

THE

IRISH RAILFANS' NEWS

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EDITORIAL

Someone once said that if the 15:30 Cork-Dublin is late on Monday, the Direct-Orient Express will be late in Istanbul on the Friday following. Untrue, of course! But the implication of railway interdependence, even internationally, illustrates the importance of watching one's neighbour. The neighbour presently being watched is British Rail, whose accelerations between Crewe and London (Euston) consequent on electrification have had a considerable effect on Anglo-Irish connections.

It is rather ironical that the service rendered most attractive by the improvements is that of the Irish-owned British & Irish Steampacket Co, as one can reach London at 11:15 next day after a full night's sleep. On the Pullman (Monday-Friday) this can be bettered by leaving Liverpool at 07:55 and arriving in Euston at 10:30. The earlier start from Holyhead (06:45; formerly 07:50) will hardly encourage the use of the sleeping on board facilities, particularly when the arrival in Euston is not until 11:05. In fact, via Holyhead, although the overall times are improved, there is a 15 minute deceleration in the Dun Laoghaire - Holyhead boat times - now 3½ hours port to port. One remembers that the L&NWR boats covered the same distance in 2 hours 55 minutes back in 1921!

BR have, however, made one alteration to be applauded - the standardisation of London departures to 17:40 "Emerald Isle", 20:55 "Irish Mail" and 21:20 ordinary train, on every day of the week, Sunday included, is more than welcome even if the first-mentioned travels via Rugby on Sunday but via Birmingham (New Street) every other day. But why does the "Irish Mail" with the sleeping cars precede the ordinary 21:20? There is little enough attraction in a train sleeper when it must be vacated for an 03:15 sailing but when the opportunity so obviously exists why not woo sleeping car passengers with the later start and the advantage of the shorter connecting time at Holyhead?

SOME ARTICLES OF IRISH RAILWAY INTEREST**Railway Magazine**

April Wise's Staff on the BCDR (Paragraph)

Railway WorldFebruary Slieve Gullion - The Last Irish 4-4-0
Irish Railtour Report**Modern Railways**

February The Irish Scene

BOOK REVIEW

“The Ballycastle Railway” by Dr E.M. Patterson (David & Charles)

Dr Patterson’s fourth major book on Irish railways shows a further interesting facet to those who knew little of the Ballycastle line. His book gives in an entertaining style a deal of the inside story of the railway; the wordy battle between the directors and the manager in 1885 and the incident in 1905 of the young lady who fell out of the train below Capecastle, walked after it to Ballycastle to do her shopping, and then sought and was given a free pass in compensation. The illustrations are well chosen; the predominance of loco 44 was presumably unavoidable in modern views? The timetable reproductions and the closure notice are very pleasing as are also Mr D.G. Coakham’s drawings of rolling stock. If the Ballymena lines - Dr Patterson’s next - can be treated similarly, the two will provide a highly satisfactory pairing.

News Section

CIÉ GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Renaming Of Stations

To commemorate the 1916 Rising, CIÉ has renamed 15 stations on its system after Irish patriots and will erect commemorative plaques - that to Sean Heuston (a former railway clerk) will be unveiled in Kingsbridge by the Minister for Defence next June. The new station names will be:

Amiens Street	Connolly (I Conghaile)
Kingsbridge	Heuston
Westland Row	Pearse (Piarsach)
Cork	Thomas Kent (Tomais Ceannt)
Limerick	Colbert (I Colbaird)
Waterford	Plunkett (I Phluingceid)
Galway	Eamonn Ceannt (Eamoinn Ceannt)
Dun Laoghaire	Mallin (I Mheallain)
Dundalk	Clarke (I Chleirigh)
Drogheda	MacBride (Mhic Giolla Bhride)
Sligo	MacDermott (Mhic Dhiarmada)
Bray	Daly (I Dhalaigh)
Tralee	Casement (Mhic Easmainn)
Kilkenny	MacDonagh (Mhic Dhonnchadha)
Wexford	O’Hanrahan (I Annrachain)

In view of our large British readership “The Irish Railfans’ News” will retain the former nomenclature.

Sandycove Station

Concurrently with the renewal of bridge 98 at Sandycove station, the remodelling of the station building was put in hand. Work has been continuing slowly and the new building is now ready for opening. Like the timber structure it replaces it is astride the road bridge. The frontage is of a grey mosaic pattern with a central glazed section fitted with glass double doors. Inside, the concourse is floored with black and white tiles, the walls are bright mottled white and lighting is fluorescent. A glass fronted two position booking office occupies the centre of the booking hall. The opening is expected to take place very shortly.

99% On Time

During the week ended March 5, CIÉ passenger trains - other than suburban services - achieved an extraordinary record in punctuality. Of the 282 trains involved in the week, only two ran late. The total time scheduled for operation was 53,484 minutes and the amount by which this was exceeded was a mere 28 minutes. In effect, as near perfection in passenger train punctuality as can be expected was achieved and this state of affairs provides an eloquent testimony to the reliability of the B class General Motors locomotives which were responsible for the greater part of the record.

Dunkettle Closed

With effect from February 7 the halt at Dunkettle on the Cork-Cobh line was closed completely. As Sunday trains do not stop, this meant that the last ten calls were made by trains of Saturday February 5. In actual fact the last train to stop at Dunkettle could be said to be a Sunday train - the 00:05 Cobh-Cork, made up of B144, a compo, 2 standards and HV, was scheduled to make a "CR" stop and indeed did so on the said Sunday morning at 00:29. A single railway enthusiast alighted! Dunkettle was initially the city terminus of the Cork & Youghal railway from the first opening to Middleton on 10th November 1859. When the bridge - then a lifting bridge - over the Glashaboy River was ready the line was extended to Tivoli on 15th September 1860. Latterly the station at Dunkettle has been little used due to its proximity to Cork and the bus services on the road alongside. Surprisingly, Little Island - the next station out of Cork - thrives, possibly due to its traffic source being on the opposite side of the line and thus passengers must pass the station to reach the main road.

