THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

brian bóroime

RAILTOUR

SOUVENIR BROCHURE

3/-

Proceeds in aid of Locomotive Fund

Front Cover Photograph: No.800 at Limerick Junction - first day of working to Cork, 2nd October 1955. (Kelland Collection$ Bournemouth Railway Club)

As the Belfast – Dublin portion of our route has been covered in previous itineraries and since this tour is partly intended to celebrate the 22nd anniversary of the introduction of the "Enterprise" some notes on the history of that train may serve to cover the Northern section.
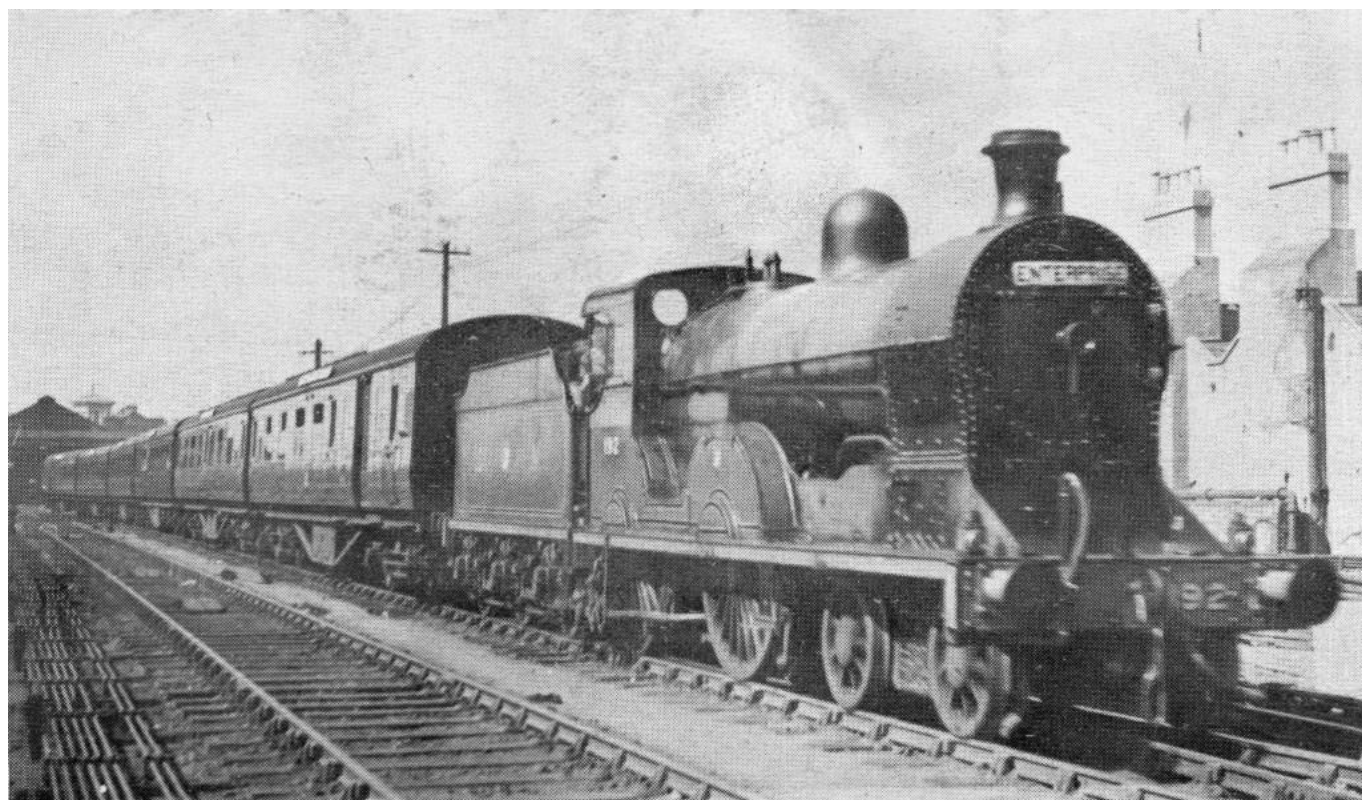

No.208 passing Mount Pleasant on Down evening Enterprise, c 1950. (A. Donaldson)

When World War II broke out the GNR, unlike the NCC, made no alteration to its schedules; but in time poor coal, arrears of maintenance and weight of trains forced deceleration. On top of this, Customs delays (two prolonged examinations of every train) could produce overall times, especially in the Down direction, more appropriate to cycles than trains. These conditions outlasted the war and, to crown it all, in 1947, although the omnipotent (in the Six Counties at any rate) Internal Combustion Juggernaut had not yet recommenced its destructive career, Aer Lingus was showing signs of introducing an air service between the two chief Irish cities. As in 1932, the GNR rose to the occasion and its reply was the "Enterprise". Test runs had already been made with Nos. 190 and 172. If these lacked the mathematical precision of the recent CIÉ tests, they made up for it in exciting running; No.172, albeit with only four bogies, covered the distance in 105 mins, speed rising to 60 up Kellystown and into the eighties at a number of points.

