

THE

IRISH RAILFANS' NEWS

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EDITORIAL

In so far as the Transport Tribunal, now sitting in Belfast and having before it the question of the closure of further sections of the Northern Ireland railway system, is concerned, we do not feel that the usual niceties of awaiting its findings before commenting need restrict us. From the very outset it became apparent that the Tribunal is only functioning as a legal requirement and that its findings will in the end likely coincide with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Government.

The proposed closure of the Portadown - Derry line is, of course, the main source of objection and, surprisingly enough, a negative line of defence seems to have been taken by the Trade Unions despite the considerable unemployment that will result. They and others seem to have accepted the Tribunal Chairman's statement that the possible past mismanagement of railway affairs was of no concern and that only the accounts of the UTA would be considered. Acceptance of this rules out intelligent investigation and covers up the many sins of the past. The fact that the UTA's nearest neighbour, CIÉ, has not been able to make its railways pay, but has, nonetheless, adopted a policy of modernisation and efficiency in working methods, does not seem to mean anything to the Northern way of thinking. The inference is that all those in Northern Ireland in a position to object have been overawed by the dictatorial attitude of the Tribunal. One of the very few facts of any consequence disclosed at the hearings was that the Portadown - Derry line accounts for 28% of the UTA's entire rail freight traffic. What was not disclosed was the proportion of the 28% which originates in the Republic of Ireland and is destined to Co. Donegal, also in the Republic. This in fact is the kernel of the problem, just as it was in 1957 when the "Irish North" was closed. It is a purely political question which identifies itself with the Stormont policy of isolating the North from the South. In furtherance of this apparent aim the jobs of many railwaymen affected and the future development of the economy along the border area will likely be sacrificed.

The economics of the operation of this line are a secondary consideration. No one has even suggested what the picture would be if diesel locos were introduced to work the goods trains, which, as any observer can see, run fully loaded. No one has suggested the closure of smaller stations, leaving only Dungannon, Omagh and Strabane open as railheads for the surrounding areas. The economics of operation, if in the hands of CIÉ, would be quite certain as the bulk of the traffic is of the sort that both it and British Railways (but not Mr Benson of recent fame) have proved to be ideal for rail transport - the long distance goods traffic. This is demonstrated by the lengths to which CIÉ are prepared to go in working the Donegal traffic over the NCC line via Coleraine to Derry if the Omagh line closes.

Such thoughts are unlikely to receive much sympathy at Stormont and perhaps the resignation of all those affected to the likelihood that the railway will be closed in any event is justified in the light of the history of rail transport in the area during the last 40 years. We do feel, however, that a much better battle could have been fought even in the face of such opposition.

SOME ARTICLES OF IRISH RAILWAY INTEREST

Railway Magazine

August New Irish Coaches are Versatile

Modern Railways

August New All-Metal CIÉ Coaches.

August et seq The Irish Scene

Railway World

October Irish Rail Speed Today

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Please Note: The 1965 Subscription Rate has had to be raised to FOUR shillings (Overseas 6/-).

News Section

CIÉ GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Winter Timetable

No spectacular innovations are included in the current passenger timetable, which has been in operation since September 7. Services generally are provided on the same pattern as last winter including the 18:30 Kingsbridge-Cork express on weekdays and the separate Sunday trains from Amiens Street to Cork and Limerick. An important change of practice from last winter, however, is made in the Midland Section, where the morning weekday departures from Westland Row are provided by two trains this year (08:40 to Galway and 09:10 to Westport and Sligo) as opposed to one combined train at 08:40 last winter. In fact, for the first 2 weeks of the current timetable three separate trains ran each weekday. The return workings to Dublin in the evenings also follow the new practice this year. The most noteworthy curtailment in service as compared with last winter is made on the Dublin-Drogheda section of the Dublin Suburban lines where the train service in both directions is withdrawn from stations Killester to Portmarnock after 19:30 each evening. This development follows the earlier withdrawal of winter evening services on the Howth branch in September 1962 and on the Amiens Street - Greystones section in September 1960. An unexpected feature of the timetable is the provision of an extra service on Friday mornings only from Rosslare Harbour to Wexford North and back, apparently to cater for local market traffic. Another feature is the extension of the extra summer season boat trains connecting the daylight sailings at Rosslare Harbour with Cork, Limerick and Dublin (with the exception of the 20:00 train from Waterford to Dublin) until the first week of October. Another new summer service - the Sunday train in both directions between Amiens Street and Waterford - has also been continued throughout October although this has not been published in the winter timetable. Finally it is of interest that this timetable does not include last winter's Thursdays only connection from Ennis to Limerick, which enabled people from the former town to make a return day trip to Dublin (via Nenagh and Ballybrophy). These Ennis-Limerick connections were discontinued as from Thursday August 20 due to lack of support and have not reappeared in the winter timetable.

