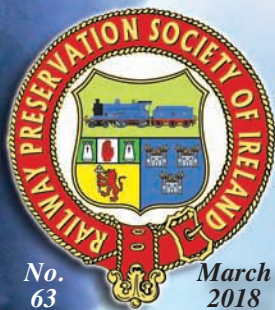


FIVE FOOT THREE



No.
63

March
2018

The Magazine of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland





FIVE FOOT THREE No.63

March 2017

CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	2
Chairman's Report – John McKegney	5
News From the Board – Paul McCann	9
Steam Locomotives – Peter Scott	12
Dublin Diesel Report – Gerry Mooney	16
Whitehead Diesel Locomotives – Andrew Davidson	18
Whitehead Carriage Report – Phillip Newell	20
Belfast Area Operations – Mervyn Darragh	23
Dublin Area Operations – Joe McKeown	30
Dublin Carriage Report – Joe McKeown	37
Whitehead Site Report – Dermot Mackie	39
Heritage Engineering Ireland – “HEI”	44
Whitehead Railway Museum – Robin Morton	46
Locomotive Electrics – James Friel	50
Volunteering with the RPSI – John Williams	54
Life as a Volunteer – Eileen Armstrong	56
Skibbereen and the Baltimore Railway Extension – John C Dwyer	58
The Return of No.131: A Celebration of the ‘Q’ Class – Conrad Natzio	67
‘Q’ Class performance – Conrad Natzio	71
Letters to the Editor	78
With Thanks	79

To contact Five Foot Three with letters, photographs or other contributions, send an email to 5ft3magazine@gmail.com, or write to

**FIVE FOOT THREE
P.O. BOX 461 NEWTOWNABBEY COUNTY ANTRIM
NORTHERN IRELAND BT36 9BT**

*Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Board of the RPSI. All photographs are copyright either of the RPSI or of another photographer, and may not be reproduced without permission.
Thank you to the contributors to this magazine.*

RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND
Registered with The Charity Commission NIC102389 (NI) & CHY6141 (RoI).
Company Limited by Guarantee registration NI 10798

FRONT COVER – No.85 brings the curtain down on a very busy 2017 – and the 70th year of the Enterprise – with a powerful New Year's Eve “Mince Pie” departure from Dublin Connolly. (Photo: G Mooney)

INSIDE FRONT COVER TOP – It is 07th May in Waterford, and No.4 waits to return the “Shannon & Suir” May Railtour to Dublin, having come to Waterford over two days via Athlone, Ennis and Limerick. (Photo: L Griffin, courtesy C Friel)

INSIDE FRONT COVER BOTTOM – Adam Lohoff waits to swing out the arm of Lisburn balloon tank to water “Jeep” No.4 on the 04th June “Steam Enterprise”. By contrast, Adam's black and red liveried Jeep bag shelters behind the column, hoping very much NOT to get watered. (Photo: Editor)

And so it is that the Editor, like the Doctor, regenerates once more, complete with feisty female assistant. Edward Friel produced five editions of *Five Foot Three* during his six years as Editor and I have enjoyed every one of them. Edward has striven unswervingly for perfection during his tenure and I think he was much better as Editor than he perhaps thought he was.

Edward continues to wear many hats in this Society (Curator, Director, loco rep are the ones I can think of) and the new Editor can unfortunately state he wears practically as many. He wishes Edward well and takes on the additional time-consuming challenge of keeping the

covers a respectable distance apart. Do we have to now find room at Whitehead to preserve Edward's study à la Roald Dahl or Terry Pratchett?

In essence it is intended to keep *Five Foot Three* very much to Edward's format, but with the addition of a couple of volunteer profiles. The plan would be to profile a volunteer from Belfast and Dublin per edition. John Williams of the site squad provided this idea and his submission appears in this edition. The second I have to confess is another Belfast volunteer, Eileen Armstrong, just to test the water. If thought to be a worthwhile addition, someone from Dublin will be targeted next time!



Edward Friel, the previous Editor of *Five Foot Three*, reflects on another job well done at Connolly shed on 31st December. (Photo: G Mooney)

Editors aside, 2017 has been regarded by many in the RPSI as a time of change and uncertainty. Although the buildings at Whitehead have sprung up over the course of approximately five years, the six months directly following the "soft opening" in March 2017 have proved some of the most challenging that we have ever had to deal with, at least at an organisational level. There is a need for the Society now to forecast and plan ahead more than ever, so that we encounter as few unexpected problems as possible; a concept the food industry refers to as "horizon scanning".

Much water has squeezed under the RPSI viaduct this year but it is now time to focus once more on our unique selling point; running mainline steam trains. To our well-honed mainline offering we can now add the big new bonus of being able to bring our passengers to Whitehead Railway Museum, an attraction Berkeley Dean Wise in his heyday would have been proud of!

I have a new perspective on the mainline trains courtesy of my two-year-old son, Alex, who has recently travelled on both a Broomstick Belle and a Santa train. I had not encountered the Society from the viewpoint of a parent with a child before and it is enlightening as this category is our major target market after all.

Our little boy, with a rapidly increasing vocabulary to test, never looked away from the carriage window during the ever changing 16 miles to Whitehead. He was captivated by 'the River' (twice), 'the Cranes with a [H and] W on', trucks,

lorries, 'brum cars', other trains, seaside, seals, seagulls, ducks, boats, lighthouse, stations, 'Kissmas tees' and castles. Santa didn't get a look-in and eye contact with the bearded man in the red suit was steadily avoided; until after two little squirty boats for the bath were unwrapped; then we had to go and see Santa straightaway when he was spotted on the platform at Whitehead.

A Thomas flag purchased from the shop and a lump of coal donated by the loco rep completed the excitement and 'the big blue engine with the orange fire and rods' has been talked about ever since. At a tot-friendly 2-hour round trip with all these attractions and more, we really do offer a cracking product to our passengers. This is the culmination of what we all work for; to keep steam alive and bring it to the public who, for the most part, lap it up. Daddy even got a drink to boot!

Keeping the wheels turning and the coal fires burning comes down, as always, to a small but loyal and reliable band of volunteers and staff who are prepared to do everything from tackle a blocked toilet, to re-tube an engine 125 miles from home. They slave over a stove flipping burgers for hours or give up their own night's sleep to go out in the snow to persuade a sleepy loco to wake when even it must think it has done enough to deserve a rest.

We must salute and value these people, because only with their goodwill and co-operation can our small but varied fleet of historic stock perform for wide-eyed little children in the future.

To the RPSI staff we now welcome Chef Martin Black and Café Supervisor Jackie Webster, whose food, innovation and eagerness (not to mention post-4pm jugs of hot chocolate for the shunters on a December afternoon) have gone down very well indeed. May the café go from strength to strength.

To HEI we welcome Engineering Manager Ivan McAteer, who immediately received ex-Donegal 2-6-4T No.4 "Meenglas" as an early Christmas present. We wish him good luck as he starts straight in the deep end there. As an aside, an enquiry from the Editor as to why the ash dump was suddenly full of manky beer cans and drinks bottles yielded the answer that the bottom had been cut from one of "Meenglas"'s tanks during the week and they were what had fallen out.

Finally, there is the old saying in the Society that Dublin makes all the money and Whitehead spends it. This phrase is not unrecognised by those at Whitehead; but it is not for lack of money-raising effort by the RPSI volunteers there. Over the last few

years, despite astronomical sums of money sloshing around, no significant money has been put into the MK2 carriages since they entered traffic in 2004. Whitehead was down to a mere six vehicles for much of the 2017 season due to maintenance arrears which have built up over the years where capital has instead gone into grand schemes.

Dublin have wisely invested the majority of their time and effort into their carriages to the point where the Cravens can fully stand up to the highest scrutiny and permit the RPSI to sell an attractive top market added value premium charter product internationally ... even when diesel hauled! The regularity and popularity of these charters shows what can be achieved on the mainline.

Carriages are our bread and butter but we face a 2018 of even further carriage budget cuts with high capacity vehicles, such as 302, withdrawn with no funding to return them to traffic. If you have one of these wallets which £20k readily falls out of; Phillip Newell and his merry band of Mk2s would be exceptionally timely and worthy recipients of such donations.



No.4 hauls a Santa train at Barberstown, Co. Dublin, on 16th December. (Photo: S Allen)

When our overworked but highly efficient Hon Secretary Paul McCann handed me my 2017 RPSI Membership Card at last January's Orangefield meeting I could, by no stretch of the imagination, have thought that one year later I would be penning (or lapping) a letter as Chairman of the RPSI! However that is what has happened.

Although I have been a member since the early days of the Society and a keen supporter of all its aims I have never been an activist nor have I served on any of its committees. My biggest role until this year was to be Santa!

It was therefore with utter surprise it was suggested to me by several highly respected members of the Society that I should be the new Chairman, with Denis Grimshaw stepping down for health reasons. Quite honestly I didn't really take the approach seriously at first but 'they' didn't give up! So it was in September that I was both co-opted as a Director and immediately elected Chairman. It is a role that excites and terrifies me in equal measure at this time of transition for the RPSI as the new Whitehead Railway Museum has become an exciting reality and a gem in the local tourism offering.

It also makes me immensely proud to hold this role. The RPSI is without doubt one of the most adventurous and successful Heritage Railway organisations in these islands. We have achieved miracles on a shoestring! We are the only group that operates 4-4-0s

on the mainline and we have not one but three GNR stars in Nos.171, 85 and now 131. We can all share that pride as RPSI members whether active volunteers or simply sympathetic supporters.

Just a little about myself. I am a native of the city of Derry – so I'm from Londonderry! My mother was from Sligo and my father from Belfast so I'm a cross border institution. My earliest railway memories were of watching Lough Swilly trains skirting the beaches en route to Buncrana, of being given a cab ride round Victoria Road station on a CDR Tank Loco which had just hauled a train from Strabane and of watching mixed gauge wagons and vans being shunted on Derry's docks mostly by tractors but sometimes by our loco RH Smyth (aka Harvey). In 1971 I worked as a bus conductor on the Lough Swilly which was then thriving despite the troubles.

In 1972 I was ordained in the Church of Ireland. After two curacies I served as rector in Rathfriland & Ballyward, then Gilnahirk, Belfast, before moving to Armagh in 1990. It was there I was very happy to spend over half my ministry until my retirement to Portrush in 2013. Apparently those who coaxed - or press ganged – me into accepting the Chairmanship thought my experience of chairing assorted church committees would equip me for the job!

In September my first task as Chairman was to travel to Dublin to join the Emerald Isle Express on the first leg of its



The new RPSI Chairman, Canon John McKegney, gets to grips with the levers of power in Whitehead Excursion signal box on 25th October. (Photo: A Allison)

weeklong tour to Rosslare. Our Blue and Cream Cravens coaches looked magnificent both inside and out and they reflected great credit on the Dublin based members of the Society. The, mostly American, visitors were hugely impressed.

Not long after that on 25 October I was thrust into the limelight for the opening of Whitehead Railway Museum. This is a magnificent project which will surely become a 'must see' attraction of the growing Northern Ireland tourist offering. It couldn't have been achieved without huge commitment by Society members and the support of the funders who put their faith in them to deliver.

Extensive coverage in the local media and more recently in the national railway press was gratifying to see, with five pages in Railway Magazine and four in Heritage Railway. It is my hope that this will prove to be a magnet to draw in visitors from outside Northern Ireland. The new Museum complements the recently opened Gobbins Cliff Path and enriches Whitehead's amenities.

To get the best out of WRM we will have to continue to learn the new skills of running a first rate tourist attraction and this will involve both new skills and new volunteers. It is a challenge and an invitation to all members and friends who could find a fascinating new activity

for their spare time.

At the opening of the Museum our President Lord O'Neill looked resplendent in his authentic uniform of a Belfast and Northern Counties Railway Stationmaster.

Full credit must be given to the 2020 Committee, which steered that project to completion on behalf of the Board, and especially to my predecessor, Denis Grimshaw, for the vision that led to the creation of Whitehead Railway Museum.

Further recognition has come with the Whitehead Railway Museum's nomination for the Sir Peter Manisty award at the Heritage Railway Association Annual Ceremony which is to take place in Birmingham in February.

As Chairman I have been really

impressed by the level of commitment and expertise in the Society. It takes a huge deal of engineering experience to keep steam trains running on Irish mainlines and teams of dedicated volunteers to meet the needs and expectations of our passengers and the visitors to our Museum and Cafe. We have an offering of which we can be justly proud.

Steam and Jazz, Santa, Mince Pie, Sea Breeze and other such trains do not happen without much planning and preparations while the annual May railtour alone is an immense operation only made possible by members who anticipate problems and overcome them. In all this we greatly appreciate the willing and helpful cooperation and support given by management and staff of Iarnród Éireann and Translink NI



No.4 runs light engine and bunker first over the River Barrow at Monasterevin on 18th June to meet No.85 at Portarlinton and work the Steam Dreams charter on to Westport. (Photo: M Crockett)

Railways. Without them we simply could not function.

An important public face of the Society is the series of monthly meetings in Orangefield organised and introduced by the inimitable Charles Friel. Attendance at these meetings is amongst the largest of any society in these islands and they never fail to be interesting.

Most of the work of the Board is concerned with matters which, though vital, do not make headlines. The most major challenge facing the Board, as I write, is to develop our governance structures to make us both more responsive and accountable. We have been advised by Dr Roger Courtney who wrote a perceptive Review of our Governance which has established guidelines for the future.

In November 2016 Ruth Harper was appointed General Manager to draw together the many elements which go to make up the Society and the Museum and take initiatives to enhance our offering. It is most unfortunate that Ruth has recently been unwell. I wish her well and hope that she may soon be able to resume her duties. In the meantime we

are delighted that Siobhan Dillon, who was our 2020 Project Manager, has agreed to serve as our part time Acting General Manager.

It is invidious to single out individuals but I cannot help express my admiration to our Secretary, Paul McCann, who not only serves the Board with great efficiency but also maintains members' records, puts out the regular email bulletins that keep members up to date, answers all sorts of queries and never seems to flap!

I still feel very much the 'new boy' and I am sure there are many members who could do a far better job than I! However I have accepted the challenge and I feel humbled that members have put their trust in me and I hope you will not be disappointed in the months that lie ahead.

Finally let me parody President Kennedy and suggest that you "ask not what your Society can do for you but what you can do for your Society".

We have a great Society; together let us make it even greater.

Once again the Board spent a large proportion of the year's meetings engaged in anything and everything but running trains, that being left to the ever-competent operations committees in Belfast and Dublin.

With plans proceeding ever more quickly towards the opening of the Whitehead Railway Museum in March, things became increasingly hectic. An added burden was the recruitment and management of employed personnel, something for which it soon became obvious that we were not fully equipped!

Board: During the year the Board said goodbye to Denis Grimshaw, who retired as Chairman after seeing the Whitehead development through to completion. Also to Stephen Comiskey, who stepped down from the role of Carriage & Wagon Officer in Dublin in order to return to college. To them go many thanks.

Happily, John McKegney responded to having his arm severely twisted and was co-opted to take on the Chairman's role. Likewise, Michael McMahon offered his services to strengthen the Board, and was subsequently appointed as Treasurer.

Thus, at present, the governing board is:

Chairman: John McKegney

Vice-Chairman: David Houston

Secretary: Paul McCann

Treasurer: Michael McMahon

Directors:

Eileen Armstrong

Mervyn Darragh

Edward Friel

Bill Garrioch

Dermot Mackie

Fergus McDonnell

Joe McKeown

Phillip Newell

Peter Scott

Mark Walsh

The Posts of Special Responsibility to the Secretary for the year were: Charles Friel (Belfast Meetings); Mark Kennedy (Curatorial Adviser); Ciaran McAteer (Legal Advisor); Barry Carse (Dublin area membership queries).

Developments: As part of the Heritage Lottery Fund programme, we engaged employees to undertake the roles of General Manager, Events & Marketing Co-ordinator and Education and Interpretation Co-ordinator. The latter two persons left during the year and have not been replaced. A number of other issues relating to staff arose during the year and we are actively seeking to add human resources know-how to the Board. Can you help?

Elsewhere, the Museum opened for tours in March, and a pool of guides was set up to conduct visitors around the exhibits. At present, we are taking steps

to address a few issues which prevent visitors guiding themselves around. To that end, an 'app', which can be downloaded to phones and tablets, was launched in October 2017. Visitors will be able to use it to navigate themselves around the Museum.

Obviously, with any new build, there were snagging issues and our Project Manager, Siobhan Dillon, has worked tirelessly to have these attended to.

The official opening of the Museum took place on 25th October 2017, and it was a great relief to all involved to get to this point after a number of years of very hard work by many volunteers. At the opening ceremony the opportunity was taken, rightfully, to honour Denis Grimshaw for his untiring leadership over about seven years to get the Museum to this stage; he was presented with an honorary life membership.

Members of the Curatorial Committee remained busy overseeing the interpretative content of the Museum. There was an added burden this past year as it is time for official re-accreditation of the Society as a registered museum.

The Tea Room in the station building opened during the year, and has had nothing but excellent reviews ever since. Well done to supervisor Jackie Webster and her staff there.

If you are in a position to visit the Museum, then please do; the feedback is great and we all want to see it become a great success. Have a tour, then a cuppa or meal in the Tea Room – a great way to

spend a morning or afternoon!

Connolly Shed has continued to be an excellent aid to working trains out of Dublin, and facilities there were continually enhanced during the year.

Governance: As part of the funding for Whitehead, the funders have insisted on better governance by the Board. To this end, we are in negotiations with external bodies to see how we can progress this. A solution might well see external directors recruited, having expertise not readily available within the Society, e.g. human resources, as already alluded to.

It will also be necessary to set up a 'Management' committee, probably chaired by the General Manager or a designated Board member, to oversee the day-to-day management of the Society.

These matters are ongoing and any outcome will be presented to members in due course.

Finance: Money worries are perennial, and 2017 was no different. With the major spending on the buildings complete, they had to be fitted out and this saw a significant drain on finances as not all of the work was supported by our funders. Furthermore, expenditure on salaries increased significantly, despite being partly grant-aided.

Nevertheless, our core business of running trains continues to be very successful, with most trains sold out well in advance, added to by healthy charter and film business north and south.

Volunteers: There were a number of new

faces this year, especially after the appeal for Whitehead tour guides early in the year.

Volunteer Co-ordinator, Eileen Armstrong, is encouraging as many of our members as possible to join the ranks. With the new premises at Whitehead, Connolly and Inchicore the facilities for working members have never been better.

General: The new website was launched in March. It has proved a big hit with the public, but maybe not so much with railway enthusiast members. It is still being worked on and many of the features which members enjoyed on the old system will hopefully reappear in due course.

