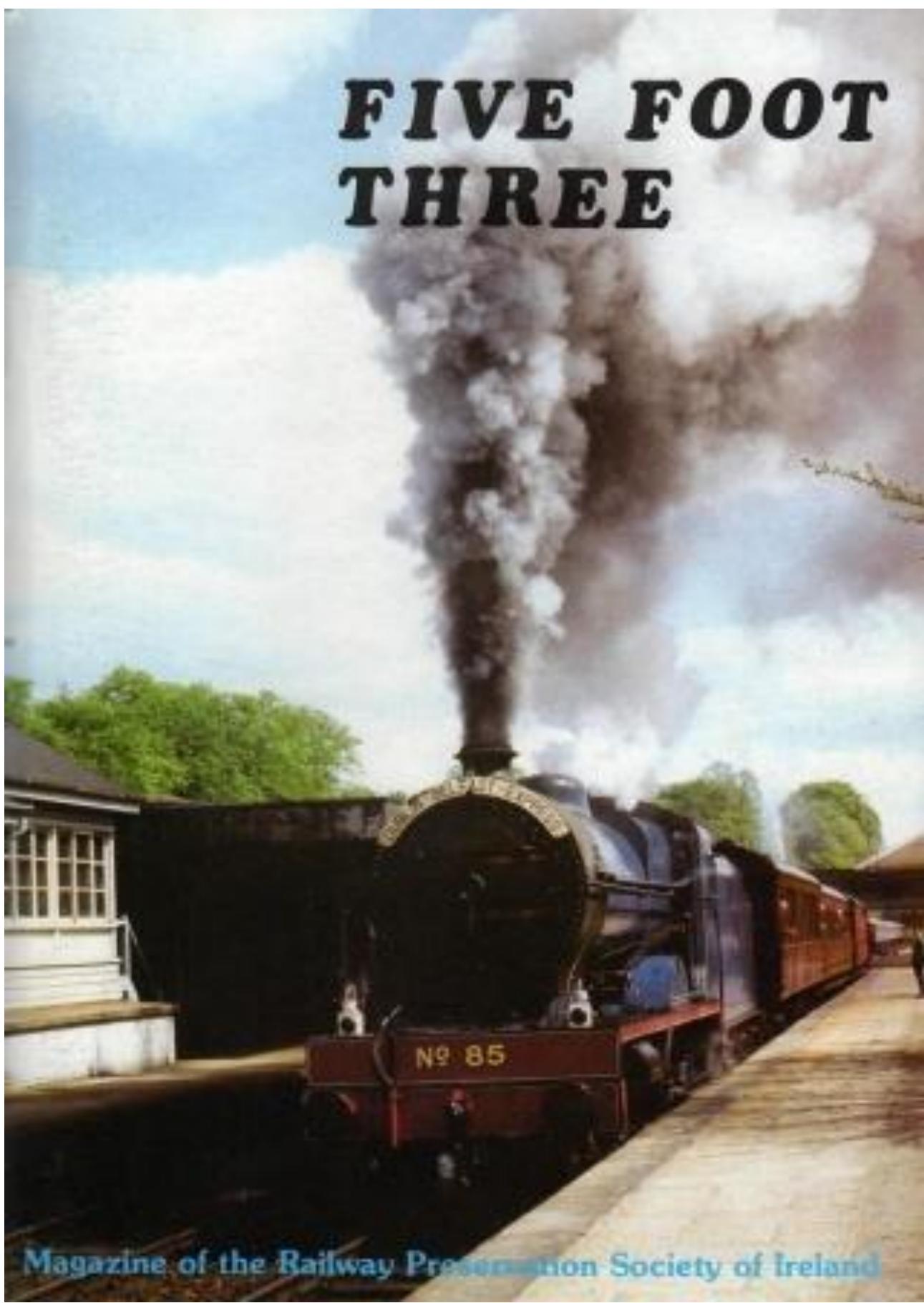


# FIVE FOOT THREE



Magazine of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

# FIVE FOOT THREE

## No.34

### Winter 1987/88

**Editor: Nelson Poots**

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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.85 makes a vigorous re-start from Lisburn on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1987 with her lightweight 3-bogie Whitehead-Dublin train. At Dublin the 8 coaches of the International Railtour made a more appropriate load for her return to Belfast while No.171, relieved of that burden, followed her north with the smaller train. (Eric Langhammer)*

#### **EDITORIAL**

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It is regrettable to have to begin on a sombre note but, since the last issue was published, three outstanding personalities have vanished from the railway scene: J.H. Houston, railway engineer; R.M. Arnold, railway observer and author and - probably the best known to travellers on RPSI trains - Harry Ramsey, NIR driver and gentleman. Tributes to all three appear elsewhere and we extend our sympathy, albeit somewhat belatedly, to their families.

Harry's untimely death highlights a situation which has been steadily creeping up on the Society, i.e. the diminishing numbers of men available to crew steam locomotives. Many of those who were in their heyday at the end of NIR steam are now close to retirement, their numbers being further depleted by ill-health and the movement of younger men to other duties. We are entering a period of change which,

over the next few years, will see the departure of many familiar faces. Already some hitherto seldom-seen persons are beginning to appear on the footplates of steam locos, with varying degrees of enthusiasm as while some might be content to settle for something more comfortable others welcome the chance to have another go on steam. One 'younger man' has taken to No.4 like a duck to water while, on the Great Northern side, others more senior have also been producing some outstanding performances. Our thanks are due to them all and to those who arranged for their appearances in order that our main line operations could be carried on successfully. Hopefully, the present programme of training NIR volunteers on steam work will ensure that this situation can continue.



*"As if the fire-cleaning wasn't enough!" Locomotive Inspector Frank Dunlop beset by a Japanese TV crew at Portrush on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1987. (C.P. Friel)*

Turning to the more mundane matters of Five Foot Three, it may not have gone unnoticed that of late the magazine has taken on a rather lean - even emaciated - appearance. To say this is not to criticise those responsible for its production but rather to highlight the difficulty of acquiring sufficient material to keep the covers a respectable distance apart. It seems pointless and a waste of the Society's scarce resources to produce a magazine consisting mainly of a formalised reiteration of departmental reports which for the most part have already been published in news sheets. To do better than this requires a supply of articles of general railway interest. Unfortunately these, like money, do not readily materialise but usually have to be coaxed out of people.

There must be among the readership many who could either contribute something themselves or point the way to a source which could be tapped. Particularly desirable would be the reminiscences of railwaymen past and present. A lot of people, with distasteful memories of school essays, might well

look on writing a contribution as a form of torture they could do without or feel that someone might criticise what they produce. Don't worry, the Editor is in the same boat but a joint effort might well produce some worthwhile material.



**No.171 leaves Belfast York Road with the 50<sup>th</sup> Portrush Flyer on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1987. (C.P. Friel)**

The current locomotive restoration project, No.461, is the subject of an article in this issue. The next candidate is No.27 "Lough Erne" so now is the time for Fermanagh and beyond to get into the act!

A final word on the subject of content. Should it be exclusively Irish or would an occasional article of wider railway interest be acceptable? Do bear in mind that the Editor, possessing neither a magic wand nor a crystal ball, can only publish what is made available to him! Your comments/suggestions will be much appreciated.

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#### **CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN**

**Sullivan Boomer**

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Incredible as it may seem, I believe that my last essay into print was in June 1986. However, many of the events which have taken place since then have been described elsewhere in the magazine so a brief reference here will suffice.

Our operations, as most of you will be aware, have been very successful again this year. Planning for the "Shannon" Railtour for 1988 is well advanced, and the only problem most passengers should face is deciding which train to travel on. I hope that has whetted your appetite, and it is planned to have the final details ready for publication just after the turn of the year. On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1987 we operated the "Wedding Belle" and had a wedding reception on the train for the first time.

On the rolling stock front we have had a period of excellent locomotive availability, but essential maintenance work must now be undertaken to ensure that we still have a full fleet available, whilst work progresses on No.461. Carriage stock all needs relatively minor attention, but it will be time

consuming; many cosmetic jobs are required on paintwork, and small remedial repairs must be carried out if we are to avoid serious deterioration of our assets. Parallel to this are the refurbishment of NCC Third 241, presently well advanced, and the external repainting of her sister coach 238, as well as the coaches already mentioned.

To aid our maintenance the development programme is being continued, with the erection later this winter of the sheer-legs and the construction of the heavy lift area, where we will have the facility to change bogies; at least 2 coaches currently in traffic must be lifted before next year's operating season begins. It is also hoped to start work on the Carriage Shed, although as this project will cost about £100,000 it will have to be phased over at least 2 years (unless you can find a way to raise that amount of money!). It is also hoped that within the next 3 years or so a start can be made on the development of the Carriage Repair Shed, Paint Shop, and the Machine Shops and Workshop area, and some more space and equipment, in the form of machine tools, can be introduced.

However, this all depends on the membership at large. Many members give generous support by way of cash but all too few by way of working at either Whitehead or Mullingar. I know that many of you live too far away to attend regularly but many members who could attend don't, making the excuse that "I don't have the skills to do that sort of work". Those living around Belfast could go to a class at Belfast College of Technology on Monday evenings; it's called Basic Locomotive Maintenance, and we make parts for the locomotives; it really is good fun and a complete novice would find the atmosphere very friendly indeed. In no time at all you would realise that you can do "that sort of work". Some members are also attending classes on Basic Woodworking, and the girls can now use a mortising machine the very best! If you can hammer a nail, turn a screwdriver or spanner, or wield a paintbrush, you can maintain coaches and engines! We must have more voluntary workers, or we will not be running trains next year!! All societies, even the biggest in the UK, have the same problem, but we have always managed to show a lead in the past, so don't let the side down now.

Enough, I hear you cry, and I know that I have laboured this point several times already this year, so to close let me wish you, on behalf of the Council, a "Guid New Year", and hope to see you at Whitehead!

## **NEWS FROM COUNCIL**

**Robin Morton**

The RPSI started 1987 on a winning note - by landing a certificate of commendation in the annual Steam Heritage Award run by British Coal. It was, not surprisingly, the return to traffic of loco No.85 "Merlin" which had caught the eye of the judges and fittingly it was our vice-president, Lord Dunleath, who accepted the award on behalf of the RPSI at a ceremony in Buckinghamshire in April.

News of the award attracted much welcome publicity at home and "Merlin" starred on television and in glorious Technicolor on the front page of the Belfast Telegraph.

It was very much No.85's year and the Council was delighted that the loco was repaying so handsomely all the investment both in terms of cash and time. It is now 10 years since the project got under way but the sight of the gleaming "Merlin" at the head of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Enterprise in August made it all so worthwhile.

After the AGM Rory McNamee was re-appointed to the post of Mullingar Officer, bringing to 17 the total strength of the Council. Paul Newell rejoined the Council to serve as Appeals and Sponsorship Officer, while Nelson Poots took over as Editor. David Humphries strengthened our Dublin-based contingent by taking over the newly created post of Southern Publicity and Marketing.

The Council has continued to meet on a monthly basis at Central Station, by kind permission of NIR. Again much time has been saved by the efficient functioning of the Operations Committee under Ernie Gilmore.

Financially we got our heads above water again by paying off the overdraft incurred for the installation of the Coleraine turntable. It was a conscious decision by Council to go into the red but it still came as a relief to see the minus sign replaced by the plus.

The financial picture was improved by another successful operating season and the icing on the cake came when we snapped up three film contracts with No.184 in the autumn.

The Council decided to allocate some of the surplus towards the much-needed heavy lift area at Whitehead, by installing sheer-legs to lift coach ends. This is essential for maintenance work on our coaching stock.

The Irish Locomotive Restoration Fund was launched on the Lough Gill railtour and many generous donations have helped bring forward the day when locos No.461 and No.27 will return to the main line.

Significantly, the Council has found itself pressed more and more by maintenance officers to vote funds for the hiring in of outside labour to help locomotive and coach projects. With the demise of the ACE scheme at Whitehead we have become acutely aware of the shortage of volunteers at Whitehead and the Council has had no option but to bring in outside contractors for essential jobs. In the year up to August the Society expended some £4,000 on labour.

The thorny question of diesel preservation which provoked such interest at the AGM was the subject of a questionnaire to the membership in the summer but, perhaps inevitably, the results were somewhat inconclusive.

The similarly contentious issue of concessionary travel on Society trains was also the subject of much deliberation by the Council. The Council decided on a compromise which was explained to members but which basically comprised complimentary travel for Council members and rostered members on public excursion trains, and a concessionary fare for rostered personnel on the main leg of the two-day tour.

Another matter related to finance was the proposal to reimburse Society members involved in midweek film contracts for loss of wages. It was decided that rostered personnel in charge of locomotives and coaches should receive £50 per person per day and that in future such payments should be built into the overall price of the contract. It was stressed by the Council, however, that such turns should be rotated as much as possible among available personnel.

Bowring Martin have continued to advise the Council on the insurance front and have also been involved in our discussions with NIR about insurance arrangements for the operation of wooden-bodies coaches. The Council has meanwhile still not given up hope that the CIÉ may be persuaded to lift the ban on our train operating on the Dublin-Mallow section.

The Council gave renewed consideration to the future of Mullingar, our Republic of Ireland base. Council policy is that Mullingar is primarily an operating and storage base, with heavy overhaul work being centred on Whitehead. It was decided that the Society's aging 0-6-0 No.184 should be kept in use as long as possible. It was expected, however, that No.171 would be sent south in 1988 for use in the series of special trains due to be operated in connection with the Dublin Millennium celebrations. A meeting was held in September between relevant Council members and the Mullingar workforce to agree the details of the policy.

Thought has also been given to a re-structuring of the operating grades, to allow raw recruits a sample of life on the footplate. The proposal was that the bottom rung should comprise everything from assistant shunter to assistant steam raiser. Already some new blood has come forward, including some members of the fairer sex.

At Whitehead the Council is still keen to see progress being made with the proposed interpretive centre, with a view to letting a wider public view the Society's exhibits. As always, the problem is on

the cash side and to this end the Council has appointed a firm of management consultants to give a professional appraisal of possible avenues of grant aid. We hope then that the firm will help us tap this source of capital funds.



***No.85 departs from Dundalk, bound for Belfast with the return working of the first of the 1987 Steam Enterprise trains on 22<sup>nd</sup> August. (Barry Pickup)***

With the go-ahead in principle being given to the cross-harbour rail link in Belfast, the Council has "put down a marker" with NIR and asked the board to note our possible interest in the Antrim-Lisburn branch should this section of track ever become surplus to NIR's immediate requirements. This line still seems to offer the best prospect of an RPSI branchline operation getting off the ground.

The Council has continued to co-operate with our friends in the Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway Society, following the loan agreement for loco No.3BG "Guinness". Negotiations were underway for the transfer of a six-wheeled coach from Whitehead.

To finish the report where it started, it is a pleasure to announce that the Society also concluded the year in winning style - by landing a merit certificate in the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Tourism Endeavour Awards 1988.

## **OPERATIONS 1987**

**Ernie Gilmore**

The year began with the members in a sombre mood at the AGM in February. So much had been achieved in 1986 but so much had been spent on necessary developments that the 'bottom line' looked threatening. We all agreed that something exceptional had to be done. It was against this background

that the Operations Committee took the unprecedented step of organising four Portrush Flyers and three Steam Enterprises, gambling on having three main line locomotives in traffic and a hard pressed fleet of nine coaches. If we filled the trains the rewards would be the injection of funds that the Society needed. The other unknown factor was the volunteer manpower (perhaps I should say 'peoplepower'!). Would the operating staff rally round our new Locomotive Running Officer Jeremy Saulters?



***No.85 leaving Drogheda, southbound with the final Steam Enterprise, on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1987.  
(C.P. Friel)***

Dear member, I am happy to report that the Society had a 'bumper' season. At the outset let me sincerely thank the Operations Committee (Northern and Southern) who have worked tirelessly to keep steam trains running full of passengers. In addition to the Operations Committee I must mention our man in the West, Peter Bowen-Walsh, who together with his wife, managed to keep a busy veterinary practice going, while organising the Sligo local steam trips in connection with the Lough Gill Railtour. His efforts produced a magnificent surplus of £1,955 for the No.461 and Lough Erne (Sligo Tank) appeal, the train being sold out almost a week before the trip. I cannot forget the squad under Kieran Barber and Heather Boomer who organised and cleaned the train between trips - a most important task and one which was rewarded this year by favourable comments from passengers. Keep up the good work! Also thanks to our Coach Stewards who were invaluable in helping people find their seats, in answering questions and in handing out publicity material. We need more help for next season. It's taking care of the little details that brings people back year after year to share a day out with us.

And what can I say about our Bar and Dining Car Staff? The neat uniforms reflect the caring attitude of the volunteers and add a professional touch to the Dining Car. The Bar is already renowned but congratulations are due to John Richardson and staff for the new catering arrangements which have added significantly to the overall enjoyment of many passengers and to the funds raised through the Dining Car. Once again it was a big effort just when it is most needed.

Last but not least, the Operating Staff without whom the wheels would not turn. And turn they did in 1987, at least once a fortnight and quite often every week during the operating season. Thank you to all those involved in shunting, steam raising (the all night squad), firing and driving. Thank you to those who have recently joined the operating 'ladder', may your progress to driver be rapid and smooth.

The Lough Gill International Railtour to Sligo last May was once again the showpiece of the year. The fact that it ran at all was a monument to the determination and dedication of a few members.

The drama began on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May when No.4 innocently enough sprang leaks from a few boiler tubes at the firebox end. This was surprising since she had just passed an hydraulic test. She was on her way round from Whitehead to Lisburn on the Saturday positioning run to Dublin before the Railtour. As it was more convenient to fix the leaks with the locomotive in Belfast, she was replaced at Lisburn by NIR GM 112 for the trip to Dublin. No.4 limped back to Central Services Depot (Queens Quay) with black patches in her fire. The following five days were unforgettable and went something like this.

Sunday	Locomotive cooling down and first inspection of tubes.
Monday	Leaking boiler tubes were expanded and locomotive steamed but several other tubes leaking. Leak noticed at firebox corner seam.
Tuesday	Locomotive cooling down and more tubes expanded, but no guarantee that more tubes would not leak. The Emergency Committee met at 17:00. The time had come for a major decision. It was 64 hours to go to the departure of the locomotive for Dublin and just 84 hours before the Railtour scheduled departure from Dublin to Sligo.  No.85 "Merlin" was out of the reckoning because with her 21 ton axle loading she would not be permitted on the Dublin-Sligo route and it was too late to re-arrange Hotel accommodation for over 300 people in a different destination,  No.171 Slieve Gullion was the proud possessor of three new bearings and had no brick arch in the firebox. Her new bearings had not been tested hauling loads at speed - she had only operated the Easter Bunny train rides at Whitehead. On the other hand she could do with the mileage to 'run them in'. The final decision to use No.171 was based on the hard fact that it is easier to 'nurse' a locomotive with, perhaps, hot bearings running at reduced speeds with frequent stops, than to cope with a leaking boiler which puts the fire out! The problem was the lack of a brick arch in No.171. 24 hours minimum are required for the new arch to dry out which left us with Tuesday evening to have Bob Edwards build the new structure inside the firebox. Fortunately, Bob was available that evening and John (Junior) Doyle, in response to our distress call, opened the family warehouse of Irish Brick Refractories at 20:00 hours to supply Bob with refractory cement. The arch was completed after midnight.
Wednesday	No.171's arch was drying out.
Thursday	No.171 worked a three coach trial train from Whitehead to York Road and proceeded light engine over to Antrim, Lisburn and Belfast Central without incident.
Friday	No.171 worked light engine to Dublin Connolly. At around 17:00 we were delighted to hear by telephone that she had reached Dublin running cool. The Railtour was on and would be steam hauled. Don't forget that we didn't have No.184 as a standby at Mullingar. Leslie McAllister, the RPSI London Agent, had been kept informed of events and was able to advise participants travelling on the overnight ferry from Liverpool of the locomotive change to prepare the LMS enthusiasts for a cultural shock!

