

The 'Decade of Centenaries'

All-island history competition for primary and post-primary schools

Template cover sheet which must be included at the front of all projects

Title of project:

The Donegal Railway and the local community.

Category for which you wish to be entered (i.e. 'Decade of Centenaries', biography, local/regional, or national (including social/cultural) issues

Local or regional issues/Decade of Centenaries

Name(s) of class / group of students / individual student submitting the project:

1st-6th Class pupils at Gartan NS (Word Count: 1,962)

School roll number (this should be provided if possible):

13755E

School address

(this must be provided even for projects submitted by a group of pupils or an individual pupil):

Gartan NS, Churchill, Co. Donegal

Class teacher's name

this must be provided even for projects submitted by a group of pupils or an individual pupil):

Ms Claire Mc Intyre

Contact phone number:

0861068265

Contact email address:

geraldinemctr8@gmail.com

Our history project is based on The Donegal Railway. We chose this topic as it coincides with the same era as the Decade of Centenaries. At a local level we have researched the railway in our own area and discussed how it linked to the railway at a national level. We interviewed local people and gained primary and secondary evidence for our project.

Building the Railway

In the late 1800's a newspaper article appeared in The Belfast Newsletter on September 4th 1896 which detailed the Chief Secretary's visit to Donegal. It states the need for a railway track in order to develop local industries.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY IN DONEGAL.

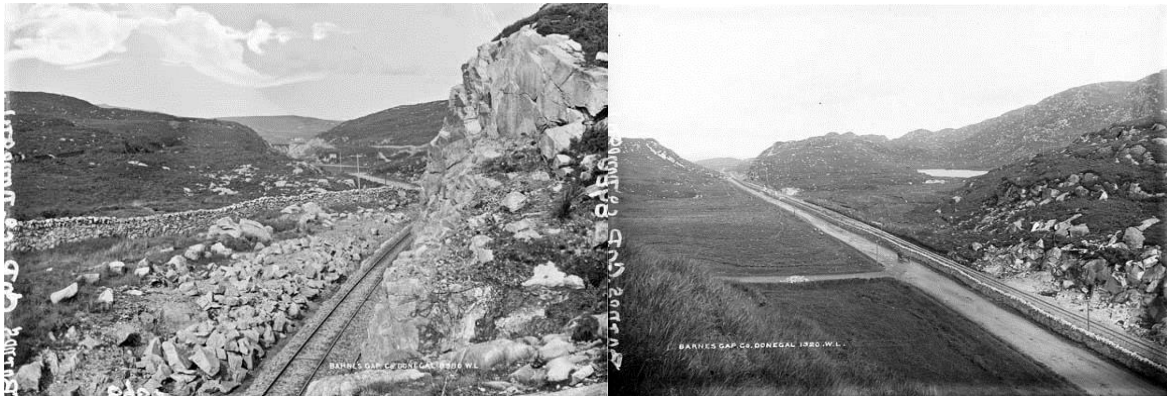
SPECIAL TELEGRAM.

Yesterday the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lady Betty Balfour, Mr. Dowdall (private secretary), and Mr. Robertson (chairman of the Board of Works) left Buncrana to continue their tour in Donegal. The party were conveyed by special train to Letterkenny, and along the route were enthusiastically received. Fog signals were placed on the line at various points. They drove from Letterkenny to Kilmacrenan, Creeslough, and then to Dunfanaghy, where bunting was gaily displayed. Several arches spanned the streets bearing mottoes of welcome. A very large crowd assembled at the hotel, where the Chief Secretary received a deputation, who presented an address of welcome. They urged on him the necessity for the construction of a light railway. Mr. Balfour, in reply, said he was thankful for the very cordial welcome. He was there to see the country for himself, and to consider whether the district was a proper one through which to run a light railway. He was not in a position to make any promise, but it would give him the greatest pleasure in the world if the Irish Government could construct a railway, which would undoubtedly foster and develop industries. The reception showed that the day was passing, or perhaps had already passed, when the Government was regarded as hostile rather than friendly to the poor population in this island. He did not think that was a correct description, but if it ever was a correct description of the past, seeing what had already been done, he hoped the term of the present Government would mark a step in advance in the interests of the material benefit of the country. Lady Balfour was presented with several bouquets, and the party loudly cheered leaving the town. At Ballyconnell, the house residence of Mr. Olphert, D.L., a deputation waited on Mr. Balfour, and a cordial address of welcome was read by the Rev. Mr. M'Fadden. Reference was made to the splendid service rendered to the country by Mr. Arthur Balfour. The Chief Secretary assured those present that he would do all in his power for the prospects of that part of the country.

