7.

Limerick as a Railway Centre

By W. J. SOUTH and L. HYLAND

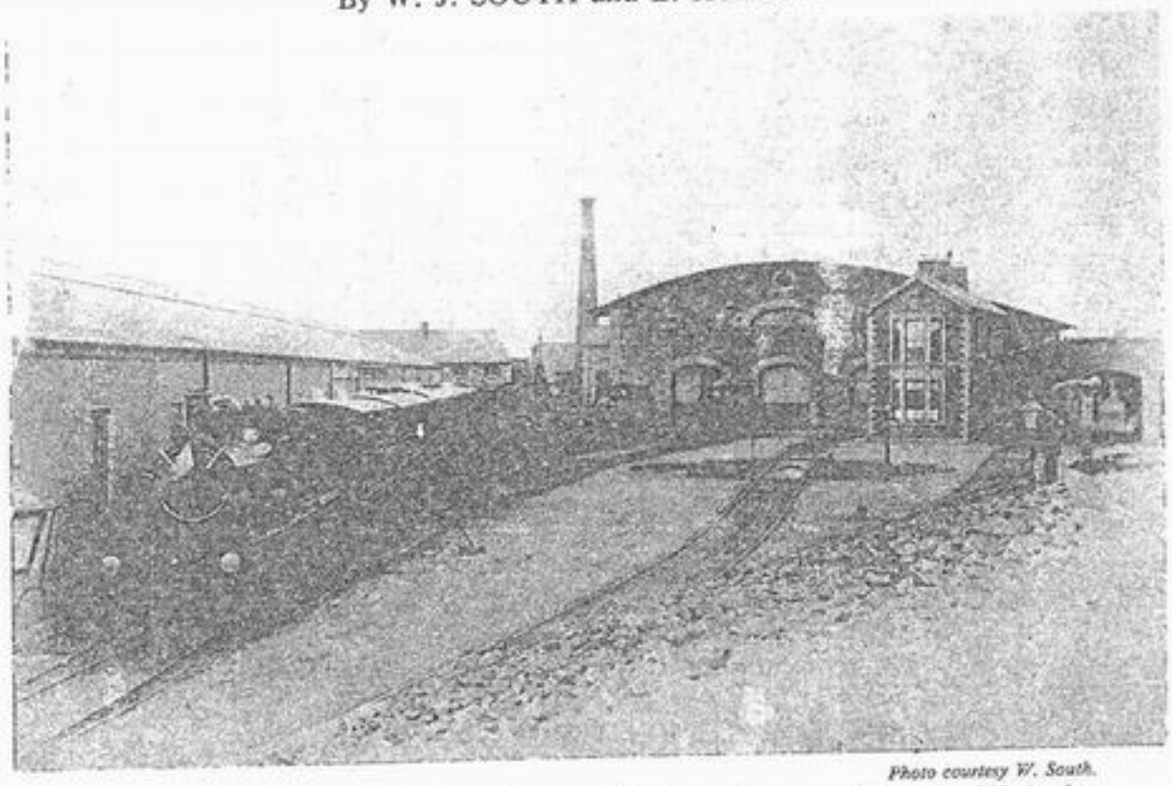


Photo courtesy W. South.

WLWR 4-4-0 No. 55 'Bernard', on GNR Royal Train at Limerick, 1 September, 1897, having conveyed the Royal party from Adare to Killaloe. The Royal party, the Duke and Duchess of York (later George V and Queen Mary) with George Balfour, Chief Secretary, attended a house party and shoot at Adare Manor on 31 August, the shoot netting 732 pheasants, 52 woodcock, 1,680 rabbits and 5 hares!

Limerick, as befits the third city in the Republic of Ireland, is a place of considerable importance in the railway sphere, both on account of its large population and because it is the most southerly focal point of traffic across the River Shannon. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the first railway in Ireland to be authorised by Parliament was the Limerick & Waterford Railway which, in linking the towns mentioned, would have passed through the fertile "Golden Vale", centre of the Irish dairy industry. Although this scheme of 1826 failed to materialise, a second attempt to bring railway communication into Limerick was successful, as on May 9, 1848, the Waterford & Limerick Railway opened its first 25 miles from Limerick to Tipperary.

Limerick terminus has changed but little since its opening, and travellers still ascend the same flight of steps from the forecourt to enter the handsome two-storey stone building, which contains the offices and a recently-modernised refreshment room. Facing roughly eastwards, and covered for most of their length, are four passenger platforms, flanked by a carriage siding on each side—six tracks in all. Platforms 1 (552 ft.) and 3 (537 ft.) are the longest, and can accommodate nine or ten bogie coaches. Platforms 2 and 4 are, however, only 397 ft. and 373 ft. long respectively.

Straight from the platforms, for three-quarters of a mile, stretches the Waterford line. To the north, or left-hand, side of the station building is the principal goods yard, known locally as the "Top yard"; and beyond it is a long and commodious goods shed and loading bank. In between is a small turntable, giving access to the one-time Market Siding, authorised on July 23, 1860, and built by the Waterford and Limerick. This formerly crossed three streets on the level to serve Limerick City Market, as well as two adjacent bacon

factories, but has latterly been cut back, and now serves only as an oil depot. This siding was worked in its early years by a small Waterford, Limerick & Western Railway 0-4-0 saddle-tank, later by horse traction and by Great Southern Railways locomotives *Elf* and *Imp*, and lastly until its closure in the 1930s by a Sentinal locomotive.

On the south side of the two running lines is a second goods store, reached by a roadway along the south side of the station. This roadway also acts as a terminus for all provincial bus services from Limerick. Beyond the two goods stores a bow string girder bridge carries the Roxboro Road across the six-track formation.

Limerick wagon works, which produces much of C.I.E.'s new goods rolling stock, is on the south of the line, which, half a mile from the passenger station, reaches Limerick Check—a wooden platform on the up line at which even today certain trains stop for ticket collection and examination. At the east end of the platform is the signal cabin of the same name.

The section from here to Killonan (at milepost 4¼) is double track, and originally this extended a further 17¾ miles, to Limerick Junction. In 1929 the Great Southern Railways lifted one road between Limerick Junction and Killonan and removed the signal cabin and junction with the Ballybrophy line at the latter, making two parallel single tracks from Limerick Check without further physical connection. In 1946, however, the cabin and crossovers at Killonan were restored and normal double track working resumed. The Waterford & Limerick Railway, heading generally south-east, is in connection with the Dublin-Cork main line, by which it is crossed at an angle on the level, three miles north-west of Tipperary. Two months after the Waterford & Limerick was opened to Tipperary, the Great Southern & Western Railway reached this point (thereafter known as Limerick Junction) and a quarter-mile connecting spur was laid into a joint station, remarkable for its complicated and unusual layout, west of the flat crossing.

Limerick's second railway was opened on July 12, 1856, as far as Ballingrane (then called Rathkeale) and was constructed by the Limerick & Foynes Railway, incorporated in 1853. This company reached Foynes on April 29, 1858, and subsequently, under the auspices of the Rathkeale & Newcastle Junction Railway, was extended from Ballingrane to Newcastle West on January 1, 1867. This latter branch was extended by the Limerick & Kerry Railway to Tralee on December 20, 1880. All of these minor companies were first supported and later worked by the Waterford & Limerick. The line from Foynes made

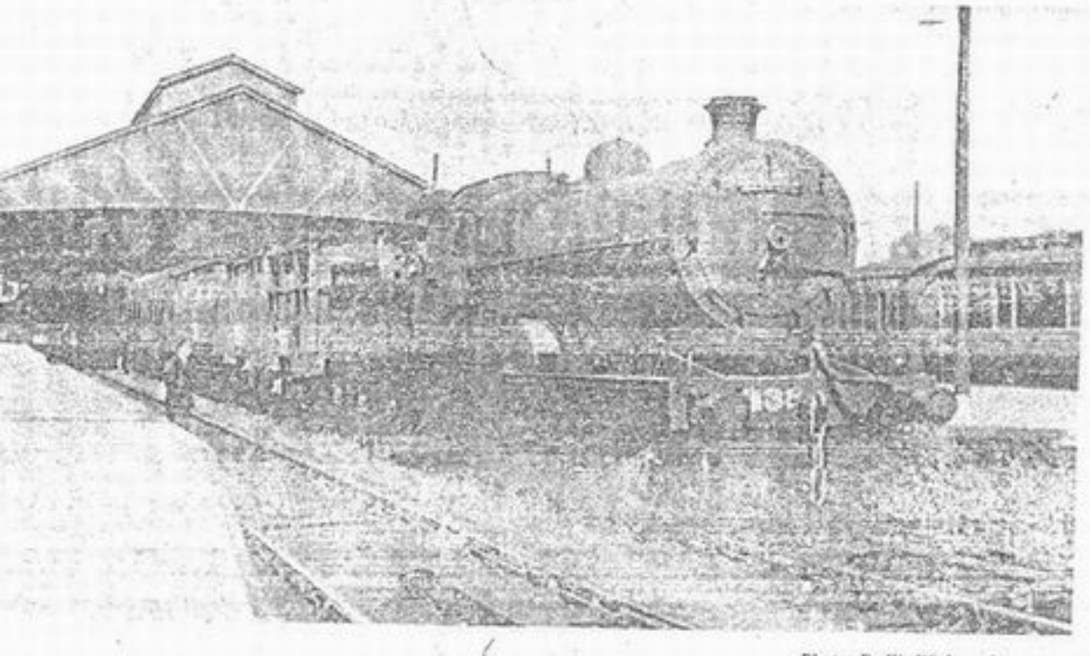
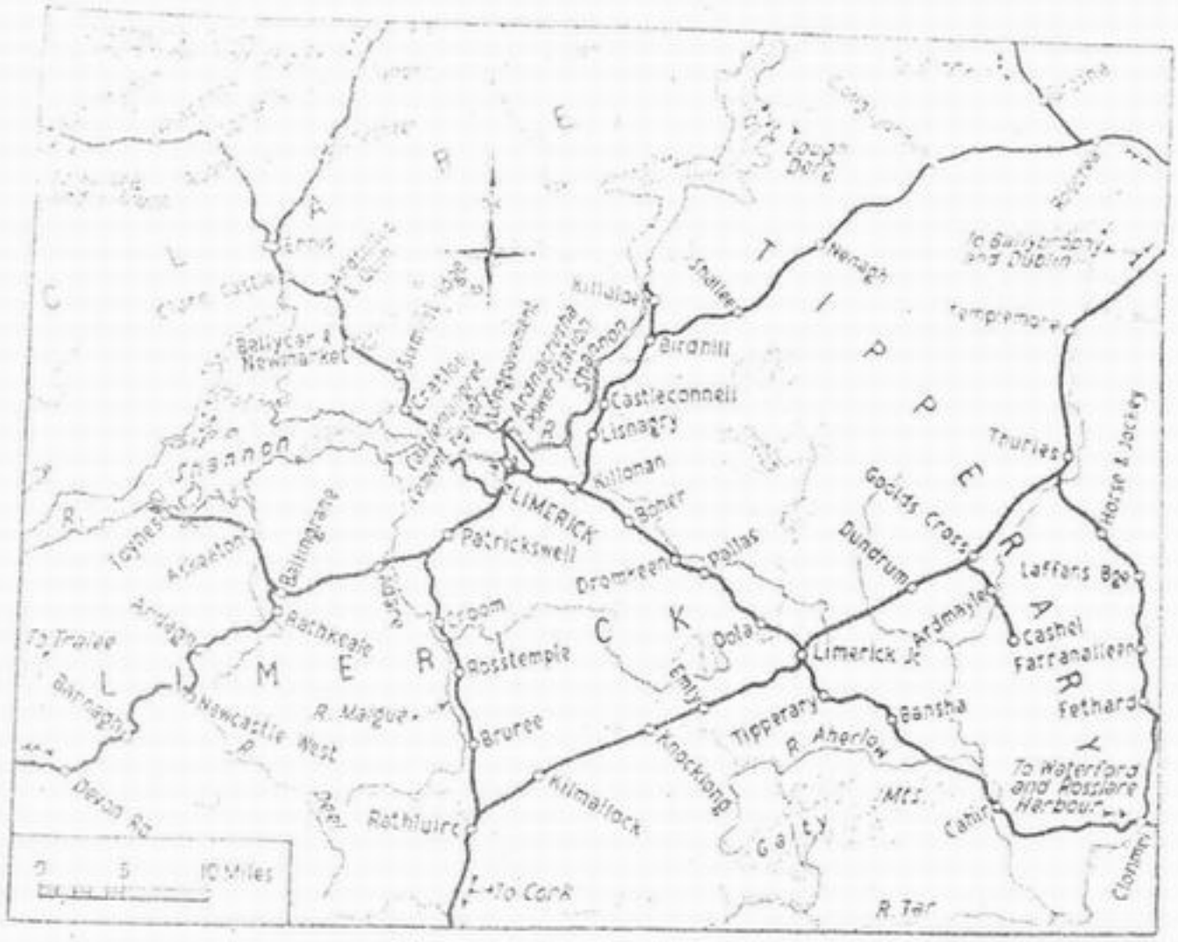


Photo: D. W. Winkworth.

Ex-GSWR D3 4-4-0 No. 338 at Limerick Station on a mixed train.



Map of the railway serving Limerick.

a trailing junction with the Waterford & Limerick at Limerick Check Cabin, and the trains had to reverse in and out of Limerick Station.

This mode of working is perpetuated by the present-day mixed train to Foynes, but other Kerry line trains now avoid the reversal by using the later direct curve from Limerick Station Junction to a junction with the original line close to Carey's Road goods yard. Limerick Station Junction is at the platform ends, and so sharply curved that connection with the northernmost platform is impossible. Consequently, Kerry and Foynes trains are able to use platforms 2, 3 and 4 only—number 4 being the most usual nowadays. The junction is worked from Limerick Station Cabin at the extemity of platforms 1 and 2.

