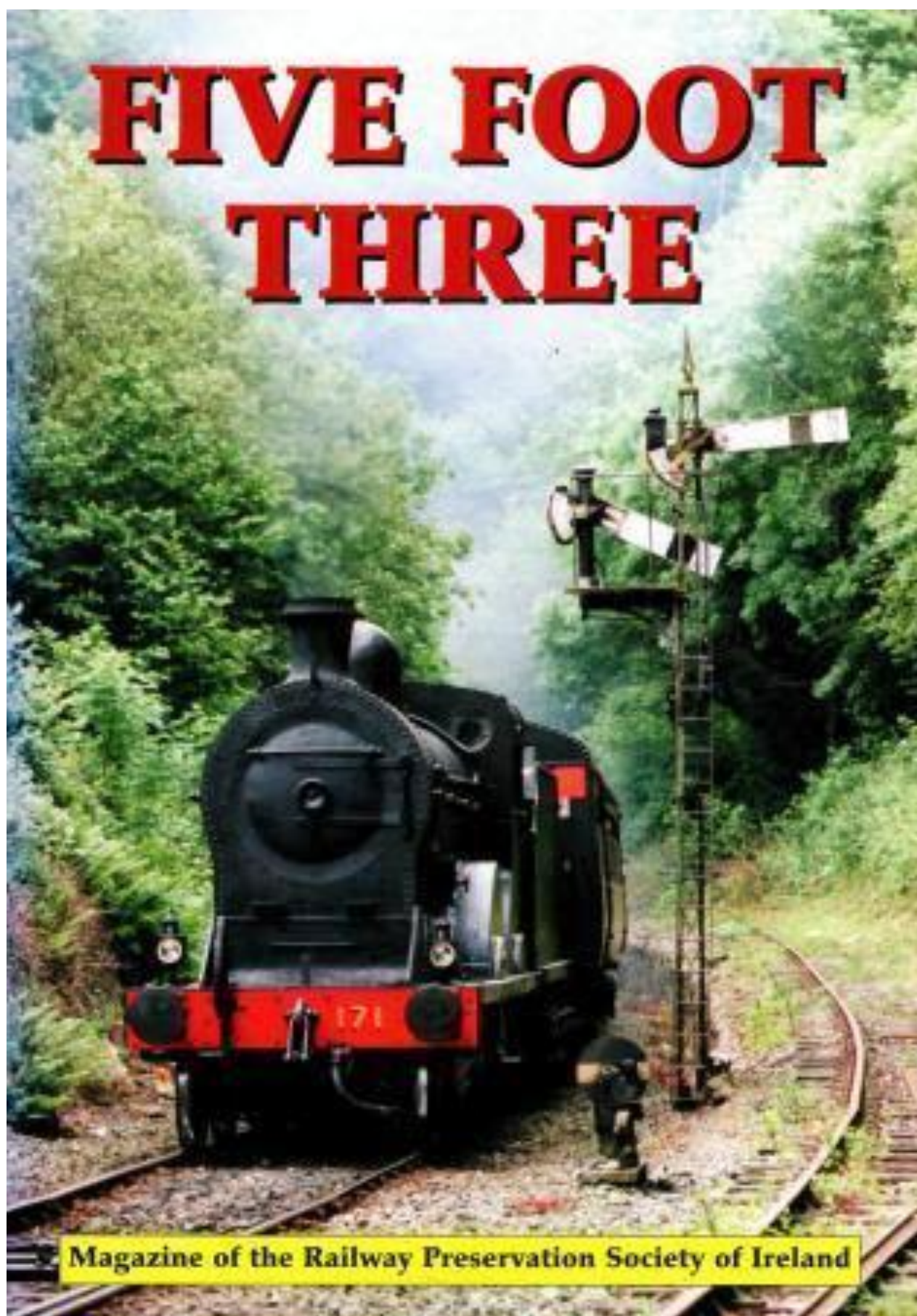


FIVE FOOT THREE



Magazine of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

FIVE FOOT THREE

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Editor: Nelson Poots

CONTENTS

Editorial	
Chairman's Column	Sullivan Boomer
News From Council	Paul McCann
Northern Operations	Heather Boomer
Southern Operations	Peter Rigney
Locomotive Report	Peter Scott
Carriage & Wagon Report	Mark Kennedy
Whitehead Site Report	Dermot Mackie
Five Foot Three To Three Foot Three	Archie Morrow
More Railway Hardware	W.T. Scott
Comments & Recollections	Laurence Liddle
Ticket to Ride?	James Scannell
Camping Coaches II	W.T. Scott
Suburban Tank Locos Compared	Laurence Liddle
Runround at Ballymoney	J.A. Cassells
Book Review	
Letter To The Editor	

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

Cover Photograph: No.171 "Slieve Gullion" arrives at Rathdrum on the return working of the "Strawberry Fair" on 5th July 1997. (C.P. Friel)

EDITORIAL

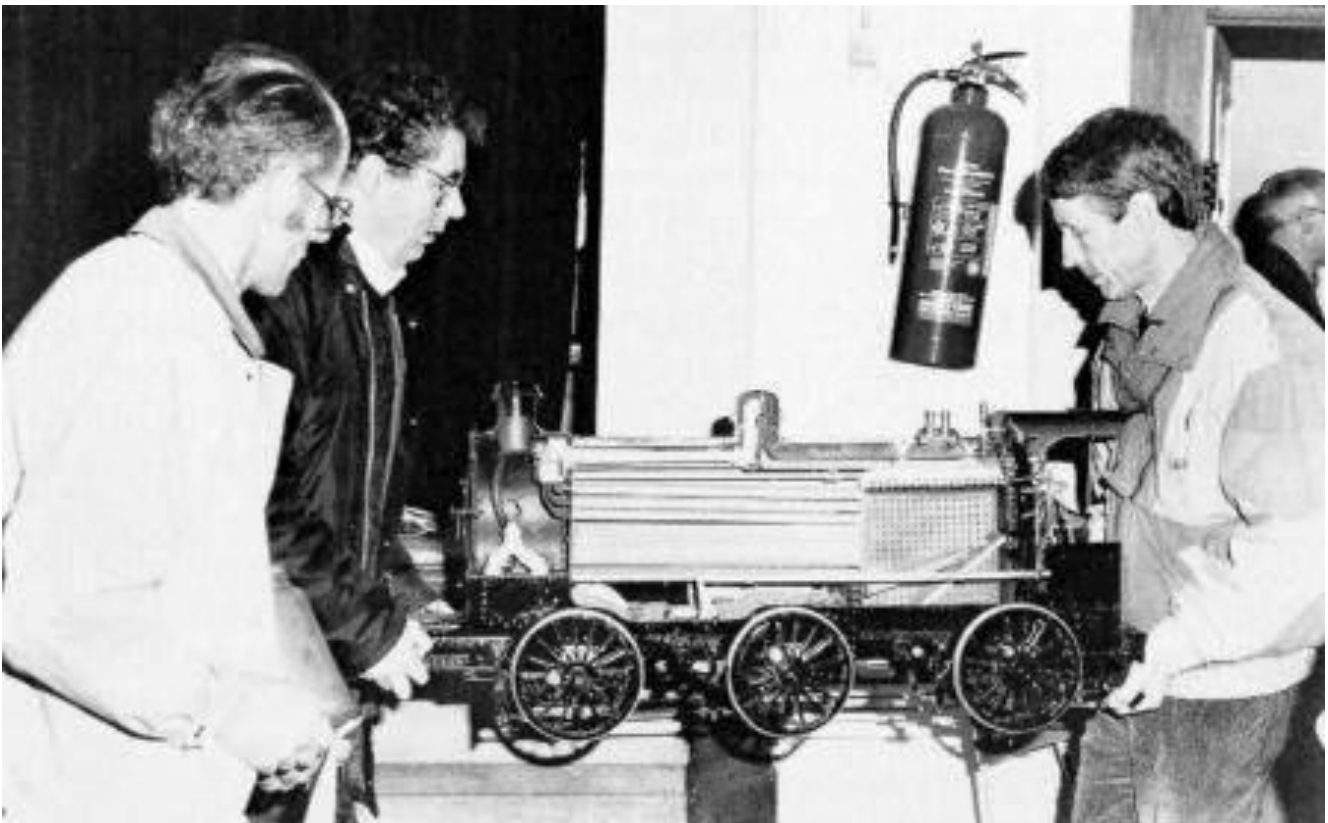
Despite the 'opinions expressed...' disclaimer on the title page there are matters in relation to which one must tread carefully, bearing in mind the well-known adage that one does not live in Rome and fight with the Pope.

From several of the departmental reports in this issue it will be clear that the derailment in September 1996 gave rise to a long and complicated series of events. Doubtless, various opinions as to the cause of the incident were expressed but the initial outcome was that, after a brief incarceration at York Road, the locomotive was allowed to return to Whitehead and subsequently to work the Santa trains, albeit subject to sundry restrictions. These were not unwelcome to Mr. Claus - who was often hard pressed to complete his duties during the normal running time to Whitehead - but would have made other main

line operations well-nigh impossible.

The next stage was the independent investigation by Halcrow Transmark and by the time this far-reaching and unexpectedly prolonged process was over we had lost the 1997 Flyer season. However, it was not all loss as No.85 came out of it with a clean bill of health - a not altogether surprising result, given the dedication and professionalism of the person responsible for its maintenance - so we're back on the road again.

What might be seen as the down-side is that it's no longer enough to keep the engine, and other vehicles, in good order; you have to write about it as well. It always was written about - in books showing what was defective and what was done about it - but it seems that more is required, which will be an additional burden in an organisation which has never suffered from over-manning. It's probably the least that could be expected in an age where any organisation is in danger of drowning in a sea of charters, mission statements, declarations of aims or objectives or both. An example of how the state looks after its citizens was the recent suggestion (in England) that hot pipes on locomotives should be labelled or colour-coded. One might have supposed that those who have business upon locomotives would be aware that they are driven by steam, that this is a very hot substance, that most of the pipes are full of it and that it would be safest to treat all as though they were!



Once a favourite item at Great Victoria Street Station, when a penny in the slot would make it work, the sectioned model of SGS No.202 was on display at St. Jude's Hall on 22nd January 1997. Damaged by a bomb several years ago, it is being restored (in his spare time!) by Peter Scott, who is seen here supervising John Friel and Dermot Mackie. (C.P. Friel)

Some would suggest that anyone who finds pleasure in something so non-"state-of-the-art" as a steam locomotive must be something of a dinosaur. If to this is added an aversion to what he sees as change for change's sake and a belief that those who claim to be adults should be treated as such, then he must surely qualify for inclusion with the ancient reptiles. However, an unfortunate aspect of modern life is

that people are encouraged to blame any adverse result of their actions, no matter how stupid or perverse they be, on someone else and to set about claiming damages. Whether this has led to the ever-increasing flow of regulations or vice versa is a moot point but the two seem to feed off each other.

Enough reptilian ranting and on to better things. As you will read, we are now contractors to the railway industry and are well on the way to having our long-awaited loco workshop. Hopefully, these will be two more things which will feed off each other. The response to the workshop appeal must have not only delighted but amazed our Treasurer. And just imagine having an overhead crane to move all those hernia-inducing bits and pieces!

The wagon contract, in addition to making us some money, will eventually lead to a considerable tidying up of the Whitehead site. It's a pity the vandals couldn't have been a bit more selective in what they set fire to and only burnt the stuff which never looked like going anywhere. In the short term the place will look even more like a scrapyard but when all is cleared up there should hopefully be the further advantage that flat wagons will be a less attractive target for evil-doers.

Meanwhile, Dublin has been hitting the high spots with their State Coach restoration which, in addition to bringing in some money, has got a lot of good (and free) publicity for the Society.

Looking over some of the articles in this issue, there appears to have been something of a deviation from the 5'3" gauge - what with narrow gauge, English engines, East African engines waiting in the wings and, if there is room, a last-minute tale of travels in America. Hopefully this will be seen as a chance to draw comparisons with the Irish scene and will not lead to demands for the head of the Editor!

A sad note on which to close is the passing, a few months ago, of former York Road driver Alan Robinson who towards the end of NIR steam was a delight to the timers, though not perhaps always to his firemen. A tribute by Joe Cassells appears elsewhere in the magazine.

Regrettably, not quite the close as, just as the magazine was going to press, those who knew him were shocked to hear of the sudden death of Robin Convery. Even now only in his forties, "Big Robin" was already a well-established and popular figure at Whitehead when the writer first made his acquaintance in 1970 and he remained active there until leaving to live and work in England. We offer our deepest sympathy to his wife, Margaret, and their young family.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Sullivan Boomer

This year has been one of the most eventful in the Society's history, and not because of our operations. If you have been following the Newsletters during the year you will appreciate that at times there has been much left unsaid, but only because we didn't have unlimited space to "tell all". I don't want to dwell on our trials and tribulations, but rather take the positive view that we have exposed ourselves to searching professional scrutiny - and have passed muster! Certainly, we have to improve our record keeping and look more towards mirroring current practices in the professional world - those of you who face ISO9000 or BS5750 or NAMAS or any other certification or accreditation system will already know the score, and regrettably there can be no escape for us. But we can take great pride from the fact that, in reality, all we have to do is formalise what has been Society practice for several years. We are at least starting from a very high standard!

The end of 1997 has been a time of good news. Not only are we back running on NIR but the "Coleraine Shopper" proved to be quite popular, given the relatively small amount of advance publicity. This may be an idea to look at for the future. After this the "Santa Specials" out of both Belfast and Dublin achieved their, now normal, high loadings and, hopefully, a reasonable profit.

Our Locomotive Workshop has been built, and Dermot Mackie and his merry band are rapidly putting

the permanent way in place so that the building can be used. By the time you read this a vehicle may have already 'christened' the new facility by entering it on the rails! Thanks also to your generous support, we are able to afford to lay part of the concrete floor as well, although the installation of electrical services, light and power, will take a little longer and a fairly sizeable additional sum of money.

Other ways of earning a few pounds, however, are continuing. The Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway Company contract for the mechanical refurbishment of one of the former Irish Sugar Company's Orenstein & Koppel locomotives is continuing to schedule. The restoration work has been extensive, to say the least, as much of the original fabric of the locomotive was totally life expired, but a very presentable engine should appear at the end of the job. The boiler, which is being rebuilt by Rory Woolf in Ballymena, is expected around Easter, and the final assembly will take place after the boiler has been fitted.

Another contract we have won is with John Mowlem Construction Ltd., who are the main contractor to NIR for the rebuilding of the Belfast to Lisburn section of the Great Northern main line. This work will be starting about March and will last for the remainder of the year, and there will be five different single line sections created during the contract on each line of metals. To allow them to proceed quickly Mowlems have been sourcing additional permanent way wagons, and the Society has contracted to supply a total of six bogie flat wagons, each 60 feet long, on a lease arrangement. To do this we are utilising old coach underframes, including those of the vehicles destroyed in the fire in May 1996, as well as the frames of a couple of 'laminate' coaches whose bodies are beyond economic repair at this time.

The underframes of the coaches destroyed in the fire can now be released, as our Loss Assessor has obtained agreement from the Compensation Agency that they will accept liability. Several youths were successfully prosecuted for the incident, and as a result we qualify for compensation for criminal damage. The exact amount of the settlement is still to be decided - you could say we're at the 'haggling stage' - but the view of several current members of the Society's Council is that any such sum should be carefully invested and used to improve the covered storage and maintenance facilities at Whitehead. If we can get even 50% grant aid then a relatively small sum can go quite a long way!

You'll also be aware that the Council is appointing a Strategy Committee to look at our long term planning. With the review of the Society's management structure completed last year it was felt that a comprehensive study of the future options for the Society would be appropriate. We all have our own ideas, of course, and it is those ideas that need to be aired. Aesthetically, we'd all love to see 800 on the Cork main line, but economically it's probably a total non-starter. That's what the Strategy Committee will have to review, and their recommendations can be considered by the Council and the membership in formulating our future policy. If we want to be here, running main line steam passenger specials in the next century, we need to prepare ourselves now. And we will!

NEWS FROM COUNCIL

Paul McCann

What a year!! One can only hope that such a dark cloud never again descends on the Society, nor stays for as long as it did, never really lifting until the autumn. The cause of the gloom, the derailment of No.85 near Coleraine while hauling the "Atlantic Coast Express" of the previous September, dominated Council discussions for most of the year.

Following the derailment, NIR placed a ban on Society operations, although this was eased to an overall 25mph speed restriction in time for the Christmas operations. The railway company subsequently carried out an examination of the Society's stock operating on the unfortunate train but found no evidence of any fault, and their subsequent report stated as much. However, it was felt by

NIR that an independent assessor should be appointed to ascertain safe operating speeds for Society trains on NIR metals. It was the delay in appointing the consultants that led to the lack of northern operations during the summer months, and the bleak outlook as perceived by those involved in operations, especially the regular attenders at Whitehead - the enthusiasm to turn out locomotives and coaches just evaporated.

The consultants, Halcrow Transmark, were appointed in the early summer but their investigation extended into examining all aspects of the Society's operating relationship with NIR and the scope of the resulting report, and its cost, was much greater than originally expected. However, the report was published and all parties concerned found its conclusions and recommendations reasonably acceptable. There then followed a meeting with Transmark, NIR and the DED Health & Safety Executive at which a list of action points was hammered out, not all by any means against the Society. It was at this point, in September, that approval was given for a return to main line operating on NIR, subject to the restrictions agreed as a result of the report. In order to restore morale among the operating teams, it was decided that a quick return to the main line was in order, hence the operation to Coleraine in November.

The other main topic of discussion this year was the construction of the locomotive workshop at Whitehead. It had been agreed before the latest round of ERDF funding had been received that the workshop would receive priority over the other projects. At the start of the year it was becoming clear that the time for a decision was fast approaching. The Treasurer did his sums and found that the original cost of £50,000 would not build the workshop. An approach to the ERDF authorities resulted in the approval to redirect £30,000 allocated to other projects to finance the workshop.

Further calculations showed that of the 50% that the Society would have to fund, nearly £20,000 could be appropriated from various coffers, leaving approximately another £20,000 to be found from elsewhere. It has to be admitted that some Council members were unsure as to how successful an appeal would be when the idea was proposed. How wrong we were, not only did the appeal raise the necessary amount but by the time all standing orders and covenants are accounted for we should be around 30% over target.

Our members must be congratulated and thanked for their exceeding generosity in helping to ensure the Society's engineering future. The building has already been constructed, the connecting trackwork is being laid and it is hoped that we will be able to afford flooring and the connecting of utility supplies before too long.

Some other good news received during the year was our success in tendering for the contract to overhaul the mechanical parts of the Downpatrick & Ardglass locomotive, Orenstein & Koppel No.3. It was this job which allowed our locomotive team to keep their morale up during the summer as work on our own locomotives was not being progressed so urgently because of the fallout from the derailment. The Downpatrick contract is due to run until July 1998.

More good news came in the form of two prizes, totalling £5,000, from the AIB Better Ireland Awards for our work on the restoration of Irish State Coach 351. The project has gone forward to the final round of these awards and there is the possibility of winning the £20,000 first prize.

The AGM at Whitehead required discussion of the proposed new Council structure, so the usual business was dispensed with reasonably quickly. There then followed some heated debate but, surprisingly, an agreement with some changes to the proposal was reached reasonably quickly and to the satisfaction of nearly all. The new Council structure is due to come into place with the 1998 AGM and it is hoped that some business experience may come onto Council with the filling of the post of Business Development Officer and the posts of general Officer. Chas Meredith was the only new addition to this year's Council so it will be interesting to see if the new structure will see any

significantly new faces.