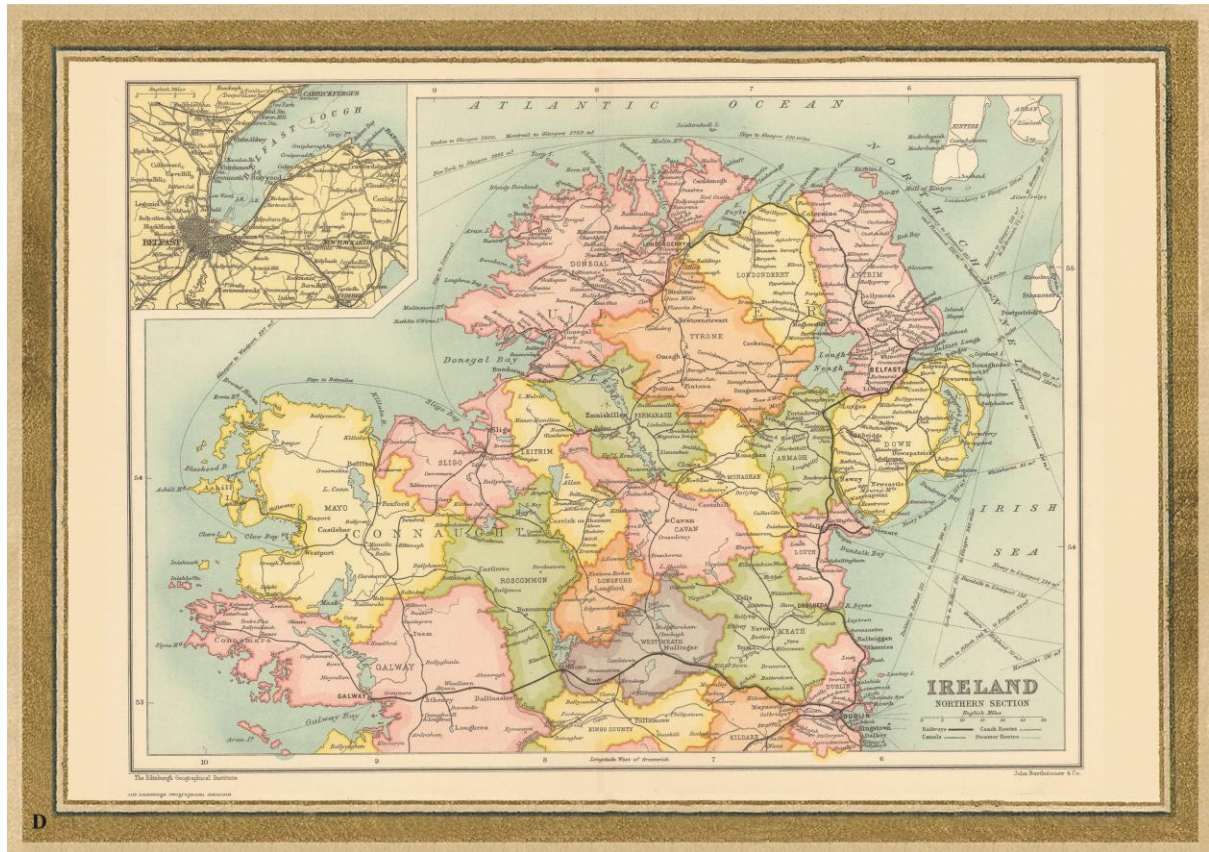
In the nineteenth century roads in Donegal were in poor condition so that meant transport of goods was solely by horse and cart. The Railway network was set up across the County. As World War one came to an end more and more goods had to be transported throughout Donegal on a daily basis. Goods were shipped to different parts of Donegal by train cheaper than it would have cost by horse and cart. Apart from goods and freight there was an increasing amount of people leaving Donegal to emigrate to other countries to seek work.

There were three main railway routes in Donegal. These railways were the County Donegal railway, Londonderry and the Lough Swilly railway. The Lough Swilly railway ran from Letterkenny Southwest and westwards passing Old Town, New Mills and Foxhall then it turned northward to Churchill before reaching Kilmacrenan station. This map details the railways of Donegal in the 1920's.

A company was formed to construct a line from St Johnston through Raphoe, Convoy and on to Glenties. This line was then linked up to the Strabane line. This line continued southwards on from Enniskillen. Enniskillen eventually gave rail access to Belfast, Dublin, and the many towns between. The Railway was now an important part of people's lives. Here are some photographs of lines around Donegal in the early 1900's.

