

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND  
" 1997 SEASON SOUVENIR BROCHURE "



Preserving your Railway Heritage

The RPSI is totally voluntary and a registered charity

# *Welcome Aboard*

Welcome to the Society's 33<sup>rd</sup> year of operating mainline steam trains. We invite you to journey back in time to the great age of steam. We hope you will enjoy your time on board. If you have any comments or queries please do not hesitate to contact either of us.

Our "Welcome Aboard" brochure has been produced since 1992 for all of our Dublin based trains. We are delighted that in 1997 we have finally managed to expand its production to cover the Belfast trains as well.

The Society would like to express its appreciation to both Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways for their continued support and co-operation. To all our volunteer members who give so unselfishly of their time - our sincere thanks.

**SAFETY:** May we ask you, our passengers:

- \* Not to stand in the corridor between carriages
- \* Not to open carriage doors until the train has come to a complete stop and the door is at a platform
- \* To supervise, at all times, children in your care
- \* Not to lean out of windows

Thank You

David Houston - Hon. Operations Officer (Dublin)

Heather Boomer - Hon. Operations Officer (Belfast)

Hon. Brochure Editor: David Humphries

Contributors: John Friel and James Scannell

Front Cover: GNR (I) No.171 west of Clonsilla Station (on the Dublin/Sligo line) on a driver training special on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1977. (Gerry Mooney)

## **NO SMOKING**

**In accordance with current legislation please note that all carriages on the train are NON-SMOKING areas with the exception of the dining/bar vehicles**

## A 1908 Double Tragedy at Bray (Co. Wicklow) Railway Station

by James Scannell

When you joined the Society's steam train today in Dublin, Belfast or at some other location you may have noticed that the respective railway company employees and the train crew wear high visibility garments so that they can be seen as they go about their duties - requirements laid down under EU and Governmental rules and regulations concerning "Health and Safety" at work but it wasn't always like this and in the past railway companies at times paid little attention to the conditions that their employees had to work in.

Bray, Co. Wicklow, lies 12 miles south of Dublin and it is a 2 platform station with a middle track to allow through traffic through the station when there are trains or rolling stock in both platforms.

In 1908, No.2 platform, the "Down" platform which is on the east side of the station did not exist and where it now stands were a number of sidings where carriages and other rolling stock could be stored. The station had 3 tracks, one being the siding mentioned already, a through track and a track serving Platform No.1, which is the current "Up" platform. The middle track had a set of points connecting it to the track serving the platform which was shared by arriving and departing trains. This meant that it was possible to have a departing train and one just arrived standing back to back in the platform.

On the evening of Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February 1908, the Up "Mail Train" for Dublin from Wexford arrived at platform No.1 just after 7p.m. and immediately work on changing the locomotive began. This required the locomotive to be uncoupled from the train, and going forward sufficient distance so that it could reverse through the station using the middle track to get to the engine sheds which lay at the southern end of the station complex, for cleaning and servicing. Its place was then taken by another locomotive which was ready to replace it. All of this had to be completed by 7:10p.m. when the train was due to resume its journey to Dublin.

On this particular evening it appears that it had been decided to add an extra carriage to the train and the task of moving it from the siding known as the "Shed Rail" was entrusted to Timothy Doyle and William Needham. However, these men did not inform Michael Quail, the signalman in the south cabin what they were about to do, and they started moving the carriage by hand to the points while the locomotive was in motion. They had managed to move the carriage by about 15 yards when the locomotive in reverse came through the points and due to the angle of the carriage, struck it with great force propelling it backwards.

The force of the impact knocked the two men to the ground but both fell over part of

the track and the carriage passed over their legs causing them severe injuries. The carriage then struck the stop block and recoiled off it moving forward and striking the two men a second time.

Immediately, Laurence Doyle, the locomotive driver, stopped his engine and ran forward to where the two injured men lay as did Thomas Doyle who was on duty at the level crossing (the site of the present day barrier crossing) and in the presence of both men, despite the severity of his injuries, Timothy Doyle admitted that the accident was due to his fault.

