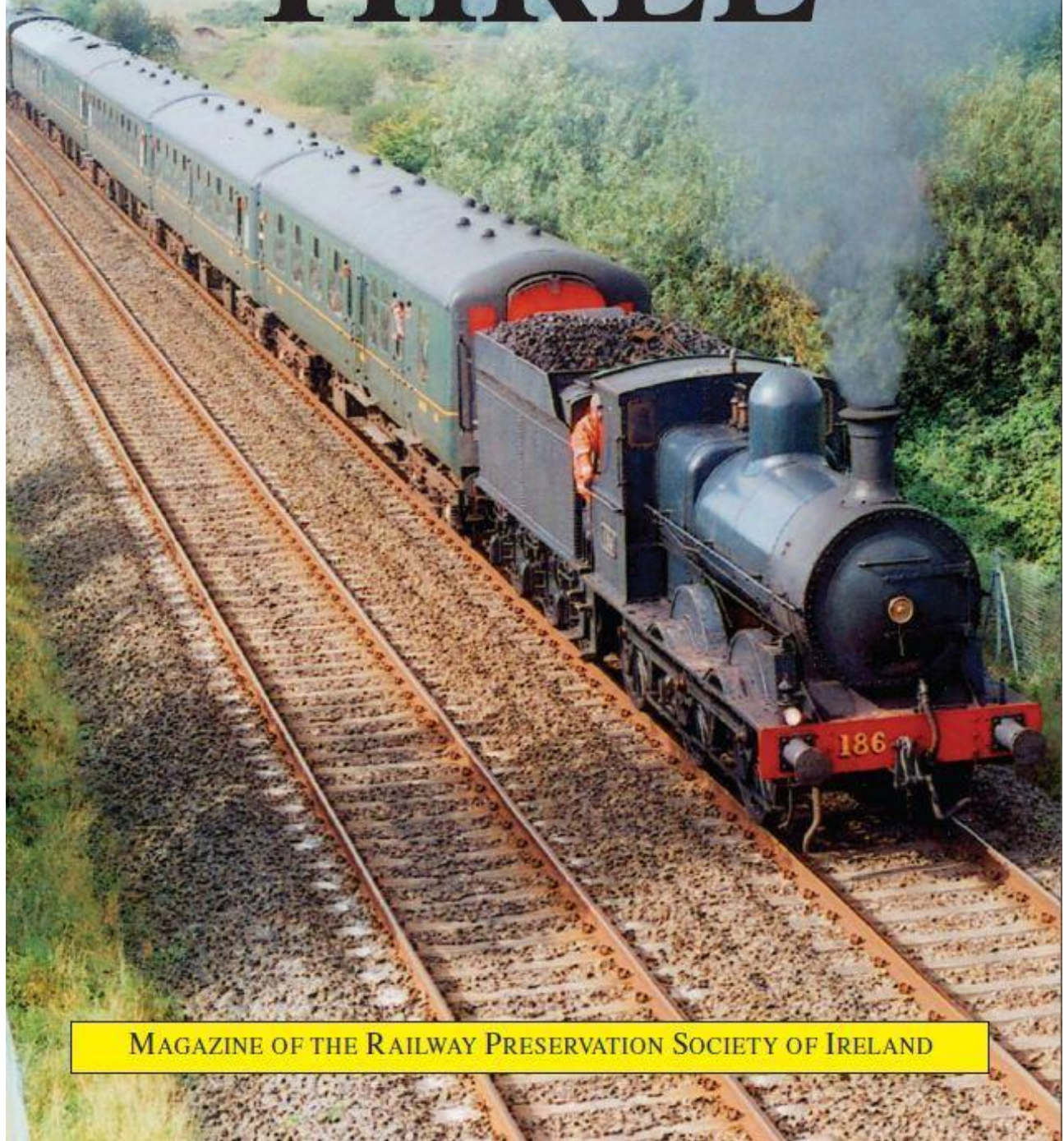


# FIVE FOOT THREE



MAGAZINE OF THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

# **FIVE FOOT THREE**

## **No.55**

### **Winter 2008/9**

**Editor: Nelson Poots**

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

***Front Cover: No.186 passes Craigavon's Balancing Lakes, "Country comes to Town" on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008. (I.C. Pryce)***

#### **EDITORIAL**

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Carrying on where the last Editorial left off, it can be reported that while the Editor has possessed a mobile phone for some years, he has not yet got into the habit of carrying it around - which rather negates its purpose. As for one that takes pictures or tells him the way home...! However, there are probably more important matters with which to concern ourselves.

What could be described as a corporate sigh of relief was heaved when two NIR drivers and two from IÉ were finally passed out as steam drivers. With a solitary driver in the north and the imminent

retirement of half of the Renehan team it would probably only have been a matter of time until we were forced to cancel an operation somewhere. Much credit is due to those on the RPSI side who stuck with what at times appeared to a never-ending process. In days of old a loco inspector would take a fireman out for a day, put him through his paces and, if all went well, that was that. Nowadays, when almost every activity down to blowing one's nose has to be risk-assessed, the process is somewhat more complicated, as Irwin Pryce's article relates.

A pat on the back also for Francis Richards and team, whose central locking gear has now been fitted to all our running carriages, where it gives trouble-free operation. Hopefully, in the not too distant future more standard class carriages will be turned out as, at present, for lack of anything else, some passengers are being carried in first class accommodation at standard fares. Now that a system of steam heating has been decided on, one might also look forward to the day when the gallant No.186 will no longer be burdened with 30-odd tons of non-seating generator van.



*Awaiting departure - Tony Renehan on No.4. (H. Stacpoole)*

The entry into service of dining car 547 has been much appreciated, while 2008 also saw the completion of the Youth Team's "Ivan" project, its crowning glory being the recent installation of a stove cast in the RPSI foundry.

Meanwhile, loco No.4 is in the process of being equipped with TPWS which, in addition to recording her passage through time and space, should enable us to run at speeds commensurate with that of other railway traffic. Although some of the foregoing have been grant-aided, they are still costing the Society a lot of money.

Speaking as one who for seven years also wore the Treasurer's hat, it is sad to note the departure of Wilma Cairns, whom many people knew only as a friendly and helpful voice on the phone - despite this often interrupting her financial duties. Not everyone was aware of how much of her own time

Wilma devoted to RPSI work, often assisted by her husband, David, especially in relation to the May Tour which for her began around January. We wish her well.

And finally, our thanks and best wishes to IÉ driver Tony Renehan who retired on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009.

Appropriately - and no doubt much to his liking - his final job was on steam with No.4 for the Dublin-Cork-Dublin outing that weekend, when he received a rousing send-off, both indoors and outdoors.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**Johnny Glendinning**

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It is hard to believe that another year is over and that I am writing this, my fourth Chairman's report. It has been another busy year for the RPSI and thanks to the hard work of our volunteers and paid staff, a lot has been achieved. First of all I would like to thank all who worked on the door locking project; it was a real team effort and one I was proud to have been involved in. I would also like to thank NIR Fleet Engineer Ian Campbell, and his approval panel for making time to approve our train in time for the first Steam and Jazz of the year. We also needed to obtain an exemption from the requirement to have TPWS fitted to locomotives No.186 and No.4 and I must record my thanks to Mal McGreevy, General Manager Rail, and Garry McKenna of DRD who obtained this for us at short notice.

Tony O'Shaughnessy and his carriage team have been very busy this year; not only have they managed to get the heritage set fit for traffic for this year's season, but they also overhauled a number of our Cravens coaches and got them through the IÉ approval process in time for them to be used on the Dundalk 50 train.

Our two operating committees have worked very hard this year and have run a season of very well loaded trains and between them they operated on either IÉ or NIR on 33 different days.

The launch of diner 547 and brake van "Ivan" was a great day and helped us say thank you to supporters and funders of our organisation. It was excellent to see the Youth Team showing off what they have achieved. I hope they keep up the momentum and grow in strength.

Training has been a big item this year, and thanks to all the hard work put in by David Humphries and Irwin Pryce, we now have 4 new steam drivers. The driver training on IÉ was sponsored by FÁS while training on NIR was sponsored by Awards for All. This is a big achievement for both railway companies and the RPSI and shows a huge commitment by the companies to continuing to operate steam over their networks. This is the first time for many years that a driver has been passed for steam in Ireland. The two companies have chosen different paths to the same end: IÉ used their own training school and trainer and out-sourced assessment to EWS, while NIR, with the help of the RPSI, out-sourced both the training and the assessment. However, the plan is to move to a position where NIR will be able to do all steam driver and fireman training and assessing in-house.

But more training than that has been carried out. Irwin Pryce, Peter Scott and Dermot Mackie have successfully completed an A1 assessor's course and they are now able to assess our footplate crews, shunters and machine operators.

Wesley Chapman and Ken Pullin, both members of the Whitehead Electrical Squad, attended and passed a City and Guilds 2382 Certificate in the Requirements for Electrical Installations BS 7671 IEE Wiring Regulations 17<sup>th</sup> Edition course.

Tony Ragg went on a course in Derby on computerised museum records which was 60% funded by the NIMC and David Orr and Ben McDonald went on a seminar about education in museums, again run by NIMC.

In March our Development Officer, Fergus O'Donnell, made a proposal to Council that he and Gerry Money would order 500 sets of Bachmann coaches which would be modelled on RPSI Mk2 coaches.



Their idea was to sell them and make money for the No.461 project. This was an easy decision for Council, especially as Fergus and Gerry were going to do all the work. They raised an amazing €23,000 to help complete No.461. What was a surprise was the speed with which the coaches were all sold. So a big thanks to Fergus and Gerry for seeing this project through to a successful end.



***Gerry Mooney and Fergus McDonnell present Peter Scott with a large cheque from the sale of the Bachmann model carriages. (G. Mooney)***

Another big item this year was the HLF Project Planning consultation. We engaged three consultants to look at not only who we are and what we do and how well we do it, but also what we do wrong and what we need to do to improve these things. The next stage is to analyse the reports and then hopefully come up with a project that HLF will help fund. I also want to see these reports used to support similar projects and funding in Dublin.

It was with regret that I learnt that Nicola Henderson had decided this year to give up running our shop at Whitehead. Nicola has run the shop and ordered the presents for Santa for more years than I can remember and we are very sorry to lose her. She goes with our gratitude for all her hard work.

I also very much regretted having to inform Wilma Cairns that we could no longer afford to keep her services. Wilma has been the contact point, the voice at the end of the phone, the interface between the RPSI and the public. She will be very much missed and we wish her well.

The year ahead is going to be very tight for money. We no longer have the Donegal contract which brought in well over £44,000. There are no more large contracts like that on the horizon. The IFI Mk2 grant will finish in December 2009 and we need to complete any work on Mk2s such as 303, 304, 460 and 463 by then. However, I am very hopeful that we will be able to get grant aid to do some renovations to the site fences and buildings.

The Society needs volunteers with skills in marketing and sales. Can I appeal to anyone who feels they could help with any of these to please get in touch?

Finally I would like to say thank you to this year's Council for all their hard work and to all those, whether in the RPSI or not, who have supported me over the past year.

## **NEWS FROM COUNCIL**

**Paul McCann**

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The year 2008 was one of mixed fortunes - there was good news and bad.

The good news was that in July at the launch of Diner 547 and the very successful 'Ivan' project, Translink's Chief Executive Catherine Mason said, "with the diner in operation, there is plenty of scope for the RPSI to develop steam train activity in Northern Ireland." Furthermore, she said she looked forward to many more years of continued operation of steam trains and continued co-operation between the RPSI and NI Railways and Iarnród Éireann. Such endorsement from top railway management goes a long way to sustain morale among volunteers, letting them know their efforts are not in vain.

A Heritage Lottery Fund grant early in the year allowed the Council to engage consultants to look at all aspects of Society operations, but mainly to investigate the feasibility of developing Whitehead as a Museum and visitor centre. During May and into June members were encouraged to submit their views to ensure that the consultants had a wide-ranging selection of opinions to work from in order to develop their recommendations. The final report was delivered in October - the views expressed therein tend towards development of Whitehead as an engineering facility and a 'destination' rather than a full 7-days-per-week museum. Council has started drawing up proposals which can be submitted to HLF with a view to attracting further funding for suitable Stage 1 projects.

Further good news about the security of Society operations came in October when two NIR drivers, Stephen Glass and Gary Moore, were passed out as fully-fledged steam drivers. Not only that, but at the end of the Santa season it was announced that Ken Fox and Robbie Jolley were similarly passed out on Irish Rail. Congratulations to the drivers and to all in the Society who worked so long and hard to achieve this result. The NIR course was organised by the RPSI and NIR, delivered by West Coast Rail and was part funded by Awards For All (a lottery grant for local groups and part of the UK National Lottery). The Irish Rail programme was part funded by FÁS, Ireland's National Training and Employment Authority. The Society is indebted to both these bodies for their encouragement and financial support.

The bad news, of course, was monetary! Despite the grants and funding already mentioned, costs continue to soar - not surprisingly, mainly in the area of health & safety regulations.

After the 2007 Santa season, the Council (perhaps belatedly) gave consideration to the fitting of secondary door locking (SDL) to our Mk2 coaches. A programme of work was drawn up and, once started, progress was extremely quick, and the full set was fitted, tested and certified in time for the Jazz trains in June - no mean feat given the in-house design and massive learning curve. However, it was not cheap, and did also mean there were no Easter Bunny trains, nor could the set be operated north of Dundalk on the May railtour. It should be noted that the design has proved very robust and has given little or no trouble since fitted, an excellent tribute to the Carriage and Electrical squads. The main outstanding tasks on the Mk2 set are provision of a steam generator and back-up electrical generators.

Having a diner/bar in the set once again is a major boon, not least among the early morning operating crews who now regularly avail of a cooked breakfast!

Meanwhile, the Dublin team was beaver away to get the heritage set fit for traffic in the new season. As if that were not enough, the task of overhauling and certifying the Cravens stock was continuing in parallel. That all sets, north and south, were available for traffic at all was no mean feat!

More bad news was reported in March, with the collapse of the two sheer-leg gantries in a major storm. While the gantries were overhauled and re-erected by November, it did mean that most of the Site team's effort, and a large part of that of the Workshop team, was diverted during the year from other vital tasks.

The state of the finances also meant that we had to say good-bye to Wilma Cairns, our administration assistant. Wilma will be sorely missed, especially around three-day-tour time!

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2007, it was announced that negotiations had been concluded with Carrickfergus Borough Council for the purchase of our Whitehead headquarters. However, the boundary issue recorded in my last report is still outstanding and we await a final agreement between the two legal teams.

The fitting of Train Protection & Warning System (TPWS) and Automatic Warning System (AWS) to No.4 is now under way, with a view to testing and certification before the summer season - again, a very expensive process. A Health & Safety Compliance Appeal was launched during the year to assist with the costs of SDL and TPWS. The good news is that around £25,000 has so far been raised; the bad news is that this is only half of the estimated total of £50,000. The appeal is still open, so please consider donating if you have not yet done so.

Although they started later in the year than usual, mainline operations were very successful this year if the number of 'sold out' trains was any indication. The accounts will show if the number of passengers carried translates to a healthy income. The Society's gratitude to all involved in operating these trains, whether on the footplate or in passenger care, must be recorded. But to our armchair members we must ask, once again, that you consider giving up one day a year to help your society, especially during the very busy Christmas period.

At the AGM in Dublin, there was one change to Council when Joe McKeown returned to take over the General Officer post vacated by Norman Foster.

Hopefully, the Society's standing and facilities in NIR's jurisdiction have been satisfactorily confirmed for the foreseeable future. But it would appear that Council's main task in 2009 is to consolidate the Society's position with the Irish Rail network. While there is no lack of help and support, everyday pressure on the company means that the RPSI is some way down their list of priorities. It is vital, therefore, to have official recognition and provision of the facilities needed to successfully operate steam trains, i.e. turntables, watering and, most importantly, a secure and fully facilitated base within which our coaches and locomotives can be properly cared for. Hopefully, a long-overdue meeting with Irish Rail management will take place early in 2009 to discuss these concerns.

After yet another year, it is unfortunate to report that those tasked by Council with drawing up proposals to improve Council structure and procedures have not been able to meet. Perhaps in 2009!

Congratulations are due to the team who so quickly (April to November) marketed and sold 500 sets of Bachmann RPSI Mk2 coaches, raising over €23,000 for overhaul of No.461.

No less worthy of mention are the sales teams who work so hard to sell, raffle, and generally coax, on all Society trains. Their efforts bring significant income.

It was reported last year that Hunslet locomotives 101 and 102 were offered for sale to registered museums. As there has been no movement on that front and, with a critical lack of space at Whitehead, a decision by Council to scrap one or both of these locomotives can no longer be discounted. Why then are there rumours doing the rounds that the Society has obtained a 141/181 GM locomotive from Irish Rail? There are various pros and cons of having a GM locomotive rather than a Hunslet but, while the subject has been raised at Council and discussed informally with Irish Rail, there has been no definite decision to obtain another diesel locomotive.

The on-line booking system available through the Belfast Welcome Centre, and linked from the Society's website, has been in operation for a year and the vast majority of tickets for northern trains have been sold by this method, and very successful it has been.

The number of members receiving the email Bulletin continues to increase (now over 630) but, as in previous years, I would ask that members view this as their Society and, hence, their news. To that end, please continue to submit any items of Irish railway news that you feel other members might be interested in. It has been reported during the year that some members without access to emails have felt left out, and are not receiving the same news as their email colleagues. While it cannot be argued that email news is very much more up-to-date, the paper News-Letter is what members are actually paying for with their subscriptions, and the amount and frequency of news in that format has not changed with the introduction of email. Note that the email Bulletin is a 'free' extra and there is no guarantee that it will always be available!

It was reported last year that a mailshot sent out between the summer and end of 2007 had resulted in a number of lapsed members re-joining. This continued during the year and the increase in members, to give the highest ever membership, can be seen.

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>
NI	411	399	391	386	380	379	378
RoI	403	387	380	375	375	388	371
GB	303	299	290	294	284	305	277
Overseas	31	35	34	35	32	38	38
Adult	679	688	676	685	696	748	728
Senior	339	298	289	275	247	227	207
Junior	19	33	29	31	24	28	25
Student	13	8	8	6	5	1	n/a
Family	19	14	15	14	21	25	23
Life	57	57	58	58	59	61	62
Societies	4	4	4	5	5	5	6
Honorary	18	18	16	16	15	15	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,148</b>	<b>1,120</b>	<b>1,095</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>1,071</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>1,064</b>

The trend of Adults sneaking into the Senior category has been commented on in the past and nauseam - can't be helped! But, more worrying is the fall in Junior and Student members this year, despite the very satisfactory overall increase.

The Society's single largest overhead is insurance, so it is good to know that the annual premiums are remaining more or less static - so thanks to Karen McLaverty of Marsh for that.

Within the Society, the Posts of Special Responsibility to the Secretary for the year were: Charles Friel (Belfast Meetings); Johnny Glendinning (Museum Curator); Mark Kennedy (Curatorial Adviser); Philip Lockett (Web Manager); Ciaran McAteer helped with legal issues; Barry Carse, Dublin area membership queries; Nelson Poots ("Five Foot Three" Editor).

There are various sub-committees which assist Council in conducting its business - thank you one and all.

Continued thanks to the management and staff of Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways for their help and support throughout the year.

And finally, congratulations to the Youth Team for their work on 'Ivan', GNR brake van No.81. Onwards and upwards!



**Locomotive Position****No.3 “R.H. Smith”. LPHC 0-6-0ST shunting loco. In traffic, Downpatrick.**

No.3, which was overhauled for the Larne line relaying contract in 2006, is currently based at the Downpatrick and County Down Railway.

**No.BG3. A. Guinness, Son and Co 0-4-0ST shunting loco “Guinness”. Boiler Inspection, Whitehead.**

The Guinness engine is used for shunting the yard at Whitehead when the operation is deemed too arduous for the Carlow diesel. The loco was used during the summer for Whitehead Open Day duties.

**No.4. Ex LMS NCC 2-6-4T loco. Fitting TPWS, etc., Whitehead.**

Loco No.4 returned to Whitehead on the “Mince Pie” special on 28<sup>th</sup> December, after operating the Dublin based “Santa” trains. The first move was to get the loco steam cleaned for the fitting of the train protection equipment mentioned last year. This is required both to comply with recent legislation and to enable the loco to operate more readily within the tighter schedules now existing on the NIR system. Design work is now well advanced and equipment is being acquired.



*One of No.4's piston rings - and the remains of another! (P. Scott)*

No.4 has continued to give the sterling service which we have come to expect, but unfortunately suffered a piston ring failure during the return from Rosslare in August. In spite of the consequent loss of power, the loco succeeded in working the train back to Dublin. The problem was investigated in Dublin but the limited facilities at Connolly loco shed proved unequal to the task of dismantling the suspect valves. As a result the loco was unable to work her part of the Dundalk Works celebration train as planned, and instead limped back light engine to Whitehead on one cylinder, sounding most unusual. Repairs were tackled promptly - this involved dismantling the valves and pistons, machining new rings

and reassembling everything. Some debate has ensued regarding lubrication and also the mileage that can be expected from the narrow type of rings fitted to the tank engine. The main difficulty which defeated the dismantling attempts at Connolly was carbon build up behind the valve rings, which made the valve heads jam in the unworn part of the liners - not an unknown problem. With increased mileage we may have to schedule piston and valve ring changes at 'mid-life' overhaul, i.e. at 5 years when the loco normally gets boiler attention.

By way of compensation, the loco has just completed a highly successful weekend run to Cork and back - the "Top Link" train run to mark the retirement of our long faithful Irish Rail driver Tony Renehan. (The other drivers are already demanding their own special retirement trains. Not so fast, lads!...)