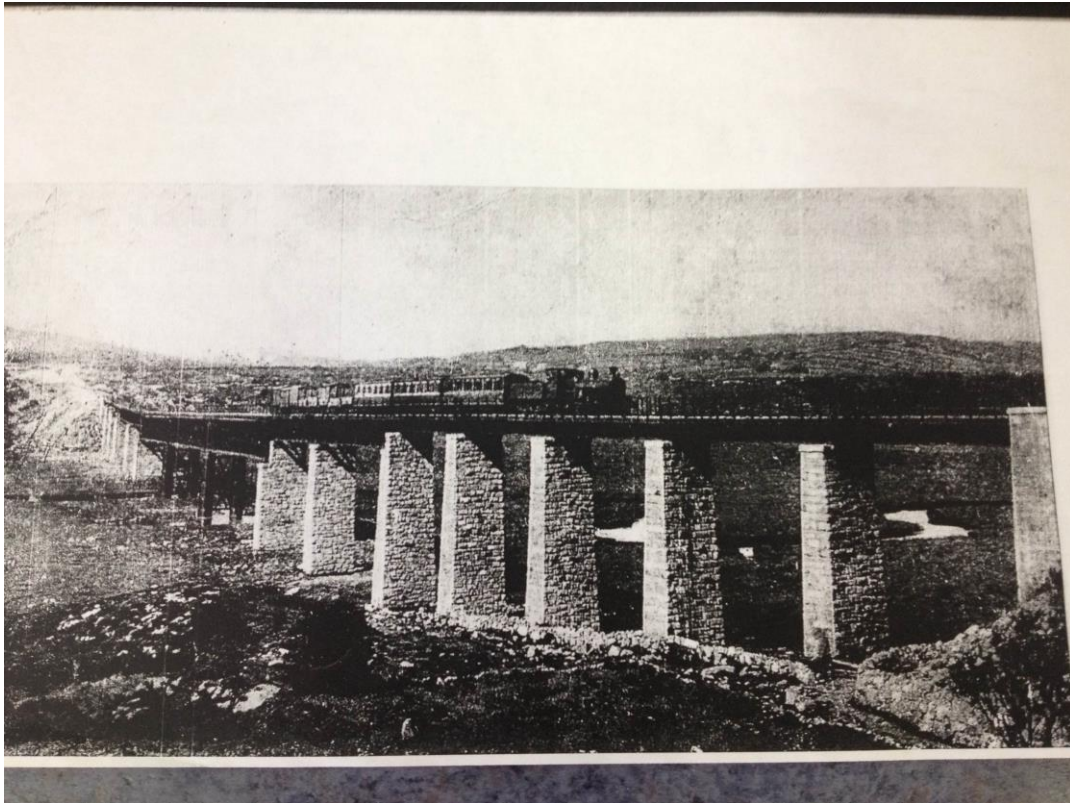


Here is a map of the railways of Ireland during the 1920's



The building of the Owencarrow Viaduct

The building of the Burtonport extension was a great engineering challenge with little machinery or electric power. It was 100% manpower and horse power. There were no jack hammers, air compressors or JCB's. Dynamite was used to blast the huge cuttings. Another of their problems was to build a bridge across the Owencarrow River and bog. A temporary steam driven pile driver was used to push oak trees from Derryfad and Umerfad into the bottomless bog and swamp. Fleeces from sheep were also driven down, then rocks and granite blocks were hoisted into place with a block and tackle. This is a photo of the viaduct in Creeslough.



The train past by Muckish Mountain in Carnamaddy and had been open for over twenty years without any accidents. The crossing over the Owencarrow viaduct was known to be dangerous in bad weather. Our class were lucky to visit the old Railway track near here on a class trip. A historical train disaster however took place on Friday 31st of January 1925. The 5.15 Derry-Burtonport train had departed Kilmacrenan Station at 7:52pm. As the train approached the viaduct which was 400-440 yards in length and travelling at a speed of about ten miles per hour, disaster struck! It was a very stormy night and a great gust of wind lifted the carriage next to the engine off its rails. The driver applied the vacuum brake and stopped the train. The wind had lifted the two big coaches from the rail and flung them downwards on the parapet. Of the 14 passengers on board 4 of these had been hurled to their deaths. Here is a newspaper article which gives details of the Owencarrow disaster.

TRAIN WRECKED

BLOWN OVER IN FURIOUS GALE

FOUR KILLED AND TEN INJURED

(Reuter.)

LONDON, Saturday.

Four passengers were killed and ten injured through a terrific gale blowing a train over an embankment last night near Creeslough, Donegal.

The engine remained on the rails, but both coaches were caught by the force of the gale and crashed 40 feet down an embankment.

Only one passenger escaped injury.

The dead include a magistrate and his wife, who had been to fetch their son from hospital, from where they had removed him despite the matron's appeal to let him remain on such a stormy night.

The son was taken back to the hospital severely injured.

Later details of the disaster show that the gale blew the roof and sides off one of the coaches, the occupants of which were hurled into a ravine.

Mr. W. T. Cosgrave, President of the Dail, has sent a message of sympathy.



Types of Trains

Lough Swilly:

The Lough Swilly was the train that went from Glenties to Letterkenny. In 1915 the Lough Swilly train opened and it closed in 1950. The Lough Swilly train was a vital part of the local community; it brought the benefits of modern public transport to the wild remote part of Ireland.

That Old Sinner:

In 1917 the Irish times christened the Burtonport Extension "That Old Sinner" It was a well deserved title after fourteen years in operation . It was called that because the train lost goods while on transit, the driver was guilty of erratic driving, and passengers had to travel along with cattle in cattle carriages. Below is a picture of the train.



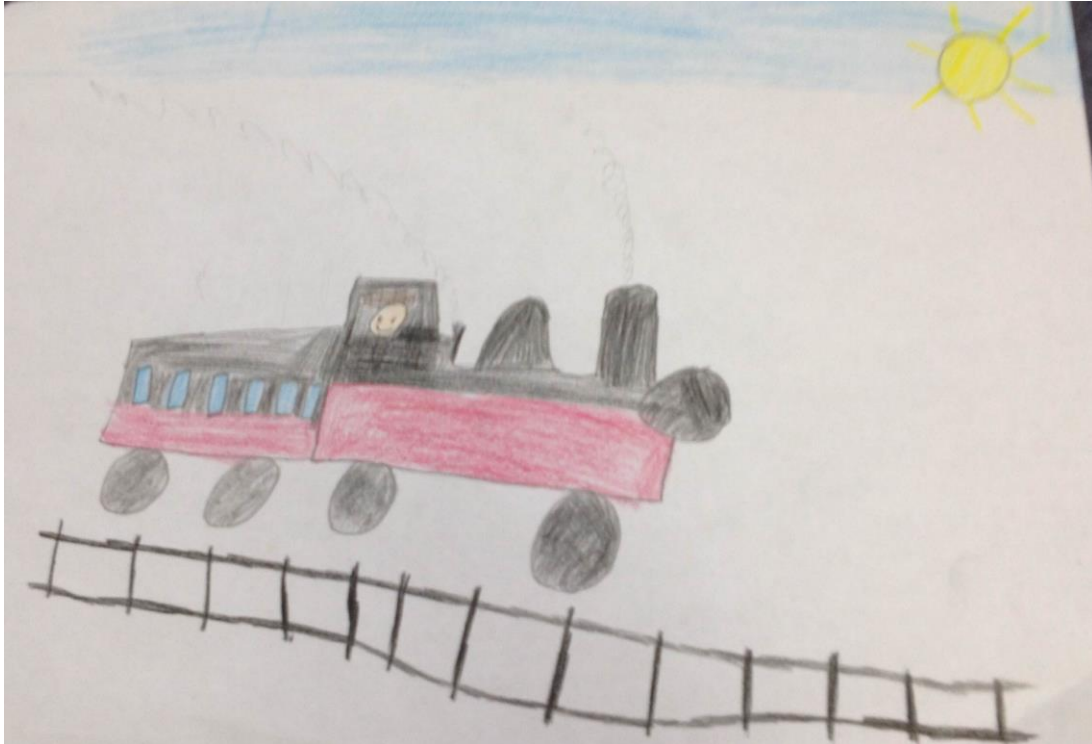
That Old Sinner started at Burtonport and went through Dungloe road, Gweedore, Cashelnagore, Falcarragh , Dunfanaghy road , Creeslough, Killmacrenan, Churchill, Foxhall , Newmills , Old town , and Letterkenny.

