

THE

IRISH RAILFANS' NEWS

Volume 2

July 1956

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EDITORIAL

The first day of June was one of considerable moment in the annals of Irish Railways and of the Banteer-Kanturk-Newmarket line in particular, as that morning saw the first regular train service on the branch for nine years. When, on the 27th January 1947, CIÉ announced the "Temporary closure" of the line and when six years later no move had been made to end that state of affairs there were many who believed that it would never resound again to the rail beats of laden wagons save only for the Kanturk fair specials. This belief was further strengthened when, on 18th October 1952, CIÉ applied to the Transport Tribunal for a release from their obligation to provide regular goods and passenger services on the line. Almost a year elapsed. On 25th September 1953 an additional application was lodged covering special passenger trains and on 2nd February 1954 the Tribunal held a public sitting in Kanturk to hear these applications and the objections thereto. At this meeting the Parish Councils and other local people unleashed a vigorous opposition to the CIÉ closure proposals and this was in no small way responsible for the issue of only a conditional exemption order by the Transport Tribunal on 20th January 1955 which, although allowing closure to regular passenger and goods services, did not exempt CIÉ from the operation of cattle specials for fairs. Simultaneously with this announcement CIÉ declared their intention of running an experimental regular goods service on the branch as it would in any event require to be fully maintained for the fair specials. Further developments - the order of the lightweight diesel units, the reopening and the subsequent rejoicing - are current news items but they are not by any means the end as the branch is now itself on trial in its day to day traffic. We look expectantly forward to reporting its final self-justification as in that event alone lies the ultimate victory.

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In this issue of "The Irish Railfans' News" our feature article is devoted to the County Donegal Railways and for it we are indebted to Mr S.J. Carse. As the future of the system is in the same "melting pot" as is much of the GNR, perhaps it will not be inopportune to recommend those of our readers who have not visited the line or have allowed it to age too long in memory, to pay it a visit as we feel sure they will be made cordially welcome and will find their journey a rewarding experience.

News Section

CIÉ DUBLIN AREA NEWS REPORT

Sunday Trains To Bray

A wave of protest arose in Bray early in May following the CIÉ announcement that Sunday trains on the Dublin Suburban lines would operate only on Whit Sunday, May 21, and from July 1 to August 26

inclusive this year. In previous years the period of operation was from Whit to mid-September without a break. Despite numerous representations from local organisations calling for a train service in June, CIÉ maintained that their buses could cope satisfactorily with any traffic offering. This contention was disproved most emphatically on Sunday June 10, when fine weather attracted Dubliners to the seaside and, although it is estimated that 70 buses per hour left the city for the Dun Laoghaire direction and a further 30 per hour for Bray, large queues formed faster than they could be got away. No doubt as a result of the chaotic conditions, CIÉ announced that the train service would commence from the following Sunday, June 17. This, perhaps, was the most striking demonstration of the inability of road services to cater for heavy passenger movements.

Dun Laoghaire Improvements

Work commenced on June 14 on the first stage of the improvement scheme at Dun Laoghaire station referred to in our last issue. It is now expected that the new up platform will be completed and the line through the station doubled before summer 1957.

Summer Timetable

Although very few new services have been introduced, certain trains have been accelerated in the summer timetable which became effective as from June 25. In general, there is little difference from the timetable in operation last summer. The usual extra trains have been added, all observing virtually the same schedules as they did in previous years. The principal accelerations to be noted are in main line services between Dublin and Cork, Galway, Wexford and Westport. On the Dublin-Cork route some of the principal weekday trains have been speeded up by as much as 25 minutes, while the running time of both up and down Sunday trains has been cut by forty minutes. 40 minutes and 20 minutes respectively have also been cut off the schedules of the main trains from Dublin to Westport and Galway while the 09:10 from Westland Row is the first regular train to travel non-stop to beyond Mullingar - its first halt (for crossing purposes only) being Castletown. The 10:00 Westland Row to Wexford and Rosslare has at last been accelerated, and by as much as 29 minutes, but there is no improvement in the Sunday schedules on this route. Of the new services introduced, the most notable is the extension of the additional Limerick-Waterford summer train to Rosslare Harbour providing regular through trains between Limerick and the Fishguard steamer for the first time since pre-war days. Another innovation is the provision of passenger accommodation on Saturday afternoons only on both the goods trains from Waterford to Ballycullane and to New Ross - commendable, although unusual, market services. It was gratifying to note that the summer timetable this year was given its deserved publicity by CIÉ through press advertisements and that the general public was clearly made aware of the faster diesel hauled trains and the refreshment facilities provided.

