Músaem Chontae Mhuineacháin
Monaghan County Museum

MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM | PRESENT

MONAGHAN AND THE GNR(I) GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAYS

MAGIC MILES IN MONAGHAN

MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM – EXHIBITION JULY 2008

Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin
Monaghan County Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Museum would like thank the following people and organisations for their invaluable help in putting together this exhibition.

Monaghan County Council
Shirley Clerkin, Heritage Officer
Fermanagh County Museum
Louth County Museum
Louth Archive Service
Selwyn, Nigel, Gordon Johnston
(Headhunters Museum, Enniskillen)
Armagh County Museum
The Northern Ireland Regional
Curators Group (NIRCG) for use of
research from their exhibition 'All
Change – The Social Impact of the
Railways'

Des Fitzgerald
George Drum
Charles Friel
Pat Brady
Paddy McGeogh
Danny Aughey
Martin McKenna folder loan
Paddy Martin
Donal McEnroe
Stephen Boyd
Bobby Morton
Carmel Rudden
Jim McAvinchey
Joe McKenna, Nelius Flynn
Padraig Horgan PH7 Design
Dessie Gamble
Gene (Gerard) O'Rourke

Magic Miles
in Monaghan
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY (I)

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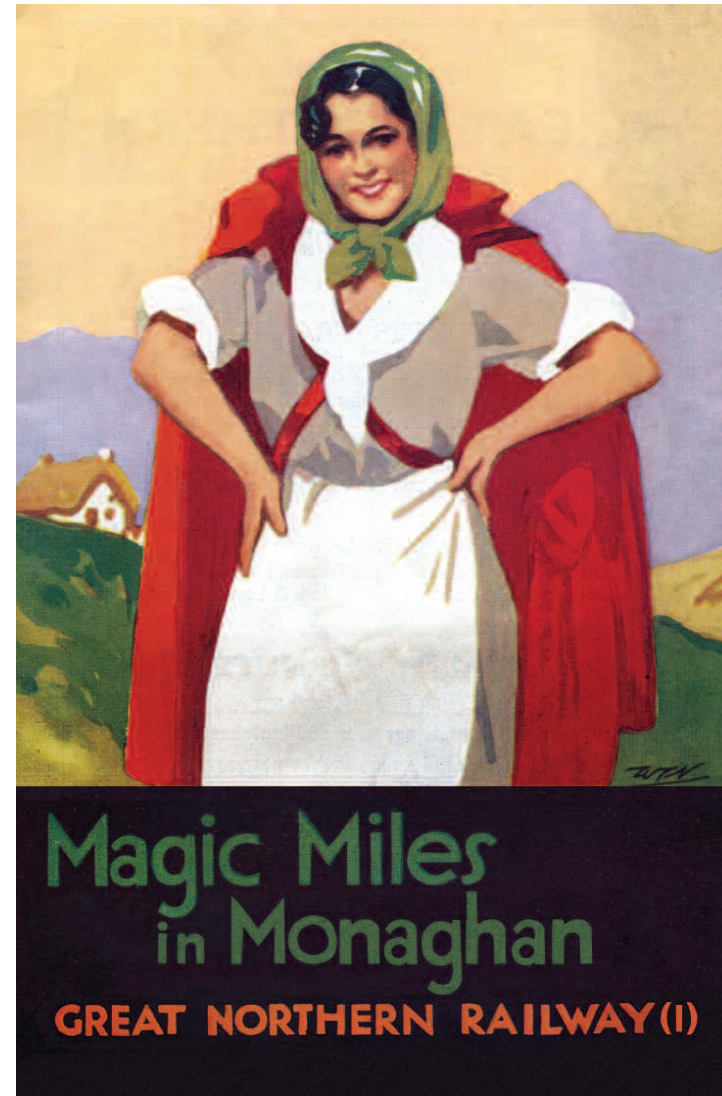
EARLY BEGINNINGS

Railways made it possible, for the first time to move large quantities of goods and people at speed over long distances. Fuelled by a mania similar to the internet revolution, railways began to spring up all over the country. The first railway in Ireland was the Dublin to Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) Railway and it was on this line at about 9am on Wednesday the 17th of December 1834 that the locomotive 'Hibernia' became the first passenger train in Ireland. Within a year it had transported over 1 million people, the railways were in business.

