



MODERN RAILWAY SOCIETY of IRELAND

The Twelve Counties Railtour



**NIR General Motors Locomotive 111 at Dublin Connolly on the Cross-Border
Railtour 24th May, 2008**

photos: I Cross

Saturday 22nd May, 2010

**Whitehead - Belfast Central – Dublin Connolly – Island Bridge Junction –
Limerick Junction – Mallow – Killarney – Tralee and return**

The Twelve Counties Railtour

Welcome aboard the Modern Railway Society of Ireland's "Twelve Counties Railtour", (yes today's train will pass through twelve of the island's thirty-two counties). And to give you a chance to work them out for yourself they are listed after the table of today's carriages.

This is the first MRSI organised railtour that has operated south of Dublin since the "The one-one-one Day Tour" in May 2006. This is due to the Irish Rail embargo on railtours, and when that was lifted, the collapse of the Malahide viaduct which caused the postponement of this tour, originally scheduled for October 2009.

Today's train is to be hauled by an NIR 111-class locomotive and the similar Irish Rail 071 Class.

By the mid-1970s CIÉ needed more powerful locomotives for its mainline services than the re-engined 'A' Class. An order was placed with General Motors and in 1977 the 18-strong 071 class entered service. These locomotives were much larger than their earlier sisters, having 2,475hp turbo charged 645E3C V12 engines and a Co-Co wheel arrangement.

In the late 1970s NIR was keen to develop and upgrade its "Enterprise" service. It had last been upgraded in 1970 with the arrival of three 1,350hp 'Hunslet' locomotives and a rake of Mk11b carriages. However, given the problems NIR were finding in operating a small, unique class of locomotives they decided to order two further locomotives identical to the CIÉ 071-class.

They entered service in February 1981 and were numbered 111 "Great Northern" and 112 "Northern Counties" after two of the three constituent railway companies of NIR. The need for a third GM was resolved in 1984 with the arrival of 113 "Belfast & Co Down", all the nameplates were presented to NIR by the RPSI.

The 071/111-class GMs reigned supreme on Ireland's main line services throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, giving sterling service, but they were relegated to secondary duties in the mid-1990s with the arrival of the 201-class. 32 of these locomotives were supplied to Iarnród Éireann (201 - 207 and 210 - 234), with a further two (208 and 209) for NIR for the Enterprise services.

Today the 071s are deployed on freight and permanent way traffic and the three 111s only have permanent way traffic and empty stock moves. There are no diagrammed passenger workings for either type.

We want you to enjoy your day with us, and we would ask you to bear the following in mind:

1. Please do not go on to the tracks at stops, particularly at Connolly and Tralee.
2. Please follow instructions given to you by stewards, particularly when the train is about to leave.
3. Please do not lean out of windows while we are moving.
4. We would also ask you to be considerate of others both on the train and at stops, where photographs are being taken.

The RPSI buffet car is open during the day for the sale of hot and cold snacks, tea and coffee and soft drinks. There is also a sales stand run on behalf of the Irish Steam Preservation Society by Clifton Flewitt

Today's Carriages

The train of Mark II carriages which are forming our train today have been hired from the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland. They were introduced to service on their steam trains

in 2004 as current railway safety standards mean that the Society's preserved historic carriages were no longer authorised to operate on much of the Irish railway network, including the entire NIR system.

The carriages scheduled to be on our train are.

RPSI Number	Mark	Type (Class)	Seats	Doors	Original Company	Built	Previous Number
180	2a	FK (Corridor First)	42	5	BR ER	1968	13475
181	2b	FK (Corridor First)	42	4	BR WR	1969	13487
547	2b	Buffet SO	23	4	NIR	1970	547
300	2b	(Open Standard)	62	4	NIR	1970	822, 934
301	2z	TSO (Open Standard)	64	6	BR MR	1967	5207
302	2z	TSO (Open Standard)	64	6	BR MR	1967	5135
460	2z	BSO (Brake Open Standard)	31	4	BR MR	1966	9382
462		Gen Van	0		CIÉ	1969	3158

The twelve counties: Antrim, Down, Armagh, Louth, Meath, Dublin, Kildare, Laois, Tipperary, Limerick, Cork and Kerry.

Outbound

	Arr.	Dep.
WHITEHEAD RPSI		05.20
Whitehead		05.21½
Kilroot		05.25½
Carrickfergus		05.30½
Greenisland		05.35
Bleach Green		05.37½
Yorkgate		05.42½
Donegal Quay		05.43½
Lagan Junction		05.45
Belfast Central	05.46½	05.55
City Hospital	05.58	05.59
Lisburn	06.09	06.10
Lurgan		06.25½
Portadown	06.33	06.35
Poyntzpass		06.47
Newry	06.57	07.00
Dundalk		07.16½
Drogheda	07.41½	07.45
Mosney		07.52½
Balbriggan		07.56
Skerries		08.00
Malahide		08.09
Portmarnock		08.14
Howth Junction		08.18
DUBLIN Connolly	08:33	

	Arr.	Dep.
DUBLIN Connolly		09.20
Glasnevin Junction		09.25
Islandbridge Junction	09N32½	09N37½
Inchicore		09.41
Hazelhatch		09.50
Sallins		09.58½
Newbridge		10.05
Kildare		10.10½
Cherryville Junction		10.13½
Portarlington		10.26½
Portlaoise		10.36½
Ballybrophy		10.50½
Lisduff		10.55½
Templemore	11.01½	11.08½
Thurles	11N16½	11N31½
Limerick Junction		11.55½
Charleville		12.18
Mallow	12.33	12.43
Killarney Junction		12.44½
Banteer	12.57	13.02
Millstreet		13.12½
Rathmore	13.20½	13.25½
Killarney	13.46	13.56
Killarney Check	13N58	14N01
Farranfore		14.18½
TRALEE	14.40	

(N): Non-Passenger Stop

Return

	Arr.	Dep.
TRALEE		15.35
Farranfore	15.50½	15.57½
Killarney Check	16N15	16N17
Killarney	16.21	16.31
Rathmore		16.49½
Millstreet		16.58
Banteer		17.09
Killarney Junction		17.21½
Mallow		17.23½
Charleville		17.36½
Limerick Junction	18.00	18.18
Thurles		18.37½
Templemore		18.44
Lisduff		18.49½
Ballybrophy		18.54½
Portlaoise		19.08½
Portarlington		19.19
Cherryville Junction		19.32½
Kildare		19.34½
Newbridge		19.39½
Sallins		19.46
Hazelhatch		19.52½
Inchicore		20.01
Islandbridge Junction		20.05
Glasnevin Junction		20.13
DUBLIN Connolly	20.20	

	Arr.	Dep.
DUBLIN Connolly		21.20
Howth Junction		21.29½
Malahide		21.33
Skerries		21.40½
Balbriggan		21.43½
Mosney		21.47
Drogheda	21.53	21.55
Dundalk		22.20
Newry	22.37½	22.39½
Poyntzpass		22.48½
Portadown	22.59	23.01
Lurgan		23.07½
Lisburn	23.23½	23.25
City Hospital	23.35	23.36
Belfast Central	23.40	23.47
Lagan Junction		23.48
Donegall Quay		23.49
Yorkgate		23.50
Bleach Green		23.56
Greenisland		23.59
Carrickfergus		00.03
Kilroot		00.08
Whitehead		00.12½
WHITEHEAD RPSI	00.15	

In the itinerary which follows, places are denoted by milepost numbers. Between Whitehead and Yorkgate mileposts are measured from the old NCC terminus at York Road; beyond Yorkgate they are measured from Dublin Connolly. All mileposts as far as Dublin are on the right-hand side of the train in the direction of travel. North of the border all the mileposts were replaced under Translink and are now standard two face posts with black figures on a yellow background. South of the border there is a mixture of old GN posts and replacement IÉ posts, which are somewhat larger than the NIR posts with black figures on a white background. A word of warning is necessary about the new posts. No great effort was made to ensure their accuracy. This was particularly true on the Larne line, where every post between 2¾ and 6 is badly out of place.

The Route Described

WHITEHEAD: For the few hardy souls who will be with us all the way, we start this morning from what is now the RPSI platform in Whitehead. This was originally built, as Whitehead Excursion Station, by the MR (NCC) in 1907. The present NIR station at Whitehead, which is few hundred yards away, is the third station serving the town and was opened in 1877. The original buildings still stand on the left side, along with the signal cabin, now disused.

Heading for Belfast, the line closely follows the shore of Belfast Lough until Downshire. Initially, the line between Whitehead and Carrickfergus was single track, with a passing loop at Briggs's Loop. The line was doubled by the LMS (NCC) in 1929. At that time, the new Down one was taken through a short tunnel (145 yards long) approaching Whitehead. NIR singled the line again in 1994, ostensibly because the Up line was in danger from coastal erosion.

However, the state of Whitehead tunnel gave rise to grave concern, and the tunnel was closed, all traffic being now handled on the old Up line as far as MP 14.

CLOGHAN POINT: Near MP 13 a long jetty will be seen on the left side. This was built in preparation for the opening of Kilroot Power Station, to allow for the unloading of large oil tankers and storage of fuel for the power station. The shore facilities stand on land reclaimed from Belfast Lough in the early 1970s. The landfill used was carried from Magheramorne in spoil wagons from the Belfast foreshore motorway project, hauled by the Hunslet locos.