Rolling Stock Developments

Inchicore Works is to build 15 new coaches of which there will be 5 standard class, 5 composite and 5 brake standards. Work has already commenced on the standard class coaches and at the same time work is in hand on the provision of two further ambulance coaches and two radio studio coaches. These latter 4 will be conversions from existing stock. 24 of the 30 bulk cement wagons being constructed are in traffic while further wagon construction is to include 26 barytes wagons, 44 zinc concentrate wagons, 20 bulk oil tankers and 410 flat wagons. On April 16 the first of the new ambulance vehicles made its appearance when it was brought to Amiens Street to be blessed on Sunday April 17, along with a representative selection of other rolling stock. AM15, as the coach is numbered, is, of course, a conversion not a new vehicle. It was formerly second 1407 which worked on the Waterford and Tramore section from its delivery there on 23rd May 1955 to the closure of the line on 31st December 1960. The coach has been adapted to provide a small kitchen, a staff compartment, two 8-seat bays, centre vestibule with outward opening double doors, two sections accommodating 4 stretchers each and lavatory. It will be used on pilgrimage trains to Claremorris for Knock shrine.

Mallow - Waterford

The Minister for Transport & Power gave warning in March last that closure of the 76 mile line from Mallow to Waterford was intended at an early date. This, although an extensive closure, will not perhaps surprise the student of Irish transport greatly, however much he may regret the loss of a most attractive scenic route. Goods traffic is heavy only at Dungarvan with Fermoy and Kilmacthomas the only other concentrations in its length. Passenger traffic is light and mainly through from Cork or Mallow to Rosslare although it is only fair to point out that an unimaginative timetable and the proliferation of stops at small stations, like Carrolls Cross, Tallow Road and Ballyduff, have done nothing to attract traffic. The Rosslare Express calling at all the stations of consequence, takes 2 hours 10 minutes from Waterford to Mallow while the 09:20 slow train takes 2 hours 42 minutes - the latter's overall average speed is nearly 22 mph! No date has yet been mentioned for the closure - in any event the statutory 2 months' notice has to be given - but quite likely it will be phased to coincide with the winter timetable of mid-September next.

It is expected that the Rosslare Express will be rerouted via Limerick Junction with but little extra time and rumour of alterations at the Junction are circulating for the nth time since 1848 when it opened. It may well be that the conflict of Limerick-Cabra cement trains and Waterford-Cork traffic will bring about the change even if only the provision of east to south and west to north avoiding curves.

The impending closure lent a spice to the special railcar excursion arranged by the IRRS on St. Patrick's Day, March 17. The route followed was from Amiens Street to Thurles, Clonmel, Waterford, New Ross, Waterford, Mallow and thence back by the main line to Amiens Street. The train comprised a four-coach railcar, 2628, 1357, 2400, 2609, and made no less than 26 stops between Dublin and Mallow without loss of time. It was thus all the more regrettable that a mechanical failure at Kildare should cause arrival in Amiens Street to be 80 minutes late.

New Ross Cabin

As from April 18 the signal cabin at New Ross was closed and all signals, except those protecting the level crossing, will be removed. That portion of the yard formerly worked from the cabin will be converted to hand-point operation. Traffic on the branch is quite heavy although only infrequent use is made of the new Stafford's Wharf siding.

Cement Specials

Since 25th November 1965 the Castlemungret Cement factory has been loading bulk cement wagons destined for the storage silo at Cabra, Dublin, and on and from February 21 special paths have been arranged for such cement trains. Two regular trains leave the cement factory at 11:35 and 18:45 reaching Cabra at 16:53 and 00:05 respectively. They return empty at 19:30 and 03:45, due at Castlemungret at 00:45 and 09:00 respectively. Although not a "Merry-go-Round" operation, these schedules keep two sets in almost constant use including the loading and unloading time. The only stops scheduled are at Limerick Junction for reversal. In addition, an extra path (03:00 ex factory and 11:30 ex Cabra) will run if required. The introduction of this comprehensive timetable has caused sundry minor alterations to other goods trains, but has not affected passenger trains.

Floods

There was an aftermath to the flooding, reported in January, on January 10 when the Mallow-Waterford line was again closed down by floods at Ballymacmague. This disruption lasted some three weeks as a portion of the track at 43 miles 75 chains was covered over for 50-60 yards by a lake of "dead water" which proved impossible to drain. During this period, the 07:00 goods worked from Mallow to Cappoquin and back and the 09:40 goods from Waterford to Dungarvan and back. Buses ran between Mallow and Dungarvan but the 09:20 local passenger train ran from Waterford to Dungarvan and returned in the path of the 13:30 Cork-Waterford. For the entire period the "Rosslare Express" ran via Limerick Junction.

On the Dublin-Wexford line the repairs to bridge 193 were completed in mid-January but it was found that bridge 208 at 44 miles 10 chains between Avoca and Woodenbridge had been more severely undermined than had been at first suspected and the work of repairing the foundation of the south abutment with concrete meant that the line was not reopened to traffic until the up and down night goods of February 1. In actual fact one earlier movement was the running of loco G614 light from Grand Canal Street to Shelton siding at 15:10. It replaced loco G611 on pilot duties there. Passenger services resumed on February 2 when B165, HV and five bogies (including buffet 97N) worked the 07:30 from Rosslare Harbour to Westland Row.

Signalling Developments

The up gantry at the Dublin end of Bray down platform was removed on March 22 and has been replaced by two ground discs for the sidings and a single arm starting signal applicable to up trains

starting from the down platform. On February 22, Carrowduff cabin was permanently dispensed with and the level crossing signals are operated from the gate heels themselves. The cabin ceased to be in regular use on 16th December 1964.

Cork City Railway

The prognostication of closure in our last issue has proved unfounded and traffic was resumed on January 18. Exceptional, too, has been a February working of the siding on Andersons Quay which has not seen any use for several years. An interesting feature is that since the introduction of one-way streets in Cork, the streets over which the City line passes are one way from north to south. This makes the operation of trains in the direction Albert Quay - Glanmire Road more difficult than ever, as to navigate a train of up to 20 wagons or so against the fast moving stream of traffic is made more awkward by the curve at Andersons Quay where the line crosses to the wrong side of the road.

Lifting

The position of work on lines being lifted is as under.

