

# WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

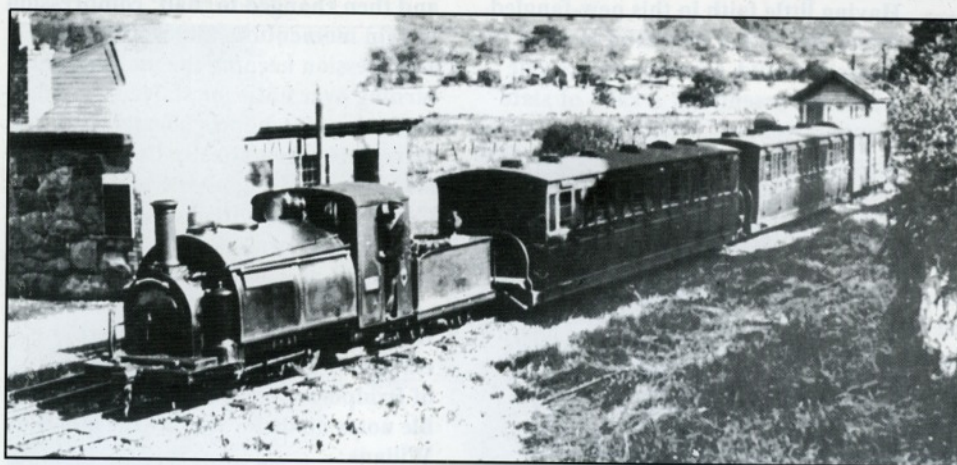
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Issue No. 21

ISSN 1462-1371

September 2003

## 1923 - 2003



Top - The 'Royal' train, with 'Prince' in charge, arrives at Rhyd Ddu on July 30th 2003 - photo D.W. Allan.

Above - The 1923 'publicity' train headed by 'Palmerston', which marked the opening of the line through to Porthmadog, passing Waunfawr & heading for Dinas

**W**e couldn't possibly let the momentous events of July 30th 2003 pass unrecorded in this Journal. Although numerous pictures have been published to mark the event, it is most fitting that the first passenger train to grace Rhyd Ddu for over sixty-five years should bear such a remarkable similarity to the press/

publicity train of 1923. The photographs published here illustrate the poignancy of the comparison.

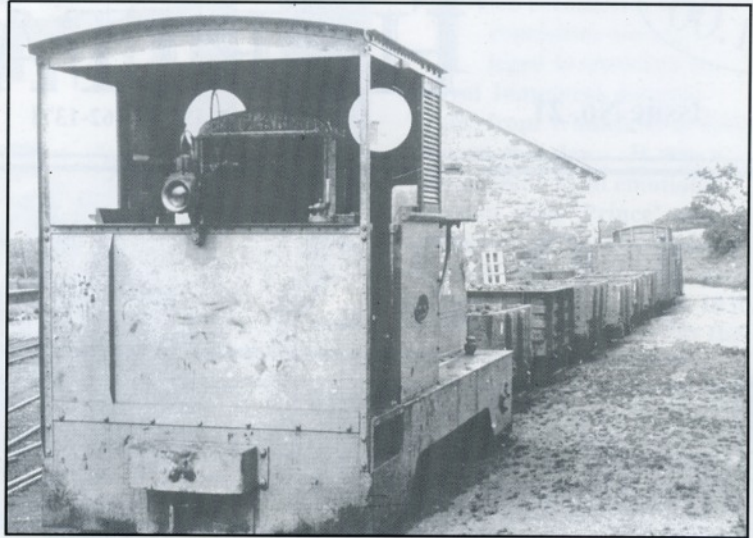
# 'Russell' to the Rescue

The trialing of Kerr Stuart 0-6-0 diesel no. 4415 was well documented in an early Festiniog Magazine (no.26, Autumn 1964) and covered its use based at Dinas in 1928, and Boston Lodge the following year. The article was written by JW Willans, son of KW Willans (referred to as KWW) who had recently left Sentinel Industrial Locos of Shrewsbury to become General Manager at Kerr Stuart, who in 1928 had built 4415, their first diesel locomotive.