In the event, the Enterprise was of <u>seven</u> coach formation, Compound-hauled and allowed 2¼ hours. The times, which were made up from standard schedules with allowance for non-stop running were as

follows: in the Up direction, 12 minutes to Lisburn, 30 to Portadown, 49 to Goraghwood, 73 to Dundalk, 100 to Drogheda, 129 to Howth Junction and 135 to Dublin. The Down times to the same points were 8, 35, 61, 87, 105, 125 and 135 minutes. If they were inferior to the 1932 times, the engines and permanent way had also deteriorated, and it was intended that a punctual arrival should be possible in spite of an average dose of slacks. In practice, most arrivals were just on the wrong side of time. This was partly due to fear of anticipating the Customs officials, but there was another reason - drivers tended to adhere rigidly to scheduled passing times, so that time lost by a PW check near the end of the run could not be recouped. This rigidity in turn came from a desire to avoid a signal stop en route, which would mean troublesome Customs form-filling. For the same reason, the train was given two clear sections ahead.

No.192 leaving Dublin on morning Enterprise in 1950. Note the unusually heavy load for this train. (Kelland Collection, Bournemouth Railway Club)

Some Adelaide drivers claimed that if the load was over seven bogies, extra time was allowed in proportion to the excess and also that they were not supposed to make up for slacks, but the valiant efforts of many others belied this, and in any case it never appeared in print. For example the train was observed to arrive on time with ten bogies. Certainly, at a time when standards of running on long-distance trains had reached nadir, the "Enterprise" brought new interest and hope. At worst, it was better than the ordinary trains, and the effort to keep passing times exactly meant hard running in sections where a check was suffered. In general you could rely on a 72-75; 75-80 was reasonably frequent, but 80 or over very rare. The nonstop run through Goraghwood could mean minima in the 40s at Bridge 180, while Kellystown was quite often cleared at 50 in the Down direction and 55 in the Up.

A sum of the best passing times (Up) taken from a large number of runs, comes to 27.13 to Portadown, 44.39 to Goraghwood, 63.44 to

Dundalk, 88.08 to Drogheda and 118.15 to Dublin, These runs involve all five VSs and No.191.

No.83 entering Dublin in 1949 on 10:30am ex Belfast. (Kelland Collection, Bournemouth Railway Club)

The Belfast-based "Enterprise" (introduced on 11th August 1947) was so successful that for years one could not be sure of boarding it (let alone securing a milepost seat) without booking in advance. It was not surprising, therefore that a second Dublin-based train was introduced in May 1948, leaving at 9:30am and returning from Belfast at 5:15pm, the Down train overtaking the 9:00am at Dundalk by means of No.31 Loop. Experience soon altered these times to 11:00am and 4:45pm. For a time the 11:00am called at Dundalk to pick up British Customs officials, and the 4:45pm was timed to pass there in 70 minutes, to clear before the Works knocked off at 6:00pm. The second train had a higher ratio of third class accommodation to first than the original one, which was altered to match as new firsts were built and wartime "utility" coaches converted for long-distance working. Incidentally, these were the first GNR trains to have no second-class accommodation.

Traffic on the Dublin-based service did not develop to the same extent as on its predecessor, and it was taken over by AEC railcars shortly after their appearance in 195. It was, however, readily steam-substituted at busy weekends, and in certain summer timetables a diesel relief followed to a slower schedule. During other summers in the 1950s an interesting procedure was followed on Saturdays: the 7:30am Down (a new train introduced with the AECs) was steam-worked if heavy and returned as the 4:45pm. The 9:00am split at Dundalk, the train engine taking a non-stop portion to Belfast in 82 minutes. The engine which had hauled the Bundoran Express as far as Dundalk followed on the second portion, making the usual stops and carrying the Derry through coaches. This engine returned on the 3:00pm Up

(which mid-week was the return of the 7:30am). Finally the 11:00am Enterprise returned as a relief to the 3:00pm from Belfast. Minus its buffet car, which was inserted into the 3:00pm, it worked to Dundalk, thence to Kells and finally to Dublin. All this ensured that steam worked the heavier and diesel the lighter trains.

After the arrival of the VSs in 1948, the Compounds were rarely found on the Enterprise, though No.84 and No.85 had spells on it. The Ss never worked the Belfast-based train, apart from taking over after failures, but No.171 had a spell on the Dublin-based train in 1952 and other Ss worked it occasionally. The odd engine failure produced practically every GNR passenger class from the 5'6" Ps upwards.

In the autumn of 1950 the "Enterprise" was extended to Cork. The 10:30am ran into Platform 2 at Amiens Street as usual. At 1:00pm the CIÉ engine transferred it to platform 5 whence it was supposed to depart at 1:40pm but could easily leave before time, as public departure time was shown as 1:30pm. In the reverse direction, the Amiens Street pilot performed the transfer between arrival at 4:45pm and departure at 5:30pm. Outline schedules were: Clondalkin pass 20 minutes, Sailing 36, Kildare 51, Port Laoighise 72, Thurles 112 and Limerick Junction 135. Restarting, Mallow was passed in 40 and 28 were allowed to Cork. On the return journey the times were 34 and 76 minutes then 24, 64, 87, 98, 114 and 127 minutes.

