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FIVE FOOT THREE

No.18

Winter 1975

Editor: C.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.171 eases across the Shannon Bridge at Athlone on the “Burma Road” tour in May 1975. (C.P. Friel)



We publish this photo by way of a light-hearted quiz. There's no prize or anything like that but you may like to exercise your knowledge by trying to identify the location. The solution is printed at the end of the text - but don't look yet. (Lens of Sutton Collection)

EDITORIAL

When Five Foot Three began life, some nine years ago, prototype steam was entering its last phase and the magazine had the twin objectives of providing articles about the Society and articles on Irish railways generally.

Our articles have concentrated on the steam era, mainly because our writers prefer to write about steam, partly because the backbone of Society workers and the majority of members (so far as we can tell) like it that way and mostly because steam is the *raison d'être* of much of our enthusiasm. While steam was still in company use, Five Foot Three carried "Vaporaria", an informed and comprehensive coverage of steam activities which did much to introduce new members to the ways of steam in Ireland. But with the withdrawal of the last Jeeps five years ago, all of our articles had to assume a retrospective air and it has been a worry to your present Editor that sooner or later these articles, based largely on personal experiences as they are, would dry up or reduce to a trickle.

Let it be said straight away that there are no signs of this happening, judging by the supply of articles still being written and submitted.

Apart from personal recollections, there is much room for personal research. Most of you will know a railwayman and could jot down his tales and yarns. Why not consider a piece based on that? Doing this would require a lot of common sense and considerable diplomacy on your part and not a little co-operation on the part of your subject. The Irish Folklore Commission have been in the collecting field for some time and, precisely on the basis of talking to ageing farmers and fisher folk, have accumulated masses of invaluable material. There is much valuable railway material waiting to be tapped, sifted and sorted and set down on paper. But if someone doesn't start work soon, most of it will be lost for ever.

There must be many members with interesting tales that could do with being published; but it's a sad fact that not everyone thinks he can write well enough for publication - he should see some of the items submitted to the printers we use! Any publication carries a fair bit of ghosting and behind-the-scenes cross-checking. So if any member feels unhappy about producing a polished article, he should feel confident of receiving any help he may feel necessary (discreetly done, of course).

There are other ways you can help in the production of the magazine or in the Publication Department generally. Someone with a knowledge of printing methods would be an obvious asset but anyone who can type or handle Letraset or prepare layouts for printing would be just as welcome. Amazingly few enthusiasts seem to do their own printing, but some of our photographers should find plenty of useful work in copying old photos or producing acceptable prints from old or difficult negatives (or indeed learn how to do any of these things) and find a worthwhile niche in Publications.

Another valued member of the team would be someone good at drawing (not necessarily with fancy letters after his name) who might busy himself (herself) producing drawings, sketches or even cartoons.

At present the Publications Department functions almost single-handed and your Editor is anxious to involve more people wherever and whenever possible. If any of the above is accomplished, then Five Foot Three should be able to go on producing valuable articles on the steam era for many years to come in a format worthy of their content.

Please call us, we can't call you.

NEWS FROM COMMITTEE

Denis Grimshaw

The new Committee took over last November in the midst of negotiations to purchase ten coaches from Northern Ireland Railways. The vehicles to be purchased were:

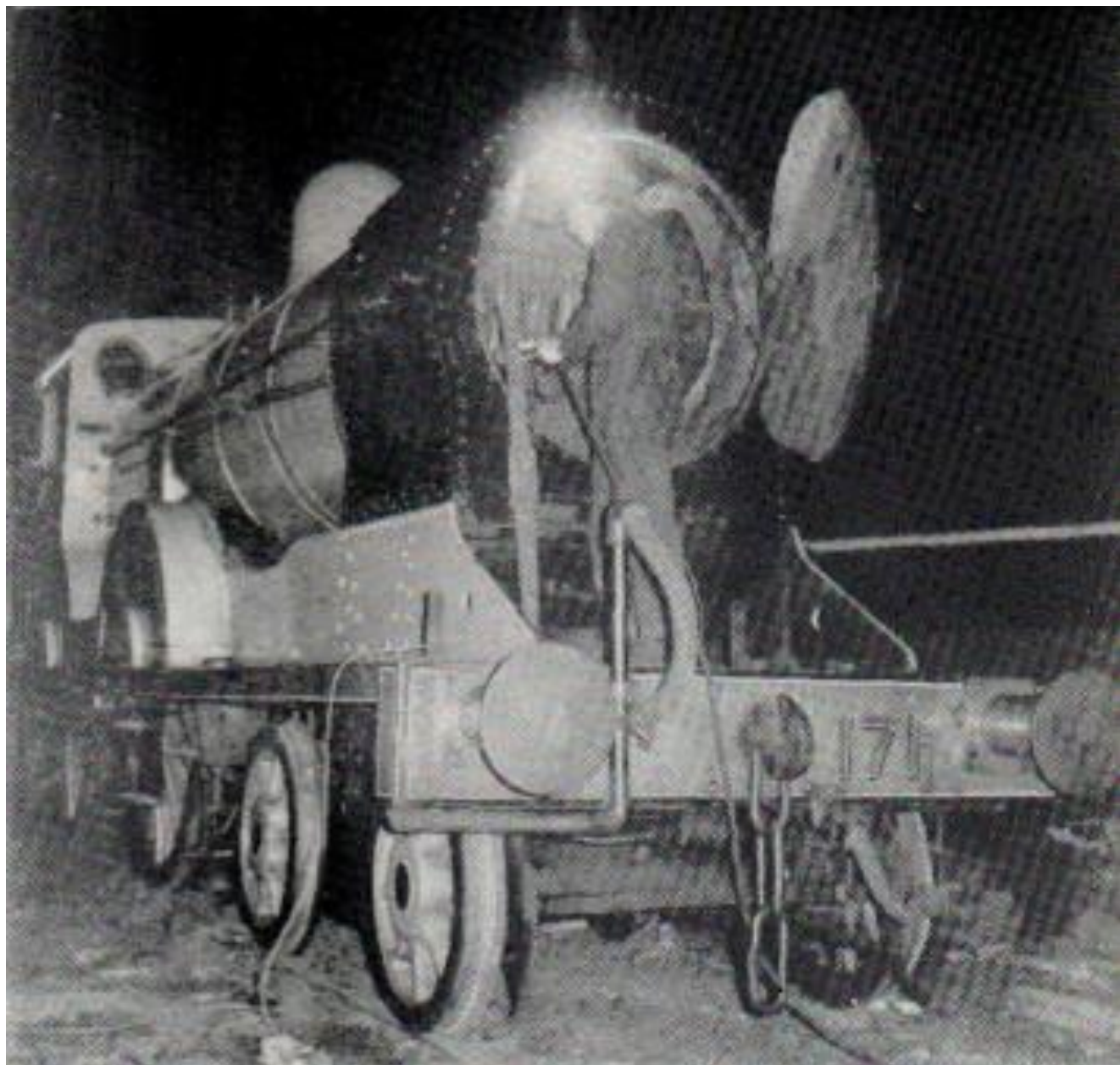
561	ex-GNR	227	C2	Side-corridor first	48 seats
562	ex-GNR	231	D5	Brake first corridor	18 seats
583	ex-GNR	176	K15	Open Second	70 seats
586	ex-GNR	9	K31	Open Second	72 seats
594	ex-GNR	175	L14	Brake Open Second	23 seats
340	ex-NCC	238	J12	Corridor Second	64 seats
342	ex-NCC	241	J12	Corridor Second	64 seats
358	ex-NCC	243	J6	Corridor Second	64 seats
472	ex-NCC	91	K3	Brake second corridor	56 seats
550	ex-UTA	81	B5	Dining Car	34 seats

In the event 550 was not available and an additional K15, No.581 was substituted. At that time it was anticipated that all the coaches (other than 550) would be available to us during the winter. However, the delayed introduction of the railcars on NIR prevented York Road works from preparing a new loco-hauled set from ex-BUT railcars in time for the spring and summer traffic, with the result that NIR have had to retain the ex-NCC coaches and 586 in traffic for the time being, and they have not yet come into RPSI ownership. Additionally, 561 and 594 have not yet been moved to Whitehead, due to lack of storage space and the amount of work needed to put them back in service.

Towards the end of the year the Society became registered for VAT purposes. Whilst some additional

book-keeping work is now required, we have the great advantage of being able to reclaim all VAT paid on purchases by the Society. Taking into account the coach purchases, this should save us nearly £300 this year.

The re-signalling and rationalisation of trackwork on the Dublin-Cork main line has resulted in Sallins goods shed losing its rail connections. We were therefore obliged to move No.186 out of Sallins and she is now stored in another shed on the CIÉ system - originally she was to go to Dundalk but this was changed at the last moment, while the engine was on the move.



BALLYMENA & LARNE (1): No.171 started the operating season by working the “Ballymena & Larne” on 5th April. Here we see the engine having its small tubes blown through with the compressed air line on the night before the tour. (C.P. Friel)

It was decided to construct a mobile workshop in the large 30 foot van area of the ex-BUT railcar brake first, 562. This will enable minor repairs and adjustments to be made to our locos and coaches during

tours, if necessary, in an emergency. Spare parts (and spare coal) can also be carried.

One of the more unpleasant decisions which had to be taken was to postpone until September (and ultimately cancel) the hitherto annual Steam Gala. There were two principal reasons for the decision - firstly, the extensive track alterations and additions needed at Whitehead would not leave the layout suitable for extensive train operations in June and secondly, the amount of work demanded by the trackwork, carriage renovation, loco maintenance and tour and Flyer operations, coupled with our hard-pressed but nevertheless limited workforce, simply didn't make the extra effort of a Gala feasible.

We decided to stage an RPSI appearance at the Sportsman's Show held in the King's Hall, Belfast from 25th February to 1st March. A stand was booked jointly by ourselves and Lord O'Neill's Shane's Castle Railway. We hoped to recoup most or all of the cost from sales of souvenirs, books, etc. As it happened, sales were disappointing but we gained valuable publicity.



BALLYMENA & LARNE (2): No.171 speeds past Dunadry on the NCC main line with the five-coach tour train on its way to Ballymena. (C.P. Friel)

Two notable alterations to our Insurance Cover were made. Firstly, our Public Liability insurance cover was increased to £500,000 and secondly a Personal Accident Policy was taken out to cover our members whilst at Whitehead or on tours. Benefits and so on are mentioned in Derek Young's "Insurance Notes" elsewhere in this issue.

