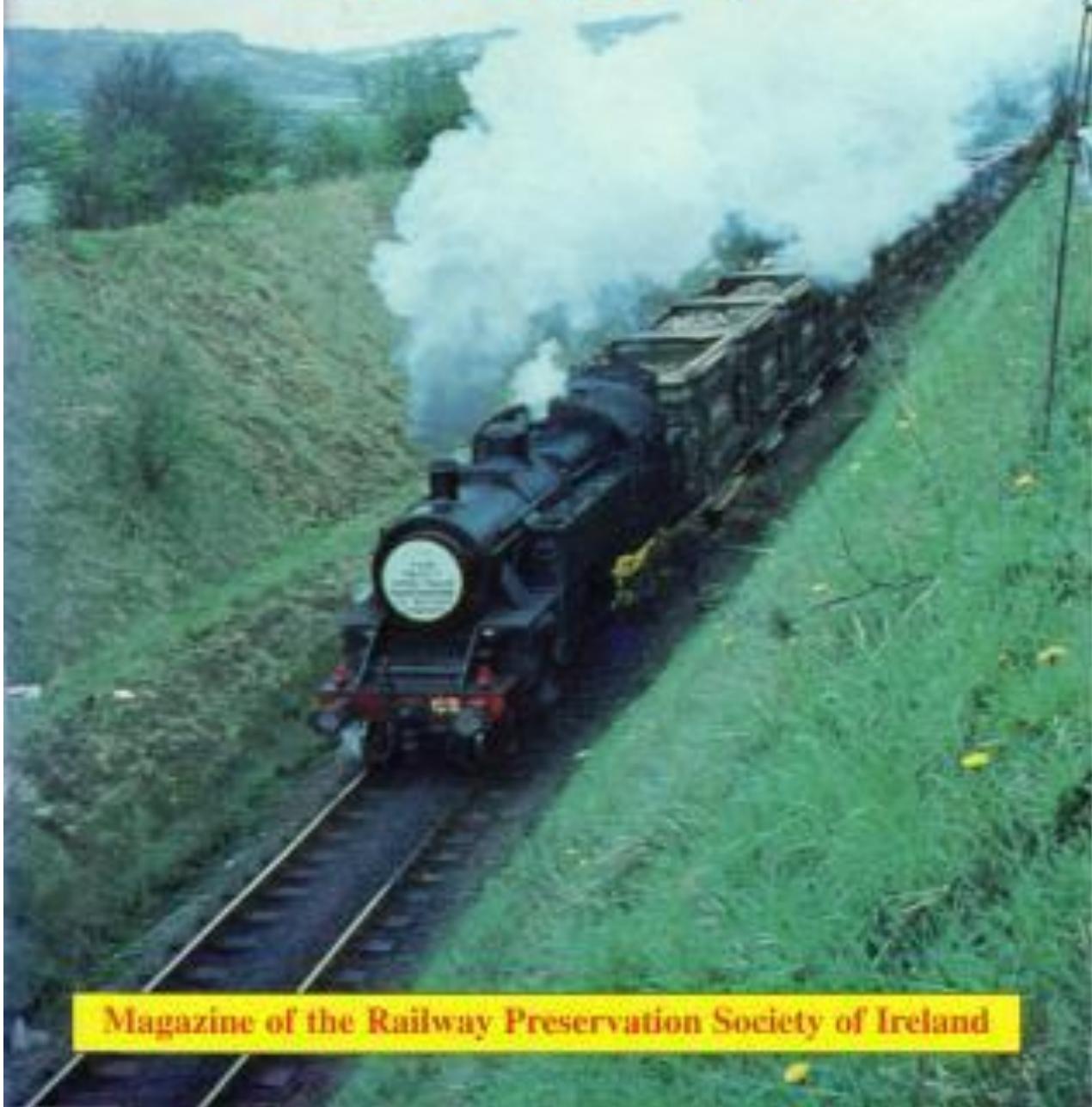


FIVE FOOT THREE



Magazine of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

FIVE FOOT THREE

No.46

Winter 1999/2000

Editor: Nelson Poots

CONTENTS

Editorial	
Chairman's Column	John Creaner
News From Council	Paul McCann
Locomotive Report	Peter Scott
Whitehead Site Report	Dermot Mackie
Belfast Area Operations	Evan Pamely
Dublin Area Operations	Peter Rigney
State Coach 351	David Humphries
30 Years On: Carrickfergus And The End of Steam	J.A. Cassells
Comments And Recollections	Laurence Liddle
One Small Island - Four Railways	Walter McGrath & Jack Phelan
Railway Hardware III	W.T. Scott
Bray, Dargan & Quin The Younger	James Scannell
Whitehead And The Railway	Mark Kennedy
Letters	
Book Review	

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

Front Cover: Never to steam again Jeep No.53 tackles Slaughterford bank, assisted in the rear by unseen No.4, with the final Stone Train on 2nd May 1970. (I.C. Pryce)

EDITORIAL

The Millennium! May the word be soon consigned to history, despite the efforts of various media to extract the last bits of mileage from it. Continuing the biblical theme introduced by our retiring Chairman: "and He spake unto them a parable"; when the UTA set about acquiring the "Jeeps" there was not a No.0; thus until No.10 was completed and delivered they did not have ten Jeeps and the next series, had the numbers been vacant, would have started at 11. So how does the so-called Millennium start at 2000?

Regardless of what may be regarded as nit-picking, the RPSI did not participate in this over-hyped event, although even a Whitehead Millennium Train Ride might have proved difficult to operate. Whatever the reasons, this turned out to be a good move as various highly priced cross-Channel railway events, like many events of all sorts everywhere, had to be cancelled due to lack of hysteria.



Though retired for several years, former NIR Loco Inspector Frank Dunlop is far from inactive and visited the 1999 Open Day at Whitehead. Having ensured that No.171 was presentable, he then gave visitors a guided tour of the loco. (W.T. Scott)

The changes whereby NIR became part of Translink may have led to some initial uncertainty but more recently meetings of responsible officers of the RPSI with senior management of Translink have gone a long way towards clarifying mutual objectives - even if they were initiated in a somewhat unusual manner!

As can be read elsewhere, what may well be the world's longest running main line train using preserved steam had to be cancelled for the 1999 season, after 25 years, due to the closure of Central Station-Central Junction as part of NIR's Dublin route upgrading. However, the support of North Down Borough Council helped to make the Flyer's replacement a success. Even more successful were the Belfast Santa trains - due in no small measure to the excellent BBC TV programme which (by accident or design?) came out at just the right time. Another of its producer's talents is lighting up engines at very unsocial hours, although one cannot but fear for the safety of his magnificent beard in the often unpredictable draughting of freshly lit-up locomotives!

It would appear that success can bring its own problems, one of which appears to be group seating. This may be exacerbated to some extent by the use of compartment coaches which to most modern-day travellers are something of a novelty and are appreciated by many family parties who find it pleasing to have 'their own place' even though they do not occupy all of the seats in it. A problem can arise when later groups arrive who are either too large to fit in or perceive the compartment as being 'taken'. Even with only a single ticket outlet, which would be a retrograde step, individual seat allocation for up to ten trains would be very difficult.

Obviously it pays to turn up in good time and then be prepared to be a little flexible, as was the case with the great majority. Unfortunately, one or two chose to stroll up to the barrier at departure time and then subject RPSI staff to unwarranted abuse when no red carpet appeared. A much more pleasing memory is that of seeing happy families leaving the Santa or Halloween trains and thanking members for a nice day.

Why "Thank-you" - after all, they'd paid us to take them? It just goes to show that there are still a lot of nice people around.

Dublin has been far from inactive and, in addition to a film train - only one this year! - turned out their own train of thespians (look it up if in doubt!) at Wexford. When will the old fishing boats come back to the Quay to put a decent look on the place?

And finally, as they say ... our retiring Chairman - retiring only in the sense of ceasing to hold office. When John took office, it was well known that, due to health problems, he would not be there ad infinitum but his legal background and general knowledge of people cannot have but helped the Society. Having come into the post at a fairly late stage in both his and the RPSI's career he was content to let his team of office-bearers get on with the job, nudging them in the direction he felt they should go or, perhaps, away from where he felt they should not, while he got on with the Chairman's role of meeting and greeting.

Anyway, assuming that this will be read before the next AGM - not least because in the interests of economy our Secretary likes to send out as much as possible in one posting - it's goodbye to John and all the best to his as yet unknown successor.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

John Creaner

Hail and Farewell. It's that time of the year again and I have to give some kind of account of my stewardship.

When it comes to the point of doing this I wish I had kept a diary and I would strongly recommend that my successor (what has he done to be so favoured of the gods?) should keep a diary of events.

Fortunately other contributors, the ones actually involved in the direct manual, fiscal, operations and other fields will be giving detailed accounts of their activities. Even if I could, I would not wish to trespass on their preserves.

For me and for the rest of the Society it has been a year to remember. To the usual attractions we added the Dundalk 150 trips and the Bangor Belles. These events were possible only through the support and enthusiasm of Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways and we are very grateful to them. Particular gratitude is owed to the good and friendly people of Dundalk and to North Down Borough Council who supported us with advertising campaigns and in many other ways hitherto thought almost impossible. I hope that relationships will be renewed and prosper in the coming years.

This year we also had the pleasure of meeting and welcoming our new Vice President, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, an Ulsterman of great distinction whose talents and enthusiasm will make him a very valued member of the Society. I had very pleasant meetings during the year with Joe Meagher and Ted Hesketh and other officials of the two railway companies who left me in no doubt that they wished for nothing but the good of the Society and that it should live long and prosper.

At the reception lunch as part of the Dundalk 150 celebrations I had for the first time in my life the pleasure of being given the biblical invitation “Friend, go up higher”, and indeed I had though perhaps not the worship, but certainly the crack of the presence of them that sat at meat with me. I for one have always lived in dread (as I am sure we all have) of being like the other fellow who was made to “go sit down in the lowest room”.

It would seem that someone with great diabolical influence has severely taken against the North Atlantic Express. There is a very potent curse on that operation. Enough said. Let us draw a veil over it and hope that the curse can be undone next year and for all future years.

My period as Chairman of the Society has been one of almost unalloyed pleasure. I got to meet many interesting new people, both within and outside the Society, people that I would not have encountered as an ordinary member. I had great fun as well as the odd stab of anxiety. I did find some of the exaggerated, and no doubt sham, deference from members a bit wearing at times. This was at its worst at meetings of Council where the almost puppy-like servience and obedience to my every whim would have been sickening, but that I knew that they meant it. And if you’ll believe that ...

Really, though, I was grateful and often deeply moved by the concern and goodwill towards me from countless people during the year, many of them completely unexpected. It was at the same time very humbling as well as heartening to be the object of so much care. My grateful thanks to you all and my very best wishes.

NEWS FROM COUNCIL

Paul McCann

1999 was a nondescript year - there was no major setback, nor was there any significant breakthrough. If anything can be said about the year it would be that it was business as usual, with a few doors closing and a few opening, with those of us going through the latter never knowing what was hiding behind.

The 1999 Council was elected at the AGM in March. Our new Vice-President, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, was introduced to the members but, as he didn't feel well enough acquainted with the proceedings of the Society, he left the presiding of the meeting to Chairman John Creaner. Operations Officers Joe Fitzpatrick and Heather Boomer stood down and were replaced by Charles McDonnell and Evan Pamely respectively. Bill King-Wood also joined Council for the first time. Unfortunately, due to ill-health, John Creaner had to retire from Council in November, but he has agreed to help out where he can in a legal capacity.

Council meetings are now held every two months on a Sunday in Dundalk, the feeling being that an all

afternoon meeting is more beneficial than monthly meetings in the evening in either Dublin or Belfast. A major item of discussion over the year was the renewal of the site lease for Whitehead - yes, the process does take that length of time, and still is not complete. We have agreed a further 25 year lease from Carrickfergus Borough Council at £2,500 per year, with an option to renew when that agreement expires. The rent was £175 for the past 25 years, so the effects of inflation can be readily seen.



Twenty years ago, the Whitehead Open Day saw the last main line appearance of No.186, seen here leaving with a return excursion to Belfast York Road. The date is 2nd June 1979 and the engine is in the livery it wore for the filming of "The First Great Train Robbery". (C.P. Friel)

Another crucial item of Council deliberations is a future carriage policy. With the ban on wooden-bodied stock on certain lines, we are conscious that we must avoid these lines or pay the cost of hiring stock from the railway companies. The other option is to obtain one, or even two sets, of steel coaches for our own use. Up to now it has been very easy to talk about this possibility as there was nothing available anyway. Now, however, NIR is actively seeking to reduce the size of its fleet of Mk2 coaches. For the Society this is decision time - should we consider the purchase of these carriages or should we hold out until IÉ's Cravens coaches become available? That certainly is one decision that will have to be made, but there is more to it than that. Other matters to be addressed are: (1) the condition of any coaches purchased and the cost of returning to traffic; (2) whether IÉ will allow ex-NIR coaches to run on their metals, and vice versa; (3) possible future restrictions on coaches of which there are no longer any examples in company service. Currently we are holding far-reaching discussions with the authorities in the south as to how we might proceed with a coaching policy. The intention is to take any outcome as a basis for discussions with authorities in the north.

Obviously, it is to be hoped that a satisfactory arrangement can be concluded to allow us access to all

lines. One alternative, a branch line, has not been recently considered, but the possibility arose with the announcement of a proposed national transport museum for Mullingar. Initial hopes were for a museum to be established within a few years, although this now seems very optimistic. One of the proposals suggested that the line between Mullingar and Athlone would be re-opened with a steam service. No doubt the Society would be a prime candidate for getting involved with this project. However, no commitments of any sort have been made, nor will they be unless we are assured that there is no risk to the Society's current operations, nor to the Society itself. A Council member sits on the museum's board so we are well placed to influence any decisions made.

The claim against the Northern Ireland Office for the destruction by arson of a number of carriages at Whitehead has been settled. The sum of £380,000 has been paid in compensation. In Society terms, it is a large amount of money but it will not go very far if used to restore the coaches destroyed or to purchase and turn out steel coaches. Plans for the future of the money are currently being discussed.

Moves have been made to heighten the Society's profile with the railway companies and within government circles. To that end, a number of meetings have been initiated with our President and Vice-Presidents. It is intended that more will follow and the process will be on-going.

A significant venture was started during the year when the Dublin Area Operations Committee hired the services of an agency to carry out telephone and administrative duties related to ticketing. Now, this is a very welcome relief for those volunteers who would otherwise have to carry out such time-consuming duties, but it comes at a cost, i.e. income that would otherwise go to the Society is now funding an outside commercial enterprise. For a number of years we were fortunate to have the services of retired members who were able to devote a considerable amount of time to the organising of operations. This is no longer the case and it is unfortunate that we have to spend hard-earned income on such services. To make matters worse, later in the year it was decided that the northern operations team would also need some outside help. Whereas normal ticketing could be arranged in-house, it was agreed that the annual railtour booking system, which for many years enjoyed the undivided attention of a single household almost constantly manned, now needed more attention than currently available. A secretary has recently been taken on for a trial basis to deal with telephone bookings. She will also take some of the burden off the Treasurer and help to organise filing for the Locomotive Department. If the trial is a success it will help to alleviate the burden on members of the above departments while re-establishing a knowledgeable human voice for telephone contacts. The downside is that those departments can expect to see their budgets reduced to pay for the secretarial services - unless, that is, the service is used to procure extra business to help pay for itself.

Dublin operations ran more or less as they have done in recent years with no major new venture. The Dublin area continues to be attractive to film makers and in virtually every year recently there is some contract, this year being no different with work on "Angela's Ashes" and a film on the life of James Joyce's wife, Nora Barnacle.

The Belfast Area Operations Committee this year saw a complete upheaval with five or six new faces on it. Members will have noticed a number of new operations from Belfast, although not all were a direct result of having a new committee. The main reason was the cancellation of the "Portrush Flyer" operations due to the Belfast Central line being closed over the summer. As options elsewhere were limited, members of the committee approached North Down Borough Council with a view to running a train to Bangor. They were very pleasantly surprised to discover that not only were NDBC very keen on the idea but they would advertise the proposed train, help to defray some of the costs and, more significantly, they requested another day's operation in conjunction with their annual festival. The outcome was two successful days of shuttles running to Bangor, on which NDBC provided entertainment, sweets and balloons for the children. At least three days of operation are planned for 2000, plus the further possibility of a higher profile charter later in the year.

The other new operation was the “Broomstick Special” at Halloween. All who travelled took it very seriously and there was hardly a child who did not make some effort to dress up for the occasion.