At first two GNR rakes worked the trains but in 1952 CIÉ supplied a set mostly of their post-war flush-sided stock, though older brake-ends were used - one of these was a 66ft Rosslare-type clerestory at first. As CIÉ had not yet built any Buffet Cars, a GNR vehicle was used, painted green to match. (Incidentally, while a GNR rake had been based on Cork, it was used on a variety of additional turns, including the Sunday trains and Cobh locals.) One of the roofboards of the CIÉ set bore the legend "Rianaire", a well-chosen title which means "Rail traveller" but this not perpetuated.

At the beginning of the 1953 summer timetable CIÉ turned the Cork "Enterprise" over to diesel railcars and the through Belfast-Cork traffic was carried in a single through coach. Coupling difficulties however, compelled reversion to steam after a few days, and timers breathed again. During the last summer of working (1953) the Cork "Enterprise" became very popular, often loading to 10 bogies, but it disappeared from the timetable and was replaced by the nonstop expresses.

The running was at first erratic - the 800 class seemed to run away on the drivers, though some of them nursed their engines to Kildare (presumably to save water) and found they hadn't enough time left at Thurles. These tactics, of course, produced good running from Limerick Junction onwards. On other occasions, drivers seemed to be in trouble from Thurles to the Junction, and water stops were sometimes made. Once the 400 class took over, they were only supplanted on occasions when the load was very heavy, and were officially rostered for it, according to the WTT. There was a sort of hierarchy of engines - the best two went on the Enterprise and the next best on the Up mail; whenever the Radio Train ran, it got the best engine and the other trains moved down one place. Details of the Limerick Junction - Cork running were given in "Five Foot 3" No.4. For the other portion of the journey, a survey of fifteen runs gives a best net time of 128 minutes

(Down) and worst of 136 minutes - a remarkable degree of consistency. The best time to Sallins, for example, was 33.05 and the worst 36.14 - both with 800 class engines. Running was more lively in the Up direction, a notable performance being by Ned Shiel and No.802 in 1953 when, with 360 tons, he ran from Limerick Junction to Amiens Street in 120.36 (or 119 net) covering the 85.9 miles from Thurles to Islandbridge in 86.37.

In 1951, "Pop" Kelly with No.800 and only 190 tons, covered the 89.1 miles from Dundrum to Hazelhatch in 86.59, after which he had PW and signal checks. Gross time to Amiens Street was 122.52 (116 net). No instance is known of a 500 class working the train though both single- and double-headed 321 class engines have been observed on it, as a result of loco failures.

But to get back to our itinerary. The GNR Main Line is mile-posted on the Down (i.e. right-hand out of Belfast) side from zero at Connolly. Thence the Loop Line has its mileposts on our right, measured from Islandbridge. Thereafter the posts all the way to Cobh are on the Down (left) side from zero at Heuston.

The principal gradients are: a rise at 1/84/138 from Islandbridge to Clondalkin; undulations with a rising tendency follow to the Curragh, the chief dip being before Hazelhatch. There is a fall at 1/180 from MP30 to MP34 and undulations thence to Portarlington, whence the line climbs, at 1/340/500/170/220 to Clonkeen (MP53½), then drops at 1/280 to MP56½. Ballybrophy bank, up at 1/128, comes between MP62½ and MP65. After undulating to Thurles, the line descends at 1/180 to MP93½, which is followed by a two mile rise at 1/230. The chief grades thereafter are a rise at 1/156 to MP109½ and a less steep descent from MP118 to MP126; after climbing to MP140¼, the line falls at 1/151 to the Blackwater Viaduct, rises at 1/125/140 to MP151½ and falls to Cork, at 1/60 from Rathpeacon to Kilbarry and 1/64/78 after a short easing.

The Cork line was opened to the Curragh in 1846, Ballybrophy in 1847, Limerick Junction in 1848 and Cork (temporary terminus at Kilbarry) in 1849. Engineering and other difficulties connected with the 1,350 yard Cork Tunnel delayed the completion of the last portion till December 1855. The original Cork station, opened 1856, was, of course, a terminus. The present terminal/through station was completed in 1893.

Sallins (17.9 miles) was formerly the junction for the Tullow Branch, closed to passengers in 1947 and to all traffic in 1959. There are hopeful rumours of its reopening as far as Naas (2¼ miles) on account of the carnage on the Dublin - Naas Racetrack (nominally a public road). Sallins is also noteworthy as the detraining point for an annual pilgrimage to nearby Bodenstown, the burial place of Wolfe Tone, the original Irish Republican. The Curragh Siding (MP27½) was opened in 1856 by the GSWR who had built the Racecourse Stand. It was also used to serve the newly constructed military camp. An engine is always provided to haul race specials into the Siding.

