

FIVE FOOT
THREE



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FIVE FOOT THREE

No.17

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Editor: Charles P. Friel

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

Front Cover: No.4 takes the first "Portrush Flyer" of 1974 past Auld's Bridge, just south of Mossley, on 27th July 1974. On the engine are Billy Steenson and Willie Graham. (C.P. Friel)



1975 PROGRAMME

WE ARE GOING PLACES IN 1975 - ARE YOU COMING?

The dates of our tours in 1975 are, as yet, only provisional but we give them to you now so that you may plan and prepare so as to make the most of the Irish Steam Year.

5th April

One-day tour on Northern Ireland Railways.

31st May & 1st June

Two-day, two-engine tour. Proposed route: Dublin - Attymon Jct - Loughrea - Athenry - Claremorris - Sligo (overnight) - Claremorris - Athlone - Dublin. All the usual tour facilities. Yes, it's the Burma Road at last!

19th July, 2nd, 16th & 30th August The 1975 Portrush Flyer season with No.4 throughout.

4th October

Further one-day trip - not yet finalised.

Full circulars, booking forms, etc., will be available in good time, of course, for all these trips. Reduced fares for members.

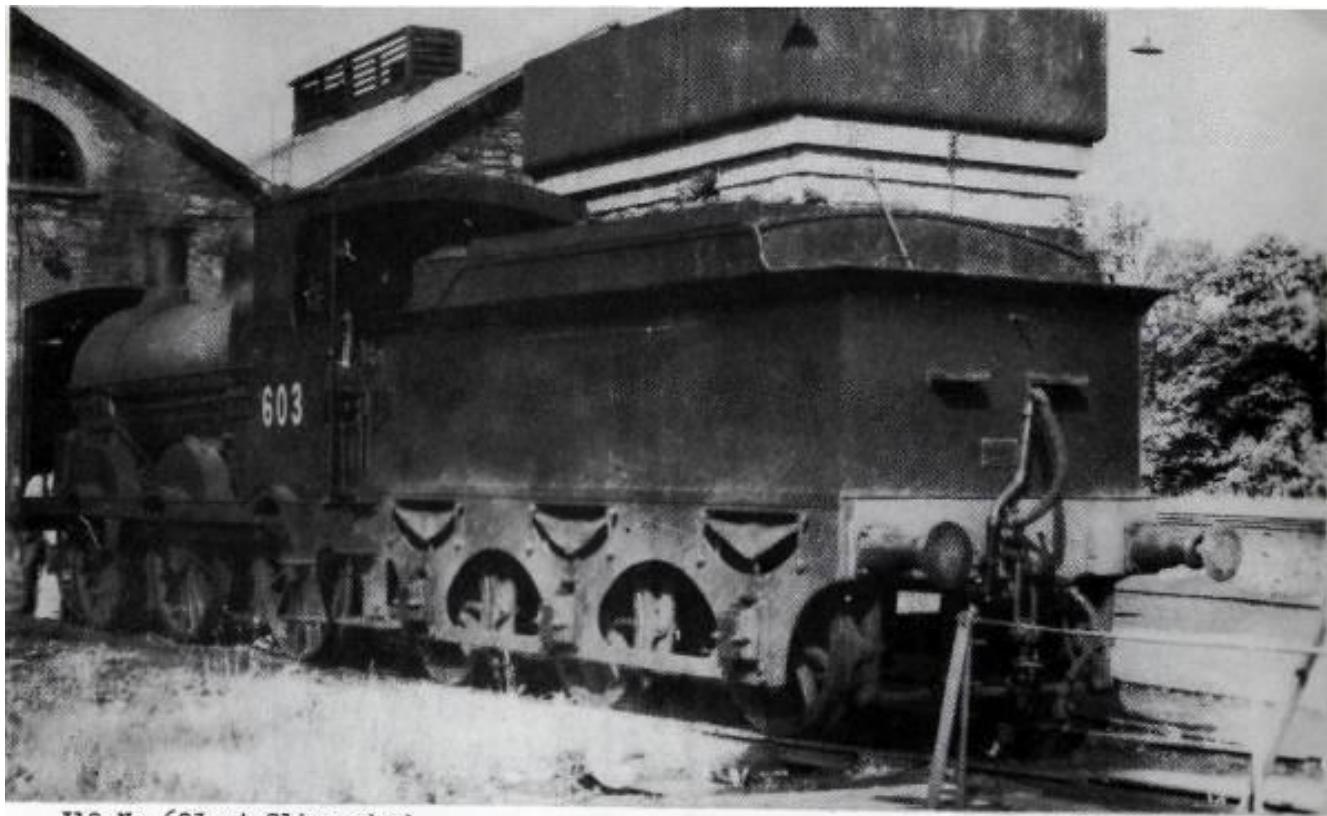
EDITORIAL

Our Society was formed relatively late in the rush of such societies in the British Isles in the early and mid-sixties. And we were formed fairly late on in the demise of Irish steam, too. After 1964, only the Mogul tanks were left operating in any numbers or in anything like decent order. It is a sobering thought, and not over-stating the case, to say that if we had been founded only a year later, neither No.186 or the Guinness, nor even No.171, would have been saved for future use.

During the Society's first cautious years, steam continued in use in the North though very much a pale

shadow of the palmier days of the early sixties, and it was only the securing of the spoil contract that kept the Jeeps running and maintained until 1970. The spoil contract was beneficial to the Society, for without it the workshop facilities of York Road would have been unable to work on No.186 or the Guinness, two engines which in their own way kept the hopes of a more prosperous tomorrow firmly in the mind of the average enthusiast.

Without the spoil contract it is doubtful if No.4 would have been secured, for in those penniless days we would not have been able to buy either the engine or the vast quantity of spares we were able to purchase in later years. The same contract also kept No.27 in service as York Road pilot, the only non-standard loco of NIR, until she was purchased on withdrawal by Roy Grayson.



J19 No 603 at Sligo shed
Photo - S C Nash

In fact, of our seven locos at present only one has been purchased outright (No.4); the others have been donations or held on long-term lease.

Despite the rather haphazard way in which our collection came together, it does form a reasonable representation of Irish steam in terms of type, age, or company of origin. Of the larger companies only the Midland (MGWR) is not represented. While No.171 is a worthy representative of the Irish 4-4-0 and all that means in terms of grace, speed and character, No.186 symbolises the numerous hard-working classes of 0-6-0 which were the back-bone of our lines, while No.4 is the ultimate in a 'modern', efficient and well-liked mixed traffic tank engine, capable of hard slogging and fast running. The small batch of Irish industrial shunters find embodiment in the colourful Guinness, an unpretentious engine now a firm favourite with visitors to the Gala, while the minor lines of this Island find their representative in No.27, a Beyer Peacock like so many Irish engines but at the same time having its own claim to fame.

The Society was all of eight years in existence before a single coach was preserved. It was almost miraculous that a 65-year-old, twelve-wheeled, clerestoried gas-lit coach should still be in service by

that time. By all the laws, 861 should have disappeared years earlier and we should be eternally grateful that she survived on the Inchicore works train long enough for us to be able to save her. In 1972, we also acquired the Great Northern Directors' Saloon, another vehicle which could so easily not have survived after six years of idleness.

When we talk today of our first ten years, we think of the enormous difficulties we have faced, the crises we have surmounted and the good luck we have had. Compared with many of our cross-channel fellows, we have a small scattered membership and very little money to spend. Most things we undertake involve an uphill struggle. But consider the fact that those who founded the Society never foresaw us being able to keep more than one loco running. In those days, the thought of running eight main line trains in summer, including an intensive Flyer season, was an impossible and unattainable dream.

NEWS FROM COMMITTEE

J. A. Friel

The year's events - detailed elsewhere by other contributors - passed off very successfully. The actual number of events in which our engines are used is now quite staggering. The Committee's concern, in the coming years, will be to maintain this level of activity. One essential element in doing this is that more members must come forward to take on active roles in the running of the Society. Just how we go about encouraging more members to do this puzzles the Committee at the moment.

The Sunday Train Rides, thanks in part to the introduction of afternoon teas in the Diner, did very much better than last year. However, the "Portrush Flyer" has now firmly established itself as our major event, both in terms of enjoyment and of Society income. No.171's failure to reach Derry on 17th August prompted the decision to run the "Tenth Anniversary" railtour to the same destination, again with No.171, on 26th October. No.171's performance on that occasion was more in keeping with the tradition of the S Class and her run is covered elsewhere in this issue.

On Sunday 29th September, steam, in the form of No.4 and No.186, reached Silvermines, five years later than originally planned. No.186 is now stored in Sallins goods shed again. The shed is now used as a store by Westinghouse and we are grateful to them for co-operation in allowing our continued use of the shed.

Six second-hand steel roof trusses have been purchased for £150 for use on our loco shed extension at Whitehead. Although the trusses will have to be rebuilt, they are nonetheless quite a bargain. At present, a sub-committee is investigating what is involved in putting on the roof. The decision on whether or not to proceed this winter will depend on what other major expenses we are faced with.

Another sub-committee is, at present, examining coaches for possible preservation. With the arrival of new trains on Northern Ireland Railways, the so-called 'steam bogies' will probably become redundant. With a view to storing any new acquisitions, there is a track-laying drive at Whitehead at present. Preparatory earthworks have already been carried out.

Towards the end of the summer, the Society's Ferguson tractor broke a connecting rod and is now out of action. Over the years in our ownership, the tractor has been very useful, especially in trackwork and coaling. We are now looking for another larger tractor (with front loader of course). Can anyone help?

In early September, yet another break-in occurred at Whitehead. Windows in the Diner were broken and food was scattered about. The culprits were actually caught while driving away in a stolen car! The police are bringing charges and the Society has lodged a claim for damages.

Approved expenditure:	Roof trusses	£150
	Christmas cards	£40
	Colour postcards	£90

LOCOMOTIVE REPORT**P.A. Scott**

The first locomotive operation of the year was a test run on the Larne line for No.186 and No.171. No.186 worked Whitehead-Belfast-Whitehead, and No171 Whitehead-Larne Harbour-Whitehead, the purpose being to run in the left big end and right coupling rod bearings of No.186 and to check the valve setting and vacuum brake on No.171. Unexpectedly, No.186's right-hand trailing tender bearing ran badly hot and a wagon pad was substituted at York Road for the cotton waste which was assumed to be at fault. The remainder of the bearings were given pads subsequently.

No.171 was, as usual, the subject of unfavourable comments from the engine crew. On this occasion, stiffness and bad steaming were reported. However, the handbrake in 861 was found to have been left on between Whitehead and the Harbour, which adequately explained the former.

The engineering work on No.4 was completed by the end of May and the engine was worked light to Larne Harbour and back to run in and check the new valve rings and coupling rod bearings.

For the Steam Gala on 26th June, the engines used were No.171, No.4 and No.186, shunting being carried out by the diesel engine No.23. The Sunday trains were worked from the next day through to 15th September usually by the Guinness engine but on occasion by No.186 and No.171 whenever it was necessary to run these engines for test purposes.

The "Portrush Flyer" ran on Saturdays 20th July and 3rd, 17th and 31st August. For these trains the engine normally rostered was No.4 with No.171 as standby. On 17th August it was planned to work the train with No.171 and also to extend to Londonderry in order to turn the engine.

The arrangements for shunting and crewing were somewhat altered from the previous season, partly due to the presence of the diesel shunter. For any passenger working on the main line it is now the accepted practice to shunt the stock on the previous evening, thus permitting the steam engine to come off shed much later. Similarly, the procedure upon return to Whitehead is for the engine to propel the train into the excursion platform and to proceed to the shed, the diesel carrying out the shunting immediately or on the following day. On Sundays when train rides were in operation the diesel also permitted the Guinness engine to run round her train. This was necessary because it was thought wiser to stable the engine in the new shed for security reasons, thus leaving her on the wrong side of the coaches.

For working the "Portrush Flyer", a steam raiser was rostered for the train engine and also for the standby engine. Two Society enginemen were rostered to prepare the engine and drop the fire in the evening, and also to travel with the train to Portrush to assist and carry out any minor repairs and adjustments required. When possible, separate crews were rostered for the diesel and for the train rides engine on Sundays, but on occasions one crew had to man both engines during the holiday period.

It was also arranged that two enginemen and assistants were available on Sunday to inspect the "Portrush Flyer" engine of the previous day and to carry out routine cleaning of the smokebox, etc. Coaling of the engine was normally carried out by tractor during the intervening weekend.

During the summer, No.4 worked uneventfully, the chief concern being the appearance of a number of leaks in the tanks and a tendency for the big ends to carry more than a normal running heat. The leaks were repaired by welding or patching as appropriate and, judging by the state of the plates, are the forerunner of many more. The felt pad was replaced in the right big end, and the two compared on the next run; little difference was apparent, but later in the year the right big end appeared to be running cooler.

On 17th August, the only serious trouble of the summer occurred with the failure of No.171 while

working the "Portrush Flyer". The run started well with similar times recorded between Whitehead and Belfast as with No.4, and the eight bogie train was started out of Belfast with promising ease. By Monkstown, however, the fire had become badly clinkered and from there on the engine was not steaming.

Once pressure had fallen much below 100 lbs there was difficulty not only in moving the eight coaches, but also in keeping the brake off, the latter being more pronounced than would be the case with an NCC engine because the vacuum also works the brakes on the engine and tender. This problem was not helped by a check at Kingsbog Junction so that the signalman could warn of signals disconnected at Ballymartin gates.

