice of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies but naturally enough this dealt largely with the wholesale use of a preserved branch line. It provided some useful pointers, but our unusual position meant we had to start virtually from scratch to work out fees. No.186 alone was offered, because we felt there wasn't enough time to make No.184 serviceable, and the basic conditions were that the engine should not move except under her own steam, and that she could be withdrawn by the Society on mechanical grounds. We also wanted payment to be made through CIÉ to give us some muscle.

By June the activity was slackening off and our suspicions were confirmed when the filming date was put back to January 1978. The prospect of a film contract seemed to be slipping away and the RPSI got on with the summer operating season.

The film rights were, meanwhile, taken over by Warner Brothers and then by Dino de Laurentiis, and I prepared to tell the 1977 AGM that the negotiations had been fruitless. Then, like a bolt out of the blue, our contact phoned on 24th November to say it was all on again under the auspices of Starling Films. They wanted another meeting pronto in Dublin and this was fixed for 26th November, with the RPSI being represented by Sam Carse, Paddy O'Brien and myself.

There were some familiar faces among the film-makers but some new faces. And the plans had also changed - to the benefit of the RPSI.

CIÉ had ruled out the possibility of a diesel mock-up because it couldn't operate at the required 40 mph, so the RPSI was to take a more prominent role. In addition, negotiations for the filming in April were opening at a more convenient time for the Society with the quieter time of the year ahead - although the filming date was still too close for comfort.

Armed with the knowledge gained earlier in the year, we offered No.184 as the principal engine - with restoration by the RPSI at Starling's expense. We knew what was required to make No.184 serviceable and another factor was that No.186 was already committed to operating railtours during part of the proposed filming period. We were fearful that although the filming was scheduled to take place between April and June it could slip back into the summer. It turned out that Starling were keener on No.184 in any case as she could be more effectively modified to 1855-style.

For the Council No.184 was a great imponderable but we decided the best policy would be to aim at restoring the engine for the film in the knowledge that we could fall back on No.186 if No.184 failed to make the grade.

Although we were back at square one, the ground felt familiar and we set to work with more confidence. We used the basic conditions worked out beforehand but we covered many more eventualities this time. The main conditions were:

1. Payment in advance for restoration and modification estimates.
2. Locos to move under own steam.
3. CIÉ to drive engines, RPSI personnel to be present.
4. RPSI to retain the right to withdraw engines on mechanical grounds at all times.
5. Adequate security for locos at filming locations.
6. Filming dates to be agreed in advance with 72 hours notice for additional days.
7. RPSI not liable for non-availability of locos.
8. RPSI to approve schedules in advance.
9. Adequate insurance to be taken out.
10. Starling to pay legal costs.

The principal matter was, however, consideration of adequate hiring fees. On the advice of Brian Ham, our legal adviser, we opted this time for a 'global' fee per engine per day. This replaced the cumbersome process where RPSI would be charging a fee for hire of engine, another for RPSI man-hours, another for coal and oil, etc.

What might be called the crunch meeting came on 6th January 1978. We had given Starling our proposed global fee along with conditions and they wanted to discuss this. They flew me over to Heathrow for the day so that I could represent the RPSI at a meeting in Pinewood Studios. For a few brief hours I felt like a VIP. A trip over on the Shuttle with just a briefcase under my arm, top executive style, and then a chauffeur-driven limousine to whisk me from the airport to Pinewood.

It turned out to be a busy meeting which lasted four hours. We went through all the conditions with a fine toothcomb, pausing only momentarily at lunchtime for sandwiches and coffee.

We left consideration of our fees until the end and Starling suggested differentiating between the various types of day involved in the filming. These were broken down as:

1. Filming in steam at Heuston.
2. Filming with locos, dead at Heuston.
3. Filming in steam between Mullingar and Moate.
4. Filming in steam at Cork.
5. Light engine movement.
6. Days when the engine is prepared for filming but filming does not take place.

Meeting shortly afterwards, the Council largely agreed the terms but we decided to challenge one element. Starling, arguing that they were footing the bill for the restoration of No.184, had reduced fees for the hiring. The Council successfully asked for a differential between No.184 and No.186, insisting on a higher fee for the already operational No.186.

The film contract became the principal matter before the Council for the early part of 1978 and some changes were agreed in the conditions. The one which caused the most soul-searching was the concern expressed by Starling about the possibility of No.184 breaking down mid-way through the film. Obviously it would be too expensive to start again with No.186 and yet they could not conceive of switching engines mid-way for what was supposed to be the same train. We agreed that, depending on the nature of the fault, should No.184 fail we would not object to her being propelled by a diesel.

Thankfully, it, like almost all the conditions, was never put to the test.

With fees agreed, and most of the conditions outlined, I'd hoped it would just be a matter of sitting back, awaiting the arrival of the contract. But in fact the work was just beginning. Between mid-January and the start of filming in April there were frequent phone calls - often three or four per day to be made and to receive. I found myself in a role as middleman between Starling and the RPSI locomotive restoration squad led by Peter Scott.

I had to keep myself briefed with progress at Mullingar and this was made difficult by the Éire telephone strike which meant the only telephone contact between Belfast and the Republic was through direct-dial calls to Dublin - and sometimes it took up to an hour to get them to ring out.

As the filming date loomed large Starling grew increasingly agitated about No.184's state of progress. When we ran into difficulty over the injectors, occasioning much uncertainty and a week's delay at a key stage, it fell to me to break the news to Starling.

I accompanied the Starling representatives on the all-important maiden voyage by No.184, a test run from Mullingar to Athlone on 15th March. We bumped along in a brake van on a freezing cold day, but

we ground to a halt with a hot tender axle box and returned to Mullingar. This was bad enough news for the Starling man. But worse was to follow when it was realised that we had sent his taxi driver blissfully off to Athlone to await our arrival there!

With the start of filming my involvement eased greatly and the loco running department bore the full brunt of responsibility. The signed contract was safely locked away in our bank and the hiring fees arrived punctually.

It had been a hectic and challenging four months with constant activity - overpowering at the time but great to look back on.

One wondered what the members at large were thinking about it all and for me a memorable moment came at the Belfast area meeting in April. We screened a couple of slides of the modified No.184 plus film train with a fine head of steam near Castletown - and the audience burst into spontaneous applause. It had all been worth it.

RESTORATION AND MODIFICATION OF LOCOMOTIVE NO.184 Peter Scott

Before going into an account of the work involved in restoring and modifying No.184, I should perhaps explain why No.184 was involved at all when she was to all intents and purposes derelict, and other engines (in particular No.186) were in working order and could have been used for the filming. In the first place, No.184 was the engine requested by the film company (Starling Productions) when they first approached us, as being the most appropriate to give a period appearance. Second, it was clear from the start that Starling would require modifications to be carried out to the loco to present an appearance compatible with the year in question, i.e. 1855. The Society felt unwilling to carry out such modifications to a locomotive regularly required for traffic, and No.186 was already committed to a railtour programme. Third, Starling were prepared to finance the necessary overhaul. Most important of all in many respects, both the Council and the locomotive maintenance team - particularly at Mullingar - were keen that the overhaul of No.184 should proceed. Without such backing, the project would not have been possible.

When the Society acquired No.184 and No.461 in early 1977, an examination of both locomotives was arranged by myself and the findings reported to the Council to assist with deciding restoration priorities. This examination revealed that No.184 was intact with all fittings available, but that fairly extensive work was required on the boiler, motion, tender and brake system. None of this work was considered exceptionally difficult or costly, that involving the largest capital outlay probably being the replacement of boiler tubes.

Information was also available regarding the engine's most recent appearance in traffic. She had last been in steam for the making of the film "Darling Lili", in 1968, and also for open days at Inchicore Works. More recently, she had been hauled from Dublin to Cork and thence to Mullingar for storage, and during these movements no overheating of bearings was reported. During the "Darling Lili" filming, No.184 had been assisted by an A-class diesel locomotive disguised as a luggage van, the reason being partly the heavy train involved and partly the poor condition of the loco, itself. After such a lapse of time, concrete information was hard to acquire, but the poor performance was generally attributed to slowing glands, restricted water capacity and an unspecified defect in the slide valves. It was also found that the loco had been lifted prior to the filming and the axle boxes examined; at the same time the piston rings had been renewed. The original smoke-box vacuum ejector had been removed and replaced by a Dreadnought ejector together with the necessary pipework.

In order to put the locomotive into sufficient order for the filming of "The Great Train Robbery", it was decided to carry out the following work. On the mechanical side, it was considered unnecessary to lift the loco, for examination of the bearings, but it was decided that the slide valves should be dismantled

to see if any obvious defect presented itself. From the "Darling Lili" reports, and also because of severe wear apparent in the slipper blocks, it was clear that these and the glands would have to be dismantled and overhauled, requiring the pistons to be withdrawn from the cylinders. The big end bearings, eccentrics and side rod bushes were observed to be in a worn condition, but for the limited work proposed it was felt unnecessary to rectify this. The tender brake cylinders, linkage and pipework were severely corroded and complete dismantling and overhaul was necessary. The front plate of the tender, carrying the intermediate buffers and draw gear, was in a dangerously wasted condition and the best course of action seemed to be a complete replacement. It was decided to re-metal one tender bearing, and to replace the cotton waste in the tender boxes by spring pads.

Regarding the boiler, our insurers recommended re-tubing together with building up by welding of parts of the front tube plate. Several washout plugs required to be refitted. The boiler fittings required to be examined and mounted, and a number of studs replaced. Slight buckling of the firebox crown sheet had been observed, together with evidence of leakage from certain crown stays in the same area, but the defect was not considered serious enough to warrant immediate attention. Upon completion of repairs, the boiler would be given the statutory hydraulic test to one and a half times normal working pressure. (The working pressure for No.184 is 1501bs.)

In addition to the overhaul work, Starling Productions required certain modifications carried out to give the locomotive more of a period look. It should be stressed that no attempt was made to have the engine an exact replica of the locomotive involved in the actual robbery, but rather to give a general appearance compatible with the engines of the 1850s. To this end false outside frames were to be added to give the impression that the engine was a 2-2-2 and not a 0-6-0, by disguising the coupling rods. Outside springs were to be added for the leading and driving wheels above the running plates roughly corresponding to the springs already in existence on the tender. The chimney was to be extended to the maximum height permitted by the loading gauge, and a polished brass dome added. The cab roof and sides were to be removed, leaving only the front spectacle plate. A false lever reversing gear was to be fitted, and the engine painted in the supposed livery of the South Eastern Railway.

The modifications were thoroughly discussed both with Starling and CIÉ, and were limited to easily removable additions, or alterations which could be readily restored.

The overhaul and modification work was undertaken on the basis that as much as possible would be contracted out, leaving the Society itself responsible chiefly for retubing, and dismantling and assembly work. Estimates of cost were given on this basis. Society personnel would work at weekends as normal, with five or six coming from the Dublin area and as many as could be spared (usually two or three) from Belfast. It was felt that the largest single job would be the retubing, and since so much subsequent work depended on it, we decided to arrange a concentrated week's work as soon as the tubes became available. The week in question would actually cover nine days Saturday to Sunday, and would involve six of the maintenance team taking leave from their normal employment. Expenses incurred in so doing would of course be reimbursed.

In the event of the work running out of time, or otherwise proving impractical, it was decided that No.186 would be offered as the main locomotive for the film instead, using the tender from No.184. If all went to plan, No.186 would be used as a background engine, the only modifications required being painting in the SER livery.

Although major expenditure could not be undertaken until the contract had actually been signed, work did in fact start in December 1977, with removal of boiler tubes and repairs to the tender. The removal of the tubes was straightforward enough, but subsequent washing out was a laborious process since the boiler had been badly scaled up.

The engine and tender brake cylinders were dismantled and repairs carried out including renewal of the

diaphragms and bellows. The cylinders in question were a standard pattern on the GSWR, but different from the usual type in that the seal is made by a diaphragm rather than a rolling ring. The GSWR cylinder has much to recommend it in terms of simplicity and robustness. This type of cylinder has acquired the delightful term ‘vacuum pan’ and the diaphragm is known as a ‘pan sack’.

The tender reservoir pipework and non-return valves were taken to Whitehead for complete renewal. The tender front plate was cut away as far back as the shovel plate, and replaced by a new section of $^{3}/_{8}$” plate with the various pads for the intermediate draw gear welded on. The intermediate buffers were repaired, one spring replaced, and the buffer housings were fitted with bolts to replace the original rivets.

As soon as the contract was signed, orders were placed for the supply of the boiler tubes and the various items required for the modifications. The false frames and spring hangers were made by John Henning Ltd. at Waringstown, and the extended chimney by Kane’s Foundry in Larne. The springs themselves were provided by the simple expedient of using redundant wagon springs. The brass dome and other details were to be arranged by Starling Productions.

While preparations for the retubing continued, work progressed with the brake gear, and also with the limited amount of overhaul proposed for the motion. The cylinder and valve covers were removed (necessitating, incidentally, the removal of the front buffer beam for access), and the valves and pistons dismantled. Both appeared in excellent order, without any defect likely to cause the poor performance evidenced during “Darling Lili”. However, the gland bushes were found to be excessively worn and one was damaged; these were despatched to Harland & Wolff for metalling or replacement as appropriate. The glands are of a very rudimentary design, there being simply two bushes with the rings of asbestos packing in between; pressure is maintained by gradually tightening the gland nuts. This job was done by the engine crew and not by the shed staff; by all accounts the driver tightened the top nut, which is easy enough to get at, while the fireman was despatched beneath to attend to the lower one.

The slide bars and slipper blocks were dismantled, and the slipper blocks were machined by Messrs Belton at Ardagh, some 30 miles from Mullingar. This was the nearest machine shop capable of such work. The slide bars were closed by about ¼” to accommodate the new slipper block thickness.

The tubes arrived at the beginning of February, and the nine day period referred to above was arranged to start on 11th February.

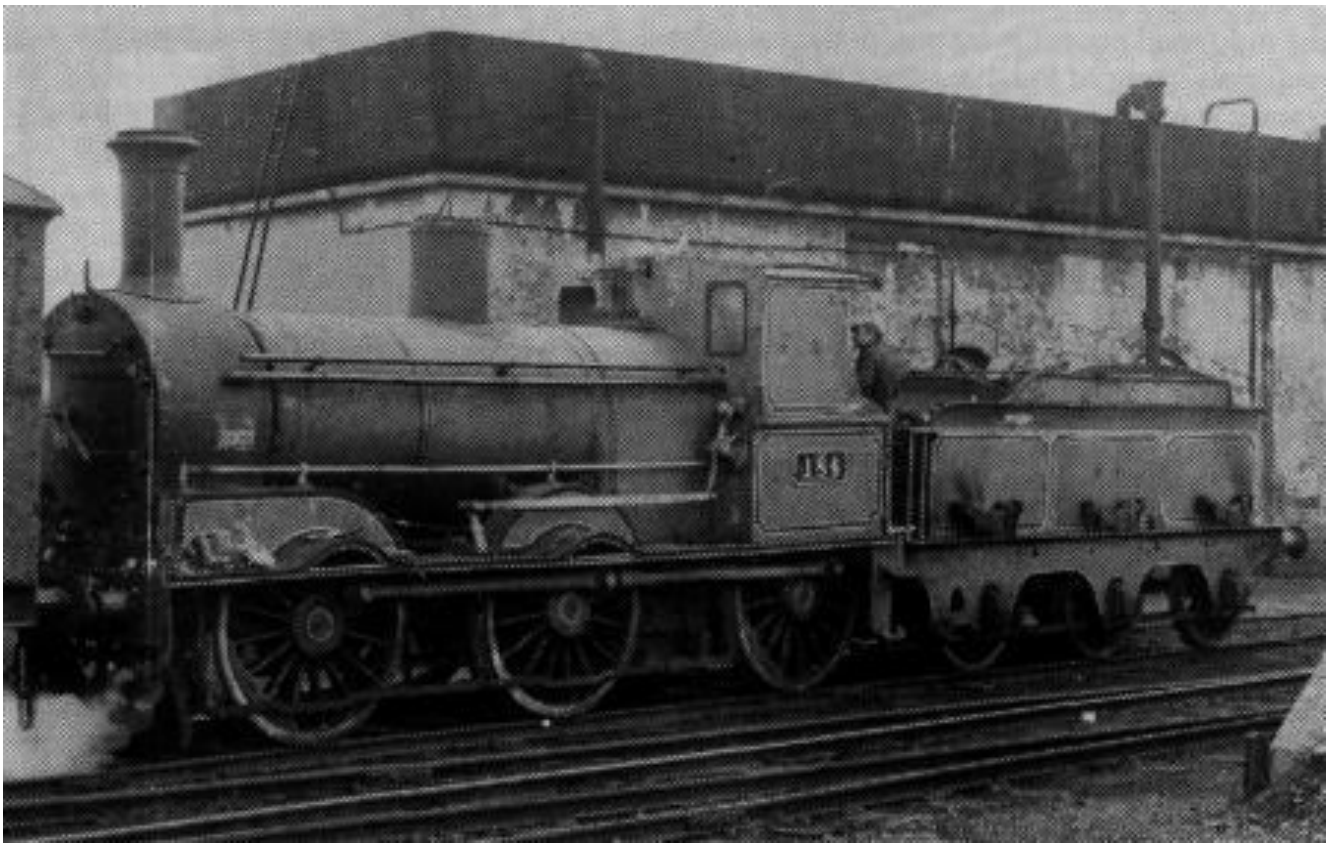
Before fitting the new tubes, it was necessary to build up the lower part of the smokebox tube plate by welding, and the main steam pipe was removed to facilitate this. It was found necessary to renew studs both for the steam pipe and the blast pipe. The actual fitting of the tubes was a straightforward but tedious job. The Society’s electric expanding gear was used to expand the tubes, and this made light of the work once set up. The machine is a cumbersome arrangement, the motor of which is suspended outside the firehole door or smokebox as appropriate. A long telescope drive bar with a universal joint then transmits the drive to the actual expander. The expander is positioned in each tube in turn by the operator, who controls the machine by a remote switch.

The motor was suspended conveniently enough from the cab roof for expanding the firebox ends of the tubes, but the smokebox end presented some difficulty in this case. In the end, the machine was supported from the rafters of the shed by ropes, its tendency to twist sideways being restrained by further ropes. The end result gave the impression that the shed was tenanted by gigantic but very asymmetrical spiders.

At this stage, I should maybe explain the set up at Mullingar. The Society has tenancy of the loco shed on a temporary basis, by courtesy of CIÉ. The shed has two parallel through roads and is capable of taking six locomotives; each road has a pit and the water supply from the adjacent reservoir tank is still in working order. The roof and drainage systems are intact, and three-phase power is available. In these

respects Mullingar is an excellent base for the Society, but there are several disadvantages. For one thing, the shed has no doors and without secure tenancy of the premises this could not be rectified. Also, the only road access is by way of the cattle bank directly opposite, across the main line; any materials brought in have either to be shunted across on a wagon or else carried over the tracks. A wagon was used to bring in the boiler tubes, and the same method was employed for the air compressor.

