

Chairman's Report – for WHRHG 2018/2018

My report is both a review of last year and a look into the future

Projects and External Support

Heritage Trains

As you know the company is running heritage trains on Sundays during this coming August using 'Prince' and three heritage carriages, the Curly Roofed Van, Carriage 15 and Carriage 18. This is the result of some lobbying by ourselves and meetings with the Company by Mike Hadley and me. We have agreed to support the trains financially at £100 each. The trains will run from Dinas to Rhyd Ddu and back, stopping at Tryfan Junction for around 50 minutes including a runpast for photography and also providing the opportunity for observing Glan yr afon and Betws Garmon by slowing down and/or stopping.

To make these a success, we do need volunteers at Dinas and Tryfan Junction who are willing to engage with passengers. Please speak to me after!

If we can help the company make this work, then there is a bigger prize to be had next year.

Tryfan Junction continues to be our 'master piece' and has been open on a regular basis during 2017 for which I must thank John Wood for being the Honorary Station Master as well as Abba Loos for providing the necessary facilities, for a price. Mike Hadley has made strenuous efforts to set up a friends Group for TJ to support John and ensure that the station can be opened on high days and holidays including Super Power in September.

The question of improving interpretation on site here remains and we have had some discussions with the WHR/FR on the issue. We just need to provide some words and funds and the Company will arrange the design and production of a suitable board.

The option of installing a dummy siding or at least some means of indicating the link between the station and the route of the Bryngwyn Branch – now the Slate Trail – remains.

The Cambrian Crossing Box at Pen y Mount has caused us some grief in the past and we employed a contractor to install the replacement timber cladding painted by the WHR Society West Midland Group and to finish it off. It is now complete and must now rank as one of the most expensive wooden buildings in the area taking into account the money and man hours that have been sunk into it. Thanks are extended to the efforts of members of the WHR Society Midlands Branch and to Mike Hadley who co-ordinated the project and who also plays a key role in our other buildings projects. Mike will bear witness to my frustration over this particular building.

As I reported last year, **The Water Tower at Beddgelert** is now in use but Cedric continues to fine tune its operation. I'd like to thank Cedric for his efforts on the water tower in providing an excellent new photo opportunity and a very useful working asset for the railway. As we know from a report in one of the recent Journals, it was through the far sightedness of Michael Whitehouse and others that the concrete tower was preserved and thus permitted the reinstatement of the water tank and water supply.

At **Betws Garmon**, we are in the process of commissioning a contractor to stabilise and conserve the remains and using a relatively new technique of capping the remaining walls with turf.

As for Glan yr afon, we will continue to liaise with the company and make an appropriate financial contribution to its conservation. Interestingly earlier this year Mike Hadley and I bumped into the farmer who owns the quarry and on whose land the remains of the weigh bridge lie and we broached the subject with him. It was not dismissed out of hand and he seems to be a 'nice chap'.

During the year, we made our third and for the moment final donation to the **Kerr Stuart Fund** but we will consider making additional donations if it accelerates progress on this very worthwhile project to restore a pioneering locomotive with strong links to the WHR.

We continue to support the **FR/WHR photo scanning project** initiative and are looking at ways of how our own photographic archive can be brought within its umbrella. This will undoubtedly involve supporting the project with further finance

As for projects, we have supplied information to the FR/WHR for Dr Prideaux's Ashbury coach activities.

Annual Accounts

Copies of the annual accounts are in front of you and I would like to thank Peter Roughly for not only making sense of our revenue and cost streams and putting these together but also dealing with PayPal and badgering Adrian for his end of year's stock returns. Through the kindness of a former colleague of mine – Celia Adams, a chartered accountant they have been 'inspected' and passed as 'fit for purpose' a tribute to Peter's meticulous approach in sometimes trying circumstances.

We are as you can see, currently in robust financial health but we must not become complacent – I'm happy to field any questions

Web site

We now have a brand new website and I must thanks David Tidy our web master for his efforts in polishing and fine tuning the work of the professional web site designer as well as continuing to keep our web presence in good order and up to date.

www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk

The inclusion of Pay Pal on the site continues to be a great advantage for users and for sales of books and subscriptions.

The Group's Facebook page which I manage continues to provide a forum for discussion and the posting of items that might not fit within the constraints of the website; we now have 269 followers – if you have not done so already take a look and like us please and of course post and comment on relevant matters.

