

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

£1.00

Issue No. 18

ISSN 1462-1371

December 2002

MORE TREASURE TROVE!

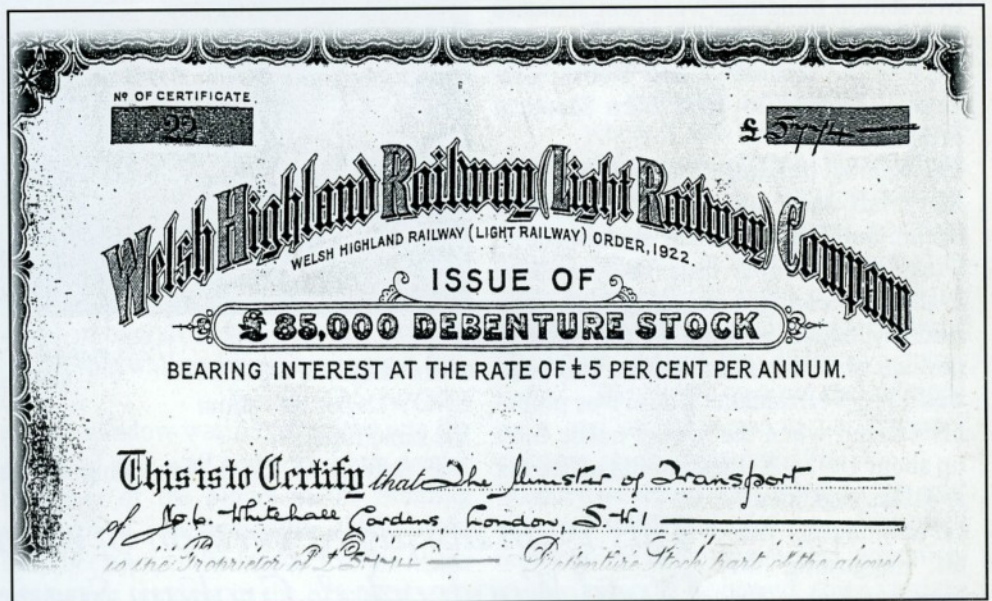
An unexpected e-mail has led to the securing of more priceless Welsh Highland and North Wales Narrow Gauge original documents. Two boxes each measuring over one cubic foot and 'crammed full of old documents relating to the Welsh Highland Railway and precursors' found themselves on the desk of the Records Reviewer of the Insolvency Service. The Reviewer advised that the Public Record Office would probably not want to take on the collection and that his only other option was to destroy the files. Fortunately, and with great good sense, the Reviewer advised the Heritage Group before any such action could be taken.

Arrangements are being made for the transfer of the boxes to Gwynedd Archives for safe keeping.

The papers are said to include 'Sealed Specification of Works Construction agreement between North Wales Power & Traction Co. and Bruce Peebles of 31st July 1905, Title Deeds of land at Beddgelert plus maps, original hand written copies of purchase agreements of land bought by the railways, LMS Dinas Junction Layout drawings and first land registration documents, Trust Deeds to secure second Mortgage £100,000 Debentures ranking after £80,000 first Mortgage Debenture Stock, and many more items.

And it doesn't end there! The Official Receiver, who was kept informed of the impending transfer, asked "why only these papers?" - "what about the Official Receiver's files which are considerable - should these files not also be included in the package?"

But it was decided in order to free up desk space that the first two boxes should be transferred immediately to Gwynedd Archives, with the further documents to follow in due course.



So Welsh Highland archives will end up where they rightly belong for safe keeping. The FR's archives are already in the custody of Gwynedd, so cataloguing and documenting the WH records should present no difficulty.

The Heritage Group Newsletter will carry the full details of the contents of the boxes when they become available and its team of researchers will undoubtedly use them to fill in more details of the fascinating jigsaw of life on the Welsh Highland. Heritage Group Secretary, John Keylock commented "We really must congratulate and thank the Insolvency Service for their prompt action which otherwise may have led to the loss of unique Welsh Highland data"

The Welsh Highland seems to attract more than its fair share of unusual narrow gauge oddities, but surely one of the more bizarre of these is the one they tell with pride in the Insolvency Service.

Debenture Stock Certificate recovered from an earlier hoard. Will these new 'finds' have the same interest?

It would appear that the WHR has gained some notoriety as the Services' longest running case. In their Annual Report under the headline "Completion of Oldest Case after 65 Years!", they state, "November 1999 saw the conclusion of the Services' longest running case - the Welsh Highland Railway, wound up in 1934". They haven't got that quite right, but nevertheless the report goes on "but the legal complexity surrounding the sale meant that the line was eventually sold to the Local Authority to enable the land to be used by the community". Well, that's not quite right either. However in celebration of this landmark, a photograph of the Festiniog's cheque hangs in the Boardroom of the Insolvency Service!

