

SURVEY OF RAILWAYS IN COUNTIES LOUTH AND MONAGHAN

Summary

Fred Hamond

1. INTRODUCTION

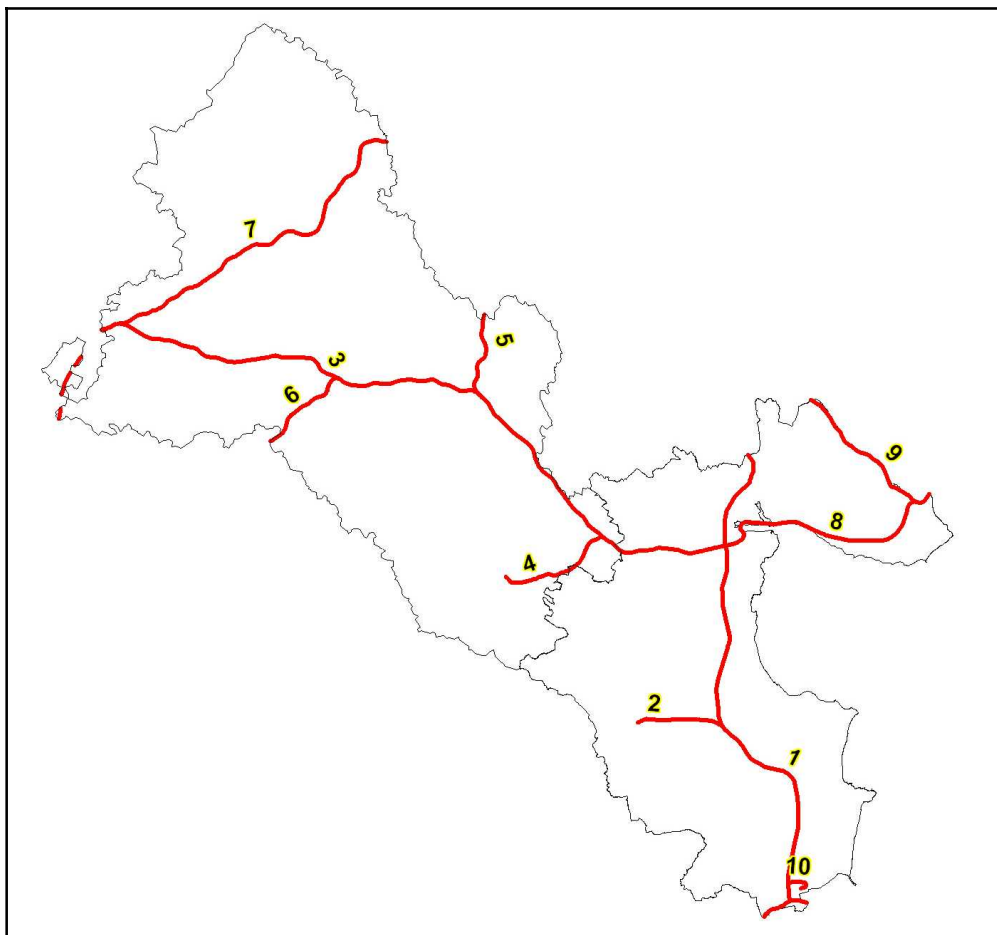
Project brief

The objective of this project was to identify all railways which were built or worked by the Great Northern Railway (Ireland) in counties Louth and Monaghan and to survey the features thereon, notably stations and bridges. Level crossings and other features were also to be noted as well as significant cuttings and embankments along the line. Sites of special industrial heritage significance were then to be highlighted for possible inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures.

Background to the GNR(I)

The Great Northern Railway (Ireland) was established on 1 April 1876 as the result of the merger of four railway companies: the Drogheda & Dundalk, Dublin & Belfast Junction, the Irish North Western (originally the Dundalk & Enniskillen), and Ulster Railway.

The survey area encompasses lines built by each of these companies before they merged, and also lines subsequently constructed by the GNR(I). Although the Dundalk-Greenore and Greenore-Newry lines were built by other companies, they, were eventually taken over and worked by the GNR(I) as well.