The easy road from Kingsbog to Antrim was covered at a discouraging 40-45 mph, and Ballymena was eventually reached half an hour late. A stop of 25 minutes here to cross the 10:55 ex Portrush enabled steam to be raised and some attempt made to break the clinker, but the nature of this was that it had run between the bars and was impossible to move no matter how vigorously the dart was applied. The train again started well out of Ballymena, but by Glarryford pressure had fallen so badly that it was impossible to lift the brake after a partial application and the train came to a stand at post 42 $\frac{3}{4}$.

A quick consultation with the engineman in charge, Frank Dunlop, decided that it would be better to send for the standby engine rather than struggle on to turn No.171 at Londonderry since time was so short, and then face the same problem on the Up working. Instructions were accordingly phoned from Dunloy and the standby arrangements put into operation.

Upon arrival at Portrush, the engine crew were transferred to Whitehead by car. The crew on this occasion were driver Robert Graham and fireman Willie Graham, both of whom must be commended not only for working so hard to make No.171 steam but for treating their ordeal philosophically. In compensation, they had an excellent run with No.4 on the Up working that evening.

The incident raises the question why No.171 should perform so badly on the same coal as used perfectly well by the other engines, and whether this was a fault of the engine itself, or the heavy train or the method of firing. Indeed, at first sight, it would appear to be an accurate comparison between No.171 and No.4, since the load and other conditions were similar.

However, we have discovered over the past years that the coal with which we are supplied is not of consistent quality and the clinker formed on this occasion was undoubtedly the worst we have ever encountered. The coal is delivered in ten-ton loads to Whitehead, and it has been established that nearly the whole of one such consignment was loaded onto No.171. The consignment in question was delivered during the autumn of 1973, and was bought as insurance against possible future supply difficulties resulting from the miners' industrial action at that time. Although impossible to be definite at this late date, the suppliers are fairly sure that this load was part of a shipment which did not come from their regular collieries.

It should be explained that the coal we are using is the same as that supplied for ordinary domestic use and is the only sort now imported which approaches railway requirements. It is referred to as Group C and normal usage does not demand consistent quality, so that this varies considerably. However, the worst clinker formed is normally not troublesome with a moderate train on a run of less than 100 miles.

We are at present in negotiation with the coal suppliers with the intention of either securing a better grade of coal or at least of keeping a better check on the Group C. The latter may involve buying greater bulk when a consignment known to be of better quality has been imported.

Following No.171's failure, I have been criticised for what has been described as loading the engine beyond its capabilities. I do not agree that this was the case, and would set out my reasons as follows.

First, I do not intend to advance any theories concerning GN 4-4-0s vis-à-vis NCC 4-4-0s and 2-6-4Ts;

I do not possess sufficient information myself and will leave the timers and others who claim to understand locomotive performance to argue about this. The engine has already worked seven coaches from Belfast to Portrush in 1969, while suffering from the mechanical faults which beset her at that period, and should therefore be capable of taking additional load now that these problems have been corrected. Had, for example, the brake and gland problems not been sorted out in the interim, there would have been no case for attempting a heavy train.

Second, although there have been recent reports of the engine steaming badly, there have been as many of her steaming well. In each case when bad steaming was reported there was some explaining circumstance, for example lack of cleaning the fire or the method of firing adopted.

Third, I feel that the engine has been the subject of much unjustified criticism, both on the part of railwaymen and railway enthusiasts; unjustified because it arose from prejudice or referred to mechanical failings which were not inherent in the locomotive itself and have since been corrected.

I therefore decided to try a heavy train in the hope that the engine would prove itself.

Unfortunately, my reckoning did not include a freak load of bad coal. Nevertheless, I feel that the truth of my assertions regarding the engine's capabilities was largely borne out, witness the performance while the fire was still clean and the way in which the loop line was negotiated even with pressure seriously reduced. However, such comments are of little relevance when a train arrives two hours late due to locomotive failure, and as regards redeeming No.171's bad name things were undoubtedly very much worse by the end of the day.

Assuming that the overriding reason for the failure was the bad coal, it was decided that the best course of action would be to run the engine again as soon as possible. The "Tenth Anniversary" railtour had already been planned to run to Dublin at the end of October. This was reorganised to Londonderry on 26th October, both to keep the engine nearer Whitehead and to give the NCC enginemen a chance to prove both the locomotive and their handling of it - given, on this occasion, coal of reasonable quality. To accommodate the number of bookings, four coaches were required, but this was increased to five since it was felt that four would be too light a load to prove anything.

The run began cautiously but performance improved throughout the day; the five miles between posts 55 and 60 were covered in 5 minutes 4 seconds and on the Up working Ballyboylan bank and the Antrim-Kingsbog section were negotiated with more than confidence. Once again I will leave the timing enthusiasts to make comparisons and discuss how good a run this actually was; for my own part I was pleased to find no shortage of steam even with a fair amount of clinker and an excellent response to being 'thrashed'. The only problems which arose during the day were a broken heating connection at the engine and a tendency for the left big end to carry heat. The oil feed to the big end was increased and it did not give too much trouble - ironically it appeared to cool down more whenever the engine was worked harder.

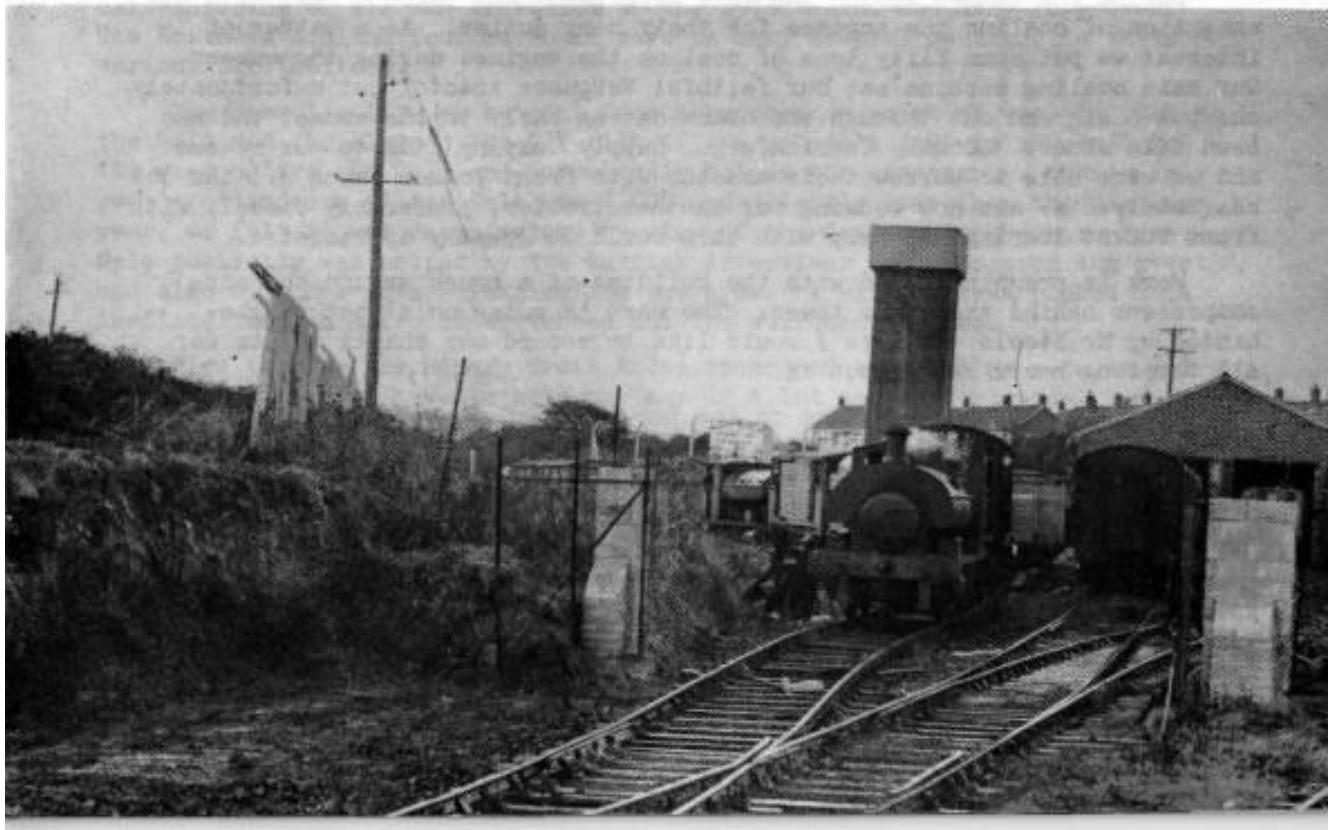
The remaining major locomotive operation of the summer was occasioned by the "Silvermines" railtour on 28th and 29th September. This required locos No.4 and No.186 to work to Limerick. No.186 was despatched to Sallins on the Monday before the tour and it is hoped that she can be shedded there for the next twelve months. No.4 took the empty stock to Dublin on Wednesday 25th, from where she worked the tour train on the Cork main line and subsequently back to Belfast on Sunday evening. No.186 was to work the train from Limerick Junction to Clonmel and back and on the Sunday pilot No.4 from Limerick to Silvermines before working part of the train between Birdhill and Ballybroughy.

Coal was sent by rail to Connolly and to Limerick; 7 tons to Connolly for No.4 and 7 tons to Limerick for No.4 and No.186. The quantities were based on coal consumption figures of 50 miles per ton for both engines, established over the past two years. Higher figures are of course allowed for light engine working (though less markedly in the case of No.186), and additional coal is allowed for lighting up

and on shed.

At Limerick a forklift was available for loading the coal, but at Connolly no such facility exists and No.4's high bunker has caused problems in the past. To expedite matters, a simple jib crane was constructed to be mounted on the bunker.

PHOTO BELOW : No BG3 "Guinness" clears the coaching siding before relaying - the rake includes "R H Smyth" on its way to the shed. On the extreme left note the excavated bank on the route of No 1 Carriage Siding. The derailed Guinness Van can be seen to the right of BG3.



The transfer of half a ton of coal from No.186 to No.4 at Ballybrophy was unnecessary and left us with too much at Connolly to be accommodated on No.4 that evening. The problem was solved by stacking the excess bags round the framing at the front of the engine and transferring them to the van in 861 at the passenger platform.

None of the tour demanded any outstanding locomotive work but, as we have almost come to expect, No.4's performance was well above average. The start out of Dublin on Sunday evening was particularly outstanding.

No.186 worked in her usual dependable manner until the double-headed working on Sunday morning when she had to be taken off the train due to the overheating of a tender axlebox bearing. Trouble had first been encountered during the light engine working from Sallins to Limerick Junction, when it was discovered that all of the tender oiling pads had twisted over onto their sides, thus bringing the spring frames into contact with the journals. The reason for this was that the pads were designed for a wagon axlebox which is about one inch narrower. A means whereby the pads could be kept upright was looked for without success at the Junction, and eventually the pads were removed altogether and cotton

waste substituted.

The fault with the type of waste available was that it tended to become wedged between the journal and the bearing and also seemed to lose its lubricating quality after a period of running. On this occasion, the hot box drew attention to itself by squealing, and the train was stopped before any damage was done. It was, however, felt that it would be best to let the engine proceed light to Sallins at reduced speed so that the boxes could be watched, rather than risk more serious trouble by continuing to run to passenger timings.

To conclude this report, the following is an outline of the more important maintenance work which should be undertaken over the winter:

- No.23 Adjust drive chains and repair sand gear.
- No.4 Examine and repair oil pipes.
- No.186 Fit tender axlebox pads.
- No.171 Repair tender stretchers, refit left big end, and check weighing.
- No.3BG Minor boiler repairs including replacement of several tubes and hydraulic test. Repair brake gear.

In addition, the general overhaul of No.3 "R.H. Smyth" to put her into service may be undertaken if other work permits. This should be a fairly straightforward and inexpensive job. It includes reassembly of boiler fittings, retubing and hydraulic testing, repairs to sheet metal work of tank, bunker and running plate, and repainting.

CARRIAGE NOTES

K. Pullin

During the running season our efforts are directed mostly towards routine maintenance such as axleboxes, topping up batteries and so on, and to repair work such as replacing broken windows, fixing loose door handles and luggage racks and the like.

We had no less than nine windows broken, eight of them as a result of vandalism, an expensive waste of time and money we could well have done without.

The lighting circuits gave us some interesting problems at times. For example, the Diner's supply voltage rose from the nominal 24 volts to 62 and blew several bulbs before we could switch everything off. This resulted from a high resistance in the battery connection, as the dynamo has no voltage regulation and depends on the battery charging load to keep things in check.

The weather permitted only a little external painting but we eventually got the open Bredin into RPSI maroon on both sides and lined one side partially in time for the "Silvermines" tour, so giving some idea of how the train will look when all the coaches are painted. Bredin 1335 has reached the undercoat stage but will have to wait until spring and fine weather before the process goes any further.

That brings us to the coming winter. Following the excellent response to the Coach Appeal, we are looking forward to acquiring several new coaches. Most of the ex-NIR vehicles we hope to acquire are in good running order but a fair bit of work will be required in replacing the odd window, light or luggage rack and, of course, the inevitable repairs to the smallest compartments and their equipment.

SITE NEWS

P. Newell

During the summer season the Site Department has taken a rest, with the exception of coaling the engines for their many duties. As a matter of interest, we put some fifty tons of coal on the engines during the summer. Our main coaling machine was our faithful Ferguson tractor, but unfortunately she

put a big end out through the crank casing early in the summer and has been idle since. Luckily Carrickfergus Supply Company came to our rescue and we were able to borrow their tractor with front end loader which did the job adequately. We are now looking for another tractor, preferably diesel, with front bucket loading, and help with this would be greatly appreciated.

Work is pressing ahead with the building of a house around our air-compressor behind the water tower. The work is going on almost single-handed by Mr Steele and here I would like to record our thanks to him for all the long hours he has put in.

