

*The Railway Preservation Society
of Ireland*

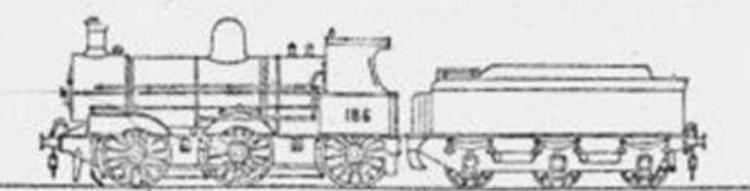
PATRON: THE RT. HON. THE LORD O'NEILL



FIVE

F(D)D'T

THREE



ILLUSTRATED
PRICE at least 2*½*

FIVE FOOT THREE

No.3

Summer 1967

Editor: Andrew Donaldson

CONTENTS

Editorial	A. Donaldson
Coleraine As A Railway Centre	J.R.L. Currie
A Memory Of 1964	J.A. Cassells
Steam Swan Song	S.W. Röttger
If ...	J.D. Fitzgerald
An Engine Once Again	A. Donaldson
Vaporaria	J.A. Cassells
Letters To The Editor	

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

EDITORIAL

A. Donaldson

Once again a railtour has proved to be the big event of the Society's year - particularly exciting in this case as an engine which was once expected never to run again triumphantly upheld the best J15 traditions. Instead of being a flop, as was once feared, the occasion placed several feathers in the Society's cap, not to mention more names on its membership list and a lot more cash in its kitty.

As usual, a large number of railwaymen proved to be the heart of corn, entering fully into the spirit of the thing. Messrs Coulthard, Topley, Craig, Macafee, Dunlop and McDonald have again given us hearty co-operation in their respective capacities. Then Driver Alfie Crawley, and his mate Brian Nicholl, made the engine their special pet both before and during the tour. Even their turnout on the day showed how they regarded the event. We hope they enjoyed themselves as much as we did and that they will find themselves on No.186's footplate again on many future occasions.

The sterling work of the other footplate crew, Bertie Wright and Paddy Russell, has perhaps not been sufficiently publicised. Contrary to the suggestions of an article in the local press shortly afterwards, their work was exemplary. The brakes of the GNR stock, out of use since Easter, were slow to release, making us take over 4 minutes for the first mile; in view of this, it was remarkable to fall only momentarily to 25 on the Loop. After the Ballyclare Junction slack we got away to 62 as early as MP 14. The maximum was 72, representing a more accurate estimate of speed than would be given by most speedometers, and not likely to cause the permanent way department any qualms. The difficult schedule to Ballymena was kept to within a few seconds, largely by maintaining speed in the upper sixties till well after Kellswater. The return journey was equally fine, albeit with two engines; for R.J. Simpson had hastened with 53 from Derry, whither he had worked a goods, to accompany us. Speed rose to 68 before MP 28, recovering to the same figure after a 46 mph slowing caused by the notorious Drumsough gates, and only falling to a "North Atlantic" 60 at post 13, after which the engines were eased for the slack. In spite of the ensuing PW restrictions, arrival in Belfast was just on the right side

of schedule - indeed timekeeping had been impeccable throughout the day. 55 was an unexpected (and, to timers, welcome) substitution for 4, which had been specially cleaned up for the trip.

We cannot but deplore the practice - noticed also on previous occasions - of quoting exaggerated speeds to the Press. On our outing the restrictions were meticulously observed and we hope all those involved will accept this (unfortunately belated) correction.

While on this subject, we would ask members, if they must publicise the Society in the Press, to do so over their own names, making it clear that the views expressed are their own and theirs only. Not all the publicity we received was realistic or beneficial.

It is difficult to understand how trundling up and down a mile or two of line could compare with the delights which Craig Robb and his staff provide for us on these occasions; and it is as well to state categorically that the Society has no plans to acquire a stretch of line; indeed the financial position of such lines in Britain, with much greater potentialities than we have, is not encouraging.

On the other hand, many members would like more railtours and it would be a good thing to steam our engines more frequently. NIR have always been ready to allow us to operate over their system; Mr Mooney of CIÉ Operating and his staff are being most helpful, and provided their Mechanical Engineer's Department can be satisfied that our engines are sound, the future for railtours appears bright - the only cloud being the absence of an alternative base should any of the links connecting Whitehead with the bulk of the Irish Railway system be severed.

“Triallam timcheall na Fodhla” *[Let us go around Ireland]* said Keating. Let us follow his advice, and traverse as much of Ireland as we are permitted. Members can best help by avoiding conduct likely to lead to an accident or embarrass railwaymen who are our best friends.

COLERAINE AS A RAILWAY CENTRE

J.R.L. Currie

In this article, I shall try to give some idea of Coleraine as it was in the period 1914-24, that is, from the outbreak of the First World War, to the opening of the new Bann bridge.

The layout of the station was much as it is today. Around the canopy of the main entrances - there were two, one to each platform - was a capping of tasteful scrolled ironwork. This was a victim of a post-war re-slating operation.

The track layout at the eastern end was exactly as it is today; entry to the goods yard was controlled by a cabin, “South”, while the Derry Central bay, now disconnected from the main line, and the crossover to the engine shed were worked by a small ground frame at the end of the up platform, which was not so long as it is today. The Derry Central platform was surrounded by a sleeper fence, doubtless intended to prevent fare dodgers making a hasty retreat. In place of the present water crane, there was a tower, similar to that which formerly stood at the Portrush end of Portstewart down platform. This tower was demolished when the platforms were lengthened in the thirties.