Dieselisation Progress

At the date of writing - June 30 - 53 of the Co-Co type DE locomotives have arrived in Inchicore and of these about 48 are available for service. As reported in our last issue, all services from Kingsbridge (except the Dun Laoghaire Pier trains) and all passenger trains on the Midland section are diesel operated. Since then, diesel-electric has, during May, superseded steam motive power on the Radio Train and on all regular services, both passenger and goods, on the Eastern Section, between Dublin, Wexford and Rosslare Harbour except only the mid-day workings each way which are handled by a railcar set. Diesel-electrics have also been assigned to the Cork-Rosslare services since May 21. All regular goods services on the Midland Section, from Dublin to Galway, Sligo and Westport, are now worked by the A class DE locos, as are all regular goods trains from Dublin to Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Athlone. The AEC railcars, displaced by this further allocation of DE locos to work main line passenger trains, have themselves in turn replaced the steam passenger workings on the Portarlington-Athlone, Limerick-Tralee and Limerick-Waterford lines. On the two latter routes the services under the present arrangements are being maintained by only two railcars, one-based at Tralee

- which works to Limerick in the morning thence to Waterford in the afternoon, and the other based in Waterford working the same links in the opposite direction. Railcars still, however, work a few of the lighter services on the main lines from Dublin to Cork, Tralee, Waterford (via Carlow) Rosslare Harbour, Galway and Sligo. No additional railcar sets, further to those mentioned in our last issue, have yet been noted on the Dublin Suburban services but on Sundays since June 17 some of the trains were hauled by DE locos - the first to appear on local Dublin trains.

Diesel Shunters

Work is progressing in Inchicore on the construction of 19 diesel-hydraulic 450 hp shunting locos for general use throughout the CIÉ system. The mechanical components for these are being supplied by the German firm of Messrs Maybach AG.

Locomotive Withdrawals

Since publication of the comprehensive list of CIÉ locomotives withdrawn for scrapping in our July 1955 issue, 52 further locos have been taken out of traffic. The list showing the number and class of each loco is as follows:

1 D17	192 J15	375 K1	544 D6
9 D17	202 J11	382 K1	545 D5
55 D17	219 J11	389 K1	548 D5
59 D17	243 J15	390 K1	553 J26
63 D14	317 C7	398 K1a	555 J26
95 D14	323 D2	405 B2	556 J26
120 J15	333 D4	407 B2	584 J18
122 J15	334 D4	423 G1	614 J10
146 J15	335 D4	443 J8	643 J5
147 J15	337 D4	456 C2	645 J5
160 J15	340 D4	458 C3	662 G2
163 J15	352 J9	500 B1	702 J15a
175 J15	360 K3	501 B1	850 P1

Although many of the above locomotives have already been scrapped there are, at the time of writing, eight of those mentioned still lying at Sallins awaiting breaking up. The withdrawal of 375 is as a result of the Cahir accident in December 1955 and that of 122 as a result of the Kildare collision in June, as it appears quite beyond repair. A14 and A44 are also out of traffic due to their being involved in the Mallow and Kilfree Junction accidents, respectively.

B Class DE Locos

Since the arrival of the first of the B class DE locos, reported in our last issue, two further units have been delivered. It has been learned that the centre - not the leading - axle of each bogie is unpowered and their correct description is therefore A1A-A1A and not 1B-B1 as stated. They are twelve-wheel, six-axle units, and so far their operations have been confined to the Dublin-Cork main line.

