

IRISH RAILWAY NEWS

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09:50 Bangor/Dublin empty carriages passing Drogheda on 7th May 1994. (Gerry Mooney)

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Editorial

Thank you for your patience in awaiting this issue which at this stage is almost six weeks late. We hope, nonetheless, that you find it interesting and reasonably current. We have not produced a colour cover on this occasion as the expense in doing so is not covered by the current subscription rates. We would like to have a colour cover, as standard, but would probably need to raise the subscription rate to about £16 per annum. Would this be acceptable? Please let us know your views.

The next few months promises to be a very interesting period on Irish Rail with the arrival of new locomotives expected shortly. Further exciting developments and announcements are anticipated and will be reported when made public.

Congratulations are due to the Labour Court, the Labour Relations Commission, Irish Rail and its employees on the resolution of the dispute over new work practices. This agreement represents a landmark in Irish railway history probably on a par with the conversion from steam to diesel. It is to be hoped that the damage occasioned to freight traffic by the threat of industrial action will prove transient and that the improved competitive position will allow for the generation of new passenger and freight traffic.

A new timetable was introduced by Irish Rail on 16th May. There are several imaginative features and some creative and adventurous use of the new railcars which are operating to some quite spectacular schedules both on the new ARROW service to Kildare as well as on Maynooth, Drogheda and Dundalk services. The potential of purpose built equipment is well illustrated by the 08:13 Dundalk to Dublin (Pearse) which leaves six minutes later than the old 08:07 ex Dundalk but is scheduled to arrive at Pearse station seventeen minutes earlier than previously. A full review will appear in the next issue.

The last issue was felt in some quarters to be overly critical of the railway companies either implicitly or overtly. Such criticism as there may have been arises out of a genuine concern for the railways to prosper and for them to be examples of excellence in a country where such examples are none too common. Where clear inadequacies exist, it is in everybody's interest that they be rectified in so far as resources and circumstances permit. There is no doubt that the railway is on the threshold of a new and exciting era in which quality and customer care will be paramount.

A. Gray - 26/5/1994

Irish Rail

Dublin/Belfast Project

There has been a heightened level of activity since January particularly in so far as track renewal is concerned with almost 11½ miles relaid since the beginning of the year.

Signalling

Almost all fixed signals associated with the Malahide/Drogheda SSI re-signalling scheme were in place by the beginning of May, including the northbound gantry mounted signals at the Laytown end of Mosney loop but excluding the southbound signal reading from the Up platform at Balbriggan, the southbound loop starting signal at Skerries and the northbound signal reading from the Up platform at Skerries to the loop or along the Up main towards Balbriggan. The Up advance starting signal at Drogheda (DA 41) and the Down advance starting signal at Malahide (MH 20) were changed from two to three aspect heads in February. Similarly the existing three-aspect Malahide Down distant signal (MH 102) has been fitted with a four aspect head. As yet, none of the additional aspects are in use, pending commissioning of the overall scheme. The change to MH 102 will avoid an unduly restrictive approach to Malahide station in the event of either the starter or advance starter being at danger.

Pending the commissioning of an upgraded CTC console at Dublin (Connolly) the line to Drogheda (from and including Malahide) will be controlled from the existing Drogheda signal box which has been enlarged for the purpose. It is understood that the new signalling is scheduled to be commissioned in advance of the annual timetable change and will come into operation on Sunday 15th May. Pre-commissioning work saw the installation of a new facing crossover (No.244) at Skerries on Saturday/Sunday 9th/10th April. The crossover is located on straight track near the former Golf Club Halt, i.e. almost ¾ of a mile on the Dublin side of the station. Installation of a new trailing crossover at Skerries (No.240), located on straight track half a mile north of the station, took place during an overnight possession on Saturday/Sunday 23rd/24th April. The nearby facing turnout from the Up road into the future loop (No.241) was also installed at the same time. The new trailing crossover (No.232) located about a quarter of a mile south of Balbriggan station and the trailing connection from the future loop onto the up road opposite the cabin at Skerries were installed the following weekend - again during a night-time possession. This latter work necessitated the removal of the existing North trailing crossover at Skerries (No.7), together with the trailing connection and traps from the refuge siding (No.8). The existing South trailing crossover (No.9) was disconnected and substantially removed at the same time thus reducing the operational layout to plain track pending commissioning of the new signalling.

The South trailing crossover (No.14) at Balbriggan was removed on 7th May but the North crossover is to remain until the cabin is closed. Between Friday 29th April and Monday 2nd May the North facing crossover at Mosney (No.12) together with the adjacent crossover from the loop to the Down main line (No.11) were removed. These have been replaced by a new facing crossover (No.221) and a turnout from the loop to the Down Main (No.222). Between Friday 6th May and Sunday 8th May the South trailing crossover (No.18) and the facing crossover from the Down main to the loop (No.17) were removed and replaced by a new trailing crossover (No.224) and a facing turnout to the loop (No.223). None of the new trackwork is connected to the existing cabin and will therefore remain out of use until the new signalling scheme is operative. The Up and Down outer home, advance starting, main to loop and loop to main signals together with the ground mounted discs at Mosney were removed in stages commencing on 29th April. At the time of writing in mid-May the distant signals had been fixed at caution and only four working levers remained to control the home and starting signals in each

direction. From and including 29th April all trains ceased to call with the exception of the push/pull operated 15:04 ex Pearse and its return at 16:11 from Mosney. The 17:42 ex Pearse, normally looped at Mosney, was altered to run non-stop from Balbriggan to Drogheda so as to reduce the delay to the closely following 18:20 Dublin/Belfast service. With effect from 6th May the 15:04 ex Pearse terminated at Balbriggan returning from there at 16:18 in the path of the 16:11 ex Mosney. Bus/minibus connections are being provided to Gormanston, Mosney and Laytown in place of the curtailed services. Most of the trackwork for Mosney was pre-assembled in Buckey's sidings in Drogheda although the trailing crossover was assembled on the former goods loading bank at Gormanston.

Bridges

Two further overbridges have been reconstructed - OB 66 at Gormanston station and OB 109 at Dromin Junction. The first mentioned was demolished, reconstructed and the public road reopened within seven days - the railway having been closed overnight on Saturday/Sunday 5th/6th February. The precast concrete structure has a lined stone facade in sympathy with the original bridge abutments which remain in place. These two bridges are of a different design to earlier reconstructions and consist of six precast segments - two bed stones and four portal-arch sections spanning the running lines. The previous design for similar bridge renewals was somewhat more complicated and required at least twice the number of precast sections while producing a slightly less stylish end result.

Renewal of the so-called County Bridge (OB 55), just south of Balbriggan, has been delayed due, ironically, to objections by local Green Party activists. Twenty three bridges have thus been rebuilt or significantly altered since September 1992.

Permanent Way

Since the beginning of January almost 11½ miles have been relaid with concrete sleepers and continuous welded rail. The Down line is completed between Dundalk (North) and the border and has also been relaid from MP 24½ to 26¾ (except between the crossovers at Mosney). Short gaps in CWR have been filled by renewal of the Up road from MP 14½ to 14 and from MP 35¼ to 34½.

The Down road is being re-aligned over a distance of several hundred yards near MP 58¾ in order to ease the curvature in the cutting at this point. The refuge siding at Skerries has been relaid with second hand track panels preparatory to its incorporation in the new up loop at this location. Almost 50% of track miles between Dublin and the border are now upgraded to CWR.

Renewal work south of Drogheda has so far been confined to Sundays with almost ¾ of a mile being typically relaid during a single possession of under 12 hours duration. Such progress obviously requires some advance preparation and requires the use of two Donelli gantries, one to remove the existing track panels and the other to place and space the new sleepers. The gantries run on lengths of long welded rail which are placed on the sleepers as the work advances. The new track is ballasted on the day and as opportunity arises over the following few days with packing, lining and stressing generally taking place either at night or on subsequent Sundays. The renewed track is generally cleared for the existing 70 mph line speed within two to three weeks.

The platform coping stones at the long closed Dromin Junction have been removed to facilitate relaying through the station area.

Heavy ballast traffic is reported from the Boyne Road branch with up to four departures on Saturdays and two to three on Sundays. On some occasions two trains have been observed loading on the branch at the same time.

Rolling Stock

Twenty-eight Mk3 compatible vehicles are to be acquired for the new services and these will be formed

into push/pull sets, each expected to consist of seven coaches - driving trailer/first, full first and five standards. There will be nine trains in each direction on weekdays and this will require three sets to be available at all times, two based in Belfast and one in Dublin. The shortened journey time and reduced turn-around permitted by push/pull operation will allow the 50% greater frequency to be achieved without increasing the number of sets employed. Each set will make three round trips on weekdays instead of two at present.

Signalling - General

A number of signalling alterations became effective at Waterford with effect from the end of November last. The existing Waterford West Down outer home signals (Nos. 4 and 12) have been moved 60 yards further from the cabin and now additionally protect Newrath No.2 crossing which is expected to be upgraded from accommodation to controlled status. The Up distant signals for Newrath No.1, previously mounted on the same posts as the outer homes, have been moved 175 yards nearer Waterford. In the Up direction new advance starting signals (Nos. 31 and 42) are provided on the Waterford side of the crossing. The connection to the Ballinacourty line, along with the associated signals, was taken out of use on 21st November thus isolating the disused branch.

Modifications to the existing signalling in the Hazelhatch and Sallins station areas are currently in progress and are designed to alleviate conflict between the new South West Corridor services and existing mainline trains. The distant signals at Hazelhatch and Sallins were converted from two-aspect to three-aspect operation on 10th April thus allowing the home signals to display a single yellow aspect even when the starting signals are at danger. The sequence of signals in such circumstances will now be double yellow on the distant, single yellow on the home and red on the starter. Previously the distant signal would have displayed a single yellow while the home would have approach released from red to yellow.

At Sallins the Up home signal has been moved some 300 yards towards Cork while the corresponding distant signal is similarly relocated a quarter of a mile south of its previous position. This latter change will allow a following train to approach the home signal even if the Up platform at Sallins is occupied. The Down starter at Sallins (CY 214) was converted to three aspect operation on 8th May and now reads to an advance starter (CY 208), which is located at the Newbridge end of the station. The loop starter (CY 216) is altered to display a yellow rather than a green proceed aspect and now reads to the new advance starter. These alterations allow a train to enter the Down platform even if the section ahead is occupied.

At Hazelhatch a new Up section starting signal (CY 229) was commissioned on 8th May and is located some distance on the Dublin side of the station thus allowing an Up train to serve the platform and proceed beyond the station even if the section ahead is occupied. This latter signal is so positioned as to allow a train to draw up to it and stand clear of the facing crossover which could then be used to route a Down train via the Up platform and into the loop. The gantry mounted up home signal (CY 225) is converted to three aspect operation while the loop starter (CY 223) remains a two-aspect signal but now displays a yellow rather than a green proceed aspect. As at Sallins these changes should make it practical to loop local services without causing undue delays to either the local service or the overtaking train.

