

"River Mite" in the shed at Ravenglass in 1936, thought to be awaiting disposal. This 4-6-0 + 0-6-4 articulated loco, built at Ravenglass in 1928, had its boiler, cab and tender mounted on a rigid girder frame, with pivoted driving units derived from 4-6-2 locos "Colossus" and "Sir Aubrey Brocklebank" (Gordon Tucker)

## THE RAVENGLASS AND ESKDALE RAILWAY

INCREASED POWER PROVISION 1927-1928 **GORDON TUCKER**

The 15 inch Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway had its origins in a 2ft 9in gauge mineral line opened in 1876 which soon developed passenger traffic. This line conveyed haematite iron ore from mines near Boot in Eskdale to the Furness Railway at Ravenglass on the Cumberland coast about 7.5 miles away, and carried mainly excursion passengers from the Furness Railway to view and explore the scenic grandeur of the Lake District mountains. The cessation of demand for that particular kind of iron ore caused financial difficulties for the railway; passenger traffic ceased in 1908, and the railway closed altogether in 1913. In 1915, in spite of the First World War,

Messrs. Narrow Gauge Railways Ltd, (with which were associated the famous model railway manufacturer W.J. Bassett-Lowke and the well-known model engineer Henry Greenly), took over the line - and started clearing it and relaying it to the gauge of 15 inches. The lower half of the line was opened for passengers and goods by the spring of 1916, and operation was gradually extended up into Eskdale. For the passenger traffic, the scale model (3in=1ft) 4-4-2 "Sanspareil" - which had previously been used on other, temporary 15in gauge railways - was brought into service with seven open 4-wheel coaches and two covered bogie vehicles. This locomotive quickly proved inadequate on the

From *The Narrow Gauge*, No. 121/122, 1989.

<sup>32</sup> See also p. 41 for Schull & Skibbereen Rly.

steeply graded line and consequently the 4-6-2 scale model locomotive originally named "John Anthony", but renamed "Colossus" was purchased from the Staughton Manor Railway. Many trains, which in the season carried 70 or 80 passengers, had to be double-headed by both locomotives. Later, another similar similar 4-6-2, "Sir Aubrey Brocklebank" was obtained. The first two locomotives were built by Bassett-Lowke before 1915, and the third by Messrs. Hunt in 1919, to the designs of Henry Greenly.

To these the big 2-8-2

"River Esk", built by Davey Paxman, was added in 1923.

For the goods and mineral traffic, older locomotives of a contractor's type (i.e. not scale models) were obtained. First 0-4-0T "Katie" was brought from Eaton Hall, then 0-6-0T "Ella" and 0-8-0T "Muriel" were brought from Duffield Park. With this steam motive power the line struggled on for over a decade. The highest part of the line from Beckfoot to Boot was quite early taken out of use in view of the 0.25 mile climb at 1 in 37 involved, but the line was extended to a new upper terminus at Dalegarth on more favourable gradients. Nevertheless, it was obvious from the

gradient profile that the line was difficult, with short stretches as steep as 1 in 40. So in 1927/8 radical changes were made to the locomotive power. The simplest change was the rebuilding of "Muriel" into an 0-8-2 tender engine, "River Irt", with a new low slung scale-model-type boiler. This proved a powerful and effective locomotive, but did have a rather peculiar look with its wide running plate. The other two locomotives introduced were much more revolutionary.

"River Esk" was a rebuild of the already powerful scale-model-type 2-8-2 which was given an 0-8-0 steam driven tender, this form of articulation being according to the Poultney system. "River Mite" was an extraordinary machine which incorporated the frames and mechanisms of "Colossus" and "Sir Aubrey Brocklebank" into a 4-6-0 + 0-6-4 articulated locomotive with a new boiler, cab and tender mounted on a single rigid girder frame, and the two driving units pivoted on this according to the Fairlie system. This system is, of course, much better known in relation to double-boilered - locomotives as used, for example, on the Festiniog Railway. This made a powerful engine which was at first reported as being very successful.



R & ER train of open bogie coaches, headed by "River Irt" at Dalegarth in 1936. (Gordon Tucker)

It should be pointed out that the three rivers after which these locomotives were named all ran down to the sea close to the railway: the River Irt just to the north, the River Mite close to the lower two-thirds of the railway, and the River Esk close to the upper part of the railway and then flowing somewhat to the south. The "River Irt" continued to give satisfaction, but the use of articulated drives did not, and "River Esk" was soon once again provided with an ordinary unpowered tender. "River Mite" was withdrawn altogether after four or five years, and my photograph shows it in the shed at Ravenglass in 1936, laid up and probably awaiting disposal.

