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Journey into the Past for the AGM! Saturday 8th August 2020



Things to come? In August this year one of the 'Journey into the Past' train services, exclusively available to Heritage Group members, will 'rest' at Waenfawr on its return journey to Dinas while the Group's AGM is held in the new station building. Chairman's Challenge - the meeting has to be concluded so that the Group's train can depart for Dinas before the service train from Portmadoc to Caernarfon arrives!

Photo: Nick Booker, August 2018.

Annual General Meetings are all about reviewing what has gone on in the year just past and this year we will be doing it with the help of the WHR's 'Journey into the Past' Train.

Thanks to the indefatigable efforts of Cedric Lodge and the good offices of Clare Britton, the Commercial Manager and the esteemed team at Harbour Station, the 'Journey into the Past' heritage train is being made available to the Group for its Annual General Meeting. To facilitate this

event, we have accordingly moved the AGM to later in the year.

Members are therefore invited to join the train at Dinas on Saturday 8th August 2020, departing at 10.30 am.

Itinerary

- The train will travel from Dinas to Rhyd-Ddu and return
- Members may join the train at Dinas, or any of the other stations up to Rhyd-Ddu

- The train will depart from Dinas at 10.30am
- En-route to Rhyd-Ddu, the train will stop at Betws Garmon and Glanrafon where passengers may alight
- On the return, we will stop at Waunfawr, at approximately 1pm, where lunch and refreshments will be taken
- The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Waunfawr Station building commencing at 2 pm promptly
- The AGM will end at 3.30pm and the train will depart at 3.40pm, arriving at Dinas at around 4pm
- The train is likely to consist of 'PRINCE' with three heritage carriages

Essential information / FAQs

Visiting Betws Garmon and Glan yr Afon

Members wishing to alight at Betws Garmon and Glanrafon are advised to wear stout footwear and to have waterproof clothing with them. Note that there are no platforms at either location

Lunch

A pre booked picnic lunch for a modest charge will be available from the Caernarfon catering staff or travellers may bring their own.

Who may travel?

Travel on the train is for paid up members and one partner only so please bring your membership card if possible, although we will have a list of members available.

Accommodation on the train is limited, and it is recommended that members give notice in advance of their intention to travel. Booking will be on a 'first come first serve' basis. Attendance at the AGM is of course not restricted to those travelling on the train.

For those not travelling on the train

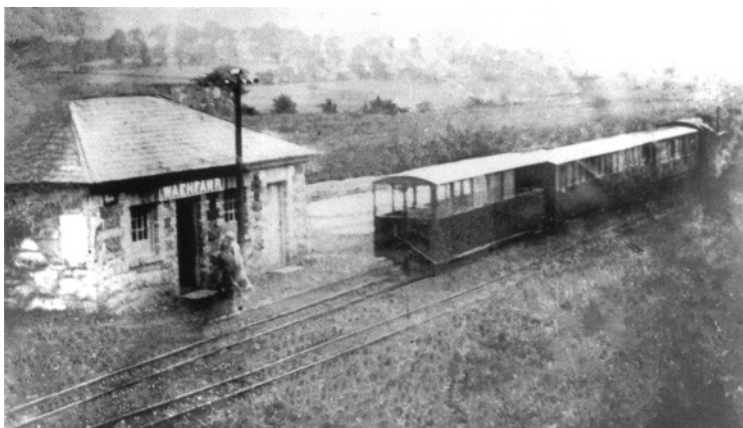
If arriving by car, parking is permissible in the corner of the car park by the access to the platform.

We will be sending out these details with the papers for the AGM but to assist us with planning ahead please would you let us know whether you would like to travel on the 'Journey into the Past' train at the AGM on Saturday 8th August 2020

Expressions of Interest for travelling on the train please to Mike Hadley: mikehadley@gmx.co.uk or 01386 792877. If preferred please write to Mike at;

Round Hill,
Earls Common Road,
Stock Green,
REDDITCH,
B96 6TB

Mike writes: "However you contact me, I would like to ask anyone requesting travel for their name, membership number and the name of their travelling companion, if any."



Waenfawr - Then and Now.

Clear photographs of the original Waenfawr station building when in use are rare. Often trains seem to get in the way! The left-hand photo above, taken in 1934 by Roger Kidner, is about as good a view as I can find as *Russell* had, conveniently, paused beyond the building when the shutter clicked. *Russell's* train, comprising a Pickering Brake Composite, one of the Ashbury 'Corridor' carriages and the Gladstone Car seems to have been largely devoid of passengers. Hopefully the turn out for the AGM will be better!

The new station building, completed in 2019, wherein the AGM is scheduled to be held, is significantly larger than the original but captures the NWNCR characteristic architecture of the original. This photo was taken by Barrie Hughes in April 2019, before the building was finally completed. The view is looking towards Dinas from the footbridge with a Porthmadog to Caernarfon train to the right.

More on the Alexandra Tramway Accident

A short query passed to Dave Rogerson has generated additional insights into the events described in *WHH* 85. In his response to this query, David wrote:

“Just before the publication of *WHH* 85, the editor, Peter Liddell, contacted me to see if I could clear up a confusion in the research into the accident on the Alexandra Quarry Tramway in 1907, described in the article to be found on page 3 of that issue. He, and the author, Dick Lystor, had noticed a discrepancy between the original newspaper accounts of the accident and the later newspaper reports of the official hearing into the accident. As *WHH* is a journal of record, Peter wanted to get every detail right, hence his approach to me.

“Newspaper reports of the accident noted that the man killed was Mr. W. R. Williams of Rhostryfan. At the official inquiry he was identified as William John Williams. Which was correct?