	Line	Opened	Builder
1	Dublin-Belfast	1849-50	Dublin & Belfast Junction Railway
2	Ardee Branch	1896	GNR(I)
3	Dundalk-Enniskillen	1849-58	Dundalk & Enniskillen Railway
4	Carrickmacross Branch	1886	GNR(I)
5	Armagh-Castleblaney	1910	GNR(I)
6	Cootehill Branch	1860	Dundalk & Enniskillen Railway
7	Portadown -Clones	1858-63	Ulster Railway
	Clone - Cavan	1862	Dundalk & Enniskillen Railway
8	Dundalk-Greenore	1873	Dundalk & Greenore Railway
9	Greenore-Newry	1876	Dundalk, Newry & Greenore Railway
10	Cement Factory Branch	1938	GNR(I)
11	Drogheda-Oldcastle	1850	Dublin & Drogheda Railway

Dates given for sections opened in counties Louth and Monaghan only

2. METHODOLOGY

Site identification

Sites were primarily identified using relevant OS six-inch and 25-inch map sheets. Various railway publications provided additional information, notably Stephen Johnson's *Atlas & Gazetteer of the Railways of Ireland* (1997) and Edward M Patterson's *The Great Northern Railway Ireland* (2003). Protected railway-related structures contained in the Louth and Monaghan county development plans were also noted.

The brief specified that only stations no longer in use were to be surveyed. Drogheda MacBride and Dundalk Clarke were therefore excluded. For each of the remaining stations, all buildings and structures were noted: station buildings (containing the ticket office, waiting rooms, toilets etc), station houses (containing the station masters' living quarters), platforms, footbridges, waiting sheds, toilets, goods sheds, weighbridges, livestock and goods beaches, engine and carriage sheds, signal boxes, water tanks, miscellaneous buildings, and entrances.

All overbridges (i.e. road-over-rail) and underbridges (rail-over-road and rail-over-river) were noted. The numerous culverts (generally under 2m span) carrying minor streams and drain under the base of embankments were excluded.

Only level crossings which were explicitly captioned as such on the OS 25-inch maps were included in the survey. Un-named level crossings were excluded, although some were noted in passing during fieldwork.

Various miscellaneous features were also noted: junctions, sidings, railway-related buildings and houses not within stations (e.g. level crossing keeper's houses). Because of their complexity and extend, only cursory surveys were made of the GNR(I) Works and adjacent township at Dundalk, and the railway village of Greenore.

Site numbering

In order to keep track of the various identified features, each line was given a 2-digit number (in no particular order), e.g. 07 is the Portadown-Cavan line. The sections of line between stations were then given a single-digit number, e.g. 072 is the section between Glaslough and Clones on the aforementioned line. The sites along each of

these sections were then given 2-digit number, generally starting with the station itself and continuing sequentially, e.g. 07201 is Glaslough station at the start of section 2 to Clones, 07203 is the third feature along etc. Where a site contained more than one building or structure, additional numbers were suffixed, e.g. 07201.1 is the station building at Glaslough, 07201.2 the platform etc.

Historical research

The historical background of the lines and their respective sites was based primarily on published information. This was researched and summarised by Charles Friel, one of Ireland's leading railway historians. Mr Friel also holds an extensive collection of photography showing the railways in their heyday, all of which he generously made available to the project. Along with the large-scale OS maps, these proved invaluable in interpreting the various components at each station and interpreting what now remains.



Smithborough Station, 1957
(courtesy Charles Friel)

Field survey

All buildings and structures were surveyed and evaluated according to National Inventory of Architectural Heritage standards and criteria. Architectural Research & Recording were responsible for recording most of the stations, whilst Fred Hamond focused on the line features (mainly bridges and level crossings). Charles Friel also assisted in the preliminary survey of the stations.

For the buildings, the following attributes were noted: size, plan form, roof, walls, openings, interiors (where accessible), and setting.

The following attributes were recorded for bridge components (ie abutments, arches, spandrels, parapets, and wing walls): materials, embellishment, alterations and additions, span (between abutments), abutment depth and/or parapet separations.