Progress has now been made on the provision of a roof for the new shed, with the acquisition of a complete set of roof trusses from an old Belfast Harbour shed. We will have to alter the trusses slightly but if all goes well we could well have a new roof by next summer.

Those members who were interested enough to come down and see the progress of the new carriage sidings will have observed that the siding was too sharp to take bogie coaches - well, this road has now been broken at its tightest part and straightened. This siding, to be known as No.2 Carriage Siding, will now hold three coaches and a wagon.

The site of the siding for the 'rubbish rake' has now been cleared by a JCB excavator which was very generously made available by Arthur Wickham. In fact, this machine has paved the way for a big new siding which when completed will hold seven coaches, which should be a great boon in making up a Flyer train by simply adding the front two bogies.

However, I should here point out that because of the chronic shortage of manpower we are having to shelve important work on the engines in order to lay these sidings and complete the trackwork once and for all. Therefore, I would make a final appeal to you to come down one or two Saturdays this winter and give us a hand.

PUBLICITY REPORT

R. Morton

The continued success of our main line steam trains has made the job of publicising our events all the easier - the "Portrush Flyer" is now beginning to enjoy just a little of the immense popularity in the general public's mind hitherto enjoyed by such glamorous engines as 4472 or the Welsh narrow gauge lines.

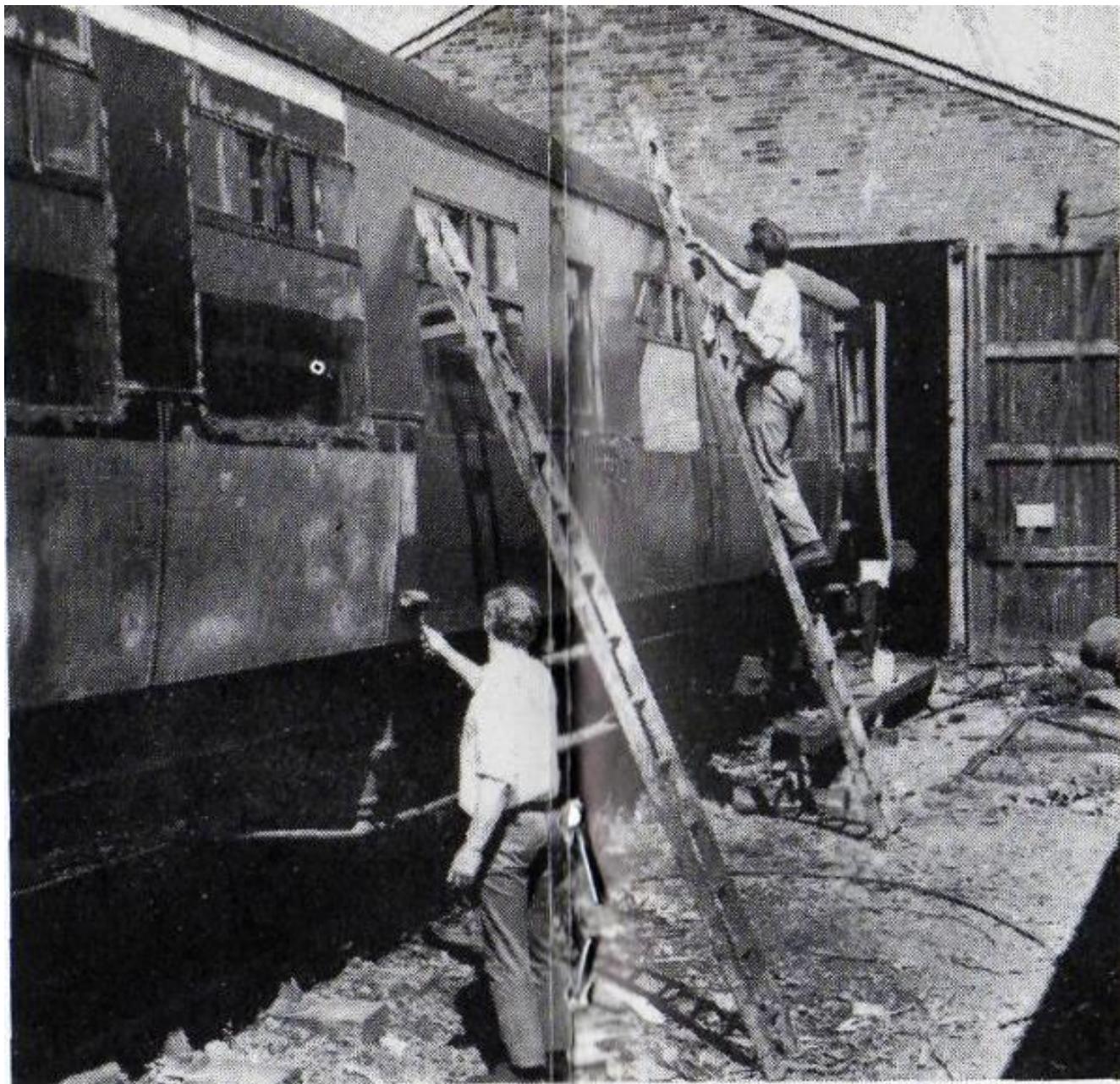
It has been rewarding and satisfying to be able to plug the Society's activities in the press. And the amount of coverage we received is surely an indication of the respect we have achieved.

An interview on BBC Northern Ireland radio saw the Society off to a good start at Easter. The "Portrush Flyer" publicity, which swung into top gear after the "King Fergus" trip, was given a great boost by the inclusion of the shapely Miss Portrush, Maureen Kerr, in the publicity pictures, along with the engines, even if the photo session did pose some new problems for the Editor.

NIR gave valuable help in the printing of the Flyer Brochure and a cutback in newspaper advertising was made up for by a comprehensive circularising of all who travelled on the 1973 trains, and many re-booked. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board gave us many helpful mentions in their various publications.

The Schools' Day was helpful from a propaganda point of view in pushing the Gala and the Flyer. The UTV film of the Schools' Day was screened in the week before the Gala and undoubtedly helped the attendance. While this year's attendance at the Gala was 4,000, and slightly less than the previous year, we felt it was satisfactory in view of the deplorable weather. Pre-Gala publicity was helped by the Carrick Advertiser who sponsored the event, and also by a new idea - leafleting the area. A willing team pushed Gala leaflets through doors in Whitehead and the surrounding area.

Bids to have the Sunday Train Rides sponsored met with no success and it is clear we will have to have our say in a lot sooner next year. Nevertheless, newspaper publicity and direction boards pushed attendances up to unprecedented levels - the inclusion of afternoon teas was an undoubted winner.



Ken Pullin, left, and Bob Edwards repainting Bredin Open 1333 in RPSI maroon livery. (C.P. Friel)

The "Portrush Flyer" is a dream come true for publicity men - children genuinely fascinated at the sight of No.4 made perfect material for press photographers, and the first Flyer received most satisfactory coverage in the press - Inspector Billy Steenson and Fireman Willie Graham dominating the Belfast Telegraph that evening, and again on the Monday morning they graced the centre pages of the News Letter. We gained more publicity at the end of the season when several VIPs travelled on the last train - but to some papers this was the final Flyer of all!

The "Silvermines" tour presented some problems as many of the Éire papers seemed not to realise exactly what the tour was about - the point that this wasn't the final steam in Ireland and that the

engines and coaches are privately owned seemed far beyond the comprehension of many. It was disappointing that the national press carried no coverage at all, but on the other hand the crowd at the platform at Clonmel proved that the message had got through there.

Although there is some disquiet about having many local people turning up at stations, it was felt that having the chance to sell badges and souvenirs to local youngsters is a valuable one and probably outweighs the inconvenience undoubtedly caused to participants. But the matter is to be looked at again. Unfortunately, some of our events have not received the publicity that we would like to see in the railway magazines. I must say that our main attention has been to the local press in Northern Ireland as it seems that the majority of our events depend on the support of Ulster people.

The publicity and publications have co-operated in a number of ventures this year. The Steam Brochure for the Gala and Flyer is one such item and this time around we asked Carnaghan, who specialise in these things, to take on the job of getting advertisements for this year's edition. They also saw to the printing of the brochure with our text and pictures.

Another joint effort was what has been aptly termed our propaganda newspaper "Steaming On" - directed at obtaining financial and other help from industry. After an initial burst - which brought in over £300 - a renewed effort is to be made with the circulation of the Belfast Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Now it's down to the annual task of preparing details of the Society for the various English booklets which carry a summary of enthusiast activities.

FUND-RAISING NEWS

W.S. Boomer

As another year draws to its close it may be useful to look back on what has been achieved before starting to plan for next year.

Back in January last we were retubing two engines and as you might expect money was not plentiful. On a shoestring budget, the Sales Department gambled for high stakes and we seem to have won through. The first breakthrough came from the Severn Valley Railway, who invited us to participate in a joint ARPS (Association of Railway Preservation Societies) venture with Platignum, and contribute four drawings for a colouring book. This we did, undertaking to sell 1,200 copies, of which we still have quite a few left. At the same time, we committed several hundred pounds to the purchase of a couple of thousand lapel badges, including a new one of No.3BG "Guinness". Finally, we spent another few hundred (then non-existent) pounds on "Portrush Flyer" pennants, sat back and hoped for the best.

Now, with the year concluded, our turnover has exceeded £2,000, an all-time record, giving us a total profit on the year of about £1,000 which includes draws and other fundraising ventures. We have had an extremely successful season this year, and next year we hope to do equally well if not better, as well as introduce some more sales lines and hold our prices down.

In closing, I would like to thank my colleagues on the sales team who have, as in previous years, given unstintingly of their time and effort, even during Flyers and railtours when everyone else was enjoying the run, timing or taking photographs. To mention names is not my practice but I feel I should mention especially David Webb and John Shaw, who virtually ran our Shane's Castle stall this summer on their own - their effort was much appreciated and it is only a pity that more members were not so unselfish in tearing themselves away from their other pastimes to help out. My best thanks, of course, are returned to Lord O'Neill who kindly allowed the project to proceed. To Derek, Roy, Alva, Thomas and the others - thank you all for your help. It was much appreciated.

Let's hope that next year will be even better!

Whitehead seems to have had an unending series of events this year, starting with the Bring and Buy Sale and Auction in March, and continuing with two Open Days - the Schools' Day and the Gala - and the Sunday Train Rides programme. Between each of these events there was usually a deal of shunting to be done as each event had its own requirements of engines and train, shops and diner.

The Schools' Day on 12th June was very much aimed at the lower age group but the Ulster Workers' Strike about this time was wreaking havoc with school timetables and examination courses and this led to many last-minute cancellations. However, the parties that finally came had an added bonus in watching and taking part in the Ulster Television filming of the event. Fortunately for us, some of this film was screened just before our Gala a fortnight later.

Preparations for the Gala began in mid-winter with a few informal meetings - and miles of biro ink later, at one o'clock on 27th June our Gala got under way with the presentation of William Watson etched mirrors to Messrs Waring and Humphreys of Northern Ireland Railways. The loco on the mirrors was 101, one of NIR's big Enterprise diesel-electrics. The mayor of Carrickfergus was also present, and to him we presented a copy of member R.M. Arnold's "NCC Saga" as a memento of the occasion. The weather began bright and clear but rain clouds soon gathered and for most of the afternoon it was either raining or just about to. I don't think I've ever seen so many humans packed into a tent the size of our own - it must have elastic walls. A well-known parachute team made a spectacular jump mid-way through the event.

The Carrickfergus Amateur Band, overcoming an acute seating problem, provided a pleasant musical background to the activities in which the Model Engineers and RUC also took a leading part, the former providing miniature train rides. Graham Stanley also braved isolation in the Municipal Pavilion to put on a magnificent slide/film show to an appreciative audience.

Our own train was packed throughout the day and was alternatively worked by No.4, No.171 and No.186, hauling 1333 and 861.

No Gala would be a gala without having its hitches - this year the public address system arrived late, leaving Johnny Glendinning having to produce miracles with poles and speakers. There were three shortcomings, however - the seating and tentage have already been mentioned and our few money-spinning stalls produced only £6 between them - it is hoped to change this situation radically next year.

In the end about £300 was raised and in the end the weather cleared and the day ended on a bright, cheerful and successful note.

Next day, summer arrived at Whitehead with the onset of another Sunday Train Rides season, but this year with an innovation in the use of the Diner to provide afternoon teas. Several co-operative wives, mothers and other relations provided home-made scones and biscuits and helped man the Diner.

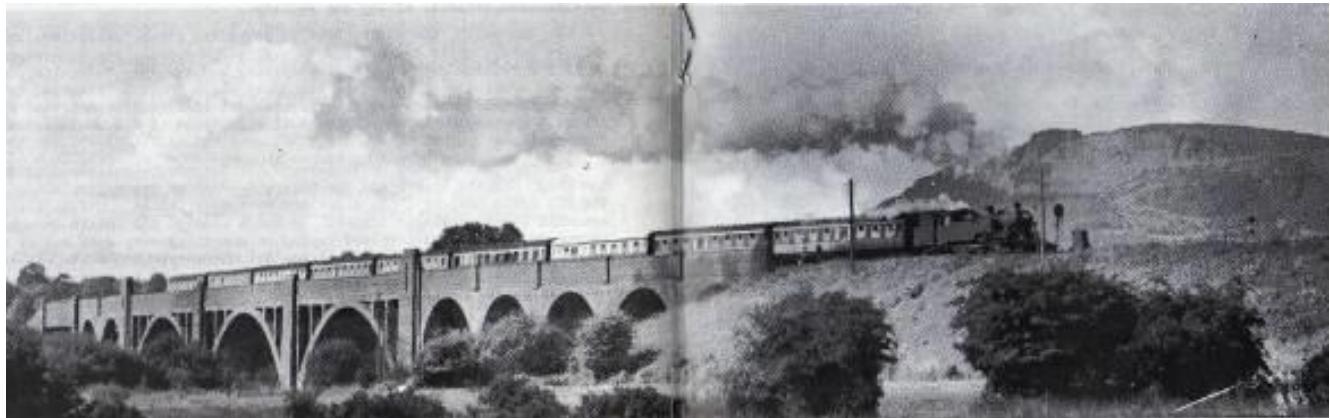
Sometimes things got chaotic but the increased takings this year owe a lot to the Diner and its cheerful staff. The average takings were in the £50 region and we decided to extend the season into the first two Sundays in September, gaining an extra £60 in the process.

