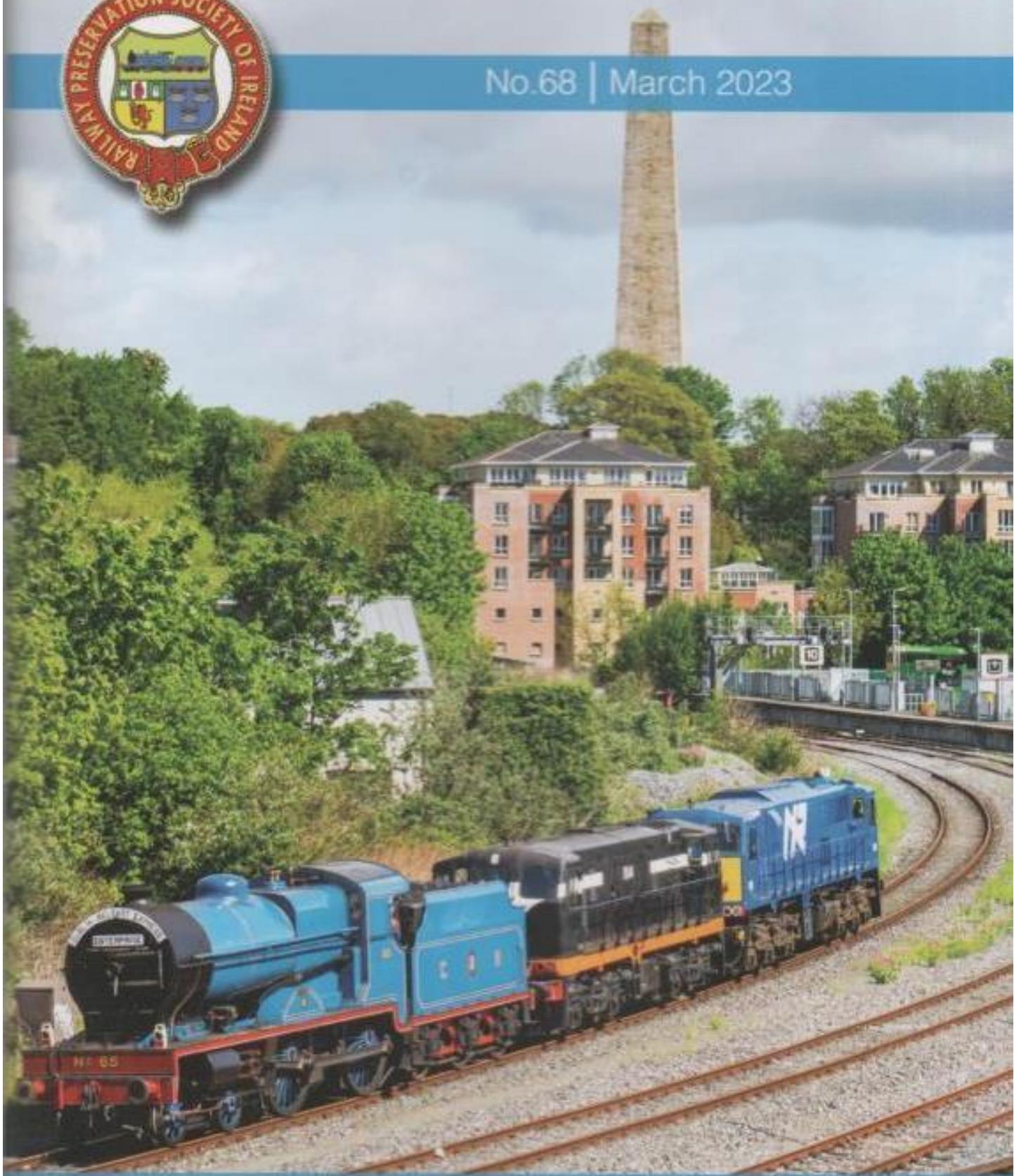




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FIVE FOOT THREE

The Magazine of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



B141, Inchicore, 7th May. (Photo: A Duggan)

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

FIVE FOOT THREE
WHITEHEAD RAILWAY MUSEUM
CASTLEVIEW ROAD • WHITEHEAD • COUNTY ANTRIM
NORTHERN IRELAND • BT38 9NA

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Poor old No.85 had a year to forget. Here she is running in alone by the Royal Canal at Broombridge on 13th March. Unless stated otherwise, all picture dates are in 2022.
(Photo: A Duggan)

Cover: NIR 8112 hauling B141 & No.85 to Connolly at Islandbridge Jct, 10th May. (Photo: A Duggan)

Whilst the idea is that this edition of Five Foot Three reviews Society events in 2022, it would be wholly remiss to not straightaway refer to the tragic death of Driver Noel Playfair on 16th January 2023. To Rachelle, Gemma, David, Christopher, Rebekah, Daniel, Tyler, Ben, Sam and the wider family, the RPSI extends its deepest condolences.

Noel will undoubtedly feature in this magazine as the 2022 Driver of No.131 and, just once, No.85, not to mention 3BG, as he determinedly kept what was often a lackluster and challenging season – both on the footplate and off – on the rails. Noel's Obituary will feature in next year's edition, covering 2023, partly as the Editor himself does not yet feel up to the job of putting the best of the tributes together. Suffice here to say the Editor

spoke to Noel twice in York Road in the 24 hours beforehand and he was as cheerful, 'can-do' for the Railway and caring for his family as he ever was. There was an enormous funeral for Noel on 25th January 2023, which at least 55 RPSI members attended.

Returning to 2022, by March Covid-19 restrictions were largely lifted. This ended a two-year period of restricted operation. Without the efforts of Lisa Adair in securing grant aid during this period it is doubtful that the Society could have survived. By April 2022, prospects looked good for both jurisdictions to return to running profitable mainline steam trains. Dublin got back to full strength, but soon encountered severe reliability issues with No.85 which certainly sapped morale amongst those attempting repairs.



For many, many years Noel Playfair and Gary Moore were the A-team on Belfast operations. Gary fires No.85 to Noel in pre-pandemic days.

However No.85's problems had no effect on the increasingly popular Dublin-based diesel tours. No.85 did at least manage to feature prominently, alongside B134 and B141, at Inchicore's open day in May.

Irish Rail gently helped out where required and the safety-net they provided in the end enabled a successful, if not exactly satisfying, Dublin season in which at least much useful revenue was generated.

Regardless of what the final verdict turns out to be on No.85's woes, she is, in 2023, in her last year of her 10-year certificate and has performed sterling work from Derry-Londonderry to Waterford to Tralee... repeatedly. By this stage in her lifecycle, No.85 should be playing second fiddle to a fresh locomotive running in, but the Society has not produced an overhauled mainline steam locomotive since 2015. As we approach our 60th Anniversary, we must not ignore the fundamental requirement for the useful handful of our locomotives to be continually moving through a service – overhaul – service sequence. We emerged from the pandemic with Whitehead's workshop full of non-mainline projects, in various stages of completion. In 2022 a concerted and largely successful effort was made to clear these out to enable focus to return to No.171 and the pending re-tube of No.131... even if the aforementioned No.85 had other ideas.

In contrast to Dublin, the North, with the reliable No.131, desperately struggled with the ever-increasingly serious and

urgent issue of Translink crew availability (now culminated in 2023 in the situation already noted). During 2022 we had trains cancelled or ran with diesel due to lack of Driver Assessors, lack of Firemen, Covid-19 in crew, lack of sales and the death of a Monarch. Thanks to Translink for their assistance and positivity at meetings, but business must now be done.

It is painfully obvious to some at Whitehead that the bulk of the revenue comes from Dublin and attempts were made in 2022 to redress the balance a little. Several new ideas for evening trains were trialled. In general, the seeds of future growth may be seen there, but we need to get away from last-minute decisions and we need to get a serious handle on successful target marketing consistently well in advance. Following very positive sales in March the headwinds, including cost-of-living, marketing, staffing, crew availability and pathing uncertainties proved extremely severe.

When we operate a mainline train, we are not competing with anyone else on the island. When we focus on the deceptively easy options of running Train Rides ad infinitum and on being a Museum, we are competing with several others in Northern Ireland alone. But if we could overcome the crew availability and marketing issues to fill our Belfast trains - and at the same time re-focus our engineering to provide Dublin with the steam engines they require to run both local and multi-day tours - well, the prize of securing profitable mainline steam far into the future is there for the taking.

2022 was a funny old year. In theory, it was a return to normal but there was more than a touch of the 'new normal' about it!

Some highlights from the year:

Train Rides and Sold-out Dublin Trips

The very welcome return of mainline trains in Dublin unleashed what can only be described as a pent-up appetite for steam in a population starved of it for two years. Booked-out trains throughout the year were marred only by a propensity for No.85 "Merlin" to disgrace itself on a number of occasions with a recurring big-end problem, leading eventually to the Christmas season being diesel-hauled.

The lockdown fallout and some sickness

resulted in a reduced pool of available mainline crews in the north this year, so there was a smaller number of Whitehead-based trips, and those that did run were confined to the Larne line, with a couple making it as far as Lisburn.

Line closures at Halloween didn't help. So, to make up for this there was a rather full programme of train rides at Whitehead, with a few non train-based events, usually in liaison with third parties, thrown in - it has to be said with mixed success. A hybrid Christmas season of mainline days and train ride days appears to have been reasonably successful.

Our Mk2 diner 547 has been out of service since before COVID, but with trips being short and all visiting Whitehead, with its café facilities, the lack of on-board refreshments has not been a



Dundalk, 23rd October, L-R James Friel, David Carse, Peter Rigney and Jonathan Clinton.

(Photo: CP Friel)

major issue this year.

Hopefully, No.85 will be fully operational in the coming season and a full programme of proper mainline trains will follow.

Charity

As a charity itself, the Society has always tried to help others when possible. For a number of years now we have been able, through the generosity of members, to make seats available on our Santa trains for needy families. This past year was the best yet, with two full carriages being made available to the Salvation Army and DePaul for their use. Thank you!

Remote Meetings

Despite pandemic fears having largely subsided, both internal and external Society meetings continued to be held mainly online, although the AGM in September was face-to-face which shows it can be done.

No doubt there is an element of comfort and laziness in holding internal meetings via computer, but it does make them very convenient despite the drawbacks. And, it allows cross-border deliberations without the hassle of travel. It will be interesting to see how this all pans out.

The public meetings continued online and it's interesting that other societies follow this trend, albeit that some of them also have parallel live get-togethers.

The Society's meetings were, as always, excellent so well done to Charles Friel and his team.

Changes at Board

In August the Board said goodbye to John McKeown, who retired as Chairman for health reasons; we wish him well. Following that, Peter Rigney was co-opted to the Chair, as was Sue Harpur as Vice-Chair and Mark Bailey as Treasurer. All three were officially elected at the

September AGM, as were Mark Walsh, after a few years away, plus Jonathan Clinton, Martin Devlin and Jim O'Neill. Departing directors were Fergus McDonnell and Phillip Newell and our thanks to them.

The Board is now:

Chair: Peter Rigney

Treasurer: Mark Bailey

Directors: Jonathan Clinton

Mervyn Darragh

Martin Devlin

Sue Harpur

Mark Kennedy

Paul McCann

Joe McKeown

Jim O'Neill

Mark Walsh

External: Dermot O'Hara

Health & Safety

Our 5-year Licence to Operate a Light Railway is due for renewal soon and James Friel and his team have put significant effort into the documentation required for the renewal. This culminated in a visit to Whitehead in January 2023 by the head of the Railway Safety Authority, part of the Gateways & EU Relations Division of the Department for Infrastructure (NI), at which it was indicated that the licence would be renewed to cover operations in the yard, including shunting, train rides, etc.

An Engineering Standards Committee and a Safety Committee (advisory), established under HSE guidelines, have been set up for Whitehead. In Dublin, Denis McCabe continues to lead the safety efforts there.

Administration

During the year the team lost its Education Officer, but Lisa has since been

joined by Graham Nortje who is responsible for the day-to-day financial admin. Sue Harpur has been very busy helping out during the year when the General Manager has not been available.

Locomotives and Rolling Stock

Apart from the current running locomotives, No.85 and No.131, the number one priority in the workshop has been the overhaul of No.171 "Sieve Gullion", which last appeared in public on train rides at Whitehead on 26th October 2001. With a fair wind, the locomotive should commence trials in 2023. Please note that the 171 Completion Appeal remains open and your donations are invited.

A major milestone was reached when B134 appeared on static display in public at the Inchicore open day in May. In its grey and yellow livery, it had a plaque unveiled by the American Ambassador to

Ireland. Work continues in getting the locomotive into traffic.

As in the previous year, No.3BG "Guinness" was the mainstay of operations during the year, operating train rides and numerous shunting turns.

Membership

For another year, the number of members increased during the year, which is reassuring despite the lack of major mainline attractions (in NI at least).

Online Facilities

The website resources continued to expand with reports, photos and historic documentation. However, it was a lot less this year as most of the available information was gleaned and added during the lull of lockdown. Probably the most significant additions were individual web pages for a number of our vehicles. If you can help with information then



Whitehead, 10th December – Noel Playfair, Ryan Downey, Barney McReynolds in cab and David Orr on ground.
(Photo: CP Friel)

please do get in touch.

If you haven't visited the Members Area then have a look.

Online sales continued to be impressive during the year, helped by a number of new books - heavily advertised to members and on our social media channels. The most notable book, sponsored by the Society and launched in June, "Steam's Last Challenge" by Joe Cassells, is a must for your collection.

Thank You

As always, thanks must go to all who have served during another busy year on the Board.

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

Regular contact was maintained with the management of the railway companies, NI Railways and Iarnród Éireann. They continue to be supportive, so thanks to them.

As always, our volunteers rarely disappoint and they continued to help where possible. New volunteers are welcome - so give us a call!



Sam Hall, trainee Driver, drives No. 131 under Philip Lockett's supervision on 13th August.

(Photo: J Cassells)

Having just read my 2021 submission to Five Foot 3, it is difficult to relate to the conditions that we endured during the pandemic. At the end of 2021, we had coped with lockdowns, restricted service provision and new procedures on site. Now, at the end of 2022, we barely hear mention of the virus. The vaccination programme was rolled out and we all went back to normal, more or less. The biggest indicator to me of this emergence of freedom was, as our house is under the flightpath to Aldergrove, planes coming in once again, thick and fast. Clearly people were clambering to make the most of life beyond restriction. It was almost as if the previous 2 years had been erased.

