

THE

IRISH RAILFANS' NEWS

Volume 2

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EDITORIAL

In our January editorial attention was focussed on the divergence of opinions between the Dublin and Belfast Governments concerning the value of railways. Since then there have been startling developments affecting the position in Northern Ireland and the Government there have declared that a ruthless policy will be employed to denude the entire area of railways, except for the Belfast-Dublin and one or other of the Belfast-Derry lines.

The case put forward for this decision is that the railways are unremunerative. This is undoubtedly true, but is due, to no small extent, to the obligations incumbent on an efficient railway system which do not apply to their competitors. Railways, being common carriers, must be in a position to transport any traffic offered even though it is unremunerative. Similarly, they must maintain their lines and signalling systems - no mean task - consistent with a high standard of public safety. In the case of road hauliers, however, the position is reversed; they can select their traffic, they pay but a small tithe to cover the use of the roads, and have no onerous safety precautions to observe. Under these conditions one would expect that it would be policy to use road services to feed the railways. Not only is this not done, but road services engage in active competition, and it is even usual to find buses and trains of the same company running parallel services, a state of affairs which has been allowed to continue unchecked for the past two decades.

Another feature worthy of mention is that the railways in the North of Ireland have suffered from lack of capital expenditure on modernisation, which would not only reduce running costs but also attract greater traffic. As an example, a group of senior members of the GNR staff, who have formed a committee to deal with the problem created by the Government statement, have pointed out that dieselisation would save £500,000 in fuel costs alone. Notwithstanding this, the Northern Government appear, from Mr Maginess' speech on March 6, to have reached a decision to scrap the entire system, without even an effort, either on the lines mentioned or in any other way, to put the 'house in order'. Apparently, they are content without further trial to "scrap a great part of the railway system, without delay" and transfer their problems to the roads. Surely, this is not a satisfactory solution.

News Section

CIÉ DUBLIN AREA NEWS REPORT

Rail Rates Rise

On January 17, when announcing a 10% increase in rail fares and charges - which came into effect on February 1 - Mr Frank Lemass, General Manager of CIÉ, stated that but for the advent of diesel-electric locos the outlook for the future of railways in this country would be grim and current losses

would be even greater. Recent wage increases, higher coal prices and a rise in the cost of stores and other materials had already raised CIÉ losses in the current financial year to almost double that of last year. But, stated Mr Lemass, CIÉ were hopeful that the change to diesel traction would save the day although, unfortunately, it would be a number of years before they could achieve the complete changeover and the consequential economies in operation which would derive from it. "We can only hope in the interim period," he concluded, "to keep going as best we can."

Second Class Again

CIÉ have announced their intention of altering their present 'Third class' to 'Second class' on and from June 3 next, in conformity with the majority of European railways. Already, vehicles bearing the unfamiliar numeral '2' on their doors have appeared in traffic, including some of the 10'2" wide Park Royal coaches, four diesel railcar units, a number of steel coaches and even one or two six-wheelers. The new charges mentioned elsewhere will not be further increased as a result of the alteration of class.

Locomotive Letter-Number Classification

It now appears certain that CIÉ have decided to classify their locomotive stock by letter as well as number on the basis of one class letter for each 100 numbers. Thus it will be of interest to enumerate those classes which have emerged to date:

A1-A60	Metrovick	Diesel-Electric	Co-Co
B101-B112	Sulzer/Metrovick	Diesel-Electric	1B-B1
F501-F503	Walker/Gardener	Diesel-Mechanical	Narrow gauge
G601-G603	Deutz	Diesel Mechanical	Four-wheel

This leaves the letters C - E to be filled, probably by the Metrovick 550 hp Bo-Bos and the earlier existing diesel-electric locos.

First 'B' Arrives

On February 15, the first 'B' class diesel-electric loco for CIÉ arrived at North Wall, Dublin. It is a twelve axle 1B-B1 Sulzer motored loco built by the Birmingham Carriage & Wagon Company, with electrical equipment by Metrovick. It is believed that this loco - the first of twelve - is a development of the 1100 class mixed traffic locos obtained by CIÉ in 1950.

Naas Race Special

Special trains to Naas are run for each race meeting there, but that on March 3 presented a particularly spectacular sight as loco 85 piloted 198 - both immaculately clean - out of Kingsbridge with a 10 bogie train.

