

BANDON HISTORICAL JOURNAL



£4.00

Walsh Printers (Clonakilty) Ltd.

NO 11

Castlemahon, Bandon.

1995

THE OLD "CORK & BANDON" RAILWAY

by B. Bennett

Once upon a time there was a broad-gauge (5 ft. 3 in) railway system from Albert Quay in Cork city, connecting most of the towns and villages in West Cork. Commencing at the level of the River Lee, it climbed over the watershed of Goggins Hill, down to the plains of the Owenabue, along through Upton, until it reached the banks of the Brinny River. Continuing through the Kilpatrick Tunnel, it followed the course of the Bandon River until it reached Dunmanway, after which it had to climb through Gloundaw Pass to reach Drimoleague which was the junction for one branch to Skibbereen and Baltimore, and the other went to Bantry. There were other branches to Kinsale and Clonakilty and the total mileage of the system was almost one hundred miles.

The first section from Ballinhassig to Bandon opened in 1849 and the connecting link to Cork opened in 1851 on completion of the Chetwynd Viaduct and the Ballinhassig Tunnel. Thus, the Kilpatrick Tunnel near DOWNDANIEL was the first railway tunnel in Ireland opened for passenger traffic.

A separate undertaking called the West Cork Railway Co., commenced a service from Bandon to Dunmanway in 1866. This Company's station in Bandon was where the car-park of St. Patrick's Church is to-day. This entailed the transfer of passengers and goods traffic between the two stations as the line from Cork terminated near Bandon Bridge (now Kelleher's Builders Providers). Eventually, both stations were replaced by the building which is now the County Council offices.

Meanwhile, a line had been opened in 1859 connecting Kinsale Junction (near Killeady) to Kinsale - a distance of 10 miles - with stations at Ballymartle and Farrangalway, serving the villages of Riverstick and Belgooly respectively.

The next development was the opening of a line from Dunmanway to Skibbereen in 1877 by the Ilen Valley Railway Co. followed by the Drimoleague to Bantry section in 1881. The latter terminated at a station where Bantry Hospital stands to-day but was extended in 1888 to the town and pier. The West Cork Co. opened a branch from Clonakilty Junction (Gaggin) to Clonakilty and the Ilen Valley extended their line from Skibbereen to Baltimore in 1893.

The Schull and Skibbereen Co. began operating a narrow gauge (3 ft) line in 1886 whilst another separate company ran a line from Ballinascorthy to Timoleague from December 1890 with an extension to Courtmacsherry in April 1891. These two lines enjoyed "Baronial Guaranteed" status during their existence.

Each and every one of these operations necessitated the passing of separate Bills in Westminster and subsequent negotiations with property owners and landholders

for the purchase of their rights, etc.

The system was now complete and in 1888 the various companies (with the exceptions of the Schull and Skibbereen and the Timoleague and Courtmacsherry) agreed to amalgamate and form the "Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway Co.", which in turn was amalgamated into the "Great Southern Railways" in 1925.

From early days until 1925 the system was popularly known as the "Bandon Railway" and it was the lifeline of the whole West Cork area until the advent of the internal combustion engine created severe competition for traffic and signalled its eventual demise in 1961.

