

THE

IRISH RAILFANS' NEWS

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Managing Committee:

L. Hyland (Editor)

D. Seymour

B. Pender

N. McAdams

EDITORIAL

The address of the Minister for Transport & Power, Mr Childers, to the Institute of Transport in Dublin on December 17 must be welcomed as a major contribution to the formulation of a long term policy for public transport in Ireland.

In speaking of the results of CIÉ's recent research study of its problems, the Minister said that the public service element of transport involved the provision of many services which might be inherently loss-making and this produced a conflict. It posed the question whether public transport should cut down services to what a part of the public regarded as essential in order to meet financial commitments, or whether it should provide the services and look to the State to bear the deficit. This led directly to the problem of the railway and the further question arose as to whether the railway as a whole must be regarded as a form of public service or whether it could ever be treated as a commercial operation.

Having reviewed the salient features of the transport industry in Ireland, Mr Childers concluded that public transport could not be governed solely by the rules of supply and demand as in the case of a commercial concern. The fact that public transport must be orientated to the social as well as the purely commercial obligations of the industry implied that the Government must reserve the right to determine by appropriate legislation the overall direction of transport policy. The CIÉ study showed that the transition costs for a change over from rail to an all-road system would involve such heavy additional capital charges that the loss would be even greater than at present. From the facts available, said Mr Childers, it was clear that the main arterial structure of the railway would surely be preserved within the ambit of the coming legislation. The commuter railway system in Dublin was also likely to remain essential, even although it would be run at a loss. The task before the Government and CIÉ was to ensure that public transport was as efficient as possible and was run at the lowest possible cost.

These conclusions of the Minister are most welcome evidence of fresh thinking at Government level on the role which the railways must play in the public transport system of Ireland. The great problem posed by the chronic financial difficulties of the railways since the end of the last war has at last been boldly faced and, notwithstanding the unfavourable economic implications, the decision has been made to retain our present arterial railway system although the Minister did temper his statement by pointing out that the solution propounded was a compromise and as such would require re-examination from decade to decade.

In view of the character and the extent of the essential transport needs of the community, the wisdom of this decision must be commended. To a student of rail transport who realises the superiority for long-haul traffic, this major decision may appear to be simply common sense, but to a Government hitherto pressing for self sufficiency of CIÉ before March 31 next, the Minister's address represents a courageous admission by the Government that it has had to re-think its public transport policy. It is well to realise, soberly, that if an all-road transport system had been decreed it would have removed railways from the country for all time and that the railways can not now "rest on their oars" but must

constantly strive to improve their services if they are to retain their place as the framework of our public transport system.

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The Committee of "The Irish Railfans' News" would like to wish all their readers the Compliments of the Season.

SOME ARTICLES OF IRISH RAILWAY INTEREST

Railway Magazine

November Stored at Strabane (Photo page)

January Irish Miscellany (Photo page)

Modern Railways

October et seq The Irish Scene

January The Railways of Ireland in 1963
 CIÉ Adopts the B4 Bogie

Railway World

November Avoca-Enniscorthy Centenary (Paragraph)

January The Emerald Isle (C.J.A.)

Modern Tramway

December Londonderry Harbour Tramways

News Section

CIÉ GENERAL NEWS REPORT

"T.E.E."

To cover the visit of his Holiness Pope Paul 6 to the Holy Land, Telefís Éireann arranged two special trains from Belfast to Dublin on Sunday January 5 and Monday January 6. These had to carry a film and tapes recorded in Belfast over the Eurovision network and it was essential that they were brought to Dublin immediately as they formed part of the evening's programme. Thus it was that B154 hauling a 3-coach BUT railcar set, 716/232/710, left Belfast at 21:30 and performed the journey of 112½ miles in 2 hours. The locomotive carried a special headboard "Telefís Éireann Express". On Monday the same train hauled by B172 was run for the same purpose leaving Belfast at 19:17 and reaching Dublin at 21:20.

Rolling Stock Developments

Although complete, neither the new kitchen car No.2403 nor the first of the Craven coaches has yet appeared in traffic as expected. At Inchicore Works a start has been made on a series of new six-wheel heating vans to augment the present four-wheel ones.

Locomotive Developments

Contrary to expectations, no steam motive power was used during the 1963 beet season and the only CIÉ steam locomotives in use are four for pre-heating stock standing in terminal stations. Nos. 132,

151 and 197 have been employed since December 2 in Dublin stations and No.251 in Cork. The last mentioned is scheduled for scrapping and is not mobile; it is hauled to and from the bay platforms in Glanmire by the diesel pilot. The Dublin locos travel under their own steam and have been observed performing a shunt when convenient, but while stationary they often have the regulator handle removed! 4-6-0 loco 800 “Maedbh” still remains at Inchicore but it is understood that she will be hauled to Belfast in the near future following a handing over ceremony. In preparation she was hauled to Sallins and back again on November 20 to test her movability. Of other preserved (or scheduled) locomotives: 5C (0-6-2T) is mounted in Ennis; 90 (0-6-0T) is in the bay platform at Fermoy where her exposure to the elements is not improving her paintwork; 184 (0-6-0) is in the open in Inchicore while 85N (4-4-0) remains in Dundalk. The stud of steam locomotives on the active list has been reduced from the 53 listed in April 1963 to a total of 17. The reduction of the fleet to this number has been progressing rapidly and a mid-December survey revealed the following allocation (numbers underlined are those locomotives intended for retention):

Athlone	159N, <u>593</u> , <u>603</u>
Cork	118, 251
Dublin (Amiens Street)	<u>132</u> , <u>151</u> , <u>197</u>
Dundalk	225, 132N, 204N
Inchicore	80N, 111, 187, 463
Limerick Junction	106, <u>125</u> , <u>130</u> , 164, <u>186</u> , 351
Mallow	109, 116
Mullingar	131N, 172, 599
Rosslare Harbour	249, <u>461</u>
Sligo	574
Sutton (Tram Shed)	<u>198</u> , <u>261</u>
Thurles	<u>104</u> , <u>124</u> , <u>195</u> , <u>262</u>
Waterford	<u>179</u> , <u>183</u>

In the case of loco 131N it is learned that scrapping will not take place immediately as it is expected that this loco will be used on the forthcoming IRRS/RCTS/SLS steam tour in June this year. At the same time the scrapping in mid-November of what was the oldest CIÉ locomotive must be mentioned. This was the 0-4-0 vertical boiler Cork coal gantry loco known as “Pat” which hauled coal hoppers on an overhead system from Penrose Quay to the coal bunker close to the shed at Glanmire Road.