There are now separate Twitter pages for the RPSI and Whitehead Railway Museum. Facebook pages exist separately for the main Society, Dublin

and the Museum. Also, the public email list, with over 5,600 email addresses, helps to sell our trains without resort to paid advertising.

Members: It is gratifying to report an increase in membership numbers in 2017 – up from 969 to 1,010. Most of these were in the Junior and Adult categories, as the Seniors remain at 53% of the total membership. Hopefully, this is a trend that will continue.

Thank You: As always, thanks must go to all who have served on the Board throughout the year. The burden was particularly heavy in 2017, so thank you also to all who served on one (or more) of the various sub-committees.

Once more, thank-you to the railway company management and crews for their help in making the trains the success they were in 2017!



It's 23rd December and, loco preparation complete, some crew in a variety of dress relax before the Santa trains get underway. Adam Lohoff is dressed to go on the track; James Friel's coat has thoroughly inspected all No.85's lesser inspected areas, David Orr's overalls have trimmed the coal and Noel Playfair is dressed for driving trains. In fact Noel Playfair is nearly always dressed for driving trains.(Photo: J Cassells)

No.4 LMSNCC WT-class 2-6-4T mixed traffic loco, 1947.

In 2001, major overhaul of No.4 was completed – this included extensive boiler repairs and attention to bearings and running gear. Also major rebuilding of side tanks and repairs to the bunker. In 2014-2015 the loco got minor boiler repairs and minimal attention to running gear, with certain items noted for definite attention the next time round. Items now on the list are renewal of tyres and valve liners, also more extensive repairs to the bunker and tank under the coal space. There is a much more extensive list than last time round. No.4 recently suffered from an unexpected spate of flue tube leakage at the firebox tubeplate, a problem that was eventually cured by renewing the flue tubes – a job which HEI (the RPSI Engineering subsidiary) carried out at the Society's base at Connolly loco shed in Dublin. No.4 was completed in time to operate the Dublin – Maynooth "Santa" trains.

No.85 GNR(I) V-class 4-4-0 compound express passenger loco "Merlin", 1932.

"Merlin" has become the "old faithful" of the Society's Whitehead based trains and has worked reliably, with the unfortunate exception of an overheated big end. Although the big end was an immediate show stopper, it was actually dealt with quite expeditiously at Connolly shed, for which both volunteers and HEI staff deserve credit. The loco shed at Connolly has been a major asset permitting running repairs to be tackled

in Dublin which in the past would have required the loco to be hauled to Inchicore or Whitehead. Whitehead provides the machining and other back up services and inevitably there is the additional toing and froing with personnel and equipment.

Like No.4, No.85 also requires attention to known items which are approaching the worn out stage. Piston heads and glands are noted in the repair book. The boiler will need its 10-year overhaul with attention to stays and renewal of the regulator valve, together with the usual inspection and retubing regime. Like No.4, "Merlin" has been on the Santa duties and at the time of writing has just operated the annual "Mince Pie" train Belfast to Dublin and return.

No.131 GNR(I) Q-class 4-4-0 express passenger loco, 1901 rebuilt 1920.

Major restoration of the loco was funded by the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, administered by "GROW South Antrim", to whom our best thanks are due.. The tender (No.37) was subsequently restored by the RPSI. The loco is currently undergoing fitting of TPWS equipment and commissioning. Hopefully it will be in traffic early in 2018. Early indications are that the loco should be a lively performer and if so will live up to the GNR(I) Q-class reputation. Formerly called "Uranus" when green liveried and before rebuild, the name will not be applied.



On her first running-in trials with a train on 05th November, No.131 ran a hot bogie axlebox. By 10th November the loco has been placed over the wheeldrop pit. The winches on either side have lowered the leading wheelset onto a trolley in the pit, on which it has been slid sideways towards the workshop, winched from the pit again and moved through the doors. Finally the workshop crane lifted it into the wheel lathe. RPSI / HEI attention had No.131 back together again and running smoothly on the mainline on 19th November. (Photo: Editor)

No.171 GNR(I) S-Class 4-4-0 express passenger loco, 1913 rebuilt 1938.

Loco No.171 also received funding assistance from GROW South Antrim. It was partly overhauled by a contractor who unfortunately was unable to complete the work. The Society is left with the completion. The good news is that most of the materials necessary have been acquired. Major work outstanding is overhaul of pistons and valves including fitting of a new valve liner, renewal of crown stays, retubing, refurbishment of big ends and general reassembly, testing and commissioning. Also the mandatory fitting of AWS/TPWS/OTMR and other electrics.

No.461 DSER K2-class 2-6-0 goods engine, 1922.

No.461 has always produced a mixed bag regarding performance. Steaming has sometimes been abysmal – on other occasions surprisingly competent. Maybe we expect too much from what is basically a lightly built goods loco with a replacement boiler which has reduced pressure and heating surface compared with that intended by the designers. No.461 is at present approaching the end of its current boiler tube life, and a decision will have to be made as to its future.

Locos in store

No.186 GSWR J15-class 0-6-0 goods loco, 1879, rebuilt with Z class boiler.

Currently out of traffic and taking pride of place in the exhibition area of the carriage shed. No.186 always excelled itself as convenient to operate, reliable

and well proven for punching above its weight. Even so its size precludes it from the heavier trains and tighter timings now in demand, so for the moment a rest in the Museum is its immediate outlook.

No.184 GSWR J15-class 0-6-0 goods loco, 1880.

A sister engine to No.186, but closer to original condition, having the original “101 class” boiler and appropriate tender. Out of traffic now for many years, No.184 needs a new cylinder block and attention to the boiler. The tender is in need of extensive refurbishment. The loco is currently in store and would need considerable attention to render it fit even for display purposes.

SLNCR 0-6-4 mixed traffic loco “Lough Erne”. (Later numbered 27 by Ulster Transport Authority)

Surprisingly, No.27 is the youngest of all our steam locos – “Lough Erne” and “Lough Melvin” being the last steam locos delivered to an Irish railway. By all accounts Messrs Beyer Peacock who built them never actually got paid until the locos were acquired by the UTA upon closure of the SLNCR in 1957. No.27 figured in the early years of the RPSI and operated to Larne and Antrim, but has been out of use now for many years. Like No.184 it would require much attention even for display, and extensive refurbishment if it was ever to be returned to traffic. Also, like Nos.184 and 186, it is not considered appropriate for current main line operations.

Shunting locos

No.3 Ex-Guinness 0-4-0ST shunting loco, 1919. (Usually referred to as "3BG")

The Guinness loco is currently on Whitehead shunting and train ride duties. It has been in traffic now for a year, following minor repairs which included renewal of part of the throat plate, new smokebox and new coal bunker. This loco is proving very valuable in training steam loco footplate reps of the near future during these (often monster) shunting operations as it fills a valuable niche that was essentially empty for 4½ years between withdrawal in February 2012 and re-instatement in October 2016. Although No.186 proved almost as effective for the first two of those years, she did have her own mainline duties to be getting on with and required twice the time to steam raise.

No.3 Ex Londonderry Port and Harbour 0-6-0 shunting loco, 1928.

The "Derry engine" has been out of traffic since the Larne line relaying contract and a holiday in Downpatrick. It needs renewal of crown stays together with other boiler and mechanical repairs.

County Donegal Railway Class 5 2-6-4T locos

There are now two ex-CDR locos at Whitehead. No.5 "Drumboe" has been undergoing overhaul for County Donegal Railway Restoration. "Interreg" funding assisted in overhauling the frames and working parts to operational standard, but the boiler needs major rebuilding and has yet to receive attention. More

recently, sister engine No.4 "Meenglas" arrived for a cosmetic make-over, organised by "Destined" – a voluntary society set up to help people with learning difficulties and which has the use of the Derry Museum premises – but with far sighted aspiration to include the railway museum in their plans.

Sadly both locos lay outside since the closure of the CDR at the end of 1959, and have suffered every manner of deprivation in consequence. "Meenglas" is to be rendered presentable for display purposes only, but nothing will be done to preclude eventual return to active service – some day!

58 Loco Project:

Work is progressing as time permits on rebuilding of boiler No.24. The "G8AS modified" boiler was fitted to the LMSNCC Moguls and 2-6-4 tank locos, although there were detail differences. (The Moguls did not have the later rocking grate as fitted to the tank engines, for example.) We have received some useful items by way of donation to the project – connecting rod, return crank rod and chimney being some of the noteworthy items. (Has anyone else anything of significance which they would like to contribute? I never cease to be amazed at what comes to light even after so many years – the last of the Moguls was broken up in 1967 and all of the tank engines except No.4 had gone by 1970.)

2017 began for the Dublin based diesel fleet with the transfer of 134 from our base in Connolly shed to Inchicore. The move was to facilitate the start of the overhaul of this locomotive to return it to mainline service.

Prior to the move, a lot of planning and assessment was undertaken with the locomotive under the supervision of IE CME Peter Smyth and his team. When the locomotive first arrived in Inchicore the locomotive was subject to very detailed examinations by various departments to work out how best and efficiently the work would be carried out.

It was decided that the bogies would be the first area to be tackled. As there are no slave bogies available, once the bogies came out the locomotive would effectively be stranded on its stands. The locomotive was lifted in the FCR shop in Inchicore and placed on stands. The bogies were then moved down to 'Diesel 1' shop for full deep cleaning. Once years of accumulated dirt was removed the four traction motors were then removed from each axle.

The motors then went on a road journey to Green Net in Co. Cork. This company undertakes all the traction motor work for IE and is well experienced with this type of motor. We are very grateful to Green Net MD Pat Sullivan who, from the very start, said he wanted to assist the Society with this restoration. The motors are now undergoing a total rebuild and will be as good as new when

returned to the locomotive. Green Net will also overhaul the main and auxiliary generators which are vital in the provision of the power to the traction motors.

Back in Inchicore, the bogies were stripped and various items identified as in need of replacement. We are fortunate that the spares, secured when the locomotives were first purchased, produced a number of items which will be used. The axles and wheels were subject to ultrasonic testing and one axle was found to be life expired. Fortunately the axles on the 071 are identical to those on the 121 so we will be able to acquire a new axle and wheels to replace the bad one. Work is well underway on the overhaul of the brake linkage and all associated items. Once the overhaul of the motors is complete, the overhauled bogies will go back under and the locomotive will then move to the Ramps shop for a rebuild of the bodywork and structure. It is planned that the cab will be fully stripped out, with a new floor and supports going in.

The large radiator will also be removed and fully overhauled by specialist contractor. All CAWS and communication equipment will also be overhauled and certified before the locomotive returns to service. The critical brake valves and the full brake system will also undergo rigorous testing and certification.



Work is well underway with the overhaul of 134 in Inchicore works. The GM 645 power unit is in good order despite its age. It will undergo a thorough inspection and have component replaced as required. The loco is on works bogies, its own having been dismantled for refurbishment. (Photo: G Mooney)

It is planned that the locomotive will return to as close as possible its original appearance. Over the years various changes took place which altered the appearance of these locomotives. Where possible, these will be 'retro fitted' to give as much of an original appearance.

As the project involves so many departments in Inchicore a dedicated project co-ordinator was appointed to the overhaul by Peter Smyth. Shane Campbell now looks after the management and implementation of work in Inchicore. Such is the progress with the project that the RPSI and CME dept. have monthly meetings to discuss the work completed and underway and to plan the next phase of works.

Without question, the enthusiasm and interest this project has attracted from the staff in Inchicore has to be acknowledged by the Society. If it was not for their help it would be a long time

before such significant progress could be made with the restoration of our 121 class locomotive.

The continuation of this project relies on support for the diesel railtours run specifically to raise funds for 134. So far several of these have operated; he highlight was the Munster Double, which featured a pair of 071 class locomotives running in multiple for the first time ever from Dublin to Cork and Tralee. Over 400 passengers travelled on this railtour which greatly helped to finance restoring 134. This was a new record for RPSI diesel railtours and shows that there is a demand to see 134 back on the mainline. Please continue to support these railtours and it won't be too long before we see 134 back on the mainline!

Since my last report, the 'Diesel Department' as we seem to be now called has been busy, but things have not progressed as quickly as I would like, mostly due to lack of manpower, money, and of course time being spent on operational duties. Our main focus has been GM B142, but other work has been carried out on "Carlow".

23 'Planet' – ex Irish Shell, built by FC Hibberd & Co. In store. We had intended reviving 23 but, with limited resources, it was decided to put this on the long finger. Engine, gearbox, bodywork, wiring, painting are all work which could be done when other projects complete.

No 1 ex COMHLUCHT SIÚCRE ÉIREANN (Irish Sugar) 'Carlow Diesel', 88DS built by Ruston Hornsby

Undergoing light repairs out of traffic. Investigations are continuing regarding the gearbox in "Carlow" – I have been in contact with some heritage railways which use similar 88DS locos, and have a few things to try. The gearbox maladies that plagued the locomotive in the past are thought to be due to atmospheric air getting drawn in to the high pressure oil system of the gearbox. New gaskets and seals have been made and special oil, designed for use in Steam turbines, has been put in to the gearbox. This oil is very difficult to aerate, and dissipates aeration quickly. Hopefully with the seals all replaced and this oil employed, reliability will improve.

Otherwise the loco is in good condition, both engines work well and the body is sound, only needing the paint freshened up. Repaint is planned in Spring 2018.

The thought is to revive "Carlow" for use on short shunts where it isn't economical to run up 142 for 30 minutes of work, or indeed steam raise 3BG, for example pulling out, turning and coaling No.85. It is also probably more suitable for use in the carriage shed, where 3BG or B142 cause havoc with the fire alarm systems and the white roofing panels.

Carlow is due to be released from the disconnected 5-road early 2018.

B142 – ex CIE/IE, built by General Motors Electro-Motive Division (EMD) La Grange, Illinois.

In traffic, (yard only). B142 was stopped in March 2017 due to a corrosion build-up between a cab window unit and the body, which lead to the window becoming loose. Work on this and some other corrosion repairs were carried out.

All four cab doors have had their outer-skins replaced by HEI. The doors were in a terrible state thanks to poor corrosion protection and Whitehead's sea air. On first inspection repairing the doors seemed like an easy job; just cut out a sheet of metal and screw it on - in reality 55-year old hinges and locks don't like being dismantled and proved stubborn and difficult to line up.

The bottom of Cab No.1 has had all the rot cut out and new metal welded in, along with repairs to the cab frame in this area. Various sections of the side panels have been repaired or replaced.

In June 2017, the engine oil was analysed, and the decision was made to change the oil due to higher than normal levels of zinc, which is can be dangerous to the silver wrist pin bearings in the EMD 8-645-E 2-stroke diesel engine as fitted to B142. This is not a cheap or simple operation as the engine requires 2 barrels of oil (over 400 litres!) for a single oil change. The coolant system was also drained and flushed and approx. 275 litres of antifreeze mixture replaced.

November 2017 saw the locomotive return to traffic after the body repairs

B142's paint has suffered badly and has

failed in various areas, particularly on the roof leading to significant areas of corrosion. This has been repaired, and the locomotive is currently in various colours of undercoat. Final painting is currently on hold until the weather and temperatures improve. The locomotive will be repainted in a different livery to what has been worn since going in to preservation, and probably hasn't worn for around 40 years. I was keen to have the 1972 CIE 'Supertrain' livery represented amongst the preserved 141 class locos – it was the only one not represented as of time of writing; B142 will be renumbered back to 142, contemporaneous with the 1972 livery.

Otherwise the locomotive remains reliable and only required minor repairs during the year, mostly replacement of worn electrical switches when needed.



It's 18th March and a short train has been prepared to run train rides during an Irish Railway Record Society visit to the new Whitehead Railway Museum. Unusually it is diesel with B142 in charge. Not so unusually, it is driven by Ryan Downey who has ample help from (L-R) Alan McKnight, Sam Hall, Alistair Campbell, James Robinson and Edward Friel, the guard for the day. (Photo: C Friel)

As usual the year began with the annual inspection of the coaches. It was with regret that I had to reduce the running set down to six coaches for most of the year due to a variety of reasons. In general the coaches behaved themselves very well over 2017 with very little of interest to report. One notable and welcome excursion was the joint diesel railtour to Sligo, which was a worthy substitute for Rosslare. All being well the Mk2s should make it to Rosslare or possibly Kilkenny in the next two years or so.



Sligo on 09th September and the Mk2s have made it here from Whitehead, all the way with NIR GM 112 on the MRSI/RPSI "East Coaster (gone west)". (Photo: J Cassells)

Most of the year was spent on the continued overhaul of BSO 460. Work undertaken to this vehicle has included

bogie and brake overhaul, installation of a new generator, rewiring, repainting, re-upholstery and the complete rebuild of one end from the floor up. Excellent use was made of our new air driven rivet gun which has completely revolutionised pop riveting and makes window frame overhaul less of an arduous task. She is now outshopped in the NIR red upholstery instead of the old BR blue, making a pleasant change. 460 finally re-entered traffic on the first Santa run of the season and has performed very satisfactorily. Her new generator was finally commissioned over the Christmas week and powered the train on the Mince Pie run, creating an unusual atmosphere of peace in the business end of 463.

In the background, work has been continuing on ex CIE Mk2D 5106, now RPSI 304. Work to date on 304 has included the reskinning of each end, the renewal of vestibule flooring, the complete reglazing and renewal of window rubber and completion of the usual side body repairs. Re-wiring, fitting of CDL and preparation for painting is all ongoing, though all things being equal I hope to see 304 enter service with the RPSI in mid-2018. Jobs earmarked for Spring 2018 include external and internal painting, seat fitting, upholstery and brake gear overhaul. If any of the above jobs are of interest to potential volunteers, please let me know.

At the time of writing work is rapidly progressing on the former GSWR ballast

wagon 8309. This wagon is subject to a grant from the Northern Ireland Museums Council. Work to this vehicle has included searching for - and locating! - the original bearing brasses, renewing rotten steelwork, casting new axle box covers and replacement works plate and freeing up the brake and ballast dropping mechanism. What should have been an easy and straightforward task to replace the bearings took much head scratching and mulling before it was decided to lift the vehicle off its wheels using the gantries. This in theory was to be easy but 40 plus years of adhesive crud soon prolonged the process. However, by the end of the afternoon in the fading light we had lifted the vehicle, cleaned the journals, replaced the bearings and given everything a good clean and generous lubrication.

The plan is to paint the wagon in GSWR livery. Details are unfortunately very scarce, however I am fortunate to have access to a scale GSWR goods wagon model built by the GSR Chief Draughtsman H J A Beaumont in Inchicore in the early 1900s and painted in genuine GSWR dark grey livery. In addition, a number of photos of GSWR wagons have come to light from various sources that will allow us to accurately portray lettering that was applied to the vehicle. As regards completion, we hope that the wagon should be finished in mid-February.

