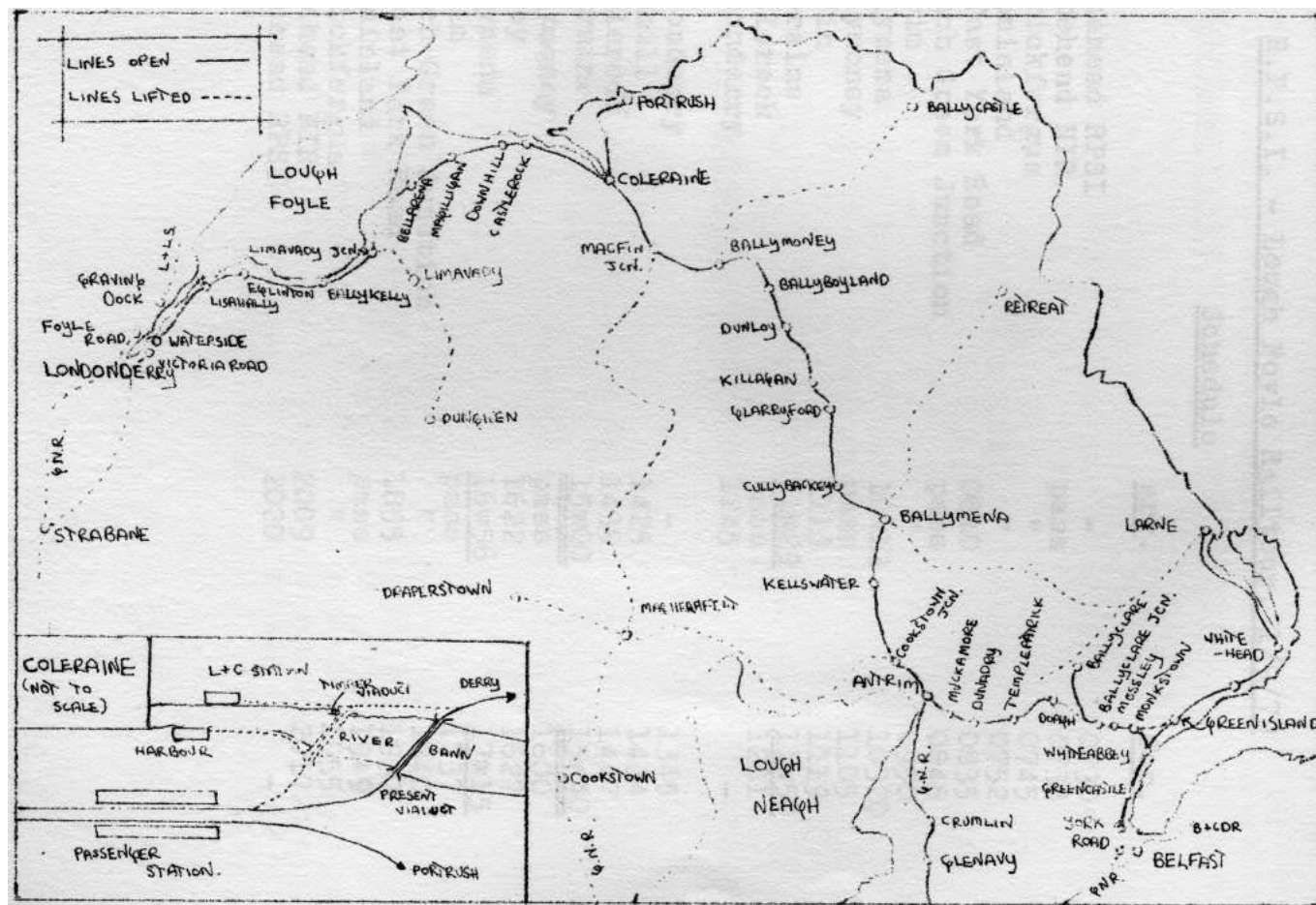


Lough Foyle railtour



Souvenir

Brochure



Welcome aboard the Lough Foyle railtour. There are a number of notable features about this tour. The locomotive, ex GS&WR No.186, celebrates her centenary this year. This will, however, be the first time that she (or indeed any of her class) has worked to Derry. It is also the 125th anniversary of the completion of the Londonderry and Coleraine railway.