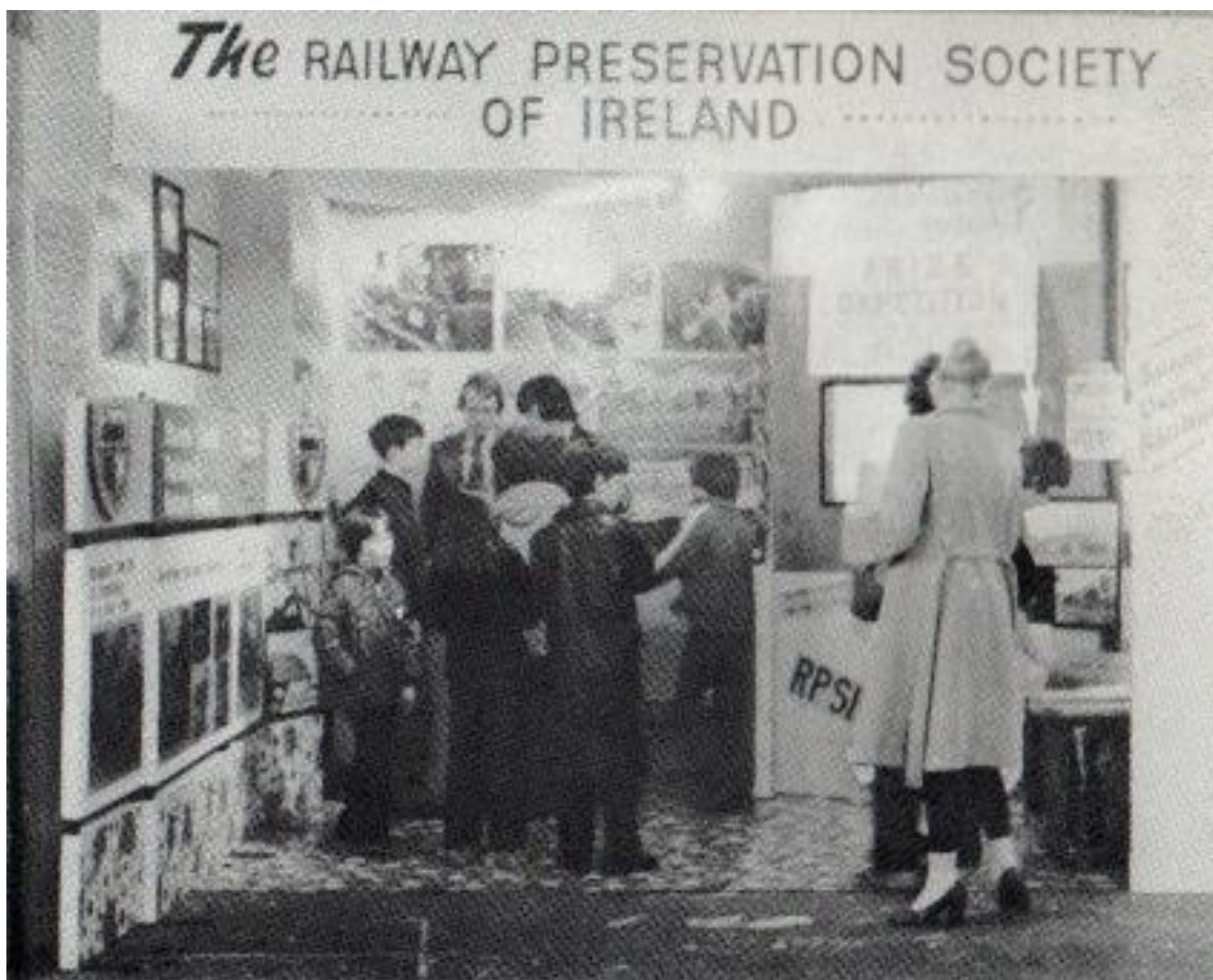
The Society's old tractor, which had given invaluable service in previous years, finally gave up the ghost last autumn. Repair was not practicable, again mainly from a manpower point of view, and in April we purchased a loading shovel for £350 while the old machine fetched £50 for scrap. The loading shovel is a heavy diesel-powered tractor with a big loading bucket and with its arms pivoted above the driver's cab, the bucket can reach higher than even No.4's built-up bunk from ground level.

A scheme to organise and control the Society's workshop facilities and personnel to the best overall advantage of locos, coaches and trackwork, was evolved during the spring and has now been put into effect at Whitehead.

Finally, at the time of writing, a great start has been made to the operating season with the outstanding successes of the "Ballymena & Larne" and the "Burma Road" Railtours. Bookings for the Flyer were slow at first but picked up dramatically after further publicity and prospects are bright.

Expenditure on locos during the year so far is:

No.3	£120	No.186	£25
No.3BG	£20	Equipment	£30
No.4	£110	Workshop	£70
No.23	£12	Miscellaneous	£61
No.171	£80		



The Society's stand (jointly with the Shane's Castle Railway) at the Sportsman's Show in Belfast earlier this year. The display of photographs included all our locos, a selection of coaches, coverage of the Flyer, views of tours and illustrations of work in progress. A programme of slides of RPSI and SCR views ran continuously using back projection. Sales were very disappointing but as a publicity exercise it was very worthwhile. (C.P. Friel)

The work of maintaining our engines continues unabated though thankfully with fewer of the last-minute struggles which dominated many previous winters' work. It is possibly best to take each of the engines in turn and outline the work completed and on hand at present.

3BG It was intended to give this engine a hydraulic test before the summer season and the boiler was prepared for the test but in the end it was postponed when six replacement boiler tubes were late arriving. Her tubes are now in poor condition and the engine will require re-tubing within the next two years.



Removing the tank and chimney of "R.H. Smyth" using a hired road crane. (C.P. Friel)

3 The Derry engine, "R.H Smyth", has been receiving an overhaul but the work has only been carried on when more essential tasks permitted. To facilitate examination of the boiler we removed the saddle tank and the chimney.

This necessitated the hire of a seven-ton mobile crane. The boiler was in reasonable condition but with the usual defects - tubes needing replacement, wasting of tubeplate and rivets in the smokebox below the tubes and wasting of the firebox wrapper plates near the foundation ring.

The tubes had clearly been replaced in batches at different times - the soundest batch was in the middle while the tubes to the outside were badly corroded and required replacement. Some of the replacements came as spares with the loco while the rest were old tubes from No.4 and No.171 last year. A batch of these old tubes was cleaned in a chemical bath by Messrs Harland & Wolff. We then selected the best and removed the ends of the tubes, where the most pitting had occurred, when cutting the tube to the correct length for the smaller boiler. A hydraulic test was carried out, to a pressure of 240 lbs per square inch to the satisfaction of the insurers - we can now proceed to prepare the engine for steam testing. When removed, the saddle tank was

found to be in fair condition except along the sides at the bottom next the boiler. This part of the tank was inaccessible when the tank was in situ but while it is off the engine it can easily be repaired by patching the affected parts.

The engine needs considerable sheet metal work done and some is already in hand, viz. the smokebox, the running plates and the ashpan. Removing the chimney necessitated burning away part of the smokebox since the chimney had become corroded into the supporting ring. The running plates need repairs in the vicinity of the sand and tool boxes while the smokebox door bears a number of patches and is an unsightly piece of ironmongery - we would like to replace it if possible.

During the winter some members agreed to take fittings and copper tubing home for cleaning during the week and the scheme was a big success with several very clean and well restored fittings being put back on the loco. Many of the valve faces had been badly cut by steam and these were machined or ground in as appropriate. Certain of the studs for mounting fittings to the boiler were replaced.

As stated before, we hope to have the loco in traffic for next summer but again this will depend on the pressure of work on other engines.

- 4 The first job tackled on No.4 after last year's running season was attention to the brake gear. The problem with the brakes was that because of wear in the brake hangers and crossbeam bearings, the brake blocks were moving out sideways and were in danger of fouling the coupling rods. The design of the blocks, with no flange round the back of the wheel tread means that they tend to come away from the wheel when the brake gear bearings get worn. It was hoped to rectify the position by renewing six bushes but we ended up replacing no less than twenty-four bushes and sleeves. This involved a very considerable amount of work as all (of the order of 2½" diameter and 3½" long) had to be bored, machined, case hardened and fitted. To add to the work, one of the brake hangers was found to be twisted and one of the crossbeams one inch longer than to drawing so that in the first instance assembly was impossible.

While working the "Portrush Flyer" on 19th July, one of No.4's superheater elements burst. A continuous blow was noticeable when the regulator was open at Belfast in the morning and became gradually worse as the day progressed. This led to heavy coal and water consumption and a poor performance, especially with the nine coach train. The element in question was located, removed and repaired and the engine was turned out on the Train Rides on 27th July. However, this revealed that more elements were defective since more began leaking while the engine was in steam.

It is a difficult job locating the leaking elements while they are in the boiler and with the likelihood that other elements were about to leak too, it was thought best to remove them all and examine and hydraulically test each one individually. As well as the elements, the water tanks were giving trouble with a serious leak needing attention.

By arranging for No.171 to work the 2nd August Flyer, we had three weeks to complete No.4 in time for the two proposed ten-coach Flyers.

As expected, we found a further five elements to be leaking or near to perforation when examined. These were replaced with sound tubing and the whole set tested hydraulically to 300 lbs per square inch before replacement in the engine. No further trouble was experienced with the elements.

- 171 It had been proposed to repair the tender with strengthening of corroded internal stretcher plates but this had to be postponed due to lack of time.

The left piston rod and crosshead were dismantled so that an error in the taper joint could be rectified. At some time the rod had been forced into the crosshead too far thus leaving the clearances in the cylinder incorrect. The small end strap was impossible to remove as it was too near the projecting end of the piston rod and the cotter was no longer doing its designed job of forcing the rod into the crosshead but rather trying to force the two apart if driven in.

It was difficult to dismantle the joint - it is usual to use a gradually tapered wedge driven between the end of the rod and the small end but it couldn't be used in this case as the gap was too small and wedge buckled. Eventually the joint was broken using the connecting rod as a lever - we dismantled the big end and applied force to this end of the connecting rod thus causing the small end strap to bear upon the piston rod.

To correct the fault, several methods were open to us - it was thought best to build up the tapered end of the rod with a deposit of nickel and machine and refit to the crosshead. In the event this work was carried out by Lyness Brothers (Plating Engineers) of Belfast - our best thanks are due to them for promptly undertaking a difficult job and also doing it free of charge.

Twenty-five firebars (a half-set) for No.171 were cast by Kane's Foundry of Larne.



