



# The Railways in County Donegal

The railways across County Donegal operated and served the public between 1847 and 1965. The trains transported many goods and products such as fish from Killybegs, tweed from Donegal Town, turf from the bogs, and livestock from the farms. Most of these goods and many people from County Donegal usually went through Derry, especially before partition in 1921. With the introduction of the railways, travel became much easier and quicker across the County and further afield, for work and for leisure. These railways were often the last port of call for emigrants who left for distant shores, for school children going to and from school, and for visitors both local and non-local to explore this beautiful part of Ireland.

Three different railway companies, operated across, and through County Donegal. These companies combined, employed several hundred personnel at their peak, bringing much needed investment and employment into the county. These companies were the County Donegal Railways (CDR), the Great Northern Railway (GNR) and the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway Company (L&LSR). New Hotels and other ancillary services facilitated the increased movement of people and generated additional revenue.

The two narrow gauge railways of County Donegal, the CDR and the L&LSR had over 200 miles of railway across County Donegal in total by 1914, they were the largest narrow gauge network of railway lines not just in Ireland but also in the British Isles. The L&LSR used the largest steam locomotives found on any of the Irish narrow gauge railways, whilst the CDR was also the first railway company in the British Isles and globally to use a diesel combustion engine to power a passenger railcar as early as 1931! The first railway station in Ireland to be powered by electricity was the station in Fahan, as early as 1885.

If you want to learn more about the railways across the County why not visit the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre in Donegal Town, or check out [www.donegalrailway.com](http://www.donegalrailway.com) where more comprehensive publications about the railways are available. This museum is dedicated to rescuing, restoring, showcasing, and celebrating the unique railways across Donegal. It has just taken possession of its restored Donegal Steam Engine, "Drumcobe", the first original steam engine back in the County in decades, which is now on display on a newly built presentation platform. The museum also has a large display of unique artefacts, other rolling stock, audio presentations, a retail outlet and a coffee stop! For more information see contact details on the back cover.

## Visiting Points



### 1. Carndonagh Station

This is a former Lough Swilly Station built in 1901 for the extension railway from Bunrana. Even though the Station closed as early as November 1935 much of this station still survives today such as the station building, carriage, goods and loco sheds.

Coordinates: 55.25339127408603, -7.261565234051027  
Eircode: F93 VX52



### 2. Bunrana Station

This Lough Swilly station was built in 1864 when the line from Derry was opened here, as a Broad Gauge line originally. The former station building closed in August 1953 but survives today as the Drift Inn, a popular bar and restaurant.

Coordinates: 55.12772828454708, -7.457324566674464  
Eircode: F93 FT99



### 3. Fahan Station

This Lough Swilly station now the Railway Tavern, was built in 1864 and closed in August 1953. Passengers would change here for the steamship services along Lough Swilly operated by the railway company. This station was the first place in Ireland to be powered by electricity generated by a windmill.

Coordinates: 55.08887768550461, -7.476051947631969  
Eircode: F93 TVF2



### 4. Foyle Valley Railway Museum

Opened in 1989 to house the railway collection of the North West of Ireland Railway Society. The Museum has a variety of original Donegal locomotives and rolling stock on display.

Tel: 028 7136 2424 Postcode: BT48 6SQ  
Coordinates: 54.990958635946164, -7.320732351785162



### 5. Farland Point

This was the site of the first railway opened by the Lough Swilly in December 1863 to Farland Point. Closing in 1867, it was the shortest lived railway line in the County. Today you can walk or cycle here along part of the former trackbed of the line from Tooban Junction to Letterkenny.

Coordinates: 55.0426571413879, -7.47659729435152



### 6. Manoreenningham Station

This station was opened in 1883 when the Lough Swilly extended their line from Tooban Junction to Letterkenny. In typical Swilly style the station was about 2 miles from the village it was meant to serve. This station closed in 1953.

Coordinates: 54.935501140939905, -7.607993427023581  
Eircode: F92 DE42



### 7. Letterkenny Station

The bus station building is the last reminder of the three railway lines that used to serve Letterkenny, between 1883 and 1959. When the County Donegal Railway opened its line from Strabane to Letterkenny in 1909 it was the last new Narrow Gauge Railway built in Ireland.

