

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

£1.00

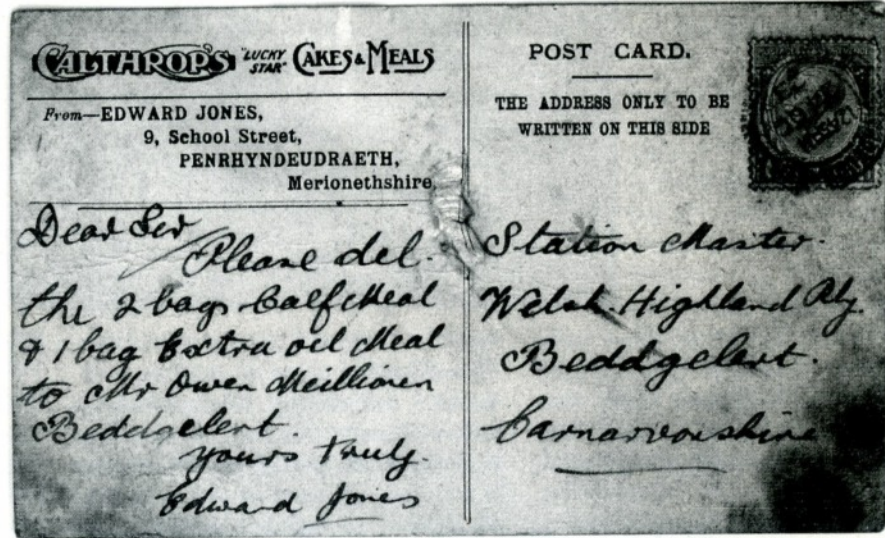
Issue No. 8

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WELSH HIGHLAND TREASURE TROVE!

An amazing cache of old Welsh Highland, papers and documents, including some which relate to the FR, have found their way to Heritage Group secretary John Keylock. The saga started a couple of years ago with a phone call to John from the Isle of Wight. The caller stated that he had a large envelope which contained some papers relating to the Welsh Highland and would John be interested in them. Following John's 'yes' it was promised that they would be sent on. Then a disappointing silence. Following more phone calls it was discovered that the papers had been misplaced. However the caller said that he was soon to move house and hoped that the move would reveal the envelope. In March of this year the promised papers arrived - a four inch thick pile of fascinating historical documents, some of which go back to 1907! Their history is obscure but it is believed that they were 'recovered' from the loft space of Snowdon Ranger station in the late 1950's. Their survival through the war years, stuffed in the loft of an abandoned station in a notoriously damp area of Wales, is quite remarkable. They shed a fascinating insight into the mundane everyday life of both the Welsh Highland and the North Wales Narrow Gauge, which would otherwise have gone completely unrecorded. The documents include consignment notes for the return of empty beer barrels from local hostleries to the brewers, slates from Glanrafon to Portmadoc, and wool from



Beddgelert to Halifax. There is a vast selection of memos mostly to H.D. Jones, the Beddgelert station master. They come from D.O. Jones - station master at Dinas, from the

Priceless documents - include 1893 NWNGR poster!

Audit Office in Sale, and from Messrs Tyrwhitt, May and Evans at Harbour station. The memos refer to many aspects of every day life and mention many of the other stations and halts under the station master's control. For example it is learnt that copper concentrates were being produced at Nantmor as late as 1927. One final surprise was a poster, mostly in Welsh, advertising an Eisteddfodd at Pwllheli in 1924. This is very fragile, and it will be stored at Gwynedd Archives. And if this wasn't enough another priceless discovery, possibly unique,

has been an 1893 NWNGR poster. This measures approximately 29" x 21" and is headed with the company crest. It portrays, with nine fully captioned illustrations, the merits of the scenic route between Dinas and South Snowdon. It should be borne in mind that at this time the NWNGR provided the best means and shortest route by which the walker could gain access to Snowdon summit. (Things would change dramatically with the opening of the Snowdon Mountain Railway). Inevitably the poster has suffered the ravages of time which has resulted in the loss of part of the crest together with one illustration and its caption. The poster is currently being restored by Gwynedd Archives and work is in hand to replicate the missing sections. When complete the poster will be scanned and copies will be available for sale to members. Pending the provision of museum facilities on the railway the original poster will be stored at Gwynedd Archives.

