

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

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HARMONY

It is not the job of this publication to be uncritical of the FR's proposals for the WHR. It will give praise where it is due and it will criticise where it feels it has to. A case in point for praise is the restoration of both the station building and the goods shed at Dinas - an all round excellent job. But having said that they do not sit comfortably with the Garratts and the new coaches. They somehow look out of place, an anachronism. Maybe this will alter with time but one can't help feeling that Russell and a train of the old familiar Welsh Highland stock would look much more at home than these aliens from South Africa! Perhaps this is something we can look forward to early in the new millennium. The commercial reasons for these large locos are appreciated, but they need to be integrated into the Welsh Highland scene and not imposed on it.

NWNG Bridges

The Gwyrfai Valley has been adorned with the characteristic NWNG Rly bridges for over 120 years. 'Snowdon Ranger', 'Beddgelert' and 'Moel Tryfan' have passed under their portals. '590', 'Russell' and 'Gowrie' have added their deposit of soot to the lining. They are as much a part of the landscape as Snowdon itself. The bridges are built in random granite with a red brick lining to the interior arch. They are faced on the outside rim of each elevation with traditional yellow Ruabon brick, which in some cases is laid in a herring bone fashion. In many cases the telephone insulators which carried the wires through the arch are still in position.

Originally there were thirteen of these bridges but one has since been demolished by



Road Over Bridge at Waenfawr
D. Allan - April 1998

the farmer at Cae Hen and another, over the Rhostryfan road replaced in 1933 by a concrete bridge.

Therefore it is of vital importance that all the others remain intact. It is understood that the trackbed will have to be deepened under them to allow for the passage of the Garratts, but it is hoped that all their other features will remain undisturbed so that this unique example of Welsh Railway heritage can be appreciated by future generations.

"New" Old Photos

More photographs of the railway when it was running continue to be unearthed. All of them throw some insight into some aspect of the line and all of them are fascinating to the Welsh Highland enthusiast. They will be made available to everybody provided permission has been obtained from the owner. They should be seen as complementary to the main Welsh Highland collection held in the WHR (Porthmadog) shop

Two new examples are reproduced on the back page of this Newsletter, both are of the right angled crossing of the Cambrian. What the chap up the pole is doing is anybody's guess. Surely he can't be posted there to act as lookout for the Cambrian Coast Express?!

Postcard sized prints are available from John Keylock at 50p each plus postage

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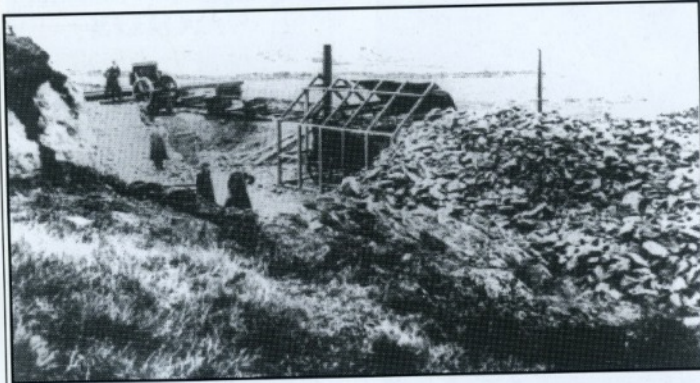
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Mystery at Pitt's Head By Derek Lystor

During the third of the survey walks carried out last year, the discovery of a previously unrecorded feature was made at Pitt's Head. Subsequently this has provoked considerable de-

ideas were discussed by the surveying party.

However the discovery of a photograph in Gwynedd Archives, (reproduced by kind permission of Gwynedd Archives Service) led to further



bate and research by various WHHG members. The findings thus far are recorded in this article and further information will be welcomed.