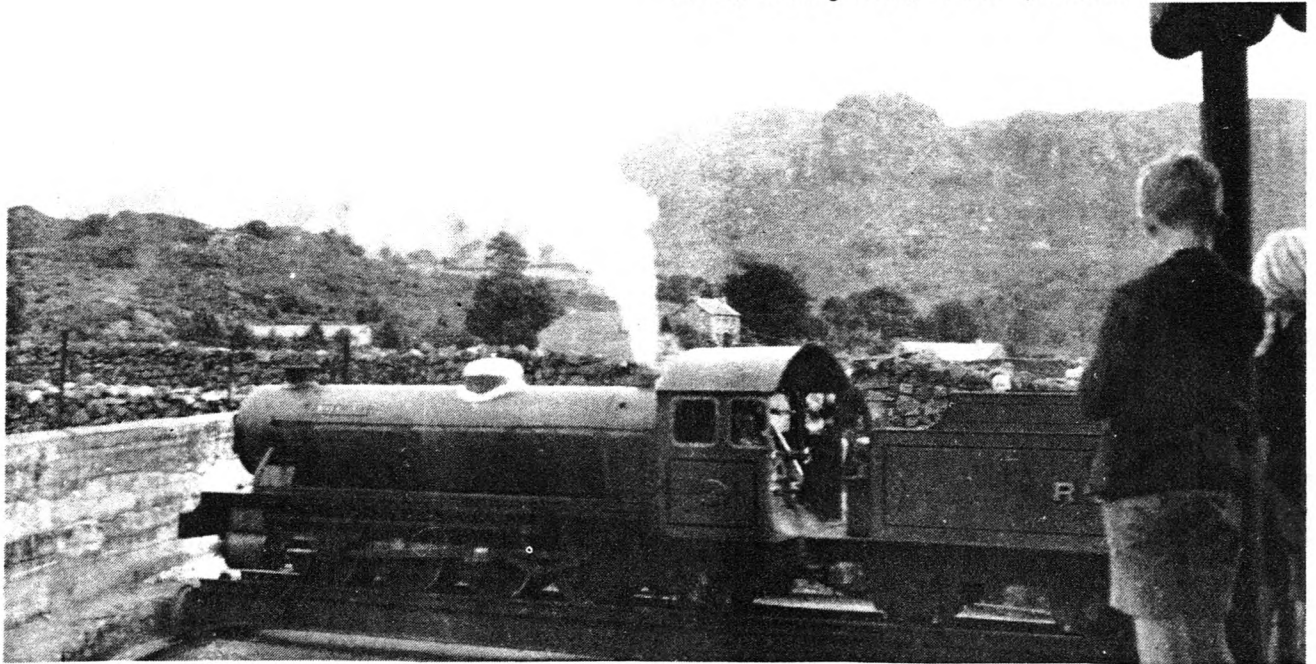
Other locomotives were provided from time to time, and one of these obtained in 1966 took the name "River Mite", and so must not be confused with the original articulated locomotive of this name.

Further information may be found in the following: Railway Magazine, Vol 37, July-Dec. 1915, pp. 463-9; Vol 38, Jan.-June 1916, pp. 386 and 446-7; Vol 63, July-Dec. 1928, pp. 257-265.

J.D.C.A. Prideaux, "The English Narrow Gauge Railway", Newton Abbot, 1978, pp. 79 and 93.



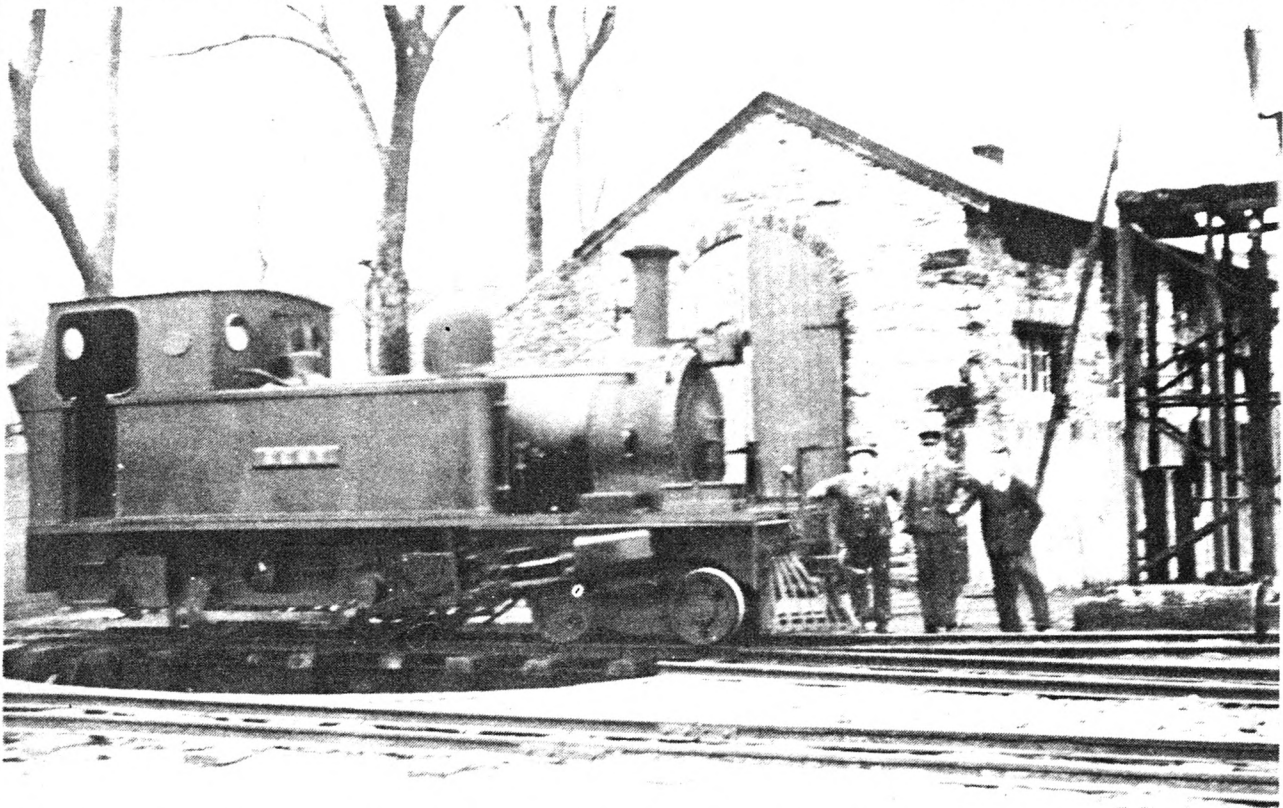
Close up of the cab of 0-8-2 "River Irt", Dalegarth, 1936 (Gordon Tucker)