Macmine - New Ross: Since January, the section of line between Palace East and Chapel has been lifted and work is continuing to Macmine. All lifting is still done by tractor, but the removal of material is by a lifting train usually twice a week. For this operation it was necessary to insert a special staff instrument in the station building at Macmine; not in the cabin. The method of operation is when the train from Wexford is on the branch and locked in, to insert the staff in this instrument with the concurrence of the Enniscorthy signalman, who also transfers a staff to an extra instrument in his cabin. This puts the normal instruments in phase and permits normal working.

Sundries: Several minor sidings have been removed recently. The Dodder siding at Ballsbridge, RDS, was lifted in March as also were the sidings at Straffan in February.

Annual Report

The 15th Annual Report of CIÉ was published some time ago, considerably late due to the recent printing strike. The report covers the year to 31st March 1965 and is a most comprehensive and presentable document.

During the year, the Transport Act 1964 was enacted and the Minister for Transport & Power outlined to the Board policies which he expected them to pursue.

There was a deficit of £1,475,000, an improvement of £131,000 on the previous year; £525,000 of the annual subsidy was saved and will be carried forward, but has been temporarily used to meet commitments on the Capital Account. A loss of £1,202,000 was incurred on the railways despite increased revenue of £611,000. The principal package deals concluded during the year related to cross-channel bacon traffic, steel traffic from Cobh, and fertilisers from Arklow. Reference was made to the fact that the cessation of goods traffic by the UTA had presented CIÉ with a major operating problem.

The various tables of statistics are of great interest to the railway enthusiast. The railway, which now covers only 1,458 miles and 38 chains, provided 36.5% of CIÉ's revenue involving 333,145,700 passenger miles and 57,927,291 loaded wagon miles. Last year the Minister referred to the effect on road traffic should the railway be closed as "nugatory". An extremely interesting conclusion to be drawn from the passenger statistics included is that while the number of passengers carried dropped by 101,106 the average receipt per passenger increased by 0.61^d. This has very likely been caused by the closure of small stations and in this event appears to have been justified. The number of passengers travelling first class by other than suburban services has increased by 9,385, thus increasing the average receipt per journey by 2/10^d. The number of passengers travelling second class by other than suburban services dropped by 450,346 but the average receipt per journey increased by almost 3^d - illustrating an increase in the average distance travelled.

The number of diesel locomotives and railcars remains unchanged at 212 and 86 respectively, but the mileage covered by the railcars has begun to decline noticeably. The ratio of locomotive mileage is approximately two-thirds on passenger trains and one-third on goods trains. Statistics of rail freight workings show a decline in ton miles. Bearing in mind the size of the goods trains usually to be seen throughout the countryside, it is interesting to note that the average weight of loaded wagons per train is as low as 3.72 tons each and there is an average of 6.91 empty wagons per train. This is a highly uneconomic state of affairs as the average capacity of each wagon is 11.47 tons. The average yearly mileage for diesel locomotives is 33,326 and diesel railcars 15,898. These mileages would appear to be very low and reflect considerable inefficiency, most likely due to the low reliability of the A and C class diesel-electrics. The average mileage covered by the railcars hardly exceeds that of the average motorist and must surely be giving a very low return, if any, on capital invested.

Locomotive Developments

The return of K801 to traffic early in last February, after a prolonged sojourn in Inchicore Works, was a welcome event and instead of returning to Cork, the former MAK diesel of the GNR was allocated to work Drogheda Cement trains, a task for which it is extremely useful as the locomotive combines a low maximum speed with a high haulage capacity. Alas, however, her reappearance was of short duration for on February 22 she was reported returned to Inchicore out of action.

Among the locomotives recently cut up at Inchicore recently has been the Bulleid turf-burner of 1957.

Modernisation

Although the impetus of modernisation has, with the completion of many projects, slowed, work is still in progress in Cork Glanmire Road. The heretofore rather dark subway is being retiled and with improved lighting will soon present a clean bright appearance. At the same time the lift for the transfer of luggage has been replaced and modernised.

Work on the rebuilding of the Midland Store at North Wall is now proceeding. The replacement of the old building will be of light construction on steel girder frames with a marked similarity to the extension which survived the fire of 28th October 1965. The revised traffic arrangements detailed in our last issue continue; outward wagon-load traffic is still handled on two of the loading banks and inwards traffic in the west annexe.

A minor modification noticed is the provision of some new wagon sheets coloured black and brown in conformity with the passenger rolling stock livery. As, however, clear polythene wagon sheets are appearing in some quantity, particularly on fertiliser traffic carried in open wagons, this colouring may not be of very long duration.

