

	<p>Object: Steam Locomotives Number 5 Drumboe</p> <p>Museum: Donegal Railway Heritage Centre Tyrconnell Street F94EE Donegal Town 00353 (0) 749722655 info@dongalrailway.com</p> <p>Collection: Locomotives</p> <p>Inventory number: 51</p>
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Description

In 1907/8 the County Donegal Railway Joint Committee (CDRJC) ordered 5 new modern steam locomotives to deal with the growing traffic as the CDR network expanded. They were called the Class 5 locomotives numbered 16-20 and built by Nasmyth, Wilson & Co Ltd in Manchester and they were a 2-6-4T; the numbers stand for the wheel arrangement and the T for tank engine.

Drumboe was originally "17 Glenties" but was renumbered 5 and given the new name "Drumboe" in 1937. The engine also had been superheated in 1929 to increase the hauling capacity. On the evening of 31 December 1959 Drumboe hauled the very last train from Stranorlar to Strabane and back as the CDR finally closed as a railway.

After closure Drumboe was moved to Strabane to be stored in the former goods yard where it would remain for nearly 30 years. In March 1961 the remains of the CDR were auctioned off and Drumboe was bought along with other former CDR rolling stock by Dr. Cox, a dentist from the USA. For various reasons none of this rolling stock ever made it across the Atlantic Ocean and after the closure of the GNR in 1965 Drumboe and its sister locomotive Meenglass were at the mercy of vandals.

In 1988 Dr. Cox donated Drumboe to the North West Ireland Railway Society (NWIRS). The society rescued what was left of both locomotives in 1989 and moved them to Derry for storage. When the County Donegal Railway Restoration Society (CDRRS) was formed they offered to store Drumboe in Ballybofey in late 1991. Then in January 1997 it was moved to the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre. Since 2007 Drumboe has been stored at the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland (RPSI) base in Whitehead awaiting completion of the restoration plans for this historic steam locomotive.

Over 100 years ago there were over 225 miles of narrow gauge railways in County Donegal run by two very different railway companies. These were among the largest narrow gauge railway networks in Western Europe. The largest of these network of almost 125 miles was operated by the County Donegal Railway, with their lines running from Derry/Londonderry

to Killybegs.

The Donegal Railway Company was taken over in May 1906 by the Great Northern Railway and the Midland Railway of England. They formed the County Donegal Railway Joint Committee (CDR) to run the railway they owned on an equal basis. The new owners decided that their new railway required larger and more modern steam locomotives, which were quite unlike what the other Irish narrow gauge lines were building at this time with the possible exception of the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway.

In 1907 the CDR ordered 5 modern steam locomotives to deal with growing levels of freight traffic, in particular. Nasmyth Wilson (NW) of Manchester, were given the order for the Class 5 2-6-4T locomotives. They were delivered between 1907 and 1908 as listed below, with their original names and numbers.

16 (4) Donegal NW 828 built 1907; after 1937 Meenglas

17 (5) Glenties NW 829 built 1907; after 1937 Drumboe

18 (6) Killybegs NW 830 built 1908; after 1937 Columbkille

19 (7) Letterkenny NW 831 built 1908; allocated Finn but not carried

20 (8) Raphoe NW 832 built 1908; after 1937 Foyle

The Class 5 tank engines were based upon the Class 3 4-4-4T, built in 1902. The new CDR locomotives were the first 2-6-4T locos in Ireland and were only the second locomotives of that wheel arrangement, built for use in the British Isles. These new locos weighed over 43 tons and had driving wheels of 4 foot in diameter. They cost £ 2,475 each and they were not superheated. When they were placed into service, they quickly proved to be a success on both goods and passenger trains on the CDR. They had one minor problem, which was their restricted coal and water capacity when working heavier trains. These problems were rectified when the Class 5A tanks were built in 1912, with superheaters, extended water tanks and enlarged coal bunkers.

In May 1923, GT Glover the GNR loco engineer carried out a survey of the steam locomotives of the CDR. The Class 5 locomotives had been in service for about 15 years, many of them were due soon for their first heavy repairs and most locos would also need new fireboxes as well. The GNR as part owners of the CDR, had responsibility for their locomotives and rolling stock. As part of his report Glover recommended that superheaters would be fitted to members of this class at their next heavy repair. The cost of fitting a superheater at £89 each, would be quickly recouped by savings in fuel and running costs. Between 1924 and 1929 all members of this class were fitted with superheaters, except No 19 "Letterkenny". This improved their performance, as well as bringing them into line with the Class 5A locomotives.

During the 1930s, the CDR started to introduce railcars on some of their services as part of an economy drive by their legendary manager Henry Forbes. By 1937 the CDR had withdrawn any steam locomotive built before 1904, leaving 12 steam locomotives from 3 different classes in service, from 1937 until closure. The Class 5A locos had already been renumbered in 1928, now the Class 4 and Class 5 locos were renumbered in October 1937. The Class 5 tanks also took some of the names of the former Class 2 4-6-0T engines. This meant that for example; No 17 "Glenties", now became No 5 "Drumboe" in October 1937, this engine had been superheated in 1929. From October 1937, most surviving CDR steam locomotives received a new Geranium Red livery. Not all the Class 5 locos received this new red livery and No 19 "Letterkenny," was withdrawn in the previous black livery without

receiving its new name or number. With just 4 of the Class 5 locomotives left in traffic, there would be no further engines withdrawn from this class of locos until 1955. When "Letterkenny" was scrapped after 1940, the frame of this loco were used to create a new turntable for the railcars at Killybegs.