The discovery was that of a rectangular stone base, approximately 5 feet by 7 feet, with four large securing bolts, 15 inches high with centres at 31 inches by 49 inches which are cast into the concrete floor. This is set back off the trackbed a little under 300 yards north of Pitt's Head road bridge. The site lies beneath a large outcrop of rock and there was formerly a footpath access from a nearby farmstead. The trackbed at this point is on an embankment adjacent to the main Rhyd ddu to Beddgelert Road and there is a considerable depression on the non roadside, with a culvert under both railway and road. The base sits at the south end of this depression somewhat higher than the trackbed. It was obvious that some form of activity had been carried out at this location and various

re-examination of the site. The photo was originally thought to have been at Salem Quarry (the railway's ballast pit), but a series of photographs taken by David Allan shows it to have been of the Pitt's Head site. The Archive view, taken in the early twenties, shows a fixed plant with two large drive or flywheels mounted on a stone base with some form of plank way behind. The latter seems to be raised above the track on the embankment and disappears off to the left behind a rock outcrop. On the embankment there is what appears to be a grizzly - a type of coarse screen used for 'sizing' in stone crushing operations. There is a ledge on the left of the view in front of which there is a depression containing the steam engine in a timber framed shed. A tarpaulin covers part of the shed roof giving the machine and its attendant some degree of shelter. Immediately behind the shed is a large pile of broken stone.

Initial researches suggest that the engine was a large

portable machine, possibly built by Robey, of 10 or 12 NHP and was either a compound or duplex. It was not self propelled but was a portable power source much used on construction sites for driving machinery such as crushers, mills, pumps and saw benches etc. Here the 'crusher' or 'mill' would have been driven by a considerable length of flat belting.

A photograph taken by Clinker at South Snowdon in 1922 shows the layout of Parry's timber tramway and associated wagons etc. In the centre of the scene however is a stationary engine which is very possibly the same Robey, perhaps being used there for driving a circular saw for cutting the timber. Behind it is what could be the same timber framed shed as at Pitt's Head, whilst in front may be the machine with double flywheels.

Two factors have to be taken into account to establish exactly what was going on at this site. The first is to determine what the plant on the stone base was and secondly to decide whether the operation was up and running or in the process of being wound down at the time the photograph was taken.

The plant may have been a stone crusher or concrete mill and there is evidence to support both theories. At first glance stone production seems to be the obvious choice. There is a deposit of stone, which shows some sign of having been worked; a trestle to allow skip wagons (or maybe wheelbarrows) filled with stone access to the crusher; a possible screening apparatus on the embankment and a

large stockpile of crushed rock. It is reported that McAlpines tipped hard-core at the summit section and at Afon Cwm Ddu in 1922. Crushed stone may also have been barrowed up the embankment into trucks or road vehicles

However, it is just as likely that the plant was a pan mixer for concrete. The photograph suggests a circular pan in the horizontal plane below the flywheel shaft. The four bolts are thought to be too widely spaced to relate to the crusher and may have been used to hold the grizzly in position. All the culverts on the new line were being constructed in concrete by 'Concrete Bob' McAlpine.

The biggest factor against the site being used for stone production is that there is no obvious way of feeding the 'crusher'. This leads on to whether the site was being set up, or in decline. If it was still being developed, perhaps the crusher was not fully assembled, awaiting additions such as feed hopper, discharge chute etc. There are no signs of a drive belt from the engine and, as already mentioned, the shed was but a frame. On the other hand, the presence of a large stockpile of stone, if produced at the site, could well indicate the required tonnage had been achieved and that the equipment was in the course of being dismantled.

My thanks are due to David Allan, John Keylock, Michael Davies, J.I.C. Boyd and Bill Briggs for their help with this article.

Photo - 'Pitts Head Crusher' - Gwynedd Archive Services

Hafod Garregog - Ynysferlas Halt

Derek Lystor



*Stone base of the Crusher
as it is today
D.W. Allan*

Mileposts or Km-posts

Never can so much fuss have been caused by such a little item! Did the NWNG have them? Certainly Boyd refers to them in his description of the line, but only the first one is marked on the 25" map.