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May dawned, overcast but dry, and while three hundred and eleven breakfasts were being contemplated, No.171 and coaches 114, 9, 1335, 87, 1327, 1142, 68 and 91 were being prepared in

Dublin by our rostered volunteers for the biggest railtour ever organised by the Society. Eight coaches 85% filled gave just a little breathing space for an exciting weekend. One detail which was overlooked in the eleventh hour reorganisation was the re-routing of the tour train away from the Newcomen Junction line out of Connolly. No.171's previous acquaintance with this sharply graded loop line proved too much for her because of a signal failure causing an enforced stop at Liffey Junction. This time, however, she coped well with one extra coach but running in the opposite direction. With hindsight we were lucky to get away without overloading one of her new bearings. After a photo stop at Leixlip and a water stop at Enfield, the CIÉ crew nursed her to Mullingar. The first 50 miles hauling a train had been successful so it looked as though what seemed impossible just two days before might happen and we might be steam hauled all the way to Sligo. We were pretty sure that if we got her to Sligo we would also get her back as far as Dublin where No.85 would be waiting to take over the train to Belfast.

At Mullingar the engine and van 114 were detached, taken to the fertiliser yard where the CIÉ forklift truck was used to transfer bags of coal to the tender and the van from a container sent down from Whitehead before the Railtour. In this way we kept control over the quality and price of the coal. No.171 went for water only to discover that the water tank had emptied itself overnight. Emergency fire hoses carried in the workshop coach 114 were hastily brought into use and the tender filled from a roadside fire hydrant. There was plenty of time therefore to observe the vandalised Mullingar set with virtually every window smashed and, more interesting, the repair work to the boiler of No.184 in the engine shed. Unfortunately, a late departure from Mullingar meant the cutting out of the runpast at Mostrim (Edgeworthstown) but, as we were to get it on the way back, it proved a good recovery margin for the train crossing at Longford.

By the time we reached Carrick-on-Shannon the bar and Dining Car were fully patronised and the packed lunches were well under way, washed down by copious pints of a certain dark stout. Our German friends from Berliner Eisenbahnfreunde and our Australian visitors from the 5' 3" gauge State of Victoria had by this time got over their language problems thanks to some female interpreters on duty in the bar. There was time however to savour a cool blue 4-4-0 undertaking runpasts at Carrick and Ballymote 'swiftly and with style'.

Arrival at Sligo was heralded by a lone piper double-heading us up the platform to the cheers of around 1,000 good Sligo people who had turned up for the already fully booked local steam trips to Ballymote. This welcome, laid on by the Town Council, was appreciated by many of our visitors from overseas.

Railtour patrons now had three choices. Ninety-nine went on the innovative Yeats Country trip around Lough Gill with afternoon tea in historic Lissadell House, sharing in its memories of W.B. Yeats. This 1½ hour trip took twice as long due to an over-enthusiastic coach driver and delayed the start of the Railtour Banquet. Ninety-one went on the lineside buses where it was possible to obtain good video and stills of the train going and returning from Ballymote, at different locations, of course. The remainder stayed on the train for the short trip and were joined by 200 Sligo folk to fill the seats vacated by the bus travellers. As it turned out these 200 seats could have been sold over and over again but we avoided over-crowding. The second trip to Ballymote, departing at 18:20, was dedicated to the local families and carried over 450. Once again our souvenir shop and bar facilities were fully appreciated. Thanks again to Peter Bowen-Walsh and all at Sligo who helped in many ways to make the visit of the steam train a memorable one. To realise  $\frac{1}{15}$  of the £30,000 appeal in just 2½ hours is a magnificent effort.

Hunger was apparent at the late start of the Banquet but the excellent meal served to 270 weary travellers more than compensated. After an official welcome to Sligo by the Mayor and short speeches by Chairman Sullivan Boomer, tour leader Rudiger Reich from BEF and ARPS representative Chris Smyth, the evening got into full swing with traditional Irish music and poetic yarns from a delightful

group of instrumentalists called Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. The craic was so good that the group played and sang for twice their booked time, until 1:30am. Where else but Ireland!

Former editor of Railway World, Michael Harris knows the drill and, in his article on the railtour in the September issue, made favourable mention of our civilised start next morning at 09:45. By this time of course the RPSI operating crew had been up and had transferred 3 tons of coal from the service coach to the locomotive tender, observed by just a few early birds. One big disappointment was that we could not persuade CIÉ to permit the train empty or full, part or all the way down Sligo Quay.

Unabashed, we set out for a non-stop run to Carrick-on-Shannon - 37½ miles - the longest stretch for No.171 so far. Her bearings were well warmed on arrival which was only to be expected and it was really only then that we reckoned that she would see us through the weekend.

At Longford, 55 people boarded the lineside bus to obtain two excellent shots of No.171 on the move, one at an accommodation crossing behind a housing estate on the outskirts of Longford, and, best shot of the weekend, of a confident No.171 hammering past beautiful Lough Owel at 55 mph - definitely worth missing the second attempt at the runpast in Mostrim. Railscene Video No.11 is worth buying for this shot alone (end of commercial break!).

Mullingar saw the 'lumpy shunters' in action again (someone had to come up with a nickname for the RPSI female operating crew). 5 tons of coal were transferred from the RPSI container to the tender and 2 tons to the service coach.

A lineside bus had already departed 15 minutes when No.171 left tender first to run out to Moate and back, on the Galway line. This stretch of line brought back memories of the making of the "First Great Train Robbery". Lineside photographs were obtained at derelict Streamstown and, returning, on a high embankment near Castletown. The lineside buses worked like clockwork throughout the weekend.

After a quick top-up of water from the errant Mullingar tank, the fresh Dublin crew set out at a cracking pace for the non-stop 50 mile run to Connolly. The locomotive was obviously in fine fettle, and justified the care and attention taken on the previous day. We felt a mixture of pride and relief as we steamed into Connolly a little late due to the locomotive firebox triggering the hot box detector at Killucan.

Earlier in the day a special "Steam on Sunday" train made up from the remainder of the Whitehead stock in traffic, i.e. full van 411, side corridor 3<sup>rd</sup> 238 and Directors Saloon 50 ran a 272 mile round trip Whitehead to Connolly behind No.85 "Merlin", returning to Belfast Central behind No.171 after the main railtour.

It is interesting to reflect at this point that RPSI steam trains covered a total mileage of 520 on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May. It was not possible for a person to travel on all of these trains since no one has yet perfected the art of being in two places at the same time. Two members however rose to the challenge and swapped the return trip from Sligo to Connolly (134 miles) for a bus journey from Sligo to Belfast on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May to catch No.85 leaving Whitehead at 10:15 on Sunday morning thus maximising the steam mileage for the 3 days at 605. At an all-in fare of £91 including the Ballymote second trip, this must represent outstanding value for enthusiast steam trains at 15p per mile. Sticking to the railtour as planned, the average enthusiast covered 580 miles at an all in cost of £88 (Ballymote first trip only).

Back in Connolly No.85 was waiting to back on to take us to Belfast. What a moment that was! For the majority of our visitors it was the first glimpse of the big azure blue 3-cylinder 4-4-0. Those who were not having their dinner in the Dining Car were able to revive old memories of Amiens Street and the Enterprise Expresses or just gaze at the only compound locomotive now working in these islands.

However, those finishing their meal in the Dining Car were in no doubt of the locomotive change when the regulator was opened for the 113 miles journey North. After a 'simple' start over the approaches to

Connolly, Driver McCaughley opened her to ‘compound’ and the unmistakeable throaty roar was accompanied by a determined pressure on the small of the back as she accelerated the eight bogies away for the 54 miles non-stop to Dundalk. Forget your multiple blast pipes and ejectors, this is the real thing!

By Dundalk the Dining Car had already served over 130 meals and was preparing for the last sitting! Thank you to all those regular cross-channel visitors who help out willingly in the bar and Dining Car each year. (That reminds me, I really must join the SRPS.)

At Dundalk we bade farewell to sixty patrons who had to get back home for work on Monday via the Liverpool ferry or British Airways. The connecting road coach to Dublin Airport and Ferryport waited while passengers photographed No.85 leaving for Belfast. Unfortunately, a last minute change to a larger capacity bus delayed progress to Drogheda when the planned sight of No.171 crossing the Boyne viaduct with the returning “Steam on Sunday” trip, was missed by approximately one minute.

Meanwhile No.85 was acquitted herself well on her second northward climb of the Wellington Bank since returning to traffic. The non-stop run to Belfast Central was arranged to give an indication of the water consumption between Connolly and Central with a view to the Enterprise 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary non-stop run on 11<sup>th</sup> August. Inspector Dunlop was pleased to report that in spite of the brief set-down stop at Dundalk there was an adequate reserve of water in the tender at Central.

Thanks to a 50% grant from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board we had convenience buses laid on to take 152 visitors to the Europa and Stormont Hotels and bring them back in the morning.

The Railtour Round-up on Monday started on a wet morning in Belfast with breakfast at 08:30 and a fairly leisurely start from Central at 09:20 with No.85 and eight coaches to Coleraine, turning on the new RPSI turntable and returning to Belfast York Road and thence to the Society’s site at Whitehead. A lineside bus was laid on to photograph the train climbing through Balmoral station on the outskirts of Belfast and at a location on the Antrim Branch near Greenmount Agricultural College. No.85 had already performed a hasty runpast at Glenavy and, although running a little behind schedule, had to wait at Antrim for the lineside bus to connect. After a brief stop for water at Ballymena, it was on to Ballymoney for a crossing with the 11:05 ex Londonderry and arrival in Coleraine for pre-booked lunch in the Dining Car.

Willing hands pushed the big engine round on the new 60’ turntable (ex Great Victoria Street GNR(I) terminus in Belfast). The third day of the three-day steam event is generally acclaimed as the most relaxing and enjoyable. Whether it’s because the train is not usually so full or because there is a feeling that it’s much better than being at one’s place of employment is for others to judge, but for me it’s the fulfilment and winding down of eight months of planning and arranging. So when the railtour finally arrived in the Whitehead RPSI site having completed 580 miles in three days, the two locomotives consuming nearly 30,000 gallons of water and 20 tons of coal and the passengers consuming over 200 packed lunches and 300 meals, it was understandable that the operating crew were muttering phrases such as “never again”, “definitely my last”, etc.; yet the enjoyment of the patrons and the assurances of a return visit next year is enough to start the ball rolling all over again.

Of course an Irish three day tour should last four and ours is no exception. The visit to Shane’s Castle Railway with lunch and special steaming kindly arranged by The Lord O’Neill, and the Witham Street and Ulster Folk and Transport Museums, was thoroughly enjoyed by all on the Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May.

It was only the cognoscenti who noticed No.171 slip quietly round from Central to Whitehead on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> with the final leg of the “Steam on Sunday” special which had eventually arrived in Central late on the Sunday night after dark. There was a rumour going around that there were some of the passengers still aboard when we went to move the train round to Whitehead on Wednesday, but this was unconfirmed!

The expanded Portrush Flyer season was quite successful. It had been some years since we ran one in June and we were doubtful of the market. The publicity surrounding the 50<sup>th</sup> Flyer added momentum to the ticket sales and we ran with 8 coaches 100% filled behind No.171. We had invited the Board of Directors of NIR together with our sponsors and were particularly delighted to welcome the Chairman Sir Myles and Lady Sheila Humphries on the trip to Portrush.

The second trip behind No.4 on the 4<sup>th</sup> July was 73% filled and included a party of surveyors and families dressed appropriately for Independence Day celebrations.

To ring the changes No.85 worked the third Flyer on 18<sup>th</sup> July with again 8 coaches 91% filled. By now the roll-on publicity which would seem to be mainly by word of mouth, had taken over and the fourth Flyer on the 1<sup>st</sup> August was loaded to 9 coaches 100% filled behind No.4.

The good news about the Flyer season is that we carried a record 1,270 people to Portrush.

Unfortunately, the bad news is that the Coleraine extension was a wash-out on the first trip, (June is not a holiday month in Portrush) while the Castlerock extensions on the second and third trips were less than half full, One is tempted to blame the £1 fare increase but the fourth trip was over 80% filled. The real problem is one I have mentioned before in the magazine and that is the relatively high cost of operating the Flyer due to NIR having to pay for temporary staff to operate the crossing gates on the Bleach Green to Antrim section. Because of the fare structure the main train needs to be 100% filled each trip - a tall order - in order just to break even. Any surplus has traditionally come from full Castlerock extensions. So we must (a) increase the main train fare to a reasonable less dependent level and/or (b) step up the publicity and marketing for the Extensions.

The NIR Enterprise 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary trip on 11<sup>th</sup> August was perhaps the highlight of the 24 years of the Society. After weeks of meticulous preparation everything came good on the day and provided all the necessary publicity for the Steam Enterprise season. And what a season it turned out to be!

Dedicated to No.85 and a nine coach train driven by a certain Robert Quayle, the GN main line is hard to beat. It's incredible to think that only 18 months before the RPSI Council seriously questioned the usefulness of No.85 on the Society trains. She appeared to be weak, hard on coal and water and, worst of all, her tender was sensitive to bad trackwork. She was given one last chance, a test run to Drogheda and as the 'old hands' became familiarised she suddenly looked promising. In the meantime, NIR had admitted bad trackwork at Portrush and Coleraine yards and gave her big tender a reprieve.

When planning the Steam Enterprise season we had no idea if we could market one of the trips in August - the traditional Flyer month, so it was no surprise that the first trip on the 22<sup>nd</sup> was just over 50% filled. This was a nine coach train and in previous years we would have been delighted with the 200 seats sold. The 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September proved again the roll-on effect at 90% and 100% capacity. Over the three trains we carried over 900 passengers and at the economic fare of £15 Adult return, the operating surplus was £1,300, not including profit from catering, bar and shop. This compares with an operating loss of £1,246 for the Flyer season. Consideration should be given to running the Portrush Flyers from Belfast Central next year which would reduce the NIR charges.

This brings me to the Bangor Belle and Larne Lough trips. August Bank Holiday Monday was the Bangor Belle day and the support was disappointing this year. We had four round trips from Belfast to Bangor, two marketed from either end. The slick operation with No.4 and 8 coaches broke even and made a small surplus of £168 not including catering and shop.

The Larne Lough, always a favourite end of season jaunt, was on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October, arranged to bring No.85 and all remaining coaches at Central after the Steam Enterprise season, back to Whitehead. The train was upgraded into a Sunday Luncheon train and the operation just broke even with a surplus from the catering and bar. Thanks are due to the Carrickfergus Silver Band members who entertained us to a few 'old standards' in the Dining Car. The highlight of the afternoon was Merlin's non-stop run

from Larne Harbour to York Road in 33 minutes and 43 seconds, just a few seconds outside No.4's time on the lighter weight Paul Newell Irish Locomotive Appeal Special on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June. This was a most appropriate way to end the most interesting and successful season operated by the RPSI.



***No.4, her earlier troubles behind her, performs well on the 1 in 109 climb through Cultra on the third of the four Bangor Belle trains run on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1987. (C.P. Friel)***

I must mention two very successful Southern operations. Clonsilla Shuttles were operated very smoothly on 15<sup>th</sup> August and 12<sup>th</sup> September. The new arrangement of running through Connolly to Pearse station to run round and service the locomotive has proved a winner.

On 15<sup>th</sup> August No.184 and the Mullingar set carried 1,144 people in 4 round trips representing 100% capacity. Our Publicity and Marketing Officer David Humphries negotiated with the Irish Life Building Society to use their shops to sell tickets. TNT (Skypack) provided sponsorship for the tickets and we are grateful for these healthy signs from the Dublin area.

On 12<sup>th</sup> September No.184 was out again carrying a total of 950 persons in four trips. The drop in numbers was all on the first trip which was badly affected by torrential rain before noon. Unfortunately, rather than overcrowd the other 3 trains, people had to be turned away. Congratulations to Tim Moriarty and his catering team and to Joe Fitzpatrick and helpers for the souvenir sales. The total turnover on the two dates was a magnificent IR£960 in the catering van and IR£1,400 from sales of souvenirs.

The icing on the cake however was the private charters. These included the prestigious NIR Enterprise 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary charter, the West Clare Centenary charter at Ennis and no less than three separate film

contracts as follows:

Troubles	Filmed in Connolly and Greystones on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> September using No.184 plus coaches 1142 and externally repainted 861 and 1097. These were worked from Whitehead to Dublin by NIR GM on Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> September. (Yes, there were two steam locomotives and 17 RPSI coaches in Connolly that day.)
Echoes	Filmed in Carrick-on-Suir on 17 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> September using No.184 and Mullingar set of coaches.
The Old Jest	Filmed in Moate on Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> October using No.184 and coaches 861, 1097 and 1142.

Congratulations to all those at Whitehead and Mullingar who worked day and night (yes - right through) to have the film trains ready on time - it seemed impossible but we did it with help from professional painter Sammy Cameron, joiner Tommy Hill-Moore and signwriter member Audrey Smyrl. Can we do it next year?

#### **INTERNATIONAL RAILTOUR POSTSCRIPT**

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Following the tour, several letters from participants were received by the Operations Officer who, with becoming modesty, passed them on to the Editor. All expressed satisfaction, with the exception of one gentleman from the south of England who demanded an apology and the refund of some money. In addition to this he suggested that he be furnished with several other items by way of compensation for the "hasel" which he had suffered and that failure to do so would result in our being denounced to the railway press. No doubt he received his apology and refund but has anyone paid the ransom? As far as is known the Society has not been castigated in any national journals so have we an 'Irangate' waiting to be revealed! Meanwhile, let's hear what some of the others had to say:

"I really enjoyed the railtour - I hadn't travelled behind a steam engine for many, many years and it brought back many memories. My sincere thanks to you and to all who helped to organise the outing."

*Shaun, Bramalea, Ontario*

"Just a line to congratulate you on the success of another railway tour and to assure you of our support in the future. May I also thank you for your kindness and courtesy on Saturday evening; it was a most enjoyable occasion."

*T Caughey, Bord Failte, Belfast*

"I'm writing to tell you how much I enjoyed the Lough Gill tour. I've not had such a time on one of these trips for a very long time - if ever, indeed. I think the whole thing reflected the greatest credit on everyone connected with the RPSI. Particularly, I would single out those worthy stalwarts - ladies and gents - who worked so hard over the three days in the dining car. We hear from all sides how much worse life and living has become today. To experience those three days was to realise that this is not by any means the case. It was superb. God willing, I hope to be participating again next year. PS: I hope No.4 will be restored to full health soon. Much as I sympathised with the Society over her last minute trouble, I was very pleased to have the opportunity of haulage by No.171."

*Guy Tremlett, Oakham, Rutland*

"May I express on behalf of all participants in our group my thanks for all that we have learned during the Lough Gill Railtour. You and all involved in that tour made our stay in Ireland a most memorable one."

*Rudiger Reich, Berliner Eisenbahnfreunde*

"I feel I must write and congratulate you and the other members of the RPSI for a wonderful weekend of steam. Unfortunately I was unable to travel the Sligo leg of the journey but thoroughly enjoyed that fantastic run behind No.85 on the Sunday night. I talked to some of our overseas guests who had

travelled to Sligo and they were all full of praise. The dining car crew are also to be congratulated for another marvellous effort. I am sorry to have to mention an incident which I feel should not be allowed to occur and that is the question of operating staff going through the train in dirty overalls. It is probably just thoughtlessness but it does give a very bad impression apart from the fact that people can get their clothes dirty in a cramped situation such as in the dining car.” *Mervyn Brown, Letterkenny*

“Just a line to say how much I enjoyed the tour and to express my appreciation to all who worked so very hard to make the time so pleasurable and so much fun. Everyone put in so much effort and always with a smile.” *John Larke, Cambridge*

*[So much for blowing our trumpet - but why not? The RPSI tour is unique in the British Isles, and probably much further afield. The nearest thing to its atmosphere that I have encountered was in 1987 when I defected to a week-long railtour in Turkey in which we lived on the train in conditions ranging from opulence to semi-squalor, depending on one's purse and one's appetite for housekeeping. The latter point is not unconnected with Mr Brown's letter in which a warning note is sounded to any who may believe that dirt equals authenticity. When such a comment is made by an enthusiast it is not hard to imagine that Mr and Mrs J Public, on whom we depend so heavily for finance and goodwill, will not be happy about paying to suffer dirt and/or discomfort and will also tell their friends so. It is pleasing to see how many of our travellers paid tribute to the work of the catering department for whom life on the tour is one long slog as opposed to the more intermittent bouts of toil and woe which are the lot of those in the dirty garments. Finally, in partisan vein, I can assure Mr Tremlett that No.4 is now ready to run the legs off any of her blue sisters! - Ed.]*

## LOCOMOTIVE REPORT

**Peter Scott**

### **No.3 “R.H. Smyth” (Londonderry Port & Harbour Commissioners 0-6-0ST). In Traffic.**

Requires re-tubing and renewal of firebox seam rivets, also attention to slack bearings.