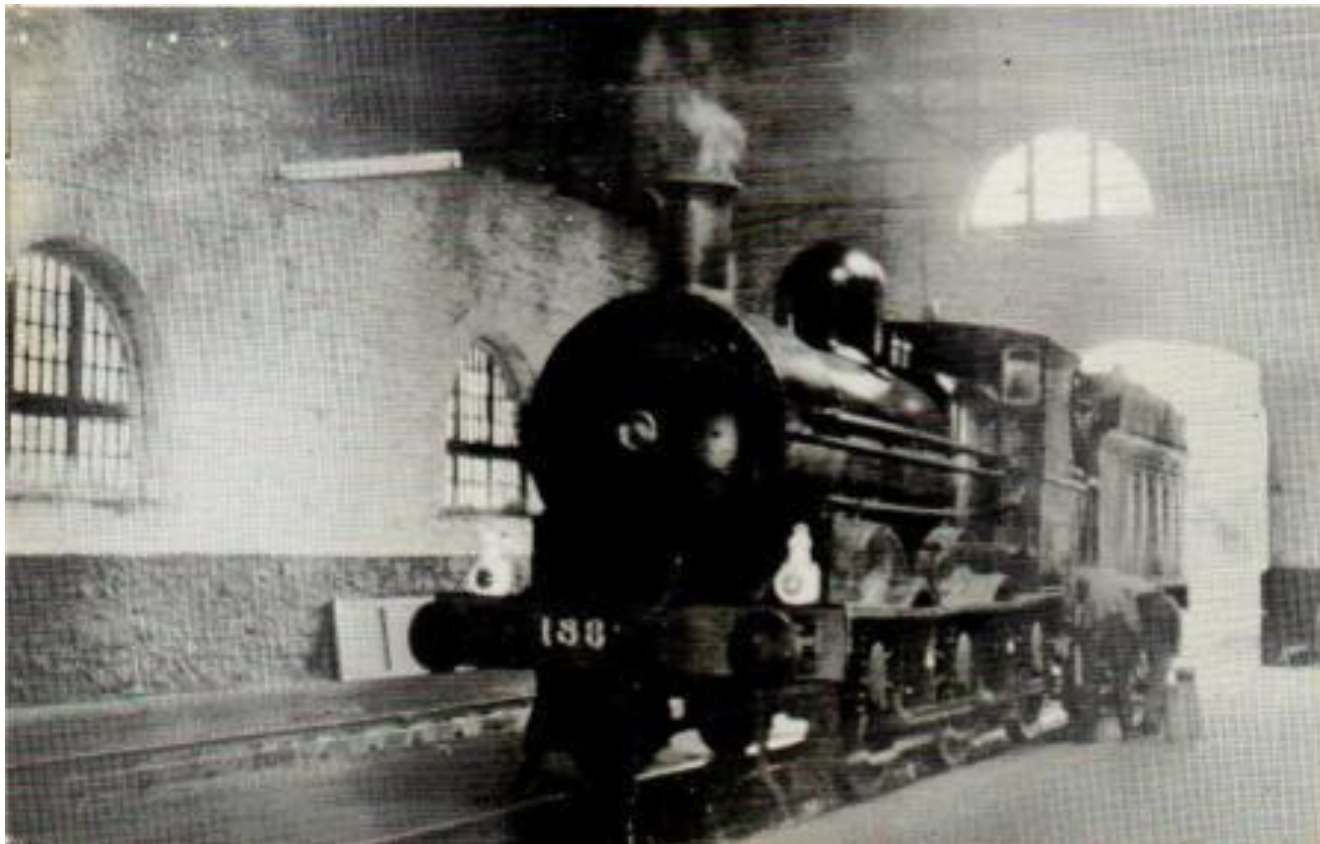
Both the locomotives involved in the "Burma Road" tour on 31st May/1st June had running-in trips to test work done during the winter. Here No.171 stops at Glynn during its running-in trip to Larne Harbour and back. (Brian Hill)

- 186** The tender axlebox pads which gave trouble during the "Silvermines" tour were replaced as soon as pads of the correct type were obtained and the loco ran satisfactorily on the "Burma Road" tour.

The loco will require vacuum brake gear overhaul and boiler inspection (both visual and under steam) by the insurers before running again.

Plant The loading shovel has proved very useful - as well as loading coal very efficiently, it can lift items weighing up to two tons, e.g. corridor ends, BUT railcar heating boilers, R.H. Smyth's tank. It has also successfully started the Planet by towing it.

The roof of the compressor house is proceeding as manpower is available. Other improvements have been carried out in the organisation of stores, tool cupboards and the working area in the shed.



The sort of photograph you can get on our tours - steam in its proper environment with little or nothing to show that it is a tour in the seventies and not a scene from the fifties. Here No.186 is oiled round inside the ex-MGWR shed at Sligo on the Sunday morning, 1st June 1975. (C.P. Friel)

SITE REPORT

Paul Newell

Since my last report the re-positioning of the former splitting point for No.2 Carriage Siding and the main line has been completed with the result that shunting has already become greatly simplified. The removal of the point and its reinstatement in the platform road to give access to shed roads 1 and 2 was done in four weekends - this reflected great credit on those involved. However, I must point out that the work would not have been completed but for the valuable assistance of the Locomotive Department and Ken Pullin of the Carriage and Wagon department who designed the layout of the point.

As well as working at Whitehead, members have been involved in the lifting of two points from Greenisland, which will arrive at Whitehead as soon as we can arrange transport. Work is also in hand slewing the old main line behind the water column and extending it along the trackbed of the No.1 Carriage Siding, christened the Burma Road siding in its embryo state when it seemed as if nothing would run over it. There was some earthwork required to prepare the old cutting for the new track and this involved a day's work for a 6D excavator, which managed to break the main water pipe to ourselves and the nearby railway cottages. The break was fixed next day but not before the excavations

had turned into a quagmire. The approved expenditure so far reads like this:

Hire of excavator	£60
Purchase of 20 tons ballast	£30
Fence extension materials	£200
Purchase of two points	£600
Purchase of track	£400

The fence extension materials will be used to extend the fence towards the bridge around Nos. 1 and 2 Carriage Sidings so that No.1 will be able to take seven bogies and No.2 six bogies. With Nos. 1 and 2 Shed Roads clear, Nos. 3 and 4 Shed Roads and the platform will hold another five bogies giving a total storage space of eighteen coaches in comparative security.



Taking levels on the newly-installed point in the platform road, giving access to the shed roads 1 and 2. The truncated 'main line' in the background has been slewed behind the water column to lead to the new No.1 Carriage Siding. (C.P. Friel)

INSURANCE NOTES

Derek Young

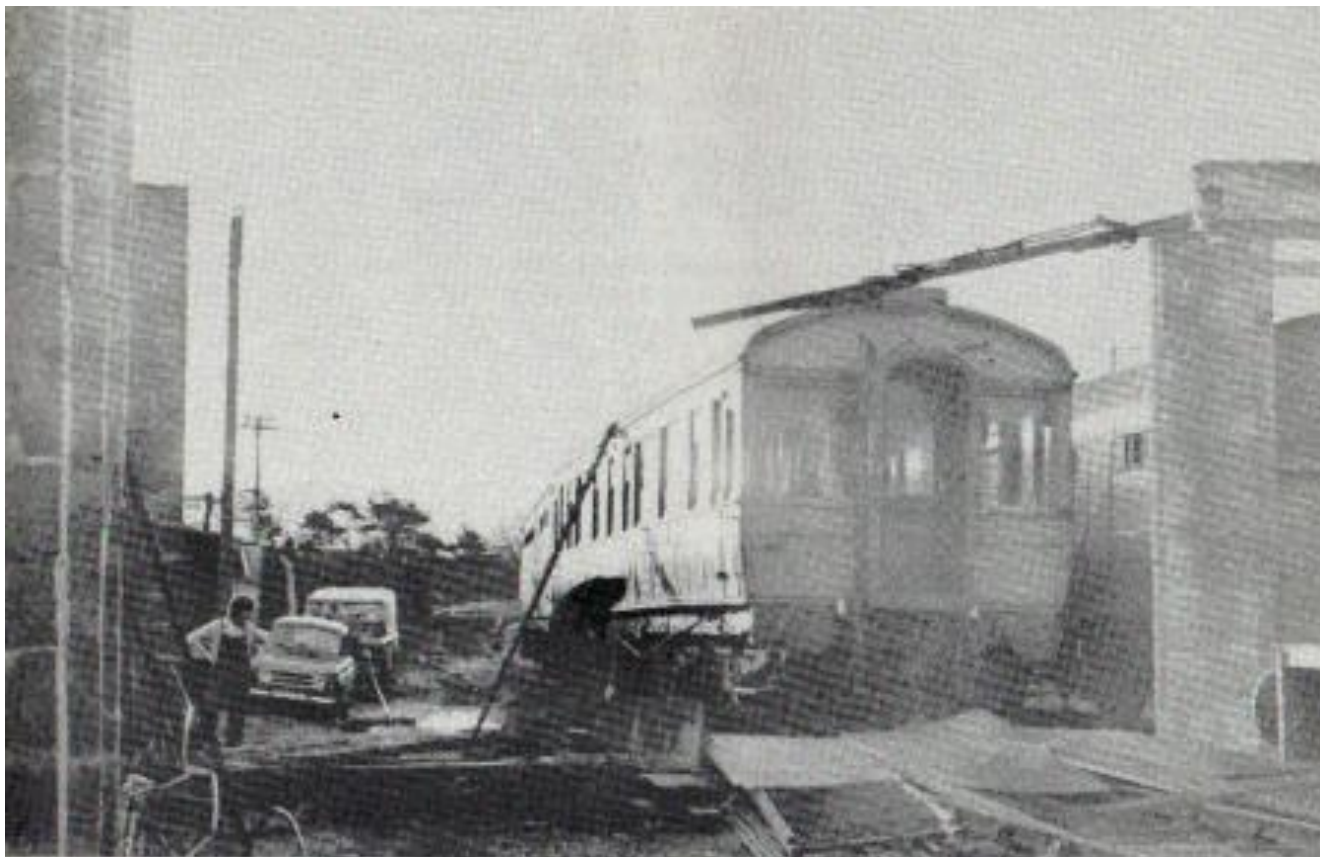
The Society has in force various insurance policies designed to protect the Committee and members from any legal liability arising out of the various activities carried on at Whitehead and the operation of railtours, etc.

