

FIVE FOOT THREE



Magazine of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

FIVE FOOT THREE

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Editor: Alan Edgar

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

Front Cover: Our Site Officer puts his labours to the test as he drives No.3 over the new trackwork at Whitehead during a Sunday train ride. (C.P. Friel)

EDITORIAL

When the subject of the magazine is raised at Society Council meetings, discussion usually revolves around routine matters such as when reports should be written, when bills should be paid and when the magazine should be distributed.

Recently, more fundamental questions have been asked. "Does our magazine fulfil any useful function?" "Do we need a magazine at all?" "Anyone closely involved with our activities knows what's going on, and we distribute news sheets to inform other members." "Most people never read it anyway." Could the Society save itself £1,000 per year by dispensing with the magazine altogether? Such discussions are not unique to our own Society; a magazine we recently received from an Australian Society contained a discussion of precisely this issue. The answer does, of course, lie with the entire membership, rather than just the Council of our Society. It is my contention that a large majority of the membership desire to have a magazine of some form. Which leads to the question: What sort of a magazine does the membership want?

The present policy of the Society is to produce two issues per year. In fact, for the past few years, only

one issue was produced, 1980 being the first year for some time to have two issues (just). But would the membership prefer (assuming it was possible) a much shorter magazine quarterly?

What do members want to read in their magazine? More Society news? More historical articles? Humorous articles of the type favoured by some of the English societies? While we would stop short of suggestions of tabloid format, page three or running prize bingo, the Editor (and the Council) would be very willing to consider the views of the membership. But first we must know your opinions.

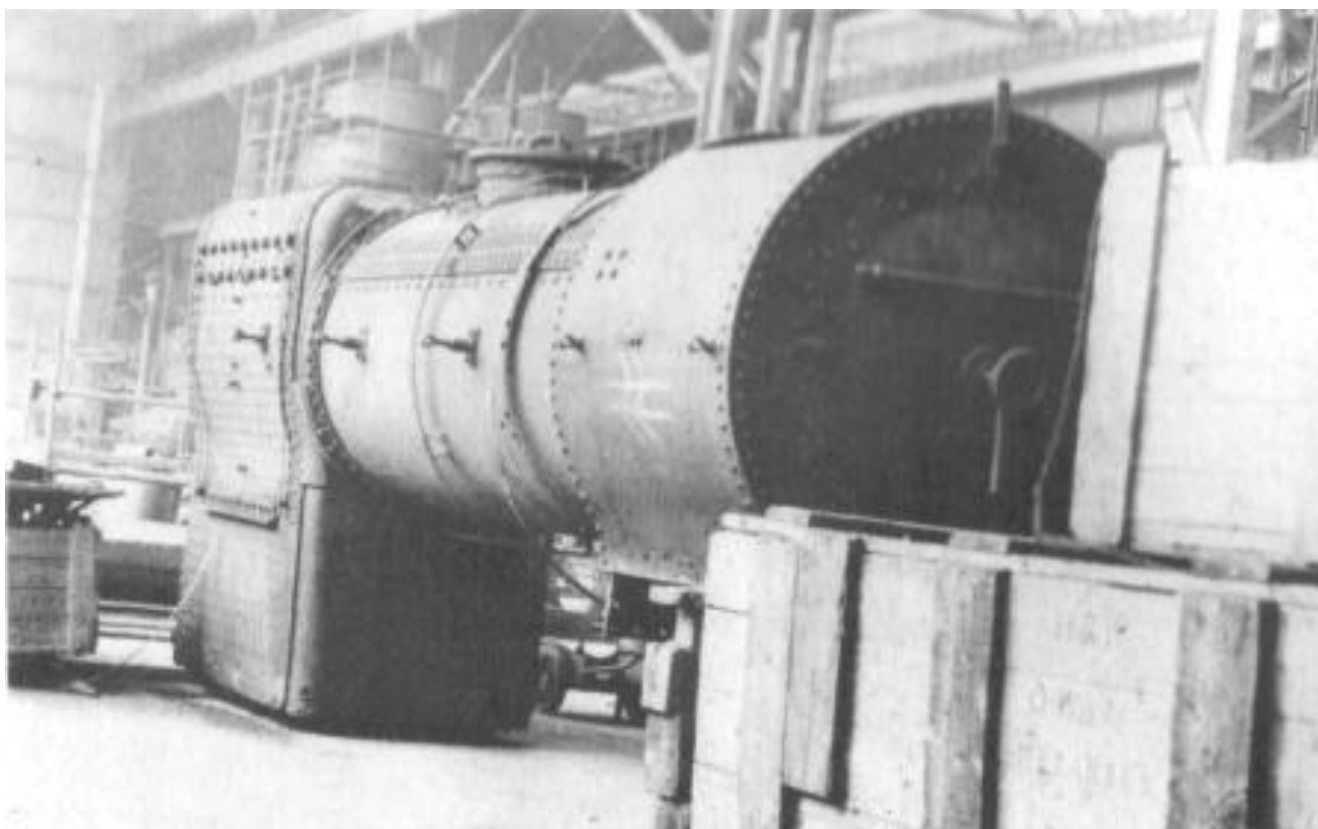
NEWS FROM COUNCIL

Robin Morton

A shortage of cash has dictated Council thinking in recent months, with Thatcher-type economies being effected and only essential items of expenditure getting the go-ahead.

The particular body-blow under which we were reeling was the postponement of the Ben Bulbin tour. We had been relying on the tour for an injection of capital; now, not only were we deprived of this, but we also had to find an additional £1,200 to pay for new boiler tubes for No.171.

The two principal ways in which the Society generates income over and above subscriptions are railtours and fund-raising, the latter being carried on under the banner of Irish Steam Scene.



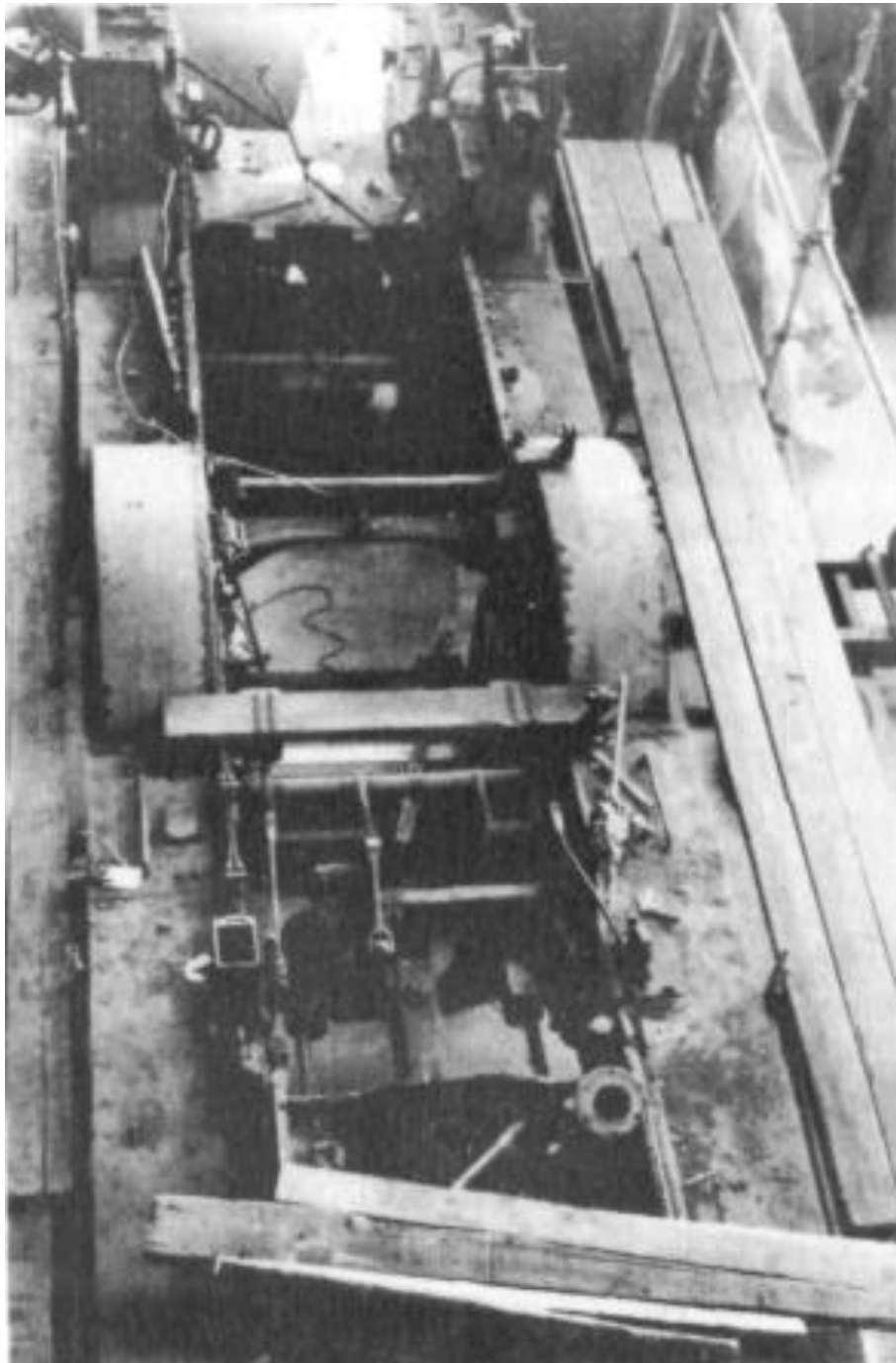
What is happening to No.85? The boiler prior to firebox work and retubing, taken about one year ago. (C.P. Friel)

But the railtour season has always been a short one and it was with this in mind that the Council agreed on two moves at Whitehead. Firstly, to operate Santa Claus train rides in December; and secondly, to start the Sunday afternoon train rides a month earlier than usual. Both have proved extremely worthwhile.

On the railtour front the Council has found the main hurdle still to be railway company charges.

The Bangor Belle on 2nd May covered its costs thanks to generous sponsorship by North Down Borough Council.

But the Claddagh railtour on 27th June showed a deficit despite a well-supported afternoon trip between Galway and Athenry. Hopes were high that the rest of the railtour programme would be profitable.



The frames of the No.85 about one year ago. (C.P. Friel)

The Portrush Flyer and the Steam Enterprise were both featured in the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's new venture, Irish Steam Weekends. Undoubtedly because of the prevailing conditions bookings were disappointing, but the Council hopes the NITB would not be deterred.

The Operations Department of the Council has been re-structured because Denis Grimshaw intimated

he would no longer be able to serve as Operations Officer for fear of a clash with his new job in NIR. Hence the Council decided to revert to a railtour sub-committee, to be headed by Ernie Gilmore, the Operations Officer designate.

Another sub-committee was set up to carry on the branchline investigations. After two EGMs the Society decided to promote the re-opening of the Scarva-Banbridge line, and 10 members were appointed to be a steering committee.

On the main line Lord Dunleath represented the Society at the official handing over ceremony on 2nd February of the nameplates for NIR's new Enterprise engines.

Links with NIR were further strengthened on 4th July when the company 'borrowed' an RPSI steam train to transport Minister of State and railway enthusiast Michael Alison between Belfast and the Whitehead Steam Gala. This trimmed down event was financially much more worthwhile than the 1980 Gala.

In December the loan agreement between the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the Society for locomotive No.85 "Merlin" was finally signed. The locomotive's overhaul at Harland and Wolff was in its final stages at the time of writing. On the insurance front, reinstatement value of the engine sheds at Whitehead was increased to £90,000 to keep pace with inflation.

A claim for fire damage to a garden made after the Society's Dublin Bay railtour in April 1980 was settled by the insurance company with payment being made to the aggrieved householder. It was the first claim to be made off the Society's public liability policy since the Society was formed in 1964.

The Council decided to launch a special appeal to help raise funds to pay for materials being used by the Limestone Youth Training Project in Belfast during their work on RPSI carriages at Whitehead. The Society was grateful to the Northern Bank for its donation of a typewriter and photocopying machine to the Society.

Among those members appointed to posts of special responsibility are: Mervyn Darragh - Membership Secretary; Johnny Glendinning - Safety; Alan Love - Portrush Flyer bookings; Andrew Malcolm - Membership plates; Laurence Morrison - Membership plates ordering; Paddy O'Brien - Mullingar superintendent; Jeremy Saulters - Irish Steam Weekend bookings; Lavens Steele - Ulster Tourist Development Association representative.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

John Richardson

As one who spends many evenings with a cup of tea and an aspirin toiling over the books in an effort to ensure that the Society remains on a secure financial footing, I feel it is opportune to share a few thoughts.

Many members when approached by me to purchase a ballot ticket or other sales item view the exercise as a tiresome chore. Others, when they hear of a sales outing resulting in a take of £400, are tempted to think of this in terms of having another £400 to spend. It should, however, be borne in mind that to pay for new boiler tubes for No.171 - and for No.4 during the coming winter - the sales team will have to sell something like £9,000 worth of souvenirs.

But for the untiring efforts of the pitifully small sales team the Society might well have folded after the postponement of the Ben Bulbin tour - yes, the situation is as serious as that.

With this in mind, we have expanded our operation to include a traction engine rally in Co. Cork, a youth exhibition at Bangor ... and an Orangeman's 'Twelfth' demonstration at Randalstown.

The greatest success of the year has been the introduction of a Teddy Bear instant raffle which has, at the time of writing, netted £700.

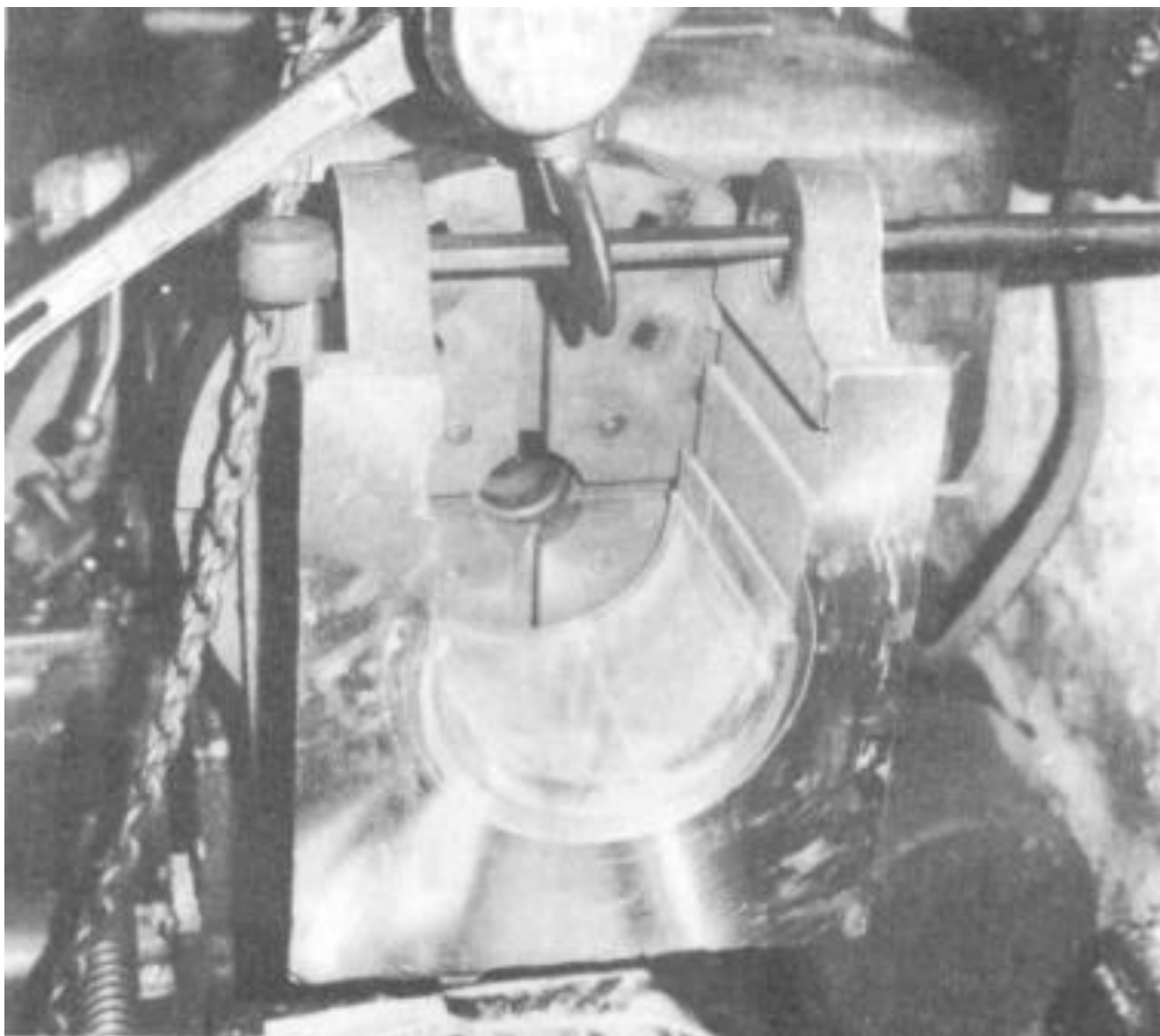
So the next time you are confronted by a request to help in the RPSI fund-raising effort by purchasing something at a rally or on a train, don't pull a face or turn away - it's your Society and we are relying on your support.

LOCOMOTIVE MAINTENANCE

Peter Scott

No.3 “R.H. Smyth”. In traffic, Whitehead.

Repairs to the leading axleboxes to reduce excessive side play will be undertaken at a convenient opportunity.



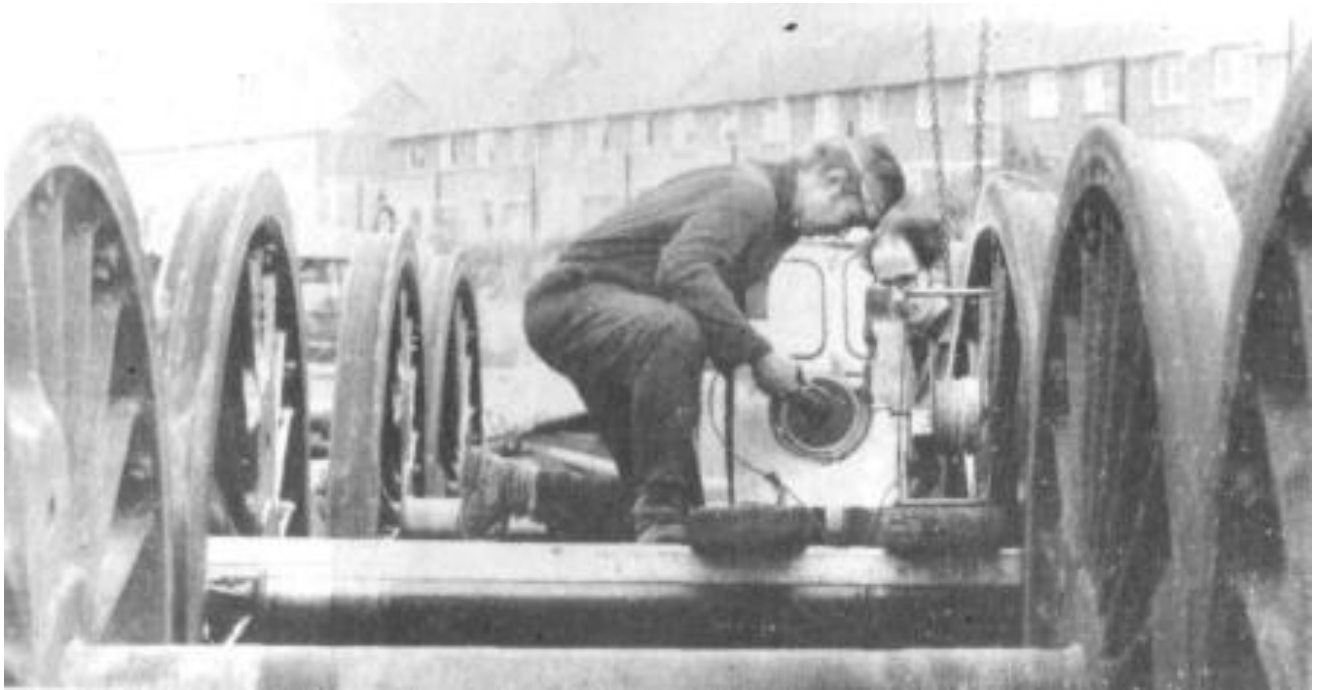
One of No.4's axleboxes is machined on the Society's lathe. (C.P. Friel)

No.3 BG “Guinness”. In store, Whitehead.