It might be worthwhile for some diligent reader to list all the events regarding Receivership and Liquidation which dogged the company and its predecessors and which eventually led to the current revival?

South Snowdon Station

Basic earthworks throughout the NWNG appear to have been completed by the original contractor, McKie, in 1873/74. Boys, the contractor who took over in 1876, finished off sufficient works in time to allow most of the NWNGR to open in 1877/78, but the final section from Snowdon Ranger to Rhyd Ddu did not open until May 1881.

The most obvious effect was that these two station buildings were non standard (those at Dinas, Tryfan Jct, Rhostryfan, Bryngwyn, Waenfawr and Betws Garmon all appear to have been identical originally).

The original buildings at Rhyd Ddu were the goods shed and a basic brick built station building of similar appearance to Dinas etc. Some time later, a stone L-shaped 'cottage' building was presumably added as soon as the need to provide staff accommodation was realised. The Refreshment Room was probably erected when the tourist traffic built up about 1891/92; the booking office hut at Dinas had identical and unusual finishes, suggesting the same supplier. The brick station building was extended in 1897, displacing the original gentlemen's toilets, which were replaced by new facilities at the rear of the building and possibly incorporating the previously open ground frame.

Passenger services, very restricted since the beginning of the First World War, were withdrawn at the end of 1916 and the Refreshment Room removed as a consequence. After that date the station saw only occasional freight - mainly timber and coal. Regular passenger services recommenced in July 1922 as part of the Welsh Highland Railway, but only to and from Dinas. A bookstall, described as a 'small hut' had been installed near the site of the Refreshment Room in that year, but was removed in October 1923, whilst the station nameboard, which had read SNOWDON since its erection c. 1892,



1923 picture by an unknown photographer (ref G25 - 03)

was changed to SOUTH SNOWDON at about the same time.

The railway at Rhyd Ddu being on an

wall would have been a ticket window, then a fireplace, and finally a door into the ladies' waiting room. The other walls would probably have had bench seating fitted. The ladies' room, again fitted with similar bench seating, was lit by the central window in the west wall, and a further door led into an earth closet, lit by a narrow window at the northern end of the west wall.

The ticket office, as originally constructed, was lit by the right-hand window

embankment, necessitated the station being on a terrace, accessed by a slope from the main road wide enough for a cart. This could be closed off from the station by an iron gate. The goods shed, together with a dry stone/slate walled yard, stood on the other side of the slope.

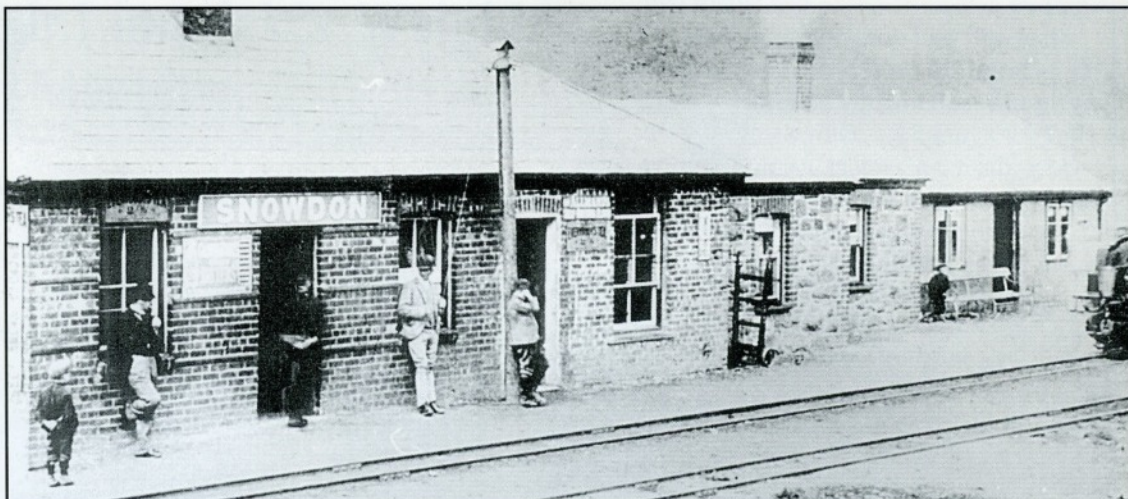
As originally constructed, the brick building had one door with a sash window either side on the east (rail) side, one door on the north end, and two sash windows on the west (road) side. Although the internal layout has to be conjectural, one can be reasonably certain that the door on the east side led into a waiting room lit by the left hand window and by a fanlight over the door. Inside, on the right-hand

(made secure by external horizontal iron bars) and accessed via the door in the north end wall. Since it would have had to double as the parcels/luggage office, security considerations suggest that it must have been divided, probably by a counter with lockable lifting flap rather than by a full height partition.