Dunfanaghy was a popular seaside town which attracted lots of visitors in the summer months. These visitors would have travelled by train and stayed in Dunfanaghy.



The Wee Donegal:

The Wee Donegal went through Letterkenny station, Trentagh station, Gweedore station, Kilmacrennan station and Burtonport station.



The Oxydent hour of smiles:

The Oxydent hour of smiles went from Letterkenny to Derry. The train went through a long tunnel and passed for a long time through a low lying meadow. It was a first class train with comfortable seats.

Passengers

There were three classifications on the coaches- first, second and third. First class passengers and second class passengers were allowed one hundred pounds of luggage and third class passengers were allowed sixty pounds luggage.

In the carriages there was a strict no smoking policy. The carriage carried at least fourteen passengers. Children under three years of

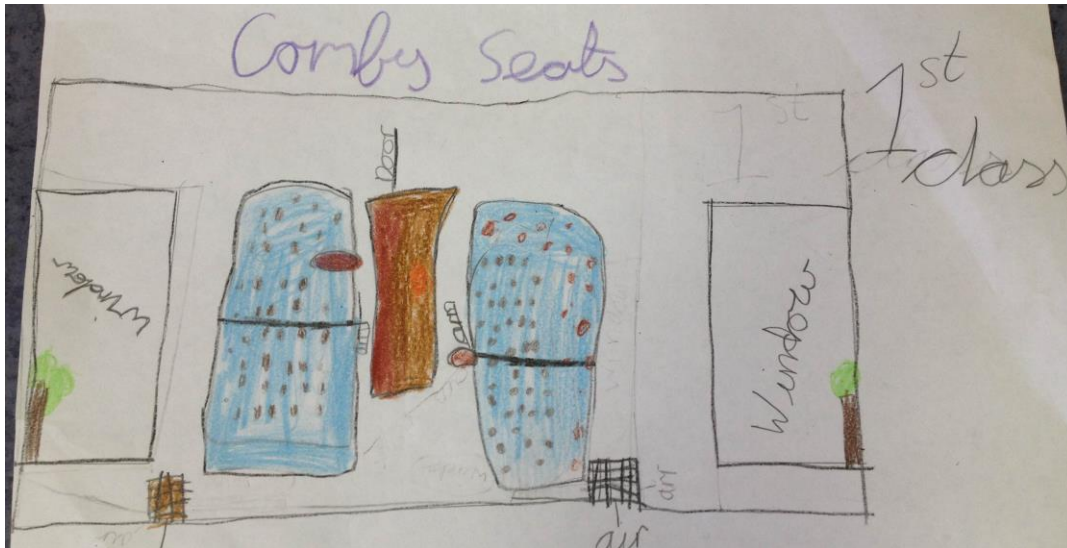
age were allowed to travel for free. Children between three and twelve were charged one penny each. First class passengers had the best of all seats in the train. The second class passengers had seats that were not fancy but comfortable.

Interior of trains

Inside the train the seats were covered in red leather. There were oriental rugs on the floor and expensive French antiques.

The seats were wooden and there were flap tables. There was a water tank on top of the roof .The windows were able to be put down and it was very cold in the winter. The carriages were comfortable.