This railtour is only possible through the co-operation of Northern Ireland Railways, and we would like to remind you that the future of railtours depends on responsible behaviour by participants. In particular we would ask you not to cross the tracks at Belfast (York Road) and to exercise extreme caution elsewhere, especially when other trains are in the vicinity. In addition, passengers for lineside buses should board the buses and re-board the train as promptly as possible, to cause minimum delay. We hope you enjoy your trip.

--oo00oo--

Locomotive No.186 was built in November 1879 at the works of Sharp Stewart Ltd., and is a member of the 101, or J15, class standard goods engines of the Great Southern and Western Railway. This was once the most numerous class in Ireland. The first examples were built new in May/June 1867, by Beyer Peacock Ltd. No.186 was built with a saturated boiler and was reboilered (still saturated) in 1898, and again around 1909. She received her fourth boiler, this time a superheated 'Z' class one, in 1932, and was fitted with new frames in 1935. She remains in this condition today. Sister engine 184, the other survivor of the class, retains a saturated boiler.

The J15s were outstanding locomotives and were used on all kinds of working from passenger trains to shunting. They were extremely reliable, and cheap to maintain. Tales of J15 exploits are numerous, but perhaps mention should be made of the beet campaign. The working of special trains of sugar beet during its season was a feature of several railway centres in Ireland, including Waterford, where 186 was shedded for much of her working life. For the beet specials, rosters were prepared well in advance, and the engines were "tightened up". Then, night after night for three or four months, full specials of beet were hauled from countryside to factory, quickly returning with empties to be ready for another run. With other duties as well, locomotives were often out of steam only for a washout. Only the toughest locomotives could withstand this sort of treatment, but the J15s did so for many years, although other types of locomotives were, of course, also used on the trains.

186 worked her first railtour for the Society in 1968, but this will be the first time she has reached Derry. With the imminent

removal of Derry turntable, taking tender engines there in future will be difficult.

--oo00oo--

Belfast (York Road) - Londonderry (Waterside)

For the benefit of participants unfamiliar with the NCC, Down trains proceed away from Belfast, Up trains proceed towards Belfast.

--oo00oo--

We commence our journey from the York Road terminus of the LMS (NCC) railway, along the metals of the Belfast and Ballymena railway. York Road is now but a shadow of its former self, with main line trains diverted over the GNR Antrim branch. At one time the station had an overall roof which extended over most of the length of the platforms. This was extensively damaged, along with the rest of the station, in the 1941 blitz, and was subsequently replaced by the present canopies.

More recently the construction of the M2 motorway has swallowed up much of the station's siding space, including the loco, and goods yards. In connection with this, Platform One was removed to make room for the present running shed. More recently still, the main concourse and terminal buildings of the station, including the clock tower, have been demolished and the land on which they stood disposed of. Their place has been taken by the much smaller building now in use.

On the down side of the line just after leaving the terminus are the works of the old NCC - now NIR's main workshops. Twenty-nine locomotives were built here, including broad and narrow gauge two cylinder compounds.

The start out of Belfast is almost level for three miles. On the up side, the line is flanked by the M2 motorway. Before this was built, the lough shore came to the foot of the embankment on which the line ran. It is worth remembering that all the spoil for construction of the motorway was rail hauled from Magheramorne by the last of the "Jeeps" - of which our own No.4 is now the sole survivor.

At one time there was a station at Greencastle, but little trace of it now remains.

As the line leaves the shores of Belfast Lough, it begins to rise, initially at 1 in 102. The Shore Road tunnel and Whiteabbey station are passed before the junction at Bleach Green is reached.