One of the most satisfactory aspects regarding Mullingar was that the Society had negotiated use of the enginemen's dormitory. Regrettably now closed, the dormitory was still in operation during the film contract and proved invaluable. For a fraction of the cost of a hotel room, the Society's working members had excellent accommodation within a few yards of the work in hand. For this and other facilities we have to thank the Mullingar station staff, from whom we have received co-operation and encouragement on an unprecedented scale.



The first occasion No.184 was steamed and moved under RPSI ownership, 12th March 1978. (David Carse)

The nine day period is to me one of the most memorable in my association with the Society. Not all the memories are pleasant ones. On the one hand, we had an enthusiastic group of Society personnel, all dedicated to the success of the project and prepared to work long hours and go to endless trouble to achieve it. As can be imagined, working with such a group is quite an experience - not only the work, but the subsequent unwinding which normally involved wetting the locomotive's head.

On the other hand, the weather conspired to give us one of the coldest weeks which I have experienced, and in a draughty engine shed devoid of doors, this was no joke. The best we could do was to erect a makeshift screen across the door openings, and to light a brazier adjacent to the locomotive each morning. As an illustration of the severity of the weather, we found when dismantling the valves that a

substance like concrete had blocked some of the passages. We started to laboriously chip this away, but fortunately discovered before wasting too much time that what we were dealing with was in fact frozen mud. It was readily shifted by placing the brazier under the cylinder block for several hours.

Several other aspects of the nine day period come to mind. One of these was the Society's catering arrangements, ably undertaken by member Tim Moriarty. Tim had no other function allocated than to provide breakfast and lunch and to arrange provisions. In addition, cups of tea would appear at appropriate intervals during the day.

This arrangement was a most satisfactory one, and Whitehead could definitely benefit by its imitation.

Apart from welcome interruptions such as the tea breaks, we were required on two occasions to line up in front of the locomotive for the benefit of the local press photographer; I don't think anyone in Mullingar could have been left unaware of the preparation of the engine and the impending filming.

Then on the Wednesday evening we were treated to dinner by the proprietor of the local supermarket - that is to say, the one patronised by Tim Moriarty in his capacity as catering organiser.

On the debit side, the work inevitably took longer than expected. There were several reasons for this, one being problems with the compressed air supply. The first air compressor which we acquired was powered by an engine which proved beyond the wit of man to start. The second was part of a paint spraying set and was capable of only light work. It was used to descale the front tube plate before welding. The third machine was more appropriate to the work in hand, but was not delivering full pressure and made the beading over job very slow.

Once the fitting of the tubes was complete, the boiler was blanked off and given the statutory hydraulic test to one and a half times the working pressure. The first test failed due to numerous minor leaks, but once these had been attended to the test was passed without difficulty.

Once the hydraulic test was completed, the blanking off plates were removed and the boiler fittings replaced, together with the main steam pipe, blast pipe, vacuum ejector, lubricator and associated pipe work. The locomotive was then steam tested. The initial steam test demonstrated that the boiler itself was sound, but the brake would not work and neither injector could be prevailed upon to start. At this stage, the time available to complete the loco together with the modifications was very short, and it is only due to the enthusiasm of the Dublin members of our maintenance team that we proceeded at all. It is indeed fortunate that we did, because the faults were readily located and rectified.

The fault in the brake system was traced to a blockage in the reservoir pipe, due to the fitting of a joint in a manner which I will charitably describe as unusual. The injectors were dismantled and it was discovered that one had a set of badly worn nine millimetre cones, while the other had a mixture of nine and eight millimetre. In addition, the internal feed pipes were badly scaled up.

When these matters had been attended to the engine was again tested and matters were found to be much improved. Both injectors worked readily and the brake was serviceable, although the top vacuum was inclined to fall away during a partial brake application.

A test run was organised between Mullingar and Athlone, but unfortunately had to be cut short at Castletown because of an overheated tender bearing. This was due to the replacement of the original cotton waste by oiling pads, a suitable pad being hard to find because of the restricted space in the axleboxes. Apart from this, the test run proved that the locomotive was basically sound, with no sign of blowing glands or the alleged valve trouble. However, the big ends were found to be very noisy and repairs were reluctantly considered essential. The big ends and the tender bearing were dismantled and the brasses re-metalled and machined by Harland and Wolff in record time. The left crank pin was found to be badly scored and required to be filed and lapped in. Before the next test run, the tender was fitted with a reservoir tank, to improve the brake performance. This made a big difference, the fall in

top vacuum being negligible thereafter.

On Monday 20th March, a further test run was arranged, and on this occasion the engine performed in an exemplary fashion. A test train consisting of three coaches was hauled from Athlone to Mullingar without any problem, barring a slight heat in the left big end (which was expected) and the failure of the right injector due to the ingress of a piece of cotton waste (which was not).

The locomotive was now in a fit state to work the film train, but required the carrying out of the modifications and the painting. The cab was cut down to splasher level as decided, leaving the spectacle plate intact. For protection of the crew when not actually involved in filming, a framework was constructed incorporating the old side sheets and a canvas cover. This was used for working between film locations. The false frames (consisting of sheet steel, stiffened by angles and liberally festooned with dummy rivet heads) were bolted to the running plates and also secured by brackets to the motion plate and ash pan. The extra springs and spring hangers were fitted above the running plates. Starling Productions supplied a double reversing lever for mounting on the footplate, and also a polished brass dome cover of dubious authenticity but undisputed magnificence. This did not stand close examination as it was in reality anodised aluminium. New number plates were also fitted, No.184 becoming 134 and No.186 becoming 136 for the duration of the film.

Fortunately, the extended chimney had been dispensed with by this time, although the work had progressed to an advanced stage and the patterns can be modified to provide much needed new chimneys for both No.184 and No.186 (standard chimneys, I hasten to add, not extended ones).

After several trials and errors regarding the livery, Starling eventually settled on a middle green for the upper works with a brick red below the running plate. This livery is, to give a personal opinion, rather attractive, but the lining out could have been improved.

Upon completion of the modifications, the locomotive was given a further test, and as a result another stiffener was added to the false frames. Apart from that, everything was in order and the locomotive was handed over to traffic just within the deadline set.

Before ending this report, I should perhaps add a comment on the usefulness of No.184 as one of the Society's locomotives. Even though the overhaul work carried out was the minimum possible, the locomotive amply repaid the time and money spent. It has been the opinion of everyone concerned in the subsequent operation of the engine that she is all that should be expected from a J15 class locomotive - unspectacular but easy to operate and maintain and thoroughly reliable. The most serious drawback is that, unlike No.186, she has a saturated boiler and very restricted water capacity, limiting her range to under thirty miles. We may be able to alleviate this to some degree by fitting one of the few remaining larger tenders, but only at the risk of spoiling what is at the moment a most attractive locomotive.

FROM A RUNNING VIEWPOINT — John Friel

When in December 1977, the film contract, which had apparently died some six months earlier, suddenly came alive again, Starling Productions requested that the RPSI provide both No.184 and No.186 for use on the film and gave a rough schedule of filming dates and locations. I had to assess whether enough members of our operating staff would be available to be on set during all the filming and associated light engine runs.

Unlike rostering staff for the annual Whitehead Sunday Steam Train Rides and Portrush Flyer season, members would be extensively required on weekdays. At the last minute, there could be changes of dates (as occurred when Donald Sutherland was taken ill), requests for extra filming days because of bad weather or other problems, uncertainty over whether the engines would be based in Mullingar or Athlone for the May Moate filming (the choice was made very late) and changes in the availability of

our own staff who would cover weekdays by taking holidays or time off work without pay.

Perhaps the most daunting possibility was that of the RPSI representative having to withdraw the engine from the film set because of mechanical problems, with highly-paid directors, actors and technicians with several thousand pounds worth of equipment breathing down his neck - fortunately this never happened.

Enquiries among the operating staff revealed that there would probably be enough manpower available, provided the number of days envisaged was not increased too much.

The pre-film planning which followed was similar to that for a railtour on CIÉ. The Society would supply coal to the various locations and would supply water column bags to CIÉ for erection at appropriate places. Society staff would be responsible for steam raising and fire dropping at Mullingar only, with CIÉ responsible everywhere else. Of course, CIÉ staff would crew the locos but the accepted practice is now for RPSI staff to look after oiling and checking over our locos. We were adamant that all loco movements would be with engines in steam to ensure sufficient lubrication of the cylinders. On long light engine runs, such as to Cork, No.186 would pilot No.184 and the latter would do the minimum of work because of her limited tender water capacity (about 1,600 gallons). It was agreed that the film coaches would be worked by CIÉ diesel between film locations, to the disappointment of lineside photographers, in order to simplify arrangements. RPSI staff would fit No.184's temporary cab before LE runs and would remove it afterwards. The film company agreed to be responsible for cleaning the locos on set; but in practice they never did any. Thus, the locos began the film coated in artificial dirt and they became progressively dirtier as time went on.

During the filming, RPSI staff would benefit from the film company's catering service, which was taken advantage of with relish by all the staff, including a few notable gourmets.

On Wednesday 5th April, a full day's rehearsal and filming took place between Castletown and Mullingar. No.184 ran first LE from Mullingar to Castletown and coupled on to her film train of four wheelers (two first class, three seconds, two thirds and van) for the first time. No.184 looked her best that day, with painting completed and no artificial dirt applied. As she pulled out of Castletown and the film helicopter took to the air, we realized fully the magnitude of the project that we were now an integral part of.

On that day, the tenor of all future filming days was set. There were long, boring periods of waiting around while endless set preparations were made. Then there would be a sudden demand for action followed by more changes in plan and further delays. During the waiting No.184 would blow off frequently and having no cab roof to deflect any of the sound upwards, would deafen everyone in the vicinity.

During the contract negotiations, the film company reserved the right to have their own railway expert on the set to venture an opinion should any faults develop on our locos. We agreed on this, although there was some speculation on the possible calibre of the person the film company might produce - a retired bus inspector being a popular choice. However, our doubts were completely unfounded and the representative turned out to be John Bellwood, Chief Mechanical Engineer of the National Railway Museum at York and former loco running superintendent at York during many BR steam years. Many long hours of inactivity on the film set were taken up in conversation with Mr. Bellwood and his advice on many aspects of railway preservation was sought.

Between the start of April and the end of June 1978, all the filming took place, but in addition, we had the Claddagh Railtour (No.186 with CIÉ stock) from Mullingar to Galway and back) on 6th May and the two-day South Wexford Railtour on 10th and 11th June (No.4 and No.186 to Wexford (overnight) via Limerick Junction). Associated with the two-day tour were the stock workings of No.4 and seven RPSI coaches from Whitehead to Dublin on 8th June and return on the 12th. There was also an Open

Day at Whitehead on 20th May a Larne line running-in trip for No.171 on 27th May and the Steam Train Rides season began on 18th June, the day after No.184 and No.186 arrived back in Mullingar from the end of the filming in Cork.

During the three months of April, May and June, we had one or more locos in steam on 36 separate days. On six of these days there were two locos in steam and on three days there were three engines in steam. No.184 was used for filming on 26 days (18 days in steam, eight days dead) and No.186 was used on 14 days (three in steam, eleven dead). Between 16th and 23rd May, No.184 was in steam and working on eight consecutive days a record for a loco in RPSI service.

We always had a minimum of two RPSI personnel rostered (selected from the steam grades) and this number was increased when two locos were used or at Mullingar where we were doing steam raising, coaling and fire-dropping. No less than 18 members of our operating staff were rostered at various times.

Rostering engine crews was CIÉ's responsibility and they adopted the sensible policy of using the same core of men throughout the operation. Joe Byrne of Mullingar and Morgan D'Arcy of Inchicore formed the principal crew with Paddy Reeves of Mullingar and Joe Murphy of Dublin coming in when a second loco was involved. During the last phase of Mullingar-based filming an Athlone diesel helped out with shunting and so on. Loco Inspector Eddie Cummerford of Dublin was in charge of the Dublin filming with Loco Inspector Eamonn Lacken of Athlone looking after the Mullingar activities.

All of the CIÉ staff would go to any lengths to comply with film company or RPSI requirements and the co-operation was 100% throughout. Many firm friendships were established between CIÉ and Society staff, all of whom we look forward to meeting again on future RPSI tours. One of the many amusing aspects of the filming was the virtual need for interpreters when plans were being discussed on the film set. Various American, English, Belfast, County Antrim, Dublin and Westmeath and mid-Atlantic accents could be heard engaged in conversation, frequently interrupted by 'pardons', 'whats', 'repeat that', 'eh?', etc. Somehow, though, the message always got through to everyone concerned.

All of No.184 and No.186's movements during the period April to June 1978, are summarised in the table below:

TABLE OF No.184 AND No.186 DUTIES - APRIL TO JUNE 1978

Date	Locomotives	Location	Comments	
April				
5th	184	Castletown	Rehearsal Day.	
12th - 14th	184	Mullingar-Athlone line	Filming based mainly around Castletown.	
15th	184 & 186	LE run	Locos plus stores van, Mullingar-Dublin.	
16th	184 & 186	Dublin	Afternoon rehearsal at Heuston.	
23rd	184 & 186	Dublin	184 dead.	Daytime filming at Heuston.
27th	184 & 186	Dublin	184 dead.	
28th	184 & 186	Dublin	Both locos dead.	
29th	184 & 186	Dublin	Both locos dead.	
30th	184 & 186	Dublin	186 dead.	
May				

2nd - 5th	184 & 186	Dublin	Locos dead for night filming, 20:00 to 06:00 .	
5th	186	LE run	Dublin to Mullingar.	
6th	186	Claddagh	Mullingar to Galway and return.	
6th	186	LE run	Mullingar to Dublin.	
8th	184 & 186	Dublin		
9th	184 & 186	Dublin	186 dead.	Daytime filming at Heuston.
10th	184 & 186	Dublin	Both locos dead.	
12th	184 & 186	LE run	Dublin to Mullingar with stores van.	
16th - 23rd	184	Mullingar-Athlone line	Filming based mainly around Moate.	
June				
8th	184 & 186	LE run	Mullingar - Dublin - Limerick Junction - Waterford coach 114. No.184 stopped and shedded at Thurles.	
10th	186	South Wexford	Waterford - New Ross - Rosslare Harbour - Wexford (overnight Rosslare).	
11th	186	South Wexford	Wexford - Rosslare Harbour - Limerick Junction.	
11th	184	LE run	Thurles - Limerick Junction.	
11th	184 & 186	LE run	Limerick Junction - Cork with coach 114.	
15th & 16th	184 & 186	Cork	186 dead. Filming in Cork station.	
17th	184 & 186	LE run	Cork - Dublin - Mullingar with coach 114.	

NB: Locomotives in steam unless specified otherwise.

The only serious defect to arise on either loco occurred on No.186 when her main steam pipe developed a leak. A leak in the pipe's lower joint was suspected on the light engine run from Dublin on the previous day but nobody was too sure until the hole developed during the Claddagh railtour on 6th May. The effect of the blow in the smokebox was to destroy any suction on the fire from the blast of steam from the blast pipe. Despite this, the Athlone crew of Sean Nally and John Clynes with Inspector Eamonn Lacken struggled heroically up the Woodlawn bank in both directions. After the tour No.186 returned to film duties and had her steam pipe replaced after return to Mullingar on 12th May.

In the end, no defects arose which interrupted the filming schedule. This, coupled with our ability to produce the locos in the first place, established a very good reputation for the Society with the film company. We always managed to produce locos when requested, though on one occasion it was only possible because a member of the operating staff was available for duty through being on strike.

Apart from having No.184 restored, the Society benefited from the film contract in many ways. One of these was the enjoyment and useful experience obtained by our own operating staff - indeed several promotions were made possible by the experience gained from the film work. I will leave it to some members of our staff to tell the story of different parts of the filming, but I would like to thank, on behalf of the membership of the Society, all the members whose professional approach and hard work during long hours made the RPSI's involvement in the Great Train Robbery possible.

A FOOTPLATE VIEW **Charles Friel**

Although the filming might be over, and the finished product on the screen for all to see, there are, for those who took part behind the scenes, a lot of memories, not only of the filming itself, but also of the lengthy preparations.

In the middle of April, I was one of those rostered to look after the engine for its second trial run. Having got the engine ready, we eased out of the shed and across the Galway line to pick up a sad looking goods brake van, then moved down to the station to pick up the sundry passengers for the trip to, hopefully, Athlone. It was a bitter morning, blowing hard from the West, a far cry from the soft day of the Kerry jarvey; it was a damned determined day.

Athlone on 20th March 1978 saw No.184 on this trial train back to Mullingar in the early afternoon - the loco is still in the remains of the "Darling Lili" livery. (C.P. Friel)

Joe Byrne and Paddy Reeves made the engine their own, with some help from Eamonn Lacken, and to shelter them on the twenty-eight mile tender first run, we hurriedly knocked together a kind of weather sheet. Running bunk first through Castletown and Moate was a job for the dedicated or an Eskimo. All went well enough, not a hot box to be felt, only the fire in the guard's van wasn't drawing very well despite the many think-tank sessions. The only worrying thing, for the uninitiated, was the sharp clatter from under the smokebox when running shut-off - probably amplified for the frozen few on the van's leading balcony. It was just the port faces and slide valves parting company.