### **No.4 (LMS (NCC) 2-6-4T). In traffic.**

This locomotive was recently fitted with a new smokebox, steam pipes and chimney. Several boiler tubes were replaced, a number of firebox seam rivets were renewed and the boiler received a hydraulic test. The pony springs were also renewed.

### **No.23 (Irish Shell 4-w DM) In traffic.**

General servicing to be carried out shortly.

### **No.27 “Lough Erne” (Sligo Leitrim & Northern Counties 0-6-4T). In store.**

This locomotive's external appearance has been improved by the application of a coat of black paint - appropriately enough by Fermanagh member George Stephenson. An extensive overhaul will be required and this, along with the current overhaul of No.461, is the subject of a fund-raising drive organised by Paul Newell.

### **No.85 “Merlin” (GNR(I) 4-4-0). In traffic.**

Broken tender spring repaired. No major work planned.

### **No.171 “Slieve Gullion” (GNR(I) 4-4-0). In traffic.**

Broken tender spring repaired. Hydraulic test completed. This loco will shortly require complete re-tubing, renewal of firebox seam rivets and other firebox repairs, renewal of main steam pipes and repairs to the tender. This work will probably be started after the 1988 season.

### **No.184 (Great Southern & Western 0-6-0). In traffic, at Mullingar.**

The smokebox shell has been renewed, the boiler partially re-tubed and a hydraulic test carried out. The

small-end bearings were re-fitted and the slide bars closed. This loco will shortly require a new smokebox tubeplate.

**No.186 (Great Southern & Western 0-6-0). In store.**

No work planned.



*No.3BG "Guinness" is gingerly propelled on to a low-loader by the other No.3 "R.H. Smyth", prior to moving on loan to the Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway Society early in 1987. (C.P. Friel)*

**No.461 (Dublin & South Eastern 2-6-0). General overhaul.**

Work has continued as time permits on the following:

Driving wheels re-profiled and journals skimmed, wheelsets cleaned and painted.

Tender wheels cleaned and painted, journal ends rebuilt, axlebox brasses re-metalled.

Repairs to tender tank and coal rails completed, interior being de-scaled and painted.

Tender drag box rebuilt.

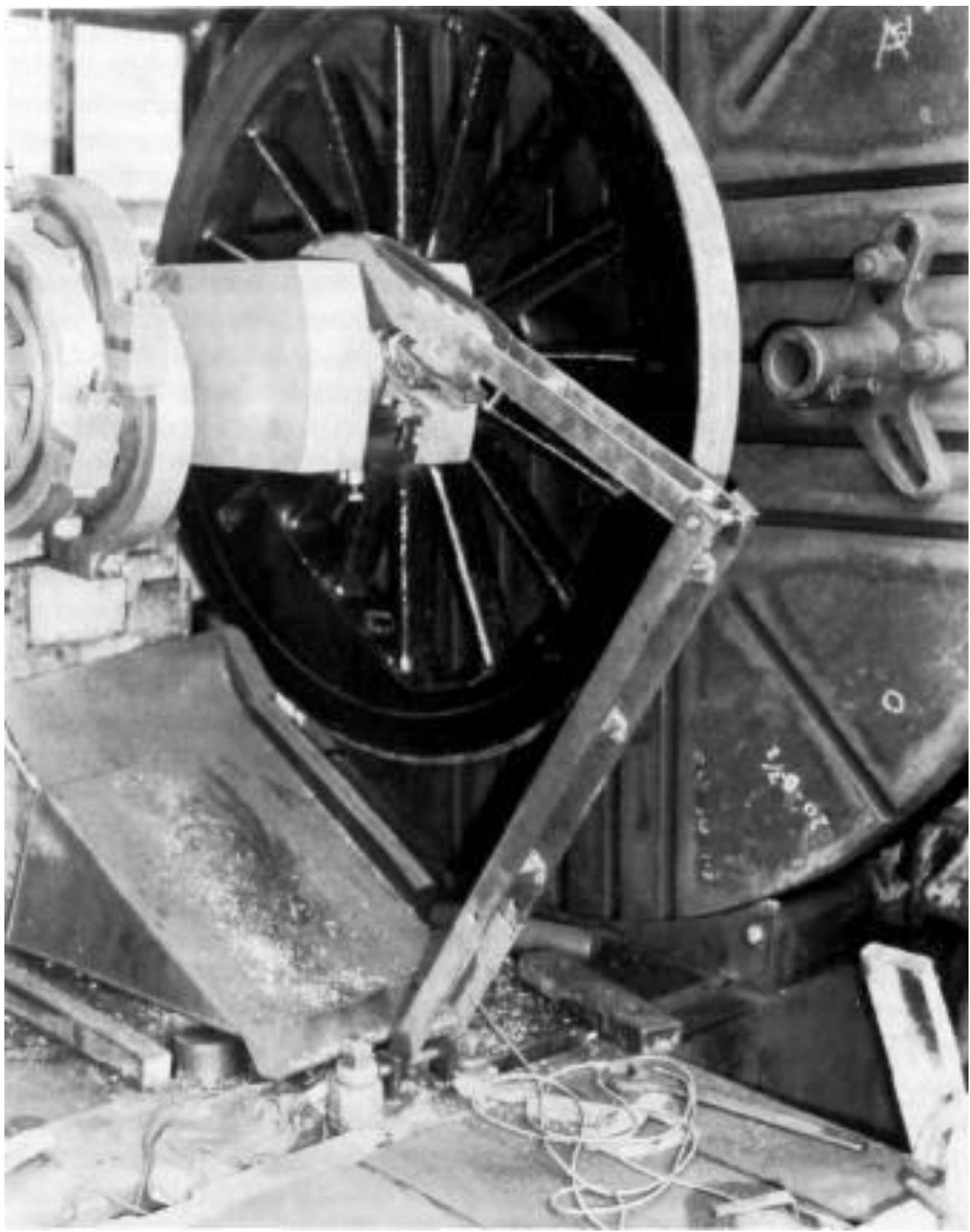
All brake gear dismantled, worn parts being restored and renewed.

Pony truck spring hangers, spindles and guides renewed.

Valve liners pressed out and ports de-carbonised. Slide bars built up and machined.

Fitting of new left-hand and right-hand hornblocks and liners.

Boiler fittings overhauled and missing parts replaced.



*Just one of the benefits of the Tech class! The Peter Scott machine, referred to in the No.461 article, applying the final finish to one of No.461's crankpins. (C.P. Friel)*

Since the preparation of the above report, it has come as a shock to learn of the death, on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1987, of George Stephenson. Over the years, one could be sure of George turning up every so often when, after the long journey from his home at Bellanaleck, he managed to combine family business with what was obviously pleasure for him in putting in a day's work on whatever job came his way. His friendly manner and cheerful willingness to assist were an example to all and will be greatly missed by those of us who had the pleasure of knowing him. We offer our sympathy to his wife and family.

## **CARRIAGE & WAGON REPORT**

**Alan Edgar**

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The 1987 season appears to have been a very sedate one from a carriage maintenance viewpoint. One additional vehicle, GNR open third 9, has been added to our running fleet. First appearances can be deceptive however, and in this case disguises the sometimes frenzied activity going on behind the scenes.

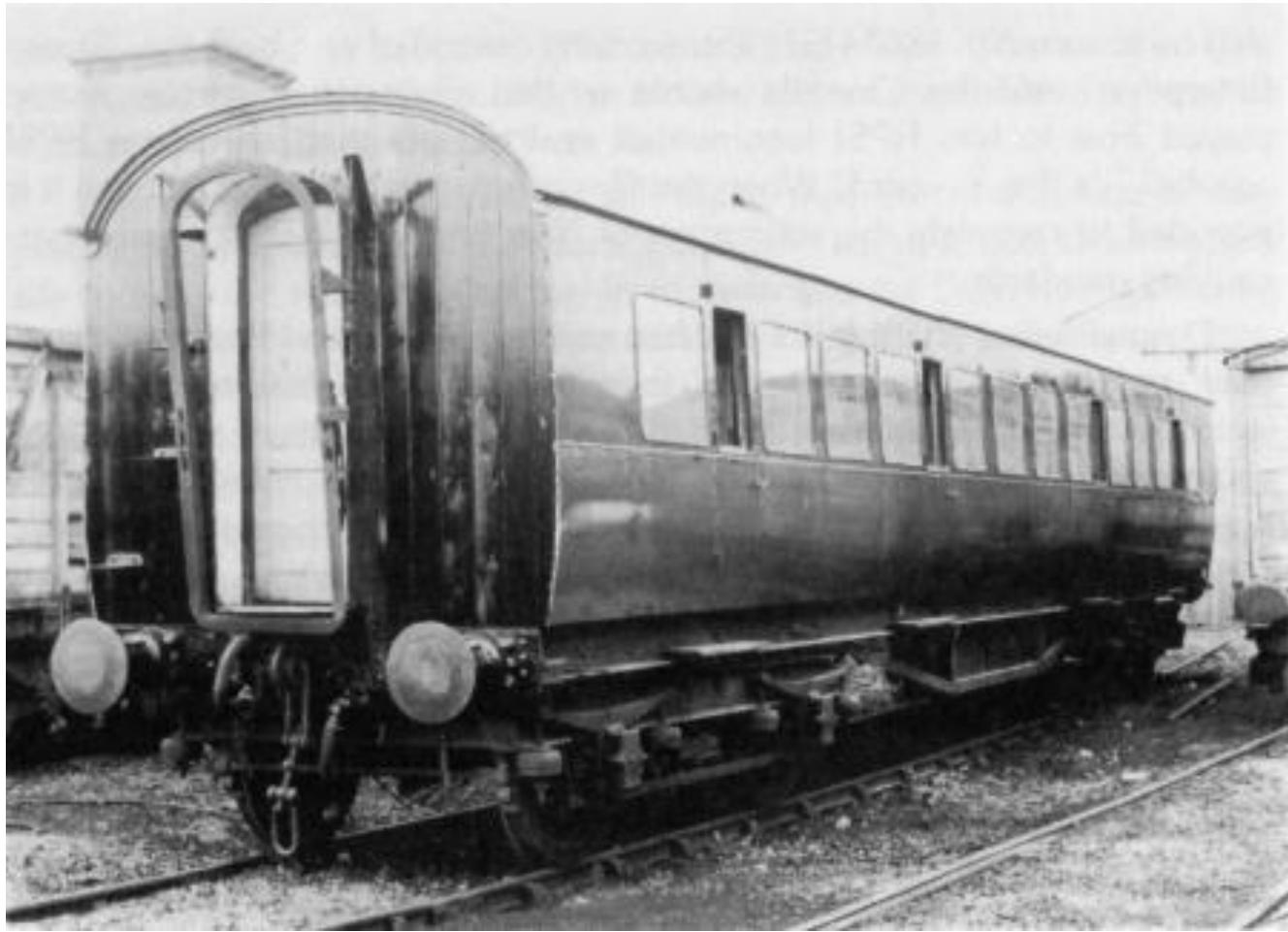
After 1097, the Great Southern tri-composite described in the last magazine, left the repair road, the resulting space was occupied by NCC third 241, a carriage which last ran in the 1984 season. Like 68 and 238, this vehicle was originally built for the Midland Railway (England) and came to Ireland in 1942 as a replacement for rolling stock destroyed by the Luftwaffe blitz on Belfast in 1941. 238 and 241 in fact assumed the numbers of almost identical vehicles which had been destroyed. We have no information on their running numbers when in England and would be grateful if anyone could shed light on this. The three vehicles mentioned were modernised by the UTA in the 1960s by the fitting of flush aluminium panelling and rubber-mounted windows on the exterior and plastic laminate panelling internally. In the long term we may restore these vehicles to their original appearance, with wooden panelling, but this will have to wait until we have permanent covered accommodation for our carriages. In the meantime they will be turned out in the simplified LMS livery, although they never ran in such a livery in their present condition.

Despite having been in traffic until relatively recently 241 required a fairly extensive rebuild. The problem appears to have originated with the toilet water tanks, which had corroded through, leaking their contents into the ends of the coach and causing extensive rot. Much of the hardwood framing at the ends of the coach had to be replaced, although costs were kept down by using second-hand sections from a NCC brake van broken up at Whitehead some years ago. Once the framing was completed new planking was fitted to the ends and to large areas of the roof. New water tanks of larger capacity than the originals were also fitted. While this work was in progress, a squad was engaged in stripping the external panels down to the bare metal as the old paintwork was badly crazed. This proved to be an extremely time-consuming job.

The build-up to the two-day tour in May saw GNR brake 114 inside the shed. This seems to have become an annual event but this year major surgery, which involved replacement of a number of doorposts and associated framework, completed the rebuild which had to be fitted into the brief periods when 114 was not required for traffic. Its external appearance benefited from a repaint in GNR mahogany - thus providing a match for 9, which made its debut on the two-day tour. The mid-week squad put the final touches (in the form of luggage racks and seating) to the interior of 9 before moving on to their next project, the interior of 241. The other major job on 9 was to repair the brake rigging, all of which proved to be badly worn.

After the usual panic for the two-day tour we looked forward to a fairly quiet life for the rest of the season, but this was not to be. Rumours of a film contract were heard around the beginning of August and acquired substance with the visit of representatives from the film company (Little Bird Films) to Whitehead shortly afterwards. They required carriages of vintage appearance to depict a Dublin & South Eastern Railway train in the 1920s. In a particularly rash moment they were shown 861, the

celebrated 12-wheeled brake which had been lying derelict since withdrawal for repairs in 1984, and 1097, the GSR tri-composite. Subsequent events quickly became dubbed "Mission Impossible". The good news was that the film company would finance external restoration of these two vehicles, using professional contractors where necessary. The bad news was that only four weeks were available before filming was due to start. In the event, volunteer labour was also heavily committed and Whitehead Youth Project (the YTP scheme) was also hijacked for the duration. Just to make things more interesting, 861 was in a siding which had been disconnected for some time due to track alterations by the Site Department. Nonetheless, our ex-ACE joiner, Thomas Hill-Moore was soon in evidence beginning woodwork repairs, as was a YTP squad tackling glazing.



*NCC third 241, with numbering and corridor connections still to be completed, emerges from the paint shop at Whitehead. (C.P. Friel)*

A preliminary survey had revealed 861 to be structurally sound apart from a small area around one gangway where rot was present. There was also damage sustained by the guard's duckets when it was discovered that these were too wide to pass through the portals of Mullingar shed. Much of the wooden moulding on the exterior of the coach required replacing, as did the beading around the windows, which was in poor condition, leaving the windows loose in their frames. 861 had unfortunately been left on one occasion beside the boundary fence of the site and the result was about twenty windows smashed by stone-throwers. The roof canvas required replacement but this was not possible in the time available so a cosmetic coat of paint was applied to the old fabric. 1097 had already been partially restored and required only minor external woodwork before painting could commence. These two coaches would be augmented by GSWR all-first 1142 which was already in traffic, all three being

painted in GSR fully lined livery.

The end of the first week saw the completion of external repairs to 1097 and significant progress on 861. That weekend an impromptu track gang, augmented by C&W Department volunteers, forsook the delights of the "Steam Enterprise" to re-connect the severed siding. On Monday morning Sam Cameron, our professional painter on the contract, started work on 1097. All we had to do was to have 861 ready for him to start on the following week! The ensuing three weeks saw the most concentrated period of work in the history of the C&W Department. It was necessary literally to work through the night on a number of occasions to meet the deadline; for example, to have all the woodwork on 861 completed so that the painting could begin, and to have all the lining on 1097 completed so that varnishing could be proceeded with. There were compensations. As 1097 was transformed by coats of maroon gloss and Audrey Smyrl (another new recruit) applied the finishing touches in the form of lettering - another all-night stint-the rest of us were spurred on to complete 861 to a similar standard. Meanwhile, Messrs Hamilton, Saulters, Charters, Boomer and Martin were overhauling vacuum brakes, Messrs McBride and Somerville were painting roofs and Whitehead Railway Project were re-glazing droplights.

The colossal effort put in by all concerned paid off and the film train was ready to leave on the appointed date, Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September 1987. Several of us travelled down on the diesel-hauled special working from Whitehead to Dublin - the filming was to take place at Greystones on the following Sunday and Monday. At Lisburn an appropriate, if not too serious, headboard was affixed to the front of the locomotive, GM diesel 111 "Great Northern". *[Other, more serious-minded enthusiasts and railwaymen expressed different views as to the appropriateness of this object which subsequently found its way on to loco No.184! - Ed.]* This working coincided with both the "Steam Enterprise" and the Clonsilla shuttle so that afternoon Connolly station played host to two RPSI locomotives and no less than seventeen RPSI coaches - is this a record? When the film coaches return to Whitehead it is intended to complete the restoration of 861 and 1097 to passenger-carrying standards.

Despite being hijacked for the film contract Whitehead Railway Project maintained steady progress with their own projects. Inside their shed, structural repair of GNR all-first 227 is almost complete; re-paneling will commence soon. Outside the shed, fitting out of GNR dining car 88 is at an advanced stage and her return to traffic in late 1988 seems feasible.

I usually conclude these reports by thanking all those individuals who have worked for the C&W department. It is gratifying that the Chairman's appeals for more help have not fallen on deaf ears, but have brought about the reappearance of some once-familiar faces and the appearance of some new ones. The only problem is that it is not now practical to mention everybody by name. I thank you all for your efforts, large or small, By the way, there is still room for even more new faces.

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## **SITE REPORT**

**Johnny Glendinning**

This time last year (October 1986) final negotiations were taking place with the DOE Roads Division concerning the renewal of the Kings Road Bridge. Included in that renewal was the replacement of the existing cast iron central piers by a single reinforced concrete pillar as well as the bridge beams and deck. This meant severing not only the Kings Road but also the siding connecting the RPSI to NIR system. The DOE had to postpone the work until the three months period between the Santa Trains and the Easter Bunny Train Rides. As this was a tight timescale, the contractor could not allow much time for the RPSI to remove the track and, on completion of the bridge, to replace it.

In my discussions with the DOE I asked for two weeks to lift the track and for three to replace it. This was plenty of time to carry out the work but if the existing track squad was used - approximately five to six people - then they would have to work all of four days at Christmas and the six days at Easter. I

therefore decided to make an appeal to the members at a Belfast Area meeting to help, picking the Saturday after Boxing Day as the day most members would be available. As it happened, we got 24 on that Saturday which meant the work was completed on one day instead of four. Thanks to all those who were involved. The contractor, Mivan Construction Ltd., completed the work under the bridge on time and we were able to replace the track in time for Easter Bunny Train Rides.

I think visitors to Whitehead will agree that the new bridge is very pleasantly designed, clean and functional. Mivan left us a nice, clean and dry site to relay the track on. Our thanks to them and the DOE Roads Division Ballymena for their help and co-operation. Before leaving the bridge contract I should also mention that this contract is the first time the site squad here has managed to directly bring money into the Society's coffers.

Some members may well be wondering what is happening to our connection to the NIR System. Since the re-signalling of the Larne line occupation of the NIR side has only been possible with the permission of the signal man at York Road. As the new signalling does not cater for shunt movements from the up to down platforms and vice-versa the Whitehead-only trains which lie over must have access to the siding. This restricts any RPSI train operations on Saturdays and weekdays. Once the present work is completed there will be two sidings one for NIR and one for the RPSI, with a crossover between them to provide access to the RPSI site.

The Site work has continued with the relaying of the turnout for Nos. 1 and 2 carriage sidings to improve curve and alignment of the sidings. The proposed carriage shed is at the planning stage, with the possibility of the work starting in June 1988. Work is commencing this month (December) on the erection of the sheer-legs which will occupy the time over Christmas. May I take the opportunity to welcome the new members to our squad and to thank them and the old faithfuls for their valuable work throughout the year.

