

THE

IRISH RAILFANS' NEWS

Volume 2

October 1956

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EDITORIAL

As the autumnal evenings close in we can look back on a summer of extremely mixed weather and this has played no small part in keeping the passenger traffic on our railways much lower than that of 1955, which in response to weeks of sunshine was of record proportions. Despite this powerful traffic deterrent, however, excursion trains this year were not by any means unsupported.

Of the 'holiday' trains, the GNR all-in day tours to the "Mountains of Mourne" from Dublin and to the "Hills of Donegal" from Belfast were quite well patronised, as also were the CIÉ Radio Train day trips to Killarney and Galway, while the Dublin-Arklow "Sea-Breeze" trains proved as popular as ever, but without requiring the duplication for which provision had been made. It was the Cork area, however, that was worst affected as the epidemic of poliomyelitis, coupled with the adverse weather resulted in greatly reduced traffic on trains to Cobh, Youghal, Baltimore, Bantry and Courtmacsherry. It will be necessary in assessing the potential traffic for next season to bear these disadvantages in mind as 1955 has shown clearly that, given the incentive, seaside travel can make a valuable contribution to our railways.

There is also another type of excursion traffic which is less affected by weather considerations than that mentioned above. This is, of course, the excursions run in connection with various sporting and other events and here a more encouraging trend is noticeable. Since August last special trains have run bringing passengers to a circus, both while in Dublin and in provincial towns, for the first time since pre-war days.

For the All-Ireland Hurling final on September 23 no less than 32 trains brought Cork and Wexford supporters to Dublin, while for the Pioneer Rally at Cork on June 24, 28 trains were required for passengers from points spread over the entire country. No such weight of traffic has been seen since the previous Pioneer Rally of 1949 in Dublin and the Eucharistic Congress of 1932. Indeed, the season just past has presented its problems in plenty and it is pleasant to feel that in successfully coping with such traffic it has been proved that our railways are admirably adaptable to the varied circumstances thrust upon them.

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Enclosed with this issue readers will find the 1957 subscription renewal form for "The Irish Railfans' News". The committee will be very grateful if this form is returned at an early date - if possible before the end of November - to the address shown. In spite of the increase in postage rates, no change is being made in the rate of subscription for 1957 as it is hoped to cover increased costs by an increase in circulation. Have you a friend who would be interested?

The committee would also like to avail of this opportunity to tender their thanks to those who have sent notes and news during the year and look forward to their continued assistance in the future.

News Section

CIÉ DUBLIN AREA NEWS REPORT

Position Of CIÉ

When moving a vote for £1,000,000 in the Dáil on July 25, to enable CIÉ to meet its contractual commitments until November next, the Minister for Industry & Commerce stated that he had received from the Chairman of CIÉ a detailed memorandum on the present position of the undertaking. The report was described as "particularly grim" as it drew the conclusion that due to the expansion of privately-owned transport there was little or no possibility of putting the railways on a self supporting basis and that only Government action could prevent a collapse of public transport. As CIÉ were particularly vulnerable to increasing costs with their high employment content and heavy fuel charges a deterioration in working results for the year ended March 31 last had been recorded. The results of the recently increased charges had been largely negated as the point seemed to have been reached beyond which transport charges could not be increased without incurring a loss of traffic. This unfortunate position, together with increased costs and the phenomenal expansion in recent years of competitive privately-owned road transport, had all contributed to this reversal in the progress of CIÉ towards solvency. The Minister added that the present programme of dieselisation and modernisation, in so far as it had been implemented, had fully realised the economies which were originally claimed for it, but that as CIÉ had failed to retain its former volume of traffic and maintain a reasonable degree of stability in costs, it now seemed likely that the undertaking would fall short of paying its way even in its rehabilitated form. Therefore the Minister stated that the Government was faced with one or other of three broad courses: 1) substantial pruning of the rail system; 2) subsidisation of the railways on a permanent basis; 3) the introduction of restrictions on private transport. As none of these courses could lightly be embarked upon, the Government was not prepared to commit itself to any future transport policy without the fullest exploration of the problem. A Committee therefore had been set up to carry out a rapid appraisal of the position and when its report was available no time would be lost in considering whether changes were necessary in the national transport policy.

Transport Inquiry Committee

Following the announcement made in the Dáil on June 26 and reported in our last issue, that the Government intended to reassess the public transport position to see whether it would be possible to maintain present policy in regard thereto, a Committee of Inquiry into Internal Transport was appointed by the Minister for Industry & Commerce in early June with the following terms of reference:

"To inquire into and review the developments in internal transport in recent years as they affect public transport undertakings; to consider what measures are necessary in the light of these developments to ensure the provision of the transport requirements of the country on a basis which will best serve the public interests and to report thereon to the Minister for Industry & Commerce on or before 1st November 1956."