Despite what was happening in the North, operations out of Dublin, including the annual Railtour, progressed satisfactorily with nothing much of note other than a filming contract in October. "Amongst Women", a joint production by RTE and the BBC, required a train from the 1950s period for filming on the Westport line. The Irish Traction Group supplied A39, their ex-CIÉ diesel electric locomotive in silver livery, and the Society provided three carriages in CIÉ green. A few other filming enquiries have been received late in the year, but none as yet have come to fruition.



No.202 features again as retired GNR driver Bobby Quail presents Peter Scott with a £500 cheque for the loco workshop appeal. Mrs. Quail looks on approvingly. (C.P. Friel)

Northern operations were confined to "Santa Special" and "Easter Bunny" operations on the Larne line, and these were very well patronised. There were Open Days at Whitehead on two consecutive Saturdays during the summer - not very lucrative, but a chance to give the public, and more especially our members, a chance to see our engineering teams in operation. Visitors were able to view the newly laid foundations for the locomotive workshop.

Last year, the shuttle train operations out of Dublin in August had to be cancelled due to lack of crews on Iarnród Éireann - partially addressed this year with three weeks of crew training in March - but this year we again suffered cancellation by IÉ, only this time as a consequence of engineering works on the

Rosslare line. Such is life!

An approach of a different kind was made to the Society in October when Messrs Mowlems, the contractors expecting to carry out the relaying of NIR's Belfast to Lisburn line, requested the Society to supply them with ballast wagons and flat wagons for rail carrying.

Another slightly out of the usual request was the offer by Cookstown Council to buy a carriage for their new museum at the old Great Northern Railway station in the town. Agreement was made to buy ex-CIE laminate 1469, but the carriage has yet to be moved from the site at Whitehead.

On the subject of insurance, we have to thank our brokers, Bowring, Marsh & McLennan, for the excellent job they do in ensuring that our premiums are not escalating as every other cost seems to be doing these days.

Membership figures for 1997 were significantly down on 1996, finishing up at 972, compared to 1,014 last year. The breakdown of that total is: Northern Ireland, 361; Éire, 308; Great Britain, 267; Overseas, 36. Alternatively: Adult, 688; Senior, 168; Junior, 20; Life, 62; Family, 19; Honorary, 11; Societies, 4. A large proportion of the decrease is due to the failure of a number of members who paid by standing order to increase their payments in line with the subscription rate change following the imposition of VAT by the UK tax authorities. Also, it is difficult to attract new members when there are no trains running to exhibit the Society's wares.

My thanks as always to Northern Ireland Railways and Iarnród Éireann for allowing us the use of their respective board rooms for our Council meetings, and also to Brendan McQuaid, the stationmaster at Dundalk, whose premises we use for our one meeting a year on 'neutral' ground.

Posts of Special Responsibility to the Secretary for 1997 were: Charles Friel (Belfast Meetings); Nelson Poots ("Five Foot Three" Editor); John Creaner (Legal Adviser); Johnny Glendinning (Museums Liaison Officer). As usual Peter Rigney in Dublin keeps me up to date with southern information, gossip and trivia for the members' News-Letter. Thanks also to Barry Carse who helps process a large number of the membership payments in the south. Most of the work carried out by these members goes largely unsung. For instance, how many members rely on this journal for keeping in touch, or how many would feel that their winters were not the same without being able to attend the monthly meetings in Belfast? Please also spare a thought for the 'stuffers', that dedicated band of members who gather together five times a year around a large table covered in envelopes, news-letters, sales sheets, booking forms, coffee, wine, beer, etc.

My thanks to all the above and to our members for helping to keep steam on the rails.

NORTHERN OPERATIONS

Heather Boomer

I've had a slightly easier year than normal, although a frustrating one. Easier because we didn't run a summer season, and frustrating because all the preparation for one had gone ahead, and we had even managed to almost sell out two of the "Portrush Flyers" before they were even advertised. In the event, it all came to nothing, but at least we now have the Transmark report as a framework for future operations, so maybe our future as an operating Society is a little more secure.

A successful "Easter Bunny" operation on the Monday was followed by the "Slieve Mish" International Railtour, named after the mountain which overlooks Tralee. This was largely successful, although there were a number of last minute hitches, as always, and not a few panics. The rapid re-organising of the Monday to give us a superb steam run to Dundalk, and the use of an 80 class railcar to get us to Cultra for a visit - my sincere thanks to Mark Kennedy - saved the day, but showed just how much we depend on the tolerance of our passengers. We made a profit - that's the job I'm given by the Council - but changes will have to come. This year we'll be trying a couple of new ideas, and I suspect

that the International Railtour will change subtly over the next few years, or we will have to lay it to rest, and none of us want that. Modern railway operating practices make it difficult to run railtours for the purist and we must now gear to the more catholic tastes of the broader enthusiast, and allow for his wife (sorry, partner - to be politically correct!) who now accompanies him.

The “Coleraine Christmas Shopper” was an experiment, but we had to get back on the main line anyway. In the event it proved better than we had hoped, and there may be potential for the future. The Operations Committee will have to look at this carefully. The “Santa Specials” were an almost total sell-out, as usual, and although the fare was kept the same as 1996 it will have to go up for 1998.



The line between Downshire and Whitehead has seen many variations over the years. Originally single, it was singled again a couple of years ago due to the sea undermining the Up line. Towards the end of 1997 the Down line was slewed and joined to the Up (just around the bend) to facilitate tunnel repairs and bridge strengthening. No.85 is working ‘wrong road’ on a Santa train on 14th December 1997. (C.P. Friel)

The 1998 programme is now under way, and bookings are being received for the “Gall Tír” International Railtour. You’ll have to travel if you want to find out the origin of the name. We hope a full summer programme can be run, and we’re even hoping, in some way, to re-introduce a “Steam Enterprise” although this is dependent on a number of conditions which are not within our direct control. We’ll just have to wait and see!

Finally, may I offer my annual and heartfelt thanks to all those people who have made it happen during the year; the Locomotive and Carriage Departments, the operating crews, the small band of coach stewards and on-train helpers who deal with our passengers, and last, but by no means least, the Belfast

Area Operations Committee, a small but loyal band of stalwarts who have “kept the faith” during our bleakest hours.

SOUTHERN OPERATIONS

Peter Rigney

The pattern of Dublin operations is based on that established for Millennium steam in 1988. The 1997 season had us operating on eighteen days, of which sixteen had a loco in steam, and eight were revenue trains. This is an increased intensity of operation, for which we must thank our growing band of volunteer workers. It is also, as far as I am aware, the only regular steam programme from an EU capital, with the exception of Madrid’s Tren de la Fresa.

There are three distinct products. The short haul market is catered for by the Maynooth, Greystones and Santa trips. These trips are to a great extent a family affair, and are priced accordingly. The medium haul trips are a recent innovation, and have Mullingar as their destination. Mullingar is an ideal place, with turntable and covered station accommodation. Rosslare remains the destination of our long haul trips. The low speed of No.461 makes the DSER our only option. While enthusiasts might prefer a wider choice of destinations, they represent a tiny minority of our customers. The fact of the matter is that the public prefer the Rosslare line.

Since its return in 1991, our train has consisted of No.461 and eight bogies. In 1997 the honours were shared between No.171 and No.461, whose tubes were reaching the end of their life. A seven coach set was turned out for some of the lighter runs, to allow 1416 into Inchicore for roof and body repairs.



***Loco exchange at Mallow on 10th May 1997: Driver Don Renehan and Inspector Tony Foley.
(C.P. Friel)***

1997 operations opened early, with crew training runs in March. The Summer Steam brochure contained an excellent photo of the train, consisting of No.171 and two coaches. There were eight days running between 10th and 26th March. Two days training had to be cancelled due to leaking big tubes - a problem which was to remain with us throughout the season.

The training runs involved an 11:00 departure from Connolly and a run to Mullingar doing all the stops. In Mullingar all concerned had a quick lunch in between coaling and fire cleaning. Crossing the afternoon passenger in Killucan, we followed a railcar in from Maynooth to arrive in Connolly about 16:00. Consecutive weekday running is particularly demanding on Society members, especially those who are free during the day. Our thanks are due to all concerned and also to the trainees themselves, and their instructors, Dan Renehan and Tony Foley.

Crew training finished on 26th March, and on Friday 28th the season proper opened with No.171 hauling seven well filled coaches to Mullingar. This could be said to be a variant on the Easter trains which we ran in previous years, and was a most convivial event, being highly popular with the customers. The Midland was visited again on 25th May, when the Enfield shuttles ran. Shortly after this, Enfield tank received a visit during which a substantial amount of detritus was shovelled out and the valve mechanism was repaired.

Midsummer was marked in the now normal manner with No.461 hauling a fully loaded eight coaches of steak eaters to Mullingar. The barbecue special continues to be one of our most popular trains. As always, our thanks are due to Dawn Farm Foods for their sponsorship, and to the army catering staff in Mullingar barracks for their help.

July was a busy month, with mixed fortunes. On 6th, No.171 hauled a well filled eight bogies on the Strawberry Fair. We got to Rosslare Europort (as the harbour is now known) despite earlier fears that the destruction by fire of Ballygeary signal cabin would prevent us taking the train beyond Rosslare Strand. A first on this trip was the taking of coal in Gorey. This experiment was a success and was repeated on the second Rosslare trip. On 26th July, No.171 hauled seven coaches to Mullingar on a second attempt at a Sixties Night. With no more than 150 passengers, this was not judged to give an adequate rate of return, and will probably be replaced by a Rosslare trip in 1998.

August was planned as a quiet month and in the event proved to be even quieter. The Greystones operation due for Sunday 24th was cancelled for a variety of reasons, not least of which was a busy GAA programme on the day. The huge increase in attendance in the hurling and football championships in recent years makes Sunday operations in August and September increasingly problematical.

Our Summer season concluded on 6th September, with a well filled Rosslare trip hauled by No.171 on its last trip before returning North on 30th September. We were glad to welcome a number of guests from the UK, including a party from the Severn Valley.

Autumn is generally a quiet time from the operations point of view, with most effort being concentrated on maintenance. Autumn 1997 was characterised by a lot of film activity. Of the four active enquiries, only one actually made it into production. On 16th and 17th October, brake 1916, Bredin 1335 and diner 2421 (all painted in CIÉ green) were at Castlerea on the Westport road for filming of *Amongst Women*, a BBC /RTÉ co-production. This was a co-production in another sense in that the motive power was provided by a silver A39, owned by the Irish Traction Group. Our thanks to Peter Jones and his team for all their help and co-operation.

Having been painted green, 1916 rapidly reverted to maroon for another film which was planned to commence in late November. Also chosen by the film company were 88, 1142, and TPO 2981. Problems with actor availability caused the deferment of this project.

The year concluded as usual with Santas. No.461, fresh from a re-tube, performed well on trains which were filled to capacity. Some of the trains were booked out before they were publicly advertised.

From an operating point of view, the highlight of these trips was No.461's restart from a signal check at Glasnevin Junction on a greasy rail. Seasoned observers expressed the view that a restart in similar

circumstances would have been beyond most diesels except a 201 class.

Maintenance and Repair

On the locomotive front, boiler tubes occupied most of our time. Tube leaks on No.461 and No.171 gave members a chance to develop those upper arm and stomach muscles by liberal use of the expander. For the record it must be noted that none of the adult members of the Dublin Loco team can get through the fire-hole door of No.171. The only alternative to removing the damper door and some firebars was to rely on our junior members and the still thin Evan Pamely. *[Come on now, Dublin. Several persons at Whitehead who are older and/or fatter than Evan can manage it - including a 13 stone Editor! - Ed.]*



No.461 at Killarney on the “Slieve Mish” railtour, 10th May 1997. (C.P. Friel)

No.461 did relatively little work during the year, and spent most of its time in Inchicore as plans for an Autumn re-tube matured. During the Summer, the opportunity was taken to place the loco and tender on the wagon weighbridge in the North Wall. This marvellous piece of technology allows each axle to be weighed simultaneously. Following on this, the rear tender springs were removed, tested and repaired. Our thanks are due to all in IÉ who helped, including those in the smithy and the Chief Chemist’s Dept. Each of our locos will be required to visit the North Wall wagon weighbridge in due course.

In late September, the re-tubing of No.461 commenced. Sited in the Carriage lifting shop in Inchicore, No.461 was adorned with scaffolding to ease access for Chas Meredith and his team. Work proceeded at a steady pace, with thankfully few delays. A few additional jobs were undertaken, including

annealing copper pipes, building up of firebox seam rivets, and tightening up the buffing gear between loco and tender. While most of the work fell on a few members, it was very good to see some new members become involved. As November progressed, the new tubes went in, were expanded and beaded over. After a successful hydraulic test, the loco was steamed on the Wednesday before the Sunday of the first Santa.

During the re-tube we watched a succession of Cravens go through the shop for major work on bogies, electrics and steam heating. It does not seem likely that these coaches will come on the market in the near future.



Drogheda in the course of re-modelling on 12th May, 1997. Despite the upheaval, the water column still worked. (C.P. Friel)

From the Santa trips onwards our Dublin loco will be based in Inchicore. This is due to the fitting of a new fume extraction system in Connolly shed which is not reckoned to be compatible with the type and volume of fumes produced by a steam locomotive. The locomotive maintenance operation is dependent on the co-operation and help of IÉ staff at all levels. Particular thanks are due to James Doody, Projects Engineer for help and advice during the year.

Coaches

A programme of systematic upgrading has started for the Heuston set. This involves recording and tackling small jobs, which taken together, has the effect of improving the interior look of the train. The electrical department have not been idle, and the last dynamo has been de-commissioned. Apart from more reliable battery condition, this eliminates the weight and rolling resistance of dynamos.

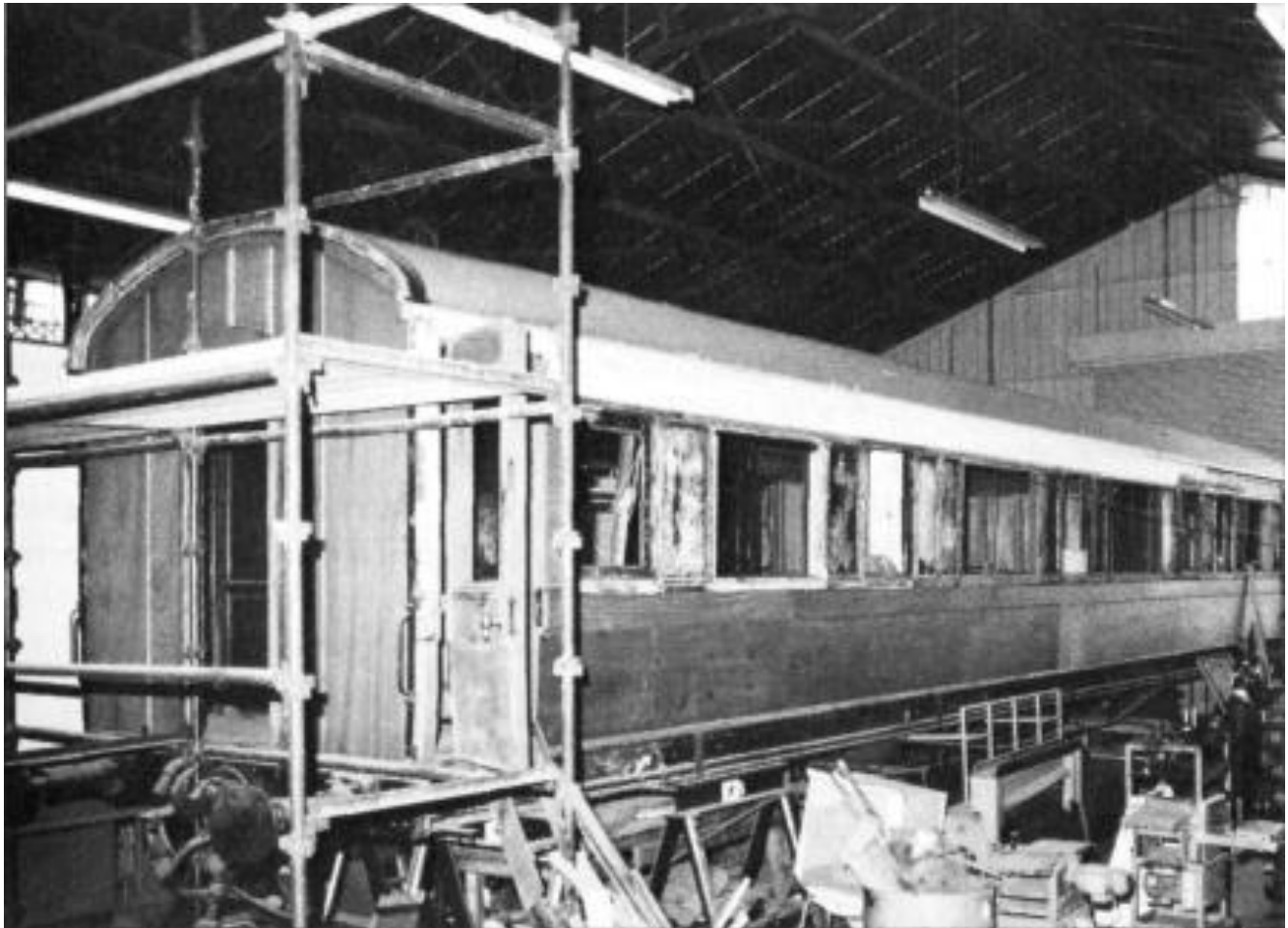
The majority of time put in on the Heuston set has gone into our three Park Royals, which give us over half of our seating capacity. Two of these vehicles came off the scrap line, and need a lot of work. 1383 got a full interior job in 1996, and in 1997 it was the turn of 1416. Between trips it received a thorough body job in Inchicore with roof, end panels and some side panels being replaced. On its return to Heuston, one half of the passenger saloon was fully re-painted and refurbished. It is hoped to complete

this job by late Spring.

Laminate 1463 will return to the set in 1998, and will facilitate maintenance in that we will have 9 vehicles to cover an eight coach train. The main tasks remaining on 1463 are painting and upholstery, which will probably be undertaken in Dublin.

State Coach 351

This project has made significant progress, and we are now within sight of the home straight. George Dempsey and his team have completed the exterior body work, and a great deal of the interior work. This is a slow and painstaking process, which will be more fully described in a later issue.



Irish State Coach 351 undergoing restoration at Inchicore. (D. Carse)

At present, we are planning the next stage, which involves painting the coach, prior to refitting gangway ends, bogies and running gear. This work will take place in the ramps in Inchicore, to which the coach will shortly move. It will take the place of TPO 2977, which is nearing the end of its restoration, and which has now gone for painting.

Those involved were delighted to reach the finals of the AIB Better Ireland Awards for our restoration work on the coach. Sadly we did not win the overall category award for heritage, but we were very happy to attend the Awards ceremony on 12th January and to gain the publicity resulting from the 10 minute slot on RTÉ's Nationwide programme. Also, the £5,000 won in earlier heats will be very useful in furthering the restoration work.

Our thanks are due to the numerous firms who have sponsored their products or services, to FAS staff

in Cabra training centre, and in particular to George Dempsey who has kept the project running.

LOCOMOTIVE REPORT

Peter Scott

Operational Locos

No.3, ex L.P.& H.C. 0-6-0 shunter

Continues its very necessary but unsung duties as Whitehead shunter and train rides loco. While Compound No.85 has been the main line loco, No.3 is always used to assemble the train so as to avoid No.85 negotiating the tight curve into the carriage shed. No.3 will need retubed soon. Messrs. Sigma Paints have most generously offered to supply paint for this loco and the work will be done after the retubing.