Work this year has also included our most important and historical vehicle, ex Rosslare boat train 861. Work has not progressed as quickly as I would have liked, however we have now removed the vast majority of rotten timber and have treated about a third of the vehicle for rot. We have also examined the chassis and running gear and have found nothing of any real concern which is a relief. I hope to push on with this vehicle in early 2018 and would invite those who have not done so, to donate to the appeal or spend a few hours working on the vehicle.

Our steam heat Dutch van 462 is currently enjoying a sojourn at York Road awaiting a gap in the queue for the under-floor lathe. It is hoped that this strategic vehicle will return to us in early 2018, once the woes of leaf fall season are concluded for another year.

Plans for the coming year will involve starting to upgrade the interior of the Mk2s with new upholstery and paint and/or varnish in addition to trying to push a few more bogies through the workshop. To date, Joe and Ian have done an excellent job on the coaches, both externally and internally, which has begun to receive very favourable feedback. Hopefully, subject to volunteer availability we will begin to overhaul one of the ex-Gatwick vehicles to join the running rake in early 2019.



This is the newly applied ex-NIR red moquette of Mk2 460 on 20th January 2018, having survived a baptism of fire on the 2017 Santa trains. Always a popular coach, it is good to have it back after a five year withdrawal. 460 is now fitted with a generator in its van, giving vital alternative to that in 463. (Photo: A Lohoff)

Having reviewed the original Mk2 development plan (2003) we have now managed to acquire enough Mk2s to adequately cover our future requirements though there is one major exception – a second dining vehicle. President's saloon 5408 is not a candidate as it is to run unaltered, as per the agreement with IE. However, the question is - do we purchase another vehicle and gut it, or do we convert a Gatwick or another existing vehicle? One major constraint to bear in mind is that space at Whitehead is very limited and it is highly likely that a further cull of redundant items will be required to make life both easier and more manageable at Whitehead.

The last year has been an extremely challenging one, and the next few years are going to be even more so for the C&W Department. This is due in part to an unfortunate period of carriage asset underspend in the last few years by the Society. I can only hope that the running rake will benefit from internal storage and enhanced overhaul facilities, in the near future.

Finally, I would like to thank Peter, Brian, Mark, James, Adam, Thomas, Alan, Bobby, Sam, David, Paul, Andrew, Joe Cassells, Ian Wilson, Dermot & Co and Johnny & the E Squad for all their help throughout the year. Without them, the RPSI could not have run our northern based trains.

The past year proved to be very busy with passenger trains, locomotive running in trials, light engine workings, Gatwick carriage transfer moves and in-house trains.

The season began on Sunday 8th January when No.4 was worked light engine from Dublin to Whitehead to enable a cab radio to be fitted as required by Irish Rail. The locomotive returned on Sunday 19th March. Also on 8th January the four Gatwick carriages and full Mk2 brake that had been stored at Lisburn for six years were moved slowly to Adelaide engineer's yard for temporary storage. The following Sunday 8946 and 8948 were taken to Whitehead by GM112.

The Easter Eggspress trains hauled by

No.85 operated on Easter Monday and Tuesday 17th and 18th April; two trains both days. These popular trains were again fully loaded but, as for much of the operating season, the passenger capacity was limited to the six functional carriages.

A special charter for the Old Newry Society, a single evening journey from Whitehead to Newry operated on Saturday 22nd April. The train was worked by No.85 and, after snaking its way through the Belfast to Lisburn railcar traffic, made good time to Newry. This included for the first time in some years a set down stop at Poyntzpass.

The first weekend in May saw the traditional enthusiasts' big railtour, the



No.4 has just come across the River Lagan and approaches Belfast Central to work the Steam Enterprise of 04th June. (Photo: J Cassells)

"Shannon and Suir". The positioning operation with Mk2 carriages to Dublin on Thursday 4th May was hauled by No.85. Unfortunately the locomotive was failed, this not being noticed until being lit up in Connolly shed early on the Saturday. Somewhere between Dundalk and Dublin an oil cap unscrewed itself and allowed the oil to escape from the centre big end bearing.

The popular Friday diesel railtour, the South Kerry, operated to Killarney on Friday 5th May hauled by GM o86. After an unfortunate Dublin delay due to the Cravens set being unintentionally blocked in at Inchicore, time was made up and, along with excellent time keeping on the return, made for an excellent day out.

The main Shannon and Suir Railtour featuring Limerick as the overnight stop on 8th and 9th May comprised a circular route, out via Athlone and Athenry and return by Waterford and Kilkenny. With only No.4 available it worked well with some fine running to Limerick. On Sunday there was a tight platform dwell time slot at Waterford, the Belmond train being scheduled to arrive shortly after our arrival. The locomotive was serviced both at Waterford and Kilkenny. A special word of thanks for an excellent run back to Dublin and in the circumstances a 30-minute down on schedule was most acceptable.

Monday 10th May saw the NIR crew take No.4 and the Mk2 set steadily to Drogheda and on to Dundalk where water was taken. An on time arrival occurred at Belfast Central and

Whitehead. No.85's major problem aside this was the end of an excellent weekend of railway travel.

The month of June has fast become the busiest operating month. This began with a Steam Enterprise on Sunday 4th June. No.4 worked the train with a fine outward run. On the return steaming became increasingly difficult due to some poor quality coal coming down the shovel plate. This made life difficult for the crew resulting in the train being around 30 minutes down on return to Belfast.



Turning as it (mostly) was; No.4 is in a quiet Great Victoria Street, using the triangle there to turn, during the southbound light engine move on 11th June. (Photo: Editor)

Three Steam and Jazz trains operated on Fridays 9th, 23rd and 30th June. The first and last worked to Whitehead Excursion while, due to a film production company taking over the platform at Whitehead, the second train worked to Portadown. The Bourbon Swing Band provided fine entertainment for the passengers. No.4 worked the first operation and No.85 the others.

To meet Steam Dreams charter

requirements from Dublin No.4 worked south light engine on Sunday 11th June.

The latter part of the Steam Dreams week involved Belfast. On Tuesday 20th June, after the carriages had been worked to Dublin by GM112, No.85 and train departed mid-afternoon to Belfast. The train took water at Dundalk and was overtaken by the 15.20 Enterprise. Some time was lost at Lisburn as the locomotive could not draw forward until a local working departed from platform 3. Arrival in Belfast was about 15 minutes down on the schedule. The following day involved a steam working to Bangor and Portadown. The planned trip to Portrush had to be cancelled at short due to an engineer's works over run to the bridge at Crumlin. The train and passengers returned to Dublin as planned behind GM112. The day was not over for the

trains support crew as it had to return to Whitehead, arriving there around midnight thirty. For those lucky to be on board they enjoyed a fantastic all green signals non-stop run Dublin to Belfast Central.

A Bangor Belle operated successfully on Sun 25th June with No.85.

No.461 worked light engine from Dublin to Whitehead on Sunday 2nd July, the purpose being to examine the engine with a view to re-newing its tubes.

A fourth Steam and Jazz train operated behind No.85 to Whitehead Excursion via a Lisburn stop on Friday 7th July.

After some years absence, Whitehead in-house train rides this year operated independently on Saturday's 15th, 22nd, and 29th July and also on 5th August



No.85 heads the second Portrush Flyer of the year into Platform 3, Portrush on 06th August. (Photo: J Cassells)

combined with the annual Whitehead Food Festival. The latter date gave us 709 passengers; significantly more than the 577 of the other three dates combined and shows the benefit of operating in conjunction with other events. 3BG covered all these trains along with the most welcome return, for the first time since 2013, of LMSNCC 68 and GNRI brake van 81, informally known as "Ivan". Variable weather was had on every day, with the brake van stove being hastily fired up on 5th August to dry out colleagues of the guard who, along with the outside café seating being trialled and some unlucky birds of prey that were tethered on the football pitch, were the subject of an extremely vicious downpour just at opening time.

An intense Portrush Flyer programme was agreed with trains scheduled into

Portrush on five consecutive Sundays starting on 30th July. The trains operated but unfortunately the year saw the first use of the new signalling system on the Portrush Branch. At the moment only one train is permitted to work the Branch at a time. The Society was informed only one steam visit to Portrush would be permissible on the day. Therefore No.85 had to run round and depart empty to Coleraine shortly after the passengers had disembarked. On the return passengers were brought by a strengthened service train to Coleraine to resume their journey by steam.

The fifth and final Steam and Jazz train with No.85 operated on Friday 25th August. All the jazz trains were sold out.

Saturday 9th September saw further train



They're back! GNR(I) 20-ton brake van 81 "Ivan" and LMSNCC 68 make their entrance under the direction of guard Edward Friel on the 15th July Train Rides. (Photo: A Davidson)

rides with 3BG, 68 and "Ivan" at Whitehead for European Heritage Open Day. This was a day where we were nearly over-run with visitors, but fortunately 3BG did not wish to be kept quiet as trainee fireman George Ebrill was more than up to the task. Congratulations to everyone present for coping so admirably.

The Society in conjunction with the Modern Railway Society of Ireland operated a joint diesel railtour on Saturday 9th September from Belfast. The East Coaster planned and agreed for Wexford and Rosslare had to be diverted at short notice to Sligo due to an overlooked engineering possession near Bray Head. The train comprising NIR GM112 and six carriages was then diverted to Sligo. The Connolly guards are passed for Sligo. Departure off Sligo was delayed due to a brake release

problem that was quickly resolved. A stop at Ballymote was omitted which resulted in an on time return to Dublin. On the Belfast return some delays due to restricted progress through the suburban stations led up to a 10-minute delay on the return running schedule. However, all said and done it was a very pleasing tour. GM112 performed magnificently all day.

A further Steam Enterprise operated on Sunday 24th September. The train had a significant party from the Dundalk Railway Heritage Society who once again joined us for this train. Although it was not possible for the Society to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the "Enterprise" with a non-stop re-enactment, the run to Dublin was of the highest standard featuring one of the best climbs of the Wellington Bank and showing No.85 in top form. The non-



Turning as it (mostly) is; on 05th August No.3BG has reversed No.85 onto the Whitehead turntable. The shunter, Colin Stewart, emerges from between the engines as Adam Lohoff, 3BG's driver, awaits him to get clear and give the wave away. In the background the Editor waits to unscrew a locking bar, while Sam Hall walks away from the camera. Soon all those in shot and the same number again, will combine to push the table around.(Photo: J Cassells)

stop run from Dublin to Dundalk was the highlight of the return. This included two sparkling climbs of Rush and Kellystown banks. An anniversary well celebrated.

Early on the mornings of Sunday 15th October GM112 brought the remaining Gatwick set carriages, 8945 and 8947 plus full brake 8911 from Adelaide to Whitehead.

The ever popular Broomstick Belle was worked on Sunday 29th October with No.85 doing the honours. Two wicked witches (they did smile a lot) distributed seasonal themed goodie bags to the children. A welcome development was the opening of the Excursion Station building shop where merchandise sold quickly.

The locomotive department had requested a test run for No.461 and on completion of the Broomstick trains it worked the six carriage set to Belfast Central and return. The locomotives performance has been assessed. *[The records taken on No.461 on this 2017 date are indistinguishable from comparison runs it conducted against No.186 in 2013, to attempt to determine a reason for No.461's poor steaming. During steaming trials, the loco rep records boiler pressure, shovels fired, injector(s) on/off, degree of regulator and speed against wayside points, eg Trooperslane. No.186 was the winner by quite some margin whereas No.461 remains the only loco capable of sending Noel Playfair into a prolonged foul-mouthed frenzy! – Ed]*

The much anticipated return to traffic of GNR Q Class No.131 following an extensive renewal and re-construction of

a tender No.37 happened on Sunday 5th November. With all the necessary paper work and key electrics in place NIR granted the locomotive a Licence to Test. This permitted the locomotive to work to a reduced speed limit with the train being empty of passengers. The schedule, a light engine working to Carrickfergus followed by a repeat with five carriages was successfully completed. The locomotive and carriages worked to Belfast Central and return in the afternoon. On return the locomotive was found to be running an overheated bogie axle box. This was attended to in the following days.

A second test day for No.131 was arranged for Sunday 19th November, with two return runs to Belfast Central. The attended to bearing ran well. The opportunity was taken to undertake a formal brake performance test using a very compact GPS linked device borrowed at short notice from Irish Rail. The test was successful. At the time of writing the Society is in negotiation with NIR to have this locomotive approved for passenger traffic.

The annual Whitehead Victorian Street Fair was on Saturday 25th November and, at footplate crew request, No.131 was in use for novelty value. Anticipating high numbers and the possibility of requiring lighting, Mk2 coach 303 was used, it being a high capacity brake vehicle; unfortunately as the yard becomes increasingly full it becomes less feasible to retrieve brake-van "Ivan" for one-off events. The day was a great success and again shows the mutual benefit to the Society and the local



Quintessential Q: The rescued, rebuilt, refreshed, rejuvenated and reborn No.131 charges through Whiteabbey for Whitehead with the second of two proving runs from Belfast Central on 19th November. Take another look; what an achievement! (Photo: C Friel)

community association of scheduling our events together. At one stage visitors had to be turned away as there just wasn't the capacity. Being over-run with numbers is a nice problem to have.

With views that the Whitehead Sunday Santa operating days were proving too long with three return trains it was decided to curtail these to two each day. To maintain our 14 trains this required operating an extra day. The train hauled by No.85 worked to Whitehead on 2nd, 3rd, 9th, 16th, 17th and 23rd December and from Portadown to Lisburn on 10th December. As ever these popular trains sold out quickly. The St. John Ambulance cadets assisted Santa and were a credit to their organisation. The introduction of fully refurbished

passenger brake 460 for these trains strengthened the set to seven carriages.

For the first time in the Society's history we operated a train on New Year's Eve, the Mince Pie to Dublin. This proved to be a great day out with good train running, and convivial company; a fine way to end a very busy operating year.

As always a special word to NIR and Irish Rail for their support, and all who volunteered during the year in any way, to assist in making the trains happen and our customers welcome.

We thought we were doing well in 2016 when trains operated by Dublin Area Operations Committee (DAOC) carried no fewer than 11,370 passengers. But 2017 turned out to be even busier – with a total of 12,131 passengers carried on our trains. All going in the right direction thanks to the commitment of our volunteers and the co-operation and support of Irish Rail. A huge team effort.

While our operating season did not begin until March, the start of the year was still a busy time behind the scenes for the Carriage Preparation Team. The working set of Cravens coaches received a lot of attention at Inchicore Railway Works, where we were made feel most welcome.

Cravens 1506 and 1541 were the focus of most attention this year. The steam heating was serviced. Wall panels were re-varnished while tables and chairs were painted, ceilings washed and all seating re-upholstered.

These jobs completed, we were well set for our first outing of the year, The Midlander from Dublin to Maynooth on Sunday 18th March. Two trains were operated by Dublin-based locomotive No.461, while the train consisted of Cravens 1532, 1505, 1514 (bar) 1522 (diner) 1506, 1541 and BR Van 3173. Two trains were operated, the first carrying 293 passengers and the second 312.

On Saturday 8th April we ran the Marble Tribesman diesel special from Dublin Connolly to Galway, back to Kildare and

then on to Kilkenny. Motive power was GM o81 to Galway and Kilkenny and GM o88 back to Dublin from Kilkenny. Great running all day had us back in Dublin Connolly just five minutes down. We carried 255 passengers, 60% of whom were from GB.

We were out again on 17th April with the Dublin Riviera, two round trips from Dublin Pearse to Greystones. Steam locomotives Nos.4 and 461 were both lit up at Connolly Shed early in the morning and either could have operated the train. However, No.4 was chosen for the entire operation. The first train carried 273 passengers, the second trip 279 passengers. This was the first occasion upon which we had used Eventbrite, an online booking system. The system worked very well.

Our fourth trip of the year was to mark the 170th anniversary of the Dublin and Drogheda Railway reaching Howth in May 1847. On 28th May we operated three round trips, involving steam locomotives Nos.85 and 461. As there is no run round facility at Howth, GM o88 was used on alternate trips so that everyone had steam in one direction. Train One carried 295 passengers, train two carried 229 and the third train 268.

The opportunity was taken to use No.85, which had been repaired at Dublin Connolly after running a hot centre big end bearing on 4th May, en route from Whitehead to Dublin with the May tour train. The locomotive required running in before returning to the main line, so the



The "Midland Compound" of 03rd June brought No.85 to Maynooth for the first time; a vital destination for the loco to be able to get to if it is ever to work from Dublin for a prolonged period. (Photo: J Cassells)

Howth branch was ideal. According to the record books, it was only the second occasion ever that a Class V Compound had traversed the branch.

The "Midland Compound" from Dublin to Maynooth on 03rd June was our fifth outing of the year. After the Howth 170 trip it was established that all was still not well with No.85. The bearing was again taken down and dressed; the entire fire grate had to be removed to allow attention to be given to the lower stays inside the firebox. Both the big end and grate were refitted to the locomotive on the Thursday before the trip.

On the Saturday morning No.85 left the shed tentatively for a series of low speed LE trips to help bed in the bearing. This

took Merlin onto new ground for a V Class Compound. First the loco headed to Clonsilla and then ran two return trips from Clonsilla to Dunboyne/M3 Parkway. Once back on shed a full examination of the bearing indicated that all had gone well.

No.85 backed onto the Cravens on Platform 3, Dublin Connolly and departed on time for Maynooth with 220 passengers on board. Stops were made at Navan Road Parkway and Clonsilla to check the engine, and the train arrived back in Connolly on time. The Society would like to thank Irish Rail for its assistance in the planning of this operation and for clearance to operate No.85 to M3 Parkway at such short notice. Three firsts for the RPSI with



During the "Shannon & Suir" Railtour, the RPSI's Joe McKeown and Gerry Mooney flank Irish Rail Inspector Lar Griffin, while driver Ken Fox and fireman Keith Farrelly lean from No.4's cab on 06th May. (Photo: C Friel)

No.85 reaching three new destinations in a week must be some sort of record.

It was important to get No.85 back in traffic because next up was the Emerald Isle Explorer. This is the annual visit by Steam Dreams to Ireland, and it involves a major commitment by DAOC as well as Whitehead.

The operation kicked off on Thursday 15th June with a run from Dublin Connolly to Rosslare with No.461. The train had to be shunted for this operation, the formation being BR Van 3173, 1541, 1514 (bar) 1532 (Pullman dressed) 1506 (Premier Dining dressed), 1522 (kitchen car), 1505 (Pullman dressed). All carriages were fitted with carpets, curtains, antimacassars and table lamps for the occasion. The set was

washed the day before in Inchicore by the Carriage Presentation Team.