Clearly the new railway will have to have distance posts for excellent safety reasons. The FR prefers them to be in kilometres even though they themselves have mileposts! May we now look forward to Porthmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog being converted to kilometres? The WH Heritage Group favours good old British miles, with a clearly visible zero datum point based on Dinas station building. Indeed the Group will offer to fund the installation of mileposts from Dinas southwards and if Km posts have to be used then they could be on the opposite side of the track.

Heritage member Sean Emmett and the Railway Performance Society, of which he is a member has offered to design and install them.

Sean goes on to suggest that alternative designs could be based on NER style posts or GWR style double faced posts or the design used on the Welshpool and Llanfair

May we invite Heritage members to express an opinion on this issue and maybe submit some ideas on design. Sean Emmett has already made some suggestions using 4' long double head or bullhead rail for the posts with small plates each side showing the distance. He suggests that the plates should be 8" high and 4" wide.

So if any member has design ideas for mileposts could they please send them to:-

Cedric Lodge
Tan y Ffordd
Bettws Garmon
Caernarfon
LL54 7AJ

There has always been some mystery surrounding the halt serving the Ynysferlas area, with both its name and location being somewhat confused. I hope that this short article may provide a logical explanation.

Taking the location first - there are three sources of information. Boyd gives the distance from South Snowdon as 8 miles - 7 chains, Mount's 1923 Report says 8 miles - 10 chains, and the 1924 WTT concludes that it was 8 miles - 5 chains. This is a total variation of 5 chains. In all cases the site is a little over half way between Hafod y Llyn and Croesor Junction. Today its location is recognisable by the two vertical lengths of old rail which once carried the nameboard and which are situated on the Porthmadog side of the level crossing, just north of the Afon Dylif girder bridge. This is a logical place for a halt - the minor road links the railway with the main Beddgelert road and also passes by Hafod Garegog house.

The earliest reference

to a stopping place in the area is contained in Mount's report in which he refers to Ynysferlas. This same name also appears on the earliest printing of punch tickets, introduced when the line was extended through to Porthmadog. However the earliest timetable, both working and public, refer to 'Hafod Garregog' (note the incorrect spelling). Boyd refers to a possible halt site, but there is no evidence to suggest that trains ever stopped there. It would seem very likely that this place was chosen to be Hafod Garregog Halt, but at the last minute (after tickets were printed) plans were altered and the Ynysferlas site, having better access and more likely to provide revenue, was renamed Hafod Garregog, with the original site being dropped.

My thanks to Michael Davies for his help with this article.

NOTE In a letter to Dafydd Wigley MP, Mike Hart confirms that if the halt is re-opened then one 'r' will be used in 'Garegog'.



*Survey Party between the nameboard posts at Hafod Garegog
20th August 1997 - D. Allan*

WELSH HIGHLAND

30th January

Festiniog Railway granted Light Railway Order for Junction Railway contract and powers to build joint station at Portmadoc

7th February

Amendment Order granted authorising abandonment of certain sections of PBSSR route to ease grades from 1:28 to 1:40.

17th February

Circular to FR shareholders proposing working arrangements between FR & WHR, including through running to Blaenau Festiniog, together with a cross-town link line and a new station in Portmadoc.

23rd February

Accident at Nantmor level crossing involving Lipton Tea's delivery van from Caernarvon and railway trucks. The incident was reported in the 'Caernarvon & Denbigh Herald'.

14th March

Commencement of Junction Railway contract.

19th March

Ministry of Labour report to McAlpines regarding use of local labour.

April

Colonel H.F. Stephens appointed civil engineer & locomotive superintendent of WHR/FR.

9th April

Completion of negotiations regarding land purchase in Beddgelert area.

30th April

Tube burst in traffic on 'Moel Tryfan'.

May

Initial 'Regulations for Working' introduced - "Private and not for Publication".

1st May

Reply from McAlpine to Evan R. Davies regarding report of 19th March.

8th May

Further correspondence between McAlpine and Davies

9th May

'Palmerston' loaned by FR until just after official opening

12th May

GWR Working Instructions for Cambrian Crossing issued from District Traffic Manager - Oswestry. New signal box brought into use.

