

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

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WAENFAWR COALYARD REVEALED

Following the constructive demolition of Waenfawr station building the Waenfawr site quickly became a hive of intense activity. Part of the action involved scraping off the accumulated turf and debris of some seventy years. Astonishingly this revealed the existence of the completely unknown - or at least forgotten - Waenfawr coal yard, which presumably was laid down in NWNGR days. A large area of slate slabs was uncovered to the south of the station building site. These lay between the main line and the siding which had served the little goods shed. The slabs had a well polished appearance which indicated much shovelling! They were laid in a sort of crazy paving formation, with each slab measuring about 24 inches by about 18 inches, and quite dramatically, small lumps of coal were recovered from between the slabs. The total size of the yard was carefully measured and found to be some 720 square feet. JCB driver, John Humphries, is to be commended for carefully unearthing the site and for bringing it to the attention of the Heritage Group.

Certainly in 1923 coal was being delivered to Dinas by the L.M.S. from the Broughton and Plas Power Coal Co. in the Wrexham coalfield. Transhipment from the standard to the narrow gauge took place - with the aid of gravity - at the north end of Dinas yard (in the exchange sidings). Coal deliveries from Dinas to Waenfawr would have been in 4-wheeled, five plank



wagons of four tons capacity with a lift up door on one side only. (Larger quantities of coal for Beddgelert were delivered in the ex War Department Hudson bogie wagons). Driver's logs of the 1920's and 30's detail 'loaded coal wagons for Waenfawr' and 'coal empties from Waenfawr'.

In WHR days coal was used in just about every household. To meet this demand there were several coal merchants along the line. Indeed it is known that there were three in Bryngwyn, two from Rhostryfan, two in Beddgelert and one at Rhyd ddu. According to ex WHR driver Gronwy Roberts in an interview recorded in 1988 "the Rhyd ddu merchant was a Mr Atcheson - he was a funny old fellow, he always wore a pair of clogs together with a tail coat and a peaked cap. He pulled a little trolley in which his coal was weighed out in half hundredweight bags because he couldn't manage a full hundredweight."

Waenfawr coalyard looking south. Former main line is top right. David Allan - Nov 1999

One of the Waenfawr coal merchants was John Parry who is reputed to have been the same colour as his merchandise! In the 1930's he acquired a Morris Commercial lorry, prior to which he presumably relied on a horse and cart. The romantic can conjure up a picture of Parry in charge of horse and loaded coal cart leaving Waenfawr station yard via the approach road and trudging up the hill into the village with his hearth-warming load.

One further twist in this extraordinary tale was revealed in that same recorded interview with Gronwy Roberts. Gronwy mentioned the various coal merchants on the line, he said that there were two in Waenfawr but he could only recall the name of one of them. That name was none other than one John Humphries whose namesake had just unearthed this seventy year old feature with his JCB!