## **MULLINGAR OPERATIONS**

**Rory McNamee**

When it became obvious that No.184 was not to take part in the 1987 International Railtour the disappointment can only be imagined but we did not realise then that better days were ahead. The smoke of the tour had hardly cleared when David Humphries, who had recently taken on marketing RPSI operations in the Republic, broke the news that Ennis Arts Council wished to charter a series of trains. These were to run between Ennis and Gort to celebrate the centenary of the West Clare Railway in June 1987.

At the time of the tour no one in their right mind would have bet money on engine or train being ready before 1988. No.184 was in a forlorn state, minus smokebox, sand boxes and several boiler tubes, while almost every pane of glass on one side of our five running coaches had been smashed by vandals.

Talk about being kicked when you are down! However, materials and equipment had been assembled since the vandalism in April and the participants on the tour witnessed an apparent miracle whereby the coaches which they had seen in such a sorry state on Saturday were all re-glazed by the time they passed again the next day. Unfortunately, the stock of window glass which we had built up over some years is now seriously depleted. A further concentrated effort by volunteers, assisted by outside contractors, saw us back in business by 29<sup>th</sup> May 1987 with loco and coaches passed for the road.

It had been decided that when bringing the train on any outing requiring mileage in excess of 30 miles it would be prudent to travel to the destination the day before. This, in hindsight, was a wise decision because although we were back in business our troubles were far from over. On Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June, after a slow start, we ran to Athlone where we took water and were told that we would have to wait until the down Galway had passed. After this had happened we expected to get away but, no, we were then informed that we would have to wait until the up Galway had cleared as well. Eventually, after two

hours of kicking our heels, we were off again and made good running to Athenry. From here we had planned to run light engine to Galway to turn but we were told that the turntable there was out of order so we hooked up again and set off for Ennis. We were not far into the Athenry-Gort section when loud hangings from the motion were heard and felt. Nothing for it but to stop, whereupon it was found that the left hand cotter had vanished, leaving traces of its exit route on the paint of the motion plate. We had no spare cotter but we couldn't stay there so some sort of repair had to be made. This was done using a piece of 1 inch square bar which lasted until Craughwell, all of two miles! There, a second attempt was made using an old oak chair key and some rail spikes. This required adjustment at Ardrahan, where some redundant signal levers were spotted. Inspector Eamonn Lacken suggested that they might be of use so we put one on board. At Gort the repair was reinforced by a strap made of jubilee clips which took us eventually to Ennis. There the first loco fire in 23 years was thrown out, Eamonn's parting comment being that our Athenry-Ennis time of 3½ hours must be some kind of a record!

After an early rise on the Saturday morning, oxy-acetylene gear was acquired and part of the Ardrahan lever was fashioned into a new cotter with the aid of an angle-grinder and drill which David Humphries had persuaded a local firm to lend free of charge. Part of the agreement with the Arts Council was that coal would be supplied by the Electricity Supply Board and we set about loading this with a mechanical shovel provided. Unfortunately, after three loads the shovel broke down and could not be fixed. However, the first two trips ran without incident and an attempt was then made to load more coal with a replacement shovel which had arrived. It was found that this one could not reach high enough so, while trip No.3 ran, a ramp was built out of sleepers.

By this time the trouble had moved back to the engine where it was found that the ESB coal, while yielding great heat, was badly affected by long stops with the result that the fire was now choked by a black mass of clinker. The drop grate had become jammed by heat and clinker so the clinker had to be shovelled out. To make matters worse, unless it was shovelled out as soon as you broke it up, it re-solidified so we found out the hard way that the usual method of fire-cleaning only led to even more work.

After this, Sunday got off to a better start, with fine weather and no clinker. But pride comes before a fall and on the second run falling boiler pressure brought us to a stand at Crusheen where the fire again had to be cleaned and re-made. Disaster number three was just around the corner. On the previous day, during the problems with the fire, one of our less experienced members had decided to give a hand by doing some oiling. Unfortunately water had got into the oilcan during one of Saturday's downpours. The outcome was that on the last trip on Sunday the right hand small end ran hot causing yet another stop for remedial action. By this time people were feeling cheated if there wasn't a stop in the section anyway so they weren't in the least concerned. From every window there came Thomas the Tank Engine flags and the sound of "Are you right there, Michael" being sung with such enthusiasm that the engine could hardly be heard. The scene on our next arrival back at Ennis nearly defies description, with the train almost having to push its way through the crowds on the platform. In a carnival atmosphere "Chris Meehan and his Red-Neck Friends" were belting out their best from the back of a truck.

After examination of the offending bearing it was decided to run the final trip of the day and as usual we made an unscheduled stop in mid-section, this time at an apparently deserted spot between Crusheen and Tubber. Here a fork-truck appeared, slithering up a slope at the end of a grassy lane with a ton and a half of good coal to solve our clinkering problems - the answer to a prayer. We could hardly believe that anyone would be so mad as to drive a loaded forklift truck in such a place but the young man in charge didn't seem too worried and was delighted with his reward of a footplate trip to Gort. Our thanks are due to Stationmaster O'Donoghue who made the arrangements. It seemed then that a

non-stop return from Gort was on the cards but some fool ensured that we made a stop by pulling the communication cord as we were leaving the station.

After disposing of the engine we took refreshment and boarded a GAA special which was returning empty to Dublin. What a clever arrangement, we thought - until at 1am we arrived in Cork! Was there to be no end to calamities? We eventually made it to Dublin by 9am, happy but very tired.

On Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June, we were back in Ennis to return the engine to Mullingar and left at mid-day accompanied by good wishes and enquiries as to when we would be back. The co-operation and friendship we received there could not be surpassed. I must also thank Norman Foster for volunteering to return the engine crew to Athlone on 5<sup>th</sup> June after they had arrived at Ennis with no way of getting back home. Norman was back at dawn, offering more help. Having seen Norman with his camera at almost every level crossing, Eamonn Lacken was heard to wonder if we stopped would Norman drive over the crossing a few times so that we could photograph him! Thanks are also due to Tim Moriarty and his sales team.



**No.184 arrives at Ennis on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1987 with empty stock prior to working the West Clare Centenary series of charter trains. (David Carse)**

Bushed with the success of this operation, the Mullingar team set out to plough new territory. The Ennis operation had been a fixed price charter by the Arts Council but how would we do on the open market. Dublin-based local trips had always been a feature of the Mullingar programme but in recent years these had been running into problems. The previously very successful Bray route had been closed to us with the introduction of the DART suburban service. Trips over the less scenic Midland line to Enfield and Maynooth had seen problems of various kinds, not the least of these being that of watering the engine. After David Humphries had analysed the situation we decided that shorter trips and more of

them were the answer and their destination should be Clonsilla. The double track would minimise section blocking and water could be taken at Dublin Pearse. There we would potentially be in the way of suburban services so it would be in everyone's interest that we should spend as little time there as possible.

David, assisted by Barry Pickup and Joe Fitzpatrick, took charge of the publicity campaign leaving locomotive and coaching staff free for their own work. The Irish Life insurance company had kindly agreed to sell tickets at six of their offices but, two days before the trips were due to run, sales were not encouraging. David decided as a last effort to let it be known that tickets would be available on the day. On Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August we set off for Dublin in the capable hands of Mickey Moore and Johnny Driscoll, still not knowing if we were in the money-making business, and after an enjoyable run stabled the train at Pearse and No.184 at Connolly.

Next morning Tommy Blackwell and Paddy Perry had No.184, with Inspector Jack Ahearne in charge, and after collecting our train we arrived at Connolly at 10am. One look at David's face told us the story; the first trip and half the second were already sold out! On the first trip the return was routed via Newcomen which taxed No.184 to her limit but didn't seem to bother Tommy as he brought the train up that crippling climb as if he was going for a stroll. However, the rest of the trips were brought in by the easier route. One unsuspecting damsels was taken by surprise as she used what she thought was a secluded roof-top to improve her tan in the sunny weather, only to find herself being admired by an entire train-load of people. By the next time the train passed appropriate adjustments had been made and she enthusiastically waved with the rest of the crowds who had come out to see the trains go by. After four very successful trips the carriages went to Heuston to be stored for the next month or so while No.184 returned to Connolly. Although RPSI locos are no strangers to Connolly shed it must be the first time in at least twenty years that a steam locomotive was stored there - certainly the first since its conversion to a traction maintenance depot.

The period before the next series of Clonsilla trips was used to great advantage, with the total internal refurbishment of coach 1483, involving the replacement of roof beams, ceiling - and wall - panels and internal re-painting. All credit must go to the team involved, not least Gary Brennan whose effort in working fifteen days on the trot was enormous despite his stature. His brother, Stephen, was drafted in as well, while Mark Humphries showed that he could paint as well as draw. What remained of the troublesome Ennis coal had to be removed from the tender. This task fell mainly on Denis McCabe as, although he had been in America at the time, it was felt that as an employee of the ESB he could not be totally blameless!

On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September the second series of Clonsilla trips ran, as successfully as the first although the weather wasn't quite up to July standard. During the course of the day Connolly was almost taken over by RPSI stock - 2 locos and no less than 17 coaches; No.85 "Merlin" having arrived with a 8-coach Steam Enterprise from Belfast, followed by a NIR diesel hauling three coaches freshly restored for filming work.

This film work had been arranged during the summer and resulted in following programme:

Sat 12<sup>th</sup> Sept: Clonsilla shuttles.

Sat 12<sup>th</sup> Sept: Belfast/Dublin/Belfast Steam Enterprise.

Sun 13<sup>th</sup> Sept: Greystones, filming for "troubles", No.184 + 861, 1097 & 1142.

Mon 14<sup>th</sup> Sept: Ditto.

Tue 15<sup>th</sup> Sept: Greystones-Waterford, No.184 + 5 Mullingar coaches.

Wed 16<sup>th</sup> Sept: Waterford, maintenance check and prepare for second film.

Thu 17<sup>th</sup> Sept: Carrick-on-Suir, filming for "Echoes", No.184 + 5 coaches.

Fri 18<sup>th</sup> Sept: Ditto.

Sat 19<sup>th</sup> Sept: Waterford-Mullingar, No.184 + 5 coaches.

After the Clonsilla runs had been completed on 12<sup>th</sup> September No.184 was turned, coaled and put into platform 2 at Connolly for the film company to carry out modifications. It had been intended to keep the loco in light steam overnight but the water got down and so the fire was thrown out. In the morning it was a surprise to find that the boiler, which had held its level quite well despite a month's storage, now required considerable topping-up. The resulting delay meant that at 07.30 Inspector Ahearne decided to take a diesel to haul the three coaches to Bray. The diesel had been rostered to be available in any case, to be used in the event of backward movements through the tunnel being required. Shortly afterwards No.184 followed, having attained working pressure and carrying some rather chastened personnel.

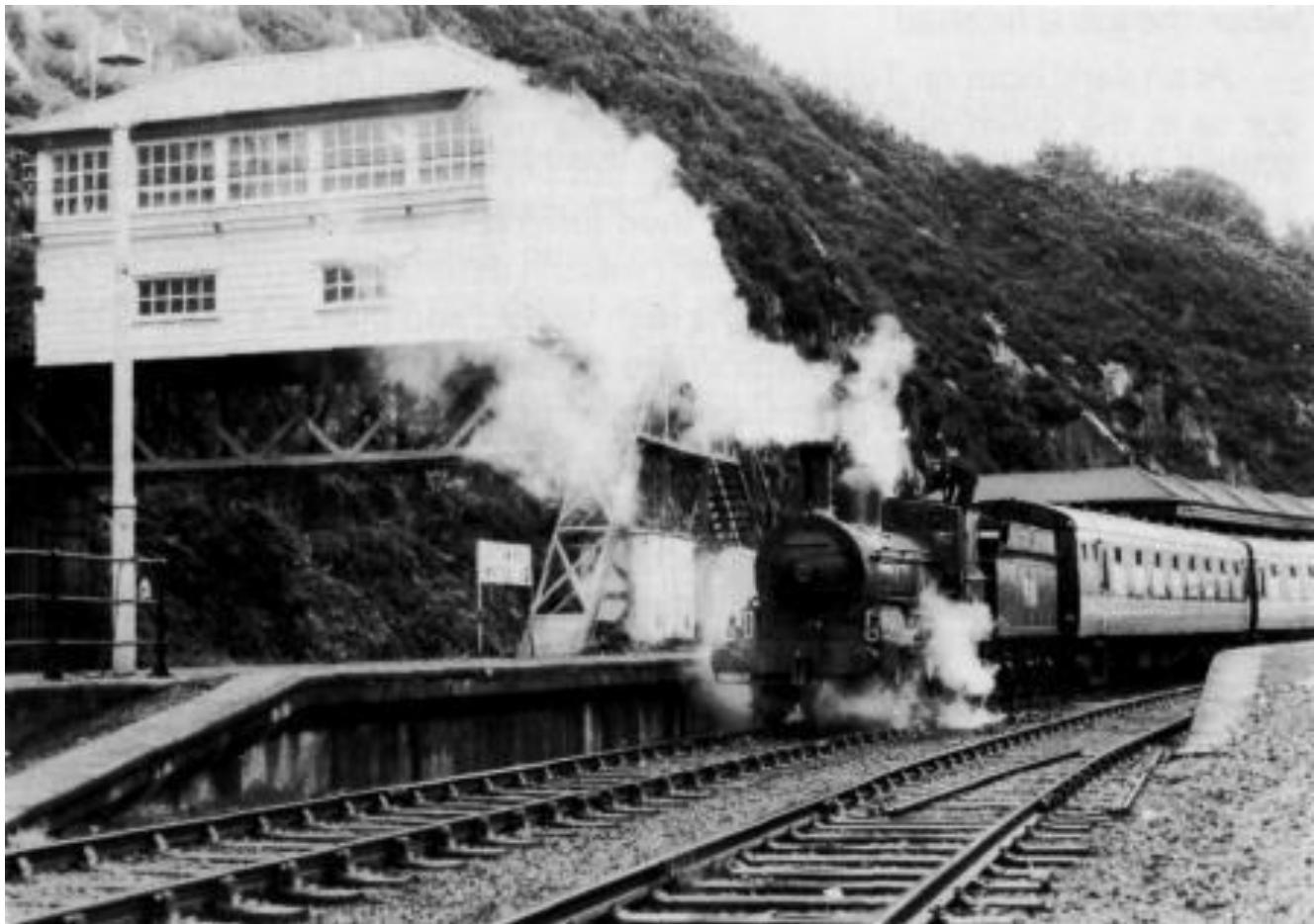


*The film star. No.184 near Greystones down starter signal during the filming of "Troubles" on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1987. The 'flying snail' on the tender has been temporally covered up. The condition of her exhaust would suggest that this was not No.184's beach-clearing run. (Barry Pickup)*

At Bray station we took on extras for filming around Bray Head, two runs up to No.1 tunnel and then off to Greystones which is also known to rail users as Delgany but had now become Kilnalough, with all modern lighting, etc., removed and period posters put up instead. Sunday's filming consisted of arrivals and departures at "Kilnalough", along with station scenes. Only the crew were to be in shot on the footplate and only film extras were to be in the coaches. Thus snubbed, we rescued our beer from the train and took to the beach. There we could admire gentle maidens suitably clad for the purpose and if this grew boring all we had to do was raise our eyes and view our own film star and her three magnificent companions. At one stage in the toing and froing the film star disgraced herself by priming and sending a fine dark mist over the beach with the help of an off-shore wind. The gentle maidens, as

they scrambled for cover, directed equally dark looks at the RPSI crew who decided that the time had come for a discreet withdrawal from the area.

Filming finished at 7pm and it was decided to keep No.184 in steam to maintain the boiler level. Some of our Whitehead brothers had been with us since the previous day and one of them assured us that he knew how to look after an engine in light steam and volunteered to do so. Two hours later we returned to find 10 lb of steam,  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of water in the glass and a glimmer of fire. With some careful handling we managed to get enough pressure up to start an injector and before too long we were out of trouble. No harm was done and lessons were learned by all concerned. Watering arrangements on the Sunday and Monday were undertaken by Greystones fire brigade who went to some trouble to locate a source with sufficient pressure. On Monday most of the filming was in the section between Greystones and Wexford, both lineside and on-board and by 8.30pm it was a wrap, as we say in the film business when the job is finished.



*On her long journey home, No.184 pauses beside Waterford's unusual signal cabin. (W.T. Scott)*

At an early hour on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> a diesel delivered the Mullingar coaches for us in the down platform before setting off for Mullingar with the three Whitehead ones. At 6am we set with our five coaches across the Murragh, the first steam there for ten years, then turning inland at Wicklow, through Rathnew and Glenealy with the dawn making its illuminating presence felt; a robust climb to Rathdrum across the high viaduct and then to a halt beside the tank to take our first railway water in two days. Along the Avoca valley we laid a carpet of steam, held in suspended animation by the cool morning air. Onwards through Arklow, round by Inch and to Gorey where the fire brigade was again to supply water. After half an hour an anxious phone call revealed that they had been expecting a traction engine

and not a railway engine! However, they speedily sorted out the problem by laying over 25 lengths of hose.

At Enniscorthy we bade farewell to Mickey and Johnny and welcomed Joe Mulleigh and John Barry, the Waterford crew who would be with us for the next four days. More railway water was taken at Rosslare Pier. Here rumblings about coal which had been going on since morning came into the open, with concern being expressed about getting over Taylorstown bank and viaduct. With the fire gingerly tended to, pressure and a full glass of water were maintained and as we topped the bank No.184 defiantly started to lift her safety valves but the second injector soon cured that and ensured that no coal was wasted. Campile soon loomed into view but no sign of a staff exchange, only a waiting ballast train. A few blasts of the whistle brought the signalman rushing out but the damage was done; the severe brake application could not be overcome and we ground to a halt. The signalman was questioned as to the proper way to treat an important express train but he said he hadn't been expecting us so soon. After re-starting we soon crossed the longest railway bridge in Ireland, over the Barrow, then along beside the Suir with its island castle and finally to Waterford North where we left the coaches in one of the eastern bay platforms. Then off for water and re-coaling, noting with satisfaction that there was still about 14 tons left, before throwing out the fire and heading for a well-earned rest.

On Wednesday a more leisurely start was made with breakfast at 10am, followed by a walking tour of Waterford. After some searching we managed to find traces of the old Tramore line, including the station platform and fencing. Satisfied with this, we retired for lunch. The afternoon was spent in re-packing glands, a general inspection and cleaning of the engine. In the evening we were joined by Norman Foster, who was never far away, and the engine crew in a local tavern where some remarkable tales were told. As they say, you should never let the truth get in the way of a good story!

Next morning, we lit up the engine at 5am and at 7am set off for Carrick-on-Suir, but when we arrived there we found that the film-makers had been at their work again and we were in Castlefinn. After the usual arrangements had been made, we were ready to begin. The order came for silence on the set and was shortly repeated more loudly, accompanied by angry glares at the engine and its occupants. The chief offender was Joe who was amusing everyone with impersonations of railwaymen and any other persons he thought merited it, along with advice aimed at the director as to how to do his job and threats to go home and take the train with him. Fortunately, none of this reached other ears! Friday was occupied with more filming in the station and in sections and also saw the return of Sam and Jimmy who had gone back North on Wednesday. Mark, on the other hand, could not tear himself away and was becoming so pleased with his prowess with the shovel that he felt it was time he got his hands on the heavy one normally kept as a spare. To keep it out of the way we had to hide it in the tender tank but promised to return it to him, painted green, before we went home. As in other areas, every vantage point around was filled with people anxious to get a look at the train as we passed.

On Saturday, all filming completed, it was time to head for home again and at 10am we said farewell to a misty Waterford and set off via Carrick-on-Suir, Kilsheelan, Clonmel and down into Cahir. This was the scene of a fatal accident many years earlier when Woolwich Mogul 375 plunged through the viaduct and into the Suir below, killing both enginemen. A curious link exists between this incident and our own No.184. After the tragedy it was found impossible to extricate the body of the driver and local supplies of gas for the cutting gear were exhausted. Supplies were sought further afield and arrived at the scene along with a welding demonstrator, Frank McCarroll, who took over the task of cutting free the driver, semi-immersed in the icy waters of the Suir. Almost twenty-seven years later No.184 required specialist welding repairs to her firebox and the man who carried them out was none other than the same Frank McCarroll.

