

The
Belfast & County Down Railway
Museum Trust



The Belfast & County Down Railway Museum Trust

Secretary:

R. J. Pue
60 Victoria Road, Belfast BT4 1QW

Trustees:

J. J. Leckey
Vestry Hall, Ballygowan, Co. Down
W. P. McCormick
4 Martello Drive, Craigavad, Co. Down
D. J. Coakham
6 Sandringham Gardens, Bangor, Co Down
J. H. Smith
136 Kensington Road, Belfast 5.



INTRODUCTION

The Belfast & County Down Railway Museum Trust is a relatively new organisation although the Trustees are all well known in the field of railway preservation. The first move towards establishing the Trust was made in 1969, the idea being to foster interest in railways generally and to preserve relics and photographs from the railway and tramway systems whose lines radiated from Belfast, especially the Belfast & County Down Railway, and the other County Down systems.

To establish an organisation such as this a great deal of legal investigation had to be carried out and it was not until early in 1972 that the work was completed and the Trust Deed signed and sealed, thereby legally constituting the Trust.

During the time this work was being carried out the future of Saintfield Station, which was considered by the Trust to be of vital historic importance to the community, was put in jeopardy by the plans of Down County Council to run a road through the property.

The Trust immediately objected to the Ministry of Development, and submitted to them its own plans for the future of the station and the surrounding area. The aim of this book is to give you some idea as to what these plans are, how you can help and, briefly, a look at the Belfast & County Down Railway from which the Trust takes its name.

*COVER PHOTOGRAPH:—4-4-2 No. 18 on Belfast-Newcastle Train
at Saintfield on 16th July, 1938.*

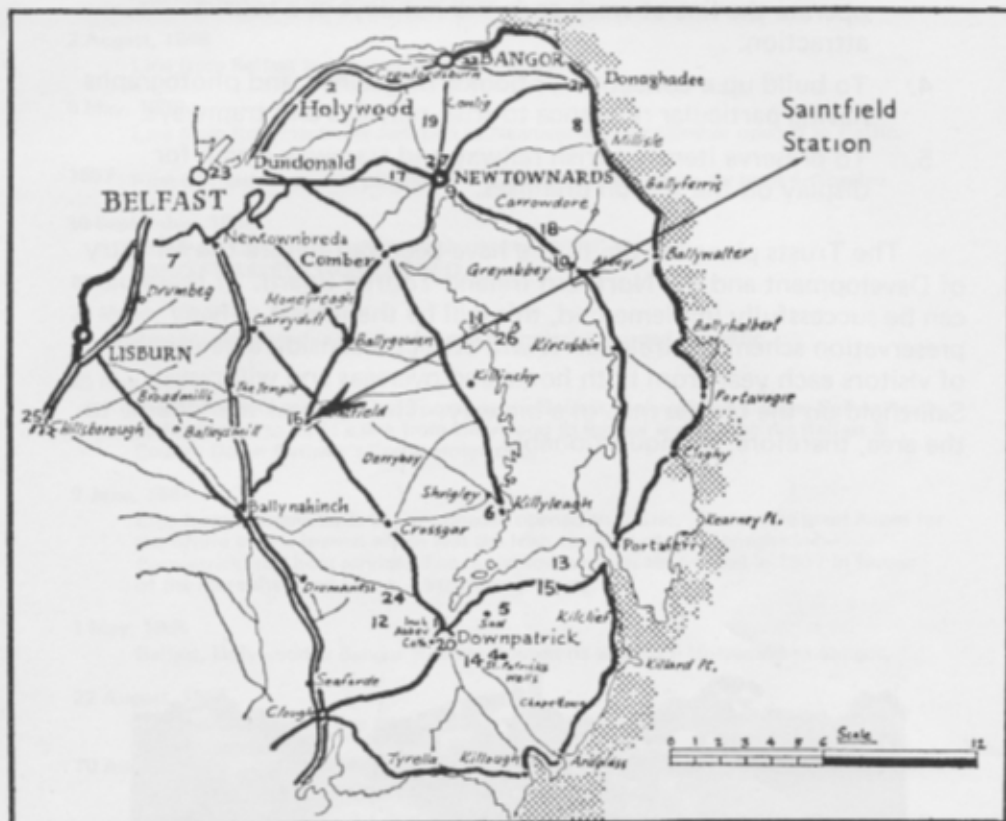
WHY SAINTFIELD

Saintfield station was built in 1856 on the main line of the Belfast & County Down Railway Company on its route to Newcastle and opened to traffic on 10th September, 1858. It was built to the design of Sir John Macneill the famous Irish engineer, who although not an architect was responsible for the design of a number of railway buildings throughout Ireland. This station now stands as the only complete and unaltered example of his work.