THE RIDDLE OF GLANRAFON

BY DEREK LYSTOR

Glanrafon Quarry, situated on the western slopes of Snowdon, some eight miles from Dinas Junction, was by far the largest working served by the NWNCR 'main line'. Opening in the early 1870's, it operated on a fairly small scale only developing with the coming of the railway. Most authorities state that closure occurred in 1915/16, coincidental with traffic ceasing on the NWNCR in the latter year. This was in the midst of the Great War which had resulted in reduced demand for slate and it was



also the year in which quarrymen ceased to be 'protected' from military service. At this time Parry was operating his timber extraction tramway south from Rhyd ddu. It is suggested that he acquired a locomotive from a closed quarry which Boyd (N. Caerns Vol. 1 p246) suggests was 'Muriel', an 0-4-0 built by De Winton

circa 1879. However there is much evidence to support the fact that as was so often the case in the slate industry, sporadic working continued at Glanrafon for many years after the 'official' closure.

First mention was made in 1921, contained in Major G.C. Spring's Report commissioned by the FR. He concluded that there was a probability of increased mineral traffic from various quarries along the route including Glanrafon, 'all of which show signs of resuscitation'. Boyd tells us that by 1922, although the incline had been lifted, a loop on the main line was still in situ. Next we have a copy of an invoice dated January 1924 from the WHR (Light Railway) Company to 'Messrs D. Ellis & Co, Glanrafon Quarry, Rhyddu (sic), Carnarvon' for the conveyance of two consignments of

slate from 1948 shot by Bill Rear of Glanrafon weigh-house still extant at the time of the 1934 Glanrafon to Dinas - for onward transmission to Betws-y-Coed. The wagon numbers into which the 16 ton 12 cwt of slate

lease for it is clearly shown in the photo of the demolition train taken at the site by J.F. Bolton in 1941 - see Newsletter No. 5. Finally Dr. Dafydd Gwyn of Gwynedd Industrial History Society states that the last slates were actually taken from Glanrafon in the early 1950's, using a horse and cart together with a Land Rover to remove them!

When did Glanrafon Quarry close? And when did commercial production cease?

were transhipped at Dinas are also quoted. The rate per ton was 5/8 making a total invoice payable to the WHR at 'Dinas Nr C'von' of £4 14s 1d. Even in March 1928 empty slate wagons were being dropped off at Glanrafon, '2 & 7 slate empties for Glanrafon' are specifically recorded. It is also suggested that smaller slates, down to 10" x 6", were being won from quarried material which had been previously discarded. Lastly, in the 1934 lease of the WHR by the FR, it is stated that a stabling siding remained. So the riddle is solved, the quarry definitely reopened to some degree after the said 1915/16 closure. It is clear that the reopening of the railway facilitated the despatch of slate. It proves the necessity of a loop at Glanrafon in early WH days and there are no doubts that a siding was

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GOWRIE COLQUHON AITCHISON - AMICE, FCIS, 1863 - 1928



Gowrie
Colquhon
Aitchison

Gowrie Aitchison (centre) at Snowdon Mountain
Railway circa 1904. Picture thanks to Tony
Hopkins of SMR

was born in Poona, India, the son of General Charles Farington Aitchison and Annie Acheson Colquhon. After education at Clifton College, Bristol and Queen's College Cambridge he went, in 1882, to work at Buxton Lime Farms as Assistant Manager and presumably lived at nearby Burbage. In December 1891, aged 28, at South Collingham near Newark, he married Rose Mabel Woolley, the youngest daughter of Thomas Smith Woolley, senior partner in Smith Woolley Land Agents of Collingham. In 1896 he moved to within our 'sphere of interest' being appointed General Manager & Secretary of the-about-to-be-opened Snowdon Mountain Railway. The accompanying photograph, an enlargement from one showing all the railway's staff, was surely taken at this time.

In 1898, following in the footsteps of S. (almost certainly 'Samuel') Tanner and James W. Szlumper, he became Manager and Secretary of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways, although on the 1901 timetable he is titled 'Secretary & Traffic Manager'. In 1904 his narrow gauge portfolio was further advanced when he became Manager & Secretary of the Portmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway. This company was financed by the North Wales Power & Traction Company based at Dolgarrog which, in the same year of 1904, had been granted an Act

authorising a
line from Dinas
to Caernarfon.