As a small team we were looking forward to a relatively peaceful start to the year. As you know, operations start in earnest at Easter, with on site operations

commencing around St Patrick's Day. This allows for a few months of slightly less frenetic office work and a general concentration on maintenance. However, in a last hurrah to Covid funding, Tourism NI released monies which were to be distributed through local Councils to allow organisations to trial new events. All risk would be subsumed through the identified funds. I needed to pitch for as much of the fund as I could and the Society received in the region of £25,000 to trial Murder Mysteries, Cups and Carriages Afternoon Teas, and a Mother's Day trip in partnership with Magheramorne House. This was an enormous undertaking given a very short timeframe and involved countless written quotations for numerous services and supplies. All events had to be delivered and vouched for by the end of March and



Matthew Crockett, Barney McReynolds & No.131 back on the mainline, 16th April.

(Photo: CP Friel)



*In Inchicore on 7th May are Rebecca Laverty, Lisa Adair, Denis McCabe, Peter Rigney and John McKeegney.
(Photo: CP Friel)*

we were required to deliver three Afternoon Teas and three different Murder Mysteries. This amounted to seven events in three weeks and was tough. However, all were delivered and all sold out. The Mother's Day event was particularly exciting and worked very well despite having to be diesel hauled due to lack of crew. We barely had time to notice the invasion of Ukraine and the knock on impact on the price of fuel – especially, in our case, coal. It is, therefore, very fortunate that we have a very competent Technical Operations Manager in James Friel, who stockpiled coal before prices escalated further, giving us sufficient supplies to run until the end of the season.

In March I also submitted a funding application to NLHF as part of a stream to encourage skills into the heritage

sector. We were successful with our application and were able to start a recruitment process to attract a Finance and Administration Office funded for three years. More about that later. I also, with the assistance of our Curator, Mark Kennedy, applied for a Climate Change grant through Northern Ireland Museums Council. This saw work undertaken to insulate the Dunleath workshop and to curate a new piece within the museum concentrating on how steam evolved and how transportation continues to evolve. Mark and I at this time also embarked on a course entitled Steps to Sustainability hoping that this would be another means to secure some targeted funding. We achieved this and coach 837 was brought to Whitehead with funds secured to make the vehicle waterproof. We also received funding from NIMC to develop and

publish a book on the Spoil Trains. Many thanks to Charles Friel and Mark Kennedy who devoted countless hours to the project. However, and I am sure that Mark and Charles will not mind me saying that their endeavours would not have been possible without the contributions of Joe Cassells, the author of the content. Joe, a wonderful tome and an absolute credit to your inestimable knowledge. I would urge anyone who hasn't purchased a copy to do so – you won't be disappointed!

So, in essence, what should have been a slightly quieter few months turned into a whirlwind of activity.

In April we were able to operate our first mainline trains for Easter. These were the first forays onto the mainline without any restrictions in terms of loading and the Easter Bunny was on the platform in Whitehead as our passengers travelled once again. We were back and ready to

sell more trains for our evening market. In terms of the Museum, numbers visiting were steady but down on pre-pandemic figures, something that the Belfast Management Committee will be focusing on in 2023. In 2022 we had group bookings including church groups, car clubs, U3A groups, and care homes. The museum was also visited on a number of occasions by the Mayor, once by Lord Caine (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland), by John McGrillen (Chief Executive of Tourism NI), by Howard Hastings (Hastings Hotel Group), and by Gordon Lyons (MLA).

Towards the end of April it emerged that we were in the sight line of film location scouts. We secured a lucrative deal from the Netflix production, *The Lift*, which saw our platform turned into the scene of a heist. Later in the year we would host Sky Atlantic who filmed scenes for their film '*The Lovers*', a German film company



At the launch of '*Steam's Last Challenge*' on 24th June are Noel Playfair, author Joe Cassells, Mark Kennedy and, seated, spoil train Fireman Barney McCrory.

(Photo: CP Friel)



The Site Squad – Dermot Mackie, John Williams, Willie Hollinger, Peter Lindsay, Roy Thompson and Robin Morton - get into 'Steam & Stetsons' mode on 19th May.
(Photo: Editor)

who develop steam train pieces for YouTube, Waddell Media filming a piece about the Banbridge line, and the team from Great British Menu. Film contracts and filming in general continue to reap rewards in 2023 as we really get a name for ourselves as a location where filming is without too much issue.

May saw Rebecca and I enjoying a trip on the Enterprise to Dublin to enjoy Inchicore Works 175. It was a fabulous day with so many RPSI members and volunteers in attendance. 134 was resplendent, as was its chief volunteer, Gerry Mooney. Gerry spoke eloquently, as did the American Ambassador and the tour round the works was fascinating. Our Dublin volunteers went to great efforts to sell food and drink to guests on the day. My abiding memory is of popping my head round the kitchen door to say

hello and being greeted by Fergus and the team looking very hot but smiling nonetheless. Our Dublin team are remarkable and always deliver sensational experiences which sell out. I, and the rest of the team 'up here' really appreciate your efforts. They certainly don't go unnoticed.

Throughout the summer months we operated a range of evening events and a host of Steam Saturdays. Thank you to all our volunteers who helped make this happen. Your commitment is unquestionable and I know that the Society simply would not operate without you. We veered off piste with some of our offerings and ventured into 'Steam and Stetsons', with Boxcar Brian, Country Harmony band and hog roast, and 'Steam and 80's'. Although these didn't sell out, we have learnt valuable lessons



Train Rides work best when linked to something else – a traction engine visited Whitehead on 26th November, Whitehead Victorian Day.

(Photo: N Lawrence)

and may well try more in the future. Our specially themed Steam Saturdays [nineteen Train Rides days of which 3BG worked thirteen and No. 131 the rest – Ed] did particularly well and we will replicate them in 2023. By the middle of August we had got through the majority of our evening programme when two things happened. On a happy note, my son Matthew got married to his fiancée Charlotte. It was a fabulous day, marvellous weather, and great company. On a devastating note for me personally and for the Society, Rebecca proffered her resignation to take up a full time post with NMNI. This was a great opportunity for her and I was delighted that she was successful in securing the post but, knowing the can do spirit, immense

presence, and great talent, I knew the Society would struggle to replace the irreplaceable. On behalf of us all, good luck Rebecca and we hope to see you volunteering in the months to come. Don't let that shunting qualification go to waste!

At around this time I was informed by our Chair, John McKegney, that he would be standing down for health-related reasons. John has been in my life in some form for the last 40 years. He was my rector in St Mark's, Armagh and officiated at some of my memorable moments. I hadn't seen him for many years before I got the GM job but was delighted to be back in his acquaintance, albeit with him as my boss! I was upset to hear of his decision but entirely understanding. I



Crew Competency includes bi-annual Personal Track Safety refreshers at Adelaide for those who venture onto the mainline. Occasionally, candidates may get a drive on the CAF Simulator while the assessor marks the papers. Phil Lockett communicates he has encountered animals on the line at Balmoral on 7th July.

(Photo: Editor)

know that both he and Karen have very challenging times ahead and wish them courage and much love to cope with the next chapter. Thank you for being my Chair, John.

In September, as a result of the funding mentioned earlier, we welcomed Graham Nortje to our office. Graham was relocating from South Africa with his wife, Bee. Graham has certainly had to hit the ground running but has coped admirably and finance systems have never been in better shape. I must say a huge 'thank you' to John White who has been showing Graham the ropes for the last number of months – John, I think 184 has missed you! September also saw the move to transfer staff from HEI to RPSI. This was completed in November.

Unfortunately, September was my last month of 2022 in the office prior to being

off on sickness absence. The wheels still turned (literally), not least due to the efforts of our new Chair, Peter Rigney, and our new Vice Chair, Sue Harpur. I owe both of them an immense amount of gratitude for putting momentous effort into taking on a lot of work, stress and inconvenience. Halloween and Santa were delivered and money was made. I'm back at the helm once again and itching to get on with 2023.

In conclusion, and I know this report is about last year, but I wanted to mention how saddened I was, we all were, at the sudden death of Noel Playfair. My deepest condolences go to Noel's family and friends. He will be impossible to replace and an immense loss to the Society for which he worked for tirelessly. May he rest in peace.

No.3BG. A. Guinness, Son and Co 0-4-0ST. In traffic, Whitehead.

The "Guinness" engine worked the majority of the shunts and train rides in 2022. As well as being popular with passengers and crews, No.3BG provides an important training ground for trainee drivers, firemen and steamraisers.

No.85 "Merlin" GNR(I) V class 4-4-0 compound express passenger loco. In traffic, Dublin Connolly shed.

"Merlin" has been based in Dublin for 2022 and probably will be for the remainder of her "10 year" boiler life. In 2022, this locomotive was particularly unreliable, suffering no fewer than 4 occasions of the centre big end bearing running hot - in April, August, October and November. No root cause has been identified. Each time a big end is machined, the brasses are reduced in size until they reach a final minimum size before requiring replacement. At the time of

writing new big end brasses have just been cast to replace the previous pair.

No.85's "ten year" boiler life will expire in late 2023, after which she will need a boiler lift and overhaul before returning to traffic. At this time other items will be attended to, such as fitting the "Wakefield" type mechanical lubricator to replace the "Silvertown" version previously fitted in the 1980s. The purchase of the "Wakefield" lubricator was paid for by donations from members.

No.85 is owned by National Museums Northern Ireland and has been on loan to the RPSI from that organisation and its predecessors since 1978. The loan agreement was recently renewed with NMNI, which means that we have use of No.85 until 2037. The peculiarities of this arrangement meant that No.85 made a very brief visit to Newry in October 2022, to re-set a licence export agreement.



No.85 on the Egyptian Arch, Newry, 23rd October.

(Photo: CP Friel)



No.171's superheater header, normally found in the top of the smokebox, set up for hydraulic pressure testing, 12th July.
(Photo: B Hill)

No.131, GNR(I) 4-4-0 Qs class express passenger loco. In traffic, Whitehead.

No.131 ran reliably in 2022, working all the Whitehead based trains, apart from one occasion when crew availability meant that a diesel locomotive was substituted. The only major work she required was the replacement of two spongepads on the trailing coupled wheelset under the cab. On No.4, or the NCC "Mogul" designs, replacing a spongepad is something to be done in a couple of hours, with 4 nuts and a dust cover removed, and the assembly slides out. No.131 was designed in the Victorian era, when labour was cheap and not so much thought was given to ease of maintenance - so the job took several days, and involved shunting, removal of the coupling rods, lots of pipework, and dropping the wheels on the wheeldrop by about 10 inches using the wheeldrop to get the spongepads replaced.

The new boiler tubes for No.131 were ordered towards the end of 2022 for the mid-term retube, which will happen in February and March 2023.

Locomotives out of traffic:

No.171 "Sieve Gullion". GNR(I) S class 4-4-0 express passenger loco. Under overhaul, Whitehead.

No.171's boiler was tubed and hydraulically tested in the autumn and moved out to the front of the engine sheds on its trolley for steam testing just before the Santa Train season. At the time of writing, the boiler has been steamed to identify defects before its formal examination – the first fire on No.171's grate since 2002.

Work on No.171 will slow down in early 2023 as all efforts are made to get No.131 and No.85 fit for the 2023 season.

No.4 LMS (NCC) class WT 2-6-4T mixed traffic loco. On display, Whitehead.

We plan to begin dismantling No.4 towards the middle of 2023, for major overhaul. This surefooted and reliable locomotive is missed by the operating staff both in Dublin and Whitehead.

No.186. GSWR 0-6-0 J15 class standard goods loco. On display, Whitehead.

No.184. GSWR 0-6-0 J15 class standard goods loco. On display, Whitehead.

No.184's appearance continues to improve, with the small team working on the "static display" locomotives having grown from 1 to 3 persons.

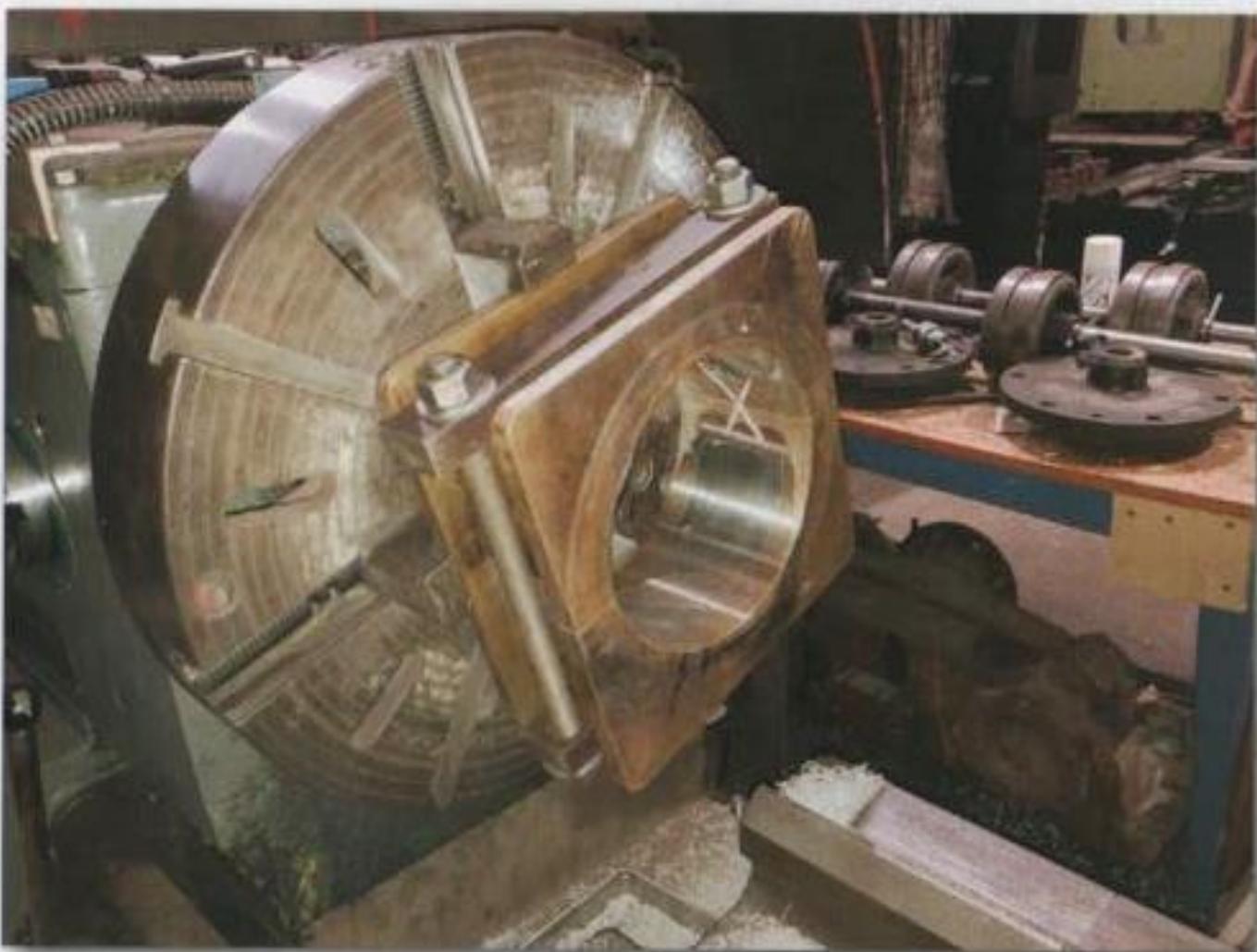
No.461. D&SER 2-6-0 K2 class goods loco. On display, Whitehead.