*No.4's valves after refurbishment, showing the multiple rings which tend to become jammed by carbon deposits. (I.C. Pryce)*

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

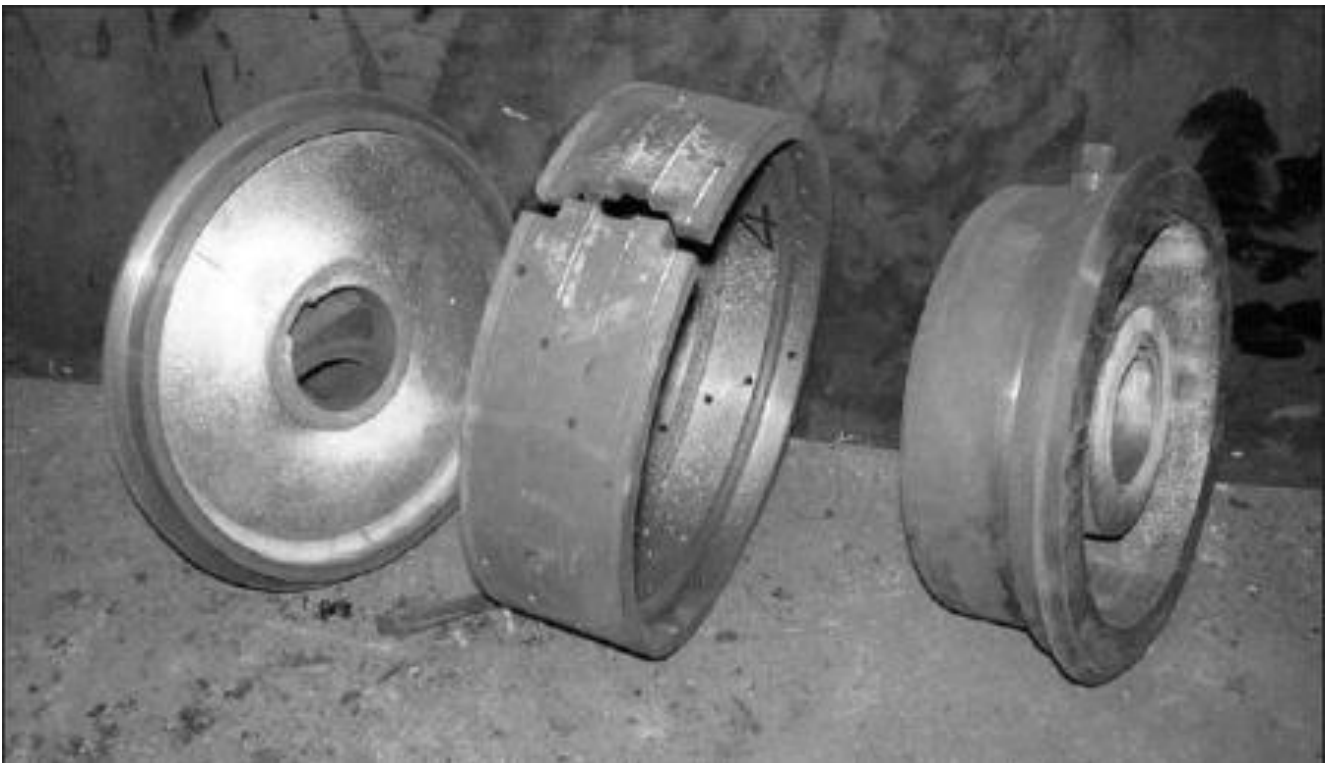
No.186 has mainly operated on Whitehead based trains. During the Santa operations, 7 vehicles were handled for the first time (6 Mk2s and the "Dutch Van" which provides electric power and brake van facilities).

While No.186 was the mainstay of the Whitehead operations, and has put up some excellent performances, a number of instances of poor steaming have occurred, most noticeably on the Whitehead-Dublin "loco swap" operations. Contributory factors can be identified, but it is difficult to pinpoint any overriding cause. However, it should not be forgotten that loco No.186 was the easiest and

most cost effective option for getting a locomotive into traffic when we had a small number of coaches available and also were not running to Dublin. No.186 - a small goods engine - was never intended as a Belfast-Dublin passenger loco and has only been roped into such operations because of the “loco swap” requirement, which has now become a passenger operation rather than a light engine move. Hardly surprisingly, the GNR(I) addressed the issue of running speedily and reliably between Belfast and Dublin long ago and came up with the Q-Class 4-4-0s, followed by the S-Class and the V-Class compounds - not to mention the VS. Examples of the first three have been preserved, and it is certainly our intention to proceed with the overhaul of one of the above trio as the next priority. However, it must not be forgotten that tender locomotives have need of one of the most fundamental of railway facilities namely strategic turntables - and the retention of those that remain, together with possible reinstatement of some that don't, should be high on our priority list.

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

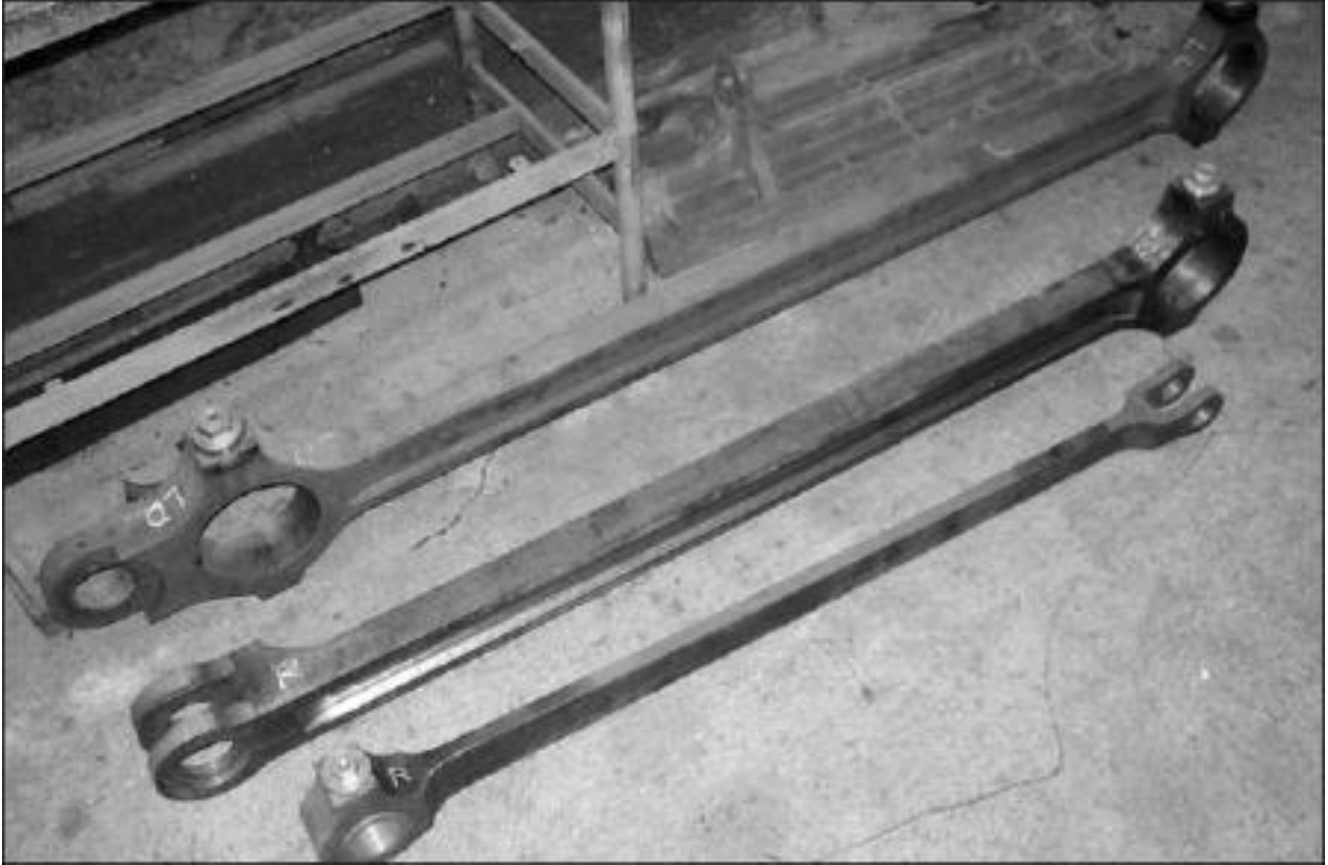
No.461 is undergoing general repair, with major work concentrating on the boiler. The lower half of the outer firebox has been renewed and work is now progressing on the inner copper firebox. New half sides and throat plate are being fitted together with a complete new door plate. Once the new firebox is in place, all the water space and crown stays will be renewed.



*A valve head from No.461, very different from those of No.4. (P. Scott)*

Mechanical repairs have included a “front end” overhaul with new valves, pistons and rings as required. No.461 employs the “Schmidt” design of piston valves. This arrangement has a single broad ring on each valve head (as opposed to Loco No.4 which has 6 narrow rings per head). The valve head is in two parts, the inner part being a disc designed to be flexible so that the steam pressure assists in sealing by pressing it onto the ring. A series of holes is also drilled through the valve ring, the theory being that this relieves some of the steam pressure which would otherwise cause excessive wear at the port bars. Understood? Good! One of the valve gear eccentrics has been found excessively oval and is being re-machined; other than that the mechanical overhaul is well advanced.

I would like to acknowledge some recent monetary contributions to the overhaul of No.461. Our best thanks are due both to those who contributed and to those who organised fund raising. Although most of the high value items (copper plate, stays, tubes and the like) have been acquired, there is still much on-going expenditure needed to complete the project. To give one practical example, money in the bank means the ability to renew boiler tools like stay taps rather than waste time struggling with worn out tools with “GSR” stamped on them - romantic as such a circumstance may appear.



*More Whitehead engineering. In the foreground are two new rods forged and machined for the motion of “Drumboe”, while behind the largest rod can be seen a newly cast section for No.4’s rocking grate. (P. Scott)*

### **Steam Locomotives In Store**

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

As remarked previously, No.85 would probably be the easiest of the GNR(I) 4-4-0s to return to traffic, since major boiler and mechanical work was done last time round. However, the size of the loco obviously increases costs and questions over turntables and route availability need to be addressed. The loco would require train protection equipment similar to that being fitted to No.4.

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

No.171 requires general mechanical overhaul and will need boiler repairs, the extent and cost depending upon dismantling and surveying. Train protection equipment would be required.

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

In store inside the carriage shed. Requires major repairs.

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

In store in the carriage shed.

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

Of the three GNR(I) 4-4-0 locos, No.131 requires the most work particularly regarding the boiler. Route availability should present the least problem of the three. The loco has the advantage of already being partly dismantled, with most of the major parts that need renewal already acquired. Another point in No.131's favour is that it would be a 'new' loco (to us). And it could of course make use of No.171's tender - assuming no immediate requirement to have No.171 operational as well! (No.131 should run with a narrower tender body and flared out coal rails, not the straight sided type paired with No.171 - but the wheel base and coupling details are compatible.) The TPWS requirement would of course apply. A decision regarding which of the GNR(I) trio gets preference needs to be made soon if locomotive availability is to be maintained. And the comments under the No.186 article apply.

**Diesel Locomotives**

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

The Planet needs engine and gearbox repairs.

**No.1 “Carlow” Diesel. Ex CSÉ Ruston and Hornsby diesel shunter. In traffic, Whitehead.**

The compressor was rebuilt as outlined last year with new liner, piston and rings. The gearbox is still functional but needs frequent oil replenishment and suffers loss of pressure after sustained operation. Major dismantling is necessary to rectify the fault.

**Unilok ex UTA road-rail shunter. Minor repairs and improvements, Whitehead.**

The Unilok was based for most of the year at the transport Museum at Cultra, where it performed the duty of moving loco No.74 “Dunluce Castle” in connection with functions requiring the turntable area of the Gallery.

Minor repairs and servicing are currently under way.

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

In cannibalised condition. Awaiting decision on future action.

**102 “Falcon”. Hunslet Bo-Bo diesel electric loco. In store. Whitehead.**

The loco was last in operation as shunter at Adelaide goods yard. Awaiting decision on future action.

**Foundry and Contract Work**

**No.90. Ex-GSR 0-6-0T loco.**

No.90 was transferred to Downpatrick after completion of repairs at Whitehead. Some minor jobs for example replica GSWR lamps are being completed.

**No.5 “Drumboe”. 3ft gauge ex CDR 2-6-4T loco.**

Completion of Interreg funded work. This work was undertaken as a partnership between the RPSI and Donegal Railway Restoration Ltd. The Interreg funding is now complete, but work is continuing on the loco where it can be fitted in and contributes to training and maintenance of skills. The aim is to have the loco frames repaired, the motion refurbished with missing parts provided, and the loco re-assembled later this year. It will not quite be ready at that stage to strike a match but will have brought that day a lot nearer. All work done is to fully operational standards.

Missing items which have been reinstated are a missing section of the coupling rod and also a missing valve rod. These items were made by forging to rough shape and then machining.

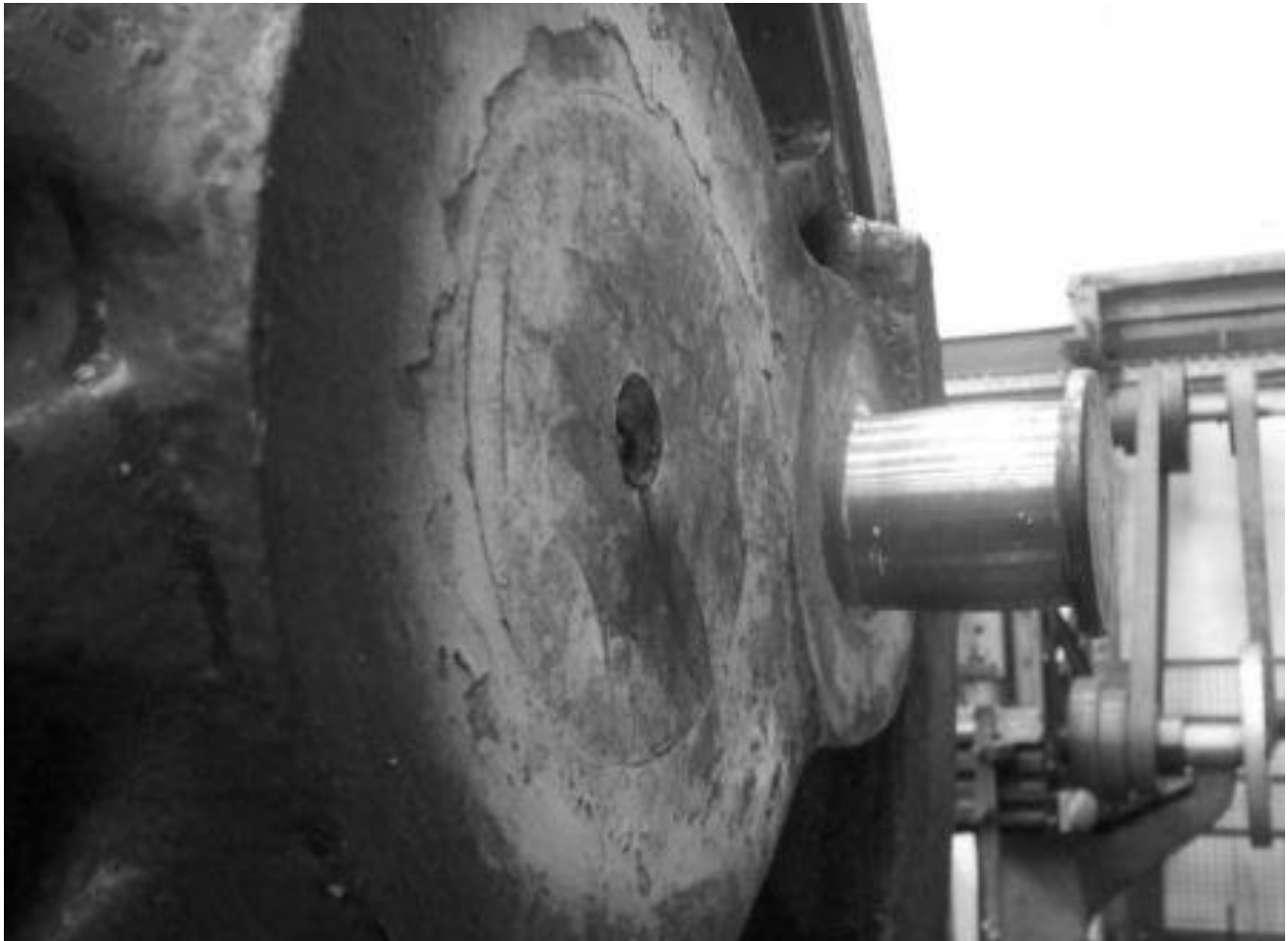


### **No.1 (O&K) (Overhaul Contract for Downpatrick and County Down Railway)**

Work is progressing on the steam pipes, boiler feed pump and motion, also vacuum brake equipment.

### **Wheelsets for Strathspey**

The three wheelsets for Barclay loco No.17 of the Strathspey Railway at Aviemore were sent to Whitehead to have their crank pins skimmed to true up severe wear. One crankpin was renewed. The big end journals were also trued up.



*Strathspey wheel as received, note barrel-shaped crank pin. (P. Scott)*

### **Central Door Locking And Train Line**

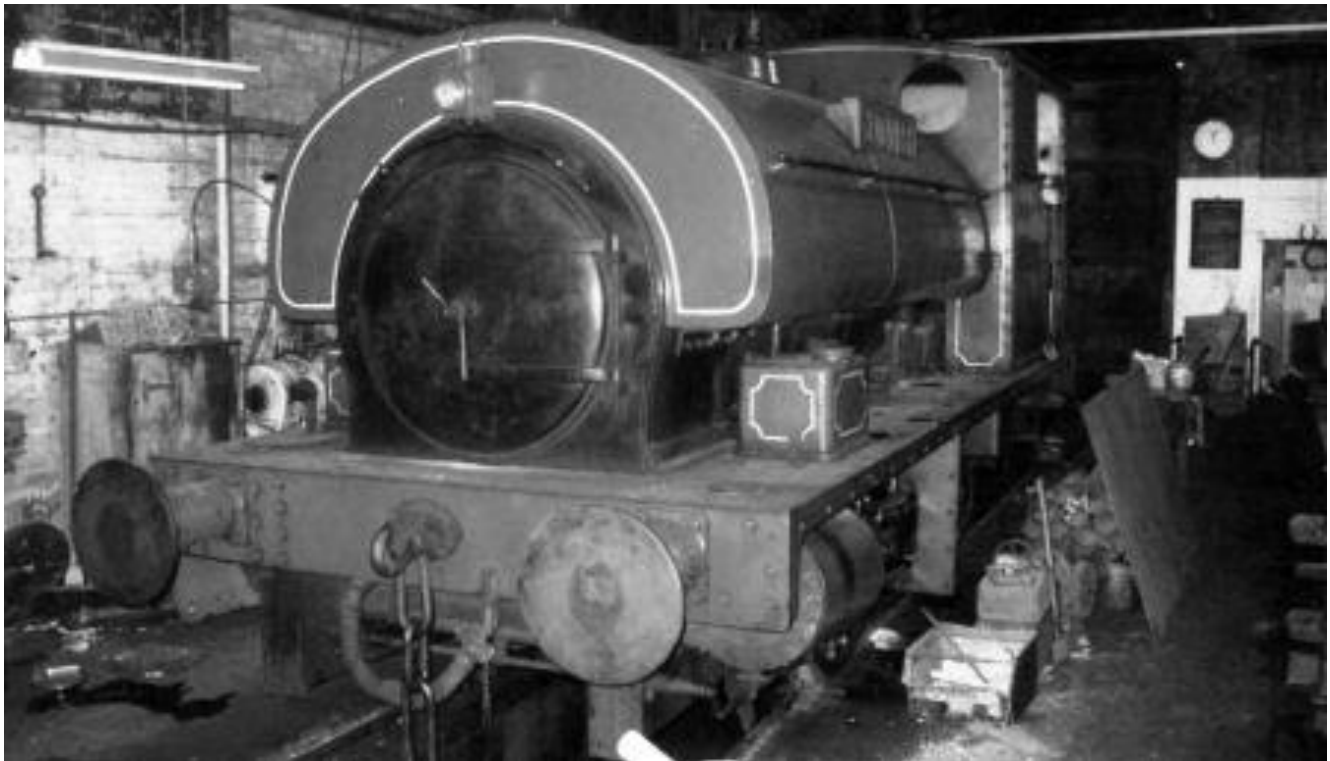
The train line and CDL fitment mentioned last year was completed on the seven operational Mk2 vehicles. Together with the Dutch van, which provides electric power, this has been the operational train over the past year.

The two ex IE Mk2D coaches acquired during the year are to be fitted with CDL and the first, 303, is at present in No.5 Loco shed for this purpose. No.5 shed gives pit access for fitting CDL train line, also steam heating equipment.

It is planned to fit a small generator to the existing brake coaches (460 and the as yet not commissioned 463) so that they can supply power as well as passenger accommodation, without the need for the Dutch Van.

I took over the post of loco running officer from Jeff Spencer during August 2008. My assistant, Ben McDonald, and I found ourselves responsible for aspects of operating our locomotives in the Northern area. This included, but was not limited to, coal, water and oil, on-board tools and equipment, and routine maintenance tasks such as boiler washouts.

The coal we are currently using comes from Daw Mill at Arley, near Coventry in the West Midlands of England, and we have it delivered to Whitehead by the lorry-load - 28 tons at a time. The coal is then loaded into the locomotives using the loading shovel - an ancient diesel tractor which has a bucket on hydraulic arms long enough to reach even No.4's high bunker. Peter Scott has been busy training younger members in its use, and two are now close to being passed as shovel drivers, with another two in training. The Guinness engine does not have an external bunker, so the methods of coaling this locomotive are more labour intensive and involve wheelbarrows and buckets!



*For a few weeks in 2008 the Guinness engine had a respite from sleeping rough, sharing No.1 shed road with sundry items including No.461's large boiler tubes and an axe. Despite occasional tensions, there are no reports of the latter having been put to use. (I.C. Pryce)*

This year we have burned nearly 50 tons of coal from Whitehead. I am told that when the A1 steam locomotive trust calculated the amount of carbon dioxide their new locomotive No.60163 would produce per passenger mile, they found it was a lower figure than that for a 4 door car on a suburban commute. I have not done any calculations for our own locomotives but I am happy to quote their story to anyone who challenges me about "dirty" steam locomotives.

The Daw Mill coal seems to suit all three locomotives well. It will sometimes clinker in No.186 but provided that the fire is cleaned at regular intervals, gives little trouble. However, it is rather expensive and we are looking at an alternative source of coal that comes highly recommended from main line locomotive owners in Britain. In Dublin we use a Polish coal on which engines steam well, but it can be sore on the firebars.

Our supplier of bearing oil stopped stocking the oil we use this year, and my thanks are due to Paul Newell for arranging an alternative supplier through his contacts in the Belfast docks. After problems with piston and valve rings on No.4 referred to in Peter Scott's report, we investigated sources of appropriate steam oil for the hotter parts of the locomotives. In future we may use the same type of oil north and south of the border. This is an issue because locomotives are swapped frequently from Whitehead to Dublin and vice versa.

Water for our locomotives comes from a variety of sources. We have our own water tower and column at Whitehead which we use when trains run in to our site. There are water tanks at both platforms in Ballymena, and my thanks are due to Jeremy Saulters for ensuring that these were full at the appropriate times for our trains. Portrush retains its steam age water tank, and indeed on our last visit it flushed a remarkable amount of water borne vegetation into No.4! However, with Portrush off our list of destinations for now, Lisburn's balloon tank was my main concern as it was supporting similar weeds round the low water mark. These were cleaned out and work was done on the float valve on that tank to make its operation more reliable.

Ben and I have taken an interest in making boiler washouts less of a trial for those involved. More frequent washouts reduce the amount of solid material removed from the boiler each time, and mean that the whole operation can be completed successfully in one day. Copper pipe reducers at the end of the washout hoses increase the speed of the water flow through the washout holes, which shifts mud and scale more quickly. We have been lucky in that the other young people at Whitehead have rallied round to help with washouts, indeed one day we even managed to rope in the DCDR's locomotive officer!

These are the mileage figures for 2008:

Locomotive	4	186
Train miles	3,254	1,856
Light Engine miles	130	0
Total loco miles	3,384	1,956
Total miles since last overhaul	24,360	11,457

The low number of light engine miles is encouraging, as a light engine movement is by definition one without fare-paying passengers! The Guinness engine, which doesn't go any further than the shunting signal at the south end of Whitehead yard, had a busy year too, clocking up 26 days in steam shunting, running train rides during open days, assisting with the repair and reassembly of the sheer legs, and marshalling the Mk2s into whatever order is required.