Signals

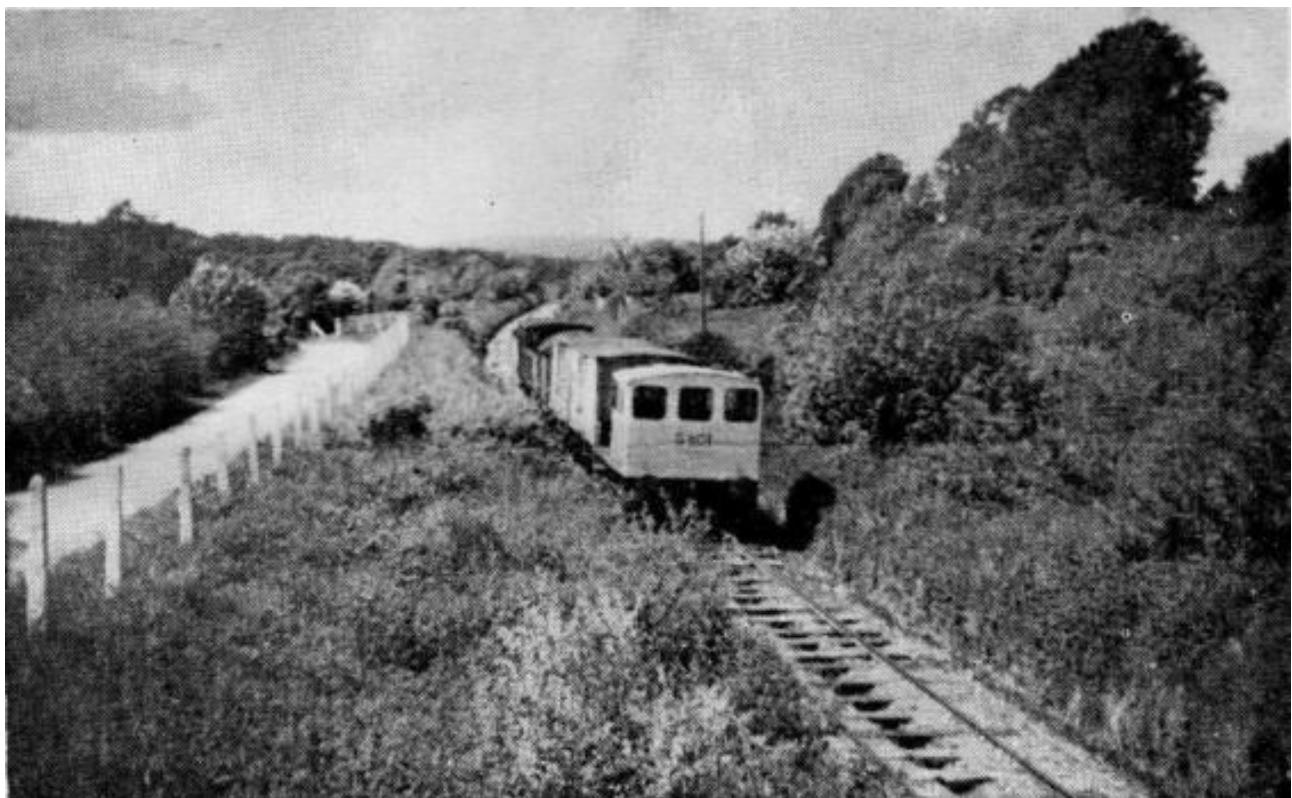
A new type of plastic signal arm has been reported in use at Dun Laoghaire and also at Inchicore. It embodies a white background which moves with the arm for ease of sighting.

CIÉ PROVINCIAL NEWS REPORT

Newmarket Branch Reopened

With ceremony reminiscent of the railway openings of the Nineteenth Century, the 8¾ mile Co. Cork

branch line from Banteer to Newmarket was experimentally reopened to goods traffic on Friday June 1, having been closed to all traffic, except a monthly livestock special, since January 1947. The reopening marked the implementation of CIÉ's decision to provide an experimental goods service operated by a lightweight diesel locomotive to ascertain whether it would be economically practicable to maintain freight services on this or on other closed branches. Quite an encouraging start heralded the inauguration of the Newmarket service for although only one week's notice of its commencement was given to local traders the first train from Banteer on June 1 comprised seven wagons of merchandise, five for Kanturk and two for Newmarket. The train was hauled by loco G601, the first of the three new Deutz four-wheel, diesel-hydraulic (not diesel-mechanical) locos to go into service. Having made its single scheduled run up and down the branch, the loco returned light to Kanturk in the evening where it was officially welcomed by the local dignitaries and prominent business men. The reopening ceremonies were fittingly concluded with a dinner in the Olympic Hotel, Kanturk, given by the Kanturk and Newmarket Parish Councils to celebrate the triumph of their nine years' agitation to save the local line from extinction. The branch has, since reopening, been provided with a daily goods service in each direction, leaving Banteer at 10:00 and returning from Newmarket at 15:00. The service is being worked by loco G601, and from reports received it appears that traffic offering so far has proved quite promising. It has been stated by CIÉ that the future of their remaining closed branches depends on the success achieved in these experimental operations on the Banteer-Newmarket line.



G601 on the 15:00 goods from Newmarket at Allensbridge in June.