“My first step was to search Rhostryfan, a relatively small village, in the 1901 census, but this revealed that neither W. R. nor W. J. Williams were to be found there. It was possible that the person in question had moved into the village between 1901 and 1907, but this first line of approach was abandoned.

“However, I did note that the death of a William John Williams had been recorded at Carnarvon Register Office in early 1907 and so, speculatively, I obtained the death certificate for this person. Luckily it turned out to be the correct one, recording his death on 11th Feb 1907 “on the private tramway connecting Alexandra Quarry and the narrow Gauge incline”. Hence, as I think we suspected, the Inquiry had got his name right and the original accident report in the *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald* was in error. This was surprising since the early report also noted that the victim’s brother, Mr R.H. Williams, worked for that same newspaper.

“A closer inspection of the death certificate revealed another error in the newspaper. His address was given as Hyfrydle, Rhosgadfan. A renewed search of the 1901 Census soon revealed that the family had all along been living in the next village to the one I had been searching.

“In 1901 William John Williams lived with his parents, a sister Laura and his brother Richard Hughes Williams, a journalist, in Rhosgadfan and had done so since before 1881. All the younger children had been born there although an elder sister, Jane, who had left by 1901, is recorded as born in both Llanwnda and Aberdaron.

“William’s parents, Richard and Laura Williams, were both born in Aberdaron and had married in 1875. Richard was the son of an agricultural worker and had started work on the fields by 1871. However, he must have seen the chance of a better life in the quarries and moved to Rhosgadfan soon after his marriage. This move almost certainly coincided with the upturn of the fortunes of Braich, Moel “Tryfan and Alexandra

Quarries on the opening of the NWNGR line to Bryngwyn and Drumhead in 1877. William John followed his father into the job and even Richard, his other son, was a slate quarryman in 1891 before turning to journalism.

“The Williams family started their new life in the village and Richard, William and Laura were born there in 1878, 1880 and 1883 respectively. Their first residence, recorded in 1881, is in the heart of the village at ‘Cadfan Isaf’, but on the next three occasions they were at the last house in the section of the census covering Rhosgadfan. The house names are different – in 1891 they are recorded as living at Tyddyn-difyr (a ‘pleasant’ or ‘agreeable’ small-holding), then in 1901 and 1911 at Hyfrydle (a ‘delightful place’) – but the placement from the census could imply the edge of the village in both cases.”

Note:- Tyddyn-difyr really was, indeed still is, at the upper (eastern) edge of Rhosgadfan, just north of the original Alexandra workings and close to the route of the tramway from the later Alexandra workings down to Drumhead. However, Hyfrydle, or at least the house that goes by that name today, is closer to the centre of the village, located behind Capel Rhosgadfan. A building first appeared at this location between 1889 and 1900, occupying the south-east corner of the Capel enclosure. To return to David’s notes:

“By 1911 only the parents were living at Hyfrydle and they stated that they had had five children but only two were still living.

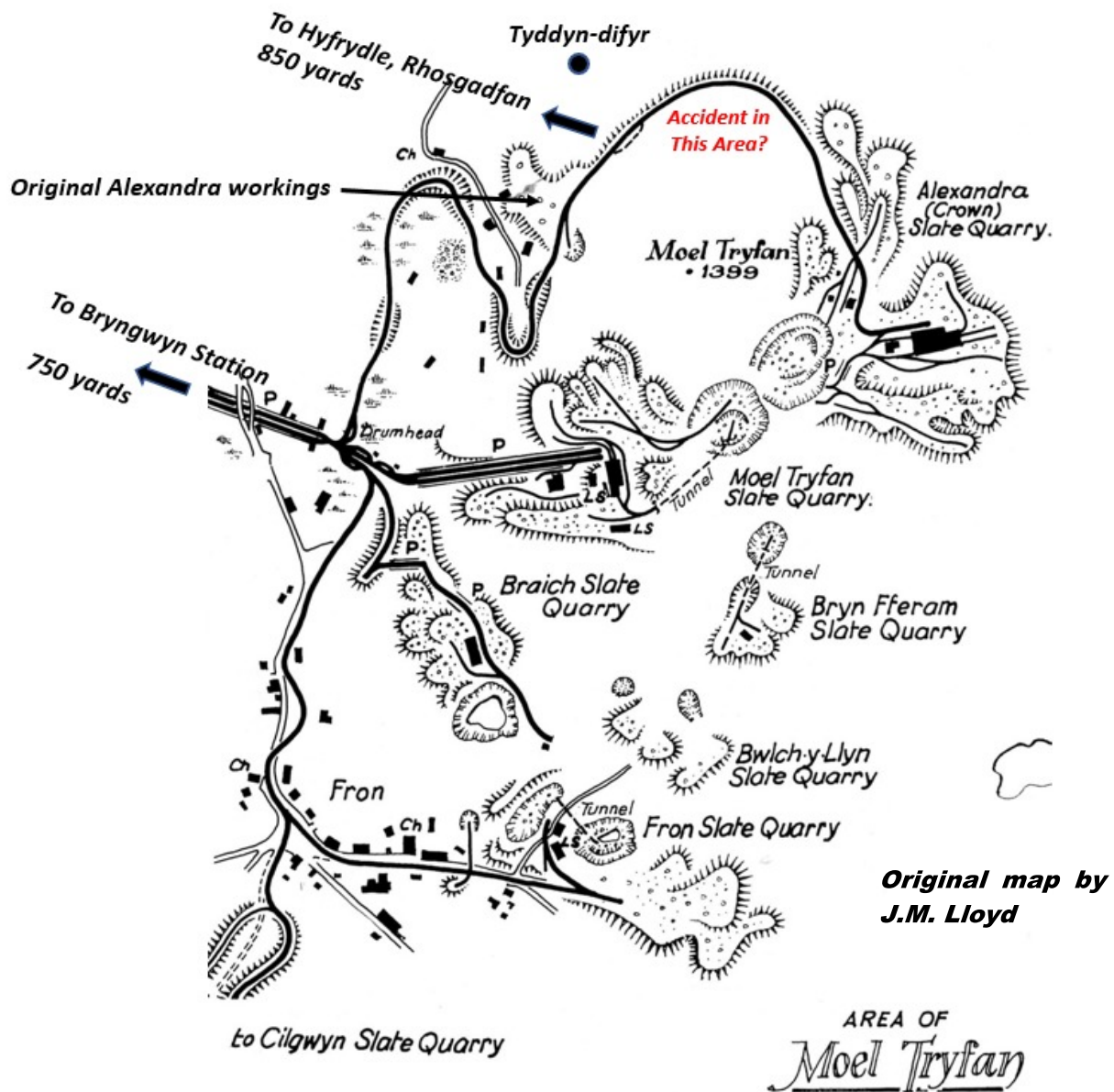
“These must have been Richard Hughes Williams, married and living in Carnarvon, and one of the daughters, married and untraceable.