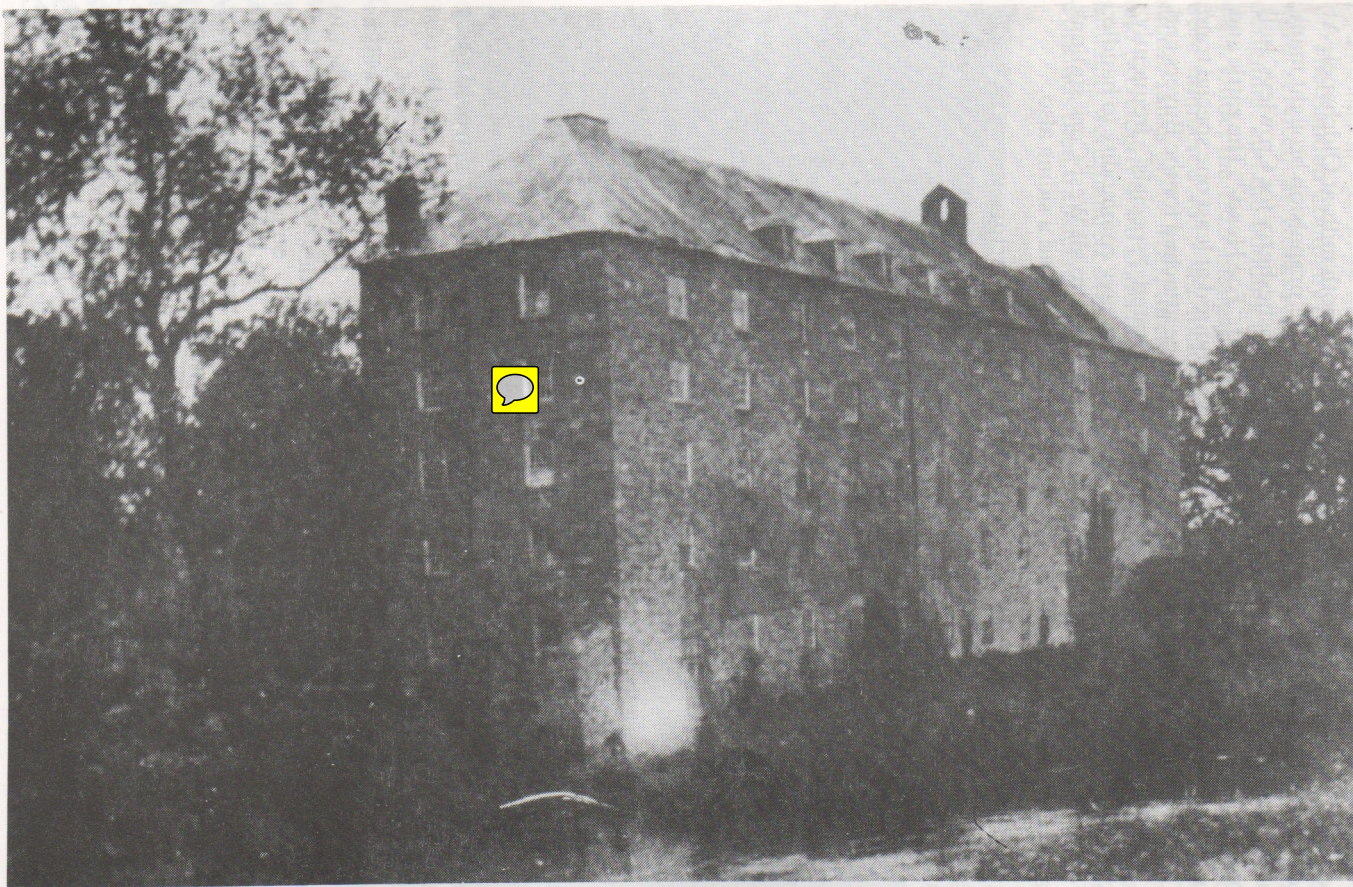
The administrative centre was at Albert Quay and the locomotive depot was at Rocksavage (near the South Infirmary). Practically all other departments were located at Bandon. These included signalling department, vehicle building, saw-mills, creosoting pits for wooden sleepers, carpenters' and plumbers' departments, engineering shop, etc., so that before the 1925 amalgamation the number of men on the pay-roll at Bandon exceeded one hundred (see photograph of cover of St. Patrick's Parish Bulletin dated 13th May 1973 reproduced herewith).

Financially, the line was not an outstanding success and dividends on shareholders' funds went unpaid at times. In 1862, (when the line was only eleven years in existence) passengers and merchants were reverting to road transport between Cork and Bandon due to the manner in which management applied charges for both types of traffic. A person could travel from Bandon to Cork by coach for one shilling and six pence when the second-class return fare by rail was four shillings and six pence. The issuing of season tickets was cancelled and stage coaches ran again from June 1862 in competition. Long lines of horses and carts could be seen on their way to Cork with all sorts of country produce and goods made in the town, and returning with merchandise for shopkeepers, publicans, etc.