END OF SINGLE TRACK: The single line section ends near MP 12. The extensive industrial facilities seen here are part of Carrickfergus Salt Mine, one of the two major UK providers of rock salt for road gritting.

There were four stations/halts between Whitehead and Carrickfergus, of which only Downshire remains.

KILROOT (MP 11½): This was a typical NCC station, with a signal cabin. It closed in 1977, and has totally disappeared into the power station complex. Right beside the station, on the left-hand side, was a little whitewashed cottage, once the home of Jonathan Swift. Sadly that too has been lost to the march of progress!

EDEN HALT (MP 11): The village of Eden lies about half a mile away to the north, but there was a little settlement of holiday cottages here, and the LMS (NCC) provided a halt, with staggered platforms, opened in 1925. It was closed in 1977 and, being of a rather exiguous nature, quickly disappeared.

DOWNSHIRE (MP 10½): The halt here was another 1925 opening, but to serve a growing housing area. Like Eden, it was originally built with staggered platforms, but it was extensively rebuilt in its present form in 1979. It was originally named Downshire Park, the "Park" being dropped after the 1979 rebuilding.

BARN HALT (MP 10): Another 1925 opening. Barn was intended to serve Taylor's Mill which can be seen in the distance on the right. Clearly it did not live up to expectations, for it closed again in 1931. During World War 2 the area had a number of businesses involved in war work, and the halt re-opened in 1942, closing again in 1977. The only remaining structure is the metal footbridge which still stands

CARRICKFERGUS (MP 9½): This is the major station on this line, with three platforms, the bay being usually used for trains terminating here. In the current timetable there is a half hourly service during the day from Belfast to Carrickfergus, with every other train continuing towards Larne. Carrickfergus is a town with a long history. It is the proud possessor of one of the best preserved Norman Castles in Ireland, and the Parish Church of St Nicholas dates back to the 12th Century. Both these can be glimpsed from the train on the left side as it enters Carrickfergus. This was also where William of Orange landed in 1690 at the start of his campaign in Ireland against James II. In railway terms. Carrickfergus used to be a busy centre, with a small engine shed, situated at the Belfast end of the Up platform, and significant freight traffic. There was a branch to Carrickfergus Harbour, as well as a number of industrial sidings, serving mainly salt workings. That traffic had largely disappeared by the 1950s, the harbour branch dosing officially in 1957, though it had been little used for some time. The original station buildings are still standing, and have been the subject of a very sympathetic renovation, which has resulted in a number of awards. The old signal cabin still stands near the Belfast end of the Up platform.

CLIPPERSTOWN (MP 9¼): This halt was opened in 1925, and has recently been extensively renovated. It serves a large area of recent housing development, and has heavy traffic, particularly at peak times.

Beyond Clipperstown the line climbs quite steeply towards its summit at Greenisland. Passengers on the left side will see a large Industrial building. This used to be the Courtaulds Factory, which was supplied until the 1960s by rail from Belfast docks. There was an extensive internal railway system, with two industrial steam engines.

MOUNT (MP 8¾): Mount Halt was opened in 1925, but closed again in 1930. When the Courtaulds Factory opened in 1946, it was re-opened as Courtaulds Platform, although quickly renamed Mount. In its later years it had a very limited service, and very little traffic, and it closed in 1972. A signal box was provided to control access to the Courtaulds system. The remains of the old station and signal box were demolished during the Bleach Green - Whitehead relay, and can be seen lying in a field on the right side of the line.

TROOPERSLANE (MP 7¾): Opened shortly after the line commenced working, Trooperslane remains open. In one of the great acts of railway vandalism the original, and unique, station buildings, built in the style of a Swiss chalet, were demolished in 1974. The monument visible on top of the escarpment on the right-hand side is the County Antrim War Memorial, at Knockagh.

GREENISLAND (MP 6½): Originally named Carrickfergus Junction this was an exceptionally busy station until the 1930s. Before the construction of the Loop Line from Bleach Green to Monkstown, all trains from Belfast to the north had to run out here to reverse. Engines off trains from Portrush and Londonderry were serviced here before heading back north again, the turntable being in the area now occupied by the car park. There were three platforms. The opening of the direct line in 1934 diminished its importance and, although the 'Back Line', as the old route became known, nominally remained open until the 1960s, it saw little use towards the end, and it was closed in 1963. The old route can still be clearly seen on the right side as we

leave Greenisland for Belfast. The station was extensively rationalised in recent years, and is now a two platform station with a very basic modern building on the Down platform.

JORDANSTOWN (MP 5¼): From Greenisland the line begins to fall towards Belfast.

Jordanstown station serves the main campus of the University of Ulster, which can be seen on the left side of the line. As a result it is now one of the busiest stations on the line. The original, handsome station buildings were demolished in the 1970s, and present facilities consist of a portacabin for railway staff, and bus type shelters on the two platforms.

BLEACH GREEN (MP 4¾): The impressive reinforced concrete viaduct of the Loop Line can be seen on the right side as we approach Bleach Green Junction. There was a very basic halt here, on the Larne lines only, opened in 1925 and closed in 1977.

WHITEABBEY (MP 4¼): Another of the line's original stations, this too has been extensively rationalised, with bus type shelters on the two platforms. Recent investment has seen the provision of an extensive park and ride facility on the right-hand side.

WHITEHOUSE (MP 3¼) From Whiteabbey the line falls again to near sea level. Two stations were provided to serve the village of Whitehouse. The first, at Erskine's Cut (MP 2¾), closed in 1860. The second one, where the line crosses Whitehouse Park, was open from 1860 to 1954. When the station closed, the concrete platforms were used to extend the platforms at Ballymacarret on the Bangor line. They eventually disappeared with the Bangor Line relay in the early 2000s.

It is hard to remember that, until 1968/9, the line ran along the shore of Belfast Lough here. The sterling efforts of the last of NIR's steam fleet, hauling stone from Magheramorne, reclaimed the land on which the motorway now runs.

FORTWILLIAM DEPOT (MP 1): On the left side can be seen the extensive facilities provided for the cleaning and fuelling of NIR's new fleet of CAF built railcars. On the other side of the line can be seen the sidings, wash plant and fuelling point associated with NIR's main depot at York Road. The present running lines squeeze between the depot and workshops, on the right, and the motorway on the left. The more observant will observe MP 0, which is just about in line with the buffers of the old York Road terminus, which was on the right side. From here, the mileposts are measured from Dublin Connolly. The almost derelict grey building on the right just before we enter Yorkgate is the former Midland Hotel.

YORKGATE (MP 114¾): When plans were being drawn up for the Cross Harbour link, the various stages had to be carefully choreographed. The scheme was, essentially, a road scheme, connecting the Sydenham Bypass with the motorway system by means of a new stretch of motorway - the M3 -which was to cross the River Lagan on a new bridge.

Construction of this new road required the demolition of NIR's Central Service Depot, where the bulk of the DEMU fleet, along with the Enterprise sets, were routinely serviced. As a result a new railway connection was to be built, allowing the transfer of the maintenance facilities to the York Road site. To provide sufficient space, the old York Road Station had to be demolished, and new facilities built on the site, before the CSD was closed. As a result, the first stage of this project involved the closure of York Road, in 1992, and its replacement by a new station, on the line of the new railway, at Yorkgate. Until the opening of the Cross Harbour link, in 1994, Yorkgate was the terminus for Larne line trains. The gradient up to Yorkgate platforms from the Whitehead direction is reputedly the steepest on the current NIR system.

CROSS HARBOUR LINK (MP 114¾ - MP 113¾): This was, possibly, the most important infrastructure project in the history of NIR. It also represents both the innovative and the idiotic in transport planning. That a link like this should have been built single track was then and is

now even more so seen as short-sightedness of the worst kind. Leaving Yorkgate, the line immediately becomes single, and continues so across the Dargan Bridge, doubling again near MP 114, which is close to the site of the old Queen's Quay Station, closed in 1976. There is a short crossing loop at Donegal Quay (MP 114½), but this does little to alleviate the bottleneck that is already developing. With plans for increased frequency of services on both the Derry and Larne lines this can only get worse. The link, which was opened on 28th November 1994, ends at Lagan Junction (MP 113¾), where the Bangor line trails in on the left. The line crosses the River Lagan twice. The first crossing is the Dargan Bridge, which crosses the river where the cross-channel ferries used to be berth. From this bridge can be seen the Odyssey Complex, behind which lies the Titanic Quarter. Also visible are the two gigantic yellow cranes (Samson and Goliath) at Belfast Shipyard and the Lagan Weir. The second crossing is the Lagan Viaduct, built to replace the infamous "Shaky Bridge", the frailty of which was legendary!

BELFAST CENTRAL (MP 113½): To many people this seems to be a major misnomer, since the station is situated some distance from the City Centre. However, it was built at the very height of the Troubles, when the City Centre was being subjected to a relentless terrorist bombing campaign. At that time there was a serious suggestion that a new commercial centre would be built on the by then derelict cattle markets where the Hilton Hotel and BT Tower now stand. Had this been done, the new station would have been ideally placed. The new station was built on the site of the extensive railway goods facility at Maysfields, which had been derelict since the 1960s. There are four platforms. It is the terminus of the cross-border Enterprise service (although there are proposals to move the Dublin trains to Great Victoria Street, which is much more centrally situated). The recently refurbished station buildings, which are at street level, reached by escalators from the platforms, have a range of passenger facilities, and have won a 'Best Station' award.