No.461's cab has received a makeover and is now presentable to members of the public visiting the museum. The final touch to the cleaning and painting was for the electrical squad to add a light to the cab so that all the various controls are clearly visible.

No.3 "R H Smyth". LP&HC 0-6-0ST loco. On display, Whitehead.

This locomotive is the latest to receive the in-depth cleaning and painting efforts of the small team working on the locomotives on static display.

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



No.85's centre (high pressure) big end bearing gets machined (yet again) following re-metalling at Whitehead on 6th November. This again failing in December, new brasses to original, unworn design size have been ordered and delivered for 2023.

(Photo: N Lawrence)



No.461 has been turned at Whitehead, to face Belfast, prior to entering the museum section of B-Road on 6th February, a shunt performed by B142.

(Photo: Editor)



Having completed six years of museum duty, No.186 was exchanged with No.461 on 6th February. No.186 awaits turning, in order to face Larne, for display in the engine shed. The shunt was primarily to place grain van 504 in the museum, where it can now be viewed.

(Photo: Editor)

B134

2022 was a year of change for B134. The year began with the locomotive in the most up to date livery on the Irish Railway network and finished with the locomotive returned to its 'as delivered' livery of grey and yellow.

The application of the original livery by the expert team in the Paint Spray Facility was ahead of the locomotive taking centre stage at the Inchicore 175 event in May. The locomotive was officially unveiled in its original appearance by US ambassador to Ireland Claire Cronin. This was the first time for the majority present to see a 121-class locomotive in the original livery. The finish of the locomotive drew much attention along with positive comments from those present and increased even more the appetite to see it out on the mainline once again.

The main work during the year concentrated on the complex wiring and operation of various components. This work was carried out by experienced fleet technicians with the addition of apprentice electricians using B134 to further their knowledge of GM locomotives.

As the year drew to a close, the preparation and specification work was carried out ahead of delivery of the new battery packs which will power the locomotive.

The plan for the early part of 2023 is completion and live testing of the electrical system. The locomotive will then be drained of all fluids before new lubricants etc are added to the locomotive. The engine itself will then undergo static trials on the load bank in Inchicore Works. This gauges the output



Driver Ken Fox with B134, Inchicore, 07th May.

(Photo: CP Friel)

of the generator and allows the setting of transition which takes place when the locomotive is out in service producing maximum effort from the engine. Once all static trials and adjustments are complete, the locomotive will undergo a series of trials before returning to service.

Thanks to CME Peter Smyth and his entire staff in Inchicore for the continued support and enthusiasm with the restoration of B134.

B142

B142 started 2022 by being back to its usual round of yard shunts and then has had a quiet remainder from August to the present day.

After the engine work last year B142 conducted enough shunts to get through

a nearly full tank of diesel fuel and bed in the sixteen formerly new brake shoes. Each pair of brakes is actuated by one air cylinder so to ensure even wear, particularly when new, a lot of adjustment was necessary.

During some familiarisation training with a Dublin based volunteer, B142 developed a fault where it would not take power. Luckily, this happened in the shed. With the support of Phill Clampett and Barry O'Sullivan of Irish Rail (my thanks to them both) the problem was narrowed down to the brake system interlock relays. Troubleshooting commenced with the support of James Friel and Sam Hall and eventually through the multiple relays, switches and wires the fault was found to be a microswitch under the Cab 2 Driver consul. The microswitch was changed out



Sam Hall with B142 in Whitehead's D-Road paintshop, where it has been since August 2022.

(Photo: J Clinton)

and B142 was back in business. Again, another learning opportunity was gained on EMD systems.

While not a mainline locomotive or even a revenue generator, B142 is very useful for maintenance shunts at the Whitehead base. However, years of being outside has taken its toll. The plan had been to retrain and pass out the existing Drivers however upon discussion with stakeholders and the decision was taken to remove B142 from traffic to once and for all complete the painting of the locomotive. Therefore, the last major shunt was to move itself into the paint shop at the rear of the Woodwork shop.

With limited volunteers and budget, trying to get B142 prepared and painted was the next challenge. A number of businesses were approached but never

got very far. Martin Devlin, who has a number of paint jobs under his belt, stepped forward to take on the challenge. Again, my thanks to Martin for taking on this work so far from his normal volunteering activities.

Presently B142 resides in the paint shop approximately 75% prepared for painting. Unfortunately, there have been delays again caused by uncovering corrosion through this work. A number of fabrication jobs are required at the time of writing but as always we have a plan!

Lastly, I would like to thank all those who support the efforts of the Diesel team in the wider RPSI organisation and also the Modern Railway Society for their generous donations to B142 that keeps the restoration work moving forward.



NIR GM 8112 and No.85 share Connolly Shed on 8th July.

(Photo: N Lawrence)

Just to re-cap – the project is to reinstate an LMSNCC 2-6-0 or “mogul” engine, based on the overhaul of existing components and the sourcing of missing

or unserviceable items. The rationale is to provide the RPSI with another large passenger loco, and of a class different from the ones that we are used to. While



Slotting the groove for the sponge box in a mogul axlebox, 19th May.

(Photo: P Scott)



G8.24 throat plate and barrel, Feb 2023.

(Photo: P Scott)

the project is an ambitious one, it is certainly achievable thanks to the availability of existing essential components and to those whose enthusiasm and generosity has enabled work to progress.

The NCC Moguls were introduced in 1933 because of the necessity for larger locos to tackle the new loop line at Greenisland plus the desire to speed up services. They were based on the LMS 2300 class, a highly successful loco with excellent "front end" design. The moguls continued to be built until 1942, there being 15 in the class. They were the mainstay of the major passenger services on the NCC, and later worked both to Dublin and Derry via the GNRI lines, until displaced by the 2-6-4 tank locos and the incoming diesel traction in the 1950's and 60's.

While reinstatement of a loco has been in the background for many years, and various materials eg firebox plates were acquired when the opportunity arose, serious progress only began in 2018. The first move was to commence the rebuild of boiler No G8.24. The LMS G8AS boiler is a standard LMS design, the basic boiler being suitable for either the mogul or the later 2-6-4 tank engines. The boiler has progressed to the stage that most major components are now accounted for. The renewed barrel was reported on last year and the firebox outer wrapper has just recently been delivered. Heavy work like the rolling and pressing of plates like this is done by a contractor. Assembly and riveting of the boiler should commence soon. After that, there is of course much work ahead with the fitting of stays and tubes. We are fortunate in having nearly

all the boiler fittings (injector steam valves, top feed clack valves, safety valves etc).

Work on the loco itself has concentrated on sourcing of missing components. As already reported, many of the items are steel and iron castings, and the "Covid" lockdown ironically assisted in the design and production of patterns – we got on with this work since little else could be done without infringing Covid rules. The majority of these items have now been cast, and there is an array of them awaiting machining. Machining of horn guides, axle boxes and flanged plates is continuing. One awkward and tedious job recently completed was the slotting of the driving axle boxes. The mogul and tank engine driving axle boxes are identical - they consist of a steel casting, with a pressed-in brass to provide the

bearing. Although the outside surface of the brass is circular, it is a "D" shape not a complete circle and is located by two abutments – so the seating has to be formed by a slotting machine rather than a lathe or boring machine. Assistance with a suitable machine by the Strathspey Railway is gratefully acknowledged.

The "flanged plates" are the stretchers which connect the main frames together, and they require pressing to form the flanges followed by machining and accurate drilling to hold the frames correctly in line. There is also the "saddle" which connects the frames between the cylinders and supports the front of the boiler and the smokebox. It is a formidable box shaped structure weighing about 1.5 tons. It is nearly ready to be sent out for machining. (The saddle takes the place of the inside cylinder



Smokebox saddle, G8.24 inner firebox and outer wrapper, Feb 2023.

(Photo: P Scott)



New and old con rods, and a close up of their big ends, Feb 2023.

block which does not exist on the NCC Mogul, being an outside cylinder engine). Once these components are available, the frames can be aligned, and assembly progressed.

A notable missing item was one of the connecting rods. The missing rod has now been forged and machined. The rod was supplied by Messrs WH Tildesley. The new rod is shown alongside the existing one.

Thanks are due to all those who are carrying out practical work. As well as the Society's employed engineering staff (usually around 5 people), there are typically about 8 volunteers. Both these groups are primarily employed on the

Society's general maintenance and overhaul work; the mogul project is fitted in whenever possible, and as funding is available. As always, we would welcome more volunteer support.

Training in workshop procedures (fitting, machining, welding and more) is carried out both at the Society's premises and at the South Eastern Regional College at Lisburn.

Funding for the project has to date come from private subscription, and thanks are due to all who have contributed, be it large or small. A wider appeal is intended whenever other urgent overhaul work (principally loco 171) is completed.



On 4th December, No.131 was on Santa duty whilst No.171's boiler was outside being prepared for hydraulic and steam tests.
(Photo: N Lawrence)

After a 21-month absence from the Irish Rail network, steam locomotive No.85 *Merlin* departed Dublin Connolly light engine on Sunday 13th March 2022 bound for M3 Parkway terminus. This movement was part of our "Return to Operations programme", which involved all our departments planning and preparing for what was going to be our greatest challenge – the resumption of mainline steam and diesel operations.

As part of a series of light engine movements, No.85 also ran to Platform 3, the Clonsilla bay platform. It is believed that this was the first time a steam locomotive had used this platform. The light engine test runs successfully concluded, it was time to test the engine with a train. No.85 was tasked with taking

a train of six Cravens carriages and a van to Maynooth.

In tandem with this, Dublin Operations took the opportunity to run a Safety Forum, given that it was two years since our volunteers had seen action. This included a Safety Refresher Course and a Covid Procedures Briefing. A total of 39 volunteers took part.

None of this could have happened without the tireless efforts of the Inchicore Carriage Preparation and Maintenance Teams, Health and Safety and the Connolly Locomotive Shed Team who had been working in the background over the past 21 months, ensuring that we were ready to run trips once lockdown was lifted. The set consisted of eight Cravens and van 3173. Work had



No.85 at Raheny on 18th April Easter Eggstravaganza.

(Photo: B Pickup)

continued on routine maintenance on the set through 2021. Van 3173 had two outings on Sperry rail testing trains in February and October, covering approximately 2100 miles.

The great day dawned on Saturday 26th March when we were able to operate our first main line passenger train since 2019. "The Midlander" from Dublin Connolly to Maynooth and back. Two round trips were operated on the 26th and again on the 27th.

During the first day the IE Steam Crews were assessed by an Inspector from West Coast Railways. The Commission for Railway Regulation was also doing an audit on our whole operation.

All our train operating documents had been updated to cover the Covid regulations. Covid information signs were prominently displayed, sanitisers located in each toilet and at the bar and dining car counters. Windows were left open.

All tickets for Saturday and Sunday's trains sold out within a few hours. On board we had a special whiskey tasting charter. This required VIP trimmings, antimacassars, white tablecloths etc. The partnership with "Whiskey on the Tracks" has proved to be most successful.

We carried 631 passengers on Saturday's trains and 645 passengers on Sundays. We were back in style and this was a very successful weekend of steam.

Our first diesel tour took place on 2nd April. This was a significant anniversary because it was on this date in 1964 that the new Cravens carriages were demonstrated to the Press. They then entered service on 10th April, working the 18.30 Dublin to Cork train.

The route was Dublin Connolly to Dundalk, Dundalk back to Connolly via Skerries Loop. With 248 passengers on board we then left Connolly for Galway. Despite an on-time departure from



US Ambassador to Ireland Clare Cronin, with B134 in Inchicore on 7th May.

(Photo: M Devlin)

Galway we were blocked at Woodlawn due to late running down service trains. This delay resulted in us arriving back in Connolly 41 minutes late. An emergency 5mph slack between Athlone and Ballinasloe had had a major impact on punctuality of both our train and the service trains.