Annual Report

The overall net deficit of CIÉ for the year ended 31st March 1964 was £1,605,881, an improvement of almost £154,000 on the previous year. The deficit on rail operation was reduced by some £457,000 to a

total of £904,769. This was achieved by a combination of an increase of £115,000 in revenue and a curtailment of expenditure by £342,000. Goods train traffic earned £153,000 more than the previous year but passenger traffic earnings decreased by £42,000. Traffic which contributed to the increase in rail tonnage included cement, groceries, ale, porter, gypsum, scrap iron and peat moss. The total tonnage handled by rail was 2,471,000 - an increase of 9,000 over previous years. A significant achievement of the rail sector during the year under review was that expenditure was reduced in spite of the "Ninth Round" wage increase of approximately 12%. The report claims that this reduction was achieved mainly because of the extension of diesel traction, the substitution of road transport for a number of branch railway lines, the closing of 68 small stations during the year and reduced expenditure on the maintenance of rolling stock. The statistics appended to the report disclose that the official loco stock now consists of 18 steam locomotives, 165 diesel-electric, 3 diesel-mechanical and 44 diesel-hydraulic locos. The report adds, however, that rail services throughout the year were operated exclusively by diesel power and that "high standards of reliability and punctuality of service were generally obtained".

State Special

On Thursday September 24 a special train was run from Kingsbridge to Killarney at 09:45 conveying the President of India who was paying a State visit to Ireland. The train was hauled by General Motors locos B145 and B151 looking spotless and with whitened buffers. The train, which included the State saloon 351 and the new kitchen car 2403, was scheduled at a particularly slow rate - 2 hours 20 minutes to pass Limerick Junction - and was due at Killarney at 14:00. As the President was leaving Ireland via Shannon Airport there was no return working; the train returned empty later in the afternoon.

Modernisation

At Glanmire Road station, Cork, the local booking office is undergoing complete alteration. The former semi-circular one has been removed and is being replaced by a modern straight glass-fronted booking window. An area of the concourse is also being tiled in a black and white pattern. These colours are also in evidence on new type nameboards which have appeared at several stations on the system. The new boards are bi-lingual and have admirably clear lettering in black on a white ground. They are, however, painted, in contrast to the former "white on black" enamel boards and it is difficult to see what, if any, improvement the new style can claim; it certainly can not be in reduction of maintenance. In several stations they replace the GS&WR type board with raised letters which was extremely durable - but in English only. Rath Luirc has, remarkably, reverted to its former name - Charleville - on the new board although retaining Rath Luirc as the Irish equivalent. The new goods stores both at Charleville and Mallow, mentioned previously, are now in use. At Grange, on the Clonmel-Waterford section, an extension to the loading bank has been made for the beet season.

Locomotive Developments

Work is proceeding in Inchicore on loco C234 which is to receive a Maybach 950 hp engine in place of the Metrovick 550 hp one with which all this class are fitted. The use of steam locomotives for steam heating of passenger trains will be obviated this winter by the fitting of stationery Spanner boilers at principal termini. Two have been fitted at Amiens Street and Kingsbridge but on October 6, loco 130 was transferred from Amiens Street to Inchicore where it will be used for pre-heating coaching stock being supplied to Kingsbridge. An interesting development is the repainting of the Inchicore breakdown crane with zebra stripes at each end for easier identification. At Thurles locos 104, 124, 195 and 262 have been moved from in front of the loco shed to the "back of the cabin" siding, on the down side north of the station. The loco shed has been reduced to a two-road one by an erection in the west side of the shed. Apart from the moves mentioned above all steam locomotives are, at the time of writing, still in the positions previously reported.

Rolling Stock Developments

At the time of writing work is in progress on all of the remainder of the 40 coaches - now, apparently, the total order - designed by Cravens Ltd and being assembled in Inchicore works. These coaches, described in our April issue, are still confined to the Southern section of the system and only about 25 are yet in traffic. It is surprising that none has yet been allocated to the "Enterprise" set - an overdue development which we had hoped would have taken place by now to bring this train into line with the "Fáilte" and "Sláinte" sets. The four six-wheel heating vans are in traffic since the steam-heating season commenced and are numbered 3153-3156 inclusive (not from 3151 as previously stated). Use of the new CIÉ wheel symbol has become more apparent in recent months and is now noticeable on many coaches and on goods wagons in replacement of the former "flying snail" device. Another novel feature is the painting of red and yellow stripes in zebra fashion on the guard's side-lookout of goods brake vans. This enables locomen to see more readily that their train is complete. On Thursday September 24 a special of condemned vehicles was worked from Cork to Mullingar comprising, on arrival at Mullingar, 41 wagons, ex MGWR six-wheel coaches 3M, 20M, 164M, 9M, 85M, 57M, 165M, 151M, 56M, 30M, 177M and Mallow breakdown van 316A. Loco A8 provided the motive power and by now all the vehicles have been dismantled and burned.

Cheap Weekends

The once-monthly bargain weekend fares will again be on offer this winter. It is learned that there will be 8 such, on weekends commencing Fridays: October 23, November 13, December 4, January 22, February 19, March 19, April 23 and May 14. The fares will be the same as before, single rate for return journey. Also as before, special Sunday evening services will operate, where such services do not already exist, from the principal provincial centres to Dublin. Since the extension of the five day week to the Civil Service, the trend of weekend traffic to the Friday evening departures from Dublin has been marked and the regular up evening trains have often been loaded to capacity. Slight alteration to the make-up of suburban trains on Mondays to Fridays has also been necessary due to the increase in passengers on trains after 17:30 at the expense of those departing between 17:00 and 17:30.

