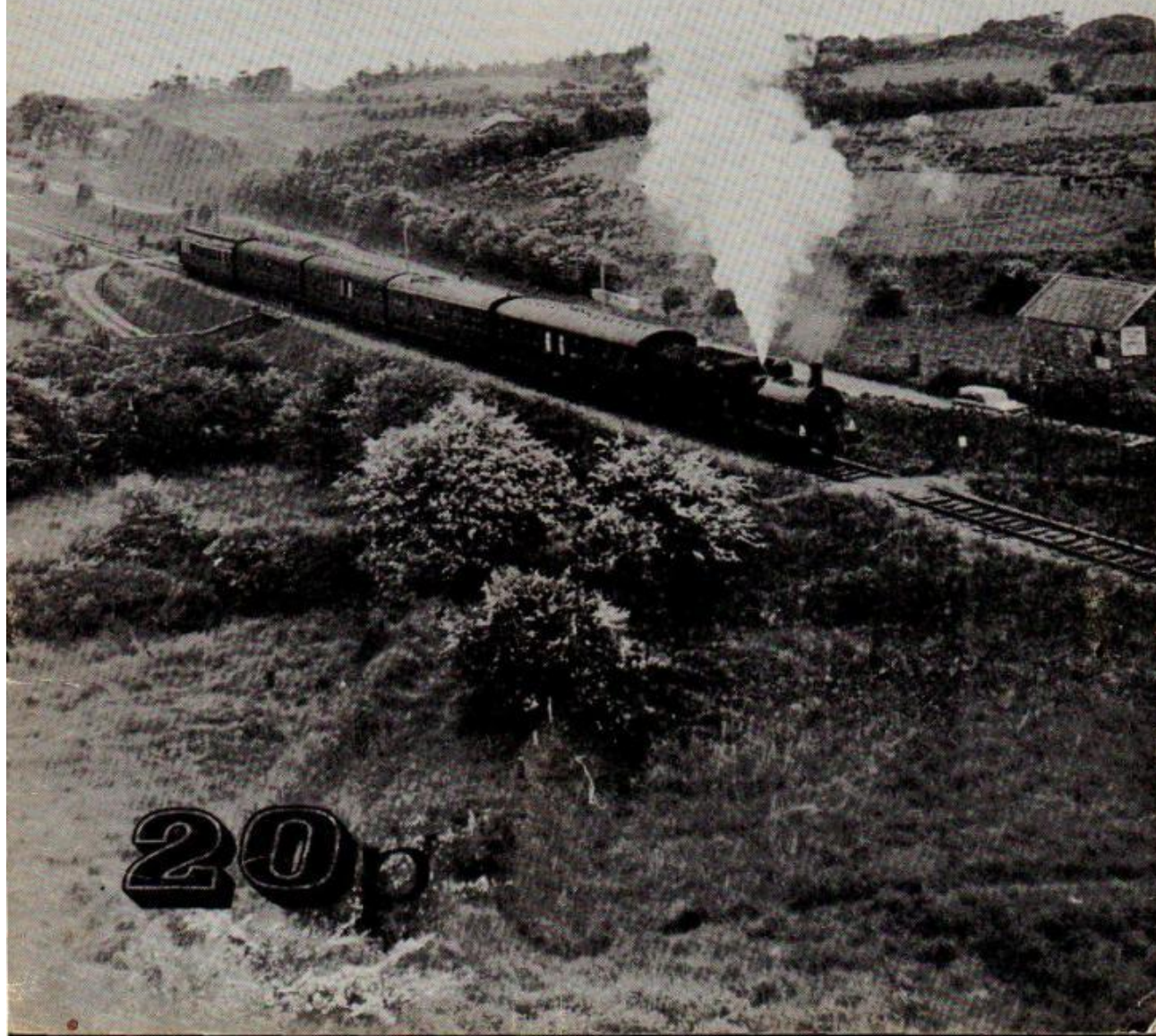


*FIVE FOOT
THREE*



FIVE FOOT THREE

No.19

Winter 1975/76

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: J15 No.186 working the Society's "Burma Road" Railtour on 1st June 1975. The train is seen here passing through the Esker south of Swinford making its way southwards. (C.P. Friel)



Our quiz photo in this issue comes from Canada, but fear not, the location is definitely in Ireland! The solution will be found at the end of the text.

EVEN MORE NEW ROUTES IN 1976

Will you be there?

The opening of Belfast's new Central Station has caused some changes to our plans but plans at present seem settled; it promises to be a busy year.

22nd May: Whitehead - Bangor - Lisburn - Belfast Central - Belfast Queen's Quay - Bangor - Whitehead with No.171. A 196 mile tour giving four trips over the Central and covering three Companies' lines.

12th and 13th June: Dublin Heuston (nee Kingsbridge) - Limerick Junction - Mallow - Cork with No.171 (or possibly No.4) then Cork - Youghal - Cobh Junction with No.186 and Cobh Junction - Cobh - Cork with No.171 on the Saturday. Sunday begins with No.186 to Cobh and back and hopefully on Cork City Railways before the 'traditional' false start to Rathpeacon with both engines; double-heading on to Mallow and train splitting to the Junction and No.171 to Connolly and Belfast All the usual tour facilities; hotels arranged, etc.

17th and 31st July, 14th and 28th August: 'Usual' Flyer season with No.4 throughout.

25th September: Bangor - Belfast Central - Londonderry - Whitehead with No.4.

PLUS: Steam Train Rides on Sunday afternoons during July and August at Whitehead.

PLUS: Empty coach workings for members.



Once a common enough sight and one we hope to recreate several times in the coming season of tours - steam on the County Down. Ex-GNR U class 4-4-0 No.67 "Louth" (ex No.202) heads seven bogies from Portadown through Craigavad en route to Bangor in the early summer of 1964. (Irwin Pryce)

EDITORIAL

1. Some four years ago, in the first Editorial in the revised layout of your magazine, we speculated on the new horizons to be opened up with the reinstatement of the Belfast Central line. Those four years have brought many new peaks to the Society's string of achievements - our trains have ranged far and wide over this island on two-day tours, and one-day events have made a steady comeback while the "Portrush Flyer" broke much new ground for preserved steam not only in Ireland but probably in Europe.

In the immediate future, both the two-day tours and Flyers will continue much as before - but it is the one-day tour which will develop most in the next couple of years, both North and South.

In the North, the reopening of the Central will bring what is virtually a new route to the Belfast one-day tour and running trains in terms of Lisburn-Bangor or even Bangor-Derry will provide all of us with something new. What was once thought of as five separate bits of line - the Bangor branch, the Central, the Northern main line, the Antrim branch and the NCC main line will be seen as one corporate whole. No.4, of course, is no stranger to any of this new order of things, apart from passenger work over the Central itself and, excepting her, everything the Society does in this connection will be completely new.

In the South, the shedding of one of our engines in that part of the world has prompted us to attempt running one-day tours based on Dublin. This new trend could well mark the start of a Dublin-based steam revival and augers well for continued and increased activity decentralised from the strained and

straining Whitehead-based main body of the Society. After all, we are the Railway Preservation Society Of *Ireland*.

We can certainly look forward to new pastures for some time to come.



J15 140 with the 12:20 Cobh to Cork near Tivoli on 14th June 1957. Coach similar to 861 next loco. (S.C. Nash)

2. Unfortunately, this second part of our leading article must strike a different note.

In 1975, Five Foot Three appeared only once instead of the promised twice. Following much careful thought, the Committee decided to scrap the second issue of 1975.

Despite many attempts to add a second or third string to the Publication department's bow, your magazine continues to be a one-man-band production. And without lashing out money it looks like remaining thus in the foreseeable future. A major consideration in the Committee's decision was the very small number of people working on locos, coaches and site at Whitehead and it was decided that your Editor could not be spared from Whitehead if the maintenance programme was to be completed satisfactorily before the running season.

If there were more workers at Whitehead, the Editor could be released to do the job he was elected to perform and give everyone two magazines a year. Given the proper attention and effort, there is much Five Foot Three can do. For instance there are five prototype articles which could be in course of preparation but aren't. You can help in two ways; either come to Whitehead and do a share of the work or offer to help produce the magazine in some way.

NEWS FROM COMMITTEE

D. Grimshaw

The summer of 1975 saw the Committee preoccupied with the running of the "Portrush Flyer" trains. Just before the last Flyer we heard that CIÉ's Loughrea branch, Ardee branch, the Burma Road and the

North Kerry lines were all to close on 3rd November. Having covered the last two recently, we set about trying to cover the Loughrea branch before it went and arranged for the No.171 tour to Dundalk to be extended to include the Ardee branch, already covered by GNR UG and GSWR J15 classes but not by an S. We brought forward a substantial amount of maintenance work on No.186 in preparation for the Loughrea trip. Unfortunately this trip had to be cancelled on the insistence of the CIÉ Civil Engineer.

During the summer, we became a Limited Company. This provides substantial legal safeguards for Society members and we have been subsequently recognised by certain statutory bodies as a charity and this is to our financial benefit.

A new addition to our fleet of vehicles is our sales caravan purchased in November for £220 and we hope to recoup this outlay from greatly enhanced income from the events we hope to attend.



The Great Northern's Ardee branch closed at the end of October last - the last steam on the branch was on 4th October 1975. Here No.171 heads for Dromin Junction with the Society's special which also marked the last steam departure from Belfast Great Victoria Street. (C.P. Friel)

During the year it was established that the basic running and administration costs of the Society when divided by the number of paid-up members came to substantially more than the current membership subscription. A Special General Meeting was held in November, when the members agreed to increase the subscription to £3.50 for 1976 and £4.00 in following years. This proposal was ratified at the Annual General Meeting.

Since the last edition of Five Foot Three we have taken delivery of a further six coaches, Nos. 340, 342 and 358 NCC corridor seconds, 472 NCC corridor second brake from the North Atlantic set, 561 GNR all first corridor and 586 GNR open second.

The Committee has recently been considering the long-term future of our Whitehead premises and the extent and location of the facilities which we would like to have there eventually. While we don't

expect these to materialise for several years yet, we want to ensure that each item of track, fencing, earth works, buildings, etc., which we undertake will not conflict with the eventual use of that particular piece of land. A sub-committee was formed and their report is awaited at the time of writing.

The estimated cost of the work planned for the current year by the various departments of the Society is as follows:

Locomotives	£1,400
Site Work	£1,100
Coaches	£300
	<hr/>
	£2,800

Several PSRs were appointed during 1975. These were Michael Henderson as Assistant Commercial Officer, Paul Newell as Carriage Running Officer, John Friel as Safety Officer and Denis Grimshaw as Portrush Flyer Officer. The post of Carriage Running Officer has now been upgraded to a full Committee post following the Annual General Meeting.