This is Ireland's only flying junction and is also the start of the steepest mainline gradient in Ulster - three miles at 1 in 76. The "loop line" from Bleach Green to Monkstown was completed in 1934, before which main line trains travelled out the Larne line as far as Greenisland, where they reversed to gain access to the main line. The usual practice at Greenisland was for the locomotive which was to work the train over the main line to back down onto what until then had been the rear of the train. The trains were at one time worked from York Road to Greenisland by the diminutive J class 2-4-0 tanks, and our cover illustration shows No.25 so employed.

The line between Bleach Green and Antrim is presently closed to regular traffic, but is the only link between the York Road Workshops and the rest of the system. At Monkstown, the "back line" joined the main line on the Up side, and some of its trackwork still remains. The connection was broken in 1965. As we continue to climb the bank, more observant passengers will be able to discern traces of the original main line, including a stone bridge, also on the up side. With the construction of the loop, the trackbed was lowered substantially.

Above the loop, the gradient eases to 1 in 89 through Mossley station.

Just before MP10¾ the line passes under a motorway bridge. This is the site of Ballyclare Junction station, and the bridge now stands where once was the level crossing. The passenger station was on the Derry side of the bridge, with MP10¾ on the platform. The actual junction for the branch was just under 2½ miles further on, at Kingsbog Junction, which also marks the summit of the bank. There was never any passenger station here but the signal box remained open until passenger services were transferred to Belfast Central. The crossing gates, like all others between Bleach Green and Antrim are now operated by the train crew, or by flagmen.

The line now falls gently to just beyond Antrim. For many years this was one of Ireland's finest racing grounds; high speeds were maintained right up to the sharp curves at Ballymena Goods.

The four small stations between Kingsbog and Antrim; Doagh, Templepatrick, Dunadry and Muckamore have been closed since the early sixties, but at one time each had a signal cabin, goods yard, and passenger buildings. Traces of some of these facilities remain.

At Antrim, the former GNR line from Knockmore trails in on the Down side. The present signal box is located at the Derry end of the Down platform, and also controls the crossing gates. The

track layout at Antrim is not particularly suited to its present usage, as it is not possible to proceed directly from the Up platform to the branch. Consequently Up trains are now often held outside the station until a Down train clears the Down platform.



Mogul No.93 at Antrim, April 1954. (Kelland Collection, 24048)

