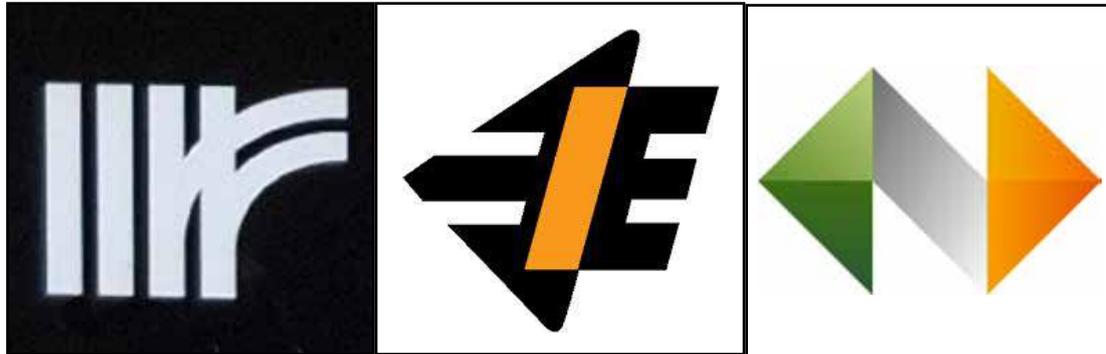




Irish Railway Factsheet: Iarnród Éireann



IÉ logos (1987 / 1994 / 2013)

Iarnród Éireann (IÉ) commenced trading on 2nd February, 1987. The company was responsible not only for the provision of all national and suburban rail services, but also for road freight operations, catering services and the management of Rosslare Harbour. Reporting to the Managing Director were seven senior managers responsible for: Finance and Company Secretarial Services; Operations; Human Resources; Business Development (Passenger); Business Development (Freight); Mechanical Engineering and Manufacturing; and Civil Engineering. The five Areas, responsible in CIÉ days for rail and road operations, were replaced by three new rail-only regions: East (based at Pearse station, Dublin), South (based at Cork) and West (based at Galway). This structure was designed to give the new company a much stronger customer and market focus to pursue new opportunities for increased revenue and profitability, while allowing managers responsible for day to day operations concentrate more fully on the running of the railway.

The formation of IÉ brought to the end the era of large scale line closures and cutbacks as a means of trying to rectify financial difficulties. From then on the railway was expected to use its existing resources effectively to generate additional business. However, amongst the earliest actions of the new company were the formal abandonment of the North Kerry line from Tralee to Ballingrane Junction and the withdrawal of the last remaining passenger service from the Mullingar to Athlone line.

IÉ's early investment programmes were seriously hampered by a lack of capital and by restrictions on rail expenditure imposed by a 1983 review of the subvention formula. Nevertheless, IÉ were able to complete a number of infrastructure upgrading projects which had been started by CIÉ prior to 1987. These saw the relaying of substantial portions of the Dublin to Cork main line with continuously welded rail on concrete sleepers, allowing speed to be increased up to a maximum of 90 m.p.h., and the extension of the main line CTC system to Kilbarry (Cork), Limerick, Ballinasloe, Knockcroghery and Moate by the early 1990s.

IÉ inherited a fleet of 126 locomotives from CIÉ. This consisted of 44 of the re-engined 'A' Class locomotives and 82 GM built units in four classes (071, 121, 141 and 181). Initially it seemed that this fleet would prove satisfactory to meet IÉ's needs, but soon reliability problems with the ageing 'A' Class were to lead to increasing problems in maintaining the required level of service. At one

stage, availability of locomotives for traffic on a daily basis slipped to as low as 65. Most seriously affected were freight services, with trains being cancelled to provide motive power for passenger services. Approximately half the coaching stock fleet acquired by IÉ in 1987 consisted of timber framed vehicles dating from the 1950s and early 1960s. Following the crashes of 1970s and early 1980s, in particular Buttevant and Cherryville, a decision had been taken to withdraw this rolling stock and the Park Royal coaches as soon as was practical. By early 1988 the main line MkIII carriage building programme, started by CIÉ, had been completed and attention turned to the construction of the 24 MkIII push-pull coaches, which entered service in 1988/89. These two projects allowed the retirement of much of the older stock. Further withdrawals of over age stock was achieved by the leasing of three sets of 3-car 80 Class railcars from NIR in late 1987, for use on suburban services in Dublin and Cork and by the purchase of 15 second-hand British Rail MkII coaches in 1989. These latter vehicles were refurbished at Inchicore works and brought into service in 1990.

