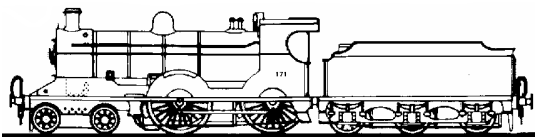


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



April 2009

NEWS LETTER

APOLOGY

Delay: Apologies for the extreme lateness in getting this News-Letter mailed. Problems in getting the annual accounts ready for publishing was the significant factor.

WHITEHEAD DEPOT

Sheer-Leg Gantries: A major amount of work has gone into repair, refurbishment and assembly of the gantries. The finished articles were load tested on Wednesday 25th March and are now certified for a SWL of 16 tonnes.

Atlas Excavator: A very generous gift from NIR, the old Ballymena-based Atlas road-rail excavator, was taken by low loader to Whitehead on Monday 30th March. Driver familiarisation training was provided by NIR. On Saturday 4th April the machine was used to lift four heavy wheels onto a trailer for sale as boat anchors, and then spent all afternoon making light work of transferring a mass of signalling equipment from a flat wagon that has to be returned to NIR.

Workshop: A new air compressor, acquired by courtesy of member Selwyn Johnston, has been delivered and is to be installed in place of the old machine with a faulty motor.

Stores: Organising of stores and tidying up of the site is progressing but there is still much to be done. Mk2 coach spares from Inchicore are being located and catalogued in the recently acquired container.

Tidy Up: In January salvageable parts were removed from the old side tanks of

No.5 "Drumboe" before cutting up for scrap commenced. Followed by a general tidy-up of that area.

School: On 14th February a shunting school was held, with 5 new recruits being put through the ropes. With an engine in steam, a number of the operating grades were also assessed.

Signalling: In early March an RPSI team visited Roscommon, where Irish Rail opened their signal store (the old goods shed) to allow the selection of any mechanical gear required, within reason - all in good condition.

Two trailers were filled - this included channel iron for point rodding, bell cranks, point locks, detectors, pulley wheels, wire pulleys, a couple of spectacles and weights, spare cabin levers and cabin floor quadrants, wire tensioners and a few other odds and sods.

The Society, as always, is indebted to Irish Rail for allowing us to purchase this material.

Further dismantling and painting of signals. Just about everything required for the poles is now cleaned and being painted, with a few exceptions. Claremorris gate groundframe lifted off wagon for refurbishment. It is planned to order poles to replace the rusted examples retrieved from Claremorris.

BELFAST MEETINGS

14th January: An excellent night of films from the back (and current) catalogue of Macha Film Studios.

11th February: Contributions from Charles and John Friel, Robin Morton and Peter Scott on how the Society's involvement in

the "First Great Train Robbery" film came about.

11th March: The season ended in traditional fashion with a film show by Fred Cooper.

General: The short Society news-reel feature at the start of each show has been very well received and it is hoped to continue and improve this item.

Some investigation is being carried out into an alternative venue. The Society is very happy with the present premises, but the lack of a lift to the first floor is taking its toll on some of our senior members.

So, that's it for another season - the 35th! Ideas for next season on a postcard please.

OPERATIONS

Top Link: See separate report.

Easter Eggspress (1): The trains had sold out in the week prior to Easter. On Easter Monday, 13th April, No.186 operated from Dublin Connolly to Mullingar. There, in association with Belvedere House, there was a bus transfer from the station to the House where the children participated in an "Easter Egg Hunt". In the meantime, a local trip operated back to Enfield.

Easter Eggspress (2): Fully booked by Good Friday, the traditional format of two return trains from Belfast Central to Whitehead operated behind No.4 in fine spring weather. The children were treated to Easter eggs and magic and balloons from the on-board entertainers. Newly qualified NIR driver Stephen Glass was at the regulator all day.

Carrowbeg Railtour: The annual railtour will be taking place over the second weekend in May:

Thursday 7th - No.4 + Mk2 set: Whitehead - Dublin.