One city merchant wishing to set up a branch in Bandon found that the charge for returning his empty containers would be twice as much as when they were full. The only commodity on which charges were not increased was coal because merchants could have it shipped from Cork to Colliers' Quay and transferred to Bandon by road at the same all-in cost, namely two shillings per ton.

Apart from passenger traffic, all kinds of goods were handled, and in the early years, locomotive power was a problem. The small engines and the long inclines in places created difficulties but matters gradually improved in this respect. Small consignments like shop-keepers' requirements are always the most lucrative business for railways but bulky traffic like coal, grain, sand and stones do not produce much revenue. There was plenty of the latter type on offer. The Aerial Ropeway from Ballinphellic Brickworks on the Kinsale Road brought heavy tonnage to Ballinhassig Station and the three stone-quarries near Killeady sent large quantities of whinstone to the city for street surfacing.

The sidings in Bandon produced heavy traffic too - hogsheads of whiskey from



Farrannasherry Mills, Murragh Bridge, 1835-1920.

(By courtesy of C.J. O'Regan)



*In the year 1919 Bandon Railway employees met to make a presentation to Mr. Tom Collins prior to his departure for America. **Front row:** (l. to r.): Larry Lehane, Willie Singleton (died 1970), Sam Williams, Con Collins, Billie Milner, J. Wilson, Jerome O'Mahony, John Flynn, P. Walsh, John Lynch, Mike Hurley. **2nd row:** D. Rattray, Gerald Troy, Con Lombard, Jim Jones, Jim Wilmot, Johnny Hurley, Dick Corker, Patk. Collins, Tom Collins, John Baker (died 1975), John Coughlan, Tim Whelton, John Collins, Jack Ring. **3rd row:** Michael Mehigan, Mike O'Leary, Bill Lehane, Tim Collins, Dan Collins, Paddy Calnan, Dan O'Leary, Miah O'Donovan (died 1976), J. Murray, Johnny O'Donovan, Paddy O'Mahony, Thady Murphy, Jack Regan, Justin McCarthy. **Back row:** Michael Larkin, Michael Kearney, Casey Donovan (died 1974), Donal Reen, Dave Jennings, Bill Davis, J. Galvin, Sonny O'Leary, Bobby Hayes, Jim Carey, Jerh. Hickey, Jack Murray, Con O'Mahony, T. Collins. (Courtesy of Paddy Connolly.*

Allmans' Distillery (who provided their own locomotive) and stout for bottling at Beamish & Crawford's plant at Watergate.

The siding at Castlebernard was used extensively by both mills at Oldchapel. At Shannonvale on the Clonakilty Branch, the famous horse propulsion brought many tons out of the siding. There was also a siding at Farranasherry for Crowleys' mill near Desert Station and it was powered by a horse called "Toe Head". The cattle and pig fairs held in the West Cork towns in those days required at least one special train from Cork in the early mornings, usually with a carriage attached for the Buyers and Cattle Dealers. Fish traffic from Baltimore necessitated "specials" frequently. Barytes from Bantry and Dunmore, Clonakilty, was a heavy commodity to handle. Sand for agricultural purposes from Courtmacsherry went to all West Cork stations as far as Madore and Durrus Road. Atkins of Dunmanway had a siding also.

From the early 1930's, sugar beet traffic for Mallow Factory was very heavy during the months of October to January. Most of it came from Clonakilty, Courtmacsherry and Timoleague. Prior to 1922, much traffic accrued from the British Naval and Army garrisons at Bere Island, Clonakilty, Kinsale, Bandon and other barracks.