Two anniversaries were marked this year when special trains were run, in co-operation with the railway companies, for Dundalk 150 and Cork 150. In June the Schools Days were re-introduced and it is hoped to keep them on the calendar every year. Plans for 2000 are to bring back the much-missed “Portrush Flyer”, although it seems we will have to operate via Lisburn for another year as work on relaying the Bleach Green to Antrim line only started in November and is unlikely to be finished in time for our operations.

A major development for 2000 could well be the re-introduction of the “Steam Enterprise” - discussions are under way but nothing has been finalised yet. Given that the operation has not been run for many years, we will be hoping for a high profile re-launch and expect substantial support from members, given the fact that many have bemoaned the lack of steam on the Dublin line in recent years.



Will we be seeing this again in 2000? No.85 in a classic shot on a “Steam Enterprise” at Laytown on 26th September 1987. (C.P. Friel)

As has been the case in most recent years, the matter of crew training in Belfast and Dublin remains a problem. In each centre we have only two qualified steam drivers. Negotiations with the railway companies continue.

Over the past few years the Society has been undertaking two outside contracts, both now complete. The contract with the Downpatrick Railway Museum to overhaul their locomotive No.3 ended in October when the locomotive returned to Downpatrick. While the Society probably did not make a lot of money on the contract it was definitely a learning experience and will stand us in good stead should anything similar ever come our way again. The contract with John Mowlem to hire flat wagons for use in relaying the Belfast to Lisburn line was extended when the same company got hired to relay the Belfast Central line. The latter opened in August but some further maintenance work was involved and the wagons have only recently been finished with. It is unlikely that Farrans, the contractor for the Bleach Green-Antrim relay, will want the use of the wagons as they will be supplying the entire project

by road as there are numerous level crossings on the line, no adjacent running lines, and a double track formation to allow unrestricted access by lorries.

Progress on the installation of utilities in the locomotive workshop has been slower than would have been liked but nevertheless continues. The foundry, however, is up and running and is a valuable asset supplying locomotive and carriage parts. Some work for an outside party has been undertaken, and a number of replica locomotive number plates have already been sold to members.



***Having assisted with loading the Orenstein & Koppel loco on to a low-loader, "R.H. Smyth" poses below the King's Road bridge as the O&K leaves for Downpatrick on 2nd November 1999.
(C.P. Friel)***

I am grateful to Philip Lockett who has agreed to construct the Society's internet web site. A number of prototypes have been on-line during the year but the final version is still being compiled and it will go live during 2000.

Membership figures for 1999 were slightly up on 1998, being 1,009 compared to 994. The membership breakdown was: Northern Ireland, 375 (up); Republic of Ireland, 333 (up); Great Britain, 266 (down); Overseas, 35 (up). Alternatively: Adult, 702 (up); Senior, 185 (up); Junior, 25 (down); Life 63 (up); Honorary, 12; Family 20 (up); Societies 4. The number of Senior members continues to increase significantly, presumably due to the increasing age profile of the membership. We really need to attract new Junior members but this is proving increasingly difficult in this instant gratification Playstation age.

The usual thanks for help during the year now follow. Firstly, our insurance brokers, Marsh Ltd - new name, same firm - continue to provide an excellent service at what are, for insurance premiums, reasonable rates. A rise this year is mainly down to the UK government increasing the extortionate percentage which they extract.

We no longer use the board rooms of Northern Ireland Railways and Iarnród Éireann for Council meetings, but the Belfast Area Operations Committee do use the Translink conference room in Great Victoria Street station for their meetings, so thanks are due there.

Posts of Special Responsibility to the Secretary for 1999 were: Charles Friel (Belfast Meetings); Nelson Poots ("Five Foot Three" Editor); Johnny Glendinning (Museums Liaison Officer); Philip Lockett (Web Manager). Again this year there was no official Legal Advisor as the previous incumbent had to relinquish the post when he became Chairman - however with John's retirement from Council he will again be able to provide legal advice (or press gang a replacement). 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. What is missing is a member in Dublin with his ear close to the ground, and with computer access, who would be able to assist Philip Lockett to keep the southern information on the web site up to date - any offers?

Also, thanks to all those members who served on the various sub-committees: Operations both north and south who organised the running of our trains; Finance which ensured that our financial situation stayed on the rails, setting budgets for all the spending departments; Workshop which has responsibility for the general running of the site at Whitehead. These committees relieve Council members of a lot of the day-to-day running of the Society, leaving Council meetings to concentrate (in theory) on the broader picture, making decisions on policy.

As usual I would like to appeal to members to get actively involved in helping to run the Society. From the above you will note that outgoings have increased as outside agencies are now being paid for work which was once carried out by Society volunteers. As a result there is less available for spending on locomotives and coaches. You could either help to raise extra funds to pay for that outside help, or take on some of the work that is currently being paid for. Finally, my thanks to all our members for helping to keep steam on the rails. To those who do take an active role and are not mentioned by name above, you are appreciated by the Society, and steam on the main lines of Ireland is its own reward.

LOCOMOTIVE REPORT

Peter Scott

The current locomotive position is as follows:

3 Ex LPHC 0-6-0ST shunting loco. In traffic, Whitehead.

The "Derry Engine" - There is nothing dramatic to report but we have been generously donated materials for a much needed repainting. Being the magical year 2000, this may in fact happen. There are other rumours regarding this engine and year 2000 - hopefully not of the bug variety which is all too prevalent when it comes to steam engines and unusual things. Watch this space, as they say.

4 Ex NCC 2-6-4 T. Major Overhaul, Whitehead.

Our main on-going work during the year has been the overhaul of loco No.4 "The Tank Engine". The boiler is now virtually complete with hydraulic and steam testing out of the way and only the superheater and some cladding to fit.

The mechanical overhaul is well advanced and at the time of writing the loco is soon to be wheeled and the boiler fitted. Originally, the boiler was thought to be in most need of major attention, and for this reason ERDF grant aid was sought, and duly obtained - for which we are most grateful. Only a small grant allocation was made to the mechanical work, much of which had been done piecemeal over several years.

But when stripped down it was found that nearly everything was in need of attention - from worn out brake pins and bushes to shapeless cylinder liners. Even the driving wheels, which had been re-profiled once in the Society's ownership, needed attention again even if only to ensure that the loco sticks the pace for the next 10 years.

Incidentally, the cylinder liners are now bored out to nearly $19\frac{3}{8}$ inches which should, in theory, give a

4% increase in tractive effort.

Most of the mechanical work involving expenditure has been funded out of the Society's own income. Maybe this is not the place to raise such issues, but I would remind everyone that the overhaul of a locomotive is an expensive undertaking and must be funded from some source or other. I was recently asked why we took on such work as the Mowlem wagon contract and the overhaul of the Orenstein and Koppel locomotive, instead of working at No.4. The answer is quite simple - the two contracts mentioned were properly funded, the work on loco No.4 was not. The contract work kept our paid staff in employment, so that they were then available to work on loco 4 as time permitted - and also were available to carry out the retubing of No.85 in double quick time. He who pays the piper calls the tune and where there is funding available, that is where time and effort will be directed. My own impression is that our limited number of train operations could never generate funding on the scale necessary to service major overhauls, and if our train operations provide for running maintenance and minor repairs and renewals, then this is reasonable and all that should be expected.



Great amounts of scale and other disagreeable material are in evidence as the O&K locomotive's boiler is lifted in April 1997. Eddie Creamer is obviously enjoying his workout on the Whitehead Exerciser! (P.A. Scott)

27 Ex SLNCR 0-6-4T loco. In store, Whitehead. Needs major repairs.

85 Ex GNRI 4-4-0 compound express passenger loco. In Traffic, Whitehead.

“Merlin” tends to see less use nowadays because of route restrictions and the absence of the “Steam Enterprise”, but did make a brief appearance for the Cork 150 celebrations. This is easily passed off in one sentence, but involved the loco running light from Whitehead to Limerick Junction, operating the

passenger workings as required and returning light, all over several days - all without problems bar a temporarily jammed clack valve. However, the loco had just received a set of small boiler tubes together with hydraulic test and reassembly - no mean feat with the bulk of the work concentrated into one week. Our admiration and thanks go to our full time staff for a magnificent effort.

171 Ex GNRI 4-4-0 express passenger loco. In Traffic, Whitehead.

No.171 continues to be the main Whitehead based loco, and also continues in black livery - a source of irritation to some of our members and a matter of which we are not unmindful. The loco was painted black for film work and rather than waste manpower in repainting her blue, with its involved lining out, a temporary job was made by restoring her to authentic GNR(I) black livery. However, the temporary nature of this is increasingly brought home as more and more of the black wears off and the blue comes through like a guilty secret. As with No.3, year 2000 may come into play and there may just be changes!

No.171 has continued to faithfully perform her duties but those who endured the "Atlantic Coast Express" can be forgiven if they raise questions. The Atlantic Coast Express has traditionally run in September each year and of late has not been one of our happier ventures. The train runs to Derry and back and last year we got to Derry very late and nearly not back at all. Part of the problem was loco water supplies but the main problem was an unfamiliar type of coal. To blame the crew, or the choice of coal, would be quite wrong - circumstances dictate that we must try different fuel sources from time to time as other sources come to an end or alter in quality.

The late driver Percy Mitchell was asked by an inquisitive passenger what sort of coal was used nowadays. "Oh, the black stuff yet," was the prompt reply. All the coal we have ever used has been black but there the comparison ends. Over the years, we have endured clinkering coal, dusty coal, large coal, small coal, slacky coal, sparky coal, smoky coal, coal that is too hot and burns out firebars, coal that takes ages to light, coal whose ash would not fall through the bars but all stayed in the firebox, and on one occasion coal that wouldn't burn at all. (We didn't pay for that lot, it was donated - thanks.) In short, we have had every sort of coal under the sun, but consistent supplies of something that approximates to the ideal has always eluded us. So I would ask that no-one be too critical while we try different fuel possibilities. I don't mean to imply undue criticism of the coal suppliers - after all, they are limited by what is dug out of the ground for their main consumers, and usage by steam locomotives is now a very small part of their business. But a suitable fuel of consistent quality and long term availability is essential to any steam train operator, and the consequences of falling short in this respect are potentially serious. Anything that delays or stops a train or distracts the crew is bad news, quite apart from ruining the day for organisers and participants alike. So improving the fuel situation will be high on our priority list.

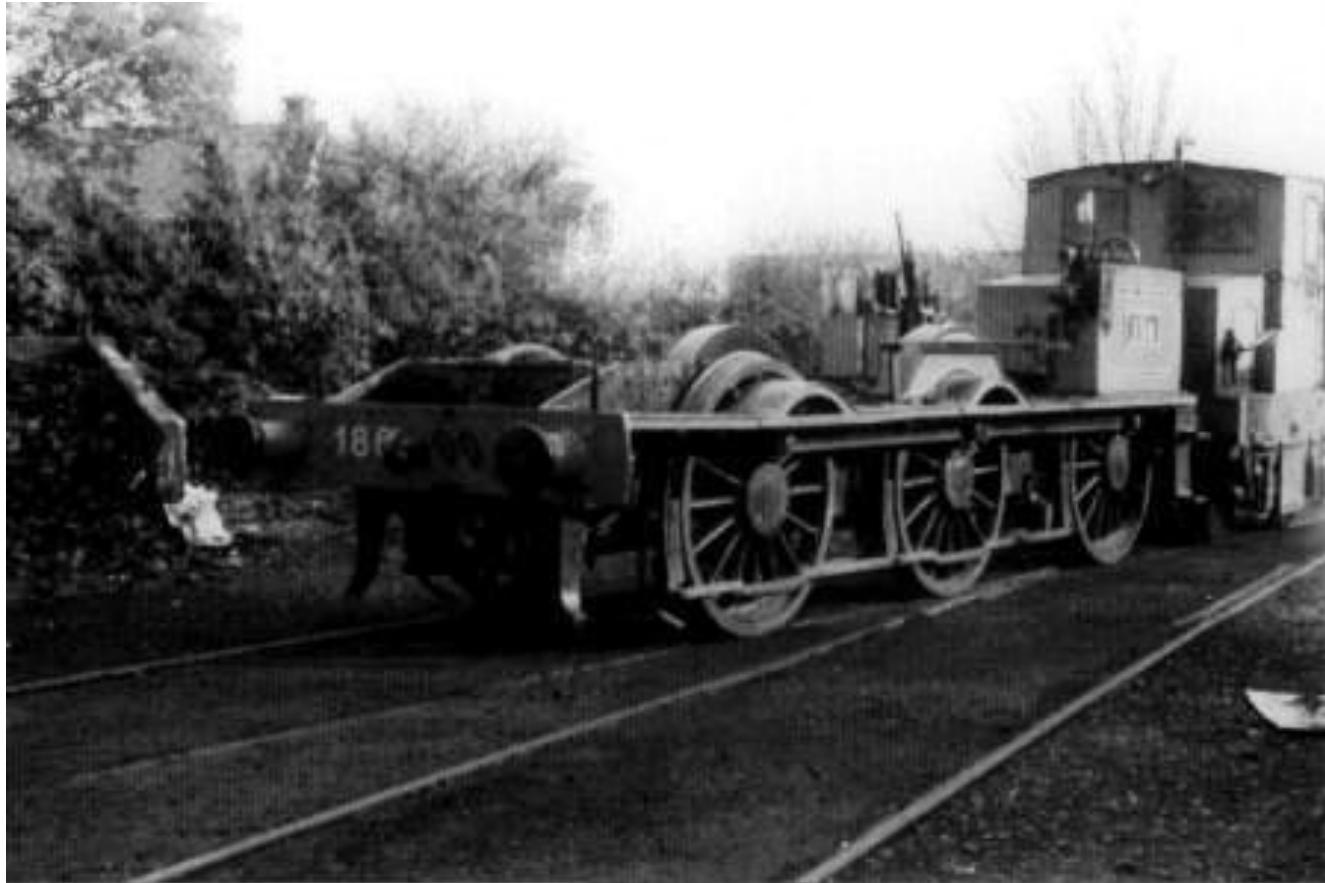
184 Ex GSR 0-6-0 standard goods loco. In store, Mullingar. Needs major repairs.

186 Ex GSR 0-6-0 standard goods loco. Whitehead.

In order to establish a policy to ensure locomotive availability for the medium term, we decided to return loco No.186 to Whitehead from Inchicore where she had remained after the Open Day 3 years ago. The loco duly arrived - after a short sojourn in the docks at Belfast. This came about because of the logistics of transportation, and our best thanks are due to Messrs Coastal Containers who accommodated the loco at very short notice. The boiler has now been removed and opened up for thorough inspection, and sufficient descaling done to the cylinder block to establish that the loco is free from the problems that beset No.184 in this area. Once a reasonably accurate repair cost is established, we can decide whether to proceed with overhaul or not.

More than one member has remarked to me that the new millennium would just not be complete without a J15 bumbling about somewhere - after all they were once the most numerous of Irish loco

and unlike the other remaining classes have actually seen the previous century. Being a very simple loco compared with the later designs, relatively inexpensive return to traffic may be possible within the “new millennium” timescale - depending upon whether you believe year 2000 or 2001 is actually the first year. (I go for 2001 - “1” is the first of anything, not “0” - they numbered the J15s from 101 onwards, after all!)



No.186 did not rest long at Whitehead before its boiler was removed for inspection. Here the long-suffering diesel No.23 propels the remainder into the loco shed. (P.A. Scott)

461 Ex DSER goods loco. Minor repairs, Dublin.

No.461 is approaching the end of her 10 year boiler overhaul period, which requires the boiler to be removed and opened up for thorough examination not normally possible with parts obscured by the locomotive frames. Logically this is the time for major mechanical work as well, and No.461 needs attention on several fronts. The precise date of her ‘swansong’ is yet to be clarified. No.461 was actually the second loco returned to traffic from a derelict state by the Society (the first was No.184), and was entirely funded by the Society’s own resources, limited as they were. Once a few teething troubles like hot bearings and poor steaming were knocked into shape, No.461 proved to be a faithful and reliable machine and her retirement from active service will hopefully be a temporary one.

23 Ex Irish Shell Diesel shunter. In Traffic, Whitehead.

Needs general servicing and painting. Awaiting availability of “Carlow” diesel.

“Carlow” Diesel. Ex CSE diesel shunter.

Loco is at present receiving routine testing of air receivers and attention to an elusive gearbox problem.

Orenstein and Koppel Loco No.3. Contract for DARCo.

“The O&K” as it came to be known, was overhauled on a contract basis for the Downpatrick and Ardglass Railway. When it arrived in derelict and unserviceable condition in 1997, more than one person questioned the wisdom of any attempt to restore it. However, 2½ years later the ‘derelict’ competently pulled its first train for some forty years and shortly after this was delivered to its owners by road low loader.

Part of the work involved the fitting of vacuum equipment to enable the hauling of passenger coaches - did this loco or its sisters ever haul passengers before? I doubt if they ever saw anything but beet wagons, but maybe some of our historians know differently.



