

THE

IRISH RAILFANS' NEWS

Volume 3

April 1957

No.2

Managing Committee:

L. Hyland (Editor)

B. MacAongusa

D. Seymour

EDITORIAL

Unless the Dublin enthusiast turns his steps towards either the GNR or the Amiens Street - Bray line, it is extremely likely that he will be able to spend his lineside leisure without sight of a steam train. The once familiar cloud of exhaust, which enveloped his favourite bridge vantage point, is now a rare sight. With the advent and entry into service of the CIÉ class C DE locomotives even the days of steam operated branch lines on that system, which we were wont to seek out for a short nostalgic flash-back are numbered. Indeed, as we write, the transformation is proceeding apace. Already the lengthy Valentia Harbour branch has been dieselised and Tralee now boasts the most varied selection of new motive power in the country with A and C class DE locomotives rubbing shoulders with the AEC railcar sets and even a G class branch line unit. Steam, however, still exists today on certain workings, of which the principal are the CB&SCR goods and branch trains, the Macmine - Waterford line, the three Midland branches - Loughrea, Ballinrobe and Ballaghaderreen - the Birr and Foynes trains, the North Kerry line goods and the local passenger services between Galway and Tuam. Now, however, even these fastnesses are threatened - the two first-mentioned are rumoured for early dieselisation - and the next few months will see the final "coup de grace" that will extinguish the fires of even these few remaining outposts.

Whither then will the steam enthusiast turn in this vast sea of diesel traction?

First and foremost, let us hope that he will return, without nostalgia, to places he has known in the steam era and thus realise that a line of character does not solely depend on its motive power for that character. On second thoughts, there is a small steam loophole in the CIÉ dieselisation act. This loophole is the Cavan & Leitrim Railway, which is the subject of the feature article in this issue and which, isolated by its gauge and its situation off the beaten track, has known no internal combustion engined vehicle on its metals other than a rare visit by the four-wheel inspection car stationed normally at Ennis for use on the West Clare section.

Here then is a system, varied as could be desired which is, if not quite flourishing, at least struggling valiantly. With locomotives and rolling stock of three different narrow gauge railways working on its metals the Cavan & Leitrim is a minor museum, but more too, for it shortly bodes fair to become CIÉ's last outpost of steam.

-o-O-o-o-O-o-

The appearance of a book devoted to Irish railways is a rare occurrence and although "Narrow Gauge Album" also deals with the little railways of Great Britain a great proportion of its coverage is devoted to Ireland - once the richest narrow gauge territory in these islands. This book, written by Mr P.B. Whitehouse and published by Ian Allen Ltd, is made up of a selection - and Mr Whitehouse emphasises that it is only a selection - of vignettes of the narrow gauge scene illustrated not only with a series of splendid photographs but with pen-pictures of each line treated. Those who seek a comprehensive pocket-size history and loco list will fail to find it in "Narrow Gauge Album" but the book is more

readable for the lack of too much statistical detail and is certainly a fine, albeit fairly expensive, addition to the regrettably small store of writings on the narrow gauge railways of Ireland.

News Section

CIÉ DUBLIN AREA NEWS REPORT

Dieselisation Progress

Delivery of the last one of the order of 60 A class Metrovick DE locomotives was made early in January, and on February 2 No.C201, the first of the C class Metrovick DE 550 hp Bo-Bo locomotives, arrived at the North Dublin. Since then nine further C class DE locos have been delivered together with two B class Sulzer DE locomotives further to the seven of that class already delivered as reported in our last issue. None of the E class Maybach DH locomotives under construction at Inchicore has yet gone into service but since our last issue the two remaining G class Deutz lightweight branch locos have been allocated to traffic. As reported elsewhere, G602 has been sent to re-open the Castleisland branch while loco G603 replaced steam motive power on the Clara - Banagher branch on March 4 and has been working the once-daily goods service on the branch since then. On March 4 also, locos C201 and C202 superseded steam motive power both on the passenger and goods trains on the Farranfore - Valentia Harbour branch.

New Railcars

The first two of the six new suburban railcars under construction in Inchicore, as mentioned in our last issue, were put into traffic on March 8, following trials in the Dublin area. Nos. 2661-2 were observed on the 08:45 Dublin - Cork express on that date. Since then this pair of cars with intermediate open second and a buffet car have worked occasionally the Cork Express link - 08:45 ex Dublin and 18:00 ex Cork. The four remaining cars should be ready for service by mid-summer.

