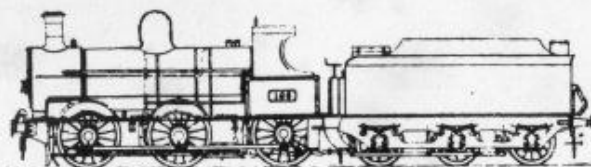


THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

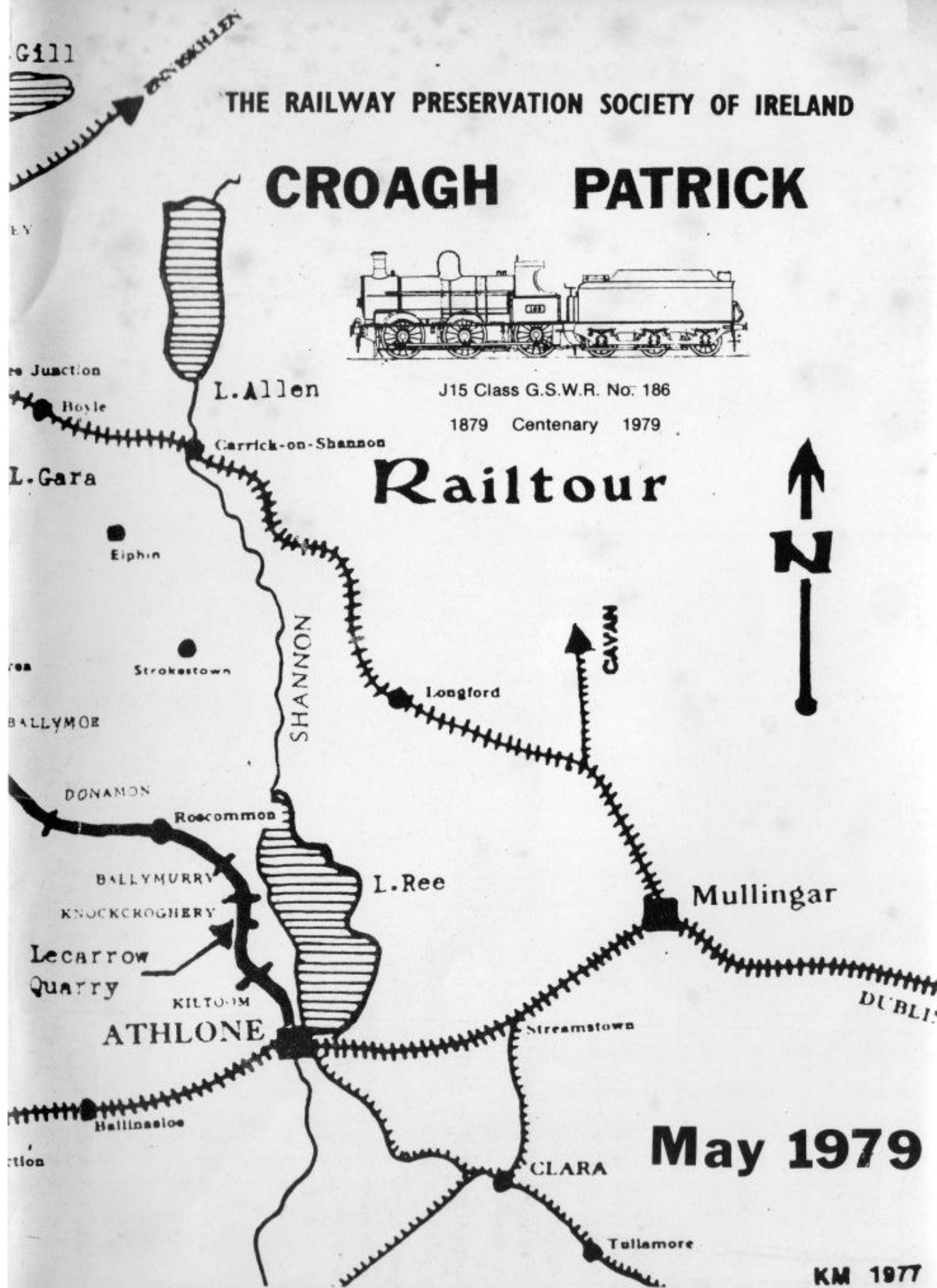
CROAGH PATRICK



J15 Class G.S.W.R. No. 186

1879 Centenary 1979

Railtour



May 1979

KM 1977

THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND

WHITEHEAD EXCURSION STATION - WHITEHEAD, Co. ANTRIM

PATRON: THE RT. HON. THE LORD O'NEILL

Souvenir Brochure

of the

Croagh Patrick

Railtour

1979

FRONT COVER: Map of this railtour originally drawn by K.A. Murray, Editor
IRRS Journal

This brochure was compiled from acknowledged sources by Tim Moriarty,
assistant (Railtours) to the Publications Officer of the Society.

THE RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY O IRELAND

"CROAGH PATRICK RAILTOUR" - Saturday/Sunday/Monday 26/27/28 May 1979

Dublin - Mullingar - Athenry - Westport - Ballina - Roscommon - Athlone - Portarlinton - Dublin - (Lisburn - Antrim - Whitehead)

Featuring: - Steam travel over the Mayo lines, Ballina branch, and the goods-only Athenry - Tuam - Claremorris line.

- The first passenger train for 19 years hauled by newly-restored Class J15 0-6-0 No. 184.
- Extensive double-heading by J15s 184 & 186 - 99 and 100 years old respectively.
- Steam travel to the heart of Connemara, amid the rugged and splendid scenery of the west of Ireland.
- Full programme of photo-stops, runpasts and lineside buses.
- Overnight accommodation and connecting travel from Britain arranged, including comprehensive air travel arrangements.

The Croagh Patrick railtour (called after the 2,510ft high mountain adjacent to Westport) will start from Dublin Pearse station, call at Dublin Connolly, and continue to Mullingar, restoring the practice of Midland trains from 1935 to 1973. To allow as much time as possible for the scenic lines in the West, haulage from Dublin to Mullingar on Saturday, and from Athlone to Dublin on Sunday, will be by CIÉ diesel-electric locomotive.

At Mullingar, our preserved ex-Great Southern & Western Railway class J15 0-6-0s Nos. 184 and 186 - the latter in her centenary year - will take over the train for most of the remainder of the stream portion of the tour, continuing over the rest of the Midland Great Western Railway's main Line as far as Athenry, including the Mullingar - Moate - Athlone section recently used, with locomotive No.184, for filming of "The First Great Train Robbery".

After turning the engines at Athenry, the train will head north over the 33-mile goods-only Athenry - Tuam - Claremorris line, formerly part of the Waterford, Limerick and Western Railway's line from Limerick to Sligo.

At Claremorris, the Mayo Line will be followed through Balla and Castlebar to Westport, on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, for our overnight stop, where hotel accommodation at reduced rates has been arranged by the Society (see later).

On Sunday morning, the train will return to Balla before reversing and proceeding via Manulla Junction onto the 20-mile long Ballina branch, which has not seen a steam train for almost 20 years.

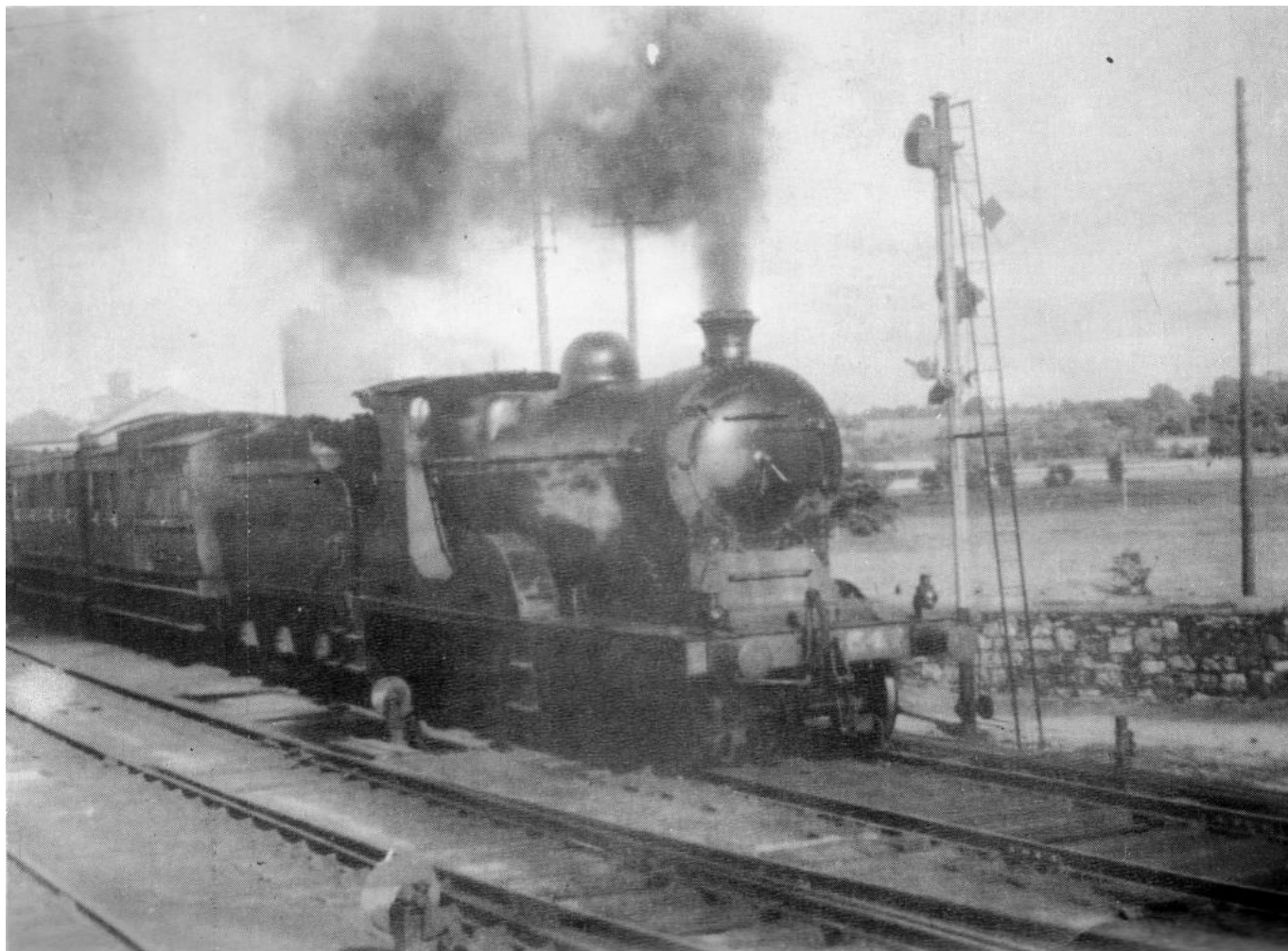
After returning from Ballina to Claremorris, we will take the main Mayo line through Castlerea and Roscommon to Athlone, where steam will give way to diesel for the run back to Dublin, this time via Clara, Tullamore, Portarlinton and thence the Cork - Dublin main line. Arrival back in

Dublin is timed to connect with the evening Dun Laoghaire - Holyhead and overnight Dublin - Liverpool sailings.