## **CARRIAGE REPORT**

**Francis Richards**

The 2008 season was undoubtedly the year of the electrics. It started with a program of installing a three-phase train line to provide electricity down the length of the train, powered by the diesel generator in the Steam Heating and Generator Van (alias the 'Dutch' or 'Roaring' Van) or, when stabled, by a shore connection from the site three-phase supply.

This allowed the replacement of some of the ageing batteries on the coaches, and the opportunity was taken to procure and install battery chargers that could be mounted on the vehicles and connected to the train line. This means that battery charging can be done on the run and that all chargers can be operated from a single supply when stabled.

While all this was going on a learning curve on the Lister diesel and its associated alternator was climbed. The diesel turned out to be the easy bit, although dirty and awkward to get at as it was installed in the gap between the two steam heating boilers when the van was converted from 24 volt DC operation to 230 volt AC. However, familiarity brings its own rewards and the contorted positions

required were soon learned. During this period a set of electrical drawings of the control panel was made as there appear to be no others available. This exercise was time-consuming but the diagrams have subsequently been of great benefit. Design of the train line and its installation were in the capable hands of Johnny Glendinning and his team.

With power down the train it was time to install the Secondary Door Lock equipment now required on slam-door stock in passenger service on the NIR network. The equipment is based upon the electro-pneumatic panel used by BR and on NIR's Gatwick and soon-to-be refurbished 80 class sets. However, as we have no compressed air supply on our vehicles, modifications were made to provide an all-electric solution. This dramatically decreased the amount of installation time and cost while still conforming to - and in some areas exceeding - the requirements of the Group Standard. In order to minimise crew-training requirements care was taken to ensure that operating procedures were very similar to those used on the NIR Network.

All this work required approval and this was obtained in the Spring of 2008, unfortunately just too late for the first run to Dublin, which meant that we were not allowed to carry passengers between Whitehead and Dundalk.



***No photos of electricity being available, here instead is a picture of how passengers used to manage in the days before people were presumed incapable of looking after themselves. Bray, August Bank Holiday, 1970. (M.H.C. Baker)***

A period of adjustment followed while we learned about the door locks themselves and then came the addition of the Dining Car. The Dining Car had been completely refurbished and fitted out over the previous two years. With power now available, work could commence on the installation of the cooker and fridge freezer (both had to be installed via a window - see FFT No.54), and all the other facilities that a modern standard kitchen requires. The kitchen has been inspected and approved by the Health and Hygiene department of Carrickfergus Council.

The dining car and the Dutch van were offered for approval at this time and, together with other

carriages, passed a brake test at 70 mph behind an NIR diesel locomotive in preparation for an increase in running speed in the future.

There have been a few occasions for intervention with systems since installation; the most complicated being the inability to provide satisfactory toast in the diner. This was traced to low voltage from the generator set in the Dutch van. Contact with the original manufactures was eventually achieved and an obsolete (to them!) installation and maintenance manual duly scanned and emailed. Two faults were found and corrected but the third caused an unscheduled fire drill as the linear reactor caught fire (not sure what it does, but it sounds like a cousin of a nuclear reactor). A spare was fitted, adjustments made and 'cracking' toast resulted.

The overhaul season in the spring of 2009 will see improvements to the generator situation in order to provide backup and hopefully to avoid the need for the Dutch van on steam-hauled trips. Two new (to us) coaches were purchased from CIÉ, being the last surviving Mk2Ds. The first of these is under repair for fitting of train line, steam heating and secondary door locking, together with a full refurbishment of the interior. This will add two SO vehicles to the rake - each with 64 seats, luggage storage and two toilets and, in one case, a minute guard's compartment with handbrake and emergency valve.

## **NORTHERN OPERATIONS**

**Mervyn Darragh**

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The season got off to a slightly late start due to our dedicated electrical team fitting and commissioning Secondary Door Locking (SDL) to our Mk2 carriages, to comply with NIR requirements under UK Health and Safety rules. It was a tight timescale to get the carriages fitted and approved for the Barrow Bridge Railtour but unfortunately by a matter of a couple of weeks we missed being approved to carry passengers north of the border. This was very disappointing, but all appreciated the effort put in to get the carriages approved before the tour.

The 2008 season was operationally quiet with all trains running as planned. There were 25 operations requiring a Northern Ireland Railways crew. Three locomotive swaps between Whitehead and Dublin were required and, to help defray costs, we decided to market those trips to the public. While our stop in Dublin was only around two hours this did not deter many who wished to sample over 200 miles of main line steam, with two locomotives. This was most heartening as were all our Belfast operations, having reached a point where we are turning customers and income away, due to limitations on train haulage capacity. The only exception was the Dundalk 50 train from Whitehead to Dundalk, but this was compensated by a fully loaded local train onward to Drogheda and return.

The first movement on the main line was on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May, under the control of an NIR engineer, when No.4 completed its gauging of the NIR network by running light engine from Whitehead to Larne Harbour. This was followed by a brake test run with the Mk2s to Belfast, and the carriages afterwards similarly brake tested behind a GM diesel.

The Barrow Bridge railtour over the weekend of 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> May was a great success with the exception mentioned above on the GNR main line north of Dundalk. The only disappointment that affected all passengers was that they could not travel to the newly commissioned Rosslare Harbour station platform. As our Mk2 carriages had not had their footboards pre-gauged for clearance against the platform edge (carriages stabled at Whitehead over 230 miles away), the train had to proceed empty from Rosslare Strand. Thankfully the weather stayed dry, as station cover for passengers was sparse. That task satisfactorily completed, the carriages are now approved for passenger use to the Harbour. For the record, on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May No.4 had worked the carriages from Whitehead to Dundalk empty, and onward with passengers.

For local customers the season started with the ever-popular Steam and Jazz trains that ran to



Ballymena on four consecutive Friday evenings from 6<sup>th</sup> June. The first three operated behind No.4, while the last used No.186.

A need for No.4 to fulfil some Dublin operations saw the first Belfast to Dublin (locomotive swap) train on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, marketed under the guise of Strawberries and Steam. No.186 returned the train north.



***No.4 arrives at Clonmel during the May tour. The fine weather contrasts with what was to come at the end of January 2009, when the town was flooded. (I.C. Pryce)***

2008 saw a busy Whitehead site train activity year:

A Northern Ireland Museums Council “Museums and Galleries” Month event on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May that featured an art group showing traditional posters and an art exhibition in an open Mk2, and a clay modelling pottery artist located on the platform. Guinness BG3 and two Mk2s did the honours.

A successful Schools Day for Whitehead primary schools took place on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> June. Train rides were provided on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July in association with the Whitehead Community Festival. The highlight for the Society was the first use of almost fully restored GNR brake van No.81 (affectionately nicknamed Ivan). Passengers on the train could travel in the guard’s van for the first time in many years, as a nearly completed Ivan was successfully run in.

In association with “Britain in Bloom” judging at Whitehead in early August Guinness No.3BG and Ivan (complete with hanging flower baskets on each lamp bracket) featured.

There were train rides provided on 10<sup>th</sup> August using No.186 for the Disabled Ramblers NI that saw some nifty mobility scooter parking displays in the van of passenger brake 460. On Sundays 17<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> August train rides aimed at the passing family trade were provided. In association with the European Heritage weekend the Society opened its base to guided tours on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September. Train rides supplemented the “Open Day”.

There were unfortunately no Portrush Flyers in 2008. The track north of Ballymena was awaiting

planned life extension upgrade work, and part renewal, now taking place. To fill a summer void two new operations, both operated by No.186, ran to Bangor: the first from Portadown on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> August, and the second with two return trips from Lisburn on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August. The Portadown train, filled to capacity, was the first public steam train excursion from Portadown to Bangor since July 1965 when the connecting Middlepath Street bridge in Belfast was demolished for a road improvement, so severing the Bangor line for around 10 years. The Lisburn to Bangor trains were very well patronised.



***The Northern Ireland Disabled Ramblers group on their visit to Whitehead on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2008.  
(M. Walsh)***

The ever-popular Country Comes to Town excursions off Portadown to Lisburn operated on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September in marvellous weather. Many thanks again to Translink/NIR for supporting the steam operation as part of their input into the event. No.186 again provided the motive power.

The Dundalk 50 operation on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September (mentioned above) commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closure of the Great Northern Railway works at Dundalk, was a great success. No.4 and No.186 were booked to work trains simultaneously from Dublin and Belfast, with the first operation of Society's Cravens to Dundalk from Dublin and Mk2s from Belfast. Unfortunately No.4 had to return light engine to Whitehead on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September, for piston repairs. Attempts made earlier in Dublin to repair the fault had been unsuccessful, needing the heavy Whitehead tools. NIR GM 112 "Northern Counties" fulfilled No.4's duties and returned the Mk2 set to Whitehead, while No.186 worked the Cravens to Dublin.

After repair No.4 was run in on the Halloween Broomstick Belle trains to Whitehead on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October. These popular trains are financially very rewarding.

After long deliberations the much-awaited programme for two NIR firemen to be assessed as steam drivers took place between 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October. After a day's classroom session on the 27<sup>th</sup>, out-road assessing took place on 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October to Lisburn, and 29<sup>th</sup> October to Ballymena; out and back

over the mothballed Antrim Branch. West Coast Railways' senior steam driver and qualified assessor Ron Smith carried out the assessing. Congratulations to new steam drivers Steven Glass and Gary Moore.

A requirement to get No.4 to Dublin for the heavily loaded Santa Trains meant another locomotive transfer train on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November. Although of a light train consist, it was full and the income generated assisted in covering the operational costs.



***Having limped home from Dublin on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008, No.4 was met by the sight of Whitehead's Down platform being down in every sense. The coping had detached itself the previous day, fortunately without damage to persons or trains. (I.C. Pryce)***

The Santa train programme started on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December and was slightly different from before. With an encouraging loading on last year's Portadown train we decided to test the Portadown market with two trains. These were most successful, being fully loaded.

The remaining trains on 7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December worked Belfast Central to Whitehead, with one late afternoon working to Lisburn on 14<sup>th</sup> December. Tickets for these trains sold out within 10 days of going on sale - something of a record.

The year closed on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December with the very popular Minced Pie and Mulled Wine train to Dublin. This provided an opportunity to return No.4 to Whitehead for Train Protection and Warning System (TPWS) work, and have it commissioned for the 2009 operating season. Unfortunately No.186 struggled with the train, having to be stopped to have the fire cleaned and steam raised on a number of occasions. At the time of writing coal that would not make steam was being blamed. The NIR crew and Inspector are to be commended for struggling on to Dublin where arrival was two hours late. A quick turn-round should have enabled a departure off Dublin about 50 minutes down. However, while the train was ready to depart at 17:05 (immediately after a northern DART departure) cautious signalling held us until after 17:20. Despite No.4's best efforts, time could not be made up, being held at Drogheda for the up Enterprise to overtake.

TPWS work to No.4 was temporarily stopped, allowing it to work the Top Link Railtour to Cork between 30<sup>th</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009. This was an out of season railtour that commemorated Irish Rail steam driver Tony Renehan's retirement. Tony's (and his younger brother Dan's) first association with steam started with the Irish Railway Record Society charter of No.186 to Kilkenny in September 1968 when both were rostered as 'third men' - and after 40 years, as they say, the rest is history. We in Belfast are indebted to Tony for his enthusiastic work on the big railtour weekends.

What does the 2009 operating season hold? With track upgrade work between Ballymena and Coleraine due for completion by early July a limited Portrush Flyer programme will be sought for the late summer.



*No.186 at Lisburn on one of the Portadown Santa trains on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2008. (I.C. Pryce)*

May I thank our volunteers in helping to make the trains run, and to those providing on-train support to our customers. I will not mention names, but all will know who they are. Finally a special word of thanks to Northern Ireland Railways for their continuing support without which we could not operate.

## **SOUTHERN OPERATIONS**

**David Houston**

Whilst the operating year just completed could be regarded as largely routine, there were a couple of notable achievements which are dealt with in greater detail in other reports but were important in relation to securing the future of our operations.

The first achievement was the welcome return to service of Cravens stock - into traffic on 28<sup>th</sup> September for the "Dundalk 50" event.

The other achievement, very topical when these notes were being written over the Christmas period, was the passing out of two Irish Rail drivers as steam driver/fireman. This was certainly notable and

vital to the continuance of steam operation over the Irish Rail network.

The operating season got off to a late start, the May International Tour ‘fringe’ event prior to the main tour being the first occasion when the Dublin heritage set was in traffic. It worked from Dublin Connolly to Mullingar and return with locomotive No.186. A photo-stop at the recently opened Phoenix Park station was well received by those travelling.

A day of Bray Shuttles diaried for 31<sup>st</sup> May had to be cancelled due to crews not being available. After that, however, we had a largely trouble-free season.

The last weekend in June was booked for a charter involving Belvedere House, near Mullingar. Patrons were taken by train from Dublin Connolly to Mullingar on the Saturday and transferred by bus to Belvedere House where they were entertained. Meanwhile, the stock, hauled by No.4, did a return trip from Mullingar to Enfield for local passengers before stabling at Mullingar for the night. Return to Dublin was on the Sunday afternoon. A misunderstanding by a coach driver returning patrons from Belvedere House to Mullingar station resulted in all his passengers being brought direct to Dublin by coach instead of by steam-hauled train! Most unfortunate, but we were unable to intervene.



***On the May tour “fringe” trip to Mullingar on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2008 No.186, with Dublin’s ‘heritage’ carriage set, made a photo stop at the recently opened Phoenix Park station. (I.C. Pryce)***

Three “Sea Breeze” day excursions were operated over the summer. Heretofore, we have always taken passengers (mainly local) from Wexford to Rosslare Strand or Rosslare Europort. However, there was a new station at the Harbour with only minimal facilities and new arrangements for running round a train there, so it was felt that the local trip should be curtailed to the Strand, with the empty stock continuing to the Harbour for turning and servicing. At least the turntable survives there!

The first “Sea Breeze” ran on 13<sup>th</sup> July and made additional stops at Blackrock in both directions to pick up and set down members of The Blackrock Society who were very appreciative of this facility. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> August operation we took a large party from Rathdrum to Wexford and back. On this



occasion our member Paul Clarke, who lives locally, pulled out all the stops to market the day out, and he succeeded well in that regard. The final “Sea Breeze” on 24<sup>th</sup> August was noteworthy only in that No.4, which worked all three excursions, developed a mechanical problem on the return journey. However, in the best tradition of steam haulage, she got the heavy train back to Dublin without losing too much time, and we are very appreciative of the crew for persevering in difficult circumstances.

The closure of Dundalk Works in 1958 was marked on 28<sup>th</sup> September by the operation of two special trains - one from Dublin Connolly and the other from Whitehead and Belfast Central. The resolution of No.4’s problems had not been achieved in time for this event, leaving no option but to hire a diesel locomotive to cover the Dublin departure. Not only was this special diesel-operated - NIR 112 doing the honours - but, as mentioned above, it was the first outing for a rake of Cravens stock in Society ownership. Whilst there was understandably some disappointment that a diesel was substituting on the day, the overall impression gathered was one of “these things happen”. Passenger response was good overall. No.186 provided the motive power for the other special, and both locomotives worked Dundalk-Drogheda return shuttles to meet demand from Dundalk folk for a short excursion. At the end of the day No.186 brought the Cravens to Dublin and the diesel returned the Whitehead set north.



***No.186 again, this time with the Cravens carriages, almost entirely in their earlier CIÉ livery, passes Haynestown with one of the “Dundalk 50” trips on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2008. (I.C. Pryce)***

A considerable amount of fringe activity was available to participants on the day in Dundalk. It included an ex-GNR double-deck AEC bus on display with a traction engine (in steam) on the station forecourt, museum exhibitions and a model railway display. Our sincere thanks to Society stalwart David Humphries who spearheaded the entire venture, and who succeeded in obtaining local sponsorship to meet some of the cost.

Another joint venture with Belvedere House took place on Halloween Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October, when patrons were brought from Dublin Connolly to Mullingar and then transferred by coach to Belvedere House for a Halloween experience. Whilst they were being entertained the train, headed by No.186,

operated another Mullingar to Enfield and return shuttle. Overall it was a successful operation with the prospect of further joint ventures with Belvedere House in the future.

No.4 returned to full health, and to Dublin, in time for the ever-busy Santa season. It had seemed until quite close to Christmas that only seven coaches would be available to meet the usual heavy demand for tickets, so the "Sold Out" message went out even sooner than normal without any advertising being required. And then the eighth coach (1142) became available, and the dilemma was - will we advertise or not and risk running with empty seats? The revenue income from an extra coach is substantial - 56 seats for each of 18 trains. As it happened the 'bush telegraph', aided by the Society's website, soon took care of the extra seats. Not only did we clear a substantial waiting list but in no time at all we had to advise that the extra coach was sold out. So to all those who helped Santa to make the season a success and, vitally, to raise important revenue for the Society, a very big thank you.

Finally, this report would not be complete without expressing sincere thanks to all our many friends at all levels in Iarnród Éireann who ensure that our trains operate in a safe and successful manner. Noteworthy at this time is Society member and locomotive driver Tony Renehan who will probably have already retired by the time this appears in print. I know that he will be mentioned in other reports, but I feel that he deserves special thanks from the Dublin Area Operations Committee, who have relied on his enthusiasm and expertise, and that of his brother Dan, over many years to ensure the operation of our trains. We wish him a long and enjoyable retirement and look forward to seeing him from time to time as our guest. He will be most welcome.

## **WHITEHEAD SITE**

**Dermot Mackie**

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Work on the Whitehead site can be a very mixed bag of outdoor activities, but if I was to sum up this year it would be a case of ups and downs and opening and closings. January was the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday of the ever-faithful JCB and we celebrated with a cake (see photo in last year's report - the Editor jumped the gun on me) and used the gathered folk, including new recruit Trevor Taylor and the digger, to spread 20 tons of crushed stone in the pot-holes of our laneway.

In February we pulled the necessary electric cables through the conduit to the sleeping coach at the back of the site with the help of Alan McRobert and John Williams and also put down ash to bind the hard core. It was about this time that Nathan Lightowler and his grandfather, Jim Totton, did a magnificent job of putting in a brand new toilet in the Tarry. Unfortunately, in the early hours of Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March an 80 mph wind from the south east blew down both of the sheer legs. Serious damage was sustained to one of the gear boxes and a lot of the structure was deformed but, miraculously, they missed the rake of Mk2 coaches in the nearby carriage siding, the electricity pole and Drumboe's boiler! Once we got over the initial shock and Peter Scott carefully assessed the damage it was realised that all could be repaired. Fortunately, I had acquired two spare winding motors and gearboxes from York Road a few years ago when NIR rationalised their lifting facilities. It was also seen as an opportunity to thoroughly overhaul the equipment, put in place additional access platforms and update the electrics. Definitely a case of an ill wind blowing some good.

In April we put diner 547 into No.5 shed road to bolt down the bar, spent a lot of time tidying up around the sheer legs and moving the by now dismantled pieces into the workshop, all ably assisted by Geoff Moore, Maurice Moore and Robin Morton.

A small incident in early May damaged the wooden crossing gate that used to close 3 and 4 roads, but it was neatly repaired by Bob Skingle, only to be totally demolished the following month during a shunt for the Steam and Jazz trains. At this stage it was decided to re-use the original heavy metal gate, but this required major repairs to the gate-post, supervised by Peter. The post, with an enlarged base plate, was then bolted into the old concrete foundation and the metal gate re-hung, all with the help of

the hand crane and Gordon and Robbie Hannigan. It was also decided to replace the old and rusted main entrance gate, support pillar and some fencing, but in the event this work was done very neatly by outside contractors.

By this time we had started the Summer Tuesday nights and our project for this year was the Carlow diesel loco. Philip Newell was a great help and we tackled a number of jobs including adjustment of the driving chains and brakes, filling the oil in the wheel bearings and fixing water and diesel leaks.



***Bad, but could have been worse. Brought down by the violent storm of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008, one set of sheer-legs narrowly missed the smokebox of “Drumboe” while the other came very close to an electricity pole (out of shot on the right). (I.C. Pryce)***

July saw the start of the replacement of the old rusty door lintels above 1 and 2 shed roads. This was a major task over the next three months which, apart from help with putting up and taking down the scaffolding, was carried out almost single-handedly by Joe Galbraith who did an excellent, sympathetic job on the brickwork. The impending launch of 547 and brake van Ivan at the end of the month required a lot of tidying up and an opportunity was taken to recycle scrap metal. This included the old copper train line wire from the Mk2 coaches and some aluminium, all loaded onto cage pallets and taken to Belfast in Francis Richards's van. You can imagine the smile on my face when I was handed a cheque for more than £1,000!

The ball-cock on the water tank at Lisburn had been giving problems for some time but in August the youth squad, ably led by James Friel, had it dismantled, repaired at Whitehead, refitted and fully functional for the Bangor and Portadown trips.

September saw the removal of the Strathspey Railway wheelsets from the workshop and the opportunity was also taken, with the help of Thomas Charters and John Wolsley, to start assembling the

repaired sheer-leg parts, a job which continued into October. It was during this month that redundant signalling equipment from around Claremorris arrived at Whitehead, following extensive work by Mark Walsh and Francis. This was off-loaded from lorries onto flat wagons with help from John Lockett and myself and should make an interesting project for the future.



*Re-erection of the sheer-legs on a rather wet 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2008. The set at the Belfast end, and its winding gear, have been restored to their rightful position and the road crane is now lifting the other set. The pole which had a narrow escape is on the right. (A.C. Ragg)*

November was extremely busy on the Site front with major preparations for the impending arrival of four 40ft containers, organised by Paul Newell, and the final erection of the two sheer-legs in the heavy lift area. Space had to be cleared at the sides of the carriage shed and workshop for the containers and the opportunity was taken to rationalise and recycle a lot of surplus and unnecessary scrap metal. In addition a forty foot length of 3ft gauge track was laid at the back of the workshop, in a sunken tramway format, to facilitate the movement of the Donegal stock that is currently being overhauled. The able assistance of Nathan Carter and Evan Pameley in the final stages of this work was much appreciated. Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> saw the culmination of all above with the timed arrival of a 55 tonne crane and two containers on lorries at 8am, all of which had to be preceded by a shunt of the front yard. All four containers were in place by 11:15 which left the afternoon to erect sheer-legs, lift on the motors, wire up the electrics and put on the covers. The crane was finished by 5pm, despite blowing a hydraulic hose, and all work, included a put-away shunt, was complete by 6pm. Detailed repairs in the workshop, critical planning and good team work by members on the day meant that all went extremely well and the success of this major project was a credit to all concerned.

And finally, our old alternative to the modern gym work-out machine, the hand crane, had its wire ropes replaced in December. Site activities at Whitehead are nothing if not varied and always good exercise in the great outdoors. All volunteers are always welcome.

## **DRIVER TRAINING ON NIR**

**Irwin Pryce**

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The railway of today is very different from what many of us remember.

The Guard's van could contain live chicks for Omagh, a coffin for Strabane, a box of fish for Dungannon or a greyhound for Derry as well as the pile of distinctively scented canvas mailbags.

