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Could WHR Structures be 'Listed'?



*Dinas Goods Shed on 26th January 1988,
Left - standard gauge entrance, centre -
original NWNG window, right - narrow
gauge exit, then used as a window
Photo David Allan.*

CADW have confirmed that with exception of the privately-owned former Snowdon Ranger station building that none of the remaining Welsh Highland/North Wales Narrow Gauge buildings or structures have yet been afforded the protection of 'listing'. Heritage Group secretary John Keylock commented, "Given the potential threat that redevelopment poses, the situation needs to be remedied with some urgency. We believe that the Welsh Highland Rail-

way is of considerable importance to the history of Wales - the current rebuilding programme is an obvious testament to that. We are suggesting that the opportunity should now be taken to enhance the heritage of this historic line, now that the basic reconstruction has been completed to Rhyd Ddu. Already considerable damage has been unnecessarily caused to a unique section of the former contractor's trackbed in the Aberglaslyn Pass, which has survived since

1906, and it is vital that further damage to the surviving structures is prevented".

The Heritage Group committee is therefore recommending that the following structures should be considered for 'listing': -

*Beddgelert road bridge &
abortive trackbed. 14th
January 1989 -
photo David Allan*

Dinas station building - now fully restored.

Dinas goods shed - the former dual gauge building, also restored.

Tryfan Junction station building - currently a derelict shell.

Glanrafon Quarry weigh house - only example of a NWNG weigh house remaining.

Beddgelert road bridge - built in 1906, but never used for the line, which was eventually diverted to an adjacent route.

Abutments of the part completed, but 'never used' accommodation crossing on the abortive route to the east of the Beddgelert road bridge.

Abutments of the 'never completed' river bridge on the Afon Glaslyn, upstream from Bryn y Felin.

Contractor's trackbed and associated slate culverts on the abortive route on the east bank of the Glaslyn.

CADW have expressed the possibility that the Heritage Lottery Fund might be able to help should any funding be necessary.

A New WHR Book!

The Welsh Highland Railway
'Halfway to Paradise'

by

John Stretton

Price £15.99

Available from

WHR - Porthmadog

WHR - Caernarfon

WHR Heritage Sales

Available now!



G.E. Hughes - Photographer & Archivist

Geoffrey Hughes was the son of the vicar of Llanwnda and lived at the vicarage in Dinas from 1916 – aged 2 – until 1937. It is said that his first sight of railway activity at ‘the junction’ was obtained from the bathroom window whilst standing on the lavatory seat!

As a young teenager he became well acquainted with W.H. (Willie Hugh) Williams, as the Welsh Highland's senior driver. Willie Hugh had joined the NWNCR as an ‘apprentice engine fitter’ in 1876 and features in many Welsh Highland photographs. A paternalistic Willie Hugh nurtured Geoffrey's affection for ‘lein bach’ and for ‘Russell’ in particular, and it was not long before he became involved with cleaning ‘Russell's’ brass and copper components – a very early volunteer.

However it was not until the 1930's that G.E.

Hughes acquired a Box Brownie camera. Several of his photographs have been in the WH collection for many years, having been obtained from Goronwy Roberts, again well featured

John Keylock explores an amazing new photographic archive

negatives. This has had the effect of substantially enhancing the collection of photographs of the original railway. ‘The Baldwin – ‘590’, ‘Moel Tryfan’, and ‘Russell’ are all recorded with –

as ‘Russell's’ driver in the 1930's. Recently, having established contact with G.E. Hughes' two sons, we have been able to borrow their father's