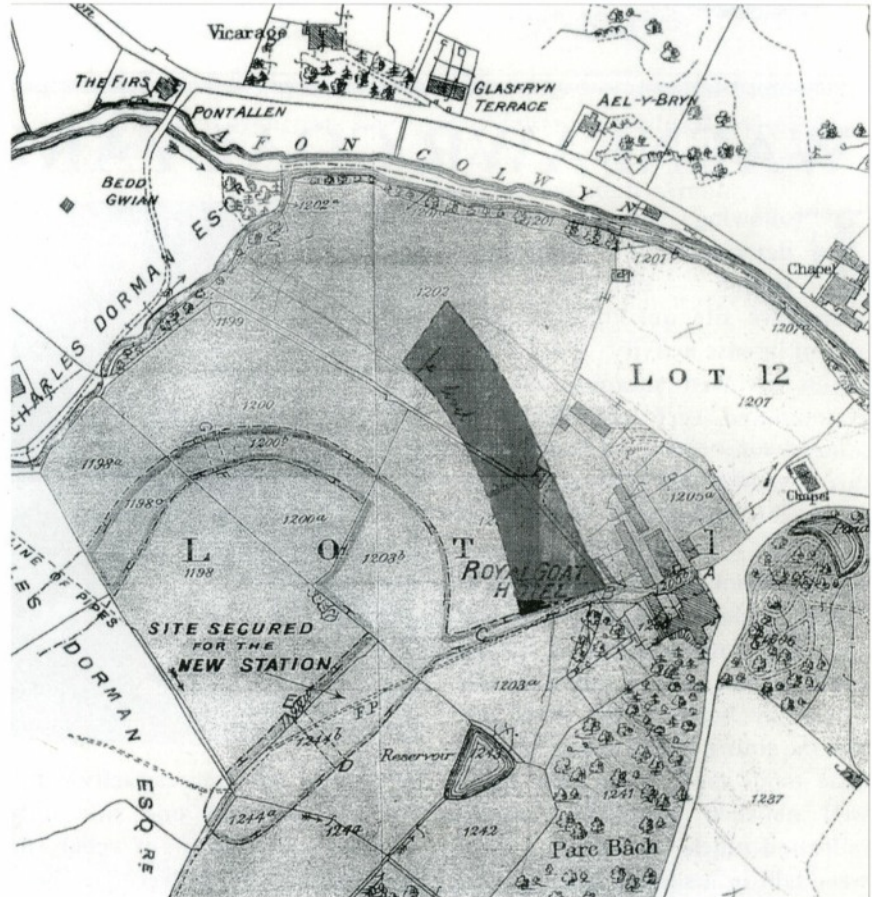
FROM THE ARCHIVES

MORE FROM THE SALE OF THE GOAT HOTEL IN 1903

In Heritage Newsletter No. 6 some tantalising details were given about the sale of the Goat Hotel in Beddgelert. Quoting from the original, the article referred to "The portion of the Property Edged Green on the plan of Lot 1 has been conditionally sold to the Promoters of the New Light Railway.....etc." The railway in question was in fact the Beddgelert Extension of the NWNGR. As can be seen from the accompanying plan, taken from the original 1903 Sale Catalogue, the "terminus" to which the plan refers was to have been at right angles to where the WHR station was eventually built. The sale of the Royal Goat Hotel Estate took place on June 6th, 1903, but it was four days later, on June 10th, that the conveyance was signed.

The Beddgelert Extension Railway then 'effectively' exchanged this land for the plot which was to become the site of Beddgelert Station (WHR). The plan clearly shows this alternative site, with the course of the line up to Afon Cwm Cloch drawn in pencil on the catalogue for the benefit of the potential purchaser. A condition of the new conveyance was that the land should not be used for tea gardens and the like! A further condition was that 'the company shall not at any time construct or maintain any other station within one mile of the Goat Hotel, except a platform for passenger traffic only on the eastern side of the Glaslyn River!'

From just north of Tyn-y-Coed to Beddgelert, the proposed Beddgelert Extension Railway followed a rather different alignment to both the PB&SSR and subsequent WHR. Up to the point where it crossed the Afon Cwm Cloch, between Cwmcloch and Cwmcloch Isaf, it more or less



Land plan taken from the original sale document. The proposed station site is the semi-circular tongue of land - bottom left hand corner.

paralleled the later WHR route before sweeping through 90 degrees to cross the WHR 'horseshoe' at its narrowest point, then through a full half circle to terminate, as previously mentioned, with a station at right angles to the eventual one.

It is interesting to note that two small buildings were ultimately demolished by the PB&SSR contractors during construction work. One building disappeared when the site of Beddgelert station was cleared and levelled and can be seen immediately above the words ROYAL GOAT HOTEL. The other at Bedd Gwain, lies under the later PB&SSR embankment to the left of the Afon Cwm Cloch. Any information on either of these two buildings would be gratefully received.

From the 'North Wales Chronicle'
February 10th 1922
**PORTMADOC BEDDGELEERT
AND SOUTH SNOWDON
RAILWAY.**

It has come to the knowledge of the Directors of the above railway that Rails, Sleepers and other Materials have been taken from the Line. The co-operation of Landowners, Occupiers, and others, are requested in recovering this Material. The work of opening the Railway will be greatly simplified if this Material is returned at once. Anyone having information regarding this Property is invited to communicate with the ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, Festiniog Railway, Portmadoc.