It was, altogether, a very busy summer and an experimental one in many ways - the results speak for themselves, I think, with about £700 net being taken on the Site.

Finally, thanks again to everyone, to all who helped and did nearly all the actual donkey-work, and thanks too to our customers, I hope to see you all again in 1975.

more public support for steam trains in the shape of the Flyer. We had no problems in filling eight coaches and Diner on two Flyers, and seven plus Diner on the other two, and one of these would have been loaded to nine vehicles if the engine wasn't No.171. About 2,000 passengers were carried on these four trains. Seventeen complete carriages were pre-booked and the remainder of the patronage came in varying sizes of parties, families and individuals. Somewhere between 25 to 30 per cent were child fares, while 38 members took advantage of the Season Ticket offer.

The organisation went smoothly apart from an initial delay in producing the brochure because the Railway wanted to obtain clearance from their catering contractors for us to operate 552 ourselves. Then NIR paid for the production of the brochure in return for some of our members distributing leaflets advertising the reopening of the Lisburn-Antrim branch. I think it is fair to point out that there is considerable work in organising the Flyers and one is kept busy during the booking period by the post and telephone.



With a feather at the valve and her exhaust steam drifting along the train, No.4 confidently tackles the loop line across Bleach Green Viaduct with second "Portrush Flyer" of 1974. The nine-bogie train is seen here getting under way after a stop at Whiteabbey. The mountain behind is, of course, Cave Hill. (C.P. Friel)

The standard of running was excellent with the exception of No.171's misfortune with a load of bad coal on 17th August. Derry, once again, had to do without a steam train though the engine has since run our "Tenth Anniversary" tour to Derry very successfully. We have, though, decided to run all Flyers in future to Portrush only.

The enthusiast's tours however all showed some recalcitrance in reaching the required number to make any profit. It appears that nowadays 200 is about the maximum we can hope for.

One wonders at the future of such tours, especially with rising costs and limited route availability. Of the local tours, the "King Fergus" and "Tenth Anniversary" trains each had 186 passengers of which over 20% were Juniors. Costs were covered on each of these but without any substantial surplus - the cost of these tours usually includes some £20 or more for paperwork.

The "St. Lawrence" tour, which had to be cancelled due to the general strike, had only 106 bookings one week before running. Except for the fact that No.186 had to be worked south anyway, this tour could not have run. We had hoped to make this more attractive by using No.171 as well. In the event (or non-event) this doesn't seem to have had the desired effect. We were expecting to lose some money on this run, but by including 552 we hoped to recoup some losses. Please note that although it is our policy to require tours to run and cover their costs on fares alone, we had considered this tour a special case.

Then there was the "Silvermines" tour, our highlight of enthusiast tours? Perhaps, but again there

seems to be a downward trend in patronage. We had 206 passengers plus about two dozen casuals for small parts of the tour. These two-day events depend on support from England and this year 80 came. Some of these came purely to cover certain sections of track (and one told me he didn't care whether it was by steam or diesel), others came because some section was particularly attractive to them. One can't help wondering what will happen when we run out of fresh routes. Will they come at all?



Miss Portrush, Maureen Kerr, with No.186 and RPSI crew of Driver Irwin Pryce and Fireman Robin Convery. (C.P. Friel)

On the "Silvermines" - 59 Éire passengers and 67 with Northern Ireland addresses - almost a three-way split of our complement. This kind of tour shows the smallest number of juniors - only a handful in fact. We had 81 non-members (about the same fraction as for the "Tenth Anniversary" run but the other

two tours had only about 11% non-members).

It was a bitter disappointment that two days before the tour CIÉ elected to decide that the Silvermines branch was not passed for carrying passengers in spite of their having run two passenger carrying trains on the line. It seems incredible that such a decision can be made by a progressive modern concern where the tour programme was discussed and approved over six months previously. This, coupled with the perpetual difficulty of obtaining a quotation for a tour on CIÉ metals, makes organisation (and advertising) quite a headache at times!



After the presentation of GN crests at Portrush. Left to right: Hugh Waring, Managing Director of NIR; Michael Henderson; Myles Humphreys, NIR Chairman; Col. Clarke, Mayor of Coleraine; Cllr. McLean, Mayor of Carrickfergus. (C.P. Friel)

Once again the fares on this tour were just sufficient to cover our costs at £2,000. With hotel costs being included in the booking, over £8,000 passed through our hands.

The operation of the tour went smoothly enough. We felt the aftermath of a strike at Connolly when the non-watering of our stock delayed the initial departure of No.4 on the Saturday morning, and thereafter things went well, though No.186 crossed the Cahir viaduct a little too soon in the anxiety not to block the Boat Train at Tipperary. The Sunday started well, but the No.186 ran a hot tender box while piloting No.4 to Silvermines. The leap-frogging had to be dropped as No.4 worked the train forward with No.186 following cautiously light engine behind, gingerly making her way to Sallins. No.4's driver was so enraptured with the smooth, effortless running of his engine that he forgot to stop at Cloughjordan, a small though for some fairly important lapse in a day when No.4 proved more than at ease with the Cork main line, despite the permanent way works. We provided a lineside bus for everyone on the passenger-less Silvermines section - the sight of No.186 and No.4 steadily climbing the continuous 1 in 50 to the mine was a sight to remember, the twin exhausts drifting across the hills as the exhaust beats went into and out of synchronisation on that sunny Sunday morning in September.

It was especially gratifying to have a quick turn round in Connolly, pulling back one of the two hours lost by permanent way work. Has the witch's spell of RPSI tours arriving at Great Victoria Street in the early hours been broken forever?

A word, or rather several words, of thanks must go to all the Northern Ireland Railways and Córas Iompair Éireann personnel who have helped to make our tours successful. Special thanks are due to men like Frank Dunlop, J.C. Pemberton, Paddy Teague, Noel Craig and Alf Keane, to mention just a few of those who are most involved in the actual planning and operation of our tours.

FUTURE THOUGHTS

J.A. Friel

It is true to say that the development of Whitehead as the RPSI base has been haphazard. People who visit the site infrequently always comment on the number of changes since their last visit, but they always give the impression of being mystified as to the ultimate object of so many apparently unfinished schemes.

This article attempts to outline the reasoning behind the Committee's present policy of site development. In the main we aim to provide: (a) safe covered accommodation for all our stock, and (b) enough free track space on which locos can be run for test purposes as well as on Steam Galas, Schools Days, etc.

It was in order to provide covered accommodation for all our locos that the building of the three-road loco shed extension was begun in January 1971. Within six months, roof level (eighteen feet) had been reached and money had run out. However, two roads were laid into the new shed, because although it offers no protection against the weather, the walls are high enough to deter vandals and thieves (previously, any loco left outside had to have all its brass and copper fittings removed).

Now, three years later, there is a possibility that the shed roof will finally materialise with the acquisition of some second-hand steel roof trusses. The span of these is 60 feet and they will have to be rebuilt to a 45 foot span before being lifted into position. A series of wooden rafters will be used as spacers and on these the actual roof of asbestos sheeting will be laid. After this, the erection of proper doors and then the putting in of a concrete floor with drains and tramway-type track set in (we already possess the track) will be the next move. We still have to decide on hinged or sliding doors.

Ideally, of course, we should have a shed to store all our coaches in as well, but the provision of this would cost many thousands of pounds and is beyond our means at present (not that we don't know where we would build such a shed if the opportunity arose). At the moment it is certainly difficult to work on the exterior of the coaches (sealing leaking roofs or painting) in the open. If we had the roof on the new shed, at least we could make one road available for working on one coach at a time under favourable conditions.

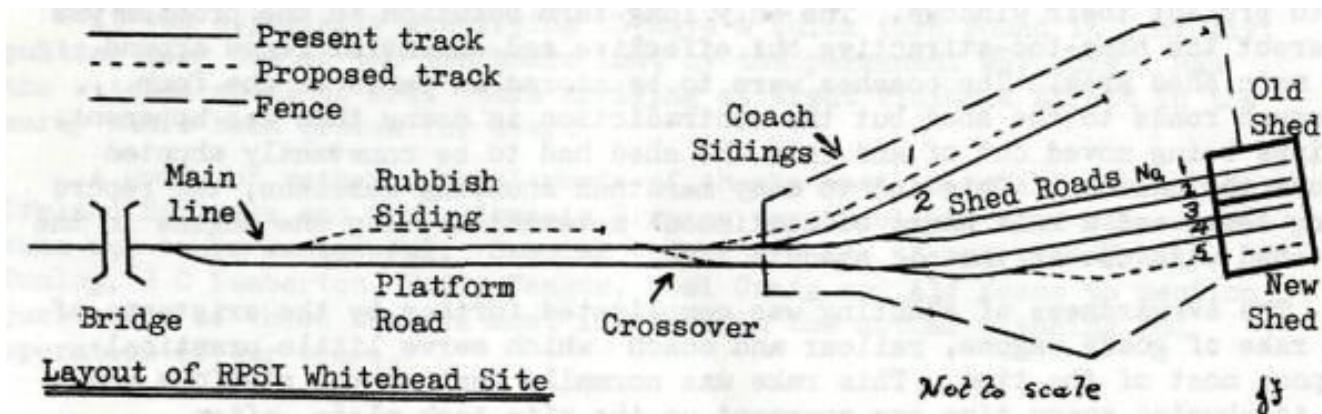
When the arrival of five new coaches (four Bredins and the Diner) became imminent in June 1973, the need to protect these against vandals became a critical problem. The two coaches already at Whitehead were both wooden-bodied vehicles (861 and 50) and they had ugly hardboard sheeting nailed on to protect their windows. The only long-term solution to the problem was to erect the none-too-attractive but effective and essential fence around the main shed area. The coaches were to be stored in pairs on the four approach roads to the shed but the contradiction in doing this was apparent. Engines being moved out of and into the shed had to be constantly shunted around the coaches. This led to many marathon shunting sessions, the record being seven and a half hours of continuous movement to swap one engine in the new shed with one in the old shed.

The awkwardness of shunting was complicated further by the existence of the rake of goods wagons, railcar and coach which serve little practical purpose most of the time. This rake was normally kept at the platform and had to be shunted every time any movement on the site took place, often involving breaking this rake (which included such nightmare vehicles to shunt as the big GN tender with no front coupling or buffers and an open wagon with a broken back and no buffers at one end). Perhaps readers will understand how the slightly irrelevant but heartfelt shunter's description of this as the "rubbish rake" came into being. The onset of the first Flyer season really brought our storage and shunting problems to a head and a scheme was devised whereby a siding for this rake would be laid outside the fence parallel to the platform road. At the time of writing this siding is being laid in a most rudimentary manner.

With some foresight the chain link fence was originally laid out to include the cutting between our shed and the Larne line. In due course this cutting was excavated and one siding laid, greatly relieving the congestion problem.

In the near future more coaches will become available and the policy is to acquire as many of these as are fit for use and can be safely stored inside the fenced area. Even if coaches are not immediately useable, they represent an investment in the future in that they can eventually be fixed up. This simply means increasing our siding space by laying a second siding in the cutting, which will involve further excavation. Eventually we hope to be able to store up to seventeen coaches safely.

Of course the platform road and our 'main line', which are normally kept free for loco testing, train rides and so on, must always be maintained, rotten sleepers replaced and pumping rail joints repacked and weeds kept at bay.



An examination of the accompanying diagram will show that the transfer of any vehicle from shed roads one or two to roads three or four involves traversing the entire length of the site to the bridge and back. If the crossover were laid where indicated, then all the shed roads could be shunted from the 'main line'. This seemingly slight advantage in theory would save many valuable man-hours in practice as well, of course, as making running round a train a useful possibility.

The future development scheme, in the short term, would be to lay the 'rubbish' siding and the second coach siding, complete the shed roof and then put in No.5 shed road and the crossover. The donation or even the acquisition at cost price of the following materials would be greatly appreciated: blocks, cement, wood, asbestos sheeting, and so on.

The Committee's present policy on site development is really to complete the above list of jobs as soon as practicable so that all volunteer workers can then devote their time to working on the restoration and maintenance of our locos and coaches.

MILEPOST TEN

D. Grimshaw

It is certainly difficult to say when it started - the idea, that is, of large-scale railway preservation in Ireland.

In the early 1960s, both CIÉ and the UTA still operated large numbers of steam engines, with plenty of vintage rolling stock to match. It was obvious, however, that the writing was on the wall, due to the increasing fleets of railcars and diesel locomotives and the threat of further large scale line closures.

Most railway enthusiasts at the time were busying themselves enjoying this steam while it lasted, with the aid of cameras, tape recorders and stopwatches. Others reminisced on what had already gone, and recorded details on paper for posterity before they were forgotten.

The idea that some day there would be none of this was so horrifying to most as to halt such trains of thought in their tracks before the implications and possibilities had been fully explored. Unless you just happen to be a millionaire, with the most expert knowledge of every conceivable aspect of railway operations and engineering, the preservation and maintenance of main line steam locomotives and historic coaching stock requires the establishment of a large and skilful organisation devoted to that purpose.