Private Sidings

The new sidings at Shelton Abbey - serving the £6m nitrogenous fertiliser plant of Nitrigin Éireann Teoranta in the Woodenbridge-Arklow section of the D&SER main line - have been completed since our last issue. Two main line connections are provided - one facing in each direction. At the Woodenbridge end of the fan of sidings an automatic barrier level crossing has been erected but is not yet in use - the first such in Ireland on a single track line, rendering the "Second Train Coming" warning unnecessary. The siding extends across the Avonmore by a pre-stressed concrete bridge to the factory about a mile to the south-east. Although production at the factory is not scheduled to commence until early 1965, the sidings have already been in use to convey building materials to the construction site. Further south in D&SE territory, another siding has recently been completed at New Ross to serve the fertiliser plant of Messrs Albatros Windmill Ltd. This single track siding, on the Waterford side of New Ross station, has been built between the railway and the river Barrow and access to the factory (which is on the far side of the railway and an adjoining public road) is made possible by a tunnel constructed underneath the railway and the road. Judging by recent press announcements of major projected industrial plants at Dublin and Limerick, it would appear that further private sidings may shortly be constructed in these centres. The preliminary sketch plans of the new chemical complex to be built by Gouldings Ltd, in conjunction with ICI Ltd, at East Wall, Dublin, make provision for sidings connecting the plant with North Wall yards while it has also been announced that the large processed timber project to be built at Rosbrien, near Limerick, by Noyek Ltd, in association with Israeli interests will have a rail connection. If these plans materialise at Limerick, it is most likely that the new siding would diverge from the 3½ mile private siding built in 1961 to serve the cement factory

at Castlemungret.

Loughrea

A resurgence of traffic on the branch has required the retention of the summer formation - a C class loco and 2 bogie coaches. It is understood that the revitalisation is due to the difficulties of parking in Loughrea!

Signalling Developments

The fourth public automatic barrier level crossing in Ireland came into use on September 21 at Dromiskin on the Dublin-Belfast main line between Castlebellingham and Dundalk. It is approximately half a mile south of Commons crossing which was similarly fitted on 2nd September 1963. The installation follows the pattern of previous ones at Grange, Commons and Emly, all of which are situated on double lines. The first single line one will likely be that at the road entrance to the new factory at Shelton, mentioned elsewhere in this issue. Near MP 55¾ between Craughwell and Athenry on the Limerick-Sligo line a new level crossing is being constructed but this will probably be of conventional gated pattern. On August 3, for one day only, the "closed" signal cabin at Newcastle was brought into use for the day of the Wicklow Regatta traffic. The signals have since been marked with an 'X' denoting that they are out of use and a similar state of affairs exists at Blarney, Boher, Pallas and Oola. Craughwell, another block post where signals had been similarly marked, is to have its status restored commencing on October 19 for the sugar beet season at Tuam factory.

Mullingar Accident Report

The report of the Inquiry into the accident near Mullingar on 5th December 1963 was made by Mr T.L. Hogan, the Railway Inspecting Officer, in July. The circumstances were reported in our April issue. The Inspecting Officer concluded that the cause of the accident was the failure of the driver of A42 - the relief engine coming from Mullingar to assist the stranded 15:00 Dublin-Galway - to drive carefully, keep a good look out and to have his engine under control approaching the disabled train. The question of protection of the train arose and Mr Hogan concluded that in the circumstances detonators placed ¼ mile from the stranded train afforded sufficient protection but he recommended that the CIE rules are in need of revision and clarification as soon as possible. He also recommended that one person should be in charge of all operations at the scene of an accident and criticised the lack of attention shown for the welfare of the passengers in the instance under review.

Glenealy

The sharp turnout at the south end of Glenealy station has been eased following the removal of the crossing loop and the 25 mph speed restriction has been removed. Station and signal cabin are both closed.

Peat Moss At Port Laoise

Bord na Mona have commenced the establishment of a peat moss factory alongside the former Portlaoise-Kilkenny line close to Mile Post 2½. As reported last year, lifting of the line commenced at Mile Post 24 near Castlecomer Junction, but the gang working north ceased operations near MP 2¼ and a stock of rails is deposited there, probably for an extension into the factory. The terminus is about half a mile south of Togher level crossing (No.7), and thence to Conniberry Junction the track has been relaid with second-hand bull-head rail; the track removed was sufficiently good for renewals on secondary lines. The runaway rail wagons reported in our last issue were being loaded with rails for removal. The peat moss factory, as almost all Bord na Mona works, will have its own narrow gauge railway on to the bog developed. This line will have to cross the Dublin-Cork main line and this is expected to be accomplished by overbridge between Clonkeen crossing (MP 53½) and Clonboy Bridge.