Station Master Roberts was quickly on the scene and sent word for medical assistance and for clergy. Very promptly Dr Monsell and Dr Brew arrived. They examined the two injured men which revealed that Needham's legs were very badly injured while Doyle's were severed below the knees and he was also suffering from internal injuries.

The 7:10p.m. departure had been held in the station and this departed at 7:23p.m. with Needham accompanied by Dr Monsell. On arrival in Dublin Needham was brought by waiting ambulance to the Meath Hospital where despite the best efforts of the medical staff, he died from his injuries around 9p.m.

It took longer to move Doyle as Dr Brew, to use a modern term "had to stabilise the patient" before he could be moved. This took nearly an hour and he was removed to Dublin in a special train consisting of a van and locomotive, being attended to on the journey by Dr Brew. On arrival a waiting ambulance took him to the Meath Hospital where after 10p.m. he died from the severe extent of his injuries despite the best efforts of the medical staff.

Two days later, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1908, the formal inquest on the deceased was heard before Dr Louis A. Byrne, City Coroner, at the City Morgue which was attended by Mr A.E. Bradley representing the Dublin and South Eastern Railway Co., Mr Joseph Gleeson represented the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and relatives of the deceased and a Sergeant Slaton and Constable Finneran of the RIC represented the police who carried out their investigation into the accident.

The jury heard a very full and thorough account of the events of that night from an array of witnesses and there was a long discussion as to whether the lives of the deceased could have been saved if they had been brought to the Rathdown Union Infirmary - the present day St Columcille's Hospital in Loughlinstown which is 2 miles north of Bray - rather than to Dublin where they were treated. This was a reference to the fact that at the time of the 1867 Bray Head derailment, the injured had been placed in mineral wagons and brought to the Shankill Station on the former Harcourt Street / Bray line (closed 31/12/1958 and now an office park) from where they were

carried across fields to the Rathdown Union Infirmary for treatment.

After weighing up all the evidence presented, the jury returned a verdict of "accidental death" and exonerated the locomotive driver Laurence Doyle and the signal man Michael Quail from all blame, and also added a "rider" that in the case of all future accidents, casualties should be treated by the nearest hospital.

Today (1997), improved working conditions, better staff training which is on-going all the time and communications through the use of radio, lineside telephones and mobiles, means that such an accident as happened in 1908 should never happen again. But safety on the railway is something which is the concern not only of the employers, but also of the employees and the travelling public who should heed the advice and instructions given to them from time to time with regard to railway safety.

In 1927, Platform 2 was added to the station as part of major work on the station. In the 1980s, as part of the work associated with the DART, the turntable, water tower and other buildings were taken down and there were major alterations to the track layout to the extent that the station layout today is very different to what it was in 1908.

*We are grateful to member Wesley Riddall for the following reference he received from the Great Northern Railway ...*

GN 62.

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY BOARD.

GENERAL MANAGER'S OFFICE,

AMIENS STREET STATION,

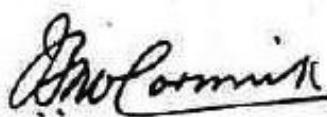
DUBLIN. 21st December, 1955.

THE GENERAL  
MANAGER'S OFFICE  
1955-12-21

J. F. McCORMICK,  
GENERAL MANAGER

This is to certify that John W. Riddall was employed by this Board as an Office Messenger from 27th September, 1954, to 17th December, 1955. Mr. Riddall proved himself to be honest, conscientious and painstaking in his work and gave complete satisfaction in the discharge of his duties.