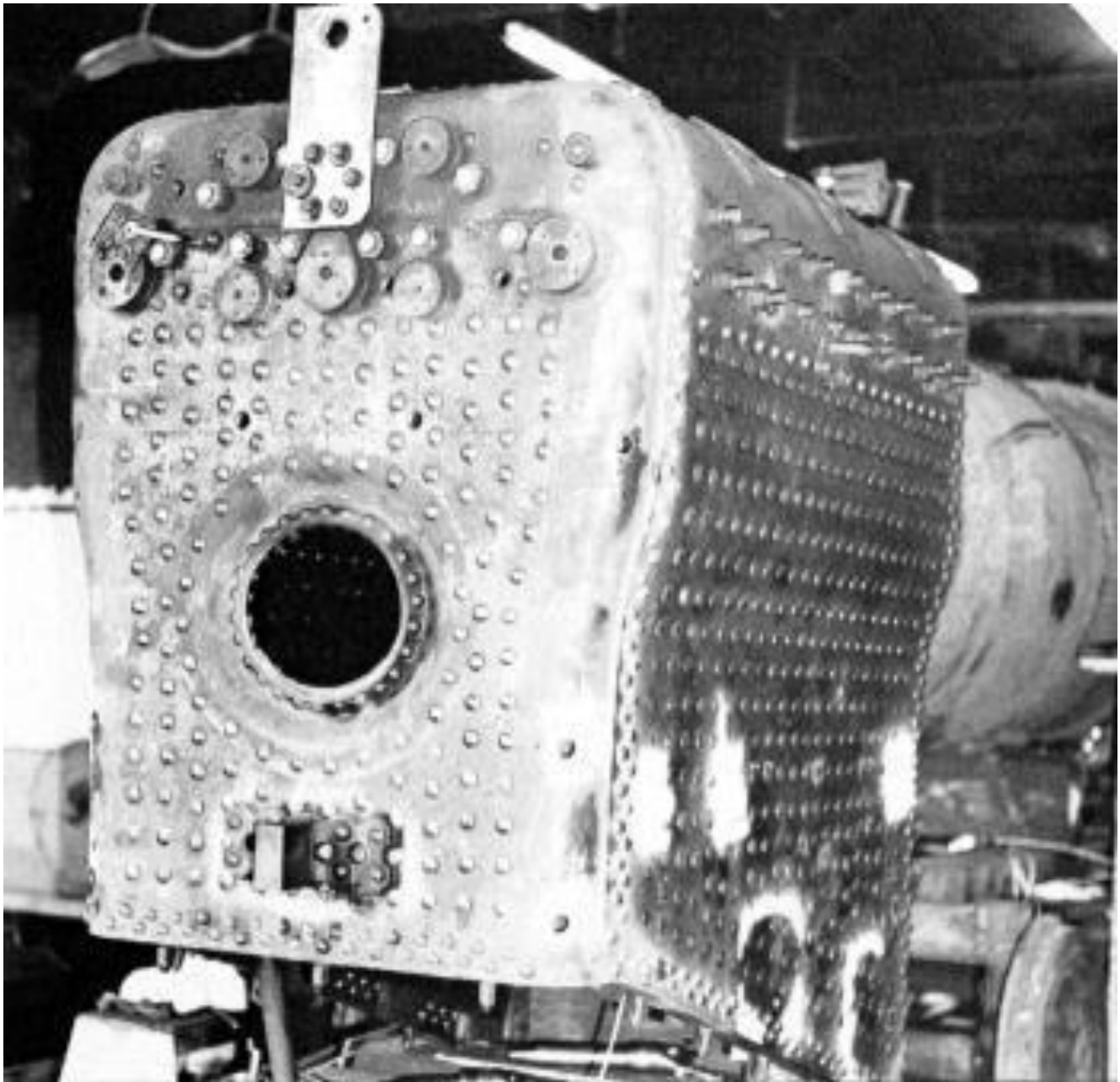


The 'Derry Engine' on her home ground in April 1933. The loco is coupled by various means to a narrow gauge wagon. The rope draped over the buffers is presumably to deal with situations where it was not coupled at all! (W. Robb)

No.85 "Merlin", ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 compound

No.85 was back in action during November and December, operating the Shopping Train to Coleraine as well as the normal Belfast to Whitehead Santa trains.

A persistent problem was encountered with this loco, involving foreign matter being carried over with the steam and affecting the vacuum ejector, cylinder lubrication system and whistle. Several months of inactivity did not help the situation. The problem was traced to the use of a steel pipe between the dome and whistle stand - this may have been a GNR economy, but once the pipe became corroded, the economy proved to be a false one as scale continually broke away. Attempts to clean the pipe failed and eventually it had to be replaced by a copper one - an extremely awkward job due to the confined space.



No.4's firebox and boiler, showing the new sides and doorplate of Whitehead manufacture. Shortly afterwards, the whole assembly received a splendid coat of silver paint. This was something of a mixed blessing as other paint would not take to it so, unless we want it to look like an American loco, the smokebox will have to be stripped. (C.P. Friel)

No.461, ex DSER 2-6-0 goods loco

Based at Inchicore in Dublin. Following retubing of the boiler, the loco operated the Dublin Santa trains. It is now having minor mechanical repairs attended to.

The retubing was carried out in the carriage lifting shop at Inchicore and we are greatly indebted to Jim Doody of Irish Rail for the use of the facilities. The job was organised by Chas Meredith, Dublin Loco Officer, who confounded all doubters by completing the work in time for the Santa operations.

No.23, ex Irish Shell 0-4-0 diesel mechanical shunter

Carries out the most mundane of light shunting duties at Whitehead yard. The gearbox will soon need major repairs.

Locos Under Repair

No.171 “Slieve Gullion” ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 passenger loco

This loco is at Whitehead and is currently also being retubed. It is hoped to have her available for Easter.

No.4, ex LMS NCC 2-6-4 mixed traffic tank engine

Undergoing general repair at Whitehead.

It had been the hope that this loco would return to traffic in 1997 to celebrate her 50th birthday (together, I may add, with certain others of the animate rather than the inanimate variety who have also attained this respectable age). However, events conspired to delay matters and at present only the boiler is approaching a state of completion with the hydraulic test imminent.

The bogie and pony truck have been overhauled with wheels re-profiled, axle boxes refurbished and attention to worn side control mechanism and side bearers.

As soon as No.171 is back in action, work should resume with overhaul of the cylinders and valves, including boring of the cylinders and valves and renewal of piston rods.

Major refurbishment is also needed on the tanks and bunker, and this should resume once our full time staff have completed the ‘bread and butter’ work upon which they are currently engaged, namely the work on civil engineering wagons and the overhaul of the Orenstein & Koppel loco for Downpatrick.

Carlow Diesel, ex Irish Sugar 0-4-0 diesel mechanical shunter

Problems with the gearbox have delayed this loco entering traffic.

Derailment

The issue of the derailment of No.85’s tender near Coleraine and the subsequent investigation has been referred to elsewhere in this magazine. I would like to express satisfaction that this issue has now been resolved, albeit after delays which really should not have occurred.

Regarding the safe speeds and other operating practices addressed in the assessment, the recommendations have been accepted and the impact on our operations should be minimal - in fact hardly noticeable to the passenger. The investigation carried out will greatly assist in the preparation of safety procedures, planned maintenance and other matters which are now receiving a much higher profile throughout the railway industry than formerly. It is important not only that the Society operates safely but is seen to follow justifiable practices acceptable to the railway authorities.

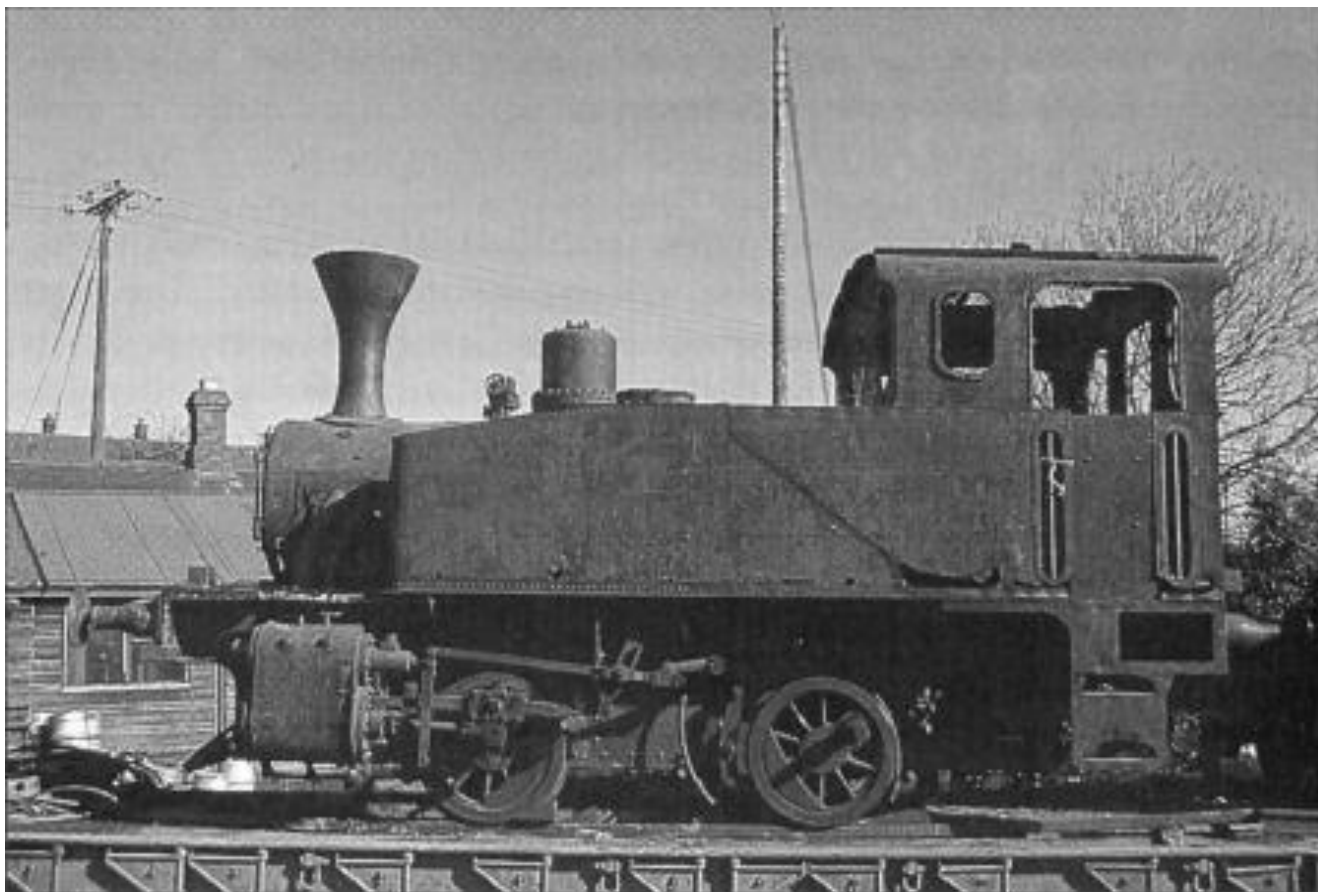
Contract Work

The Society is carrying out two vehicle refurbishment contracts at the present time. The first has been on-going for nearly a year and is the overhaul of ex Irish Sugar Orenstein & Koppel shunting loco No.3 for the Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway. There were originally three of these rather quaint little locos; they were based at Thurles and Carlow where they shunted the sugar beet sidings. The loco was in very dilapidated condition with nearly every component needing attention - from corroded main frame members to worn out bearings. Even the axles needed to be straightened and the main crank pins renewed.

The work is being carried out mainly by our full time staff. To date repairs to the frames are well

advanced and most bearings have been renewed. The side tanks are being completely renewed and one is nearly ready - this is a lengthy job since a traditional riveted structure was specified.

The boiler is being refurbished elsewhere and our responsibility is to fit it and commission the loco, together with vacuum brake equipment.



***Orenstein & Koppel No.3 - the “quaint little loco” - as it arrived at Whitehead on 15th March, 1997.
(N. Poots)***

The second contract involves the conversion, overhaul and hire of 6 carriage underframes to John Mowlem & Co plc. Mowlems are the contractors engaged by NIR to relay the track between Belfast and Lisburn, and for this purpose they require flat wagons to carry 60ft rails and track panels. Again this work is being carried out by our full time staff. Following the malicious fire at Whitehead two years ago, a number of underframes are available and the vehicles to be converted are GSR Bredins 1328 and 1333, CIÉ Laminates 1483 and 1915 and GNR BUT trailers 561 and 562. The work includes removing the remains of the bodies, essential repairs to bogies, drawgear and vacuum gear, fitting of flat timber decking and the fitting of handbrakes.

Work has started on the burned out remains of Bredin 1328 - a sad job since this was one of the first of the Society's own coaches to be acquired and was a main line express vehicle very suitable for excursion purposes. Its latter duties will be less glamorous but hopefully contribute no less to the coffers. The reason, other than the obvious commercial one, for taking on such work is to assist in building up our own capability to undertake increasingly heavy and exacting overhaul work, for which the new loco workshop is only a part of the requirements.

Loco Workshop

The shell of this building is now complete and I would like to add my special thanks to all who contributed. The appeal was so well supported that the additional funds will greatly assist by helping to install the concrete floor, fit the doors and make a start on the electrics. The floor is necessary for the 'machine shop' area - our machine tools are currently in the loco sheds where the presence of engines in steam or being washed out does not help. In order to assemble the overhead crane in the new workshop, we hope shortly to re-convene the 'Friends of Queen's Quay Crane' Society - an informal body which came into being for the purpose of dismantling the 100 year old overhead crane from the former Belfast & County Down workshop at Queen's Quay. Apart from actually dismantling the crane, initiation into this organisation involved getting extremely dirty and later consuming ale at an appropriate venue. *[On one occasion only the demand for an admission fee saved the Loco Officer and Editor from innocently entering a wholly inappropriate venue, where their presence could have given rise to unjustified assumptions regarding their sexual preferences! - Ed.]* With any luck the dirt will be a thing of the past, since our aging and defective steam cleaner has now been renewed in connection with the wagon contract.

CARRIAGE AND WAGON REPORT

Mark Kennedy

As regards the running of steam trains, this year has been a very quiet one for the Whitehead carriage department. However, we have taken the opportunity to carry out a lot of work at the site and on the carriages during this period.

GNR 9 - This very useful open carriage with toilet and reserve brake compartment has had a lot of work carried out on it between Christmas 1996 and Easter 1997. The roof which had been leaking badly was stripped off and a new PVC fabric roof coating applied. The gutters which were heavily caked with years of paint and mastic sealer were cleaned down, repainted, and replaced. It was the interior which required the most work and money.

The carriage had always had a distinctive smell, this was in part due to damp caused by the leaking roof, but mainly due to the foam cushions having rotted. The seating fabric was also dirty and torn in many places. New seat bases were made from plywood with new foam and fabric supplied by a local contractor in Islandmagee. He did an excellent job on time as promised and was competitively priced. While the seats were being remade the frames were all sanded and repainted gloss brown as were the skirtings and window surrounds. The ceiling was also repainted while the seats were out. New tables salvaged from one of the CIÉ laminate carriages have been cut down and fitted to all seats in No.9 where possible. This, hopefully, means that fewer pints will be spilled over the seats. It also gives extra seating suitable for dining if required. When the interior was reassembled it met with approval from members.

My only regret is that while the seats were out, it would have been nice to put new lino on the floor, but the cost was prohibitive. The carriage is now back in active service with toilet and guard's van, also tidied up. The exterior was repainted in maroon (coach having previously been in GNR railcar blue and cream). The blue and cream livery was very pleasing when first applied, but the cream did not weather well in service. The new maroon livery, whilst not particularly authentic to the vehicle, means that the entire train is now one colour.

NCC 243 - This vehicle has been in the Society's collection for almost 20 years but has yet to run in a Society train. Much work has been carried out on this vehicle in the hope that it will enter revenue-earning service in the next year or two. It would be a very useful vehicle, holding 64 passengers and providing two loos. Most of its component parts are the same as the other NCC vehicles in the running set.

Other work during the year involved the clearing out of the two carriage stores buildings which had to be demolished to make way for the wonderful new locomotive maintenance cathedral. Similarly, much effort has been expended tidying the shop and platform for the summer train rides at Whitehead site.

The Transmark report on Society vehicles did not (as reported elsewhere) criticise standards of record keeping as there were no previously agreed standards. Their recommendations are based on British Rail main line steam practice. In future, record keeping is likely to become much more time consuming and expensive. I firmly believe that the time has come where the RPSI will have to employ full-time paid engineers and/or fitters to cope with the ever-spiralling demands of others. The current number of regular volunteers at Whitehead hovers around 4 dedicated individuals. Somehow the Society will have to generate the extra income to pay the staff required.

I wrote last year in FFT that we should dispose of vehicles which have no realistic chance of being restored. The contract with Mowlem mentioned below goes some way to addressing this issue by recycling vehicles into rail flats.

I am frequently asked when the Society will be acquiring steel bodied carriages for double-track main line use. The position is as follows:

The RPSI Council's current policy is to acquire suitable vehicles when they become available. The tricky bit is that no-one knows when they will become available. Both NIR and IÉ are chronically short of passenger vehicles. This has not been made any easier for them due to losses by derailment and terrorist activity in the past year.

If they ever become available CIÉ Craven stock would probably be most suitable for our needs, being sturdily constructed 64-seaters with tables, 2 loos per carriage, and vacuum braked. Problems to be overcome include the need for a generator to power carriage lighting. The Cravens do not have dining cars or brake vans, though I understand one or two have recently been modified.

Other possibilities include ex-NIR Enterprise set of BR Mark II vehicles. However, these vehicles are most complex and have a reputation for rusting from the inside out in later life. I have also wondered if NIR 80-class intermediate coaches are worth considering. I would welcome more discussion on the matter; however, current enquiries suggest that steel vehicles are unlikely to come our way in the short term.

Mowlem Contract

The railway civil engineering contractors, Mowlem, approached the Society with a view to borrowing six carriage underframes to use as rail-flats during the rebuilding of the Belfast-Lisburn line for NIR. Conversion work will take place at Whitehead using mostly sub-contractors. The following vehicles will be used:

CIÉ 1483 laminate

CIÉ 1915 laminate

GNR227 (UTA561)

GNR 231 (UTA 562)

GSR 1328 Bredin

GSR 1333 Bredin or CIÉ 1469 laminate

WHITEHEAD SITE REPORT

Dermot Mackie

1997 has been the year of the locomotive workshop. We started clearing out the NIACRO shed in January, helped by the carriage lads, and moved all the good timber and scaffolding into the carriage

shed. However, a large amount of metal scrap had accumulated at the back of the site and February saw a good turn-out of the site squad, including Robert Davison, Robin Morton, Trevor Mounstephen and Alan McRobert, to help fill skips which realised almost £600.

March saw the arrival of the 'sugar engine' from Downpatrick on a low-loader and all the usual suspects, plus John, Philip and Tim Lockett, Trevor Wood and John Wolsley, were rounded up to assist in getting it on to the rails. At around this time the JCB, which will be 30 years old this year and is itself a collectable, was given a well-earned complete service.

By April the contract for the loco workshop had been awarded and it was all hands to get the remainder of the proposed construction site cleared. Wheelsets and containers were moved with the JCB or the hand crane and the Derry engine and the site for the shed was marked out. Some concrete sleepers were used to repair part of the platform road in May.

5th June saw the start of the loco workshop. At the end of the month the Sunday train rides had started and Tim Lockett and myself began the refurbishment of the platform security gates. At the same time the shop received a much needed overhaul, both inside and out, and Nicola Walsh and her team are to be congratulated on their excellent handiwork. David Henderson made a vintage ticket sign while Mark Kennedy crafted a glorious Whitehead Excursion Platform nameboard. Meanwhile, the loco workshop foundations had been dug and the concrete poured.