The usual railtour facilities will be provided throughout this tour by the Dining Car.

A WORD FROM THE COMMITTEE

Participants are not allowed to ride or be on the footplate of the engines while on tour. Train Crews have been advised of this arrangement. Participants are also reminded to be careful of double running roads and, in their own safety, should comply with any directions given by officers of the railway companies or the Society's marshals.



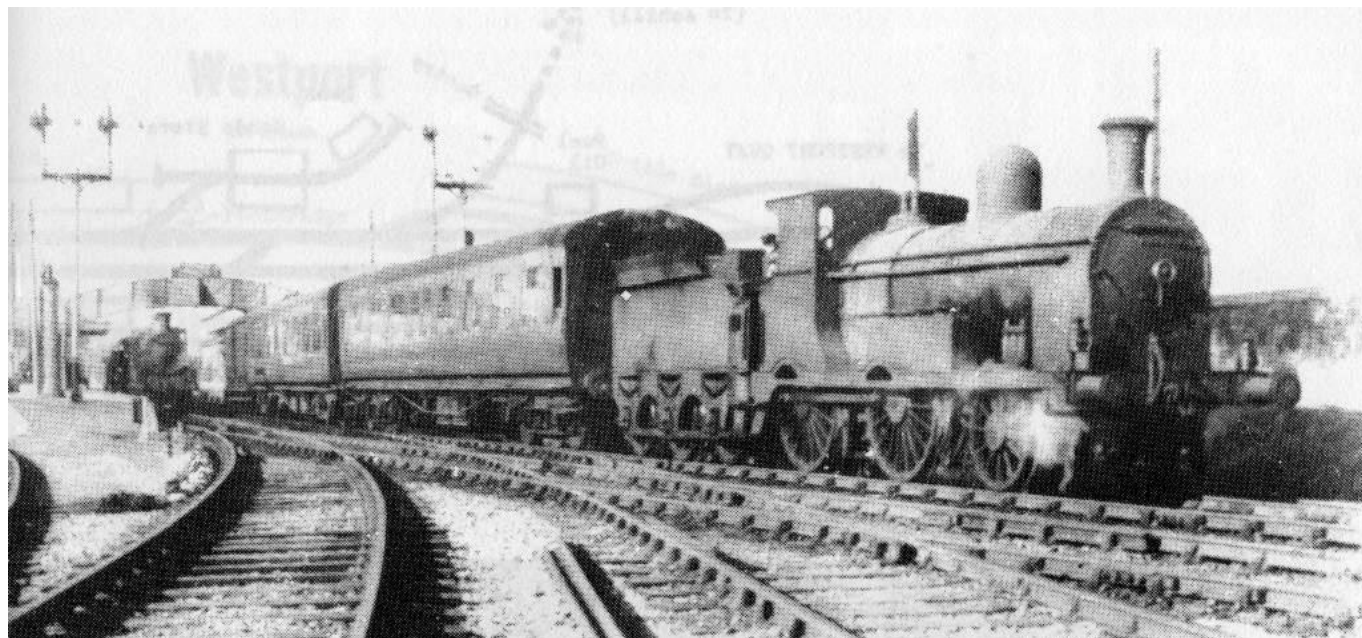
4-4-0 No.547 at Mullingar in August 1950. (A.J. Cronhelm)

THE MAYO BRANCH

The railway line from Athlone at the River Shannon to Westport in County Mayo on the west coast of Ireland, and its branch to Ballina, have been known to several generations of railwaymen as "The Mayo Branch". Even in steam times this part of "The Midland" has not received much attention from railway enthusiasts and little has been written until the extensible articles by Norman McAdams in Journals 72 and 73 of our sister organisation the Irish Railway Record Society from which we quote by kind permission of the author.

In 1854 the only railway in all Connaught was the MGWR's main line from Dublin to Galway. The GS&WR's proposed "Grand Junction" scheme was to

have extended the branch from Portarlinton to Counties Mayo and Sligo. The real purpose of the project was to gain access to Athlone and from there to drive deep into MGWR territory. These schemes were rejected by Parliament and a year later two further proposals, emerged suggesting: (1) a line from Athenry to Tuam, Castlebar, Westport and Ballina; (2) a branch from Longford to Castlebar via Strokestown, Ballaghaderreen and Swinford.



The 1:30pm Westport-Dublin train at Claremorris with loco No.655 in 1956.

Lord Lucan, landlord, soldier and 19th century "whizkid" entered the arena at this stage and in 1856 submitted proposals for a line from Tullamore to Athlone, Roscommon and Sligo. To put it briefly the MGWR were incensed by this threat over its monopoly of Athlone and its own plans from Longford to Sligo. After many legal battles the Bill for a line from Athlone to Castlerea was passed with the MGWR subscribing in 1858 to the Great Northern and Western Railway. The official opening of the single track section to Roscommon took place on 13th February 1860. An intermediate station was opened at Knockcroghery, and later in the year Ballymumy appeared. The extension to Castlerea was marred by an unfortunate accident at Bellacaher, near Ballymoe when a ballast train conveying a number of workers derailed and ran into the bog. The line opened to Castlerea on 15th November with intermediate stations at Doncannon and Ballymoe provided a few months later. The line crossed further bogs and the River Suck to reach Ballyhaunis by August 1861 and thence to Claremorris in May 1862. By the end of that year the line was extended to Castlebar with an intermediate station at Balla. Further battles ensued before Lord Lucan achieved his line to Westport with the official opening on 29th January 1866. The service from Dublin was then taking 6 hours 50 minutes. Peculiarly enough, it was decided to build the Westport Quay extension to be opened before the Ballina branch. When the line eventually opened to Foxford (1st May 1868) with one train each way per day speed was restricted to 18 mph until the line had consolidated. The construction was not as good as the Westport line and evidence remains even to this day. The River Moy bridge consisted of five 40ft wrought iron girder spans, on cast iron piers.

Two years elapsed before the section to Ballina saw its first train. In that period the GN&WR had sought an abandonment order for this section and what remained undone at Westport Quay. They were issued with a warrant by the Board of Trade authorising the abandonment whilst a new deal was worked out with the Midland which effectively transferred control from the GN&WR to the MGWR. The Quay line opened for traffic on 1st October 1874. In 1879 as a result of the Board of Trade regulations Kiltoom was created as a blockpost to divide the long Athlone/Knockcroghery section. Other halts were later built at Ballinlough (1880) Ballymummy (1894) and Islandeady (1914). The line from Athlone to Roscommon was doubled by 1879 and singled by the Great Southern and Western in 1930.

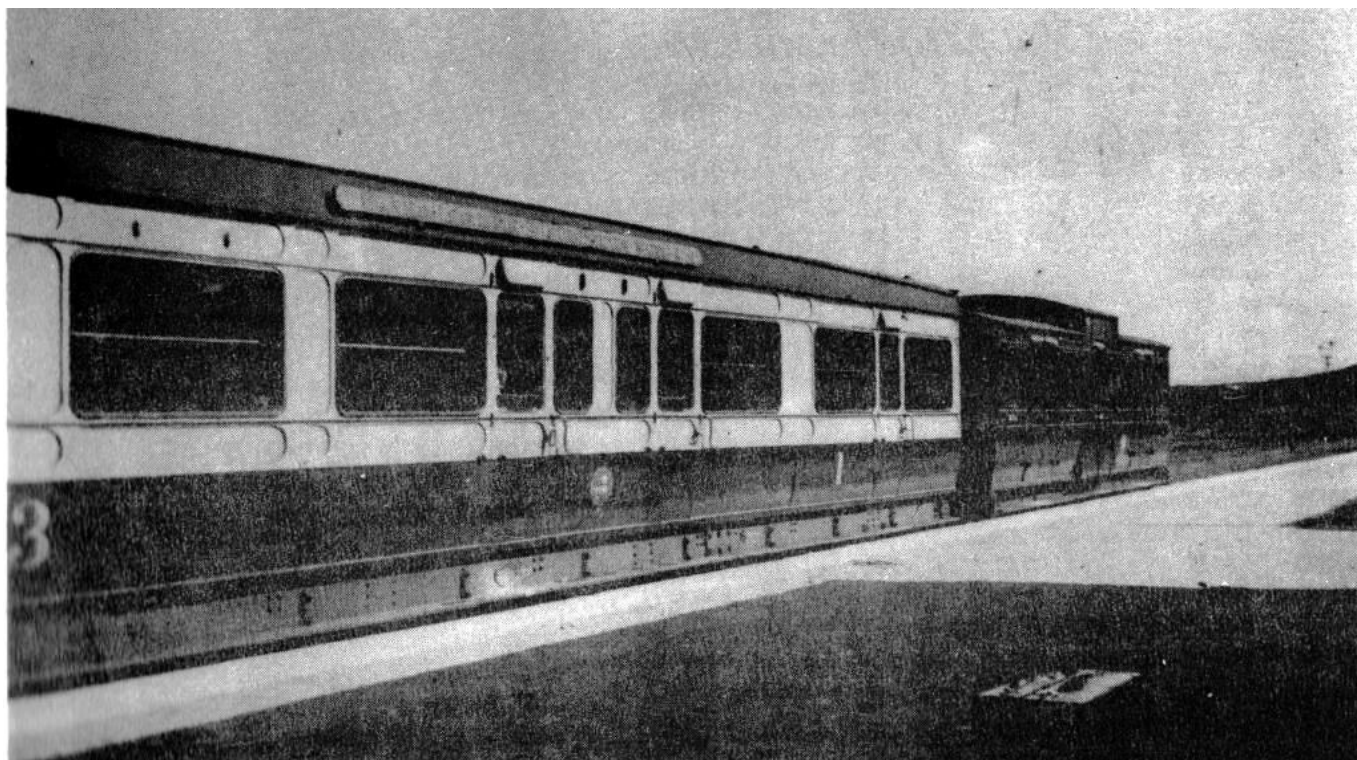


GSR No.561 at Westport on 17/7/1934. (H.C. Casserley, 11199)

In 1890, owing to the failure of the potato crop, and to aid the fishing industry, the Government decided to construct several railway lines in the west of Ireland. Amongst those so constructed were the Westport - Achill and Ballina - Killala branches. The Treasury provided the capital, free of interest, to build the lines as light railways, and the Midland supplied the extra cost of making them as standard gauge lines. The Achill branch closed to passengers in 1934 and to all traffic in 1937. The Killala branch lasted until 1934.