The main line diverged sharply to the left once over the level crossing. Some 250 yards further on, it met the harbour branch, which diverged sharply and on a steep grade, to the left. The main line itself curved gently to the right, and then swung out to cross the old bridge of 1860. The Portrush line diverged more gradually, just as it does today. This end of the station was controlled by a cabin set in the fork of the main and Portrush lines - “North”.

The level crossing was then operated by a rack apparatus situated in a hut just on the Londonderry side of the level crossing; the North cabin had, of course, a lock on the gates, interlocked with the appropriate signal levers in the frame. There were quite complicated slotting arrangements between the two cabins and the ground frame, but as far as can be remembered, the ground frame was only operated as required, and consequently its slots normally remained “off”. The old Bann bridge was locked by a

Pinkerton box, like the ones at Macfin and Toome, all, curiously enough, over the Bann. The tablet for the Coleraine-Castlerock section had to be conveyed from the North box to release the swing section; the points to the harbour were similarly operated. This was not particularly frequent.

Turning now to the loco yard; once again this is little changed, save that the Stationmaster's house has gone, as has the "Shop yard". Another small difference was that all coaling was accomplished by hand, from a stage; the mechanical plant did not come until 1938. The driving staff then consisted of about 12 crews; how many other staff were employed, I am not aware. The interior condition of the shed was very different to that of today; no pigeons' droppings falling on a single filthy "Jeep". No; a couple of heavy Compounds kept company with a Light, there was a Class "3" 2-4-0ST of 1883, and at one period two real gems - both Class "E", some of the few remaining engines of the Belfast and Ballymena Railway. Excellent little machines they were, and popular with their crews. Their numbers were 18 and 19.

The then-common system of 'one crew - one engine' was in vogue. The invisible green engines shone, the brasswork employed any spare time the crews had at turn-round. It is said that one driver - he had No.5, one of the 1904 heavy Compounds - was so fastidious that when the cleaner's chit was handed to him for signature he first took his handkerchief and moved it down the brass handrail of the cab. If it did not prove unstained, he refused to sign the chit! A far cry, you may think, from 1967; indeed so, but conditions were different in 1907. At best, the one crew - one engine system was an inflexible relic of the old Victorian tradition of driving by contract. But it did encourage a smart turn-out.



No.27, a 2-4-0 at Portrush about between 1914 and 1924. (W. Robb)

Just about the time we are reminiscing of, the first two of the four "U" Class passenger 4-4-0s would have made their appearance at Coleraine, though it is unlikely that they would have been shedded there. Doubtless they were the centre of attraction; how their drivers must have been envied by the others. No more new engines would have been seen until 1922, when a couple more "U"s came upon the scene. That period must have been a field one for the early NCC enthusiast, for soon three new classes

followed hard upon the heels of the “U”s; the “V” Heavy Goods 0-6-0s in 1923, and the “U1”s (which incorporated the wheels and motion of scrapped Class “B” Light Compound 4-4-0s), and the “U2”s in the following year.

The war had relatively little effect on Coleraine from a railway point of view. Some of the younger traffic and locomotive staff, naturally, enlisted, leaving gaps that were hard to fill. But the average driver could see no reason for abandoning his footplate for the mire of Flanders; was he not king of his castle, owner, virtually, of this live beast whose every impulse he controlled; and most important, wasn’t he taking home anything up to £5 every week?

After the war, the work on the replacement of the old Bann bridge, by then in a dangerous condition, got under way. This had been planned to commence long before, but the machinations of Kaiser Bill had prevented it. So a speed limit of 5 mph and a restriction on weight and double-heading was imposed, and the NCC settled down to wait. The contract for the main bridge and one over a road was awarded to Armstrong Whitworth, but the Committee undertook the making of about half a mile of embankments itself. The material for these was quarried about two miles from Coleraine, towards Macfin, where there was a shallow cutting. The place may yet be seen; the track passes through a wide flat area, with banks on either side. To excavate this earth, a steam shovel was employed. This was the first to be seen in the district, and drew large crowds of interested spectators to watch it at work.

Finally the work was complete, and Coleraine took to the river and to the surrounding hills as No.50 “Jubilee” (still of course a two-cylinder compound), pulled into the station at noon on Friday 21st March 1924, hauling a special train containing the Chairman, Major Somerset (a Coleraine man), the Board, and other notable guests, among them the redoubtable Bowman Malcolm who had designed the new structure. The train proceeded across the new bridge, breaking a tape, and then set back, the guests alighted, and Major Somerset raised and lowered the new bridge. Off again, this time to “stable” on the old bridge, and watch the first service train cross the new bridge. This happened to be a down train, the 2:3pm Coleraine-Londonderry. All then adjourned to the up platform at the station, whence the train now proceeded. The felicitous speeches usually attributed to such occasions - one old driver told me the theme was “You pat my back and I’ll pat yours” - were duly rendered, though an old grievance was dragged out of the mists of time to be given an airing - whether rail or river traffic should be given preference. To this the Chairman verbosely pointed out the several ways in which the new structure would alleviate delays to shipping. With that, the Harbour Commissioners had to be content, and the Chairman and the official party then resumed their seats in the train - which doubtless included 88, the new dining car - and departed for Belfast.