“Thinking I had done all I could I had one more faint lead to follow up. An associated family tree had thrown up the name Dic Tryfan. This was the pen name of Richard Hughes Williams who, before his early death in 1919, went on to become one of the very earliest and most revered writers of short stories in the Welsh language. The stories are woven within the slate mining community in which he was born and raised and I wonder whether the NWNGR staff on the trains from Bryngwyn, on which I am sure he must have travelled sometimes from his home in Rhosgadfan to his work in Caernarfon, realised they had a future celebrity on board.”

As I edited David’s notes, a train of thought, admittedly speculative, was triggered and I will summarise this here, with the usual health warnings, of course.

The original accident report in the *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald* included the sentence:

Four young men employed at the quarry, but who were not working on Monday, returned from the quarry on a locomotive which usually plies on the incline.



Why would four men “employed at the quarry” have been there if they were not working on that day? Had they gone up expecting to work only to be told that on that day no work was available? Or had they, perhaps, been there for administrative reasons? There was no indication at the Inquiry, apparently, as to this matter.

Whatever the reason, it having been decided that they were not to work that day, what would they have done next?

It is perhaps possible that they might have decided to visit the other quarries in the area to see whether work might be available there. However, were this the case it seems highly unlikely that they would have travelled on the tramway – the workings of the Moel Tryfan Quarry were contiguous with the Alexandra and it would have been both simpler and quicker to walk from one to the other. Whilst not as close, a similar argument could be used in the case of both Braich and Fron.

Alternatively, they could simply have been returning home, in which case the tramway might well have offered a clear attraction.

Now that we know William John Williams lived in Rhosgadfan, he at least had a quick route home if he rode the tramway but ‘got off’ before it reached the old Alexandra workings, that is to say in the vicinity of Tyddyn-difyr, whence there were several footpaths that led to the road on which it appears that Hyfrydle was located. It would have made no sense for him to ride all the way to Drumhead as this would have taken him well out of his way.

Were this the circumstance, that WJW was still on the loco when the tube burst suggests that it had not yet reached the Tyddyn-difyr area. In other words, it was still comparatively close to the quarry. The reports of the accident give no indication of its exact location.

Of course, they could all for some reason have been heading to Rhostryfan or perhaps even Carnarvon. Unless further evidence comes to light, we will, I suspect, never know.

Animals in Distress on the NWNGR



The NWNGR bridge under the road at Cae Moel - both the NWNGR and the Afon Rhyd passed below this bridge.

On the restored railway the bridge is designated OB 6 AND UB 7, although the river has now been diverted to pass under the railway at UB 5, some 20 metres downstream, towards Dinas. OB 6 is 350 metres from the restored railway's chainage zero point, the Dinas-side face of the bridge under the A 487 (OB 1).

In this view, from November 1999, the track bed curving to the left following its easterly path towards Tryfan Junction can clearly be seen. The Afon Rhyd flowed towards the camera, entering from the left, passing under the railway before flowing to the right behind the photographer. Thus the railway simultaneously passed under the road and crossed the river.

The girders supported the track above the water. The rails ran on wooden beams, one of which had, at least partially, survived. There would originally have been wooden decking to prevent any one, or anything, falling into the waters below. By the time of the hearings discussed by Dick, the decking "had been burnt away".

Photo by David Allan - WHRHG Collection Arch 1411.

Santa was very kind to me this year, providing me with two books that John Keylock would have called "excellent bedtime reading"! One of them was his and Dave Southern's book about the Bryngwyn Branch, and of particular interest in that book was the paragraph on page 50 describing John Paull's claim for a pony killed in the railway.

I had prepared the following article for publication in *WHH* some time ago, describing this particular incident. It is adapted from reports in the 14th Jan 1898 and 4th Feb 1898 editions of the *Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald*. It would seem by all accounts that the owner of the pony suing the NWNGR was not after all John Paull, a slate merchant from Carnarvon, but a Mr R.R. Williams of Fronwydyr, Rhostryfan. It may well have been that Mr Paull was the

Dick Lystor has been studying another accident - this time from 1897 involving errant livestock.

owner of one or both of the other ponies which escaped unscathed.

