

# FIVE FOOT THREE



Magazine of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

# FIVE FOOT THREE

## No.52

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**Editor: Nelson Poots**

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

***Front Cover: RPSI No.3 prepares for action at the Down line loading point at Greenisland, August 2005. (I. Pryce)***

#### **EDITORIAL**

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Another year has passed - rather more rapidly than one would wish! Looking backwards and forwards in the customary manner, but not wishing to trespass too much on the writings of others, what is there to say?

To begin on a sad note, 2005 saw the deaths of some ‘characters’, each well-known in his own way: Joe Cassells has written an eloquent tribute to Willie Graham, who gave pleasure to many and deserved a better end. Also gone are Tom McDevitte, alias radio raconteur “Barney McCool”, a familiar figure and occasional speaker at the St. Jude’s meetings; while slipping away almost unnoticed was “Gilly” Reid, a former GNR driver perhaps not so widely known but a regular traveller and entertaining companion on many RPSI trains, whose ashes were, appropriately, scattered in the vicinity of the former Adelaide shed during the return of No.186 from her stay in Lisburn.

Something which will certainly not be missed is the requirement for our vehicles to make regular visits to various parts of the NIR system to see if they still fitted into the infrastructure. Whilst these could sometimes be combined with a passenger-carrying operation of uncertain viability they were on the whole an expensive nuisance and a wasteful employment of the small pool of NIR 'steam men'. This has now been done away with except for 'new' vehicles or for places where our Mk2s have not yet visited, e.g. the re-laid Larne line, accomplished on 22<sup>nd</sup> January.



***RPSI volunteer Fr. Eddie Creamer conducts an appropriately ecumenical little ceremony to scatter Gilly Reid's ashes near his former place of work at Adelaide. (I. Pryce)***

To describe the Society's fortunes as "boom and bust" would be an overstatement, although it does seem to be something of a roller-coaster ride. In 2005 there was relief that spending on the Mk2 programme had, if not stopped, at least eased off. We have six coaches passed to run, with a much-needed diner/bar car to follow, all of which will somewhat restrain No.186's current exuberance! The long-delayed IFI grant has at last been finalised - a pity it couldn't have come a couple of years earlier, but that's water under the bridge now and, although there will still be substantial spending on carriages, it should be at a more controlled rate and with grant assistance. In case anyone should think that everything is now fine and dandy, don't forget that there is an unending cycle of locomotive overhauls.

Just when we were starting to think that the world mightn't be such a bad place came the derailment in Dublin, with the possibility that their Santa trains, one of our perennial big earners, might be cancelled or at best seriously curtailed. Fortunately, with the invaluable assistance of IÉ and a lot of hard work, it was possible to run as planned. As you will read elsewhere, the 2005 Tour (it used to be called the Two-Day but now we've almost lost count!) was widely acclaimed as one of the best ever, while we also had several useful charter operations to augment the regular outings.

The news that the Society was to provide a loco and crews for the Larne line ballasting came as music to the ears of members who yearned to do some regular serious work on a locomotive - and no less to

those of the Treasurer! Although this was certainly the big event of the year no more need be said here as it gets extensive coverage elsewhere.

Readers will notice that, for the first time in many years, Laurence Liddle's informative "Comments & Recollections" is missing. Laurence is now aged 90, his wife isn't very well and they have recently changed their residence - hence no article. Hopefully, once settled, Laurence may be moved to take up his pen again; in the meantime we wish them both well.

To conclude, a shameless 'plug'. Elsewhere, you will read of "Steaming in Three Centuries", the story of the 101/J15 class locos. John Friel will be delighted to be besieged with orders and the Society will benefit. Buy it - you won't regret it!

## NEWS FROM COUNCIL

**Paul McCann**

Previous years have perhaps had a certain inevitability about them - but not 2005. The year started with Council conscious that operating trains from Whitehead would not be an option due to the line from Bleach Green to Larne closing for up to 9 months for relaying; but what was the alternative? A few ideas were tossed around as to where the northern Mk2 set would be stored. The most bizarre was at Platin cement factory on the Navan line but Adelaide yard was the favourite and, indeed, it did seem that the latter would be the case until NIR made it clear that there would be no room there due to the need for storing withdrawn railcars. Eventually, with some reservations, Lisburn was selected. In the event, this turned out to be an excellent base from an operational point of view and everything worked reasonably well, even if it did involve the Chairman in a number of late night visits to water the coaches and charge the batteries. No.186 and five Mk2 coaches were stabled in Lisburn from 13<sup>th</sup> March 2005 and are due to return to Whitehead in late January 2006! Our sincere thanks are due to NIR, and especially to the staff at Lisburn, for the help provided during our sojourn there.

The first outing of the year was a train ostensibly run to celebrate receiving the 2005 Coiley Award for the restoration of No.186. In fact, it was operated to allow three NIR drivers to be officially certified. So congratulations to Driver Noel Playfair, Fireman Gary Moore and Fireman Stephen Glass. The certification was carried out by Merlin Rail and was the first step in putting in place a system of documentation of approval for steam training in NIR. An agreement has also been made with Iarnród Éireann to initiate a training scheme in Dublin, but it will not be until later in 2006 at the earliest due to pressure on drivers there.

An official dinner to celebrate the Coiley Award was held later in April and was organised by the Events Committee, a Society group which meets occasionally to organise events outside the main stream of Society activities.

Operations during the year were upset by a derailment of coaches in Dublin and derailment of No.186 at Lisburn, meaning that a couple of planned operations were cancelled and a few others operated with Cravens. A further upset occurred when No.186 suffered a big-end problem on one of the Christmas trains and had to be withdrawn from traffic for repair, the remainder of trains to be operated by railcar. This was probably the only major drawback with Lisburn as a base as some running-in would otherwise have been possible at Whitehead, which might have allowed the locomotive back into traffic before the end of the season.

Despite the foregoing, there were a number of very welcome charters north and south, including to Wicklow and as far afield as Galway, and no fewer than five to events at Cultra. Likewise, it was gratifying that there were two film contracts during the year - for "Lassie" and "The Wind That Shakes The Barley".

Participants on the May railtour could, if desired, have had steam travel on six days out of the eight over which the extended tour lasted. It is hoped that future tours will allow full access to positioning

runs where possible. As an aside, during steam operations, Council would urge all members to obey the trespass notices on railway lines. The Society does not condone trespass for any reason and both railway companies take a very dim view of it!

The locomotive stud increased by five during the year, in theory at least, since all five were based at Whitehead anyway! In April it was announced that CIÉ had agreed to sell No.131, No.184 and No.461 to the Society for a nominal sum. The latter two have been in the Society's care since the late 1970s but officially remained in CIÉ ownership. Around the same time Translink offered Hunslets 101 and 102 for sale to a number of interested parties. Not actually expecting to be successful, but keen to ensure that the locos were retained for possible preservation, the Society submitted a bid for a nominal amount. In July we were surprised to be informed that the locos were to be ours. It was not immediately obvious what the plans for the locos were to be, but since then a small and dedicated body of members has formed to initially protect 102 from the worst of the elements, with a view to getting it started eventually.



*The train run on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2005 for the validation of the NIR crew by Merlin Rail is seen here approaching Cultra. (C.P. Friel)*

In the north our Mk2 carriages appear to have been accepted by the travelling public, and only a bar and a generator are lacking. Having gained approval to operate on NIR, the set gained system-wide approval on Iarnród Éireann just in time for the May tour.

The long-anticipated grant was finally officially approved in December 2005 and we can now look forward to receiving a 40% rebate on our expenditure on the northern set over the next few years. In the south, it now seems that the Cravens coaches may well be retired in 2006 and a number, including two vans, have been identified for purchase by the Society. We will await events, as the retirement of Cravens has been announced and put back a few times before! Of our vintage carriages, 238 and 241 are on lease in England, and 1097 in Downpatrick.

Work continues behind the scenes to deal with the Society's responsibilities under the new Railway Safety legislation north and south. It has been accepted that the RPSI can operate under NIR's safety case when on the main line in the north, but a Light Railway application has been submitted for our own operations at Whitehead. It has been intimated, but not confirmed, that we may be eligible for an exemption from central door locking and train protection requirements due to the few trains operating in a year. This remains to be seen! The Society's representatives remain in close contact with both railway companies and both government departments on these issues.



*This was a test train cum change of lodgings on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2005 which saw coach 301 on its first outing. After running to Coleraine the train returned to Great Victoria Street where No.186 was turned on the triangle before taking the train to Lisburn for stabling. Here, at Kilmakee, International Airport traffic awaits the passage of the veteran. (C.P. Friel)*

Negotiations during the year with IÉ included carriages, driver training and turntables. The latter is a point of major concern as Cork turntable was removed during the year, and that at Mullingar made inoperable due to a new fence. This follows close on the disconnection of Galway and Sligo tables following CTC extensions over the last couple of years. We are assured that the remaining turntables are safe and it has been hinted that the one at Cork may well be reinstated in a slightly different location.

As part of our Network Agreement with NIR it was agreed that the Company would review those items of infrastructure left on their network which were no longer needed for day-to-day use but which would be required for the running of steam trains. During the year NIR engaged a consultant to review the state of all remaining watering facilities and the Coleraine turntable, which belongs to the Society and is installed on a section of ground leased from NIR. As a result of this review NIR has decided to undertake the upkeep of all the existing watering facilities and has asked the Society to carry out some

work to maintain the turntable in a safe condition and to erect a fence round it.

At Whitehead, Carrickfergus Borough Council has agreed to sell the site to the Society, with payments to be made over five years. Bill King-Wood was co-opted to Council a few years back to carry out negotiations on the Society's behalf. Escape is in sight, Bill! Also, whilst the NI Transport Holding Company are reluctant to sell the remaining section of the site in their possession (the main platform road), they have agreed to officially lease it. From a historical point of view, it is believed that they retained this section of track to provide a temporary refuge siding for two NCC jeeps and twenty spoil wagons!



*A couple of years ago RPSI plans had to be revised due to damage to the viaduct at Cahir. Driver Tony Renehan has a good look at the new one as No.186 works from Limerick to Waterford on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2005. (C.P. Friel)*

At the AGM in Belfast, Council were pleased to have Nina Dillon as a guest. Nina officially presented a chain of office in memory of her late husband David, past Vice-Chairman of the Society. There were a few changes on Council, notably the retirement of Norman Foster, our first Chairman from the south. As Joe Cassells noted at the meeting Norman's Chairmanship "was one of distinction". New faces on Council during the year were David Houston, Fergus McDonnell, Tony O'Shaughnessy, Francis Richards and Derek Young. Retirements were Peter Emmett, Paul Newell and Alex Richardson.

On a delicate note, one item that was mailed to members during the year was the "Gift Of A Lifetime" leaflet. This detailed how members could benefit the Society with a legacy. Information was provided for both UK and Irish legislations. It is agreed that this could be a sensitive subject but Council would appreciate if members would give it some consideration.

At the time of writing, the No.461 Appeal fund is in the process of being wound up. Hopefully, the Treasurer's report will show how much was raised. Members are thanked for their contributions and for all donations to the Society which come in along with membership payments.

The major item of news (and income) during the year was the sub-contract negotiated with Amec-Spie

to provide the motive power and locomotive crews for the ballast trains to be operated during their possession of the Larne line for relaying. The contract ran from the first train on 5<sup>th</sup> August until the final one on 9<sup>th</sup> December. To all members who gave up their time to firstly overhaul No.3 in double-quick time and to subsequently crew the engine over all those weeks, including a number of overnight turns, the Society owes a great debt of gratitude. 2005 was an encouraging year for the number of youthful trainees on the operating grades and the ballast trains allowed a lot of experience to be gained.

The Society's website has been especially useful this year and thanks are due to Phil Lockett (now with team of James and Edward Friel). Thanks also to Phil for getting NIR to include an advert for the Society in their timetable booklet. The e-mail Bulletin continues to provide news and general railway information to around 520 members. The year past has seen an enormous increase in the number of requests for help on various railway-related topics from members of the public. Hopefully, members are able to help where requested and they are encouraged to do so as it will increase the perception of the Society as a group of helpful and friendly people. The archive of information in the Bulletin this past year is the biggest yet - I would like to think that members find it useful and interesting. Generally, it would be appreciated if there was more input from south of the border as it tends to bias towards the north since most of the current contributors reside there. All submissions are gratefully accepted - few, if any, are rejected. So thanks to all who sent items, especially Sullivan Boomer for his observations on the Larne line project and Evans Hamilton for his contributions on the same topic.



*Welcome support for the aging activists, Ben McDonald and James Friel seem happy after helping to water No.186 at Ballymena on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2005. (C.P. Friel)*

The usual thanks are due to Charles Friel for his organising of the Belfast meetings. We are currently in the middle of another varied and entertaining season. The meetings are also a great venue for catching up with all the Society gossip, especially during the quiet months between Christmas and Easter when not much is happening in the way of trains. It also means that reading material can be bought in the one place as the number of Irish railway books on the sales stand inexplicably continues to rise, indeed

soar! On that subject, there are still a number of copies of “40 Shades Of Steam” in stock and every member is encouraged to obtain a copy - now with errata, addendum and price reduction!



*The profusion of puddles in Lisburn yard gives some indication of the preparation and disposal problems here. No.186 is ready to leave for the last time on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2006, looking very smart thanks to the earlier efforts of the photographer. (I. Pryce)*

Last year the membership statistics were introduced in tabular format and so delighted were my readers that I will retain this method of presentation!

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2000</b>
NI	386	380	379	378	383	383
RoI	375	375	388	371	347	346
GB	294	284	305	277	279	276
Overseas	35	32	38	38	31	31
Adult	685	696	748	728	721	716
Senior	275	247	227	207	196	195
Junior	31	24	28	25	22	17
Student	6	5	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Family	14	21	25	23	18	26
Life	58	59	61	62	64	64
Societies	5	5	5	6	5	5
Honorary	16	15	15	13	13	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>1,071</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>1,064</b>	<b>1,040</b>	<b>1,036</b>

The same comment made last year applies again, i.e. the number of members who fail to renew their

memberships each year is by far the greatest in the Republic, with half as many again lapsing as the total for NI and GB. Perhaps that area is more of a family market - borne out by the incredible demand for the Santa trains in Dublin, whereas in the north it can be a struggle to fill some trains.

We are still trying to get all UK taxpayers to sign Gift Aid forms. Although there are 511 in operation, raising £4,761 of extra income, more members could do so.

The usual thanks go to those who helped Council cope with the management tasks: Karen McLaverty of insurance brokers, Marsh Ltd - costs slightly down for the 2005/6 period, but still massive; Ashgrove House - ticketing and phone service; Wilma Cairns - ticketing, book-keeping, phone answering and general secretarial services.

Within the Society, the Posts of Special Responsibility to the Secretary for 2005 were: Charles Friel (Belfast Meetings); Johnny Glendinning (Museum Curator); Mark Kennedy (Curatorial Adviser); Philip Lockett (Web Manager). Ciaran McAteer has been assisting with Whitehead site, and other, legalities. Barry Carse continues to receive and lodge membership payments in the Dublin area. Nelson Poots has had an extremely busy year as Treasurer and "Five Foot Three" Editor and also spent a significant number of days on the ballast trains - given the fact that you are now reading this journal, he managed to survive! However, Council are anxious that he receives more with help the day-to-day finances in the north, so any members interested in joining a small team are asked to get in touch as soon as possible.