No.4. General overhaul, Whitehead.

Replacement of the 5¼” diameter tubes was completed and a hydraulic test carried out, the existing 1¾” diameter tubes being retained. Further assessment of the life expectancy of these tubes took place

as a result of the failure of tubes of comparable age on locomotive No.171. In consequence, it was decided to renew the 1¾" tubes, and this is now in progress. Work is progressing as opportunity offers on the fitting of the driving axleboxes.



No.4's axlebox is bedded on its journal. (C.P. Friel)



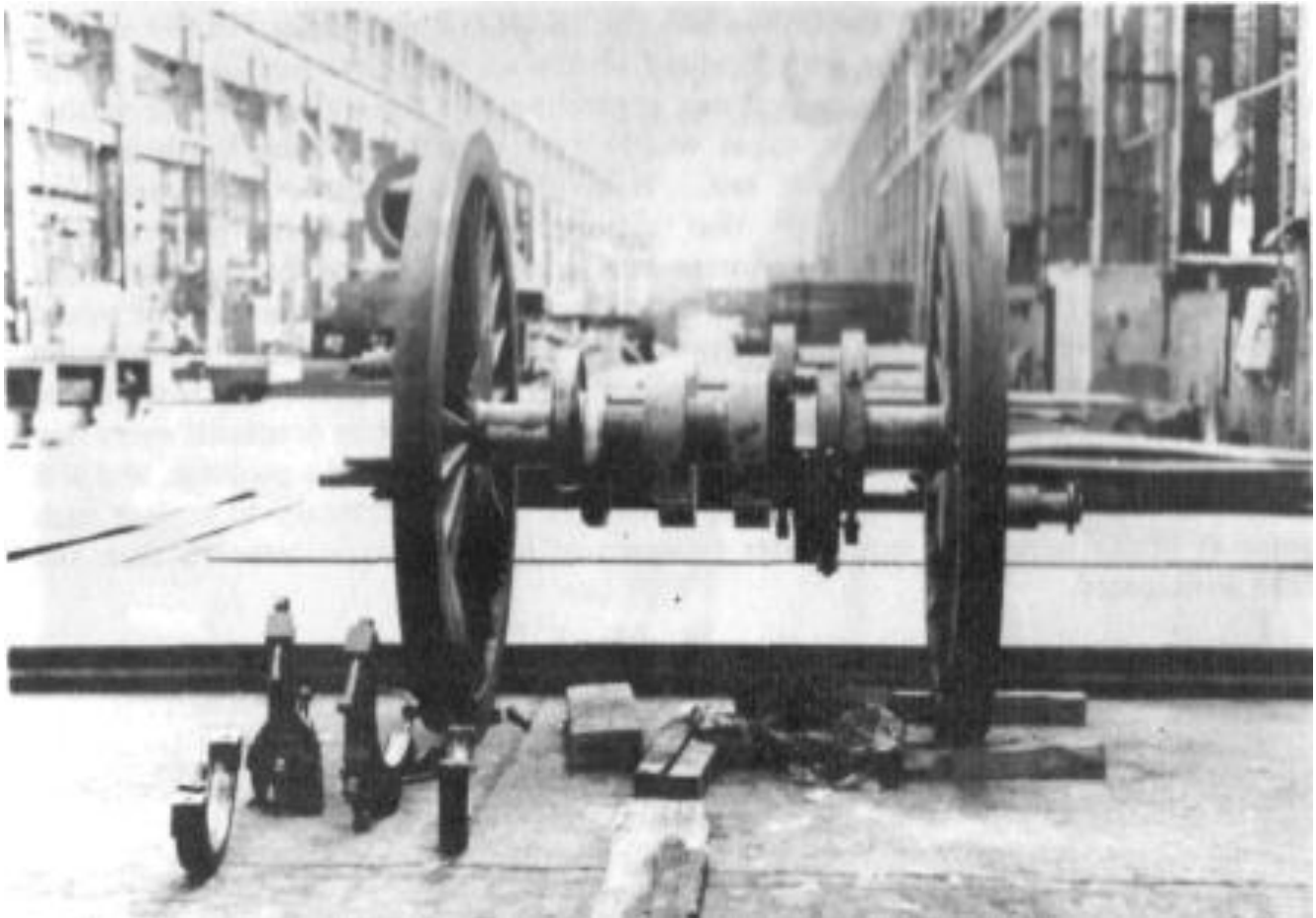
Brian Hill (left) and Paul Newell refit No.171's right-hand piston, following replacement of the piston head. (C.P. Friel)

No.23. In traffic, Whitehead.

No.27. In store, Whitehead.

No.85 “Merlin”. General overhaul, Harland and Wolff.

Replacement of the boiler tubes has been completed, together with the welding in of new plate sections in the fire-hole casing plate, and the renewal of copper stays. The hydraulic test has been successfully completed. Two small cracks which were located in the cylinder block have been repaired by the “Metalock” process.



No.85's eccentrics being refitted to the crank axle. (C.P. Friel)

No.171. In traffic, Whitehead.

A complete set of new superheater elements has been made and fitted. Owing to the high cost of ready-made elements, the new set was made up at Whitehead, using a procedure specified by British Railways. This involved bending 1½” diameter tube to form the ‘return bends’ and ‘legs’ of the elements, machining the ‘ball ends’ and welding the sections together to form the completed elements. It is intended that the same method be used to provide elements for locomotives No.186, No.461 and No.4.

New piston heads were made to replace the existing heads which were excessively worn. Certain areas of corroded plate were replaced on the tender. The brick arch was renewed.

The 5-yearly hydraulic test was applied, and was passed without incident. However, following the subsequent failure of a number of 1¾” tubes, the entire compliment of 1¾” tubes has been replaced.

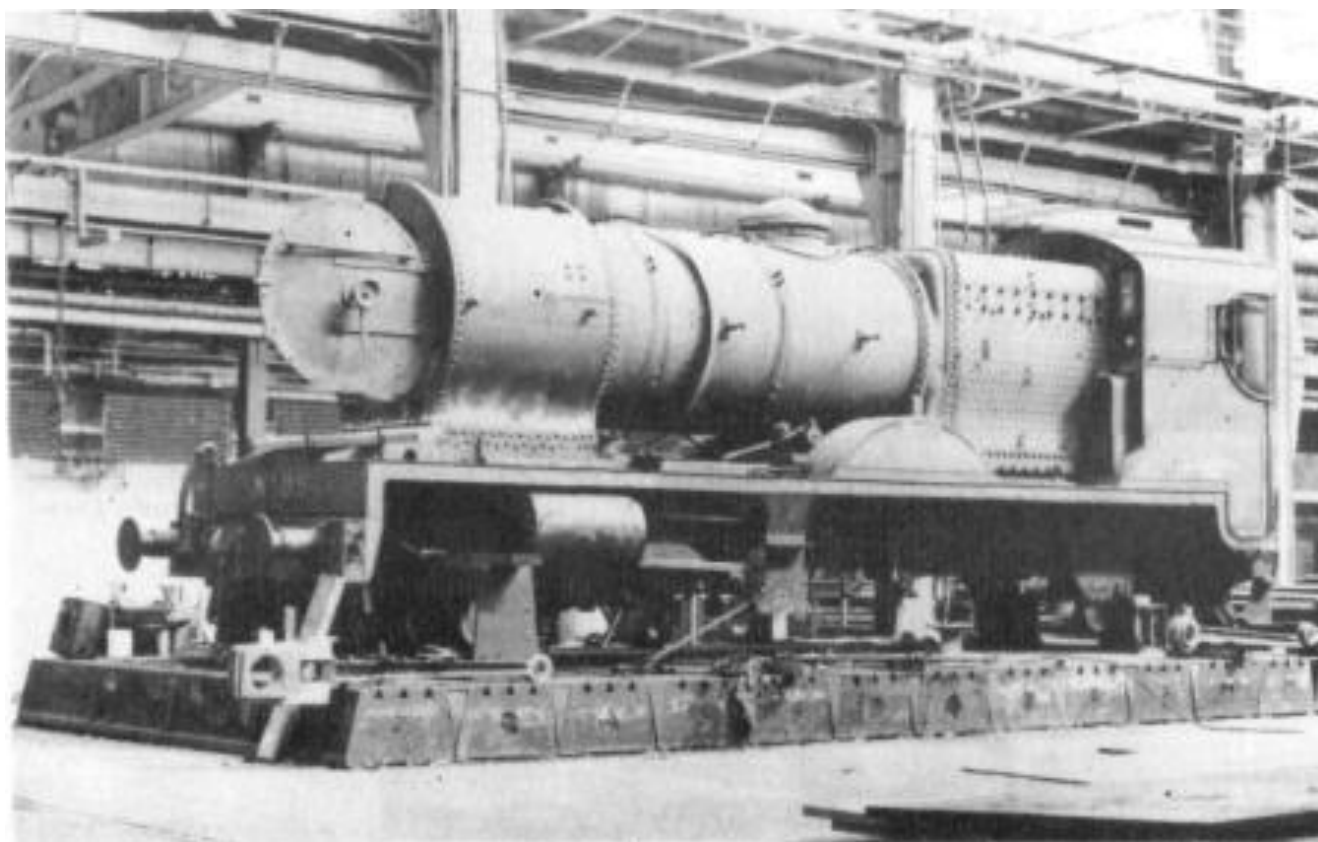
The ferules protecting the firebox ends of the 5¼" tubes have been renewed, a simple and inexpensive method of making ferules having been established.

No.184. In traffic, Mullingar.

This locomotive is now operating with the tender from locomotive No.186. A new set of injector cones is to be provided for the right injector.

No.186. In store, Whitehead.

Repairs to the firehole ring patch have been carried out. Further boiler repairs required are replacement of the boiler tubes, superheater elements, firebars, smokebox front plate and door.



No.85 being erected with the boiler refitted to the frames. (C.P. Friel)

No.461. General overhaul, Mullingar.

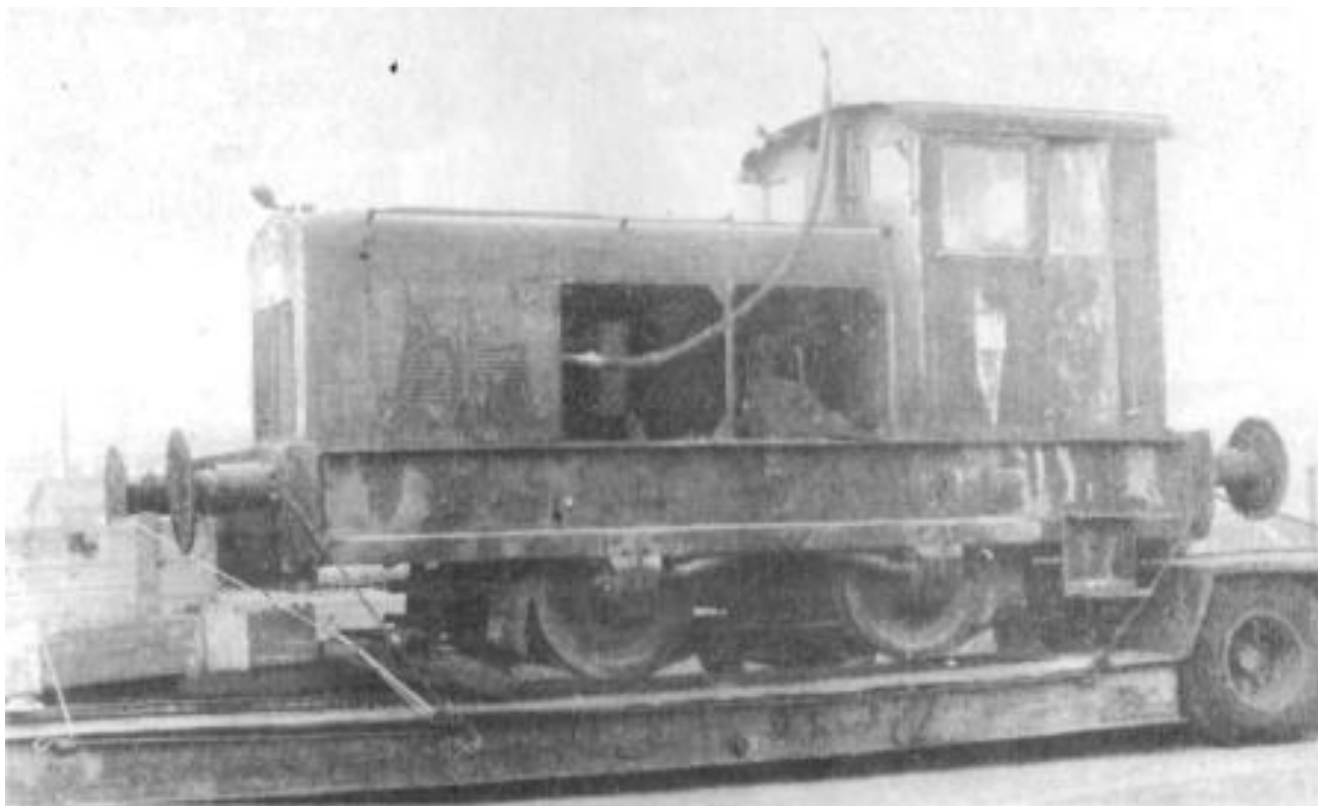
The driving axleboxes have been re-metalled and fitted. Boiler repairs are continuing. A new piston and piston rod are required for the right cylinder, and the piston is being cast at present.

Welding. The high quality welding necessary for manufacture of the superheater elements and for the repairs to the firehole ring patch on No.186 was carried out by Paul Downey and Roger Graham of BOC (NI). Our best thanks are due to them and to manager Tom Mathers for arranging the work.

Boiler Tubes. As stated above, the 1¾" diameter tubes in locomotives No.171 and No.4 have been replaced as a result of the unexpected failure of the tubes in locomotive No.171.

It has been established that the failure was due to general wasting at the fire surface (inside) of the tubes, together with localised pitting on the water surface next to the copper tubeplate. This condition was not apparent either from external observation, or from examination of sample tubes which were withdrawn from the boiler for assessment prior to the hydraulic test. It highlights a problem which has

been suspected for some time, namely that a boiler operating under 'preservation' conditions does not necessarily deteriorate at a slower rate merely because the boiler sees relatively little operation compared with a locomotive in daily service. It would appear that the present patterns of operation, i.e. intermittent working at maximum capacity followed by varying periods out of use, but subjected to the corrosive effects of boiler water, soot and ash, is more detrimental to a boiler than continual every day operation. It is difficult to see any effective way of alleviating the problem, and it is likely that the Society will have to face raising the capital necessary to replace such items as boiler tubes and superheater elements at more frequent intervals than had been anticipated.



Stop Press! The Society's latest acquisition, an ex-Comhlucht Siuicre Éireann Ruston and Hornsby diesel shunter. (C.P. Friel)

CARRIAGE AND WAGON

Alan Edgar

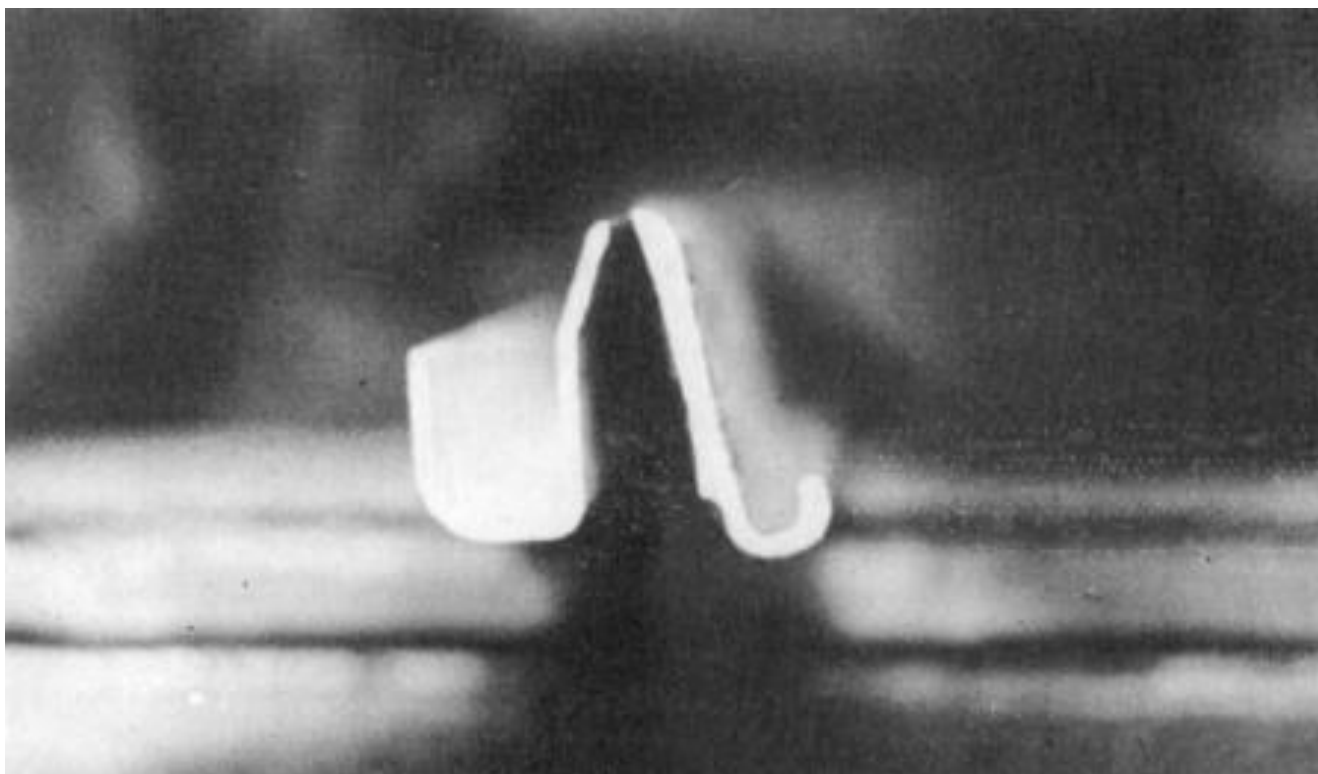
1981 is proving to be a very significant year for the Carriage and Wagon department as it has seen the commencement of several important projects, and the fruition of others. Two of these - the restoration of the GNR(I) Director's Saloon, and the involvement with the Limestone Youth Training Project are the subject of articles elsewhere, so I shall not comment further here.