The signal cabin is unique, being the last remaining one of Belfast & County Down Railway origin complete with a M'Kenzie & Holland lever frame. This was left by the demolition squad at the request of Mr James Black, the present owner, who has been responsible for the preservation of the property since the line closed on 16th January, 1950. Saintfield station is now the oldest complete Belfast & County Down Railway station in existence.



Saintfield lies 10 miles to the south-east of Belfast on the main road to Downpatrick, the County Town. It is the venue for the famous "Temple 100" motor-cycle race held annually in July and as can be seen from the map below, is encircled by places of interest to the visitor, only a few of which are listed. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board brochure states that "No part of Northern Ireland is richer in interest" than North Down.



- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| 1. St. Patrick's Grave
Downpatrick | 9. Movilla Abbey | 20. Downpatrick Cathedral |
| 2. Ulster Folk Museum
Craigavad | 10. Greyabbey | 21. Donaghadee |
| 3. Governor's Residence,
Hillsborough | 11. Sketrick Castle | 22. Bangor |
| 4. Struel Wells, Downpatrick | 12. Inch Abbey | 23. Stormont |
| 5. Saul (St. Patrick) Co. Down | 13. Audley's Castle | 24. Loughinisland Churches |
| 6. Killyleagh Castle | 14. Ballynoe Stone Circle | 25. Hillsborough Fort (being
repaired and restored) |
| 7. Giant's Ring, Ballylesson | 15. Castle Ward | 26. Nendrum—Mahee Island
(Monastic Site) |
| 8. Ballycopeland Windmill | 16. Rowallane Gardens | 27. Newtownards Priory |
| | 17. Scrabo Tower | |
| | 18. Mount Stewart | |
| | 19. Helens Tower | |

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

1. To renovate the station and restore it to its original condition.
2. To re-lay the track within the station precincts hoping to extend it for a distance of about 2½ miles to Shepherd's Bridge.
3. To preserve locomotives and rolling stock to be used to operate the line at week-ends and holidays as a tourist attraction.
4. To build up a collection of books, magazines, and photographs having particular reference to Irish railways and tramways.
5. To preserve items of Irish railway and tramway origin for display on the station premises.

The Trusts plans for the future have been put before the Ministry of Development and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. If these plans can be successfully implemented, this will be the largest railway preservation scheme in Ireland. It will attract a considerable number of visitors each year from both home and overseas and will put Saintfield on the tourist map in a big way. The value of the scheme to the area, therefore, is unquestionable.



4-4-2T No 18 on the 10.50 a.m. train from Belfast to Newcastle between Shepherd's Bridge and Saintfield on 9th July, 1935.

The Belfast & County Down Railway

Chronology

26 June, 1846

Act of Parliament passed incorporating the Belfast & County Down Railway with authorisation to build a line from Belfast to Downpatrick with branches to Holywood, Newtownards, Bangor and Donaghadee.

2 August, 1848

Line from Belfast to Holywood opened to traffic.

6 May, 1850

Line from Ballymacarrett Junction to Newtownards via Comber opened to traffic.

1857 First 6-Wheeled coaches purchased — All coaches had previously been 4-Wheeled.

10 September, 1858

Line from Comber to Ballynahinch opened to traffic.
SAINTFIELD STATION OPENED.

23 March, 1859

Line from Ballynahinch Junction to Downpatrick opened to traffic.

25 May, 1860

Act of Parliament passed incorporating the Belfast, Holywood & Bangor Railway with authorisation to build a line from Holywood to Bangor and joining the Belfast & County Down Railway's line at Holywood.

3 June, 1861

Line from Newtownards to Donaghadee opened to traffic. There were great hopes for the future of this branch which was the Irish terminal of the Donaghadee — Portpatrick mail boat service. The route however was abandoned in 1867 in favour of the more sheltered Larne — Stranraer crossing.

1 May, 1865

Belfast, Holywood & Bangor Railway opened its line from Holywood to Bangor.

22 August, 1865

Belfast — Holywood line purchased by the Belfast, Holywood & Bangor Railway.

10 August, 1866

Act of Parliament passed incorporating the Downpatrick, Dundrum & Newcastle Railway.

25 March, 1869

Line from Downpatrick to Newcastle opened to traffic and operated by the Belfast & County Down Railway on behalf of the Downpatrick, Dundrum & Newcastle Railway.