Coordinates: 54.95385580273146, -7.72853723297478  
Eircode: F92 TN23



### 8. Owenacrow Viaduct

This is the site of the largest piece of infrastructure found on the Lough Swilly Railway, which opened from Letterkenny in 1903. Here the railway crossed the Barnes Gap, and on 30th January 1925 the train to Burtonport was blown off the viaduct by strong winds, killing four passengers.

Coordinates: 55.0840019216963, -7.891981959797899



### 9. No II Derryherriff, Creeslough

This is one of the former gatehouses used by the railway between 1903 and 1947 for level crossings on the former Lough Swilly Railway.

Coordinates: 55.13427530840532, -7.9372824536934745 Eircode: F92TW92



### 10. Cashelnagore Station

This former Lough Swilly station opened in 1903 and closed in 1947. It is now an Air B&B. During the 1980s Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie swapped the attractions of Hollywood to film "The Railway Station Man" here.

Coordinates: 55.08368248731793, -8.116798462977068  
Eircode: F92 X45X



### 11. Burtonport Railway Bridge

This is part of the Burtonport Railway Walk from the former terminus in this small fishing port to near the former station at Kinnacslagh. Here you can walk or cycle along nearly 6kms of the former Lough Swilly Railway which opened in 1903 and closed as early as 1940.

Coordinates: 54.97675578118963, -8.404270257708296



### 12. Glenties Station

This is the former terminus of the CDR branch from Stranorlar opened in 1895 and closed completely by 1952. The station building is in excellent condition and remains can be found of some of the other buildings such as the loco shed and water tower.

Coordinates: 54.801223718868314, -8.28453800533456  
Eircode: F94 AE68



### 13. Fintown Station and Railway

This is based at the former County Donegal Railway station in Fintown on the Glenties branch. Since 1995, during the summer months 4kms of the former branch from Fintown is operational.

Coordinates: 54.868235640219694, -8.12041403244385  
Eircode: F94 FR90



### 14. Killybegs Pier and old railway siding

Opened in 1893 and closing in 1959, this was the terminus of the branch from Donegal Town. Although nothing remains of the former station building you can still see some former County Donegal rails on the pier in Killybegs. There was a short branch to the harbour.

Coordinates: 54.63616681828643, -8.44163308816118



### 15. Straleeny Triple Arch Bridge

This substantial triple arch bridge is located near the site of the former Asdara Road station. It is located about 4kms north of the former Killybegs terminus on this branch, and opened in 1893 from Donegal Town.

Coordinates: 54.658321336629946, -8.420372549750535



### 16. Bunlucky Railway Bridge

This bridge over the Bunlucky river was on the former CDR branch to Killybegs near the former Dunkineely station. The bridge is a rare survivor of the typical double arched bridge often used by the County Donegal Railway.

Coordinates: 54.633872094284115, -8.34216376743656



### 17. Donegal Town Station & Drumcobe

This is home to the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre since 1995, based uniquely in the former CDR station building. The line to Donegal Town opened in 1889 and closed at the end of 1959.

Coordinates: 54.65697731305463, -8.108043859816409  
Eircode: F94 EE00 Website: [www.donegalrailway.com](http://www.donegalrailway.com)



### 18. Barnesmore Hall

The best place to see the remains of the County Donegal Railway through the scenic Barnesmore Gap, is to take a break at Biddys pub and restaurant. Here you can park the car and see the former CDR trackbed which ran adjacent to this location.

Coordinates: 54.72024564865439, -7.953151527900352



### 19. Derg Bridge Halt

This halt opened in 1912 beside where the road to Castlederg crossed over the CDR, just before Barnesmore Gap.

Coordinates: 54.74448887542329, -7.9206027439507025



### 20. Stranorlar

Stranorlar was the former headquarters and workshops of the County Donegal Railway. The former station site was demolished in 1974. There is a replica station nameboard beside the main road, and from here remains of the former railway bridge that used to cross the River Finn can still be seen.

Coordinates: 54.801321313426214, -7.775724178613055



### 21. Killygordon Station

This former CDR station building is located adjacent to the road bridge over the former railway. The railway was first opened through here in 1863 as a Broad Gauge line from Strabane.

Coordinates: 54.795416569419785, -7.682622977939077, Eircode: F93 V2V5



### 22. Castlefinn Station

This is the site of the former CDR station opened in 1863 and after partition it also became the main customs post from 1923 until closure in 1959. The former station building with its canopy and goods shed still survive as does the former Irish Customs Office.