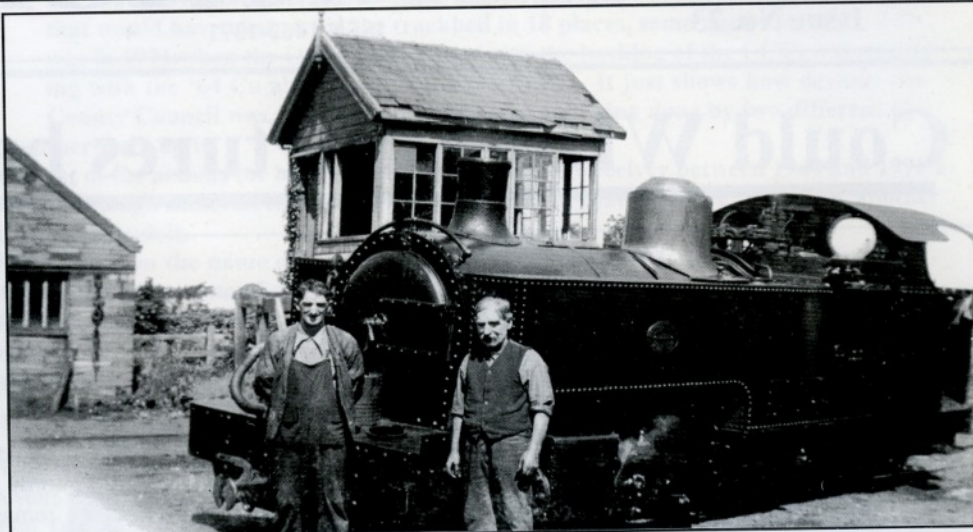
Above - ‘Russell’ in front of a rather dilapidated Dinas signal box

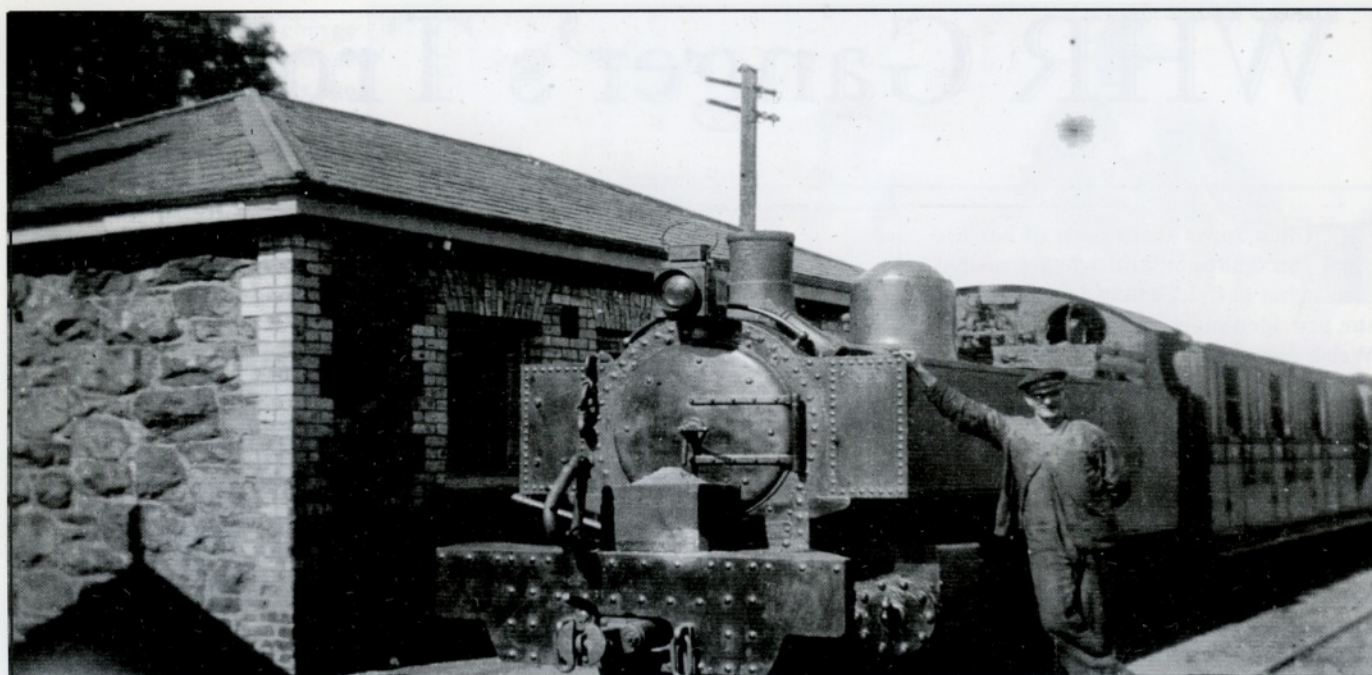
Below - A unique view, but a little underexposed, of the station master's house at Waunfawr (now the Snowdonia Parc Hotel).

Both photos G.E. Hughes 1934/35

perhaps not unnaturally – pictures of the latter predominating. Several feature the children of Hugh Roberts, another Welsh Highland driver who was W.H. Williams' nephew. The accompanying photographs are published for the first time for the benefit of the wider gaze.