Work at Whitehead has continued unabated. As I mentioned in the last report, we had experimentally fitted 1333 with aluminium guttering from a scrapped MPD trailer. This proved to be a vast improvement over the previous arrangement, so we tracked down a supplier of the aluminium section in question, and purchased a large quantity: enough to do several coaches.

The first coach to be fitted with guttering from this source was 1142, which was also re-roofed with PVC proofed nylon. Much of the exterior panelling on this vehicle was hardboard, and was in poor condition. Work began on replacing this with $\frac{3}{8}$ " ply, one side of the coach being completed and in undercoat before we had to make room in No.5 road for other vehicles. We expect to move 1142 back into the shed as soon as the immediate needs of the running coaches are dealt with.

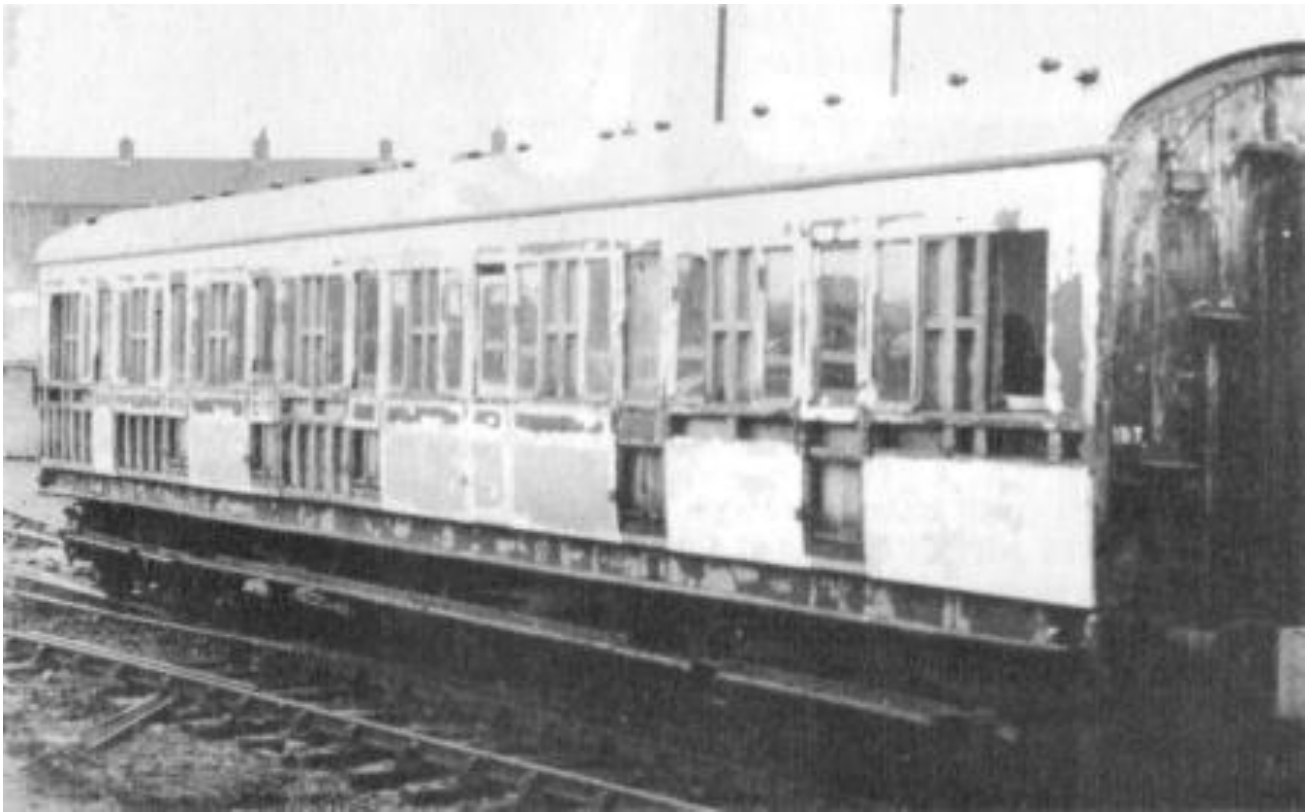
We lost one of our most dedicated volunteers when Dave Humphries moved to Dublin to take up employment there. I would like to wish Dave well in his new job, and thank him for the work he has done in the past.

Work on coach 238 has proceeded well, and not only has the second toilet been rebuilt, but the rest of the interior has also been refurbished. Credit for most of this work must go to John Shaw, but mention should also be made of the Limestone Youth Training Project, who painted the internal panelling in woodgrain effect, and two new volunteers (at least as far as C&W work goes) Tommy Dorrian and Fred Graham. Fred and Tommy have been chiefly concerned with painting, and besides 238 have carried out work in 114, 241, 88 and 1333. This has vastly improved the image of the train from the point of view of the general public. 1333 also received attention to a number of external body panels which had been attacked by the dreaded tinworm; apparently a common pest of railway preservation sites. Removing the old panels was an occupation in itself, as each one was held in place by what appeared to be 93 million countersunk screws, mostly rusted solid and requiring to be drilled out. Just for good measure, the panels were also bolted through to the inside around the windows. New steel sheet panels were cut to the correct size and treated with rust proofing primer before being screwed to the coach. In addition, all the old putty was removed from around the windows and replaced with mastic, thus curing the leaking windows which have plagued this coach for a number of years.

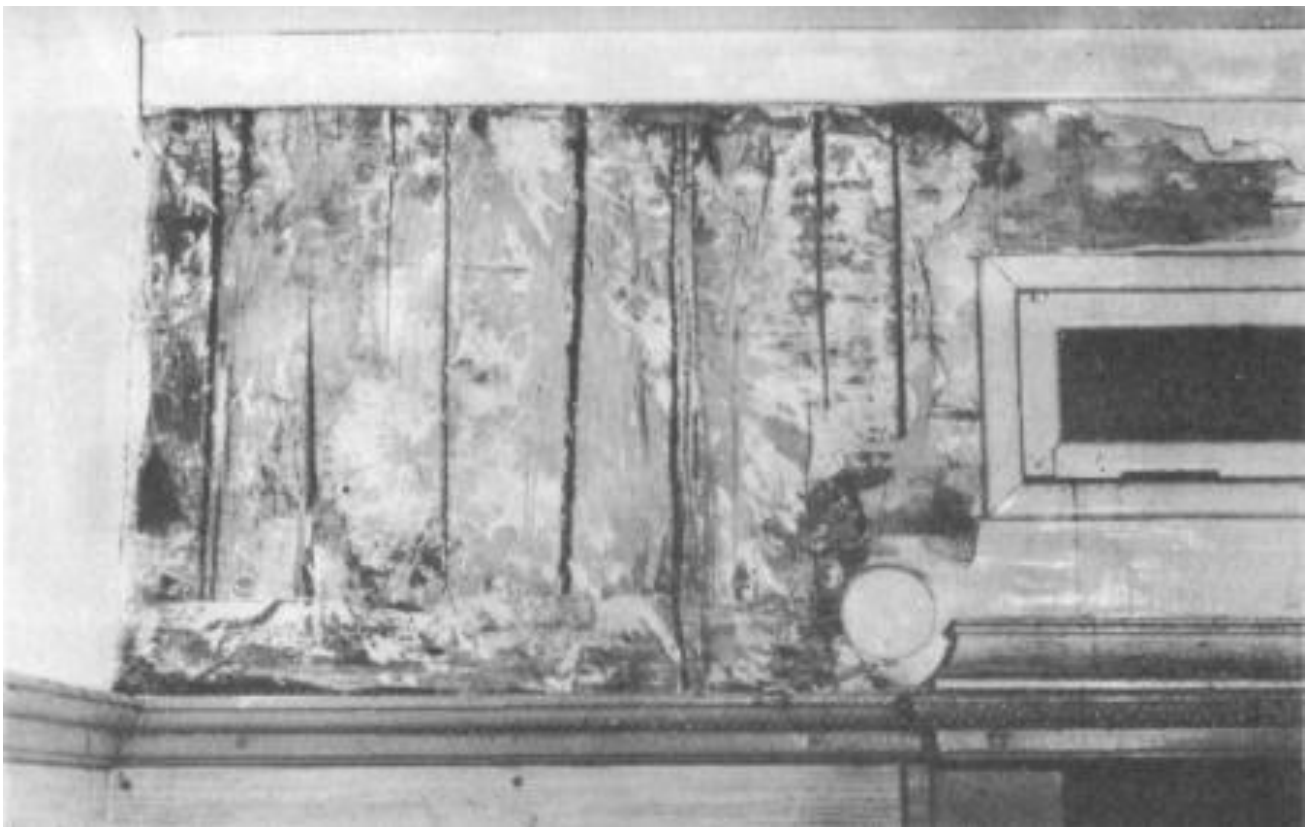


A comparison of NIR (left) and CIÉ gutter sections. (C.P. Friel)

A new technique was used to repair the roof of our best known coach, 861. The entire roof was coated with “Decadex,” a liquid plastic weatherproofing compound. This has the great advantage that it is not necessary to strip off the old roofing fabric, which in 861’s case was basically sound, though full of holes. Nylon mesh ‘bandage’ was laid over any cracks, joints, or holes before the compound, which is simply painted on, was applied. In addition, the wooden gutter moulding was renewed on one side of the coach - the original was badly affected by rot, and had fallen off completely in places, thus presenting a most unsightly appearance.



Coach from Duffy's Circus? Ex GS&WR 1st 1142 during re-panelling. (C.P. Friel)



Water damage to one of the compartments in 238. The rotten wood had to be cut out and replaced. (C.P. Friel)

1327 was the next candidate for attention, and she shared many defects with 1333: leaking roof and windows, external panels rusted through, internal ones riddled with wet rot, seats disintegrating under the advance of a remarkable variety of fungi. A depressing sight, particularly when the coach is supposed to be in traffic. The following list of jobs gives some idea of the work in progress:

Roof: Scrape off old loose paint, and old mastic from panel joints. One coat of primer over entire roof, reseal panel joints with new mastic. One coat of grey undercoat, one coat gloss over entire roof.

Gutters: Replace CIÉ pattern with NIR pattern.

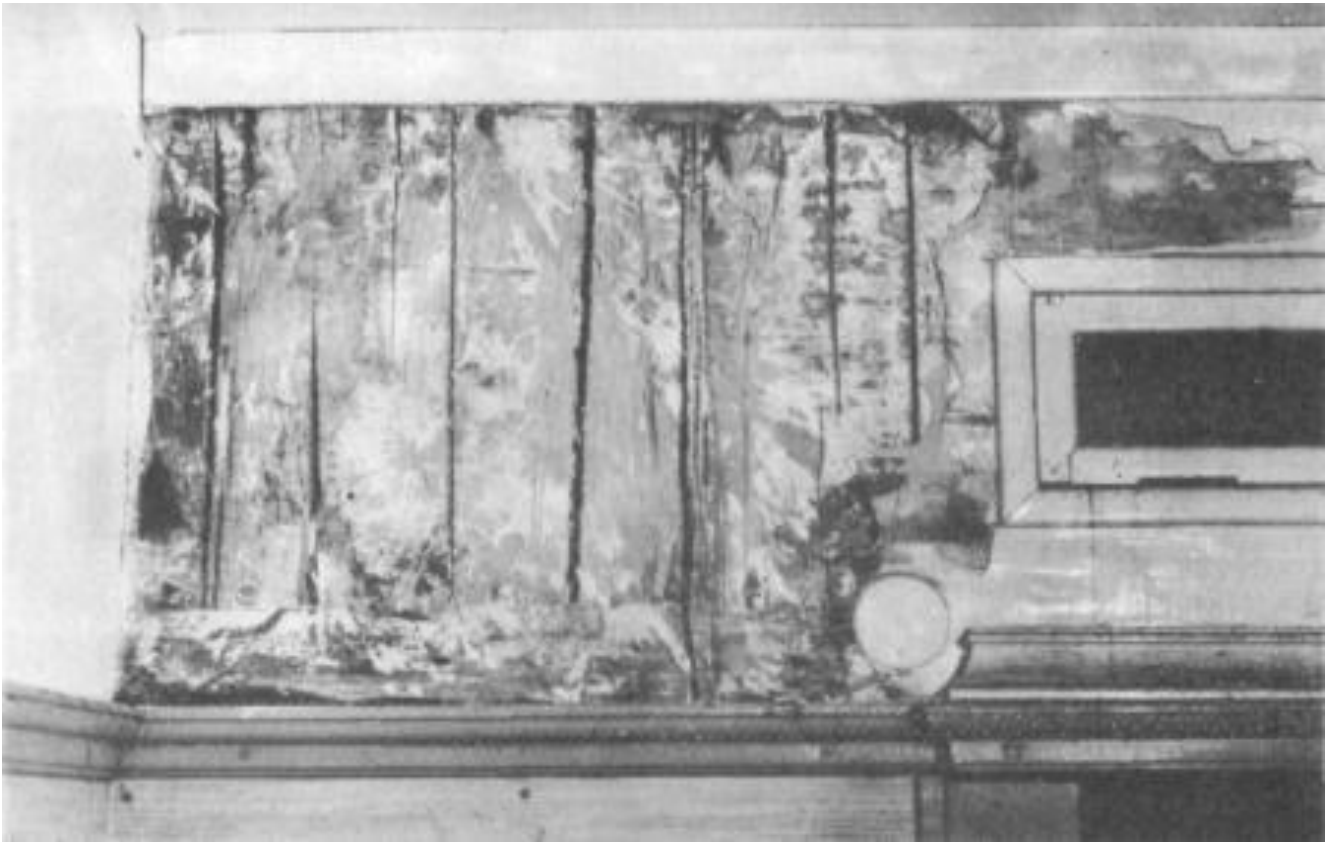
Exterior Panels: Replace 18 panels which have rusted through with new steel sheet.

Windows: Remove all old putty, replace with mastic, replace two broken windows.

Interior: Replace two rotten ceiling panels, paint ceilings. Replace approximately half of internal panelling. Manufacture and fit 14 new window sills, re-varnish/re-paint interior as necessary. Re-hang sliding compartment doors. Re-upholster all seats and fit. Replace floor covering.

Mechanical: Overhaul vacuum cylinders, brake gear, emergency application valve. Repair leaks in vacuum pipe.

Electrical: Replace Batteries.



*Water damage to one of the compartments in 238. The rotten wood had to be cut out and replaced.
(C.P. Friel)*

When it is considered that similar work is required on most of the other coaches, it can be seen that we have plenty to keep us occupied. Mention should be made here of another new recruit to the C&W Department, Len Ball, who has, amongst other things tackled the repairs to 1327's roof in a most capable manner.

On the mechanical side, all of the running coaches have now received a brake overhaul, although it is anticipated that new brake shoes will have to be cast and fitted to some of the coaches in the near future. Future plans have a disconcerting habit of rearranging themselves to contradict what has been stated, but the Council has been giving future coach plans careful thought recently. This is because the shortage of passenger rolling stock on CIÉ is jeopardising the continuation of our Southern based operations, such as the Claddagh.



Tommy Dorrian in 238 preparing door frames for repainting. (C.P. Friel)

A partial solution is to stable five coaches in the South from the end of September, returning North after next year's two day tour. Within the next few years, however, it is desirable to bring additional carriages into traffic, so that one train may be based in the North, and a second in the South. Thus the 'old wrecks' in the sidings at Whitehead, so often the subject of scathing comment (What do we need all those for?), will have to be resuscitated. Even when they are all restored, we may still require further coaches to make up numbers.

Finally, I would like to give my sincere thanks to all those who contributed to the carriage work programme. It is heartening to see that there is now the nucleus of a C&W team, with a desire to work together to restore our coaches to high standards. We have achieved much in 1981, and hope to continue this progress in 1982. It is a case, however, of the more the merrier, so if anyone reading this is interested in doing coach work, do come down some week-end and join us.

THE EVER CHANGING FACE OF WHITEHEAD

Johnny Glendinning

Anyone who has not been to the "site" for a year or so might be excused if they did not know where they were. Gone is the untidy jungle of fences and gates which projected out in front of the shed alongside the platform. The final repositioning of the gates is in progress at the time of writing. This

involves lifting one of the new gate posts and moving it about 200 feet, thus making space for the heavy lifting area to be constructed.

During last winter what must be an RPSI record was achieved. Two turnouts were lifted out, repositioned and relaid, together with a third turnout which will eventually lead to the heavy lifting area. This included levelling out the site with the JCB, and ballasting the new trackwork with fresh ballast. This work was completed within two months which may seem unremarkable until it is realized that it is only eight weekends. I think you will agree that congratulations are due to those who gave us their free time and made it possible.



A telephoto shot from the King's Road bridge shows the new point work immediately after the crossover was installed last year. The tracks to the left lead to the carriage yard. (C.P. Friel)

Work has now started on laying a fourth turnout, but this can only be completed when the gate post is in position. In the near future, therefore, the eight coach run round should be completed, but looking slightly further ahead, we are considering the installation of our 60ft turntable which would enable a locomotive (or coach) to be turned at Whitehead.

Due to the alterations in the track layout, the Sunday Train Rides have had to be run on the loop, only visiting the platform road to pick up or set down passengers. This has meant that the turnout under the bridge can no longer be clipped in one direction, so to save having to clip and re-clip, a two way mechanical facing point lock has been installed, worked from a separate lever. (Non locked facing points must be clipped if passenger trains are to propel over them.) To indicate to drivers that the point is locked, and safe for them to proceed, and also to prevent wrong road working against a locked pair of blades, ground signals have been installed, working off the same lever as the lock.

Installing signals is a new venture for the RPSI, and I hope that this is only the start of a much more extensive signal system. NIR have recently announced their intention to start work on the replacement

of all semaphore signals, mechanical interlocking, and absolute block working with a new system of automatic and semi-automatic colour light signals, electric relay interlocking, and track circuits. The entire new system is to be controlled from one signal box. This means that we are soon to lose all the surviving examples of mechanical signals in the north. We hope to acquire typical examples of all the remaining signals, and eventually to signal our site at Whitehead with NCC somersault signals. GNR equipment could eventually find a new home on the Scarva-Banbridge scheme. Some NCC equipment, formerly at Londonderry (Waterside), has already been bought and is at Whitehead awaiting erection. Therefore, it is my intention to create a Signal and Telegraph gang, whose first job will be to locate and list interesting and/or essential equipment, and to arrange for its removal to Whitehead - after it has been purchased I might add!