The Shed Building is protected by a Fire Policy and another policy covers inspection and insurance of the locomotive boilers. A Public Liability policy covers the Society's legal liability for injury caused to any person legitimately on the site at Whitehead, or damage to his property. The liability of one member to another is not covered; that is, one member accidentally injuring another during the course of work. It is possible to effect individual 'personal liability' policies covering their legal liability for causing personal injury or damage to property. Members should contact their own insurance company

for details - premiums are modest. This type of cover is now also available as an addition to the 'household' type of policy covering the building and/or contents of a private dwelling house, and some members might find that they already have this extension. If not, it can easily be arranged and the premium is usually less than if a new policy were to be issued.

A 'personal liability' policy would of course cover a member at all times, and could nowadays be regarded as an essential addition to complete one's own personal insurance cover. If one, for instance, crossed a road carelessly, and caused an accident, an action could be taken by the aggrieved party on the grounds of negligence, and this policy would provide cover against the ensuing claim. The word 'negligence' should be noted.

The Committee are continually reviewing insurance cover, and have just concluded negotiations to provide a Group Personal Accident Policy. A summary of the cover provided for members is set out below.



The remains of the front of the new shed after being blown down by a gale in December last. The doors to the left-hand road have gone altogether while all that remains of the doors to road four is the door header resting on the GN Directors' Saloon. As yet no manpower has been available to begin rebuilding. (C.P. Friel)

Insured Persons

Any registered member of the Society between the ages of 16 and 70, of sound bodily and mental health and free from defect or infirmity, while on the premises of the Insured (i.e. the Society) and including any outing organised by the Society, from the time the member leaves his home for the purpose of taking part in any such outing, until the time of return home after such outing.

Benefits

Death	£2,000 (£250 if under 18 years)
Loss of two limbs, or sight of both eyes, or lose of one limb and sight of one eye	£2,000
Loss of one limb or sight of one eye	£2,000
Permanent total disablement from attending to any occupation	£2,000
Temporary total disablement from attending to the Insured person's occupation.	Benefit during such disablement at the rate of £20 per week (£5 if under 18)

The temporary total disablement payment of £20 per week is not paid for the first week of any disablement. This is known as the deferred period, and is designed to eliminate claims for a small injury, e.g. a bruise, and keeps the premium at a reasonable level.

Members will be pleased to learn that this cover is being provided at an annual premium of 20p per head! The Society has to pay an annual premium based on the membership at 1st January each year and the Treasurer, John Richardson, would be grateful if every member would take the first opportunity available to send 20p, e.g. the next tour booking or postal sales order. This is an important policy, designed to, as far as possible, protect members working at Whitehead, with the additional cover provided for the journey to and from the Site and Railtours, so please assist the Treasurer - it is for your benefit.

The Society has a duty to take all reasonable precautions to see that its activities are carried out in a proper, ordered and competent manner. All members working at Whitehead should have signed an indemnity form and the guidance and instructions of the Site Officer and the Safety Officer followed at all times. Members owe it to the Society and themselves, to ensure that they work safely within the limits laid down.

Remember, insurance premiums now take up a large slice of the Society's annual income; the insurance cover is there to protect you but you still must remember that Safety Comes First. Now, how about sending in your 20p - it's a bargain.

HOLYWOOD REMEMBERED

Ernest N. Cooke

In writing this article I hope to convey to younger readers some idea of what Holywood station was like between around 1925 and 1950 and possibly revive memories for readers nearer to my own age. I cannot guarantee that everything is perfectly exact, I will be as accurate as memory allows without delving into text books.

My earliest memory of Holywood station is being driven there in one of three local taxis, those owned by either Billy Anderson, Tommy Crighton or James White. It was usually for the purpose of being taken for an afternoon's shopping, which I hated as much then as I do now, and on arrival at Queen's Quay we usually took a horse-drawn cab to the city centre. The train we invariably took was the 'Motor' train which must have left around 2pm, always from the Down platform, there being a notice on the Up side of the subway to show that the next train for Belfast would leave from the Down side. On the Motor train one could buy tickets from the conductor, or at the booking office, whichever suited. The train itself consisted of one long 'motor' coach (the name originating from when these coaches actually had an articulated engine) and one or two six-wheelers. The motor coaches, being

eight-wheelers, ran very smoothly, they were clean, light and airy; they were non-smokers and all third class, if one wished to travel by second or first class one used a six-wheeler, and it was the custom for third class passengers who wished to smoke that they were allowed to use the second class compartments. The engine was always a 2-4-2 tank, one of either numbers 5, 7 or 27. Possibly 28 was also used but I do not remember it.

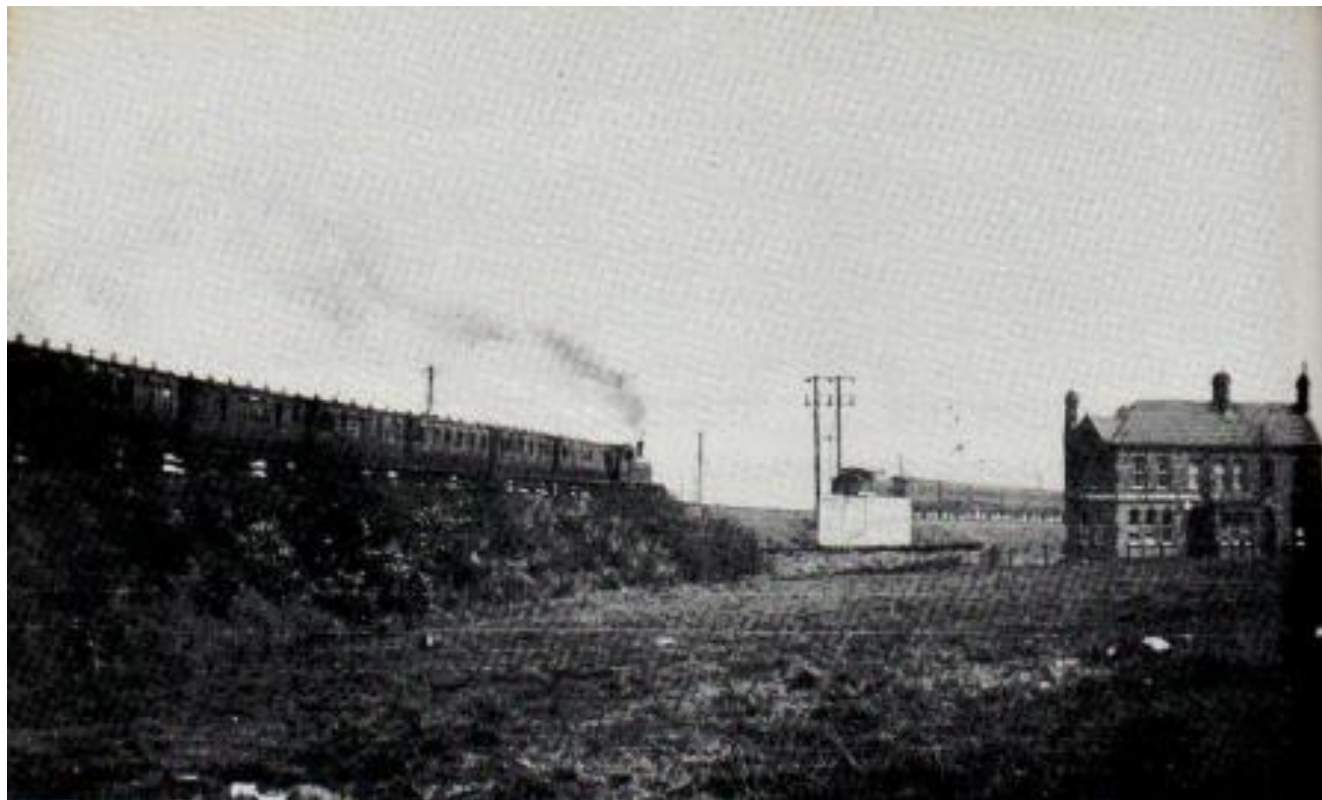


Great Southern F2 class 2-4-2T No.430 near Sandycove with a Dublin to Bray train in June 1951. Built as DSER No.11 at Grand Canal Street in 1886, this engine ran for a time on the Belfast and County Down. (Derek Cross)

There were two motor train sets kept at Belfast, the third motor coach being usually at Downpatrick. The motor trains on the Bangor line turned either at Holywood or Craigavad, they consisted of either one or two six-wheelers, never more than two; one was always a first/second composite, if there was a second one it was usually all second class. The composite was often a small coach with only four compartments, two firsts and two seconds. The motor coaches consisted of two larger ones and one that had two windows less than the larger two coaches. When running with the engine at the rear, the driver operated the train from a driving compartment at the end of the motor coach, that is to say the end nearer Belfast, this operation was done by turning a large three-leg vertical handle which was connected to rods which controlled the regulator in the engine, and of course the driver also had a brake valve. There was also a printed sign setting out the whistle code for communicating with the man on the engine - I wonder was there a copy of this notice in the engine, I doubt it. There was a wire over the roofs of the train which enabled the man in the motor coach to operate the engine whistle. Passengers were forbidden to ride in the driving compartment of the coach, though they could enter or leave the train through it; sad to say this strict rule was not being observed in the tragic accident in fog at Ballymacarrett when a motor train ran into a stationary Up business train from Bangor.

That was on 10th January 1945. I remember the way in which the Up line all the way back to Marino,

and probably beyond, was blocked by the following Up trains which were held at the automatic signals. I had gone to Holywood to catch the 9:15 ex-Bangor but I am not sure now on which actual train I left for Belfast about an hour later, going very slowly past the scene of the crash, the only time I ever remember working wrong-line on the Bangor branch in BCDR days.



No.3 on the 8:57am Down crosses either 8 or 16 working bunk first on the 8:45am ex Bangor near Holywood in 1934. The foreground, towards the Star and Garter on the right, has now been built upon. (Ernest N. Cooke)

Reverting to my main subject again, Holywood station itself was quite a place. On entering through what is still the entrance hall today, on the right was a wall showing the current BCDR and other timetables, behind the wall was the stationmaster's house which had a pleasant garden giving on to Redburn Square. On the left was the booking office, in which at least three men worked - in earlier days there was a reasonable amount of parcel and goods traffic which all had to be documented, much of the smaller items being handled by the local carrier Fred Graham who operated a horse-drawn cart around the district. In later years there was a kiosk in the right-hand corner of the entrance hall, and on leaving the hall and turning left one at once saw the notice about "Next Train to Belfast" which I mentioned earlier. On the Up side, first came a hatch for parcels traffic, in to the back of the booking office, next was a substantial "Gentlemen", with appliances supplied by Oakes of Halifax. Then one came to a large gate, beside which was a smaller gate which was the one generally used by the ticket collectors. On the platform itself were no less than three waiting rooms, but I can only remember one being used, the one nearest Belfast. The centre waiting room was used by a very important military gentleman during the War, the Railway Transport Officer who must indeed have had one of the easiest jobs in the Army! On the Down platform the gate was nearly at the top of the incline leading up from the subway, and there was a single waiting room. Of course the waiting rooms always had a fire in winter and I think the Ladies Room must have been off the Down platform waiting room. The third platform was the small bay at the Belfast end of the Up platform - it was used by Motor trains

whenever they had to move away from the Down line if a Bangor-bound train was due before their departure time. The bay could not be reached direct by a train arriving from Belfast and was used two or three times daily.