Due to its original place of work, the O&K was disrespectfully referred to by some as the “Sugar Puff”. Here, on steam test, it is about to do some puffing. Witnesses of the event report that its puffing was very discreet and its machinery almost noiseless. (P.A. Scott)

Workshop

The new workshop building has of course been available for some time and the new covered space has proved invaluable. Work currently under way there is the overhaul of loco No.4’s driving wheelsets and her bogie and pony. A piece of equipment recently brought into action has been a crank pin truing machine - this is currently being used to skim the worn crankpins of loco No.4. It has been designed to operate whether or not the wheels are removed from the loco, so that any possible “casualty” repairs can be handled. Other on-going work is the overhaul of coach bogies. The overhead crane (the belt driven relic from 1897) is nearly operational and is undergoing testing.

Installation of machine tools awaits the provision of electric supplies which is now getting under way - this work must be largely done on a voluntary basis due to funding constraints so unfortunately it can't just be completed overnight.

Again I would express my thanks to those who assisted with the workshop project - gradually we are asking how on earth did we ever do without it?

Foundry.

Our iron casting activities have concentrated on a large backlog of brake blocks and firebars. However, we have also completed several outside contract jobs, (nothing to do with railways - one involved making replacement finials or 'spikes' for Victorian railings in Belfast city centre). Another sideline has been to make replica cast iron notices and maker's plates - these will be offered for sale as a fund raising effort. For example, we have already advertised the replica of No.4's "Derby" maker's plate, any proceeds from which will of course assist with the overhaul of the loco itself.



Whitehead's latest in-house product - the crankpin machine - in action on one of No.4's driving wheels. The driving belt tensioner is not fully visible but consisted of a chain hoist attached to the guard iron of the pony truck in the background! (P.A. Scott)

Loco Crewing/Training/Certification

It is fundamental to our operations that we have sufficient personnel both capable of operating our locomotives and available when required. Clearly the whole picture has changed over the years with the gradual retirement of those who grew up with steam traction, and the appearance of those to whom it is all new. One thing that has certainly emerged is that younger firemen and drivers are perfectly

capable of both the interest and the competence necessary - success with steam locos is not necessarily reserved for those with a lifetime of experience or coal dust instead of blood in their veins. It does however require a feel for what is after all a very basic machine that needs continual observation and appropriate action on the part of the crew. No reliance can be placed on electronic wheelslip detection, automatic matching of fuel consumption to power used, and the handy bell or buzzer to remind you when something is going wrong!

Training, re-training, record keeping and certification of those involved in train operation and other safety critical activities are an essential part of the procedures appropriate to the railway industry and it is the Society's policy to carry out or assist with this where it becomes necessary.



The finished article, ready for departure to Downpatrick where its owners are said to be well pleased with Whitehead engineering. (I.C. Pryce)

Other Locomotive Possibilities

There have been persistent rumours regarding the overhaul and return to traffic of locomotives other than those belonging to or loaned to the Society. This may to some extent be wishful thinking on the part of those who would like to see something different for a change. To those working on the locomotives, there is never a dull moment because the work is never ending and the problems thrown up are often new ones. Also, "better the devil you know". But to members and others travelling on our trains, the same old loco year after year becomes commonplace and the behind the scenes work required to keep it running gets ignored. This is quite understandable - but I hope everyone realises that there is a limit to our ability to field locomotives. We really only have seven main line locos at our disposal and some must be undergoing overhaul while others are in traffic so that we get a return on the capital invested in them! Regarding other locomotive possibilities, I cannot comment on locos not

owned by or loaned to the Society - other than to say that I have heard the rumours too, and what I have heard so far has not made me discouraged!

WHITEHEAD SITE REPORT 1999

Dermot Mackie

After the excesses of the mid-winter break, the first Saturday in the year brought physical exercise as the Site Gang began to demolish the redundant block walls of the wheel lathe house. John, Philip and Tim Lockett made a good start but it was heavy work. Two weeks later, I hired a kango hammer for the job but only succeeded in trapping a nerve in my back which put me out of action for a month. While I was away, the lads finished the job.

When I got back to work, I used the JCB and with help from Thomas Charters and Trevor Mounstephen managed to dig out the first of the three very deep foundations for the hydraulic wheel press. The second foundation was finished at the end of February with help from John Wolsley and Bob Davison. The last was finally excavated in early March. In each instance, the holes were carefully filled with concrete blocks from the wheel lathe to make a solid found. During this time Bill King-Wood meticulously made the shuttering and the concrete base was eventually poured at the end of March.



The Whitehead Shop, looking much the better for its new roof. (J. Wolsley)

During the winter months, the flat roof of the platform shop began to leak even more than usual. Inspection showed that the structure itself was sound and of a better quality construction than an equivalent modern replacement so it was decided to erect a new NCC style pitched roof, complete with overhang, on to the frame of the original shop. This was finished in early April - just in time for the Easter Bunny train rides. A midweek squad, which included David Henderson and Trevor Wood, replaced the water-damaged ceiling panels in May and the shop now constitutes an attractive - and lucrative - feature of our Whitehead operations.

On three Saturdays in May the site team, including Robin Morton and the carriage squad, were busy preparing for the final concreting of a large part of the central passageway in the carriage shed. After a big shunt, 42 tonnes of hardcore were laid with the help of the JCB. This was followed by tamping, a waterproof membrane and reinforcing steel. The concrete was poured on the 22nd May and it is now possible to walk safely from the side door, halfway along the shed to the front doors. This work was considered essential to the safe conduct of the Schools Days in early June, but it has also greatly benefited the care and maintenance of our carriage stock and, into the bargain, looks especially smart since Mark Kennedy has given it a coat of dark red sealing paint.

June saw the annual scrap drive with cast iron chairs being salvaged from the rotting sleepers that were replaced on the platform road. These will be melted down in our new foundry to make brake blocks, piston valves and cylinders. The sleepers, which made a large pile at the back of the site, were tinder dry by the end of July. This coincided with the Society's Open Day, so when the stock had been moved, we took the opportunity to light a deluxe bonfire which burnt with alarming intensity! August was a very busy operating month but with the help of our resident welder we started on much needed repairs to the cab of the JCB. This progressed as and when time permitted but I am glad to report that the cab is now self-supporting and the driver's seat is dry.



Concrete pouring in progress in the carriage shed. (J. Wolsley)

After the trouble with the northern umbrella tank at Ballymena on the Derry trip, Alan McRobert made a few local enquiries and was able to obtain the help at the Ballymena Fire Station. Green Watch emptied the tank as a training exercise and this enabled repairs to be made to the plunger mechanism and the tank to be cleared of accumulated rubbish and rusty mud. The newly renovated system was

successfully swung into action on the “Coleraine ‘Shopper”.

Almost all of the site gang turned out to build the rail ramps for the unloading of No.186 and the loading of Downpatrick’s Orenstein and Koppel locomotive on 2nd November. The job was finished by lunchtime and, since the weather was fine and there was plenty of help, it was decided to lift the very last 60ft section of timber sleepers from the platform road. These timbers were in fair condition, having been replacements for worse specimens in 1994, and are stored for future use. A fortnight later the section was re-laid with concrete sleepers and the road was cleared for traffic in time for the Broomstick Belle at the end of the month.

In the next thousand years, we intend to complete work on the electrics within the locomotive workshop, to replace the interlaced timbers at the Larne end of the platform road and to lay more concrete in the carriage shed. To do this we will need help - bodies are required for a good mixture of indoor and outdoor activities - just like in the holiday brochures for Blackpool, ‘fresh air and fun’!

BELFAST AREA OPERATIONS

Evan Pamely

1999 has been a challenging time for a new Ops Committee. While glad of the presence of members who “know the ropes” there were several new recruits who made it possible to spread the work load.

As you will recall, it was clear from the start that the Portrush Flyer would not run. This was a great disappointment to us all. Other differences this year have been co-operation with IÉ and NIR for the 150th anniversary celebrations in Dundalk and Cork and the provision of ticket outlets in Belfast, Bangor and Lisburn.

Encouraged by support from North Down Borough Council we decided to run to Bangor in place of Portrush. These trips proved popular and have contributed to our funds from the outset. The other innovation this year was the Broomstick Special. As with any new operation we expected a loss, which in the event was in the region of £500. Although well supported, the trains were not full. I was amazed at how popular the event proved to be. The majority of the children came in fancy dress, as did some of the adults. More prizes would be useful next year. The whole event had a festive atmosphere and clearly shows potential for the future.

The repeat trains we ran were the Steam and Jazz, the Atlantic Coast Express and the Belfast Santas, including the Coleraine Shopper. The Steam and Jazz was well patronised and this has encouraged us to try running two next year. There were some logistic problems relating to access to the bar and refreshments which need to be addressed. The Atlantic Coast Express was at best a forgettable experience. It highlighted the importance of maintaining fully operational lineside equipment and the problems which can arise when both NIR and RPSI personnel do not act appropriately in unusual circumstances.

Before saying anything about the Santa Specials I must comment on David Dillon’s programme “Keeping Up Steam”. Screened on BBC TV after the Coleraine Shopper it turned our already popular Santa trains into an overnight sell-out. I have heard many comments from the public praising the programme and it has undoubtedly considerably raised public awareness of the RPSI.

The content and quality of the programme were outstanding, showing an accurate and appealing overall view of RPSI activities.

Although we only sold the Santa trains to capacity we still had some difficulty finding seats together for large groups who arrived just before departure. This resulted in strident complaints which required remedy. One group we were unable to seat and they received a full refund; for the others we found seats but not together and they received a 50% refund, the total returned being £74. It appears that this is not a problem for the Dublin Santas and I can only conclude that the Belfast Public are more

demanding.

The 150th anniversaries provided great opportunities for the RPSI to run main line trains. These were of course Iarnród Éireann operations with the co-operation of NIR, the RPSI providing the motive power. The Dundalk 150 was a splendid day's celebration of the historic connection between the town and the GNR(I). This involved two separate trains, No.85 from Belfast and No.171 from Dublin. For Dundalk people there were return trips to Drogheda and Poyntzpass. I was not there for the Cork 150 but I understand that the climb by No.85 out of Cork was exhilarating, a useful trial for our own tour. We are pleased and proud to have been associated with these events.



No.171 "Slieve Gullion" climbs past Craigavon on a proving run to Bangor on 6th March 1999.
(C.P. Friel)

We are still working on arrangements for the 2000 May Railtour. Going to Cork requires the co-operation of several IÉ departments to give the crew the necessary route knowledge, provide the Cravens carriages and ensure track access on the day, but I am hopeful that all arrangements will be made in time and that the Tour will go ahead as planned.

Temporary route availability restrictions of the locomotives on some lines has lately minimised our possible destinations. It looks as though, with the completion of the line upgrade, we shall be going to Galway in 2001 and enquiries have already been made of the hotels there. The Sligo line upgrade is due to be completed in time for us to visit Sligo in 2002 and then Westport in 2003.

Iarnród Éireann have also agreed to provide coaches for a Steam Enterprise this coming year. They have been most helpful and we look forward to a return to the Great Northern main line in April.

From the outset we wished to make our tickets more readily available to the public. Thus we enquired of Bryson House and Lisburn and Bangor Tourist Centres if they would sell tickets for us.

They all agreed and have done good work during the year. The Tourist Information Centres, including Carrickfergus, have worked well together while in Belfast the public have appreciated being able to buy tickets in the City Centre. The staff in all places have worked very well selling our tickets and are to be greatly thanked for their efforts.



No.171 runs round its train, the “Coleraine Shopper” at Ballymoney on 27th November 1999
(C.P. Friel)

In 1998 we had problems of clinkering and slack with coal purchased in Belfast. As a result, in 1999 we decided to try Polish Steam Raising Coal. We were told that it was unique and would provide good heat if used correctly. This has indeed proved to be the case but unfortunately only our more adaptable crews have been able to master the technique of using it. More than once it has proved unmanageable, so for the last two days of the Santa season we tried coal from Ellington colliery, the last remaining deep mine in North-East England. Its higher volatile content made it more suited to the firing technique normally employed by our firemen and No.85 was not short of steam for the whole of the two days and there was only a little clinker in the grate on disposal of the loco.

Unfortunately, the Ellington pit is scheduled to close soon but hopefully another suitable coal will be found.

I have to thank many people for their assistance, not least the other members of the Belfast Area Operations Committee. It is also important that we acknowledge with thanks the assistance and co-operation of the management and staff of Translink, Northern Ireland Railways. I believe we have had a successful year and plans are already well advanced for next year. With sustained effort from a developing team I believe the year 2000 will see the resurgence of a renewed RPSI presence in the Belfast area.

Our pattern of events was the same in this year as in other years. In all, 15 operations were conducted, of which 14 were behind steam. The season starting with an early Good Friday, followed by a barbecue, three Rosslares and concluding with two Santas. Even the film work went to pattern, with a day being spent in Pearse.

Our Santa trips went to Greystones for the second year in succession, as our usual Maynooth venue was off limits due to work on doubling the track. DART services to Greystones have not commenced, but the overhead has been live since June. We took water in Greystones with the current switched off, and with a permit to work issued by the Electrical Engineer.



No.461 worked the Ballybophy-Limerick leg of the “Saint Munchin “ Railtour on 8th May 1999 and is seen here at Roscrea. (C.P. Friel)

Coaches

1142 was dropped from the set, and an opportunity was taken to move her to Inchicore for an internal and external repaint, in order to be an appropriate companion vehicle for 351 at its launch in 2000. This opportunity was availed of, even at the price of running a seven-coach train.

1383 in Mullingar is close to completion, and hopefully will return to Dublin in the spring, and be replaced with sister vehicle 2423.

Special Events

Recent years have seen a number of charter trips for incentive groups and the like. These involve a

mid-morning departure from Pearse, a run down the South Eastern with catering supplied either by the Society or a contractor, and a return either before or after the evening rush hour.

This year we ran two such specials. On 26th May we ran to Greystones, returning empty for an incentive group from Holland, while on 15th July we ran to Arklow for the Royal Society of Chemists, who were holding their annual conference in Trinity College. On this occasion we conveyed our passengers to Rathdrum, where they took to coaches to see Wicklow. The train then ran to Arklow for servicing, and then returned to Rathdrum to collect the party and bring them back to Dublin.

Inchicore

On 27th June an open day was held in Inchicore. This was on a much smaller scale than that of 1996, but had No.461 in steam in an exhibition of modern and contemporary rolling stock, which included 351, freshly painted, but minus gangways.

Nora Barnacle

Our one and only film of this year bore this title, and concerned the wife of James Joyce. Station scenes such as this are a regular feature of the engineer's sidings at Pearse. The venue was supposed to be Galway in 1904, and the presence of 1142 was mandatory. Although the coach was then in the ramps in Inchicore receiving attention, one side and two compartments were finished by George Dempsey and his crew so as to be available for the shooting day of 23rd May.

Ghost Train

This was one of the most unorthodox events that the Society personnel have been involved in. It was conceived as part of a major open air festival timed to coincide with the end of the 1999 Wexford Opera Festival, and involved a train comprising a number of acts in specially constructed sets on flat wagons moving along Wexford quays, with a ghost train theme.

The locomotive left Connolly in the early afternoon of Sunday 31st October, arriving in Enniscorthy as darkness fell. Here we took water and collected our train of five flat wagons with open sided containers, and a goods brake van, fresh from overhaul in Limerick wagon works.

Three of the wagons had a stage set built on them, and the other two wagons contained a generator and a sound desk. Staff from Limerick Works were on hand to see that the sets were in gauge, and to ensure that the sets were secured for travel to Wexford. Each stage contained an act on the ghost train theme complete with vampires, demented scientists and assorted ghouls.

We left Enniscorthy under the watchful eye of regional inspector Mick Dunne, and went cautiously at a 20mph along the moonlit banks of the Slaney. Travel in a goods brake van is an unusual experience in these times. Thankfully, the weather was mild, as the rebuild of the van did not include a stove.

On arrival at Wexford, the scene changed totally. The platform was packed with actors and production personnel, all of whom rushed onto the train to get their acts ready. At the signal, the train departed cautiously along Wexford Quays, which had been transformed into an open-air theatre for the occasion, and which was packed to capacity. On three occasions, the train stopped and the actors did their stuff. After one final encore, a spectacular fireworks display commenced as the train crossed the Crescent Bridge, and disgorged actors and some technical gear. Having ensured that the sets were tied down we set out for Rosslare Harbour arriving there at two minutes to midnight, tired and thankful for the facilities which are offered to hotel residents at this late hour.