"Drumboe" and "Meenglas," were both named after the homes of former Chairmen of the railway company. Whilst "Columbkille," was named after the patron saint of Derry, the last loco in this class, "Foyle" was named after that important river after 1937. During the 1940s the County Donegal was still a busy railway and by the end of that decade, the diesel railcars they had introduced had taken over most of the regular passenger services. Steam locomotives were still required for the goods trains and the special excursion trains that ran during the summer months. The only line that remained operated by steam only for all services was the line from Strabane to Victoria Road, which was owned by the UTA after April 1949.

In 1952 the CDR branch to Glenties had closed completely and that the mounting losses facing the CDR, could not be sustained in the long term. With less traffic and with more railcars available meant that the CDR were able to withdraw 2 of the Class 4 tank engines, that had not been used for a number of years in 1952. The steam locos had to be retained by the CDR, in 1954 on weekdays the timetabled goods services required 4 steam locos daily. When extra trains were being ran on days during the summer months up to 6 locos could be required on those days. With the closure of the branch to Victoria Road in December 1954, the CDR only needed at least 2 steam locos from Mondays to Saturdays for the regular goods services.

This meant that the number of CDR steam locos could be reduced after 1954, which allowed some engines to be withdrawn such as the Class 4 tank "Eske" in 1954. In 1955 another Class 5 loco "Foyle" was withdrawn from service, parts from this locomotive were used to keep other CDR locos in service such as "Columbkille."and" Blanche." Around this period whilst the other locos were withdrawn that "Drumboe" received a final heavy overhaul, which allowed it to continue into service until 1960. "Meenglas" was overhauled in 1954 and "Columbkille" as late as 1958, in Stranorlar works. The last 3 of the Class 5 tanks were operating up the end of 1959, when the remaining CDR lines closed to passenger services. On the last day of services on 31 December 1959, the last train from Stranorlar to Strabane which was normally a railcar was replaced by a special train. The special train of 5 carriages was hauled by "Drumboe" to Strabane, when it returned to Stranorlar that evening at 8.30pm, it was welcomed by a large crowd as the County Donegal Railway passed into history.

From January 1960 to mid -February 1960, the CDR still operated regular goods trains between Strabane and Stranorlar, for six weeks. Some trains still ran up to March 1960 moving rolling stock to either Strabane or Stranorlar. By April 1960, "Drumboe" was now stored at the CDR goods yard in Strabane but it was not used for any of the CDR lifting trains. In March 1961 an auction of CDR rolling stock was held in Strabane and Stranorlar. Amongst the rolling stock purchased by Dr Cox from the USA, were the 2 locomotives stored at Strabane, "Drumboe" and " Meenglas". Plans were announced to ship these ex CDR locomotives to the USA, instead they were to remain abandoned and unwanted at the former station in Strabane until 1989.

The North West of Ireland Railway Society (NWIRS), which had already rescued some

former CDR railcars and steam locos, were informed that a road scheme was planned for the former Strabane station. Contact was made with Dr Cox who agreed to donate “Drumboe” to the NWIRS, if they could rescue both locos from the scrapman in Strabane. Within weeks both locos were moved and put into storage in Derry, with “Meenglas” stored outside the newly opened Foyle Valley Railway Museum. There was no place at the Museum in Derry for “Drumboe”, which was stored elsewhere. In 1991 a new preservation group was formed in Donegal Town and they asked to take “Drumboe” on loan. An agreement was quickly reached and “Drumboe” was placed in store at Ballybofey from Derry in late 1991. Some limited restoration work took place here, before “Drumboe” was moved to Donegal Town in November 1996, before being moved to the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre in January 1997.

After some grants were achieved in 2006, “Drumboe” was moved for some restoration work to be carried out by the RPSI at Whitehead. Since 2007 “Drumboe” had made Whitehead her new home. Thanks to the LEADER grant from Donegal County Council and funds raised by the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre, this next stage of the restoration work to mechanical standard, started in September 2020. Hopefully by Easter 2021, “Drumboe” can return home to the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre.

Jim Mc Bride

Basic data

Material/Technique:	Metal
Measurements:	LxWxH 33x8x11foot

Events

Created	When	1893
	Who	Nasmyth, Wilson and Company
	Where	Manchester
[Relationship to location]	When	
	Who	
	Where	Manchester
[Relation to person or institution]	When	
	Who	Nasmyth, Wilson and Company
	Where	

Literature

- Joe Carroll and Neil Tee (2015): Through the Hills of Donegal-An illustrated update on the history and current status of the County Donegal Railway. Donegal Town