HALTS UPDATE



Nantmor Goods Shed in 1934 from the train - Roger Kidner

Since the publication of the last Newsletter, some new information has come to light regarding WHR halts.

My thanks go to member Roger Kidner, whose photograph of the goods warehouse at Nantmor taken from a passing train in 1934 is reproduced here. As can be seen, what was described in Newsletter No. 6 as a 'corrugated iron structure' was in fact two ex FR 4-wheel coaches side by side with a corrugated iron and timber roof. Mr Kidner suggests that the trackside coach was First Class, whilst other sources suggest Third. Whatever the class, both coaches were built by Ashbury in March 1868 and were of the narrow type (Nos. 7 - 10 and 14, with No. 10 being First Class). All were scrapped by 1928, but it is doubtful

whether they had been used for many years. The 1934 lease makes no mention of goods facilities here, so the warehouse must have been the result of FR involvement in the WHR later that year.

Further reference to the lease reveals some other information regarding passenger shelters and facilities at the halts. Salem Halt is listed as having 'One Wooden hut as Waiting Room'. If the position of that Halt was changed as previously suggested, this building may have been replaced by the corrugated iron structure seen in the photo in Newsletter No. 5. The building at Hafod Ruffydd is confirmed as being of 'Zinc and Timber', but the

Derek Lystor reviews the position in the light of further revelations since the last 'Newsletter'

lease reveals that it is 'divided into a Waiting Room and Booking Office'. As no tickets were ever issued from here, one suspects the office that was used for goods business, essentially for the benefit of the local farmers. An intriguing entry alongside Nantmor Halt is the existence of 'One water supply, Tank only'. There is no mention of loco or engine water, as at say Beddgelert, or lavatories, so the precise use of a water tank remains a mystery.

Mr Kidner alighted at Hafod Garregog in 1926 and he cannot recall any passenger accommodation being present - suggesting that these facilities may have appeared during the lease period. However, the Lease clearly indicates the presence of 'One small hut (old railway Carriage)', so this must have appeared between these two dates. Ynysfor is quoted as having 'Two Small Huts of Zinc and Timber'. The one on the northern side of the level crossing must have been replaced by an old FR coach body some time later.

Finally, due to a proofing error, the wrong opening date was given in the last issue for Croesor Junction. This should, of course, have read 1st June 1923.

ARTHUR RIMMER

Arthur died in December 1999 aged 80. Perhaps his greatest WHR disappointment was to visit North Wales in 1938 only to discover that the trains had ceased to run the previous year. He was on the scene however to photograph the demolition train and the rake of carriages lined up for auction. Arthur served as a squadron leader with the RAF during the war and it

was during this time that he photographed Dinas from the air. In 1941 he wrote to 'The Modern Tramway' magazine and with reference to the Welsh Highland suggested "that the line could be bought by railway enthusiasts and run by them". It would be no exaggeration to describe him as the first pioneer of the Welsh Highland restoration project. Thank you Arthur.



W.H.R. WATER TANKS

JOHN KEYLOCK



Snowdon Ranger station photographed in 1948 by Bill Rear with the remains of the water tower in the foreground.

locomotive (Russell) took water from the tank". Later services were resumed over the crossing and the Portmadoc tank may well have been brought back into use.