The signal engineer’s staff, however, had little time for repose in the next few days. All points and signals, some old, some new, had to be connected up to their respective new signal cabins, “South” and “Junction”. South was at the Belfast end of the down platform, while Junction, which controlled the new and present alignment in connection with the new bridge, was on the Londonderry side of the level crossing, on the up side of the track. This latter box controlled the level crossing directly, and also contained the modern controls for the new Bann bridge, which space does not allow me to elaborate on now.

The shed by the end of 1924 had its allocation of the new engines. One can visualise the old-timer comparing his green “Compound”, not yet repainted, to the sparkling new crimson “Scotch”. What was his verdict? I feel sure he found for the Compound. Not so the young cleaner; he would contrast the clean, sleek lines of the newcomer to the high-chimneyed Edwardian appearance of the Compound; and he would find the older engine wanting, and pray Providence to hasten the day when he would be at that regulator. But he did not know that that by that time a new and more sophisticated class would have ousted the “Scotches” from their dominant position - the “Moguls”. But that is another story.

The last Dublin-Belfast train to be regularly worked by ex-Great Northern motive power was the 2:45pm from Dublin (4:00pm from Dundalk) and I intend to deal with the final section from Portadown to Belfast, when on Saturday evenings anything from a UG to a VS was liable to hook on.

In the winter 1963/4 timetable, the Saturday 2:45 was the only principal train booked to change engines at Portadown, where the Mogul or "Mogul Tank" (WT) was replaced by an Adelaide engine, almost always an ex-Great Northern class. The Portadown engine's outward working was on the 1:05pm goods; the Adelaide machine was sent out on the 1:45pm passenger from Belfast, an unexacting three bogie train, and after turning and watering at the shed, it always sat in the passenger station during the afternoon.

In the summer, the 12:30pm and 3:15pm Dublin trains were always in the hands of the Adelaide top link, and the 2:45pm was the return of the 12:30pm, worked by the same engine all the way from Dundalk to Belfast. Motive power was almost always a WT, usually 53 or 55, both of which were just ex-works. But VS No.207 did make quite frequent appearances, and during the first week of the summer timetable, S class Nos. 170 and 171 took turns to work over the bank each day.

The new winter timetable was similar to the old, except that after the end of October, GN engines were rarely seen on the 1:45, and instead a WT, invariably either 1, 9 or 50, took over the 2:45 at Portadown. After 28th November, when 174 appeared, no more GN engines worked this turn.

Between the closure of the Warrenpoint line on 2nd January 1965 and the end of regular steam in the area on 13th February, the 2:45 became a Portadown turn all the way, and the 1:45 from Belfast, now the return of the 10:10am goods from Portadown, also ceased to be an Adelaide working. The last phase of the 2:45 was as a CIÉ diesel-hauled train, and it disappeared from the timetable altogether at the start of the winter 1965/6 timetable, when a new 2:30pm Enterprise was booked to call at Dundalk and Portadown.

Perhaps the most meaningful way of dealing with locomotive performance, which in terms of punctuality was, after all, the immediate concern of the ordinary traveller, would be to take each section in turn. With six bogies behind him in winter, and up to nine in summer, the driver of the 2:45 was allowed 9 minutes to leave Lurgan, 17 to arrive in Lisburn, and 12 thence to Belfast. Due to the 5 mph slack for bridge building at Moira (for which no allowance was made in the Lurgan-Lisburn timing), and a tardy bus connection at Portadown, timekeeping was a difficult matter, though this is hardly a reflection on standards of work.

"Eight to arrive and one to depart" was a rather unreasonable schedule over the difficult road to Lurgan, the more so during the summer. The nearest I ever timed to this allowance was 8 minutes 6 seconds, with a maximum load train of nine and a van and WT No.55, although personally I thought even more of S No.172, which as late as September 1964 worked an eight bogie train into Lurgan in only 8'31". Ironically my worst 2:45 time, 12'21", was recorded behind 171 on a squally May afternoon with nine bogies, a quite exceptional wintertime load. I always considered a good average was between 8½ and 9.

Lurgan to Lisburn, for which the 17 minute timing was, before the slack, absurdly easy, involves a three mile climb to post 96 at gradients steepening to 1 in 210, followed by a pleasant racing stretch down through Moira and Maze into Lisburn. One of my most exciting runs before the slack was with S No.174, driven by George McCullough of Adelaide, and hauling six bogies and a van. The time was 15'31" and we breasted the summit in 5'55" at 47, sustaining 60 - 65 all the rest of the way. When the bridge building began at Moira, however, the picture changed and anything between 18 and 20 minutes was decidedly good going. I quote two fairly typical examples, one with an S class, the other with a tank. On a May Saturday in 1964, Driver Boreland had 170 with five bogies and a van, and in an

18'54" run, the summit was passed in 5'51" at 45 followed by 54½ before, and 62 after, the crawl through Moira. The second, more nostalgic, occasion was when another Adelaide man, Herbie Harbinson, celebrated his retirement with an extremely sound run with WT No.1 and six bogies. We passed post 96 in only 5'27" at 51½, and after the crawl through Moira attained 64 down the Maze before stopping in Lisburn in 18'38".