Sligo Goods Altered

A minor revolution took place on the Sligo line on September 7 when the winter timetable was introduced. The goods train operation was altered to give three trains throughout in place of the former one Dublin-Sligo, one Mullingar-Sligo and one Mullingar-Longford. This involves a new train leaving Dublin (North Wall) at 19:35, stopping at Mullingar, Collooney and Ballisodare, reaching Sligo at 04:10 (03:30 on Sunday mornings). This arrival, compared with 06:40 of the former 21:15 goods, greatly widens the area in which "next day delivery" can be offered and brings Co. Donegal within range of Sligo based lorries. A second goods leaves North Wall at 22:25 and, roughly replacing the former 03:00 ex Mullingar, arrives in Sligo at 09:30, while an 04:30 Mullingar-Sligo takes connection out of the 23:40 North Wall - Galway and serves all intermediate stations. These alterations have necessitated the recasting of the Midland line goods departures from North Wall. The new Sligo takes the place of the former Galway which now leaves in the place of the original Sligo. The second Sligo slips into the timetable gap between the Galway and the midnight goods which is now specifically designated as an all-line train. The new pattern is, therefore: 19:35 Sligo; 20:20 Westport (unaltered); 21:30 Galway; 22:25 Sligo and 23:40 all-line. In the up direction the Sligo departures are now: 05:50, 15:10 and 21:15 (19:50 on Saturday).

All-Ireland Football Final

On September 27 Kerry and Galway met in Croke Park, Dublin, and as always the all-Ireland Football final generated heavy traffic from all parts. The Southern section arrivals were characterised by near-faultless operation and the use of General Motors diesels throughout. Kildare presented a busy appearance as B174/B158 with 9 ex GNR bogies passed at 09:28 on the Athlone special, as the following Waterford special, B142/B177, HV, 10 bogies and HV (including buffet) called from 09:36 to 09:38½. Both of these were about 3 minutes late but at 09:55 B162/B150 with 10 bogies and LV passed dead on time. Meantime at 09:52 B130 had gone south with a 9-bogie train from Greystones to Claremorris (for Knock) which included Ambulance Coach 163M and buffet. The next special, from Killarney, was 2 minutes early at 10:10 and was B154/B164 and 12 bogies (including buffet). 6 minutes later B165/B153, 10 bogies and LV (including buffet) passed on the Westport - Westland Row special which, although scheduled via Mullingar, was rerouted at Athlone and was fitted into the procession at Portarlinton. A second Knock train from Greystones passed 3½ minutes later with B161/B157, HV, 10 bogies and HV (including 2400 diner, 2403 kitchen and 2127 Radio Van). The Tralee special was next, fully 10 minutes early, at 10:27 with B171/B141, LV, 11 bogies and HV (including buffet). The Ardfert special was 6 minutes early at 10:42 and was B172, LV, 7 bogies and LV (with buffet 170N). On the down line there followed in quick succession, the regular Limerick - B163 and 9 bogies - and a third Knock train: B145/B152, 11 bogies and HV, including kitchens 272N and 1130 and Radio Van 875. Both were punctual but the five-coach railcar for Waterford was 5 minutes late at 11:09. The up road in this period had B151/B176, 11 bogies and HV (including buffet) ex Cork, nearly 1 minute ahead of time. B168/B156, 12 bogies (including buffet) ex Tralee was similar. B149 sped south at 11:20 with the Sunday morning Cork train while at 11:32½ B147, LV, 9 bogies and HV, the up Limerick special, passed 8½ minutes late - the first train in any way significantly behind time. A second Cork special, poorly supported, was 2 minutes early at 11:43 and was B148, LV and 6 bogies and the Farranfore followed, fairly full, 5 minutes early with B129, LV, 8 bogies and HV (including buffet). The last special, from Birdhill, had B159 heading 7 bogies and LV and was 6 minutes late. It only remains to record that B146/B176, 12 bogies and LV (including buffet) was on the regular Cork - Amiens Street train.

Liftings

Work on the removal of abandoned lines continues and is presently as detailed below.

West Cork: Crossbarry station has now been lifted and the gang are proceeding towards Ballinhassig.

The loops there and at Waterfall are retained to allow the loco of the demolition train to run round. The train, normally hauled by a C class loco, returns to Cork on Fridays. At Albert Quay the station area under the overall roof is being walled and converted to a store but nevertheless the yard and signals are still in use. Considerable fertiliser traffic from Gouldings Ltd is loaded at the former arrival platform.

Meath Line: Lifting of the Fairyhouse Bridge - Navan section has been completed to MP 33¼ - Navan Home signal. Railcar A (UTA 101), which was used on the removal, is now derelict at this point. Clonsilla-Fairyhouse remains intact.

Banagher: The Banagher branch, which remained untouched for so long, had in August been lifted completely and the junction near Clara has also been removed.

Other Lines: At the time of writing no lifting has yet taken place on either the Athy - Ballylinan branch or on the Macmine Junction - New Ross section.

UTA GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Rolling Stock Developments

Some 10 more carriages are stored at Adelaide awaiting scrapping. They include Saloon 152, stripped of interior fittings, and the four oldest UTA carriages of BCDR origin, three of which date from 1896. NCC diner 548, built in 1924, has been renovated. A programme of renovating certain coaching stock has commenced at Duncrue Street. Ex GNR coaches are being overhauled in the traditional manner, but certain NCC coaches are in addition undergoing extensive improvements in accommodation. Formica is being used to replace wood panelling and completely new upholstery is being used. Coaches repaired in this manner so far are: 334, 344, 354 and 356, while coaches 274, 176 and 340 are currently in the shops - all of 1924 vintage. Rebuilding and repainting 300 wagons continues.

