

The Great Western Railway in Ireland

By Mike Burrows.

From the very early days of the Great Western Railway the owners were always looking for ways to promote G.W.R. interests, so it was only a matter of time before the country of Ireland came under the scrutiny of the directorship and resulted in a plan to operate a steamship link between England and Ireland.

A passenger for Waterford, travelling on the G.W.R, in 1856, would alight at Neyland (Milford Haven) and be ferried across Pembroke Dock to embark on a twice weekly iron screw steamer, "City of Paris", which was owned by Ford & Jackson, of London. An improvement the following year saw another vessel, the P.S. Pacific, commence service between Neyland and Cork.

Parliamentary Powers were granted in 1871 whereby the G.W.R. was able to run her own steamers on the Milford to Waterford and the Milford to Cork routes, this actually taking place from June 1875. Both services were operated by the G.W.R. for a year or so after which arrangements were made for the Cork service to be run by the City of Cork Steam Packet Company Limited.

After a payment of £45,000, the G.W.R. took over on 1st February 1872, the four ships of Ford & Jackson (still being operated in Captain Jackson's name) on the Irish service, the South of Ireland, the P.S. Malkhoff, the Vulture and the Great Western (1). The Malkhoff was broken up in 1884, followed by the Vulture in 1886. In 1878 the other two steamers were transferred to the Great Western's Weymouth - Cherbourg service, the South of Ireland coming to grief off the Dorset coast on Christmas Day 1883.

The Great Western (1) returned to Milford in 1885 and was occasionally -chartered by the City of Cork Steam Packet Company Limited. She was loaned to the Weymouth & Channel Islands Steam Packet Company for six months in 1887 to replace the wrecked Brighton, then sold to David MacBrayne in 1891 when she was renamed Lovedale, and finally broken up in 1905.

A further £40,000 each was spent on two new vessels, the P.S. Limerick (1) and the Milford, which appeared in 1873. A second Limerick came on the scene a year later, followed by the Waterford (1).

The P.S. Pembroke was added to the Irish service fleet in 1880 and, after an accident in June 1895, she was converted to twin-screw propulsion in 1896. In 1915 she was transferred to Weymouth and eventually broken up in 1925.

A new Company, the Fishguard Bay Railway & Pier Company was registered on 29th June 1893, this being a joint venture between the G.W.R. and the Great Southern & Western Railway of Ireland. It produced a subsidiary which became known in 1894 as the Fishguard & Rosslare Railways & Harbours Company Limited. The nautical side of business being operated by the G.W.R. The railway interests from Rosslare harbour to Waterford, then on to Marlow and Cork were entirely under the control of the G.S. & W.R.

One steamer a day in each direction was authorised in 1895 and the S.S. Voltaic had the honour of becoming the first steamer to be owned by the new company.

GWR/in/I/1

Two new ships, the T.S.S. Great Western (11) and the Great Southern, were to be seen on the Milford to Waterford route in 1902. Another ship, the T.S.S. Waterford (11) was added in 1912. She was sold in September 1924.

1906 saw the inauguration of the Fishguard to Waterford route. This new service commencing on 30th August. The steamers were supplied by the Fishguard & Rosslare Railways & Harbours Company Limited. To maintain a double daily service three fast steamers were needed, these being the Tr.S.S. St. Patrick (1), the Tr.S.S. St. David (1) and the Tr.S.S. St. George.

In May 1913 the St. George was sold to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, who in turn sold her in June 1919 to the Great Eastern Railway. The St. Patrick was broken up after a fire on 7th April 1929. The St. David was renamed Rosslare in 1932 and sold a year later. A fourth sister ship joined the fleet in 1908, the St. Andrew (1) which was renamed Fishguard in 1932 only to be sold for scrap in September 1933. All three vessels were converted into hospital ships on the outbreak of the 1914-18 war.

The T.S.S. Atlanta was acquired from the London & South Western Railway in 1910 and was sometimes used for tender duty at Fishguard before leaving the fleet in 1924.

The first of a second series of saints, the T.S.S. St. Patrick (11), was registered in 1930 under the F& R.R & H. Company and operated for some of her career from Weymouth. In June 1941, while approaching Fishguard in daylight after an overnight run from Rosslare, she was attacked by enemy aircraft, just off Strumble Head, and hit by several bombs she sank very quickly. The St. Andrew (114 built in 1932 became a hospital ship in World War 11, returning to the Fishguard - Rosslare route in 1946. After conversion to a side-loading vehicle carrier she was scrapped in 1967. The St. David (11), also commissioned in 1932, similarly became a hospital ship but was lost at the landing in Italy in January 1944.

The T.S.S. Great Western (111) succeeded the Great Western (11) in 1934. She did a spell on trooping duty from April to August 1944 and was acquired by the British Transport Commission (Western Region) in 1948. She sailed on the Fishguard - Waterford passenger service until June 1959 when the service became cargo only. This service was axed in turn in 1966.

The Great Western's war losses caused the laying down of the T.S.S. St. David (111) which was launched in February 1947 and entered service at Fishguard in July of the same year. The St. Patrick (111) arrived a few months later. This was eventually transferred to the Weymouth - Channel Islands service under the control of the Southern Region.

So ended the marine department of the Western Region, with the transfer of the Fishguard ships to the London Midland Region. The remaining member of the F & R.R & H. Co., Ltd., fleet, the St. David (111) continued on the Fishguard - Rosslare route with the F R monogram on her funnel instead of the B.R. emblem.

GWR/in/I/2

In their capacity as forwarding agents the G.W.R. had offices in,

Dublin : 11, Nassau Street.
Cork : 98, Patrick Street.
Limerick : 123, O'Connell Street.
Waterford : Adelphi Quay.
Rosslare Harbour.

Check List of Perfins of the G.W.R. used in Ireland

Stamps of G.B.

Die 2 Queen Victoria 1d red Plates 177 & 180.
Postmarked 156 (Cork)

Stamps of Eire

		S.G. No.	Scott.
Die 3	½d bright green	71	65
	1d carmine	72	66
Die 10	2d pearl green	74	68
Die 8	½d bright green	71	65
	2d pearl green	74	68
	2d carmine	109	103
Die 9	2½d red brown	115	110

Check List of Railway Executive Western Region Perfins used
in Ireland

RE/WR	½d green	133	128
	1d carmine	112	107
	1½d claret	113	108
	2½d red-brown	115	110
	3d blue	116	111
	2½d wine	152	145
	3d blue	158	151

A cover exists, posted at Cork on 11th April 1956, with the rubber stamp endorsement,

TEMPORARY ADDRESS
BRITISH RAILWAYS OFFICE
ALBERT QUAY STATION
CORK.

NOTE: The Die Numbers given above are from the forthcoming booklet on Railway perfins and are the same as those in the earlier listing issued via the Bulletin with the exception of Die 10. This is an additional die.

GWR/in/I/3