LOCOMOTIVE REPORT

P. Scott

Locomotive maintenance work was suspended until December in order to release men for work on the track and fence. This leaves a rather short period of time during which a rather heavy programme of repairs is to be completed. The present condition of the locomotives and the work proposed can be summarised as follows:

No.3BG: As mentioned in previous reports, the Guinness engine's tubes are now in need of replacement and for this reason it is our intention to have the Derry engine available for the coming operating season. Apart from tubes, the Guinness engine is generally in a sound condition, with no recurrence of the persistent overheating of axlebox bearings which dogged her after being involved in the "Belfast Docks" railtour in 1968. It is not proposed to carry out any maintenance work in the immediate future, but a number of jobs will be tackled when time permits; for example, re-metalling of a crosshead and repairs to the buffers and drawgear. The engine is also in need of repainting.

No.3: Work has got under way again and is proceeding towards the next stage in the overhaul, which is steam testing of the boiler. This requires replacement of the saddle tank, which was removed for repairs, and a considerable amount of other sheet metal work. The boiler fittings have also to be re-assembled.

While re-assembling the engine, we are taking the opportunity of making some alterations with the eventual fitting of a vacuum ejector in mind. In order to provide for the ejector exhaust, the blower pipe is to be changed to the left side of the boiler. A new steam valve is to be provided for the blower, and the original valve, which is of unnecessarily large proportions, will supply steam for the vacuum ejector.

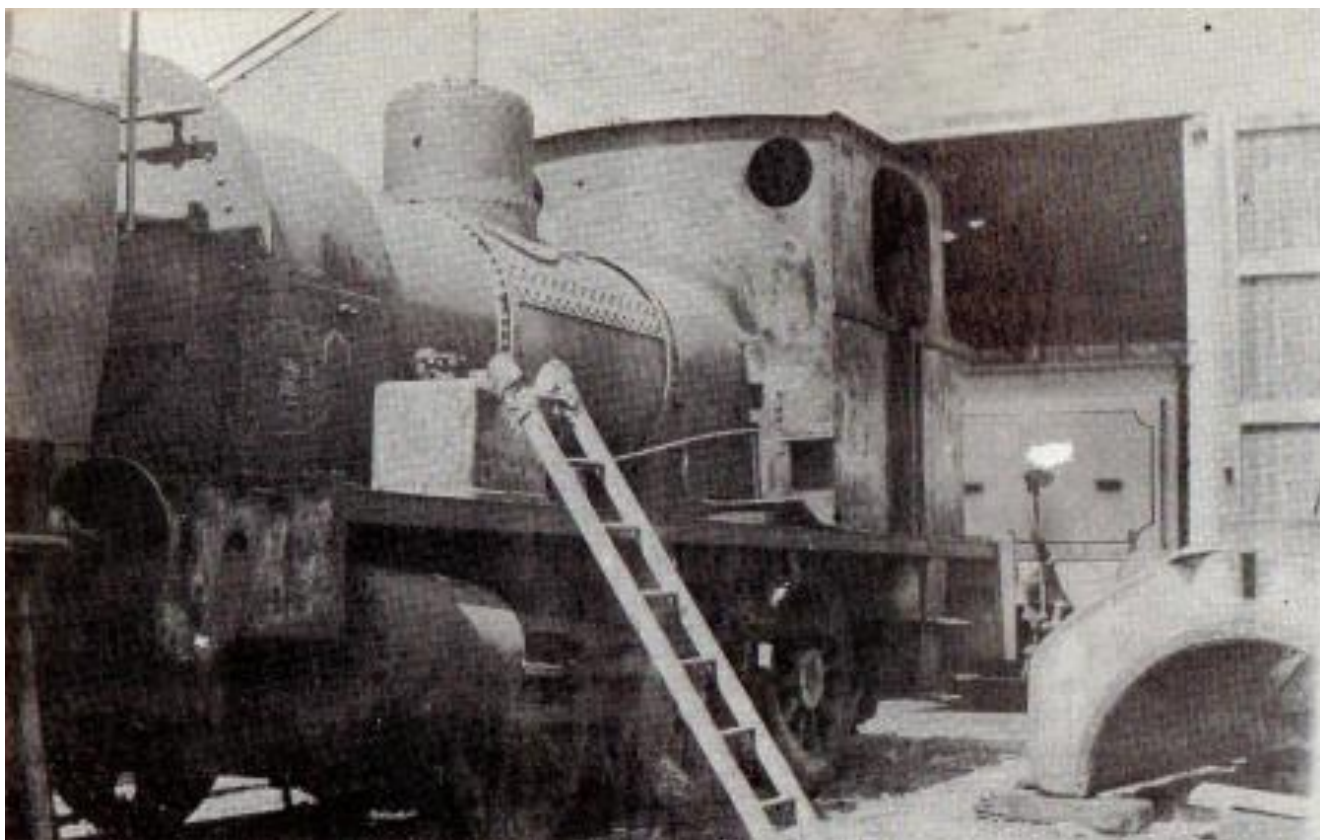
No.4: When No.4 was acquired by the Society, it was in the full knowledge that the engine was in need of extensive mechanical overhaul. (The choice in favour of No.4 was largely because of the poor condition of No.53's firebox). Although the engine has performed in a capable and often outstanding manner over the past few years, there have of course been a number of failures which are symptomatic of the run down condition of the engine. In order to avoid the risk of further failures of this nature, it is most desirable that a major overhaul should be undertaken before much longer.

A certain amount of overhaul work has already been completed, for example reboring of the valves and

repairs to the brake gear, but this represents, as it were, the tip of the iceberg. In order to proceed further it will be necessary to have the motion dismantled and the engine lifted off her wheels.

The method of tackling the proposed overhaul, and its timing, is a matter which will require careful consideration - not only because of the extent of the work required and the weight of the engine, but also because of the site developments which are liable to affect all maintenance work from now on, and the perennial problems of manpower and finance.

Before the 1976 operating season, it is proposed to tackle only a number of minor repairs. However, it is intended that preparation and planning for the overhaul will proceed at the same time, so that there should be no preventable delays when the major work is eventually put in hand.



Ex-Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners' No.3 is undergoing a heavy overhaul at Whitehead, the work being carried out when time and manpower is available. For a while last summer "R.H. Smyth" was stabled outside the shed to enable the diesel to receive attention. Here Harvey's tank is removed (on right), the boiler cleading and lagging removed; the appendage on top of the dome was in connection with the locomotive's hydraulic test. Watch out for the return of this locomotive to active service soon.

No.23: The diesel engine has given little trouble since replacement of the clutch cone - apart, that is, from the occasional failure to start due to the poor condition of the batteries. This problem is now being taken care of by keeping the batteries charged every week when the engine is not in use. The charger is also used for the battery in the loading shovel.

Work proposed for the diesel over the rest of the winter includes oil changing and servicing of bearings, and also repairs to the forward / reverse gear mechanism.

No.171: Since replacement of the 1¾ inch diameter boiler tubes, we have had persistent trouble with the middle and lower rows of the large tubes leaking at the firebox end. The reason for this is that the

tubes are badly wasted in the vicinity of the tubeplate, and attempts to stop the leaking tubes by expanding and fitting new ferrules have not met with much success. Repairs to the worst of the tubes will be undertaken before the engine runs again; however, negotiations are in hand for the supply of a full set of new tubes and all eighteen will be replaced if these become available in time.

Although No.171 has worked in a more satisfactory manner over the last year than previously, we are still not by any means satisfied with her performance and are consequently examining several possible areas of improvement. At present, tests are being carried out to check the valve events and when these are complete the valves and pistons are to be dismantled so that the rings can be examined and the parts cleaned of carbon.

In addition to this work, sheet metal repairs are also in hand on the tender and ashpan.

No.186: The condition of No.186 is generally sound, most of the work required being of the desirable rather than the essential category. For example, the valves require setting and the engine could do with a new set of firebars. An exception to the above is the replacement of a number of hoses and further adjustments to the brake gear after the recent overhaul of the vacuum cylinders.

A direct consequence of No.186 being shedded at a distance from Whitehead is that even straightforward maintenance jobs assume a major proportion and work which can reasonably be postponed is normally shelved with the engine's eventual return to Whitehead in mind. Essential work is usually tackled by sending men and equipment from Whitehead for a weekend, the job in question and the tools required being very carefully planned out in advance.

However, a most encouraging sign of late has been the amount of work carried out by certain of the Dublin-based members of the Society - men who have only recently become active on the locomotive maintenance side of the business. They have most enthusiastically and successfully tackled routine work like boiler preparation and washing out, as well as assisting in the reassembly and adjusting of the brake gear. This is a most helpful trend and augers well for the continued shedding of an engine in the Dublin area. If any members in the greater Dublin area would like to join this small but growing band of workers they should contact our Dublin Agent, Sam Carse who will put them in touch with Paddy O'Brien who has undertaken the role of foreman.

HOLYWOOD

Ernest N. Cooke

The article "Holywood Remembered" was done from memory and after seeing it in print, I decided to go and have a look at Holywood, NIR, in December 1975. I wish I had remained with my memories!

It was a wet December day and, having parked my car in Holywood, I went to the station and if I had not known where it used to be, and indeed still is, I would not have found it. There is no sign of any sort to say it is a station and the entrance is through a hole in a concrete wall. Inside there is not a timetable and so I simply had to wait until a train arrived to take me up to town. It was horrible; not a sign of its past glory other than one palm tree in what was the station master's garden, no waiting room other than two open-fronted concrete boxes. Two items, however, brought back memories; a trespass notice conveying a 40s warning from the BCDR and that strange signal which used to herald the departure for Belfast of a motor train from the Down platform. Someone must have forgotten to remove it as it obviously has no purpose now. I hope that at least these two objects of pure BCDR origin can long remain there to back my memory of what was once a busy railway station.

LOCO RUNNING

J.A. Friel

In the name of Locomotive Running take place many diverse activities, the scope of which will become clear as you read this report.

The entire Operating Staff now comes under the control of the Locomotive Running Officer. The official grades are Driver, Fireman, Steam Raiser and Shunter/Guard, while those being trained as Shunter/Guards form the unofficial grade of Assistant Shunters. At present, we have six drivers, five firemen, three steam raisers, five shunter/guards and five assistant shunters. Committee policy is to recruit members as assistant shunters and let them progress up through the grades towards driver.

The fact that a member begins by being trained as a shunter does not imply that shunting is in any way an inferior job. In fact, it is an extremely important and responsible job, for the shunter controls every stock movement. Initially, the assistant shunter merely helps the rostered shunter with couplings, chocks and so on during which time he becomes familiar with the shunting signals and normal shunting practice. Eventually he is allowed to conduct shunts himself under the supervision of the rostered shunter. When the assistant has had adequate experience of conducting shunts on his own, he is appointed to the grade of Shunter/Guard.