Furthermore G.E. Hughes was a meticulous recorder of the locomotives he saw and the train journeys he made. After all these years there has come to light a record of all his journeys on the Welsh Highland in July, August and September 1936. One assumes that most of these were on the footplate. ‘Russell’, ‘590’ and ‘Welsh Pony’ all feature in the train's make up; departure times and destination are all recorded. In a lovely example of his attention to detail, and one which illuminates activities of over seventy years ago, he records that on the 21st September 1936, the last day of operation, that the penultimate (morning) train also took loaded





coal wagons to both South Snowdon and to Beddgelert.

We hope to publish full details of this fascinating record of the last days of the WHR at a later date.

We are extremely grateful to Stephen Hughes in particular for the opportunity to borrow his father's negatives and to make prints for posterity. Stephen's father has proved to be not only a photographer, but also a very systematic recorder of Welsh Highland events. As his efforts have provided us with such a wealth of new and fascinating detail it would perhaps be not inaccurate to describe Geoffrey Hughes as the Welsh Highland's first archivist!



Photographs

Above - 'Russell' & driver pose outside the waiting room at Dinas

Centre - An extremely steamy shot of the Baldwin, '590', also at Dinas

Bottom - A rare picture of 'Welsh Pony' at Dinas station

All picture G.E. Hughes 1934/35

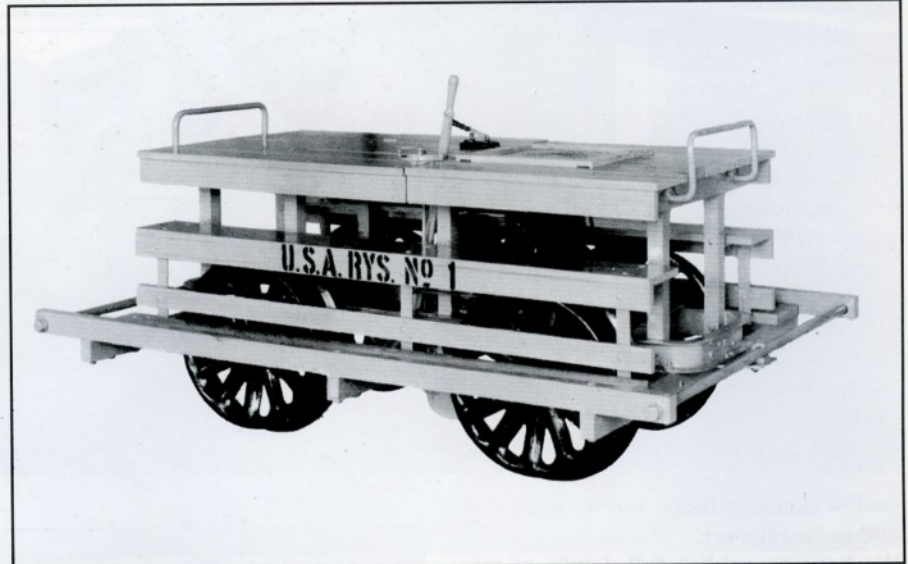
WHR Ganger's Trolleys

Ellen Jones spent most of her life in Nantmor and when I visited her in Criccieth in January 2002, she provided many anecdotes about the Welsh Highland and its relationship to village activities. Furthermore she confided that some years previously she had deposited documents with Gwynedd Archives and amongst these was a photograph of a ganger's trolley at Nantmor circa 1933. This featured herself as a young girl, her father and the local ganger; the photo is reproduced here. (Two other 'new' photographs were discovered in the same archive file and will be the subject of future articles).

It is recorded that in 1914 the NWNG had three 'platelayer's trolleys' and interestingly, by that date, the number of 'rail and timber' trucks' had been increased from 14 to 29, presumably to satisfy the demands of Parry's Timber

A little known aspect of the WHR operation - more from John Keylock

Tramway (see WHH Journal No 19, p7). Colonel Stephens' purchase of Baldwin '590' is well known, but he also acquired for the railway at least two, and possibly



four, petrol-engined platelayer's/ganger's trolleys. Perhaps, needless to

say, these were War Department surplus and interestingly, like '590', of American origin.