In later days the final section changed from the dullest into one of the most exciting parts of the journey. With the old ghost of Meeting House Crossing finally exorcised, time was always made up on the 12 minute allowance. Even the heaviest trains were whipped into the sixties after Dunmurry before stopping in Belfast, often in well under 11 minutes. The best time I recorded on the 2:45 was 9'54" with S2 No.192 and six bogies, maximum being 68, and another piece of work well worth mentioning in passing was with an unusual engine, UG No.82, shown in the illustration. Although certainly not the best choice for a well-filled eight bogies, even she managed a 53 after Dunmurry.



UG No.82 taking over the 2:45pm ex-Dublin at Portadown. (A. Donaldson)

On 13th February 1965 an era came to an end, but to anyone who has ever stood on Portadown platform watching a rather grimy S backing down as the Portadown tank clattered off up to the shed, or raced over the footbridge at Lisburn making a "minus connection" off the 5:35pm, such an article as this is unnecessary. You will have your own memories of the happiness which could be bought for the price of an afternoon return to Newry.

STEAM SWAN SONG

S.W. Röttger

The Irish passenger service to which steam has clung most tenaciously has been that between Belfast and Larne - indeed steam has not yet relinquished this last stronghold in this year of grace, 1967.

In recent years the 2-6-4Ts were used on all steam duties here, and were ideal since quick turn-round times were often essential. In this article I shall try to illustrate the high standard of locomotive performance involved.

When the WTs first arrived the management were so captivated by their handiness that, according to Mr Houston, it was actually proposed to rebuild the Moguls to match, using bogies off scrapped "Whippet" 4-4-0s. They also share with the ex-SLNCR "Lough Melvin" class the distinction of being one of the last two intact steam classes in these islands, though 2, 7, 8 & 52 were withdrawn in 1965, and 9 in 1966. [26 is also withdrawn. - Ed.]

Apart from 2-4-0STs which disappeared in the 1930s, tank engines for mainline work had been unknown on the NCC in spite of the success of GNR No.142 in 1924.



VI No.14 on a local ex-Whitehead at Jordanstown in the fifties. (W.T. Scott)

The flexibility of "Jeep" operation is obvious when, for example, one considers that in 1966 engines were expected to (and did) run round the 3:10pm ex-Belfast in 7 minutes at Larne Town to return on the 4:05pm "School Train". This is of course no longer possible since the station lost all its pointwork and signalling.

The chief banks are:

1. A rise at 1 in 102 for 3½ miles from MP 3, broken by a short stretch of 1 in 75 after easing through Whiteabbey. The line then dives under the viaduct at Bleach Green, to resume climbing at MP 5.
2. A fall at 1 in 102/97 from Greenisland to MP 9½.

Speeds in the sixties - and, formerly, in the seventies - were usual on both descents. The five miles on to Whitehead are gently undulating with severe curves along the shore over the last 1½ miles. The subsequent single line has crossing loops at Ballycarry (MP 16½), Magheramorne Loop (19½) and, until September 1966, Larne Town (23¼), the last mentioned on a sharp curve. Banks on the last section are short.

As there is rarely more than 9 miles between stops, a check in any section normally precludes interesting running. Such sections have therefore been omitted from the tables which follow.

The most important trains have long been the heavy 8:00am up and the 5:30pm down business trains carrying much prestige with railwaymen and retaining some old NCC traditions, such as signalling the departure of the former by a handbell in Larne Town station. Indeed, these trains resemble the "Club" trains of the erstwhile L&YR in England. From the timer's point of view, an important characteristic is their running non-stop over the 9.7 miles between Belfast and Carrickfergus.

The main boat trains are the 10:05am and 5:55pm down, and 9:30am and 5:00pm up.

Run No.	1	2	3	4
Train	5:30pm	5:30pm	5:55pm	10:05am
Loco No.	6	10	4	4
Bogies/Vans	5/2	6/2	4/0	4/0
Belfast	0-00	0-00		0-00
MP3	5-15 53			4-57 58½
Bleach Green	7-25 47½			7-00 48
Greenisland	9-40 50 63	10-30 65		9-12 52 64
Carrickfergus	13-07 (15)	14-00		12-51 [15RS]
Kilroot		57		58½
Whitehead		[8] 7-18 pws	0-00 [4]	0-00 [4]
Ballycarry		[3] 4-30	3-15 56 64	
Magheramorne Loop			21 sigs	
Glynn		65	60	
Larne Town		[10] 9-08	12-21 [14]	

Run No.	5	6	7	8	9	10
Train	7:00pm	7:00pm	7:00pm	9:30am	6:45 SO	9:45am
Loco No.	4	4	3	4	3	53
Bogies/Vans	4/0	4/0	4/1	4/0	6/0	6/0
Larne Town	0-00			0-00		
Glynn	3-04 56			3-16 39		
Magheramorne	5-33 [8]			5-55		
Magheramorne Loop	56			6-15 64		
Ballycarry	5-21 [5] 37		0-00	10-16		
Whitehead	3-45 [4] 60		3-37 43	0-00		
Kilroot	4-16 51		4-30 59	4-10 65 64		
Carrickfergus	3-45 [8]		7-05 45	6-32	0-00	
Trooperslane	see note		3-30		50	
Greenisland	[5]		5-14	0-00	5-10	0-00
Jordanstown	[3RS]			2-45 49		
Whiteabbey	[3RS]	0-00		0-00		
MP 3				67		
MP 2½	66	70			72	
Belfast	6-57 [8]	6-15		6-30	8-34 [11]	

Notes on the runs:

Run 1. No.6 once gave me a creditable performance on this train with no less than 9 bogies and a

four-wheel van.