Beet And Fertiliser

The 1963 sugar-beet season which has just come to a close is notable in that it is the first completed without the use of steam locos. This has been made possible by the reduced tonnage passing by rail and the attenuated system now being operated. Thurles factory was, perhaps, the least affected as in its area only the Mountmellick branch has been closed. CSÉ, in fact, even provided steam traction as their loco Mallow No.3, built in 1935 by Orenstein & Koppel, was in use between Thurles factory and the sidings, assisted by the Thurles 0-4-0 diesel. Tuam was not too greatly affected and here loading was well up to standard. A record was established by Tullamore on December 13 when 85 wagons were loaded in one day. Actually, over the three days December 12/13/14 no less than 230 wagons were loaded at this one station alone. At Carlow and Mallow the picture was much different. The severance of the lines through Palace East meant that a great proportion of the beet travelled through by road and hence the normal goods were capable of moving all the supplies from the South Eastern. At Mallow only a surprisingly low 10% of beet was railed to the factory due to the loss of the Bandon system. Now the Mallow area reaches only to Dungarvan, Listowel and Youghal, and only the last mentioned has heavy loading.

On the other hand, the traffic in fertiliser is well up to normal and the heavy flow is this year being

handled much more economically. The Cork - Croom - Limerick special does not run as it did in 1962/3 but wagons are forwarded by goods train from Cork to Limerick Junction, thence they take the place of the former passenger carriages on the Night Mail to Limerick to connect with the 03:40 Limerick-Sligo goods for Claremorris. Beyond this the 03:40 usually has a full load off the Midland and anyway has no other train to relieve it as is the case between Limerick and Claremorris. Hence a light engine works from Sligo at 13:50 (since November 9) and returns with the fertiliser, now special non-stop to Sligo at 17:00. As many as three train crews should be saved by this *modus operandi*. New Ross is also having a busy time with a reported 60-80 wagons per day probably from Cork. No development has taken place in Wicklow as to the quay extension for fertiliser traffic. A change of ownership of the Wicklow factory has taken place and this is likely the cause.

Slipping

On Sunday October 27 - one of the CIÉ cheap weekend dates - Cork tunnel proved too much for two trains both with 1,900 hp at their command. The 18:15 special relief to the regular 18:30 Cork - Dublin, left at 18:18 but stuck at MP 163 on the bank out of Cork. This bank starts from the platform end at Glanmire Road at 1 in 78 through the wet $\frac{3}{4}$ mile tunnel, steepening to 1 in 64 and, after a very short respite at 1 in 714, to 1 in 60. It was on this last mentioned grade that B161 and B141, with HV and 10 bogies, slipped to a stop and had to be rescued by A47 and banked through the section to Rathpeacon where the special departed for Dublin at 20:02, leaving A47 in the siding there. At the same time B173 and B144, LV, 12 bogies and HV, left Cork with the 18:30 for Dublin - then 93 minutes late. Extraordinary to relate, this also stuck for lack of adhesion at MP 162½ on the same gradient and had to be hauled to Rathpeacon by A47, so strategically placed there by the last train. The 18:30 eventually restarted from Rathpeacon at 21:24 reaching Amiens Street at 01:10, 2 hours 51 minutes late. Meantime the Tralee - Kingsbridge and Limerick - Kingsbridge specials performed the scheduled calls of the Cork train on the main line. As no undue difficulty had been noticed heretofore it is most remarkable that both trains should be affected, but to prevent a recurrence a pilot loco normally now hauls a 30 ton brake van through the tunnel sanding the up line before most main line departures. This is because sanding equipment is not in use on CIÉ diesel locomotives.

Liftings

Removal of abandoned lines has been reported at the following points:

West Cork: Lifted to Ballineen & Enniskeen station which has been the depot since passing Dunmanway. On occasions a C class loco has been stabled in Ballineen even over weekends.

Castlecomer: Work has reached the one intermediate station of Corbetstown and is being handled by a rail tractor and a "train" of four-wheel PW flats.

Palace East - Muine Bheag: Lifted to near Ballyling siding, between Ballywilliam and Borris, to which latter point material is being brought.

Oldcastle: Lifted from Oldcastle to the entry to Kells Station.

Edenderry: Late in September removal of the branch commenced and was completed to the site of the former Nesbitt Junction in one month.

Other Lines: The Mountmellick, Newmarket and Birr branches are now removed but no work has yet been reported from Ballylinan, Banagher or North Wexford.

Christmas Traffic

The brunt of Christmas traffic in 1963 fell on the Saturday preceding the festival - December 21. Morning trains were heavy from Kingsbridge and specials ran to Waterford at 13:40, B163, 7 bogies (all of the "wooden" era), HV and LV, which left at 13:49; and to Limerick, B165, LV, 8 bogies and

HV, which left platform 2 at 14:01½ - 1½ minutes late - with passengers standing. The 14:25 to Cork, B167, LV, 8 bogies and HV, left on time quite full and an unexpected 14:40 relief was run from No.2 which took the overflow. It was B162, 5 bogies and HV. The traditional 16:00 special had B149 in charge with 4 bogies and HV for Cork and 4 bogies and LV for Kerry. The 17:45 Limerick was B151 and B168 with HV, 10 bogies and LV, and filled nicely to capacity but the Waterford trains were poorly supported - the 18:00 special was a 6-coach railcar and the 18:15 was B160, 7 bogies and HV with only a sprinkling of passengers. The 18:45 to Cork and the 18:55 to Kerry both left promptly, the first, B126, 8 bogies and HV and the latter a 7-coach railcar. The 20:00 Night Mail comprised B150, 3 bogies, LV, HV, a horsebox and 5 wagons, while its auxiliary had B158, 2 SVs, TPO, HV, 2 bogie vans, TPO 1M, 2 LVs, a bogie van, 1 wagon and an LV.

Christmas Eve followed much the same pattern but it may be remarked that the 17:45 Limerick had only one GM (B168) for the HV and 10 bogies which were crammed full to the extent of over 100 passengers standing. The 18:00 and 18:15 to Waterford were well supported and one wonders why the former could not have left No.2 platform to relieve the congestion on No.1. Nonetheless the passenger handling today is greatly improved from the extreme overcrowding mentioned in these pages in previous years.