“R.H. Smyth” is in No.1 carriage siding. In the centre can be seen the turnout which will eventually lead to the heavy lifting area, while the track on the right will be joined to the point work in front of the new shed to form the eight coach run round. (C.P. Friel)

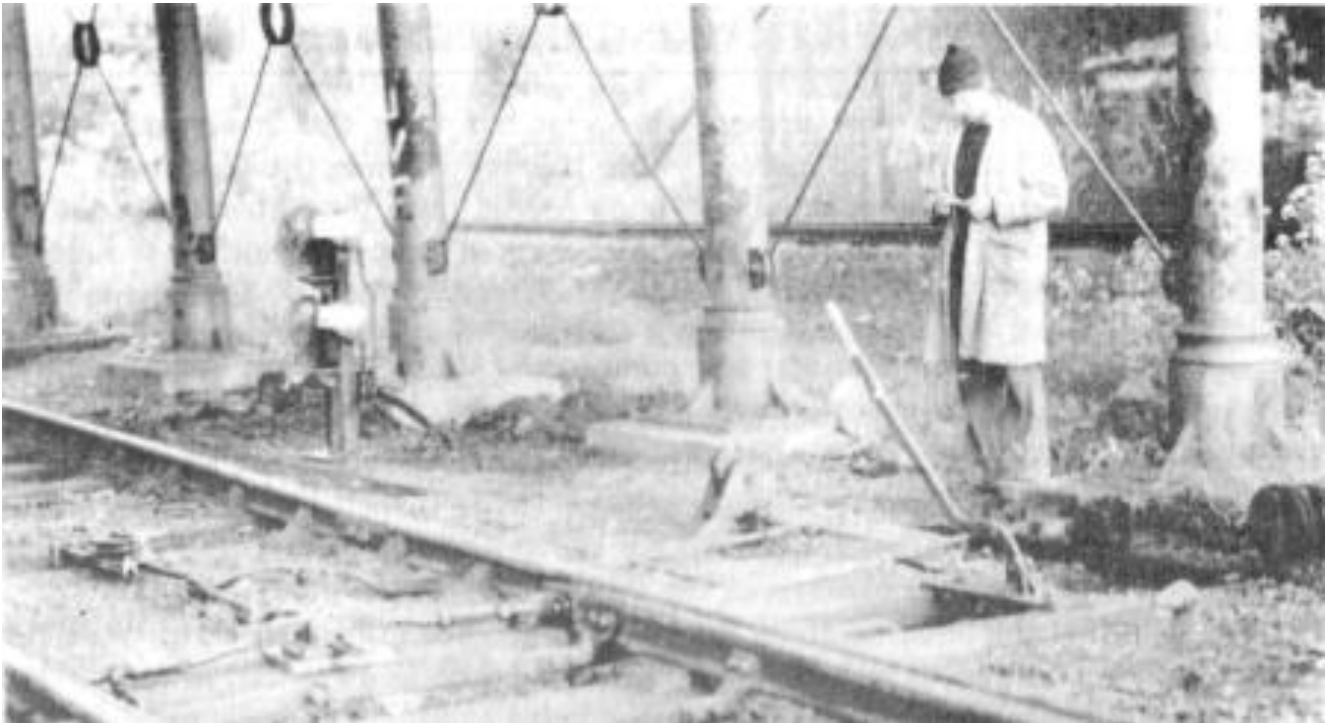
The second S&T job will be the construction of an NCC pattern signal box at Whitehead excursion station (money permitting) and installation of a lever frame and a signalling system. It would be intended that this work would be completed to coincide with Whitehead (NIR) being changed over to the CSC system in 1983/4 when the present cabin will close.

We are fortunate to have in our ranks Simon Marsh, who has served for several years on the Kent and East Sussex Railway's S&T Department, and he has agreed to act as the first RPSI S&T ganger. Any member who is interested in this work and would like to get involved should contact me at Whitehead.

Work on re-wiring the shed and other buildings is continuing under the guidance of John Taylor, who designed the new system. Hopes are high that John and his gang will have completed the upgrading by the autumn.



Whitehead Escape Committee commence tunnelling towards the boundary fence. (C.P. Friel)



A well-known locomotive running officer seems perplexed by the sudden appearance of all this signalling equipment. The lever for the point lock in the centre of the track can be seen (at right angles to the original point lever) as can two of the ground signals. (C.P. Friel)

Once again the summer has seen regular Tuesday evening work parties, which have proved very useful. Finally, may I express thanks to all those who have worked on the site. It gives me continual pleasure to organise work for a band of workers who always give so much with a cheerful smile, and are willing to put their hands to anything they are asked to do.

Special thanks are due to Ken Pullin, without whom it is fair to say that the trackwork would not have happened, and to Lavens Steele who continues to keep the Tarry so clean and tidy. To those who have not been to the site for some time, or even at all, you are missing some good fun and craic. The work is satisfying and not all hard, so if you're free on Saturday afternoon, why not come down and join us?

THE LIMESTONE YOUTH TRAINING PROJECT

Alan Edgar

A very welcome development this year has been the involvement of the Society with a Government sponsored youth training scheme, the Limestone Youth Training Project. This scheme employs young people from the Limestone Road area, usually school leavers, for one year, and trains them in basic skills such as Woodwork, Metalwork, Painting and Decorating, and Upholstery. Much of this is applied to 'community' work, for example at Senior Citizens' homes, or to work for charities, such as the National Trust.

RPSI member Ciaran McAteer had been involved with the LYTP from the early stages in setting it up, and it occurred to him that the RPSI had a vast untapped reserve of suitable work projects for the scheme in the shape of its carriages. We are very much indebted to Ciaran for making the initial approaches, and putting the Society in contact with the manager of the project, Robert McCartan.

The first job undertaken by the LYTP concerned the armchairs for the dining car. These were threadbare when we bought the coach in 1973 and in recent times only two or three of them survived in use, disgorging handfuls of plastic foam onto the floor from time to time. The more horrible examples never saw RPSI service, preferring to lurk in dark corners in some of the out of use coaches.

All of this changed when the entire set was gathered together and despatched to the LYTP workshop in Belfast. Here they were completely dismantled. The wooden frames were stripped and re-varnished. New foam filling was fitted and covered with new upholstery. The 24 chairs are now all back in the diner and the transformation has to be seen to be believed.

As mentioned in the C&W report, the trainees also grained out the internal woodwork in 238 with light oak scumble, giving the appearance of varnished woodwork. A number of other projects are in the pipeline, such as the restoration of the original dining car tables, and the manufacture of two sets of carriage name boards, one for the "Portrush Flyer" and the second an "Enterprise" set.

The most ambitious project being taken on involves the trainees coming down to the Society's site at Whitehead one day per week, and there to undertake the complete restoration of a coach. The vehicle chosen is the 1921 built GS&WR all first 1142, and it is planned to restore this coach to a high standard, and then hand it over for traffic. This is where you, the members of the Society, can help this most valuable scheme. While there is no charge made for the labour provided by the LYTP, the Society must meet the cost for the materials used. Most of you will be aware of two facts, firstly that the Society's finances are stretched to the limit at present, and secondly that carriage restoration is expensive.

We are therefore appealing for donations, or sponsorship for this particular scheme. While a "Restore 1142" campaign may not have the same emotive appeal as a plea to save a locomotive or coach from the scrap heap, it is nevertheless extremely important to the Society at this moment. We are short of coaches in traffic, and further coaches would generate more income for the Society. I would therefore ask you to support this appeal as generously as possible. A total of up to £3,000 may be eventually

required, as some items such as upholstery and heavy duty floor covering are now extremely expensive. One possibility is to sponsor the restoration of one compartment (approximately £120) or a number of places (there are eight seats in each compartment). An appeal form is included with this magazine.

In conclusion I would like to thank all of the staff of the Limestone Youth Training project, who have been most helpful, and have always accommodated the Society's sometimes curious needs.

RETURN OF "THE STAGECOACH"

Alan Edgar

In 1911, a new saloon carriage was put into traffic on the GNR(I). Classified A3, it was 48ft long, 9ft 6ins wide, weighed 29¼ tons, and seated 22. It was allocated the number 50. This saloon was intended for the use of the directors of the company, and was designed as an inspection vehicle, being provided accordingly with observation ends, brake application controls, and steps from the gangways to rail level. In Great Northern days the saloon was normally stored under cover in the paint-shop in Dundalk, which may explain the lack of photographs of it prior to the 1953 Royal Train.

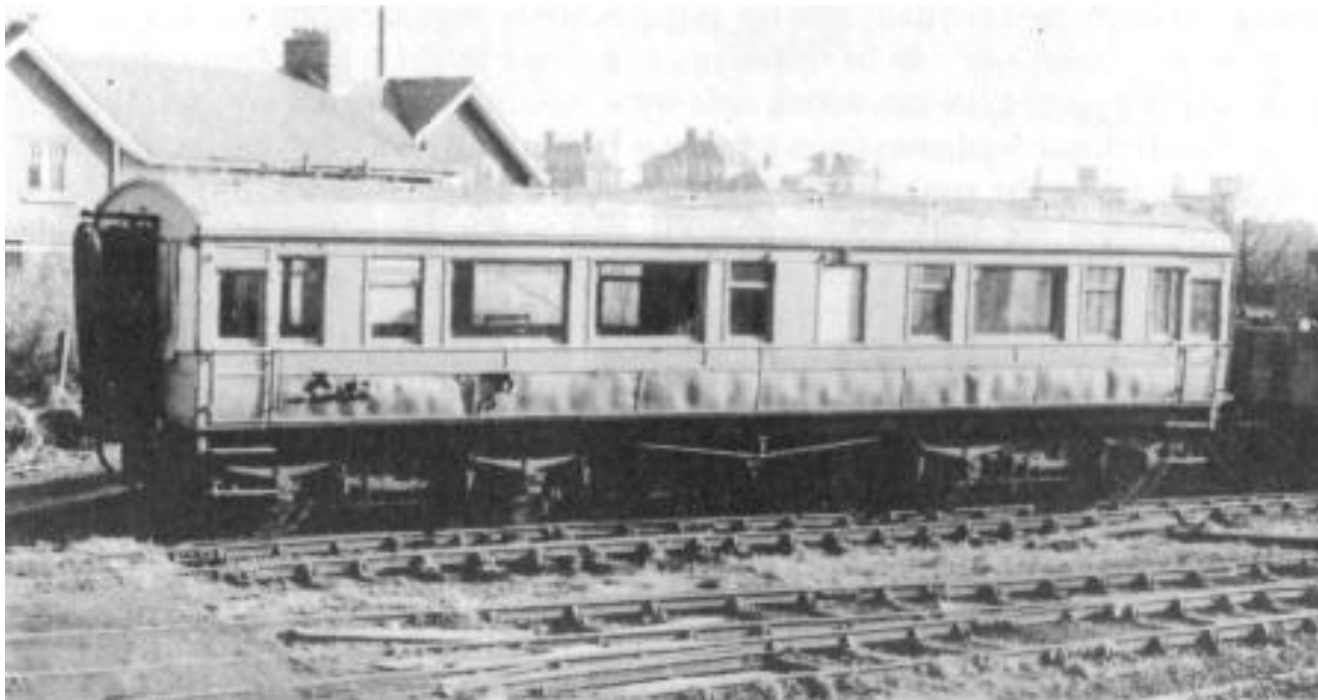


No.50, in blue and cream livery at Great Victoria Street, during the 1950s. (D.G. Coakham)

The saloon was reputedly used for board meetings of the Company, it being the practice to attach it to a suitable train and work it to either Belfast or Dublin, depending on where the meeting was to be. It was also used regularly to convey the directors to the Great Northern Hotel in Bundoran, apparently a favourite haunt. The Society is in possession of a copy of the official diagram of the saloon, dated 1911. There are a number of differences from the present condition of the vehicle. Most of these seem to date from the refurbishment for the 1953 Royal Train. The brake application equipment referred to was removed. It consisted of vacuum application valves in each vestibule, and a handbrake located, would you believe, in the lavatory compartment. It would have been possible to apply the handbrake while seated on the WC but it is not thought that this was an intentional part of the design! Also removed were four fixed seats in the vestibule, while the loose wicker chairs inside were replaced with large upholstered armchairs. The drawing depicts the coach with curious half height corridor connections, but the normal type were fitted for the Royal Train, if not previously. The then modern "airvac" extractor ventilators were fitted to the roof, and the coach was turned out in the blue and

cream railcar livery, as indeed were the rest of the Royal Train vehicles. It is worth digressing here to point out that the RPSI possesses three other vehicles from the train, namely ex GNR brake first 231, all first 227 and ex UTA dining car 87.

Following the Royal Train the saloon saw sporadic use on special occasions. At the break-up of the GNR in 1957 it passed to the UTA, receiving their sombre green livery, and the number 150. Under the UTA the saloon was mainly used for inspection duties, and the unfortunate history of that concern dictates that many of these were far from happy occasions. An inspection of the system during 1963 in connection with the notorious Benson Report utilised the saloon (a photograph of the inspection train is reproduced in Five Foot Three No.14) as did an inspection of the GN's Derry Road immediately after closure.



Exterior view of 50 shortly after purchase by the Society. (C.P. Friel)

The first RPSI involvement with the saloon was in 1969 when she was borrowed to carry dignitaries during the official handing over of locomotive No.186 by CIÉ. By this time 150 had been repainted in dark blue, with a broad yellow band (promptly dubbed “Easter Egg” but at least better than UTA green!) and the lower parts of the body had been re-panelled in hardboard. Some time after this trip the blue and yellow had given way to unlined grey. 150 now saw little or no use, being stored in the open at various locations such as Great Victoria Street, Antrim, and York Road. Decay set in, with the hardboard panelling warping grotesquely as leaks in the roof caused widespread rot. In addition, she suffered broken windows while the furniture, carpets, light fittings and dynamo were all removed. In early 1973 Northern Ireland Railways decided they had no further use for the coach and agreed to sell it to the RPSI. The Ulster Tourist Development Association very generously agreed to purchase 150 for the Society and in Spring 1973 she was moved to Whitehead to become the RPSI's second coach.

Following some superficial repairs the saloon accompanied coach 861 on a number of RPSI trips, but the purchase of the four Bredins from CIÉ and the GNR dining car from NIR later in 1973 meant that the saloon was no longer required as a passenger carrying vehicle. Thus the saloon fell into disrepair again as all efforts were channelled into maintaining the high capacity stock. By 1978 the condition of the vehicle had deteriorated to such an extent that opinions were being expressed as to whether or not it

was worth saving.

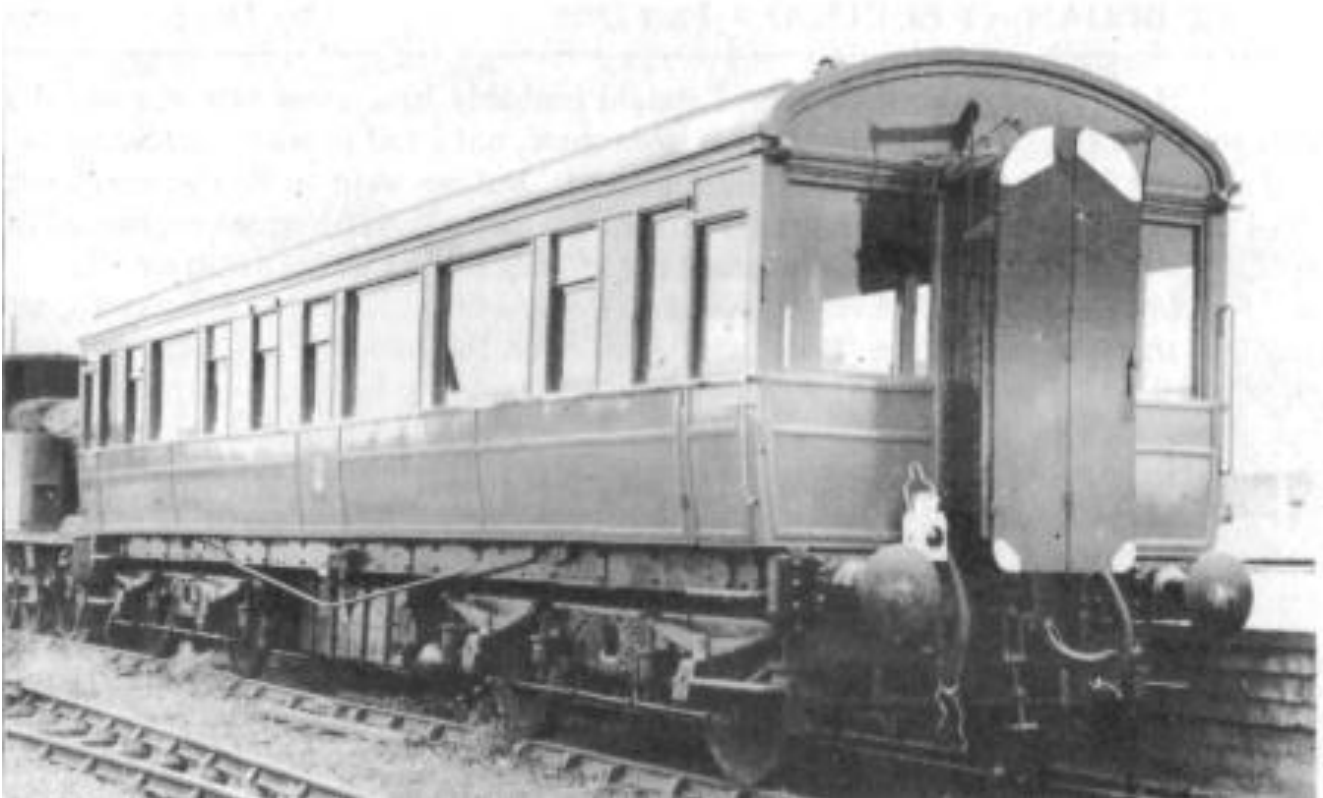
At this point Lord O'Neill, the Society's President, stepped in and offered to sponsor (along with a consortium of friends) the complete renovation of the coach, to be carried out at NIR's workshops. In November 1978 the saloon was moved from Whitehead to York Road, and covered accommodation. The old roof fabric, the external panelling, much of the internal panelling, and the ceilings, all rotten, were removed, and the coach frame dried out. Many of the vertical structural members required sections cut out and replaced, and many of the horizontal members, particularly around the windows, were completely rotten, as were the window frames, droplights, and door bottoms.



Interior view of 50 shortly after purchase by the Society. (C.P. Friel)

The extremely time consuming work of repairing the structural members of the coach had to be fitted in with all the usual activity in York Road works, the body builders working on 50 when not required for more urgent work. Following the structural repairs, the sides were re-sheeted in marine plywood, and the roof was re-covered in PVC proofed nylon. There then came a long lull in the work as NIR were fully occupied in refurbishing ex BR Mk2 coaches for their new "Enterprise" set.

In early 1981 the saloon was moved from the diesel running shed, where she had been since arriving from Whitehead, into the Works proper, and the overhaul resumed in earnest. The vacuum and steam heating systems were overhauled. The doors were rebuilt and refitted, and the raised wooden mouldings on the exterior of the coach were machined out of mahogany and fitted to the body sides. Before the interior was re-panelled, all the wiring runs were replaced with new cable. As much of the original electrical equipment was missing a Wolverton (LMS) system was modified and fitted, utilising the original battery boxes. New window frames were made and fitted, while inside the walls were repanelled, and new ceilings attached to the roof. The ceilings were papered with embossed wall paper which was then painted. By this time the exterior was ready for painting. Originally the coach would have been varnished, but it was considered more practical to apply the latter livery, using a ground paint and producing a grain effect with scumble. GNR livery has been referred to variously as "teak" - no doubt mimicking the LNER terminology; as "mahogany"; as "brown" or even as "red". We were fortunate in being loaned an original panel from a GNR coach, but there are difficulties here. There seems to have been a large amount of variation of the exact colour, tone and graining between coaches. There were two reasons for this. Close examination of the layers of paint on the ex GNR coaches at Whitehead reveals a variety of colour - both of ground paints and of scumble has been used. Secondly, the effect created after application of the scumble can vary greatly, depending on how it is applied; how much it is thinned, how much it is brushed out. We tried various combinations of teak and mahogany scumbles and ground paints on test panels but were not satisfied with any of them. Eventually we came up with "pitch pine" scumble on "mahogany" ground paint which matched the original panel almost exactly, and captured the elusive orange tinge the livery seemed to have. The saloon looked superb when fully grained out and varnished.



