

Railroad

I was appointed a train driver in 1968 April fools day 1st April 1968. I drove the first oil train from Maghermorn up till Greencastle what is known now as the M2 and then I progressed onto passenger trains between York Road and Derry Waterside and I went from that back to the Great Northern and over to Bangor between Bangor and Queens station I progressed from that to Great Victoria street then and drove trains between Belfast and Portadown and Dublin and worked mostly on local trains but you done the express on Sundays.

Reduced traffic from Adelaide yard to the Waterside railway station with artificial wagons you were carrying approximately 600 tonnes worked by a Diesel traction engine. I also worked Specials from Portadown to Dublin for All Ireland finals and National League finals in 1958 and 86. and drove explorations to Bundoran it was run mostly from Cookstown to Bundoran and in general the specials to Dublin were very good because you were able to get to the match and it was actually a days outings for you whenever the Diesels came along it wasn't hard to work as steam would appeal. You hadn't the same intensity the enjoyable time there.

Lough Derg Specials and Oliver Plunkett Sunday were big days on the Railway for traffic because there was the Down and Connor there was 600 people went on that Sunday and returned home early Monday morning and everyone had a meal on the train which was supplied from a gas cooker. On the western tour and they also had an ambulance coach for invalids to travel in and they Sunday school excursions went to Bangor and Portrush and they were very popular with all the children to. It was very important in the sense that it gave employment to most of the station along from any destination to where you arrived there was people worked most stations would have had 10 or 11 employed and the people where glad of the employment because there wasn't as much employment back then than there is now. And most people when they were coming they came in bicycles to the station and arrived in Portadown myself there must have been 200 bikes there I couldn't believe when I seen as many bicycles at Railway station and people went to shop in Belfast and that early morning trains were full for going to factories and the preparation for large exclusion trains were started on Wednesday or Thursdays before the Sunday they were going and everybody was working cleaning and getting it prepared and reservations set up for the people that would be traveling and the engine had to be got ready to. The fitters examined everything before they left and they examined the carriages the examiner done that at the station.

The railway was a way of life majority of men worked on it because they were that attainted to their work they hardly missed a day in fact I never recall anybody with more that one day off and if they had the cold they still would come in and the staff always sure to have a good crew on the

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engine and the dining cart staff and guard would have kept everyone going and each would help the other to get through the journey and along the way they were waiting on you coming there for that time the newspapers came on the train and you were able to bring any correspondents to them along the wayside station you would have thrown the paper off to them. If you weren't stopping you had some papers for them and the old men appreciated it very much then when they were stopped you would give them a bucket of coal for the fire. Then the weekend maybe they would have had a half a dozen eggs for you or something like that as a thank you.

It wasn't about moving people the general goods were brought coal and timber and bread was the most important because it had to be in every morning for the Bread man at 8.00 and face it in a position where they could get it out to the ordinary public. There is also an ammunition wagon which you had occasionally on the train and wherever you stopped the police were always there guarding it so we wondered what was wrong we didn't know what was on the train the guard would have had the information on that.

Everything didn't run too smooth occasionally you had the odd breakaway between Beragh and Omagh when the train split in two and one half went on to Omagh you had to keep out of the way in the second half running behind you. And generally they crashed into one another without loss of life thankfully.

The safety of the passenger were most important because we had bob signals that were carried in the event of an accident that you had to go back and put altnators on the line a mile back so if another train over ran the signal so that there would be no crash but unfortunately to the one onetime I don't know what happened but that was a good idea to have the bob signals you had to be sure when the inspector came along and examined your kit and you had your bob signals up to date.

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