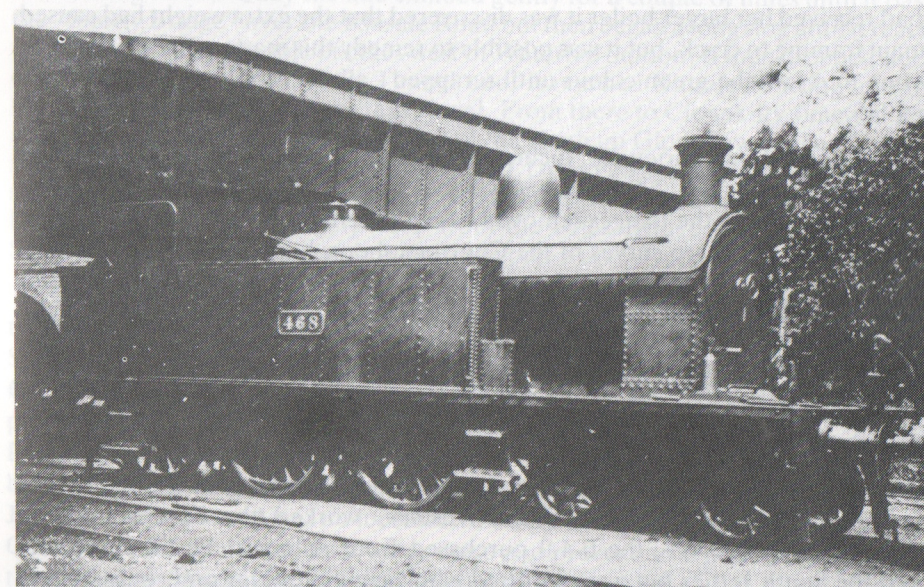
Train movements were controlled by the standard "block system" which ensured that only one "staff" could be available at any one time for a section. If the driver checked that he had been given the right "staff" for the section he was about to enter, it would be impossible to meet another train before reaching the next station. With the exception of Desert, Madore, Durrus Road and Creagh, all stations had "staff instruments". A "long section" arrangement between Cork and Bandon, enabled the early morning trains to operate without signalmen being on duty at Waterfall, Ballinhassig and Upton.

Prior to the opening of the Cork City Railways in January 1912 the whole Bandon system was isolated from Glanmire Road terminus and all traffic for "up country" had to be moved across the River Lee. The Great Western Railway of England showed great interest in connecting both termini in the hope that it would bring business to their subsidiary, the Fishguard and Rosslare Harbour ferries, and the cost of the line was borne by them jointly with the Great Southern & Western Co. of Ireland, the Cork Harbour Commissioners and the Bandon Company. As well as connecting the Glanmire Road and Albert Quay stations, there were branches to Anderson's Quay, Customs House Quay and the South Jetties.

Before 1912, when purchasing new locomotives it was necessary to arrange arrival date so that the level of the tide would ensure that the deck of the transporting ship would be level with road surface at Albert Quay at two o'clock in the morning. The locomotive would arrive loaded across the deck of the ship on suitable rails and a length of rail would be laid temporarily across the roadway from the gate at the eastern side of the Albert Quay terminus building. When the rails on both roadway and deck were matching and connected, compressed air would be applied to the cylinders of the locomotive and this would move it off the deck and across the

roadway and into the railway yard. The upward curved rail-ends could be seen projecting out under the wooden gate until the yard was demolished in the 1960's.

The Bandon Company maintained a stock of 20 engines for many years and they were serviced at Rocksavage. This work included major overhauls, some re-designing, and the building of one 4-4-0 tank in 1901 which was numbered 7 (later 478). Under the 1925 amalgamation the 20 engines transferred to G.S.R. ownership were numbered 463 - 482 inclusive. They were:- eight 4-6-0 tanks (463 - 470) six saddle-tanks (471 - 476), three Neilsen Reids 4-4-2 (479 - 481) and 4-4-0 tank (478) and two elderly 4-4-0 Dübs tanks. Both Courtmacsherry engines (Argadeen and St. Molaga) were handed over as well as the Schull engines. All heavy maintenance work was then transferred to Inchicore.