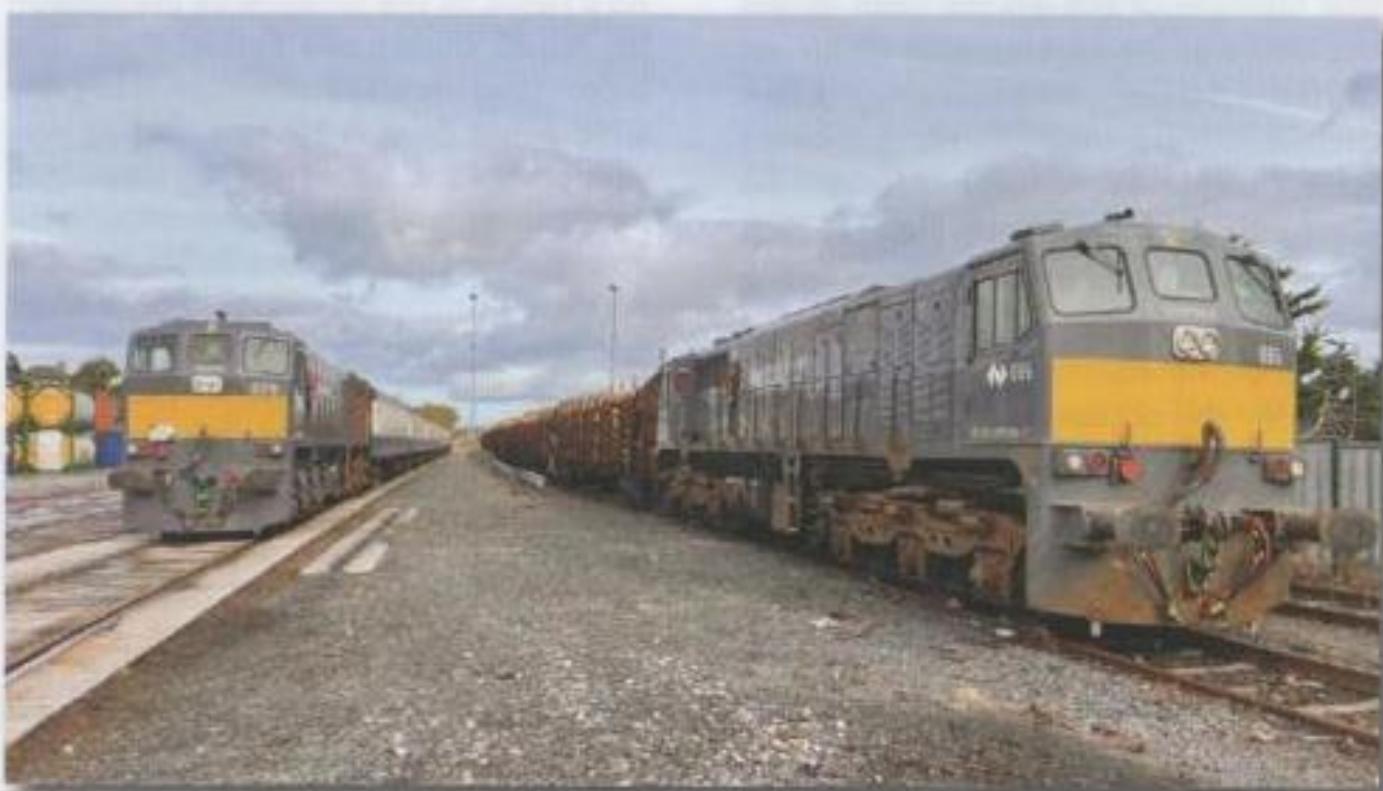
Our Easter Eggs Express normally goes to Wicklow, but due to a PW possession the route was changed to the Great Northern mainline. The route was Dublin Connolly to Drogheda with local trips from Drogheda to Dundalk and then Drogheda to Skerries Loop. Problems with the motion feed on No.85 resulted in an hour's delay departing Dundalk. We had run three trains and carried a total of 1,137 passengers during the day.

A lot of planning had gone into the Inchicore Open day which took place on 7th May. This event was designed to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the opening of the works in 1846 and had originally been planned for 2021. Planning had begun in 2020 with the RPSI being

represented by Peter Rigney and the IRRS by Kieran Marshall.

The exhibition featured No.85 on display on the turntable and B141 on display on the carriage shop traverser. Dublin Operations were asked to assist with catering and this involved coaches 1522 and 1514 being coupled together and accessed via a set of steps. In Fleet casualty repair shop 2 a walk-through exhibition of a century of carriage design was provided, with a mark 4 coach being coupled to Cravens open standard 1532, State (Royal) carriage 351 and side corridor First Class 1142.

With over 7,000 people attending, stewarding was crucial and RPSI provided two dozen stewards who worked with IÉ stewards. The dining car team led by Fergus Mc Donnell put in a hard day, with none of the ventilation which a moving train gives, while John Richardson and the Owens brothers provided a sales stand. Takings would have been higher had we a card machine as many potential customers carried no cash.



Ballina freight yard on 8th October after 076 had swapped with 085. 076 worked the train to Westport and back to Connolly.

(Photo: N Enright)



John and Gerard Owens, Ewa Jurkiewicz and John Richardson in Connolly in Dec. (Photo: c/o J Richardson)

The highlight of the day for both IÉ and the RPSI was the ceremony at which the United States Ambassador, Clare Cronin, unveiled the name plate "Inchicore Railway Works" on the RPSI's GM single-ender diesel loco B134 which is currently undergoing restoration. The locomotive was resplendent in its original grey and yellow livery for the occasion.

This event was a very well thought through and structured display. It offered not just a variety of locomotives, rolling stock and trains, but also afforded access to workshops, demonstrations of all types to show what is involved in keeping the railways in operation today. It was an honour and a pleasure for the RPSI to be so centrally involved in this prestigious event.

As a result of the issues with the motion on No.85 during the Easter trains the locomotive received attention from our CME James Friel. A big end bearing was re-metalled and as part of the running in procedures two light engine trips were arranged between Clonsilla Jct and M3 Parkway on Sunday 29th May. After inspection following the trips the engine was declared fit to run a "Midlander" special to Maynooth in the afternoon. This was a successful trip, we carried 364 passengers.

Our second diesel railtour was originally named "The Blue Thunder" but that had to be changed as issues arose with the NIR Diesel 112 which precluded the engine's involvement. Dublin Operations made the decision to continue with the tour but to utilise an Irish Rail 071 class loco. The "Shade of Grey" railtour ran on

Saturday 11th June and the route was Dublin Connolly to Cork, Limerick, Ennis, Athenry, Athlone, Portarlington and back to Connolly. A very successful tour with 265 passengers on board.

A first for Dublin Operations on this tour was our move to embrace the cashless society. Credit card readers were installed in the bar and dining cars, and also on the sales trolley. This met with much approval from our passengers, many of whom are used to relying on credit and debit cards for purchasing goods. We need to move with the times.

The "Wicklow Steam Express" ran on Sunday 19th June, travelling from Dublin Connolly to Wicklow with two local trips to Greystones. As we had to cross a Down Rosslare train after our first local trip we were put into Platform 2 at Wicklow, the only access to this platform being over the cast iron footbridge. After the second local trip, we were again put onto Platform 2 to cross an Up Rosslare. Inevitably there was considerable congestion on the bridge on both occasions, which was unfortunate. Despite this, we operated three successful trips and carried 874 passengers.

Sunday 31st July saw us back on the DSER, this time with the Enniscorthy Rockin' Food and Fruit Festival Steam Special. Dublin Connolly to Enniscorthy and a local trip to Wexford. As a result of issues with the turntable in Rosslare Harbour we ended up 75 minutes late. The regulator looped us in Arklow to permit the following Up Rosslare train to overtake. However, our train was too long to facilitate this, so we proceeded.

Sadly No.85 developed steaming issues in Rathdrum. A concerted effort was made to rectify the issues and with a good head of steam we made it to Greystones. The Regulator directed that the train would terminate in Greystones and that our

passengers would take the DART to Connolly.

Despite the issues on the return journey, the passengers appeared content with the two trips and indeed, our only complaint on the day was that the bar had run out of draught Guinness. Overall, we carried 658 passengers.

The problems with No.85 required further maintenance and as a result, the engine was not available for our Cú Chulainn trip to Drogheda and Dundalk on Sunday 14th August. We took the decision to cancel this outing.

Unfortunately, proposed test light engine runs to Maynooth with No.85 had to be cancelled because of the fire risk in the heatwave. This meant we had to use a diesel locomotive for our next trip - the Marble City from Dublin Connolly to Kilkenny on Sunday 21st August.

As our 286 passengers boarded the train on Platform 5 they were entertained by the superb Sir Henry Inglesby's Fife and Drum Corps, a band from Carrickfergus under the command of our very own John Richardson (Everyone's a winner). At Kilkenny, the band presented a plaque to Dublin Operations chairman Joe McKeown on the platform. This plaque is now proudly displayed in our bar.

Once the weather returned to normal we were able to run two light engine test trips for No.85. This enabled us to run two "Midlander" trips to Maynooth on September 4, carrying a total of 432 passengers.

Our third diesel railtour for the year was the "Western Liner Diesel Tour" Saturday 8th October. The route was Dublin Connolly to Ballina, Claremorris and Westport. A very successful tour with numerous photo stops and loco changes and 197 passengers on board.

The "Cú Chulainn" trip to Dundalk on

23rd October was unusual in that No.85 was required in Northern Ireland so that her export licence (as an exhibit within the museum) from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum Cultra could be issued. Dublin Operations took the opportunity to run a passenger special to Dundalk.

This gave us an opportunity to remember and pay tribute to one of our great steam drivers, Tony Renahan who passed away on the 18th November 2019. Many of Tony's family and friends travelled on the train and his brother Dan carried his ashes on board.

To complete the formalities, No.85 uncoupled and went light engine to Newry before returning across the border to Dundalk. A most enjoyable day and mission accomplished in that our licence to use No.85 was extended. We carried 254 passengers.

Our annual Hallowe'en themed trains were operated on Saturday 29th October, with all carriages being appropriately decorated for the occasion. No.85 operated two successful trips to Maynooth, carrying 698 passengers.

The 2022 season of Santa Trains started on the weekend of 3rd December. As has happened for the past few years, every seat on all 18 trains sold out within 20 minutes of them going on sale in October.

All our volunteers were briefed beforehand and the usual format was adopted. The carriages were adorned with festive decorations, while seasonal music was relayed to every carriage by means of our PA system. Santa started making his way down the train as soon as we pulled out of Dublin Connolly. Santa was preceded by musicians playing Christmas tunes.

We served complimentary mulled wine, tea/coffee and mince pies to the passengers, while Santa's elves presented

selection boxes to all the children from Santa and his elves. At Maynooth there was an opportunity for children to have their photographs taken on the platform with Santa. And as ever, we offered full bar and dining car facilities on board the train. Unfortunately, things did not go according to plan. When No.85 arrived at Maynooth on the very first train, it was discovered that the engine was running a hot big end which meant *Merlin* was declared a failure. A diesel was requested to bring the train back to Connolly and to provide motive power for all remaining trains. Thanks are due to Irish Rail for coming to our rescue.

As if this was not enough, the heavy frost on 12th and 13th December caused some problems with frozen pipes in the 1541 and 1522, our bar and dining car, as well in some of the toilets. Our Thursday and Weekend Teams swung into action and had most of the issues repaired before the next train on the 17th December.

In the course of the Santa Season we carried 7,354 passengers, while our fundraising team raised €18,578 in raffles and sales plus €7360 in calendar sales, making a total of €26,208 over the three weekends. Over the year as a whole our fundraising team brought in €45,462 from our trains and sold an amazing 1,090 calendars. This was a fantastic result by sales team leader John Richardson (JR) and his colleagues, Gerard and John Owens, who are the core Fundraising Group in Dublin Operations. We much appreciate their efforts and those others who assist on a day-to-day basis.

Over the year we carried 14,043 passengers on 38 trains, virtually the same passenger total as we carried during our last year of mainline operation in 2019 (14,082). This figure represents a tremendous recovery post-Covid. Thanks to all concerned in making this possible

and in particular to the Dublin Management Committee, who held all their meetings during the year virtually on Microsoft Teams.

During the year we had four audits from the CRR, two on train audits, one of Connolly shed, and one of vehicle storage procedures in Inchicore. We continue to develop the Safety Management System and implement the Safety improvement plan. On the disposals front, the board agreed to give four heritage set coaches to the Maam Cross railway project; 1383, 1419, 1916 and 2421. The Dublin carriage team also carried out preparatory work on the four Gatwick carriages stored in Dundalk station so that they could be moved to the INWR yard for scrapping.

Our congratulations go to our Cork

volunteer Alex Duggan, RPSI Inchicore Maintenance Department and Carriage Steward, who was runner up in the Lord Faulkner Young Volunteer Award at The Heritage Railways Association Annual Awards Ceremony in Birmingham on 19th March.

The restoration of the Great Northern Turntable at Connolly Station by Irish Rail in conjunction with the RPSI also received a runner up award in the Large Groups category.

In closing, we remember Aidan McDonnell, Dublin Operations volunteer and former Carriage Officer, South, who died on 29th January and Dublin Operations Steward Vincent Sharpe who died on 26th May. May they both rest in peace.



No.85's new Irish Rail train radio, 21st July. It can be seen that as technology increases, the toolbox / crew belongings space on our locomotives continues to decline.

(Photo: N Lawrence)

All in all 2022 proved to be a very unspectacular year for the northern Mk2 rake. The coaches performed as required in all respects, following the somewhat lengthened maintenance period Covid gave us. For the record the rake consisted of 181, 300, 301, 302, 303, 460 and 463.

The year started well with the completion of the repainting to carriage 300 in addition to the application of decals and lining. This allowed us to field a fully lined out train, which unfortunately had not been the case until this year due to more pressing activities.

Throughout the last year work has been concentrated on running repairs to the operational rake, overhauling 304 and undertaking minor repair work to the diner 547. Running repairs have generally consisted of droplight adjustment, replacing lighting tubes/bulbs, door lock renewal, painting, vacuum or steam heat bag renewal, brake adjustment and lighting.

Carriage 304 has now been progressed to the stage that the interior has been

largely reinstated, including the fitting of newly upholstered headrests. The carriage has also been wired for the RPSI train line system and the central door lock circuit tested. Issues surrounding the air conditioning circuit (noted in previous reports) have been cracked following several days with the wiring diagrams and multi-meter. At the time of writing the system has yet to be tested, however this is likely to be in the near future. Both of the gangways have been removed in preparation for new diaphragms to be fitted and replacement of the gangway guiding bushes. The vehicle has also been lifted and a bogie swap undertaken to release wheelsets for use in other bogies and to enable the vacuum pipework and brakes to be tested.

In the background work has continued on a standby basis to our diner 547. Attention to date has been focused on the floor in the kitchen area and the vacuum brake equipment. This popular vehicle will hopefully see a reprise in the 2024/5 operating season, provided an operational need is identified by the



NIR GM 8112 takes 6 Mk2s out of Whitehead NIR on 27th March, Mother's Day. (Photo: J Cassells)

operating committee.

The big carriage and wagon news of the year was the purchase and shipping of a third TSO 64-seater from the Caledonian Railway. The carriage is identical to RPSI vehicles 301 and 302. The vehicle was delivered on 4ft 8½" bogies and on account of a minor complication associated with unloading, the vehicle was unloaded onto a temporary length of narrow gauge (!) track. The vehicle was then transferred to Irish standard gauge accommodation bogies a few weeks later. The purchase of this vehicle was only possible at a time of severe financial hardship for the Society by disposing of the Mk3 sleeper coach and a very generous loan by a member who shall remain anonymous.