Athlone was reached about lunchtime and the obstinate column at the west end of the platform eventually gave up the struggle and allowed us to fill the tank. With a clean bill of health, No.184 kicked the brake van into a nearby siding and we went into the shed yard to pick up three bogies. The

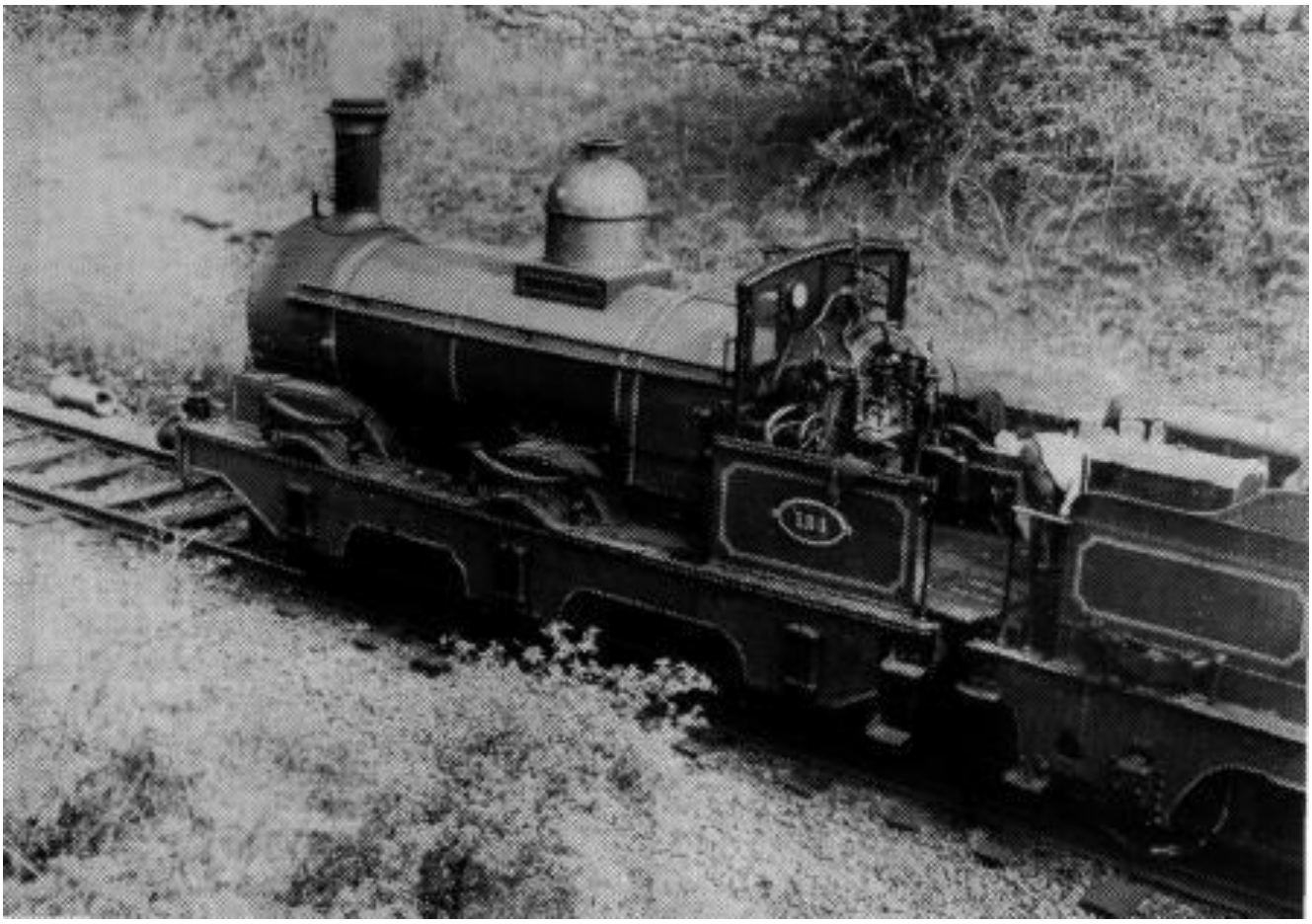
fire got a bit of a clean and we held our breaths as the large ejector was put on. We needn't have worried for the two arms of the vacuum gauge sailed up to the twenty-two pound mark without the least hesitation. Before long we moved the train up to the platform and waited in quiet dignity while one of the latest big General Motors diesels haughtily sailed in and away again with a Galway train. The passenger coaches soon had a healthy complement of passengers and without the fuss and bustle normally found on a railtour, No.184 cautiously moved off for Mullingar. Yet this was a lot more important than many a tour, here was an engine coming back to life after being almost forgotten for a decade. A determined and matter-of-fact kind of run brought us to Moate without any bother. A splash of oil round the motion, a quick feel of the boxes and big ends, a look in the firebox and away we went. It was only then I remembered I had a stopwatch buried somewhere in the camera bag. Midland posts must seem a little odd at first, using shapes rather than roman figures to denote distances but that didn't get in the way of recording some very spirited running by No.184 in her new found lease of life. Bowling along at thirty would have seemed unimaginable only a few months before, yet the watch was recording just such a speed only a couple of miles out of Moate. Undeterred by the rising gradient of 1 in 200 or so, a speed of thirty-six was maintained right up to within sight of Castletown distant and as soon as the regulator was shut, the safety valves lifted in triumph and a cheer went up from the many faces looking into the cab across the low tender from the leading coach doors and corridor connection.

The engine passed the test with flying colours and all was set for the filming and all that that was to involve. My own next involvement was in bringing the engines, No.186 and No.184, into Dublin for the filming at Kingsbridge. The move was to take place on a Saturday since No.184 was involved in filming at Moate during the previous week. The rostered staff for the Saturday travelled to Mullingar on the Friday evening and we arrived in Mullingar just after dark. As we parked on the erstwhile cattle beach, we caught sight of a trail of steam backlit by the yard lights. It was like something out of the proper days of steam, something too elusive for even Mr. Kodak's versatile film. I should mention that I hadn't seen the engine since that Athlone trial and despite having been involved in the modifications since earliest times - producing side elevation photos, references to Crampton engines, digging up what a 1855 South Eastern engine might have looked like - I was quite unprepared for what came next. With the squealing and groaning normally associated with shed yards, an engine drifted into the arc of one of the yard lights, moving bunk first without any steam on. What a vision it was - here was a Dickensian engine, something from an early Hamilton Ellis painting, an engine straight off the side of a pre-war biscuit tin. With a low tender, piled high with coal and prickling fire irons, a high exotically-shaped dome cover, completely hidden wheels and, most strikingly, no cab at all. You could see the fireman and driver on the footplate, with no protection, one leaning over the side watching the road while the other casually started an injector. It couldn't really be happening, it shouldn't be, and yet it was. I felt sure I would wake up, deflated, in a short while and find it wasn't really happening.

Next morning, however, it was happening, it was just the hour it chose to happen that was wrong. Up at half three, the fire was put in and the steam-raising process began; it was just as cold as in real life, the smoke just as acrid as real smoke and the oil holes just as awkward as on a real engine. Yes, it was real after all. For the first time since the Grand Steam Tour of 1964, two J15s were in steam together. No.184 and No.186 were eventually coupled to the Mullingar tool van and a goods brake and we set out for Dublin, picking our way through goods trains, ballast specials and excursions. No.186 was coupled in front and she was to do most of the work - No.184 was in steam mainly to keep the lubrication going.

Our oddly-shaped train only got as far as Hill of Down before stopping, here to meet the down morning Sligo and be overtaken by a special full of scarf-waving schoolgirls going to a camogie match (a sort of Irish hockey with war cries). The settlement of Hill of Down, or at least that bit of it within range of the station, consists of just one building which acts as telephone exchange, grocers, hardware shop and public house. As we waited at Hill of Down we visited this versatile establishment and while many of

the party concentrated on the last-mentioned function, some others persuaded the owner to knock up ham sandwiches. For the princely sum of a pound, I bought four rounds of ham sandwiches (each made up of two slices of bread and two of ham complete with mustard to taste), two pints of milk, a bar of chocolate and a pair of boot laces! The day was turning unreal again.



A detailed look at the modified No.184 in a cutting near Castletown showing dummy frames on the loco, additional springs, the exotic dome cover and new number plate. The additional levers on the fireman's side are hidden by Morgan's jacket while he gets a wash from the tap on the front of the tender. (C.P. Friel)

Leaving Hill of Down, we got as far as Enfield, where we were to take water, and spent a pleasant hour oiling round, trimming coal forward, answering unlikely questions from disorientated locals and being overtaken by, amongst other things, the diesel-hauled film coaches. The run resumed without any bother and before long we were bowling along the banks of the Royal Canal, the Midland main line looking even more like a narrow twisty lane set among high crowding hedges. A fair posse of chasers kept us company right into Dublin and before long we were passing Liffey Junction and staggering forward from colour light to colour light as we headed for Amiens Street. At West Road Junction someone had borrowed a length of signalling copper wire and it was quite some time before the sound of two J15s tackling the short, steep climb round Newcomen Junction was heard echoing round the North Wall yards.

For once, getting into and out of Amiens Street didn't take the rest of the day and just about five o'clock we had run the engines round the two vehicle train and with No.184 running bunk first, leading the cavalcade, we set off wrong road out to East Wall Junction. Drifting along the main line, we felt

people should be looking at us, but few bothered to stop and stare, probably just as well for in Dublin watching a train is usually the prelude to stoning the thing. All too soon the train edged into Fairview diesel depot (formerly the Great Northern's railcar depot, at Milepost One) and the foreman waving a white cloth indicated just where he wanted us to stop. Here we met Jimmy Judd again, the senior man in the squad which usually looked after our steam engines during their visits to Fairview, and before long the shunting and disposal of two engines within a couple of years of their respective centenaries was well in hand and the Society's personnel set about making themselves decent and finding digs in Dublin for the night. Originally many of us had intended making our way home on the Saturday afternoon, for the engines had been in Dublin at mid-day but now with things going on so late we resolved to wait over and see some of the fun next day at Kingsbridge.

No.184 and No.186 on shed at Mullingar, raising steam in preparation for the run to Dublin. (C.P. Friel)

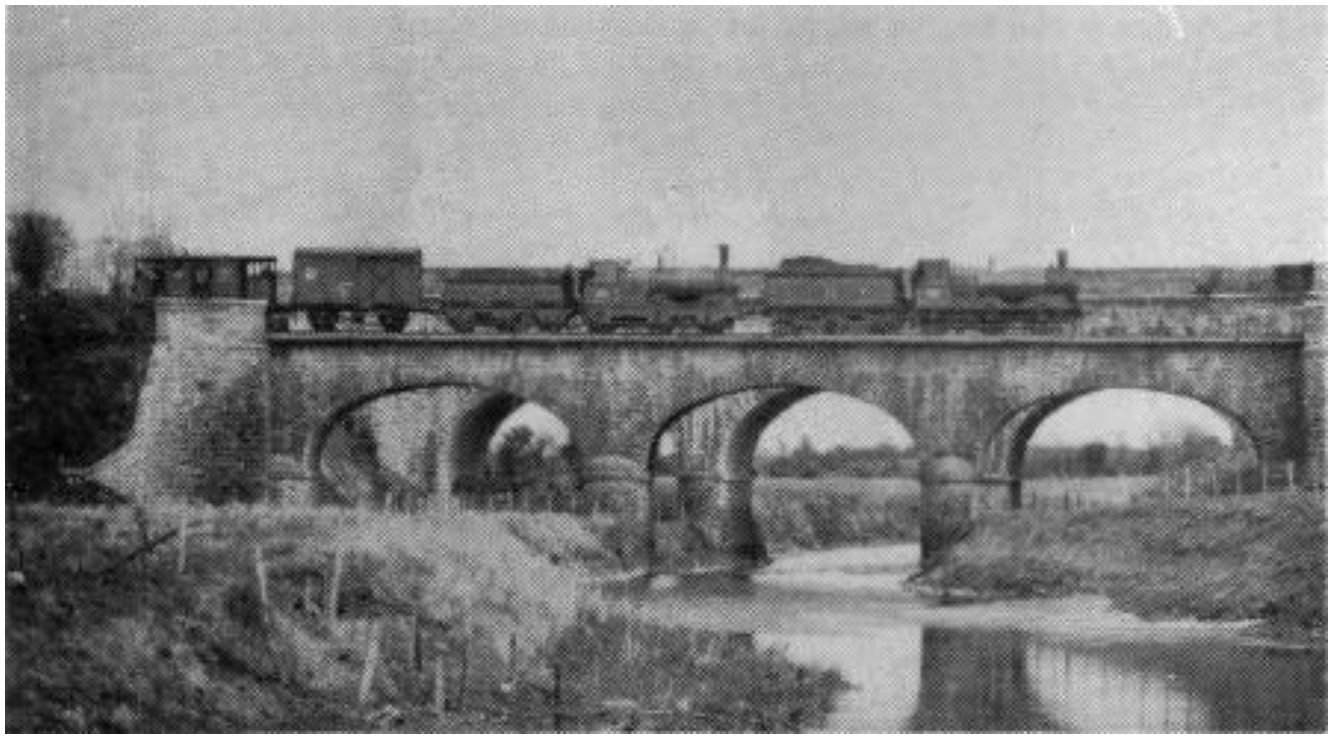
For the filming, platform five at Kingsbridge and much of the concourse and the taxi-bay alongside were taken over and it was to be the ritual during the filming that the engines would be kept at Fairview and be coaled and serviced there, travelling to Kingsbridge for the action. The Sunday (16th April) was to be a camera rehearsal day and both engines and the train were involved. Early on the Sunday morning the same cavalcade of the day before set out to cross Dublin for Kingsbridge. This time I wasn't on the footplate and a worthwhile chase through Dublin followed.

Kingsbridge was transformed; we found the coaches waiting and the engines just put the finishing touches to the whole scene. The coaches were in the wrong order and had to be shunted. For a glorious hour under clear sunny skies, No.186 acted as station pilot, bustling four-wheel coaches around the place, Gussie Leonard driving with the panache of years' practice. It could have been the making up of the down Cork mail in the late forties; there were times when you felt your watch should be showing the year as well as the time!

I had to wait for another month before getting really involved in the filming itself. On 20th May, I

travelled south with a steam-raiser from the Society's operating staff, to take up what could well be a week of solid slog at Mullingar and points west.

Driving through the quiet farming land of Westmeath it seemed unlikely that we would find a resurrected saturated J15 mucking about with a train of four-wheelers, the whole thing being filmed by an American film company working to a seven million dollar budget and with stars like Lesley-Ann Down, Donald Sutherland and Sean Connery wandering about to boot. That unreal feeling was in the air again. We were jolted out of our doubting and disbelief by suddenly coming across, amidst a signpost pointing the way to Lough Ennel, Castletown, Loughanvally and other sleepy villages, a fingerpost reading "Great Train Robbery". Maybe it was really happening in the forgotten part of Ireland.



The two J15s en route to Dublin from Mullingar for filming in Kingsbridge, April 1978. This has since become known amongst railway circles as the five hour trip to Dublin. (David Carse)

There was nothing at Castletown but there was still Moate to be investigated so we forged on, passing the remains of the Clara branch and edging our way down the bustling oasis of Moate. Finding the station was no bother, a pall of engine smoke stood vertical in the still afternoon air. Suddenly there she was, a dirty outside framed engine with high dome and chimney, without a cab and coupled to a long train of four wheelers. There was nobody about, save the usual troupe of local kids and the odd curious adult. Walking round the engine we soon found a familiar face, one of our own members, sitting on the driver's seat keeping an eye on the fire and water level. Everyone else was at lunch - in the goods store!

As nothing very special seemed on the cards for the next hour or so we set off to inspect the train.

The film train looked right from the front, No.184 coupled to two yellow and black firsts, painted very much in the stage-coach style, three brown seconds, two almost-windowless thirds and a van. But the sting was in the tail. Coupled behind this lot was a flat carrying camera dollies, bits of props and scaffolding (scaffolding? ah well, all will be revealed, we hoped). Also on the tail of the train was a bogie flat but with the coach sides only two feet high but carrying the same roof and lantern covers as the rest of the train. This low-roofed vehicle was to be used by the stunt man but it proved unrealistic

apart from one or two instances and in the end all the coach roof stuff was done on top of the proper train using a camera inside the last third, but with part of its roof slid forward to allow the camera to appear through. Right at the end of this now unlikely train was 163, a General Motors diesel of not-quite 1855 vintage. No.184's tender does not hold a lot of water and this, along with the high incidence of propelling the train back to a starting point and passing cameras again led the loco inspector and traffic inspector to call in an Athlone diesel. This coupled on the back and helped to keep the whole thing safely on the road and also help No.184 through the long day with the minimum use of water.

Then, out of the blue it was action stations, the walkie-talkie carried by many of the film crew crackled to life and a voice of authority demanded everyone on board for a helicopter run.

We headed off in the car to find a suitable overbridge from which to photograph the train up the line. Within a few minutes of stopping we saw a plume of smoke, faintly heard No.184's familiar whistle and then the early evening peace was shattered by the sound of a helicopter, flying very low and dancing about the sky above and in front of No.184. The train was doing well over the required thirty and tore past in a most business-like manner - the miscellaneous flat cars and diesel had been left in Moate and this was all No.184's own effort. In a period punctuated by glimpses of the unreal or feelings that it must be an earlier reincarnation, this was just another instance of feeling we had the use of a time machine. Did we or did we not see a man scrambling along the coach roofs, jumping from vehicle to vehicle, just as it said in the book?

The Sunday morning dawned bright and cold and lighting up in a cabless engine didn't help things. Over the next few days, we three members of the Society's staff took turns to do the steam raising, travelling with the engine, fire cleaning, oiling, coaling and fire dropping. The day began for one of us at about half four with the steam raising - not a long job for the boiler was still warm from the day before. Round about six or so the other two would appear to help finish the oiling which was complicated by the dummy outside frames. To oil the cups on the coupling rods meant having the engine in steam so that the cups on alternate sides of the engine could be brought within reach of the dummy axlebox covers which hinged down to allow oiling. It was through this aperture that the engine boxes were also oiled. To do this meant using an oil pump and again moving the engine so that a suitable gap in the spokes could be used to gain access to tops of the boxes. All this toing and froing was usually completed on time, a lengthy business and by about 06:30 the CIÉ crew, Joe Byrne of Mullingar and Morgan D'Arcy of Inchicore, would have turned up and begun their own checks and preparations. Just before seven we would blow for the road out of the shed and the engine would go down to the passenger station to take water. With that successfully done, the steam raiser would leave the engine to get cleaned up and feed himself, to join the operation later by road and probably spend the day taking photos or running messages. Meanwhile, No.184 would set off tender first into the dewy damp of early morning, sometimes coping with fog, for the sun was yet low on the horizon. Depending on the requirements of the film company, we would be working at either Castletown or Moate - during my stint we began most mornings at Castletown where we would edge up to the inner home feeling just a bit miserable after eight miles of tender first running into a thick mist and not much in the way of heat from the firebox.

Once coupled on to the train, we'd draw it out of the siding and up to the platform where we would soon be joined by the Athlone diesel and the engine inspector, Eamonn Lacken. We'd usually spend a while on some minor repair or attend to a trimming, sort out a toolbox or set about cleaning the fittings. The day always got off to a lethargic start; the sound of No.184 blowing off lustily first thing in the morning after the night before wasn't very welcome to some, and at least one lighting man swore he had a brass band marching around between his ears!

When the afternoon's shooting finished, we'd be keeping an eye for the continuity lady who came round with the next day's call sheet which itemised just what was going to happen the next day. Our

eyes picked out the caption ‘TRAIN’ and would read something like ‘No.184 in steam facing Mullingar - in Moate station by 7:15am. Flat car and diesel in attendance’. The film making business is one of such flux and change that it wasn’t until the call sheet came round that we really knew what to expect the next day. The rest of the call sheet set out all sorts of scene numbers and technical details which meant nothing to us. But one could find bits of interest - for instance one of the sets might be ‘exterior Ashford Station’ or the list of artistes might include ‘43 men/women/children crowd’ to be in makeup at Athlone for 07:00 or the helicopter might rate a mention and times. It was all a big jigsaw puzzle and we were part of it.

Our day would draw to a close, so far as the filming was concerned, about eight or so and we would set off light engine for Mullingar, with the prospect of loading coal, fire-dropping and so on still to come.