DID YOU KNOW?

With the coming of railways came the coming of time. Before this local time could be different in separate areas of Ireland. Trains ran to strict timetables and it became necessary for "time" to be standardised countrywise between Ireland and Britain. People used to set their clocks by the trains.

GNR(I) FAST FACTS

- THE GNR HAD 562 MILES OF TRACK AND WAS SECOND ONLY TO THE GREAT SOUTHERN AND WESTERN RAILWAY IN LENGTH.
- EARLY LOCOMOTIVES WERE IN VARIOUS SHADES OF GREEN.
- IN 1912-14 THEY WERE CHANGED TO BLACK.
- IN 1935 THE FAMOUS SKY BLUE BEGAN TO APPEAR.

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RAILWAY STAMP
G.N.R. (I.)

1/-

P 95798

No. of Packages

Weight

CARRICKMACROSS BOUND TRAIN AT ESSEXFORD - 1957

CLONES 1957 - A WORKER WEDGES HIS SHUNTING POLE UNDER THE DOOR OF A CATTLE CAR AND GETS A FREE RIDE. THIS DANGEROUS PRACTICE WAS FORBIDDEN BY THE GNR(I).

THE FIRST TRAINS IN MONAGHAN

The first railway to service parts of County Monaghan was the Dundalk & Enniskillen (D&E) Railway. The first section of the D&E from Dundalk to Castleblayney was opened in 1849, reaching Clones in 1858. The second line to service parts of Monaghan was the Ulster Railway, which started in Belfast and was eventually extended to Monaghan Town in 1858 and then on to Clones via Smithboro in 1863.

Following various company amalgamations and Acts of Parliament the Great Northern Railway of Ireland GNR(I) was founded in 1876. When the company was founded most of their rail network was already in place and they only opened a small number of lines and these were mostly branches off existing routes.

DID YOU KNOW?
In the late 1850's it cost £13,000 per mile to lay a track. This cost rose to £19,000 per mile in Monaghan due to all the embanking necessary in the Drumlin (hilly) terrain.

GNR(I) FAST FACTS

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GNR(I) IN THE 1920S WAS FANE VERNON WHO RESIDED AT ERNE HILL BELTURBET (NOW BELTURBET GOLF CLUB).
HIS WIFE USED TO TOUR THE TOWN OF BELTURBET DAILY IN A CARRIAGE PULLED BY FOUR BLACK DONKEYS.

LOCO NO 49, NEWBLISS 1951

BALLYBAY RAILWAY STATION - MID 1930'S

TRAIN PULLS INTO CLONES - MID 1950'S

WORKERS AT MONAGHAN STATION - 1954

MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM
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MAGIC MILES IN MONAGHAN

05

CLONES EAST SIGNAL HOUSE, c 1910.

