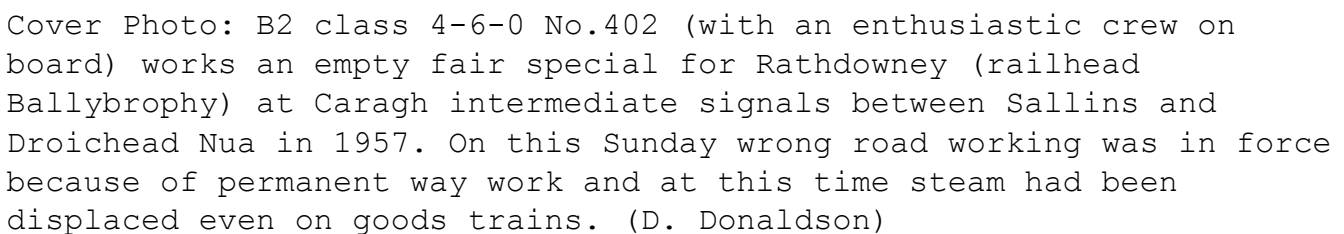




SILVER MINES RAIL TOUR

28th and 29th September 1974

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SILVERMINES RAILTOUR BROCHURE

Written by D. Donaldson

Leaving Connolly we traverse the GSWR North Wall line to Island Bridge, mile-posted on the Down side (i.e. our right) from zero at Islandbridge. The section from Island Bridge to Glasnevin Junction (Milepost $2\frac{3}{4}$) was built in 1877 to give the GSWR access to the MGWR North Wall goods yard via the MGWR North Wall branch, Glasnevin Junction, of course, being a simple turnout facing the opposite way to the present. The junction was later disconnected to save maintenance of pointwork. However, when the GSR closed the Broadstone terminus in 1937 and transferred the remaining MGW section trains to Amiens Street (the Cavan and Kingscourt trains had been using Amiens Street for some time) Glasnevin Junction was reconstructed in its present form (the earthworks are obviously fairly new) to save the heavy Midland trains having to negotiate the steeply-graded MGWR route. Galway, Sligo and Mayo portions sometimes totalled over 400 tons, and the spur from Newcomen Bridge Junction, on the MGW North Wall line, rises to Amiens Street at 1 in 51 and is single-line forby. The steepest grade facing Midland trains on the GSWR line is a short stretch at 1 in 95 near the erstwhile Drumcondra station, though there is about a mile of 1 in 84 through the Phoenix Park tunnel.

Coming out on to the Cork main line (mile-posted on the Down side) at Island Bridge, we face a climb most of the way to Curragh Main Line Cabin about MP27 $\frac{3}{4}$, beginning at 1 in 84/100/138. There is a dip near Hazelhatch, which often produced one's first "sixty" in the Down direction - indeed, it was here that No.800 "ran away" with Joe Tighe in 1939 to the tune of 74mph. Apart from its ends, the Cork line is not too severely graded; the principal banks that concern us are: nearly four miles down at 1/180 from post 30; 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles rising at 1/128 to a summit at MP65; and "Jack Loughlin's Bank" - 2 miles at 1/180 down to MP93 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Incidentally, the Carlow branch was originally intended to form part of the main line which was to reach Cork via Kilkenny, Cashel and the south side of the Galtees.

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 in 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. The Curragh Siding (MP27 $\frac{1}{2}$) 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 Wolf hill Colliery line. Port Laoighise, 50.9 miles (= the garrison town of [the barony of] Laoighis - formerly called Maryborough after Mary Tudor) was until 1962 the junction of 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, originally intended to continue to Geashill on the Portarlinton - 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 to serve a Bord na Móna (peat) installation. Narrow gauge lines cause the blood pressure of the average railway enthusiast to rise but he can relax again. Any three foot gauge lines seen belong to Bord na Móna and are liable to be taken up and relaid elsewhere as the peat bogs are worked out.

Mountrath (MP59½) has a melancholy interest as the place where an 800 class engine, whose crew had "bailed 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-wheeler compo. 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 - a few years ago the Comhlucht Siúicre 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 (from 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 Dal 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 horse 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 Boromhe or Boirmhe, 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.