CIÉ Position

On March 26, the Minister for Industry & Commerce announced that the operating losses of CIÉ for 1956-7 were estimated at £1,825,000. In view of this very serious financial position, Mr Lemass stated that some major decisions affecting the future of CIÉ would have to be taken as soon as the awaited report of the Committee of Inquiry into Internal Transport was submitted.

Rolling Stock Developments

On January 11, the first of the new suburban composite coaches, No.2162, was put into service on the Dublin - Bray - Greystones lines and by March 26 up to No.2169 had already appeared in traffic. These 10ft wide, centre-corridor coaches have an unpainted stainless steel finish similar to all new main line coaches and seat 40 first class and 36 second class passengers. Since our last issue one of the two GSR built bogie TPOs - No.2950 - has been withdrawn for scrapping and it is understood that a number of new bogie TPOs will be constructed shortly in Inchicore in replace of these and older sorting vans still in traffic. It is also learned that a large number of 30ft vans, together with some 30ft mail vans and further steam-heating vans for working with DE hauled passenger trains, are to be built at Inchicore during the coming twelve months.



Recent scenes at Molahiffe, Co. Kerry on the Farranfore - Valentia Harbour branch.

Dun Laoghaire Improvements

Widening of the road overbridge at the Sandycove end of the station was completed in mid-January and work then commenced on the extensive track alterations necessary to enable a continuous double-track main line to be laid through the station. This substantial task was successfully carried out in stages, the major alterations being effected on Sundays during February and March. On Sunday February 17 the manganese crossing, by which the coal quay siding traversed the main line in the centre of the yard was

removed and a new connection to the coal quay was made from the bay sidings. On Sundays during March the new up line was laid through the yard, while at the Sandycove end of the station the existing down line was slewed to the contour of the recently-cut-back down platform. This leaves room for the doubling throughout of the line at an early date. At the time of writing - March 27 - construction of the new up platform has commenced but no colour light signals further to those mentioned in our last issue has yet been installed. It is now expected that the improvement scheme at Dun Laoghaire will be completed before June next as planned.

Improved Suburban Services

In preparation for the new suburban timetable being planned for the Dublin - Bray - Greystones lines next summer when the reconstruction of Dun Laoghaire station will be completed a questionnaire seeking passengers' views on the existing services was issued to all regular suburban travellers on March 22. Passengers were invited in addition to state the arrival and departure times at the Dublin termini suitable to their own requirements in the mornings, at lunch-hour and in the evenings, together with their preference of class and of season, weekly or daily tickets. A similar survey of passenger views which was carried out in 1950 resulted in no changes being made in the timetables, as it was learnt that the majority of regular travellers was generally satisfied with the services existing at that time. CIÉ, however, have now stated that even though present suburban services may generally satisfy the public it was hoped, with new and faster diesel operated services next summer, to plan later departures from the suburbs which would give the same arrival times in Dublin as at present afforded. Time-trial runs with fast and stopping trains were made on the Amiens Street - Greystones route on March 21 in connection with the proposed improved timetable. The train used comprised five bogie coaches with steam heating van hauled by C class DE locomotive No.C204.

Further Suburban Trials

As we go to press further trials with DE locomotives have taken place on the suburban section. On Monday March 25, loco A43 worked the 17:07 Amiens Street - Greystones train, which is booked non-stop between Westland Row and Dun Laoghaire and according to reports received the DE loco completed the journey in a time considerably less than the steam schedule. On March 28 and 29 further time-trial runs with C class DE locomotives were made on the same section and these followed a similar pattern to the trial of March 21.

Another Weekend Experiment

During the weekend February 15-18 CIÉ repeated their remarkable concession - first granted in November 1956 as reported in our last issue - of issuing return tickets between all stations at single fare in a further effort to encourage weekend traffic. Although the response seemed more encouraging than that of the November experiment, it still did not assume the proportions worthy of such a singularly generous concession.