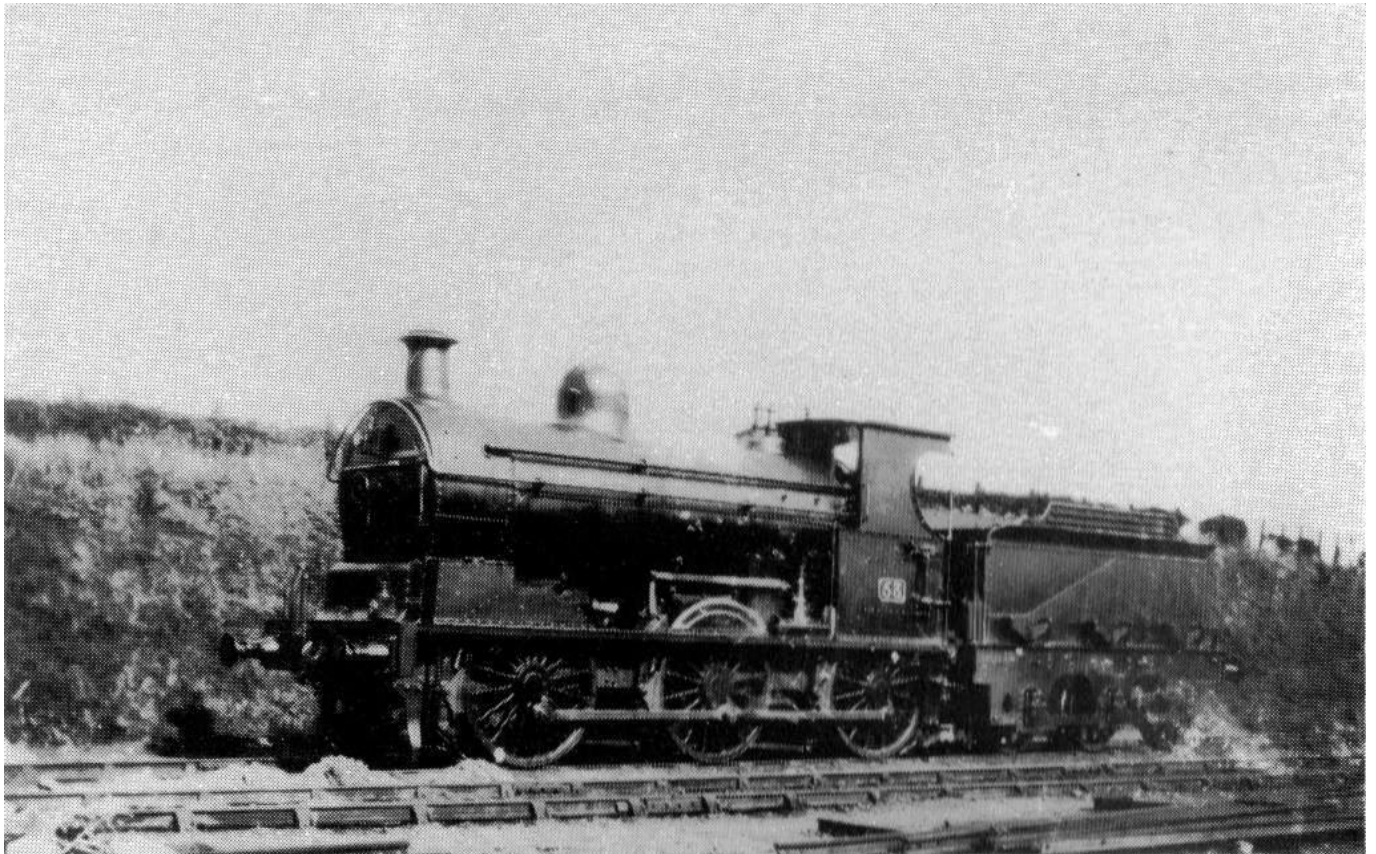
Drumsough was formerly Cookstown Junction but has now reverted to its original name. The junction station was situated on an island platform, but this was removed to allow the track to be realigned, being replaced by the present timber ones. The trackbed of the Cookstown line can still be seen, as can the water tower and the foundations of the engine shed. For many years this shed was used, like Whitehead, for storing locomotives surplus to traffic requirements. Towards the end, the locomotives were usually bound for the scrapyard, although one of the last locomotives to be stored here was the now preserved BCDR 4-4-2T No.30. At one time, however it was the practice to put a locomotive through the shops, run it in, and then store it here, or at Whitehead, over a winter to emerge for the heavy seasonal traffic the following year.

Kellswater: Former block post. It is hard to imagine how a station so remotely located could ever have generated much traffic.

Ballymena Goods: Some of the stone built sheds are still in use by road hauliers. The stump of the signal cabin can be seen on

the Up side. This was the site of the original Ballymena passenger station.

Ballymena: Situated 33 miles 40 chains distant from Belfast by rail. Ballymena is derived from the Irish meaning "middle town"; appropriately enough if a rail journey from Belfast to Portrush is considered. The fine station buildings and awnings here have recently been demolished by NIR, to be replaced by modern 'functional' ones. Despite this many relics from the past remain, including the double water column at the Belfast end of the up platform, one arm of which once served the narrow gauge line to Larne. The other narrow gauge line, that to Parkmore and Retreat, left in the opposite direction, running parallel to the locomotive shed (now used for storing tamping machines) before curving away around the town. The extensive yard around the locomotive shed is now used for storing withdrawn railcars. A rather more interesting relic at the shed, however, is a snowplough (designed for attachment to a steam locomotive).