The vehicle is in generally good structural and internal condition, however it has been heavily stripped of its internal electrics at some stage in the past. Whilst slightly tiresome this has proved a blessing as it allows the vehicle to act as a guinea pig for future rewiring and re-configuration of the lighting systems as technology improves. We have all the parts in stock to overhaul the vehicle and some exploratory work has already begun to suss out exactly what is required to return it to operational condition. For instance the floor has now been lifted to expose the structural framework behind the drawhook and buffer housing, in preparation for conversion to Irish standard gauge. In due course the end sheets and dome ends will be removed to expose the end pillars to allow a thorough assessment of their condition and any necessary repairs that may be required.

The addition of another TSO to the fleet effectively completes the original Mk2 project which was agreed by the RPSI Board/ Council in the early 2000s. The current stocklist leaves the Society with

4 brake vehicles (3 of which with generators including 1 with additional steam heating equipment), 4 no 64-seaters, 2 no 62-seaters, 1 no 54-seater, 2 side corridor firsts (each seating 42), a dining vehicle and an additional 4 56-seaters. This provides the Society with a comprehensive range of options based on a selection of different operational models identified at the time and more recently. Additional vehicles to those listed above currently within the Society's ownership will be considered as a source of spares for parts only, with the exception of the Irish State coach 5408 which is currently on static display.

As ever things move on and the Society must now start budgeting for retention tanks. Successfully proven methods (at reasonable cost) can only be comparatively easily retrofitted to certain vehicles, notably the first-class coaches and the 62-seaters on account of their toilet location i.e. not immediately behind the crash posts. Other vehicles within the Society's ownership can be retrofitted with tanks though at a greater level of cost and complexity. Research and design is currently ongoing in this regard and must now be seen as one of the Society's key priorities in the next period.

Unfortunately, there was no opportunity to repair no 81 or 68 during the year. Consequently, the train rides utilised a portion of the Mk2 set which was far from ideal from a practical operations point of view.

As always my thanks go to Joe and Ian (plus assistants on occasion) who ensured that the set is turned out in a presentable condition both internally and externally.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have given up their time to volunteer with the Carriage and Wagon Department throughout the year. Without their assistance there would have been no northern based steam excursions.



Returning to 6th February, some of the rarely viewed curiosities from the original, pre-2020 project, carriage shed section of B-Road have made it to the platform: the defunct 'Planet' diesel shunter No.23, Mk2 305 (ex-NIR 935) and ex-LMS (NCC) 243. No.186, fished from the Museum section with them, sits on their rear.

(Photo: Editor)



Having extracted the above, B142 returned to the depths of the shed to haul out carriages 87, 91, 2422 and 62M. Here is the recently painted ex-LMS (NCC) 'North Atlantic Brake' 91, in what passes for daylight. The rake will be split between 91 and 2422 in order to insert grain van 504, before 2422 is re-coupled and 62M dropped: before 87, 91, 504 and 2422 return to the museum. 504, being marginally shorter than 62M, enabled No.461 to be exchanged for No.186, whom No.461 is slightly longer than: and thus make maximum use of the museum space's storage capacity. Space is often at a premium at Whitehead and on days like this you don't half feel the lack of it.

(Photo: Editor)

The new year started with a post-Christmas tidy up. Santa's sleigh was returned to the brown van in the museum and the tree and decorations put into a container. Some old MK2 buffers were retrieved from behind the third road and a sleeper was replaced just outside carriage shed Road A. The roof of container C was refitted after being lifted off in a storm. At the end of January, we spread four tonnes of ash at the back of the Site, pulled out No.131 for a boiler wash out and moved No.184 a few feet in five road to facilitate ongoing restoration.

At the start of February, we repaired the net football fence on the platform and put twenty-one old big tubes into the skip for recycling. Following a very big shunt with B142 on the first weekend, to put the

Guinness grain van into the Museum, it was noticed that the frog which controls 1 and 2 shed roads was sinking badly. Repair of this critical piece of track was then a priority over the next three weeks. The whole area had been filled to rail level with waste ash which had to be dug out with the Atlas to reveal three very rotten long crossing timbers. The associated chairs were very interesting industrial archaeology of an ancient NCC type not used since WW2. These required special bolts to be machined to replace the badly corroded and wasted originals and were screwed down onto new 13' timbers. All was jacked and packed with clean 2" ballast greatly helped by Peter Lindsay and Gordon Hunt and successfully traversed on the last weekend in the month to move



The Site Squad renew the crossover between 1 & 2 Roads on 17th February.

(Photo: J Cassells)



David Orr and Willie Hollinger with the ex-Tubbercurry lever frame which they have painted up in the signal box, 6th October.

(Photo: R Morton)

No.171's frames on a low loader from No.2 shed road to the workshop. (Joe Cassells photo in here)

In early March, we concentrated our activities on a scrap drive and, between some copper and a lot of old rails and other ferrous items, managed to net £1,016. The rails at the door to No.2 shed road were seen to be sinking when 3 BG was pulled out. Part of the problem was a rotten long sleeper in the shed which we dug out and replaced in the second week. Twenty-eight tons of coal were delivered about this time, but needed a lot of effort with the JCB to back fill the coal bunker and clear the siding to the turntable. On St Patrick's Day, we moved the picnic tables on the platform back from beyond the signal box nearer to the station building. We also moved the metal

scrap skip from its bunker at the back of the site to facilitate a further coal delivery which came before a price rise and saved the Society £3000.

On 24th March we pulled out both Nos.131 and 3BG, fixed the switch lever for one and two shed roads and sent some copper with David Lowry for recycling, which netted £190. The following week we put up shelving in the Station Cafe, jacked and packed A-road outside the carriage shed and put up two signs for Platform 3 on the main road. In early April we helped Peter Scott with materials to make a press for the Mogul boiler and carried out an extensive bushwhacking of the third road siding. Easter preparations the following week meant pulling out No.131, assembling the platform inflatable globe and chopping up

an old garden shed for lighting up timber. After the holidays we moved six tons of ash to the back of the site and I sold two small scrap tyres as garden features for £100. At the end of the month we fixed a broken gate post at the Station and Colin Stewart installed supporting wheels for each of the big gates. The Atlas shunted No.171's frames out of the workshop and we also moved the Mogul frames outside. This was all to facilitate coating of foam insulation to the inside roof and walls of the workshop by a contractor. To do this job safely James Friel hired a cherry picker for the first two weeks in May. It was also used to inspect the water tower, put up new lights in the workshop, remove dangerous guttering from the carriage shed and replace the cap on the foundry furnace chimney.

In the middle of the month the Atlas was given its big annual service and we made a new smaller wicket gate at the Station. A longitudinal sleeper in 4-road engine shed was giving concern when parking B142 so we removed it and put in a new 11' hardwood timber. The end of the month had been very busy removing picnic tables, signs, lamp posts and trolleys from the platform for the Netflix film contract while the back of the site has also been tidied to accommodate the numerous wagons and trucks that go along with an outside set.

We started June by replacing all the platform materials after the filming and pulling out No.131 for the Jubilee weekend celebrations. No.131 was pulled out again later in the month for Father's Day train rides while Whitehead in Bloom put in some lovely plants and we moved the palms on the platform into bigger barrels. At the end of month we pulled out 3BG for the Teddy Bear Saturday and tidied up the loco store, moving patterns to a container.

In early July a defibrillator was mounted

on the entrance gate post to the Station building and its canopy received four lovely hanging baskets of flowers. We dismantled a home signal at the bridge end of the platform and sorted out some smelly drains. After the Twelfth holiday we put up the refurbished home signal arm with new lenses and a good series of paint coats. By now, we were well into a weekly ritual of emptying bins, watering plants and carrying out essential track inspections prior to weekend public train rides. Over £500 was also realised when the big skip was emptied of mostly scrap metal with some copper recycled separately.

August started with gardening and weed killing on site, a big job being the trimming of the laurel perimeter hedge around the top of the turntable wall while the pit was cleaned out. The carpark got a tidy up with a petrol strimmer kindly supplied by a society member. Despite several of the Site team being on holiday mid-month we still managed to cover the routine rubbish and watering turns. On 18th a BR MK2 standard open coach arrived on a low loader from Scotland on 4' 8 1/2" bogies! Unfortunately, the lorry could not access the heavy lift gantries so that meant laying 120ft of third rail using the Atlas. The coach was gingerly lowered down a ramp onto this arrangement and the lorry was then able to leave. During the last 2 workdays of the month we moved the Bessbrook tram to the back of the workshop using the Larne forklift and replaced a rotten long timber in two shed road once 3BG had been pulled out.

At the start of September the by now rotten and leaking roof of the Larne forklift was replaced with a new one with help of the HEI staff and the JCB, Atlas and Larne forklift all passed their annual insurance inspections. We also carried out preliminary cabling and internal lever work in the signal cabin to allow the

functional operation of the recently repaired bracket home signal the aim being to replicate some aspects of a working signal box and thereby enhance the visitor experience. The frame has been cleaned and painted and the levers painted in the correct colours depending on their function, either signals or points. Connection of the home signal to the box required the installation of pulleys and wire over 100 metres in length and a tubed channel up through the platform from track level. Successful completion of this work means that visitors can pull on and off two signals from within the signal box but, thanks to the interlocking skilfully installed by David Orr and Willie Hollinger, not at the same time!

October was busy with gardening type jobs such as cutting hedges and clearing up leaves and emptying roof gutters greatly helped by Tom Mathers and George Smyth. We moved No.171's superheater tubes into the workshop for pressure testing while Robin Morton did a great tidy up of the metal swarf below the machines and lathes. Preparation for Halloween trains included pulling out 3BG and John Williams and I painted a bright yellow line back from the platform edge as a safety guide for our visitors.

As mentioned, the recently acquired MK2 coach 306 came from Scotland with standard gauge bogies. An essential swap to Irish gauge bogies took place on Thursday 3rd November in perfect

weather. This was a complex operation requiring a lorry crane to lift the coach one end at a time, the standard bogies being removed and replaced by Irish gauge units using the JCB and Larne forklift. The standard bogies were lifted onto a lorry for recycling by noon. A successful and safely completed operation only made possible by the well organised help of a full Site squad and the professional assistance of Thomas Hamill and Sons.

Later in the month Roy Thompson and some friends completed a delightful scenery piece for the G-gauge model layout in the Carriage Museum. We took the opportunity to rationalise our sleeper stock onto flat wagon C310, before a delivery of 50 very good second-hand sleepers from the recent Dargan bridge relay and gave the JCB a major service.

December is always a busy time preparing for the Santa season and this year was no exception. We put up the tree and decorations, brought the sleigh out of store, erected the snow globe and a gazebo and before each weekend operation pulled out No.131 and carried out a detailed track inspection. We also moved four coach bogies to the back of the site onto the old siding left by the departed sleeping coach and put the by now passed superheater tubes into No.171's boiler. We ended the month with our traditional Christmas fry in Platform 3 after another busy year.

Following two years of intermittent lockdowns, Whitehead Railway Museum bounced back in 2022. It wasn't quite business as usual, however, as Covid concerns still had an impact. Despite this, the total number of visitors to the museum edged up from 8,205 in 2021 to 8,973 in 2022, so we are going in the right

direction.

To assist us in rebuilding our market post-Covid, we received welcome assistance from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council and the Department of Agriculture. During March we benefitted from funding to underwrite a number of Destination Hub



The Editor explains the innards of an axlebox to visitors on the upper floor of the museum during 131 spongepad replacement on 19th May.

(Photo: R Morton)



WRM was the setting on 23RD June for the launch of Steam's Last Challenge. From left are then RPSI Chairman John McKeown, the Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Alderman Noel Williams, Author Joe Cassells, Charles Friel and Mark Kennedy.

(Photo: R Morton)

events, including a main line trip, Murder Mystery evenings and St Patrick's Day train rides. Part of the package was an afternoon tea experience served in dining car 87 in the museum.

Platform 3 café, the beating heart of our museum, has taken some of these ideas forward by organising a programme of afternoon tea and steak barbecue events which help increase footfall. Thanks go to Rob Davies and his staff for providing a welcome to visitors and maintaining such a high standard of cuisine. An army marches on its stomach and a museum is much the same.

Some 10,000 copies of the museum's promotional flier were printed in March and distributed to outlets throughout Northern Ireland. This campaign was

augmented by social media marketing and publicity on the radio and in the newspapers. These posts prompt the public to check out our website and Facebook pages and this can often translate into new visitors.

Each new addition to the museum display creates a PR opportunity. To this end we were able to announce in February that the award-winning Guinness Grain Van 504 had taken its place in the Carriage Gallery. Then in June the Curatorial Committee organised a Platinum Jubilee exhibition in Directors' Saloon No. 50, the very coach in which the Queen had travelled during her Coronation tour of Northern Ireland in 1953.

In May Whitehead Railway Museum was once again a key player in the annual

Industrial Heritage Week organised by MEA Council. We contributed a number of video shorts to the online platform showing work behind the scenes in the Dunleath locomotive works at Whitehead.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the end of steam on Northern Ireland Railways, member Joe Cassells wrote a book called "Steam's Final Challenge". This was published by the Curatorial Committee with funding from the Northern Ireland Museums Council and a launch took place at the museum in June.

In November we were able to allow visitors to access the footplate of our centenarian steam engine No.461. Thanks go to volunteer Gill Lewis who single-handedly gave the footplate a deep clean and refurbished all the footplate fittings. To mark the centenary the Events & Marketing Committee organised a visit by the Mayor, Alderman Noel Williams, to cut a 100th birthday cake for No.461. A welcome follow-up came on December 10 when Gill told Radio Ulster's Your Place and Mine programme all about the project.

We continue to network with local organisations such as Whitehead Community Association and the Causeway Coastal Route Hub. WCA featured our steam train rides in its two major initiatives – the Summer Festival and a Victorian Christmas. Our membership of both these bodies is of considerable mutual benefit. We are also grateful to Brighter Whitehead for their assistance in maintaining the planters on our platform, the colourful displays are always much appreciated.

Summer train rides helped to boost footfall on Saturdays but special events have an even more dramatic impact. Our Doggy Day was a notable success, increasing the usual steam train ride numbers from around 160 to 280.

After months of planning we were pleased to be able to participate in MEA Council's Made for Memories project. This dementia-friendly storytelling programme was funded by NLHF and the council and the two venues chosen were WRM and Carnlough Hub. We played host to residents from local care homes and sheltered accommodation. A local storyteller provided the entertainment while we offered refreshments and chatted with the guests. We learnt a lot and we could see the potential for similar exercises in the future.