The Committee consists of the Chairman of Irish Shipping Ltd, the General Manager of Aer Lingus, the President of the National Farmers Association, the Managing Director of a large Cork business undertaking and the Chairman of the Transport Tribunal, who is also Chairman of this Committee. Following appointment, the Committee invited representations from interested bodies and persons on matters relevant to its terms of reference and in response received submissions from several national organisations and many individuals. The Committee's report and their recommendations are, therefore, awaited with nationwide interest.

‘Silver’ Coaches For CIÉ

Inchicore works are engaged at present in the production of further open second class coaches in an unpainted aluminium finish. These coaches, which are 61'6" long by 10' wide, seat seventy passengers and weigh 26 tons 3 cwts each. An unusual feature is the class numerals on the doors which are in red. At the time of writing numbers 1429-1437 are in traffic, mostly on the Dublin - Cork and Dublin - Tralee routes.

Winter Timetable

Few alterations of note have been made in the winter timetable which has been in operation since September 17. The extra services provided in the summer timetable have, as usual, been withdrawn but with the notable exceptions that the fast Sunday trains between Dublin and Cork and the weekday Skibbereen connections to and from the mid-day Cork - Bantry train in each direction, have wisely been retained. Improved services between Dublin and Limerick have also been provided by means of additional connections with fast Dublin - Cork trains at Limerick Junction. A peculiar alteration in the new timetable is the retiming of the principal morning departure from Dublin to Wexford and Rosslare Harbour from 10:00 to 11:30.

Summer Services Extended

Early in September, CIÉ announced that their Sunday services on the suburban lines in the Dublin and Cork areas, which were intended to operate during July and August only, would be continued until September 30. This is the first time for many years that such services have been extended beyond the duration of the summer timetable. The “Sea Breeze” train which runs from Harcourt Street to Arklow on Wednesdays and Saturdays during July and August only was also continued until the last Saturday on which the summer timetable operated. These extensions of the services became possible this year when a reduction in costs of operation was achieved following the substitution of steam by diesel motive power.

New Turf-Oil Locomotives

The Minister for Industry & Commerce has announced in Dáil Éireann that CIÉ has designed a prototype locomotive to burn either turf or oil and that it will be ready for trials by the end of this year. It will be necessary, however, to hold trials lasting at least a year to discover whether the locomotive is suitable for ordinary working.

Dieselisation Progress

At the date of writing, September 28, delivery of 58 of the order of 60 A Class 1,200 hp Metrovick DE locos for CIÉ had been completed, while 5 of the B Class 950 hp Sulzer DE locos had arrived at Inchicore. Construction of the 19 DH 450 hp Maybach shunting locos is proceeding and the first of these should be in service early next year. Although the first of the G Class 125 hp DH Deutz locos was put into service on the Newmarket branch on June 1, the two remaining locos of this class are still awaiting allocation to traffic. Delivery of the 34 Metrovick DE locos of 550 hp had not yet commenced at the time of writing. Since our last issue, diesel has superseded steam motive power on further services of the CIÉ system. The goods trains on both the Waterford - Limerick and Limerick - Sligo routes are now worked by DE locos and, since August 11, when A35 made the inaugural trip, the popular Wednesday and Saturday “Sea Breeze” from Harcourt Street to Arklow has been similarly operated. On the introduction of the winter timetable on September 17 the remaining steam passenger workings on the Mallow - Tralee and Mullingar - Sligo lines were substituted by DE loco hauled trains. Extensive use has been made of the A Class locos to operate the Dublin suburban services on Sundays since June 17 but so far no weekday suburban train is regularly worked by a DE loco although such locos traverse suburban metals on DSE main line trains and on certain specials to Dun Laoghaire Pier.

During the summer, railcars were utilised to operate one of the Sunday trains in each direction on the Dublin - Rosslare Harbour route, while greater use continued to be made of these AEC railcars on many of the lighter trains on the Amiens Street - Greystones and Harcourt Street - Bray suburban lines. Only secondary and branch lines of the CIÉ network now retain steam workings and these are likely to remain until the 550 hp Metrovick DE locos on order become available for traffic.

