

The Newry and Armagh Railway and Lissummon Tunnel

by JOHN CAMPBELL

On the 14th of January 1965, the rail link to Newry and Warrenpoint was closed when a train left Edward Street Station on its final run to Goraghwood. This single track line has been operating for over 110 years and had been built by two separate companies. The Newry to Warrenpoint section was constructed by "The Newry-Warrenpoint and Rostrevor Railway Company" and the line from Newry to Goraghwood had been built by a company named, at that time, 'The Newry and Enniskillen Railway Company.' Strangely enough, the Newry, Warrenpoint and Rostrevor Company never managed to take the line through to Rostrevor (although a 'railway' Hotel was built there) and while a line did eventually reach Enniskillen, it was not built by the Newry and Enniskillen Company.

As early as 1826, just one year after the opening of the Stockton to Darlington line (the first railway), consideration had been given to the construction of a railway line between the important port of Newry and the historic city of Armagh. In that year a survey was commissioned by a Mr. William Blacker of Elm Park, Co. Armagh, and a report was published. This however came to nothing and it was eight years later, when the first line in Ireland — the Dublin to Kingstown line (over 6 miles long) — was opened on December 17th, 1834.

Two years later two new railway companies were formed. They were the 'Dublin and Drogheda Company,' which was empowered to construct a 32 mile line north from the capital to Drogheda, and the 'Ulster Railway Company,' to construct a 36 mile line from Belfast to Armagh. This latter line had reached Portadown, via Lisburn and Lurgan, by 1842 and the Dublin-Drogheda line had been completed and was opened on the 24th May 1844. That was roughly the position, therefore, when in 1845 the "Newry and Enniskillen Railway Company" was formed to undertake the biggest and most ambitious project to date — the construction of a 72 mile line via Armagh and Clones to the Fermanagh town. However, Parliament had also given approval in the same year to the "Dundalk and Enniskillen Company" to construct a line linking these two towns and insisted that the Clones to Enniskillen section should be

constructed jointly by the two companies. At that time Newry was an important sea port and the promoters argued that the construction of the line would provide more effective access to the port and would benefit the trade of the town generally. The business people were also aware of the rising challenge of Belfast port. A local business man described it:—

"It is within my own memory when all the people from Portadown and the neighbourhood there, went to Newry, and it is within my own recollection when Belfast began to break in upon it. A coach between Armagh and Belfast was established by the Belfast people yet all the coach could carry was four inside and six outside, and that was once the amount of the passenger traffic between the West of Ulster and Belfast. It runs along the line of the old coach road, and now the Ulster Railway carries the people into Belfast along the same line by thousands. At that time the Belfast people started their coach, the Portadown people had to ride their horses 15 miles from Portadown to Newry to transact business, and then they began to tire of that sort of travelling in the winter day, and they began to prefer the coach to Belfast, and the Newry people let them go; and this is part of the way that Belfast has advanced on Newry."

Some idea of the significance of Newry port can be gained from annual returns from the port authorities about that time. There were 117 vessels registered at Newry and in one year 843 vessels had entered the port. The principal trade was with Great Britain and with Liverpool in particular, but ships also sailed from the port to the Continent, America and the Middle East. The trade figures for the year showed £500,000 exports and £600,000 imports.

The proposal to construct the line was greeted with enthusiasm and so in August 1846, having received the necessary parliamentary approval, the Company commenced work on the first section of the line between Newry and Goraghwood. The engineer on this first section was John Godwin, a highly qualified and able man who lived at Rostrevor. The Company was London based and the Chairman was Mr. William F. Spackman, who was allowed considerable freedom in how he conducted the affairs of the Company and in

how the funds of the Company were expended. The Board of Directors included a number of Irish Directors but the rather remote handling of the Company affairs, coupled with some dubious dealing in Company funds by the Chairman, resulted in serious mismanagement. The line did not appear to present any great engineering difficulties. It is described as, "leaving Edward Street on the level and passing over the Bessbrook river and under the Newry to Markethill Road where it climbs a gradient of 1:70 before entering Goragwood on the level." However, it was to take a full seven years before the work had been completed and there followed further delays while defects revealed by Board of Trade Inspectors were made good. The line finally opened on March 1st 1854.

During this period there had been considerable progress on the construction of other lines. Two years earlier in 1852 the "Dublin and Belfast Junction Railway Company," which had been formed the same year as the Newry Company, had completed construction of the 63 mile line to link the Ulster Rail line at Portadown and the Dublin-Drogheda line at the latter town. This was to provide through traffic between Belfast and Dublin. The final section of this line had been the six mile stretch between Mullaghglass and the Wellington Inn, south of Newry, including the construction of the eighteen arch viaduct at Craigmore, Bessbrook. Prior to the completion of this section the main line company had established a station at Mullaghglass which was known as the Newry (Armagh Road) station to service the Newry area. This station was subsequently moved up the line to the site of the present main line station, off the Newry-Camlough Road. The Ulster Rail Company had completed its line to Armagh in 1848 and was now proposing to extend the line to Clones via Monaghan and so link up with the Dundalk to Enniskillen line.

A line had also been constructed by a separate company between Newry and Warrenpoint (a distance of seven miles). This was opened in May 1849. The progress made on these other railway schemes during this period, while the 3½ mile line between Newry and Goragwood was under construction, illustrates how disastrously inefficient the Newry and Enniskillen Company was and how poorly it must have been viewed by the other companies. Indeed, relationships between the Newry Company and the others were to continue to present innumerable difficulties for the Company throughout its independent working life. When the line was opened to Goragwood the

Company's entire rolling stock consisted of two second-hand locomotives and three carriages, one of each class. There had been no provision for goods vehicles and arrangements had to be made with the main line company to work its goods vehicles over the Newry line. But the Junction Company had established its own Newry station on the main line and naturally continued to promote it in preference to the new line.