Leaving Athlone, the Mayo Branch turns to the right, over a 40mph restriction, immediately after passing Athlone west signal cabin. The overall permitted speed on the line is 70mph except for various local restrictions. Lecarrow ballast pit (88¼) is one of the two quarries used

by CIÉ for permanent way ballast. It is on the Up side of the line, and consists of a siding facing Athlone, off which is a loop which passes under the stone crusher; a ground frame and subsiding ETS instrument control entry to the siding. Lately the quarry has not been worked and local suppliers have brought ballast to places such as Castlerea where they are loaded into trains. Roscommon was one of the major livestock railheads in the west of Ireland but its freight function nowadays is radically altered. It is now the terminus for a nightly liner train from North Wall (via Portarlinton) and is included under the new Uniload system for Sundries traffic. Ballymoe (107¾) was closed to passenger traffic in 1963 but remained in the livestock business until 1973 and finally closed as a block post in 1978.



MGWR bogie at Achill on the same day. The carriage board is bilingual and reads in Celtic script: An Ćloċleatan-Ćatair na Mart-Gob an Ćoire (Broadstone - Westport - Achill). The letters with the dot (seimhiú) were said to be "buailte" or aspirated. This is nowadays transliterated by "H" in modern Irish. (H.C. Casserley, 11207)

Since 1930 the pilgrimage traffic to Knock was expanding and Ballyhaunis was used as the railhead until 1935. From then onwards Claremorris has been the railhead making it the most important station on the Mayo Branch, not only from the Knock traffic point of view but because it is the railway crossroads of north Connacht. Nowadays, it is the changing station for Dublin passengers en route to Ballina whilst formerly these were lines to Sligo and Ballinrobe. The line to Tuam, Athenry and Limerick remains for freight only, basically but pilgrimage specials will operate extensively on Sundays and very occasional weekdays between April and October 1979. The only scheduled freight service to use the Athenry - Claremorris section is the Esso train on Wednesdays and Fridays which serves Oranmore and Claremorris.

Originally there were four cabins and a ground frame in the Claremorris area but in 1941 a new central cabin was built at the north end of No.2

platform. There were many other alterations over the years but perhaps the most important one was in 1952 when the Down No.2 platform was converted into an island, by demolishing the locomotive shed and extending its line southwards into the loop on the Tuam line. This move was directed mainly at the Knock trains which at this time were often numbering as many as 22. In recent years the largest number has been 16 on 23rd June 1974 with 30 locomotives and approximately 150 coaches. The pioneer Total Abstinence Association organised that day and by coincidence our steam special is scheduled to be in Claremorris when the same group are attending at Knock. It will be interesting to see if the availability of rolling stock will provide a similar number of trains as in 1974.



Loco No.293 on the Westport train at Manulla (3:30pm ex Claremorris) with Ballina portion being shunted on 24/6/1939. (Postcard)

Manulla Junction (146) was closed to all traffic in 1963. A year later it ceased to be a block post, and the facing points for the Ballina branch became remotely controlled from Balla cabin. All lines at Manulla, except the running lines have been lifted. Trap points on the Ballina branch protect the junction, but there is no equivalent protection on the Westport line. The signalman at Balla can take on trains simultaneously and hold one as required at Manulla, at the home signal on either line.

Ballina serves a large area of North Mayo, and has always had significant freight traffic. There has been large investment in recent years, in particular a modern yard designed to cater adequately for container and bulk traffic.

The former locomotive shed and Down passenger platform along with the hill which surrounded them has been removed. One line has a gantry for containers, and another is reserved for fertiliser and bagged cement traffic which come in block trains from Shelton Abbey and Limerick respectively and are off-loaded by forklift. A new signal cabin has been

built at the Down side. All points are power-operated, and all signals are colour light type. The area of control extends to include the crossing at Rahans. The passenger platform road now ends at a buffer stop instead of going on across the roadway, and an engine release is provided onto the former down loop.



Loco No. 530 4-4-0 (Achill Bogie) on a train from Manulla Junction at Ballina in August 1935. (J.M. Robbins)

The contract with Asahi Synthetic Fibres (Ireland) Ltd, for the transport of chemicals by rail from North Wall to Ballina and thence by road to Killala represents the first major operation on a regular basis for CIÉ. It is not permitted to convey these chemicals except on the special Asahi liner train. These are two chemicals mid-bed. Acrylonitrile is a thin, water-clear liquid which is produced by oil refiners and can be used in many processes for the manufacture of acrylic sheet, orlon, cashmilon or as an additive for making oil resistant rubber and as an insecticide. It tends to evaporate, can be easily ignited, will float on water and is heavier than air. The other chemical - Methyl Acrylate is also a thin, water clear liquid produced by the oil processing industry and is used as a resin in leather and paper finishing and with acrylonitrile in the synthetic fibre industry.

In the Asahi compound at Alexandra Road Extension, North Wall the Asahi staff load the demountable acrylonitrile tank containers. The methyl acrylate containers do not provide all that much traffic but when it does arise the laden tank containers are shipped direct to Dublin last, transferred to the compound by road and these loaded on rail wagons. On leaving the compound and proceeding over the Dublin Port and Docks Board tramway the train consisting of train locomotive, barrier wagon, chemical

containers and shunting locomotive must not exceed 5mph. At the exchange sidings, in North Wall, any traffic offering will be attached next to the locomotive using 42'9" bogie container flats. Next to this will be added the oil traffic which will have previously been worked over the Docks tramway from the Esso premises by the Port's tractors. The entire train departs, without the shunting locomotive, at 19:05, crossing the Up Sligo passenger at Killucan. Scrapping work at Mullingar which is spark emitting must cease while the Asahi train is passing.



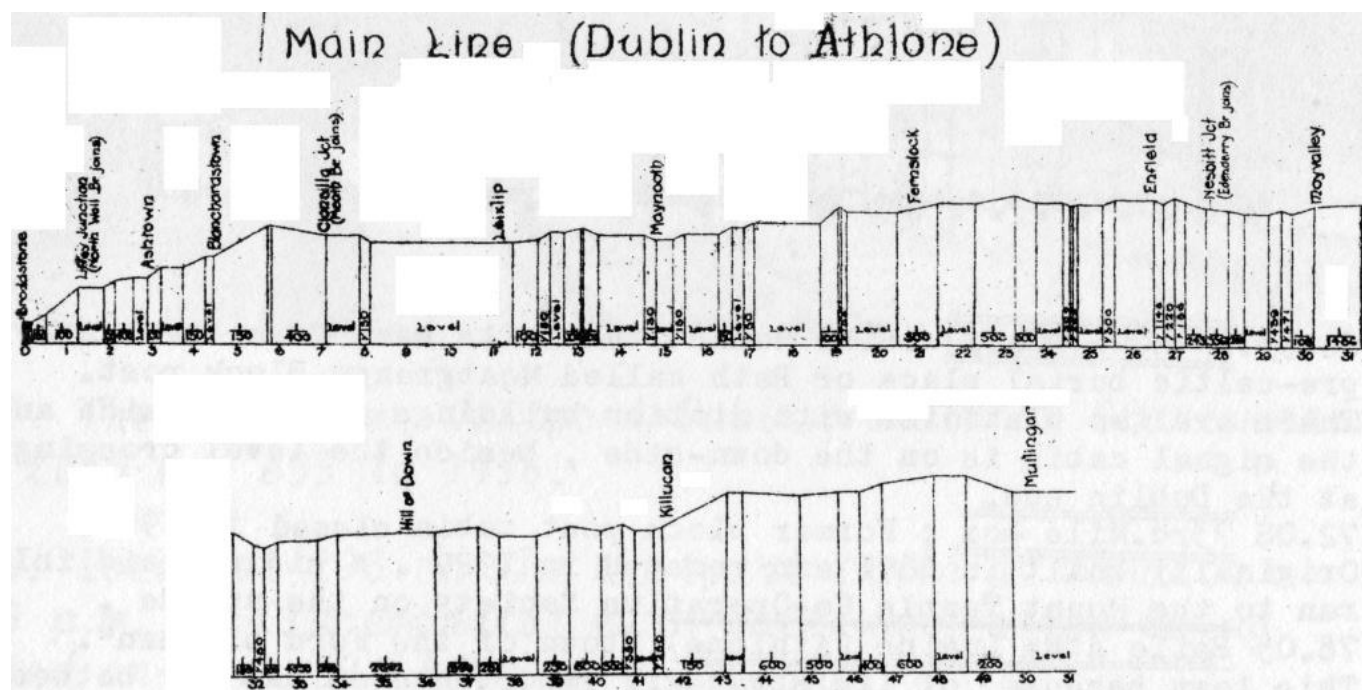
Modern image on the old Midland! Up empty Asahi train hauled by CIÉ Metropolitan Vickers/General Motors 042 near Hill of Down in September 1977. (B. Carse)

At Ballina, the train shall take the gantry road and stop so that the chemical units are alongside the bonded area. The locomotive is shut down while unloading of the train by 30 ton gantry crane is in progress. The bonded area is equipped with a gas detection unit which if activated by escaping gas will initially sound a warning in the signal cabin or if more concentrated will automatically activate a warning bell in Ballina fire station, and a general audible alarm in station area.