12th May

Inspection train for Directors and contractors - 'Palmerston' and ten loaded slate wagons. Oakeley private carriage used. Girder bridges tested.

15th May

Inspection train from Porthmadog to Dinas - Double Fairlie and three coaches. Passengers included Jack, Davies, Tyrwhitt, A. McAlpine and Prendergast.

19th May

Further inspection train with Gladstone car substituted for Oakeley carriage.

22nd May

Mock run for Ministry inspection.

24th May

Ministry of Transport inspection by Lt. Col. A.H.L. Mount. Loop inspected at Waenfawr. Train from South Snowdon to Portmadoc - 'Merddin Emrys' and three coaches. 'James Spooner' attached to train at Beddgelert for double heading to Portmadoc for girder bridge testing. Britannia bridge inspected.

28th May

WHR regulations for Cambrian Crossing introduced.

29th May

Col. Mount's inspection report published.

June

Williams' report to Stephens on ex NWNG coaching stock at Dinas.

1st June

WHR new line opened to 'Portmadoc New (1923)' - first train was the 8.10 am ex Portmadoc consisting of 'Princess', two bogies and a brake van. The 9.50 am train ex Dinas was headed by 'Prince'. Trains crossed at Waenfawr.

1st June

Additional report from Col. Mount regarding cross town link and new station at Portmadoc.

7th June

Williams' report on 'Moel Tryfan' at Dinas.

8th June

Through trains between WHR and FR begin.

CHRONOLOGY 1923

17th June

'Moel Tryfan' started retubing at Dinas.

July

Simplex 4wP purchased for £350 from Kent Construction & Engineering Co., Ashford, Kent. Used on Croesor run and as FR bottom shunter.

July

'Moel Tryfan' sent into Boston Lodge for repairs and fitting of vacuum brakes. Locomotive cut down for through running over FR.

July

Six open bogie carriages ('Toastrack') ordered by the FR from Robert Hudson Ltd., Leeds at £155 each.

July

Vacuum brake fitted to No. 8 (Gladstone Coach).

4th July

Baldwin '590' purchased for £240 (delivered to Dinas) from Government Property Disposals Board through E.W. Farrow & Sons, Spalding.

9th July

New timetable for completed railway introduced.

11th July

Letter from S.J. Sylvester (Secretary to the Prime Minister) to S.E. Tyrwhitt, - "Lloyd George thanks you for your letter of 29/6 and WHR Return journey pass".

18th July

'Russell' derailed at Beddgelert.

August

"Snowdon & Welsh Highland Holiday Book" published (1/3d).

8th August

'Russell' jumped the rails at Portmadoc.

21st August

Reply given to Ministry of Transport request for estimated revenue from Caernarfon extension. - "Passengers :- £420, Parcels :- £100. Mails :- £40, all per annum." (Morris & Jones of Caernarfon anxious for extension to proceed as they think it would reduce their grocery distribution costs.) LMS Cheap Day Return, Caernarvon - Dinas 5d.

23rd August

Delivery begins of Hudson 'Toastrack' coaches No. 37-42.

September

Hire of car from W.V. Turner, Saracen's Head Hotel for £2-16-8d.

September

'Toastrack' coaches repainted in FR "Lake".

21st/22nd September

Bettws Garmon Sheep Dog Trials. Special handbill printed.

October

Welsh Highland articles published in 'The Locomotive' & 'The Railway Gazette'.

1st October

John May appointed Superintendent of WHR & FR.

Winter

'Russell' sent into Boston Lodge works to receive vacuum brake.

December

Welsh Highland article published in 'Railway Magazine'.

December

Repainting of coaching stock in "Kentish Green" commenced.

December

Carriage No. 10 renumbered 23 in WHR/FR combined systems. Coach overhauled and repainted. 'W H R' attached to sides in cast iron letters.

December

Annual receipts :- Goods £3422, Passengers £2517, Loss £1573. Number of passengers - 58,203.



