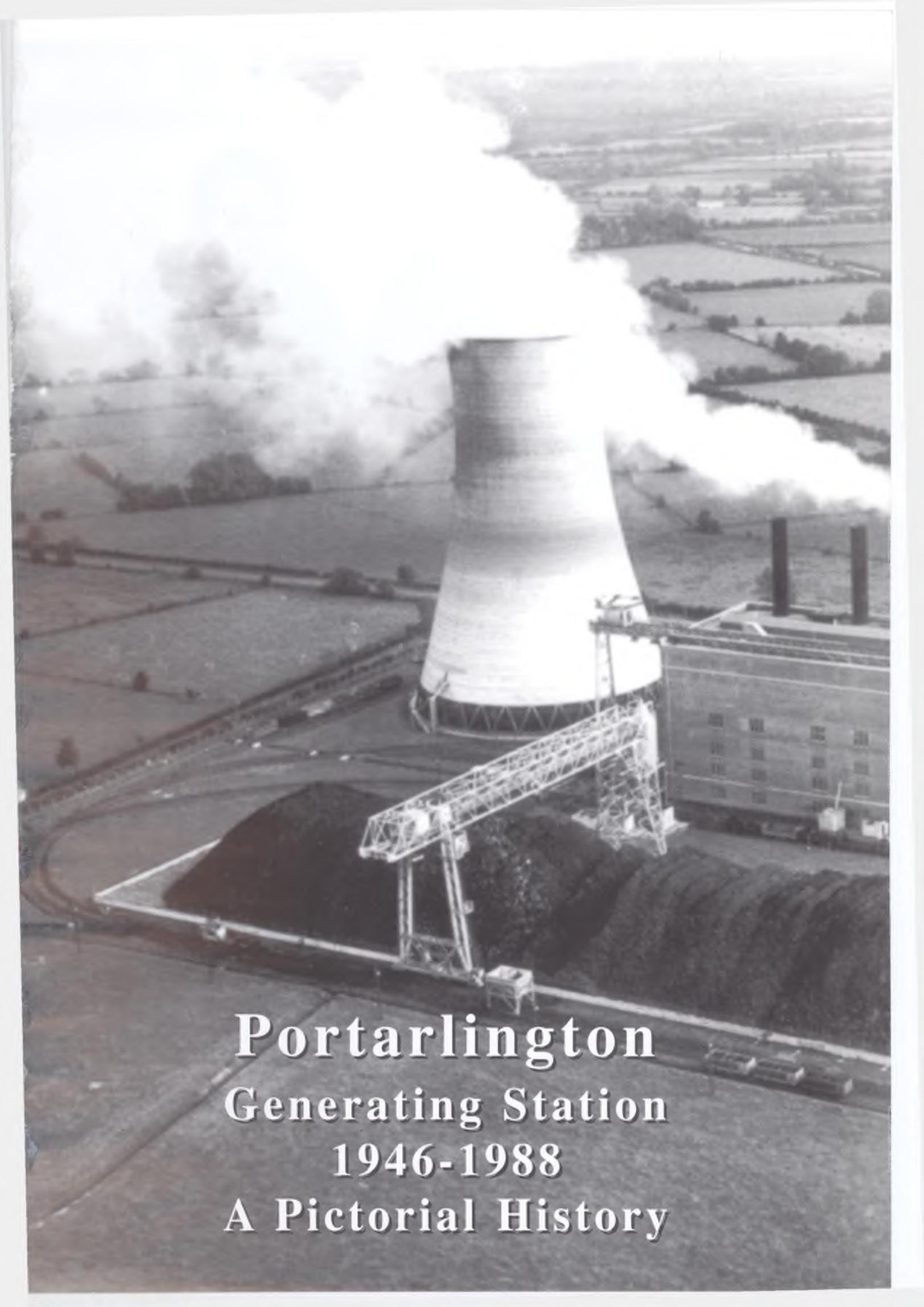




# Portarlington Generating Station 1946 - 1988 *A Pictorial History*





**Portarlinton  
Generating Station  
1946-1988  
A Pictorial History**

# Meet Jon and Pat, who compiled this book



## Jon McCowen

I am a native of Portarlinton and I joined the staff at the power station in 1957. I moved to Rhode Station in 1985 retaining a partial involvement in Portarlinton until the eventual closure date.

I took the voluntary severance scheme in 1999 about six months before the death of my wife Marie.

I thought that I had left this project behind when I retired – but Pat later contacted me to suggest that we should make an attempt to complete this publication. He reasoned that the time we had spent working together in Rhode on publishing a regular Safety Bulletin – later to become a staff newsletter – should adequately equip us for the task.

The work proved harder and more complex than we expected and has certainly taken a lot more time than we originally anticipated. We have learned some different skills and I have been encouraged to begin learning at least a little about digital photography and photo manipulation.

My sons Paul, Mark and Jonathan, also my daughter Louise have all provided encouragement in many ways. Paul, in particular, has demonstrated to me the need to provide greater clarification for people who would have no knowledge of either the ESB or of the conditions of the country in those times.

I was lucky enough to bring my camera along with me on many ESB related occasions for basic snapshots so there are a number of photos of mine included here.

Pat provided a lot of drive both in the tracing and securing of photos of former staff members and also in suggesting many ways of improving the presentation of our material. The script was written by me, except where otherwise attributed, but all decisions were taken jointly.

## Pat Culleton

A native of Mountmellick, married to Breda and we have four children – two girls and two boys. I worked in Portarlinton Generating Station for twenty-one years, as the song says “A mighty long time”, on mechanical maintenance and later moving to Instrument Section. With the station closing I basically moved to Rhode Generating Station and worked in Allenwood Generating Station on relief work for about five years. I remained in Rhode until closure in March 2003 when I opted to relocate to Portlaoise Training School.

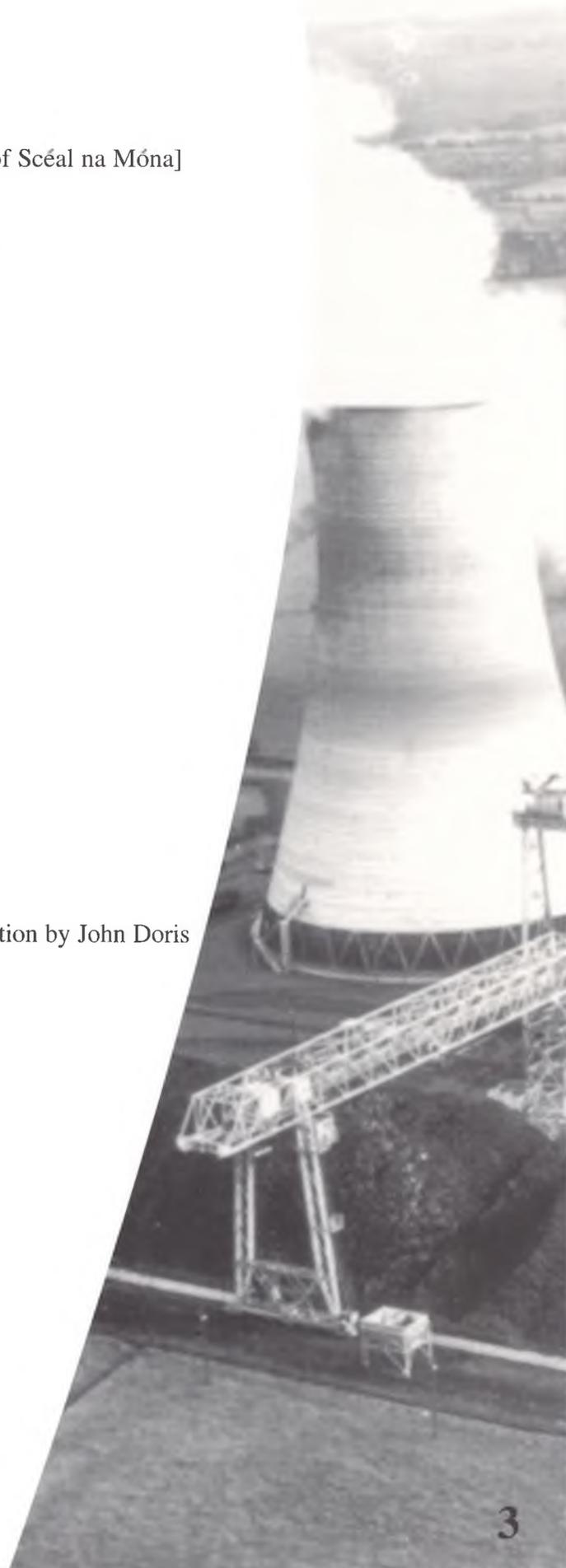
This book was truly a labour of love for me and I was delighted to be involved in such a demanding project. Having worked on various committees and projects with Jon in the past left the task all the easier as we understood each other's ways of thinking and we knew what to expect from each other. We both worked tirelessly on this project to make it a memorable record of life and times in the power station in Portarlinton.

I have two regrets – one that I didn't take more photographs when the station was up and running and the other that so many of my colleagues have passed away and will not have a chance to relive the memories contained in the finished project.

I hope you all enjoy our look back in time at how sod peat harvested on the local bogs by Bord na Móna was transported to the station and was burned in large boilers to produce steam to drive the turbines to produce electricity – a source of energy that is still used the length and breadth of Ireland. Portarlinton Generating Station will always be special to me as it was my first place of permanent employment and it was also the first power station to use sod peat to produce electricity in Ireland.

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# Introduction

This book was originally intended as a memento for the many people who contributed to the story of Portarlinton Power Station but we hope that it will also function as a tribute to their great work in making that story such a successful one. It consists mainly of photographs of people who worked at various stages on the construction of the Station and during its subsequent operation from the Official Opening on April 17th 1950 to the Official Closing on March 31st 1988. There are a number of photographs from the construction of the Station and from the eventual demolition of the Tower and the rest of the buildings. We also include technical details about the Station and its constituent parts and we try to place in context its significance in the Ireland of that time. Even for those of us who worked there in the early days it is hard to grasp the relevance or, indeed, the importance of what would now be regarded as a very tiny power station.

The original idea for this publication came during the Lunch and “get-together”, which was organised by the ESB for the former staff-members and their partners after the demolition of the Cooling Tower. At the subsequent reception in the Arlington Hotel former staff members, who were now based in a number of different ESB locations, availed of the opportunity to renew acquaintances and to reminisce about shared work experiences. Gerard (Gerry) Hickey had borrowed from Head Office Library a collection of photographs relating to the construction of Portarlinton Generating Station and these photographs proved very popular with all the people there. During a discussion on the history of the Station and the staff who had worked there Gerry suggested that it should be possible to collect a representative selection of photographs of those staff members. From these photographs we should be able to compile a pictorial history of the Power Station and the staff who worked so hard to produce electricity for so many years. This pictorial record could be published and presented to the staff members themselves or to their families. There was general agreement that such a record would be very popular and would find a welcome with all the people connected with the former power station.



Some time later a group of the former staff members who were then based in Rhode Station began organising the assembly of photographs for scanning onto computer discs – and, hopefully, for later transfer to the printed page. Since then a number of false starts were made but finally a concerted effort has seen us reach the goal of publication.

I was reluctant to use the quotation “Every Picture tells a Story” because this has become something of a tired cliché due to constant repetition. However, as we collected and compiled the photographs for this book, we realised that each picture does even more than just tell a story. It also fixes each event in its own time and we found it fascinating to see how various members of the staff matured over a number of years.

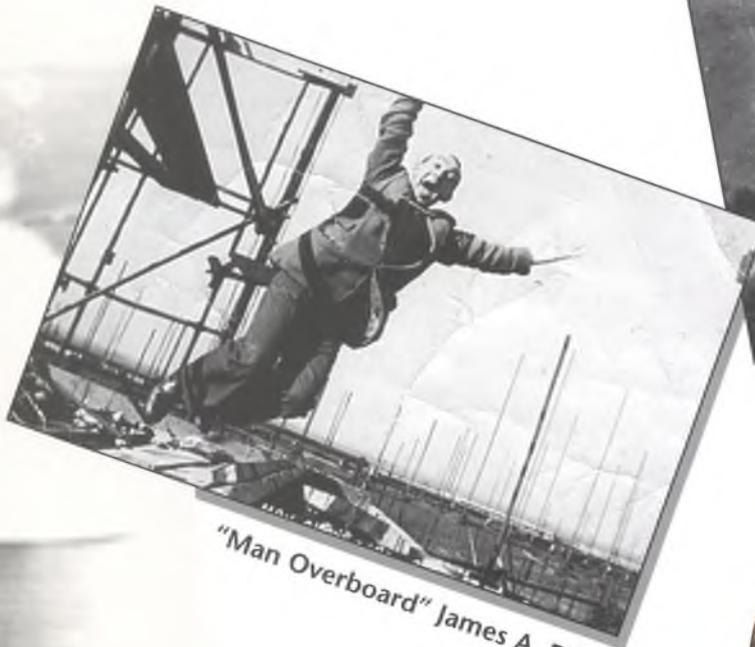
In addition to having a special meaning and significance for those who worked in Portarlinton Generating Station, each picture can play its part in commemorating the importance in its time of that Station and of those who contributed their energy and talent to that story.

Sadly, a great many of our colleagues are no longer with us but it is our hope that this record will make some contribution to ensuring that their memories live on.

As we came nearer to publication we have realised that our entire focus in this publication has had to change because of the passage of time. Where originally we had just considered a collection of photographs for presentation to staff members (either retired or still active in other ESB locations) now we have to realize that very many of those who are likely to read it will have no basic knowledge of the working of a power station. Accordingly, we have included material, both explanatory text and also diagrams, which we hope will give a satisfactory outline view of what Portarlinton power station represented.

It is our fervent hope that other people coming to this publication will also find it interesting. Hopefully, it will provide a permanent record of an important part of our lives and, eventually, will become part of our heritage.

# Construction Phase



"Man Overboard" James A. Doyle



Early site photograph.



Chapman's 5 ton Derrick.



Preparatory work.



Early machinery.



Collecting gravel in pit.

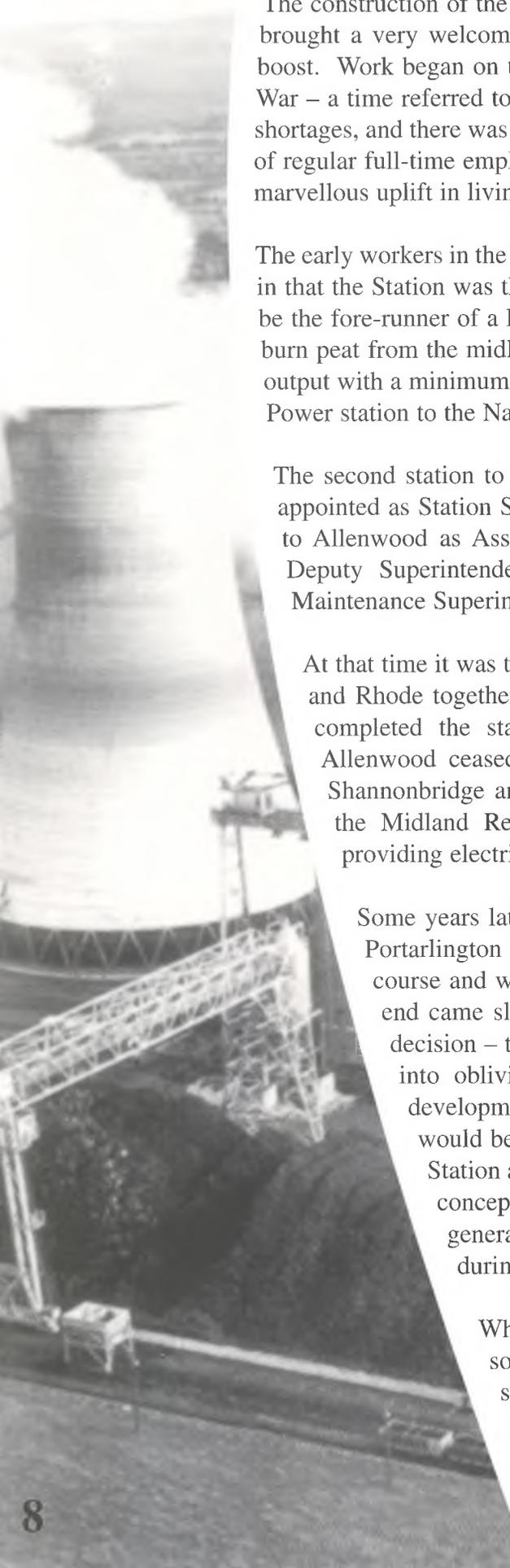
Most of these photographs came from the photo album of the late James A. Doyle [to be seen above in a "man overboard" role].



Back – Arthur Oakley, J. Dowling, M. Gannon.  
Middle – Jim Keogh, P. McNamara, Mr. Dunne.  
Front – J. Carroll, Tom McCormack, Pa Phelan.



# The Importance of our History



The construction of the Power Station and the necessary development of the local bogs brought a very welcome boost in employment to an area which badly needed such a boost. Work began on the construction in 1946 just after the end of the Second World War – a time referred to as *The Emergency* in this State. It was an era of rationing and shortages, and there was little sign of the development that later took place. The prospect of regular full-time employment ensured that the entire Portarlinton area experienced a marvellous uplift in living standards and also in general morale.

The early workers in the Power Station were also aware that the whole project was unique in that the Station was the first in Western Europe to use sod peat as its fuel and was to be the fore-runner of a large number of Power Stations built by the ESB which were to burn peat from the midland bogs. Since there was at all times a great emphasis on full output with a minimum of down-time they were also conscious of the importance of the Power station to the National Grid.

The second station to be built was in Allenwood, Co. Kildare and William Peet was appointed as Station Superintendent in charge of both stations. Eugene Smith moved to Allenwood as Assistant Superintendent and he was replaced by Mick White as Deputy Superintendent in Portarlinton – while Bob Magee was appointed as Maintenance Superintendent and Jim McPhillips as Chemist to the joint stations.

At that time it was the intention to group the three stations Portarlinton, Allenwood and Rhode together under the management of William Peet but when Rhode was completed the stations were separated under separate superintendents – and Allenwood ceased to be the junior station. In later years Ferbane, Lanesboro, Shannonbridge and Bellacorick, together with the original three stations formed the Midland Region (all peat-burning stations) and played a major role in providing electricity for a developing Ireland.

Some years later I became extremely conscious of the fact that at some stage Portarlinton Power Station and the associated bogs would have run their course and would close down. It ultimately made no difference whether the end came slowly and gradually or was the result of a sudden management decision – the bold experiment would be a thing of the past and would fade into oblivion. It might get a slight recognition as a footnote in the development of an industrial infrastructure in modern Ireland but there would be no individual history or record of the contribution made by the Station and its staff towards that development. I gradually developed the concept of the compilation of such a history for the benefit of later generations and also as a tribute to those who had contributed so much during those years.

When Portarlinton Station closed officially in 1988 I realised that somebody would have to move fairly swiftly to ensure that the story was not lost forever. It was obvious to me that some financial assistance would be required and I reasoned that ESB management could be convinced of the need for such a history. I outlined my proposals to Mr. Pat Treanor who was Station

# The Importance of our History



Manager in Rhode at that time and I am grateful for the encouragement he gave me and for his support when we spoke to the Regional Manager Mr. William Flood. As a result I eventually submitted my proposals to the Chief Executive, Mr. P.J. Moriarty, who was very enthusiastic and immediately gave his approval to the project. He asked me if I had anyone in mind to undertake the research and the writing involved in completing the book. I was happy to recommend my friend and former colleague Richard J. Mullins, whose earlier publications included

“Athletics in Laois [1876-1956]”,

“Portarlington Golf Club – a history [1908-1987]”

“Offaly Golfing Society [1973-1988]”

I knew well that when Richard undertook any project he devoted himself tirelessly to that undertaking until it was completed.

Mr. Moriarty promised that the ESB would underwrite the costs of publication of the book as a recognition of the sterling contribution made by Portarlington Generating Station and its staff over many difficult years.



Richard Mullins was excited at the idea of the History and immediately suggested that the scope should be widened to include a history of Clonsast Bog Development and I agreed with the logic of that suggestion. I then formally cleared the proposal with Mr. Moriarty and the project got underway.

In 1993 the book “**A history of Portarlington Generating Station & Clonsast Bog Development**” was published and was rightly acclaimed for the hard work and painstaking research which had

gone into its creation. The book gives a marvellous account of a great chapter in the history of this country and is a fitting monument to all of the people involved over the years – and we owe a great debt to Richard, who brought a unique insight to the project having worked for both Bord na Móna and the ESB.

This present publication attempts to address a different aspect of the story in that it comprises a collection of photographs taken at various stages in the life of the Power Station. The concentration is mainly on the various people who contributed to the successful running of the station over so many years. We were lucky enough to get copies of so many photographs from the early days – but it is a matter of great regret to us that we were not able to assemble photographs of all of our fellow workers (even from relatively recent years). When we consider that many of us list photography as a hobby it surprises us that there is a dearth of such photographs.

# Construction



**Bungalow frame  
(front) 14/3/47.**

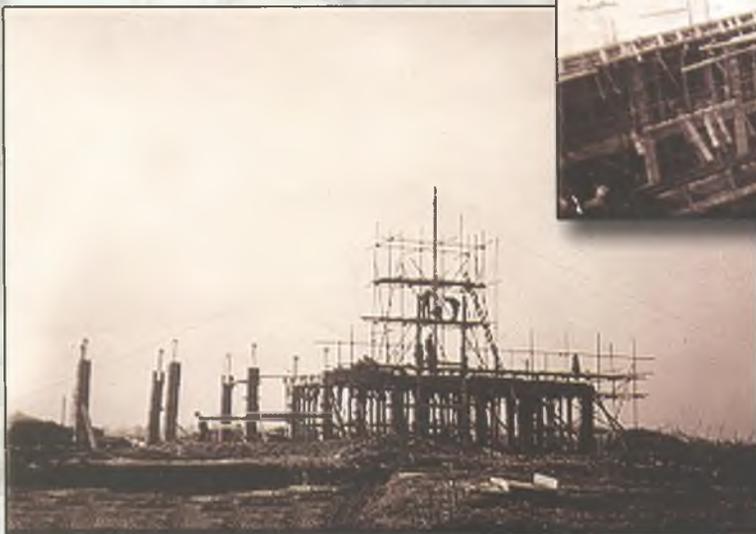
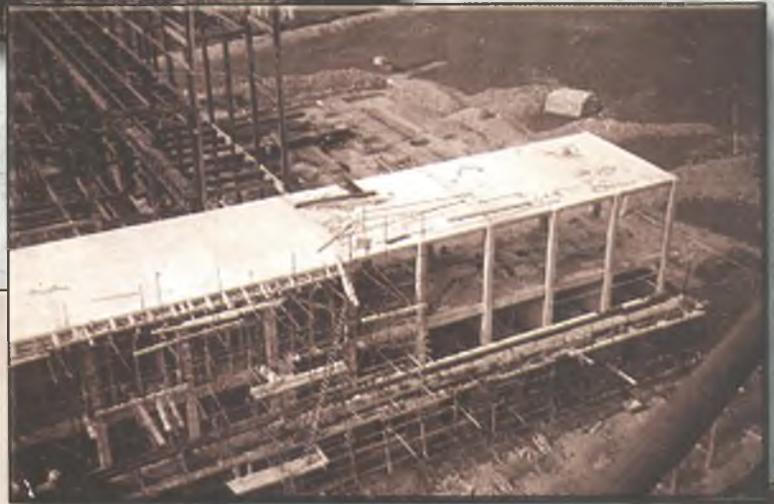


**Workshop 31/8/47.**



**Block Machines.**

**Workshop 1/10/47.**



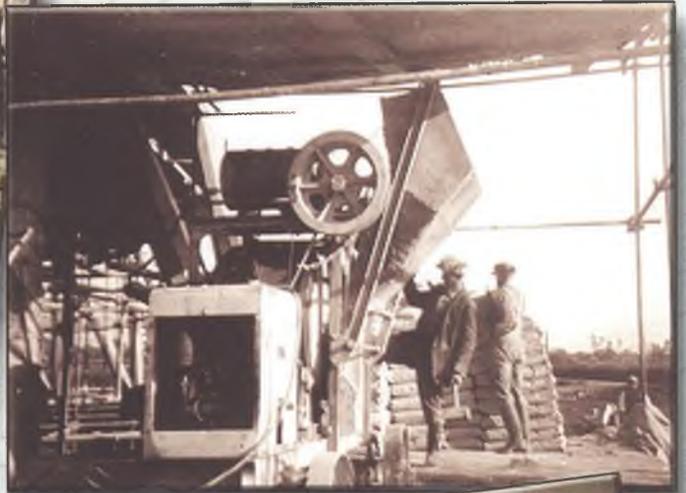
**ABOVE — Workshop shuttering from tower 6/2/47.**

**RIGHT — Workshop shuttering and hoist 3/2/47.**



# Construction of Tower

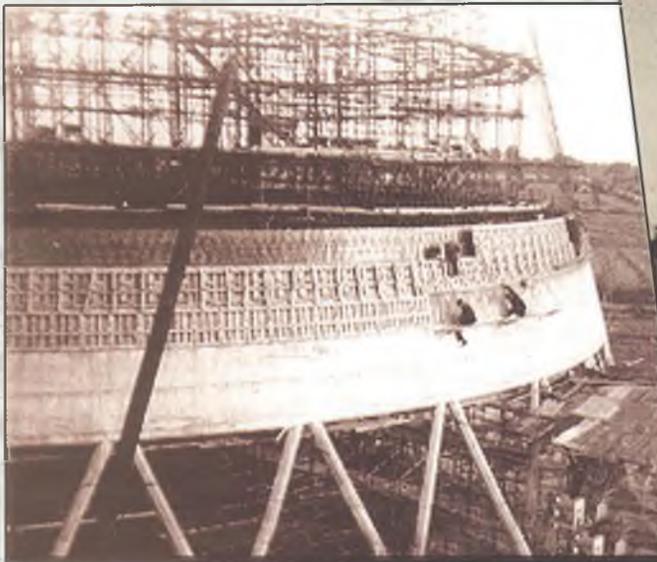
BELOW — Mixer at tower 10/7/47.



Vertical inlet base  
1/4/47.



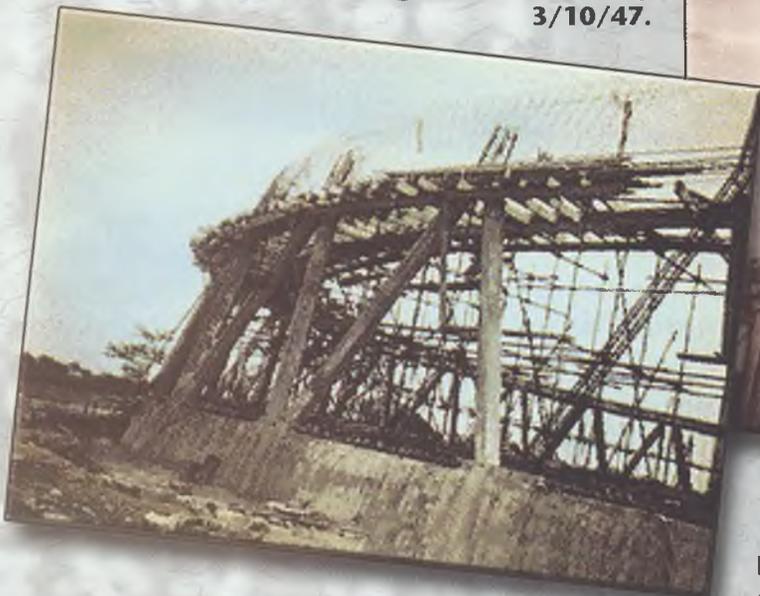
Tower scaffolding 30/6/47.



Erecting tower shuttering  
3/10/47.



ABOVE — Erecting tower  
shuttering 3/10/47.



LEFT — Finished  
diagonal columns.

# Introduction to William (Bill) Peet and the new peat-fired Power Station



Even though he had retired many years earlier William Peet's name was always synonymous with Portarlinton, and we decided that we could not compile a story about Portarlinton Power Station without interviewing the famous man himself.

Leslie Steedman and I went to the Sue Ryder Home in Co. Kilkenny to visit him and we were amazed at his energy and his deep interest in Portarlinton – and in its progress. Even then, over thirty years since retiring and at the age of 93, his mind poured out ideas of what could, and should, be done in the Portarlinton area. He has always felt very strongly that the ESB has an obligation to fittingly acknowledge the many years of loyal and dedicated service provided by a few generations of Portarlinton workers. He outlined for us a great many of his ideas and questioned us about the present day developments around the town and enquired about many of the former ESB workers. He was also conversant with present day happenings throughout the world and told us that his radio kept him in touch with the world outside. His eyesight had deteriorated greatly over the years, but mentally and physically he is an inspiration to far younger people. His enthusiasm is such that he felt compelled to ring me with further thoughts and sent me four handwritten foolscap pages where he outlined his ideas again. He mentioned a few times the fact that his eyesight made it really very difficult for him to read or write. He said that he understood fully I might get a severe headache trying to decipher his notes and anyway “I would write more but I cannot even read what I have written so far”. When I spoke to him on the phone a short time later I did not dare say that I had found it quite difficult to read his scribbled memos over thirty years earlier at a time when he had perfect vision.

He always felt that his appointment as Manager included a responsibility to act for the general good of the community. He was certainly conscious that the Power Station had a finite life because of the limited amount of fuel available from the local bogs. He stated on a number of occasions that it would be the height of folly to allow the Power Station to become the mainstay of the local economy during its lifetime and then leave the local economy in a worse state at the end of the ESB involvement.

Recently, I read in a discussion on Management that the person at the top of an organisation, by whatever process, creates the culture of a place whether it's a factory, a school or a power station. This surprised me because we always considered this idea had gone out of fashion in recent years. During the 1950s and the 1960s it was commonly believed that each of the power stations reflected the style or personality of its respective manager. Thus the stations were referred to as Bill Peet's station, Eugene Smith's station or Niall Russell's station – and so on.

The success of Portarlinton power station was in every respect a team effort and nobody understood this better than William Peet. He regarded his role as that of the coordinator who familiarised himself every day with the progress of the various departments that made up the station. Everyone knew that the manager would do his rounds to a regular timetable early in the day and would expect a comprehensive report from each location. He was quite content that the staff were every bit as concerned as he was that the station would operate to maximum capacity – and he always said that the staff consisted of good hard workers who knew their job.

William and Helen Peet played an active part in a number of local organisations and were members of a group of people who

endeavoured to improve the social amenities in the town. As the Portarlington Arts Group they organised regular lectures, concerts and exhibitions – and indeed held a very successful Talent Competition which was very widely supported.

William Peet opted for early retirement in 1968 because he believed that people should prepare for the next phase of their lives while still young enough to adapt. As they had always planned they moved to Helen's home area in Scotland but unfortunately Helen died suddenly within two years.