The East and West ground frames at Newbridge were disconnected and removed on 8th May as were all the associated signalling including ground mounted shunt signals CY 210(s) and CY 199(s) which were co-sited with the Down and Up home signals respectively. The goods yard is thus no longer connected reducing the Newbridge station layout to the two main lines with a facing crossover at the Kildare end and a trailing crossover at the Sallins end. It is, however, still possible to route an Up train via the Down Platform or to run round on the main line.

A new shunt signal (CY 201) has been provided on the Cherryville Junction side of the West (trailing) crossover at Kildare and reads to either the Up main or loop as required. This signal will give added convenience when running round and will also facilitate the termination of railcar services on the Down platform at times when the Up platform, served by the loop, is required for other trains.

Irish Rail have invited tenders for the re-signalling of the section of line between Waterford and the Barrow bridge, a distance of some 12km. This would include both Abbey Junction and Belview and would probably see the elimination of Abbey Junction cabin and obviate the necessity for movements to and from Belview to be in possession of the ETS token for the section to Wellington Bridge. Tenders have also been invited for the re-signalling of the Bagenalstown/Thomastown section of the Dublin/Waterford line - a distance of 34km. This latter project is to facilitate the Lavistown bypass, which will allow through running between the two stations mentioned and eliminate the time consuming reversal at Kilkenny and the necessity to traverse the 2¼ miles between there and Lavistown twice. The major beneficiary of this change will be the many Bell liner trains operating from Waterford (Belview) to Dublin and Belfast. It is not apparently intended to reroute passenger traffic although there may be scope for additional express services to and from Waterford which could be expected to complete the journey in well under 2 hours. The tender details were published in the European Journal in accordance with procurement regulations for public bodies.

The Irish Rail cable train was used to plough new ETS cabling in early March for Telecom Éireann from the Shannon bridge near Drumsna to Sligo - a distance of somewhat over 42 miles. The work was expected to commence on 7th March and take about nine days although no ploughing was scheduled for either the intervening Friday or Sunday when the line is at its busiest. On the other days the 08:40 and 13:25 ex Dublin terminated at either Dromod or Boyle depending on the location of the plough train. Similarly the 13:30 and 17:40 ex Sligo commenced at either Boyle or Dromod as appropriate. This latest work will replace the rather troublesome pole route carrying the block circuit and should virtually eliminate block failures and attendant delays on the Sligo line west of Enfield. (The pole route between Enfield and the Shannon bridge was superseded by underground cabling in 1992.)

Permanent Way - General

Irish Rail have sought tenders for the supply of 12,000 tonnes of UIC 54 kg/metre rails in 36, 54 and 108 metre lengths. This tonnage is sufficient for the renewal of 68 miles of single track - somewhat less than a year's programme at current rates.

Dublin/Cork

With upgrading concentrated elsewhere and so much already completed there is not a lot of activity to report, although ballast cleaning continues to be a constant maintenance chore. A little under half of a mile of track has been relaid on the Up road between MP 125¼ and 124¾ since January - a continuation of work commenced in December 1993 with the renewal of track between MP 124¾ and 124. Further renewals aimed at the elimination of the remaining 10 miles of jointed track on wooden sleepers in the Charleville/Limerick Junction section commenced in mid-April. Some 95% of the Down line and 91% of the Up line have been upgraded to CWR to date. A temporary speed restriction of 40 mph is in place through Portarlinton on both roads and may well be preparatory to rumoured track realignment in the station area - a move which could be expected to result in the removal or easing of the existing permanent 60 mph restriction at this location.

Dublin/Waterford

A further 2¼ miles of track have been renewed - MP 38 to 38½ between Cherryville Junction and Athy and MP 49 to 50¾ between Athy and Carlow. As some of these renewals were undertaken on weekdays there was partial bus substitution of the 11:35 Heuston/Waterford and 10:50

Waterford/Heuston on a number of occasions. At the time of writing in mid-April a further 1¼ miles is being renewed between MP 77¼ and 78½ with the track being slewed westward between Highrath and Lavistown level crossings. When completed the mileage of CWR on the Cherryville Junction/Waterford section will be approximately 28% of the branch total.

Dublin/Sligo

The 1¼ mile stretch of track from MP 19 through Kilcock station to MP 20¼ has been relaid as has just over a mile of track immediately west of Killucan station thus upping the mileage of CWR on this route to 31½ or 23% of total track miles. Preparatory work for further renewal towards Ferns Lock was in hand at the time of writing. The deviation at MP 4½, referred to in the last issue, is still in place.

Limerick/Limerick Junction

A further mile of track has been renewed and CWR installed thus bringing the total upgraded mileage to 58% of the branch track miles. Some 69% of the single track section between Killonan Junction and Limerick Junction section is now CWR. The latest section renewed is from MP 7¾ to 8¾ near Boher. At the time of writing in mid-April preparatory work for further renewal was in hand in the Pallas area where there is a 2¾ mile section of jointed track on wood sandwiched between sections of CWR. This work, as elsewhere, involves the construction of ramps at accommodation crossings so as to avoid an undue gradient up to the new track levels. The opportunity is generally taken at the preparatory stage to improve the view of each crossing for both rail and farm traffic.

Portarlinton/Athlone/Galway

Preparatory work for renewals between MP 47½ and Geashill station commenced in March with some of the work being undertaken at night with the aid of floodlights. Similar work is in hand between MP 70¾ and 71¾ just east of Clonnydonnin loop where there is currently a semi-permanent 50 mph speed restriction. Further west, work has commenced in preparation for renewals in the Athlone/Ballinasloe section between MP 86¾ and 88¾. The renewal of a mile of track in the Attymon Junction/Athenry section, MP 109 to 110, in October 1993 brings the total mileage of CWR between Athlone and Galway to 5¾ or almost 12% of the total.

Dublin/Rosslare

Extensive drainage work is in progress on the slab track section between Dun Laoghaire and Sandycove with a deep channel now in place between the running lines in this section. The OHLE was de-energised and the Down line closed to traffic between Dun Laoghaire and Dalkey on Good Friday 1st April to facilitate the operation of three mechanical diggers at Sandycove station in connection with this work. A diesel-hauled shuttle service was provided on this date between Dun Laoghaire and Bray commencing after the 07:09 Bray/Howth DART and terminating on the conclusion of work around 18:30. This was the first interruption to DART services of this nature, for some time, as ongoing repairs to the slab track section are generally undertaken at night. The current method of repair involves cutting away small portions of concrete slab and substituting concrete sleepers, secured in a metal frame, which is in turn bolted into the underlying rock. The sleepers are then encased in concrete thus restoring the slab. As poured concrete is no longer the primary structural support traffic can resume almost immediately.

Renewal of both roads over a distance of about 1¾ miles between Woodbrook and MP 10¾ (Westland Row mileage) has commenced with extensive formation excavation, drainage works and ballast cleaning on the approach to and through both the former Shanganagh Junction and the current Shankill station. So far a little over half a mile of CWR has been installed on the Up road from Woodbrook Shanganagh. New palisade fencing has also been erected on both sides of the line in this area.

About five miles of CWR is now in place south of Bray representing about 5% of total mileage. Of the

13¾ miles of double track between Pearse and Bray some 69% of the Down line and 65% of the up line now consists of CWR.

EU Funding

The position in regard to the investment program for the national railway system and for urban transportation developments, including LRT, contained in the £20 billion National Plan remains somewhat confused given that EU funding has been cut by around £800 million to £7.2 billion. It has become clear, however, that there will be no significant LRT expenditure in 1994 although newspaper reports suggest that some £3 million has been allocated to fund design work.

Investment in Irish Rail has been linked by the company and the Government to the acceptance of far reaching productivity and work practice changes discussed elsewhere. It is believed, however, that the EU Commission are more favourably disposed to physical infrastructure investments than to certain (costly) training and human resource aspects of the plan.

In a paper released at the end of March the Economic and Social Research Institute has questioned the allocation of EU funding to the improvement of the railway infrastructure and expressed "some concerns about the effectiveness of the Dublin Transportation proposals sketched in the (national) plan". This influential body has a history of dogmatic objection to railway investment over the years.

Timetable Changes

Correction: The new 15:50 Dublin/Longford service mentioned in the last issue is not scheduled to serve Maynooth although it has in fact done so on a number of occasions.

Following the (nominal) cessation of mail traffic by rail a number of timetable alterations became effective from 31st January. The 05:50 ex Heuston and 22:15 ex Connolly to Cork together with the corresponding Up workings at 15:00 and 21:30 have been cancelled entirely - these trains were dedicated mail trains and carried Travelling Post Offices. The day mails ran each weekday but the night mails had been a Monday to Friday operation for many years. The 07:55 Heuston to Galway now departs at 08:00 while the 15:10 ex Galway departs at 15:15 though existing arrival times are maintained. These trains formerly ran to a 60 mph schedule due to restrictions imposed on TPOs some years ago, and can be expected to be significantly accelerated in the 1994/95 timetable effective from 16th May. The 20:30 Heuston/Cork now departs at 21:00, runs half an hour later to Limerick Junction where an extended stop results in a Cork arrival 40 minutes later than previously at 00:20. The 19:40 Rosslare/Limerick runs as before to Limerick Junction but now departs there at 23:05 after a 37 minute stop. The 21:30 Liner/Mail from Dublin (Connolly) to Galway and the corresponding 22:00 Liner/Mail ex Galway were initially diverted to operate from, and to, the North Wall and no longer carry TPOs. It is understood that these latter trains have been further altered to operate as connecting services between Galway and Athlone only. The Mallow/Tralee/Mallow and Limerick/Waterford/Limerick liner/mails now operate as liner trains only. The weekday 05:15 Dublin (Connolly)/Dundalk mail and empty passenger working is cancelled as is the 21:05 passenger/mail ex Dundalk. The last up service on weekdays from Dundalk is now 19:03 while Drogheda has a service at 19:35 on Monday to Fridays and 18:46 on Saturdays. The 06:15 Dublin (Connolly)/Drogheda (MF) is altered to 06:00 to facilitate crews working the 07:16 and 07:32 ex Drogheda who previously travelled on the 05:15 mails.

The Sunday-only 20:10 Heuston/Galway is deferred to 20:20 but arrives in Galway five minutes earlier than previously at 23:25. Likewise the Sunday 21:15 Heuston/Cork departs at 21:30 but now arrives in Cork ten minutes earlier at 01:10. Both of these trains conveyed TPOs although there were no corresponding return workings. The Monday-only 00:10 connection from Limerick Junction to Limerick now departs at 23:55 and arrives at 00:22.

A new Monday-only train is provided from Cork to Tralee at 06:25 arriving at 08:40. This was previously a mail and balancing empty carriage working which left Cork at 03:25. The set returns as the 09:55 Tralee/Cork service. The necessity for this movement arises from the fact that there are four Sunday trains from Tralee and only three arrivals.

Locomotives

The number of serviceable 001 class locomotives continues to decline with literally only a handful in traffic at any one time. 001, 005, 011, 012, 015, 026, 036, 039, 048 and 051 have made regular or semi-regular appearances over the last few months. 038 and 049 are not expected to run again although 055 had returned to traffic by the middle of May.