STEAM HAULED ROUTE DESCRIBED

Each place is listed firstly by its Irish name, followed by the English version and then by the meaning based on the Irish version. Items of historical or geographical importance are then noted, followed by the railway description. The figures before the place names are given in miles and chains from Broadstone (MGWR) Dublin unless otherwise stated (1 mile = 80 chains; 1 chain = 22 yards). In speaking of Up and Down

directions, the Down side means that in ascending order mileage. Where stations have been closed the past tense is used in describing facilities even though these may still be on site, though out of use. It has been possible to describe only those places traversed by the steam hauled portion of this railtour for space reasons. The full timetable for this railtour is published separately this year.



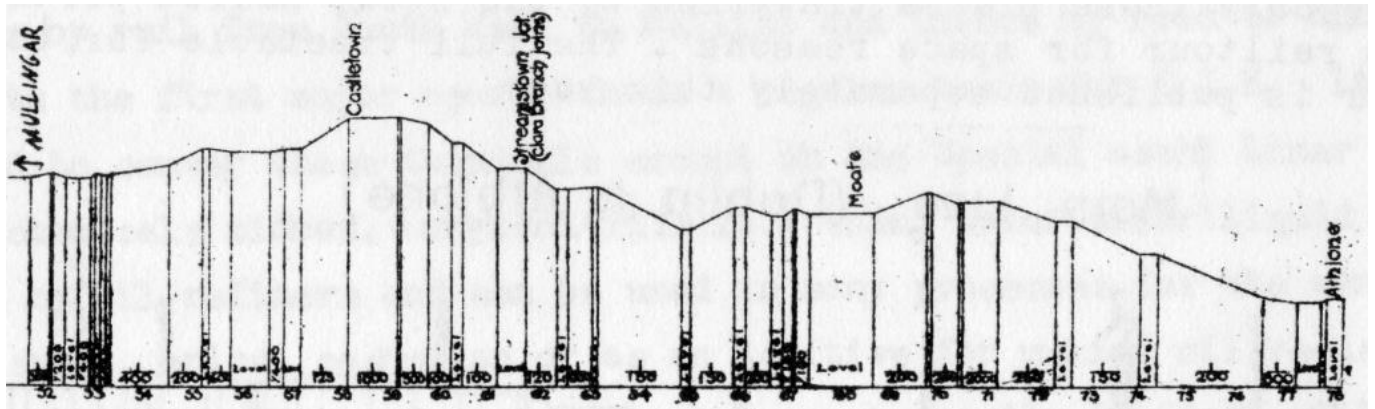
50.17 An Muileann gCearr (Mullingar) "The Sick Mill": Mullingar is the county town of Westmeath and the market centre for the midlands cattle industry. The town was granted to Hugh De Lacy by Henry II for his loyalty to the crown. It was, before the coming of the railways, an important canal depot and remains of the canal basin, dry dock and warehouses can be still seen. Its Catholic cathedral with twin 140ft spires was designed by Ralph Byrne. It was the terminus of the MGWR line from Broadstone from 1848 to 1851, when it became a junction with the opening of the line to Longford. There are four platforms. The main station buildings which included the now closed "Newbrook" buffet are between the Up Galway and Down Sligo lines. The goods facilities and stores are at the Galway end of the Up platform, and the loco shed and turntable are on the Down side. In this shed are based the RPSI engines for today's tour and also ex D&SER locomotive 2-6-0 No.15 (461) waiting heavy overhaul. It is here that loco 184 was restored last year by Society members, mainly from Dublin, for the making of the film "The First Great Train Robbery".

Mullingar was the depot for the Bretland mechanical track-laying train built in 1923. This area is now used as a scrapping depot for old wagons and carriages. Mullingar has two signal cabins.

51.22 Newbrook: Former racecourse platform and siding for the adjacent racecourse, now the GAF (Ireland) company factory, manufacturers of vinyl floor covering.

58.22 Baile An Chaisleáin (Castletown) "Town of the castle": Block post. Station closed to all traffic in 1963 - the signal cabin is still in use.

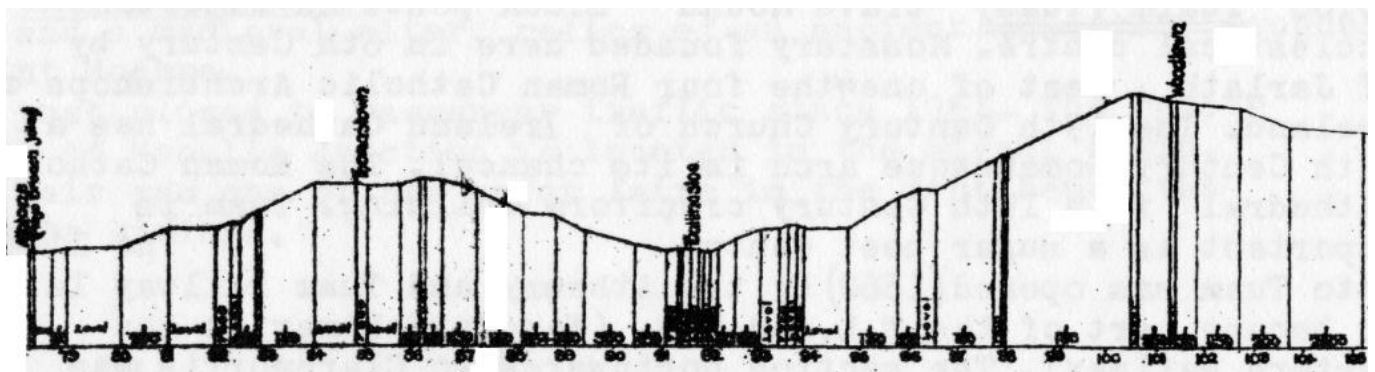
61.56 Baile An tSrutháin (Streamstown): Former block post. The station and signal cabin were closed in 1963 when the Horseleap-Clara branch succumbed. This branch diverged by a facing junction at the Dublin end of the Island platform and ran beside the mainline before veering away on the Down side.



68.33 An Móta (Moate): "The Mound" takes its name from the nearby pre-Celtic burial place or Rath called Moat grange. Block post. There are two platforms with station buildings on the Up side and the signal cabin is on the Down side, beside the level crossing at the Dublin end.

72.08 73rd Mile Box: Former block post cabin closed in 1962. Originally built in 1891 and renewed in 1929. A siding laid in 1919 ran to the Mount Temple Co-Operative Society on the Up side.

78.05 Baile Átha Luain (Athlone) "Town of the Ford of Luan": This town because of its strategic importance on the way between Dublin and Galway has often played a decisive role in Irish history as the scene of many battles. In 1001 King Brian Boru massed his troops here. A fort was built in 1179 By Turloch Mor O'Connor to protect his new bridge. It featured in 1690 when the town was attacked by King William's army under General Douglas, but was defended by the Jacobite forces under Richard Grace. The town is the birth place of the famous singer Count John McCormack. Block post. Athlone has two junctions. At the Dublin end the line from Portarlinton joins by a trailing junction just before crossing the river Shannon by the 542ft opening span bridge built in 1851 and formerly double track. The station has two platforms and a bay at the back of the Down platform.



At the Galway end are goods stores on either side of the line for Westport, and the line for Westport diverges by a facing junction on the Up side at the West Cabin. The loco shed and turntable (now out of use) are at the Galway end beyond Athlone West Junction.

78.24 Athlone West Junction: Here the Mayo line to Westport and Ballina diverges.

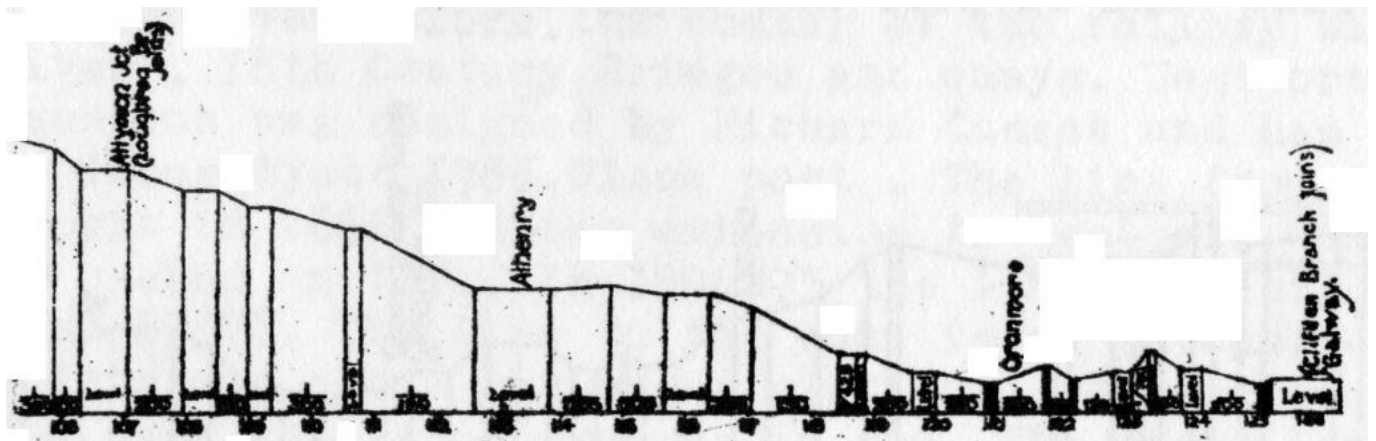
79.14 Monksland: Former block post. Junction of the Monksland ballast pit 1877-1928. Seldom used since 1910 when Lecarrow was opened.