Alongside the running line, which becomes single beyond the junction, is a siding to serve the gas plant, but which also provides a means of working transfer trains between the "top yard" and Carey's Road Yard without requiring the withdrawal of the Limerick-Patrickswell train staff. Both this siding and the running road are steeply graded between 1 in 57 and 67. Carey's Road Yard is on the right-hand side of the curve which the Kerry line takes on leaving the station, and can be entered either from the siding mentioned or by a crossover from the Kerry line which permits trains to run southward out of the yard without reversal. The yard now handles bulk traffics, such as cement, grain, and livestock, almost exclusively, but was formerly the yard for the G.S.W.R. It is still sometimes referred to as the "Cork Direct Yard".

The triangular layout of Limerick is completed by the original Limerick & Foynes line to Check Cabin, already mentioned, and this spur, which joins the more recent curve from the station at Foynes Junction, Limerick, is still known as the Foynes Loop. Foynes Junction was worked by its own cabin up to 1931, but now is controlled instead by the station cabin. The loop is also steeply graded (1 in 100) and, passing under the Roxboro Road, cuts between

the wagon works on the left and the eight-road engine shed on the right. Adjacent to the shed are coaling and watering facilities for steam locomotives, and oil tanks for diesel fuel. There is also a 55-ft. turntable.

The Limerick, Castleconnell & Killaloe Railway (first incorporated as the Limerick & Castleconnell Railway in 1855) never reached Limerick on its own metals. It was, however, under the wing of the Waterford & Limerick and was worked by, and, in 1872, amalgamated with, that company. Therefore the fact that its junction was at Killonan was no handicap. It was opened to Castleconnell on August 8, 1858, to Birdhill a year later, and reached Killaloe on August 12, 1862. Subsequently, on June 1, 1864, the G.S.W.R. branch from Ballybrophy, via Roscrea and Nenagh, reached Birdhill, and thus opened up a second route from Limerick to Dublin, 5½ miles shorter than that via Limerick Junction.

At about the same time, the Limerick & Ennis Railway was struggling to complete a link northwards to County Clare. Although the first section, from Longpavement to Clarecastle, 1¼ miles from Ennis, was opened on January 17, 1859, and worked by the Waterford & Limerick, the opening to Limerick was delayed until March 26, because the Board of Trade at first refused to sanction the use of the bridge across the River Shannon near Longpavement, four miles from Limerick. Between November, 1859, and May, 1861, the Limerick & Ennis Company worked its own line, but it soon returned to the W.L.R. fold, and was amalgamated with the latter in 1874. The Ennis trains start their journey heading east, but curving ever left, and circling the city, they eventually, at Longpavement, strike northward to Ennis.

Longpavement Halt is the starting point of a one-mile branch, which runs along the west bank of the Shannon to Ardnacrusha Power House. Nowadays it is used only occasionally, as it was primarily brought into being for the purpose of transporting equipment and materials to the site during the construction of the River Shannon hydro-electric scheme between 1925 and 1929. It is of interest to recall that, during this period, an extensive system of 3 ft.-gauge track was laid down in the works area, one section of line actually penetrating several miles across country to a terminus on the City fringe. Here suppplies, which mostly had arrived by sea from Germany, were loaded into both tipping and covered wagons, and hauled by German-built 0-4-0 steam tank engines along the roughly-laid line, which crossed numerous roads, as well as the Limerick-Ennis railway, on the level. At the point where it crossed that line, protective stop signals were provided, but the narrow-gauge trains usually had a clear road as they were much more frequent than services between Limerick and Ennis.

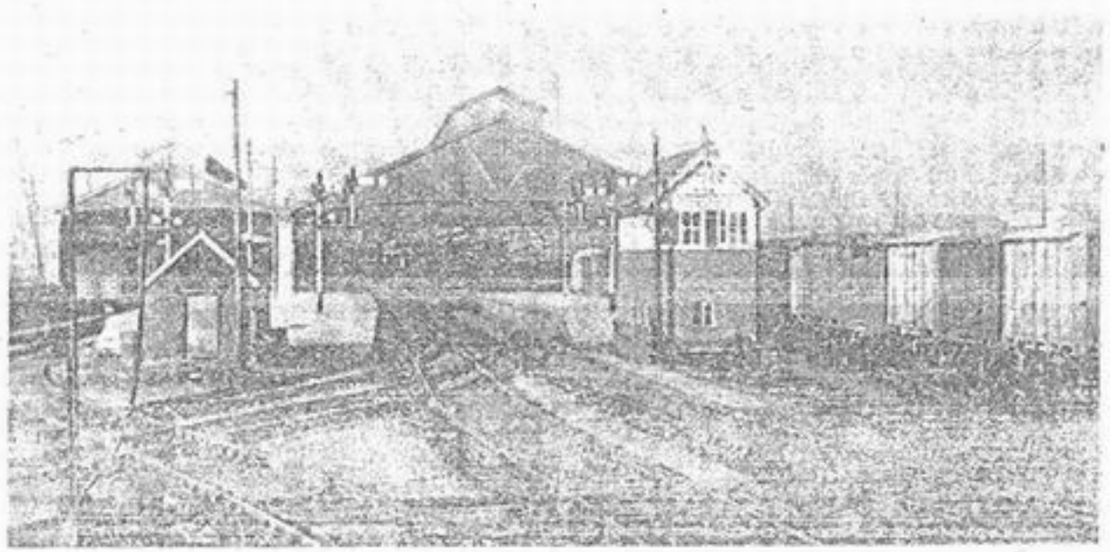


Photo: L. Hyland.

Limerick Station, showing the line to Foynes diverging sharply at the platform ends.

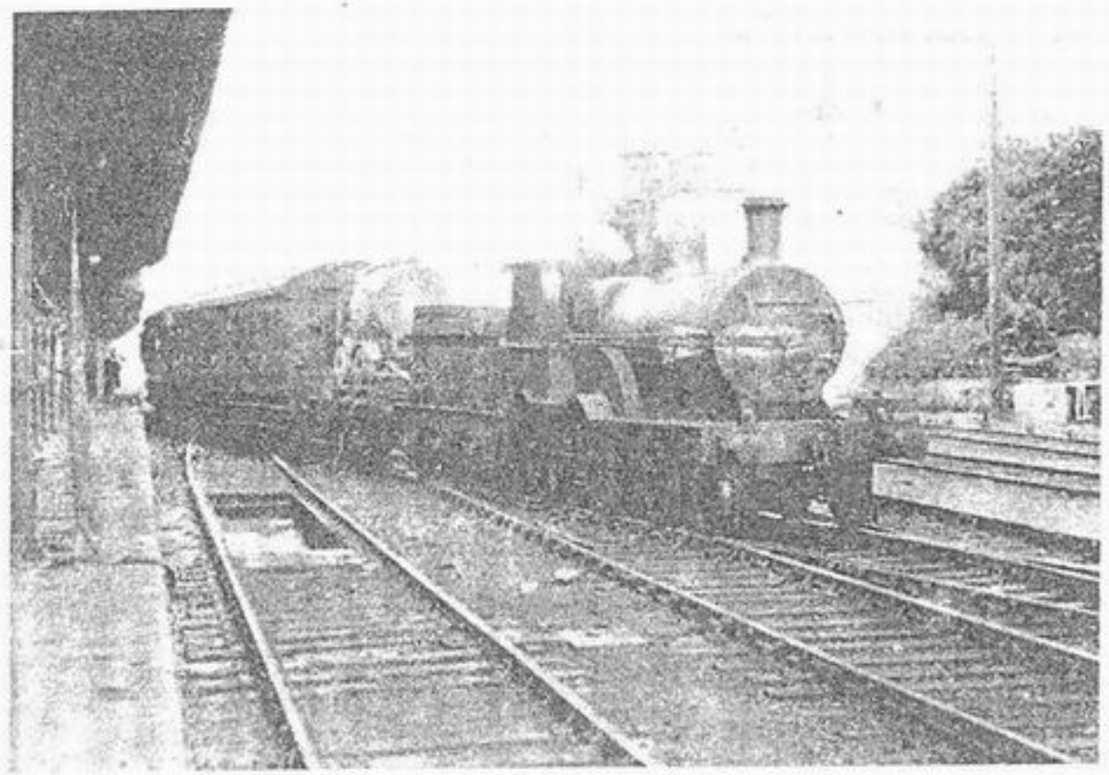


Photo: B. I. Nathan.

Ex-GSWR D17 4-4-0 No. 9 on the scissors crossing at Limerick Junction.

Alongside the works, which extended for several miles, a complicated system of spur lines served the various excavators and dredgers. The locomotives in use had built-in stove-pipe chimneys, and spark arresters were added later. The boilers were fitted with domes and sandboxes. Light repairs were carried out locally, but engines requiring heavy repairs were returned to Germany and replaced by new engines of the same type. Ancillary to the 3-ft. system was a smaller network of 2-ft. gauge lines in the immediate works area, using pre-fabricated track capable of being moved about as the work progressed. These lines were worked by 0-4-0 well-tanks, also with stove-pipe chimneys. By 1930, both systems had disappeared, and their very existence is now almost forgotten. However, the 5 ft. 3 in.-gauge branch from Longpavement to Ardnacrusha is still in existence.

Up to 1862, Limerick was a W.L.R. stronghold, but on August 1 of that year the G.S.W.R. gained a foothold with the opening of the Cork & Limerick Direct Railway between Charleville (now Rathluirc) and Patrickswell and the grant of running powers over the Limerick & Foynes Railway into Limerick. This line was worked from the outset by the G.S.W.R., and amalgamated with that company in 1871. This explains the reference to Carey's Road depot as the "Cork Direct Yard". Patrickswell Junction is unusual in that the points are sited on the Limerick side of the station and thus an apparent "down" platform is in reality the Charleville platform and, similarly, Kerry trains in each direction must use what appears to be the up platform. The two lines run parallel for about three-quarters of a mile before parting in their respective directions. The Waterford & Limerick Railway was renamed the Waterford, Limerick & Western in 1895. It was amalgamated with the G.S.W.R. from January 1, 1902, and all lines in the Limerick area came under one ownership. As a direct consequence of this fusion, the Midland Great Western Railway secured running powers between Athenry, Co. Galway, and Limerick and commenced operating a goods service over this route between Limerick and Dublin. This working continued right up to the outbreak of the first world war.

Only one short stretch of single track—the Limerick Cement Factory Extension

Railway—remains to be mentioned. This, the most recent railway in the country, was opened with some ceremony on October 1, 1957, to link the cement factory at Castlemungret with the national railway network. The junction, operated by a key on the Limerick-Patrickswell staff, is beyond Rosbrien level crossing (near milepost 2) on the Kerry line; the branch crosses three public roads on the level in its three-mile course.

Up to the outbreak of the second world war, the pattern of train services into and out of Limerick showed little variation from year to year. The Limerick Junction line was always the busiest and usually carried six passenger trains each way, five of them (including a night mail train) extending to and from Waterford. The morning and afternoon connections off the fast Dublin-Cork day mail trains covered the 22 miles each way between Limerick and Limerick Junction non-stop. Through carriages operated daily between Rosslare Harbour and Limerick for passengers from the Fishguard steamer.

Crest of the GSWR.

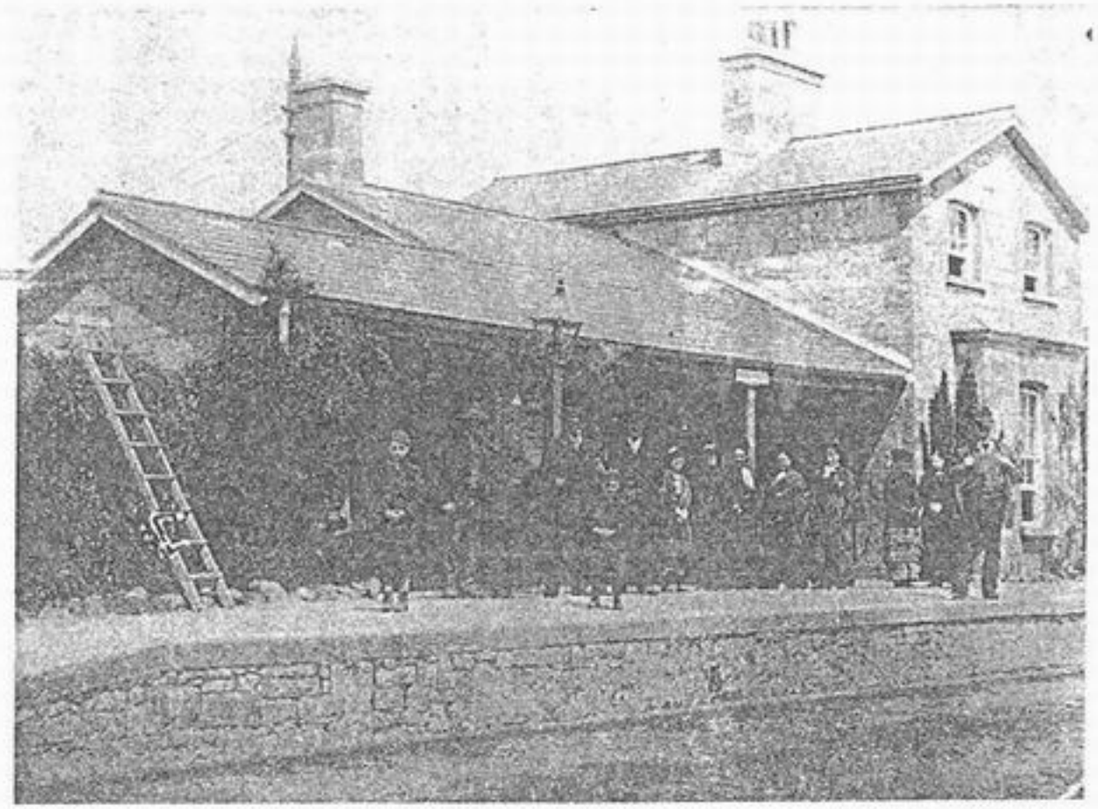


Photo: T. Westropp.

Patrickswell Station, 1882.

The service to Dublin via Killonan and Nenagh normally consisted of two through-carriage portions each way on weekdays, engines being changed at Ballybrophy, where reversal also was necessary. In 1926, a Pullman car was introduced on one of these services, and became the first refreshment car working into Limerick. A local stopping train operated between Nenagh and Limerick in addition to the through services. In 1928, an extra Nenagh-Ballybrophy-Limerick-Nenagh link was provided by a Sentinel railcar, but this working did not survive after 1931 between Nenagh and Limerick.