CIÉ PROVINCIAL NEWS REPORT

Castleisland Branch Reopened

The 4½ mile branch line from Gortalea to Castleisland was reopened to regular goods traffic on January 7 having been closed to regular passenger and goods trains since 27th January 1947. The new service, which, like that on the Banteer - Newmarket branch is being operated as an experiment, is worked by G602 - the second of CIÉ's 130 hp Deutz four-wheel DH locos. The goods commences from Tralee at which point wagons for Castleisland are transferred from the main line services. At first, departure was at 11:15 returning at 16:00 but since February 11, the service has been retimed to leave at 08:20 and return at 14:40. According to reports received, it appears that the branch is receiving its measure of support. Although theoretically closed between 1947 and the reopening this year the line

has continued to handle grain specials and a monthly fair train. Passenger specials - mainly the annual pilgrimage to Claremorris for Knock - have also been run on infrequent occasions.

Cork Platform

Work has just been completed on the re-facing of the main line departure platform at Cork's Glanmire Road providing better clearance for the new 10'2" wide coaches.

Castlemungret Branch

Earthworks for the new CIÉ branch are now laid down throughout the three miles of its length except for a few hundred yards at the Castlemungret end. No rails have yet been laid and it is understood that as the embankment will require some little time to settle permanent way work will not commence for the present. The point of junction will be just short of MP 2 on the Limerick - Tralee line about 200 yards beyond Rossbrien level crossing. The new line in its course will cross the Limerick - Cork road at right-angles and the Limerick - Foynes - Tarbert road diagonally. Both of these crossings will be on the level.

New Cattle Wagons

Limerick wagon works have been engaged in the production of a new series of cattle wagons and some of these have now appeared in traffic. They are of conventional design but all are fitted with vacuum brake equipment as is proclaimed by the symbol "VAC BRAKE" painted in white on their sides. These new wagons are numbered in the 21000 series.

Timetable Alterations

As from January 22 the thrice weekly 17:40 Cork - Rosslare boat express was re-timed to depart from Cork at 18:30 and arrive in Rosslare at 22:20 in order to reduce the delay occasioned to passengers travelling by the steamer to Fishguard. The preceding weekday 18:10 Cork - Limerick Junction stopping train has been accelerated by 8 minutes overall since the same date.

Late News

On March 29, three C class DE locomotives were sent to Cork (Glanmire Road) for working 'runs of goods' between Cork and Rathpeacon and to act as yard pilots.

On March 30, the second pair - 2662/3 - of the new railcars were put into traffic on the Amiens Street - Greystones line where they were observed working as a two-car train on off-peak services.

Sequel to Cahir Accident

A postscript has just been added to the story of the accident which took place at Cahir station on 21st December 1955. Readers will remember that loco 375 hauling a beet special from Waterford went out of control approaching Cahir and, in avoiding the Limerick - Waterford mail train standing in the station, was plunged through the Suir viaduct into the river below with the loss of two lives. At the inquiry into the crash it was recommended that double-way signalling should be installed at Cahir to enable up trains to be brought into the down loop and vice versa. This has now been completed as from March 26 and new wrong-road starting signals have been provided.

GNR GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Portadown - Derry Line Damaged

On Sunday February 17 damage was caused to the Portadown-Derry line when, almost simultaneously, in the early hours of the morning, overbridge 74 (MP 27-27¼) and underbridge 77 (MP 28-28¼), both between Pomeroy and Carrickmore, were damaged by explosives. Known locally as the "Rock cutting" and "Dry arch" bridges, respectively, they both serve the Dungannon - Omagh road. The most severely

damaged was the underbridge as a hole was blown between the rails strewing debris over the road below and a length of rail was completely destroyed. In the case of the overbridge the sides were blasted out leaving debris blocking the railway. Between Dungannon and Omagh buses replaced the two Sunday trains in each direction and in addition, to cater for local traffic, trains ran to Pomeroy and Carrickmore and a connecting bus was provided. The road traffic was resumed on Sunday evening but the railway remained impassable until Thursday 21. Goods and passenger traffic was handled in the normal schedules although the former was sent mainly in sealed vans via Armagh, Clones and Enniskillen. The damage caused to both bridges is estimated at a total of £20,000.