Dun Laoghaire Improvements

Large-scale excavation works commenced at Dun Laoghaire in the first week of September in connection with the improvement scheme being undertaken at the station to relieve the congestion of rail traffic experienced during peak periods. The improvements include the provision of a new up platform at the station and the doubling of the main line through this area. An application has been made for permission to close to traffic the road immediately in front of the station building for two months from October 1 while CIÉ are carrying out widening operations on the bridge there. The entire scheme is expected to be completed within nine months.

Extra Sunday Cork Trains

On Sunday July 29 the long-desired fast Sunday evening service between Dublin and Cork was inaugurated. A train is now provided in each direction on Sundays between the two cities, one leaving Dublin at 18:15 and the other from Cork at 18:00, these being supplementary to the existing 'all-stations' services. The 165½ mile journey is covered in 3¼ hours, which includes a stop in both directions at Limerick Junction and Mallow. Bus connections with the up and down trains are given at Limerick Junction to and from Limerick. The new service has been operated by diesel railcars since inception. It is proving very popular and has been retained in the winter timetable.

CIÉ PROVINCIAL NEWS REPORT

Castlemungret Branch

Construction of the 3 mile railway linking Castlemungret Cement Factory with the Limerick - Tralee line, a short distance outside Limerick station, was commenced on September 3. Messrs Murphy Bros. of Cork are the contractors for the earthworks. It has been stated that the link line will take over a year to complete at a cost of approximately £53,000.

Newmarket Branch

From reports received it appears that the Banteer-Newmarket branch, which was reopened experimentally to goods traffic only on June 1 last after a nine year closure, is being well patronised by local traders and business men. The daily goods train consists, on the average, of between 8 and 10 wagons, two or three of which are usually bound for Newmarket and the balance for Kanturk. The service on the branch is being worked by G601 - the only 125 hp DH Deutz loco so far introduced to service by CIÉ. No official statement, however, has yet been made on the success achieved since the reopening of the branch.

Last Steam From Sligo

On September 15 loco 654, in hauling the 19:25 Sligo - Mullingar night mail, had the honour of working the last regular CIÉ steam train out of Sligo. For the occasion the loco was decorated with bunting and on its boiler and splashes were chalked its original MGWR number and name - No.28 "Clara". The train departed to the din of loud cheers and exploding detonators. The last CIÉ steam hauled train to arrive in Sligo was worked by loco 659 at the head of the 21:47 Mullingar - Sligo night mail of the same night. Since September 17 all regular CIÉ trains, both passenger and goods, to and from Sligo have been diesel operated.

Ballylinan Branch

On July 14, a special passenger train for a party of IRRS members ran on the remaining 4½ mile Athy-Ballylinan section of the former branch from Athy to Wolfhill. The train consisted of loco 171 and coach 854 with a goods brake van. This was the first known passenger train to traverse this line, which has only been in use during the beet season since the closure of the abandoned section beyond Ballylinan to Wolfhill Colliery.

GNR GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Summer Traffic

In spite of adverse weather conditions throughout most of the summer holiday period, traffic reached a high level. Excursions were run for organised parties on almost all sections and included: Carrickmacross-Dundalk, August 15; Dublin-Portrush, August 6; Ardee-Dublin (two trains, one of which was in connection with a steamer excursion from Dublin to the Isle of Man), August 6; and Warrenpoint-Dublin, August 5. In addition, specials were run through from GNR to CIÉ stations and vice versa, linking Belfast with Killarney and Waterford with Dundalk (for Carlingford) to mention but two instances. Main line trains were continually duplicated at weekends and several extra trains were run to handle traffic for both Pettigo and Bundoran.

Aldergrove Signal Cabin

At the end of July, Aldergrove cabin, a block post on the Knockmore Junction - Antrim line, was closed and Electric Tablet working between Crumlin and Antrim introduced. As it is necessary on occasions for trains to be assisted out of Antrim by an engine in the rear a special banking token, similar to that employed in the Bray-Greystones section of CIÉ, has been provided to enable the assisting engine to return light from Aldergrove. This arrangement gives rise to an unusual working on Mondays to Fridays when the empty UTA coaches to form the airport workers' special Aldergrove-Ballymena, which were formerly propelled separately from Antrim, are attached to the 17:15 Antrim-Belfast. This service is a GNR diesel train which takes the tablet for the entire section while the UTA coaches and loco for the special follow, attached to the railcar, with the UTA driver holding the banking token. The UTA train is detached at Aldergrove and returns to Antrim while the GNR diesel continues to Belfast.