The Ennis line was served by four passenger trains in each direction. Two of these operated throughout to Sligo, one ran to Tuam only, while the remaining service terminated at Ennis. The Kerry line also enjoyed a service of four trains each way, three of which usually gave connections at Ballingrane to and from Foynes.

Until 1931, three passenger trains operated between Limerick, Patrickswell and Charleville, but, as the connections onwards to Cork were by main-line stopping trains only, the journey time between the two cities over this route usually was greater than by the more roundabout Limerick Junction route. This factor, coupled with the disadvantage of a change of train at Charleville, led to the diversion of through traffic to the alternative route, leaving the link line with the purely local traffic. The latter was of such negligible proportions that it was found necessary to suspend the Limerick-Patrickswell-Charleville passenger service as and from December 31, 1934, by which time the frequency had shrunk to two services each way.

Throughout the war years, and the subsequent period of fuel rationing, considerably reduced services operated on all lines in the Limerick area. Since then, the pre-war frequency has been restored on the Limerick Junction and Nenagh routes, although depleted services still operate on the Ennis and Kerry lines.

The current winter timetable shows twelve passenger workings into Limerick on weekdays, and a similar number outward. They consist of three short workings from Limerick

Junction, two each from Waterford and Dublin (via Nenagh), and one each from Sligo, Galway, Nenagh, Tralee, and Foynes. The last-named is a steam-worked mixed train, and is seldom used by passengers, because of its lengthy journey time. All other passenger services are diesel-operated. During the summer months, an additional early morning service operates from Rosslare Harbour and Waterford to Limerick, with a corresponding evening return working. However, this involves the cancellation of two services each way between Limerick and Limerick Junction, although in effect the through working takes up the path of one of these trains.

Goods trains from no less than eight separate lines converge on Limerick Station, and number eleven regular workings in all. These include one day goods from Sligo, with a short pick-up working along the same line from Tuam; one local working from Nenagh; a fast night service from Dublin via Limerick Junction; separate day and night services from Waterford; and a night goods over the direct line from Cork. There is also a day pick-up working along the Kerry line; the Foynes mixed train already referred to; and two daily cement trains from the new Castlemungret branch.

With the exception of the Foynes and Tralee workings, all goods traffic in the Limerick area is now handled by diesel-electric locomotives. Yard duties in the station area are in the hands of two "C" class 550 h.p. diesel-electric shunters, with occasional assistance from "101" class 0-6-0 goods engines. One of the 550 h.p. engines operates the Castlemungret service as well. Besides the regular goods workings, several special trains conveying livestock operate into Limerick from outlying towns, usually en route to Dublin for Shipment. Special cement trains operate frequently between Limerick and Cork, over the direct line.

From the foregoing, it will be observed that Limerick is quite a busy railway centre, by Irish standards. This is especially so in the summer months, when passenger traffic is heavy.

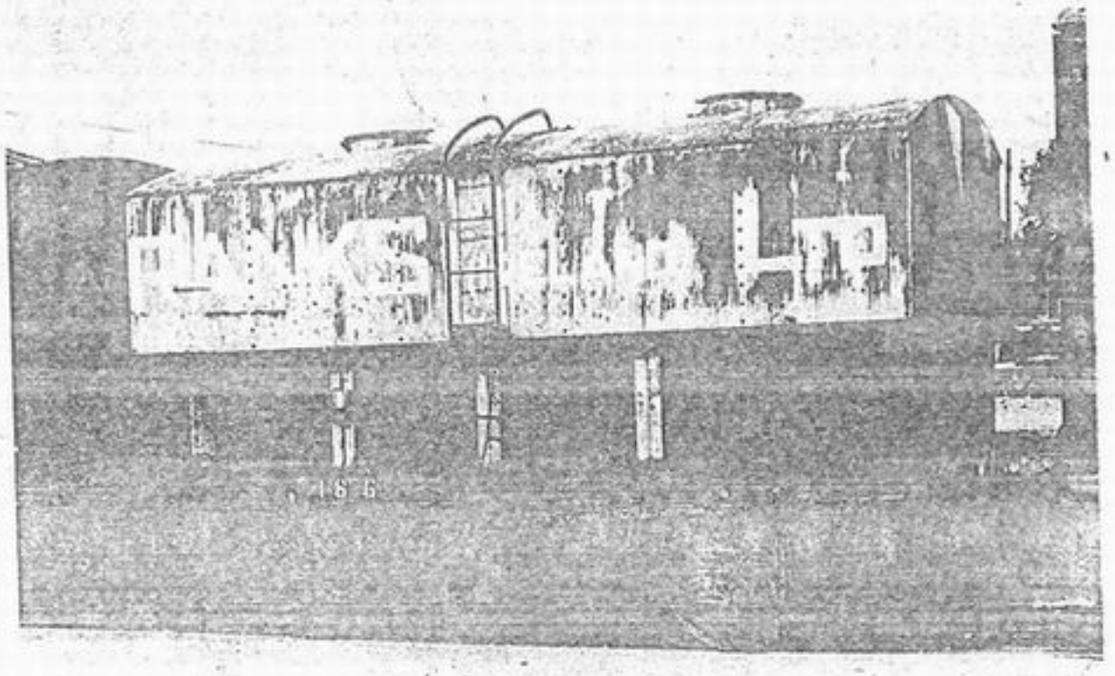


Photo: G. Spillane.

Ranks grain wagon, 1938-1960's. These were unloaded through an underneath hopper while parked on the former railway bridge across Carey's Road.

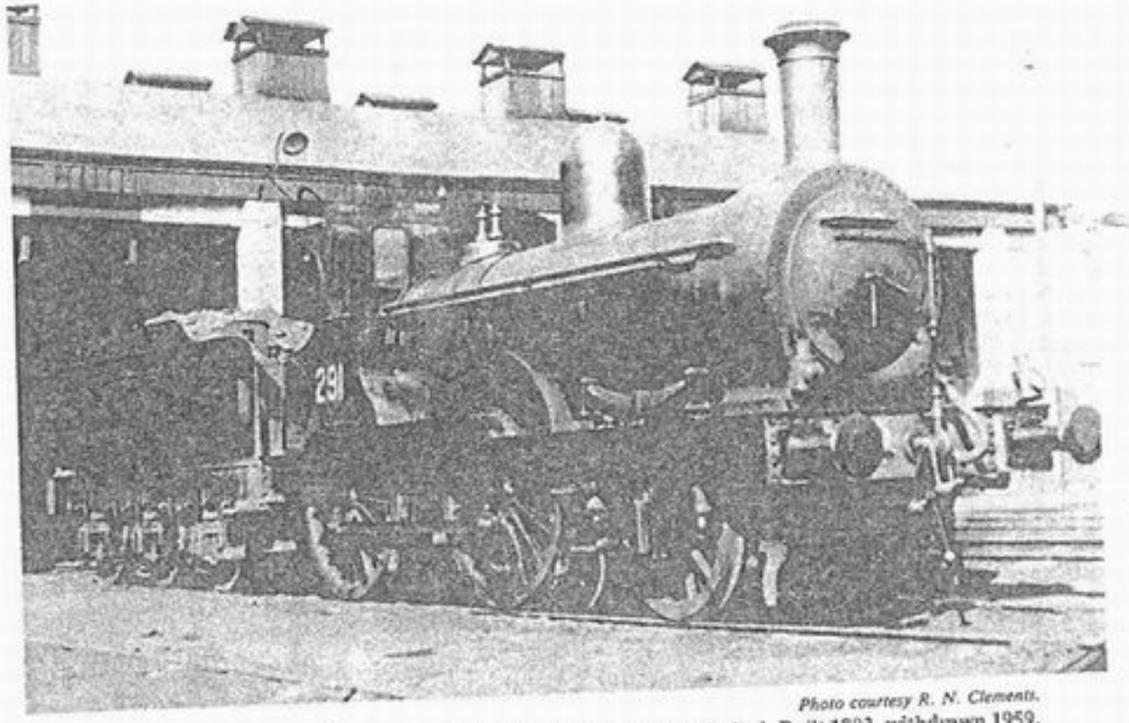


Photo courtesy R. N. Clements.

Last Waterford & Limerick steam engine in CIE service at Limerick shed. Built 1893, withdrawn 1959.

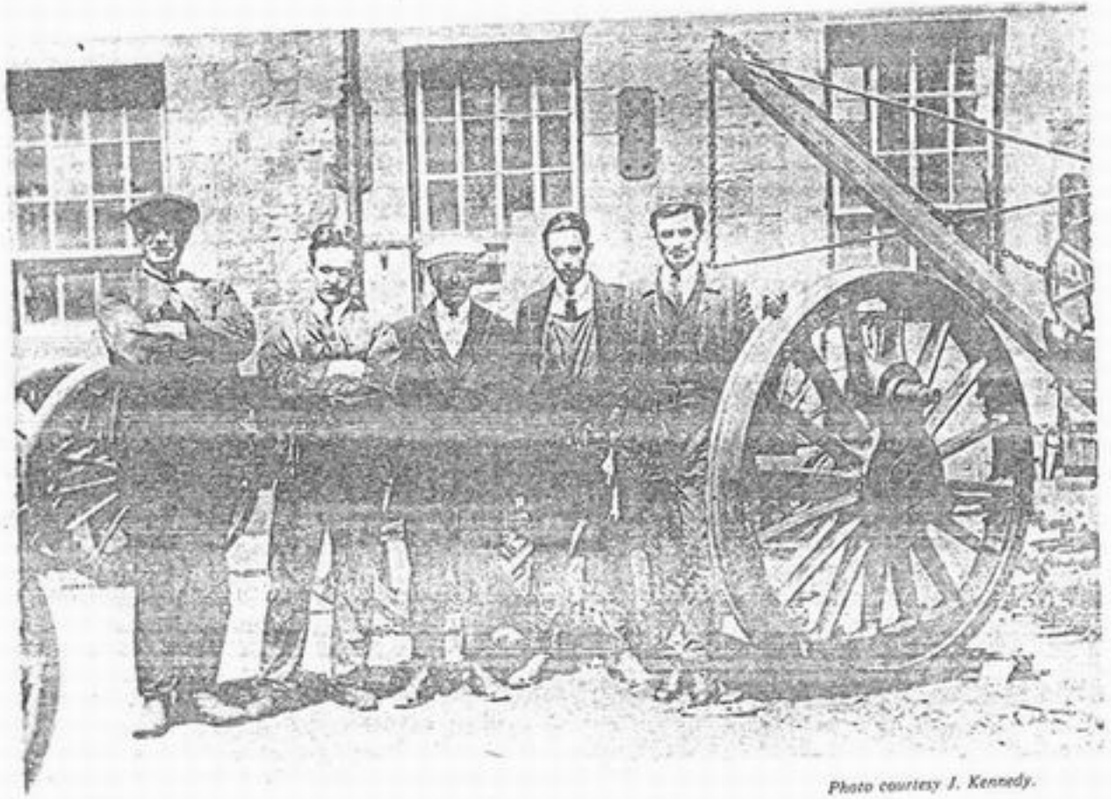


Photo courtesy J. Kennedy.

Limerick Workshop, 1922.

Building the Limerick & Waterford Railway

By MICHAEL O'DWYER

A long main line from Waterford to Sligo, with secondary lines and branches. Incorporated as Waterford & Limerick Railway in 1845. Opened 1848-54, extended later to Tralee, Claremorris and Sligo. Name changed to Waterford, Limerick & Western Railway in 1896. Amalgamated with G.S.W.R. in 1901. Locomotive and carriage workshops in Limerick, which continued until the end of steam power.

We! the boys of the village grew up with the sights and sounds of the railway. The bridge down at the station was our grandstand. Here we went, at every available opportunity, to gaze and wonder, looking down on the goods-train passing beneath—wagon after wagon rattling along on two lines of shining steel which seemed to converge as they led away into a distance beyond our horizons to a city of wonders (Limerick, whose streets were paved with gold and even in these tender years we were stricken by a longing which maturity didn't alter, "the lure of the city"). Gazing down from our lofty perch on the bridge we had an almost irrepressible urge to sneak on to the train and make all our dreams come true by being whisked along at an incredible speed through fields and hedgegrows, endless lines of carriages and wagons, uniformed men rushing around shouting commands, a welter of excitement. Sadly we realised that even a child's imagination has to come to grips with reality. Our reverie ended when we beheld that stern blue uniformed man adorned with glittering badges, who signalled the train to move off with his green flag. He stood between us and wonderland—our dreams of a moment ago were a thousand years in the past. The present was a line of horse carts laden with merchandise moving away from the goods-stores, men shovelling coal out of wagons, the old jarvey driving his jaunting-car to his accustomed stand on the bridge to await an incoming train and the prospect of a commercial traveller alighting who might require his services.

The bridge was our world. A world which provided us with all the excitement we needed, something was happening at the station all the time. Weekend trippers to town displaying their finery, turned the platform into a riot of colour. Sunday excursion crowds rushing to get on, others waving to us as the train passed, perhaps the additional thrill of two engines pulling the almost interminable length of carriages.

The railway station fulfilled other important roles in our community, not least that of newsagency where we got the latest from town given by one of the train crew to the platform porter who proclaimed it as intended for one hearer but allowed all present the benefit. We rushed hastily through the village, in competition proclaiming who won the match, or what notable national figure had passed to his reward that day.

The night goods puffing and whistling as its wagons clanged together was our lullaby to sleep, as mayhap the morning train coming in awaked us to a new day. The railway was an integral part of our life taken for granted, it was there before we were born, for all we knew or cared it might have been there for ever, as the hill above or the brook below. At school or at home the railway was scarcely ever referred to except in the present tense, apparently everyone took it for granted assuming that it could go on for ever in its present state of prosperity.