Kildare was the site of the religious settlement of St Brigid, a sort of Celtic Vesta christianised into a saint, her Vestal Virgins becoming nuns. The chief extant sign of this religious origin is the round tower, marred by a modern phoney-castellated top. Its fine Hiberno-Romanesque doorway indicates that it was a late example, built solely as a bell tower (cloigtheach) and was not, like most round

towers, thrown up hastily for defence against the Vikings in the 9th or 10th century.

At Cherryville Junction, MP32½, diverges the Carlow line, opened in 1847 (before the Cherryville – Portlaoighise section of the main line). It was singled to Athy during World War I to provide rails for the Wolfhill Colliery Branch.

Port Laoighise, (= the garrison town of [the barony of] Laoighis – formerly called Maryborough after Mary Tudor), 50.9 miles, was until 1962 the junction for the Kilkenny – Waterford Branch, opened in 1867. In 1885 the Waterford and Central Ireland railway built a branch from Conniberry Junction near Port Laoighise on this line as far as Mountmellick, but originally intended to continue to Geashill on the Portarlington – Athlone branch. The Mountmellick branch was closed to regular traffic in 1947 but came alive annually during the Beet season till its complete closure in 1962. A short stretch of the Kilkenny line remains open to serve a Bórd na Móna (peat) installation, Bórd na Móna also owns the various narrow gauge lines seen in this area.

Mountrath (MP59½) has a melancholy interest as the place where an 800 class engine, whose crew had "baled out" (i.e. dropped the fire for cleaning and relighting) during the coal crisis, was "lost" for some days, being left in a siding behind the station.

Ballybrophy (66¾ miles) became a junction when the branch to Roscrea was opened in 1857. Limerick trains used to carry a Thurles or Clonmel portion – often a single twelve-wheel composite. Hauled by a 2-6-0 or 4-6-0 this made a curious-looking train. When the Limerick services were turned over to diesel railcars, a steam train worked between Ballybrophy and Clonmel, usually hauled by a Coey 4-4-0.

There are a number of mileposts out of place between Templemore and Thurles, in case anyone is tempted to claim excessive, speeds. Thurles shed long remained a steam outpost, providing the engines for the Clonmel branch, ballast trains (the quarry is at Lisduff, the first station after Ballybrophy) and beet specials in season. No.800 was also stored here. South of the station, on the Down side is the Sugar factory and sidings – quite recently the Comhlucht Siuicre Éireann German-built 0-4-0Ts shunting here were the only locomotives in steam in the Twenty-six Counties.

Near MP87¾ diverged the Clonmel Branch, opened in 1880 to shorten the distance from Dublin to Clonmel, then the chief town of all Tipperary. A railbus was tried for a short time on this branch in the 1950s. Though busy during the Beet season it was closed to passenger traffic in 1963 and completely in 1967, the road being broken forthwith at Horse & Jockey, where it crossed the main road from Dublin to Cork at (for the road point of view) an awkward angle.
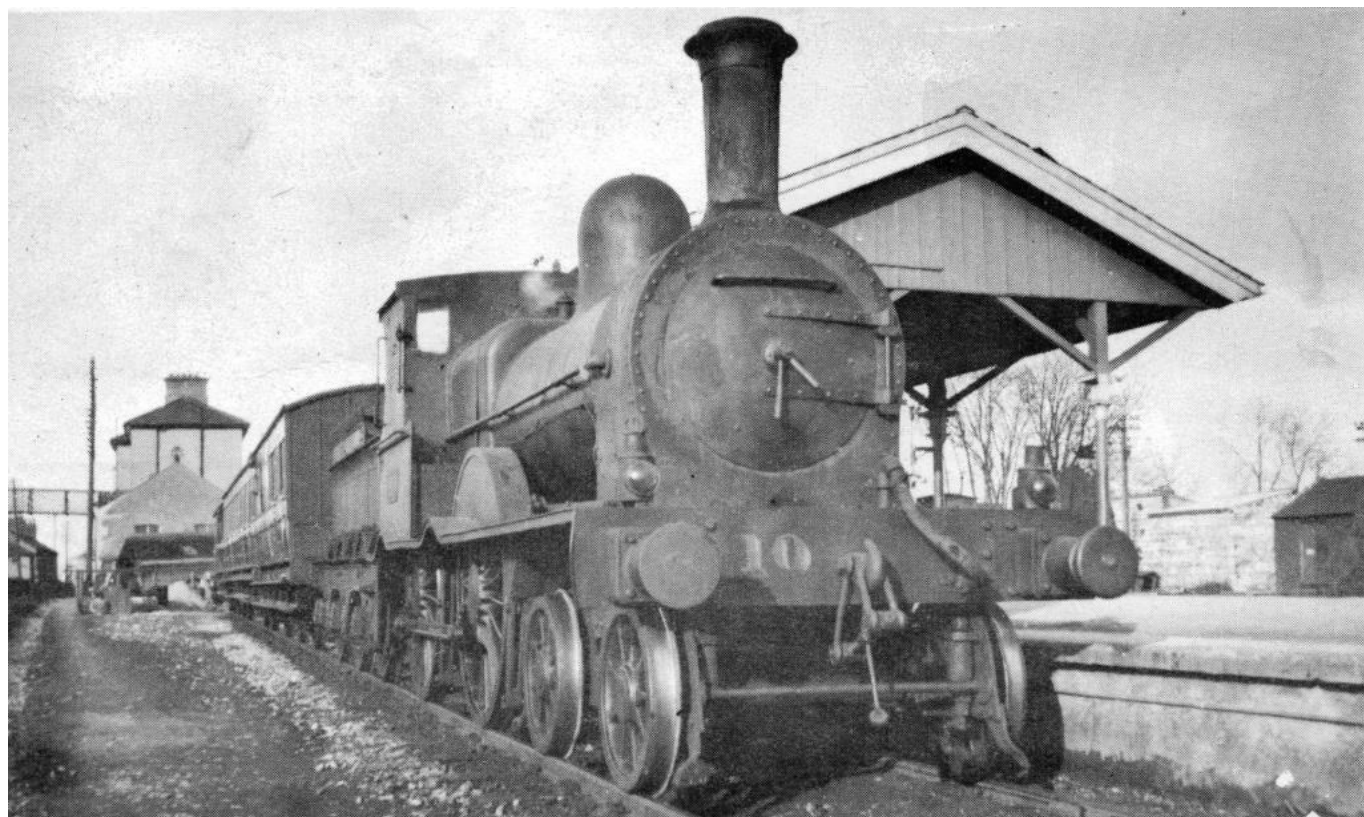
Goold's Cross (MP95) was until 1954 the junction for the Cashel Branch which, however, had had no regular service since 1947.