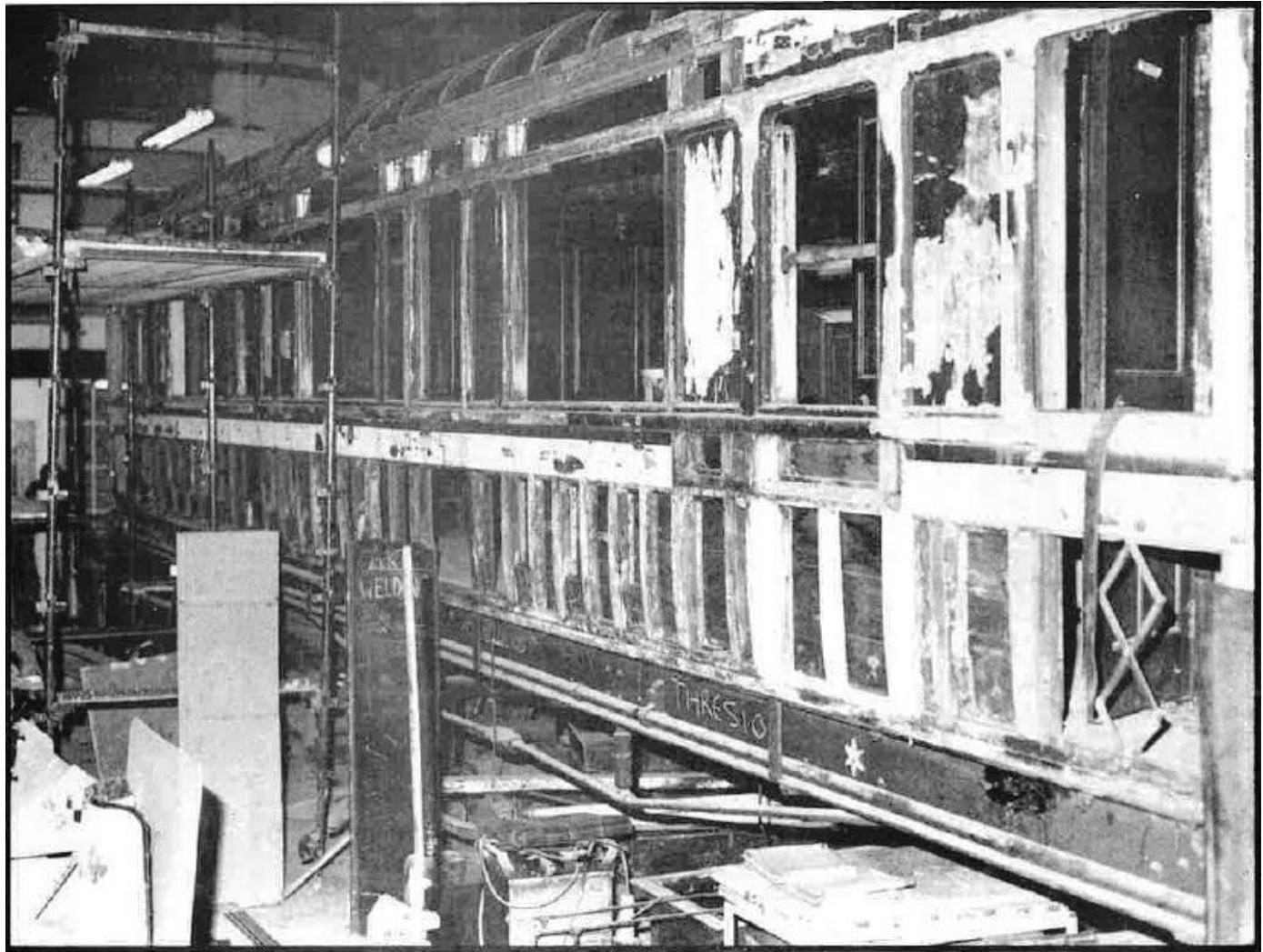
He left the service with the object of bettering himself as the prospects of promotion to a clerical post were remote in existing circumstances.



GENERAL MANAGER.

## **Irish State Coach No.351**

This historic vehicle was built by the Great Southern & Western Railway at Inchicore Works in 1902 for the State visit of King Edward VII to Ireland in 1903. It was subsequently used by Royalty on several occasions but after 1921 it is reported to have been laid aside under dust sheets. It remained "in store" until, in 1961, Córas Iompair Éireann decided that it still needed a State Carriage.