Transport Tribunal

The Tribunal opened on September 8 to hear about 35 objections to the UTA's closure proposals. Mr Frank Harrison QC for the UTA said that over a period of years the UTA had become fully satisfied that its present railway system was uneconomic, and now must be substantially pruned if not entirely shut down, if there was to be any prospect of financial solvency by September 30, 1966 when under statute, the Authority must pay its way. The Government had made it clear in Parliament that it was not prepared to sink large sums of public money in modernising a railway system which the public were not prepared to support.

The UTA wanted to make clear to the objectors and the Tribunal the way in which it was performing its duty. Comprehensive timetables for alternative road services instead of the rail services to be discontinued had been drawn up and there were plans for express and limited-stop buses which would be substantially equivalent to the rail services which they proposed to close.

Replying to the criticism that discontinuation of the railway sections concerned would increase traffic congestion on the roads, Mr. Harrison noted that the Minister of Affairs had explained that if all remaining railways were progressively closed down, the amount of additional traffic using the roads would not exceed one year's normal growth in the number of road vehicles. If the present rail cuts were approved by the Tribunal, the working losses of the railway system would be cut from £610,000 to £231,000 and 1,153 out of 2,868 employees would be paid off.

Later Mr J.C. Bailie, Railways Manager, said that the line from Londonderry to Portadown was 75½ miles long and carried about 6% of the UTA's total rail passenger traffic and some 28% of its rail freight tonnage for the year ended 30th September 1963. Goragwood was the Northern Ireland Customs rail frontier station and the question of its future as such was being examined.

Strabane Urban Council, one of the objectors, accused the UTA of failure to observe the provisions of

Section 5 of the 1948 Transport Act (Northern Ireland), which enacted that “It shall be the duty of the Authority to provide a properly integrated system of public inland transport for passengers and goods in Northern Ireland by rail and road”. The Council alleged that this failure had brought about the deterioration of the rail services. The Chairman of the Tribunal, Sir Anthony Babbington, said that his inquiry would deal with the situation on the basis of the UTA’s accounts which had been accepted by Parliament. They would not, he said, go into the question of whether, under different circumstances, the Authority might have made the railways a success. The Tribunal hearings are expected to last about a month.

Locomotive Developments

“Jeep” 2-6-4Ts 4 and 56 were undergoing general overhaul at Duncrue Street works in late September. They will be fitted with reconditioned boilers. Locos 51 and 55 which were previously being overhauled are now back in traffic. The experimental tender for 2-6-4T tank locos, described in previous issues, is out of use at Adelaide. 4-4-0 58 has regularly been in steam, working between Belfast and Portadown. Locos 13 (0-6-0) and the remains of 95 and 98 (2-6-0) have been sold for scrap. 4-4-0 207 has continued to form the backbone of motive power on Belfast-Dublin specials despite her deteriorating condition. 2-6-4Ts worked regularly from Belfast to Omagh during July and August despite the overall 30 mph restriction. This type of loco has again become a common sight on the Warrenpoint branch from which “Jeeps” were banned some years ago.

Siege Of Derry

Despite the fact that the celebrations at Derry were held on a Wednesday this year, the usual specials were operated when, on August 12, 7 steam specials were required on the NCC section. These were all operated by “Jeeps” leaving only 2 locos for other use on the NCC, with the 17:00 and 17:30 Belfast - Larne Harbour steam worked. Into the GNR Derry station at Foyle Road came two 2-6-0s, one ‘S’ class 4-4-0 and, most unusually, two 2-6-4Ts, 53 and 55. As usual on the GNR section five specials worked in and six specials worked out. The Strabane pilot engine was a 2-6-0 on this date so that all of the three serviceable Moguls on the section were in use on the Derry Road. This operation worked all the better in that it was not on a Saturday. In all 13 locomotives and 95 carriages were worked to Derry on special trains.

Excursion Traffic

Steam failure caused the through Bangor-Dublin Thursday train to be operated by AEC railcars on two occasions this summer. On one of these the three-piece car railcar was so inadequate for the numbers travelling that the waiting room seats at Lisburn were installed in the guard’s van. For the return journey an additional coach was added. On August 6, four specials were operated by CIÉ from Dublin to Belfast. Among the many ex GSR bogies in use was a twelve-wheeler, an unusual sight north of the border. On July 4, in addition to the usual services, 6 steam specials to Portrush were run, including two from the GN section. Between 19:00 and 20:00 a train was scheduled to leave Portrush every 10 minutes.

Station Improvements

The long overdue repainting of Portadown station is now well under way with very pleasing results. The colours in use are grey, cream and light blue. On the NCC Cullybackey and Bellarena have also been repainted. In the case of Bellarena this has been the first painting it has had since the formation of the UTA in 1948.

Railcar Developments

In addition to the semi-permanent transfer of railcar set 14/517/15 from the NCC section to the Belfast-Bangor line, set 18/519/19 spent most of July on the BCDR section and 35, 514, 21, 524, 527 and 20

were also similarly transferred for the specials of August 1. The experiments with the two diesel railcars, one with an AEC engine and the other with a Rolls Royce one, are, as mentioned in our last issue, still progressing. Confirmation of our report in the July issue, that the UTA would possibly be placing further railcar orders, came with their advertisement in August for tenders to be submitted for the supply of 7 underframes, 8 pairs of bogies and 17 sets of body framings.