Friday 8th - Irish Rail diesels + Mk2 set: Dublin Connolly - Kildare - Waterford - Limerick Junction - Dublin Heuston.

Saturday 9th - No.4 + Cravens: Dublin Heuston - Westport.

Sunday 10th - No.4 + Cravens: Westport - Ballyhaunis - Ballina - Ballyhaunis - Westport.

Monday 11th - No.4 + Cravens: Westport - Dublin Connolly; No.4 + Mk2 set: Dublin Connolly - Belfast - Whitehead.

Tuesday 12th - Coach visit to Patterson's Spade Mill and boat trip on Lough Neagh.

Strawberries & Cream: At the time of writing, it is hoped that No.4 and No.186 will swap between Whitehead and Dublin on Sunday 24th May. The fare will be £25, tickets from Belfast Welcome Centre.

Charter (1): A one-way run from Belfast to Cultra will operate on the evening of Saturday 30th May for the International Writer's Conference gathering.

Steam & Jazz: No.186 is due to operate the traditional trips with the Apex Jazz Band on Fridays 12th, 19th & 26th June and 3rd July.

As the newly restored diner 547 is in full operation, the operating and finance committees are very much of the opinion that passengers should purchase their drinks on the train. A full wine list and selection of beers and spirits is available. Members intending to travel are asked to give the Society's bar their patronage.

Charter (2): A private charter for Malahide Lions will operate from Dublin and Malahide to Dundalk and return on Sunday 7th June. The organisers will market and allocate their tickets locally. However, when the train reaches Dundalk the Society will operate a local trip Dundalk (departing 1 pm) to Drogheda and return, to be marketed by RPSI locally in Dundalk and on the Dublin area booking form.

Sea Breeze: It is hoped to operate to Wexford and Rosslare on 21st June and 5th July.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Whitehead: 303 (Mk2 Open) is undergoing refurbishment, including: overhaul of electric heating and fitting of steam heating; fitting of secondary door locking; train line; cleaning and painting of seat frames; preparation for exterior painting.

B4 Bogies: Preparing next set for overhaul.

Dublin Heritage Set: Work is continuing on the set. Final works are being completed on GS&WR 1142 and cosmetic maintenance on State Coach 351.

Dublin Cravens: A lot of work is taking place to get a full set of Cravens prepared and certified for traffic, including:

- Axleboxes.

- Vacuum and steam bags and seals replaced as necessary.
- Brake tests.
- Provision of crew area.
- Batteries replaced on 6 coaches, electrics checked and repaired.
- Water filler repairs to several carriages.
- Sealant filling, sanding of bodywork and window templates obtained for masking in continuing preparations for livery change.
- Toilet refurbishment and painting ongoing.
- Conversion of 1522 to a dining car. This coach was collected from Mullingar on the Easter operation on 13th April.

Spring Has Sprung: With the longer brighter days, why not take this opportunity to have a visit to Whitehead to offer your services? There is plenty to be done - for all skills, or none!

For instance, the carriage cleaning squad is seeking help to develop a larger team to help with all aspects of keeping the interior and exterior of our carriages spic and span.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1 (DCDR Contract): Bending steam and exhaust pipes.

No.3 "R.H. Smyth": Minor repairs while at Downpatrick.

No.3BG "Guinness": During January the locomotive boiler was washed out in preparation for examination in February.

No.4: Cleaning out and preparing for TPWS fitting. Removal, dismantling, repair and refitting of driving wheel springs. Production of spare springs. Preparation for boiler washout and exam. One minor problem which arose during the Cork operation was a leaking superheater element.

No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL Contract): Dismantling valves, pistons, valve gear refurbishment. Casting brass bearings. Machining return cranks. Completion of new rods and bearings. Fit coupling rod bush keys. Renewal of corroded frame platework. Renew slide bar studs.