*Work being carried out at Cabra.*

Between its renovation in 1961 and its second withdrawal in the early 1970s (when the present Mark II air-conditioned carriage was brought into service) No.351 was used on many occasions, both by Presidents of Ireland and by visiting dignitaries, including such disparate figures as the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and various Papal Nuncios.

Sadly, from 1970s, the State Coach languished in the open at Inchicore until, in 1991,

at the suggestion of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland, the then Managing Director of Iarnród Éireann, Mr David Waters, took the bold decision to put the vehicle under cover, dry it out and see if it could be restored.

In late 1995 the Society and Iarnród Éireann completed negotiations and it has been agreed that the Society will take charge of No.351, in trust, and oversee its full restoration. The Society has also completed separate negotiations with FÁS who will undertake the restoration work. The Coach was transferred from Inchicore to FÁS at Cabra and work commenced in May 1996. It is expected that the process will take about two years to complete.

Much of the time and effort to-date has been spent in the painstaking task of stripping/removing both damaged and decayed material. It is our intention to refurbish all existing material and re-use but obviously this will not be possible in every case. It is interesting to record that much of the damaged material can be attributed to the unfortunate fire in 1991 at Inchicore rather than the passage of time.

The Society has been most fortunate in being able to recruit Mr George Dempsey as its foreman on this project. George comes to us after many years of service with CIÉ/Iarnród Éireann. Having worked on the vehicle in the 1960s he is full of enthusiasm for this 're-birth'.

The Society would like to express its appreciation to Charlie O'Connor and Pat McKeown of FÁS and Joe Walsh and Jimmy Doody of Iarnród Éireann for all their co-operation in seeing the project to this stage. A very special work of appreciation to Coillte Teo (the Irish State Forestry Board) for their sponsorship of the timber to be used in the restoration. Further sponsorship for materials is required to complete the task so if you can assist in any way in this regard the Society would be delighted to hear from you - contact either of the Operations Officers listed in this brochure.

## Early days of the “Portrush Flyer”

by John Friel

As you start to read this article, I hope that you are enjoying - or have just enjoyed - a day out on board an RPSI steam train from Belfast or Dublin. From time to time, passengers ask us how the idea of operating a vintage steam train over the rails of our national railway companies came about - so, back to the start ! When I was a schoolboy in Portadown in the early 1960s, CIÉ (the predecessor of Irish Rail, the railway company of the Irish Republic) had switched completely from steam to diesel traction. In Northern Ireland, steam would last until 1970, but in 1964 it was becoming obvious that the older, more historic, locomotives would not survive for much longer.

In September 1964, I heard on the radio news that the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland has been formed at a meeting the night before in Belfast. The news report stated that the newly formed RPSI hoped to raise enough money to acquire several redundant steam locomotives and store them in the equally redundant locomotive shed at Whitehead, County Antrim, on the Belfast, York Road to Larne Harbour line. That sounded fine - another museum for static railway exhibits to complement the existing Transport Museum in Belfast. Then came the bit of news that I wasn't expecting - it was hoped to restore the locomotives for use on special excursion trains! Well, it's one thing to scrape the rust off an old locomotive, repaint it, polish the brass work, etc. It's another thing to restore locomotives (that were known to be in pretty a run-down condition) to running order to a standard that would satisfy railway company inspectors, boiler insurance company inspectors and heaven knows who else? How could a Society, just formed and with no money, contemplate the idea of re-creating the facilities of a railway company engineering works? How could volunteers acquire the expertise needed to restore and operate steam engines? Along with many others, I gave the Society no chance of success - it was fashionable for young people to be cynical in those days!

However, I did not let my cynicism prevent me from joining the RPSI and becoming a willing volunteer at Whitehead. To cut a very long story very short, the Society did achieve its original aim and the train that you are currently travelling in (or have just travelled in) is the living proof. By 1972, the RPSI had operated many steam-hauled excursion trains from both Belfast and Dublin for the benefit of its own members. These 'railway enthusiast type' trains spent all day exploring a particular line with lengthy stops at stations and 'runpasts'. A runpast consists of backing the emptied train out of a station and then charging through making as much smoke and noise as possible for the benefit of photographers. It is vitally important, of course, for the train crew to remember to reverse back to collect the passengers.