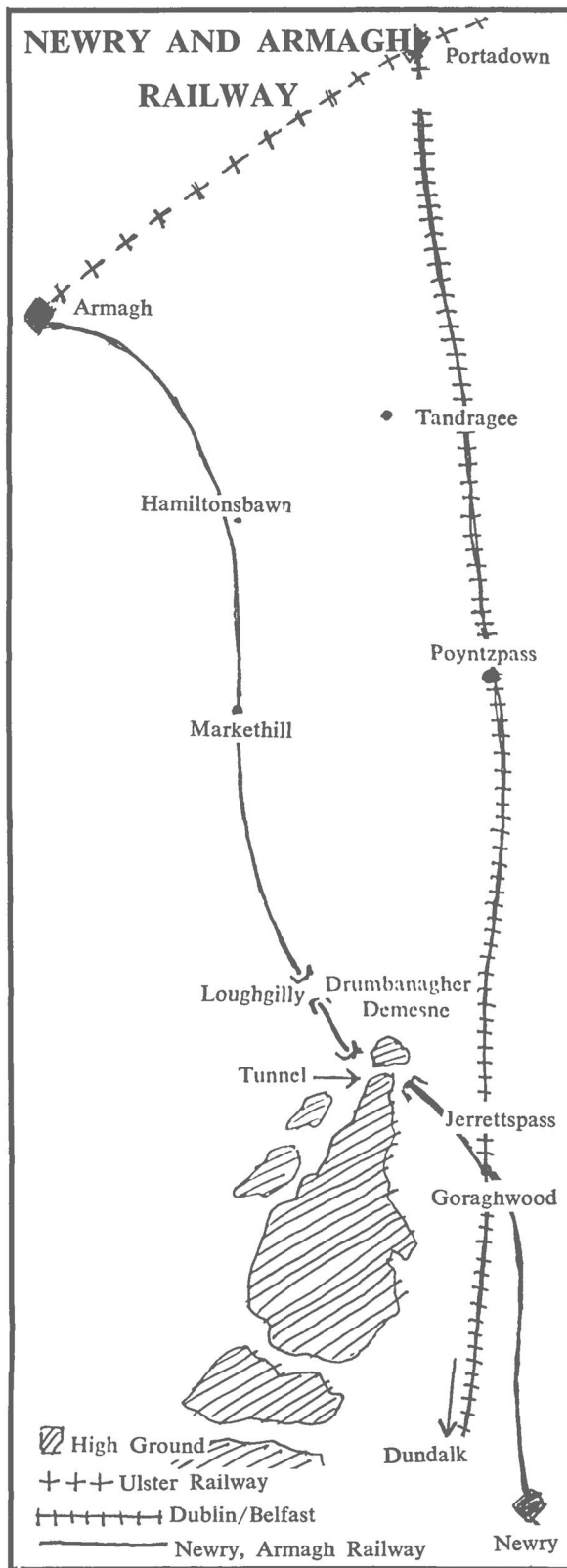
£135,000 had been spent on the line to Goragwood — railways were being constructed at that time for under £20,000 per mile — and it became obvious in 1855 and 1856 that there was no prospect of the line paying its way unless it was extended beyond Goragwood. The net revenue for the second half of 1856 was £3! Mr. Spackman, the Chairman was eventually forced to resign following an investigation which revealed irregularities in the handling of the Company funds and the conversion of some of these for his own private use. A new Chairman, Mr. C. A. Lattimore, was appointed, and Spackman's son, who had too conveniently served as Secretary to the Company was also removed and replaced by a Mr. T. A. Weatherhead.

It was also decided to transfer the administrative management of the Company from London to Edward St., Newry and an effort was made to improve relationships with other companies. Towards the end of 1856 a decision was taken to abandon the idea of constructing the line to Enniskillen but to proceed with the section from Goragwood to Armagh and the name of the Company was to become 'The Newry-Armagh Railway Company.'

The proposal to extend the line to Armagh met with considerable opposition from the Dublin-Belfast Junction Company and the Ulster Rail Company who were now well established and were providing the alternative route, Goragwood to Armagh via Portadown. At considerable cost they engaged counsel and submitted their arguments to the Committee of the House of Commons considering the application. However, the Newry Company was determined to press ahead — it really had no choice if it was ever to show a return on the investment to date. It appointed Mr. G. W. Hemans of 10, Rutland Square, Dublin, as engineer and he carried out a survey of the line and prepared plans for submission to Parliament. Additionally the Company commenced negotiations with the Newry Warrenpoint and Rostrevor Company on the construction of a link line across the town. This was completed in 1861 and the line was also extended

to the Albert Basin in Newry. It was estimated that the cost of the extension line to Armagh would be in the region of £180,000 and it was proposed to raise this money through the sale of shares at £10 each. Mr. Hemans' plan for the construction of the line was to bring it through Drumbanagher Demesne. When this route had been originally proposed in 1845 Colonel Close has asked for £20,000 compensation. However, when the plans were laid before Parliament it was declared that, as evidence of the good will of the landed gentry to the construction of the railway, Colonel Close had withdrawn his claim. The background to this declaration was to be explained later.