LEADING DIMENSIONS OF CLASS 463

Cylinders, Diameter	18 ins.
Stroke	24 ins.
Working Steam Pressure	160 lb. per sq. in.
Total Weight of Engine	55.2 tons in working order
Adhesion Weight	41.9 tons
Maximum Axle Load	14.5 tons
Driving Wheels	5 ft. 2½ ins. diameter
Tractive Effort at 85% b.p.	16,920 lb.
Coal Capacity	3 tons
Water Capacity	1,100 gallons
Eight 4-6-0 tank engines were built by Beyer, Peacock & Co., of Manchester for the C.B. & S.C.R. Co between 1906 and 1920. No. 468 built in 1910 is pictured here.	

The picture of No. 468 reproduced here is interesting because it must have been taken soon after the amalgamation. Standing in the Rocksavage depot under the Hibernian Road Bridge, the old Bandon wide-flanged funnel has been replaced by an "Inchicore" funnel and the new cast-iron number plate is on the side tank instead of the small brass plate, high on the cab-side. But the large screw-jacks for emergencies are still near the smoke-box (these disappeared soon afterwards) and the coal bunker has not received the addition which added about five cwts. to the original capacity of three tons.

During the "Bandon" regime all locomotives were painted dark green and lined with a narrow double yellow line. The principal alteration during their time with the G.S.R. was the fitting of "Belpair" boilers to seven of the eight 4-6-0's. Soon after 467 had received her larger boiler it was discovered that the extra weight had caused the main framing to crack, but it was possible to remedy this matter. No. 469 was the only one to retain the green colour until scrapped - all the others were plain black after 1925.

On amalgamation a variety of "Inchicore" engines began to appear. The first was an 0-6-0 goods engine No. 209 which had a higher tractive effort than the 4-6-0's. No. 90 soon followed with the flanges removed from the centre driving wheels to enable her to negotiate the sharp curves of the Courtmacsherry line. These were followed by 4-4-2 tanks No.s 27, 30, 32, and 34 which were very suitable for passenger trains on main line and branches. Some of the Bandon engines disappeared and could be found working the Dublin suburban lines where they were very popular with their crews due to their free steaming ability and lever reversing. No. 468 was observed working Harcourt Street to Bray in 1928 but returned later (and appeared in a film which was made in Bantry in 1935).

Later, Nos. 269 and 270, ex Waterford and Western, appeared and in the 1950's, Nos. 552 and 557, ex Midland Great Western, worked the beet seasons in Courtmacsherry. No. 495, the 0-4-0 purchased from Allmans' Distillery usually worked the South Jetties but was not fitted with vacuum braking and consequently was unfit for passenger working but did on occasion run as "pilot" engine on Courtmacsherry excursions.

In 1954, diesel rail cars were introduced for passenger working and "C" class diesels for goods trains appeared in 1956. These helped to improve timings and performance but competition from road-borne traffic was increasing all the time and the end was looming.

The Bantry Bay Steamship Co. (which may be regarded as a subsidiary of the C.B. & S.C.R.) began operating a steamer service from Bantry to Castletownbere in 1883 with a small vessel called the "Lady Betty Balfour" which was replaced by the "Princess Beara" about 1900 and a new ship called the "Lady Elsie" was purchased for the Bantry to Glengarriff service in 1903. The Castletownbere sailings called at Adrigole Pier and also at Lawrence Cove and Ballinakilla on Bear Island. Sunday excursions from Cork and intermediate stations to Glengarriff, via steamer from

Bantry, were very popular for many years. The Pier at Bantry was extended and lines laid so that trains came alongside the steamers at both sides. A new pier was built at Glengarriff in 1906 where the "Harbour Queen" now operates.

In advertising the scenic route from Cork to Killarney via Bantry, Glengarriff and Kenmare, it was referred to as the "*Prince of Wales Route*" in reference to his tour in 1858 although he could only use the line from Cork to Bandon then. In July 1893, Prince Louis of Battenburg travelled the same route using the 3 p.m. from Albert Quay to Bantry. The Bantry Bay Co. operated successfully until the early 1930's but falling receipts led to the "Lady Elsie" being laid up and the "Princess Beara" sailing only on Thursdays to Castletownbere and returning on Saturday mornings and doing a trip to Glengarriff on Saturday afternoons. All sailings ceased in 1946.