Diesel-Electric Locomotives

35 of the Metrovick diesel-electric locomotives have arrived at Inchicore at date of writing, March 27, and most of these are already in traffic. All regular passenger trains into and out of Kingsbridge are normally diesel operated, with the sole exception of the boat trains to and from Dun Laoghaire Pier. Of the diesel workings three services - the 08:45 and 16:45 to Cork and the 18:15 to Kilkenny - are railcars and the remainder are A class diesel-electric loco-hauled trains. The introduction of these units has been gradual. In addition to the workings mentioned in our last issue, they were brought into use on the Waterford (via Port Laoise) trains at the end of December and at the same time from Cork to Youghal on the 18:15. This latter is, as yet, the only train on the Youghal branch to be hauled by an A class loco. It is the loco of the 07:15 from Dublin and on its return from Youghal at 19:45 it works the 21:15 Night Mail to Dublin. On February 20 a railcar was superseded by an A class loco on the 09:00 to Waterford via Carlow, and its reverse working at 17:15. Also from this date the Thurles connections off the Dublin-Limerick trains were taken over by the DE locos in a roster interwoven with goods trains

between Dublin and Cork. On February 25, A13 paved the way for the conversion of the Dublin-Galway main line to diesel-electric traction when it left on the 20:05 Night Mail from Westland Row. On and from February 27 both the day and night mails on this line, together with the former railcar workings at 08:20 up and 15:35 down, have been handled by A class locos, and as from March 19, the 09:25 Dublin-Sligo and the 23:15 Galway goods also became DE hauled. These Midland workings necessitated the fitting of Manson staff-exchange apparatus to the locos on this section and a man was carried, between Dublin and Athlone only, to operate it, although elsewhere on the system the driver alone is in the cab. So far, these locos have caused no alteration to passenger schedules but certain goods trains have been changed.

Good Friday Trains

A commendable innovation by CIÉ was the provision of passenger trains on most of the main lines on Good Friday, March 30, for the first time since pre-war days. In addition to the normal night mails the following special service operated: Kingsbridge to Limerick at 10:00 (via Nenagh), to Cork (giving a connection at Mallow for Tralee) at 10:40, and to Waterford (via Carlow) at 11:00. At Limerick Junction the Dublin-Cork train connected with services in both directions between Limerick and Waterford. A special service ran on the Cork-Cobh-Youghal and Waterford-Tramore sections. A train was run from Westland Row to Galway at 12:15 giving connections at Mullingar to Sligo, Attymon to Loughrea, and connecting with a Limerick-Sligo train at Athenry. The Mullingar-Sligo train mentioned gave its own connections at Dromod to Belturbet and at Kilfree to Ballaghaderreen. The normal 14:30 Westland Row-Westport train ran, giving connections to Ballinrobe and Ballina. A train was provided from Westland Row to Wexford at 11:25, together with a two hourly service on each of the Dublin suburban lines. Corresponding return services also operated in all cases. It is notable to record that only the branches in the Midland section were provided with a service and indeed remarkable that passenger trains ran on such minor lines as the Ballaghaderreen branch and the Cavan & Leitrim, while the entire Cork Bandon and South Coast and the West Clare were left without any passenger service whatever. Generally, however, this new Good Friday service is a substantial and worthy improvement on that of previous years, when the passenger accommodation on the night mail trains afforded the public their only train service of the day. As always, normal services with suitable additions operated during the remainder of the Easter period.

Rugby International, February 25

On this date Ireland met Scotland at Lansdowne Road. A feature of this winter's internationals has been the increased capacity of the ground made possible by the use of the new concrete West Stand which spans the double track Amiens Street - Greystones line. Three long-distance excursions ran through to Lansdowne Road for this match. First of these to arrive was from Cork and passed Amiens Street at 13:31 with Loco 258 hauling the 6 bogie train. Both this and the Limerick special changed locos at Inchicore. At 13:42 GNR loco 210 brought 10 bogies in from Belfast and this was taken onwards by 377. The third special, from Limerick, comprised only four bogies and a 6-wheel van. This, headed by loco 261, stopped at Amiens Street for 10 minutes from 13:56. Three local specials ran from Amiens Street to Lansdowne Road in addition to the regular service. Locomotives on these workings included 89, 346, 461, 543, 586, 608 and 673. The Cork special returned behind 801, attached at Amiens Street on account of the axle load restriction on the loop line bridge. The Limerick train went back behind 301 which ran through from Westland Row.