THE CHANGING TIMES

If we had foresight at that time to peer a little into the future, we would see that its halycon days were coming to an end. The next generation of village children would not come to the bridge. Rather would they turn their backs to the railway and face the new attraction of motorised road traffic. We were never allowed to be intimate with trains unless

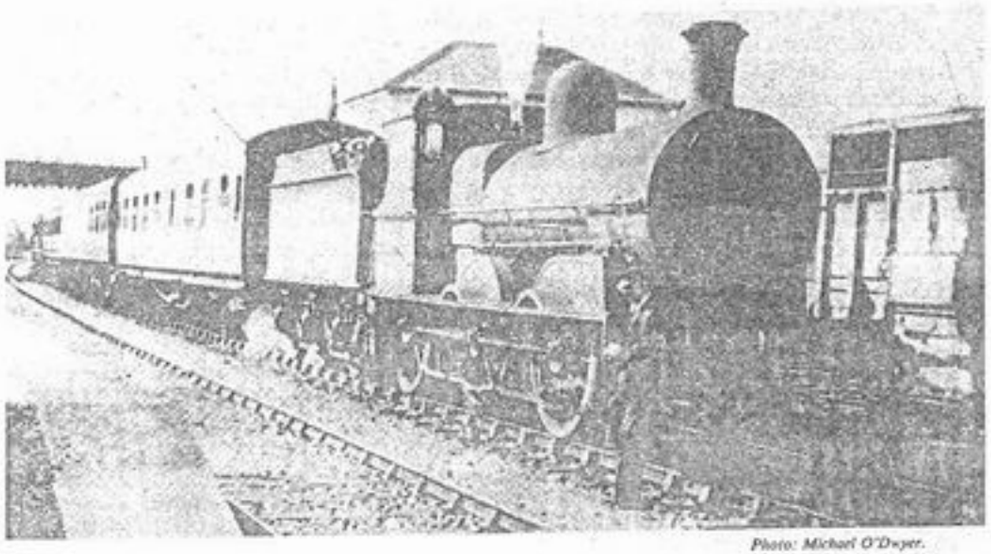


Photo: Michael O'Dwyer.

Ex-GSWR J15 0-6-0 No. 125 on the last steam train at Pallas Station.

we held a ticket to travel, otherwise the uniformed official always present on the platform, hustled us away with little ceremony. On the other hand motor vehicles came down the street, occasionally even coming to a halt outside our house when we took advantage of the drivers absence to familiarise ourselves with its workings and never resisting the temptation to give the rubber bulb horn a squeeze before we scampered off. In these early days of motoring, all kinds of fantastic vehicles appeared on the roads, one of which was the Char-a-Banc, a long open coach with seats facing forward, forerunner of the modern bus. Seating fifty, these carried passengers in competition and lured them from the railway by indiscriminate fare-cutting. Private carriers using motor lorries indulged in a similar practice in the manner of merchandise. The railway had served the people well, but suffered the same fate as many a good servant, by being cast aside when no longer needed. As early as 1929, the situation had become so critical that economy measures had to be resorted

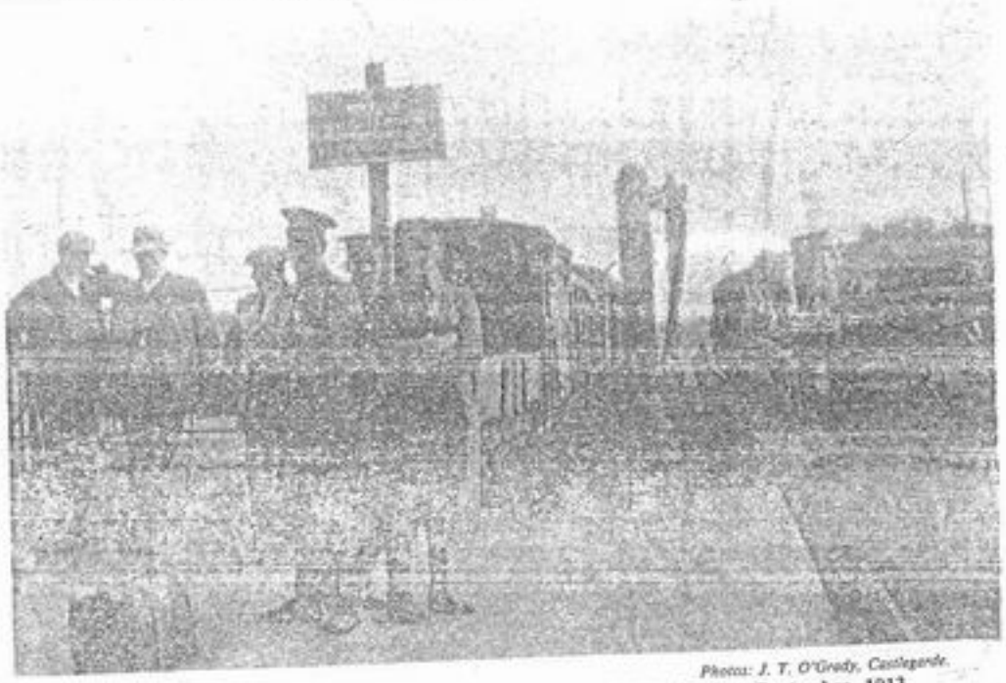
to. In that year a gang of railway mechanics from headquarters in Inchicore arrived and set up a base at Pallas station, taking up lodgings in the village. They began dismantling and removing one line of rail, converting signals and crossovers so that henceforth after a period of 82 years as a double track it would be from now on a single one with the resultant economy of maintenance. In the 1930's railway mechanics all over the country were busy lopping off branch lines and cutting the companies losses. Railway workers resented this policy which was depriving them of their livelihood and the country of an efficient transport service of which they were justifiably proud. Had not the railway benefitted every man, especially the poor and ushered in unprecedented social change. This was described by a contemporary in 1845. "Rail, rail, nothing but the railway". What a different aspect the business world now wears compared to former times. Until 1825 there were no railways and the highest speed man could attain was in the saddle of the fastest horse. By 1900, in a man's life-span, the country was covered by a network of railways. Built faster than modern motorways by armies of itinerant labourers using pick, shovel and gunpowder. For the first time in history the poor could be carried cheaply from place to place to find work. Barriers of isolation surrounding small communities were broken down. Obscure villages grew with the advent of railways into towns. Man gained a new attitude to distance. His world was no longer restricted.

Reporting in 1853, the directors of the Waterford & Limerick Railway stated, "while traversing an extremely rich and populous district—that between Tipperary and Clonmel—the line labours under the disadvantage of having one of the best roads in Ireland running almost parallel from it, from which time is required to divert the traffic. No doubt the public will soon find the railway the most economical mode of conveyance". No doubt they did, but eighty years on, the wheel had turned full circle from the road to the railway and back again to the road.

The wise ones quipped in 1847 that grass would grow on the roads. In 1933, the wise ones were once again prophesying that the railway would grow rusty. Happily, "time the great vindicator" has proved both to be false, as more and more motorists are parking their cars and availing of the comfort and speed of railway travel.

FINANCE

Of every £100 spent on railway construction, private investment provided £80, government and professional lenders subscribed equally the remainder, which shows how dependant a railway company was on the private investor both here and in England and the colossal task of inducing them to put their money into yet unrealised Irish railway projects. All government moneys were by way of loans which had to be repaid with interest. Fortunately some English statesmen were favourably disposed, notably Sir Robert Peel, who publicly declared his desire to help any Irish railway project. In 1847, £800,000 was advanced by the treasury for famine relief projects. Railway works were not included nor were any Baronial grants of ratepayer money to go to them except in exceptional circumstances. Only one Irish railway company, the Waterford & Limerick, availed of Baronial grants. England contributed £4.3 million, Ireland £4 million, private £8 million in the 1840-50 period towards Irish railway construction. English bankers sometimes proved more helpful, as when the Provincial Irish Bank refused accommodation to the Waterford & Limerick. Glynns Bank advanced £30,000. In 1847 a government loan of £620,000 at 5 per cent was advanced to enable railway work to begin. Railways were the largest consumers of capital in the mid-nineteenth century. The Waterford & Limerick Railway alone consumed £1,237,759, a colossal sum at that time. A private undertaking, it attracted some brilliant businessmen who devoted their skill and energy to its promotion, the most notable being Charles Bianconi. When his horse transport empire was doomed by the railways he henceforth used his wealth and organisational genius in promoting the railways, becoming a director of the Waterford & Limerick Railway Company. A report of October 1847 stated: "the directors of the Waterford & Limerick Railway Co. were received by the Lord Lieutenant at the Phoenix Park. They were the Earl of Glengall, Ald. Meagher, M.P.;



Photos: J. T. O'Grady, Castlegarde.

6th Division, British Army, arrive for manoeuvres at Pallas Station, September, 1913.

Photo: J. T. O'Grady, Castlegarde.

6th Division, British Army, arrive for manoeuvres at Pallas Station, September, 1913.

Wm. J. Cleary, M.D.; John Riall and Charles Bianconi. Mr. Saunders, secretary of the company, was with the directors. They were favourably entertained by his Excellency who went into details in the affairs of the company. There is every reason to conclude that government aid will be extended to this spirited national undertaking. Thanks is due to a company whose extensive operations both along the line and in the workshops in Limerick have been most providentally servicable to the labouring classes and trades of this city during the past and present seasons of scarcity and suffering".

In spite of not very encouraging predictions the pioneers of the Waterford & Limerick Railway pressed on towards their ultimate goal of girdling Ireland's waist from the Shannon to the Suir with lines of steel.

THE PROBLEMS OF PROGRESS

Though finance was the major problem there were many others, no less irritating, such as land acquisition which involved constant litigation.

28th May, 1847—William Daly claimed in respect of two acres required by the Railway Co. He held the land in lease for two lives at £2 10s an acre per annum. He claimed £1,902 for loss of land and injury to his farm by railroad works. The verdict of the jury was £271 for all. The company had originally offered £300 which was refused. Later the company obtained an Act of Parliament compelling land owners to pay cost of litigation in such cases.

Not all welcomed the railway. Landowners refused to allow lines to cross their lands. Towns refused railway stations, fearing the engines which many looked upon as devilish monsters might explode, or frighten horses. A railway notice of 1847 stated: "we have

resolved to suspend all work in any district where outrage or injury is offered to any of our contractors, gangers or labourers".

Notice—14th December, 1847.—£100 Reward. Waterford and Limerick Railway Co. "The Board of Directors hereby offer a reward of one hundred pounds to any person who will prosecute to conviction the evilly disposed person or persons who on Tuesday, 30th Ult. placed a wagon across the line of rail between Newpallas and Oola, whereby the safety of the train returning from Tipperary to Limerick was sought to be endangered. By Order W.S. Saunders, secretary". **Notice**—20th July, 1847. £50 Reward. "Whereas some miscreants did on the 20th June, place on the line of rails of the W&L Railway Co., at Boher, an obstruction by which a train of wagons was upset and one man killed and two others seriously injured; and again on the 9th inst. the same offence was committed but unfortunately without serious consequences. Notice is hereby given that Directors of the W&L Railway Co. will give to any persons bringing such information as will cause the discovery and conviction of the offendor or offendors The Sum of £50 Sterling for First Offences and £25 for the Second. By Order. Signed Wm. S. Saunders, Sec.".

PROGRESS REPORTED

By early 1846 the work of constructing the first section of the railway outwards from Limerick to Tipperary was under way. R. B. Osborne, an eminent railway engineer, was appointed to supervise operations. The company had sufficient capital (£85,000) available to at least ensure a continuance of the work to Tipperary Town. This in itself, was a great advantage as it linked up Limerick City by rail with Dublin, thereby reducing the travel time between the two, from days to hours.

To establish this link-up as quickly as possible may have been a key factor in beginning the line from Limerick rather than from Waterford. Access to original terminus at Limerick was from Roxboro Road, adjacent to the bridge which now carries that road over the railway and which had to be built when the railway terminus was extended further down to its present site. Head office was in Waterford. Extensive carriage and locoworks, where engines were built, were set up in Limerick. A report of 2nd March, 1847 stated: "the terminus, including site for workshops, cost approximately £18,000. The land from there to neighbourhood of Tipperary, including houses, remuneration for crossing and severance cost £1,400".

Reports of railway activity in Limerick, March, 1846: "The W & L Railway Co. this day got possession of Mr. Purcells premises in Nelson Street. Three vessels are now discharging rail iron and sleepers for the company, making 15 cargoes to hand, six more are expected".

January 1st, 1847. Waterford and Limerick Railway. "Court of enquiry held in Grand Jury Room, Co. Courthouse this week, Henry Marty, Q.C. presiding as assessor when a jury was empanelled to assess amount of compensation to which Samuel Dickson, Esq., of George St., was entitled, for injury to a portion of his lands and premises at Dickson Lane, Careys Rd., Ballysimon and Garryglass, by severance or otherwise from construction of such portion of railway as will pass through same. Enquiry terminated on Wednesday when jury retired to consider their award. Returning they awarded Mr. Dickson £279 10s., which sum being less than the compensation offered by the company obliges Mr. Dickson to pay the costs".

February 1846. "Mr. Geoghan, Supt. of the W & L Railway works at terminus near city, charged John Cavanagh, a labourer, with instigating the workmen to turn out for advance of wages and inducement to leave their employment. The charge was fully sustained by evidence and Ald. Watson as chairman of the Bench said, he regretted that at the present moment when wages and employment are so generally complained of, a body of men should be so unmindful of their families as to commit such illegal and wanton conduct as to deprive them of their means of support. It is also to be lamented that the Railway Co. should be put to such trouble. Those same people were so glad to seek employment from the railway and receive an amount of wages they scarcely contemplated twelve months since. The

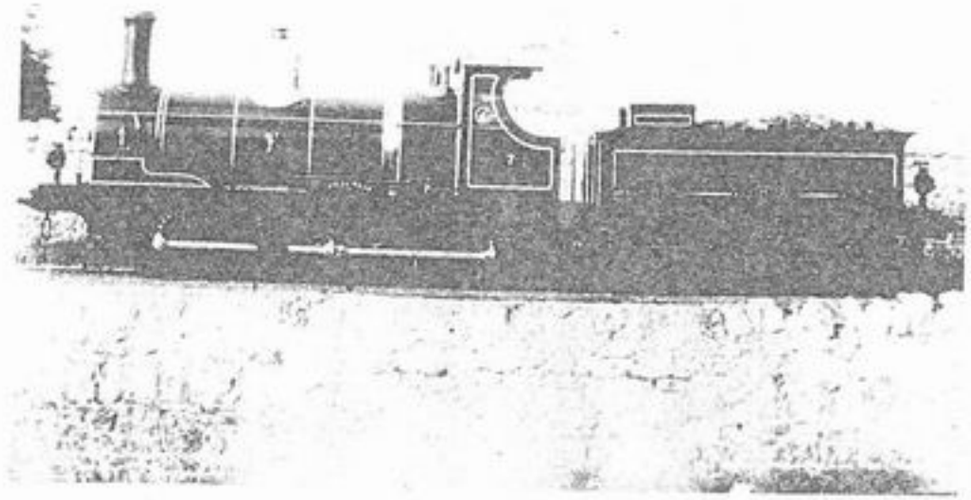


Photo courtesy R. N. Clements.