Between Belfast Central and Central Junction we are on the old Belfast Central Railway, opened as an independent undertaking in 1874, but quickly taken over by the GNR. When the line opened there was a short-lived passenger service, but by the time the line was being rebuilt in 1975-76 the original stations had disappeared. The line was closed in 1965, the last passenger traffic being Sunday School excursions from the former GN line to Bangor in June. The very last trains were materials trains run in connection with the building of the new halts at Seahill and Crawfordsburn Hospital on the Bangor line. The demolition of the Middlepath Street Bridge in the autumn of 1965 isolated the Bangor line from the rest of the system, and removed the only remaining *raison d'être* for the Central line's existence. It was re-opened in two stages in April 1976, leading to the closure of Queen's Quay and Great Victoria Street stations.

BOTANIC (MP 112½): This was a new station built at the time of the 1976 opening. Its location, on Botanic Avenue, is close to Queen's University and student traffic has always been heavy. Until the reopening of Great Victoria Street in 1995, it was also the station used by many commuters from the Great Northern line heading for the city centre. It has just had its platforms extended to cope with 6-car CAF sets.

CITY HOSPITAL (MP 112¼): The City Hospital is one of the principal medical centres in Northern Ireland, and is situated right beside the railway. The halt here was opened in 1986 and from the beginning has provided steady traffic for the railway. The rather forbidding grey stone building overlooking the station on the left-hand side is part of the original Belfast Workhouse, now part of the hospital complex.

Immediately after leaving City Hospital we come to City Junction where the line into Great Victoria Street curves sharply away on the right-hand side. The original Belfast Central Railway line curves westward to join the lines from Great Victoria Street at Belfast Central Junction. The old signal cabin stood in the fork between the lines on the right hand side, just at MP 112.

We now join the Great Northern Railway main line.

ADELAIDE (MP 111¼): Approaching this station a large sports stadium will be seen on the right. This is Windsor Park, where the Northern Ireland soccer team play their home internationals. Adelaide signal cabin stood just facing the football ground. Originally named Adelaide and Windsor, this station stood right beside the GNR's Belfast Locomotive Depot, which was opened in 1911, and closed, following the demise of steam, in 1966. The extensive site was re-developed as a modern freight yard, which replaced the original GNR facility at Grosvenor Street. It was served by CIÉ trains, and handled heavy traffic in three main flows - Guinness inbound to a purpose built depot adjoining the yard; cement inbound; and fertiliser inbound and outbound. In the 1980s heavy container traffic developed, resulting in the erection of a large crane to cope with the traffic. Sadly, the dramatic change in direction by Irish Rail management in the early 2000s saw the total eradication of all this traffic. Since then, the yard has been used to store redundant rolling stock. It is, however, soon to enter a new phase with the construction of a new service depot for the 4000 class railcars due to be delivered from CAF in 2011-13. The former NIR Freight Sector buildings currently house the Translink call centre and ROTA (Rail Operations Training Academy).

BALMORAL (MP 110¼): Approaching Balmoral there is a little yard on the right-hand side. This was originally intended to be a welding plant for CWR. On the left, at the same place stood Balmoral Signal Cabin near which were sidings built to serve the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society's facility at King's Hall. The station itself is close to King's Halt, seen on the left, and Musgrave Park Hospital, which is Northern Ireland's principal orthopaedic hospital. The station does good business all year round, but is especially busy during the annual Balmoral Show, in May.

FINAGHY (MP 109½): This is another busy suburban halt, opened as a "rail motor" halt in 1907. There was a small goods yard on the right-hand side beyond the overbridge, and a signal cabin, the base of which the more eagle-eyed may glimpse among the undergrowth.

DUNMURRY (MP 108½): This was the one intermediate station between Belfast and Lisburn when the Ulster Railway opened in 1839. Dunmurry signal cabin was some distance away in the Lisburn direction, by the road crossing.

DERRIAGHY (MP 107½): Approaching Derriaghy a large factory can be seen on the right. This was where the famous De Lorean cars, of 'Back to the Future' fame, were made. Derriaghy has had a chequered history. It was originally opened, again as a rail motor halt, in 1907, closed in 1953, then reopened in 1956. There has been considerable housing development in the vicinity in recent years, and the station is now quite busy.

LAMBEG (MP 106½): We are now entering linen territory, and Lambeg village, which is to the left at the station, was a mill village. However, over the past number of years there has been massive housing development on the other side of the line, meaning that this is now another busy little station. There was a signal cabin at the Belfast end of the Down platform. This is long gone, but its location is still clearly visible.

HILDEN (MP 106): Hilden is another mill village, built to serve Barbour's Mill which can be seen in the distance on the left, and the station was the last of the 1907 rail motor halts. There was a small goods yard on the left, with a wooden goods store, and a signal cabin. All have long disappeared. Hilden was the scene of a fatal accident in 1983, when an empty 80 class train ran into a failed 70 class set, resulting in the death of an NIR driver. This accident led to the first withdrawal of an 80 class power car, number 88.

LISBURN (MP 105): The line approaches Lisburn on a sweeping curve and in a cutting. On the right is Lisburn's main public park - Wallace Park. Lisburn was the original terminus of the Ulster Railway when it opened in 1839. It is still a busy station. There are three platforms, and the GNR buildings, with their characteristic yellow brick dating from 1878, are still in use. The signal cabin still stands, at the Dublin end of the island platform. There was a goods yard behind the island platform with a large brick goods store. Most of this has been sold for commercial development, but part has been retained for use by the permanent way department. Lisburn also boasts two working steam age water columns, used on a regular basis by RPSI specials. Remarkably, given the safety record of railways in the north, Lisburn featured in two major accidents in the last 50 years. In 1963, during the great blizzard, the evening Dublin bound train ran through signals and inflicted considerable damage on the prototype MED cars, 6 and 7. Fifteen years later, the 11:00 Belfast - Dublin Enterprise, hauled by 010, ran into the rear of the 10:05 Bangor - Ballymena local leading to the death of the Enterprise driver.

KNOCKMORE HALT (MP 104¼): Leaving Lisburn there are three tracks - the Up and Down Dublin lines and the single track Antrim branch, now mothballed. This 'third line' was constructed in 1977 to allow the closure of Knockmore Junction cabin. The halt at Knockmore was something of a curiosity. There were two platforms, one on the Antrim branch; the other on the Up Dublin line. This meant that passengers could travel from Knockmore to stations in the Portadown direction, but coming back they had to go through to Lisburn. The halt closed with the Antrim branch in 2003, though both platforms still remain.

KNOCKMORE JUNCTION (MP 103½): The site of the junction is marked by the overbridge. This was, originally, a two way junction with the line to Banbridge and Newcastle branching off to the South (left side) and that to Antrim branching off to the North. The Banbridge line closed in 1956, though a siding out to the animal rendering plant at Newforge remained in use into the 1960s. The Antrim line closed to passengers for the first time in 1960, but was retained for freight traffic. When UTA freight finished in February 1965 CIÉ traffic for Derry and Donegal, which had formerly gone over the GN Derry Road, was re-routed via Lisburn, Antrim and the NCC line to Derry. In 1974 a local passenger service was re-introduced and in 1978 the Belfast - Derry trains were diverted via the Antrim - Lisburn line to/from Belfast Central. It was the re-opening of the Bleach Green - Antrim line that sounded the death knell for the branch, services ending in June 2003. The line is at the moment mothballed, but there seems to be little enthusiasm for re-opening, despite the fact that the line runs along the perimeter of Belfast International Airport.

MAZE (MP 102½): The platforms still remain here. The station opened in 1895, and was intended to serve the village of the same name, and the adjacent racecourse. Both these are some considerable distance away. However, the station remained in use until 1974. MP 102½ was originally measured as being in the middle of the road at Maze Station Gates, and as a result was to be seen on the middle post of the crossing gates - a rare example of a moving milepost! Under NIR common sense prevailed, and the post is just on far side of the gates - though perhaps not entirely accurate.

BROOMHEDGE (MP 101): There was a small signal cabin near MP 101¼ which was only switched in at times of peak traffic to split the lengthy Knockmore Junction - Moira section. A small yard for handling agricultural traffic was sited just on the Lisburn side of the overbridge, and the loading bank can still be seen. During World War 2 an ambulance train was stabled here for some time. Beyond the overbridge there was a passenger halt from 1935 – 1953.

DAMHEAD (MP 100): This was another 1935 opening, intended to counter growing road competition. The railway here runs close to, and parallel with, the main Belfast - Armagh road.

Damhead Halt retained a very limited service until closure in 1973. The remains of the platforms can still be clearly seen.

MOIRA (MP 98): As we approach Moira, the significance of its name becomes apparent - the town can be seen some distance away on the left, on a hill overlooking a broad plain, hence the Irish name Magh Rath - the fort on the plain. One of the most significant battles in ancient Ireland took place here in 637AD. The railway station, opened with the railway line in 1841, retains its original Ulster Railway buildings on the Up platform. The signal cabin, now also standing on the Up platform, was originally situated just beyond the level crossing on the left-hand side. There was a small goods yard on the Down side, now occupied by the Conservation Branch of the NI Department of the Environment. As noted, the station is a long way from the town, but in recent years it has become a thriving park and ride station, and a large car park has been provided, usually filled to capacity during the day. When the line originally opened it was single track, and there was a passing loop here.