"River Irt" on the turntable at Dalegarth in 1936. (Gordon Tucker)

# THE SCHULL AND SKIBBEREEN RAILWAY

GORDON TUCKER



S&SR no 3s "Kent" on turntable at Schull, April 1936 (Gordon Tucker)

Following Walter McGrath's note in NG115 on the 3ft Schull and Skibbereen line in County Cork, Ireland, Gordon Tucker sends a transcript of the report of General Hutchinson of the Board of Trade who inspected the line and its equipment on September 2 1886. This is an interesting account of the line, has not - Gordon believes - been published before, and is reprinted here.

INSPECTOR'S REPORT, 2 September 1886.

Sir,  
I have the honour to report for the information of the Board of Trade that, in compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 13th ultimo, I have inspected the West Carbery Tramway and Light Railway, authorised by the

order in Council of 1885 (Schull and Skibbereen).

This Tramway & Light Railway is the first constructed under the powers of the Act of 1883 which has been completed.. It is a single line, on the 3ft gauge, extending from Schull to Skibbereen, a distance of 14 miles, 23 chains. The authorised length of the line was 14 miles, 69.1 chains, but by improvements effected in the laying out of the line a saving of 46.1 chains has been effected.

No land has been purchased, nor have the works been constructed, with a view to the future doubling of the line, but enough land has been acquired, for a length of about 18 chains, for the construction of sidings at the termini and an intermediate point.

Parts of the line are laid along the side of the public road, and parts on private land; at the entrances and exits of the line from the public road to private land, gates and gate-houses have been provided.

The steepest authorised gradient is 1 in 30, there being about 3.25 miles in all of this gradient. The sharpest authorised curve is 2.5 chains. Six of these curves were authorised, but by improvements effected in the laying out of the line the number has been reduced to three. These have been provided with check rails.

The permanent way consists of flat bottomed steel rails, principally 30ft long, weighing 45 lbs to the yard, fished at the joints with fish plates 18 inches long, of transverse sleepers of Irish larch, 6ft by (as minimum dimensions) 8.5 inches by 4.5 inches, ten to each 30ft, the central intervals being 2ft 3in at the joints, and 3ft 1in elsewhere; of ballast, principally broken stone, 8 inches deep below the under surface of the sleepers. The rails are secured to the sleepers by dog spikes only, except (1) on gradients steeper than 1 in 70, where there are fang bolts at each end of each rail; (2) on curves of 5 chains radius and less, where there are two pairs of sole plates under each rail; and (3) on gradients steeper than 1 in 70 combined with curves of 5 chains radius and less, where there are 4 pairs of fang bolts and 2 pairs