J. Lockett, T. Mounstephen and R. Davison, all smiling happily, at work on the connection to the loco workshop. (T. Lockett)

It was July before we had a dry Wednesday evening to do more work on the gates but with the help of the regulars it was possible on Saturdays to complete the cleaning and rustproofing. Thankfully August was a hot dry month and Thomas Charters, Stephen Glass and myself were able to put on the undercoat and top coats in ideal conditions. The gates were finished off with welded galvanised mesh and barbed

wire and are both secure and pleasing to the eye. Late in the month the steel erectors started putting up the framework of the loco workshop, while the end of the train ride season enabled work on the turnout into the workshop to commence in September. Initially, this meant dismantling parts of the carriage siding but by October, in what was balmy weather, I had a full squad of volunteers to lift in the long timbers, the crossing and the switches. These had, like the internal travelling crane for the workshop, all come from the old Central Service Depot at Queen's Quay.



Inside the newly completed loco workshop building, looking towards Larne. The ex-Queen's Quay overhead crane can be seen in the background. The building within the building houses the wheel lathe and the gantry above it used to continue over the wheel-drop pit. (C.P. Friel)

By November we started to screw down the chairs on the turn-out and could then jack and pack the sleepers. The late afternoon of the 22nd was very spectacular as the sky lit up with sheet lightning.

People came scurrying out of the carriage and loco sheds to see the storm, which produced a waterspout off Donaghadee!

Two consecutive Saturdays in December put track through the doorway into the loco workshop, the

main structure of which was by then complete, giving a great sense of satisfaction to all those involved. It has been a hard year's work which would not have been possible without the help and camaraderie of all those mentioned above. More track has to be laid inside the workshop but at least, for once, we will have the luxury of a covered site. Why not join us in 1998 and enjoy the craic?

FIVE FOOT THREE TO THREE FOOT THREE

Archie Morrow

I was born and reared on the Derry Central line, around Knockloughrim. This is only one of several Derry Central stations which, despite having been closed for over 40 years, you can still easily recognise nowadays. You might say that my family's connection with the Derry Central began with the building of the line, when my grandfather drew stone from Soundinghill Quarry. We lived about two miles from the station and when I was small my father used to take my brother and me on excursions to Portrush. He had been wounded at the Somme in the 1914-18 war and he used to meet a lot of his old friends which led to him being in fine order by the time we got home. A lot of these old friends were on the railway so he never used to buy tickets for me or the brother and I was always waiting for us to get into trouble for this.



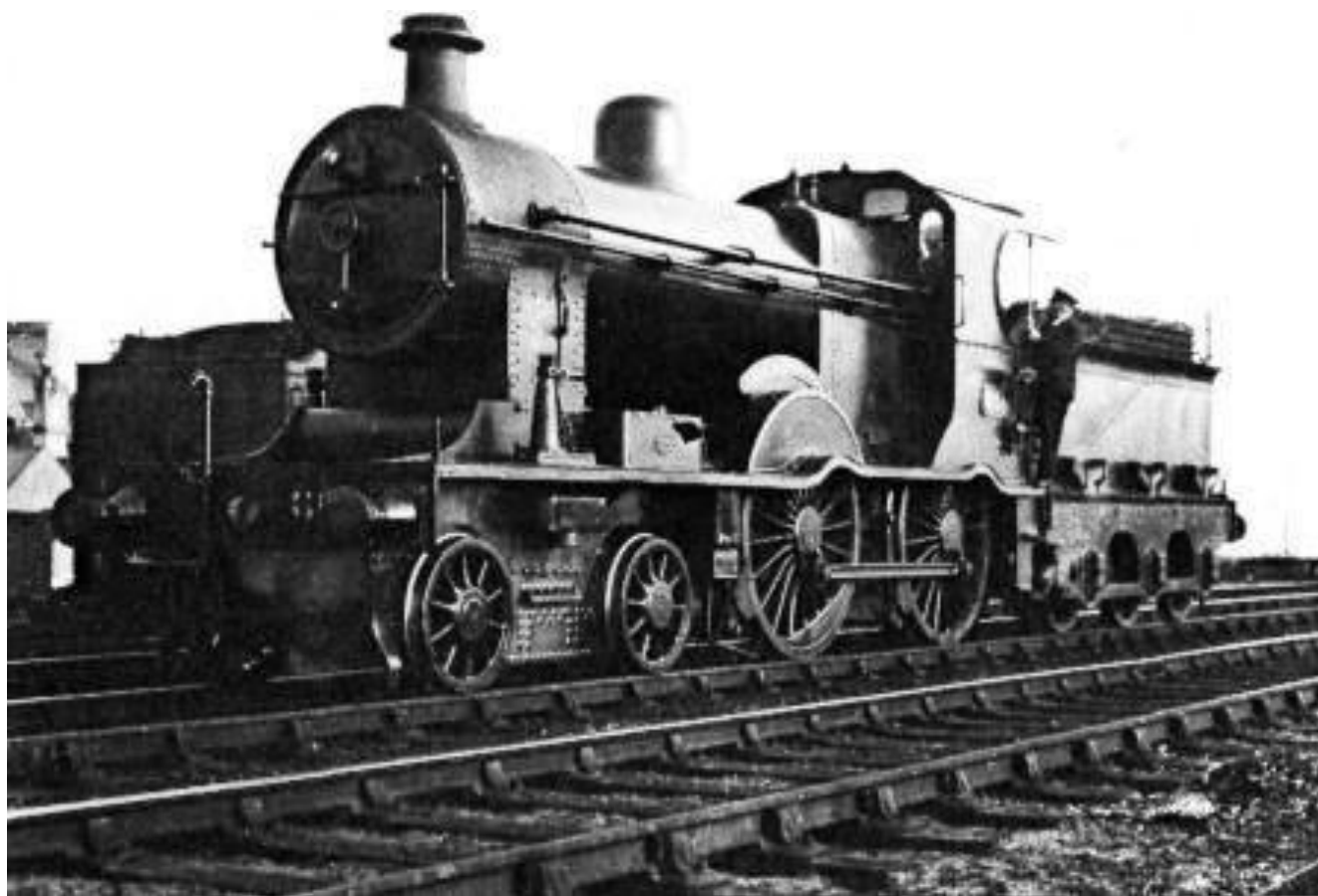
Cookstown Station in 1936. The GNR side of the station was on the left, the NCC on the right. (Real Photographs)

If I had listened to my mother, I would still be digging spuds in Castledawson, but in 1941 I decided I would be a railwayman and, being a fairly big and strong young fellow but too young to be claimed by the military, I got a start. This was at York Road just after the city got bombed and York Road was very badly hit. After about three weeks there I was appointed to Antrim as a cleaner.

Antrim was a fairly easy job as it didn't really have any engines of its own - there seemed to be a different engine there every night - but they kept two crews there to take over whatever engine came in. McNally and Gilmour were the drivers. At that time engines were being moved away from Belfast for safety; one went to Carrickfergus and two to Whitehead. The Antrim cleaner didn't do much cleaning as an engine was never there for long - it was mostly a matter of keeping the fire lit until the new crew

booked on. After another short spell at York Road I was transferred to Cookstown. This was quite a busy wee place then with four drivers: Bob Harkness, Sam Stewart, Jim Murray and Billy Cole, and had the added interest of the Great Northern branch from Dungannon coming in alongside.

The NCC engines there then were the A1 class 4-4-0s known to one and all as 'Whippets', possibly not so much for their speed as for their lean appearance, with their slender high-pitched boilers. They didn't steam very well and I was pleased enough not to be firing them very often. At that time a few of Bowman Malcolm's 4-4-0 compounds were still around and I remember No.55, which I fired a couple of times. These were 2-cylinder compounds, with one high pressure and one low pressure cylinder. This was all very well when they were on the move but to get them started they had first to be stopped in the right position. Their drivers knew all about this and kept an eye on the position of the rods when stopping but when drawing up to a water column there wasn't much choice as to where you would stop and when this happened there could be a lot of wrestling and reversing to get them away again.



'Whippet' No.65 "Knockagh" at Portrush in July 1937. (W. Robb)

After a while I was moved to Cookstown Junction. Nowadays it takes a sharp eye to spot the site of this once important junction on the former NCC main line just over three miles beyond Antrim. Like a lot of Irish junctions, it tended to confuse the visitor by taking its name from where it led to rather than where it was situated! The line to Cookstown passed through Magherafelt and then gave off two branches, the first of these being the Derry Central which ran north and eventually re-joined the NCC main line at Macfin. The other was the Draperstown branch.

During World War II Cookstown Junction was a very busy location with a lot of military traffic on the main line; to Randalstown, the first station on the Cookstown branch and to the bases served by the Derry Central. The station was quite extensive, with substantial buildings on the island platform and

sidings for traffic in both directions. There was another young lad there who worked as a porter. Of course, we wanted to be into everything and, being young and keen, we were given all sorts of jobs to do by the men who were senior to us.

On one of Cookstown Junction's platforms was a fine toilet which was separate from the rest of the station buildings, while there was a lamp room which was right in the middle. It would have been much better for the railway if they had been the other way round. The station had a petrol-driven pumping engine and the fuel for it was kept in a 40-gallon drum in the lamp room. One night my friend and I went down to refill the wee engine's tank. We had a hand lamp with us and when we went to move the drum of petrol we found the bung had been leaking and before we knew, the store went up in flames which quickly spread to the station building. It was a lovely station but the whole place was burnt to the ground.



No.55 "Parkmount" leaves Mossley with an interesting selection of vehicles in the 1pm Cookstown-York Road on 15th September 1933. Single line working was in operation during the construction of the new Loop Line. (W. Robb)

The only good thing to come out of it was that 28 wagons of petrol were parked in one of the sidings away from the station, otherwise Cookstown Junction and everything around it would have been destroyed. There were two big sidings: Shannonstown went towards Randalstown and then there was another beside the down main line. The petrol was for the American base at Randalstown and it was in 4-gallon cans. I never saw that sort of can again until I went to Africa, where they called them 'debbies'. They were a square can - if you ever see an African woman carrying a can on her head that's what it will be. When the place was well alight the Stationmaster, who was a good-living man, came on the scene and I felt that he was inhibited by his beliefs from fully expressing his feelings as he watched his station go up in smoke. We were both under seventeen and shouldn't have been handling petrol at all!

Somehow I survived this episode and the enquiry that followed. At that time, a lot of the engines at Coleraine and Cookstown Junction were Whippets and the later 4-4-0s, the U2 class. The latter were known as Scotch Engines although this name was, strictly speaking, only correct for those of them that were actually built in Scotland. They had a tendency to run hot in their big ends and Jimmy Murray had a method of dealing with this - when the engine was stopped for the night he would pack bands of sticky material around the crank-pin and pour in cylinder oil and leave it to work its way into the bearing. I remember him holding us all spellbound after he had travelled on a train on which he had shared a compartment with Albert Pierrepont, the public hangman, who had been on Northern Ireland in the course of his duties and had passed on the gruesome details to Murray.

Although I had been quite a while at Cookstown Junction, nobody had ever set out exactly what my duties were. One day, Inspector Sam Bacon arrived to take stock of the place and wasn't impressed by what he found. It was pointed out to me that my duties included keeping the shed tidy, that it was far from tidy and that he proposed to sack me. After a heart to heart to talk I managed to escape this fate and also to get through to him that I was getting a bit fed up with life there, as I seemed to be getting nowhere while others like Tommy Crymble, who had joined on the same day as me, and others who had joined later were to be seen out firing on Portrush specials or night goods trains.

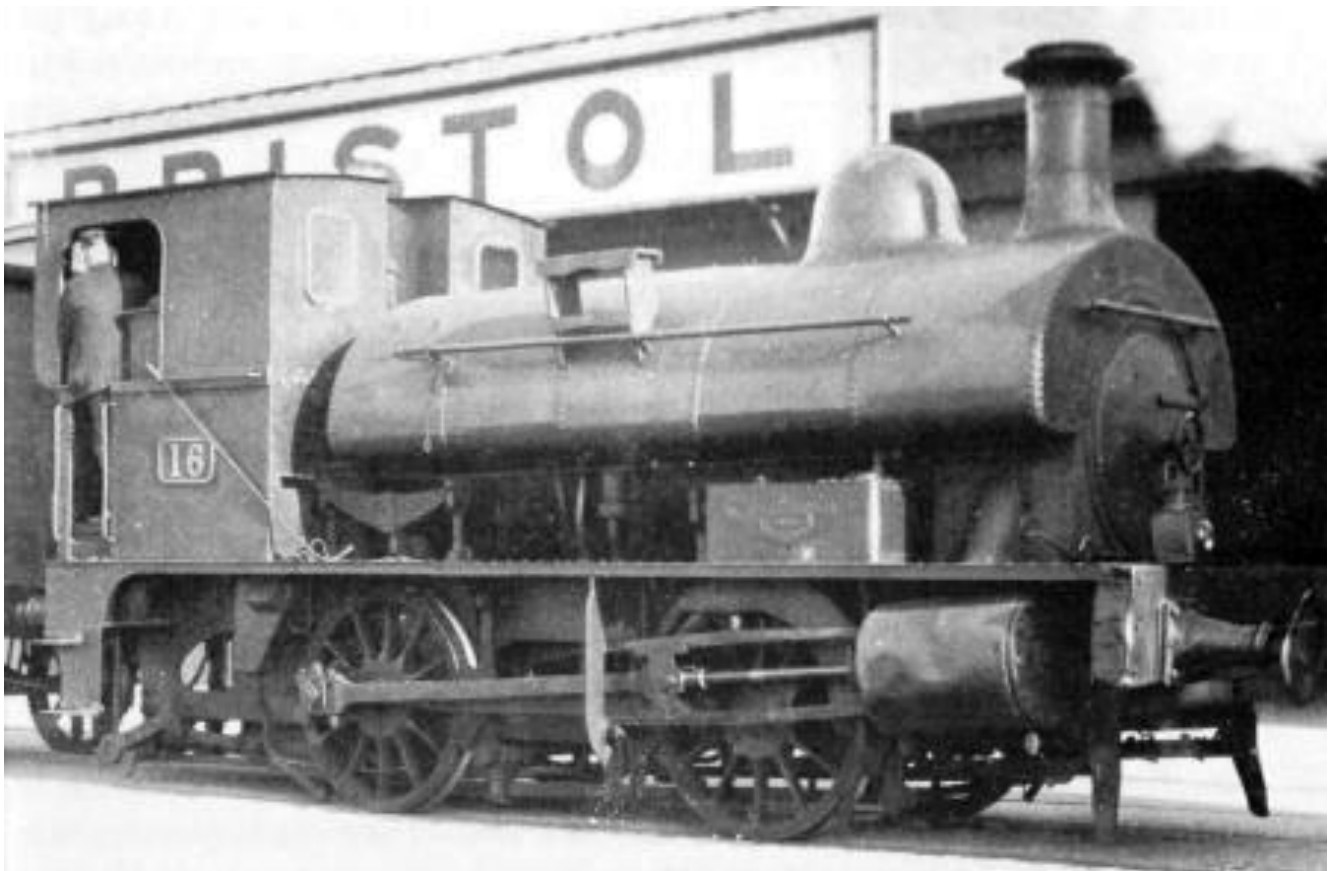


***Cookstown Junction in 1956 by which time the incendiary Mr. Morrow was a driver in Kenya.
(Stations UK)***

The upshot of this was that, about the end of 1943, I got a transfer to York Road where there were a lot of cleaners then, among them Cecil McCracken, who eventually became Shed Foreman. At this time, of course, the black-out was in operation which, as well as creating difficulties at work, also gave problems in getting to and from work. We had one fellow in the cleaning squad who was very timorous. He lived somewhere out the Shore Road and in those days it wasn't all built up like now, there were big dark houses and big dark spaces between them. Older men in the shed used to fill his head with ghost stories till he wouldn't walk home at all after the late shift and used to hang around the shed until the first train in the morning. The Head Cleaner, Sam McCullough, had nicknames for everybody. He called one fellow 'Laudanum' because he behaved as though he was drugged - one day he was cleaning a tender and went on past the end of it and fell into the pit!

I had moved to Belfast as a 'passed cleaner', i.e. qualified to deputise for a regular fireman when required, and before too long, the move paid off and I began to get some firing turns. This was a step in the right direction and a bonus was that I went on to day work since this was the time that I would most likely be required to stand in for a regular fireman. I remember one day a certain driver refused to have me on a Portrush express because I hadn't enough experience. Since I had done quite a lot of unofficial main line firing when I was in Cookstown Junction I reckoned I had all the experience I needed and that, anyway, a good driver should be willing to give advice to a young fireman. A few years later, when he was a foreman, he was boasting about his driving days and I told him, among other things, that he could drive damn-all. That was the last conversation we ever had!

I was a bit hot-headed in my younger days. When cleaning a fire it was easy to get your hand trapped between the fire iron and some fitting in the cab and when this happened I was liable to fling the offending tool to the ground, along with any others that were nearby and a certain amount of bad language for good measure. Any relief that this brought was paid for by having to heave them all back up on to the footplate when I had cooled off!



"The Donkey" at Donegal! Quay on 11th March 1935. Since Archie Morrow is over 6ft. tall his dislike of this engine is understandable. (W. Robb)

I started on the shunting engines around the docks and 0-6-0 No.13 was the one I remember best. Later in the war the two 0-6-0 tank engines arrived from the LMS in England. They had to be altered to 5' 3" gauge and were given the numbers 18 & 19. One shunting engine I was glad not to be on too often was the 0-4-0 saddle tank No.16, otherwise known as 'The Donkey'. The engine was no size at all and the footplate was always covered in coal, which isn't good to stand on. This, along with my height, meant that eight hours on this engine was murder.

After that, I began to get fairly regular turns out on the line, a lot of them on fair specials to the Derry

Central where there were many fairs: Dungiven, Kilrea, Draperstown, Bellaghy (which enabled me to visit my mother and pick up cakes and the like), and also to Magherafelt, Moneymore and Cookstown. For a lot of these jobs you would double-head the 6:30 goods down from Belfast, come off at Cookstown Junction and pick up a train of empty cattle wagons. The driver would be a spare man from York Road, very often Bob Logue or 'Ducky' Joe Wilmot - I think he got this name because he was a bit short in the leg. The tender was always piled high with coal, in order that some could be exchanged for 'prugh' - a difficult word to define but which in this case included various foodstuffs not easily available in wartime Belfast. A story is told about a Coleraine crew on a Derry Central fair special, who invited the stationmaster to take a bit of coal in return for keeping an eye on their engine while they went up the town. When they returned, their happy smiles soon vanished when they found a nearly dead fire and so little coal left in the tender that they had to raid a wagon in Magherafelt to get back to Coleraine!



A genuine "Scotch engine" (i.e. built by North British), either No.75 or No.76 at Cookstown Junction shed in August 1937. (W. Camwell)

A very big thing on the railway was the strike of 1933. This might seem a long time ago now but in my early days it was very fresh in men's minds and remained so for a long time afterwards. The strike had been brought on by the railway companies' plan to cut wages, but what brought about the bitterness was the fact that some men had worked during the strike. You were soon let know who was who where this was concerned. Bob Logue was one of these and of course, as a young man, I thought this was an awful thing until I found out much later that he had a big family - eleven - and, with no other means of support; that put a different complexion on the matter.

When I was appointed as a full-time fireman my first regular driver was T.J. McAuley. He was a fine engineman and liked a clean engine. This was no hardship because I did too and I hated standing on coal. We got along very well and although we could both be a bit hot-tempered, we could be squabbling in Belfast and an hour later be having a pint in Larne. Years afterwards, I was very sorry to hear of him being knocked down and killed when walking to York Road shed - I couldn't understand

how it happened as he always went that way.