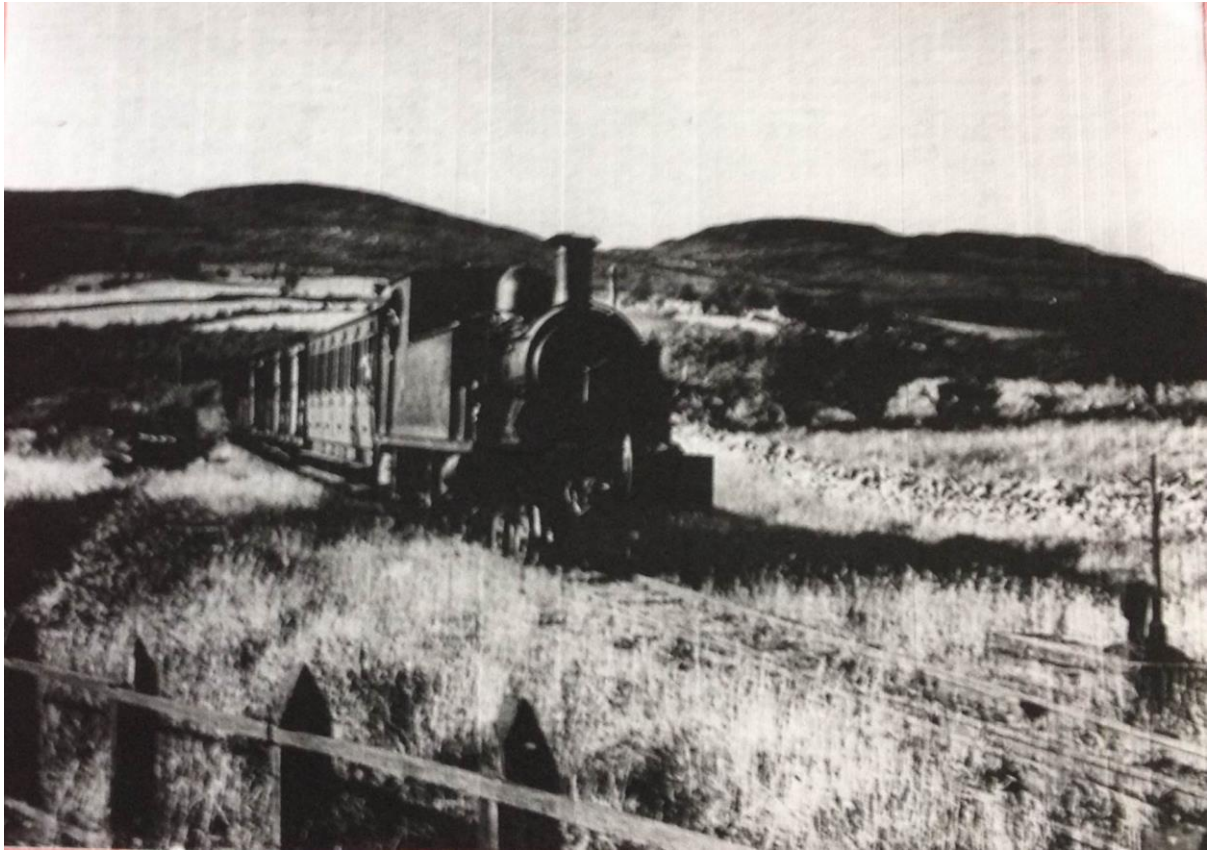
It was very exciting to look out the window at the beautiful landscape of Donegal. The train was often over crowded. Following the Owencarrow viaduct disaster safety precautions were put into operation. Heavy ballasts were put on all trains using this section and a wind gauge was erected to measure wind velocity and all trains were stopped if winds reached a danger point of 80 miles per hour. On the night of the Owencarrow disaster winds were said to be 106 miles per hour.

Local employees

Mrs Ciss Boyle sold tickets at the Churchill station. Here is a photo of Sally Green, a local lady who often travelled on the train. This was taken outside the Churchill Station.



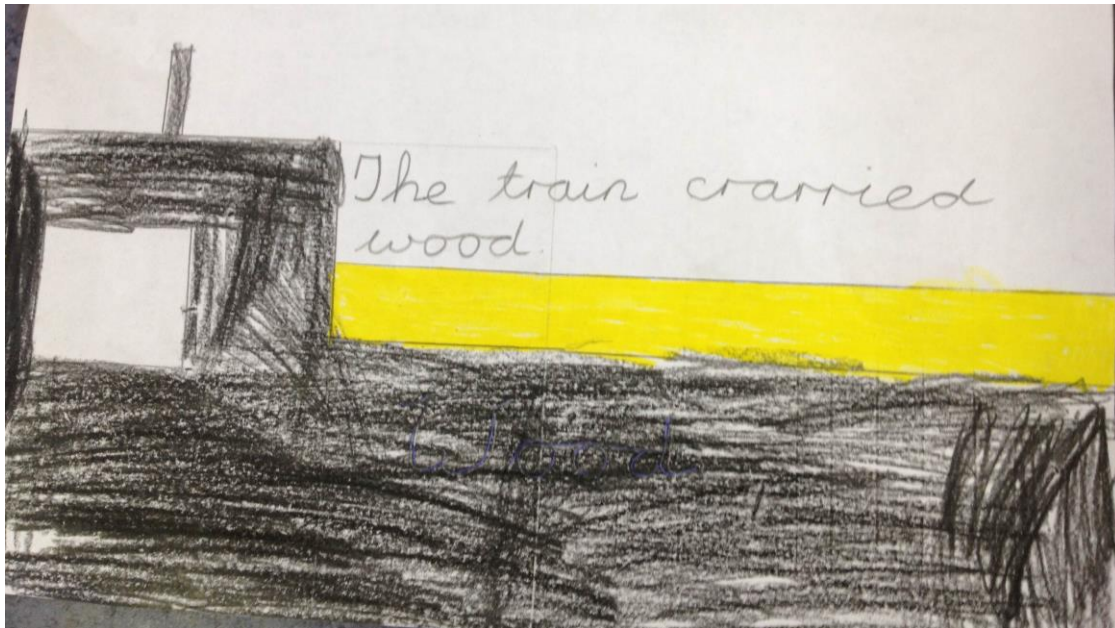
This is the train that passed through Trentagh.



Bredan Delap, Anton Delap and Master Fay were all Masters. The conductor was Jimmy Cundey and the driver was Paddy Slowey. Francie Mc Iueany was in charge of the lifting of the rails. James Mc Intyre was another driver. John Mc Grenra worked at the railroads he was given the responsibility of opening and closing the gates across the Trentagh road. This was a job which held great responsibility. Often the task was left to the gatekeepers wives as they were busy working on the farm while the train passed through.