There are a number of members who serve on the various sub-committees, the duties of most of which are well removed from the hobby aspect of the Society and they are thus due extra special thanks. And finally, as always, our thanks to the management and staff of Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways for making it all possible - we hope to work with you and further improve our relations in 2006.

## **LOCOMOTIVE REPORT**

**Peter Scott**

### **Locomotive Position**

#### **No.3 "R.H. Smith", LPHC 0-6-0ST shunting loco. In traffic, Whitehead.**

Last year, in my report I said that we shouldn't lose sight of this engine, since we never knew when it would be needed again ... well, sometimes my crystal ball does work and indeed the Derry engine most certainly was needed again! 80 days' work and some 65,000 tons of ballast once again testifies to the usefulness of this most excellent loco. Much more is said of this elsewhere, so I will limit my comments to recording that the loco received a comprehensive overhaul and returned to traffic in July; from then until December it was hired to Messrs Amec Spie for top ballasting the newly relaid line from Bleach Green to Whitehead and has now returned to Whitehead. The overhaul consisted of basic boiler repairs and re-tubing, new axle bearings together with sponge boxes to replace the plain underkeeps, wheels re-profiled, new springs, motion bearings tightened up, new piston rings, new ashpan and firebars, tank repaired, new buffer springs, new brake hangers and blocks and numerous minor items.

#### **No.BG3 "Guinness", A. Guinness, Son and Co 0-4-0 ST shunting loco. In traffic, Whitehead.**

The Guinness loco was seriously considered as a contender for the Amec contract, one possible arrangement being to "top and tail" the train with it and the Derry engine. The obvious advantage would be doubling the traction power, but as well as this would be to avoid propelling, especially when level crossings are concerned. The main drawback would be the crewing (8 persons per day to cover 2 shifts), so really this option was never furthered. An interesting concept though - the nearest thing to a Magheramorne spoil train since 1970! The Guinness loco would also have needed extra provision for

coal, as designed it only has a diminutive bunker within the cab.

#### **No.4 Ex LMS NCC 2-6-4T loco. In traffic, Dublin.**

No.4 continues to be based in Dublin, where the heavier traffic warrants a larger engine. The loco is stabled at Inchicore when not in use and at Connolly during train operations, e.g. the "Santa" trains in December. The driving springs have all been renewed following several spring breakages - this job was done in the loco shed at Connolly where the raised track and use of an elevating trolley rendered the job extremely easy.

No.4 is now reaching five years since her overhaul, and it is planned to carry out 'midlife' boiler re-tubing and other repairs. Ideally this would not be done until No.461 is ready to return to traffic.



*The "Derry Engine" in the latter stages of its overhaul in the workshop at Whitehead, its wheels being craned onto the rails. A temporary chimney has been fitted for steam testing and the white board clamped to the cab carries a pressure gauge on its other side! On the right is the inverted firebox of No.461, on which the missing platework has since been replaced; the board here had a "things to do" list for No.3. (I. Pryce)*

#### **No.186 Ex GSR 0-6-0 standard goods loco. In traffic, Lisburn.**

Following an encouraging start, No.186 continued to acquit herself most competently and has now operated to Waterford and Limerick (during the 2005 May Tour) and in the North as far as Castlerock. The performance of this small and somewhat basic locomotive has been most gratifying - a minimum of 27 mph up the Mossley bank is good work in anyone's book!

The loco and train were stabled at Lisburn since March 2005, a result of the Larne line re-laying. Our thanks are due to NIR and in particular the Permanent Way Department for accommodating us there. The length of the longest siding at Lisburn admits only the loco plus five Mk2 coaches - more than that would be possible only by blocking access and causing unsatisfactory problems. In the far corner of the yard was our coal dump and also "No.3 loading shovel" - the second of the two tractors with front loader, normally kept as spare at Whitehead. This machine was sadly in need of a coat of paint and,

while normally out of sight at Whitehead, it was felt to be unsuitable for public display - so it got its red and black livery restored prior to the move by low-loader to Lisburn. The principal drawback to Lisburn is the lack of covered accommodation and lack of a pit - fortunately, No.186 does not require the pit for such jobs as brake adjusting which can be done on both loco and tender from outside.



*With its front end supported on blocks, No.3 is now raised to enable the wheelsets to be rolled into position. (J. Wolsley)*

Unfortunately, the sojourn at Lisburn was marred by two unseemly incidents. The first was derailment of the leading tender wheelset when entering No.3 platform tender-first. Damage to tender and track was negligible. The circumstances were thoroughly investigated and appropriate action taken as quickly as possible.

The second incident occurred on the second day of the “Belfast Santa” trains from Lisburn to Antrim, when the loco suffered a hot big end. The big end has since been repaired and the loco and train returned to Whitehead on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2006.

#### **No.461 Ex DSER 2-6-0 goods loco. General overhaul, Whitehead.**

The overhaul of this loco was held up while we concentrated on getting No.3 ready for the ballast contract, but resumed as soon as No.3 departed by low-loader to Greenisland. The outer firebox door plate has been flanged and welded into place. The throat plate is also being renewed and has been formed and drilled for stays. The firebox sides will be fitted next. Work is also progressing on the inner firebox, the lower half of which is to be renewed by welding in new sections of copper plate. Preparatory weld tests have been completed. Mechanical work is also progressing with the axleboxes being set up in the frames for marking out and re-metalling.



*At Lisburn on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2005 the rear wheels of No.186's tender are about to be re-railed. Those who have wrestled with traversing screw jacks must envy NIR this piece of kit! (C.P. Friel)*

#### **Steam Locomotives In Store**

#### **No.85 “Merlin” Ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 compound express passenger loco. In store, Whitehead.**

Not much to say about No.85, since the loco is in store awaiting a decision as to her future. Gets moved at intervals to combat static bearing damage. The blast pipe has been removed to facilitate oiling the cylinders and also to commence making a pattern for a new one. The existing one has worn very thin

and one of the last running repairs was to patch a large hole in it. The chimney has equally reached the end of its useful life.

No.85 is a good contender for relatively inexpensive return to traffic. The boiler must be removed for thorough inspection and repairs, but all the really heavy work was done last time round. There will be mechanical work required but this should be limited to renewal of some wearing parts since again the bulk of the work was done during overhaul at Harland & Wolff and at Whitehead. What is needed is resumption of the "Steam Enterprise" and extended route availability - not to mention retention of appropriate turntables - to justify the effort.

**No.171 "Slieve Gullion" Ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 express passenger loco. In store, Whitehead.**

No.171 is also enjoying her "watch below", to use the nautical phrase, and like No.85 gets moved occasionally to keep working parts free. Also like No.85, her steam pipes have been removed to facilitate oiling the cylinders and valves, but also to get pattern equipment made for the "steam pipe butts" - the short cast iron pipe elbows between the main steam pipes in the smokebox and the cylinder block.

This loco would be a more expensive proposition for return to traffic since both boiler and working parts are in need of extensive dismantling and overhaul.



*A brief home visit in November allowed some jobs to be carried out on No.3, seen here on No.2 shed road with temporarily(?) retired No.85 stabled indoors. (C.P. Friel)*

**No.184 Ex GSR 0-6-0 standard goods loco. In store, Whitehead.**

Requires major repairs. Now in store inside the carriage shed.

**No.27 "Lough Erne". Ex SLNCR 0-6-4T In store, Whitehead.**

**No.131 Ex GNR(I) 4-4-0 express passenger loco. Preparation for overhaul, Whitehead.**

The steam pipe butts referred to in the section on No.171 are identical for No.131 so the pattern will do for both. Interest is being expressed in restoring this loco and the requirements (and likely costs) are

being established in greater detail.

### **Diesel Locomotives**

#### **No.23 Ex Irish Shell “Planet” diesel shunter. In store, Whitehead.**

The Planet needs engine and gearbox repairs.

#### **No.1 “Carlow” Ex CSE Ruston & Hornsby diesel shunter. In traffic, Whitehead.**

The Ruston loco operates reliably so long as its gearbox is not over-taxed by lengthy heavy shunting. Investigation of the gearbox fault is still on the “to do” list but since this requires removal and stripping down of the gearbox to investigate, it is an easy job to put off.

#### **Unilok ex UTA road-rail shunter. In traffic, Whitehead.**

The Unilok continues to perform its ritual of moving No.74 “Dunluce Castle” out of the Railway Gallery at the Transport Museum whenever the Museum requires the area for a function.

#### **101 “Eagle”. Hunslet Bo-Bo diesel electric loco. In store, Whitehead.**

While acquisition of this loco by the Society has not met with universal acclaim, at least it is now under control of the RPSI. All the major parts, including engine, generator and traction motors, are available but much of the switch-gear is missing.



*New faces at Whitehead. On 29<sup>th</sup> October 2005, the Hunslet Team pose with the object of their affections. One of the jobs No.3 did on her final homecoming was to move 102 to a more convenient position. (C.P. Friel)*

#### **102 “Falcon”. Hunslet Bo-Bo diesel electric loco. Repairs, Whitehead.**

102 was also acquired from NIR when offered for disposal. Although several organisations expressed interest, the Society felt that there was little prospect of the loco being removed from Whitehead in the short term. On the other hand, a number of members were expressing an interest in restoring the loco to

working order. Restoring it to a condition where it can shunt and test train brakes can probably be done without major work or financial outlay. A "Hunslet" group is already working towards this. So far, effort has been concentrated on supplying workable batteries and getting water out of the cylinders. It should be stressed that diesel preservation is not a "core" activity of the RPSI and funding must come from external sources.

### Foundry and Contract Work

Work currently being undertaken includes overhaul of running gear on 6-wheel coach 62M for the Downpatrick and County Down Railway and repairs to an inspection trolley for the Donegal Railway Restoration based at Donegal Station. Also planned is boiler repair to 0-6-0 loco No.90 and completion of overhaul of Orenstein & Koppel loco No.1, both for DCDR. (Orenstein No.1 is similar to No.3 which was overhauled for DCDR several years ago.) The foundry has just completed casting new brake blocks for the 6-wheel coach.

### CARRIAGE & WAGON REPORT

Francis Richards

Firstly I wish to thank Paul Newell, my predecessor for his work, particularly as he continued in office for the Society despite having requested that he be allowed to stand down at the last AGM. Paul is providing great help to me while handing over the office.

As this is my first report, I shall restrict it to the Northern operational rake of Mk2 vehicles.



*Brake/first 463, formerly BR(E) 17091, still requires a lot of work. Recently arrived from Heysham, it is being shunted by No.3 on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2005. On the left is David Orr while on the loco is Edward Friel, following in the footsteps of his older brother. (C.P. Friel)*

The operational rake comprised 5 coaches in the last season due to siding space limitations at Lisburn where the train was stored during the Bleach Green to Larne track relay. These were worked back to Whitehead on 22<sup>nd</sup> January and now await their annual overhaul and assessment.

## Mk2 Operational Stock

Number	Type	Seats	Train Line	Status
180	Corridor 1 <sup>st</sup>	42	No	Awaiting minor floor repair
181	Corridor 1 <sup>st</sup>	42	No	In traffic
300	Open	62	No	In traffic
301	Open	64	No	In traffic
302	Open	64	No	In traffic
460	Brake Open	31	No	In traffic



*The Mk2 running rake, minus 180 which could not be fitted into Lisburn, is seen to advantage as No.186 attacks the bank after stopping in Holywood with one of the "Titanic Charter" trains on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2005. (C.P. Friel)*

## Mk2 Under Restoration Or Held As Spare

547 Work is progressing on the dining car. The following items are needed but it must be said that this list is not complete!! A repair to the dome is required at the Larne end. An additional water tank is to be fitted at the Belfast end with appropriate plumbing. Note that this will provide drinking water. Passenger alarm valve is to be reinstated in central corridor. Battery boxes to be repaired or replaced by ones from 4112. Electricity connectors (train line) to be completed. Decision on cooker required - gas or electric? If gas, then gas bottle box to be rebuilt / replaced. Water heaters for hand wash and glass wash basins to be determined. 230-volt power supply outlets to be determined and mains cabling run. Lighting circuits to be tested. Branch pipe for steam connection to pressure ventilation unit is required, also 3 steam traps. As you can see, there is plenty of scope for volunteer labour on this vehicle. The bogies for 547 have been refurbished in-house. These are the first 'B4' bogies to be so treated.

4112 Open saloon. This vehicle, originally built for the Western Region, has been purchased from

CIÉ as a source of spares. It is currently being stripped and will provide the following 'donor' parts: bogies, buffers, draw gear, toilet fittings, electrics, doors, battery boxes, corridor ends, windows and roof water tank to be removed. The gutted body will then be scrapped.

Of the following 3 open saloon vehicles, one (at least) is to be modified for disabled access.

920 Currently at Heysham. Reportedly best available Mk2 open.

923 Whitehead.

935 Whitehead (on temporary bogies).



***No.186 drowns the sound of coughing birds as she storms up to Mossley with an Easter Bunny train on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2005. (C.P. Friel)***

One or two of the remainder will be used to provide higher density seating than that available from 180 and 181.

462 Hunslet driving trailer 916. Given the current interest in Hunslet 102, it will be retained as it is for the near future, i.e. do not remove control wiring, etc., and do not convert to vacuum brake.

463 Brake 1<sup>st</sup> with side corridor and 24 seats. The vehicle is partly restored but much work is outstanding, although extensive restoration to toilet area has been completed. It is suggested that this vehicle be used as a generator van in addition to its role as our second guards brake. The vehicle has vacuum brakes but no train line.

6402 This vehicle, obtained from Iarnród Éireann, is a twin generator version of their 'Dutch Van'.

Over the last 6 months, it has been partly restored and both the large and small generators are operational. The interior needs de-greasing and cleaning. The gutters and down-pipes are blocked. Note that this vehicle can supply power for the tour train, but at the expense of not being a revenue earner. It needs to be converted to vacuum brakes but does have working train line fitments.

The small generator provides about 23Kw which is expected to be sufficient to provide the electrical needs of steam-heated rakes of up to seven vehicles, including the diner. This generator is driven by a 3-cylinder air-cooled Lister engine. The large generator provides about 230Kw which will support lighting and air conditioning for a full rake of Mk2d vehicles (or a medium sized village) if required. This generator is driven by a six-cylinder turbo-charged Cummins diesel of 13 litres capacity!

## BELFAST AREA OPERATIONS

**Mervyn Darragh**

The 2005 operating year opened unexpectedly early on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> January when No.186 and five Mk2 carriages were used to carry out driver and firemen assessment. This was organised by the Society to facilitate NIR. Merlin Rail (now FM Rail) sent their senior steam driver and traction inspector, Peter Kirk, to oversee the NIR crew assessment. Two return passenger trains operated from Lisburn to Bangor in cold but fine weather.