Although the main line was originally intended to go through Cashel, the town was not in fact served by rail till 1904 and then only by a branch. Cashel (Caiseal – a circular stone fort) was the residence of the Kings of Munster, but as these failed to protect their Kingdom from the Vikings the Dál gCais (Dalcassians) under Brian Boru and his brother Mahon (their capital was at Kincora, Killaloe) did the job for them by defeating the intruders at Solohead (Limerick Junction) and

capturing the Norse trading town of Limerick. Brian, of course, is famous for his organisation of the final Viking defeat in 1014 at Clontarf which gave peace to all Western Europe. He was killed in his tent by a fugitive Viking after the battle. He was the first Irishman to think nationally and had striven, with success, to restore civilized living throughout the land, after the Viking ravages. His cognomen, properly Bóroimhe or Bóirmhe, means "of the Tribute" - a reference to his position as "Imperator Scotorum" (Emperor of the Irish). Cashel is famous for Cormac's Chapel (1134) the last fling of Celtic Irish Architecture.

Near MP106¼ is Kyle Level Crossing, the junction for the new (1967) spur enabling trains to run direct between Dublin and Limerick - made necessary by bulk cement and similar trains and useful also for passenger Specials. It is now regularly used by the Sáirséal express. Later in our tour we have a photographic stop at Milltown Crossing, the Limerick end of the spur.

Limerick Junction station was opened by the GSWR in July 1848, the WLR line from Limerick to Tipperary reached the spot two months earlier. The WLR opened the spur from Keane's points (Limerick side) to the new station and shortly afterwards doubled its main line from here to Limerick.

No.10 at Limerick Junction in 1952. (R.M. Arnold)

The name "Limerick Junction" Is of course perfectly rational, meaning "the junction for Limerick", though perhaps Its Irish name "Gabhal na Sulchóide" - Solohead Junction - is more obvious.

In the WLR timetables it was merely known as "the Junction" because, of course, from that Company's point of view it was not the junction for Limerick at all. Although we are, irrationally perhaps, to enter the station by the traditional reversal, it is in fact no longer necessary for main-line trains to do so. When you come to think of it,

it wasn't easy to arrange a junction station for two lines which intersected (especially as the two companies didn't always see eye to eye) while avoiding facing points on the GSWR main line.

Once your train has reached the platform. Limerick Junction is a handy enough station to change trains at -no lugging of baggage across overbridges - one wonders if passengers at junctions like Coleraine and Mallow wouldn't welcome a similar platform arrangement. It was near Limerick Junction that the War of Independence broke out in 1919 - an ambush in which one of the guerrillas was Dan Breen, a GSWR linesman.

Knocklong (MP117) was the scene of a bloody battle in 1921 when a group of guerrillas, under the same Dan Breen, held up the Down Mail to rescue a prisoner. The falling grade through Kilmallock was the location of the record-breaking speed exploit of No.800 while on trial - the maximum is variously quoted at 93, 95 and 98 mph.