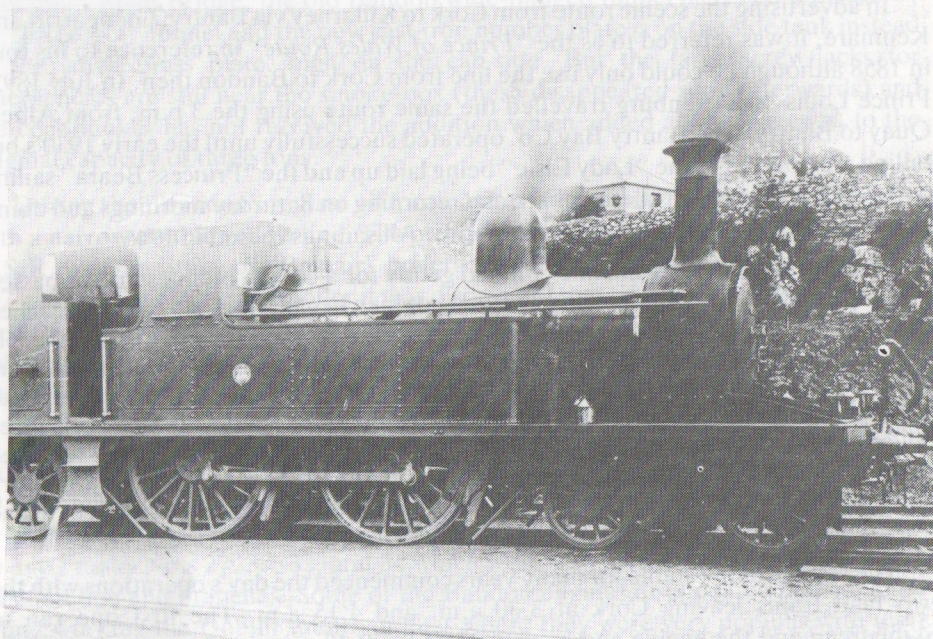
Leaving Albert Quay the line climbed gently for a couple of miles until it passed the "Snotty Bridge" over the Kinsale Road but then began a long slog until it reached the Abbey Bridge a couple of miles west of Waterfall Station. It then dropped steeply down through the Ballinhassig Tunnel until it reached Kinsale Junction and from there to Bandon Station it was fairly level. From there to Clonakilty Junction it was all uphill again but then levelled off until the climb up Gloundaw began some three miles west of Dunmanway. The line from Drimoleague to Skibbereen dropped steeply down the "Mutton Bank" just west of the junction. Likewise, on the Bantry branch there was a very sharp drop from the Brick Bridge west of Durrus Road Station right down to the terminus near the pier.

The standard time-table for many years commenced the day's operations with the two mail trains leaving Cork at 3.30 a.m. and 4.15 a.m. The first one ran to Skibbereen and the engine and crew worked the 8.40 a.m. passenger train back to Cork. This was one of the heaviest workings of the day. By the time the Bantry portion had been amalgamated at Drimoleague and a few wagons of pigs from Dunmanway, plus a similar contribution off the Clonakilty Branch, the train would be getting quite lengthy but double-heading was not permitted between Clonakilty Junction and Upton. An extra locomotive would head the 9.10 a.m. passenger from Cork to Kinsale Junction, take water there and proceed to Upton to be attached to the 8.40 to assist up to Ballinhassig and through the tunnel.

The 4.15 ran to Drimoleague, returned as a Goods train to Bandon, and worked the 8.50 a.m. "Mixed" train to Cork. The engine would then work the 11.15 Goods to Drimoleague and return with a Goods train which for many years was the Up Night Mail arriving back in Cork before 7 p.m. Meanwhile, the engine of the 8.40 a.m. would have been turned and taken the 12.55 p.m. Passenger train from Cork to Drimoleague and returned with the 4.55 Passenger train arriving back in Cork soon after 7 p.m. In this working, both engines involved (usually Nos. 463 and 465) were doing double journeys over most of the line for six days every week - at least 200 miles per engine per day.