Each station had at least one cabin - usually manned 24 hours a day. It is hardly believable that one man nowadays controls a mileage of track far in excess of the 75-odd miles from Portadown to Derry with cabins at Portadown Junction, Annaghmore, Vernersbridge, Trew and Moy, Dungannon, Dungannon Junction, Donaghmore, Pomeroy, Carrickmore, Beragh, Omagh (two cabins), Newtownstewart, Victoria Bridge, Strabane (two cabins), St Johnston, Londonderry South and Londonderry North. Let's not forget also the manned crossings - too many to list - but bearing rich sounding names such as Mullafurtherland, Tattykeeran, Killyraggy (No.1 AND No.2!), Aughalurcher, Tattyraconnaghty and Killyshambally. (The spell-checker on my PC is having some sort of a fit here.)

The locomotive would have had Driver and Fireman whose total practical experience might have totalled 60 years. Neither of them was likely to have been an educated man - though this is a very different matter from being uneducable. In those days few had the chance of an education, whilst nowadays huge efforts are expended in an all too often futile attempt at improving the standard of education for a significant part of the population.

On one occasion two men (who perhaps felt themselves better educated) scampered into the office at Adelaide, having been consulted by another on how a defective superheater element should be recorded. Their delight knew no bounds at finding "Elephant tubs blowing." recorded in blunt pencil in the Defects Book. It is a tribute to the skill and intelligence of such men that a complex system was run with precision and safety.

In the early days of the Society we were blessed with a core of long-experienced "steam men". We were well aware that many of them were approaching retirement and that with that would come the loss of a body of knowledge that would be difficult to replace. Patterns of employment over the years had led to periods of non-recruitment, e.g. from 1924 till the outbreak of war only one man was recruited to footplate grades on the NCC. Post-war closures and dieselsation eventually led to redundancy for many of the men who had been employed to help cope with the increase in traffic during wartime. The



result of this was that we could see on the horizon the disappearance of steam footplate men. Some respite was to be found in the generation of men who were employed in the 1960s as a result of an over-optimistic view of the capability of unreliable diesel units and the traffic generated by the contract for movement of quarry waste from Magheramorne for the construction of the M2. Time also took its toll of these latter-day steam experts.

That things were simpler in times past is undeniable. To pass out a Driver Bill Hanley would apparently send the Fireman into the train and allow the candidate to drive while he, Hanley, fired. This would have been simple but for Hanley's trick of doing things wrongly. Inappropriate use of the blower, firing in the wrong place and failing to look out for and pass on information on signals where the Fireman would have first sight of them were all employed to put the candidate on his mettle. The resulting paperwork amounted to one side of paper addressing 10 points.

Addressing the issues of training and assessing the capabilities of a new generation has occupied many minds for the past few years. My patience is alleged [*By himself!* - Ed.] to be legendary. The editor reminds me that a legend is something that no-one believes, though in his more generous moments when looking at the hoops we have had to jump through he has on odd occasions admitted that there must be some truth in the allegation.

Let's see just what had to be done. Now from here the reader might begin to feel the influence of Morpheus, but as a 21<sup>st</sup> century steam enthusiast you will no doubt read on.

Our operations on NIR are underpinned by document OPS-STD-0018. This was developed in 2001 by the Society along with Malcolm Knight of Halcrow and Northern Ireland Railways. It is similar to the 'industry norm' used for steam operations on the main line in Great Britain, namely the Code of Practice for Steam Operation No BR/BCT601. Where we differ from mainland practice is that operators there normally have the status of Train Operating Company and provide their own Drivers, Firemen, Guards and Inspectors. The locomotive is usually owned and maintained by another body, the carriages perhaps by yet another and the access to the line controlled by still another, Network Rail. This gives a degree of freedom which we are denied, but also includes complexities and responsibilities which we are grateful not to have. We operate under NIR's safety case and are required to demonstrate the most exacting standards in all our activities. The document specifies who may drive and fire on the main line and in 29 pages specifies the practical skills and theoretical knowledge required.

With this in place, the work of training could begin. Additional risks over and above what drivers could expect to encounter in their daily work were looked at in a Task Risk Assessment. The reader will be spared the intricacies of this but essentially each task carried out by a steam locomotive driver and fireman had to be identified and any risk identified, the precursor leading up to it identified and the potential outcomes identified. A score was then allocated based on an assessment of the frequency and severity of the risk and how frequent the happening. Controls must then be put in place which address the risk and reduce it to an acceptable level through training and assessment.

As part of their day to day duties train drivers are subject to a routine process of training and regular assessment in order to ensure their competence. Steam operations had then to be included in this. The process is based on an Assessment Algorithm, which considers:

- The difficulty of the task. (A difficult task involves high levels of vigilance, skill and concentration for prolonged periods; carrying out that task under hazardous, emergency or degraded conditions and involves the assimilation of a high volume of information.)
- The importance of the task. (The consequences here of failure to carry out the task correctly could be life-threatening, disrupting to operations or easily rectified.)
- The frequency which the task is carried out. (If carried out less than once a week it is regarded as

infrequent - this in itself can be a problem since the Driver may not be familiar with operation.)

The result of this stage in the process is to place a specific priority in the training process. This is then correlated to our Steam Training Programme, the method of assessment and National Standards (NOS).

A Training Plan was then evolved. It was felt that since trainee drivers were already familiar with footplate routines as experienced Firemen this could be accomplished in 16 sessions over a four day period, followed by an agreed number of hours driving under supervision.



***Beaming and (less usually) gleaming, Gary Moore receives his driver's certificate from Stella McDermott of Heritage Lottery Fund at the dinner in the Reform Club. (J. Lockett)***

Each session addressed specific tasks and the time allocated to each element is specified along with the means by which training was given, e.g. by use of sectioned brake fittings, a prepared PowerPoint presentation or a locomotive in steam.

This stage was to be carried out in the classroom at Whitehead with backup of a range of audio-visual props, cutaway locomotive parts and the use of No.4 in steam outside. The Trainer for this was to be Ron Smith of West Coast Railways. A requirement for this was that the trainer was to be Qualified to A1 standard, the Nationally agreed qualification for all persons engaged in vocational training.

An agreed form of assessment was then devised. The trainees had to demonstrate practical ability to carry out each of the hundreds of tasks carried out as a steam footplate man and, in addition, answer correctly dozens of theoretical questions to demonstrate that they understood the workings of a steam locomotive. The format for carrying this out was designed to be compatible with that used by Northern Ireland Railways for their day-to-day driver assessment.

The reader may be excused if by now he has skipped a few lines. But by now the paperwork generated had extended to almost two hundred pages and we still had not turned a wheel. Remember this was once one page!

Paths had to be arranged, men freed from normal duties, locomotives and carriages made available along with coal and water. Our own stalwarts who regularly turn out at all hours of the day and night had to be rostered. A deadline for successful completion had to be met or else we would lose £10,000 in grants from the then Heritage Lottery Fund for training.

Finally, on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October, the classroom work began. On following days No.4 worked to Lisburn and Ballymena and skills were demonstrated. The final stages were completed six hours before the deadline for claiming the training grant!



*This time it's Stephen Glass's turn, Ms McDermott again doing the honours. (J. Lockett)*

As is usually the case, too many are involved to thank them individually, but special mention must be made of Steven Leeman, Brian Murphy, William Pritchard and Richard Knox of Northern Ireland Railways. We may sometimes forget that they have their "day job" to do and that the long hours they spent helping us over the hurdles are in addition to this. Tim Knapp of CDL assisted with professional advice on many thorny bureaucratic issues.

Noel Playfair, Gary Moore and Stephen Glass participated in what must have been a nerve-wracking process. Mickey Hamill, NIR Driver Assessor, oversaw things on the day, while Andy Taylor and Ron Smith of West Coast Railways were at our beck and call over several years.

On the day, the lads and ladies who run the show did their bit in coaling, watering, cleaning, lighting up, cooking and the hundred and one other things that go on behind the scenes. It should be mentioned that after I had left Whitehead on the Wednesday evening and was facing a steak along with Ron Smith in Dobbin's Inn a broken spring was discovered on No.4. This was replaced that night. Sorry lads!

We now have two more steam drivers to add to Noel Playfair. I wonder does everyone realise how much we depended on Noel over the past years. Always available, always dependable, always good humoured in adversity - a man cast in the traditional steam mould in fact.

It would not be fitting if I did not recall one story of a time when things were a lot simpler. Drew Donaldson congratulated a certain Driver who had just taken a VS over from Dundalk to Goraghwood in 25 minutes, cutting 4 minutes off the booked time. “That was a good run Driver,” he said. The surprised reply was “Oh, was it? I wouldn’t know. I’ve got no watch, no timetable - f#@! all.”

Simpler times indeed!



*At the Reform Club dinner on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2009, RPSI vice-president Sir Ken Bloomfield presents Noel Playfair with a certificate and a view of No.186 that he doesn’t normally see. (J. Lockett)*

## **STEAM DRIVER TRAINING ON IÉ, 2006-2008**

**D. Humphries, G. Mooney**

If you refer to the table of RPSI trains in “Forty Shades of Steam” you will find that there have been four occasions over the last two decades when crew training occurred on Iarnród Éireann (IÉ) - April 1992, January 1996, March 1997 and April 2003.

It is fair to say that without qualified crews the RPSI is going nowhere! Therefore it is also fair to acknowledge the support of IÉ to our Society in running the above programmes. It should be clarified that all of these programmes were to pass out firemen who would complement the existing qualified steam drivers and would in due course become competent and be passed out as steam drivers. It is unfortunately a fact that despite all of this effort we still arrived in 2008 with only two qualified drivers - Tony and Dan Renahan. This happened for a number of reasons - the main ones being transfers and promotions within IÉ. For example, when a man is promoted to Inspector or moves to DART he is ‘lost’ to steam crewing.

I am sure our membership will give due credit to the Dublin Area Operations Committee (DAOC) who, despite all of the above, did not take their eye off the ball and strove very hard to address this issue. As far back as July 2003 the Society met with the then new CEO of IÉ - Mr Dick Fearn - and among the topics covered was “that the provision of more trained footplate crew for steam locomotives needs urgent attention”. Despite some ‘slippage’ we again met with IÉ in November 2004 and this produced from IÉ a written commitment in January 2005 that the IÉ Training School would provide a

comprehensive eight-week course for steam conversion training. It is important to record that the IÉ Training Programme would be structured to combine the roles of driver and fireman so that at the end of the course successful candidates would be qualified in all aspects of footplate knowledge. This would be in marked contrast to previous 'training schemes' which resulted in candidates being passed out solely as firemen.

At that time also IÉ advised the Society that all training would now be on a commercial footing - subject to contract and the payment of a charge per individual trained. In August 2005 IÉ advised the RPSI that formal training would take place in October 2006 - an unfortunate delay due to other demands within IÉ.

During the period August 2005 and October 2006 many other issues were addressed. These included:

- The finalisation of a Commercial Agreement with IÉ - the "Contract Training Services" document;
- An application to FÁS which resulted in securing grant funding towards the Society's not insignificant costs;
- The seeking by IÉ of expressions of interest from those of their drivers around the country who were interested in partaking in steam conversion training. A healthy total of 28 applications were received.

Also during this period the IÉ Training School set about developing a full training programme which was subject to both third party validation (Rail Operations Development in the UK) and acceptance by IÉ's own Safety Department.

In September 2006 we were advised by IÉ that the validation process was taking much longer than expected and also that there were difficulties in releasing some of the personnel required for the eight weeks duration of the course - quite a setback! At a meeting in November 2006 it became clear that training would now have to be postponed into early 2007. A high level meeting with IÉ on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2007 was held to review where we were and how we might progress matters. This resulted in September 2007 as being the most likely date when training could proceed. In August 2007 IÉ confirmed that their Safety Department had validated the process and training finally got under way in September 2007.

The training began in Inchicore Works with the trainees undertaking some classroom work before their introduction to live steam with No.186 in the Works internal network. Over a couple of weeks the trainees got their hands on injectors and basic skills in moving and stopping the locomotive. The training then went 'out road' with No.186 and a small rake of Irish Rail Mk2s moving from Inchicore to Dundalk for more intensive training. Over the following few weeks each of the trainees would take it in turn to drive and fire the locomotive and increase experience. This part of the training was important for the trainees to gain confidence and to put into practice what they had learned in the classroom.

This out road training was a huge task for the RPSI locomotive department. Each day the locomotive had to be prepared before the trainees' arrival in the morning, and then they had to dispose in the evening when the day's training was finished. The co-operation and will for success of the programme from all members from both the Dublin and Belfast locomotive crews was very important. To put it simply, if members had not given up their time or taken time off work the programme would have come to a halt at this stage.

The training in Dundalk finished off with No.186 heading back to Belfast and No.4 coming to Dublin for the Santa season. It had been hoped that the trainees would have been passed out on the Santa season 2007 but various issues indicated that the passing out would happen in 2008.

Right from the start of the 2008 season the trainees would be a feature of all the operations out of Dublin. Each day spent on the footplate gave a better understanding of how things worked in practice

and how the locomotive performed in different situations. The one thing that the trainees had that no book or classroom could teach them was the guiding hands and experience from the masters of the art, Dan and Tony Renehan. There is not much these two men have not seen when it comes to steam locomotives, so the trainees would never be let stray too far from the path.

As the 2008 season went along the trainees' confidence grew with experience and thoughts soon turned to 'passing out' for the grade. It was the intention that the trainees would be put up for assessment during the Santa season so a special training trip was run in November to give some extra experience. However, at the start of the Santa season it emerged that the passing out would not happen until January 2009. This was cause for concern to all involved because, as we all knew, one half of the existing steam crew would be retiring at the end of January and any further slippage would spell disaster for the programme. Then it emerged at short notice that the assessment would take place over the final two days of the Santa operations.



***Successful candidates Robert Jolley and Ken Fox on the footplate of No.4. On the ground are Joe Maher (IÉ Training), Jim Smith (UK assessor), Tony Renehan, Gerry Mooney, Tony Cooke (IÉ Inspector) and Dan Renehan. (M. Hoey)***

This was a huge boost ahead of Christmas and Inspector Jim Smith arrived from the UK on the Friday to conduct his written exam in Inchicore Works. Over the following two days he assessed the trainees in all aspects of locomotive management and competence in regard to both driving and firing. As the weekend went on tension and nerves eased and word from the front was that all was going well. After finishing up on the Sunday we all waited for word as to how it all went and then came the news we had all been waiting for - Robert Jolley and Kenneth Fox had been successful in their assessment in both



driving and firing. With that news the mainline operations out of Dublin got the boost of new blood that it had needed for so long.

The success for these two men was no easy task. The whole training program required a huge level of effort from all concerned. David Humphries, Gerry Mooney and David Carse were very much in the front line for the RPSI and made sure every requirement from the railway company was met and nothing left to chance. All members in the operating department also assisted in making sure stock and loco watering demands were met on every occasion during the training and regular operation trips. All grades in Iarnród Éireann also made a huge effort and this also is to be acknowledged, in particular the training school at Inchicore for which this type of training was a new departure for all involved.

The end result from all this is that we now have two fully passed out locomotive crew members who with their enthusiasm and effort will go a long way to keeping mainline steam alive in Ireland. To everyone involved - thank you and well done!!

## **THE GS&WR AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY (PART 1)**

**Alan O'Rourke**

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A few years ago, the RPSI book sales offered me an item listed as "GSWR Coaching Traffic 1900", which I expected might be about the rolling stock allocation to specific services, or details of the marshalling of excursion and special working. It proved to be a foolscap folio size document, which had at some date been bound in a black cover bearing a printed label GS&WR Circulars from Superintendent of the Line and had been later overwritten in hand "Goods Rates." In fact, it is a sort of "appendix to the appendix to the working timetable" containing various notes about working the railway, and since I also have a working timetable for the GSWR dated 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> May 1901, I thought it might be worth writing up some notes on the daily running of Ireland's premier line, a little over a century ago.

For the GSWR, the period 1898-1901 was a tumultuous time, which had seen its operating mileage increase from a little over 600 to nearly 1,100. At the end of the nineteenth century, three impecunious companies radiated from Waterford (there was also one quite prosperous line existing in "splendid isolation," but it is not part of our tale). Of these three paupers, all of whom depended on rather generous rebates from the English Great Western Railway, the Waterford & Central Ireland Railway (WCIR) might just have had a happier history if its northern extension to Mullingar had materialised and the Westmeath cattle traffic had left on the New Milford steamer rather than via the North Wall. The tale of how the GWR shifted its resources in partnership with the GSWR into a concern called the Fishguard & Rosslare Railways & Harbours Co. has already been told by Oliver Doyle and the late David Murray in the Journal of the IRRS. All these three Waterford companies had to find new fairy godmothers, and the WCIR and Waterford, Dungarvan & Lismore Railway (WDLR) fell quite naturally into the GSWR camp. But the Waterford, Limerick & Western (WLWR), as it had become, was more complex. For 30 years the Midland Great Western Railway had anxiously watched the WLR extending a long sinewy tentacle into what was its territory under the 1860 "Peace Treaty" with the GSWR which had divided central Ireland into spheres of influence. By 1900, the WLWR had nearly 140 miles of its own metals on the wrong side of the Shannon.

A rather purple and one-sided account of railway politics of the time is given by Joseph Tatlow, manager of the MGWR. He begins with the skirmish of 1892, when the Midland made an unsuccessful bid to take over the Athenry & Ennis Junction Railway, worked by but not owned by the WLR. There is one glimmer of humour: one of the Midland's witnesses, a cattle dealer called Michael Ryan, found himself being cross-examined on the question of livestock trespassing on the railway and, thinking that George Stephenson's famous comment needed updating, suggested of the cow: "it would use its running powers". Running powers of a more orthodox type were at stake in 1900, when the Midland opposed the GSWR take-over of the WLWR by introducing its own amalgamation bill. The result was

a Committee Room battle lasting 106 days and involving 31 companies or other authorities. The Midland's allies included the Dublin, Wicklow & Wexford Railway and the Limerick Harbour authorities. However the Great Southern & Western carried the day with the MGWR awarded a consolation prize of running powers from Athenry to Limerick. As New Year's Day fell on a Sunday, the Act actually came into force on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1901, so the WLWR just survived into the twentieth century, like Queen Victoria, who expired at Osborne House on 28<sup>th</sup> January. Tatlow records that the Midland first exercised its running powers on 8<sup>th</sup> January being welcomed by the "Joy Bells" of Limerick and a threat of injunction from the GSWR for non-payment of dues.

After the dust had settled on the amalgamations, the system had nearly reached its maximum mileage. The short link between Glasnevin and Church Road junctions was opened during the currency of this timetable, and indeed only about another 64 miles were added to the system in its last quarter century. Some of these sections, like the South Wexford line (Waterford-Rosslare, opened 1906) and the Cork City Railways were of great strategic significance, and there were a few minor additions like the Cashel branch to be completed. The working timetable, however, showed that the new empire was as yet in a transitory state. WDL line trains were of course still starting from the South station in Waterford and the Limerick-Ballybrophy line was worked as two dead end branches, but with at least one set of through connections daily each way, and there appears to have been at least one daily through Dublin-Waterford service.



***On 9<sup>th</sup> February 1955 J11 0-6-0T No.217 is about to cross the River Lee via the Cork City railway. (R.M. Arnold/C.P. Friel)***

The GSWR had built its last six-wheel vehicles for conveying passengers a few years previously, although many were destined to have lengthy careers, through to CIÉ days. However, there was an active carriage building programme in the period 1899-1902, partly to cope with expanding services, partly to allow the withdrawal of some fairly appalling stock from the WCIR and WDLR, although even some of this was sold on to thrifty concerns like the Cork & Macroom and Waterford & Tramore

railways. Some of the new coaches were 45' arc-roofed stock, completing batches of earlier designs: TPOs, full brakes, lavatory composite and full thirds. At this period, carriage design was moving from self-contained vehicles, some with short internal corridors for access to lavatories, to stock with end gangway connections. Some vehicles ran, at least for a while, with such gangways at one end only, which must have caused problems if they turned up "wrong way round." A new development was the open saloon third, with seating bays and internal lavatories. These enjoyed a vogue in Ireland and Scotland in the Edwardian period, which Hamilton Ellis ascribed to the sociable Celtic nature, whereas the English preferred the territorial security of the side-corridor-and-compartment arrangement. Most of these vehicles used a new longer 50' underframe, and some had the end gangways. Also running on 50' chassis were a selection of clerestory roofed full thirds, and brake composites, and most luxurious of all, and both with end gangways, dining saloon 571 and full first 349, both built in 1900.

Although the twelve-wheeled Rosslare clerestories and the final GSWR design of elliptical roofed side-corridor stock were a few years in the future, train weights were increasing beyond the older 4-4-0s' capacity, and in 1900 Robert Coey (chief mechanical engineer at Inchicore from 1896-1911), put the first of his various batches of larger 4-4-0s on the road, the four 301 class which introduced new larger 26" stroke cylinders. For goods traffic, the ubiquitous J15s were still up to most services, and the last batch with some Coey variations in the design emerged from the shops in 1902-3. In terms of tank engines, 1900-1 saw the emergence of four 4-4-2Ts and three 0-6-0Ts, although these were essentially Ivatt designs of a few years previously.



***CIÉ coach No.457, a 45ft lavatory composite built in 1899. Seen here at Waterford in April 1955, it was withdrawn in 1960. (H.C. Casserley/C.P. Friel)***

One must remember that at that period, railways had an almost complete monopoly of inland transport, passenger, minerals, goods, perishable commodities and mails, since the only rivals were canals, horse-drawn vehicles and a few primitive internal combustion vehicles, rattling over poor quality roads. Indeed, the railways were "common carriers" not only conveying, but to some extent obliged to accept,

just about anything which needed moving from A to B, and this required a complex bureaucracy to deal with rates, conveyance, delivery and collection. There were special provisions for items as diverse as showmen's caravans; steam-powered fairground roundabouts; "theatrical companies (dramatic, burlesque, operatic, musical and musical comedy)"; hucksters and drapers going to markets; parties of not less than five "musical artistes" and their managers; and tandems and tricycles.



*Another J11, this time No.220, leaving the Cork tunnel at Kilbarry with a brake van en route to Rathpeacon. Piloting over the 1 in 60 gradients through and beyond the tunnel was common, while banking was apparently discouraged. Whilst avoiding the worst of the smoke, piloting must have taken crews much farther from home than they would have gone as bankers. Depending on rostering, this may or may not have been advantageous. (W.T. Scott)*

The military had a keen interest in the railways, both for peacetime conveyance and for the extra traffic which would materialise in case of war. Arms and ammunition under escort might travel in passenger stock on goods trains, but were then to be marshalled immediately next to the brake van rather than at the front of the train, as was more usual for fitted stock. There was also a complex system of discounted fares for naval cadets, coastguards and Royal Navy seamen, army nurses and schoolmistresses, soldiers' wives and families, and soldiers on leave. The latter might avail of a return ticket at single fare or even half the single fare on producing signed certificates from their commanding officers. Such concessions were however limited to visits to family and other legitimate business, and the company's servants were advised to be on the lookout for abuse of these concessions by "soldiers proceeding to football and cricket matches &c., and by musicians" *[sic]*. Most of these concessions were of course third class, but non-commissioned officers were allowed second class travel if sanctioned by their superior. Police officers might avail themselves of travel on the mails at the ordinary fare of 2d per mile, but plain-clothes men had to produce a warrant to get that concession. For militia men travelling to training, special warrants allowed free travel. As far as possible, the first

vehicle in any passenger train should not be one conveying passengers but failing this, if traffic allowed, the first compartment in the leading coach was to be locked as “dummy.” Rather oddly, the MGWR had refused to accept passenger train traffic in unfitted vehicles, so all such traffic for transfer had to go in fully fitted (not just piped) vans.