No.186: Annual boiler exam - in Dublin.

No.461: Positioning of inner firebox for trimming. Truing up eccentric. Overhauling of boiler fittings. Adjusting inner firebox

plates for assembly Preparation of valve rings. Overhaul of vacuum ejector.

Unilok: Minor repairs were carried out before the vehicle returned to Cultra.

Wickham Trolley (CDRRL Contract): Painted frames, arranged drive shaft.

G-Class (DCDR Contract): Re-profiled wheels.

Giant's Causeway Railway: Casting firebars.

Foundry: Work carried out on: casting bearings and injector fittings for No.5 "Drumboe", and firebars for No.4.

Contract: Two 3ft gauge spoked wheelsets were transported to Whitehead, having reached Belfast on 13th January aboard the MV "Silver River" from Ramsey in the Isle of Man, courtesy of Isle of Man Railways and Meziron shipping line.

The wheelsets are destined for a (currently wheel-less) County Donegal Railways goods van which is being refurbished at Whitehead for the County Donegal Railway Restoration Society. They formerly belonged to a long-scrapped Isle of Man Railway bogie passenger carriage - also 3ft gauge.

The wheels and axles have now taken up residence on the Society's short section of 3-foot gauge track at Whitehead, to be fitted to the wagon in due course.

Steam Drivers: The Society is pleased to report that Irish Rail have officially announced that drivers Robbie Jolley and Ken Fox were passed out as steam firemen/drivers on Sunday 21st December. Congratulations to both.

GENERAL

Membership: If there is a renewal form included with your circular then, at the time of mailing, your subscription was overdue or not fully paid.

Five Foot Three Online: A number of issues of the Society journal, Five Foot Three, have been made available on the website to add to those already there. For the most part they do not include pictures, but it was felt that the text would be of interest until such times as the mammoth task of scanning the photographs can be accomplished.

Sales: The following items are now available from the RPSI shop.

Crossing the Boyne: the Great Viaduct 1855-2005 by Iamr  d   ireann in association with the Old Drogheda Society. Paperback, 20 x 21 cm, 12 colour and 35 b&w photos, 96 pages,   7.50.

DVD by Brian Stinson - Hibernian Steam Scene Volume 7, 65 minutes,   15.

DVD by Brian Stinson - Hibernian Steam Scene Volume 8, 62 minutes,   15.

Lough Swilly Buses by Irvine Millar. Hardback, 28 x 21 cm, 200 colour & 240 B&W photos, 224 pages,   25. The transition from rail to road operations is described in detail.

"The Top Link" Railtour Brochure, edited by Charles Friel. Belfast - Dublin- Cork & return, 58 photos, 44 pages,   3.

Locomotives of the GSR by Jeremy Clements and Michael McMahon, 384 pages, 346 photographs,   35.

AGM: See the attached notice. All Council posts are open for nominations. Simply send in a note to the address below, signed by yourself and two other current Society members. Nominations should be mailed by return.

CELEBRATORY DINNER (20th February 2009) By Robin Morton

There were two good reasons for celebration when the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland held a gala dinner at the Ulster Reform Club on the evening of Friday 20th February. The first was the accreditation of museum status which the Society recently received, and the second was the successful completion of the first phase of the steam crew training scheme which involves footplate crew from Northern Ireland Railways.

A total of 78 people attended - members, their spouses and friends - and on this occasion the function took place in the opulent surroundings of the Old Billiard Room, right at the top of the house overlooking Royal Avenue in the centre of Belfast. The period room has gas fires and a lengthy bar, all under a grand pitched wooden ceiling. The guests, including the NIR crews, a strong contingent from Dublin, a youth team table and quite a few 'old giffers', gathered for drinks at the bar before proceedings began.

On the tables guests found a specially designed menu card - the work of RPSI Whitehead Site Officer Dermot Mackie's daughter Emma, to whom our thanks are due.