During his period as a Shunter/Guard, the member goes on learning all the time; he comes to know the inner thinking behind shunting procedures, can come up with improvements to our safety measures, judge clearances for coaches and engines to a nicety and have the satisfaction of bringing on raw recruits to his own high standards. During this time he becomes closely involved with steam loco operations; he appreciates the requirements of drivers and firemen, the capabilities of the engines and builds up a rapport with the men on the footplate and can work together with them to everyone's best advantage. While a Shunter/Guard he builds up an intimate knowledge of the site, the rolling stock and the possibilities and shortcomings of the layout. Eventually the Shunter/Guard moves on to become a Steam Raiser and has to contend with a fleet of four (soon to be five) operational steam locos which are completely dissimilar.

The Steam Raiser is the unfortunate individual who gets up hours before everybody else to light up a locomotive. His first steam raising turns are done in the company of another footplate man but soon the job is all his and the heavy responsibility of having steam on at the appointed hour is his alone. Normally the driver and fireman are rostered to book on approximately three hours later, when steam pressure should be just starting to appear. Once shunting begins, the steam raiser can stay on the footplate as third man, eventually taking a turn on the shovel and begin learning about the next job up. An upgrade to fireman follows in the fullness of time and occasionally he will be allowed to drive under the supervision of the rostered driver. Final promotion to driver is the ultimate step. The basic idea is to use every opportunity to train people for the next higher grade. But even so it can take years for someone to obtain sufficient experience, in terms of man hours in one grade, to become eligible for promotion (the present Loco Running Officer is still only a fireman).

The "Portrush Flyer" plus Sunday Train Rides season requires that members of the operating staff be rostered on eleven consecutive weekends from the beginning of July. The train rides are, of course, confined to a Sunday but the four Flyer weekends entail activities from Friday evening right through to Sunday evening.

For each of the first three years of the "Portrush Flyer", the make-up of the train has been different. So also has the track layout at Whitehead. So each year a new method of shunting the train together must be thought out. In 1976, both will be different again.

In 1975 a detailed plan of every shunting movement required was drawn up. Because of having to store coaches in sets of two in front of the shed, the process of assembling the train is a complicated one. From Friday evening through to Sunday evening, seventy four shunting movements take place. In this article I don't intend to list them but rather hope to give some insight into the background work involved in producing the Flyer train.

From the Belfast end of the train the make-up was as follows: 562 (brake), 583, 1333 (opens), 1328

(corridor), 552 (Diner), 1327, 1335 (corridor) and 861 (brake). This was the train of RPSI-owned vehicles as it left Whitehead; at York Road another one or two coaches could be added on the 'outside' of 861.

A Flyer weekend begins on Friday evening at 19:00 with a driver, second man, shunter and assistant shunter hooking on. Diesel No.23 is used to assemble the train coaches into two sets of four and then pull No.4 out of the shed for lighting up.

At 03:00 on Saturday morning, the steam raiser arrives to light up No.4. He hopes that the fire catches quickly (especially if he is publicity officer as well) since a failure at this stage could seriously delay the day's activities. Once the fire is under way, black smoke pours through No.4's enclosed cab, driving the steam raiser to the safety of the back room. Two of the 1975 steam raisers discovered "Dad's Army" on the BBC World Service at 04:00!

At 06:00 a fresh crew of driver, fireman, shunter and assistant come on duty to prepare the engine and train. Initially the locomen are concerned with oiling the engine and trying to make the cab interior look respectable after the lighting up. When the engine is ready, the two halves of the train are combined at the platform. The shunter and assistant check all the corridor connections, doors and gangways, couple up the vacuum bags and take up any slack in the couplings (fortunately the Flyer doesn't run during the train heating season). Finally the brakes are tested and the train is handed over to the NIR crew about 08:00.

After the early start and the intense work involved in preparation, a welcome luxury for RPSI crew is having breakfast served in the Diner while the Flyer makes its way along the shores of Belfast Lough.

At Portrush, the RPSI crew is on hand to assist the NIR crew if necessary and to keep an eye on the engine during the long afternoon.

On arrival back at Whitehead, officially at 21:45 but usually a good deal later, a certain amount of shunting is necessary. No.4 splits the train into two sets of four coaches again so that she can proceed to the shed. The Guinness loco is hauled out for the next day's train rides and the Flyer engine's fire is finally dropped. Any defects reported by the NIR crew are entered in the Defects Book and this is often followed by our own inspection while the loco still has steam.

By this stage it is often 23:00 and the RPSI crew have had quite a long day, since 06:00, but last summer two firemen started their turns at 03:00 instructing the steam raiser. Nobody objected to this in the slightest as everyone felt that being involved with the Flyer from the start right through to the end of the day was rewarding in itself and it means that the NIR crew liaise with just one set of individuals during the entire day. In any case, due to the rostering system no member of the staff does more than one Flyer turn each summer.

On the Sunday morning an entirely different crew appears for that day's activities. A steam raiser lights up at 07:00 and at 09:00 the train rides driver, fireman, shunter and assistant come on duty. The morning's operation is concerned with servicing the Flyer train to have it ready for a fortnight hence. An additional two men are rostered to check over No.4 and give her the kind of detailed inspection which is not possible when the engine is still in steam. While the loco is still outside the shed the ashpan and smokebox are cleaned out and the loco is coaled. Coaling is now an efficient operation using the loading shovel which can reach No.4's bunk with ease. After coaling, No.4 is put into the shed to be checked for cracked firebars, loose nuts and bolts, etc.

The train rides crew proceed with shunting coaches with the Guinness loco. By 13:00 most of the coaches should be back where they were on Friday afternoon with the Diner sitting at platform ready for afternoon teas. Meanwhile the previous day's Flyer coaches are being cleaned out. 1975 was the first year when coach cleaning was included in the general rostering. By requesting everyone on the

operating staff to take part on one of the four Sundays in question, it was possible to muster a squad of up to ten members on each day. In particular the Diner, whose main function in the latter stages of the Flyer is that of a bar, has to be made ready for the more elegant role of serving afternoon teas; this called for a transformation indeed!



Coaling has long been a bane at Whitehead but now solved with the arrival of our loading shovel, seen here making light work of lifting something like half a ton of coal into No.4's high bunker. (C.P. Friel)

The train rides run from 14:00 to 18:00 and between 15:00 and 17:00 the train can be running almost continuously if it is a busy day. The Guinness engine is very handy for using up coal which is not up to mainline standards, either because of being dusty or because of clinkering qualities (the remnants of No.171's ill-fated load of 17th August 1974 were finally used up by the end of July 1975). Thus, despite having a load consisting solely of coach 861, the crew can be kept busy and the proximity of the Diner is greatly appreciated. The train rides is now the main occasion on which our train crews come in contact with the public. It was gratifying to see that they made the effort to present a neat and tidy appearance. After several hours shunting with the Guinness, most could be seen washing and donning clean overalls before the train rides started. While the train is stopped at the platform, people are allowed on board the engine to see the fire and marvel at the complicated array of fittings.

A steam locomotive certainly evokes some interest and enthusiasm in most people, as our train rides prove. Our crews enjoy chatting to people and answering the many questions on how the engine works.

A good many ex-railwaymen appear and it is interesting to listen to their reminiscences. Some things you hear, though, must be taken with a pinch of salt - for instance the number of people who claim that their fathers drove "the last steam train" (wherever that was!) is just incredible and there are far too many drivers for the few royal trains run in Ireland.

The day is ended with more shunting, disposing of the Guinness and using the diesel to shunt the last coaches up to the shed.

The beauty of having a large operating staff is that many activities can go on while no individual member of the staff is rostered too often. Each person does approximately the same number of turns, and these are spread out as much as possible through the season. Some members fear that joining the operating staff means they are expected to be at Whitehead every weekend. In fact the idea is to increase the size of the operating staff as much as possible so as to decrease the workload on the individual.

As mentioned earlier, a complete list of all the shunting movements necessary to operate a Flyer weekend was drawn up, duplicated and issued to all members of the operating staff. After all this effort, the planned shunting was only carried out once (for the first Flyer). Due to superheater trouble with No.4, No.171 worked the 2nd August Flyer. Coaches 552 and 562 were dropped to reduce the load to seven coaches (one NIR coach was added at York Road) and the coaches were marshalled in a different order. No.4 was back for the third and fourth Flyers but on these occasions the load was ten coaches and the two NIR vehicles involved were sent to Whitehead before the 16th August Flyer and remained with our stock until the end of the fourth run; this again meant a departure from the planned routine.

Apart from the Flyer season, the operating staff is involved in producing engines in steam for the annual boiler inspection, testing locos and carriages, running-in trips and, of course, railtours. As well, innumerable shunts now go on with the diesel. The roads in front of the shed are normally full of coaches so that if anything from a steam engine to a permanent way trolley is to move at all on the site the diesel must first shunt two or three coaches out of the way.

The one-day railtours (the "Ballymena and Larne" on 5th April and that to Ardee on 4th October) were relatively simple affairs in comparison to our annual two-day two-engine railtour. The previous two two-day railtours (to Waterford and Limerick in 1973 and 1974) had been held in September and the change to May/June for the "Burma Road" railtour in 1975 was welcomed for two reasons. It meant that planning for the tour did not have to go on during the hectic Flyer season and it meant that both early mornings and late evenings were bright, greatly facilitating the preparation and disposal of engines and coaches.

An innovation on the "Burma Road" tour was the use of ex-BUT brake first No.562. As you will have read in the News-sheets, this vehicle has an engineering workshop and stores for spares in the area formerly occupied by the heating boiler. Heading off into railway territory which has not had steam facilities for several years, as on our two-day railtours, sometimes strikes me as being akin to sending a rocket to the moon - you feel very cut off from your base and the more self-sufficient you are the better your chances of survival. Despite seating only 18 passengers, 562 is a vehicle I would like to see included in all our future trains. Apart from the comforting presence of cutting and welding gear, drills and jacks, tools and spares, 562's van space is adequate to take up to four tons of coal in plastic bags. On seeing a duty roster sheet on the notice board at Whitehead which included the instruction "Coal 562", one member was heard to comment, "At last, a J26!" Apart from the convenience, 562's coal space saves us the expense of sending wagons of coal from Belfast. So far we have brought coal on the "Burma Road", on the Flyers and on the Ardee tour. On the last mentioned, 562 was marshalled next No.171 and when we arrived in Drogheda four tons of coal were transferred to No.171's tender within fifteen minutes. Our thanks go to the twenty or so members who brought about this minor miracle.

A future report will give a more detailed account of the operating staff's involvement in running railtours. But now, since this is a Loco Running report, a few comments on the running of our locomotives. For the record, the table below gives the mileages attained by our locos during 1975.

Locomotive	Train miles	Light engine miles	Total
4	480		480
171	1,145	98	1,243
186	130	275	405

A few further additions reveal that during the year we ran 1,755 train miles and 373 light engine miles giving a grand total of 2,128 miles altogether.