Monday dawned wet, and the lighting up crew surveyed a grey sea as they trudged down the hill from their B&B. As soon as the crew arrived rested from their exertions, the wagons were shunted to allow the loco an 11:00 departure. The weather cleared as we waited for the down passenger to cross us at Rosslare Strand, and we enjoyed a fine run to Rathdrum where we had tea and scones while waiting for

the afternoon passenger to cross us. As luck would have it we got a good path through DART land, and arrived back in Connolly at about tea time, thus concluding one of the strangest yet Society ventures and one which due to weather and time of year, has gone totally un-photographed

The last event before the Santas did not involve the loco, but involved three coaches providing a train for A39, for the tenth anniversary of the Irish Traction Group. 1916, and diner 2421 ran to Wicklow and back.

Anniversaries

1999 might be regarded as the year of the two anniversaries, as our operations began with the Dundalk 150, and finished with the Cork 150. Both of these events marked the 150th anniversaries of the arrival of the railway in these respective locations

These events are undertaken at cost by the Society, and form part of our public service remit. In each case, the programme was drawn up by local IÉ staff, and involved local and civic dignitaries in suitable events, combined with a special train for local people.



No.85 at Dundalk for the “Dundalk 150” anniversary trains. (I.C. Pryce)

The first event was in April, where two trains of Cravens met in Dundalk. This event was masterminded by Brendan McQuaid, the stationmaster. It involved No.85 hauling a train from Belfast, where it met No.171 which had hauled a similar train from Dublin. Both trains consisted of Cravens and Dutch vans, the last standard gauge vehicles to be built in Dundalk. At Dundalk, two simultaneous local trips were run to Drogheda and Poyntzpass respectively. These trips were full to capacity. Upon return to Dundalk, No.85 posed for photos with preserved coaches 88, 1335 and TPO 2978, before returning to Connolly, where after a brief interval in Connolly, it ran to Inchicore suitably placed for the two-day tour.

Almost as soon as the Dundalk event concluded, rumours began to circulate about a similar event for Cork in the autumn. In the event what materialised was a run between Limerick Junction and Cork. In the down direction No.85 would collect a Mark 2 set in Limerick Junction, and convey a trainload of dignitaries with stops and ceremonies in Mallow and Kilbarry, a suburb on Cork's north side, where the railway temporarily terminated before Cork tunnel was completed.

No.85 ran light to Dublin on the Wednesday, and to Limerick Junction on Thursday. On a wet Saturday morning she picked up her set of 5 Mk2s and an EGV. Loco Inspectors P.J. Lenihan and J. Ryan of Cork met us at the Junction. The train was immaculately turned out and set for in-seat refreshments. Heading south of Limerick Junction she made good time, with stops at Charleville for water, and Mallow for ceremonies. On arrival at Cork the loco proceeded to the shed for coal water and turning, prior to a 16:00 departure. A large crowd bought tickets to travel on the return leg, which would be diesel hauled back to Cork.



Steam and foul weather serve to highlight No.85 at the “Cork 150” event. The umbrella appears inadequate! (I.C. Pryce)

No.85 was blowing off as we left Cork station. We had six steel coaches - the maximum a GSR 400 was allowed was seven coaches, probably of lighter construction. The worst part of the climb out of Cork only begins when you leave the tunnel, and head into a steeper, sharply curved section. No.85 performed well in the capable hands of Tony Renahan, and arrival in Mallow was five early. The opportunity was taken here to sweep down the masses of dirt which had been blown from the roof of Cork tunnel and which accumulated on the running plate and firebox top, thus blinding the footplate crew. After a fast run, we arrived at Charleville and took water, arriving before time in a congested

Limerick Junction, where things were somewhat in disarray due to a buffer-locked beet special.

Most of the RPSI crew went home on the 17:30 ex Cork leaving a small group to accompany No.85 back to Dublin and ultimately Whitehead on the Sunday. Thus ended an almost 600 mile round trip for the newly retubed No.85.

The next major 150th anniversaries are Galway (2001) Derry (2002) and Killarney and Waterford which both fall in 2003. Of interest only to the younger members will be Rosslare Harbour (2056), *[How about a centenary for the less young? - Ed.]* although by that stage we will hopefully have done reopening specials to Navan via the MGWR and to Monaghan via Armagh

Tony Foley

No account of 1999 would be complete without a mention of the retirement of Inspector Tony Foley. Tony is the last Irish Rail driver who came through the steam line of promotion of cleaner, fireman and driver. Attached to Inchicore, he has crewed RPSI specials since the early eighties. His commitment to a coherent system of crew training has enabled the Society's activities on IÉ to continue as they have. He also expressed a strong dislike (to put it mildly) for No.184, on the basis of his experiences on her during the last days of steam.

Cork 150 - A Postscript by W.T. Scott

November 1999 saw the 150th anniversary of the GSWR main line from Dublin to a temporary terminus at Blackpool (at the northern end of the Cork tunnel). The occasion was celebrated by a special steam train hauled by No.85 from Limerick Junction to Cork and back.

The load was six bogies and the day was extremely wet and misty; nonetheless the locomotive pounded confidently up the gradient from Cork. The bank starts at 1 in 76 in the tunnel and about halfway through steepens to 1 in 64. After leaving the tunnel there is a momentary almost level 200 yards at Kilbarry, followed by two miles of 1 in 60 to Rathpeacon. There the worst part of the climb ends although climbing at much gentler gradients continues until MP 152.

Rathpeacon was a marshalling yard for Up goods traffic in steam days. So-called "runs of goods" (about ten wagons) were brought up from Cork and the main train was made up in the level sidings at Rathpeacon, the remains of which can still be seen on the left of the Up line. The main line train engine then came up from Cork shed and took over the made up train.

Passenger trains of course came up in one piece but were almost always double- or triple-headed. One exception was the Enterprise, which got the best available engine, an 800 or a good 400 class. I wonder if No.85's train of six bogies is the heaviest ever taken single handed by a 4-coupled engine.

STATE COACH 351

David Humphries

Exterior

Exterior bodywork restoration completed. All of the sidelights are now fitted. One large one in each of the sections has been fitted so that it can be removed to enable the furniture to be installed.

Painting and lining out of the exterior is completed. Four GS&WR crests have been affixed and varnishing has been completed up to the final coat. This coat will be applied when the carriage is sent to the Inchicore Paint Shop where conditions are more suitable for the final finish.

The four outside doors are awaiting the delivery (from England) of specially commissioned double actuating door locks and the striking plates complete with safety catches. The other door fittings, plungers and escutcheon plates were sent to have the chromium plating restored and all will be fitted as part of the final fit out.

Fitting of stepboards - two on each side running the full length of the carriage - is completed. As well as matching the timber and joining the lengths as required, the missing leg irons - burnt off for loading onto road transport - were fabricated and fitted onto the underframe. For the same reason - removal by road - the battery boxes and associated iron work was removed in the same fashion. Fortunately, we were able to salvage replacement items from off a scrap carriage - AM13 - and after some modification to the battery boxes and the fabrication of the battery box cradles they were installed and now contain some of the electrical equipment for the interior lighting.

The two scissors type gangways, salvaged from the same vehicle which provided the battery boxes, have been fully overhauled. All new timber work fitted. Also new leathers. Both gangways are now installed.

Finally, the passenger communication cord has been fully restored. Virtually none of it existed when work commenced. The chain, tubing, bell mouth and brackets and housing/covers had to be either fabricated and/or salvaged from our old friend AM13.

Interior

With the exception of the two toilets for which we are awaiting the delivery of the Connemara marble all of the interior bodywork is fully completed. French polishing of the panel work is completed up to the stage where after final fit out of interior fittings it will then receive the final tidy up. The panels in the smoking room have, in addition to being polished, been waxed as per the original specification for such panelling.

All of the handles and escutcheon plates for the interior doors were sent to be polished and lacquered before fitting. The doors have now been re-hung and locks and handles fitted. For the record, two interior doors were missing when work commenced on the carriage. Both were at the Smoking Room end of the vehicle. One was a compartment door and the other was a gangway door. Both were of oak construction and both have been made and fitted.

All 'open' windows now have timber drop lights. These were constructed to the original design obtained from a scrap one still remaining in one of the outside doors. The leather straps were manufactured by an outside contractor who specialises in this type of leatherwork. They have been manufactured complete with decorative stitching as determined from the remains of an original strap. The buckles for the straps were obtained from the Worth Valley Railway.

All the drop lights are fitted complete with straps and buckles. The studs for the drop light straps are also in place on the garnish rails. As with most 'loose' items many were missing and replacement ones had to be cast.

Finally the fabrication of the valances covering the steam-heating pipes in the three 'rooms' has been completed and they are now in place.

Electrics

All of the wiring is completed. The control is housed in a box discretely installed in one of the vestibules. Fitting of switches, etc., will be undertaken as part of the final fit-out.

Plumbing

The plumbing is partly complete. All of the pipe work on the underframe is installed. Each toilet has also had the toilet cistern - high level - installed. Completion awaits the arrival of the Connemara marble wash hand basin tops, etc.

Running Gear

Both bogies have undergone a full general repair and are now in tip top order. The bogies from 1142 were used for this purpose and a replacement set of bogies for 1142 is presently being organised.

The buffer gear and draw-bar gear have been thoroughly overhauled. All of the rubber springs have been replaced with new material. The timber packing between the buffer casting and headstocks has also been replaced with new material.

Steam Heating

All of the steam-heating pipes on the underside of the carriage have been replaced with new material. On completion the entire system was tested for leaks, etc. Any leaks found were corrected and following another test the system was declared to be in good order.

Brakes

All of the brake gear has been thoroughly overhauled. This covers every single item of equipment down to the final washer. This means that all pull-rods, truss bars and associated items have been individually examined and dealt with as necessary. All split pins, washers and hoses have been replaced with new ones. The vacuum cylinders, quick release valves have been stripped down and overhauled to General Repair specification. Having completed the fitting of the brake gear it was tested again for specification. It passed the test and was certified fit for service.

It is expected that in the near future the carriage will receive its out road trial before being declared fit for service.

I'm grateful to George Dempsey for compiling the notes on which this article is based.

30 YEARS ON: CARRICKFERGUS AND THE END OF STEAM

J.A. Cassells

In recent issues of Five Foot Three I have been recalling the last years of Irish steam, as brought to mind by interesting RPSI train movements of the 1990s. This year my memories are prompted by no less than three RPSI workings which terminated in Carrickfergus in 1999: the Scout charter of 6th March, the Steam and Jazz special on 18th June and the Santa "short working" on 19th December.

There were also, of course, RPSI trains in connection with the local Civic Festival specials of 19th April 1980. Carrick was always a regular terminus for short distance local trains, and many readers will remember that the last regular steam trains on NIR ran to Carrickfergus and Whitehead on the Easter weekend in 1970.

The station has a further melancholy significance in that its goods shed housed two of the last working NIR engines for a time, and the small goods yard was used for cutting up engines at the very end of steam. Older RPSI members will also remember that the shed housed the Guinness engine for a time, and that on 18th September 1967 ex-SLNCR tank No.27 was turned out to bring her to Whitehead. So, bearing in mind that the year 2000 marks the 30th anniversary of NIR's farewell to steam, it might be as well to record here some more of the details which have as yet to appear in print, and are already fading rapidly in the minds of those of us who witnessed them. I should like to record at this point my thanks to Irwin Pryce, Derek Henderson and Charles Friel, all of whom helped me with the detail of what follows.

On New Year's Day 1970, the relatively new NIR had but seven working steam engines, kept mainly for the trains which from 14th November 1966 to 2nd May 1970 brought nearly 4.2 million tons of spoil from Magheramorne to Greencastle in an estimated 7,600 journeys. At the time, of course, we knew all this was only a stay of execution for steam, but it was quite exciting to see engines going into York Road works, albeit for "sole and heel" jobs to see them through their last days. Morale was lifted, too, when at the beginning of March 1968 four "jeeps" (50+55 and 51+56) became the dedicated stone train engines, and were allocated two sets of regular crews each. This was a great morale-raiser, and for a brief while the clock seemed to go back to the 1950s as York Road men took pride in "their own" engines again. But it was not long until almost any surviving engine could be seen on stone train

working, as 50, 55 and 56 spent long periods out of steam. As late as 1969, new driving springs were ordered in quantity and fitted to 4, 50, 51 and 53 by the cheery fitter Rab McDonald and his quiet assistant Freddie whom his boss for some unknown reason nicknamed the "Bishop of Ripon". Rab was also known as "Oul Bendy Boots" on account of his Wellington boots - very necessary given the continually flooded pits in the pathetic wind tunnel of a maintenance shed he had to work in. Another assistant of Rab's was Jim Morrow, who remained in NIR service until his retirement early in 1998.



No.186 at Belfast York Road on the occasion of her first steaming in RPSI ownership in early 1967. The man in the middle is none other than "Oul Bendy Boots" while on the right, gazing into the murk, is shed foreman Norman Law. (I.C. Pryce)

The busy summer of 1969 - covered in an earlier edition of Five Foot Three - faded into a steamless autumn, and the Christmas holiday period saw not one steam passenger substitution. Six or seven NCC coaches were, however, in the works being overhauled and painted in the all-over maroon livery which the RPSI was later to adopt. There was no such luck for the engines, though. 10 succumbed before Christmas, while 5 worked her last stone train on 28th March, and her last passenger train on 30th March. 50 failed on the Great Northern ballast in early April and 55 last worked a stone train on 28th March. No.6 failed on shed after working her stone train turn on 23rd April. The last three steamable engines were thus 4, 51 and 53.

For obvious reasons, very little detail exists of the performance of these mighty trains, which often grossed well in excess of 800 tons. Irwin Pryce was fortunate to be able to time a good run with 4 banked by 56 on 20 loaded wagons. Tom McCrum and Jack Kitchen had No.4, and "The Batman" Simpson and Albert Plews No.56. Signal checks at Whitehead and Greenisland prevented any really storming work up the two principal banks on the Larne line, but the maximum speed of 40mph allowable with these wagons was attained at Downshire. All told, the run took 1 second under the 45

minute schedule. The late Mac Arnold timed a fair number of these trains from the footplate, most of it similar to the above. His last run was made on 2nd March 1970 with 55 banked by 53. Even at this late stage the two engines put up a good show, falling no lower than 22 up Mount bank and stopping at Greencastle in 44'56".

In personality terms, the final year of stone train operation featured at various times: Willie McAleese, Paddy Russell, Jack Kitchen, Davey McDonald, Harry Ramsey, Bertie Wright, Paddy Dobbin, Tommy Dean, Barney McCrory and Willie Gillespie. Retirements had by this time taken some of the original stone train men on to the diesels, so among the last group of steam men to grace the York Road "top link" were Percy Mitchell, Jimmy Simpson, Alan Robinson, George Houston, Tom Crymble, Dan McAtamney, Rob Graham, "Engine John" McAuley and R.J. "Batman" Simpson. One of the best known stone train combinations was driver Davey McDonald and his beloved No.51 - the subject of an article in the Belfast Telegraph a few weeks before the stone contract ended. Genuinely heartbroken at the end of company steam, he was happily able to amass quite a mileage on RPSI steam trains in the 1970s and 1980s before illness caused his premature retirement and sad death.

At least as interesting as drivers would be the record of those keen young lads, too many to name here, who formed the last generation of firemen and were largely made redundant as soon as steam finished. Of them all, only Arthur McMenamin and Tom McCrum remain in footplate service.



With boyhood memories of this engine brand new at Larne, the Editor has a sneaking regret that it wasn't the one to be preserved. Twenty years later, in May 1969, No.51 heads a stone train between Whitehead and Kilroot. (I.C. Pryce)

Turning to operation in those last days, I can trace no steam haulage of passenger trains apart from Easter Monday and Tuesday 30th and 31st March: two dark, cold and rainy days which summed up the mood of those of us who were out recording the end of an era. While Portrush saw its first-ever all

diesel Easter weekend, steam filled in the odd gaps on the Larne line, albeit with some interesting workings. On the Monday, Jack Kitchen and Tom McCrum had No.4 on the 09:50, 12:35 and 15:35 ex Belfast, returning on the 10:23 and 13:20 ex Carrick and 16:38 ex Whitehead.

A total surprise was the appearance of No.5 with Willie McAleese and Johnny Magill to work the 17:35 ex Belfast and 18:15 ex Whitehead - almost certainly her last revenue earning working for NIR. Next day there were only two afternoon workings: 14:35 ex Belfast and 16:40 ex Belfast, returning at 15:05 ex Carrickfergus and 17:25 ex Whitehead - the very last NIR scheduled steam working. No.4 was in the hands of Davey McDonald and George Robinson, and just about the only cheerful feature of these sad days was the three coach set of very smartly refurbished coaches.