As had happened the previous year, Steam Dreams provided their own chefs and kitchen and waiting staff. The RPSI provided stewards and bar staff for the train. GM 075 brought the set back to Dublin, where the set was placed on Platform 5 for servicing by Steam Dreams in readiness for departure for Killarney.

Day Two involved No.85 bringing the train from Dublin to Thurles, and then proceeding LE to Limerick Junction to turn. GM 084 meanwhile took the train forward to the Junction. No.85 resumed duties and took the train through to Killarney, arriving just three minutes down after some great running.

Day Three was a return trip to Tralee with No.85 while the following day brought us to Westport. A change of locomotive took place at Portarlinton, with No.4 taking over from the Compound, which then proceeded LE to Dublin. Arrival in Westport behind No.4 was just two minutes late, not bad for a distance of 265 miles, involving six water stops and a locomotive change.

The following day was easier, from Westport to Ballina and return. This time we managed to get right into Ballina platform and passengers were able to disembark. Excellent running by No.4 again and arrival back at Westport was an impressive four minutes early.

We were well into our stride by now and No.4 brought us from Westport to Dublin Connolly, where passengers, catering crew and kitchen equipment had to change trains to the Whitehead-based Mk2 set, as the Cravens are not yet permitted north of the border. No.85 was in charge for the run to Belfast and on to Whitehead. We had departed Westport at 07.46, arrived in Dublin Connolly at 13.45 and reached Belfast Central at 18.51, after 279 miles, five water stops and a locomotive change

The final day did not run as planned. It turned out that the Antrim-Lisburn line was not available due to an engineering possession. So it was Whitehead to Belfast Central, back out to Bangor and then through to Portadown. It was back to Central with No.85 and thence to Dublin with GM 112, where arrival was at 20.45.

Due to a signalling problem at Dunmurry

during the morning, a local train from Bangor to Central had been cancelled. But Steam Dreams stepped in and agreed to carry NIR passengers travelling direct from Bangor to Central, about 30 of who took up the offer – and were delighted by the surprise change in mode of transport. Steam comes to the rescue!

Despite the final day difficulties, all had gone well and we had carried 120 happy passengers. This concluded the Steam Dreams three-year contract but we look forward to their return in 2019. The RPSI has enhanced its reputation and we have built a valuable relationship with all concerned at Steam Dreams. It all augurs well for the future.

The seventh trip of the year was our ever popular Sea Breeze on 9th July from Dublin Connolly to Arklow, with a local trip from Arklow to Gorey. No.4 took charge of the train and we carried 261 passengers to Arklow and a further 311 to Gorey.

The focus switched to the GN main line on 23rd July for the Boyne Specials. The set was shunted during the week before and now comprised BR Van 3173, 1541, 1533, 1506, 1514 (bar), 1522 (diner), 1505 and 1523. Some work had been done on No.4 during the week and the driver took it easy to Drogheda. We carried 160 passengers to Drogheda on the positioning run, 369 to Dundalk and then 367 travelled from Drogheda to Skerries loop.

We were back on the DSER on 6th August with our ninth outing of the year, the Slaney, a trip run in conjunction with the



It is 23rd July and No.4 is about to run round the "Boyne Special" at Dundalk. The 1405 ex-Belfast Enterprise arrives on the right. Four of the RPSI "Gatwicks" are stabled over on the left. (Photo: M Crockett)

Enniscorthy "Rockin Food" Festival. The set was already at Connolly when we got news that No.4 had been failed on shed due to leaking boiler tubes. Rather than cancelling the train and disappointing the 264 passengers, the Operations Manager decided to run with GM 077.

This proved to be the correct decision. On arrival in Enniscorthy the footbridge was filled with soldiers in period dress and armed with muskets, while soldiers in period dress were on the platform. After an exchange of shots the passengers were escorted to Enniscorthy Town Square, for a celebration to mark the anniversary of the 1798 Rebellion. We departed Enniscorthy for Wexford with 304 passengers on board, some of whom expressed disappointment at the

lack of a steam engine. We will have to do it again in 2018!

The following weekend diesel traction was planned. GM 071 hauled a private charter by the Irish Railway Record Society to Howth and Sligo.

The eleventh operation was another Tour; The Emerald Isle Express private charter by Railtours Ireland. The train was formed by six Cravens, all done up in Pullman Style, same as per the Emerald Isle Explorer. The consist was 1541 (RPSI library and reading carriage), 1514 (bar), 1505 (Pullman Carriage); 1532 (Pullman Carriage) 1522 (kitchen car); 1508 (storage and crew carriage), BR Van 3173.

The train looked magnificent with

carpets, tablecloths, lamps, flowers and curtains. Volunteers with one chef ran this train, also handling catering and serving. Newly out-shopped GM 073 was requested and this was agreed.

The railtour started on Monday 25th September with a run from Dublin to Rosslare Strand. Before we left Connolly a champagne reception was held on Platform 5 for passengers and VIPs. Lunch was served as the train headed down the DSER. Passengers detrained at the Strand, while the train proceeded to the Harbour to run round and service the carriages. Tables were set for the following day and the train returned ECS (Empty Carriage Stock) to Dublin.

From Connolly the train headed for Waterford for the overnight stop, arriving there at 23.08. Our passengers had travelled by coach from Rosslare for a sightseeing tour including a visit to Waterford Crystal before arriving at Waterford Castle for an overnight stay. Once they arrived at Waterford station we left behind GM 073 for Cork. A stop was made at Tipperary for the usual photo call beside the station name board. Lunch was served en route, and arrival in Cork was at 13.46.

The stock was transferred to Mallow for stabling and servicing and the next day ran ECS to Cobh. There we collected our passengers for the trip to Killarney, during which lunch was served. Next morning we served coffee during the run to Tralee, where our passengers detrained for a coach tour to Dingle. The train returned ECS to Killarney.

Day Five involved a trip with our passengers from Killarney to Ennis (morning coffee served en route) and then on ECS to Galway. The train stabled in Galway in the siding under the station roof, and once there the carriages and kitchen were prepared for the following day's trip back to Dublin.

The final day saw an on-time early evening departure from Galway, whereupon the RPSI team began serving a four course banquet en route to Dublin, where we arrived at 22.50. RPSI volunteers provided a guard of honour for the 50 passengers as they got off the train and went to their hotels. Another well satisfied trainload of visitors.

During six days our train had travelled more than 1,024 miles and covered 17 of the 26 counties - Dublin, Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford, Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Tipperary, Limerick, Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway, Roscommon, Offaly and Westmeath.

After a bit of a breather it was back to action for trip twelve, The Munster Double on 14th October. Again it was a diesel special with two GM 071s working in multiple hauling the full operational set of Cravens in their attractive blue and cream livery. GM 071 was in its 1976 livery with CIE roundel while 073 carried its 1987 Irish Rail livery.

The tour route was to Cork, back to Mallow, Killarney and Tralee, before returning to Dublin. The highlight was the departure from Killarney to Tralee. There was a great roar from both locomotives up the bank.



RPSI, Steam Dreams and Irish Rail crew, staff and volunteers pose at Athlone on the way back to Dublin from Westport on 20th June's "Emerald Isle Explorer". (Photo: S Comiskey)

During the tour, new models of the Cravens in the blue and cream livery were launched and many sold on the day. This tour could not have happened without the superb co-operation and enthusiasm from Irish Rail and in particular, Chief Mechanical Engineer, Peter Smyth and Philip Clampett. We carried 387 passengers and 39 RPSI volunteers worked the train.

Our final trips of the year were the seventeen Santa trains over three weekends, thirteen steam with No.4 and four diesel. Santa trains ran from Dublin Connolly to Maynooth with the full operational set; eight Cravens and the BR generator van. A record 6,894 passengers (up from 5,826 in 2016), made it our best ever Santa season.

2017 was our first year using the online system for ticket sales and it worked very well. Our colleague Audrey, in Oceanic, produced a manifest for each train which made our job so much easier.

John Richardson's popular "Everyone's a winner" raffle brought in a staggering €21,065.00. John worked tirelessly on every train and we are indebted to him. Meanwhile our volunteers John and Gerard Owens sold 937 calendars. All much needed income.

With regret I record that Dublin Operations lost one of our valued volunteers, Tony O'Grady, on 10th October. Tony was a familiar face to passengers as one of our train stewards and was also a member of the Carriage Presentation Team.

We are delighted to report that progress has been made on securing a licence for the RPSI to use a shed in Inchicore Depot which hopefully during 2018 will allow us to expand the range of maintenance work that the Carriage Squad can undertake. Our thanks in this regard are due to Peter Smith, CME Inchicore, for all his help, also to John Grey and in particular John Barrett and his team in the Paint Shop.

In the meantime, we continue to use the "oil road" at Inchicore for ongoing maintenance work, and thanks are due to the carriage team for work carried out in all weathers. At present, only three of our vehicles are under cover – GSWR coaches 351 (The President's Saloon) and 1142 (side corridor 1st), along with Cravens Open 1539.

During 2017 two Cravens in the running set were re-upholstered, leaving just one vehicle in the original upholstery. Work

continued on general maintenance and upgrading of the interiors, and on the overhaul of 1539, a 1964-built Cravens Open.

Eight of the heritage set vehicles (Park Royals 1383 and 1419, brakes 1916 and 1949, diners 2421 and 88, Bredin 1335 and laminate 1463) are currently stored in Heuston valeting plant.

The aforementioned 351 and 1142 are stored in the fleet casualty shop in Inchicore and although they have accumulated nil miles they have generated useful revenue by being used in three film productions during 2017. These were a television commercial for a fashion manufacturer and two films. The first was *Vita and Virginia*, a film about Virginia Woolf starring Gemma Arterton (who featured in James Bond film *Quantum of Solace*) and English actor Rupert Penry-Jones. And the second was a short film called *Monterey Express*.



Not exactly Dublin area. Or carriages. Or wagons. Or locomotives... but a mention of Mullingar yard, photographed on 26th March 1997. Shown are GNR(I) tender No.43 and, to right, an alleged Dundalk boiler truck. Both of these are now resident at Whitehead; the tender arriving 20 years after this photo, on 11th May 2017.

(Photo: G Roose)



Charles McDonnell and Peter Emmett take a moment to pose for a photo while working on BR 3173 ahead of the Steam Dreams special. (Photo: S. Comiskey)

The following is the details on a carriage by carriage update with the accumulated end of year mileage in brackets.

3185: Awaiting overhaul. (Nil)

3173: Crew coach and van. (5,161 Miles)

1508: Converted by IE to a snack car. With 43 seats, also acts as shop. Used as a staff/catering facilities coach during the Railtours Ireland Emerald Isle Express railtour. (2,743 Miles)

1505: In traffic. (4,863 Miles)

1506: In traffic. Seats re-upholstered (4,561 Miles)

1514: In traffic. Our dining car - new cooker fitted. (5,161 Miles)

1522: In traffic. Our bar car (5,161 Miles)

1532: In traffic. (4,399 Miles)

1523: in traffic. Toilet floor replaced. Final coach still in original IE upholstery. (1,199 Miles)

1541: In traffic. Seats re-upholstered (5,161 Miles)

1539: Stripping out now complete, new tolightts fitted. New main steam pipe fitted, and repainting of frame has commenced. Coach now sits on overhauled set of bogies from Whitehead. The seats have already been reupholstered and will be fitted once the interior is complete. (Nil miles)

1529: Now sits on ex NIR slave bogies - a source of spares.

A 20ft skip was ordered in January when lots of rubbish was gathered up with help from Tom Mathers and Alan McRobert and removed. In addition track laying materials, including concrete sleepers, were assembled at the back of the sheds for the eventual movement of the sleeping coach through the wheel drop road.

As part of the preparations for the semi-official opening of the Museum on the 1st March the Site Squad emptied and moved all the items from one of the two containers in the car park. Once the other container was emptied of electrical stuff, these two good 40ft containers were moved to the back of the site, one each for the use of carriage and locomotive departments respectively. In addition the smaller foundry container was moved from the coal bunker to the back. We then closed off the remaining compound at the Belfast end of the car park with a security fence and with great help from Willie Hollinger assembled two 12x8ft containers. These were put on the platform behind the Station and were used to house the contents of the building during the cafe fitting out phase.

Tidying of the front of the site, as requested by the funders, was begun, with the removal of several ton bags of bricks and sand from between two and three roads. In addition five pallets of steel structural sections for MK2 coaches were moved into the carriage shed workshop.

The next big project was to move the sleeping coach. The last week in January was used to make a long curved track at the rear which was to be ultimately connected to the wheel drop road. Initially this involved slewing one of the 40ft containers. About this time all the point levers in the yard were repainted yellow by Johnny Lockett and our ferrous skip was emptied and netted £250.

The first Thursday in February was occupied with clearing out 5-road in preparation for the wall painters and lighting engineers. On Saturday 04th February we connected the curved track to the wheel drop road with the loading ramp kit. Shunting of the sleeping coach however quickly showed up a major problem with the drawbridge and only thanks to sterling work by Peter Scott was this item lifted high enough to clear the coach roof. The coach was then pushed onto the curve, initially with B142, and then pulled further along by the Atlas. It was getting dark by the time we dismantled the ramp. On a very wet subsequent Tuesday the site gang with help from Trevor Taylor and Richard Armstrong pushed the coach out to the straight part of the curve at the Larne end. We disconnected the curve, slewed it across parallel to the gabion wall and then pulled the coach to its final resting place. On the following Thursday we dismantled the track, and returned the container to its normal position.

Despite the best efforts of storm Doris

on 23rd February we laid almost four cubic meters of concrete, completing plinths for gas cylinder storage, oil stores and the monster iron worker plus repairs to the floor of one shed road.

First Thursday in March we assembled a 200sq ft container store in the main building to act as a safe refuge for artefacts and did some major sleeper

releasing 60ft of siding for future storage. This month was particularly good on the recycling front with scrap iron, aluminium and copper wire, the last two metals being ably handled by David Lowry, bringing in over £1000.

The gaps between the rails and the concrete in the carriage shed visitor reception area were cleared of



The Site Squad have just moved the camping coach into place on 07th February. L-R Trevor Taylor, Tom Mathers, Colin Stewart, Dermot Mackie, Willie Hollinger. (Photo: G Hunt)

replacement work on 4-road pit where 3BG is kept with good help from Nigel Speirs and Neves Vaz. The following week we spent repairing track and made preparations to allow us to replace the gap in the third road siding, which had been removed to access vital turntable rails last year. Mid-month we dug out hard core and slots for sleepers and put back 45ft of track. In addition fifty sleepers were moved from storage on the track to a flat wagon, all in all

polystyrene foam by Denis Campbell and then filled with removable wooden strips to prevent trip hazards and aid wheel chair access. Fourteen wooden sleepers were taken round to the wheel drop shed to fill in the unsafe gap around the lift area. Following a busy Easter Monday and Tuesday we turned and coaled No.85 in preparation for the Newry trip. We also emptied the small green container behind the station building to accommodate the fit out for the cafe.

The following week we brought in a large skip and used it to remove all the ash and a lot of scrap timber and rationalised all the waste oil into three barrels. Following the despatch of the Enterprise on 4th May Colin Stewart and I gave the Atlas its annual service.

The Castlerock signal frame was delivered on 9th and was lifted with the telehandler and is temporarily stored in the car park compound. The next week was occupied with gardening duties on the banking, fixing the Larne end steps on the sleeping coach and cleaning the gutters on the train coaches, all greatly helped by Robin Morton and Peter Lindsay. We also made a door in the stockade wall behind the cafe, to help

the staff gain easy access to their container and the 500 litres of waste oil mentioned above, was removed by an accredited recycling firm, at no expense. In addition the Larne end vestibule floor of coach 302 was removed. The end of May saw the Site squad aided by Gordon Hunt and Roy Thompson make a concrete path between the rails that lead to the turn table. Complete with slots and wooden slips this will allow wheel chair access to the major part of the museum from the stables while still being available for shunting.

Early in June we fixed one of the big doors at the front of 3-shed road to ensure it closed properly, put a green mesh on the car park fence facing our



One of our new quirks is this drawbridge at the Larne end of the Wheeldrop Shed which takes visitors across to view the workshop through 1st-floor windows. Drawbridging seems to be a skill which was lost in the C14th; it is 1714 in the photograph and, even though over six hours has already been put into lifting it, it would be fully dark on 04th February before the drawbridge was high enough for the camping coach to pass. (Photo: Editor)

neighbours to obscure the stored items and moved the Bessbrook tram with the telehandler to allow positioning of the axle bearing brackets. Scrap copper taken to the recyclers netted £275. The rest of the month was taken up with preparations for the "*Trautmann*" film contract which went ahead very successfully on Tuesday 27th. The following Thursday was spent tidying up the platform when the opportunity was taken to remove a lot of old moss which had been killed earlier with weed spray.

Early July saw the return of No.461 and we cleared out the old coal from her tender. I also got a chance to do some more weed spraying on the banks. On a glorious 12th July we did a massive shunt with 3BG to return the museum and its stock to normal, after the filming.

August started with more track repairs and sleeper replacement. The fire hose reels on the outside of the carriage shed had their plumbing overhauled and correct spray nozzles fitted as part of an upgrade of site safety arrangements.

In the second week we lifted the grain van bogies off the platform, using a combination of the Atlas and the hand crane, and transferred them to the Long Siding. More track repairs were carried out in the following week, something we have not been able to do for some time, and a further round of weed spraying. We also cleaned out the rubbish from inside the GSWR ballast wagon, which had been retrieved from the back of the carriage shed, and two of our group spent several days needle scaling and painting part of the frames. The repairs

to the steps from the car park by MSM only partly filled a large skip, so with the contactors permission I filled it with five tonnes of ash. On 29th August two fire awareness training sessions were held by an outside expert in the stables, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. In this way over twenty full-time, part-time, paid and volunteer staff were able to attend this important safety briefing.

A number of other safety critical issues were addressed in September which included fitting a mirror to cover the corner of the main building, a small wheel chair ramp at the entrance to the stables and movement of the LPG gas cage away from the visitor route. A new, purpose built, handrail was fitted to the open end of the platform in the carriage shed and extra signage was installed.

We also got a good chance to do some long overdue track repairs, including the replacement of five wooden sleepers in the approaches to 3-shed road. A gather up of scrap aluminium and copper netted £176. I am delighted to report that both the Atlas and the JCB telehandler passed their respective annual insurance assessments this month. Also there was the installation of the intruder alarm system upgrade in the older buildings. An additional fire alarm control panel was fitted, at no expense to the Society, in the room at the end of 2-shed road, beside the refuge telephone. This is an excellent central location for this facility and will greatly help the management and testing of the fire alarm system for the whole site; the other panels being in the stables and the carriage shed.