0-6-0 No.53 at Ballymena, 9th August 1930. This locomotive was an E1 class compound rebuilt from an older locomotive in 1907. 53 was finally withdrawn in 1944. (H.C. Casserley, 7092)

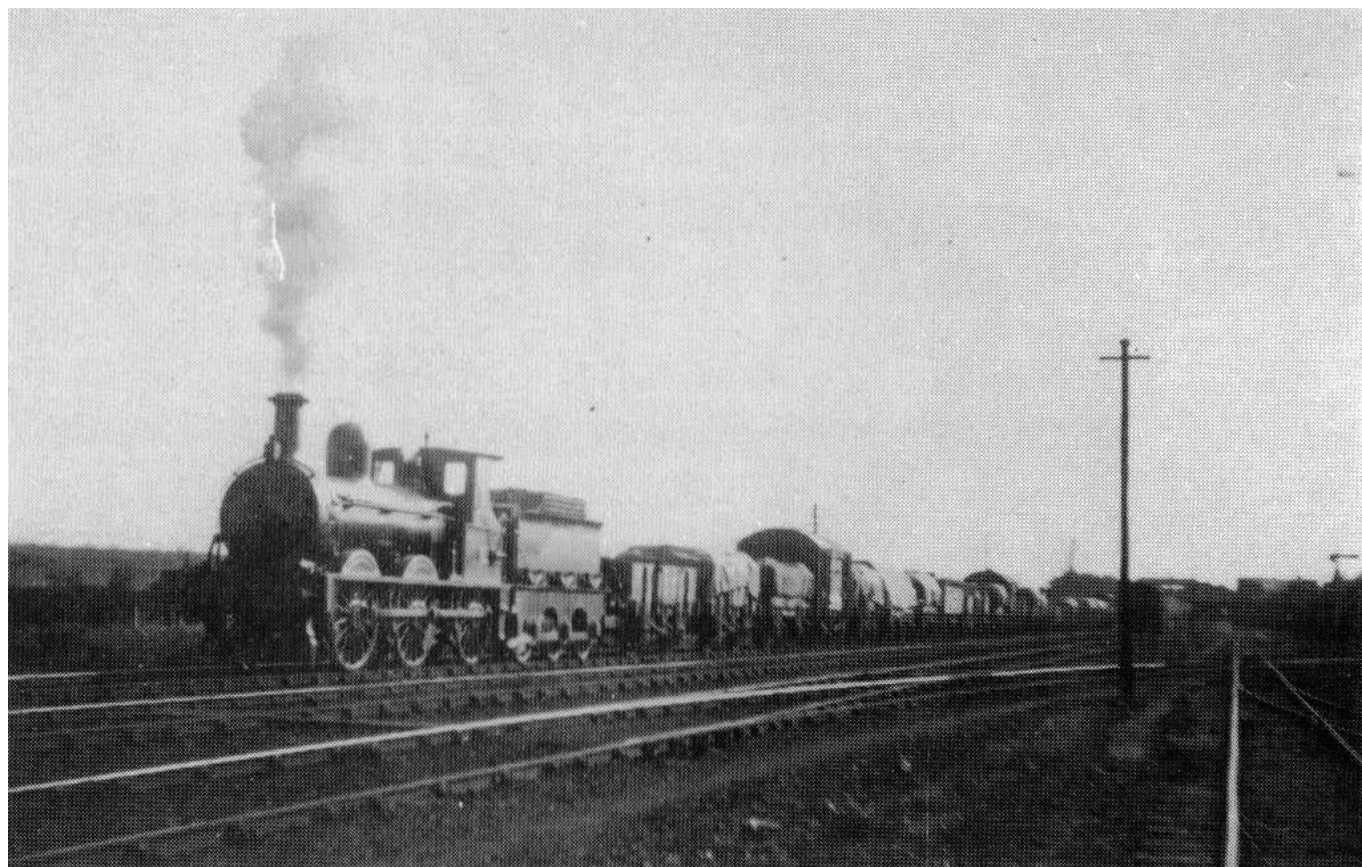
Leaving Ballymena the line, now single track, climbs and curves through rock cuttings, reaching a summit at MP37½. In the days of steam heavy trains (both passenger and goods) were banked by the Ballymena pilot.