0-6-0 No. 7, 'Progress', the first locomotive built by the WLR in Limerick.

Magistrates did not intend to deal summarily with the case which is subject officially to transportation. Case sent before a higher tribunal".

1846—The Waterford Board of Guardians have adopted a memorial to Government to advance £100,000 to enable Waterford and Limerick Railway Co. to commence operations at Waterford end of the line.

THE RAILWAY REACHES PALLAS

The railway builders working outwards from Limerick towards Tipperary were fortunate in not having any formidable natural obstacles in their way which would slow down work and add to expense. So the work continued apace and had reached Pallas by the Summer of 1847 as the following verifies. *Limerick Recorder* 15th June, 1847. "Fatal accident on last Thursday evening at Landscape in this County. As the workmen were taking away from a pit the trunking stuff for the Limerick-Tipperary railway, the upper part of a bank fell in and striking on the breast of a labourer of the name of Hall threw him backwards on a great stone which lay behind. From this situation he was immediately raised by his fellow labourers' in a state of insensibility but as there had fallen on him only a small quantity of earth some hopes of life were entertained and accordingly every means of resuscitation then at hand were resorted to. The Rev. J. Murphy, who had been at the time in discharge of his priestly duties nearby, came immediately to the spot and gave his valuable assistance but the poor man was dead. As the corpse was borne from the fatal spot along the railway towards Newpallas, the heart-rending cries and lamentations of his widow and four children visibly affected the spectators. From his care and labours, Hall's poor family expected protection and food, but with him these hopes are gone forever".

GREAT NUMBERS AT WORK

Report of a ceremony at Caher, in March, 1847, enables an estimate to be formed of the number of labourers employed on the Waterford & Limerick Railway works. The first

sod was turned in the presence of a vast multitude of people. A very handsome wheelbarrow and spade were provided for the occasion by the engineer of the company. The Earl and Countess of Glengall placed the first sod, then Rev. Mr. Tobin, P.P., Joseph Cooke and George Fitzgerald each dug a sod. Immediately after the ceremony Mr. Osborne, the engineer, placed 120 labourers at work. In a very short time he expects to employ 150 to 200 per mile. The wage paid was nine shillings per week, which was considered a very good wage then. This was a time when money was scarce and labour plentiful. Many who came from far afield seeking a job in the railway works were turned away, which had dire consequences for them as they perished from hunger. A common occurence in the dreadful year of 1847.

Report of *Limerick Recorder,* Tuesday, October 12th—"The trunking for the second line of rails is being rapidly made between Tipperary and Limerick, and is completed from Limerick side as far as Landscape in the parish of Grean. There are nearly 300 labourers, with about 40 Masons and Stonecutters and a number of horses employed. In this time of distress, many of these people and their families are kept by this employment from a state of approaching starvation, but very soon almost all our poor will be without employment, the result of which it is difficult to contemplate. Near the bridge over the railway at Newpallas, a few cottages of poor persons have been purchased to enable the company to raise the public road to a proper height for the bridge. Whatever way these people will house themselves during the coming winter, the money they received for their houses is a seasonable Godsend, as it affords them a means of answering the more imperative call for bread.

Henry White, M.D., being the landlord of one of these cottages yielded up his own claim for compensation in favour of the occupier, a tenant at will named Morrison, who by the loss of an arm is rendered unfit to labour. Such acts of benevolence, particularly in times of dire despair, deserve the praise of all".

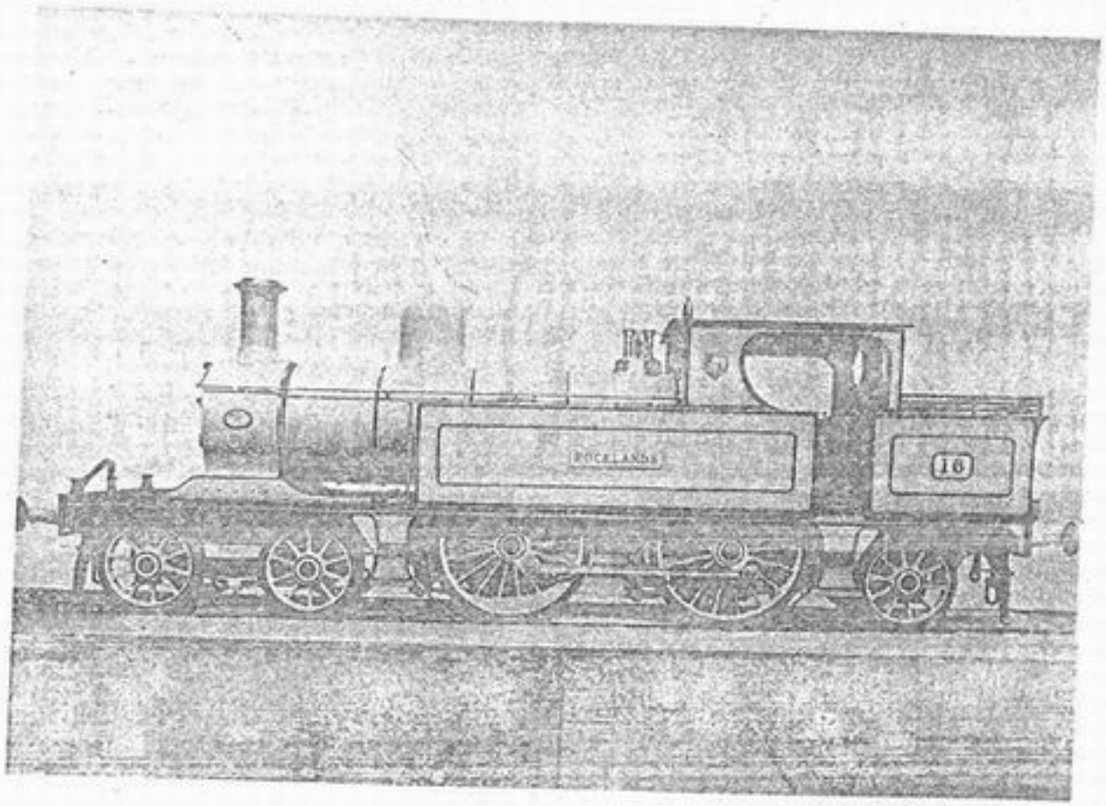


Photo courtesy W. South.

WLWR 4-4-2 T No. 16, 'Rocklands', designed by J. G. Robinson, Loco. Superintendent, Limerick, built by Kitson & Co., Leeds, 1896-97. Became CIE No. 269, withdrawn 1957.

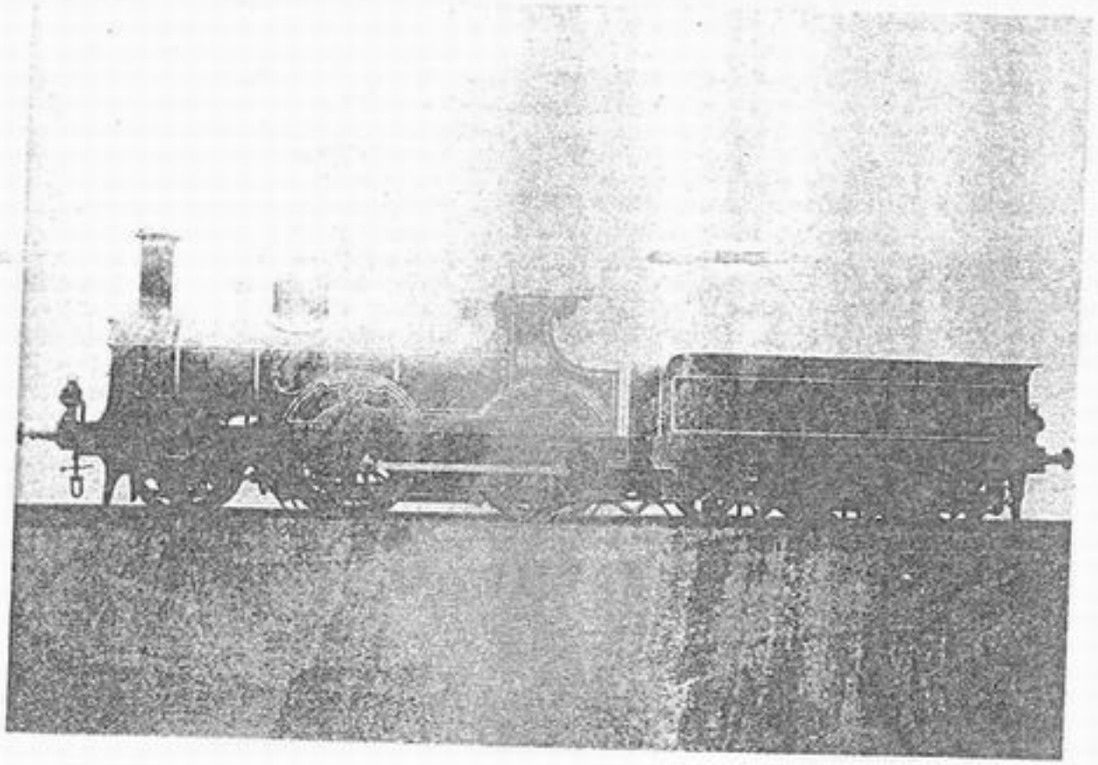


Photo courtesy W. South.

WLWR 2-4-0 standard passenger engine No. 10, 'Sir James', designed by J. G. Robinson, built by Dübs & Co. c. 1889. Became GSWR No. 263, scrapped 1909-10. Named after Sir James Spaight, Chairman.

Notice, 28th Sept. 1847.—Notice is hereby given, that in pursuance of the Waterford & Limerick Railway Acts 1845 and 1847, the Company will on the 15th day of October next apply to the justices assembled at Newpallas petty sessions, or any two of then, for the purpose of obtaining the consent of said justices to authorise said company to carry the railway across the highway, commonly called the "Old Tipperary Road" on the level, at a certain point in the townland of Cross parish of Tuoclugin of which application all persons concerned are hereby required to take notice.

27th September 1847, J. O'Farrell, Solicitor, 92 George St.—There are six exceedingly strong and handsome metal bridges now erected between Limerick and Newpallas, the entire workmanship of which was executed by Limerick artizans under the superintendence of Mr. Osborne the eminent engineer who has been instrumental in saving the company thousands of pounds in bridges alone. 3,400 tons of metal was used.

THE FIRST JOURNEY

9th April 1847.—Yesterday morning at 7 o'clock the engine of the Waterford Limerick Railway Co. made its first trip on the railway as far as Ballysimon and back. The rate of speed being 35 miles per hour.

Tuesday, November 23rd, 1847.—We are happy to learn that the line to Tipperary is now close to completion. On to-morrow the first express trip will take place when the engine, tender and several carriages will leave the terminus at the Roxboro Road here for Tipperary, where the permanent Station House is nearly finished.

The long awaited day had arrived.—*Limerick Chronicle,* May 6th, 1848.—We have pleasure to announce the opening of the Waterford Limerick Railway hence to Tipperary on Tuesday next for conveyance of passengers by up and down trains at 4/6d, 3/s, 1/8d, per 1st, 2nd and 3rd class. The stations are five viz. Limerick, Killonan, Pallas, Oulah

(Oola), Tipperary. Depart Limerick at 6 a.m., Killonan 6.20, Pallas 6.55, Oola 7.10, Tipperary 7.30. Train depart Tipperary 8 a.m. In 1852 stations were opened at Boher and Dromkeen. A well appointed omnibus from Cruises Hotel meets trains.

May 17th, 1848.—The line of rail between this city and Tipperary we are rejoiced to perceive is daily thronged with passengers and traffic luggage. It is sincerely hoped the undertaking may afford that benefit to the shareholders which they deservedly merit, as through their directors they have evinced an anxious disposition to afford the public every facility and accommodation. Travellers by this line enjoy the comfort of superior and elegantly fitted out second class carriages, an example of which should be followed by the directors of the G.S.&W. Railway, as passengers by the latter convey, loudly complain of the rough and uncomfortable second class vehicles.

LIMERICK-WATERFORD LINE OPENED

One-third of the Waterford Limerick Railway was now in operation. It was indeed a "Long Way to Tipperary" for the workers on the line, as they had to hack and shovel every inch without the aid of machinery, and they completed all of the 24 miles in less than two years.

At a meeting in September, 1849, the directors expressed the hope that work on completion of line which had been suspended in 1847 would soon be resumed. Five years were to elapse until the following report appeared.—Waterford Limerick Railway, September 12th 1845.—Yesterday was a great day on the line which, for the first time was opened into the city of Waterford amid the rejoicings of thousands who manifested their enthusiasm on an occasion so gratifying in every respect. At either terminus flags floated.

Limerick, September 19th, 1854.—On Sunday morning the first excursion train over the whole line from Limerick to Waterford started from the terminus. The train carried from 600 to 700 excursionists who much enjoyed the ride. The company deserve much credit for offering these excursion trips to the public.

Let us not forget to look back along the line to the men who built it. They have vanished to happier spheres but the benefit of their labour is manifested in every train that passes along a railway which has survived and is still busy after 135 years.

Two Railway Guides

By JIM KEMMY

Railway guide books became popular in the second half of the nineteenth century. The most prolific author of these guides was George S. Measom, who travelled extensively in Britain and Ireland in the course of his researches and writings.

Meason was commissioned by the directors of the various railway companies to write the books as a means of advertising and promoting their relatively new transport system. In 1866 he published two companion volumes, part of a larger series of "official illustrated guides", on the Midland Great Western Railway and the Great Southern & Western Railway.