The hearing into the unfortunate death of the pony on the railway, was heard at Carnarvon County

Court on Wednesday 12th January 1898, before his Honour Sir Horatio Lloyd. Mr R.R. Williams of Rhostryfan sought to recover the sum of £8 from the railway company, the value of a pony belonging to him, which was killed on the 15th September 1897. Mr R. Roberts appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr H. Lloyd Carter for the NWNGR. It was stated that near Bryngwyn station on some parts of the incline, there was no fencing, and there was nothing to keep the ponies that were grazing in the area, from straying onto the line. On the morning of the 15th, Owen Thomas, a company employee, was coming down the railway on a trolley and saw three ponies on the line. Instead of trying

to clear them off, he chased them until they reached Cae Moel bridge, some 300 yards from Dinas station. The railway went under this bridge and there was a stream under the railway, and as a result of him chasing the ponies, Mr Williams' animal fell into the water and was drowned. In reply to a letter written to him (presumably by the plaintiff's solicitors), Mr S. Tanner, the railway's manager, stated that from enquiries he had made, he found that Thomas did try to save the life of the pony and had acted as he thought best but had failed, but whilst expressing regret at the occurrence, he could not see that the company was liable for the loss of the animal. The Judge stopped the case for want of a proper plan of the scene of the incident and the jury were discharged.

The hearing was resumed without a jury at the next court, held on Wednesday 2nd February, Mr R. Roberts again appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr H. Lloyd Carter for the NWNGR. Plans of the railway and district were submitted and proven by Mr Bowen Jones, the surveyor of the Caernarvon Harbour Trust, and Mr Williams' counsel called a number of witnesses to prove that the fencing of the railway was not sufficient to keep animals from straying onto the line, and also to show that at various times, both day and night, the company had neglected to secure the gate near Bryngwyn Station, through which it was believed the pony in question had entered the line. It had already been stated in evidence for the plaintiff at the previous hearing that Owen Thomas had been seen going down the railway on a trolley on the 15th September, and that three ponies were running before him. One pony was subsequently found dead under a bridge near Dinas Station, having apparently fallen between the rails into a river and drowned.

Mr Carter, for the defence, said that the pony was last seen alive on the 14th September at seven o'clock on the common, and at ten o'clock that night the gate was found shut and bolted. He would be able to call witnesses to prove that it was the invariable rule to close the gate across the common. Owen Thomas was going down on a trolley when he found that there were three ponies on the line. These ponies were generally very wild, and gave great trouble to the NWNGR, and it was not owing to any defect of fencing on the part of the company; all the evidence given went to show that there was no fencing above

Bryngwyn Station, and there was nothing to show a defect on the side of the line, and consequently the case must fall through on that point. The second point raised was that the pony had been killed in consequence of the negligence of Owen Thomas, but it was not part of his duty to turn off ponies from the line. They had got upon the railway through different gates, which intersected the line right down, and if any one of these gates were left open, the ponies would stray; but there was no obligation upon the company to keep them shut. When Owen Thomas saw the ponies, he was far behind, and due to the frequent curves of the line, was not able to keep them in view at all times. They kept on, and if any attempt was made to call his attention to them he did not hear it. When the ponies reached the bridge, one of them fell between the rails and into the water. Thomas came up to them at this spot, and seeing how matters were, and that he could not extricate the pony, he made all haste to reach Dinas Station, where he got assistance. By the time he returned to the bridge, the pony had moved, and had fallen headfirst into the water and had drowned.

Owen Thomas himself gave evidence bearing out the advocate's statement, and Mr Tanner gave evidence as regard to the fencing.

His Honour, in delivering judgement, said that it had not been proved that the pony had gone on the railway at Bryngwyn, but it was evident that it had been seen at seven o'clock the previous night close to the railway station. It was admitted on all sides that the premises were not securely fenced at the station, and there was a conflict of evidence as to whether the gate had been properly closed and fastened. It appeared that the gate had not been locked on the 15th of September, and his Honour believed that it was possible for the pony to get on the line there. On the second point, he was of the opinion that Owen Thomas should have exercised greater care when he saw the ponies on the line, and should have conducted them to a place of safety and not allowed them to run before him as far as the bridge. If he had done that, as he had no doubt done on previous occasions, he would have been able to avert this accident.

Judgement was given for the plaintiff for the full amount, and the costs of two days' hearing.

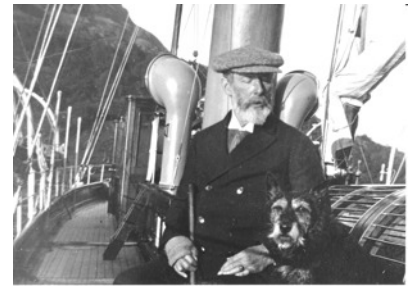
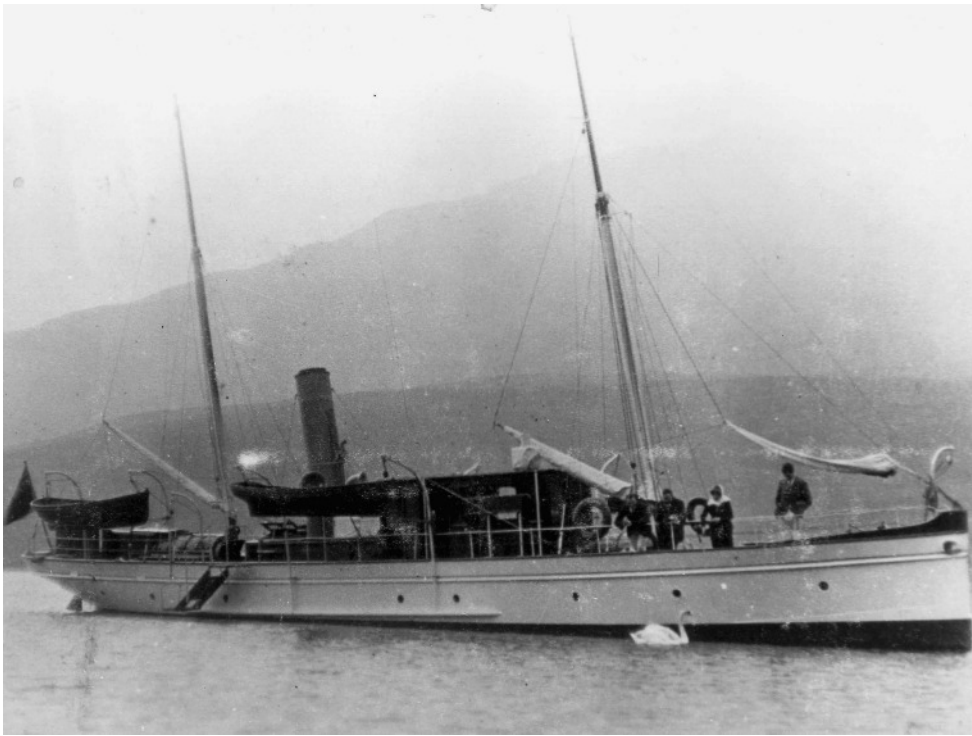
Rebuilding at Cae Moel, looking towards Tryfan Junction.