At around that time I was friendly with Percy Mitchell who was then firing to McDade. Percy was fond of the horses - when they won. As they couldn't always be relied on to do this, Percy's life was full of ups and downs. One weekend we went to Dublin and I ended up paying for it due to Percy having made an unsuccessful investment the day before with his holiday money!

Around the end of the war the NCC experimented with oil-burning and Mogul No.100 was fitted with it. I never fired her although Sammy Sloan did. He left the railway early but I still meet him now and then.

The railway also experimented with coal briquettes. These were big things about 9 or 10 inches square and had to be broken up to be fired. This caused problems for some men because as well as coal dust and cement, the briquettes had some sort of chemical in them to make them burn better and this affected some men's skins when struck by chips - they looked as if they had sunburn. Two types of Rozalex were issued, one for the hands and the other for the face. I was lucky and wasn't affected. On the Larne trains, if you were lazy, you could pile the firebox full of briquettes at the start and then sit back for the rest of the way. Normal coal would have choked the fire but the briquettes were big enough for air to get through.

Some of the men had strange ways. One, Tom Hagan, had been a friendly sort until he had a big win on the pools but after that he seemed to become the opposite. I think this was because he thought his mates would either be jealous or else expect him to give them a share. Another, who had better be nameless, was notorious for cadging cigarettes and anything else he could get. On one occasion, he had backed his engine on to a boat train in Larne Harbour and, a short time later, the Inspector caught two sailors on the engine fiddling with the controls. Luckily, the engine was in back gear and the train was against the buffer stops so they didn't manage to move it. On searching for the driver and fireman, the Inspector eventually found them carrying passengers' luggage in return for tips!

Going back to fire-cleaning, this was made very much easier when the 2-6-4 tanks, the 'Jeeps', started to arrive in 1946. They were fitted with rocking grates and hopper ashpans and this made the job child's play if you went the right way about it. At the start there were some problems when the rocking bars got badly burnt and replacements weren't available so fire-cleaning had to be done the old-fashioned way, with the steep slope of the grate making it more difficult. When using the rocking grate to clean the fire, you had to take care that the latch on the rocking gear was set so that you only shook the fire and didn't dump the whole lot into the ashpan.

Some Larne line trains terminated at Kilroot, which is hard to imagine nowadays when the whole station area has been swallowed up by the power station. Dean Swift's house, with its 'round corners' was there and I can't understand how it was allowed to be knocked down. Just a short distance before Kilroot was Eden halt with two tiny staggered platforms about one carriage long. A surprising number of people used the halt. There were a lot of small bungalows in the area and I think people went there to get out of Belfast, especially during the war. There seemed to be a lot of young women among them and they would blow kisses and so on. I must have been a big soft young fellow then because this embarrassed me and I didn't know how to reply. If I only had it to do again ...!

I must have learnt something eventually, because I got married in 1952. Since I had enough money to do it, I decided to make a start on buying a house. This cost me £100 down and £5 4s 8d (£5.24) per month which was no more than the monthly rent of a council house. However, when I went to the solicitor's the gentleman I dealt with seemed rather scornful. His attitude was, "What does a stupid railway fireman want to be buying a house for?" Some years later he turned up one day in Portrush, requesting a ride on the engine. He got his ride, but between there and Coleraine I reminded him of our earlier meeting and assured him that I was still managing to cope.

At around that time I was firing to Johnny Fitzpatrick, for a lot of the time on Mogul No.92, a beautiful engine. At that time, what they called the Big Link was on an 8-week cycle. One job that came around on summer Saturdays included working empty coaches from Portrush to York Road via the Derry Central. With nine coaches and a bit of care this could be done on a tankful of water. However, on one occasion - I forget what engine we had - we had ten on and I suggested to Johnny that we stop for water at Antrim. "Not at all," he says, and we got the length of Doagh before the injector blew out. As the boiler was full we had no trouble getting to Ballyclare Junction but there panic set in and we dropped the train and headed down the Back Line to Greenisland for water. With all the downhill after Ballyclare Junction we might just have made it without the water but by the time we finally reached York Road the place was in turmoil due to the lack of our ten coaches. I don't know how he got out of that one!

On another occasion, I was firing to him on No.104 when he got into worse trouble although it wasn't his fault. We had worked train from Portrush into Coleraine and, after stopping, we pulled forward into Henry's siding to allow a Derry train into the platform behind us. While there, I did a bit of work on the fire and put the fire irons back on the tender but didn't secure them, which, as it later turned out, could have been the end of me. Meanwhile, the engine of the Derry train had uncoupled and gone to the shed and we backed on to its coaches to make up the train for Belfast. This left us out in the section, beyond the colour light starting signal which would then automatically be showing red. In due course we got the wave and off we went. This was against the rules as the move should have been checked with the signalman but the cabin is at the opposite end of the station and normally everything would have been alright. Unfortunately this wasn't a normal occasion as an empty stock train hauled by No.93 had been sent on from Macfin and we met it coming in on the single line just as we left Coleraine. Bill Hanley, the Loco Inspector, was travelling on No.93 and tried to jump off but was too late and got injured and the driver, Paddy Quinn, was hurt as well. When I saw what was going to happen I stood in the middle of the footplate and held on to the regulator. When we hit No.93 the fire irons flew forwards past where I had been standing and on through the cab window. If I had stayed there I would have been speared but both Fitzpatrick and I escaped injury.

I won't say who organised it, but a clever move was made after this. There was a military special which had to go to Larne Harbour and it was arranged that Fitzpatrick would work it. By this time, I was in the pub with other survivors and friends but they got me out and on to the engine and I can't have been so bad that I couldn't fire as we made it OK. Johnny didn't have that problem because he never took a drink. This move got him away and out of trouble, because if it was going to be alleged that he was at fault, he should have been suspended there and then and not allowed to take out another train.

Around 1950 the Ulster Transport Authority took over the Belfast & County Down Railway. They proceeded to close all of the County Down except the Bangor line and at the same time they closed a lot of other lines, including most of the Derry Central. This meant that, as well as acquiring quite a number of surplus BCDR engines, they also took on a lot of displaced enginemen who retained whatever seniority they had had before they were transferred to York Road where this didn't go down too well with those who were junior to them. As a fairly junior fireman I found myself doing all sorts of jobs around the shed and I was probably lucky to be kept on. Eventually the matter sorted itself out and, apart from the seniority problem, they weren't a bad bunch. Of course there was a lot of banter and an example - maybe not in the best of taste - went as follows: NCC man visits hospital and sees another man clutching his elbow and showing signs of distress. "What is that man's problem, Nurse?" "He has haemorrhoids, sir" "But why is he holding his elbow?" "Because he is a County Down man!"

At that time several of the NCC's 4-4-0s were getting long in the tooth, while a number of the BCDR engines had a fair bit of mileage left in them. Those that seemed worth keeping were put through the shops. They were also repainted in UTA livery, with the circular UTA badge applied to the side sheets

of their cabs, and got new number plates with 200 added to their BCDR number. There was a period of interchange, with Jeeps 7 and 10 going over to the Bangor line to show them what a real engine could do, while several of the County Down's small tanks were tried out for a couple of years on some of the lighter jobs on the NCC side. They weren't a complete success because some of the lighter jobs could involve occasional spells of heavy work.

By this time some of the Moguls, up till now the NCC's front-line engines, were beginning to show their age too. Although the oldest was only about 25 years old, they had had a hard time during the war and by 1956, although I wasn't around to see it, three of them had gone. I enjoyed working on them; they were great steamers - except for No.95 which had a jumper blastpipe. This was a device whereby the blast pipe nozzle was movable and rose up to open additional outlets when the engine was working hard. The idea was to soften the blast and avoid the fire being pulled to bits but I think even the Great Western, where it originated, eventually found that it was more trouble than it was worth. The Moguls were a bit lively at the back end and would have been the better for having trailing wheels under the cab. Given their LMS parentage, the chances of this were near enough nil, since such a wheel arrangement on a tender engine was unknown there and Derby had even been unhappy with the NCC's insistence on a 6'0" driving wheel.

In 1954 I saw an advertisement by the Crown Agents for locomotive drivers to work on East African Railways and I thought I would like to give it a go. The only problem was that I wasn't a driver! However, I approached Bill Hanley and he agreed to pass me out so that when I applied I could truthfully describe myself as a driver. I'll always be grateful to him for this and very much regret not getting in touch with him again when I eventually returned from East Africa.

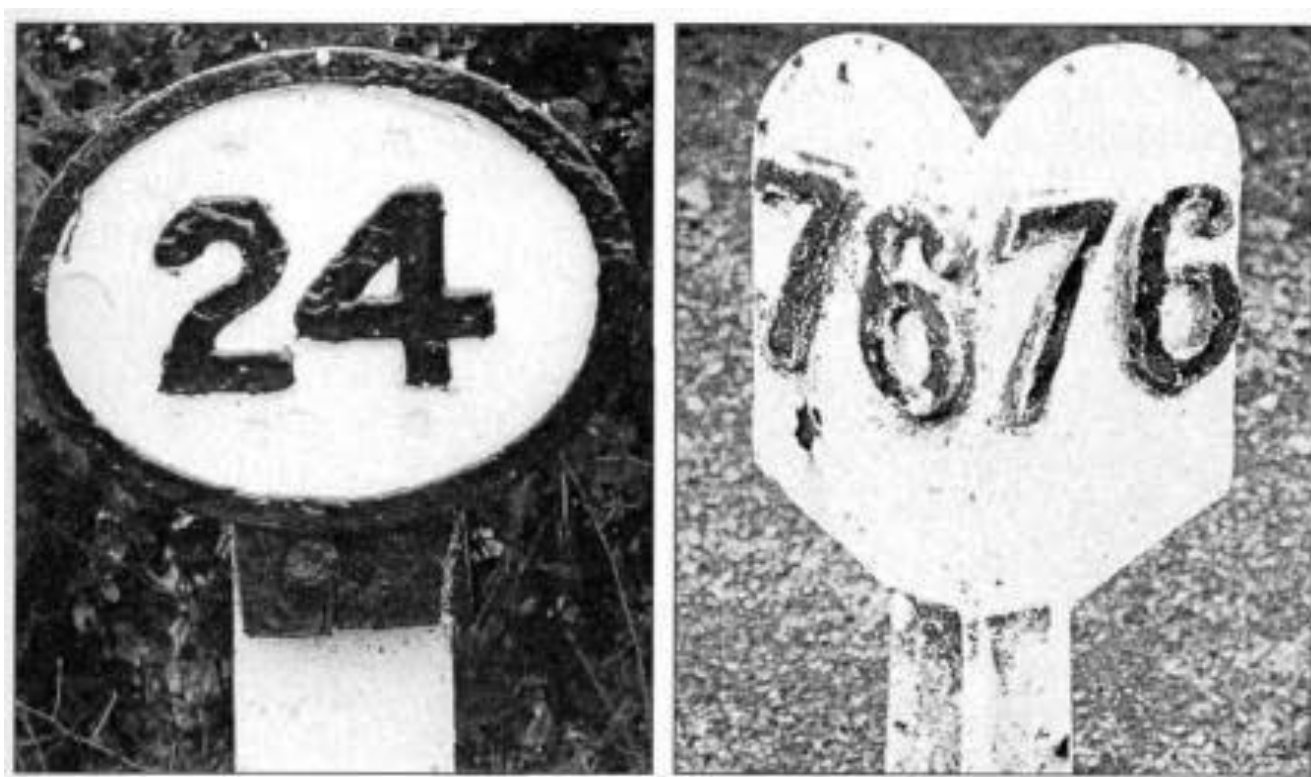
From that you will gather that my application was successful, but that's a story for another day.



Alex McMurray, gatekeeper at Galdanagh level crossing, with his family. The gates are to the right of the photograph, 1/4 of a mile from Dunloy station. (Courtesy of H. Marks)

1. Mileposts & other lineside “hardware”

One of the most distinctive features of the old railway companies mentioned, but not elaborated on, by Billy McCormick, was the milepost - that indispensable fixture for most serious enthusiasts as well as railwaymen needing to pinpoint the precise location of speed restrictions. In Northern Ireland these had the appearance of permanence, but over the last 30 years they have gradually lost their heads or become swallowed in the undergrowth which now envelops most of the cess and embankments of our railways. One welcome reversion in this respect has been the Belfast-Dublin main line, which now boasts a full - and highly visible - set of replacement posts from the border to Lisburn, partly as a result of representations from railway staff themselves. Indeed two Irish lines, Drogheda to Navan and Belfast Central to Bangor, have in recent years been re-mileposted, with posts on the opposite sides to the originals: for good measure the Bangor branch posting was completely renumbered from zero at Dublin Connolly at the time of the reopening of the Belfast Central Railway in the 1970s.



(Left) - GNR full mile post; (Right) - GSWR full mile post at Tuam. (W.T. Scott)

Re-mileposting in the dim and distant past must have been common. The surviving lines of the Waterford, Limerick & Western Railway all now carry GSWR mileposts of the 1890s, and one school of thought suggests that the present Great Northern main line must have been re-posted after the completion of the viaduct at Drogheda. Certainly this might explain a number of headless posts between Tandragee and Portadown which do not correspond to any measured distance.

As befitted its status as the premier company, the Great Northern used solid cast iron heads, generally fitted to posts made from old rails except in locations where a post was judged impractical. At most stations which coincided with a milepost distance the posts were fixed to the platform, or even - as at Balbriggan - cemented into the brickwork of the station wall: on the other hand milepost 16 on the Derry road was fixed in below platform level at Dungannon station, totally invisible from a down train. Like the MGWR, the GNR used distinctive shapes for each type of post. Whereas the west of Ireland

concern used a combination of squares, triangles, diamonds and vees, the Great Northern used a ▲ shape for quarters, ♦ for halves and ■ for three quarters. The mile was an oval plate similar in size and shape to the bridge plates. It is well known that the GN signal posts in track-circuited areas carried a horizontal diamond; what still remains shrouded in mystery is why several mileposts on the northbound climb of the Wellington bank have large discs with serrated edges attached to the posts.

Between Belfast and Coleraine the BNCR used a standard head for quarters, halves and three quarters, with the bottoms shaped to suit the rail section posts and the corners rounded. The full mile, again with rounded corners, was a square shape.

Northern Counties figures were bolder than the GNR, and the “2” would have served as “7” if inverted, though this was not done. Whereas the Great Northern style of figures were common to bridge plates and mileposts, the NCC design of figures were common not only to these but also to wagon and locomotive number plates. (The 2-6-4 tanks 7 & 57 broke with tradition by having an almost vertical leg to the “7”.) They also served other uses as well: it is known that one full mile post from a closed NCC line ended its days as a house number in the front garden of a railwayman! Interestingly, the BNCR style of lettering was also used by the Belfast & County Down railway in its mileposts and wagon plates, though this economical company generally used painted numbers on its bridges.

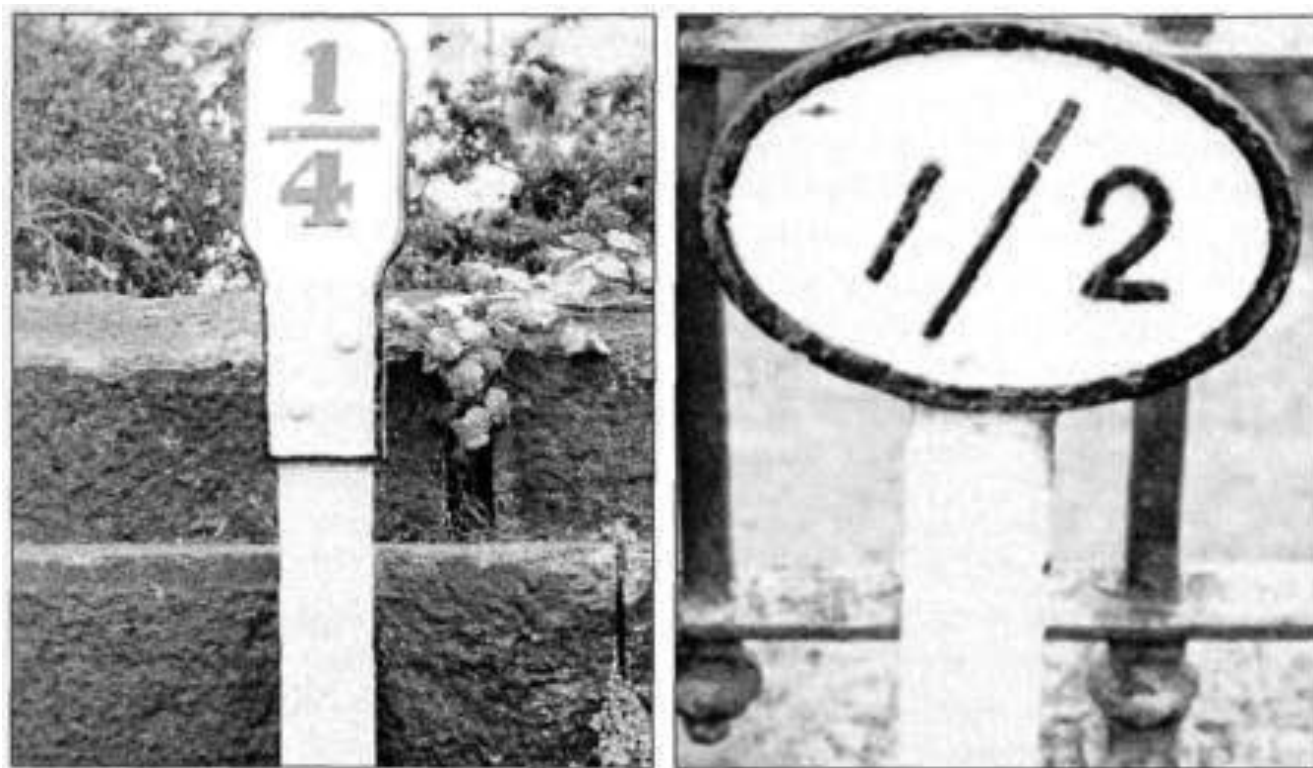
After the construction of the loop, concrete posts appeared between Bleach Green and Monkstown. The LMS had a great fondness for concrete for all manner of railway hardware (including the Bus Stop signs for their road motor traffic in pre-NIRTB days) - and oddly enough a concrete post used to exist between Greenisland and Carrickfergus lettered “MRNCC Boundary Post”. A concrete post also appeared near Ballycastle.

At the other end of the main line, the posts between Derry and Coleraine were small with oval heads, mounted on thin iron stakes. Whole miles carried the appropriate number, while the fractions were separated by a diagonal rather than a horizontal line. It has always been presumed that the Londonderry & Coleraine Railway must have been posted from Londonderry Waterside to its own terminus at Coleraine Waterside (a wooden building which survived until as late as 1972 before being destroyed by vandals in a malicious fire) before the Bann bridge was built. The BNCR must have re-posted the line from Belfast, but I cannot definitely say either what was the origin of these peculiar little posts, or why the last few miles between Lisahally and Londonderry have the normal BNCR posts.

GNR main line posts were on the down (left hand) side measured at zero from Dublin (although, incidentally, the only marked zero post position in Ireland is on the platform ramp at Westland Row station at the end of the Dublin City Railway). Branches were measured from their respective junctions, though usually on the right, and this also applied to the Derry line as far as Omagh. Newcomers to the Derry Road must also have been puzzled by the apparent changes in milepost numbers after Omagh from the low forties to the eighties: the explanation of course is that the line was posted from zero at Barrack Street, Dundalk, to Derry via Clones and Omagh. Travellers on the RPSI's Rosslare steam trains may also be aware of a similarly dramatic jump in numbers at Rosslare Strand (the last semaphore-signalled country junction in Ireland still open to passengers throughout) as the line comes in from Waterford, mileposted from Mallow.