At Ráth Luirc Junction (MP128¼) came in on the Up side, the "direct" line from Limerick to Cork via Patrickswell, opened in 1862 by the Cork and Limerick Direct Railway, under the aegis of the GSWR which thus gained access to Limerick. The line was closed to passenger traffic in 1934 but, apart from its daily goods, it was used latterly by many Pilgrim Trains from the south en route to Claremorris and carried a considerable traffic in cement during the construction of Cork Airport. It was closed completely in 1967. At the Junction can be seen the path of a spur, removed in 1906, which provided a direct connection in the Up direction. The Junction cabin was removed in 1924 and the points electrically worked by a hand generator in Ráth Luirc box, a mile distant. This method, unique at the time, was later used at Inny Junction and Monkstown. To this branch Ráth Luirc owed its large yard, turntable and third platform.

Mallow (MP144½) is the junction for the lines from Waterford (opened 1860 to Fermoy) and Tralee (opened to Killarney in 1854). Both these were subsidiary companies operated by the GSWR — its favourite method. The Waterford line was closed in 1967 but the portion from Dungarvan to Waterford is to re-open in September 1969 and a 1½ mile branch to be built from it to a new factory at Ballynacourty. The Waterford line diverged by an orthodox double - single junction but Kerry trains run wrong road from Mallow across the Blackwater to Killarney Junction (MP145¼) as the branch connects with the Up main line only, there being no crossover. The points at Killarney Junction are electrically operated from Mallow. The Sugar-Beet factory which provides so much seasonal traffic is situated off the Kerry branch.

Mallow was the birthplace of Thomas Davis, founder of the "Young Ireland" movement in 1842 - indeed he is the originator of most modern pre-Americanomimy Irish political thought.

The "Ten Arches" (Blackwater Viaduct) were destroyed in the Civil War of 1922. Fortunately its replacement, unlike Belvelly Viaduct, was made able to take the largest locomotives. (Mallow = Magh Ealla - the plain of the Allow, an ancient name for the Blackwater.)

Blarney (159.4 miles) was in steam days the point where the pilot was usually detached - it ran ahead and set back into a siding on the Down side. The station was closed in 1963. The village and castle, whose name has been made to rhyme with such depressing inevitability with

Killarney, in exilic ballads, were more directly served till 1934 by the Cork and Muskerry 3ft gauge railway.

Rathpeacon (161.4 miles) is the terminus of the "Runs of Goods" from Cork – i.e. rakes of wagons worked up here for making into mainline goods trains. On our way down the 1/60 we pass (MP163) over Kilnap (Cill an Abba – the Abbot's Church) Viaduct, over 100ft high and one of the points served on Sunday by our lineside buses. At Kilbarry some of the original terminus can be seen on the Up side. Originally, all trains were banked through the tunnel, but later double and triple heading was practised. In the latter case only one engine was detached at Blarney.
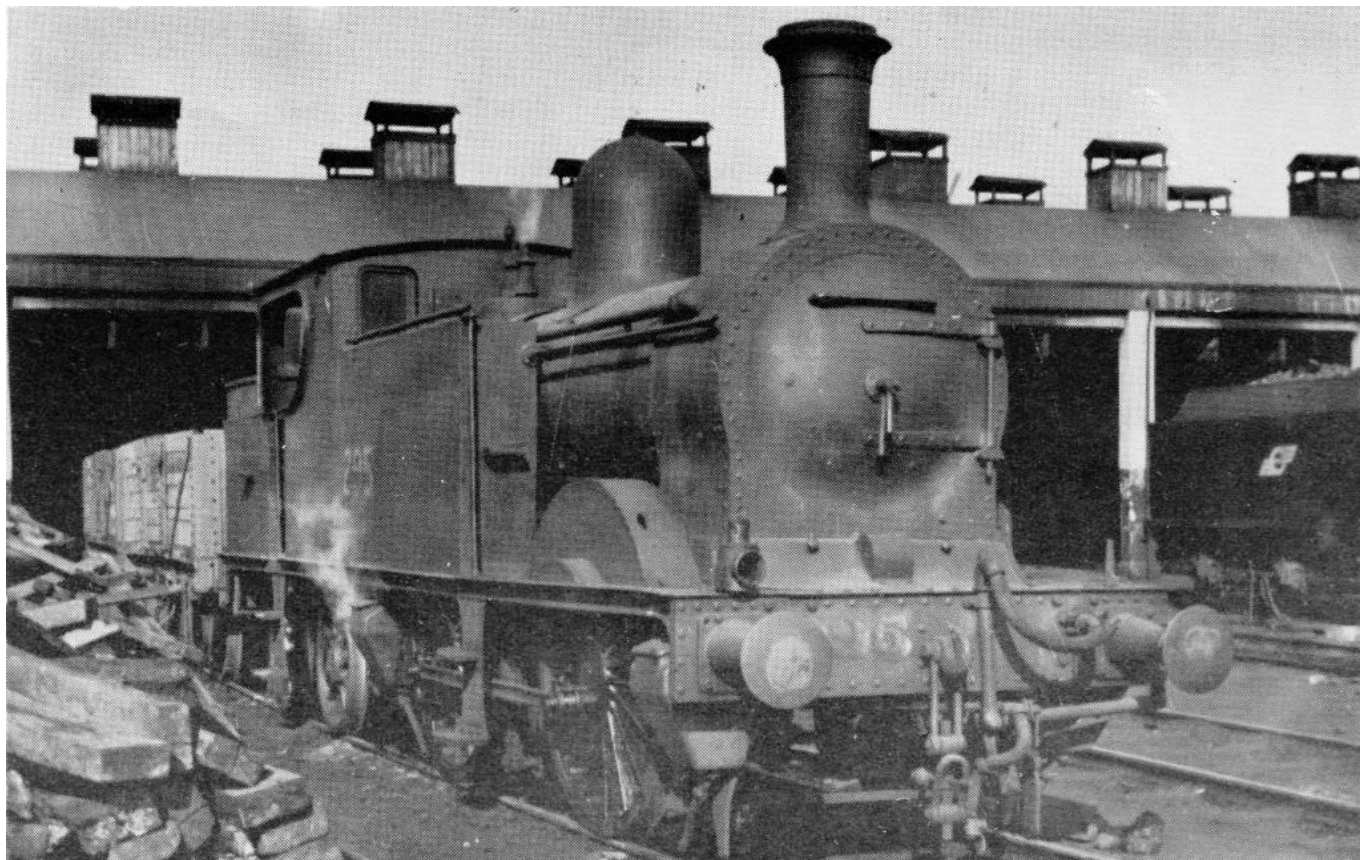