Limerick Junction was opened by the GSWR in July 1848, the WLR line from Limerick to Tipperary having 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. The name "Limerick Junction" is, of course, perfectly rational, meaning the junction for Limerick, though perhaps its Irish name "Gabhal na Sulchoide" - 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. The traditional reversal is in fact no longer necessary for mainline trains, although we will enter the station by this traditional method. 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 GSW 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.

As to running on the Cork line - pre-1939 it was somewhat variable, depending on the quality of coal. A good sprinkling of record runs on special occasions showed what the engines could do under favourable

conditions, but on ordinary trains one was liable to have to make an awful lot of runs to collect a really good one. The short-lived 1939 Mail, on the other hand, was consistently good, especially in the Down direction. Its nearest equivalent in post-war days would be the Enterprise, albeit a very different sort of train.



Bla class 4-6-0 No.801 "Macha" leaves the Junction on the 10:30 Cork and Kerry train in September 1951. Seventh from the engine is a Pullman used as the diner in the Kerry portion of the train. Note the contour of the 1951 stock compared with the pre-war Bredins. In later days Down trains swung onto the Up main line for a few yards before gaining their proper road by a facing crossover. (Kelland Collection 200)

Its running was at first erratic - the 800 class seemed to run away on the drivers, though some of these 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 Three" 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 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 Island Bridge in 86.37.

In 1951, "Pop" Kelly with 800 and only 190 tons, covered the 89.1 miles from Dundrum to Hazelhatch in 86.59, after which he had permanent way 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.

The first section of the Waterford and Limerick Railway to be completed was the 24.8 mile length from Limerick to Tipperary. There was, of course, no junction at Solohead then - the GSWR had not reached that point yet. The line was extended to Clonmel in 1852. The narrow Up platform at Tipperary is an innovation since steam days.



D11 class 4-4-0 No.304 (formerly named "Princess Ena", leaving Cahir on the 12:29 ex Limerick on 28th July 1954, negotiating the track taken by 375. The second vehicle is an eight-wheeled version of 861. (D. Donaldson)

Till 1963 there was a single-platform station (but with crossing loop) at Bansha near post 29½. Near post 37½ is Abbey Siding, Cahir (both sides of the line), still in use and the oldest siding to appear in current working timetables. Cahir (38.3 miles) is chiefly remembered nowadays as the scene of a dramatic fatal accident in December 1955. The Down Night Mail, augmented by vans for the heavy Christmas mail and parcel traffic, was found to foul the crossing loop points at the

Up end of the station. Consequently, an Up Beet Special, in charge of "Woolwich" No.375, was directed into a siding which formed an extension to the crossing loop. But 375 failed to stop and, demolishing a stopblock at the end of the siding, plunged into the River Suir beyond, killing the enginemen who had stuck to their engine.

Clonmel was formerly served by a branch from Thurles, built by a company calling itself the Southern Railway of Ireland, later absorbed by the Waterford Limerick and Western Railway. The junction faced Limerick and was situated close to the engine shed.

The Limerick - Waterford line is mile-posted on the Up (i.e. the south-west) side from zero at Limerick. The line falls most of the way from the junction to Clonmel, finishing with a long stretch from about MP 44½ right into Clonmel, which includes some 4½ miles at 1 in 132. There is, however, a climb of two miles at 1 in 150 shortly after Cahir in the Down direction.