After Cahir, we headed on up through the "Khyber Pass", Tipperary and on to Limerick Junction where we took water and cleaned the fire. Here Joe and Johnny left us and we were joined by Paddy Lipper,

Roger Healy and Inspector Mick Shine whom we had last seen on the Ennis trips. They were to be with us as far as Athenry. As we wanted to turn the engine it was necessary to propel about two miles along the up line, guided by the guard to make sure that the van didn't go beyond the signal where we would make contact with CTC who would instruct us to ignore all red signals until we were on the Limerick line proper. This movement cost us an hour on top of our schedule. The ever-present Norman was chasing, along with Derek Henderson and Irwin Pryce, and we gave them an extra shot at Oola when priming caused the brakes to come on but got our own back at Boher where we were running so well that all they got was a rushed trailing shot! A quick turn-round at Limerick, where the new electric signals were in use for the first time, had us on our way to Ennis where water and lunch were taken before continuing on to Athenry where the crew were relieved by John Clines, new recruit Paddy Molloy, and Inspector Eamonn Lacken.



*With some 4 miles of hard climbing behind her, No.184 approaches the closed station of Liffey Junction on the final Clonsilla train on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1987. The lines on the right led to the former Broadstone terminus of the MGWR. (W.T. Scott)*

After more good running, via Woodlawn and Ballinasloe, we reached Athlone where Eamonn left to get a car to bring the enginemen back from Mullingar when they got there. He was replaced by Albert Boine at Moate and we eventually arrived half an hour late. However when the delay at Limerick Junction is taken into account we had actually gained half an hour on the time allowed between there and Mullingar. So after an absence of five weeks No.184 was finally back and Eamonn and Albert both commented that they had never seen her running so well.

It was while sitting up with No.184 on the Sunday night at Greystones that I was reminded of one man

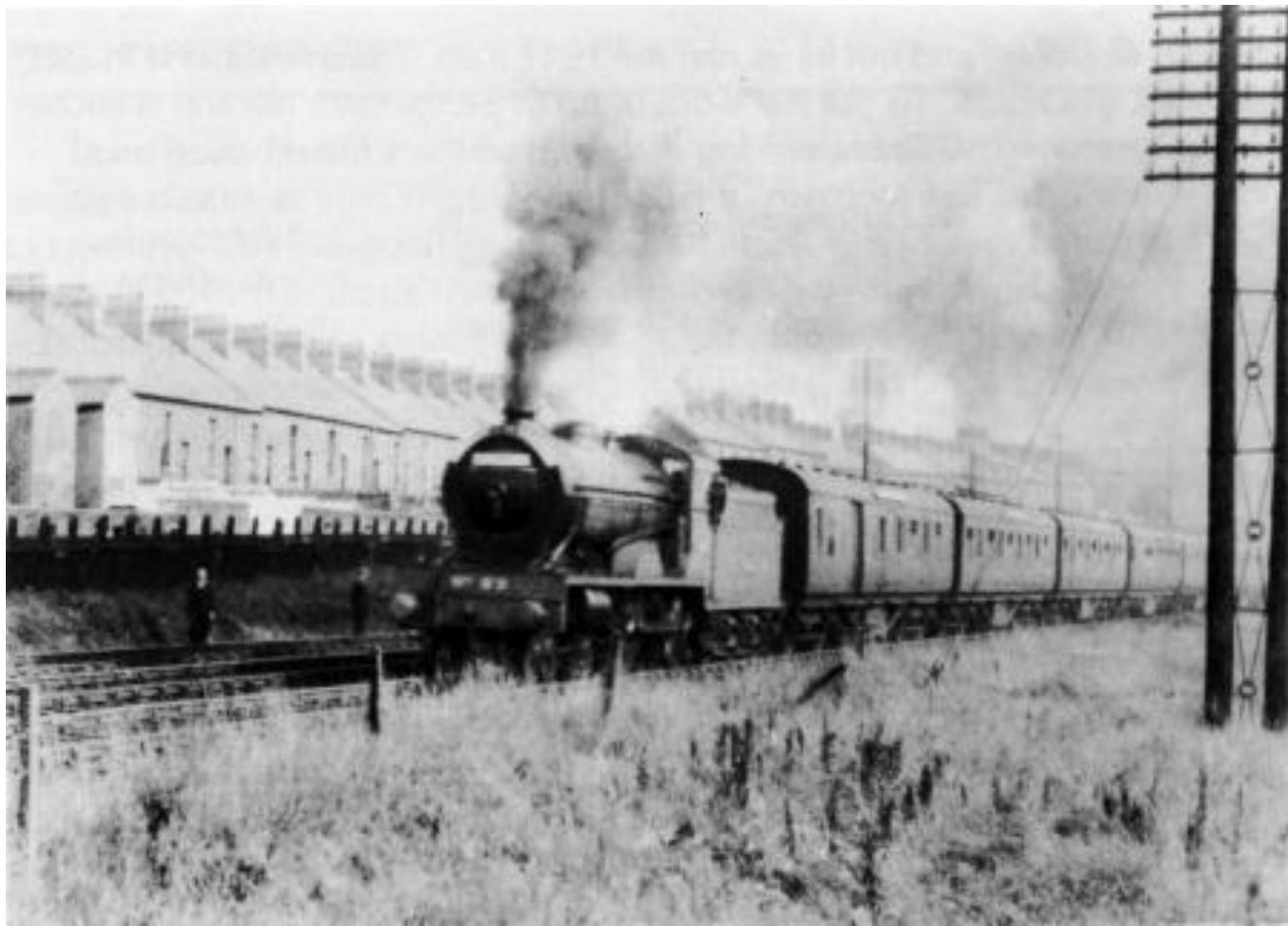
who made all her runs possible. While she was being tested for work in the film "The First Great Train Robbery" the right hand piston gland casting broke and, as it was made of cast iron, specialist welding was called for. Such a specialist was George Brant, a friend of our resident fitter, Tony Brennan, and he volunteered to do the job. Cast iron is a difficult material to weld, even in workshop conditions never mind in an ill-equipped shed, but George did the impossible. When a strap was being fitted to the repair he remarked that if the engine would move under her own steam a strap would not be needed, and it never was.

Why Greystones? Well George, who has since died, was a member of the sea angling club there and, sitting there looking up at the light and stars which must often have guided him, it was with sadness that I wished him eternal rest.

## THE ENTERPRISE

W.T. Scott

The Great Northern Railway made a commendable, if unsuccessful, attempt to recover from World War II and the Enterprise was one of the moves to recovery. The inaugural train left Belfast at 10:30am on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1947 headed by No.83 "Eagle", still at this time with her round-topped boiler. This was the first regularly timetabled non-stop run in Ireland of over 100 miles, Customs examination being carried out in Belfast and Dublin. The make-up of the original train was: third brake, 2 thirds, buffet car, 2 firsts, third brake. Tare weight was 206 tons and seating capacity was 72 first and 200 third-class passengers.



*Compound No.83 "Eagle" between Central Junction and Adelaide on a morning up Enterprise in the summer of 1948. Note original round-topped firebox. (A. Donaldson)*

For its first year the train was worked by the compounds, 83 and 87 being regular performers. By the end of 1948 the VS class locomotives were available and virtually monopolised the train until steam finished on it in 1957. The 2½ hour timing on the train represented the fastest overall time ever laid down between the two cities though the 1932 mails were allowed 2 hours 20 minutes, inclusive of stops, giving a net time of just over 2 hours. The schedule of the 1947 down Enterprise (1) was as follows, with those of the 1987 fortieth anniversary train (2) and the 1932 Mail (3) shown for comparison:

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Belfast	10:30	10:30	05:45
Dunmurry		10:40 pass	
Lisburn	10:42 pass	10:44 pass	
Moira		10:51 pass	
Portadown	11:00 pass	11:03 pass	<u>06:12 / 06:16</u>
Goraghwood	11:19 pass		<u>06:34 (slip)</u>
Dundalk	11:43 pass	11:41 pass	<u>06:55 / 07:06</u>
Dromin	11:56 pass	12:07 pass	
Drogheda	12:10 pass		<u>07:30 / 07:33</u>
Howth Junction	12:38 pass	12:38 pass	
Dublin	12:45	12:45	08:05

A glance at the schedules above shows that No.85 had more time to reach Portadown than the original express - necessary because of the extra distance from Belfast Central and a severe PW slack at Lisburn - but from Portadown to Dundalk she was more tightly timed than either of the other trains. To allow for a well adhered to 60 mph restriction south of Dundalk she had 63 minutes to Dublin and not 61 as had the 1947 train. The overall time in each case was 2½ hours. To put the work of No.85 in perspective, her run is shown alongside an original Enterprise log and a run on the 1932 morning train.

	No.85; 210/220 tons 11 <sup>th</sup> August 1987		No.206; 210/216 tons 1950		No.87; 197/210 tons 1932	
Belfast	0:00	mph	0:00	mph	0:00	mph
Lisburn	14:00	47	12:24	60		61
MP 96	24:52	48	21:34	58/77		<u>62½/81</u>
Portadown	34:45	26	29:06	30	<u>26:34</u>	
Poynzpass	47:09	41	43:01	44		
Goraghwood	53:14	42	49:26	62/52	<u>19:21</u>	
Bridge 180	62:35	41	58:11	41		48/65
Adavoyle	65:43	49/63	60:56	66/72		70/85
Dundalk	74:01	38	69:20	21	<u>21:30</u>	
MP52	77:10	45/51	74:05	34	4:20	
Dromin	85:45	56	83:56	62/58	12:13	60
Kellystown	93:14	47	91:16	44/67		<u>37½/77</u>
Drogheda	99:36	17	100:06	15	<u>24:19</u>	
Laytown	104:50	62	106:05	69	6:42	
MP16	115:41	56	120:12	54/82	18:13	49/74
Howth Junction	126:27	55	129:33	72	28:03	
Dublin	134:14		135:21		33:28	

No.206 made a very fast start and, not hampered by any PW restrictions before Portadown, was almost 5 minutes up on No.85 at this point - helped by a 77 mph burst through Lurgan which under present conditions No.85 could not match. After Portadown to Goraghwood there was little in it and the climbs of the Wellington bank were identical. No.206 gained a little down to Dundalk but passed through more slowly. Dundalk in 1950 with Irish North trains, the square crossing and heavy goods traffic was always treated with respect. No.85 got through better and then made a very fast climb to Post 52 and with further good work up Dunleer and a fast run down to Drogheda (by 1987 standards) clawed back some of the arrears. Once clear of Drogheda No.85 ran well through Laytown and Skerries, climbed superbly to Post 16 and was early through Howth Junction, arriving in Dublin about  $\frac{3}{4}$  minute early. No.206 had a PW slack after Laytown and, despite some 80 mph running, was a few seconds late. A net time for No.206 would have been 133 minutes. Allowing 1½ minutes for the extra distance from Belfast Central, No.85's run would be equivalent to 132 minutes from Great Victoria Street, well up in the list of Enterprise fast times and a great credit to the crew of McCaughley, Kitchen and Inspector Dunlop.



*A year later, same train, same location but this time with VS No.206 "Liffey". The locomotive at this stage had not been fitted with the smoke deflectors which later became unique to this class.  
(A. Donaldson)*

The Enterprise was so successful that a second train, based in Dublin, was soon put on, arriving in Belfast at 12:45pm and leaving again at 4:45pm. This train never loaded as well as the Belfast-based one and four bogies usually sufficed. One consolation for timers was the appearance on it of the S class 4-4-0s having a last fling on the main line. The train was so timed as to be through Dundalk at three

minutes to 6pm so as to avoid danger to the workers leaving at 6pm. This was rigidly kept, producing exciting running to recover any delays. The train became an early casualty to the AEC diesel railcars which kept time easily with three coaches but struggled with four. The extra bogie was a K15 attached to the rear of the railcar set. Its passengers had no buffet facilities nor was the main train as quiet and smooth running as its steam predecessor.

Customs examination of the Enterprise was, of course, carried out in Dublin and Belfast and to facilitate this no heavy luggage, e.g. trunks, was carried. In the dining car two drinks cabinets were used; locked and unlocked appropriately as the border was crossed. The Enterprise usually carried two guards and this was regarded as one of the prestige jobs on the railway. Irwin Pryce senior, was an Enterprise guard before moving to the platform at Great Victoria Street as foreman.



*On the return working of the Dublin-based Enterprise, S class No.171 "Slieve Gullion" passes Adelaide, 1953. (A. Donaldson)*

Naturally, the Enterprise was an Adelaide top link job - Becket, Dean, Dodds, Malone and McKeown being the men in charge in the early fifties. Other names to figure as the years went on were Mercer, Martin, Thompson and Strannix. The engines used were always Adelaide's best; No.201 had a long spell in the mid-fifties while before her No.208 was a regular performer. A question often asked was could the time have come down to 2 hours. Certainly the VS class could have coped with such a time but the GNR permanent way of the 1950s was far from the standard of the 1930s so time keeping could not have been guaranteed. Water was always a constant worry as stopping the Enterprise was forbidden due to the Customs requirements and the coal was not of uniformly high quality so 2½ hours was a safe compromise.

# BELFAST-DUBLIN NON-STOP. THE SERVICE BEGUN ALL NORTHERN CREW

The non-stop rail service between Belfast and Dublin was inaugurated to-day, when the first train left Great Victoria Street, Belfast, for Dublin at 10.30 a.m. The train consisted of seven new coaches of the latest and most luxurious design, and carried 72 first class and 200 third class passengers. All seats had been booked days in advance.

Special arrangements have been made for Customs examination at Belfast on the outward and at Dublin on the return journey. So smoothly did these arrangements work in Belfast that all passengers and luggage were comfortably on board the train some minutes before she left on her southward run.

The train was drawn by "Eagle," one of the Bluebird-type compound engines built in 1932. She consumes three tons 10 cwt. of coal on the double journey.

The crew of the train all belong to Belfast. The guard, Mr. R. B. Hemphill, 10 Workman Avenue, Springfield Road, has been in the service of the Company since 1909, and a guard for 18 years. The train attendant, Mrs. Stella McNeill, Denmark Street, is new to the service. Both officials wore new uniforms specially designed for the service. The engine driver is a veteran, Mr. Joe Donnelly, of Benares Street, The Hostess, Mrs. who has been 47 years on the footplate. The fireman is Mr. Peter Rodgers, Lower Clonard Street.



The Hostess, Mrs. Stella McNeill.

At the terminus to see the train off was Sir George Clark, deputy chairman of the company, while Mr. Hugh M'Intosh, chief mechanical engineer, and Mr. H. S. Knott, traffic manager, travelled with the train.

## LEFT DEAD ON TIME.

The train left dead on time. She seemed to the passengers to "float" away from the platform, and 13 minutes later she was flying through Lisburn Station, which was past in a flash.

In the guard's van a close watch was being kept on the timing and officials there were well pleased with the performance of the train, which was running steadily through the sun-bathed country. At Lurgan, she was a quarter of a minute before her scheduled time, and passing through Dundalk one minute had been gained. She flashed through Drogheda two minutes ahead of time, and began her fastest run when 75 miles per hour was touched at Rush Bank, just beyond Skerries.

At this point the steadiness of the train could be judged by the sight of people walking along the corridor without support.

The catering end of the train is probably the most interesting from the public point of view. The dining car seats 30 people at a time, at a la carte prices. Thus the lover of one course has not to pay for four.

Then, too, there is a "public" bar, where on the first day of the run there was a queue.

Mr. C. Johnston, hotels and catering manager, Belfast, travelled with the train. In charge of the staff of six was Conductor S. Donnelly, also of Belfast.

The train arrived in Dublin at 12.45, dead on time, and was met by Mr. G. B. Howden, general manager, and Mr. T. J. Carton, traffic superintendent.

The Customs at Dublin were cleared in a few minutes, and long before one o'clock there was no trace of the Northern invasion by the latest means of rail conveyance.

There was a famous cartoon in the thirties depicting the fate of the passenger who dared to stop the "Cheltenham Flyer". The GNR had no cartoon but had issued a four-page circular governing the working of the Enterprise and stopping that train involved endless correspondence of the "Please explain!" variety, telegrams and phone calls. Only in cases of extreme emergency such as locomotive failure or sudden illness could this be done. Special arrangements were in force for stops at Dundalk or Goraghwood in the event of either of the above emergencies since both were Customs stations for normal trains. If a stop was to be made at either place then either Castlebellingham, Adavoye or Scarva had to be notified by means of three short blasts on the engine's whistle as the train passed. The appropriate signalman then notified Dundalk or Goraghwood and the Customs were alerted.

Signal stops were almost unknown on the Enterprise since no train was allowed in front of her unless it had 10 minutes plus the normal block section to allow it to be diverted. The Enterprise's timekeeping was monitored by Portadown, Goraghwood, Dundalk and Drogheda reporting its passing time and Dublin its arrival time.



***No.206 again; arriving at Dublin on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1950 on the first leg of the short-lived Belfast-Dublin-Cork Enterprise. (Kelland Collection)***

Only one person, so far as I know, managed to board the Enterprise en route and this, not surprisingly, was R.M. Arnold. "Mac" was on the platform at Dundalk one day when the Enterprise stopped. He moved stealthily over to the train, hoping to get on, encountered an official and moved smartly away. He was then intercepted by this official with the words, "You can't get off this train here, sir," and hustled on to the train! So began the only log on the Enterprise starting in Dundalk. Getting out at Belfast was solved with the aid of a friendly guard.

Very few Irish express trains were named and even fewer carried a headboard. Of this short list only the Enterprise and the Bundoran Express were regular trains. The NCC Festival Express was short-

lived and the CIÉ Radio Train with its lightning flash only ran on certain days of the week.

The Enterprise headboards were of four different types:

1. Small straight board carried bolted to the smokebox handrail and turned down when not in use. This was the only board suitable for the S class engines.
- 2, 3, 4. Large curved boards for the V and VS class engines. These read "Belfast-Dublin Express", "Dublin-Belfast Express" and "Belfast-Dublin-Cork". This last type was carried during the years when the train worked through to Cork as described by Bill O'Donnell in a previous Five Foot Three.

The article, reproduced here by kind permission of the Belfast Telegraph, was published on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1947. The cutting was loaned to the Editor of Five Foot Three by Mrs. Stella McNeill, whose photograph appears in it. On reading the Telegraph's article on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Enterprise she was somewhat disappointed to find that the author had named another lady as having been the first stewardess and, for good measure, had got the colours of the uniform wrong. Mrs. McNeill says that it was navy blue, like the guard, and not light blue like the engine.

Whilst, as the 1947 article tells us, it was possible to walk through the train without support, Mrs. McNeill found that this aspect of the work did not agree with her and she had to give up her post after a comparatively short time.

Although Mrs McNeill is still an active lady, assisting in her daughter's hairdressing business, she would have been quite a few years younger than the rest of the train crew and is probably now the only surviving member.

Conditions in the bar do not appear to have changed much - as travellers on the "Steam Enterprise" will testify! On the other hand, the quoted coal consumption of 3½ tons for 200-odd miles seems remarkably frugal by today's standards!

## **ENTERPRISE 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY - PLANNING THE EVENT**

**Denis Grimshaw**

It did not escape the attention of certain senior staff in NIR that the return of preserved GNR(I) Compound locomotive No.85 to full operational condition in 1987 coincided with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Enterprise Express.

Fortunately, the same year also saw the establishment both of Business Sector Organisations within NIR, with InterCity set up to totally control the Company's longer-distance passenger services, and of a new railway company, Irish Rail, to run the railway business of CIÉ.

Both NIR InterCity and Irish Rail were anxious to exploit any important and relevant opportunity to publicise and promote their new organisations, particularly where both would be readily associated with such an event.

Thus, the idea was born of staging a fairly authentic, and by its very nature quite a spectacular, recreation of the original Enterprise of 1947, and using the publicity this would be certain to generate, to focus the attention of the media, the public in general, and many influential people responsible for transport and business in general throughout the British Isles, on the present day Enterprise services and plans and proposals for its development and improvement in the future.