Coaling wasn’t really a heavy job as Mullingar has a massive fork-lift truck and we used it to lift the coal, loaded in hundredweight bags and sent by rail from Belfast. The area used for coaling is also Mullingar’s fertiliser depot where the bags of ‘artificial’ are unloaded on wooden pallets; while the coal was going on board someone usually gathered up whatever bits of broken pallet there were and stowed them for lighting up the next morning. With a three-man Society crew at this stage of the day, the CIÉ men at last had a chance to book off and we set about disposing of the engine. It was usually after ten when three grimy, tired and rosy-cheeked volunteers booked off, had a quick wash and headed to the local chip shop for a carry-out before adjourning across the street to what was euphemistically called ‘Mr. Power’s grocer’s shop’. By some strange coincidence we usually met the CIÉ men there too, and neither party were interested in groceries! Over a pleasant glass or two of Liffey water, we’d relive the day’s experiences, discuss the engine’s condition, decide how we could do things better tomorrow or just talk about railways. Morgan D’Arcy, an Inchicore man, couldn’t understand how every passenger train he saw on the Midland was called ‘the Mail’ and why there was always a fuss about it. ‘Mister Byrne from Mullingar’, as he was always known on the film set, usually had to live down his latest encounter with the film company’s nurse. Joe was forever polishing the cab fittings and the boiler backplate and one day , when trying to clean the top of the boiler, had managed to scorch his forearm rather badly. One of the film people had properly insisted that he have his burn attended to and dressed by the nurse, a very pleasant middle-aged woman who looked after everyone’s bruises, cuts and knocks. The arm had to be dressed every day, but others on the footplate alleged that Joe was getting it redressed far more often than that! Joe got his own back, however, when Eve Arnold, one of the film company’s stills people and a famous photographer in America, took some stills of the engine crew. After taking a group shot, and a couple of Joe, she went on to take a lot of Morgan. Joe alleged she took only one of him, but took eighteen of Morgan! So the honours were about even, but both allegations came to the fore every now and again, much to the chagrin of his mate and the amusement of all those in the know.

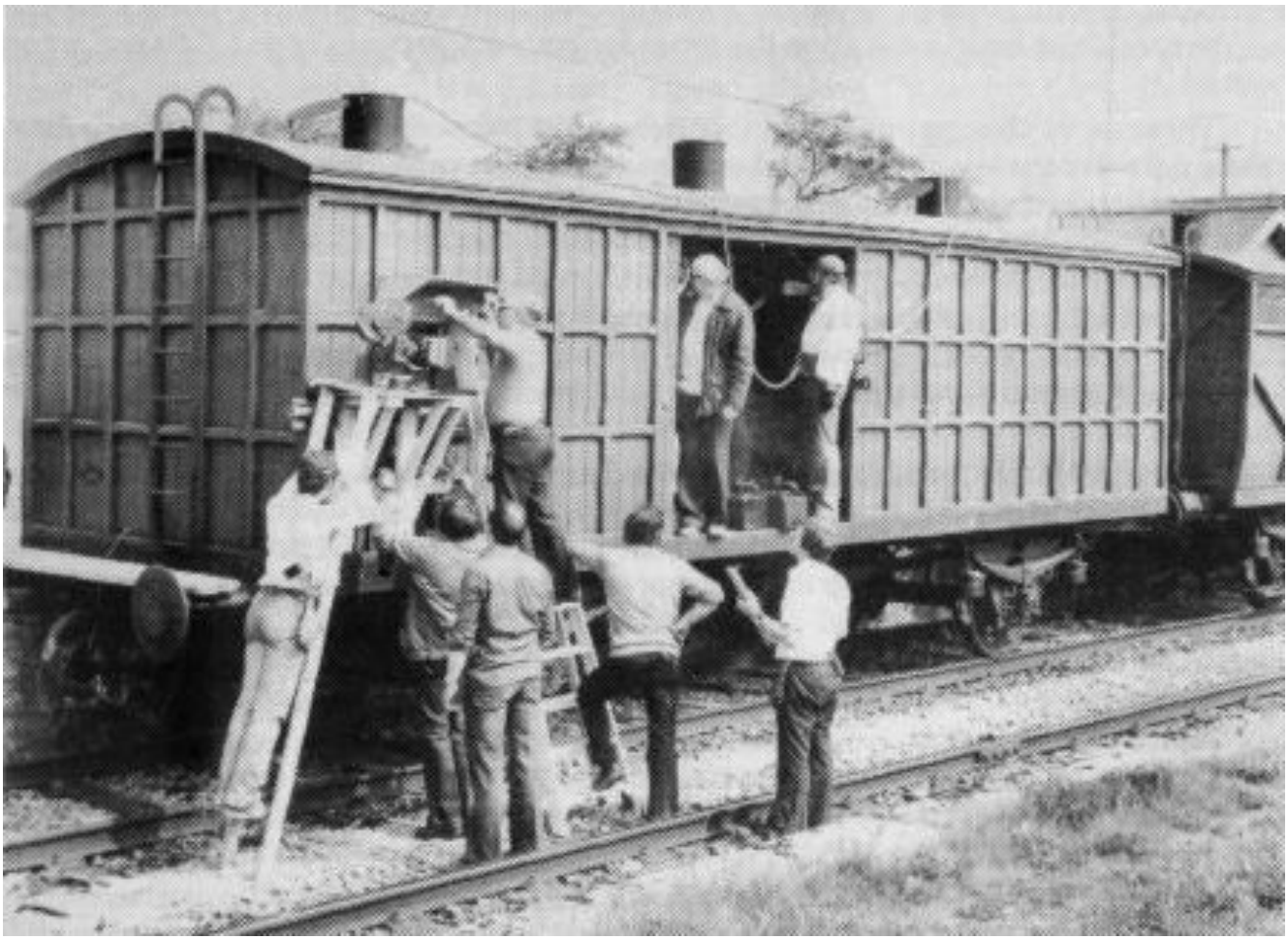
So it was that the evenings were wiled away in the local ‘grocer’s’, very pleasantly indeed, where even the barman’s pleading “Time, now, please” was always followed, sotto voce, by “What’s you and the men having, Joe?”

On the last Sunday of filming at Mullingar the morning was spent setting up for shooting the sequence where the gold bullion is thrown from the train. There were to be shots inside the guard’s van of Sean Connery (Pierce) breaking into the van while the train was rattling along between London Bridge and Ashford. There were to be cameras set up on the end of the guard’s van to film the exterior shots and cameras on the ground at the dropping point to film the bags being picked up. To rig up the cameras on the outside of the van meant building elaborate platforms to hold the cameras and scaffolding (ah ha!) over the buffers for the cameramen to stand on. Knocking all this together took a time, meanwhile Sean Connery and Donald Sutherland rehearsed their dialogue and actions in the van.

Just after a down Knock pilgrimage train had cleared the section, we headed off towards Mullingar to a

small tunnel to see if the cameras and so on would fit through without damage. Nailed to the leading coach was a piece of wood which overhung the coach side by the same amount as the camera platform. We were to do our usual thirty miles an hour through the tunnel while the cameras filmed the action at the rear. From the footplate we kept an eye on the piece of wood, ready to drop the brake should it break. But we needn't have worried, there was plenty of room to spare.

We spent the morning charging up and down four or five miles of line and then stopped just inside the distant signal and set down three camera crews before backing away towards Castletown again. Then with the matter of fact "Take the train to Mullingar, thirty miles an hour, radio silence" over the walkie-talkie, we'd set off and the cameras rolled as Connery and Sutherland threw the Gladstone bags clear. After a couple of takes, the director was satisfied and we set back to Castletown and lunch.



One Sunday morning in May 1978, camera crews set up two camera positions to record part of the bullion drop and its associated exits and entrances. In the doorway on left is Geoffrey Unsworth chief lighting, now deceased, alongside is Sean Connery in his mountaineering ropes, gold at his feet. (C.P. Friel)

The afternoon was to be more exciting, however, for the helicopter was to be used and that always meant great excitement, or so we were told. After topping up the tank at Moate, we got rid of the diesel and the odds and ends, the RPSI men either retired into the train or chased by road and the train propelled almost to the Athlone distant signal while the helicopter began its strange dance just above the trees and telegraph wires. There was to be no 'thirty miles an hour' instruction this time, Joe and Morgan were to go full tilt and get on with it!

Those of us chasing positioned themselves just below the remains of 73rd mile box, taking care to conceal ourselves and our car as best we could. Before long the buzzing of the helicopter broke the silence, followed soon after by the most tremendous racket from the engine. Joe had 'left her out to the pins', the local description for the big valve with full cut-off. It was certainly a stirring sight as No.184 charged round the bend below our position, the exhaust lifting high above the chimney, echoing among the bushes and hedges pushing our feeble tape recorder almost into next life. With the roar of the engine and the buzz of the helicopter, the train swept past charging away up the hill as if the devil was behind her, the stuntman scrambling about the swaying roofs.

Sparing only a second or two to watch the disappearing train we scrambled into the car and set off in pursuit. The road is never too far from the line and we could easily keep the hovering helicopter in sight. Joe had promised Morgan that he would slow to forty (!) for the staff at Moate, and we hoped to make use of that slack to get ahead again. So it was, that after running many miles at well above the overall Éire speed limit of sixty, we drew up, somewhat breathless, at an overbridge, hid the car among nearby trees and watched in disbelief as No.184 burst into view only half a mile behind us and roaring like a wounded bull.

A picture of three happy men, on the engine, left to right, Morgan D'Arcy who did the firing, Athlone loco Inspector Eamonn Lacken and Joe Byrne in SER uniform but CIÉ cap. Various extras and film crew complete the scene at Moate (Ashford). (C.P. Friel)

Again the attendant helicopter circled just above the train, sometimes ahead, sometimes circling behind, sometimes standing still while No.184 charged forward oblivious of its presence making the most tremendous noise as she bowled along with the greatest ease with her 150-ton train.

After a quick pair of shots, we leapt into the car again for what would be the hardest bit of the chase and after beating No.184 by so little the last time, were not too confident of beating her anywhere else. Over the next section, the road and line part company for quite a away but you'd think an Austin

Princess driven determinedly would outpace the centenarian. After what seemed an eternity we got back within the range of the line and were just about level with the engine when helicopter peeled off, the exhaust dropped to a fine blur, and the safety valves lifted! What an engine!

That was quite enough excitement for one day.

The next day's filming was at Moate, renamed Ashford for the occasion. Early in the morning, the props people had moved in and erected signs, name boards, carried in polystyrene milk churns, cardboard trunks and luggage, set about painting the station buildings and scrupulously clearing the tracks of every vestige of the twentieth century. Not a single Coke tin, fag packet or chocolate wrapper was missed, the place was picked clean. In recent years CIÉ have painted their signals with 'Day-Glow' paint, which looks luminous even in daylight. Such things wouldn't be right for 1855 so the painters soon set about covering the signal arms with a wash of brown stain.

Shortly before ten the train backed out of the station towards Athlone and stopped near the distant signal. Meanwhile the station itself was a flurry of last minute organisation. The scene being filmed was the arrival at Ashford and there were three cameras in use. One was on the platform side of the train as people got in and out and so on. Another camera was positioned at the same (Dublin) end of the other platform, at ground level and hidden from the other camera by a few discreetly placed packing cases, travelling trunks and a couple of those plastic milk churns.

For the crowd scene on the platform, there were over forty members of local amateur dramatic societies, all in period costume of course and each with their own precise movements when the call for action was given. Some strolled along the platform while others stood about in casual groups. Porters carried bags around or wheeled a trolley, while potential female passengers waited decorously on the station seats. For the benefit of the third camera crew positioned either in or on the train, a couple of horse drawn vehicles waited in the station yard and the area around the station was cleared of any modern vehicles and for long periods the approach road was closed to all traffic.

When all was in position, the train was called forward using the walkie-talkie radio and No.184 made a lot of smoke and noise as she bustled into the station. On the call of action, the immobile figures on the platform began their planned movements and the train drew in to a stop, drain cocks open and the safety valves just beginning to lift. Fine, that was one shot in the can, now to do it again.

For the retake a camera was positioned about five yards ahead of where No.184's front buffer would come to rest and the crew cautioned to stop in exactly the same place next time. Just in case they overshot, a camera assistant tied a stout rope around his endangered camera, ready to yank it clear if No.184 came too far forward. The zoom lens was set so that when the engine stopped, the buffer beam would fill the screen - should look good in cinemascope!

After the second arrival, the Mail was due to pass through, and restless passengers for Athlone and beyond were finally allowed onto the platform. The local postman trundled his trolley onto the platform, everyone stood clear and a re-engined A class diesel rumbled in with the Mail. Just as the leading van came to the platform, the guard threw out a couple of mail bags for the postman, scattering two of the milk churns like skittles, and knocking over a fragile packing case. Within a few minutes the Mail was gone and the clock turned back to 1855.

For the next retake, cameras were positioned on the carriage roof, first perched on the leading coach, looking forward over the engine and later towards the back of the train, looking down on the platform.

Shooting the arrivals at Ashford took all the morning and in the afternoon there were just some odds and ends to tidy up. It was planned that the filming would finish that day.

For the final planned shooting, the signalman at Moate donned period costume, including a tall top hat - the engine crew were already in costume. A camera was mounted in the cabin and the scene would be

the train tearing past, with him working in the cabin, and the camera would follow the train as it headed towards Castletown. To add interest, the stunt man was to again make his way along the top of the train as it headed away from the station. Fair enough. The train backed towards Athlone and came through at the now customary thirty miles an hour. Just after passing the footbridge, the stunt man had to stand up and begin his movement along the train. In the event the locals uttered a few screams when the coached swayed just as he stood up and it looked as if he might loose his balance.

A few minutes later the train came back to the station to load up and head back to Castletown for final 'wrapping' and departure. On the way the film crew made an impromptu appearance on the tender and filmed quite a bit of the footplate action.

And then it was over. With great efficiency, the cameras were packed away in their own lorry (which was about the size of the average removal van) the special equipment was stripped from the coaches, the Assistant Producer came up to the engine to thank everyone for their hard work and before we knew it they were gone.

Like Cinderella's stagecoach, the scene dissolved before our very eyes, like something that never happened.

We made our way back to Mullingar and coaled up, cleaned the fire and for the first time for a whole week, we put the engine inside the shed. There would be more filming later on of course, but that is a different story.

For our part we were both sad and glad that it was over. It was a grand time on the set, doing something we really loved doing and being treated so well by the film company, but glad too that No.184 had done so well. Compared to her feeble and dishonourable performance on "Darling Lili" she was a different engine - fair enough there were little things to worry about, but who could forget her epic dashes for the benefit of that helicopter or the minimum of attention called for at the end of the day's work. Before long we were back to the ordinary work at Whitehead and the very next weekend were helping turn out No.171 for the first of her trials after having her boxes attended to.

"R.H. SMYTH" OFFICIALLY HANDED OVER — Robin Morton

Locomotive No.3 "R.H. Smyth" officially became RPSI property at a special handing over ceremony at the Society's headquarters at Whitehead on Wednesday 23rd August 1978.

The Rev. Laurence Campbell, the RPSI member who originally privately preserved the 0-6-0ST shunter, presented the engine to the Society.

It was officially received by the Society's patron, Lord O'Neill, and then Mr. Campbell stepped onto the footplate and drove "R.H. Smyth" through a ceremonial white tape which was stretched across the platform and track.

The engine, No.3, was decked out in colourful bunting and had been painstakingly cleaned and polished for the occasion. Nameplates were fitted to the cab sides.

The fifty guests took a short trip behind "R.H. Smyth" in coach 861 which the engine was pulling, train-rides style.

Guests included representatives of Northern Ireland Railways (led by Mr Roy Beattie, the chief executive), Carrickfergus Borough Council (with the Mayor, Councillor Sam Murphy), the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Enterprise Ulster, the Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners, and the media.

The event was widely publicised on local television, radio, and in the newspapers, and the Society derived a significant publicity boost from this.

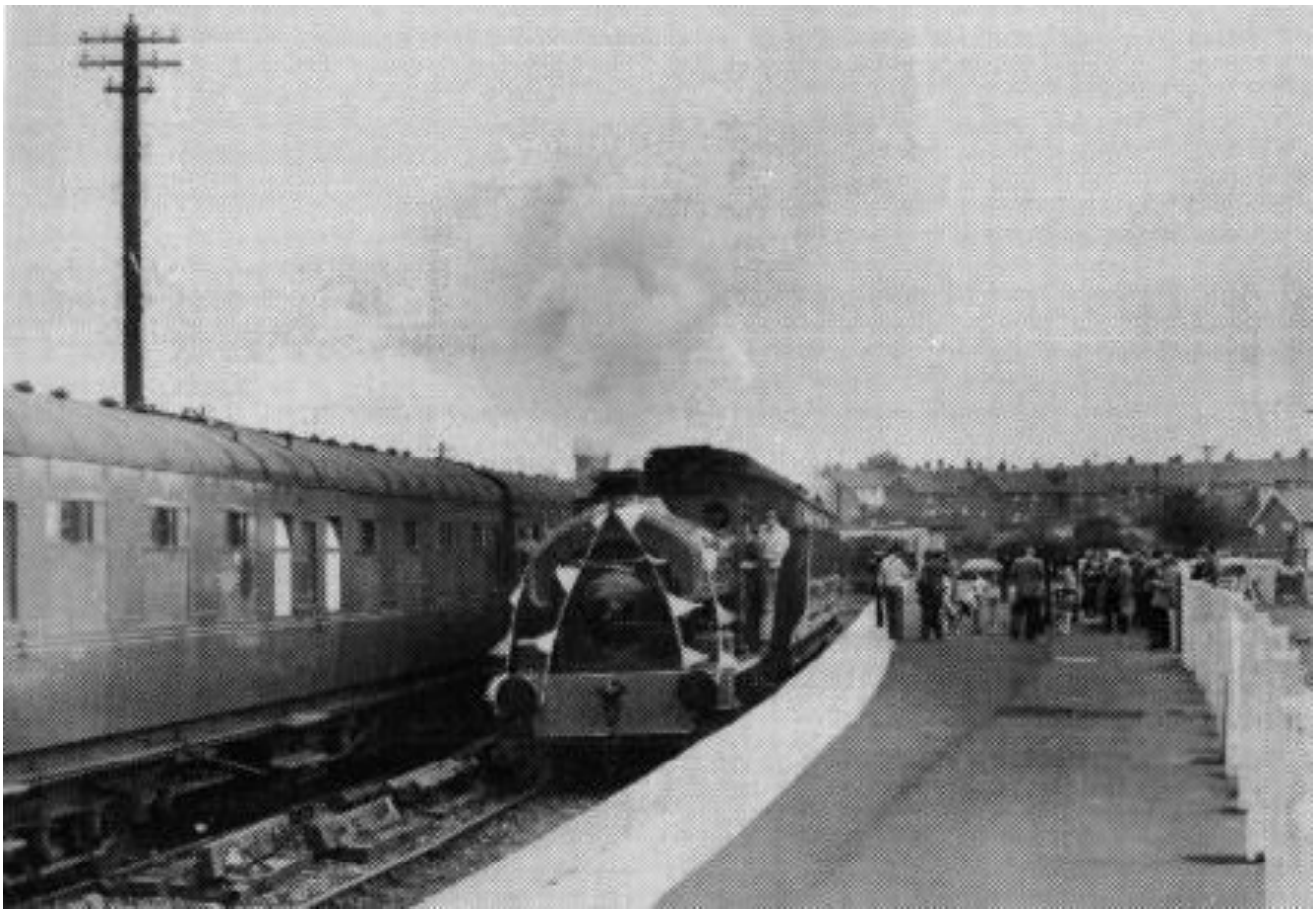
The guests were entertained to a sherry reception in diner 552 and then they had a buffet luncheon in the nearby Carrickfergus Council squash pavilion. Catering was by Call-a-Chef of Carrickfergus.

At the ceremony RPSI Treasurer, John Richardson, outlined some of the developments which had taken place at Whitehead, and outlined the Society's activities.

Mr. Campbell paid tribute to the Society for the amount of restoration work which had been done on the engine and said that "R.H. Smyth" probably looked better than when she arrived new from the makers at Londonderry quayside.