Railcars

The 17 Japanese built railcars, 2601-2617, arrived at the Ocean Pier in Dublin's North Wall on board the Mammoet line's MV Envoyager around 05:00 on 14th February. The ship is understood to have left Kawasaki on 29th December and was routed via the Suez Canal. The first vehicle, 2603, complete with its bogies was unloaded at 10:30 by the ship's 400 tonne crane and placed on board a heavy haul trailer belonging to Allelys for the short trip between the pier and Alexandra Road where two road cranes were waiting to lift the vehicles onto the tramway.



Railcar 2604 being unloaded from the MV Envoyager, 14/2/1994. (Gerry Mooney)

The next car lifted was 2605 but this was placed on the quayside for some time and little happened thereafter until 2604 was unloaded and conveyed to Alexandra Road at 14:00. The first set 2603/4 was conveyed to Inchicore by 167 sometime around 16:00. Unloading continued up to about 22:00 on the 14th and was completed the following day.

Following the fitting of CAWS and train radio equipment at Inchicore the first self-propelled trial on running lines took place on 7th March with 2601/2 running to Kildare in the morning and Portarlinton in the afternoon, the former movement following the 09:00 Heuston/Tralee from Inchicore. Trials thereafter have continued on a near daily basis primarily from Inchicore to Kildare, Portarlinton or Portlaoise although a trial took place to Cork for the first time on 18th March. 2611/12 formed the trial train on this date and was observed arriving in Cork station via the goods loop as the main passenger platforms were occupied at the time.



Railcar 2603 at Alexandra Road, 14/2/1994. (Gerry Mooney)

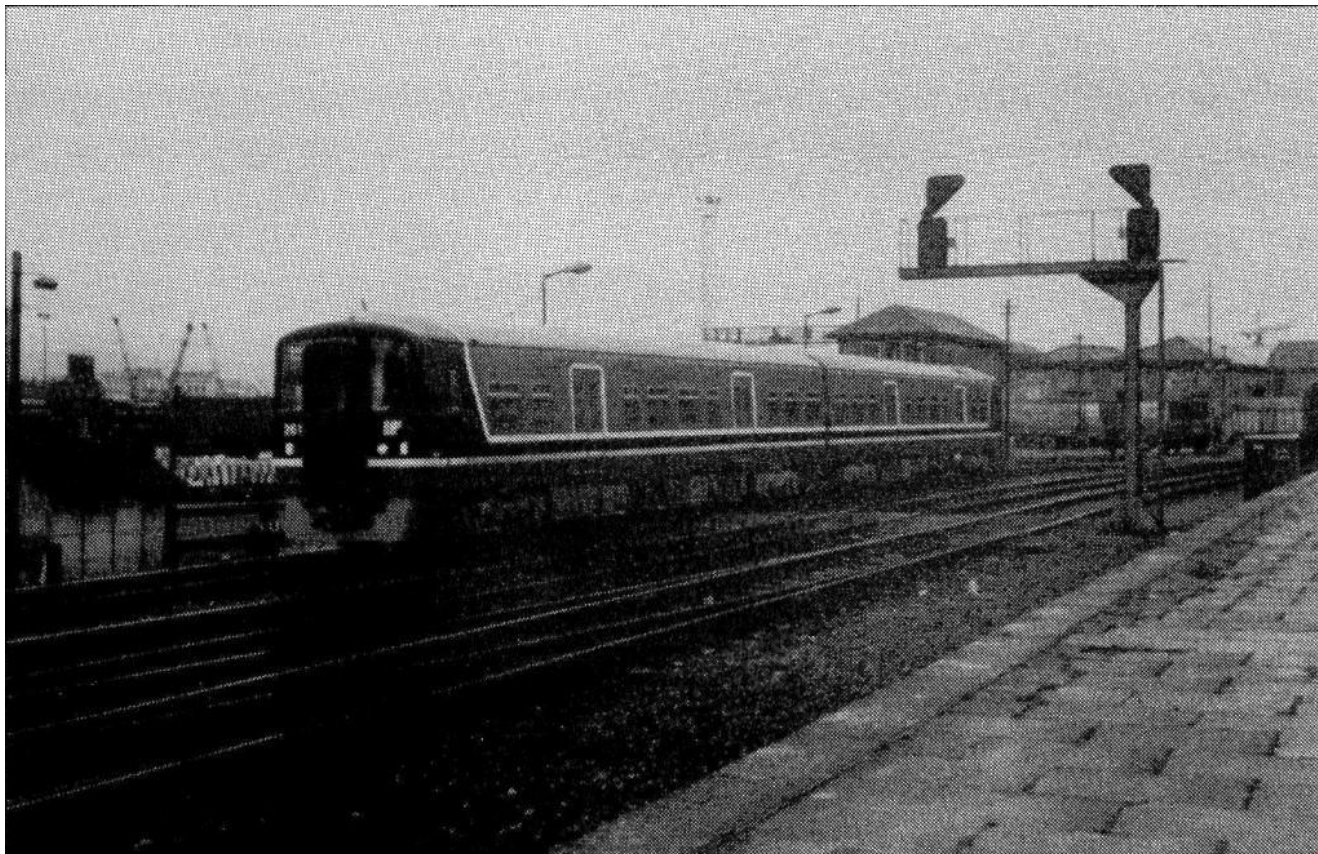
A traditional Japanese sake barrel-breaking ceremony took place at Inchicore on 23rd March to mark the handover of the railcars to Irish Rail. The keys of the first set were presented to Transport Minister, Brian Cowen, by the chairman of Mitsui, Koichiro Ejiri. The guests, including the Japanese Ambassador, were later conveyed to Hazelhatch to sample the new trains.

The build up of the driver training program during the week ending 22nd April saw as many as three sets in use simultaneously with trials extending to the Waterford line on at least one date. The first trials took place on the Belfast line on 23rd April when 2613/14 ran to Dundalk returning ahead of the 11:00 ex Belfast which arrived in Dublin (Connolly) at 13:41 - almost twenty minutes late. The same two-piece train ran from Inchicore to Dublin (Pearse) and Mullingar the following day. Subsequent trials are understood to have included visits to Galway, Rosslare and possibly Limerick via Limerick Junction.

Park Royal Coaches

The three coaches mentioned in the last issue - 1400, 1944 and 1946 - were finally withdrawn on or around 8th May. In a related development a two-piece push/pull set, 127 + 2 p/p 6104, was based in

Limerick for a number of days to facilitate driver training commencing on Monday 9th May. It is understood that the four-piece push/pull set currently based in Dundalk will be transferred to Limerick from the commencement of the new timetable on 16th May and that its link will in turn be taken over by a four-piece railcar formation. These changes will allow the acceleration of services on the Limerick/Limerick Junction section as the 50 mph restriction applicable to trains conveying Park Royal stock will no longer apply.



Railcars 2611 and 2612 at Cork, 18/3/1994.

Mail Traffic

The last travelling post offices ran on the Galway line on 21st January being conveyed on the 21:30 Liner/Mail ex Connolly and the 22:00 Liner/Mail ex Galway thus ending a tradition of over one hundred years. TPOs have likewise disappeared from the Cork line although the dedicated mail trains continued to run, without TPOs, up to and including 29th January. These changes have been anything but successful from the point of view of An Post and were accompanied by a major deterioration in the reliability of the mail service which had not been fully restored to normal by the end of March. Despite these changes mail continues to be carried by rail in considerable quantities with an extra van being attached to the 21:00 Heuston/Cork for the purpose. Cross-border mails were still being conveyed by rail as of mid-February as were mails for Bray and Drogheda.

Limerick/Claremorris

The Athenry/Claremorris section remains closed to all traffic although ballasting of the line was due to commence near Tuam towards the end of April. It is believed that a new Ballina/Waterford liner train may be introduced when the route via Tuam becomes available for traffic. Such a train would convey export containers from Ballina and Claremorris which are currently routed via the North Wall and

would be additional to the weekly Foynes/Ballina “coal and oil” train. Export of meat products via Claremorris has increased considerably in recent times and is straining the capacity of the existing Ballina/Dublin liner train.

Unfortunately the Limerick/Ennis section has been closed due to flooding near Ballycar since early February and as a result the passenger service has temporarily ceased while the Limerick to Athenry bulk cement has been diverted to run via Portarlinton. Bagged cement traffic is presently being conveyed from Limerick to Gort by road. (Normal working resumed on or around 17th May.)

A passenger train is understood to have operated from Limerick to Galway via Gort on 25th January departing at 16:15 and returning at 02:30 the next day. This was the first passenger working North of Ennis since 7th March 1992.

Traffic

Due to a severe shortage of rolling stock the 17:15 Dublin/Mullingar was cancelled on 4th February, as well as 4th, 11th, 16th, 18th and 25th March. Passengers for Maynooth were accommodated on the 17:05 to Sligo which was deferred to 17:15 on each of these occasions. However, except on the last-mentioned date the train ran non-stop to Maynooth as normal with a bus connection from there back to Leixlip. Passengers for stations Castleknock to Clonsilla inclusive were conveyed by bus from Connolly while taxis were used on at least some of the dates mentioned to bring passengers to Broombridge and Ashtown.

134 worked the 13:35 Connolly/Rosslare on 30th January necessitating a visit to the turntable prior to working 18:00 return service. Other engines of the same class were subsequently observed on Rosslare services reflecting the gradual demise of the re-engined “A” class and the relative availability of the single-ended 121 class. Loco 129 was observed passing Drogheda on 12th February with a Down liner train consisting of 15 bogies laden with 40ft Bell containers. The same engine is understood to have worked the 11:35 ex Belfast (Adelaide) on the previous day, again hauling 15 bogies.

The 18:30 Dublin/Sligo was delayed at Dromod for about an hour and a half on 14th February due to a bomb warning. Arrival in Sligo was at 23:15. The double heading of push/pull trailers to improve reliability and provide additional power, when used for mainline duties, continues with such an arrangement being the norm on the Sunday-only 10:25 Connolly/Rosslare and 14:50 Heuston/Waterford. Both trains return to Dublin at 18:00.

The 11:00 ex Belfast was held in Dundalk on 11th February due to a block failure between there and Drogheda. This delay, apparently to allow Dunleer be “switched in”, combined with regulation 15 mph running between Dundalk and Dunleer to produce a total delay of about an hour on this date.

The 05:20 Cork/Dublin was delayed North of Mallow on 24th February due to a coach defect which necessitated splitting the train. This incident resulted in a delay of somewhat over an hour and a half.

150+152 were reported at the head of a laden Navan/Alexandra Road Tara mines train on 9th April representing a further inroad into traditional “A” class territory.

A special train operated from Bagenalstown to Longford via Dublin on 27th February in connection with a GAA fixture. This movement was repeated on 5th March due to a drawn match and on the latter occasion consisted of an 071 class locomotive, six Mk2a/b coaches and a Dutch van.

The 14:50 Heuston/Waterford, 127/162 + 6 p/p, failed on 13th March and was observed passing the Curragh with replacement engines at 16:48. The corresponding Up train, at 14:35 ex Waterford, arrived in Kildare somewhat ahead of schedule and was overtaken by the 14:30 ex Cork. Unfortunately signalling problems caused an extended blockage at Hazelhatch and reduced speed from there to Inchicore resulting in a Dublin arrival just before 18:00. The failed engines off the 14:50 were observed

on the Up mainline at Hazelhatch as the Waterford train ran through the loop.