From what little can be seen of the interior of the building in photographs, it is conjectured that all internal walls were in brick with the exception of that between the ladies' waiting room and closet which was probably wooden. A single fireplace, perhaps of similar design to that at Dinas, occupied the waiting room.

This is an abridged version of an article by David Woodcock & Graham Spencer which first appeared in 'Narrow Lines', the house journal of 'The 7mm Narrow Gauge Association'. WHH would like to thank Graham, Editor of the magazine, for his kind permission in allowing us to use the article.

Before the brick building was extended, the space between it and the stone 'cottage' was occupied by the 'gents', and it is thought, an open ground frame. The gents was surrounded by a wall about 6 feet high, probably largely open to the sky, and almost certainly contained a urinal and an earth closet. When the extension took place in 1897, the gents was rebuilt behind the main building, at its south-west corner and at a



lower level, with access by a step or two down from the slope leading to the road. It can be seen in photograph WHR 54 which suggests that it comprised a single earth closet along its short northern wall and a urinal along its western wall. The latter was probably built from slate slabs and may well have been 'flushed' by the outflow from a nearby downpipe. Again, all but the earth closet was open to the sky. The actual extension of the original building by 9 feet northwards resulted in a single L-shaped structure, effectively increasing the ticket office and staff accommodation. It is assumed that it may have resulted from a growth in parcels and luggage traffic. The two Ashbury brake compos. had one of their 3rd class compartments reclassified to 'Luggage' around this time, and of course the two Pickering brakes were built with even more luggage space in 1907. A new exterior doorway was knocked into the east wall of the existing building at the

north end of the ticket office area. Full frontal view with adverts for 'Every-man's Teas' prominent. 1923 Photomatic (ref G36 - 16)

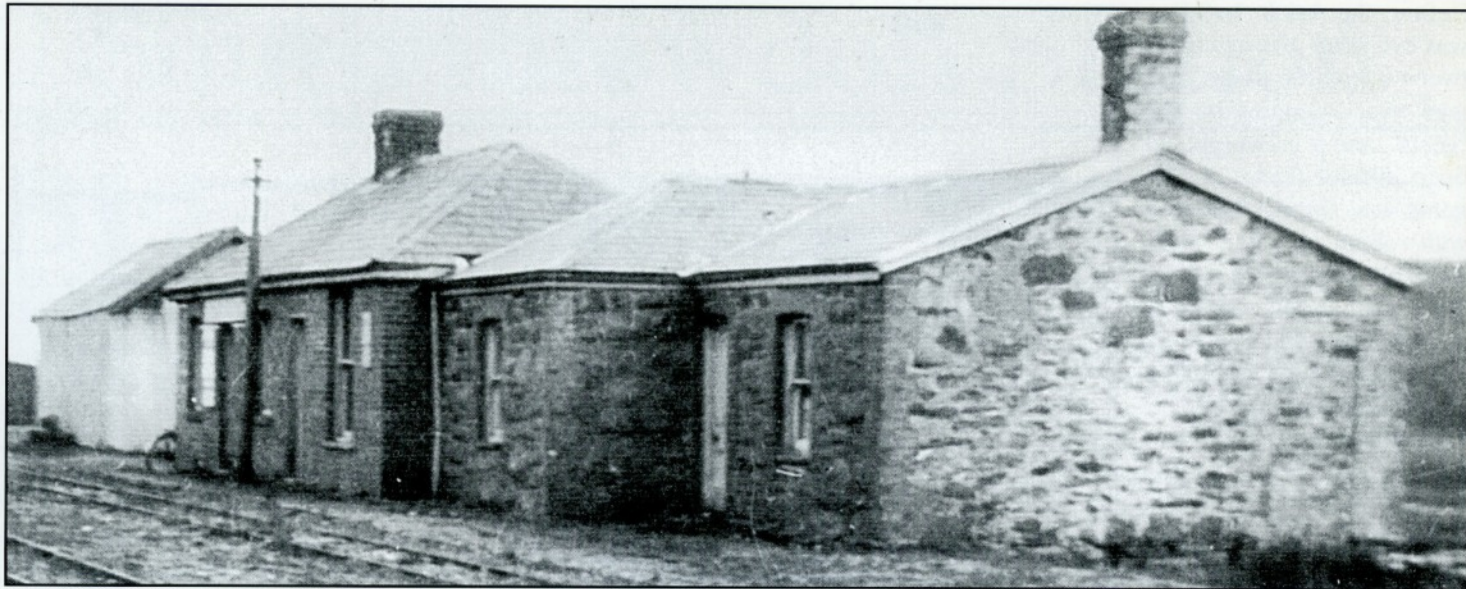
This doorway was rendered, presumably to hide and protect the broken brickwork, and the door itself seems to have been mounted behind rather than within the opening created. This doorway was lower in overall height than the existing one in this wall and it was without a fanlight.