The most striking feature of the table is No.171's train mileage consisting of 116 miles on the "Ballymena and Larne", 160 on the Flyer, 269 on the Ardee tour and no less than 600 on the "Burma Road" Railtour. It is satisfying that she did all this running without any of the bad luck (such as bad coal, bad tubes, etc.) which has spoiled some of her previous appearances. More importantly, she proved to be a genuine standby engine for the "Portrush Flyer". Despite that one failure, No.4 has proved to be our 'bread and butter' engine by hauling the last two Flyers, each of ten packed bogies.

In comparison to the two big engines, No.186 now seems to be enjoying a period of rest in the Republic after her many previous hectic years (who can forget her record breaking run when No.171 failed on the "Three Rivers" and she worked out to Ballinacourty and back before leaving Waterford for Dublin and later Belfast Great Victoria Street, doing probably the greatest mileage for a 0-6-0 in one day in 1973?). We hope, though, to give her a bit more use in the coming year.

During my first year as Locomotive Running Officer, I was assisted by many people, in particular by Peter Scott during the initial stages of taking over the job. In railtour planning, Tony Ragg was most co-operative and understanding of the servicing needs of locomotives out on the road. Co-operation on all matters relating to coaches was forthcoming from Paul Newell in his capacity as PSR of coach running.

During 1976, the number of jobs undertaken by the operating staff will increase both at Whitehead and elsewhere. At present negotiations are going on with Lord O'Neill in connection with our operating the Shane's Castle Railway on certain Sundays during the coming summer. We are always anxious to enlarge the operating staff and if you would like to take part in our activities, please get in touch. Perhaps you will share the feelings of many who feel that the opportunity to take part in trains like the "Portrush Flyer" (beyond doubt the most authentic mainline steam train in the UK today) is as rewarding an activity as any enthusiast could ask for.

OUTING ROUND-UP

A.S. Ragg

Once again we were able to run all our planned tours, filling all trains to capacity, running to time by and large and arriving back at Whitehead without any major repairs to be carried out apart from some trouble with superheater elements and flats on some coach wheels.

The season began with our "Ballymena and Larne" tour in April with just over 200 passengers. This type of day trip from Belfast is as popular as ever; I have always held that a '9 to 5' tour from Belfast would be a success and this and the Ardee tour later in the year bore this out. The lineside bus at Mossley gave us good opportunities to see No.171 pounding up towards the top of the bank and that afternoon we attempted to emulate past glories of the Larne line by running our train as a sort of mock 'boat train'. Running on this line has recently been difficult due to the singling between Carrickfergus

and Whitehead (and latterly Cloughan and Whitehead) but happily the double track has been restored. I much hope the facing crossover laid at Whitehead in connection with the singling will be allowed to remain - it simplifies our operations on returning from a tour. The "Ballymena and Larne" was participated in by a mostly all Northern Irish populous, 90% from the north and two thirds of all being members; £450 was collected in fares.



Tales of the NCC hand tablet exchanging at speed are legion and the tradition lives on with the "Portrush Flyer". Here, at Dunloy, the signalman receives the Cullybackey tablet while fireman Willie Graham picks up the Ballymoney tablet, looped on his left shoulder and turns to tell the driver that all is well. The train was the last one of 1975. (C.P. Friel)

Following this tour came our piece de resistance in tours, the "Burma Road" railtour on 31st May/1st June. For several years this tour was mooted by many but for various reasons we did not attempt it. However the decision to go was taken and we all enjoyed planning for and operating over this much-requested line. The number of passengers was restricted by No.186's capacity of five bogies over the Burma Road itself. One of these was the Diner, but with only one brake the seating capacity was 240. As expected, we had to refuse bookings during the last week before the tour. I am indebted to Denis Grimshaw who undertook the handling of tour bookings and coped admirably, despite difficulties in Sligo. We were badly let down by the Imperial Hotel who summarily cancelled our booking for no good reason a few weeks before the tour (the cancellation was all the more serious as many travelling CIÉ personnel and our own operating staff, coach people and Dining Car staff were affected). The Grand Hotel has been very reluctant to part with the deposit paid originally to secure the accommodation despite all bills being paid in full on the Sunday morning. The Belfast office of Bord Failte was, as always, very helpful and found alternative accommodation for those displaced from the Imperial.

Both No.171 and No.186 performed well; at last we felt we could send out No.171 without fearing what defects she would collect on the way. As in past years the train was worked empty coaches to

Dublin midweek before the tour thus allowing for any possible blockage of the GN main line and giving time for any minor jobs as needed doing. The bogies were stored at Westland Row (Pearse) and No.171 at Fairview railcar depot (Amiens Street shed being closed).

No.171 worked out of Dublin on the Saturday morning and once the crew got used to her we made good time to Castlerea where the train was split. No.171 took part of the train to Claremorris while No.186 followed with the remainder. From Claremorris No.186 was in sole charge leaving No.171 busily being coaled from 562 in the Ballinrobe branch platform. During the next two days we stopped at every station, open or closed, on the Burma Road. Altogether there were 265 bookings (not all for the entire tour) of which 148 came from Britain, 47 from the Republic and 70 from Northern Ireland. 123 were non-members and we collected £3,646 in fares.



After two unhappy experiences with the Flyer, No.171 made a real comeback on the second Flyer on 2nd August. Here she tackles Dhu Varren in confident style to round off a perfect day. Note the crowd on the embankment to No.171's left; at Flyer departure time, it seems, life in Portrush and in the caravan parks along the line comes to a full stop. (C.P. Friel)

The next series of events was the Flyer season; again No.4 working at fortnightly intervals in July and August. Once again I was assisted by Denis Grimshaw, this time he handled the bookings while I prepared for my forthcoming marriage. 1975 was the most successful Flyer season yet; having established the idea over two years, the bookings came in with the minimum of expenditure in publicity. We ran up to ten coach trains with No.4 - an exciting prospect, but we found it difficult to manage so many passengers adequately while No.4 did not have much in hand. The only difficulty came with the second Flyer; you will already have read of the problem and its solution, thankfully no one seemed to mind the upset once things were explained. We produced a special 'welcome aboard' leaflet for the occasion and this did a lot to explain the position. It was ironical that we tried to run No.171 on the Flyer on two previous occasions but then dropped the idea only to find No.171 doing it all anyway.

The last tour of the year was to Ardee. We heard towards the end of August that several CIÉ branches were closing and Dromin to Ardee was one of them. Hence the planned GN main line tour was extended to Ardee and was further extended to Drogheda when Dundalk turntable became inoperable (and it has since been taken out).

So in its final form No.171 worked a six coach train empty to Great Victoria Street on 4th October and next day the last steam train left there en route to Ardee. The shunting at Ardee was complicated by the loop being too short and the run-round was accomplished by splitting the train and remaking it in a siding. The turning of the loco at Drogheda will probably be best remembered for Inspector Frank Dunlop's remark to our Chairman, "Now, just the once, Bob!"



You will have seen mention of the last steam from Great Victoria Street in this issue. In this photograph, No.171 has stopped under the Boyne bridge, on Platform 2 of the station, after working the empty stock train from Whitehead on the night before the tour. The train beyond is the NIR Enterprise set and the figures on the left are blurred because of the long exposure needed. (C.P. Friel)

Looking back over the past three years, our greatest single achievement has been the running of the Flyers. Some will say that the NCC enginemen have the working of the train down to a fine art and know just how to run and keep to the timetable and no more, well we all may have to think again with the possibility of a new timetable in 1976. But the success of the trains cannot be measured in passenger miles or pounds income alone; for me a much more satisfying aspect of the operation has been the establishment within the Society of an almost professional operating department, and I use operating to include everyone involved in the Flyers. A regular public excursion such as this demands very high standards indeed. John Friel brought a new aspect to rostering last year, covering everything from drivers to carriage sweepers, and our efficiency improved by leaps and bounds.

Another achievement, maintained over many years, has been the friendly co-operation and assistance

we receive from both NIR and CIÉ. This is amply illustrated by the reasonable rates they charge us for the use of their metals; by maintaining their realistic levels we are able to run tours based on a minimum of 200 passengers (about 300 in the case of a Flyer). When I took over railtours, CIÉ's rates were rising rapidly, so steeply indeed that our operations south of the border were threatened.

However following a meeting with them and our explaining our financial set-up their charges returned to a much fairer level.

As I hand over Operations now to Denis Grimshaw, I will finish by recording my sincere thanks and the thanks of the Society to everyone in CIÉ and NIR with whom I had dealings, one could not hope to do business with a more obliging bunch of people. My thanks go too to those in the Society who helped me in so many ways and I wish Denis a successful period in Office.

PUBLICITY REPORT

R.O. Morton

1975 was a great year to be a railway enthusiast. The lavish Rail 150 celebrations in England led to an unprecedented revitalising of interest in trains and brought the hobby a much-deserved air of respectability. And as people realised that steam was no longer in regular use, many latent enthusiasts became fully-fledged devotees. All this was important for the Society.

Certainly, this reawakening made publicity much more rewarding and it meant that television and newspapers were more willing than ever to cover the Society's events. In short, steam trains became big news.

The Sport and Leisure Exhibition at the King's Hall in February started the ball rolling. Members who manned the Society stall for the five-day show distributed over 4,000 eye-catching leaflets telling visitors about the Flyer, tours and train rides. A fine display of photographs of Society steam and an ingenious back projection of slides was backed up by a continuous tape of steam at work.

The arrival of the first of our purchase of ten coaches from NIR in February meant more valuable publicity with two separate interviews on Radio Ulster and several paper stories. One of the interviews took the form of a 45-minute late night chat show with Charlie Friel sharing the airwaves with Blossom Dearie. Spring brought a long awaited breakthrough in the monthly national railway publications with both the Magazine and World carrying features on the Society. And our name was also kept prominent in Britain by the inclusion of potted versions of RPSI happenings in various guides and handbooks on preserved steam. Of particular satisfaction in this field was the colour picture of No.171 and a blurb about the Society which appeared on a British Tourist Authority wall-chart detailing preserved steam in the British Isles. The chart was also available in French and German, so the Society's name went European. The local Tourist Board also gave us mentions in its monthly round-up of coming events.

The first tour of the year attracted Ulster Television's attention and a camera crew visited Whitehead on the day before the tour to see the loco being hauled out of the shed and cleaned. A major disaster when the Planet refused to start (with the camera crew almost knocking on the door) was averted by a speedy visit to a local garage to get the batteries charged.

The big event of the year was the "Burma Road" tour and it was excellent fodder for the publicity machine. The local papers saw the significance of the first steam train for ten years but again the Dublin dailies were reluctant to take the bait. Radio Telefís Éireann had a cameraman following our triumphant progress into Sligo but once there the waiting crowds were something of a hazard, especially during the shunting. In future our tours will not be so widely publicised in the local press, despite the revenue we receive from sales.

Again the Flyer publicity was the major task of the year. The Flyer relies on public support more than any of our events and unfortunately local press publicity was rather delayed until late June. As always

there was a minimum of expenditure on advertising with almost all of the publicity coming from the news value of the trains. For the Flyers we prepared a special leaflet which, aimed at the man in the street, gave details of the Society, the engine, coaches, operation and route.