We were all encouraged and inspired to hear that William Peet had returned to Ireland where he worked tirelessly for a number of charitable organisations. Then one night he saw Mother Theresa of Calcutta on the Late Late Show and he decided to go to Calcutta to work as a volunteer helper among the lepers. He spent thirteen different periods of time out in Calcutta over the next seventeen years, working wherever he was required. He was very modest about this phase of his life – and at no stage did he accept that there was anything wonderful about his contribution. He mentioned to us only one particular event that he still recalled with satisfaction.

One morning when he was walking to the hospital he found, huddled at the side of the road, a young girl who appeared to be nearly dead and, indeed, one of her legs had been amputated. He carried her in to the nuns, who fed her and cared for her. She responded really well to the treatment but he felt he should try to do something more to help improve her quality of life. He was aware of the work being done to make some rudimentary artificial limbs and looked for advice. As a result he built and fitted an artificial leg to help the little girl – and was amazed to see how quickly she learned to run around and play. He felt then that he might actually be doing something useful in the midst of so much illness and abject poverty. Later, after he returned to Ireland, he saw a photograph of that same girl, which was used in Life Magazine to illustrate the work being done in Calcutta.

As a footnote I would mention the fact that in those early years the Manager was always referred to as “Mr.”, and even though William Peet himself was unfailingly courteous and friendly, nobody would ever dream of addressing him by his first name. All of the other Managers I later worked for easily slipped into the casual use of first names and things became a lot less formal. However, even now when we have retired, we still think of our first Manager with affection as “Mr.” Peet.

This piece started out as a short introduction to the man who was our first manager but I quickly realised that the story was far larger than I had at first considered. Not alone was he the visible face of the ESB and the power station, which was to provide good steady employment and major support for the local economy for a period of over forty years, but he also played an active part in the community until he retired. In addition, he was unusual in the sense that he later embarked on an even longer career, which had an impact on a great many people in Ireland and abroad.

Since this article was prepared for publication William Vallis Peet died at the Sue Ryder Nursing Home in Ownings, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny on February 16th 2004, just short of his 96th birthday. His funeral was attended by many people of different religions – and the speakers celebrated a life dedicated to peace.

The comprehensive obituary published in the *Irish Times* paid tribute to a pacifist who worked with Mother Teresa in India.

# People involved in Construction of Tower



**ABOVE —**  
Kevin Kelly and  
Mr McMahon.



**A team of construction workers**  
perched precariously on scaffolding  
looking down towards the  
photographer.

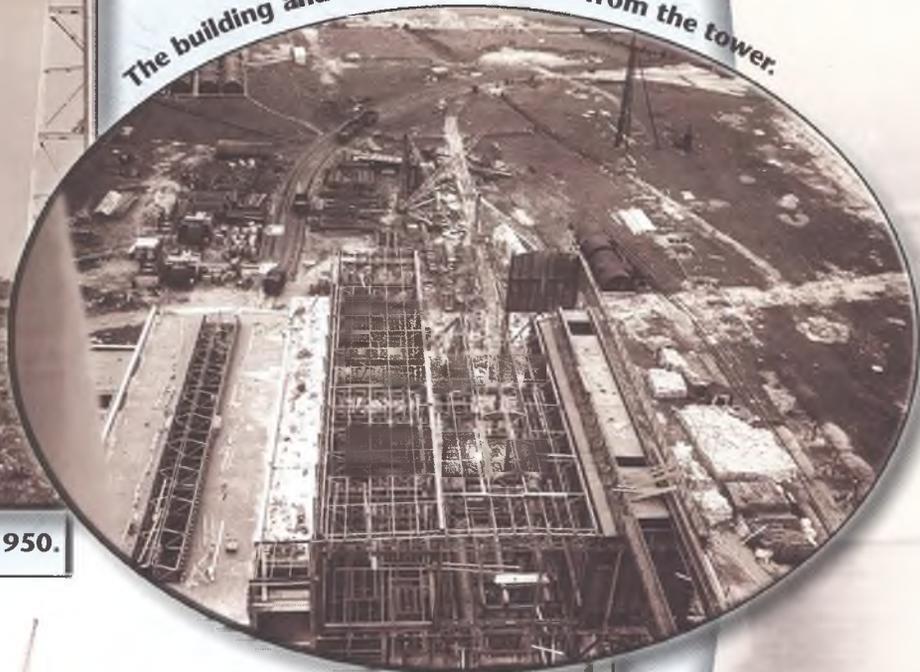


**ABOVE and RIGHT:**  
Jim Doyle with two  
colleagues.



# Station Construction from the ESB archives

*The building and site photographed from the tower.*

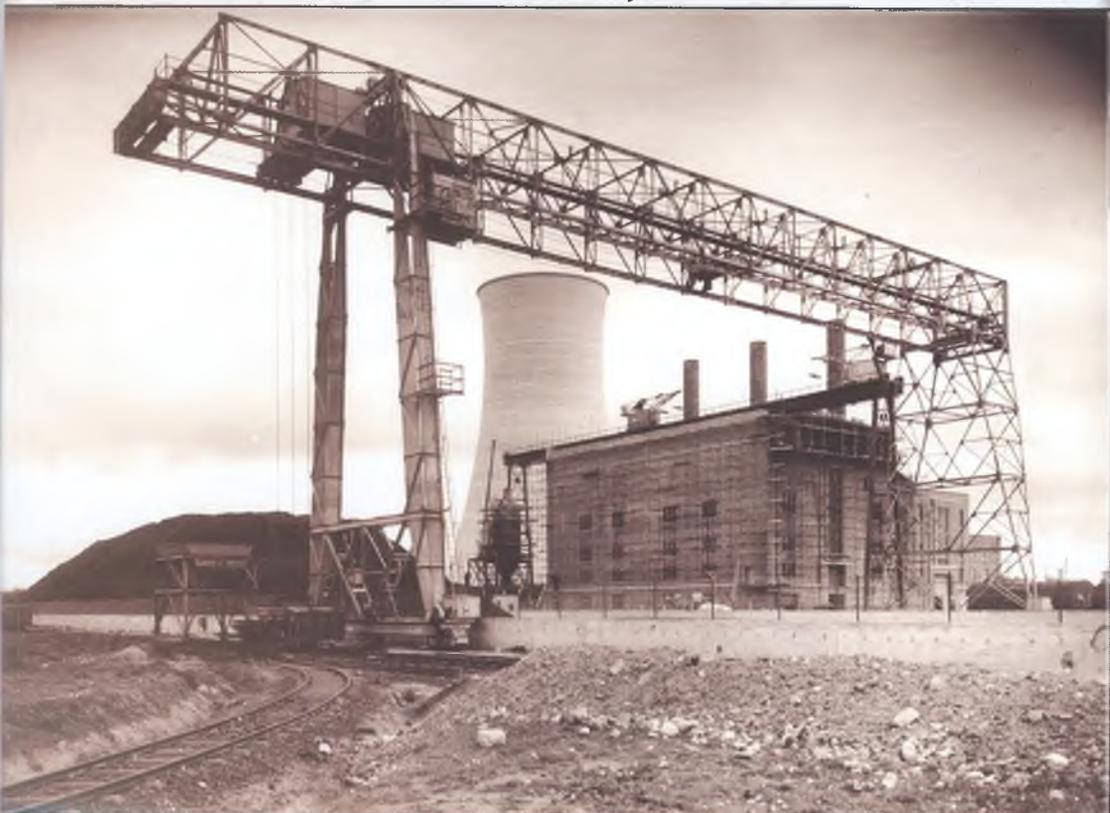


**Ash disposal plant – 25 October 1950.**



**ABOVE – Early construction in progress – December 1947.**

**BELOW – Field crane from rear of site – 7 June 1949.**



# Station Construction from the ESB archives

Photograph  
taken in  
December '47  
from  
Rathangan  
Road.



Photograph  
taken from  
Barrow Bridge  
on 12th July  
'48.



BELOW —  
Photograph  
taken from  
Bog Lane on  
7th June '49.



BELOW —  
Aerial shot  
taken from  
rear - station  
working.



# Construction Workers from the ESB archives



**ABOVE — Builders of Power Station. Photo courtesy of Sean McCabe.**

**BELOW — Transferring peat from railway wagons to narrow gauge Bord na Móna wagons on 15th August 1951.**





**Clonsast Hostel, Cushina.**

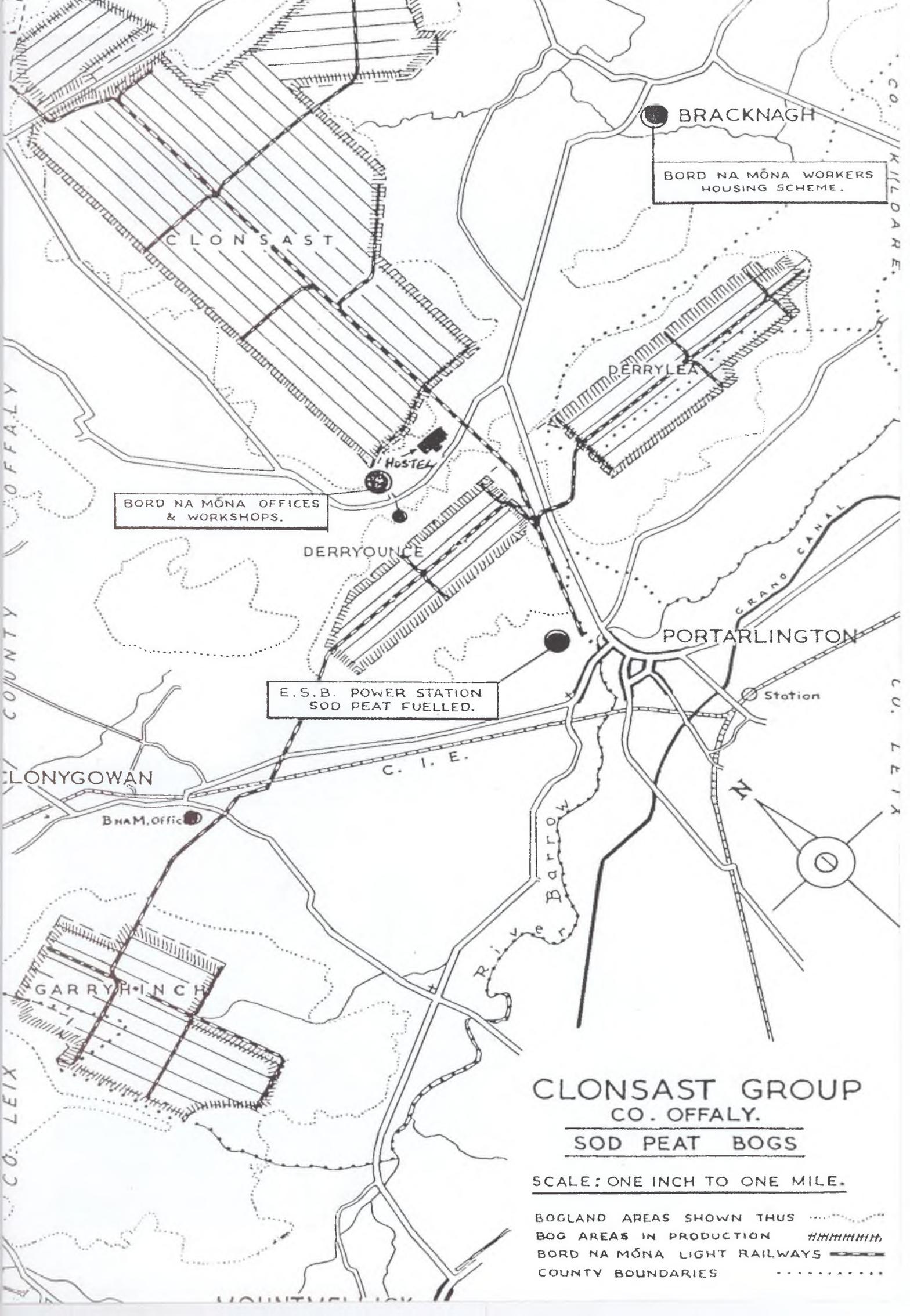
## **Bord na Móna Section**

The bogs were developed by Bord na Móna who at first drew on the experience of German and Russian engineering firms – and later designed and developed their own range of machines.

Up to 400 people were employed on the bog at various tasks (with an extra 700 required part-time for footing the turf before the onset of mechanisation of the turf harvesting in the 1960s). A Bord na Móna housing scheme was built at Bracknagh to accommodate many of the permanent workers and, in addition, a hostel capable of catering for 100 men was constructed at Cushina. The hostel was a self-contained unit with kitchen, food store, dining room, flush toilets, showers, fumigator, boiler-house and recreation hall. A large percentage of the men who lived there were from Galway and Mayo and, by all accounts, they were extremely good strong workers. When we consider that about 500 miles of drains were manually dug with short crutch-handle shovels we can get some idea of the sheer back-breaking work that these men accomplished. Most of them later played a great part rebuilding England's blitzed cities and in constructing many of the major roads.

We are grateful to Valentine Trodd of Scéal na Móna for this fine sequence of photographs which provide us with a broad view of the turf harvesting process.

*Photographs supplied by:  
Valentine Trodd, Scéal na Móna, Bord na Móna.*



● BRACKNAGH

BORD NA MÓNA WORKERS HOUSING SCHEME.

CLONSAST

DERRYLEA

BORD NA MÓNA OFFICES & WORKSHOPS.

HOSTEL

DERRYOUNCE

PORTARLINGTON

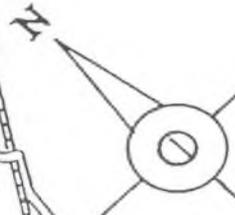
E.S.B. POWER STATION SOD PEAT FUELLED.

Station

CLONYGOWAN

C. I. E.

BNAM, Office



GARRYHINCH

River Barrow

**CLONSAST GROUP**  
CO. OFFALY.

**SOD PEAT BOGS**

SCALE: ONE INCH TO ONE MILE.

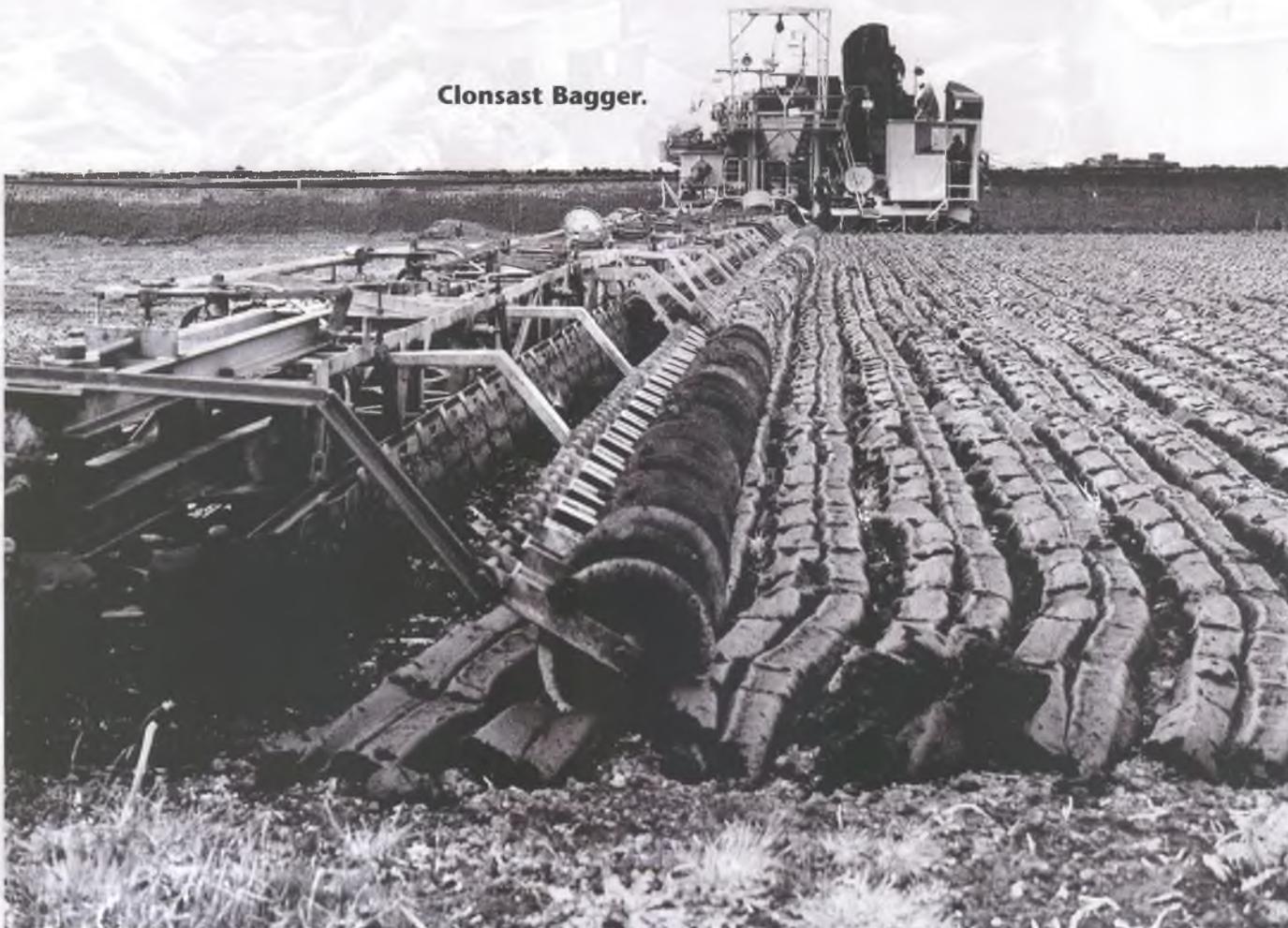
- BOGLAND AREAS SHOWN THUS
- BOG AREAS IN PRODUCTION
- BORD NA MÓNA LIGHT RAILWAYS
- COUNTY BOUNDARIES

# Bord na Móna



**Turf footers from west of Ireland on Clonsast bog.**

**Clonsast Bagger.**



# Bord na Móna



**Windrower - old type.**



**Clonsast sod lifter -  
1974.**

# Bord na Móna



**Clonsast loader.**

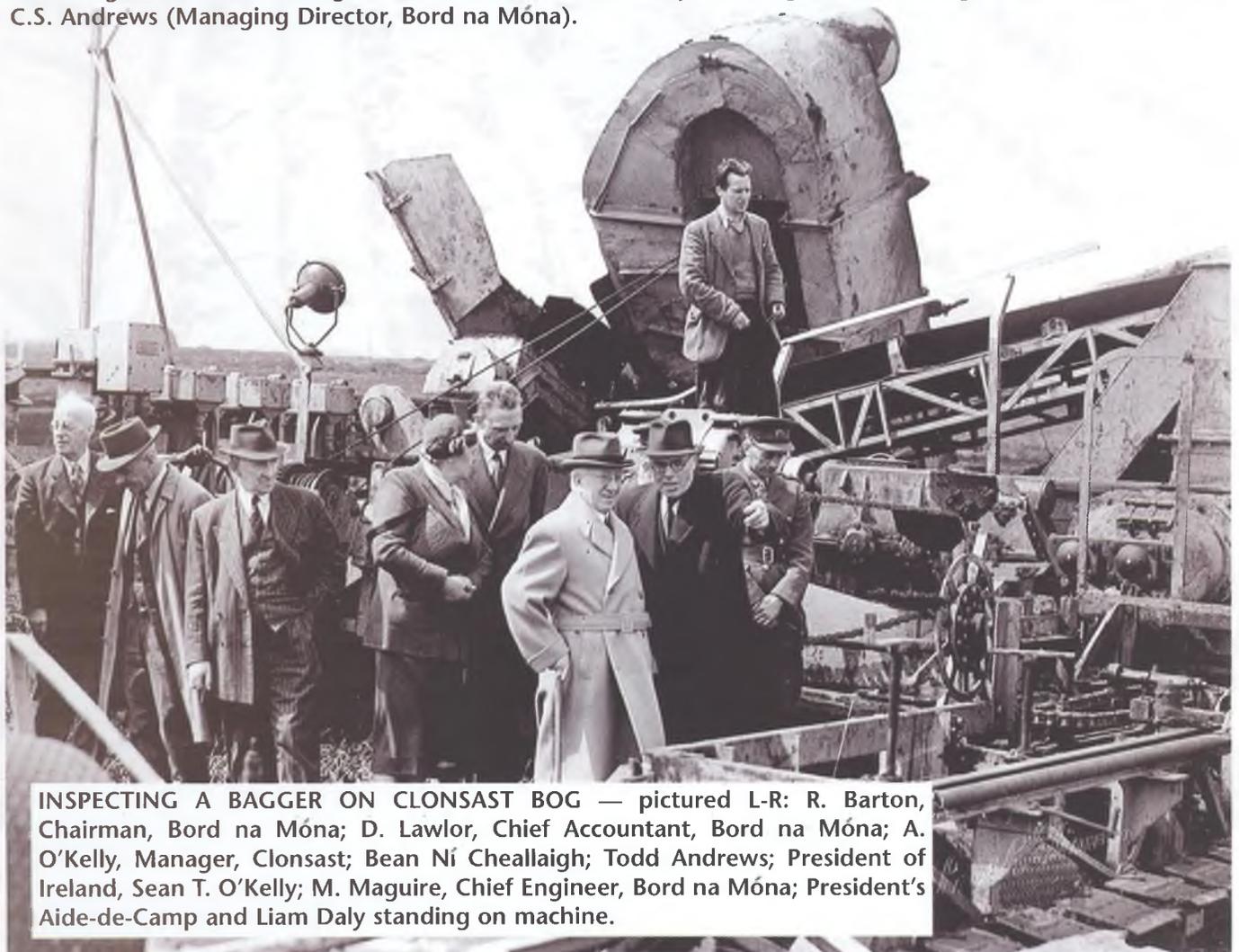
One of the three 0-4-0 well tank peat burning locomotives (LM45) which were built in 1949 by Andrew Barclay of Kilmarnock for use by Bord na Móna at Clonsast.



# Bord na Móna

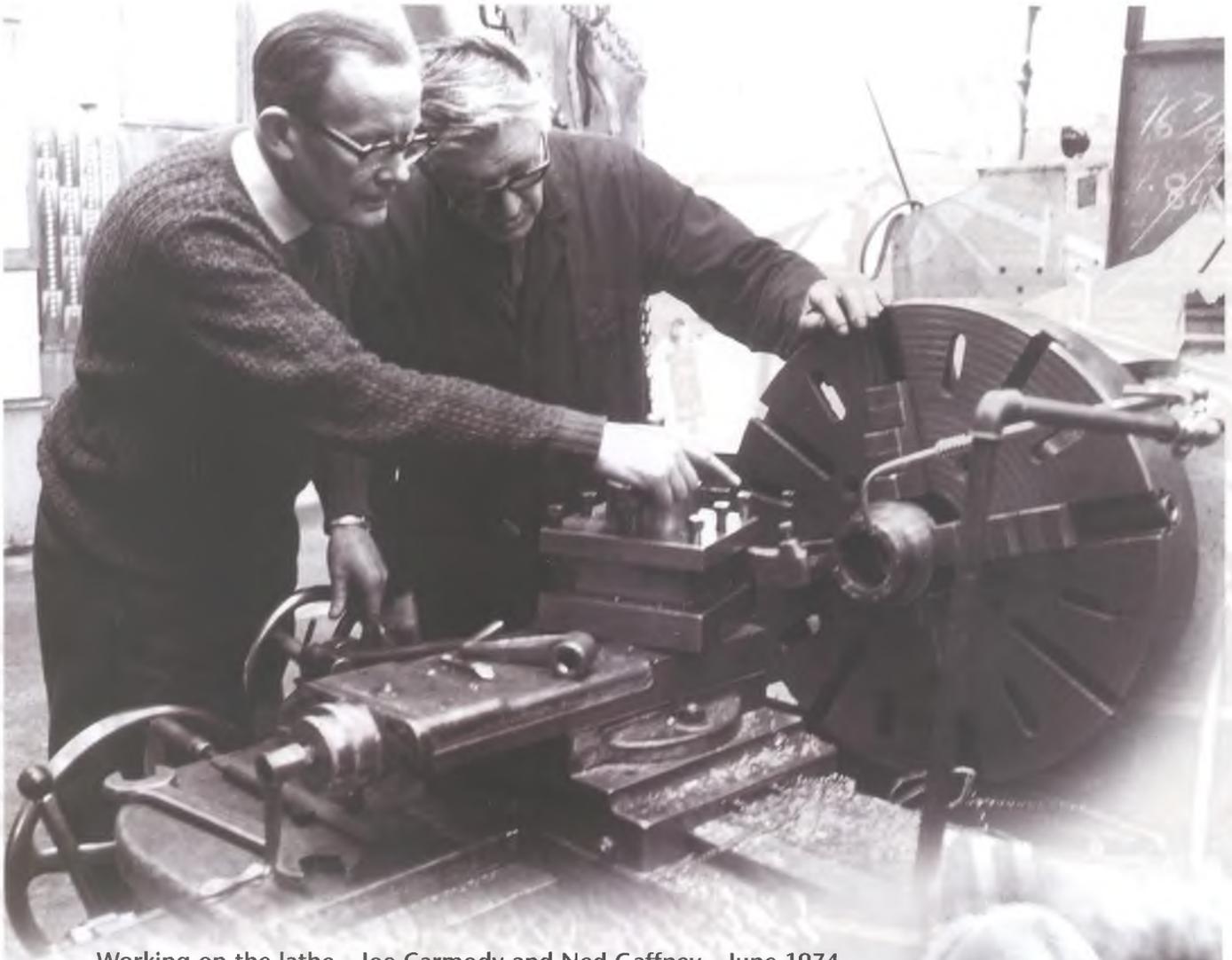


PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO CLONSAST — included in the photo walking Clonsast bog were: R. Barton (Chairman of Bord na Móna); D.C. Lawlor (General Manager, Bord na Móna); Dr T.S. Wheeler (Bord na Móna Director); M. Finnigan, Clonsast Manager; President and Mrs. O'Kelly; M. Maguire (Chief Engineer, Bord na Móna), C.S. Andrews (Managing Director, Bord na Móna).



INSPECTING A BAGGER ON CLONSAST BOG — pictured L-R: R. Barton, Chairman, Bord na Móna; D. Lawlor, Chief Accountant, Bord na Móna; A. O'Kelly, Manager, Clonsast; Bean Ní Cheallaigh; Todd Andrews; President of Ireland, Sean T. O'Kelly; M. Maguire, Chief Engineer, Bord na Móna; President's Aide-de-Camp and Liam Daly standing on machine.

# Bord na Móna



Working on the lathe – Joe Carmody and Ned Gaffney – June 1974.

Martin D'Alton  
Bord na Móna  
representative  
at Power Station



Barclay Locomotive.



# Bord na Móna



**On the bog at Clonsast, Portarlinton — this was how they conveyed visitors to the working areas of the bog back in the 1940s. A photo from the Irish Tourist Association Inc. of Upper O'Connell Street.**



**Last Rake — pictured (in front of loco): Michael Murphy, Liam Corcoran, Eddie Geoghegan, Jim Murphy, Bill Devereux. (standing on loco): Jim Gorry, P. Geoghegan, John Joe Quinn, Sean McCann. (standing beside loco): Jim Harkins (Manager), Har Bryan, Paddy Delaney, Peter Kelly, Paddy Mulpeter, Seamus Connolly, Harry Hickland (Area Manager).**

# The Significance of Portarlington Generating Station in the 1950s

*Ireland of the '50s was, literally, a completely different place. There were only three steam generating stations located on the coast and four hydro-electric stations headed by Ardnacrusha, which was always regarded as the 'Jewel in the Crown' of the ESB and, indeed, of the country.*

## E.S.B. Generating Stations – 1950

### Hydro-electric Stations

	Total capacity kW
Ardnacrusha	85,500
Pollaphuca	30,000
Golden Falls	4,000
Leixlip	4,000

### Steam Generating Stations

	Total capacity kW
Pigeon House	95,000
North Wall	12,500
Albert Road (Cork)	5,000
Portarlington	25,000

Ardnacrusha was a magnificent engineering achievement and it acts as fitting testimony to the people who conceived the original idea and also to those who had the courage to push ahead, in spite of all the obstacles, and so arrive at a successful conclusion. At a later stage the Turlough Hill pumped storage project must have attracted many doubters but it too has proved its creators right by its ability to come on load practically instantaneously – and also its capacity to use surplus power at night to pump up water to the upper lake thus making the station available at full capacity for peak time running.

Portarlington was a totally new concept at a time when there was still a low demand for electricity. People nowadays would laugh at the idea of a station with two 12.5mW sets but the table above provides an illustration of the percentage of the available load represented by that 25mW.

At that time the people of Ireland had no notion of the uses of micro-waves, electric cookers were relatively scarce – and the plethora of electric gadgets we now take for granted had not even reached the design stage. When I remarked on that fact recently I was reminded that vast areas of the country had not even got electric light then. Oil lamps were still in use in the countryside and radios were powered by “wet” batteries, which had to be brought to central locations for charging. Some enterprising people had small windmills to provide electricity and many others provided light in their homes by judicious use of car batteries. Portarlington was the forerunner of many other new stations, which would be needed because of the Rural

Electrification Scheme. This scheme had begun in 1946 and it can truthfully be said that hardly any other project in our history brought such changes to rural Ireland. With the financial provision for an initial expenditure of £5m the scheme was to bring massive changes by bringing the benefits of electricity to rural communities. The first pole of the rural scheme was erected at Kilsallaghan on November 5th, 1946 – and the final phase of rural electrification was completed in Black Valley, Co. Kerry in the late 1970s.

The decision to build Portarlington Generating Station had been taken in 1936 and preliminary work started on the site before tenders were invited for the erection of the plant in 1939. Obviously, the outbreak of the World War delayed any further activity until 1946 when work resumed. It is important to remember that even though the Power Station began production in 1950 the basic design of the plant was definitely of pre-war vintage. Therefore there was a degree of obsolescence in the design even before it opened.

Portarlington Station began production in 1950 but one rarely mentioned fact from that time is that everyone concerned was involved in a learning process. The majority of the staff came from a background of small farming and were well used to working hard – but were accustomed to working as part of small units. The change over to working beside large numbers of fellow workers who would bear responsibility for different aspects of production was a skill which needed learning fairly quickly.



The first pole of Rural erected at Kilsallaghan late in the evening of November 5th, 1946. First Rural Supervisor Jim Dunne in hole. Dan Burke, Rural Engineer, looks on with W.F. Roe and P.J. Dowling on right.

Many of the staff members in the new station had served in the army and they were convinced that their army service had prepared them for working in industry. According to Joe Sharpe and Jack Gibson, who worked with us in the chemical department, they all had been trained to work together in groups for the good of those groups. They also maintained that they had learned to find something useful to do during the [inevitable] periods when work slackened off temporarily. I don't know whether all of that was strictly true – but I have to admit that Joe Sharpe kept every bench and piece of equipment in a clean and polished condition during all the time that I knew him.

