

THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

Inbear nOllárba

**RAILTOUR**

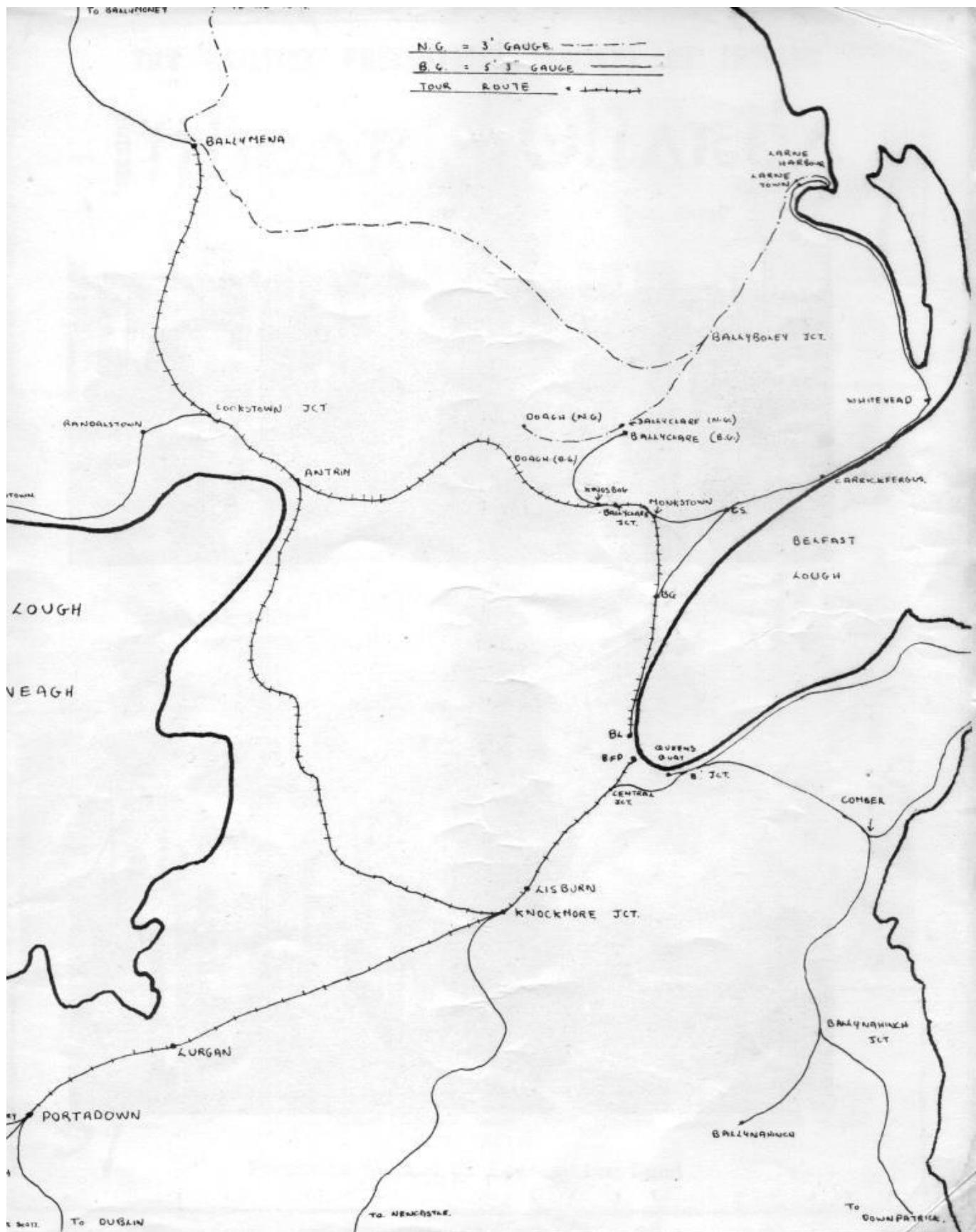


**SOUVENIR  
3/- BROCHURE**

Proceeds in aid of Locomotive Fund

This brochure is produced by the Society's Magazine Sub-committee.