As the very first Enterprise in 1947 departed from Belfast for Dublin at 10:30am on the 11<sup>th</sup> August, with 7 coaches hauled by a Compound, on a 2¼ hour non-stop schedule - the ambition was evolved of doing precisely the same thing exactly 40 years later - to the minute!

The schedule also permitted the Company's guests to return to Belfast on a modern present-day Enterprise train at a suitable time for lunch to be served, whilst those passengers residing in Dublin

could travel to Belfast that morning on the 08:00 ex-Connolly.

The RPSI was approached, and readily and enthusiastically agreed to locomotive No.85 and 7 carefully selected coaches being chartered for the steam special.

At a very early stage, both BBC Northern Ireland and Ulster Television also expressed great interest, with promises of extensive coverage, whilst RTÉ also agreed to televise the arrival in Dublin. In the event, a great deal of newspaper and magazine coverage was also forthcoming, ranging from Radio Times to the Ulster Tatler, and from the Belfast Telegraph to the Irish Times.

Visually, the train was to have looked as authentic as possible and thus, with the exception of Directors' Saloon 50 and NCC brake/third 91, flush-sided carriages with minimal numbers of doors were used, to match the styling of GNR Enterprise stock.

The first three coaches - which would feature most prominently in photographs and TV coverage, were all in GNR mahogany livery, the first two (114 and 9) being fairly authentic Enterprise stock (9 was actually built in 1954 as a railcar driving trailer, but very closely resembles a standard K15). Even the two GSR vehicles used, side corridor thirds 1327 and 1335, could well have been seen on the CIÉ set on the Belfast-Cork Enterprise of 1951-53.



**No.85 "Merlin" receives a final top-up of water a few minutes before departure from Belfast Central with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Enterprise on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1987. (C.P. Friel)**

It was unfortunate that two other GNR flush-sided coaches currently under restoration by the RPSI, dining car 88 and side corridor first 227, would not be ready for the 1987 season.

To add to the authenticity, accurate replica locomotive headboards and carriage sideboards were

provided, proclaiming “Belfast-Dublin Express - Enterprise” (a Dublin to Belfast Express locomotive headboard was used on the return journey).

As only about 100 seats would actually be required by NIR, the remainder - those on the Belfast side of dining car 87 - were made available to the RPSI for their own members.

The actual train formation used was:

GNR(I)	Class V 4-4-0 Compound Locomotive No.85 “Merlin” (running with VS Class 4,000 gallon tender No.31).	
GNR(I)	Brake Third Open	114
GNRB	Third Open	9
GNR(I)	Directors’ Saloon (First)	50
UTA	Dining Car	87
GSR	Third Side Corridor	1327
GSR	Third Side Corridor	1335
LMS (NCC)	Brake Third Side Corridor	91

The total train weight (excluding locomotive and tender) was 206 tons tare. Right from the start of the planning process, it was realised that the very high profile of press and media coverage, together with the significance of many of the NIR guests (who included several of the very top echelons of British Rail and Irish Rail management, together with almost the entire NIR Board and other senior government and business officials), would lead to the highest embarrassment in the event of Locomotive No.85 failing and a diesel locomotive having to be substituted. Accordingly, it was decided to run S Class No.171 in advance as a pilot engine, as far as Dundalk, and to follow No.85’s train from there to Drogheda, so as to be readily and quickly available to take over from No.85 in the event of the compound being unable to continue as the result of an unexpected problem such as a hot box, severe tube leakage, fusible plug failure or whatever - however unlikely. No.171 would not need to proceed beyond Drogheda, as even Malahide could be reached in less than half an hour from there, and a turntable was available. To avoid the total waste of No.171’s presence if No.85 performed well, it was decided to stop the return steam special (17:04 ex Dublin) at Dundalk, and to double-head the train on to Belfast with the two 4-4-0s, a spectacular sight which could not have been seen for many many years.

The timetable pathing of the train at 10:30 ex-Belfast conflicted with two Irish Rail local services - the 11:47 Drogheda-Dublin Pearse and the 12:35 Howth-Bray Dart train. Irish Rail were approached and readily agreed to shunt the former train at Mosney for some 18 minutes, and to hold the latter at Howth Junction for 8 minutes to give the steam special a clear run.

There remained two major issues to be addressed - could the run be made non-stop, and could a 2½ hour timing realistically be achieved?

In regard to the former, there were three main problems - locomotive water capacity, the hot box detector north of Dunleer, and the absence of CAWS signalling equipment on No.85, the latter situation normally requiring a compulsory stop at Signal HJ23 north of Howth Junction to phone in the train identity to CTC.

The last non-stop steam run was probably in June 1964, when NCC Mogul No.97 ran north-bound non-stop with a lightly-loaded special. To “test the water”, the return Dublin-Belfast working of the Sligo Two-Day Tour in May was operated by No.85 without taking water en route, even though a short stop was made at Dundalk. With an 8-coach load, Central Service Depot in Belfast was reached with 700

gallons still in the tank, and gave confidence to the proposals for 11<sup>th</sup> August.

Once again, Irish Rail agreed to special arrangements in regard to the hot box detector (which had often given false alarms in the past due to steam locomotive fireboxes) and the CAWS system, to maintain adequate safety standards but hopefully without having to stop the special.

To assess the likely journey time, a detailed speed profile for the run was theoretically calculated, showing the estimated speed for each ¼ mile of the journey. The speeds for successive quarter miles were calculated so as to be in line with acceleration or braking characteristics derived from logs of good previous steam runs with locomotives of similar power on similar gradients, and taking all current permanent and temporary speed restrictions into account.



*Another top-up! The NIR crew of Inspector Frank Dunlop with Drivers Willie McCaughley and Jack Kitchen celebrate their on-time arrival at Dublin on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1987. (C.P. Friel)*

These speeds were then discussed in detail with the Chief Locomotive Inspector, and a number of slight adjustments made. Once a target speed profile, which was considered to be tight but achievable was agreed, it was then a simple arithmetical exercise to translate each ¼ mile speed into seconds of running time, and from this to derive a detailed train schedule. This led to a target schedule of 2 hours 13 minutes, giving two minutes of recovery time on a 2¼ hour timing. On the day before the run, however, an additional temporary speed restriction of 40 mph was imposed between mileposts 104¾ and 101¾, just south of Lisburn and was calculated to add about 1 minute to the schedule, to give a calculated timing of 2 hours and 14 minutes.

One other possibility to be borne in mind was the scenario of an unplanned closure of the cross-border

line for reasons such as a derailment, industrial action on Irish Rail or a bomb scare, all fortunately rare but possible occurrences. A full contingency plan, including a detailed timetable and locomotive servicing arrangements was therefore prepared for running the whole show to Londonderry at the last moment should that have been necessary - hardly the route of the Enterprise, but better than sending everyone home empty-handed!

The locomotive crew selected had been associated with No.85 on virtually all her runs on the Great Northern main line since restoration, and were thus very familiar with the engine. For the record, they were Drivers Willie McCaughey and Jackie Kitchen, with Inspector Frank Dunlop, whilst the Guard was Frank Leonard.



*No.171 and No.85 are reflected in the River Lagan as they leave Belfast Central for Central Service Depot on the evening of 11<sup>th</sup> August 1987. After spending the day in the role of Cinderella, No.171 double-headed the train back from Dundalk. (C.P. Friel)*

The train was brought from Whitehead to Central Service Depot (Queen's Quay) on the previous Saturday, and the Sunday and Monday saw intense activity on the locomotive and carriage cleaning fronts - by both NIR and RPSI personnel - which resulted in the train on Tuesday morning being in quite impeccable condition.

All that remained, therefore, was to run the train - an event adequately described elsewhere in this magazine, although a few other details might be added.

For example, the platform staff and train crew at Belfast Central were so keen to avoid a late departure, that they inadvertently got the train on the move nearly a minute early! As a result, the arrival at Dublin was a most impressive two minutes early at 12:43, although only one minute was actually gained on the

schedule.

As is now history, the run was in fact made non-stop in 2 hours 14 minutes - precisely the time calculated. There were, however, two close shaves which could very easily have thwarted this achievement. Firstly, the NIR diesel locomotive on the 09:00 Belfast-Dublin failed at Dundalk, and the section was only cleared some 15 minutes before No.85 was due to pass the preceding block post at Newry. For that reason, No.171 was held at Newry and shunted on to the Down line to allow No.85 to overtake, instead of at Dundalk as planned.

Secondly, only an hour after the steam "Enterprise" passed, a block telegraph instrument failure occurred between Portadown and Poyntzpass signal boxes, resulting in several following trains being stopped out of course at Portadown by signals.

All in all, the event was an outstanding success, and attracted a huge volume of favourable publicity to the railway, both in NIR/IR and RPSI aspects.

In terms of railway history, the run equalled if not bettered, the normal performance of the "Enterprise" in its steam days, despite the extra two minutes or so required by starting from Belfast Central instead of Great Victoria Street station.

Great credit is due to all the people concerned 'on the ground', ranging from the locomotive crew to the signalmen and crossing-keepers en route, to the NIR and IR Control Offices, to those in the Society who restored and prepared the engines and carriages to the standard achieved, to the dining car staff and the young ladies of InterCity who served coffee and scones, and later a glass of bucks fizz to all the guests on board - or, as expressed in the Weekly Traffic Notice - "To all concerned".

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## IRISH MOGUL SURVIVOR

Charles P. Friel

Locomotive No.461 is the only survivor of the fifty-four 2-6-0 (mogul) locomotives of six different classes that ran on Ireland's standard-gauge lines (5 foot 3 inches). There was a solitary standard gauge 2-6-0 tank and no less than eight 2-6-0Ts on Ireland's "other standard gauge" (3 foot) but that is another story.

The engine was one of two sisters built by Beyer Peacock in 1922 for the Dublin and South Eastern Railway (DSER), 1907 successors of the Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford Railway (DWWR). Its route from Dublin, Westland Row, to Wexford is still in use, though Westland Row was renamed Pearse in 1966. Most other DSER lines are now closed and lifted - Dublin Harcourt Street to Shanganagh Junction, Woodenbridge Junction to Shillelagh, Macmine Junction to New Ross. The New Ross to Waterford section remains intact and is occasionally used (usually when a ship load of French-made concrete sleepers is landed at New Ross).

Locomotive No.461 is now under the care of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland (RPSI) at Whitehead, County Antrim.

This is her story, or at least as much of it as I have been able to assemble; much, I am sure, remains to be uncovered. If you can add to the information then, please, do get in touch.

It seems that No.461 was first conceived as a 0-6-0 in the tradition of most Irish goods locomotives, deriving her ancestry from the 0-6-0 designed in 1904 by Richard Cronin, DSER.

Locomotive Superintendent until 1917, Cronin had been an Inchicore man and some traces of Inchicore practice came with him.

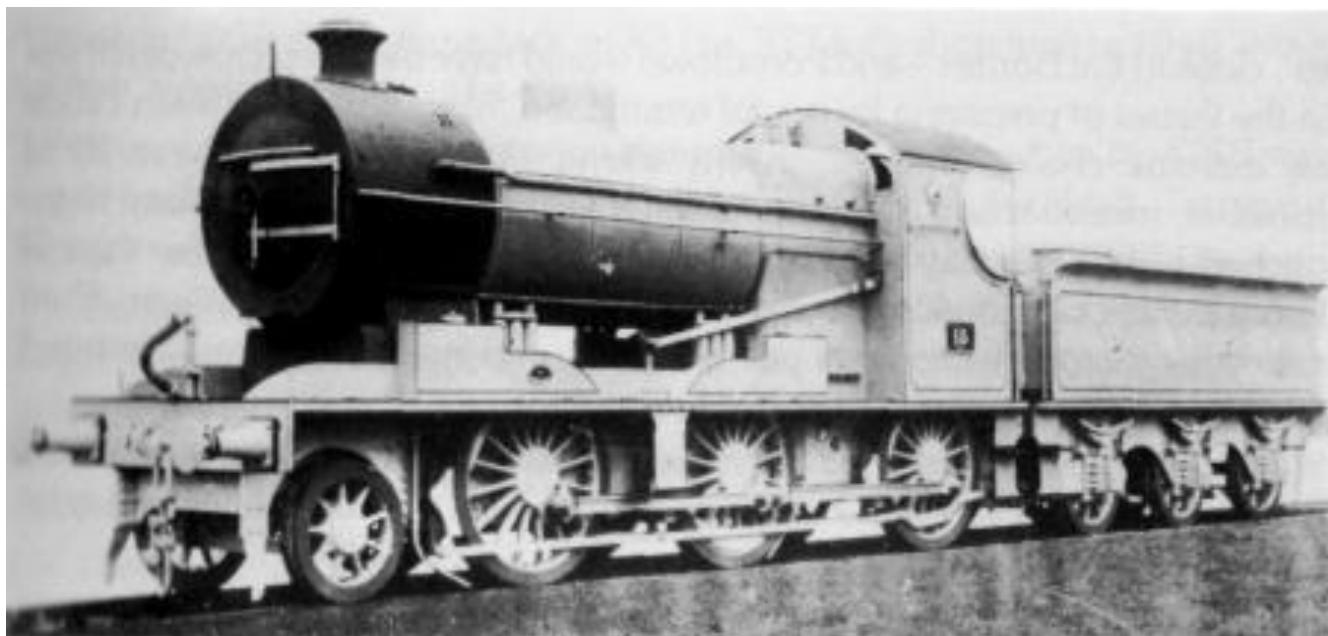
The coupled wheelbase has an unusual distribution and this has been attributed to 0-6-0s supplied by Vulcan to the DWWR in 1891 and perpetuated in Cronin's locos. Wild, however, decided on increased boiler capacity and superheating - something not seen on the DSER before. It might have been the

addition of the Robinson superheater and extended smokebox that tipped the scales in favour of adding the leading pony truck. Thus the engines were built as 2-6-0s, probably to keep within the DSER's modest axle-load limits. Still, the front end has the pudgy look of the afterthought about it. Wild has been credited with saying that the length of the loco and tender was limited by the position of the buffer-stop behind Harcourt street's turntable.

A word of explanation seems called for here. The DSER always considered Harcourt Street to be its principal Dublin station. It was an unusual station - the double track main line was served by a single platform and terminated with a turntable right at the platform ends, the layout was somewhat cramped, for the turntable served both the goods loop and engine release roads. The boundary wall skirted the edge of the turntable with a buffer stop set into the wall. Behind the wall was a 24 foot drop into Hatch Street. On 24<sup>th</sup> February 1900, a cattle special from Enniscorthy got out of control on the long falling gradients of 1 in 80 and 1 in 169. The train ran through the station and across the turntable, pushing the buffer-stop through the three-foot thick wall, and came to rest atop a pile of rubble in Hatch Street. For many years afterwards, some commuters thought it awfully clever to ask for "a single to Hatch Street".

Anyway, the buffer stop in the back wall of Harcourt street influenced the design of Ireland's last mogul.

The moguls had the same eight inch piston valves as their predecessors but the cylinders were enlarged from Cronin's 18 or 18½ inches to 19 inches. This enabled the load of the Wexford goods trains to be increased by 5 to 45 wagons. The crucial section was between Wicklow and Arklow where the line rises to a summit at Rathdrum, with gradients of 1 in 100 and 1 in 90 in both directions.



***Maker's photograph of No.461 in her original form as DSER No.15. (Beyer Peacock)***

The powerful new engines had only a 15-ton axle load. The technical details were:

Locomotive weight	50 tons
Driving wheel diameter	5 foot 1 inch
Cylinders	19 inch bore, 26 inch stroke
Valves	piston valves with 8 inch diameter pistons
Boiler	Belpaire type, 18 flue tubes of 5¼ inch outside diameter, 144 smoke tubes

	of 1¾ inch outside diameter
Boiler pressure	175 lbs per square inch
Motion	inside Stephenson's link motion
Braking	steam brake on locomotive and tender
Springing	"volute" type springs on locomotives tender
Coal capacity	5 tons tender
Water capacity	2,600 tons

The tender is a standard DSE model, and originally had coal rails fitted immediately above the outward flair of the top. At some time since then the rails have been replaced by steel plate.

While Cronin's side-window cab was not retained, a steel sliding shutter can be pulled out to fill in the cab cut-out - a very useful feature on a main line that has a spectacular cliff section between Bray and Greystones and seashore mileage virtually all the way from Merrion gates to Wicklow.

The locomotives were built by Beyer Peacock in 1922 (works numbers 6112 and 6113). Although the tender was £13,350 for the two, this was not a firm price but had a sliding clause to allow for increased costs, the final cost was £19,336. Some months later the post-war upsurge in prices was dramatically reversed, but too late for the DSER. Vulcan had actually put in a firm tender of £16,520 which would in the end have been cheaper. The locos were numbered 15 and 16.

When delivered, the Irish Free State was in a state of civil war and the railways of County Wexford were very much in the front line. The DSER had to endure may raids and had to recover many locos and items of rolling stock from embankments, rivers and the county road. At least two of the locos involved never worked again. One was DSER No.68 "Rathcoole", a 4-4-0 built by Beyer Peacock in 1905 (4646). She was virtually destroyed on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1923 at Palace East while working a cattle special from Wexford to Waterford. This was just two days after a hair-raising high-speed derailment while working the 6.05pm Rosslare Boat Express from Harcourt Street. Sketch White, No.68's regular driver, was in charge on each occasion and was so upset that he suggested to Sir Thomas Esmonde, then DSER Chairman, that "the new engines be kept out of mischief". It might just be a coincidence that George Wild had lately been district superintendent of the Great Northern at Londonderry, but it was on the GNR(I) that the new locos found refuge. The just-run-in engines ran coupled light engines, both in steam to store at the Northern's Belfast shed, Adelaide. Why Adelaide, one wonders, why not Dundalk or Newry? Perhaps they were too close to the border - and Portadown would have been too crowded if not in the throes of preparing for a total rebuild. So maybe Adelaide wasn't such an extreme choice after all. In any event, Fred Graham, stalwart RPSI member, modeller and coach restorer, remembers hearing an unusual high-pitched whistle one day in late January 1923 or perhaps the first few days of February. He ran across to the shed in time to see both engines in steam. Fred maintains that the locos were painted green and indeed one was illustrated thus on a Wills cigarette card in 1924.

No other DSER loco had been green since 1897. At Adelaide shed the smoke ducts on Nos. 1 and 2 roads were removed to accommodate the sisters' high cabs.

The locomotives stayed at Adelaide for some months before returning to the DSER and taking up their regular duties. From 1923 until 1955 the pair worked opposite each other on the heavy night goods trains between Dublin and Wexford. During the day No.15, always based at Wexford, worked Wexford to Rosslare Harbour local trains while sister No.16, based at Grand Canal Street, Dublin, sometimes worked Dublin suburban trains. Some drivers, though, maintained that No.15 was the faster and a better steamer than her sister.

When the DSER was absorbed into the nationalised Great Southern Railways (GSR) in 1925, the locos

were renumbered No.461 and No.462 and classified K2 (K denoting 2-6-0 wheel arrangement).

In 1940, No.462's original boiler was condemned and she was fitted with a standard Inchicore N boiler (the same as fitted to ex-GSWR D10 and D11 classes of 4-4-0 and to classes J4 and J9 of 0-6-0). This, too, was a Belpaire type with superheater but was pressed to only 160 lbs rather than the DSE's 175 lbs. The Inchicore boiler was 2 inches shorter and 2 inches smaller diameter than the DSE boiler and had 18 5¼ inch flue tubes but only 90 1¾ inch smoke tubes. The N boiler's heating surface was only 992 square feet compared to the 1,248 of the DSE model. Little else is known about the loco at this period except that shortly after the amalgamation No.15 was 'renovated' (?) in Limerick works. I wonder why Limerick rather than Grand Canal Street? Certainly Grand Canal Street seems to have been a grim place to work but what other reasons were there for sending her so far from home? Maybe you know the answer! In any event the renovation was notable for another reason. When No.15 emerged from Limerick her cab-side plates had been altered from DSER to read GSR. The number No.15 remained, though after 1940 the remaining DSE boiler and an N boiler alternated between the two engines. Externally the most noticeable differences were that the dome on the Inchicore boiler was positioned closer to the firebox while the DSE boiler had a footprint on the smokebox ring, at the bottom of the door. Curiously the 'missing' DSE dome turned up on K3 No.357 for a short time in 1940; more of the 'missing' chimney later.