Having had previous involvement with the redoubtable Colonel Stephens, KWW approached him with a view to 4415 being tested on the Ashover Light Railway. The Colonel, however, suggested the WHR and the offer was accepted. First acquaintance at Dinas was Daniel O. Jones. 'Digs' were provided by one Mrs. Jones (no relation to Daniel); the mattress was hard and lumpy, and over the bedroom washstand hung the framed text 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults'!!

The diesel was transferred from its transporter 'wagon' to Welsh Highland

track. KWW and his son, JW (Bob) Willans, were joined by one Phillips from Maclarens who was a Benz diesel engine expert (bear in mind that it was a Maclaren Benz engine fitted in 4415). With 4415 on track, Russell arrived with a passenger train from Beddgelert. Fireman Goronwy Roberts regarded the diesel with a mixture of suspicion and Celtic hilarity! Driver



'4415' shunts slate wagons at Dinas. Photographer unknown, date - 1928

'Willie Hugh' Williams, however, showed deep interest

and mounted the footplate to be instructed. There followed some yard trials during which the Kerr Stuart derailed due to a set of points not fully closing. She merci-

fully rerailed by moving gently in reverse! Then there was some shunting of slate wagons.

On the first full day, 4415 was assigned to the Bryngwyn early morning goods. Having little faith in this new-fangled diesel, the Welsh Highland insisted that Russell should accompany/precede what was essentially a rake of slate empties. Not long after leaving Tryfan

Junction the curves and gradients began to make themselves

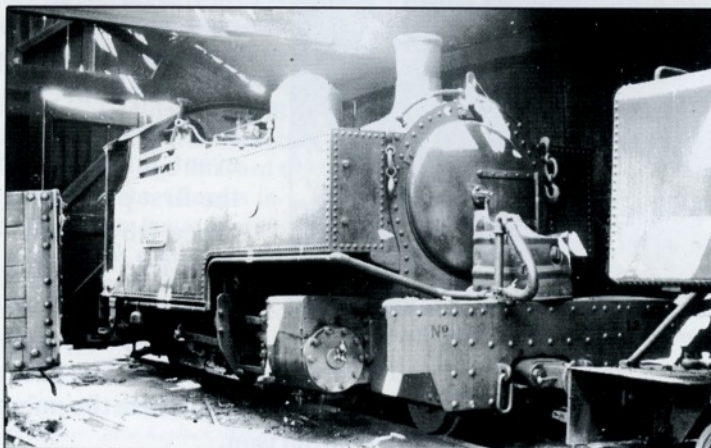
felt. KWW had overlooked the possible necessity for sand and 4415 came to a halt! "Russell sanded for us and we got away again in low gear".

The 4 cylinder engine was started up on paraffin before changing over to diesel. It was desirable to change back to paraffin just prior to stopping, otherwise one would have the tedious business of priming the fuel system with it. Starting was by means of a petrol 'donkey' engine as opposed to electric or compressed air. Having started, a friction clutch was engaged, the main engine turned over on 'no' compression and then changed to 'half' compression to gain momentum, followed by 'full' compression keeping the main engine turning over until she started. On starting, a dog clutch incorporated in the drive was automatically thrown out and the petrol engine was shut down. Contrary to Col. Stephens hopes, the Kerr Stuart was not left with the WHR/FR as a gift!!

In compiling this article, the writer is extremely grateful to Mr Robert Cox of Bridport, Dorset for making available notes made for him by the late Bob Willans.

'Russell' joins '590' in the loco shed at Dinas. Photograph - J.F. Bolton, date - 1941. See 'Chronology 1937 21st June' on page 6.