THE BUNDORAN EXPRESS, CLONES 1950

TRAIN BOUND FOR DUNDALK AT BALLYBAY - 1956

NO 201 AT MONAGHAN ROAD STATION - 1957

WORKERS AT CLONES STATION - MID 1930's
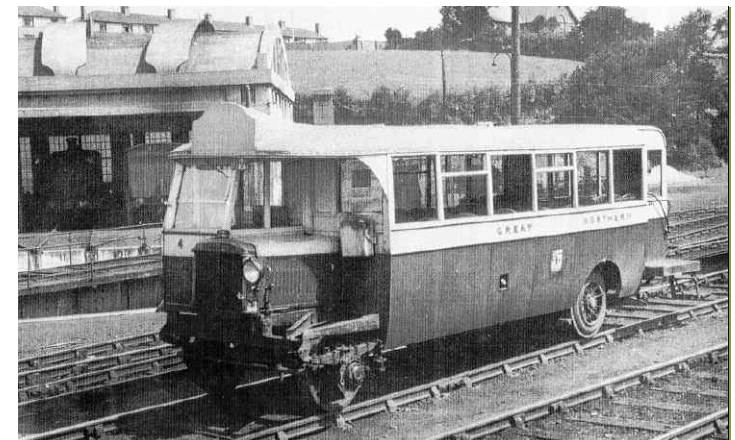
GOODS TRAIN PULLING CATTLE CARS, CLONES 1954

ONE OF THE LAST TRAINS AT CLONES - LATE 1950'S

POST OFFICE WORKER, ANDY BELMORE COLLECTING
THE MAIL FROM THE TRAIN. MONAGHAN c.1925

BUNDORAN EXPRESS, CLONES 1950

RAILBUS AT CLONES - C. 1950'S

ON THE TURNTABLE AT CLONES, C.1950

SOME OF THE LAST PASSENGERS AT CLONES, LATE 1950'S

GNR(I) FAST FACTS

- CREWE JUNCTION IS A FAMOUS JUNCTION IN ENGLAND AND CLONES WAS REGARDED AS THE "CREWE" JUNCTION OF THE GNR(I).
- CLONES HAD 4 BRANCH LINES.
- CLONES OPERATED AS A JUNCTION FROM 1858 TO 1957.
- THE LINE FROM CLONES TO CAVAN CROSSED THE BORDER IN 6 PLACES

GLASLOUGH STATION - 1945

LADY LESLIE'S COACH OUTSIDE GLASLOUGH STATION, c.1940

HORSE TRAM AT FINTONA

NEW HORIZONS

Before the coming of the railways, many people in Monaghan and indeed in counties all over the country would have grown up, worked, married, raised families and died within a 20 miles radius of their home. The railway completely changed this way of living. It gave people the opportunity to leave their local area and move about much more freely. It changed their perceptions and knowledge of the world. Journeys which had taken days could now be completed in hours; travel for leisure became commonplace and a greater variety of goods became available. News could now travel much faster and as a result Dublin based newspapers became national newspapers. The local railway station was a gateway to a wider world, it was the scene of many hellos and poignant goodbyes as it made it much easier for Ireland to export its most valuable product, its people.

DID YOU KNOW?
The idea of 3rd class seats was not popular among the upper classes as they feared it would lead to the lower classes spreading out around the country and causing unrest!

MAIL BY RAIL

The spread of railways and the reliability of their timetables made it possible for the first time to dispatch goods for next day delivery throughout Ireland. One of the main services to benefit from this was the post. This became a huge source of revenue for the GNR(I), so much so that railway timetables would be put together to suit the needs of the Post Office. In 1869 a special coach, known as a Traveling Post Office (TPO), was added to the trains carrying the mail, thus enabling the mail to be sorted en route. By the mid-1860s a TPO had been added to the Night Mail from Clones to Derry.

In a country of high emigration, efficient mail services were crucially important in maintaining contact between the emigrant and home. Without the railways it would have taken much longer to receive the 'letter home from America.

DID YOU KNOW?
Recognisable boundaries were along each side of the railway. The primary reason for this being that landowners didn't want railway builders, 'navies' trespassing on their lands; possibly stealing crops and meeting the maids!

THE DAY TRIP

Idle machines don't make money, so the railways ran excursions to sporting events such as the All Ireland Final at Croke Park, the Ulster final in Clones and mystery tours to make the best use of their trains during the off peak times. Before this it was only the very wealthy who could afford to go off on holiday. The railways introduced the masses to seaside holidays and day trips. Trips to Bundoran aboard the Bundoran Express (which ran through Clones from Dublin to Bundoran) were particularly popular with day trippers from Monaghan.

