

with a minimum payment of 45% of gross receipts. Additionally, certain works were to be carried out within a year at the expense of the GN&W. No agreement was reached, the principal sticking point being the percentage payable. The GN&W offered 40% up to £40,000, 38% on the next £5,000 and 37% thereafter. The matter was postponed until February 1870, when the GN&W formally requested a renewal for ten years, the MGW again proposing changes which were totally unacceptable. Obviously in an endeavour to pressurise the Midland board, Lucan reverted to his old tactics by publishing a notice of application to obtain running powers over both the MGW and GS&W between Athlone and Dublin. At no stage did anybody enquire as to where he was going to obtain the rolling stock.

A lease is offered.

In March, Benjamin Room, the GN&W Secretary, wrote suggesting three alternatives: a renewal of the 1859 agreement, a 999 year lease on terms to be settled by arbitration or an amalgamation of the two companies. It was agreed that the line should be leased, the Act giving effect to this receiving Royal Assent on 4th July 1870, the arrangement to be effective from 1st November of that year. The entire concern, including the Westport Quay line when completed, was taken care of in the Act, but it specifically excluded the Foxford to Ballina line, which of course had so recently been the subject of an Abandonment Order.

During the course of the discussions, an

attempt had been made to include this section of line. The MGW board opposed this but stated that it was prepared to enter into a separate agreement to work it for three years, after which it would lease it. The leasing Act required the MGW to maintain the railway in good and efficient repair and working order. The annual rent was to increase from £28,500 to £33,500 by 1885, sufficient to allow the GN&W to pay a dividend of from 4.5 to 5.5%. A second Act of 1870 extended the time for completion of the Westport Quay line, it being finally opened for traffic on 1st October 1874. It had been inspected by the BoT in November 1873 and again in June 1874, but the MGW refused to take it over due to 'some of the works being most defective'. In January 1876, the Harbour Commissioners requested the running of passenger trains over the Quay line, a request which was refused. It was renewed in June 1880 when they asked that two trains should be extended to the Quay during the bathing season. This time the MGW agreed.

As regards the Ballina extension, the works were in a forward state by March 1872 with prospects of an opening by the Autumn. It was however 19th May 1873 before the line was opened due to various unfinished works. Relations appear to have improved between the two companies about this time. In November 1876, plans were approved for the doubling of the Athlone to Castlereagh section, Price being ordered to obtain the necessary tenders. These were submitted in February 1877 for

Athlone to Roscommon, the contract going to J.J. Bagnell, but progress was slow and the second line was not brought into use until August 1879, at which time Kiltoom was opened as a blockpost.

June 1885 saw talks taking place on a possible amalgamation of the two companies. Nothing came of these talks, but four years later more serious negotiations took place. By November 1889, it had been agreed that a Bill would be promoted for the purchase of the GN&W, the latter's shareholders to be made secure as regards dividends. To accomplish this, it was intended to issue 4.25% Midland stock amounting to £276,339 for a similar amount of GN&W stock. The Act giving effect to the purchase received Royal Assent on 4th August 1890, and thus came to a close the independent existence of Lord Lucan's line. Lucan himself had died two years earlier in 1888. He will always be remembered for his martial misadventures; his contribution to the extension of the railway system in the west of Ireland has largely been forgotten.

Roscommon on a Fair day with a large number of cattle wagons evident. This was a major railhead for livestock traffic and was one of the most important stations on the Mayo line with extensive siding accommodation. Courtesy John Kennedy.