No such organisation existed in Ireland in the early 1960s.

The Irish Railway Record Society was well established and flourishing, but it had not been specifically formed to be a 'preservation society' and was confining its preservation activities to small relics and persuading CIÉ to (statically) preserve several locomotives itself.

In any case, the IRRS was based in Dublin (albeit with areas elsewhere), and steam on CIÉ finished (to all intents and purpose) on 30th March 1963 with still no preservation society in existence. In the North of Ireland, where UTA steam still continued, there were four main railway enthusiast organisations in 1964.

The Belfast Area of the IRRS held indoor meetings, with talks on railway subjects, and organised outings by service trains. The Northern Ireland Road and Rail Development Association was a pressure group with the object of obtaining more equitable treatment for rail transport than had been the case up to that time, and of preventing further widespread rail closures. The Transport Museum Society advised the Belfast Transport Museum on static preservation, and provided voluntary labour for restoration work. The Royal Belfast Academical Institution Railway Society, better known as 'Inst', held indoor meetings, outings by service train and successfully operated a number of steam-hauled specials over both the CIÉ and UTA systems. This latter enterprise was facilitated by the fact that, in the 1950s and very early 1960s, the cost of running a steam operated special was incredibly small - for example, in 1962 the Inst Railway Society ran a steam-hauled special from Drogheda to Oldcastle and Kingscourt and back, a distance of 120 miles, for a cost of £43!

After the end of CIÉ steam in 1963, a number of J15 class locomotives were held in store, in case of emergency. Arrangements were already in hand for the IRRS, in conjunction with the Stephenson Locomotive Society and the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society, to run a massive week-long

farewell steam tour of Ireland in June 1964. To this end, six J15s were steamed and tested in the spring of that year, the engines being 130, 151, 183, 186, 197 and 198. Of these, four, Nos. 130, 183, 186 and 198 were selected for the tour. It was the running of this tour which ensured the survival of CIÉ steam locomotives in running order into 1964, as the remainder of the 'emergency' stock had been allowed to deteriorate and most of it was scrapped shortly afterwards.

It was realised, around this time, by some of the railway enthusiasts in the Belfast-based societies, that the operation of any further steam tours, over either the UTA or CIÉ systems, would have to be on a much larger financial scale, and beyond the resources, both of tour planning and of facing the risk of financial deficit, of any one society.

In the south, the entire cost of providing steam facilities, such as coaling plant, water columns and supply, ash disposal, the equipment and staff for running repairs and maintenance, and the very retention cost (i.e. the interest available by investing the money which could be obtained by selling a locomotive for scrap) and the storage cost of steam locomotives, would be directly chargeable to any future railtours, even if CIÉ would agree to running them.

In the north, every route (except the Dungannon-Coalisland goods line, the Omagh Markets branch and the Coleraine Harbour branch, on all of which the UTA would not, by 1964, allow any passenger train) had at least a few seasonal steam passenger trains. To run a special and obtain enough patronage, therefore, involved laying on something very much out of the ordinary, such as unusual locomotives for the particular route, or double-heading. All this greatly added to the cost, due to the additional engine miles involved.

And so, early in 1964, the 'Northern Ireland Railway Societies Joint Committee' was formed. This was not a Society as such, but merely a joint railtour committee, backed by the four Belfast organisations previously mentioned.

This committee consisted of Derek Young of the NIRRDA, Michael Shannon of the TMS, David White from RBAIRS and Michael Belshaw and myself from the IRRS Belfast Area.

The principal recorded achievement of the Committee was the operation of a railtour from Belfast to Loughrea, County Galway, on 4th April 1964. Originally intended to be steam throughout, using two of the J15s being prepared for the one-week trip in June, various circumstances, including pathing difficulties, meant bringing forward the Belfast departure time so much as to miss connections from all the cross-channel steamers, and possibly also deterring a large part of the potential Belfast support, due to the early start. The trip was eventually run using VS class 4-4-0 207 "Boyne" on the Belfast-Dublin portion and a diesel railcar set on the Dublin - Mullingar - Loughrea - Portarlington - Dublin section. The runs on the main line in both directions with 207 produced remarkable performances, largely on account of the light three-coach load.

The Joint Committee, however, achieved a lot more than the Loughrea railtour. By bringing together people from different organisations, outside the context of the aims and methods of the existing societies, and with the united purpose of continuing the existence of the steam trains, it formed the basis of the RPSI.

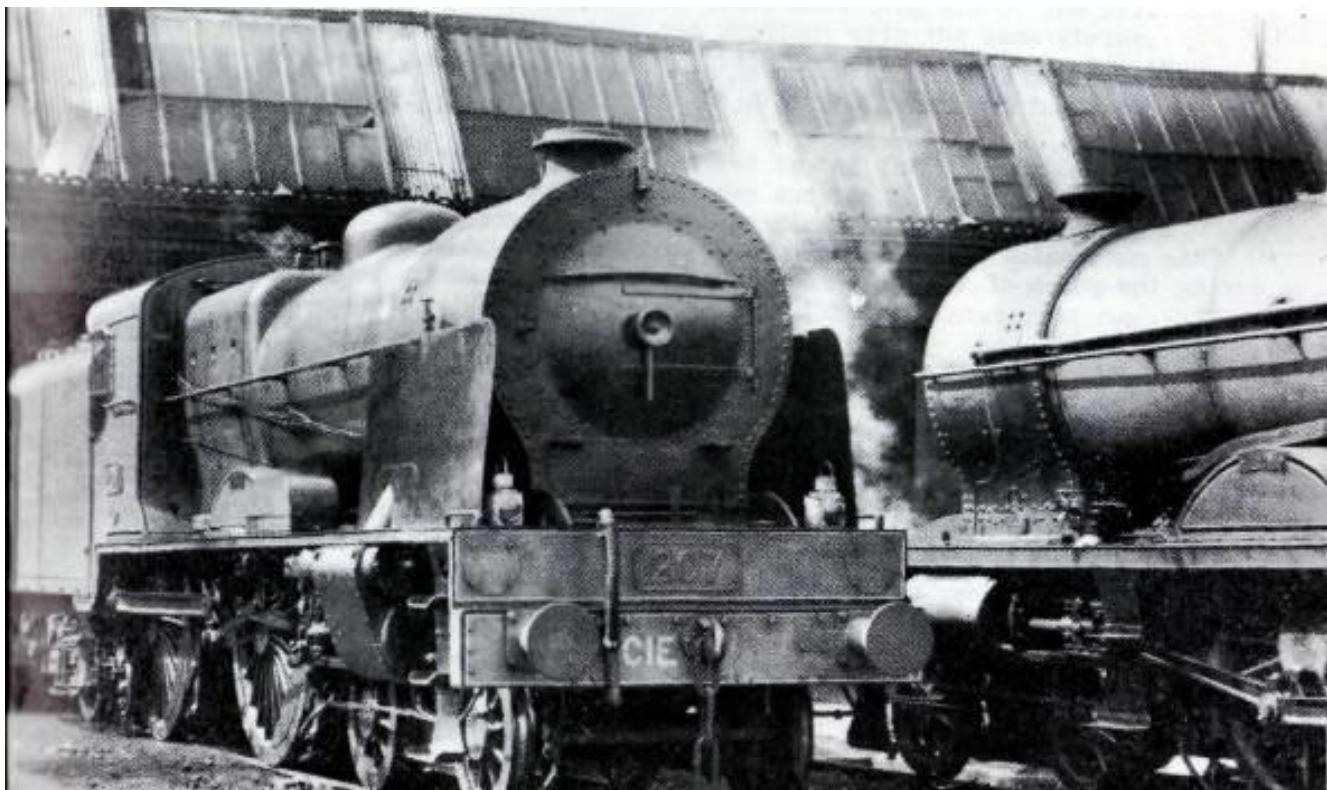
When the Inst Railway Society lost interest in the Joint Committee after the Loughrea tour, and Michael Belshaw departed to England in the summer, it fell to the remainder of the Joint Committee to found the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland, tens years ago, in September 1964.

The aims and objects of the Society have not changed from that time. It was appreciated then that railway-operated steam would soon cease on the UTA lines, as had already happened on CIÉ, and that if the running of steam specials and the preservation of historic coaches and other ancillary equipment were to continue, it was up to the RPSI to achieve this, in co-operation with the Railways. Right from

the very start, even before the inaugural meeting was held, Whitehead had been selected as the most promising location for the Society's base, subject to careful consideration of all the alternatives, which included Lisburn, Moira and Ballinderry.

The RPSI has achieved more than any of us then thought possible. At one time, the RPSI Committee expressed great concern that a broken locomotive spring would necessitate the repair being undertaken by one of the railway workshops. The prospect of a 2-6-4T and S class receiving a retubing and overhaul in the one winter at the hands of our own members at Whitehead seemed impossible.

In May 1965 the Guinness Brewery in Dublin ceased using rail transport for the transfer of its products to Kingsbridge Goods Yard. This led to our first breakthrough when Messrs Guinness presented one of their broad gauge engines, No.3, to the Society. This was followed in July of that year by the Board of CIÉ donating a J15, one of those kept in existence by the 1964 tour. In fact, No.183, which had put up the best performance on the week's tour was selected, but by the time the order to put the engine aside for preservation was given, the cutting-up of 183 had already started and the second choice fell on No.186. A week later none of the J15s would have been left. The subsequent performance and condition of No.186, however, has proved to be so good that 183's demise may well have been for the best.



One of the early possible candidates for preservation, No.207 "Boyne", with another GN 4-4-0 which was preserved, No.85 "Merlin". The pair was photographed at Adelaide in Summer 1962. (B. Quin)

There have been disappointments too, of course. When the Society was formed, NCC Mogul No.97 "Earl Of Ulster" was still intact, as was GNR(I) VS class 4-4-0 No.207 "Boyne". We had hoped to preserve one or both of these engines but, at the time, funds were simply not available. It is also sad to relate that only a year before the RPSI was founded, a Midland Great Western G2 class 2-4-0 was still lying in the scrap siding at Dundalk. Apart from the great historical value of this engine (there is virtually nothing from the Midland preserved), its light axle-loading would have allowed the G2 to run

on any line in Ireland and it could thus have assisted No.186 on minor branch lines with heavy trains. In the realm of coaching stock, ex-GSWR Dining Car No.353, which was a twelve-wheel clerestory vehicle built for the same train as our brake 861, had been fitted with a modern kitchen and was still in main line CIÉ service in 1967. It was to have been sold to the Society on withdrawal, but there was a misunderstanding or lack of communication somewhere and the vehicle was broken up instead.

At Whitehead, it had been hoped to retain the 45ft turntable which was still functional when we moved in, although the connecting track had been lifted. It is a great pity, for historical as well as operational reasons, that this was not to be.

The chief reasons for these disappointments are simply the perennial difficulties of ambitious preservation schemes - lack of finance and shortage of helpers. However, despite this, the achievements of the Society are something of which we can be justifiably proud.

If the next ten years are as successful, we can look forward to an exciting future. After all, ten years ago we started from nothing.

IT SAID IN THE PAPERS

In their enthusiasm to write about the Society, some journalists have departed from the Society's news bulletins and have chosen somewhat unlikely ways to describe us and our activities. The results are often amusing and we repeat below a few excerpts, none of them, we hasten to add, from our Publicity Officer - we are keeping his gems for again.

Based in Whitehead, County Antrim, the Society owns six old boilers which they have restored to their original splendour with loving care.

Limerick Weekly Echo, 7th September 1974.

Youngsters gasped with wonder as the 'monster' came into the station driven by 'veterans' of another age.

Munster Express on No.186 during the "Three Rivers", September 1973.

A new generation has grown up, a generation that knows little or nothing of the glamour of steam, that has never heard the rhythmic beat of the exhaust or thrilled to the sight of the glowing fire knifing the inky darkness of a winter night.

News & Star, Waterford, on the "Three Rivers" tour.

She's a butty fussy looking class of an engine but at 95 she can perhaps be forgiven for that.

Bord Failte publication on No.186.

There is also an association which looks after old engines, called the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland.

Belfast News Letter, 30th November 1973.

They were there in their hundreds, all steamed up and raring to go. They cheered and waved and dashed up to the engine to admire and caress it.

Irish Press feature on RPSI members.

This particular engine, formerly an express, was taken out of commission during the years of the Second World War and did not make a re-appearance.

Northern Constitution taking to a 'member' about No.4, 4th August 1973.

There's nothing like steaming off to the seaside in your very own choo-choo and that's how these

children from Belfast trouble spots felt yesterday as they crowded around the Portrush Flyer.

Sunday Mirror on first Flyer.

Apparently NIR does not possess any steam engines and would have to rely on the RPSI to help 'pull' out.

Belfast News Letter on solutions to fuel crisis, 1st November 1973.

STEAM PERAMBULATION

R.M. Arnold

When in Dublin just prior to the "Silvermines" tour I chanced to overhear someone referring to it thus. Now that I have been requested to attempt an estimate of how certain parts of No.4's performance compared with the best of the past I am reminded of it again.

At the outset this tour pursued a delicate path between two quite independent railway strikes. Some natural disorganisation, as a result, at Connolly was presumably the cause of an eleven-minute late departure. This I noted with some satisfaction, as the even hour to Kildare seemed too generous (the Enterprise was allowed 51 minutes). Although No.4 was doing well in the Phoenix Park area we were 84 seconds down on my best Enterprise time to Islandbridge Junction (402 with seven bogies), and the work continued to be rather modest in comparison until that bad check at Hazelhatch. This produced quite a remarkable reaction from No.4's footplate, and one of the most satisfactory feelings (on most occasions) for the recorder of performance is that the engine crew are looking at their watches.