Cullybackey: Until recently a block post. The signal box is still in use to control the crossing gates. Shortly after passing here, the train runs over a recently laid section of continuous welded rail.

Glarryford: Former block post. The integral station buildings and goods shed (now partly demolished) were very similar to those at the next station, Killagan. Both these stations are long closed but Dunloy was open until recently, both as a block post and a passenger station. With the closure of Dunloy and Cullybackey the section became Ballymena-Ballymoney.

Ballyboyland Quarry was once the NCC ballast pit, but is now privately owned. A block post was opened here in 1958 to divide the heavily graded Dunloy-Ballymoney section, but has since been closed.

Ballymoney: All that remains of the once extensive layout here is the crossing loop and a relief siding. The Ballycastle narrow gauge formerly used the opposite face of the Up platform, upon which the main station buildings are also located.



4th May 1920. 0-6-0 No.31 departs from Ballymoney with a goods.
(Ken Nunn Collection, 2575)

Macfin was once the junction for the Derry Central line, and remained as a block post for some time after the loss of its branch.

Coleraine is, even today, an important junction station. Formerly, the line to Portrush was regarded as the main line. Many trains from Belfast would contain a Derry portion and a Portrush portion. The engine (often a Derry shedded one) would be waiting to take the former on to Derry, while the remainder would be hauled to Portrush by the engine that had worked the train from Belfast, which would then return to Coleraine shed for servicing. The site of the shed is now occupied by a bus maintenance depot; and the once extensive goods yards are now also largely given over to road usage. At Coleraine we leave the metals of the Belfast, Ballymena, Coleraine and Portrush Junction Railway and pass on to those of the Londonderry and Coleraine Railway, but not before running over an interesting piece of civil engineering.

The Londonderry and Coleraine Railway was completed exactly 125 years ago (hence the suggestion that this tour be named the "Inter City 125"). The original terminus was on the west bank of the Bann, and there was no physical connection to the BBC&PJR. In 1860, however, a connection was opened between the two lines, and the L&CR station was closed the following year. The Bann was bridged by a timber viaduct which was located further upstream than the present viaduct. In 1892 a connection was opened into Coleraine Harbour, on the east bank of the Bann.