A sash window was incorporated into the extended east wall and was much deeper than any of the others in the building although of similar width. There must have been a specific reason for this as the equivalent window in the extended west wall matched existing windows, alerting one to the possibility that the 'signal box' (i.e. ground frame) was located within the extended brick building rather than in the stone one as shown in Boyd.

The hipped roof was lengthened to cover the extension, producing a distinctly awkward valley where it now overlapped the roof of the existing, and slightly lower, stone 'cottage' building. The interlocking ridge tiles from the original northern hipped end seem to have been robbed in order to extend the main ridge and the new hipped ridges used a simpler style of tile which lacked the distinctive interlocks. The WHR repaired the chimney stack and added a pot to the 'cottage' chimney stack in the mid 20's. Wooden studding was fitted to the east side and south end of the original brick building to allow enamelled advertisement signs to be displayed, some vestiges of which remained through to the end of the WHR. Two, presumably displaced signs appear to have been fixed directly to the brickwork between the inserted doorway and the new large sash window when the building was extended. An LNWR style wooden nameboard bearing the name SNOWDON in 10 inch cast iron letters was fitted over the door to the waiting room (partly obscuring the fanlight) apparently in 1892, although the timetable posters for that year still referred to Rhyd Ddu. The board was changed to read SOUTH SNOWDON in late 1923. The Welsh Highland added a board, no doubt intended for timetables, of about 4' x 2', headed 'WHR' to the left of the waiting room door, and a double poster board on the south wall. A fitment at the north end of the east wall of the extended building may have taken a lamp or have been an enamelled advertisement incorporating a thermometer, a



Rear of the building - note the gent's urinal flushed by the downspout! A 1939 picture by Photomatic. (Ref G36 - 16)



Closed, weeds invade the track, Refreshment Room gone, but the Goods Shed still evident. 1939 photo by Arthur Rimmer. (Ref A-21)

common feature in mountain areas which attract tourist visitors. There appears to have been a similar example at Dinas.

Apart from its complex roof, the 'cottage' was simple, built of rough stone blocks with brick quoin work. It is likely that it contained two bedrooms at the south end, lit by sash windows in both east and west walls, and entered directly from the 'platform' by a door in its south-east corner. There would have been a range at the northern end of the kitchen, with the chimney in the gable end above. An interesting feature is a bricked up doorway at the western end of the gabled end wall, together with what appear to be a set of steps recessed into the retaining wall which supported the refreshment room. It is surmised that this doorway originally led from the kitchen, perhaps via a small

lean-to scullery, to these steps, which provided access to a 'garden' below. When the refreshment room was added, blocking this route and causing any scullery to be demolished, it seems probable that this same doorway facilitated the use of the cottage kitchen for food and drink preparation as there are no indications that the refreshment room itself had any such facility. The doorway was presumably blocked up when the refreshment room was removed, but the newly uncovered steps could still be readily accessed via the platform door. A 1925 photo by C. Mowat shows what appears to be washing drying in the garden.

Access to the refreshment room was from the platform via a single door. This was

flanked by a pair of casement windows, and there was a further group of four such windows in the north

end wall. If the theory regarding the cottage kitchen being used for food preparation is correct, there must have been a door in the hidden south end wall as well. The back wall was plain. The building sat on substantial wooden beams and would have had a wooden planked floor.

In NWNG days the woodwork on the brick and stone buildings was a dark colour, almost certainly some variation of maroon and/or brown, with sash window frames picked out in white - quite unusual for this period. Originally the corrugated iron refreshment room seems to have been painted a light colour - possibly slightly pinkish. The woodwork was a darker colour - probably maroon-brown, whilst the casement frames were white. The roof bore the reversed-out painted words REFRESHMENT ROOM, doubtless intended to be seen from the Snowdon pathway, and later the word REFRESHMENTS was painted above the end windows. By 1909 the colour scheme had changed totally, with the corrugated iron a dark colour, which could have been green or red oxide, and all the woodwork white, or at least a pale colour. With the formation of the WHR, a variety of paint schemes was used on the station buildings; photos show they were different in 1922, 1923 and 1939 at least.



Abandoned and derelict - Bill Rear's 1948 picture, looking right towards Dinas. (ref 1072)

Concerning Mr. Limerick's Weighing Machine.

Amongst the surviving papers found in the 'Quellyn Lake Hoard', there are several memos which reveal a tale of intrigue and mystery surrounding the 'Limerick weighing machine'.