Goods/freight

The train also took goods to Churchill, it brought the post to the post office and wine and beer to the public house in Churchill. Paddy Slowey was the driver and Jimmy Cundey was the conductor. The closest station to Churchill was Trentagh station. The train also carried stones to the quarry.



The train carried animals too. People took bull calves on the train and other animals. They went to marts or were hired. If they were hired they would get £19. Glenveagh and Gartan Lake were popular locations for fishing and they used the train for transporting the fish to the markets. The fishermen caught the salmon, wrapped them in rushes and sent them to Dublin by train. The train took the sand from Muckish Mountain to Burtonport, bread to the station house in Letterkenny, Soapstone from Churchill and Burtonport station in and it also brought sand to Derry.

The post came to the post office by train from Derry. People came to the post office by train to pay their bills and mortgages. The post office was a mile from Trentagh. A horse and cart took the post to the post office.

The Hiring Fair

The railway companies encouraged cattle to be transported to the fair in Letterkenny by train. Cattle were sold at this fair and children were often hired to work on farms during the summer months. This is a timetable advertising The Letterkenny Hiring Fair on Friday 14th May, 1915.

control at Letterkenny and the two managements encouraged touting for cattle traffic at the Letterkenny Fair.

Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway.

Letterkenny Hiring Fair,

FRIDAY, 14th MAY, 1915.

On above date the **TRAIN SERVICE** between BURTONPORT and LETTERKENNY will be as under:—

	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.		a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	
LEAVE BURTONPORT, ...	6.0	8.30	10.40	3.30	LEAVE LETTERKENNY, ...	9.2	1.30	4.0	6.45	
Do DUNGLOE ROAD, ...	6.6	8.37	10.46	3.36	Do OLD TOWN, ...	9.8	1.36	4.10	6.48	
Do KINCASSLAGH ROAD, ...	6.15	8.45	10.53	3.42	Do NEW MILLS, ...	c	1.46	4.20	6.58	
Do CROLLY, ...	6.33	9.3	11.10	4.0	Do FOXHALL, ...	9.26	1.53	4.27	7.4	
Do GWEEINORE, ...	6.48	9.20	11.21	4.15	Do CHURCHHILL, ...	9.39	2.4	4.38	7.16	
Do CASHELNAGORE, ...	7.7	9.39	11.39	4.34	Do KILMACRENAN, ...	9.53	2.19	4.50	7.30	
Do FALCARRAGH, ...	7.17	9.52	11.49	4.44	Do CREESLOUGH, ...	10.22	2.50	5.30	8.0	
			p.m.		Do DUNFANAGHY ROAD, ...	10.28	2.55	5.35	8.5	
Do DUNFANAGHY ROAD, ...	7.39	10.16	12.11	5.9	Do FALCARRAGH, ...	10.53	3.22	5.55	8.29	
Do CREESLOUGH, ...	7.50	10.27	12.22	5.20	Do CASHELNAGORE, ...	11.6	3.35	6.5	8.41	
Do KILMACRENAN, ...	8.16	10.53	12.48	5.47	Do GWEEINORE, ...	11.27	4.10	6.29	9.1	
Do CHURCHHILL, ...	8.26	11.0	12.58	5.58	Do CROLLY, ...	11.38	4.26	6.45	9.10	
Do FOXHALL, ...	8.38	11.17	1.10	6.10	Do KINCASSLAGH ROAD, ...	11.57	4.41	7.0	9.29	
Do NEWMILLS, ...	8.43	11.22	1.15	6.15	Do DUNGLOE ROAD, ...	p.m.	12.4	4.16	7.5	9.35
Do OLD TOWN, ...	8.51	11.31	1.23	6.24	ARRIVE BURTONPORT, ...	12.10	4.50	7.10	9.40	
ARRIVE LETTERKENNY, ...	8.55	11.34	1.27	6.28						

MARKET TICKETS will be issued to Letterkenny by 6.0 and 8.30 a.m. Ordinary Trains.

J. L. CLEWES, General Manager.

Printed at the Landedry Station Office.—10015

Handbill of services in connection with a Letterkenny Hiring Fair

We visited the old railway tracks in Creeslough for a school trip. Seamus Doohan talked us through the history of the local line as we re-traced our ancestors footsteps while walking along the old railway track.

Here are some photos of our class trip.



ISR **Siúlóid an Sean Bhóthar Iarainn** **ISR**










Siúl ar na casáin áitiúla siúil atá forbartha ag coistí áitiúla i gcomhar le Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall agus eagraíochtaí forbartha eile ar an sli ina raibh an traen ag réachtáil ó Leitir Ceanainn go Allt a Chorainn ag tús an 20ú aois.

This section of the Letterkenny and Burtonport Extension Railway which operated into west Donegal between 1903 and 1947 has been developed as a local walking trail.

The provision of a railway service into the deprived mountain and coastal areas of County Donegal in the early years of the twentieth century facilitated the development of the fishing industry by allowing the shipping of fresh fish from the fishing ports to the markets for the first time. The retail industry received a boost through the easier supply of goods, visitors coming in on the train resulted in a boost to the tourism and hotel sector in the area and many people in west Donegal visited the urban hubs of Letterkenny and Derry for the first time due to the train.

The Letterkenny and Burtonport Railway Extension, operated by the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway Company Ltd, provided a rail service to west Donegal during the War of independence and both World Wars, the final train running on the route in 1947, sections of the line are now being regenerated as walking trails.

This section of the line alongside Lough Agher follows the route of the railway traveller having negotiated the Owencarrow Viaduct and gone through Creeslough and Dunfanaghy Road stations. The route runs alongside Muckish Mountain before descending into Falcarragh.