Foynes Rejuvenated

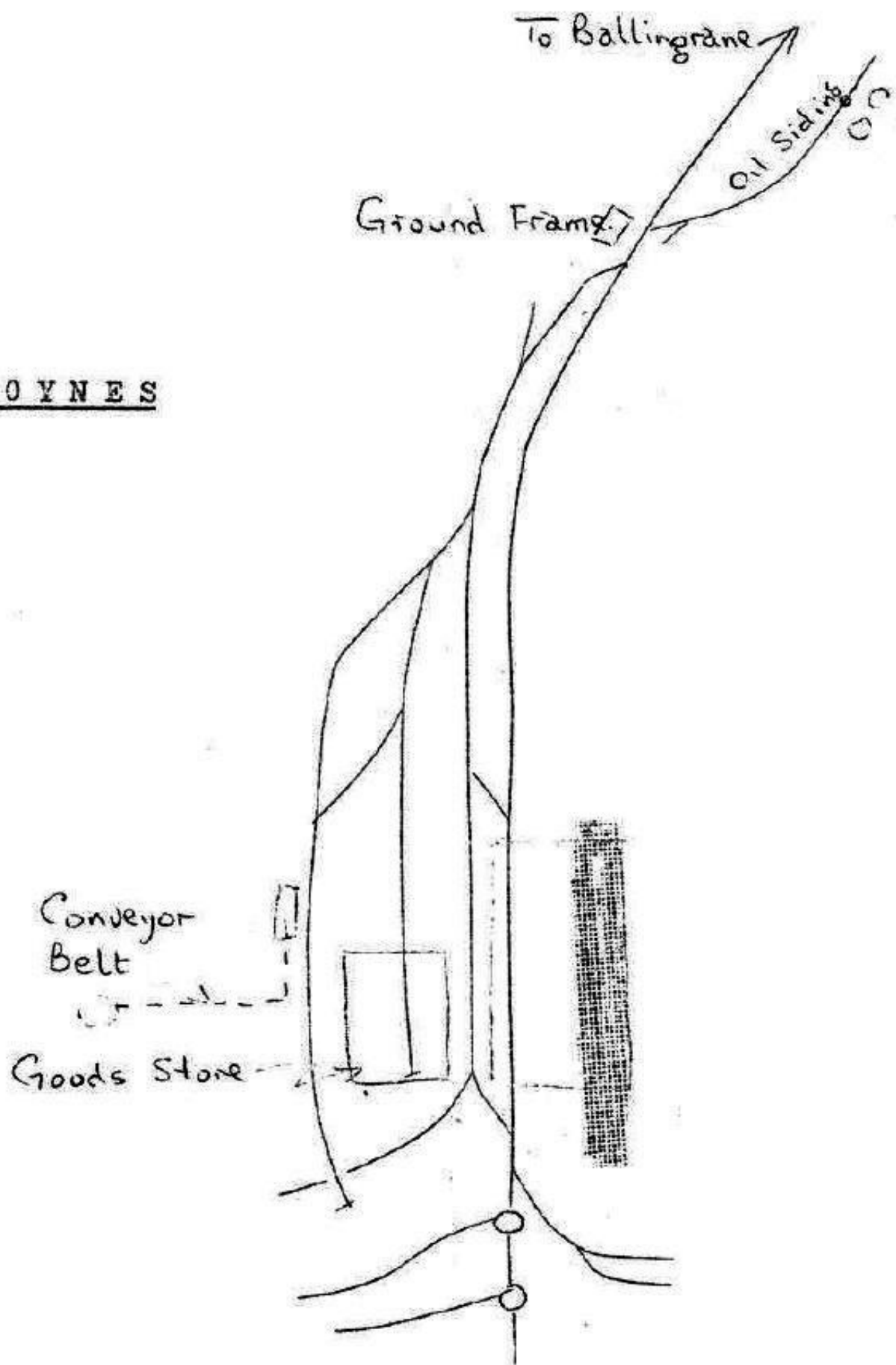
Since the report of alterations in our last issue, the new layout at Foynes has taken shape. A diagram of the new layout as at the end of March is appended and it will be seen that there is a conveyor belt for the handling of barytes from the wagons to the quayside stockpile.

The former passenger platform is now rail-less and the signal cabin out of use but not demolished. As reported in January, the signalling installations have been reduced to a two-lever ground frame and the entire yard beyond the king points is controlled by hand levers.

Details of the workings for the new barytes traffic are given below.

The sidings on to the quay via the wagon turntables are in situ but not in use while the siding at the back of the goods store covers the third quayside connection. For the ore traffics a new jetty is to be constructed just up-river from the present one. This work is not yet commenced.

FOYNES



Silvermines Branch

A second public notice regarding the proposed Silvermines branch was published on January 28 and extended the period for objections to February 10. The notice differed from the first only in two minor alterations of wording, and in an explanatory note confirmed that the plans were the same as those previously mentioned. As yet, however, no railway works order has been granted to CIÉ for the construction of the line. The point of divergence from the Ballybrophy-Limerick line will be MP 35¼ not 35¾ as mentioned in our last issue. The working of trains for barytes traffic began on April 11 and they are being loaded at Nenagh for the time being. This involves an extra working from Nenagh at 09:15 which runs non-stop through Limerick via the Foynes loop. The ordinary Dublin - Nenagh - Limerick goods has been retimed between Nenagh and Limerick, where it transfers 13 wagons of barytes to the regular 11:30 Limerick-Foynes goods. The empty wagons are returned both on the 15:50 Foynes-Limerick goods and a 21:30 up special. They continue to Nenagh by the 19:30 ordinary goods or on the 07:00 special extra goods Limerick-Nenagh. The locomotive of the 09:15 special returns from Foynes to Limerick at 12:30, crossing the Foynes goods at Ballingrane, and thus enabling the branch to be still worked by manual staff. Provision for reversion to ETS. working, of course, still exists for use if required.

UTA GENERAL NEWS REPORT

Greencastle Derailment

A three-piece MED railcar, while working the 12:00 from Larne Harbour to Belfast on February 21, became derailed at speed as it approached Greencastle on the shore of Belfast Lough. Trailer 521 and railcar 22 left the rails, wrecked the permanent way and came to rest tilted at a dangerous angle over a steep ten foot bank down into the Lough. None of the 25 passengers in the two coaches was injured. All trailers in the series 516 to 527 were subsequently withdrawn for examination. Train services were severely disrupted but single line working was quickly instituted. At 20:00, York Road station was closed and all traffic suspended, passengers being directed to buses. A steam crane was brought from the GNR section at Adelaide and gangs from various areas of the NCC were assembled to relay the track. The 15:00 Derry-Belfast was so delayed that a 2-6-4T and 8 bogies had to be provided at 18:00 to work from Belfast to Larne. Other measures resorted to included the combining of the 17:30 and 17:35 Larne and Carrickfergus trains. Because of the derailment, main line trains of 6 coaches or more had to use the crossover at Bleach Green Junction while smaller trains were able to set back at Greencastle.

Service Suspended

In a surprise move, the Northern Ireland Government announced on Friday April 15 that it intended to ban all rail services from the Republic of Ireland between the hours of 21:30 on Saturday April 16 and 19:00 on Sunday April 17. No restriction was put on southbound trains. This ban was, presumably, intended to prevent supporters from the south attending a demonstration in Belfast on April 17 or to prevent damage to trains by extremist elements in Northern Ireland. Road traffic was subject to close scrutiny by armed police. In effect the ban only prevented the operation of the 10:30 ex Dublin on Sunday between Dundalk and Belfast although there was some doubt at one stage as to whether the 18:30 down on Saturday night would be allowed to proceed. This action was unprecedented in the history of the two states in that it affected a scheduled service. The only other known instance was when on 21st June 1931 the Irish Free State government ordered the cancellation of special trains to Sallins for a political ceremony. It is of interest that the ban on April 17 was imposed despite a CIÉ refusal to provide special trains for intending participants.