With the culvert carrying the diverted Afon Rhyd under the road to the left and the reconfigured Cae Moel Bridge to the right, the new track bed runs towards the camera and the site of what later became the new under-bridge that now crosses the Afon Rhyd.

David Allan - 15th May 2000 - WHRHG Collection Arch 1625



Business and leisure. More on James Cholmeley Russell



Main Picture - Russell's yacht *Madge* at Arrochar at the head of Loch Long - from Jim Michie.

Upper right - Russell relaxes on *Madge's* after-deck. Lower right - Crewman 'Allan' on board *Madge* - Both courtesy of Evelyn Pangman

Way back in the 1990s, when I wrote my original article on James Cholmeley Russell (*FR Heritage Group Journal 48*, Winter 1996/97 – see also *WHH 25*, September 2004), Michael Bishop found an entry in the Directory of Directors of 1912 identifying Russell as the chairman of the Barking Gas Company. Despite the best of intentions over the years, it was only thanks to a day in London last year at the Guildhall Business Library that I finally was able to discover more about Russell's involvement with this company - and others - as well as tracking down more on his yacht ownership. A holiday break in Edinburgh the previous year had given me access to the Royal Highland Yacht Club archives.

Russell's roles with the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company and the Manchester & Milford Railway are now familiar territory, as to a lesser extent is his involvement with the abortive promotion of the Royal Exchange and Waterloo Railway. However, he was a restless man who sought new opportunities for making money that included property development and a lucrative legal career. Through his family, commercial and legal network he was well connected and, despite suffering health problems in the last decade of his life, he still found time to develop new interests.

Nick Booker has provided this update from his files on J.C. Russell.

Quite when Russell extended his transport interests to the sea is yet to be confirmed, but the Stock Exchange Yearbooks for 1902 and 1903 show him as a director of both the British & North Atlantic Steam Navigation Company and the Mississippi & Dominion Steamship Co Ltd. There is a Liverpool connection here, as both companies were owned by Richards, Mills & Company of Liverpool and they ran a fleet of ships to North America. However, by 1903 both companies had been acquired by the International Mercantile Marine Company as part of a major restructuring of shipping lines operating across the Atlantic. IMMC also owned the White Star Line of *Titanic* fame (or infamy?). Following the takeover, it seems that Russell and his fellow directors were required to resign.

About three years later, in 1906, Russell became a director of the Barking Gas Company. The gas works in Barking opened in 1836, and a company was formed the following year. By 1841 Barking's streets were lighted by gas and in 1867 a new company, the Barking Gas Company, was incorporated. This continued to supply Barking with gas until 1912, when it was absorbed by the Gas Light and Coke Company. The GLCC went on to become one of the largest gas companies in the UK, employing some 21,250 people, and later became the major part of the North Thames Gas Board, one of Britain's twelve regional area gas boards, when gas supply was nationalised in 1949.

Russell may well have owed his involvement with the Barking Gas Company to a family connection. At the time he became a director, the company's chairman was Arthur Charles Humphreys-Owen, a Welsh barrister, landowner and Liberal politician. Humphreys-Owen, born at Garthmyl, Montgomeryshire, was the son of Erskine Humphreys, a barrister, and, like Russell, he went to Harrow School but went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, rather than Russell's alma mater, Magdalen College, Oxford. However, in 1874, Humphreys-Owen married Maria, one of Russell's sisters. H-O was also chairman of the Cambrian Railways Company from 1900, so he and Russell, quite apart from the business of gas, may well have discussed the fortunes of the Manchester & Milford Railway, where Russell was the Manager and Receiver. Arthur Humphreys-Owen died in 1905 and Russell succeeded him as chairman of the Gas Company. At the same time, Russell's nephew, Arthur's son, Arthur Erskine Owen, joined the board - a nice example of keeping it in



Arthur Charles Humphreys-Owen, 1836-1905
National Library of Wales

the family. Russell remained chairman of the Board of Directors until his death in 1912.

By the mid 1890s, Russell had acquired Creag Mhor, a substantial country house at Onich, close to North Ballachulish, some 12 miles south of Fort William, near the entrance to Loch Leven. The house, on the shore of Loch Linnhe, was originally built in 1890 for the wife of the Episcopalian Bishop of Argyll. Today, the building is the Creag Mhor Lodge Hotel. Russell seems to have spent increasing amounts of time in Scotland and in 1903 both he and his wife joined the Royal Highland Yacht Club, which was originally founded and based in Oban, about 30 miles south of Onich.