13 May, 1871

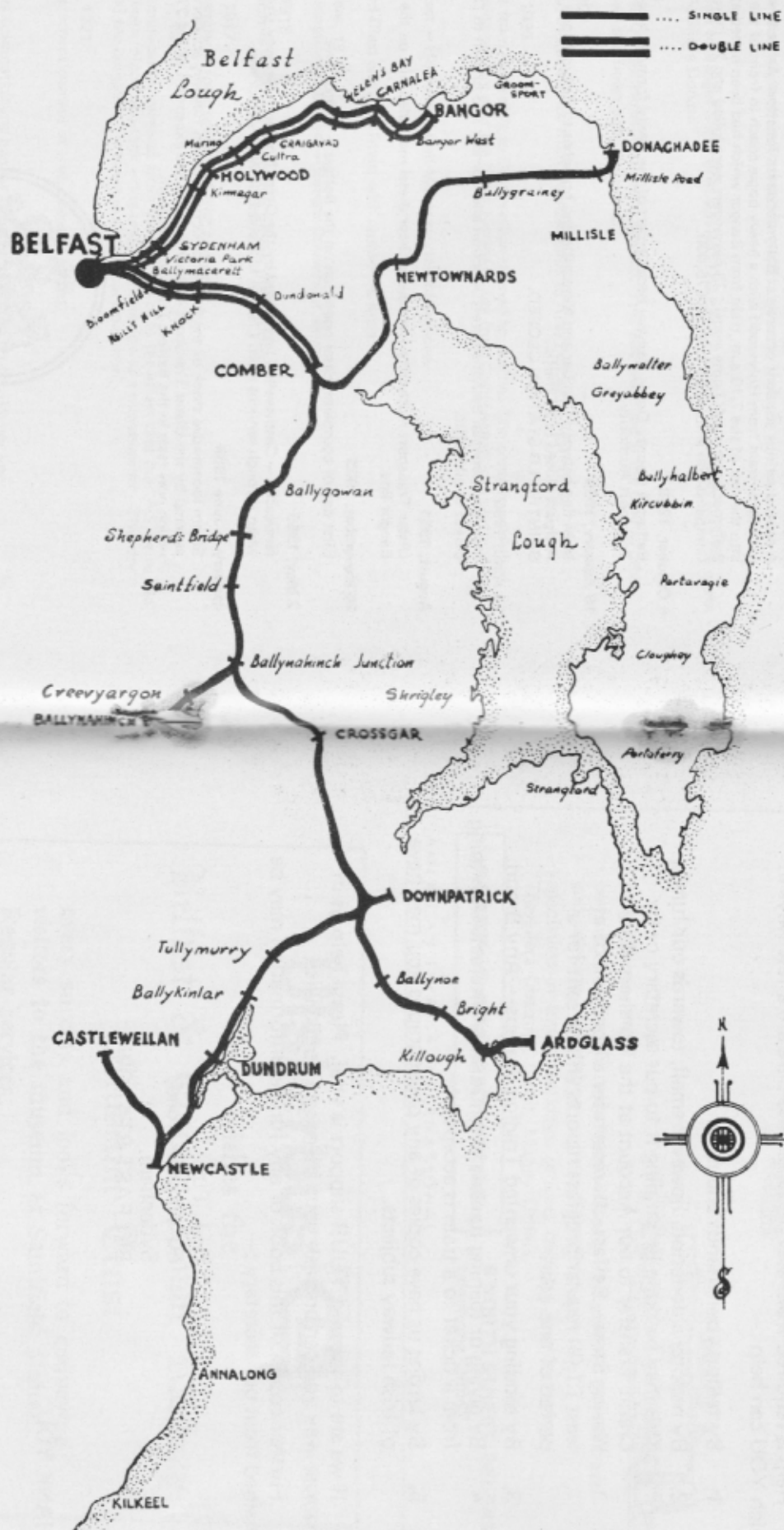
Serious accident occurred at Ballymacarrett Junction when a Belfast bound train approaching the junction on the main line collided with a derailed engine. Two passengers were killed and 55 injured.

22 August, 1881

Downpatrick, Dundrum & Newcastle Railway purchased by the Belfast & County Down Railway.

- 14 July, 1884**
Belfast, Holywood & Bangor Railway purchased by the Belfast & County Down Railway.
- 31 May, 1892**
Downpatrick to Ardglass line opened for fish traffic.
- 8 July, 1892**
Downpatrick to Ardglass line opened to passenger traffic. Downpatrick loop line
Downpatrick loop line opened to traffic.
- May, 1893**
Belfast to Bangor Steamboat service (The Bangor Boat) inaugurated with the vessel
"P.S. Slieve Donard".
- July, 1898**
Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle opened. This was described at the time as "the
largest and finest hotel in Ireland".
- August, 1903**
Road motor service from Newtownards to Ards Peninsula introduced.
- 24 March, 1906**
Line from Newcastle to Castlewellaan opened to traffic. The company also had
running powers over the Great Northern line from Castlewellaan to Ballyronney.
- May, 1905**
Belfast — Holywood Rail-Motor service introduced.
- 1906**
Third Class carriages fitted with cushioned seats.
- 29 September, 1915**
Termination of Belfast — Bangor Steamboat services.
- 1 August, 1916**
Newcastle — Kilkeel motor-bus service inaugurated.
- 1 January, 1917**
Government took control of Irish railways.
- 19 February, 1919**
Communication received from the Admiralty to the effect that the "P.S. Erins Isle"
had been mined and sank while under commission as a minesweeper. Thereby
ended the company's interest in steamboat operation.
- 15 August, 1921**
Government control of Irish railways ended.
- 1926**
Sykes automatic type banner signals introduced on the Bangor line.
- 26 May, 1927**
Donaghadee — Ballywalter motor-bus service inaugurated.
- October, 1928**
Belfast — Holywood motor-bus service inaugurated.