In addition, the local management and the ESB had a separate learning curve of their own to master. The boilers and the fuel handling plant were originally designed around the use of coal as a fuel. There were, of course, imaginative and ingenious design differences incorporated into the plant – but, ultimately, the only real test was to observe and adapt where required when the station became operational. Coal is a quite uniform type of fuel and a delivery of coal will have the same characteristics from start to finish.

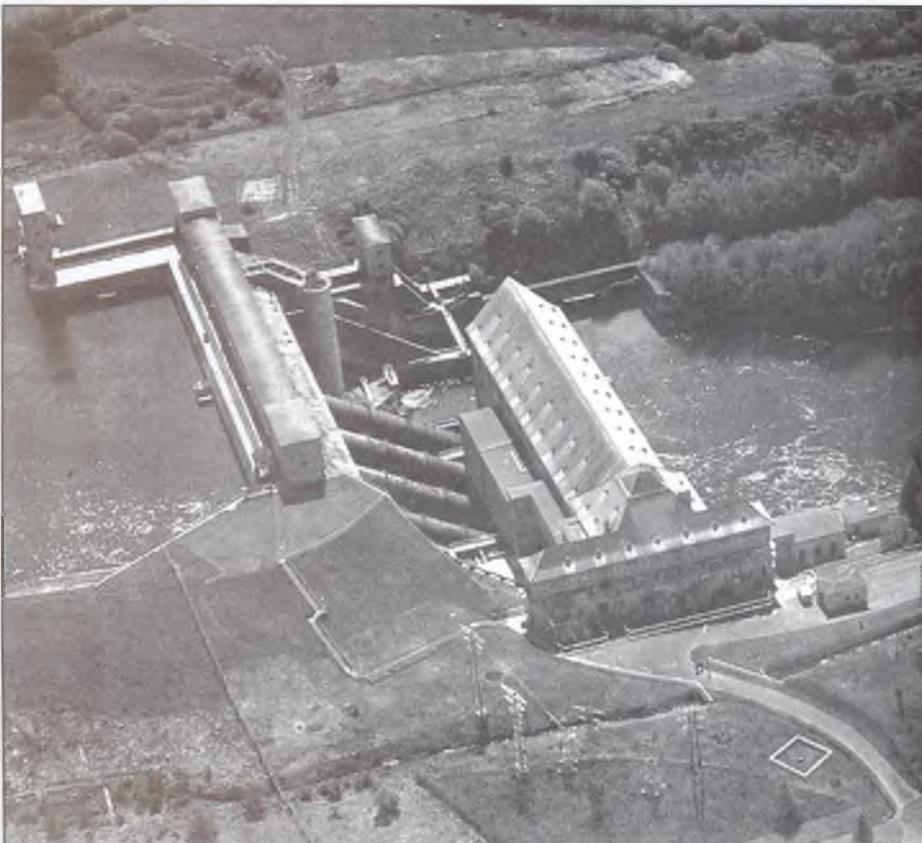
Peat, on the other hand, is anything but uniform and can vary enormously in various parameters. There were a number of very distinct bogs which made up the Clonsast group of bogs, and each produced peat of a type particular to that area – again with a number of variations. The first very obvious difference was in colour, since peat could vary from very light brown to very dark brown (actually almost black). In general, light colour corresponded to low density and dark colour to high density. Peat also could have similar variations in heating capacity (calorific value) and could have either high or low ash content. All of these

parameters were dependent on the age of the bog and the conditions under which it was formed. Very importantly, it could vary greatly in moisture content, and this depended on conditions at harvesting time. The ideal moisture was considered to be between 35% and 45%, but, since there seemed to be a cycle of roughly seven dry years followed by seven wet years, the ideal moisture was not always attainable.

The power station paid Bord na Móna for the peat according to a sliding scale based on the moisture content. The method of sampling the fuel was based on mathematical principles, which assumed that sods of peat would always be of a roughly uniform size. This was feasible when the peat was harvested by hand (by large numbers of casual workers who worked in groups and were paid at piece-time rates). With the advent of a great number of harvesting machines, mostly designed and made by Bord na Móna, there was a far greater proportion of broken peat of varying sizes in the deliveries. This greatly diminished the possibility of accurately calculating the efficiency and, importantly, the correct cost. Eventually, a prototype sampling method to take account of the actual type of fuel was produced by the Senior Chemist, Des O'Houlihan. As a result, a completely new sampling system was designed and tested by former Shift Engineer Jim McGoldrick and this made scientific analysis possible.

The method of recovering peat from the peat store was based on methods used for coal and it proved impossible to draw out enough peat fast enough to keep the station running if the supplies were interrupted for any reason. In the end it was discovered that the use of loading shovels, operating through a gap created in the wall of the peat store, gave the required rate of filling wagons. The crane used in that store was of an ungainly height and required regular supervision. A similar crane toppled over in high winds in another station. There was a specially created system for disposing of the ash produced in the combustion of so much peat – but it never really worked properly. Alternative methods were designed on the spot to overcome this problem.

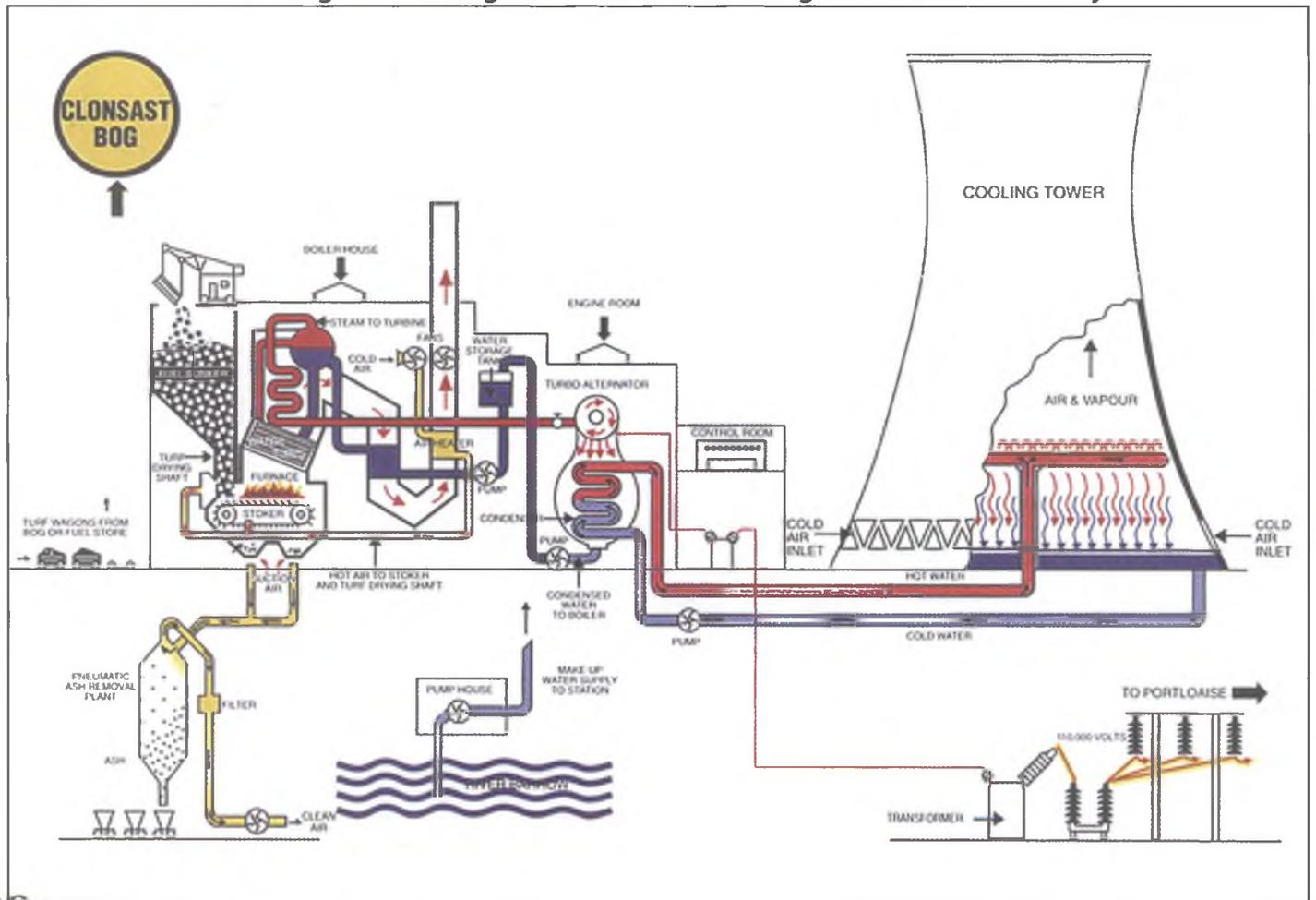
When all of these facts concerning the needs for learning and adapting are taken into consideration it becomes obvious that a great many people made significant contributions towards turning Portarlinton into such an efficient and reliable power station. It is my firm belief that great credit is due to those many pioneers in the early days.





ABOVE — Photo of Station from the early 1980s.

BELOW — Schematic Diagram showing the use of turf for the generation of electricity.



# Booklet – Official Opening 17-04-1950

## Foreword:

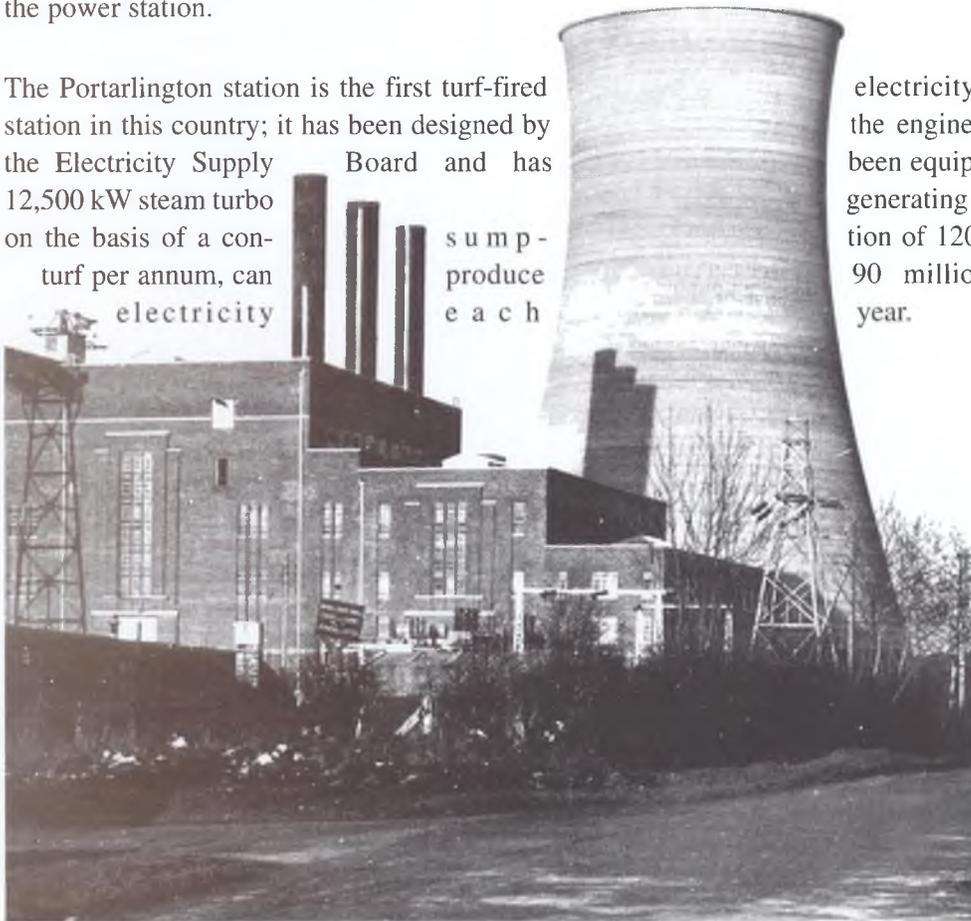
ESB Public Relations Department issued a special booklet for the official opening of the power station. This contained a good deal of explanatory material about the station and the ESB. We include here many of the more relevant pages ...

The Electricity Board, in pursuance of its policy to utilise, as far as possible, the natural resources of the country for the generation of electricity, has built a generating station at Portarlinton, in close proximity to Clonsast bog. This bog is about 4,000 acres in extent, and is situated four miles north of Portarlinton. It has been equipped by Bord na Móna with turf-winning machinery capable of producing, in an average year, 120,000 tons of turf, all of which will be consumed in the power station.

The Portarlinton station is the first turf-fired station in this country; it has been designed by the Electricity Supply Board and has 12,500 kW steam turbo on the basis of a con-turf per annum, can electricity

s u m p -  
p r o d u c e  
e a c h

electricity generating the engineering staff of been equipped with two generating sets which, tion of 120,000 tons of 90 million units of year.



General View of the Power Station.

## General Description of the Power Station

The station is erected on the north bank of the River Barrow, about a quarter of a mile outside the town of Portarlinton, on a site comprising thirty acres. The boiler plant, the steam turbine driven generators, the control room and general offices for the operating staff are housed in the main building to the right of which rises the 236-foot high hyperbolic concrete cooling tower.

Behind the power house, and straddled by a bridge crane, is the fuel store, capable of holding 40,000 tons of turf. A single track narrow-gauge railway circling the fuel store, and passing between it and the main building connects the station with the Clonsast bog and, in addition, a full gauge C.I.E. siding connects the station to the Portarlinton-Athlone branch line.

To the left of the power house is the outdoor transformer station, which raises the voltage from 10,000 to 110,000 volts.

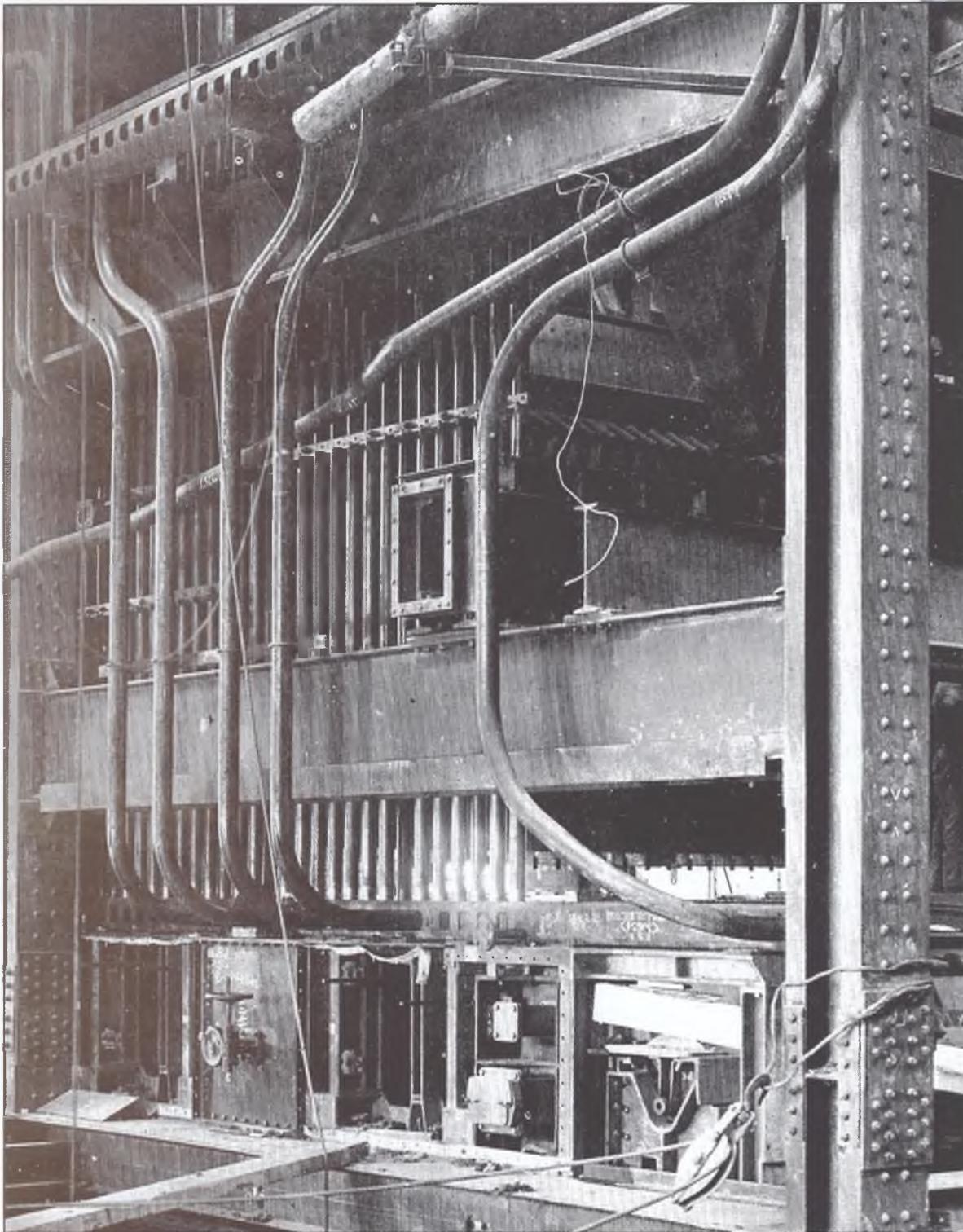


**Christy Lawlor operating the North Roof Crane.**

### **Turf Fuel: Handling and Storage**

The turf, which is machine-won and air dried, is delivered directly from the bog to the station in steel wagons, each holding five tons of fuel. On arrival at the station, the turf is weighed and samples are taken for analysis and determination of moisture content. It is then fed directly to the boiler house bunkers or stock-piled in the fuel compound for future use. In the latter case, the contents of the wagons are unloaded in any part of the 12,500 square yard storage area by means of the 8-ton electric bridge crane. This crane lifts each full wagon off its bogie, carries it to the required area, tilts the wagon to allow a hinged door at the end to open automatically and thus discharges the turf. The wagon is then returned to its bogie.

If the fuel is required for the boiler house bunkers, the wagons are run directly to the boiler house and unloaded in a similar manner by two jib cranes on the roof of the boiler house. The turf is discharged into one of the three bunkers which serve the three boilers immediately under them. Sixty loads of turf are required to fill a bunker, each of which has a capacity of 300 tons.



**Section of the Boiler Plant under construction.**

## **The Boiler Plant**

Built above and around the furnace is an intricate arrangement of water tubes fed from a steam and water drum, 40-ft. in length and mounted on 50-ft. steel columns. The drum collects the saturated steam at a pressure of 450 lbs./sq.in., and at a temperature of 460 F. The “wet” steam is then passed through the superheater, a secondary system of tubes, which is heated by the furnace below and raises the temperature of to 825 F. The steam is delivered at this temperature, and at a pressure of 425 lb./sq.in., to the turbine which drives the electric generator. Each of the three boilers can provide 150,000 lbs. of steam per hour.

The output of one boiler corresponds to the output of one turbo-generator which, at maximum, is 15,600 kW.



**Front of Boiler Unit showing Drying Shaft.**

## **THE BOILER PLANT:**

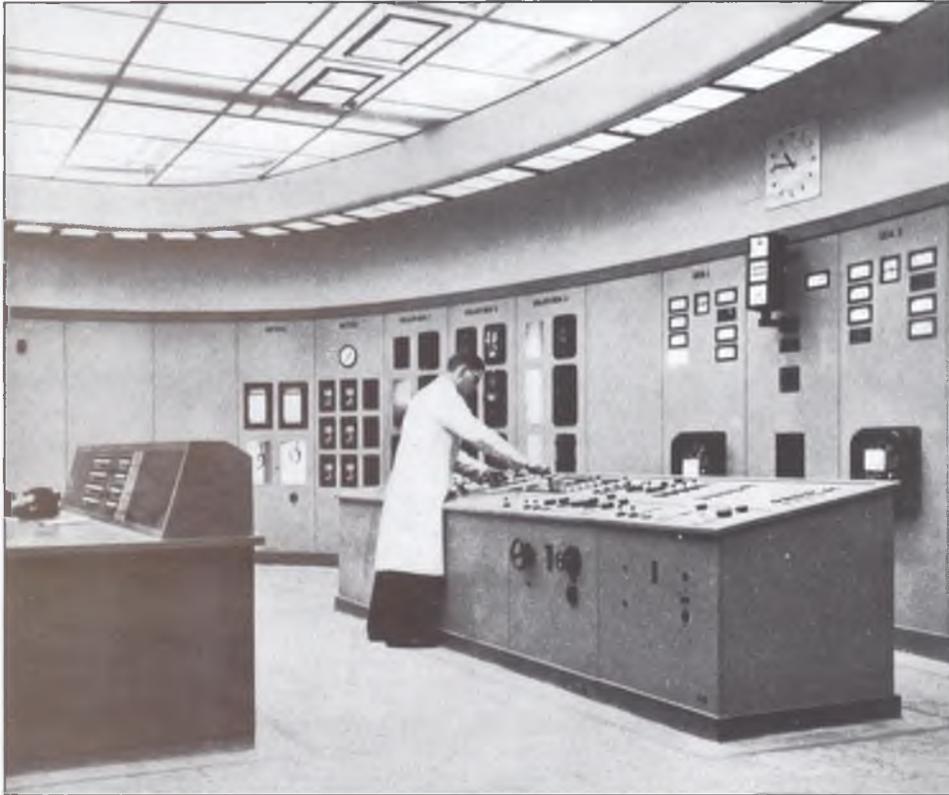
### **Turf Combustion Chamber**

Each of the steel bunkers in which the fuel is stored, converges at the bottom to a vertical drying shaft which guides the turf down to the combustion chamber of the furnace. As the turf descends through the shaft, hot air is blown through it to reduce further the moisture content. This enables the turf to burn more readily. When the turf enters the combustion chambers of the furnace, it passes on to a slowly moving chain grate stoker, where combustion takes place. The residual ash falls from the grate at the back of the grate where it is collected in hoppers. The ash, which is in the form of clinkers, similar to those resulting from coal-burning, is then crushed and removed mechanically to an ash disposal plant which cools the hot ashes and discharges them into wagons for removal from the station.

## The Control Room

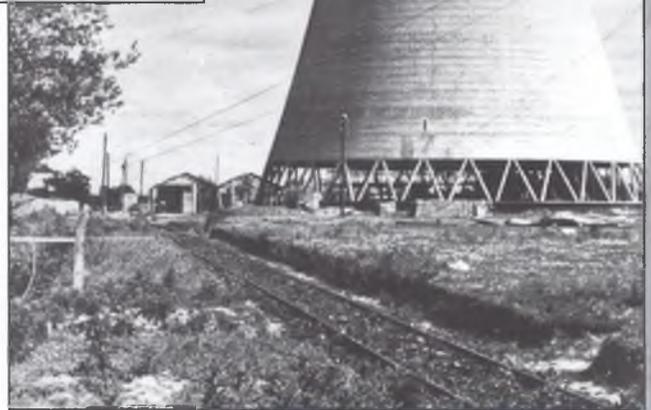
The control room is situated in the main building, above the low tension and 10,000-volt switchgear. The instruments which show the load, voltage, frequency and other particulars of the generating plant and also the controls for operating the plant itself are located in this room. In addition, the 10,000-volt and 110,000-volt switchgear and transformers are remotely controlled from here.

The control room operator can establish direct contact with the Board's other main stations by means of the high-frequency telephone which operates over the main 110,000-volt transmission lines. He is thus in a position at all times to regulate the output of the station as circumstances require.

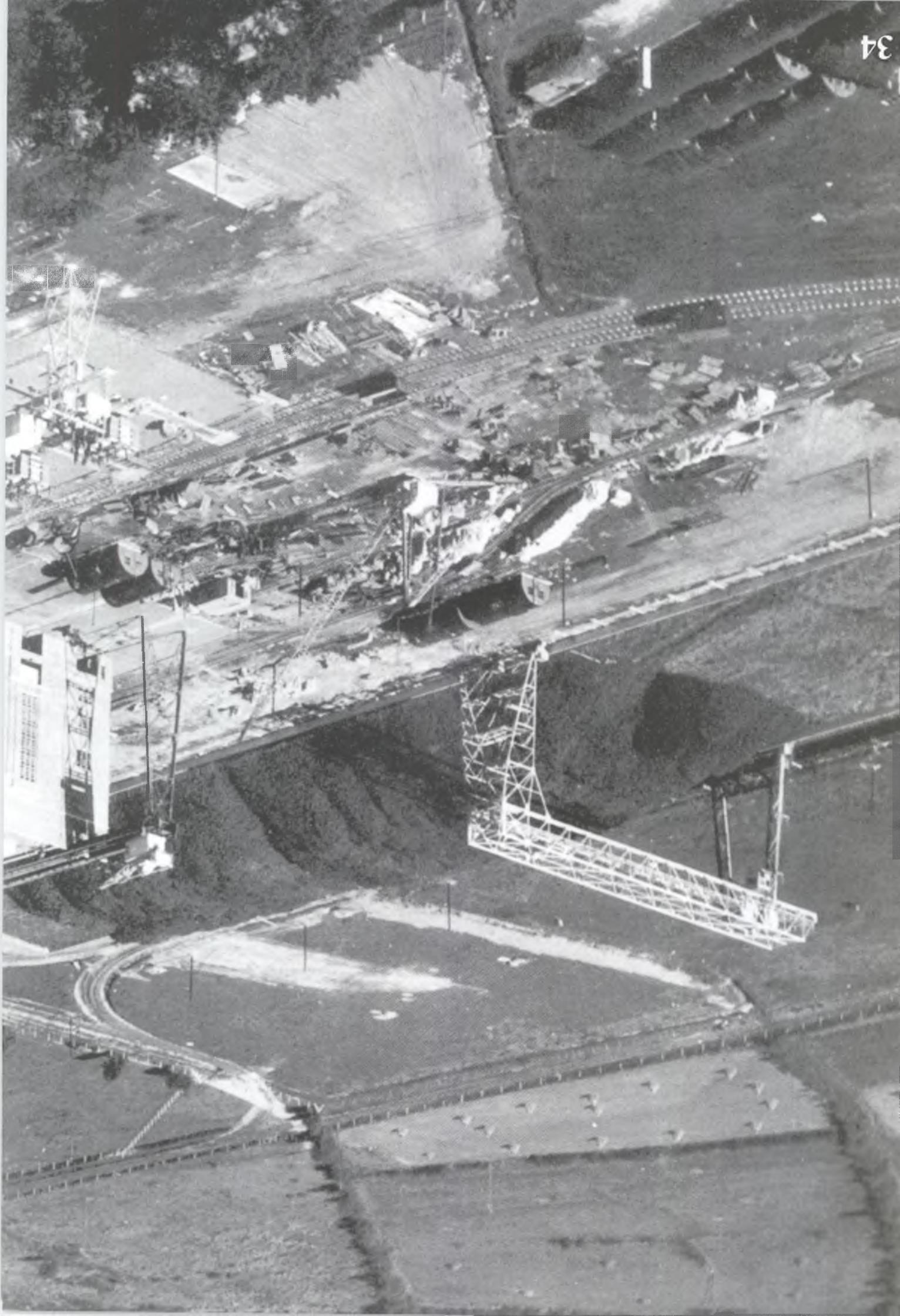


## The Cooling Tower and Pump House

To operate the condenser plant of each set, 12,500 gallons of cooling water are required per minute. This is equivalent to 18 million gallons per day. As it is not always possible to obtain such a large quantity of water from the River Barrow, it is necessary to reduce by means of a cooling tower the temperature of the water returning from the condensers and thus make the water available again for cooling purposes.



From the condenser the cooling water is pumped through a riser shaft in the centre of the cooling tower to a height of about 30 foot. It then passes out through radial feed pipes which spray the water into the air before it falls over wooden laths into the pond in the base of the tower. In falling, the droplets and spray of water are met and cooled by a rising column of cold air, which is induced into the base of the tower by the chimney effect of the tower itself and the rising current of warmed air. Approximately one per cent of the water circulated through the tower is lost by evaporation and this is replaced by water pumped from the River Barrow. A pump house erected beside the river provides "make-up" water for the 750,000 gallon reservoir in the base of the cooling tower.





*Aerial view of station near completion.*

**Jim McPhillips, who was the first chemist appointed to Portarlington, is seen here working in the laboratory.**



### **The Chemical Laboratory**

In the laboratory the complete chemical analysis, the moisture content, and the calorific value of the fuel used is determined and on these results the price to be paid for the fuel is based. The laboratory staff is also responsible for the control and treatment of the feed and boiler waters; this work is necessary to ensure that no scaling takes place inside the boilers, and that no rusting or other damage occurs which would reduce their efficiency or availability. Checks on the condition of the turbine lubricating oil, and the transformer and switch oils are also made as required.

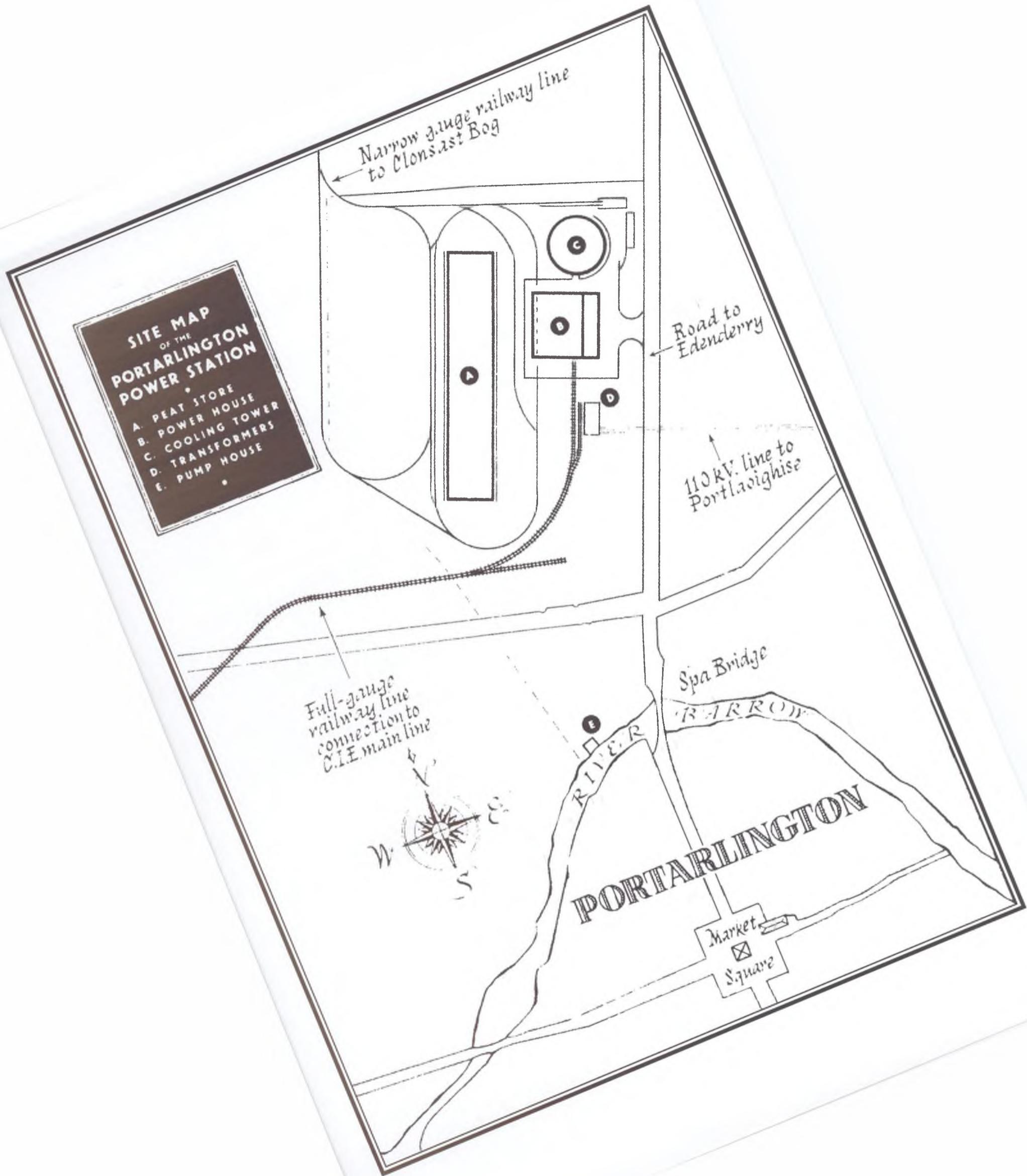
### **STEAM TURBINE DRIVEN GENERATORS**

The generating plant comprises two 12,500 kW steam turbine-driven alternator sets.