Russell's first visit to Oban Bay is recorded in the RHYC register as being in *RONA* between the 27th July and the 11th August 1904. *RONA* was a 59-foot long single screw

steam driven schooner, built in 1900 at Greenock by Chambers Bros.

Lloyds Register of Yachts for 1905/1906 shows Russell as owner not only of *RONA* but also of the *GRIFFIN*, a 72-foot iron hulled steam yacht built in 1877 which he had owned since May 1900. By 1910, the latter was under new ownership. Russell's last recorded visit to Oban, again in *RONA*, was between the 10th and 11th August 1909. Given Russell's failing health, described in my article in *WHH* 75, it seems that he was not really in a position to enjoy the pleasures of cruising as much as he might have wished.

Russell, clearly not one to stint on his sailing and cruising activities, also acquired another yacht, *MADGE*, and it is this that we know most about. She was a 72-foot long, 37-ton single screw steam yacht built in 1899 and originally intended for service on Loch Shiel, a freshwater loch some 12 miles west of Fort William. At the head of Loch Shiel lies Glenfinnan and the monument commemorating Prince Charles Edward Stuart's raising of his banner in August 1745 and, beyond, McAlpine's famous curved concrete railway viaduct. When on Loch Shiel, the yacht was named *CLANRANALD*. However, her draught proved too deep and she was sold in 1902 to Robert Kerr of Caledonian Forge, Irvine, who renamed her *MADGE*, before selling her to Russell in about 1911. Following Russell's death, his widow Eleanor disposed of both yachts. *MADGE* was renamed *HINBA* in 1914 and was lost off the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1924. At Russell's funeral, his coffin was carried by "Mr Russell's own men" including the captain and engineer of his yacht, presumably *MADGE*.

Following its sale, *RONA* subsequently passed through the hands of several owners. By 1929, her port of registry was Dartmouth and in 1930, her owner was a Mr Thomas R. Philip, the son of a wealthy Bristol businessman, living at Camp House, Clifton Down, Bristol, now a conference centre. The last recorded owner was a Mr F. A. Mayer of Stillmans, Wickford in Essex.

GRIFFIN came off the yacht Register in 1911 and, it is assumed, was scrapped, by which time she would have been some 40 years old.

Sources

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gas_Light_and_Coke_Company

Royal Highland Yacht Club Archives

Lloyds Register of Yachts for the relevant years

www.clydeships.co.uk

Stock Exchange Yearbooks for the relevant years

Various Wikipedia pages

www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/dominion.shtm

Cunard and the North Atlantic 1840–1973: A History of Shipping...Francis E. Hyde

Clyde Steamers Edition 13, 1977

Jim Michie, Loch Shiel Eagle Cruises

A View from 1865

Whilst I was recently trawling through newspaper archives - as one does - I came across this charming piece in *The North Wales Chronicle*, 24th June 1865, Page 8, Column 1.

I was drawn to the “correspondent’s” turn of phrase and his undoubted high-levels of optimism. He also, it seems to me, touched on a few thoughts and observations that might not be out of place in these post-Brexit times.

However, what really caught my eye was his quotation from Mark Akenside’s work. It just so happens that

Akenside was an old boy of your editor’s school, along with numerous other worthies ranging from Admiral Lord Collingwood to Rowan Atkinson. Akenside’s name, along with Collingwood, Armstrong, Eldon, Stowell and Brand, lives on in the Newcastle Royal Grammar School Song. I simply had to reproduce this piece here.

My text, I hope, is accurate but I have not slavishly reproduced the exact layout of the original. However, the spelling is as published, notably, of course, in the case of Welsh place-names.

BEDDGELERT.

The RAILWAY, &c.— A correspondent writes as follows :— the other day paid a passing visit to this romantic and charming little village, nestling as it does amidst the very centre of the Alps of North Wales, and I don't think I ever saw it looking to greater advantage, nor more beautiful in every respect. They who never had the good fortune to visit this mountain paradise can never have any conception of its picturesque beauties from any mere verbal description of them and even they who may have seen it under ordinary circumstances would be surprised at its present surpassing loveliness. The mountains, from early morn until late at night, are bathed in a flood of sunshine and owing to the recent magnificent weather, they are covered from their base to their summit with the richest and greenest foliage and verdure of one of the finest summers on record. Any person, however unimpressive he may be, who can view the scene from this delightful spot without feeling the liveliest emotions of rapture and delight, must be a legitimate object of pity, and be mentally eyeless and spiritually soulless. *He* would never be enabled to appreciate what Akenside⁽¹⁾ meant when he wrote

“He felt the power of Nature smiling at his heart —

How lovely, how commanding!”

Visitors have already commenced arriving at the far famed Goat Hotel, which looked to me as if it were a splendid palace in another Happy Valley, which *Rasselas*⁽²⁾ himself would have regretted ever to have left, despite the tedium and monotony of his existence. Travellers speak with rapture and delight of the beauties and wonders of Rhine-land; but I much question whether there is to be found in the whole of Germany or Switzerland more lovely and varied scenery than is to be met with in a walk from Penygrwid to Pont Aberglaslyn — a distance of some nine or ten miles, under the very foot of Snowdon. It is no wonder, indeed, that Beddgelert has become “a favourite place of report to summer tourista.”