Many Irish Railway companies, including the GNR(I) promoted tourism and developed existing beauty spots by building their own hotels, such as the Great Northern Hotel in Bundoran. Thanks to the railways, the work outing became an annual event and the honeymoon became part of the wedding celebration.

DID YOU KNOW?
Early trains had no on board refreshments or toilet facilities for passengers, so trains had to make lengthy stops at stations to allow weary passengers to use the facilities!

The Leslie family had their own waiting room at Glaslough station.

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UNLOADING FISH, BALLYBAY 1958

HORSE DRAWN GNR(I) CARRIAGE AFTER WINNING FIRST PRIZE AT THE DUNDALK SHOW 18TH SEPTEMBER 1947

DRIVER: J MC KEOWN, CLONES 1935

SIGNALMEN & STATIONMASTER AT GLASLOUGH C.1950's

FREIGHT WAGONS AT GLASLOUGH WITH MAIZE FOR WALLACES MILL, c.1930's.

RAILWAY WORKERS ON A BREAK IN CLONES - MID 1930's

GROUP OF WORKERS AT GLASLOUGH STATION - 1925

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MR STANLEY (SIGNAL MAN)
GLASLOUGH c.1950's

GNR(I) FAST FACTS

- THERE WERE THREE CLASSES OF CARRIAGE ACCOMMODATION- 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD. THIRD CLASS ACCOMMODATION WAS LITTLE BETTER THAN A CATTLE WAGON AND IF IT HAD SEATING IN THE EARLY DAYS OF TRAINS IT WOULD BE WOODEN BENCHES.

YOUNG LADIES ON THE TURNTABLE
AT CLONES, C.1950's

RAILWAY NAVVIES, 1910

WORKING ON THE RAILWAY

For many of the workers in Monaghan the railway was a way of life, something their fathers and brothers had worked on before them. The earliest workers who built the railway were known as 'navvies' who took their name from the navigators who had previously built the canals. During the 19th century, building railways as a 'navvy' was ranked as one of the most dangerous occupations, exceeded only by mining and seafaring.

In addition to bringing employment in the construction of tracks and buildings, people were needed to man the trains and run the stations. Stationmaster, Engine Driver, Fireman, Guard, Clerk, and Signalman were some of the many positions available. The railways allowed many people with little formal education to become highly skilled members of staff. For those lucky enough to secure a position on the railway, assuming good behaviour and obedience to company rules, it was a job for life.

DID YOU KNOW?
The highest point on the entire GNR(I) line was between Armagh and Keady.

At their peak, Irish Railways employed over 30,000 staff.

POLITICAL STRIFE

The political upheaval from the War of Independence and the resulting Civil War witnessed numerous attacks on the railways in the early 1920s. An ambush by the IRA on 11th February 1922 at Clones station witnessed the deaths of Matt Fitzpatrick, the local IRA commandant and four uniformed A Specials. The IRA was also involved in a number of hold-ups and bomb attacks on lines and bridges. An unsuccessful attempt was made to derail the 5.50 pm Dublin – Belfast train near Adavoyle on 19th August 1922.

Services were also disrupted when signal boxes were burned and rolling stock maliciously derailed. GNR(I) lines now crossed an international border in 17 places. This caused great disruption in the trading patterns which had led to the construction of these lines in the first place. Two sets of Customs officials at designated border crossings examining both goods and passenger trains led to an increase in journey time. One early casualty of the new political geography was the last part of the GNR(I) system to be constructed - the line from Castleblayney to Keady and Armagh, which was closed in 1923.

CROWD OF FRUSTRATED SHOPPERS BEING DETAINED BEHIND A CUSTOMS BARRIER AFTER A SHOPPING TRIP TO BELFAST. MONAGHAN STATION, EARLY 1940's.

