

Railways



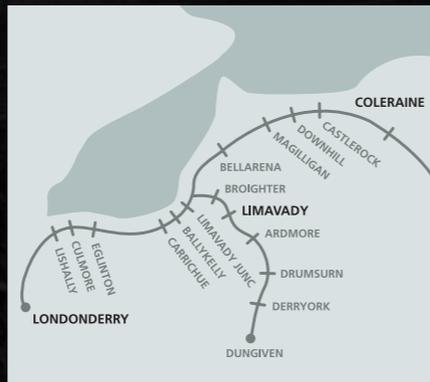
Map of local railway lines in 1947. Courtesy of National Museums Northern Ireland

In the early 1900s, at the height of the Irish railways, almost everyone lived within 5 miles of a railway station.

The railways allowed fast and efficient transport of goods, speeded up mail and communication networks, promoted and created seaside resorts and established standard time.

From the early 1920s, road and air transport began to replace the railways so that by the end of the 1950s the majority of our local lines had been closed.

The railway tracks have long gone, and their path through our towns and villages has been interrupted by roads and other developments. But many of the station houses, gatehouses, piers and bridges still remain.



Limavady's Path Through History

Below is a timeline showing Limavady Heritage Trail sites in their historical context. Those featured in this guide are highlighted.

BC	C1st	C5th	C7/8th	C12th	C13th	C17th
CARVANBANE TOMB 4500-2500BC	AUGHLISH STONE CIRCLE 2500BC	BROUGHTER HOARD FIND SPOT C1st/BC	DRUMCEATT ASSEMBLY SITE C1st	BLACK FORT C5th/C12th	WHITE FORT C5th/C12th	KING'S FORT C5th/C12th
		TANDRAGEE FORT C5th/C12th	ROUGH FORT C5th/C12th	TAMNARIAN FORT C7th/C8th	BANAGHER OLD CHURCH C12th	BOVEVAGH CHURCH C12th
				DUNGIVEN PRIORY C12th	ST AIDAN'S CHURCH C13th	DUNGIVEN CASTLE C17th/C19th
C18th	C19th	C19th	C19th	C19th	C19th	C19th
DRUMSURN OLD CHAPEL C18th	BALLYDONEY SWEATHOUSE C18th	DRUMCOVITT HOUSE C18th	TANNYRANNY CHURCH C18th	THE RHELICK, KILLEEN C19th	LARGY BRIDGE C19th	LIMAVADY WORKHOUSE C19th
				PAUPER'S GRAVEYARD C19th	BALLYKELLY OS BASE TOWER C19th	MAGILLIGAN MARTELLO TOWER C19th
				SAMPSON'S TOWER C19th	LOUGHERY'S SCUTCHING MILL C19th	KILHOYLE LIME WORKS C19th
				GALVIN SCHOOL C19th	RITTER'S GENERATOR C19th	CARRICK MILLS C19th
C19th	C19th	C19th	C19th	C20th	WW2	WW2
LARGY SCHOOL C19th	LARGY POET'S HOUSE C19th	LARGY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH C19th	LIMAVADY JUNCTION C19th	DRUMSURN RAILWAY STATION C19th	MAGILLIGAN RAILWAY STATION C19th	BELLARENA RAILWAY STATION C19th
				OS MARK MAGILLIGAN C19th	OS MARK BENBRADAGH C19th	ST MATTHEW'S GRAVEYARD DRUMSURN C20th
				LARGY ORANGE HALL C20th	LARGY PILLARS C20th	AGHANLOO AIRFIELD WW2
						BALLYKELLY AIRFIELD WW2

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The Causeway Museum Service represents a partnership between the four local authorities of Coleraine, Ballymoney, Limavady and Moyle. This project is part of a three year community outreach programme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Causeway Museum Service



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Limavady Heritage Trail

Railways



Londonderry & Coleraine Railway



Bellarena Station

PERIOD
C19th/20th

ACCESS
Castlerock and Bellarena stations are still operational



Limavady Junction c1950

Construction began on a railway line between Derry and Coleraine in 1845. Some 22,000 acres of sloblands along the southern shore of Lough Foyle were reclaimed to lay the tracks, and tunnels were blasted through the cliffs between Downhill and Castlerock. The route remains the most scenic railway journey in Northern Ireland.

There were 10 stations along the line at Castlerock, Downhill, Magilligan, Bellarena, Limavady Junction, Ballykelly, Carrichue, Eglinton, Culmore, and Lisahally. Only Castlerock and Bellarena remain operational.

The Coleraine/Derry line was connected by a four mile spur line to Limavady Station. The first train steamed into Newtownlimavady – as it was then called – in 1852. Unfortunately, the station platform was several inches higher than the bottom of the carriage doors, so the dignitaries on board had to dismount from the opposite side of train onto the track.

Passenger services to Limavady Station ended in 1950, though goods transport continued until 1955.



Limavady Junction



Bellarena Station

Magilligan Station



PERIOD
C19th/20th

GRID REFERENCE
C7072 3442

TOWNLAND
Craig

ACCESS
Private.
Permission must be gained from owner

The station house was built in 1873 by John Lanyon as the first station on the Londonderry and Coleraine Railway and remained in use until the early 1970s. It has since been renovated and converted into a house and apartment.

Seen from Duncrun Road the long low building emphasises and celebrates the speed of the train, an effect made all the more dramatic by the contrast of the flat landscape around it. The signal box is not original – it was taken from Cullybackey, renovated, and placed on top of the former toilet block – but it has improved the original design of the building.

Drumsumn Station



PERIOD
C19th/20th

GRID REFERENCE
C7160 1705

TOWNLAND
Maine North

ACCESS
Converted to a private dwelling

The arrival of the railway created a bustling village at Drumsumn nearly overnight. Since it is situated halfway between Limavady and Dungiven, most of the railway workers stayed in Drumsumn while building the line.

Part of O'Connor's Store was converted into a hotel for the men who came from miles around looking for work. In order to save their boots for digging, many of them walked from as far as Garvagh and Kilrea in their bare feet.

The station house was in the heart of the village and was provided with a goods store mainly for transporting lime from Kilhoyle Quarry. In 1962, Hurricane Debbie blew away the store, along with most of the haystacks in the area.

Limavady & Dungiven Railway



Limavady Station



Limavady Station

PERIOD
C19th/20th

ACCESS
Railway line has been removed

Rapid growth of the flax industry in the area led to an increasing demand for fast and efficient export of flax and linen to the large spinning and weaving mills of Belfast. Soon after Limavady Station opened, plans were begun to extend the line towards Dungiven.

The Limavady and Dungiven Railway ran mostly parallel to the Castle River, with stations at Ardmore, Drumsumn and Derryork. The largest bridge was close to Derryork station where the line crossed the Gelvin Water, the piers of which still stand today.

The line opened in July 1883 and open carriages were organised for the dignitaries to board the first journey. Unfortunately, the ladies in their fine summer dresses had not accounted for getting covered in soot and smoke.

The steepest gradient and sharpest curve both occurred at Drumaduff Moss, where the train screeched and scraped along the line and often got completely stuck.

One of the fondest memories of the railway is of 'Boyle's excursion', an annual Sunday School outing organised by Mr Patterson Boyle of the Bee Hive Stores. Six or seven hundred children from all over the countryside were taken to Portrush for the day – for many it was their only outing of the year.

The railway never made a profit and was sold to the Northern Counties Committee in 1907. Passenger services were withdrawn in 1933 and from then on, only one goods train ran daily. The last train ran from Dungiven to Limavady on 8th July 1950.