The two Irish books were sold at one shilling and sixpence each or 3s. 6d. for the two volumes bound together, with "steel-plate frontpiece and map". The preface to the Great Southern & Western guide claims: "The work forms one of a series of picture guides lauded by the press as 'unexampled for lowness of price, and variety of information'."

A study of this book shows it to be crammed with a variety of information and engravings. With all the Victorian thoroughness of the age, Measom brings a professional, if sometimes over-elaborate approach to his task. He stops at every station on the line and gives a commentary on the main historical and topographical features of the cities, towns, villages and surrounding countryside on his route. Though much of the historical detail covers familiar territory, it provides an abundance of information on houses and other buildings on the landscape.

Measom devotes part of his account of each city and town to the "commercial aspect" of the place. One may surmise that the large firms and shops paid for their "write-ups" in the book. Naturally enough in these circumstances, the writing is of a totally complimentary nature and Measom adopts an uncritical attitude to the working conditions and quality of the goods manufactured and sold in the different premises. However, his minute description of the factories and shops, and the details of the various manufacturing processes employed provide a useful picture of industrial and commercial life in nineteenth century Ireland.

But perhaps the most vivid part of Measom's work is the engravings. The Great Southern & Western guide contains 172 engravings, all of a high quality, of castles, bridges, churches, monuments, mountains, rivers, lakes and many other features. Another interesting aspect is the imaginative manner in which drawings of animals, birds and ornaments have been incorporated into the design of initial letters.

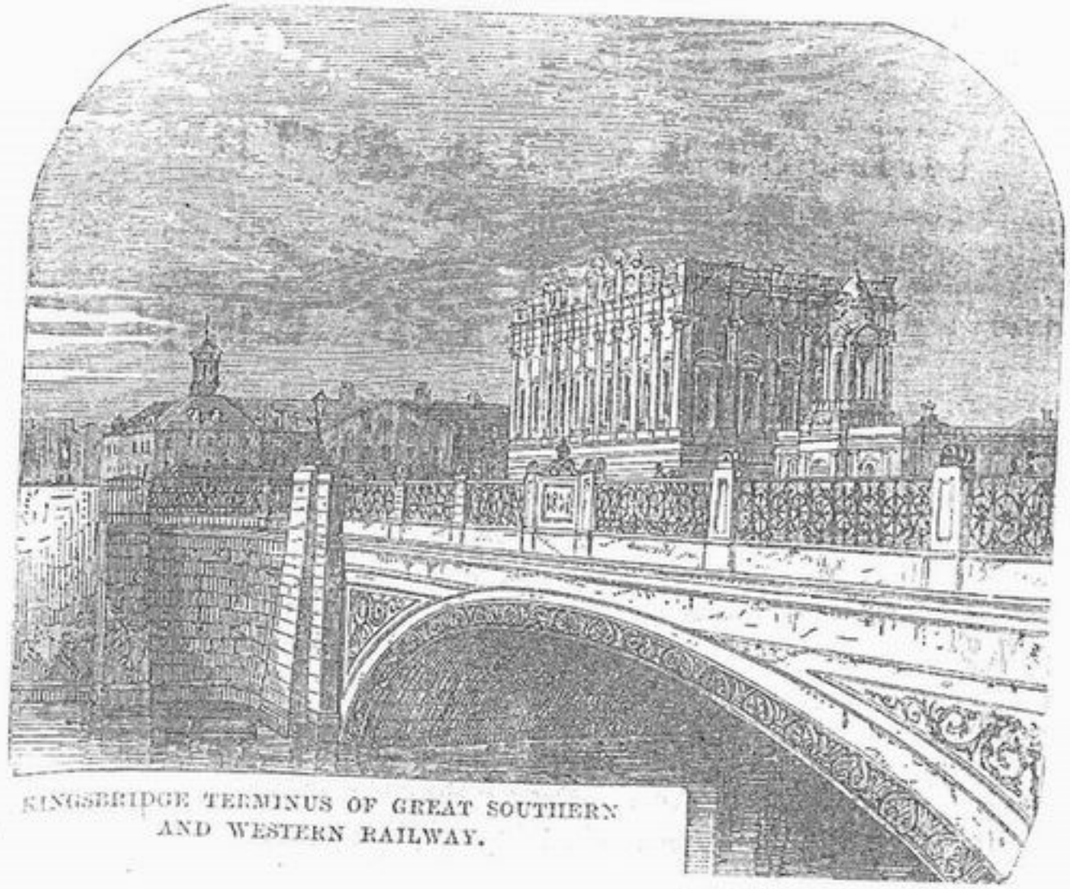
Surprisingly enough for a railway guide, the book contains only one distant illustration of a train and only two engravings of stations, the Kingsbridge Terminus and the Cork and Bandon Terminus. Indeed, so wide is the scope of the work, it could almost be said that Measom's guide describes most other things except trains and railway stations!

Be that as it may, Limerick city and county, with 25 engravings and a large amount of writing space, feature prominently in the book. Measom takes up the story at the city:

> "There are five lines of railway from Limerick. We will describe them in order: the first running north-west to Ennis will shortly be completed to Athenry and so to Galway. Omitting Limerick, the railway branches to the north and then to the north-west, and crossing the Grand Canal twists round the city above the mouth of the Abbey River. The tourist will have the Shannon in view on his left to Cratloe Station, to reach which we have passed Castle Connell, a village about six miles from Limerick. The road to Cratloe lies over a rich alluvial flat, which stretches from the shores of the river to the base of the highlands which rise behind the woods of Cratloe".

Measom goes on to trace the route of the line to Ennis. He then returns to Limerick and sets off on another rail journey, close to the banks of the Shannon Estuary, to Foynes. He pauses at Patrickswell, Adare, Rathkeale and Askeaton stations and gives his usual detailed accounts of the buildings and the countryside encountered on the way. At Rathkeale

George S. Measom.



KINGSBRIDGE TERMINUS OF GREAT SOUTHERN AND WESTERN RAILWAY.

he mentions that "a line is being constructed to 'Newcastle', seven miles to the south-west". He continues on to Foynes Junction and proceeds on the Cork and Limerick Railway, by way of Croom, to Charleville.

After some further journeyings Measom turns his attention to the 77¼ miles of the Waterford & Limerick Railway, which was opened in 1854. He writes: "The workings of the line is well managed by Henry Jacob, Esq. The head offices are in Waterford".

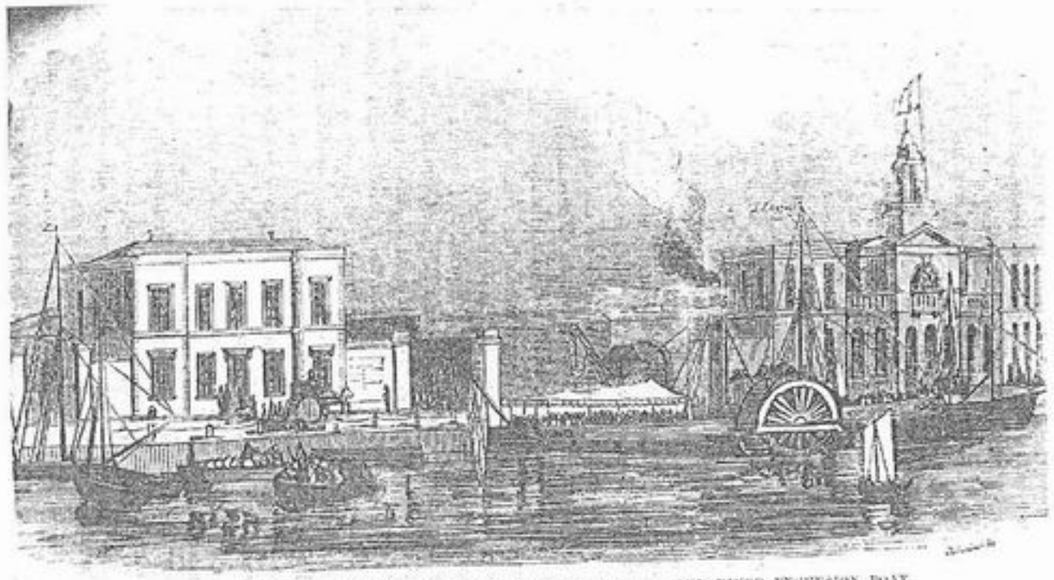
In his trip into East Limerick, Measom takes in Pallas, Dromkeen, Boher and Killonan stations. Returning to Limerick, he sets out, through the Golden Vale, for Limerick Junction. This extract gives the flavour of the author's descriptive powers as he passes through the lush pastures, in the shadow of the Galtee Mountains:

> "On the north of this portion of the plain stands the noble range of the Galtees, which on this side rise for the most part with a gentle ascent, while on the north-west they are in many parts extremely precipitous. The highest summit is Galtymore, which attains an elevation of about 2,500 feet. The wild magnificence of this chain is from the sudden elevation in the midst of a fertile plain, very striking; and its vast groupings present an assemblage of the most interesting features in boldness, freedom of outline, and variety of aspect. There are three curious circular lakes of small extent on these mountains, and the glens diverging from them present many natural beauties, particularly in the western glen, in which is a fine cascade".

Measom follows the line through Tipperary and on to Waterford before returning to Limerick Junction to continue his south-western explorations. Setting out for Killarney, he travels by way of Knocklong and Kilmallock stations. Here is his account of Kilmallock:

> "The town is pleasantly situated on the western bank of a small stream called the Lubach, and its walls enclosed a spacious quadrilateral area, in which were several castellated mansions inhabited by noble and wealthy families. They were all built

Initial letter from Measom's text.



CORN EXCHANGE, CORK AND BANDON RAILWAY TERMINUS, AND RIVER EXCURSION BOAT.

of hewn stone, and communicated by noble castellated gateways with the streets inhabited by the trading and commercial classes, of which only the foundations can be traced".

He devotes 13 pages of text and engravings to the "commercial aspect" of his Limerick section as he dilates on the business activities of the three city firms, J. Matterson and Sons, William Todd and Company, and Mathew Fitt and Sons (Newgate Brewery). The illustrations provide some rare pictures of nineteenth century Limerick mercantile life.

Measom leaves Co. Limerick from the Kilmallock station and goes on through Co. Cork to Killarney. He ends his south-western journeyings on the 390th page of his book at Valentia.

The guide to the Great Southern and Western Railway of Ireland is a remarkably detailed, well-researched and historically accurate work, though on rare occasions Measom gets a few details and captions wrong. But despite these slight shortcomings, the book remains a valuable record of our railways in the 1860s.

In his book, *Holiday Haunts on the West Coast of Clare, Ireland,* printed by G. McKern & Sons, 113 George Street, Limerick, in 1891, H. B. Harris gives these "instructions to tourists and others" travelling to the south-west.... "from Dublin by Great Southern and Western and Waterford and Limerick Lines, via Limerick".

> "Those travelling by this route have the option of going from Limerick to Kilkee direct by steamer to Kilrush, or rail to Foynes and from thence to Kilrush by steamer, and then over South-Clare Railway, which is an extension of the West Clare Line, to Kilkee; or take rail to Ennis and thence by West Clare and South Clare Lines to all parts on the West Coast of Clare. All these several routes have their own peculiar advantages and charms".

Some of these "peculiar advantage and charms" are outlined in another railway guide book *Through the Green Isle: A Gossiping Guide to the Districts Traversed by the Waterford, Limerick and Western Railway System,* by M. J. Hurley, illustrated by T. O'Scully. The book was printed in 1895 by N. Harvey & Co., Waterford.

In his preface to the work, the author tells how he went about his task:

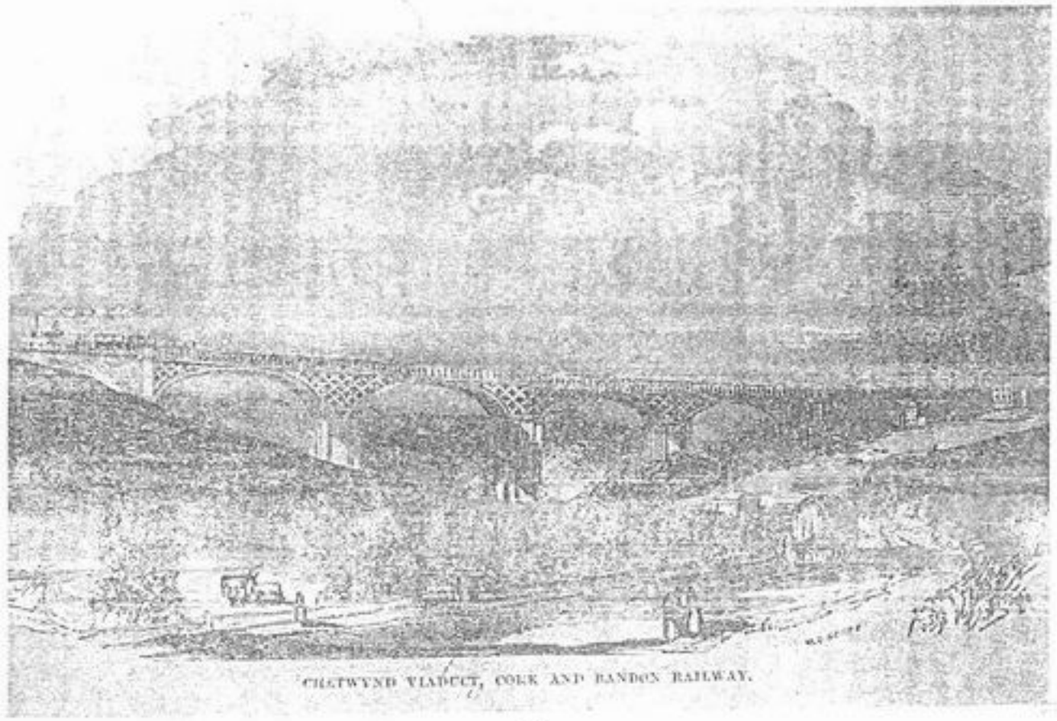
> "We have simply pursued the course of the line through the South-East and West of Ireland, dealing as well with the notorieties associated with each locality, as with the natural and architectural features.... accuracy in statements of fact is maintained as far as possible, but the gossiping plan of the production rather repels the formality of quoting authorities".