## John Keylock Explains



# FR Loco to the Rescue

## Agreement between the Festiniog Railway Company, and the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company.

“**T**he Festiniog Railway Company agree to let out on hire one of their small Locomotives for Six months from (the) date hereof in working order to the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company for the sum of One Hundred and Thirty Pounds, and the latter Company agree to accept on hire, and pay the Festiniog Railway Company the said sum of £130 in two installments, the first installment of £65 at the expiration of 3 Months (or the 9<sup>th</sup> day of August next) and the Balance at the Expiration of the Six Months term from (the) date hereof.

*“such as damage from upsetting the Engine”*

The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company will be responsible for all extraordinary damage that may occur, through their neglect, or that of their servants, such as damage from

*Transcript of the original 1876 leasing document from recently discovered material. The original was handwritten in delicate copper-plate, and is now in Gwynedd Archives*

upsetting the Engine, or causing any injury whatsoever beyond ordinary wear and tear, and to use as fuel coals from Coed Porth Colliery, and to carefully screen same during the said term of Six Months, and the Festiniog Railway Company undertake to maintain and bear the expense of all ordinary wear during the said term. Any extraordinary repairs or damage to be executed by the Festiniog Railway Company, and paid for by the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company at cost price. The Festiniog Railway Company undertake to deliver the Engine at the Llanwnda Junction free of cost to the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company, and the latter named Company undertake to deliver immediately after the expiration of the said term to the Festiniog Rail-

way Company on their line at Portmadoc free of cost, the said Engine ”

The Agreement is dated 9<sup>th</sup> May 1876 and is signed by C.E. Spooner (Secretary to the Festiniog Railway Company) and by Sir Llewellyn Turner (Chairman to the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company). Both signatures are witnessed.

The Agreement begs several questions. It is interesting to note that the locomotive was loaned to the NWNGR almost exactly 12 months before the first section of the line was opened to the temporary station at Quellyn (May 1877). It is also interesting to note that Spooner, who was not only the FR Company Secretary but was also engineer to the NWNGR, had been blamed by the courts for the company's failure to pay the contractors (Mckie). He had failed to make the necessary inspections to allow for the agreed stage payments. Mckie purloined company materials in lieu of payments (sending 5 tons of dog spikes to the IOM Railway for which he was also responsible (Boyd)). As a result of the criticism the NWNGR Board promised to speed up progress, and one has to wonder if the hire of this locomotive was part of that 'speeding up process'.

The relationships involved seem to be a trifle incestuous. Did Spooner negotiate the deal with himself as both FR Secretary and NWNG contracting engineer? Perhaps he then placed the agreement in front of his chairman suggesting that if he wanted the line opened and the funds starting to flow then he'd better sign the thing? Finally, which 'small FR locomotive' was used to fulfil the contract? Maybe FR archives can help?

*The site of the temporary station at Quellyn, to which the first stage of the line opened in May 1877. D.W Allan - 12th July 2003*



# The Railway in

The Welsh Highland Railway, in its various guises, was opened to traffic for sixty years and last working in May 1937, the Company remained in receivership for a further period of over  
the receivers involved in the Company's financial affairs - sourced

## North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways period 1877 - 1922.

### Samuel L. Price. (5th December 1877 to 7th May 1878)

The parlous financial state which was to dog the line throughout its existence came to the fore a mere seven months after the NWNGR opened to Quellyn in May 1877. Early in December of that year, the first receiver was appointed when the Company was taken to court by a firm of financiers, Grant & Co., for non repayment of money loaned. Grants had Samuel L. Price appointed on 5th December and he was to remain as receiver until 7th May the following year when the Railways Company successfully appealed against the decision in court.

### James Cholmeley Russell (9th December 1878)

Just seven months later, on 13 December. the Company found itself back in receivership, a situation in which it was to remain for the rest of its independent life. J.C.Russell was a Director of the Moel Tryfan Rolling Stock Co., a company set up that month to purchase the locomotives and rolling stock that he owned and had hired to the NWNGR since 1876. Naturally the Railways Co had got behind with their hire repayments (to the tune of nearly £1000) and Russell assigned this debt to the MTRSC who promptly took steps to have a receiver appointed - none other than Russell himself! Later the following year, in June 1879, Russell was also appointed Chairman of the NWNGR, remaining in both posts until his death late in 1911.