Rugby International, March 10

On this date Ireland and Wales met at the same venue and similar trains ran. Due to late running of the Cork special, the Belfast train which had been hauled to Amiens street by GNR 209 passed Westland Row behind 396 with the usual 10 bogies at 14:05. The Cork train passed at 14:20 but this time comprised 10 bogies and van which 261 had taken over from 801 at Inchicore. At 14:32 the 5 bogies

and van Limerick special passed behind 264. Return trains were as on February 25. On the local services 591, running tender first, got into difficulties with the 13:43 special and 561 was attached as pilot at Westland Row. Other locos were 86, 89, 345, 461, 543, 670 and 673. An interesting working was the first local special from Lansdowne Road after the match which was headed by Woolwich 2-6-0 number 396 running tender foremost!

Rolling Stock Developments

The number of new steam-heating vans under construction at Inchicore to work with trains hauled by diesel-electric locomotives has been increased to 40 and at least 31 of these are already in service. The first of the Park Royal coaches designed for main line traffic has appeared. They are similar to the suburban coaches in external appearance and in interior seating, but differ in that toilet facilities are provided at each end of the coach in place of the longitudinal seating accommodation provided in the suburban version. The new main line 10'2" coaches are numbered from 1419 and all ten should be now be in service.

New Wagons Appear

The first batch of new four-wheel open wagons being built by CIÉ in Limerick have appeared in traffic. They are of all-metal construction with corrugated sides and ends and have a silver finish. An unusual feature is that the numbers - in the 12000 series - are painted in white on the black frames instead of on the bodywork.

Railcars on Suburban Service

Since our last issue three further railcar sets have been allocated to the Dublin suburban services. Consequently, the Harcourt Street-Bray line on which three sets are operating, now only boasts of two steam workings daily in each direction as compared with twenty diesel workings. Although three further sets are operating regular links on the Amiens Street - Greystones line, steam is still predominant on that route. The diesel railcars are now becoming available for the Dublin suburban services due to their gradual substitution by diesel electric locomotive hauled trains on the main lines.

Dun Laoghaire Improvements

On February 20, the Minister for Industry & Commerce announced that a grant from the National Development Fund, not exceeding £20,000, would be made towards the cost of improving Dun Laoghaire station. In the announcement he officially confirmed the report forecast in our last issue that the improvements would include the doubling of the railway line and the provision of a new platform and waiting accommodation on the up line through the station.

CIÉ PROVINCIAL NEWS REPORT

Castlemungret Branch

Having been granted power to acquire land compulsorily for the laying of this new three mile branch, CIÉ, in mid-February, invited tenders for "the construction of earthworks, culverts, drains and fencing for the Limerick Cement Factory Extension Railway". It now seems probable that construction of the line will commence very shortly.

West Clare Notes

Recent information from the West Clare section reports the withdrawal of all steam locomotives, except 5C, from Ennis. 8T and 2C have already been cut up in Inchicore, where 7C, 6C and 6T are awaiting a similar fate. The three diesel-mechanical locos are working the daily goods trains which now depart later than, but are scheduled for similar arrivals to, the former steam workings. The down train leaves at 11:25 following the 11:00 railcar, while the up goods loco first makes a special trip at

08:00 with a passenger coach - usually one of the railcar trailers - to Miltown Malbay. This is a special service for the workers of a factory there. The locomotive then returns to Kilrush to take the up goods at 10:15. An amendment must be made to the numbers quoted for the goods locos in our last issue, which should have shown them as F501-3. These conform to the new CIÉ letter code numbering explained in this issue.