As a follow-up, Made for Memories led to the development of an Accessibility Guide funded by NLHF and MEA. This is aimed at people organising visits to Whitehead Railway Museum by groups of people with mobility issues as well as those living with dementia. It is timely because NIMC had carried out a review of accessibility at the museum in March. This new guide, which will be available online, will be a significant help in developing this important market.

We had already been put to the test earlier in the year by a Scottish visitor who arrived in a power chair. She submitted a review to Euan's Guide, an Edinburgh-based accessibility review website. Thankfully we got a positive review but our visitor picked up a couple of issues which we have sought to address.

At Halloween WRM got a boost from the staging of two new events. One was a Horror Express film show in newly arrived coach 837, while the second was a "Hunt for Dracula" event aimed at children who were entertained by professional storytellers.

Our involvement with MEA resulted in the museum being featured in a new promotional video for Whitehead and Islandmagee. The film was screened at the World Travel Market exhibition in

London, where MEA had a stand.

Group bookings are gradually returning after Covid and we have had successful visits by school groups, church groups, men's sheds and historical societies. Thanks go to our volunteer guides who make every visitor feel welcome and special. The feedback is excellent, and visitors are impressed by the size and scale of the museum.

A particular favourite is our signal box gallery which now features a refurbished lever frame a track diagram a tablet machine and two working signal levers. Visitors love to pull the interlocking levers and see the signals move. This invariably prompts questions about the role of the signalman and the safety measures introduced after the Armagh Disaster.

WRM was chosen by the Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society as the venue for a video of its performance of a dance called The Flying Scotsman. The mandate

was a train background so No.3 RH *Smyth* obliged. RSCDS groups from around the world are doing likewise and a video showing all the performances will be launched in 2023 to mark the Society's centenary. Another publicity opportunity for the museum!

The Events & Marketing Committee would like to record its thanks to our General Manager, Lisa Adair, and to Rebecca Laverty, our erstwhile Education Officer. We were sorry to lose the services of Rebecca in September but wish her well in her new job. We are grateful to our new finance and admin officer, Graham Nortje, who is now handling the museum guide rota and handling group visit inquiries.

As ever, Whitehead Railway Museum is poised for further growth but we rely on our members to act as our publicity agents. Please avail of your free visit and help to spread the word far and wide. We know we are on the right tracks and look forward to a busier year in 2023.



The Steam & Jazz on 17th June played out under an extraordinary sunset at Whitehead.

(Photo: R. Laverty)

I have been fascinated by steam engines since I was a child. I loved to watch them puffing and pulling their carriages full of passengers through the Yorkshire countryside where I grew up. As an adult I have continued to be enthralled and have spent many wonderful days visiting museums and travelling by trains powered by magnificent shiny engines bellowing steam.

So you can imagine my delight when in June 2022 some friends invited me to join them at an event organised by the Whitehead Railway Museum, part of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland. We travelled to Belfast by steam train before returning to Whitehead for hog roast and dancing on the platform, to a

live country band. The event was a resounding success.

During the evening I was approached by Sue Harpur from the Society who had noticed that I was wearing a North Yorkshire Moors Railway Tee Shirt and thought I must be interested in steam trains. Following a brief conversation, she asked if I would consider volunteering at Whitehead. I jumped at the chance stating that I was a 'hands on' person and would love to be involved in some sort of restoration work regardless of how dirty the work would be.

In mid-July 2022, full of excitement and wearing my new boiler suit and steel toe-capped boots, I arrived for my first shift at Whitehead Museum's work sheds



Gill Lewis on No.461, 28th July.

(Photo: R Morton)

where I was looked after by volunteer John White. He suggested that I could start cleaning the footplate of engine No.461 with the intention that visitors to the museum would eventually be able to actually get on and imagine what it must have felt like to drive it.

As well as working on the engine in the shed, I took home as many brass fittings, gauges and windows that I could fit on my kitchen and dining room tables and set about cleaning and polishing, hoping that I could return them to their original condition.

I eventually finished the work in November just in time for her 100th birthday. We were extremely pleased when the Lord Mayor came to the Museum to cut a birthday cake for No.461 on the platform.

Since then, I have moved on to the footplate of 'RH Smyth' No.3 which, although smaller than No.461, is equally as dirty.

During my time volunteering at Whitehead, I have been made to feel so

welcome and part of the team. Whenever I need help with anything I only have to ask and someone will be happy to assist. I have also learned so much about the workings and history of steam engines and it is fascinating.

The Museum needs more volunteers so whatever skills you have or if, like me, you have enthusiasm and a willingness to give a little spare time, the Society would very much appreciate a call from you.

It would be lovely to have more female volunteers and there are various jobs available such as tour guide, train marshal, office work. Of course, you could always join me, up to your elbows in dirt and grime.

There is a lovely café which is open to the public, a cosy, well equipped staff canteen and shower facilities so we can go home looking presentable.

Just one more thing to say to prospective volunteers. Please don't let age be an obstacle, I am 70 years old and enjoy myself beyond words.

My best wishes to you all, Gillian Lewis.



Robin Morton, John White, Gill Lewis, Alderman Noel Williams - Mayor of Mid and East Antrim - and President Joan Smyth CBE on 16th November.
(Photo: CP Friel)

In response to our Editor's call for more steam articles from the Southern Area, I have taken up my pen to write down some of the memories of CIÉ engine-men. Men I knew well and worked with for over 45 years.

I grew up surrounded by steam trains. They ran across a red iron bridge across our Avenue. Around the other end corner we had the Fairview Park whose clean, blue engines carried head boards saying 'Enterprise Express' or 'Bundoran Express'.

When my parents moved out to the western suburbs, we had Inchicore Works just over our neighbour's back wall. Seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, engines whistled and blew off. The huge concrete coaling tower caused thunderclaps of sound every time a coal hopper was emptied into it.

Many of our neighbours worked for the

railway in every conceivable trade or grade. My Mother's father had been a station-master. Her brother and sister worked for the railway. My Father's family had railway connections. Best of all was a friend of my uncle's (known to us as 'Uncle Bill') who was Loco shed clerk in Broadstone shed.

When this shed closed in April 1961, locomotives and staff moved down to Amiens Street GN shed.

When the last GN foreman (Moore?) retired, Bill was promoted to Foreman. So we always had free access to visits and get in among those lovely machines. We would enter via Coburg Place and those iron stairs up to the Foreman's office.

One Saturday in late '61, I was chatting to Bill in his office. A driver named Rafferty had a Compound for the 13.25 Drogheda and was none too pleased to have such a big engine for a small train. Bill's telephone



Fairview Park – S-class 4-4-0 No. 173 Galtee More passes the railings of Fairview Park with the first down Bundoran Express of 1955 on Sunday 29 May 1955.

(Photo: Neil Sprinks © Charles P Friel Collection)



Inchicore – With its cooling tower on the far right, this was Inchicore running shed on Saturday 8 May 1955 with a motley collection of ex-GSWR 0-6-0s and 4-4-0s on show along with a solitary Woolwich and the works shunter.

(Photo: G F Douglas © Charles P Friel Collection)

to the de-mounted coach where the firemen lived was out of order and he asked me to run up and call out Jackie Campbell to assist Rafferty.

Up I went. At the coach door a tall, thin chap in smocks stood. 'What do you want, Chisellie?' he asked. I told him and he brought me in and thus I met the last of the CIE Dublin Area steam firemen.

There were men from all depots of CIE and GNR: Sligo, Wexford, Clones, Dundalk, Athlone, Galway, Inchicore, Broadstone and Amiens Street. Redundant firemen had two choices, 1) leave the job or 2) take appointments in the Traffic Department. The men in the coach were there because Amiens Street still had a daily requirement for steam power for trains. Many of the men I met that day would later crew RPSI steam footplates.

Joe Murphy stood looking at GS&W 4-4-0 No.301, the last of her type and standing adjacent to the coach. No.301 would soon be hauled away to Inchicore to replace F6 2-4-2T No.42 on shop-heating duties. Perhaps Joe was re-living his trip to Waterford on her with Driver Paddy Neville on a IRRS special in 1960.

Mick McGuinness was chatting to Gerry Kinahan. Tommy Canning was discussing Compound working with Jim Kiernan. Two card schools had taken over the tables. Billy Scanlon, ex-Sligo, was discussing Arigna coal with John Reynolds, ex-Ballinamore C&L.

I was in Heaven. These men would be my mentors, colleagues and friends until their dying days. These young men fired to the last steam drivers in the Dublin area. And all their drivers would be Passed Firemen of the War years and bad coal generation. There was nothing anybody could tell them about steam locomotives and, after 1959, they cheerfully manned the locos of all Irish standard gauge companies except the NCC.

One day they might have a Bandon tank or a Midland 2-4-0. A saturated J15 or a GN 'S' class 4-4-0 and they told me stories I never forgot.

I will start with Joe Murphy. Joe was a 4th generation footplateman, his father, Dan was a noted Top Link driver at Inchicore mostly on Loco No.501 (4-6-0). Joe's service began in November 1946 at Inchicore as a cleaner. By 1952 he was a fireman on the Pilot link. His first out-

road turn was with old Jem Cummins on loco No.172 (0-6-0) working the Limerick goods. He fired Loco No.402 to Limerick Junction, also with a goods. That time for Mick Flood.

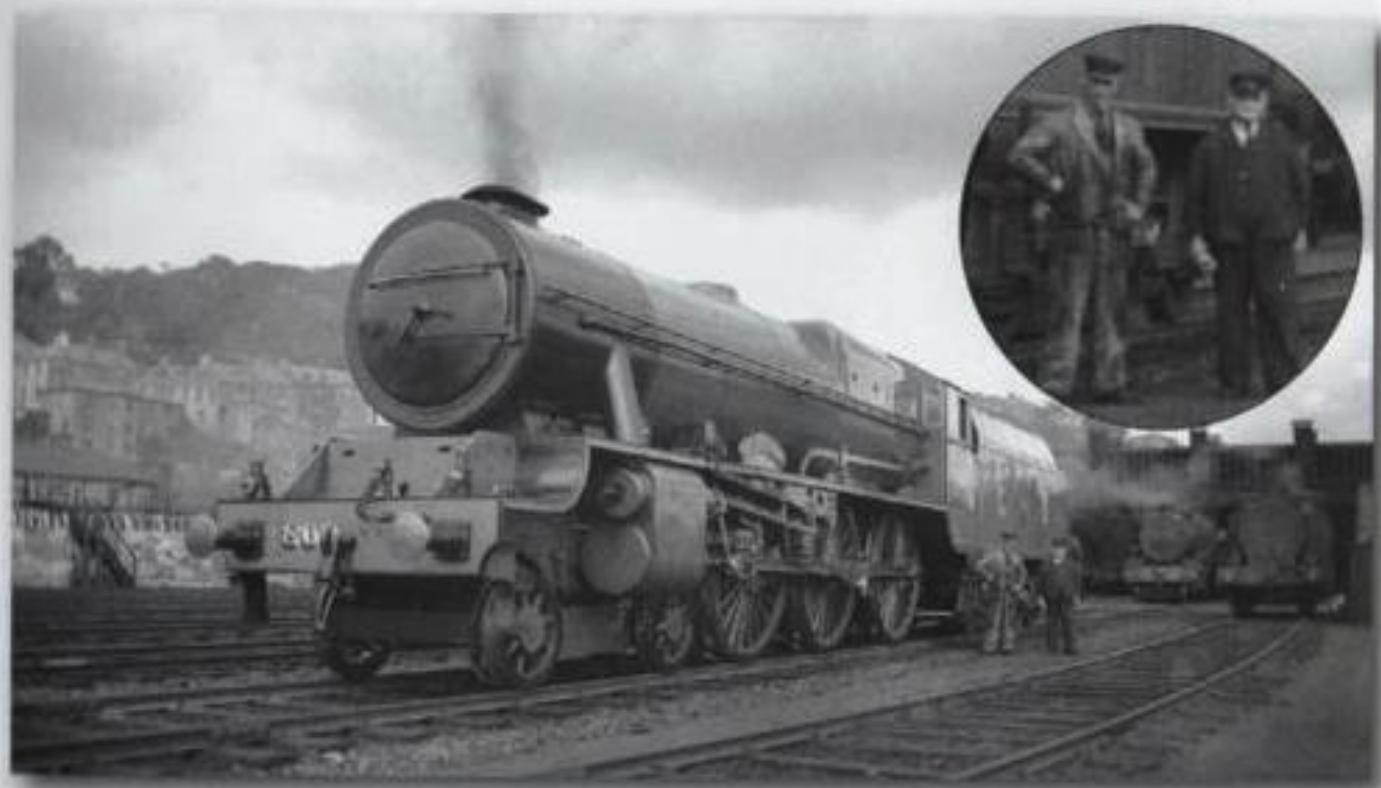
But I must mention two unusual jobs. He was sent with Matt Ryan, who had fired No.800 on her maiden trip to Cork, when, on the return, she hauled 450 tons of train up out of Cork. No less a personage than O S Nock recorded that run from the footplate. By 1960 Matt was a Special Link Driver and was sent to Limerick Junction to haul up three ex-MGW 0-6-0s. They were allocated Loco No.402 (4-6-0) for the job. But first they had to work the Ballybroy- Thurles flyer.

Arrived in the Junction they found that the 3 old MGW engines had to be oiled up. At this point Joe Bowe, fireman, arrived to do brakesman on the crocks. As brakesman, Joe refused to assist in oiling-up and adjourned to May-Mayo, a local hostelry, for refreshments.

It was very late when they got away from the Junction and they were shunted at Thurles, Ballybroy and Mountrath so, as they approached Portlaoise, Matt decided to 'heel up' at Conniberry Dormitory. They stabled the cavalcade in the yard and washed up.

But, of course, none had any food as they were rostered single trip. Matt Ryan had a few shillings but the two firemen had only pence. Result: they bought a loaf of bread, heated the grease on the pan and dipped the bread slices into the hot, tasty, grease. Next day they set off for Broadstone via North Wall arriving there in the late afternoon.

Joe sat the Driver's examination but sadly only got one driving turn prior to the end of steam. He, with Fireman Charley Koppenhofer and ex-Enniskillen fireman, acting brakesman Frank Maguire, was sent passenger to Portlaoise to relieve a Cork crew on Woolwich No.388 hauling 'dead' locos for scrap. They collected Nos.154 (J15) and 607 (J19) at Portarlington and



Cork Glanmire Road shed – This is O S Nock's picture of B1A-class 4-6-0 No.800 Maedhbh before working the Up Day Mail on Saturday 12 August 1939. Standing beside the cab steps are Fireman Matt Ryan and Driver Foley.