'Russell' and train at Beddgelert - 1923 F. Moore (WHR No. 39)

BRYNGWYN WALK - Michael Davies

This article is based on part of a letter to the editor from Heritage committee member Michael Davies. It is so

deep cutting, curved embankments and some very nice stone culverts and animal creeps. I wondered how the level

gone and it really is very pleasant and green. If for any reason we can't get through the National Park, then I think we should go for Caernarfon to Bryngwyn, but probably someone would tell us that it would not be financially viable! There was great heat up at Fron, but no pub of course and I was without drink. The Post Office sold only stamps (can you imagine that?) but I was in luck, for just across the wide village green, once criss-crossed by tramways connecting the NWNG Rly Drumhead with Cilgwyn and Fron quarries, was a village store which was 'agored'.

Suitably fortified I set off up the flanks of Moel Tryfan, passing a very large 'hole' filled with deep blue water.

This is now sheep country, for not a soul did I see, just a few abandoned farmsteads. With Mynedd Mawr and Craig Cwm Bychan to my right, and with the Moel Tryfan quarries to the left I steered a north-east course until I could see my goal ahead - Bettws Garmon in the Gwyrfa Valley. A swift descent brought me to the rail-built ladder stile crossing just north of Salem from where the main line was walked to Plas y Nant. Special attention was paid to the site of the 'waiting room' just south of Salem and to the two 'Blacker Bombard' mortar gun sites in this most delightful section of the old 'North Wales' main line. A short wait at Plas y Nant produced a south bound bus which took me to Rhyd ddu

where I was more than delighted to find the Cwellyn Arms 'agored' all day. I soon downed a pint of bitter shandy before striking off for the trackbed to Snowdon Ranger, now less boggy than on some recent walks. Bill Rear's pictures (taken in 1948) were checked again and some notes made. At Ffridd Isaf I could see Dave Kent and his wife sitting outside their front door enjoying the marvellous weather. Regrettably time did not permit a detour for a chat.

Speed was reduced for Glanrafon viaduct and a stop made at a mountain stream at 7 - 1/2 miles for both a drink and 'greasing the boxes' i.e. bathing the feet! The signal post base is still there - I now know where to look - and I checked the point where the photo showing the tents was taken (WHR Photo No. ?)

Snowdon Ranger hostel appeared to be very busy with two minibuses unloading and a taxi collecting two people who perhaps had found the hostel full - and didn't possess a bus timetable! My return bus soon appeared and after a short wait in Caernarfon I was back in Bangor for the Holyhead - Birmingham express. Home at 9.00pm - a jolly good day out!!"

*Photo - Bryn Gwyn Branch - Bridge over Afon Rhyd
D. Allan 1st April 1998*



evocative that it deserves sharing with a wider audience. Michael lives in Cheshire and is a devotee of public transport.

"Travelling by train and bus to Caernarfon I caught the 11.30am WHR train from Caernarfon Castle to Dinas Junction, where the old granite-built station building was covered in scaffolding - presumably for re-slating? (Yes - Ed). Another bus took me over Cae Moel bridge to Rhos Isaf from where I followed field paths until reaching the Bryn Gwyn branch 1/4 mile south of Rhostryfan. The heat was searing and the cuckoo monotonous as I laboured away up the 1 in 40, (Boyd claims it is sometimes steeper!). It is a lovely line and very easy to walk from Rhos to the level crossing located just before that remarkable horseshoe curve near Bryngwyn. Here there is a

crossing was operated in NWNG Rly days - before the 1923 Light Railway operations? I had visions of the Bryngwyn porter/signalman jumping on his bike when the Rhostryfan box belled "train entering section", cycling down the hill and opening the gates to ensure that the train didn't have to stop on the steepest part of the branch. The Bryngwyn station master would attend to the station gates whilst the porter would make his way back up the hill - about 1/4 mile. Perhaps all a dream, but a nice one at that!