The numbers and classification remained unchanged when the GSR was made part of Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ, Gaelic for Irish Transport Company) in 1945.

Sometime about 1953, while fitted to No.462, the N boiler had ash disposal tubes fitted on either side of the smokebox. Apart from looking ugly, the enginemen held that these new tubes interfered with the loco's steaming by destroying the smokebox vacuum. They took their own remedy by blocking the tubes with sugar beets.

Grand Canal Street Shed closed to steam on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1954 and No.462 transferred to Broadstone shed, at the former terminus of the Midland Great Western. When the Wexford goods trains were dieselised in late 1955, No.461 joined her sister at the Broadstone. From there they worked DSE section suburban trains and occasionally they both worked passenger excursion and goods trains on the Midland section; the crews loved them. Each winter, though, the two engines transferred to Waterford to help out during the busy beet season - typically lasting from mid-October to late January. The pair were usually employed on beet specials from Waterford to Thurles via Fethard and were worked by crews from both Limerick and Waterford. No.461 was never known to fail and, apparently, drivers did their best to get No.461 on their train.

Broadstone shed closed on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1961 but the sisters had stayed on in Waterford. In June of that year No.461 worked her last passenger train, part of a week-long joint IRRS/RCTS/SLS special. No.461 worked the train from Kilkenny to Waterford and then over the now-closed line via Dungarvan to Mallow. There the train reversed again and travelled north along the Cork main line to Charleville (Rathluirc) where it took the Bruree line to Limerick.

A month later No.461 was noted working the car train between Ballygeary and Rosslare Harbour. The loco continued to be based in Waterford and in June 1962 visited Cork for repair. At this time No.462 was ailing, proving unable to work even the lightly-loaded Dungarvan goods. Over the winter of 1962/3 No.461 and two 0-6-0s shared the workings of the 21:15 Waterford to Thurles beet special and its 12:25 return.

In April 1963 steam was all but eliminated on CIÉ and the remaining engines were concentrated in just eleven sheds. As part of the final round-up, No.461 and No.462 ran to Inchicore where No.461 was labelled for retention but No.462 was condemned to scrap, taking the surviving DSE boiler with her. This left No.461 with an N boiler (No.746) albeit fitted with a DSER chimney. By the end of 1963,

No.461 had 'escaped' back to Rosslare but liberty was short-lived; by the following Easter she was again in store. This time the shed was a new one for her and her first visit to the former Great Northern since 1922. No.461 joined four other engines at Sutton, on the Howth branch, stored in the former Hill of Howth tram shed.

In late 1964 No.461 was on the move again, this time back to Inchicore where she was converted to use as a stationary boiler.

It is not known for how long this continued but by late 1965 she was lying out of use and almost forgotten until, in December 1967 (with persuasion from the Irish Railway Record Society) CIÉ announced that they were preserving three of the remaining locomotives. J15 0-6-0 No.184 was to go on display at Inchicore, ex-Great Northern Q class 4-4-0 No.131 at Dundalk and No.461 at Wexford.



*No.461, with CIÉ 'N' boiler, at Bray on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1956. Several differences can be noted on the boiler, smokebox and tender. (H.B. Priestley)*

For the first of three annual public Open Days at Inchicore on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July 1968, CIÉ operated a one-coach train within the Works hauled by No.184, then in use for the filming of "Darling Lili". Two other engines were repainted for the occasion and put on display near the turntable. Ex-GNR(I) No.131, for some reason, was painted in GN blue (something she never had before) while No.461 was turned out in an approximation of DSER livery - black lined red and orange with painted numbers rather than plates and the tender wasn't lettered. The effect was rather spoiled on both engines by painting all wheel tyres white - very American but hardly either informed or sensible.

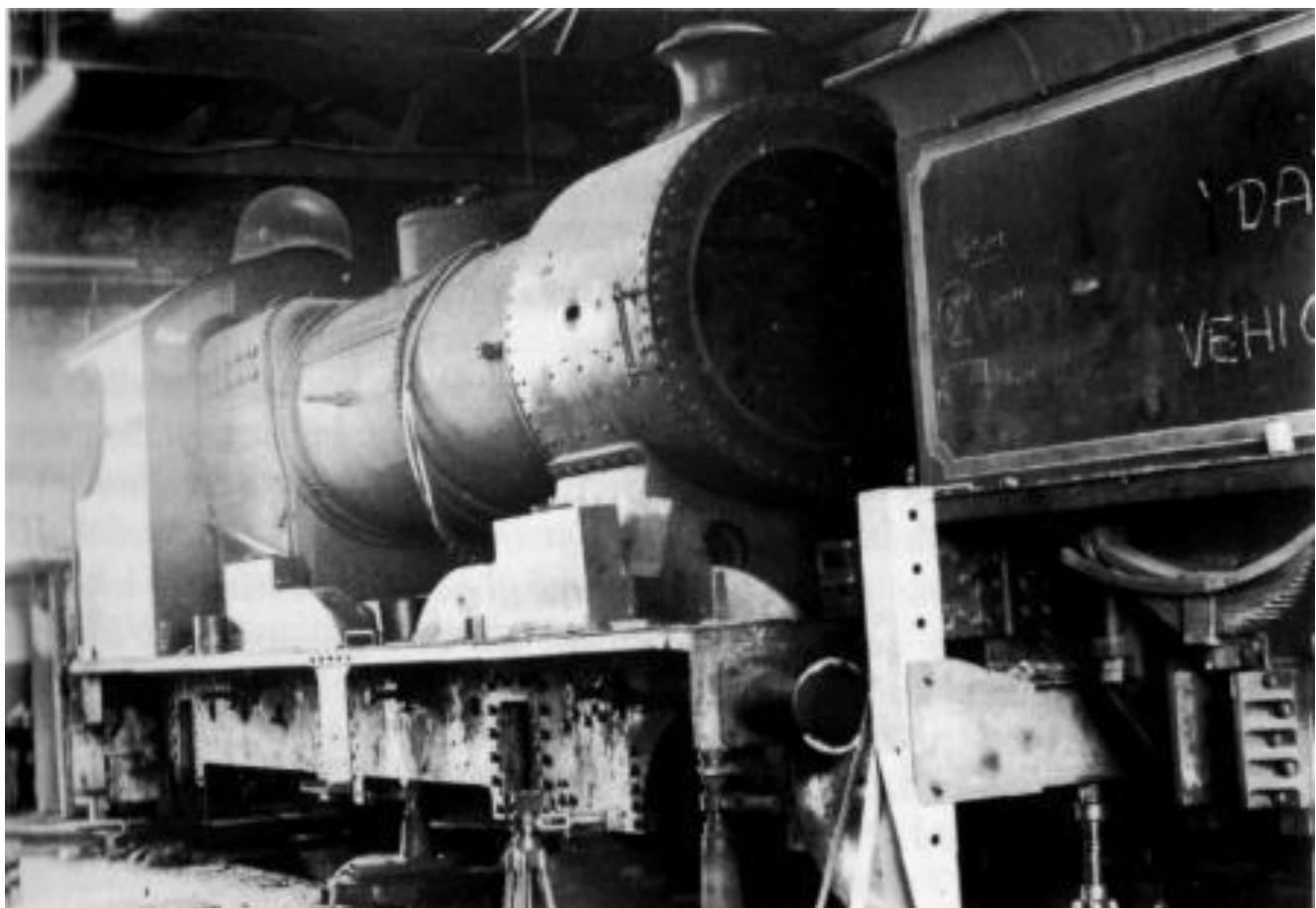
No.461 and No.131 (static) and No.184 (in steam) all appeared at the following two years' Open Days before the idea was dropped - apparently it took the Works three weeks to get ready for the big day and another week to recover! Be that as it may, the three locos were usually shunted alongside the main line each time one of the Society's railtours was due to pass the Works.

In early 1975, Mullingar became established as the RPSI's base on CIÉ territory, with the arrival of ex-GSWR J15 No.186 from her previous home at Sallins. This loco had been presented to the Society by CIÉ in 1968 and, at that time, was a regular and gallant performer on RPSI tours. She even worked Waterford - Ballinacourty - Waterford - Kilkenny - Dublin - Belfast (Great Victoria Street) on one memorable day; but that, as they say, is yet another story.

On 19<sup>th</sup> November 1975, out of the blue, No.461 and No.184 left Inchicore behind diesel-electric B154. After an overnight stop at Thurles, the trio arrived in Cork on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Both No.184 and No.461 were on display outside the shed when No.186 and No.171 worked the Society's "Seandun" railtour to Cork, Cobh and Youghal in June 1976.

In early 1977 both No.461 and No.184 were offered to the RPSI on permanent loan and they were again diesel-electric hauled to their new home at Mullingar.

No.184 was quickly restored to star in the seven-million dollar film "The First Great Train Robbery", with filming taking place between April and June 1978. Subsequently she replaced No.186 as the Society's small railtour locomotive.



**No.461 on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1987. Since then the tender has been completed and has left the shed. The appearance of the smokebox is deceptive; it is rotten and will soon follow the tender - but to the scrap-heap! (C.P. Friel)**

Since 1963 No.461's activity and inactivity had combined to produce the state of affairs described in Peter Scott's article in Five Foot Three No.31. For the benefit of those who may not have read the article, the locomotive's already run-down condition was exacerbated by the loss of blast pipe, main steam pipes, steam castle and regulator valve. Happily, the latter item has been retrieved. The journals

of the driving axles had become badly pitted and while being moved from Cork both leading axle boxes ran very hot, causing further damage. At one stage CIÉ had found it impossible to move the loco due to a seized piston and solved the problem by the simple, but drastic, means of burning through the right piston rod. Later, when confronted with a similar problem on the other side, it was apparently felt that further surgery of this type - more readily associated with the scrapman - was preferable to dismantling the motion. For good measure, part of the brake rigging had been mangled in an encounter with pointwork when the loco was being moved.

As it was clear that Mullingar did not have the facilities necessary for restoration, No.461 was moved by road to Whitehead, arriving on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1984, followed by her tender on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1985.

Some idea of the amount of work required to restore the loco to operating condition will have been gained from previous reports and Peter Scott now brings the story up to date:

Work is at present being concentrated on the tender, which is almost complete, some work remaining on the brake gear. A recent setback was the discovery of a broken spring leaf which will have to be repaired prior to re-assembly. When ready, the tender will be stored outside to release shed space so that work can begin on the pony truck, driving axleboxes and rods.

The driving wheels have all now been re-profiled and the journals skimmed up. The wheel lathe was rearranged so that one profile and the opposite journal could be machined at the same time. Finishing of the journal surface was previously done by using a broad nosed tool to 'rub' the surface, after which the surface was polished with emery. The finishing is now being done much more conveniently using a grinding machine - this has proved far quicker and produces a better surface.

A problem arose when the big end journals on the crank axle came to be trued up. These journals were badly scored and pitted, and to produce an accurate surface by hand would have been a lengthy process. We therefore constructed an attachment for the wheel lathe to enable these journals to be machined. It consists of a follower which runs on the journal and which carries either a cutting tool or a grinder mounted on an adjustable slide, which can be fed into or across the surface. The follower is supported by a hinged arm mounted on the lathe bedplate. The whole device of course has to be narrow enough to fit between the crank webs, about 4½" wide in the centre of the journal.

The driving hornblocks of the locomotive have already been referred to in a previous article since both were found to be badly cracked. The right hornblock is a steel casting and was cracked at the leading top corner. The leading half of the hornblock has now been replaced with new plate welded on and machined. In the case of the left driving hornblock, this was found to be an iron casting which had cracked at the same corner and was in two pieces held together with a steel plate. A completely new welded hornblock has been made for this side. Both hornblocks have now been machined and are being fitted to the frames. Fortunately, there are no cracks in the frames themselves. A set of locomotive springs was ordered and has recently arrived.

A crack has, however, been discovered in the wall of the left cylinder. It starts at a stud hole and runs back about two thirds of the length of the cylinder. Repair should not be too difficult since fortunately the crack is accessible. No.85 was found to have two cracks in the cylinder block and these were repaired by the "Metalock" process.

The valve ports were found to be badly carbonised and to facilitate removal of these deposits the four valve liners have been removed. A jig was constructed so that a hydraulic jack could press the liners out. The carbon is now being burned out, using a propane torch.

To a casual observer it might look as if little has changed, apart from the appearance of several gleaming wheelsets and a quantity of new platework on the tender but substantial progress has in fact been made and it should soon be possible to make a start on the restoration of the boiler and associated

fittings.

*[The next Five Foot Three should include an article on the running of No.461 in CIÉ service and, of course, a progress report on her restoration. By that time Charlie Friel may have the answers to some of the questions which have occurred to him since he began to take a hand in the work - no less than seventeen arising from one visit! Examples: Why 88 smoke tubes instead of 90, and did she get a new cylinder block in 1944? - Ed.]*

## **HARRY RAMSEY**

**Irwin C. Pryce**

The death in January 1987 of Harry Ramsey has meant the loss of a valued friend of the Society.

Harry joined the LMS (NCC) in 1942, serving in Larne and Belfast as a cleaner, with short periods in Whitehead and Carrickfergus. He was appointed Fireman in 1953 and Driver in 1965, becoming a familiar and welcome figure on York Road workings.



*Sadly, we won't be seeing this again. Davy is probably relieved that No.85, never his favourite engine, has come to rest. Meanwhile, having taken the firing in his stride, Harry has a smile for the world as ever. (I.C. Pryce)*

After the difficult war years it must have seemed small reward for men of Harry's generation to suffer the treatment handed out to them in the subsequent two decades as closures, dieselisation and reduction in services brought about the constant threat of being paid off or reduced. It is a tribute to Harry's character that throughout his service to the railway his own standards never slipped. On one occasion

the shine which Harry kept on No.74 “Dunluce Castle” while shedded at Whitehead caused York Road to borrow her for a directors’ special. The result was a personal letter from the General Manager congratulating him on the condition of the engine.

At a later stage Harry took charge of No.56 and then No.53 on the stone trains from Magheramorne to Belfast, the shining condition of the footplate evidencing the pride he had in his job.

In more recent years it was a pleasure to share the footplate of Society engines with him - the light and easy manner in which he used the shovel and constant use of the hand brush showing that his standards had not changed.

His driving and firing showed exceptional economy and his frequent mate Davy McDonald appreciated this, on one occasion looking sadly into the bunk of a certain blue engine and saying, “You know, if Harry and me only had No.4 we’d burn no coal at all.”

On a personal level Harry always seemed to have a pleasant “Hello” and a smile, the constant stream of questions and comments being given a careful and courteous reply. No request for an extra stop, a shunt or a hurried lunch produced anything other than a willingness to help others in the team, nor did a lack of courtesy in others provoke other than a mannerly reply.

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## MAC ARNOLD

**J.A. Cassells**

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Mac Arnold was in many ways a unique individual in the brotherhood of Ulster railway enthusiasts. Unique in his knowledge and experience of the steam railway worldwide, unique in his literary output and unique too in his standing among professional railwaymen. They regarded him as one of themselves - and it was most significant that the attendance at his funeral included drivers, inspectors and even retired operating superintendents.

Mac’s railway interest grew during his Bangor childhood and his boarding-school days in Dungannon and developed through his postings around the country as a young employee of the Northern Bank. His Bangor days nurtured a great love of the BCDR, later encapsulated in his first book “Steam Over Belfast Lough” and in “The County Down” - one of his last. His schooldays and early working life similarly stirred his enthusiasm for the GNR(I), and few railways can have had their operations and personalities so painstakingly analysed as in his two volume study “The Golden Years of the GNR”. His softest spot, however, was for the NCC, and over the years he cultivated not only a deep knowledge of operation and loco performance but also a personal acquaintance with almost every footplateman on the system. It was this personal angle that gave such a distinctive flavour to “NCC Saga”, which I regard as perhaps the best of his five books.

His knowledge of railwaymen was not confined to the footplate grades - indeed he loved to tell how, photographing along the Derry Central line in the 1950s, he was saved from arrest by suspicious ‘B men’ only through the timely appearance of the directors’ inspection saloon propelled by WT No.2. W.S. Marshall, the Operating Superintendent, noting his plight, promptly plucked him from the arms of the law and ensured that he got not only an unexpected run over the line but a good lunch as well!

South of the border he travelled the length and breadth of CIÉ in the 1950s, often with Drew Donaldson. Some years ago “Five Foot Three” published an article of his on “Athenry As A Railway Centre”, and almost his last published piece was “It’s Only A J15”; not only a tribute to the engine class but also a touching memorial to his lifelong friend Drew.

No less exhaustive were his British and foreign travels. Mac was fortunate enough to have full experience of the high summer of post-war British express steam, and careful enough not to neglect the wealth of minor branch lines; he could boast, indeed, of a photograph in every county of the British Isles. But though his eye was always firmly fixed on the passing mileposts he did not miss the wider

railway environment. Countryside, history and people were part and parcel of his interest; and characters he met - or bandied words with! - on the railway took on larger than life dimensions as he later described them. Later still, he discovered the continent, and took great delight in all aspects of the steam scene from West German schnellzuge to the meandering byways of North Italy. And though he claimed no expert knowledge of the continental scene, a 1975 article on the West German 23 class 2-6-2s in the "Continental Railway Journal" was one of his best performance studies.

There was finally - and sometimes rather furtively - his knowledge of trams and buses! Many of us, to be honest, have taken a passing interest in other forms of public transport; Mac typically was able to reveal a detailed knowledge of Belfast trams when he reviewed "Gone But Not Forgotten" under the pseudonym of Bailie MacWheeble in "Five Foot Three".

Railway publishers' catalogues these days are crammed with the names of railway 'experts'; what made Mac the genuine article was his meticulous habit of recording with stopwatch, camera and detailed notes. Into his books, articles and talks went hard evidence, personal experience and careful research. Even letters, invariably done on his distinctive typewriter, contained a wealth of observations and railway asides.

But to concentrate on railways alone is to miss the man himself, for Mac had a view of life that ranged far wider than his hobby. He was knowledgeable in classical music and English literature, and though none of his children ever became railway enthusiasts he was proud of them and their families. Most of all Mac was blessed with his wife Kathleen, and no man could have wished for a more tolerant and understanding partner. Railway people fascinated her, and visitors to the house always found a friendly welcome and generous hospitality.

Mac was never a man to suffer fools gladly, or to let pomposity or bluffing go unpunctured. But although his manner could at times be austere there was often a kindly twinkle in his eye, and all through his life he fought against bouts of indifferent health. Self-pity was not part of his philosophy, and even in his last years, when incapacitated by serious illness, he busied himself as long as he could with his writings.

As a Society we salute the memory of one of Ireland's foremost railway authorities, and we offer our sympathy to his wife and their family on their sad loss.

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**J.H. HOUSTON****W.T. Scott**

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John Harold Houston joined the Midland Railway (NCC) in 1919 as a premium apprentice at the York Road works and so served two years under the chief engineer, Bowman Malcolm. At this time the NCC possessed only four modern passenger engines - the U class 4-4-0s Nos. 70-73 - and had just taken delivery of the three V class goods engines; the rest were two-cylinder compounds. Part of Harold's apprenticeship was spent on the rebuilding of these engines and he gained considerable footplate experience running-in the rebuilds.

Though training as an engineer he was equally at home driving and firing - a fact the company made good use of during the 1933 strike when Harold had No.50 "Jubilee" on the boat train. "Jubilee" was then newly rebuilt and in Harold's view the most handsome and free-steaming of all NCC engines.

A great locomotive enthusiast as well as an engineer by profession, he was a natural choice to monitor the performance of the GNR(I) 4-4-0T locomotive when it was loaned to the NCC in 1924. The Glover tank set new standards of performance on the Larne line which no NCC engine could equal despite the use of a brand new 4-4-0 to compete with her. Over forty years later he recalled the tests vividly to me, "She made her time up the bank to Greenisland and we had nothing that could get within a minute of her to Carrickfergus." His only quibble about the GNR engine was her tendency to roll as speed built up to over 60 mph down the bank to Carrickfergus. (The NCC had few tank engines of their own at this

time and so Harold would have had no experience of their behaviour at speed.) Thirty years later Billy Hanley, the NCC's then locomotive inspector, was to voice a similar complaint about No.187 when she came over.