The last test of the York Road hydraulic buffers by a steam loco - No.5, on 31st January 1970. Unfortunately a rather fuzzy photo, but the only one known to exist. (J.A. Cassells)

However, Charlie Friel has a record of steam worked ballast or materials trains to Portadown on three Sundays 12th, 19th and 26th April 1970, featuring Nos. 4, 51 and 53.

The final weeks of the stone trains saw less variety, and 4, 51, 53 and 55 mostly dominated the last workings. On 3rd and 24th January, for example, I photographed 51+53 on the Saturday 10:13 working, while on 7th and 28th February 51+55 were the engines on the same train. On 31st January the hydraulic buffers at York Road were tested by steam for the last time by No.5. Tom Smyth of Ballymena (who probably had an hour to spare between diesel turns) had the thrill of striking the buffers at the regulation 2, 5 and 10 mph - and hearing the thunderous report of each impact! A morning's photography on the Larne line on St Patrick's Day 1970 saw two stone train sets working, with 53+51

and 6+55, while 5 worked wagons and van to Larne, returning later in the day with a train of rails - part of a consignment bought second hand from British Railways following the lifting of the "Port Road" from Dumfries to Stranraer.

Three days later the RPSI organised an ambitious local trip which began with No.186, crewed on the NCC by Harry Ramsey and Geordie Gaw, working empty carriages from York Road to Great Victoria Street via Antrim, then out to Portadown (the last steam train to use the old Portadown station), back to Lisburn and on to Antrim. No.171, which had come light from York Road worked by Davey McDonald and Johnny Magill, took over the train here for a run to Ballymena and back to Belfast. At York Road No.186 (which had run light from Antrim) hauled the train to Larne Harbour and back to Carrickfergus, where No.171 was waiting to double head the train to Greenisland. Here No.186 came off and No.171 finished with a smart run to Belfast. Not until 28th April 1973 was another steam passenger train (again an RPSI special with No.171, Bertie Wright and Geordie Gaw) to work between Whitehead and Larne. Steam was now in terminal decline, and by the end of March stone trains were being cancelled on a daily basis for lack of motive power. On 26th April No.4 took the steam crane to Warrick's Crossing near Cookstown Junction in connection with motorway bridge work. Next day began the final week of stone train operation, in which only one set operated, sometimes with as little as nine wagons, though a full set of 20 wagons was turned out for the last day.



No.4 prepares to depart with the 13:20 Carrickfergus-Belfast York Road on 30th March 1970.
(J.A. Cassells)

The final Stone Train was on 2nd May 1970. No.4 with Bertie Wright and Albert Plews, and No.53 with "Batman" Simpson and Johnny Magill, were cleaned up and provided with headboards to work the ceremonial last trains - 05:40 empty to Magheramorne and 10:50 back to Greencastle - with 51 as standby engine. After unloading for the last time, the two engines took the empty wagons back to Magheramorne, and then ran light to Carrickfergus, where their fires were dropped and they were locked up in the goods shed. Rather overcome by the depression of all this, I unfortunately kept no further notes except to record that a week later No.4 was back in Belfast to work a heavy girder train to

Ballyclare Junction, banked by 51, and that 5 and 51 had also been kept in reserve for the summer. Ex SLNCR No.27 was worked from York Road to Whitehead in June 1970, steaming for the first time in RPSI ownership on 13th June 1970, while on 26th June 1970, 53 was hauled dead by No.171 from Carrickfergus goods shed to Whitehead where she featured as a clean but dead exhibit on the Society's Open Day on the following day. After that, 53 was taken straight back to Carrickfergus, where she was finally broken up when the yard itself was lifted in 1971.

My own last photograph of an NIR engine in steam at York Road shed was taken on 16th October 1970, the day before a Society trip to Derry with No.171. No.51 was in steam amid the shrinking ruins of the shed, as the foremen had already shifted to a portakabin following the demolition of the shed offices and "tarry". 5, 6, 50, 51 and 55 were later broken up at York Road, and, as mentioned above, No.27 was removed to Whitehead. As a final gesture, one of the shed foremen arranged for some small souvenirs to be removed from the engines and distributed as keepsakes to the small group of us who had followed the last days of his engines - symptomatic of the real friendship that developed between York Road enginemen and enthusiasts in those last years of steam. My story finishes where it began at Carrickfergus. At various periods in 1970 and 1971 the shed housed 4, 53, 171 and 186. By late 1971 the railway had sold off Carrick yard and the last NIR engines had been scrapped. But on 9th October 1971, No.4 steamed for the first time at Whitehead, and that begins another story, for another time!

COMMENTS AND RECOLLECTIONS

Laurence Liddle

I was very sorry to read of the death of Eamon Lacken; with his passing our Society has lost a good friend.

I first met Driver Lacken, as he was then, as long ago as the mid-1960s (I am afraid I have forgotten the exact year) on the occasion of a day trip from Belfast to Loughrea and back. Motive power between Belfast and Dublin each way was provided by ex-GNR VS class 4-4-0 No.87 "Boyne", whilst between Dublin and Loughrea, out via Mullingar and back via Tullamore we had an AEC railcar set.

For the full outward journey on CIÉ, and back as far as Athlone, Eamon was our driver. On the branch, and on the main line back as far as Athlone there were two or three of us in the cab with him, including Belfast guard Alec Young, probably better known to older members of the Society as "Spitfire". Alec was every bit as dedicated a railwayman as Eamon and came with us on the CIÉ section of the trip purely out of professional interest (he was guard on our special both ways on the GN line). As another example of "Spitfire's" railway enthusiasm I remember him telling me that when he was booked to work the Sunday Belfast-Dublin return turn (there were only two regular Sunday trains each way in those days), during the long lie-over in Dublin he would remove the UTA badge from the lapel of his jacket and take himself to No.5 platform to watch operations, as keenly interested as any lay enthusiast.

Alec thoroughly enjoyed the Loughrea trip, not least because he had a chance to act as guard for part of the way. The CIÉ guard booked for the outward journey had brought his breakfast with him (I think he was working home to Athlone after having brought up a goods) and "Spitfire" offered to relieve him while he consumed his meal at his leisure. I still remember Alec saying to me, with just a hint of pride in his voice, that he had exchanged the staffs at the crossing points between Clonsilla and Mullingar. One might think that a man used to dealing with the heavy Great Northern staffs (and these really were staffs!) on the Derry Road, down through Pomeroy for example, coping with the miniature ringed aluminium affairs on the Midland would have been child's play. However, I suppose that, even for a professional, experiencing these for the first time might have had a certain degree of doubt as to whether the hand and arm were going to go through the ring, or hit it with unpleasant consequences.

Certainly on the first few times that I took such staffs I was acutely aware of the messy right hand I would have had if I had missed the centre of the target. Fortunately I never did. Rather more expertise

than I possessed however was probably needed to score a bulls-eye on the Waterford staff catcher depicted on page 66 of the last issue of Five Foot Three. Somewhat similar contraptions were in use on the Great Western in England and Wales, but I don't know of any others in Ireland. Were they by any chance a WL&WR feature?



Seen here at Moate, on the left is Eamon Lacken, while on the footplate are Joe Byrne of Mullingar and Morgan D'Arcy of Inchicore who crewed No.184 during the filming of "The First Great Train Robbery". (C.P. Friel)

To return to Eamon: Like so many railwaymen of all grades he came from a railway family, his father having been a driver at Athlone before him and as professionally interested as his son. For years Driver Lacken senior kept a diary recording details of various runs and identifying the locos concerned.

Athlone, which had the largest allocation of engines on the Midland after Broadstone, was a particularly family-minded shed. Indeed there was a custom, whether it was an official regulation or not I do not know, that unless an aspiring footplateman was the son of a driver or of a widow of a railwayman, he had a somewhat less than poor chance of being taken on as a cleaner. Towards the end of steam however such restrictions on employment were eased.

This digression into what we may call the hereditary principle on the railways reminds me that on page 109 of the excellent publication "Fermanagh's Railways" there is a photograph of "Driver Paddy Martin and his fireman on PP class 4-4-0 No.46 at Bundoran". The fireman was Mickey Gilheaney who, at various times in his career, was stationed at Enniskillen, Clones and Omagh, at which latter station he ended up driving BUT railcars until the assassination of the Derry Road. Mickey was the son of a guard on the Cavan & Leitrim, an interesting example of the hereditary principle at one remove.

The last time I met Eamon was on the day of the 150th anniversary of the coming of the railway to Mullingar. On that September day he had come from Athlone to meet some of his many friends and acquaintances, both railwaymen and Society members, who had travelled down in our special from Dublin. Eamon was his usual cheerful and friendly self, ever ready to discuss railway matters (and Midland ones in particular) with an interested layman. I will always remember my last handshake with him as I left our train to return to Dublin on the afternoon service train from Sligo.



J18 class No.583 (ex-MGWR No.82 "Clonbrook") shunts a cattle wagon off the 12:05 from Attymon Junction at Loughrea on 30th July 1959. (B. Hilton)

I have written before of the debt that our Society owes to the many senior officers of both of the major Irish railway undertakings, particularly during our early years when official approval was such a vital factor in getting our infant Society established. We owe as great a debt to the many railwaymen of the various operative grades, enginemen, guards, loco and traffic inspectors, and in this context I am pleased to be able to pay a small tribute to our late friends Eamon Lacken and Alec Young.

Archie Morrow's reference on page 39 of the last issue to a herd of elephants keeping pace with the goods train he was driving through the Tsavo National Park in Kenya [*or did Archie keep pace with the elephants? - Ed.*] reminded me of the book "The Maneaters of Tsavo" which was published in the early years of this century and which told the story of how the entire workforce engaged in the construction of the railway from Mombasa to Nairobi was so terrorised by a pair of the beasts, who appeared to pick off their victims at will, that work was completely stopped more than once before they were eventually shot by the engineer in charge, a Lt Col Patterson. Elsewhere on the line, Police Superintendent Ryall was keeping a nightly vigil because of similarly troublesome creatures but unfortunately succumbed to sleep whereupon one of them entered his carriage, killed him and carried him off to be devoured. Another book, "The Lunatic Express", deals in detail with the construction of the railway, the motives for the construction of which appear to have been largely political. The Germans were in charge in

what was then Tanganyika and the British wanted to beat them to Lake Victoria and its hinterland. *[It has been suggested that the appetite of the lions for human flesh was whetted by the failure of the construction workers to bury those of their colleagues who had been struck down by tropical diseases.*
- Ed.]

Mr Hayes's picture on page 64 of FFT No.45 is absolutely classic Great Northern: to me the photograph recalls that much abused and never to be forgotten concern every bit as much as would a picture of S class No.173 heading the Up Mail through Mount Pleasant ("daylight almost visible under the wheels", to quote the late Harry Wilson) in the summer of 1938, or of a VS taking a 9-bogie "Enterprise" up the bank at the same location ten years later. One small point perhaps: the picture might be considered not to be absolutely 100% GN. Why the topless chimney? Had someone in Dundalk works seen an example, or a picture, of one of the small ex-Caledonian 0-6-0s on the LMS which in their final years sported rather ugly stove-pipe chimneys, and decided that anything Scotland could do Dundalk could do better? I always thought the "stovepipe" to be a particularly unpleasing feature on any engine, spoiling the good looks of, for instance, the otherwise graceful outside-cylindered 4-4-0s that William Adams built for the London & South Western, or the Drummond T9s of the same railway in their later days.



Having come down Mountpleasant, GNR S class No.173 "Galtee More" passes Dundalk North signal cabin on a Belfast-Dublin train in the late 1940s with a V class compound 4-4-0 in the background. (B. Hilton)

The note in last August's Newsletter that No.186 is to be dismantled as a preliminary in assessing the feasibility of restoring her to running order made cheerful reading. Not only do we need another operational engine (albeit that No.186 is of somewhat limited capacity), but it would be a great pity if neither of the two survivors of the most numerous class of Irish locomotive (both of which we possess)

were never to run again. It is probably unreasonable to expect to see No.184 in steam again, but is there no chance that she could be cosmetically restored and offered to the Cultra museum on indefinite loan?

How about an approach to the Museum authorities suggesting such a loan, provided that they could make a worthwhile contribution to the cost of restoration?

Apropos of my remarks, in our last issue, on GNR bus No.389, I am indebted to Brian Boyle for confirmation that that vehicle did indeed have a Harkness body as I had surmised.

The 0-6-0ST pictured at Riverstown (FFT45 page 3) could not have found a more appropriate Irish home, close to the site of the former Dundalk, Newry & Greenore line, over which for so many years five 0-6-0STs, a type otherwise rare in Ireland, operated. These machines were re-gauged versions of the standard small tank engines built at Crewe during the Webb regime and used for light shunting throughout the LNWR system.



Dundalk, Newry and Greenore Railway No.2 "Greenore" shunting at Newry. (H.C. Casserley)

Up to 1932 the Dun Laoghaire-Holyhead mail steamers did not operate from the former inner harbour at the latter port but used the Admiralty Pier which was nearer the harbour entrance. Even though in the 1920s and early 1930s the mail steamers were operated by the railway company (LNWR and later LMS) and could thus have used the inner harbour which was railway property, the Admiralty Pier, which had been used by the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company's ships, which carried the mails until just after the end of the first World War, continued in use. This pier was connected to the main railway installation in Holyhead by a line which had a severe weight restriction, with the result that on arrival of the "Irish Mail" at Holyhead main station the locomotive was detached and the train taken forward to the Admiralty Pier by one of the Webb saddle tanks. This process was always a matter of considerable interest to the author who, in his childhood years, was accustomed to make regular visits to relatives in England. I have just said that the locomotive of the "Irish Mail" would come off at

Holyhead main station, but frequently in the twenties the Mail would be double-headed. I remember, for instance, during the Christmas holiday period of 1927, that motive power on the down Irish Mail on a night that I travelled with my parents was a Midland Compound (at that time fairly new to the North Western line) piloted by a “George the Fifth” 4-4-0. I think it likely that these would have come off at Crewe, to be replaced by a couple of “Georges”, or perhaps a “Prince of Wales” 4-6-0, but I cannot be sure of that. There was certainly through running in the later LMS days. *[Two points here: (i) rummaging reveals that “Robert Nelson” No.4 is a 16” x 22” Hunslet 1800/36, supplied new to Hilton Main & Holly Bank Collieries Ltd and preserved for a time on the Great Central Railway at Loughborough; (ii) since the “Irish Mail” was a Euston-Holyhead train, why did the RPSI’s Dublin-Rosslare train carry such a headboard a couple of years ago? - Ed.]*

Mention of the DNGR reminds me of Dundalk, and a question that I posed to myself the last time I passed through that former railway town. The sight of the former “Central” signal cabin, so attractively preserved on the island platform, set me wondering whether Dundalk, which at one time had no less than eight cabins, seven GNR and one DNGR, held the record for the number of such structures in a single town, outside of Dublin, Belfast and Cork in the latter’s heyday. My memory is not too good as regards Limerick (which certainly had quite a few cabins) but I cannot think of any other provincial town with as impressive a collection as Dundalk’s. For the record, the seven GN cabins were North, Central, Square Crossing, South, West, East and Barrack Street. The DNG one was at Quay Street.

The Northern seemed to have a great love of providing multiple cabins for the towns which it served; think of Drogheda, Enniskillen, Strabane, Omagh and Clones for example, each of which had two cabins. Portadown had three and Newry no less than five, though this high figure was due to the number of level crossings in the town. It is highly likely that had funds been available in the later inter-war years some at least of these numerous cabins would have been dispensed with.

I remember G.B. Howden, at that time General Manager, and formerly Civil Engineer, of the Great Northern, saying in about 1946 that were the system being provided with a completely new signalling system ‘from scratch’ eleven cabins would be sufficient to cover all operations. At that very early post-war period he was of course thinking in terms of 1930s technology. I do not remember GBH specifying where these eleven cabins would be. At a guess I suggest Dublin, Drogheda, Dundalk, Portadown, Belfast, Newry, Clones, Enniskillen, Omagh, Derry and Lisburn. As things turned out however it was not until some time after the end of the second World War that the GN main line got its first solitary colour light signal, whilst it was not until after the break-up of the old company that any significant modernisation of signalling took place, when the Dublin suburban colour light system was extended northwards from Connolly station to Howth Junction.

Finally, I made a bad mistake in stating in our last issue that the photo on page 52 of “Fermanagh’s Railways” of Great Northern Q class No.133 approaching Maguiresbridge from the Enniskillen direction showed the engine carrying white headlamps. This picture, and a similar one on page 124 of the 1979 edition of Mac Arnold’s “Golden Years of the Great Northern Railway”, clearly shows the lamps as black. My statement therefore that the train behind 133 could not have been one of those diverted from the Derry Road during one of the washouts between Pomeroy and Dungannon during the early post-war years was incorrect. I am at a loss to explain how I made such a stupid mistake.