However, by 1972, it was becoming obvious to the Committee of the Society (of which I had become a member) that these trains were losing their popularity, probably

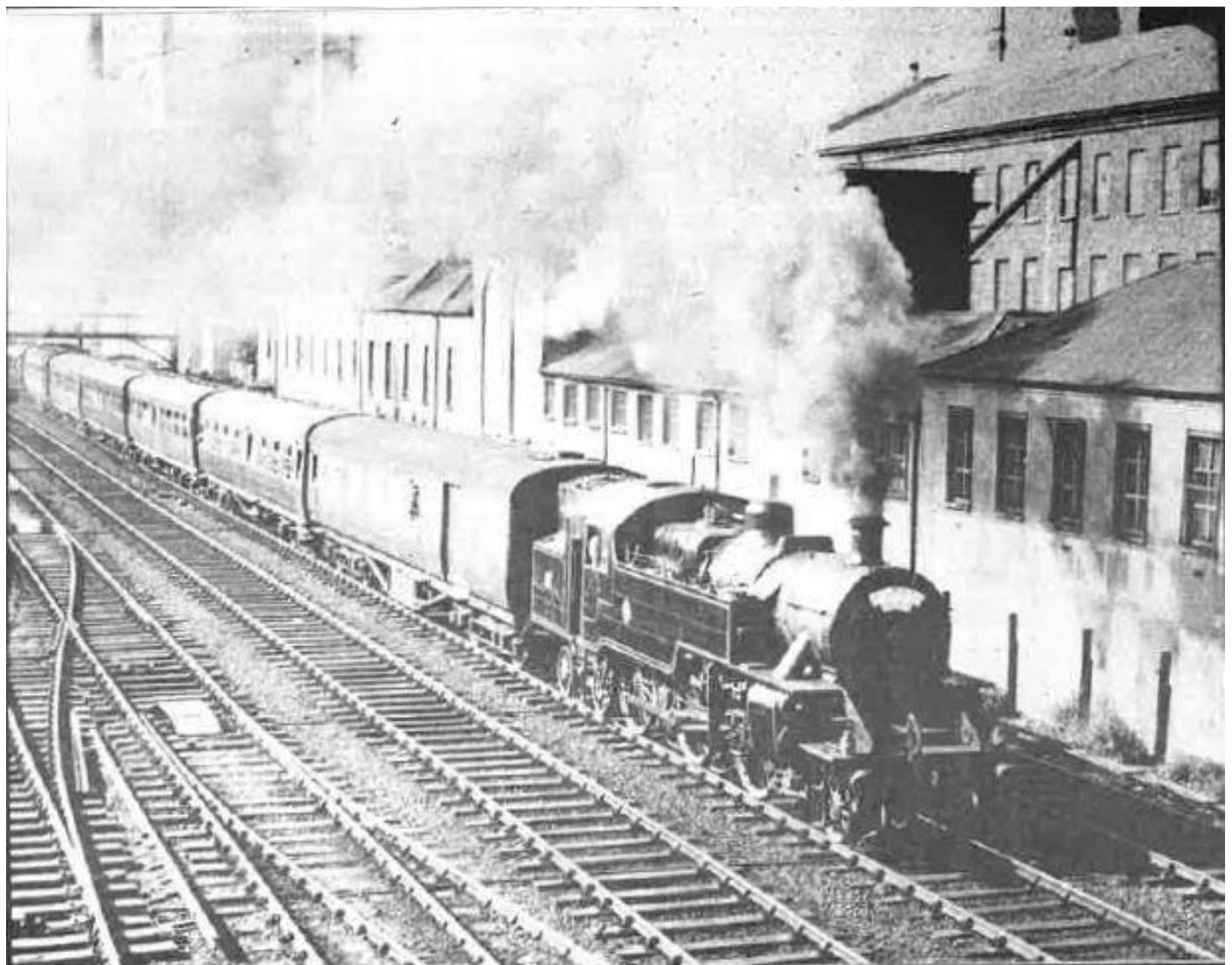
because we had already traversed the limited number of railway lines available so many times. A new concept was needed and the idea of the "Portrush Flyer" evolved. The idea was to offer the public in general, and families in particular, a day trip to the traditional seaside resort of Portrush on the north coast. It was important to plan our schedule to allow people around six hours to enjoy the delights of Portrush. The name "Portrush Flyer" was taken from a 1930s train which ran over the same route. The original Flyer train was operated by a company with the snappy title of "London, Midland & Scottish Railway (Northern Counties Committee)". Don't get the idea that I would demean the NCC, as the company was known. In the 1930s, the NCC's schedules and slick operating practices were on a par with the best anywhere in the UK. Now when I look back to 1972/3, I am amazed at how quickly our idea became a reality.