The only drawback is the somewhat difficult access from England to this charming locality; but on making some enquiries, I found that even this is very soon likely to be obviated. The Welsh Coast line of Railway, from Aberystwith to Carnarvon, is in rapid course of construction, via Portmadoc and, in addition, there is a branch line being made from Portmadoc up the valley to Beddgelert; so that when the two lines are completed there will be direct and rapid

communication by railway from the centre of England to the very centre of Wales. That this little branch line will “pay,” there can be no manner of doubt; for in addition to the scenic attractions of the place, and which must always draw crowds of visitors during the summer months, there are a number of slate quarries and copper mines in the valley, which at present are only partially developed, by reason of the heavy expence and trouble in forwarding the produce to market. The want of a line of railway has been long felt: and I believe that Mr. Searell was the first to broach the undertaking, many years ago, and during the past spring he had the great satisfaction of being present at the cutting of the first sod, and of seeing his anticipation in a fair way of being realized.

There are no less than five or six slate quarries in the neighbourhood of Beddgelert, one of which (the South Snowdon) Mr. Searell is the manager, and a railway to either Carnarvon or Portmadoc is absolutely necessary to a proper and extensive working of them. There are likewise some valuable copper mines — Mr. W. E. Powell being the manager of two, namely, of those called the Brynyfelen, and Rhyd-du. To cart the produce now to Carnarvon costs 6s. per ton, which forms a serious item in the cost of production, besides limiting the quantity which can possibly be disposed of. The proposed line of railway, therefore, in addition to the accommodation which it will afford to tourists, will do much to increase the mineral trade of the district, and to add to the prosperity of this the most romantic and beautiful spot in North Wales. Prince Llewelyn would doubtless have been much disconcerted had he seen the Iron Horse snorting and hissing along the side of the River Glaslyn, driven by his relentless foes, the Saxons, and instead of plunging his sword into the side of his faithful hound, the luckless Gelert, he may have used it against the intruding *Sais*; but we live in happier times, when national animosities are softening down and fading away, and when the Cymry rather welcome a “Saxon invasion” than otherwise, as with it come wealth and convenience, and all kinds of material advantages. Beddgelert, from its great natural beauties, must be always attractive; but a railway will enable thousands to visit and joy, who otherwise would not have an opportunity for so doing afforded them.

1 Mark Akenside, Poet and Physician, 1721 - 1770

2 *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, Samuel Johnson, 1759

Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis



I could not help but notice recent discussions on our Facebook page concerning the photograph reproduced above. It seems appropriate, in light of that discussion, that we take a close look at this image. The photo is WHHG 19 in our collection and was a Hudson's-series image, specifically their no. 489.

The location is obvious - Rhyd-ddu, although by the time this photo was taken the name 'Snowdon' had been adopted. The locomotive, I am tempted to suggest, was *Snowdon Ranger*. As this discussion continues, it will emerge that the date of this photograph is of a period when we know that *SR* had lost, apparently temporarily, its high-mounted sandboxes and was operating with the same sand box installation as seen on *Moel Tryfan*. For identification purposes we really only have the length of the nameplate to go on.

The train comprised 7 carriages - from the rear an Ashbury Brake Composite, both Ashbury 'Corridors', 3 Ashbury 'Summers' and the 'Workmans' Car.

There are points worthy of note, so we will look at these, from the rear, in more detail.

The quality of the photograph is sufficient to suggest that there were no glazed panels in the door to the guard's compartment in the Ashbury brake, which, if so, identifies the vehicle as no. 2.

The two Ashbury 'Corridors' were arranged no. 9 to the rear with no. 10 in front. It is particularly evident here that no. 10 had not yet been divided into separate first and third class sections when this photo was taken. As the 'Corridors' were acquired in 1893, we begin to construct a date 'window' for the image.

The presence of 3 of the Ashbury 'Summers' further constrains this window as these were not acquired until

1894. The three carriages were, from the rear, one of the 2 semi-glazed carriages, no. 12, and both of the un-glazed carriages, nos. 13 and 14, in that order.

The carriage next to the locomotive was no. 7, the so-called 'Workmans' Car.

In the Facebook discussions, the issue of the station building extension was raised. At some point, the main building was extended northwards to fill the gap between it and the Station Master's cottage next door. The ground frame was installed in this gap and as a result of this change it found itself indoors. Photographs of the building show a particularly long window here, presumably to ensure adequate vision when the levers were being operated. On Facebook, David Woodcock noted that he and I had agreed the extension was completed in either 1896 or 1897, with a leaning toward the latter. However, the Facebook discussion included the suggestion that the extension had been completed whereas the photograph clearly shows that it had not.

Thus we have a fairly tight dating window, limited to the period after the acquisition of the Ashbury 'Summers' but before work commenced on the extension of the main station building - thus either 1894, 5 or 6. Depending on the length of time we presume that it took to extend the building, this possibly might be extended to include the earlier months of 1897.

Dating the extension work is problematic, but one line of argument is as follows.

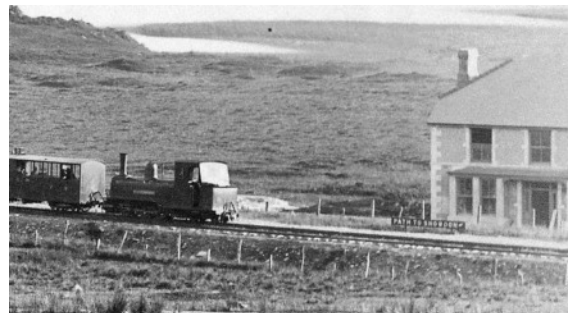
The full Carl Norman image from which the 'extension work-in-progress' image on page 11 was extracted (*Snowdon from Rhyddu*) is particularly interesting here in that a plume of steam is clearly visible at Snowdon Summit. It is true that the Snowdon Mountain Tramroad was



Before and After - Left, the station building at 'Snowdon' before extension - note the gap between the building and the adjacent Station Master's cottage. John Keylock collection - Arch 4875. Note also, on the left, horse-drawn traffic waiting on the road beyond the building for traffic to Beddgelert. Right, the building after being extended to fill the gap - note the increased depth, relative to the originals, of the window in the new extension. Francis Bedford, WHR 66.