John Limerick was the local coal merchant at Rhyd Ddu, living at Edward Terrace with his wife Laura. He had a coal yard at the station and thus would have required necessary weighing facilities there. First mention of the machine was made in a brief memo from the Accountant's Office at Portmadoc on 25th August 1925, in which Robert Evans informed H.D. Jones at Beddgelert that it had been damaged at Dinas, perhaps whilst being loaded for onward dispatch to South Snowdon. Arrangements had been made for it to be sent to Boston Lodge for repair, and Jones, responsible for matters at South Snowdon at the time, was asked to make sure that it was sent as early as possible.

No more was heard until the following year when, in early January, Jones wrote to Evans on the matter and received a reply on 26th. Some progress had obviously been made as Williams, at Boston

A Tale of Mystery and Intrigue from Derek Lystor

Lodge, had sent the missing part of the machine, 'securely packed and addressed to South Snowdon, on 12 December 1925'. Evans asked Jones to make further enquiries.

Things were not all they seemed however, as we learn in the next memo written some six weeks later on 18 March 1926. This tells us that Jones had written back to Evans promptly on 30th January regarding the missing parts, and

that Evans had phoned and also written to Jones informing him that 'the parts were certainly sent from B. Festiniog', a slightly different version than that given by Williams earlier. Although the full correspondence is missing, reading between the lines one assumes that the machine was still out of action and as a consequence Mr Limerick was not a very happy man!

The final memo of 31st March throws the whole mystery wide open. Evans had got back to Williams at Boston Lodge and was told that 'all the parts of the machine which came to the works were returned, and that he (Williams) does not know what part, in Mr. Limerick's opinion, is still missing'. What is more intriguing is that Williams said he saw a weighing machine, similar to the one in dispute, in WORKING ORDER at the station! Jones was asked once again to look into the matter and report back, but there were no more references in the recovered archive, so unfortunately, we will probably never know the complete story. My thanks to Gina Kent for her local enquiries and for searching through various Electoral Rolls and Census Returns

1935 CHRONOLOGY

February

Output from Cilgwyn & Moel Tryfan Quarries no longer carried over WHR.

1st February

Repair & Renewal Estimate for Permanent Way, Locomotives and Carriage & Wagon, prepared by WH Austen - totalling £677-5s-0d.

5th April

FR met with LMS at Euston to revise the NWNG/LNWR Agreements of 1877 & 1884 regarding expenses at Dinas, resulting in a saving of £170 backdated to January.

July

Lease rental increased to just over £100 per annum.

8th July

Start of summer service. Working over Cambrian crossing resumed for 'Five Valleys Excursion' traffic. Waiting shelter erected at Portmadoc 'New' (1929).

14th September

Service reduced to one through train in each direction, and one between Portmadoc and Beddgelert (Fri & Sat excepted).

28th September

End of summer service.

December

Total tickets sold 12644; Receipts - Passengers and parcels £746-14s-5d; Goods (coal, coke and merchandise), £206-19s-10d; Total receipts, £1001-9s-9d; Annual loss £596.

Welsh Highland Heritage Group Notice Board

The 2003 AGM will be held on Sunday 4th May; please make a note in your diary. Members are asked to bring their models of Russell and your committee is working on some additional 'entertainment' for either before or after the meeting.

Please note that enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter is a reminder that your subscriptions for 2003 are due on 1st January 2003 - unless you have a membership card which is valid until 31st December 2003 i.e. for members who joined later in the year.

Your group has made a donation of £200 to the Russell Appeal. Your committee would ask that you give serious consideration to making a personal contribution towards helping to restore this unique Welsh Highland Loco to its 1906 condition - an appeal leaflet was enclosed with the last edition of the Newsletter.

Newsletter Editor - David Allan, 132 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, Wirral, CH62 0AE. Tel 0151 327 3576 - email dw@allan89.fsnet.co.uk

WHH Group Secretary - John Keylock, Weathervane Cottage, Childswickham, Broadway, Worcestershire WR12 7HL. Tel 01386 852428.

Glanrafon Update

Since the article on Glanrafon quarry first appeared in WHH No. 8, considerably more information has come to light, enabling a further account to be given of this important source of freight traffic to the NWNG/WHR.

The first mention of working on the site was in April 1876 when the landowners, Vaynol estate, granted a lease to two quarrymen for prospecting at Bron Fedw. In December the following year, a licence of Glanrafon proper was given to William Hayward, the proprietor of Cilgwyn Quarry, by R.R. Williams of Clogwyn Quarry, the latter having obtained a lease from Vaynol some time earlier. A year later the partnership was enlarged by the addition of the Owen family, engineers and foundry owners of Caernarfon. The coming of the NWNG had made access to the quarry easier and further capital was required for development. In August 1879 the Owens purchased a number of NWNG shares, later vested in the Quarry Co., to help finance the line from Snowdon Ranger to Glanrafon, and in 1894 obtained a 47-year lease from Vaynol. Two years earlier, 97 men were employed and a total of 1725 tons produced, rising to 3500 four years later. The workforce steadily rose, peaking at 410 in 1895, but thereafter gradually reducing, falling to only 9 in 1902. Although the Owen's lease had been extended in 1901, it was obvious that the quarry had fallen on hard times and whilst the Penrhyn strike of 1900 - 1903 had meant that smaller concerns had enjoyed a period of prosperity, the failure of Glanrafon was not easily explained. Local opinion suggested that the slate deposit was a 'honey-pot' i.e. a throw off portion of slate vein of exceptional quality but very limited quantity, petering out into barren rock in all directions and quickly worked out.