84.71 Carrowduff: Former block post 1891-1905 then called Thomastown or 85th Mile Box re-opened 1912 and was renamed in 1925 by the GS&WR. Closed in 1965.

91.51 Béal Átha na Sluaighe (Ballinasloe) "Ford mouth of the host": In the days of horse transport it was the largest horse and cattle fair in Europe as evident by the number of sidings at the station. This town has many fine 18th century houses and stands on the river Suck. The surrounding area is rich in limestone once sought after as a superior building material. Its Catholic church was in part designed by Pugin in 1852. Ballinasloe is also the western terminus of the Grand Canal. Block post. Two platforms with signal cabin at the Down side.

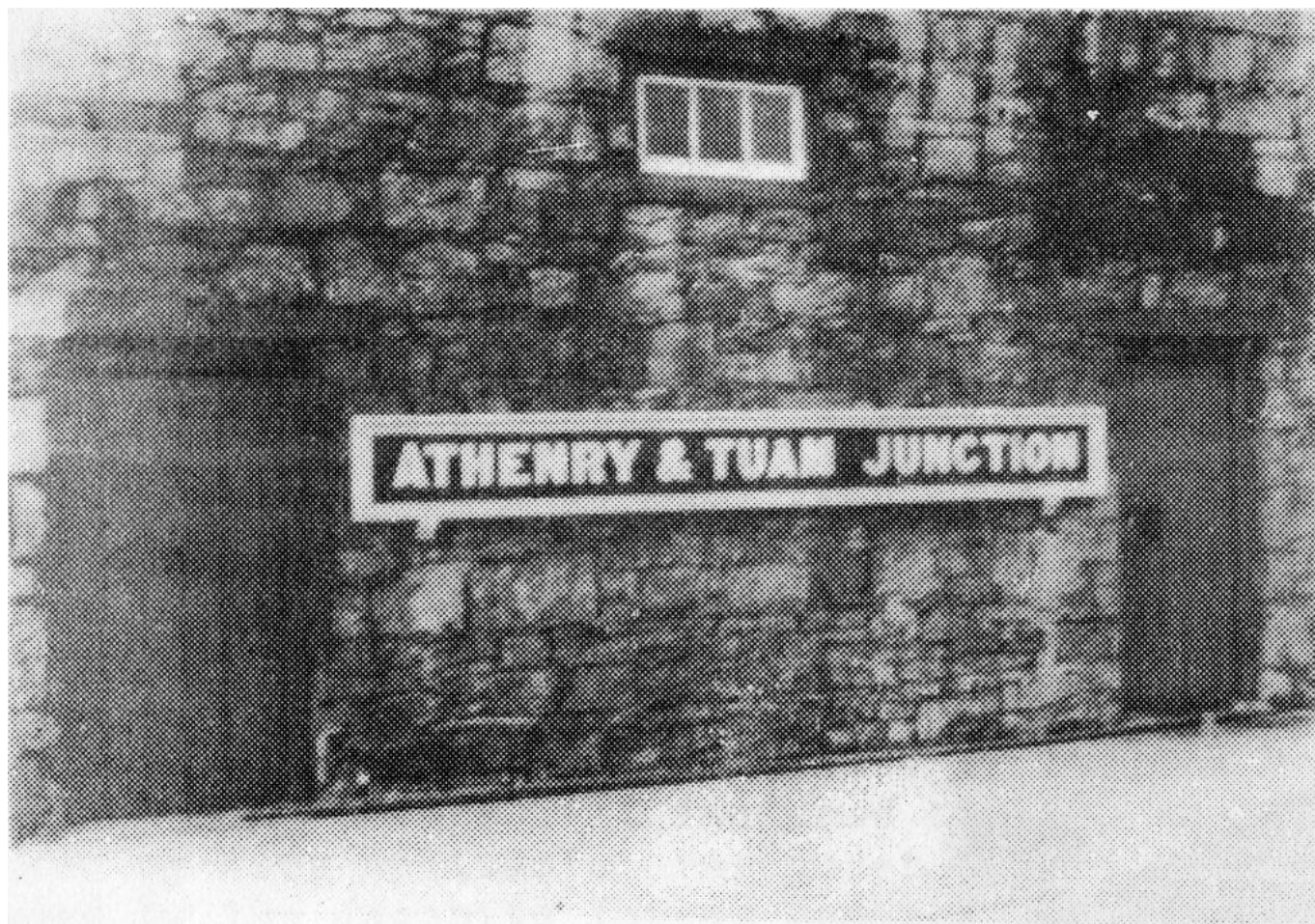
101.31 Mota (Woodlawn) Block post. One passenger platform on the Up side. A goods platform, cattle bank and dock are on the Down side.

107.20 Áth Tíomáin (Attymon Junction): Block post. Junction for the former 9 mile track to Loughrea. Closed in 1975.



113.36 Baile Átha An Rí (Athenry) "Town of the King's Ford": Block post, formerly Athenry and Ennis Junction and Athenry and Tuam Junction. The latter portion on the former destination board is now painted out. Town founded by Miles De Birmingham in 1235 on land given to him by William De Burgo. Birmingham built a typical Norman castle here between 1235 and 1250. Athenry was the scene of a battle in 1316 between Pheilim O'Connor, King of Connaught and Anglo Norman forces in which the King and many Irish nobles were slain. De Birmingham also founded a monastery here in 1241 but only the church remains. It was looted by Cromwell in 1652 and used as an army barracks during 1750 having been burnt a number of times between 1324 and that date.

The town's most famous relic, the richly ornamented "Shrine of St. Patrick's Tooth", is now in the national Museum in Dublin. Athenry was originally an intermediate station on the Mullingar -Galway line. It became a junction in 1860 with the opening of the line to Tuam. The line to Ennis was opened in 1869. On this tour our engine will be turned and watered here.



(Distances now from Limerick)

64.00 Belville Siding: A former trailing siding on the Up side was provided here for beet traffic.

69.76 Béal Átha Cluinín (Ballyglunin): Block post.

76.15 / 00.00 Tuam (Tuam) "Grave Mound": Block post. An important ecclesiastical centre. Monastery founded here in 6th Century by St. Jarlath. Seat of one of the four Roman Catholic Archbishops of Ireland. The 19th century Church of Ireland Cathedral has a 12th century Romanesque arch in its chancel. The Roman Catholic cathedral is a 19th century cruciform building. Tuam is important as a sugar beet centre. The line into Tuam was opened (1860) by the Athenry and Tuam Railway later to become part of the WL&WR (Waterford Limerick and Western Railway). The section northwards to Claremorris was opened in 1894 by the Athenry & Tuam extension to Claremorris railway, also later merged with the WL&WR.

(Distances now from Tuam)

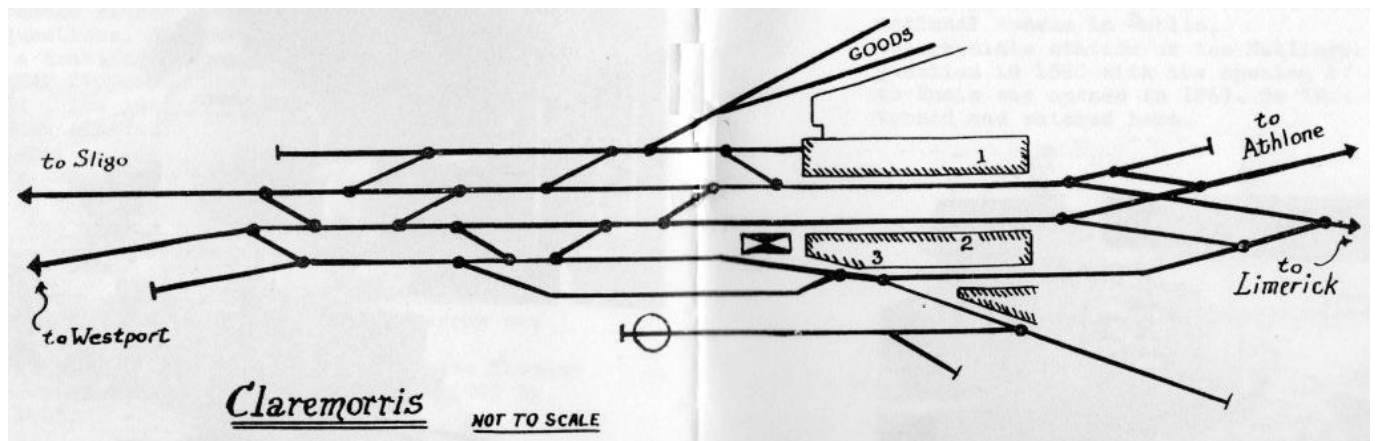
01.50 Tuam Sugar Factory: Extensive sidings on the Up side for the factory beet traffic.

04.37 Castlegrove: Former station closed in 1963.

08.49 Baile An Mhuilinn (Milltown): Former block post. Closed in 1963.

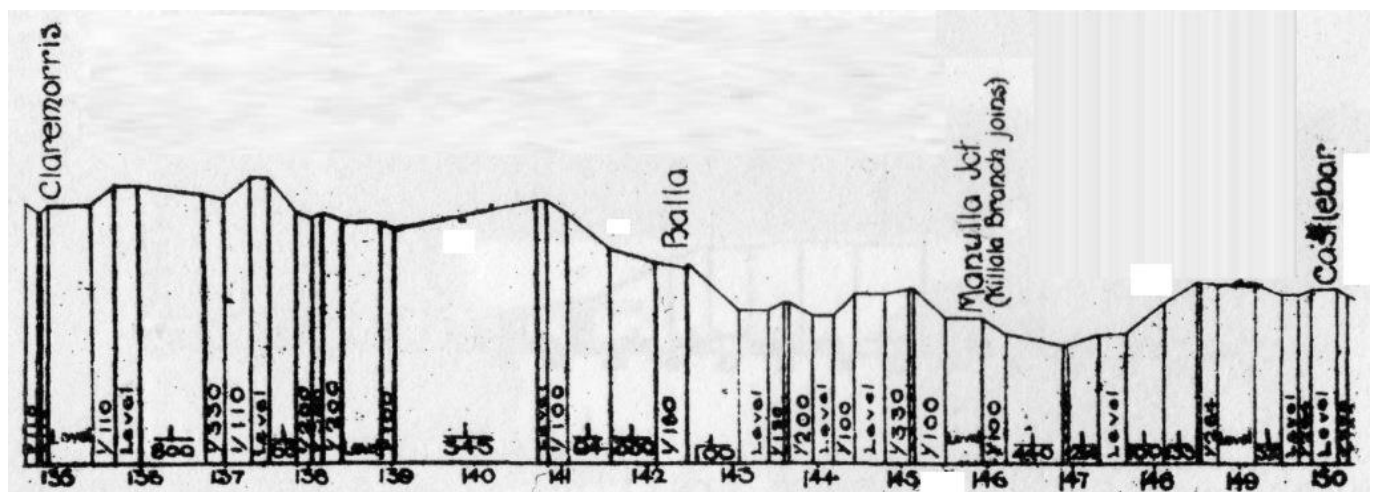
12.44 Baile An Daighín (Ballindine): Former block post. Closed in 1963.

