



Irish Railway Factsheet: Londonderry & Lough Swilly Railway



L&LSR emblem (1953)

The **Londonderry & Lough Swilly Railway (L&LSR)** lines from Buncrana to Carndonagh and from Gweedore to Burtonport had been abandoned in 1935 and 1940 respectively. The closure of the remainder of the system was planned but had to be deferred due to shortages of petrol and oil for replacement road services. By the end of the war years the company was carrying nearly 500,000 passengers per annum on its rail services from Derry to Buncrana and Gweedore.

With the ending of hostilities and the restoration of petrol and oil supplies, the company re-embarked on its policy of replacing rail services by road transport as vehicles became available. The line from Letterkenny to Gweedore was in a dangerous state of disrepair at the war's end. While the daily goods service between Letterkenny and Gweedore was withdrawn in January 1947, a few special trains operated until June of that year when the line finally closed. Lifting of the line took place in 1949. Regular passenger services ceased on the Derry to Buncrana and Tooban Junction to Letterkenny sections in September 1948, but freight workings and occasional passenger specials continued on these lines until 8th August 1953 when the remaining rail services were withdrawn.

Lifting of the lines commenced almost immediately and was completed in early 1954, except for those in the yard at Derry. The L&LSR continued to operate road services until 1981, when the company was sold to local business interests. By this time, the L&LSR had become the longest-lived railway company in either Ireland or Britain, having outlasted all its rivals by many years.

Additional Sources:

Flanders S, 1997, "Londonderry & Lough Swilly Railway - An Irish Railway pictorial", Midland Publishing Ltd, Leicster, Great Britain (ISBN 1 87580 0745)

Patterson, E M, Begley, J & Flanders, S, 2018, "The Lough Swilly Railway", Colourpoint Books, Newtownards, Northern Ireland; Revised edition (ISBN 1780731477)



L&LSR tender locomotive No. 12 outside the depot at Pennyburn, Derry, circa 1940. (Photo © George R Mahon - IRRS Archive)



The L&LSR's locomotive depot at Pennyburn, Derry, circa 1938. (Photo © Robin N Clements - IRRS Archive)



L&LSR 'Royal Tiger' single-deck bus operating in Derry City, 16 March 1953. (Photo © Leslie Hyland - IRRS Archive)