A strange feature of Holywood was the centre track; it was really a run-round for engines of trains which turned at Holywood, but as all trains then turning there were motors, it was seldom used except by the daily goods which arrived from Belfast in the very early morning and which I never saw. But the strangest of all was the method used to deliver coal to the gasworks, which were situated behind the Belfast end of the Down platform. The operation was always done after the passing of the last train at night as it involved manual loading of the coal from the trucks into barrows which were then emptied into the coal holes behind the platform.



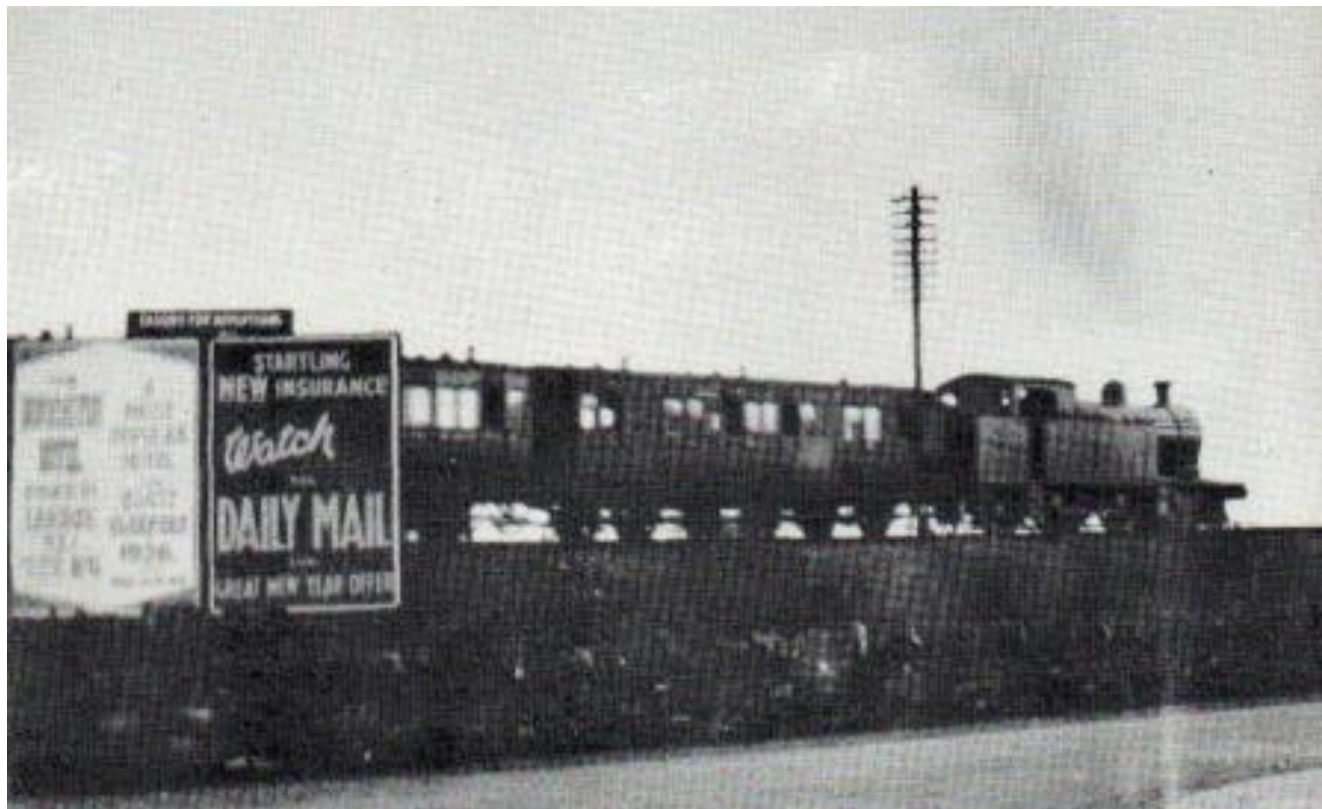
BCDR Baltic tank No.25, running as UTA No.225, near Carnalea on a Down train of six-wheelers on 14th May 1950. The Baltics were built by Beyer Peacock in 1920 and survived until 1956. (H.C. Casserley)

Redburn Square, onto which the station opened, remained much the same until the present by-pass road was built, but in the early 1930s there were no houses between the station and the Star and Garter public house on the left-hand side of the road leaving the square and here one could get a good view of the trains. The first bridge at the Bangor end of the station was for pedestrians only and I often broke the law on my bicycle! On the shore side of this bridge was an ancient men's lavatory which ceased to function when more modern conveniences, male and female, were opened on the shore side of the next bridge. There was, as indeed there still is, an opening from the bottom of the ramp leading to the Down platform which gave access on to Marine Parade. During the 1930s when the BCDR started to operate the Holywood buses (previously operated by the owner of the Maypole cinema, I think - they were certainly called 'Maypole') garages were built to house the buses in the goods yard and these were eventually used by the NIRTB buses. But a far more interesting piece of 'garaging' took place in the

goods yard after the Belfast air-raids, when every night about half a dozen tank engines were sent there rather than risk bombing in Belfast. Indeed some of the Baltic tanks surplus to requirements were to be seen there during the daytime.

On the top of the pillars supporting the fine platform awnings, could be seen the monogram of the original Belfast and Holywood Railway - I wonder do they still exist?

Before the installation of the automatic signals in the early 1930s, there were fine semaphores - the Down starter was on a bracket that stuck out beside the elevated signal cabin, the Up starter was a double signal as it also controlled the bay line, there was an arm with probably five signals on it and this controlled movement in and out of the goods yard. On the Down platform there was, and still is, a signal which controlled the 'motor' trains leaving for Belfast.



4-4-2 tank No.16 starts away from Holywood with the 8:55am from Queen's Quay to Bangor in 1930. (Ernest N. Cooke)

The goods yard had a substantial single-line goods warehouse and three other sidings, there was what one could term as 'general' traffic handled in the warehouse, and a fair coal traffic in the yard. During the hunting season horse-boxes were used from the passenger bay platform and were conveyed by passenger train. Parcels traffic was handled by passenger train and the heaviest daily item was fish which arrived by the 8:55 from Belfast and was collected by the local fish purveyor, a Mr Fred Balmer. The newspapers also used to arrive from town in the mornings and evenings. There was an actual six-wheel fish van. It passed through Holywood from Bangor every morning, I think on the 8:45 from Bangor, but it was not opened at Holywood. A similar van operated between Ardglass and Belfast and maybe one also from Donaghadee.

From the time when I first began to study the timetable, in the early 1930s, it changed little till the outbreak of the war in 1939. From an observer's point of view the most spectacular sights were the business trains that passed through in the morning and evening without a stop - what a sight it was to

see a Baltic, bunker first, coming down from Marino, steady as a rock, charge through the station and then open up as it gained level ground beyond, the last six-wheeler swaying from side to side.

Another fine sight was to watch an express heading for Bangor, from the Marine Parade where the road from the Maypole turns on to the front.



BCDR tank No.3 with the 12:55pm ex Queen's Quay leaving Holywood on 28th February 1952. No.3 was shedded at Bangor. The leading vehicle in the train is an old NCC bogie. At this period County Down trains were a varied lot, with ex-NCC railcar 3 on the 'motor' turn, the first of the UTA railcars 6 and 7 in use on Bangor trains. Baltic 224 was in service together with large 4-4-2Ts 208 and 209, small tanks 203 and 211 and 2-6-4Ts 10 and 50. (R.M. Arnold)

Much has been put in print by others about the trains themselves, so I will not get too involved here. The general make-up of the Bangor trains was seven in winter, eight in summer when an extra 'third' was added, and during the rush hours trains went up to twelve six-wheelers, some of which were Club saloons. Great was my joy in 1938 when the two new eight-wheelers arrived, giving a very much smoother ride to all three classes of travellers, and in fact a train of eight-wheelers was made up by taking three older coaches from the main line. At the other extreme was the workmen's train, 7:15 from Bangor in the morning and 5:50 Down in the evening, a slow train made up of very ancient six-wheelers which were not used except on this service - they should have been classified Fourth rather than Third.

The engines I remember most, apart from the trio that worked the motors, were the large 4-4-2 tanks, numbers 8 and 16; they were exceptionally reliable. Then the four Baltics, which I admired for their

beauty and size, but which I have since learnt were not so popular with those who operated them. In winter, and especially during the last years before the war, smaller 4-4-2 tanks were used more and more. I remember particularly numbers 3, 15 and 30, though of course all members of the class must have also been seen. The tender engines were seen from time to time, but not on regular duties, but I cannot remember seeing the 2-4-0. Then towards the end of the war the new large 4-4-2 tank number 9 was produced, and another wartime sight was a Great Southern 2-4-2 tank which was more generally seen pottering around Queen's Quay. I will say nothing of the eventual arrival of the Jeeps for by then the BCDR had ceased to exist.

Footnote

After consulting R.M. Arnold about the caption for the first photograph relating to Mr Cooke's article, he supplied the following note on BCDR loco working which is of great interest. He writes:

During the hard times when the Baltic coal bill became impossible, about 1933-1939, the 4-4-2 tanks were used for all Bangor trains, except during 8 or 16's wash-out days or when in for repairs, when one Baltic would appear. This was in winter of course - in summer everything had to be used.

Ex Queen's Quay	Loco	Ex Bangor
	8	7:00am
Goods	16	7:15
6:25	13	7:50
7:15	3	8:00
7:33	8	8:20 (Non-stop)
LE	12	8:35 (One stop only - Donaghadee engine)
7:50	16	8:45 (All stations)
8:29	13	9:15
8:57 (Fast train)	3	9:45
9:55	16	10:45
10:55	13	11:45
11:55	3	12:45
12:55	8	14:00

Prior to 1931, I travelled every Saturday on the 10:45, which at that time was 16 for two weeks, than 23 for two and then back to 16; 8 worked the 9:45 turn then and 24 was the Bangor engine, so standard tanks were much more rare. Typical of the BCDR was the 8:55 altered to 8:57 about 1930 when the new 8:35 ex Bangor started. Every second counted on the BCDR and literally hundreds of times I noted the 10:55 just making its first few puffs off Holywood Down platform as we ground round the curve on the 10:45 to a stop at the platform.