Railcar Developments

Trailer coaches for the English Electric diesel-electric railcars are under construction at York Road and so far Nos. 721, 722, 723 and 725 have been completed. They are of side corridor construction, having seven compartments, each seating eight second class passengers. They have been painted in the NCC section livery of maroon and cream. Two power cars are also under construction in York Road and bogies of a type similar to the B4 bogie have been observed outside the shops. The turntable is being lengthened so that the cars when completed can be got out of the shops. The turntable is being lengthened so that the cars when completed can be got out of the shops. The first set was due to go into service at the end of April but it now appears unlikely that the new fleet will be ready in time to have any appreciable effect on the summer timetable.

Fluorescent lighting has been fitted to railcars 26, 27 and 33, trailers 510, 512 and 514. Trailer 512 did not receive an overhaul or repainting at the same time. All are in service on the Bangor line.

Seahill Halt

The new halt at Seahill on the Bangor line was opened on April 4. Situated between Helen's Bay and Marino, it was due to have been completed last November. 25 down trains are booked to call there daily from Monday to Friday with 24, including one by request only, in the up direction. The Saturday service is slightly smaller but there is also an adequate Sunday service. Seahill serves a new housing area still under development and the UTA can not be criticised for the quality of service which they are providing. This is the second of the two new halts which have recently been provided on the Bangor line, the first being that at Crawfordsburn Hospital which was opened on 13 September last. A remarkable situation exists at Crawfordsburn as the halt which is open to the public is situated on private property. The hospital issues tickets, but at the same time, to judge by the nature of the notice boards of which there are several, intends to rigorously prosecute trespassers on their property. This could lead to many complications.

Queen's Quay Signalling

Work is proceeding on the replacement by colour light signals of semaphore signals at present in use. The new signal cabin at Queen's Quay is not yet ready for use. Neither have there been any moves to restore the connections with the Central line.

Easter Specials

Extra trains were run as usual during the Easter period, culminating on Tuesday April 12 when 17 steam worked specials were required to take participants to a demonstration at Lisburn. The 08:15 Belfast to Portadown was extended to Dublin and was worked by steam to Portadown. A race special to Dublin at 08:50 was steam hauled throughout. All available 2-6-4Ts were in steam on the GNR section with only Nos. 7 and 57 out of use at Adelaide. 0-6-0s 37, 48 and 49 were also in steam. No.37 was not required to work and No.49 acted as pilot at Great Victoria Street Station. Between 15:30 and 17:30 all Belfast bound trains from Lisburn departed from either the up (to Dublin) platform or the loop platform, whilst all Portadown direction trains left from the down main line platform, regaining the up main line outside the station. On Easter Saturday there was a steam special at 13:45 from York Road to Ballymena for football fans. The train consisted of 2-6-4T No.10 and five bogies and was very lightly loaded. The short branch from Coleraine to Portrush was reopened as is usual and on Easter Monday and Tuesday there were a number of steam workings.

Road-Rail Shunter

A "Unilok", a machine capable of shunting a goods yard both by rail and road, has arrived in Belfast. It has been taken from York Road to the diesel shed at Great Victoria Street but, so far, no drivers have been instructed in its use.

Washing Plants

The new carriage washing plant has been almost completely assembled at Great Victoria Street station. A carriage washing plant is also to be erected at York Road. The parts for this have been delivered and it is expected that it will be erected shortly.

Cheap Weekends

Cheap weekends of a similar pattern to those offered by CIÉ were operated by UTA on the weekends of January 21/24, February 11/14 and March 11/14. The weekend return to Dublin was 31/2^d (single fare) while a day return of 20/- was available to excursionists on the Sundays of those weekends. The 25/3^d day return fare which is available on most Thursdays and Saturdays from Dublin has not been made available for passengers from the north.

Lifting

The lifting of closed lines has been continued as detailed below.

Portadown - Derry: At the time of writing, the lifting gang was approaching Newtownstewart from Victoria Bridge. The contractor's lifting train - railcars 104 and 101 - are based at each station in turn and work materials in from the railhead. 101 operates as a winch vehicle on the site. Materials collected are cleared by the UTA by steam train, usually twice weekly. Station yards between Newtownstewart and Portadown are intact but every station has suffered badly from the attention of vandals. In Omagh a wagon on the running line had its brake released, presumably by mischievous children, and ran half a mile to demolish a level crossing. In reply to a protest against the lifting of the line made by Strabane Urban Council, the Ministry of Development stated that experience had shown that the doubts expressed as to the likely congestion on the roads had not materialised. The relatively small amount of traffic thrown on the roads had made no appreciable difference to existing conditions.

Goraghowood: The station at Goraghowood has been demolished except for the platforms, the turf shed at the end of the up platform and the Customs hut at the back of the platform. Even the paving stones have been removed from the extension at the north end of the up platform from where Church Lane crossing intersected it. The portion of the platform over the crossing used to be raised to allow traffic to cross

Other Lifting: The connection with the former Ballyclare branch (Kingsbog Junction) has been taken out and a facing crossover has been replaced by a trailing one closer to Kings Moss crossing.

Transportation Survey

On March 14-16 last, as part of a transportation survey to establish the patterns of travel in the Belfast area, passengers on both local and cross-border trains were interviewed to obtain a random sample of their travel habits. The choice of dates - just before St. Patrick's Day - seems unfortunate as traffic would hardly be normal, at least on cross-border services.

BORD NA MONA

On March 21 the Bord sought tenders from engineering contractors for the erection of a bridge across the River Shannon about one mile south of Shannonbridge. It is to be a fixed girder bridge 525ft long with seven spans; six of 80ft and one 45ft. It is to be supported on reinforced concrete piers. In requesting tenders, however, the Bord states that it is prepared to consider a proposal for an alternative bridge with pre-stressed concrete superstructure. The bridge is to carry a narrow gauge railway which will link bogs under development on both sides of the river with the power station under construction. When built, this will be the sixth railway bridge across the Shannon: Limerick, Athlone, Lanesboro (B na M), Drumsna and the erstwhile Cavan & Leitrim bridge at Mahanagh - the last-mentioned being the only one not in use today.