In the steam turbine the heat energy of the steam is changed into mechanical energy by allowing the steam to expand while passing through rows of steel blades which are rotating in opposite directions at 3,000 revolutions per minute. These rows of turbine blades are attached to two discs each of which is carried on a steel shaft coupled to a 10,000 volt alternating current generator on each side of the turbine.

In the steam turbine the steam is exhausted into a vacuum made by condensing the steam and this almost doubles the amount of work which the steam can otherwise do. The steam is condensed by abstracting its latent heat by means of large quantities of cooling water pumped through the condenser. The condensed steam returns to the boiler as feed water. The cooling water is cooled by circulating it through the cooling tower before it passes back to the condenser to repeat the process.



# Portarlinton Generating Station

## Official Opening

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### PROGRAMME

COMMENCING AT 12 NOON, 17th, APRIL, 1950

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Presentation of Key to Daniel T. Morrissey, Esq., T.D.,  
Minister for Industry and Commerce, by R.F. Browne, Esq.,  
Chairman, Electricity Board, at Main Entrance to Building.

Blessing of Station by Most Reverend Thomas Keogh, D.D.,  
Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, in Machine Room.

Starting of Generating Unit by Daniel T. Morrissey, Esq., T.D.,  
Minister for Industry and Commerce, in Machine Room.

Tour of Inspection of Station, starting from Machine Room,  
and proceeding to Control Room, Laboratory, Boiler House,  
Ash floor, Water Cooling Tower and Turf handling Plant.  
The tour will be made by guests in groups of approximately  
ten persons conducted by guides.

Re-assembly of guests in Reception Marquee at 1 p.m.,  
Guests are requested to hand their Invitation Cards to  
Their Guides.

Luncheon will be served in the Luncheon Marquee at 1.15 p.m.

W. M. L. ...

E. Long St.

Jim Fay.

Thurkington.

Key House

T.B. Call.

K + L

Sam Myers

James D. Vette

Phadvis

Home Leaver

Designed and Produced by Public Relations Department, Electricity Supply Board, and Printed by The Temple Press Ltd., Dublin.

P. F. Mayo (May 21)

H. B. Bury (1844)

J. Hardman

Bookie Barnes  
with Lewis

R. R. Hester

W. H. Cross

J. A. Bea

W. B. Langman

W. B. L.

A. B. B. B. B.

W. B. B.

P. G. Campbell

J. C. Duggan, Rector

W. B. B.

P. J. Walsh

J. M. B.

W. B. B.

Joseph B. B.

J. M. B.

P. B. B.

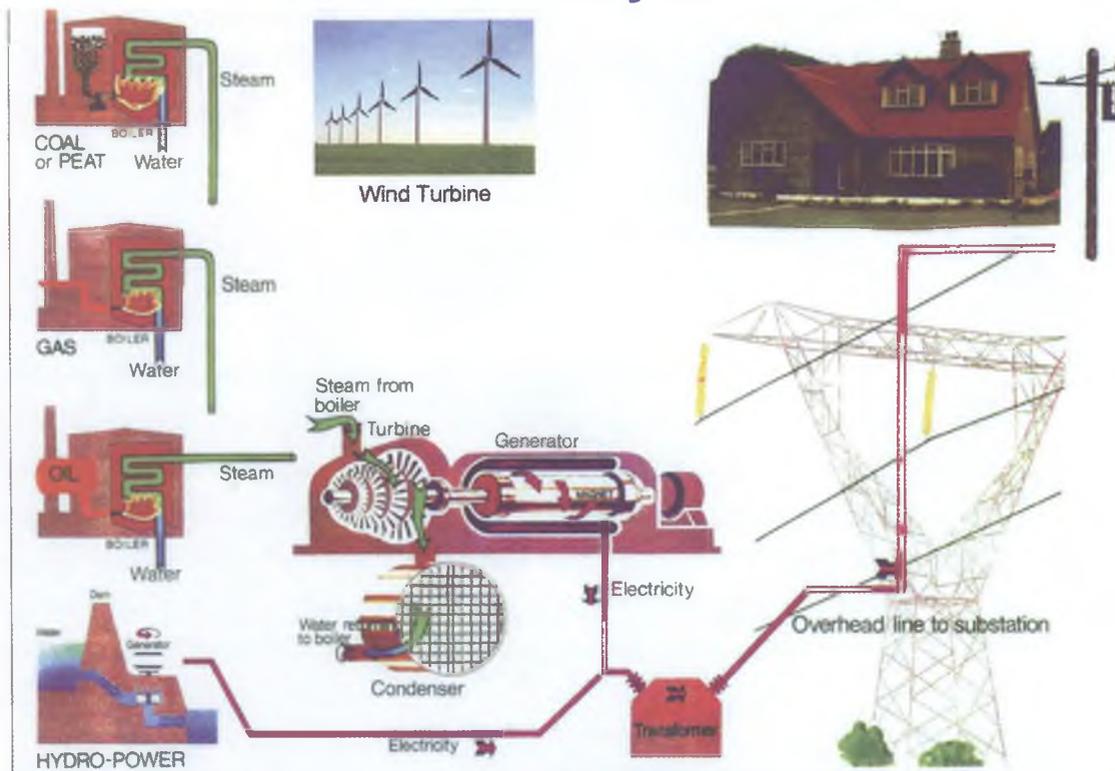
A. M. B.

W. B. B.

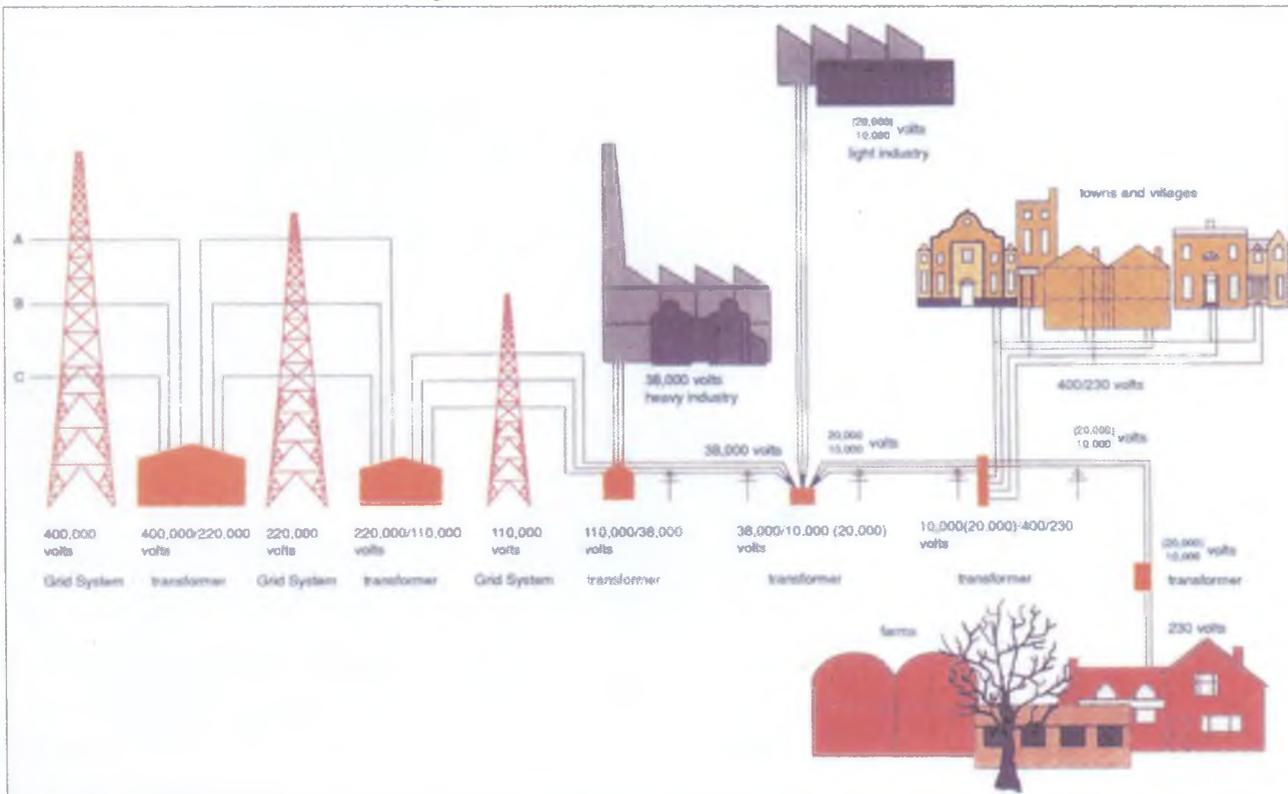
Many of the guests signed Jim Doyle's booklet.



## How Electricity is Made



## How Electricity is Transmitted and Distributed



# The thoughts of Mr. W.V. Peet (as outlined to Jon McCowen)



I have been thinking about our concerns for the proper use of the ESB generating site in Portarlinton. I think the great need of the day is the provision of facilities for the young people in Ireland.

Portarlinton is in a central position in Ireland and just needs to develop its own structures and activities. I would like to see the ESB site made into a cultural and sporting centre for the young people.

I would point out the following advantages it has compared to other places – as I see them. Its situation on the main rail line and its close proximity to the main roads from Dublin to the South and the West give it a unique advantage. The Grand Canal passes through Monasterevan and the branch from Monasterevan to Portarlinton could (and should) be restored. I would envisage using that piece of canal and constructing a boat harbour on the Dublin side of Portarlinton so as to keep boats there in the winter and then in summer you would have access to the grand Canal and from there on to Dublin and the Shannon with access to the Shannon Basin and the Fermanagh lakes in the North.

Even yet the people of Ireland do not manage to communicate with our various partners in the European Community. I really think we have very poor language training facilities in this country. It would be really important to establish a good language centre so that language students could learn all or any of the common languages that they fancy. Hotel or Hostel accommodation would obviously need to be provided there in order to attract enough students.

It should also be possible to create a musical programme for all classes of musical instruments and a Concert hall and other related facilities. As I see it, with careful planning, people would have access to music, languages, horse riding, boating, swimming and field sports. They would also have the opportunity to study their heritage since you must remember that the old name for Ireland was “The Island of Saints and Scholars”. Portarlinton is in the middle of the locations of these ancient saints – Glendalough, Clonmacnoise, Tara, Cashel, Kildare and others. The town is situated conveniently to reach all of these places and the boat and rail services could be integrated into these activities.

I consider that the ESB should get involved in promoting these types of development in return for all the loyal and dedicated service given by so many people from Portarlinton area to the production of electricity at such a critical stage in our history. I believe the ESB already have an interest in promoting Classical Music.

# ESB Midland Region Stations

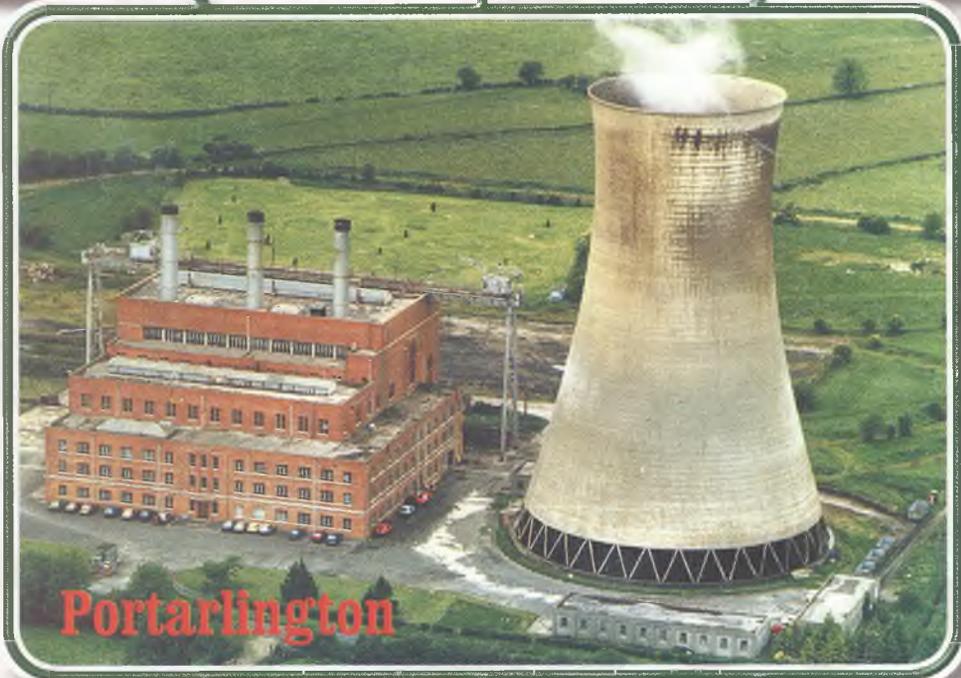
**Allenwood**



**Ferbane**



**Bellaorick**

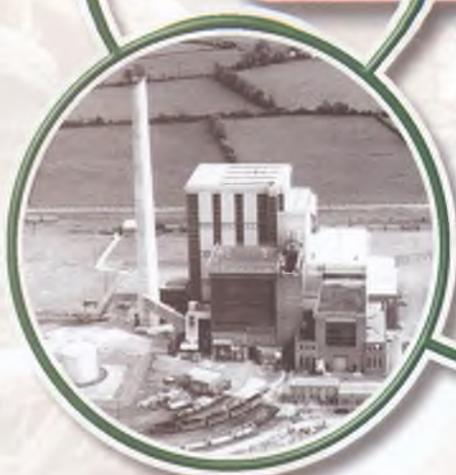


**Portarlington**

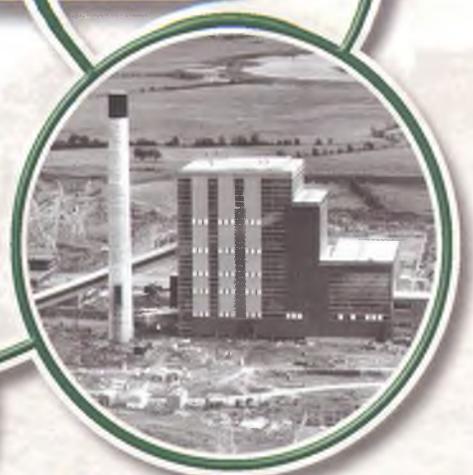
**Rhode**



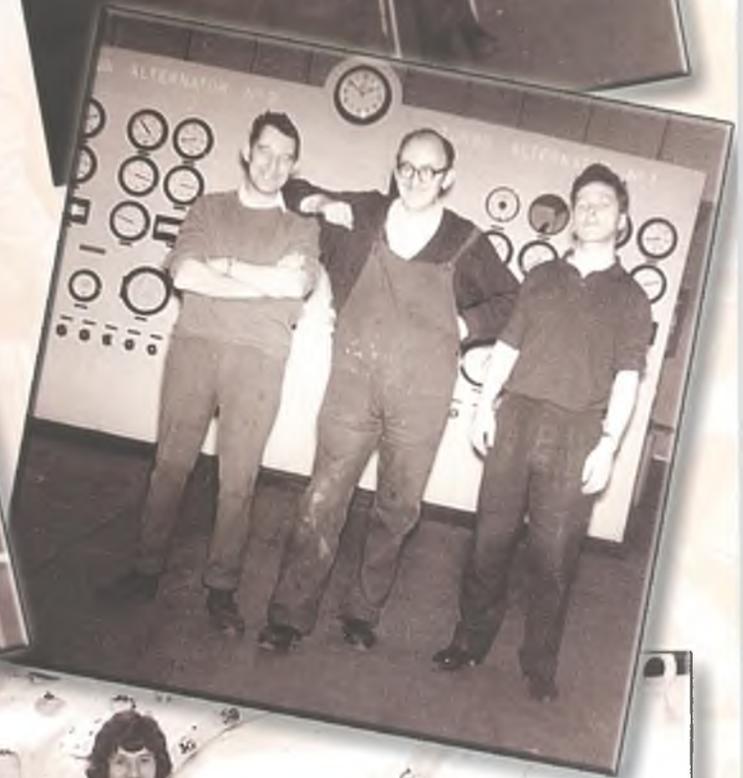
**Lanesboro**



**Shannonbridge**



# Early Photographs



[Top left] Jon McCowen and Tom Deegan.

[Top right] Henry Murray.

[Middle left] Henry Murray and Seamus Maher.

[Middle right] Jack Hutchinson, Tommy Lawlor and Mick Keogh.

[Left] Joe Tinkler.

[Right] Vincent McEvoy





*Photographed clockwise from top left ...*

**Ed Mongey, Joe Hoey Snr. and Danny Brennan.**

**Martin Brennan.**

**Jon McCowen.**

**Jack Hutchinson and Tommy Lawlor.**

**Kathleen Ennis and Don Mullins.**

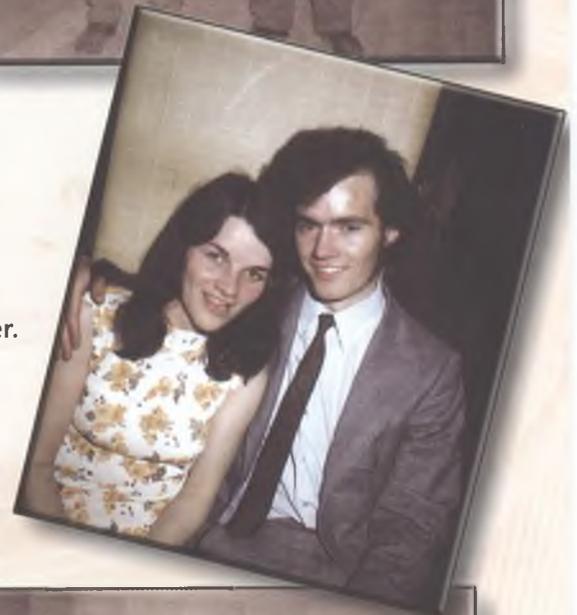
**Norman Bishop and Jack Hutchinson.**

**Mick and Peg Mullally.**

**Ray Denton and Jack Kenny.**

**Jack Boylan and Seamus Maher.**

**Mick Brennan, Johnny Moran and Billy Whelan.**



# Early Photographs



Henry Murray.

Frank Maher.

Jim Whelan, Tom O'Shea, Hugh Keogh and Jack Mooney.

Mick Carter and John Delaney.

Dermot McNamara.



LEFT:

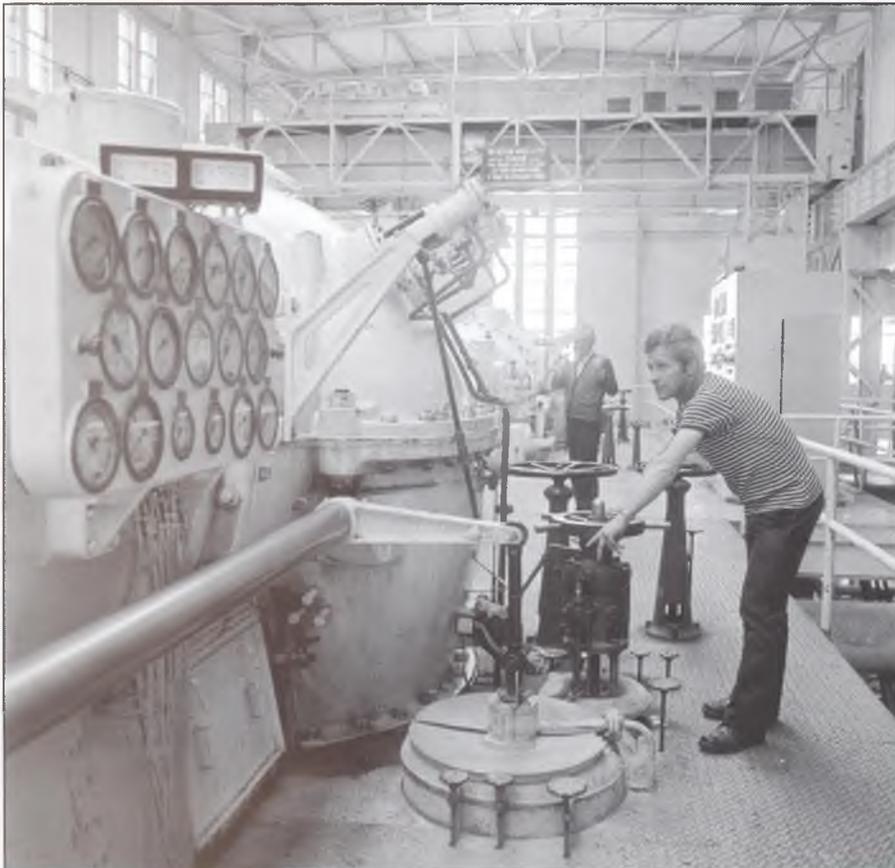
Martin Brennan, Tommy Dobbyn, Mickie Nicholls, Roger Aherne and Joe McElroy.

# The Portarlington Experience

It is understandable, and laudable, that members of the staff in each of the power stations believe that their particular construction phase and the later development phase were unique – and were “the best of their kind” in the history of the ESB. To a great extent each group was creating its own slice of history both in their own areas and in the industrial development of the country.

One of our former colleagues, Jack Noonan, wrote an article in the Midland Region Magazine, “Survey”, in which he dwelt at length on the degree to which members of the ESB staff identified with their employers both on a national level and, in particular, in their local organisation. He considered that as the ESB increased in size on its way to becoming the great organisation it is today that this strong identification was in danger of being lost and that we were all becoming just dispensable numbers who would just turn up for work and carry out the tasks assigned to us – but we would have lost that special emotional attachment to our organisation and he felt that would be a great pity. He gave instances of various colleagues who, on their own initiative, carried out work above and beyond the strict call of duty in order to meet some deadline or just to complete some task properly. I know from personal observation that this type of extra commitment was very much in evidence in Portarlington Station, particularly in the early years. This was in no way peculiar to Portarlington because many of the people who worked in the other new stations have remarked on the almost proprietary attitude most of their staff adopted towards their own station. At the present time with the necessary (and welcome) development of trade union / management negotiations and national agreements it is possible to forget that fact. It is difficult nowadays to appreciate the degree to which the staff in those days displayed a personal identification with the power station and with the ESB.

We certainly believe that the “Portarlington Experience” ranked up among the best. Indeed, many of the staff who later worked in other locations expressed the opinion that Portarlington Station had a unique relaxed and friendly atmosphere.



Tom Murphy and Mick Keogh.

The ESB Journal ran a series entitled "Meet the Staff", which consisted of a series of interviews accompanied by photographs of the staff involved from a different location each month. We include in the following pages a reproduction of the article devoted to the staff of Portarlington in the issue of May 1969.

## MEET THE STAFF

### PORTARLINGTON

Story: ARTHUR SIMPSON

Photographs: EUSTACE MALCOLM

This month we visited Portarlington, the Board's first turf-burning station, which was commissioned in 1950 and is still going strong. Our first call was to Station Superintendent W. V. Peet, who took up duty in Portarlington in November 1949, a few months before the station was opened. He, in fact, started with the Board in 1937, having worked for a number



*W. V. Peet*

of years in England and with the E.B.N.I. He spent the war years in Pigeon House, then was three years in Generation Dept. before moving on to Portarlington. Gardening is his main interest, and he derives a great deal of satisfaction from this. In recent years he has also taken up stamp-collecting, and now has what he describes as a fairly respectable collection.

His assistant is Jim Mahony, a native of Durrow, Co. Laois, who came to Portarlington in January 1967, having completed a grand tour of duty which took in a big number of stations. He proved invaluable in organising our particular tour of Portarlington, and we're grateful to him for his assistance.



*Jim Mahony*

Our guide around the station was Porter Paddy Greene, who like a lot more of the staff is a football fan. He worked on the construction of



*Paddy Greene*



*Ray Denton*

the station with all the various contractors before joining the Board.

We spoke to Control Room Operator Ray Denton, a Dublinman who came to Portarlinton in 1951. Fishing is one of his hobbies, and he was sporting a Riviera type tan which he had acquired on a fishing trip to Lough Mask. For the record, he told us that he didn't catch any fish, so there's at least one honest fisherman in the world. Stamp collecting is another of his interests, his speciality being Irish stamps, and he has a big collection stretching back twenty years. In his remaining spare time he is

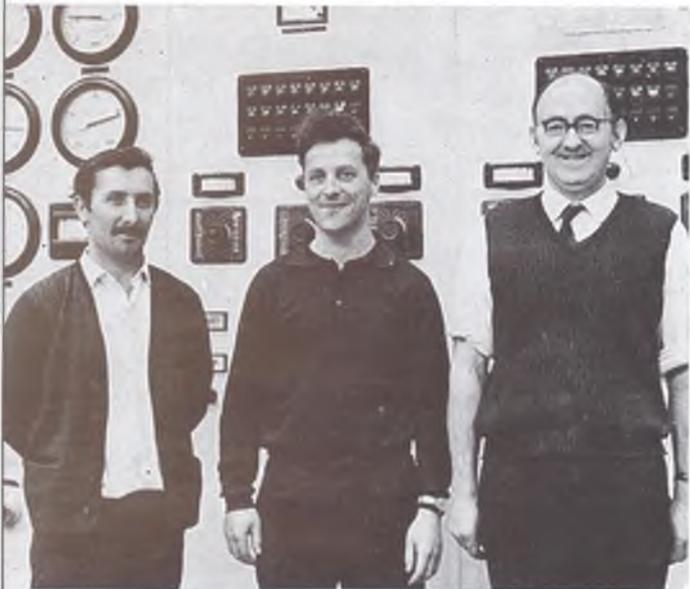


*John Corbett*

interested in tape-recording, represents several tape clubs in Ireland and corresponds on tape with people all over the world.

Electrical Supervisor John Corbett is a native of Roscommon, and served his apprenticeship with the Board in Athlone. He left Athlone in 1956, moving on to Lanesboro, then to Ferbane and then to Bellacorick before coming to Portarlinton in January 1969. His hobby is fishing, trout mostly, though he has had some success with salmon.

We visited the Laboratory and met some of the staff there. First of all we spoke to Technical Assistant (Chemistry) John McCowen. John is



*A.P.A. Joe Brennan and Turbine Drivers Mick Keogh and Tom Lawlor.*



*John McCowen*

a keen photographer, and we got in a plug for some photographs for the Journal which we hope will come to something. He also plays football, tennis and golf and does a bit of gardening. Lab. Assistant Peter Kirby comes from Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, and has been a year in Portarlinton. At the moment he is studying hard, in preparation for the Leaving Certificate Physics exam, which he is doing in June. In spite of finding himself in a stronghold of Gaelic games he still remains a staunch supporter of the Blues. Sampler Tony Coleman is a native of Portarlinton, and has worked at the station since the opening. As well as sampling the turf he has sampled a wide variety of sport, including boxing, marathon walking, hurling and football. He is secretary of the local G.A.A. Club, and



*James Doyle*

does a lot of inter-county refereeing. He has also refereed a number of All-Ireland semi-finals. There is a very strong local interest in Gaelic games, so much so that there are no clubs catering for other games in the vicinity. Sampler William Sharpe does a bit of fishing, mostly trout, and is also a bingo addict, at which, he told us, he loses more than he wins, but he enjoys it just the same.

We met Yard Supervisor James Doyle several times during our visit, but somehow never got down to having an extended talk with him. Eventually he gave us his history in a very condensed fashion, to the effect that he had worked on the construction of Portarlinton as a Civil Works Inspector and has been there ever since. We feel sure that there's more to it than that! We did gather from others that he is a fairly



*William Sharpe, Peter Kirby and Tony Coleman.*

useful golfer. His assistant is Christy Lawlor, and there's no doubt about where his main interest lies —it's very definitely in Gaelic football. And why not — he has four sons on the Laois team. This must surely be a record. He has another son who is too young yet to be on the team, but he'll no doubt make it in time.

Loco. Driver Tommy McEvoy is another man with a keen interest in Gaelic football. He used to play on the Offaly team, and has won three Railway Cup medals. In our travels around the station we had gathered the impression that



*John Mooney, Hugh Keogh, Jim Whelan and Tom O'Shea.*

MAIN PHOTO — GROUP AT TOWER — Back Row: Joe Slattery, Jack Gibson, Peter Blanc, Har Kennedy, Mick Carter, Martin Aspell, Sean Shortall, Vicent McEvoy, John Delaney, Tom Murphy. Middle Row: Bobby Orange, Sean McEvoy, Alo Maher, Seamus Colbert, Mick McGuinness, John Ward, Jimmy Carroll, Christy Lawlor, Cecil Emerson, Tom McEvoy, Andy O'Neill. Front Row: Seamus Dowling, Tony Culliton, Tommy McCormack, Tommy Connolly, Brendan Thompson, Don Mullins and Jody Slattery.



*A group of the staff photographed outside the station.*

there seemed to be a more than usual number of clubs in the area. Tommy explained one of the reasons for this, and it is that the border between Offaly and Laois runs through the parish. So you have Offaly clubs on one side, and Laois clubs on the other. In fact, there are four senior football teams in the parish. It would seem to be a good idea for them all to get together and make up one first-class team, but then, like all border questions, it's easier to talk about them than to solve them, and there are

many real difficulties preventing this course of action.