And for the first time since the first-ever Flyer, we were on the front page of the Belfast Telegraph.



The work of removing trackwork from Greenisland was greatly facilitated by the work done by our loading shovel, seen here making light work of lifting a 60 foot rail onto the low loader using two track tongs suitably roped to the bucket. (C.P. Friel)

Car stickers were produced for the Train Rides and, combined with newspaper coverage and word of mouth, record crowds were attracted. The direction boards placed on the main road also attracted a lot of passing trade. This made up for the lack of the annual Steam Gala and a Schools' Day - both fine events for publicity.

Perhaps the one event which caught the media's eye most satisfactorily was the October tour to Ardee. BBC television cameras covered the event in a most imaginative way which included a motorway dash to film both the departure from Belfast and an exciting shot of No.171 on the main line near Moira.

Through the winter the Society is kept in the public eye with meetings in Belfast, Dublin and London and a flow of news through the railway journals. Preparation of the regular news-sheets to members has been a time-consuming but worthwhile job. News-sheets have covered the full spectrum of Society activities and complement the magazine with more regular and up-to-date news. Thanks must go to Charles Friel for help in this field and also for his constant supply of photographs for publicity purposes.

Publicity can do much, but the easiest form of publicity lies with the members - word of mouth. Tell your friends, relatives and work mates about our trains, tours and activities. You can easily make the Society even better than it is.

SITE NEWS

N. Hamilton

The premature arrival of coaches 340 and 342 from NIR caused the erection of a lot of additional chain link fencing at an incredible rate over two weekends. Everyone present worked very hard until darkness fell, but at present some temporary portions of fencing exist and a new track gate has to be constructed. Secure fencing is vital but the present pressure of work elsewhere on the Site prevents completion of the job, although two telegraph poles are already in position to act as gate posts.



Danger, men at work. The Burma Road siding made steady progress during the summer and was very necessary to accommodate our continually-growing coach fleet. Here an unusually large Sunday morning track gang take a break from packing the new road to pose for the camera. (C.P. Friel)

The two points that were being lifted from Greenisland, as mentioned in the last report, were finally transported to Whitehead by low loader just after the Annual General Meeting. This was achieved by the concerted efforts of many members who came to assist after our appeal at the Meeting.

In order to simplify shunting, and in line with the intended overall future track plan for Whitehead, No.2 carriage siding is to be connected into the platform road. Work is well in hand and the task of relaying one of the Greenisland points was made considerably easier by the clearance of the trackbed down to base level by our loading shovel. While the track is broken, we are taking the opportunity to replace some thirty sleepers in the platform road near the bridge. These sleepers, now ten years in our service, came from Courtaulds sidings at Carrickfergus and were in very poor condition, resulting at times in alarming variations in gauge!

Here I must mention the ever-present shortage of workers at Whitehead. Anyone willing to wield a

shovel is urgently required every weekend. Any necessary skills can be quickly picked up on site but with as few as three or four people at times, it can only be a matter of time before major Society activities will be affected. The blame cannot then be put on those who take the trouble to attend every weekend but rather on those who do not.

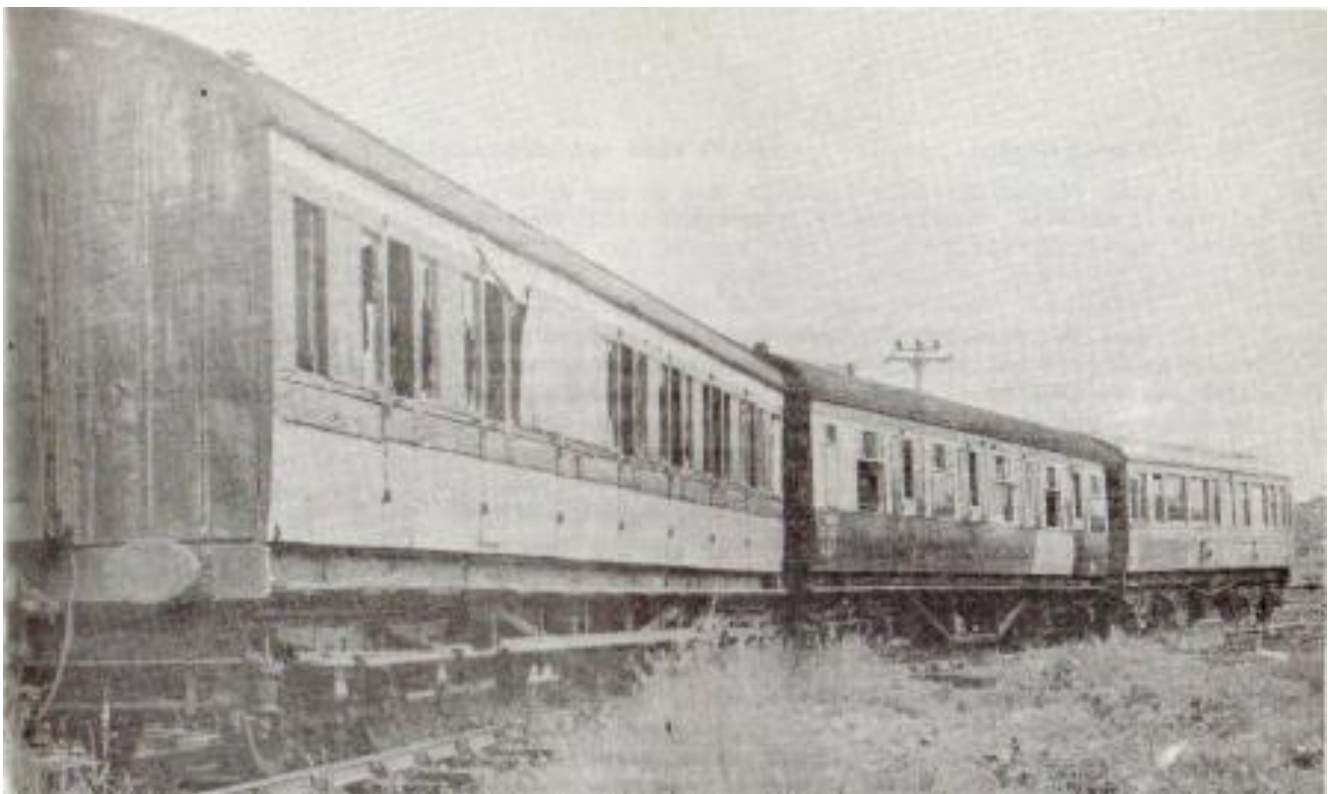
CARRIAGE NOTES

K. Pullin

In recent months the coaching stock at Whitehead has increased alarmingly and we now have no less than seventeen passenger vehicles. This seems a good time to list these and also to give some indication of our plans for their restoration. I have taken them in numerical order.

50 GNR Directors' Saloon Built 1914 and purchased April 1972

The condition of this vehicle is fairly dilapidated with extensive decay in both internal and external panelling. The roof leaks quite badly in places and the dynamo control gear is missing. Some work should be done as soon as the immediate demands of our running programme have been seen to.



Three bogies out of use but awaiting restoration. Left to right they are: 4012, ex 1142, GSWR corridor first built in 1921; 581, ex 98, GNR K15 open second built in 1941; 150, ex 50, GNR Directors' Saloon built in 1911. (C.P. Friel)

88 GNR Dining Car Built 1938 and purchased June 1973

This vehicle is still numbered 552 (her UTA number) but will be renumbered soon. A new roof covering of PVC-proofed nylon has been ordered and will be put on as soon as possible; this will be something of an experiment and if it is successful several other coaches may get the same treatment. With the roof watertight a renewed attack will be made on the interior decor.

340 and 342 NCC Corridor Third Built in 1922 and purchased October 1975

These two replacements for bomb-damaged coaches in the 1941 Blitz are flush-sided products of

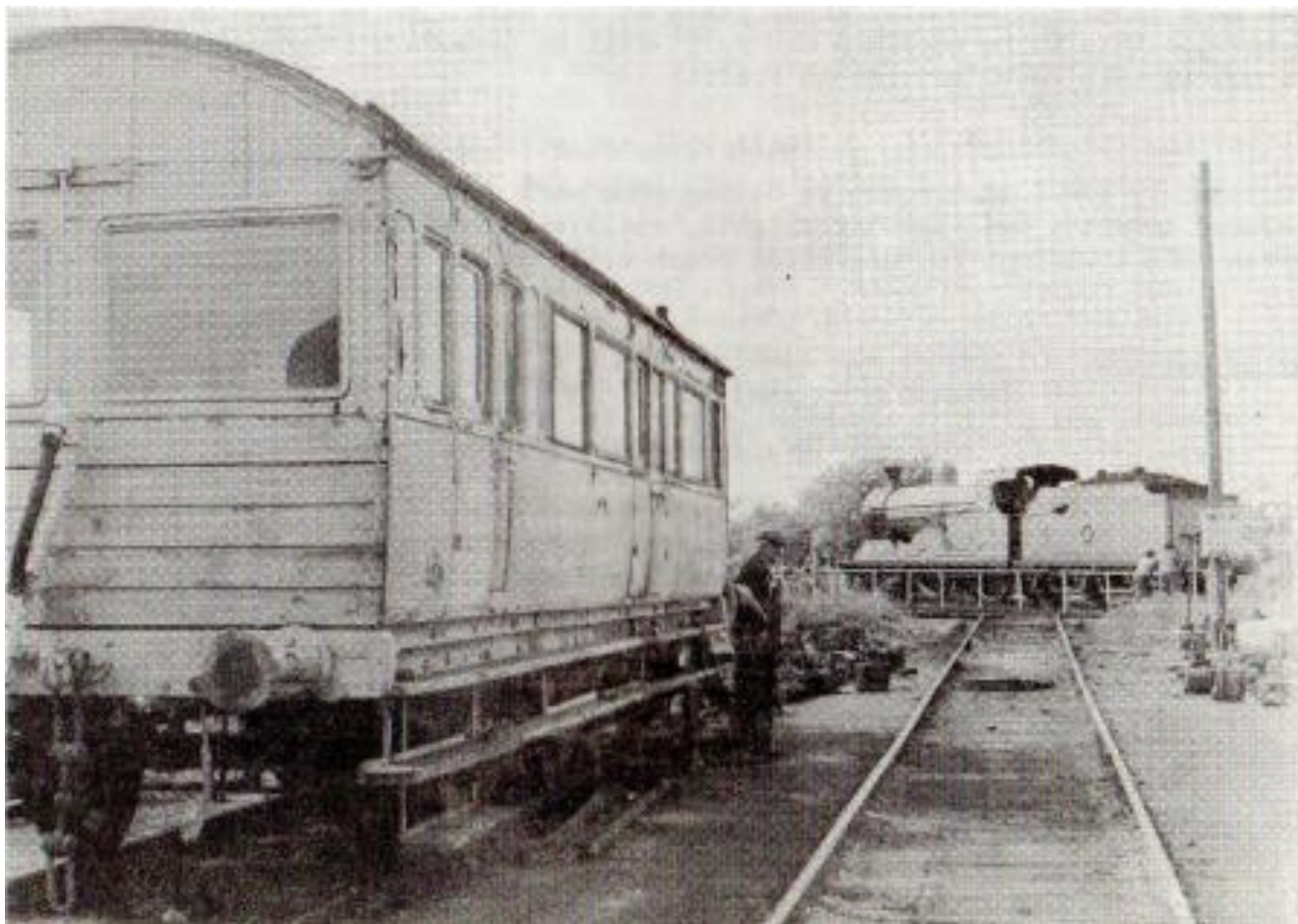
Derby. They are in fair condition and should be able to run this summer if required. 340 is another candidate for re-roofing as the present covering is very poor. Both vehicles were class J12 and were numbered 238 and 241.