The end came for the Owens, who sold out in February 1904 for £25,000 to the newly formed Glanrafon Slate Quarry Co Ltd., registered in Glasgow with a capital of £50,000. This was to be the last major operator; the four directors and all the subscribers (bar the Owens) were from Scotland and eighty men were taken on. Although money was always tight things did get a little better, but with weakening trade putting pressure on the profitability of small, high cost concerns, it was always going to be a struggle. Even though Glanrafon used water to great effect, with a water wheel in the mill, another for pumping, a water balance and turbine driven winding systems, it was but a matter of time before the inevitable occurred. Calls were made on the shares in 1904 and 1905, and a £10,000 Debenture issue was announced in 1906. This



*The remains of Glanrafon weighhouse lie adjacent to the trackbed in this idyllic setting. 13th April 1997
- D.W. Allan (ref F51 - 06)*

same year the workforce had risen to 128, but thereafter steadily declined, and fell to a mere

33 in 1914. The commencement of the Great War proved fatal to the fortunes of Glanrafon, and a resolution to dispose of all its assets was passed at an EGM on 18 May 1916. Later that same year it was agreed, at a further EGM, to appoint a liquidator - RA Murray - and formally wind up the company; this took

More Research by Derek Lystor

place on 23rd October 1919.

As discussed in Newsletter No.8, this was not the end of operations at Glanrafon. By 1921, six ex-quarrymen had leased the tips and reworked suitable blocks to produce damp-course slates. By November 1923, the concern was trading as David Ellis & Co and slates were transhipped over the WHR to Dinas. In July and August the following year Cadwaladr Humphreys (who also worked Clogwyn) was quarry manager, and in 1925 obtained a license to work the tip. This he did until possibly as late as 1939, although in answer to a question regarding the state of local quarry operations in 1931, the Board of Trade had been notified that the quarry had shut.

The final period of work took place in 1952/53 when the Thomas brothers from Nantlle, having been prevented from working Clogwyn, were granted a lease from Vaynol to re-work the tips, again for damp-course slates. This ceased in 1958/59 after repeated discov-

eries of unexploded mortar bombs left behind during wartime commando training!

The quarry, covering some 372 acres, was high above the NWNGR and connected to it by a double track incline. At its foot, there was a triangular junction with the main line occupying a shelf-like site supported by a high stone retaining wall. There was a loop on the main line (not shown in early O.S. maps, but Boyd, NG Railways of N Caerns, Vol 1, West, page 246, gives 1895 as the date a modified loop was installed), storage sidings, a wagon turntable and a stone weighbridge of typical NWNG design. Within the quarry, material was raised by a powered incline, later superseded by a tramway tunnel, to a mill which was doubled in