Cahir Accident Report

The report into the cause of the accident at Cahir station on December 21 last was published on May 29. The Government Inspecting Officer of Railways reported that he considered the accident was caused by the train being out of control approaching and passing Cahir station, as action to stop it did not appear to have been initiated by the driver until it was too late to be effective. He also considered that the guard was not keeping a good look out and that he was slow in appreciating the situation and

applying his brake fully although such action would probably have had little effect on the outcome. While the signalling at Cahir could not, in the circumstances, be regarded as a cause of the accident, the Government Inspector thought that its operation on the occasion was irregular. For convenience the down night mail to Waterford had been brought into the up loop and the ill-fated beet special took the down loop. Despite this fact the drivers of both trains were presented with the same signal indications as if they were to run into the normal loops on the night of the crash. This action is apparently common practice but the Inspector considered that many undesirable effects flow from it. Consequently, he recommended that the practice should not be continued unless additional "double-way" signalling be installed to control train movements. Copies of the report can be obtained from the Government Publications Sale Office, GPO Arcade, Dublin @ 2/3^d per copy, post free.

West Clare Filming

Kilkee station - renamed 'Dunfail' for the occasion - was the location used for one 'leaf' of the film "Three Leaves of a Shamrock". Star of the production was loco 5C - newly painted black with silver and yellow lining - and named "Viceroy" - which, with carriages 7 and 27 (renumbered 145 and 178) and a goods wagon fitted as a brake van formed a train on the "Ballyscran & Dunfail Railway" for the occasion. 5C is the last steam loco to remain on the West Clare Section and although in steam for the filming was towed to Kilkee behind one of the new diesel mechanical locos.

Crash At Kilfree

Shortly after 06:00 on June 15 the 22:10 North Wall-Sligo goods train failed to stop on entering Kilfree Junction and crashed through a buffer stop wrecking the DE loco A44, together with 12 wagons. Although the force of the impact ripped the body off the locomotive and sent it hurtling in a triple somersault down a 25' embankment, the driver in the cab had a remarkable escape with only minor injuries. The wrecked loco and wagons blocked the main Dublin-Sligo line until it was finally cleared of debris in the early hours of June 16. During this period rail services from Dublin ran only to Kilfree whence substitute road transport operated for the remaining 24 miles to Sligo. Among the goods carried in the ill-fated train were drums of carbide and 40 cases of gelignite which, fortunately, did not explode after the collision. It seems remarkable that this mishap was the third occasion since December 21 last on which a diesel-electric hauled goods train failed to stop on entering a station - the previous examples being at Mallow on the above date and at Portarlington on May 26. In the latter case, however, the Thurles-Dublin goods train involved succeeded in stopping in Monasterevan without causing any damage.

Collision At Kildare

At 19:30 on June 22 a J15 class loco - No.122 - was wrecked when involved in a collision with a trial train of empty coaches hauled by loco 328 at Kildare station. 122 was shunting from the up platform to the up main line at the Dublin end of the station when it was struck almost broadside on by the trial train which was travelling along the latter line. The shunting loco was derailed and flung against the embankment by the force of the impact and appears damaged beyond repair. Loco 328 and the three leading six-wheel coaches of the trial train were also damaged and single line working was in operation on the down line between Curragh and Kildare until the debris could be cleared away.

Pioneer Rally At Cork

The greatest convergence of excursion trains in one day on any CIÉ station for many years took place on Sunday, June 24, on the occasion of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association's Rally in Cork. 28 special trains from various centres ran into Cork - 26 into Glanmire Road and 2 into Albert Quay. All of those to Glanmire Road were worked by A class DE locos - except for two specials which were railcars - and as they arrived continuously from 07:40 to 13:15 at about 12 minute intervals it was essential that adequate siding accommodation be made available near the station to ensure rapid

clearance of rolling stock from the arrival platform in readiness for following specials. To provide for this the Cork-Cobh Sunday rail service was suspended and replaced by a bus service for the day and both up and down lines between Cork and Cobh were utilised as long sidings for the servicing and storage of trains. It may be accredited to CIÉ that their arrangements for handling such heavy traffic in so short a period proved remarkably successful. Most specials were from 10 to 20 minutes early on arrival and only one was late - by four minutes. Among the more interesting routes taken by the specials are those from the following centres: Carrick-on-Shannon via Dublin (with connection ex Ballinamore); Sligo via Athenry; Ardfert via Patrickswell and Croom; Belfast (GN stock); and Tullow.

LATE NEWS

Crisis On CIÉ

In the Dáil on June 26 the Minister for Industry & Commerce announced that if wages and costs had remained stable CIÉ would have broken even in 3/4 years, but that as it was a greatly increased loss was likely due to the failure to retain the pre-1955 traffic since the recent increase in rates and fares. "Therefore," said Mr Norton, "reassessment is necessary to see whether it will be possible to maintain the present policy regarding transport and whether any changes are called for in the light of the very decided swing away from the railways."