The plans included the proposal to have stations at Drumbanagher, Loughgilly, Markethill and Hamiltonsbawn. The line would be 22½ miles long with a short tunnel at Loughgilly. In spite of the stiff opposition of the other companies who, among other things, drew Parliament's attention to the fact that the Newry and Armagh Company had spent £135,000 in constructing a 3½ mile line, the bill to extend the line to Armagh was passed in August 1857. However, it then became clear that Colonel Close's decision to withdraw his claim for compensation had only come about when the Company had agreed that the line would not proceed through the demense but that instead a tunnel would be constructed to take the line through Lissummon Hill. It was explained that has this been disclosed at the time, coupled with the opposition of the other companies, a line involving the construction of a long tunnel would have been unlikely to receive Parliamentary approval. It was also added that the revised line including the tunnel would be 1½ miles shorter. Approval for the construction of this line was eventually obtained without further opposition from the other companies and the pressure was then on to raise the necessary funds. All and sundry were encouraged to purchase shares and local business people in Newry and Armagh were exhorted to support the venture. A number of meetings were held and these were invariably addressed by Mr. William Kirk, M.P. of Annvale, Keady, a substantial mill owner in that area and a major shareholder in the Company. The response was patchy and a succession of contractors were appointed and started work, only to have to withdraw when the funds ran out. Included among these were R. S. North of Bedford Square, London and McCormick Green and King — the latter had actually commenced work on the tunnel section. An attempt to obtain funds from the Public Works Loan Commission was unsuccessful

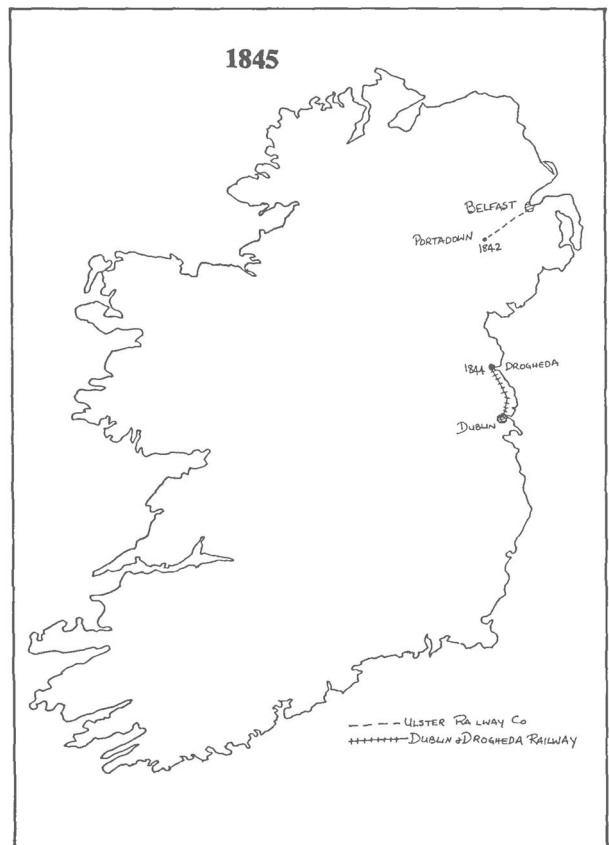


Eventually work recommenced in October 1861 when the contract was placed with the contractors Watson and Overend to carry out the work still outstanding between Goraghwood and Armagh, including the construction of the tunnel. 230 men were employed on the section between Goraghwood and Markethill and to speed construction, work also commenced on the Markethill-Armagh section. Eventually there were 1500 men working on the line. The major work of the line was of course Lissummon Tunnel. Originally planned to be 1604 yards long, it was extended to 1,759 yards, 1 yard short of 1 mile and the longest tunnel in Ireland. It was a considerable engineering operation which involved the sinking of 6 shafts along the line and mining and boring through rock from each shaft. The deepest shaft was sunk to 200 ft. and the debris was conveyed to the top in large buckets or skips. A reporter for the "*Newry Commercial Telegraph*" who visited the works gave a graphic description of the operations there. He describes journeying on foot from Goraghwood, where a bridge was being constructed to allow the line to cross the main line, and then through Jerrettspass. He goes on to describe arrival at the entrance and continues:—

"One would suppose that, after passing over so many hills, of no mean proportions either, through which no tunnels are to be cut, the hill at Lissummon would be of gigantic proportions. The supposition would not be wrong founded, and the work still to be accomplished by these hardy sons of toil will require, it would seem, superhuman exertions. The progress made at the South end, or that facing Newrywards, is merely of an initiatory character; but the 20 feet of tunnel will give some idea of the work on hands. The solid rock protrudes on every side, and a temporary wooden structure, arched, is erected — room being allowed between the wood and the rock for the masons to proceed with the brick work according as the miners advance.

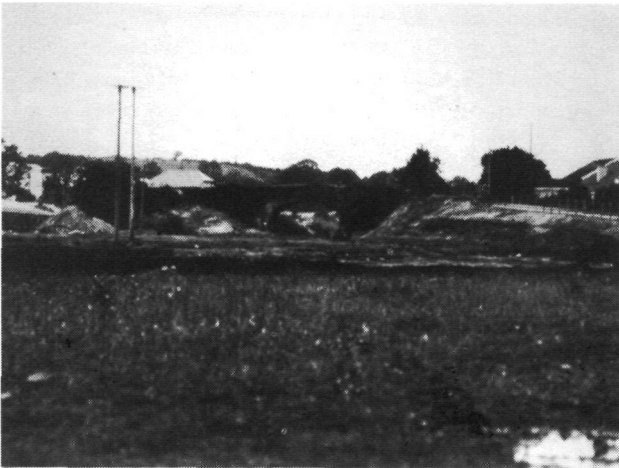
This Southern entrance presents, even now, in its rugged state, a peculiarly grand and imposing appearance. The hill rises abruptly, and on either side the scenery is delightful, with the handsome little Church of Drumbanagher giving a marked but gentle touch to the view. Retreating Northwards, the upper strata over the Southern entrance for as good as a hundred yards has been cut away in the shape of a half moon. Mounting this hill, we stand over the tunnel, or rather over its future course. Its entire length will be about 1600 yards. At the North

entrance considerable progress has been made, but the most interesting and most novel portion of the work, is to be witnessed where the shafts have been sunk. There are now six shafts erected, and the men are busily employed — 'under the surface' — cutting and boring, mining and blasting. We were told that no adequate idea could be formed of their capabilities, unless they could be seen at work, and so, accompanied by Mr. Swan (for whose courtesy in showing us over the entire of the works we have to return our thanks), we determined on paying a visit to the workmen underneath. As we have remarked there are six working shafts sunk, and stationary steam engines are in operation at the four deepest shafts, the remaining two being worked by horse power. The depth of shaft No. 1 is about 199 feet; of shaft No. 2 about 200 feet; of shaft No. 3 about 133 feet; of shaft No. 4 about 113 feet. The other two shafts are not just so deep, as they approached the decline in the Northern side, which is not near so abrupt as at the opposite entrance, and are worked by horse power.