The 15:10 Westport/Dublin ran in an altered and accelerated path on 20th March being advertised to serve Castlebar, Claremorris and Portarlinton only. The train consisted of 185/131 + 6 Mk2a/b + DV and arrived in Dublin with about 270 passengers at 18:45. The connecting 15:05 Ballina to Manulla Junction was altered to depart at 15:40 and extended to Dublin (Heuston) serving all stations from Foxford to Kildare except Manulla Junction. (The latter station is open for interchange traffic only.) This train consisted of 122/181 + 6 Cr + GSV and arrived in Dublin at 20:00 with a further 200 passengers.

The 06:40 ex Athlone failed near the former Lucan station on 25th March resulting in a delayed arrival at Heuston just before 10:00. The disabled train was pushed to Inchicore by the 05:20 ex Cork which then followed as soon as the Athlone train had been hauled clear.

The 07:00 ex Limerick and 07:30 ex Waterford were also delayed and both arrived at Heuston within a few minutes of the Cork train. Down trains were also badly affected with the 09:00 Heuston/Tralee being observed passing Cherryville Junction at 10:47 somewhat over an hour late. This train consisted of 083 + EGV + 7 Mk3 and was delayed awaiting the engine off the incoming 05:20 ex Cork. The 10:30 Showtime Express to Killarney was formed by the set of the incoming 07:00 ex Limerick and thus suffered a similar delay. This latter consisted of 073 + 7 Mk2a/b + DV and passed Cherryville Junction at 11:54.

The 10:30, 11:30 and 12:30 North Wall to Waterford Bell liner trains were observed passing Cherryville Junction at 13:11, 13:33 and 14:29 respectively on Saturday 26th March. These trains consisted of 143/160 + 18 bogies, 142 + 18 bogies and 129/188 + 18 bogies. All were fully laden and had arrived in Waterford by 18:15.

The 10:00 Sligo Quay to North Wall empty (Esso) oil train on 29th March consisted of 011 + 2 bogies (empty kegs) + 1 bogie (40ft Bell container) + 4-wheel barrier + 17 empty oil tanks + 4-wheel barrier. It crossed the 08:40 Dublin/Sligo passenger train, 071 + EGV + 6 Mk2, at Boyle on this date.

First class capacity on the 07:55 Dublin/Belfast is often insufficient for the traffic offering with the overflow being accommodated in the adjacent dining car. Such was the case on 30th March when the train was formed by 085 + EGV + 6 Mk2.

The 07:25 ex Westport was observed leaving Hazelhatch on 1st April at 13:26. The train consisted of 073/084 + 8 Mk3 + EGV and is understood to have failed near Roscommon. The 13:00 to Westport was a scratch set and was worked from Hazelhatch forward by the crew of the delayed Up service.

A 15:30 Executive special operated from Belfast to Kildare on 22nd April. The train consisted of 126/127 + 4 Mk3 + EGV as far as Connolly at which point 072 took over. The 121s then worked the 18:30 Connolly/Sligo but got into difficulties at Claude Road, shortly after departure, although the train was able to proceed after a brief stop. The return special train operated on 24th April and was 071 class hauled to Connolly, where 189/165 took over.

DART services were suspended between Booterstown and Dun Laoghaire from approximately 11:00 to 14:45 on 29th April after a lorry carrying steel girders crashed through the boundary wall and came to rest on its side blocking both lines just North of the coal quay bridge at Dun Laoghaire. The OHLE suffered little or no damage but clearance work was delayed while the driver was extracted from his cab. Passengers travelling on the 13:35 Connolly/Rosslare were brought by bus for all or part of the journey while the return 18:00 ex Rosslare was similarly affected.

An unusual and welcome feature of the May weekend arrangements was the operation of auxiliaries to Galway at 19:10 on the Friday and 10:20 on the Saturday. About 130 travelled on the Friday train with a further 100 on the Saturday special. The latter was formed by the set of the Friday-only 17:00

Heuston/Ballina and returned empty to Ballina from Galway via Athlone. The regular 18:45 to Galway on the Friday, 080 + EGV + 7 Mk3, had about 500 passengers leaving Dublin while the 11:00 to Galway the following day, 086 + 9 Mk2 + EGV, had about 300 passengers leaving Kildare.

Dublin Transportation Initiative

It is understood that the DTI draft final report suggests that there may be merit in considering the development of a new rail freight terminal to the west of Dublin preferably in the Clondalkin area. This would be combined with distribution facilities and linked to the C-ring motorway. The report is less enthusiastic about suggestions that all freight for Dublin Port should be transhipped to rail at such a terminal. Also out of favour is the proposal to convert the ex-MGWR Liffey branch into a truckway as this would interfere with the prospects of extending commuter rail services and in any event would facilitate only a small volume of freight movements.

Dun Laoghaire

Proposals for development of Dun Laoghaire port, mentioned in the last issue, received planning permission on 25th February. There is, as expected, no commitment to the redevelopment of Dun Laoghaire DART station. Given the much increased road traffic, in particular of heavy goods vehicles, associated with the project it can be assumed that there will be an extended planning appeal.

Heuston Station

The developments proposed for Heuston Station mentioned in the last issue and reported in other publications appear to be somewhat more tentative than initially thought and may not necessarily occur in the precise format described nor indeed in the immediate future. The proposed plans were extensively discussed at a meeting of the Chartered Institute of Transport on 17th January.

Connolly Station

The ramp access to Connolly Station from Amiens Street has been resurfaced and presents a much improved appearance. It is, however, still in use by Bus Éireann as a storage area for buses serving the nearby Busaras and is consequently severely congested and polluted at busier times.

South West Corridor

Work on the construction of the new station at Cherry Orchard and the reconstruction of Clondalkin, Hazelhatch, Sallins and Newbridge stations was nearing completion at the beginning of May.

Cherry Orchard is located mid-way between the 3¼ and 3½ mile posts and would appear to consist of 90 metre length platforms similar to those built on the Maynooth line at Castleknock and Coolmines.

By 8th May new lighting was in place, surfacing of the platforms with tarmac was in progress and a crane was on the site erecting the new footbridge. Based on the platform length and in conformity with Department of Transport regulations no train of more than four passenger carrying vehicles will be allowed to call at the station though in contrast to the Maynooth line such a restriction is unlikely to be a problem for the foreseeable future.

The station at Clondalkin was likewise well advanced by 8th May with the platforms being surfaced with tarmac, new lighting in place and the footbridge and shelter frameworks already erected.

The station at Hazelhatch is almost complete with all of the original buildings demolished except for the station house on the Up side which has been re-roofed and externally refurbished. The platforms are rebuilt to their original length, raised and surfaced with cobble-lock bricks. New lighting has been

erected and shelters are in place, two on the Up platform and one on the Down. There will be public access to the station on both the Up and Down sides and ramped access is provided to both platforms for wheelchairs.

At Sallins all previously existing buildings on the Up side have been demolished but the station house and adjoining building on the Down platform has been re-roofed and externally refurbished. The platforms have been raised and resurfaced with cobble-locked bricks, new lighting has been erected and new shelters are in place, two on the Up side and one on the Down. A stylish new covered footbridge spans the running lines and incorporates the long disused stone steps which were part of the previous structure. As at Hazelhatch ramped access is provided to both platforms and there will be public access on both the Up and Down sides.



15:40 Heuston/Kildare "Arrow" service at Sallins, 17th May 1994. (A. Gray)

At Newbridge the existing platforms are being raised and resurfaced, new lighting provided and the station forecourt improved.

The main station building at Kildare has been transformed in appearance with the stonework cleaned, the roof re-slatted and an attractive white and green paint scheme applied. The footbridge has been extensively repaired and the station forecourt resurfaced.

Car parking will be available at Clondalkin, Hazelhatch, Sallins, Newbridge and Kildare but not at Cherry Orchard.

Irish Rail have announced that 22 local trains will operate in each direction on Monday to Saturday between Heuston and Kildare with a journey time of 40 minutes for the 30 mile trip including five intermediate stops. Ten of the 17 new Japanese railcars operating in two or four car formations will be allocated to these services including the four-car set which will take over the existing early morning Athlone/Dublin commuter service together with the return working at 17:00. Feeder buses are to be

provided from North and South Clondalkin to Clondalkin station, from Celbridge to Hazelhatch station, and from Naas to Sallins. Incidentally the station at Hazelhatch is to be known as “Hazelhatch & Celbridge” while that at Sallins will be known as “Sallins & Naas”.

Given the relatively isolated position of Heuston Station the new service will be significantly dependent on a priority bus link along the Quays to O’Connell Bridge, although there is likely to be pressure to divert trains via the Phoenix Park tunnel to either Connolly or Pearse. As mentioned in the previous issue such a move would require careful planning, further investment and a recast of existing outer-suburban and DART services.

New Gantry Cranes

A new 35 tonne container gantry crane has been erected in the ex-L&NWR Holyhead Yard at Dublin (North Wall).

The gantry crane at Sligo referred to in the last issue is of 35 tonne capacity not 45 tonne as previously reported. It is, however, not yet in use.

Sligo Quay Tramway

The tramway along the deep water jetty is now back in operation having been taken out of use temporarily to facilitate the erection of the new container gantry crane. Loco 071 was observed shunting both the goods yard and jetty on 29th March during the interval between its arrival on the 08:40 ex Dublin and its return on the 13:30 ex Sligo. A single tar wagon, dispatched from the North Wall the previous evening, was worked from the Cold Chon premises to the goods yard on this occasion.

Ballyseedy Derailment

A recent meeting of Tralee UDC was informed by Irish Rail’s divisional engineer that last November’s Ballyseedy accident was caused by a rail defect which had been present for less than a 24 hour period. Pressed about the general state of the line the local IR operations manager indicated that the company was fully committed to its retention and that £16.5 million would be spent upgrading the Mallow/Tralee section over the next six years. A sum of £1.5 million will be spent on a new signalling system.

Industrial Relations

Due to a dispute concerning a promotional appointment in the Fastrack office all services into and out of Galway were cancelled on Friday 28th January with affected trains reportedly running to and from Athlone only. Normal services resumed the following day.

Following extensive negotiations a comprehensive and far-reaching productivity package, along the lines of that detailed in the previous issue, was put to members of SIPTU and the NBRU but was heavily rejected in a secret ballot. The proposed deal would result in 171 job losses amongst the 1,500 affected staff and achieve cost savings of £1.5 million a year.

The company felt obliged to commence implementation of elements of the package with effect from 5th April and accordingly rostered staff for training on the new railcars and in the use of portable ticket issuing equipment. Fourteen staff were suspended on this date for refusing to co-operate with the training program. The first effect of this dispute on passenger traffic occurred later in the day with the cancellation of the 18:20 ex Dundalk. This was a special train running in the path of the 17:00 ex Belfast which had been cancelled due to advertised Easter Tuesday Bank Holiday arrangements in

Northern Ireland. Affected passengers were accommodated on the following 18:00 ex Belfast, due to depart Dundalk at 19:03. It is understood that the 20:15 Dublin/Dundalk service was also cancelled and replaced by buses on this date.