Run 3. The 5:55 serves a dual purpose; a later “fast” commuter train as well as a Boat Train. I had quit the heavier 5:30 in despair at Whitehead and my wait was rewarded with this sprightly performance.

Run 4. The coaches were former “North Atlantic Express” stock which worked the corresponding train in the late 1930s.

Run 5. The 8 minute allowance to restart from Magheramorne is obviously designed with the MO (market day) stop at Glynn in mind. The request stop to pick up the signalman at Kilroot meant a brisk brake application. Overall time was kept from Whitehead to Carrickfergus - 8'1". The efforts of the crew, hitherto successful, were stultified, for as we came under Clipperstown bridge a calf was seen - possibly a relative of the one which had derailed a railcar at Mount. We had to stop several times, losing all chance of timekeeping.

Run 8. This train is unique in being booked non-stop from Larne to Whitehead. The lateness of a down railcar necessitated the crossing stop at Ballycarry. If this run doesn't prove 4 to be the best of the 1 - 10 series, I don't know what would! The driver, however, was still not convinced.

Run 9. My best ever performance on Mount bank.

Run 10. A good piece of work by an engine which is reputed to be erratic.

IF ...

J.D. Fitzgerald

Members will be familiar with the nebulous Ulster & Connaught Light Railway; but Irish railway history boasts another might-have-been: late in the 19th century the MGWR was planning a railway from Kingscourt to Cookstown. The line, of course, was never built - it did not even leave a trace of its ghostly existence as the U&CLR did at Keady; but the later Castleblaney-Armagh section of the GNR followed its course fairly closely.

The intention had been to extend the Kingscourt line to Carrickmacross (a subsidised car service ran from Kingscourt to Carrickmacross in connection with trains until the GNR branch opened) but the GN got there first, in 1886. In 1893 it was proposed to extend from Kingscourt to Armagh. Deputations from Northern towns then appealed to the MGWR to bring the extension to Cookstown to connect with the B&NCR. The route was surveyed and powers to make the line sought in a bill of 1893 - double to Armagh and single thence to Cookstown. At this time relations with the GN were rather unfriendly but at this point the GN expressed their anxiety for a peaceful settlement of all disputes and after a meeting between the two chairmen the MGWR agreed to drop the extension clauses from their bill. Strong pressure continued in the north for the line and in 1900 an independent company, the Kingscourt, Keady and Armagh, was authorised, omitting the Cookstown extension. In 1902 the KKA was authorised to abandon the Kingscourt-Castleblaney section, whereon the MGWR, next year, secured powers to make the line themselves. They probably never intended to do so, but wanted to be in a position to prevent invasion of their territory by a competitor.

The proposed line was to strike due north from Kingscourt for 2½ miles before swinging north-eastward towards Carrickmacross, passing to the west of Lough Fea. Carrickmacross was passed at MP 6, the railway running through the centre of the town and crossing two streets by overbridges. Apparently no connection with the GNR branch at the east of the town was contemplated.

From Carrickmacross the proposed line was to run northward towards Castleblaney. The distance between the two towns was 10½ miles and the only village to be passed was Broomfield. There was an ascent at 1 in 110 from MP 7½ to MP 11. Castleblaney was to be approached from the south-east and at

MP 16½ precisely the GNR Dundalk-Clones line was to be crossed by a bridge 16 feet high and of 27 foot arch. This was at a point about a quarter of a mile on the Dundalk side of the GNR station. The MGWR line was then to cross Evelyn Street and straighten to run parallel with the GNR line for about half a mile. Once more there was no connection proposed between the two companies' lines.

From Castleblaney as far as Keady the course of the line was to be the same as that later followed by the Castleblaney, Keady and Armagh Railway, worked by the GNR. However, about a quarter of a mile before reaching Keady, at MP 26, the line swung sharply towards the east, even running almost south-east before swinging towards the north again at MP 29. Incidentally, near MP 27 the line was to have crossed the proposed U&CLR. There was a fall at 1 in 105 from about MP 28 to MP 31 and again from MP 31½ to MP 36 at 1 in 103. Since this was appreciably easier than the 1 in 70 of the GNR line as actually built, the extra 1½ miles of the Midland route (9½ compared with 8 on the GNR) might have been the better proposition. Just short of MP 35½ a trailing siding 1 mile 8¾ chains long ran to the left to the factory at Milford.



BT class 4-4-0 No.1 at Irish Street Halt - near path of proposed MGWR line. (Allison Studios, Armagh)

The Midland line was to have entered Armagh in a rather similar way to the later GN line, but just after passing under Callan Street, a facing siding ran to the right for 1 furlong 9 chains. The siding was to have run up the edge of the present Cathedral Road, but what function it was to have served is hard to say. Shortly after this siding, the proposed line was to have run northwards towards Moy, while a spur 2 furlongs 9½ chains long ran to the right towards the GNR station, following the same route later used by the GNR line. The proposed Cookstown line crossed the GNR Belfast-Cavan line and continued towards Moy and Dungannon. It crossed the Ulster Canal near Blackwaterstown.