Though a professional engineer, Harold had a keen appreciation of what looked right and the Moguls which appeared in 1933 offended his aesthetic sense. The engineer appreciated their capacity for speed and hard work but the artist was offended by their stark austere appearance. He maintained that they only photographed well broadside on.

On a small railway like the NCC the engineers had to be capable of many jobs and Harold did considerable work on coaches. He was concerned with the design work for the special rake of carriages for the narrow gauge boat express which, alas, was short-lived though the rake of stock - the first to run on the 3ft gauge - then worked on the Ballycastle line and finally, until 1959, on the Co. Donegal Railway. The North Atlantic Express rake, the brake of which still survives in RPSI trains, was another of Harold's jobs. Based on LMS designs of the early thirties, considerable adaptation was necessary to fulfil Major Spier's aim of a lightweight high-capacity train. The carriages were extremely comfortable with the one fault of inadequate ventilation on hot days. I asked Harold about the small toplights long after he had retired and he smiled and said, "That was a mistake." I thought he was criticising the original design but he went on to say, "When I got out the drawings, the toplight dimensions were misquoted and so on an already small window became even smaller. Worse still, the large panes were now totally non-standard so we had to keep a stock of special glass for replacements."

When war came in 1939 the NCC locomotives were by no means ready for it due to a cutback in works overtime. Harold Houston foresaw this problem in the late thirties but could not persuade the management to step up work on locomotives. The GNR came to the aid of York Road and shopped engines at Dundalk - a gesture Harold never forgot, especially when No.81 was returned fully painted in the old maroon livery, the last NCC 4-4-0 to get this treatment. "They helped us when we needed them," was all he would say in response to many criticisms of the GNR in the fifties.

Harold Houston came from an old BNCR/NCC family but he was fated never to attain the post of chief engineer at York Road. The old NCC died in January 1948, with him second to John Thompson. The bus-orientated UTA took over and his chance went, never to return. He never complained in public but, without doubt, in the charge of such a fine railwayman the transition from steam to diesel would have been better managed.

His papers, presented to the Irish Railway Record Society in 1949/50, remain the standard works on NCC locomotives - no other Irish railway is so well documented. Anyone intending to write or talk about the NCC went to Houston - it was always quicker than searching for written sources. He had an outstanding collection of NCC photographs and was a close friend of A.W. Croughton who visited Ireland frequently. Harold would arrange his NCC visits and in return received copies of the prints. His foresight in keeping copies of all NCC drawings at home enabled him to produce new drawings for NCC locomotives, carriages and wagons after the blitz in 1941. He also salvaged the original Ross 'Pop' safety valve from the ruins of York Road.

In the preservation field he devoted time and energy to ensuring the survival of NCC No.74 and BCDR No.30 in pristine condition for the Transport Museum. If either ever steams again it will owe much to the historical sense of fitness of J.H. Houston.

After he retired to Whitehead Harold became a town councillor and a keen bowler. He was always happy to meet old friends and fellow enthusiasts to talk about the old NCC. My last contact with him was in 1986 and concerned the NCC narrow gauge compounds and brought the usual accurate detailed reply even though the engines had been scrapped for nearly forty years and he was in his eighties. Also living in Whitehead was R.M. Arnold, another enthusiast for the old NCC, and when 'Mac' became

housebound Harold made a point of visiting him regularly to chat about the railway they knew so well. These visits continued almost until he died, a kindly act by a fine gentleman.



*On her home ground with the Portrush Flyer on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1987, No.4 climbs the 1/76 above Monkstown on the former NCC main line, now singled between here and Antrim. (C.P. Friel)*

## THE WORKSHOPS OF THE COUNTY DONEGAL RAILWAYS

S.J. Carse

The County Donegal Railways was the most important of the Irish narrow gauge lines and as such had extensive workshop facilities at Stranorlar.

The original West Donegal engine shed later became the locomotive repair shop and with the West Donegal and Finn Valley carriage sheds formed the three-road workshop. It was 120' long and 63' wide. The boiler house and smithy were housed in a building alongside measuring 57' by 22' 6".

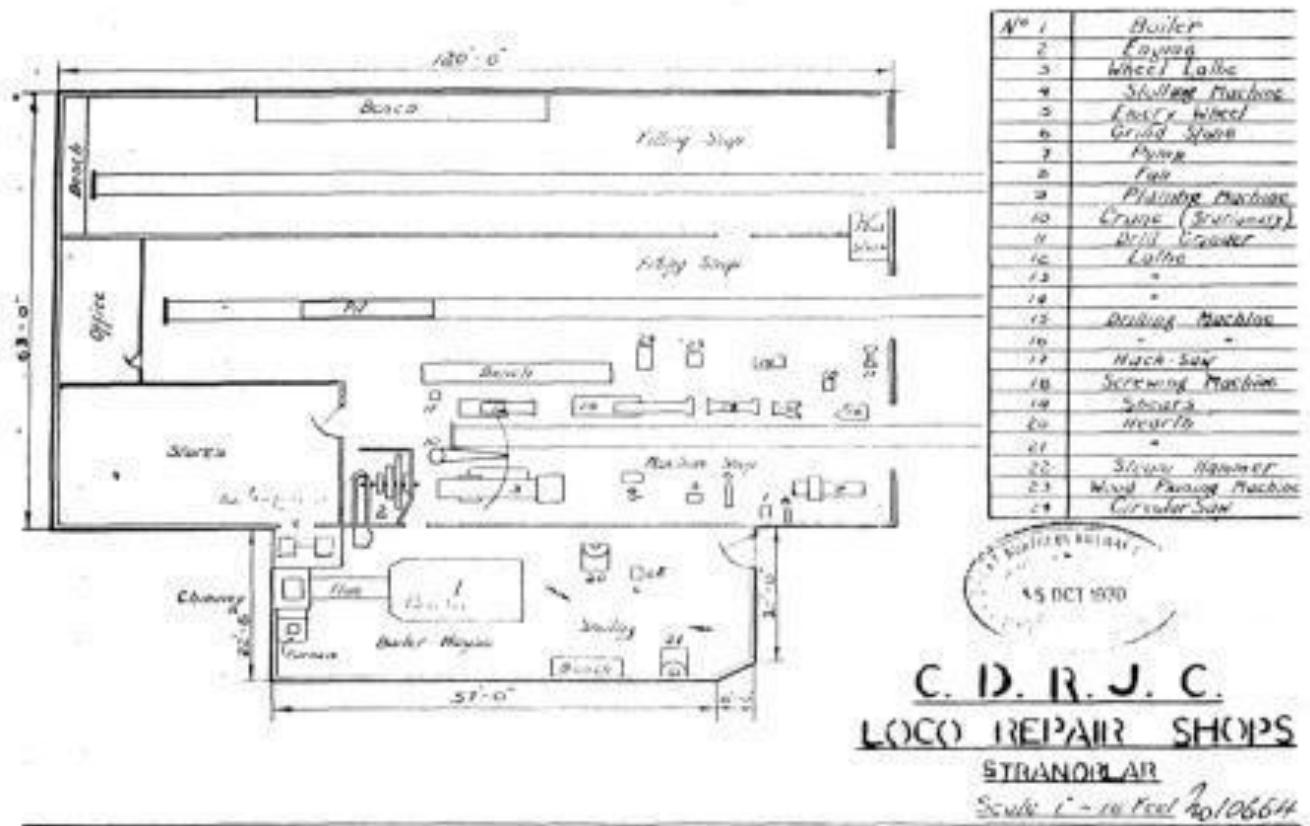
There were twenty two machines of various types, powered by a Cornish boiler which was purchased new in 1898, the makers being Tinkers Ltd., Hyde, near Manchester. It was 14' 4" long, outside diameter 4' 6" and had a working pressure of 80 lbs.

In May 1936 Mr. G.B. Howden, then Chief Mechanical Engineer to the Great Northern Railway and County Donegal Railway said, "The whole outfit is most uneconomical and most of the power is lost in the antiquated belt and pulley system which has been added to from time to time without any regard for efficiency. On average 180 tons of coal is consumed yearly which, including freight, costs about £250; while a man is constantly employed keeping up steam. His wages are £90 per year, so that altogether our power is costing us £340 per annum."

In September 1936 Mr. Forbes, manager of the CDR, wrote to Mr. Howden suggesting that the old boiler be replaced by a diesel engine. This was duly ordered and was delivered in June 1937. During the shop holidays the old steam engine was dismantled and the new Gardner 53 hp diesel engine was working by 13<sup>th</sup> September. Its fuel consumption was 7 gallons per day, costing 2/11 (15p) compared with 13 cwts. of coal costing 18/- (90p), as well as having a man available for other work.

Advertisements in the Dublin and Belfast papers for the redundant steam plant failed to attract more

than three enquiries. The Company's offer to part with the lot for £100 brought only one reply - to the effect that the price was about £80 too much! The boiler was offered to the GNR for use as a fuel oil storage tank for the road buses at Donegal town. This offer was also refused so it was decided to keep it and use it as a storage tank for the shop engine, thereby replacing a side tank from a scrapped locomotive which was first used for this purpose.



On the 11<sup>th</sup> June 1956 the diesel engine failed, the connecting rod became dislodged, resulting in breakage of the piston assembly, etc. Fortunately, no member of the staff was in the immediate vicinity and no personal injuries occurred. To enable the various machines to be restored to operation with a minimum of delay, a diesel road tractor was hired at 35/- (£1.75) per day. The main drive was connected to the tractor drive and the plant returned to operation on 18<sup>th</sup> June.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September that year it was agreed that the shops should be re-wired and that current from the ESB mains should be used to power motors driving individual machines or, in some cases, groups of machines as follows:

## Individual Machines

Wheel lathe (if retained)	one 15 hp motor (see below)
American tool lathe	one 3 hp motor with reversing starter;
Grindstone	one 1½ hp motor
Blower	one 2 hp motor

## Groups of Machines

Combe Barbour lathe	}	one 5 hp high torque motor
Slotting machine	}	
Vertical boring drill	}	
Hacksaw	}	one 7½ hp high torque motor
Shearers	}	
Screwing machine		
Circular saw	}	one 10 hp motor
Wood planer	}	

The estimated cost of the conversion to electric power was as follows:

Motors and starters (excluding pulleys)	£310
Wiring (subject to closer scrutiny when policy decided)	<u>£250</u>
	£560

The Gardner diesel engine was restored to working order and took over from the hired tractor on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1956. Its days in the service of the CDR were numbered, however, as electric power came into use in the shops on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1957. The diesel engine was offered for sale, more successfully than its predecessor, finding a buyer in Basra, Iraq.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### **In The Days Of The Clogher Valley by Jack Johnston, Friar's Bush Press, £4.50.**

In one respect I found this book a disappointment, for the title and the cover picture led me to expect a detailed photographic study of one of Ulster's less documented railways and its hinterland. In fact the book is mainly concerned with the social history of the Clogher valley, and the railway content is limited to the first 23 photographs.

The strength of Mr. Johnston's book is his evocation of a bygone age in the Clogher valley; towns and villages, people and events are recalled in an interesting selection of appositely captioned photographs.

The section on the railway is rather unbalanced. No doubt due to its remote location, the author has managed to illustrate only eight of the three dozen stations and halts on the line. There is good selection of engine photographs, and one particularly interesting shot of the railway's diesel railcar on its inaugural run. Railway enthusiasts might have welcomed some more detail in the captions, and perhaps more reminiscences of the surviving employees of the line.

Mr. Johnston has clearly worked hard on this recreation of a local community and its railway, and I expect it will have a ready sale especially among older Clogher Valley people who have by now distant memories of the railway itself.

JAC

## RETIREMENTS FROM NIR

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Driver Davy McDonald retired from Northern Ireland Railways in August 1987. During the 1986 "Flyer" season there had been rumours that he might not be back the next year. Unfortunately the rumours turned into fact as, after a period of ill-health, Davy eventually decided to call it a day.

A photograph of him with the late Harry Ramsey on No.85 appears in this magazine. For many people, however, the two men will always be associated with the Portrush Flyer and No.4 and it was on that engine that Davy was most content and where his quiet competence could be seen at its best. One did not expect fireworks but rather a feeling for his engine, perhaps best exemplified by his reaction to an exceptionally vigorous run-past by a certain other railwayman - "Thon's an awful way to treat an

engine!"

We tend to take familiar things for granted and in recent times it was probably not widely appreciated how he and Harry, neither of them in the best of health, regularly and uncomplainingly turned out to work the Society's trains.

November 1987 saw the retirement of Billy Steenson, another railwayman to whom the Society has cause to be grateful. Younger members will be unlikely to have any recollection of his footplate days as in the early years of the Society he had become Shed Foreman at York Road. This post must have been somewhat lacking in job satisfaction as the steam shed was obliterated by the motorway and the remaining locos were allowed only the minimum maintenance to enable them to stagger through to the end of the spoil contract.

Despite, or maybe because of, this demoralising situation Billy was always a source of advice and encouragement to the Society in their efforts to preserve locomotives. On occasions the assistance would be in tangible form - suffice to say that not everything at York Road was obliterated.

Although his final years with NIR were spent unseen among the mysteries of Control, he could still be observed from time to time taking more than a passing interest in the Society's locos, the last such occasion being an appraisal of "R.H. Smyth" on "Santa" work.

We wish both men a long and happy retirement.

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

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Sir,

I refer to the subject of diesel preservation and to the controversy which has arisen over the past year. My views would maybe interest your readers.

In the first place, diesel preservation is not contrary to the Society's principles as currently defined. We can preserve any aspect of the railway, from locomotives to tracks and bridges. However, in the early days the whole point of the Society was to preserve steam locomotives as they had become an endangered species. I seem to remember that in 1964 all efforts were directed towards preserving a GNR(I) S class. Talk of preserving diesels in those days would have been unheard of and any member suggesting such a course of action would probably have been drummed out of the organisation! The same applied to coaches and even the NCC tank engine was looked upon with misgivings.

Subsequently, of course, both the tank engine and the coaches have become essential to our operations. In their turn the early diesel locomotives are now being displaced and will disappear if action is not taken.

However, there is no doubt that even if diesel preservation is within our constitution and desirable to some of our members, it would be a complete departure from our life-style over the last 25 years. To make such a change should have a major consensus of favourable opinion within the Society. There is no point in preserving something just because it is becoming scarce, if few people really care.

Since a small number of the active Society members have expressed an interest in diesels, I was very interested in the recent questionnaire on the subject, since this produced a view from the membership as a whole. The results were dismissed as inconclusive, but to me the salient points are first, that only 7% of the membership replied at all and second, that only 1% wished to become practically involved. In other words, the vast majority were not interested enough to influence the decision one way or the other; and an even greater majority had no wish for practical involvement. There is thus no hidden well-spring of support for diesel preservation. Any such project is therefore far less likely to succeed than the current steam restoration programme, which itself struggles for want of proper finance and

manpower.

As regards the general public who travel on the Portrush Flyer and Steam Enterprise, I cannot see any benefit in offering a diesel locomotive at the head of the train, Our customers travel because it is a steam train and to operate something only marginally different from Northern Ireland Railways would be to commit commercial suicide.

To conclude, I would suggest the following:

First, in view of the lack of widespread support, no Society funds should be committed to diesel preservation.

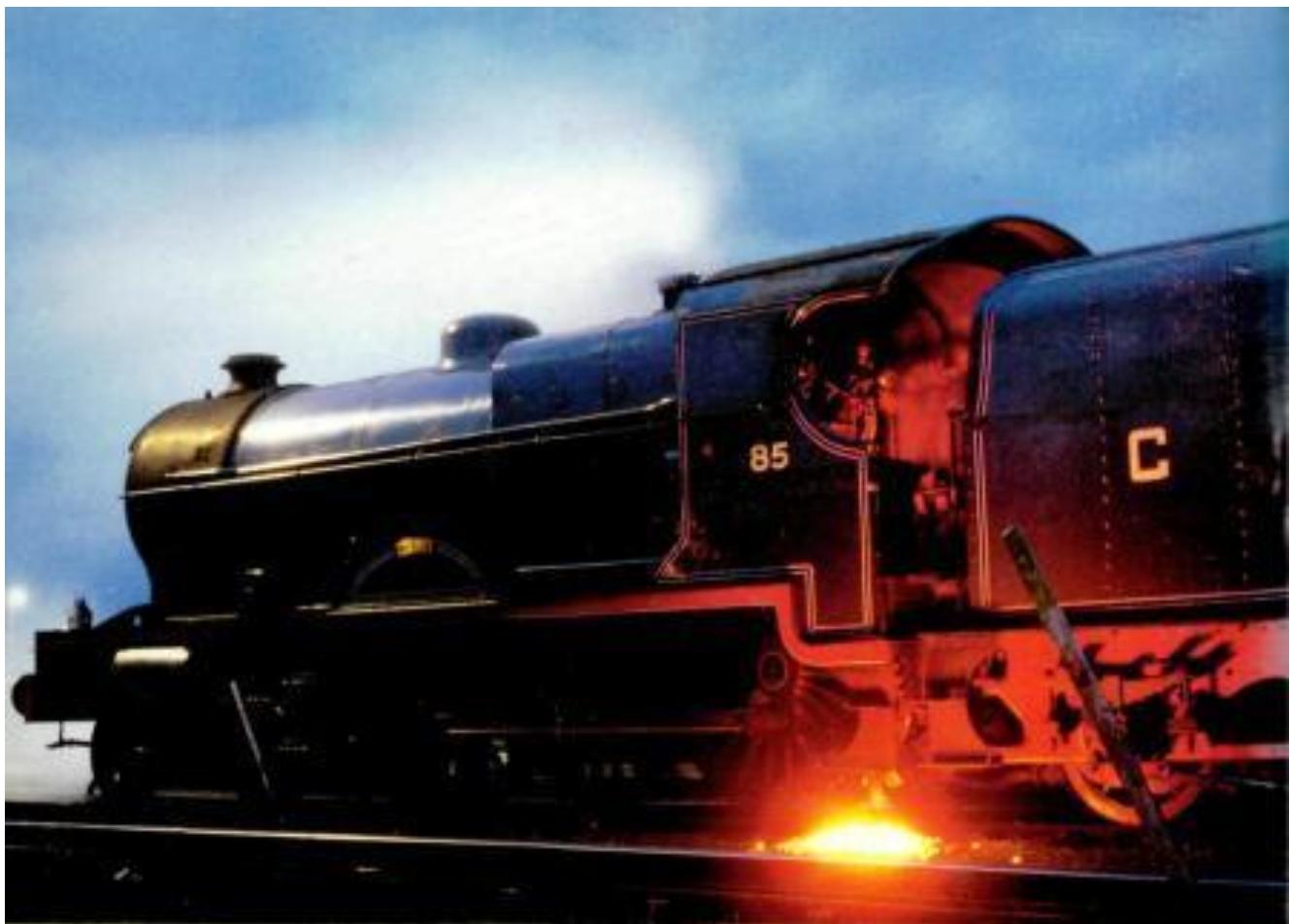
Second, if individuals or groups within the Society are prepared to organise and finance the preservation of a diesel locomotive, this should have official Society encouragement.

Third, to receive such encouragement, the members in question must produce not only the funding necessary to secure the locomotive but also to transport it and to provide additional shed or siding space. Eventual restoration of the locomotive would then depend upon further funds and practical action being forthcoming. All this must be in addition to and not instead of our normal activities.

Yours etc.,

*Peter Scott*

Locomotive Maintenance Officer



*At the end of the day; No.85 has her fire dropped at Central Service Depot, Belfast, after her return from Dublin with the 1987 International Railtour. (Eric Langhammer)*



*Something old, something new, something borrowed, something black! Newlyweds Siobhan and Brian Spurle, with NIR drivers Cecil McAdam and Jack Kitchen with the "Wedding Belle" at Bangor on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1987. The RPSI Operations Officer, who had a certain interest in the proceedings, may be seen in the background, clutching what is presumably the relevant circular. (N. Poots)*