View from 'Brickie Loanin' looking towards Edward Street, Newry



Bridge at Craigmore



Goragwood Station—the Newry line on the right

“We select No.4 shaft and, taking our places in the large bucket, we were soon whirled far beneath, and, looking upwards, a little blue speck was the only indication of the outer world. Cutting had been made in both directions, north and south — and the stout and burly English ‘gaffer’ soon issued from the darkness, in response to the call of our companion, the superintendent.

“What progress have you made in that direction?” (south) was the query. The ‘gaffer’ flung out his line and the direction soon come:— “Twenty three feet, sir.”

“What in the other direction?” Bye-and-bye we learn “Twenty two feet six, Sir; but we met with very hard stuff in this direction.” In the Northern ‘cut’ three men were engaged, and each man had his ‘light’. Very frequently the labour is most severe. Hard slate rock is very abundant in the vicinity, and often ‘blasting’ with gunpower has to be resorted to. While the men are engaged in boring, another is employed in conveying the debris to the bottom of the shaft, where another man is busy in filling, and signal wires inform those above that a load is filled. In the Southern direction of the cut, down No.4 shaft, the same process was going on, and the water here was flowing very rapidly. The double pump, however, which was in full play, carried it off as quickly as the torrents issued from the bowels of the earth.”

“Mr. Swan, we understand, is about having erected double pumps at the other shafts, which, undoubtedly, will prove of great service. The quick transit from daylight to the bottom of the tunnel leaves the unaccustomed visitor in complete darkness. Soon, however, in the darkness, minute lights are observable, and, in a short time, a peculiar kind of light sheds itself on all around, and renders the vision tolerably clear. After a most interesting and instructive stay the visitor will return to *terra firma* with a far better idea of the labour to be performed by a peculiar class of men who, from childhood, are brought up to ‘life under the surface.’

“A word or two with regard to the other shafts. Just as we were lingering around the mouth of shaft No.1, the signal came from below that the miners wished to be conveyed to the surface. They had met with an unusually hard piece of rock, and they were obliged to blast with gunpowder. The men had scarcely arrived more than a few seconds at the surface, when five or six heavy explosions took

place. Smoke began immediately to issue from the shaft, and it was a considerable time before the miners could venture to work again. We were shown, in connection with this, an instrument at present being constructed, convenient to the fourth shaft, for clearing off the smoke more rapidly, and, by sending down fresh air, permits the men to commence work at once. 'No delay' seems to be the guiding principle of all concerned, and we do not believe that the work could be in better hands or under better management. Shaft No.2 is of the greatest depth, being about 200 feet to the top of the tunnel. About once in every quarter of an hour a load of stones arrives from the bottom. But when basalt dykes are met with, the slate in the neighbourhood is found to be of extraordinary hardness, and the work is very hard indeed, and consequently requires a greater amount of time and labour. The centre shaft, No.3, had been passed through more favourable strata, being composed mostly of soft sandstone. Taken on an average, the entire of the working parties make about four yards progress each day; but this calculation should not be positively adopted, as variations, in excess and under the average, are very frequent. The granite of the neighbourhood is used in the mason work along the line, and excellent granite the land produces. The tunnel at Loughgilly is 600 yards in length and has been cut through a short time ago, and the mason work is now in full play.

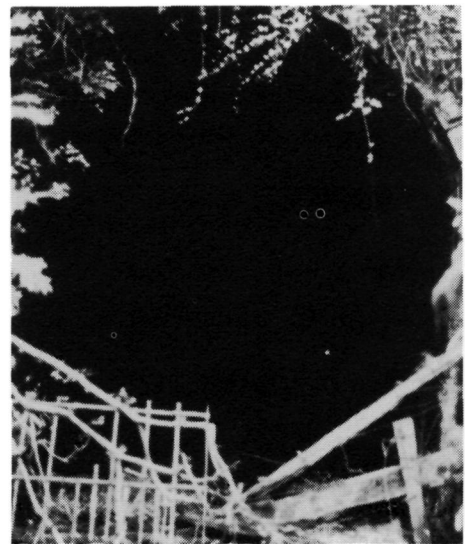
"There are a great number of labourers and workmen of all kinds employed on the line — a great portion of whom are Englishmen, chiefly those who are employed 'under the surface' in their own country. Neat cottages have been erected for their comfort, convenient to the tunnel, of the description usually met with in the mining districts of England. The cottages are partly of wood and partly of mason work, and the interior is clean, commodious, and well arranged. Sufficient accommodation has not yet been provided, but another 'row' of houses is being rapidly erected. Men who follow mining are, as a rule 'brought up to it' as they broadly express it and their pay is pretty fair. They work twelve hours and receive from 5 shillings to 6 shillings per day as compensation for their toil, and the dangers which they necessarily incur. From they commence work until they leave off, their clothes are completely saturated with the falling water, and one of the men whom we remarked as rising from shaft



Kilmonaghan Road Bridge, South of Jerrettspass



Tripe Arch 'under bridge' at Jerrettspass



Southern entrance to Lissummon Tunnel
—(the spot of light is the Northern exit)

No.1 had several scrapes or cuts on his cheek.”

The location of some of these shafts is still marked today with mounds of the excavated rock etc. In other cases, the stones were carted away to construct and repair roads. Where visible, they show the line of the tunnel from where it enters the hill behind Drumbanagher Church to where it emerges a short distance from Michael O'Brien's home. The tunnel remains in quite good condition to this day, and apart from the problems about access to the entrances, it can be walked with no difficulty. The rails and sleepers have been removed and the only evidence of the track are the wooden keys strewn about the floor. The walls and roof were built with cut stone and the small arched recesses were built around with brick with the natural rock face forming the back wall. As in 1862 when the reporter visited the tunnel, today's visitor will find some limited vision when he, or she, becomes accustomed to the gloom. The exit is clearly visible from the entrance. In some places there is quite a lot of water coming down and stalactites hang from the roof.