The steep incline from Cork (Glanmire Road) required special rules, although the use of special brake vans from Cork to Rathpeacon was dispensed with. The attaching of vehicles behind the brake van on goods trains remained prohibited. For passenger trains, only fully fitted vehicles might be attached behind the rear van, and even then passengers were barred from travelling in them. On departure of up trains from Cork, the signalman in cabin A was to set number 33 points for the up loop, and not to move them until Kilbarry had given “train out of section.” During that time, the up loop and up main were to be kept clear of all vehicles as far as the turnout for the Queenstown branch and the fouling point for the bay platforms at the east end of the station. Down goods trains were required to pin down enough wagon brakes before leaving Rathpeacon to control the descent, depending on the state of the rails. Also, goods and cattle trains were not allowed away from Mallow unless they had a clear 30 minutes head start over passenger trains.

A rather newer piece of line which required special rules was the direct curve at Charleville from the Croom branch to the up main Cork line, opened for goods and cattle trains only. The Charleville station master had to appoint a suitably experienced pointsman, under the direction of the signalman at Charleville Junction. Once the staff was extracted by the Bruree cabin for an up-road train, the pointsman took a special key from the Junction cabin to the ground frame at the Limerick end of the loop to make the points for the loop and pull over the slot lever for the home signal from the branch. Leaving the key in the frame, he proceeded to the ground frame at the mainline end, where the signalman released the frame and the pointsman made the road from loop to mainline. The signals for the train off the branch could then be lowered. The pointsman collected the ETS and once the train was clear of the loop, all points and signals were restored to normal, and the staff (unless there was another working over the loop), and the ground frame key returned to the Junction cabin. Although a signalman could take on a train from the branch to the loop starting signal when the Charleville-Kilmallock block section was occupied, such practice was discouraged in view of the gradients and curves. A whistle code (one long and two short, rather than the more usual three long blasts) was provided for trains from the branch to the up main, to be given on approaching the up distant and to be repeated until given the road for the loop.

Among the various admonitions to stationmasters were to ensure the collection and return of expired tickets; to stop cyclists riding on station platforms; to ensure that cross-channel traffic was clearly labelled, as to whether it was for the North Wall-Holyhead, or Liverpool (via City of Dublin Steam Packet) routes; to make use of the half-penny rate for advice notes on parcels, if the envelope was not sealed, rather than the penny rate post for closed envelopes; and to have platforms sprayed with water in dry weather to keep dust down. Although a break of journey at an intermediate station was allowed, the passenger was expected to surrender his ticket to the stationmaster, collecting it when he recommenced his travels. The Carted Luggage arrangement allowed passengers to have their cases delivered to hotels on an approved list, or any railway company cloakroom at 6d per item, if appropriately labelled and within the usual weight restrictions. This facility included some stations in the north of Ireland, and many of the mainland companies, covering stations from Thurso (Highland Railway) to Penzance (Great Western), and from Aberystwyth (Cambrian) to Southwold (Southwold narrow gauge line). By agreement with the Post Office, the company would accept letters from the public not exceeding four ounces in weight at all its passenger stations, on the attachment of both the usual 1d postage stamp and a special 2d railway company stamp. Letters might be addressed to the station nearest the intended recipient, and collected there within seven days, or handed on to a Post Office employee at their destination.

Commercial travellers, as long as they signed indemnity forms to state that their goods were carried at owners' risk, might carry samples, etc., above the usual luggage allowances as follows: first class three hundredweight; second class two hundredweight; third class one and a half hundredweight. For such gentlemen holding season tickets a more generous scale was provided which, including all other luggage allowances, ranged from three hundredweight for a £5 second class season ticket, up to twelve hundredweight for a £20 first class ticket. Such men were also allowed concessionary weekend return tickets at single fare prices in all three classes - outward travel from noon on Friday to end of Saturday, return Sunday or Monday - by all services except the mails, on producing a certificate of identity from their professional association with a photograph attached. Such tickets were accepted for travel to and from the GNR and MGWR.



***Rather more vigorous action at Kilbarry, with J15 No.127 piloting B2 No.409 on a passenger working. (Kelland collection/C.P. Friel)***

A good deal of attention was devoted to the correct use of brakes. On stock fitted with the automatic vacuum brake there was a release wire, its position indicated by red star on the solebar. This device released the brake for shunting, but men were admonished to allow a few seconds for the brake to come off, and to give the wires a light tug, and to avoid "rough handling" of these devices. For emergencies only the guard could apply the vacuum brake by holding down the valve of the lever in his van. His duties also included checking that all vacuum hoses were connected along the train before commencing the journey and at any intermediate stations where pipes had been disconnected for shunting. After this, he signalled the driver to produce the vacuum, by waving a white signal (flag or lamp) up and down. Once the valve in the rearmost van of the train showed at least 15 inches of vacuum, he changed the signal to a horizontal wave to show an adequate vacuum, but the green right of way signal could not be given until the guard was satisfied that the train brakes were in good order. It was also the guard's responsibility to make sure the driver knew which parts of the train contained loose-braked or "foreign"



vehicles with only one brake pipe. The GSWR seems to have used twin pipes, a small one and a larger diameter one, only the latter being compatible with other railways' hoses. If during running the vacuum fell below 15 inches, the guard was to pull the communication cord and show a green signal to the driver.

As the above shows, in the era before any form of short-range telephone or intercom communication, there was a complex system of visual signs between railway employees. On passing the distant signal for terminal stations, guards and drivers were to use the hand brakes, not the vacuum, to bring the train to a halt at the appropriate place. On inclines, guards were not to trust the automatic brakes, but use hand brakes instead. Where there were more than ten wagons for each brake van, then wagon handbrakes had to be pinned down on gradients. Brake pipes were not to be left hanging free, but secured to another hose or the stop plugs. The vacuum was always to be broken before shunting, by letting air in either from the engine or the application valve in the nearest van. This avoided sucking washers, cotton waste, etc., into the pipes. In frosty weather shunters were advised to release the brakes on vehicles standing for lengthy periods or overnight to avoid wet wheels freezing to the blocks. Should block and wheels freeze, they were to be released by pouring hot water over them or applying a lighted piece of oily waste, while taking care not to scorch paintwork. Jarring the block with a hammer or bar might also help release, but I suspect that direct blows to something as brittle as cast-iron below zero might not be such a good idea!

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*[To be continued...]*

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## TRAVELLING TO IRELAND, 1940S TO 1964

Mike Page

One day in late September 2008, visiting an uncle in Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, I walked the trackbed from Abbeyfeale station to Devon Road. The trackbed has been tidied up and grit-surfaced for walkers and cyclists. It seemed very odd to be walking where I last rode a train from Limerick to Abbeyfeale in 1955. My mother had taken my sister and I once or twice a year from Wolverhampton, by train and ship via Holyhead and Dun Laoghaire, to see the grandparents until Grandfather Collins passed away and Grandmother came to live with us in England. The hardest part, I imagine, for the adults, of getting to Abbeyfeale 60 years ago was the time - leaving Wolverhampton (High Level) at 10:38pm and not reaching Abbeyfeale station on the Limerick-Tralee line until nearly 7pm next day.

For me, the journeys were pure magic: lots of steam engines, the voyage across the Irish Sea and rides in different trains once we had left the ship. The thing about the Irish trains was that the coaches - in their two-tone green livery and carrying the 'flying snail' CIÉ emblem - always seemed to be clean, inside and out.

There was no doubt that some of the CIÉ's stock was old. You could sit on the hard wooden bench-like seats in the older, dimly lit, six-wheeled coaches included in the make-up of a boat train from Dun Laoghaire to Dublin. The seat backs in our one were low, so the grown-ups had to be careful not to collide with the heads of people sitting behind them. There would be a puddle of water, with its dead flies, rhythmically swashing about in the gaslights' large glass bowls above your head, watched anxiously by those below. And how the boat train seemed to crawl along, as if it had all the time in the world available to complete its 6-mile or so journey to Dublin Westland Row (now Pearse).

On the western side of Westland Row's covered train shed, where the boat train terminated in a bay

platform, our engine - a J15 0-6-0, a Cronin 4-4-2T or even a 2-4-2T - greeted a line of horse-drawn hansom cabs. Hansom cabs? - yes, because fuel shortages plagued Ireland in the 1940s, so hansom cabs carried on into the early 1950s in Dublin.

At Westland Row there would also be a few taxis, mostly big American Fords. The lucky ones who grabbed a taxi were the ones let off the train first - the porters locked all doors on the boat trains, not so much to keep us in as to keep the locals out. The porters usually unlocked the coach doors from the front, working back along the train, which was why there was always a scramble to get off the ship first to get in the front of the train and so hopefully grab a taxi. Only occasionally the waggish porters at Westland Row would sometimes catch them out by unlocking the train from the back first! The furious expressions on the irate passengers' faces as you passed them trapped at the front would have stopped a horse!



***More luxurious than the coach described by the author but showing the glass bulbs of its gas lamps, this is CIÉ clerestory 819, a 50ft saloon third built in 1901 and withdrawn in 1960. (M.H.C. Baker)***

I remember clearly that we often had to ride in a hansom cab all the way from Westland Row to Kingsbridge (Heuston). It was quite a business climbing in at the front, with the horse's rear end very uncomfortably close! On farms, we children had been warned to keep away from a horse's back legs! And how the cab swayed and rocked as the porter threw our luggage up to the cabby to store on the unsteady-looking cab roof.

In 1949 we had journeyed, with some aunts, from Leamington Spa via Rugby, joining the "Irish Mail" there to Holyhead. The ship was packed. My mother was thankful we had not been asked to join the 'relief' ship, the flat-bottomed, 1934-built, "Princess Maud", moored behind our ship, the new 'Hibernia'. The "Princess Maud" was notorious for giving rough Irish Sea crossings. My mother and her sisters had found a corner on the boat deck for shelter as the saloons and lower decks were all full.

One wonders what today's Health and Safety officials would have thought of the crude gangways and of families spending three hours huddled together on an open boat deck on a rainy night in the rough Irish Sea!

The arrival at the wooden Carlisle pier head of Dun Laoghaire was around 6am. The Irish customs officers, like their British counterparts, were opening and searching every suitcase and adding their chalk marks. Once marked, we were allowed out onto the wooden platforms where two boat trains waited.

With the train wheels squealing and groaning, our diminutive tank engine - probably an F1 or F2 2-4-2T - drags a motley collection of six-wheelers and wooden bogie coaches, with their rooftops sporting a castellated array of all sizes of ventilators, around a sharp curve and over a level crossing, watched by some interested locals and squealed at by flocks of seagulls. We dive into a tight, curving tunnel with rocky walls. Almost immediately, we join the Bray-Dublin line in a grey stone-walled cutting. We whistle under a bridge, past the very clean and tidy Town station and then out into the open. Looking back over the sea wall, we can see our ship and all the small boats in the harbour. Now we are lazily accelerating to a comfortable 25 mph or so, paralleling the beautiful sandy beaches of Dublin Bay, to be seen stretching way around to Howth on the horizon.

The local trains seen passing us from our compartment's windows, going south to Bray, all seem to be much faster than our train! But the seaside is leaving us and we are now running on a low embankment past smart suburban back gardens, then warehouses and then across a bridge over the Grand Canal, which gives a brief view of ships. Then we grind our way over points into a bay platform at Westland Row at around 7:30am. Windows are dropped down and heads appear, impatient for porters to unlock the doors. We leave our few suitcases at Westland Row to seek out an Irish breakfast of thick, lean, smoked bacon, meaty sausages and fried eggs and bread for around 1 shilling (5p) a head! That would take about an hour. Then we take a cab or a tram to bring us to Kingsbridge for the 9:30am departure of the direct train to Limerick.

In 1949 I would have been restrained to stay with the family to drink tea in the buffet, with its polished wooden counter, and view wistfully the cakes you could not have, displayed under glass covers, but by 1951 I was allowed out alone onto the platform to explore. This I did. Our train was already in a bay at the outer end of the station. It had no six-wheelers, except for a six-wheeled brake sporting a very prominent guard's lookout. There were about five coaches, including a massive clerestory coach. No engine had appeared yet and the only action was, for me, a real novelty: a diesel shunter, numbered 1001, shunting the large goods yard. One or two trains passed by in the near distance, avoiding Kingsbridge and taking the Phoenix Park line to Amiens Street. I'm now told that these could have been freights or the odd 'special'.

We still had some old 4-4-0s in England, but the small ancient-looking and high-wheeled 4-4-0, with a large dome, now backing down towards our train hardly appeared capable of pulling itself, let alone a string of coaches. Now, on reflection, it was probably an Aspinall D14 or D19. After coupling up and perhaps mistaking my incredulity for interest the driver invited me onto the footplate. Suddenly that little 4-4-0 had become the most exciting engine in the world! It was my first ever time on a locomotive's footplate. How I would have loved to have ridden on it all the way to Limerick!

But my mother had begun her search for her offspring. We met at the clerestory coach, so I grabbed one of the big brass handles and turned it. It was stiff and suddenly gave way, clicking smartly into the vertical position: "Can we ride in this?" My mother must have liked the look of the deep padded and buttoned seats in the compartment as she called to the others to join us. Eventually we made a slow start and our 4-4-0 seemed to be making heavy weather of getting the train on the move - I did not know then that it was a stiff climb up to Inchicore. We slowly puffed past that large depot, which had an imposing green 4-6-0 towering above the smaller fry. I had begun taking Irish numbers in 1951, and

it was 801 “Macha” that stood among the 4-4-0s and 0-6-0s that day. We had also passed a long train of cattle wagons waiting behind a fat-boilered 2-6-0, No.369 I think it was.

We then made surprisingly speedy progress as far as Ballybrophy, arriving at 11:30am. There, the 4-4-0 deserted us and went onto a nearby turntable before returning to what was the back end of our train. It was then, after grinding its way around a very sharp curving left-hand junction, that we seemed to leave the Twentieth Century far behind. We took a single track that sometimes seemed to pass almost through the middle of farmyards. We scattered hens, raised hissing geese, disturbed pigs and caused indignation of the horses waiting at crossing gates. The horses towed mostly ‘floats’, as these low, flat carts were called (I believe they were called ‘trams’ in other parts of Ireland. [*Ruck-shifters in Co. Antrim. - Ed.*]). They were designed to tip back under haycocks and had a rope or chain winch that pulled the haycock onto it, tipping forward into a locked position. The ‘floats’ seemed peculiar to Ireland. Only the cows and immobile donkeys seemed unperturbed by our passage. Those donkey carts, with black-shawled old, and not-so-old, ladies who waited patiently at level crossings, looked as if they had not moved all day!

We reach Roscrea, where we cross a J15 0-6-0 on a cattle train. As we enter the station, our 4-4-0’s fireman does a classy juggled exchange of token staffs with the signalman ‘on the fly’ before we halt. The signalman goes to his box; levers are pulled, and then he gives a staff to the J15’s crew. The engine takes up the slack, the brown and white cows protest at the disturbance and the J15 pulls away. The signal is clear for our train and we amble out, heading steadily towards a reasonably on-time arrival at Limerick at 1:20pm.

Small boys always expect termini to be large and grand so Limerick came as a bit of an anti-climax. It had two island platforms under its twin-peaked roofed train shed. Along the side of the station were a number of old single-decker green CIÉ buses being loaded up in the cobbled yard. One man stood perched on the top of each bus receiving cases, boxes and bundles thrown up to him for stacking by the porters below. Our train for Abbeyfeale was not due to leave until 5pm. But the question yet to be answered was: was it to be 5pm ‘new time’ or ‘old time’? CIÉ ran to British Summer Time (‘new time’), while everyone else remained with ‘old time’ (Greenwich). Having established that it was 5pm ‘new time’, we set off, uncertainly, to have some lunch and look at the shops. One had to be really sure about which ‘time’ the train ran, as there was only one train a day each way on the Tralee line. Only the English could become unwittingly confused over old time and new time!

Later, we returned to the station at 4pm ‘new time’ - just in case. There was no engine in sight yet as we walked past two obviously occupied cattle trucks, a six-wheeled full brake, a bogie clerestory coach and two more modern looking - but still very wooden - corridor coaches, one of which was a third brake. One of the ‘modern’ coaches was lying about its age as it sagged in the middle and was still gas-lit. Eventually, a J15 0-6-0, Tralee’s 156 I think, backed down onto our train, which had filled up quite considerably. We puffed out, grinding around a very sharp right-hand junction immediately at the platform end. After calling at a few stations we clattered around a curve into the Newcastle West terminus at 6:13pm.

No.156 uncoupled and then sidled past us to access a turntable in the yard before returning to what was the back of the train. Departure scheduled at 6:30pm was still some ten minutes away. No-one was in a hurry. Local children larked about among the lengthening shadows on the platform; some of the townspeople with time to spare swapped stories and news with the passengers. A donkey brayed of its boredom at having been left standing in the goods yard. As soon as the train departed we realised we were now downwind of our beefy friends!

We set off into the high, rolling, patchwork hills of western County Limerick. Our steady progress began to get slower and slower as 156 struggled to hold a daisy-picking pace. We were climbing on a 1 in 50/70 to the 538ft above sea level summit of the Barnagh Bank. Maybe this bank was the reason

why the CIÉ operated 0-6-0s instead of 4-4-0s on this line. My aunts had told me stories of a few years ago of the train only getting halfway up and then having stopped to raise steam - as one might expect with only a mixture of turf, wood and slack to burn! However, 156 was burning coal and 'cobbles' so she made it to the summit this time. The train clattered on, stopping at Barnagh. I waited in anticipation of the deep rock cutting and tunnel before stopping at the penultimate station before Abbeyfeale, Devon Road. We drifted on down the valley with the Barnagh Hill now behind us and I was now impatient to see Abbeyfeale Hill. Soon the long head-shunt with earth buffer stop (it still stands) and a few forgotten cattle wagons came into view, then the grey stone goods shed and station - we had arrived!



***J15 No.156 has left Tralee in the opposite direction and is seen here in March 1954 at Cahirciveen, last stop before Ireland's most westerly station at Valentia Harbour. (A. Donaldson/W.T. Scott)***

Time was often spent visiting Abbeyfeale station to see the lunchtime shunt, usually a J15, and the evening train from Limerick. The 9:25am morning train could be seen departing a mile away from my grandmother's landing window. Occasionally, there would be friends or relatives to see off at the station. On one such occasion, in 1952, the Limerick train was late and everyone - particularly the two cousins heading for Cobh and the USA - was getting anxious. Eventually a whistle was heard down the Feale valley from the direction of Listowel. It was not a J15 but a big-wheeled 4-4-0 that strode in, apologetically, to Abbeyfeale station. The 4-4-0 was probably one of Tralee's Aspinall D17s and one would imagine the driver and fireman offering up rosaries for support as an 1880s-built, 6'7"-wheeled 4-4-0 was probably not the best idea for tackling Barnagh!

The journeys back to England were a very different affair. They were far too hasty for a child. Haste meant he'd be soon back at school in Bilston! Our J15 did not have to work too hard to get us to Limerick by 11:15am. Then a big-boilered, high-wheeled Coey D12, like No.306 in 1953, would whisk the 12pm to Waterford at what appeared to be breakneck speeds to its first stop to make connections

with Cork and Dublin expresses at that marvellous, if eccentric invention, Limerick Junction.

No doubt you may already know, but there were two phenomena peculiar to Limerick Junction. One has not changed - it still lies in the middle of nowhere, some 23 miles from Limerick! The other has changed: once, every train arriving at that station's platforms came in backwards! "Oh, you got that wrong", you might say as our D12, having branched right off the Waterford line, apparently approaches a bay platform. Ignoring that idea, the D12 carefully treads along behind the station and past a second bay at the south end to enter a long head shunt. After a brief wait for points to be changed, and now guided by our guard - with his hand not far from the guard's brake, one imagined - the D12 slowly backs our train into that second bay at the Cork end of a single long platform.



***D12 No.306 at Limerick Junction, date unknown. Although there is provision for eight "dogs" to secure the smokebox door only five are in use - probably still preferable to wrestling with the original dart and shiny ring. (A. Donaldson/W.T. Scott)***

As we climb down onto what seemed to me a very low platform a train clatters across the two-track main line at the Dublin end, it is the late-running 10:50 Waterford-Limerick which should have got there before us. This train also probably had a D12, which halts and then backs its train into the bay at the Dublin end - the one our D12 passed by. The expectant passenger numbers have now considerably swelled on the long main platform. Those who know will go, perversely, to the north end for Cork and the south end for Dublin.

Signals on the 'up' main line drop their arms. Here comes our train, the 12:15pm off Cork, with a big green Bredin B1a 4-6-0 striding towards us with the brakes full on. Her number is 800, her name is "Maedhbh", after a mythical Irish queen, and the legend is cast in Irish script over the leading driving wheel. She has a varied lot of coaches, including some rather new-looking steel-panelled ones as well as an old Pullman dining car. Signals have also cleared for the Cork train and it too comes by at speed, steam blowing from Watson 4-6-0 No.409's safety valves and the brakes full on. 409 also has a ripe mixture of stock and a gas cylinder wagon hanging on its tail.



The two expresses are at rest. All is quiet for a moment, then point rodding and signal wires grind and shake. There is a whistle from 409 and slowly, the gas cylinder wagon of the Cork train leads the careful reversal into the north end of the platform. A whistle from 800 precedes her shunting movement whereby she backs her eleven-coach train into the platform's south face. There you have it! Two Irish steam giants at rest, facing each other, smokebox to smokebox.

We get the 'right away' first and 800 eases our train back out over the crossover. Once our last coach is clear, Queen "Maedhbh" shows she is no ancient ambler and accelerates us purposefully away from the Junction. We are in the third coach, one of the steel-panelled ones. I remember this because of the strange pull-down door windows - they did not have a window strap. Instead, my aunt had to squeeze the shiny steel top to release the window. Now you can clearly hear 800's fierce staccato exhaust and we are soon bounding along at a very fine speed. 800 screams at every station and level crossing: "Out of the way! This lad has to get back to school!"



*No.409, looking very smart at Dublin Kingsbridge in 1949. (Kelland collection/C.P. Friel)*

Over the holidays, as I remembered them, I saw all three 'Queens' at Limerick Junction as well as 502 and 500 and some of the 400s. We sometimes had afternoon tea in the old Pullman diners that some of these trains boasted. CIÉ had, I believe, inherited three of them.

In 1949 our train from Cork pulled carefully into Kingsbridge at 4:30pm. Normally we took a cab or taxi into Dublin city for tea near to Westland Row, where we would join the boat train to Dun Laoghaire. I could never wait to get onto the station, as there were usually a number of trains stopping, or running through to and from Bray or further down the coast. The variety of engines and coaches was extensive. The boat train waited in a bay on the down side and could have anything from a 2-4-2T, through the various tank engine classes, to a J class 0-6-0.