Looking after the clerical end of things is John O'Dea, a native of Mitchelsown, who started with the Board in Portarlinton seventeen years ago. His interests are gardening and fishing. He was struggling with a heavy cold and coping with the Monday peak of work when we arrived, so we left him to it and went on to speak to the only girl in the place, Typist Deirdre O'Connor. Deirdre is a native of



*John O'Dea*



*Deirdre O'Connor*



*Bob Orange*

Portarlinton, and worked for a while in Head Office. She forsook the bright lights of Dublin to return home about six years ago, and has no regrets on that score. She plays golf and tennis, because, she says, there's nothing much else to do. Now, what can you make of a remark like that?

Storekeeper Bob Orange is the Journal representative in Portarlinton. His unusual surname



*Vincent McEvoy*

is of Huguenot origin, and his family is the only one now bearing this name in the area. He is a part-time member of the Fire-Brigade, and in his early days he was a very keen Irish dancer, an accomplishment for which he has won a lot



*Fitter's Mate Mick Murphy, Fitter Jim Mullally, Electrician's Mate Sean McEvoy, Bricklayer Paddy Harty, his mate Charlie Ward and Paddy Greene (again!).*

of medals. His services are now very much in demand as a judge of Irish dancing competitions.

A.P.A. Tom O'Shea is a darts expert, and is captain of a local team. They won the Leinster Darts Championship in Dublin about four years ago, and during the past six years his team has won over fifty tournaments. He is also Chairman of the Hurling Club, and plays on the local team. A.P.A. Hugh Keogh comes from Portarlinton, and has been playing football since his earliest days. He won an All-Ireland medal with Allenwood in the E.S.B. Championship, and still plays



*Jimmy Redmond*



*Peter Beacon, James Lawlor and Paddy Powell.*

with the Allenwood/Portarlinton team, who have reached the semi-final this year. He captained the Portarlinton team which won the Leix Junior Championship last year. In his spare time he plays the accordion at local functions. A.P.A. John Mooney has been in Portarlinton since the opening of the station. His hobby is breeding greyhounds, but we didn't get any hot tips from him, as he prefers to sell them rather than race them. Although he has bred some good dogs it's not as easy as it may seem, as they require constant care and attention,

and must be fed on the best food, mainly meat and eggs. Still, you never know, he may come up with another Master McGrath one of these days! Fireman Jim Whelan has been at the station since the opening, and has been on shift all that time. He's grown so accustomed to it by now that it's almost second nature to him, and we doubt if he'd like to change. He likes to do a bit of fishing on his days off.

Fifth year Apprentice Vincent McEvoy seems to lead a very busy life. He is Secretary of Eire Og Senior Football Club, and also plays on the team. They are in the quarter-final of the Offaly Championship this year. In addition he acts as a fund-raiser for various local organisations. He does this by promoting dances and raffles, and between one thing and another there's



*Liam Keoghan*

a lot of work involved. His main concern at the moment is to raise funds for the Club, which has eight teams in the Offaly Championship.

We spoke to Andy O'Neill, who comes from Castledermot, Co. Kildare, who has many interesting stories to tell. He joined the Army at sixteen, and served for fifteen years, during which time he became an expert on gunnery. Andy is a man who has the capacity for being contented wherever he is, and he found Army life suited him very well, although he appreciates that those who hadn't the capacity to learn and tried to go against the system could find it rough going. He left the Army in 1935, and worked at various jobs, principally with Bord na Mona, before joining the Board in 1950. He has nine sons and two daughters, and one of his sons, James, has over three hundred medals and nineteen cups



*Anthony Maher, Jack Boylan, Tommy Ward and Patrick Clarke.*



*Joe Claffey*

which he won for Irish dancing — in fact he was never beaten by anybody in a competition.

Mechanical Supervisor Gerry Mansfield was on holidays when we called, and we found Senior Fitter Jimmy Redmond filling in for him. Jimmy comes from Wicklow, spent the war years in the Army, and worked with Bord na Mona as a fitter before joining the Board in 1950. Fishing is his main interest during his spare time.



*Eddie Dunne*

Shift Supervisor Liam Keoghan comes from Waterford, and has been a year and a half in Portarlinton. He has been moving around a lot, and will shortly be on the move again, as he is going to Shannonbridge. Anther man that's

used to moving is Electrician/Relief Operator Joe Claffey. Joe is a native of Tullamore, and has been in Portarlinton for two years. When we asked where he had been previously he covered everything by replying "everywhere". He is interested in hurling and football, and also does some shooting and fishing. Technical Records Officer Eddie Dunne played football with Laois, and still retains a keen interest in both hurling and football. And, talking of football, Shift Relief Anthony Maher, A.P.A. Jack Boylan, Fireman Tommy Ward and A.P.A. Patrick Clarke didn't have much to say for themselves when we spoke to them — the explanation offered was that they were all Offaly men, and were still feeling badly about their defeat by Kerry in the National League!

Finally, in the Turbine Room we met Peter Beacon, Paddy Powell and James Lawlor. The latter is probably lucky to be alive, as one of the turbines blew up about ten years ago, due to a metal fault, and he was on duty at the time. Pieces of metal flew in all directions, and some were later found outside the station, but fortunately nobody was injured.

So we concluded our visit to the staff in Portarlinton. We would like to thank everybody for the help and co-operation that we received.



**Early ESB logo.**

# Staff Houses

The ESB provided employment to a great many local men during the building of the power station and many local people joined the workforce when the station was commissioned. The management and supervisory staff, as well as many skilled tradesmen, were recruited from other stations and also from other industries. The ESB provided houses close to all their stations, mainly to accommodate the staff who were likely to transfer from one station to another. Because the station was located very close to the town of Portarlington, it was fairly unusual in that the twenty-seven houses provided in the town were all within easy reach of the workplace.



The houses were built to a very high standard and had large gardens to the rear as well as sizeable lawns to the front. Of course, there were complaints that the architects had not made the kitchens large enough but all of the houses still look very well – over fifty years later.

To some extent this resulted in the creation of mini communities since the families involved obviously had shared interests and probably similar backgrounds. However, they all quickly became part of the larger community – and contributed a great deal to the development of the town (as mentioned elsewhere in this book).

To the best of my knowledge no significant attention has been paid to the long-term impact that a development like that had on such a small community – at a time when most of the country was struggling to

recover from the scarcities of the war years. Dick Mullins rightly drew attention to the fact “that the community was, in a large measure, sheltered from the recession of the 1950s which was a decade of low growth, high unemployment and depressed living standards, but above all massive emigration”. That alone was very significant but it seems likely that the influx of so many new people would also have exerted a major influence on the general culture of the community and its future development. At the present time the town is experiencing a massive growth in housing and in population and it is hard to predict what changes will be seen during the next decade. No doubt this is likely to be examined closely in some sociological studies in the near future.



# Training & Development

*During the 1950s and 1960s practically all of the engineers (and future management) employed by the ESB worked at first as trainee engineers in Portarlinton or Allenwood, and then as Shift Engineers before moving on to bigger stations on shift (The Shift Engineer was effectively the Shift Manager – a term which later came into vogue).*

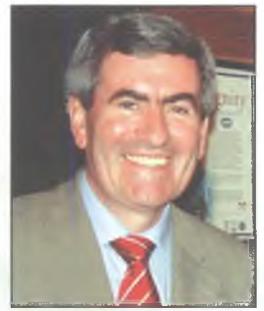
The ESB in later years encouraged and supported staff who wished to study for the exams which would allow them to increase their technical knowledge and also to gain promotion to Shift Supervisor and, later, to Shift Manager. Staff in other categories were also encouraged to undertake studies in their own particular discipline – and in some cases the ESB cooperated with the Colleges in designing specific courses and provided part-time release for staff members to achieve the appropriate qualifications. In due course the ESB underwent a big transformation in becoming an equal opportunities' employer.



Photographed at a course held in Head Office were (FRONT, L to R): P. Newell (Galway), F. Beattie (Dundalk), L.J. Rossiter (Waterford), G. O'Reilly (Tralee), D. Crowe (Limerick). BACK: J.G. Goss (Electrical Training Officer), T. O'Brien, Dublin City), B. Wiseman (Cork), M. Kehoe (Portlaoise), G. Mullis (Sligo), A. Pollock (Athlone) and D. O'Neill (Distribution Dept.).



First year electrical apprentices from Sligo and Waterford Training Centres who received prizes. They are (L to R): Eamon McAndrew, most improved apprentice; Mr Jim Gregory, most improved apprentice; Mr John Geoghegan, 1st place in class and Mr Pat Whelan, 1st place in class.



**Padraig McManus**

In January 2003 the ESB Chief Executive, Mr. Padraig McManus, announced a Scholarship Scheme. As part of Corporate Strategy fifty third level scholarships, spread over a five year period, would be created for ESB staff. Fourteen students returned to education in 2003, ten more started in 2004, with a further eleven joining the scheme in 2005.



**Gerry Goss**

The original Electrical Supervisor in Portarlinton was Gerry Goss who came from Dundalk. He had worked on the construction of the station and, later, on the construction of Allenwood. When the ESB decided to set up an Electrical Training School in Head Office, Gerry was one of the first people seconded to the project. He later worked abroad with ESB (International), designing electrical networks in different countries. We include a photograph of Gerry with one of the classes which benefited from his teaching.

**John Geoghegan**

John Geoghegan joined the staff in Portarlinton as an electrical apprentice in 1974. He became an Instrument Technician and worked in Ringsend Generating Station. Later he worked as a technologist in Test Services, Powergen. In September 2003 he commenced a four year degree course in Electrical and Electronic Engineering (BEEE) at University College Cork on a full-time basis.



1958 ESB Electrical Apprentices Class in Kevin Street, DIT.  
(inset: Gerry Downey and Fintan Maher)



## A World First for John Ryan

John Ryan, Instrument Department, Moneypoint, was awarded the City & Guilds Gold Medal for his final year Mechanical Engineering.

John came first in the world in his final year exam papers – a remarkable feat when one considers the thousands of apprentices who sit the exam worldwide.

He is seen here, left, receiving the Gold Medal from Noel McLoughlin, Station Manager, Moneypoint.

John, a native of Ballacolla, served his apprenticeship in Portarlinton.

## Minister presents diplomas



E.S.B. Staff members who received their diplomas from the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Mr. Justin Keating, at Kevin Street College of Technology, Dublin. They are (from left): Mr. Thomas Healy, Poolbeg, Technical Certificate in Applied Science; Mr. Dermot McNamara, Allenwood, Technical Certificate in Applied Science; Mr. Christy McLoughlin, Technical Certificate in Electrical Engineering; Mr. Thomas Deegan, Poolbeg, Technical Certificate in Applied Science; Mr. John McCowan, Portarlinton Station, Technical Certificate in Applied Science, and Mr. John Gavin, Marina Station Cork, Technical Certificate in Applied Science.

# It Started in Portarlinton



INSTRUMENTATION COURSE 1974/75 — Left to Right: C. Davy, J. Stenson, A. Egan (T.C.), P. Dowling, B.A. Mannion (T.C.), T. Trimble, A. O'Toole (Drawing Office), P.J. Grogan, D. Nolan, M. Morrison, D. Teeling and D. Greer.



1978/79 C.G.L.I. PT. II 275 COURSE — Rear Left to Right: J. Ward, D. Teeling, K. Hynes, T. Mitchell, L. Whelan, D. Geraghty and D. Greer. Front: A. Egan (T.C.), B. O'Briain (T.C.), B.A. Mannion (T.C.), C. Davy and A. Ryan. C. McCabe, Tara Mines Ltd. also attended the course.



Instrumentation Course 1970/71 — Back Row: Jack Bohan, M. Quirke, Andy Murtagh, C. Hennessy, Adrian Kelly, J.P. Graham. Centre: M. Holland, B. Cusack, N. Hynes, Don Geraghty, F. Walsh. Front: B. Mimmagh, B.A. Mannion, Andy Ryan, John Ward, Len Traynor.

In early September 1958 a letter arrived to my home outside Ballisdare, Co Sligo, informing me that there was a vacancy for an Instrument Technician in Portarlinton Generating Station. To this day I do not know who sent the letter but I applied for the job, was duly interviewed by Mr. Bill Peet and Mr. Bob Magee, and was offered the position. My wife Brid and I moved in to No. 4 Sandy Lane and we both retain, without exception, fond memories of our three years stay in Portarlinton. We joined the choral society along with some of the Power Station staff such as Dick Mullins and Sean McCarthy and we have a photograph of Brid playing the violin at a concert in December of 1959 when clearly expecting our first child.

The Arts Group, in which Bill Peet played an active part, was instrumental in bringing groups of musicians to the town. Talk about being spoiled – we had the Dowland Consort led by Professor Brian Boydell of TCD and a Concert Trio comprising Bernadette Greevy, Mary Gallacher and Jeanie Reddan and a memorable performance by a Russian harpist Maria Korchinska among others.

So is it any wonder that after forty plus years we still enthuse about our memorable three years in Portarlinton.

## The Itinerant Gang

I moved to Test Section in early 1962 and for the next six years our team criss-crossed the country in the course of carrying out acceptance tests on new units or investigation tests on existing units. In all, up to 1968, my work took me to eleven main line thermal stations – on many repeat visits and often for periods of a week or more. From Bellacorick to Tarbert and Marina and all points between it was very much the exception to find myself with more than a continuous month at home in Dublin. When you take into account that I also paid twice yearly visits to the four 5mw hand won turf stations located between Donegal and Kerry, the aptness of the term "Itinerant Life" is clear.

by  
**Tony  
Mannion**



### Training

In 1968 action was, at last, taken by Generation department to set up an in-house training section devoted exclusively to training instrument technicians. It was breaking new ground because at the time such a course was only available at CEGB Training centres in Britain. I viewed it as a God sent opportunity to get back to a civilised style of living and to become a Teacher/Instructor in the field of instrumentation and control. But setting the whole thing up from scratch was an intimidating prospect. The staff advertisement for the new promotional position came out in July of 1968, interviews were held and the decision was taken to appoint yours truly. I did not get to my new office in the Pigeon House Hotel until October – cutting things rather fine given that the first course was scheduled to start in early January of 1969.

From the outset London City & Guilds subject number 310 and, later on, Technician Level Number 275 was the standard in both syllabus and end of course examinations.

The technology being installed at that time in the power stations was, increasingly, electronics based and this was reflected in the subject list of our courses from the outset. Trainees were selected from ESB station electricians and fitters and, on most occasions, we took an applicant or two from outside industry – reflecting the fact of the all round shortage of qualified people in industry at the time. Over the years, training courses, where possible, followed the practice which I had adopted at the outset of having CGLI Technician level exams at course end and this continued up to my availing of the early exit package in 1990. So came to an end my very satisfying and, dare I say it, successful career in ESB which had started in such accidental, but fortuitous, fashion in Portarlinton in October 1958 – thirty two years earlier.



ESB Journal, July 1970 — The second extended course in Instrumentation, covering the syllabus of C.G.L.I. Course 310, Part I, was concluded on Friday, 26 June. During the last days of the course participants sat for the three papers of the examination. The photograph (by Brendan Whitty) taken outside Generation Department Training Centre, Pigeon House, where the course was held, shows BACK L to R: Brian Gillespie (Erne), Thomas Mitchell (Rhode), James McSwiggin (Erne), Gabriel O'Reilly (Ringsend), Vincent McEvoy (Portarlinton), Michael O'Brien (Ardnacrusha). FRONT: Brendan Whitty (Lanesboro), Thomas Kelly (Gt. Island), Cyril Robinson (since resigned), Bernard A. Mannion, Instructor, Raymond Mulligan (Bellacorick) and Liam Holbrook (Ringsend).



Initial group of B.S.E.D. trainees with Board staff. Picture was taken in Generation Training Centre Sept. 1976.



1978 PT.1 C.G.L.I. 275 COURSE — Back L to R: J. Maher (Tarbert), J. Geoghan (Ringsend), J. McDermott (Bellacorrick), T. Corcoran (Ferbane), C. McCabe (Tara Mines Ltd.). Front: A. Egan (Instructor), R. O'Briain (Engineer-in-Chief, T.C.), M. O'Duffy (Ferbane), B.A. Mannion (Training Officer) and J. Egan (Bellacorrick).

## Course Design



Training course given by Dick Clarke of the University of Southern California — 4th row (L to R): John N. Ryan, John O'Shea, Sean Oates, Kevin O'Malley, Robert Byrne, John Egan, Paul Bennett. 3rd row: Tom Mulvaney, Paul D'Arcy, Jim Wynne, John Ryan, Gearoid Hogan. 2nd row: Gabriel Keegan, Ann Bowe, Peter Donogher, William Edmonds, Bert Horgan, Louise Murphy McMahon, Tadhg Crowley. 1st row: Gerry McAlevey, Nessa Duffy, John Campion, PJ Grogan, Michael Jordan, Adrian Carroll.

## ESB Scholarships



Pictured here are the ESB Scholarship Programme students and their mentors at a seminar in the Mullingar Park Hotel prior to the start of the 2005 academic year.

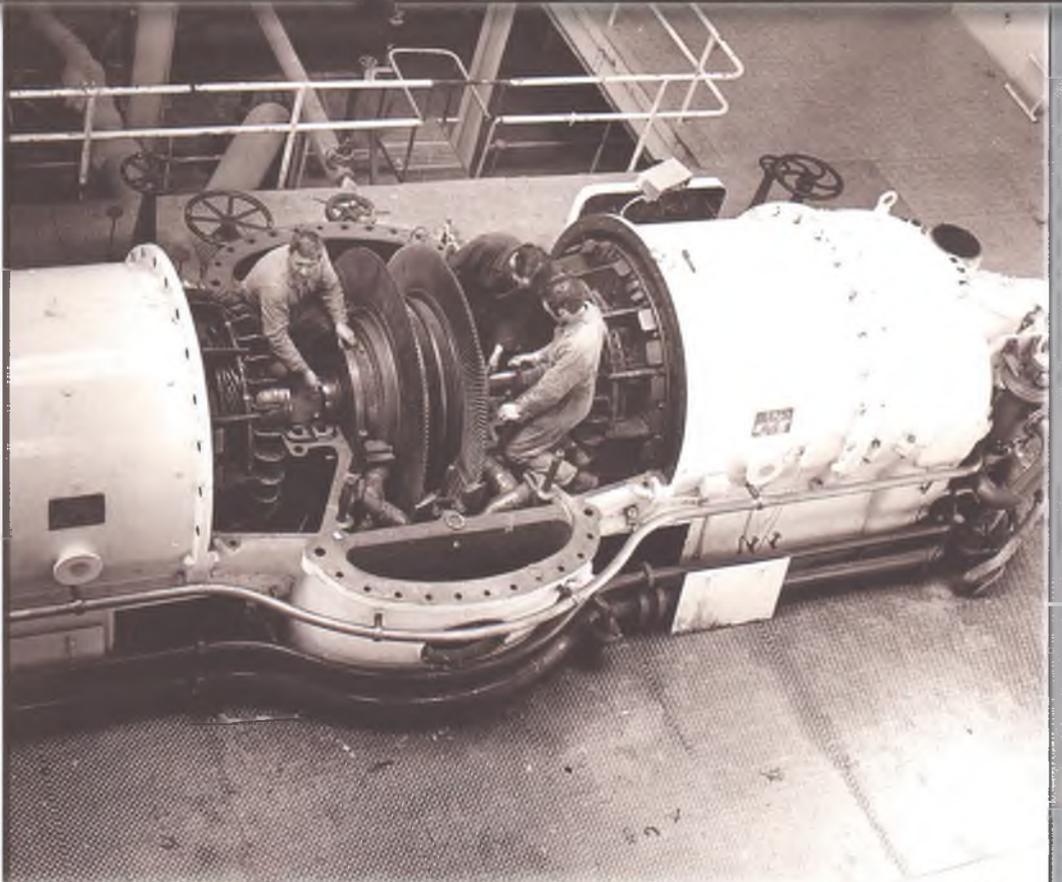


Top Left: Joe Claffey.



Top Right: Dick Eacrett.

Centre: Peter Hynes, Cammy Bryan and Freddy Van der Blom.



Bottom Left: Peter Blanc, Enda Powell, Jack Henriques, P.J. Dunne, Mick Carter, George Quinn and John Delaney.

Bottom Right: P.J. Dunne, Peter Kavanagh, Peter Hynes, Mick Carter, Steve Allen, Sean McEvoy, Luke Clarke and Mick O'Brien.



# Early experiences at Portarlinton Generating Station

by Jon McCowen



*[This article was originally written for the 2004 edition of Portarlinton & Killenard Emigrant Newsletter]*

Even though building work commenced in 1946 and Portarlinton Generating Station was officially opened on April 17th, 1950 I actually first became aware of the Power Station building when Brother Ryan, the principal of St. Joseph's School, assigned myself and classmate William O'Keefe (now serving as a priest in America) to the task of attempting to restore a plywood model of the red-brick building. The scale model had been promised to the CBS but had been damaged in a fall before the official handover. We managed to accomplish cosmetic repairs with the use of copious amounts of glue but the skills required to restore the model to its original firm structure were beyond our collective experience. I have never actually discovered the eventual fate of that unfortunate replica.

In February 1957 I first entered the actual building itself when I attended for interview for a job in the Laboratory. Ironically enough I had to step carefully around some of the debris from Turbine No.1, whose blades had burst through the outer casing in a potentially serious accident. The late Jim Lawlor, who had been on shift at the time, showed me the extent of the damage and explained how lucky the staff were to have escaped injury.

At that time the Station had three Babcock & Wilcox boilers serving two 12Mw Stal turbines. This effectively meant that the Station had the capacity to generate 24Mw more or less continually. Since the Station had a common steam range the generators could be operated by any combination of boilers and the spare boiler could be cleaned and overhauled immediately and made available to carry its share of the load when required. Some years later the capacity was raised to 36 Mw with the addition of another similar set from North Wall and the Station entered a new era of working at full capacity for weeks on end. Successive Regional managers and Chief Executives paid tribute to the staff who played their part in operating the Station at that full capacity for so long and emphasised how important it had been to the ESB to be able to rely on that consistent output during a period when 36Mw formed an appreciable percentage of the board's total output.

During my interview I was informed by the acting chief chemist Gerry O'Herlihy that "cleanliness comes before godliness in laboratory work" – and, even though I was taken aback by the remark at that time, many years later I realised that it was probably one of the best pieces of advice I ever received.

When I joined the power station staff the first thing that made an impression on me was the cleanliness of the station. It was obvious that peat was inherently a dirty fuel and there was also some necessary construction work underway to restore Turbine no. 1 to active service. In spite of all that there was a conscious effort to keep things neat and tidy. Much of the credit was due to the manager Mr. William Peet who visited each department every day and was always immaculately dressed. But I discovered that the staff members had a great sense of pride in their power station and were scrupulous about keeping their own departments clean.

The resident Station Chemist at the time was Miss Frances Crowley, one of only two female chemists then employed by the ESB. I am still grateful for the very good practical training and professional advice I received from Miss Crowley before she emigrated to a new life in Rhodesia. Group Chemist Des O'Houlihan took responsibility for Portarlinton and Allenwood stations – and later became Regional Chemist. He was a bundle of energy who taught us all the value of a "hands on" approach to any problems around the station. He was also the first person I came across who had the gift of lateral thinking as opposed to the structured vertical thinking most people used to solve problems. He would often arrive in to a station during attempts to solve a chemical or engineering problem and immediately offer a series of (often unrelated) suggestions which would generally include a probable solution. His favourite mantra was "just because you have found the perfect solution to a problem it does not mean that you cannot find a better



Tony Coleman



Bobby Orange



Frank McCague



Des O'Houlihan



Jack Gibson

solution at a later time". Since he had so many good ideas of his own he had no problem giving due credit for any good work or suggestions from any of his staff.

The regular staff then attached to the laboratory were Tony Coleman and Joe Sharpe with Jack Gibson filling in as relief. Tony was well-known as a successful footballer, hurler, runner and boxer who also refereed matches in a number of counties. He trained Portarlinton to win three senior county championships and he had an encyclopaedic knowledge of all sports. I also discovered that he had a seemingly limitless collection of stories and anecdotes from the construction stages and also the operational life of the station. Joe Sharpe was a serious conscientious worker with a very active sense of humour and an ability to get in the last word during the repartee that is normal when a large group of people work together.

Around the station I met many interesting people but there were some who, for a variety of reasons, made a particular impression.

In every factory that I know of the person in charge of the stores has a reputation for impudence, probably because they are subjected to so many unreasonable and crackpot requests during the course of a week. Because Bobby Orange was the lightest man in the station – and was very reliable and helpful – he got away with a spectacular line in impertinence. He had a great ability to play on words and nothing malicious was ever said, so many people tried to provoke a quotable response. He helped to brighten up many a day and was a very popular workmate.

*{The Profile of Joe Mullen, which appeared in the original article, has been moved out to page 106}*



Joe Sharpe

By its very nature, the general services group contained the largest number of workers in the power station. The supervisor of that group provided the workers for the turf-handling crew and the general maintenance and cleaning crews – and also provided workers to the other supervisors to supplement their numbers for any extra work needed. Jim Doyle filled that role during construction and also during the early days of operation in the station. He regularly used to joke that some of the other supervisors used to request "send me five men – or Tom McEvoy". Even if we allow for a certain degree of exaggeration the fact remains that the same Tom was a very strong powerful man who could quite cheerfully get through a great amount of work in a day. He was a very popular person and he also commanded great respect because of his status as a legendary footballer during the 1930s and the 1940s. Tom McEvoy, who was generally known as "Chonk", became the first Offaly man to win a Railway Cup medal in 1939. Playing at fullback for Leinster for consecutive years he went on to win medals in 1940 and 1944. Later on he trained many football teams.

Frank McCague was the painter at that time and was active in many organisations, both sporting and charitable. He became Chairman of Portarlinton GAA Club and he presided over an unprecedented era of growth and achievement for gaelic games in the town. He served in a number of positions both at local and county level for many years and still found time to serve in the local fire brigade and other organisations. He continued for years to mark the pitch and put up the nets and flags and became "Mr. Football" for a complete generation of players.

One of the real characters from the early days was Andy O'Neill, who hailed from Castledermot in County Kildare, as he constantly reminded everyone. He was a natural storyteller with a disarming ability to draw passers-by into his latest creation which generally ended with a laugh at someone's expense (occasionally his own). However, he will be remembered most for his ability to imitate the voices of many of the management team – particularly over the phone. Every one of us embarked on at least one fruitless journey around the station as a result of an instruction received over the phone from "Mr Peet". There were stories of a Bord Na Móna transport manager rushing around organizing extra (unrequired) rakes of turf and of a shift engineer bringing most of his shift out to remove floating debris from the cooling tower pond and many more stories – but we were never really sure who was responsible.

There were obviously many more characters who deserve a mention but space is limited and I don't have all the stories. I can only say that Portarlinton Power Station had a great friendly atmosphere and that I thoroughly enjoyed my time working there.



Tom McEvoy



Andy O'Neill

# Electrical Mail

The Electrical Mail included a number of photographs of staff members from Portarlington in their issue of June 1978 and we reproduce these here.

## ESB PEOPLE IN PORTARLINGTON



Mr. John Hutchinson is from Portarlington and joined the staff in 1950. He is married with seven children, one girl is a solicitor and one son is an engineer with Leeds County Council. Three others are studying for degrees at UCD. He plays golf at Portarlington Golf Course.



Mr. Michael Nicholls is from Portarlington and joined the staff in 1965. He is married with three children and lives in a staff house in the town. He plays darts with the station team which recently won the ESB Darts final.



Mr. Tom O'Shea is from Portarlington and joined the staff in 1962. He is married with three children. He is a member of the Juvenile Committee of the Local GAA Club and a member of the Station's Darts team which holds the ESB title.



Mr. John Doris is from Trim, County Meath and joined the staff in 1961 in Generation Department after graduation from UCD. He has worked in Ringsend, North Wall, Lanesborough, Allenwood, Rhode, Shannonbridge and Tarbert Stations before going to Portarlington in 1971 as Deputy Station Superintendent. He is married with six children and is Chairman of the Portarlington Tidy Towns Committee and the Town's Branch of the Rehabilitation Institute.



Mr. John Corbett is from Ballyforan, Co. Roscommon and joined the staff in 1938 as an apprentice in Athlone District. He was a Senior Electrician in the District up to 1957 when he went to Lanesborough as a Control Room Operator. He was appointed Electrical Supervisor, Bellacorick in 1961 and Electrical Supervisor, Portarlington in 1968. He is married with six children and spends his spare time fishing. He is an Executive Delegate for the Supervisors Branch of the ESBOA.



Mr. Joe Delaney is from Portarlington and joined the staff in 1969 as an Electrical Apprentice. He is engaged to be married and is spending most of his spare time building a house. He has the roof on and the windows in. He reckons on saving £3,000 doing the work himself. He is interested in music and does social work with a group visiting hospital patients.



Miss Mary Brennan is from Portarlington and joined the staff in 1972. Gardening is her main outside interest. She and Rebecca Condell are the only two women in Portarlington Station.



Mr. Sean Shortall is from Portarlington and joined the staff in 1966 where he is married with three children. He used to hurl with the Leix minors and Portarlington juniors but now spends his spare time swimming and gardening.



Mr. Thomas Lawlor is from Portarlington and joined the staff in 1949 when the station was commissioned. He is married with three children. He is a member of the Town's Saint Vincent de Paul Committee and the Lourdes Committee which organises pilgrimages to the Shrine each year. He is married with three children. He spends his spare time gardening.



Miss Rebecca Condell is from Bilboa, County Carlow and joined the staff in 1974 in Portarlinton, where she is the Clerical Officer. She plays tennis and badminton in her spare time.



Mr. Joe Colbert is from Portarlinton and joined the staff in 1965. He is the maintenance Chargehand at the moment. He is married with four children. Fishing, walking and going to films are his main outside interests.



Mr. Peter Blanc is from Portarlinton and joined the staff in 1965. He is a bachelor and lives in Portarlinton with his family. He does a bit of shooting in his spare time and is a member of Emo Gun Club.



Mr. Peter Kavanagh is from Portarlinton and joined the staff in 1970 as a fitter after serving his time with the Monasterevan firm. He is married with four children. He played with the Leix County Vocational Schools in the All-Ireland final in 1955 and won a Leix Senior Championship medal in 1959 playing with the Portarlinton Club. He has retired from football now and plays golf.



Mr. Peter Hynes is from Roscrea and joined the staff in 1971. He is the Senior Fitter in the station. He is married with three children. He spends his spare time gardening and does a bit of shooting over the local bogs. He is Secretary of the ESB Fitters Association.



Mr. Joe Slattery is from Portarlinton and joined the staff in 1951. He is married with five children. He is the captain of the Station's Darts team and also a member of the committee of Portarlinton Anglers Club. He is a keen fly fisherman and fishes the River Barrow.



Mr. Pat Culleton is from Mountmellick and joined the staff in 1967 in Portarlinton as an apprentice fitter and is now an Instrument Technician. Motor racing, shooting and photography are his main outside interests. He is a member of the Birr Motor Club and drives a Cooper S. Mini.



Mr. Michael Mullally is from Monasterevan, County Kildare and joined the staff in 1961 in Ferbane as a fitter after serving his time with Bord na Mona. He has been eight years in Portarlinton. He is married with five children and lives in a staff house which he bought out last year. He spends his spare time gardening.