*En route to her "Suir Valley" duties, No.186 simmers quietly among the roaring diesels at Dublin Connolly. (I. Pryce)*

Thankfully, this year did not have the trials and tribulations associated with the locomotive and carriage acceptance operations of 2004. Locomotives 4, 85 and 186 are passed for the NIR system with the carriages brake-tested, platform-gauged and approved for everywhere except Bellarena, Londonderry and stations north of Whitehead. By the time you read this article the Larne line will have been carriage-gauged and approved. On 13<sup>th</sup> March 2005 carriage 301 passed its brake test and was subsequently approved for service by the NIR Approvals Panel, giving a total of six Mk2 carriages now approved to operate on NIR: Mk2 side-corridor firsts 180 and 181, open standards 300, 301 and 302

along with standard open passenger brake 460. The opportunity was taken on 13<sup>th</sup> March with the same consist to perform an obligatory run to Portrush to maintain the Halcrow 6-month track access requirement. Unfortunately due to the condition of the run-round road there, permission to enter Portrush was withheld until remedial work had been carried out so the train terminated at Coleraine.

With the closure of the Larne Line for a complete rebuild from Bleach Green to Whitehead, and significant upgrade work beyond to Larne it became apparent that there might be no Whitehead-based mainline operations during 2005. Through the kind co-operation of NIR at many levels the Company agreed that locomotive No.186 and five Mk2 carriages could be accommodated at Lisburn during the closure. The transfer took place on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

The season officially opened with another successful Easter Bunny train operation, this time to Bangor on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March. A private charter operated to Cultra (for an Ulster Folk and Transport Museum dinner function) on 31<sup>st</sup> March, quickly followed by the Titanic Festival charter to Bangor on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April. A further charter operated to Cultra on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> April, No.186 making a fine sight and sound as she accelerated up the bank to Bangor. More welcome charter work and income followed on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May with a repeat operation to Cultra.



*No.4 gets a quick check-over at Enniscorthy on the “Suir Valley” tour on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005. Between the starting signal and the tunnel is the bridge over the River Slaney, popular with photographers. (C.P. Friel)*

The International Railtour, the “Suir Valley” to Waterford, was one of the best in recent times and operated over the weekend of 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May. Positioning operations to and from Waterford took place on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May. The railtour effectively got under way on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May when No.186 and five Mk2s departed Lisburn for Dublin at 10:45. A healthy crowd of local enthusiasts and some mainland tour participants had an enjoyable journey to Dublin.

Due to the numbers travelling and the lack of a suitable steel-bodied Society catering/refreshment vehicle Iarnród Éireann kindly provided a restaurant car, an open standard and a generator brake to supplement the rake. The Saturday was bright but chilly and a strong wind ensured that the coaches

when shunted onto Rosslare Pier were liberally coated with salt spray. The Sunday operation to Limerick proceeded under special engineering permission to the Junction, as the line was closed for upgrading. In contrast to the previous day, the weather was fine and warm. For the record, No.186 and a small set of Society wooden-bodied coaches worked the Waterford positioning operations.

Saturday saw No.4 and eight vehicles form the train to Waterford via Rosslare, while the Sunday trip to Limerick and return was worked by No.186 with six vehicles, the catering car and full brake being temporarily dropped due to locomotive haulage limitations. Monday saw our return by the Kilkenny Line (via Lavistown Direct Curve) to Dublin and Belfast. No.4 performed excellently on the day.

A special word of thanks to the Iarnród Éireann and NIR crews for their enthusiasm in making the International Railtour weekend such a success.



*On the Rosslare Harbour-Waterford leg of the “Suir Valley” No.4 is about to leave the Dublin line at Rosslare Strand. The signalman handing up the new token is keeping things at arm’s length, but the one arriving from the Harbour seems about to get him in the leg! (C.P. Friel)*

To facilitate operating needs Spring Bank Holiday Monday saw the transfer of No.4 to Dublin and No.186 to Lisburn. This was the nearest the northern operations team could get to operating a Steam Enterprise. Because of driver hours restrictions this could not be marketed to the general public, due to the very short time in Dublin. An encouraging number of members supported the day and their participation ensured that this essential operation did not make a financial loss. A similar operation is planned for 2006, with membership support again essential. As the Spring Bank holiday is not observed in the Republic we encountered a full weekday service there. On our return we missed our booked departure due to no platform being available until the afternoon 15:20 Enterprise had departed, then we were severely checked by an all-stops DART to Malahide. By that time we were being quickly caught by a Drogheda-bound railcar and we were transferred to the up line between Skerries and Balbriggan to be overtaken, followed by a rapid return to the down line and acceleration through Balbriggan. A prompt departure from Drogheda enabled us to keep in front of the 16:50 ex-Dublin

Enterprise, to be overtaken at Dundalk. Despite a temporary running problem approaching Newry, recovery was made and arrival in Belfast was close to time. This was an excellent day out, bringing back an atmosphere akin to early Society railtours.

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June saw a Causeway Express operation with No.186 to Portrush and a connecting coach to the Giant's Causeway. This operation was originally organised as a passenger train to Coleraine with empty carriages to Portrush to facilitate the Halcrow 6-month track access run between Coleraine and Portrush which had not been possible on 13<sup>th</sup> March. By the time we operated the track access requirement had been removed by NIR and the train operated throughout as a passenger working.

The bright June evenings ensured the return of the very popular Steam and Jazz trains which ran on consecutive Fridays 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July, averaging 190 passengers per operation. Needless to say, our passengers enjoyed a night of traditional jazz music provided by the Apex Jazz Band, with much good humour and dancing at Portadown and Lisburn.



*The “Three Cities’ trip on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2005 made a virtue out of the necessity of returning No.4 and No.186 to where they were needed. No.4 is heading south from the Lisburn stop; No.186 would work the return leg later that day. (C.P. Friel)*

July and August is traditionally Portrush Flyer season but, due to essential NIR engineering works on the 20<sup>th</sup> August, only two Flyers were possible. Passenger numbers were strong and improved marketing in and around Portrush ensured that the afternoon Dalriada workings were well filled, so helping to maximise takings. Surprisingly, the Bangor Belle on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August was lightly loaded, the reason being difficult to fathom as ticket pricing was competitive. The day ended on a down note as No.186, running tender-first at around 5 mph, derailed the first set of tender wheels while negotiating the curve at Lisburn’s platform 3. No fault was attributed to the Society and operations resumed with the ever-popular and well patronised Broomstick trains on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October.

The last Saturday in November operation has in recent years been worked as the Coleraine Santa, with the positioning run sold as the Coleraine Shopper. This year, as an innovation, we operated from

Ballymena to Coleraine as a Santa train. This had to be limited in passenger numbers to facilitate the shopping patrons. In the end there were 93 fare-paying Shopper customers and 126 for the Ballymena Santa. The two Coleraine Santa trains had a total of 487 passengers - just over 700 customers carried on the day. There were five Belfast Santa operating days. The combination of a longer journey time to Antrim, compared to Whitehead, and a need to keep within driver hours and minimise after-dark running meant that the first train of the day was relatively early - perhaps a little too early for the average Ulster family, even with early-rising children, and these trains were initially slow to fill. Everything operated fine until the afternoon train on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December when it was found on arrival at Antrim that No.186 had run a hot big end, the engine being declared a failure. Our priority then was to return passengers, by whatever means, to their point of departure. This was largely achieved through the help of Ulsterbus who provided an additional vehicle over and above the rather sparse service that ran at that time. Peter Scott and his team did their best to get the engine back into service for the weekend of 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> December. The work was done in time but, unfortunately the logistics of operating out of Lisburn meant that the running-in necessary before putting the engine back into public service was not possible. NIR are to be commended for providing a 5-car 80 class set to cover the remaining Santa trains.

As we look forward to 2006 what does that hold:

- Work continues on DSER No.461 and hopefully she should be well advanced towards completion by the year's end.
- Work continues on finishing off diner/bar car 547. It is planned that she can be presented to NIR in the early spring for the necessary approvals procedure before entering service. Since the withdrawal of our wooden-bodied stock the catering and bar facilities, a focus for passengers, have been much missed.
- Progressing firemen to drivers is a priority and the necessary introduction of new men to train as firemen is a must before Steam Enterprise services can be reintroduced. This operation needs two crews as the operating day exceeds the maximum permitted working day of a single crew.
- The Earl of Desmond railtour to Tralee will hopefully be as successful as that centred on Waterford.

A special word of thanks to NIR drivers Noel Playfair (driver), Gary Moore (fireman) and Steven Glass (fireman) for covering the northern steam workings in 2005 and to NIR and Iarnród Éireann for their continued support and assistance.

In conclusion, our sincere thanks to all who assisted throughout the operating year in many varying roles. Without that help, in whatever guise, we could not have had such a successful season.

## **WHITEHEAD SITE REPORT**

**Dermot Mackie**

The heavy rains in early January caused flooding at Whitehead, with a major problem around the Foundry. However, with the sterling help of Trevor Mounstephen, Robin Morton and the JCB, we dug a soak-away to solve the problem. Later that month we started what was to prove to be a marathon - moving and stacking solid metal carriage wheels to make room at the back of the site. Several weeks later we had 34 wheels in five neat piles, which is good going when you consider that they weigh a quarter of a ton each! January was also an opportunity for a training day for shunters with both practical and written tests. Despite the very cold weather all, including a refreshing sprinkle of young lads, passed with flying colours (see photo) and some moved on to become steam raisers and firemen on the ballast runs.

February is always a good month for track repairs and 2005 was no exception, with John Wolsley and Johnny Lockett all lending a hand in this vigorous outdoor pursuit. The water supply to the Carriage

shed and Loco Workshop had lost a lot of pressure and when water was seen to be boiling out of the ground near the compressor house a major leak was suspected. After much heavy work with pick and spade an old water T-junction was found to be the culprit. A spare was located in the carriage shed and since then the ground conditions have never been so dry.

March saw urgent track repairs followed a small derailment of No.3BG, which had to be completed before the train could be moved to Lisburn. The first weekend in April was a hectic one for the site squad, starting at 7am on the Saturday with the arrival of Mk2 coach 4112 from Dublin. GNR 9 was loaded for Inchicore where she was exchanged for the 'Dutch' generator van 4602 which arrived at Whitehead by 8pm. In the interim, the Site squad, helped by Rob Davison, Howard Robinson and Paul and Philip Newell, had changed bogies on Diner 547 and 241. The latter coach was then put on to the returning lorry and went to England the next day. Later in the month 4602 was moved inside the shed and a damaged door was taken off 547 to be replaced by a door from 4112. The two buckeye couplings from 4112 were also removed for use on 547.



***Dermot Mackie ran a shunting school, including some quite mature students, at Whitehead in January 2005. (D. Campbell)***

Warmer weather in May meant that we could start the paint job on 547, but only after its bogies had been swapped for a temporary set so that they could go into the Workshop for a major overhaul. On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May a group of twenty engineering staff from Queen's University was given an in-depth tour of all the facilities at Whitehead and had a trip in coach 68 behind No.3BG. When they left, I sprayed the site with weed-killer and then, with the help of James Friel, I removed two windows from 4112 for the Diner. Further Saturdays in May and early June saw some of the Site squad assisting in pounding the new firebox doorplate of No.461 into the required profile. Hard work for hot weather, while a scrap drive at this time netted £150.

At the end of June, the imminent arrival by road of a very long and heavy track tamping and lining machine at Whitehead, as part of the Larne line re-lay contract, necessitated the removal of 20 tons of soft soil from the laneway and its replacement with hardcore. This was only possible with the use of the combined efforts of the JCB and a dumper truck driven by Thomas Charters. The track machine arrived

safely and its storage in the carriage shed earned the Society some useful income. By now the mid-week summer squad had resumed its usual activities, with the able help of Maurice Moore and Gary Bell. The previous work with the JCB had brought to light a collapsed front wheel bearing which needed replacement; much helpful advice coming from Francis Richards.

Early July saw some simple track repairs in time for the Sunday train rides, but the rest of the month was taken up with all hands helping to get "R.H. Smyth" overhauled for the impending ballast contract. The first Thursday in August had the engine on the obligatory low-loader, this time bound for Greenisland, with the lorry going on to Dublin, to return later in the day with No.131's tender. Meanwhile the mid-week squad had been busy with the removal of more windows and a toilet tank from 4112 before the school holidays ended.



*"How do you play one of these things?" Dermot Mackie, Alan McRobert and Thomas Charters (of headboard fame) relax at Whitehead. (J. Wolsley)*

September and early October gave us a chance to replace some wooden sleepers on the site track and a tidy-up produced £140 worth of ferrous scrap. Unfortunately, around this time, the local vandals saw fit to break the paving stones off the platform shop steps and throw them onto the shop roof. Repairs required the replacement of 15 slates, a job I could not have managed without the help of Alan McRobert. At the end of October, on a very wet Saturday morning, a lorry arrived from Dublin with two bogies, steel trestles and other spares. These had to be hand-craned off and, in true Whitehead fashion, the rain stopped just after the site gang, helped by Charles Friel and son, had finished the job!

As you have probably gathered by now, this was more of a 'do any job' year for the Site squad but the camaraderie and sense of satisfaction remain the same. Why not come down to Whitehead on Saturday or Sunday? We can always get you a wee job!

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#### **WILLIE GRAHAM**

#### **Joe Cassells**

Willie Graham was in every way a larger than life character, and the large attendance at his funeral service last August demonstrated how large was his status in the local community as well as the world

of professional railwaymen. He was one of the central figures in the last days of steam in Northern Ireland, a familiar footplate presence from the time in 1965 when he turned sixteen and made a rapid transition from portering at Carrickfergus to cleaning at York Road. Although a generation too late to be an NCC man, he worked all his days with men whose railway service began in the 1940s, and rapidly absorbed their traditions and ethos. Not long after No.54 emerged from the shops following her final overhaul it was Willie who identified her as “T.J. Macauley’s engine”, and soon he was proudly identifying himself as the head cleaner of York Road. One by one that band of cleaners turned into firemen - a group still represented on today’s NIR by Barney McCrory, Tom McCrum and Arthur McMenamin.

Small of stature though he was, Willie was not lacking either in presence or in strength. Drivers who often

berated “the wee wasp” privately noted that he worked hard and always had the steam they needed. I remember, for example, 12<sup>th</sup> July 1967 when he stood manfully up to “Charlie Alan” Robinson’s characteristically vigorous driving methods with ten bogies on an Orange Special from Coleraine to Derry. A few days later, he was involved in an epic of another kind. The Saturday following “the Twelfth” was traditionally the busiest of the year on the NCC, and Willie went out firing to Jack Kitchen (himself only newly passed out for driving) on the prestigious 8:35 Derry express. For a crew whose combined ages didn’t even reach 45 this was a daunting prospect, and as Frank Dunlop was on holiday, old Sam Hanley of the traffic department went with them - the last time I ever saw the traditional inspector’s trilby hat worn on a footplate. Sam was obsessed with punctuality, and incited his two young charges to do a run which has gone into timing history. Indeed, their time of 9’30” from Ballymoney to Coleraine was rarely bettered by any diesels in the future!

The Stone Trains on the Larne line were steam’s last defiant shout on the NCC, and Willie and those other young men of his generation enjoyed them to the full. As the new NIR began to phase out steam, Willie was delighted to become one of an elite band of men who worked the RPSI’s early main line tours, and even more pleased when he graduated to driving in his own right. Although most of his diesel driving was done from Central Service Depot, he retained his seniority at York Road while firing our trains to such Great Northern stalwarts as Willie McCaughley, Andy Rushe, Jimmy Donnelly, Billy Croft and Bobby Quail. I don’t have full records of the 1960s or 1970s, but during the last sixteen years of his career Willie undertook no less than fifty-four driving or firing turns for the RPSI - not the least of them on those incomparable “Steam Enterprise” workings of the 1980s which set performance standards of pre-war quality, sometimes with all-NCC crews! His last steam run was on a “Whitehead Santa” operation on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1997. Appropriately his fireman that day was Willie Gillespie, whose father Willie Graham had himself fired to in his early railway days.