In 1954 we were told at Kingsbridge that a train now ran through to Dun Laoghaire, departing at 7:35pm. So we stayed in the area, leaving our bags at the left luggage office, to find a cafe. All parents seemed to live in fear of missing trains so we returned at about 6:30pm, to be told that our boat train

would depart from the 'arrival' platform. The 3:30pm from Cork eventually rolled in at 7:25pm, headed by a Coey 4-4-0 piloting a 'Woolwich' mogul. This elegant rake of coaches - mostly the all-steel types - also included a Pullman diner. Into the now empty Pullman we went, reclining thankfully in its deep seats. Eventually, six or seven coaches of the train - appreciatedly including ours - were pulled out of the station. You can imagine a twelve-year-old's amazement to see that a F class 2-4-2T (F1 or F2, not sure now!) was doing the honours! It ran by to couple on the other end and tow us through Phoenix Park tunnel to Amiens Street. There, I was puzzled to see a shiny black 4-4-2T No.1, as I had already spotted CIÉ No.1, a D17 4-4-0, at Limerick. Doubtless I had seen a GNR T2 4-4-2T of that identification, as I had learned later from an Ian Allan "ABC Irish Locomotives".

After leaving Amiens Street, the 2-4-2T steadily worked us up to 30 mph or so, which seemed quite quick as we dashed along the viaducts across Dublin and through Tara Street station! All too soon after leaving Westland Row we were alongside the sea wall and beaches and before long we could see Carlisle Pier. The ship left soon after 8:40pm.

My last journey to Abbeyfeale as a child was in the summer of 1955. From Dun Laoghaire we rode in an ancient six-wheeler to Westland Row, pulled by a J15. At Kingsbridge, the Limerick train was now made up of AEC railcars. I saw a number of railcars - the precedents of very startling changes on the way.



***F2 2-4-2T No.428, photographed at Bray in 1931. (Real Photographs/C.P. Friel)***

My next trip to Abbeyfeale wasn't until 1964. The 'Cambria' and 'Hibernia' were still active but it was a 141 class General Motors Bo-Bo that took me to Westland Row. At Kingsbridge I chose a train to Limerick Junction, pulled by two 141's. The Metrovick 'A's and 'B's were seen on freights. I spent the journey looking for fast-disappearing green coaches! Then the train from Waterford to Limerick was also 141-hauled. There was no train to Abbeyfeale, the passenger service having ceased the year before.

Today, there is no comparison - even Holyhead has changed for the worse, benefiting the car driver and

inconveniencing the train passenger. CIÉ - now IE (Iarnród Éireann) - is mostly DMUs. The Dublin-Cork trains no longer have to back into Limerick Junction, though the Limerick-Waterford diesel multiple units maintain the tradition.

As I walked back along the old trackbed from Devon Road I reflected - happily, I suppose - that I had missed the wholesale slaughter of Irish steam between 1958 and 1963. Would trains ever run again along this route? Well, with the traffic density along the Limerick-Castleisland main road, there had been some local interest shown in such an idea, though it certainly will not happen - at least not while the 'credit crunch' is with us!

## **1965 & 2008, "BANGOR BELLE" REFLECTIONS**

**J.A. Cassells**

Last summer's very successful "Bangor Belle" not only filled the train but brought large crowds to Portadown station to see the first direct steam excursion to Bangor since July 1965. Largely unnoticed among them were two thoughtful men, quietly studying No.186 with a discernment sharpened by years of firing express passenger and heavy goods trains over the Wellington Bank. From their wealth of experience of Great Northern 0-6-0s, large and small, Jimmy Donnelly and Peter McCann had only one question: "Could she take eight bogies to Bangor?" It was an interesting speculation, and of course they were thinking of the slightly more beefy UG class they both fired on through Bangor excursions in the early 1960s. The UGs generally plodded up Holywood bank a lot more sedately than No.186 - admittedly with eight heavy Great Northern bogies - and latterly they weren't in such good mechanical condition as our J15. Their question, and the historic nature of the 2008 "Bangor Belle", turned my mind back over four decades to the last summer of steam to Bangor, and the year when so many ex-GNR engines worked for the last time. It was a sad time, rather neglected by comparison with the coverage which both the Irish North and the Derry Road have received in some excellent books and articles recently. What follows is nowhere near as exciting, but maybe the story should be told before the memories fade even further!

The bitter-sweet first six weeks of 1965 saw the last of regular steam on the Great Northern area of the UTA. The period began with the closure of the Warrenpoint branch on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, and from the following Monday the Dublin semi-fasts (steam-worked for just a few more weeks) ran non-stop from Portadown to Dundalk through the now silent Goragewood station. It ended with the closure of the Derry Road on 14<sup>th</sup> February. During that last week we could see what was coming as CIÉ B class locos worked an intensive daily crew-training diagram. The 01:01 Belfast Grosvenor Street-Portadown goods began this cycle, and diesels then worked the 05:50 goods Portadown-Dundalk, the 08:30 goods Dundalk-Portadown, the 13:30 goods Portadown-Belfast, the 18:20 passenger Belfast-Dundalk, the 19:55 fitted Dundalk-Portadown and the 23:00 goods Portadown-Belfast Grosvenor Street where the cycle restarted.

On that last Saturday of the old order - remembered by my generation as a bright and extremely cold day - things seemed deceptively normal, apart from the arrival of B171 with 32 wagons and van on the morning goods from Dundalk. S class No.174 (filthy dirty and coupled to a black roller-bearing tender) was the Portadown pilot and U class No.201 the Belfast pilot. Jeep No.8 and SG3 No.97 were at work in Portadown goods yard, while UG No.149 and S class No.170 and No.172 were up the Derry road on the normal Saturday afternoon shunts and local workings. NCC mogul No.97 brought in a cement special from Derry Foyle Road (routed there, I gather, in error for Waterside) - almost certainly the last train a mogul ever worked. By this time No.97 was sadly too far gone to have been considered for one of this day's rugby specials to Dublin. S class No.171 with driver Bertie Walker was a surprise choice for the 11:22 Grosvenor Street-Portadown goods (retimed from 10:32 since there was a 10:45 Dublin special running) and the 13:10 Portadown-Belfast local. Two rugby specials ran to Dublin that day: No.55 on the 09:25 (steam to Dundalk only) and No.207 on the 'all in' train which offered meals at

seats and worked through to Lansdowne Road. The normal Dublin semi-fast passenger trains, and associated Portadown-Dundalk goods trains, employed WT Nos. 2, 9, 53, 56 and 57. All worked as normal, except that Jeep No.9 on the 14:45 ex Dublin, which was steaming poorly, was replaced at Portadown by No.53. There was some interest at the appearance of one of the new Cravens coaches in the set of the 09:15 ex-Dublin. And in what would at any other time have been the perfect finish to a long and busy day of steam travel, Bobby Quail - then in his 23<sup>rd</sup> year of service, though still reckoned one of the younger drivers - did a cracking run from Portadown to Belfast with engine No.56 on the 18:30 down - the last "late Dublin".

Two days later, a new age began: Portadown shed was closed; most scheduled goods trains were now only a memory; there were a few special workings to clear engines and rolling stock from the Derry Road before it fell silent; all the cross-border and Belfast area 'local' traffic was diesel-hauled; Adelaide shed began to fill up - but with engines whose day was done. There were a few gestures of defiance. As No.172 limped into Adelaide for the last time on 17<sup>th</sup> April, she had the inscription "And Derry's gates will close for ever" chalked on her smokebox. All that remained now were the Belfast pilot engines, one at Grosvenor Street and the other in Great Victoria Street passenger yard - neither of them very hard wrought - and the odd ballast working. At the once-busy Adelaide shed, Sam Mehaffey was now having to find work for his staff. VS No.207, which had become almost black, was the object of particularly vigorous cleaning in the spring of the year and looked splendid as the full glory of her lined blue livery re-emerged, with burnished steel and brass work. On another occasion, I have a note that a group of cleaners spent 15<sup>th</sup> October 1965 cleaning 53, 54, 55, 56 and 149 to perfection. The men involved were not young lads either. After the 1965 closures, firemen with twenty years' experience were reduced to cleaning - a sore experience for a family man with children to support, not to mention the blow to his morale. That wasn't all: Portadown men who were transferred to Adelaide were expected to pay their fare on their daily journey to and from Belfast!

Unsurprisingly, many of their colleagues left railway service altogether, taking advantage of a compensation package based on years of service. Some were young enough to begin a second career while others were just happy to take retirement a year or two early as a familiar world crumbled around them. Some strange situations resulted: there were stories of skilled diesel fitters taking "the compo" and leaving the railway on a Friday for a new life with Harland & Wolff - to be replaced on Monday by inexperienced men fresh from the Shipyard! Northern Ireland Railways, which came into existence two years later, was to be very much the poorer for this loss of a whole generation of experienced railwaymen.

As the days lengthened, the Sunday School excursion season, the Easter, and July holidays and the traditional summer Dublin excursions produced some steam work, while, as recorded later, there was one last huge day of steam activity on "Blackmen's Saturday" at the end of August. In the autumn the first ominous entry appeared on the Adelaide daily roster board when a crew was rostered "Ballast Adelaide-Strabane". The lifting of the Derry Road had at last begun, though I took little interest in how it progressed. Rumours circulated of VS No.207, of all engines, reaching Annaghmore on a lifting train, but this now seems not to be correct. It is possible that she was the motive power for a p.w. train which was propelled a very short distance out from Portadown Junction to retrieve track materials, but even this cannot be verified. The class, of course, rarely strayed off the Dublin-Belfast main line. No.207 worked all the way to Cork on an IRRS outing on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1961, as well as appearing more than once on the midweek Inchicore works trial trains to Port Laois (as illustrated in Michael McMahon and Jeremy Clements' excellent new book). No.208 for her part worked light to York Road over the Antrim branch in 1963, and in the same year took over from a U class loco at Maysfields on a Bangor-Dublin excursion. There was one enthusiast on board the train that day - and when Stephen Rottger came back for the RPSI fortieth anniversary dinner he still regretted not having his camera with him!

The Christmas holiday period was most disappointing. In 1964 there had been daily relief passenger trains in the run-up to the holidays. In 1965 steam's only contribution to the festive season on the GN area was a twice-daily steam-hauled mail working, at 15:10 and 23:30 from Belfast to Portadown, returning at 18:30 and 04:50 to Belfast. It was usually composed of NCC bogie full brake 619 and a tail of fitted vans, and I have a note that No.55 was derailed whilst shunting at Portadown on 15<sup>th</sup> December.

Appended to this article is a table detailing the movements and disposals of engines throughout the year 1965: not the most uplifting of reading, but possibly the only record which is ever likely to be compiled. The UTA renumbering of ex-Great Northern engines is detailed in the table. Throughout this article, to save confusion between ex-GN engines that were renumbered and those that were not, I have used the numbers which most of these engines carried for all but the last seven years of their lives. Older readers will of course remember that in 1963 the UTA bought four engines from CIÉ: S class 170, 171 and 174 and VS 207. Unlike the engines inherited at the dissolution of the GNRB, these were never renumbered. I understand that in 1958 the UTA had not planned to renumber its new acquisitions (in their stock lists, CIÉ simply referred to ex-GN engines by their original numbers with the suffix N) but Harold Houston insisted on it, for administrative tidiness.

In retrospect it's amazing that with so little work to do, and with half a dozen 'Jeeps' in good order to do it, so many ex-GN engines were used so often in 1965. A typical example was on 12<sup>th</sup> April when UG No.82 was the spare engine in steam at Adelaide, sister engine No.149 was the Grosvenor Street pilot, and S No.171 was shunting the passenger yard at Great Victoria Street. At different times during 1965 SG3 97, SG 18, UG 82, 146 & 149, U 201, S 170 & 171 and VS 207 were all used on various duties, though only No.207 and two of the UGs regularly worked special passenger trains. One other engine might have been included: U class No.202 was originally listed for retention until the end of the summer, but along with UG No.82, (which I last saw in steam on 17<sup>th</sup> April) was in fact condemned before the last Bangor excursion season began. This left only a pair of UGs - No.146 and No.149 - to work those big eight-bogie trains through from the Great Northern in the spring and summer. No other surviving engine was light enough to cross the 'Shaky Bridge' over the Lagan at East Bridge Street Junction and, since latterly there were no fitters on duty at Adelaide after lunchtime on a Saturday, it is a credit both to those two engines and the men who worked them that not a single train to my knowledge was ever cancelled due to a mechanical failure.

By the end of the year most of the forty engines which had gathered at Adelaide were either scrapped or moved elsewhere, and of the ex-GN locos, only SG3 No.97 and UG No.146 & No.149 remained on the books, while No.171 was of course set aside for preservation. Perhaps the most surprising of these was the last 'Big D', GN No.97. She shunted Grosvenor Street fairly regularly throughout the early spring, and had occasional use thereafter. I gather that she survived mainly because "Harlandic" diesel No.28 was too temperamental to be depended on. SG3 No.97 is reported to have gone to Maysfields, then been retrieved and replaced by U class No.202, which was meant to be retained for Bangor traffic. The last time I saw the SG3 in steam was on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1965, as Belfast station pilot.

VS No.207, though in run-down order, continued to work Dublin specials until September 1965. I can trace only one mechanical failure during this period, when she was taken off a 09:25 Dublin excursion at Dundalk with a broken spring on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1965. On the other hand, during the last months of her life, I had three runs to Dublin behind No.207 and speeds of over 70mph were attained on each occasion. The last of these was on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1965, when Harry Dickson and Gerry Aldridge had her on the Friday excursion traditionally run for the Aga Khan Trophy competition, which in those days concluded the Royal Dublin Society's summer Horse Show. As late as the night of 13<sup>th</sup> July 1965, No.207 and 'Jeeps' No.54 and No.56 could be seen together within station limits at Great Victoria Street after working in two specials from Dublin and one from Dundalk. By that time the triangle at

Adelaide had been broken, and all three engines were turned (with some difficulty) on the new and very stiff turntable which was installed near the site of the former Ulster Railway yard. Rumours abounded that a small, modern shed was to be built at Great Victoria Street, but Adelaide remained in existence until the very end of Great Northern steam in November 1966.

The RPSI was of course instrumental in organising No.207's last run, when she double-headed with No.171 from Lisburn to Portadown and back to Belfast on our inaugural outing of 11<sup>th</sup> September 1965. This was almost certainly the last time an engine was turned at Portadown shed. Three days later I noticed her inside Adelaide shed with motion heavily greased and chimney covered. I wondered at the time whether they were hoping she might escape the inevitable.



***No.207 at Drogheda on 09:25 Belfast-Dublin special on Easter Tuesday 1965, driver Charlie Mulgrave. (J.A. Cassells)***

The two UG class, 146 and 149, had a comparatively adventurous last two years of life. Had the decision not been taken to demolish the Middlepath Street bridge, sever the Belfast Central Line and cut Bangor off from the rest of the Irish railway system, they might have gone on working passenger trains long after July 1965. But from late May until mid-July these rugged little engines were to be found in Bangor every Saturday (and sometimes through the week as well). Hauling eight Great Northern wooden coaches up Holywood bank was a tough assignment for them, and Irwin Pryce recalls watching an excursion labouring up to Craigavad. A track gang was at work, and as the train slowly approached, one of them called up to the driver: "Would you take a cup of tea?" Jimmy Sneddon had plenty of time for a polite reply of, "No thanks, you're all right." as the engine plodded past. Bangor at that time still had a central engine release road, worked by a ground frame released from the signal cabin. The retention of such a facility would have made the shunt at Bangor much easier in August 2008! On some occasions three specials were booked from Bangor of a Saturday evening, and the UG off the first would hand over to a "Jeep" at Central Junction before scuttling back to Bangor to work the third and final special of the day. Even this was sometimes not sufficient to handle all the Great



Northern traffic: on 19<sup>th</sup> June for example No.146 worked the 18:40 and 20:45 specials from Bangor, No.149 the 19:10, and two AEC railcar sets covered the 19:00 and 20:10 specials to Portadown.

As far as I know, no MPD set ever worked into Bangor via the Belfast Central Line before its first closure in 1965. The only visits to Bangor by this type of railcar that I am aware of were all after the re-opening of the Central line in 1976: a football special from Coleraine to Ballymacarrett on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1977 which ran empty to Bangor and back; a Civil Engineer's inspection train from York Road on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1979, and the RPSI's own "Farewell to the MPDs" tour on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1979. As far as I know, no specials originating from CIÉ ran to Bangor in 1965. The last major occasion when traffic of this kind came to Bangor was probably on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1964 when B class GMs 165, 141 and 164 arrived on two specials from Dunleer, and one from Drogheda. Adding to that the appearance of UG No.149 and U No.202 on specials from Portadown, this may well have been the largest number of locomotives seen in Bangor on any single day since the dieselisation of the Bangor line!



***Having arrived at Bangor with the first of two specials from Lurgan, Jimmy Sneddon on UG No.146 awaits the arrival of No.149 with the second. Peter McCann, then a fireman, is looking out of the engine; 13<sup>th</sup> July 1965. (J.A. Cassells)***

Local excursion trains in 1965 were generally booked non-stop from Bangor to Lisburn and vice-versa, but there were exceptions. On 21<sup>st</sup> July, for example, ex-Great Northern Guard Hubert Hadden came along the train to ask me if I'd give him good warning of Sydenham station. Although steam had finished on the Bangor locals as long ago as 1953, an old lady had still mistaken the excursion for the all-stations Queens Quay service! This incident had echoes of an RBAI Railway Society which the previous October had brought a U class 4-4-0 to Bangor for the last time. Adelaide driver Ernie Thorpe had a sketchy knowledge of the local stations - rather a handicap, since several photo stops were booked. As the train was steaming under the road bridge at Cultra it was suggested that a photo stop was intended at the station they seemed to be passing. Those on the footplate reckoned that the resultant emergency stop was as nothing compared to the torrent of language that accompanied it!

The UGs had some unusual workings. On 4<sup>th</sup> June 1965, Derek Young photographed UG No.146 with two coaches, coming over the Shaky Bridge on an 08:10 Bangor to Great Victoria Street special. The coaches were propelled in from Central Junction and put on the front of a 09:25 Great Victoria Street-Dublin special. I assume this unusual working must have been for a private party rather than a public excursion. The summer Thursday Bangor to Dublin excursions (which up to the previous year could occasionally have produced a small Great Northern engine throughout) were diesel worked by AEC sets in 1965. The very last of them - indeed the last through passenger train from Bangor to the GN section - was on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> July 1965 and the driver was Ned O'Hara. Coincidentally, the same man with fireman Rocky O'Hare had worked the final steam excursion out of Bangor the previous evening with UG No.149, when the RPSI booked a party on the last regular Wednesday excursion from Bangor to Lisburn. Younger readers may need to be reminded that these midweek excursions hark back to a time when every town and city had its own midweek 'half day', with most shops closing at lunchtime! There was also, of course, the RPSI tour of 11<sup>th</sup> September, already mentioned, which took No.149 from York Road to Portrush, then back over the Antrim branch to Lisburn. This once in a lifetime working - almost certainly the only time a Great Northern 0-6-0 ever reached Portrush - produced a very solid run in each direction with Coleraine drivers Cameron and McQuilken.



*The photographer affirms that No.149 had 8 bogies on this train, one of two Faith Mission specials from Portadown to Bangor on Easter Monday 1965, seen here on the Belfast Central line, by then singled. As the Derry Road was closed earlier that year, participants from as far afield as Strabane had to leave there at an unearthly hour and travel to Portadown by bus - faith indeed! A couple of years later the traffic had been successfully disposed of. (I.C. Pryce)*

As a footnote, I think 43 years is now a safe enough interval to disclose that on one of the Wednesday Bangor excursions, the late-night empty carriages back from Lisburn made a special stop at a station convenient to the houses of both the driver and the guard. The fireman was left to take the train into Belfast on his own, while his elders and betters pulled their bicycles from the van and pedalled happily home to an earlier bed. Those who know their Great Northern might like to speculate on the location

and the men!



*On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1965 fireman Foy, on the 11:00 special from Antrim, gives up the token for the Antrim-Lisburn section. Following the first closure of the branch to passenger traffic in September 1960 a Tyer's instrument replaced the former staff section to Ballinderry. (J.A. Cassells)*

Aside from passenger trains, the two UGs had a spell of quite intensive use on Bangor line engineer's trains in advance of the severance of the Central Line, while perhaps their most unhappy duties were hauling dead engines to Maysfields for scrapping. For example, Moguls 91, 93, 94, 99 and ex-GN engines 172, 192, 202, 205, 208 were hauled thence on 28<sup>th</sup> May, followed two days later by moguls 97 and 104, and ex-GN engines 13, 16, 175 and 190. With her boiler removed for possible re-use, only mogul 97's cab, frame and wheels were disposed of - a sad end to an engine with a new firebox, and

last overhauled little over a year previously. What an asset to the RPSI she might have been! On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1965 No.146 worked the last steam-hauled weed-killing train to spray the Bangor line. Several steam-hauled ballast trains were run in connection with the construction of Crawfordsburn Hospital station (which originally had a sleeper platform), the first of a series being probably on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1965. The last two days of these trains brought both engines to the BCD section. No.149 worked a ballast train on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1965, and the very last, which was also the last steam train to penetrate the old Queen's Quay station, ran on 12<sup>th</sup> August with No.146. Derek Young, who covered that day's working, noted that there was a certain amount of confusion in the operation. No.146 ran first to Victoria Park by mistake, and then had to propel back into Queen's Quay. He presumed that some material had been brought back from Crawfordsburn which should have been unloaded first. After the severance of the Middlepath Street bridge, there were some final forays to Maysfields to remove large numbers of very derelict wagons before that yard was lifted and the Central Line finally broken at Belfast Central Junction. For some years thereafter, North Down's only contact with steam was a rather tenuous one, via Mr Billy McCormick's well-known garden railway at King's Road Knock. For some years, until it went first to Shane's Castle and then to the Giant's Causeway, ex-Larne Aluminium Company No.1 ran occasionally on Billy's little "main line" to a terminus in the garden next door. Interestingly, the neighbour, a Mr McAfee, was indeed related to W.A.G. McAfee of the UTA!



***Also on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1965, Jeep No.53 is on the 09:35 Belfast-Portadown special at Lisburn. In the bay platform No.55 is on the 09:55 Lisburn-Antrim special. (J.A. Cassells)***

Although it's not strictly within the scope of this article, I should record that in the last year of their working lives both UGs continued to be quite widely travelled. They were used on Easter Tuesday 1966, on a highly intensive shuttle service of specials from Belfast to Lisburn in connection with a Junior Orange demonstration. This was certainly the very last 'big' steam day on the Great Northern when, during the early afternoon, no less than four engines were to be seen together in Lisburn yard. No.146 was borrowed for a few weeks in July 1966 to shunt at York Road, at a time when Sligo tank No.27 was out of action. Things must have been tight enough at that time, for Frank Dunlop

remembered having to take a MPD power car over to the Coal Quay to get urgently needed loco coal! No.146 later returned to Adelaide, and was in fact the last engine to work out of the shed, hauling preserved compound No.85 to storage in the goods shed at Lisburn on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1966. After she'd gone, leaving the shed totally empty, a permanent way man said to me: "There's only one No.48 left here now, and she's not much good". He was referring of course to one of the battered MPD power cars which by that time were powering both ballast trains and the Derry Road lifting trains. No.146 was eventually brought from Lisburn to York Road once again, but was not deemed sound enough for further use and was finally cut up on the NCC. No.149 visited Ardee and Kingscourt on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1966 on the RPSI "Province of Leinster" railtour. On Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September 1966 she also hauled the very last GN-area service trains to be worked by steam - hurriedly taken off the station pilot to replace a failed AEC set on the 17:18 and 18:22 Lisburn locals. After being failed with a cracked axlebox, No.149 was withdrawn and eventually cut up along with SG3 No.97 on the remains of the old Third Line, which by that time had become a long siding from Great Victoria Street to the then totally demolished site of Adelaide shed.