(Photo: O S Nock © Charles P Friel collection)



Limerick shed - Driver Jack Meehan and Fireman Pat McKeown before working the North Kerry Railtour on Saturday 4 June 1972.
(Photo: Charles P Friel)



Ballinacourty – Fireman Jimmy Browne and Driver Jack O'Neill at the terminus on Sunday 16 September 1973.

(Photo: Charles P Friel)

ran on to North Wall. A Midland crew then took the whole lot on to Mullingar for scrapping.

Joe did a spell in the Traffic Dept, portering in Westland Row. During this time he was sent as guard, engine and van, to Arklow with Driver Jem Monaghan and Fireman Jackie Campbell (ex-GN) on J15 No.149 to haul home several ex-GN coaches which had been burned out at Avoca on a Mystery train.

Approaching Rathdrum, No.149 broke an Eccentric cotter. A broken file was pressed into service to enable her to clear the section, where the Driver wired for a replacement loco. It was the only time Joe ever saw this done. Joe had to wait until 1976 before he got his hands

on a steam engine again.

Steam specials came within the roster of the Special Link, so when the RPSI ran their first two-day tour in September 1968 (the 'Naomh Ciaran') Inchicore Foreman O'Toole consulted his Special Link sheets. Inchicore's input was to work Jeep No.4 from Inchicore to Portarlington and bring No.186 home from Clara.

Senior man Colbert ('The Heeler') Dunne was a fourth-generation loco man and a hard man to run. He had Ned Dumphry ('Earful'), to fire for him. Ned was a dedicated loco man who had given up a good job to join all his relations in the railway. He had fired for Peter McGibney, Frank Forde and Mick Flood,

all top men on steam.

For the following year, 1969, 'The Brian Boru' tour took Nos.4 and 171 to Cork. Again Dr Dunn had Ned on No.4 while Mickey ('Heavy Weapon') Murphy: the son of Dinny, well known to steam enthusiasts in the fifties and sixties. The Fireman was Gus ('Blinking Gussie') Leonard. His Father was Paddy of the Straboe smash. These two crewed No.171, which had a blown piston gland and so was sent light to Cork, while No.4 gave a superb run with 8 bogies to Cork. Upon arrival No.171, with Cork crew, worked the train to Cobh, while No.4 went on Glanmire Road shed for servicing. At the entrance to the shed, No.4 derailed her pony truck at a very awkward spot. It took some time to re-rail her.

On Sunday morning the Dublin crews set about preparing their steeds and found

that the Cork fire-dropper had been lax about cleaning the grates. A lot of dross had to be shovelled out before Loco Insp Joe Canning (ex-GN) was satisfied that they were right to go. A good climb was made to Rathduff, where No.171 came off and No.4 headed for Limerick. Unfortunately, No.4 again derailed and break-down foreman Ollie Browne decreed that she must continue bunker-first to Dublin. No.171 coupled on again at Ballybroughy and set off for Dublin. *[There is a very slightly different second thought on this and who is correct is rather academic anyway: No.4 left Cork bunker-first as Cork shed decided she wasn't fit to run pony-leading. In Limerick, Ollie Browne had his own look and confirmed Cork's decision. – Ed]*

Civil unrest in the North upset 1971 and 2. Two single-day tours were run each of these years. In April 1971, Murphy and



Loop Line Bridge - No.171's first known venture south of Connolly was on Thursday 29 May 1975 – the year before Willie McCaughey's irate phone call in 1976. Here No.171 brings the Empty Carriages for the 1975 Burma Road tour for stabling in the Boston Yard, south of Pearse. (Photo: Charles P Friel)



Kilbarry – Nos. 171 and 186 slog up the 1 in 70 away from Cork Tunnel with the 'false start' from Cork on Sunday 13 June 1976 with the Seandun Railtour.

(Photo: Charles P Friel)

Leonard worked No.186 from Kinsgbridge to Portlaoise visiting the Curragh siding and Coolnamona Turf factory. While participants trundled across the bog in Bord Na Mona wagons, No.186 returned to Coniberry Junction shed to turn and clean the fire. In return for assisting in this 1 footplated back to Kildare. Inspector Johnny Maguire (nephew of retired Foreman Charlie Maguire) sat with his back to the fire, content to leave the work to the expert crew.

The 1972 tour ran from Limerick, over the North Kerry to Tralee and Castleisland, with No.186 crewed by Limerick Driver Jack Meehan and Fireman

Pat McKeown. Inchicore's part was to bring the loco light from Sallins and back after the tour. Driver Billy Beatty ('The Admiral') had this job.

The two-day 'Three Rivers' Railtour of September 1973 featured No.186 to Rosslare, from where No.171 (down via Kilkenny) took the train across the South Wexford to Waterford. No.186 followed light to work an evening trip to New Ross and a Sunday morning trip leapfrogging back to Dublin.

The DSE crew were Driver Tony Finnegan and Jim Kiernan. These were to return on Sunday firing to the crew of No.171 Driver Paddy Neville and Ned Dowling. A Waterford crew of Driver Jack O'Neill

and Jimmy Browne worked No.171 to Rosslare and return. I assisted Jimmy Browne but, sadly, on Sunday morning, No.171 put out a cylinder cover so No.186 worked the whole trip Waterford – Ballinacourty, and return, then Waterford to Amiens Street. Later, she continued on to Belfast, some journey for a veteran 0-6-0!

Inchicore Driver Neville ('Igor') had Bray man Jim Kiernan with him. Waterford Inspector Bill McDonnell joined us and Paddy put him in to drive, knowing his

enthusiasm for steam. (Jack O'Neill had kept Bill away from the regulator.) Bill was made up. Paddy sat up on the toolbox and fed down coal to Jim and I. Poor old No.171 was hauled home by diesel. We passed it at Lavistown Junction, Ned Dowling on 049 and Tony Finnegan on No.171.

Our two-day tour for 1974 was 'The Silvermines' tour in September. But our old Foreman had retired. Billy O'Toole was an life-long Inchicore man and well knew his staff. The new man was from



Port Laoise – Three tired but pleased locomen take a breather while working the Mallow to Connolly section of the Seandun Railtour on Sunday 13 June 1976. Left to right are Morgan D'Arcy, our author Dan Renahan and Joe Murphy. Morgan was later to star as No.184's fireman in *The First Great Train Robbery* film.

(Photo: Charles P Friel)

Limerick Junction via Grand Canal Street so for the steam job he consulted his Special Link seniority list. Senior man Frank Sneyd declined. Mick Corcoran agreed but would not go with Harry Kearns. Nobody would fire to Harry: the tour looked doubtful. To save the day, Paddy Neville agreed to crew with Harry. First thing Harry did was to quote to Paddy, his (Harry's) seniority date of November 1942. So Harry would drive, but first they had to get No.186 coaled and stabled in Sallins. Later No.186 was taken to Limerick Junction and left there on Thursday.

To add to the mix the Mail Porters went on strike on Friday and picketed Amiens Street. Train services stopped. Unions and Management met. At 2300 it was resolved.

Whatever about Harry Kearns he could make an engine go and No.4 made a great run down the main line before No.186 took over at the Junction for the trip to Clonmel and back: Driver Owen Browne, Fireman McKeown. No.4 again took over for the run into Limerick, now with Driver Kennedy and Fireman Martin Cowhey of Limerick.

Sunday was planned to Double-head out of Limerick and up to Silvermines, but the Operating manager got cold feet and would not allow a train of passengers up the mineral line. So the Limerick crew of Driver Roger Healy and Fireman Billy Crowe on No.4 hauled the empty train up and back. Meanwhile No.186 (crewed as Saturday) ran a hot RH tender axle-box and it was decided that she should follow the tour train to Sallins base. So I joined the crew with Loco Inspector Johnny Maguire on No.186. Johnny attended to that hot box by packing oil-soaked sponge cloths under the axle and off we toddled to Sallins, checking the box regularly.

Number 4 made a good run home to

Amiens Street and a NIR crew took her to Belfast. Just as a matter of historical interest, next day Monday 30th, the unique ex-GN diesel MAK ran LE from Inchicore to Drogheda for cement train working.

The 'Burma Road' tour of May 1975 had no Inchicore involvement but I cycled over to Glasnevin Junction to see No.171 climb the bank to Liffey Junction. (I was due in work at 12.45). Two DSE men crewed No.171, Driver Dick Millea of Waterford and Canal Street, with Mickey Richardson, Canal Street. I noted Inspector Arthur Toner hogging the regulator.

On Sunday I went down to Athlone to join the up train. Athlone Driver Val Horan with Sean Clynes firing rolled into Athlone early. Waterford driver Jack O'Neill was also in Athlone. When the Dublin crew took over No.171, we adjourned to the Diner for pints and steam talk. Jack had very strong views which none of his colleagues agreed with. Hence few wanted to crew with him.

By 1976 things at Inchicore had changed. Mickey Murphy and Colbert Dunne had been promoted on to the Top Link. Gussie Leonard and Ned Dumphry had gone up on to the Passenger Link for the duration of the summer timetable, so Foreman Walsh began to fish around for a steam crew for the two-day Seandun tour. Joe Murphy was now a Special Link driver and was mad for the job. But to get a mate was not easy, so Joe inveigled his best friend, Morgan d'Arcy into firing: Morgan wanted assistance, one of the Renehans to fire. I was available!

The tour began on Thursday 10th June when No.171 hauled a train to Dublin. It was to stable in the Boston yard. NIR Driver Willie McCaughley requested a conductor across the Loop line. Foreman Reilly sent over Noel Rooney, replete in summer Tee-shirt and open-toed sandals.

Noel stepped up on 171 –

‘Who the hell are you?’

‘I am your conductor.’

Willi was off the engine in a flash and rang Bill Reilly ‘Send me over A DRIVER!’

Later, No.171 stabled in Fairview. Next day, No.186 hauled a van to Cork to stable.

When I booked-on at 04.00 on Saturday 12th, unusually there was no sign of Morgan. Inspector Comerford joked that I might be making my maiden run to Cork. However, at the main gate Morgan came rushing up. His alarm had failed so when he collected his gear we piled into the taxi for Fairview. I had just cycled across this very route. No.171 had been lit-up and an RPSI member told us she was fully oiled-up. Comerford took an oil feeder and went over her himself.

All being well, tank full and fire-irons secured we whistled up East Wall Junction, cabin for the road away. At 06.15 the disc cleared and we puffed away tender-first, going up the down road and across onto the Southern side of Amiens Street and over the Loop line. A fine, misty, drizzle was falling. Morning was slow to appear as we re-traced our steps to join the Link line and climb up past Drumcondra to Glasnevin Junction and Cabra yard.

When Joe shut-off, the safety valves lifted and both injectors went on. We rolled down the bank, through the Phoenix Park tunnel and over the Liffey Bridge to Islandbridge Junction. We stopped in the Gullet and Kingsbridge cleared the disc to take us back down into the station. Joe released the train brake but the Inspector applied it.

Joe looked at him quizzically: ‘There are passengers in the train.’ And there was, though illegally. We were booked empty coaches. So I walked back to the Bridge

of Signals to phone the signalman. He was none too happy. After a delay, the station pilot arrived to haul us down. We departed Kingsbridge at 08.50. My Dad was standing on Memorial Bridge to see us blasting up the Gullet and wave us a good trip.

Joe always loved to show off passing Inchicore shed and Ned rolled his eyes as Joe dropped No.171 out to make noise passing the crowd of assembled drivers and fitters at the Sand-stove door. Ned would rather take her easy to Clondalkin and he wondered if Joe had spent too much time with Dinny Murphy, another driver who loved to make noise.

Once over the bank at MP4 No.171 got into her stride and we romped along on 25% and the main valve. Firing was light and often and she held her pressure. Water was taken in Kildare and we went on easily down the main line. The sun broke through and we had a fine day, but the left-hand injector began to act up and it eventually failed, leaving us without the ‘Slacker Pipe’. The result of this was that we got progressively blacker with coal dust.

Water was again taken at Thurles and cans of tea were brewed. After refreshing man and steed we continued on to Limerick Junction. We had now run the equivalent of Belfast to Dublin and the fire was assessed. Morgan had fired on GN locos and so we had kept the fire light, bright and tight. It certainly looked good. But we had not reckoned on the long stand. It played havoc with our fire bed so that when we got the road away, we had a full boiler and steam pressure. By the time we topped the Junction bank we were down to 120psi and half a glass of water.

The easy road on towards the ‘Morningstar River’ and judicious use of the fire-irons allowed pressure to rise somewhat but the pull up after

Charleville knocked her back. We rolled towards Buttervant, but the climb up past Grange village dragged her down. Now I saw where Joe had made an error. He had set the vacuum brake high (23"/24"), now as pressure fell the train brakes began to drag. Before the top of the bank we ground to a stop. While Morgan poked at the fire, I walked back pulling the strings.

Pressure rose, we re-started and topped the bank at Two-Pot-House and rolled down to Mallow. Now the signalman compounded the problem. As we cleaned the fire he arrived and told us to clear the down Main and back up into the Killarney platform. As we rolled down to clear, Inspector Comerford took a fire-iron and began to break up clinker. At that moment his very expensive wrist-watch strap broke and he lost his family's gift. As we began to push back over the crossing No.171 slipped and we came to a stand. We had the whole place blocked up. Had we been allowed in on to No.3 in the first place ...

After cleaning the fire and a long delay we got away out of Mallow and began to climb up the Clyda Valley, past Mourne Abbey, to the Iveagh (Ivy) Bridge. On a clean fire, No.171 romped away and after Rathduff we washed up in a bucket for relief in Cork. We signed-off and went to the Enginemen's Dormitory to shower and cook our dinner. Then we rested for an hour. Later, in Driver Bohan's pub in Cork, I discussed the fire problem with Ned Comerford. He blamed himself for our problem and I learned a lesson that day. Anywhere a long stand is booked, knock a bit out of the fire and rebuild the fire just before departure.

We had a good night in Cork and booked-on to travel out on the steam special to Mallow. This allowed Cork crews to again handle steam. Both Nos.186 and 171 double-headed the train to Mallow and there we relieved the

Cork crew. As expected, they had fired 171 as they would a Southern engine ie a very heavy fire. So we partially cleaned it and levelled it off. No coal was fired until Buttervant and we kept it light and bright. Morgan drove and we had to restrain Joe with the shovel.