GNR GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Railway Position For Review

Following the inquiries held by the Dublin and Belfast Transport Tribunals in both cities, regarding the future of certain sections of the GNR, the Belfast Government met on June 19 to discuss the problem. The result of this was an announcement by the Minister of Commerce that a White Paper on public transport in the area will be issued during the Autumn. No further action is to be taken regarding the railway position until then, when the whole situation is to be reviewed and the proposal to close one of the main lines from Belfast to Derry - either the GNR via Omagh or the UTA via Coleraine - will be discussed. While no independent figures are available at present for the Portadown-Derry section it was announced that traffic was declining. It was also stated that before any closure decisions are reached each section will be carefully reviewed on its own merits and on the effect it would have on the Belfast-Portadown line were it closed. A private member's Bill to return road freight to private hauliers was withdrawn and will be presented for discussion also in the Autumn.

Trial Trip

As part of the enquiries into the proposed closure of one line to Derry a party of senior members of the UTA and GNR travelled by special train over the GNR line from Belfast. The journey was made on May 29 in a three-coach diesel railcar which left Belfast at 10:45 and, stopping at Portadown, Dungannon, Omagh and Strabane, arrived in Derry at 13:05. It left again at 13:55 and, running non-stop, reached Belfast at 16:05. The fastest present timing of an ordinary train on this line is 2 hours 55 minutes.

Derriaghy Halt

Having been closed since May 1953, the halt at Derriaghy, situated between Dunmurry and Lambeg on the Belfast-Lisburn section of the Dublin-Belfast main line, was reopened to traffic on May 1. From reports so far received it seems that there is a considerable traffic being handled as the halt is close to a new and extensive housing estate.

Summer Timetable

In contrast with recent years the summer timetable came into operation this year three weeks earlier

than usual, on June 2. Few alterations are noticeable apart from a somewhat improved service on the Belfast Suburban section due, in part, to the Banbridge branch closure. Seasonal Sunday services will operate on the Howth and Newry-Warrenpoint lines although the latter did not reach the full frequency of 12 trains until June 24. On this latter date also the Sunday 12:00 Belfast-Dublin commenced and this year calls additionally at Laytown, Balbriggan and Skerries. This train returns at 19:00. Weekday services on all lines closely follow last year's pattern.

Banbridge Closure

The closure to all traffic of the line from Knockmore Junction to Banbridge took place on April 29, although goods trains will continue to use the mile from the junction to Newforge siding. Since the closure a train has run to collect the station seats and name boards on the section, and this was followed on Whit Monday by an IRRS excursion from Belfast worked by a three-car diesel, set 603/95/604. We understand that a train ran on May 23 as far as Newcastle to collect material from the B&CDR. It is learned that, contrary to the article in our April issue, Banbridge shed remained in use, housing two locos nightly up to the closure.

Hill of Howth Tramway

Two years have passed since the closure threat and not only are full services still in operation but are carrying a very healthy summer traffic this year so far. All cars other than Nos. 5 and 8 are in service and have been newly painted, except Nos. 9 and 10, which still retain the old teak livery. The two cars out of service are in need of renewal of certain bodywork and it is not known whether they will receive this attention due to the expense involved. A number of the standards have been replaced and the remainder painted in the usual green.

Oldcastle Branch

With the advent of the summer timetable even more of the working of this branch has been delegated to Railcar A. This is brought about by substituting it for the AEC diesel railcar which formerly operated the 19:20 from Drogheda to Kells and back. Thus, all services, with the exception of the morning passenger from and to Oldcastle, are handled by this car.

CDRJC

Railcar Repair

Railcar 19 has just returned to traffic after a visit to the Stranorlar works where it underwent a complete overhaul and was repainted throughout. The cream and red striped device which formerly adorned the front of this car has, however, now been replaced by a cream 'V' motif similar to that on car 20.

Sunday Excursions

There are no regular Sunday trains on the CDRJC, except a Church working between Ballyshannon and Rossnowlagh. During the summer months occasional excursions operate between Strabane and Rossnowlagh and back. Certain other excursions are run forming part of the GNR "Hills of Donegal" tour from Belfast and this year eight such are scheduled. Passengers travel by GNR to Strabane thence to Ballyshannon via the CDR and return by the GNR branch from Bundoran after a break at the latter point. The CDRJC work these services by steam or by two railcars coupled, according to traffic requirements.

SL&NCR

Goods Traffic

The recent decision to increase the goods and livestock rates on the SL&NCR appears to have had a

damaging effect on traffic as, of recent weeks, only one goods train each way per day is operating as a rule. This entails the working back to Enniskillen of the 13:45 down railbus which now also works the 19:20 down - formerly a mixed steam train.