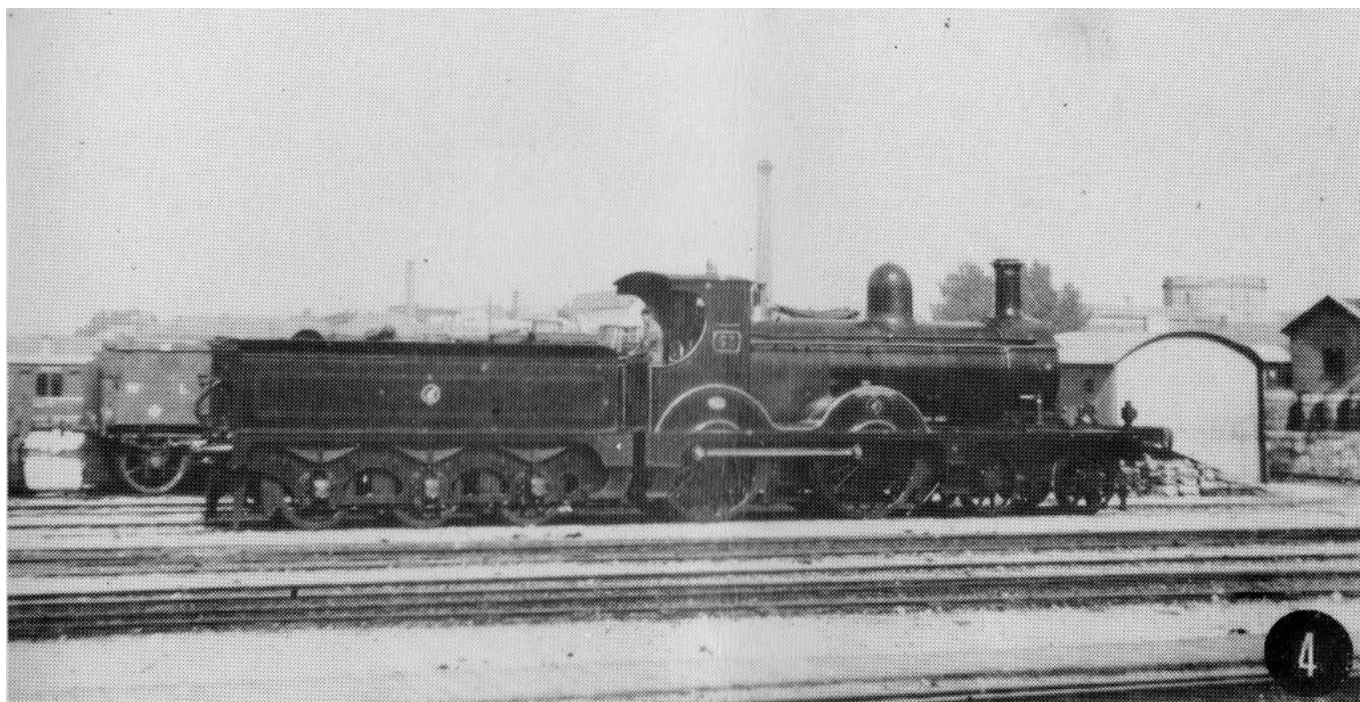
At Keane's Points at Limerick Junction, while heading for Limerick, we pass onto another portion of the main line of the Waterford and Limerick. The gradient profile to Limerick is simple; apart from a very short rise near MP20 and a couple of level stretches, it falls all the way. Mileposts are on the same side as those on the Waterford side of the junction (i.e. on the Up side). 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 train Driver Delaney with 2-4-2T No.35 (F6 class built Inchicore 1894, weight 46 tons and tractive effort 9,580lbs) 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 class 4-4-0 No.10, dimensionally similar to No.35, gave the best run on a Down stopping train, her total running time being 40 minutes 5 seconds (steam schedule 47 minutes and 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 being 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 minutes net start-to-stop with a maximum of 65mph.

In 1955 when the train was non-stop, Dan O'Leary reached even higher speeds - 66½ with No.358 (5'8½" 4-4-0 of class D4) and 68mph with 313 (Coey D10 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.353 which managed her 60 like the rest. Delaney even appeared

one morning in 1954 with 295 - ex Waterford Limerick and Western No.52 "Brian Boru" but this was an all-stations train and nothing notable was recorded. Oola is less queer-looking in Irish - Ubhla = apples.



D15 4-4-0 No.296 at Limerick, in the red livery of WLWR with yellow lines, plenty of brass beading and copper capped chimney.

(H.L. Hopwood, Ken Nunn Collection H759)

Killonan (MP4½) 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 WLWR extension) comes in on the Down side and continues separately into the terminus. A 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 WLWR) in 1856, and doubled in 1968. Actually it is two single lines, the "Down" road serving Foynes and North Kerry while the "Up" road goes to Carey's Road (goods) and the Castlemungret Cement Factory branch (opened in 1957). On the far side of the Loop is the running shed and next we pass the WLR works, now used for wagon repairs. In steam days many of the small 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. It had been decided to eschew all reference to violence in this brochure, but Brian's principal achievements lay in peaceful reconstruction. The almost-mythical Sarsfield was more warlike - but at least he got a train named after him.