Exterior view of 50 after restoration, taken at the 1981 Whitehead Open Day. (C.P. Friel)

The interior had meanwhile been completed, and we must record the generosity of M&L Ltd who provided new light fittings, and to Ulster Carpet Mills who provided new carpets. Both these items

were free of charge. The saloon was taken out for a test run and at 60 mph the only defect found was the failure of the lavatory to flush. The final touches were now applied in the form of wicker chairs and matching tables, and GNR crest on the sides (at the time of writing the coach has still to be lettered). The saloon made its inaugural trip when it conveyed Michael Allison (Secretary of State to the Northern Ireland Office), Sir Myles Humphries (Chairman of Northern Ireland Railways), Lord O'Neill, and other dignitaries from York Road to Whitehead Excursion station for the Society's open day, returning to York Road in the late afternoon. It was subsequently attached to the 25th July "Portrush Flyer" and is booked to run on the "Ben Bulbin" railtour.

There are a large number of people to whom the Society owes a great debt of gratitude for the showpiece that is No.50 today. The Ulster Tourist Development Association, who originally bought it, to Lord O'Neill, and his syndicate who sponsored the overhaul, to M&L Ltd., to Ulster Carpet Mills, and last but certainly not least, the staff of Northern Ireland Railways who, at all levels, gave the closest co-operation.

Finally, perhaps I should explain the title of this article. I happened to hear the saloon thus referred to while in York Road. It certainly seemed to have much more affinity to that earlier era of transport than the sleek all welded Mk2 coaches which surrounded it at that time.



Interior view of 50 after restoration, taken at the 1981 Whitehead Open Day. (C.P. Friel)

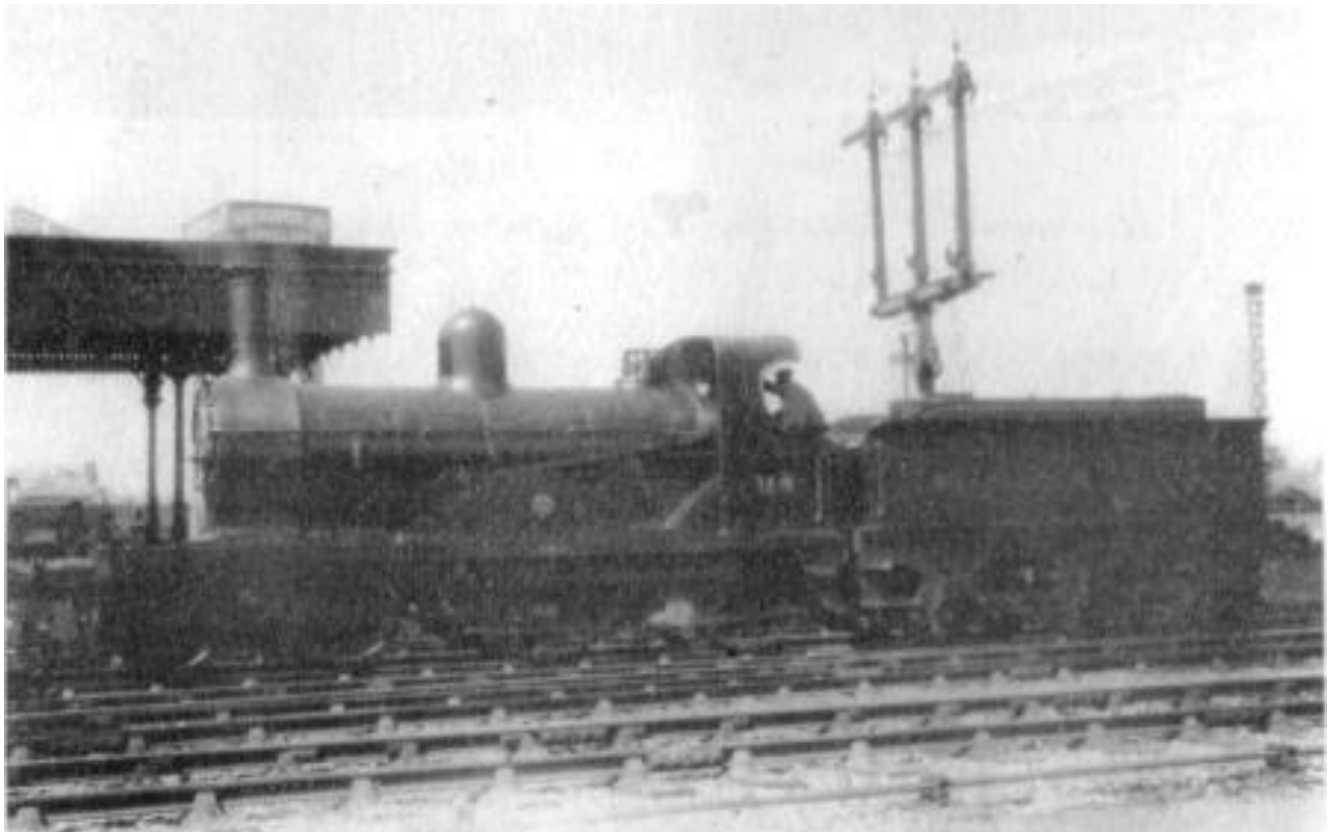
IT ALL BEGAN AT PETTIGO - Part One

R.A. Read

If I had been born in July, I should probably have come into the world at Pettigo, Co. Donegal, as my father came from there, but I had to wait until November, and saw the light of day in Cupar, Fife, instead. But we went to Pettigo every year until the Great War, and these journeys introduced me to the little green engines of the GNR(I)'s Bundoran branch, thus starting my lifelong interest in locomotives. My father's sister Evelyn taught at Portora Royal School, Enniskillen, and tells me that she remembers

“Rose” and “Thistle” on the branch; they were of course the small 4-4-0s 118 and 119. One of the attractions of her journeys was the little refreshment room at the triangular Bundoran Junction. Sometimes we crossed to Ireland via Londonderry on the Laird Line “Rose”, otherwise it was by Belfast with the “Redbreast”. I always remember the sweet scent of tobacco from Murray’s factory at Great Victoria Street station, and the taste of Ross’s Ginger Ale in the refreshment room, which my father recommended in place of Iron Bru and other Scottish concoctions. Coming into Belfast stern first we would pass the Heysham, Fleetwood, Liverpool, Ayr and Ardrossan steamers which had already arrived. There was always the excitement of knowing whether we were going via Omagh or Enniskillen in the novelty of a second class compartment. On the Enniskillen route I remember seeing “Colebrooke” on the Clogher Valley train at Maguiresbridge and “Lough Gill” on the SLNCR at Enniskillen. After getting on the Bundoran Branch at the junction we got the impression that the branch train was doing a terrific speed because of the clatter of the 6 wheel coaches on the thirty foot rails.

On arrival at Pettigo we were greeted by the smell of turf fires and on market days by the whiff of cattle. If the Lough Derg pilgrimage was on, the brightly coloured wagonettes and jaunting cars of Floods and Brennans made a bright spectacle in their yellow and green liveries. Another well-known scent was of bread hampers which came off the morning train, all bread coming from Belfast in special vans for all parts of the country.



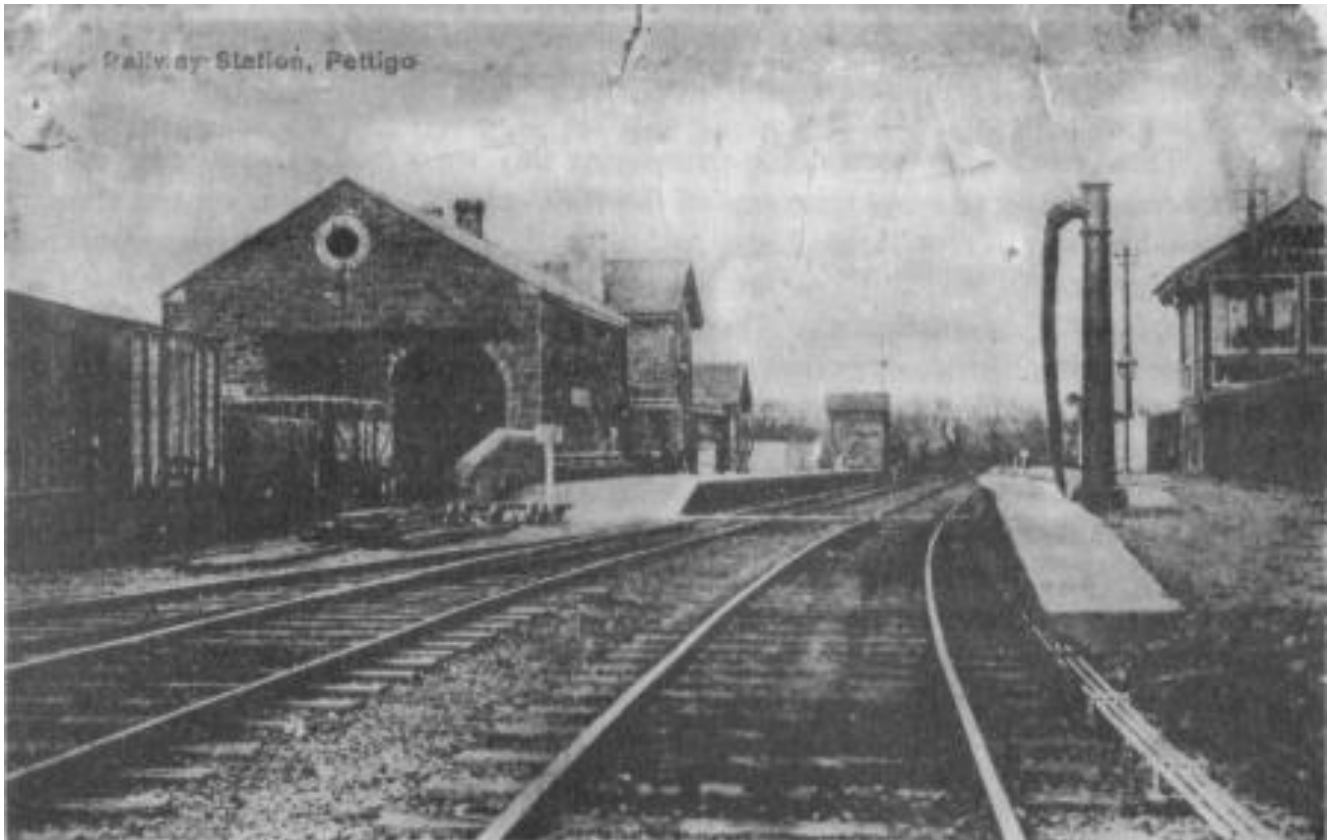
GNR J Class 4-4-0 No.119 - formerly “Thistle” - at Amiens Street in 1921. (Kelland Collection 52)

They must have been doing permanent way work at Pettigo just before the war, as I remember a relaying train east of the station with a green locomotive standing at the bridge over Killynoogan Lane, and then shunting back when the afternoon train for Enniskillen was due. After a wartime visit in the “Hound” of Burns Line from Glasgow, we returned in the “Duke of Argyll” to Fleetwood, passing on the way the Titanic’s sister “Britannic”, fitting out as a hospital ship, only to be sunk in the Mediterranean in 1916.

In 1919 I knew more about engines, and thinking all GNR(I) locomotives were beautiful I was dismayed to see the ugliest I had ever seen - 12 in Great Victoria Street station. She had been fitted out with an extended smokebox housing a Phoenix superheater. Luckily I later got a photo of her at Londonderry after she had been rebuilt to the standard type. At that time 0-6-0 61 (class A) used to shunt the sidings at Pettigo while I played in my grandfather Robert Read's garden. He had written the "History Of Pettigo" in which he mentions that in 1862 the line was surveyed, and that the first contractor relinquished the undertaking which was completed by Messrs Brassey and Fields. He states that in 1865, before the railway was finished, there was a serious row in the town which arose from the rescue of a prisoner by the navvies. The railway was opened for traffic on 28th March 1866, and as he says the quantity of goods brought to Pettigo increased enormously.

Shane Leslie's book "Long Shadows" mentions that the largest pike caught in Ireland was weighed on the Pettigo station scales, and as it was wartime was cut into little pieces and sold in Belfast instead of being preserved.

Around 1920 class PP 4-4-0s 46 and 107 were working the Bundoran branch, and besides 61, old 59 0-6-0 used to appear. By January 1920 Bundoran had 4-4-0 class PP 43 and 71 and 0-6-0 class A 146. Enniskillen had 4-4-0 89 class P and 107 class PP, and 0-6-0 59. Omagh had 4-4-0 class PP 46 and QL 128.



General view of Pettigo Station. (Photographer unknown)

As most of the family had emigrated to Toronto in the early twenties, mainly to work at Eaton's stores with whom there were family connections, I was not able to stay in Pettigo again, although over the years I have made occasional day visits, the last being in 1980.

In August 1924 we went to Portrush when we stayed in a boarding house facing north-eastwards with a good view of the Atlantic and the Skerries. One stormy summer day, the Anchor liner "Cameronia"

came in quite close, presumably to get some shelter. We made the usual trip on the Giant's Causeway Electric Tram and also visited Portstewart, coming down from the station behind tram engine No.3. Portrush Station was very busy at the weekends with excursions from Belfast, etc. I soon became accustomed to the high pitched banshee screech of the NCC whistles which contrasted strongly with the more mellow sound of NBR and GNR(I) locomotives to which I was more attuned. Most of the engines were painted 'invisible' green which was to all intents and purposes a matt black. Photography at the station was hindered by a narrow mesh fence on the seaward side but I was able to note the new 4-4-0s 74, 75, 76 and 78 on Belfast trains along with U class 4-4-0 73. Older locomotives were on the stopping trains and excursions - Class As 3 "King Edward VII", 34 "Queen Alexandra", 20, 63, 64 and 68, while Class D 50 "Jubilee" with its 7 foot wheels also appeared. 2-4-0s 10, 46, 51 and 57 were in on Coleraine locals. Portrush still had some coasting trade, "Collin" sailing on 19th August, "Spurnpoint" on 21st, "Kelvinside" on 27th and the puffer "Jessie" on the same day.



H Class 2-4-0 No.84 arrives at Bundoran on 11th September 1898. (Nunn Collection H251)

The harbour had other attractions as about 8am each day a lady of some fifty years bathed nude in the harbour. I felt that as I was shortly to become a medical student it behoved me to observe this somewhat unattractive spectacle! My grandfather's cousin, Adam Reade (so he spelt it!) who was Headmaster of Coleraine Academy assured us that the natives had got used to this event! However, all good things come to an end and we set off for home via Belfast. On the way, I noted 0-6-0Ts 106 and 109 and 2-4-2T 101 on the narrow gauge lines and around Belfast were old 2-4-0 8, new 0-6-0s (V) 13 and 15 and older 0-6-0s 31 and 39 of class K, 43 and 44 of class K1 and E1 54. A quick visit to the GNR at Great Victoria Street produced 4-4-0 (Q) 121, small 4-4-0s 72 and 73, 2-4-2T 94 and 4-4-2T 189, while SG3 8 was noted going down to Maysfields. I noted at Queens Quay that the locomotive livery was more definitely dark green compared with the NCC. 4-6-4Ts 22, 23, 24, 25 and 0-6-4T 29 were seen along with 4-4-2Ts 1, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 30 - quite a busy scene compared with later years.

A short visit in September 1926 followed a crossing from Glasgow in the “Moorfowl” with a return voyage in the “Woodcock”. At Adelaide Shed on 25th September I noted 4-4-2Ts, 115, 144, 147, 0-6-0s 6, 117, 184 and older 0-6-0s 41 (E) 80, 81 (A). Small 4-4-0s 75 and 77 were present, looking in their re-built form extremely neat compared with the monstrosity No.12 mentioned earlier. Q 4-4-0s 120 and 122 were on shed, but of special interest to me were 2-4-2T 93 and also 0-6-0T 204 which had been purchased from the contractors of the Castleblaney, Keady and Armagh Railway.

The next visit in September 1927 afforded me a much more detailed look at the GNR. At Great Victoria Street on 3rd September 4-4-0 173 was noted on the 10:15 to Dublin an old Class A 0-6-0 146 arrived from Lisburn at 10:02 while 4-4-2T 116 went out at 10:20 for Lisburn followed by Class Q 122 on the 10:45 Londonderry. Newly painted Class P 89 was shunting at the station in a fine glossy black livery. One remembered how LNW enthusiasts praised shiny black. Unfortunately whenever I saw LNW locomotives in the twenties they were absolutely filthy. I remember studying a Claughton in Euston in 1924 and as it had no LNW number plates or name, to this day I do not know which one it was! GNR(I) stations also were smart in 1927 with neat fences painted white. In fact the whole concern, locomotives, coaches and stations, was in excellent state then.

A quick visit to the NCC produced 4-4-0s, 24, 74, 76, 77 and newly painted maroon 4-4-0 No. 28 recently rebuilt with a small high pitched boiler. Back at Great Victoria Street GNR 4-4-0 191 was on the 5:35pm arrival from Dublin carrying lamps marked “Dublin”. QL 4-4-0 114 was on the 5:45 to Dundalk. Among the older engines I saw at Adelaide Shed on 6th September were 0-6-0 (E) 41, 0-6-0s (A) 33, 61 and 80, Class A1 57, 58 and 140, Class B 66 and ex Keady line 0-4-0ST 203 with 0-6-0T 204 lying dead inside. Present also were 2-4-2T 93 and class P 4-4-0s 82 and 89.



***CVR No.3 “Blackwater” on 11:30 mixed from Fivemiletown at Maguiresbridge, 14th May 1920.
(Nunn Collection 2623)***

On 12th September we set off for Warrenpoint on the 10:15 to Dublin behind 172. 0-6-0 59 was on an Armagh-Portadown train while 0-6-0 40 (Class E) was on the Scarva to Banbridge. 4-4-0 71 was on the Armagh-Goragwood train while we had 4-4-0 44 which trundled us down from Goragwood to Warrenpoint. I could not identify the Dundalk, Newry and Greenore tank which I saw at Newry. On 13th September 2-4-0 84 with standard chimney, sandbox on splasher and extended roof to cab was

noted at 3:59 and 2-4-0 85 arrived at 5:14pm. Some of my Warrenpoint notes appear in Volume 2 of R.M. Arnold's "Golden Years of the Great Northern Railway" but for those misguided enough not to have bought this book, I had better repeat and amplify these notes. Old class B 34 was doing the shunting on the 17th but much more activity occurred on the 18th when Sunday specials came in behind 4-4-2T 30, 144, 148, 0-6-0s, SG2 15 and 17, NQG 165 while 174 brought in a special from Dublin at 1:50. As this class S locomotive could not be accommodated on the turntable, the crew spent the afternoon uncoupling the tender and turning the two parts of the locomotive separately before joining up again in readiness for departure at 7:30.