As might be expected from this formula, M. J. Hurley's work is a more modest and shorter (113 pages) presentation than Measom's book. Allowing for the fact that both writers were covering much the same territory, and given their similar approach, it is not surprising to find that there are some common features in the two guides. However, as the title of his book suggests, Hurley did not linger as long as Measom on the way and adopts a brisk, discursive tone throughout his travels.

He starts off from Co. Waterford and continues through the counties of Tipperary and Limerick. He passes the stations of Oola, Pallas, Dromkeen and Killonan and gives some brief details about the surrounding countryside. Stopping at Limerick, Hurley, in a potted historical sketch, traces the course of the city's many invasions. Like Measom, he devotes much attention to the sieges. In describing the main industries and buildings he notes: "The Waterford and Limerick Railway Company, under the *regime* of the present Locomotive Engineer, Mr. J. G. Robinson, build their own rolling stock in the Limerick workshops, thus forming an important element in the industries of the city".

Leaving Limerick, Hurley takes the Killaloe line through Lisnagry station to Castleconnell. He gives a pleasant picture of the picturesque villages and the untrammelled flow of the river in its full and wild glory, in the years before the Shannon Scheme siphoned off its great power:

> "The village of Castle-Connell is an exceptionally pretty one, and its situation in one of the most delightful spots on the Shannon has made it a most popular resort of the good citizens of Limerick, who are within twenty minutes of it by train. The scenery upon the Shannon embraces some of the loveliest combinations of river, rock, and woodland, particularly about a mile below the village, where the course of the river runs through a host of rocky crags and immense boulders scattered broadcast in its path. Here they vainly essay to bar the hitherto calm-swift career of the 'King of Island Rivers'. At the first check to the royal progress the majestic wrath bursts forth, and, amid the tumult of a myriad imprecations, this huge volume of water rushes wildly onward, over the rocks and under the rocks and through them, in foam, in eddy, and in spray, a glorious picture of manificent turbulence! The struggle continues for a considerable distance till the seething river emerges in triumph from the contest



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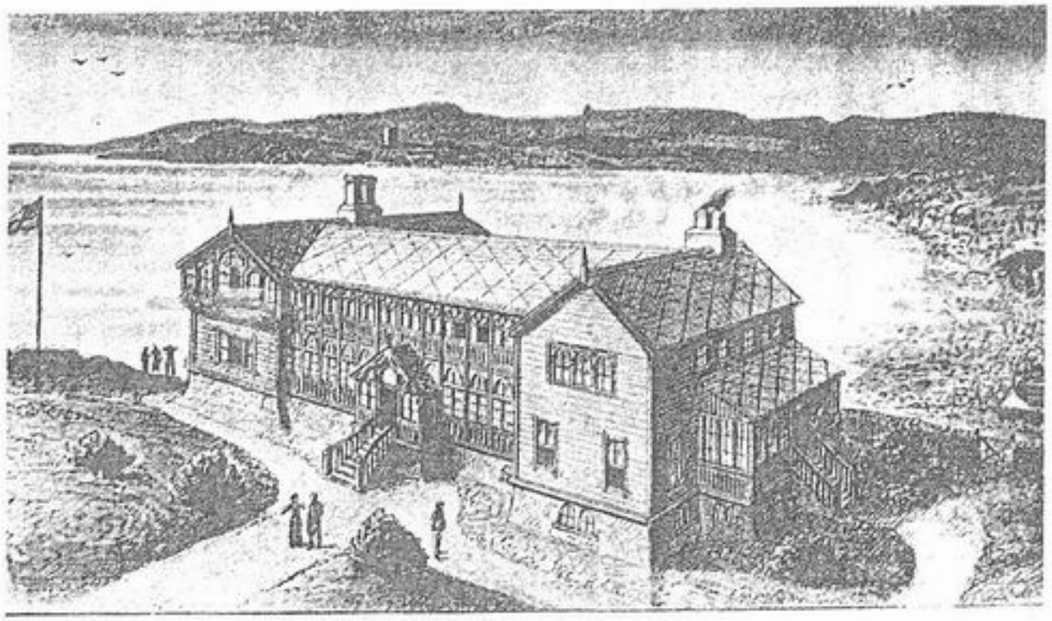


HOTEL AT LAHINCH GOLF LINKS.

> and resumes again its course in stately quietude, not a ripple on its placid bosom to tell of its thunderous career through the famous Rapids of Doonass".

Four drawings by T. O'Scully of the riverside scene at Castleconnell and Doonass further enhance this description.

Hurley continues his journey to Killaloe before returning to Limerick. He then sets off for Ennis, passing "Corbally, a pretty little district of villadom, occupied by the leading families of professional and commercial Limerick". He travels on through counties Clare and Galway and, once more, comes back to Limerick.

Hurley, following Measom's tracks, thirty years before, leaves the city on the Tralee line. Passing through the Patrickswell and Adare stations, he switches to a branch line at Ballingrane Junction for the ten mile run, via Askeaton station, to the Foynes terminus. Returning to Ballingrane Junction, he resumes his journey to Tralee.

Hurley concludes his travels and his book with a jaunt on the West and South Clare Railways, better known as the West Clare Railway. He describes the experience:

> "The line is a narrow gauge one, and its headquarters are in Ennis. There are only two classes—first and third—and the carriages are of a very comfortable description. Taking a seat in the train at Ennis, and looking forward, we find ourselves running parallel to the line from Ennis to Athenry, etc. We soon diverge in a westerly direction....The course of the line is now through a wild, stony district, which is not relieved until Corofin Lakes comes in sight".

The attractions of the holiday resorts of Ennistymon, Lisdoonvarna, Lahinch, Miltown-Malbay, and Kilkee are exalted in words and drawings. Hurley reaches the end of the line at Kilrush, "the principal seaport in Clare, (which) has steamboat communication up the Shannon to Limerick".

The guide is generously illustrated with 61 drawings and two photographs. Limerick city and county fare well with 10 drawings and a photograph of a display of Limerick lace.

Copies of both books are difficult to find today, even in public libraries. The works of these little-known authors are not only collector's items: they are quaint and unique relics of our railways in the second half of the nineteenth century. The two guides tell a leisurely story—a story of an age when steam was king, and engine drivers and their firemen "reddened the road" and drove their "chariots of fire" down the tracks of Irish railway history.

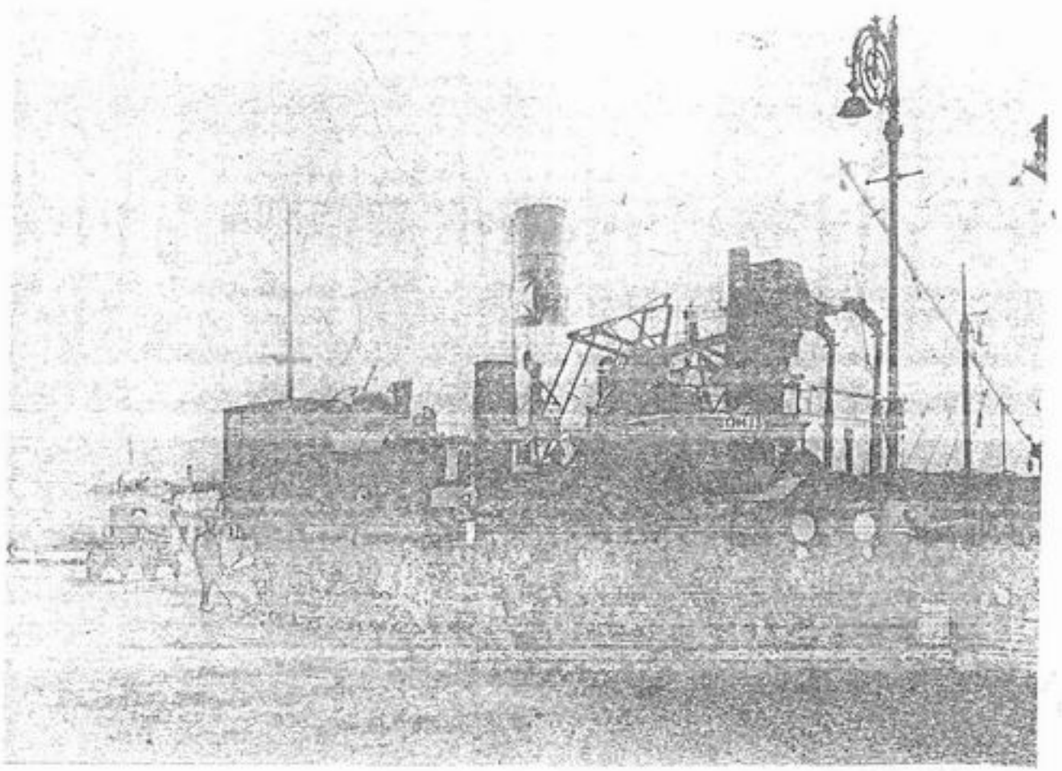
The Shannon Scheme Railway

By MICHAEL McCARTHY

What an exciting sight it was for us children in the 1950s, perched on the level-crossing gates at Parteen-a-lax, watching the steam engine powering and squealing its way to Ardnacrusha. The train was a rare sight then because "The Line", as it was known locally, was seldom used. We were never quite sure why the train was going to the power station, but it did not matter. The sight of that great barrelled engine, belching and billowing smoke, was enough to engulf and smother any childish imaginings. During last summer I had occasion to film part of that same railway line at Longpavement for a sequence in a documentary film on the Shannon Scheme. Sadly, I noticed that in many places the track was showing signs of dilapidation and decay which, presumably, will hasten its removal entirely.

The two-and-a-half miles of railway line from Longpavement to Ardnacrusha were built during the early days of the Shannon Scheme. On August 13, 1925, the fledgling Irish Government and the German company of Siemens Schuckert signed the £5.2 million contract for the electrification of the Free State. Amidst considerable controversy and opposition work began immediately. German and Irish engineers rapidly conducted surveys and staked out areas in Parteen, Ballykeelaun, Clonlara, O'Brien's Bridge and Killaloe. Speed was the essence of this contract which was to be completed within three-and-a-half years. By the end of the autumn most of the preparatory work which would facilitate the massive construction operation was finished.

The living conditions in Ireland which the Germans encountered were quite primitive. Valentine Williams, the novelist, writing in the *Structural Engineer,* gives a rather florid



Limerick Docks: locomotive being transported to Longpavement.

Wagon wheels and generator parts for Ardnacrusha turning into Castle Street.

account of what the Germans had to face, an account which is not too flattering to the people of Parteen or to the place:

> "A Titan's task confronted these peaceful invaders. Ireland could bring almost nothing to their aid save the more or less willing arms of her unskilled labour. The German engineers found themselves in a virtual roadless tract of desolate pastureland with naught save a couple of miserable hamlets all the way from Limerick to Killaloe. There was no power station they could utilise, no railway to transport the plant to the building sites, no fuel except imported, and at Limerick docks totally inadequate facilities for handling the fabulous quantities of materials required....
>
> "As they inhaled the soft and sluggish Shannon air and watched the ragged natives pottering about their wretched hovels and dim cabbage patches in the leisurely manner peculiar to the west of Ireland peasantry, hearts less valiant than those of the professional engineer must have quailed before the magnitude of their undertaking."

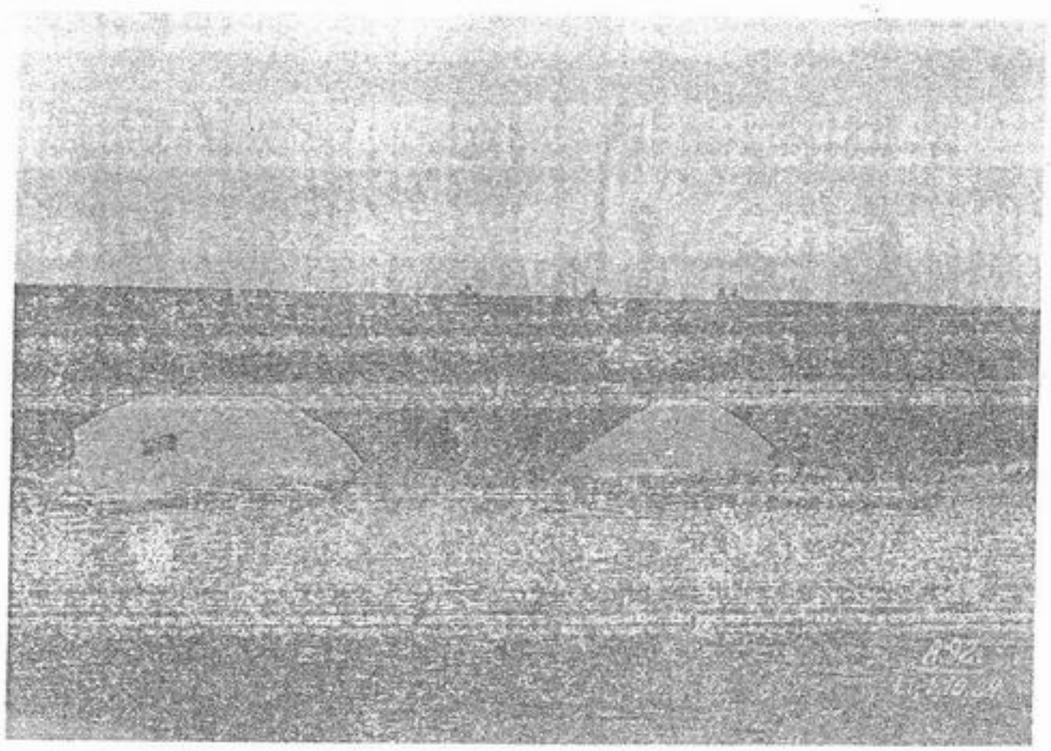
While Williams may have exaggerated somewhat, there is no getting away from the fact that conditions in those days were bad. Roads to Parteen and Clonlara were surfaced with loose stones and sand which quickly turned into a quagmire during the winter months. Even as far back as December, 1916, *The Clare Journal* carried a report of Fr. P. Russell, parish priest of Parteen, attending a meeting of Clare County Council in Ennis where he spoke on behalf of the parishioners, stating that the roads in the area were a disgrace because of a large traction engine going to and coming from the local quarry which supplied stones for the Limerick-Broadford road. He complained that there was nothing but mud everywhere and that this constituted a danger to people and vehicles (mostly bikes in those days). Ten years later, in 1926, the situation had not improved. "There's no mud like our mud which is the father of all muds", said the *Limerick Leader* of December 18. Clare Street in the city, because of its bad surface, was known as "a second Clonlara", according to another report in the same paper. So when the Germans arrived with their massive 35 ton trucks and began to motor about the place the local authorities just had to take action.