Limerick Running Shed on 4th July 1930. Most of the engines can be identified and we take them left to right. The smokebox shows the 4-4-0 behind J15 187 to be No.20 (D17 class) which was based in Limerick at this time. In the next road but one is C5 class No.271 (formerly WLWR No.18 "Geraldine"). Behind her the splashers belie the 4-4-0 to be D15 No.296, another ex-WLWR engine, formerly 53 "Jubilee". Just beyond 271 can be discerned the smokebox of D14 No.88 while just visible inside the second last shed road is obviously a J11 0-6-0 tank, probably No.219 (normally shedded at Limerick). On the extreme right stands M2 0-4-0T "Elf", formerly the loco portion of Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford railmotor No.1. With the exception of "Elf" which was withdrawn later in 1930, all the engines shown had at least twenty-five years active years still to come. (Locomotive Publishing Co 87714)

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,

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 1/200. There follows a two mile bank of 1 in 100 up to MP26³/₄, and more undulations, culminating in a one-mile climb at 1 in 100 and 1 in 105 into Roscrea. After a rise and gradual fall, there is a bank of nearly two miles at 1 in 135 to Milepost 1.



J15 No.162 on the 19:45 Birr connection out of the 17:40 Limerick at the bifurcation of the Birr and Nenagh lines, on 23rd May 1959. The lateness in the life of the branch is exemplified by the modern stock used. (D. Donaldson)

At Milepost 35¹/₄ diverges the Silvermines branch, 1¹/₄ miles long (serving barytes and zinc mines) on a rising grade of 1 in 50 broken only by a short length of 1/450 where the line crosses a public road about half a mile from Silver-mines 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 Waterford and Limerick 2-4-0s.

At Roscrea you will see the stub of the Birr branch running alongside for some distance. Borris-in-Ossory beet loading bank at MP3 was closed in 1967.

Running over the Ballybrophy - Killonan line was not usually exceptionally bright, though some tightest-ever timings were introduced in the summer of 1950. These totalled 84 minutes running allowance (five stops) in the Down and 91 minutes (six stops) in the Up direction. The fastest section was Cloughjordan - Nenagh, 9.2 miles in 13 minutes, start-to-stop = 42.5 mph. D3 class No.338, with a time of 11.43 from Roscrea to Ballybrophy (scheduled 16) and D4 with 11.48 over the same stretch in the opposite direction (scheduled 15) showed they could keep the new times easily (both engines had above-average loads) but by winter 1951-52 they had been eased out to 89 minutes Down and 96 minutes Up.



J4 0-6-0 No.258 with N Class boiler whereas many of her sisters had the original 257 superheated boiler. She is seen here working the 12:30 fair special ex-Nenagh at Cloughjordan on 4th November 1957. This class was considered so useful that its retention, in its entirety, (until dieselisation should be complete) was advocated by the CIÉ loco department. (D. Donaldson)

In pre-war days MGWR D7 4-4-0 No.538 with 190 tons had run from Cloughjordan to Roscrea in 13 minutes 3 with a maximum of 62 (1950 schedule 15 minutes) and thence to Ballybrophy in 14 minutes 50 with a maximum of 61½.

Long distance passenger trains on the line were heavy for the engines (Coey 4-4-0s) provided, so speeds in excess of 60mph were hard to come

by. One run, however, deserves re-telling. In 1952 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 minutes 33 with a maximum of 60½. The train was here to be combined with one from Thurles, so 154 returned to her branch trundle, unaffected by this tremendous effort.

Finally, we look at the final portion of the tour, the Great Northern main line.

Participants on this section will wish to know the points at which high speeds may be attained or loco performance assessed in the Down direction, so we give gradients, etc., from that point of view.