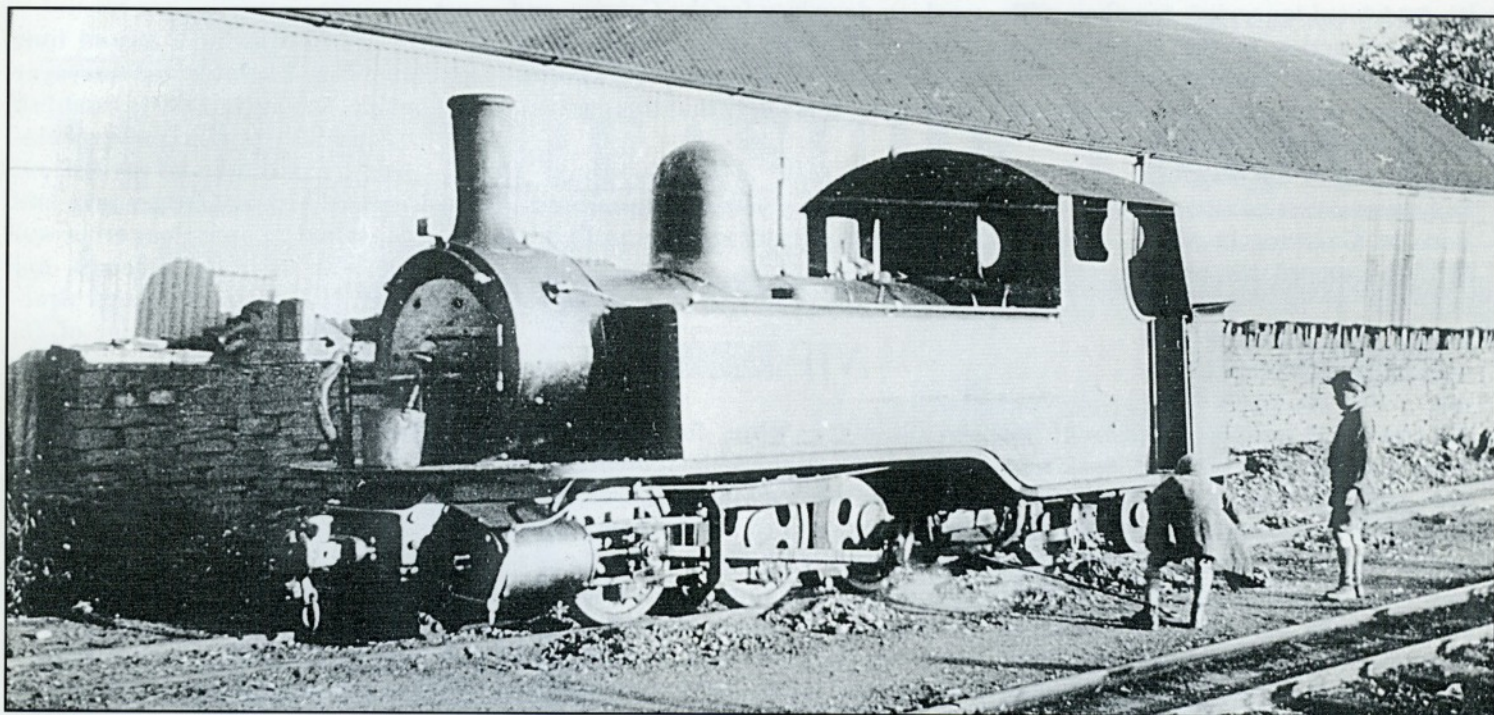
size by 1900. Excess water was removed by pumping, using flat rods and a remote water wheel - later a drainage tunnel was cut. Rubbish was hauled away by locomotives, details of which are again given in Boyd. The two storey barracks was located part way down the incline together with another building of unknown use.

All that remains of Glanrafon today is the deep, water-filled pit, the scant remains of the mill together with the more obvious barracks, and extensive waste tips. The various levels are strewn with rock falls. However the incline is very prominent, and the weighbridge is still recognisable - it is hoped that it may be rebuilt one day as a permanent reminder of the quarry.

As is usual with matters concerning the local slate industry, my grateful thanks are due to Gwynfor Pierce Jones, who's continuing help is much appreciated. Thanks are also due to the Scottish National Archives for help with the 1904 to 1919 period.

Welsh Highland Photographers

- Roger Kidner



Roger Kidner's 1934 shot of 'Moel Tryfan' in the siding outside Dinas carriage shed, (ref G51 - 01)

In this occasional series we hope to describe some of the photographers who by their work and dedication have allowed those of us privileged enough to witness the re-birth of the Welsh Highland an evocative glimpse into that original railway as it ran in earlier times. We dedicate this series to those intrepid adventurers who without the benefit of our 'throwaway cameras', digital technology, and our access to easy motor transport, recorded that earlier WHR and so much enriched our railway heritage.

Roger Kidner's railway photographs are well known, but it is revealing to set down the circumstances in which each shot was

taken. Roger's commentary of his delightful shot of Moel Tryfan at Dinas in 1934 both enlivens the picture and adds to our knowledge.

Roger writes "On my first two trips over the Welsh Highland Railway I did not have a camera, though my memory is clear. The first was to Hafod Garregog, and after the train had pulled out, the guard applied the brakes and ran back to warn that there was a dangerous bull in the field near the halt. The second was during the Coal Strike; the WHR was burning Bel-

gian stuff and much time was lost on the journey to Beddgelert by stopping to raise steam several times after Nantmor.

By 1930 I had a camera; however I did not take many of the trains moving along and across the High Street - at the time the FR was using New station as a terminus for trains from Blaenau. There was also the Simplex popping along to the Flour Mill. One day I did a full coverage of the Snowdon Mountain Railway, and on returning in late evening by road I made a call at Dinas. I found I had only one exposure left on my last roll of film. There was much to take, but I have not regretted my choice for that exposure, Moel Tryfan in full sunlight outside the engine shed".

The following item of Welsh Highland ephemera was gleaned from BR's Passenger Instructions to Staff in 1957; further comment is superfluous!

31. WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY

COMM. CIR. 358 -13/9/57

The forward half of a first class return, blank card ticket No 012, South Snowdon to Clapham Junction, was recently received in collection at the latter station.