### Gowrie Colquhoun Aitchison (15th January 1912)

Following his death, Russell was succeeded by G. C. Aitchison, appointed on 15 January 1912. Along with the NWNGR, Aitchison also had connections with the PBSSR, Snowdon Mountain Tramroad and North Wales Power & Traction Co. (see Journal 8, page

### Henry Joseph Jack (9th April 1921)

The formation of the Welsh Highland Railway was but a year away when Aitchison was replaced by H.J. Jack on 9th April 1921 who effectively became the NWNGR's last receiver. The Aluminium Corporation of Dolgarrog, of which Jack was Managing Director, had taken control of the NWNGR in 1920 and had already acquired the PBSSR by virtue of taking control of the NWP&T Co. two years earlier. Thus the stage was set for the creation of the WHR.

# Administration

spent a grand total of 52½ years in the hands of a receiver. Indeed, after the line had seen its 8½ years until being wound up in 1946. In this short article, Derek Lystor summarises all from the various books on the WHR and from official documents.

## Welsh Highland Railway period 1922 - 1964

**F**rom obtaining its LRO on 30 March 1922, the WHR enjoyed a period of nearly five years without the need of a receiver, although financial disasters were never far away. The inevitable occurred early in 1927 and, like the NWNCR before it, the WHR went into receivership, and remained there for the rest of its existence.

### Lt. Col. Holman Frederick Stephens (4th March 1927)

**T**he redoubtable Col. Stephens, by then Chairman and Managing Director of the WHR was appointed receiver from 4 March 1927 after Caernarvon County Council took the Company to court for overdue interest on their debenture holdings. The dire financial state was compounded when substantial damages were awarded to the owners of the Royal Goat Hotel at Beddgelert.

### J.A. Iggulden (17th March 1931)

**B**y March 1931, Stephens' health was failing and his duties were taken over by his accountant J. A. Iggulden.

### Richard Thomas Griffith (23rd October 1931)

**J**ust over seven months later the Colonel died at Dover, and Iggulden was replaced by R.T. Griffith, a Caernarvon accountant who was at that time clerk to Gwryfai Rural District Council. (He became Chairman of Caernarvon County Council in 1934). Griffith remained as receiver and manager, witnessing the final trains and total closure of the railway in 1937, until his death.

### George Gregory Williams (8th February 1939 - Jan 1946)

**M**r G.C. Williams, treasurer to Caernarvon County Council, took over from the late R.T. Griffith on 8 February 1939. He was destined to be the last WHR receiver, a position he held as late as 1946. This was some two years after A.A. Thomas was appointed Liquidator in March 1944, following the issue of a compulsory Winding-up Order in the February. Williams was able to advise Thomas on a number of matters, the last being with regard to lease terms on Dinas Station shed in January 1946. That same month the Order was finally sealed and Williams was relieved of his duties.

The 1922 Company was finally placed in the hands of the Official Receiver on 6 July 1964 following the death of Thomas.

# Did Marconi use the NWNNG?

**L**ike many headlines this one is a trifle misleading, but in 1912 the Marconi Company commenced construction of a transatlantic wireless transmitting station at Waunfawr. The site chosen was the west-facing slope of Cefn du mountain above the road to Ceunant.

Machinery and construction materials were brought to the site entrance on Ceunant road on 'freight vehicles'. Foundations and stay anchors for the ten, 400 ft high, aerial masts alone required some 6000 tons of material. Because of the slope up from Ceunant road and the boggy nature of the ground a light railway of Jubilee track was laid from the road to the furthest boundary of the site for transporting this vast tonnage. The line was divided into three sections, each with its own stationary steam engine to provide rope haulage of the loaded trucks upwards.

Despite this high degree of organisation one wonders whether the NWNNG

railway benefited from the carriage of any minor goods traffic for the station – which was transmitting by 1914. A more positive Welsh Highland connection lies in the fact that the electricity supply for the transmitter came from the North Wales Power Company's

## *John Keylock's Imaginative Speculation!*

hydro-electric power station at Cwm Dyli.