The GNR main line is mile-posted on the Down side and the gradient posts are to be found on this side too. The first "sixties" were usually produced by the short (about 1½ mile) fall through Howth Junction. Thereafter, a minor summit at MP16 is followed by a racing stretch to Laytown (27.7 miles). The climb out of the Boyne valley (Kellystown Bank) comprises about a mile at 1 in 187 and three miles at 1 in 177. The summit is marked by the disused Kellystown cabin at 37.3 miles on the Up side. In GNR days this cabin was switched in at times of heavy traffic. It was particularly useful when mainline trains were being run in several parts. There follows another "galloping ground" (Dunleer Bank) starting with five miles falling at 1 in 197 and continuing to about Dromiskin (automatic barrier) crossing near MP49¼. An "Eighty" was a certainty here in pre-war days, and a distinct possibility right up to the end of steam.

The famous climb between Slieve Gullion and the Cooley Mountains is largely at 1 in 100 though there is a short stretch at 1 in 91 about MP57 - the steepest gradient of the whole line. After a short "dip" at 1 in 140 from Adavoyle station to Meigh level crossing, climbing resumes, mostly at 1 in 120 to the summit about MacAnuff's Bridge (No.180) just after MP65¼. After about ¼ mile of level the line falls at 1 in 100 in places to MP74, near Knockanarney ("Hillock of the Sloes") crossing, though there is a 50mph speed restriction from Bessbrook station (closed, at MP69½ onwards. Gentle undulations follow to Portadown. There is a speed restriction to 30mph for steam locos over the Poyntzpass curves, though I once negotiated it in perfect safety on the pre-war 08:15 Up at 51mph and once behind a Jeep at 58!

Portadown is followed by a gentle but, from the performance point of view, interesting rise to MP96, after which there is a fall to Belfast, broken at Knockmore Junction and again at Derriaghy.

In pre-war days, one confidently expected to "clock" an "eighty" on the descent into Dundalk and a friend of mine was bitterly disappointed to record only (!) 79½ behind PPs No.77 and unrebuilt S2

No.191 with twelve bogies on a Belfast-Killarney special, and no more than 70 behind a U on a Bangor - Dublin excursion. The PP must have been very rough at this speed though Robbins timed one at 82mph piloting a Compound during the War, with fourteen bogies down Dunleer Bank.

Indeed 90mph was recorded more than once below Mountpleasant, though many drivers treated the curve more with respect. A story is told of a member of the Traffic staff who found himself on the footplate of a 4-4-2T attached to bank a Compound out of Goraghwood. As it was a passenger train, the tank was coupled, so when the Compound began to 'run' down the other side, the traffic man travelled for much of the descent on his knees.

In pre-war days, very heavy loads were often taken from Belfast to Portadown, for reasons of economy, the 08:15 and 19:10 took a Cavan portion, and for a time the 10:30 included coaches for Derry. In addition, all trains except the 19:10 had a Warrenpoint through coach (in the case of the 17:40 this was a "slip") while the 17:40 had at certain periods coaches for Cookstown and for Portadown. The Compounds were generally asked to take up to 14 bogies unaided; if a pilot was provided, she was at first attached next the train, owing to the excessive oscillation of the Compounds at the front end. If an S class engine (unrebuilt) was used on the 08:15, a pilot was supplied. The 10:30, however, was unpiloted unless it was necessary to return the Portadown engine which brought in a special at 09:10 to cater for "commuters" on days when the 06:40 ex Dublin was running in one of her later paths, if delayed by the Holyhead boat. Thus on one occasion I observed 174 tackling twelve bogies unaided and making a good fist of it. The 19:10 was more easily timed and did not load up quite so heavily, though a greater variety of engines was to be found on it.

I have seen (in pre-timing days) a QS take out ten bogies and van on it, and QLs handle one bogie more.

To go back further still, I recall seeing, as a small boy during the 1932 Eucharistic Congress, 250lb Compounds storming past the foot of Ulsterville Avenue (about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from Great Victoria Street terminus) with twelve bogies on the 17:40, exhaust shooting skywards as drivers strove to keep the impossible 27-minute timing to Portadown.

The Great Northern began, as it ended, life with a type of engine unique in this country - the 4-2-2 express singles Nos. 88 "Victoria" and 89 "Albert" - an idea which the Loco Superintendent apparently brought from Doncaster. (The WKR had 4-2-2 non-bogie tanks for a time.) 88 and 89 continued to work the Mails long after coupled engines came into use on other trains.