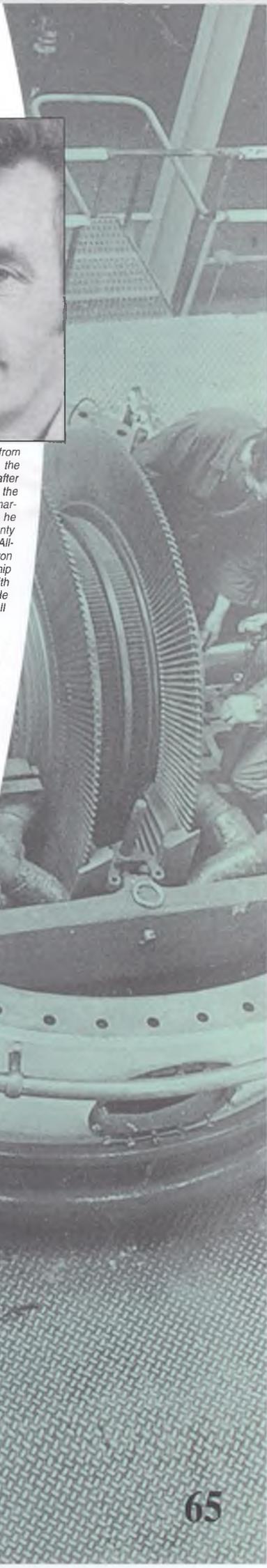


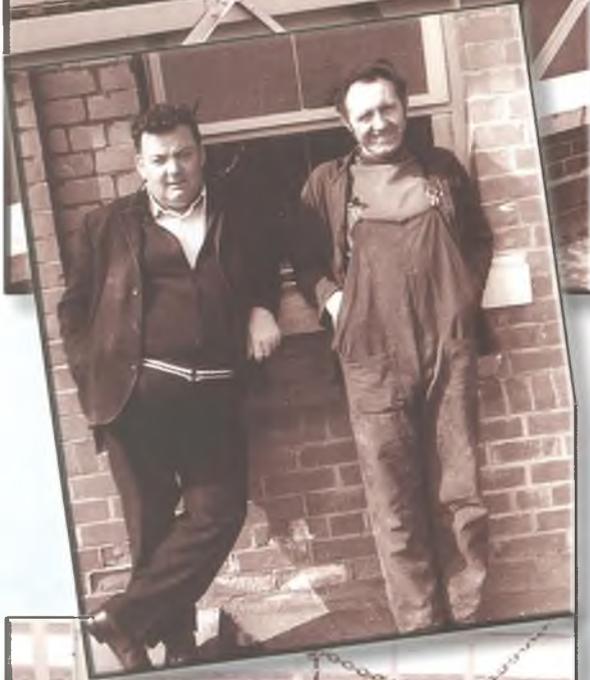
Mr. Jimmy Redmond is from Tinahealy, County Wicklow and joined the staff twenty-seven years ago in Portarlinton where he is now the Mechanical Supervisor. He is married with five children. His pastime is travelling. Last year he went to South Africa and Rhodesia and this year is taking off for Canada.



Mr. Tony Coleman is from Portarlinton and joined the staff in 1949 working on the construction of the Station. He is the Chargehand on fuel handling. He is married with six children. Gaelic football and hurling are his main interests. He played football with Portarlinton in three county championships in 1954, 1955 and 1959.

ESB  
PEOPLE  
IN  
PORTARLINGTON





[Top Left]  
Peter Kavanagh,  
Paddy Walsh, Paddy  
McEvoy and John  
Delaney.

[2nd from Top Left]  
Charlie Ward and John  
Dunne.

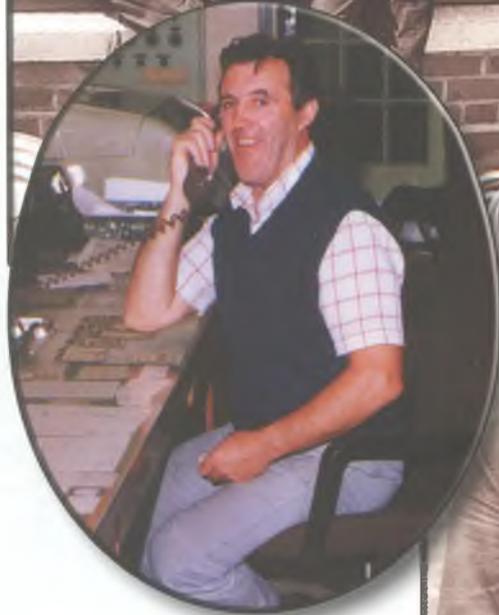
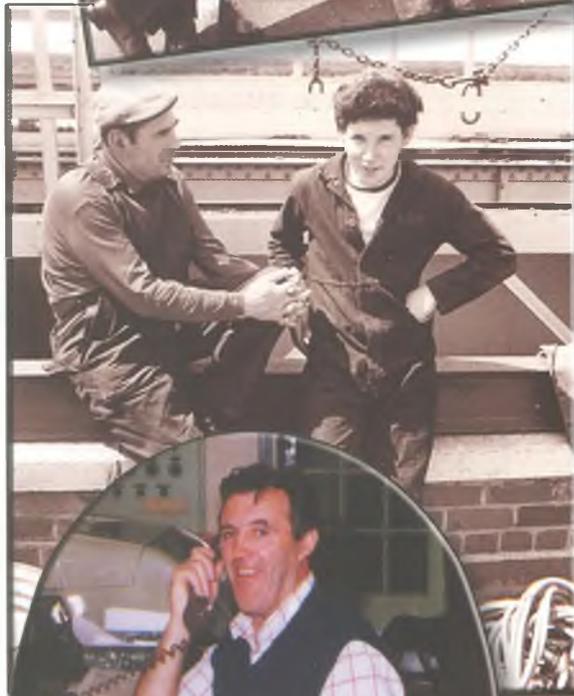
[2nd from Bottom Left]  
John Lawlor and Enda  
Powell.

[Bottom Left]  
Joe Claffey.

[Top Right]  
Peter Hynes and P.J. Dunne.

[Middle Right]  
Stevie Allen and Sean  
McEvoy.

[Bottom Right]  
Paddy Maher, Joe Hoey Snr.  
and Danny Brennan.





Liam Maher.



Liam Hickey,  
Pa Phelan,  
John Dillon,  
Tom O'Shea,  
Ger Hickey.



Tom Gibson, Cammy Bryan, Gerry Hickey,  
Peter Hynes, Steve Allen and Andy Rowe.



P.J. Nolan pictured with David and Paucic. Ron Sothern.

# Portarlington Generating Station — Barry Hutch 1985–1987



I had been Station Manager in Allenwood for three years when Bob Magee, the Manager of Portarlington, retired in 1985. The decision was taken to twin the two sod-peat stations and I, effectively, became the new manager in Portarlington. At that stage the station had been running for 35 years and its capacity had been reduced from three turbines to one – and that one was out for major maintenance. This made everybody very nervous since the fate of the station (and of the town) depended on the operation of this turbine. The immediate priority was to get the station on load as soon as possible – but the ultimate closure of the station had to be addressed and my mission was to prepare the staff as best I could. This involved taking part in negotiations to determine the number of the staff who were prepared to accept the Voluntary Severance Package and go into a well-earned retirement – but it also meant actively seeking alternative employment within the ESB for those staff members for whom retirement was not a preferred option. I am happy to say that many of the Portarlington staff successfully moved to other Stations and to the Districts and of those who moved none ever complained to me. In fact most had done well out of it.

When the time came to run up the turbine I was conscious that all eyes were on me and on the Swedish Commissioning Engineer. The technical advice that I had received suggested that, with a turbine of that age, we should not hang around too long at the intermediate stages of run-up. We prudently followed that advice and brought it on load quickly – and, thankfully, it continued running until the Station closure on March 31st 1988.

I was involved in many hours of negotiations with various sections of the staff as we attempted to make the eventual closure as painless as possible. Within the station I had many discussions with Denis Byrne, Tony (Thatcher) Coleman, Thomas McEvoy and Tommy Connolly. The most famous of the older shop stewards was Jody Slattery, who represented the Amalgated Union, and who had worked as the lagger in the station. He technically belonged to the Midland Region at that stage and was not directly involved in the talks but we eventually persuaded him to move to Allenwood to work at lagging until his retirement. When I discovered the enormous range of humorous stories he possessed and his gift for diversionary tactics I thought that maybe we got off lightly.

Ger Connolly was the local TD and he resided in nearby Bracknagh. Ger loved the cut and thrust of a lively local meeting – and I got to admire his skill and, particularly, his timing as he jumped in to make a timely intervention and thus carried the day. Brigid Emerson and Cathy Honan were actively engaged in local politics on behalf of the PD's.

We were all working to some degree in uncharted territory and we were creating the template for similar closures in a number of other stations. We had our disagreements, of course, but we generally managed to keep our concentration on the need to arrive at a conclusion that was satisfactory to all parties.

I returned to Portarlington in the late '90s when I was in charge of the Station Demolition. There was some local concern because it was felt that Portarlington had not been treated as well as some others in terms of Community support. A meeting was arranged in the East End Hotel in order to address these concerns and it was thought that a small room upstairs would cater for the expected attendance. In the end, the full function hall had to be commandeered – and it was a very long night's discussion. The demolition of the tower, which had been scheduled for 10.30am on Saturday March 22nd, had to be postponed because of the lack of agreement. The tower was finally demolished on Thursday, April 3rd 1997 at 10.30am.

The issue of Community support was later rectified to some degree when an agreement was reached with Portarlington Community Development Association (PCDA) for enterprise funds and I was delighted to be part of this closure. It has been agreed that the Amenity Park beside the river, which has a walkway to Derryounce Lake, will be transferred to PCDA.

Portarlington Station fulfilled a very important role in its early days and was regarded highly by the Management and Board of the ESB. I regret that my time as manager of the station came at the end of its days and I must say I enjoyed my involvement with the staff and with the people of the Portarlington area.

# Portarlinton Managers

**1949 to 1968**



**William V. Peet**

**1968 to 1985**



**Robert F. Magee**

**1985 to 1987**



**Barry Hutch**

**1987 to 1988**



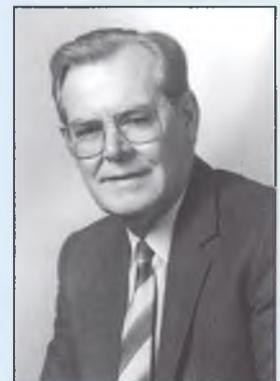
**Daire O'Broin**

## Mr. P.J. Moriarty

We, as the staff who worked in Portarlinton, owe a debt of gratitude to the late Mr. P.J. Moriarty for his invaluable support in the publication of the History of the Station but also in his attempts to help keep the station operational through the use of coal as an alternative fuel. This was a time when the demand for electricity doubled every seven years and the ESB would very soon be hard pressed to meet that demand even with the construction of a new Station. Unfortunately, the country entered a period of low growth, which resulted in a considerable drop in demand, and, when the recovery finally came, there was a different National Energy Strategy in place.

Through his long service as Chief Executive, and later as Chairman of the ESB, Mr. Moriarty worked tirelessly trying to create an organisation that would value all individual contributions and would have no artificial ceilings blocking individual progress. I would like to record my personal admiration for his humane and enlightened approach at all times.

He later served as chairman of the RTE Authority and he was one of a select body of dedicated Public Servants who served the country tirelessly as genuine patriots (in the best sense of that overused word).



# Early Photographs



Danny Brennan.



Nan and Mick McGuinness.



Joe Hoey Sr.



P.J. Dunne, Peter Hynes, Mick Carter and John Delaney.



Pat Culleton, Noel Deffew and Henry Murray.



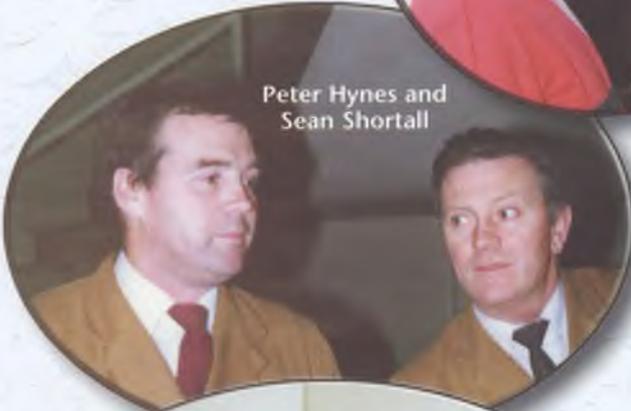
ABOVE — Dermot Higgins, Norman Bishop, Denis Byrne, Frank Knight, Pat Culleton and Cammy Bryan.



Joe Murphy.



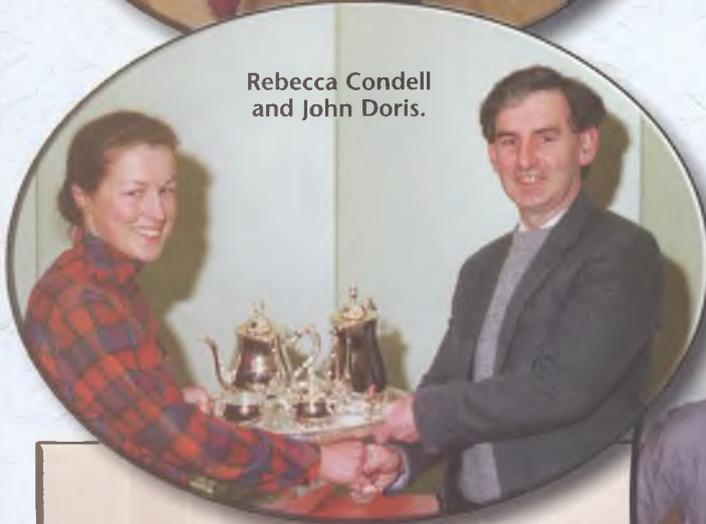
RIGHT — Mick Keogh and Joe Doyle.



Peter Hynes and Sean Shortall



George Quinn.



Rebecca Condell and John Doris.



Rebecca Condell.



John Dunne.

# Early Photographs

P.J. Dunne, Seamus Mullally,  
Liam Mooney, Peter Hynes,  
Tony Walsh and John  
Smith.



Willie Cross.



Seamus Raleigh, Dympna Hyland, Pat  
Culleton, Rebecca Condell and Mick Slevin.

BELOW — Jock and Anne Kelly



Joe Hoey Jr.

Rebecca Condell, Mick Slevin and Dympna Hyland.



Johnny Murphy.



Thomas McEvoy.



Billy Murphy.



Rebecca Condell  
and Mary  
Brennan.



ABOVE — Daire O'Broin and Mick Slevin.

LEFT — Pat Culleton and Noel Deffew.



BELOW — Mick Slevin and Mary  
Brennan.



Peter Hynes, Seamus Reynolds and Leslie Steedman.



ABOVE — Frank Knight, Pat Culleton, Cammy Bryan and Denis Byrne.

LEFT — Noel Deffew.

RIGHT — George Quinn and Enda Powell.



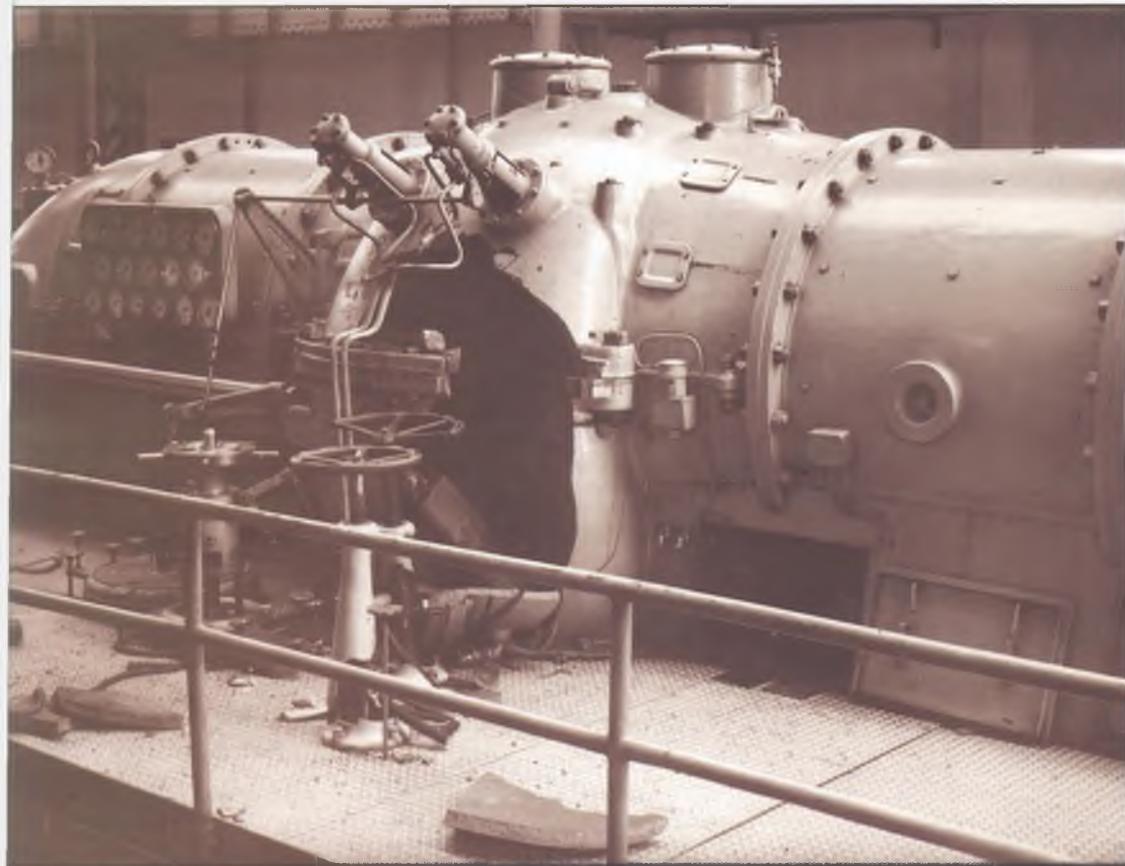
Joe Sharpe, Alo Maher, Daire O'Broin and Bill Flood.



Three turbines.



Dismantling fallen chimney.  
Peter Hynes with John Smith  
and P.J. Dunne.



Results of blading failure.



Diesel generator.



Inside cooling tower.

# The Christmas Parties

Party

Photos taken at the 1969 Christmas



The adults included are: Dave Malone, Frank McCague, Jack Hutchinson, Joe Slattery and Johnsy Murphy.

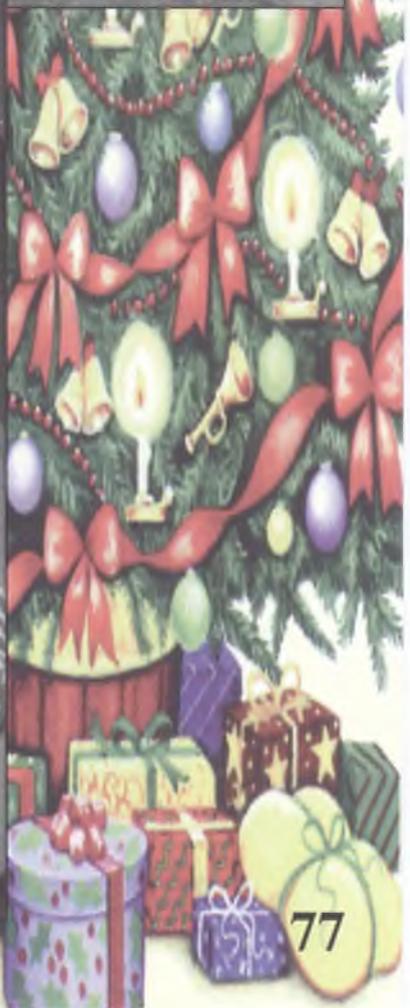
Every Christmas a dedicated group of the staff used to organise a Christmas Party for the children and grandchildren of staff members. Every year the regular members, and the newcomers who were drafted in, would get together in a series of loosely organised meetings and lay the groundwork for the current campaign. After much agonising over the calculation of the probable number of children who might turn up on the afternoon and the requirement to make the party “more fun this year” the years of experience paid off – and the campaign got underway. Jack Hutchinson always organised the selection and purchase of the toys and Frank McCague arranged for the hire of suitable films for the afternoon [always needing to make sure that the projector which belonged to the Midland Region was also in place]. There was also a well-organised group of wives and girlfriends to make sure that the food and refreshments were more than adequate for the large crowd which inevitably turned up. Needless to say not everything ran smoothly in the preparation stages and there were many crises which threatened to convince doubters that “this year is going to be one big disaster”. The projectionist [usually Dick Eacrett or Joe Claffey] was certain to be subjected to some good-natured heckling but this was regarded as “par for the course”. Santa [usually impersonated by Jack Henriques] came in for some mild ribbing but dealt with it all in fine style. Afterwards, there were constant promises from the principals that “this will be my last year involved in this hassle – and I am definitely leaving it to younger staff next year”. When next year arrived the “usual suspects” started again the process that they enjoyed so much – and which they did so well.



Fran Keogh meets Santa.



Clare Delaney supervises.



# Presentations



Above — Jim O'Mahony makes a presentation to Deirdre O'Connor on the occasion of her marriage.

Below — Retirement of Jay McCague.





Wedding Presentation to Rebecca — Pictured are Joe Colbert, Frank Knight, Pat Culleton, Brendan Thompson, Rebecca Condell, Peter Hynes, P.J. Dunne, Mary Brennan, Cammy Bryan, Norman Bishop, Denis Byrne, John Doris, Tony Coleman, Mick Carter, Mick Keogh, Paddy Connolly and Mick Slevin.

## Memories of Portarlinton Generating Station — by John O'Shea

I arrived in Portarlinton in March 1970 having followed Robert Magee from Arigna. Joe Byrne was the Deputy Station Superintendent as they were called at that time – one of the best engineers I came across in my forty four years in the ESB. Pat Carey was Maintenance Technical Officer and I replaced Eddie Dunne – ex-Laois footballer, who moved to Ballyshannon – as Technical Officer Operations. The Maintenance Supervisors were Gerry Mansfield, John Corbett and James Doyle. Shift Supervisors were William Mullins, Basil Malone, John Kenny and John Moran. John O'Dea ran the Administration Office and Jon McCowen was in charge in the laboratory. Paddy Greene was the station porter and, as well as delivering the mail, kept us informed of all the news both inside and outside the station. The Control Room was manned by Tom Killeen, Brendan Thompson (same year as myself), Richard Eacrett, Ray Denton, Roger Aherne (we finished our service in Marina) and Joe Claffey who was a good hurler and could drive a golf ball an extremely long way.

Offaly were coming to the top of the football tree and won their first All-Ireland in 1971. Joe Slattery, Sean McEvoy, Vincent McEvoy, Tony Coleman, Mick Carter, Jon McCowen, Jim Whelan knew their football inside out, as did John Pierce, who was a Kerryman like myself.

Other names which spring to mind are Richard Mullins, John Ward, Jim Redmond, Pat Culleton, Tom Dobbyn, Willie Roche, Jack Hutchinson and Peter Beacon (I moved into his Staff House on Portlaoise Road). I moved on to Great Island in July 1973 and eventually retired from Marina Station in October 2004. Those were happy days – and I say “Thanks for the Memories”.



# Portarling

Paddy  
Carey

Edwin  
Carter

Martin  
Collins

Frank  
Higgins

Henry  
Gallagher

Paddy  
Dwyer

Matt  
Howard

Jim  
Lehane

Arthur  
Oakley

Paddy  
Murray

Ned  
Murray

Paddy  
O'Rourke

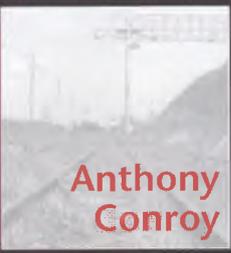
Eddie  
O'Toole

John  
Pierce

# ton STAFF MEMBERS



Michael  
Collins



Anthony  
Conroy



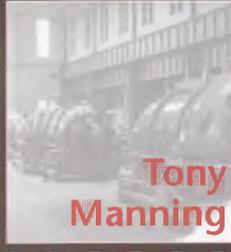
Norman  
Conway



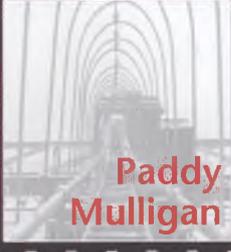
David  
Doran



Jerry  
Crowley



Tony  
Manning



Paddy  
Mulligan



Billy  
Mullins



Paddy  
Murphy



Mick  
Murphy



Willie  
Roche



Tom  
Shortall



Kevin  
Thompson

# Long Service Awards

## Presentation of Long Service Awards to Staff and



**BACK ROW:** D. Kennelly, M. Heavey, R. Orange, A. Kavanagh, Hearty, P. Hearty, Mrs. Slattery, J. Slattery, P. Powell, J. Hoey. Howard, J. McQueen, J. Mullally, Mrs. Mullally, Mrs. Hoey, Mrs. Quinn, W. Flood, B. Hutch. **2ND ROW:** J. Corbett, Mrs. Lawlor, J. Henriques (hidden), Mrs. W. Whelan, Mrs. Kelly, J. Doris, J. Lawlor, M. Cusack, J. Whelan, W. Whelan,

# Pensioners of Portarlington Generating Station



**M. Brennan, T. Gibson, J. Redmond, Mrs. Redmond, Mrs. 3RD ROW: J. Lawlor, B. Clear, T. McEvoy, F. McCague, S. McEvoy, Mrs. Malone, Mrs. Powell, Mrs. Bolton, Mrs. Mrs. Corbett, Mrs. O'Neill, A. O'Neill, L. Clarke, T. Lawlor, J. Whelan, J. Whelan, Mrs. Moran, E. Blanc. FRONT ROW: K. D. Malone, W. Bolton, J. Hutchinson, J. Moran, H. Quinn.**

# Long Service Awards

The Regional Manager, Bill Flood, presents Long Service Awards to:

[1] Paddy Powell

[2] Vera Quinn on behalf of her father George

[3] Joe Slattery

[4] Andy O'Neill

[5] Paddy Hearty

[6] John Corbett

[7] Frank McCague

[8] Jack Henriques

[9] Jim Mullally

[10] Dave Malone

[11] Tom Lawlor

[12] Harry Quinn



Noel Weatherhead who took all the photographs.





# Long Service Awards

The Regional Manager, Bill Flood, presents Long Service Awards to:  
[13] John Lawlor, [14] Luke Clarke, [15] Gerry Mansfield, [16] Billy Whelan, [17] Bobby Orange, [18] Jim Whelan, [19] Tommy Gibson, [20] Tony Kavanagh, [21] Mick Brennan, [22] Sean Moran, [23] Jim Redmond, [24] Jim Lawlor, [25] Jack Hutchinson. [26] Josie and Joe Slattery.



19



20



21



22



23



24



25



26



# Later Photographs



**BACK** — Peg Redmond, Joe Hoey Snr and Bob Orange.  
**FRONT** — Kathleen Hoey, Nell McEvoy, Mary Brennan and Madeline Orange.



John Doris, Barry Hutch, Tony Coleman, Jim Moloney and Sean Shortall.



**BACK:** Martin Heavey, Paddy O'Dwyer, Johnsy Murphy, Ena Moran, Peg Redmond, Jim Redmond, Tony Coleman and Tom McEvoy. **FRONT** — Tommy McCormack, Kathleen O'Dwyer, Rosaleen Murphy, Madge Rodgers, Elizabeth Kavanagh and Bridie Quinn.

## Later Photographs



Frank McCague, Paddy Powell, Jim Lawlor, Barry Hutch and Martin Heavey.



Ena Moran, Sean Moran, Lena Whelan, Kathleen Whelan and Jim Whelan.

# Later Photographs

BACK — Jim Lawlor, Cam Bryan, Peter Beacon and Dave Malone.  
FRONT — Tess Malone, Teresa Bryan and Anna Beacon.



MIDDLE LEFT — John Henriques and Nellie Oakley.

MIDDLE RIGHT — Bill Flood and Bill Bolton.

BOTTOM  
BACK — Johnsy Murphy, John Corbet and Dave Malone.  
FRONT — Jim Redmond, Sean Moran and Frank McCague.





TOP — Norman Bishop, Billy Whelan and Barry Hutch.

MIDDLE — Johnsy Murphy, Martin Heavey and William Peet (1st Manager).

BOTTOM — Tom McEvoy, John Doris, Dave Malone, John Lawlor, Jim Lawlor.

# Group of Staff and Families



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT —**

Lena and Jim Whelan.

John Clarke, Martin Malone and John Lawrence.

Kathleen and Joe Hoey with Tess and Dave Malone.

Two groups of Staff and families at Long Service Awards.

Peg Hearty and Peg Redmond.

Jim Redmond and Paddy Hearty.

Dilly and Jack Henriques.





Tommy Connolly, Johnny Murphy and Jimmy Carroll.

## Stevie Allen

Laois Minor football team won the Leinster Championship in 1966 & 1967. During that second campaign they introduced a very young high scoring forward called Stevie Allen, who went on to have a distinguished football career. He was also a noted basketball player in his youth but concentrated on football in later years. He won a Leinster Junior Championship medal in 1968, and in 1969 was on the Laois team which won the U-21 Championship. He represented Leinster in the Railway Cup Competitions in 1974, 1975 & 1977 – and continued to play club football for Portarlinton until 1988, when he was part of the panel which won the Laois Senior Championship. He has trained many football teams since his retirement – including the Laois Ladies' football team.