970 of these trolleys were manufactured by Fairbanks Morse & Co for use in France on the American Expeditionary Forces 60cm railways during WW1. The Americans referred to these machines as 'speeders'. They were powered by a single cylinder petrol engine directly coupled to one of the axles. There being no clutch they were

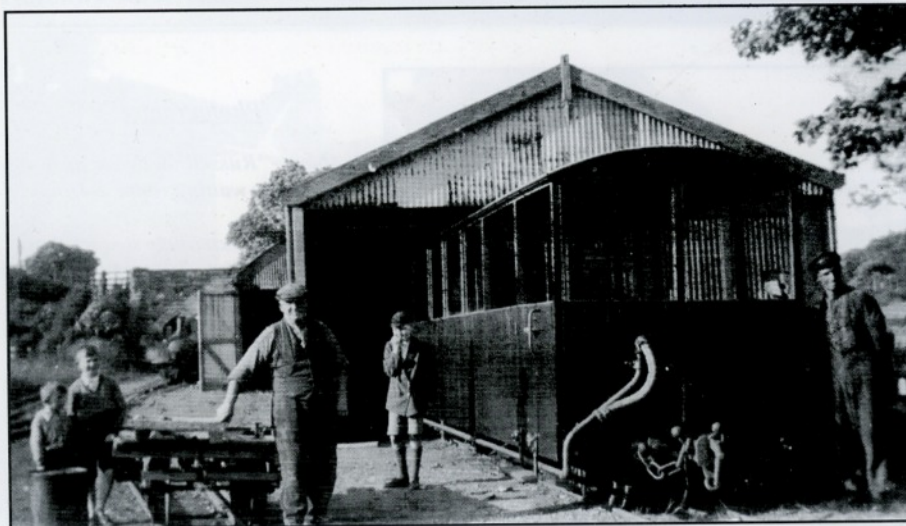
*Fairbanks-Morse 'Speeder'
Courtesy Richard Dunn*

push started in the required direction of

travel. A hand brake, prominent on the Nantmor photograph, was fitted, but other methods of speed control seem to have been an adverse gradient – or derailment! Nevertheless they proved to be most useful at the front whenever it was necessary to get quickly from A to B. Four men, sitting sidesaddle, could be carried – or six with a squash. The handles at each end were for holding on, push starting and lifting on and off the track.

The Nantmor photograph is the first to come to light showing such a trolley on the WH in its complete and original condition. Beneath the cloth-capped ganger's waist can be seen what would appear to be the maker's plate. A mid 1920's memorandum from Harbour to the Beddgelert stationmaster, gives authority to purchase petrol and oil for such a trolley.

The 1934 lease records two 'petrol platelayers trolleys' and two 'propelling trolleys' with one of each based at Dinas and South Snowdon. One can reasonably assume that the latter were of the 'pump trolley' type, there being casual photographic evidence of their existence in the 1930's. At the 31st December 1924 the railway owed George Cohen – machinery, as well as scrap metal merchants, £22 -10/- for 'trolley supplied'; it is not