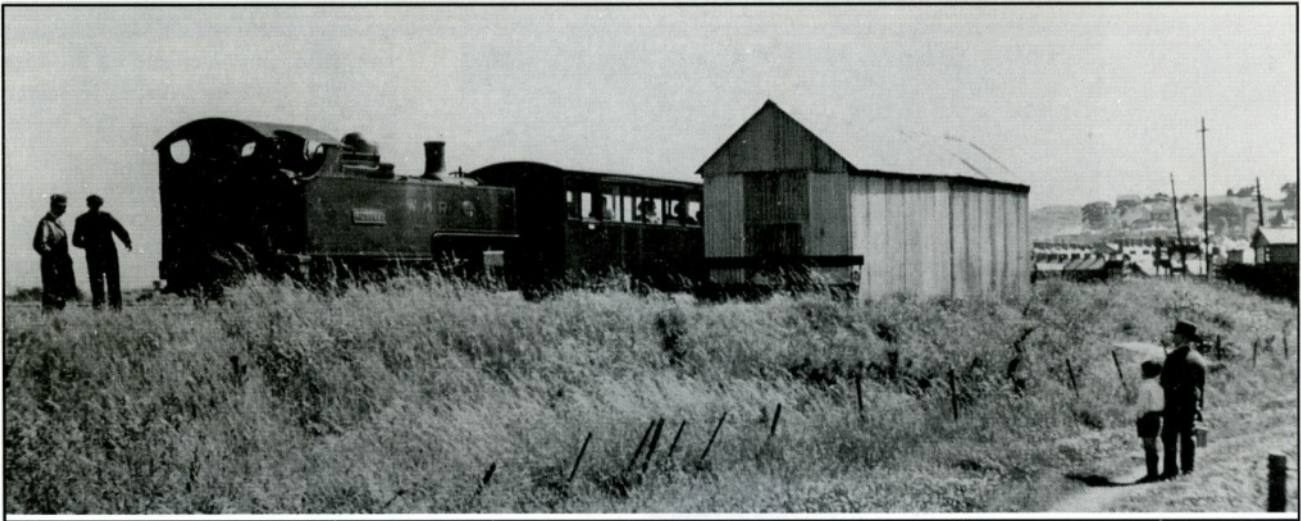
In this capacity he ordered 'Russell' from Hunslets in February 1906. It was perhaps intended that 'Russell' should work specifically between Caernarfon and Dinas, which had been authorised two years earlier, as the plan was to have the majority of the PB&SS worked by electrically powered locomotives. At this time James Cholmeley Russell was Chairman & Receiver of the NWNGR, he had held the latter position since December 1878 and would be succeeded by Aitchison on his death (but that is to jump ahead!). This all goes to show how inextricably intertwined were the affairs of the NWNG and the PB&SS Railways.

With the arrival of 'Russell', there was no need to retain 'Beddgelert', and she was scrapped after a life of only 28 years, spent mainly on the Bryngwyn branch. Aitchison acquired one of her nameplates which is still in safe keeping with one of his descendants. In 1908 'Gowrie' was ordered from Hunslets in anticipation of the NWNGR opening as a through route from Dinas to Portmadoc. So it was that two, virtually new, locomotives would be available to the company.

So by 1909 Aitchison was manager of everything narrow gauge on both sides of Snowdon, but in November 1910 he resigned to join his father-in-law's firm of Smith Woolley. He was nevertheless retained as