I used more footpaths from Bryngwyn station to Fron, passing a couple of severe looking Calvinistic chapels. The countryside here has changed very much since my first visit in 1950, which was the last time I walked this upper part of the branch. All industry has

Letters Letters Letters

PB&SSR Gradients

Having been interested in the PB&SSR for as long as I have been interested in three-phase electrification, I must challenge the conclusion of Jim Hewett's armchair survey of the two trackbeds above Beddgelert. The OS map reveals two points at which the original PBSSR survey, with its 1 in 29 gradient, was replaced by the 1 in 40 WHR alignment. I think that an on-site survey might show that there was a third, exactly where he suggests it should have been immediately beyond the Meillionen crossing.

The first and best known realignment is immediately south of Beddgelert, where Bruce Peebles stopped work almost as soon as they had completed the bridge over the main road. The line would have crossed the river on its original alignment, then the gradient steepens to 1 in 29 to regain the old alignment as it entered Beddgelert.

The next realignment produced the reverse curve above the station, where old and new routes are clearly shown on the OS map. The map shows no evidence of an earlier alignment above the Meillionen, though I am sure I have seen a photograph of abandoned works in that area. I would have expected to find something, as the map suggests that Bruce Peebles, (or maybe a contractor working on their behalf) had erected walls (fences?) throughout their contract, even though actual construction got no further. A proper survey to take levels along the original route from the river below Beddgelert to

the summit just before Pitt's Head would prove the point one way or the other - unless by some chance the original PBSSR survey still exists, which would save someone a lot of hard and dirty work.

My guess is that the old line consisted of three really steep pitches at 1 in 29 connected by shorter sections on a slightly easier inclination. Anyone searching for proof of this should remember that the original line was never completed and that subsequent WHR construction probably altered the topography of the area quite significantly.

There would have been no point in making the ruling gradient significantly less than 1 in 29 because the locomotives were designed specifically for the line and asynchronous three-phase induction motors behave quite differently from other forms of prime mover. The PBSSR locomotives had but two speeds, so far as I can make out, so there was no point in making the gradient profile more complicated than it needed to be so it would be a simple matter to lay it out. Had the railway been completed I suspect that the limitations of Bruce Peebles' little locomotives, basically a Ganz mining locomotive, would quickly have become rather embarrassing. What their successors might have been can only be conjectured - I once designed a 400hp "Crocodile" fitted with two of Bruce Peebles' magnificent BS90 motors which would have boasted three running speeds and - to judge by the same motors being worked far beyond their designed rating on inclines in the Oakeley Slate Quarry in the 1960s -



would have required regular water stops to drain and refill their boiling water resistances. But for the fact that Bruce Peebles had yet to underestimate their enormous appetite for cold water possessed by BS90 control gear working flat out, I would be tempted to suggest looking for signs of water stops on the climb out of Beddgelert, as the tiny 0-4-0s would no doubt have displayed a similar appetite.

It is an interesting thought that were the WHR being built today its locomotives might well be powered by three-phase motors, for thanks to modern solid-state circuitry it is possible to use such a transmission in a d.c. Or diesel-electric locomotive.

RODNEY WEAVER
Kenilworth.

Aberglaslyn Halt

In the previous issue, Jim Hewett raises the question of Aberglaslyn Halt which was mentioned in Welsh Highland Heritage No 1. He is quite right in saying that a halt was contemplated, but never opened, bearing this name. However, in this case, both the ticket article and the photo of Dinas station name board refer to Nantmor Halt, which was renamed 'Aberglaslyn' in June

1934 with the commencement of the FR lease. Presumably this was done in a vain attempt to encourage more passengers.