Six new masts for the more efficient short wave system were installed in 1923. However the station closed in 1939, having lasted about as long as the Welsh Highland itself. The masts were removed as scrap, leaving only the transmitting hall, which now provides stabling for the Plas y Celyn trek-

king and riding centre. Antique ceramic insulators high on the walls of the transmitting hall and bases for the aerial cable stays are the only other relics to have survived.

The start of hostilities in 1914 dictated the necessity for better communications between the Falkland Islands and the northern hemisphere. To this end Marconi & Co were awarded the Admiralty contract to provide a powerful transmitter which was built on the northern shore of the harbour opposite Port Stanley, some 3½ miles away and served by a narrow gauge railway. The station was operational by 1915 and so powerful were the signals from this giant transmitter that they were received in the North Sea. One wonders therefore if they may also have been picked up in Waunfawr?!

Perhaps this information should be displayed at Waunfawr station?

Much of this information is gleaned from 'Marconi and his Wireless Stations in Wales' by Hari Williams

## CHRONOLOGY 1937

### April

Final freight traffic to South Snowdon; 8 tons of coal.

### 29th April

Investing authorities met at Caernarfon and discussed the case for the FR being freed from its lease and that the WHR should be wound up. Portmadoc UDC asked for first option to purchase the Croesor to Portmadoc section.

### May

Last outward goods (1 ton), dispatched from Beddgelert.

### 14th May

FR resolved to suspend all traffic on WHR from June 1st.

### 31st May

Official date of closure to all traffic.

### 1st June

Final goods train ran from Dinas to Beddgelert, carrying 19 tons.

### 19th June

'Russell' left Dinas for Portmadoc and collected all FR wagons en route for delivery back to the FR. Collected '590' from Bos-

ton Lodge and remaining WHR wagons from Harbour station and returned to Dinas, collecting further wagons at Beddgelert. Load proved too heavy for the overgrown track and the train was split at Beddgelert, before continuing successfully to Dinas.

### 21st June

'Russell' collected remaining wagons from Beddgelert and intermediate sidings. On return to Dinas, joined '590' in the loco shed. (See photo on page 3).

### July

Audit Office records showed 8 tons of coal delivered to Beddgelert in this month, but by virtue of 'Russell's' activities in June this was obviously a case of information running late.

### 22nd November

Caernarfon CC proposed that the FR be freed from the lease upon payment of £500 plus outstanding rent.

### 31st December

Annual rent as per lease arrangement, £14. During the year, 225 tons of coal was received at Dinas; 200 tons went forward to Beddgelert, with the remainder being delivered to South Snowdon. When Arthur Rimmer visited Beddgelert in 1937, there was still a stack adjacent to the coal siding.

# Aberglaslyn Vandalism

The Portmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway was one of several railway companies who managed to stamp their influence on the Welsh Highland a long time before the railway was born. It retains that influence even today, for it was responsible for the 1906 construction works in the Aberglaslyn Pass, part of which were used for the 1923 line and which will be used again for the railway under reconstruction.

It built the never-used road bridge, which today guards Beddgelert from the south. It completed that remarkable accommodation work in the field to the east of the road bridge which looms like some ancient folly as a monument to the 'route that never was'. It built the abutments of the river bridge which line up the accommodation works with the road bridge, and significantly it also built the railway embankment, which led from these abutments to the trackbed adjacent to the Brynyfelin bridge.

Sadly this old trackbed has been radically altered by the National Trust, the very body into whose care these ancient remains have been entrusted.

John Padley has ably highlighted the destruction in his letter.

The Heritage Group are responsible for the archaeological and historical conservation of the old line. We have tried to ensure that the rebuilding work takes fully into account the unnecessary destruction of artefacts. Whilst these sections of the PB&SSR may be outside the remit of the reconstruction work, it remains our responsibility to ensure that railway archaeology is not destroyed. The desecration of this remarkable section of this remarkable Welsh Railway cannot be allowed to pass without comment. John Padley succinctly sums up the position.