CLOSED BRANCHES OF THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY

When the Great Northern Railway Board took over the system formerly belonging to the Great Northern Railway (Ireland) in September 1953, it received among its assets a system containing five branch lines without a regular passenger service. Two of these branches are formed by the remaining portions of former connecting lines, as the Armagh-Keady once continued to the Irish North Western at Castleblayney and the Goraghwood-Markethill extended to Armagh. These links had been severed in 1924 and 1933, respectively. Since 1932 the GNR(I) had countered the threat of road competition by the use of railcars and railbuses on certain branch lines but, far from extending this policy, the Board have, since taking over, withdrawn passenger traffic from a further four lines.

Hence it remains that the GNR today has 9 “closed” branches in its railway network, all of which are intact and as the future of the remaining sections in Northern Ireland now hangs in the balance it is, perhaps, a suitable time to outline the present position on these branch lines in the notes following:

(1) Dromin Junction-Ardee (4½ miles)

Closed to regular passenger traffic in June 1934. Has since retained a daily goods from Drogheda. A new siding recently laid to a factory in Ardee augurs well although Dromin was closed to all traffic on 31/1/1955. Occasional passenger specials have run for sporting events.

(2) Scarva-Banbridge (6¾ miles)

Closed to all traffic on May 1, 1955. No trains have operated since.

(3) Knockmore Junction-Banbridge (15 miles)

Closed to all traffic on 30th April 1956.

(4) Inniskeen-Carrickmacross (6¾ miles)

Closed to regular passenger traffic in April 1947. Retains daily goods from Dundalk which handles some gypsum traffic from the mines near Kingscourt. Occasional passenger specials have run for sporting events and coaches have been run from this branch to connect with trains to Pettigo (for Lough Derg pilgrimage) and Bundoran.

(5) Banbridge-Castlewellan (18½ miles)

This branch, closed to all traffic on 1st May 1955, was better known as the Newcastle branch, as GNR trains continued over the metals of the UTA (ex BCDR) to that resort. The 4½ mile UTA line was closed at the same time. Since then three passenger specials ran to Newcastle to cater for parties whose arrangements had been disrupted by a go-slow strike of UTA road services in June-July 1955. No other trains have operated since.

(6) Dungannon-Cookstown (14 miles)

Closed to regular passenger trains on 15th January 1956. Still retains a daily goods to Cookstown, a Monday-Friday goods to Stewartstown (8½ miles) and a daily goods to Coalisland (5 miles) which is extended to Cookstown on Mondays and Fridays. Extra goods and livestock specials run if required.

(7) Shantonagh Junction-Cootehill (7¾ miles)

Closed to all regular traffic in April 1947. Occasional specials have run since with stock from the monthly fair. The Board has applied for powers to close the line even to special traffic. Passenger specials have not run for some years.

(8) Armagh-Keady (8 miles)

Closed to passenger traffic in February 1932, since when a daily goods service has operated. As far as can be traced only one passenger train has operated in recent years, and it was an IRRS special on 19th September 1953. Loco was No.147.

(9) Goraghwood-Markethill (8¾ miles)

Closed to passenger and goods traffic in February 1933. Monthly livestock specials operated until April 1955 since when no trains have run.

Mention must also be made of the lines from Dundalk (12¾ miles) and Newry (14 miles) to Greenore, which were worked by the GNR for the Dundalk, Newry & Greenore Railway since 1933. This line was in turn controlled by the L&NWR, LM&SR and British Railways. Train services, which ran in connection with the GNR main line, ceased on 31st December 1951 when the Greenore-Holyhead cargo steamer was withdrawn. The lines have been abandoned and the property sold although a short section at Dundalk is in use to enable access to the docks to be gained.