16.10 Southern Yard: Former block post and terminus from its opening in 1894 to its extension to the present former MGWR station in 1895. The station here is sometimes used for goods traffic.



17.00 Claremorris (MGWR Station): Block post.

In May 1862 the line from Ballyhaunis to Claremorris was opened and extended to Castlebar in December. The 12¾ mile branch to Ballinrobe was opened in 1892 and closed in 1959. The short remaining spur is used as a siding for Knock pilgrimage specials. Consequently in this centenary year of the celestial apparitions at Knock Shrine 12 miles away, Claremorris is a very busy passenger station.



Leaving Claremorris the line turns away to the left while the Sligo line goes straight on. There are pleasant views of mountains ahead and Cruach Phadraigh (Croagh Patrick), "Ireland's Holy Mountain" (2,510ft), after which today's tour is named, can be seen on the right in the distance. Here according to legend the saint spent 40 days in prayer and fasting on the summit. Pilgrimages still continue today and on the last Sunday in July "Garland Sunday" many undertake the arduous climb, often in bare feet. The saint is said to have cast the demon Corra from the summit. Lake Corra at the southern base of the mountain is said to have sprung up in gratification at this happening.

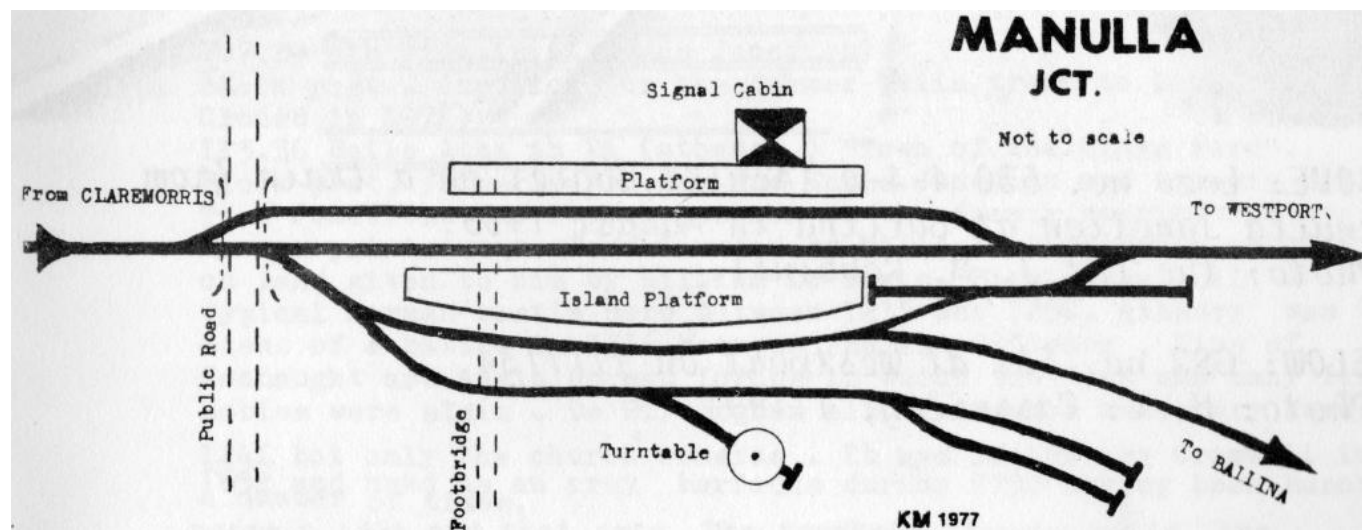
138.49 Mossbank Level Crossing.

Here the line runs on poor and boggy land.

141.00 Commencement of Balla Bank, 1 in 94, 1 in 100. This continues through Balla to Manulla Junction with the exception of a rise at MP143½.

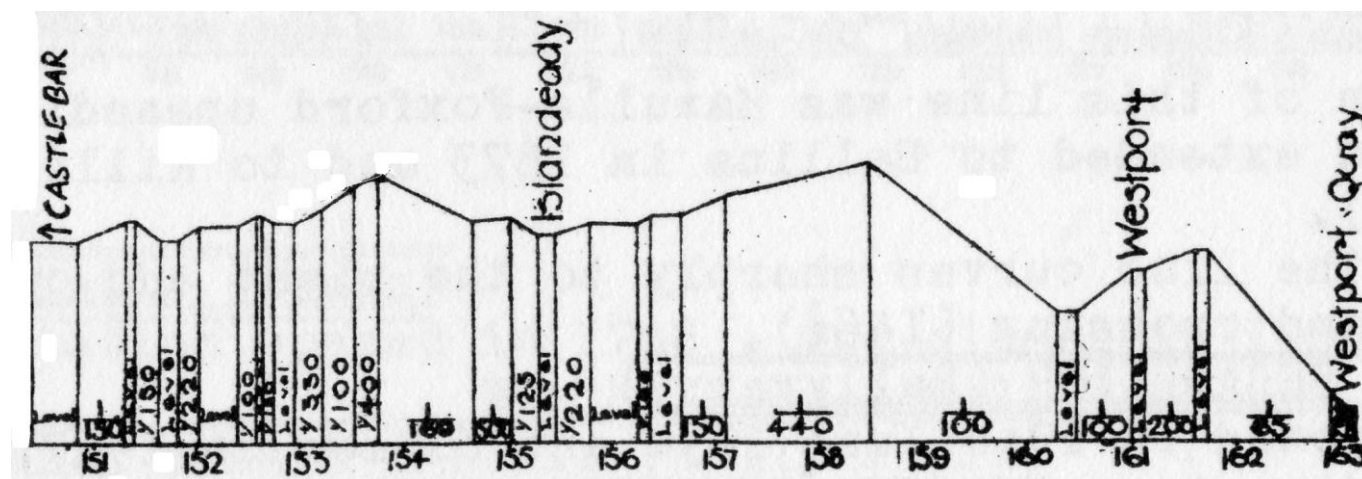
142.35 Balla "A well": This town contains the remains of a round tower and a mediaeval altar, relics of an ancient monastery founded by Saint Mochua.

Block post closed to passenger traffic since 1963. The remote control of Manulla Junction is located in the signal cabin. Balla fair was one of the major fairs in the west hence the extensive sidings.



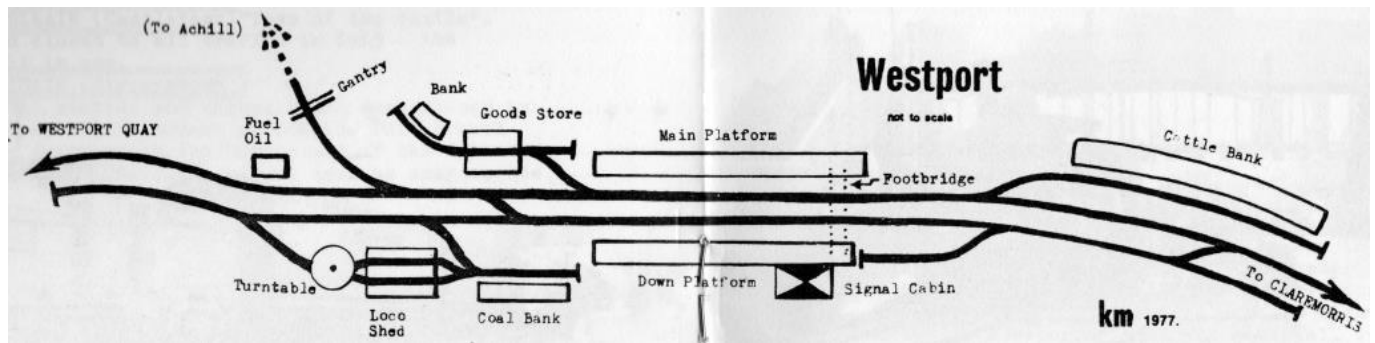
145.71 Maigh Nulla (Manulla Junction): Former block post opened with the line to Foxford in 1870. Closed in 1963, Manulla was a very elaborate place necessitated by the nature of the service on the Ballina branch. With the closure of Foxford the Manulla Junction-Ballina section became the largest (20½ miles) section carrying regular passenger traffic. The station here was fairly substantial with the buildings on the Island platform. As the line leaves Manulla, there are lakes to the right and left.

147.60 Commencement of the 1 in 100/133 Breaffy Bank to MP148½, followed by a flat stretch into Castlebar.



150.10 Caisleán An Bharraigh (Castlebar) "Barry's Castle": Charter granted by James 1 in 1613. The town was captured by confederate Irish in the 1641 rebellion. Block post. Situated on an S-bend with a 40mph restriction at the approach from Westport. The station has two passenger platforms. The line leaves Castlebar along the shore of Castlebar Lough. To the right may be seen the County Hospital - the former workhouses where many died during the Great Famine of 1847/8.

155.39 Oileán Éadaí (Islandeedy): Former station closed in 1963. It had a large canopy extending over the platform. From MP155¾ to MP156¼ there is a speed restriction of 50mph. From MP158¼ the line runs at 1 in 100 down the side of a valley. Then there is a sharp ascent at 1 in 100 up the final stretch into Westport station itself on the level.