Sales/Publications

The great success in 2016 and 2017 was Ghosts of Aberglaslyn that has quickly moved into profit and we only have limited stock remaining.

As for new books we have a manuscript by Dave Southern on The Croesor Tramway that Peter Liddell and I are working on with the aim of having it available by Christmas.

Our latest mini venture is a DVD based on a short amateur film shot in the summer of 1936.

Adrian Gray continues his splendid efforts in selling our publications for which I thank him.

We have a widely dispersed membership and to a great extent, the Group's Journal is what binds us together in our common cause. Without the efforts of Peter Liddell as Journal Editor and print manager and his contributing authors, we would not have that well regarded quarterly publication and heritage voice. I know from experience that he can be most persuasive in eliciting those 1,000 words or more to fill a space at short notice. As for his forensic approach to extracting information from photographs, I remain in awe. Peter also wrestles with the design and printing of our books.

Thanks are due to ZPQ the printers of the journal and some of our books – they manage to combine keen prices with good service and quality, which is no bad thing!

Membership and Administration

Our membership is just about stable at 267 and we are attracting new members. I thank Dick Lystor for continuing his sterling efforts on membership and developing and managing our archives – he continues to spot buy interesting items on eBay including WHR photographs and paper ephemera which seem to emerge from who knows where. He also manages to mine the archives for interesting insights into the history of the railway particularly of the personalities involved and their quirky behaviour and turn them into fascinating articles for the Journal, one of which, 'The Capricious Coalman of Nantmor' was featured in Heritage Railway Magazine by Geoff Courtney, one of their contributing journalists. I refer you also Dick's separate reports on Archives and Membership.

As for becoming a corporate entity, we for the time being at least, remain as we are, unincorporated.

I need to mention GDPR and we are taking steps to ensure that we meet its requirements in ensuring for example, that we have the consent of members for holding their data and you will note that for example, the website now has a privacy notice.

Cedric continues to look after the administrative aspects of the Group including meeting minute taking, one of the important but unglamorous activities of an organisation. Thank you Cedric.

External Relations

We continue to maintain our links with both the WHR/FR and the Heritage Railway in various ways.

Mike Hadley, played a valuable part in the in the development of the WHR's new station at Caernarfon.

I continue to be a Director of the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways Heritage Limited. I think it's fair to say that in addition to our own activities over the years, the Company plays an important role in ensuring that both railways pay more attention to heritage assets and history than perhaps was previously the case in the recent past. It is also a fairly young board and now has new members bringing new skills and experience to the 'party'.

The Future

I remain acutely aware of the need to find a home for our archive material and indeed that of others. The archives issue also features significantly in the deliberations of the Heritage Company and various initiatives are underway – a long term solution is however just that - long term

Interpretation continues to be an area where we can provide a useful resource, support and funding.

The Waenfawr replica building project has perhaps a role for us but that remains to be investigated.

I have already mentioned the heritage trains and maybe in 2019 we might yet see 'Russell', the sole remaining locomotive of the NWNGR/WHR, the Buffet car and the 'Gladstone' coach at Tryfan Junction.

Moving on to an international aspect of our activities, an email received by Peter Liddell a few days ago reminded me how an interest in 'our' railway not only transcends national and cultural boundaries but also emphasises the engineering aspects of our hobby. You will recall some articles in our Journal on Mr K F Antia, a railway engineer from India who studied at the University of London in about 1925

and as part of his first degree studies wrote an illustrated paper on the then 'new' Welsh Highland Railway.

Mr Antia went on to become one of India's leading railway engineers, president of the Indian Institution of Civil Engineers and Vice-president of the International Prestressed Concrete Federation. He was tragically killed in an aircraft crash in May 1968 on his way to an international conference. In 2010, two of his granddaughters came to visit the WHR and members of the Group hosted their visit.

In the email to Peter L , Yasmine Stafford another granddaughter said that the family now wished to make a donation of £500 in memory of the death of their grandfather 50 years ago on May 28th . That donation has now been made and your committee has discussed the most appropriate means of commemorating Khurshed F. Antia and his link with North Wales and its railways.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the Committee for the sterling work they have put in over the year to keep the Group functioning.

Thank you all for your support

Nick Booker

Chairman

May 2018