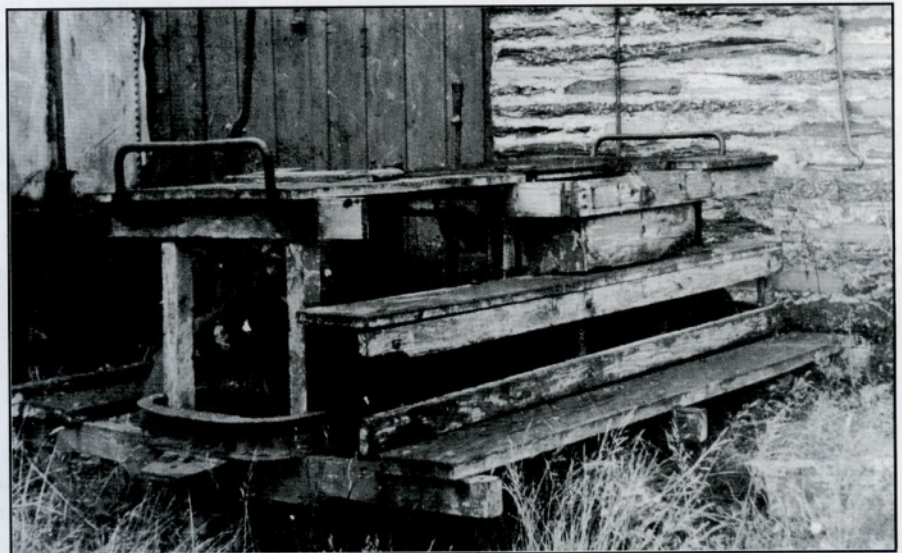
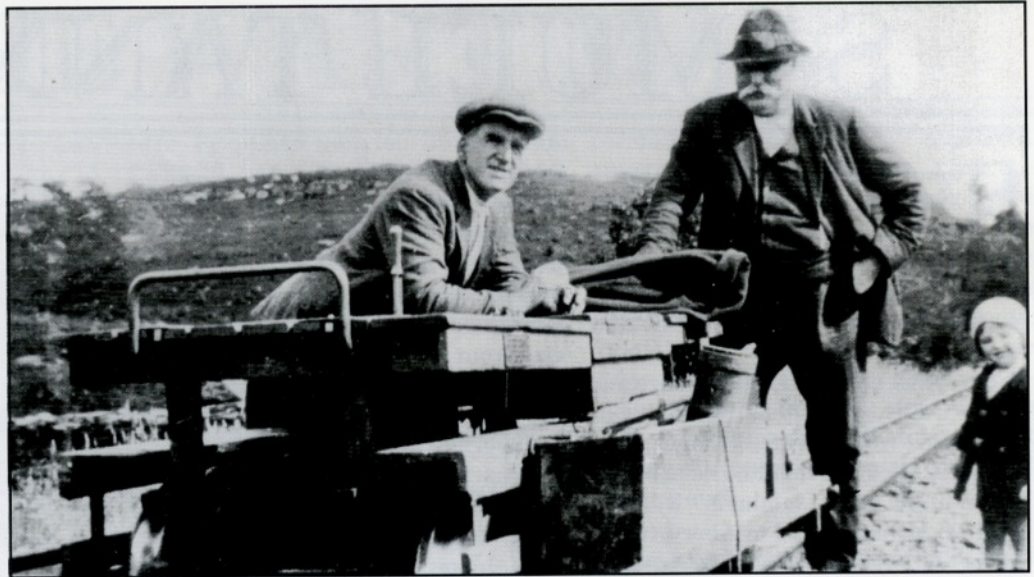
Ganger's Trolley ends its days in a somewhat undignified guise as an early mobile 'WorkMate' at Dinas

Photo G.E. Highes 1934/35

known whether this charge was for a petrol-engined or pump type. Eighty years ago – bearing in mind the cost of '590' – this could well have covered the purchase of two petrol-engined types. That being said it is also logical to suppose that the petrol-engined trolleys came from the same source as the Baldwin '590', being Government surplus.

Photographs of a 'manually propelled' trolley roped to the rear of a passenger train in the mid 1930's are well known. However by 1935/6 one such trolley, stripped of its mechanism, was being used by the Dinas carpenter as the equivalent of today's 'WorkMate'. It features, coincidentally, in a photograph of the Gladstone carriage being repainted outside Dinas carriage shed, and one suspects the same model is being used by Mrs Bolton and Mrs Boyd-Carpenter sitting aboard at Rhostryfan in 1941.

In 1943 Mr James Boyd photographed a complete Fairbanks-Morse machine at Boston Lodge – see accompanying photograph. Fifty years ago the embryonic 'new' FR had little thought of either heritage or preservation and the machine was re-incarnated as 'Busta'. That is another story – but at least the wheel sets have survived.



Top - Ganger's Trolley near Nantmor (GAS)

Centre - As used on the WHR photographed at Boston Lodge by James Boyd, in 1943

Bottom - Mrs Bolton and Mrs Boyd-Carpenter enjoying a ride at Rhostryfan on a 'Speeder' - J.F. Bolton 1941



A.G.M
Sunday 2nd May
Royal Sportman
Porthmadog
2.30pm

SAMUEL TANNER

Samuel Tanner came to the North Wales Narrow Gauge aged 35 in 1890 as engineer/superintendent/secretary, but by 1892 he was styled as Secretary and Manager, his name appearing at the bottom of the timetable for that year.

Tanner was born at Chunel in Ireland in 1855, but by 1879 he was living in Pembroke with a wife, Isabella, and daughter - Ellen (could he have been a victim of the potato famine?) By 1881, aged 26, he had moved to Aberystwyth, where he was described as being a 'railway manager', and working for the erstwhile Manchester and Milford Railway, where he may well have been in contact with James Weeks Szlumper. Like Tanner, Szlumper had a North Wales Narrow Gauge involvement during the 1890s as (consulting) engineer.