The following day the 08:00 Galway/Dublin was cancelled at Athlone and the 110 passengers on board transferred to the 07:25 ex Westport. The 11:00 ex Dublin (Heuston) to Galway ran from Athlone only, although connecting buses were provided from Dublin. These two trains were similarly disrupted for the remainder of the week.

The only other casualties reported during the first week were the Friday-only 16:45 Dublin to Cork on 8th April and the 17:15 Dublin to Mullingar and 20:10 Mullingar to Dublin on the 9th.

The following week saw the cancellation of the 08:07 Dundalk/Pearse from Monday 11th April to Friday 15th April inclusive. Substitute buses were provided to cover this service which was cancelled due to the suspension of the rostered driver. Dublin/Galway trains, however, ran normally during this period. Some limited disruption of freight trains was also reported due to the suspension of drivers at Inchicore, Connolly, Athlone and Dundalk depots. The unions, meantime, sought and obtained a mandate for strike action effective from mid-night on Friday 15th April after which date all rail services operated by Irish Rail would be suspended.

A last minute intervention by the Labour Court secured a suspension of the dispute in return for the reinstatement of thirty-nine suspended staff and the deferral of new rosters. In return the unions agreed to facilitate limited training pending a full Labour Court hearing which took place on 20th and 21st April. The interim agreement was not finally accepted by all parties until 23:55, five minutes before the dispute was due to commence.

Modified proposals were issued by the Labour Court on 25th April and put to ballot by both Unions with SIPTU recommending rejection and the NBRU issuing no official recommendation one way or the other. Irish Rail meantime announced that 279 temporary staff would be paid off from 3rd May and that an additional 1,000 jobs would be at risk if the proposals were rejected. The modified package was accepted by SIPTU on this occasion with 675 votes for and 585 against, although the smaller NBRU is understood to have rejected them by a ratio of four to one.

Formal and informal contacts were established over the weekend although the threat of NBRU pickets and a complete stoppage on 3rd May remained a distinct possibility up to about 18:20 on the previous day. Further discussions took place over the next few days with both SIPTU and the NBRU with the company agreeing to defer new rosters. Amended arrangements were subsequently accepted by the NBRU allowing revised work practices and new rosters to become effective from 16th May although, in fact, the first non-DART OPO trains ran on 13th May.

The disastrous potential of a dispute for the freight business was continually emphasised during the tense stand-off periods prior to the various deadlines. It appears, according to newspaper reports, that Irish Rail may have lost up to a £1m in revenue as major customers pre-empted the dispute by hiring road hauliers. At the time of writing the movement of Bell containers to and from Waterford port is much reduced with, for instance, only one train operating from North Wall to Waterford on Saturdays 30th April and 7th May during an interval in which four such trains would ordinarily have been expected.

On the passenger front Irish Rail published an emergency bus timetable effective from Saturday 15th April which was intended primarily to cater for people unable to make their own alternative arrangements. Some 100 private buses would have been involved serving both mainline and outer-suburban routes. NIR cross-border services would have operated to and from Newry with substitute buses thence to Dublin. Fortunately it was not necessary to activate these contingency plans although, no doubt, time and money was invested in preparing them. Almost all permanent way work was

cancelled on Sunday 16th April, as due to the uncertainty, no staff were rostered and arrangements previously made for possessions and plant hire were cancelled.

Rambler Tickets

All of the existing Rail-only Rambler and Rover tickets have been withdrawn and replaced by a 5-day ticket valid for unlimited travel over a period of 15 days. Bus/Rail versions of the 8 and 15 tickets remain available, but are naturally poorer value unless it is intended to use the bus option. Prior to the change tickets were valid for unlimited travel on Irish Rail for 4, 8 or 15 days, with a version of the 8 and 15 day ticket available which included unlimited travel on NIR.

Details of the tickets currently on sale are summarised below.

Number of Days Travel	Validity Period of Ticket	Cost 1993/94		Cost 1994/5	
		IR	IR/NIR	IR	IR/NIR
4	8	£45	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	15	N/A	N/A	£60	£70
8	15	£60	£70	£85*	£105**
15	30	£90	£100	N/A	£180*

* Includes Bus Travel

** Includes Bus Travel and is valid for 30 days.

Storm

Strong winds caused a block failure between Dundalk and Drogheda on 3rd February resulting in regulation 15 mph running over the 22 mile section. The 07:25 ex Dundalk was thus delayed by almost an hour and did not reach Pearse station until after 10:00. Although the section was subsequently shortened by opening Dunleer cabin, trains were restricted to 15 mph between Dundalk and Dunleer for a period in excess of 24 hours resulting in a delay to services of between 20 and 45 minutes.

Later the same day the 18:00 ex Belfast, which was already running over an hour late, failed at Howth Junction blocking the branch as well as the Up main. Apart from seriously disrupting DART, a queue of trains resulted including a following fertiliser train, a laden Tara Mines train and the 19:45 Dundalk to North Wall liner train. The Belfast train, hauled by 085, was eventually able to proceed and arrived in Dublin sometime after 22:00.

High seas on the same day resulted in the closure of the Greystones/Wicklow section and caused the cancellation of the 17:26 Connolly/Arklow at Greystones. This section was reopened, following examination, some time after 22:00.

Other problems on this date included the suspension of DART services between Dun Laoghaire and Dalkey for almost an hour around 22:00 due to OHLE problems.

Cork/Cobh

Irish Rail have confirmed that upgrading of the Cork/Cobh service, including the provision of new rolling stock, and the proposed reinstatement of the Cork City railway as far as a new terminus adjacent to the Brian Boru bridge forms part of the company's strategy for the area, but that no funding is currently available. Other proposals expected to remain on the long finger are the re-opening of the Youghal line as far as Middleton, through running from Mallow to Cobh and the opening/reopening of

stations at Blarney and Kilbarry. The Cork/Cobh service has been much run down in recent years with a reduction in service frequency and the cancellation of late evening services. Nonetheless business remains reasonably brisk and there is clearly considerable potential given adequate investment.

A push/pull set, 124 + 6 p/p 6102, worked at least one trip to Cobb on Bank Holiday Monday 2nd May prior to working the 17:40 Cork/Dublin auxiliary.



Bridge construction on the New Ross branch, March 1994.

New Ross Branch

Irish Rail have written to the New Ross Harbour Commissioners stating that there was no immediate intention of closing this line, which has been out of use since September. The track, however, was severed for some time to facilitate the construction of an overbridge carrying the new road linking the N25 with the new Waterford port at Belview. Following completion of the bridge the track panels were gradually reinstated and the line is understood to be passable, though not in use as of the mid-May.

Ballinacourty Branch

A crowd of up to 300 people attended a public meeting at Carroll's Cross, half way between Waterford and Dungarvan, on 6th March, to show support for the recently formed Waterford & Dungarvan Railway Preservation Society. The society hopes to save the scenic 27 mile branch from destruction and restore it as a tourist attraction and a vehicle for job creation and development in County Waterford.

The line features a number of major engineering structures including the 400 yard long Suir viaduct at Waterford and the well known viaduct at Ballyvoile which had to be reconstructed in 1924 after the civil war.

A motion for the formal abandonment of the line is understood to have been passed at a general meeting of the Fishguard & Rosslare Railways & Harbours Company held in Ashford, Kent on 10th February. This company is jointly owned by CIÉ and Stena Sealink, successors to the GS&WR and the GWR respectively.

At the time of writing in early May it was expected that Waterford County Council would ask CIÉ to hand over the Ballinacourty branch into its charge thus retaining the line for future development and preservation. The deadline for submissions to CIÉ is reportedly 27th May. (CIÉ are apparently acting in the capacity of agents for the F&RR&H company.)

Miscellaneous

- It is reported that the Carriage Conversion shop at Inchicore is to be rebuilt following fire damage some years ago. This is the building in which the Mk3 were constructed and the ex-BR Mk2 air-braked coaches were refitted.
- It is reported that facilities are being provided at Limerick Junction for the repair of on-track maintenance machines. This facility will reduce the out of service time involved in bringing equipment to Barrow Street (Dublin) for attention.
- The Kilbarrack DART action group has been offered £50,000 by Dublin Corporation to fund improvements in the vicinity of Kilbarrack station. The group is seeking £400,000 to cover the reconstruction of this busy but vandal prone station and put their case to the Minister for Transport, Mr Cowen, and Mr Niall Andrews MEP who met the group at the station in early April.
- It is reported that the Glounthaune Community Association are to undertake the refurbishment of the station at Cobh Junction as part of a Youth Employment Scheme.
- In connection with the Ireland v Scotland Rugby International on 5th March Irish Rail advertised a return fare of £70 for travel on the executive train from Cork to Dublin (Connolly) and return inclusive of "Executive Irish Breakfast" and "Three-course Silver Service" dinner. The fare also included travel by DART to Lansdowne Road. The standard class return fare on this date was £21 available on the 07:35 regular and 07:45 relief trains out of Cork and valid for return at 17:30, 17:40 or 19:00 from Dublin (Heuston). The executive train was advertised to depart at 08:10 and return at 18:15.
- In a judgement delivered on 15th December 1993, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal by Irish Rail against an earlier High Court judgement which apportioned 30% of the blame for the "Claremorris" derailment against the company and 70% against Mr Patrick Diskin. The company was held to be in part responsible in that it failed to post a notice at the accommodation crossing warning farmers to notify the stationmaster before moving a herd of cattle or advising that information should be sought on precise train times. The matter arose out of the derailment, at speed, near Claremorris, of a special train from Balbriggan on Sunday 24th September 1989, as a result of striking a herd of 14 cattle which had wandered along the line while being driven by Mr Patrick Diskin between lands owned by Mr Michael Diskin.
- An armed gang who held a family hostage for four hours at Drumleck, Castlebellingham, on 15th February were forced to abandon their attempt to steal a container of cigarettes from a Belfast/Dublin liner train as, due to earlier locomotive failures, the train was running considerably out of path. The gang had earlier hijacked a crane and stolen a lorry as part of the elaborate operation.
- The short single track Connolly to Newcomen Junction spur was taken out of use on 7th February to facilitate the reinstatement of the lifting bridge over the Royal Canal which was replaced some

years ago by a culvert. This work is being undertaken in connection with the proposed reopening of the canal to navigation for amenity purposes. The line, however, was re-opened over the weekend of 20th/21st May although no work of any significance has yet taken place.

- Published punctuality on the Sligo line for the 4 weeks ended 2/1/1994 showed 91% of the 146 weekday trains arriving within 10 minutes of booked time. The next 4 week period showed 97% of the 152 weekday trains arriving within the same margin of booked time. No statistics are available for Sunday operation. Incidentally this is the only line for which such information is regularly available.
- The redundant signal boxes at Templemore, Goolds Cross, Dundrum and Knocklong have been demolished. These cabins were closed on 12/1/1986, 12/12/1986, 14/12/1986 and 10/1/1988 respectively.
- CIÉ, the Irish Rail holding company, has sought planning permission to convert Howth DART station for office and retail use. It is envisaged that 20 offices and a craft shop would be provided on the ground floor together with retail storage on part of the first floor.
- An armed and masked raider stole £530 from Shankill DART station on 10th March.
- The largely redundant goods store and associated buildings at Newbridge were destroyed in a fire at the end of April leaving a burnt out shell which was demolished over the weekend of 14th/15th March.