Front Cover Photograph: V1 class 0-6-0 No.13 on Up Kilrea Goods at Drumsough about 1959. (A. Donaldson)



INBHEAR nOLLARBHA RAILTOUR

Great Victoria Street - Portadown: The mileposts are on the Down (i.e. right-hand) side, measured from Dublin. Gradients: The line rises from Belfast to near MP104, with a half-mile breather after Derriaghy. The steepest part is 1/145 at Balmoral. Undulations ensue to Moira, from which there is an ascent at 1 in 185/145 to MP96 whence the line falls all the way to Portadown, except for a brief rise from MP90 to MP91. These falling grades vary from 1/143 at MP88 to 1/476 at MP94.

Until the recent destruction of its facade, Great Victoria Street was one of the two surviving Ulster Railway buildings, the other being on the Up platform at Moira. The Ulster Railway was the earliest of the railways serving Belfast, opened in 1839 with a single road laid to 6'2" gauge.

Platform 5, once used by the "Enterprise" trains in both directions, has been converted into a bus terminal, one of the many instances where the line has been violated by road encroachment - the other instances are the raising of the roadbed over underbridges at Balmoral, Derriaghy and Moira and, more serious still, the recent deflection of the track at Seagoe, near Portadown. The railway, however, got a little of its own back in the closing of the vexatious accommodation crossing at Dunmurry, which ruined so much post-war running, while level crossings at Durham Street (MP112½) and Tate's Avenue (MP111½) were replaced by overbridges in 1849 and 1926 respectively. Incidentally, when Durham Street bridge became due for renewal in 1933, the idea was put forward of moving the terminus out beyond it, but was dropped.

Platform 1, outside the main building, was formerly used by Lisburn auto-trains and other lightly-loaded locals (it only held a little over four bogies) but was lengthened when No.5 was lost.

In the thirties, the GNR saved engines and manpower by adding Warrenpoint and Cavan or Derry portions to mainline expresses. This produced trains which were far too long for No.3, then the principal departure platform, so the front three bogies were left in No.2 until the last minute, when the engine would add them to the front of the train proper. The 8:15am often thus loaded to thirteen bogies in summer - I once saw it struggle out with fourteen, hauled by a single engine - a Compound. The S class 4-4-0s were known to handle as much as twelve bogies, unpiloted, on occasion.

The "Third Line" between Adelaide and Central Junction (MP112) together with the Central Line itself (it connected the GNR with the BCDR and is expected to reopen) had the unusual feature of Permissive Working, for non-passenger trains (passenger trains did not use the third line, though around 1939-40 there was a 6.03pm local only as far as Balmoral, which propelled back to Great Victoria Street empty carriages via the "Fifth" line to Adelaide and third line thence to Belfast. Latterly empty trains returning from Bangor excursions sometimes stabled on the third line beside Adelaide shed.

The original loco shed at Belfast was close to the passenger station, but in 1912 a new eleven-road shed was built at Adelaide together with a modern grid-type marshalling yard. Filling material was brought from the area south of Donegall Road bridge, which consequently looked like the site of a proposed railway yard, but wasn't. Adelaide yard was

shunted by a couple of QGTs (0-6-2T), one for each neck. The pilot at the north end had the additional duty of banking departing goods trains as far as Dunmurry, the steepest part of the rise out of Belfast being through Balmoral. The latter station formerly had a small yard of its own - three sidings and a headshunt which came to life during the Agricultural Shows at the adjacent Royal Ulster Agricultural Society's grounds. An engine was employed here for most of the day on such occasions - I remember class A 0-6-0s Nos. 28 and 60 on this job at various times.

Adelaide Yard, incidentally, has seen the locos and rolling stock of many railways. In 1937 a number of "Coronation Youth Specials" off the NCC and BCDR worked into it, hauled by three moguls, a "Scotch" engine and BCDR 0-6-0 No.26 and 4-4-2T No.13, the two latter working their trains up and down to Lisburn several times during the afternoon as locals, to the delight of enthusiasts. Similar specials in 1953 involved the use of some ex-DNGR six-wheelers, that system having recently closed. Rakes of borrowed GSR including DSER vehicles with the familiar spoked wheels, were also stored there in preparation for the Twelfth of July traffic to Finaghy. We may also remember engines of the DNGR, SLNCR GSWR (No.322, on trials ca 1909) and DSER (2-6-0s Nos. 15 and 16 stored in Adelaide during the Civil War of 1922-3).

Finaghy had a two-road wartime yard and switch cabin while Dunmurry, originally the only stopping place between Belfast and Lisburn, was served in the fifties by a Laundry train which on being loaded propelled back to Grosvenor Street to form part of the 8:50pm Derry Goods; and Hilden had a switch cabin, goods store and siding, where wartime oil cars were stored.