161.11 Cathair Na Mart (Westport) "Stone Port of the Oxen": An important town even before the coming of the railway with its navigable river, 18th century bridges and quays. Westport House, a Georgian mansion was designed by Richard Casset and has additions by James Wyatt in 1788. Block post. The line from Athlone reached Westport in 1866 and the extension to Westport Quay (162.67) was opened in 1874. In 1894/5 the line to Achill was opened (closed 1937). The line to the quay is an extension of the one from Athlone and had a passenger platform. Once across the road onto the quay the line diverges in two. The right line ran into a coal yard and the other was a tramway along the quay. The present line ends at Westport Quay passenger station.

SUNDAY 27th MAY

161.11 Westport

155.39 Islandeedy

150.10 Castlebar

145.71 Manulla Junction

142.35 Balla (Run round)

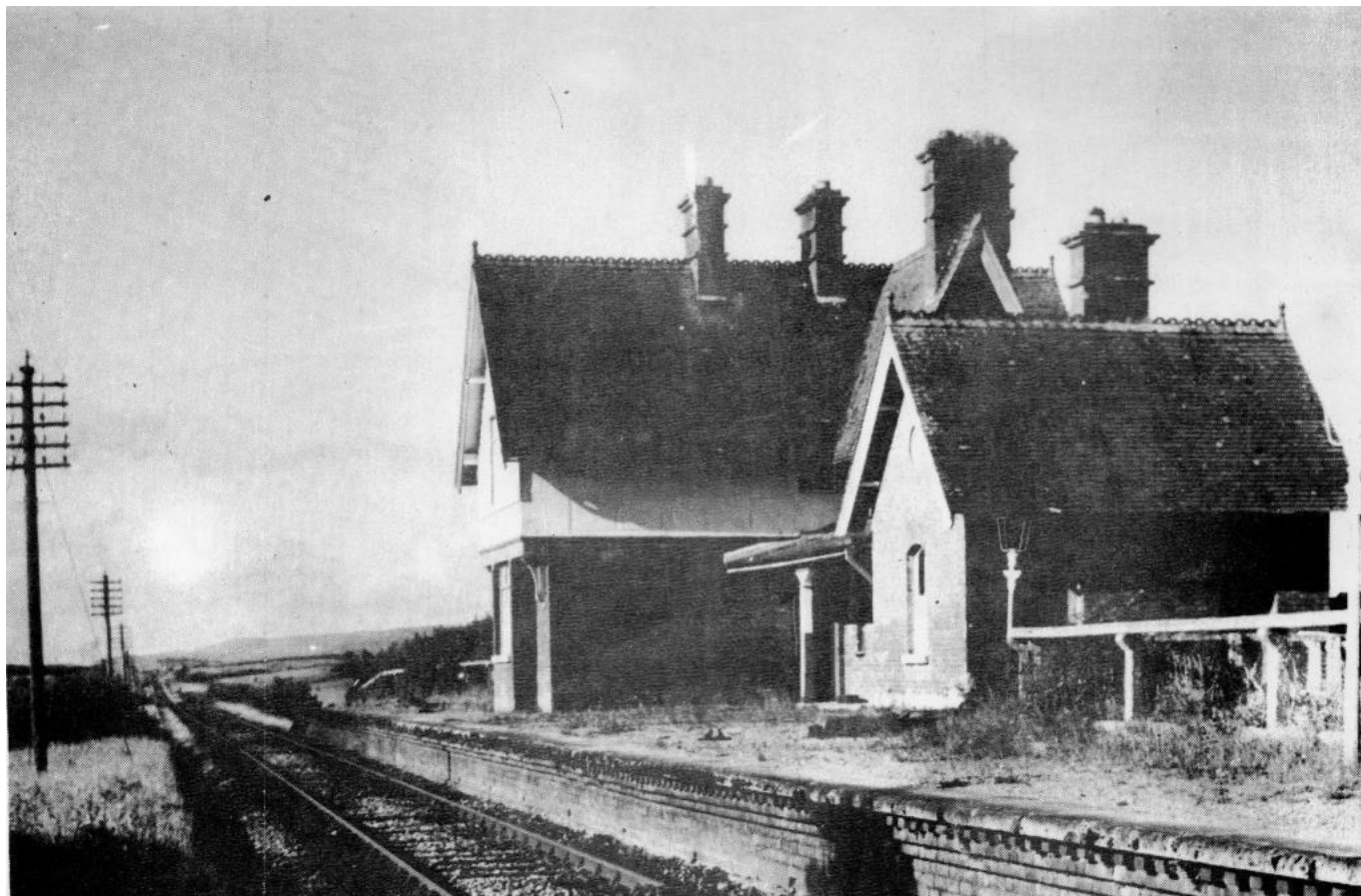
145.71 Manulla Junction

The first section of this line was Manulla-Foxford opened in 1870. The line was then extended to Ballina in 1873 and to Killala in 1893 (closed 1931).

Leaving Manulla the line curves sharply to the right and quickly reaches Barrackland crossing (MP146¾).

150.30 Béal Átha Bhearaigh (Ballyvary): Former station opened in 19th June 1894 and closed in 1967. The station building is very attractive.

Leaving Ballyvary the line crosses the main Castlebar-Ballina road by a low underbridge. In 1974 the road was lowered under this bridge, the scene of many road accidents in the past.



Station without a train; the attractive station building at Ballyvarry between Manulla Junction and Foxford. (J.P. O'Dea)

152.65 An tSráid (Strade): Michael Davitt founder of the Land League was born here. Former ballast pit with loop and sidings.

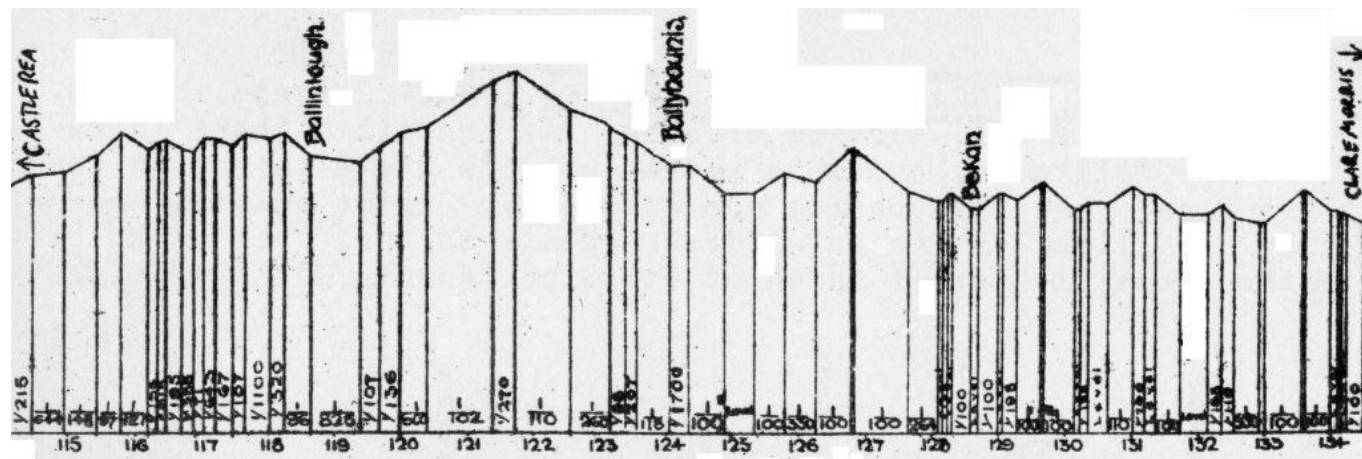
From MP153½ there is a sharp bend which has been the cause of at least one derailment. Next the line descends to the River Moy bridge at MP156. In the past when this river flooded, rail traffic was often suspended. In recent years drainage has been carried out. The river bridge has a speed restriction of 30mph. From Moy to Foxford the line climbs.

157.14 Béal Easa (Foxford) "Mouth of the waterfall": Former Block post. Closed in 1963 and all facilities removed. It had a loop with Up and Down platforms with the station buildings on the Up side. While open the station enjoyed reasonable passenger traffic, and excellent goods business. Its closure came as a surprise and it caused annoyance and disturbance locally including blocking of the line and forcing trains to stop.

At MP163 is a glucose factory. It was proposed in 1935 to install sidings here with a loop inside the factory premises.

166.44 Béal An Átha (Ballina) "Mouth of the Ford": Seat of the Bishop of the Killala Diocese (RC) and the largest centre of population in Mayo. Ballina stands on the shores of Lough Conn at the mouth of the river Moy. During the 1798 insurrection General Humbert landed at Killala with the French forces and Ballina was the first town to be taken in the subsequent hostilities. Block post. Terminus of the line since the closure of the Killala branch in 1931. The station was remodelled early in 1977. Its new yard and colour light signalling came into operation in