By Newbridge knowledgeable observers became aware that something really startling was being done and so we soared up Curragh bank as no steam locomotive in my experience had ever done before. The actual time from Sallins to Newbridge was not so very remarkable (even allowing for that signal stop) and speed at Sallins had been considerably less than that 402 run or even "Lough Neagh"'s sprightly effort in 1960. No.4's time from passing Newbridge to the stop at Kildare can be broken up as follows: 1 min 58 to Curragh; 1 min 23 to post 29; 2 min 15 to the stop, most of this 4½ miles being uphill at 1 in 172.

Most issues in a study of steam performance are best decided by comparison with other runs and I have carefully gone through my own experiences 1948-55 both over this stretch and for that on the return just west of Kildare. This includes all the thirteen surviving 4-6-0s (except 502 which I never happened to have at this end of the line), several Woolwich 2-6-0s and no less than five classes of 4-4-0, including six of the 321 class. None in either direction took the gradient with the same stride. However, No.4 had the advantage of a lighter train on most occasions and, with a generous time at Kildare ahead to recover, could be worked full out, as she must indeed have been.

That lively run with 402 I have referred to had the Enterprise through Kildare 3 minutes under the booked 51 minutes and was in fact 2¾ minutes better to Lucan while No.4's strange crew was getting the hang of her, but I estimate No.4's net time to the Kildare stop from Connolly as 50½ minutes, a shade better than the fastest steam timing of post-war days. Cornally's Newbridge-Curragh time with 402 was 2 mins 34 (another Enterprise run with 403 was 2 mins 35). The loads here were respectively about 50 tons and 20 tons more than No.4. The smartest time I can find was by 329 with about 20 tons more on the Down Mail, when the time from passing Newbridge was 2 mins 28, to stop then in Kildare in 6 mins 13 (49 seconds more altogether). Even 406 piloted by 4-4-0 No.64 could manage only 2 mins 30 for this vital stretch. GNR enthusiasts may like to be reminded that 197 scored 2 mins 28 with a bogie less than No.4. A difficult estimate of her net time that splendid day works out at 49 mins to the Kildare stop, but then she was allowed 52 minutes and most of the circumstances were very difficult. No.174 did less well but had been checked after Sallins.

Before inflicting the statistics of No.4's return trip upon you it seems fair to mention by no means the

only surprisingly dull trip I have had 'down hill' from the Junction to Limerick. Similarly next morning there was nothing to write home about in No.4's performance over the Nenagh route to Ballybroyph. One statistic was that she was certainly the heaviest engine I have seen on that road. Another (unwanted) one was a non-stop run from Nenagh to Roscrea, something one never got on the ordinary services. However, I have experienced it before (on a railtour) when 125 (J15) with the same load was allowed 30 minutes and took 41 mins 22 (a net of about 37) after being stopped outside Roscrea. We did manage to roll in unchecked but No.4's time was a poorish 32 mins 37. I have runs with 301, 304, 314 and 344, all of which did better, as they were of course timed to do.

A promising aspect of No.4's run back up the main line had been a timing of 47 minutes Kildare-Connolly but not for the first time track repair work completely upset this (rather a disappointing coincidence, if it is one). However, No.4 set off from Ballybroyph in good style and her running, though it contained nothing exceptional as far as Portarlington, had sufficient quality, just as it had had in the same area coming down, to have maintained most times of the 1950 period. Then came the second significant signal check of the tour and once again No.4 responded as if Kildare was some kind of irresistible magnet. Unfortunately a proper stop at Kildare was not practical with watering in mind, so the significant point to point times will have to be Monasterevan - post 35 - Cherryville Junction - post 31. No.4 was again rushing a bank here (1 in 180) and her time of 5 mins 26 for 5.7 miles can be broken up as follows: 1 min 29; 2 mins 24; 1 min 33. Never having thought it worthwhile to take post 31 before I shall have to reserve the comparison to the first two bits and the best I can find to compare with No.4 is 401 on the Enterprise with 1 min 35 and 2 mins 38. One of the less popular members of the class but a favourite of mine, 405, in a run memorable because of glorious acoustics was, on the Up Mail, slower than her GWR-looking sister by 5 seconds on the first bit from Monasterevan (she had called at Portarlington) but was level with 401 from post 35 to Cherryville with 50 tons more than No.4, as had 401.

At this stage in my investigations the verdict was so clearly in favour of the NCC engine that it almost began to look as if someone had removed the position of the various timing points since 1955. However, a more reasonable conclusion was obviously that the GSR might have done something better at the summit point of their steam operations in 1939. The late J.M. Robbins was covering what was going on at that time with his customary dedication so I have turned up eight consecutive runs timed by him, the first in 1938 and the last in 1940.

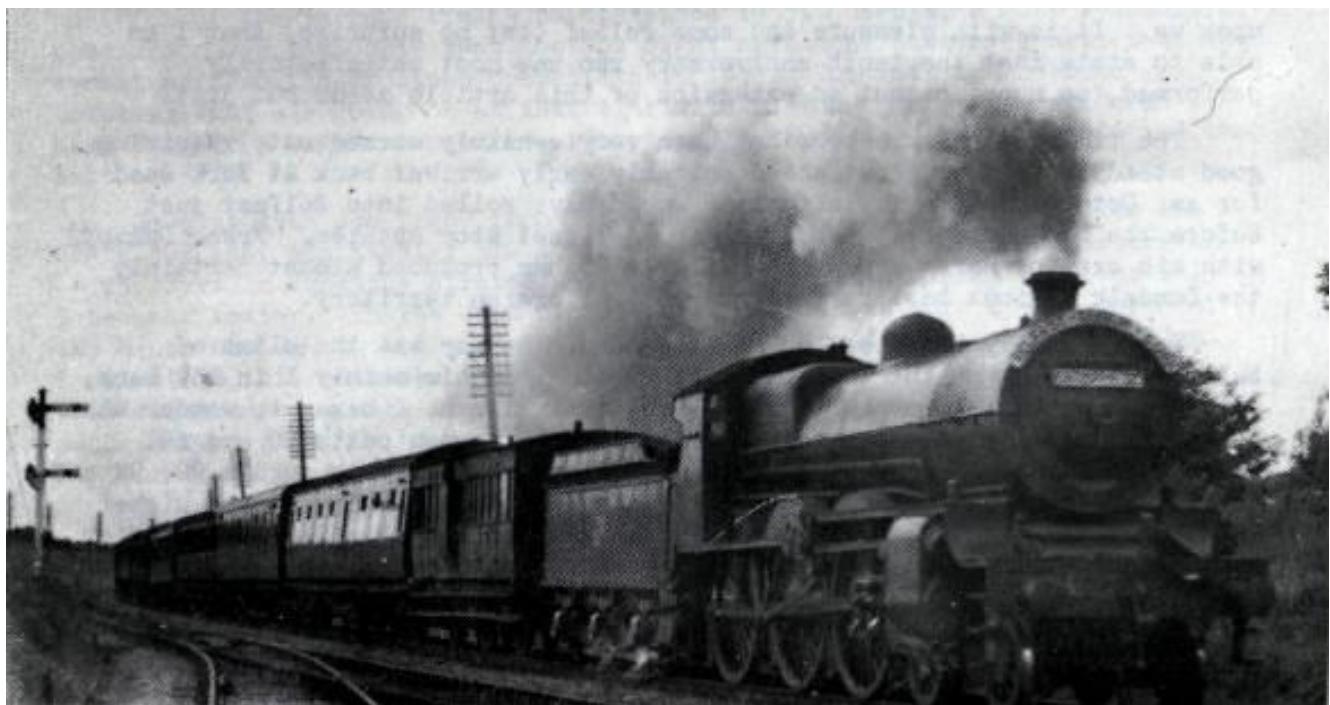
However, even Joe Tighe (mentioned somewhere in the brochure) with the crack 402 and, admittedly, 310 tons required 4 mins 42 for the Monasterevan-Cherryville Junction stretch and 405, with about the same load, was only 3 seconds better. In the Down direction comparison favours No.4 even more, for the brand new 800 took 6 mins 20 to stop in Kildare from passing Newbridge. I calculate this thirteen vehicle train to be about 330 tons, but I think this difference is more than covered by the much better time of an engine so much smaller than the huge 4-6-0. In another run by 800, with a slightly lighter load, the time was 6 mins 32.

It should not be difficult to prove by figures that an 800 or a Woolwich 2-6-0, or even a 400, could in the same circumstances have bettered what NCC 4 achieved. But not infrequently a steam locomotive fails to do what in theory it should be able to do and also every now and again exceeds those expectations. We now KNOW what No.4 is capable of doing. I await evidence that any other engine has actually maintained an average of over a mile a minute over either of the two sections in question.

The four CIÉ enginemen involved in the two Kildare efforts with No.4 were P. Neville, H. Kearns, J. Murphy and M. D'Arcy. I must also mention two bright snippets on the GNR main line with ex-GNR crews. The first contained some very un-empty-carriage-like running in a path where the RPSI train was possibly, in so doing, proving a bit of a nuisance. Eventually No.4 left Drogheda with the incentive of the Enterprise not so far behind (strange how this post-war train seems to filter into both

stories). Capable Adelaide enginemen (W. Croft and L. Foy) had been handling No.4 with skill throughout and the five bogies were through Balbriggan in 11 mins 32. On the Sunday night a rocket-like exit from Dublin with Dundalk driver John Rodgers produced a passing time to Donabate of 13 mins 12. Signals halted both these efforts, either of which would have been very unusual in any period of Great Northern history except 1932-4. For instance, on 28th August 1933 compound 86 passed Donabate in 13 mins 55 with 6 bogies after being slower than No.4 over every section until the tank was stopped by signals. On that occasion, over that historic track so recently (Monday 21st October 1974) the scene of a tragic accident, the 4-4-0 reached Drogheda in 32 mins 30 so it seems reasonable to assume that had No.4 been permitted to continue in the same style the NCC engine could have made an even time trip to Drogheda. Let us hope that on the next occasion we'll get that clear road.

There was one common denominator to all the four runs I have detailed and too much other good locomotive work on each of these three days. This was the NIR Locomotive Inspector Frank Dunlop whom we were all so glad to see in excellent form after his recent illness. Wherever No.4 goes, Frank goes, we are all very glad to say. On this tour, especially, his energy and smiling expertise seemed to have no limit. Here was an attitude to the railway and the steam locomotive which seems to go back fifty years and is very rarely found today.



No.401 passes The Curragh with the Up Enterprise on 15th July 1953. This run is mentioned in the "Steam Perambulation" article. (H.M. Rea)

I had just completed this tribute to our NCC tank engine's prowess in September (there was just no space to review her competent work on the Portrush Flyers this year) when the prospect of No.171 going to Derry was again upon us. It is with pleasure and some relief (but no surprise) that I am able to state that the "Tenth Anniversary" run was most satisfactorily performed, so much so that an extension of this article seems but just.

The timings for this tour had been very sensibly worked out, requiring good steady work throughout and a suitably early arrival back at York Road for an October evening. In fact we would have rolled into Belfast just before the booked time (5:35pm) but for a signal stop outside. Frank Dunlop, with his crew of Harry Ramsey and Willie Graham, produced almost certainly the Dundalk engine's best

performance yet on foreign territory.

For me, easily the pièce de résistance of the day was the climb of Ballyboyland bank on the way home. As we stormed this mainly 1 in 139 bank, after taking the Ballymoney-Dunloy tablet at 41 mph, I began to wonder when I had last recorded a speed in excess of 50 mph between posts 50 and 48. Referring to the "NCC Saga Supplement", for instance, although moguls 90, 94 and 96 all were running faster before Ballymoney and passed through at a higher speed they all did fall below 50 mph in the end, and no surprise with heavier trains. NCC timings on the whole allowed for time keeping, and even recovery, with ten bogies, so it is not surprising that when one looks for energetic climbs with loads of about half that, one often looks in vain, for it was just not necessary.

However, I have turned up a couple with two of the best Jeeps. On 20th June 1954, 52 driven by Fred Mahon was cautious through Ballymoney but then made a time of 2 mins 21 with the six bogies for the 2 miles from post 50. On the second occasion, 10th September 1966, several of the dedicated students of steam performance who welcome RPSI tour policy today were with me when 3, with Alan Robinson and the same load, made exactly the same time, despite a stop at Ballymoney. They will be as interested as I am that No.171, with about 20 tons less, made a time of 2 mins 20.

It was very pleasant at Derry to have another chat with Bert Davis in Dining Car 552. Over twenty years ago I regularly observed his burly frame on the fireman's side of No.4's younger sister 55, and there is a modest example of his driving 6 in the Saga Supplement. He was recalling the splendid steam and hauling powers of an NCC 'Slieve' (69), the most willing of the class especially as regards "burning stones". Getting 55 a few years later was to have something much more sensitive and refined. Just one shovelful misdirected could produce no end of steaming trouble. Bert today is of course regularly in charge of 'Hampshire' diesel units on the NCC main line.

As No.171 left Whitehead for Derry that morning a piece of NIR track alteration was traversed for the first time by a steam locomotive. The trailing crossover on the Belfast side of Whitehead station had been altered to a facing position on the double track, in accordance with a new arrangement to use the Down line as single track (both directions) for passenger trains, leaving the former Up line exclusively for spoil trains. On the Tuesday following the Derry tour, a 'Hampshire' set was derailed on this crossover. That this might have been one of our own carriages seems to emphasise that the Society's tenth birthday has been a fortunate one despite one serious act of vandalism.