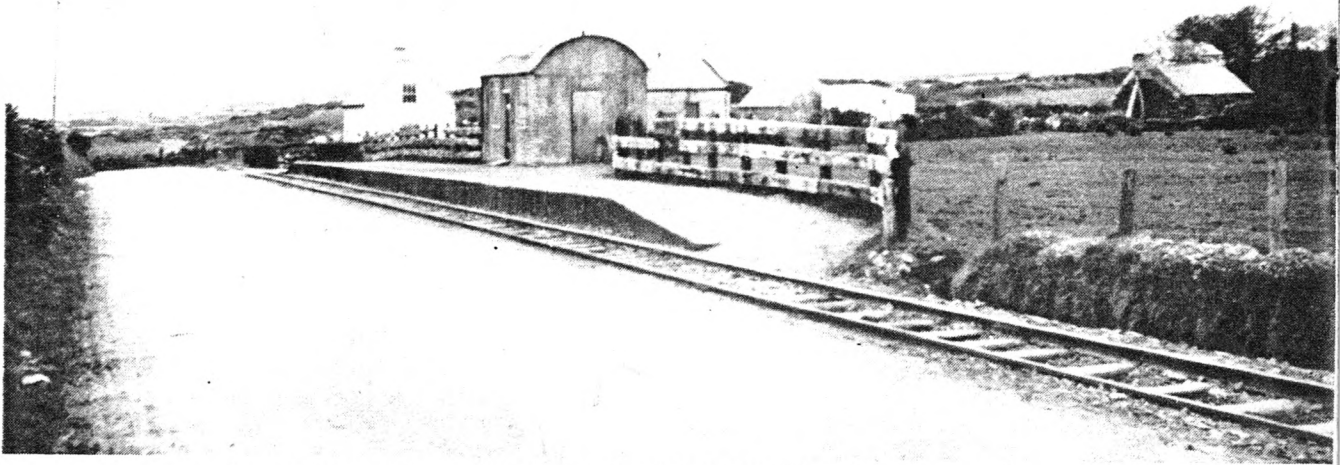
of sole plates to each rail.

The width at formation level is 10ft, where there is more than one line of rails there is an interspace of not less than 6ft 8in.

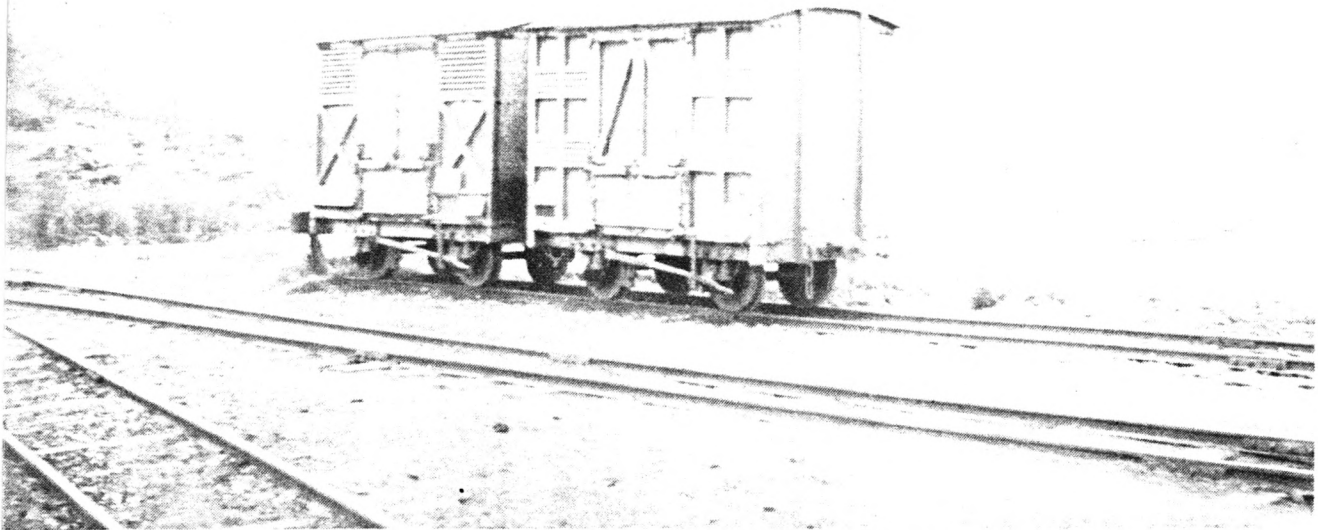
There are two bridges over the line, one a foot-bridge of 26ft span, in which the supports are formed of trussed rails let into rock; the other a road bridge of 16ft span, constructed with stone abutments and wrought iron girders.

Under the line there are 3 road bridges and 3 river bridges: 4 of these are constructed with wrought iron girders, supported on masonry abutments or piers, the widest being 21 ft; the other two are constructed entirely of masonry, the spans being 20ft: in addition to these works there is a masonry viaduct of 12 spans of 20ft each (one of these spans is included in the last remark) over the Ballydehob river. There are also 7 large masonry culverts, widest 12 ft. These various works appear to have all been substantially constructed and to be standing well. The girders have sufficient theoretical and practical strength for carrying the engines (weighing 15 tons) to be used on the line. The Ballydehob viaduct is a very fine piece of work, built on rock foundations. The fencing is of post and wire, of mound, post and wire, and of dry stone walling, backed with sods.