Similar locomotives were in on the next Sunday with the addition of 0-6-0 AL 55 and 0-6-0 E 194. 2-4-0 86 arrived at 11:51 on 21st and I noted it had a wider funnel than 84 and had rounded splashers without sandbox. There was a ferry over to Omeath and I noted several DNGR trains in LNW livery but it was just too far off to make out the numbers on the engines.



Portrush just before the war with U2 class 4-4-0 No.75 "Antrim Castle" waiting to leave for Belfast. (Lens of Sutton)

On 22nd September we took a day excursion to Dublin where my granduncle, John McCrea, a retired chemist from Newry, had recommended what he called a "good eating house". Leaving at 10:20am behind small 4-4-0 71 I noted LMS tank 1 "Macrory" at Newry while class AL 141 was seen at Goraghowood. Class S 173 arrived there at 10:59 on a Dublin-Belfast express, Class P 4-4-0 arrived on a Newry-Portadown train and 2-4-0 86 came in on the Armagh to Warrenpoint. We then joined the Belfast to Dublin express which arrived at 11:15. At Dundalk I noted 2-4-2T 95 recently painted and also small 4-4-0 43, while at Drogheda 46 was on the Kells branch train.

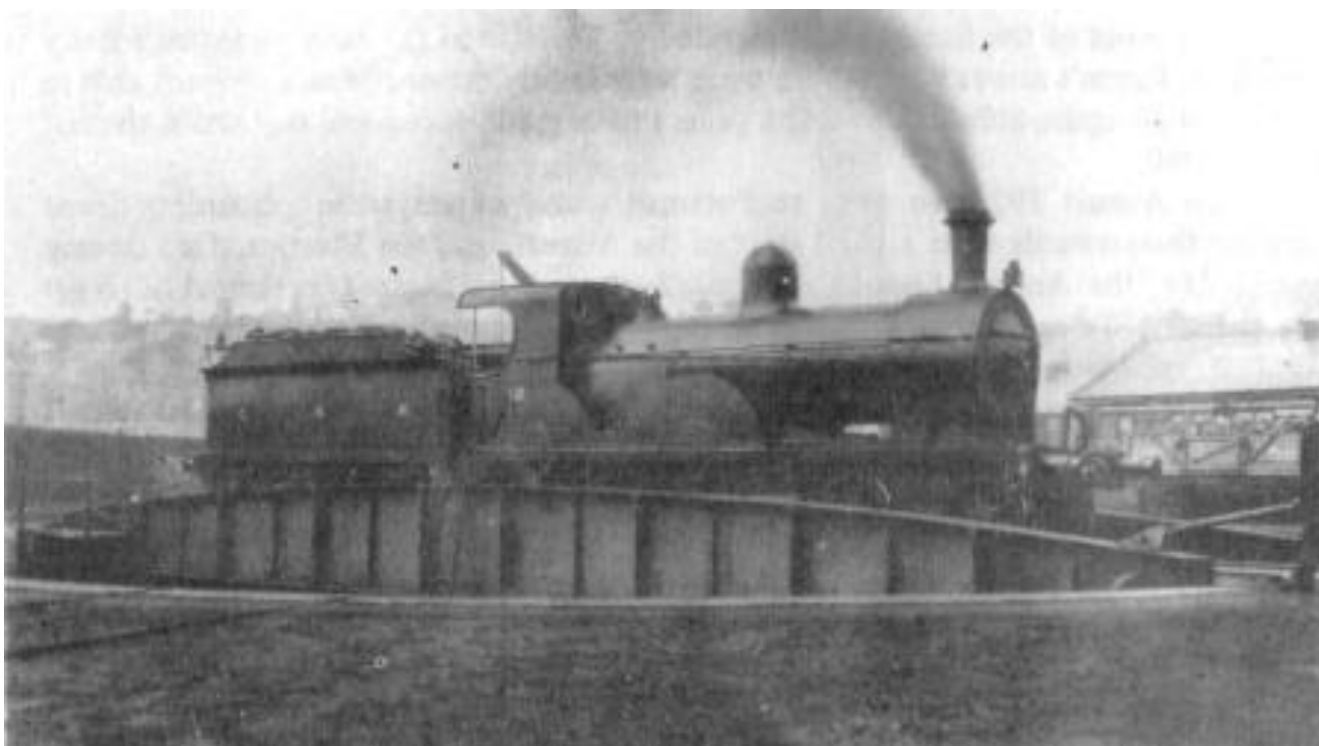
At Dublin were visible 0-6-0 NQG 109, class A 68 and 4-4-2T 189, while on the Liffey railway bridge I had a glimpse of GSR 4-4-2T 458 and 2-4-0T 424. We came back on the 6:40 which had Class S 172

and eleven bogie coaches (two to Oldcastle, one to Enniskillen, one to Dundalk and seven to Belfast). On the return journey I noted the 5ft 6in wheeled Class P 54, QL 4-4-0 156, 4-4-2Ts 3, 5, 185 and large 0-6-0s 158 and-177. We passed Malahide at 6:54½, Balbriggan 7:09, Bettystown 7:14 and arrived at Drogheda at 7:19 when I noted 4-4-0 Class U 200 and Class P 46. From Dundalk onwards we had a Q Class 4-4-0.

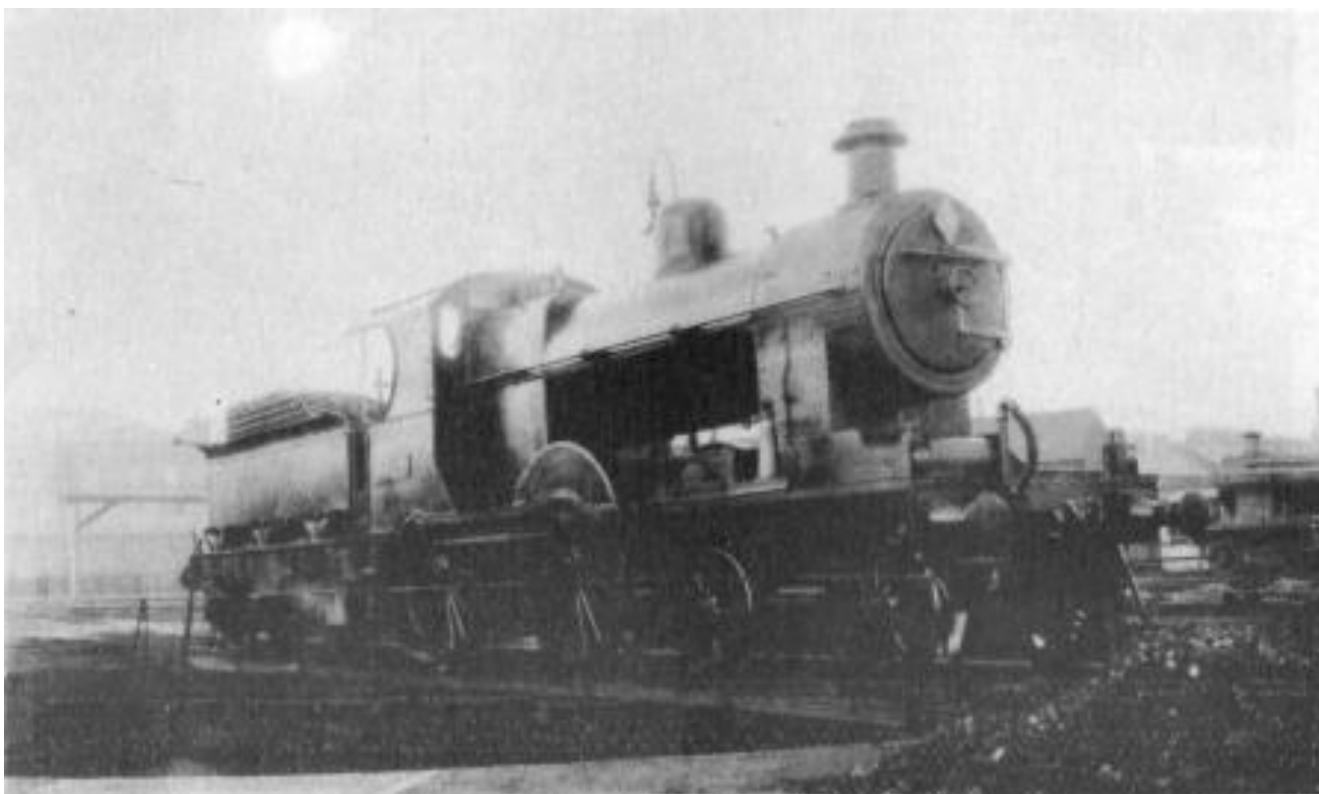
On 27th September we returned to Belfast on the 10:30 and I noted at Newry Class LQG 110 and small 4-4-0s 43 and 77 with 44 under repair. Also seen on the journey were 2-4-0 86, 0-6-0s 38, 40, 41 and 184. My final visit next day was to York Road LMS shed where 2-4-0s 10 and 56, 4-4-0s 2, 72 and 74 and old 0-6-0s 37 and 44 were visible as was old 2-4-0ST 49. Thus ended a memorable and enjoyable holiday.



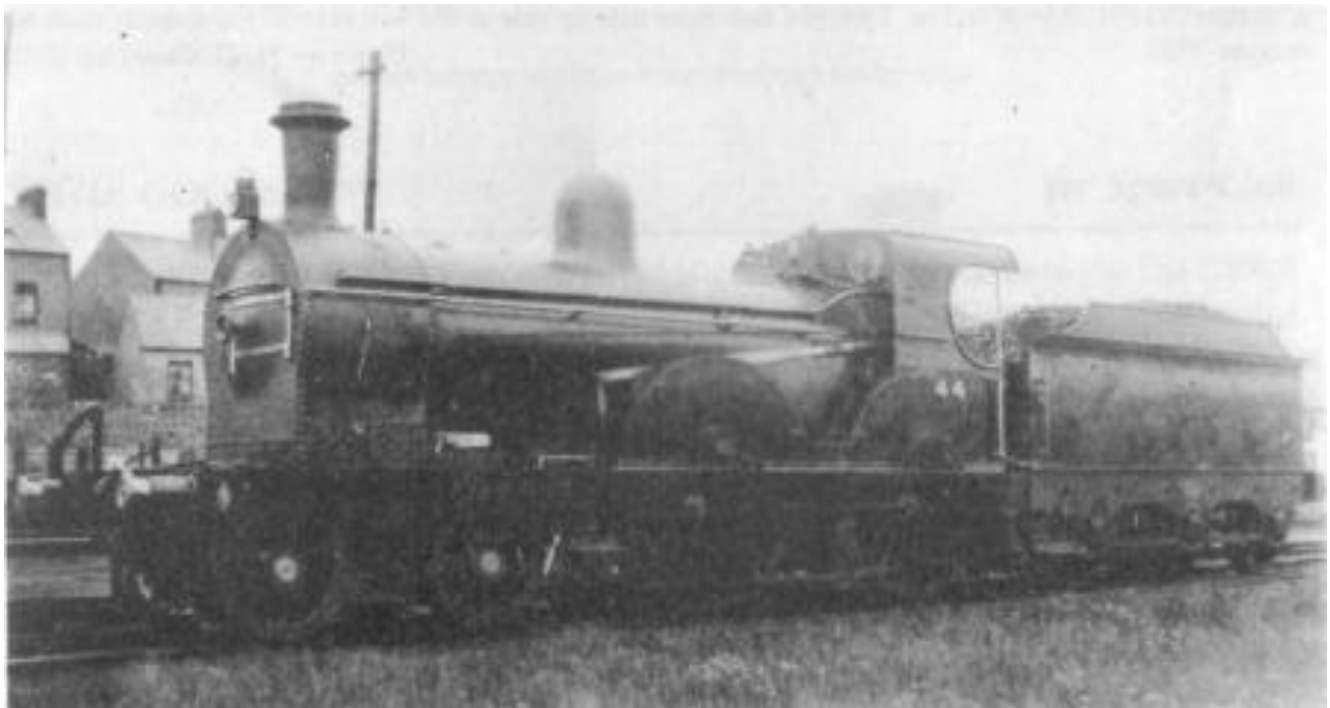
PP 4'3" 4-4-0 No. 12 "Ulster" with the extended smokebox and chimney perched well forward to accommodate the Phoenix superheater. Posed at Dundalk near the North Cabin. (Watson Collection WG3)



No.12 in later years, after acquiring a smokebox of more normal proportions, Londonderry 15th August 1931. (R.A. Read)



4-4-0 No.68 in red livery at York Road on 20th August 1931. (R.A. Read)



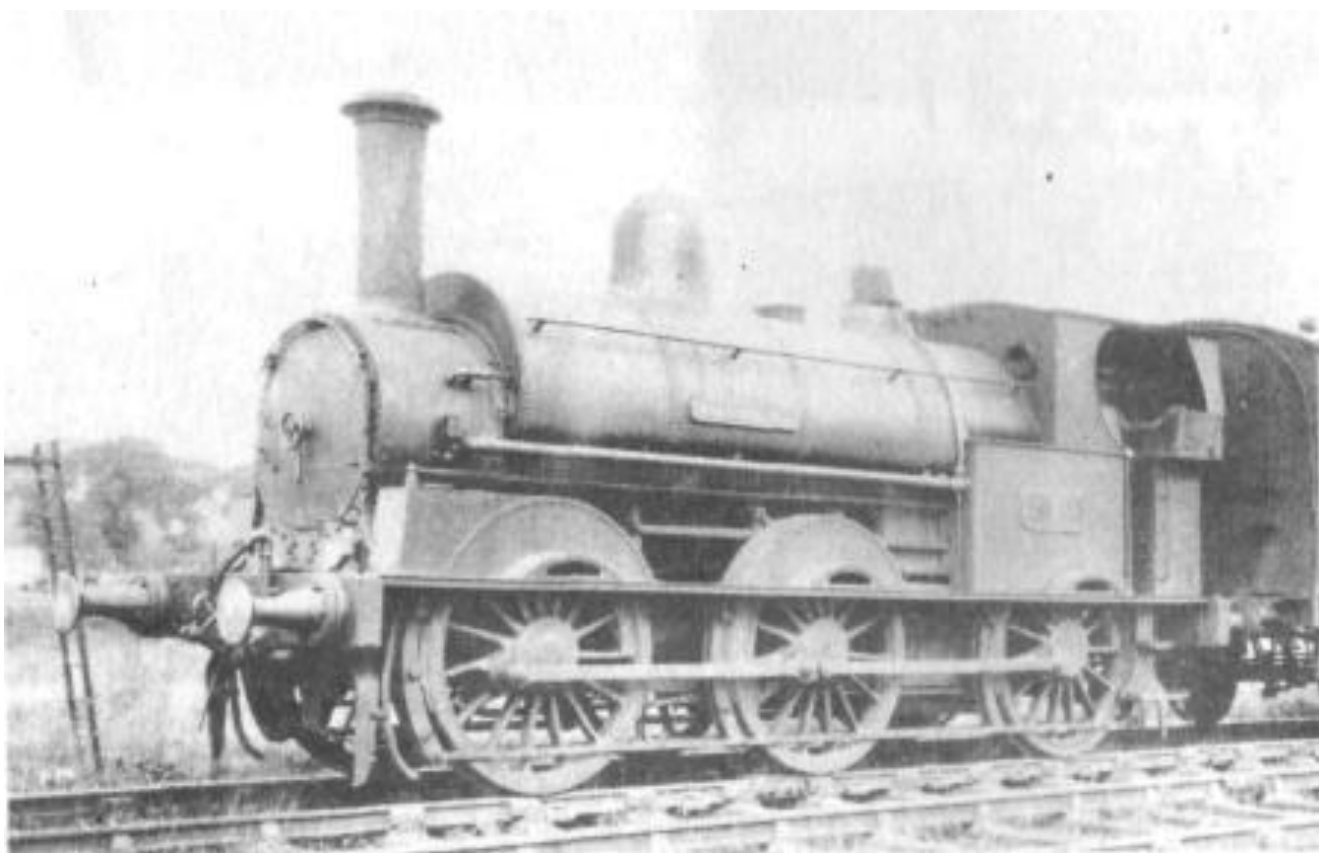
No.44 at Londonderry on 15th August 1931. (R.A. Read)



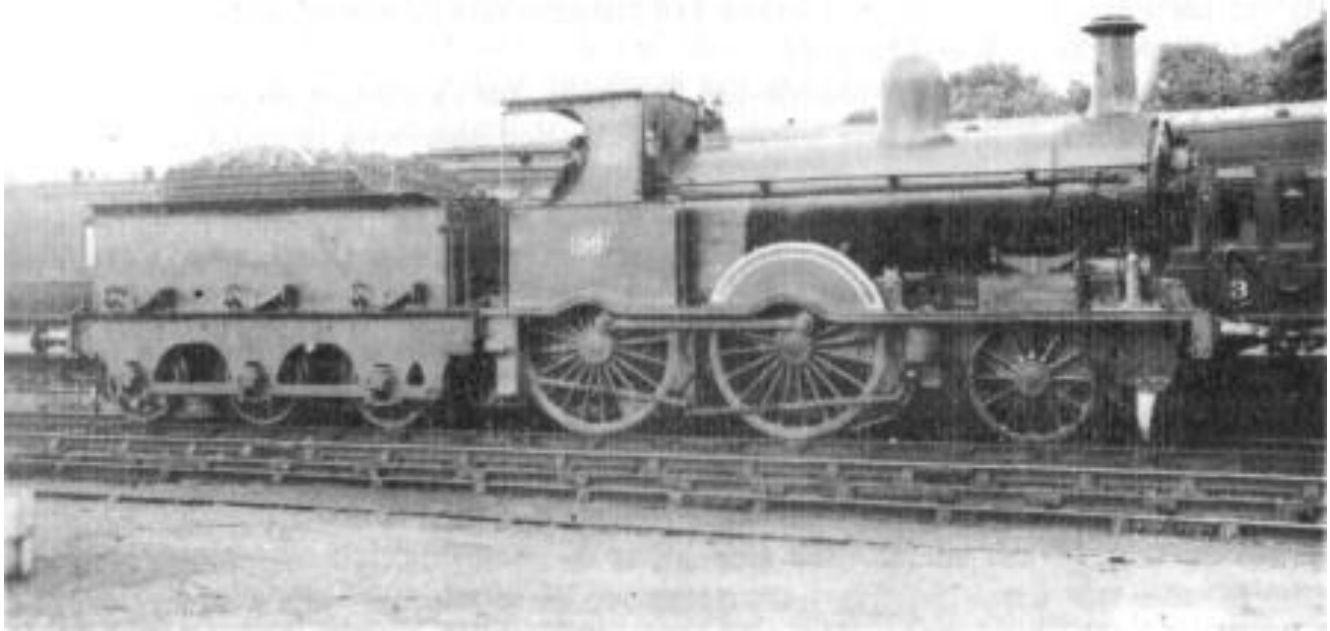
In this 1933 view of Warrenpoint, a Glover tank waits to leave with a train for Belfast while a P Class 4-4-0 is turned. (Loco and General 7176)



A comparison of chimneys. The two H Class locos side by side at the entrance to Portadown shed, 8th August 1930. (H.C. Casserley 7053)



DN&GR No.1 "Macrory", Newry 1933. (Loco and General 7173)



NCC C Class 2-4-0 No.56, in 1936. (Loco and General 6718)

ON THE GOODS

Spare Link

Reading Jack O'Neill's very enjoyable article on the race between the GSWR and the DSER for the cattle traffic between Waterford and Dublin, I fell to reflecting upon the changing face of the Irish railway system within the past ten years. Stock specials and loose-coupled trains are but a pleasant memory, Rail Plan 80 having put paid to a whole way of train operating and working methods. No longer can one hear the tinkling tone of wagons buffering up and three link couplings dropping off draw-hooks. Apart from seasonal beet trains, the only loose coupled trains now running are PWD ballasts, the Inchicore oil and repairs train and the very occasional Heuston-Cork scrap train. Stopping to pin down brakes at Inchicore, Calna, Rathpeacon and Barnagh in accordance with the instructions issued in the Appendix to the Working Timetable is no more. Vacuum braked liner trains speed through the countryside and once busy stations like Portarlinton are now but wayside stops. Drivers still talk with nostalgia of shunting at Tullamore or Carlow, while fly-shunting at Arklow was an art unto itself (even if illegal).