Like most of his generation, Willie regarded RPSI trains as simply a continued extension of the steam railway he had known. Frank Dunlop, who taught Willie most of what he knew about railways, became both a good boss and a close personal friend, and was particularly attentive to him during his last illness. And lay enthusiasts like ourselves were also regarded as part of the extended railway family. Often, travelling up to Belfast, I would find the window knocked, and that familiar figure beckoning me out to hear the latest item of railway scandal.



Willie Graham gave so many of us so much pleasure, and his company was never less than totally stimulating. The Society mourns his passing, and extends to his wife, sons and family circle sincere sympathy in their loss.

## MORE LIGHT ON THE 800 CLASS

W.T. Scott

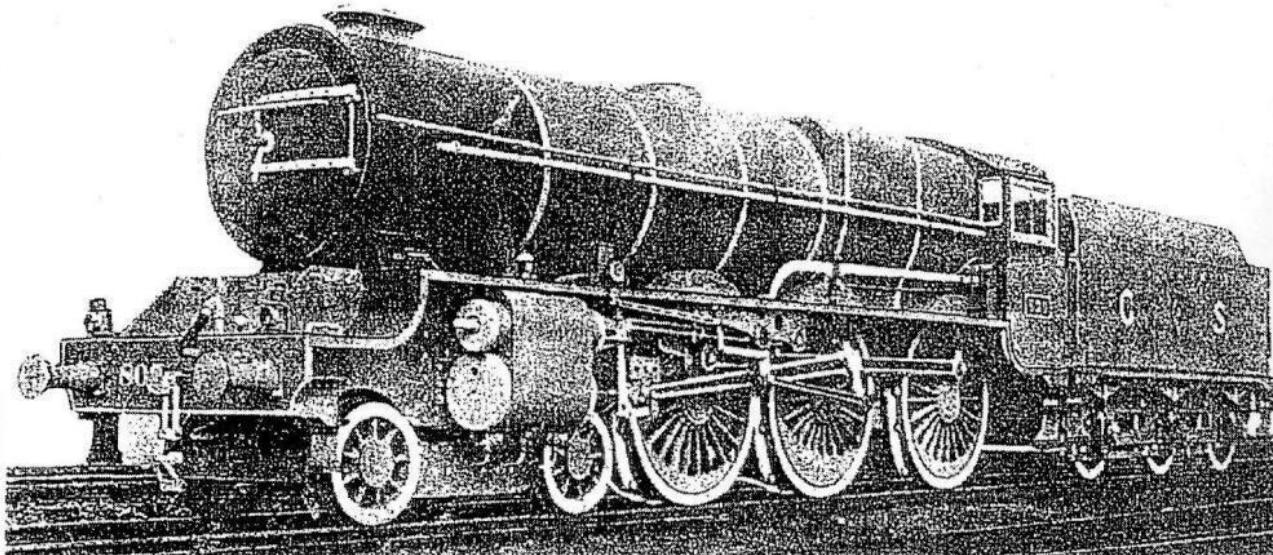
### Extract from "The Engineer"

#### NEW GSR 4-6-0 LOCOMOTIVES

Recently built at the company's works, Inchicore, Dublin, these three-cylinder engines have been introduced for heavy passenger service between Dublin and Cork, on the Great Southern Railways.

#### NEW G.S.R. 4-6-0 LOCOMOTIVES

*Recently built at the company's works, Inchicore, Dublin, these three-cylinder engines have been introduced for heavy passenger service between Dublin and Cork, on the Great Southern Railways*



(Courtesy "The Engineer")

The first of a new series of express passenger locomotives, to be known as the "800" class, has recently been completed at the works of the Great Southern Railways at Inchicore, Dublin. The design incorporates three single-expansion cylinders and the 4-6-0 wheel arrangements. The inside cylinder is placed ahead of the outside ones and drives the crank-axle of the leading pair of coupled wheels, and the outside cylinders drive the middle pair. Steam distribution is effected by 9-in. diameter piston valves having a maximum travel of  $6\frac{3}{4}$  in.; each cylinder is provided with an independent Walschaerts valve gear. The crank-axle is of the built up pattern, having its revolving masses balanced by extension of the crank webs. The steamchests are placed above the cylinders and it will be noted the sectional elevation drawing that a double chimney is fitted, the inside cylinder exhausting through the front portion and the outside cylinders through the rear portion of the chimney. The drawing also shows the arrangement of the separate blastpipes and the steam piping of the cylinders. This appears to us to be a very well arranged front end which should assure freedom in both steaming and exhaust.

The boiler, which is of large proportions, is set with its centre line 9 ft. 6 in. above the level of the rails.

It is of parallel formation and built of 2 per cent nickel steel plates; the diameter of the forward section is 5 ft. 9½ in. and the rear section 5 ft. 10¾ in. The length between the tube plates is 14 ft. 5<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. The MeLeSco superheater is comprised of twenty-eight elements, housed in smoke tubes 5½ in. diameter outside, and the copper ends are expanded into Kuprodor copper bushes screwed into the tube plates. The small tubes number 143, the diameter in this case being 2 in. outside. A multiple valve regulator is located in the smokebox and occupies the position shown in the sectional drawing. The firebox wrapper plate is of Kuprodor copper with Kuniclad stay bolts fitted to the lower portion of each side plate and the tube plate. As seen, the clothing plates of the boiler are tapered at the top portion, giving the now familiar truncated appearance as between the boiler barrel and the firebox covering. The crown plate of the firebox is directly stayed to the wrapper plate with two rows of flexible staybolts at the front end. Two 5 in. diameter Ross pop safety valves are mounted upon the firebox, set for a pressure of 225 psi. Special fittings include an Alfloc automatic continuous blow-down valve. The boiler is fed by two Gresham & Craven 10 mm injectors.

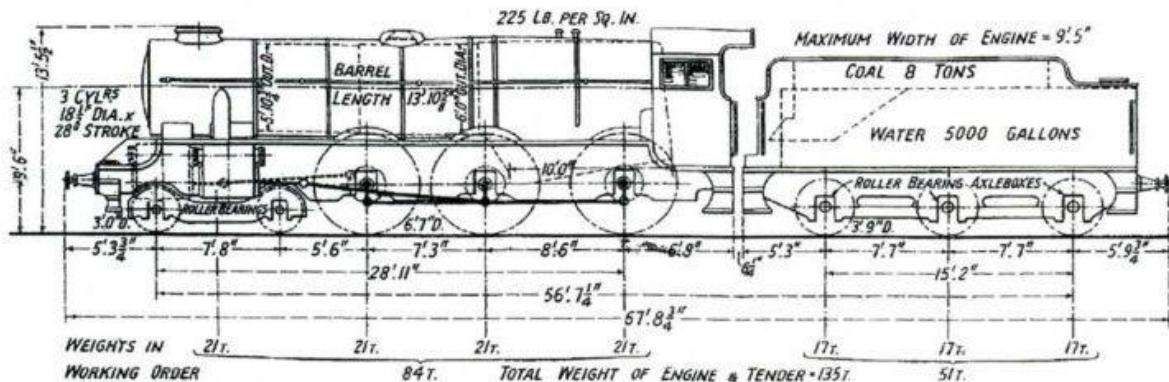


Diagram showing overall dimensions and weight distribution, Great Southern Railways new three-cylinder 4-6-0 type locomotives

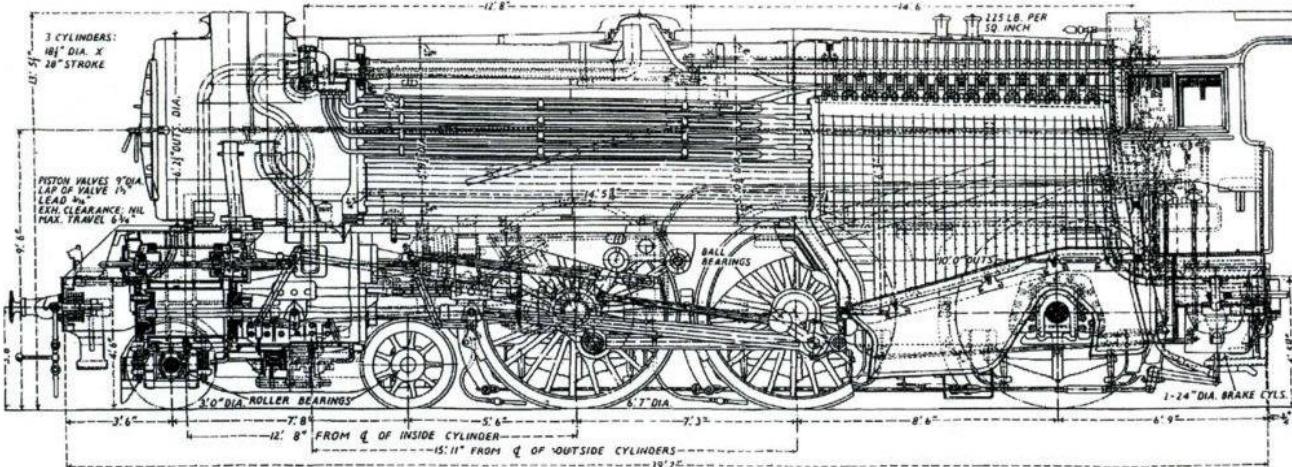
The principal dimensions are as follows:

Cylinders (3), dia.....	18½ in.
Piston stroke .....	28 in.
Piston valves, dia.....	9 in.
Lap of valves .....	1½ in.
Lead .....	3/10 in.
Exhaust clearance .....	Nil
Maximum travel of valve .....	6¾ in.
Wheels, coupled: dia .....	6 ft. 7 in.
Wheels, bogie: dia.....	3 ft. 0 in.
Wheels, tender: dia.....	3 ft. 9 in.
Wheelbase: bogie .....	7 ft. 8 in.
Wheelbase: coupled .....	15 ft. 9 in.
Wheelbase: total .....	28 ft. 11 in.
Boiler, heating surface: firebox .....	200 sq. ft.
Boiler, heating surface: tubes .....	1,670 sq. ft.
Boiler, heating surface: total (evaporative) .....	1,870 sq. ft.

Heating surface superheater .....	468 sq. ft.
Heating surface combined total.....	2,338 sq. ft.
Working pressure per sq. in.....	225 lb.
Grate area .....	33.5 sq. ft.
Tractive effort at 85 per cent. b.p .....	33,000 lb.

The frames of the engine, bogie and tender, are made of Ducol high-tensile steel plates. The engine frames are 1½ in. and those of the bogie and tender 1 in. thick. An interesting feature of the design of these locomotives is the liberal use made of anti-friction bearings. The valve motion incorporates ball bearings fitted to the return crank and needle roller bearings to the quadrant link trunnion and the eccentric rod ends. The engine bogie is fitted with inside roller bearing axleboxes, and those of the tender wheels also have roller bearing axleboxes. A 12-feed Wakefield mechanical lubricator is used for supplying oil to the cylinders and valves, and a Silvertown lubricator with the same number of feeds for the axleboxes, slide bars, and other points. The engine and tender are fitted with vacuum brake apparatus.

In working order the engine weighs 84 tons and the tender 51 tons, giving a total weight, engine and tender in working order, of 135 tons. The adhesion weight is 63 tons; and the factor of adhesion 4.3. The tender of the 6-wheeled type and has a capacity of 5,000 gallons of water and 8 tons of coal. The tank is constructed of Dalzo rustless steel. The engine cab is of commodious pattern, being 9 ft. wide inside and fitted with sliding windows at the sides. A screen-wiper is fitted to the window on the driver's side. The engines are being painted in blue-green, picked out with black and yellow lining.



Sectional elevation drawing showing general arrangements of new three-cylinder 4-6-0 type express locomotive, Great Southern Railways of Eire. Built at the company's Inchicore works. Designer: Mr. E. C. Bredin, M.I.Mech.E., M.I.Loco.E., Chief Mechanical Engineer

### W.T. Scott continues ...

Following references to the 800 class in the last edition of Five Foot Three, some more interesting information is to hand from Mr Sean Kennedy. Sean is one of that dwindling number of enthusiasts old enough to remember the 800 class at the time of their introduction, and of course is well-known for the superb photographs he took of the final decades of steam on the Great Southern Railways and later CIÉ.

Sean recollects that speed and performance trials with 801 hauling loads of five, ten and fifteen bogie coaches took place in February and March 1940. They were undertaken against a background of fading hope that the international situation might yet be saved. Some very high speeds were recorded, and involved lifting a full 500 tons unassisted up the bank out of Glanmire Station, Cork. He is fortunate

enough to have photographed one of these trains near Templemore, on his way home from school. His picture is a marvellous period piece, and shows a bowler-hatted inspector sitting up in the fireman's seat. Sean also has some of the rolls from the recording machine used on these trials in the absence of a full Dynamometer Car (a vehicle which no Irish railway ever owned). Little knowledge of these remarkable trials leaked out at the time; they were totally private, and wartime engineering and speed restrictions were already coming into operation.

The Engineering Departments of both Queen's University Belfast and Trinity College Dublin took considerable interest in the 800s, and indeed Trinity hosted an international symposium of engineers in October 1939 at which Edgar Bredin delivered a paper on the new engines. One notable absentee was H.R. McIntosh of the Great Northern. It was intended that he should chair the proceedings, but he was unable to be present.

An outline of Bredin's paper on his new engines was distributed, as were detailed sectional drawings. During his presentation, Bredin made much of the fact that the engines were designed to run 200,000 miles between main overhauls - a figure 800 did in fact pass by October 1940 - against figures of 60,000 miles for contemporary LMS 4-6-0s and 80,000 for LNER express engines.



***No.801, as yet un-named, with a test train near Templemore in 1940. A bowler-hatted inspector is in the fireman's seat and below him the drive for a speedometer can be seen mounted under the running plate. Can anyone comment on the coach behind the engine? (S. Kennedy)***

Sean also mentions two puzzles raised by photographs in the recently published "Father Brown's Trains and Railways". One shows a close-up of a windscreens wiper on an 800 class, and Sean has his own photographic record of this rather superfluous gadget. He says it was counter-productive. In the absence of detergent, the combination of engine oil and wiping with dirty hand cloths simply created opaque smearing of the windows that the wiper was meant to keep clean!

The other little mystery involved a small metal plate lettered "O.T." which Fr. Brown spotted below an engine number plate. Sean remembered asking about this as far back as 1939, and receiving no very

clear answer. He reckoned the best explanation was that O.T. = “On Trial”, and referred to some patent refinement to the brake application of this particular engine. There were apparently ten such plates attached to various engines - particularly 338 when she was carrying experimental high superheat from 1937. A similar plate also appeared on a photograph of a London & North Eastern Railway 4-4-0 at the time.

In 1949 CIÉ marked the centenary of the Cork line on 29<sup>th</sup> October with the “Centenary Express”, which was so successful that it had to be duplicated. The main train of ten carriages hauled by No.800 left at 10:04am with Ned Shields of Inchicore at the regulator.