This leaves only a word to be said about the NCC "Jeeps" on the Great Northern in 1965. The end of regular steam finished a brief but bright period when the younger Portadown men produced some excellent work on the Dublin semi-fast trains. As to semi-regular trains, in the spring of 1965, the old "late Dublin" was briefly revived on a few Saturday nights, with a "Jeep" being sent light from Adelaide to Dundalk at 16:10. A surprise choice was No.8 (an engine which soon returned to the NCC) on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1965, and driver Andy Rushe - later a familiar figure on RPSI specials in the 1970s and 1980s - produced a sparkling run with the featherweight load of three bogies. Another type of traffic, now long lost to the railway, was the southbound conveyance of pigeons on a Friday night, usually for release at Arklow or en route to the Rosslare ferry for races beginning at Haverfordwest. These trains, often quite heavy, typically left Grosvenor Street goods yard following the last Lisburn local at 23:15. During the summer there was the Tuesday and Thursday "Tourist Train", 10:45 from Belfast and 17:10 from Dublin Amiens Street, so called as it worked a Dublin excursion which was part of a package holiday deal based on the UTA's Laharna Hotel in Larne. Its composition was typically four K15s and the last surviving GNR kitchen car, and each coach was fully tabled to provide lunch on the outward journey and dinner on the return. A really perceptive observer might even have seen the station pilot engine in platform 1 - "the motor platform" - on a Wednesday night when the train was provisioned from the adjacent catering department offices, or on a Friday as the tables were removed from the coaches again. There was also a 09:25 public excursion, usually on Thursdays, timed to return from Dublin at either 17:58 or 18:20. On Rugby international Saturdays, these trains would run in similar paths, though obviously more heavily loaded.

But what to work them with? These trains were invariably steam-hauled, and until 1964 there were the two remaining VS 4-4-0s, as well as the more serviceable of the ex-NCC moguls along with the occasional S class. By the summer of 1965, of course, the only tender engine fit to go to Dublin was the very run-down No.207, and I have no record of any of the surviving S class engines working any scheduled passenger train after February 1965.

Someone had already given thought to this eventuality, for when WT No.53 came back from heavy overhaul in the summer of 1964 she was hauling an auxiliary tender, converted from a redundant small (2,500 gallon) mogul tender. No.53 and No.55 were modified to work with this tender, but even an anti-airlocking device didn't totally solve the problem of water-flow from the tender to the engine. And of course, there was the small matter of coal to be shovelled forward on arrival in Dublin. I gather that a test run was made in August 1964, involving driver Arthur Boreland - an economical engineman if ever there was one - and No.53 with the tender made it from Belfast to Dublin and back to Goraghwood before replenishing the tanks. Several photographs exist of No.55 plus tender on the "Tourist train" of 18<sup>th</sup> May 1965, though I doubt whether this ensemble reached Dublin on many other

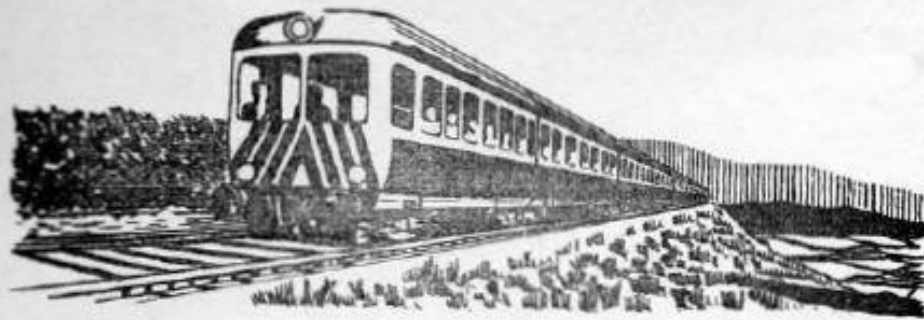
occasions. The basic problem was, of course, coal rather than water; for although there were still columns at all the principal stations, coal stocks were no longer kept at Amiens Street. In January and February 1965 there were two 'big' rugby Saturdays, and on each of them the heavy 9:25 special was Jeep-hauled to Dundalk only, with a CIÉ GM forward to Dublin. But with more moderate loads (and the Tourist was a light train) there was no reason why a tank engine shouldn't make Dublin and back on one bunker of coal, though there were at least two occasions when crews got into trouble on the way back from Dublin on this account, and one train had to be hauled in from Balmoral. In the summer of 1965 it was therefore not uncommon to see the front van of a Dublin excursion filled with sacks of coal, the engine's bunker piled way above the loading gauge, and the footplate knee-deep in coal. In 1966 the problem was solved by fitting 'cribs' (bunker extensions) to some of the tank engines; but that is another story for another day.



***Central Junction, May 1965. No.53 had coupled onto the 19:15 special from Bangor, which she will work to Portadown. UG 146 was already en route back to Bangor to work the 20:45 special to Lisburn. (W.T. Scott)***

There were just a few unusual operations involving tank engines during this period. On 12<sup>th</sup> July an Orange demonstration at Ballinderry was covered in the morning by a special with No.55 and driver Jimmy Sneddon, from Great Victoria Street to Antrim and back, stopping to set down en route. In the afternoon, though, Bobby Quail and No.51 worked an empty carriages to Lisburn which was then propelled to Ballinderry, which at that time lacked a loop. On the same day there were a number of Lurgan-Portadown specials, and that evening it was quite unusual to find two light engines coupled (No.53 with Leo Harbinson and No.56 with Billy Croft) returning to Adelaide. The next morning No.54, No.56 and No. 207 headed south on specials to Dundalk and Dublin, while No.51 and No.55 ran coupled to Portadown to work the day's shuttles for the Sham Fight at Scarva. With Goraghwood now closed and Poyntzpass having only one crossover, the associated eight-coach empty carriage workings were propelled all the way in one direction: on the 16:45 propelled empty carriages from Portadown, I was quite amazed to record a max of 53! All told, eight engines worked a total of 18

passenger trains during the course of this day.



## AFTERNOON EXCURSIONS

TO

# BANGOR

**Wednesdays, 14th and 21st July, 1965**

**SPECIAL THROUGH TRAIN**  
[via Belfast Central Railway]

From		p m	p m.	Return Fares 2nd Class
PORTADOWN	dep	1-30	-	10/3
LURGAN	"	1-40	-	8/3
LISBURN	"	-	2-10	7/-
HILDEN	"	-	2-12	6/3
LAMBEG	"	-	2-15	6/3
DERRIAGHY	"	-	2-18	6/-
DUNMURRY	"	-	2-22	5/9
FINAGHY	"	-	2-26	5/3
BANGOR	arr	2-50	3-10	-

**Return trains will leave Bangor as under :-**

For Lurgan and Portadown at 8-50 p.m.

For Stations Finaghy to Lisburn at 9-20 p.m.

**CHILDREN 3 AND UNDER 14 YEARS OF AGE - HALF FARE**

**Tickets valid for day of issue only**

# ULSTER TRANSPORT

(214)

*Handbill for the last two weeks of public excursions from Portadown and Lisburn to Bangor. There was a final excursion from Lisburn to Bangor on 28<sup>th</sup> July, as mentioned in the article.  
(J.A. Cassells)*



At the end of the “Twelfth Week”, and following a long interval, the last two engines left locked up in Portadown shed since the preceding February were brought back to Belfast. No.9 - the engine fetched off the last 14:45 ex Dublin on 13<sup>th</sup> February - finally got back to York Road via Lisburn on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1965, and next day John O’Hare and Cecil McAdam were sent down to light up No.50. She worked light engine to Lisburn, collecting two scrap coaches from the yard and following the afternoon “Enterprise” with a (sort of) empty carriage train to Adelaide.

The biggest day of all was 28<sup>th</sup> August 1965 when no less than six Jeeps and the two UGs ran an intensive morning and evening shuttle service for a large R.B.P. demonstration at Lurgan: No.51 with driver John O’Hare, No.56 with Jimmy Sneddon, No.55 with Tommy Hoey, No.54 with Leslie Wright, No.53 with Billy Croft, No.50 with Leo Harbinson, No.149 with Ned O’Hara and No.146 with Roy Stanfield. No.171 and No.207 were both in steam as standby engines, while SG3 No.97 was station pilot. Never again would Adelaide turn out eleven engines for a day’s work - five of them ex-Great Northern!

Thus ends a rather serendipitous story, all of it inspired by those two ex-Great Northern men at Portadown this summer, and that cheery afternoon excursion with No.186 from Portadown to Bangor. Just another example of the many beneficial spin-offs from our regular main line workings! My thanks are due to Denis Grimshaw, Irwin Pryce, Ian Wilson and Derek Young, all of whom read, corrected and amended earlier drafts of this article. As always, their help was invaluable. I am also indebted to Richard Whitford for information about Bangor special traffic in the summer of 1965.

#### **APPENDIX: DISPOSAL OF ENGINES FROM GN AREAAFTER 1965**

Engine number

UTA (GN)    Class    Notes

##### **NCC engines on the GN area**

1	WT	Returned to NCC after Feb 1965
2	WT	Returned to NCC after Feb 1965
7	WT	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 22.04.65. To store at Ballymena May 1966
8	WT	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 23.04.65. Returned to NCC May 1965
9	WT	Steamed Portadown to York Road 15.07.65
50	WT	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 16.07.65. Returned later to NCC
51	WT	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 22.4.65. Returned to NCC Nov 1966
53	WT	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Returned to NCC Nov 1966 [8]
54	WT	In works Feb 1965 & returned to GN. Returned to NCC Nov 1966
55	WT	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Returned to NCC Nov 1966
56	WT	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 15.04.65. Returned to NCC Nov 1966 [1]
57	WT	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Hauled 7 to Ballymena May 1966 [7]
91	W	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
93	W	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
94	W	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
97	W	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965 [2]
99	W	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
104	W	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965

##### **Ex GN engines: UTA 1958 renumbering, followed by original GN numbers:**

32	13	SG3	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965 [3,9]
33	20	SG3	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide April 1965. Scrapped April 1965
34	40	SG3	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
35	41	SG3	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 30.04.65. Scrapped April 1965
36	49	SG3	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide April 1965. Scrapped April 1965

37	97	SG3	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 10.04.65. Scrapped 1967
38	16	SG2	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
40	18	SG2	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
43	175	SG	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
44	176	SG	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 30.04.65. Scrapped April 1965
45	78	UG	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
47	82	UG	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965 [4]
48	146	UG	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 02.03.65. Scrapped 1967 [5,6]
49	149	UG	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 08.04.65. Scrapped 1967 [5]
58	208	VS	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
60	172	S	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 17.04.65. Scrapped April 1965
62	190	S2	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
63	192	S2	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
66	201	U	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
67	202	U	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965 [4]
68	205	U	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped April 1965
170		S	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 09.04.65. Scrapped December 1965
171		S	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Preserved
174		S	Steamed Portadown to Adelaide 21.04.65. Scrapped December 1965
207		VS	At Adelaide Feb 1965. Scrapped December 1965

- [1] Damaged near Dungannon 28th July 1966 whilst on lifting train duty.
- [2] Boiler retained at York Road pending possible re-use (which never happened).
- [3] Had not steamed for some years prior to Feb 1965
- [4] Listed for retention to work Bangor traffic, but condemned in Spring 1965
- [5] Retained primarily for Bangor traffic, summer 1965
- [6] Hauled preserved compound 85 to storage at Lisburn Nov 1966. Scrapped 1967
- [7] Resurrected for one day as York Road pilot 12<sup>th</sup> August 1966
- [8] Worked on NCC in mid July 1966.
- [9] Sent to York Road for second shopping in 1963, but this was not felt worthwhile, Never steamed again.

## **IRISH TRANSPORTER WAGONS**

**Sydney A. Leleux**

“British Transporter Wagons” was the subject of a special issue (number 203) of The Narrow Gauge Railway Society’s magazine The Narrow Gauge. This summary is written as a token of thanks for help given to the author by members of this Society during his research. Only the material relating to Ireland is reproduced here. Any conclusions drawn are my own, and are presented in good faith with the intention of promoting discussion. A transporter wagon is basically a specialised flat wagon designed to enable wagons of one gauge to be carried over a railway of a different gauge. The use of such wagons eliminates the cost in time, money and potential for damage/loss arising from transshipment at the break of gauge. In Britain transporters have a long history and existed on a number of railways.

The Belfast & Northern Counties Railway absorbed several 3ft gauge railways including the Ballymena, Cushendall & Red Bay Railway in 1884 and the Ballymena & Larne Railway in 1889. The B&NCR was itself absorbed in 1903 by the English Midland Railway, which managed its Irish lines

through its Northern Counties Committee. Later still, in 1923, the NCC became part of the LMS, which in 1924 took over the 3ft gauge Ballycastle Railway as well. As was common practice when a large railway company absorbed a smaller one, major repairs were concentrated at the main works, in this case at York Road, Belfast. While mainland companies and the Irish Great Southern Railway used ordinary well and flat wagons to carry narrow gauge stock to and from works, over the years the NCC built three 5ft 3in gauge transporter wagons to carry its 3ft gauge stock, the first in 1889 and the others in LMS days.



*NCC transporter wagon, believed 3095, at Ballymena on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1930. (H.C. Casserley / S.A. Leleux)*

Two of the transporters were essentially bogie flat wagons, with one pair of longitudinal frame members (covered by steel strips) acting as 3ft gauge rails. By having smaller diameter bogie wheels than normal the floor of the transporter was sufficiently low to enable 3ft gauge coaches to be loaded and not foul the main line loading gauge. A consequence of the low floor was that the buffer beams were about 9 inches lower than usual, so buffing- and draw-gear would not match normal rolling stock. Accordingly, each buffer was fitted to a horizontally hinged plate, with a suitable detachable anchoring strut. The draw hook also could be raised and lowered. With buffers and couplings raised the transporter could run with ordinary stock without difficulty. There was an end loading bank at Ballymena and a similar one at Ballymoney, but when the B&L was cut back to Larne Harbour no loading bank was provided and a crane had to be used.

The bogie transporter with outside bearings to its axles was built by the B&NCR in 1889. It became number 3093. The other bogie transporter, number 3095, built in 1930, was essentially similar but larger, presumably to carry the new 50ft luxury coaches being built for the B&L. It had a carrying capacity of 20 tons. Photographs show these transporters loaded with various carriages and locomotives, including 2-4-2T No.104 in Midland Railway days.

The third transporter was a sturdy 6-wheel flat wagon built in 1926 to carry 35 tons. It had disc wheels

with inside bearings. Its buffers and couplings were above the level of the floor, and similar to those already described. Originally it was numbered 3045 but was later renumbered 3094. From photographs, it seems to have been mainly used for locomotives, which were secured by steel strips bolted at each end of the locomotive's buffer beam to the transporter's buffer plates.



***NCC 2-4-2T locomotive No.42 on the 6-wheel transporter wagon 3094 at Belfast York Road on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1948 - probably the loco's final Works repair. (H.C. Casserley / S.A. Leleux)***

These wagons were probably last used to carry County Donegal Railway exhibits to the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum. While the rolling stock was loaded on NCC transporter 3095, plated to carry 20 tons, 2-6-4T Blanche, weighing 50 tons, was loaded on the NCC 6-wheel transporter 3094, plated to carry 35 tons. As a result 3094 constantly ran hot, blocking the line with its slow progress. A prolonged stop had to be made at Beragh, 26 miles from Strabane, and Portadown was eventually reached the next day. The crew of the GNR(I) engine hauling this train had not expected to be on duty for over 18 hours and had no spare food with them! *[Reportedly, they spent some time at a particular signal cabin whose occupant was noted for his frugality. There they derived some grim satisfaction from making him share their hunger as he could not, in all decency, start eating his own food while they were there. - Ed.]*

When the Cavan & Leitrim Railway built the Arigna Extension, it considered the use of transporter wagons to improve coal handling, but the loading gauge would not permit main line wagons. Instead, coal boxes holding one ton were tried, transferred by crane between flat wagons of 3ft and 5ft 3in gauge, but were found to be unsuccessful.

A large brewery was operated by Arthur Guinness in Dublin, a few hundred yards from Kingsbridge (later Heuston) station. At first horses were used to haul main line wagons to and from the brewery, but in 1888 the first 'transporter locomotive' was introduced. William Spence, of the Cork Street Foundry, Dublin, began building 1ft 10in gauge locomotives for Guinness's internal system in 1887, and built 18 to the same design up to 1921. The same firm also constructed four transporters to permit narrow gauge locomotives to haul main line wagons, two in 1888, one in 1893 and the last in 1903. The concept was simple. A sturdy four-wheel all-steel flat wagon had a hole in the floor the same shape and size as the footplate of one of the narrow gauge locomotives. Within the wagon was a pair of rollers, at the same

centres as the locomotive's driving wheels and geared to the wagon's own wheels. A hoist was provided over a siding which had narrow gauge track arranged centrally between the 5ft 3in rails. A locomotive was positioned beneath the hoist, lifted up, then lowered into an empty transporter so that its wheels rested on the rollers. The narrow gauge locomotive could now move freely over broad gauge tracks, and shunt broad gauge wagons. Although two broad gauge 0-4-0ST were bought in 1914 and 1919, and an 0-4-0DM in 1949, when I visited the brewery in 1960 I found one 0-4-0ST and the diesel in use, assisted by two narrow gauge locomotives on transporters. This unusual system had lasted over 70 years. Several Guinness steam locomotives survive, in both gauges, and a transporter wagon with its hoist machinery is at Amberley Museum in Sussex, although I believe it is not yet reassembled.

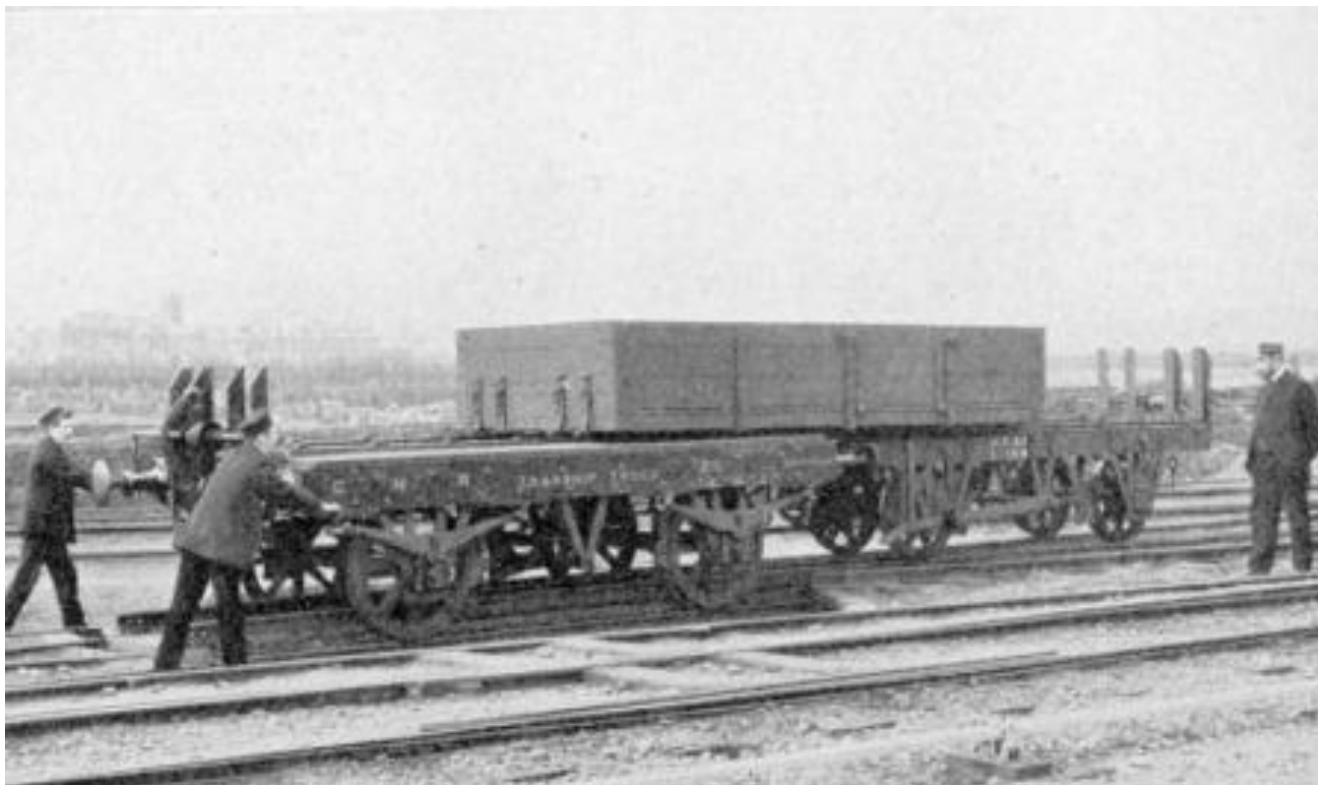


***A Guinness transporter wagon photographed in June 1964. The housing containing the gearing to the wagon's wheels can be seen, as can the rollers on which the narrow gauge loco's wheels rested. (H.C. Casserley / S.A. Leleux)***

The last item to be described is not really a transporter wagon but more an ingenious form of container or a demountable body system. However, as published information is scanty and the idea was to avoid break of gauge transshipment it is covered here. The County Donegal Railway was acquired jointly by the Great Northern Railway of Ireland and the English Midland Railway in 1903. At that time R.H. Livesey was the CDR General Manager (until 1906) and his son R.M. 'Young' Livesey, who is described as having 'an inventive turn of mind', was Engineer to the County Donegal Railways Joint Committee (until 1922). Around 1906, Livesey designed and patented 'tranship trucks' to avoid the problems associated with the break of gauge.

Basically each gauge required a number of standard wooden wagon underframes, with a vertical iron frame carrying a winch mounted at one end, and two rows of eight double-flanged wheels along the floor to guide and support the body. The wooden body was of conventional construction, and had longitudinal bars underneath to rest on and in the underframe's double-flanged wheels. On both ends of the body were four vertical pieces of iron strapping, which continued under the floor to secure the ends.

A bracket at the bottom of each piece of strapping had a hole for a pin which passed into a corresponding hole in a bracket attached to the buffer beam, so locking the body in position. The 3ft gauge underframe had a tare weight of 3 tons 9cwt. The GNR(I) version did not show a tare weight, only 'Tranship Truck', 'Return to Strabane' and 'To carry 5 tons'.



***A GNR/CDR transshipment wagon in use, showing the fittings described by the author. (S.A. Leleux collection)***

Despite the date 1907 for the CDR wagons, the GNR(I) had previously constructed tranship trucks years before, as Diagram Number 79 drawings 62A & 67C, show wagon number 718 in 1890, 701 in 1896 & 715 in 1918. Diagram Number 79, captioned 'Tranship Truck GNR(I) Loco Carr & Wagon Dept Dundalk 1893' shows a wagon, 19ft 6in long over buffers carrying a van body 15ft 6in long, on four wheels at 9ft centres. It had a tare of 5 tons and was to carry 5 tons, which easily accommodated a load of 4 tons 14 cwt comprising 'tare of CDRJC' (sic) Covered Body 1 ton 14 cwt and the van's 3 ton load. Maybe a member can say why the GNR(I) had built these early tranship trucks. Was it for an experimental demountable body system, possibly able to be loaded on to a road vehicle, which Livesey later became aware of and adapted for the CDR?