New Lamps

Following trials in Limerick it has been decided to replace shunters' metal hand lamps with a new type of lamp in "unbreakable" plastic. The new lamp is electric, is manufactured in Germany and weighs less than half the old oil lamp. It can show white, red and green aspects as before. Similar lamps are coming into use in Cork.

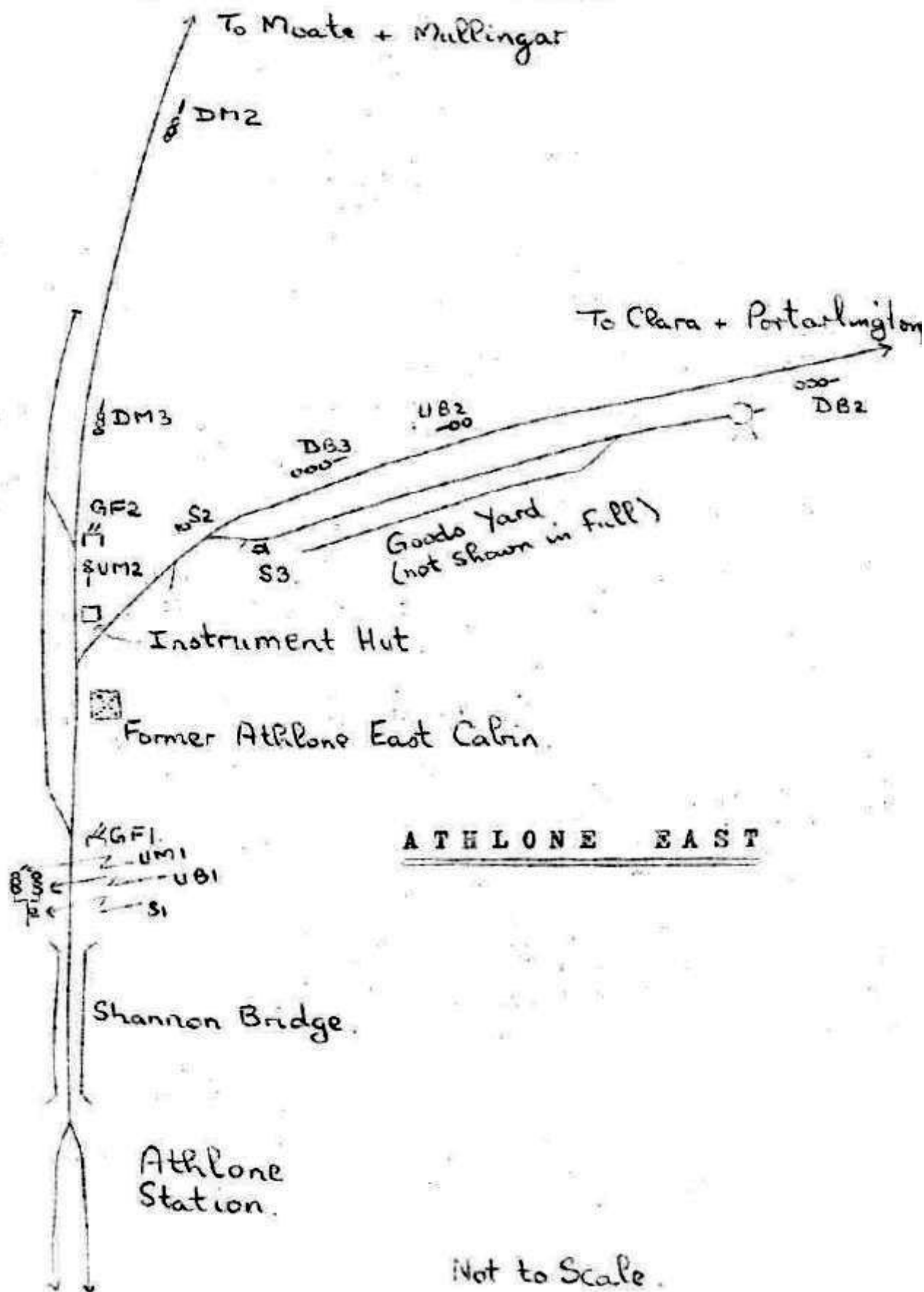
Colours And Symbols

CIE is to have a new design policy giving it distinctive colours - white, light grey, dark grey, golden brown and black. These will be used in "appropriate combinations" of which the current rail livery is an example. The familiar "flying snail" or winged wheel device is to be replaced by the letters "CIE" surrounded by, of all things, a broken wheel! Early examples of the new symbol only tend to foster appreciation of its predecessor.