Marshalling of a goods train was a skill. The brake van had first to be placed at the stopper and the wagons shunted against it in their proper order. Like all occupations or professions, there were good shunters and bad. We will never forget the great Tommy Sullivan of Kingsbridge goods, known as the "Wonder Boy", a title well deserved. Tommy could work a 12 hour shift with just a 10 minute tea break and keep 3 locomotives busy. On one never to be forgotten night, he was all alone in the yard, I was on the pilot and between us we made up 11 outgoing goods (all of 65 wagons) and shunted 5 incoming. It is one of the ironies of life that Rail Plan 80 made Tommy redundant when all goods traffic except Guinness and Bellferry transferred to North Wall depot.

The working of a loose coupled train called for a great measure of co-operation and skill on the part of the loco driver and guard if the train was to reach its destination safely. A certain amount of friendly

rivalry existed between the 'front end' (driver) and 'back end' (guard).

The guard was responsible for the train, for examining all wagon doors were sealed, for shunting at wayside stations and also for observing signals (when this was possible). He had to apply the brake in his van when the train was stopping or descending long gradients. Sometimes the 'front-end' felt they were not getting the assistance they required from the 'back-end' when descending banks and this often led to acrimony. When working through dips such as Ballyrobin or Maynooth a good guard would apply his brake carefully and in good time to stretch the train while the driver used full throttle on the loco, and in this way the train passed smoothly on its way.

Just as loco men discuss the merits of various classes of engines, so the guards often discussed vans. The ex GNR 25 ton van had a powerful brake and the wheels would never skid but the outside side lights were difficult to maintain alight. The CIÉ 30 ton van was a terrible hard-riding vehicle equipped with a square cast-iron brick-lined stove that would not melt butter. The wheels would pick up and skid even on a dry rail and the terrible wheel flats and loud hammering noise as they passed bore eloquent testimony to this fault. How any guard worked the 19:50 Kingsbridge-Cork non-stop goods (165½ miles) is quite a mystery to me, yet work it they did. A stop at Mallow was later inserted at the request of the Inchicore goods link drivers and this short stop gave a measure of relief. It also permitted examination of the train. My own favourite van was the small 20 tonner, surely the best brake van ever to run. They rode very smoothly had a very good brake and the excellent cast-iron, round, pot-bellied stove was surely the most efficient heating unit ever devised. When that fire got going the very paint would melt off the walls. Most of them were renewed in Limerick works from 1967 and emerged with soft upholstered seats draught-proofed doors and side look-outs, heavy brown lino on the floors, fuel bins and food lockers. Unlike the 30 ton vans they retained the cast iron axleboxes and plain brass bearings with pad lubrication until the end.

Many's the trip I had in them, over the DSER to Arklow and on the Midland to Mullingar and, if I may, I would like to describe just one such journey.

I was rostered to book on duty at 22:40 in the Midland yard to work the 23:40 Dublin-Galway goods to Mullingar and the 04:15 goods home (continuation of 20:35 ex Galway due North Wall at 06:45). It was a very cold, frosty starlit night in January. I made my way down the almost deserted North Wall, huddled up in my heavy railway overcoat. Passing Campion's pub the warm yellow light from the snug acted like a beacon. Loud, bawdy laughter from within stirred a twinge of envy and desire but duty called and I turned in the gate to the Midland depot. The Spencer Dock had a covering of ice on it and my boots crunched on the cobblestones. Experience told me on which road my van should be.

Walking gingerly over the frosted sleepers, the silence of the night was broken only by the crash of railway wagons hitting up. My heart leaped to find 23501, a 20 ton van, against the block. She was only fresh out of Works and she glistened in the moonlight. I threw my 'traps' up and, pausing to check the position of the safety bar, climbed up after them. The smell of fresh paint was overpowering. The lampman had 'dressed' the van and set the fire. One match sufficed to light the side lights and I lit the fire. The tail lamp would be lit later and placed on the bracket at the appropriate time. The reason for this will emerge later.

Checking the operation of the hand brake (incidentally, although 23501 had just been through works, she still had the old arrangement of two brake handles, one on each veranda rather than the more modern central brake in the middle of the caboose. This allowed the guard to apply the brake from his seat instead of traipsing in and out), a look at the axleboxes and springs and then on to the business of checking the train and recording the numbers of each wagon up to the locomotive. Tonight we have 35 wagons, 20 more than that laid down in the Appendix and so we must take a banking engine to Liffey Junction even though the train engine is A43, a Crossley 1200hp DE. This is because it's the van power that is the important factor due to the very steep gradient.

A few words with my driver to acquaint him with details of the train and to inform him that he will be picking up empty cattle wagons at the junction for Mullingar. The banker (E425) is in position and ready. I return to the van. Prompt on time we get the right of way. A green light from me to the driver and away he starts. Very slowly, very gently he stretches the couplings until the van begins to move. We crawl out over the points and 425 runs up behind. Ever so gently the banker and the van buffers close and then the banker starts to shove. Two loud raucous whistles pierce the night. A43 gives an answer and we are under way.

The climb from North Wall to Liffey Junction is ferocious and the roar of the Maybach engine reverberates in the cutting. Through the dip under Drumcondra (Binns) bridge and then we are on to the stiffest part of the bank. Some late night revellers gaze over Whitworth Road wall in silent awe, and I reflect on the many times I did exactly the same. The memory of a green Woolwich 2-6-0 banking a goods in that same deep cutting will never fade. Under the short tunnel at Cross Guns and on up to Glasnevin Junction, trailing in on the right with the tracks of the GSWR North Wall branch shining in the moonlight.

Still climbing we meet the North City Mills line looking very derelict, the banker has eased off and the train engine has hold of the train. Over the sharply curved steel bridge and we have arrived at Liffey Junction. We are allowed 30 minutes here for shunting (23:55-00:25) but, using the banker to grab the van, we make short work of picking up the 15 cattle wagons from the yard (no railway man says cattle wagon by the way, KN is the universal term used). The load of the train is now 50 wagons equal to 45, the fifteen KNs counting as ten. My train is now complete once again and I give my driver a green light to start. Again the couplings are stretched and when I feel the van moving I wave the green light from side to side to inform the driver the train is complete. A steady white light is the reply. Only now do I place the lighted tail lamp on the bracket. On a train assisted in the rear, the banker carries the tail light.

Liffey Junction at this time (1969) is full of wagons some for repair, some beyond repair, some simply being held for traffic requirements. It has a daytime pilot and a fair size staff. The station buildings are still intact, the vandal has not yet arrived. It is a place of fond memories for me, my first footplate experience took place here when Billy Scanlon allowed me on to 0-4-2ST "Sambo". I was all of 9 years old. Talk about steam in the blood.

Over Reilly's crossing the line continues to climb through Ashtown and Blanchardstown towards the top of Coolmines. At one time the banking engine used to go all the way to the summit. Looking ahead from the van one could easily imagine that the train was being drawn by a steam engine for the pyrotechnic display being put on by A43 is spectacular, flames, sparks and thick black smoke belch up into the cold night air.

The distant signal for Clonsilla, on the same post as the gate signal, is on, and so I gradually wind on the brake. "Up Galway mail must be late," I muse. Hardly have we stopped than the Mail thunders past, B126 working full out, the staff given out for the last time. Clonsilla is the end of double line and the start of single line since the MGW main line was singled by the GSR in an economy drive. After a short interval the down starter clears, my driver being in possession of the Clonsilla-Leixlip ET staff.

Off we go again, over the crossing and through the station. On the right the trackbed of the Meath Road curves away northwards and in the angle, the old Dublin and Meath loco shed, now a dwelling-house, stands as silent witness to past hope. Barberstown crossing and Lucan North flash past, the concrete sleepers here creating their own peculiar sound. Away south, beyond the hollow where the village of Lucan sleeps, far over the silent countryside, the Dublin and Wicklow mountains stand, bathed in cold clear light. Crossing the van to take advantage of the twisting railway for observing the train, the glint of moonlight on the Royal Canal catches my eye. This defunct system of transport, now a beautiful silver ribbon of serenity will be our close companion throughout the journey. How hard it is to believe that this is the same canal as the weed-choked rubbish-filled open cess we passed at Croke Park and

crossed over at Liffey Junction.

The distant signal for Leixlip is coming up. On the loco the staff is placed in the snatcher and dropped out. Exchange apparatus is on the down side and without slackening speed, the staffs are exchanged. From within his small snug cabin the signalman waves as the van passes by and I flash my lamp in acknowledgement and greeting. Leixlip is a beautiful small station and even at night it has charm. The canal is tight to the railway and they both share a common viaduct (aqueduct?) over the beautiful Rye Valley. Quite a good cattle traffic passes through here for the International Meat Packers factory and the cattle dock is never empty. A very sharp right hand curve necessitates a speed restriction of 30 mph on trains and carries the line under the main Dublin-Galway road. (A funny incident occurred in this station one evening when a down goods stopped in the loop. The young fireman, over anxious to please his driver, leaped down on the right hand side to oil the engine landed in the cool waters of the canal. The picker had to be used to fish him out).

Along beside the canal we run and, after passing a set of gates, I gradually wind on the brake to stretch the train. The loco is eased back in preparation for the notorious dip through Maynooth. A rather unusual stone bridge permits road traffic to cross both the Royal canal and the railway, each having a separate archway. Over to the left a brief glimpse can be had of Connolly's Folly, an obelisk erected to give famine relief work to the starving peasantry in the late 1840s. The boards for Maynooth are clear and when the van passes the home signal I let the brake off while the driver opens up the loco. The staff exchange is on the right hand side as is the cabin.

Many goods trains broke off at Maynooth and most drivers had a very healthy respect for this place. For instance, if the Distant signal was on and on approaching the Home signal it cleared, rather than attempt to lift the train, many drivers preferred to come to a stop and re-start rather than risk snatching the couplings with possible breakage of the train.

Maynooth was also the station where the driver of Woolwich 396 (Mick Cuddy) stopped his train after the unfortunate Broadstone fireman "Dancer" Murray was killed when struck by an overbridge while pulling down fire irons. An Athlone goods checker named Matterson, who was travelling in the train as a passenger, volunteered to assist Mick Cuddy on the footplate and the train reached Dublin with the footplate covered in blood. No relief was provided for the driver and he had to work the loco to Broadstone alone with the remains of his close friend and mate. Checker Matterson was awarded a new suit of clothes to replace those ruined on the footplate. Driver Cuddy was badly affected by the incident and never worked mainline trains again.

The flash of Maynooth cabin lights and I wave my lamp to the signalman in friendly greeting. Across the canal looms the great college of Maynooth, founded in 1795, now in darkness as the students sleep peacefully in their beds. I don't envy them, for the moonlit frost-covered countryside is so beautiful it makes work a pleasure and the heat in 23501 is great. Night work has its compensations.

On to Kilcock we roar passing under the red metal bridge which killed Peter Murray. This station has its problems for loose-coupled trains and when stopping here it was preferable to pull the train to a stand because, being at the top of a short steep bank, any fall-back could lead to broken couplings. In fact some months after the journey here described, such a fate befell van 23501 and it ran back with most of the train into the buffer-stop and was so badly damaged it was scrapped. This is also a block post and the exchange apparatus is on the left side.

The next set of gates is at Ferns Lock, a one-time station and block post closed in 1963, with the line climbing all the way to MP 23. Enfield (26 miles) is the largest station on the Dublin - Clonsilla - Mullingar section and was the junction station for the closed Edenderry branch. The boards are clear and we have nothing off here tonight so if the signalman has no traffic offering he will indicate this to my driver with a green light and we need not stop. Nevertheless we approach cautiously. A loud blast

on the engine whistle and the noise of the engine being opened up clearly says no stop tonight. The signalman waves from the doorway of his snug cabin and I wave back. Beside the cabin a silver-painted circular water tank is a reminder of steam days, but little did I realise that 8/9 years later I would be watering steam locos No.184 and No.186 at this very tank.

Under the main Galway road and along beside the remains of the Edenderry branch we run. Numerous old wagons are stored on this spur including ex GNR brake vans. I recorded the numbers of these vans but cannot now find the notebook. Nesbet Junction was the actual point of divergence of the branch and this was 1½ miles from Enfield. The branch closed in 1963. In its later days the Liffey Junction pilot ran out 2/3 times a week to work traffic as required, mainly stock and seasonal beet, grain, etc.

Another notorious dip is the next problem and this is ¼ mile from Moyvalley station. This dip is worked in the same manner as Maynooth, the train being stretched well in advance. Deer from a nearby estate can often be seen close to the line around this station, also closed in 1963. Between here and Hill of Down, 3 sets of gates must be crossed, Ribbontail, Ballinabarney 1 and Ballinabarney 2. Also, two aqueducts carry the Royal Canal over rivers on the right hand side.

Once again the ETS is exchanged and we travel on to Killucan and its famous bank. This starts at Thomastown gates and ends at MP 43. The bank is 1½ miles at a grade of 1 in 150 and because of this, many drivers stopping a loose-coupled train in Killucan station going down would pull the train to a stop to avoid fall-back and snatching of couplings with the risk of breaking the train. On an up goods, the guard always made sure of keeping the train stretched by applying the brake on the level stretch of line just before descending the bank. (Some drivers had no fear of banks such as Killucan or indeed Ballybrophy but other men lived in dread of such places. One driver colleague, working the heavy B+I liner from North Wall GS to Cork worried about successfully negotiating 'Bally' bank (1 in 125) before he ever mounted the footplate, yet North Wall to Cabra with grades of 1 in 50 and 1 in 88 and Islandbridge Junction to Inchicore 1 in 84 held no fear for him.)

Across the easy road to 46th mile box (or "The Downes" as it is more familiarly known to railwaymen) and here we meet our second block of the night. The first up Galway gets preference and we must go into the loop. When we get safely in, the driver gives 4 short blows to tell the signalman we are clear and shuts down the noisy Crossley engine. The silence is deafening. Across the bog, a dog (or fox?) barks at the full, frosty moon. A strange beauty pervades the whole place. The small cabin on the left, its yellow light warmly welcoming, must be the loneliest in Ireland. To pass the time I go up to speak to Christy, the signalman. Quick as a flash, he produces two cups and pours the tea. We chat about general things until the bells start ringing. "Here he is now" says Christy. "I better get back to my van," I reply. Wishing him a good night I walk very carefully along the frost-covered sleepers to the van. Very faintly at first then gradually growing louder the roar of the Up goods engine working hard can be heard. Soon he thunders past, the song of the short wheel base wagons very distinctive on the rail joints, and then the van flashes by, three red lights glowing bright and fading rapidly into the east.

Our engine re-starts and shatters the stillness, the points go over and the signal clears. I give a green light held steadily and the train moves off slowly. Over the crossing and clear away to Mullingar. Baltrasna level crossing is passed at MP 46¾ and a gentle climb to MP 49 brings us to the summit of the Dublin-Mullingar section. It has been against the collar for most of the journey. I wind on the brake for the last time and get my 'traps' together.

Soon the lights of Mullingar appear and we run slowly through the station where I jump off. The train will be shunted at the West box yard and re-marshalled for Moate, Athlone and places west. Two shunters, muffled up against the freezing night in old coats and carrying toothpicks (shunting poles) climb onto the G class Deutz pilot and set off after the train to commence this work. Night time is Mullingar's busiest and the sound of tinkling buffers goes on most of the night. The lowing of cattle is another distinct sound at the station, one of the busiest cattle stations on the CIÉ system.

I make my way into the mess room on the down Galway platform to brew tea and snatch a bite to eat before I take up my return working (04:15 ex Galway). The night foreman Joe Gorman comes in to exchange banter for a short while and to thaw out a little. I lie back on the long wooden bench to reflect on the night's work and to enjoy the heat of the Rayburn stove, and soon drift into the arms of Morpheus. All too soon, the shunters rap the door to rouse me for work. Once more I dress my van (23639 - 20T), build up the fire and begin to record wagon numbers. Another goods blows for the road.

Yes indeed, a whole method of railway working died under Rail Plan 80. The goods system might be more efficient but definitely not so romantic or exciting. To me the romance and excitement more than made up for the low wages and awkward hours. I loved every minute of it.

THE FINAL YEARS OF THE NCC

Geoffrey Marshall

Though the original Belfast and Northern Counties Railway had been taken over by the old Midland Railway in England at the early part of the century, it had still maintained its individuality, its pride, and above all a healthy railway tradition. From the operating point of view it was an entity in itself, the only connections with its parent company being at the top, in the way of financial control, and occasionally in the appointment of its senior officials.

After the prosperous years of the second world war had ended, followed by the slump in traffic of the late 1940s, it was obvious that the days of the LMS (NCC) Railway as a separate organisation in Northern Ireland were numbered, and the amalgamation of transport in the province was only a matter of time.

Joint committees of road and rail experts carried out a series of inspections of the whole system in order to decide on what should be done in view of the railway's falling traffic receipts, but it took an incident during a visit to one of the stations on the Belfast-Londonderry line to spell out the real difficulties which were facing the railway. After a brief inspection of the waiting rooms, lavatories, booking offices and other station facilities, the committee visited the refreshment room where coffee was to be served. One senior member of the Road Transport Board pointed out of the window, and drew attention to a man who was painting a white line on the road outside the station. "You railway men haven't really got a chance to compete with us financially," he said with a smile. "You have all these buildings and conveniences to maintain and attend to, and if there are no fires lit in the waiting rooms in mid-winter, you will get complaints from the public, while out here, within the four white lines just painted on the road, you see our station, and our total local commitment."

When finally the Ulster Transport Authority was formed, many of the fears of the old railway staff, that they would be swamped by the road transport section, were realised, but two factors helped to mitigate the situation at any rate for a time. These were the facts that the Authority's new Chairman was himself a railwayman well versed in railway procedures, and that the true railway tradition of the staff still left assisted in maintaining the high standards they had enjoyed for so long.

However, before the LMS (NCC) Railway was finally and completely submerged by the Ulster Transport Authority, there had been many incidents, peculiarities, and sometimes even comic events, which quite apart from its splendid record with regard to freedom from serious accidents, were in many cases unique in railway history.

There was the Ballykelly air runway crossing for example. The necessity during the war for a longer runway to be made at this airfield (to allow for larger aircraft to be used in order to increase the protection given to ships in the Atlantic) resulted in the runway being extended for several hundred yards over the main Belfast-Londonderry railway line. Complete safe control was accomplished by the use of the standard signal and telegraph block interlocked instruments, one being located in a signal box adjacent to the crossing point, and the other in the airport control tower. By this means it was

impossible for a train and aircraft to be using the track where it crossed the runway simultaneously.