October also saw the start of tidy up jobs in preparation for the Official Opening of the Museum on the 25th. One of these was moving 22 brake cylinders in the carriage shed and generally cleaning the red floor area where the reception was to take place. All rubbish was gathered and placed in the appropriate skips, leaves lifted from the pathways and the gutters in the Stables cleaned out. With generous assistance from Mid and East Antrim Council, the road approaches to the site were lowered and new tarmac applied by contractors, just two days before the opening. This gives a very good impression compared to the old potholes.



No.85 returns from the Bangor Belle of 25th June and finds 3BG waiting to shunt the Mk2s away and haul out the film train for "Trautmann". The station building has been clad in a timber façade to "look more like" Manchester (St Helens). (Photo: Editor)

November saw the track squad doing necessary repairs to the sloping approaches to 1-shed road pit which had slumped badly. Initially all the rail joints were refurbished with new bolts and then the whole road was cleared of ballast with the Atlas and then the track was jacked and packed to create a more

even and gradual gradient. We also acquired a defibrillator, thanks to the generous sponsorship of a member. John Williams, a senior cardiac nurse, gave a lunchtime seminar on the correct use of this life saving device, now kept in the bothy. The last week we put up the Santa decorations in the train and I gave the JCB Telehandler a well-earned annual service, just in time for the busy Christmas coaling season.

On 27th November there was a working at heights course given in the stables by an outsider trainer. The morning was given over to the theoretical safe use of ladders and scaffolding while the afternoon was a practical session with one of our two aluminium tubular scaffolding sets, which I had earlier purchased with GROW monies.

An additional green container was assembled on the platform for Santa presents and the small flat wagon was made ready with sleepers and rails for the imminent arrival of Meenglass; due on the 30th November. It arrived very late in the day with off-loading taking place in the dark, all went well.

Early in December I purchased two badly needed, new, wheel barrows and the old ones going in the iron skip which altogether netted £390. Following yet another tidy of the outer yard on a very wet 14th morning, thirteen of the Site squad retired to the station cafe for a well-earned Christmas fry to finish off what had been a very enjoyable year. As you will have gathered we always have a range of tasks to do and all volunteers are very welcome.

2017 was another busy year for Heritage Engineering Ireland, the RPSI's subsidiary engineering company.

The rebuilt G8AS boiler, part of the No.58/105 project, represented a substantial chunk of HEI's work for 2017, about 10% of the total work for the year.

Close in second was substantial welding and fabricating work on carriage 302. Another big job was the completion of tender No.37, to run with No.131, of which the HEI guys are justifiably proud. To give an impression of the extent of the work on this tender, only a few components above footplate level are original – the rest was made at Whitehead. We even cast the works plates, which gives a build date and location of 1920 at Dundalk – although 2017, Whitehead might be more accurate! New tender tanks are not unusual in Great Britain on overhauled locomotives, but few are of riveted construction as No.37 is. There are some welded joints, but mostly on the inside where the rivets would not be visible.

The routine work of running repairs to the rolling stock made up much of the remainder of the work for the year; showing a year on year increase of 28%. A significant task was the renewal of the superheater flues in No.4, which had to be completed in time for the start of the Santa train season. Good news in December 2017 was the recommissioning of the foundry, which had been dormant since the building work at Whitehead required it to be

moved. Thanks to the development work, the foundry now boasts a splendid 1-ton overhead crane, which has made the handling of heavy parts much easier. One of its first products was a set of brake blocks for No.85, which gratefully received them part way through the Santa season. Around the same time flanging blocks were cast to make a former for the outer firebox of the G8AS boiler, firebars for No.4, and also axlebox covers and a works plate for ballast wagon 8309, currently being restored.

The maintenance work on the locomotives is vital at the busiest time of the year. The HEI team made many trips to Dublin to ensure No.4 was able to complete the Santa schedule. No.85 also had its fair share of work with a spring being replaced before the penultimate Santa run.

In 2017, the big external contracts included a tram from the Bessbrook and Newry Tramway, No.6. It had survived for many years as a summer house in the Convent of Mercy, Bessbrook, before being sent to Whitehead for restoration. We have sourced replacement wheelsets for it, and work is well underway to replace rotten sections of timber.

The other 3ft gauge arrival was 2-6-4T No.4 "Meenglas", formerly of the County Donegal Railways. It was part of the rolling stock bought by Dr.Cox for shipping to the USA in the early 1960s. As documented elsewhere, the move to the USA fell through and No.4 went to the Foyle Valley Railway museum in the

Maiden City. It sat outside the museum building as a sort of advertisement right up until the end of 2017, when it was moved to Whitehead. HEI will cosmetically restore the locomotive to make it fit for display purposes. The nearly six decades in the open air have not been kind to the locomotive, with substantial corrosion having taken place and all but the most inaccessible brass components stolen for scrap value. HEI have their work cut out to repair and return the locomotive by May 2018.

HEI employ four full time staff, one part time employee, one part time receptionist / office manager and one apprentice. A recent addition in December 2017 is a full time engineering manager, Ivan McAteer. Ivan has worked for a variety of companies and has excellent experience of managing small specialised engineering teams.

The need for a manager was identified to

aid the management of the multiple projects which HEI undertakes; the majority for the RPSI, with a small proportion for external customers. HEI needs this external work to supplement its major role working for the RPSI.

An important role for Ivan will be to ensure the optimum balance between HEI's primary role of undertaking RPSI work and attracting external work to ensure financial stability. Managing the health and safety aspects of HEI's work will also fall under his remit.

One important aspect of Ivan's job will be to help with succession planning. The HEI staff have developed their skills over the years and these skills now play a vital part in the maintenance and overhaul of the RPSI's trains. These encompass welding and fabrication, boiler work, hot riveting, machining, foundry and other skills specific to the RPSI. Retaining these skills is vital to the future.



On 30th November HEI's Jim Adams watches his next job arrive in the form of ex-Donegal 3ft gauge 2-6-4T No.4. One wonders if we now have to renumber the 5ft3" 2-6-4T as No.4BG? (Photo: A Lohoff)

A glance at the visitors' book at Whitehead Railway Museum is sufficient to suggest that we must be doing something right..."Absolutely amazing, well worth visiting, excellent tour guide," "I love it", "Nice Tea Room", "First class tour", "Fantastic, must bring the grandchildren", "A great way to spend an hour or so, we will be back", "So much to see, this requires more than one visit".

Indeed the feedback from visitors to WRM, whether in the visitors' book, on TripAdvisor or on Facebook, has been most encouraging. Particularly heartening is the proportion of out of state visitors — in particular those from the Republic and Britain.

It has quickly become clear that our "target market", as the experts call it, extends from enthusiasts to the family party plus the general public, precisely the sort of clientele who travel on our trains nowadays. Our visitors come at the museum from various angles. Some are fervent Thomas the Tank Engine fans, others want to learn about the nitty gritty of the locomotives and carriages, while yet more are simply fascinated by the social history of the railways.

As has been observed, Whitehead is a particularly appropriate location for the RPSI to set up its museum. Whitehead was a railway town — developed and promoted by the Belfast & Northern Counties Railway. Their aim was to make Whitehead an attractive destination for visitors and now 110 years on, we are taking up that torch. In common with

the B&NCR, we would love our visitors to consider travelling by train to reach us.

Whitehead Railway Museum has certainly got a lot to offer. We boast five galleries, ranging from the signal box (where visitors can pull the levers), the locomotive gallery, the workshop and the carriage shed to the Stables, where visitors can get a handle on the impact made by the railways over the past 120 years. And all this is complemented by our period style Tea Room where visitors can enjoy everything from morning coffee to lunches and afternoon tea.

The Museum combines with our mainline operation to widen the Society's reach and enable us to deliver on our responsibilities as custodian of so many priceless items which can no longer be part of the mainline offering. In particular, the Museum affords us the opportunity to put on display historic items such as 1879-built 0-6-0 No.186 and Great Northern Railway (Ireland) Directors' Saloon 50 (built in 1911) which would otherwise have been tucked out of view at the back of a shed.

The 2020 Committee, which met monthly, was tasked with overseeing the completion of the project, liaising with the funders and the management team, and sorting out the various snagging issues. In tandem with this, the Curatorial Committee attended to the finer points of detail in the displays in the various galleries. It has been a fine team effort.



WRM visitors get a good look at many smaller artefacts that were hidden away for years, such as the sectioned hydrostatic lubricator and brake ejector once used to help train GNR(I) footplate crew. (Photo: M McCormick)

The unique selling point of the Museum is that it encompasses the RPSI's heavy overhaul workshops and visitors can observe restoration work in progress on locomotives and carriages. Indeed, the funding we received applied not just to the provision of a museum but also to a turntable plus enhanced workshop facilities. This in turn extends the capacity of the RPSI to undertake locomotive and carriage overhauls.

Panel displays in the various galleries tell the story of significant events in Irish railway history such as the Armagh Disaster of 1889, in which 80 people died. There is a scale model of Ireland's most famous train, The Enterprise, in steam days. Audio-visual presentations of our "Museum on the Move" show the

Society's trains in operation in all parts of Ireland. Push button interactive panels tell the story of various locomotives and carriages, while visitors can focus in on various galleries in the museum by tapping on an interactive table-top display.

Perhaps the biggest wow factor comes when visitors get their first glimpse through a glass panel of No.171 "Slieve Gullion" in the locomotive gallery. The blue-liveried engine is out of traffic at present but getting up close to such an engine still makes a huge impact. One of the many information panels gives details about the engine — in an easily digestible format.



Come to think of it, it is not just smaller exhibits that were locked away; Diner 87 was restored during 2010 by the then "Youth Group" and, due to circumstance not desire, saw infrequent use until the opening of WRM. Here tour guide Norman Close shows visitors around the "Meals on the Move" exhibition. It strikes the Editor that without the activities of the "Youth Group" between 2006 and 2012 (and some former members thereafter) that there would be virtually nothing to display in the carriage gallery of WRM. (Photo M McCormick)

The trick is balancing the needs of those who have only a vague interest in trains — perhaps inspired by Michael Portillo* - with the requirements of the more dedicated enthusiast. But thanks to the efforts of the volunteer guides — all of them Society members — this has been achieved. Guides have undergone training and been accredited as part of the Tourism NI World Host programme and are expert at meeting the expectations of the various visitors. Plans are in hand for self-guided tours to be provided as an option and these will facilitate those wish to study the various information boards in more detail.

As members will be aware, Whitehead Railway Museum has undergone two openings. The first was a "soft opening"

by The Lord O'Neill, on 1st March, and the second was an official opening by Mrs Joan Christie, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Co Antrim, which took place on 25th October.

Much media publicity was generated by the official opening, which helped raise the profile of Whitehead Railway Museum and the RPSI. The focus going forward is very much on marketing and we hope to develop the potential for school visits, family parties, retirement groups, cruise liner parties and coach tours during 2018. The Museum's involvement in the Gobbins Cluster Group has been most helpful in this regard, as we can co-operate with other

visitor attractions in the vicinity such as The Gobbins to encourage visitors to stay in the area and take in a second centre.

More recently, Whitehead Railway Museum has been the focus of major features in two of the leading GB-based railway publications, namely Railway Magazine and Heritage Railway. Gary Boyd-Hope, the deputy editor of RM, commented: "Not only has RPSI transformed its headquarters into a modern, user-friendly attraction, but it is also running steam-hauled excursions directly into its site." Hugh Dougherty of Heritage Railway describes the Museum as "first class" and says it is "one of the finest museums within the heritage railway movement".

Significantly, Whitehead Railway Museum was short-listed in the Heritage Railway Association's Annual Awards. It was one of two entries nominated for the prestigious Manisty Award and the winner was due to be named at a ceremony in Birmingham on 10th February. Such recognition is a major boost for the museum and for the RPSI.

WRM was made possible by £3m funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund under the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland and administered by Tourism Northern Ireland with additional support from Mid & East Antrim Council and Ulster Garden Villages.

Indeed, it is worth noting that this £3m brings to £4.2m the amount of funding that RPSI Whitehead has benefitted

from since 2013, the most significant other funder being Generating Rural Opportunities Within (GROW) South Antrim. Over those years the site has been transformed whilst still facilitating major locomotive and carriage overhauls; not always easy. We remain indebted to all the funders for their confidence in and commitment to the RPSI.

But equally important to the success of WRM has been the contributions of the many people who have given so much time and effort to getting the Museum ready for the openings and who are working hard to take it to the next stage of its development.

The challenge for Whitehead Railway Museum in 2018 is to significantly increase our visitor numbers and income. We know we have a must-see visitor attraction on our hands; the challenge is getting the word out and encouraging more visitors to cross our threshold. But provided everyone pulls together we can make enormous strides this year—just watch this space!

*(*Michael Portillo was invited to Whitehead for the RPSI's 50th anniversary in 2014, but was too busy filming in Europe and America to attend. Far better you come now anyway, Michael, much more to see! – Ed).*

Our steam locomotives ran successfully for their entire working lives without any electrical equipment fitted to them. Strange as it may seem to a younger generation of railway enthusiast, an engine driver from the days of steam was expected to judge his speed without a speedometer to help him and keep a lookout at night with only an oil lamp or two lit on the front of his buffer beam. The fireman read his boiler gauges with the soft light of an oil lamp and the reflected glare from the fire.

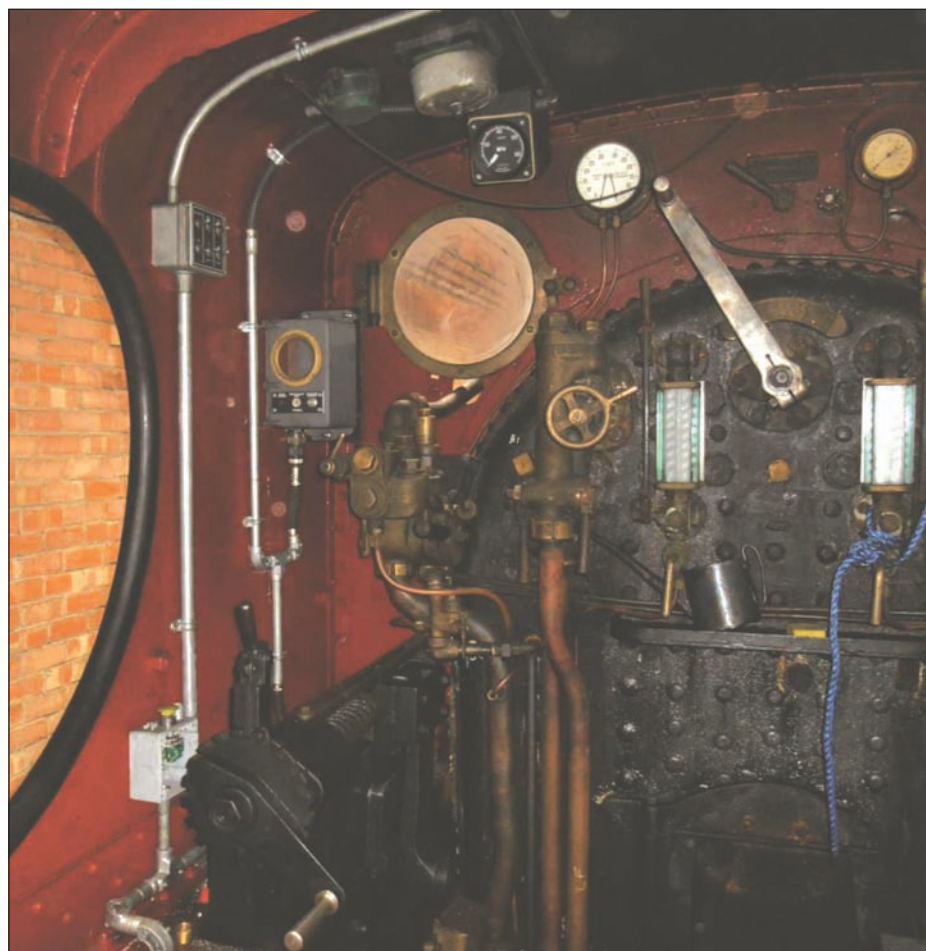
This situation continued until 1993, when Irish Rail requested that electric headlamps were fitted to No.461. Fast forward 25 years to 2018, and the typical amount of electrical gear on an operational locomotive has grown exponentially. There are of course electric headlights, which we mount in replica oil lamp housings to retain the good looks of our locomotives. These are controlled from the cab and have a full and dipped beam. Around 1996 the requirement for speedometers came in – our locomotives now carry speedometers mounted in 1950s era “Smiths” casings. This sort of speedometer was used by the GNR(B) on their later railcars, and is as near as we can get to an appropriate look for a steam engine cab. They can be illuminated for night time running.

Perhaps obviously the engines carry a radio to allow the crew to communicate with control. We used to run using portable radio sets, but now we are

moving towards permanent installations. Three locomotives already have a permanently installed NIR train radio – which is a simple arrangement, little more complicated than an aftermarket radio you might put in your car. No.4 is the first to have the Irish Rail train radio, which is of a similar size, and about as easy to shoehorn into the cab, as your average desktop computer.

Legislation was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2007 which mandated train protection and recording features on passenger carrying trains. As a result, all our engines carry a data recorder from which various readings, principally speed, can be downloaded in the event of an accident. Like the “black box” flight recorder on an aircraft, these are painted bright orange.

Perhaps the most complex modern contrivances are the TPWS and AWS. The AWS – or Automatic Warning System – is a device which sounds a warning horn to the driver when approaching a yellow or red signal. The driver has a few seconds to press a yellow acknowledge button, or the system applies the brakes. Once the button is pressed, a visual indicator – called a sunflower – displays a yellow and black aspect to the driver to remind him of the signal he has just passed. The AWS system dates from the 1950s on British Rail, where it was introduced after a couple of accidents involving signals passed at danger. It has its roots in an earlier system used by the Great



No.131's driving position on 21st January 2018 shows the following electrical installations as work in progress:

The bell on the roof rings approaching a green signal. To its left is a claxon, operated via the vacuum in the train brakepipe, which sounds approaching a yellow or red signal. Below the bell is the speedometer. Just above the cabside cutaway are the switches for headlights (front and rear, bright and dip) and cab instrument illumination lamps (not yet fitted over the pressure gauges or between the gauge glasses).

Between cabside and front window - and right in front of the driver's face - is the sunflower box which stays black for green signals but switches to yellow for yellow or red signals. On it are buttons for temporary TPWS / AWS over-ride, such as for when permission is granted to pass a signal at danger.