The stations are at Schull, Ballydehob and



Roadside halt (Kilcoe?) on S&SR in April 1936 (Gordon Tucker)



Two cattle wagons (?) at Ballydehob in April 1936 in GS markings. (Gordon Tucker)

Skibbereen: at the latter the existing station has been made available, the new line being brought along side the back of the platform: at the two former stations buildings and platforms have been constructed. In addition to these stations, fixed stopping places have been arranged at convenient points at intervals of about 2 miles each.

Small engine turntables have been provided at the termini.

In consideration of only one engine at a time (or two coupled together) being employed on each of the two sections into which the line is divided, that the facing points are locked by the train staff, which each Engine is to carry, and that the speed is to be very limited, the erection of signals and the usual interlocking arrangements have been dispensed with.

The rolling stock consists of small four-wheeled Engines (of the Tramway type) weighing 15 tons each, 1st and 3rd class carriages with doors at the ends, brake vans, cattle wagons, and open trucks: the Engines are fitted with steam and hand brakes; the carriages and brake vans with the automatic vacuum brake; and the wagons and trucks with hand brakes and vacuum brake pipes.

The line appears to have been well and quickly constructed, and the rolling stock to be of good

quality and adapted to the nature of the line.

The County Surveyor of the West Division of Cork attended the inspection and informed me that he was generally satisfied with the condition of the line (except as regards some few matters which were in course of completion) and had no objection to its being opened for traffic.

The only requirements which came under my notice are as follows:

1. The buffer stops close to the road at Skibbereen station should be strengthened;
2. The fencing along the banks of the Slea river near 12.25 miles requires completion;
3. The keys of the facing point locks at Schull, Ballydehob and Skibbereen should not be removable from the locks unless the points are locked for the main line;
4. The urinals at Schull and Ballydehob should be properly screened;
5. The Engines should be provided with speed indicators.

The safe working of the line will, to a very great extent, depend upon the observance of a very moderate rate of speed. This is limited by the order to 12 miles per hour where the line is on the side of the road; and considering the nature of the engines and the character of the

line, it should never be allowed to exceed 15 miles per hour at other parts of the line. Absolute stops should be made, and reductions of speed be observed in the following instances.

#### ABSOLUTE STOPS

1. Before crossing the public road at Schull station.
2. At the intersection of the road at 68 chains on the journey to Schull.
3. At the intersection of the road at 1 mile 60 chains on the journey to Schull.
4. At the intersection of the road at 4 miles 43 chains on the journey to Skibbereen.
5. At the intersection of the road at 7 miles

65 chains on the journey to Schull.

6. At the intersection of the road at 10 miles 40 chains on both journeys.

7. At the intersection of the road at 10 miles 50 chains on the journey to Skibbereen.

8. At the gate near 11 miles 40 chains on both journeys.

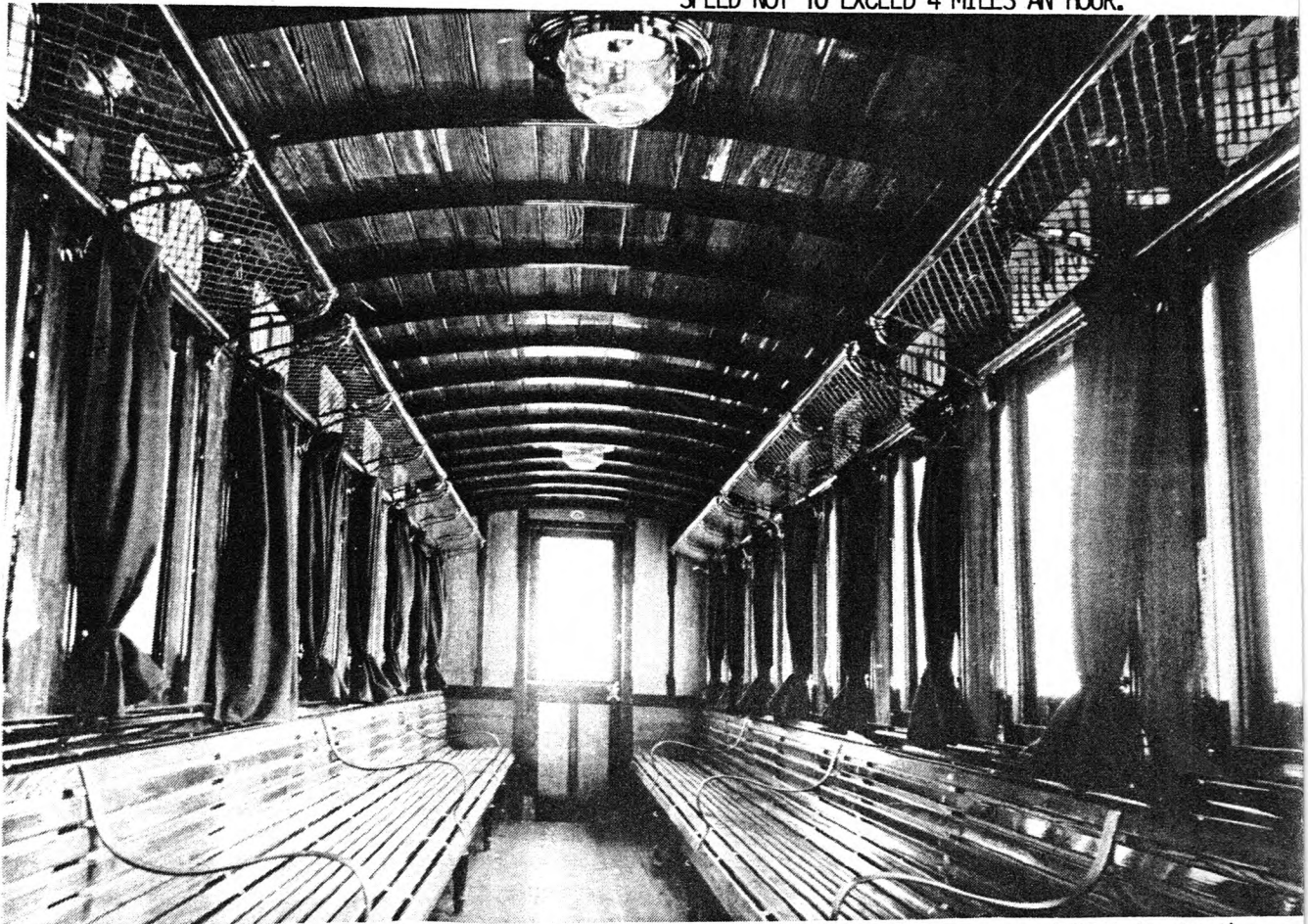
9. Before crossing the public road at Skibbereen station on the journey to Skibbereen. SPEED NOT TO EXCEED 6 MILES AN HOUR

