



Irish Railway Factsheet: County Donegal Railway Joint Committee



CDRJC Crest, 17 August 1959

With the ending of World War II and the lifting of petrol and oil rationing for road vehicles, it was not long before the **County Donegal Railways Joint Committee (CDRJC)** was in financial trouble. The Stranorlar to Glenties branch was closed to passenger traffic on 13th December, 1947, while special goods trains continued to operate over the section until September 1949. The line finally closed on 10th March, 1952 and lifting began the following year, being completed in 1955.

Runaways and derailments were not unknown on the CDRJC in those post-war years, generally without too serious consequences. However, a serious accident occurred on 29th August, 1949 which resulted in the death of three persons. Railcar 17 had left Donegal bound for Ballyshannon, without the driver being in possession of the staff for the section. About half a mile from the town, in a leafy cutting, the railcar rammed steam locomotive 10 which was hauling a special goods train in the opposite direction. The driver of the railcar was killed instantly and two passengers died soon afterwards.

Despite the introduction of two additional railcars in 1950/51 (numbers 19 and 20) and the arrival of three coaches from the closed Ballycastle branch of the UTA, traffic, except for excursion trains which remained well used, continued to decline unabated. On the freight side, container services were introduced in 1955. These carried CIÉ containers routed between Dublin and Letterkenny and their use reduced the time taken between the two places by up to 24 hours. Losses mounted steadily, making further closures inevitable. The Derry - Strabane section of line, which was owned by the UTA but operated by the CDRJC, closed to all traffic on 31st December 1954, although it was used on 30th June, 1955 for a Sunday School special, before being formally abandoned in September of that year and lifted soon afterwards.

By now it was clear that the end was in sight for the CDRJC's railway operations. In May 1959 the company applied to the Transport Tribunal for permission to close its remaining lines and this was granted. The last scheduled services ran on 31st December, 1959. However, a goods service operated three times daily on the Finn Valley section until 6th February, 1960 and occasionally after that. The task of lifting the system began on New Year's Day 1960 on the Foyle bridge between Strabane and Lifford and was completed within the year, the Finn Valley section being the last to go. The CDRJC operated replacement road services until 1966 at which time these were taken over by CIÉ.



CDRJC railcar 18 at Donegal Town station, 26 August 1959. (Photo © Tom Davitt - IRRS Archive)



CDRJC steam locomotive 'Drumboe' at Strabane, 15 May 1959. (Photo © Chris Gammell - IRRS Archive)



CDRJC railcars 19+20 on the Isle of Man Railway, circa 1975. (Photo © Paddy O'Brien - IRRS Archive)

Additional Sources:

County Donegal Railway Heritage Centre
www.donegalrailway.com

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