Athlone East

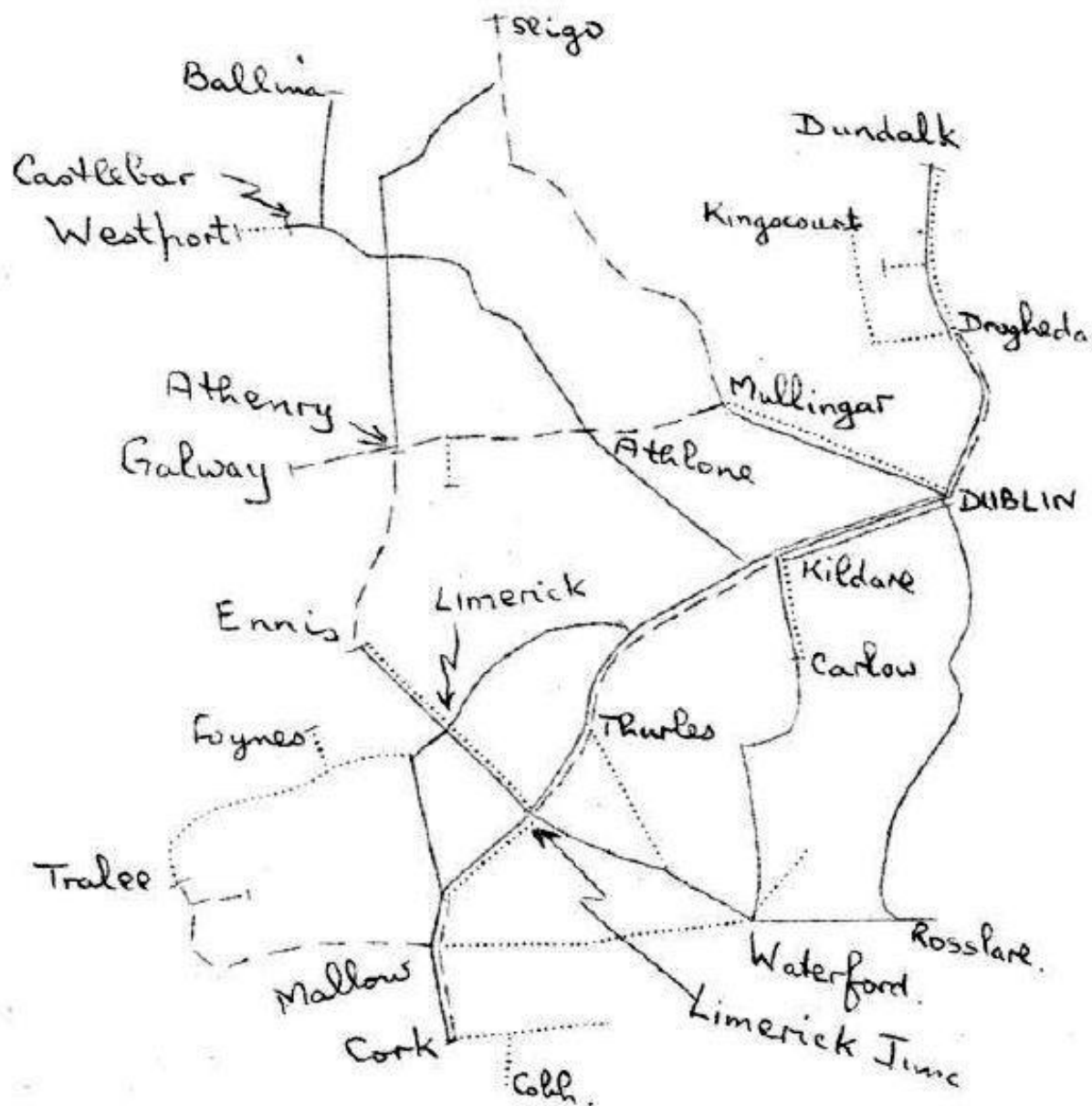
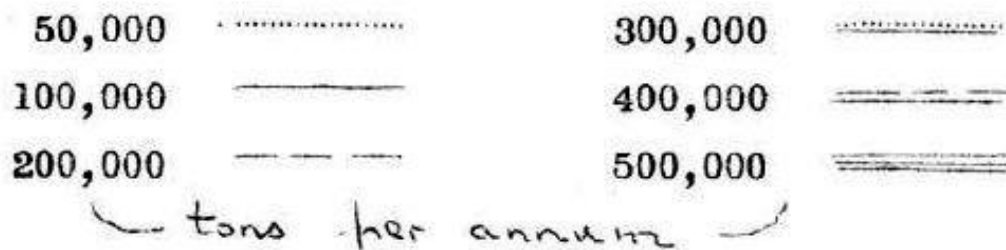
The re-signalling work in hand at Athlone reached the point of change-over from semaphores on Sunday, 1st December 1963, when the new colour light signals were brought into use east of the Shannon and the former Athlone East Cabin (32 levers including 4 spares) was closed. Its two ETS instruments, to Moate on the main line and Clara on the branch, were transferred to the West Cabin and subsidiary instruments at the end of the platform (main line) and at the East Junction (branch) are provided to expedite the "line clear" in the case of arriving up trains. Track circuits extend continuously to beyond the outer home signals on each line.

The layout of the new signals is shown on the diagram. Athlone West has now an extra "frame" (16 levers, 1 spare) in the form of switches arranged on an illuminated panel diagram showing track occupancy from the station over the track circuited area. Instead of conventional numbers the new signals and their switches are designated: DM or UM = Down (or Up) Main; DB or UB = Down (or Up) Branch, for running signals; S = Shunting signals; P = Points and GF = Ground Frame locks. These symbols are followed by a number from 1 to 3 giving sequential identification. Running signals are two or three aspect according to position but all shunt signals are 2 aspect. In addition to the signals east of the river, the Down home and Up platform starting signals are replaced by colour lights operated from the original lever frame in the West Cabin.



C.I.E.

FREIGHT DENSITY DIAGRAM
(excluding beet traffic)



Pacemaker

Last October we mentioned editorially the “Pacemaker” survey undertaken by CIÉ into its economics and operation. Recently CIÉ published a freight density map reproduced herewith. An analysis carried out by computer - using over a ton of punch cards - established that 62% of the ton-miles was over a mere 25% of track mileage and that 71% of all traffic originated at five stations. Although these were not named, it seems likely from the map that Dublin, Limerick, Cork, Drogheda and Dundalk or Thurles are those involved. Some other details of the map are most revealing; for instance, the heavy traffic out of Limerick, particularly to Ennis and Sligo, from Dublin to Carlow, Ballina and Castlebar (but not Westport) and on the Sligo line. The other extreme is notable on the Waterford-Mallow line and, most surprising of all, is the relatively low position apparently occupied by Waterford although as traffic is well dispersed over the five lines meeting there, the actual tonnage may not be too low. A similar passenger map would be extremely interesting and would likely show extreme similarity except for one or two lines where freight obviously predominates. One also wonders to what extent the inclusion of beet traffic would alter the freight map?

Collision near Mullingar

On Thursday 5th December 1963 the loco of the 15:00 Westland Row to Galway and Westport, made up of A17, LV, 6 bogies and HV, failed in the Killucan-Mullingar section near MP 49. Efforts to restart A17 proved useless so A42 was summoned from Athlone to assist. On reaching the disabled train, however, A42 collided with it causing damage to both locos, destroying luggage van 2709 and causing slight damage to compo 2172 and second 1456. The locos were buffer-locked and effectively blocked the line to traffic for over 6 hours. The accident occurred in dusk at about 18:25 and the following 18:15 to Sligo was smartly stopped at Liffey Junction, returned to Amiens Street and was re-routed via Portarlinton, Athlone and Mullingar. The up Day Mail had by this time reached Mullingar and its diversion via Athlone and Portarlinton made it 2 hours and 12 minutes late into Dublin although cross-channel boat passengers had been brought forward by bus to make their connection. The line was cleared in time for the up Galway - Dublin, but not the down, Night Mail to travel via Mullingar.