Lord O'Neill said Mr. Campbell had been very generous in presenting the engine to the Society.

"R.H. Smyth" is used for shunting at Whitehead and also regularly works the Sunday afternoon steam train rides in the summer.



"R.H. Smyth" does a vigorous run past along the platform at Whitehead for the benefit of TV crew immediately after being handed over. (C.P. Friel)

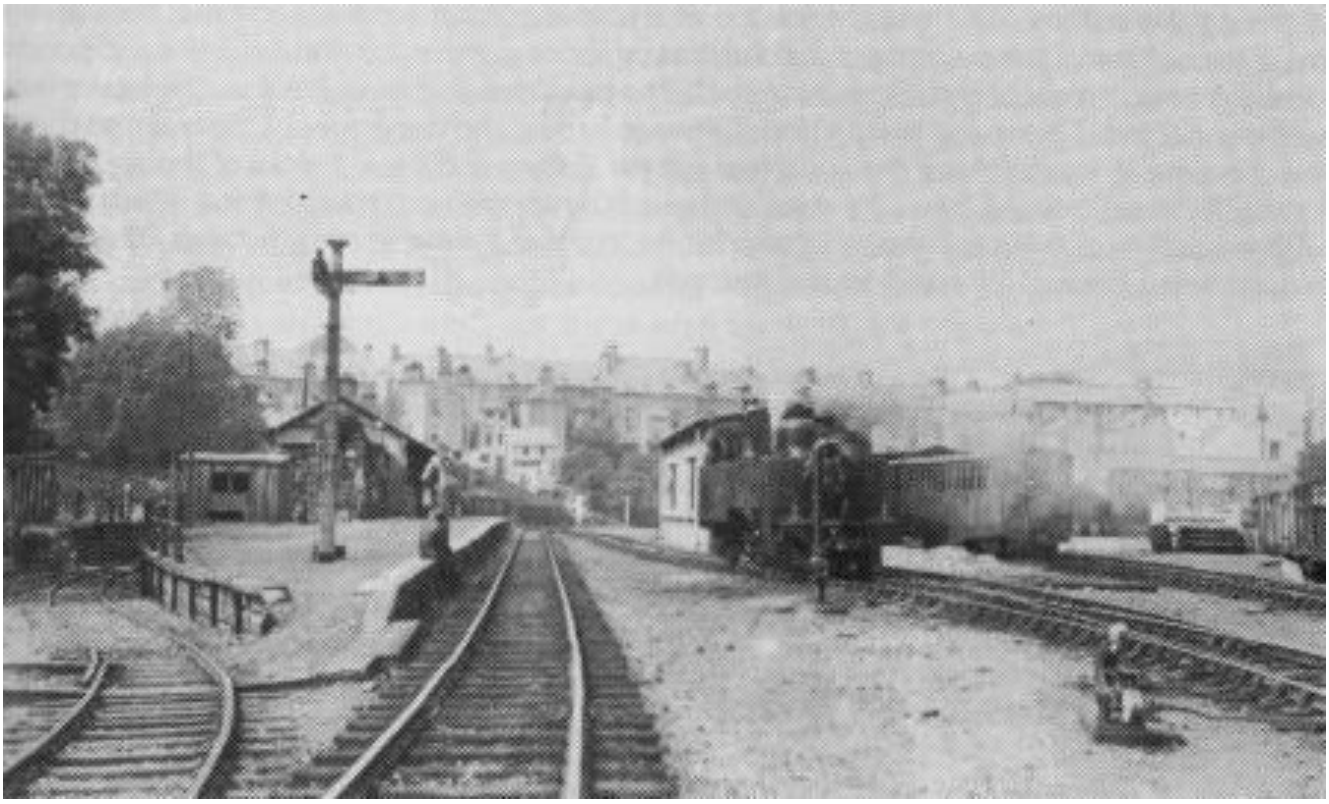
BALLYCASTLE MEMORIES — Ernest Cooke

How far back can one's memory go? As far as railways are concerned I can remember Ballycastle in 1924, and I was then four years old, the details are not very clear, but I can recall alighting from the train in Ballycastle and that the platform was then at the right hand of an arriving train. There was a roof over a small part of the terminus, the carriages were of compartment style, probably six wheelers, and the engine was black; one of the Ballycastle Company's Kitson tanks in all probability. Apart from being weighed on the platform weighbridge, that is all I can remember about that journey which took place half a century ago, but that first introduction to the Ballycastle Railway led on to many more

meetings with it during the following 26 years.

As this is intended to be an article on my personal memories, I will not go too deeply into technical details, all of which have been well covered by persons more qualified to do so.

My second visit to Ballycastle was in 1931, and from then on I made regular yearly visits till the start of the war in 1939. In 1931, together with a school friend who was staying with us in a well known boarding house on Quay Road, I spent a great deal of time at the station, where we were free to wander, and soon got to know all the railway staff. By this time the station had been rebuilt by the NCC, who had taken over from the old company. The platform was now at the left side of an arriving train, and the layout was to remain virtually the same till the end of the line in 1950. There was also a new engine shed which accommodated the two locomotives normally allocated to the line. The other new item was a goods shed, concrete like the engine shed. A small part of the old passenger station, including the covered part mentioned above, remained at the end of two goods sidings, and beyond this was a third siding which had a platform for most of its length. Behind the passenger platform, at its outer end, was a small bay platform, and this was used to take trucks of timber down to a saw-mill.

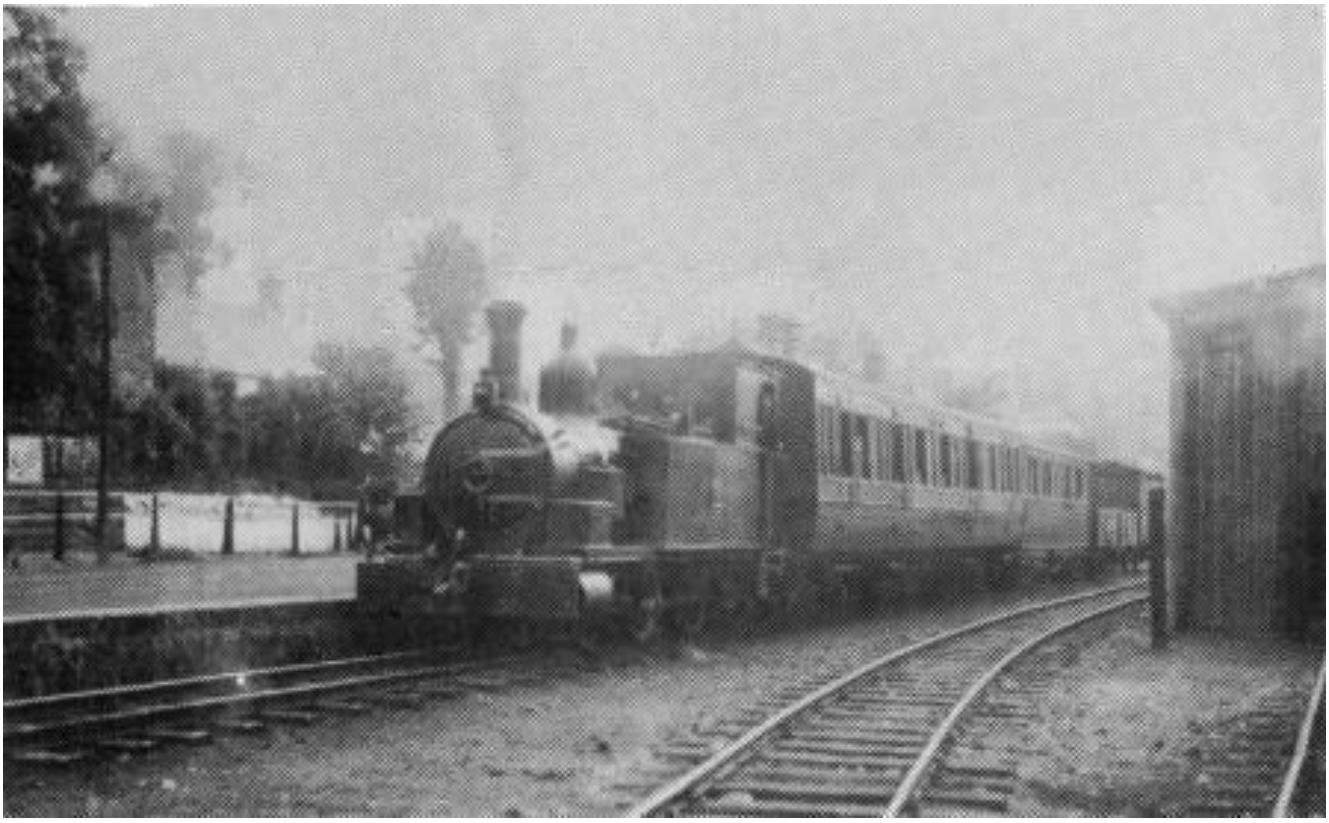


General view of Ballycastle station with 102 running round. Sawmill siding on the extreme left. (Real Photographs Ltd X5732)

In 1931 there were five trains in each direction each day, except for Sundays when there where only two. Indeed this arrangement lasted right to the closure in 1950, and the timetable altered little over the years. I never saw the first departure which was around 7am, but certainly in 1931 I saw the station activity at all other times of the day.

We would usually arrive at the station around 9:20am to see the first arrival of the day. This conveyed a wagon for the daily supply of Messrs. Inglis's bread, which was promptly unloaded and transferred by hand to the horse-drawn bakery cart. I can still smell the fresh bread, mixed with the smell of engine steam. On arrival the engine ran round the train, taking water on the way, and would then take away

any trucks that were at the rear on arrival, and these would be given a push and allowed to run into the various sidings. The guard's brake van was given a shove onto the run-round loop and brought to a stand before reaching the buffers. The guard and one of the station staff would then push the van by hand to the rear of the passenger coaches ready for departure, but if there were any goods vehicles to go, unusual by this train, they had to be added to the rear before the brake van was connected. There was half an hour between arrival and departure of the train, so there was no time to waste. After the train had left for Ballymoney, any trucks of timber for the saw mills were lowered by a wire rope and winch down the very steep incline which ended with a small turn-table by means of which one truck at a time turned through 90 degrees before being pushed by hand to the saw mill.



106 on train at Ballycastle. As mentioned in the article the first coach is an NCC-built centre corridor composite, while the second is an ex B&NCR 'tramcar' vehicle, built for the Cushendall road. (Real Photographs Ltd. X287

At that time the usual passenger accommodation was two bogie coaches; one was an old ex-Red Bay line vehicle with a veranda at each end. It had first and third class, and there was a white wooden notice on the first class part, on both sides, advising passengers that they required first class tickets. The other coach was a very modern NCC vehicle, similar to those used on the Ballymena to Larne narrow gauge boat train. This vehicle had two first class compartments each sitting six people, and two double third class compartments, there was a centre gangway, and corridor connection, though at that time there was no other vehicle on the line with corridor connections. It also had a small guard's and luggage compartment, but the guard always had to travel in his small brake van at the rear of the train. The finishing touch to this superb vehicle was a lavatory for the first class passengers, but I cannot be sure if the third class had one. The vehicle was upholstered in the style used on the broad gauge at that time: I think the first class seats were pink right from the start. About four other veranda-ended coaches were kept in reserve, usually at Ballymoney in a shed, two coaches being all that were required except on fair days.

In 1931 the two small 0-6-0 tanks that had come from Ballymena, had full charge of the line, each working for a week at a time. These were replaced by NCC designed 2-4-2 tanks when the Ballymena to Larne passenger service was withdrawn after the railway strike two years later. This type monopolised the service till the closure, except for a short period during the war when the two remaining Ballycastle railway engines with their disc type of bogie wheels were used, but these engines were not popular.

After the departure of a train, the starting signal at the end of the platform was set at danger, and the home signal which controlled the arrival of trains was lowered in anticipation of the next arrival 2½ to 3 hours later. An arriving train always gave a long blast on its shrill whistle as it came out of the last cutting and ran onto the viaduct above the saw mill, and the engine, running bunker first, and usually letting off steam, would come clanging slowly into the platform.

All trains were liable to convey goods trucks, but these were most conspicuous on the midday arrivals and departures, and this was therefore the busiest shunting time of the day.

In 1947, much to everyone's amazement, I bought a house known as Derganagh (it is now a school) in Ballycastle and announced that I would travel daily to Belfast to my work. The idea of actually living in Ballycastle would have thrilled any railway enthusiast, and I made the most of it, though I must admit that in order to save time I often drove to Ballymoney whenever I had enough petrol. By doing this I could leave my house at 7:50am and be in my office in town by 10am, while if I took the train from Ballycastle at 8:35 I would not reach York Road till around 10:45. In the evenings, if I was using my car I would catch the 5:10 to Ballymoney and be in my house before 7pm. If I was catching the narrow gauge, I either had to get the 3:45 from town and be home about 6:15, or the later 6:25 which meant I would not be home till 9pm. So, much as I loved to use the narrow gauge, I regret to say that I used the car whenever possible. All the same I took great interest in the railway and knew everything that was happening on it.

During the war I made only one trip to Ballycastle, in 1943, and things seemed much as usual, with Barry Limerick driving, accompanied by the fat and jovial MacDuff. The traffic did not seem unusually big, and apart from an odd soldier in uniform, the scene was unchanged.

By 1947 the incline to the saw mills was no longer in use, but otherwise the station was just the same except that the last remains of the old wooden passenger station vanished. There were two or three camp coaches at the end of the long siding, one was an old veranda car, the others were ex-broad gauge six-wheelers which must have arrived by road. By this time all the other 'modern' bogie coaches from the Larne line had been transferred to the Ballycastle line and only one veranda car was available for use, and came out only on Lamas Fair day, when every possible vehicle was used. Usually on fair day the two engines worked together, double-heading six vehicles, though one year two or three coach trains were operating. By 1947 all the lavatory accommodation had been removed from the coaches, and the corridor connections were removed. Otherwise the service was much as before, except that two guards vans were used after a train had got out of control and charged the buffers at Ballycastle. These vans were allowed to be at the front of an arriving train when there were no goods trucks at the rear end.

During the three years that I lived in Ballycastle, there were very severe winters, and during one of these a train had to be abandoned in the snow between Capecastle and Armoy. When the weather was bad I abandoned my car, and more than once my good friend Mr. Hutchinson, station-master at Ballycastle, would telephone Ballymoney to ask that the Belfast express be held as he had a first class subscriber on the train which was late in leaving Ballycastle; never once did I miss a connection at Ballymoney, indeed should I be late in arriving by car, the Belfast train was sometimes held while the station-master watched for my hasty arrival outside the station. Such was the service of the NCC.

Soon after my arrival to live in Ballycastle, the NCC was absorbed into the newly born UTA. At first this did not make much difference, and they even gave one engine a heavy overhaul. Goods traffic was declining, though passenger traffic, especially in the summer, was not too bad. During the last winter of operation (1949-50), however, a real decline set in, and sometimes only one passenger coach was in use, although the service still remained at five trains each way daily. As already mentioned, the timber traffic had left the railway, and in the late 1940s the coal traffic also went to the roads. On fair days there was some cattle traffic, but then this also went over to the roads, so that by the end there was hardly any goods traffic. One business that did not desert the railways was the Inglis bread, which in the last few years of the railway was conveyed in containers.

2-4-2s on shed at Ballycastle. 41 (left) and 44 (right). Note the wicker baskets for coaling. (E.N. Cooke)

Right to the end (July 1950) it was a friendly line, where everyone knew everyone, the two guards, Irons and Devenney, had a kind word for all. When that sad Sunday arrived for the departure of the last passenger train from Ballycastle, there were large numbers of townsfolk to see it on its way. The leading engine carried a wreath placed there by Devenney. I remember walking along the platform with James Mutton, the manager of UTA railways. Even he was a sad man that evening, though I always thought, and told him, that he could have at least extended the life of the line by introducing a diesel service which could have reduced journey time from 55 to 30 minutes. After that last train had left, nobody hastened to put the starter signal to danger, eventually I walked to the ground frame with the porter, and the signal never again went to the off position. The last train, six coaches and two engines was not over full, and the final one into Ballycastle still less. Even allowing for raising the signal, I was able to go by car to Capecastle and see the train emerge from the tunnel; indeed I stood on the middle of the track to photograph the train. Barry Limerick, whom I had warned of my intentions, must have

woken any early bedders in Capecastle when he gave unusually long Cock-a-doodle-do on the shrill NCC whistle.

After the closure, I had not much interest left in Ballycastle, and I moved to Greenisland, where for at least a few more years I could still travel by steam trains, but once the diesels took over I seldom used the UTA. I did return once more to Ballycastle, in the summer of 1951, and saw the two engines (Nos. 41 and 44) sitting out in the open awaiting cutting up. Much of the track had been lifted. I arranged to buy the two locomotive chimneys, and to this day they are still in use, but not giving forth steam and smoke. Instead in their retirement they give forth, what do you think? Geraniums!

A DISTANT PUZZLE — Irwin Pryce

Some time ago in the turmoil of movement involved in the opening of the new Belfast Central Station and the disappearance of two of the city's termini combined with the virtual disappearance of the third, a document came to light which set me thinking. It was a typewritten copy of a run from Dublin to Belfast on 10th September 1918, with, oddly enough, our own No.171. What really caught my attention was that it claimed 107½ minutes running time from Dublin - surely the fastest ever. Was it possible? One other puzzling point was the make-up of the train - all Great Southern and Western stock. How could this be?

In Ireland we are fortunate that a small band of enthusiasts has recorded locomotive performance and history with care and dedication and here was something in the nature of a blockbuster! A record run with only skeleton details in some of the most important places.

Not being easily tempted to put pen to paper, I hesitated for some time before deciding to tackle this article. My motives for doing so are twofold; firstly in the hope that the article might bring forth some facts about this remarkable run and secondly to stimulate the brains of those with an active interest in locomotive performance.

Have not more famous names than mine dined out for years on flimsy bits of unproven history?

The log accompanies this article.

Let us first examine some of the details. No.171 certainly seems a likely choice for such a train since she was usually spare in Dublin, after spending her first three or four years after building in Belfast and before being given to O'Farrell as his regular engine about 1927.

Driver Ryan was certainly one of the hardest running men the Great Northern ever produced and at that time would have been one of the youngest drivers in Amiens Street. We can certainly imagine this young man, not for some years yet to get a coveted place in the main line links, eager to try his hand with a crack engine like No.171 and with a handy train of a mere 121 tons.

His fireman, J. Clarke, was probably the Jim Clarke who later drove in the Dublin top link during World War Two.

The make-up of the train is of special interest. Why GS&WR stock? This might suggest a through working, perhaps from Cobh. The six wheel van at either end would certainly suggest a reversal at Amiens Street. The absence of first class accommodation is a little puzzling - most mainline trains, even specials, would carry a proportion of first class accommodation. Perhaps this was a chartered special?

The carriage truck, a mere seven and a half tons, would certainly have been subjected to a pretty hectic journey - enough to cause a few raised eyebrows in the Traffic Manager's Office, I would imagine!

Could this have been a special in connection with an American Liner calling at Queenstown? This could explain the make-up of the train and the prestige accorded to it.