Feature Section

THE COUNTY DONEGAL RAILWAYS

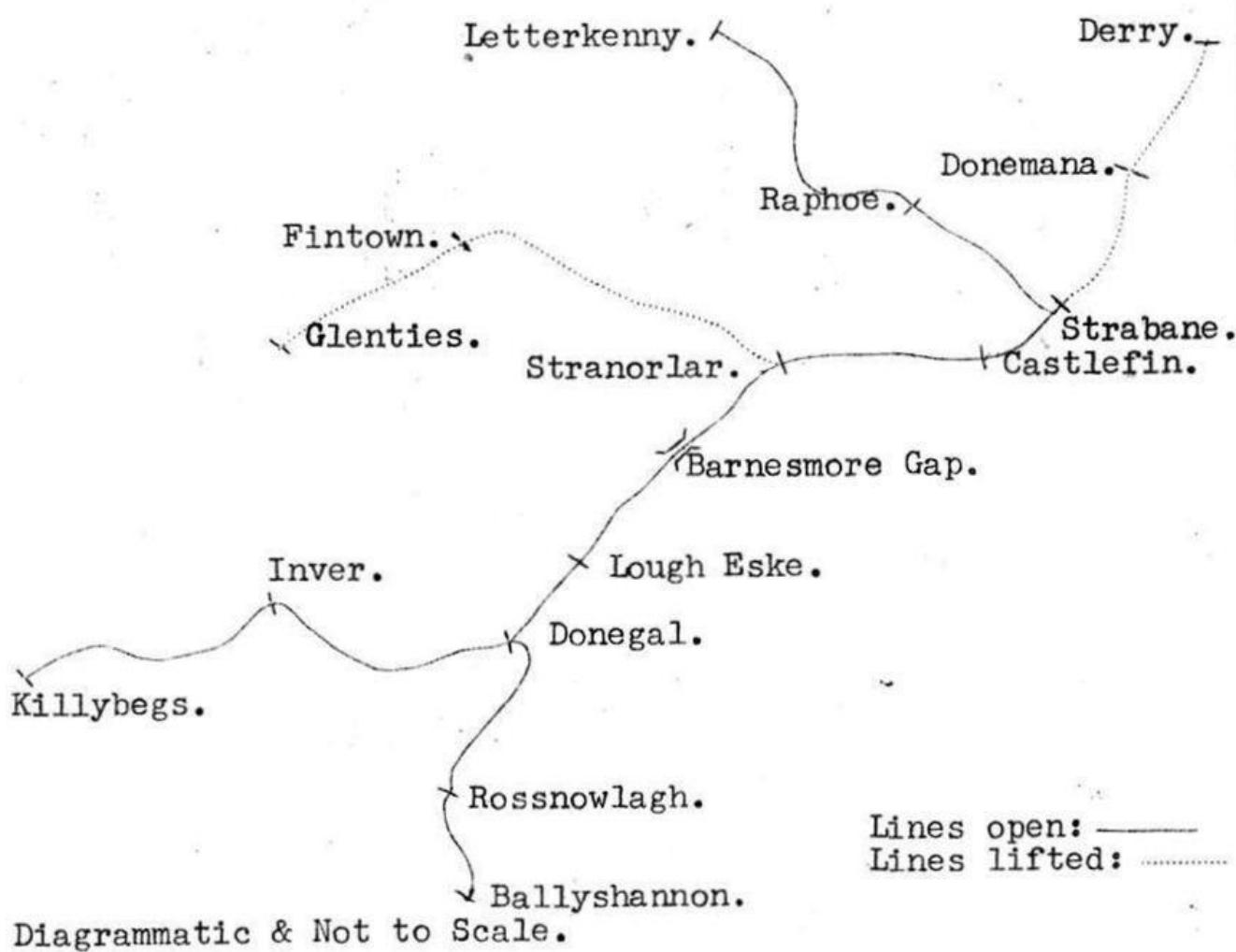
The Donegal Railway Company was formed on 27th June 1892, by the amalgamation of the Finn Valley Railway and the West Donegal Railway. The former, which was of the 5'3" gauge, was opened between Strabane and Stranorlar on 7/9/1863 and the latter, of 3' gauge, was opened from Stranorlar to Druminnin (Now Lough Eske) on 25th April 1882, extended to Donegal Town on 16/9/1889 and to Killybegs on 18/8/1893. After the amalgamation the Finn Valley section was converted to the 3' gauge and on 16/7/1894 narrow gauge trains began running through to Strabane. The Stranorlar-Glenties branch was opened on 3/6/1895, the Strabane-Derry on 8/8/1900 and the Donegal-Ballyshannon on 21/9/1905. Under the provisions of the Great Northern (Ireland) and the Midland Railways Act 1906, the Donegal Railway was acquired jointly by these two companies except the Strabane-Derry which passed entirely into Midland ownership and the present County Donegal Railways Joint Committee was established. The Strabane & Letterkenny Railway was opened on 1/1/1909. It is worked by the Joint Committee. In 1923 the Midland passed to the LMS (NCC) and this in turn passed to the Railway Executive (British Railways) on 1/1/1948. The Strabane-Derry section was taken over by the UTA in 1949 but continued to be worked by the Joint Committee until its closure on 31/12/1954.