CDR wagons 155-157 were built in 1900 (sic) with open bodies for 'cut stone traffic from Watson's quarry at Mountcharles' (two stations from Donegal on the Killybegs branch), and 249-252 were built at Dundalk for this traffic in 1908. As the stone traffic declined so the wagons were converted to other types. At the time of closure 155 had a covered tranship body. Numbers 253 & 254 had been built in 1908 with covered bodies, but 254 finished as a single-plank drop-side open wagon.

Transfer took place at Strabane, using the 18ft diameter turntable at the west end of the station (item 13 in the plan on page 41 of Patterson's CDR book). The turntable itself had both 3ft and 5ft 3in gauge rails, and was served by sidings of both gauges. On the turntable the narrow gauge rails were supported on wooden blocks so that the floor height of wagons of both gauges was the same. The method of operation appears to have been to bring the two tranship wagons, one loaded with a demountable body

and the other empty, into contact, turning them if necessary so that the ends without the iron frame and winch were touching. The body was unlocked and the winch cable from the empty wagon attached. Two men operated the winch to pull the body off one underframe on to the other. The tension in the winch cable was probably sufficient to keep the two wagons together. When the transfer was complete the body was locked in position and the load was ready to continue its journey over the other gauge. The newly empty tranship wagon was then put into an adjacent siding. Simple! However, the practice later fell into disuse and the tranship wagons were converted into ordinary ones. Patterson lists wagon stock (page 146), showing five tranship wagons, numbers 249-254, built by the GNR(I) in 1908 and converted to covered and coal wagons 1922-31. The same list shows CDR 155 built in 1900 as tranship, later covered and 42 (a flat originally from the West Donegal Railway) converted to tranship at some unspecified date. Maybe 42 and 155 were the prototypes, converted from existing wagons, as I have seen official-looking drawings showing all the tranship wagons being built in 1907, listing numbers 44, 155, 156, 157 & 252 with 'open wagon' bodies, to carry 3 tons (tranship) or 5 tons (not tranship), while 253 & 254 had van bodies to carry 3 tons. An article by S. Carse on County Donegal Railway Wagons in the Irish Railway Record Society Journal (No.70, summer 1976) states that there were twelve tranship wagons, numbers 42, 44, 45, 155-7, 249-252 with open bodies and 253 & 254 with covered bodies, and twelve broad gauge frames to match. The article added that when tranship use declined some were converted to ordinary wagons: 42 to a flat by 1926 later to a 'falling-side' (open) in 1950, 45, 249 & 250 to high-side flats, and 152, 157 & 250 to falling-side. Even so, in 1944 it was reported that three tranship trucks existed 'in perfect order' while a fourth had its body permanently fixed. No 251 got a covered tranship body around 1952, probably from 254. Naturally over a period of time tranship bodies did not always pair up with their original underframes, for example a photograph shows body 252 being carried by frame 151. The mixed gauge transfer turntable at Strabane lasted until closure at the end of 1959. Fayle's book "Narrow Gauge Railways of Ireland" shows a CDR body on a transfer wagon in a GNR(I) train.



*GNR tranship wagon 26 at the mixed gauge turntable at Strabane. (C.H. Hewison / S.A. Leleux)*



Although the numerous Irish 3ft gauge railways would appear to have been well suited to the extensive use of transporter wagons I suggest the following reasons, in no particular order, why this was not the case:

1. Some lines were managed by local people who may not have been aware of the possibilities.
2. Even if they were aware, all the Irish 3ft gauge railways had been open for years before Calthrop demonstrated his design at an exhibition in Leeds in 1896 (the last totally new Irish 3ft gauge public railway was the Tralee & Dingle, opened 1891) and, as the C&L discovered, the existing loading gauge was insufficient for main line wagons on transporters without costly reconstruction of overbridges, etc. The track would probably have needed expensive upgrading as well to take these heavy vehicles.
3. Wages were low and hours long in the early 1900s, so tranship costs were affordable.
4. Both the volume and value of potential traffic to be transferred were low - the only bulk traffics apart from livestock were iron ore from Parkmore to Larne (unloaded at the quayside) and coal from Arigna (shovelled across, even in later years of higher wages and unions).
5. Some lines served harbours so, in theory at least, incoming bulk materials like coal and lime could be received direct from the ship without the need to tranship from a main line wagon.
6. Some lines carried heavy livestock traffic, which could transfer themselves (with suitable guidance and encouragement!) from narrow gauge to main line. Indeed, when livestock was carried by rail arrangements had to be made to unload the animals at intervals for food and water, and this could have been combined with the transfer.
7. As the narrow gauge lines were independent companies the neighbouring main line had little incentive to reduce the costs of transshipment. I think it is significant that although Livesey appears to have designed his tranship wagons before the GNR(I) became joint owners of the CDR, a batch was built only after the change, when there was now a main line company directly concerned with the costs of transshipment, and with the financial and material resources to provide a solution.
8. Investment capital was scarce, particularly after World War I.
9. The ready availability of cheap lorries after World War I, with local ex-army men to drive and maintain them, reduced freight traffic.
10. A combination of politics and timing, explained below.

Home Rule (i.e. independence) for Ireland had been a major issue in British politics for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Eventually Southern Ireland achieved independence in 1921, which was followed by two years of civil war causing a lot of damage to the railways. Great Southern Railways was formed in 1925, amalgamating all the railways in the Irish Free State, but excluding all the lines which were wholly or partly in Northern Ireland. By the time the GSR had dealt with the problems of amalgamation and war damage the harsh economic climate of the late 1920s limited any improvements it might make. Road competition was already a factor and some narrow gauge lines were struggling. In fact, the only major improvement made to a narrow gauge line was the dieselisation of the West Clare in the 1950s. GSR did not even build any transporter wagons similar to the NCC ones to assist the transfer of stock to and from works for overhaul or between railways.

However, suppose Home Rule had been successful in 1905, or the proposed nationalisation of Irish railways in 1905 had not been refused by the government in Westminster. It is then reasonable to suppose that the equivalent of GSR would have been formed by 1910, at which date narrow gauge railways were still definitely a vital part of the country's transport provision. Whether or not Ireland had remained united, the former Great Southern & Western Railway's works at Inchicore could well

have seen the need and devised an equivalent to Livesey's tranship wagons. Indeed, the obvious thing to minimise costs would have been to design a standard narrow gauge underframe to suit the coupling heights and arrangements of all the constituent companies. The only other expenditure - which would not have been excessive - besides the necessary rolling stock, broad gauge as well as narrow, would have been a small turntable and associated sidings at the interchange points. This would have given many of the advantages of transporter wagons without the prohibitive cost of rebuilding bridges, etc.

Much of the material for this article has been accumulated from published sources over a number of years, but I want to thank the following for providing information and/or comment: D. Bates, A. Bowler, C. Friel, A. Gray, R. Gratton, M. Kennedy, P. McCann, A. O'Rourke, W.T. Scott, J.L. Stevenson, M. Taylor, P.J. Wilde, and Railway Preservation Society of Ireland which published an appeal for me. Photograph copyright holders in the appropriate captions.

## **GS&WR COACH 1142**

**Charles Meredith**

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Five Foot Three No.48, Winter 2001/02, at page 54, included a note on the history and then state of this coach. The piece ended by expressing the hope that proper restoration could take place "in the not-too-distant future" and that 1142 could be the next step in the slow progress towards a complete GS&WR train.

That issue of Five Foot Three contains two photos of 1142 as then painted in "imitation" pre-first world war GS&WR livery to accompany the then newly-restored Royal Saloon 351. 1142 appears on its own at p.54 and with 351 at p.22.

Various circumstances, including the restoration at Whitehead of GS&WR J15 loco No.186 (thus providing genuine GS&WR motive power, and an enjoyable pint with former Irish Rail Connolly Motive Power superintendent George Dempsey - who, it will be recalled, was the able project supervisor for the restoration of GS&WR 351) led to the commencement of 1142's refurbishment in July 2005. The necessary arrangements having been made with Irish Rail, 1142 was rolled into Carriage Shop No.1 - the Shop in which she was built in 1920 - on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

To continue the pleasant and historic connection with Carriage Shop No1, George Dempsey commenced his railway career as an apprentice coach-builder in the same Shop in 1950 and also worked there on the restoration of Royal Saloon 351 in 1961.

The original intention was to replace some cracked outer body panels, carry out general light repairs and do a repaint. Events, as they always do, decided otherwise! Close inspection led us to conclude that all the body panels below waist level should be renewed, in three-eighths inch marine ply, rather than the original three-eighths inch mahogany sheeting. When we came to strip out the mahogany, we found that a certain amount had already been replaced in plywood, though whether by CIÉ or by the RPSI we have not yet discovered. During 1980 the Society renewed the roof covering and at that time Alan Edgar, then Carriage Officer, remarked that she was about the soundest coach the Society possessed! We also found that parts of the timber framing were showing signs of what might politely be described as "water ingress", which convinced us that we should strip out the whole coach, ends and all, so that we could ascertain the worst! In the event, while the "worst" was sufficiently bad to more than vindicate our decision, nothing was revealed that could not be dealt with by much hard, patient and painstaking work, supported by the abundant coach-building skills of George Dempsey.

It was necessary to cut out and replace short lengths of solebar (the timber foundation), particularly under the two toilets, as well as short lengths of waist rail and lower waist rail beneath windows ("lights" in coach-building parlance) whose mouldings had deteriorated and were letting in water.

A major coach-building exercise arose through the discovery of considerable rot at the switch-board end of the corridor-side cantrail - the main horizontal member below the roof, and to which the whole

roof is attached. The cantrail is a very substantial piece of hardwood and we ended up renewing two separate lengths of approximately twenty feet at the switchboard end and another eight feet over the first external door at the same end. One of George's beautiful "railway" joints is shown in the accompanying photo.

Although we had invaluable help from others in the stripping out process and, later, in the repainting, most of the hard slog of cutting, shaping, "offering-up" and fitting and securing the myriad different bits and pieces that were required was done by George Dempsey, with the author as general assistant and "gopher".



*One of the major joints described by the author. (C. Meredith)*

As the work progressed, and as we realised that we had become more and more involved in serious restoration, as opposed to renovation, it became obvious that, to achieve a result commensurate with what we were doing, matters of detail were becoming as important as structural soundness. It was decided that, among many other such items, all window mouldings, internal and external, should be renewed; all door handles, escutcheon plates and grab handles should be re-chromed; all droplight frames and droplight straps should be renewed; the top step-boards on each side should be replaced; all door stops should have new rubber inserts provided (invented, as it turned out!); and that the end gangways should have their steel tunnels and leather bellows renewed.

Stripping out the defective sections of cantrail involved the removal of a considerable part of the ceiling of the side corridor, which had to be made good, restored to its curved profile, re-papered in anaglypta paper and re-painted.

All seating was removed and the life-expired sprung underbases replaced by a solid timber platform, covered by re-using the existing upholstery mattress covers, but filled with a much thicker and denser foam. The end result is equivalent to a Craven or a Mk2 seat base. Finances did not permit our preferred option of renewing the entire upholstery to "first class" standard.

As might be expected, in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology, sourcing early 20<sup>th</sup> century materials - screws, nuts and bolts, coach screws, droplight mouldings and straps and many other bits and pieces proved extremely difficult. Thanks to our many friends in Inchicore Works, many items were either traced in odd corners or made for us. Special sizes and quality of screws came from Keighley in West Yorkshire. Droplight straps were sourced for us by the Vintage Carriages Trust (Museum) at the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway. Internal window mouldings were made by our good friend Colm Hyland, ex-Inchicore coach builder, who had been an integral part of the Royal Saloon 351 restoration team. To meet modern safety requirements, all fixed lights and droplights were re-glazed in safety glass of the same thickness as the originals.

The question of painting, lining-out and numbering and lettering turned out to be a huge enterprise in itself, worthy of a lengthy article on its own. The author burnt much midnight oil researching GS&WR coach presentation of the post-first world war period, with particular regard to the construction of this generation of coach bodies, which were built without the former recessed panels with curved ends at cantrail level. Cutting a long story short, it was decided to adopt the LNWR deep purple lake as the overall body colour. This colour had already been identified and adopted by the Downpatrick & Ardglass Railway as being either the actual shade or the nearest equivalent for its magnificent restoration of GS&WR 836, and it was discovered from the NRM at York that this colour is available to order from Williamsons of Ripon. The white panelling of 351 was omitted, as this feature was applied only between approximately 1900 and the outbreak of the first world war and was never applied to coaches of 1142's period. The lining out in gold and vermillion followed the precedent set by the wonderful model of GS&WR dining car 344 in the Transport Museum at Cultra, and followed by Downpatrick with 836 and by ourselves with 351. The remaining problem of lining out lay in the treatment of the panels at cantrail level, on which no GS&WR information has yet come to hand. Pending authoritative clarification, and the author being a jazz musician, improvisation seemed the best course! It seemed reasonably safe to assume from old (black and white) photos that when the GSR took over from the GS&WR in 1925 the former deep purple lake was continued until the brief adoption of brown and cream in the early 1930s. It also seems from mid-to late-1920s photos that on stock built with flush cantrail panels the lining-out was carried out in square-ended panels, rather than the former recessed curved panels found on 351 and 836 (and 861, for those concerned with her). Accordingly, the former lining-out pattern was simply altered to suit ninety-degree corners, rather than gentle curves. Any authoritative information to the contrary will be gratefully received.

The author takes full responsibility (or blame) for the numbering and lettering, the artwork for which was prepared solely from old black and white photos. No authority could be found as to precise dimensions, colour and gradation of drop shading, etc. The one thing the author can assert, contrary to suggestions to the contrary, is that GS&WR drop shading was to the left of the numeral or letter, with a black shadow to the right. As a matter of interest (and record) the GNR placed its drop shading to the right, using what appears from photos to be the same font as the GS&WR for the body of the numerals and letters. Again, any authoritative information will be gratefully received.

The painting itself was a huge undertaking. Most readers will have come across descriptions of how coach bodies (and trams) were stopped, primed, undercoated, top coated and varnished, with all the rubbing-down (pumicing) that goes with it. We had never done it before and were astounded, at undercoat stage, at the wonderful finish that could be achieved! Far from comparing our results to a baby's bottom, we began to describe babies' bottoms as resembling our coach-finish! That was until it came to top-coating. We have reached no firm conclusion as to whether our problems lay in temperature, humidity, dust levels or even noise pollution from the incessant radios in the Carriage Shop. On some days paint flowed on and dried beautifully. On others, it was back to more pumicing and repainting.

All seven compartments have been re-carpeted and the lino in the corridor replaced. The toilets have been tidied up and redecorated and new down-pipes fitted underneath. However, they will not be restored to their former glory, if that is the right word, without renewing the GS&WR mosaic flooring - which we fear is a job too far.

As part of the less glamorous activity, our member and former Dublin Loco Officer Paddy O'Brien replaced the switchboard end draw hook. Our electrical officer Charles McDonnell overhauled the electrics. David Seymour repainted everything from the step-boards and frames down. The pull-strings for equalising the pressure in the brake cylinders were replaced, as were the red stars outside of the frames indicating the location of the strings, which are not visible from outside. The stars were sourced for us from the stores of the old wagon works at Limerick. New carpet for the seven compartments and lino for the side corridor was provided and, in large part, laid by Norman Foster.



*Detail of lettering, also note the substantial and re-chromed door and grab handles. (C. Meredith)*

When it comes to thanking all concerned in the restoration serious difficulties arise - someone is sure to be left out! Apologies in advance. But first and foremost must come our hosts at Inchicore Works - Irish Rail - and, in particular, Dick Fearn CEO; John McCarthy, former CME; Phil Verster, present CME; Jimmy Doody who, before he retired, did most of the actual arranging for our accommodation; successive Carriage Foremen in Carriage Shops 1 & 2; all the men, of all skills, in the same Shops; the Paint Shop; the Machine Shop; the Running Shed; the Wagon Shop; the Ramps; Diesel One (as it then was, now the Bogie Shop); the upholsterers; the shunters; the Drawing Office; the Security Staff; the Office Staff - in short, everybody.

Apart from the top-coat paint purchased from Williamsons of Ripon and certain items to do with lining-out, Dulux Paints kindly donated all paint - as they had done in the restoration of 351.

Tony Filby, Paint Curator of the National Railway Museum, York, gave much assistance with everything to do with painting, lining-out and lettering. Our friends at the Downpatrick Railway also contributed much useful advice.

Paddy O'Brien, Charles McDonnell and David Seymour have already been mentioned.

Other valuable work was done in the earlier stages of stripping-out by David Humphries, David Seymour, Fred Andrews and Jimmy Owens. The lion's share of the painting, including all its many trials and, we like to think, tribulations, was done by Peter Fletcher.



*“So, what now?” George Dempsey and the author consider their next move. (C. Meredith)*

But the essential element in the whole job was George Dempsey, whose coach-building skill, judgment, and continual good humour (which he might not admit) transformed the whole 3½ years of the restoration from being merely a job, we hope well done, into 3½ years of great interest and pleasure.

And, let's hope that we are a step nearer to that complete GS&WR train!

## LETTERS

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Dear Sir,

Is there still space for a rail-connected museum at Mullingar? From afar, it seems to me that Whitehead and Downpatrick have neither the room nor the spare manpower to take more projects.

The first Irish General Motors diesels are historic locomotives even outside Ireland. Why not an internationally supported high-grade museum, starting with a “single-ender” in exhibition state alongside a sectioned engine and displays showing the engine development from U.S. Navy submarines to the latest 201 series?

The successful use of GM diesels in Ireland led to the “private” 59 class in England and, later, the 66 class. Canada is now a big exporter of diesel locomotives.

Could help be got from GM and their successors for a GM heritage museum? It could include later a heritage fleet of running locomotives for Ireland.

Yours faithfully,

W.J. Snasdell

Stamford, Lincs.

*[Note: Mr Snasdell's letter was written pre-"credit-crunch", one result of which has been that GM themselves are now seeking help! - Ed.]*

## BOOK REVIEW

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### **Locomotives of the GSR by Jeremy Clements and Michael McMahon, Colourpoint Books**

**384 pages, 346 photographs, colour dust jacket pictures, 2 line drawings, maps, tables, etc. ISBN 978-1-906578-26-8, £35**

Wow! For some time, Southern locomotive fans have cast envious eyes at the Colourpoint histories of the GNR and, more recently, NCC engines. Well, their own volume has proved well worth the wait. At first sight it sounds expensive, but taking account of size and photographic content, it is actually very good value for money. Of course, a book limited to the machines built for or by the GSR would be rather slim, and this covers all the stock inherited in 1925, even if some never carried a GSR number plate. As much pre-group stock had long lives, it is really a history of locomotives built from about 1880 onwards for the constituent companies. The authors have done their homework very well, and although there may be room for a bit more scholarship on the mechanical dark ages at Inchicore and Broadstone, as regards the post 1925 era, this really is the definitive account. Some material has appeared before, but is well integrated, such as the 1948 summary of each surviving class, a pithy, unsentimental few lines saying what the operating department thought of its antiques on a day-to-day basis and often far removed from dewy-eyed enthusiasts, coming across some ancient engine or logging a spectacular one-off run.

This is of course an era now slipping from living memory, and some decisions may not have been minuted, so there has to be a bit of reading between the lines. Here the authors are very perceptive. One problem was that in the newly formed GSR, MGWR men took many of the administrative positions, and to even up the power balance, the chief mechanical post went to Bazin, whereas Morton, your man from the Midland who had already proved himself an astute fellow in spotting bargains off the shelf, had a much more enlightened view on superheating the better older classes. In fact, Broadstone seems to have thumbed its nose at Inchicore on this issue, and quietly finished superheating the 650 class: in 1948 they were about the only Midland engines to get an unqualified thumbs up, the larger 4-4-0s being damned as poor timekeepers on the DSER section.

However, for a company that prided itself on thrift, GSR locomotive practice was decidedly wasteful at times, with each CME determined to produce 'something new', although this led more to technological vanity than genuine progress. 850, always an engine to provoke partisan views, but the one genuinely innovative design, was doomed to be a one off; the 670s were a retrospective step. In fact, Inchicore should have adopted a Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' approach to selecting the best of the later pre-group designs: a dozen more 257 class would have been more welcome to the operating department than 'improved J15s'. A few more DSER moguls and B4 Bandon tanks would also have been useful additions to the fleet. Maybe nothing illustrates this principle more than the 4-6-0s: the 500s did everything required of them, and more, for thirty years, with only minor modifications, whereas the mechanically more sophisticated 400s needed radical and expensive rebuilding to make them efficient engines. The cost of reconstructing them might have been better spent on a few more 500 and Woolwich class engines. The authors even take on the legend of the 800s, suggesting that their main value was boosting morale and for publicity, whereas from a mechanical point of view, they were a luxury the GSR could ill afford and minor changes to working practices would have made them



unnecessary. But, as the authors comment, for much of their period passenger traffic was actually in decline on the GSR system, whereas goods receipts held up much better, and so, while the company fiddled around trying to produce 'fixes' for the Cork mails and the Bray suburban services, it was just as well that it had inherited a fleet of hardy 0-6-0s, which could handle the bread-and-butter traffic.

The photographs are generally well reproduced; just a few for obscure engines are a little soft, and for 'spotters' there are good shots of some rather camera-shy specimens, like 211, 250, 441, 618 and 621. Sadly, the only scale plans are of two patterns of WLWR tenders, from the Stephenson Locomotive Society book on Robinson's work: there may be a book of drawings later if there is enough demand (hint, hint!). There are chapters on tenders; the fuel crisis (a detailed account of a difficult time, which bridged the GSR/CIE transition); and a brief account of steam loco policy under CIE (for more details of this period see the Decade of Steam book). Wisely, the turf-burner is left to its own specialised books, but the authors take 'locomotive' as a broad term for any self-propelled vehicle, so the Claytons, Sentinels (both shunting engines and railcars), Drewry vehicles (broad and narrow gauge) and Drumm trains are all covered. All narrow gauge engines extant in 1925 also feature, but these are well documented elsewhere, and I think the real strength of the book is the detailed accounts of the pre-1925 engines, their rebuilding and modification, and the critical discussion of GSR locomotive policy down to 1940. For the not so technically minded, there is also a very clear and illustrated account of the working of locomotive valve gears and superheating. Finally, the book also includes detailed tables of GSR and GNR returns, which suggest that the GSR was not quite so economically backward as followers of the 'enterprising' cross-border line would have us believe! In fact, allowing for the fact that GSR engines and rolling stock were older (and in many cases fully depreciated), the return on capital may have looked even better for the GSR.

**AJOR**



*GSR carriage 1142 - the finished article. (C. Meredith)*



*No.186 at Knockarney en route to “Dundalk 50” on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2008. MP74 here marks the start of the gruelling climb of the Wellington Bank. Out of sight behind the trees surrounding Drumbanagher Church is the entrance to Lissummon tunnel, Ireland’s longest, while in the foreground is the Newry Canal, likewise disused. (I.C. Pryce)*