SPECIAL EXPRESS TRAIN - DUBLIN TO BELFAST

TUESDAY, 10th SEPTEMBER 1918

Composition of train (GS&WR Stock)

30' Parcel Van No.17	13½ tons
30' Parcel Van No.20	13½ tons
57' Dining Car No.2002	33¼ tons
30' Carriage Truck No.755	7½ tons
50' Third Class No.823	24¾ tons
52' Third Class No.885	28¼ tons

Total	121¾ tons

RUNNING

Miles Between Stations	Station	Time Passing Stations	Time Between Stations (mm:ss)	Average Speed (mph)	Remarks
-	Dublin	11:05:00	-	-	
4¾	Howth Junction	11:11:30	06:30	43.84	Signals Raheny
4¼	Malahide	11:15:30	04:00	63.75	
12¾	Balbriggan	11:27:30	11:30	66.52	
10	Drogheda	11:36:00	09:00	66.66	Engine: No.171 Driver: D Ryan
15½	Castlebellingham	11:50:30	14:30	64.13	Fireman: J Clarke
7	Dundalk	11:56:00	05:30	76.36	
		11:59:30			Coal used: 36.24lbs per mile
15	Bessbrook	12:16:00	16:30	54.54	
2½	Goraghwood	12:18:00	02:00	75.00	Water used: 2,164 gallons
15¾	Portadown	12:33:00	15:00	63.00	
5	Lurgan	12:38:00	05:00	60.00	Weather: Fair, stiff head wind
12½	Lisburn	12:49:00	11:00	68.18	
7½	Belfast	12:56:00	07:00	64.28	

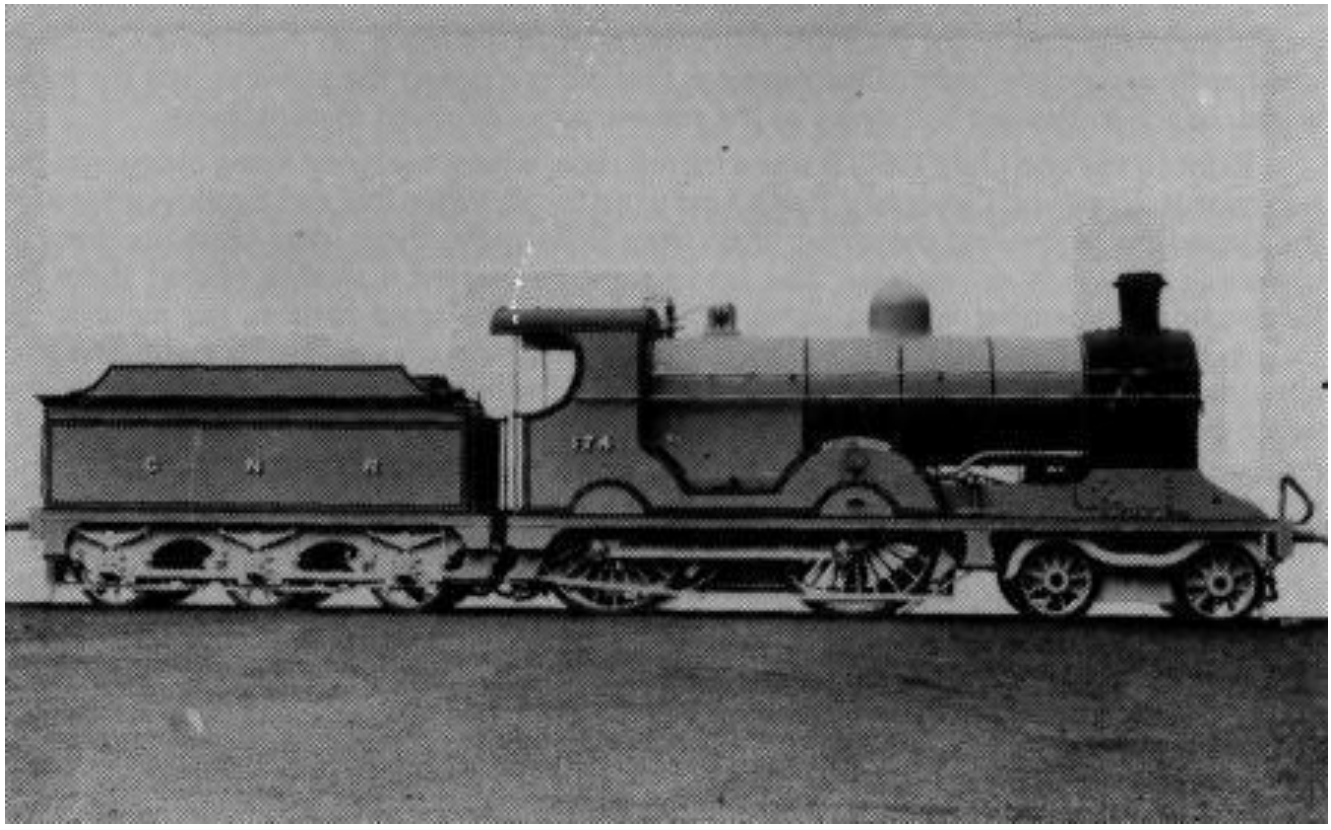
Distance: 112½ miles. Time: 107½ minutes. Average Speed: 63.85 mph.

Now to the times as quoted in the document. The method of recording - to the near half-minute and then quoting average speeds to the second decimal place is of course mathematical nonsense. The only details of the Great Northern's best known speed exploit, that with No.190 and one bogie when Bob Bruce took her from Belfast to Dublin in 97 minutes with a half minute stop at Lisburn were recorded in this manner and seem to stand up to scrutiny.

We could expect the guard to have recorded the time conscientiously, probably with his huge 'Omega' pocket watch, engraved with the company name and number on the back. However, rounding every time off to the nearest half minute introduces an immediate possible error of plus or minus a quarter minute.

In comparison with modern practice where a loss of several minutes would not be expected to excite the notice of either driver or guard, in those days half a minute did count. My father, a lifetime in railway service, tells of Davy McIlwaine, a main line guard in the old tradition who seemed to delight in booking every possible minute against drivers. Such was the engineman's fear of this man that one driver, seeing him approaching his engine, watch in hand and thinking to forestall him said apologetically: "I'm afraid I lost a minute from Goraghwood." Guard McIlwaine replied: "It's all right, it's not lost at all, I have it here in my book!"

To test the possibility of an 'S' with 120 odd tons running to such seemingly incredible times, I have taken what would be a fairly fast time to milepost one, and from there extrapolated her possible progress to each whole milepost the entire way to Belfast. Such a process would of course be a nonsense if it were not backed up by knowledge of what the 170s were capable of. To my own knowledge of steam locomotive running on the Dublin Road, I have added the knowledge and experience of others so the resulting 'log' is pretty close to what might have happened. The interested reader might care to try this exercise for himself and compare his result with mine.



Works photograph of No.174. Note the small flared top tender, bogie wheel splashers, outside brake rodding and additional 'plumbing' to smokebox. (Loco Publishing Company 88118)

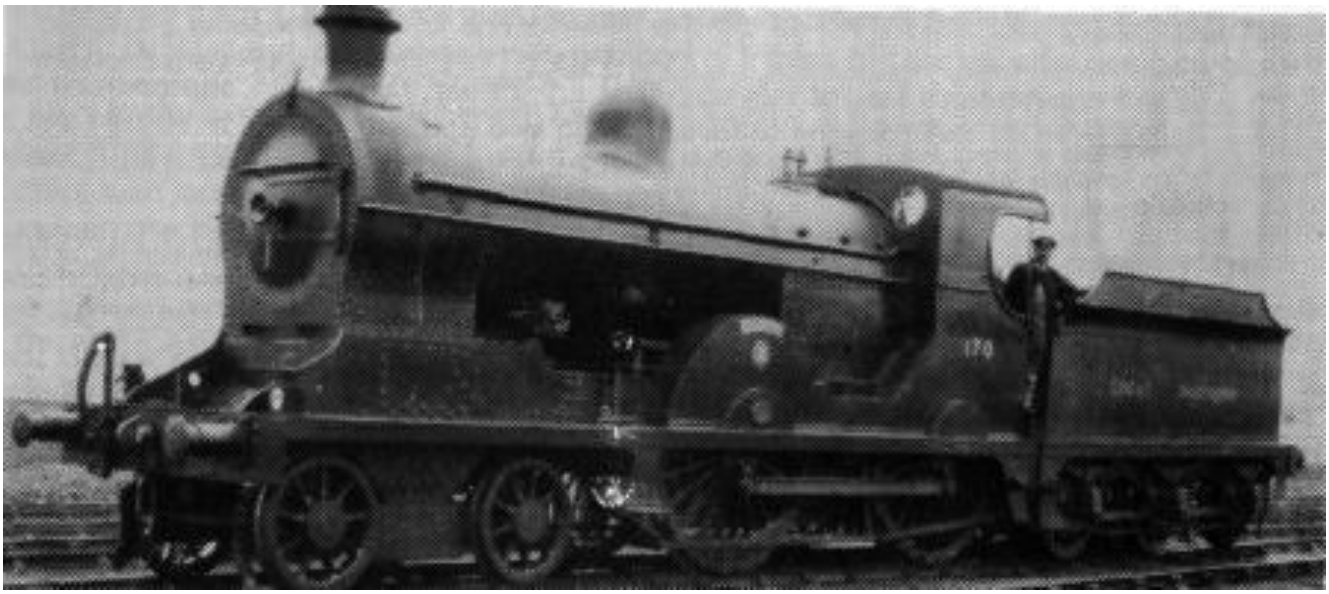
Well, let's see just what might be involved for an 'S' with a load equal to four bogies and a keen crew, to keep to the quoted times.

As a foundation for the log I have assumed a time of 2 minutes 15 seconds to milepost 1 - certainly a reasonable time, for the 170s excelled at fast starts and good climbing, as No.171 continues to

demonstrate. 60 mph could easily have been attained by passing Howth Junction in 6 minutes 30 seconds. The signal check at Raheny can only have been a slight one, causing a momentary shut-off. The gentle fall to Portmarnock would bring her up to about 73 and perhaps 76 on the easy road before Donabate, passing time to Malahide would be 10 minutes 30 seconds - exactly that claimed in the record. With this sort of momentum the three mile rise of Rush Bank could be topped at at least 60 mph giving a time at the summit (post 16) of 16 minutes 40 seconds. Left to run downhill through Skerries and Balbriggan in a manner not often seen in post war years, No.171 could have kept up a steady 75 mph average, passing Balbriggan in 21 minutes 30 seconds (half a minute ahead of the claimed time) perhaps touching a maximum of 78 or so. Even without the hectic approach to Drogheda and the blinding round curves with which some men made (and lost) their reputations, this would see us through Drogheda in 30 minutes 50 seconds, almost exactly the claimed time. Nothing very exceptional here by the standards of the 1930s.

The next section to Dundalk poses a few problems to the researcher, with no times given for Kellystown summit or Dunleer. However, working on available evidence, let's see how the run might have gone here. A climb of 1 in 177, such as that to Kellystown, near milepost 37¼, is just where we would expect a good 'S' to shine. No.171 should have had little problem in passing the summit at at least 60 mph in about 38 minutes 30 seconds from Dublin. Most of us can visualise Driver Ryan reaching up and pitching the burnished regulator handle over onto the big valve and setting the catch on the reverser at perhaps 35% with his fireman having set the feed on the right injector, lifting the flap, then the deflector plate on its curved ratchet handle and starting to methodically feed the fire all round.

With these engines in those days there could be none of the 'heave it in the door' nonsense.



In this 1928 photograph No.170 is in black livery but retains her name. She has lost the bogie wheel splashers and acquired Ross pop safety valves. This was, of course, before rebuilding in 1938 when the class received long travel valves among other modifications. (Loco Publishing Company 24808)

With this treatment we can imagine No.171 storming up the hill with the needle on the pressure gauge rock steady and the water holding at half a glass. Can we also picture that little smile of satisfaction often exchanged between enginemen on finding their mount responding to their hard work?

On the long rollicking descent through Dunleer it is tempting to imagine some epic high speed being attained, but remember this was in the days before the 170s had been fitted with long travel valves and 200 lbs pressure. Since the doctrine of Churchward was as long reaching Dundalk as other works we

really could not expect a maximum of much higher than the low 80s, perhaps 83 or 84 mph. Indeed, such speed for a conventional Edwardian style 4-4-0 would have been exceptional. This sort of progress would have seen the train through Castlebellingham in 45 minutes 30 seconds and a stop in Dundalk in 51 minutes 50 seconds - 50 seconds slower than the claimed 51 minutes. At this point it is obvious that there is some inaccuracy in the time from Castlebellingham to Dundalk - though remember the problems inherent in timing over such a short distance to the nearest half minute.

In the next section the quoted times of 16½ minutes to Bessbrook and 18½ minutes to Goraghwood leave little to spare, even with fast descents then customary to Bessbrook, round the sweeping curves over the Craigmore viaduct and the high embankment at Mullaglass. The quoted time of two minutes from Bessbrook to Goraghwood is impossible of observance and here we must again bear in mind the crude method of timing used over this short section.

The real problem here is that No.171 would have needed to hold about 50 mph on the 1 in 100 climb past Mount Pleasant. Was this possible? Certainly I had seen her hold 44 on this bank with a similar load in her last and run-down days in company service. Common sense indicated that 50 should be possible with an engine in good nick and indeed R.N. Clements in his article on the 'S' class *[S Class Locomotives Of The GNR, IRRS Journal, Spring 1964.]* quotes No.172 holding 53 on the trial run of 8th April 1945.

A passing time of 10 minutes to Adavoyle would involve about 55 at the foot of the bank, a minimum of 50 mph or so and 55 mph on the easier stretch past the reservoir. A maximum of 63/64 mph in the dip and a minimum of 56 over the top would see her passing milepost 66 in 13 minutes 50 seconds. A maximum of 77/78 mph before Bessbrook would give a time of 16 minutes 30 seconds, exactly that claimed, though even a sustained 75 or so on to Goraghwood would not allow her to pass Goraghwood in less than 19 minutes.

Allowing for the customary disregard for the speed restrictions at Poyntzpass, Scarva and Portadown Junction and a speed of 75 mph attained across the bog, Portadown could have been passed in 33 minutes 45 seconds (15 seconds, slower than claimed).

Past experience shows that No.171 should have had no difficulty in averaging 60 mph from Lurgan to the summit at milepost 96. Such progress would see her past post 96 in 42 minutes 35 seconds, and a maximum of 75 at Moira and 77 or so at the Maze would see her through Lisburn in 49 minutes 15 seconds.

Here again we meet some difficulty - the claimed time of seven minutes from Lisburn to Belfast is probably incapable of being kept and a time of 7½ or 7¾ minutes might be the fastest possible. Such a discrepancy could again be accounted for by the difficulty in recording time accurately over a short distance without a suitable watch.

Allowing for this we have a possible arrival time in Belfast of 56 minutes 50 seconds.

Well, all of this gives us a possible running time from Dublin of say 108¾ minutes - rather more than the claimed 107½ minutes. Some more rash assumptions of speed would enable a slight paring of this time, though we would soon pass beyond the area of already proven fact. All the calculated speeds and times have been based with one eye on past recorded achievements and the other on the claimed times so much further reduction in time is not likely.

All of the foregoing begs the questions: What was the train for? Where was it coming from? Why the hurry? Is it possible?

Well, what do YOU think?

These questions, and others, were discussed with the late Drew Donaldson, who subsequently added the following comments:

This article should please those members who want Five Foot Three to revolve incestuously round our own engines, as if no other engines but ours ever ran in Ireland.

Mr Pryce's extrapolations are mostly in accordance with logs of runs made before World War II, when the running was harder at certain spots (e.g. Bessbrook to Goraghwood and Lisburn to Belfast) than it is today. Only the best time I can find for Lisburn to Belfast is about 8 minutes. So I should be inclined to lengthen the Lisburn to Belfast time to 7½ - 7¾ minutes, taking the required amount off the Lurgan to Lisburn time. Logs show that No.171, with only 121¾ tons tare, would not have been pushed to average over 60 mph from Lurgan up to post 96 (the Enterprise, with a VS and nine bogies, topped milepost 96 summit at 60 mph on one occasion in 1953, for example).

The train is interesting being about the same weight (without the carriage truck) as that with which 328 made her immortal run in 1917. That was an Irish Convention (i.e. Ancient Order of Hibernians) special; was this the corresponding train the following year? The use of third class stock bears this out and the 30' van front and rear indicate a train which had reversed en route, e.g., when handed over by the GS&WR to the GNR (I) at Amiens Street.

But what about that carriage truck? 1) How did it hold the road at all (even allowing for the fact that carriage trucks had to be able to withstand a certain amount of high speed running)? 2) Its inclusion would suggest that the train had been chartered by a 'gentleman', though the use of third-class stock is against this. The question must remain insoluble till some more light is shed on the subject.

The official record is careful to give weather, and coal and water consumption as well as the average speed to two places of decimals! Thus one is tempted to wonder if it is the GNR's reply to some speed exploit by the GS&WR. The only locomotive the GS&WR had in 1918 more powerful than the 'S' class were Nos. 341 and 400. Had, say, 341 done something remarkable on the Cork line, or had No.328's exploit of the previous year caught the GNR off their guard? Did they want a revanche for the 1911 locomotive exchange? We would love to know. What a pity that competent observers and timers were so thin on the ground in 1918!

Certainly the log shows what No.171 could (once) do. In 1918 she had only 175 lbs per square inch pressure and short-travel valves. She was spare engine at Dublin at the time. She no doubt didn't put in a high mileage, and consequently was in good 'nick', with clean valve ports. The log sets one wondering what 'our' No.171 could do if her (long travel) valves were set to give a much greater lead and could that be why so much of her work was so mediocre? There is food for thought here, especially as the policy of the RPSI is to regard a steam locomotive as a practical machine to haul passengers (or goods), not a curiosity fit only for a museum.

"NEXT STOP FOR THE STEAMER" — Nelson Poots

In the early 1950s this cry was a familiar sound to travellers on boat trains stopping at Larne Town and was reinforced by an addition to the station name board. Thus warned, passengers for Scotland remained on board and continued to Larne Harbour where the "Princess Margaret" awaited them.

The Harbour in those days was very much railway-orientated, its chief importance being its position as the Irish end of the shipping link to Stranraer. This being so I hope I will be excused the occasional digression into matters which, if not strictly 'Five Foot Three', at least have railway connections. Over the last 20 years or so the Harbour has changed greatly, mainly to the detriment of the railway which has withered away to a fragment of the extensive layout which used to exist there. At that time the "Princess Margaret" was in sole charge of the Stranraer route apart from a brief period of assistance by the ill-fated ferry "Princess Victoria". The successor to the latter was the 'Hampton Ferry', a train ferry

on loan from the English Channel. The car deck of that ship would have been an asset to the RPSI, consisting basically of a 4-road carriage shed with vast amounts of timber inserted to make it usable by cars. Strange 3-wheeled road vehicles frequented the Harbour, one being a Scammel which with its huge wooden cab always looked ready to fall over. Another variety consisted of several small Lister trucks which, with a hydraulic pump, lifted 4-legged pallets and bustled them round the station to the consternation of pedestrians. Their front wheel was driven by a motor mounted above it and the whole assembly was mounted in a turntable which enabled strange gyrations to be performed.