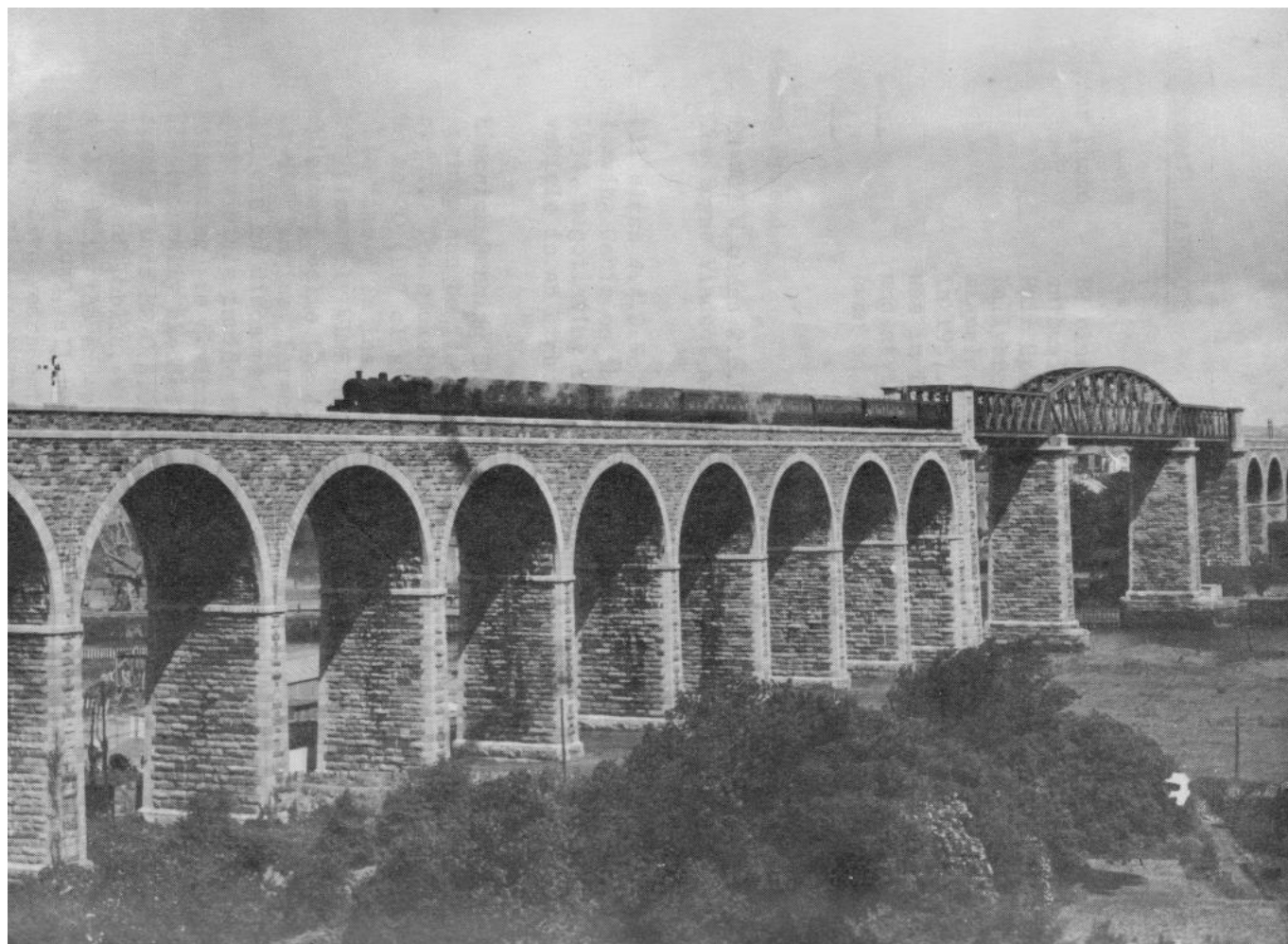
As the sharp curves at Drogheda and Portadown remind us, through rail connection between Dublin and Belfast was a sort of afterthought and. achieved by joining up the Ulster Railway (to Armagh) and the Dublin and Drogheda Railway, whose terminus (still used for wagon storage) was on the Up side of the bank to the Up side of the present Drogheda station.