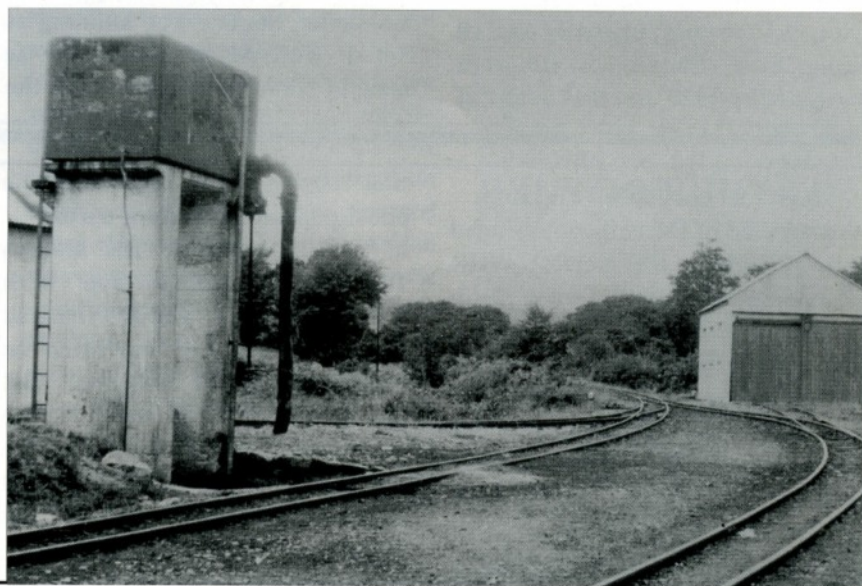
Other water towers were at Beddgelert, Dinas, Bryngwyn and Snowdon Ranger (Quellyn Lake). The 1922 Works Schedule relating to Quellyn Lake states - 'new water tank with hydraulic rams to be fitted'. (Boyd Vol two, page thirteen). And indeed there is a stream either side of the station which would have provided the driving force. The 1934 lease relating to Quellyn Lake refers to 'One ram forcing pump for supplying water for the locos'. It is interesting to note that the circa 1910 25inch to 1 mile O.S. Map indicates 'Tanks' at Quellyn Lake, suggesting the need for storage because of potential shortage. A footnote at the bottom of Boyd page thirteen refers to an illustration of 1910 showing two tanks. Photographs of Beddgelert water tower, of similar concrete construction to that at Portmadoc New (1923), shows a one inch pipe

A delightful study by P.M. Gates of Beddgelert station throat with emphasis on the water tower - date unknown.

This saga started in 1996 with an article in FR Heritage Journal No. 47 by Adrian Gray about the brine tank wagon which served as a locomotive watering tank atop a lattice of sleepers at Pont Croesor. (See Roger Kidner's photo on page 3 in Newsletter No 6).

How water got from the river to tank was a question answered by Green & Carter in Somerset - 'The World's Oldest RAM Manufacturer - Established 1774' - and still going strong. In a letter to the writer they confirm "being involved with hydraulic ram installations on the WHR, but unfortunately we have no records which indicate exactly where the installations were carried out". Roger Kidner's well known 1934 photograph of 'Welsh Pony' and train on Pont Croesor (see top of next page) shows the water tank, tower and extension to the bridge abutment with the tank feeder pipe from the ram under the bridge clamped to it. Even in those days there was a safety fence at the bottom of the access ladder, to prevent the possibility of falling into the Glaslyn! It is likely that the Pont Croesor watering facility was only regularly used prior to

Portmadoc New (1923) coming on stream, presumably connected to the town's main water supply. However, Pont Croesor tank may have come back into regular use, when in 1929 WHR trains ceased crossing the GWR at Portmadoc. (See Boyd Vol two page thirty seven). The use of the north side of the crossing and Pont Croesor water tower are specifically mentioned in Jack Steel's account of a journey over the line in that year - "At Pont Croesor the





'Welsh Pony' and train crossing Pont Croesor in 1934. Note the tank feeder pipe which is under the bridge and clamped to it. Photo Roger Kidner - 1934. (Photo is much enlarged)

coming out of the tank bottom and disappearing underground. This suggests mains supply, but only if particular 1922 plans see the light of day may the point be proven. Quellyn Lake, Bryngwyn and Dinas water towers obviously originated in NWNCR days. A possible water supply for the latter was discovered on the first phase of the Heritage Group trackbed survey in 1997. Just beyond the A487 road overbridge (Pwllheli to Caernarfon road), the trackbed runs parallel to the Afon Rhyd, which it subsequently crosses at the unique Cae Moel bridge. On the southern side of the trackbed, and originally buried just outside its shoulder, of is a run of nine inch internal diameter earthenware pipes. About halfway between the A487 bridge and Cae Moel bridge a leate leads off the Afon Rhyd, controlled by the remains of sluice gate built of rail and iron bar. This sluice gate is 36ft from where the leate leaves the riverbank. A further 87ft from the sluice the water feeds into the 9in pipe via a settling pit. The mouth of the pipe is set into an attractive slate 'embankment' some 4ft 6in wide and 2ft deep. The pipe run can be traced to the boundary of the Mount Pleasant Hotel in the grounds of which the trackbed is presently covered with overburden. It will be interesting to see if further positive clues are unearthed during construction work.