consulting engineer and on the 15th of January 1912 he became Receiver of the NWNGR following the death of Russell. So now there were two locomotives named after Receivers! The history and provenance of 'Russell' is well known and the locomotive may be seen working, restored to its original condition, at Gelert's Farm - Porthmadog. However, sadly, the final fate of 'Gowrie' lay in the hands of the scrap dealer. The locomotive was surplus to NWNGR requirements due to the outbreak of the Great War, and it was sold for Government use in 1917(?). The Ministry of Munitions sent 'Gowrie' to Wake's Geneva Yard (J.F. Wake, Dealer) in Darlington who advertised it for sale between 1919 and 1927. In 1923, Robert Williams acting for the FR inspected the locomotive with a view to possible purchase. Where Williams saw 'Gowrie' working will perhaps always remain a matter of conjecture. Could it have been on a line at the site of Marske aerodrome? But back to the man who gave his name to 'Gowrie'. In 1914 he 'joined up' as a Major with the Sherwood Foresters, having previously been associated with the Royal Welch Fusiliers. He saw service in the Irish Rebellion and for the rest of the war was in charge of a section of the East Coast defences. By the end of the war he had gained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He remained Director, Secretary and Engineer of the NWNGR until the 9th April 1921 when he was succeeded by Henry Joseph Jack. By 1924 he had become a senior partner at Smith Woolley and retired the same year. In 1926 his wife died but in 1927, aged 64, he remarried, but alas after only one year of his new marriage Aitchison died on 2th October 1928. The writer is indebted to Michael Stewart for providing biographical details of his Great Uncle Gowrie and to Aitchison's granddaughter for confirming the photographs of her grandfather.

PORTHMADOG (NEW) 1929 - AND ALL THAT



'New' station with 'Russell' ready to depart - 8th July 1936. Photo S.W. Baker.

Whilst the WHR was being built through to Portmadoc a lavish new station was planned between the Flour Mill and the Cambrian Crossing. In the event it turned out to be little more than a corrugated iron building similar, but a little larger, than the one at Beddgelert. This was supplemented by a wooden refreshment room run by the Snowdon Mountain Tramroads & Hotels Company Limited. This station, with its own station master - O.C. Davies, (presumably an FR employee as he doesn't appear on the 1923 WHR employee's list), saw regular use until the end of the summer season in 1928 when it appears to have become destaffed. At the start of the 1929 summer season, in fact on the 8th of July, WHR trains ceased to cross the GWR and terminated north of the crossing. Passengers had to cross the standard gauge line by foot, escorted by a member of the FR staff. Thus was created the third narrow gauge station in the town, variously described as *Portmadoc New '1929', '1931' or '1933'* depending on which source of reference one consults. Although 1931 is invariably quoted, the site of this second '*Porthmadog New*' would seem to have come into use in 1929 even though there was no building present at that time. Evidence of the use of the north side of

"Porthmadog's most ephemeral railway station"

the crossing at this time is revealed in Jack Steel's interesting account of a journey over the FR and WHR in 1929.

Mr Steel relates that having arrived from Blaenau Festiniog by FR train at Harbour Station - "they were directed

to follow the line from Harbour Station, over the bridge, and keep right.

This meant that the first building we approached was Sergeant Williams' Cafe"..... "Later we emerged fed, and continued on to the New Station. Having reached the north side of the Cambrian Railway crossing we had only minutes to wait until

'Russell' arrived" - see 'The Narrow Gauge' - No 50 for the full account. Boyd states that trains *officially* terminated there in 1931.

There are many photographs available from which the development of this station can be traced. At first it was simply a stopping area with a rough nameboard, but by 1930 it had acquired a seat! However it would appear that prospective passengers had to wait a little longer before they

Name '*Porthmadog (New)*' just visible on station seat back rest. Date & photographer unknown.





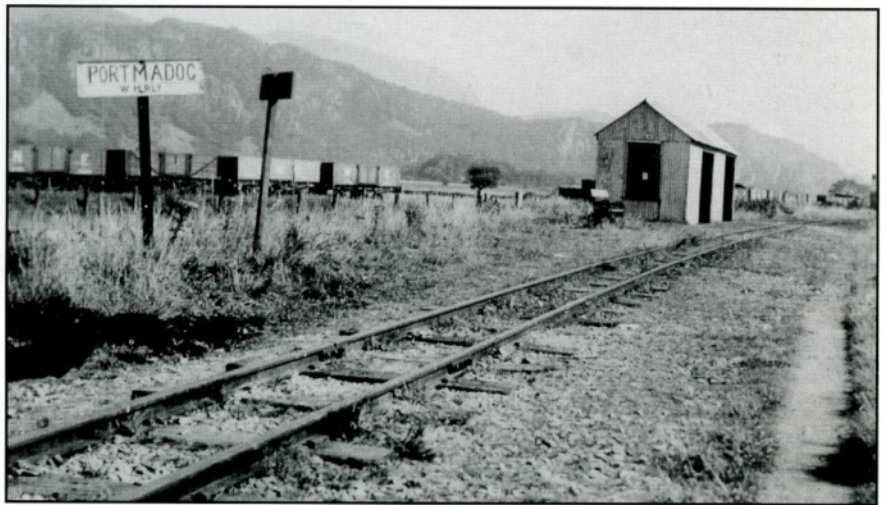
After closure - narrow gauge severed, signals gone, 'New' station still visible. (JIC Boyd collection)