The through route was only completed by the construction, after many difficulties, of the Boyne Viaduct in 1855. For a time after 1849, one could travel between Dublin and Belfast in the leisurely cycling time of eight hours, using a stage coach between Castleblaney and Armagh.

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SOME NOTES on the engines and coaches on the tour

No.186 will need no introduction to previous tour participants, having appeared in almost every tour run by the Society - indeed she has run over three thousand miles in Society hands.



Ex-NCC W class 2-6-0 No.97 "Earl of Ulster" crosses the Boyne Viaduct at Drogheda on an Up Sunday train. (D Donaldson)

Originally built by Sharp Stewart in 1879 as one of the (eventual) one hundred and eleven members of the famous 101 or J15 class of mixed-traffic 0-6-0s built by successive engineers to McDonnell's design. 186 received a "Z" class superheated boiler in 1932 and new frames in 1935. She was based mostly in the Carlow and Waterford areas and ended her career in "company" hands on the Grand Irish Steam Tour of 1964. She was later presented to the Society by the Board of Córas Iompair Éireann and was stored variously at Adelaide, Ballymena and York Road before beginning her active days on RPSI trains with the pioneering "Dalriada" railtour in May 1968.

Since then 186 has been the subject of much hard work at Whitehead - the range of work includes renewal of firehole rivets, retubing, attention to rods and bushes, crank pins and big ends, renewal of the top of the smokebox shell. She is equipped with a 3,375 gallon tender, thought to have been used by B2 class 4-6-0 No.401.

No.4 appears on this Tour fresh from her triumphant completion of her second season on the Society's Portrush Flyers - a programme of four public steam excursions from Belfast using Society stock, recreating all that was best in the last days of steam on NIR and providing the nearest thing to proper main-line steam in the British Isles and, indeed, the only regular steam operating on a main line in these islands.

4 was built as one of the first of the WT class of 2-6-4T in 1947 at Derby as a tank version of the W class moguls introduced in 1933 (see photograph above). No.4 was based principally at York Road but did put in some startling performances on the County Down in 1951 as well as being the first of her class to reach Dublin in December 1954 following the washout of the Tolka bridge. Like the other survivors of the eighteen members of this class, 4 finished her days on the "Stone Trains", working the last train with No.53 in May 1970 having already worked the last NIR steam trains the previous Easter Tuesday. 4 was bought, despite competition from scrap-merchants, and has since had much work done on her, the latest being a complete repaint with hand-done crests.

Turning now to our coaches, all of which were used on the Flyers. 1327 and 1335 are 56 seat seconds built to Bredin's design in 1935 and 1937 respectively - 1335 is slightly wider over body and has some more upholstery while 1327 has roller bearings. 1333 is a 1936 open version with similar body, and seats 72. Originally she was built without corridor connections and when these were added the seating capacity fell by four. 861 is the most historic of our vehicles and her survival until so recently is nothing short of curious. She was built in 1906 for the Boat trains on the Mallow-Waterford line between Cork and Rosslare. She is a twelve-wheel clerestory compo brake with two first class compartments and five second class (two of which were built as third class but never used as such). The large van portion of the coach has been partly taken over by the shop which was added without altering the coach except for one wall and the counter. 861 is gas lit, thanks to retention of the fittings by CIÉ and the help and advice of Calor/Kosangas. This firm helped, too, in the reinstatement of the other RPSI vehicle on this train, ex-GNR Diner 552 which was formerly GNR 88 built in 1938 for the 8:15am ex Belfast and 6:40pm Down. She was later displaced onto the 9am ex Dublin before being converted for BUT railcar use in 1958.