On the NCC the posting was again on the down side from headquarters, this time at Belfast, with the single anomaly of the half-mile post on the ‘wrong’ side at Cullybackey station. Again there is a puzzling alteration of numbers, this time between Bleach Green and Mossley. The building of the loop line shortened the distance to Derry by 2½ miles, but the posts still read via the line from York Road to Greenisland (where trains reversed) and the distances from post 8¾ onwards must be measured by the old line from Greenisland rather than the new “Back Line”. Since there must be a further discrepancy in the vicinity of Coleraine, where construction of the new Bann bridge also involved building a new piece of line, the precise miles and chains distance from Belfast to Londonderry is still a matter of

some conjecture! To make matters even more difficult for the pedantic, precise zero points at Irish terminal stations are unknown: the North Eastern Railway in England was by far the most precise in this respect by placing a plate lettered D/P (datum point) at all stations where a measured mileage was computed in the absence of a milepost.



(Left) - NCC 1/4 mile post; (Right) - NCC 1/2 mile post of type used between Londonderry and Coleraine. (W.T. Scott)

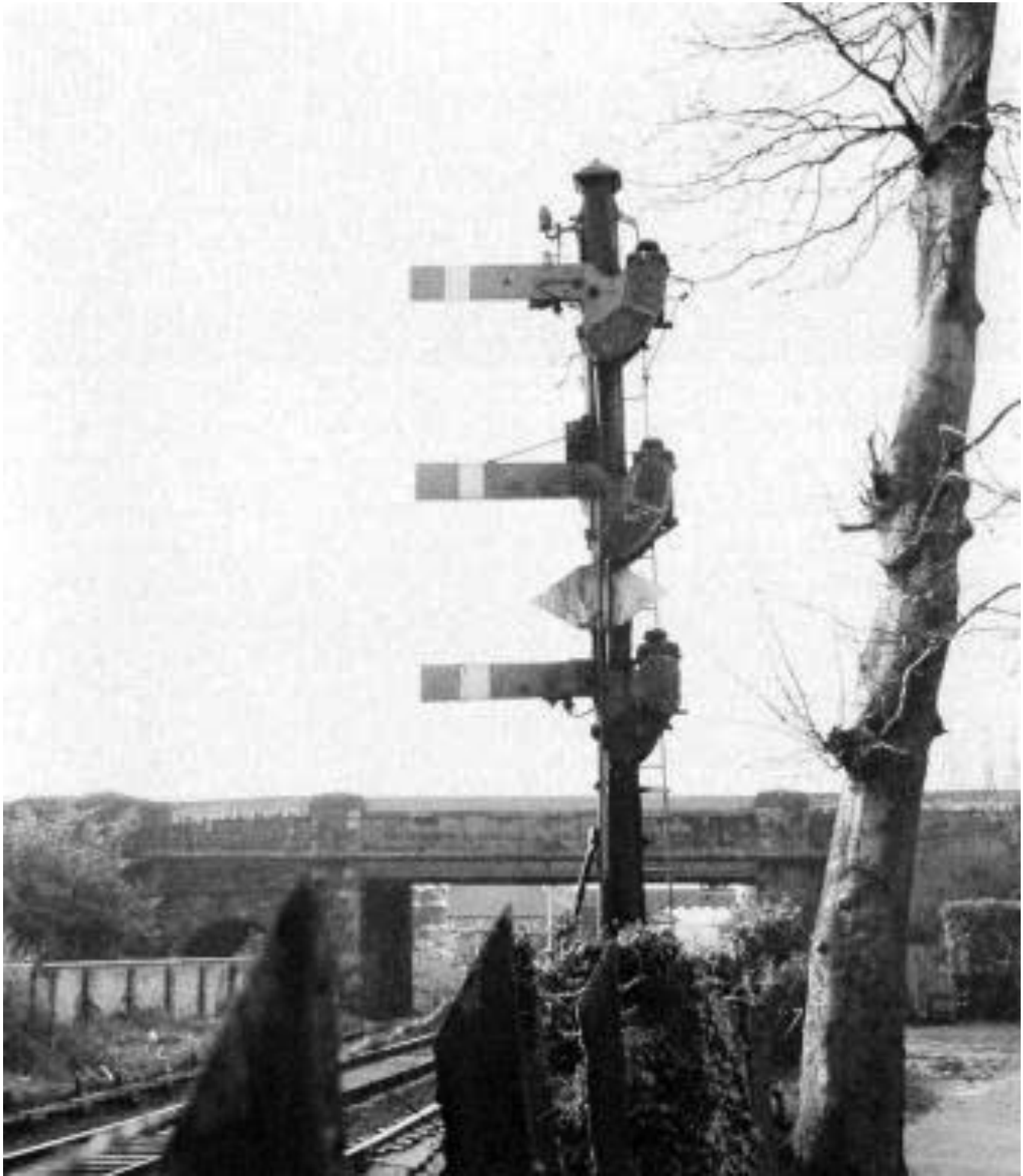
The BCDR was something of a northern odd man out in posting its lines on the right hand side from Belfast - though, as already explained, the Bangor branch now has its original posts on the right and its 1970s NIR posts on the left. The Waterford & Limerick also posted its main line on the right from zero at Limerick (though the GSWR branch from Ballybrophy to Killonan Junction was left-hand posted), as did the Dublin & South Eastern from Shanganagh Junction to Wexford. The DSER's coastal route to Bray was even more confusing: although nominally posted on the left from Dublin to Shanganagh, a large number of posts are randomly situated on the right.

Gradient posts on the GNR main line were another notable feature of railway 'hardware', though they are to be found on few other lines apart from the GSWR Cork main line, where they are often sited on the right hand side, i.e. the opposite side to the mileposts. In the days of mechanical signalling on main lines, "Catch Point" boards were a familiar feature on steeply graded sections. The last remaining catch points disappeared a few years ago from Kellystown bank on the GNR: the splintered remains of the Catch Point sign at Monkstown have probably succumbed by now to the local vandals. Another odd form of warning board - for lineside TPOs - disappeared from the GSWR main line in 1971 when the last remaining Irish mail snatching apparatus was dismantled.

2. Signals

As Billy McCormick noted, each company had its own characteristic signals. No BCDR signals survive in regular use, and the only GNR and NCC semaphore signals still in regular use survive at Navan and Castlerock and Portrush respectively. The GNR used lower quadrant semaphores with 3' 6" arms - the

shortest of any broad gauge railway in Ireland. By contrast, its neighbour at Newry and Dundalk, the DN&GR, as part of the London & North Western Railway used that company's very long-armed signals.



GNR 3-arm signal at Belfast end of Lisburn. (W.T. Scott)

The Great Northern wasted very little money, and its signals were often hung on plain poles rather than

expensively tapered wooden posts. Occasionally, a lattice post might be used, as for example at Maysfields, [Note original spelling, as opposed to modern “singularised, leisure-centre” version. - Ed.] but this was very rare. This was, however, compensated by the very tall signals used in difficult locations. The Lambeg starter was situated on a curve near an overbridge, and the same post also carried the Lambeg home and a repeater. An inconvenient footbridge at Adelaide also led to the down home signal having two arms. Signal gantries were not a feature of GN practice, but NIR’s re-signalling of Lisburn when the “third line” to Knockmore was constructed in the 1970s gave Lisburn - briefly - a fine new gantry straddling the up and down main lines.



The short-lived gantry at the southern end of Lisburn. Obviously not sited with steam traction in mind, its position meant that a loco requiring water had to enter the section beyond the signal.
(W.T. Scott)

Two other features also distinguished the GNR. Firstly, it made frequent use of underslung signals, examples of which could be seen at Goraghowood, Lisburn, Malahide, Sutton & Baldoyle, Navan and other locations. It also made a practice of slinging two or three shunting arms on a single pole, as on the fifth line at Balmoral, approaching Lisburn on the up road, and at Belfast Central.

The BCDR, like the GNR, used lower quadrant signals throughout with large arms. On the Bangor line, however, it threw conformity to the winds and controlled this busy suburban line with a mixture of banner, upper and lower quadrant signals. Among interesting signal cabin interiors ranked Holywood, where the levers had polished brass plates rather than the more normal painted variety, and Bangor where resignalling in the 1960s led to the frame from Magherafelt being installed.

Another feature of the County Down was the extensive use of lattice posts, both for single arms and bracket signals. The latter could be seen at Bangor (now at the preserved Downpatrick line), Donaghadee and at the down end of Comber. The BCDR also possessed one of Ireland’s largest gantries at Queen’s Quay. A less desirable feature of the BCDR’s signalling was a type of permissive block working which enabled certain automatic signals in the Belfast area to be passed at danger after a pause of two to four minutes, depending on weather conditions. This practice was the major factor in

the Ballymacarrett accident of 1945.

So far as signalling was concerned the NCC was very much the cat that walked on its own, instantly distinguished by its handsome somersault signals with pointed finials. These were first introduced by Berkley Deane Wise, Civil Engineer to the BNCR from 1888 to 1906. Before this time the BNCR had used conventional lower quadrants, though with long arms, and these were gradually replaced in the early 20th century. The reason for the introduction of somersault semaphores was unclear - possibly just to be different from other lines, or else to have a signal which made a false clear indication impossible. At Abbot's Ripton on the English GNR between Huntingdon and Peterborough a Leeds express was wrecked, as was the up "Flying Scotsman" and a goods shunted at the station. The crews of all three trains swore that the signals showed clear, and when a fitter tried the signals he was able to demonstrate that the weight of frozen snow on the wires had caused the arms to drop to a false clear position. Shortly after this the GNR went for the centrally balanced semaphore dropping clear of the post, with the clear indication showing when the arm was vertical. This may have been used by the NCC. Safer still were upper quadrant signals, extensively used by the LMS and later British Railways. Larne Harbour was unique among Irish railways in being signalled in this way, due of course to the port of Larne being owned at one time by the LMS.

The NCC made use of two- and three-arm bracket signals, the latter being illustrated at Ballymoney in the last Five Foot Three. The right-hand arm controlled the fast road through the station, and this was the arm to which the distant signal applied. Antrim had a fine three-signal bracket at the Belfast end of the station and, as this was a joint station, it also featured Great Northern signal arms. The same station also had an example of the underslung starter. Few NCC stations were large enough to warrant a somersault gantry: Belfast and Coleraine were colour-light by the 1920s and 1930s respectively, both with a hybrid form of signalling which featured mechanical points but electrically operated signals. A gantry at Limavady Junction survived at the Derry end of the station. One example of a gantry saved was the tall home signal controlling access to the platforms at Portrush; to save a profusion of signal arms a mechanical box on the signal arm displayed the number of the platform into which the train was signalled. This signal, and all the platform starters, also featured small calling-on arms, and these were also a feature of the signals at Ballymena.

Many signals and points situated a long distance from their cabins were fitted with motors for ease of pulling, for example at Ballykelly; here too one of the signals was a Great Northern signal arm mounted on a Great Northern post. The Portrush outer home at Dhu Varren was a very hard pull, with sand blown on the wires, but was never motorised - novices and first-time visitors to Portrush cabin were often handed the cluster and invited to try it! *[Ed. recalls a similar boyhood experience at Larne Harbour, where there was no sand!]* On the Great Northern, when colour lights replaced semaphores between Adelaide and Lisburn in early 1964, a new distant signal for Belfast Central was installed at the Lisburn end of Adelaide platform. This signal proved almost unpullable but the post remained in situ after a colour light had been installed to replace it.

3. Royal Trains and lamp brackets

Finally, a feature of the railway now gone was the lamp codes displayed by the engines of the GNR and NCC. The GSR and later CIÉ did not distinguish particular types of trains by their codes, but all trains carried two lamps on the front buffer beam. It is very gratifying, by the way, to notice that some at least of the RPSI representatives on main line tours still ensure that our engines carry correct lamp codes. GNR and NCC engines carried lamp irons at the chimney and the left and right hand sides of the buffer beam. The GNR also had a lamp iron in the centre of the buffer beam, which was used for ordinary goods, mineral or ballast trains. Apart from this, the codes of the two companies were identical. To work the Royal Train in 1953, mogul No.102 had to have a centre lamp iron welded on so that the full Royal headcode could be carried.

Two letters and two photographs from Mr G Hayes in the last issue of Five Foot Three deserve some comment. First, the picture of ex-MGWR No.639 ambling, as Mr Hayes puts it, through the Loop Line side of the then Amiens Street station in 1959. My guess as to where the loco was coming from and what it had been doing is that it had brought up some wagons of livestock off a Midland section goods for delivery to the meat factory on the Up side of the former DSE line at Canal Street, and was returning to North Wall where it was on pilot duty. This was an antic (although latterly performed by a diesel) which lasted into the seventies.

Mr Hayes's picture of the 'Gas Tanks' on page 65 brought back many memories, particularly of the smell of gas which pervaded the environs of Bray station and which was at its most pungent in the neighbourhood of Albert Walk and Albert Avenue.

The 'Gas Tanks', which conveyed charged containers from the gas plant at Inchicore Works to Bray for replenishing the reservoirs of the suburban stock stationed there, and empties in the opposite direction, was always an interesting train to observe for it was the regular means of conveyance of all kinds of fitted vehicles to and from Inchicore. This feature of the train is well exemplified in the photo, which shows a horse box and an old GSWR bogie coach. The picture reminded me that the GNR used to mount a sort of ersatz 'Gas Tanks' operation when returning vehicles from Dundalk Works to Belfast by way of Clones when the vehicles would be attached to regular Irish North and Cavan/Clones-Belfast trains.

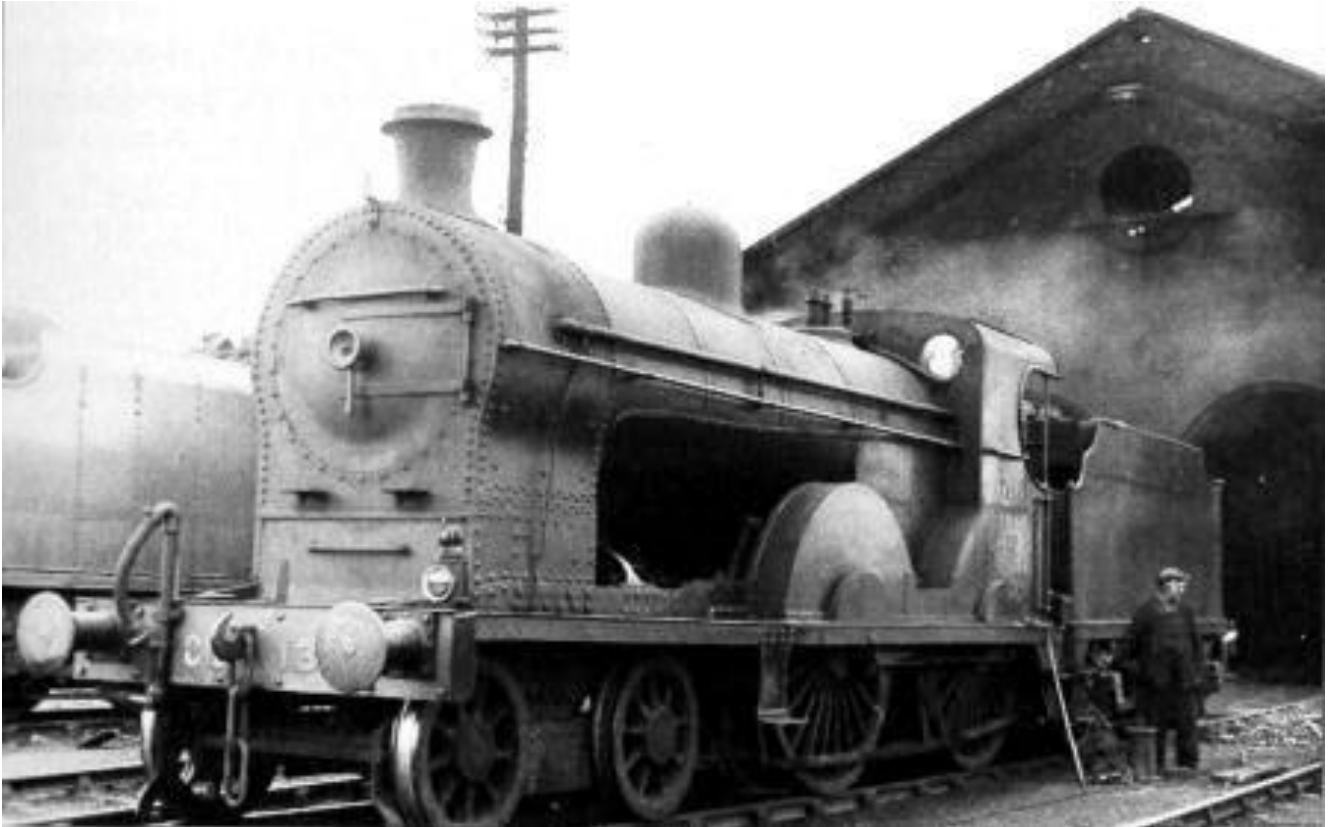
If Mr Hayes's 'Gas Tanks' picture was taken at the same time (1959) as that of No.639 it may have been that actual gas tanks were no longer a feature of the train; however, after 40 years I will not be dogmatic on this point [*Like many other trains, it may have retained its name long after this had ceased to be an accurate description.* - Ed.]

The locos of the 'Gas Tanks' were almost as varied a lot as the vehicles which they hauled. Inevitably, there were plenty of J15s, both superheated and saturated, but any machine from the DSE section suburban and Pier links might appear. For example, on the two occasions when I 'footplated' on 'Gas Tanks' engines the first trip was with a superheated J15 while the second was with none other than that most excellent and greatly to be lamented ex-GNR 'Q' 4-4-0 No.132 ("Mercury" in her early days). Need I say that this loco dealt with Drumcondra bank and the steep pull up through the Phoenix Park tunnel as competently as she had coped with Pomeroy and Carrickmore in days gone by? To be fair I must add that the J15 also did well up through Drumcondra (despite having to suffer a spell of very amateur firing from myself!), to the extent of receiving from Driver 'Cobbler' Byrne the tribute, "She's not such a bad old yoke". Who thinks that it is only the inhabitants of the northern part of the country who make use of understatement?

On another footplate trip on No.132 at around the same time as my 'Gas Tanks' journey, but on the 13:10 Saturday 'Greystones Express' referred to by David Houston in his letter, six bogies posed no problem on Glenageary or Killiney banks, nor on the steep and sharply curved northern approach to Bray Head. I have to admit though that our Bray-Greystones time was somewhat longer than David's recorded 8 minutes 32 seconds when the seabirds roosting on the rocks below the line must have had their slumbers disturbed in no uncertain manner. Apropos of this section, I remember being told by a Bray driver, in the days when there was a frequent service between there and Greystones, that there were people who would regularly travel by bus between Greystones and Bray from where they would continue their journeys by train, for fear of travelling round the Head.

Personally, I consider the passage of the Bray Head section of the Dublin-Rosslare line as one of the most scenic railway journeys left in Ireland, the other being the trip over the former NCC road immediately to the west of Downhill tunnel. In the latter case, on a fine summer morning, the

combination of sand and sea in the foreground and the Inishowen hills with their white buildings reflecting the sunlight in the background, was a sight that I never grew tired of in the days when I travelled over this section fairly frequently and which now, on the other side of the world, I will always remember. Indeed, despite being an unashamed Great Northern partisan, I can say that on the occasions in the fifties and sixties when circumstances dictated that I travel from Belfast to Derry via Coleraine rather than via Omagh, the passage of the Castlerock to Limavady stretch was almost (but note this latter word) worth the temporary desertion of the Portadown and Omagh and Londonderry and Enniskillen lines.