could enjoy the luxury of a waiting shelter. This first appears in a 1935 view of '590' and train, in which a glimpse of the north elevation is visible. The building is absent in a view looking northwards from the 1923 station taken the previous year.

In its final form, the station comprised a gravelled waiting area with the corrugated iron passenger shelter on the west side of the single line. To locate its site today it was situated adjacent to the area presently occupied by the '64 Co's Railway Extension Department assembly shed. The previously mentioned nameboards and a seat labelled "PORTMADOC (NEW)", perhaps salvaged from the 1923 station, were positioned on the south side. Another seat, located at the northern end of the shelter, completed the scene

Three excellent photographs show the station in close up. One shows the rear elevation, with 'Russell' on a Dinas train, taken in July 1936, whilst the other two show the front elevation. These suggest that the building consisted of two small identical shelters fixed together, the one nearest the crossing having a boarded up window. Could they possibly have come from wayside halts whose lack of passengers had made them redundant? As a footnote to the above, a photograph from the JIC Boyd collection, dated some time after final closure and taken from the customary position looking north from the derelict 1923 station

Gelert's Farm - site of the 'New' station was on the WHR embankment to the right of the two wagons. 11th May 1994 - D.W. Allan



Rather splendid 'New' station sign! Date & photographer unknown.

site, provides a few more scraps of information. Gone is the water tank and related equipment, together with the associated GWR signal box along with its attendant telegraph pole. The narrow gauge has been severed immediately south of the crossing and the north end of the loop has been lifted. This latter work was carried out by the GWR in October 1938. North of the crossing the passenger shelter is clearly visible, although one

of the openings appear to have been boarded up. This suggests that the building may have been used for some purpose during the period when Beddgelert Siding was used by the demolition contractors for stacking and transshipping rail and materials. Perhaps then this is the final pictorial record of Portmadoc's most ephemeral railway station.



PICTURE POST-CARD RESEARCH!



“LLYN GADER LOOKING TO MOEL HEBOB”

The bland description to this commercial post-card hides the fact that this picture is perhaps the most interesting to come to light depicting the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway.

Probably taken circa 1903/5, the view shows a typical NWNGR train of that era, with the passenger carriage marshalled behind the goods wagons. This, despite many strictures from the Board of Trade that such practice must cease and that the continuous brake (Westinghouse in this case) be operable on all passenger vehicles.

The loco is either ‘*Snowdon Ranger*’ or ‘*Moel Tryfan*’ - two identical 0-6-4T’s built by Vulcan Foundry in 1875 and numbered 738 & 739 respectively. Behind the loco is a gunpowder van (empty?!) followed by three large coal wagons, with the 1877 Ashbury brake/compo at the rear of the train. The loco is standing beside the tin ‘Refreshment Room’ run by the Snowdon

Mountain Railway, whilst the station master’s house to the far right has a board in front with pointing hand bearing the slogan “Footpath to Snowdon”. The station building (1881), with later extension is seen behind the train and to the left of this is the Goods Shed. The guard can be seen waving the train to set back, presumably to collect more wagons - perhaps timber traffic. Left of the

Michael Davies investigates the implications of an old post-card!

Goods Shed on a short siding can be seen that most illusive of NWNGR vehicles, the Cleminson six-wheel open wagon. A similar one existed on the Festiniog Railway.