This section of walking trail along the route of the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Extension Railway has been developed by Muckish Development Group with financial support from Donegal County Council through its Development Fund Initiative. The project has also been supported by Fáilte Ireland, Donegal Local Development Company and Udarás na Gaeltachta. Photographs courtesy of CDRL.

Walking the line by Seamus Doohan

One of my favourite low level walks is the old light gauge railway from Creeslough to the Falcarragh station. As I walk the track I try to imagine what it was like to be sitting on the old "Muc Dubh" as it rattled its way westwards to its next stop . The "light railway (Ireland) Act 1889" had decided that they would build a track from Letterkenny to Burtonport ,that track was only 112 inches wide on the 9th of March in 1903 .

I would start walking just after gatehouse no.12, then going on the embankment and going through some cutting with Muckish mountain on my left and the miners path still visible, etched into the shoulder of this majestic mountain. I then pass Lough Agher on my right and

keep heading towards gatehouse no.13 and then to Falcarragh station.

Local Links

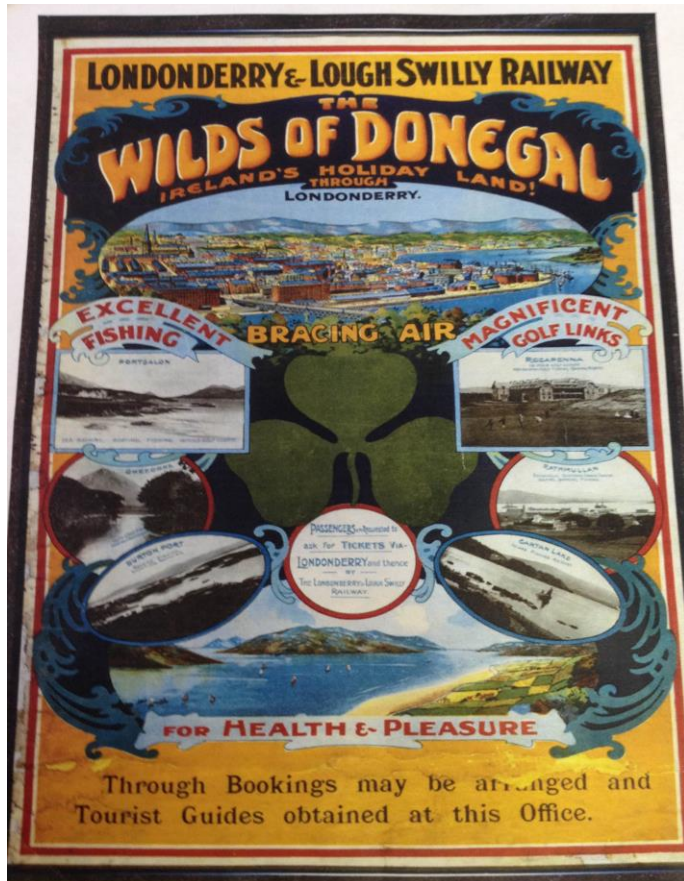
Tourists came to Wilkins Hotel, Glenveagh castle, St. Columba's hotel and Loughveagh house by train. In this photo we see tourists who arrived by train to Wilkin's Hotel in Churchill.



Tourists and locals came by train to Doon Well near Termon. This was a popular place of pilgrimage and it attracted thousands of people to the area in the early 1900's. Here are some photos of pilgrims at the well.



The people who stayed in *Glenveagh* castle and *St. Columba's* hotel went fishing in *Gartan Lake*. *Glenveagh* and *Gartan* lakes were also popular fishing locations. This is an advertisement about fishing in *Gartan Lake* and *Burtonport*.



This is the record book of visitors who came to St. Columba's hotel during 1912 to 1915. More than likely they came by train. Here are the names of families who stayed in the hotel: Mac Gregor, Stevenson and Bland. Stevenson caught 32 trout weighing 12 pounds in the Kibbon Lake.