Down by the screw reverser is a yellow button for the driver to press within a few seconds of the claxon sounding / sunflower displaying or the vacuum brakes will be automatically applied by an air-admission valve down by the cab footstep. Underneath the brake ejector, a large black sensor detects the position of the reverser and activates the AWS receivers under the front bogie or tender according to direction of travel. Yards of conduit festoons the cabside and perhaps 100 more runs hidden underneath the loco and tender. This lot, plus radio(s), is powered by 8 batteries up on the rear of the tender. (Photo: Editor)

Western Railway, dating back to about 1906.

AWS was augmented on British Railways in the early 2000s by TPWS – Train Protection and Warning System. This extra system filled in one of the shortcomings of AWS – in that the driver could press his acknowledge button and then continue on through a red light, if he wanted to. The TPWS drops the brake immediately if a red signal is passed. It also brings everything to a screeching halt if the train approaches a danger signal at too high a speed to stop before passing it.



Nos.85 & 131's new brains are in replica toolboxes behind the driver. The large orange box is the OTMR. The rest permits you over 40mph! (Photo: J Friel)

These systems were installed in some of our engines from 2007. They are the most complex because they include receivers mounted down amongst the leading and trailing wheelsets of the locomotive; several controls in various parts of the cab, a switch operated by the reverser, and an eye-wateringly expensive transformer and control box.

All this gear requires a considerable

amount of electricity – this is provided by bulky heavy duty lead acid batteries, which have to be tucked out of the way. On No.4, we squeezed them in under the bunker above the bogie. On No.461, room was found behind the buffer beam above the pony truck. 186 has them tucked under the tender, and the GNR(I) engines have them up on the back of the tender near the water filler. Each battery weighs 30 kg and some engines have four, others eight. These batteries provide 24 Volts direct current, which is used directly by the lighting and Irish Rail radio, converted to 12 Volts for the speedometer, data recorder, and NIR train radio, and to 40 Volts for the AWS / TPWS.

A typical installation, such as on No.131 which is in progress at the time of writing, will require 900 yards of cables of various types. The cables go in galvanised steel conduit which has to be hidden away under footplates and valences. 50 yards of conduit went into No.85, along with 120 conduit fittings of various sorts. Various bespoke housings and boxes have to be made including the lamp housings mentioned earlier, battery boxes, enclosures and junction boxes. These have been made by HEI, most recently for No.4's Irish Rail radio. On that occasion, as we were pressed for time, a joint effort between RPSI volunteers and HEI employees had the boxes designed and manufactured within 3 weeks. Once the boxes, cables and conduit are mounted on the locomotive, the various electrical components can be fitted. These range from the unbelievably expensive

(£1,443.54 for a TPWS transformer) to the remarkably cheap (£2.78 for a headlamp resistor).



No.4's Irish Rail radio, installed spring 2017. Perhaps the point where the ability to make the electrics fit in with their surroundings was lost! (Photo: J Friel)

You could be forgiven for thinking once the physical installation work was complete, the locomotive could be used. Unfortunately the slowest part of the project has yet to begin – the certification and acceptance of the new equipment. This is carried out in conjunction with an independent consultant acceptable to both the RPSI and the railway companies. For TPWS, Thales, the manufacturer of the system, perform a “First of Class” test on the locomotive to verify that the radio signals received from the trackside equipment are within limits.

Then our consultant signs off on our structural calculations – which show that the new TPWS aerial will remain firmly attached under the locomotive, and that the heavy box containing the sunflower display won't break free if there is a collision – tests the new systems, and satisfies himself that all is in order.

Next come brake tests that include running through a red light at slow speed

and approaching a signal at high speed, to make sure that the TPWS can stop the train when required. Organising and carrying out these activities can take many months, but the end result is rewarding as the outshopped locomotive can then travel all over Ireland.

The cost of fitting this stuff to our locomotives is substantial, both financially and in terms of volunteer hours. The installation on No.85 cost about £25,000 in total, materials and paid labour, with volunteer hours probably worth something similar. In terms of volunteer hours, we're talking something like one man's free time – weekends and evenings – for about a year and a half, just to fit out one locomotive. We were fortunate to be able to acquire redundant electrical gear from NIR railcars which considerably reduced the cost of buying some parts new – our thanks go to Thomas Hamill and Sons of Ahoghill, and the guys at Downpatrick who were most helpful.

A lot of the electrical work on our locomotives was carried out by the late Mark McClements, whose designs and ideas from Nos.4, 186 and 461 I have effectively copied onto Nos.85 and 131, using the old adage of “if it ain't broke, don't fix it!” or, in my case, change it. The installations have been remarkably trouble free, mostly because of Mark's robust designs. This is to the surprise of some people who may have considered it ill advised to install electronic gear on a steam locomotive, where the modern equipment vies for space with coal slurry, hot water, oil and sand – usually the enemy of all things electrical!

VOLUNTEERING WITH THE RPSI; Could I; Should I?

John Williams

When I look around the Parke Hall in Orangefield Presbyterian Church at our Winter Meetings I see a large number of folk who are there to see and hear what the RPSI have been up to as well as what the main speaker is to divulge to the eager eyes and ears of the audience.

However, I also note that the majority of the audience is males who have reached retirement age and I sometimes wonder if they have ever thought of offering to help the Society by volunteering.

Now I can hear you say, "I wouldn't know what to do" or "I wouldn't have the skills required" or "I mightn't fit in". Well, I am sure that each and every one of us who do volunteer regularly at Whitehead has probably said the same thing before trying it. *(Certainly did think this back on 11th May 2001 as I visited the Society for the first time during a steam gala at Whitehead. Dermot Mackie – whom I'd never met before - offered me a return trip to Carrickfergus with No.4 and wooden coaches for £5; 13 years after that I married his daughter, the Broomstick Belle's Wicked Witch! - Ed)*

You do not have to be an engineer, technician or even have knowledge about railways. The only skills required are to be enthusiastic, drink tea or coffee and have a laugh with like-minded people.

If you can use a paint brush or roller, a spade or shovel, or any other piece of equipment, clean the windows in our

carriages and you don't mind getting your hands dirty, you will be made very welcome. There are always jobs to be done, with a lot more expected in 2018.

I joined the site squad many years ago, and like many of the members of our squad, we learnt on the job under the teachings of Dermot Mackie. None of us knew anything about relaying track, replacing sleepers, shunting or the many tasks which we perform. Our squad consists of retired Medical Consultants, Surgeons, School teachers, University Lecturers, others who have worked in large engineering establishments, while I am a Registered Nurse. We all enjoy each other's company, we have a laugh, and our work, indoors and outdoors, is always varied. It's one way of keeping fit without having to pay for gym membership!

I am also a coach marshal. Coach Marshals have a very important part in the running of our trains. Their main role is to ensure the comfort and safety of our passengers, and to ensure the coach interiors are kept clean and tidy during the train journey.

Coach Marshals are required to help passengers get on and off the train by holding the carriage door open. Where there is a large gap between the train and the platform, e.g. Belfast Central, marshals help people negotiate the gap by holding the door open and offering a helping hand.



The site squad celebrate the connection of the Whitehead turntable to the Irish railway network on 13th October 2016. Front row Gordon Hunt and Trevor Taylor. Back Row: John Williams, Willie Hollinger, Dennis Campbell, Alan McRoberts, Colin Stewart, Roy Thompson and Dermot Mackie. (Photo: R Morton)

To ensure that passengers obtain the most enjoyment out of their trip you would talk with them to determine where they come from, have they been on any RPSI trips before, would they like to know more information about the locomotive or carriages they are travelling on, are they happy with the trip and have they any suggestions for improvement?

Coach Marshals would be expected to assist with a discreet collection of rubbish during the trip which would take place on a frequent basis, but not too frequent as to cause passenger concern. This is to ensure that the coaches are kept tidy and free of all rubbish.

If this is something that you think you could be involved in, please volunteer your services. Training would be provided, and you would never be left on your own to look after a full coach of passengers.

Of course there are other squads with a variety of jobs, but no matter where your interest lies, or how often you can help, be it one day a week or a month, you will be welcomed with open arms.

So please give it some serious thought, make a New Year resolution to join us at Whitehead, to help keep our trains running. You won't regret it and might even enjoy it.

LIFE AS A VOLUNTEER

(Or more accurately a super-volunteer – Ed)

Eileen Armstrong

A few years ago I was a paying passenger aboard “Merlin” heading for Portrush when I decided it was time for a cuppa. We were seated in 547 table 3 and I remember it so well because that cuppa changed my life.

I noticed the guy serving tea (Francis Richards) was under pressure, if I'm being truthful his fingers were in my tea and I complained. He asked if I thought I could do better, I said 'YES' and I came behind the counter and helped the rest of the journey to Portrush.

I was introduced to Rita Henderson who quickly showed me the ropes and I must have impressed, for I was asked back by Rita, who introduced me to Chris Bowman the Catering Manager. With my managerial background I found it easy to organise and get things done. When Chris became unwell, I was able to take some of the pressure off him by handling the stock and cash for the Bar and Catering department.

Chris sadly died of cancer and when I was asked by Belfast Area Operations



It was all fun and games over Christmas '17 with Rita Henderson, Tony Deane, Fiona Gault and Eileen Armstrong in 547! (Photo: courtesy E Armstrong)



Dublin volunteers Stephen Comiskey, Zachary Westhelle Hartfiel and Nicky Cox pose with custom-made 'Pullman' signs (lovingly painted by Nicky Cox) for the RPSI Cravens, on 15th June. (Photo: courtesy S Comiskey)

Committee to take on the Catering Manager position, I accepted. I set myself the project to redecorate the interior of 547 and give the place a makeover, including painting, polishing and addition of new flooring. This also includes new artwork provided by my husband, Richard. I'm very proud of 547; I take full responsibility for the dining carriage from training of staff, cooking, cleaning to even pulling a pint!

Then, I was holding down a 35hrs a week job but now I'm retired and have a more formalised role. I'm a member of the BAOC, 2020 Committee, Events Committee, a Director on the Board and Volunteer Co-Ordinator.

I look after the Tour Guides providing daily contact with them and making sure their rota is up to date. I order uniforms for Tour Guides and Train Marshals and was a key person in getting our café awarded its 5-star food hygiene rating. I do the Tea

Room banking and general admin as well as serving in the Tea Room when required.

At Christmas I look after Santa's outfit and keep Santa fed and watered, I even order and decorate the station Christmas tree. I make sure we get the Easter Bunny on our Easter trains every year and order all the Easter eggs. At one stage I was ordering loo rolls and soap for our hard working site volunteers. I'm sure many would say I have a hand in most things.

Volunteering for me is a way of life; I believe that everyone should volunteer though it doesn't have to be to the extent that I do. It's a great way to make friends. I believe to volunteer you must be able to SMILE, LISTEN and LAUGH.

It's not your aptitude but your ATTITUDE that makes a great volunteer. If you decide to join our team at Whitehead I promise you we will provide the training to do any job and appreciate the time you give up.

SKIBBEREEN & THE BALTIMORE RAILWAY EXTENSION

John C. Dwyer

Overview

The railway arrived in Skibbereen, the terminus of the Ilen Valley Railway on 21st July 1877, followed by the Schull & Skibbereen tramway which commenced its operation from 6th September 1886.

The Baltimore Extension opened on 2nd May 1893 and the final rail development in the area occurred with the opening of the Baltimore Pier Extension in 1917.

Baltimore Railway Extension

On 2nd May 1893 the Baltimore Extension Railway Company, with a nominal capital of £70 made up of 7 shareholders each with a £10 share, opened the railway from Skibbereen to Baltimore. This was to become the final major expansion of the extensive Cork, Bandon & South Coast Railway. The driving force behind this venture was local Skibbereen curate Rev C Davis. He was instrumental in having the Light Railway Act of 1889 passed through the Westminster Parliament. The act authorised the Government to provide a sum of £30,000 to finance the building of an 8-mile railway extension from Skibbereen to Baltimore. This was done partially to alleviate unemployment, hunger and distress in the area. Sadly Fr. Davis passed away in 1892 before he had an opportunity to see the line in action. William Martin Murphy, founder of the Irish Independent newspaper and who died in 1919, built the line using 60lb steel rail on creosoted sleepers. The only

intermediate stop along the line was at Creagh Halt which had a 249-foot long platform on the down side. Baltimore terminus had a 252-foot long down side platform.

The potential for further extending the line to a new pier at the harbour was soon realised and planning got underway in 1913 to undertake the work of constructing the pier. The task was finally completed in the summer of 1917 by the Congested Districts Board at a cost of £9,500. The railway company's own engineering staff carried out the laying of the ¼-mile track to the pier, along with 2 sidings on the pier itself at a cost to the company of £734 9s 1d. The company also contributed £1,000 towards the pier's construction costs. This rail link was to become Ireland's most southerly railhead, a distance of 62 miles from Cork city's Albert Quay station. The completion of the scheme also marked the end of railway building in West Cork. A substantial increase in fish traffic resulted from this direct rail access to Baltimore port.

The one negative piece of news to emerge in the early part of the 20th Century was the termination in 1916 by the Post Office of the mail contract with the railway which had been in place since 1881 and which in more recent times had included the transporting of mail between Skibbereen and Baltimore. In 1877 for example, the Down Dublin Night Mail arrived at Cork's Glanmire Road



Railcar 2637 preparing to depart Cork (Albert Quay) on the 6pm to Bantry, 5th May 1955. (Photo: courtesy C Friel)

station at 2.00am. From there the mail for West Cork was transported by road vehicles to Albert Quay station where the Night Mail of the Cork & Bandon Railway was due to leave at 3.00am, to arrive in Bantry at 5.55am. In the opposite direction, mail for Dublin left Bantry at 6.50pm and arrived in Albert Quay at 9.35pm. It was loaded onto the Dublin Night Mail which left Cork at 10.06pm and was due in Dublin at 4.10am.

From December 1920 until May 1923 the Skibbreen to Baltimore service was closed completely due to Civil War difficulties. Though the line was worked by the Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway Company, the Baltimore Extension Railway Co. retained its

identity until 1925 when both companies were absorbed into the Great Southern Railways. The accumulated losses in working the line totalled £13,696-15-10. The listed names of the Baltimore Extension Railway Co. directors at the time of the amalgamation are noteworthy; William Martin Murphy, James William Lombard and William Lombard Murphy.

In 1931 Baltimore station was reduced to 'Halt' status. As a result the position of stationmaster was downgraded to that of halt keeper under the control of Skibbreen stationmaster. The year 1932 was a particularly successful one for the railway. Cheap excursion fares encouraged large numbers to travel to the Exhibition and Industrial Fair, which

was being held on the Carrigrohane Road in Cork from May to October of that year. Also on 26th June 1932 a special excursion train departed Baltimore at 3.40am with a large contingent bound for the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin. The running of outward excursions to GAA matches and to Skibbereen Agricultural Show, along with inward specials to Baltimore Regatta, generated additional passenger traffic for the company. The importing of coal through Baltimore harbour was a source of further goods business and an important revenue earner for the railway.

On Sunday 25th November 1934 large numbers of supporters travelled on Irish Republican Army specials to Skibbereen to commemorate the Kilmichael Ambush which led to the death of Michael Collins. Trains for Skibbereen departed Albert Quay at 11.30am and Bantry at 12.15pm. On Sunday 15th September 1935 a special charter by Mallow Town Confraternity departed Mallow at 8.30am and ran through to Skibbereen where the consecration of Dr Casey, the new bishop of Ross was taking place in Skibbereen Cathedral. The return train departed Skibbereen at 8.00pm on its return direct service to Mallow.

A novel event took place in 1937 when members of Skibbereen Catholic Young Men's Society (CYMS) travelled by train to Bantry and hence by sea on "*The Princess Beara*" to Castletownberehaven. My uncle Jim Dwyer was among the group that travelled on the day. In

January 1940 Cork United Cattle Traders Association agreed to a request from the Baltimore Fair Committee to hold a cattle and sheep fair in the village in late January of that year. The railway was contracted with the proposal for the direct conveying of live animals from the fair. From 8th October 1941 only one daily service operated, in the morning out of Baltimore due to the coal shortage brought about by World War II.

The first indication of uncertainty over the future of the Baltimore Extension came on 15th December 1948 in the form of the Milne report, which advocated the complete closure of the line. Fortunately nothing became of the report and the line continued to operate. During the months of July, August and September of 1949 several Sunday 'seaside specials' ran from Dunmanway to Baltimore. The return fare was 3/6 with trains being well supported.

A 'monster' Bazaar took place in Baltimore between 8th and 11th April 1953. A special afternoon train conveyed Skibbereen folk to and from the bazaar. A special was also run from Dunmanway on one of the afternoons so great was the attraction.

The Knock Pilgrimage 'Special' was another annual event well supported in the Dioceses of Ross. Again citing Sunday 24th May 1953 as an example, the train departed Baltimore at 12.30am and travelled via Cork to Claremorris where pilgrims transferred to buses for the final stage of the journey to Knock. The elapsed journey time was approx. 24 hours.



Class F6 2-4-2T No.34 with a short, mixed, branch train at Baltimore, 21st September 1953. (Photo: N Sprinks, courtesy C Friel)

On 6th June 1954 Sean T O'Kelly, President of Ireland, unveiled a memorial to local patriot Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in Skibbereen. Large numbers travelled by train from Cork's Albert Quay station to be present at the event. The train served stations from Cork to Skibbereen and then continued onto Baltimore to pick up passengers both there and at Creagh halt to bring them back up to the ceremony. Later in the same year the Baltimore branch of the Irish Countrywomen's Association organised a large party for an outing to Cork on Thursday 23rd August.

Trial runs of four car diesel units to Clonakilty, Baltimore and Bantry took place on Monday 22nd February 1954 (although other sources say 24th Feb – Ed) with a follow up running to Clonakilty and Bantry on Thursday 4th

March. The inaugural diesel working from Skibbereen took place on Sunday 25th July, when the regular Bantry set was used to form a special to the Munster Football Final in Cork.

Sunday, 22nd May 1955 saw the first ever diesel pilgrimage railcar running on the Baltimore extension. The actual train service commenced in Creagh as the pilgrims mainly hailed from the adjacent parish of Rath. On the August Monday of the same year four trains were needed to bring record crowds to Baltimore regatta – two from Drimoleague and two from Cork city. On the week following, on Sunday 7th August, a 'special'* carried travellers from Cork to Baltimore on their way to Cape Clear for the unveiling of the new Marion Grotto, the grotto is sited near St Kieran's Well.