The MGWR, incidentally, named the Kingscourt-Armagh section Railway No.1, the Armagh-Dungannon section being No.2. Mileposts, therefore, began again at Armagh and so at MP 7 a facing junction led to the 2 furlong 5 chain spur to a riverside wharf at the Moy. From Moy the line ran

towards Dungannon on an ascending gradient with 2½ miles at 1 in 101. For about the last 1½ miles into Dungannon the line was to run roughly parallel with the GNR Portadown - Derry line about half a mile away to the north. However, no tunnel was to have been needed by the Midland line, although the complicated layout planned for Dungannon made up for this.

On entering Dungannon, about 200 yards south of the GN line, the proposed Midland line sent a spur to the left which rose at 1 in 50, ran parallel with the Cookstown line and then swung right to cross both the MGWR and GN lines. The latter was to have been crossed by a two arch bridge about 170 yards on the Donaghmore side of the existing road bridge at Dungannon GNR station. About halfway along this bridge another siding ran towards the left, swinging round to run parallel with the GNR line and with the Ballygawley Road. The main siding was to cross the junction of John Street and Ballygawley Road, the former of which was to be closed, and then swing right so as to run in the opposite direction to the siding described above, facing back towards Portadown in fact. Scotch Street was to be crossed on the level and the end of this siding was at Railway Road, about 150 yards away from the GNR station.

Meanwhile, the Cookstown line itself ran roughly parallel with the GNR Derry line towards Donaghmore and 2 miles from Dungannon the Midland line crossed the GN about ¼ mile short of Donaghmore station. The Midland line was to run through the village of Donaghmore and swing north towards Cookstown, which was 12¼ miles from Dungannon, compared with 14½ miles by the GNR route. The prevailing gradient was 1 in 101. Cookstown was to be approached from the west after a 90° curve from the southerly approach. William Street and Union Street were to cross over the line, as it descended at 1 in 100 towards its junction with the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway. The total distance from Kingscourt to Cookstown was to be 60 miles 5 furlongs.

AN ENGINE ONCE AGAIN

A. Donaldson

As already recorded, it became obvious late in 1966 that No.186 would run again and work on her was put in hand for the May railtour.

As the chief mechanical defect had concerned the coupling rods, these were removed by members and re-bushed in York Road Works. Fitter R. McDonald then refitted them using new collars turned by Derek Henderson, and new taper pins.

After an unsuccessful attempt to raise steam, the tubes were again cleaned, using an auger in some cases to clear blockage, and washed out with a hose.

A week before the outing, the engine raised steam readily - members found her blowing off at 140 lbs - but refused to move under her own power; in addition, the reverser could not be shifted. The trouble was diagnosed as a leaking regulator valve, combined with blockage of the cylinder drain cocks. In addition, the left-hand cylinder cover was blowing badly.

The covers of the steam chest and left-hand cylinder were removed next day and large quantities of sediment cleared from the drain cocks and steam chest.

During the next two days the regulator valve was faced under the direction of R. McDonald, who also rejoined the covers and cleaned the ejector cones and the interior of the lubricator.

On the Wednesday the engine was again steamed - this time there were no snags; she worked a ballast train to Ballycarry and on return shunted the permanent way sidings all afternoon. She was found able to shift heavy loads without slipping and Alfie Crawley described her as "a strong brute". Himself and Brian Nicholl, his mate, were in charge of her throughout and took a personal pride in her running and appearance - to the extent of polishing the axle ends.

No further serious troubles cropped up, but during the tour a gland began to blow and a big end knock caused some concern, though with little effect on the running. These matters will be attended to before

No.186 makes her next trip.

In the intervals between the mechanical repairs, the engine was cleaned and painted by Ciaran Clendinning and Fred Cooper, while a group of members polished up her external brasswork. Certain members went down at 6:00am on the morning of the trip to give her a final grooming.

The tender floor has been leaking badly and is not even sound enough for welding. It has been temporarily patched with tar and we are hoping to obtain a larger and more watertight vehicle in the near future. Meanwhile, a new locker has been fitted to replace that which was missing.

Since the outing NIR have accepted our offer of a loan of her when required and she did shunt York Road passenger yard in June. She has since been again cleaned and her cab interior given a further coat of paint.

Though the engine's appearance on the outing was a credit to the Society, Ciaran regards her as only "cleaned up", and provided we can be assured of a reasonably long programme of outings, he plans to do a full job on her next winter, finishing her in GSWR olive green, lined black, white and red - like 184 or 90, which is preserved as a static exhibit at Mallow.

Our appreciation of the help rendered on this and many other occasions by Messrs Macafee and Dunlop of NIR has been set on record elsewhere; at this stage it may be as well to remind our readers that our indebtedness to Córas Iompair Éireann has been much greater even than we had imagined, particularly to Mr Frank Lemass, General Manager, and Messrs N.J. Devereux, Mechanical Engineer (Rail) and R.P. Grainger, Assistant Mechanical Engineer (Rail) of Inchicore. The engine they gave us is far more than an interesting museum piece - she is a most useful and efficient unit of motive power.

At a General Meeting on 12th May it was decided by a majority vote to proceed with the work at Whitehead shed. Since then a team of 8 have been down each Saturday under the supervision of John Richardson, Site Officer, and have renewed 200 sleepers recently supplied by NIR. A further 200 sleepers should be delivered shortly and it is hoped that laying the platform road will start in September.

The point outside the shed will be resleepered in August; 8 new crossing timbers have been acquired for this purpose. Work has also started on fencing, and on clearing the platform, and John hopes that many more members will join him on Saturdays.