DEREK LYSTOR
Newton Abbot
Devon

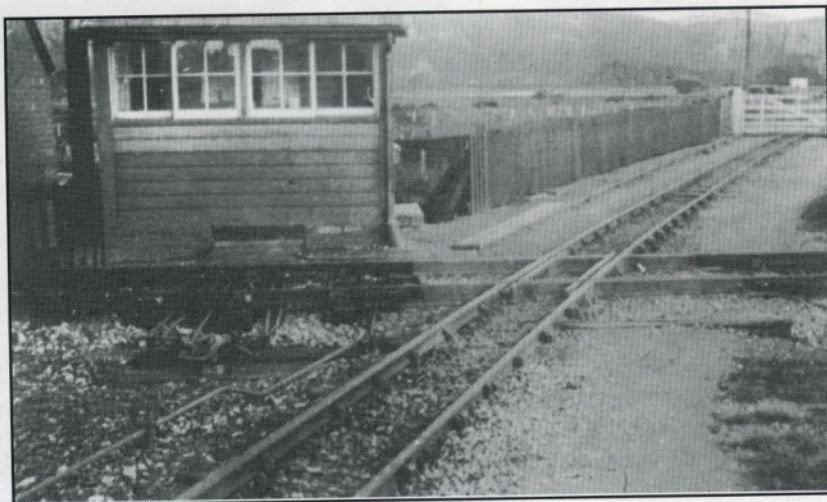
Aberglaslyn Halt - again

A map of 1923/24 vintage indicates Aberglaslyn Halt at the southern end of the long tunnel - at the start of Cwm Bychan. About the same time the grandly styled Snowdon Mountain Hotels and Tramroads Company produced a series of postcards depicting scenes on the Welsh Highland. Much artistic licence was employed and one view is of Aberglaslyn Halt, depicted as being between the end of the long tunnel and the railway bridge over Cwm Bychan access track. (see picture above by *Snowdon mountain Hotels & Tramroads*)

The halt is shown as being on the westward extension of the railway embankment, with buildings rather more substantial than those associated with the Welsh Highland! There is no manifestation of this embankment extension today.

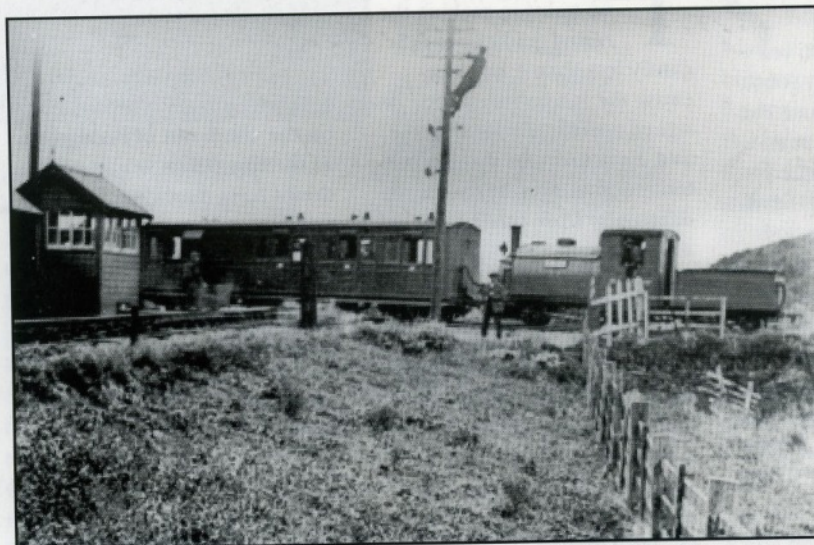
JOHN KEYLOCK
Broadway
Worcestershire

'New' Old Pictures



*Right Angled crossing of the Cambrian Main line - Porthmadog
Photo by K.F. Antia
1928
From 'treatise',
Michael Davies*

*England Loco and Train crossing the Cambrian Main Line - Porthmadog
By Permission of Peter Johnson
- a well protected movement!*



NOTICEBOARD

Please remember the AGM (our first) which will be held in the Saracen's Head Hotel - Beddgelert on Sunday 13th September at 2.30pm. An agenda will be available at the meeting. A draft constitution has been prepared and will be available on request from John Keylock. It is based on a simplified version of that used by the FR Heritage Group.

Copy date for next Newsletter is 30th September 1998

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