FIRELESS BULLEID?

Link Man

I find that any story, whether historical or otherwise, dealing with the steam locomotive of interest - so may I relate an incident which occurred in the Inchicore erecting shop in 1950?

At that time Inchicore had been asked to do some heavy engineering work for the Electricity Board and

the erecting shop was given the task to complete. In order to meet the delivery date, the men in this shop were asked to work overtime each evening and they agreed to work until 10pm. Being on overtime, the men were entitled to a tea break at five o'clock and the majority of the men took this in the mess room but the foreman and his assistants dined in the shop office situated high on the western gable wall. From here they could look down on the shop floor.

One evening as they sat and ate their meal they heard the small wicket door below them open and a small dapper man stepped in. He walked slowly up and down each aisle, stopping now and then to examine a piece of equipment or look at a locomotive under repair and gradually he made his way to where the foreman and his assistants were sitting.

He greeted them in an educated though friendly English accent and introduced himself as O.V.S. Bulleid. He explained himself as the new Chief Mechanical Engineer (in an acting capacity) and was just looking around the Works. As is the way of all railwaymen, he was invited to have tea.

He politely refused the invitation but sat down and began to talk with the men telling them of the plans he had for the revitalisation of the railway system and of the new coaches he intended to build. Then he revealed the most amazing idea of all.

Using a 'magic' pen incorporated in a ring which he wore on his finger, he drew a locomotive boiler. This boiler had neither firebox or smokebox but had a cab attached at each end and the whole lot was carried on a girder frame mounted on two bogies (the number of wheels was not specified). The boiler would be pressed to 600 pounds per square inch and be fed from an external steam source. Steam supply plants would be erected at strategic points, viz. Inchicore, Cork, Limerick, Thurles, Athlone, Sligo, etc. Each locomotive would be capable of working the heaviest and fastest trains and could remain in traffic for 23 out of every 24 hours.

The principle of this idea is not new, we have had fireless locomotives for many years, but was Bulleid seriously considering applying it to main line operation, or was it just a passing notion?

Think of what a machine of this type would mean in these days of energy crises and concern over air pollution. The dirt and filth associated with the conventional steam loco would be banished forever, the problem of staff recruitment eased (this is always serious where shift work and dirty conditions combine), finding foreign currency to purchase diesel power would not arise and dependency on imported coal or oil would not be the problem it is today. And the engine would, of course, be single-manned.

Preparation of a fireless loco for traffic is simplicity itself and takes only fifteen to twenty minutes. The boiler is filled with hot water and flexible steam pipes from the stationary source are connected. The inlet control valves are opened and gradually the water inside the boiler is raised to the pressure of the incoming steam. When the time comes for recharging, there is no need to refill the boiler with water since the water which produces the steam is added to the original content of the boiler by the condensate of each fresh change of steam from the stationary source.

As the boiler is not a boiler as such but a steel reservoir of suitable strength to withstand the pressure of the outside steam source, there are no boiler tubes and therefore no scale formation and no need for periodic washing out. Maintenance is minimal.

Unfortunately no information is available on the bogies intended, to carry these locos. Of the men who were present at this informal meeting none can recall Bulleid mentioning what he intended to do in this respect but I think a likely answer lies in 'CC1' and the 'Leader' class, Apart from wheel diameter (3ft 7in and 5ft 1in respectively) and number of cylinders per bogie (2 and 3) both had a self-contained and removable steam engine and chain drive (from the middle axle on the 'Leader' and trailing axle on 'CC1') carried independently on each bogie. Perhaps Bulleid had in mind a similar type of bogie for

this design.

The external steam supply plants would, of course, have had boilers built in Inchicore designed for automatic firing on the hopper system using turf as fuel - turf, of course, being more suitable for use in stationary boilers than in a moving engine.

Would such a locomotive have been a success? From the point of view of economy, I say the answer must be yes.

If one takes into account the cost of 94 Metrovick diesel-electric locos and 12 Sulzer locos in 1954 and the cost of re-engining the 94 Metrovicks of classes A and C over the period 1968-1972 plus the cost of 63 General Motors diesel-electrics of three 'B' classes plus the oil bill, it must add up to a staggering total. Compare this with the cost of a similar number of home-produced fireless boilers, with a much longer life and using some of the plentiful native turf to generate the steam, and the steam project must work out very much cheaper.

Success in traffic? Who knows, but certainly anybody who remembers the Crossley A and C classes (and I drove both) would not call them a shining success. The fireless loco being very much simpler in design and construction than a diesel-electric would be less prone to failure, possibly the bogies would have been the most troublesome parts.

Maybe someone else can throw more light on this - perhaps Bulleid's last brainwave in an attempt to stem the tide of dieselisation.

REFLECTIONS OF IRELAND

Derek Cross

"This reservation ticket does not guarantee the holder any particular seat, a seat in particular class nor any seat at all"

Thus the small print on the back of a seat reservation ticket on the Enterprise Express during its first week of running from Belfast to Dublin way back in the late forties. In actual fact I got my seat as designated and a very comfortable seat it was and for the times a very comfortable train, hauled if I recall correctly by Glover Compound No.83 which made a splendid noise going up the bank through Goraghwood and ran like a hare beyond.

Some fifteen years later I travelled the Great Northern main line again on the early Belfast-Dublin train after a wedding of epic proportions and while I don't remember many details of the trip I think we started off behind an ex NCC 2-6-4 tank. What I do remember was the startled expression of the Customs Officer at the Border when he asked if I had anything to declare and I said, "Yes, a monumental hangover," and thrust a cigar into his hand which I had been given sometime in the small hours and certainly did not feel like smoking that morning. He examined it, pronounced it was a good cigar, suggested some whisk(e)y and departed leaving my case in pristine condition. This was the charm of the Irish railways, they were very informal but on the main lines very efficient. Us foreigners can be very funny at their expense - Limerick Junction will never live down Ahrons but he was right ... I saw it for myself in diesel days and still don't believe it; though to this day Cambridge station has a similarity.

However, that "Enterprise" expedition was not my first experience of the railways of Ireland - what was far more interesting was that a school friend's family had some farms in West Donegal and just at the end of the war I was invited to stay with them for a bit of fishing. As there was a chronic petrol shortage at the time they suggested that I get there by bus. Bus be damned! I had discovered that the Lough Swilly still ran a mixed train once a day as far as Gweedore and this was too good to miss. At the time I had a broken ankle that was in plaster but nothing daunted, with the aid of a walking stick, I hobbled forward at each station to try and get a photograph with a very ancient camera that I had at the

time. The fact that the photos didn't come out very well is neither here nor there - what was interesting was the reaction of the loco crew. After a couple of station hobbings I was invited on board "to save you the walk" was the way it was put. Naturally I didn't refuse and had one of the most interesting footplate trips of my life.



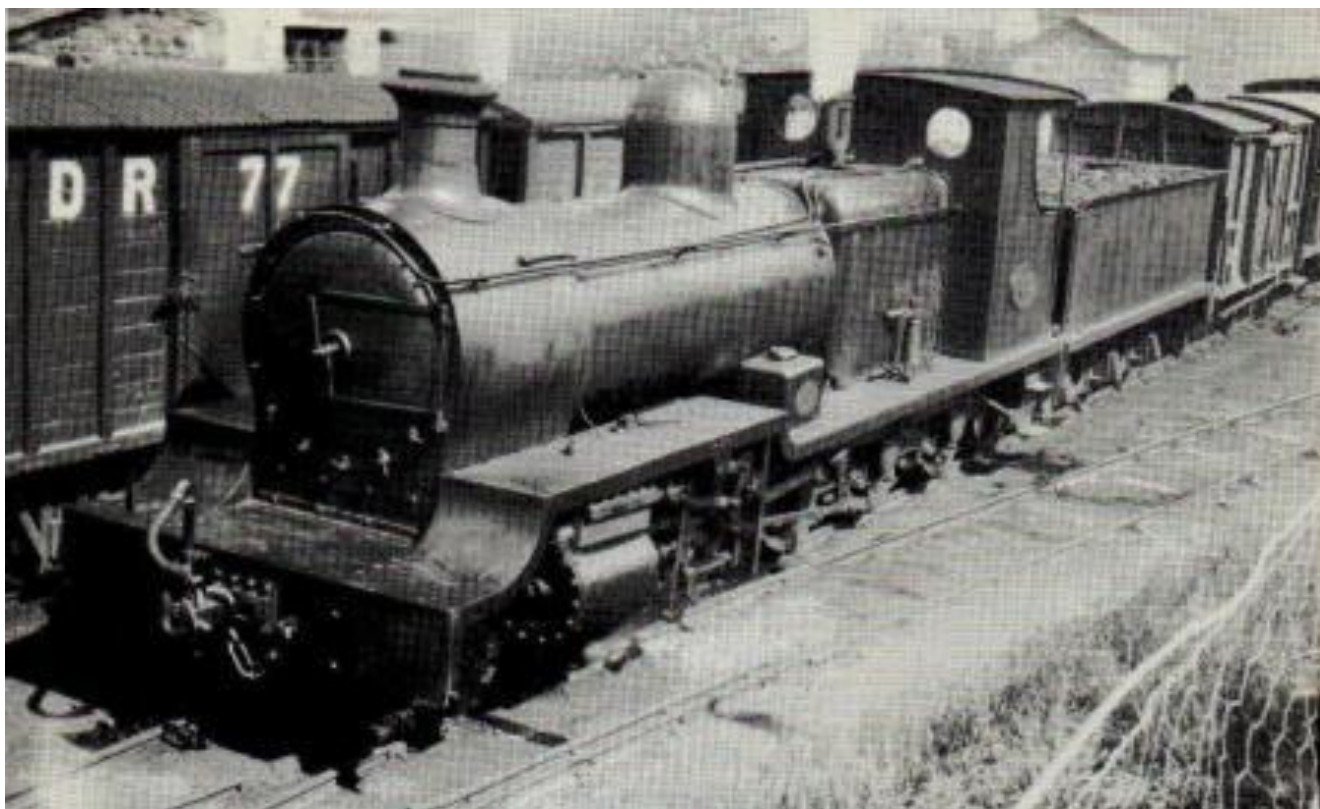
Superheated J15 No.114 passing over the bridge on Wexford Quays with the train mentioned in "Reflections Of Ireland", watched by the local Garda. The date was August 1958. (Derek Cross)

The loco was the last of the Swilly's big 4-8-0s, No.12 in a very rundown condition. Luckily the train was light but for all this it seemed to use a lot of water and we never passed a single water column, at least not one where there was a handy pub. Then the penny dropped when I heard the driver say to his mate, "Just half a turn here, that'll give us time for a couple of pints if the Englishman pays his round." The bag was put in, the valve opened half a turn and the tender refilled at leisure ... the crew and super-cargo refilled across the road at speed and the driver's judgement was proved to be correct. It was a fascinating journey over an intriguing line ... luckily junior RAF Officers were schooled to hard heads. I count myself lucky to have travelled over the L&LS despite some very startled looks from my hosts when they met me at Gweedore, coal-blackened and Guinness-bedraggled.