Bogie tank 4-4-2T No.463 makes a spirited departure from Drimoleague with an Up goods, 21st September 1953. (Photo: N Sprinks, courtesy C Friel)

4th September witnessed the inaugural running of a railcar excursion to Baltimore. Up to 200 travelled on the 7-car double-diesel unit, which was chartered by the CIE Social and Welfare Club. Albert Quay departure was at 10am, with stops at Bandon and Skibbereen only to pick up passengers. The 62-mile journey was covered in just two hours and was one of the fastest runs recorded on the route.

A date, which stands out in my own mind, was Sunday 14th October 1956. The event in question was the excursion to the Chipperfields International Circus. The Baltimore branch train ran through non-stop from Drimoleague to Albert Quay. Combined rail and admission to circus fares were arranged to facilitate circus-goers. The author recalls travelling on that excursion with his late

father, Jerome to be entertained by one of Europe's largest and most spectacular circus extravaganzas of that era. What memories are re-ignited in recalling that same event!!!

The circus and troupe had come in by boat from England to Cork. The variety of animals, incredible skills of the artists and sheer size of the big top were simply breath taking.

The year 1957 saw the replacement of steam hauled trains on the Skibbereen - Baltimore route by diesel-electric hauled trains. On June 9th, Whit Sunday, the first ever diesel-electric excursion ran into Baltimore where arrangements had been made to connect with boat trips to Cape for 'Visitor's Day' on the island.

Again on 27th September 1959 a special train ran to Cork (from Bantry with a

connection at Drimoleague from Skibbereen) bringing 400 persons on this occasion to another special performance by Chipperfields at the Show Grounds. A troupe of twelve elephants greeted the travellers as they stepped off the train at Albert Quay and led the parade to the big top.

August 1960 marked the last occasion when it would be possible to travel by train to Baltimore Regatta, though we were not aware at the time of the events which were about to unfold. On that Bank Holiday Monday between 800-1,000 passengers were carried on four trains. Baltimore station was a hive of activity with sidings full to capacity while the regatta was in progress.

It was on that fateful day, Tuesday 27th

September 1960 that news of the imminent closure of the entire West Cork Railway system first broke. I can still vividly recall hearing the announcement being broadcast on the 6.30pm Radio Eireann news. The Dublin bureaucrats had cast the dice and the execution date set for 6 months hence, Good Friday 31st March 1961. P J Herbert, the Cork District Superintendent, himself a dedicated railway man all his life had the unenviable task of conveying the tidings to his fellow workers in the Albert Quay. From there he travelled to Bandon with a heavy heart where he repeated the message to the staff at Bandon station.

Services could not be legally terminated for 6 months after notice of termination had been served. However, in December



Approx. halfway along the branch between Drimoleague and Baltimore we find No.34 asleep on shed at Skibbereen on 30th May 1953. Photo: N Sprinks, courtesy C Friel)

1960 work commenced on lifting Baltimore sidings. The awful reality of the situation was beginning to dawn.

My final trip on the West Cork took place on 8th December 1960, the Feast day of the Immaculate Conception, when my fondly remembered Aunt Nell and I travelled from Skibbereen to Cork city where the Christmas season was in full swing. En route to the city the lifting of sidings was very much in evidence. However, it was the sight of station buildings, condemned for closure in a little over 3 months, being painted in the new CIE colours of red and cream that we could not fathom. After a day's shopping in Woolworths, The Queen's Arcade, Cash's and the new Dunnes Stores, visits to relatives in South Terrace and lunch in the Green Door restaurant and cakes room at 92 Patrick Street we headed back home on the train for the final time, changing at Drimoleague en-route. As we stepped off the train, on what had indeed been a happy day, we nonetheless were aware that for us we were witnessing the end of an era in rail travel through West Cork.

The Irish Railway Record Society chartered a special steam excursion headed by No.464 to travel over the West Cork network, including the Baltimore Extension line, on St Patrick's Day 1961 as a final tribute to this once proud railway. Stations, sidings, bridges, tunnels and signals were enthusiastically and expertly photographed. Many of the photographs are preserved in the offices of the Society at Heuston Station in Dublin.

Despite the protests, numerous suggestions for improvements, and impassioned appeals, a long wail of the hooter signalled the departure of the final passenger train as it slowly pulled out of Skibbereen station for Baltimore at 8.30pm on Good Friday. A large crowd had gathered to bid farewell and to bemoan the immeasurable loss which the passing of the railway would bring to so many. As the train made its way over the 120 foot River Ilen lattice form girder bridge, through Bridge Street level crossing and into the 'cutting' detonators on the line filled the air with a noise which was in stark contrast to the deafening silence of the onlookers. It marked the closing chapter of the book for the railwaymen in particular and the people of West Cork in general.

By 1962 the tracks had disappeared and the system which had taken so much time, resources, skill and effort to build was no more. The signatures of a future President, Childers, and Tod Andrews saw to that and proved unfortunately yet again that the pen is mightier than the sword!!! The track across the level crossing at Bridge Street Skibbereen survived until the early '70s when it was finally lifted by Cork County Council workmen.

Some notable traces of the Baltimore and Skibbereen Extension still remain to the present day. The latticed girder bridge traverses the river Ilen at Skibbereen and has been preserved thanks to the efforts of the proprietor of the West Cork Hotel. The level crossing and accompanying lodge on the Baltimore Road has been beautifully

maintained and is well worth stopping to view, especially when the flowers are in full bloom. Elements of the station buildings in both Skibbereen and Baltimore can still be traced.

It is somewhat ironic that while numerous stretches of former railways have been relayed throughout Ireland as tourist amenities and special interest group attractions, here in West Cork, an important center of tourism, almost not a single yard of the 'permanent way' remains for either tourist or local to enjoy.

If the Cork Bandon and South Coast Railway appears in retrospect some idyllic transport system, tragedy did occur; for example at Skibbereen on Friday 15th May 1896, when the 4p.m. train from Cork Albert Quay arrived with a horse box attached. Shunting commenced to allow two wagons be attached to the 6.30pm down train for Baltimore. To facilitate the attaching of the additional wagons to the train, the horse box was uncoupled at the turntable and placed in a siding. The two wagons were then moved nearer to the engine shed and clear of the points. Mr. W. H. Loane was the Station Master, John Gallagher the train driver. John Mehigan was the station porter in charge of changing the points and moving the wagons. Timothy Keating worked in the store house as well as assisting the porter in moving the wagons when required. He was requested to uncouple the horse box and take the coupling chain to connect the two wagons to the Baltimore train. The train went forward and was signaled to reverse. The engine

whistled before it started shunting. The two wagons did not appear to have their brakes applied and they rolled too close to the points.

Timothy Keating, in an effort to remove the chain from the horse box, was caught and squeezed between a buffer of the horse box and one of the wagons. After the impact the horse box derailed. The accident happened at 5 o'clock. Timothy Keating was in pain but conscious at the time but unfortunately his condition worsened and he died at 11.30p.m.

The Munster branch of the IRRS met in Cork's Gresham Metropole Hotel on Thursday 31st March 2011 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the closure of the West Cork railway. Prior to the meeting Tony Price and the author visited the former railway terminus at Albert Quay. This unscheduled visit was warmly welcomed and the two 'guests' were invited to look around what was once the terminus of the CB&SC Railway. They sat quietly in the former Board Room as the clock approached 6.09pm, the slightly delayed departure time of the final passenger train to Bantry, with connection at Drimoleague for Skibbereen and Baltimore.

The trains may have gone but the memories remain strong!

(another source suggests that this was a connecting special from Drimoleague to Baltimore, from a special from Cork to Bantry – Ed)*



Above: Crowds say "Farewell" to an old friend, the last train, on 31st March 1961. (Photo: courtesy JD Dwyer)

Below: To mark the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Cork Bandon & South Coast Railway, the Munster branch of the IRRS organised an outing on 07th July 2012. The author, in the centre, is accompanied by fellow railway enthusiasts John O'Neill, Kathleen Dwyer, Seamus Ryan and brother Michale Dwyer.



THE RETURN OF No.131; A Celebration of the 'Q' Class of the GNR(I)

Conrad Natzio

The history of the Qs of the GNR(I) is remarkable in several ways. Few classes of locomotive can have taken to the rails as front-line express power yet, despite their success, have been so quickly superseded. Few can have been more highly regarded by their crews. And few indeed can have reappeared, almost sixty years after the introduction of the class, to work the same main-line duties for which they were designed. What follows will attempt to explain these apparent paradoxes, and in particular will give examples of the engines' work which may help to account for the affection which always seemed to have surrounded them.

The history of the class has been the subject of a couple of articles over the years, by R N Clements (in IRRS Journal No.46, 1968) and by Fred Graham and Bill Scott (*Five Foot Three* No.35, 1988), and needs no detailed repetition. Built, to a total of 13, between 1899 and 1904, the work of the Q class on the Mails and other principal express turns was soon curtailed by the introduction of the significantly bigger QL class (the first of which appeared only six months after the last Q), a development doubtless justified by the rapid increase in train weights. So, for some years after the QLs arrived, until the rebuilding of certain bridges between Portadown and Derry, the Qs were restricted to the main and Belfast - Clones lines.

Little record remains of their performance in these years on secondary services. But from 1912 they, and indeed the QLs, were allowed to Derry, replacing the PP class still in charge of what was at that time (before the 1934 completion of the Greenisland cut-off on the NCC route) an important and highly competitive service between Ulster's two principal cities. Although at least one QL was stationed in Derry for a period, that type's greater weight and longer wheelbase than its predecessors, with its light frame construction, reduced its suitability for the peculiar difficulties of the Derry line on which the Qs took more kindly to the constant curvature, gradients and indifferent roadbed. Accordingly they became the line's passenger locomotive of choice, and their success there over the following forty years established their reputation.

From 1919 onwards the Q class was rebuilt with superheaters and piston valves, taking the form familiar today in No.131. By a happy combination of good design and, it must be suspected, good fortune, the resulting boiler and front end proportions were near the ideal, and the rebuilt engines were an outstanding success. They remained in charge of the Belfast - Derry passenger service until, in the Second World War, the S/S2 class was allowed to Derry to cope with the increasingly heavy trains. In the inter-war years the entire class was stationed



No.131 in original condition with green livery and low boiler - and hence longer chimney, seemingly not made from one casting - has attracted quite the crowd of fitters and / or shed staff for this very early C20th photo, perhaps at Dundalk shed. The "Uranus" (Greek god of the sky) nameplate is prominent but nameplates, like blue livery, were not applied to the re-built form of Q we now have, which is one reason No.131 does not now carry them. (Photo: C Friel collection)

in the North, where (in addition to the Derry expresses) there was plenty of suitable secondary work on the lines to Clones, Cavan, Omagh, Enniskillen and Warrenpoint.

The unfortunate result (from the point of the enthusiastic recorder of performance) was that they were very rarely able to indulge their remarkable speed worthiness on the main line. Bob Clements wrote that there were only four such occasions when their work was recorded, but each was "of distinctly exceptional quality", as we shall see. The rarity of their appearances is illustrated by Bob's own notes, available in the Irish

Railway Record Society's archive. Of the 104 runs out of Dublin which he recorded between the wars, starting in the late 1920s, 55 were behind compounds, 36 with S/S2s, 14 with QLs, and one with a Q.

After the war, the pace of change accelerated. Trains were slower, new engines became available, finances were tighter - to the point of crisis in 1953, by which time of course the diesel revolution was well under way. There was less work for the Qs, and when the Great Northern's separate existence ended in October 1958, withdrawals had reduced the class total to nine. CIE



No.131 at home on the Derry Road – the real Derry Road! – at Porthall in Co. Donegal on a train from Londonderry (Foyle Road) to Belfast. The white-capped customs man is a symptom of the "hard border" of the day. (Photo: RM Arnold, courtesy C Friel)

received five in the division of the spoils and, of these, two were fortunately at the time undergoing a general repair at Dundalk Works – Nos.131 and 132. The remaining three did no work for their new owners. No.135 was the only UTA acquisition to find continued employment and, as the last of the class to retain an NCC-type tablet catcher, she still worked occasionally to Portrush over the Antrim branch with through excursions from the GN section.

Nos.131 and 132 emerged from overhaul in, respectively, September 1958 and April 1959, and were just in time to re-establish the reputation of the class for, on 31st May of the latter year, all scheduled (as opposed to special) steam working from Dublin's Amiens Street ceased. No sooner had CIE taken over than a locomotive shortage arose. The

three big VS class 4-4-0s which they acquired were withdrawn (or under repair, in No.207's case; as was compound No.85) and the four S/S2s were in generally poor order.

The two Qs were at once pressed into service on the surviving steam-worked expresses, 14.30 and 18.25 Down, and the balancing up workings, between Dublin and Dundalk (where UTA power took over) and, as we shall see, their performance for these months sometimes approaching the old standards. After the regular main-line work was lost to diesels, both Nos.131 and 132 found employment on special, diesel-substitution and seasonal jobs. No.132 in particular experienced other parts of the CIE system, reaching Athlone on the Christmas "turkey train", the seasonal perishable working, and ran

some useful miles on South-Eastern section suburban trains. She is also reported to have worked a non-stop special to Belfast, and it would be interesting to know how she fared. No.131 was kept mostly to the former GNR lines and, for a considerable period, acted as the Dundalk passenger pilot. In this role she brought the successor to the up 'Mail', the 18.00 ex-Belfast, up from Dundalk one evening in December 1961, perhaps the last time she worked a main-line express. Her arrival in Dublin emptied the Amiens Street station restaurant, in which the annual dinner of the IRRS was taking place!

We need now to look at the quality of Q performance at its best. This found its way into the 'Locomotive Practice and Performance' columns of the Railway Magazine only twice, and published details elsewhere are hard to come by - no doubt some logs must survive in ancient notebooks, which stalwarts of

the RPSI might be persuaded to divulge.

I was lucky enough to catch a few notable runs with those two hardy survivors Nos.131 and 132 in their brief Indian Summer.

The logs which follow, then, are a mix of ancient and modern, but perhaps show how the high regard in which the class was held was justified. Let us hope that the restored No.131 will give us a taste of what was lost, while we acknowledge the achievement of the Society in bringing her back to active life. We might dare to suggest that the RPSI has inherited the mantle of the Great Northern Railway (Ireland), of which the late Mac Arnold once wrote "...was, like rugby football, one of the great levellers across Ireland's political divide... men of different creeds and political opinions often shared a footplate - and a genuine affection".



Here we leave No.131 for the moment; plinthed in Dundalk on 13th May 1981 and watching A43 arrive on the 14.30 from Dublin. At this stage, it is worth noting neither Nos.85 or 461 had turned a wheel in preservation either! (Photo: J Cassells)

First, a brief look at the work of the 'Q's on their happy hunting ground, the Derry Road. Alas, published records are few indeed. In *'Five Foot Three'* No.35, Bill Scott included a couple of runs timed by himself and by the late Drew Donaldson, and they are reproduced (logs 1 and 2) in the form in which they appeared. Some details (particularly of uphill speeds) are lacking but can be deduced with fair accuracy. These runs were made when the GNR's somewhat crude staff-exchange equipment (a net on the loco's tender!) was still in use, and this permitted passage through the single-line loops at 30mph, some improvement at least on what was possible with hand exchange. These two runs are perhaps typical rather than

exceptional: the uphill work was good, but no faster than I experienced on two successive runs behind a 'U' class No.68 (ex No.205) in 1960, with a seven coach train (see *FFT* No.61). The difference lies in the much livelier downhill running, almost unthinkable in the line's later years. The best pre-war schedules were 20, 38, and 26 minutes for the three sections shown; latterly the BUT railcar timings were 23 and 40 minutes, and followed by stops at most stations onwards.

In the up direction the only reference I can find is to the run mentioned, but not reproduced in detail, in the *'Railway Magazine'* article by C J Allen of December 1930, timed in 1924 by J



No.133 departs from the north end of Omagh for Londonderry (Foyle Road), date unknown. The GNR(I) was elegant in most things but the staff-catching net attached to the tender looks capable of trawling up any sort of additional bi-catch it may find along the platforms. (Photo: courtesy C Friel, D Kirk and R Weatherup)

Macartney Robbins, and later quoted by other writers. No.121, with 7 coaches/190 tons, ran from Strabane to Omagh in 26'50", and thence to Dungannon in 37'15", falling to 22½mph on the 1-in-75 climb to MP26½summit. From there to Portadown the 15.0 miles took only 17'25", with an exceptional maximum of 68mph and a time of only 13'50" to pass MP2, 13.0 miles from Dungannon ("almost unbelievably fast" - R M Arnold).

Much faster, however, was the running on the main line on the occasions it was recorded, and again we must be glad of CJA's article noted above, which was devoted to performance in Ireland on both GNR and GSR. During the 1920s and 1930s the 'Q's were based at northern sheds, and it must have been unusual for Dublin crews to get to handle them - as they certainly did on two at least of the runs to be described.

In the down direction there is only one to be found during that period ('RM', May 1939), with 135, unfortunately incorrectly described by CJA as 'unrebuilt', in the small hours of a Sunday morning (undated) with the newspaper train: it seems likely that the driver, Dublin's Dick Batten, with a featherweight load, was encouraged (by Bob Clements) to recover what he could of a very late start. At all events, his time from a (signal?) stop at Howth Junction to Drogheda is believed to be the fastest start-to-stop run ever achieved in Ireland with steam traction on a scheduled train rather than a special (log 3).

The three following logs are my own

from the 1959 Indian summer: on a Wednesday afternoon I took a trip to Drogheda on the 14.30 down, and was justifiably surprised and astonished by the result (log 4), as Tommy Rooney of Dundalk evidently decided after Skerries to see what the engine could do in the way of speed.

That this was hardly a flash in the pan was demonstrated by the same combination of engine and crew later the same week with the Saturday load (log 5), even if the top speed was a little lower. No.132, in the last week of regular steam working, had less chance of fast running on the 18.25, but pulled back three of the four lost minutes after Drogheda (log 6).

The first two logs in the up direction also date back to 1930 or slightly earlier, and are taken from the same 'RM' article of that December. The practice then was to mention the speeds in the text rather than print them in the log, and therefore I have had to interpolate the likely intermediate figures in the first (log 7), with No.125 probably timed by Macartney Robbins; Bob Clements, in whose archive the details also appear, was responsible for log 8 with No.121. He was at that date timing to the nearest five seconds, but the speeds claimed appear to be supported by the times. Driver Mick O'Farrell was to become famous for his work on the compounds. Some readers will remember Charlie Kelly's run home from Drogheda (log 9) - the prelude to the grand railtour of 1961.

Log 10 shows No.131 on the last leg of a long day's work in 1958: the 07.30 ex-

Dublin and 15.00 return from Belfast were booked for railcars, but at that time were regularly steam worked by the same engine throughout, on the sharp diesel timings. Dublin men ran the train to Dundalk, whence a local crew took it on to Belfast and back, to be relieved by colleagues for the final leg. No.131 did this job several times, and seemed to be doing at least as well as the bigger 'S's.