The remains of the sluice gate in the leate with the Afon Rhyd which supplied the water in the background. Photo David Allan January 2000



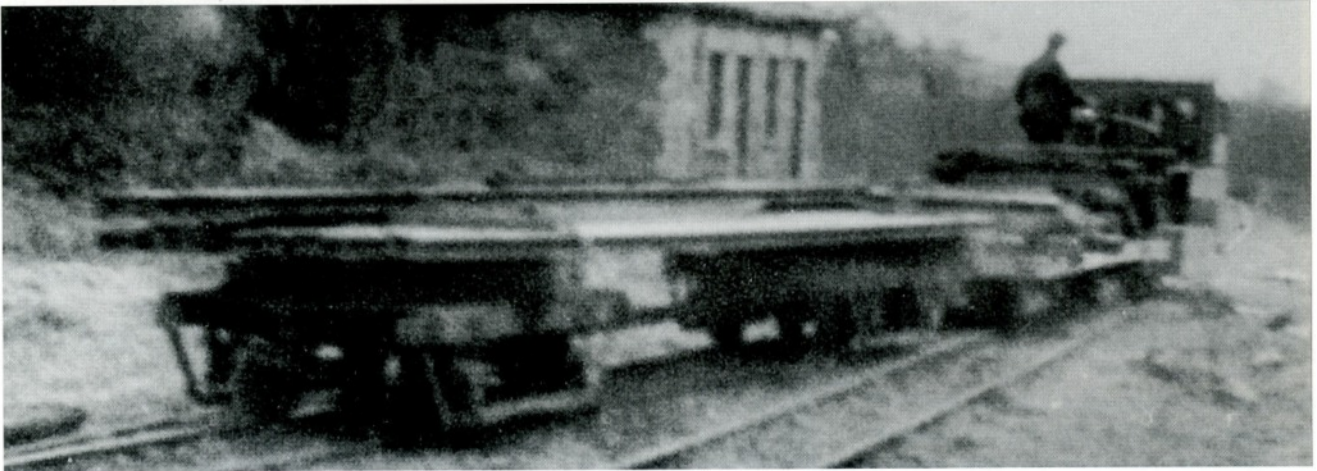
Almost certainly this system was the original supply to Dinas yard. By the time of the opening of the NWNCR, Green & Carter had already been in business for nearly a century and having seen the best possible photograph of the Dinas installation, they suggest that it is

Removing an example of the buried water supply pipe. Photo - David Allan, December 1999.

an obvious candidate for the ram water feed method of supplying water to a raised tank.

THE FR LEASE OF 1934

DEREK LYSTOR



By the end of 1933, growing losses had forced the WHR board to take the inevitable decision to suspend all train services, this effectively closed the entire line on 31st December of that year. Early in 1934, attempts were made to encourage the quarries in the Moel Tryfan area to use the line, but these had failed due to another periodic slump in the slate industry. The prospect of the WHR reopening for the 1934 summer season seemed unlikely. However, encouraged by an improvement in their own fortunes, the FR decided to take a 42 year lease on the Welsh Highland and the summer service for 1934 began on the 9th July, running through to the 20th September.

The lease was a comparatively long document, therefore the following is a resume which attempts to highlight the salient points.

Dated 26th June 1934 and carrying Stamp Duty of 5/-, the Lease was made between three parties - viz. The Welsh Highland Railway (Light Railway) Company (the Lessor Company), Richard Thomas Griffiths (the Receiver) and the Festiniog Railway (the Lessee). Details of the formation of the WHR, the Debenture holders, District Council involvement and the appointment of a Receiver are

given, followed by the main part of the Deed, laying out the various conditions, agreements, covenants etc., binding the three parties. The First Schedule - a list of Debenture holders, is followed by the Second Schedule which gives a fascinating insight into the railway. It comprises a comprehensive

“The Second Schedule of the Lease gives a fascinating insight into the railway”

inventory of the Welsh Highland's assets, breaking the railway down into its individual components, from 21 miles 57 chains of main line to one scythe held by the Dinas PW Dept!