Perhaps the most interesting vehicles in the picture are those on the far left, at what was then the extremity of the line. From right to left they are : Gloucester Brake/compo, two Ashbury four-wheel coaches, another Ashbury four-wheel coach or four-wheel Goods Brake Van,

Gloucester Third, and Gloucester Brake/compo. The Gloucesters were six-wheel to Cleminson’s patent. The NWNGR possessed two ‘Road Vans’ (Goods Brake Vans) and as no windows show in the left hand four wheeler it could be one of them. All the latter vehicles are probably ‘crippled’, certainly the Ashbury four-wheelers were not fitted with continuous brakes and were withdrawn in 1897. Several new carriages were purchased in 1891/7 which would also render the Gloucesters redundant. The Ashbury Brake/compos (Numbers 1 and 2) were replaced in 1907 by two handsome Brake/compos by

R.Y. Pickering and this also helps date the photograph.

Construction of the Extension southwards to Beddgelert was commenced circa 1904 by A. Krauss & Son for the Portmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway Co., but the picture shows no sign of any activity in this direction.

The assistance of Mr Derek Lystor in research of this picture is gratefully acknowledged. Picture, with thanks from the David Laycock Collection.

LETTERS

NWNGR - BEDDGELERT EXTENSION

The article on the proposed Beddgelert Extension in the last issue clarifies several points, but it poses more questions than it answers!

Firstly, the very end of the line, where the buffer stops would be, is considerably higher than the middle of the horseshoe curve which is right in the middle of the WHR station site. Was the land, on which the WHR station was located, lowered when that (or the PB&SSR) was built, or was there to be an embankment there? I suspect that the PB&SSR and WHR stations may not have been at the same height anyway. I suppose that the end of the line might well have been in a cutting which would have allowed it to be lower but then the gradient would have been quite formidable - something like 1 in 30 (maybe worse) straight out of the station. I really need to have another look at the site soon to see how it could have been done. It is unfortunate that the 25 inch maps I have do not show the contours and the 1/25,000 do not give enough detail.

BEDDGELERT WATER SUPPLY

John Keylock says he thinks the Beddgelert water tower was fed from the mains and yet the Goat Hotel (even in WHR days) was supplied from the reservoir just the other side of the line. It seems unlikely that the WHR would pay the water board inflated prices for water if it could possibly get it cheaper from the hotel supply. Does anyone have any thoughts on this?

Jim Hewett

Wallington, Surrey.

JOHN KEYLOCK REPLIES BEDDGELERT STATION & WATER SUPPLY

The station site is shewn on the relevant maps as being in a cutting. The eventual Beddgelert station was and is effectively in a cutting too, but nevertheless would have been at a lower level. On the water supply - I am not really convinced that

Beddgelert water tower was supplied from the mains which is why I expressed the hope that some paperwork which may be eventually be received from the Official

Receiver might shed some positive light on the matter. An possible alternative to using the hotel's supply is contained in a letter of July 1936 from the absentee landlord of Cwm Cloch to the FR. The letter, concerning one of his tenants lost or drowned sheep, reads - "kindly think of a poor fellow who lost his sheep in a gully, from which you obtained your water supply"!!

John Keylock

Broadway, Worcs.

AND MORE FROM JIM HEWETT NWNGR - BEDDGELERT EXTENSION

Even before visiting the site I realised that the gradients would be severe although the contours on the 1/25,000 O/S map could not be relied upon and could well give a false impression. The line was to have used almost the same route as the later PB&SSR from Ty'n-y-coed to the Afon Cwm Cloch, although I think at a higher level as it crossed the river at almost the same spot as the WHR and therefore must have been at much the same height. From here the WHR drops (according to my calculations) 90 feet to the station. I reckon that the proposed NWNGR station would have been about 25 feet higher than this - i.e. dropping 65ft in a distance of about 25 chains (1850ft), assuming the run round loop was fairly level. This gives an average gradient for this section of 1 in 28 - and that from a standing start!

The engineering work required would have been fairly light as it largely followed the contours. Between Ty'n-y-coed and Afon Cwm Cloch there would have been some digging out, but it is difficult to say what the original levels were there. Having crossed the stream, a shallow cutting would have been required and the material from this would have filled a hollow about 200 yards further on. The last 180 degree curve just follows the hillside round but still descending steeply. This poses another question - where would the original NNNG station been located?

As it would have been on a through line to Portmadoc and Capel Curig I don't think the site would have been suitable.