ONE SMALL ISLAND - FOUR RAILWAYS

Walter McGrath & Jack Phelan

FFT No.45 asks whether “Robert Nelson” No.4 is the first 4’8½” gauge locomotive in Ireland since the Silent Valley contract in the 1930s. Asking questions is always much wiser than making positive statements. Questions can be answered - statements may have to be retracted.

So the answer to the Editor’s question is that “Robert Nelson” No.4 may well be the first steam

locomotive to run in Ireland since the thirties on the 4'8½" gauge; it is certainly not the first locomotive to run on a 4'8½" gauge railway in Ireland since that time. The authors believe that that claim belongs to two locomotives operating on a small but very intensively used system on an island in Cork Harbour.



3'6" gauge trackwork at
Alexandra Steps, May
1982. (J. Phelan)

Haulbowline Island is directly opposite Cobh, Co. Cork. It has many claims to being unique. Prior to 1922 it was a large naval and military base occupied by the Royal Navy and the British Army. In the

nineteen thirties the first steel mill in Ireland was established there.

Then came World War 2 and the Irish Defence forces added a Marine Service to its various branches and the Naval barracks and dockyard, long silent and practically abandoned, saw the new Marine Service take over the deserted barrack buildings and basin and Haulbowline became a Naval base once again.

But what really makes Haulbowline unique, certainly for railway enthusiasts is that since 1865 four railway systems have been built on the island with three different rail gauges. Bertie Wooster (yes Bertie of Jeeves and Wooster fame) says in one of his stories that “It is best to start at the beginning and not jump into the middle of the story” - which he (Bertie Wooster) is prone to do.

In 1806 the then Admiralty acquired Haulbowline Island from the Board of Ordnance and a Martello Tower was built there. This was one of the many built around Ireland and Britain to repel any invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte. Incidentally the name of the island in Irish is Inis Sionnach - The Fox’s Island.

Then in 1865 the Admiralty commenced the building of its base - with a large enclosed wet dock, which could have its water maintained at a constant level by a very wide pair of lock gates or caissons. To build the wet dock, the necessary naval stores and the Barracks to house the personnel, the island was practically doubled in area.



3'6" gauge wagons, of somewhat basic construction, at south end of basin. (J. Phelan)

The project was certainly ambitious - but two things contributed to the success of the plan; firstly the neighbouring Spike Island had a large convict prison - so the prisoners were used to provide cheap (very cheap) labour; secondly a temporary railway system was laid in to facilitate the construction. A temporary bridge was built from Spike to Haulbowline over which the convicts walked to and from

their work. It was removed following completion of the job and now very few people believe that such a bridge ever existed.

The first railway was thus a temporary arrangement. Two steam locomotives were used by the contractor. These were built by Aveling Porter (now Aveling Barford) of Grantham and were delivered to the Admiralty in July 1875 and May 1878. These were 4 wheeled geared locomotives with driving wheels of 3'0" diameter. Vickers supplied the steel tyres for the wheels. Rail gauge was 3'6".

Construction was completed by 1887 and in the 1890s a permanent railway system was constructed on Haulbowline, thus bringing the Island's system into being. Once again a gauge of 3'6" was chosen - presumably the success of the earlier gauge caused the Admiralty to go for a gauge wider than the 3' gauge common to Ireland for narrow gauge systems.

The new system had almost 3 miles of track. From its construction until 1914 there were 2 circuits of track, with a connection between the circuits. One circuit had been built to encircle the dock basin; the second circle enclosed the stores and other buildings on the older part of the island. Whilst Haulbowline Island was primarily a naval base, a third part of the Island was an Army barracks - strictly military territory. This had no railway, but in 1914 when war was declared the Navy moved in, the Army went elsewhere and a third railway circuit was added.

Steamers of the Cork Blackrock and Passage Railway were common in Cork Harbour at that time and a short length of track was laid to connect with a pier on what had been the Army part of the island. Produce was discharged from the Railway Company's vessels into wagons which were manually pushed to and from this pier.

The two Aveling Porter engines were apparently disposed of on the removal of the first temporary system and a new locomotive had arrived in 1897 for the new railway. Manning Wardle were its builders.

The manufacturer's number was 1357, and it was an 0-4-0 saddle tank. The engine had outside cylinders 8" x 14", wheel diameter 2'6", the boiler was 7ft long with a diameter of 2'1" and a pressure of 140 lbs. The original cost was £635.

Drawings of the locomotive had been retained by the Irish Naval Authorities and these enabled R.N. Clements of the Irish Railway Record Society to prepare an illustration of the engine. It had a spark arrester on its chimney - a feature one assumes necessary in a dockyard.

When the railway was built, warships of the Royal Navy, and indeed all other navies, burned coal for steam raising. The Manning Wardle was used to haul large tonnages of coal, also dockyard materials, and long trainloads of wagons were handled by it.

A Board of Works locomotive arrived at Haulbowline in 1912. Little is known of this engine; apparently it had a copper firebox and a tall, rather thin chimney. It may have come second-hand from England. The original basin had a large dry dock at its south end for ship repairs; a second dry dock was in the course of construction at the time of the second engine's arrival.

In 1923 Haulbowline Island was handed over by Britain to the then Irish Government. The Civil War had seen the formation of a Naval section of the Irish Military but following the cease-fire by Republican forces this Naval force was disbanded and the Board of Trade took over responsibility for Haulbowline. The railway was worked occasionally for a few years - then came the inevitable auction and all rolling stock was sold in 1933. Most of the wagons went and the two locomotives were broken up on the island.

The track remained, and in 1951 most of it was still in situ. A few stretches had been covered over or removed. Big stretches were removed from 1954, leaving only the second circuit near the wet basin.

In Admiralty days a third system had been built to a gauge of 2 feet. Little is known about this third system; one imagines that it was quite small, probably with small manually propelled "trams". A small bit of this track still exists on the disused and dismounted caissons.

Curiously, parts of the track of the 3'6" gauge system adjoining the basin proved of use to the new Irish Naval Service. A few small wagons remained - these were used mainly to remove refuse or other matter discarded by the ships, and were moved by a self-propelled steam crane to a dump on the east side of the island where the contents were emptied. This practice continued - certainly up to 1982. At that time a good deal of track remained. By 1984 much of the remaining track at the south end of the basin had been concreted or covered over. By 1997 the steam crane, wagons and remaining track had disappeared.



Admiralty railway 3'6" gauge loco shed, May 1982. (J. Phelan)

Curiously the stone-built locomotive shed is in perfect repair. It is used by the Navy for other purposes. Nowadays, Haulbowline Island is in four divisions. The most easterly part is an area used for extending the island by dumping slag and waste materials into the sea.

Then comes the basin including the two disused dry docks; the north, south and east sides of the basin are used exclusively by Naval Vessels. On the west side of the basin is a fairly new quay; this is used by commercial shipping coming to or departing from the Steel Works.

The central part of the island from north to south is occupied by the Steel Mill and its offices and associated buildings. Indeed the huge naval storehouses built by the Admiralty are now occupied as offices, stores, etc., by the Steel Company.

The original Island, the western end, is now the base for the Navy and has all the trappings of any such

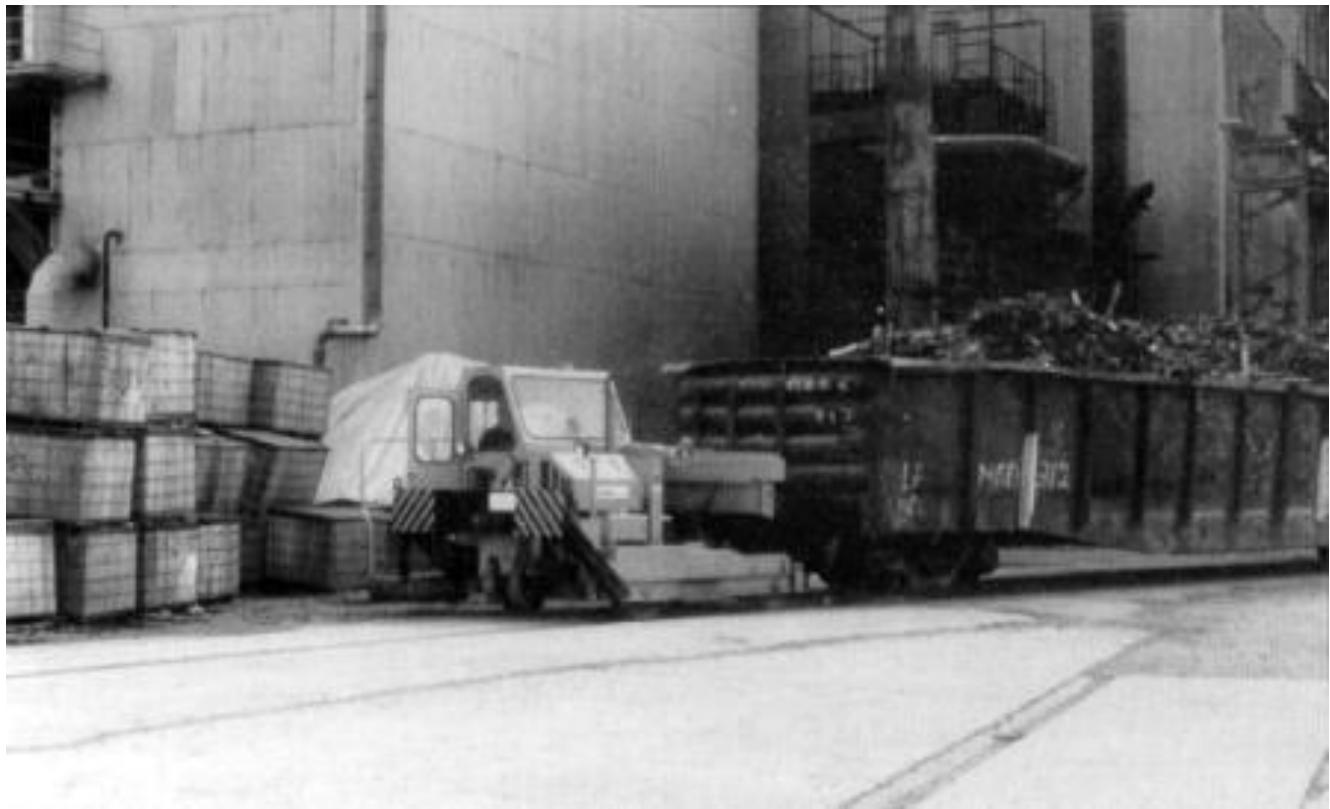
base, including housing for married personnel. In the 1970s a bridge was built from the mainland near Ringaskiddy to the south end of the island, thus aiding its watery isolation.

In July 1980 one of the authors was motoring near Ringaskiddy late in the evening and was stunned by what appeared to him to be a mirage. On the south side of the main road, in the grass margin, were huge railway bogie wagons, definitely American in origin - otherwise why emblazoned with the legends "Lehigh Valley" and "Erie Lackawanna" - and also some bogie flats.

The mirage turned out to be real - the things were real; they were railway stock. The explanation was simple; the Steel Mill was being modernised, a new system of railway track was being installed and the contractor who was bringing the rails had acquired the wagons for use on the system. They had come from Canada - although ex USA.

Thus came into being the fourth railway to be built on Haulbowline - a new, quite short, railway system, built not to the Irish standard gauge of 5'3" but to the British and world standard gauge of 4'8½". The wagons were to be refurbished and two Unilok locomotives were coming from Galway to work the system.

Now a word about the Steel Mills. At that time a semi-State Company called Irish Steel Ltd (at another time Irish Steel Holdings Ltd) ran the mill. Europe had an overproduction of steel - mills were closing and Irish Steel felt the draught. In the 1990s the Government decided to privatise and sold the steel mill to an Indian Steel Corporation. Today the mills are leaner and hungrier - they are efficient, they make money and are run by Irish Ispat Ltd. One of the authors has been told by an official of the Company that "Ispat" is the Hindi word for "Steel".



Unilok road/rail loco on 4'8½" gauge with loaded scrap gondola, May 1982. (J. Phelan)

The railway system now in operation is a series of sidings; one runs alongside the quay in the wet basin used by ships coming to Irish Ispat's works. Another runs right out along the jetty where the ferries arrive from Cobh. Others are running into large buildings in the Mill. It would be true to say that there

is a strong resemblance to the shunting yards beloved by railway modellers - built in this case to a scale of 12" to one foot. There are two differences: firstly there is no hidden 'fiddle yard' and secondly this is no model as the figures will show.

Irish Ispat own 12 rail wagons, six are bogie flats and six are steel sided gondolas. The bogie flats carry finished steel product, whilst the gondola bogies are used to transport scrap which comes for melting down in the huge furnaces in the Mills.

The amount of finished product carried on the flats is about $\frac{1}{2}$ million tons per year, whilst the scrap tonnage carried in the gondolas averages out at about $\frac{1}{4}$ million tons. Impressive figures for a system with 2 tiny locos and 12 wagons.



Unilok No.1A02 on IRRS "passenger special" at Haulbowline in 1982. The gentleman observing the frolics is Walter McGrath. (Courtesy Irish Steel)

The locomotives are very interesting as they do not require loops or head-shunt releases to run round any rake of wagons. The driver engages one of the controls, uncouples from the American system automatic knuckle couplers, drops down road wheels which are normally retracted whilst the loco is on the track, and in so doing raises the rail wheels from the track. Then the driver literally takes his Unilok around the train on the adjoining concrete or tarmac roadway, approaches the rake from the other end, raises the road wheels, re-engages the rail wheels to the steel rails, couples up - and is ready to move off.

Due to the road/rail ability the locomotives can run down to the engineering workshops for any necessary repairs or overhauls using the Island's road system and in due course 'motor' back to the rail system.

So, "Robert Nelson" No.4, you are not the first 4'8½" gauge loco to run in Ireland since the thirties but since you operate on another short 4'8½" gauge line in County Louth perhaps another strange connection should be mentioned. Haulbowline Island is in County Cork, Ireland's largest county, whilst County Louth, Ireland's smallest county, has its own Haulbowline - a lighthouse and former Coast Guard Station.

Because Haulbowline Island is both the seat of heavy industry and a naval base, public access is not available. Security at both the steel plant and naval installations is strict, so the average rail enthusiast cannot wander in to take his photograph. The Island has had three visits from members of the Irish Railway Record Society. On Sunday 26th May 1957 an organised trip for the members of the Munster Area of the Society was held and, thanks to, permission of the O.C. Naval Base those present toured the then extensive remains of the Admiralty's 3'6" gauge system.

Two further visits were organised. On Saturday 22nd May 1982, by permission of the O.C. Naval Base and General Manager Irish Steel Ltd., the Munster Area members saw both systems - the operational 4'8½" gauge lines and the lessened remains of the Admiralty system, and on Saturday 7th July 1984 members from Dublin travelled to Cork by service train where they met up with Munster Area members and the entire party went by train to Cobh, and travelled over in a Marine Transport Ltd. Ferry to the Island to see both systems. Again the Naval and Steel Authorities co-operated to enable this visit to be undertaken.

Today the Irish Navy has 7 vessels, with ship No.8 expected shortly from a British shipyard. Fine new engineering facilities have been built at the north end of the Basin - unfortunately resulting in the last stretch of 3'6" gauge track disappearing from that area. Irish Ispat Ltd. continues to operate its own 4'8½" gauge lines and stock. Services on the Cork to Cobh line for passengers are greatly improved since the last visit of the IRRS to the Island as Japanese built "Arrow" railcars provide an hourly service from early morning to late at night, whilst a very large tonnage of both liquid ammonia in bogie tank wagons and bagged fertiliser is conveyed from the Marino Point yard of Irish Fertiliser Industries. The "Ammonia trains" run to Shelton Abbey sidings near Arklow in County Wicklow. Nearer Cork, many containers are loaded on to and off liner trains at the North Esk yard, also situated on the Cork to Cobh line.

RAILWAY HARDWARE III

W.T. Scott

Hand Cranes

Most stations of any size required a crane located at a suitable point for unloading merchandise from wagons left there by the local goods. Most of these cranes were stationary and had a lifting capacity of between 1 and 5 tons, depending on the importance of the station. The basic crane involved a stout wooden jib secured to the base of the crane and stayed by tie-rods to the framework containing the winding mechanism, the structure forming a triangle. The lifting chain was secured to a winding drum, on the shaft of which was carried a large gear wheel. This was driven by a small gear wheel on another shaft, to which was attached a large winding handle. This gearing gave considerable mechanical advantage, enabling loads beyond the strength of several men to be lifted, albeit slowly, and a pawl and ratchet arrangement ensured that the crane did not run away when the winding handle was released.