Permanent way slacks handicapped 800 to Ballybroy - 66.6 miles in 85 minutes 10 seconds. After Ballybroy 800 showed her pre-war ability, passing Limerick Junction in 40 minutes for 40.3 miles, Charleville 62.6 miles in 61 minutes, Mallow in 78 minutes and finally arriving in Cork in 100 minutes for the 98.7 miles from “Bally”. The nominal speed limit was 70 mph but 800 reached 75 mph in some sections.

Denis Sheehan of Cork had the return working and ran in to Kingsbridge from Ballybroy in 71 minutes, with a cautious run down from Inchicore. A week later the excursion ran in from Ballybroy in under 67 minutes.

## RAIDERS OF THE LOST BOARD

**Edward Friel**

### (A story of drama and suspense)

According to legend there are two Portrush Flyer headboards. One of them has been in use for many years. The other had been cast in brass in the latter years of the last century by renowned engineer Peter Scott in “moments of lucidity” while recovering from influenza. It was carried for over a decade and was admired by all until its sudden and mysterious disappearance.

Rumours of its fate have been legion but most claimed that it had been stolen for its brass lettering by some passing vagabond, or perhaps quietly sold to an unscrupulous enthusiast by an unknown criminal.

Those who actually remember seeing the fabled ‘Lost Board’ tell of its fiery gleam when caught in the sun, a gleam that would fry a man’s eyes if he gazed too long upon it. No train that carried it ever had an accident and no photographer who saw it could resist its allure.

It was the dream of every Whitehead volunteer to find the fabled relic and restore it to its rightful place so that its renowned craftsmanship and perfect proportions could be seen once again by all. None, however, truly believed that the board could still exist after so long.

None, that is, except Thomas Charters! Thomas’s incomparable knowledge of the Whitehead site led him to formulate an alternative theory. He believed that the headboard had, indeed, returned safely and unscathed from its final journey and had been hung, in the customary Whitehead fashion of the time, on two nails sticking out of the wall. Then, he believed, it could have fallen down “behind all that oul rubbish in the corner of the shed”.

While travelling on a Portrush Flyer in 2005, almost five years to the month since the headboard vanished, he revealed his suspicions to a select group of persons who happened to be nearby at the time. Among them were Edward and James Friel (in that order for a change), who resolved, though the perils were great, to recover the Lost Board from its final resting place.

Wasting not a moment, when they happened to be at Whitehead the following Tuesday, they prised away three lockers from the wall of the shed, and found a lot of forgotten notices pinned to it about safe use of equipment. Exciting though these were, their attention was seized as their torches glinted off something yellow. Miraculously, the brass had not tarnished in all these years and its paint was

virtually unblemished. The Lost Flyer Headboard finally saw the light of day once more!

With extreme reverence they lifted the precious relic from its place of concealment and marvelled at its beauteous lines, still discernible under layers of soot and dust. When Peter arrived that afternoon they finally reunited him with his long-lost and beloved creation.

He asked them if they could give it a polish before he put it on No.186.



**No.186, with gleaming headboard, approaches Ballyboylan level crossing on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2005.  
(C.P. Friel)**

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## TALES FROM THE BALLAST

**Mark Walsh**

Five Foot Three No.47 covers the first time that No.3 "R.H. Smith" escaped from its cramped stable into the wide world to do battle with the 1 in 75 Mossley Bank during the Bleach Green-Antrim relay of 2000. Shortly after arrival back at Whitehead, "R.H. Smith" came out of service and his/her adventures passed into RPSI folklore, with those of us too young to have been involved going lined green with envy at the thought that we had missed our chance.

In early 2005 it became known that NIR had awarded the contract for relaying the Larne line between Bleach Green and Whitehead to AMEC-Spie Rail. An integral part of any railway construction project is the laying of top ballast between the sleepers, usually by way of loco-hauled wagons. For this purpose AMEC were to use NIR's six French-built hopper wagons (reduced to three once work was completed to Carrickfergus). They then approached the Society with a view to hiring a steam locomotive.

The present tranquillity enjoyed by "R.H. Smyth", as it hibernates in Whitehead, is well deserved after the 19 weeks of somewhat intense but unpredictable activity experienced by the green machine and its crew, to say nothing of the months of prior negotiation between the RPSI and AMEC. These meetings were on-going from around March 2005, and included, on the RPSI side, people involved in our financial, engineering, logistics, legal and crewing areas. It became apparent at these meetings that the RPSI, in Peter Scott and Nelson Poots to name but two, had previous experience of ballast working on the Antrim NCC line in 2000, but that AMEC had no experience of working with steam engines. They occasionally looked a bit perplexed that we were offering to be on site at 5am - three hours before their own workers - day after day, to shovel coal and get dirty for no obvious personal benefit.

Throughout the meetings and the subsequent contract AMEC's front men, Darren Coomber and David Wright, showed a keen enthusiasm not only to have us on their site but also to accommodate steam as comfortably as is possible in the modern era. They and their workforce ensured that we never wanted for coal, water, diesel, wood, security or storage accommodation - although the occasional umbrella, if offered, would have been gratefully received!

As Roster Officer for the RPSI's Northern Operations, I was involved at a fairly early stage in discussions as we had to decide if sufficient crew would be available to man No.3 continuously over a period of at least 3 months, beginning in early August. A survey of potential crew members suggested that the operation was within the capabilities of our rather limited manpower and the month of July was spent trying to round up as many people as possible. It was decided to have a crew change at 2pm, meaning that four people were required each day. AMEC originally requested that the engine be available from 7am-10pm, which would give each crew a 9-hour shift, including steam-raising and disposal. In the event, the engine was not usually needed until around 9am and disposed of around 8pm. As the days shortened in October, the crew changeover moved to 1pm.



*NIR Inspector Lennie McCall (left) with his PTS class on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2005, all suitably clad to be "on or near the line". (C.P. Friel)*

In July we seemed in a tight position crew-wise as not everyone who could help held a Personal Track Safety (PTS) certificate. PTS is now an essential requirement for RPSI crews, railway employees and contractors who wish to work on NIR lines, as it proves knowledge of the relevant railway procedures. Nor were there enough people passed at least as Fireman to allow us to operate continually through the contract. Irwin Pryce, the RPSI's Training and Certification Officer, stepped in to pass recent recruits David Orr and Francis Richards, as well as James Friel and myself, as Firemen. Irwin also persuaded

regular workshop helpers Eddie Creamer, Bill King-Wood and Alan McRobert to join the operating ranks. A PTS course was organised by NIR in late July and those who had offered most availability were dispatched to it.

With the contract secured back in May, work progressed on the overhaul of No.3. On one occasion AMEC senior management were invited to take a tour of our Whitehead base, in order that they could see No.3 and to show them the high standards of work carried out by the permanent staff and volunteers there. On entering the loco shed they ignored No.3 completely and made tracks straight for No.85, commenting that our engine did indeed look powerful enough for the job and asking how quickly we could have her ready!

The 'Derry Engine' emerged at the end of July for steam testing sporting a bizarre coat of fluorescent green paint. Upon exposure to daylight it was decided that it would be easier on all concerned if they could look at the engine without sunglasses and the current coat of Larch Green was applied and partially lined out, lack of time preventing completion of the lining. As before, nameplates and builder's plates were not attached.



***Under the watchful eye of Peter Scott, No.3 climbs onto the low-loader at Whitehead on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2005. (James Friel)***

After barely enough time for last-minute adjustments and running in, AMEC requested that No.3 go to Greenisland by low-loader on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August, 4 days later than expected. That day a respectable squad of fifteen turned up at Whitehead to build the ramp that allowed the loco to be driven onto the lorry in the afternoon and then off again onto the 'back line' siding at Greenisland.

The previous evening, 3<sup>rd</sup> August, AMEC had said they required everyone who intended to work on their site to attend an induction meeting in their headquarters at Bleach Green at 10am the next morning. This looked as if it was going to be a serious impediment as, with the low-loader due to arrive early that morning, all hands were needed at Whitehead. In the event, the lorry was delayed until mid-afternoon, allowing fourteen to attend the induction meeting while one remained to tend No.3 at Whitehead. A further course was held on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> for those who could not attend on the 4<sup>th</sup>. The

result of the PTS, operating assessments and inductions was to leave the RPSI with a pool of 23 potential crewmen, of whom 20 actually served, including trainees.

I had always been assured that, based on the 2000 contract, the first weeks would provide a flood of availability and that there would be a drought from October onwards. In fact, it proved to be the other way around, with everyone clearing off for the summer! However, only in the 18<sup>th</sup> week of the contract did crew shortage become a major issue; at this point (but for an unconnected reason!) Nelson Poots took over the crew rostering. It is fortunate that University holidays are so long that half the contract fell inside them; the new blood saved the Society the blushes of non-availability due to crew shortage many times.



*In the beginning ... Mark Walsh and John Lockett at Greenisland. On and under the engine, the hard hats justified their existence by bumping into things that would otherwise have been avoided! Most crew quietly set them aside, at least when on the engine. (M. Walsh)*

While 131 days were rostered (at 4 people per day that's a massive 524 turns that were covered, over and above main line requirements), the contract actually ran from 4<sup>th</sup> August until 9<sup>th</sup> December, a total of 128 days. Of this total, 81 days were actually operated, the longest unbroken period being from 24<sup>th</sup> October - 5<sup>th</sup> November while based at the Salt Mines. Three loading/stabling points were used: Greenisland, Salt Mines and to a much lesser extent, Beach Avenue, Whitehead. Despite hopes that it would be based there during the second half of the contract, the loco only managed to spend 2 or 3 nights in its RPSI home. Only one day was cancelled by the RPSI for any reason; Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August due to crew shortage - a case of mild triskaidekaphobia perhaps. *[Shades of Drew Donaldson; presumably it means fear of 13. - Ed.]*

With the engine delivered to Greenisland on the Thursday, the six NIR wagons arrived on the Friday night. Friday itself was largely spent posing for the AMEC workers' cameras - they were out in force for a look and to bombard Driver John Lockett with questions. In the end, with me as fireman to John we were given permission to do a couple of light engine trial runs down the hill to Jordanstown before disposing of the engine. At this early stage, the engine's whistle chain snapped. The whistle remained

difficult to operate until James Friel, a firemen with a particularly inventive mind, installed an ingenious dual-control mechanism that allowed equally easy operation from both driver's and fireman's side - essential when propelling the wagons. It consisted simply of a rope from the whistle to the centre point of a second rope strung between the security bars on the rear cab windows.

First thing on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August, drivers Sullivan Boomer and Brian Hill shunted the wagons into two rakes of three and dropped the first ballast in the process - the wagons came full of NIR's familiar grey ballast, which is still noticeable at Greenisland among AMEC's pink granite. Each empty wagon weighs 23.5 tonnes, and a loaded 3-wagon train around 275 tonnes. One train was loaded on the 'back-line' siding, the other just short of the summit on the down main line. On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August Driver Nelson Poots and Fireman James Friel started the work proper with ballasting runs to the Bleach Green viaducts. "We shall live off the land!" declared Nelson, as he rooted through a skip for lighting-up wood. *[Or for something to enhance his seating arrangements? - Ed.]* Thankfully it was unnecessary to do so as the driver of a passing Mecalac with a trailer full of scrap wood was persuaded to donate it to our cause. Of all the machinery observed during the contract the Mecalacs were perhaps the most versatile. Basically a road-rail excavator, their arms could operate a variety of attachments including buckets, drills, grabs and a ballast-levelling appliance. They could also haul small trailers full of sleepers, rails, fence-posts, etc., and proved to be the most suitable machine for coaling No.3.



**No.3, glinting in the morning sun, receives coal from a Mecalac at the Salt Mines. (I. Pryce)**

Ballasting was not an easy operation for either enginemen or wagon men. To begin with it was straightforward enough - go to the place where the wagons ran out last time, start there and return to Greenisland only when all hoppers were empty. As the track was yet to be tamped, the odd mistake on the part of AMEC or RPSI that resulted in too little or too much ballast could be overlooked. The driver had to maintain a constant easy walking speed for ballasting. Any faster meant that the stone got spread too thinly with Owen, the AMEC man responsible for ballasting, ordering the train back to do it again. Too slow, and frantic 'speed up' signals would result as the stone piled up too thickly around the train.

When it came to the precision art of top dressing (applying a small quantity of stone to undernourished areas), the wagon chutes were set so that one ballasted the six-foot, one the five-foot and one the cess. In this manner, dribbling stone here and there as it went, the train would trudge for miles at walking

pace, sometimes for nearly two hours, until the wagons finally emptied.

As one cause of untoward incidents was hand signals not being seen by the Fireman because he had his head in the coal bunker, the occasional trainee as a third-man on the footplate was welcome. Radios were tried on the footplate but their use was discontinued as they were hard to hear over the din of tumbling stone and barking engine and there was always fear of the radio blacking out at a crucial moment. So hand signals became and remained the norm, although in the tunnel at Downshire Owen used light signals, swinging No.3's massive headlamp around his head as if it was a bag of feathers. On one occasion Peter Scott brought along a GPS speedometer. Taking its readings from satellites, it informed us that optimum ballasting speed was 1.9mph, with an untaxing run from Trooperslane to Greenisland, propelling three empties, reading as 13.9mph. There was no doubt that the engine could comfortably have done more.



*A quiet day at Greenisland - loaded wagons on the Down line and No.3 awaiting instructions on the Back line with not a soul in sight except the fireman. The tail pipe and vacuum brake application valve can be seen on the rear of the nearest wagon. (C.P. Friel)*

It took firemen a while to get used to the mainline at Greenisland, as it sits at the line's summit with steep gradients on either side (1 in 98 Jordanstown-Greenisland, 1 in 120 Trooperslane-Greenisland, 1 in 98 Clipperstown-Trooperslane), a situation which often resulted in No.3 blowing off for a considerable time after a run, as firemen arrived with a blazing fire. It was soon worked out that the best approach was to use the time spent running downhill to build up the fire and fill the boiler, thus having the engine ready for the uphill work. Upon reaching Greenisland, the boiler would have sufficient room to add water and prevent the dreaded blowing-off.

The wagon men would normally arrive around 08:30, so the RPSI would begin steam raising around 06:30. At Greenisland, in August, this was a pleasant enough task as the steam raiser could just step

aboard and light a fire, due to an abundance of dry scrap wood and the engine not requiring any security measures as there was an overnight security guard. Likewise disposal in the evening was very easy as No.3 could just be driven over some specially provided steel sheeting on the 'back line' to have her ash pan raked out. She could then be moved back further to allow the ash to be shovelled into a designated line-side pit. All this could be done in daylight with easy road access and coal, oil, water and wood to hand. We had our own container as an oil store and changing area.

At Salt Mines in November it was a very different story. In order to leave the up line clear for Mecalacs to clamber on and off the track near the loading point, No.3 and train were often stabled on the down line after crossing over on the single-line points,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the loading point and car park and right down by the sea. Photographs of No.3 after arrival at Salt Mines will show stacks of lighting-up wood and diesel drums crowding the running-plate as, with uncertainty over stabling points, these essentials had to be carried on board. For the same reason, the engine's protective shutters were carried on the leading wagon each day. Installing or removing these shutters in a gale was no picnic, especially as one of them had now to be used for dropping ash onto and was usually filthy. Similarly, starting the fire was difficult as it usually took 5 minutes to find a wind-free spot in which to strike a match! Having lit the fire, the next priority was to find a sheltered spot as the cab would be uninhabitable for the next hour or so. At least twice a day (to oil up and dispose) someone had to get into the motion of the engine without getting a hernia. Everyone had his own way of doing this and his own position of relative comfort to adopt once inside.