RPSI chairman Johnny Glendinning, whose membership of the Ulster Reform Club was key to the Society being granted use of the premises, acted as master of ceremonies and gave guests a warm welcome. He invited RPSI Whitehead volunteer Fr Eddie Creamer to say grace, and Fr Eddie delivered a suitably worded prayer.

After dinner, Johnny Glendinning said that it had taken a considerable effort on the part of the Society to secure museum status. He then introduced Chris Bailey, director of the Northern Ireland Museums Council, the body which is responsible for scrutinising applications and conferring museum status on appropriate bodies.

Mr Bailey said museum status was a national standard which applied to operators across the UK. He said it was no mean feat for any organisation to secure museum status. He said each applicant was subjected to close scrutiny, including an examination of how well the body was managed and how well it looked after its collection.

Mr Bailey said the RPSI was joining 38 other accredited museums in Northern Ireland. The benefits included greater access to public funding, and he said that the Heritage Lottery Fund tended to favour organisations which were on the list.

In addition, museums which had attained the standard would find greater openness from kindred operations when it came to arranging loans of exhibits. It was a valuable mark by which the public could be confident that the operator was protecting an important part of our heritage, on behalf of the generations to come.

The other advantage was that the public would look upon museums which were accredited as suitable repositories for items of interest which were in their possession. Mr Bailey concluded by congratulating the Society on its achievement.

Johnny Glendinning then invited three of the members of the RPSI museums committee - David Orr, Mark Kennedy and Tony Ragg - to come forward to receive the certificate of accreditation from Mr Bailey. This certificate was duly presented to the

three members, to much applause.

The RPSI chairman then turned to the second cause for celebration - the conclusion of the first phase of the NIR steam drivers course. He said the RPSI Council had been looking to the future with the objective of prolonging the Society's operations on the metals of Northern Ireland Railways and Iarnród Éireann. He said both railway companies had been working with the Society to help resolve the problem, and now, for the first time in a long time, we had two new steam drivers on IE and two on NIR.

Driver training did not come cheaply, however, Mr Glendinning said. But the cost burden facing the RPSI had been greatly eased thanks to funding assistance from the Heritage Lottery Fund, for which the Society was very grateful. He said he hoped that the HLF might be in a position to help with the next stages of the process, the passing out of the inspectors and firemen.

Stella McDermott from HLF opened her remarks by congratulating the Society on securing museum accreditation and on completing the first phase of the driver training course. She said she knew when she first met Johnny Glendinning and Derek Young that the Society would achieve accreditation.

Ms McDermott said the RPSI was a good fit as far as HLF was concerned because it had been "doing volunteering" for so many years. The amount the RPSI had contributed over the years to heritage was, she said, probably unquantifiable. Training was something that HLF was very keen on. Not only the drivers concerned but also the public would benefit from the process, because people would be able to travel on RPSI trains and see them steaming through the countryside for many years to come.

Ms McDermott said HLF had worked closely with the RPSI under its Awards For All scheme, and was aware that there were big plans for the Whitehead site and for further training. HLF hoped it could work with the RPSI in order to deliver its objectives at Whitehead.

Johnny Glendinning then called forward NIR drivers Steven Glass and Gary Moore, both of whom had successfully completed the training course. Ms McDermott then presented both drivers with framed

certificates.

Then established NIR driver Noel Playfair was called up, to be presented by RPSI vice-president Sir Ken Bloomfield with a framed photograph by RPSI photographer Charles Friel of him at the regulator of No.186 and a framed certificate marking his commitment over a period of 20 years to keeping RPSI trains on the go on the mainline. Sir Ken jokingly described Noel Playfair as a 'convert' - someone who had converted from diesel to steam.

Sitting alongside the drivers and their partners at table No.4 (how appropriate) was RPSI operating crew inspector Irwin Pryce, who was instrumental in negotiating the passage of the driver training scheme over a period of many months and bringing the first phase of the scheme to a successful conclusion. The Society is deeply indebted to Irwin Pryce.