We congratulate the winners of the Photographic Competition, Messrs Dunnett & King (senior) and P.J. Montgomery (junior). We thank member R. Grayson for undertaking the judging at short notice. There followed a Social evening (21st June) at which slides, tape-recordings and nostalgic reminiscences brought home to members what we have lost - and lost irretrievably if we do not maintain and expand our railtour programme.

VAPORARIA

J.A. Cassells

Since the new year the following WTs have been repaired at York Road: 3, 4, 6, 10, 50, 53, 55. No.53 had been brought out of store at Coleraine. 5 has emerged after repairs with the new NIR monogram on her side tanks. On the other hand, 54's firebox was condemned in March, while 9, after repair last summer and again in February, has been finally withdrawn. Her smokebox door was removed for 56 and her bogie for 4. Her leading truck also goes to 56. At the time of going to press, 55 and 56 are both receiving attention in the shops.

Although all trains were diesel immediately after the introduction of the new timetable on 1st January 1967, after mid-March the 5:30pm and return were often steam hauled. The steam workings reached a climax on 27th June 1967 when there were six passenger trains each way, in addition to the 4:55pm to Cullybackey. After a weekend's work by diesel fitters, Larne line steam vanished on Monday 3rd July,

but has now reappeared regularly on the 5:30pm and occasionally on other turns. Incidentally, the 2:05pm SO is booked steam to Larne Harbour, the return working being the 5:05pm Boat Train.

Steam returned in force to the Portrush branch, not on 13th May, but on Saturday 24th March, when No.6 worked the 3:00pm, stabling at Coleraine. On Easter Monday and Tuesday there were two trains to Portrush with three returns on Tuesday, 6 having worked to Derry and back since Saturday. The running, however, matched the weather.

The only other steam to Derry was on goods and permanent way trains, apart from the Gortahork specials, the 8:35 SO and return, and a Sunday 2:55pm special returning empty. On 12th July, three Orange specials each way ran from Coleraine to Derry. Actually the 8:35am SO is not booked steam this year, though the 3:05pm to Portrush is, returning at 7:30pm. Steam substitution has also been frequent on the 9:25am and occasional on the 10:50am SO and 1:15pm to Portrush.

The Sunday School season, though not producing such combinations of WTs as last year, rarely failed to provide three specials. An interesting variation was a Sunday School special from Coleraine to Castlerock on 24th June.

Over the Antrim branch the only known excursion has been one to Portrush from Dublin, and one from Antrim to Drogheda, both diesel, but it is rumoured that excursions from places on the GN section will be restored next year.

There have been steam empty carriage and ballast workings over to the GN, and 4 has ventured as far as Portadown.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Quo Vadimus?

The question with which I head my epistle is one which, in its English equivalent at least, I have been asking various members of the Society for some time. From these enquiries I have discovered one major fact - nobody knows!

True, most members have their own particular ideas of what the Society should be doing, but no-one can say what the underline official policy of the Society is set out to be.

Most members have expressed the earnest hope that there will continue to be outings, particularly over CIÉ, but beyond that it seems all ideas reduce to some woolly intention to put Whitehead in order as a site, perhaps only temporary, where we may shed our engines. There, about two to three years away, most members end their well-intentioned speculations. What lies beyond in the vast uncharted oceans of the future seems to be of no interest. Careless mariners frequently hit rocks and sink, hence we should take warning and attempt to steer our ship with some more attention.

This lack of planning can be attributed to two things. The first is, I regret to say, a lethargic, if not apathetic, membership. How much of this fault amongst the members is inherent and how much is the outcome of ill-guidance by the Committee I do not know, but fervent enthusiasm two or three times a year is not enough, and unbelievers need only look to English societies, or the ill-fated Dublin tram society, to find the proof of this.

Secondly, I blame the Committee. Perhaps it is unfair to criticise them too much but as the elected representatives of the members they must shoulder the responsibility; that is their function. Their lack of clear and concise planning, their woolly statements at meetings, even Annual General Meetings, the time consumed by them in even the simplest actions, whether these are throwbacks from the membership I neither know nor care but this state of affairs is quite intolerable. What is needed is

definite long-term planning, and the sooner proposals are put before the Society for acceptance the better.

Let us fully realise that our railways have a very unsettled future ahead of them. No matter what member of the railway management may give assurances, let us be quite clear in our own minds that policies can change and what may one day be a busy railway line can next be the foundations for a motorway. This has happened with the “Derry Road” (Portadown-Londonderry) and it can happen again.

We must decide whether or not we ever hope to operate a Bluebell-type branch line, what future acquisitions we would like to have, what worthwhile projects we should spend our money on. Let us not fanatically defend Whitehead on the “We’re here because we’re here because we’re here” principle, but rather take a reasoned look at all the alternatives which members at one time or another offered up for consideration. Some may be unsound financially, others impracticable, others just undesirable, but all must be considered and the ultimate aims of the Society determined.

I do not think it unreasonable to say that in the not-too-distant future, indeed probably within the next two years, the Society will either stand or fall on its policies. The members at home must take more active interest in the Society. The members who are further afield in England, the Republic or overseas must make their opinions known in these pages. We must decide our fate now, and whether the decisions we reach are those private hopes of every member, or not, they should be taken to enable the Society to work with more effect towards its ends.

A Worthy Aim?