The cost of operating the Flyer could be kept within reasonable limits if we owned our own coaches instead of having to hire them from the railway companies. Right on cue, a number of coaches including a dining car, which were in 'almost ready to run' condition, became available from Northern Ireland Railways and CIÉ at affordable prices. The big question was - would enough members of the public want to travel to make the Flyer a financial success? Income from fares would have to cover the cost of the NIR charge for the day, coal for the engine and publicity costs for the one Saturday in July and three in August that the train would run. In the event the answer was yes, but don't think that our trains run to make a profit. Any surplus money generated is always urgently needed for ongoing restoration work.

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July 1973 was a proud day for the RPSI. At 9:15a.m. (5 minutes earlier than the 1930s time), 1947-built locomotive No.4 pulled out of York Road station with the first ever RPSI Portrush Flyer.

The NIR driver was the late Percy Mitchell, whose claim to fame was that he had been fireman on the locomotive of Ireland's last steam-hauled Royal Train in 1953. The train conveyed Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip from Lisburn to Lisahally, near Londonderry. For our first Flyer season, the fares for the 130 mile round trip were Adult - £1.40, Under 16 - 90p. A carriage seating 64 people could be hired for £60 for the day! The Flyer has been operated on three or four Saturdays every summer until the present day, loading up to ten coaches on a number of occasions. The only blemish on this record was one year in which the Flyer was diesel hauled due to all the steam locomotives having repair work carried out.

As far as I know, the Flyer was the first preserved steam train in Europe, if not in the world, to run regularly on railway company tracks and it is certainly the longest lived. In Britain, similar operations have come and gone since 1978. The only one presently running, "The Jacobite" on the West Highland line from Fort William to Mallaig, is well worth travelling on for the spectacular scenery.



*1947 Built Loco No.4 departs from Belfast York Road Station with a Portrush Flyer Train in 1976.*

When our trains are out on the main line, they are crewed by railway company personnel - two drivers and a locomotive inspector on the engine and a guard on the train. Normally, the drivers take turns at acting as driver and fireman

A steam locomotive can consume a ton of coal every forty miles. Shovelling at a rate of a ton an hour can be a daunting task for a driver who is used to sitting all day while driving diesels. For many years, two highly respected NIR drivers crewed the Portrush Flyer on a regular basis - Harry Ramsay and Davy McDonald. There was a certain ring to saying: "today's crew is - Ramsay/McDonald". I remember Davy once summed up what the Flyer is all about when he said, "This train is the real thing - there's no make-believe here." Sadly, both men are no longer with us. Until his retirement a few years ago, NIR Locomotive Inspector Frank Dunlop travelled on the footplate of the locomotive on most of the Flyers. Frank's enthusiasm and hard work had a lot to do with the success of the Flyer. When you worked closely with him, you quickly saw

why he became an inspector. He never missed a thing and he did not suffer fools gladly. When someone once asked him to consider running non-stop from Portrush to Belfast, without stopping to water the locomotive in Ballymena (just for the fun of it), his terse reply was, "never pass a water column - there's no prizes for running out of water."