Derry Incident

In the early hours of March 2 a goods train - comprising loco 13, 27 wagons and van - which had left Enniskillen for Derry at 21:30 the previous night, was stopped by detonators and then boarded by three armed and masked men at a point just south of Porthall. The three men, having removed the train crew, drove towards Derry and when some two miles from the city abandoned No.13 and her train to run with open regulator, out of control, into the dead-end Foyle Road goods yard. At St. Johnston, however, when exchanging the electric train staffs, the signalman's suspicions regarding the enginemen had been aroused. He warned the signalman at Derry South cabin who diverted the runaway into the arrival platform of the passenger terminus where it would cause least damage. The engine entered the platform at about 20 mph, crashed through the buffers on to the concourse, and piled telescoped wagons about 20 feet high. Although seven wagons were almost completely destroyed, No.13 was able to steam 'with caution' to Dundalk for repairs. Early morning trains over the section were cancelled, but after an inspection of the line normal working was resumed. Damage totalling an estimated £22,000 was caused by this incident and the destruction by fire on the same night of the goods offices at Derry station. The same loco 13 as was involved in the above incident was derailed and thrown down an embankment while working a train of Royal bloodstock near Goraghtwood in 1922.

Timetable Alterations

Commencing March 1 an extra train to Howth calling at Harmonstown, Howth Junction and Sutton leaves Amiens Street at 06:55 and returns as an all stations working at 07:25. Certain existing trains (1 down and 6 up) have also been timed to call at Harmonstown in addition to the above new train and the service provided initially. From the same date the 15:00 passenger train from Belfast to Dublin calls at Dunleer. No extra time is allowed on its overall schedule of 2 hours 50 minutes.

Harmonstown Halt

On Monday January 7 the new halt on the main line at MP 3 - between Killester and Raheny - was opened to traffic. It is officially named "Harmonstown Halt". At the outset 25 down trains (26 on Wednesdays) and 26 up trains were booked to call and it is encouraging to report that the halt enjoys an extremely flourishing traffic to and from the city, most of which is comprised of season ticket holders attracted by the low rates (3/6^d weekly and 14/- monthly, second class). So successful has the halt proved that on and from January 20 all local Sunday trains have been booked to call and it is anticipated that with the advent of fine weather a considerable seaside traffic to Sutton, Howth, Malahide and Donabate will be built up. Harmonstown Halt claims from Butlin's Mosney the title of the "most recently opened new station in Ireland".

Clontarf Halt

Work has commenced on the removal of the wooden platform and buildings which formerly constituted Clontarf Halt. Most of the down platform has already been dismantled and it is expected that the work will be completed in a few weeks. Clontarf was closed on and from 3rd September 1956 as reported in our October 1956 issue.

SL&NCR

Notes

On February 4 the reprieve of the SL&NCR for another year was granted. The allowance of a subsidy of up to £15,000 by the Dublin Government was announced to tide the railway through its troubled financial waters pending clarification of the position regarding the GNR line through Enniskillen.

Locomotive “Enniskillen” has returned from the GNR works at Dundalk where she has undergone a complete overhaul since she was sent there late last year. It is reported that traffic, and in particular the cattle traffic, on the line had shown a welcome increase during the autumn and winter and it is hoped that this increase may not be only of a temporary nature.

Feature Section

FUEL & FAIR TRAFFIC ON THE CAVAN & LEITRIM RAILWAY

The small towns served by the Cavan & Leitrim Railway are noted principally for the active part played by them in the cattle trade of Ireland and it is evident that this fact was uppermost in the minds of the promoters who, in 1883, campaigned to link Mohill, Ballinamore, Drumshanbo and Ballyconnell with the MGWR at Dromod and with the GNR(I) at Belturbet. Seventy years after the opening of the “main line”, livestock traffic still plays no small part in its struggle for existence. Nevertheless, today it is to the branch - the line from Ballinamore to Arigna - that the system primarily looks for the traffic which is its very life-blood - coal!