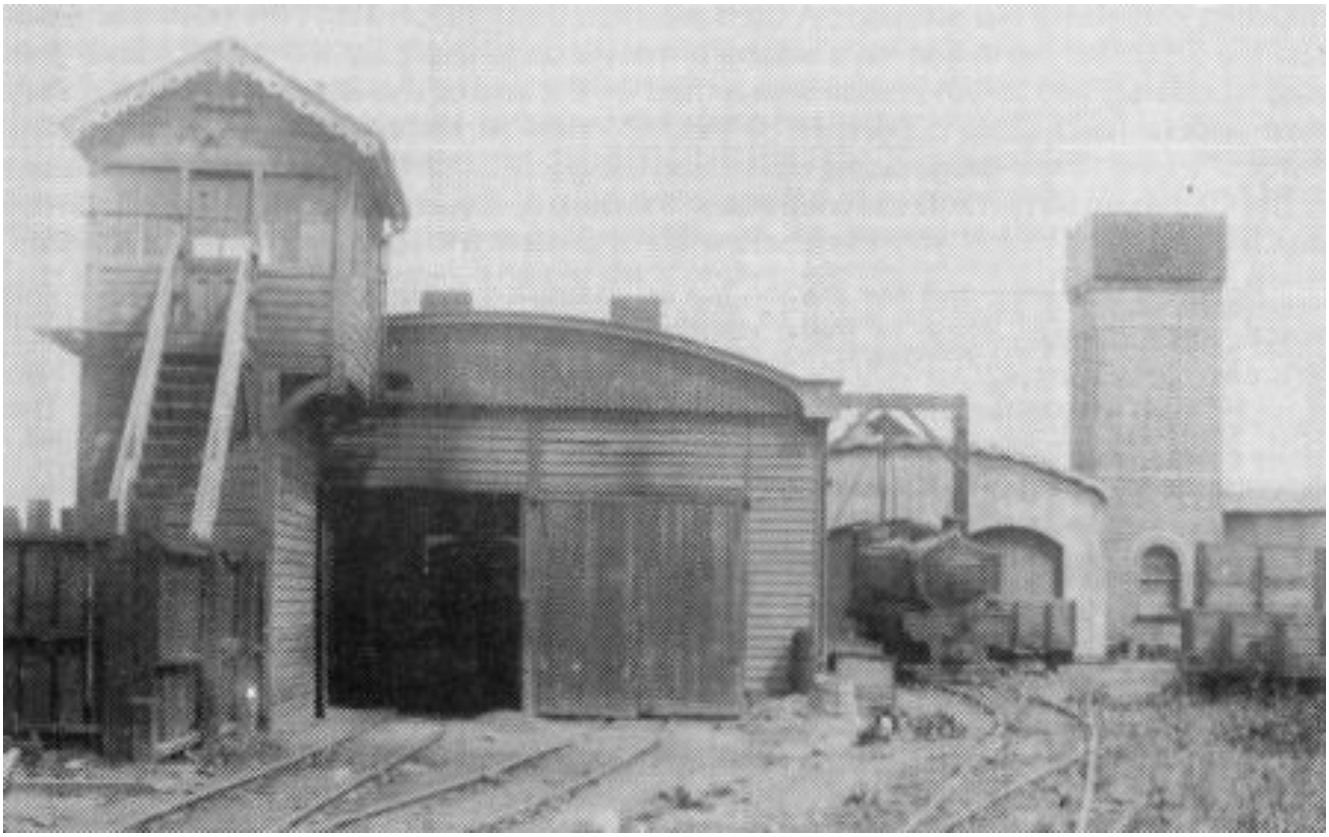
The seaward section of the main Platform is now occupied by the Stranraer passenger terminal. A siding used to run parallel to this on the outside of the station building and between them ran a conveyor belt onto which brown vans and the like unloaded parcels for the steamer. A third road ran from the present NIR container base, past the Stranraer berth and via a wagon turntable on to the quay at the South End. This used to contain two steam cranes with a third on the end of the Stranraer quay but they were seldom used, being duplicated by electric ones. At the northern extremity of the Harbour a long mixed gauge siding ran behind the signal cabin down to the quay now used by the Cairnryan ferry. Little rail traffic used the quay as it was then used by the converted tank landing ships which were the forerunners of present Irish Sea roll-on roll-off services.

Larne Harbour showing mixed gauge trackwork, and an abundance of narrow gauge mineral wagons. (Locomotive and General Railway Photographs, 7367)

In the station both platforms were divided by the roadway but the two parts could be joined by swinging hinged sections into position thus providing the longest platform on the NCC.

Between this area and the station lay an extensive system of broad, narrow and mixed gauge sidings, some of these running down to other quays. Those nearest the Stranraer quay were exclusively for coal, the others being for general cargo and were also provided with wagon turntables, the wagons being moved along by capstan winches. The hardy souls responsible for assembling rakes of coal wagons

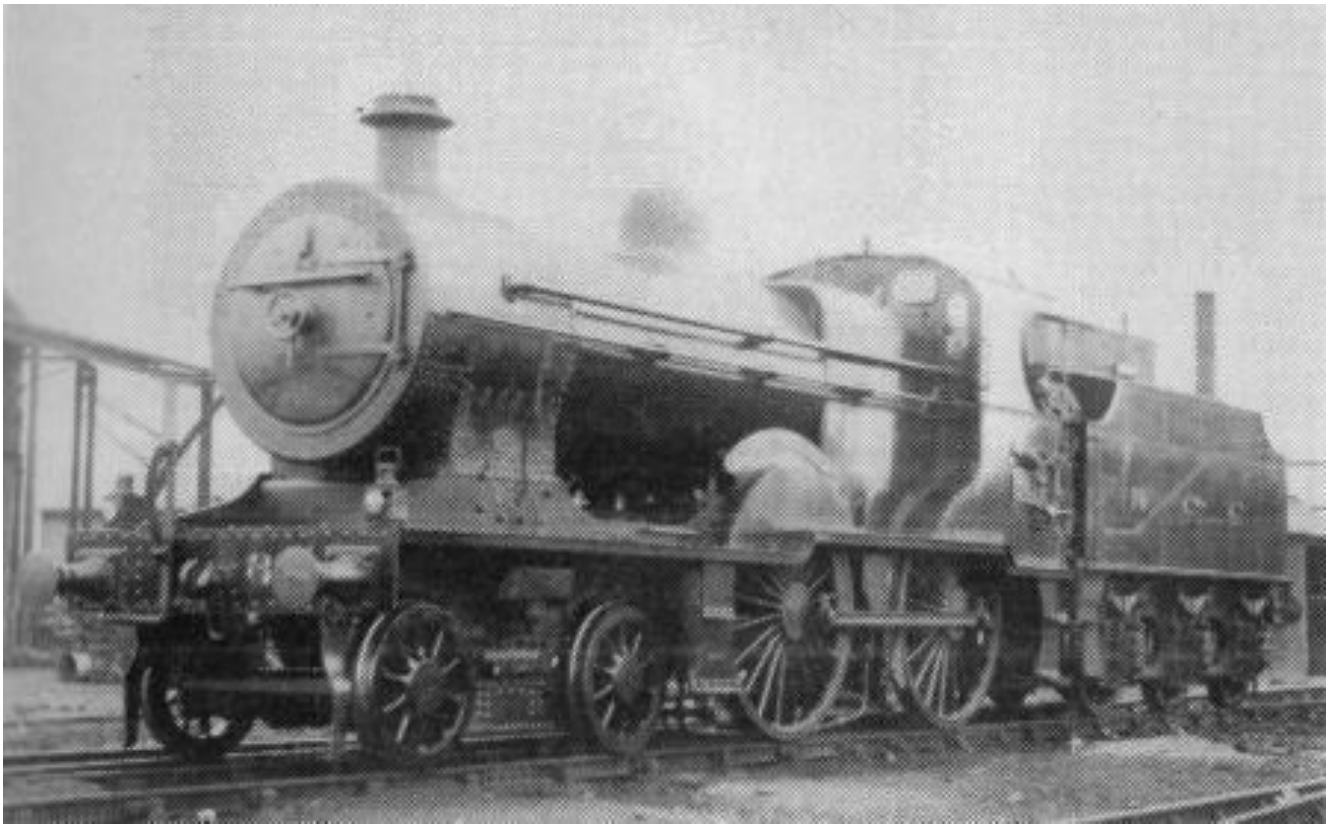
coming off the quay appeared to scorn the use of a pole for coupling and somehow survived the showers of coal resulting from violent impacts of wagons.



Narrow Gauge shed and workshops at Larne, showing ex-Ballycastle 4-4-2 113 under repair. The signal box controlled the narrow gauge line. (Real Photographs Ltd. X305)

At this time part of the British Aluminium works was still in existence. Its sole product appeared to be a red powder reputedly used in the manufacture of paint. This was often shipped out on little Clyde 'puffers' and the traffic imparted a striking red coloration to the quay and all who worked on it. Access to the aluminium works was by two narrow gauge sidings which crossed the road at such an angle as to bring about the downfall of many incautious cyclists, among them the author! The works were the home of three tiny 0-4-0 tank engines, built by Peckett around 1904. I cannot recall seeing more than one in use on any occasion. Generally they worked wagons of coal and red stuff between the quays and the works where most of the sidings faced the Harbour. This presented problems when hauling in wagons of coal. To avoid complicated running-round, a rope with a hook on each end was employed. The engine would be uncoupled and run over the points which were then changed to allow the wagons to be drawn into an adjacent siding. I used to have misgivings about this procedure, fearing that such a diminutive locomotive might be pulled over on to its side but the driver seemed to have the situation under control. This person's uniform was noticeably different from that of his UTA counterparts, consisting as it did of an old gabardine raincoat and a soft hat. I met him a few years later in hospital when he was accompanied by a shunter from Magheramorne who had rashly allowed his toes to share a section of track with a moving cement wagon. The source of the Aluminium Company's red stuff appeared to lie in a wilderness of ponds bounded by a causeway carrying narrow-gauge track of sorts. To get there with a rake of hoppers an engine would haul them out the mixed gauge towards Larne and then propel them back up an alarming gradient and over a bridge between the signal gantry and the road bridge. When a slip occurred the Peckett's already rapid exhaust bore a resemblance to an excited

motor cycle. I don't know what happened to the fire then - maybe it just hovered an inch or two above the bars! In later years the steam engines were seldom seen as a small green diesel had appeared on the scene. No.3 made a partial reappearance through a wall at one end of the works with about 30ft of stovepipe attached to her chimney, the engine having apparently been reduced to a stationary boiler. No.1 is, of course, a familiar sight at Shane's Castle while No.2 rests in the Transport Museum.



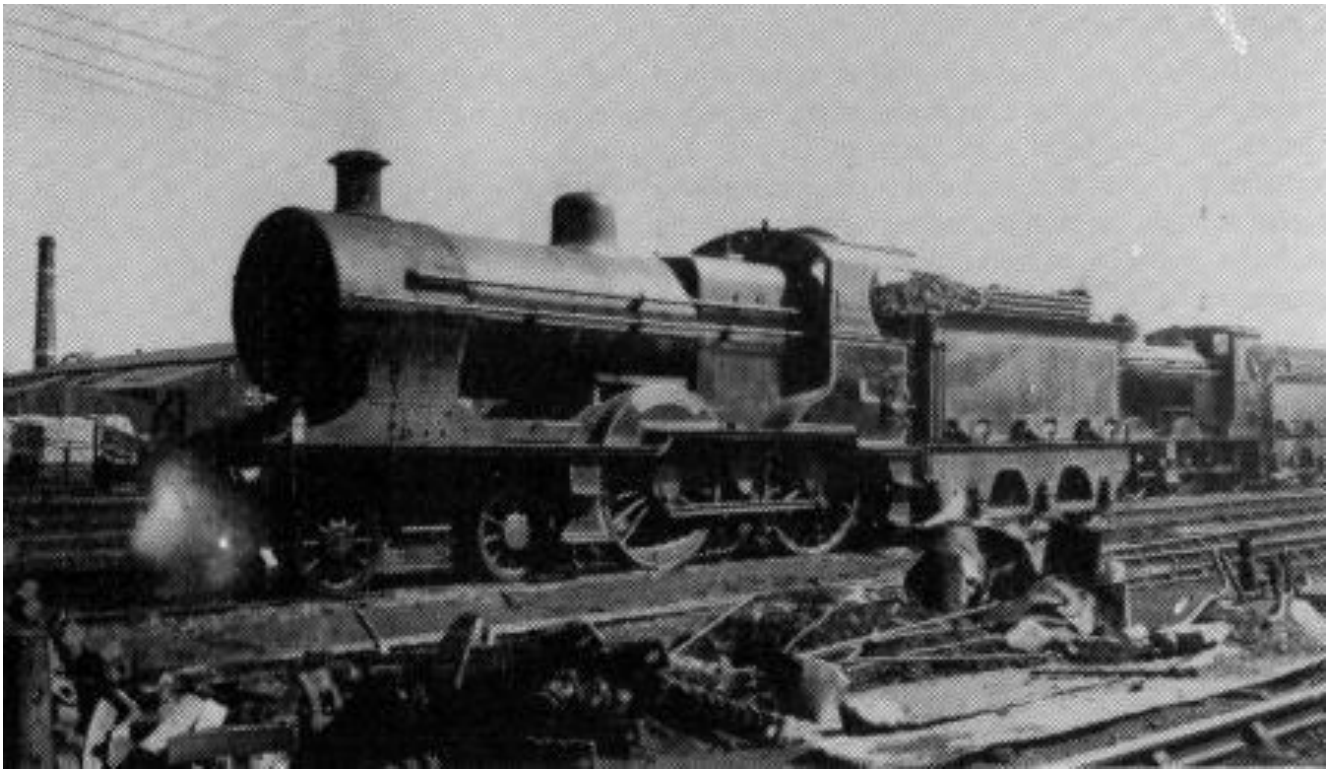
U2 No.80 "Dunseverick Castle". (Real Photographs, X738)

The UTA also had a narrow-gauge engine at Larne in the shape of the compound 2-4-2T No.42. This was a considerably larger machine than Peckett's and was housed in a tidy wooden shed behind the old bus depot in Larne where the former B&L station building was used as a ticket office for the buses. The signal cabin there was still in operation, at least intermittently, and movements between it and the Harbour were controlled by tablet, the machine in the latter cabin distinguishing itself from the broad gauge instrument by a mellow gong like the striking of an old clock. The line was kept open for the movement of coal and raw materials to the paper mill at Ballyclare and had quite extensive sidings at Larne Harbour where a supply of loco coal was kept in larger wicker baskets on a stage near the old cattle dock. The 'wee narrow gauge train' was held in some affection in Larne especially among the older folk who remembered passenger days and trains to Ballymena and told many and varied stories of its activities on the Inver bank. Certainly its departure was an event of great sound and fury, not to mention the traffic disruption caused by the emissions of the engine at the overbridge a short way up from the station. On some days a stranger might remark on two goods departures within a fairly short time but a local would know that it was only the same train having a second go at the bank. With the closure of the Ballyclare mill the line ceased to have any function and I was sad to see No.42 being cut up in its shed at Larne.

My acquaintance with railway happenings at the harbour was aided and abetted by a benevolent signalman who used to amuse himself by allowing me to work the tablet instrument and pull various

levers. The climax of these efforts came when I would attempt to pull off the Outer Home. Just when I thought I had managed it I would be yanked violently forward and there was no answer to this as the placing of feet on adjacent levers was almost a capital offence.

Through my friend I became acquainted with some of the Larne engines and their crews, mainly on the Larne shunting engine which spent a lot of time at the Harbour in the hands of Tom Duff and George Greer. Tom was a large man who seemed to have a tendency to run hot and did a considerable amount of puffing and blowing. He had good cause for this on one occasion when I disgraced myself by trying to mount a moving engine with the wrong foot and falling over backwards. A loud clang of brakes was followed by the appearance of two alarmed enginemen to greet a rather crestfallen but otherwise undamaged boy. Their usual engine was No.80, "Dunseverick Castle", which was kept in fine condition. I remember seeing both it and Jeep No.5 painted in green for a time. No.80 looked much better than the Jeep which I think was unlined and compared rather unfavourably with the more elegant No.80. No.72 had a spell in Larne around that time and No.83, "Carra Castle" also relieved for a while. Compared to the other two it was in poor order with steam and water blowing through all over the place and encrusted boiler fittings. The 'back line' was open then of course and produced such trains as 'The Perishable' which arrived from Ballymena at around 4pm, generally headed by an unfamiliar 'Castle' such as No.87 "Queen Alexandra" with her unique nameplates. Although I came across them elsewhere I can't recall seeing any of the other 4-4-0 classes around Larne, where they were referred to as 'Whuppets'.

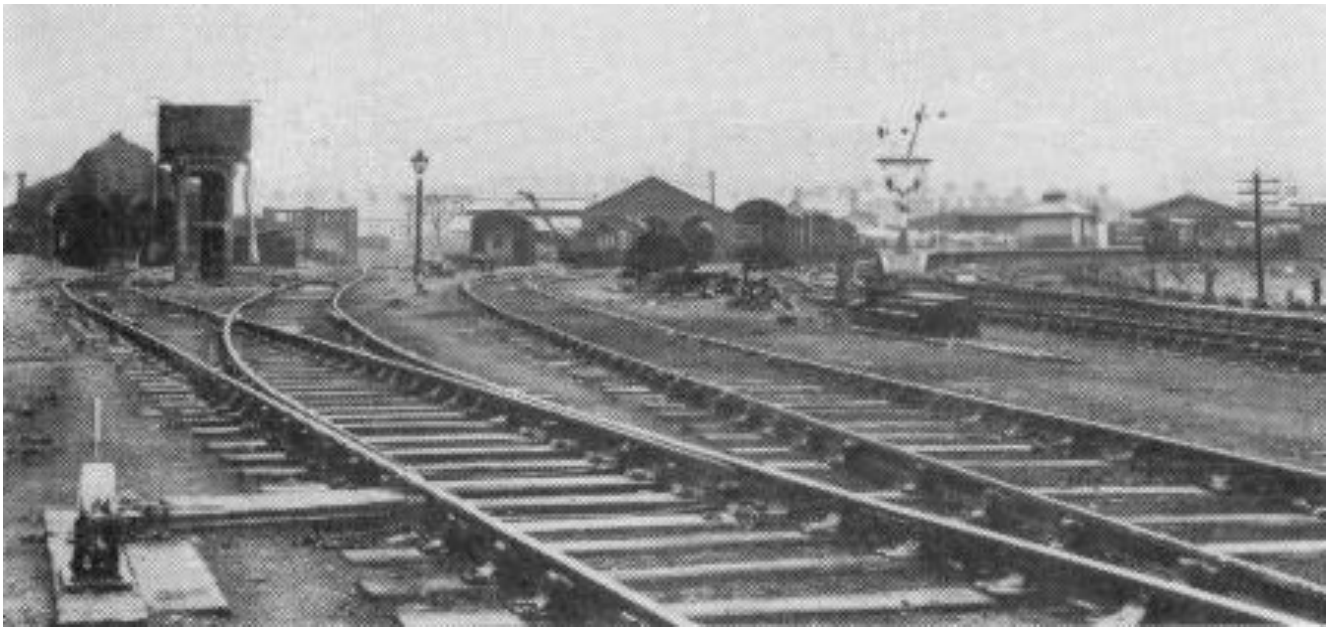


U2 No.87 "Queen Alexandra". Note the nameplates. (Kelland Collection, 24044)

Although it would appear that Moguls, while never common on the Larne line, did make fairly regular appearances, the arrival of one at the Harbour in that period was always something of an event so far as I was concerned. I think my first sighting of one was as a member of a group of small boys on the platform at Magheramorne where an anxious Cub mistress warned of the perils of being sucked in as No.96 swept majestically through. With a name like "Silver Jubilee" how could this fail to impress a wee boy? The loud clankings which often accompanied their slower movements enhanced the

impression of power and magnificence. The same manifestations probably gave rise to other thoughts on the part of their crews! Anyway I was always keen to see which would visit the Harbour and No.91 "The Bush" was by far the most common then although most of the others eventually showed up. I think No.101 was graced with a name around then. 'The Derry' was the most productive of Moguls. I believe this train left Derry at around 3pm and ran direct to Larne Harbour in the summer and on Saturdays, being divided at Ballyclare Junction the rest of the time. I have a feeling that there was a summer train to Derry from the morning Stranraer steamer arrival and this was another good source of strange engines. Some of the incoming trains could be of 10 bogies which was large for the Larne Line. An event always worth watching was the arrival of a boat train headed by the brand new Jeep No.54 from which projected a large proportion of T.J. McAuley of Belfast who seldom seemed to shut off steam until he was at the signal gantry. His rapid entry seemed to be more a matter of enjoyment than necessity.