Some doubts were expressed as the day of opening drew near, of whether the airport control tower staff would give sufficient importance to the working of block instruments, as they were obviously not railway trained. However, the full and friendly co-operation of all was ensured by the entertaining of the RAF personnel in the Manager's special inspection train, which had pulled into a nearby siding near Limavady shortly before the opening day. After a lecture by the chief railway traffic inspector on what operating procedure was essential from the railway safety viewpoint had been given to the airport control staff, they, together with the senior airport officers, were entertained for drinks and lunch on the train. A friendly and basic relationship was thus attained, and little trouble of any size was encountered thereafter, the only difficulty being caused by the frequent changing of the control tower RAF staff, which necessitated periodic retraining sessions.

In the later winter of 1940/1 the station at Ballymoney was used for a unique purpose. At the time the railway systems in Britain were undergoing almost nightly bombing, with little chance of extensive lighting tests being carried out, so as to ascertain what lighting could and could not be observed from enemy aircraft at varying distances. Up till that time Northern Ireland had experienced little enemy action, so Ballymoney was selected for these tests. Night after night the station and its goods yard were illuminated at fixed light intensities while aircraft from the nearby RAF Station at Aldergrove flew over, and took valuable readings at fixed distances on both clear and dull nights. As a result of these tests positive figures for the degree of illumination required at stations in Britain were formulated. For the exempted and more important stations and yards, where work had to be carried on continuously, a figure of 0.2 foot-candles was fixed, and a restricted lighting figure of 0.002 ft-candles was adopted for country stations, which was just sufficient for travellers to see their way along the platforms.

The LMS (NCC) lines at one time experienced technical trouble of an almost unique nature. The control of trains between stations on many of the single line sections was by means of electrically interlocked tablet instruments, located at adjacent signal boxes. The connection between the two boxes was operated on the single wire and earth return system. On two sections between Glarryford and Dunloy, north of the town of Ballymena, repeated failures of the instruments occurred. This resulted in a dropped step in the instruments, necessitating pilotman working being established, until the linesmen for the area were able to attend. For a long time no obvious cause of this was evident, and such failures never occurred on other sections of the line with the same types of instruments. Eventually a clue was found, as the sections in which the fault occurred ran over extensive peat beds, which were found to attract electrical storms whenever the aurora borealis was in evidence. Steps were immediately taken to eliminate the earth return by running a separate insulated earth wire, and no further trouble was experienced in these block sections.

The poor financial returns on the railway during the 1930 to 1940 decade resulted in a percentage cut being forced on the wages of every worker, some of whom were already poorly paid, with a very low allowance for working some distance away from their headquarters in Belfast. As an example of this the signal and telegraph staff, when working on the Londonderry side of Coleraine received a lodging allowance of just 3/6 a night, (about 18p today). Most of them however preferred to travel home each night, and out on an early train in the morning, all in their own time.

Inevitably strike action was occasionally taken, but this did little to improve their situation, and it was found that in certain cases the agreement that had been so carefully negotiated many years before between unions and management, was more often quoted by management to make points against the unions, for whose protection it was originally produced.

On one occasion an old and aggrieved signal and telegraph inspector, who was nearing the end of his railway service, was instructed to go down the line to have a look at a leaning telegraph pole, which had been reported by the driver of a passing train. All the poles were numbered, and he was told to go

and inspect No.68, which was the one believed to be in a dangerous condition. He returned to say that pole No.68 was quite safe, but never mentioned that No.69 was leaning, as he had not been asked about that one.

On the whole, however, the working staff were very loyal to the railway company, though it did mean, especially among the technical minded staff, that men frequently left for better paid jobs outside the railway. With the labour staff, outside jobs were hard to get, and the majority preferred to keep the jobs they already had.

The big event on the railway each summer was the annual two-day inspection of the line. The party consisted of the railway directors, its chief officers, and usually a few 'VIPs' from the parent company in Britain. This inspection train usually stopped to examine any new work that had been carried out during the last twelve months, and also at most stations. Then after spending the night at the Northern Counties hotel at Portrush, which was owned by the company, the journey was continued with frequent stops being made at all the small country stations along the winding Derry Central line. This was of course the big moment for these little stations. Days were spent in cleaning and polishing by the small station staff, and it became the custom for attractive flower displays to be arranged in the empty fire grates of the waiting rooms. It therefore became vital that at every station the directors should alight from the train, and after their inspection make suitable congratulatory remarks to the stationmaster.

It was very seldom that these annual inspections passed off without some unusual or novel incident occurring. On one such trip, a director said that he had long wanted to pull the communication cord between stations to see what exactly would happen and how soon the train would stop, and he then proceeded to do so. No sudden stop resulted, and on arrival at the next station, the engine driver had remarked angrily that some fool must have pulled the cord, as he had to keep his ejector operating to defeat the partial operation of the brakes, in order to reach the next station without having to make a stop.

On another occasion when the inspection train was leaving a station a member of the operating staff, having seen to the starting of the train from the platform, jumped on at the last minute, only to find that the door in the front of him was locked. He had to proceed, hanging on to the outside of the train until the next station was reached, which fortunately was only two or three miles away. However he was in luck, as no director happened to be looking out of the window at that time.

A near scandal almost occurred, when during one of these annual inspections taking place during the war years, the train had to pull up at a station just at the time when directors and their guests were enjoying a leisurely lunch in their dining car. Travellers waiting for a train on the opposite platform, were able to have an almost perfect view of the strawberries and cream being consumed, a commodity that at that critical period of the war was almost unobtainable. The situation was made worse by the fact that a newspaper reporter happened to be amongst the waiting travellers, and this was copy that was too good for him to miss. The unwelcome publicity that followed was eased when it was pointed out that the strawberries were grown privately by railway staff, and were not obtained by purchasing in the black market.

An unusual sight that used to intrigue visitors from England was the goats feeding along the railway embankment. They were quite adequately controlled by a wire stretched between two telegraph poles, with a sliding ring which enabled the animals to graze the full length of the wire without being able to approach the railway lines.

Considering the comparatively modest mileage covered by the lines of the LMS (NCC), the system had an extraordinary large number of level crossings, those in the country districts being opened and closed by the wife or family of the platelayer or ganger, who in return occupied the nearby gatehouse as their home. Anybody new to the area would consider the smashing of level-crossing gates little short of a

disaster, but this used to happen with such frequency, occasionally caused by a train, but more often by road traffic, that it caused little comment, and new gates were almost invariably taken to site and fitted within a day of when they were smashed.

When the LMS (NCC) Railway was finally absorbed into the rather ponderous Ulster Transport Authority in 1949, and lost its separate identity, the cause of its demise was purely financial. It was a transport system that was well run by experts who knew their job through long experience and dedication, but like many other railways throughout the world, was finally quite unable to operate at a profit, when in competition with road transport.

BOOK REVIEWS

Irish Standard Gauge Railways by Tom Middlemass

Fascinating though the subject may be, I have always held the opinion that the number of books written about the Irish Narrow Gauge exceeded their fair share. I was therefore pleased to see Tom Middlemass's book arrive to help restore the balance. A brave effort it is too; while those standard gauge histories written to date have each taken the story of a single company and spread it over several hundred pages, this book condenses the whole story of them all into 96 pages, including a high proportion of photographic pages. The result is predictable, and it will not please every potential reader. To cover such a wide subject in so few pages it has been necessary to condense mercilessly and in most cases the text amounts to a succession of dates for opening, closing, amalgamation, dieselisation and so on. It has not been possible to develop the information on any of the companies described to the level where the reader gains an impression of the character of their lines.

I must assume that the author has intended his work as a sampling of the whole Irish railway scene, and as such it is a pity that so many other fine books, which would supply the details to those who would wish to know them, are now out of print. If this comment seems harsh, I would hasten to add that Mr. Middlemass's book certainly does whet the reader's appetite for more, and that the information contained is top class, truncated though it may be.

The illustrations, too, must have been chosen subject to severe limitations of space, but generally they are excellent. Most of them depict locomotives, in keeping with the tastes of most enthusiasts, no doubt, but there are also coaches and station views. The book has been printed on high quality paper throughout and great care has been taken with the pictures and with layout in general.

Despite its sketchy coverage, this book will be a useful addition to the bookshelves of many enthusiasts, especially the 'New Wave' who may have missed the more comprehensive (and more expensive) books of earlier years. Others, no doubt, will buy it for its fine photography.

Irish Standard Gauge Railways is priced £5.95 and is published by David and Charles, who have also taken some space on the back cover of the book to announce that a further volume, "The Irish Narrow Gauge Railway" by J.D.C.A. Prideaux, is in preparation.

HWC

The Dublin And Blessington Tramway by H. Fayle and A. T. Newham

Banks are good at keeping money, but Allied Irish Banks Limited have parted with some to sponsor the reprinting of Fayle and Newham's "The Dublin and Blessington Tramway", first published in 1963. This was a novel way for the bank to mark the opening of its branch in Blessington. Unfortunately, I do not possess a copy from the original printing with which to compare the new issue, but I understand that there have been no changes apart from the inclusion of two colour plates. One of these depicts the crest of the company, while the other is a reproduction of a painting which shows the locomotive "Cambria" and a coach passing Russborough House.

The book extends to seven chapters, covering all the usual topics to be expected in a standard railway history. Locomotive and coaching stock, timetables, fares and a line description are all included as well as the chronological narrative of the line's history. Bearing in mind that this line closed in 1932, thirty-one years before the book was originally published, the authors must have had some difficulty in researching the anecdotes and details of the line's daily operation, but the reader will not be disappointed by their efforts.

The photographs, unfortunately, are not wonderful but again this is not surprising in view of the number of years which have passed since the line's closure.

"The Dublin and Blessington Tramway" is published by Oakwood Press, is Number Twenty in their series of Locomotion Papers, and is priced £1.50. **HWC**

The Armoured Train by G. Balfour

Until earlier this year I never had much reason to think about armoured trains, let alone develop an interest in them, but during a visit to the railway museum in Delhi I was actually able to climb on board a set of these rare and enigmatic vehicles. The armoured train preserved at Delhi was built about seventy years ago at the Ajmer works of the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway. Built on former goods wagons, the train was composed of six vehicles which included provision for a generator, searchlights, a twelve-pounder gun and four maxim guns. Each wagon was protected by a double skin of ½" armour plate.

Shortly after my return to Europe, I was pleased to review a copy of Mr. Balfour's book which covers the development and use of the armoured train from 1859 until World War II. While it has been based mainly on the use of armoured trains in the British Isles, it extends its coverage further afield, to India, South Africa and Russia. Mr. Balfour has treated the development of his subject chronologically, more or less; in the first five chapters he tackles the various proposals and projects which emerged during the American Civil War, the Boer War and the Great War amongst others, analysing each from both tactical and engineering points of view. The remainder of the sixteen chapters are devoted to developments associated with World War II, when armoured trains were extensively used in all parts of the UK.

Readers of Five Foot Three will be particularly interested in the deployment of armoured vehicles on Irish railways and Mr. Balfour will not disappoint them, for he has included a wealth of information, from the rail-mounted artillery tests near Sutton in 1895 to the notoriously unreliable 'cement van' armoured patrol trolleys which were based at Whitehead and elsewhere during World War II. In addition, he has included copious information and some excellent photographs of the rail-mounted armoured cars and armoured maintenance trains used during the Irish Civil War, and a rare photograph of the armoured train improvised by Dundalk Works in 1916.

Technology, like an advancing army, often tends to eliminate the reason for its own presence. The armoured train was part of the military technology which bridged the gap between the mediaeval order of battle of the 19th century and the nuclear arsenals of today. They were always prone to ambush and often mechanically troublesome. The army still patrols the Great Northern main line through South Armagh, but today's soldiers travel by helicopter, not only faster but more comfortable too. The armoured train is unlikely to return and Mr. Balfour's book has saved their memory from oblivion.

"The Armoured Train" is published by Batsford, price £9.95. **HWC**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Readers of "Five Foot Three" may be interested to learn that there is another railway society in Ireland which also plans to operate a branch line. This is especially relevant to the RPSI at the present time with the discussions and meetings to debate the Scarva-Banbridge proposal in full swing. It is because of this that I feel Society members should learn about it now. As this year's secretary I will outline the history, foundation, aims and activities to date of this new Society, and its proposed plans in relation to RPSI.

On 19th September 1979 six men held a meeting in University College, Galway to form a Society with the aim of "operating a working steam railway somewhere in the West of Ireland". It was named the West of Ireland Steam Railway Association. These six founders served as the first Committee until the first AGM in November 1980. It had originally been planned to operate a narrow gauge steam railway on part of the old West Clare formation. However, this scheme was found to be impractical from both the financial and operating viewpoints as land would have to be repurchased and new locos and coaches built, the costs of which would be prohibitive, even with grants from tourist bodies. The 75% grant scheme available in Northern Ireland does not operate here.

I attended their second meeting in October 1979 and suggested they turn their attention to one of the four standard gauge lines closed by CIÉ in 1975 but not lifted. Some of the Committee favoured standard gauge and agreed to look into it further. I was allowed to present plans, photos and ideas of the Loughrea Branch, North Kerry and Burma Road lines to them and pointed out that locos, carriages and wagons are all available from CIÉ in Inchicore and Mullingar. In July 1980 it was decided that WISRA would concentrate on trying to acquire the Loughrea Branch, this being the most suitable from ease of access, proximity to tourist areas (Galway, Connemara and North Clare), ideal length, mainline connection, separate station area at Attymon, siding accommodation and other points of view. I was co-opted onto the Committee at this meeting and described track layouts, facilities and rolling stock available.

Negotiations have been and are continuing to take place with CIÉ for the renting or leasing of the branch. We have received a lot of help with this from the Area Manager in Galway, who believes the scheme will be good for the area and for the Galway mainline. We are grateful to all those in Galway for their general advice and help with these talks.

Until final agreements are reached and signed we cannot start work on bringing the very derelict track and buildings up to 1981 standards. However, we have reserved some old carriages and wagons at Mullingar scrapyards and are negotiating their purchase at present. They will then move to Attymon where we have been given permission to stable them and carry out restoration work on them.

Meanwhile, we have concentrated most of our efforts and activities this year on fund-raising and publicity events. We raised money from film shows in UCG, a raffle each year at the Industrial Exhibition in Leisureland, and through donations. We gained valuable publicity from two exhibitions staged, the first in UCG on 5th February at a special publicity evening to launch our Rolling Stock Fund, the second at the above mentioned exhibition in Galway during the last weekend in March. At both I showed photos of the Loughrea Line on the last day and its condition now, while our Chairman displayed models and books. Notice of the Claddagh Railtour and RPSI and IRRS publications were also shown.

The Rolling Stock Fund was designed to pay for the purchase and restoration of suitable stock for passenger and works trains. It is our aim to preserve a representative selection of former MGWR, GS&WR, GSR, GNR and early CIÉ - built vehicles. Items reserved include MGWR and GSR ballast hoppers, GS&WR 2-plank ballast wagons, a GS&WR 5-plank open wagon, GS&WR brake vans, GSR covered wagons, a MGWR rail truck, a GS&WR ballast plough van and a CIÉ 30ft van. I hope to acquire further goods vehicles and passenger carriages as they become available. I have reserved ex GS&WR passenger brake van No.247, latterly Maintenance Department vehicle No.531A as well,

restoration of which to its original condition will take many years. We also hope to acquire a rake of six-wheelers at a later stage as those in departmental service with CIÉ become redundant. We have already raised several hundred pounds towards these items.

A lot of progress has been made recently, and many new members gained from all over the country. Publicity even included two paragraphs in Desmond Rushe's "Tatlers Parade" column in the Irish Independent on Thursday 5th February. Our plans for the immediate future are to start work on the line as soon as the final go-ahead is given, then to get an E or G Class diesel shunter or a railcar set for initial operation, with hopefully steam locomotives at a later stage, possibly those on static show at a couple of stations around the country.

The line would be primarily run as a tourist attraction and leisure railway. A local all-year-round diesel service would only be provided if local people demanded and then justified it. This has, however, been done very successfully on the West Somerset Railway. Our Chairman, Eddie Donnelly-Nash, and the Committee hope that the RPSI would come and visit the line regularly, and maybe run regular trips to it during the summer using locos and stock based in Mullingar, only a couple of hours away. The Chairmen of both societies have already been in touch with each other over possible areas of co-operation and mutual interest to both parties. I note with interest Paul Walsh's comments at the recent EGM in Belfast concerning the fact that No.184 was used only three times last year and that the little used Mullingar-Athlone route is suitable for steam running on a regular basis. A sort of "Loughrea Flyer" every Saturday during July and August fills the imagination!

I see the establishment of a tourist railway in Co. Galway as being of great benefit to the region, and it would bring much needed income to the Loughrea area, which suffered two economic blows recently with the closure of the Tynagh Mines nearby last summer and the loss of the Wrangler jeans factory this winter. It would also be a good thing for railways and the preservation movement in Ireland generally. The fact that the RPSI proposes to re-open a branch line in Co. Down would be a welcome addition, as then we would have two private lines in Ireland. Each one could promote and advertise the other and loaning and swapping of locos and stock could even take place. I do not see our line in Connacht posing any threat to the success of the Banbridge scheme as they are so far apart. I would be far more worried about the effect of two proposed schemes within a few miles of each other in Co. Down as these could split the volunteer labour and potential passengers with neither receiving enough help or traffic to make them viable. With all the closed lines in the country, both lifted and still intact, it seems a pity to me that some other area such as Kerry, West Cork, Wexford-Waterford areas, Wicklow, Donegal or any other area of beauty or tourism could not benefit from the spin-offs of a steam railway. I wish the RPSI every success with their scheme and pledge the support of the WISRA if we can help our fellow preservationists in any way such as regular exchange of ideas, information or progress.

It is essential that any preserved line be connected to the main line system of the country. This is one of the reasons we opted for Loughrea as it will be possible to run through trains onto and off the line. RPSI, IRRS and CIÉ Mystery Trains could all run straight down to Loughrea, while we could run special excursions to Galway, Dublin or wherever for football or hurling matches or day trips to the seaside, the complete train being taken over by mainline drivers at Attymon Junction. The possibilities for both CIÉ and societies are endless. At the same time I must also point out that regular branch trains can complete all their movements, including locos running round, without fouling the mainline and causing delays to Galway trains. This is another mark in favour of the line, as some British groups have found that running onto the mainline to gain a connection platform is not liked by the national railway operators. Taunton and Totnes are two examples. Readers wishing to know more about the WISRA and the scheme should contact me. The subscription for 1981 is £3 which entitles members to quarterly news sheets, notice of all meetings, talks, film shows and other activities, and a chance to become part of Ireland's growing band of railway preservationists. We welcome members from the RPSI, IRRS,

GNRS, NWIRS, BCDRMT and other societies, and recommend to our own members that they join one or two of these other organisations if they are interested in their sphere of activities.

Martin Hewitt

WISRA Secretary.

NB: The views expressed are personal ones, but reflect the general aims and interests of the WISRA.



“Bangor Belle”, No.171 storms past Craigavad on 2nd May 1981. The tube troubles were yet to come. (C.P. Friel)



No.184 between Galway and Mullingar on this year's Claddagh Raittour. (C.P. Friel)



What's the point on going on raitours? They can never recreate the atmosphere of the real thing. No.184 and No.186 during the 1979 tour to Westport. (C.P. Friel)