Northern Ireland Railways

Cross Harbour Link - Position As Of Mid-April

Completion work on the viaduct sections is nearing an end with railings and other fittings in place over the entire length. Preparatory work for track laying is well advanced with the entire section from Lagan Junction to Yorkgate ballasted to a depth of about eight inches by road lorries, which gained access via the embankment at Lagan Junction. Rails are in situ over the entire section having been lifted by crane from street level, and will be welded into 180 metre lengths on hardwood sleepers. The double track Lagan Junction is to be assembled at Antrim and when in place just east of the Lagan viaduct, the main line will in effect be the cross-harbour link as this will be the straight route with the Bangor line curving away to the right. Thereafter there will be a double track section of sufficient length to hold a six piece railcar set clear of both the Bangor line and the turnout from the single track section leading onto the new river crossing. Having reached the County Antrim side the viaduct opens out again to provide space for a loop capable of holding a six-piece railcar set, before narrowing again to single track for the remaining few hundred yards to Yorkgate.

In order to improve operational flexibility at Belfast Central various track and signalling alterations are to be carried out including the provision of a new trailing crossover west of the station. This is already in place and when operational will allow trains from platform 4 to depart towards Portadown, a routing already available from platforms 1, 2 and 3. Further alterations at the east end of the station will permit Bangor and Larne direction departures from platform 3 to be paralleled with Up direction arrivals on platforms 1 or 2. It will also be possible to have simultaneous departures to Bangor and Larne, while parallel arrivals along with various other permutations will be facilitated by the introduction of two-way signalling over the Up Bangor line and on the double track section of the cross-harbour link.

The Cross Harbour rail bridge has been named the Dargan bridge after William Dargan, the Carlow born engineer who built much of the Irish Railway system as well as the Port of Belfast.



Dargan Bridge, Cross-Harbour Rail Link Belfast, April 1994.

Dublin/Belfast Project

Renewal of the Down line between the border and MP 65¼ is now complete, although speed restrictions were still in place at the southern end of the Wellington cutting as of mid-April. Towards the end of April activity had shifted to the southern approach to Portadown where about one mile of the Down line, between MP 86 and MP 87, has been relaid with concrete sleepers and jointed flat-bottom rail. Further north a start has been made on the rehabilitation of the Lisburn/Belfast section with extensive formation renewal and selective sleeper replacement undertaken at night on the Down line between, but excluding, Lambeg and Derriaghy stations. The Lisburn/Belfast section was relaid some fifteen years ago using jointed flat-bottom rail on concrete sleepers and is expected to be gradually converted to CWR over the next two years. Ballast continues to be loaded at Poyntzpass and hauled in bogie wagons to the point of discharge.

NIR have recently awarded contracts for the supply of 4,950 tonnes of flat-bottom rail, 69,000 concrete sleepers, 138,000 rail seat pads and 276,000 rail clips and insulators. This material is sufficient to renew about 28 track miles and is to be delivered between July 1994 and March 1997. (European Journals S53/115, S34/115, S9/149.)

Great Victoria Street

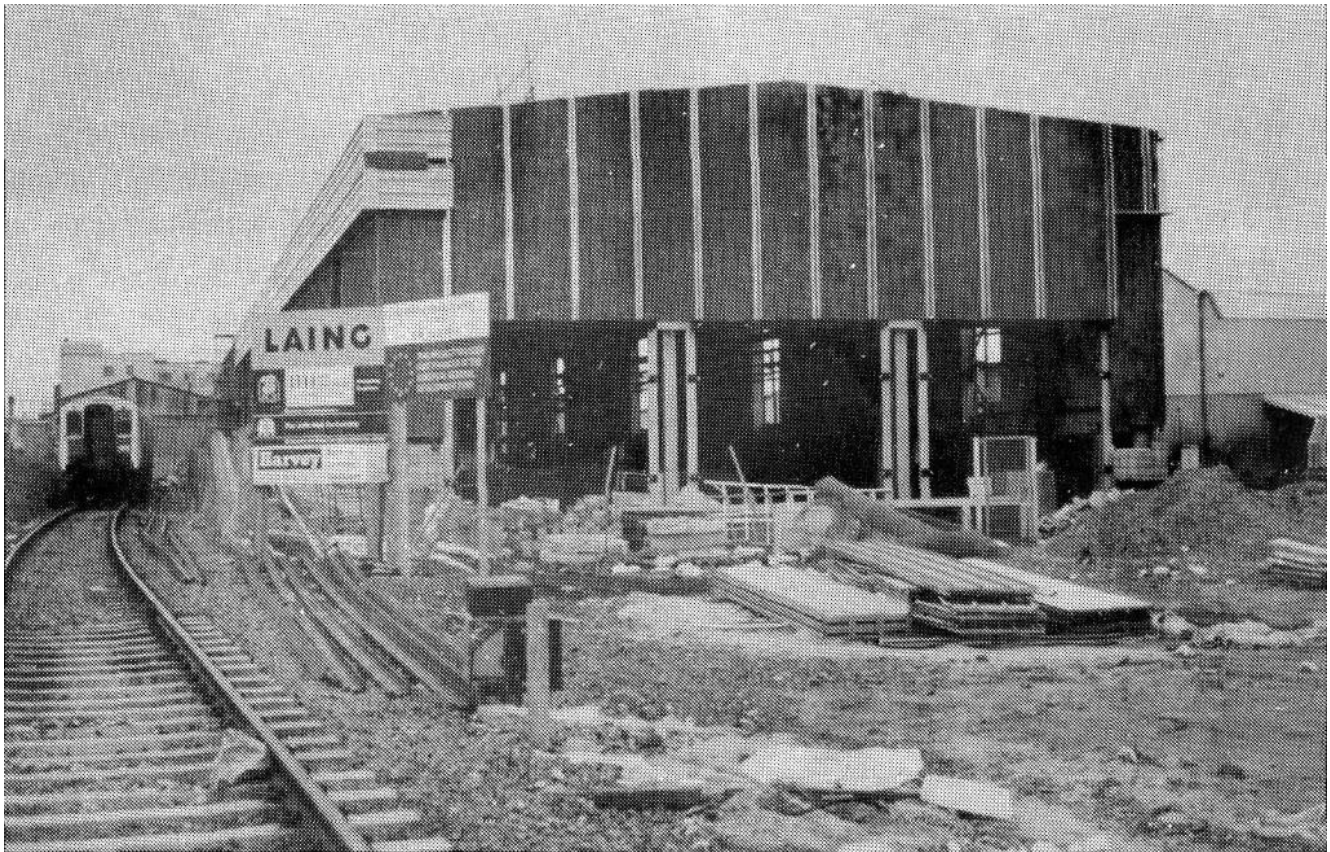
This project is expected to start shortly and the new station and connections are due to open for traffic in June 1995. (See previous issues.)

Belfast Central

The East Bridge Street entrance to the station is currently being refurbished and extended and when completed will considerably add to the existing passenger circulation area. Additional office accommodation has recently been provided at Central to house the Operating Department and Control Office which were formerly located at York Road.

York Road

Construction of the new running shed at York Road is well advanced and work is proceeding on the associated alterations to trackwork in the yard, as well as on the provision of various ancillary buildings and servicing facilities. A contract has been awarded to the Yorkshire company BWI Dawson for the supply of a new train wash, the foundations for which are already in place. (Tenders Electronic Daily, Page 115, Volume 37, Issue 053.)



Construction in progress at York Road in Belfast, April 1994.

Locomotives and Rolling Stock

The two new locomotives on order from General Motors are scheduled for delivery in early 1995 and will enter traffic in NIR colours pending application of the new livery to be applied to equipment working the new cross-border service which is due to start towards the middle of 1996.

Locomotive 112 re-entered service at the beginning of March following bogie overhaul and is resplendent in the modified livery previously applied to 111 and 113. The locomotive has been fitted with bogie yaw dampers similar to those already successfully fitted to 113 and to Irish Rail locomotives of the same type. It is understood that the opportunity has also been taken to commission HEP equipment and in this connection trials were being conducted between Belfast and Lisburn on 9th

March.

Hunslet Locomotive 102 has been acting as yard pilot at Adelaide since the beginning of March, following the transfer of MV 108 to York Road. MV 104 has since replaced 108 as the York Road ballast engine.

MV 106 was under repair at York Road works on 20th April and can be expected to return to traffic shortly. MV 108 is now the Portadown ballast engine. MV 105 is stored unserviceable at York Road.

Motor coach 83 returned to traffic at the beginning of February and having spent a few days on the Larne line was transferred to CSD.



Artist's impression of new NIR locomotives currently on order from General Motors.

Storms

Power failures which affected most of Northern Ireland on the evening of 3rd February blacked out various locations including Belfast Central, Lisburn, Antrim and Ballymena and caused major problems particularly at AHBs where flagmen had to be called out. The 18:20 ex Dublin reached Belfast at 22:20, followed by the 19:00 ex Londonderry which arrived about 22:35. There were also problems on the Larne line while earlier in the day the 10:05 Belfast/Ballymena was delayed after hitting a tree on the Antrim branch.