Most, but not all identified level crossings were surveyed (85% in fact). Where surviving, the number and type of gate and gatepost was noted, along any makers' names, and signs (e.g. trespassers prosecuted).

Finally, substantial stretches of cutting and embankment were also noted and marked up on 25-inch maps. Other line features such as telegraph poles were also noted where observed during the course of fieldwork.

All surviving remains were photographed, film and digital images being taken (c.800 in all). During processing, the negatives were scanned to a digital format. Each image was numbered by its site and sequentially suffixed (e.g. 07201_01, 07201_02 etc).

3. RESULTS

In all, 226km (141 miles) of track were identified, 27 stations, 600 other types of site and c.840 separate site components.

	Line	Length (km)	Stations	Other sites	Total
1	Dublin-Belfast	46	4	0	4
2	Ardee Branch	8	2	25	27
3	Dundalk-Enniskillen	67	8	206	214
4	Carrickmacross Branch	11	2	39	41
5	Armagh-Castleblaney	8	1	17	18
6	Cootehill Branch	9	1	43	44
7	Portadown-Cavan	37	3	119	122
8	Dundalk-Greenore	20	4	62	66
9	Greenore-Newry	15	2	73	75
10	Cement Factory Branch	2	0	5	5
11	Drogheda-Oldcastle	3	0	11	11
	Total	226	27	600	627

Line lengths given for sections within counties Louth and Monaghan only.

Level crossings accounted for almost 40% of the total number of components, and bridges a further 35%. Each of the remaining types of component generally accounted for less than 5% of the total.

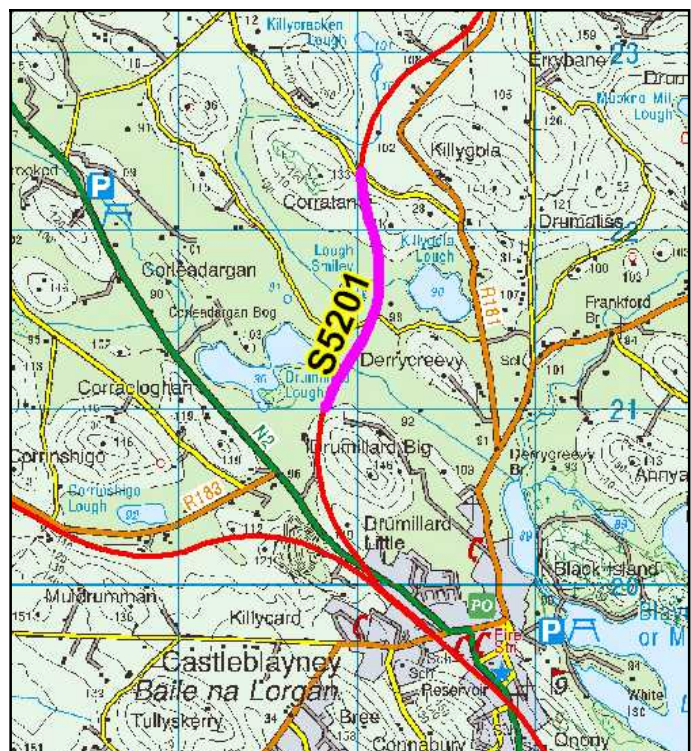
For ease of data recovery and analysis, all the data collected in the field were inputted into an *Access* and *MapInfo* databases.

4. LINE DESCRIPTIONS

For each line, the following analysis is presented: historical background to formation of that particular railway line, its construction, operation and closure.