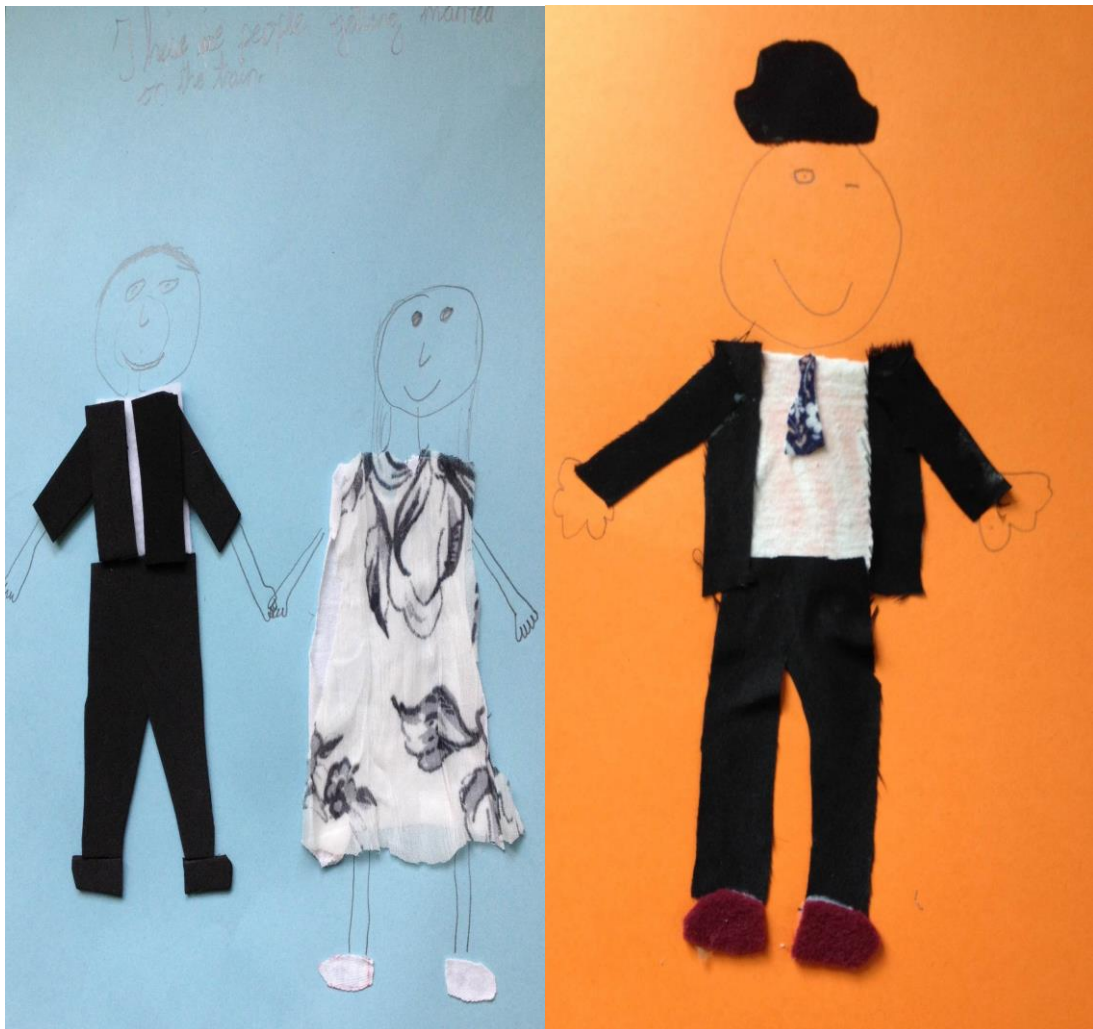
ST. COLUMB'S HOTEL
VISITORS BOOK

	NAME	REMARKS
Sept 15 1910	Mr. Storer J. R. McCormell	Had a very enjoyable holiday - I had had 32 trout weighing 12 lbs. on Arlboro lake
May 4 th	Mr. J. J. Martin Sudbury Harrow.	Had a delightful time and hope to come again
May 3 rd 10 May 11 th	Major W. S. C. Bland R.S.A. Lt. R. H. Bland C.M.G. <u>Woodbank - Whiteabbey - Co. Antrim.</u>	We have enjoyed our stay here, & wish this house all good fortune.
May 8 11	Major & Mrs. MacGregor.	Lisreen Londonderry.
May 21	Yalden H. Knowles Brookley Yalden Knowles Heath Hall Thursley Godalming Surrey	Spent a most enjoyable fortnight

	NAME	REMARKS
June 25 th July 13 th	William Hughes Hampstead England Thactray, Hornet - Jheal well Pallycarr Co. Antrim.	Brussels. Very nice indeed. Our party of six have been made most comfortable by Mr. Johnstone and we are all looking forward to coming again. Had a very enjoyable week here, must repeat leaving. Another delightful visit.
July 22 nd - July 16 th 1912	Francis H. Trimmell Leamington Spa	
July 20 th	Robert Young, Esq. Eslet, Kirkcubright Miss A. P. Young, S. T. H. Dundee Mrs. J. Cook, Leamington Spa J. Cook, Leamington Spa	
Aug. 2 nd	J. B. Hillier	Londonderry

After completing the project we unveiled many happy and sad stories about the Donegal Railway. We completed many other lessons in school based on the "Railway" theme. We created various pieces of Art based on trains and we designed fashion outfits based on the early 1900's.





In Music we learned two songs about "Train journeys". They were "Morning Town Ride" and "Hometown on the Foyle". In Drama we re-enacted railway scenes such as The Owencarrow railway disaster, visitors arriving to Churchill on holiday by train, children on the way to the hiring fair in Letterkenny and farmers bringing their animals to the fairs. We learned about history right upon our doorstep and really enjoyed our trip back in time along the railway tracks.

Bibliography

Textbooks:

- **The County Donegal Railway** by Flanders, Steve
- **The County Donegal railways** by Patterson, Edward Mervyn
- **The County Donegal railways companion** by Crombleholme, Roger
- **A Decade of Change: Donegal and Ireland 1912-1923 Document Study Pack** by Donegal County Archives Service
- **Gartan Parish** by McClintock, May
- **In Kilmacrennan long ago** by Hugh Strain
- **The Last years of "the wee Donegal"** by Robotham, Robert
- **Londonderry and Lough Swilly railway** by Flanders, Steve
- **The Lough Swilly Railway** by Patterson, Edward Mervyn
- **Maps of Donegal through the ages a visual history** by Moran, Sean
- **The Swilly And The Wee Donegal-Irish Railway Photographers** by Burges, Anthony
- **Lost Railways of County Donegal** by Stephen Johnson

- **The Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway** by Dave Bell and Steve Flanders
- **That old sinner** by Frank Sweeney
- Interviews were conducted with Jim Mc Laughlin, Elizabeth Fay, Jim Fay, Sally Green and Niall Mc Ginley. We wish to thank them very much for their time and sharing their valuable memories with us.
- Seamus Doohan, Walking guide.