Indeed, the exposed coastal position of the Downshire to Whitehead section generated a few unique stories of its own. It was so remote that the only water available before Whitehead was at Eden, more than a mile from the loading point. Access to this water involved scaling a 6-foot spike-topped fence, for which it was necessary to provide a stepladder for safe access. Each night when disposing of the engine the crews had to run the injector for 5 minutes after the water reached the top of the glass to ensure that there would be sufficient in the boiler next morning, as no water was available on site.

One morning however, the boiler was found to be almost empty. For operational reasons it had not been possible to fill the tank the night before, so Brian Hill and Peter Scott arrived to find the tank so low that water could not be siphoned into the boiler. When the wagon crew arrived they were pressed into action, filling the boiler with buckets of water from the injector overflow, so that the fire could be lit. Francis Richards was on the receiving end of a phone call from Peter, requesting him to call the Fire Brigade and go to meet them on the A2 to direct them to the engine so that they could fill its tank from their appliance. A fire crew from Carrickfergus was available and Francis told them by phone that he would be waiting in a blue Astra at the top of the lane to the Mines. "What will you be driving?" he asked. "A big red lorry!" was the answer. It took the fire brigade two runs to almost fill the tank from their 400-gallon supply and their assistance kept the delay to work to a minimum.

"Water Facilities" for the crews at Salt Mines were little better. While Greenisland's unappealing portapotties had also made the journey to the Mines, they now stood right on the edge of the shore and tended to sway alarmingly in high winds - there are even reports that the waves moved them around overnight! *[With an unreliable door latch and a capricious wind, privacy could not be guaranteed. One stormy day I watched two of them, hopefully unoccupied, toppling like targets in a shooting gallery. When more favourably sited, it was not unknown for a machine driver to watch a colleague install himself and then give the structure a gentle nudge! - Ed.]*

Equally as frightening as the prospect of being caught short on a stormy day, and perhaps the oddest story from the contract, is the spooky tale of 'John Borthwick 1848'. According to the normally sane Peter Scott, this name and date appears periodically on dark and cloudy nights upon a tumbledown gable wall beside the road access to the Salt Mines. No-one else ever saw this phenomenon in action and nothing more was thought of it, until the night when No.3 made it back to Whitehead for the first

time - 11<sup>th</sup> November 2005. After driving the train to Whitehead, Jeff Spencer was being given a lift back to the Mines by his fireman, Philip Lockett, to retrieve his van. At the tumbledown gable Jeff started waving toward the dark ruin, much to Phil's surprise because there was no one there. Upon being questioned, Jeff stated that he thought he'd seen the security guard standing in the rubble, but Phillip still insists that no-one was there. Perhaps it was a tortured soul who had been on the wrong end of Owen's wrath!



**Water, water everywhere ... Fire Service assistance at Salt Mines. (A. Ragg)**

For the record, a quick search of the internet suggests that 'J. Borthwick, Kilroot 1848' may have been an agriculturally minded man, as around this date someone of his description was a council member of both the Chemico-Agricultural Society of Ulster and the North East Agricultural Society of Ireland, both of whose president was the Marquis of Downshire. The first of these met on the first Friday of the month in 63 Arthur Street, Belfast to talk over the chemical properties of soil and manure.

Further trawling reveals that the ruined gable on which the name appears when the sun goes down and the moon is in shadow is apparently the remains of a bishop's house and bawn, with, almost unbelievably as this is a ghost story, an attendant graveyard. I cannot, however, find the reason why Borthwick's name appears on the wall, nor the significance of the date. [Either P Scott has been emulating Private Fraser of Dad's Army, or this lot shouldn't be let out after dark - or both! 'John Borthwick' is there for all to see, day or night; maybe he built the house in 1848. - Ed.]

A few days later, whilst steam-raising at Salt Mines in the early hours, James Friel, Phillip Lockett and myself noticed a shadowy figure with bright eyes emerge from underground and scurry towards us. Fearing that it might be John Borthwick or, worse still, Owen we made ourselves look busy as the figure scaled the fence and emerged into the open. It turned out to be a salt miner working the early shift, complete with head-torch, who had been sent out to inform us that our engine's chimney was parked directly below the air intake for the Mines, and that we were making the fire alarms deep underground go off, causing general mayhem with mining operations. The train was parked in an unusual position that night, 100 yards closer to Whitehead than normal, and this was a consequence that no-one could have guessed at. "Alright," said the miner, "but don't do it again!"

During our conversation with the miner we gleaned some information about the Salt Mines. The salt seam that they are working on extends all the way to Magheramorne, about 10 miles distant. The Mines currently extend over a mile inland, which is under and beyond the A2 Coast Road. They drive jeeps down the mines to get workers to the deposits and the mine face consists of a huge vault rather than a pokey tunnel. On several occasions ships, some of them quite large, were being loaded with salt from the conveyor which emerges from the mine, goes up to a storage shed and then comes down over the railway and along the pier to the ship. It was obviously the busy season for salt as at 6am on many mornings access to the Amec site was almost blocked by droves of huge lorries.



*In a scene which recalls visits to collieries in years past, No.3 propels empty wagons under the conveyors and road bridge at the Salt Mines. Demonstrating the uncertainties of life in this area, the cab sheets are on the wagon, lighting-up wood is around the smokebox and hoses can be seen in the cab. (I. Pryce)*

Alongside the pier, on the morning mentioned, James Friel found a long piece of twisted driftwood, carried it up to the engine and laid it across the front buffer beam. The reason, he explained, was to confuse photographers when they scanned their records far in the future, as to what possible purpose it could have served, being as it was 8 feet too long to conveniently fit in the firebox or lift up the lid of an axlebox oil cup. Salt Mines also has relics of war. On the shore on each side of the salt pier stands a searchlight pillbox from World War 2. An anti-shipping gun would have been mounted above and between the two searchlights about where the salt store now is and this, along with its preserved counterpart at Grey Point in Co. Down, protected the mouth of Belfast Lough from enemy ships.

The wagons were loaded on the up line at Salt Mines but the down line rails were not clipped at this point and could not be used until fairly late on in the contract. Ballasting the down line through Kilroot

Power Station thus involved 7 miles of running - 2 miles back to Taylor's Avenue crossover before returning to within ½ mile of the loading point to drop stone, and then back again to load.

After noticing some odd behaviour whilst out videoing these operations at Boneybefore (an access point on the shore between Downshire and Eden) Alan McRobert got talking to the thermit welding crew. He discovered that they were using the hot welded joint to cook shellfish for their lunch! *[Now that's really living off the land! - Ed.]*

Indeed, rail welding and tensioning tended to interfere with ballast operations during the last days at Greenisland. The welding crews would come along, cut out a short section of rail, stretch the two ends back together again with hydraulic rams and weld up the new joint. No-one outside these squads quite understood how this process worked, as logic seemed to dictate that another gap must randomly appear in the track at Botanic or Wexford or somewhere. This activity led to temporary expulsion from our cosy base, but all was not lost as we then found ourselves beside the home of a kindly ex-railwayman who offered cups of tea.

Quite often the train had hardly stopped at the loading point before Owen and his men were into their van and away, often for a considerable length of time, and some cynical RPSI persons were heard to wonder how they could spend so much time feeding or visiting the bookie's. However, it transpired that the management felt that they ought not to sit idly watching wagons being loaded while there were various others jobs to do besides ballasting. Since the cause or likely duration of their absence was seldom revealed it could be potluck what work an RPSI crew got to do. Sometimes after four runs a drained morning shift would hand over to the afternoon crew who would wait in vain for the wagon men to return from work elsewhere and not turn a wheel at all. Equally, the steam-raisers could have plenty of time to cook bacon butties on the shovel, much to the amusement of any nearby AMEC workers. Eggs never turned out that well for some reason. One driver who had no time for such basic cookery was noted for his practice of heating tins of tomato soup on the steam castle. Concern was expressed that one of these might explode, to the detriment of the cab and its occupants, but this never happened.

Despite our worries about possible vandalism, the only instance of this occurred at the Greenisland siding one night during the civil unrest of early September 2005. The rear wagon had its security chain cut and the hoppers opened, rendering the train immovable. Half an hour's graft by the wagon men the following morning, with No.3's shovel and ash rake, cleared the discharged stone sufficiently for the hoppers to be closed again and work was able to proceed with minimum delay. The only minor accident also occurred at Greenisland when a dumped bicycle was run over by the ballast train and left fit only for display in the Tate Modern.

Loading at Salt Mines initially involved the services of a Polish digger driver, known as the Mexican by fellow-workers on account of his moustache, who could only communicate by blowing his horn. Frantic hooting would indicate when it was time to move forward so that the digger could reach the last wagon. He was later replaced by a local man who, until supplies ran out, maintained a carefully landscaped pile of stone with a loading gallery running the full length of the wagons.

Not long after arrival at Salt Mines, Owen disappeared one evening on a mystery errand into Belfast, raising false hopes of an early finish. He returned with many strings of what could best be described as industrial Christmas tree lights, which the AMEC crew hung around the chutes and levers on the outside of the wagons to allow night work. Our suggestion of a star or fairy for the engine was ignored. Powered by generators on the lever platforms of the wagons, the lights proved very effective and probably resulted in two more runs per night, until around 8pm, as it was getting dark about 6pm in early November.

Although No.3 itself never made it onto the Londonderry line, it did propel the wagons out onto it to

drop ballast. Thus the engine has stood at either end of the Bleach Green viaduct (at the Antrim end in 2000) but has never crossed it.

Near the end of the contract, NIR operated gauging trains to Whitehead, in addition to ballasting the Whitehead-Larne section using GM 111. Thus it was that No.3 found itself simmering quietly at Salt Mines with CAFs, 80 and 450 Classes passing by only feet away. The most interesting comparison was probably with the GM on the day when it passed No.3 with the set of wagons that AMEC had handed back. No.3 whistled its distinctive call, but the GM did not see fit to return the greeting!



*The Thermit welding team in action. Since they are at Greenisland it will be some weeks before shellfish become available. (I. Pryce)*

And so the last run for No.3 on the main line to date fell on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005. GM 111 arrived at Whitehead to re-possess the remaining wagons and take them to Magheramorne for reunion with their counterparts. Following some afternoon shunting on home ground the fire was dropped from what has perhaps become the Society's hardest working engine, and it was said by some who worked on the Antrim contract that there was a lot more camaraderie and general craic experienced on No.3 this time around. Future plans involve a redesign of the stiff regulator, so No.3 will be even better suited should the call to battle ever come again!

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#### A VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE - MOSTLY

**Nelson Poots**

Although, wearing my Treasurer's hat, I accompanied Peter Scott in negotiations with Amec, the sordid business of negotiating a price for the contract was left in the capable hands of my predecessor, John Beaumont, who, with more experience of such matters, did a good job for us. Thus, apart from the not disagreeable task of furnishing invoices to Amec, my main input involved outdoor activities in which, as the months went by, the outdoor aspect became increasingly apparent.

Amec had the use of NIR's six modern hopper wagons, a rather different kettle of fish from the three

venerable vehicles used five years earlier on the Bleach Green-Antrim contract. It was decided that, for the section to Carrickfergus, operations would be based at Greenisland with loading points set up beside the Down main line and the stump of the former "Back Line" to Monkstown. The wagons would be split into two rakes of three, marshalled so that both sets had a working platform at their outer ends, the wagons at the rear being fitted with a tail pipe and brake valve for use if required when propelling. This arrangement worked very well, to the extent that, but for interruptions, the engine could have been in almost perpetual motion. Before the contract began there had been concern about propelling wagons over the busy level crossings at Jordanstown and Trooperslane. However, it transpired that when required, the barriers at both were operated by a radio-equipped flagman.

Greenisland was a very convenient base, with all our needs to hand. The Back Line dump initially contained a vast quantity of stone, extending right up to the boundary fence. Unfortunately the track did not extend as far as that, which meant that the digger driver had to drag a large amount of stone forward to where it could be loaded into the wagons. The stone itself was a pleasingly pink granite from some Scottish island. However, it also contained a lot of dust which gathered on top of the wagon bodies and in dry weather blew into the crews' eyes when propelling. Forty years after its closure and reduction to a siding, the Back Line finally became no more in mid-September when the points (S&C in 2005-speak) were replaced by plain track.

The supervisor in charge of ballasting was one Owen, whom another RPSI driver succinctly described as a man not given to self-doubt. When the performance of various participants did not come up to his high standards he was not slow to make this known. Although I never witnessed it, it was said that at times of extreme exasperation his hat was liable to be torn off and cast upon the ballast.

There was a slight gradient down to the Back Line points so starting with loaded wagons required little more than release of the brakes. The Down line loading point was a very different proposition, being sited near the top of the climb from Jordanstown. On account of the gradient, the wagons were scotched as well as braked when parked here and this could give problems if the engine had not come to rest in an ideal position for starting, as it was not possible to set back to a better position. Drivers could be seen opening the regulator and then staring intently at the ground in the time-honoured manner until the little engine gradually got its load on the move. Observers with video would then get excellent sound effects for the next hundred yards or so, with more sedate progress through the station preceding shutting off for the descent towards Trooperslane. If it was necessary to cross onto the Up line beyond the north end of the station another substantial heave was required but by then the engine had warmed up a bit and this was seldom a problem.

Indeed, once it had got them on the move, the engine could have hammered the loaded wagons uphill at a fair pace, although perhaps not for very long, but for most of the time the work did not involve moving loaded wagons uphill for other than short distances. For a prolonged assault the fireman would have needed plenty of water in the boiler and a really good fire to give the engine a chance of steaming against the injector. However, the unpredictability of our movements meant that if brought to that condition the engine would then quite probably spend a while going nowhere and blowing off, thus wasting water and annoying everyone in the neighbourhood.

The few such runs took place during the night turns in November when we returned to what was by then NIR territory south of Carrickfergus. Peter Scott and I had the first, and longest, of these when we took the loaded train from the RPSI base at Whitehead (one of the very few times the engine slept at home!) to Bleach Green, though not all in one go. There was a certain amount of heart-searching as to whether we would manage Carrick to Greenisland without a stop - we did, but with not much to spare. Two nights later, with frost on the ground, we were rather inconveniently instructed to stop on the 1 in 88 just north of Carrick. We got away again, with what Peter described as some pawing of the earth, but in Carrick there was supervisory concern that we might stick on the Mount bank and block the line.

The latter seemed unlikely, as even if we did stick gravity would ensure our return. To counter this suggestion someone then thought of the (much lesser) gradient from Clipperstown to Carrick and the end result was that the latter station was liberally sprinkled with ballast that night.



*Apart from the handsomely restored footbridge, little trace remains of Barn Halt. After propelling the 2 miles from the Salt Mines the train has crossed to the Down line and is now proceeding, with Owen's guidance, to wherever it is required. (I. Pryce)*

The RPSI crews were a mixture of veterans of the Antrim contract and new hands who had not experienced the like before, but the problems remained the same: for the driver, keeping a steady and appropriate speed and for the less experienced firemen, managing fire, water and steam in conditions less tranquil than shuffling around Whitehead. When Owen was operating on that side the fireman could not afford prolonged fiddling with an injector or leisurely directing a few crumbs of coal onto some chosen spot - to do so was to risk missing signals and incurring wrath.