358 NCC Corridor Third Built in 1924 and purchased September 1975

At first glance similar to 340 and 342 but with wood panelled exterior; in fair condition but the roof here again is poor. Some work has been done since the coach came to Whitehead but the worker got promoted(!) and work stopped. Another candidate for re-roofing. We hope to see further progress after the Flyer coaches have been seen to.

472 NCC Brake/Corridor Third Built 1934 and purchased October 1975

This last survivor of the North Atlantic set should see a lot of running this season after attention to details like windows, window sills, toilet etc. An economical vehicle with 56 seats AND a brake.



A coach still in Departmental use by CIÉ and one we hope to purchase when declared redundant. The vehicle is numbered 465A and was GSWR No.900 and was built for the Waterford, Limerick and Western Railway in 1891. It is a family saloon seating twenty-two originally. It was photographed at Claremorris during our "Burma Road" railtour in May 1975, with No.171 being turned in the background. (C.P. Friel)

561 GNR Corridor First Built 1949 and purchased September 1975

When this vehicle first arrived at Whitehead enthusiastic vandalism had left the interior looking as if a bomb had gone off in there. However, sterling work by the boys of Banbridge Academy, under the guidance of John Lockett (one of their teachers and a past Site Officer and Secretary), has made the

coach look much more civilised. The coach is structurally sound though the seating, luggage racks and panelling need much work.

562 GNR Brake/Corridor First Built 1948 and purchased February 1975

Now in use as a travelling workshop, coal store, tour office and accommodation for 'the men'. Condition is basically sound but work needed on doors, corridor ends and inevitably the roof must be painted.



Before 583 could enter service, one corner of the coach had to undergo massive rebuilding. Here the carpentry work has been completed and the metal sheeting is being replaced before the windows are put in. The accompanying coach article mentions many similar jobs waiting to be done on our coaches. (C.P. Friel)

581 Open Second Built 1941 and purchased February 1975

In poor condition, this coach is now in use as a store for carriage seats, luggage racks, etc. Restoration, although it will have to wait, will be extensive but not too difficult.

583 GNR Open Second Built 1947 and purchased June 1975

In much better condition than the other K15, this coach was running in RPSI trains last year but unfortunately acquired flats on one pair of wheels during the Flyer season (NOT on our premises). It is intended to have the wheels machined on the under-floor wheel lathe at Inchicore in time for the Cork tour. External paintwork and one gangway end will have to be attended to before this.

586 GNR open Second Built 1954 and purchased September 1975

Although originally numbered 9 this was the last coach built at Dundalk and was soon converted to a control trailer for AEC railcar set working. Her condition is quite good but work is needed on windows, gangway ends, ceiling and toilets. She will probably run this year.

861 GSWR Brake/Corridor 1st/3rd Built 1906 and purchased October 1972

Really the 'old faithful' of the coaching stock and a coach likely to be taking things easy this year. Her condition is good but she needs attention to doors, roof and duckets.

1327, 1328 and 1335 GSR Built 1935 and 1937 and purchased June 1973

These Bredin corridor thirds have formed the mainstay of the RPSI fleet for the past three seasons and their arrival enabled us to avoid costly and inconvenient hiring of coaches on both CIÉ and NIR. These modern flush-sided coaches are in good condition and will continue to be seen on most of our trains for some time to come.

1333 GSR Open Third Built 1937 and purchased June 1973

In good order but acquired wheel flats at the same time as 583. In this case the tyres are too thin to be machined and so it will be necessary to obtain replacement wheels before this coach returns to traffic.

4012 GSWR Corridor First Built 1921 and purchased October 1973

Originally 1142, this coach is having some work done on it, including windows (now almost intact), ceilings, droplights, toilets and electrical gear. After this attention this excellent but neglected coach will run again - moulded ceilings et al.

COMMERCIAL NEWS

M. Henderson

The 1975 season started early for the Commercial Department of the Society, with a stand at the Sports and Leisure Exhibition at the King's Hall, Balmoral in February. Although not a commercial success, it proved a valuable publicity exercise which introduced us to a new public. In March came the Bring and Buy Sale and Auction at Whitehead, which raised £80. This is always a very useful event enabling members to bring, sell and buy items of interest to the individual rather than to the Society.

On railtours and the "Portrush Flyer", the shop in 861 did well and has shown its usefulness to us many times over. An interesting variation occurred last summer when, due to a lightened Flyer, a shop had to be made up in centre cross corridor of Bredin Open 1333. Although cramped for the sales crew, it did remarkably well and has led to the possibility of including such shops in non-brake open coaches in the future.

The Sunday Train Rides season raised £300 this year, and has now established Whitehead as a venue for those with a family attempting to please everyone on a Sunday afternoon drive (the steaming income has been boosted by the introduction of afternoon teas in the Diner).

The Sunday Steamings' shop, together with postal sales and attendance at various indoor Society meetings have also produced worthwhile results.

Long distance sales sorties have also developed; one such trip, in October, to cover the closure of the Loughrea branch, brought in at least £55, while another shorter trip to a model engineering exhibition

in Coleraine during December raised over £60, both worthwhile efforts.

Apart from the 'main' sales force operating from Belfast and Whitehead, our London Agent organised several sales forays with a minimum of manpower and produced very creditable results while our Dublin Agent organised sales in connection with the closure of the Ardee branch. The biggest effort by the 'main' bunch was the Ulster Traction Engine Club's annual steam rally which while it clashed with the first Flyer and thus divided our already over-stretched sales staff was even more successful than previous years with takings for the two days topping the £200 mark.

The coming year seems to be much more demanding and exciting than ever. It is hoped to 'do' all the usual things better and attend many more fetes, festivals and so on. Towards this end, the Society has recently purchased a ten-foot Paladin caravan for use by the Commercial department. It is presently being suitably fitted out at Joe Weatherup's garage near Carrickfergus and its 'maiden voyage' in Society use will be at the Bring and Buy Sale on 20th March. The new livery is, it is hoped, quite eye-catching, so come along to the event if you can. We have also acquired a new set of publicity boards which will travel with the caravan and provide some relief for our original and much used set of boards.

With an expanding railtour programme, more new lines and more events we can look forward to an intense summer and I very much hope that, with not a little help from many of you, our bank balance will reflect the work involved.

Finally I would like to thank all who gave up their spare time so generously to help with last year's ventures; I hope you too think it was all worthwhile.

IT SAID IN THE PAPERS

Our quotations from the press were very popular, illustrating as they did some curious attitudes on the part of the gentlepeople of the press. They did it again in 1975; providing for their readers, and now for us, some revealing pieces of writing in despair in order to fill those empty column inches or perhaps just a slightly offbeat sidelight on the big occasion passing the town by.

There was a flash-back to a bygone era when referee Wilson stopped play for a few moments after the pitch was enveloped by dense smoke from a steam train passing the ground on a Railway Preservation Society outing.

Ireland's Saturday Night soccer report on evening of 10th Anniversary Railtour with No.171.

Off we go to Dublin on the puffing train, on the puff, puff, puffing train ... so sang many of us in the good old days when the steam puffing engines snorted and smoked through the countryside.

The Longford Leader on the "Burma Road" tour.

Many railway enthusiasts from Northern Ireland and Britain as well as members of the RPSI (Railway Preservation Association of Ireland) took part in the trip.

Midland Topic, 5th June 1975.

Afterwards they had to clear the fire into huge pits to get rid of clinkers. A lot of heat went up the chimney. Now the diesel driver only has to press a button.

The Irish Times, 31st March 1975 on Inchicore.

Shortly after the train left for Ballinlough the fire brigade was called out to deal with a fire on the railway embankment near Ballinlough.

Roscommon Herald, 6th June 1975 on the "Burma Road".

It looked quite well for its age, having had a 'face-lift' or perhaps a 'body-lift' would be more apt and

away it tore puffing, grunting, coughing, spitting, bellowing smoke from its funnel, as it ‘groaned’ along the 50 mile stretch of the ‘Burma Road’ from Claremorris to Collooney Junction.

Claremorris Notes in Western People.

Sight of the veteran roused feelings of nostalgia in the many onlookers and there was general agreement that with the passing of the age of steam the railways have lost something of their mystique and romance.

Tullamore Notes in Midland Tribune.

An Ras Connachta cycle race ... at Charlestown the town was kept clear of traffic by the local Gardai but the railway gates were closed (for No.186 and train) as the main bunch approached. However, all the riders managed to scramble across and it took some very hard work to catch the breakaway group before Swinford.

Sligo Champion, 6th June 1975.

SHANE’S CASTLE RAILWAY

Lord O’Neill

According to my records, there has been no article on the Shane’s Castle Railway in Five Foot Three since late 1972. In this article I propose to continue the story from that time, covering all developments which have arisen over the past three years and going on to consider possible ideas for the future.

The 1973 season started with No.1 as the regular engine in service and she continued to perform well with her modified valve gear giving excellent results. However, we had always been worried about the firebox and, as the months passed, increasing trouble arose from this area. Leaks became a regular occurrence, requiring a considerable amount of welding. Although the locomotive worked through the peak holiday period in July, it became clear shortly afterwards that it would be unwise to keep it in service any longer. It was, therefore, withdrawn in preparation for stripping in the Autumn, No.3 once again becoming the regular engine. This, of course, meant that, in the event of serious trouble developing with No.3, we had nothing to fall back on except the Simplex diesel No.2. As it turned out, this situation was to prevail until June 1975 but happily No.3 remained almost completely trouble free throughout.

During October and November, No.1 was duly stripped and the boiler removed for closer examination. When the firebox was finally extracted, it became all too clear how necessary the work was. In due course, a price for the new box was obtained from the Albert Boiler Works and the whole boiler was delivered to their premises in December. As the work progressed further, problems were revealed and there was no alternative but to replace part of the wrapper and the smokebox tubeplate which were found to be very thin in places. As a result, it was early 1975 before the boiler returned to Shane’s Castle for reassembly. In retrospect, I very much regret that a more complete job had not been undertaken back in 1970 when the locomotive was stripped in Queen’s Quay works. However, it should now give good service for many years to come and the time and trouble will have been worthwhile.