Johnny Glendinning then invited David Morgan, chairman of the Heritage Railway Association, who had travelled over from London especially to attend the function, to speak. David opened by recalling some of his trips to see railways in far flung parts of the world, relating an amusing tale about a trip on the footplate of a steam locomotive in Patagonia, where health and safety were not of such paramount importance.

He praised the Society for its achievements, which he said were well worth while celebrating, and then paid a warm tribute to the RPSI and its work in operating mainline steam for so many years. He said the Society had always been in the vanguard of mainline steam operation and said it was encouraging to see new drivers being passed out on NIR and Iarnród Éireann. It was good to see the torch being handed over and carried forward.

Sir Ken Bloomfield rounded off the formalities with an entertaining speech. He recalled that his passion for railways had begun when, as a boy, he had placed pins on the Belfast & Co Down Railway line at Neill's Hill, so that the next passing train would flatten them and they could be taken away as trophies.

But, he said, the RPSI was not just about nostalgia, he said, but about recognising the past while fostering enthusiasm for the future, and encouraging a passion for crafts such as locomotive and carriage maintenance.

The RPSI vice-president said he had a long association with museums, though his association with the Ulster Folk Museum's railway gallery, and was delighted to see the Society being awarded museums status.

Sir Ken closed his remarks by thanking the RPSI Events Committee for its organisation of the evening, which he said had passed off splendidly.

Johnny Glendinning added his thanks to the Events Committee and then invited committee convenor Robin Morton to come forward to present a bouquet of flowers to Ruth Mackie to pass on to her sister Emma to thank her for designing and providing the menus.

The formal proceedings were declared closed, but those present stayed on to examine several artefacts such as headboards, lamps and flags which had been brought along for the evening by the RPSI youth team. Thanks to them for going to the trouble of sourcing the objets d'art.

The RPSI Events Committee would like to thank all those who supported the function and who contributed to making it such a success. Thanks to John Lockett for handling the bookings and to fellow committee members Mark Walsh and Dermot Mackie for their valuable input in the planning and delivery of the function. Thanks also to Johnny Glendinning for arranging access to the Ulster Reform Club. It was good to see such a wide representation of members present, in terms of geographical spread, gender and age. Here's to the next 'do'.

TOP LINK RAILTOUR *By Paul McCann*

No.4 and the Mk2 set travelled to Dublin in advance of the main tour on Friday 30th January.

The very full train - 210 plus support staff - left Dublin dead on time on a very wet and miserable Saturday morning with Tony RENEHAN at the regulator of No.4.

After Phoenix Park tunnel, the train was diverted into the now-redundant Platform 10 at Heuston Station. This gave a few head-scratching moments until all was revealed as No.4 set off a salvo of detonators. As the train passed through, a throng of Tony's colleagues were on the

platform to wave him on.

After the long drag up the gullet, it was a race past Tony's home depot and another crowd to salute him on his last trip at the regulator.

After a 20 minutes wait in Sallins loop for two down trains to overtake, it was on to Portarlino for the first water stop of the day. The layout here has changed so it's no longer a matter of stopping the engine under the bridge and dropping the hose down. A number of hose lengths are now needed to reach the locomotive as the platform has moved a significant distance towards Dublin.

A spell in the loop at Ballybrophy left passengers distinctly unimpressed with the weather. However, it did allow them to make their way to the diner where various combinations of hot food were available, along with the newly-installed beer pump for those in need of a different sort of fortification.

Another water stop at Thurles involved a shunt into and out of the loop to allow a Down train to overtake. By now the weather was starting to dry up slightly.

By Limerick Junction, where No.4 turned on the triangle, the rain had disappeared and the sun was breaking through.

The final water stop was at Charleville before the final run on to Cork and the famous drop down through the tunnel into Glanmire Road station.