135.00 Claremorris

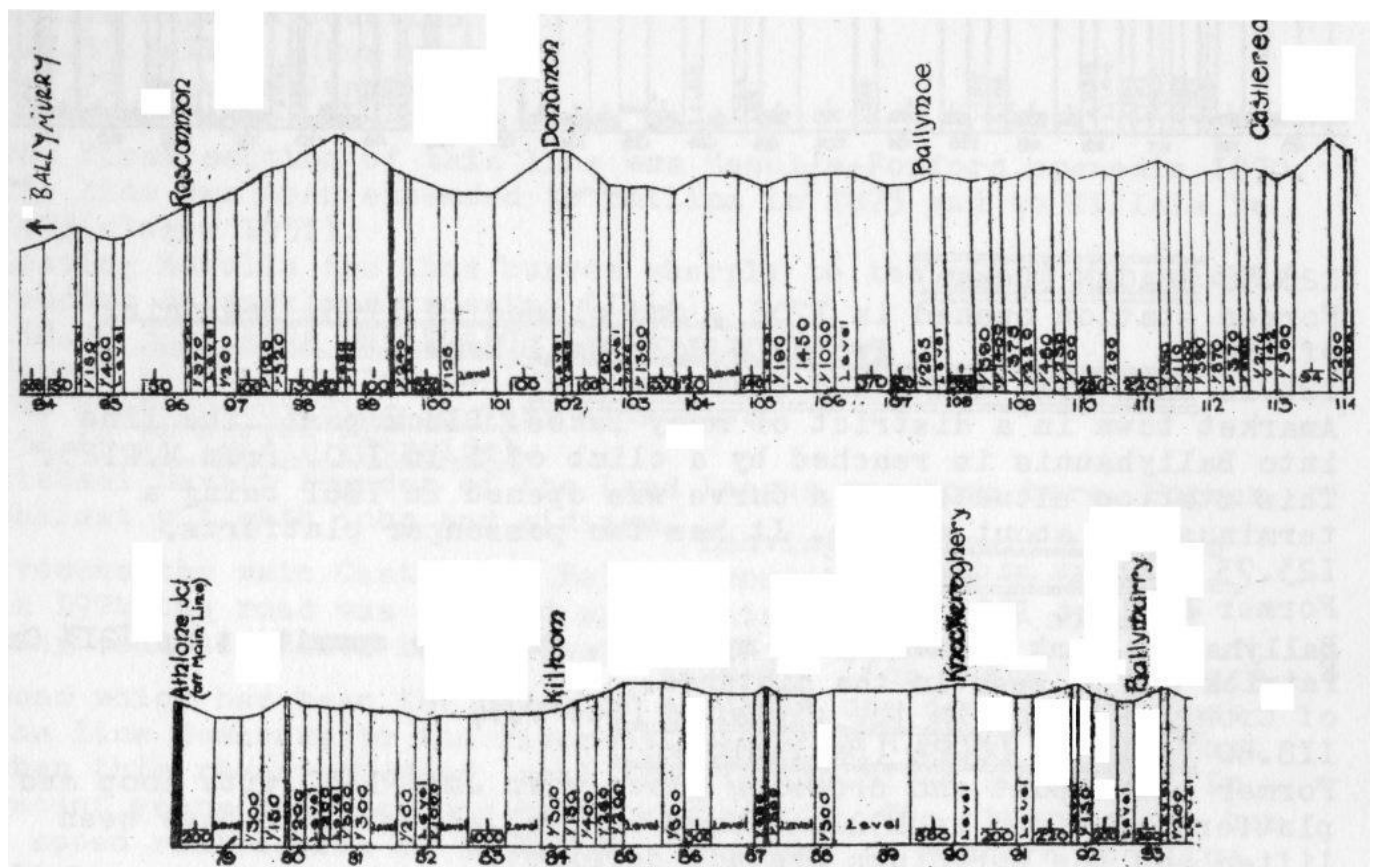


107.55 Béal Átha Mó (Ballymoe) "Ford mouth of Mo": Block post. A picturesque wayside station on the Roscommon border formed at this point by the river Suck. Closed to passenger traffic in 1963 - not surprising as there is no village or hamlet for some miles. There is a story told about a signalman at Ballymoe that he never allowed a train to pass without acquiring a bucket of coal from the engine but unknown to him while he was doing this the fireman was filling his, with vegetables from the signalman's garden!

101.73 Dún Iomáin (Donamon): Former Block post. Closed in 1963. Following the closure the line was realigned and now runs between the two platforms at some distance from each.

96.20 Ros Comáin (Roscommon) "St. Coman's Wood": The castle in this town stands on the site of a 13th century hill fort and was built by Robert De Ufford, Lord Justice of Ireland. Here is a 13th century priory built by Felim O'Connor Lord of Connaught in 1253 on the site of the former church of St. Coman, patron saint of the town. The town's 18th century courthouse was designed by Sir Richard Morrison. Block post. It is one of the most important stations on this line.

92.71 Baile UíMhuirigh (Ballymurry): Halt, closed in 1963. An automatic half-barrier crossing was installed there in 1975. Before Ballymurry the line passes a large state forest on the Down side and also runs beside one of the many great estates crossed by this line - Moate Park, former estate of Lord Cropton which was the scene of a great march of starving tenants during the famine.



90.00 Cnoc an Chrochaire (Knockcroghery): Now the first block post out from Athlone station, closed in 1963. The line from Athlone to here was originally double track, being singled from Kiltoom from November 1930.

88.20 An Leithcheathrú (Lecarrow) "The Half Quarter": CIÉ ballast pit. Opened in 1910 by the MGWR and largely worked. In about 1927 there were extensive sidings here. It stands at the terminus of the Lecarrow canal to Lough Ree on the Shannon. The remains of an old watermill without its wheel but with the machinery intact can be seen. Stone from the quarry was used to build docks on the Shannon in 1844.

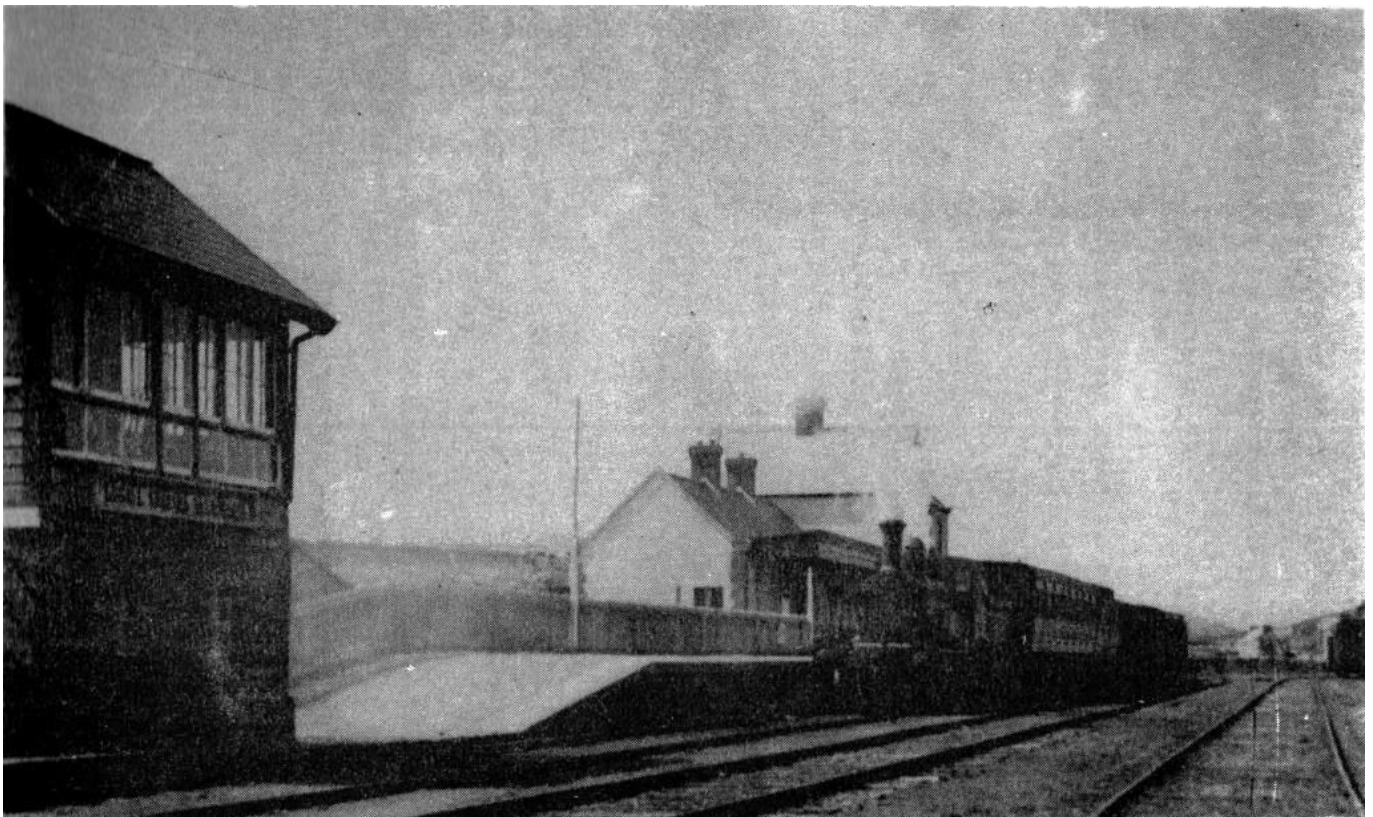
87.00 Nine Mile Bridge: Just before this bridge carrying the main Athlone-Roscommon road over the railway can be seen the remains of two short platforms used by pilgrims to the nearby holy well of St. John.

84.00 Cill Tuama (Kiltoom): Former block post. Opened 1879, closed 1963. This station had no sidings proper. Those in use were merely remnants of the original double track.

80.73 Hill O'Berries: Former ballast pit.

78.24 Athlone West Junction

78.05 Athlone: End of steam traction on today's tour. Now the tour continues by diesel through Ballinahoun (74.56), Ballycumber (68.18), Clara and Banagher Junction (65.78) - former junction for the Horseleap-Streamstown branch closed in 1963, Tullamore (57.71), Geashill, block post (50.24) and Portarlinton (41.58) to join the main Cork-Dublin line for the journey back to Pearse (Westland Row) station.



GSR No.57 at Achill on 18/7/1934. (H.C. Casserley, 11215)



THIS TOUR HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE CO-OPERATION
OF OUR TWO RAILWAY COMPANIES: CORAS IOMPAIR EIREANN &
NORTHERN IRELAND RAILWAYS.



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Many of the illustrations are taken from the various collections in the IRRS photographic library and are reproduced with the Librarian's permission. Where the photographer is known this is acknowledged.

The station diagrams were drawn by K.A. Murray and originally appeared as illustrations in the "Mayo Line" in the IRRS Journal.

In compiling the "Steam Hauled Route" full use has once again been made of the above articles in conjunction with "Irish Railways Today" (1967) by Brendan Pender and Herbert Richards, published by Transport Research Associated and now out of print.

The historical and geographical notes have been gleaned from a variety of sources - the most up to date being the AA touring guide to Ireland (1976). The spelling of the place names in Irish is that given in Eolai and Phoist Part 1, 1977 (The Irish Post Office Guide).