Ballygannon

The disruption caused by high tides flooding the Dublin-Wexford line at Ballygannon, between Greystones and Kilcoole, is now a regular part of operation on the former D&SER. The line was closed briefly at both high tides of November 4. Again, on November 11, the 07:25 down was turned at Greystones and returned in the path of the up 06:40. The real 06:40 was turned at Wicklow while the 10:15 down followed it, a 3-coach railcar with the luckless 07:25's LV and SV. A relief down day goods also ran to overtaking point with the ordinary day goods which was delayed by the tide at Greystones. By far the worst trouble occurred on December 2-4. First the up night goods of the 2nd - B169, 23 wagons and van - was delayed and in turn slightly delayed the 06:40 up of the 3rd - B167, 4 bogies and HV. The down 07:25 scraped through before the line was closed but the 10:15 got no further than Bray; indeed even the 08:10 ex Greystones started from Bray on that day. The 18:45 down fared no better than the 10:15 and a bus and lorry service bridged the gap to Wicklow where a 3-coach BUT railcar forming the 16:00 up was turned into the continuation of the 18:45 down. Next day, December 4, was worse; the 07:25 and 10:15 were cancelled; buses ran through to Wicklow and the up 16:00 was the first train passed although it only carried parcels beyond Wicklow having transhipped its passengers into a bus there. Subsequently two goods, B175, 44 wagons and van and B173, 41 wagons and van, came up within 1½ hours of each other. They both were, however, almost one day late! After such a saga of misfortune it was heartening to hear on December 14 that members of Wicklow County Council were anxious to meet CIÉ to discuss proposals for rail protection works at Ballygannon. The Council are to be highly commended for this move, showing a clear realisation of the high value of their line to a county so dependent on tourist revenue as Wicklow is.

The ex SL&NCR railcar, up to September last working the Limerick-Nenagh local train, has now again appeared. On December 15 this 59-seat car stabled at Limerick Junction to work the 13:33 thence to Mallow. The car returns light; a mere 37½ revenue earning miles per day. Unfortunately we learn that the car had to be withdrawn on December 23 owing to a mechanical failure.

Third Express

On and from January 6 a third Dublin-Cork three hour express was introduced by CIÉ in the down direction only. This is made possible by the division of the former 18:45 Cork and Kerry train, formerly a double diesel, into two loco-hauled trains; the first non-stop to Cork at 18:30 and the Kerry at 18:45 calling at Port Laoise, Templemore, Thurles, Limerick Junction, Mallow and branch stations to Tralee. The latter gives a connection to Cork for the benefit of both intermediate passengers and those who continue to arrive at Kingsbridge for the 18:45 to Cork! This connection is made by altering the 20:40 Thurles-Cork to leave Mallow at 22:16. Although the inaugural train was on Monday January 6, an 18:30 ran on the Saturday to transfer the train set to Cork. The set employed on the inaugural train was a credit to CIÉ, immaculate inside and out and with all coaches in the new black, brown and white livery and even in numerical sequence! It was hauled by B128 with seconds 1501, 1502, 1503, buffet 2402, brake second 1904 (in use for meal service), compos 2130, 2131 and HV 3115. It carried 103 passengers. This is a great improvement for Cork passengers who now reach home at 21:30 instead of 22:20. Another simultaneous alteration to the main line timetable was the exchanging Ballybrophy to Templemore in the stops of the up 15:30 Cork-Dublin Mail. This is due to the establishment of the Garda training headquarters in the former Templemore barracks. Also from January 6 the 06:30 Dublin-Cork lost its restaurant car.

UTA GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Policy Predicted

Although details of the promised Transport legislation due this month have not yet been given, the debate in Stormont on November 13 left little doubt in most minds as to the railways' position after its enactment. Clearly, the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr William Craig, intends to place reliance on an extension of the present road-building programme and the period of its implementation will probably be the remaining life of the railway system except, probably, the commuter lines mentioned in the Benson Report: Belfast to Larne, Portadown and Bangor. Notwithstanding Mr Benson's recommended retention of the line to the Border for "Prestige reasons" it has even been threatened although probably, in the main, for political motives. Mr Craig gave the figures for UTA operation in the year ended 30th September 1963 (1962 figures in brackets): Rail -£550,000 (-£458,000); Road Passenger -£75,000 (-£55,000); Road Freight -£20,000 (+£100,000); Hotels +£25,000 (+£13,000); Miscellaneous +£90,000 (+£92,000); Total Operating Loss £530,000 (£307,000), and it is noteworthy that the hitherto profitable road freight now loses money. The swing from public to private transport was mentioned and the Minister said, "Having regard to the geography and distribution of population in the Province it is natural that the private road vehicle should become the predominant mode of transport" and promised "a new road programme which will go a long way to meet the requirements of the Province". It is significant, however, that he "could not see the way clear" to give its cost; on the basis of the M1 a motorway to Derry might cost £50m! Mr Benson and his report came in for considerable criticism both in and out of Stormont, mainly on the grounds that he judged the situation from an economic standpoint only and did not take the capital cost of new roads into account in determining closure proposals. In all probability his report will be implemented, but in easier stages than suggested although it is unlikely that the GNR Derry line will see many more summers. Following the Stormont debate Mr Craig came in for censure when, speaking at Strabane, he remarked that railways would soon be as obsolete as the

stagecoach and hinted at dismemberment of the UTA. This caused widespread disapproval - although it compares with his previous statements on November 13 - and a censure motion was tabled for discussion on December 10. Employees of the UTA even marched, behind a makeshift stagecoach, to Stormont to lobby MPs in protest. A pre-Christmas rail strike which was also threatened was happily averted but it is fair to say that the Minister does not enjoy the Union's confidence at present. The Transport (Northern Ireland) Bill 1964 is awaited with interest.

Further fare Increase

On October 28 passenger fares on the UTA were increased by amounts varying from $\frac{1}{2}^d$ to 4^d , the latter applying to all fares over 3/-. More drastic was the increase by 10% on season tickets and freight charges.