DERAILMENT AT NEWBLISS c.1955

DOWNING TOOLS

That is not to say that the relationship between the GNR(I) and its employees was always a harmonious one as there were several disagreements relating to unions, working hours and pay. Following the announcement that station masters and clerical staff wages were to be cut by almost 16 per cent, a strike commenced on 31 January 1933. The GNR(I) network came to a standstill in the northern half of the country as signal men, porters, drivers and firemen all downed tools. Negotiations eventually settled the strike and workers returned to to their stations on 10 April.

DID YOU KNOW?
**The transport of livestock made up a substantial part of the goods traffic on Irish railways. In fact in the 1860s over 34,000 cattle were transported by rail each year. That had dropped to approx. 6,000 in 1926 and by the early 1950s the movement of any livestock on the GNR(I) had all but stopped.
Two thirds of all railway profits were made from shipping freight around the country.**

TRADE ON THE TRAINS

The GNR(I) formed a vital part of Ireland's industrial infrastructure. Its rail network serviced the important east coast seaports and this was key to its success in moving goods, livestock and mail for import and export. Speed of delivery expanded markets and brought goods from afar right to the local shops. Sales reps became commercial travellers jumping at the opportunity to sell their wares all over the countryside.

The railways even changed our diet, bread baked in Belfast could be on sale in Clones the same day. Fish caught in Killybegs could be on a plate in Carrickmacross that evening.

By the time of the First Word War (1914-1918), the GNR(I) was exporting livestock, eggs, butter and other agricultural products and importing bread and general merchandise from England.

These goods were loaded onto waiting wagons and vans which were then pulled to provincial towns and halts all around the GNR(I) network.

BEEF BEING LOADED AT MONAGHAN STATION c.1949

PADDY O'ROURKE AT O'ROURKES MILL INNISKEEN, LATE 1960's. THE TRAIN WOULD STOP AT THE MILL TO DROP OFF RAW MATERIALS AND TO TRANSPORT SACKS OF OATMEAL, WHEATEN MEAL AND ANIMAL FEED FOR SALE AROUND THE COUNTRY.

OFFLOADING GOODS AT MONAGHAN RAILWAY STATION 1949

ENGINEERS TROLLEY AT GLASLOUGH - 1944
STATION MASTER, TOPLEY,
BAG PORTER, WILLIAM JACKSON
AND GANGER JOE REILLY

GNR(I) FAST FACTS

- THE LINE FROM DUNDALK TO CASTLEBLAYNEY OPENED IN 1849. BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULT TERRAIN THIS LINE DID NOT REACH NEWBLISS UNTIL 1855.

GNR(I) TALL TALES

Monaghan town was a major customs post. When a train was stopped for inspection it was found to have a lion on board. Hearing of this the fireman went to have al look and somehow managed to open the cage door, permitting Leo the lion to escape. There was utter chaos. The postman hid behind the mail in the van, one of the clerks headed for the agent's office only to have it slammed in his face by the agent who was only thinking of saving himself. The shunter, Chapman was shouting from the cabin not to let the lion down Glaslough Street (where his wife lived). Then the lion was cornered and its owner surprisingly seemed to want it shot. Possibly it was not so fierce after all as when it was caught a porter had it by the tail.

DID YOU KNOW?
During the First World War a railway man at Clones had a farm at Aughalurcher on the line between Lisnaskea and Clones. Food being scarce it was a regular thing for the train to stop and for passengers to purchase eggs, fruit and vegetables. When Mr Glover the Manager in Dundalk got to hear about this practice he brought it to a quick end.

THE END OF THE LINE

The partition of Ireland in 1921, along with the greater use of road transport and the introduction of air services between Dublin and Belfast in 1947, led to a downturn in rail traffic and rail profitability throughout Ireland. The GNR(I) responded by introducing Ireland's first regular non-stop rail service between Dublin and Belfast. The first 'Enterprise' express service left Belfast in August 1947, hauled by Class V locomotive No. 83 'Eagle'.