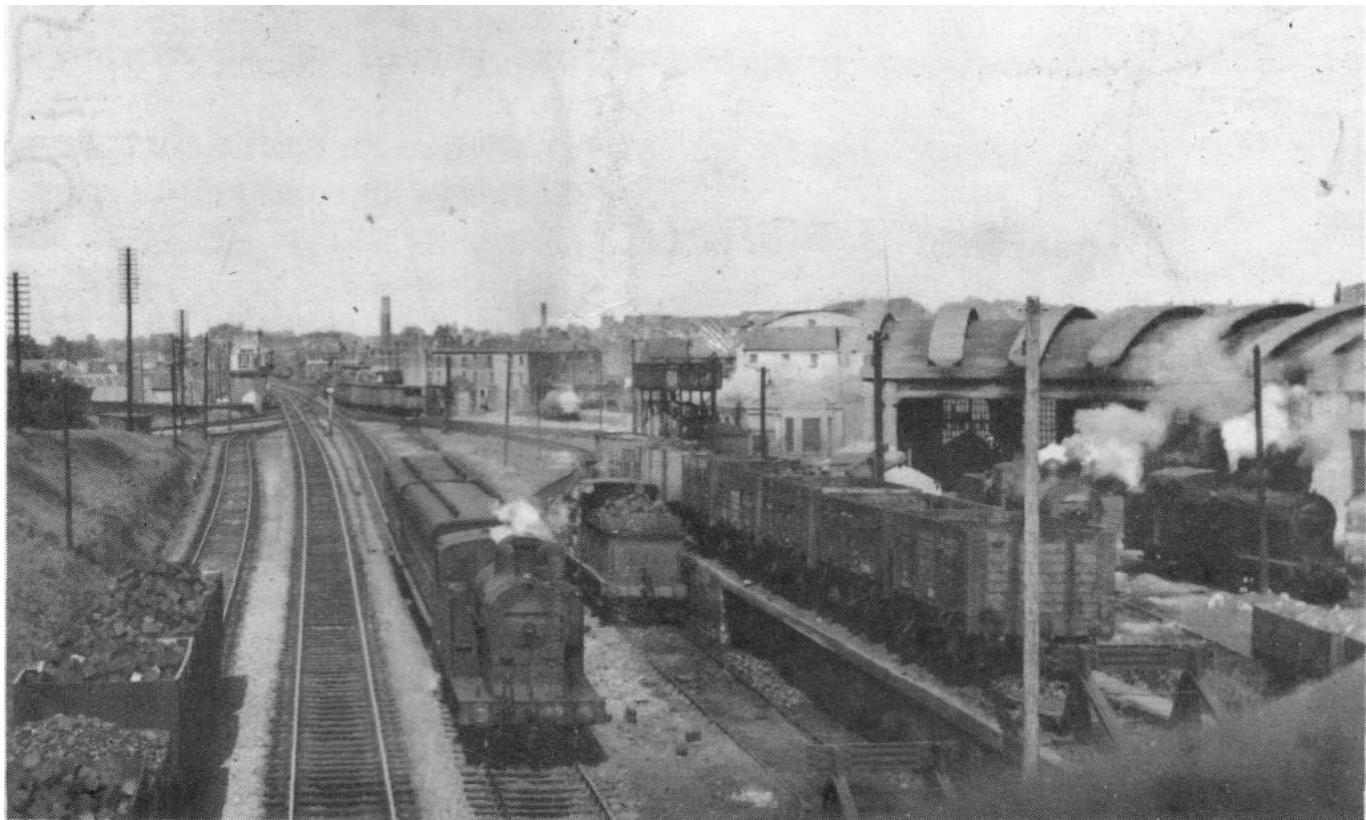
Lisburn goods yard is now used for marshalling permanent way trains. Knockmore Junction was formerly a three-route double-single junction, the other branch (finally closed 1956) going to Banbridge and Newcastle. A stub, extending as far as the nearby Newforge factory, remained for some time after the closure.

Automatic level crossing barriers have been installed at Lissue, the Maze, Damhead and Trummery. Near the disused Broomhedge Halt (built between the wars) was the siding used for Maze Racecourse. "Maze" is an Anglicised plural of Mág = plain. Moira (Mágh-Ratha) contains the same root and means the plain with the rath (circular enclosure) - an odd name as the rath was the normal form of habitation in Celtic times.