MAP OF THE BELFAST AND COUNTY DOWN RAILWAY



1933

First diesel locomotive supplied by Harland & Wolff, Belfast.

1 October, 1935

Road services transferred to Northern Ireland Road Transport Board.

1 August, 1944

Management of the Belfast & County Down Railway became the responsibility of the Great Northern Railway (Ireland)

10 January, 1945

A second serious accident occurred at Ballymacarrett Junction. An early morning rail-motor train from Holywood with a heavy bogie coach in front of the engine, ran into the rear of the 7.10 a.m. train from Bangor which had been halted at the Ballymacarrett outer home signal. 23 passengers were killed and 24 injured. Compensation amounted to some £75,000.

1 October, 1948

Belfast & County Down Railway became part of the newly formed Ulster Transport Authority.

16 January, 1950

Main line between Comber and Newcastle and branches to Ballynahinch and Ardglass closed to all traffic.

SAINTFIELD STATION CLOSED.

24 April, 1950

Main line between Ballymacarrett Junction and Comber and branch to Donaghadee closed to all traffic.

August, 1951

Ulster Transport Authority introduced 3-car diesel multiple units on the Belfast — Bangor line.

26 November, 1953

First day of complete diesel operation on the Belfast — Bangor line.

2 May, 1955

Newcastle — Castlewella line closed by the Great Northern Railway (Ireland) when through services from Lisburn to Newcastle were withdrawn.

January & June 1956

Steam locomotive stock of the Belfast & County Down Railway auctioned as scrap by the Ulster Transport Authority, with the exception of 4-4-2T No 30 which now rests in the Belfast Transport Museum.

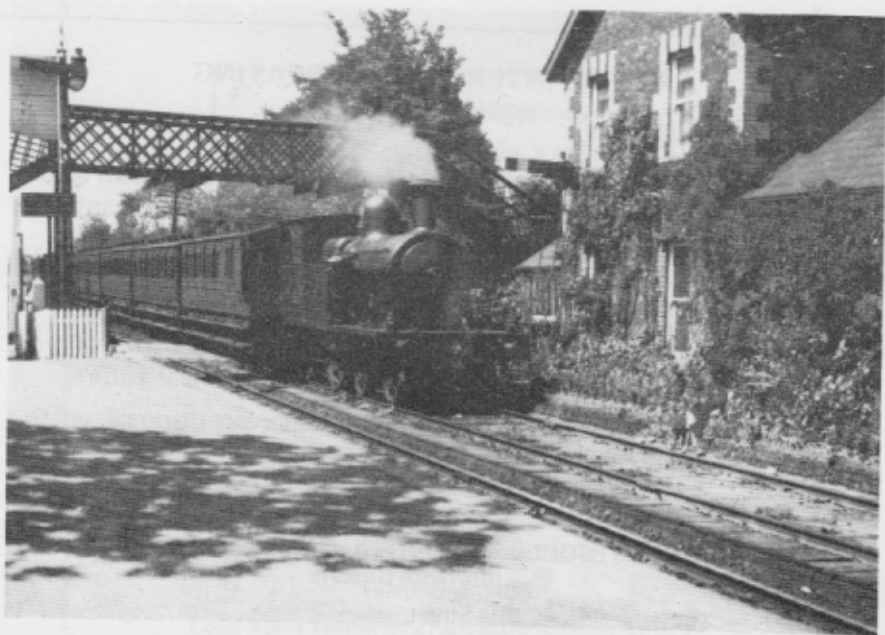


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Trust wishes to express sincere thanks to those individuals, organisations and business concerns who have given much valuable assistance over the past three years, and to those companies who have made the production of this book possible by the sponsoring of advertisements.

Thanks are also due to those who have given various items and photographs to the Trust for its collection and to those who have given of their time in helping with the restoration of the station.

For the photograph of Saintfield station we are indebted to the Ministry of Finance and for all other photographs to Mr W. Robb.



*4-4-2T No. 20 on 1.11 p.m. Down Comber Train
entering Knock on 4th July, 1933*