At Moira three generations of transport endeavour to come together. The 20th century motorway - the M1 - comes in on the left, and just beyond the 19th century railway station the line crosses the derelict 18th century Lagan Canal on a new bridge. From Moira the line climbs for two miles to the Lagan - Bann watershed, at MP 96, at which point the line passes under the motorway. From there the line falls almost continuously to Portadown. In the 1930s this stretch was one of the GNR's racing grounds.

PRITCHARD'S BRIDGE (MP 95½): There was a station here from 1842 - 1844. Nothing remains, apart from the rather unusual long sloping parapet to the overbridge.

KILMORE (MP 94¾): There was a level crossing here until 1985 when the right of way was extinguished. The concrete base of the cabin that controlled the gates can still be seen on the right side.

LURGAN (MP 92¼): Lurgan has always been something of an operational nightmare, due to the existence of three busy level crossings within a mile - in order as we cross them, Bell's Row, Lake Street and William Street (or Lurgan Station Gates). All three are still manned, but modern signalling means that virtually all trains are heavily checked approaching the town. Those on the left-hand side may catch a glimpse among the trees of the mock Jacobean outline of Brownlow House, built by the principal local landowners in the early 19th century. This area has the unhappy reputation of being the last place in the North where railway services are regularly disrupted. Lurgan Station is a modern building, the original GNR building, and its immediate successor having fallen victim to terrorist bombs. There were, at one time, two goods yards here. The main one was on the Up side, where a large brick goods store was built. This still stands, although no longer in railway use. On the Down side there was a smaller yard, with a hand crane. The station car park now occupies this site. Until the end of internal railway freight in Northern Ireland, Lurgan remained busy, and an engine came over from Portadown during the day to shunt the yards. Lurgan Signal cabin stood on the far side of the level crossing on the left until it too succumbed to a bomb attack.

Between Lurgan and Portadown the entire landscape has changed dramatically over the past 50 years. Near MP 91½ the large industrial complex seen on the right was originally built by the Goodyear Tyre Company, and between 1970 and 1983 a halt served the factory. All trace of this has now disappeared. Just beyond this the railway crosses what appears to be a causeway across a lake. There are, actually, two manmade 'balancing' lakes, intended to deal with issues of drainage during and after the building of the new city of Craigavon. They were created in the late 1960s and are now a major water sports centre. Just beyond the lakes is the site of Boilie Cabin, which marked the foot of the main downhill stretch from MP 96. Boilie controlled a minor

road crossing, but the road was swallowed up in the balancing lake project and the cabin closed. Part of the surviving road can be seen on the right-hand side. There is a brief rise here, before we drop down to Portadown past the site of Seagoe Cabin at MP 88½.

PORTADOWN (MP 87¼): As we approach Portadown, the River Bann comes into view on the right. In the distance a church spire can be seen. This is Drumcree Church, the centre of so much unrest in recent years. Just before we cross the River Bann, we pass the remains of the old Portadown station, closed in 1974. The present station, built on part of the old goods yard, is much more convenient to the Town Centre, but it is rather utilitarian in appearance, and facilities, although recently greatly improved, are limited. There are three platforms. Portadown used to be known, in railway terms, as the "Hub of the North". When the Ulster Railway was built it ran, originally to Armagh, Monaghan and Cavan. Subsequently, two further major lines were built from Dublin, Drogheda and Dundalk, and to Dungannon, Omagh, Strabane and Derry. The present station stands at the site of the junction where the three lines separated. On the right-hand side immediately after leaving Portadown can be seen the substantial brick base of Portadown Junction Signal Cabin. Beyond this, the curving line of the wall on the right marks the course of the Derry Road. The line from Portadown to Cavan closed in 1957; that to Omagh and Derry in 1965. The remaining line curves sharply towards the South. In steam days, Portadown Loco Shed was here. This was something of an Irish rarity - a reinforced concrete roundhouse, which required the ministrations of the British Army to demolish it, to make way for road improvements in the 1970s. Although a rarity, it was not unique - Clones had a similar structure, which still exists. Portadown is now the terminus of the commuter service from Bangor and Belfast, with only a couple of trains (apart from the Enterprise) continuing on to Newry.

Leaving Portadown, the line drops down to Brackagh Moss, a low lying marshy area which caused the builders of the line considerable difficulty. Track maintenance was always a problem, and this was highlighted in 1886, when a Belfast - Dublin mail train was derailed here, leading to the deaths of 6 people. The report into the accident blamed, amongst other things, the poor state of the permanent way. Local legend would have us believe that the locomotive involved, 2-4-0 No.37, still lies buried in the bog. However, GNR loco records appear to show that the engine was returned to service and was withdrawn and scrapped some years later!

TANDERAGEE (MP 82): Originally called Madden, this station lies almost exactly equidistant from Tandragee and Gilford, which are some 2 miles away to the West and East respectively. It can never have been a particularly busy place, in terms of passengers, but it survived until 1985. The station master's house is on the left, and is now a private residence. There was a siding here on the Down (right-hand) side, used to load ballast during the first relay of the line in the 1980s. The eagle-eyed among you may have spotted an inconsistency in spelling here - the official spelling of the town is Tandragee, but the GNR insisted in adding that extra 'e'!

SCARVA (MP 79½): In contrast to Tandragee, Scarva station is close to the village it serves. The line here twists through characteristic drumlin country, and Scarva is built on a sharp curve, restricted to 50 mph for many years, the limit only recently having been raised to 70. The station's main claim to fame was the topiary man on the wall on the Down platform at the Dublin end. Sadly those who maintained this landmark have passed on and it has now largely disappeared. Every year, on the 13th July, there is a major event in the village, known as the Sham Fight - recreating the Battle of the Boyne of 1690. The railway still provides a shuttle service between Portadown and Scarva on that day, and in the old days, the topiary man was regaled with an Orange sash in honour of the occasion! The station closed in 1965, but was reopened in 1984 when the limited Belfast - Newry service was introduced. Until 1955 it was the junction for the branch to Banbridge, the branch trains leaving from a bay platform on the left-hand side.

POYNTZPASS (MP 77): As we approach Poyntzpass we pass a lake on the left. This is Lough Shark, or Acton Lough. It is close to the summit of the Newry Canal and supplied water to the canal. Like Scarva, the station at Poyntzpass is close to the village. Like Scarva, too, there is a sharp curve. In Steam days, the restriction at Poyntzpass was 30 mph. Nowadays, the restriction is 45. The station closed in 1965, but it too re-opened in 1984. The signal cabin stands at the Dublin end of the Down platform. It survived because of the level crossing here which was manually operated until the 1990s. There is a siding here on the Down side, which has replaced the one at Tanderagee as the main loading point for ballast trains working in this area.

Beyond Poyntzpass the line crosses the Newry Canal, which has been close to the line on the left side since Portadown. This canal was built between 1731 and 1742, and is thought to be the earliest 'summit level' canal in the British Isles. It was built to connect the coalfields of Tyrone with the sea at Carlingford Lough, via Lough Neagh, but has had no commercial traffic since the 1930s, and is now largely derelict. Near MP 74 we reach the foot of the Wellington Bank almost 9 miles long, although with less severe gradients than the northbound climb. On the right at the very foot of the bank there is the delightfully situated church of St Mary's Drumbanagher. Just behind the church is the southern portal of Lissummon Tunnel on the Newry - Armagh line, which was Ireland's longest tunnel.

GORAGHWOOD (MP 71¾): Little remains of this once important junction, although the remnants of some of the buildings once used by the UK Customs still stand on the right (Down) side. On the Portadown side of the station was the GNR's main ballast quarry. Goraghtwood had three platforms, with that on the Up (left) side being an island platform. Into the outside face of this platform ran the line from Armagh, which crossed the main line on an overbridge just north of the station (the parapets of this are still clearly visible). That line continued to Newry and Warrenpoint. The passenger service to Armagh ended as long ago as 1933, but a freight service as far as Markethill remained until 1955. The Line to Newry and Warrenpoint closed in January 1965, and with it the station. Goraghtwood's main claim to fame was as the UK Customs post, and all cross-border passenger trains, apart from the non-stop expresses, were examined here, along with all freight trains. When Goraghtwood closed, the Customs post was moved to Portadown.

NEWRY (MP 69¼): As the line climbs from Goraghtwood, there are extensive views on the left across most of South Down as far as the Mourne Mountains. There was, for a short time, a halt at Mullaghglass, where the line crosses the main road from Newry to Armagh. Shortly after this we cross the impressive Craigmore viaduct, comprising 18 masonry arches and 140 feet high. Below this viaduct ran the Bessbrook - Newry Tramway, an electrified tramway that ran from 1885-1948. Its course can still be clearly seen. The present Newry Station is on the site of a GNR station that was known at various times as Monaghan Road, Newry Main Line and Bessbrook. It closed to passenger traffic in 1942. After a long campaign in Newry, it was re-opened in 1984. Since then it has provided significant levels of traffic, resulting in the construction of a substantial new station, opened in 2009. Since the 1984 re-opening the station buildings, such as they were, were on the Down side. The new buildings are on the Up side, where a substantial new car park has been provided. The GNR station had a small goods yard, on the Down side, with a substantial stone goods store behind the Down platform.