LOOSE LINKS

- The sugar beet campaign of 1964/5 commenced on October 8 for specials to Mallow factory, October 12 to Thurles and will commence on October 22 to Tuam but there will be no rail beet specials to Carlow this year.
- In early August, the UTA disconnected the crossover and the “Back line” points at Monkstown.
- An unusual train formation on Ballymena locals on occasions during the summer was a 2-6-4T and the two single-unit railcar trailers, 544 and 545.
- Since October 12, a 150 hp G class Deutz loco has been in use as station pilot at Kilkenny.
- Cahir Abbey siding, on the west of the River Suir at MP 37¾, has been lifted and the points removed.
- On September 6, a Waterford-Dublin auxiliary train was made up of B160, LV, bogie van, LV, four ex GS&WR seconds of 1907 and a three-coach railcar set in use as coaching stock.

JOURNEY JOTTINGS

September 26: Cork - Dublin

B141 stood at the head of a train of HV, one of the new first class coaches, buffet 2421, 5 Cravens and a HV on the 09:00 Cork-Dublin “Fáilte” on this date. The train was immaculate, all in the new livery and pre-heated - an evidence of the scrupulous attention given to most of CIÉ’s named trains.

Departure was half a minute late and, thanks to a sanding of the rails in the Cork tunnel, no slipping took place on the 1 in 78/64 up to Kilbarry. Despite a good run down the bank, Mallow was passed at 09:32¼ (2¼ minutes late) while the Rosslare Express, hauled by an A class loco, was standing in the platform. The same degree of lateness was maintained, passing the down day mail (06:30 ex Kingsbridge) near Kilmallock, until beyond Emly, where the new automatic barrier level crossing was observed. Brakes were applied for the permanent way slack to 25 mph between mileposts 108½ and 107½. Thus, Limerick Junction was passed four minutes behind schedule at a speed far removed from the normal 50 mph.

The 08:45 “Sláinte” was passed, dead on time, near MP 94 headed by a B121 class GM. No records were broken between Limerick Junction and Lisduff although the 75 mph sections were used to good effect, but on the falling grades through Ballybrophy and Mountrath the lateness was cut relentlessly so that Port Laoise was passed dead on time.

The stream of morning down trains had by then put in an appearance. The 10:00 to Limerick was a B141 class loco with seven bogies and HV while the 10:45 to Cork had two such locos, nine bogies and HV. Sandwiched in between was a B121 class loco, 2 Cravens and HV which was coasting into Portarlinton platform as the “Fáilte” sped through.

Remaining running was good. After the ascent to the Curragh the timetable was adhered to, to within 30 seconds, all the way in and one minute early at Lucan was turned into four minutes early on arrival at Kingsbridge. This was indeed a satisfactory performance but it must be remarked that full power was required almost throughout to make it so. In fact, the schedule of 37 minutes over the 37½ mile Mallow

- Limerick Junction stretch is, with the climb out of Mallow, well nigh an impossible task with a 950 hp locomotive, even with the seven bogies and two vans of this train.

STATION SURVEY

Kildare

The 30 mile post from Kingsbridge stands on the down platform at Kildare. The railway reached this point early, as the line from Kingsbridge was opened to Carlow on 4th August 1846. It is notable that Carlow is not on the Dublin-Cork main line, as extension, when it came, on 28th June 1847, was from Cherryville Junction to Maryborough (now Port Laoise). This junction is at MP 32½ and is the cause of the nameboard, recently removed, reading “Kildare, junction for Carlow, Kilkenny and Waterford via Kilkenny”.