Around 1a.m on the morning of a Flyer, a Society volunteer rejoicing under the title of "steam raiser" lights the fire in the engine. This is a task that I performed many times in the 1970s. Frequently, the thought occurred to me, "if this fire doesn't light, several hundred people will be very disappointed." It takes three to four hours to heat up the water in the boiler to boiling point. As steam pressure rises, two more volunteers arrive to oil and prepare the locomotive. These two look after and check the engine en route to Portrush and, most important of all, they get to take turns to travel on the footplate. This is what all railway enthusiasts want to achieve, but so few ever do. The footplate of a steam locomotive travelling at speed is one of the most exciting places you could be. Everything vibrates in all directions and the noise is terrific. It is like all the rides in Disneyland rolled into one, and it quickly give you an understanding of the true nature of locomotive work.

Don't get the idea that the Society member on the footplate is just there for a joyride. He (or very occasionally she) is there to perform the very responsible job of overseeing the handling of the locomotive. In particular, he checks that the lubrication systems are working properly and checks for warm bearings during stops. The driver's task sounds simple enough - drive and watch out for signals. However, concentrating on the job is quite a task on a noisy, rolling locomotive. Drivers often said that when they progressed from fireman to driver, they went home much more tired than previously. Apart from propelling large amounts of coal through a small firehole to the exact spot on the grate where it is needed, the fireman has to ensure that the water in the boiler is maintained at a safe level. It is worth reflecting that the firebox in a steam locomotive can be nearly as large as a small bedroom.

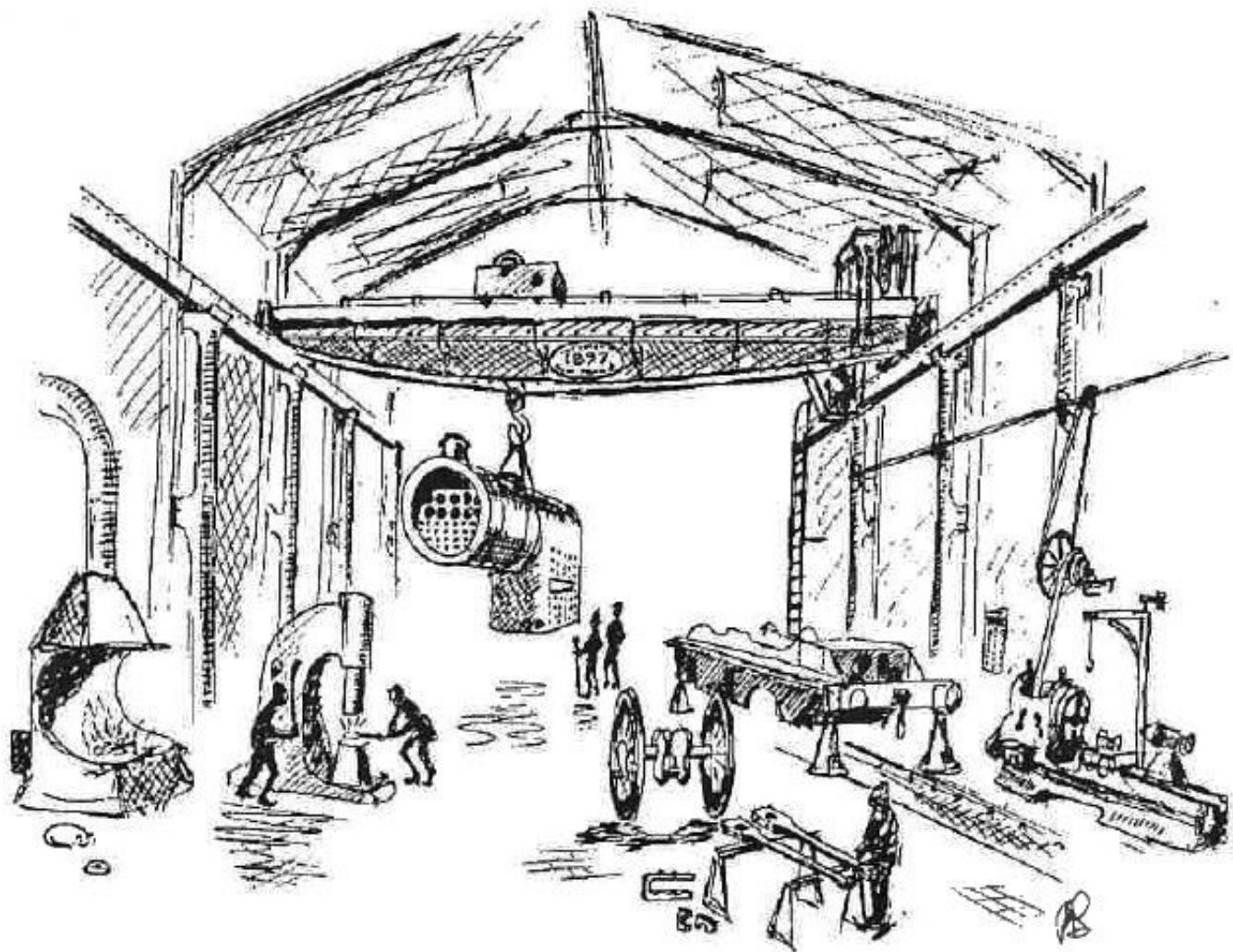
There are many hilarious tales relating to the early days of the Flyer but, sadly, most cannot be told until a good few more people have gone to the Big Train Set in the Sky. One of the less controversial stories concerned the fact that, in the early days, there was no proper sleeping accommodation at Whitehead. Volunteers simply slept overnight in the Flyer coaches. This was fine so long as people cleared up before going on duty. On one occasion, a respectable family entered their reserved compartment and were horrified to be greeted by someone's unrolled sleeping bag, underclothes, pyjamas and shaving kit scattered everywhere. Fortunately, the Flyer was easy to publicise, due to its novelty value. In common with other Society members, I did many radio and TV interviews. One question which completely floored me was, "how do you get the passengers into the train? "Through the doors," seemed