South of Newry the line continues to climb for another 4 miles. On the left we pass the striking Cloghogue Chapel, known to generations of railwaymen in the days of steam as Father Murphy's. The summit of the climb is in the deep rock cutting near MP 65½.

ADAVOYLE (MP 62½): The line falls steeply to Meigh Crossing - the village is seen to the right, with the bulk of Slieve Gullion brooding over it - then climbs briefly to the remote station at

Adavoyle. In the days of semaphore signalling there was a signal cabin here, on the Up side, and it used to be said (perhaps slightly maliciously) that the signal man accepted the appointment here because he didn't like people! The station closed to passengers in 1933. Possibly its only claim to fame was that Eamon de Valera, one of the 1916 rebels, later President of the Irish Republic, was deported from Northern Ireland here, having been arrested in Newry shortly after partition.

BORDER POST (MP 59½): As we run down the bank, a castle will be seen on the right, overlooking the line. This is Moyry Castle, an early 17th century construction, built to guard the 'Gap of the North' - the main route through the South Armagh mountains into Ulster. The bridge immediately beneath the Castle is Kilnasaggart - one of the favourite targets in the days when the Dublin line faced frequent terrorist attacks. Just beyond this a substantial, white painted post will be seen beside the line on the right. This marks the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. It was placed there, not for political reasons, but for the benefit of dining car staff on trains running non-stop between Belfast and Dublin. In the days when excise duty on wines and spirits was levied at different rates north and south of the border, such trains had two spirit lockers. Only one could be open at any time, and it was the duty of the steward to lock one and open the other as the train passed the border post!

MOUNTPLEASANT (MP 58): Another station that has had a variety of names, not least because it serves nowhere in particular. It was known as Plaster, Mountpleasant and Jonesborough and Mountpleasant during its short active life, which lasted from 1855-1887. There was a signal cabin, on the Up (left) side, which was open when required into the 1960s. Little remains of the station.

DUNDALK (CLARKE) (MP 54¼): The line drops down to the crossing of the Castletown River, with views on the left of the Cooley Mountains, and on the right of the hills of South Armagh. Dundalk was in many ways the centre of the old GNR, because here were situated the main locomotive works of the company. It was also an important junction. The station had four platforms, with two bay platforms at the south end of the main Island platform. On the platform will be seen a signal cabin. This is the old Dundalk Central Cabin, which was moved from its position south of the station at the time of the upgrading of the line in the mid-1990s. The present station staff has a great pride in the station, and there is an extensive display of old photographs in the main waiting room, charting the history of the railway in Dundalk. Like Lisburn, Dundalk retains one of the old steam age water tanks, in working order. Just south of the station the old Irish North line, to Clones, Enniskillen and Omagh diverged on the right. In recent years, Dundalk's main freight facility, known as Ardee Road Yard, was here. It is now used for storing redundant freight vehicles. The Irish North line closed to passengers in 1957, and to freight in 1960. Dundalk was also the starting point for the Dundalk, Newry and Greenore line. Trains for Greenore left the main station and ran out the Irish North line to Dundalk West, where the train reversed and ran along the northern side of the works, crossing the main line on a square crossing near MP 53¾. The DN&GR line closed in 1952.

Leaving Dundalk we pass the old GNR works on our right. Part of the site is still in industrial use, but there are also signs of dereliction in places. On the other side of the line was Dundalk loco shed. Trailing in on the left will be seen the remains of the spur to Dundalk Barrack Street which closed in 1995. Running south from Dundalk the new M1 motorway will be seen on the right. The castle seen on the far side of the motorway is Dunmahon Castle, an Anglo-Norman structure. There is a local legend that Cromwellian troops massacred 200 people here in 1842, although there appears to be no other evidence for this.

CASTLEBELLINGHAM (MP 47¼): The station was some considerable distance from the village it purported to serve. Despite this, it survived until 1978. Only the platforms now remain.

DROMIN JUNCTION (MP 43½): The village of Dromin lies about a mile away on the right - the steeple of Dromin Church can be clearly seen. The station was the junction for the line to Ardee, which trailed in from the right, with a branch platform at the station. The Ardee line lost its passenger service in 1934, but a freight service survived until 1975. The station here lost its passenger service in 1955. Only the platforms, and the water tank at the north end of the Down platform survive.

DUNLEER (MP 41¾): This is the only significant centre of population that the railway came remotely near between Dundalk and Drogheda and there has always been considerable bitterness locally that the station here is closed. Initially, passenger services were withdrawn in 1976, but such was the uproar that they were re-introduced in 1979. However, the station finally closed in 1984. The main buildings are on the Down (right) side, and are now in use as the local branch of the County Library. The larger building dates back to Dublin and Belfast Junction Railway days. There was a small goods yard, also on the Down side, just south of the station, and the signal cabin stood at the south end of the Up platform. Pressure continues on Irish Rail to re-open the station, but there does not appear to be any immediate prospect of this happening.

KELLYSTOWN (MP 37¼): The line climbs for some 4 miles to a summit at Kellystown. Here there was a tiny signal cabin on the left side that was opened only at times of heavy traffic when there was a need to split the Drogheda - Dunleer section. Although the cabin survived for a number of years it succumbed to an arson attack by vandals and was demolished. The track that allowed access to the cabin from the nearby road can still be seen.

From Kellystown the line drops down to the Boyne valley at Drogheda. On the left, as we approach Drogheda, will be seen the remains of the branch to the Boyne Road Cement factory. This last saw use during the upgrading of the line in the 1990s, when ballast trains were loaded here.

DROGHEDA (MCBRIDE) (MP 31¾): Approaching Drogheda, the line crosses the River Boyne on an impressive viaduct. The bridge is single track, but the original gauntlet arrangement was replaced by points in the 1990s. The town of Drogheda can be seen on the right as we cross the bridge. It has a long history, but its great claim to fame was the brutal events that took place here during and after the siege by Cromwell in 1649. In St Peter's Church in the town are the relics of St Oliver Plunkett, the last Catholic martyr in England. Today, Drogheda is the main servicing depot for Irish Rail's suburban diesel rafter fleet, which is prominent on the left at the station. The old loco shed still stands at the North end of the station, and the turntable from that shed has been preserved, sadly not in a position where it can be used. Just south of the station the Meath branch trails in from the right. This was, originally, the GNR branch to Oldcastle. It remains open as far as Navan for the Tara Mines trains. Passenger traffic ended in 1958. For many years the branch carried two other major traffic flows -cement from Platin and bauxite for the cement factory at Mungret, from Kingscourt. Both have now ended. A modern signal cabin stands in the fork between the two lines at the south end of the station. The steam age water column at the end of the Down platform still works, and is used on a regular basis by RPSI trains.

LAYTOWN (MP 27): The line drops down to near sea level at the seaside town of Laytown. The GNR wooden buildings, much modified, still stand on the Down platform. The signal cabin stood at the Drogheda end of the Up platform. It was known for many years as Laytown and Bettystown, and there was, for a short period after the opening of the line, a separate Bettystown station about a mile and half north of here. Immediately after passing Laytown we cross the delightfully named River Nanny. From here, the line runs close to the shore as far as Skerries.

MOSNEY (MP 25¾): Built to serve the adjacent Butlin's Holiday Camp, the station opened in 1948. There was only one platform, situated on a loop off the Down main line, but accessible from both directions. The modern outline signal cabin was sited about half way along the platform. After Butlins withdrew in 1982, the camp was run for a while by a local company but in 2000 it was sold to the Irish Government and is now used to house families seeking asylum in Ireland. The station was closed to passenger traffic in 2000, though the loop remains.

GORMANSTON (MP 24): The village of Gormanston is some distance away, and it is home to one of the more prestigious Irish schools. The station buildings, of single storey wooden construction, are situated on the Down right side) platform. There is a plaque on the gable end commemorating an incident here during the Irish War of Independence. In common with all the other stations on this section, the platforms have recently been extended to accommodate 8-car 29000 trains. Another recent development has been the provision of an extensive car park on the Down side. There was a goods loading bank, and a brick built store just north of the station on the Down side. Gormanston was the scene of a quite remarkable crash in 1974 when an empty push-pull set, propelled by B202, ran away from Connolly and eventually crashed into another empty train - a railcar - here. Sadly there was another train in the Up platform, and one of the trains derailed and crashed into it, killing two passengers.

BALBRIGGAN (MP 21¾): The bustling town of Balbriggan is on the right and the station is close to the town centre. The station buildings, which are the original Dublin and Drogheda buildings are also on the right. Balbriggan was the location of a major incident during the War of Independence when the Black and Tans set fire to much of the centre following the murder of one of their number. Leaving the station the line crosses above the harbour, which is on the left, on a masonry viaduct.

Between Balbriggan and the next surviving station at Skerries there used to be a private station at Ardgillan, serving the estate of the Taylor family.

SKERRIES (MP 18): On the Up (left) side approaching the station there is a long loop. Here, too, was a small goods yard. The original station buildings, including some rather ornate GNR canopies, are on the Up (left-hand) side. The signal cabin is at the north end of the Down platform. Skerries has grown substantially over the past few decades, and this growth is obvious from the train. Although the station is some distance from the town centre, it is convenient for much of the new housing development.