It was during 1973 that the problems caused by the gradient in the Antrim Station layout became unacceptable. On a very wet day in June, the Simplex diesel with a fully-loaded ‘Special Train’ of children was unable to stop and came into contact with the locomotive shed doors, fortunately without any damage being done to passengers or rolling stock. Again during the Traction Engine Rally the brake was eased on the brake carriage before the locomotive had been coupled up, allowing the train to run down into the locomotive shed. Unfortunately, some glass broke and a few minor injuries were sustained. Clearly this was a situation which could not be allowed to continue and, indeed, should never have been built into the layout at the start. After considerable thought as to the best method of

curing the problem, I realised that some benefit could be achieved from the substantial increase in track height which would be required at the locomotive shed. A pit had been built originally on one shed road but occasionally this had proved sufficient when one locomotive was undergoing major work above it and the service locomotive might need some small repair at short notice. Ideally, the track required to be raised 3'6" but this could not be achieved without also raising the shed roof which I was anxious to avoid. The maximum possible was 2'9", taking this fact into account. The two shed roads were raised by this amount on solid reinforced concrete plinths, leaving as wide a gap as possible between the tracks. As a result, we now have full length pits under both roads, albeit rather shallow but quite adequate for quick attention to the locomotives on open days. The rest of the track outside the sheds was raised by packing up with new ballast, except for the carriage sheds which are still at the original level. However, the layout outside these sheds was improved by moving the turnouts further away from the building. Eventually the additional 9" which are required to make the Antrim site level will be added but the present position is a vast improvement over that which prevailed for the first three years of operation.



SCR No.1 arrives at Shane's Castle, while No.3 waits in the loop during Traction Engine Rally in July 1972. (C.P. Friel)

1973 saw the delivery of two ex-Londonderry & Lough Swilly wagons; one a three-plank open and the other a mobile crane which sat at Letterkenny for many years after the railway's closure. They both require extensive restoration and as yet very little has been done. I hope to start on the crane before too long, this being the more likely to be useful. It will, however, be quite a substantial undertaking which must inevitably take time.

In 1973 I persuaded Northern Ireland Railways to part with the old news-stand from Portrush Station. Luckily we were able to move this building in one piece by sliding it onto a low-loader. It has now been restored and adapted for use as a shop on the Shane's Castle Station Platform. As it was not originally designed to withstand the elements, we have had a number of problems with it, some of which have yet to be resolved. However, it is barely large enough for our expanding stock and I shall probably try to find another role for it where it will suffer less.

After the major work on the 'Antrim' yard during the winter of 1973/74, track work has been kept to a minimum, apart from essential repairs. A number of new rails were acquired in 1973 and these have been used to improve the track where the original left something to be desired. We shall shortly lay some 'home grown' sleepers as an experiment. Fifty have been cut of mixed Douglas and Larch and well-seasoned before a double dip in our hot and cold creosoting plant - unfortunately, we have no pressure plant. They will be used as replacements on a trial basis to see how long they last. It can only be a question of time before the supply of ex-NIR timber sleepers dries up and they are already very expensive.

I am often asked "What are you doing with 'Nancy'?" For those of you not fully informed, I should hasten to add that we are still talking about locomotives and not some 'femme fatale' from the past! 'Nancy' is, of course, the Avonside 0-6-0T of 1908 which arrived here in 1972 and the answer to the question is, I'm afraid, nothing. Pressure of work on No.1 plus the fact that the cost of restoration would be colossal has resulted in continual postponements of the starting date. Indeed I doubt if we could justify running a locomotive of this size at the present time, bearing in mind that both the existing engines are well able to cope with normal maximum loads. Another factor is the possible arrival, in the not too distant future, of a Barclay 0-4-0T of 1898 weighing seven tons and with similar capabilities to No.1. It is, therefore, unlikely that she will be restored to working order in the near future but there is a strong possibility that she will be restored externally and put on show as a static exhibit at the Shane's Castle end of the line.

On the diesel front, No.2, the Simplex, has continued as standby and shunting engine. On the whole, she has been completely reliable, although a tendency to poor starting probably indicates that a top overhaul is due. In the past year 'Nippy', the Planet diesel of 1936, has been in use from time to time for shunting for which it is very suitable owing to the epicyclic gearbox. We hope shortly to clean it up for painting and then bring it into service on a standby and shunting basis. With a maximum speed of approximately 9 mph, passenger service would only arise if all else failed.

Looking ahead, the future continues to be very much circumscribed by the political unrest which has prevailed throughout the railway's five years of life. Although there is nothing I would like more than expansion, I feel it can't be justified at the moment. The troubles apart, I am inclined to think that the railway is about right at 1½ miles long. I doubt whether the economics of substantial extension would be sound but I foresee that a passing loop at the ¾ mile post could be attractive and would enable a more intensive service to be run on busy days. At present, this would only be required on four or five days a year and, therefore, the additional rolling-stock required would not make it a feasible proposition. The prospect is, therefore, that the Railway will continue in its present form during 1976. However, I hope progressively to improve the ancillary attractions. I recently asked the Tourist Board development staff for their comments on the project as a whole and their unanimous view was that more was needed by way of supporting attractions to keep people amused after the ride on the train.

Finally, discussions are now under way between Bob Edwards, John Friel and myself with a view to bringing the RPSI and the SCR even closer together with the possibility of RPSI members playing an active role in the operation of the railway. I hope this will result in a substantial improvement in the Railway's presentation during 1976.

BOOK REVIEWS

British Steam Railcars

R.W. Rush, Oakwood Press, £1.80

In this 142-page publication is to be found a systematic history and description of all the steam railcars to have worked in Britain and Ireland. Introduced in 1902 by the London & South Western Railway,

the steam railcar was rapidly adopted by many companies for use on lightly-laid branch lines and on city suburban routes which were losing passenger traffic to municipal electric tramways. A carefully written introduction does much to introduce the reader to a type of vehicle at once so familiar on account of its being steam and strange in its operating limitations and drawbacks.

A chapter of the book is devoted to the fifteen steam railcars worked by Irish Companies, of these the GNR was the largest operator with a fleet of seven. The remainder were operated by the BCDR, NCC and GS&WR, and also by the Dublin and South Eastern whose vehicles were very short-lived. None of these vehicles survived as steam railcars beyond 1918, the usual fate being removal of the loco unit and conversion of the passenger section to a conventional coach still easily recognisable from its unusual layout of seats, van, etc. All suffered from excessive vibration which did little for their popularity with the travelling public and, except for the GNR vehicles, were limited in their use by being under-powered.



One of our book reviews covers a publication on steam railcars and we take this opportunity to publish this photo of Great Northern railmotor No.4 leaving Belfast Great Victoria Street on the 3:30pm local to Lisburn on 17th September 1909. (Ken Nunn Collection courtesy of the Locomotive Club of Great Britain)

A short chapter is devoted to the later Clayton cars of the LNER and Great Southern Railway; these vehicles had no more success than their predecessors. The Sentinel cars of the NCC and Great Southern are briefly described and a final chapter covers inspection locos and Steam Cabs, including McDonnell's designs of the GS&WR.

A considerable amount of research has gone into production of this book, all the more important considering that not a single preserved example of a steam railcar exists. An attractive feature is the numerous side-elevation line drawings of most of the vehicles described (including most of the Irish vehicles). The half-tone illustrations complete a very full record of these almost-forgotten attempts to win and keep short-haul traffic on the railways economically.

This book could usefully find a place in the collection of most railway enthusiasts, whatever their particular interest, and especially those who wish to expand their knowledge of the Irish railway scene.

JNH

The Railways Of The Republic Of Ireland - A Pictorial Survey Of the GSR and CIE 1925-1975

Michael H.C. Baker, D. Bradford Barton Limited, £3.50

This pictorial survey covers a period from 1925 onwards which is a section of Irish railway history badly neglected. There were many changes in these fifty years and this photographic gallery will go well with Mr Baker's previous (often sadly inaccurate) book on this period, although much more detail and more unpublished photographs could be assembled. One wonders at the wisdom of including the first half of the seventies in such a broad canvas for during these five years the railway was undergoing major changes and assuming a role totally different from that since the war.

The illustrations in the first half of the book are from photographers other than the author and form one of the best collections of well-printed and widely varied illustrations seen for some time, and the variety is not only in steam locos but in trains, locations and railcars, although the poor reproduction of the Drumm Battery at Sallins (sic) is unnecessary - it is a pity an action photograph could not be found. The caption over the splendid photo of 333 and 309 toiling away from Cork Tunnel will make the reader long for a picture of a triple header. David Murray provides many excellent pictures including a Wexford goods leaving Waterford but badly captioned for anyone unfamiliar with the station area. The choice of the Lisduff ballast, a type of train not usually illustrated, is excellent. Other contributors, too, give great value, including the Drewry railcar at Goold's Cross, one of the few pictures on the main line away from Kingsbridge and Glanmire.

The book's main trouble starts on page 43 with an off-colour picture of B114 and the same loco gets the telephoto treatment on page 88 with Liberty Hall appearing so near Guinness as to be an extension. The excessive telephoto is again used on page 46 and distorts A16 and train so much to make the track look like that of a bog railway and the coaches about the length of a standard wagon. These pictures unfortunately set the tone for the rest of the book; one turns each page in dread of this photographic 'style' (?) and maybe many fine pictures are spoilt by their phantasmic neighbours and could easily be passed over as a result. The interesting picture on page 63 of the much talked-about but seldom illustrated wash-out of the Tolka Bridge at East Wall, Dublin is unfortunately opposite a poor study of door handles somewhere between Dungarvan and Mallow. The gross disfiguring of modern pictures is interrupted by one of the finest pictures in the book of crossing the river Barrow on the borders of Counties Laois and Kildare, otherwise known as Monasterevan. The picture on page 74 of A4r approaching Dundalk from the north is an irritating example of standing directly in front of the train with a very long telephoto lens (here the telegraph poles come down to about two paces apart).

In most books very little attention is paid to freight traffic and this one is no exception; the largest traffic visible is peculiarly enough a fair special on the Tralee and Dingle. A fair selection of wagons is illustrated but cattle traffic is given undue prominence in the modern setting. There are no decent pictures of large sized goods trains which are still operating; a grainy picture of 402 leaving Cork on an overnight goods to Dublin is written off as a less exacting duty - neither the driver, fireman or guard would doubtless agree, not to mention 402 if it could speak. Beet trains have been a very important traffic for years now, and so too are the tonnage supplied by the cement factories and carried in the distinctive wagons or the more recent fertiliser trains but illustrations of none of these appear. In recent years much mineral wealth has been discovered, despite predictions to the contrary handed down through generations, and CIÉ has and will play a major part in moving vast amounts of barytes, dolomite, magnesite, gypsum and so on. All of this has been ignored. In its place we are presented with the demolition of the Broadstone roundhouse, a selection of buses in what is supposed to be a railway

book, ex-GNR railcars with their windows smashed in, people beside a train in Bray and Courtmacsherry and too many pictures of engines lying around in sheds and yards.