Following my criticism I feel that perhaps I should offer up some more concrete ideas for a long term policy. I do not intend to deal in detail with particular cases but rather to outline certain general principles which I feel are essential.

The first question we must answer is what we mean by preservation. The engines and carriages which sit lifelessly in the Belfast Transport Museum are also preserved, but certainly no member can possibly wish to see our engines mummified in the same manner. Our aims are to “preserve in working order” and to “operate” those locomotives and coaches which come into our possession, yet this (typically) woolly statement leaves itself open to a multitude of interpretations and, also, misinterpretations.

I should at this stage clarify one point. Before I am branded as a “Bluebeller” let me explain that I, like a good 90% of the members, want outings held regularly every year, and operating over fairly long distances. Also, like 90% of the membership, I would like to see the engines in steam more than three times a year. It is plain common-sense that the engines should be used as often as possible, and one way to ensure this is to operate a section of line, preferably a self-contained branch, for regular passenger traffic in the summer months. In other words, a Bluebell-type branch line is, to a degree, desirable.

To thoughtlessly precipitate ourselves into any expenditure, no matter how slight, would be foolish and we must fully realise what we would require in the way of a line, or of traffic. To quote from a Railway Preservation Society publication:

“The first criterion in considering [the] choice of [a] branch line is the necessity of attracting a high level of passengers ...

There are two main classifications [of branch].

- (i) The ‘day trip’ line where the main bulk of our passengers would be people looking for a day out which is different ...
- (ii) The ‘holiday district’ line where the area is a well-known holiday area and annual visitors can

be counted by the hundred thousand. In this area the line would not only be an attraction in itself, but would give a service to persons moving about the area."

Certainly it is obvious from this that a line which serves a holiday district stands a much better chance of success than a "day trip" line, especially here in Northern Ireland where distances are short enough to make any line a "day trip" line.

Let me, however, quote some more good solid sense from the Railway Preservation Society:

"We deliberately concentrate on preserving rolling stock before selecting a line for preservation ...

It is our considered opinion that if we did concentrate our first efforts on acquiring a line, the opportunity of preserving many unique items would be lost ...

The first step, therefore, is the opening of a temporary depot, preferably on a section of private siding which we can be sure of using for some time, and which is secure from vandalism. When a suitable depot is opened the collection of engines, carriages, wagons, etc., is started ...

At the same time as these collections are being formed, technical investigations are carried out to decide on the most suitable line for preservation."

Now let us take stock of the Society as it stands at the time of writing. We are the proud possessors of two engines, the Guinness, which cannot work "main-line", and a J15 0-6-0 mixed traffic locomotive. We have on hire an S class 4-4-0 express locomotive, not at present in working order. With this stock we could not hope to open a siding, let alone a branch line, so we must have more engines. This may seem to argue, "Engines need branch lines and branch lines need engines", a variation on "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?". Nevertheless, before we can even hope to run long-distance outings, we shall have to seriously consider acquiring more locomotives. Very few English societies have so few, and we have rested on our laurels for too long after our initial successes.

True, we possess no coaches, but some have been "marked down" for us, and as to our wagon stock we are as well equipped as we can be at the moment.

We have, at present, a site which when I last saw it a couple of weeks ago was neither vandal-proof or even weather-proof. These are faults which can be, and indeed are being remedied quite easily. But when they have been, and we are installed in Whitehead, what then? Are we going to give little Johnny rides up and down the site behind a puff-puff? Heaven forbid! If that is what is the intention I can see a large number of members descending, in the style of the 1920s, at dead of night on the site to tear up and remove the trackwork.

Whitehead is not the best site we might have had, but, provided it is only a temporary site for the next two years or thereabouts, it should prove satisfactory. What we should be doing, or rather, what our Committee should be doing, is:

- 1) Acquiring more engines; followed by more stock.
- 2) Negotiating for the ultimate acquisition of a branch line.

For item (2) they will need the assent of a General Meeting. Let us hope they are not laggardly in calling one.

I have set out here what I consider to be logical and carefully reasoned arguments for the betterment of the Society. To those who might cry "too ambitious", let me remind them of the words used by one of our clerical members, which I think crystallised the debate on Whitehead into a vote. "He who hesitates is lost."

We have hesitated long enough.

Yours, etc.,

Sullivan Boomer

Dear Sir,

When I joined the Society in 1964 I was of the opinion that the Society's aim was to get loco 171 - one of the finest Irish steam locomotives - out on to the road. I realise there is a certain amount of difficulty in getting her into shops, but at present the Society seems more bent on the preservation of railway architecture - surely there is plenty of that in Ireland, and the Ancient Monuments Commission of the Ministry of Finance are preserving Moira station anyway.

The Society cannot exist without railtours; they are the only activity in which all members can share.

From my practical experience in the building trade, I would say that the amount of money which will have to be spent on Whitehead shed will exceed £1,000 - would we not be better to concentrate on our engines first? - it is they which make the Society - and only when they are in first class order should any large sums be spent on buildings - I do not say track, which is very necessary; but the engines have lain out of doors for many years without suffering any external harm - surely another couple of years won't hurt them.

I hope the Society will take warning from the present financial trend in amateur railway companies in Britain before embarking on over-ambitious undertakings.

Hoping that Craig Robb can maintain the present high standard of railtours, which I think are unequalled in any part of the British Isles.

Yours, etc.,

K. Clendinning