LOOSE LINKS

- A G class pilot engine - G612 - has been observed on regular duties at Longford.
- It is understood that CIÉ are considering a closed circuit television train in supplement to their current radio train operations.
- Peat moss has been coming, often at the rate of 30 wagons per day, from the Coolnamona and Kilberry factories to Waterford for shipment.
- Small type ETS instruments replaced large ones on the Greystones - Newcastle and Greystones - Wicklow sections on January 11.
- On April 19 the Limerick-Ennis line was closed by a slip of earth in the embankment near MP 11 just after B125, HV, three bogies and LV had passed with the 15:40 Limerick-Ballina.
- Work on the extension of the car park at Rosslare Harbour commenced on March 8.
- A Belfast Sunday paper reported that a road was to be built on the site of the Belfast Central Railway.

JOURNEY JOTTINGS

February 26: Dublin - Rathmore

Sharp to the minute, B153 started a short 06:30 Day Mail from Kingsbridge for Cork. The train was TPO 2972, HV 3127, standard 1393, compo 2124 and two bogie vans. Close attention was paid to the timetable to Sallins where unloading of mailbags took the full three minutes allowed. The 21:25 Cork-Kingsbridge goods rumbled past with an A class loco in charge, as the mail arrived; this time of the morning is goods time.

At Caragh, the intermediate signals in the section between Sallins and Newbridge brought the Mail to a crawl and made it three minutes late into the latter point, where the 04:15 Kingsbridge-Waterford goods was spread in several sundry sections asprawl the station.

Kildare, on our arrival 4½ minutes late, was similarly piecing together the 22:35 Cork-Kingsbridge goods (B141 and B172) which included seven flat trucks with Ford cars for delivery, a tar tanker and three containers. Smart station work recouped 2¼ minutes and with the regulation 2 minutes at Portarlinton mail-bagging, a punctual arrival was made at Portlaoise. Here, no less than 50 wagons of peat moss were standing on the branch from Coolnamona factory.

B153 made Ballybrophy bank appear non-existent and thus arrived early at that junction. At Templemore we were touching 72 mph and while the up Limerick Junction goods was passed in a blur of wagons, the TPO concentrated on dropping a mailbag, the only such delivery by apparatus on the run.

At Thurles, the passenger complement - up to this the writer alone - trebled.

At Limerick Junction we were checked by the home signal while B167/B155 departed at 09:16 for Kingsbridge with HV, 10 bogies and HV - the Limerick special for the Rugby match in Dublin. A46 with two bogies and HV arrived from Limerick, a section behind, at 09:11 but the 07:40 Cork-Kingsbridge did not get away until 09:22, 4 minutes late. The result of all this was that the Mail was some 9½ minutes late away for Mallow.

From Knocklong onwards a sprinkling of passengers entrained at each station and precluded the driver from reducing the lateness to less than 7 minutes at Mallow. The Kerry line railcar - 2620, 1407, 2625 - was standing in the up loop platform and, taking the Mail's misfortune to heart, departed the same 7 minutes late at 10:37. By dint of smart running, however, we were only 4 minutes late at Banteer and

one minute late at Millstreet where Signal & Electrical Department Van 304A was in the siding.

At Rathmore, arrival was near punctual to cross B121 with compo 2174, standard 1488, LV 2748 and HV 3149.

STATION SURVEY

Ballybrophy

The word “hamlet” is not out of place in describing Ballybrophy itself; it is certainly justified if the railway houses are excluded. Yet this is the point which the GS&WR chose for their branch line to Roscrea and Birr and later extended from the former to serve Limerick. Even the small towns of Rathdowney and Borris-in-Ossory, three miles south and north, respectively, scarce justify a station but the principal factor necessitating its retention is that the junction faces the wrong way - towards Cork - although all trains on to the branch are from Dublin.

The main line was opened from Maryborough (now Portlaoise) to Ballybrophy on 1st September 1847, was extended to Thurles on 13th March 1848 and became a junction on 19th October 1857 when the branch to Birr (then Parsonstown) was opened as far as Roscrea. It was completed and opened on 8th March 1858. The line was promoted by a separate company, the “Roscrea & Parsonstown Junction Railway”, but its existence was a mere fiction for it was absorbed into the GS&WR fold before any part of the line was open for traffic.

Limerick, the present-day destination of all trains by this route, was reached when the gap between Roscrea and Birdhill (on the existing Killaloe line of the Limerick & Castleconnell Railway) was bridged in 1864. Through services did not, however, take shape until the amalgamation of the WL&WR and the GS&WR in 1901.

There was, until some 18 months ago, one nameboard at Ballybrophy reading, below the name: “Junction for Roscrea, Birr, Nenagh, Killaloe, Limerick, Ennis and Kilkee” - this despite the closure of the Birr branch in 1962 and the Killaloe branch to passengers in 1931. This collector’s piece was amended at the commencement of renovation to read Ballybrophy only, and two new bilingual nameboards have been erected in lieu.