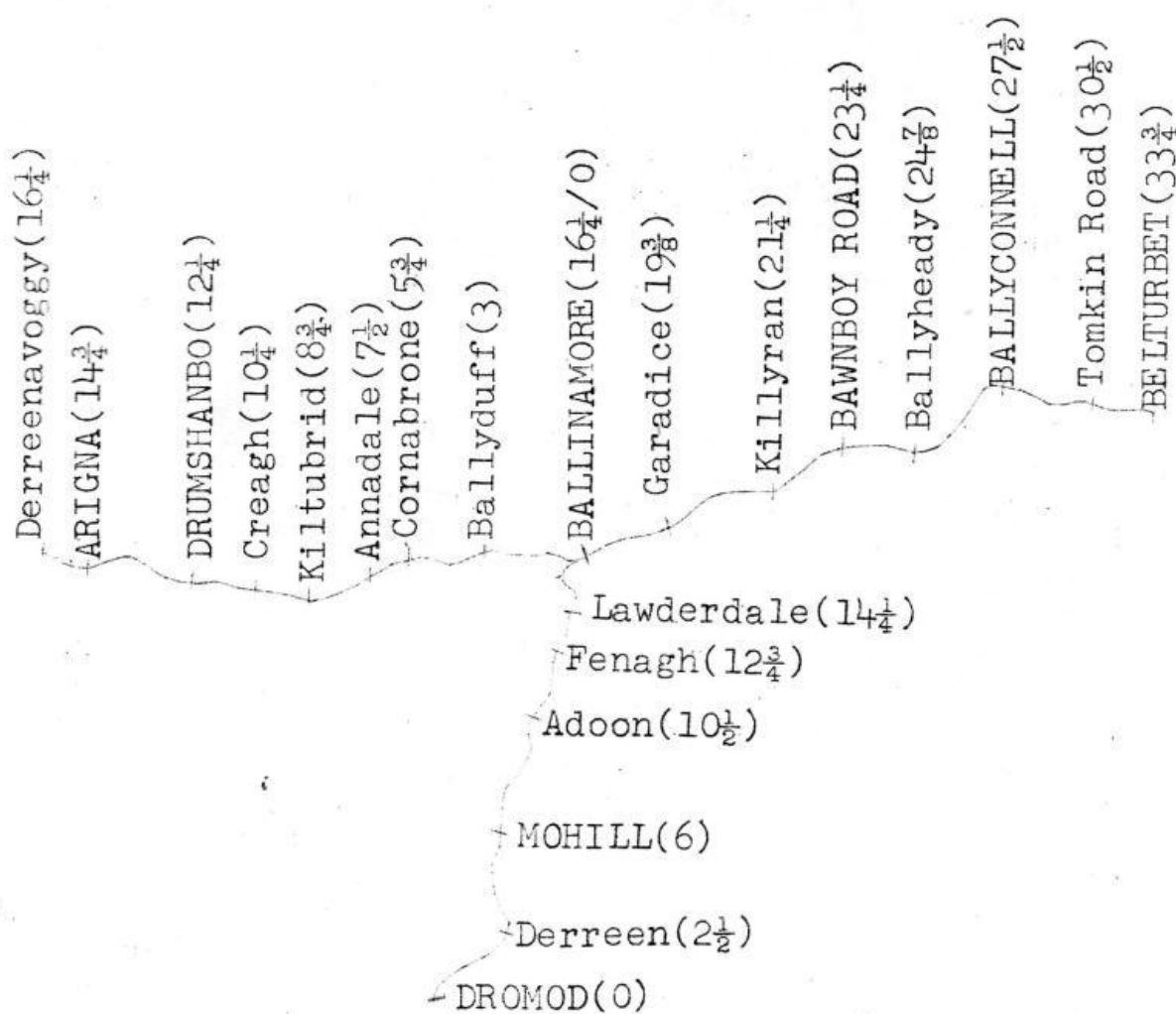
The “Cavan, Leitrim & Roscommon Light Railway & Tramway Co. Ltd” was formed on 3rd December 1883 to construct a 3' gauge line from Belturbet through Ballyconnell, Ballinamore and Mohill to Dromod with a branch from Ballinamore through Drumshanbo and Arigna to Boyle. The capital was to be raised by a Baronial Guarantee in the counties served but as the Roscommon Grand Jury withdrew its support the branch did not continue beyond Arigna and the “Roscommon” was dropped from the company's title. The main line was opened for goods on 17/10/1887 and for passengers on 24/10/1887 while the branch opening followed on 2/5/1888. On 2/6/1920 the all-important extension from Arigna station to the mines at Derreenavoggy and Aughabehy was opened by the Board of Trade during the period of Governmental control of railways. Although the quarries at Aughabehy were worked out and the extension thence from Derreenavoggy was lifted in 1930, the latter mine is still productive and the line thus ranks with the Castlecomer branch as one of Ireland's few “coal railways”. This traffic has grown to become the mainstay of the Cavan & Leitrim over the period since the extension was opened.