The Dublin Suburban traffic is presented in a peculiar light - there should have been one picture of a push-pull train in the Dublin area and perhaps a loco-hauled set of wooden stock in the Cork area to compare with the excellent pictures on pages 8 and 12. The picture on page 77 could have been in London except for the sign on the wall. It is hard to understand its inclusion or the picture two pages later of the section of track used for the deposit of rubbish - one could almost smell the nearby meat factory.

The inclusion of the very minor derailment at Tralee is wasteful of space and comes in a year when the railway's immaculate safety record was destroyed by a series of accidents highlighted by the Gormanston disaster in October when no less than three trains were involved and several people killed; there was no shortage of blocks covering this event at no extra cost. It is as well to draw attention to the fact that the BUT railcars (page 69) were never in fact returned to traffic and the locomotive on page 14 is No.4 of class D17 and Córas is not spelled Corias.

Taken as a whole, the book is recommended for the number of hitherto unpublished photographs mainly because the very good first half compensates for the distorted second.

Taking into consideration the number of illustrations the book is reasonably priced and the publishers are to be congratulated on this their first excursion into Irish matters. **BBC**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I want to say that I am puzzled about the illustration on page two of the last magazine, which is supposed to be an Up train approaching Balmoral. The background scenery doesn't seem to me like a train between Adelaide and Balmoral. I would like to suggest, with diffidence, that it is a train proceeding from Balmoral to Finaghy.

Yours, etc.,

H.A. Frazer

Belfast

[One clue seems to confirm the original diagnosis that 131 was on the Belfast side of Balmoral - the line on the extreme right which leads, I believe, to Balmoral sidings. The picture probably dates from around 1910 for the loco is in original condition with nameplates; the signal wires on the left would appear to be running from Balmoral cabin which, before about 1924, was on the Down side. - Ed.]

Dear Sir,

Your book reviewer, in writing about Volume Two of Mr Currie's "Northern Counties Railway" is dead right about the GN compounds' coal consumption.

Full details of annual consumption exist for 84 and 85 from 1932 to 1958. Omitting the bad years from 1943 to 1948, neither ever quite reached 55 lbs per mile in any year; their averages were 49.2 and 49.5 lbs. In 1944 to 1948 they averaged 54.6 and 58.3; 84's worst year was 1946 at 58.9 lbs whilst 85 reached 61.3 lbs in 1944 and 60.8 lbs in 1947.

So 65 lbs might be just possible for a month or two, given bad coal, bad weather and an engine due for the shops, but it is certainly not a figure on which to base comparisons.

Could anyone find figures for Moguls and compounds (or VS) when both were working from

Adelaide?

Yours, etc.,

R.N. Clements

Celbridge

QUIZ

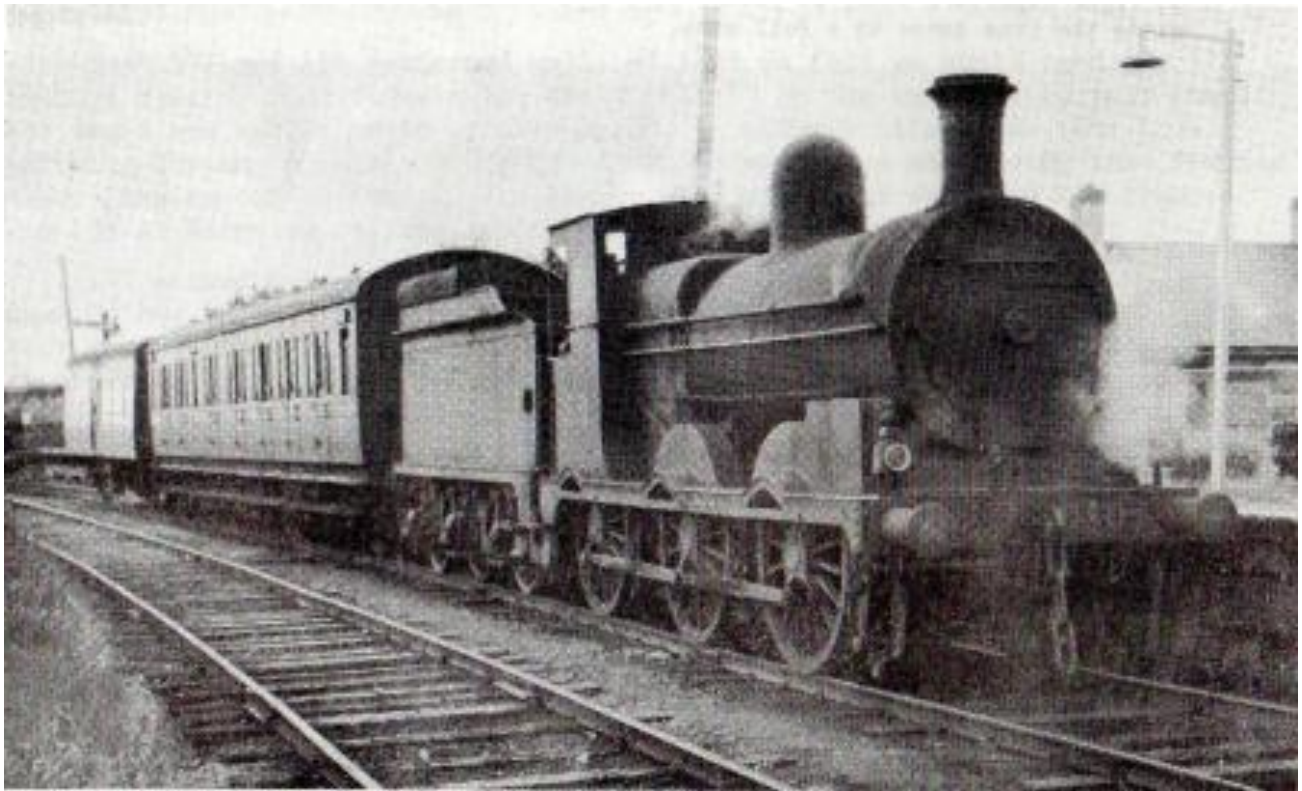
No.50 is shown shunting at Coleraine Harbour in 1961. Our thanks go to J.A. Kernahan now of Edmonton, Alberta but born in Coleraine - he combined his two favourite pastimes, he says, by supporting Coleraine's soccer team from the railway's wall.

LOUGHREA FAREWELL

Because of a ban on extra trains, the Loughrea branch slipped away without a Society steam train traversing it. To mark its closure, however, we feature here some views of the branch in steam days.



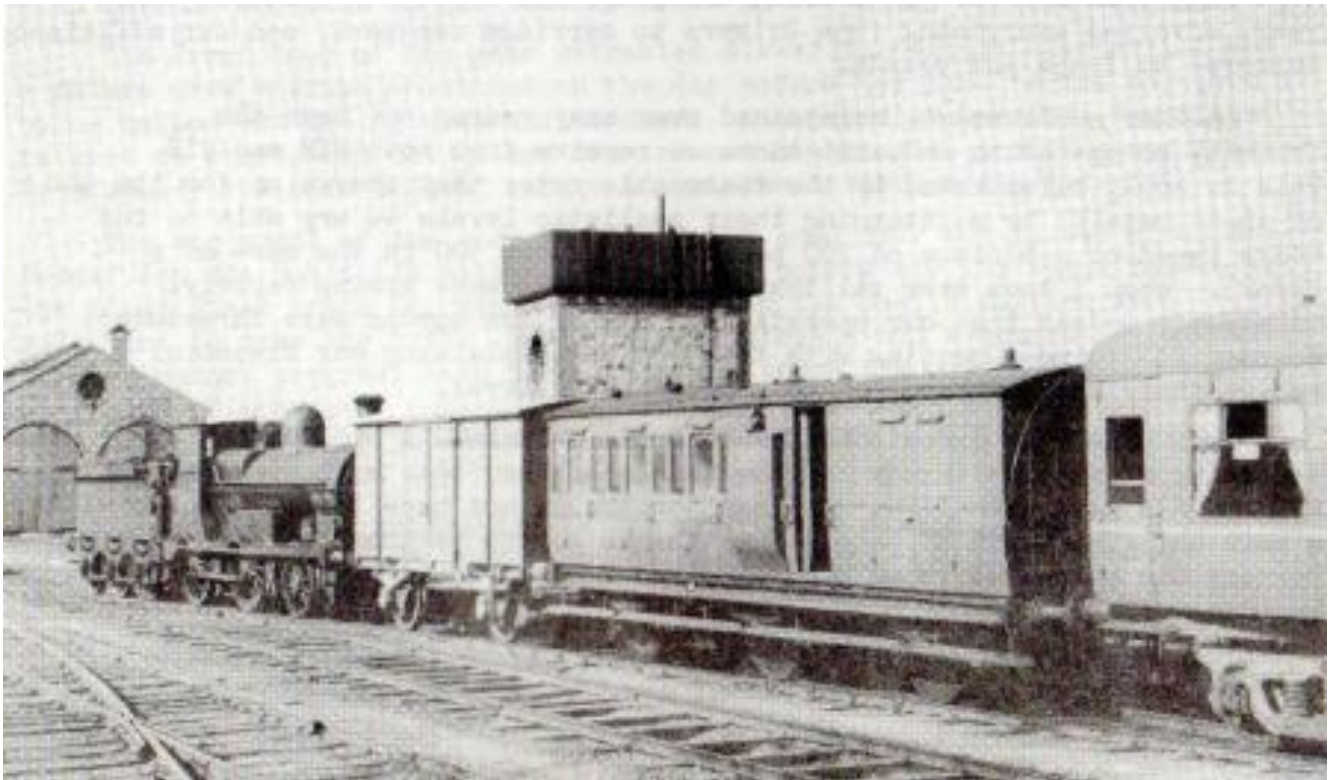
J18 No.589 is seen at Attymon Junction on Whit Monday 1959. (Tony Price)



Taken on 7th June 1961, this view shows the six-wheelers replaced by a GSWR 1911 1st/2nd/3rd bogie and a tin van. The loco is 610, an ex-Midland 0-6-0 of class J19. (S.C. Nash)



7th June 1961 saw a visit to the Loughrea branch by the joint IRRS/SCTS/SLS "Farewell To Steam" tour. The special ran in the path of the regular branch train while 610 worked the branch stock to Loughrea afterwards, but not before a Midland six-wheeler had been added to the 'empty' train. The train is seen here approaching Loughrea. (S.C. Nash)



On 21st April 1955, ex-Midland G2 2-4-0 No.30 "Active", here running as 656, is shunting at Loughrea. Included in the train is GSWR 3rd brake six-wheeler No.91 of 1884. (H.C. Casserley)