Moira was the scene of a battle in 637, celebrated in Gaelic literature, in which the High King (of Tara) defeated a rebel confederacy from Dál Riada and Dal nÁraide (parts of Antrim, Derry and Down). Moira formerly had a goods shed and two road yard, extending across the public road, which remained in use till goods traffic (within NIR) ended in 1964.

Kilmore (Coill Mhór = great wood, a reminder that Ulster was thickly wooded till the Plantation) was formerly a block post, as were Broomhedge, the Boilie and Seagoe. The only remaining block posts after Lisburn are Knockmore Junction, Moira and Lurgan. The story is told that a local inhabitant was arrested in 1798 because, when stopped and asked his business, he declared "I'm coming from Kilnaman and I'm going to Kilmore".

Lurgan had till quite recently so much goods traffic that not only had it a goods train all to itself, but an engine had to be sent daily from Portadown to shunt its yard (the rails, on which those coal merchants' wagons which you see are standing, are not connected with the running lines).



T class 4-4-2T No.139 on the 4:10pm to Armagh, passing Portadown shed on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1956. (A. Donaldson)

"Sunt lacrimae rerum" applies with great force to the railways in this part of the world, but in spite of the grim news in a recent Government publication that the Six Counties have more cars per 1,000 of population than Scotland or even Northern England, NIR have won back a good deal of passenger traffic and with the provision of new trains and the opening of a new station to serve the planned Lurgan-Portadown conurbation, who knows but "Rotha móir a tSaoghail" may rotate yet another radian or two? The new station at Portadown, we hope, points in the same direction being nearer the town.

The new station is similarly situated to the 1848-58 one (the town's second station) but the new one is, unfortunately, not sufficiently advanced to accommodate our train. Steam ballast trains generally work here on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Antrim Branch: It opened in 1871 as the Dublin and Antrim Junction Railway and is mile-posted on the Down side (our right, facing Antrim) from zero at Knockmore Junction. Now a single section, it formerly had blockposts at Ballinderry, Glenavy, Crumlin and Aldergrove. Glenavy and Aldergrove ceased to be blockposts in 1956.

Gradients. The summit is about MP3½, approached by a three mile bank, the steepest part of which is MP2¼ to MP2¾, at 1 in 97. After undulations to about MP10, there is an almost continuous fall to the Sixmilewater (MP17½) the steepest inclination again reaching 1 in 97. There follows a rise to Antrim, mostly at 1/106.

Up to 1933 there was an engine shedded at Antrim specifically for working the goods - at one time it was 0-6-0 No.9 (then NQG later rebuilt as LQG). Thereafter, one-passenger train each way was balanced by a goods working, and after the UTA took over, the morning turn of these was extended to Ballymena.

When Aldergrove ceased to be a blockpost, this train was attached to, and banked, an Up GNR diesel railcar train as far as Aldergrove, whence the two trains went their several directions. This working was subsequently extended to Crumlin. Brookmount once had sidings, two ground frames and a weighbridge, but traffic dwindled in the thirties till World War II galvanized the branch into intense activity. In one case, line occupation was so dense that an Up goods train required three days to negotiate the branch, including a whole day waiting at Ballinderry. One wonders if this was when those GNR riddles were composed of the type "Why did Lisburn the Letterkenny sent her? To Larne him she didn't give a Dam about his Ballymoney". Why not make some up yourself if you have to use some dull mode of transport such as aircraft or diesel train or if (Nár Leigidh Dia é) steam running gets really bad?

Near Glenavy can be seen, to the south east, Crew Hill (i.e. Craobh = branch, i.e. tree) where the kings of this part of Ulster were once crowned under a venerable tree.



U2 class 4-4-0 No.78 "Chichester Castle" banking 5:15pm Down train ex Antrim at Aldergrove in September 1957. (A. Donaldson)

Past Crumlin, near MP12, two large concrete posts on the Up side mark the point of the wartime Gortnagallon branch (built 1942, lifted ca 1950) which served an RAF installation on the shores of Lough Neagh. Workmen's trains at first consisted of six-wheelers though the GNR built spartan "utility" coaches for this type of train. Dimensionally these were to mainline standards and were converted to K15s, etc.,

when their junction had gone.

Aldergrove formerly had a long siding into the military (as it was then) airfield. It is said that, in connection with possible trains to serve the civil airport, a diesel railcar test train made the journey from Belfast (Great Victoria Street) in 28 minutes. The scheme was, however, dropped; the only railborne passenger for the airport whom we know of was a participant in one of our railtours, who was set down here to make his connection.