That evening a large audience of 170 gathered in the Metropole Hotel to participate in a celebration of Tony's career. First off was Charles Friel who presented a slide show which followed a geographical route through Ireland via views of past Society railtours in which Tony and his brother Dan had participated, starting from 1968!! The show was well received as were the comments and witty heckles from some sections of the audience.

Gerry Mooney, the main instigator and organiser of the weekend, next paid thanks to Tony for all his work and help to the Society over a 40 year period. He noted that he was unsure whether or not he would miss the footplate rivalry between the two RENEHANS and some of the legendary arguments which took place.

Gerry, on behalf of the Society, then presented Tony with a trip to sample some

mainline British steam. Finally, Tony received a scroll conferring Honorary Life Membership of the Society. Tony, a man of few words, and barely recognisable without his famous flat cap, was persuaded to take the microphone. He thanked everybody for the grand send-off and wished the Society well for the next 40 years. The formalities ended with a standing ovation. And thence to the bar ...

Sunday dawned cold but dry and the steam hung long and low around No.4 at the head of her train as she waited anxiously, facing that daunting tunnel. Another on-time departure was immediately interrupted by a sequence of detonator explosions as the train hit the tunnel mouth. The station staff must have been busy as the salvo continued well into the tunnel. None of this spoiled the fine performance as Tony and the locomotive tackled the long drag in excellent style - not one slip was experienced.

The run back to Dublin was trouble-free. There were water stops at Charleville, Thurles and Portarlinton. Apart from a small delay due to low water pressure in the hydrant at Thurles, running was well to time.

Approaching Inchicore, passengers were amused (and bemused) to hear over the tannoy a running commentary in style of an excitable sports presenter detailing the final furlongs of a horse race. In this case, it was the favourite "Top Link" which was approaching the final few lengths. There was another gathering of colleagues and detonations there which marked 'Top Link' romping home in fine style.

This was repeated at Islandbridge as Heuston workmates also paid an explosive tribute as the train passed by. Irish Rail's stock of detonators must now be seriously depleted!!

And it was on to what really was the final stretch as No.4 edged into Platform 3 at Connolly station. Waiting for the train to be shunted, the photographers were very loath to let Tony leave the footplate as every combination of poses was requested. The end came as the Enterprise from Belfast arrived and the NIR crew came to replace the Irish Rail crew. The final pose was senior steam driver Noel Playfair shaking hands with the now-retired senior driver Tony Renehan.

For the passengers, however, there was

more to come in the form of a fine run north to Belfast, and thence to Whitehead. Around 100 participants were delivered safely to Great Victoria Street station.

Congratulations to all who helped organise a very successful weekend. And to Tony Renehan, the Society's wishes for a long, healthy and happy retirement.

TONY AND DAN RENEHAN *By Joe Cassells*

One section of the Top Link railtour brochure was of particular interest and is included here.

Forty-one years ago, the late Bob Clements delivered his definitive paper on the 400 class to the Irish Railway Record Society in Dublin. It was an unforgettable occasion, attended by many of the men who had driven and fired these frustrating engines: the brothers Peter and James McGibney, Ned Dunphy, Paddy Guilfoyle, Johnny Maguire and others. Among the enthusiasts present were those who had timed 400s including, of course, Drew Donaldson whose newly-completed model of 409 attracted great interest at the end. Two other young CIÉ men were present too, lads from the first non-steam generation on the Irish railways; Tony Renehan and younger brother Dan.

The first trains that Tony and Dan saw were on the Great Northern main line near their home in Fairview. Later, as the family grew, they moved out to "the Ranch" at the Khyber Pass gate, with Inchicore shed just over the wall. Five minutes' walk from their front door was the Third Road Junction, and the boys spent many hours sitting on the low stone wall watching the engines going up and down The Gullet. The Renehan family had some useful friends, among them Bill O'Reilly, the locomotive foreman at Amiens Street, and Tom Leahy who was the Locomotive Controller at Inchicore. So, long before they became steam enginemen, Tony and Dan had been privileged with footplate trips and shed passes, and had got to know the remaining steam crews in the Dublin area.