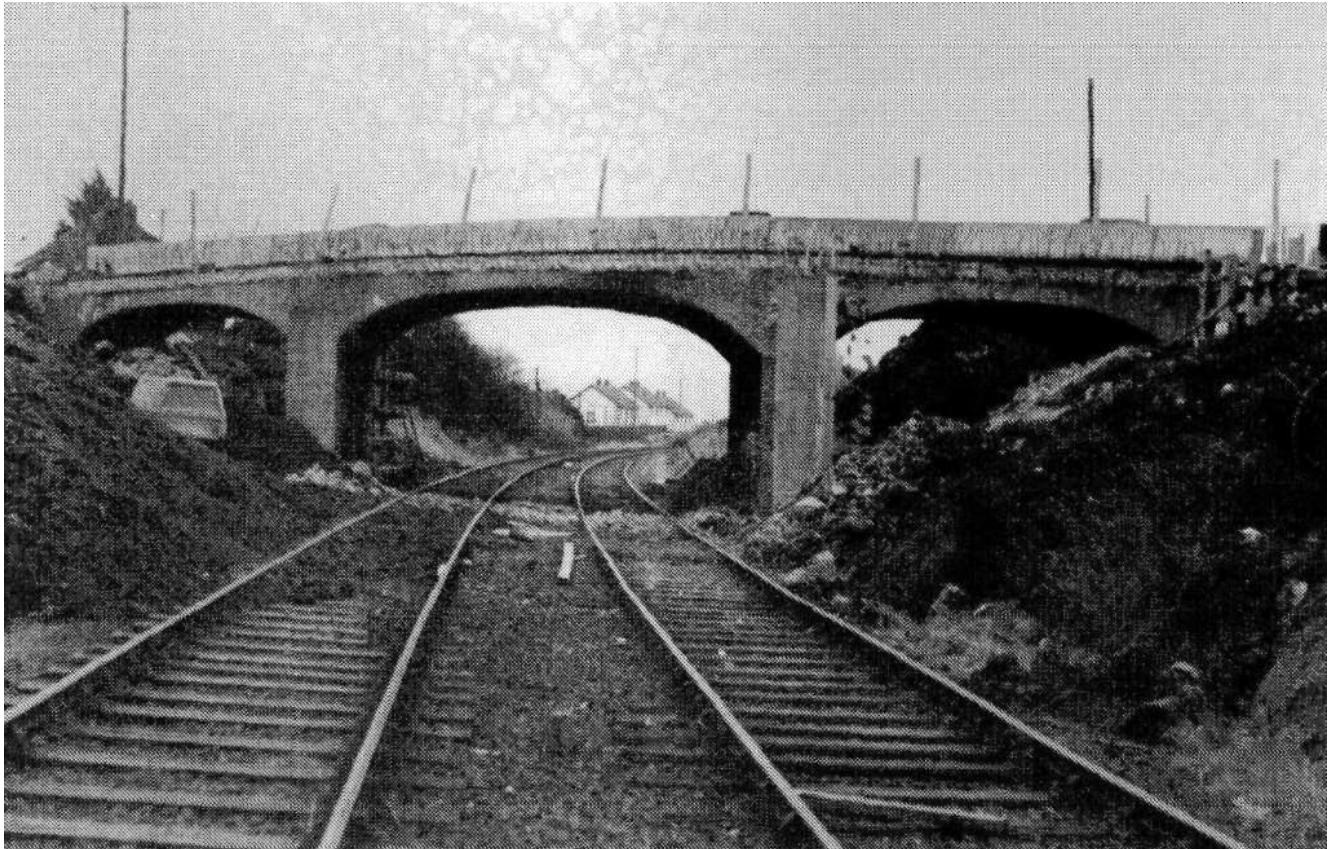
Fertiliser Traffic

111 worked an Adelaide to Londonderry bulk fertiliser train on 3rd February and again on 24th February. 112 worked a similar train on 4th March.

Bridge Renewal

The bridge, No.208, carrying the railway over the Burnfoot River, just west of the former Limavady Junction, was renewed with four steel spans during a possession scheduled to run from 21:30 on 21st March to 11:00 on the 27th. During this period trains terminated at either Coleraine, Castlerock or Bellarena. Passengers for Londonderry were conveyed by bus from Coleraine.

OB 17a and OB 33, the former on the Belfast side of Monkstown station, the latter at Mossley station, are being strengthened and widened by the Department of the Environment. These bridges were built in connection with the now little used “Greenisland Loop Line” which opened to regular traffic in January 1934. Both stations are currently closed but are likely to be re-opened should the proposed upgrading of the Bleach Green Junction to Antrim section of the ex-NCC mainline receive Government sanction.



Alterations in progress at OB 17a near Monkstown station. (C. Aspinwall)

Traffic

The 14:50 and 16:55 Friday-only Belfast/Newry auxiliaries have not been operating since January and as a result the 15:00 and 17:00 ex Belfast usually consist of at least 10 Mk2 carriages to cater for weekend travellers. This has caused some problems in the event of the 11:20 from Dublin running behind schedule as the residual turn-around time is not always sufficient to re-marshall the set and achieve an on-time return departure at 15:00.

The Ireland v Wales Rugby International produced heavy cross-border traffic on 5th February. The 08:00 Belfast/Dublin, hauled by 112, was made up to 12 bogies including the executive saloon. It was followed by an 08:30 relief, 85+4+904+97+4+86, with around 750 passengers. This in turn was followed by a relief from Dundalk, 184 + 3 Cr + GSV, which ran ahead of the 09:00 Belfast/Dublin, 111 + 10 bogies. Return trains to Belfast were at 17:45, 18 :20, 18:30 and 20:15, the later delayed to

20:38 awaiting DART connections.

A Bangor to Cultra special ran on 8th February formed by 85+4+90 and was unusual in that the train reversed at the Rockport emergency crossover and served the Down platform before returning empty to Belfast via Bangor.

The Ireland v Scotland Rugby International again produced heavy cross-border traffic as shown in the tables below, which for the sake of completeness also include details of Drogheda and Dundalk local traffic.

Service	Location	Time	Formation	Estimated Load
08:00 Belfast/Dublin	Balbriggan	pass 09:52	113+12Mk2	500/550
08:30 Belfast/Dublin	Balbriggan	pass 10:30	83+4+82+81+4+90	750/800
10:05 Drogheda/Pearse	Malahide	11:05/11:07	6102 6 p/p +128	300/350
10:05 Dundalk/Connolly	Malahide	pass 11:12	172+4Cr+GSV	200
09:00 Belfast/Dublin	Malahide	pass 11:26	111+10Mk2	480/520
09:20 Belfast/Dublin	Malahide	pass 11:39	85+4+94	250/260
11:30 Drogheda/Connolly	Malahide	12:19/12:20	026+GSV+4Cr	320/350
11:00 Belfast/Dublin	Malahide	pass 13:08	085+5Mk2+EGV	250

Belfast/Dublin 5/3/1994

Service	Location	Time	Formation	Estimated Load
17:45 Dublin/Belfast	Malahide	pass 18:00	90+4+81+82+4+83	630
17:42 Pearse/Drogheda	Malahide	18:12/18:13	127+6 p/p 6105	200
18:20 Dublin/Belfast	Malahide	pass 18:37	113+12Mk2	500
18:30 Dublin/Belfast	Malahide	pass 18:47	92+3+89+94+4+85	350/370
18:27 Pearse/Dundalk	Malahide	18:56/18:57	130+4 p/p 6101	330/350
19:15 Connolly/Dundalk	Connolly	dep 19:17	128+6 p/p 6102	80/100
20:15 Dublin/Belfast	Connolly	dep 20:18	111+10Mk2	450/470
20:20 Connolly/Dundalk	Connolly	dep 20:21	162+GSV+4Cr	220/240

Dublin/Belfast 5/3/1994

The 10:05 ex Drogheda was looped at Mosney on the above date while an empty railcar set, 89+3+92, followed the 11:00 ex Belfast and was used to strengthen the 18:30 Dublin/Belfast auxiliary.

A nine-piece set, motor cars 69, 97 and 92, worked an 09:30 Belfast/Dublin and 18:50 return on 10th April. A further special formed by 81+2 ran from Ballymoney to Lisburn in order to provide an outward connection from Co. Antrim stations. The return 18:50 ex Dublin connected with the regular 20:45 Belfast/Londonderry at Lisburn.

RPSI 4-4-0, No.171, and its train of preserved coaches, which were heading for Dublin, were diverted to CSD on Saturday 30th April due to locomotive problems. The carriages were worked to Bangor by GM 111 on 3rd May, and were stored there until the following Saturday because of space limitations at CSD, caused by encroaching road construction associated with the cross-harbour motorway. 111 was again in action with the same coaches on 7th May working an 09:50 ex Bangor empty carriage special, which was scheduled to run non-stop to Dublin.

A GAA football league fixture in Dublin involving Armagh produced heavy traffic on 1st May with

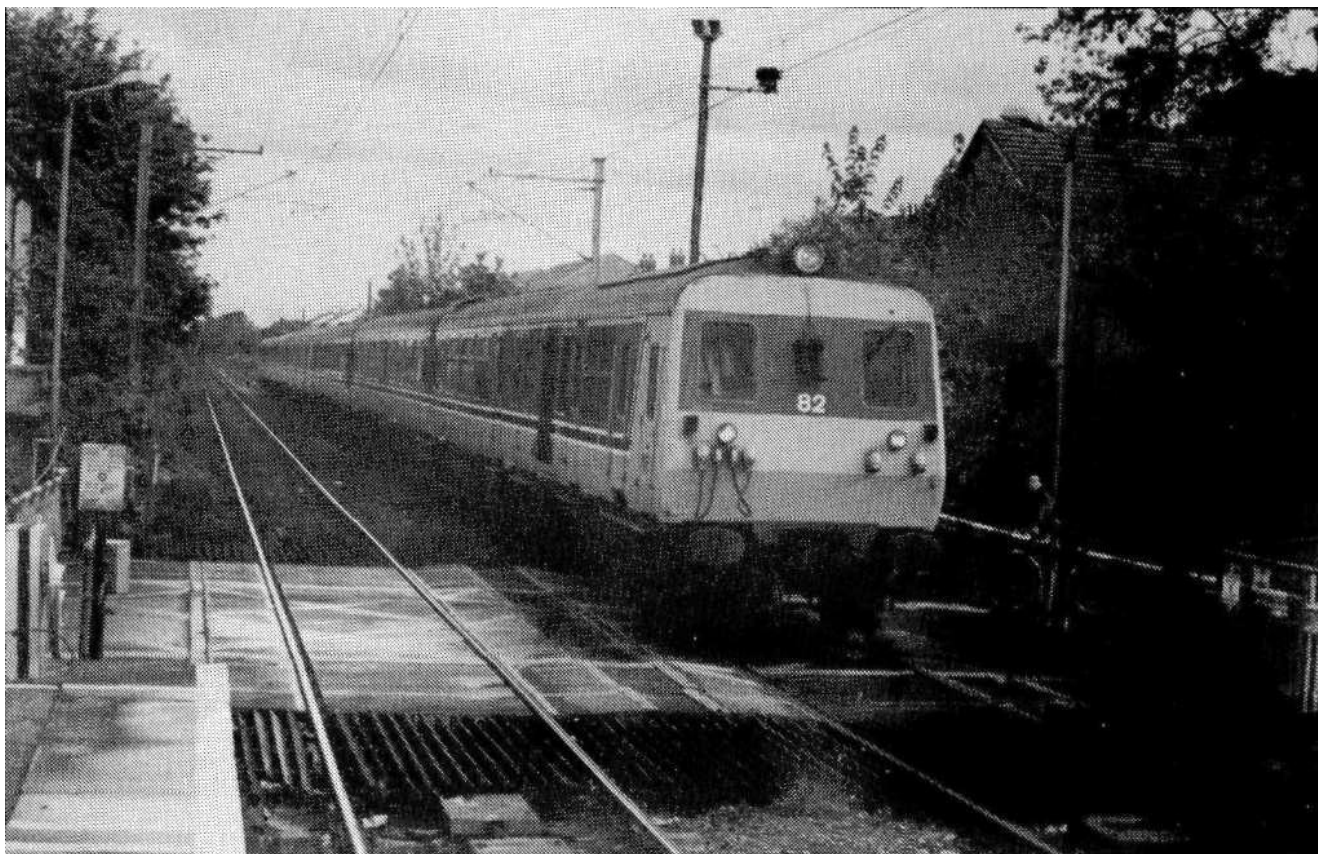
separate auxiliaries to the 10:15 ex Belfast from Lurgan (A), Portadown (B) and Dundalk (C). Return services from Dublin were as shown in the table below.