Antrim is presently the loading point for NIR ballast trains for most parts of the system - within a few days trains have been noted leaving for Magheramorne, Magilligan and Meigh, for example. As there are no facing points on the main line here, Up trains seeking to travel over the GNR branch must first set back on to the Up line.

Mileposts on the NCC main line, on to which we now pass, are on the Down side (i.e. our left facing Ballymena).

Ballymena to Belfast (York Road): Gradients: From Ballymena the line falls, mostly at 1 in 214 to milepost 29½ where begins Cookstown Junction "Hump"; the steepest part of this is a short section at 1/142. Once over the "Hump", the line falls again, mostly at 1/213, to about MP22, whence there is an almost unbroken ascent to Kingsbog Junction (MP11½), followed by a descent all the way to MP3. Most of this is over Greenisland Loop, inclined at 1/76½.

Ballymena (Baile Meadhónach = Middle Town), now the Permanent Way headquarters of NIR, was formerly the "Capital" of a narrow gauge "empire" with an engine shed (the narrow gauge later shared the shed with broad gauge engines), small works and extensive siding accommodation. The narrow gauge platform was the other face of the Up mainline platform. The double water column at the Belfast end of the station is a relic of narrow gauge days. Two lines met end on, one from Parkmore and the other from Larne, the latter running parallel with the broad gauge for some distance, before diverging at Harryville near the broad gauge goods yard.

Cookstown Junction (formerly Drumsough - i.e. Druim Samhaidh = Sorrel Ridge) is in the process of having its island platform replaced by two normal ones, to enable the track to be straightened. Its code letters are, interestingly, DS. Here diverged the Cookstown branch, with an engine shed in the Vee between the routes. This shed was one of the refuges of BCDR 4-4-2T No.30, now safely in the Transport Museum. Here also was the longest relief siding on the NCC -Shannonstown, 1,157 yards. Doagh (MP13½) was more conveniently served (though not for passengers from Belfast) by an outpost of the narrow gauge empire - to wit the branch from Ballyboley Junction. Ballyclare, the terminus of the broad gauge branch which formerly left the main line at Kingsbog, was also situated on the narrow gauge Doagh branch. Kingsbog is the next blockpost after Antrim in the Up direction and the stub of the branch remaining here enabled the pilot to be detached from down trains with great expedition - sometimes under a minute - actually faster than at Blarney. Ballynure (Baile an Iubhair = the town of the Yew tree) was also served by the Doagh branch (closed beyond Ballyclare in 1933), but the BNCR made a sort of claim to serve it by calling the next station "Ballynure Road" - the town being about six miles away. It was later known as Ballyclare Junction though the branch trains did not start from it, but worked through from Belfast.

The only trace of it now is MP10 $\frac{3}{4}$ , which formerly stood on the platform.

Note that the mileposts up to and including MP8 $\frac{3}{4}$  are measured via Greenisland. The next post after 8 $\frac{3}{4}$  is 6, measured from York Road direct. If you take a reading over this "quarter" multiply your speed by  $\frac{9}{10}$ . Part of the original roadbed can be seen between Mossley and Monkstown. The "Back Road" (the old line, now single) was in great demand during World War II for military leave trains. These sometimes loaded to fifteen bogies and were banked from Carrickfergus by an engine which otherwise shunted there and worked the Harbour branch - often a V class 0-6-0.

York Road to Larne: We leave from the York Road terminus of the former LMS NCC railway; now in the process of being rebuilt. Platform 1 has gone and its offices have been transferred to the opposite side of the station. This is due to encroachment by the threatened M2 motorway. On the down side of the line just after leaving the terminus are the works of the old NCC. Twenty-nine locomotives were built here including the well-known broad and narrow gauge two-cylinder compounds. Apart from two rebuilds in Inchicore this was the only works in Ireland to build compound locomotives. These engines were the mainstay of the BNCR and later the NCC for nearly twenty years and then were gradually rebuilt into the A1, B3, U1 and U2 classes. The last passenger compound to survive was the former 2-4-0 7-foot No.55 "Parkmount" which lasted until 1944, though rebuilt as a 4-4-0. This locomotive was something of a pet with NCC men and many stories are told of her. One of these concerns a Sunday just after the blitz on Belfast in 1941. On this occasion Parkmount was the only engine available to haul a large seventeen bogie train out to Greenisland. The NCC line is level until post 3 and then rises steadily until Greenisland at gradients varying from 1 in 102 to 1 in 187. Parkmount was blocked at Greencastle and her driver got out and phoned Greenisland signal cabin and asked to be allowed to wait until they could guarantee him a clear road to Greenisland as he could not risk a stop on the bank with his vast load of around 400 tons. Having received this assurance, he remained at the signal until he received an absolutely clear road. By this time the fireman had built up a huge fire and full head of steam so that an all-out attempt on the bank could be made. With plenty of steam and water to start with, a successful climb was made and Parkmount, working in full gear and with full regulator, arrived in Greenisland though with little or no water in the glasses.