After a series of hastily called meetings a levy of £192 per annum was put on Siemens for the upkeep of the roads with a down payment of £250; the Government made a grant of £1,638. A temporary truce was thus engineered and people went on discussing the novel "Compound Road", consisting of two parallel strips of concrete wide enough to fit the gauge of most vehicles, which was exhibited at the Dublin spring show that year.

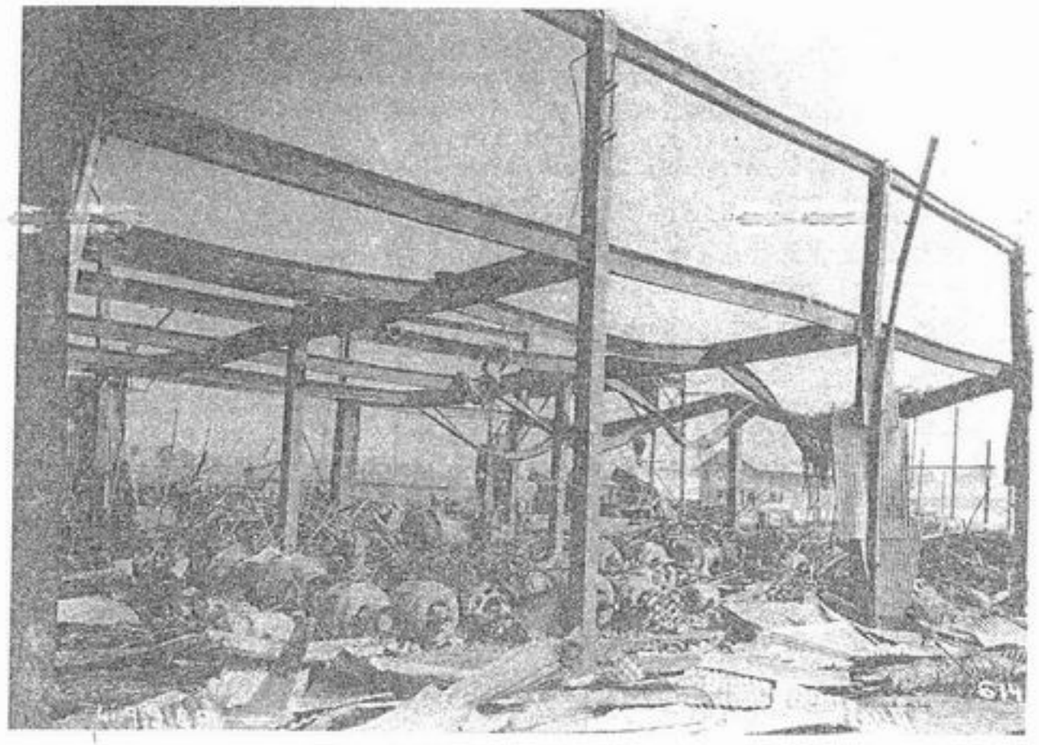
There was no way the Germans could transport their materials and machinery to Ardnacrusha by road. A railway line was vital for the success of the project. It was decided that a railhead would be established at Longpavement and from there the contractors would run their lines to the various key points on the site. The railhead would join the Great Southern Ennis-Limerick line at Longpavement and this would facilitate the transportation of equipment from the city by rail.

It was also decided that part of the line from Longpavement to Davidson's public house, Parteen, would be electrified. This was in accordance with Siemen's policy to electrify those parts of the line which would not be moved during the whole period of construction. So for this purpose a line of poles was run from the temporary power station which the Germans had built at Ardnacrusha, to Longpavement; a transformer house was constructed; electric wires were run the length of that stretch of line and the whole job was completed by March 1927. Siemens, of course, were pioneers in the development of the electric rail system, as they were in so many other fields of engineering.

Having decided on Longpavement for their railhead, the Germans also built their stores there. These were subsequently burnt down, delaying the project considerably. Everything, even the steel girders for the stores had to be imported from Germany. Steamers arrived weekly from Bremen and Hamburg bringing, first of all, lorries to run the material from Limerick docks to the railhead and then, to speed up work on the quayside, an electric derrick and two oil cranes were imported. There followed the various elements for building a railway—metals, fish-plates, sleepers, and 62 miles of railway track. Next to arrive were 76 locomotives, with engine cc of 120-220 h.p., and over 1,000 wagons. On top of this



Surveying Thomond Bridge for strength.



Aftermath of a fire at Longpavement stores.

came hundreds of small trucks, caterpillar excavators, bucket and shovel diggers, concrete mixers, stone crushers, repair plant and heavy motor boats. In all, about 30,000 tons of large and small plant were imported and railed to Ardnacrusha once that part of the line had been built. The locomotives were transported from the docks to Longpavement on rail trailers which were hauled by 100 h.p. Daimler tractors. Extensive tests had been carried out by German engineers on all bridges between the docks and Longpavement to ensure that they could take the enormous weights now passing over them. The rail trailers were also used in transferring the locomotives from one point to the next on the site, or in case of breakdown, when the train had to be brought to one of the workshops at Ardnacrusha.

It was the navvies' lot to lay the tracks. This was a backbreaking job setting the lines and dismantling them again as soon as construction on one particular section of the site was completed. The operation was made all the more difficult in winter when a man could sink to his waist in mud if he stepped off a sleeper. Most of the labourers were unused to this heavy work and it is therefore hardly surprising to note that the vast majority of serious accidents reported on the site were in connection with the railway. The year 1927 seemed to be the worst year in this respect:

"a James Everett had a railway sleeper fall on him;
a John O'Reilly was caught between two bogeys and had his leg fractured;
a Thomas Kiely of Galway was run over by a railway bogey at Blackwater;
a German mechanic Fritz Zaum was injured by a bogey at O'Brien's Bridge; and
a John Howard of Thurles was injured at Ardnacrusha when a set of rails fell on him."

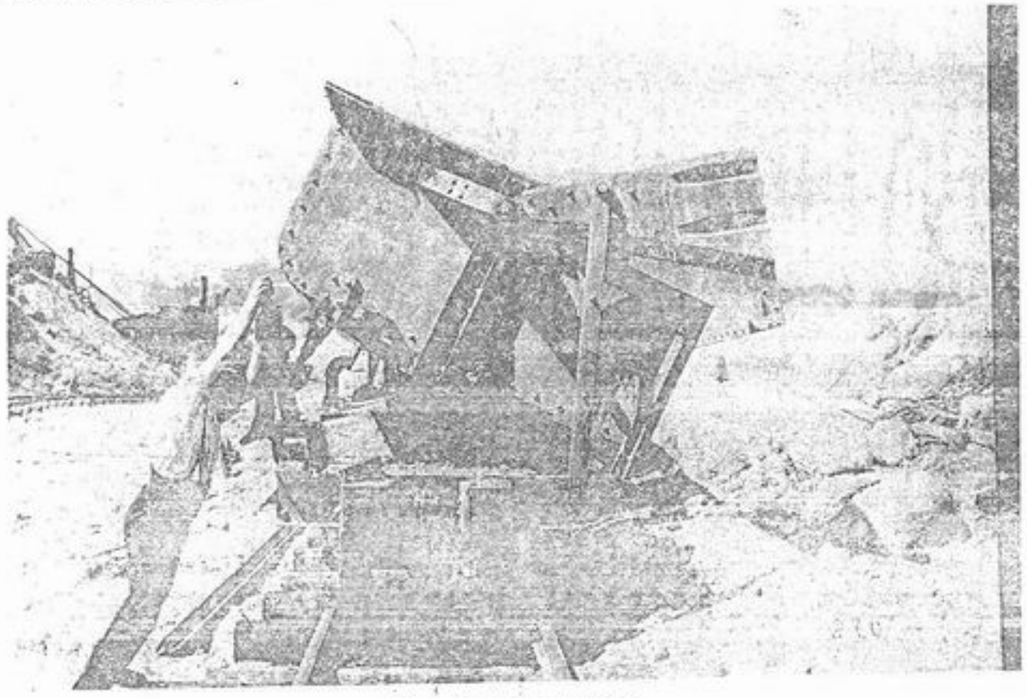
Incidentally, by the end of 1927, Paddy McGilligan, the Minister for Industry and Commerce, reported to the Dáil that so far there had been 12 fatalities and 39 accidents. For the remainder of the scheme the listed causes of accidents are heavily sprinkled with train items—buffers, sleepers, bogeys, wagons, lengths of rail, etc. Compensation for the poor unfortunate victims of various accidents was minimal and sick pay nil.

Even for the locals the railway brought its own hazards. Many nearby thatched roofs

were set on fire by passing trains. Many of the young lads too passed the time by jumping on to the trains as they rolled by and travelling on to the end of the line wherever it may have been; some of them also amused themselves by changing the points on the rails to the consternation of the German foremen who were faced the next morning with the task of getting the locomotive and the wagons back on the rails.

The building of the scheme continued apace until late 1927 when a serious row blew up between McGilligan and Siemens. The Government-appointed Shannon Board of Control felt that Siemens were falling behind schedule and McGilligan was insistent that the work be finished on time. Dr. Karl Frederick von Siemens wrote to the Secretary of Industry and Commerce, Gordon Cambell, in July 1927, saying that they could not finish on time and asked for a six months delay. They attributed the delay to a strike, three months of bad weather, delays in the acquisition of land, lack of accommodation for the German workers, the scarcity of good labour, and "the small output of Irish workmen". McGilligan refused the request. In a very forceful letter to von Siemens the only valid reason he would admit for the delay was the strike, which for a while had threatened the project early on. In another letter he softened his tone and urged that the time schedule be kept "for the prestige of the Government and Siemens. Dr. von Siemens replied, "the Shannon Scheme is for us more than just a business problem—even national interests are at stake. This view is shared by everybody in our House". The fact of the matter was that the international community was watching the performance of Siemens in Ireland and Paddy McGilligan could not afford the extension neither in time nor in money. The Minister refused to accept the pleas for an extension and by November was threatening to invoke the penalty for non-completion.

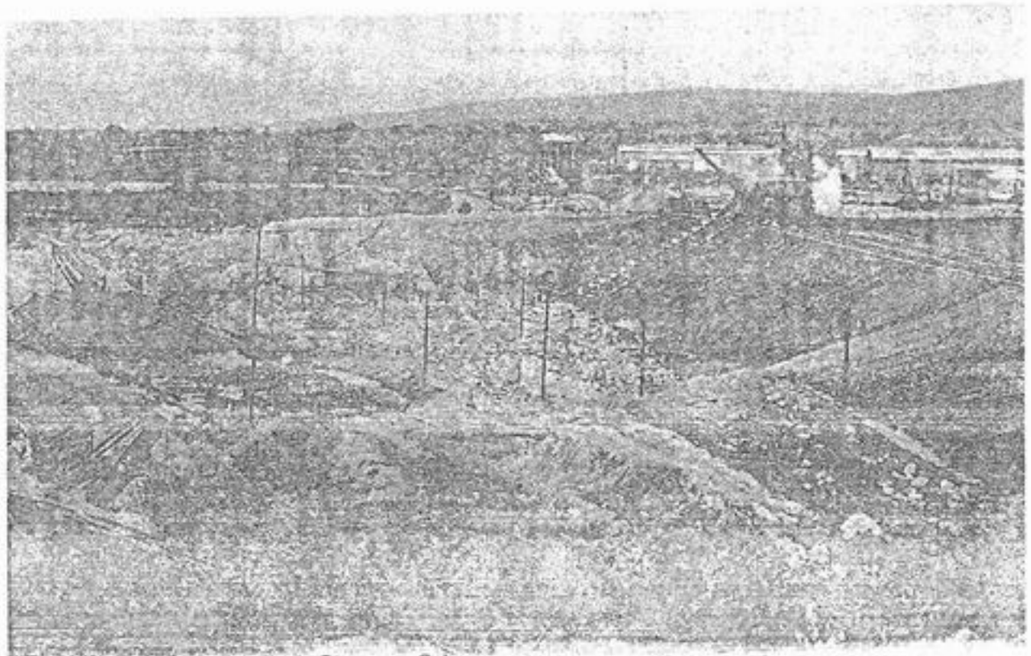
Sharp exchanges continued between McGilligan and von Siemens through the spring of 1928. The contractors were not making up any lost time and this worried McGilligan. In March he wrote to von Siemens, "The circumstances under which the development of the Shannon Scheme were undertaken gave it a publicity that was almost worldwide. Details as to the progress have been received by my Department from very many quarters, and engineers, not always interested in the success of the Scheme, have visited the works to find material for commendation or criticism of what is being done."



One of our own at work!

A conference was arranged in London at the High Commissioner's office on March 19 in an attempt to resolve matters. Dr. von Siemens and Paddy McGilligan both attended. The meeting led to an improvement in relations and a further conference was held in Dublin in the Shelbourne Hotel in May. As a result of these meetings, von Siemens agreed to send in more machinery and equipment in order to finish the work on time. Among the equipment was a number of extra locomotives and wagons which, some have argued, increased the pressure on the existing lines, crowded them, and did not help at all in speeding things up. Work, however, was finished on schedule and the Scheme was officially opened by President Cosgrave on Monday, July 22, 1929.

From then on, men and machinery gradually became redundant on the site. Navvies returned to their homes in various parts of the country and Siemens sent their locomotives and heavy equipment back to their headquarters in Berlin. The eight miles of the Scheme were fenced, landscaped and manicured. The only trace of the 62 miles of railway track remaining was the link line between Ardnacrusha and Longpavement. For many people it has just a functional significance long since passed but for many more it is part of history. Long may it remain so.



LIMERICK. The Canal, Shannon Scheme.

Milton Series postcard.