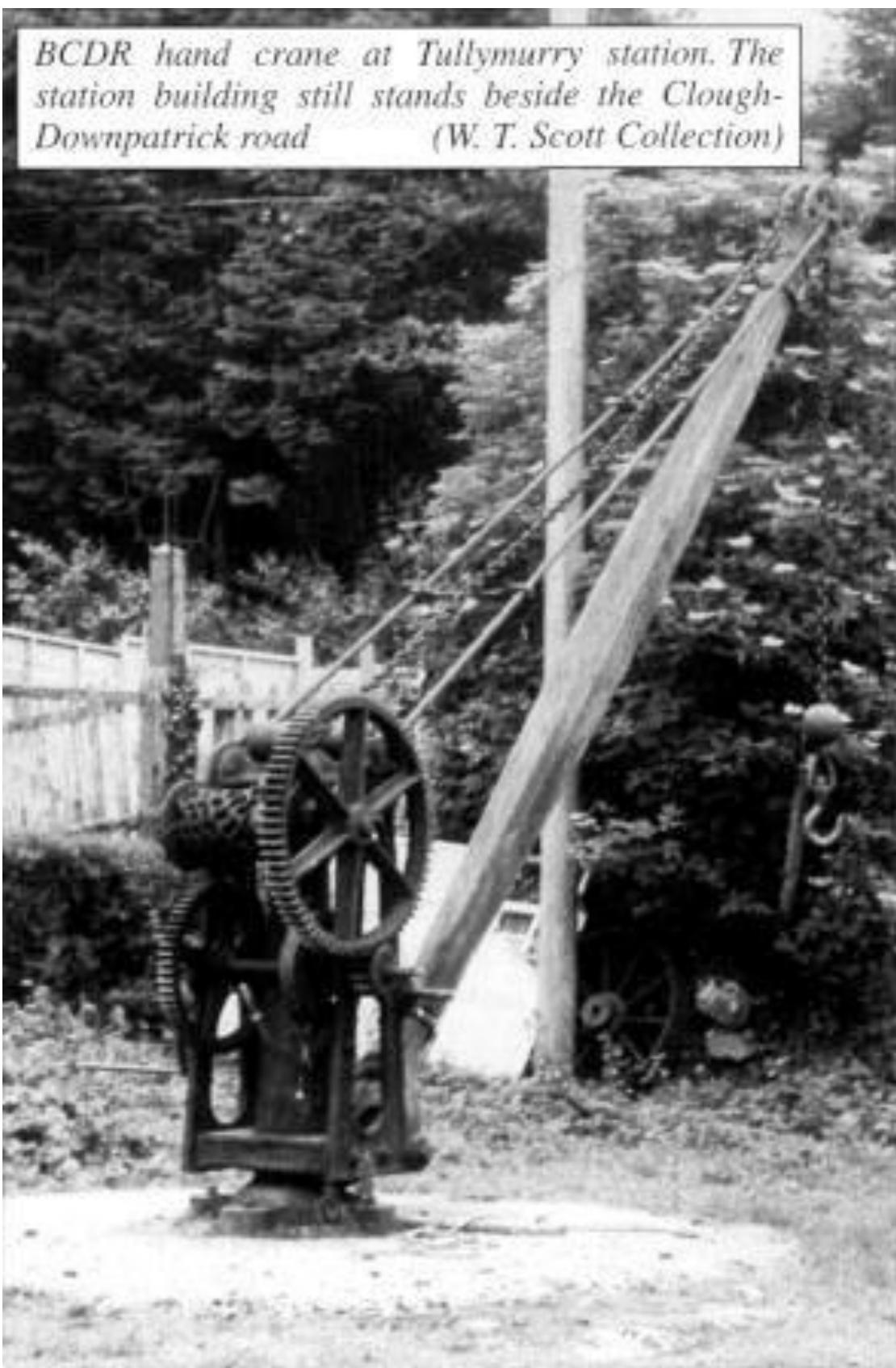
Although the jib was at a fixed angle, the crane could of course rotate to transfer the load from wagon to road vehicle. The capacity of the crane was painted on the side of the jib.

The importance and volume of goods traffic at a station could be judged by the capacity of its crane, e.g. Enniskillen had a 4 ton stationary crane whereas Sixmilecross had only a 1 ton example.

Some stations like Belfast, Dublin and Londonderry had 5 ton travelling cranes.

[A rather more sophisticated rail-mounted version from the NCC lives at Whitehead where it has proved invaluable, provided its load is within reach. It can also provide, free of charge, the type of work-out for which one would pay quite a lot in a health studio! - Ed.]

BCDR hand crane at Tullymurry station. The station building still stands beside the Clough-Downpatrick road (W. T. Scott Collection)



Capstans

These were large rotating bollards, electrically driven, which could move wagons along sidings not accessible to locomotives. A rope with a hook was attached to a wagon, drawn tight and coiled a few times round the capstan. The capstan was started by depressing a foot pedal. The winding action of the capstan was governed by the amount of tension maintained by the operator in the free end of the rope as it wound off the capstan - by easing this slightly the rope was allowed to slip, in a manner similar to a clutch, which meant that wagons could be started off gently from rest. Some capstans were of two different diameters giving, in effect, a high and low gear.

The hook on the rope was of a fairly open type which meant that it would drop off the wagon if the capstan stopped pulling. In a repetitive operation, such as on a coal quay, this could save the shunter having to drag the rope around so much. Once it was moving in a sufficient speed the wagon could be controlled by its own brake. Where necessary to guide the rope, small bollards would be installed in suitable positions. By running the rope round a bollard more distant than the wagon, the wagon could be made to move away from the capstan - thus were the empty wagons put in a position for loading.

Like many railway operations, this method of shunting was not without danger and only experienced capstanmen were supposed to do it and no-one was supposed to pass over the capstan rope when it was in use.

Wagon Turntables

A turntable designed for a steam engine has an obvious use since the engine has an obvious front and rear end and therefore normally travels chimney-first. Even the NCC Mogul tanks, which theoretically should have been equally good backwards, were turned where possible. Frank Pope, Manager of the NCC when they came, had great difficulty in persuading the crews not to turn them at Larne. *[Apart from the aesthetic aspect, drivers may have preferred to operate controls which were in front of them rather than behind their backs, whilst dusty draughts from a partly empty bunker would not have been welcome. On the Larne line, the question of platforms would not have mattered so much since some were always on the wrong side, no matter which way the engine faced - Ed.]*

Wagon turntables - now a piece of history - had no such obvious function, wagons being for the most part rectangular and happy to run either way. However, railway goods yards, especially those leading to industrial premises, were often small and cramped. Wagons might require to be moved between parallel sidings or even at right angles where there was no room for curves or points.

The wagon was placed on the turntable by hand, horse or capstan, turned through 90 degrees and pushed or pulled into the warehouse. If a move to a parallel siding was needed, this siding also had a turntable beside the first and the wagon would be moved on to this, turned another 90 degrees and moved on to the next siding. The decking of such turntables and their surroundings was flush, in order to facilitate walking by man or horse.

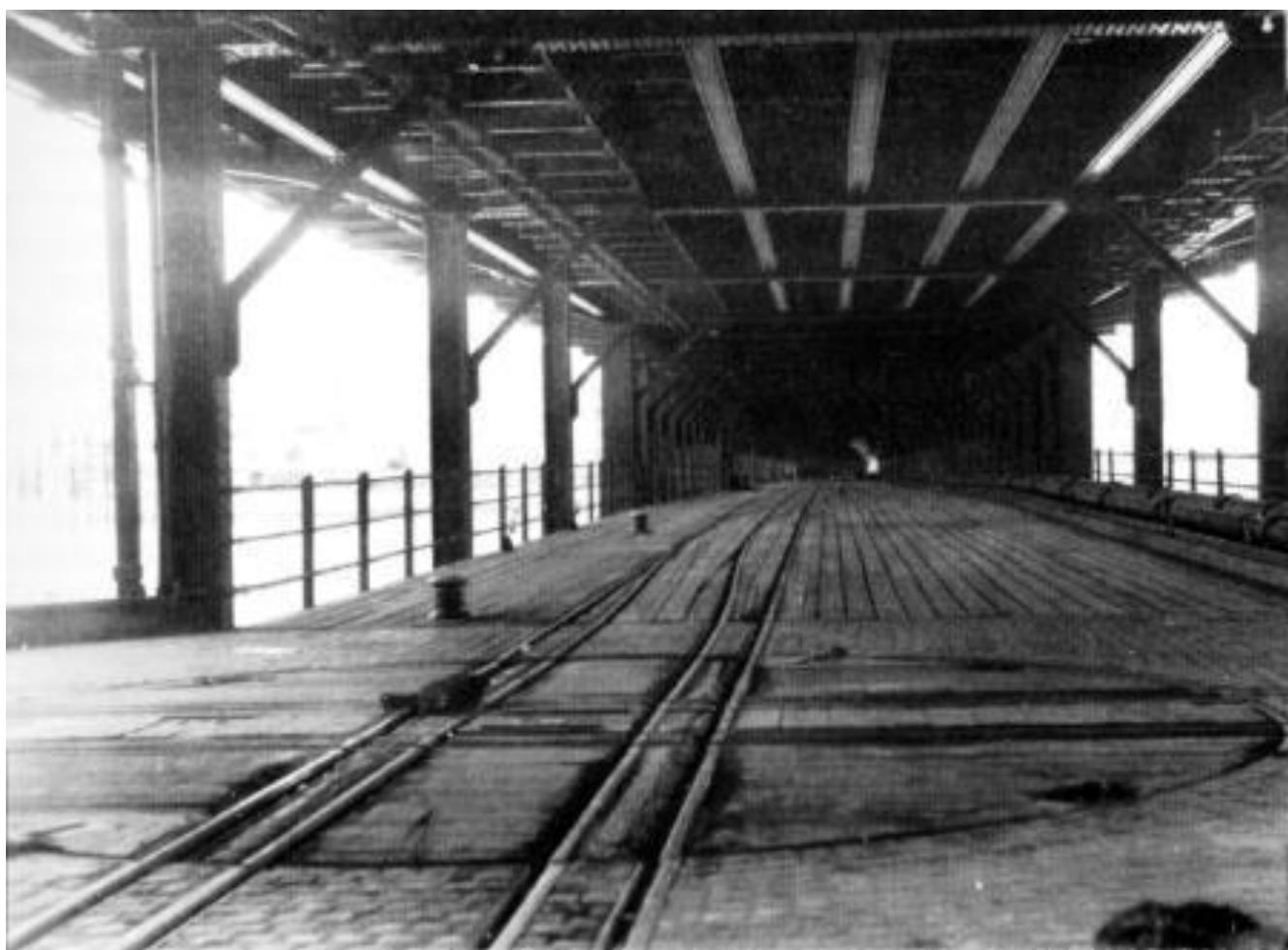
The decline of traditional industries and the closure of many lines led to the disappearance of wagon turntables. The last to work, in Northern Ireland, was probably at Sion Mills, on the GN Derry Road, where it was situated on the second loop through the station, where a 13 ft. diameter wagon turntable enabled wagons to be sent off at right angles, while access to the mill for workers was by a footbridge at the north end of the station. Herdman's Mill was an important customer of the railway and in 1962 had two goods workings, at 6:55am and 6:34pm from Strabane. These returned, propelling to Strabane, at 7:18am and 6:34pm respectively.

On the 3 ft. gauge, Ballycastle had a wagon turntable to serve a saw-mill. This was approached by a siding on the west of the station where wagons were propelled along a siding and then lowered down an incline to the turntable from which they were pushed to the mill which was at right angles to the

line. This was the only turntable on the Ballymoney-Ballycastle line. Engines always worked chimney towards Ballymoney and, since the steepest gradient was on the climb out of Ballycastle, there would have been little point in turning them.

Elsewhere on the NCC, Larne Harbour had numerous wagon turntables, some of which on the lines serving the quays were of mixed gauge. This was a place where the aforementioned capstans were much in evidence. An unusual, if not unique, feature of the standard gauge siding serving the south end quays was that track was laid across the ramp by which road vehicles made their way on to the Stranraer ferries. Careful positioning of the ramp was thus essential to the smooth passage of wagons. However, in the years prior to the remodelling of most of the Harbour the ramp was seldom, if ever, crossed as the coal and petroleum products landed on the south quay did not move by rail.

The West Clare Railway had a wagon turntable outside Kilrush, at Cappa Pier, to allow wagons to turn through a right angle on to the pier. The only other record on the 3 ft. gauge of a wagon turntable was on the County Donegal Railway at Strabane where one was situated between the GNR and CDR stations and was called the tranship table.



Wagon turntable with mixed gauge track on the lower deck of Craigavon Bridge. Note that the track becomes double under the bridge, with the narrow gauge sharing a common rail and single bladed point near the table. The two cylindrical objects on the left are bollards for rope guidance, while beyond them a capstan is visible and, beyond that, a wagon in transit. 9th June 1953. (J.H. Price)

Perhaps the most unusual wagon turntables were those on the lower deck of the Craigavon Bridge in Londonderry before it was converted to road use. These were mixed gauge and were used for

transferring wagons between the standard and narrow gauge lines on each side of the River Foyle. The track across the bridge was double track for most of its length but single at each end. Wagons were worked across the bridge using capstans.

One unusual feature of the system was that access from the GNR side was gained by points half-way along the island platform of the (Foyle Road) terminus. Across the river, on the NCC side, a standard gauge line ran up from the Waterside goods yard along the river to the turntable at the south end of the bridge. This mixed gauge turntable was the southern extremity of the lines across the bridge and meant that not only wagons from the standard gauge GNR and the narrow gauge Lough Swilly lines, but also standard gauge wagons from the NCC could visit the Co. Donegal station for transhipment.

BRAY, DARGAN AND QUIN THE YOUNGER

James Scannell

By way of a supplement to Percy G. Harris's article, "Who Was William Dargan?" (FFT No.45), one should not overlook the role played by John Quin the Younger in the development of Bray with William Dargan and others.

John Quin the Elder (1761-1852) was a shrewd operator who accumulated a large portfolio of land in and around Bray by lending money to people who were in debt, in exchange for property, with the certain knowledge that the borrowers would be unable to meet their debts when called in.

When the idea of extending the railway from Dalkey to Bray was first proposed in 1844, John Quin the Elder and others were ready and waiting for this to happen but before it became a reality in 1854, Quin the Elder had died in 1852, with his son John Quin the Younger inheriting his father's property.

John Quin the Younger was a developer who was prepared to wheel and deal and do business with others, unlike his father who had devoted his energies to amassing a large portfolio of land. When the Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford Railway Co. needed some land which Quin the Younger had, he was prepared to sell it to them in exchange for the railway company building part of the Strand Road from the Martello Tower to the bottom of the Quinsboro Road. It was Quin the Younger who managed to persuade Dargan to build the Quinsboro Road which connected the railway station with Quin's hotel on Main Street.

Surviving Quin Estate papers reveal that there was a business relationship between Quin the Younger and William Dargan but insufficient has survived to quantify the extent of this relationship.

Certainly Dargan endowed the Quinsboro Road with two fine pieces of architecture which are still standing today opposite each other - Duncairn Terrace on the northern side of the Quinsboro Road and Prince of Wales Terrace opposite it on the southern side.

Not surprisingly, Quin the Younger and the other developers and property owners saw to it that the Bray Township Commissioners Board was established in 1857, with Quin the Younger and others being elected on to it. In 1860, Dargan leased Fairy Hill (Galtrim House), making him a ratepayer and thus providing him with the necessary qualification to be elected to the Bray Township Board. As yet, no research on this aspect of Dargan's activities has been carried out.

There is no doubt that Dargan had plans for Bray and worked hard to develop it as a leading Victorian tourist resort but when he moved the Bray Township Bill, which later became the Bray Township Act of 1866, he was opposed by John Quin the Younger and others but Dargan persevered and got the Bill passed into law. The main elements of the Act were the reconstitution of the Bray Township Commissioners with greater powers, the definition of the town's boundaries and the taking over of certain responsibilities formerly vested in the County Wicklow Grand Jury. This Act was the first of a number of Bray Township Acts which would be enacted in later decades to give the Commissioners greater powers including authorisation to carry out certain works, i.e. the construction of the Grand

Marine Promenade and of the harbour and the taking into municipal ownership of the Bray Electric Lights Works.

Dargan died in 1867 and John Quin the Younger in 1869, the estate of the latter being divided amongst his family. By 1900 the family was quite fragmented, no longer having an influence on the development of the town as had been the case during the era of Quin the Elder and Quin the Younger. While the Quinsboro Road, one of the town's leading thoroughfares, is a fitting monument to the Quin family, William Dargan has not fared so well.

True, whilst Bray has a Dargan Street, No.1 Duncairn Terrace is now called Dargan House and there is a Dargan Tavern, there no public monument to William Dargan save a portrait of him in the railway mural on the east wall of the down platform in Bray Station.