As the North Wales Narrow Gauge Company, controlling the Welsh Highland Railway, was closed in 1937, tickets must not be accepted, and if presented, the name and address of the passenger concerned must be obtained and a Travelling Irregularity Report submitted to the appropriate District Officer.

C.O. PF/6/72/57

Regional Accountant (Audit) P.F.W.4310/17

Hugh Unsworth McKie

Readers of Mr Boyd's books, who will be familiar with McKie's considerable involvement with 'the Croesor Tramway' and its associated quarries, together with the construction of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway, may also be interested in his other activities during a full and varied professional career of almost sixty years.

Born at Garstang in May 1822, he served his pupillage to a Mr William Lamb, land surveyor and agent to the Duke of Hamilton. For six years from 1844 he was in private practice with Mr John Lawson and was involved with sewerage and waterworks contracts in Lancaster and elsewhere. During this period he also acted as Resident Engineer on part of the North Western Railway, and on the harbour works at Morecambe. Between 1850 and 1856 he was engaged on water supply and sewerage works at Alnwick, Carlisle and North Shields, in the course of which he introduced several improvements in the design and method of laying sewers. In 1856 he was appointed City Engineer and Surveyor for Carlisle, a position he held for four years.

Even while thus employed he was engaged in a private practice partnership. From 1860 - 1865 he was occupied in the preparation of parliamentary and working drawings for the Conway and Llanrwst Railway, subsequently acting as Contractor's Engineer on its construction. It is likely that this contract

*John Keylock examines the career of an engineer who will always be associated with the
NWNGR*

gave him the 'taste' for North West Wales and showed the potential for railway involvement in that area, for in 1867 he established a consultancy practice there based at Tan-y-rallt - Tremadoc, the former home of his illustrious predecessor, William Madocks. Besides his Croesor and N.W.N.G. involvements until 1876 McKie was responsible during this period for the extension of Portmadoc Harbour, sewerage works for Portmadoc, and other presumably local, towns. Jointly, with Mr Thomas Duncan, he was involved with waterworks for Rhyl, Abergel and St Asaph. During this period he

prepared plans for the Alexander Palace Railway, the Berlin Westend waterworks and acted as Resident Engineer to the main sewerage works at Southport.

In 1877 McKie was for a second time appointed City Engineer and Surveyor for Carlisle, leaving in 1889 to establish a consulting practice in Westminster. From here he carried out various water supply works and consulted on numerous other water and sewerage schemes, not retiring from professional practice until 1898 at the age of 76. During the remaining years of his life he enjoyed a well-earned rest

continuing to the last to take an intelligent interest in matters affecting engineering science. He dies at Spondon in Derbyshire in January 1907, aged 84.

Much of the foregoing is gleaned from McKie's obituary held by the Institute of Civil Engineers. There is no mention of any Scottish involvements or origins, but his surname presumes a Scottish ancestry and an inbuilt 'canniness'. This is perhaps borne out by his activities on the NWNGR in 1874 as detailed by Boyd in NG Railways in S Caernarfonshire (1972) in a footnote on p156.

Sharples - Tax Man?

The back page of Newsletter No 17 featured a letter from Mr A Sharples, persistent absentee landlord of Cwm Cloch, to the WHR Receiver. George Hearse may well have put his finger on the reason for Mr Sharples not giving up readily.

George, being familiar with Tyneside and having been born in Gosforth, delved into Kelly's Directory for 1947 to discover that an A. Sharples was HM Inspector of Taxes for Newcastle 7th District with offices at 100 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne. This sort of background could well have induced him to try and get blood out of the proverbial stone!

In earlier years Mr Sharples had written to the Railway from Edinburgh and Manchester addresses and moving around the country leads one to suspect that he was moving up the Inland Revenue ladder?

What The Guide Books Said

Graham Howland has recently had sight of Black's Tourist Guide to Wales in its seventh edition of May 1904. The journey from Caernarfon to 'Snowdon' is described as becoming 'toy gauge from Dinas' and we have 'an Electric Tramway' from Llanberis to the summit of Snowdon. The route to the terminus at Rhyd Ddu/Snowdon indicates a degree of artistic licence, but most intriguing is the line of rail indicated from there to Beddgelert. It doesn't even follow the projected course of the Portmadoc, Beddgelert and Rhyd Ddu Railway, let alone the NWNG extension or the PB&SS!

It parallels the eastern side of the road to well south of Pitt's Head before passing under the road and over the River Colwyn. Thereafter are no portions of the line which kept close to the west bank of the Colwyn, which it crossed again near Beudy Tan-y-Colwyn isaf and the lane off the main road to Perthi. Running for a short distance between river and road it then passed under the road, went behind the Saracen's Head and terminated behind the Prince Llewelyn Hotel.

Now there's a route to conjure with!