Cúcularnn

RAILTOUR

SOUVENIR
2/6

BELFAST - ANTRIM

From Port Arthur auxiliary cabin at 0¾ post the "Spoil Road" runs on the shore side of the line as far as Greencastle (MP2¼) where a second auxiliary cabin has been constructed on the opposite (Down) side of the line, almost directly facing the stump of the original cabin, closed in 1926 when the electric signalling was installed. The remains of Greencastle station can also be seen here; it was closed when the electric tramway was extended.

Previously there were six successive spoil sidings, each gauntleted with the main Up line. The present layout enables trains to enter at Greencastle, discharge where necessary and run out at Port Arthur, whereupon the locomotives can either proceed to the shed, for servicing, or run back on to the main line and return to Magheramorne.

At Bleach Green, site of the only flying junction in Ireland, can be seen the trackbed of Henderson's Siding, trailing from the Down Larne line - it originally ran across the road and into the factory.

Some traces of the method of construction of the Loop lane can still be seen around Monkstown (the reopening of this halt with the introduction of the winter timetable has been a welcome step). The procedure was somewhat as follows:

The Up and Down Larne lines were altered from Whiteabbey to suit the Loop Line gradient and leave room for the flyover.

The Monkstown to Bleach Green earthworks were constructed. While the new Down line was being built between Monkstown and Mossley (where it joined the old) single line working was in operation over the old Up line.

The old Down line was then moved to join the new at Monkstown and the new Up line built between there and Mossley — this involved cutting into the embankment of the original Down line, part of which can still be seen.

Finally the flyover was completed and opened to traffic in January 1934.

Incidentally, the next milepost after MP6 is MP8¾ (measured via Greenisland). If you take a reading over this "quarter", multiply your speed by $^9/_{10}$.

Ballyclare Junction is now marked only by MP10¾, which stood on the platform. Its original name was the optimistic Ballynure Road; actually Ballynure is about 6 miles distant and was till 1933 served by the narrow-gauge Doagh branch. The junction for the Ballyclare branch, closed to passengers in 1937 and completely after the war. The actual branch was at Kingsbog. The branch trains worked through to and from Belfast. Latterly, use of the stump enabled pilots to be detached in under a minute — faster even than at Blarney.

No.186 is theoretically the only steam loco now admitted to the Antrim Showgrounds siding.

ANTRIM - LISBURN

About MP15¾ we pass Millar's Bridge Halt, which consisted only of two white wooden posts to warn drivers. Other halts, opened between the

wars, were Legatiriff at 6.6 miles (from Knockmore); Meeting House at 4.3 miles; Brookhill at 3.1 miles — each adjacent to an overbridge. Near MP12, two large concrete posts on the Up side mark the site of Gortnagallon Junction, where a 2¼ mile wartime branch diverged to serve an air depot. The trains consisted of resurrected six—wheelers.

Before 1939 through coaches ran daily in summer between Dublin and Portrush. They were slipped from the 9:00am at Lisburn, conveyed by a local to Antrim, and attached to the 12 noon ex York Road. The return working was 11:45am ex Portrush. The coaches worked through to Great Victoria Street as the 2:45pm Dublin did not call at Lisburn.

In the fifties the 5pm Antrim, to Aldergrove and return was composed of an NCC engine and coaches. When Aldergrove ceased to be a block post this train banked the 5:15pm diesel. On reaching Aldergrove, the trains went their respective ways. Just before the withdrawal of passenger services, this working was extended to Crumlin.

LISBURN - DUNDALK

Automatic barriers are in use at Lissue, Maze and Damhead, and are being installed at Trummery. There will ultimately be 24 of them.

Portadown layout has recently been altered to enable all movements to be controlled from the North cabin. A new station is to be built nearer the town - an interesting throwback to Ulster Railway days. The stationmaster's house of the later UR station is still in the goods yard.

Scarva, at 79.6 miles, was the junction for a branch to Banbridge.

At Poyntzpass, don't forget the 11:30 Up Enterprise is due through at 12:11, and the 11:00 Down at 12:29.

At Goraghwood, where we take water by special arrangement, a facing spur connected with the Newry & Armagh branch. About 1½ miles north-west of Goraghwood on this line is the 1,759 yard Lissummon tunnel, the longest in Ireland. During the lifting, AL 0—6-0 No.32 became derailed in the tunnel. Because of fumes it took several days to rerail her. Another story goes that one driver, new to the road, was told of the terrible bank in this tunnel, but misunderstood its direction. When his exhaust beats quickened, assuming his engine was slipping, he applied sand. To his dismay, the exhaust nevertheless grew still faster. It is a pity the speed at which he emerged was not competently recorded.

Bessbrook station was originally called Newry Main Line and later Newry Monaghan Road. The GNR named it after a pub-less manufacturing mile half a mile to the west. Before WWII it served as the NI Customs post on Sundays. Hear MP71 opposite Mullaghglass school is the building of Mullaghglass station, the temporary terminus of the. D&BJR line from Portadown.

Where the line crosses the Dublin Road is Cloghoge Chapel, a welcome sight to enginemen – even the most ardent devotees of the Reformed Faith. There is a story of one driver who stopped for a 'blow-up' on a Sunday morning passenger train. When the Parish Priest came over and offered to ring for assistance, he was told it was a tourist train which had merely stopped to enable the passengers to admire the view (which is, in fact, very fine). His efforts to restart made it difficult for the congregation, which included a number of railwaymen,

to attend to their devotions.

Once over the summit at MP65¼ we come in sight of storied Slieve Gullion, said to be named after Culann the smith, from whom also Cúchulainn got his name. Setanta, a member of the royal Ulster boy-corps at Eamhain Mhacha was invited with his uncle, the King of Ulster, to a banquet at Culann's dún on the mountainside. The boy delayed to finish his hurling and arrived to find the dún shut and guarded by Culann's fierce hound, for he had been forgotten. Hearing the sounds of battle, the banqueters rushed out, to find the hound lying dead at Setanta's feet. Culann was not a bit pleased, but Setanta offered to guard the dún until another watchdog as fierce should be reared - and hence earned, the name Hound of Culann – by which he was known ever after. Cúchulainn, who spent most of his life defending Ulster against the forces of Maedhbh, Queen of Connaught, is traditionally connected with Dún Dealgan (whence Dundalk) a combined rath and motte on a hill visible to the west of the line about MP55.

Dundalk Barrack Street.

On our way down the bank, we pass under an aqueduct near MP61, from which engines were at one time able to take water. It was supplied from the nearby reservoir which also feeds Dundalk station.

Leaving Dundalk Junction, we pass the D&BJR station and the site of the Square Crossing en route for Dundalk South, where we reverse into Barrack Street — the original terminus of the INWR. Here was an end-on junction with the DN&GR, still marked by two cast-iron posts in the goods yard, reading D&GR on one side and INWR on the other.

After the GNR took over the working of the DN&GR, the trains used Dundalk Junction station, propelling to Dundalk West in the outward direction, and running round there on the inward journey, so as to enter Dundalk Junction engine first.

```
***************
```

We offer sincere thanks to Northern Ireland Railways and Córas Iompair
Éireann without whose kind co-operation in a multitude of matters this
interesting railtour would have been impossible.

```
***************
```

A. Donaldson
W.S. Boomer
9th September 1967