Since the end of the Second World War, bringing with it a subsequent restoration of supplies of British coal there has been a diminishing demand for the ‘soft’ Arigna product and with the termination of a contract to supply the sugar factories of CSÉ and a series of strikes at the mines, spasms of inactivity have recurred ever more frequently. Although during these periods the daily mixed train to Arigna usually worked some wagons of coal along with the ordinary goods traffic of the line, the “Paths for Coal Trains” provided in the working timetable were infrequently utilised. Since September 1956 a new contract has been secured with Cement Ltd for the supply of Arigna coal to their factories. When this traffic first commenced it was destined for Drogheda factory and thus regular coal specials ran for the first time over the Ballinamore - Belturbet section to be transhipped at the latter point into the standard gauge wagons of the GNR for the rest of the journey. At the end of February 1957 the flow of coal was diverted to Dromod whence it is railed by CIÉ to Limerick for the Castlemungret cement

factory.

Despite the fact that the future of the C&L lies in the extent of its coal traffic, it is gratifying to record that the carriage of cattle which brought the line into being is still of considerable value. A two-way outlet is afforded by the connections at Belturbet towards Belfast and at Dromod towards Dublin so that cattle sold at the local fairs can be sent to either port, although in practice almost all of the traffic is sent via Belturbet. The exception is Mohill fair, from which some Dublin bound wagons are despatched but, even so, the greater proportion is railed north. Mohill fairs are the largest on the system and in particular those in October and February - the latter is for some unaccountable reason known as "Monaghan Fair" - generally tax the railway's resources to the utmost. By way of illustration the following account of the February 1957 fair traffic may be of interest.

THE CAVAN & LEITRIM RAILWAY.



Not to scale.

Monday February 25 dawned fine and sunny as the 08:00 mixed set off from Ballinamore for Dromod. The train was headed by ex CB&PR loco 12L and comprised coach 21L and van 22L - both ex T&D vehicles transferred to the C&L in 1954 - together with 6 empty cattle wagons bound for Mohill to augment the supply of wagons stocked there since the previous Saturday. At 09:10 the first empty cattle special left Ballinamore for Mohill, followed by three similar further specials between then and

11:00. A train of coal empties, headed by loco 8L, also slipped quietly away from Ballinamore during the morning bound for Arigna to cater for the morrow's output from the mines.

Ballinamore had then relapsed into a sunny somnolence - which was more apparent than real - when the telephone's strident clangour at 13:00 announced the departure from Mohill of the return mixed working from Dromod. Loco 12L made good time with the train of passenger coach, van and 11 wagons of stock, for, despite this load, she was only 11 minutes late into Ballinamore and lost only another 3½ minutes over the remaining section of the journey to Belturbet. At this latter terminus the wagons of stock were quickly shunted into the transfer bank where standard gauge GNR wagons were standing in readiness. Before the return of this regular train at 16:15 to Ballinamore the first of the loaded cattle specials from Mohill arrived at Belturbet. It was headed by the other CB&PR loco - 10L - and comprised 12 wagons and van. On its arrival loco 12L returned westwards with the 16:15 to await crossing the next cattle special from Mohill at Ballyconnell. After half an hour's wait, loco 5T at last arrived hauling 9 wagons of stock to allow the regular to proceed further west to Bawnboy Road where another wait was expected. This did not arise, however, as the third cattle special was held at Ballinamore to avoid further delay to the returning mixed train. Before 19:00 a fourth and final cattle special from Mohill passed through Ballinamore hauled by loco 3T just in time to clear the road for the departure of the 19:00 Ballinamore - Dromod regular train behind loco 8L.

Thus ended a day of intensive activity on this, the last remaining steam operated narrow gauge railway in Ireland. Few lovers of Irish railways will hesitate to join with us in hoping that the fascinating Cavan & Leitrim may as expeditiously handle these coal and "Monaghan Fair" specials, in addition to its regular traffic, for many years to come.