Loco Developments

Locomotives overhauled at Duncrue Street since our last issue include Nos. 5, 52 (2-6-4Ts) and 97 (2-6-0). The last has been equipped with a large tender, taken from No.99, to enable it to be used on non-stop Dublin trains. Locomotives currently being overhauled are Nos. 3, 53 (2-6-4Ts), 49 (0-6-0) and 170 (4-4-0). The last mentioned is having firebox repairs and it is not expected to have a general overhaul. 4-4-0 No.207 - one of the locomotives acquired in June last from CIÉ - had had its name plates removed and has been fitted with wooden plates bearing her name "Boyne". They were made at Duncrue Street and fitted at Adelaide. 2-6-4T No.8 has been transferred to the GN section to replace No.53.

Coaching Developments

While coaches unfit for service are still stored at Great Victoria Street and Adelaide, a number of coaches have been scrapped recently at the latter point, including ex NCC diners 172 and 174 and bogie van N612 which was involved in the Rush derailment of January 1963. A further pair of bogie vans, Nos. 615 and 616, have been overhauled at York Road. Several secondary composite and brake composite coaches have been reduced to all second class and brake seconds, although N281 appeared briefly as an all-first! It is now all-second.

More Passengers

It is understood that the UTA are considering the provision of a halt on the Bangor line at Seahill, between Craigavad and Helen's Bay, to serve new housing developments close by.

Work in Progress

Extensive alterations to the York Road area are being undertaken by the UTA and work commenced in November last. Already the carriage siding between the up and down running lines has been removed and the up line is now on its site, leaving the former up line as a siding. The signalling is also being altered. Monkstown Junction has been clipped and the "Back Line" from Greenisland is now a siding. At Balmoral the "fifth line" points have been removed. Meantime no further progress is reported in the colour light signalling between Belfast and Lisburn.

Railcar Developments

ME railcars Nos. 8 and 9 running with trailer 515, that off the Ganz railcar No.5, were borrowed from the NCC section from November 25 to 29 and saw service on the Bangor line. For what is believed to be the first time MP diesels were seen at Great Victoria Street station on October 30. The train consisted of railcar 64, coaches 542, 541, 531, railcars 38 and 63, and they had come from Coleraine to Adelaide for a football match. They stabled on the "third road" at Belfast Central Junction before returning to Coleraine from platform 4 of Great Victoria Street. Railcar 101, lying at Derry, is to be sold for scrap. It was to have been preserved in the Belfast Transport Museum as soon as its working

life was over but, as reported a year ago, it was badly damaged in a collision with loco 33. It is understood that the Museum is now interested in replacing it with the sole surviving Railbus - now PW vehicle 8178, but formerly railbus No.4. It is also "hors de combat" as previously reported, having had one of its patent Howden/Meredith wheels punctured while working on a permanent way inspection near Adavoyle. It is now lying at Goragewood.

Timetable Alterations

Several subtle alterations have taken place in the Strabane area since the introduction of the winter timetable. First, the former Saturday afternoon Derry-Omagh train of last winter has been altered to a steam Strabane-Omagh working at 14:45 (SO) returning at 16:00 (SO). The latter takes connection out of the 14:00 (SO) Belfast-Omagh for Strabane (not Derry as mentioned in our October issue). The services to Porthall, St. Johnston and Carrigans are changed and since November 4 the 17:00 Belfast-Derry ceased to call at Porthall but is replaced by a Strabane-Porthall local at 18:00 (SX) - the Strabane pilot engine, which returns propelling its empty train to Strabane. On Saturdays the 19:00 Strabane-Derry local now provides a service to Porthall and St. Johnston only; the Carrigans stop is omitted. These three stations now have only one up service per week - the 18:15 (SO) Derry-Strabane. The 16:20 Derry-Belfast is, this winter, running in its accelerated summer path. With the basing of a single unit MP diesel at Ballymena for pilot duties on September 9, the last regular NCC winter steam train, the 07:00 Ballymena-Antrim, and vice versa, has ceased to be so powered.

LOOSE LINKS

- CIÉ 10 ton wagon 1211M, still with MGWR(I) plate, was noted on November 15 conveying cement 137 miles from Drogheda to Larne, despite its passing the cement works at Magheramorne, 3½ miles from its destination.
- Seas on December 3 and 4 flooded both lines at Seapoint and brought Blackrock into use as a temporary block post.
- The platforms at Cookstown Junction and the up platform at Kilroot have been shortened to accommodate only 4 bogies.
- In September Queen's Quay station was repainted in a colour scheme of "plum and mustard".
- About 14:40 on November 12, a single unit railcar No.28 was derailed between Carnalea and Helen's Bay by part of a tree blown down by the gale and the up line was blocked during the remainder of the day.
- Since October 23 all signals at Ardee except shunting discs have been dispensed with.

JOURNEY JOTTINGS

December 7: Belfast - Dublin

Nine bogies were drawn up at Great Victoria Street's No.2 platform to make the 09:25 special for the Rugby International at Lansdowne Road. It had been preceded by loco 56 and 8 bogies on the regular 08:15. Minutes before departure time loco 97 (2-6-0), with the large tender off loco 99, backed on to the train which left at 09:26¼, delayed loading latecomers.

Dunmurry was passed 9¼ minutes later at 39 mph. At Finaghy a railcar and driving trailer on the 09:20 Lisburn local was passed and speed rose on the easier grades through Lisburn to 50 mph and to a good 65 before MP 96 summit was passed at 55. The Derry and Newry diesels passed close on each other's heels at MP 97 and MP 93 respectively. A spurt was raised down the bank to 67 mph before a cautious 22½ mph into Portadown, where the train was still over 1 minute late. Good steady running mostly at

55-58 mph brought loco 97 through Goraghowood just ahead of time. The 17½ miles thence to Dundalk were run in 24 minutes with a minimum of 25 mph on the gruelling 1 in 111 approaching MP 65½ summit and without hard running down the 1 in 100 of the 8 mile Wellington Bank. Approaching Dundalk loco 50 steamed northwards with the 09:15 ex Dublin - 6 bogies and 3 vans - some 10 minutes late even on its WTT departure time of 10:35.