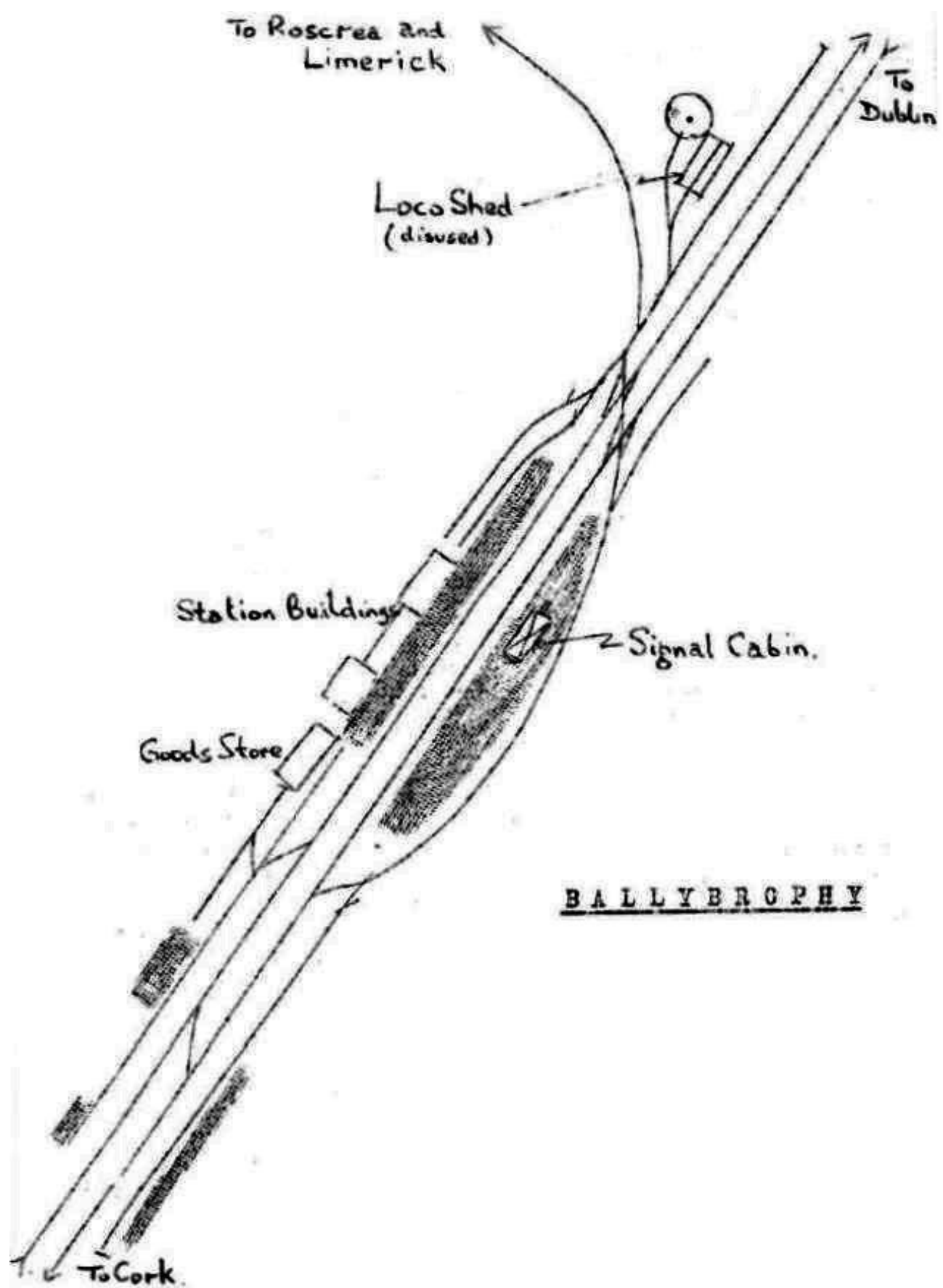
The down platform waiting hut has been demolished and new shelters, akin to the newer version of bus shelters, erected, two on the down side and one on the up side. The large water tank and softening plant have been demolished and the rest of the station buildings refurbished. The elaborate although solid stonework outside, so typical of GS&WR stations, brooks little, if any, modernisation. Small red-brick-edged flower beds have been placed on the down platform.

The station has two main line platforms with a loop and platform at the back of the down one, and a short bay behind the up one. As mentioned, the junction faces Cork and it was the latter-day practice to bring Dublin-Limerick trains to the down main line and have the Thurles and Clonmel connection standing at the loop platform.

Authority for a curve to the Limerick line direct from the down main line was sought in 1906, but although submitted to Parliament it was never built. The up bay was rarely used except for carriage storage.

At the south end of the station the goods store and a short bank with an umbrella shelter is found on the down side; opposite is a long bank for cattle and/or beet loading on two different levels.

The signal cabin (57 levers, 4 spare) is located on a height on the down platform. It replaced the former North and South Cabins in 1922.



Ballybrophy has five down calls each weekday (the 06:30, 10:00, 12:40, 17:45, and 20:40) but has only three up ones, the 08:20 Limerick, 08:00 Tralee and 15:30 Limerick. In addition there are two calls each way on Sundays. The two Dublin - Cork and the Dublin - Nenagh - Limerick goods trains serve Ballybrophy. On Wednesdays when required, a livestock special runs to Roscrea leaving Dublin (Cabra) at 14:35 and reversing at Ballybrophy at 17:52 to 18:02. This returns empty from Roscrea for Thurles being at Ballybrophy from 20:32 to 20:50. It serves the meat factory at Roscrea.

The cabin at Ballybrophy is, however, a busy place due to the through non-stop main line traffic. One point of interest is that an up train can not be passed when a down Limerick train is being handled as the latter fouls the up line while the engine runs round and also when departing. A few potential collisions have been scheduled, invariably with special trains - happily each time there has been judicious deviation from the timetable.

Feature Section

THE THURLES - CLONMEL BRANCH

When writing of the "Southern Railway" one thinks automatically of Waterloo and Victoria, of Folkestone, Salisbury and Southampton, but there was a time when, to an Irishman at least, this term would have spelt the 25¾ miles of line from Thurles to Clonmel whose full title was the "Southern Railway of Ireland". This concern applied its rather grandiose title to the link between County Tipperary's two most thriving towns without having any greater additional ambitions other than a short branch to Cashel which never materialised.