"Q" class No.132 at Dublin on 13th May 1962. (C.P. Friel Collection)

To revert to my 'Gas Tanks' journey on No.132; this run comprised part of an interesting turn of duty. The engine commenced by running light from Connolly shed to Dun Laoghaire, where it picked up the coaches of the Pier-Heuston boat train and brought these to the Pier, subsequently working the train to Islandbridge Junction from where the Heuston pilot brought it the short distance in to the terminus. No.132 then went back light engine tender-first to the 'Boston' sidings at Canal Street, collected the various vehicles of the 'Gas Tanks' and took them to Inchicore. Some time was spent at the latter place but eventually the return 'Gas Tanks' made its way up through the long tunnel and down Drumcondra bank to Canal Street once more, from where the loco went to Connolly shed. I joined No.132 at the Pier, straight off the Holyhead boat (I had been to a meeting in Manchester), this being one of the only two occasions when I travelled to and from a professional function with overalls in my briefcase. My other such packing of such an unlikely item related to a journey on a 'Merchant Navy' over the former LSWR West of England main line but that is a story which has no place in a RPSI magazine.

After reading Mr Hayes's letter on the subject of Midland Compounds I was tempted to comment on it at some length as I got to know these locos fairly well during the four years that I lived in Scotland in the mid-thirties. However, the temptation has for the most part been resisted, again on the grounds that

we are the RPSI and not the RPSE or S. Nevertheless I will permit myself a few references to the 'Crimson Ramblers'. Apropos of this nickname it is interesting to note, and an indication of the strong influence of Derby over the LMS as a whole, that the Midland Compounds were the only 4-4-0s on that railway which were permanently afforded the honour of the red livery.



Not No.132 but No.462 with a morning boat train at Dun Laoghaire Pier station on 10th September 1959. The pipes from the smokebox were meant to be a means of discharging ash but tended to cause air leaks. This was sometimes remedied by stuffing them with sugar beets (in season). (G. Hayes)

Not long after the grouping of the British railways in 1923 some Midland Compounds were put on the 'Birmingham Two Hour' trains of the LNWR section of the LMS. Here, they did much good work and made an excellent impression. A cynic might suggest that drivers who had spent many of their firing days on F.W. Webb's compound monstrosities, the 4-2-2-0s and 2-2-2-2s in particular, whose two sets of driving wheels were reputed to rotate in opposite directions when trying to start, would have accepted any sort of a compound which could be relied on not to try to tear itself apart in the middle. However, given the traditional suspicion of railwaymen of all grades of anything 'foreign', and the abysmal reputation of Webb's express locomotives (the eight-coupled compound goods locos were reported to be tolerable), praise from any LNW engineman for Midland locos - and compounds at that - was surely not given lightly.

The Euston-Birmingham non-stops were of course a very suitable train for the Compounds, demanding a steady but not spectacular progress over a generally fairly easily graded line (apart from the steep start out of Euston) and above all no stopping and restarting.

My next reference concerns an occasion in 1927 when the LMS and LNER started to think about

improving the rather dismal schedules between London and Glasgow/Edinburgh which had remained more or less unchanged over the past 32 years. As a publicity stunt and to take some of the lustre off the LNER's proposed regular non-stop service between King's Cross and Newcastle the LMS announced that it would (though on one day only) run its "Royal Scot" express non-stop between Euston and each of the two Scottish cities. The running of the Glasgow portion of this special service need not concern us here, but it was a feather in the cap of the Midland Compounds that one of these was chosen to work the six-bogie London-Edinburgh train over the approximately 400 miles. The timing was nothing marvellous; so far as I remember the average speed was around 49 mph, but it was nevertheless significant that a Compound rather than a "George the Fifth" or a "Prince of Wales" was chosen for the job. For these trains both the Edinburgh and the Glasgow locomotives carried three enginemen on their footplates.

An example of the sort of work which the Compounds were expected be able to undertake during the inter-war years was given by O.S. Nock in "Four Thousand Miles on the Footplate" in which the author refers to Compound No.1066 taking a load of 282/300 tons unaided from Leeds to Carlisle, including the long heavy drag up to Ais Gill summit. In the same book Mr Nock also wrote, in the course of describing a footplate trip between Hastings and London (Charing Cross) on ex-SR 'Schools' class 4-4-0 No.30930, "Between Hildenborough and the south end of Sevenoaks tunnel I calculate that 30930 was developing about 1,210 horsepower, a very fine effort, though certainly no better than the best I have seen with their Northern counterparts, the LNER D49 4-4-0s and the Midland Compounds."

As regards the GNR(I) Compounds I have always found it difficult to understand why Glover chose to have these built rather than three-cylinder simple expansion machines (a two-cylinder engine significantly larger than an 'S' would have been vetoed by the Civil Engineer). Surely a run of just 112½ miles during which the majority of trains made at least four stops (some made more and only one made the minimum of three) was not one on which compounds could be expected to show to best advantage. As an ex North Eastern Railway man who almost certainly would have remained in touch with locomotive development on his former stamping ground - he was reputed to travel back to Newcastle on Tyne from Dundalk every weekend - Glover would have been aware of the three-cylinder 'Shires' (D49) which had been introduced in 1927 specifically for working medium sized passenger trains in the North Eastern area. The Southern 'Schools' too, the first examples of which came out in 1930, predated the GN Compounds.

What I have just written is not to be taken as in any way belittling the high performances in the way of speed and load haulage of which the GN Compounds were capable, and of which many examples have been recorded, but merely to suggest that five 3-cylinder simple expansion locomotives might have represented a more economical investment. Not that the cost of the Compounds quoted by Beyer Peacock, £7,500 each without tenders, would seem to be anything other than laughable today. Such comparisons as could be made during the ten years that the GN Compounds and their simple expansion derivatives, the 'VS' class, were operating together would suggest that the latter had the edge on the older machines as regards coal consumption. Another interesting point was that at overhauls it was commonly found that the big-ends of the inside connecting rods of the Compounds had incurred greater wear than those of the low pressure rods. In view of the great array of eccentrics crowding their crank axles, that particular fault (not unknown elsewhere) could scarcely be blamed on a conjugated valve gear.

However, despite the generally good reputation which the Midland Compounds acquired on the LMS during the inter-war years, and despite the undoubted abilities of the Great Northern engines, we cannot get away from the fact that the construction gauge of Irish and British railways just did not permit sufficiently large low pressure cylinders being used to obtain anything like maximum value from compounding. When it is recalled that marine steam reciprocating engines built from the 1890s to the

1950s were overwhelmingly of the triple expansion type (sometimes with two low pressure cylinders) and that quadruple expansion, either using four cylinders or one or other application of the principle of the low pressure exhaust turbine, was not uncommon, it is easy to see that compound locomotives could never have a chance to show anything like their maximum theoretical abilities in our part of the world.



Mr. Liddle's preferred 3-cylinder type; VS class No.207 "Boyne" climbs towards the border with a Belfast-Dublin rugby special in February 1965. (I.C. Pryce)

To end these notes back on dry land: the photo on page 40 of our last issue, of the ex-GSWR Class K4, shows the engine in its original state. In their final manifestation the locos of this class had considerably larger boilers, Ross 'pop' safety valves (not the Ramsbottom 'cock's comb' type shown in the photo) and, as implied by the caption, larger cabs. Illustration No.22 in the Society's publication "A Decade of Steam" is of a K3 which in its rebuilt form was virtually indistinguishable from a K4.

TICKET TO RIDE?

James Scannell

The general perception by the travelling public of the Revenue Protection personnel employed by Northern Ireland Railways and Iarnród Éireann is that they are there to ensure that train passengers are in possession of tickets at the time of travel, but, given the great number of promotions that both these companies provide, some with conditions, the task of the Revenue Protection personnel is in fact to ensure that all train passengers have valid tickets at the time of travel **for the journey that they are undertaking.**

Occasionally there are news items on television or in the newspapers about ticket abuses but this is not a new phenomenon as I will illustrate with this example from the 1880s.

In 1887 it was the practice of the Great Southern & Western Railway Co to issue reduced price tickets on a Saturday night to commercial travellers. These tickets were not valid on the "Limited Mail" but

the practice had arisen whereby commercial travellers used the tickets on this train without any action from the Company.

However, on a Saturday night in November or December 1887 a commercial traveller named Alexander J. Thompson of Brighton Square, Rathmines, who was employed by Messrs Ferrier & Pollock, William Street, Dublin, arrived at Kingsbridge (now Heuston) station and purchased a reduced fare ticket for travel from Dublin to Limerick Junction. He was reminded by the ticket office clerk that this ticket was not valid for use on the “Limited Mail”, and again when he passed through the barrier.

He then boarded the “Limited Mail” and was informed by the guard when checking tickets that he was travelling on a train for which his ticket was not valid. The guard asked him for his name and address which Mr Thompson gave as he assumed that the guard wished to check that he was in fact a commercial traveller.

However, when the guard submitted his report it appears that it was to the effect that he had encountered a passenger - Mr Thompson - travelling on the “Limited Mail” with a ticket which was not valid for use on it and the Company decided to prosecute him for breaking its by-laws. In due course he received a summons to appear at the Dublin District Police Court on 10th January 1889.



A commercial traveller may have taken the order for whatever is on the cart. However, it is not at Kingsbridge but Barrack Street goods station in Dundalk, July 1960. (R.L. Dean)

Counsel for the railway company said that Mr Thompson had been informed that his ticket was not valid for use on the “Limited Mail” but that he had insisted on travelling on that train and had offered to pay the excess fare when challenged by the guard.

Defence counsel did not dispute the Company’s conditions governing the use of the reduced fare tickets but alleged that in recent times commercial travellers had started to use these tickets on the “Limited Mail” and that the Company was aware of what was going on. It was pointed out that his client had offered to pay the excess fare and had given his name and address to the guard in the belief

that the information was to be used to check that he was a bona fide commercial traveller.

After further legal argument from both sides the Magistrate, Mr Woodcock, said that while he felt that the prosecution had proved their case he required further time to study the by-laws of the Company and adjourned the case for two days.

At the resumed hearing Mr Woodcock said that he felt there was a case to answer but, since the defendant had offered to pay the excess fare of 16/- (80p), he proposed to impose no penalty and concluded the hearing without any further action except to remark that he was not happy with the practice of persons travelling on the "Limited Mail" with tickets which were not valid for that train.

And there the matter ended, with the Great Southern & Western Railway Co no doubt pleased that they had won their case. As Messrs Ferrier & Pollock are no longer in existence I have been unable to discover how that company felt about the case and what, if any, action they took against their employee for winding up in Court.

In the meantime, the 'Men in Black' of NIR and IÉ engaged in revenue protection duties continue in this task in the on-going battle against fraud by passengers, since loss of revenue through ticket fraud is one figure which does not appear in the annual accounts of either company.

Times may have changed but this problem hasn't.

CAMPING COACHES II

W.T. Scott

Following Mark Kennedy's interesting account of the Ballycastle discovery, some more information about camping coaches may be of interest.

The idea originated with the LNER in 1933, born out of the depression years when money was scarce and foreign travel impossible for most people. It provided the chance of a cheap seaside holiday while avoiding the notice-covered guesthouses of rapacious seaside landladies who put their guests out on to the street at 8am on the morning of their departure. The scheme reached its zenith in 1939 when the LMS had some 71 sites and 232 coaches throughout its system. Nationwide, more than 400 coaches and 230 sites were in operation.

In Northern Ireland in 1933 the NCC had sites at Antrim, Ballycarry, Bellarena and Toome. None of these was a seaside site and all were probably attempts to attract anglers. The scheme was not successful: by 1939 all four had lost their vehicles and caravans were sited at more conventional seaside locations. The NCC converted a total of 25 six-wheelers to camping coaches, numbered 1 to 25. Castlerock was allocated 4, 23 & 25, Ballycastle had 9, 11, 16 & 21 and Downhill had 18 & 20. On the BCDR, Newcastle had 8 & 13, while Donaghadee had 12 & 17. Coaches were also allocated to Magilligan, Portstewart and Whitehead, but I have no note of these. Unusually for a railway which had 166 six-wheel coaches, and which went on building them until 1923, the BCDR used NCC six-wheelers because they obviously had none to spare of their own!

As noted by Mark, the Ballycastle 'find' was a converted Z9 brake third. Originally seating forty in five compartments it was 30' 6" long and 8' 6" wide. Its height at the middle was 11' 5½" and at the eaves 10' 3½". Given these dimensions one must wonder how these vehicles ever got to Ballycastle! The Ballycastle loading gauge, determined by Capecastle tunnel, was 8'0" at the waist, 9' 0" high at the eaves and 10' 0" in the centre. A narrow gauge underframe would have lowered the coach a little but not enough, and it certainly could not have reduced its width. Incidentally, apart from the County Donegal, the Ballycastle loading gauge was the most generous of any Irish three foot gauge line. The bodies must have reached Ballycastle overland and then been re-gauged.

The other two Ballycastle camping vehicles were especially interesting. They were rebuilt from narrow gauge vehicles 327 & 328 and reached the seaside town in 1938 and 1939. The renumbering of these

coaches is worth comment. From about 1890 onwards the BNCR renumbered narrow gauge stock from its absorbed lines in a series 301-333. Coach 327 became camping coach 16 and 328 became 21. These vehicles, built for the Ballymena-Parkmore line, were 40' long but only 6' 2" wide. They must have worked regularly also on the Ballymena & Larne, because they acquired the nickname "Doagh bogies". Rebuilding 327/8 into camping coaches must have followed a different pattern to the rest. A width of only 6' 2" would not have permitted a corridor and a bed of average length.



***Camping coaches 9 and 11, obviously not on their own frames, at Ballycastle in July 1949.
(W. Robb)***

The LMS description quoted by Mark would have fitted the coaches of the parent system, where caravan coaches were in many cases converted from West Coast corridor eight-wheelers - at one time the most opulent vehicles to be found anywhere. It was a bit of an exaggeration, however, to apply the description to BNCR 6-wheelers and narrow gauge stock!

The coaches were placed as follows:

Castlerock: at the end of the down platform. No.4 was next the platform on a short siding.

Downhill: at the Coleraine end of the platform on a short length of track.

Ballycastle: alongside a loading bank on the east side of the station.

Donaghadee: at the old loading bank on the town side of the station.

Newcastle: the coaches here were on a length of track at the main arrival platform, and must have been positioned here after the closure of the line.

Most of the coaches on the NCC sites had ceased to be used by 1951. The vehicles not allocated to specific locations were sold off in 1952, except for 14 (almost certainly the famous Z9 No.143) which had been destroyed in the blitz in 1941. No.22 lasted as a tradesman's hut in Belfast until 1956. On the BCDR sites the coaches lasted longer. I recollect the Donaghadee vehicles still in situ in 1959, and the Newcastle coaches in use as late as 1961.

Though not directly connected with camping coaches, it should be noted that all NCC passenger 6-wheel coaches were classified Z with suffixes to indicate the types:

Z1 = first class 3-compartment with lavatory.

Z4 = first/second composite with two first and two second class compartments seating 16 first and 20 second.

Z8 = brake composites for use as slip coaches. They had one first, one second and two third, with one brake compartment.

Z11 = the three 6-wheelers taken over from the DNGR in 1933. They were built by the LNWR at Wolverton and were easily distinguished by their curved sides.

Vans were classified V1, V2 and V3, the last named being a 6-wheeled TPO which worked over the Derry Central until 1934.



Camping coaches 18 and 20, positioned to take maximum advantage of the bracing Atlantic air at Downhill c. 1953. In the background, the Mussenden Temple looks slightly less precarious than on the current Ulster TV shot. Nowadays this otherwise tidy village is so festooned with wires as to make a lower level shot almost impossible. (W T. Scott)

A final note. One of the Whitehead camping coaches was put to unusual use. It was brought from Whitehead to Greenisland in 1941 and used as a base for the compilation of the emergency timetable used after the York Road blitz.

[Not quite the final note, as Mark Kennedy, at the eleventh hour, produced the following historical data in relation to the Ballycastle coaches]:

No.9: Originally BNCR 5' 3" gauge, 6-wheel, 3rd class coach No.87. Length 30' 6". Built 1885, withdrawn February 1936. Mounted on a narrow gauge underframe from No.314, a 1st/3rd class

composite coach, length 35' 6", built 1879, withdrawn December 1934. Arrived Ballycastle May 1936.

No.11: Originally BNCR 5' 3" gauge, 6-wheel brake third No.144. Length 30' 6". Built 1887, withdrawn February 1936. Mounted on a narrow gauge underframe from No.316, a 3rd class "tramcar", length 36' 9", built 1891, withdrawn December 1934. Arrived Ballycastle May 1936.

No.16: Originally BNCR narrow gauge bogie 3rd class "tramcar" No.327. Length 40' 0". Built 1895, withdrawn January 1937. Arrived Ballycastle April 1937.

No.21: Ex BNCR No.328. Details and history as for No.327. Withdrawn November 1937, arrived Ballycastle April 1938.

SUBURBAN TANK LOCOMOTIVES COMPARED

Laurence Liddle

In Five Foot Three No.42 there appeared an article by Colin Weatherup on locomotive performance on the Bangor branch of the former Belfast & County Down Railway. Although I knew and often travelled over the Bangor line in the last days of steam I am not competent to comment on the more technical aspects of Colin's article.

However, the illustration of large tank loco No.8 revived a thought which has often occurred to me, namely, has anyone ever attempted a comparison between this engine (and her sisters, 9 & 16) and the very similar GSR/CIÉ Nos.455/6/7, originally Dublin & South Eastern Railway Nos.20, 34 & 35. In several features these two classes were identical or differed only to a small degree. Their respective dimensions are summarised below:

	DSER	BCDR
Boiler	Belpaire saturated, 160 psi	Belpaire saturated, 170 psi
Cylinders	18" x 26"	18" x 26"
Driving Wheels	6' 0"	5' 6"
Tractive Effort	15,920 lbs	18,443 lbs
Weight	64 tons 8 cwt	66 tons
Water	1700 gals	2000 gals

The DSER engines later received the Inchicore "351" boiler with round-topped firebox, while their lower nominal tractive effort is accounted for by the smaller driving wheels and slightly higher boiler pressure of the BCDR engines.

The pioneer DSER loco, GSR No.455, was turned out by Grand Canal Street Works in 1911, being the last locomotive to be constructed there. As built, it was named "King George V" (doubtless in honour of his coronation that year) and was said to have been loaned for a day by the South Eastern's Mechanical Engineer, Richard Cronin, to his Great Northern opposite number, George Glover, for exhibition to his directors as an example of a new type of tank engine which Glover had in mind to build. To what extent "King George" influenced members of the Great Northern Board (or, more likely, its locomotive committee) I do not know, but the result of Glover's submission to his directors was the appearance of the five class T1 4-4-2Ts, Nos.185-189, in 1913; the basically similar but superheated "U" class 4-4-0s in 1915; the superheated T2 4-4-2Ts in 1921 and afterwards; the "UG" 0-6-0s in 1937 and the improved versions of the latter and of the "U"s in 1948. The grand total of these engines, all to the same fundamental design, was forty-five.

Interestingly, the last 4-4-2Ts to run on the former DSER lines were, as far as I remember, T2s Nos.3 and 143. No.3 had been a Dublin engine for pretty well all of her life while No.143 had worked mostly at the northern end of the GNR. Some "U" class engines also worked on the South Eastern in the last

days of steam on CIÉ. However, that is another story.

Although No.455 - which was often referred to by South Eastern men as “King George” long after the GSR had removed the nameplates from all engines other than “Sambo” (could they get away with such a name nowadays!) at Inchicore and “Jumbo” (no problem) at Waterford - had appeared in 1911 it was not until 1924 that the two other engines of the class were delivered by Beyer Peacock.



GSR No.455 is seen here in immaculate condition as DSER No.20 “King George V”. (Real Photographs)

Since the first two of the large BCDR four-coupled tanks were built by those prolific suppliers of locomotives to Irish railways in the same year it would seem likely that all three engines were under construction at the same time. Compared to the gap of 13 years between the first and the latter two of the DSER engines, the interval between the delivery of Nos.8 & 16 and No.9 to the BCDR was 21 years, the last machine appearing in 1944.