The new express service was not profitable and in January 1951, the GNR(I) announced its intention to discontinue all services in Northern Ireland within five weeks. Two days later, around 1,200 employees were given one week's notice. In an attempt to preserve the company, both governments offered to cover its

deficit, agreeing to finance the operating losses and fund the purchase of materials and equipment.

It was to no avail. By the end of 1952 the deficit had reached an alarming £1,900,000. The following year, the two governments passed legislation to jointly nationalise the company, ending the 78-year existence of the GNR(I) as a private concern and establishing the Great Northern Railway Board (GNRB).

In 1958 the GNRB was dissolved and its assets were divided between the Ulster Transport Authority and Córas Iompar Éireann. Both of these authorities closed the bulk of the GNR(I) railway network, so that only the Dublin to Belfast line is still in use.

DID YOU KNOW?
Monaghan Railway Station was originally built in Coolshannagh, across the road from Coolshannagh Cemetery. It stood there from 1858 to 1863.

THE LAST TRAIN THROUGH SMITHBORO (1956) BY TERENCE MCPHILIPS

About a mile from where I lay
I could see her coming last
And hear her cry with a sad sad sigh
This journey is my last
No more I'll sail this iron rail
Nor the traveller homeward bear
I am sad tonight though my eyes are bright
They hide my great despair

Then she past me flew, the whistle blew
And the steam up high did soar
To the heavens high in a space to die
Alone for evermore
A mellow glow the moon did throw
As if to say farewell
The night it sighed. The wild birds cried
And the leaves in sorrow fell

Once more the silence of the night
Returns to never go
Once more a train, this time the last
Has passed through Smithboro
As I walk away from where I lay
The night it seems to bare
As the mighty roar of trains no more
Shall with their music fill the air

THE LAST TRAINS IN MONAGHAN

In 1956 the Northern Ireland Ministry of Commerce issued proposals to close all the sections of the GNR(I) up to the border with the exception of the Belfast to Dublin main line. This truncation made the remaining sections of these lines in the Republic useless. The Republic opposed the closures but the Northern Ireland government would not back down and the closures were confirmed for the end of September 1957.

The last passenger trains to operate were the Clones to Enniskillen route on the 30th September 1957 and the Clones to Dundalk route on the 10th October 1957.

After its closure, the track was lifted and many surrounding landowners purchased sections of the railway from CIE by private agreement. Some of the land still remains in the ownership of Iarnrod Eireann.