Clontarf Halt

The closure to all traffic of Clontarf Halt, which has been under consideration for some years, took place on and from September 3. The halt is the first station on the main line out of Amiens Street from which it is just under 1¾ miles distant. Opened in the year 1898 as a fully staffed station it was reduced to a halt prior to the Second World War and since then it has been attended by one man only. During recent years residential season ticket traffic has dropped in face of an excellent bus service, both CIÉ and GNR and, apart from summer trippers, there has been little other traffic. It is interesting to note that despite the present single road fare from the city (4^d) being double that by rail, receipts at the halt did not cover the halt-keeper's wages. Clontarf will be remembered, however, for the part it played as the temporary Dublin terminal when the Tolka bridge collapsed in the floods of December 1954.

Cookstown Branch

On July 8 the branch from Dungannon to Cookstown carried a special passenger train from Cookstown to Lurgan in connection with a sporting event. Another special ran on July 12 from Cookstown to Pomeroy for Orange Day celebrations and further passenger trains have been run to cater for parties of day excursionists travelling to various resorts. On Friday July 13 a railway wagon, loaded with cement and fish boxes, fell victim to a fire which broke out in the goods store at Cookstown. Houses in the

vicinity were evacuated temporarily when, in the early hours of the morning, the nearby gasometer was threatened.

Stewartstown Station

On and from August 1, Stewartstown station, on the Cookstown branch, was closed to all traffic. Although the passenger services were withdrawn on January 15 the station has been open for goods and occasional excursion trains. The Board has stated that receipts have so diminished as to render the station uneconomic and traffic has been diverted to Coalisland.

Winter Timetable

The winter timetable which commenced on September 3 shows little alteration on the services in previous winters except the deferment of the 19:30 Belfast-Derry to 20:05. This gives connection to Derry off the 17:30 Dublin-Belfast Enterprise Express.

Landslide On Bundoran Branch

On the night of September 27 about 20 yards of an embankment subsided on the line between Pettigo and Castlecaldwell. Trains have been forced to terminate at Pettigo and substitute road services continue to Bundoran.

UTA

Diesel Railcars

The three-coach diesel trains which have been operating the Belfast-Bangor service are in course of conversion to four car sets and, consequently, the motor cars are being fitted with engines of increased power. The extra intermediate coaches are ex NCC vehicles and these are not fitted with the automatic doors as is the case with other Bangor line stock, hence their windows bear a small notice warning passengers of this and advising them that the door may be opened by lowering the window and turning the handle outside the coach! At the time of writing some three-coach trains are still in use on the Bangor line and on most workings on the Belfast-Larne line.

CDRJC

Mixed Train

With the introduction of the winter timetable on September 3, the former 08:21 railcar from Killybegs to Donegal, which continued light through the Barnesmore Gap, is retimed to 08:55 and extended as a passenger working to Stranorlar. A connection thence to Strabane is made possible as a coach is now attached to the 11:10 goods ex Stranorlar - the only regular mixed train outside the Strabane & Letterkenny section.

Feature Section

THE WATERFORD & TRAMORE RAILWAY

The peak holiday season of 1956 is drawing to a close and the Waterford-Tramore section of CIÉ has reverted from its period of bustling activity to its less hectic normality, which is, however, far from the state of despondent lethargy which might be thought the case. Briefly, let us glimpse at this line which has been and will remain among the more extraordinary of Ireland's railways.

Chief among its peculiarities is the fact that the Waterford & Tramore is the only line to appear in the CIÉ working timetable as a "Self-contained line - Broad Gauge". Although other lines, amongst which are numbered the CB&SCR, B&CDR and the CB&PR operated for a period as isolated 5'3" gauge railways, the Tramore line is the only one to retain and thrive on its isolation from the remainder of the standard gauge system. The line was opened to the public on 7th September 1853. Its length is 7½ miles, there are no intermediate stations, there is one public level crossing (at Bath Street, Waterford), and there are 13 bridges - 5 over and 8 under. Gradients are slight, the steepest being 1 in 83 for a short distance to the summit level at MP 4½.

The Northern terminus, known as Waterford Manor, from its proximity to the street of that name, is sited some half a mile from the city centre and almost twice that distance from Waterford North station on the opposite side of the River Suir. A bus service provides a connection out of certain arrivals in Waterford North into the Tramore line at Manor. The only platform is on the down side and until about 1943 a roof extended over a portion of it spanning both the platform road and the line outside it which is used for storing carriages. Behind the supporting wall for this roof lie two further lines, on one of which is the combined loco shed and works. This building is now the railcar maintenance department. All four roads unite in a 22'3" turntable from which access can also be gained to a small carpenter's shop and a short loading bank. There is also a short carriage shed situated at the south end of the station. Tramore is of a very similar pattern but has only three lines terminating in an 18' turntable, as there is no locomotive shed. The roof, still in situ, spans the platform road only and there is a carriage shed outside this.