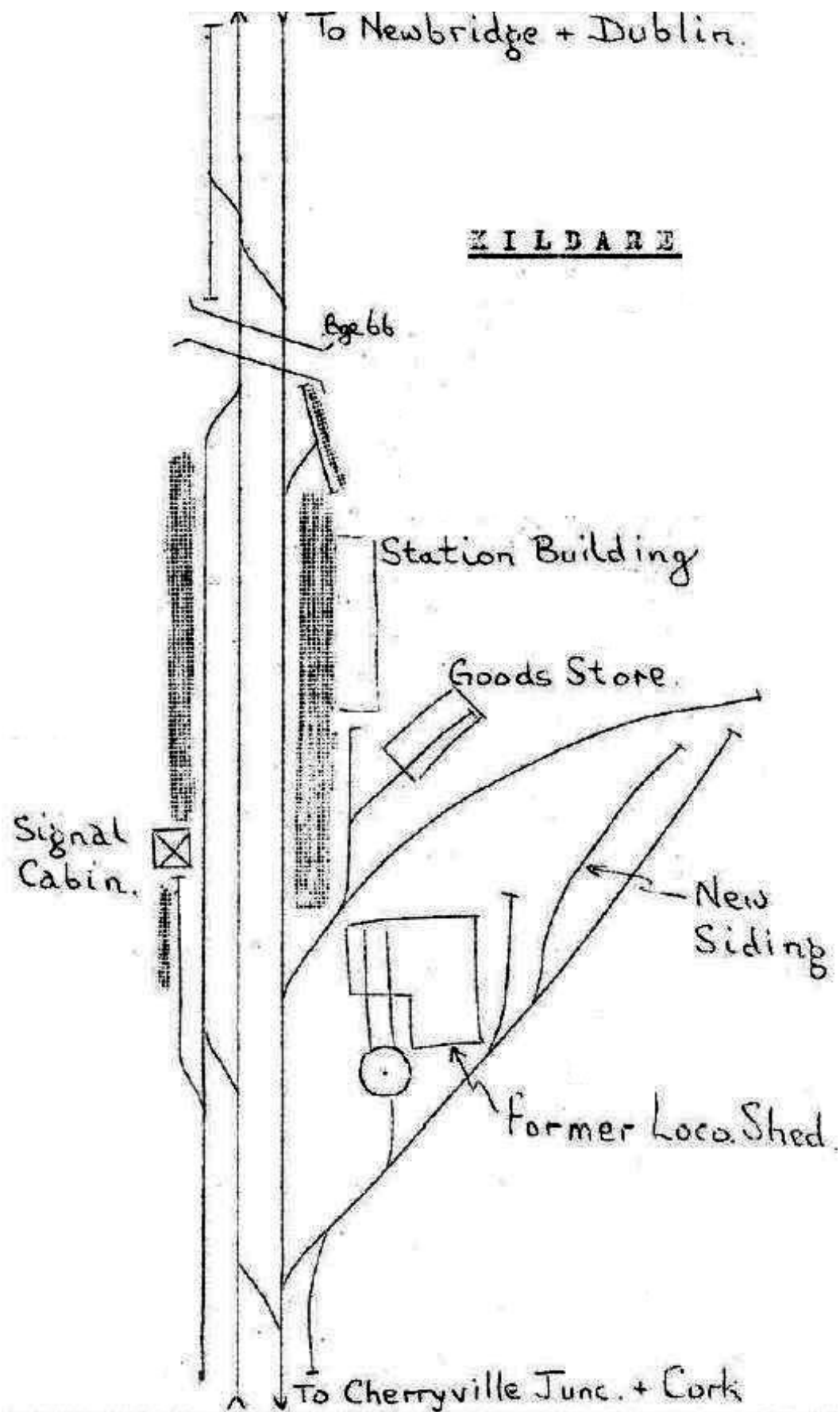
In recent years trains to the Carlow line are separate through trains which treat Kildare as just another stopping station, but formerly branch trains ran between Kildare and Kilkenny in connection with mainline trains. Some of the connections were made by slip coach off down trains. In the early years of the century this service was normally provided by the down Limited Mail, but in the 1920s the slip was changed to use the 09:20 down. The arrangement perished with the advent of the Second World War. Kildare was extremely suitable for slip coach working as the double line falls from the Curragh Cabin just beyond MP 27½, first at 1 in 234 easing to 1 in 330 before the short level through the station. The fall continues at 1 in 780 towards Cherryville. There is also a 3 mile straight from MP 29 to MP 32.

The diagram shows the layout, unusual in Ireland, with the up platform set on a loop off the through up line. The main station building, of typical GS&WR appearance, is in brick and the low platforms, characteristic of the company, remain to this day. On the up side there are two goods refuge sidings north and south of the station, while on the down side a short loading bank is sited north of the station inside bridge 66. South of the platforms the goods yard and the former loco shed are found. One siding in the yard is in use only since September 22; the curved siding behind the former loco shed will, no doubt, be known as the “new siding” by several generations of railwaymen hereafter.

The loco shed is now used as a store for wagons; the last occasion when locos shedded here was in the beet season of 1962 when the loco of the Portarlinton-Tuam beet special stabled there. The signal cabin is quite a large one having 50 levers of which only 13 are spares. It works the section south to Cherryville Junction and north to Newbridge (Curragh Cabin, when open).

Despite its position on the main line, Kildare does not itself handle a large freight traffic and in this sphere is eclipsed completely by Newbridge which is a more convenient centre for distribution. The existence of Athy and Portarlinton, both busy freight stations, also militates against a heavy traffic in Kildare. The proximity of the Curragh and many stud farms in the area too, would suggest an important horse traffic, but this is not so as the cream of it now goes by road, often in CIÉ horseboxes. With the reduction of horseboxes on passenger trains, evident in the last few years, this situation is becoming general not only in Kildare but throughout the system; nowadays only about 50% of the traffic of ten years ago is being carried.

Eight down passenger trains serve Kildare on weekdays (two on Sundays), while another 5 pass without stopping. Three down goods trains call and one goods train originates there. This last-mentioned is the 14:40 to Athy which is worked by the Port Laoise pilot engine and is responsible for the cement traffic from Athy and some of the peat moss traffic from Kilberry siding.



Feature Section

CIRCUS

For 4½ months since early June, CIÉ and UTA have been handling two very unusual trains. The Bertram Mills Super Circus is now ending its last tour of Ireland. Rail transport plays a very vital role in the Circus business and requires very special handling methods. As there are seldom such circuses to be seen in Ireland, two special trains were formed and suitably adapted for the purpose. A similar tour in 1962 by another circus involved the use of three trains, but part of the Bertram Mills Circus travelled by road - something which resulted in trouble in Ireland.

The two trains consisted of both CIÉ and UTA stock. Bogie flat trucks were provided for carrying trailers and caravans, while horse boxes were used for ponies and zebras. The less friendly species were carried in their own cage trailers which were transported on flat trucks. An ex GNR bogie van was specially reinforced to carry six elephants. Sleeping accommodation for the circus employees was provided by fitting bunks into the compartments of three side corridor coaches. A combined office, workshop and dormitory for railway personnel was also provided.