Coordinates: 54.8003392335211, -7.593858312212707



### 23. Lifford Station

This station opened in 1909, when the line from Strabane to Letterkenny was completed. Today the former station building survives. In 1923 after partition this became the customs post, as the bridge from Lifford to Strabane over the River Foyle became an international boundary.

Coordinates: 54.833847550929846, -7.476841607653737



### 24. Porthall Bridge

This is one of two former railway bridges built on either side of the border connected by a small island, over the River Foyle. This was on the former Great Northern line that ran from Derry to Dublin opening through Porthall in 1847, the line closed in 1965.

After partition the bridges became a border crossing and in 1971 the British Army blew up one of the bridges to stop it being used as an escape route after terrorist attacks.

Coordinates: 54.866141091883605, -7.456916178960492



### 25. Oakfield Park

Oakfield Park in Raphoe includes Driflin Lake Railway, the longest private railway in the country, running passenger trips during the summer season. [www.oakfieldpark.com](http://www.oakfieldpark.com)

Coordinates: 54.877475310095114, -7.574928425078962  
Eircode: F93 XY1R



### 26. Victoria Road Station

This was the former County Donegal Railway terminus in Derry from 1900 until 1955. The station building is beside the bottom deck of the Craigavon Bridge which was once used to transfer former CDR goods wagons to and from the quays on opposite sides of the River Foyle.

Coordinates: 54.98905046965329, -7.31639791199639  
Postcode: BT47 2BT



### 27. Rosnowlough Skew Arch Bridge

This is a former road overbridge over the CDR line near the former station at Friary Halt just south of Rosnowlough station. This was on the branch from Donegal Town to Ballyshannon, which opened in 1905. Skew means that the passage through the arch is not at right angles to it.

Coordinates: 54.56434701393175, -8.17249787610756

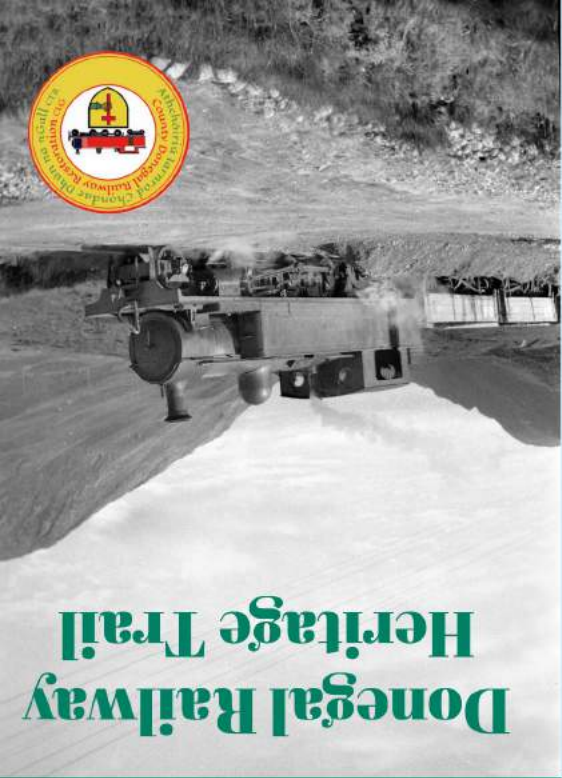


### 28. Pettigo Station

This Great Northern Railway station opened in 1866 on the line from Bundoran Junction to Bundoran. After 1923 this station became an important customs post as the station was in County Donegal but most of the village of Pettigo was in County Fermanagh.

Coordinates: 54.547749686511196, -7.830501461570262  
Eircode: F94 FN84





# Donegal Railway Heritage Trail



## Donegal Railway Heritage Trail

This unique tour map and guide, gives an overview of some of the railway heritage across County Donegal which is still to be seen today. A lot of it is hidden in plain sight! The railways are an important part of the story and history of Donegal. Within the narrative of each site highlighted, is given either an Eircode and/or it's Google grid reference, so that you can visit them yourself. Join us on this unique railway journey into the past!

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Large photographs courtesy of George Emaleus and Bluebell Railway Museum

County Donegal Railway  
 Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway  
 Proposed railways, never built  
 Roads