Tanner remained at Dinas with the North Wales Narrow Gauge until mid 1898 and he features in two well-known photographs which are illustrated in MacKay's 'Light Railways' published in 1896. The most significant photograph shows him sitting in the recently delivered carriage that was to become known as 'The Gladstone Car'! This

carriage together with a composite, hauled by 'Moel Tryfan', formed Gladstone's special from Dinas to Rhyd Ddu in September 1892. A report in the Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald of 16th September quotes. -

'The train steamed out of Dinas in charge of the energetic manager Mr S. Tanner who, a

short time previously, had the honour of being introduced by Sir Ed-

ward Watkin to Mr and Mrs Gladstone. Cheer after cheer was sent up and the old gentleman bowed his acknowledgements'.

In April (?) 1895 Mr Frank Chanter, engineer to the as yet unopened Lynton & Barnstaple Railway visited the North Wales Narrow Gauge to get ideas and avoid pitfalls - 'by the courtesy of the manager, Mr S Tanner, I was able to



This picture, thought to be of Samuel Tanner, on the approach to Snowdon Ranger station. Note child in slate wagon! Date & photographer unknown

An occasional series in which John Keylock explores the lives of WH & NWNNG Employees

examine the rolling stock and works over the whole line and to him I am indebted for the facts and figures regarding the actual traffic'. Tanner's function was taken over in 1898 by G.C. Aitchison (Heritage Journal No. 8), but alas to where Tanner moved is not known.

It is interesting to note that the 1892 timetable bearing Tanner's name offered First, Second and Third Class travel on all trains, whereas the 1877 timetable, promoting an initial service to (Old) Cwellyn, offered only First and Third, with 'Parliamentary' tickets available on the earliest and latest trains to/from Cwellyn and Bryngwyn.

More about the Vanwill Oil Co. at Dinas - C.J. Keylock

An agreement, dated 9th June 1884, between the LNWR and NWNNG sets out the terms for the mutual use of Dinas Junction. It covered the rates to be charged for various commodities handled, but at that date would not have included 'oils & motor spirits'.

It would appear that this 'new traffic' started in 1933 with rail tankers of mo-

tor spirit being delivered for Vanwill from Preston docks. In the first four months

of 1935, sixteen full tanks were received, each holding about 14 tons. Based on a rate of 20/- per ton, the value to the LMS would have been approximately £224.

With the July 1934 leasing of the WHR by the FR, there was obviously an attempt to regularise some matters, or investigate areas where an extra 'bob or two' could be found or saved. As a

result, the WHR agreed to pay the LMS 1/- per ton on 'crude oil & spirit' handled at Dinas, plus applicable terminal charges.

It has become apparent that there were three pipelines between the siding used by the rail tankers and Vanwill's storage tanks. This is hardly surprising considering the different types of fuel handled. As these pipelines passed entirely over LMS land, any matter of a wayleave was purely between the railway company and Vanwil.

THE WART MAN

In *Welsh Highland Heritage No.22* (December 2003) extracts from Col. Stephens' letters of August 1927 regarding the illness of driver Jarrett Davies raises a fascinating issue that is only now fading from folk memory in these localities.

Stephens was sceptical and very scathing of the "specialist who lives in the country", also described by him as "a Quack Doctor in the middle of a field", who was treating Davies for something like a wart on his nose. Unknown to Stephens, but widely recognised by the local populace, Davies was suffering from a type of cancerous skin 'mole' known in Welsh as *dafad wyllt* (or wild wart). Left to its own devices, or accidentally disturbed, this very painful, rapidly growing tumour would eventually prove fatal.

Fortunately for the locals of this neck of the woods, the Griffiths family on the

Llyn Peninsula (not too distant from Pwllheli) had a herbal remedy which was almost foolproof. Hundreds, if not thousands of sufferers (including my father) travelled to the little shop in the middle of nowhere to have the tumour treated. So common was the complaint,

Dr Gwynfor Pierce-Jones adds some fascinating detail to Col Stephens' scepticism about employee health - see last issue (WHH No.22)

that the quarrymen and populace of the Nantlle district formed their own Epici-lioma Friendly Society to pay for the treatment and provide a taxi to the remote home of the practitioner.