PORTRUSH TRAFFIC 1966-69

J.A. Cassells

A visiting railway enthusiast to Portrush on a spring evening any year in the later 1960s might well have gladdened at the sight of half a dozen engines assembling ten-coach special trains from every available siding in that compact little station, and perhaps puzzled about the source of all the activity. The big blackboard in the station, on which was displayed in beautiful handwriting the destination of each special train, would contain some oracular messages: "Drumcree United" and "Harryville United" might have suggested a local football cup-tie - but "Maranatha"?

Every reader will, of course, know that this little scene could be re-enacted on almost every Saturday in May and June, as Sabbath school organisers from all over the province gave their flocks a day at the seaside, and provided the remaining steam engines of the UTA with a last regular task of moving large numbers reasonably long distances. Portrush was the last survivor of a number of seaside resorts - notably Warrenpoint, Bangor and Newcastle - which in their time had a yearly 'Sunday School Season', and now that it has gone, perhaps the time is right to analyse part of the less glamorous story of Irish steam.

I have selected just four Portrush 'seasons', 1966 to 1969, mainly because I have fuller data on them than on any others; it was unfortunate that earlier years of these specials tended to pass most of us by in

avour of the more satisfactory regular timetable trains, which gradually dwindled away to nothing in successive winter timetables up to 1965. I hope those who have similar experience of earlier Sunday School seasons will be prompted to set down their observations as well.

The small group of us who patronised the last years of NCC steam often found difficulty in getting on to these trains, and once on, in timing them. A good run was indeed the reward for running the gamut of water pistol firing children and irate parents, who frequently showed quite unclerical hostility to anyone not immediately recognisable as a member of their flock. It was hard to get the correct party ticket, so we generally had to make do with the ordinary Portrush day return (much dearer than any ticket issued to bona fide passengers) and enter the trains - well, discreetly! Sometime a chance contact could supply the name of a "wee shop" where tickets could be come by, sometime an impromptu party could be organised if at least eight men could be found (hence Mr Pryce's party once), and sometimes a friendly organiser like Fred Graham or the Rev Frank McBrien would welcome us with open arms.



A timeless scene at Portrush pictured on 27th May 1967. The shunting was usually so quickly done that it was rare enough to get a photo of two trains together in the arrival platforms. (J.A. Cassells)

The atmosphere was quite unique. Well-scrubbed children going out would return redolent of candy floss and greasy hotdogs, sporting hats with decidedly untheological messages, and pestering parents for every last penny still in their pockets. The tea urns and boxes of sandwiches would be returned empty to the guard's van (the more charitable organisers would sometimes offer the remnants to timers), and the journey home would be enlivened by singing, sacred and otherwise, or even by the development of chance adolescent relationships struck up in Portrush. For anyone with an eye for the outlandish, it was there to be observed; I remember a stop at Antrim once while a quite harmless lunatic, who had contrived to anoint his head with silver paint during the day, was assisted to the van by the train crew and locked up.

For operating convenience it was preferable to arrange Sunday School trains in advance of the main summer traffic. Thus the season proper began on the day of the North West 200 motorcycle race. As

late as 1966 a public excursion from Belfast supplemented the first specials, which usually emanated from the GN. In 1966 a diesel special had been arranged, with empty carriages and a steam relief in the evening only. But things got into a mess; the 10:55 Derry train struggled out with No.6 (the rear coach carrying the 'Special Following' lamp code) and, due to bad coal and solid clinker, failed at Limavady Junction. This was the last year in which an early season public special mingled with the Sunday schools.

For the last year of Portadown-Portrush excursions, 51 and 55 were fitted with correct tablet exchangers and usually kept for Portrush. Sometimes 54 or 56 appeared when there was no Dublin special to be worked, and during the 1966 seamen's strike lack of coal led to the unusual sight one week of two AEC railcar sets - in UTA brunswick green and CIÉ black and tan - at Portrush. To obviate the need for conductors from Antrim, some Adelaide men were given a crash course travelling up and down to Portrush to learn the road. Needless to say I recorded much loss of time, and some terrible struggles up Ballyboyland on trains which were otherwise quite attractive because of the run over the Antrim branch.

The normal pattern of working was two trains per Saturday from the Great Northern (which also handled what little Bangor Sunday school traffic remained), two from Derry and the rest from stations between Belfast and Ballymena. Paths were tailored to fit where the stock happened to be; for a year or so stock continued to be stored at Greenisland (very handy for Carrickfergus-Portrush specials) and at Antrim after the lifting of the Ballyclare Junction sidings; thus necessitating a Friday shuttle of empty stock up to town, and a balancing Sunday of returns.



26th June 1966. Nos. 5, 3, 4 and 6 coming into Portrush light. No.3 is turned bunk out of Portrush because she is to work to Derry. Unusually two diesel excursions, one of them a CIÉ set, are visible. (J.A. Cassells)

The engines, two, three or four coupled together, went to Coleraine in the afternoon to turn, clean fires and take on coal. At times of coal shortage the Coleraine tower could always be relied on, though the

draconian ploys of the GN men to smuggle coal home usually collapsed - quite literally - about their ears. Not only light engine working filled the afternoon. With commendable loyalty to the railway, St. Patrick's parish in Coleraine always went to Castlerock on a short working, and the odd time the first engine out of Belfast would do a double turn to Ballymena in the middle of the day.

Crewing became, near the end, greatly simplified, and as services on the main line became thinner, the enthusiast found it increasingly rarer to see a man from Ballymena, Coleraine or even Larne handling a Sunday school turn. Latterly too, the sight of half a dozen drivers decamping from the afternoon Derry train at Coleraine also faded away, and most of the trains, worked out and back by stone train men with their own engines, included booking off at Portrush for a few hours. What they did in their spare time would make a book in itself. Some adjourned to the sandhills to contemplate nature. Some did a little engine cleaning using secret abrasives and polishes of one kind and another, and sometimes there would be the kind of emergency the RPSI faced itself this year. Thus one day in 1968, 53 broke a spring on the way down, and Bertie Wright and Willie Graham had to go up to Belfast and collect a fresh engine.

The climax of a busy day was the lifting of up to twelve or thirteen coaches from the long harbour siding behind Portrush station, and Five Foot Three No.2 has a lovely picture of the usual three engines clawing their way up that steep little bank past Castle Erin. And when the last special had safely deposited its passengers home, two great NCC characters could finally relax - traffic inspector Sam Hanley and loco inspector Frank Dunlop; men for whom we always had the utmost regard.



22nd May 1965. The last broken bike train. No.4 is leaving a van at Portstewart which will collect North West 200 casualties for attachment to the 6:20 ex-Portrush. North West 200 Saturday always began the Sunday School season. (J.A. Cassells)

Some of the last really interesting coaches in UTA stock finished their days on Sunday school traffic and it was possible to see the vehicles of three different companies almost until the end. The 1965 steel-panelled rebuilds tended to be reserved, along with the remaining North Atlantics, for more

important trains, and heavy wooden Great Northern corridors, K15s, MR NCC 'Short' bogies and Larne steels (the last of them patched up as late as 1967) were made up into sets. Notable individuals could also be seen, like NCC saloon 162, the two surviving BCDR bogies and N192 the unique reconditioned GNR brake compo. One by one they found their way to Antrim or Greenisland, or into the hands of the permanent way department, and by the last season of all, only thirty-seven coaches were available for traffic, with results that will be seen.

A good deal already exists in print on the subject of locomotives in the 1960s, and Chapter Nine of "NCC Saga" summarises most of the background to the Sunday school seasons I am describing. Different engines seem to have associations with different years, and it will be apparent that, for example, 51 and 55 were doing great work in 1967, 50 was the rather prima donna-ish star of 1968, and 4 and 53 emerged as the big numbers of 1969. Of these 50 was the most temperamental; we often felt Alan Robinson and Rab Graham (who were allocated to her after the two-crews-per-engine practice was restored in 1968) would have liked something better; indeed as early as Bleach Green one Saturday in 1968, the brick arch was on top of the fire. I cannot recall many Sunday school Saturdays in 1968 when she got out and back without being shy for steam somewhere - but on the other hand she put up a crop of very good runs. 51 was past her best at the end of the first winter on the stone trains, but we all remember her in her first full NCC summer for some years - 1967 - as a strong puller if not a fast runner. After one good run up from Portrush, I was surprised when Tom Crymble showed me just how many leaking tubes she had, without performance being too badly impaired. 53 was a troublesome engine after her last shopping in 1963-4. Adelaide usually held her back from Dublin traffic unless the load was light and she might have gone from bad to worse but for a stone train accident. Coming into the yard at Belfast one day, she began to run round preparatory to going up to the shed when the wagons moved back and the motion was torn off one side of the engine. A long job in the shops made her into a better engine, and as late as 1969 she was putting up better running than she had for some years. 55 had a large mileage out of shops, and the stone trains took their toll of her also. But until near the end, when she got very hard on water and temperamental in the injectors, most of us would have been content to regard her as one of the best. Lastly comes the accident-prone 56. Damage at Pomeroy, sore at Ballymena, running hot on Derry Day 1968, final cracked cylinder 1969 - this long catalogue of woes ruined the working life of a basically very good and free-running engine. As will be seen later, I had my fastest 'Sunday school' descent of the bank with this engine, and if it were within the limitations of this article to do so, I could record a great run up from Derry in August 1967, and from Portrush at Easter 1969.

1966 was certainly very varied from the point of view of crew operation. In this last year when 'country' men were rostered regularly on these turns I recorded performance with one Ballymena, four Adelaide and four Coleraine drivers but only three York Road men. When we divide the 1966 running into sections, a gratifying picture emerges for the double line from Belfast to Ballymena; far better than might be expected for heavy trains in sluggish paths. The average of five runs through Doagh to Muckamore (six miles) and Kellswater (sixteen miles) was 6'12" and 16'9", maxima being usually in the region of 70-72. The single line onwards could also be quite bright, and in the tables at the end of this article can be found two quite representative runs with Coleraine drivers. The other direction was, for me, a different story. Since it was convenient, and productive of some mileage, to go to Belfast via Lisburn and Portadown (finishing on the 6:30 ex-Dublin which was generally steam) I generally used one of the two GN-bound trains. These always left first in the evenings, and so I got rather too many opportunities to see how unsure the Adelaide men were of the road to Antrim. Over six of these runs I can make no more exciting average than 56 minutes from Coleraine to Ballymena, often pass-to-stop and rarely with any intermediate check or slack; hardly a sixty was attained, and there were some grim plugs up Ballyboylan.

1967 similarly defies neat tabulation, for several reasons. Although it was the last year when two really

good engines - 4 and 55 - were in first rate order, it was also the first year when the stock of unbroken tablet exchanger arms ran out, and we had to get used to yet another stage in the management's progressive loss of interest in steam. The demolition job done on 55's catcher when lifting the Ballyboylan tablet at 75 was only the most spectacular; before the end of the 1967 season not one engine was equipped for machine exchanging. Thereafter the last generation of NCC firemen became very adept at 'lifting' in the high forties, and among the drivers, Rab Graham capped them all by performing a hand exchange at 60. In those days we began a 'league table' of deft-handling signalmen, and just for the record Dunloy emerged as the winner. Rather less permanent in 1967 was a wave of signal checks and tardy level crossing gates; no less than thirty of them so blemished six weeks of Down Sunday school runs as to make any kind of general tabulation quite meaningless. Now when we do look at the performance of the year, one engine emerges head and shoulders above the others - 55. I have tabulated parts for two Down Sunday school runs, and there is little more to be said except to refer the reader to them. The only analysis I have done is of Up running from Portrush to Ballymena. The booking (depending on stops) was round about the 60-63 minutes, and a measure of how tight this was can be seen in an average of 61'40" over six runs. All of them were quite good, but well sprinkled with checks. As will be seen, the timing for this section became even tighter as time went on. Between Ballymena and Belfast the timer could hardly expect high speeds, so good climbing was the main bonus, and on 27th May Willie Gillespie did well to hold a virtual minimum of 50 up to a signal check at Kingsbog with 51 and ten bogies after running through Antrim at no more than a moderate 62 mph. A month later Tom Crymble produced another good piece of work with No.4, which readers of Mr Arnold's "NCC Saga" will remember a reference to.



28th May 1966. No.51 and No.52 lifting ten bogies from the Harbour siding. In this NCC scene a BCDR bogie is visible, two GN drivers and Inspector Hanley (in trilby) directing things.
(J.A. Cassells)

Over the last two years things got steadily worse. There were fewer coaches available now (less than forty by mid-1969), fewer engines (as Saturday spoil trains had to be run as well as the Sunday school trains) and as a result traffic was steadily being concentrated into a small number of heavy trains, with little chance of a pilot to Kingsbog, and more chance of time loss as crews took the bank carefully to avoid tearing apart the fire. In June 1969 the ultimate was reached with eleven coach trains which must

have grossed over 350 tons, and for which no assistance was produced. Along the road, mechanical exchanging was a thing of the past, and the easing of speed at Cullybackey, Dunloy, Ballyboyl and Ballymoney made even the slack schedules difficult for a heavy train. But there was some fair running in the Down direction. Those 6½ miles from Doagh to Muckamore produced an average of 6'43" in 1968 over seven runs, with the best an excellent 5'20" (maximum 75) by No.56 with 9 bogies. The 1969 average of 6'46" seems similar, but the spread of running was much narrower, and I recorded nothing better than 6'15" (max only 67) and that with two engines - 4 and 53 with ten bogies. Down the other bank - Ballyboyl - I took the four miles from posts 48 to 52 where in 1968 five out of seven runs bettered even time (best 3'48" with 50, Alan Robinson and ten bogies, max 69) and all of them made the high sixties; but in 1969 seven runs averaged 4'39", sixty only being twice exceeded. Finally, a test of pulling in the Cullybackey-Dunloy section can be seen in the post 38-45 section. The 1968 average was 8'20" with quite a few ten bogie trains getting up to 58 or 60, but in the final year the average fell to 9'5" with speeds in the high fifties.