Milk Producers Specials, 6/3/1956

Kingsbridge experienced one of the busiest weekdays of recent years on this date, when milk producers from many parts of the country staged a protest march in Dublin against the delay in the Milk Costings Inquiry. CIÉ ran 11 special trains into and out of the station along with a strengthened regular service. A17 left with the first return special at 18:00 for Tralee, between the 17:40 Limerick and 18:15 Kilkenny via Carlow - extended specially to Waterford. From 19:00 to 21:30 departures were scheduled at 15 minute intervals (except 20:30) with one extra at 20:10. At 19:03, therefore, 409 departed from platform 3 - known as the "Military Platform" - with 11 bogies for Tralee to be followed at 19:18 by 801, 10 bogies and 2 6-wheel vans for Cork from No.2 - the arrival platform. 401 next headed a similar load to Millstreet from No.3 at 19:34. The next departure was at 19:50 from platform No.1, and was an eight coach diesel railcar for Knocklong. 20 minutes after and 10 minutes late, 502 took a Mallow train, similar to the 19:15, out of No.2. A delay occurred in despatching the 20:10 which left behind 332 from No.3 at 20:31 with 6 bogies and van - a last-minute extra semi-fast for Cork. A27 left on the Night Mail 14 minutes later with a train of 7 bogies, 6 6-wheel vans, 2 wagons and the inevitable heating van. Passenger accommodation was limited to 4 bogies as the remainder included TPOs, mail and parcel vans. At 20:59, 14 minutes late, the first double-headed train left bound for Newcastle West via Limerick, from platform 2, from which all later trains also departed. 303 and 327 were the combination with 9 bogies and 3 6-wheel vans in tow. 21:15 and 21:38 saw two similar trains (10 bogies and heating van) depart for Limerick in charge of A3 and A11 respectively and at 21:55, 10 bogies and 2 6-wheel vans departed 25 minutes late behind 301 and 342 for destinations to Tipperary via Thurles and Clonmel - an unusual routing. Normal goods trains were held over until after the last of these specials had departed from Kingsbridge on this date.

On the Cork, Bandon & South Coast section a special ran to and from Bantry in connection with the specials from and into Cork. The train was notable in that it included a refreshment car. Only one special came from the Midland section of CIÉ and this two-coach train which returned behind 542 was poorly patronised in direct contrast with the Kingsbridge departures mentioned, all of which were full and some of which had hyper-capacity loads. It is possible that due to the advent of diesel-electric locomotives, such a high percentage of steam trains in one operation will not be seen again.

Cahir Accident

Following this accident on December 21, when a Waterford-Thurles beet special crashed through the Cahir viaduct into the River Suir, as reported in our last issue, the line through Cahir was obstructed and closed to all traffic. Passenger services between Waterford and Limerick were, however, maintained as a special bus, provided between Clonmel and Limerick Junction, suitably bridged the gap between the Waterford-Clonmel and Limerick Junction-Limerick sections of the line which operated rail services as two independent sections, while the Cahir viaduct was being repaired. Goods and perishable trains were enabled to run through by being diverted over the Clonmel-Thurles-Limerick Junction route. A number of special boat trains, run between Rosslare Harbour and Limerick during the Christmas holiday period, were also diverted via the Thurles-Clonmel branch. The damaged viaduct at Cahir was finally repaired by January 10, on which date normal through passenger and goods workings were restored over the Waterford-Limerick line. The Woolwich loco, No.375, involved in the accident was considered beyond repair and was cut up before removal from the River Suir on February 11.

GNR GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Tolka Bridge

Following a test with four locomotives on February 8, the new bridge to replace the “Drogheda Bridge” carrying the main line over the River Tolka, at East Wall Road, was opened to traffic on Sunday February 12, just over 14 months after the previous bridge was washed away in the floods of 8/12/1954. The first train to cross the modern three-span concrete structure was the down 10:15 Amiens Street-Belfast, formed by loco 206 and 8 bogie coaches. This train crossed the bridge on the up road and single line pilot working was in operation for most of the following week while the sections of Bailey Bridge alongside were being dismantled preparatory to their removal on Sunday February 19. The down road is now in use, having been adjusted to take a siding from the site of the new diesel shops in course of construction. As the speed restriction in force for the Bailey Bridge had been removed, the complete service into and out of Dublin was slightly re-timed with effect from February 7 to the 1954 schedules, trains being timed to arrive from 3-5 minutes earlier in Amiens Street.

No More “Third”

The recent decision by the majority of European railways to rename the two classes First and Second has been followed by the GNR and accordingly the present Third will become Second on June 3 next. Third class fares will operate for the new Second. Second class was provided on the former GNR(I) up to 31st December 1950, when it was discontinued as a measure of economy.

