



through to Dublin from every train to or from the GN&W at Athlone. As regards the actual services, there were to be four trains each way daily, with goods to be conveyed by one or more of these trains as required. In December, it was decided to go to Parliament for powers to make a deviation at Donamon, on the understanding that the contractors would indemnify the company against costs and bind themselves to have the line from Roscommon to Castlereagh ready for opening by 1st October 1860 under penalty of £11 per day. The only other parliamentary activity of the year was the passing of the Act for the Castlebar extension which empowered the MGW to subscribe one-third of the cost of construction.

The year closed with a bang for the GN&W. As the *Mayo Constitution* put it 'the great railway enterprise initiated by the Earl of Lucan has terminated in success'. On Wednesday 28th December, a trial trip was made by some of the directors and shareholders from Roscommon to Athlone. Although the day was cold, wet and windy, the weather did nothing to dampen local enthusiasm as a large number of townspeople turned out to cheer the directors. The train was loaned by the Midland, although the engine belonged to the contractors and was reported to have been decorated with bunches of gaily covered evergreens and ribbons.

The train departed from Roscommon at about 12.15 and arrived in Athlone at 13.00 after a short interruption 'occasioned by a trifling defect in the gear of the engine'. On the return journey, about 150 people were invited to travel gratuitously. The train stopped at Moate Park, residence of Lord Crofton, where an address was given by Denis Kirwan. His Lordship was presented with a magnificent candelabra of 24 lights and it was reported that the assembled party partook of a splendid *déjeuner* before separating at 4.00pm.

The BoT inspection was carried out on

Lecarrow, situated between Kiltoom and Knockcroghery, was the Midland's main ballast pit and one of two used in later years by CIE, the other being at Lisduff on the main Cork line. The pit was served by a siding on the up side which was controlled by a ground frame released by the section staff. The late J P O'Dea, courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

27th January by Captain Tyler, everything being found satisfactory, and the line was opened for traffic on Monday 13th February with a service of three trains each way on weekdays and one on Sundays. In January, the decision had been taken that there would only be one intermediate station, at Knockcroghery, and instructions were given to the engineer to suspend works on the other stations. In March, Fowler reported as to the necessity of a station at Lecarrow, as the result of which it was resolved that it be opened, it 'and Knockcroghery to be tried for three months to test the traffic'. The former may in fact have been the platform on the down side at Nine Mile Bridge, used in later years for pilgrimage traffic to the nearby St Johns Well. A memorial in July for a station at Kiltoom was met with the response that stations had been authorised for Kiltoom and Ballymurray, the latter being opened later in the year. The station at Kiltoom was shortlived as a letter was sent to Fowler on 15th October 1860 authorising its closure as from 1st November. Another station was opened there in 1879, subsequently closed in 1963.

The *Mayo Constitution* referred in May 1860 to the traffic on the new line as being most gratifying and encouraging; while the goods traffic was remarkable for the regularity of its receipts, the passenger traffic was not as good as it might have been. *The Galway Vindicator* saw the line's prospects as being good, expressing the hope that the traffic would be lucrative to the shareholders, apart from the obvious advantages to the west of Ireland.

#### Further extensions.

We have already seen how the company obtained powers of extension to Castlebar under their Act of 1859. In April, it was resolved that the extension should be opened in three sections: from Castlereagh to Ballyhaunis by 1st June 1861, to Claremorris by 1st September and the final stretch by 1st May 1862. Early in May, it was decided to seek tenders for the entire 37 mile extension. Two tenders were considered in June but were thought excessive and it was decided to offer a guarantee to Smith & Knight of £5,700 per mile, a figure which was accepted. With this problem out of the way, attention was now turned to further extensions. By 18th July it was announced that a Westport extension would go ahead and the first moves in this direction had in fact been inaugurated by the rapid increase in the subscription list, the Marquess of Sligo being reported to have given a most munificent £10,000. Ballina was also being considered and a meeting was held in the town to further this. The Castlereagh extension was inspected by Captain Tyler on 14th November, and opened on the following day.

By this time, the Castlebar extension was proceeding vigorously with the bridge over the River Suck being far advanced; great credit was due to Frederick Barry, the able engineer. At the half-yearly meeting of the Midland shareholders in March, the Chairman referred to the inadequate haulage rate of 1s.6d. per mile over the Roscommon to Castlereagh section, which resulted in a small operating loss. The hope was expressed that as traffic picked up, the situation would improve. The two companies failed to agree on this matter which was eventually referred to arbitration, an award of 2s.0d per mile between Castlereagh and Castlebar being made in November. By early 1861, good progress was reported on the Ballyhaunis extension despite a shortage of men due to it being seed sowing time. Masonry work was virtually complete and the bogs thoroughly dried out. This section was inspected by Captain Tyler on 20th August and found in order, apart from the provision of lodges 'at several boreen roads'.

Despite BoT approval, the Midland failed to give its permission due in part to the impending arbitration. Other, more serious, matters were however surfacing, namely the question of a subscription to the Westport extension and talk of a further extension to Ballina. Ennis endeavoured to have the Westport subscription of £21,000 acceded to but a counter-motion that the matter be postponed, was agreed. Despite the possibility of a setback, the GN&W issued notice of application for a Bill for the Ballina extension which included powers for the Midland