the obvious reply, but I can't remember what answer I gave. I still cringe at the thought of some of the newspaper headlines which we generated. "Getting all steamed up about a train ride" was typical.

Well, reader, I hope I have given you some insight into what was involved in re-establishing excursion steam trains. Circumstances have prevented me from being actively involved in the Society for about ten years, so I am very grateful to all those who have literally kept the wheels turning. Remember that the Society always needs more members, so please consider joining. To finish off, I refer to a question that I was often asked during those interviews that I mentioned earlier: "why do so many enthusiasts spend so much time, often in dreadful conditions, restoring old engines and coaches?" The only answer that I can give is that all enthusiasts firmly believe that there is no finer sight than that of a steam train racing majestically through the countryside.

## NEW LOCOMOTIVE WORKSHOP AT WHITEHEAD

The size of the proposed building is 71m x 24m. It will be similar in construction to the carriage shed but including the 1897 overhead crane recovered from the old 'fitting shop' at Belfast Queen's Quay sheds. It will be sited to the left of the existing locomotive shed behind the water tower and extend towards the Larne end of the site. There will be one railway track into the building, offset to the left side, leaving the right for machinery and equipment.



The main purpose of the project is to improve the effectiveness of our maintenance of locomotives and other items, especially:

1. To re-site the machine tools away from the dirt and damp of the locomotive sheds.
2. To greatly increase the covered work area.

3. To improve our capabilities by providing floor space for better and more versatile machines.
4. To provide the much needed facility of an overhead crane.
5. To improve safety by improving conditions and procedures.
6. To attract more volunteers by offering a more pleasant working environment.
7. To provide safe and effective facilities suitable for the employment of sub-contractors.
8. To preserve period machinery (e.g. the crane, wheel press and blacksmith's equipment) as a working museum of the steam era, and to allow public access to work in progress.
9. To release locomotive shed space for accommodating locomotives under cover and permit proper access to them for running repairs and servicing.