DISMANTLING A RAILWAY BRIDGE MID 1960's

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MONAGHAN STATION TODAY

CLONES ENGINE SHED TODAY

INNISKEEN STATION TODAY

CASTLEBLAYNEY STATION HOUSE TODAY

NEWBLISS STATION TODAY

CREAGHANROE STATION TODAY

MAGIC MILES IN MONAGHAN

to belfast

BELFAST TO CAVAN LINE

DUNDALK TO ENNISKILLEN LINE

GLASLOUGH

MONAGHAN

SMITHBORO

to ARMAGH

to ENNISKILLEN

CLONES

NEWBLISS

monaghan road

creaghanroe

doohamlet siding

shantonagh junction

CASTLEBLAYNEY

BALLYBAY

ROCKCORRY

culloville

to CAVAN

blackstaff

to COOTEHILL

INNISKEEN

to DUNDALK

CARRICKMACROSS

essexford

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY · IRELAND

M O N A G H A N   R A I L   N E T W O R K

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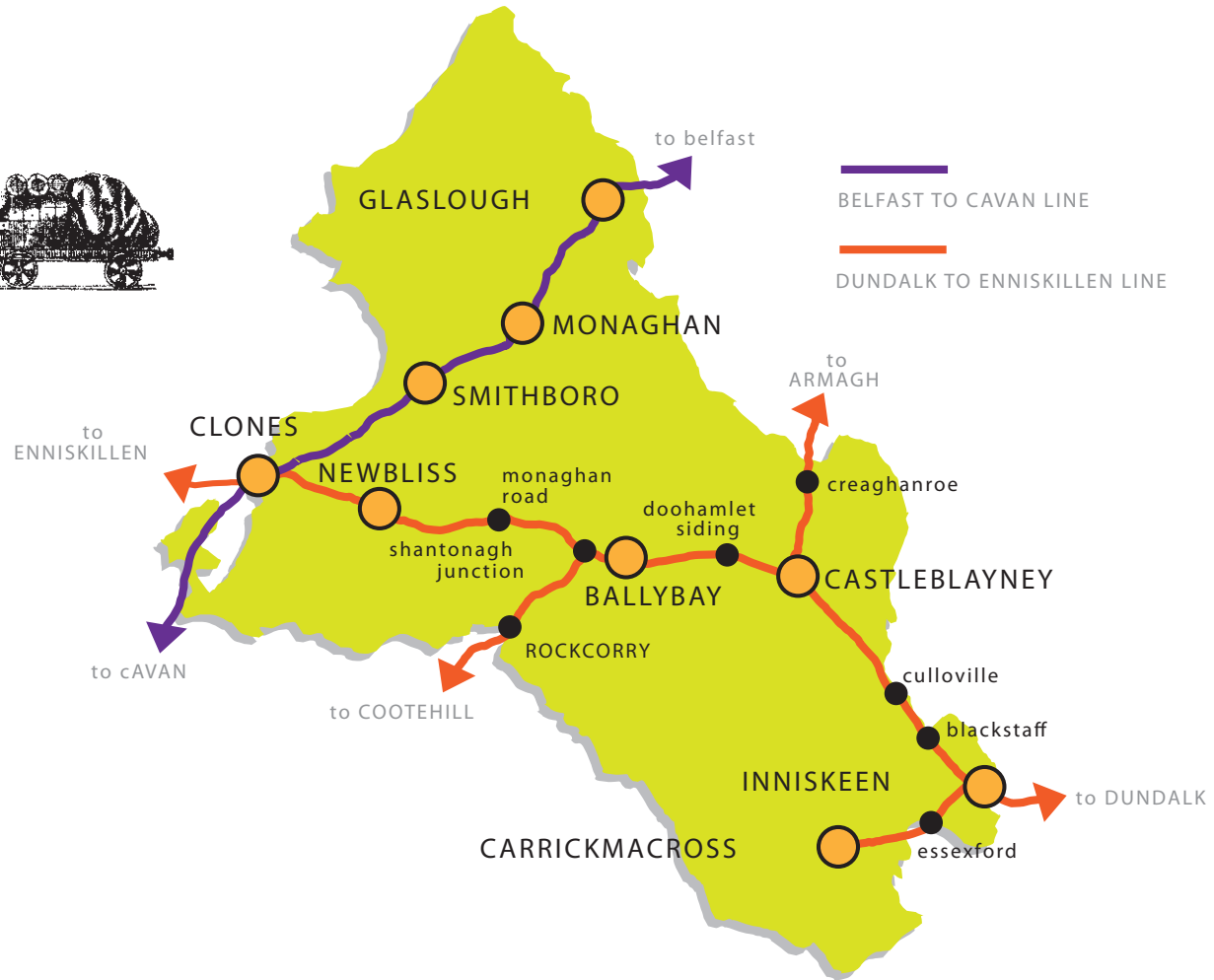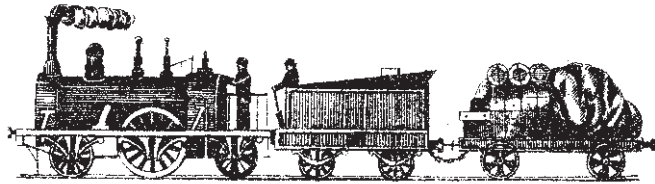
REMAINS OF BALLYNURE VIADUCT

ARCH BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER FINN

BUILT HERITAGE OF THE GNR(I)

The infrastructure of the railways was built to the highest standards, incorporating fine architecture and using good quality materials. A railway legacy of built heritage is dotted throughout County Monaghan, contributing to the character of our landscape and townscapes.