Jim Hewett

Wallington, Surrey.

'NEW' BRIDGE IN THE ABERGLASLYN

I would like to comment on Issue No. 6, page 5. I think the wooden bridge in the photo was just a simple footbridge to allow a short cut for the contractor's men working on the railway. The timber bridge is of light construction and would not be strong enough to carry wagons. The apparent sleeper laid on the bridge are probably just baulks of timber laid to provide the deck of the bridge - they are too close together to be sleepers. The inclined track up the embankment is actually just a set of wooden steps to allow a foothold on the steep sides of the embankment. If it was a temporary track can you imagine anyone trying to manhandle a loaded wagon from the level decking of the bridge and onto the "inclined track"? I think not!

However it is quite feasible for planks to have been laid besides, or on the steps to allow wheel barrows to be rope hauled to the top of the embankment.

A similar arrangement was used near Talgarth, Powys during the construction of a pipe line to provide the town with water, also circa 1904. This apparatus was known to the locals as "Jacob's Ladder".

Graham Howland
Brecon, Powys.

An Apology

In the last issue we inadvertently published the wrong picture to accompany the obituary for Arthur Rimmer - our apologies to the family. Below we publish Arthur's picture.



MORE TREASURE TROVE!

COPY.

Superintendents' Office,
PORTMADOC.
8th October, 1923

M/873/ED

Mr. Lewis Parry Jones,
Penygroes,
NANTMOR.

Dear Sir,

With reference to your application for post of Junior porter at Beddgelert, we are agreeable to give you a fortnight's trial at Beddgelert - no wages to be paid the first week; the second week at 13/7d. a week.

Please report yourself to the stationmaster at Beddgelert to-morrow at 10 a.m.

Yours faithfully,
(sgd.) JOHN MAY.

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY (Light Railway) COMPANY

Memorandum.

From General Manager's Office, PORTMADOC. To Stationmaster, Beddgelert.

28th Sept., 1923

GUARD R. T. OWEN.

With reference to the verbal instructions given you this morning, R. T. Owen is to go back to Blaenau Festiniog Station as signaller as from Monday morning next.

Please look out for a suitable lad as porter at Beddgelert and communicate with me before engaging him. A lad about 15 or 16 years of age is preferable.

W. H. Keylock

WELSH HIGHLAND AND FESTINIOG RAILWAYS.

HAY GRASS ALONG RAILWAY.

It is now being arranged that the future sale of hay grass between Beddgelert and Croesor Junction is to be under you, and I shall be glad if you will endeavour to have this sold next season. Particulars of this will be rendered to this Office.

Acknowledge.

PORTMADOC. H. EVANS.
8.1.1926
E/2317/ED
Stationmaster, Beddgelert.

KEARLEY & TONGE, Limited. Wholesale Grocers.

MITRE SQUARE, LONDON, E.C. 3.

27/9/23

The Goods Agent,
Beddgelert,
Welsh Highland Railway,

Dear Sir:-

We wrote you on 30th ulto., with reference to 2 trays of jars handed you by Mr. Turner, Saffron's Head Hotel, Beddgelert on the 19th July. We thank you for your reply of the 3rd instant, and are at present unable to trace these. Will you please let us have full forwarding particulars, and send forward, truck and invoice number in reply.

Yours faithfully,
KEARLEY & TONGE LIMITED.

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY (Light Railway) COMPANY.

Memorandum.

From Superintendent's Office, PORTMADOC. To Stationmaster, Beddgelert.

8th October, 1923

PORTER AT BEDDGELEERT.

Please note contents of the enclosed letter to L.P. Jones, Nantmor and report to me as to his progress with his work.

Porter T. T. Williams will be retained there for the present.

J May

Cadbury Bros. Ltd.
Bournville, Birmingham.

18th May 1927.

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of the 12th inst., and are pleased to note that you can arrange for the free delivery of all future traffic to our customer, J.E. Powell, Confectioner, Glanafon, Beddgelert.

We trust these arrangements will be put into operation immediately.

Yours truly,
For Cadbury Brothers Limited,
J. M. Powell

Goods Agent,
Welsh Highland Railway Co.,
Beddgelert Station,
Gwynedd, NORTH WALES.

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