Notwithstanding a 2¾ minute water stop at Dundalk the Mogul left 2 minutes before its booked passing time of 10:46 and maintained this lead on the timetable to Drogheda and, indeed, almost to Dublin. Meantime two trains, a goods and a passenger, passed. The first, headed by a new GM diesel was labouring over Kellystown bank but the second, the Enterprise, was passed flat out at MP 22¼ with B125 in charge. At Howth Junction, passed punctually at 11:46, the 11:30 Amiens Street - Howth was awaiting a clear road to the branch and the special, but for three signal checks on approach, would have arrived on time. As it was the 3½ minutes lateness in no way detracted from the merits of a good, but not outstanding run.

STATION SURVEY

Omagh

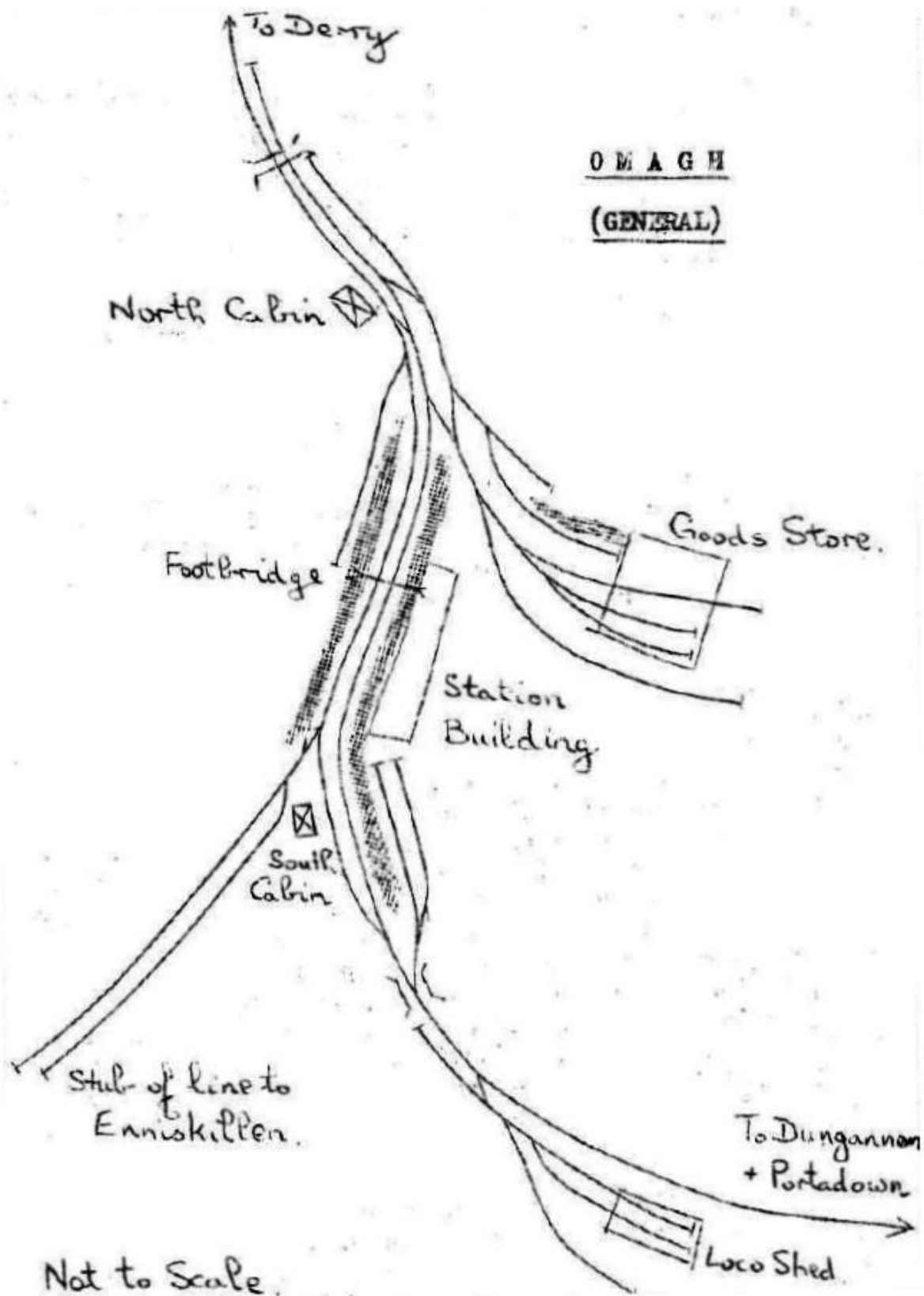
We who consider the Portadown - Omagh - Derry line as the GNR "Derry Road", find it difficult to remember that the Dundalk - Enniskillen - Omagh route was opened first by some 2½ years on 2nd February 1859. In fact the line from Derry reached Omagh on 13th September 1852, was extended to Fintona on 15th June 1853 and reached Enniskillen on 19th August 1854. The route over the Pomeroy hills from Dungannon and Portadown reached Omagh on 2nd September 1861. The Market Branch was opened in June 1862 and was used by the Portadown, Dungannon & Omagh Railway as their goods station. The then passenger station was north of the present day one which was a joint one, built by the Londonderry & Enniskillen Railway and opened on 3rd February 1863. Although through carriages from Dublin to Derry ran via Enniskillen for some time, the route via Dungannon came to be generally accepted as the main line and it has now outlived the former by over 6 years. How much longer it will continue to do so is, in view of Mr Craig's remarks in Stormont, hard to estimate.

The station which was known as Omagh (General) was an awkward one on an "S" curve with but one platform at first. Later a second one was provided. An up bay faced to Belfast and a short down one faced Derry. The station is 66½ miles from Belfast (exactly two-thirds of the way to Derry) but it is at MP 41½ from Portadown station and at MP 88¾ from Dundalk Barrack Street, measured via the erstwhile Irish North-Western through Enniskillen. After closure of the latter, track alterations took place of which the removal of the double line junction was the most salient. The junction was very difficult to work due to the need for removal of rear coaches for Enniskillen from most Belfast-Derry trains. Due to the position of the junction these were often fouling it when the train came to a stand and, as trains frequently crossed in Omagh, the difficulties of platform occupation by the four trains involved was considerable. Nowadays such manoeuvres are not necessary, much to the regret of all, for after the last trains of 30th September 1957, Omagh ceased to be more than a through station.