During ballast-dropping Owen would stride alongside the wagons, gesticulating to his assistants in a manner not unlike the conductor of an orchestra. Engine crews had to learn to filter out these signals and identify the ones meant for the loco; while for a driver the ability to focus simultaneously on both Owen and the passing ground was a desirable attribute.

Whilst I would use the vacuum brake to check the train on the longer downhill runs to a dropping site I never used it when actually dropping ballast as I felt it was too slow in its response, both in application and release, for it to be a reliable means of maintaining a steady speed. The Derry engine has a quite powerful steam brake and I found that this did the job satisfactorily, apart from a tendency to snatch and fully apply itself at certain positions. I sometimes wondered how things would work using the handbrake but as it was on the fireman's side I never found out. Others may have tried using the vacuum brake while dropping stone, but I would suspect that that may have been one of the things which led to Owen's hat going astray.

It might be thought that, compared to the gyrations of his fireman, the driver had an easy time, just

standing there, but this was not so. One of the few vices of the Derry engine was a sticky regulator, which did not facilitate fine control when slow movement was required. At the start of the contract its stickiness was of almost hernia-inducing proportions, causing drivers to seize the lever with both hands and leap violently upwards. After a lubrication defect had been remedied matters improved but some stickiness remained, which meant that for a gentle start it had to be jerked open and immediately knocked back - but not back enough to shut it again! This, and the general eagerness of the engine to be up and at it, meant that to maintain an even speed over the various undulations a driver could be continually juggling with regulator, cut-off, cylinder cocks and steam brake to curb the little beast's enthusiasm. Judging speed could be a combination of watching the ground go by and listening to the exhaust beat. However, if the engine was allowed to blow off the latter became difficult, whilst the frightful racket of the leading wagon being discharged made it quite out of the question. In somewhere like the Downshire tunnel this would, as the saying goes, loosen the wax in your ears - Owen, who spent much of his time in the midst of the din, wisely kept plugs in his!



*With Knockagh war memorial on the skyline, Owen is deploying his men. Frank and John have already mounted and Kevin moves to take up his position. Brian Hill keeps a watchful eye from the engine. (I. Pryce)*

Those familiar with the song “The Rivers of Babylon” will recall the line, “There we wept when we remembered Zion”. After the section to Carrickfergus had been completed NIR reclaimed three of their wagons and the engine stood with the remainder for almost three weeks near the former Barn Halt, now referred to by all as Taylor’s Avenue, while more track was laid. Then our base moved to the Salt Mines, beyond Kilroot and an inhospitable spot where, unlike the rivers of Babylon, there was no water except for Belfast Lough and we appreciated how well off we had been at Greenisland. Our move to the Mines coincided with the advent of autumn and the weather varied greatly. One day I was basking in the sun, only to get soaked almost to the waist by a vicious rainstorm a few days later. I dug out a pair of waterproof leggings, after which Sod’s Law came into operation and I never needed to wear

them. The Law also seemed to work reliably in relation to the wind, which would blow from the sea when I was driving and reverse itself when I had a firing turn!



*The splendour of the Salt Mines. In the distance is the Kilroot power station coal jetty; below the crane can be seen a rather dank container used by RPSI crews. On the precipice left of the containers stand the tempest-tossed Portaloos, while on the extreme right the digger rests on its terrace. Out of shot at the lineside was a one-seater tin hut on which some wag had chalked "Dry Room". Above the engine is one of the wartime searchlight houses described by Mark Walsh. (I. Pryce)*

Although some were eventually eased by tamping, I was surprised by the number of ups and downs on this seaside section of the line. However, the sharper gradients were also quite short and the engine did not have to exert itself as much as when working from Greenisland. While based at the Salt Mines everyone's preoccupation - apart from the climate - was water, the nearest source being at Eden. If things went according to plan it wouldn't be necessary to take water every time one passed Eden but the danger was that one could check the tank and decide that there was enough to do until the next run - only to find that there wasn't a next run! In the early days of our stay at the Salt Mines a leak appeared at a joint in the firebox, with the result that when bedded down for the night the boiler would quietly set about trying to empty itself. On one notable occasion it succeeded, with the results described by Mark. However, subsequent skilled attention by Peter Scott cured the problem.

With the onset of November a similarity with the previous contract became apparent in that crews were getting harder to find. Also as before, I got involved in rostering for the last couple of weeks as Mark Walsh, who had borne that burden until then, had gone on a course. The final days involved a rather nomadic existence; some loading was done from a fairly modest and short-lived pile near Whitehead tunnel, after which our train flitted to and from the Salt Mines, sometimes stabled there and sometimes at Whitehead - not at our home base, which was temporarily cut off, but beside the Yacht Club, whose shelter was a blessing on wild mornings, whilst we had usually moved away before anyone was around

to be annoyed by our smoke.

In the final week we had five men from which to find two crews per day - one turn was actually covered by one of the NIR steam men, who found it quite a change from our larger locomotives. At around this time the engine had developed a noticeably lopsided exhaust beat, subsequently traced to a valve having moved on its spindle. However, this had little effect on performance and it is pleasing to record that, as on the Antrim contract, our 77-year old loco never failed to carry out its work.



*Heading for a more scenic but no less windy location, the train is now where the line became single prior to the re-lay. The points (where the train was sometimes inconveniently stabled) are now around the next bend and the line winds its way onwards to Whitehead, passing Cloghan oil terminal, just visible on the right. (C.P. Friel)*

The rather low-key finale came on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December when Francis Richards and I made a few passes of Whitehead station until the wagons were empty. I think Owen felt that the job wasn't quite complete and would have liked to go back to the Salt Mines for more stone, but a rail-stressing crew had possession of the line so that was that. Since the afternoon turn was then cancelled, history repeated itself yet again in that I was involved in the last rites. Thus, after hand-shaking and well-wishing, Francis and I took our leave of the wagons and their crew and trundled quietly back into RPSI territory - okay, we did blow the whistle a couple of times!

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#### CAMERAS, CONTINUITY AND CODOLOGY

“Best Boy”

*[A few years ago an article appeared in a national railway magazine on the subject of continuity - or the lack of it - by film-makers using steam locos. I proffered the following piece, or something like it, but it was not published. Having retrieved it from the depths of my computer I can now publish it myself - and hope that this will not be seen as an abuse of office.*

*The late David Dillon once tried to explain to me the roles of the various strangely-titled functionaries*

*whose names stream past at the end of a film. He was partially successful in that I think I remember what a focus-puller is, although others seem likely to be forever shrouded in mystery. Purely on a whim, I have chosen as a nom-de-plume the title most liable to misinterpretation! - Ed.]*

Mr Dow's article reminded me of a filming contract in which CIÉ and the RPSI were involved in 1978: "The First Great Train Robbery", starring Sean Connery and Lesley-Anne Down. This was filmed in the Republic of Ireland and, apart from the station scenes, which included Cork masquerading as London Bridge, the bulk of the railway sequences were shot on the former MGWR line between Athlone and Mullingar. This had the advantage of being lightly trafficked (it now has no traffic) and, since the story was set in the mid-Victorian period, of being in a rural area largely devoid of modern intrusions.

Two J15 0-6-0s were involved. These were superheated No.186 (Sharp Stewart 1879), which was already in the ownership of the RPSI and played a minor role, and saturated No.184 (Inchicore 1880) which had spent several years on static display in a strange greyish-beige livery that it had worn for an earlier filming role in "Darling Lili". No major work was required to put it back into running order and a light overhaul was carried out by the RPSI who also made various modifications required by the film company.



***Joe Byrne, Paddy Reeves and Inspector Eamon Lacken on No.184, still with cab, on the second trial run on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1978. (C.P. Friel)***

This work was done in the former loco shed at Mullingar and included making and fitting false outside framing and springs, removal of the cab roof and sides and the fitting of an ornate fibreglass dome cover. As a final touch, the film people produced a wooden block on which was mounted something like a miniature signal lever which was to be placed in a conspicuous position on the fireman's seat. Its purpose was never explained but it could be assumed that since purists and pedants would be a tiny fraction of the eventual audience, the more levers the better. The loco was renumbered 134 and was supposed to resemble an engine of the London & South Eastern Railway - whether accurately or not, I wouldn't know.

The 'period' train resulted from co-operation between CIÉ and Bray Studios who built appropriate bodies on to the chassis of 4-wheel former heating vans. Only two actually had furnished interiors and one had a detachable roof section which could be removed for shots of Mr Connery's activities on top of the train, which he did himself and which included dodging a spurious signal that had been installed in an improbable position under a bridge.



*One hopes that Paddy in the diesel will stop pushing before the next overbridge - Mr Connery, dangling on his rope, might dodge it but there is little hope for the team on top in this health & safety nightmare! The well-equipped lady is Eve Arnold, stills photographer (Starling Productions)*

No.184, alias 134, was crewed throughout by CIÉ drivers Joe Byrne of Mullingar and Morgan D'Arcy of Inchicore. Sadly, Morgan passed away several years ago although Joe is, I believe, still knocking about in retirement. The late John Bellwood, then of the National Railway Museum at York, was

retained by the film company as an adviser and the RPSI were responsible for engine preparation and maintenance. A colleague and myself spent four days on the latter duty, residing overnight in the Mullingar enginemen's dormitory, which was closed not long afterwards - though not, so far as I'm aware, as a result of our stay there!

Since it was then fifteen years since the end of steam on CIÉ there wasn't much chance of flitting from one engine to another (as had been complained of in the magazine article) but the film company paid a lot of attention to continuity. It was quite fascinating to observe how the various sequences were filmed as and when convenient and then to see them put together in the proper sequence in the finished article (for some years *The First Great Train Robbery* appeared to have replaced *The African Queen* in the BBC's Christmas film offerings, although the latter staged a come-back in the recent festive season).

Much of the railway action was shot on the high embankment between Castletown and Mullingar. The opening sequence took place on a minor road passing under the line, modern height restriction signs and the like having been removed and the tarred road spread with peat mould. There the well-to-do rogue Pierce, played by Connery, observed a failed robbery in which the miscreant was flung out of the guard's van after a fight with the guard. (Nowadays he'd sue the guard, the railway company, the owner of the uncomfortable terrain on which he landed, etc. - and probably succeed!)

A lot of work went into this sequence. Inside the van were installed some crates, made of balsa wood and containing fowl supplied by a large local gentleman whom I designated the hen-handler.

Predictably, the crates were broken during the fight, the hens duly fluttered and squawked and I think someone enhanced the overall effect by chucking in a few handfuls of feathers. The would-be robber was in due course thrown towards the open door and then, "Cut!" A sturdy grab-handle had been attached near the door in case things got too realistic. I can't recall whether the finished film included a declaration that the hens - or, indeed, Pierce's watching horse - had suffered no mental or other anguish.

The next stage was to build an attachment at axlebox level on the guard's van, and to dig a shallow trench beside the line. Into this was placed a small mattress which was then covered with earth. The stunt-man was to perch on the attachment, throw himself on to the prepared landing area and roll down the steep embankment. Setting all this up took some time, during which about a hundred local people had assembled, and it was presumably planned as a one-off as there were cameras covering all angles.

After much preparation, the climactic event took place, the stunt-man launching himself in a low-altitude version of modern high-jumping practice and landing on his back on the target area, whence he progressed down the bank at some speed and with limbs flailing alarmingly. Fortunately, he was able to retard himself sufficiently to avoid crashing into the typical Irish dry-stone wall at the bottom. There he lay for a time while he recovered his breath and the onlookers held theirs before breaking into prolonged applause. Although such acclamation might have been interpreted as the reaction of honest folk to a scoundrel getting his just reward it could not be included in the film's sound-track as the area in question purported to contain only Pierce and his coachman! I thought the job could have been done just as well by the stunt-man simply rolling down the bank, but the producer obviously wanted value for money.

Most of the sequences in that area involved a speed of 30-35 mph - quite moderate, unless you're intending to jump off an axlebox. Between shootings, the train waited in Castletown station which was quite near the embankment. Since No.184 could not accelerate the train to the required speed in that distance, assistance in the form of a "141" class GM diesel driven by Paddy Reeves was employed. This, of course, had a speedometer and Paddy would shove us briskly out of Castletown and then shut off and let No.184 perform for the cameras. Although I don't recall seeing much of the film-makers' well known penchant for having steam issuing from every possible orifice, they did use a smoke gun on the tender to ensure that smoke reliably drifted past the carriage windows when required.

For most of the time my colleague and I travelled on the engine. However, when aerial shots were required we retired to one of the inhabitable coaches, but this still left the problem of what to do with the production assistant who normally also travelled on the engine, keeping in touch with the rest of his team by radio. The solution was for him to be wrapped from head to toe in sacking, like a mummy, and to be laid on the coal in the front of the tender, from which location he presumably issued muffled instructions. When the film was released I was very interested to see what they had made of this. It transpired that, by skilful editing, only his toes appeared briefly so that no-one, apart from those who already knew he was there, would have noticed.

Any engineman who had worked on J15s would probably not have felt very much the worse for the lack of side sheets and roof since, despite being by far Ireland's most numerous class and having a life-span of some 80 years, they continued to have a cab best suited to travelling forwards in fair weather. With time on his hands, a conscientious engineman would have been inclined to do some cleaning but, in the interests of continuity, this was expressly forbidden. Thus the potential effects of an oily rag on a fibreglass dome spray-painted in bronze can only be guessed at!

Appropriately for rural Ireland, while the job was done efficiently, it was in a pleasantly laid-back manner. When nourishment was required, this took the form of an open-air buffet on somebody's farm where stars and lesser mortals mingled. Quite a lot of time between sequences was spent in the loop at Castletown. The loop platform was not paved and a hen and her chickens patrolled it in search of food. To while away the time I asked Joe and Morgan what was the first thing a hen did after scratching in the ground. After they had made some incorrect guesses I informed them that it was to take two steps backwards so as to be able to see where she had scratched. They expressed doubts about this until some time later when one suddenly cried out, "Jaysus, look at that oul' hen; yer man was right!" Some months later I learned that I had achieved a degree of fame as "Yer man from the North that knows about hens".

After the film contract No.184 was returned to normal and joined No.186 in the custody of the RPSI, working on several tours and outlasting her sister whose boiler ticket expired in 1980. At present both are at the RPSI's Whitehead base where, after an extensive overhaul, No.186 made a very successful return to traffic in 2004. No.184, a much longer-term project, languished in a semi-dismantled condition for several years but has recently had her various parts gathered up and put together again, partly to make her a more presentable exhibit and, no less importantly, to have all the bits in one place!