The "Spoil Road" runs on the shore side of the line as far as Greencastle (MP2 $\frac{1}{4}$ ) where an 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.

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 Line can still be seen around Monkstown (the re-opening of this Halt recently 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 to 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.

On entering Greenisland, on the Down side can be seen the remains of the old NCC main line. After leaving Greenisland the line drops down the Mount bank to Carrickfergus. It was on this stretch of line prior to the introduction of the 50mph speed limit that the highest speeds were recorded. In the opposite direction it provides a severe test of an engine's ability to steam and pull. Below Mount station on the Up side can be seen the remains of the Courtauld's industrial railway which owned two 0-4-0STs - "Wilfrid" and "Patricia". Coal trains were regularly worked to the Mount by NCC locomotives and then handed over to Wilfrid or Patricia so that wagons could be weighed.



B3 class 4-4-0 No.60 "County Donegal" at Jordanstown in 1933.  
(W. Robb)

Next came the junction for the Carrickfergus Harbour branch; salt was taken down to the harbour for export.

After Carrickfergus the line runs alongside the sea practically all the way to Whitehead. Up to 1929 the line was single beyond Kilroot but as an unemployment relief scheme in the 1930s doubling was completed to Whitehead. We pass through a short tunnel just outside Whitehead. This last stretch from around MP12 $\frac{1}{4}$  abounds in sharp curves and has a 45mph speed restriction. Between Kilroot and Whitehead in

the days of the single line was a crossing place - Briggs' Loop. The stump of the cabin can still be seen on the Up side. Before the war, the NCC did a lot to develop the Whitehead and Islandmagee area for holidays and to handle the traffic (it is not surprising that this was heavy - the evening return fare from Belfast came down to 6d) a special excursion station was opened to the Larne side of the present station. This consisted of two platform roads, a turntable and siding accommodation. The shed, at the Larne end, held two locomotives and minor repairs could be carried out. In the great days of excursion traffic it was not unusual to see two trains at the platform, one waiting in Whitehead station and another lying in Briggs' Loop. All that now remains of Whitehead's former splendour is the road up to the shed and the shed itself though one platform road has been relaid by the RPSI.

One of the attractions of this period at Whitehead was the Gobbins Cliff Path, constructed by the NCC, for which a small charge was levied. This has now fallen into disuse. Whitehead promenade was once made of railway sleepers, and indeed the railway practically owned it. Latterly Whitehead shed, which now houses the Society's engines, was used by the NCC to store engines surplus to traffic requirements - usually in the wintertime. Before the summer timetable commenced an engine went out to Whitehead and towed in the two locomotives stabled there. One notable engine to winter at Whitehead - in fact to spend her last days there - was that well-known performer, Mogul No.96.

From Whitehead the line, now single, passes through an area of marshy ground to Ballycarry, a crossing point, and erstwhile railhead for the NCC Islandmagee road services. The next crossing point is Magheramorne Loop, where the Spoil trains load from the Quarry. Apart from the Loop itself, there is a network of sidings here enabling two spoil trains to load at once. The last station before Larne is Glynn, after which the line is built on a causeway, with sea on either side.