The goods arrangements at Omagh are of interest. The principal goods yard is that situated in a cramped space behind the up platform, but traffic continues to be handled at the terminus of the Market Branch. This line diverges at MP 40¾ facing to Belfast, from the Portadown-Omagh line and is served by three trains each weekday (2 on Saturdays), leaving Omagh (General) at 04:30, 09:00 and 15:05 (SX) and returning some half hour later. On Mondays the 04:30 runs 30 minutes later. These transfers propel their trains to the Junction to the Market Branch on the outward journey but returning they propel on the main line from the junction to the General goods yard. During the 1933 strike the junction was the scene of a dramatic smash when a down train hauled by loco 122 "split the points" which had been put in mid position. The loco and two coaches went up the Market Branch while the

remainder of the train continued on the main line.

Omagh, although a but a shadow of its former self in the days of the Enniskillen line, is of importance still, not only as a point of interchange with bus services, but also in its own right as both goods and passenger traffic remain heavy.



Feature Section

THE GENERAL MOTORS DIESELS

In October 1959 CIÉ invited tenders for new diesel locomotives, 15 of which were to be “of not less than 800 hp”, and speculation was rife as to which manufacturer would obtain the contract for their supply, because, although the necessity for the new locomotives was explained by CIÉ as being due to the acquisition of the section of the GNR in the Republic, the major reason, more apparent to close observers of CIÉ’s locomotive affairs, was the deterioration of the Metropolitan Vickers A class locos built in 1955, and a recognition of the uselessness of the smaller C class locos of the same manufacturer. While the failure of the 34 550 hp C class locos to match up to expectations was one of the main reasons for the lingering twilight of steam on minor duties, more serious to CIÉ and the travelling public was the high failure factor of the A class on which all heavy trains were dependent for motive power. Over the years CIÉ carried out many modifications to the A class and great credit is due to the works and maintenance staffs for keeping them running. This is an even greater compliment when one remembers that British Railways, when confronted with similar problems, withdrew their entire fleet for some years before modifying them. This, of course, CIÉ just could not do. When these locomotives were obtained CIÉ were in the unenviable position of having no choice but to take them as they then were the only British diesels which could be obtained quickly and currency restrictions prevented CIÉ from looking to foreign locomotive manufacturers.

This was not the case in 1960 and since a consensus of opinion seemed to favour German locomotives it came as rather a surprise that the contract had been placed with the General Motors Corporation of America. Visions of streamlined monsters on Irish rails were dispelled when the first of the locos was landed in January 1961 and it was seen that the only “American” features incorporated were powerful searchlights and a form of cow-catcher. In all there are 15 of what are now known as the “Old GMs” or B121 class locos. They are 950 hp diesel-electric locos mounted on two four-wheel bogies; they weigh 61 tons, have a cab at one end only and are numbered B121-B135. Those who decried all forms of diesel power had much to make fun of. As the locomotives were single-cabbed and were operated by one man only they had, for safety, to be worked with the cab end leading at all times to give a clear view of signals and thus required the retention of such turntables as had not been deemed redundant and removed. Worse still, they could not be used on goods trains as they had insufficient braking power. Also, while it must be agreed that 950 hp is sufficient for most of CIÉ’s services on existing timetables during most of the year it became apparent that there was little room left for improvement with engines of this horse power and unfortunately this series could not be used in multiple. Despite all these faults, however, when put into service on passenger trains the B121s immediately proved themselves invaluable provided they were not overloaded. This was regrettably often the case and resulted in poor timekeeping. On the other hand they showed that they were mechanically reliable and could be depended upon not to fail in service. So we had an anomaly in that despite the reliability of the GMs the 1,200 hp A class had still to form the backbone of CIÉ’s motive power, working practically all goods trains and the heavier passenger turns such as the 15:30 up Cork Mail.

It soon became apparent that the motive power problem was not solved. When in December 1961 a Dublin newspaper reported that 30 locomotives had been ordered from General Motors, although this was then denied by CIÉ, it was obvious that something was afoot and it came as no surprise when in May 1962 CIÉ announced that 37 more General Motors locos had been ordered, this time to be double-cabbed and fitted for multiple unit working. These locomotives were delivered in May 1962, numbered B141-B177. The effect of their introduction was salutary. The A class were relegated to goods

workings where their weight was of greatest advantage. Loco-hauled passenger turns quickly became the province of the GMs. At times of heavy traffic double-heading became the order of the day and proved very satisfactory. For the first time since the policy of dieselisation was embarked upon the object of banishing steam from the Irish countryside was almost attained and finally became a fact in April 1963. The "old GMs" to a great extent took up the duties of the C class Metrovicks which nowadays do very little work. The new GMs are not confined to passenger trains and are regularly working goods trains. Being very clean, they are proving very popular with their crews, although most drivers still prefer the A class when rostered for goods workings as they feel that the latter have more effective braking power. The effect the new GMs have had on traffic problems is also most noticeable and no longer is there to be found in each week's working circular a long list of where pilot engines are to be stationed in case of breakdowns. Dependability is assured, but one serious deficiency has not been cured for, except in multiple and with restricted loads, the GMs have little or no reserve of power for any appreciable improvement in schedules - one of the few improvements that is lacking in the modernisation of CIÉ services. Most reductions in timings so far introduced have been as a result of station closures, not of faster running. There are very few trains on CIÉ with exacting schedules, taking into account their regular loadings. Reported elsewhere in this issue is the introduction of an additional non-stop service between Dublin and Cork on January 6 but it is a matter of some disappointment that the schedule allows the present standard three hours, despite the fact that the tests of October 1960 proved that a train could cover the distance in 2 hours 33 minutes without exceeding 70 mph.

Some may question the needs for further acceleration. It is, however, evident that the margin between the time taken by an average motorist and the best train differ by all too narrow an amount. Even a 10 hp car can cover the Dublin-Cork journey in 3½ hours and this is over the route where the railway is at its most competitive. On other journeys where closure of small stations have not yet expedited the rail schedules, road can equal or surpass the best rail times. It is, however, true that the train offers a far superior standard of comfort and freedom of movement than most road vehicles but in this modern age of hustle some regard the saving of time as of paramount importance. The value in prestige of high speed services is recognised outside Ireland and a special express timing of 2 hours 45 minutes to Cork should not be an impossibility, even if it meant a restriction in train weight. Timed to suit business traffic and hauled by two GM diesels on whose reliability CIÉ can depend, such a service should tap this lucrative field.