## **A LOCOMOTIVE SPOTTER'S GUIDE TO GNR LITERATURE**

**Colin Weatherup**

In view of the extensive range of literature now available on the GNR, a 'spotting' exercise has been carried out to see how many of its engines can be accounted for in the photographs printed in a range of well-known books. The books reviewed were:

1. "The Great Northern Railway (Ireland) in Colour" by Norman Johnston
2. "The Great Northern Railway, An Irish Railway Pictorial" by Tom Ferris
3. "Locomotives of the GNRI" by Norman Johnston
4. "Irish Railways in Colour" by Tom Ferris
5. "Irish Railways in Colour, A Second Glance 1947-1970" by Tom Ferris
6. "Rails Around Belfast, An Irish Railway Pictorial" by Andrew Crockart and Jack Patience
7. "Railways in Ulster's Lakeland" by Antony Burges
8. "Fermanagh's Railways - A photographic tribute" by Charles P. Friel and Norman Johnston
9. "The Golden years of the Great Northern Railway Part 1" by R.M. Arnold

10. "The Golden years of the Great Northern Railway Part 2" by R.M. Arnold

A table has been drawn up in which all the GNR locomotives numbered between 1 and 210 are listed and the page numbers of the photographs in which these occur in the above books are provided. Thus for example the table shows that locomotive number 27, a P class with 6' 7" driving wheels, appears on p.8 of book 1, on p.147 of book 3, on p.27 of book 7, on p.123 of book 9 and p.71 of book 10 (under its original number of 82).

In each case the engine number refers to the most recent holder of the number. Thus the number 146 indicates the UG class engine which held this number from 1948 rather than the A class 'Wicklow' which was numbered 146 from 1888 until it was withdrawn in 1937. UTA numbers are not used in the table.



*One of Mr Weatherup's escapees - QGT2 No.168 at Adelaide shed, 1938. Another, SG3 No.6, is on p.10 of "Steaming in Three Centuries" (q.v.). (Loco & General)*

Photographs of 17 locomotives could not be found in the literature reviewed above. These were A class 68, AL class 36 and 56, E class 193, SG3 class 6 and 7, LQG class 162, RT class 167, T1 class 188 and 189, T2 class 64, 65, 115 and 142, PP class 45, P56 class 52 and QGT2 class 168. Note: the photograph stated to be of 189 on p.56 of book 5 appears on closer inspection to be of 186. Not surprisingly, these omissions mostly consist of unheralded T1/T2 tanks and 0-6-0s of various classes. More surprising is the lack of photographs of P 5'6" class 52 and PP class 45. While the former was withdrawn in 1950 the latter remained in service until 1957. In my own collection I have a photograph of No.45 sitting unglamorously outside Dundalk works without a tender. However photographs of two of the missing engines were found in other books. These were 162 (LQG class) on Plate viii of 'The Great Northern Railway' by E M Patterson and 167 (RT class) on p.28 of 'ABC of Irish Locomotives' by R N Clements & J M Robbins. Also a photograph of AL class 56 is featured on page 37 of the 1993/94

edition of Five Foot Three leaving 14 GNR locomotives unaccounted for in published literature known to me.

The table can be supplied by the author from his address at 21, Knockdarragh Park, Belfast BT4 2LE or by e-mail from [c.weatherup@btinternet.com](mailto:c.weatherup@btinternet.com).

## MEMORIES OF AUTUMN 1964, AND LATER

John Friel

Autumn 1964 was a depressing time for railway enthusiasts with the impending closure of the Derry Road (February 1965), the Warrenpoint branch (January 1965) and the abandonment of rail freight other than Dublin-Belfast. The realisation that steam would not last much longer (the spoil contract had not yet been thought about) led to the formation of the RPSI.

My brother, Charles, and I first heard about it in the form of a local radio news item on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1964. It stated that, at a meeting in Belfast the night before, a Society had been formed to preserve steam locomotives in the “cleaning shed” at Whitehead.

Back then, making contact with the Society could have been a major problem. There was no Internet and the majority of households, including our own, did not have a phone. We were in the forefront of technology with an electric doorbell! However, the first Secretary was Eamon Jordan from Portadown (where we resided), so contact was soon established and we joined up.



*There was a theft of brass while No.171 was stored at York Road, so some low-tech security was applied to the loco. In charge of the barbed wire is Drew Donaldson, assisted by Sullivan Boomer and Tim Morton while Derek Henderson supervises from the tender. (C.P. Friel collection)*

In those days, enthusiasts were trying to pack in as many trips on scheduled steam trains as they could afford and the platform ends at Portadown became gathering points for enthusiasts to exchange information on which trains were likely to be steam, which engines were running well or badly, etc.

Not being from the great city of Belfast, Charles and I would hang around the periphery of these groups to hear the latest news. I remember being very impressed with these Belfast folk who seemed to know everything about railways and, indeed, everything about everything! Naturally, the future prospects of

the RPSI were a major talking point and, frankly, nobody gave it a chance. Can anyone remember what the initial membership fee was? I assume that it was £1. That amount of money would have filled the petrol tank of most cars.

64-645/210-E

6/11- 1973

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348, 3163

*This letter, addressed to the late Drew Donaldson, was found in the Friel archives and shows that our fame extended even to the Kremlin!*

Anyway, I remember one comment from a member of the “cognoscenti” to the effect that, with £60 in the bank, the RPSI could afford to buy a buffer beam. Another person predicted that if the Society ever succeeded in running a railtour with its own locomotive and if the loco failed in mid-section the relevant railway company would cut it up ON THE SPOT. I have always been amused at the thought of daily announcements that the line from X to Y is still closed as a steam loco is being cut up.

However, then as now, a large number of people were working away furiously but quietly in the background - not looking for glory but getting results.

As an aside, some time after the closure of the Derry Road in 1965, locomotives from Omagh and Derry were moved to Portadown engine shed. No.60 “Slieve Donard” (GNR(I) No.172) arrived from Derry with the slogan “We will rise again” on the smokebox. I have often wondered if this was some sort of prediction of the troubles which lay ahead for all of us.

When the RPSI operated its inaugural railtour in September 1965, most of the doubters started to come round. That tour was operated entirely over UTA metals and, with steam still in daily use, it presented no operating problems to the railway company. I wonder how many drivers were available at that time.

CIÉ was a different matter with steam having already ceased there. At the Society’s 1966 AGM, a plan was announced to run a tour from Belfast to Dundalk and back in 1967, thereby bringing preserved steam on to CIÉ metals for the first time. One member predicted that the chances of that happening were zero and if a letter were sent to CIÉ requesting a path, it wouldn’t be answered! One other dismissive comment was that “CIÉ changes its mind as often as you or I change our socks!” - what prophetic words! Of course, the railtour - the “Cuchulain” - did run and many of our members enjoyed seeing cine film of it at the recent Macha Film Studios show at St. Jude’s.

By now, the theme of this article should be apparent - if the RPSI had £1 for every time somebody said it would not succeed, overhauling No.461 would be no problem. Here’s to the next 40 years.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Engines and Men by Jack O’Neill; Rectory Press, ISBN 1-903698-16-X, s/back, 234 pp., b&w photos, €20.**

The author, a retired Waterford driver, will be known to many involved in RPSI tours in that area and to a wider circle as co-author, with Drew Donaldson and Bill McDonnell, of “A Decade of Steam” published several years ago. Although as a railwayman he inevitably found himself serving in other places, his roots are very much in Waterford and he has published a number of historical books concerning that area.

This book is in four parts, the first two relating - as the sub-title suggests - to engines and men; the third is “A View from the Footplate”, and the fourth a selection of photographs. Part 1 gives descriptions and the author’s opinion of the classes of locomotives that he worked on, mainly based on “Decade of Steam” but also now including diesels. A minor quibble in relation to the latter is that in some cases the text gives the impression that they are still in service - until the final sentence, which reveals that they aren’t.

Part 2 deals with the men he worked with, their foibles and their often bizarre nicknames. Not long ago, another contributor to this magazine expressed the wish that someone should collect railway poems; here he will find several, including one which has travelled all the way from Co. Antrim - “The Lament of the Bann” a.k.a. NCC No.92. To anyone who believes that poems should both rhyme and scan, this is probably the best constructed; others are sometimes heavy going, but demonstrate that their authors cared for the subject of their verses. Recently quoted in an article by Laurence Liddle, “Gallant Forty-Four” is reproduced in full; a tongue-in-cheek epic of a feeble and unprepared little engine which was

supposed to assist a Rosslare-Cork express but was in fact propelled by it at alarming speeds!

The third part is partly - or perhaps largely - autobiographical, commencing with the progress from Cleaner to Driver of Sam "Scraps" O'Leary, an imaginary person who may well contain some traces of the author. The reader is given a footplateman's insight into working trains over various routes with a variety of engines and mates, while the section describing 24 hours at a running shed paints a vivid picture of the round-the-clock activity at Waterford in its heyday.

For the most part, the photographs could not honestly be described as inspiring. To be fair, however, the book did not set out to be a photographic album and the author, when taking them in the course of his work, would not have been intent on producing masterpieces. Doubtless, he could have found better material elsewhere but the book is very much his own thing. Little typographical errors appear here and there but can be disregarded by the reader who will be left in no doubt as to the author's deep and abiding love of the steam locomotive and the way of life that went with it. NP



*Manual signal cabins, like this one at Enniscorthy, are now an endangered species. In the background is a block token instrument, and a keen eye will note that two of the levers, by having a halfway position, can operate two signals each. (I. Pryce)*

**Steaming in Three Centuries by Irwin Pryce & Leslie McAllister, IRRS London Area, ISBN 0 902564 08 0, s/back, 192pp, colour cover, b&w and colour photos, £12.95.**

Arriving as it did when the reviewer was in the throes of putting Five Foot Three together, this book was a serious distraction. One's attention is immediately grabbed by the splendid cover photograph, the existence of which had not hitherto been revealed lest it be demanded for use in Five Foot Three!

As its sub-title indicates, the book is a history of the GSWR 101 (later known as the J15) class locomotives, the RPSI's 184 & 186 being the last survivors of what was by far the most numerous class of locomotive in Ireland. Curiously, the first to be built, in 1866, was No.112. The actual No.101

appeared 16 years later, by accident or design bearing the lowest number and this was used to identify the class, the other members of which were numbered all over the place. One needed a very good memory to know an Irish engine's class from its running number! Just such a person was the late R.N. Clements, locomotive enthusiast extraordinaire.

Rather than "cherry-pick" from the works of others, the authors' policy has been to reproduce them with no changes other than those necessitated by passage of time. Thus there are three chapters containing the work of Mr Clements - whose depth of knowledge must have rivalled that of the relevant railway officers - covering the class's evolution and development, its comparison with the nearest MGWR equivalent and a description of the J15's (a) and (b) descendants. In the case of the latter it appears that "progress" was confined to improving the cab!

Other chapters include contributions from retired professional railwaymen, including Jack O'Neill (q.v.), and the authors bring the story up to date with accounts of the restoration and operation of the survivors.

The reader will have to exercise some self-discipline, as a glance at the photographic section will bring about a temptation to go there immediately. All but a few of the class - and several from other companies - are featured here and the photographs are, with very few exceptions, of excellent quality. A great deal of effort must have gone into acquiring these but even more impressive is the research which must have been required to produce their captions. In very few cases have the authors had to hazard a guess at what was happening; in the rest the captions are a mine of information.

So, unless you are someone of comparable standing to R.N. Clements, this book will provide you with all you ever wanted to know about J15s - and some of their contemporaries as well.

Finally, in the best Parliamentary tradition, one must declare one's interest. Apart from the fact that one of the authors is a personal friend, a proportion of the book's proceeds will go towards RPSI funds - at £12.95 the book is a bargain by today's standards. It originated from a conviction that a work on J15s was a "must do"; now that it has been done, and done so well, it should become a "must have". **NP**

**The County Donegal Railways Companion: a handbook for railway modellers and historians by Roger Crombleholme. Midland Publishing. Soft-back £14.99 ISBN: 1-85780-205-5 112 pages, with 159 photographs, maps, station diagrams and line drawings.**

The Donegal has long been one of the most popular Irish narrow gauge systems and in recent years, partly linked to the schemes to restore stretches of the original line, it has become far and away the best documented of the 3' lines. For some years, Mr Crombleholme has been developing the Alphagraphix range of kits, with extensive Irish coverage, and with several other suppliers also making sets of etchings for CDR prototypes, modellers whose taste is for other companies may be feeling a little neglected. If they are not already green with envy, I fear this book may be the final stroke! On the other hand, it should encourage even more modellers to set out to recreate the CDR lines: there really is no excuse now.

The book opens with a description of approaches to modelling the Donegal, with shots of several high quality layouts, then a brief historical survey. The next chapter covers locomotives, with drawings of classes 2, 3, 4, and 5A. The famous railcars and trailers have their own section, with another ten sets of scale drawings, including Phoenix, to complete coverage of the diesel traction. Further chapters cover carriages (six drawings); wagons (twelve drawings, including previously unpublished elevations of three tank wagons); architecture; signalling (including details of the semaphore types seen at each station); road services; operation; and that constant topic of debate amongst modellers, liveries, including some tips on mixing good matches. The photographs are chosen specifically to show just the

sort of detail needed for modelling, right down to underframe and bogie details, and a set of facing point locks.

Although quite a few of the drawings have appeared elsewhere, they were scattered over more than thirty years of magazine and book publishing, and you would need a very comprehensive library to have such a complete set as can be found between the covers of this single volume. Mr Crombleholme is an accomplished draftsman himself, and so there are some quite new drawings, including essential items like bridges, signal boxes and engine sheds. The architectural detail goes down to the level of colour schemes and how to provide suitable domestic lineside structures. There are also practical details, drawn on the modelling experiences of the author and Peter Dobson, such as advice on how to build articulated chassis for some of the railcar types (p. 33), and how to produce some of the coach variants by adapting commercial kits. In terms of providing both support and inspiration for model builders, this book sets new standards and breaks fresh ground. There is one personality who permeates the book like a benign but ghostly presence: the legendary Henry Forbes, with his pithy mottoes as chapter headings, and even some new anecdotes. It's hard to criticise a book as well designed as this one, but maybe just somewhere there should be a photograph of Mr Forbes. But then, maybe he was more concerned with devising new economies than getting his picture taken!

**AJOR**

## **RPSI POSTAL SALES**

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RPSI Postal Sales have grown a lot over the last 5 years, and they now make a significant contribution to Society funds. Thanks to all those who have supported us so far. The growth in sales is due to a number of factors. Happily, the number of Irish railway books now being published is almost overwhelming. Anything that moves on rails is included in the term "railway" in this context! Years ago, one book a year was the norm. Nowadays, it feels like one a month. We should be grateful to publishers such as Colourpoint, Midland Publishing and Oakwood for their efforts. But for them, many photos which have now been published would never have entered the public domain. The same can be said for old cine film which has appeared in video format, and the output from Markle Associates comes to mind. Even video has almost had its day, due to the switch over to DVD.

Another factor in the growth of postal sales was the introduction of sales on our website. In 2005, the website was responsible for 25% of all postal sales. You can log on to bring up the sales order form which you can then print out, fill in and post off - with a cheque, of course. The form is regularly updated to keep up with the new publications. Before ordering, you can click on "sales catalogue" to find a detailed description of each item.

Your best plan is to log on and see the items which are currently available.

When sending an order to RPSI POSTAL SALES, please include a cheque (in Sterling or Euro) payable to "RPSI". Add sufficient (20%) to cover postage. The prices quoted are in pounds sterling.



*No.4 passes Hill of Down with the "Midsummer Night's Steam" train on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005. (B. Pickup)*



*No.186 shunts her train at Bangor on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2005. (C.P. Friel)*