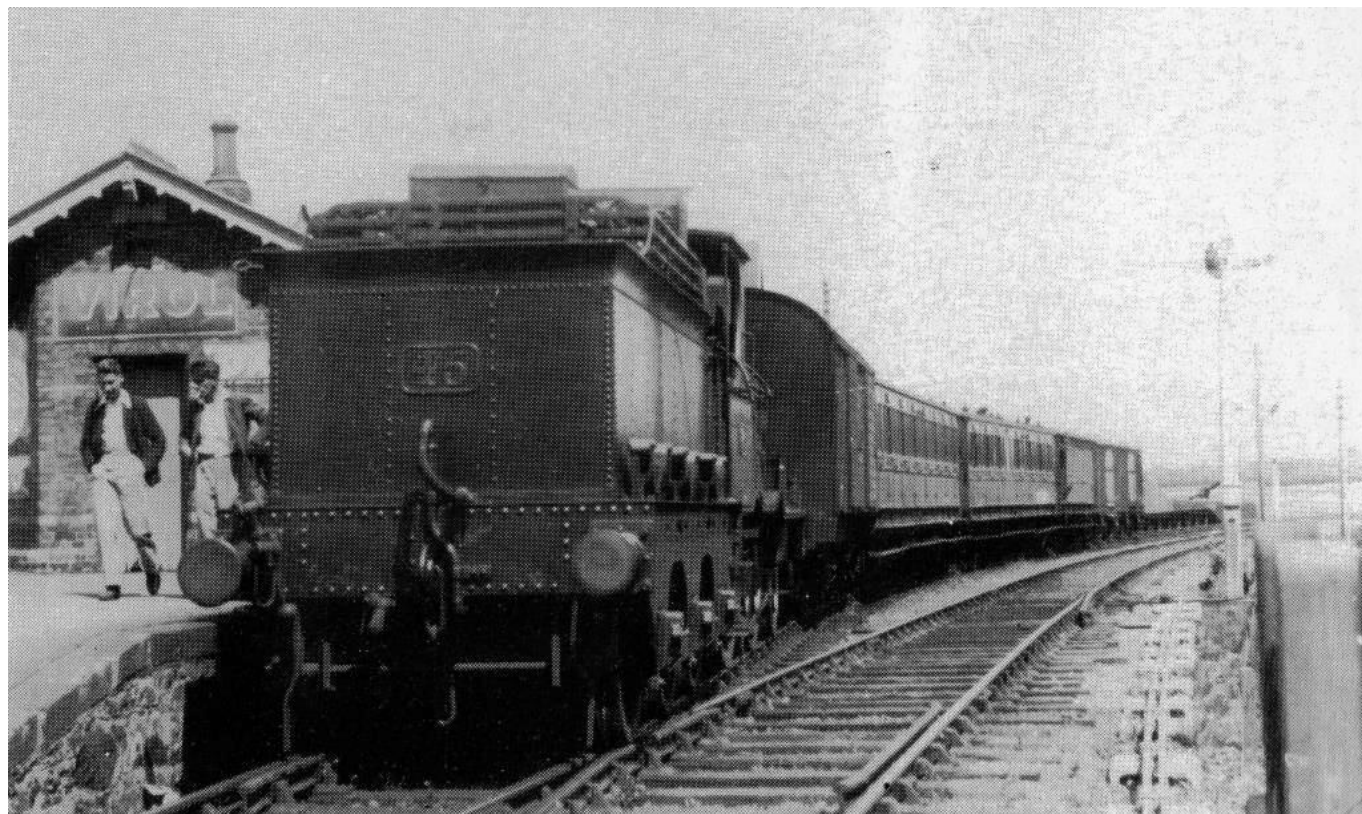
When the timber viaduct became due for renewal, a deviation line was constructed slightly downstream, crossing the Bann on a completely new viaduct (the present one), which was completed in 1924. The sixth span from the Coleraine end opens to allow passage of shipping and is interlocked to a "king" lever in Coleraine Cabin. That part of the original line on the east bank of the river survived until 1966 as connection to Coleraine Harbour.

Along the 3½ miles to Derry are some of the most scenic sections on the NCC. This section is also notable in that, apart from at Castlerock tunnels, the line is never more than 20 feet above sea level. The line skirts the shores of the Bann estuary almost until Castlerock which is now the only block post between Coleraine and Derry. The present signal cabin here is a recent one, the original being located at the Derry end of the station buildings.

Between Castlerock and Downhill are two tunnels under the grounds of Downhill Castle, now owned by the National Trust, but once the property of the Bishop of Derry (1768-1803) a well-known figure who favoured religious equality.

Downhill station was located in a picturesque site on the sea shore, hemmed in by towering basalt cliffs. The line skirts the

base of these cliffs until Magilligan station, another recent closure, is reached. Leaving Magilligan, flat terrain is crossed until Bellarena, a former block post and crossing point is reached.