And what about the men who were involved in this great undertaking? As reported, a number were miners brought across from England to work in the tunnel and an examination of Drumbanagher Church of Ireland Parish Records supports this. The records show miners and their children buried there as follows:—

William Bailey, son of miner on railway, 10/2/1863, 2½ years.

Thomas Pryor, miner on railway, 12/4/1863, 56 years.

Richard M. Walker, son of miner on railway, 27/4/1863, 7 years

William Funckley, son of miner on railway, 23/5/1863, 1 year.

James Cooper, miner of Manchester, 2/6/1863, 55 years.

Mary Anne Parker, Lancashire, daughter of miner, 5/6/1863, 2½ years.

Edward Wm. Keaton, Lancashire, son of miner, 8/9/1863, 10 weeks.

Mary Hanna Harris, Northampton, daughter of miner, 8/10/1863, 1 month.

Their behaviour did not exactly endear them to the local community and shortly after their arrival in the Markethill area they were alleged to have made use of “expressions calculated to offend the good residents” of that town. As a result, they, the residents,

held a demonstration to protest about the railway workers' behaviour and 3,000 marched through the town with fife and drum to show the strength of feeling. A sub-Inspector with 40 police succeeded in keeping the peace. The navvies, as they were called, caused problems in Newry too and one navvy described as “an English-man of immense proportions” appeared at Newry Court on a serious assault charge. William Watson, known as ‘Cumberland Bill’, emerged from Smith's Public House in Canal Street and set upon a poor unfortunate coal porter called Owen McBride, who just happened to be delivering coal in the street. Eventually the police arrived, and, ‘with difficulty,’ as the report states, ‘removed the monster to the barracks.’ Most of the disturbances arose out of the navvies visits to public houses and other places as the following reports illustrate:—

“A woman of ill-fame, named Mary Johnston; charged a navvy, named William Nelson with having committed a grievous assault upon her.”

From the evidence it appeared that two of the navvies went into the residence of this girl, and assaulted her, knocking her down and dragging her by the hair. She said:—

“The treatment he gave me was fit to kill a beast.”

Esther Scott, a fellow resident, corroborated the complainant's evidence. Acting Constable Roberts deposed that Sub-Constable McIntee and he went up to High Street and met Nelson running along, with all the women in the street running after him and pelting him with stones. He arrested him and brought him before Mr. Brady, who remanded him. He was “not altogether drunk....”

Mr. Brady said:— “This would all be avoided if they would pay the men at the tunnel and not in public houses in Newry.”

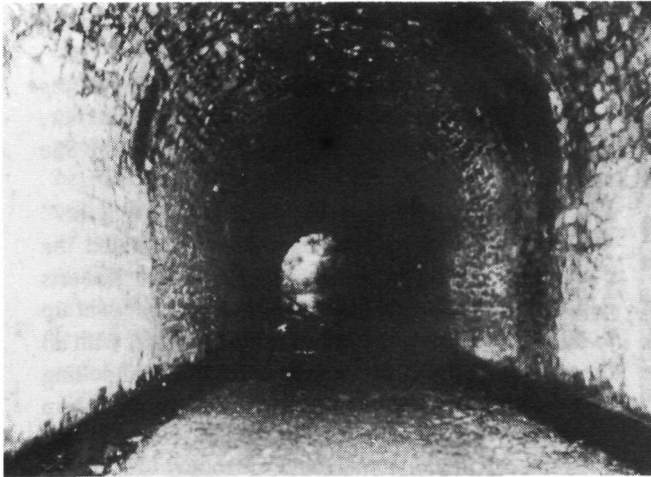
The Bench sentenced the prisoner to be imprisoned for one month at hard labour.

THE NAVVIES AGAIN!

“This morning, at the Police Court, Pat Sullivan, William Raber, Pat Quinn, Thomas Brombie, John Kirby, navvies, were brought up, charged by the police with being drunk, and disorderly on the public streets on Saturday night. The fellows, as usual, arrived in Newry from the tunnel, and, on Saturday night after having sojourned some time in the public houses, began their vagaries in the streets. The men were all fined in small sums. Peter Kelly another gentleman from the



Interior of tunnel showing recesses



Looking towards the Southern entrance



North of Ballydougherty Halt

South employed on the Newry and Armagh Railway, was brought up and charged with assaulting William Montgomery, railway guard at the Edward Street Station on Saturday night. Kelly, who, at the time was entirely incapable from the whiskey he had imbibed, attempted to get into a railway carriage when the train was in motion. The railway official at once interfered to prevent Kelly from getting on, when the latter made a furious onslaught on Montgomery inflicting serious injuries, besides knocking out three of his teeth. The prisoner was remanded to Petty Sessions."

OUTRAGEOUS CONDUCT OF NAVVIES

"John Gallagher, John Mengie, Mick Pender, John Toal, Patrick Toner and James Burns, all rough looking specimens of the 'navvie' tribe, were brought up, charged by Sergeant Edgar with being drunk and conducting themselves in an outrageous manner in Canal Street on Tuesday night. It appeared from the evidence that a crowd of navvies had just arrived from the works at Lissummon tunnel and had been misconducting themselves at Sugar Island — Gallagher and another of the prisoners being stripped and calling for persons to fight with them. The constable immediately arrested Gallagher and had the remainder of the fellows also conveyed to prison. Gallagher resisted all he could. The Bench inquired of Gallagher what he had to say to the charge. Gallagher, a stout, coarse-looking fellow, said in a surly tone that he knew nothing of the matter.

'The Bench fined Gallagher in 5s. and costs, and the remainder were fined in 1s. and costs or 12 hours imprisonment.'