Engine and Coach notes by C.P. Friel

TIMETABLE SECTION

Saturday 28th September

Dublin (Connolly) to Limerick Junction
2-6-4T No.4 and train of RPSI vehicles

| | Arr | dep | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|---|
| Connolly | | 09:20 | |
| Island Bridge Junction | pass | 09:35 | |
| Sallins | pass | 10:02 | |
| Kildare | 10:20 | 10:30 | Water |
| Portarlinton | pass | 10:45 | |
| Port Laoise | pass | 11:00 | |
| Ballybrophy | 11:23 | 11.33 | Water |
| Lisduff | 11:48 | 12:03 | Train to stop at platform, then draw forward to clear hopper at 11:55 |
| Thurles | 12:23 | 12:30 | Photographic stop |
| Limerick Junction | 13:00 | | Train to run through on Down line then reverse to platform |

Limerick Junction - Clonmel - Limerick Junction
0-6-0 No.186 and train of RPSI vehicles

| | Arr | dep | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---|
| Limerick Junction | | 14:00 | |
| Tipperary | pass | 14:10 | |
| Cahir | pass | 14:35 | |
| Clonmel | 14:57 | 15:37 | Water |
| Cahir | 16:00 | 16:17 | Photo stop and Runpast to Abbey station |
| Cahir Abbey | 16:20 | 16:35 | Train waits for passengers |
| Tipperary | <u>17:00</u> | <u>17:15</u> | Cross 16:00 ex-Limerick Lineside Bus to Junction depart 17:05 |
| Limerick Junction | 17:25 | | Bus reconnects |

Limerick Junction to Limerick
 2-6-4T No.4 and train of RPSI vehicles

| | Arr | dep | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Limerick Junction | | 17:55 | |
| Dromkeen | <u>18:15</u> | <u>18:27</u> | Cross 18:10 ex-Limerick |
| Killonan | pass | 18:40 | |
| Limerick | 18:48 | | |

No.186 will follow light engine, leaving the Junction at 19:07 and arriving Limerick at 19:47.

Sunday 29th September

Limerick to Birdhill
 0-6-0 No.186 piloting 2-6-4T No.4 and train of RPSI vehicles
 strengthened with one CIÉ brake/second

| | Arr | dep | |
|----------------------|-------|-------|---|
| Limerick | | 08:40 | |
| Killonan | pass | 08:49 | |
| Birdhill | pass | 09:08 | |
| Shalee | 09:16 | 09:27 | Lineside bus to Silvermines depart 09.22 |
| Silvermines Junction | 09:30 | 09:35 | Please remain in train |
| Silvermines | 09:55 | 10:25 | Bus reconnects Bus to Birdhill departs 10:15 |
| Silvermines Junction | 10:40 | 10:45 | Please remain in train |
| Birdhill | 10:55 | | |

Birdhill to Ballybrophy
 No.186 and CIÉ Brake + 1333
 No.4 and 1335 + 552 + 861 + 1327

| 186 + train | | | 4 + train | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 11:25 | Birdhill | | 11:52 |
| 11:50 | | Nenagh | 12:10 | |
| | 12:20 | Nenagh | | 12:42 |
| 12:40 | 12:45 | Cloughjordan | | |
| | | Cloughjordan | 12:59 | 13:07 |
| <u>13:05</u> | | Roscrea | | |
| | | Roscrea | <u>13:22</u> | <u>13:30</u> |
| | <u>13:50</u> | Roscrea | | |
| 14:15 | | Ballybrophy | 13:48 | |

At Ballybrophy both locomotives will take water and turn. The train will be recombined but without the CIÉ Brake/second.

Ballybrophy to Dublin (Connolly)
2-6-4T No.4 and train of RPSI vehicles

| | Arr | dep | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Ballybrophy | | 14:45 | |
| Port Laoise | pass | 15:09 | |
| Portarlinton | pass | 15:26 | |
| Kildare | 15:45 | 16:15 | Water |
| Island Bridge Junction | pass | 16:45 | |
| Connolly | 17:00 | | |

Dublin (Connolly) to Belfast (Great Victoria Street)
2-6-4T No.4 and train of RPSI vehicles

| | Arr | dep | |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Connolly | | 19:05 | |
| Howth Junction | pass | 19:15 | |
| Malahide | pass | 19:20 | |
| Balbriggan | pass | 19:34 | |
| Drogheda | 19:48 | 19:53 | Water |
| Dundalk | 20:27 | 20:47 | Water |
| Poyntzpass | pass | 21:22 | |
| Portadown | 21:37 | 21:42 | |
| Lisburn | 22:05 | 22:10 | Water |
| Belfast (GVS) | 22:30 | | |

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