There were 17 stops and 15 railway stations (10 of which are still standing) in County Monaghan. Structures including railway bridges (cut stone, brick, concrete, iron, access bridges), viaducts, signal boxes, goods-sheds, stations, stationmasters' houses, workers' cottages, platforms still stand marking the route of the railway, in addition to some original furniture such as lamps and gates.

The architectural style of the stations varies widely. There are two storey and single storey stations. Some were built using stone; others use brick while other stations used a combination of both. Monaghan Railway Station is a red and yellow brick single storied building, with five larger central bays flanked by nine bays on either side. Monaghan Road Station is a cut stone building which was often used by the Dawson family of the Dartry Estate. Some of the stations were plastered. Creaghanroe Station, the last to be built was built almost entirely using timber and actually resembles a railway carriage.

Clones Railway Station was demolished some years ago, but still has a very unusual and fine engine shed. Legend has it that during a visit to Milan, a member of the local Madden family, major shareholders in the Great Northern Railway (Ireland) visited a new railway engine shed constructed alongside a turntable. Impressed by this station, he had the plans copied and a replica built in Clones. It was built in 1926 of precast concrete.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sam's Bridge in Monaghan Town is named after a man who would hide himself among the goods cars when the train left Glaslough for Monaghan and just before the train neared the town would throw out some of the goods and then jump off himself and go back to collect them. His ploy was discovered when one night after throwing off his loot he misjudged his jump and leaped clear over the bridge, landing head first on the road below, killing himself instantly. The bridge has been known as Sam's Bridge ever since and is still in existence today.
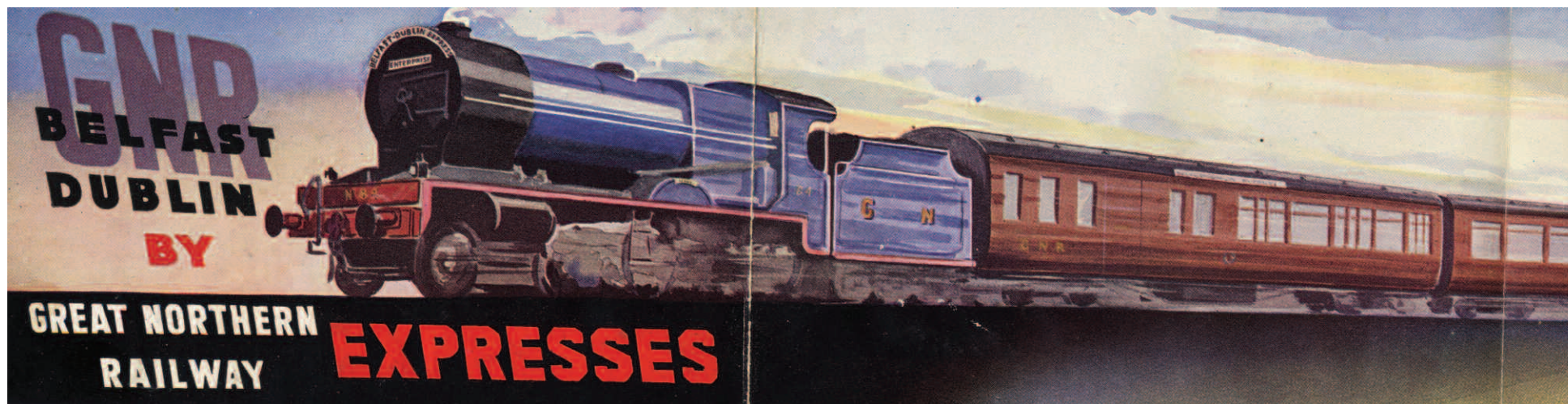
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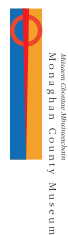
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MAGIC MILES IN MONAGHAN

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