The formation of the two trains remained unaltered for the greater part of the tour and was as follows.

Train No.1: Bogie coach 1295S, fitted with bunks (CIÉ); C434N bogie elephant van (CIÉ); 676 10 ton van (UTA); 1105, 1035, 2998, 1023, all horse boxes (CIÉ); 5540N, 331N, 442N, bogie flats (CIÉ); N72, N642, both ex GNR 40 ton tank transporters (UTA); 20 ton brake van 23566 (CIÉ).

Train No.2: Heating van 3137 (CIÉ); 470A, formerly GNR bogie coach No.465 which was converted to act as a dormitory for railway personnel and also as a workshop for the railway fitters and train examiners travelling with the specials (after the circus terminates it will become a brake testing van on the Inchicore trial train); 1M ex bogie TPO in use as a van (CIÉ); C780N, 20 ton bogie van (CIÉ); 1296, 1131S, bogie sleeping coaches (CIÉ); 708N bogie flat wagon (CIÉ); 3401N 40 ton bogie flat wagon, formerly part of the MGWR track-laying train (CIÉ); 23652, 703N, 23650, 23651, 6021N, bogie flats (CIÉ); 3148 heating van (CIÉ).

Both trains are restricted to 25 mph and the second train worked under complete vacuum. Later in the Tour it was found that removing 1M and C780N from the second train and attaching them to train No.1 resulted in the levelling of the loading and permitted the second train to work at steam sectional passenger running.

The Circus disembarked at Larne Harbour and its route thereafter included Belfast, Derry, Ballymena, Coleraine, Bangor, Dundalk, Drogheda, Dublin, Athlone, Longford, Mullingar, Sligo, Castlebar, Galway, Ennis, Limerick, Tralee, Killarney, Cork, Clonmel, Waterford, Kilkenny and Dun Laoghaire. Steam haulage was used on the UTA and provided the interesting spectacle of a UG class 0-6-0 at each end of the trains working into Bangor. From Dundalk onwards the motive power was exclusively A class diesel-electrics which were able to demonstrate their superiority over any other class of diesel in working heavy restricted trains. Indeed, on one night during the move from Limerick to Tralee, the engine of the second train - A27 - slipped to a standstill on Barnagh bank and had any other unit of motive power been in use assistance would have had to be summoned to get the train moving again.

With trains of this nature unfortunate happenings could hardly be avoided, bearing in mind the conditions of stress under which everyone was working. In Athlone, part of the second train became derailed and in Limerick a trailer went "overboard" and had to be rescued with a mobile crane. Had this latter occurred anywhere else the delay would have been tremendous.

The trains were almost invariably scheduled to leave circa 00:30 and 04:00 from each venue. All equipment was moved on the two trains and the road fleet, except for a second set of king poles for the Big Top which were always sent on in advance. Although the show was not scheduled to end until 22:40 the loading of the first train generally commenced at about 22:00. This train conveyed all the animals which were taken from the show ground at the conclusion of their respective acts. The elephants were, in every way, the biggest problem and certainly the sight of the van with its springs flattened and lurching from side to side is something that a nervous train examiner should be spared.

The method of loading and unloading constituted a serious problem almost everywhere the circus went. Wherever an end-on bay was not available one had to be made out of sleepers and rails. Killarney was, perhaps, one of the worst spots. As there was no point at which end loading was possible, a long ramp was built through the former loco shed and road vehicles were brought in through the goods yard and hauled to the ramp by tractor. At the top of the ramp the tractor was hooked off and came down by means of a second ramp at one side made of two lorry trailers and a ramp of sleepers. It then propelled the trailer to its correct position. In order that the train would arrive at its next destination, Cork, in the correct order for its unloading, each flat truck was turned at Killarney before train departure. Similar arrangements were made at other depots throughout the country.

The first train was scheduled to leave Killarney for Cork at 00:30 on September 26. Due to the poor state of the circus lorries delays were inevitable and it did not leave until 01:35 hauled by loco A27. This delay naturally reacted on the second train due away at 04:15 which did not get away until 05:25. However, as the schedule was based on 25 mph running it was possible for A24 to gain some time to Mallow where there was a stop for train examination. This was particularly necessary in view of the steep descent through Cork tunnel and the fact that most of the load consisted of heavy trailers which would easily move should a scotch break loose. Dawn was breaking as the train left Mallow at 07:00 - now only 35 minutes late - and Rathpeacon was passed at 07:38 - 20 minutes late. From there extreme caution was exercised as the train was gradually eased down the tunnel into Cork Glanmire Road station.

The circus gave its last "travelling show" ever, before becoming permanently based in London, on Sunday October 18 at Dun Laoghaire. In the early hours of the following morning the trains were loaded for the last time. On this occasion the first train conveyed passengers and animals (elephants excepted) to Dublin North Wall for shipment to Liverpool. The second train, now with a load of 12 bogie flat wagons and the elephant van, set out for Belfast to be shipped via Larne. CIÉ bade the circus farewell at Portadown. On being congratulated on their handling of such an unusual job so well the CIÉ inspector said, "Sure didn't we get plenty of practice with the June Steam Tour!"