Fares Increase

On and from March 1, passenger fares and freight rates on the Board’s system have been raised by 10%.

Headboard For “Enterprise”

A new headboard has been made by the GNR for the diesel-operated “Enterprise” expresses between Dublin and Belfast. This brings these workings into line with the steam “Enterprise” train which has carried a headboard since its inception.

Cookstown Closure

The threat of discontinuance of all passenger services on this branch, which was forecast for December 31 last did not materialise until January 15. Prior to this there were 4 passenger trains in each direction on weekdays between Dungannon and Cookstown and one on Sundays. There were intermediate stations at Coalisland and Stewartstown, together with a number of private sidings although many of these were disused. With the withdrawal of passenger trains certain alterations have been made in the Londonderry-Belfast trains. No trains between Dungannon and Portadown have, however, been cancelled.

CDRJC

Strabane & Letterkenny

At the annual meeting of the Company in February the Chairman announced a “substantial decrease” in traffic in 1955. Grain traffic was down by 69% and cattle by 22%. Sheep carried fell from 798 to 31 compared with the previous year. It was stated that the line suffered to a large extent from competition by illegal road hauliers.

Dunkineely Derailment

A rather extraordinary happening befell the railcar working the 08:21 Killybegs-Donegal on February 6, when a bullock charged the car near Dunkineely, derailing the leading wheels. The 20 passengers

were unhurt and the breakdown gang had the line cleared within two hours. The fate of the bullock is unrecorded!

Strabane-Derry Line

This 3' gauge line - the last public narrow gauge railway in Northern Ireland (excluding about 4 miles of the CDRJC) - was closed to all traffic on 31st December 1954 and recently abandoned. Lifting of the track is now almost completed and only a short section out of Strabane still remains. Sleepers have been purchased by the CDRJC and the rails sold for scrap.

UTA GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Foreboding Future

In a parliamentary debate on the state of the UTA in Stormont, Belfast, on March 6, the Minister of Finance, Mr Brian Maginess, announced that his Government "will act swiftly, strongly and ruthlessly to deal with the transport crisis", and that "a great part of the railway system will be scrapped without delay". It was revealed in the course of the debate that the losses of the UTA for the current year were estimated to amount to about £1,000,000 - as compared with £396,050 last year - and that although the losses of the GNR for the year ended 30th September 1955 stood at little more than £600,000, it was feared that losses for the current year would also amount to £1,000,000. As the problem of financing these losses was becoming acute, Mr Maginess stated that his Government could not tolerate the continuation of this position. The matter had become urgent and vital and ruthless measures would have to be taken. The proposed steps were disclosed as follows: 1) No further diesels; 2) Closure of one of the two Belfast-Derry lines; 3) The probable return of road freight to private enterprise; 4) The reorganisation of the Northern Transport Tribunal's operations. These have aroused considerable dissatisfaction and numerous objections are being made by bodies in the affected areas.

Timetable

On and from Monday February 6, rail and road services have undergone certain alterations. Sunday services on the Portrush branch have been suspended but for the 16:35 from Belfast which still runs through to Portrush without calling at Portstewart and returns at 19:20. Weekday services to Larne have been completely revised and a new timetable is now in operation.

Fares Increase

From February 1 a 10% increase was imposed on passenger and freight charges. This increase was granted by the Transport Tribunal in the face of opposition from many quarters.

Feature Section

THE BANBRIDGE BRANCH OF THE GNR

As it now seems fairly certain that the branch line to Banbridge is unlikely to survive beyond a further month or two, the notes which follow may, perhaps, be found of interest.

The branch leaves the Dublin-Belfast main line at Knockmore Junction - 103½ miles from Dublin and 9½ miles from Belfast. Needless to remark, almost all traffic to and from the branch is bound for the latter city and the junction consequently faces in that direction. Indeed, the Company incorporated by Act of 4th June 1858 to construct the line bore the title "Banbridge, Lisburn & Belfast Railway" although it was both leased and worked by the Ulster Railway from its opening on 13th July 1863. At a

glance, it would appear that the Company took a long time in the construction of a line only 15 miles long, but, in fact, the reverse is true, as it involved considerable earthworks to keep the gradients within reasonable limits; there are few other lines in the country of comparable length which have such a continuous succession of long high embankments and narrow rocky cuttings.