Limavady Junction, Class F1 2-4-0 with a mixed train, in the branch platform. (Real Photographs, 4183)

Limavady Junction, closed at the same time as Magilligan, was situated on a sharp curve. The station buildings are on the Down platform, and the Limavady and Dungiven branch, closed in 1955, trailed in on this side with the branch platform at the back of the Down main. The passenger service on this branch, latterly truncated between the Junction and Limavady, was at one time a favourite haunt of engines approaching withdrawal; the last U1 class No.4A "Glenariff" being one example.

Just beyond Limavady Junction, the line crosses the runway of the former Ballykelly Airfield. The runway was extended across the railway in 1943, and movements were controlled by a signal cabin interlocked with the airfield control tower. The Colmcille railtour, with No.171, featured a runpast at this location with one of the aircraft then based at the airfield strategically placed for photography.

At Eglinton, a former block post, the railway passes another airfield, formerly that of the Royal Naval Air Service.

Lisahally, another former block post, served a major naval base during the Second World War. The remains of the jetties can still be seen.

The line now skirts the banks of Lough Foyle for the remaining four miles into Derry.



20th May 1958. 2-6-4T No.56 at Waterside. (Kelland Collection, 24027)

Londonderry (Waterside): The NCC station in at Derry is built on a restricted site on the banks of the Foyle. The two platforms are covered by an overall roof, now the last extant in Northern Ireland. The terminal buildings have been extensively damaged by terrorist activities, and most of them were subsequently demolished. The remainder, including the ornate clock tower (listed as Grade "A" by the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society) will likely follow soon, as NIR are building a new passenger station on the site of the old goods yard. At one time the NCC station in Derry was only one of four in the city. The others were the Victoria Road terminus of the Strabane narrow gauge, and across the river, the GNR terminus at Foyle Road, and that of the Lough Swilly at Graving Dock. Interconnection was achieved by the Harbour Commissioners line of which two locomotives have survived, No.1 in the Transport Museum, and No.3 at Whitehead.

The history of Derry City dates back to 546, when Saint Columba founded a monastery on the "Island of Derry". "Derry" means "the oak grove" and the name Derry-Columbkille survived until the area was granted to the City of London under charter from James I. The walls were completed in 1618, and still stand in their entirety. They withstood three sieges within the seventeenth century, the most famous in 1689, which lasted for 105 days. The only major building still extant from those times is Saint Columb's Cathedral, in which are kept many relics of the siege.



4-4-0 No.62, in BNCR days, on the old turntable at Waterside. This table was located on the river bank, and was protected by special signalling, as locomotives tended to foul the running lines when being turned. It was too short to turn a Mogul, and was therefore replaced by the present turntable, which was originally at Cookstown Junction. (Loco and General Railway Photographs, 5918)

RPSI - Lough Foyle Railtour, 1/9/1979

Schedule

	arr	dep	
Whitehead RPSI	-	07:30	
Whitehead NIR	pass	07:33	
Carrickfergus	pass	07:45	
Greenisland	pass	07:52	
Belfast York Road	08:10	08:35	
Bleach Green Junction	pass	08:48	
Antrim	pass	09:50	
Ballymena	10:13	10:20	Water Stop.
Ballymoney	pass	11:05	
Macfin	11:13	11:19	
Coleraine	<u>11:29</u>	<u>11:50</u>	Water Stop.
Castlerock	pass	12:01	
Londonderry	12:45		
Londonderry		13:45	
Downhill	14:25	14:34	
Castlerock	14:39	14:47	
Coleraine	<u>15:00</u>	<u>15:40</u>	Water Stop.
Ballymoney	pass	16:00	
Dunloy	16:22	16:27	
Ballymena	<u>16:56</u>	<u>17:15</u>	Water Stop.
Antrim	pass	17:37	
Bleach Green Junction	pass	18:40	
Belfast York Road	18:55	19:30	
Greenisland	pass	19:49	
Carrickfergus	pass	19:55	
Whitehead NIR	20:09	20:17	
Whitehead RPSI	20:20		