The line climbs away from the coast for two miles to a summit at MP 16 where there was a short-lived station, Baldungan, which closed as long ago as 1847, then drops down to sea level again. Just beyond Skerries is the site of recent major derailments when a Tara Mines train left the road, causing considerable damage, and causing extensive disruption to other services for a considerable time. Not far from here is the site of Skerries Golf Club Halt which closed in 1967.

RUSH AND LUSK (MP 14): As might be expected with a name like this, the station is situated between the two villages of Rush and Lusk. This is an area that is well within the greater Dublin commuting zone, and there has been considerable housing development, making this station a busy park and ride centre. The signal cabin was on the Down side, at the south end of the station. In 1963, this was the location of a potentially serious derailment, when a Belfast to Dublin train came off the road at speed, fortunately with no fatalities.

At the foot of the bank, the line crosses the first of two major sea inlets, at Rogerstown. On the right the inlet has been largely infilled with domestic refuse.

DONABATE (MP 11½): This once quiet backwater is now a thriving suburban centre, and the station, in common with the others on this line, has been extended to deal with longer trains.

The station buildings, dating back to Dublin and Drogheda Railway days, are on the left. In Great Northern days, some of the suburban services terminated here, and on Sundays it was the first station out of Dublin open on the main line, leading to the sale of a significant number of day returns to thirsty Dubliners who could then patronize the bar at Amiens Street as bona fide travellers.

Between Donabate and Malahide we cross the Broadmeadow Estuary. It was the collapse of part of the bridge over the main outlet to the sea that led to the postponement of this tour in October.

MALAHIDE (MP 9): This is the terminus of the DART service, and we now come under the wires. The station buildings, which are pure GNR, are on the Up (left-hand) side, and the signal cabin still stands on the Down platform. Close to the station on the right is Malahide Castle, where the Fry model railway is on show. The town itself has developed dramatically over the last few years, and the substantial marina, with its associated apartments, restaurants and hotels can be seen on the left. Just beyond Malahide there is a derelict quarry, and the sidings there are used to stable trains when necessary.

PORTMARNOCK (MP 6¾): The station here is some distance from the town of Portmarnock, but there has recently been a considerable amount of development close to the station, which is evident as we pass. Passenger facilities were always basic, but the station is now quite busy. The nearby golf course hosts some of the major events in the sport.

CLONGRIFFIN (MP 5½): Massive housing development here was permitted on condition that a new station be provided. This station was opened on Monday 26th April 2010, and will be served by over 60 trains a day.

HOWTH JUNCTION (MP 4¾): This is another major suburban station. The Howth branch, which opened two years after the mainline, in 1846, runs in on the left, with its own platforms at the station. The station buildings originally stood in the 'V' between the two lines, but were demolished some time ago. The original DART service ran from Bray to Howth, and its introduction created increasing congestion between here and Dublin. It is certainly rare for long distance trains to get an unchecked run into Dublin. The introduction of the Malahide DART service, along with the enhanced DMU service from Drogheda, has made the section of line from Howth Junction to Dublin Connolly one of the most congested on Irish Rail. Further service enhancements, such as the opening of Clongriffin and the introduction of an hourly Belfast service, would seem to indicate the need for additional track capacity.

KILBARRACK (MP 4½): This is a relatively modern station, opened in 1969 to serve a major housing development.

RAHENY (MP 3¾): One of the original stations, from the opening of the line. Raheny is now a busy, but much altered, station. The original station buildings still stand on the Up (left-hand) side, although they are no longer in railway use. The line here runs in a cutting, but modern housing development is clearly seen all around. There is a modern booking office at street level, opened with the DART service.

HARMONSTOWN (MP 3): This was the last station opened by the old GNR before the break-up of the system, opening in 1957. The platforms and waiting shelters were, originally, concrete. There have been two significant modernisations since the 1970s and recently the platforms have been lengthened to accommodate longer trains.

KILLESTER (MP 2¼): There was a short lived station here, opened by the Dublin and Drogheda Railway in 1845, but closed again in 1847. The GNR opened the present station in 1923. There was a brick built station building at road level, but this was replaced by a more

modern building with the introduction of the DART service. The original wooden waiting shelters have also been replaced. There was a signal cabin south of the station, but this was closed in the 1960s.

CLONTARF (MP 1³/₄): The station here had a chequered history. Opened with the line in 1844, it was closed again in 1852. However, the GNR reopened it in 1898, and it survived until 1956. Apart from some concrete supports nothing remains, although the GNR Station House still stands, at reed level.

CLONTARF ROAD (MP 1³/₄): The station here was opened in 1997. It is of modern design, and was built to serve both the Clontarf and Fairview areas. It is close to the DART depot at Fairview, originally built by the GNR as a railcar depot.

Between here and Dublin Connolly the line passes East Wall Junction, where the lines into the Dublin Harbour complex diverge. This is the route taken by the Tara Mines trains from Navan. The line also passes over the lines connecting the Midland and GS&WR lines with the Dublin docks. Passengers on the left of the train will see the new Docklands Station.

DUBLIN CONNOLLY: The station here was opened by the Dublin and Drogheda Railway in 1844, and was originally known as Amiens Street Station. In 1896, the station became a through station with the opening of the Loop Line, connecting it with the D&SER station at Westland Row (now Pearse). In 1906 a link was opened with the GS&WR at Islandbridge. Today, the terminal platforms deal with Belfast and Sligo line trains, as well as Northern and Midland line suburban services that start at Connolly. The through platforms are served by the DART trains as well as those Northern and Midland line suburban services that continue to Pearse, or further south. In addition, the Rosslare services operate from the through platforms. Given their scarcity elsewhere in Ireland, Connolly is blessed with two operational turntables, one on the far side of the through platforms, the other at the locomotive shed. There is a substantial train valeting shed beside Platform 1. Incidentally, the station name was changed in 1966, at the time of the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising, when 16 of CIÉ's principal stations were named after those who were executed at that time, one of whom was James Connolly.

DUBLIN CONNOLLY TO TRALEE

Our train reverses at Connolly. From Connolly to Islandbridge Junction mileposts are on the right-hand side measured from Islandbridge; from Islandbridge to Tralee they are on the left.

Our route diverges from the GN mainline at Ossory Road Junction and curves round to join the lines from North Wall at North Strand Road Junction. Shortly afterwards we pass the massive sports complex of Croke Park on the left. This is the home of the GAA, and has recently also hosted Ireland's home rugby matches.

DRUMCONDRA (MP 3³/₄): Another station with a chequered history. Originally opened with the line in 1901, it lasted only briefly, and was closed by 1910. Between 1969 and 1983 the station buildings housed the IRRS. It was reopened to passenger traffic by Irish Rail in 1998, and is now served by the Maynooth line trains. The booking hall has a magnificent picture of a CIÉ steam locomotive.

GLASNEVIN (MP 3): Opened in 1901, it too was closed by 1910. All that now remains is the station building, which can be seen at street level on the left-hand side.

GLASNEVIN JUNCTION (2³/₄): The junction here was remodelled by the GSR following the closure of Broadstone, to allow Midland line trains to run through to Westland Row. The line converging from the left is the former MGWR line to North Wall, and is the route taken by trains serving the new Docklands Station. The line diverging on the same side is the link to Liffey

Junction and the West, and is the route taken by Maynooth and Sligo line services. We take the 1877 GS&WR line which curves round to pass under the Royal Canal and Midland lines.

CABRA (MP 2): There was never a station here, but the GS&WR had a depot for cattle traffic. Following the end of that traffic, the site was redeveloped as a cement depot, with regular block workings from Drogheda. The site is now derelict.

After Cabra the line passes through the Phoenix Park tunnel which is 757 yards long. At the south end the line crosses the Liffey and passes Heuston Station's Platform 10. This platform was constructed to ease congestion at the main station during major reconstruction work there. It is now unused.

Mileposts are now measured from zero at Heuston.

ISLANDBRIDGE JUNCTION (MP $\frac{3}{4}$): We now join the former GS&WR main line. The Heuston station complex is on our left. The former valeting shed, where the Mark 3 coaches were cleaned, is now occupied by ROTEM and used for the new Intercity Railcars. Heading down the main line, we climb through 'The Gullet' emerging near Inchicore.

INCHICORE (MP $1\frac{1}{2}$): The famous works, occupying a 73 acre site, lie on the left along with the present running shed. Some of the remaining locomotives will be seen.

PARK WEST AND CHERRY ORCHARD (MP $3\frac{1}{2}$): Between Inchicore and Hazelhatch the track has recently been quadrupled, and the existing station at Cherry Orchard was demolished as part of this scheme. A new station was built nearby serving both the existing Cherry Orchard housing area and the new development at Park West. It was opened in July 2008 and has four platforms.

CLONDALKIN AND FONTHILL (MP $4\frac{3}{4}$): Similarly, the old station at Clondalkin, which had closed in 1947 and re-opened in 1994, was demolished and replaced by this new station. Opened in October 2008, it too has four platforms.

KISHOGUE (MP $5\frac{3}{4}$): This three platform station has been largely completed, but is not yet open.

ADAMSTOWN (MP $7\frac{1}{2}$): Another brand new station, built close to the site of the old Lucan South station, closed in 1947. These new stations were part of a development deal between the Irish Government and property developers. Extensive housing development has taken place along the line of the railway here and stations were built as part of the transport infrastructure.