The Schedule begins with reference to the permanent way and stations, listing each siding and loop present, and provides some interesting information. Mention is made of a 'coal yard siding' at Waenfawr (sic), the remains of the wharf it served having been recently unearthed by the contractors. Measurements have been taken and the slate slabs forming the floor have been removed for

The 1942 demolition train - Is this the underframe of one of the pre 1877 Ashbury brakes?

preservation/re-use by members of the Heritage Group. The siding at Bettws Garmon (sic), serving Hafod y Wern quarry, is reported as still being in situ, although various accounts quote the closure of the quarry as occurring in the mid twenties. Boyd writes that a quarry at Bettws Garmon reopened for a short time in 1933 (South Caernarfonshire Vol Two pp 44/45) which was quite probably Hafod y Wern.

Although shut for nearly two decades, the quarry at Glanrafon was still served by a siding, which remained until the line was demolished. There is no mention of a further siding, said to have been laid in 1925 which served the aerial ropeway from Rhos Clogwyn quarry. This quarry was still sending slate over the WHR in 1931 but may have been closed soon after this date. It is possible that this siding was missed, as almost certainly was the timber siding at South Snowdon. Although listed no details were given of the Beddgelert Sidings at Portmadoc.

The Schedule then moves on to describe the buildings in some

MORE ON THE 1934 LEASE

detail. There are numerous entries for Dinas, including 'one small office rented by Vanwil Oil Co' and the 'goods warehouse, complete with deck and 25cwt crane'. The Stationmaster's House has 'three rooms up and down, with coal house, larder, exterior dry closet and two old outside huts'. The buildings at Tryfan and Waenfawr each comprise 'a waiting room, booking office, two lavatories and a lamp room'. Bettws Garmon was 'intended to be converted into a dwelling house and had had all partitions and floors removed'.

Quellyn Lake station building had already been converted. An interesting entry for Nantmor is 'one water supply Tank only', the use of which is something of a mystery. There is no mention of a goods warehouse, which may have been an omission as it was photographed by Roger Kidner in August 1934 - looking far from being newly erected!

The Bryngwyn branch is dealt with in a similar manner to that of the main line. The buildings at both Rhostryfan and Bryngwyn are, not surprisingly, described as 'being in a bad state of repair'. At Drumhead there were 'two lengths of rope, each 3/4 mile long'!

The next section of the Lease deals with the rolling stock. The names of the three locomotives are given as 'Russell', 'Moel Tryfan' and 'Baldwin' (!). Eight carriages are taken over and the seating capacity of each one is given. The three Ashbury 'Summer' coaches, (No 23 having already passed to the FR), each had a capacity of fifty-six, whilst the two 'Corridor' coaches

Was the Lease Legal?

(Nos. 35 & 36) seated thirty-eight and twenty respectively. Thus revealing that the conversion of No. 36 to a Buffet Car in 1927 had virtually halved its capacity. The customary error of classifying the Gladstone Coach (capacity thirty-two) as an Inspection Saloon rather than an Observation Coach is perpetuated! The two Pickering Brakes each had accommodation for eight first class passengers and sixteen third class passengers.

The railway had approximately eighty goods vehicles at the time, half of which were described as being 'in fairly good running order'. Dinas and South Snowdon each had both a petrol trolley and an

unmechanised platelaying trolley. Then there is mention of an 'old carriage having been converted into a timber wagon'. This appears in photographs of the demolition train and was reputedly the chassis from one of the two original pre 1877 Ashbury Brakes (NWNGR No 1 & 2).

Then follows a list of tools ranging from 'spanners and sickles', to equipment such as 'letter presses and stoves'. A telephone line was in place from Dinas to Croesor Junction, with boxes at Dinas, Waenfawr, Snowdon (sic), Beddgelert and Croesor Junction. Finally a description is given of the various items of furniture which graced the stations. As befitted its importance

Dinas was well equipped with various cupboards, desks and heating stoves. Waenfawr possessed nothing but one ticket case, whilst South Snowdon and Beddgelert had three clocks between them - but not one was in working condition!