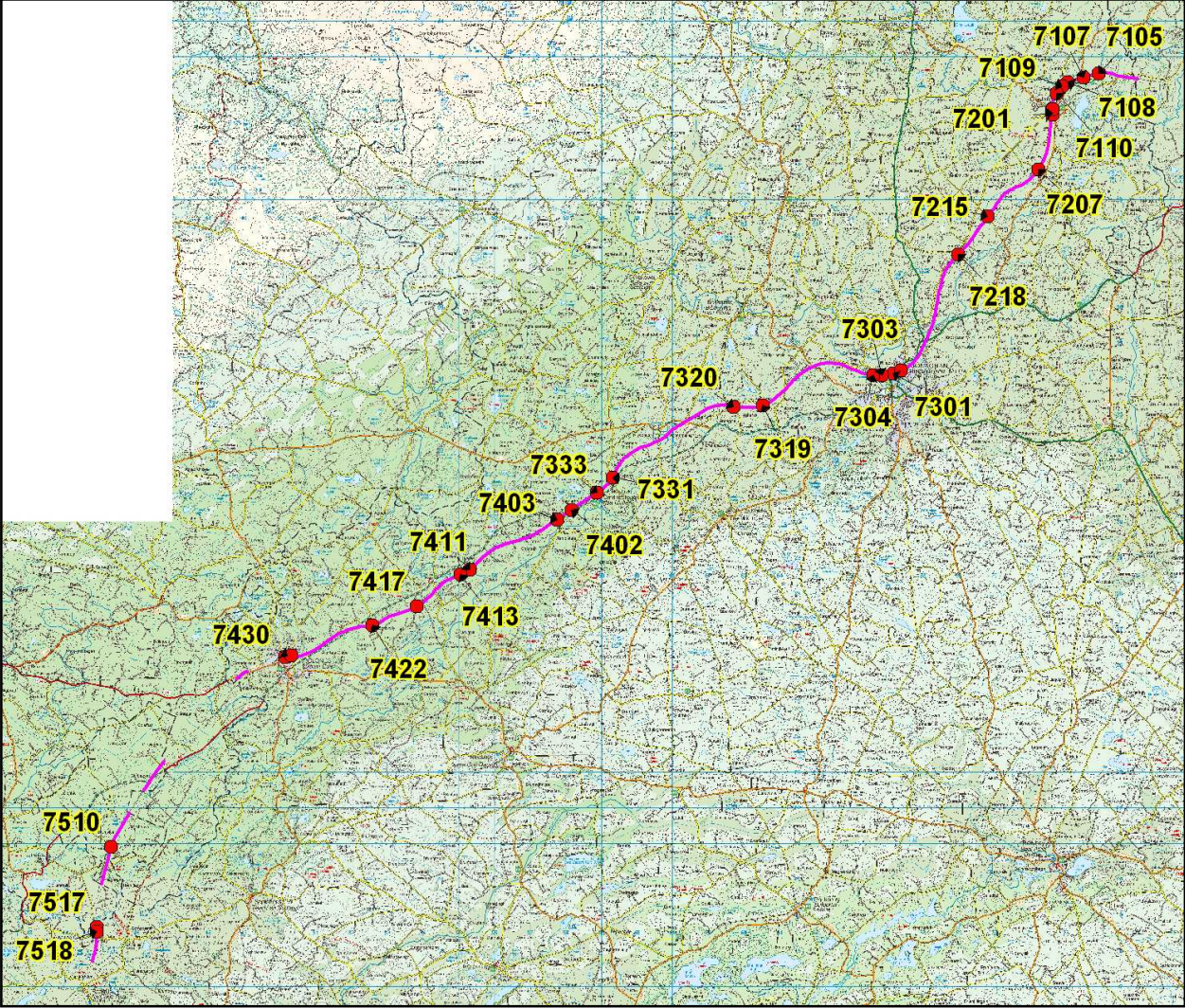
This is followed by a general description of the line. Cuttings and embankments of special note are highlighted. These merit consideration for inclusion in the Record of Monuments and Places.

Example of significant stretch of line identified on Armagh-Castleblaney line.



The various features along each line are then reviewed: stations, bridges, level crossings/ houses and miscellaneous features. Patterns of construction etc are noted.

Finally, sites of special industrial heritage significance are highlighted for possible inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures. At the moment only 14 sites are included in the Louth and Monaghan RPSs. As a result of this survey, a further 66 sites were identified as containing features of regional significance which potentially merit inclusion as well.



Sites of industrial heritage significance on the Portadown-Cavan line.