The last excursion from the GNR and the last really 'big' Portrush day. No.51 has taken over from No.10 at Antrim on this Portadown to Portrush special. (J.A. Cassells)

Up running was apt to be very dull, with the frequent slacks to lift tablets just where a heavy train could have done with gaining momentum. So in 1968 the tight 58 minute timing (with no allowance made for stops at Coleraine and Ballymoney if required to cross) was hard enough. Four runs in consecutive weeks of the 1968 season, all by coincidence with No.50, took 60'17", 62'58", 59'58" and 58'53". With a lighter load the timing was easier - even a bogie less helped 56 and Harry Ramsey to produce 56'11" with two stops, and the very best was No.50 in 55'7" hauling eight. Next year, apart from 53'28" non-stop to Ballymena with No.4 and ten bogies there was little of note, and timings for six other runs varied between 60'24" and 74'49". The most heroic effort was put up by Paddy Dobbin, who did well with an ailing 51 and eleven bogies to run from Glarryford between 58 and 60 before a stop at Cullybackey. The double line was worth watching too. In 1968, for example, Alan Robinson with 50 and eight bogies stopped in Antrim in 13'41" max 75, then sustained a minimum of 53 over Kingsbog (12'41") to stop at Whiteabbey in just over 18 minutes. With two bogies more, the same engine and driver ran from Ballymena to Doagh in 23'49" (schedule 24!) including 15'31" from posts 30 to 15 and a max of 67. Willie Gillespie has already gained a mention in this section, and on an

eleven bogie run with 55 he did excellently in 1969 to fall from 56 through Antrim to only 40 over Kingsbog. The tables contain my tribute to the last two years, and as the reader compares them to other years, it is as well to remember the difficult conditions in which they were made.

It is hardly in keeping with the normal nostalgia-type conclusion of a railway article these days to say that on 28th June 1969 none of us were thinking very profound thoughts at the end of yet another 'season'. True enough the men had told us of the plans to run the whole operation with diesels the next year, but somehow we didn't believe them, for we subconsciously tended to see steam as something timeless, and NCC steam as something which, having outlasted other Irish steam, was bound to go on forever. The collapse of the engine fleet came very quickly; by the following Easter the stone trains were finished, and we had to wait until the beginning of the "Portrush Flyer" to savour again anything like the Sunday school specials.

The final word must go to the men on the footplate. They realised that we were collecting as much data as we could about a dying era, and their enthusiasm, combined with a desire to outdo their mates in brilliance, gave us some thrilling days out for as long as the engines were fit to do the work. We still, fortunately, see some of them on the footplate of No.4 during what we hope is to become a regular RPSI Portrush season, and this year showed us that none of them have lost their touch.

The last days of the NCC may have lacked the variety of Portugal or the brilliance of Hof, but I am sure there must be some Society members who look back happily to those long spring evenings, and to the unique atmosphere of a Sunday school excursion from Portrush.

Loco	4	5	55	55	50
Load	10	7	10	10	10
Driver	P. Eliot	S. Friel	R.J. Simpson	P. Mitchell	W.J. McAleese
Date	4-6-1966	11-6-1966	10-6-1967	17-6-1967	20-5-1968
Belfast	0:00		0:00		0:00
MP3	- 41		6:53		5:53 47
Whiteabbey	9:47 33		8:12 38		7:45 41
Monkstown	14:41 17		12:44 22½		10:48 32
Mossley	<u>18:35</u>		15:31 19½*		12:45 31
Kingsbog	-		20:39 38/47		<u>16:35</u> Pilot No.3 off
Doagh	9:50 47		<u>23:40</u>		3:16 50/75
Muckamore	15:53 67*		7:53 69/72		9:13 67/60
Antrim	17:33 69		9:31 69		11:00 65
Cookstown Jct	20:35 54½		12:26 60/56		14:40 60/58
Kellswater	24:59 64		16:33 69		18:09 67
Ballymena	29:30	0:00	<u>21:22</u>	0:00	22:18 29/43
Cullybackey	34:04 38	7:50 35		7:33	28:00 38
Glarryford	40:26 56	13:25 64		13:14 60	34:32 56
Killagan	42:55 50	- 54½		15:30 58	37:00 53/56
Dunloy	46:02 56	18:38 53		18:17 60/67	40:06 38
Ballyboyland	50:22 69	23:08 72		22:15 59/67	45:05 69
Ballymoney	53:20 45/60	25:47 56/60		25:16 45	48:16 41/58
Macfin	<u>58:37</u>	30:10 26/54½*		29:20 62/67	53:10 56/22½*
Coleraine	<u>8:40</u> 56	37:18		<u>36:16</u>	61:23 18
Portstewart	8:46 38/45	To Castlerock		6:36 39/40	66:28 41/47
Portrush	<u>13:42</u>			<u>11:35</u>	<u>72:29</u>
*Max 72		*Signal check	*pws	*pws	

Load	11	
Driver	W. Gillespie	
Date	28-6-1969	
Ballymena	0:00	
Kellswater	6:34	54½
Cookstown Jct	11:29	53/48
Antrim	15:07	56
Muckamore	17:20	53
Doagh	25:39	43
Kingsbog	27:51	40 min
Mossley	30:49	53
Monkstown	31:50	56
Whiteabbey	33:49	47
MP 3	-	53
Belfast	<u>41:17</u>	

BOOK REVIEWS

A Decade Of Steam

D. Donaldson, B. McDonnell, J. O'Neill, Published by the RPSI, £1.50

With their second venture into the publishing field, the RPSI have produced a book which can without fear of contradiction be described as 'different'. It is certainly not a railway history, neither is it a locomotive history nor a photographic album. Yet within the confines of forty-two pages of text and twenty-eight of photographs it manages to combine all three elements in one concise volume at an unbelievably low price.

At twopence per page (including photos) the reader would be well justified in thinking that he is getting value for money. When I first heard that this book was on the way I envisaged a straightforward history of the declining years of steam on CIÉ, but my notions were soon amended!

The tone of the book is set by the front cover illustration of No.409 in green livery storming past Inchicore for, as the book states, "the 400s epitomised the Cork Main Line". It then goes on to set the scene with a survey of the main problems facing CIÉ in 1948, and shows how steam was superseded by diesel traction, first with railcars in 1952 and then with diesel-electric locomotives from 1955 onwards.

The bulk of the book is, however, taken up with a survey of every class of steam engine running on CIÉ metals from 1948 to the end of steam in 1963, stretching from the magnificent three-cylinder 800s to the humble "Jumbo" so familiar to Waterford crews. In this section one or other of the joint authors begins the coverage of the class and his comments are complemented by another of the authors and in this way we read of the engines from the observers and the enginemen's point of view.

The Decade is not by any means a mere mechanical survey, for woven into the history of each class is a lively narrative full of wit, good observation and information. Of special interest in this section is the performance of the 4-6-0s and the details given about the development of those classes. The section on the Coey 4-4-0s clears up a lot of misunderstanding about these fine machines. The popularity of the 60 class 4-4-0s among the authors is shown in the three whole pages devoted to them, not without cause I might add.

The history of the Dublin suburban tanks shows how the problem of the DSER line exercised the minds of Inchicore just as much as those of the Cork main line, with new designs of 2-6-2T, 0-6-2T and 4-6-2T, not to mention a new 2-4-4T design in 1946 which, like the 4-6-2T, was never built.

The majority of the photos are from Mr Donaldson's own camera and many have not been published before. Among the more interesting items is a shot of DSER 4-4-2T No.457 shunting at Limerick and one of 301 piloting 801 at Limerick Junction on the Up Mail. For sheer poetry in motion one can scarcely rival the lovely shot of 62 leaving Port Laoighise on a six-coach train. The photographs are well reproduced, by the offset litho method on art paper, and are among the best examples of this method of printing I have seen.

Several interesting tables are included. Among these is a full list of all the classes eliminated in the 1948-53 period. The Waterford Limerick and Western list has both the names and numbers of the engines along with their GSWR numbers and GSR classification. For the serious student of loco matters there are useful and comprehensive tables showing the power classification and permitted wagon loads over certain routes. There are complete dimensional details of every type while a separate table gives full details of the boilers.

Log tables are kept to a minimum, only two pages in fact, but in this space is included no less than sixteen runs, all with 4-6-0s and the larger 4-4-0s. The book is completed with a finely-drawn axle-load map of the CIÉ system showing permitted axle loads with notes of observed violations including, and this is very interesting, an 800 on the Limerick Junction-Limerick section.

Although this publication is undoubtedly a book, its method of printing is more akin to that of a magazine; a stapled cover might be quite suitable for "Five Foot Three", but in a book which will no doubt be handled quite often, it will inevitably lead to it becoming dog-eared through time. While its pages are well laid out, the type is rather on the small side for the average reader.

Several other minor criticisms could be offered. One of these is the curious layout of the book, in that it begins with the goods engines and then moves on to the tanks before dealing with the 4-6-0s and the smaller passenger types. A more logical approach, considering the alphabetical index used by CIÉ, would have been to put the passenger classes first. Several of the tables seem out of place with the rest of the book; we are given, for example, lists of WLWR and WCIR locomotives in 1900 with their GSWR renumbering and these even include an engine scrapped as early as 1863! No corresponding information is given for the MGWR, DSER and CBSCR.

I would certainly recommend this as a book which should be on the shelves of every railway enthusiast. It is a book of reference but it is nevertheless a readable book to be enjoyed by the layman, dedicated enthusiast and railwayman alike.

WNJ

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I was very interested to see in Five Foot Three No.15 a photograph of No.3 Armoured Rail Trolley which was built for the 8th Railway Construction and Operating Company, Royal Engineers, stationed at Whitehead in 1941 and that you would like to hear if there were any more of these trolleys.

As I was Chief Draughtsman of the Locomotive, Carriage & Wagon Drawing Office at that time I was very much concerned with the War Department in providing these vehicles but unfortunately I never kept any records of them as they were not our stock. Also, any drawings made at that time were all destroyed in the Blitz.

From memory there were at least three of these trolleys and I think one was labelled as 'Refrigerator Van'. I also remember someone suggesting 'Banana Van' but as we had none of these at that time the suggestion was not taken up.

The wooden underframes were built at Dundalk and were standard (I think) Turf Wagon ones being built at that time, about twenty feet long. A Leyland Lion petrol engine was fitted with a belt drive to

one axle and a handbrake stand was fitted. These underframes were then dispatched to our works at York Road where the armour plated sides and ends were fitted, a stand for mounting a Bren gun under a sliding roof - the latter in case of an air attack. Rifle and Bren gun slots, which were fitted with cover plates when not in use, were provided on both sides and ends together with an aperture for the driver and a side entrance door.

The purpose of these trolleys was to run as pilots in front of troop trains in Ireland in the event of an invasion from the South by enemy troops. As this never happened they were not used for this purpose.

I was present on the trial runs to Whitehead and found the journeys not too pleasant due to draughts through the slots and open roof together with the rough riding. One was lucky if 20 mph was reached without casting off one of the belts. I have quite forgotten where they ended their days but I am sure the GNR got them back after the Engineers left for England to prepare for D-Day.

By the way, the first experiment was the Civil Engineer's Drewry Inspection Car which was requisitioned by the War Department and fitted with armour plating. This proved far too heavy for the chassis and on the first trial run to Whitehead it broke an axle on arrival. It was lifted onto the excursion platform and stayed there until scrapped some years later.

I trust these few notes will be of interest to fellow members.

Yours etc.,

John H. Houston

Whitehead

Dear Sir,

At its last meeting, the London Area Committee of the Irish Railway Record Society discussed the Editorial remarks in the Summer 1974 issue of Five Foot Three regarding the difficulty experienced by authors of Irish railway manuscripts in getting their writings published, and it was agreed that I should write this letter to you.

As you may know, the IRRS London Area has published three books (with others in preparation) and it is always willing to consider further manuscripts on Irish railway subjects with a view to possible publication. To avoid misunderstandings, I must point out that certain conditions are imposed in respect of any manuscripts accepted, and briefly these are:

- (a) that no fee or royalty is paid to the author (though reasonable expenses are reimbursed)
- (b) that the publishing committee reserves the right to make alterations to the author's text (though this is not done unnecessarily, and usually occurs in consultation with the author), and
- (c) that immediate publication cannot be guaranteed, because of the need to fit in with other publications in the pipeline.

From past experience it appears that (a) can be a major stumbling block, but as the committee gives its services free, and produces books primarily with the objective of disseminating information on Irish railways and not of making a profit, it does not consider this an unreasonable stipulation. Any author, therefore, whose real interest is in seeing his writing published rather than making money, is invited to contact the committee, giving details of what he has to offer.

Yours etc.,

Lance King

Hon. Chairman, London Area, IRRS



During June we bade farewell to the old Larne Town Station, now replaced by a modern station on a new alignment made necessary by road works. Here Jeep 52 is seen working the 6:47am from York Road to Larne Harbour on 20th July 1965. (R.M. Arnold)



STEAM GALA 1974. A view of part of the activities showing No.4, "Guinness" and "Lough Erne" at the platform with part of the Diner on the extreme right. The train is being worked by No.171. In the right foreground the local fire brigade partially hides an Aveling road engine. (C.P. Friel)



No.171 "Slieve Gullion" passes Fortwilliam with the Empty Coaches for the third Portrush Flyer on August 17th 1974. The coal troubles" were yet to come. (C.P. Friel)



No.171 in action again on the final leg of the Tenth Anniversary Railtour on 26th October 1974. There were no certainly no steaming difficulties on this trip. Here No.171 races past Magherabeg Bridge, just south of Kellswater. (C.P. Friel)