1. On descending all gradients of 1 in 35 or steeper.

2. In passing along the curved parts of the road at 12 miles 39 chains.

3. In passing along the curved parts of the road at 12 miles 76 chains.

SPEED NOT TO EXCEED 4 MILES AN HOUR.



Interior of S&SR 3rd-class coach No 7, 1903 (courtesy Gloucester RC&W Co Ltd)

GLoucester  
RAILWAY CARRIAGE & WAGON COMPANY, LIM<sup>TD</sup>



S&SR 3rd-class coach no 7, supplied in 1903 by the Gloucester RC&W Co Ltd (courtesy of that company)

1. In passing round the curve of 2.5 chains radius at 1.5 miles on the journey to Schull.
2. In passing round the curve of 2.5 chains radius at 4.25 miles on both journeys.
3. In passing round the curve of 2.5 chains radius at 7 miles 38 chains on both journeys.

The company should give an undertaking, duly signed and sealed, to the effect that the line between Schull and Ballydehob and Ballydehob and Skibbereen will be worked by only one engine or by two coupled together at one and the same time and that such engine or engines carry a staff.

Subject to the above named requirements (of which the Board of Trade should be informed), to the observations as regards stops and reductions of speed at certain parts of the line; and to the undertaking as to the mode of working the line, the Board of Trade need not, I submit, object to the West Carbery Tramway and Light Railway being opened for passenger

traffic.

The traffic will, I am informed, as a rule be conducted by means of mixed trains, and on these trains the brake power will be sufficient. In the running, however, of goods, mineral or cattle trains, which will be deprived of the brake power derived from the automatic vacuum brake on the passenger carriages, it will be very desirable that two brake vans should be attached to the tail of each of such trains.

I have, etc.

(signed) C S Hutchinson,

Major General, R.E.

One of two other points arising from the piece in NG 115.

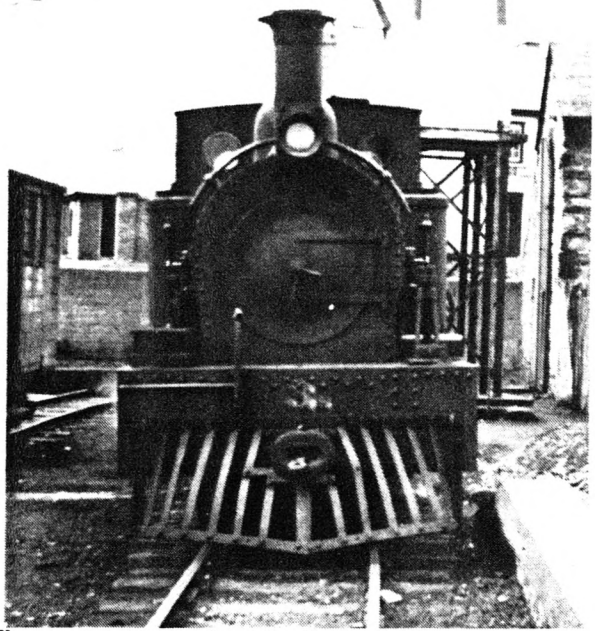
1. Although the official opening date has been given in some sources as September 9 1886, Walter McGrath states that September 6 was the actual opening date - before schedule to serve