# A Brief Account of Turbines at Portarlinton Power Station

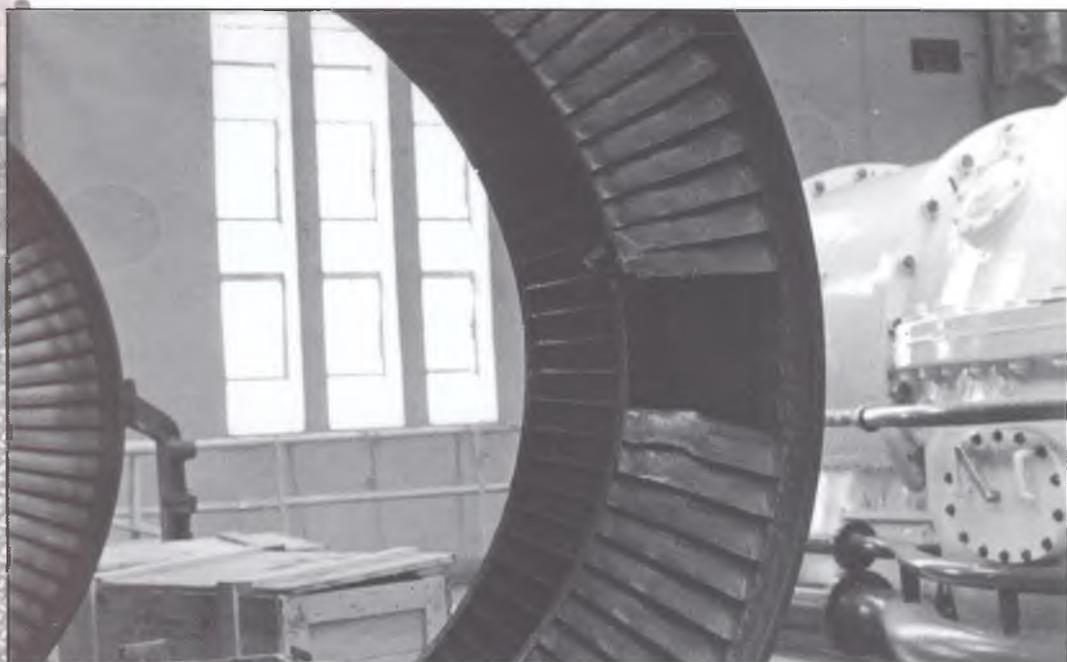
**John Doris**

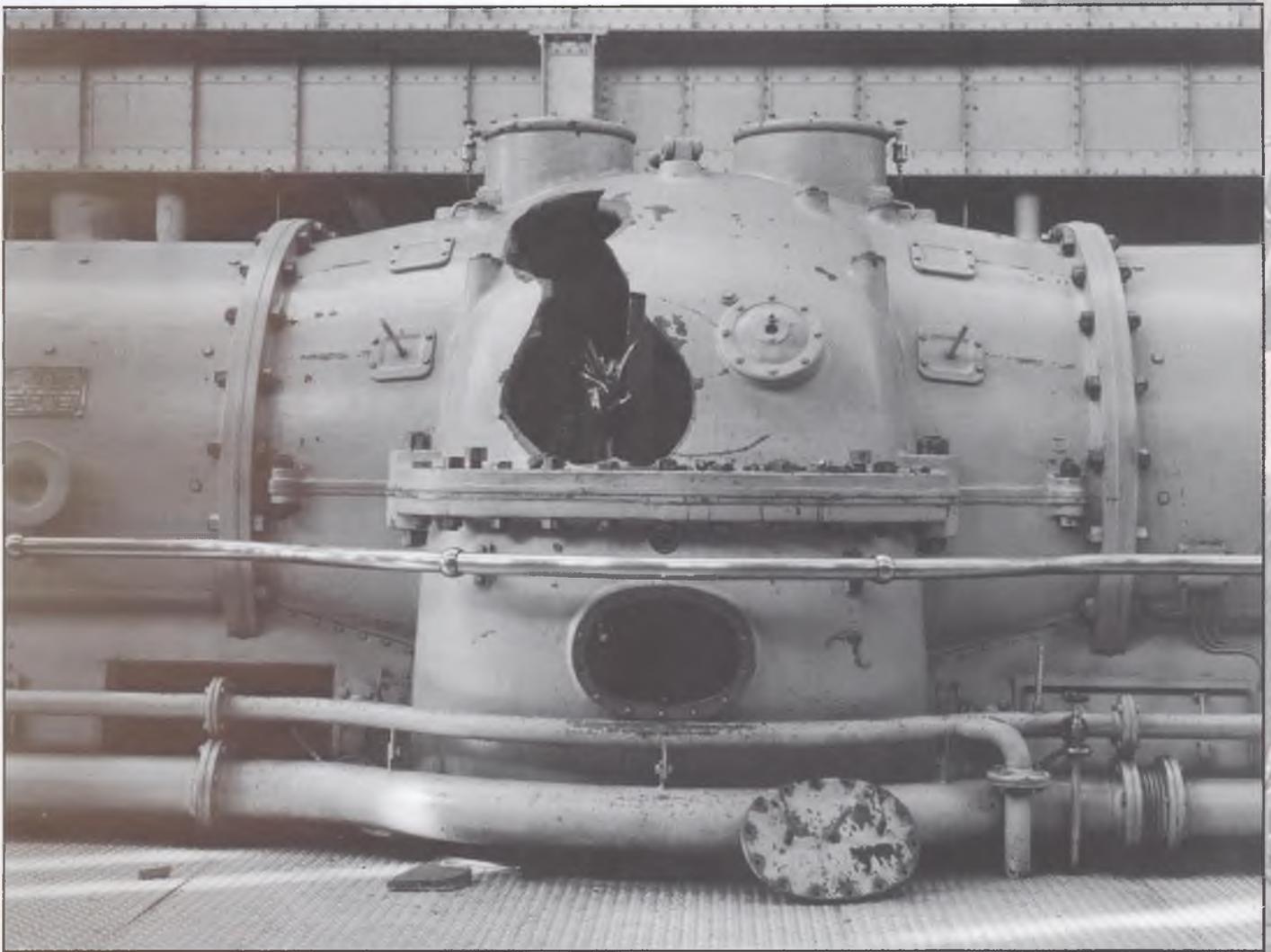
Growing up in Co. Meath in the forties and fifties, the only mention of Portarlinton I recall was during a primary school geography lesson in Kilbride, near Trim, where as a short-trouser wearing and Brylcreem-haired youngster, I learned that this exotic sounding place was one of the chief towns in the county of Laois. Later, probably during my teenage years, I noted that my small brown suitcase was stamped with the makers name, Travel Goods Ltd., and the Irish version of the name for Portarlinton, namely Cuil an tSudaire. While attending University College, Dublin, my professor of Mechanical Engineering, Dr. Leahy, referred to the turbines at the Portarlinton electricity generating station being different to those at Allenwood. As I write this now, little did I know then, in my early twenties, that over forty years later I would look back and see that more than half my life would be subsequently spent in Portarlinton, a place I had barely heard of in the first third of it!



Former Deputy Manager.

I later learned that although both Portarlinton and Allenwood stations had identical Babcock & Wilcox chain grate sod peat-fired boilers, the essential difference was that whereas Allenwood had axial-flow turbines, Portarlinton was unique in the ESB in having radial-flow ones. This meant that instead of the super-heated steam being introduced at one end of the shaft mounted with a series of blades axially, the steam flowing from the high pressure blades along the shaft to the low pressure end, the steam was introduced in the centre of the shaft and expanded outwards. This was achieved by having two concentric series of blades interlocking with each other and moving in opposite directions on two shafts which meant that there had to be two generators instead of one as on the conventional axial-flow turbine. The advantage of the radial-flow turbine was that it was compact and did not require the heating-up of a large quantity of metal which meant that it could be run-up faster than the axial-flow and so was suitable for the peaking demands of the electricity network.





The first Stal radial-flow turbine had actually been installed in North Wall in 1949 to take steam from four small oil-fired boilers (12.5 megawatts in all). It was later transferred to Portarlinton in 1962 and so became the third turbine at the station. Portarlinton originally had two Stal turbines of 12.5 megawatt capacity each (maximum 15 megawatts each for peaks) There was a serious blow up of one of these in the mid-1950s. Several other blading failures occurred down through the years, but they did generate a lot of electricity, up to 150,000 Mw/hrs per year, or 150,000,000 units of electricity in their peak years from 1963 to 1977 when all 3 turbines were available.

It seems that a lot of trouble may have been due to a mismatch of vibration nodes in rows 6 and 7. This was discovered following the last blading failure in 1985 with new techniques of vibration measurement developed by Stal Laval. For the remaining years of the power station's life, the last turbine had these blades removed and ran without them until the closure in 1988.

I visited the Stal Works in Finspong, Sweden on three occasions, when repairs to the bladings were being carried out. I was accompanied by the ESB's Turbine Specialist, the late Jack Houlihan, who was a very knowledgeable source on the Stal turbines. Incidentally, in his early years, Jack had also been a shift engineer in Portarlinton. I found the Swedish engineers very polite and they would shake your hand every time they met you! I have a vivid and lasting memory of the aerial view of the beautiful countryside of Sweden, covered as it is in woods and lakes, and picturesque wooden holiday homes speckled throughout the verdant expanses of forest. On the edge of our own vast expanse of bog lands I feel that we were all privileged to have worked in what was Ireland's first sod peat-fired electricity generating station, Portarlinton.

# Later Photographs



BACK – Barry Hutch, Bob Magee, John Doris, Johnsie Murphy, Bill Flood, Bill Peet, Dave Malone.  
FRONT – Des O’Houlihan, John Corbett, Jim Redmond, Sean Moran and Frank McCague.



Seamus and Steven Mullally.



BACK – Bob Magee, Joe Slattery, Steve Allen, Bobby Orange, John Doris. FRONT – Cammy Bryan, Norman Bishop, Jay McCague.



Kevin Keogh, Tony Lyons, Joe Kiernan, Dave McDonagh and Fergus Powell in the background.



Bridie and Noel Deffew, Peggy and Henry Murray, Anne and Paddy Dillon.



MONEYPOINT GROUP — Fergus Powell, Kevin Keogh, Paddy Lawlor, Ger Foran, Tony Lyons, Jerry Hoey and Joe Kiernan.

## Gaelic Games Competitions

Football was always the major sport in the ESB. Before 1958 various stations used to compete in the Factories' League. However, in 1958 an internal ESB competition was organised and this was open to all of the stations and Districts and also Head Office. There was a parallel competition for hurling and many noted hurlers took part in it over the years but far more players were available for the football competitions. The first competition was won by Cork District and then in 1959 the team representing Portarlinton and Allenwood won the trophy after a number of epic games in various parts of the country. A feature of the event in those years was the large contingent of supporters which accompanied all of the teams in every match.

In 1961 the competition was won again with a very strong team, which competed under the name Allenwood, but also included players from Portarlinton and Rhode Stations – and this feat was accomplished again in 1966 and 1969.

Some years later with the advent of new younger staff the individual stations entered separate teams and the matches were all closely contested. At that stage the competition adopted the Colleges' formation of 13-a-side and it made for open play and very exciting matches. A team representing Allenwood, Portarlinton and Rhode won the ESB Ladies' Football Championship in 1971. In the hurling competitions we were often represented by Tony Coleman and Joe Claffey.

Many of us played gaelic football and some were lucky enough to win county championships with our respective clubs and to wear the county colours. The Laois side was represented by Tony Coleman, Bill Bolton, Hugh Keogh, Jon McCowen, Eddie Dunne and Steve Allen.

Offaly players included Tom McEvoy, Frank Higgins and Sean McEvoy, who was a member of the Gracefield team which defeated Newtown Blues in the 1971 Leinster Club Championship final. Kevin Kelly from Wicklow played senior football with Portarlinton in the early 1950s. Eugene Smith, who later became Station Manager in Allenwood, also played with Portarlinton at that time and had earlier won two junior All-Ireland medals with his native Dublin.

[I think that was why our football teams, which jointly represented the two stations in the ESB competitions, always wore the sky-blue Dublin colours.]

I am reliably informed that when Eugene Smith was playing for Port. there were a few other ESB men on the team and there were regular calls to "give it to Mr. Smith". One of the senior members of the famous Miller family from Timahoe gave his opinion that "I never met a team before with 14 men and a mister".

## ESB Journal Report on Football '59

### FOOTBALL SEMI-FINALS

**Portarlinton/Allenwood, 2-11; Tralee, 2-6**

The match between Tralee and Portarlinton/Allenwood was played in Nenagh on 4th July, and turned out to be a thriller. Tralee opened in splendid style, and were 3 pts. up in ten minutes. Portarlinton then replied with a point and a goal by D. Dunne put them in front. Tralee fought back and the score at half-time was 1-5 each. Ten minutes after the start of the second half Portarlinton had shot into a lead of 4 pts. but Tralee again fought back and a great goal by M. Breen put them on level terms with eight minutes to go. The superior fitness of the Portarlinton side told in the closing stages and they went on to win by 2-11 to 2-6.

**Dublin No. 1, 4-0; Head Office, 1-6**

This game was played under wretched conditions, the slippery sod and greasy ball leading to much mishandling and faulty shooting. Nevertheless, there were many exciting phases, particularly in the closing stages when the Dublin No. 1 backs were put to the pin of their collars to keep Andy Lynch, Eamon McSweeney, O. McKenna and Co. at bay. Despite the advantage of a strong wind, Dublin No. 1 were lucky to be so far in front at half-time. They owed their lead of 4-0 to 0-4 to the magnificent football of Brendan Lynch, Paddy Foley, Paddy Brennan and Kevin Coffey, aided by some inexplicable lapses by the H/O defence. In the second half, H/O were so much in command that Dublin No. 1 failed to raise a flag. H/O tacked on 1-2 and had many near misses in a pulsating finish.

### FOOTBALL FINAL

**Portarlinton/Allenwood, 1-9; Dublin No. 1, 0-3**

Congratulations to Portarlinton/Allenwood on their well-earned victory at Naas on 25th July. This triumph was a fitting reward for a hard-working committee and an eager bunch of players who had set their sights on the trophies from the beginning of the campaign. The game itself was most interesting. Perhaps Portarlinton/Allenwood never looked in danger of defeat but the spectators were at all times enthralled by tenacious and exhilarating football. A fine sporting spirit prevailed to the end, with the victors and vanquished leaving the field arm in arm, happy in the knowledge that they had all contributed to an enjoyable hour's football. All the Portarlinton/Allenwood players did so well that it might be invidious to select certain players for special mention. However, the abiding memories will no doubt be the deceptive side-stepping of Eddie Dunne at centre-forward, the penetrating solo runs of Shem Douglas on his left, the brilliant fielding of Jack Bracken and Frank Higgins, two solid half-backs, and the grim determination of midfielders Owen Malone and Pat Moore. The Fleet Street side carried fewer big-guns but Paddy Brennan at fullback, Kevin Coffey at centrefield, and Paddy Doyle at half-forward



*Portarlinton/Allenwood — Second holders of the Football Shield.*

displayed a brand of football that is all too rarely seen. Others to do well for Fleet Street were Sean Treacey, Paddy Foley, Gerry Byrne and Brendan Lynch.

Scorers for Portarlinton/Allenwood, who led 1-0 to 0-1 at half-time, were Tony Coleman (1-1), Mick Jacob (0-3) Jack Phelan (0-2), and Shem Douglas, Frank Higgins, Jim McGoldrick (0-1 each). Kevin Coffey (0-2) and Gerry Byrne (0-1) replied for Fleet Street.

Tailpiece: The magnificent spirit prevailing in Portarlinton/Allenwood and in Dublin 1 was clearly evident from the enthusiasm of the large contingent of supporters who came by bus, cars, etc., to cheer on their favourites. It was good to see Patrick Harkin, Hugh Quirke and Des Hughes there to exhort the Fleet Street men, and, of course,



*Dublin No. 1 — the defeated finalists.*

Eugene Smith of Allenwood who interrupted his holiday in Bundoran to see his men do battle. Mention must also be made of Terry McCarthy, Galway, and Martin Moran, Sligo, who travelled so far to see the game. The same spirit was again in evidence at the celebrations which followed. After a wee bit of preliminary sparring, barriers were broken and men of all levels from the district and station mixed as if they were life-long friends. After a meal in the Town Hall, at which the shield and medals were presented by Terry McCarthy, there were high jinks in a local hostelry. Here victory had to be conceded to the City men,

## Football: Allenwood Upset The Odds

Allenwood 2 goals 8 points, Cork 3 points.

Allenwood became champions for the second time when they defeated last year's winners, Cork, at Nenagh on the 8th July.

Allenwood had the advantage of a stiff breeze in the first half. Paddy Moore (2) and Sean Cummins (1) had them three points up early on. Cork replied with a well taken point by Dan Lyons. Then after a period of stalemate Frank Higgins broke loose and in a matter of minutes scored a goal and two points for Allenwood, to which Sean Cummins added a point, leaving the half-time score Allenwood 1 goal 6 points, Cork 1 point.

The elements were unkind to Cork in that the breeze died down considerably during the interval. Allenwood were up two further points by Mick Jacob and Jim McGoldrick before Sean Collins sent over for Cork. This score was the forerunner of persistent Cork pressure which promised an



Above: New Inter-District Champions, Allenwood. Below: Cork, the runners-up.



E. V. Cleary, Deputy Personnel Officer, presents the Trophy to Frank Higgins, Allenwood captain.

exciting finish. However, bad luck and rock-like defence foiled all their efforts for the goal that would have set the game alight. The turning point came in the 53rd minute when a delightful passing movement ended with Joe Daly slamming the ball into the Cork net for Allenwood's second goal.

At the function later in the Ormond Hotel, both Mr. McCarthy (District Manager, Galway), who presided, and Mr. Cleary, Deputy Personnel Officer, who presented the trophies, stressed the value of competitions of this nature from the point of view of the staff and also of the Board.

**The team also won the ESB Championship in 1961 and the Journal reported on the final.**

### 1971 WINNERS LADIES' FOOTBALL

Josephine Glennon,  
Patricia Glennon,  
Gemma Kane,  
Nuala Malone,  
Mary Malone,  
Dolly Kerrigan,  
Mary Gunning,  
Greta McCusker  
and  
Kathleen Ennis.



As an indication of the importance which was attached to the ESB Gaelic Football Championship in the early years, this framed photograph of the winning team in the second year of the Championship [1959] was granted pride of place on the wall of the Staff Canteen in Allenwood Station from 1959 until the closing day in 1996.



**Allenwood-Portarlinton-Rhode Turf Fired Generating Stations — E.S.B. Gaelic Football Champions 1959**  
– BACK ROW: Owen Malone, Denis Dunne, Jack Phelan (Capt), Eddie Dunne, Jim McGoldrick, Seamus Douglas and Eugene Smyth. FRONT ROW: Jon McCowen, Tony Kilmurray, Paddy Moore, Mick Jacob, Jack Bohan, Tom Flynn, Jacky Bracken, Frank Higgins and Luke Lynch.

## Midland Region Sports

Starting around 1979 and continuing well into the 1980s the Midland Region organised a Regional Sports each year. Enthusiastic teams from the station competed in various team sports and the year's events culminated with the Regional Athletic Sports at a central venue. The tug-of-war was contested strongly every year.

We always entered a team in the Tennis competitions and Brendan Thompson usually won the singles competition while Brendan and I generally won the men's doubles.

These Regional Sports Competitions proved to be extremely popular and certainly succeeded in the task of creating a bond between the staff of the various stations in the region. They were also successful in helping to perpetuate the cultural identification of the staff with the ESB, which had been such a feature of the earlier days – and which many felt we were in danger of losing as the organisation grew larger.

# The Portarlinton Pitch & Putt Story — by Jack Kenny



## TOWER PITCH & PUTT CLUB



The social side of life at Portarlinton Station was never high on the agenda with most of the station employees. Some were involved in the local GAA scene, others Golf, Swimming, Athletics, etc., all external to station life. In 1979 a committee was elected in the station with a view to forming a Pitch & Putt club for ESB employees and to develop an area at the rear of the station building as a Pitch & Putt course. With the help of management (who provided equipment) and mostly voluntary work the committee's dream was realised in 1980. When the 9-hole course designed by Tommy Dobbyn, Jimmy Redmond and Dave Malone was opened, Paddy Culleton was appointed course manager. The club produced some very good Pitch & Putt players and most of them now play golf very successfully. The highlight of the Pitch & Putt season was the hosting of an open competition, during the Portarlinton French Festival. A station team, competing in the All-Ireland inter-station competition, played at various venues throughout the country. A team representing Portarlinton station finished runners-up in the competition in 1982. Funds for the club were raised raffling turkeys during October, November and December. The club, named Tower Pitch & Putt, was a very successful venture – most of the station staff playing at some time, but of course as in all areas of life the knockers were hiding in the long grass, vocal but not visual. The club was disbanded in 1988 when the station closed. A sad day for all.

Tom O'Shea, John O'Reilly,  
Seamus Maher and Mick Keogh.



Jack Kenny,  
Anthony O'Reilly,  
Tom Murphy,  
Gerry Foran,  
Denis Byrne  
and  
Tom O'Shea.



At tournament with  
Portarlinton French Festival  
— Gerry Mansfield, PJ Dunne,  
Breda Clarke, Bill Humphreys,  
Mary Kenny, Tom Dobbyn,  
RF Magee and Jack Kenny.



Gerry Foran, Denis Byrne, Tom O'Shea. Jim Redmond presents plaque to Paddy Clarke.

# My Memories of Portarlinton

Stevie Allen

I would like to state at the outset that I am very pleased this book about Portarlinton Power Station has been compiled and I am also glad to have been asked to record my general impressions about working there. I was told to give an honest opinion as one of a later generation of workers who had replaced retiring members of the original staff. The suggestion was made that I was at liberty to write candidly and could freely express any views I had. However, I can truthfully say that from the time I joined the staff in 1972 I enjoyed the general atmosphere there and I certainly have no bad memories to record.

During the sixteen years I spent in Portarlinton I worked in almost every department and I enjoyed my time there – and managed to learn a few skills which were very useful to me when I had a house of my own to look after. I met many fine people there who were quite capable of livening up any day while still getting their work done efficiently.

I started with the mechanical department, which had a large group of people, and there the system meant that you generally worked on a one-to-one basis with a particular fitter a lot of the time (with occasional rotations of staff). The entire unit got on well together and I soon got to find out which were the humorists and which had the imagination and skill to organise an occasional hoax or leg-pull. The department certainly could get the work done – but I have to say that anyone who was inclined to take himself too seriously was likely to be taken down a peg or two.

When I moved to the electrical department I found a much smaller group and the system favoured there meant that you could be working with any other person in the group. At that time the group consisted of Tommy Dobbyn, Noel Deffew, Joe Delaney, Joe Tinkler and Tommy Connolly. They had all worked together for some time and were a close-knit group but I was accepted as one of their own immediately and I really enjoyed the time I spent there.

There were many people in the station who had fairly long service and were familiar with the traditions of the station – and the many interesting stories from the past. I always enjoyed hearing these stories and the talk of people who had made a difference in their time [not all of them still around to give their versions of events]. Since then I have always felt that we should not lose sight of our own history and that is one reason that I am delighted that this book will be published.

At the time I was surprised to discover how many of the staff were very active in various organisation in the locality and particularly the sporting ones.

- Frank McCague was recruited by Portarlinton GAA Club where he was in turn Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and he presided over great success on the playing field [at underage and at senior level] as well as the construction of the GAA Centre and the development of the playing field.
- Bill Bolton was a prominent player in the heyday of the club and captained county championship winning teams on a number of occasions. He is currently president of the club.
- Tony Coleman was a prominent player with the hurling and football clubs and he also competed at a high level at boxing and athletics. He was a successful trainer of football teams and was a very successful referee.
- Jack Henriques was tireless in his promotion of hurling especially at underage level. Indeed his constant exhortation to “play the ball on the ground” may have been a source of amusement to the onlookers but was not forgotten by the players. Of course, what he really advocated was learning the basics first before trying to develop the fancier touches which were second nature to youngsters in his native Cork.
- John Kenny is still involved at administrative level with Arlington Soccer Club.
- Dick Mullins, Tony Coleman and Bill Bolton were major figures in St. Michael’s Athletic Club.
- Tommy Dobbyn served on the committee of the Golf Club and acted as treasurer for a few years.
- Dick Eacrett worked hard for the Rugby Club in its early days.
- Joe Tinkler, Jon McCowen and Brendan Thompson were very active in the Tennis Club.



- Dave Malone, Tom O'Shea, Brendan Thompson, John Doris, John O'Dea and Jon McCowen all play with the senior section in the Golf Club.
- Jay McCague and his greyhounds were often a favourite topic of conversation – especially when we tried to tell him that he fed the dogs too well and didn't work them hard enough.

We took part in ESB competitions in Gaelic Football and Soccer and these helped build morale as well as assisting in creating friendships with staff from other locations. Everyone spoke of the finals won by the earlier teams but we had a great team in 1973 which contained great players like Martin Heavey and John Smith. Probably the only players still around from the older teams were Hugh Keogh and Jon McCowen but in the new 13-a-side formation we came within a score of beating a great Cork team in the semi-final in Semple Stadium in what effectively was the final [since Cork won the final by a very big score].

In 1978 the station was off load for nine months while two sets of turbine blading were sent to Sweden for thorough examination and overhaul. I was very impressed with the way in which a large group of workers, with the co-operation and encouragement of the management, all worked together as a team to create a pitch & putt course. Many people worked long hours, practically every evening, until the 9-hole course was finished.

The dayworker category was represented by three unions and these were the I.T.G.W.U., the F.W.U.I. and the A.T.G.W.U. I was a member of the FWUI, whose shop steward was Tony Coleman. However, Tony was promoted to the position of chargehand and this resulted in the creation of a vacancy for shop steward. At the next union meeting there appeared to be no candidate for the position – and the rest of the members persuaded me to take on the position. Of course I was assured that the job was easy and that there would be no problems since everyone would help out. Needless to say it did not turn out quite as easy as that but, since there was a good relationship between the shop stewards, there were no major problems.

When I arrived in 1972 the three sets were regularly on full load and the outlook for the station seemed quite promising. The level of expenditure and maintenance seemed to indicate that the ESB intended to keep the station at full output for many years to come. Yet, a few years later, I remember being shocked and disappointed when electrical supervisor John Corbett informed Tommy Dobbyn and myself that the decision had been taken not to undertake any further major overhaul on G3. This looked ominous for the future but could also be considered in a positive way since the lower output from the station would mean a greater number of years of operation before the fuel supplies ran out.

During the 1980s it became obvious that the ESB had made the final decision to phase out the sod peat stations even though it was clear that the fuel supplies were not quite exhausted. The age and condition of the plant were cited – and since Bord na Móna declared that they also were intent on closing down production of sod peat we were eventually fighting a losing battle in our efforts to prolong the life of the station.

When the time came for the final negotiations the atmosphere in the workplace became really depressing. It was a time of great uncertainty – and, in general, conversations were dominated by the questions raised by the subject of closure. “Where are jobs available?” “Who is going?” “Who will take the retirement package?”

A few people could not actually believe that an institution which had meant so much to the area would be allowed to close when there was still fuel available on the bogs. The negotiations were long and tortured [but conducted in a civilised fashion by both sides] and eventually, assisted by the head office staff of all the unions, agreement was reached.

The date for the official closure was set for 31/3/88 and people all made their own decisions as to which option suited them best.

As we walked as a group towards the front gate for a final photograph, which is shown elsewhere in this book, I realised then that there was a certain finality about the move. I looked around and thought things will never be quite the same again and I would never work again with many of the people who had been part of my working life for the last 16 years.

I had made up my mind to stay in power generation and opted to move to Rhode station where I remained until it also closed. I have now settled in to work in Portlaoise District but I'll always look back with fond memories of my years in power generation.

# Portarlinton: The Final Chapter — by Daire O’Broin



I was very pleased to take up the position of station manager in Portarlinton in 1987. Portarlinton was a famous station in the early ESB system, which had provided sterling service. Many of my predecessors were famous in their own rights and I was proud to follow them. But my task was different from that of my predecessors. By the time I entered the front door peat supplies were in decline and the machinery was in a poor condition. My task was to close the station and to find other ways to either deploy the existing staff within ESB or to assist in their early retirement from the company.

In carrying out this task I explored many avenues including alternative uses to which the plant could be put. Ideas as diverse as rubbish incineration and fish farming were examined. These enterprises involved talks with local politicians and even a government minister. Ultimately they came to nothing.

A link was forged at that time with Portarlinton’s sister station Allenwood. A few felt that this could lead to good transferability between the stations. In forging this link, staff from Portarlinton went working in Allenwood for periods but there were links also forged in the area of sport and social competition. During this period a competition of two legs took place involving a pub quiz and a pitch and putt competition.

In the first leg Portarlinton showed their skill with the white ball and decisively won the pitch and putt. Allenwood subsequently won the pub quiz. However, following this leg there were mutterings in the plant and cartoons appeared in the station penned by one of the many artists depicting the organisers as biased in favour of one station. This was a very amusing cartoon, and of course I refute the bias completely. The wit shown in this incident was typical of the good spirit and humour which permeated the workplace.

It was a sad day when finally the door was closed for the last time. The staff and various managements can hold their heads high. They worked in the early years in the highest technical environment in the midlands, but like all technology it had its day and eventually bowed to the new.

Finally, I want to wish all the staff I had dealings with the best in their various and varied lives.

## Profile of Joe Mullen



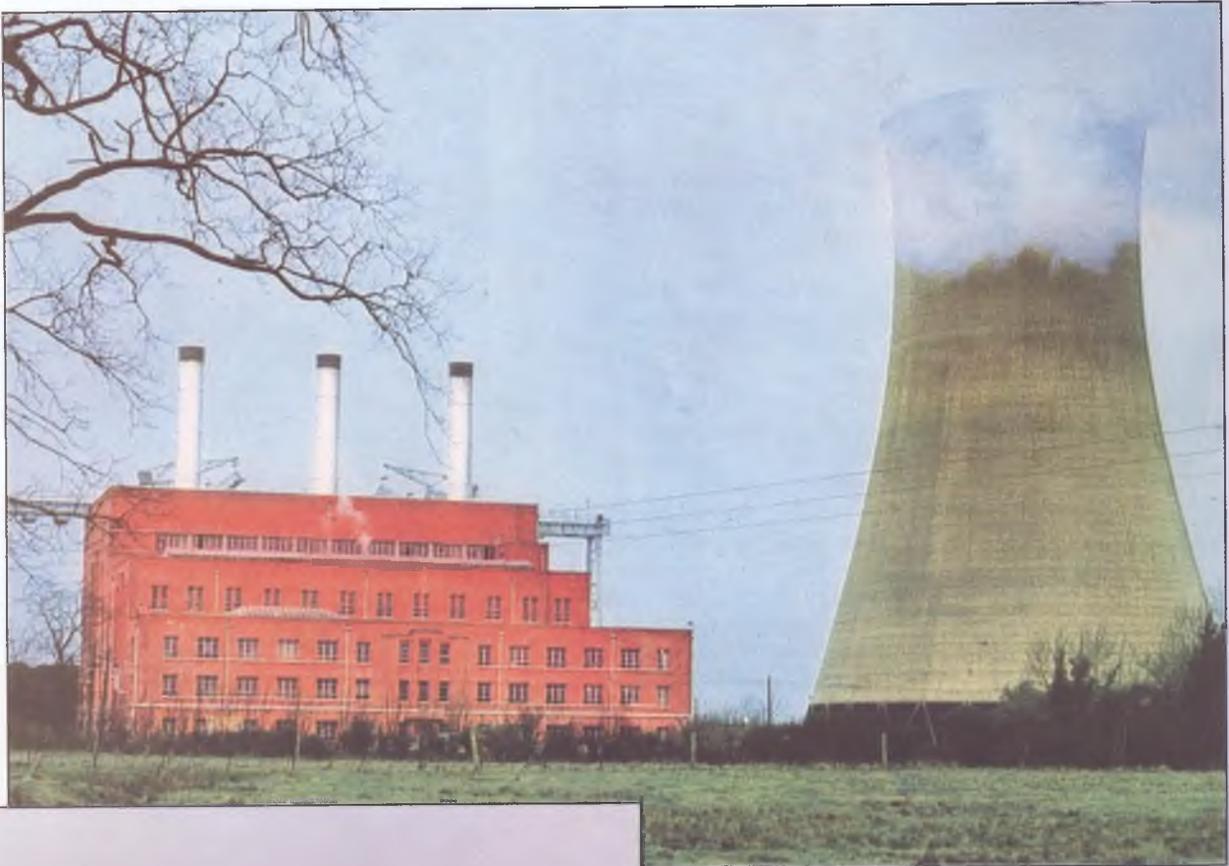
A very popular man throughout the early years of the station was the quiet reserved Joe Mullen. He was unfailingly polite and friendly and he was obviously efficient at his work but there remained a slight air of mystery about him. We all knew that he had served in World War I – and it was rumoured that he had been decorated for bravery – but he never spoke of those days. Indeed, it was only when he was over 80 as we walked home together from the funerals of a few of our former work colleagues that he talked to me about his experiences in the war. He spoke of the use of artillery and of the deafening noise and also of life in the trenches – and he briefly mentioned that they had come under gas attack. It was only years later that I learned from his daughter Mai that after one such attack he lost the sight in both eyes for a number of weeks. I also finally saw the Imperial Military Medal, which had been awarded to him in 1918, and read the citation —

“Major-General C.E. Periera CB, CMG, Commanding 2nd Division congratulates Gunner J. Mullen R.F.A. on his bravery and devotion to duty as Linesman during operations on 2nd October 1918.”

