

# REVIEW

## Classic Irish Steam



Archives of the Irish Railway Record Society IRRS, 2021, 60pp, 290 x 220 mm, hardback, 62 illustrations. €25.00

Writing in the inaugural issue of the Journal, Kevin Murray, first Chairman of the IRRS, noted that the aims of the Society were to 'record the past history and present doings' of the railways and tramways in Ireland. Describing the various methods of recording, he placed photography at the head of the list, but it is doubtful if he, or anybody else in 1946, could have foreseen how large the Society's photographic collection would grow over the following three-quarters of a century.

Today, the IRRS Photographic Archive contains many thousands of images, taken by a multitude of photographers over the years. Only a small proportion of the collection can be reproduced in the Society's Journal for the wider membership to enjoy and, to somewhat redress the balance, the Society undertook to publish its first photobook, containing a selection of images from its archive.

The resulting publication presents an outstanding collection of 62 black & white images. The images,

the majority of which are previously unpublished, were sourced from the collections of three of the IRRS's earliest members: Robert 'Bob' Clements, John Macartney Robbins and Denis Morris, and celebrate the last hurrah of steam working on Irish railways. The Society's Hon Photographic Archivist, Ciarán Cooney, has worked his magic restoring and digitising the original negatives to bring out the best in them, lifting their quality to a higher plane. The choice of an A4 landscape format allows a level of detail to be seen, which would not be the case if published in a smaller format, while the black background makes the images really stand out from the page. Reproduction in black & white enhances the evocative feel of the photographs, with the extended captions providing details of each of the images background.

The images selected for inclusion in the book capture a bygone era. They generally cover the post-WW II era, 1946 up to 1957, although a number were taken earlier, including one dating from 1938! Photo locations are diverse and include images from counties such as Cork, Dublin, Mayo, Antrim, and many more. A wide variety of trains, both passenger and goods, is also featured. On the passenger front, these range from the prestigious express trains, through local services in the major cities, to the humble branch train. Special services for organisations such as the GAA and the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, as well as the 'Mystery Train' also feature. Goods trains photographed include long trains of 4-wheel loose-coupled wagons, cattle trains, an empty train of old passenger stock converted to carry turf and shunting operations in the extensive goods yards of the time.

This book will appeal to not only aficionados of steam working on the Irish railway systems, but also to those in the wider railway enthusiast community interested in the general railway scene before the advent of widespread dieselisation. Modellers will also find the publication of use as a reference work if modelling the period in question.

This is a high-quality publication, both in terms of subject matter and also its standard of production. Highly recommended. **SH**

---

Copies may be obtained by contacting the Hon. Membership Secretary, 48 Chalfont Road, Malahide, Co. Dublin, K36 CX83; Email [membership@irrs.ie](mailto:membership@irrs.ie) at a cost of €36.40 (£31.30) each inclusive of postage and packing. Payment can be made by cheque, EFT, or PayPal.