HAZELHATCH (MP 10): The station here was originally opened in 1846, with the line, and closed by CIÉ in 1947. It was re-opened in 1994. The present Kildare Route project, quadrupling the tracks out of Dublin, ends here, and the station has been extensively rebuilt to provide two additional platforms.

STRAFFAN (MP 13): There was a station here until 1947. The gate giving access to the goods siding from the road still survives, but nothing of the station remains.

SALLINS (MP $17\frac{3}{4}$): There is a loop on the Up side at the Dublin end of the station. Sallins was one of the original stations on the line, and until 1947 it was the junction for passenger services to Tullow. That the remained open for freight until 1959. The original buildings are still extant on the right-hand side. There is also a steam age water tank. There was an engine shed here, where the RPSI used to base engines working from Dublin. The station was closed by CIÉ but reopened by IÉ in 1994. The old station name board used to state that this was the station for Clongowes Wood, the prestigious Jesuit College that was alma mater to some of the most

prominent Irish literary and political figures, including James Joyce. Also close by is Bodenstown, where the Irish Patriot, Wolfe Tone, is buried.

NEWBRIDGE (MP 25½): This is another original station, with the buildings on the left-hand side. In recent years a bay platform has been added on the Down side at the Dublin end, and most of the local services from Heuston now terminate here. For almost 70 years the station was shown in the timetable by its Irish name - Droichead Nua. Since the introduction of the Kildare line local service in 1994, however, it has been shown by its English name, Newbridge. There is heavy traffic here, and a number of mainline services stop. The old goods yard is now a large car park, which is frequently totally filled during the day.

CURRAGH MAIN LINE (MP 27½): This station is close to the Curragh Racecourse, and until 2008 was open on race days. However, Health and Safety considerations, arising from the low platforms, led to its closure. There was, for many years, a short spur, trailing in from the left which ended at a platform immediately behind the grandstand, and which was used for race specials. This closed in 1977.

KILDARE (MP 30): The station opened with the line in 1846. The original buildings are still in use, on the Down side. There are two platforms and a through road, used by non-stop trains. An engine shed stood on the left just off the end of the Down platform. This area now houses a track maintenance machine servicing depot, and sidings for infrastructure use. Kildare is an ancient settlement and the square tower of the 13th century St Brigid's Cathedral is clearly visible on the left along with the adjacent round tower.

CHERRYVILLE JUNCTION (MP 32½): This is the junction for the line to Kilkenny and Waterford, which diverges to the left. The signal cabal still stands, now used as a base for PW workers.

MONASTEREVAN (MP 36¾): Another station with a chequered history. Opened shortly after the line opened, it survived until 1976, when CIÉ closed it. After a long campaign, Irish Rail reopened the station in 2001. The old GS&WR buildings and low platforms still survive, but IÉ built a new station, with more modern facilities. Sadly, the rather sparse service offered has not attracted a large amount of traffic. Immediately after the station the line crosses the River Barrow on a seven span girder bridge. To the left can be seen the aqueduct that carves the Grand Canal across the same river.

PORTARLINGTON (MP 41¾): This station has just undergone a major rebuild as part of the scheme to raise the speed limit round the curve here. The platforms have been moved towards Dublin although the attractive original station buildings remain in place, on both sides of the track. There are Up and Down loops on the Dublin side, along with an engineer's siding behind the Up platform. Immediately beyond the road over bridge the line to Tullamore and Athlone diverges on the right. Originally built by the GS&WR as a branch serving Athlone, this is now the main route to the West, taken by Galway and Westport trains. The town of Portarlinton lies to the north and is quite a challenging walk from the station. One of its claims to fame is that Edward Carson, the Unionist leader at the time of the Home Rule crisis, was educated here.

STRABOE (MP 47¾): This remote place was the scene of an accident in December 1944, when the down Cork Night Mail collided with a stationary cattle special here. This was a time of horrendous fuel problems in Ireland, and the special had stopped to clean the fire.

PORTLAOISE (MP 51): The original buildings are still in use, the main ones being on the left-hand side. There is a loop on the Down side just beyond the station. Originally called Maryborough, this was a major railway centre. It was the junction for the direct line to Kilkenny via Abbeyleix and also for the branch to Mountmellick. Both lines closed in 1963, although

Mountmellick had lost its passenger service in 1947. Today Portlaoise has again emerged as a major railway centre. The main PW department yard on IÉ is on the left as we pass the station, and it is usual to find a couple of locos present here. A mile further, and also on the left, is the Laois Train Care Depot, where the latest ROTEM Intercity Railcars are maintained.

Near Clonkeen (MP 53¼) we cross Bord na Móna's Coolnamona 3' gauge system.

MOUNTRATH AND CASTLETOWN (MP 59½): As is suggested by the name this station was not particularly convenient to either place. It opened at the same time as the line, and was closed by CIÉ in 1976. The station buildings are on the right side. There were originally two sidings, one on each side of the line. During shunting the signalman used to refer rather pompously to the North and South yards!

BALLYBROPHY (MP 66½): This is purely a railway centre - the nearest significant centre of population is Rathdowney more than two miles away. The station has four platforms, with a bay on the Up side at the Dublin end, into which the trains from Limerick via Nenagh run, and the main Down platform being an island platform. The Nenagh line was, until 1967, the main line to Limerick, with through Dublin-Limerick trains reversing here. The station buildings are on the right.

LISDUFF (MP 72½): There was a station here until 1963, although all trace has disappeared. On the left is the Lisduff Quarry, which was CIÉ's main ballast quarry. The loading facilities are still active, but the quarry is now privately owned, and ballast for the railway is brought in by lorry.

TEMPLEMORE (MP 78¾): The survival of the station here is almost certainly due to the Garda Training College, which is situated in the town. The station buildings are on the right. Passengers on the right will see, from the church spire in the distance, that the station is some distance from the town!

At MP 81 we pass Loughmoe Castle, the 15th century home of the Purcell family. Some years ago an American tourist was heard to marvel that anyone would build such a thing so close to a railway line!

THURLES (MP 86¼): Strangely, the main buildings are on the Up, or right-hand side - that is, on the side of the station away from the town centre. A rather utilitarian concrete structure stands on the Down platform. There are three platforms, with a bay behind the Up platform which is not used, with loops on both sides at the Cork end of the station. On the left was the main goods store, still standing. There was a sizeable engine shed here on the Up side, which still stands, although not in railway use. Thurles was a junction station, with trains from Clonmel via Horse and Jockey coming here until the passenger service ended in 1963. It was also the site of one of the sugar processing factories built to handle home grown sugar beet. There was heavy rail borne traffic during the season until the factory closed in 1989.

Thurles Junction, where the Clonmel line diverged, was close to MP 87¾ and the course of the line can still be clearly seen.

GOOLD'S CROSS (MP 95): This was the junction for the line to Cashel which closed in 1954. The line diverged just beyond the over bridge. The original station buildings stand on the left side. The station was closed in 1976.

DUNDRUM (MP 99½): This very attractive little station is situated close to the centre of the village. The original buildings stand on the left-hand side. There was a small goods yard at the Cork end of the station on the Down side. It closed to passengers in 1976.

Approaching Limerick Junction we pass Kyle Crossing (MP 106¼) where the 1967 built direct curve to the Waterford-Limerick line diverges on the right. It was the construction of this that led to the downgrading of the Nenagh.

LIMERICK JUNCTION (MP 107): This station has place in Irish Railway history and folklore going back over 150 years. Approaching the station from Dublin we cross the Waterford - Limerick line on the flat, before arriving at the main platform. Originally, trains on the main line had to reverse into the platform, meaning that when north and southbound workings were in the station at the same time; the locomotives faced each other "like two Kilkenny Cats" as one writer put it. The layout was changed to allow trains to run into the platform directly. There were two bay platforms; that at the Cork end of the station was the Waterford Bay and that at the Dublin end the Limerick bay. Trains from Limerick to Waterford ran along a through line behind the main station buildings and then reversed into the bay platform. Departure involved following the same circuitous route, the engine pulling the coaches clear of the platform, then reversing back along the through line to Keane's Points on the Waterford Limerick line, where the train resumed its journey to Waterford. Over the last couple of years the track work at the east end of the station has been cleared, and all trains arrive and depart from either the main platform or the Limerick bay. Limerick Junction is the only location on the Cork line that is still controlled by semaphore signals. There are two signal boxes, one at the east end, just at the flat crossing and the other at the west end. Semaphore signals are expected to be replaced by the end of the present year. There was a large engine shed across the tracks from the main platform at the Dublin end, the remains of which still stand. There was also a rather primitive enginemens' lodge, used mainly during the beet season. It was, apparently, believed to be haunted.

Between Limerick Junction and Charleville there were three intermediate stations, now all closed.

EMLY (MP 113½): Emly was closed in 1962, and little remains, apart from the goods shed, which stand on the Down side just beyond the automatic barriers. The village which the station ostensibly served is some distance away to the north of the line.

KNOCKLONG (MP 117): The station here closed in 1977, but the remains are clearly visible from the train.

KILMALLOCK (MP 124): This is a sizeable village, with significant mediaeval remains. The station lies on its southern edge, and the original station buildings still stand, on the Up (right-hand) side, along with the low platforms and footbridge. The station closed in 1977.