Kirkwood may not have been Dundalk's fastest runner, but could certainly work an engine hard uphill, and his climb of the 1-in-177 to Kellystown was the fastest I'd recorded at the time - and my first ever run with a 'Q'. Nearly three years later another member of the then 12-strong Dundalk top link, Hughie McCarron, did almost as well on that peculiar turn, the 12.45 Dundalk - Dublin stopping train, worked as far as Drogheda only by the Dundalk passenger pilot engine (log 11). At about this time Bob Clements recorded, from the footplate of No.132, the smart run in Log 12.

Bob Clements was exceptional in leaving us his notes of how the engine was worked during this run. *[Editor has taken a liberty and added a few words to aid reading and explanation to outsiders. Note No.131 driving position photo in "Locomotive Electrics" article for this! - Ed].*

"We *[found No.]* 132 on the 6.20 train starting out of the bay in Dundalk - *[Driver]* Johnny Deery (transferred from the Irish North to Dublin last year) and *[Fireman]* Johnny Arnold. As soon as he *[Deery]* gets the right away he opens the

regulator, pulls her up to just outside the 4th mark, and away we go. By the shed she's back to 150lbs *[from working pressure 175lbs]*. Nevertheless, Johnny *[Deery]* brings the regulator full over and as the fire reddens she comes round to her pressure again. At *[mile]post* 52 I expect to see her back to the first *[i.e. the "small"]* valve, but not a bit of it, though he brings his *lever [i.e. the reverser; which in this case would have been a screw one, not a lever]* to the 3rd mark and she flies down and along the level.

It's fully 20 years since I've seen running like this anywhere on the GNR and indeed this would have been exceptional any time except 1932-33 even though the train isn't heavy. Nevertheless she's steaming perfectly and burning very little coal (though it's Yankee *[American coal]*) but at times she hops a good bit. We were doing 66-67*[mph]* in the dip and 53*[mph]* over the top at Kellystown, passed in 19 3/4*[mins]* for the first 171/4 miles.

Then he left the second *[i.e. the "big"]* valve on her quite a while after going over the top and the first for another while before shutting off. His final approach was slow over the bridge and he started braking much too soon - even so we stopped in Drogheda in 27½*[mins]*, allowed 32, and we might have done it in a minute less *[presumably but for the early braking]*. From Dundalk to Kellystown continuously at full regulator and the 3rd mark for the lever was hard work, but there was never the least shortage of steam or water.



No.132 at Balbriggan on the 1200 Dundalk – Dublin (Amiens Street) in spring 1959; CIE Days. (Photo: D Donaldson)

Indeed, had I been driving and in that much of a hurry I'd have given her a bitmore of the lever for the last couple of miles to Kellystown, for a quarter glass would have been ample there with the fall to Drogheda and the stop there."

Here's a run to dispose of the occasional suggestion that the 'Q's (because of their large wheels?) were not at their best on stopping trains. Log 13 displays No.132's abilities on the summer 18.35 Dublin - Skerries and return, and it would be hard to find a smarter operation: with five stops outward and eight on the return trip, the train was back in Dublin 83 minutes after leaving (including the time running round at Skerries).

No further details are to hand of running north of the Border, other than a run of my own behind No.135 - one of only

three, one trivial, one nondescript, and this creditable example (log 14) which could perhaps typify the daily work of the Adelaide engines on the semi-fast jobs on which much of their time was spent.

On the Saturday of a football match, No.135, then long out of the shops, was given a substantial train of eight coaches out of Great Victoria Street (two came off at Portadown) on the 17.35 to Warrenpoint. The engine was eased (possibly from a signal check) before Moira, but otherwise there could be little complaint.

Acknowledgement is due to the compilers of the logs - some alas no longer with us - and also to Joe Cassells for his help.

Log No.	1	2
Q' No.	124	122
Coaches, Tons Tare / Gross	6, 172/195	6, 179/200
Recorder	A Donaldson	W T Scott
Date	Post-WW2	Post-WW2
miles	min/sec	min/sec
0.0	0.00	0.00
6.7	10.28	10.03
9.2	13.20	12.50
10.8	15.38	15.26
15.0	24.03	23.13
2.7	5.12	5.23
9.0	15.52	14.40
11.5	20.16	19.12
14.0	23.32	22.34
17.8	27.57	27.13
19.2	29.52	29.15
26.6	39.10	34.46
9.6	12.09	12.18
14.2	18.36	17.39
15.8	21.16	19.39
19.1	25.42	24.06

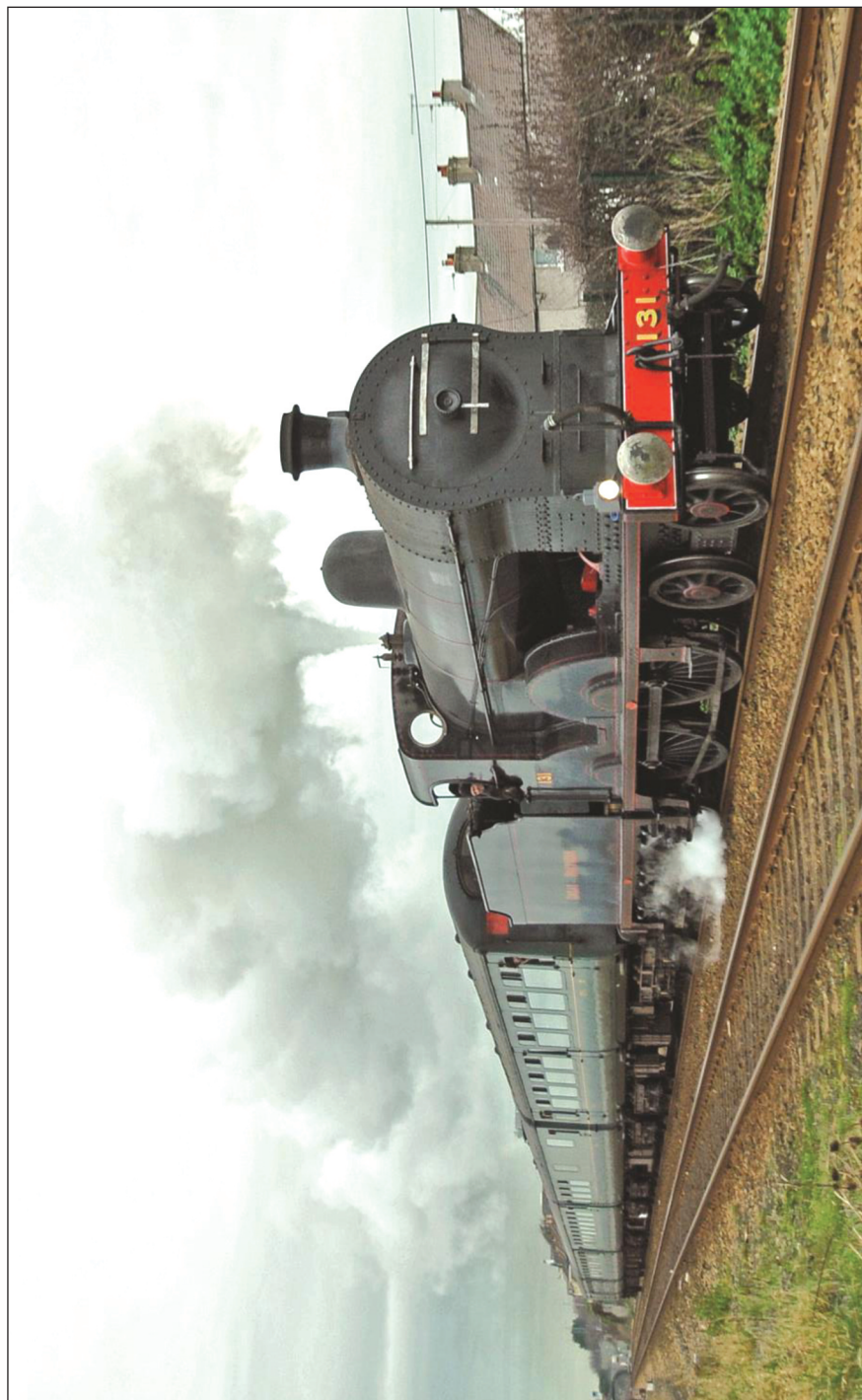
Log No.	3	4	5	6
Q' No.	135	131	131	132
Driver	Batten	Rooney	Rooney	Callaghan
Coaches, Tons Tare /	2, 58/65	6, 175/290	7+wan, 218/235	7, 205/235
Recorder	RN Clements	C Natio	C Natio	C Natio
Date	c1938	10/03/1959	14/03/1959	29/05/1959
miles	min/sec	min/sec	min/sec	min/sec
0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
0.6	DUBLIN	0.00	0.00	0.00
2.4	East Wall	2.14	2.14	2.33
3.7	Killister	5.2	5.09	5.59
4.8	Raheny	6.45	7.41pws	8.19
6.7	Howth Jc	8.54	10.01	9.46
9.0	Portmarnock	3.08	12.14	11.53
11.4	Malahide	5.21	14.4	14.3pws
13.9	Donabate	7.22	16.59	18.42
16.0	Rush & Lush	9.23	19.23	21.48
17.9	MP16	11.16	21.45	24.42
21.7	Skerries	12.5	23.45	26.58
24.0	Balbriggan	15.39	27.21	30.43
27.1	Gormanston	-	29.26	32.59pws
30.0	Laytown	19.43	32.17	37.52
31.7	MP30	22.12	35.07	41.09
31.7	Drogheda	24.04	38.09	44.07
1.3	MP33	2.30	3.32	3.28
5.6	Kellystown	6.59	9.41	9.44
10.0	Dunleer	10.36	14.07	14.16
11.9	Dromlin Jc	12.04	15.48	16.01
15.5	C'bellingham	14.41	18.53	19.09
18.3	MP50	-	21.32	21.43
20.3	MP52	18.27	23.50	23.37
22.0	Dundalk S	-	26.01	25.26
22.6	Dundalk	21.27	27.42	26.59

Log No.	7		8		9		
Q' No.	125		121		132		
Driver	-		O'Farrell		C Kelly		
Coaches, Tons Tare /	6, 190/200		8, 246/260		6+van, 174/190		
Recorder	JM Robbins		RN Clements		C Natzio		
Date	pre 1990		pre 1990		03/06/1961		
miles		min/sec	mph	min/sec	mph	min/sec	mph
0.0	Drogheda	0.00	-	0.00	-	0.00	-
4.6	Laytown	6.25	70%	6.05	66.00	6.09	69.00
7.7	Gormanston	-	64.00	10.25	pws 25	8.58	63 / 65
10.0	Balbriggan	11.20	62.00	13.45	-	11.07	64.00
13.8	Skerries	14.50	65.00	17.40	64.00	15.09	sigs 33
15.7	MP16	16.50	56%	19.45	55.00	18.19	41.00
17.8	Rush & Lusk	-	-	21.45	69.00	20.40	62 / 68
20.3	Donabate	20.48	77.00	23.40	85.00	22.56	63 / 66
22.7	Malahide	22.52	74 / 67	25.35	75 / 67	25.45	sigs 30
25.0	Portmarnock	-	69.00	27.40	69.00	28.55	58.00
26.9	Howth Jc	26.35	66.00	29.20	67.00	30.52	61.00
28.0	Raheny	-	61%	31.40	60.00	<u>sigs stop</u>	
30.0	Clontarf	29.35	66%	32.15	62.00	<u>sigs -</u>	
31.7	DUBLIN	32.30	-	34.41	-	42.29	-

Log No.		10		11		12	
Q' No.		131		131		132	
Driver		Kirkwood		McCarron		Deery	
Coaches, Tons Tare /		5, 156/165		6, 170/180		6, 170/180	
Recorder		C Natzio		C Natzio		RN Clements	
Date		25/09/1958		16/12/1961		? 1959	
miles		min/sec	mph	min/sec	mph	min/sec	mph
0.0	Dundalk	0.00	-	0.00	-	0.00	-
2.3	MP52	5.10	39.00	5.12	34.00	-	-
5.8	MP48½	8.51	64 / 58	9.23	56 / 51	-	66 / 60
7.1	C'bellingham	10.44	-	11.20	-	9.45	62.00
10.7	Dromin Jc	5.37	54.00	5.51	54.00	13.08	65.00
12.6	Dunleer	8.39	-	8.26	-	15.00	59.00
17.0	Kellystown	7.26	48.00	7.58	43.00	19.47	53.00
20.8	MP33½	-	60.00	12.02	64.00	23.24	66.00
22.6	Drogheda	15.45 sigs	-	14.38	-	27.17	-
Sched. (mins)		11, 09, 14		12, 09, 15		? 30	

Log No.			13				
Q' No.			132 (chimney first) (tender first return)				
Driver			Rogers				
Coaches, Tons Tare /			5, 150/160				
Recorder			C Natzio				
Date			14/08/1961				
miles		Sch	min/sec	mph	min/sec	mph	Sch
0.0	DUBLIN (A St)		0.00	-	6.45	-	6
0.7	East Wall		1.49	-	3.08	sig stop	
				42		45	
2.4	Killester	6	4.38		1.53	34	3
0.6	Harmonstown		1.58	36	2.05	27	3
1.3	Raheny		3.03	46	2.47	40	3
2.4	Howth Jc		4.23	54 / 58	3.50	51	4
4.3	Portmarnock	8	6.56	-	4.28	-	5
				43		53	
2.3	Malahide	5	4.56	-	4.06	-	4
				45		52	
2.4	Donabate	4	4.25	-	4.01	-	5
				45 / 44		54	
2.5	Rush & Lusk	5	4.35	-	7.13	56	8
2.1	MP16		4.32	43	4.12	43	
				56			
4.0	Skerries	5	7.19	-	0.00	-	

Log No.			14			
Q' No.			135			
Coaches, Tons Tare /			8, 240/260 (6, 180/195 from			
Gross			Portadown)			
Recorder			C Natzio			
Date			08/10/1960			
miles		Sch	min/sec	mph		
0.0	Belfast (GV5)	0	0.00	-		
0.6	Central Jc		2.39	-		
1.4	Adelaide		4.27	35		
2.3	Balmoral		5.55	37/40		
4.1	Dunmurry		9.13	pws 28		
6.1	Lambeg		12.31	45		
7.6	Lisburn	13	15.14	-		
1.6	Knockmore Jc		3.51	45		
2.5	Maze		4.57	52		
5.0	Damhead		7.58	54/48		
				47 sigs?		
6.9	Moirs		10.12	48		
9.0	MP96		13.05	41		
10.2	Kilmore		14.30	56/62		
12.4	Lurgan	21	17.57	-		
2.0	Boilie		3.41	54		
4.0	Seagoe		7.07	5 sigs		
					(2 coaches off)	
4.9	Portadown	8	9.15	-		
1.7	MP86		3.55	48		
	MP83		-	58		
5.7	Tanderagee	11	8.50	-		
				46		
2.4	Scarva	5	4.43	-		
				43		
2.7	Poyntzpass	5	5.31	-		
2.9	MP74		4.55	56		
5.0	Goragwood	9	8.06	-		



On 19th November, No.131 gets over-excited at the unfamiliar territory of Eden on the Larne line. Anto Dargan is starting the injector to reign her in. (Photo: C Friel)

LETTERS

Hello,

The most recent Bulletin has just prompted me to make a brief observation on Alan O'Rourke's article on the BCDR in 1940 in FFT 62; I don't know if this will be of any use for next year's issue.

I was struck by his comments on the Newtownards-Donaghadee section being controlled by both Wise's staff and Tyer's absolute block, and querying why this was the case. The reason is straightforward: correct use of Wise's staff and its "permits" will prevent you encountering a train coming in the opposite direction, but does nothing in itself to separate consecutive trains in the same direction.

Separation of trains in the same direction is the reason for having Tyer's absolute block instruments in addition, and this use of absolute block instruments (the same sort used on double lines) is entirely normal on lines worked by the staff and ticket system - though, in the case of the BCDR, the absolute block instruments were latterly replaced by telephones on the Ballynahinch and Ardglass branches.

This would also allow you, should this be required for traffic purposes, to separate a single staff section into more than one block section. As Alan notes, this was the case with on the Donaghadee branch where the block section could be split at Ballygrainey, but the Wise's staff continued to apply to the whole section

between Newtownards and Donaghadee.

Best wishes,

Richard Huss

Editor,

That photo on page 54 of FFT 62 is interesting. It also appears on page 138 of Mac Arnold's "The County Down", which confirms that it is indeed Andy Bell and engine 19 - his regular engine. Mac's book, though, dates the photo as 23 January 1950 rather than 25 March. There's a puzzle for someone to sort out!

- *Joe Cassells*

With Thanks to...

In addition to its own members, staff and volunteers, HEI, Irish Rail and Translink, the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland wishes to acknowledge the generous support and ongoing commitment of its funders in recent years. Whitehead Railway Museum and a number of key restoration projects were made possible by grant funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund under the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland and administered by Tourism Northern Ireland. Plus GROW South Antrim with additional support from Mid & East Antrim Council and Ulster Garden Villages.



Receiving the 2017 HRA Manisty Award for Excellence for the RPSI's new museum and engineering facility are (from left), Peter Scott, RPSI Locomotives, Lord Berkeley, guest speaker, Canon John McKegney, RPSI Chairman and Robin Morton, RPSI Events Convenor. The ceremony was in Birmingham on 10th February 2018 and the award was jointly won with the Swanage Railway. (Photo: K Braithewaite)



Gathered in the Carriage Gallery following WRM's official launch on 25th October are: Rear (L-R) RPSI Chairman John McKegney, Anna Carragher (Chair of HLF NI), Paul Reid (Mayor of Mid and East Antrim), Dr Joan Smyth (RPSI Vice-President), (Front) (L-R) RPSI President Lord O'Neill, Michele Shirlow (Tourism NI), Joan Christie (Lord-Lieutenant for County Antrim), Jean Grimshaw and Denis Grimshaw (former RPSI Chairman whose grand vision for the RPSI is now finally bricks and mortar). Special thanks are due from the RPSI to Denis for sticking by his vision through a very, very difficult implementation period. It was never easy, but he did it. (Photo: A Allison)

INSIDE REAR COVER – No.85 is in Killarney on 18th June. Gerry Mooney checks all is in order before departure on the Steam Dreams "Emerald Isle Explorer" charter. (Photo: S Comiskey).

REAR COVER – No.461 at Raheny, heading for Howth on 04th June. What does 2018 hold for this engine? (Photo: D Hennigan)