Although signed and sealed in the presence of Evan R Davies, H.L. Westall (WHR/FR Directors) and C.E. Davies (FR Secretary), it has been suggested that the Lease may not have been legal! Apparently the Welsh Highland had the authority to lease itself to the Festiniog and to lease the Festiniog itself, but the Festiniog only had powers to lease itself to the Welsh Highland!

NOTICEBOARD

Cae Moel Bridge

The girders which supported the trackbed under the road bridge at Cae Moel have been measured and will be drawn by Heritage Group member Gwynfor Pierce-Jones. The girders which carried the track over the Afon Rhyd are to be replaced with a concrete trough. The river has been lowered here and in order not to upset the fish they were electrocuted before being carted off unceremoniously up stream!

Logan Video

It is planned to update this video annually as the rebuilding of the railway progresses. The first revision should be released this summer and owners will be able to part exchange their original tape for the new one at a cost of £3.50 - retaining their original box.

The 1934 Lease

In 1934 the WHR was leased to

the FR (see story in this Newsletter). Peter Johnson has kindly transcribed the lease which runs to a dozen A4 pages. Copies are available at a cost of £1.50 incl. P & P, from Derek Lystor, 14 Teign Village, Hennock, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ13 9QJ

Comment & Letters

The editor welcomes comments, letters and articles on any item of Welsh Highland heritage interest. Please send to David Allan, 132 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, Wirral, CH62 0AE.

WELSH HIGHLAND CHRONOLOGY - 1926

<p>Early</p> <p>Austro Daimler tractor put into service on Croesor goods run (see 7/25)</p>	<p>20th September</p> <p>Winter timetable introduced - train service reduced to one return working using an England locomotive and a single bogie coach.</p>
<p>March</p> <p>Three more ex WD open wagons acquired for Beddgelert coal traffic. (See 10/25). These were surplus FR wagons and were exchanged for Ashbury semi-open No 23.</p>	<p>6th October</p> <p>Inspection of new works at Croesor Junction, Beddgelert, Britannia Bridge, Dudley Park Quarry, siding at Waenfawr and sand siding near Portmadoc - carried out by Mount.</p>
<p>April</p> <p>'Croesor Tramway' portion of High Street triangle lifted.</p>	<p>9th October</p> <p>Final Report and Approval of new works at Beddgelert and sand siding.</p>
<p>4th May</p> <p>Start of the General Strike in Britain.</p>	<p>11th October</p> <p>Report of re-inspection of 6th September and final approval for passenger services granted. Trackwork over Britannia Bridge approved.</p>
<p>12th May</p> <p>End of General Strike.</p>	<p>13th October</p> <p>Final Report and approval for Dudley Park Quarry branch and new works at Croesor Junction.</p>
<p>June</p> <p>No passenger traffic carried for entire month.</p>	<p>December</p> <p>Annual receipts - Goods £3337; Passengers £616; Loss £787. Number of tickets sold 12904.</p>
<p>19th July</p> <p>Introduction of summer timetable.</p>	
<p>6th September</p> <p>Re-inspection of the line from South Snowdon to Portmadoc carried out by Lt. Col. Mount.</p>	

THE MOUNT REPORT

An extract from the letters of Lt. Col. Mount on the subject of his 1926 inspection of the Welsh Highland

9th October 1926

Sir

I have the honour to report for the information of the Minister of Transport that I made an inspection on the 6th of October of the new work between Portmadoc and Croesor Junction on the Welsh Highland Light Railway.

A siding connection has been laid in the single line facing traffic from Portmadoc, to serve a dead end siding in a sand quarry on the west side of the line. A trap point has been provided in the siding, rodded up to the lever working the main line points. This trap point should be shifted a rail length further back and the lever operating the points should be changed for one of the weighted type. The point lever is at present locked by padlock and key on the Portmadoc

- Croesor Junction section staff. The lock should be preferably secured by chain to the lever box and should be changed for one of a type which does not permit of the key being removed unless the lock is closed.

Subject to these alterations I consider that the arrangements are generally satisfactory and recommend that approval be given to this new work.

I have the honour to be
Sir

Your obedient Servant
A.H.L. Mount Lt Colonel

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