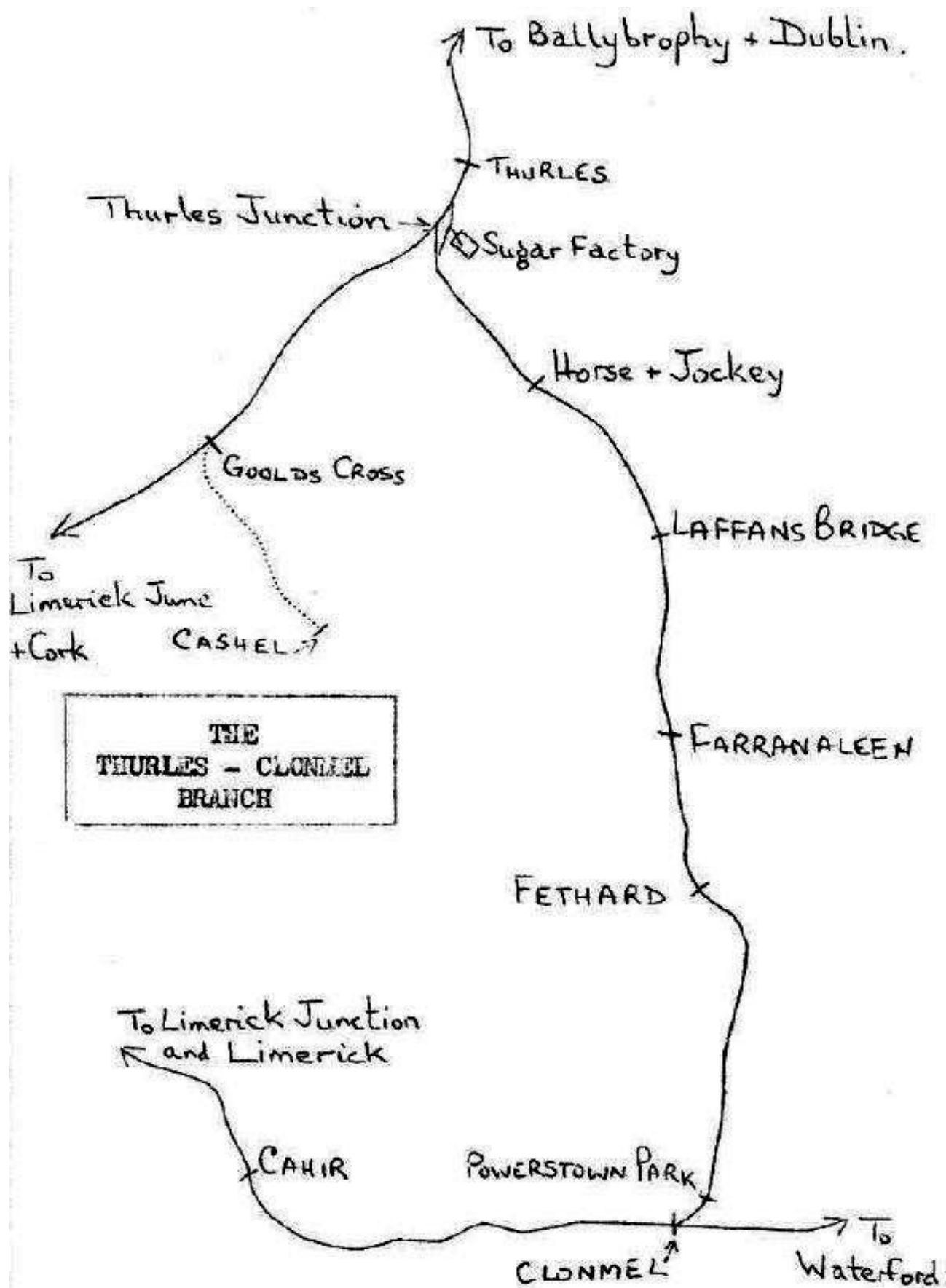
The Company was incorporated in 1865 but ran into early financial troubles when construction was spasmodic and therefore slow. The Company, too, seems to have vacillated in deciding whether to ally itself to the GS&WR or the W&LR, eventually choosing the latter. It was opened from Clonmel to Fethard on 23rd June 1879 and through to Thurles Junction - with running powers to Thurles - on 1st July 1880. The era of working by the Waterford & Limerick lasted up to the absorption in January 1901 of the then WL&WR into the GS&WR system. It passed to the GSR in 1925 and thus to CIÉ today.

Leaving Thurles, branch trains followed the main line south to Thurles Junction (MP 87 54 chains). Once there was a signal cabin in the vee of the two dividing lines but the junction is now worked by the cabin on the down side of the main line which also controls the Thurles Sugar factory yard approaches. There is a connecting link from the yard to the Clonmel branch at 15 chains (zero at Thurles Junction) which enables beet traffic to reach the factory without fouling the main line.

Just beyond, the line crosses the river Suir and heads across an undistinguished countryside to Horse & Jockey station (4 miles 26 chains). This is now closed completely but formerly it had a signal cabin on the up side and a siding opposite the one down side platform - down trains have always been those from Thurles to Clonmel, even before 1901.

At Laffan's Bridge (8 miles 17 chains) there is an up side platform with goods loop and siding opposite. The signal cabin is on the up side at the south end of the platform. In early GS&WR days the ballast pit was here and a special workman's train ran from Clonmel each morning. This ceased in 1907 when the ballast quarry was moved to Lisduff (see IRN, January 1965).

Farranaleen (12 miles 61 chains) was a halt with one up platform and a short siding which is today completely closed.



At Fethard (15 miles 59 chains) is a two-platform station serving the largest intermediate town. The signal cabin is at the north end of the down platform and there is a small goods yard with an unusual set of points in its access road.

From Fethard to Clonmel the line passes through wilder country, including a natural defile known as the "Wilderness", to reach Powerstown Park platform (23 miles 63 chains) which serves the nearby racecourse. At Clonmel the branch joined the WL&WR line at Clonmel Junction - only 14 chains from the station.

In "Southern" days the W&LR provided two passenger and one mixed train per day in each direction with, in addition, a thrice-weekly goods. In GS&WR days this varied slightly but in general there were three trains per day. The GSR years saw pruning to two - one mixed, one passenger, with, in the thirties, an extra on Wednesdays and Saturdays. During the war years the service sank to one passenger and one goods train and did not recover, except in the lavish timetable of the last two months of 1946, until in 1954 the railbus experiment was responsible for an extra train being introduced; two passenger services and one goods.

The railbus experiment involved the conversion of an AEC Regal bus to work on Howden-Meredith patent wheels. Unfortunately, when delivered to Clonmel the bus - numbered 2508 - had platform entrance facilities on one side only and hence as there were three one platform stations on the line it could suit these in only one direction. It was altered in Inchicore and ran spasmodically up to 1956 but it was most unsuitable for the line, being too small on most days for the down evening service. Yet, it could have proved ideal on a short branch with a frequent service but this was never tried. The effect, however, was to continue the two-train service on the Thurles-Clonmel line up to its closure to passenger services on 7th September 1963.

A point of interest is that for many years connections were made with Limerick trains and this involved the branch train in a main line run to Ballybrophy.

Since it became "goods only" the line has had a daily goods in each direction but it is used occasionally by specials for race meetings at Powerstown, mystery trains and, during the sugar-beet season, extensively with specials from the South Wexford area.