An enlarged detail from a Carl Norman image - No. 7106 - showing building extension work in progress at Rhyd-ddu.



An enlargement from the right-hand end of the full version of the main image, showing a relatively new Bron-y-Gader, the house to the right.

completed early in 1896 and opened at Easter that year. However, almost immediately, the locomotive *LADAS* 'fell off' and the system was closed, the rest of the year being spent installing the guards that prevent the cog wheels riding upwards out of engagement with the rack. Services did not start fully until 1897.

The C.N. image appears to have been taken at the height of summer, no doubt commensurate with the critical decision to open up the roof of the Snowdon station building during the extension process, strongly suggesting, if the plume of steam is 'real', that the photo could not have been taken in 1896.

A further dating clue for the main image can be derived from the presence of an apparently complete Bron-y-Gader visible to the right of the locomotive - see enlarged detail above. According to local records (via Gina Kent to Dick Lystor in 2002) the land on which Bron-y-Gader was built was not leased until July 6th 1894 (from Lady Watkin to Robert Ellis). The presence of a complete house on this site on a summer's day would appear to suggest 1895 as a likely earliest date for the image.

That the house was apparently complete, but as best as one can judge not yet occupied, strongly suggests that the photo was taken in 1895. This date satisfies our criteria that set a maximum date range of 1894 to 1897 but for once, it would seem, we can be rather more precise than that.

Given this date, further conclusions can be drawn. As Ashbury 'Corridor' No. 10 had not at the time of this photo been partitioned into separate first and third class sections

it follows that this was most probably done, at the earliest, after the end of the 1895 season.

Finally, in this ramble through our main photograph, let us look again at the train and the locomotive. In the Facebook discussions some surprise was expressed regarding the ability of the NWNGR single-Fairlies to handle long trains on the run out to Snowdon and back. It would appear from photographic evidence that this was not unusual although, it has to be conceded, we do not have too many photographs showing operations in the NWNGR period. However, the photograph on page 12 does show a long train at Snowdon station in charge of one of the NWNGR Fairlies.

The make-up of this train is different to our main example, this time comprising, from the locomotive: both Ashbury semi-glazed 'Summers', nos. 12 and 11; both Ashbury 'Corridors', nos. 9 and 10; the 'Workmans' Car, no. 7; both Ashbury un-glazed 'Summers', nos. 13 and 14, although the order cannot be determined. None of these carriages were brake vehicles, so there must have been at least one additional carriage to the rear, probably one of the Ashbury brake composites, so we see here a train of at least 8 vehicles, more than seen in the heading photo.

Again we can determine that no. 10 had not, at the time of this photo, been partitioned into 1st and 3rd compartments. However, the photographer's location presented an end on view of the station buildings, so whether the main building had been extended cannot be determined. Although there are reflections to be seen in the 2nd and 3rd carriages'

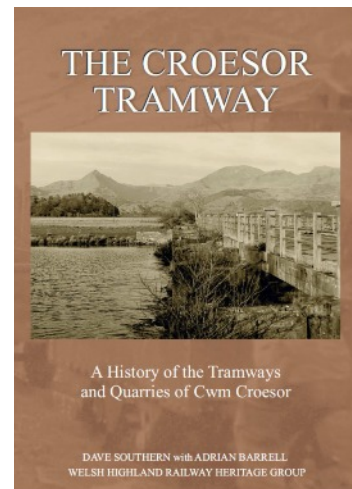
Railway & Canal Historical Society - Book of the Year Awards 2020

The Croesor Tramway nominated!

In 2004 the Railway & Canal Historical Society (RCHS) started an annual book award scheme to encourage the writing of well-researched, interesting and readable books on transport history. This is supported financially by a legacy from the estate of the late David St John Thomas, co-founder of the David & Charles publishing house.

To be considered for the 2020 awards, books must have received a good review in the Society's Journal during 2019 (including the forthcoming March 2020 issue for which reviews are already prepared) and have met certain other eligibility criteria. The first round of judging consists of a formal assessment of each eligible book by the person who reviewed it for the Journal, taking into account such criteria as quality of research, readability, presentation, and contribution to transport history. This stage has now been completed and *The Croesor Tramway* by Dave Southern, with Adrian Barrell, has been short-listed.

The winners of each category and the overall winner will be decided by a panel of three judges, drawn from the Society's membership



The 2020 awards will be presented on the evening of Friday 1st May 2020 during the RCHS's AGM weekend, this year to take place in Bradford.

Last year's short list and winner can be seen here <https://rchs.org.uk/book-awards/2019-book-award-winners/>

The Croesor Tramway has recently been reprinted, and copies are available - see the Group's website for details.

Continued from Page 11



Snowdon Ranger and train waiting to depart Snowdon.

ca. 1895
Arch 4397

windows these, unfortunately, only show us the Refreshment Room.

This photograph is subject to similar time constraints as our main picture but, perhaps, cannot be dated quite so precisely. However, the locomotive was *Snowdon Ranger*, at least according to the nameplates on the side tanks, but the complete photograph shows that the locomotive had no makers plates fitted at the time. Note the location of

the sand boxes, mounted directly on the front running plates and not, as built, level with the tops of the water tanks.

This is not the only photograph that shows *Snowdon Ranger* with a sand box installation similar to that on *Moel Tryfan*, reminding us that sand box position is not a reliable indicator when attempting to determine which Fairlie was which in photos.

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