The late 1980s and the early 1990s saw an upturn in IÉ's investment situation, brought about by the availability of EC funding for transport related projects. In the first programme of funding, the Operational Programme on Peripherality 1989-1993, the Government sought £36m for rail projects to cover the introduction of commuter services on the main line out of Heuston, new freight handling equipment at four main terminals and the construction of a short link to the BR container terminal in North Wall. The amount sought for rail projects, while a welcome boost, must be set against the £623 million sought for road developments. The Structural and Cohesion funds, covering the years 1994-1999, produced a much larger total for rail investment, some £275 million. The projects covered by these funds included track upgrading, signalling renewal, and acquisition of motive power.

With the completion of the extensions to the main line CTC network the company commenced work on the integration of Connolly (West Road) and Liffey Junction into the CTC system. Known as 'Connolly West', this scheme covered both the former GS&WR route from Connolly to Cabra and the former MGWR line as far as Liffey Junction, as well as part of the access lines from both routes into the North Wall freight complex. The final stages of commissioning of the scheme took place in late 1991. Immediately after the completion of the Connolly West scheme, the decision was taken to extend the suburban CTC system northwards from Malahide to the outskirts of Drogheda and at the same time to up-grade the existing computer system which controlled the existing system. The new 'North Dublin' signalling system was commissioned during 1994.

In 1992 the Government announced that commuter services were to be introduced on the line from Heuston to Kildare. In addition to the existing stations on the route, Heuston, Newbridge and Kildare, the former stations at Clondalkin, Hazelhatch and Sallins were to be re-opened and a new station was to be constructed at Cherry Orchard (Ballyfermot). The new service began operating in May 1994. Part of the funding for this new service covered the cost of ten new diesel railcars. In March 1992, IÉ signed a contract with Mitsui of Japan for the supply of seventeen railcars, ten for the Kildare line and the balance for other commuter services in Dublin and Cork. The new vehicles, which were built by the Tokyu Car Corporation, are each powered by a 350 h.p. Cummins engine and have a full width driving cab at one end. There are two types of car: DC1 which has 58 seats and DC2 which has 71. Passenger access is by two sets of double sliding doors on each side of each car and the DC1 has a wheelchair accessible toilet compartment. The cars were handed over in early 1994.

The 31st January, 1994 saw the ending of a tradition dating back to the earliest days of the railway. On that day the carriage of mail by special train officially ceased and the last remaining Travelling Post Office services were withdrawn. The event was marked by radio and television coverage and by the issuing of specially post-marked envelopes.

The first of ten 3,200 h.p. diesel locomotives ordered from General Motors in 1992, 201 Class No. 201, arrived in Dublin on 9th June 1994. Unlike previous deliveries of rolling stock, this consignment was not landed at the North Wall, but instead at Dublin Airport, having been flown from Canada in the hold of one of the world's largest aircraft! The remainder of the order, plus an additional 22 locomotives, subsequently ordered from the same source, were delivered in a more conventional manner. The 201 Class marked a significant increase in horsepower on previous locomotives and saw the final demise of the A Class, the last of which was withdrawn in 1995.

During 1995, a number of investment projects were announced by the Government. These included the extension of the DART to Greystones and Malahide (completed 2000), the opening of new stations at Fairview (Clontarf Road, opened 1999), Kilcock (opened 2000) and Drumcondra (opened 1999).



IE MkIII Pushpull trailer 6102 on trial at Dundalk, Summer 1989. (Photo © Pearse Mckeown - IRRS Archive)



IE General Motors built locomotive 203 working an 'Enterprise' train at Poyntzpass, Summer 1995. (Photo © Pearse Mckeown - IRRS Archive)



IE 2600 Class railcar set 2610 on an IRRS outing at Ballinasloe, 26 June 1994. (Photo © Pat McQuail - IRRS Archive)



IE inspection car 721 in Barrack St freight yard, Dundalk, circa 1995. (Photo © Pearse Mckeown - IRRS Archive)