In another case two local men, Alan Auterson and Thomas Cardwell, were charged with assaulting Bernard McLoughlin and Edward Henry, stone masons at Lissummon Tunnel and natives of Co. Tyrone. The assault was alleged to have taken place at Tullyhappy but the accused were later acquitted.

There were a number of police stationed at the tunnel during its construction. In one account ten are mentioned, but they were insufficient to quell disturbances which occurred there in 1863, when under the heading "Riot at Lissummon Tunnel" the local paper reported the following:—

"We are informed, by a reliable authority, that on Friday last there arrived from England a large number, twenty or thirty, of Irish labourers who had been, as they alleged, 'hunted' out of works in

England by English labourers, who considered the Irish as intruders on their soil, and encroachers in their field of daily labour. On arriving at Newry, these ejected sons of Erin repaired to Lissummon, where they found large numbers of the friends of these English enemies and persecutors employed, and they immediately set about summarily ejecting them from Irish soil. On Saturday morning a report reached Newry that in the scuffle that ensued, several lives had been lost but this statment was entirely false.

“However, the disturbed locality was in such a state that Captain Armstrong of Newry was obliged to proceed to the spot, and was on the ground during the entire of Tuesday. The active sub-Inspector did not arrive a minute too soon, for it appears that the stalwart farmers and labourers of the district, far and wide, digusted at the conduct of a portion of the navvies, assembled, and ‘armed to the teeth’ marched on the locality where the navvies reside. It was said that the armed party consisted almost entirely of Orangemen, who were deeply offended at the wanton insult offered to the Englishmen. We have made, however, careful inquiry, and find that, though Orangemen may have been among the armed party, the force was not exclusively of that society.

“The ‘turn-out’ to resist the outrage of the navvies appears to have been general — confined to the members of no society or religion or class. After great exertion, the armed party consented to leave the ground, but so potent was the military array, and so effective the bold front of the men of the neighbourhood that the ‘navvies’ rushed pell mell from the works and ‘skeddaddled’ to Newry. For the moment peace was restored, but the navvies having returned to the neighbourhood of the works at Lissummon, on Tuesday night, some confusion and disturbance again rose. A small body of police stationed in the locality were totally unfit to maintain the peace in the neighbourhood and the navvies, when the male inhabitants of the districts are scattered, are masters of all. It was thought that the fellows might conduct themselves in a more orderly manner in future, but this day (Wednesday) as the Petty Sessions business was being disposed off, a mounted policeman arrived at the Court House in Ballybot from Lissummon with a request for assistance, as the rioters had again declared war, and hostilities had been resumed. The special messenger was at once brought into the Magistrates



Bridge North of Ballydougherty



Embankment across Loughgilly Bog



Embankment across Loughgilly Bog

private Chamber, where we presume he communicated the information of which he was made the bearer. The interview was private. Up to going to press we did not learn if any serious fighting had taken place today at the tunnel. The report in town today was that a body of men numbering something about 300 strong, armed with guns, pikes, etc., had again today made their appearance in the vicinity of the works, determined, so says rumour, to be revenged on the men who had driven the English workmen from the place. Of course we cannot confirm this statement — we merely record the fact that such an allegation has been made."

On this occasion with the help of local people peace was restored. At least one man died in the construction of the tunnel. He was Arthur Devlin, a native of Tyrone, who missed his footing when getting into the bucket to go down and fell 170 feet down the shaft to his death. Michael Daly, whose job was described as "banksman in charge of the bucket operation", was charged with manslaughter through negligence, but was acquitted.

Continuing along the line, a shorter tunnel was constructed at Loughgilly with an embankment across Loughgilly bog. The line reached Armagh in March 1864, but because agreement could not be reached with the Ulster Rail Company on the use of their station, a temporary station was constructed on the outskirts of the town and passengers had to be ferried in. The line opened on August 25th, 1864 and the following year the company finally reached agreement with the Warrenpoint Company on the joint working of the Newry town link line, thus providing through traffic to Warrenpoint. Although now in operation the line continued to be beset by financial difficulties. It had to rely too much on the good will of the other companies who were basically in competition.

Although for a time it did share the Armagh station jointly with Ulster Rail that agreement did not work out, not least as a result of the exorbitant charges that the latter placed on the use of its services.

Eventually the Newry Company built its own station there. At Goraghwood there were the ongoing problems about payment for the use of services there and the reluctance of the main line company to work over the Newry line.

In 1866 just two years after it opened a receiver was appointed and there was some suggestion that the line should be sold. However, following what would

probably be described as "rationalisation" today, the line was allowed to continue to operate. In 1876 the Great Northern Railway Company was formed of an amalgamation of the Dublin-Drogheda, Ulster Rail, and the Dublin-Belfast Junction Companies. For the small independent Newry Company still in financial difficulties, the writing was on the wall. It was now in competition at Goraghwood and Armagh with the same Company.

The crunch came in 1878 when the Company could not pay for a locomotive it had ordered. The line was offered for sale to the G.N.R. and was absorbed into the larger Company in 1879. The line which had cost just under £400,000 to complete was sold for £60,000 cash and £165,000 in shares. During its independent lifetime the line had employed a total of 143, including 12 directors, 2 auditors, 4 clerks, 4 station masters, 34 porters, 8 locomotive drivers and various other tradesmen. There were on average four trains each way between Armagh and Goraghwood daily with much more traffic on the line into Newry.