National Trust Officer Keith Jones apologises for what has happened - he blames over enthusiasm by the Trust's contractors. He confirms that planning permission should have been sought for these alterations. To remedy the situation he advises that the Trust are going to restore the formation as best they can.

David Archer, Head of Conservation for the Snowdonia National Park, denied that the relationship between the Trust and the

## John Padley's letter

"When at Beddgelert in March I was dismayed to find that the unused embankment of the PB&SSR on the left bank of the Afon Glaslyn had been largely destroyed by the National Trust.

A new concreted surface path has been built, raised on a higher bank than the railway used to be. The PB&SSR embankment between the unused river bridge abutment and the unfinished cutting has been mostly removed to provide material for the new path. South of that cutting to near Brynyfelin they could not be content merely to put a concrete path on the PB&SSR embankment - no, they have reworked the embankment to make it higher but narrower, and in so doing have introduced some bends and kinks which spoil the integrity of the historic 100 year old alignment.

At Brynyfelin, where the PB&SSR had already been removed ("borrowed") by the WHR, new material was being brought across by a dump truck fording the river. Below this, through the pass, the water was cloudy with disturbed sediment. Wasn't this during the fish breeding season? Did these people have environmental clearance to do this? If we want to work on the river there is no end of red tape.

A better path for wheelchairs was possibly justified, but this new work is over the top. It would be more appropriate in a city ornamental park. Surely they do not intend to continue through the Pass via the Fisherman's Path? It would be a serious eyesore, and could not be made safe without steel barriers. They would want streetlights - I joke not.

Oh, and the iron hand gate by the PB&SSR bridge abutment has been replaced by a clumsy great wooden thing. Don't these people know that iron gates (and other furniture) are not an eyesore in the National Park? They are part of it, and often look more elegant than any alternative.

Who else, like me, thought that the NT was created to care for history and the environment, not to despoil it?

Park was too cosy. He commented - "The National Park Authority were extremely concerned by the action of the National Trust in the vicinity of Beddgelert and have made it quite clear that the National Trust are no different from any other developer".

To correct the matter, we understand that retrospective planning permission has to be applied for, which will include, we are

advised, full details of how the illegal works are to be made good.

The Heritage Group will make observations on the application when it is received. - **David Allan**

*The 'reprofiled' PB&SSR formation & concrete path in the Aberglaslyn.  
D.W. Allan - May 2003*



# July 30th 2003 - More Photographs



Above - Prince Charles chats to Mike Schumann at Rhyd Ddu  
D.W. Allan - 30th July 2002

**T**wo members of your committee were privileged to travel on the 'Royal Inaugural Journey Train' from Waunfawr to Rhyd Ddu on this day. It was a memorable – even emotional – occasion with 'Prince' and three heritage coaches passing through scenes captured on photographs from 1895 to 1936. Even on an unbrilliant day the unfolding panoramas were breathtaking.

Right - Inaugural train approaches the site of the famous 1941 posed demolition train picture.  
D.W. Allan 30th July 2003



## Tryfan Junction - Making a Start

Tryfan Junction station site has been fenced off so that remedial work on the building can be carried out at will, having first satisfied 'Harbour Station Control'. The station building remains have been stripped of all ivy and saplings. The two front entrance thresholds have been revealed, albeit devoid of their slate slabs, and many serviceable bricks – both red and yellow – reclaimed from the interior pile of 'rubble'. This initial work will give passengers on passing trains a better impression - a bilingual sign attached to the building indicates the Group's involvement. Thank you James Hewett for producing said sign at comparatively short notice. Those involved so far include John Davies, Derek Buckles, Cedric Lodge and John Keylock.



The next working party on the building is scheduled for Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October. Please come along and help. Phone John Keylock on 01386 852428 for further details and to advise attendance.

Tryfan Junction Restoration - John Keylock 'at work' on the station building - 29th July 2003