In due course, the two brothers joined the traffic department of CIÉ, Dan becoming one of the North Wall ballast guards and Tony a 'snatcherman'. When CIÉ's main line trains were dieselised, single manning was the rule from the outset. After some

negotiation, a second man was carried on single-track main lines like the Midland to deal with the ETS exchanges - hence the title of the job. Although this was not technically a footplate grade, Tony soon began doing more than just working token snatchers.

A driving career was already in the making. The only difficulty was that, for the moment, recruitment to the footplate grades was at a standstill. The last cleaners went in 1961. Junior firemen were transferred to the traffic grades as porters, shunters and guards, while senior firemen were reduced to driving shunting engines as passed firemen and ultimately retrained as junior diesel drivers. But with the older drivers beginning to retire, such a situation could not continue. So by the time Tony Renehan reached his 21st birthday in 1965, management and unions had agreed on the principle that traffic staff between the ages of 21 and 40 should be eligible for transfer to the footplate. So a healthy young man passed a fitness test (reputed to be more rigorous than that for Aer Lingus pilots!) and was passed out for driving. Dan followed four years later. For men who had grown up in the company of steam men, and now worked alongside them, working on steam was a dream unfulfilled, and they let Inspector Ned Comerford know it too!

So, in 1968, when No.186 was chartered by the IRRS for a day trip from Dublin to Kilkenny, Driver Colbert ("The Heeler") Dunne and Fireman Gussie Leonard were joined by the Renehan brothers. They were officially termed the 'support crew' and were booked for the day to help with watering the engine, oiling round and generally keeping their eyes and ears open to what was going on around them.

Tony and Dan had the highest regard for Ned Comerford, who had fired on the Mail links in the late 1940s, and passed out as a driver towards the end of steam. He told the brothers that he was prepared to book them out on RPSI tours but, in return, they must learn the job as nearly as possible to the way men accumulated knowledge in the days of steam. On every one of the RPSI's two-day tours from 1969 onwards, Tony and Dan would take their turn as the third man on the footplate, studying driving and firing techniques and learning how to fire. By the mid-1970s they were being booked as firemen, working to men like

Mick McGuinness, Colbert Dunne, Joe Murphy, Nicky Moore, Dick Millea, Tommy Blackwell and many others from the last steam generation. Tony's most frightening experience was almost certainly on the "Comeragh" tour of 12th May 1990 when he had his only experience of a bursting tube near Bansha on the Waterford & Limerick road.

By 1991, with 23 years' steam experience behind them, Tony and Dan passed out as steam drivers. I have no record of Tony's first official driving turn, but Dan's first day as a steam driver was on the "Decies" tour in May 1991 when Tony fired to him.

In 1981, Dan transferred to Connolly Loco, while Tony remained at Inchicore, where he is currently the senior driver. It is very useful for the RPSI that the two men were at different Dublin sheds and, thus, had wide route knowledge between them. But even more, their own accumulated knowledge has in recent years been passed on to a new generation of trainees who will keep steam running well into the twenty-first century.

Dan and Tony have so much in common, not least their knowledge of the steam age, of railway history generally, and their interest in the practical work of the footplate.

But they have one point of difference. From his earliest days, Tony has been an avid reader of any article relating to locomotive performance, and has always been glad to receive logs of the running after any RPSI outing. He was an unashamed and avid student of the writings of Cecil J. Allen and OS Nock - men whose books and articles have always left Dan profoundly unimpressed!

Tony has also been a frequent visitor to the British preserved steam railways, and his retirement will hopefully give him even more time to cultivate this part of the hobby which has grown out of his job and into his way of life.

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