Joe was an early volunteer to join the L.D.F. during the Emergency years and, later, he was delighted to serve in the F.C.A.

Joe Mullen, in direct contrast to William Peet, had a very long and distinguished career before he joined the power station staff.

# Station – through the seasons



Winter 1974.



# Last Day at the Station



Sean Shortall  
and  
Peter Hynes



Pat Nally,  
Gerry Harrington and  
P.J. Dunne.



Johnny Murphy, Sean Shortall, Peter Hynes,  
Ned Murphy, Tony Coleman, Stevie Allen, Hugh Keogh.



**BORD NA MÓNA STAFF  
LAST RAKE —**

Harry Hickland  
*Midland Area Manager*  
 James Harkins  
*Manager Clonsast*  
 Paddy Delaney  
 Liam Corcoran  
 Eddie Geoghegan  
 Seamus Connolly  
 William Devereaux  
 Har Bryan  
 Jim Murphy  
 Peter Kelly  
 John Joe Quinn  
 Sean McCann

*At the back:*  
 Paddy Mulpeter  
 Michael Murphy  
 P. Geoghegan

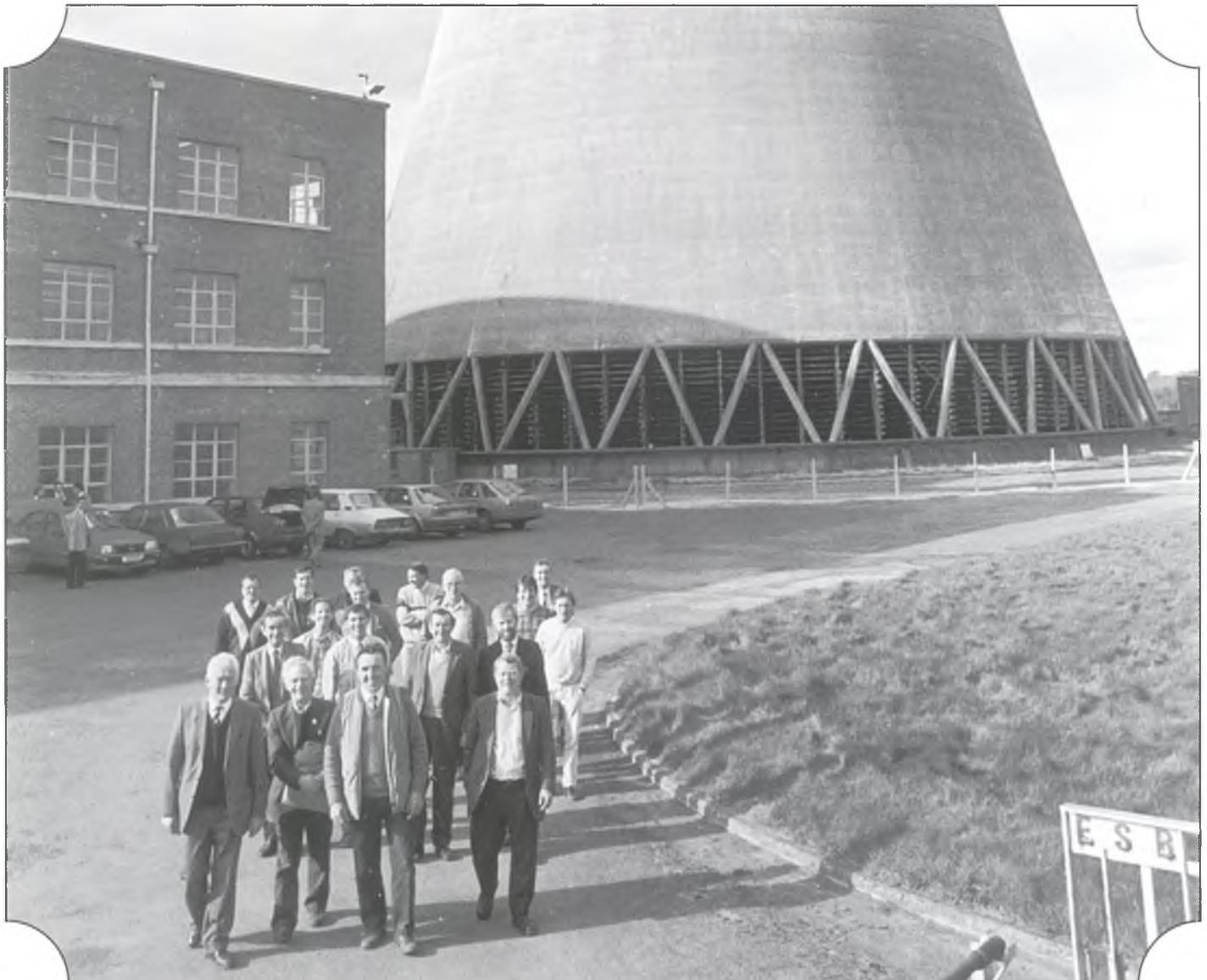
*Standing on loco:*  
 Seamus Gorry



**GATHERING IN THE CONTROL ROOM ON THE OFFICIAL CLOSING OF THE STATION ON MARCH 31ST 1988 —** Paddy Maher, Tommy McCormack, Leslie Steedman, Rebecca Bennett, Martin Heavey, Charlie Ward, Denis Byrne, Sean McEvoy, Jim Hearty, Jack Boylan, Dermot McNamara, Willie Slattery, Johnny Slattery, P.J. Dunne, Jim Carroll, Peter Hynes, Mick McEvoy, Tony Coleman, Hugh Keogh, Daire O'Broin, Jon McCowen, Joe Sharpe, Steve Allen, Alo Maher, Sean Shortall, Pa Phelan, Bill Flood, Kevin Kelly, John Doris, Joe Claffey, Johnny Murphy, Norman Bishop, Pat Colman, Joe Brennan and Brendan Thompson.



LAST PHOTOGRAPH IN FRONT OF NO. 1 TURBINE — *Front row:* Denis Byrne, Paddy Maher, Joe Brennan, Tommy McCormack, Jim Carroll, Tom Murphy, Daire O'Broin, Bill Flood, Kevin Kelly, Martin Heavey, Alo Maher, Sean Shortall. *Back row:* John Doris, Leslie Steedman, Pa Phelan, Joe Sharpe, Jack Boylan, Norman Bishop, Rebecca Bennett, Jim Hearty, Johnny Murphy, Hugh Keogh, Charlie Ward, Willie Slattery, Peter Hynes, Johnny Slattery, Tony Coleman, P.J. Dunne, Joe Claffey, Mick McEvoy, Steve Allen, Pat Colman, Ned Murphy, John Duffy, Jon McCowen.



**110** Some member of staff pose for Michael Scully in a ceremonial walkout for the "last day".

# Portarlinton Generating Station

by  
Patrick J. Culleton

*On the seventeenth of April  
In the year nineteen fifty,  
A station was built  
To produce electricity.*

*This station was sited  
In the county of Laois,  
In a town called Portarlinton,  
Not far from Portlaoise.*

*This building of red brick  
Was pleasing to the eye,  
With a cooling tower beside it,  
That seemed to reach to the sky.*

*Mr. Peet was the manager,  
Way back in those years,  
And He's still hale and hearty,  
After ninety odd years.*

*Portarlinton was the first of  
The turf burning stations,  
And sure 'twas no wonder,  
It was the talk of the nation.*

*Many visitors travelled,  
From far and wide,  
For a tour of the station,  
And see the inside.*

*Paddy Greene was the man,  
To show them around,  
For he was the porter,  
And lived in the town.*

*Fathers and sons and  
Relations of all kinds,  
Worked side by side in the powerhouse,  
As it was called at that time.*

*The sod peat was harvested,  
By the Bord na Móna crew,  
From areas like Garryhinch, Derryounce and the Bulge,  
To name but a few.*

*Many workers with skills,  
Worked day and night,  
To keep the factories running,  
And provide the countryside with light.*

*The good times we had,  
Far outweigh the bad,  
And to see it demolished,  
Indeed it was sad.*

*Now John and myself,  
Have worked ourselves blind,  
To rekindle some memories,  
For the folks left behind.*

*I hope you enjoy it,  
And I know you'll agree,  
This only marks the surface,  
Of times in Portarlinton and the E.S.B.*



# Tower Demolition

The cooling tower at Portarlinton Power Station was demolished by the contractor Robinson & Birdsell on Thursday, April 3rd 1997 at 10.30am.

When that day finally arrived the ESB Management had arranged for former members of the staff to attend together to view the demolition. The special "Viewing Area" was in a field on the Bishopswood Road at a safe distance from the site but which also afforded a clear view of the Station. One interesting aspect of the event was the contrast in the attitudes and emotions between those who had worked in the Station and the others, who included wives, relatives and local observers. Many of the latter group were quite emotional and some, indeed, were tearful at the obliteration of a very familiar landmark while the great majority of the former workers seemed to feel that the tower and building had served a great purpose in their time but had long outlived their usefulness. In addition, the steady decline into decay and disrepair of the building and site seemed to make the demolition a much preferable alternative.

We include a dramatic sequence of photographs of the event taken by Michael Scully together with some photographs of the staff who attended the demolition, and the subsequent reception, taken by Jon McCowen.



# Tower Demolition – the people



ABOVE — Front view of group at platform for photographers.

RIGHT — Bill Bolton, Bobby Orange and Tony Coleman.



BELOW — Side view of group at the platform for the photographers.



# Tower Demolition – the people



Louis Melia serenades ...  
*"The Tower We Loved So Well"*.



P.J. Dunne and Mick McEvoy.



Pat Culleton, Johnny Slattery, Henry Gallagher, Johnsy Murphy, Melia, Jody Slattery, Tony Coleman, Tom O'Shea, Paddy Connolly, John O'Dea, Alo Maher, Thomas McEvoy, Peter Kavanagh, Sean Bolton, Cathy Honan, John Clarke, Mick McEvoy, ——— and



Brendan Thompson, Mick Duffy and P.J. Dunne.



Tommy Lawlor.



P.J. Nolan, Mick Duffy, Paddy Mulligan, Anthony Maher, Tommy Dermot O'Meara, Peter Hynes, Tommy Connolly, Bobby Orange, Shortall, Tommy Lawlor, Seamus Mullally, Leslie Steedman, Bill Pat Colman.



# After Demolition

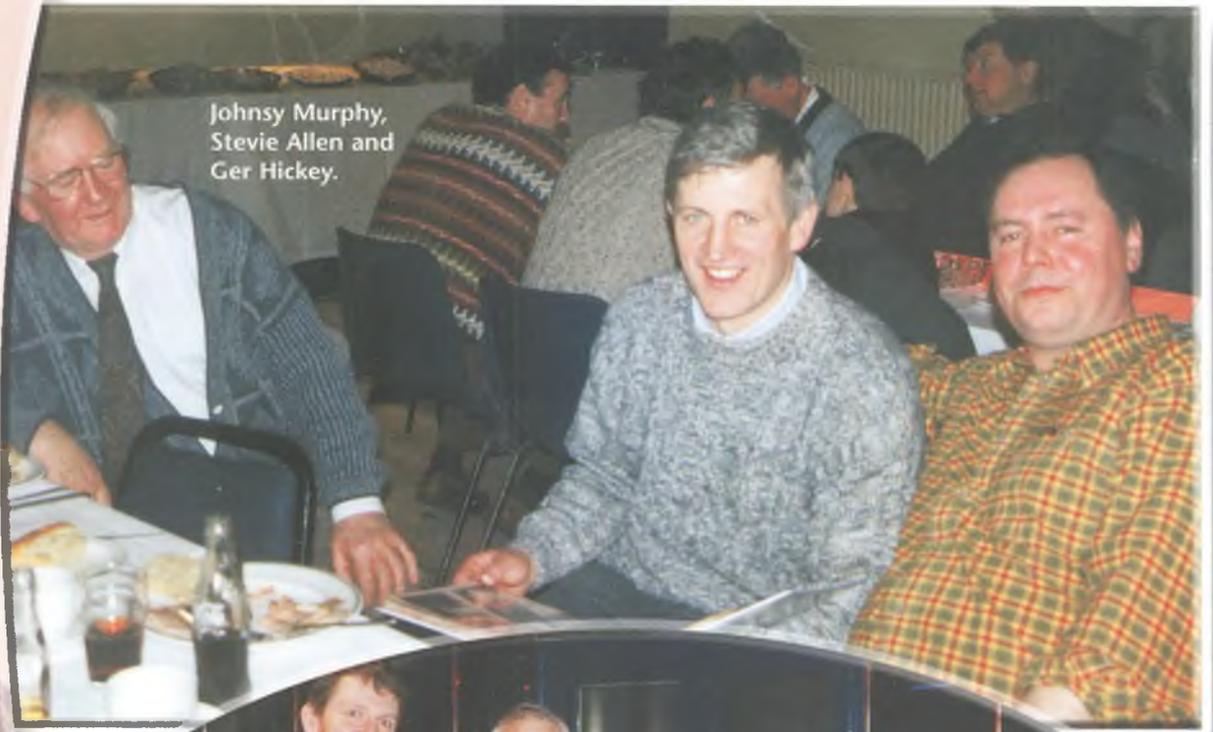


TOP — Jonathan and Louise McCowen pictured with Kieran Leavy, John and Nuala O'Dea with their grandson Jack.

MIDDLE — Jack Kenny, Tom Murphy, Etna Kenny, Patty Murphy and Sean Shortall.

BOTTOM — Madeleine Murphy, Tommy Lawlor, John and Sheila Clarke and Mary Dunne.





Johnsy Murphy,  
Stevie Allen and  
Ger Hickey.



Mick Nicholls, Pat  
Culleton, Stevie Allen, Jack  
Kenny, Joe Kiernan, Ann  
Allen and Mary Brennan.



John O'Reilly, Tom Gibson and Kathy Murphy.

RIGHT —  
Marie McCowen,  
Mary, Paddy and  
Anne Dillon.



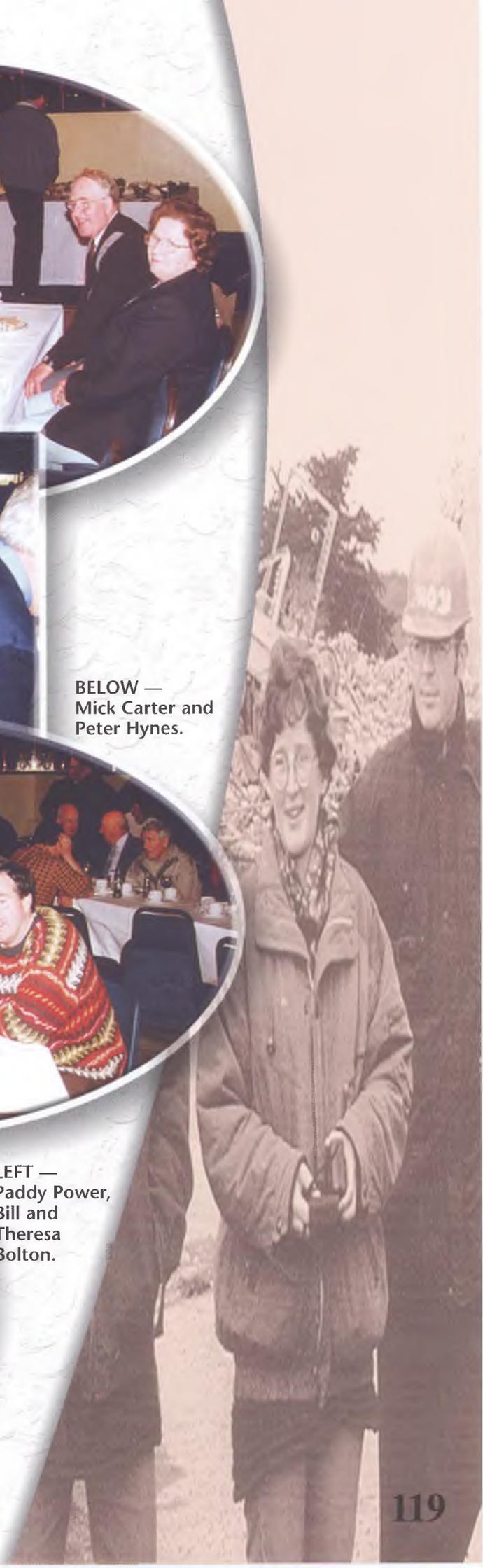
BELOW —  
Shay and Steven  
Mullally.



BELOW —  
Mick Carter and  
Peter Hynes.



LEFT —  
Paddy Power,  
Bill and  
Theresa  
Bolton.



# Station Demolition

Demolition of  
peat store crane.





# Portarlington Community Development Association

— by Aidan Mullins, Chairman



While the closure of the station and the departure of the E.S.B. from Portarlington was a severe blow to the economy of the town, the Portarlington Community Development Association (PCDA) has ensured that the local community will benefit from a substantial financial contribution from the E.S.B. The PCDA have concluded long negotiations with representatives of the ESB, Barry Hutch and Robert Love, which guarantees a total sum of €860,000 for Community Projects which meet a set of agreed criteria. A Project Evaluation Committee, which consists of members of the PCDA, Laois Leader Company and Oak Partnership, has been appointed to assess all applications for funding and decide on the allocation of monies.

The availability of these funds was advertised in the local press and applications invited for suitable projects before the notified closing date. Most of the fund has now been dispersed across a number of local projects. The PCDA has been allocated €500,000 towards the construction of an Enterprise Centre at Canal Road Industrial Estate and negotiations are currently on-going with Laois County Council to bring this worthwhile project to fruition. It is hoped to build an Enterprise Centre, work to commence this year, which will provide some affordable incubator units to assist and encourage local enterprise and job creation opportunities.

A full time Community Development Officer was recruited in March 2003 and this role is being funded for two years initially and so far has been money very well spent.

Other applicants who have been successful in having funds approved to date are:

- Community Centre Extension inc. toilets; showers; offices, etc. – €86,000
- Derryounce Lake & Walkway – €5,000
- Scouts Den – €17,000
- Portarlington G.A.A. – €10,000
- Portarlington Lawn Tennis Club – €10,000
- Portarlington Swimming Pool – €10,000
- Xmas Lights Committee – €1,500
- Corrig Wood Spire Restoration – €10,000

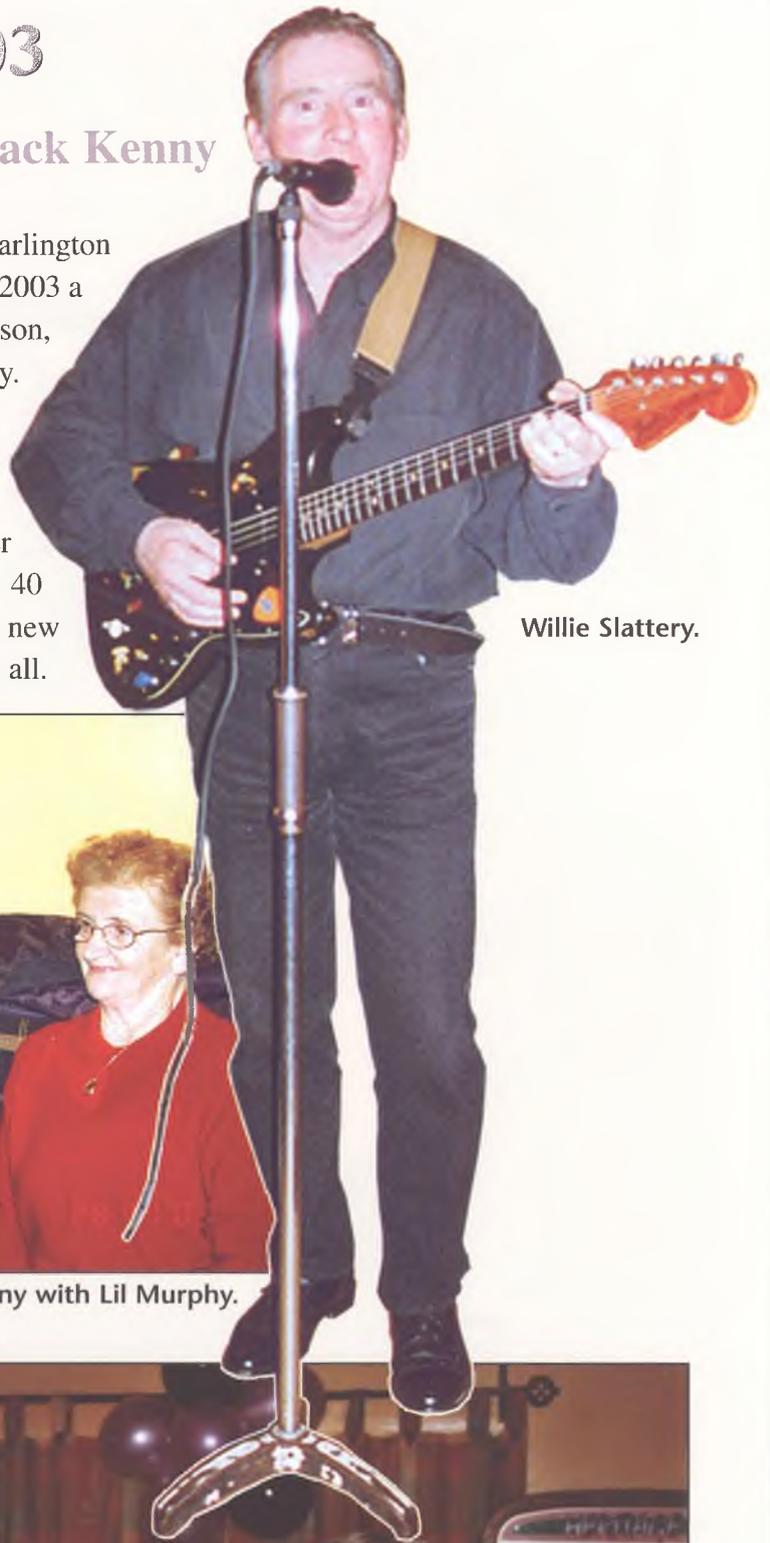
Funding will only be paid on completion of proposed projects and receipt of invoices.

As can be seen from the above various clubs, groups and organisations are receiving welcome financial assistance for a number of worthwhile projects which will benefit all in the community.

# Pensioners' Social 2003

by Jack Kenny

With the death of John Corbett five years ago the Portarlinton ESB pensioners' association went into decline. In early 2003 a small committee was formed, namely Brendan Thompson, Tom Murphy, Sean Moran, Tom O'Shea, and Jack Kenny. The purpose was to celebrate the 75th anniversary of ESB locally. Funding was obtained from Head Office and a very successful social was held in the Barrow Lodge Lounge. Music was provided by the teenager Willie Slattery and a beautiful meal was served to the 40 plus guests. Old acquaintances were renewed, old and new jokes were exchanged and a very good time was had by all.



Willie Slattery.



Jack and Etna Kenny with Lil Murphy.



ABOVE — Eileen Thompson, Mary and P.J. Dunne.

LEFT — Tommy and Maura Lawlor.

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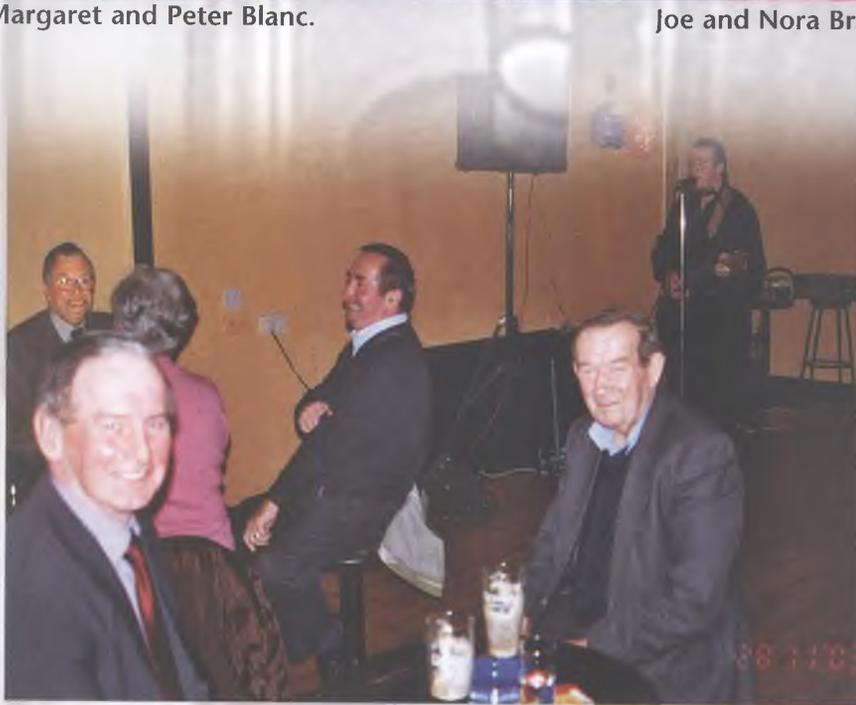
Tom O'Shea.

Mick Keogh, Paddy and Kitty Maher.



Peter Hynes, Margaret and Peter Blanc.

Joe and Nora Brennan.



John Doris and Tony Coleman enjoying the craic.



Paddy Hearty and Brendan Thompson.

Pearl McCormack and Moira Shortall.



May and Joe Sharpe.

Bobby Orange and Martin Heavey.



Nora Brennan, Sean Shortall and Tommy McCormack.

Patty and Tom Murphy.

# Before and after Demolition



For a period of around fifty years the Power Station and its 236 feet high Cooling Tower appeared to define the town of Portarlinton. The tower, in particular, could be seen from all parts of the town and was a well-known landmark for people travelling on the main roads and also on the railway. Shortly before the demolition of the Cooling Tower on April 3rd.1997 I took a photograph of the Power Station, with Marian Hill in the foreground. In July 2003 I took another photograph from roughly the same position. Both photographs are included above to illustrate the dramatic change in the profile of the town.

## Epilogue

We have completed the task we set for ourselves – and the Pictorial History of Portarlinton Generating Station has reached publication.

When we had gathered a sizeable number of photographs we realised that photographs alone were not telling the whole story. The search began for a format which would present a broader portrayal of the history of the station and we added some other sections to achieve this. In the meantime we continued our search for photographs by searching both locally and throughout the ESB. A good many more photographs were received but we also realise that many of the staff who worked in Portarlinton are not represented in this publication and we sincerely regret that. We made a genuine effort to circulate the information that we were searching for photographs and we also asked a number of people to write down their thoughts for publication. Some of them did so and we thank them for their contributions, others said they were quite content that we would do them justice, and we thank them for that also.

It is our earnest hope that readers will find this book informative and, above all, interesting. We hope that it has adequately conveyed the contribution which was made by a relatively small Station towards the eventual development of the ESB and, indeed, the country. There was a genuine spirit of comradeship throughout the years and we, and our other contributors, unite in saying that we enjoyed working in Portarlinton Generating Station.

Many of our colleagues, including some who are featured in this book, have passed on. We hope the book will perpetuate their memory and we conclude by wishing that they all may rest in peace.

# Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the support provided to us by management in the ESB towards the publication of this tribute to the staff members of Portarlington Generating Station.

Barry Hutch gave encouragement at all stages of the project and arranged for financial support.

Brid Tunney provided a line of communication to the Chief Executive, Pdraig McManus, and also co-ordinated the Official Launch of the book.

We acknowledge the co-operation of former managers William Peet, Robert Magee, Barry Hutch and Daire O'Broin, who shared their thoughts with us concerning their experiences at Portarlington.

Since we began this project many people have lent photographs to us for copying. We cannot possibly name all of these helpful people but their help is greatly appreciated – and we hope that, like us, they will derive a sense of achievement from the publication of this record.

Michael Scully, our local professional photographer, has provided us with some very striking photographs and was very helpful in checking through his files for images which would have some relevance for us.

Our colleagues in ESB Archives, Brendan Delaney, Pat Yeats, Gerry Hampson and Martin Cranley were at all times very supportive and willingly searched for useful information.

Paul Ennis, Anna Mills, Jim Murphy, Caroline Mills, Paddy Deasy and Tommie Ryan from the Training School, Portlaoise, located scarce photographs for us.

John Egan from Ringsend Training School provided many Class Photographs.

Dermot McNamara gave much helpful advice.

Noel Weatherhead provided us with the photographs taken by him at the presentation of long-service awards to the staff.

We were lucky that many photographs from the early construction days of the station were preserved in an album kept, along with some memorabilia from the opening ceremony, by the late building supervisor, James A. Doyle. We are truly grateful to his daughter Joan Doyle for making these family heirlooms available to us.

Valentine Trodd of Scéal na Móna, Bord na Móna, provided some historic photographs to help us give an idea of the part played by Bord na Móna in the history of the power station.

John Doris, Jack Kenny, Stevie Allen, John O'Shea and Tony Mannion all took the trouble to write out some thoughts for us concerning their experience of the station.

Ena Hogan and Phil Culleton helped out in the final examination of the pages before publication.

Sean McCabe from Portarlington Museum provided encouragement – and also some important photographs.

Niall McElwaine gave support and helpful advice at various stages – and checked the scripts for me.

We would like to thank Bernie Healy and Anne Deignan of EM for providing helpful publicity.

The original committee members, Ger Hickey, P.J. Dunne, Peter Hynes, John Clarke, Stevie Allen, Seamus Mullally, Pat Culleton and Jon McCowen worked hard collecting many of the photographs – and Leslie Steedman made life a lot easier for us by scanning those photographs onto Zip Discs.

We have to acknowledge the great advice and many useful suggestions we have received from Rachel Hansen and Keith Millar at Turners Printing – and the support and encouragement we received from Derek Creighton.

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