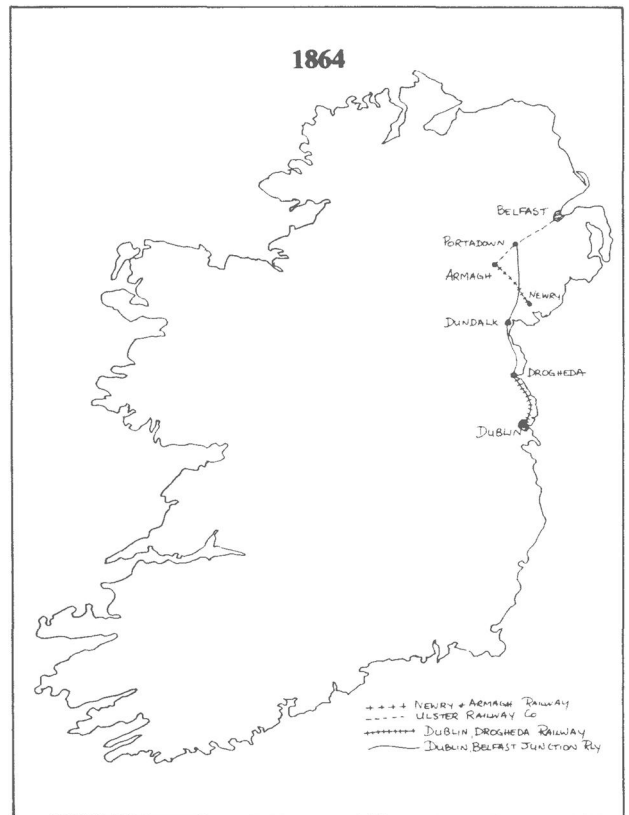
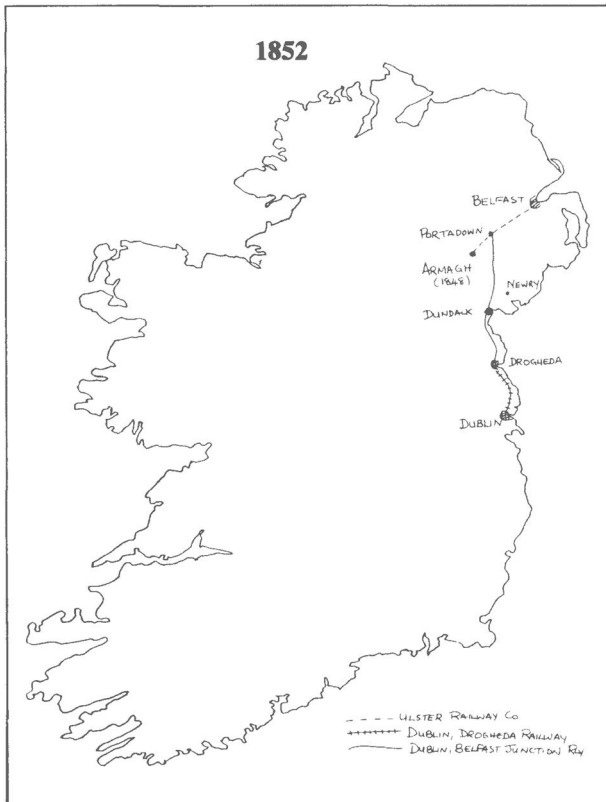
Some technical detail:— the steepest sections were where, after it crossed the Armagh Road from Newry, climbing from Goraghwood to the end of the tunnel and dropping steeply into Armagh from Hamiltontsbawn.

Ten years after amalgamation with the G.N.R. Company, the line was to become not only national but world news when, on June 12, 1889, on the steep gradient outside Armagh there occurred the worst railway accident in the history of Irish railways. The Armagh Methodist Church Sunday School had organised an excursion to Warrenpoint and hired a train with 800 seats. As it turned out 940 boarded the train which left Armagh station at 10.15 a.m. In the townland of Killuney, as they were approaching the top of the hill the engine stopped. It was decided to split the train and the rear brake van was wedged with stones. When the train was divided (this removed the vacuum brake from the rear carriages) and as the engine prepared to proceed the uncoupled carriages were jolted and started to run back. They crashed into a following train, at 40 miles per hour, some distance down the line. Eighty died in the crash and 260 were injured. As a result of the accident new legislation on braking was introduced.

The line continued in operation until 1933 when, following a strike, the passenger service between Goraghwood and Armagh was withdrawn and the

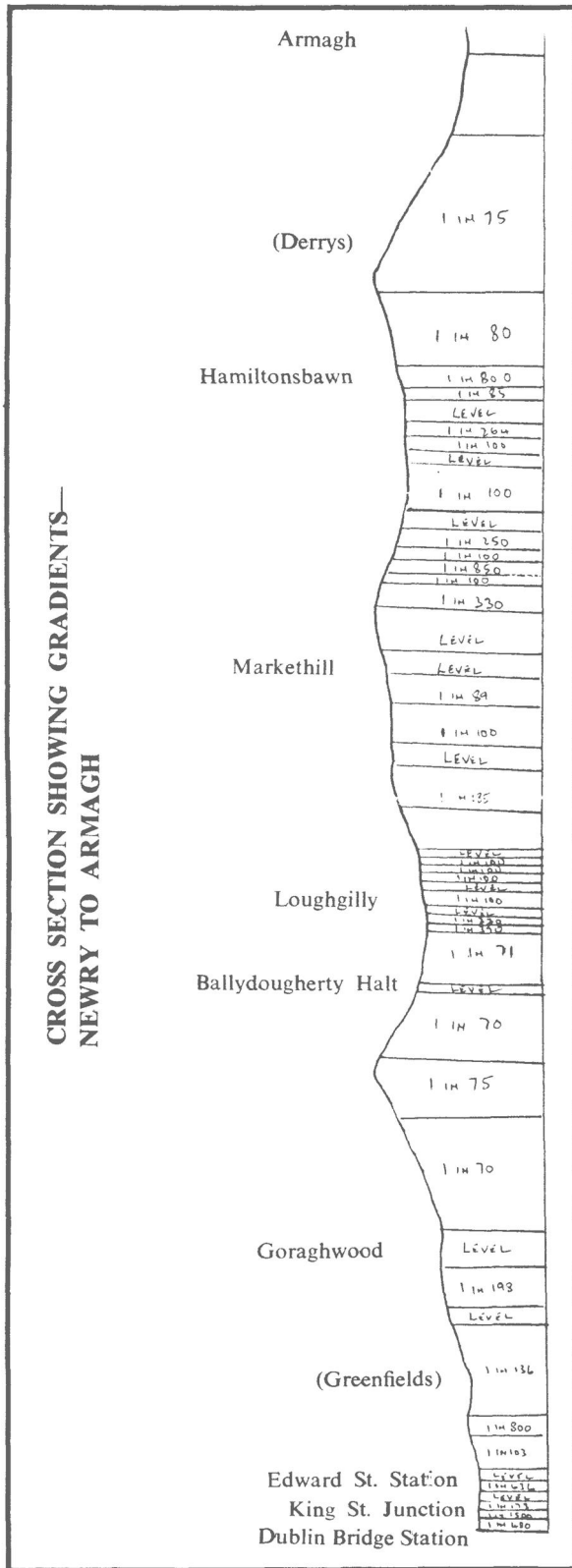
Armagh-Markethill section closed completely. Goods traffic continued on the Markethill to Goragwood section until 1957 and in 1965 the line closed completely.