The distance from Strabane to Killybegs is 50½ miles. At Strabane the station adjoins that of the GNR and its island platform is connected to the GNR by a footbridge. There are a Tranship Yard, Goods Store and a two-road engine shed. Three miles after leaving Strabane the frontier between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is crossed by a bridge, 150 ft long, over the River Finn. Clady station is 4½ miles and Castlefin, 6 miles from Strabane and both are Republic of Ireland Customs posts. Preventive work is done at Clady and executive work at Castlefin where both platforms are signalled for each direction. The Imperial Customs post is at Strabane.

Between Castlefin and Stranorlar are Liscooly, Killygordon and Cavan Halt. Stranorlar (13½ miles) is the headquarters of the Joint Committee and has the principal loco sheds. The Locomotive, Railcar, Carriage and Wagon Shops and the General Store are situated here and there is extensive siding accommodation. On leaving Stranorlar the line begins the ascent of the Barnesmore bank, 1 in 50/67, with a short level stretch at Lough Mourne, to the summit at Derg Bridge (21¼ miles) which is the

highest point on the line - 591½ feet above ordnance datum - then it drops at 1 in 60 through the picturesque Barnesmore Gap to Barnesmore Halt, Lough Eske, Clar Bridge and Donegal. From Donegal the line follows the sea-coast most of the way passing Killymare Halt to ascend the fierce 1½ mile Glen bank at 1 in 40 to Mountcharles. Then follow Doorin Road, Mullinboy, Inver, Port, Dunkineely, Bruckless and Ardara Road to reach Killybegs. There are some fine views and stiff gradients on this section, the worst bank being a 1 in 40 on a 7½ chain curve at Seahill, Dunkineely.

The Strabane & Letterkenny Railway swings to the North-West on leaving Strabane and crosses the confluence of the rivers Finn and Mourne by a girder bridge 293' long. Lifford Halt is 1 mile from Strabane and is the Republic of Ireland Customs post. The Post Office sorting depot is situated on the platform. There is a crossing loop at Raphoe (6½ miles); other stations are at Ballindrait, Coolaghy, Convoy, Cornagillagh and Glenmaquin. The Stranorlar-Glenties line which, 24½ miles long, was closed to regular traffic on 13/12/1947 was used a few time for livestock traffic until 19/9/1949. In 1952 the Hammond Lane Metal Co. bought the rails and has since completed the lifting of the line. The Ballyshannon branch, 15½ miles in length, has stations at Drumbar, Laghey, Bridgetown, Ballintra, Dromore, Rossnowlagh, Coolmore and Creevy. There is also a halt opened in 1952 at the Franciscan Friary near Rossnowlagh.



All regular passenger services are operated by diesel railcars of which there are eight, Nos. 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 20. All are 41-seaters except No.10 (ex Clogher Valley Railway) which has only 28 seats. It should be noted that the CDR was a pioneer in the introduction of diesel rail traction, No.7 railcar (scrapped 1949) which went into service between Strabane and Killybegs in September 1931

being the first regular diesel service in the British Isles. There are four railcar trailers numbered 2, 3, 5 and 6. There are 7 steam locomotives:

Class 5A: 1 "Alice"
2 "Blanche"
3 "Lydia"

Class 5: 4 "Meenglass"
5 "Drumboe"
6 "Columbkille"

Class 4: 11 "Erne"

There is also one diesel loco, No.11 "Phoenix", which is used for shunting in Strabane. There are 22 passenger coaches, 255 goods train wagons and 14 red wagons for use with the railcars.

Seven railcars normally work the service, four on the Killybegs line, two on the Letterkenny line and one on the Ballyshannon branch. At Strabane connections are taken off the GNR and, of these, four run through to Killybegs. There are also three short workings to Stranorlar of which one extends to Killybegs on Saturdays only. There are thus 7 workings each way on the Finn Valley section, while there are three on the Ballyshannon branch (4 on Saturdays). The Strabane & Letterkenny has 5 workings in each direction and an additional car at 03:00 for mails only, which returns attached to the up goods. On a normal day two locos are in steam, one based on Stranorlar working the Finn Valley and West Donegal sections. Goods traffic on the Ballyshannon and Killybegs lines, being light, is usually worked on the rear of the railcars, the goods train being extended to Killybegs when traffic warrants. On occasions coal specials are run to Ballyshannon to clear consignments landed at Killybegs. The second regular locomotive works twice each way between Letterkenny and Strabane daily, one of the workings - the 15:50 - being mixed.

At the moment, the future of the CDR is uncertain as it is closely allied to that of the GNR line through Strabane. It will be indeed a pity in this age of dieselisation if this, the pioneer of diesel traction and now the largest narrow gauge system in Ireland, is thus forced to cease railway operations.