The Londonderry and Lough Swilly must have been the second most interesting narrow gauge railway in Europe; the first was the Tralee and Dingle. I only saw the Tralee and Dingle on two hectic days when the monthly Cattle Fair was on. On this occasion two trains were run in each direction, out one day from Tralee and back the next. One train was double-headed and the other with a single engine, all of which were T&D 2-6-0Ts. On the way out we followed the empty stock trains by car but the weather was wet and photography could have been better. The following day when trainloads of bellowing cattle were brought back the weather was worse and with no hope of any photos I gladly accepted the offer of a ride in the cab back to Castlegregory Junction. Here again was the charm of the Irish narrow gauge ... the crews were terribly hospitable as such lines did not aspire to nasty things like Loco

Inspectors. You might have to walk the last few yards into the main station but the game was more than worth the candle, even if at times the engines consumed less water than the crew did Guinness.

So many reflections of this trip remain in my mind; the windswept rain-drenched climb up the hillside from Dingle, the 'all out' way that these little tanks were worked, even in the last days of the line, but above all the impression of toppling off the summit of the Glenagalt Bank. The English translation of this name, I was told, is "the place of the mad" - it must have been the inhabitants who built a railway out there! I later had the luck to travel extensively in the cabs of New Zealand locos over some of their formidable mountain lines but dipping down over the top of Glenagalt wakes me yet! It was like stepping off the edge of the world.



One of the almost-legendary Swilly 4-8-0s, No.12 at Kilmacrennan with a Burtonport-Letterkenny mixed in the Thirties. Ever noticed that No.12 has a chimney, cab and sand box very similar to our own Guinness loco? Both locos are Hudswell Clarke built - No.12 in 1905 and lasting until 1953 though out of use at Letterkenny for many years before then. (Photographer unknown)

I know that the narrow gauge has gone but I chose my title deliberately and, if you like, this is an outsider's Ireland so one more vignette of the narrow gauge must creep in. A sad remembrance of the end of the narrow gauge on the Cavan and Leitrim ... the slow movement of Mozart's clarinet concerto for the end of commercial narrow gauge steam in Britain and indeed in most of Western Europe as well.

The weather played its part for it was January and the rather cold one of 1959 at that, for there was a sugaring of snow on the ground on my first visit there. The warmth and comfort of the Dublin-Sligo early express were something to be cherished at Dromod on transferring into the mixed for Ballinamore. But the stove in the antique vehicle was glowing hot and the welcome every bit as warm. The loco was Cavan & Leitrim 4-4-0T No.4; I don't know its history but it had a massive cow-catcher and given a headlight would have been the American West of a century ago.

On this trip I only managed to get to Ballinamore for an hour or two and then back to get the late afternoon train to Dublin, travelling to Dromod behind a perfectly splendid creature of a 2-4-2T that was pure Lancashire and Yorkshire that had been sent to the laundry and shrunk. No.10 it was, and once again as so often on the narrow gauge in Ireland I was offered the hospitality of the cab. Alas, while I survived the experience, just, the loco only had a few days more running in it and was scrapped shortly after.



***“Sent to the laundry and shrunk”. Ex Cork, Blackrock and Passage 2-4-2 tank No.10 pauses at Fenagh on the Cavan and Leitrim with a Ballinamore-Dromod mixed in January 1959.
(Derek Cross)***

Two months later I revisited this charming line and while spring was in the air, autumn was in the souls of the friendly men who worked on it for it had but days to go until death. Strange to say, the last steam locos on the C&L I had met before; they were three of the Tralee and Dingle’s 2-6-0 tanks.

Returning now to the five foot three gauge, which this was/is supposed to be about, my memory takes me back to final exams for my degree at London University in 1951 when science students were given some days to repent of their sins between written papers and an oral examination. Where better to repent than in a relative’s garden that overlooked the main line between Dublin and Bray and what a feast there was to look at. Coming from the main line into Charing Cross with its scores of Schools and batteries of Bulleids, this line along the coast past Sandycove was like stepping back half a century with elderly 0-6-0s and various tanks working stopping trains, with the Wexford and Rosslare expresses worked by elegant but very Victorian 4-4-0s. I drooled and so alas did my ancient camera though I did manage the odd bad photo.

At this time the line from Dublin to Bray was very busy indeed - apart from the Dun Laoghaire boat services and the Wexford long distance trains the line had an intensive local service to Bray. I had no

timetable at this stage but an hour or so by the line in the afternoon was fascinating; trains were frequent and the locomotive variety endless. It was an unforgettable few days, especially as a priest whom I sat next to in the Dakota from London gave me four winners out of six at Foxrock races on the Saturday! I even got my degree at the end of the ordeal.

In 1959 on two occasions I had to spend a few days in a most comfortable hotel in Dun Laoghaire, the lawns of which reached down to the railway dead opposite the pier, and though the Wexford trains were by that time diesel-hauled, there was the most startling variety of steam which seemed to operate on a first-come, first-served basis with comparatively large and powerful moguls operating a two-van parcels train followed shortly after by a very elderly 0-6-0 on a passenger working. Looking back through the photos that I took at the time, the regulars seemed to be K2 class moguls 461 and 462, which at that time must have been the last example of an inside-cylindered mogul in the British Isles. There was also an I3 class 0-6-2T No.673 that had a virtual monopoly of the Parcels train connecting with the Holyhead boat in the morning. Coming from Southern territory this machine fascinated me as it had a very strong resemblance to the Wainwright J class tanks of the South Eastern and Chatham. 4-4-0s by this time were few but D2 328 appeared frequently and on one glorious occasion the boat train on a spring morning was taken towards Dublin by an Aspinall D14 class No.89 which must have been the last of her breed - the smoke she left behind must have been seen in Holyhead. The bulk of the trains were, however, in the hands of 0-6-0s with J15s 171 and 172 the star performers. In retrospect, another startling feature of these workings in 1959 was how clean the locos were, at least compared with our side of the water.

I chose "Reflections of Ireland" as the title of this essay for it is essentially a country of water, of seascapes and lochs, rivers and alas all-too-often rain. My final memories of the steam era are very much water orientated being a summer visit to Wexford and Rosslare area in August 1958 at the time when mainline diesels were not allowed to work along the Wexford waterfront and so anything going on to Rosslare was worked by steam and this was 0-6-0 country, some of which were very venerable indeed but again all in splendid condition both externally and internally. I won't forget in a hurry the evening that a diesel refused to start at Wexford and a J9 was ordered to work on to Wicklow with the last train to Dublin. The loco from memory was 351 but I could be wrong about this, and the train was the usual four coaches and the heating van. The noise going up the twisty wooded gradient from Arklow to Rathdrum (where I got off) was superb, and very surprisingly allowing for a late start from Wexford, we lost remarkably little time, even on a diesel schedule, though what conditions were like on that footplate I shudder to think as the J9s had rather narrow tenders still with outside springs.

Wexford was a splendid place for photographs as the line from there to Rosslare trundled down the quay, subject to a very severe speed restriction and controlled by elderly lower quadrant signals and frequently patrolled by the local Gardai in case some roisterous fisherman decided to decant his fish boxes on the track.

Halfway along the quay is a strange lifting bridge (familiar to all who went on the "Three Rivers") that allows small craft to enter the inner basin when the tides are right, and it is this bridge that gave me my lasting reflection of Irish railways. I wanted a photo of this and knowing that a train was due, arrived there in time to see a fisherman in the middle of the bridge wrestling with what was obviously a large fish at the end of the line. I heard the train start out of Wexford North station and thought I might be going to get a very interesting photo! At this moment the local Garda arrived at speed on his bicycle and I imagined instant evictions of fisherman. Not a bit of it, the law had its priorities right! He walked down the track, stopped the train and then gave the man a hand to get his fish to shore, the driver and fireman of J15 No.114 decanting to shout encouragement and advice. I wish I knew the breed of the fish but I think it was a cod of course.

These days at Wexford were to be my last look at Victoriana in railway working and what fun they

were; the sun shone, I made a lot of friends and the locos and stock were delightful. By the time I finally returned home from New Zealand it had gone, oil was all. Yet the anecdote I have told summed up the charm of the railways of Ireland, and charm is the right word BUT given the limitations of track layout and the sparseness of the population they were far more efficient than they have ever been given credit for. They never aspired to high speed timings, their stock may have looked old but on account of the 5'3" gauge it was comfortable; the locos may have looked old in steam days but were well cared for and, fishermen apart, they paid respect to the timetable. Added to this they got the gauge right, that extra 6½ inches made all the difference; Sweden did the same and they have the most comfortable trains in Europe.



Ex-Dublin and South Eastern mogul No.462 (sister to No.461, preserved at Inchicore) hurries along the harbour wall on the approach to Dun Laoghaire with an evening train to Bray in January 1959. (Derek Cross)

BOOK REVIEWS

Dublin & South Eastern Railway, W. Ernest Shepherd, David & Charles, £3.95

For some unexplained reason, most railway company histories which have been published to date deal with the 'northern' companies, or with the minor, and often esoteric, lines. The narrow gauge has received bounteous attention and many 'generalising' works have dealt with the major 'southern' companies; the DSER, GSWR and MGWR. It was therefore with considerable delight that this book was welcomed, since it fills one of the major gaps in our bookshelves.

The author has taken his subject very seriously, and has produced a volume which thoroughly, and entertainingly in many parts, records the history of what can legitimately claim to be Ireland's very first railway. He follows the gradual development of what must surely be the first commuter suburban service, and the expansion of the idea of cheap high density passenger working. We are introduced to the atmospheric system, in much the same way as its promoters must have heard of all its benefits, and

then we are let down with the same bump as they were when the system revealed many shortcomings.