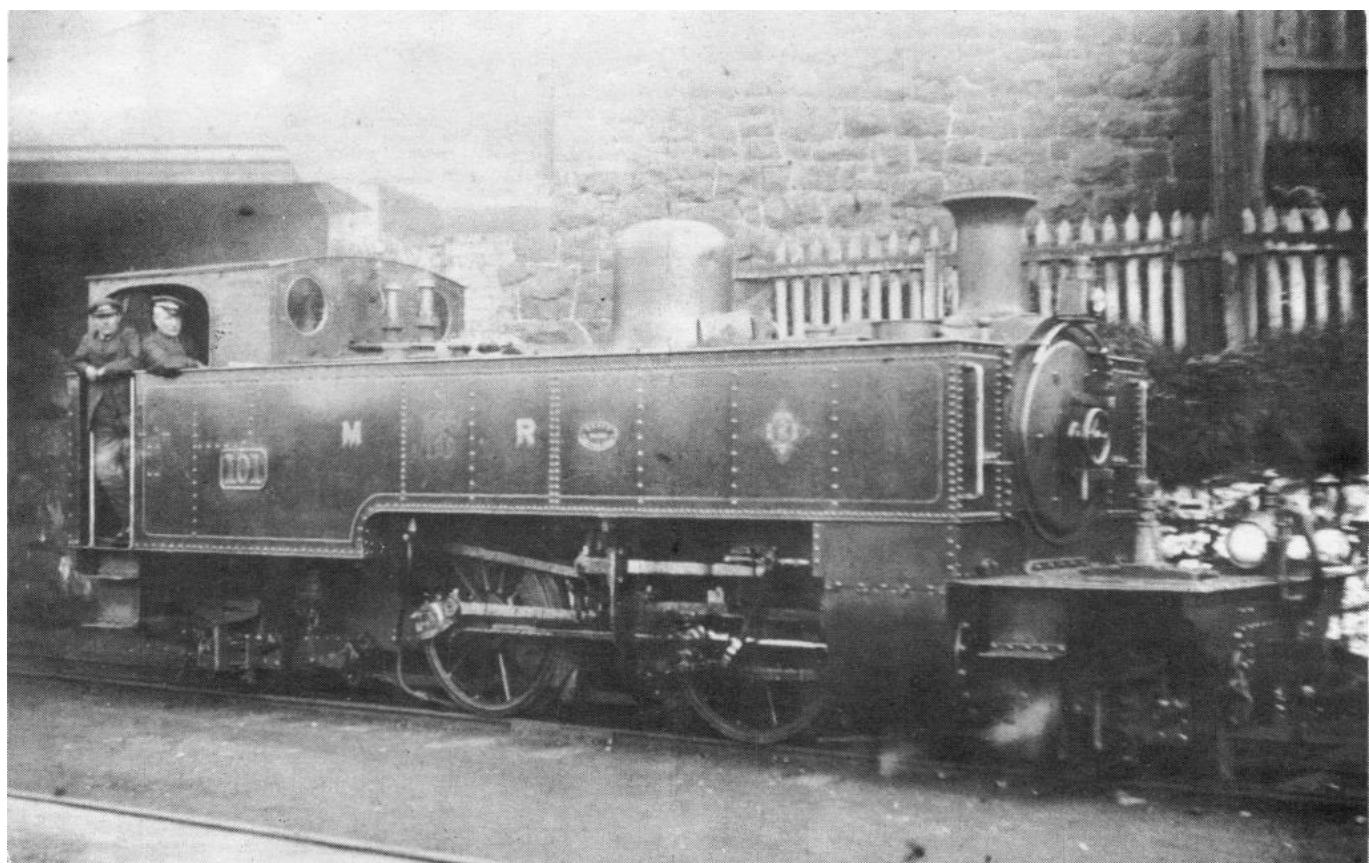
This, by the way, is where the name of our Railtour comes in - InbhearnOllarbha - the inlet or estuary of the Ollarbha - now called Larne Water. It is thought that "Olderfleet", another name associated with Larne, is a corruption of Ollarbha - fjord - a Viking form of the same name.

Larne Town is now only a shadow of its former self, all signals having been removed and the station reduced to little more than a halt. Formerly it possessed an extensive yard and an engine shed. There was a layby loop to the seaward side of the present platform road, but if crossing was necessary, one train used the bay platform.

The last mile from Larne to Larne Harbour is on a sharp curve. It will be noticed that signals on this stretch are of the standard LMS upper quadrant pattern and not the NCC somersault type. On the inland side can be seen the trackbed of the former Ballymena and Larne narrow gauge. That is why this stretch is mile-posted on both sides.