From the divergence at Knockmore Junction the line swings left and at once becomes single track - a format retained throughout its length. A mere $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the junction, Newforge siding serves a factory on the up side and the points are worked by means of a ground frame unlocked by a key on the staff. From this point the line heads straight for Hillsborough (2 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles) climbing on an embankment almost all the way and passing at MP 1 $\frac{3}{4}$, just beyond the bridge over the Lagan Navigation, Newport - a short wooden unstaffed halt platform perched on the embankment on the up side. Hillsborough is an unusual station with but one down side platform which, near its centre, spans a secondary road by a narrow bridge, and is on an appreciable gradient. It is, however, a block post and crossing station as there is a loop on the up side beyond the Banbridge end of the platform.

As recently as the Summer of 1953 it was a regular practice to cross two passenger trains at this point, but with the reduction of passenger services it has not since been necessary. Two miles further on is Ballygowan Halt with an up-side platform on both sides of, and underneath, a stone overbridge, half way up a steep bank and on a sharp curve. A more difficult place from which to start a down train is scarcely imaginable, especially as the line here forsakes its approach embankment to enter a narrow curved cutting which 'assists' by preventing the sun from drying the rails after a shower. In another two miles Magherabeg Halt is reached and consists of an up platform on which an old coach body does duty as station building - a state of affairs which also exists at Ballygowan and Ashfield. Dromore (8 $\frac{1}{4}$ miles) is the second crossing place and is the only intermediate station on the branch to boast two platforms. It was, therefore, more generally favoured for crossing passenger trains than Hillsborough although, since the closure of the line beyond Banbridge, crossings have been reduced to two per day. Immediately on leaving the station the River Lagan is crossed by a high stone viaduct and the line then closely parallels the main Banbridge road for the two miles to Ashfield Halt. This is very similar in appearance to Magherabeg. Just beyond MP 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ on the down side is the station with the euphonious title of Mullafernaghan with but one platform and a short trailing siding behind. This is the only intermediate station on the branch, (other than Hillsborough and Dromore) firstly, to handle goods traffic and secondly, to possess a signal. The latter is quite an exhibit as it is a single lattice post bearing both up and down arms - a type not frequently found on the GNR. At MP 13 the summit level of the line is reached and it then drops to the present terminus of Banbridge.

Banbridge is now but a shadow of its former self, shorn of its through trains to Newcastle and of its frequent local service to Scarva. It has two platforms with a bay behind the down one to serve Scarva trains although this involved their crossing the line from Lisburn. Behind the down platform is a large goods yard while on the opposite side is a small two road loco shed, now out of use. There is also a signal cabin situated between the converging lines from Knockmore and Scarva to control the station. Prior to the Newcastle line closure a second cabin at the other end was in use.

Services on the line were reduced gradually from thirteen in each direction daily in the early years of the Second World War to eleven in 1946. This service was more or less maintained until the drastic cuts imposed in March 1954 reduced it to the present level of 8 trains only, although then, three of these continued to Newcastle. The reduction of services was made in face of ever increasing road competition which now provides no less than 16 services per day between Banbridge and Belfast. This has done much to detract from a line that existed principally by reason of its heavy passenger traffic, as, even yet, its morning and evening business trains habitually run to four bogie coaches. Motive power on the line is varied although the UG class 0-6-0s are to be seen most frequently on such workings as are not handled by the AEC diesel railcar sets which first made their appearance on the branch in

November 1950 and are now in use on 5 trains per day.

This then is the railway which the GNR intend to close to all traffic - probably during the next month or so. Its closure will be symbolic in that it will leave County Down rail-less (except for a mile or two of the Warrenpoint branch and the suburban Belfast-Bangor line) - a blank space on the railway map of Ireland. One is tempted to wonder whether, in view of recent pronouncements regarding the future of railways in the North, the fate of County Down will shortly be that of the whole Six Counties or whether a more logical and reasoned attitude will be taken.

Before concluding, may we suggest that any proposed visit to the Banbridge branch should not be put on the 'long finger, as it may happen that, shortly, one will be unable to pass this way again?