I think it was about Knocklong we saw a down 121-hauled train stopped. A quarter of a mile ahead of it the CWR rail was badly warped. It was an exceptionally hot day. Over on the Kerry Road, our colleague, Tommy Griffin, was derailed at Knocknagashal by the same problem. On arrival in the Junction, Inspector Comerford was called to the phone to acquaint him of this problem. Tea was brewed and the fire properly cleaned.

Nearing departure time the Station Inspector asked for No.171 to return to the train. The two boys were still supping, I was on the loco, but dared not move it. A senior RPSI loco rep stepped in to move 171. Comerford soon stopped that. Apparently this guy was known as 'Self-drive' and had moved NIR railcars against all regulations at Whitehead. [I have asked around Whitehead – nobody is 'fessing up to either being or knowing who this was! – Ed]

We got away in fine style but Sunday PWD possessions played havoc with our journey home. We were looped in Portlaoise for water and to let trains overtake. Away we went into a glorious summers evening on the last lap to Amiens Street. Arrival there was at 19.20. After washing up, we went to Graingers pub for a well-earned pint. As we supped, No.171 was heading for Belfast and 186 for Mullingar. Incidentally, Cork shed had four steam engines on its premises that weekend, Nos.184,186,171 and 461. Just like old times!

[To be continued!]



VS Class No.207 'Boyne' on Amiens Street (now Connolly) turntable in the 1960s, still facing into the terminus. The table had the option to vacuum operate, via use of the loco's brake ejector.

(Photo: c/o D Carse)



V Class No.85 'Merlin' on Inchicore turntable on 7th May.

(Photo: N Lawrence)

By Robin Morton –

The RPSI suffered the loss of another founder member and active volunteer with the untimely death after a short illness of Robert (Bob) Edwards, on February 9, 2022. Robert was a founder member of the Society in 1964 and served on the RPSI Council from 1968 until 1984, first as secretary and then as chairman. During his time as chairman, the RPSI progressed from being a fledgling group of enthusiasts to becoming a firmly established and widely respected organisation.

Robert Edwards was a dedicated member of the Society and was involved, not just as a member of the RPSI Council, but also on the ground as a volunteer. He

was a skilled member of the Whitehead team, in terms of both locomotive maintenance and on the footplate grades. For many years, he loved nothing more than getting his overalls on and working on the footplate of an RPSI steam engine, whether at Whitehead or on the mainline. He had a detailed working knowledge of steam locomotives and contributed to the maintenance of the Society's fleet as well as his own traction engine.

A close friend of RPSI President the Lord O'Neill, Robert was involved in the development and operation of a 3ft gauge preserved steam railway which opened in 1971 at Shane's Castle in Antrim. He volunteered as a fitter and engine driver at Shane's Castle over many years and



Bob Edwards on Harvey at Downpatrick on 17th March 2010

(Photo: CP Friel)

was always a source of good advice and footplate expertise. He was involved in the annual Shanes Castle traction engine rally and exhibited for many years with his own road engine.

At Whitehead, he dedicated himself latterly to the final stages of the restoration of Guinness Grain Van 504, carrying out detailed carpentry work on the interior. He remained closely associated with that project until 2020, when the lockdown halted work.

Sadly Robert's health deteriorated during 2021 but he was fit enough to attend the launch ceremony in Whitehead on September 25 for the van, which had been shortlisted for the Heritage Railway Association annual awards in 2020. Regrettably, this turned out to be Bob's final visit to Whitehead.

As well as supporting the RPSI, Robert became a dedicated member of the Downpatrick & County Down Railway, whose base was close to his home at Saintfield. There, as at Whitehead, Robert focused on locomotive maintenance and footplate operations, and was always keen to pass his skills on to the next generation.

Bob was a founder member of the DCDR and served as chairman and then vice-president, a role he held at the time of his death. He had been pivotal in drawing up an agreement whereby the RPSI's No. 3BG Guinness was transferred on loan from Whitehead to Downpatrick in the 1980s, with the locomotive being used to operate the first steam trains on the new line.

Indeed, he held the unique distinction of having been chairman of both the RPSI and DCDR in his time. As RPSI chairman, Robert had been associated with a feasibility study on the proposed development of a branch line between Scarva and Banbridge. This experience

served him well when he got involved at Downpatrick and he was delighted to see a steam-hauled branch line becoming a reality.

Robert Edwards (74) was the son of Dr Matthew Dermot Edwards and his wife Ivan. He was brought up at Carnalea and educated at St Columba's College in Dublin. After school he joined the Northern Bank in Belfast and worked as a bank official. When early retirement beckoned in the early 2000s, Bob opted for a new career – as an HGV driver with Mar-Train Heavy Haulage. He was equally at home in the cab of a lorry as on the footplate of a steam engine.

Robert is survived by his wife Marion and their three daughters, Maeve, Oonah and Patricia and two grandchildren, Corin and Rowan. The RPSI extends its sincere sympathy to Marion and the family on their sad loss. The Society was represented at the funeral service for Bob which was held in Saintfield Parish Church on February 13.

By Peter Scott –

I cannot remember exactly when first I met Bob, but it was in the late 1960's and was to do with either steam locomotives or traction engines.

He was the person responsible for getting me involved in working on the RPSI's locomotives at Whitehead. In his invariably quiet and polite manner he inquired if I would "like to come and help". Which I did and have continued to do so ever since then.

I mentioned traction engines, and Bob was the proud owner of an Aveling and Porter steam road locomotive. A traction engine is a bit like a railway loco in that it requires two persons to operate it. On a railway engine, there is a driver and a fireman. For a road engine there is the driver – who makes it go and also stokes the boiler – and the steersman, who

steers it in the required direction and avoids obstacles.

"The driver is in charge," Bob instructed me. "You just steer it – and if something goes wrong and I say jump off, then you jump!" The two of us worked the engine from Shanes Castle to Clandeboye, and I am glad to say there was no "jumping" required – although my heart was in my mouth most of the way. However Bob was great company and made the whole exercise a memorable day. He had many stories about how the traction engine men did things in what was, of course, a bygone era.

Bob was always a firm friend – someone you were glad to be able to rely on with support and suggestions whenever you needed them. He was meticulous in his attention to detail – when he took up lorry driving after his banking career, he made sure that his load was properly secured with more straps or chains than really appeared necessary. And accompanied by a lecture on how it should be done. I always listened to such lectures with a slight smile – but when Bob delivered whatever load it happened to be intact and in good order, the smiles were all of approval. There are plenty of horror videos on the internet if you want to see what happens when loads are

insecure or lorries badly driven. That was not Bob's way.

I asked Bob how he liked driving lorries. "Well," he said "At least you can only drive one lorry at a time". That cannot be denied, and this must have had some relevance to his experience of banking activities.

Bob worked for many years on the steam locos both at Whitehead and at Downpatrick, but his last job at Whitehead was taking part in the restoration of a railway goods van - the "Guinness" van 504 - which was being largely rebuilt from derelict and deteriorated condition. This involved woodwork rather than boilers and bearings, but Bob always rose to whatever challenge presented itself.

Throughout this article I have referred to him as "Bob" - in fact he was usually called "Big Bob" in railway circles, probably referring to his considerable strength and a willingness to apply it. I have seen him manipulate railway sleepers in a way that would put lesser persons to shame. In later years he preferred to be called "Robert", which I complied with whenever I remembered. But my real memory is for Bob, and many years of good friendship. I will miss him.

I can't remember when Bill first became one of "the workers" in the loco department. It seems a long time ago! I do recollect him telling me that his first attendance at Whitehead was as a member of the "mid-week" squad.

Bill soon became a regular on Saturdays and was keen to tackle any job on the locos that presented itself. When new boiler plates were being flanged to replace corroded platework on the tank engine boiler, Bill strenuously took part - the work involved heating 16mm thick steel plate to red heat and bending it round a cast iron flanging block. The bending was done by wielding massive timber mallets and inflicting blows which seemed to have little effect until measured, when maybe some 3mm of movement could be discerned - even that was encouraging. Anyway Bill was not put off and would arrive with sleeves rolled up the next Saturday, asking "are we flanging today?" with anticipatory relish.

Bill never took much of an interest in the actual train operations, and footplate duties did not seem to appeal to him. However, one notable exception came about as a result of the two ballast contracts, when the Society provided loco No 3 and a crew for putting down top ballast on the relaid track between Bleach Green and Antrim, and again between Bleach Green and Whitehead. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Bill readily took to firing the loco - a task which he took on with the minimum of fuss and maximum of effectiveness.

In this and other activities, Bill was always crystal clear in any communications - what he had to say was not only down to earth and sensible, but also delivered in a stentorian voice which was impossible to misunderstand. In his professional life, Bill was a ship's master and that may explain

the matter. I can well understand that on board ship, your instructions need to be clear and to the point, and above all heard! It helps when working around trains as well. (Having said that, there were one or two instances when a slight moderation would have been appropriate - for example, when the crew arrived in the early hours at one of the ballast contract stabling points to fire up the loco. Everyone tiptoed in, quietly manoeuvring past the awkward gate so as not to disturb the adjacent residents. Then Bill arrived, and proceeded to wrestle with the gate, while describing its deficiencies in colourful terms which must have been heard on the quarter deck or even the foc'sle, to continue the nautical analogy. *[One year recently, I asked Bill if he'd had a good Christmas. The answer was 'YES, JUST A NICE QUIET CHRISTMAS' – Ed]*

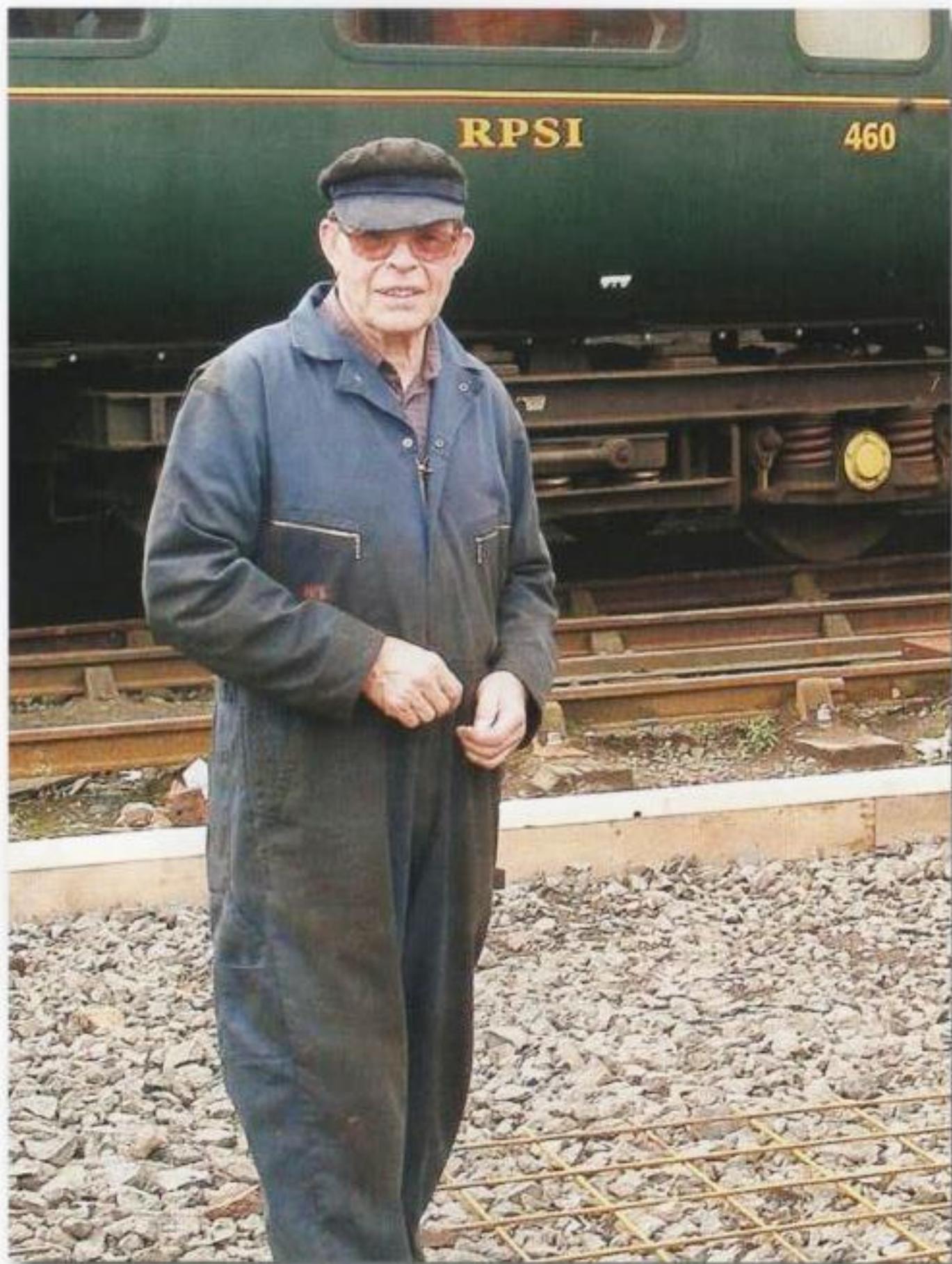
Bill continued his Saturday attendance at Whitehead until about three years ago, but sadly had to give that up due to failing health. But, not to be put off, he tackled small jobs at home like cleaning and packing boiler gauge cocks, and also the compilation of COSHH documentation. (COSHH - the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations - risk assessments that need to be carried out and which, needless to say, nobody just rushes to take on). Except Bill that is - who never shied away from unappealing but necessary drudgery.

Bill was keen on supporting the Mogul project and again figured during plate bending work. Some of the heavy machining work is being handled by Cooke Bros near Newtownards, and it is always a source of regret to me that an arranged visit there for Bill never took place.

Our sympathy and condolences to Bill's

widow Rosemary - who, bless her, always put up with his railway activities! (I only ever heard of one problem, something to

do with the state of the bath on a Saturday evening, but that's another story).



Captain Bill King-Wood at Whitehead on 10th October 2010.

(Photo: CP Friel)



3BG shunts Gatwicks, Whitehead, 24th April. (Photo: Editor)



No. 131, Easter Eggspress, Whitehead, 16th April. (Photo: CP Friel)