In 1903, A.E. Doran, in "Bray and Environs", called for the erection of a public monument to him but, just on a century later, nothing has come to pass. While the Bray Heritage Centre has a very fine bust of William Dargan, and held a month-long exhibition in 1999 to mark the bicentenary of his birth, there is no public monument to him in the town which he worked so hard to develop.

But then perhaps the railway passing through Bray serves that purpose if one agrees with the closing remarks written by the Irish Times correspondent who covered Dargan's funeral in 1867: "Wherever there is an Irish railway, there is his monument, more noble than any pyramid".

WHITEHEAD AND THE RAILWAY

Mark Kennedy

History

The success of the Northern Counties railway and the increasing prosperity of North East Ulster was a direct result of the linen industry. A good deal of flax used for linen was grown in County Londonderry and there were many mills in County Antrim to process it. The linen industry was helped by the American Civil War which caused a cotton shortage in England, so developing demand for Irish linen. Luckily for the BNCR, their territory did not suffer the same depopulation as much of the rest of Ireland did as a result of the famines of the late 1840s.

The Belfast and Ballymena Railway opened in 1848 from Belfast to Ballymena, Randalstown and Carrickfergus. The name of the company was changed to the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway in 1860. In 1862 the Carrickfergus and Larne Railway opened and the Larne and Stranraer steamboat service to Scotland began. The BNCR acquired the line in 1890. The English influence began on 1st July 1903 when the Midland Railway (of England) purchased the BNCR.

The MR ran its Irish subsidiary through a committee known as the Northern Counties Committee. This arrangement was continued when the Midland became part of the LMS at the amalgamation of 1923, (when all the major railway companies in Britain were merged into four groups). On 1st January 1948, the LMS became part of British Railways along with the rest of the railways in Britain.

The government created the Ulster Transport Authority and the NCC became part of the new organisation on April Fool's Day 1949. The UTA failed to co-ordinate Ulster's public transport network and closed most of the railway lines in its care. In 1966 road and rail transport were separated again, this time as Northern Ireland Railways, Ulsterbus and Northern Ireland Carriers.

In 1995 NIR and Ulsterbus were again merged, under the banner of Translink.

Tourists

NCC staff E.J. Cotton and B.D. Wise stand out for their contribution to the development of tourism. Edward John Cotton featured in an Amanda McKittrick Ros novel Delina Delaney, in which he was portrayed as the Father of Steamy Enterprise.

In 1888, at the age of 35, Berkeley Deane Wise became Civil Engineer of the BNCR continuing tourist developments on a scale rarely seen before or since. Besides his normal railway work, he found the time to build tea rooms, promenades, beaches, band stands, paths and footbridges at beauty spots on the line. He also extended hotels and planned golf courses.



Belfast York Road station in July 1937, before it was visited by the Luftwaffe. The tramway siding into the station can be seen and for long after it and the NCC had ceased to exist the destination blinds of Belfast trolleybuses and then motor buses offered a journey to LMS NCC Rly. (W. Robb)

In 1889 Glenariff Glen was leased to the railway and opened to the public that summer. Two years later Wise designed and opened a tea room there. He built paths and footbridges linking Whitehead and Blackhead in 1892. He standardised the design of signal cabins and minor structures such as waiting rooms.

Stations rebuilt by him include; Portrush, Belfast York Road and station hotel, Antrim, Whiteabbey, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Glynn, Greenisland, Larne, Larne Harbour, Trooperslane and Whitehead. Waiting rooms were added at Glarryford and Limavady Junction and at Whiteabbey and Jordanstown to cope with expanding commuter traffic. He also built Portstewart Tram Depot. Throughout the 1890s, Wise organised the building of new railway cottages and gate houses all over the system.

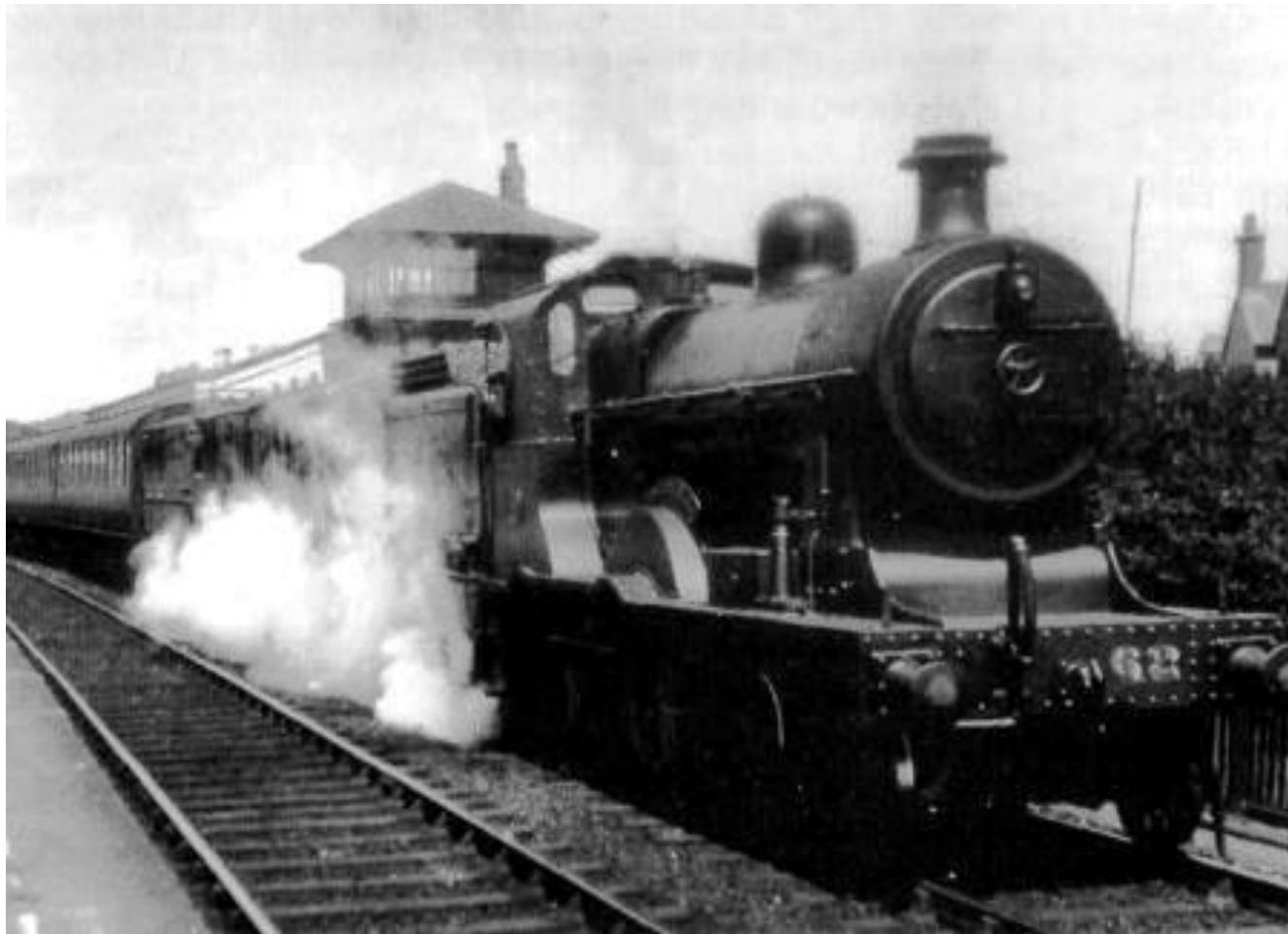
Wise was a strong advocate of the use of good quality stone ballast. He also pioneered the use of reinforced concrete from around 1900 on the railway.

He retired through ill health in 1906 and died three years later aged 56 in sight of Portrush station. He

is probably best remembered for the Gobbins Cliff Path which was opened in 1902.

Wise's achievements on the Northern Counties were even more remarkable in that he was with the company for only eighteen years. Along with his assistant, James A. Hanna, he gave the Northern Counties a distinctive architectural style of red brick buildings with large overhanging awnings and half-timbered gables. The style owes much to the architect Norman Shaw who popularised the Old English style in Britain.

Freeman Wills Crofts, BD Wise's nephew was Railway Engineer at Coleraine and later became Assistant Chief Engineer. He was the author of forty detective novels, some including a railway scene which he often tested out on the NCC. In 1929, he resigned from the railway to write full time and in the 1940s was given his own BBC Radio series called Inspector French Investigates.



Whitehead station in July 1934, with the 1:23pm. Larne Harbour-Belfast about to depart. The loco is A1 class No.62 "Slemish" and the train includes a vehicle which even then must have been ancient. (W. Robb)

Whitehead

Whitehead has the railway to thank for its development from a small clachan of houses to a pretty Edwardian seaside resort. In 1864 Whitehead had one platform and an old carriage as a waiting room. A new station was opened at Whitehead in 1877.

Following protests by the Women's Temperance League in 1883, the refreshment room had to offer tea as well as alcohol and close after the last train.

In 1894 a second platform, loop and full signalling was added. In summer 1902 King's Road and a new bridge were constructed replacing a level crossing. At the same time the main line was lowered between the station and Slaughterford Bridge.

In July 1903 extensive improvements commenced including the erection of a two road engine shed, water tower and goods shed, sidings, turntable, stabling for horses and jaunting cars and four railway workers cottages. A windmill pumped water for the engines into the water tower.

By 1903 the BNCR had issued 145 Villa Tickets for Whitehead. Ten years later, the population had increased to 1,200. This was partly thanks to the railway's practice of issuing Villa Tickets which gave families who built a house in the town free train travel for up to seven years.

A cartage service operated by McCrea and McFarland at many of the NCC stations including Whitehead was taken over by the railway company on 1st January 1904. From July 1924 these services were once again contracted out, this time to Wordie and Co.

In spring 1904 Whitehead Golf Club opened with help from the railway. On 10th July 1907 new island excursion platforms were opened. In 1908 a site at the Belfast end of the promenade was rented to Whitehead Sailing Club to erect a clubhouse and in 1911, the old landing stage was replaced by a concrete structure. The railway company built bathing boxes and a 500 seater pavilion. The railway created the beach by carting sand from Portrush and building groynes using railway sleepers.

In 1925 the government offered a grant towards the labour cost of doubling the track between Carrickfergus and Whitehead. The doubling was completed and opened in 1929. In 1937 the company proposed to build hotels, each with a capacity of 300 beds, using reinforced concrete at Whitehead, Portrush and Portstewart, but the LMS in Euston overruled it as the NCC had made a loss that year. There was a robbery at Whitehead booking office in February 1939.

The engine shed was used to store locos out of use over the winter in the 1930s and was reopened during World War II, closing again at the end of the war.

A railway bar was provided at the station in April 1946, serving only snack teas and soft drinks. (Most LMS bars had been closed during the war due to a shortage of drink.) The main station is still in use today by NIR, while the engine shed and the landward face of the excursion platform are now used by the RPSI.

The Gobbins

In 1892, the Railway Company opened up the coastline around Whitehead and Blackhead to excursionists by making pathways and footbridges along the cliffs, to encourage rail traffic from Belfast and Larne.

The Gobbins was an elaborate coastal cliff path, designed by B.D. Wise on the Islandmagee peninsula a few miles from Whitehead station. Construction work commenced in May 1901. The two-mile long path incorporated tunnels and spectacular bridges linking several sections of walkway high above the sea. The tubular and suspension bridges were built in Belfast and floated out from Whitehead on barges before being lifted into position.

The first section of the path opened in 1902, and the advertisement proclaimed "New Cliff path along the Gobbins Cliffs, with its ravines, bore caves, natural aquariums ... has no parallel in Europe as a marine cliff walk".

The Gobbins could be reached from either Whitehead, by walking along the Blackhead path, or from Ballycarry station, where jaunting cars met the trains, and visitors could stop for refreshments in the tea room at the entrance. When B.D. Wise retired in 1906 the company seemed to lose interest. The path was to have stretched 3½ miles with a northern exit at Heddle's Port but sadly it was never completed.

Severe gales and rock falls meant a high annual maintenance bill and, after a lack of repairs or maintenance during World War II, the railway decided it could not afford the rebuilding costs and so the path was closed in 1961.

Life During Wartime

The NCC played an important role in World War II as it was strategically placed to serve ports and factories crucial to the war effort. The NCC prepared an emergency timetable and built air raid shelters. At stations, all glass roofs were painted black and name boards were removed.

Whitehead became the headquarters of the Royal Engineers 8th Railway Construction Co. Their armoured Cement wagon was the Northern Counties equivalent to Corporal Jones' Butcher's lorry in the Dad's Army television comedy. Ambulance Trains were stored at the Excursion station platform from October 1940. The Whitehead ambulance train was never put to its intended purpose but it did travel to Londonderry to collect casualties from the Bismarck action and bring them back to Belfast. The Ward coaches, each held 40 patients. The interiors were painted white and had polished linoleum floors. The Treatment coach included an operating theatre, a pharmacy, and a utility room that could be used as an isolation ward or a padded cell!

LETTER

Dear Sir,

I am a keen 4mm scale railway modeller with a particular interest in the London Midland & Scottish Railway Northern Counties Committee. I have been able to get some information on NCC coaching stock but virtually none on NCC wagon stock. I would like to appeal to anyone with a copy of a NCC Coach Diagram Book and a NCC Wagon Diagram Book to get in touch to see if they would be willing to supply photocopies. I would of course meet expenses for this. I would also be interested in any good clear photographs of NCC coaches and wagons as these are invaluable in trying to produce accurate models.

My second request is in relation to private owner oil tank wagons. I have been able to identify most, if not all, oil companies that operated wagons. I have details of the Irish BP fleet before the distribution agreement with Shell-Mex at the end of 1931, but have no details of the size and running numbers of the other fleets. I have virtually no information on the Munster-Simms or Esso wagons. If anyone has clear photographs of oil tank wagons in revenue use, discharging in an oil depot, or loading at either Sydenham or Connswater I would be very keen to obtain copies for my own use. I have been able to locate a number of builders' photographs for some of the tank wagons showing original operator's name and livery, but these inevitably changed over time. If anyone can supply information on livery details for the 1930s and the post War period or colour photographs from the latter period, I would certainly be very glad to hear from them.

I would be very grateful if you could publish my appeal in your magazine as some of your very knowledgeable readers may be able to help.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Aspinwall.

Newtownstewart, Co. Tyrone

BOOK REVIEW

Locomotives of the GNRI

Norman Johnston, Colourpoint Books, £25

This review is an example of something which was planned, then forgotten and then remembered at the very last minute. Had this not been so, it could and should have been done by someone better qualified than the writer, whom some might say should be disqualified by reason of having NCC tendencies!

However, this book is too significant to be ignored, not least because it is the most ambitious production yet from Colourpoint or the author - a hardback, A4, 208 page job on quality paper. In addition to some 65 diagrams, there are 36 colour photographs and a vast number in monochrome. Reproduction is of a very high standard, especially when one considers that some were taken over 100 years ago.

The book - as its title would suggest - is primarily a history of the engines of the GNR and its constituent companies and also includes details of the companies themselves and their locomotive engineers, going back as far as 1836. Understandably, there is not so much information about some of the very earliest locomotives but, between the narrative and the appendices, there is as much detail - short of counting the rivets - about every locomotive that ran as anyone would wish. There is a chapter on tenders, one on dieselisation (shudder!) up to the Hunslet era and one on preservation, in addition to details of what went where and what became of it when CIÉ and the UTA took over.

Although there are references to the capabilities of various locomotives, one will not find here stirring tales of exploits of speed or haulage or railway skulduggery, though there is a mention of Newry shed being told that a favourite engine was to be scrapped, whereupon they promptly swapped its number for that of another less highly thought of - after all, they had trains to run and one dead engine was as good as another to the scrap man!

While some of the information could be researched from the sources quoted, many other sources have obviously been involved - above all, Paddy Mallon, to whom the book is very appropriately dedicated. At £25 it couldn't be called cheap but you may never again get so much all in one volume. **NP**



Obviously an early photo of Jeep No.1, since it carries NCC lettering - but where is it? (S. & J. Davies collection)



Another puzzle picture - how did Charlie take a photo with himself in it? A Santa train on a dull day has disgorged a gathering of timers and/or photographers whose equipment can hardly have been over-worked. (C.P. Friel)



Formerly reached via the Warrenpoint branch, Newry now almost touches the Dublin line and a new by-pass enabled this shot to be taken. No.85 "Merlin" is approaching Cloghogue Chapel on the last stage of the climb en route to Dundalk on 24th April 1999. (C.P. Friel)



*Despite having made the pilgrimage from Belfast, the photographer was not rewarded with good weather for the Cork 150 and here No.85 is seen at Rathpeacon on a typical November day.
(W.T. Scott)*