Service	Time	Formation	Estimated Load
17:55 Dublin/Belfast (B)	dep 17:43	92+4+87	400
18:05 Dublin/Dundalk (C)	dep 17:56	131+4 p/p 6101	130/160
18:20 Dublin/Belfast	dep 18:13	113+12 Mk2	650/700
18:35 Dublin/Belfast (A)	dep 18:36	82+4+69+86+4+89	650/660
18:55 Dublin/Belfast	dep 18:57	112+8 Mk2	250/260

Dublin/Belfast 1/5/1994

The 15:00 Belfast/Dublin was formed by 81-04+82+2+94 on 2nd May with 113 + 11 Mk2 following behind as empty carriages. The return 18:20 to Belfast ran in two portions leaving Dublin at 18:36 and 18:43, each carrying about 400 passengers, the first loco hauled and the second formed by the railcar set.

A special train, 85+4+82, ran from Belfast to Sandymount at 07:45 on 8th May in connection with a conference in the RDS. The train ran empty to Dun Laoghaire before returning to Connolly for stabling. This procedure was reversed in the evening with the railcars running empty to Sandymount via Dun Laoghaire.



Empty DEMU arrives at Sandymount, Dublin 8/5/1994.

Signalling, Layouts And Level Crossings

All the remaining automatic open crossings on the Antrim/Londonderry line had been converted to AHB operation by the end of March. The latest crossings altered are those at Carrowreagh, Myroe, Ballykelly, Eglinton, Lock and Du Pont.

The existing Up distant and home signals installed some time ago at Bellarena are removed and replaced by a new set of Up road signals, 342R and 342, which are located on the Belfast side of Ballykelly crossing. These new signals provide statutory protection in the Up direction for Myroe, Carrowreagh, Bellarena, Duncrun West, Duncrun East and Clooney, all of which are within about eight miles of the protecting home signal (342). In the Down direction a new set of signals, 337R and 337, is located on the Limavady Junction side of Ballykelly AHB and provide protection for Ballykelly, Eglinton, Lock and Du Pont. Signal protection for these four crossings is provided in the Up direction by the Londonderry advance starter. In the Down direction the existing signals protecting Magilligan, 336R and 336, provide the statutory protection for the crossings from Clooney to Myroe inclusive.

The siding at Fraser Street, near CSD, which was used for loading rails was disconnected at the beginning of May and lifted shortly afterwards.

Work is in progress at the time of writing in mid-May on the installation of turnouts at either end of the loop track at Killagan and it is expected that this new crossing facility will be available in time for the summer period. When commissioned track circuit block working, controlled from Coleraine, will be introduced between Ballymena and Ballymoney thus allowing the Tyers tablet instruments currently in use to be retired.

Equipment Exchanges and Unusual Haulage

The 07:10 Belfast to Londonderry and 09:40 return have recently been producing somewhat unusual train formations, particularly on Mondays, due to the requirement to strengthen other sets to accommodate returning weekend traffic. This link was worked by IR 160 + 3 Mk2 on 31st January, by IR 185 and a similar formation on 28th February, by 112 + 5 Mk2 on 18th and 21st March, by 112 + 3 Mk2 on 28th March, by 111 + 3 Mk2 on 14th April and finally by 111 + 5 Mk2 on 15th April. On the latter date the same set also worked the 13:50 Belfast/Londonderry and 17:00 return. The 16:05 Belfast to Londonderry and 19:00 return were worked by 113 + 5 Mk2 on 16th March.

IR 160/146 worked the 09:00 Belfast/Dublin on 3rd February as 111 was working a fertiliser train and 112 was receiving works attention.

IR 146 and NIR Mk2 coaches worked a number of Bangor to Portadown peak hour services from 7th to 10th February inclusive.

IR 141 failed near Dromiskin level crossing while working the 17:00 ex Belfast on 15th February. The train was eventually propelled to Drogheda by 185 and terminated there. Passengers were transferred to the 18:00 ex Belfast which arrived in Dublin at 21:07 on this date, Passengers awaiting the 20:15 Dublin/Belfast were brought to Drogheda by special train before hoarding the NIR set for the remainder of the trip to Belfast, which was reached about 30 minutes late at 23:10. 185 continued on the NIR semi-fast link until 18th February.

111 + 4 Mk2 worked the 07:50 Lisburn/Belfast on 3rd March, the locomotive then working the 09:00 Belfast/Dublin. The 07:00 Belfast/Portadown and 08:00 Portadown/Belfast were worked by 112 on this date.

Miscellaneous

- It is understood that a raft is soon to be constructed between Botanic Avenue and University

Road/Bradbury Square thus creating a 150 metre tunnel over the railway between these points. This work will facilitate the development of offices and shops over the railway and should further promote traffic at the already busy Botanic station.

- NIR Infrastructure Division's most recent Tamper/Liner, a Plasser & Theurer 08 series machine, has been observed at work on the Bleach Green/Antrim line which was used for testing and training purposes. Apart from tamping, lining and lifting straight track the machine is also capable of tackling switches and crossings. This new acquisition represents an investment of £700,000.
- The ticket office at Lisburn has been extensively refurbished during the course of which business was conducted from a portacabin in the station forecourt. Similar improvements have been undertaken at Antrim and Larne town. At Coleraine the old Pullman Bar is being converted into a waiting room and snack bar. Improved car parking is being provided at Lurgan, Moira, Crumlin, Glenavy and Ballinderry.
- The joint Guinness/NIR/Department of the Environment free travel promotion which applied after 18:30 during the Christmas and New Year period reportedly attracted some 25,000 people thus making a significant contribution to road safety during the period.
- Monthly season ticket holders on NIR are now entitled to free "Go As You Please Tickets" valid for unlimited travel throughout the NIR network.
- The signal cabin at Portrush was switched in on 28th January to facilitate maintenance work on platform 1 and to allow diversion of trains to Platform 3. Subsequently, the normal 'One Train Working' arrangements on the branch were temporarily modified so as to allow trains to operate into the latter platform without the cabin being switched in.
- A trolley service is currently available on most Belfast/Londonderry services for at least part of the journey. The current operators are Dubel Ltd, an Irish Rail subsidiary which holds the contract for catering on NIR trains and at Belfast Central station.

Private Railways And Museums

Foyle Valley Railway

- The Minister for Tourism & Trade, Mr Charlie McCreevy TD, has approved a grant of £8,700 towards the cost of carrying out a feasibility study into the proposed extension of the Foyle Valley Railway into County Donegal. The grant application was made by Donegal County Council under the Tourism Sub-Programme of INTERREG. The projected cost of the study is £11,600.
- The Foyle Valley Railway will be operative daily from Tuesday to Sunday inclusive commencing on 29th March. Operating hours are 10:00 to 16:30 except on Sundays when trains run from 14:00 to 17:30. Fares are £2 for Adults and £1 for children. It is anticipated that ex-CDR railcar No.18 will be in use on most dates. The departure point is the museum building on the site of ex-GNR station at Foyle Road Londonderry.

Fintown

- A half mile of second-hand track, consisting of 1,200 sleepers and 90 lengths of 60 foot rail, has been acquired by Cumann Traenach na Gaeltachta. The material which cost £20,000 is ex-NIR and was delivered to Fintown station in early April. It will be used to commence reinstatement of the

Fintown/Glenties section of the former 3ft gauge Stranorlar to Glenties branch which closed to all traffic on 10th March 1952. It is reported that 1½ miles of trackbed has been cleared since work commenced on the project in July 1993.

Clonmacnoise & West Offaly Railway

- This railway is open daily from April to October and offers a 5½ mile circular trip on part of the busy 96 miles of 3ft gauge track operated by Bord Na Mona at their Blackwater bog facility near Shannonbridge in County Offaly. The trip takes 45 minutes during which the story of the bog is told and the opportunity provided to view the unique flora and fauna adorning this internationally important raised bog. Trains depart every hour from 10:00 to 17:00, the fare being £8.50 for a family, £3 for an adult and £2 for a child. Each train has a capacity for 50 passengers accommodated in an air-conditioned coach built especially for the purpose. A visitor's centre and other facilities are available on the site. More extensive tours, including trips across the Shannon into the nearby power station have been run from time to time. Further information is available from Bord Na Mona.

“Freight On The Move”

Tara Mines

Over the last 17 years about 8,000 to 9,000 tonnes of ore traffic from the lead and zinc mines near Navan have been brought to North Wall each week for export. The underground mine which is situated close to the former Oldcastle branch is one of the largest such operations in Europe, and the railway is ideally suited to transport the bulk ore traffic without the environmental impact associated with road haulage. Development of the mine started in 1971, and reached full production in 1978 giving employment to 800 people.

The installation at the mine consists of a covered loading area containing a “load cell” weigh bridge which automatically controls the loading of each wagon to a maximum of 54 tons. The wagons are placed at the entrance to the weigh bridge area and the loco is released. A shunting beetle then engages the first wagon and loading commences via overhead conveyor belts. At the end of 1990 a Galway-built Unilok shunter with a 1980 registration was observed at work in place of the beetle. To obviate dust pollution the wagons are fitted with lids and the terminal equipment incorporates an automatic wagon lid lifter. Loading of the standard 11 bogie train takes about two hours including shunting. Each train of 814 tonnes gross consists of either lead or zinc but never a mixture of both.

At North Wall, on Alexandra Road, the former Gouldings fertiliser premises and jetty was taken over by Tara and fitted with an automatic tippler manufactured by Strachon and Henshaw. A traverser is located in the tippler shed so that as the locomotive enters the building it moves onto the traverser which shunts it sideways on to the “out empty road”. Each wagon is then guided by the beetle and tipped into the storage area before being traversed onto the out road lining up behind the locomotive.

The 25 wagon fleet, numbered 31001 to 31025, was built in Ireland and is owned by Tara Mines Ltd. They are bogie vehicles, 32ft long, painted blue, and in the early days carried the Tara Mines insignia on each side. Braking is two-stage with each wagon having 4 vacuum cylinders, two cylinders are in use for unladen braking and the remaining two come into operation automatically when the wagon is laden. Like other freight vehicles, the bogies are Sambre et Meuse and the wagons are designed for 50 mph running, although the 40 mph line limit applies between Drogheda and Navan.

From constant observation over the years, the timetable is operated to a programme of three laden trains to Alexandra Road each day utilising two sets of wagons. The first movement of the day is at 04:00 from Drogheda to North Wall and returns empty to Navan following the 06:57 Arklow - Drogheda passenger train. It leaves the mine again at 13:45 returning empty to Drogheda following the 18:27 Pearse - Dundalk. The set then stables until 07:00 the next morning, before continuing to Navan to form the 09:50 departure which returns empty from the North Wall at 15:05. The final train is the 19:30 from Tara Mines to Drogheda which stables there until 04:00 the next day. A fourth train operates if required while a program of either three or four trains on Saturdays and/or Sundays is not entirely unknown at peak periods. The crewing for "Taras" is exclusively provided by Drogheda depot and these trains are now single manned on the main line.

One wonders how long more we will hear the distinctive roar of a 001 class as it tackles the Rush bank or the severe gradient from North Wall yard out onto Alexandra Road. The handling of Tara mines trains by other than 001 class locomotives will be of considerable interest and may require alterations to terminal facilities in the North Wall.