It will have been noted that none of the six engines under consideration was superheated. In the case of the first DSE engine superheating was still a relative novelty in 1911, although by that time the LB&SCR 4-4-2Ts had demonstrated its value in no uncertain terms when running against LNWR “Precursor” 4-4-0s. However, by 1924 it might perhaps have been expected that the two new DSE engines would have been superheated, particularly since George Wild, who had succeeded Cronin in 1917, had introduced the first - and only - superheaters on the South Eastern in 1922. These were on the 2-6-0 goods engines Nos.15 & 16, the former better known to all RPSI members by her subsequent number of 461.

It may have been felt that as “King George” was operating satisfactorily on the services for which she (he?) had been built there was no point in altering a well-tried design. It could also have been that on the relatively short runs, with their frequent stops, between Dublin and Bray by either the coastal or inland route there was little opportunity for an engine to develop any significant degree of superheat.

The same reasoning could have applied to the Co. Down engines since they (8 & 9) were intended to work only on the Bangor branch, or not beyond Comber on the main line. It was only the exigencies of wartime that led to No.8 and her sisters ranging further afield after 1939.



The handsome bracket signal at Knockmore Junction shows “off” for the Banbridge line as GNR T2 class No.69 collects the branch line token, 1956. (W.T. Scott)

I am more inclined to favour this theory of lack of opportunity to create superheat in the case of the South Eastern engines at any rate since George Wild, who had been at Dundalk before taking charge at Canal Street, must be presumed to have been aware of what was happening in the development of tank engines on his old railway. To digress for a moment to a question to which I have never found a convincing answer: Why were the QGT2 0-6-2 shunting engines on the Great Northern superheated and the older but generally similar QGTs - originally saturated - altered to use superheated steam?

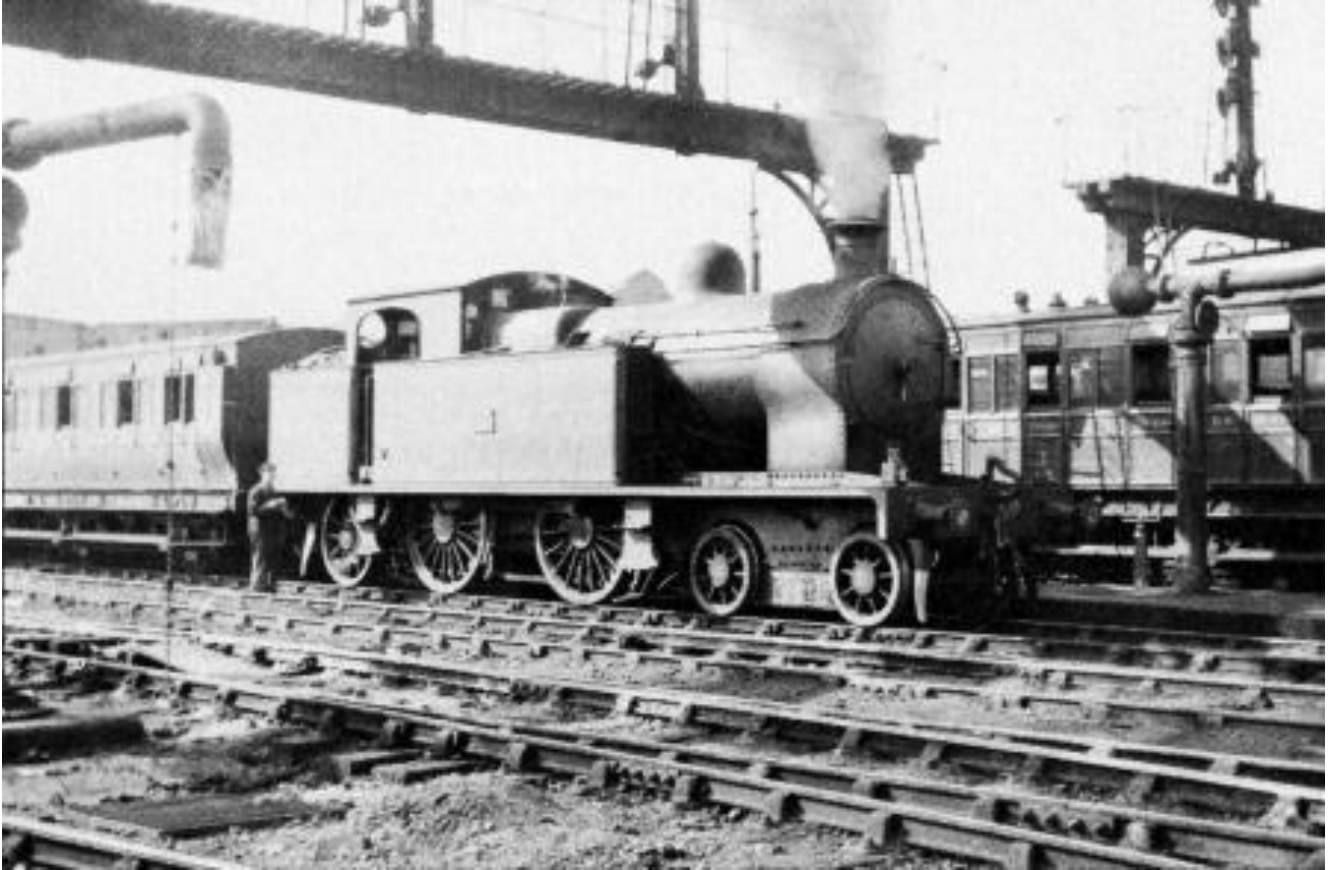
To get back to the County Down; I wonder was there from the start a presumption, or at least a hope, in the minds of either J.L. Crosthwait the loco engineer, or the traffic manager, that one day it would be possible to use the large 4-4-2Ts on Newcastle or Donaghadee trains? If this was not the case, why was the very generous provision of 2,000 gallons of water made for engines intended for a maximum run of 12½ miles?

Finally as regards these six suburban locomotives, on neither the County Down nor the DSE were they the first 4-4-2 tank engines. The BCDR “small tanks” were built by Beyer Peacock between 1901 and 1921 whilst the South Eastern acquired three 4-4-2Ts from Sharp Stewart in 1893, primarily to work the mail connections between Dun Laoghaire (then Kingstown) and Kingsbridge (now Heuston) over the newly-opened “Loop Line”. In GSR/CIÉ days these engines were numbered 458/459/460.

Writing about the County Down has reminded me of one of the ‘characters’ among senior officials of Irish railways during the earlier years of the present century - the late Charles Moore, who ended his working days as General Manager of the Queen’s Quay company. Mr Moore, the Chief Executive of what was a minor railway even by Irish, let alone British, standards was renowned for having a

somewhat exaggerated view of the importance of the BCDR and, by implication, of himself.

Once when Charlie was at a meeting of senior British and Irish railway officers in London the other people present had grown rather tired of his continued holding forth on how this and that matter would affect the BCDR. Finally one of the British managers had had enough - "Mr Moore," he said, "If I stood on the roof of your terminus in Belfast I could spit to the other end of your line!"



BCDR "large tank" No.9, then two years old, leaves Queen's Quay with a Bangor line train in 1947. With a life of only 11 years, this was Ireland's shortest-lived locomotive although, in scrapping 6-year-old 9Fs, British Railways beat that record handsomely. (A. Donaldson)

The second tale relates to the years of the Second World War, by which time Moore had retired and taken up residence in the former GNR hotel at Rostrevor. On the evening of a day during which Charlie had been in Belfast the residents were gathered around the fire in the lounge (and whatever about wartime shortages elsewhere, that fire was always kept well supplied), engaged in after-dinner conversation. Suddenly the ex-General Manager exclaimed, "Oh, the misery and suffering that that man Hitler has caused." The other speakers immediately fell silent in anticipation of a tale of atrocity or war crimes. "Yes," went on Mr Moore, "there was no first-class lavatory accommodation on the 5:40 train from Belfast this evening."

Moore was reputed to be somewhat careful of money - his own, as well as the railway company's - as my final anecdote illustrates. On the day of her retirement Charlie's personal secretary/typist was summoned to the Presence for an Official Farewell. After the usual complimentary remarks on both sides the General Manager asked the lady did she often travel to Bangor or would she be likely to do so in the future. The answer was No on both counts. "But you might go there occasionally?" The retiring secretary intimated that an occasional visit to Bangor could not be entirely ruled out of her future plans. "Well, when you do," said Charlie, "Be sure to come in and see me and I will look up the train for

you.” The feelings of the recipient of this munificent offer, who when the valedictory sentence had been half spoken had no doubt jumped to the conclusion that she would get a free, or at least a privilege ticket, are best left to the imagination!

RUNROUND AT BALLYMONEY

J.A. Cassells

The November Shopping Special to Coleraine was an enjoyable day and even provided one or two first time experiences for the Society. It was, for example, the first time we have run a short working from Coleraine to Ballymoney, and a look at my records reveals that the last time an engine ran round a train of passenger carriages there may have been as far back as 31st August 1968. This was, of course, ‘Black Saturday’ and the train was a 17:20 RBP special from Larne Town to Ballymoney. An interesting common feature of both days was No.85’s driver, Willie Graham, who fired to Alan Robinson of York Road on the 1968 special. In a brief study of this train I hope to memories of the last days of NCC steam, which will also serve as a tribute to the late Alan Robinson, whose recent death reduces still further the surviving group of men who saw out the steam era in such style in the late 1960s.



***No.85 runs round the Shoppers’ train at Ballymoney. The lamps do not signify the presence of Royalty - the centre one in a high powered electric model which we are now required to carry.
(J.A. Cassells)***

31st August 1968 was a busy day for York Road shed. Engine No.3 worked the 07:55 Larne and return; No.53 took the 10:55 Larne, returning with the Up perishable and then working the 16:10 to Larne in the afternoon, and No.4 went up the main line with a 12:55 Coleraine special. The 14:05 Larne was also steam and Larne driver Jackie Wilmot and fireman Willie Graham had No.50. At Larne Wilmot changed with Alan Robinson, and Robinson and Graham worked the 17:20 special into Belfast, taking

engine No.3 (rather unusually turned bunker-first) forward to Ballymoney. No.50 was Alan Robinson's regular engine on the stone train link, but No.3 was in rather poorer condition by this time, working frequently on the twice-weekly ballast from York Road to Poyntzpass in connection with the late 1960s fettling up of the Great Northern main line.

Alan Robinson never hung about, and smart engine working reduced 14 minutes of lateness at Larne to 9 leaving Belfast. The passengers wouldn't have noticed the expert way in which driver and fireman coaxed steam out of a fairly run-down engine, but a small group of timers - Irwin Pryce, Michael Stevenson, the late Drew Donaldson and myself - appreciated the run out the Lough shore and the minimum of 26 following a brief signal check at Kingsbog Junction. Down the hill through Antrim No.3 was a bit winded but still managed to average almost 60 mph from Doagh to Kellswater, and the time of 40'25" to Ballymena was respectable enough, given the conditions applying near the end of steam. Some more smart running, punctuated by slowing for hand tablet exchanges at Cullybackey and Ballyboyland, and a stop at Dunloy, saw us into Ballymoney not far off right time.



*The late Alan Robinson and a youthful Willie Graham on "Jeep" No.3 on 31st August 1968.
(J.A. Cassells)*

The passengers having departed, the engine ran round for a gentle trundle home on the 20:15 empty carriages, and, in the quiet of a summer evening I had time to take a photograph, reproduced here, of No.3's enthusiastic crew. Alan Robinson will never see this article, but the picture is my personal tribute to a driver who became a legend in his lifetime. Many of us will remember him as a gentle and quiet little man - apparently an extremely sedate car driver - who produced some of the fastest steam engine running on the NCC without fuss or comment, and who was anything but (to quote a word he used to describe his slower colleagues) "afeared". Towards the end of his steam career he became a regular stone train driver, taking engine No.50 and spending many hours cleaning and scouring her footplate until it shone like a jeweller's shop. It was our pleasure to have him on several occasions on the Portrush Flyer, where with characteristic modesty he tried to insist that he would only work the turn

if he could fire rather than drive! His last years were dogged with ill-health, and his passing will be mourned by all of us who appreciated the excitement he gave us right up to the end of steam.

BOOK REVIEW

A Nostalgic Look at Belfast Trolleybuses 1938-1968 - Mike Maybin, Silverlink Publishing Ltd, ISBN 1-85794-068-7, £19.95

What are the interests of members of the RPSI? Railways - certainly; trams - probably; buses - ?! But trolleybuses? These curious hybrid vehicles ran on rubber tyres but drew their power from overhead wires; they had motor vehicle registration numbers but paid no road tax and their drivers did not require driving licences. When in the immediate pre-war years the need for a complete modernisation of the Belfast City Tramways was becoming obvious, the Corporation began to look for alternatives. Ordinary motor buses were not then as technically advanced as they are now; they were liable to road tax and ran on imported fuel oil, whereas the trams were powered by electricity produced by the Corporation in its own power station using British coal.

They therefore decided on trolleybuses, a form of transport much used in London, and they eventually achieved the second largest trolleybus network in the British Isles. The first route to be converted, on an experimental basis, was the Falls Road, because the trams on this route did not cross town to a terminus in the opposite direction. Further conversions proceeded but were delayed (to some extent) by the War, and the system did not achieve its maximum development until the 1950s. This amounted to the replacement of approximately two-thirds of the tramway system.

In 1953 the trolleybuses carried 112 million passengers and travelled 8½ million miles - more than the trams and the (few) motor buses combined. One fact that amazes me in this book is the lavish service provided - at 3, 4 or 5 minute intervals on practically all routes. By comparison, the present Citybus service is but a skeleton service, although this is doubtless due largely to the ubiquity of the private car. The traffic congestion of the present day could be solved at a stroke by a massive return to public transport, particularly railways.

Only a few Belfast trolleybuses had four wheels - the majority had six. Their general shape, with a driver at the front and a conductor at the rear, was that of double-decker buses and they were, of course, uni-directional which made reversal at termini more complicated than that of trams. Although trolleybus chassis were obtained from several suppliers in Great Britain the bodies were mostly built by local firms and their general appearance, therefore, varied only in minor details.

The captions in the book are the most extensive I have ever seen. Not only is the particular bus in the picture described in loving detail, but the buildings in the streetscape, and even the very makes of private cars, are stated. Indeed the book could very well be sub-titled "Buildings of Belfast - Yesterday and Today" Although there are only two pages of colour photographs, the uniformity of the red trolleybuses renders any further colour pictures superfluous. The monochrome pictures are almost without exception of very high quality.

What caused the eventual demise of the trolleybus? Though more flexible than trams, their manoeuvrability was limited. Their overhead wirescape was complicated and no ornament to the city. (It was amazing that even the prestigious Parliament Buildings at Stormont were surrounded by wires.) They were noiseless and non-polluting but their very silence was a menace to the deaf or careless pedestrian. But the main reason for the downfall of trolleybuses in Belfast was their discontinuance in London. This so reduced the demand on builders that their trade was no longer economic and Belfast had no option but to plan for the phasing-out of trolleybuses. Accordingly, the routes still served by trams were transferred straight to motor buses and the final trolleybus ran in 1968. Several have been preserved in various states of completeness in a number of places: No.112 has been restored to its

pristine (including mechanical) condition and is on display in the Transport Museum at Cultra.

The book has a foreword by Ulster's noted athlete, Mary Peters CBE, whose only connection with Belfast's trolleybuses was as a regular passenger in her younger days. It can be highly recommended as one of the best Irish transport books ever published.

William Robb

[Editorial tuppenceworth: As a user and would-be student of trolleybuses in the late 1950s, I too found the book fascinating. I was always on the look-out for the rarities such as the original 1938 batch, Nos. 1-14, hardly two of which seemed to be alike, or the short 4-wheelers with their loudly-clicking control gear. I can't recall seeing any of the ex-Wolverhampton models, which were on the way to withdrawal by the time I began to frequent Belfast where I soon found that motor buses, although by then all diesel-engined, were invariably referred to as "patterl-buses". It's amazing that no licence was required to drive a large 7 or 8 ton vehicle which could deviate by quite a distance from the line of its wires and, as I was reminded when I graduated to driving low-powered cars, possessed sometimes alarming powers of acceleration! Enough of this - after all, we're a railway society - but don't miss the book!]

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

The following light-hearted piece was a contribution by me to Radio Telefís Éireann's "Sunday Miscellany" which was broadcast on 13th July 1997.

The railways of Ireland, particularly in the northern part, were almost totally decimated by closures during the 1950s and 1960s, yet their memory is still very vivid with the older generation, who have fond and often humorous recollections of the days of the steam train in their own areas.

The Cavan & Leitrim narrow gauge system, which opened in 1872, served these counties well for over seventy-two years. One of the company's most remarkable directors was a Reverend J.G. Digges who wrote copiously about that railway. Describing the rough ride to which passengers were sometimes subjected he observed, "Careful men took the precaution of putting their dentures in their pocket before embarking."

Another narrow gauge system was the Clogher Valley Railway which served the people of South Tyrone from 1887 to 1942. The track ran up the middle of the main street in Caledon, Augher and Clogher villages. During the coal shortages in the early years of World War II the mill workers of Caledon conceived a novel idea. They would spread butter on the rails so that the engine would slip to a stand on the hill. The workers would then pelt the driver and fireman with stones from behind a wall. The engine crew would retaliate with lumps of coal from the engine's bunker and these would be gratefully collected in buckets by the ambushers.

County Monaghan was completely served by the standard gauge Great Northern Railway. In October 1896 an engine crew was taking a goods train from Clones and Ballybay to Dundalk. Unfortunately, they stopped for too long in Castleblayney, where they visited a well-known pub in the vicinity of the station. Later, as they approached Dundalk, their wagons separated from the engine but they failed to notice this until they reached the goods yard at Barrack Street. They immediately reversed their engine, only to collide with their oncoming train at the square crossing just south of Dundalk's main station.

During the 1920s, GNR Headquarters sent a letter to the stationmaster at Monaghan demanding to know why there were no financial returns from the public toilets at his station, to which the stationmaster replied, "The inhabitants of Monaghan town had been stricken by a severe outbreak of constipation."

Which reminds me - as a youngster in 1942, I was travelling to the Irish College at Rannafast, Co

Donegal along with a good friend, now a senior figure in Dublin's legal circles. While changing from the GNR system to the County Donegal Railway at Strabane station my friend had occasion to go to the toilet but had no small change, so I gave him a penny to get into the toilet. Twenty minutes later I came back, to find him calling for my help as he was locked inside. And I had to part with another penny to get him out again - a memory that always comes back to me when I hear the expression "Spending a penny".

Monaghan people particularly regret the disappearance of the railway system, as theirs was the first county to be left completely and totally bereft of railway track.

Seamus McCluskey

Emyvale, Co. Monaghan

[The Caledon workers seem to have been rather profligate in their use of butter -even if it was home-made or smuggled - when a more cost-effective method would have been to use lubricant from their place of employment. The train-splitting en route to Dundalk was far from unique, being one of the hazards of working loose-coupled trains over undulating lines. The setting back probably only accelerated and exacerbated the inevitable as, if the wagons had reached the square crossing without meeting a main line train, there was every likelihood that violent reunification would have taken place at Barrack Street anyway. Breakaways are not confined to the distant past, having taken place much more recently - and without the aid of strong drink or mis-handling! - Ed.]



No.171 on the "Strawberry Fair" train at Enniscorthy on 5th July 1997. (Gerry Mooney)



No.461 at Banteer on the “Slieve Mish” railtour on 10th May 1997. (N. Poots)