Meanwhile, the 4-6-0 kept overnight at Drimoleague shed would have left with the 11.15 a.m. Goods and shunted all station yards before reaching Albert Quay about 3.30 and returning with the 5.30 passenger to Drimoleague where the Bantry

and Baltimore engines would be waiting to collect their portions of the train. In between times all sorts of cattle trains, the ballast train, light engines, etc., would be fitted in as well as possible between the scheduled trains.



C.B. and S.C.R. Loco. No. 3, at Rocksavage, c.1926. Still in original green livery with double yellow lining and C.B. & S.C.R. crest on side-tank. Small brass No. plate high on side of cab. Brass dome and funnel top. Built by Neilsen Reid of Glasgow as a 4-4-0 but altered at Rocksavage about 1900 by addition of trailing axle and larger bunker to spread weight more evenly.

Snippets From "The Cork Constitution"

- * **To Builders.** Proposals will be received by the Overseer for Building a Bridge at Baxter's Ford, near Bandon. Plans and Specifications to be seen at the offices of R.B. Cotter, Esq., County Courthouse.

(16th January, 1830)

- * **To Be Let.** The Bolting Mills and Dwelling House of Ballinadee with 6-62 acres. The Mill is capable of manufacturing 5,000 Barrells of Wheat yearly, in perfect working order, and in the heart of a fine Corn Country with the advantage of being able to ship on the spot. Apply: John Hornibrook, at the Mills.

(3rd July, 1830)

The Timoleague and Courtmacsherry was the "Cinderella" of the system. When it was a separate company the engineering department was beside the Abbey at Timoleague and Paddy Murphy, a local blacksmith, would make anything from a three-link coupling to a slide valve for an engine. The original locos. 2-6-0 tank "Argadeen" and 0-4-2 tank "St. Molaga" were built by the Hunslet Engine Co. of Leeds in the 1890s and were never more than barely sufficient for the traffic. Because the line was originally built as a "light railway" it was not possible to run heavier engines until improvements were made in the permanent way in the early 50's but despite many threats to close it, it survived as long as the rest of the system until 1961. Sunday Excursions were very popular in Summertime and when there was an afternoon one from Bandon it was always known as the "Boozers' Train".

The Irish Railway Record Society ran an outing on St. Patrick's Day in 1961 which ran from Glanmire Road to Clonakilty, back to Clonakilty Junction, from there to Baltimore, and back to Glanmire terminus where it arrived at 2.30 the following morning, although scheduled to be back in time to connect with the Dublin Night Mail which left at 9.15 p.m.! It was the one and only occasion that a dining car ran on the Bandon Railway.

Exactly two weeks later, on 31st March 1961, the whole system was shut down and demolition commenced on 2nd April.

A NOTE ON THE BANDON STATIONS

Paddy Connolly T.C.

The Bandon Station of the West Cork Railway Co. was situated on the side of the embankment between the present Co. Council offices and the bridge which crossed Oliver Plunkett Street: the "Eagle Bridge", about where the E.S.B. depot is to-day. Passenger access to this station was by steps from the Cork and Bandon property. A dispute between the two companies (and there were many) resulted in the West Cork Company building another station at Rice's Road in 1873 and abandoning the other station.

This new station was on the site of the bungalow adjoining the church car park at Rices Road and was in use until 1880 when the two companies amalgamated. The back wall of the station house is at the rear of the bungalow and the chimney flue is to-day utilised for the central heating boiler.

PROGRAMME 1994

January: Annual General Meeting

February: *"The Story of the Titanic"*
Mr. Michael O'Brien.

March: *"The Centenary Of Bandon Railway Station".*
Mr. Colm Creedon and Unveiling of Plaque.

April: *Tour of Oldchapel Village.*