Close to MP 128 the direct line from Limerick, via Croom, trailed in on the right. This line closed to passengers as long ago as 1934, but remained open for freight until 1967.

CHARLEVILLE (MP 129¼): The town of Charleville is about a mile away to the west, but the station here serves a wide catchment area, and remains busy. Like Newbridge, it appeared in timetables for many years in its Irish form, as Rath Luirc. Recently it has reverted to Charleville, with the Irish version shortened to An Rath. There are three platforms, with the Down platform being an island platform. The station buildings are on the right hand side. Charleville was the last operating station to retain the old low platforms, and steps were provided at strategic intervals to assist passengers joining and leaving trains. The platforms have now been raised. South of the station on the Up side there was a significant rail freight facility, now sadly disused. In steam days there was a small shed here, situated south of the station on the Down side. The RPSI is currently considering the use of the old freight depot here as a base for its preserved diesel locos.

BUTTEVANT (MP 137¼): The village of Buttevant is visible some distance away on the left-hand side. It has an association with one of the great classics of the horse racing calendar - the St Ledger. The original of this race was run between Buttevant Church and Doneraile Church, a plaque outside the latter commemorating the event. The station buildings still stand on the right side, and there is a manned signal box to manage the crossing gates. The station closed in 1977, but came to unwonted prominence some three years later when the 10:00 Dublin-Cork train, hauled by 075, derailed at speed, resulting in the deaths of 18 passengers.

From Buttevant the line climbs for some 4 miles to Two Pot House (MP 141) then falls to Mallow.

MALLOW (MP 145): Mallow is a substantial, and very ancient, settlement on the north bank of the Blackwater River. It remains an important railway centre, but it has seen its significance decline substantially. Just to the north of the station, where a steam breakdown crane is to be seen plinthed, the line from Waterford via Fermoy, closed in 1967, trailed in on the left. Here also stood an engine shed now demolished. The station itself, with some imposing buildings still in use, has three platforms, the main Up Platform being an island platform. The outer face of this is known as the Kerry Bay. Behind this lies the once busy goods yard where, until a few short years ago significant traffic was still being handled. The old Mallow South signal cabin still stands at the end of the Down platform.

KILLARNEY JUNCTION (MP 145¼): Trains leaving Mallow for the Kerry line travel on the Up line as far as Killarney Junction, which lies just south of the Blackwater viaduct. Originally the line was carried across the river on a graceful 10-arch bridge, but this became a victim of the Irish Civil War, when anti-treaty forces blew it up. It was quickly rebuilt and reopened to traffic in 1923.

Once on the branch the mileposts revert to zero, remaining on the left side.

WEBB'S MILL SIDING (MP ¼): An industrial location can be seen on the right. This was rail connected from 1863 - 1964. It was the scene of Ireland's first known railway picture - of a maliciously derailed goods train in 1884!

MALLOW BEET FACTORY SIDINGS (MP 1¼): The beet factory was on the right-hand side of the line. It was opened in 1934, as part of a campaign for national self-sufficiency. After generations of elderly steam engines had worked out their last days shunting here, the diesels took over, with a G class doing the honours just before rail traffic ended in 1974, when it was diverted to Thurles. Rail traffic returned to Mallow in 1989 and for the next decade and a half the winter months saw heavy traffic here. Sadly, sugar production ceased in 2006, and the last beet season saw the largest amount of beet carried by rail since the traffic commenced in the 1930s.

LOMBARDSTOWN (MP 5½): The substantial station buildings still stand here, although the station closed as long ago as 1963. This sleepy backwater came to prominence in 1912 when a return Killarney-Rosslare (for Paddington) excursion derailed. 99 passengers were injured, one later dying.

BANTEER (MP 10¾): This station is still open. It was the junction for the Newmarket branch, one of the lines rescued from closure in the 1950s after local pressure. The lightweight diesel locomotives (G class) were built to handle goods traffic on such lines. However, in common with most of the other branches, the Newmarket line succumbed in 1963, the last freight being handled by C221. The branch trains left from a bay platform, still to be seen. The remains of the turntable pit are also extant. The station building and signal cabin are on the right side.

RATHCOOL (MP 14¾): The station here closed in 1963, but the buildings can still be seen on the left-hand side.

MILLSTREET (MP 19): Millstreet village is some distance away to the south. The station has only one platform, but there is a passing loop. For a number of years the loop was actually a long siding, serving a not inconsiderable traffic in fertiliser, cement and, more recently, timber. The re-signalling of the line (and the disappearance of all freight) has allowed the loop to be reinstated. Millstreet attained international prominence when it hosted the Eurovision Song Contest in 1993, the station being completely refurbished in connection with this. In 1964 an Up goods train (unfitted) ran away down the 1:122 gradient into the station, headed by A54. The train derailed on the points into the loop, depositing a large quantity of chocolate crumb (one of the line's staple traffics at the time) on to the track, necessitating its closure for several days.

FRY-CADBURY SIDING (MP 24½): The factory which produced the chocolate crumb was here! Opened in 1948, it provided regular traffic for the line for many years, but this had ceased by the 1980s.

RATHMORE (MP 25½): Rathmore is probably the largest centre of population between Mallow and Killarney. The station buildings are on the left, with the old signal cabin at the Killarney end of the platform on the right. There is a passing loop.

QUAGMIRE VIADUCT (MP 31½): This carries the line over the River Flesk (yes, all those 201 names are real!). It proved very difficult to build because of the unstable nature of the ground below, and local folklore would have us believe that several houses have disappeared into the bog hereabouts.

HEADFORD JUNCTION (MP 32¾): This was the junction for the line that straggled off through remote and sparsely populated country to the little town of Kenmare. A scenically spectacular line, it succumbed in 1959. Little remains of the station, but the more eagle eyed may just catch sight of the remains of the signal cabin in the undergrowth on the right-hand side.

TRALEE JUNCTION (MP 39½): The layout at Killarney is interesting. The line to Tralee avoids Killarney station, striking off northwards at Tralee Junction. All trains serving Killarney run into the terminus there and then reverse back into the headshunt at Tralee Junction before heading up the hill towards Tralee. There was a check platform here, still visible, which allowed for the checking of tickets in the days before corridor connections. In 1976 the need for all trains to go into Killarney platform to get to Tralee was obviated by the construction of a direct crossover. The station and junction were formerly controlled by a signal cabin, still standing between the junction and Killarney.

KILLARNEY (MP 39¾): As already noted, this is a terminus. The main platform has an overall roof at the Killarney end, and there is a short bay platform at the Mallow end. The station buildings are on the left side, and directly outside the door is the Great Southern Hotel. The substantial goods yard was on the Up (right-hand) side. It has now almost totally disappeared under major property development. Killarney has been a major tourist attraction for a long time, and in the early years of the 20th century was one of the destinations for long-haul excursions from London. The GWR, which operated the Fishguard - Rosslare service, and was part owner of the Rosslare - Waterford line, ran these trains, and produced a very informative 136 page booklet in the "Through the Window" series which covers the Irish lines in some detail.

BALLAST PIT SIDING (MP 40¼): A half mile long siding ran to the Killarney Ballast Pit.

FITZGERALD PARK PLATFORM (MP 40½): The remains of a short platform can be seen on the left side. This served the nearby GAA grounds.

BALLYBRACK (MP 46¾): The station here, which served no very obvious centre of population, closed in 1963. Its only claim to fame seems to have been a fire on railcar 2617 working the 18:45 Dublin - Tralee in June 1957.

FARRANFORE (MP 50½): This was the junction for one of the lost gems of the Irish railway system, the Valentia Island branch. This ran through the desolate and inhospitable terrain of West Kerry to the town of Cahirciveen and across a bridge to Valentia, where the trans-Atlantic cables came ashore. The line closed in 1960, by which time it was in the hands of the C class diesels - C201 and C207 being on duty on the last day. The station buildings are on the right side, and the bay platform from which the Valentia Island trains ran can still be seen on the left. At the Killarney end of the station there was a long siding, known as the Co-operative siding, which received occasional wagonloads, mainly of fertiliser until near the end of Kerry line freight. Shortly after leaving Farranfore the line passes Kerry International Airport.

GORTATLEA (54¼): This was another junction station, this time for the short branch to Castleisland, which trailed in on the right-hand side. The Castleisland line was, like the Newmarket line, saved from total closure by local pressure in the 1950s. A G class was sent to operate a freight service. This service survived until 1977, latterly provided by the engine of the Mallow - Tralee goods. The station closed in 1963, and the old signal cabin still survives on the right-hand side.

TRALEE CASEMENT (MP 61½): Tralee was originally a through station, with the North Kerry line continuing on across the level crossing. There are two platforms, the main one, like Killarney, running under an overall roof. There is also a bay platform. There is a substantial yard, on the right, now devoid of any freight traffic. In this yard is one of the few remaining working turntables on Irish Rail. The substantial station buildings are on the left. The Tralee and Dingle narrow gauge line had sidings in what is now the station forecourt, and the line ran through the streets to the T&D station, about ¼ mile away. A short section of this line has been resurrected, running as far as Blennerville (which is claimed to be the most westerly railhead in Europe). This line has had a chequered recent history, with its steam locomotive, one of the original T&D engines No.5T, out of service. However, a service of sorts ran in summer 2009, with a small diesel locomotive, ex channel tunnel construction.