- 1836 (a) Dublin-Drogheda Company Incorporated.
(b) Ulster Railway Company Incorporated.
(a) Empowered to construct a line between Dublin and Drogheda (32 mls.)
(b) Empowered to construct a line between Belfast and Armagh (36 mls.)
- 1839 Ulster Railway line reached Lisburn on 12th August
- 1841 Ulster Railway line reached Lurgan on 18th November
- 1842 Ulster Railway line reached Portadown on 12th September.
- 1845 Newry and Enniskillen Company Incorporated, and empowered to construct a line via Armagh and Clones to Enniskillen (72 mls.)
Dublin-Belfast Junction Railway Company incorporated and empowered to link (63 mls.)
- 1846 Work commenced in August on the 3½ ml. stretch from Newry to Goragwood.
Royal Commission laid down a universal gauge of 5 ft. 3 ins.



CHRONOLOGY

- 1825 Opening of the Stockton-Darlington line.
- 1826 A survey of Newry-Armagh line was carried out.
- 1828 A report by Wm. Edgeworth had been published with a map attached.
- 1831 Dublin and Kingstown Railway Co. Incorporated.
- 1834 The first line in Ireland was opened on December 17 between Dublin and Kingstown (a distance of 6 miles on the standard British gauge 4-8½")



- 1848 Ulster Railway line reached Armagh on March 1st.
- 1849 Dublin-Belfast Junction Railway line reached Dundalk on February 15th (no through traffic until opened on April 5th, 1855). Dundalk-Enniskillen line had reached Castleblayney. Newry, Warrenpoint Rostrevor line Warrenpoint on May 28th.
- 1850 Dublin-Belfast Junction Railway line reached Wellington Inn, 10½ miles from Dundalk outside Newry.
- 1852 Dublin-Belfast Junction Railway line from Portadown had reached Mullaghglass on January 6th. Final six miles involving construction of the Bessbrook viaduct completed and opened on June 10th.
- 1854 Newry to Goraghwood line opened on March 1st. Dundalk-Enniskillen line reached Ballybay.
- 1855 Dublin-Belfast Junction Railway line opened Newry Main Line Station.
- 1856 Extension of the line to the quayside in Newry to the Albert Basin.
- 1857 Town of Newry Connecting Railway incorporated. Abandonment of Newry-Enniskillen Plan and change of name to Newry-Armagh Railway Company.
- 1858 Dundalk-Enniskillen line had reached Clones. R.S. North appointed as contractor on extension line.
- 1859 Work on extension line suspended through lack of funds in September. Dundalk-Enniskillen line reached Enniskillen on February 2nd.
- 1861 Line in Newry ready — no B.O.T. approval pending agreement between two companies. Award of contract to complete extension to Watson and Overend Contractors.
- 1863 Ulster Rail Line reached Clones on March 2nd.
- 1864 Newry and Armagh line reached Armagh on August 25
- 1865 Agreement with Newry, Warrenpoint and Rostrevor Railway Company in May.
- 1866 Serious financial difficulties — receiver appointed in June.
- 1878 Unable to pay for locomotive it had ordered.

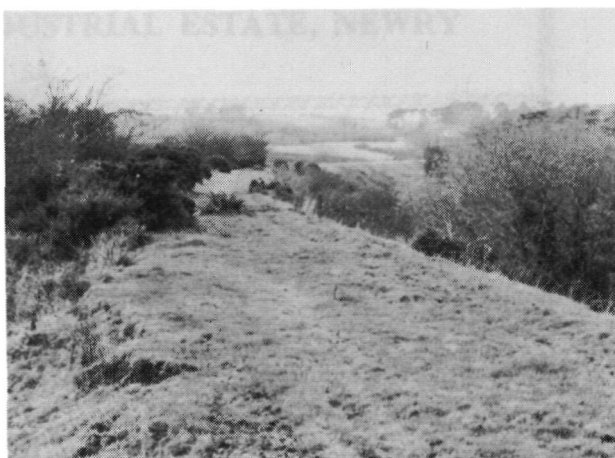
- 1879 Newry and Armagh absorbed into Great Northern Railway on September 13th.
- 1889 Rail disaster
- 1933 Passenger service ceased between Armagh and Goraghwood.
Armagh to Markethill closed completely.
- 1957 Goods traffic from Markethill to Goraghwood ceased.
- 1965 Goraghwood to Warrenpoint closed on January 14th.



Porter's house at Loughgilly



Entrance to Loughgilly Tunnel (exit is also visible)



Line approaching Markethill



Stationmaster's house at Loughgilly



Site of Markethill Station today



Postcard view
of Markethill Station



Armagh Station



Grand entrance to Armagh Station



Hamiltonsbawn



"The West Down Beagles" at Scarva 1934.



"Main Street, Markethill" c 1905