No.402 on Up Enterprise passing Kilbarry in April 1952. (Kelland Collection, Bournemouth Railway Club)

As we enter Kent station we pass under the roadbed of the Cork & Youghal Railway, whose terminus was at Summerhill nearby.

The line was opened from Dunkettle to Midleton In 1859 but completion of the Cork – Dunkettle section was delayed till 1861. The Cobh branch was opened in 1862, and soon doubled because of delays to trains. Until 1866 the CYR terminus was at Albert Street. In 1869 the GSWR put in a connection with the CYR but Cobh and Youghal trains continued to use Summerhill till 1893. An article on the CYR appears in "Five Foot Three" No.2, on sale on the train. Modern handling equipment at Cork Goods and other termini and the use of liner trains show that CIÉ is leaving no stone unturned to retain existing traffics and attract new ones.

From Cork, a short sharp rise (1/76) takes us on to the level of CYR. After an equally sharp fall, the line is practically level to Cobh except for about a mile each of ascent and descent around MP175, some of the latter as steep as 1/97. Tivoli station (MP166½) was closed in 1931, but a new siding is soon to be constructed here to serve a factory. Dunkettle station was closed in 1966. The line carries a heavy suburban traffic, especially since the opening of the Verolme

Dockyard whose cranes can be seen at Rushbrook. The stations on the branch have staggered platforms. The turntable at Cobh (where No.171 will turn before working the 20:45 special to Cork) is surprisingly long (60ft); it had at one time to turn engines as large as the 400 class which worked specials connecting with American liners. Since the destruction of Belvelly Bridge in 1922, however, axle loadings have been restricted. There is no bus service to Cobh, the distance to it from Cork being much greater by road than rail. Fota station has no road access at all.

No.295 at Limerick, c 1952. This engine was formerly No.52 "Brian Boru" of the Waterford, Limerick & Western Railway. (A. Donaldson)

At Keane's Points (Limerick Junction) we pass on to the main line of the WLR. The gradient profile to Limerick is simple: apart from a very short rise near MP20 and a couple of level stretches, it falls all the way. Mileposts - Up side from zero at Limerick. Coming out from Limerick (Down) the bigger engines on trains like the 12:15pm made heavy weather of the 40 minute timing, speed never reaching 50mph. But in 1955 there was an 8:40am Down non-stop, replacing a diesel and on this Driver Dolaney with 2-4-2T (P6) No.35 (built Inchicore 1894, weight 46 tons, tractive effort 9,580lb) and a light train rarely failed to keep the 35 minute diesel schedule, or to get well into the fifties in the process, his best being 55½ one morning at MP10 - this though he had to slow for staff exchange at most stations. Another tiny and ancient engine, 34½ ton D19 (4-4-0) No.10, dimensionally the same as No.35, gave the best run on a Down stopping train, her total running time being 40.05 (steam schedule 47, diesel 45 minutes). There were six stops, the highest speed being 52 in the 3.7 mile Boher - Dromkeen section.

In the Up direction, the Limerick connection out of the 6:45pm usually provided some fireworks. In 1952 it made three stops, all cabins were

switched out except Dromkeen and Killonan (the only present-day block-posts). On one occasion Scully, the Limerick senior driver, on No.93 (Aspinall 4-4-0) with a trifle of a bogie and three six-wheelers, ran the 8.1 miles from the Junction to Pallas in 11.05 start-to-stop, maximum 61; and the 7.4 miles from Dromkeen to Killonan in 9¾ net start-to-stop, maximum 65mph. In 1955 when the train was non-stop, Dan O'Leary reached even higher speeds - 66½ with No.338 (5'8½" 4-4-0) and 68 with No.313 (Coey 6'7" 4-4-0), both down the racing stretch from Oola to Pallas. Time to Limerick on this train was usually 30-31 minutes net, even with No.35, which managed her 60 like the res. Delaney even appeared one morning in 1954 with No.295 - ex-WLR No.52 "Brian Boru" - but this was an all-stations train and nothing notable was produced. Oola is less queer looking in Irish - Ubhla = apples.