Larne Harbour at one time possessed much of interest to the enthusiast. Apart from the cross-channel boats and their railway connections, it possessed an industrial railway centred on the British Aluminium Works and operated by 0-4-0Ts. In addition it was the terminus of the Ballymena and Larne narrow gauge railway which, after running alongside the broad gauge, turns inland to begin the fearful climb at 1 in 36/44 up to Kilwaughter. In 1900 broad and narrow gauge

must have left the harbour simultaneously because later in the year a notice was issued by Mr Bowman Malcolm strictly forbidding racing along the parallel lines. It would indeed have been a treat for any enthusiast to see perhaps the 7-foot compound Jubilee endeavouring to keep up with a narrow gauge compound - 3' 9" wheels and remarkable acceleration or the little Sharp Stewart 0-6-0Ts which were practically immune from slipping. It is by no means certain that the broad gauge was first through Larne as the little 2-4-2T compounds were capable of exceeding 40mph on the level road. Perhaps the most fascinating engine to work out of Larne was No.109, the 2-6-0T, a type unique in Ireland and rare in the British Isles. The engine was nicknamed "The Bruiser" and capable of hauling a vast load and was a great favourite at Larne. Another unique engine, though she only ran 60,000 miles, was the 2-4-4 compound No.110, a rebuild with a broad gauge boiler of a standard 2-4-2T. One peculiarity of Larne was that no ramp was provided to unload the narrow gauge engines from the transporter truck (this was usually done at Ballymena). After the lifting of the Ballymena - Ballyboley stretch the engines had to be craned off at Larne.



S1 class 2-4-2T No.101 at Larne Harbour in 1931. (K.A.C.R. Nunn, courtesy of the LCGB)

We complete our short survey of the Larne line with a note on locomotives and performance on it. The greatest variety of engine power was seen pre-1933 when the Derry trains were hauled out to Greenisland by the Belfast shed engines. This meant that anything from a 2-4-0T to a V class goods engine was used. The Larne trains and Whitehead and Carrickfergus locals saw a wide variety of motive power including A and B class compound 4-4-0s, K class 0-6-0s and even the light compound 2-4-0 No.56. After 1930 "Glens" and "Scotch" engines predominated, joined by the "Mountain" and "County" classes as the

compounds were gradually rebuilt. One well-known engine was No.50 "Jubilee", for a long period in the 1920s and 1930s shedded at Larne. She is credited with having worked the Larne Boat Express for nine months in one spell without missing a single day. This is attributed to the fact that Larne possessed an excellent fitter who spent a lot of time on her.

A foreign engine which performed on the line with great distinction was GNR No.142. Other GNR engines to run over it included S classes Nos. 171 and 174, as well as an SG3 0-6-0 running in after shopping. After the last war the WT class engines had an almost complete monopoly of Larne services and some outstanding work was done by them and even today they still run a few passenger turns together with the spoil trains.

Perhaps the high water mark of hard running on the Larne road occurred in the 1930s with the tightening of the Larne Boat Train to thirty minutes start to stop, an average of almost 50mph despite a long slack to 45mph approaching Whitehead and a 25mph through Larne Town together with the climb to Greenisland in the Down direction and the Mount bank in the Up. This train was almost always entrusted to either a "Scotch" engine or a "Mountain" class. The initial sharp booking of 9 minutes to Greenisland in the Down direction was rarely kept but by very hard running from here on the 30 minutes was usually cut - sometimes by almost two minutes. Speeds frequently approached 70 on the Mount bank and 62-66 was often sustained to the Whitehead slack. After Whitehead speed was again worked up into the sixties and on a few occasions 67-69 was recorded at Glynn. This was excellent work for four-coupled engines with only 18" or 19" by 24" cylinders and relatively small boilers as the boat train was usually six or seven bogies and on quite a few occasions in the summer reached nine or even ten coaches. The make-up of the Down morning boat train was interesting. The North Atlantic Express arrived in York Road at 9:23 and, its special stock strengthened as necessary, left as the Boat Train at 9:33. This gave a through coach service from Portrush and Ballymena to Larne Harbour. The normal procedure was for the Boat Train engine to place extra coaches on the tail of the "North Atlantic". No time could be wasted by Belfast since the North Atlantic, running to a 60mph timing from Ballymena, could not make up any delays whatever. On one occasion the North Atlantic, grossly overloaded to eleven bogies instead of the usual five to seven, arrived one minute late - in itself an incredible performance since the schedule at the time was 32 minutes. The boat engine, No.84, lifted off seven bogies, placed them on top of her own train of three, hooked up and got away in under five minutes. The run to Larne was made in 29 minutes, a fine effort with a load of over 300 tons. The engine was worked very hard to Greenisland and thereafter 65-69 was sustained to Whitehead with another fine maximum of 67 at Glynn. Further fine work at Larne Harbour ensured that the boat left on time. With this story of railway efficiency in the 1930s we may end.