Under independent ownership, which lasted until 1925, the Company possessed five locomotives although in its early days locomotives belonging to the contractor - William Dargan - were in use. Numbers 1 and 2 (built 1855) were 2-2-2WTs which survived to become 483 and 484 in GSR stock but were scrapped in 1927 and 1935 respectively. No.3 was an 0-4-2T built in 1862 and scrapped in 1930. The first number 4 was another 2-2-2WT, built in 1845, which was scrapped and replaced in 1908 by a new number 4, this time an 0-4-2T. It survived to become GSR 486 and was scrapped in 1941. As replacements for the W&T locos the GSR in 1930 transferred to the section the ex-MGWR 0-6-0T loco 560 and two similar locos - 555 in 1936 and 553 in 1941 - followed. These three locos were withdrawn from the section in the Autumn of 1955 due to their replacement by diesel railcar trains. The first two railcars, Nos. 2658/9 which arrived on the section in November 1954, were strengthened by the addition of an intermediate 10'2" wide coach 1407 in May 1955 and by a further railcar, 2657, and a second 10'2" coach, 1408, fitted as a driving trailer, in June of the same year. The railcars are second class only and are fitted with bus-type seats. 2657 has van accommodation and seats for 80 passengers while the other two cars have 96 seats each. In external appearance the cars are similar to those on the main lines. 2657/8 face towards Tramore while 2659 faces Waterford. An unusual formation on occasions is the operation of a three-coach train composed of the three motor units. It seems that even with standard equipment the Waterford & Tramore must needs display its own individuality.

Equally diverse, too, is the rolling stock on the line, which in steam days reflected a museum-like character with six-wheel representatives of the GS&WR, MGWR, CB&SCR, C&MDR, and also six ex-GSR Clayton steam railcars articulated into three two-coach sets. These latter were by way of replacements for the original stock of W&T coaches which finally became extinct during the late war although two wagons survived until early this year.

As is to be anticipated, the W&T exists on passenger traffic above all else. In fact there is little or no goods traffic passing since the withdrawn of steam trains. Two types of traffic predominate - the suburban into Waterford and, during the summer months, the seaside into Tramore. The winter timetable 1956/7 provides 15 services in each direction on weekdays and 10 on Sundays. The former is an increase of one on the winter service operating in previous years while the latter is a welcome

reappearance of a facility which was restored in September 1954 for the first winter since 1943. The journey time is 15 minutes each way. Summer traffic on the line usually builds up to a peak at weekends and this fact explains the note in the public timetable stating that "On certain days when traffic is exceptionally heavy it may be necessary to run a more intensive service at peak periods, in which case the schedules will be departed from". Of these peak periods the climax is usually the weekend nearest to August 15, but in 1955, Sunday July 10 - a broiling hot day in the midst of a heatwave - was responsible for the creation of an all-time record of 9,500 passengers carried, beating the previous record of 7,000 set up in similar circumstances in 1947. A feature new to the line in the last few years has been the call for a train on the occasions of late-night dances in Tramore. Several such "small-hours specials" have been run and have not been entirely confined to the summer period. In this respect the W&T has developed traffic in a field which could well be explored by other sections of CIÉ.

Since so much excursion traffic is carried a large variety of tickets were issued between Waterford and Tramore. In the early days concession fares existed for short period returns of different validities. After the amalgamation of the W&T with the GSR in 1925 rates became more standardised and the booking offices at either terminal carried ordinary singles and returns with one-piece card tickets for excursion returns. In 1954, as a measure of economy, the booking offices were closed and since then fares have been collected by the checker at the barrier of each station. The tickets now in use are of unusual type, being similar to an excess fare receipt but fully printed "Waterford to Tramore or vice versa". A separate series is available for single, return and excursion bookings. At the same time, in 1954, the stations which up to then were fully staffed were reduced to the status of 'halts' and are now in the charge of a halt-keeper with, in addition, the ticket checker mentioned above.

It will thus be observed that while the Waterford & Tramore Section of CIÉ still retains some of the idiosyncrasies of a line which was once rich in those peculiarities that lend character to a railway, it is worked in an economic fashion with modern equipment. Provided traffic does not diminish it seems likely that this self-contained section will remain with us for many years to come.

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LATE NEWS

Diesel Loco For Sugar Company

On September 25 a Ruston diesel locomotive was landed at North Wall, Dublin. This loco, which has been purchased by Comhlucht Siúcre Éireann, is required for their factory at Tuam.