Perhaps in the early stages of the book, the author confuses us a little and, it seems to me, is not always sure himself, just which company is which. The Dublin & Kingstown is self-explanatory, but the extension to Dalkey, the appearance of a further company with a most embarrassingly alliterative title, then the Dublin & Wicklow, the DW&WR and the whole corporate mass finally agglomerating into the D&SER tends to get rather involved. I feel that several more paragraphs could have been justified in explaining the exact intricacies, which I have no doubt caused the Stock Exchange of the day as many problems as the historian has now when called upon to rationalise into print.

The growing pains of the company, the financial difficulties, and the operating vicissitudes of a line which practicably dabbled its toes in the sea, then plunged over, round and through a massive headland, and finally ran along the water's edge again, are brought vividly to life, and I get the impression that the author feels more at home when he is talking about the stuff of which railways are made. I have no doubt that there are many who will pore avidly over the share capital, dividend and returns, and the take-overs or investments which were attempted and occasionally accomplished by the Directors, but I think the author finds this all a little dull, for his prose takes on a new life and freshness when he talks about the line, the trains, the locos and, most of all, the men who were and are the very substance of this, and all other railways.

The analyses of train working, the make-up of the trains, and the service operated are all well documented, and no doubt most readers will feel that they have missed a memorable sight of diminutive 2-2-2WT locomotives working huge trains of six-wheeled carriages, which is captured most expressively in the book. The later periods, first under the GSR and then under CIÉ are well covered, and Shepherd gives us a good account of the progressive decline under these regimes in steam days, as well as showing subtly how the travelling habits of the general public have changed over the years.

Here, also, is given a dramatic account of the sufferings of the railway during the troubled period of 1922-1924. It is doubtful if any other railway ever was subjected to such repeated and continuous harassment, or so much wilful destruction of property, at least until recent times, when to all other afflictions could be added the universally prevalent problem of vandalism. In the text one suffers with the company, and yet cannot but be amazed at the obvious resilience of the Permanent Way Foreman and his squad, as well as the company's Engineers, who, in spite of everything that happened, maintained the train service; an incredible feat.

So much for the text, which by and large is well written and authoritative. Where there are weaknesses the author does not try to bluff us, but tells us what he knows and leaves those who want further information to get it for themselves; after all a bibliography is included.

The book is quite plentifully illustrated, but I fear that the author has fallen into the trap which seems to ensnare so many. Most of the illustrations are good, and of historic interest and value, but there are a few which should not be there at all. A photograph of a ruined cottage on an extremely featureless curve (without train) is, we are told, the site of the company's former creosoting plant. This is to my mind a complete and utter waste of space. It shows us absolutely nothing. Several other photographs depict stations in their present condition. Again I feel these are unnecessary, since we can visit them ourselves. If they must be included, and I admit some should be, then surely the original condition would have been of more interest. Several of these modern photographs, moreover, are of inexcusably bad quality. The fact that there are no illustrations of the havoc wreaked during the Civil War also seems an inexplicable omission. There are many excellent suitable illustrations in existence and as few of these have been widely published, here surely was the obvious choice of at least one plate. I must raise the question - does the author pick the illustrations, or does the publisher? On some occasions I feel that the photographs (in other books as well as this one) are not chosen at all but just happen!

The appendices are without question the most thorough and comprehensive that I have ever seen, particularly the carriage lists, which I imagine represent years of patient work. I cannot but congratulate the author on these, and express the hope that future authors will provide as detailed information in their publications.

In conclusion, the book is quite readable, generally well written and adequately illustrated, and represents a major work on a fascinating company, which was not prosperous, yet was one of the best known and most important in Ireland. It fills one of the large gaps in Irish railway histories, and leaves us waiting eagerly for some courageous author to finish the job with properly informed histories of the GS&WR and MGWR.

WSB

The Northern Counties Railway Volume Two, 1903-1972, J.R.L. Currie, David & Charles, £5.50

Following the appearance of Volume One of this three-volume project, there was some speculation that the publishers were curtailing their Irish productions, so it was with some satisfaction that this volume appeared, but at a price which should ensure a steady trade for copies in public libraries.

In this part of the work, Mr Currie takes us on from the prosperous end hopeful days at the start of the century to the now much-dissected remains of a once-great system which, despite being tied to a much larger English partner, managed to retain an individual identity. The NCC certainly enjoyed a great degree of self-confidence at a time when other lines were beginning to tighten their belts. But its staff/management relationship could have been better in many ways. The coming of the second war changed many things and the sometimes misguided mismanagement of post-nationalisation years are clearly laid out by the author. One cannot help wondering at the wisdom of including the comments on present-day personnel which, although fearlessly written, tell us nothing of the NCC.

The first overall impression of this book is that it is altogether more substantial than its predecessor though there is almost as much about boats, buses, hotels and planes as there is about railways. And still the railway is seen from the management and minute book level with little or no mention of trains or the ordinary working railwayman. The lists of directors, etc., mean little though possibly of more interest to the railway enthusiast than the interminable bus routes - certainly the transcription of the York Road War Memorial (so familiar to many of us who waited patiently for a steam turn on the 5:30) does little other than fill up a page. Much of the text, too, has a familiar look. The entire war period bears a striking resemblance to Marshall's book while the recounting of the Greenisland construction has nothing new to say.

But while many of the pages are thin on railway content or nicely vague and undetailed in a newspaper kind of way, there is much meat to digest and there has been a great deal of work in putting the whole picture together. No one could quibble with the research and effort behind the book, which surprisingly contains no acknowledgements.

The illustrations contain the usual pictures of directors and other worthies but the 'train' illustrations go somewhat uneasily with photos of ballrooms, swimming pools and dockside cranes. The Civil Engineering involved in the Greenisland Loop line and the Bann Bridge at Coleraine are well illustrated but the Roe Bridge is badly reproduced as is the photo of 53 leaving Coleraine for Derry. The Derry Central photos make a pleasing pair and there is much to be learnt from the photos on page 53. The captions this time are better than before though one wonders at the statement that the spoil trains worked, "push-pull with an engine at both ends".

The section of text dealing with the spoil trains (all one page of it) does no justice at all to the final triumphant operation mounted by the men of York Road shed while the operation of the Portrush trains or the final passenger steam turns receive no mention. There is a lot to be mentioned in Volume Three.

On strictly train matters, there are some points which one feels inclined to dispute. Railcar 1 owes little to coach construction being lightly constructed like most other experiments with internal combustion engined cars and one doubts its being “really a standard coach”. The coal consumption figures quoted on page 149 leave one wondering too. The GM Compound’s figure of 65 lbs per mile must date from wartime and not the period after the introduction of the Moguls. Much of the locomotive material is undetailed and we await Volume Three for a full history of NCC engines and rolling stock, then perhaps we’ll see how a bridge, as opposed to a steam engine, can be described as an engineer’s chef d’oeuvre.

CPF

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Whilst working as an apprentice at Derby Locomotive Works during the 1950s a fitter related to me his war experiences, which consisted, along with a period in Algeria, of a term in Northern Ireland manning an armoured railcar. From what he told me and the details given in the winter 1973-74 issue of Five Foot Three, I can only imagine that the vehicles were one and the same.

Two particular stories relating to the vehicle have stuck in my memory. The first was when they used to proceed to a branch line for exercises. I am not sure which branch line it was now but at that period it only remained open for an early morning milk train. Once this had cleared the line they had occupation and could do very much as they pleased.

Apparently the driver had a very restricted view from the periscope and when proceeding down the line on one occasion failed to notice the level crossing gates at a certain point. The lady crossing keeper heard them approaching, however, and rushed out to open the gates only to see the trolley plough straight through them. This was too much for the poor soul and she fainted in the roadway.

Needless to say, the soldiers realised what they had done and promptly stopped. With a feeling of guilt they got out of the vehicle to examine the damage and were horrified to see the lady lying near to the splintered remains of the gates. Their first reaction was, “My God we have killed somebody”. They were relieved to find, however, that the lady had only fainted and was quickly revived.

On another occasion the army crew persuaded the signalman at the branch junction to allow them to precede an express when returning to Whitehead. This was much against the signalman’s better judgement but he gave in on the assurance that it would only take them fifteen minutes to reach the next passing place on the main line. However, not only was the speed of the machine quite limited but its reliability was suspect too, and they ground slowly to a halt blocking the line. The poor signalman took the blame for the ensuing delay and thereafter they were always held at the junction, even if they had a more than adequate margin, until the express had gone.

I am afraid I have no other details but I do hope fellow members find these facts interesting. I can assure you they were even better first hand.

Yours, etc.,

B.J. Watkins

Matlock, Derbyshire

[Anyone willing to speculate about the whereabouts of the branch line referred to? The lady crossing keeper seems to confirm its location as being firmly NCC. Between the original piece in Five Foot Three No.15 and the letter in No.17 there are lots of clues. Any solutions? - Ed.]

Dear Sir,

After the excellent response by the members to our coach appeal, I have put pen to paper to ask if another locomotive appeal can be made. I can fully understand that money is scarce, and other projects are in greater need of support (i.e. the new shed roof), but this appeal is intended to be somewhat long-term.

The centre of the appeal would be No.171, which I believe is 'on hire' and not really ours. Another loco to include would be No.27, if the owner is willing to sell her. This engine now lies semi-derelict, grimy and forgotten in the new shed, as badly in need of repair now as she was in her final years on NIR. If No.27 was bought, overhauled and repainted she would be an extra engine for the local tours and provide more variety to our rather small stud.

The following may seem to be rather ambitious. However I feel the three engines preserved by CIÉ, GNR 131, GSWR 184 and DSER 15, should be better 'preserved' and bought when funds permit. The word 'Preserved' is somewhat of a misnomer in the case of 131, sitting on a plinth at Dundalk, once dolled up but now rather ragged and with nowhere to go. Surely these fine machines deserve to be overhauled and returned to their rightful places at the head of a train. Whilst thanking CIÉ for keeping these locos intact, they are, in my view, now just static exhibits.

Imagine the two GNR 4-4-0s No.131 and No.171 double-heading on an RPSI tour, or No.184 and No.186 together. It's enough to fire the imagination! Oh for some cash.

I only hope these ambitions will come in time to fruition - it would give the Society mere variety in motive power, while properly 'preserving' these locomotives. Other members may have some thoughts and ideas on the matter.

Yours, etc.,

William Watson

Newtownabbey

QUIZ

The solution to the quiz in the Photograph Section - Great Northern No.131 on an Up train approaching Balmoral.