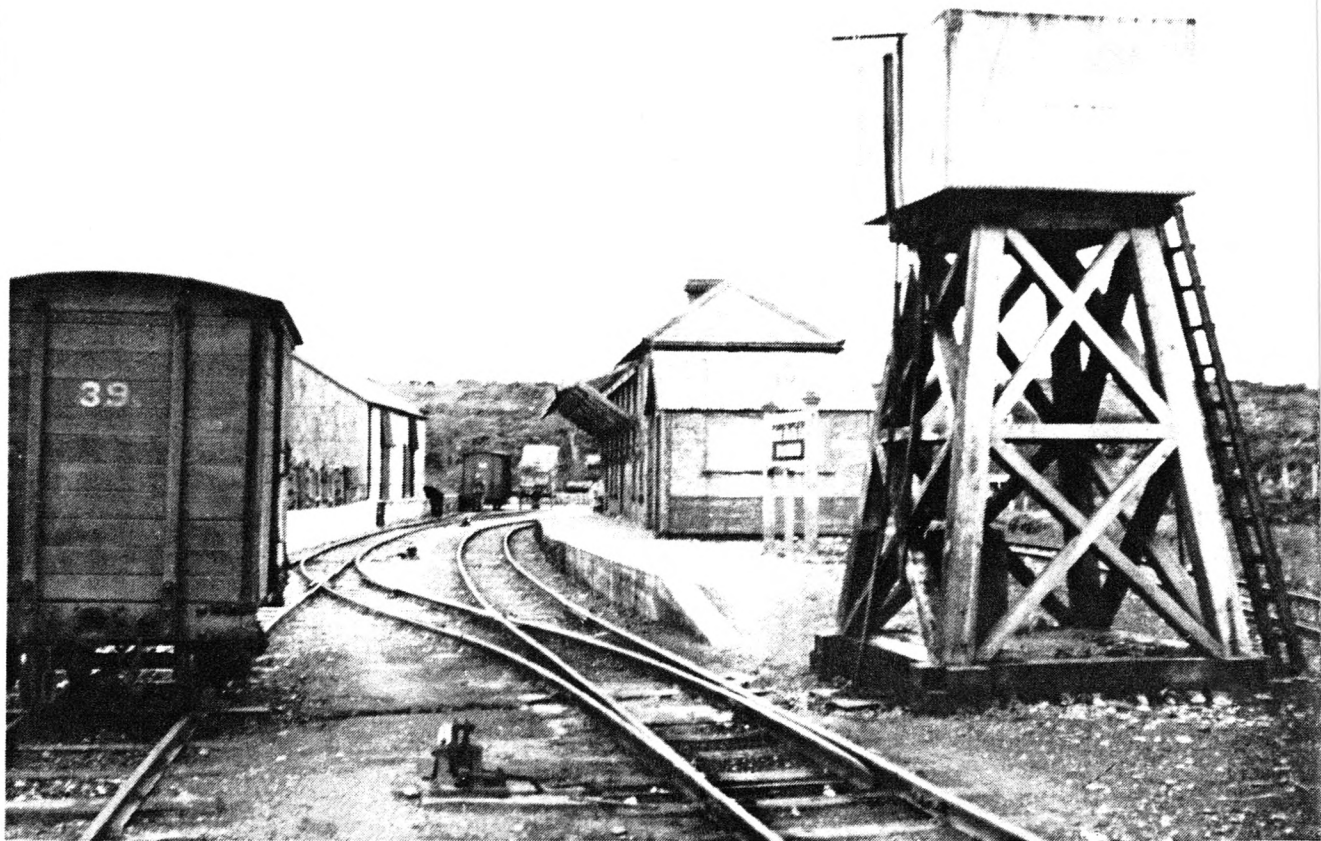
a pig fair in Ballydehob.

2. While NG 115 gave the length of the line as 15 miles, the actual length on opening - as can be seen from Hutchinson's report - was just under 14.3 miles. The opening of the Schull Harbour branch in October 1893 extended this by just under 0.4 mile to almost 14.7 miles, according to the OS map of the period. Gordon Tucker feels fairly sure it never reached 15 miles.

3. Walter McGrath's caption in NG 115 noted that he believed his photograph of the interior of a S & SR coach to be the only one in existence. It is not as this issue proves - the words "in motion" were omitted from the caption.



Front view of 3s "Kent" at Schull, April 1936 (Gordon Tucker)



Ballydehob station looking west, April 1936. (Gordon Tucker)



Schull station with the afternoon train to Skibbereen awaiting its locomotive, April 1936. The single composite coach just coped with the passenger traffic when it returned from Skibbereen later on. (Gordon Tucker)

## WHICH BODY AT THE WAKE?

A SCHULL AND SKIBBEREEN MYSTERY

HENRY GUNSTON

Recent information indicates that possibly the last surviving coach body from the Schull & Skibbereen Light Railway "literally fell apart" between Kilbrittain Castle and Schull in County Cork during 1983 - but a mystery remains as to the identity of the body. During the 1960s parts of S & S coach bodies were to be seen in a field near Owane Falls, beside the road from Bantry to Glengarriff, and my photos were taken there in August 1966.