Returning to Larne men, others of that period who come to mind are the rounded Hughie Pollock, always very tidy and looking as though he was going to his engine rather than finishing eight hours on it; the angular John Hunter, then approaching retirement, upon whose engine I did not set foot, and the jovial Billy Meneilly upon whose engine I did. Billy Smith fired to him then and they always seemed to have something to joke about. The merriment would increase if they were near the signal cabin where Bobby Evans, now senior signalman there, would get involved as well. Some of the jokes were a bit above my youthful head which was perhaps just as well! Their engine, No.51, was kept in immaculate condition although I heard it unkindly referred to by some as 'an oul cart'. Maybe this was only jealousy - No.51 lasted longer than most of her sisters.



General view of railway installations at Larne Town. Loco sheds on left, passenger station on right, goods depot in centre. (Locomotive and General Railway Photographs, 6313)

When a supply of Co. Down engines became available it was decided that one of these would suffice for shunting around Larne and so 4-4-2Ts 217 and 230 both got a spell there. They seemed to cope with the work alright although their crews must have found their enclosed cabs a change from the lofty eminence of a U2. Dreadful tales of stalling with coal trains were circulated and no-one seemed to have a good word for them, no doubt largely due to a firm belief in the inferiority of non-NCC material. Their use on heavy goods traffic was hardly envisaged when they were built although the same would apply to the 'Scotch' engines which nevertheless spent a lot of time on such duties in their declining

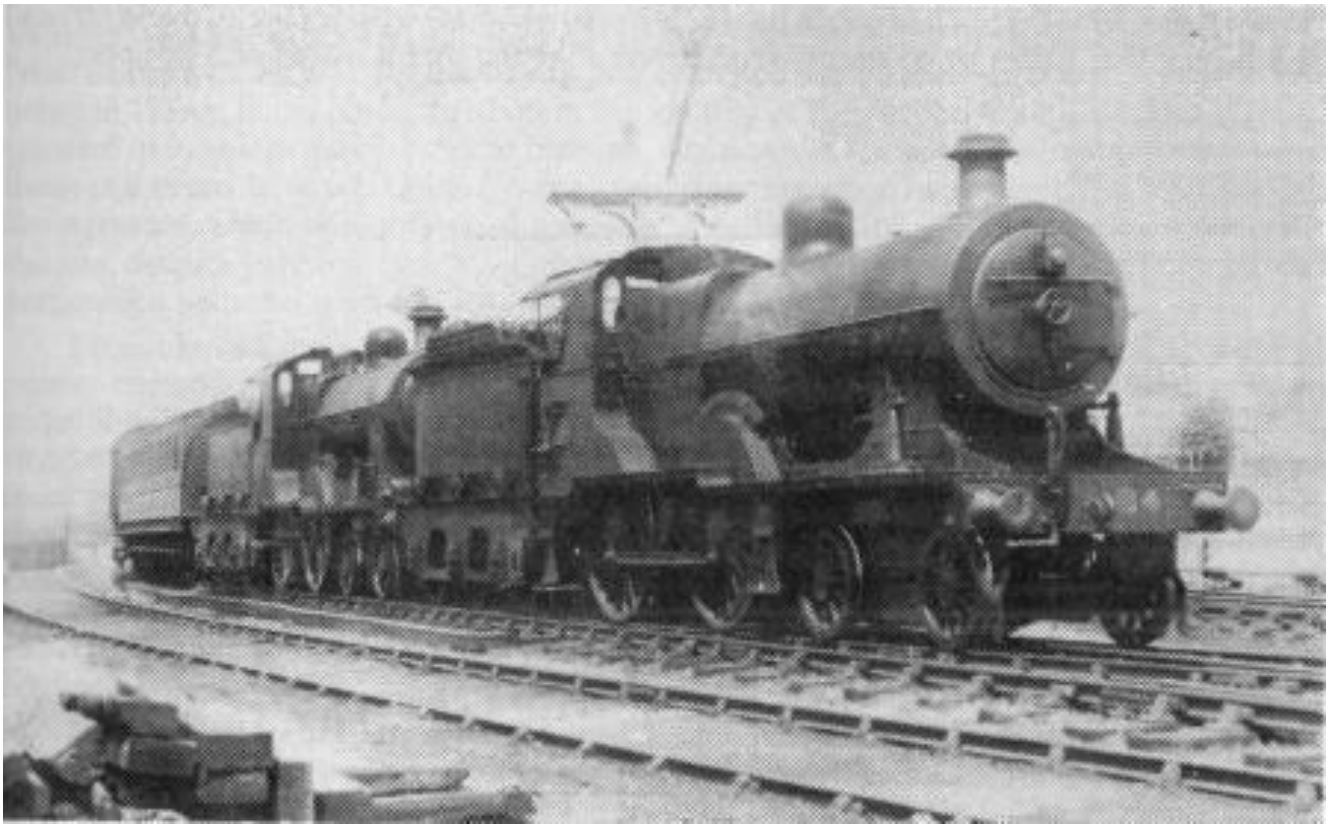
years. I have a vivid recollection of one of the Co. Down tanks leaving the Harbour in an unusually dramatic manner on a 4 or 5 bogie evening train which was the means by which the Larne shunting engine got to Belfast for coaling. A crew change may have been involved on this occasion. The driver appeared to be unfavourably impressed by the response he got when starting whereupon he set the engine to work so furiously as to cause the entire station staff to leave their various tasks and gaze in awe at the antics of this hitherto placid little engine. How long the boiler kept up with this treatment is not recorded. Perhaps the fireman, thinking of another 20 miles with several stops, may have succeeded in cooling the passions of his mate. An occasional evening visitor was Harlandic diesel No.17. I haven't seen it mentioned in any writings on the Larne line. It was seldom seen and there may have been a good reason for this.

As this article relies at least 95% on the author's memory it can only give a broad outline of the scene. A detailed account of workings could not be attempted without research which might result in the article never seeing the light of day. However, I think it is correct to say that with the 'rationalisation' of railway operations more trains now terminate at the Harbour than in the early 1950s when the majority got no further than Larne Town. The average passenger train was about five bogies and the use of predominantly compartment stock induced a proprietary attitude in regular travellers. Few trains escaped the attachment of at least one of the well known NCC 'brown vans' and some could have more vans than coaches. Late trains from Belfast often had a tail of flat wagons bearing assorted bakery containers giving forth a pleasant warm aroma. These stopped at Larne Town as did most wagons with the aroma of cattle as the goods yard and the market yard were only a few yards apart. A few stragglers plus an occasional horsebox got as far as the harbour. Still on the subject of smells, the "Princess Margaret" appeared to carry a considerable quantity of fish in boxes to be loaded on to suitably placed brown vans. Indeed, the steamer gave forth and received great quantities of parcels and crates of all shapes and sizes, some travelling by the conveyor belt and others, on pallets, being handled by crane. These were carried in vans of all types and the seaward end of No.2 platform was often occupied by a string of these. The difference in usage led to the track in No.2 being dry and dusty compared to No.1 which was sprinkled with locomotive droppings. The Motor Van, which was not allowed under the Queen's Bridge, made occasional visits presumably to load or unload a car at some part of the yard with end-loading facilities but I never saw that happening. Other vehicles such as farm machines travelled less stylishly on open wagons in goods trains. Square brown BR containers, covered in hieroglyphics, were carried on whatever type of open wagon was available. Not long after this period the container business expanded but appeared to be ignored by the railway, which has always puzzled me as this seemed an ideal type of load. It was left to the road haulage side to base a large fleet of articulated units at Larne to work a shuttle service to and from Whitla Street and Grosvenor Road depots.

The afternoon 'perishable' off the main line presumably contained foodstuffs and other urgent parcels. I remember seeing numerous baskets of mushrooms bouncing along on Lister trucks and thinking them likely to perish at any moment.

On the purely goods side the UTA did not appear to sport a great variety of wagons, almost all trains being composed of grey 4-wheeled vans and 7, 10 and 12 ton open wagons which could be either grey or brown, the latter being a different shade from the 'brown vans'! Most trains either gained or lost wagons when they called at Larne Town and the shunting engine appeared to move around wherever the work was, without any fixed pattern, and with occasional exchange trips between the two stations. As far as through goods trains of coal, etc., are concerned I am afraid my memory has failed me. All my recollections of goods workings seem to involve the Larne pilot. Coal is now no longer imported through Larne Harbour but at that time it formed a large part of the traffic through the port, much of it arriving in ships owned by John Kelly which then bore more interesting names like Moyallon or Clandeboye or Parknasilla. The smaller fleet of Howdens Ltd. was strictly Co. Antrim, e.g. Finvoy and

Gracehill. The latter firm operated the Bank Quays, just south of Larne Town, where all coal traffic is now concentrated and handled by lorry, the sidings facing Larne Town having been lifted. A steam lorry could be seen lying disused in a yard below the main line until about the mid-fifties. In the absence of definite information I would imagine that coal imported through Larne would have had a wide distribution in Co. Antrim due to the position of the Belfast coal quays on the Co. Down side of the Lagan. A considerable amount, along with bales of paper pulp, went from the harbour to the Courtaulds plant at Carrickfergus where there was quite an extensive system of sidings, now also taken up. Shunting here was carried out by two sturdy looking Peckett 0-4-0 STs, "Wilfred" and "Patricia". When these went out of use preservationists were not in a position to take suitable action and both fell victim to Eastwood's scrapyard.



Larne-Portrush excursion. U2 No.84 "Lissanoure Castle" and Al No.62 "Slemish". (Real Photographs Ltd. X144)

Towards the end of the 1950s I became a regular traveller on the 8am ex-Larne Harbour and never remember it being worked by anything other than a jeep, although if one overslept, the next train could be quite interesting, often headed by a U2. Unfortunately my return journeys enabled me to experience the encroachment of diesel in its various draughty and malodorous forms, the only relief being in the compartment coach between railcars 6 and 7. An interesting variation was on summer Saturdays when I sometimes used the 1:30pm to Larne. During the excursion season this was often made up of all sorts of curious ex-Co. Down 6-wheeled stock. The train did not always run to time and its progress was often marked by a continuous rasping from the large ejector due to parts of the coaches' braking systems not having survived the winter. On one occasion the offending vehicle was dishonourably discharged at Greenisland which probably left it back where it came from. I eventually left to work in places where steam and indeed railways were only a memory. All of a sudden Larne shed was gone and the whole place levelled and covered in buses. I took a long look and left it at that. I would prefer to remember lying in bed late at night and listening to an engine starting from Larne and making its steady

way out past the Bank Quays. Was there a late goods then or is it only my imagination? Like so many others I regret now that I let it all go unrecorded, never thinking that it would end so soon.

BELFAST TRAMCARS **Bailie MacWheeble**

A beloved and convenient rail transport system

Transport anniversaries can encourage even the most phlegmatic publisher. With "Gone But Not Forgotten" one suspects that the driving force is not so much either of the societies named on the booklet's back cover, but John Richardson. With the financial vision so necessary to any society he has marshalled his forces, especially his authors and the Fergus Press with perfect timing. It is an intriguing aspect that a preservation society so reluctant apparently, to become involved with publication, even to the extent of allowing its own magazine to decline alarmingly, should be credited with a tram publication, when it has few if indeed any tram items preserved. However, whether it wishes it or not, RPSI prestige cannot but have been enhanced by thus filling an important transport gap, in which even the Light Transport League could claim no success.

Maybe I should make my own stance clear, during a lifetime when the whole vast steam set-up has become increasingly dear against the multiple unit inevitable today. I have always been keenly aware of the street tram, as maybe can be briefly shown by one experience. I had come from Craven Arms over the (mainly) LNWR route to Swansea and had been wondering what a NCC crew might have achieved from 45283, compared with that maximum of 68 mph in 95½ miles. The plan was to hasten over to the GWR station for the Bristol train and then (hopefully) 90 mph on the up Bristolian. But hurrying out of Victoria I was stopped in my tracks by an unexpected sight - the Mumbles tram. In the end I did make Ince Castle at Temple Meads, but I can also show a photo of tram 9, the only fault being in failing, in my haste, to confirm the identity of the second double decked vehicle, coupled to 9, as was usual with 'the train' as Swansea folk knew it. Presumably it was one of these red trams to which Dylan Thomas was referring when he wrote of the "tram hissing like a gander, which brought us to the seaside". Few Belfast folk would connect its tram with the sea, despite a shabby beach at Greencastle, but most trips to Bangor and Portrush did commence with the tram to Queen's Quay station or York Road.

I heartily welcome this new book, as I am always delighted to have a full account of public transport facilities better than we have today. Far too many 'photographic collections', dusty and unwanted, survive their owners unpublished, so it is excellent that Reggie Ludgate's has appeared as the book's backbone, even though I have always resisted (successfully) publishers' attempts to treat mine similarly. Bob Hunter's apt and intelligent captions atone for the fact that no tram can compare with the more obvious life of a steam one. So badly needed in any tram book is verbal atmosphere in the form of anecdotes and personalities. As this possibly was difficult for at least two of the co-authors who did not experience the pre-trolleybus age, then possibly the less ambitious form chosen was the best solution.

Fortunately for me the sight of a tram on the No.10 route swinging round the Bank Buildings corner for Greencastle is as clearly remembered as my first mogul at Greenisland (before the presently inactive Bleach Green viaduct had even been opened). Indeed when I was born at 300 Ravenhill Road (since renumbered) no Belfast tram had as high a number. On route 7 (from Donegall Road) the tram service passing the house was sparse enough to prevent them being taken for granted - fatal for any interest. Only when there was a big match at Ravenhill could one see a tram queue of Queen's Road dimensions. Over thirty years later one could still see one of Belfast's most delightful queues, as an irate policeman reacted to catcalls from 'Island' workers held up by a herd of scurrying cattle permitted to make their last journey from Oxford Street to the docks.

The route numbers shown in the book are different from those I remember best, such as 12 for both Oldpark and Castlereagh. This was not changed at the terminus as became the case later, and 13 was used for both Stranmillis and the Corporation Street route to the NCC. Quite soon I noted that these blue, white, orange and green tickets included code letters to indicate each tram's depot and I gradually made a list from my own journeys. From the same note book I could claim a journey on each of the blue cars and many of the older ones. Eventually I could total over fifty runs with quite a few, the most regular being those which passed York Road station for Greencastle such as 298-9, 324, 350-2, 402 and 435. I'm afraid I was less observant about the interior fittings so it is useful the book tends more to concentrate on this aspect rather than depot allocations.

I note that my least used tram (403 with six runs) is illustrated and I can also accept no less than three views of 164, seeing these include that one at Wellington Place, a manoeuvre not remembered despite working 100 yards away 1946-50. The photo allocation for non-rail vehicles is about right, though a trolleybus type more typical than 246 might have been preferred. But there is something to appeal to everyone even if he isn't transport minded, with so many scenes no longer possible, from horses to old buildings. From the tram point of view the photographs which accurately identify termini are especially welcome, and one must note the two ends of the Balmoral-Greencastle route. A very sharp-eyed expert might have identified an engine from Balmoral near the gent's convenience, but there was no chance from 392's position, a car incidentally from Shore Road depot. Possibly the best point in Belfast to observe both trams and engines was from Donegall Road bridge.

Other railway aspects include 404 outside York Road station, not at all the usual type for such a duty, much more likely to be entrusted to 'rebuilds' such as 254, 255 or 258, illustrated at another terminus, Donegall Road. Also a DK1 type was regularly on the Queen's Road-Springfield Road (23) route, 253 and 271 being trams I often caught for the BCDR station. Inside that terminus 296 (as shown) would have been unlikely, the tram provided on many a wet morning (when it was inadvisable to climb the stairs) being more likely a red one from Mountpottinger such as 114. The first rebuilds I myself saw there were 22 and 78 (shown at Balmoral). Apart from length they looked so like the Chamberlains that one must assume they were their prototype. Can that be G. B. Howden alighting from 369 (an unlikely type on this route until later days) at Queen's Quay? 408 (like 407 a Mountpottinger car) was certainly a regular performer on the route illustrated, Ormeau Road to Cliftonville. It was most satisfactory to have the accident at the bottom of the latter road illustrated, the car's two immediate sisters 361 and 363 belonging to Antrim Road depot.

During the past twenty years many well written and informative articles have been published by Irish railway societies, but one cannot say the same for the quality of book reviews in the same publications. There have been brilliant exceptions, but more usual has been a verbose essay with little relevance to, or interest in the book. Yet there are many regular readers (and writers) who have never once been asked to supply a review, even when the book's subject is something on which he is a near expert. So I hesitate to call this article a review or even use anything but a pseudonym which hopefully will emphasise my own love of both trams and trains. This goes back to a long holiday in 1929 when I spent many happy hours in a small space provided by the stone structure of a North British overbridge near Portobello. Here one could identify clearly on four tracks a marvellous variety of locomotives, from the green Pacifies and Portly Atlantics to the literary names on black Scotts and Directors. With the chocolate coloured trams to Joppa and Musselburgh passing even more closely, this vantage point left even Donegall Road well down the list.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Charlie Friel and David Carse for supplying photographs, Joe Cassells and Robin Morton for typing, and John Richardson for helping to liase with the printers.

Contributions to the next issue of 'Five Foot Three' will be welcomed. It is hoped that number 24 will mark the centenary of the Society's two J15s, among other features. Articles and correspondence should be addressed to the Editor at the address given.

'Five Foot Three' is published by the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland and was Printed by Fergus Press Ltd., 65a Albert Road, Carrickfergus.