No.20 entering Limerick on a goods, c 1902. (Nunn Collection, Locomotive Club of Great Britain)

Killonan (MP4¾) is the junction for the line to Ballybrophy. In 1929 the GSR singled the line from here to the junction but left two tracks from Killonan to Limerick. They were, however, worked as two single lines till 1947 when the section was again treated as double road. About MP¾ the line from Sligo (a WLR extension) comes in on the Down side and continues separately into the terminus. Quarter of a mile further on is Limerick Check Cabin and the junction for the "Foynes Loop". This was opened by the Limerick and Foynes Railway (a subsidiary of the WLR) in 1856, and doubled in 1968 (actually it is two single lines, the "Down" road serving Foynes and North Kerry, the Up going to Carey's Road (Goods) and the Castlemungret Cement Factory branch (opened 1957). On the far side of the Loop is the Running Shed. Next we pass the WLR works, now used for wagon repairs. In steam days many of the smaller classes, as well as the Tralee and Dingle engines, were overhauled here - indeed steam engines continued to be shopped here when Inchicore was turned completely over to diesel work. The line which curves away sharply to the west at Limerick Station was built to give the CLDR access to its part of the station. It was subsequently used by North Kerry and Foynes passenger trains, although the Foynes mixed often used the original WLR route via the Check. It now gives access only to Carey's Road goods yard and Castlemungret Cement Factory.

Of Limerick's many historical associations we may mention its

successful defence against William III in 1690 after Sarsfield's French allies had marched off, declaring that its walls could be knocked down with roasted apples. A second Williamite attack, however, forced Sarsfield to surrender - this led to the Treaty of Limerick, violation of which produced the Penal Laws, a sort of Eighteenth Century Apartheid whose traces have not been entirely obliterated yet. Sarsfield is affectionately remembered for his heroic exploits - the Sáirséal Express is named after him.

Returning to Killonan, we take the Limerick and Castleconnell Railway, opened in 1858 and worked by the WLR. It was extended to Birdhill in 1860 and to Killaloe (on the Shannon) two years later. The GSWR had built a branch from Ballybrophy to Roscrea in 1857 and sponsored an extension to Birr the following year. Then, as part of a scheme to reach Limerick, they completed a line from Roscrea to Nenagh in 1863 and thence to Birdhill in the following year, and obtained running powers into Limerick. Thus Birr and Killaloe became branch termini. The former was closed to all traffic in 1963, the latter to passengers in 1931 and goods in 1944. Thereafter it was used for storing wagons awaiting scrapping.

No.154 at Killaloe. (J.E. Kite)

Mileposts from Killonan to Ballybrophy are on the Down side (i.e. our right).

From Killonan the line undulates, with a rising tendency to Nenagh which is approached by a descent of some two miles, partly at 1/120. There follows a two mile bank of 1/100 up to MP26¾, and more undulations, culminating in a one-mile climb at 1/100/105 into Roscrea. After a rise and gradual fall, there is a back of nearly two miles at 1/135 to MP1.

At MP35¼ diverges the Silvermines branch, 1¼ miles long (serving barytes and zinc mines) on a rising grade of 1/50 broken only by a

short length of 1/450 where the line crosses a public road about half a mile from Silvermines Junction. The branch was opened in 1966 and has already been traversed by enthusiasts' specials, though ours is the first steam working over it. Barytes, oil and zinc traffic make the Nenagh branch a very busy one and its traffic pattern is very different from that in steam days when, apart from through Dublin passenger trains, it had one Dublin and Nenagh Goods each way and one passenger and one goods in each direction daily between Nenagh and Limerick, the former liable to be hauled by such unusual engines as WLR 2-4-0s.

At Roscrea a stub of the Birr branch runs alongside for some distance and we hope to make use of this.

Borris-in-Ossory beet loading bank at MP3 was closed in 1964.

Long-distance passenger trains on the line were heavy for the engines (Coey 4-4-0s) provided, so speeds much in excess of 60mph were hard to come by. One run, however, deserves mention. In 1952 No.301 (she had not yet received what was to be her final shopping) developed tube trouble at Shalee. The driver wired for assistance from Nenagh and struggled to Cloughjordan, where the Birr branch engine (J15 No.154) appeared after a short wait, and hooked on in front. With 240 tons, the two engines worked up to 65mph, covering seven miles in 7 minutes 2 seconds and the whole 10 miles to Roscrea in 12 minutes 30 seconds. They then ran the next, more difficult, ten miles to Ballybrophy in 14.33, maximum 60½mph. The train was here to be combined with one from Thurles, so No.154 returned to her branch trundle, unaffected by this tremendous effort.