Walter McGrath told me recently that "the best" coach body from that site went to Mr Russell Winn's collection at Kilbrittain Castle, south of Bandon, but apparently little work was done on it there.

After Mr Winns' death, there was a sale at

Kilbrittain (see NGN 143/9) and in December 1983 I received an undated cutting from a friend living near Skibbereen concerning an S & S coach body "in poor condition" which figured in the sale. This body, apparently of a 24-seat third class coach, was bought by 14-year-old Hassard Stacpoole for £150 and he then donated it to the Schull Development Association as a museum exhibit. Enquiries of the Association during 1988, however, revealed that the body "literally fell apart" en route to Schull, and that "after seeking expert advice it was decided that it would be impossible to repair".

In "The Narrow Gauge" number 54, pages 17-21, G R Thomson comments in detail on the coach



Above, "The other body" and (below) bogie coach no 7 in two parts, in a field near Bantry, August 1966. (Henry Gunston)



bodies near Owane Falls, and clearly identifies the remains of bogie coach no. 7, of which he provides a drawing. In "The Narrow Gauge" number 55, pages 30-32, J I C Boyd adds his own notes on the S & S coaches, and my comments here are based on those notes plus photographs in A T Newham's Oakwood Press history of the S & S, and J D C A Prideaux's "The Irish Narrow Gauge Railway". As my cutting on the Kilbrittain sale indicates a 4-wheeled coach body there, this could well have been the "other body" section visible at the Owane Falls site. This comprised three windows (one a droplight) and a door on each side, with a centre door in the end wall. Not visible in my photo is an extension of flooring beyond the end wall by the side door. This flooring appears in a photo by J D Cole in Derek Bayliss' "Narrow Gauge Newsreel" column in a 1966 issue of the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway Preservation Co's magazine "The Earl". It may have given rise to G R Thomson's comment that "one (body) was bogie coach no. 7 and the other a 4-wheeler with single ended platform, which has since been suggested as being no 3 or no 4."

S & S 4-wheelers nos. 3 and 4 do not fit the bill, however, as photos show their body detail as quite different to "the other body" section at Owane Falls. The particular patterns of door, windows and louvred ventilators above droplights match the bodies of coaches which, according to A T Newham, were rebuilt in enclosed form at Skibbereen depot by foreman carpenter Mr Michael Cottam before the First World War. First class 4-wheeler no 2 of this style, however, had rounded topped doors - which the "other body" section does not - and had neither an end platform, nor the possibility of internal flooring extending beyond an internal partition by a side door.

A more likely possibility seems to be bogie coach no 5, whose body mouldings match those in the "other body" section very closely. If the first class section of no. 5 had an internal partition with centre door immediately beyond the side doors leading into the compartment, this could be the "other body" section. The apparent end wall would have been the internal partition, and the apparent end platform simply the extended floor of the coach.

By elimination the original no 5 of 1888, which was presumably the coach rebuilt into an enclosed bogie composite in 1908, was the coach next to the engine in the National Library of Ireland photo of a train on Ballydehob viaduct in J D C A Prideaux's book. The other bogie coach was either no 6 or 7, one of the Gloucester coaches. Similar to the rebuilt no 5 was an enclosed, centre door, 4-wheeler of similar body design, no 8. If the "other body" section at Owane Falls was not the first class section of bogie coach no 5, it could possibly have been half of no 8. However, Boyd's notes do not indicate an internal partition on either one or other side of the centre door of no 8, which would be necessary to provide the end wall of the "other body" section. Neither is such a partition obvious from the photo of no 8.

The only remaining possibility is 4-wheeler no. 1, which Newham mentions as having been rebuilt in similar style to no 2 in 1913, although J I C Boyd indicates that this remained an open balcony coach until his visits in the 1950s (but was it a different "no 1"? However, even if another coach were rebuilt like no 2 with enclosed ends, it would not have had a floor extending beyond a wall by side doors, as visible in Cole's photo of "the other body" at Owane Falls.

Three components of the mystery remain in my mind. Firstly was the S & S coach body which "literally fell apart" en route to Schull the "other body" from Owane Falls, and not part of bogie no 7? Secondly, was this "other body" part of bogie no 5 or 4-wheeler no 8? Finally, was the body sold at Kilbrittain in 1983 truly the last surviving remnant of a Schull & Skibbereen LR coach body?

My thanks to Derek Bayliss, Walter McGrath, Andrew Neale, the late Mrs Nicholas of Church Cross, and to Deirdre Quinlan of the Schull Development Association for help with this research.

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Welsh Highland Railway - A buffet and tea car is now provided on the train running between Portmadoc, Bedgellert and Dinas Junction.

The Locomotive, July 15 1929