The treatment was simple, but effective. A surface cut was made in the mole, and

carefully dosed with a measured amount of a dust-like potion. After the application, a plaster was applied and instructions given not to disturb the spot or to sweat. Within weeks, the tumour would (hopefully) start to drop out, and my father recalls its huge roots, reminiscent of a tree. As far as we know, Jarrett Davies also made a complete recovery, but it is clear that he had to abstain from footplate work during the treatment, despite Stephens' disapproval.

The secret formula of the Wild Wart Man (*Dyn Dafad Wyllt*) was never revealed and is now lost. It was almost certainly a very toxic substance obtained from plants, but how its action was confined only to the interior of the tumour is unclear. Whatever the case, the little shop now lies in ruins, and medical science may have lost a valuable clue to the cure of cancers.

CHRONOLOGY - 1939

January

'Railway Magazine' for January 1939 reported a recent (late 1938) visit to the WHR by Mr A.E. Rimmer. He noted the railway 'falling into decay from which any recovery is unlikely! ½ ton of coal still lying besides the Beddgelert coal siding - presumably delivered by rail in 1937, or lorry since. Station becoming dilapidated; likewise Pont Croesor bridge. LMSR station name changed from 'Dinas Jct'. to 'Dinas'.

2nd February

Further correspondence from C.E. Davies (FR secretary) to Caernaryon County Council re the FR's involvement with the WHR.

8th February

George Gregory Williams, Caernarvon CC Treasurer, appointed Receiver.

9th March

Iggulden (see 23rd December 1931, WHH No.13) threatened to remove rail to the value of the outstanding debt owed to Stephens' estate.

3rd May

Offer of £3815 received from George Cohen, Sons & Co., for railway equipment.

6th June

Caernarvonshire C.C. replied to Iggulden saying that they had received many enquiries regarding the rail, including that from Cohen, and were obtaining legal advice regarding the sale of track materials.

July

Boundaries at Dinas re-aligned by LMS Estates Department.

17th October

Letter from Robert Evans to Headmaster of Rock Ferry High School (Birkenhead), evacuated to 'Portmadoc County School', complaining about "boys playing with trucks at Beddgelert Sidings and causing serious damage to property; broken points and a large gate across the railway".

16th November

Air Ministry letter, marked 'SECRET', to the Company referring to plans to retain a section of line on which to store stock in magazines about one mile north of Beddgelert station. They also suggested that they take over the line from there to Portmadoc. The plans were not realised.

7th December

Caernarvon C.C. noted that the re-drawn boundary at Dinas appeared to cut through WHR buildings in use by the LMS!

A Plan to Stop the W.H.R.?

*Jim Hewett
Investigates*

I wonder if readers realise how close the WHR got to being stopped forever? I have come across some documents (MT 132/61) in the Public Record Office that show that Caernarfonshire (later Gwynedd) County Council had a plan that would have obstructed the trackbed in 18 places, some quite extensive. This was in 1971 when the Official Receiver (with the backing of the CCC) was negotiating with the '64 Co about buying the trackbed. It just shows how devious the County Council was, assuming that this was not being done by two different de-

partments who did not know what each other were up to.

The whole file gives a blow-by-blow account of the actions (or non-actions) of the Official Receiver between 1944 and 1971 as seen by the Ministry of Transport. There is enough material there for several articles but that will have to wait for another time. It took me several hours to even skim through it.

However, all these obstructions were to be done in the name of road improvements and the CCC seemed confident that grants could be obtained to do the work. It has to be remembered that only in more recent times has the A487 become the major (preferred) route between Caernarfon and Porthmadog. The works would have been as follows:

Glanrhyd Bridge under A487	Fill in and widen
Cei Moel Bridge	Regrade road to old level
Wernlas Bridge	Regrade road to old level
Tryfan Junction Bridge	Regrade road to old level
Waunfawr Bridge A4085	Fill in and widen
Llwyn Bedw - Gwyrfa Terrace	Widen A4085 on railway
Gwyrfa Terrace - Betws Garmon	Divert A4085 onto railway
Castell Cidwm Bridge	Regrade road to old level
Castell Cidwm - Snowdon Ranger	Divert A4085 onto railway
Snowdon Ranger car park to Pitt's Head	Widen A4085 on railway
Pitt's Head Bridge	Regrade road to old level
Beddgelert Western by-pass	Follows railway at Beddgelert station
Disused bridge (PBSSR)	Demolish bridge
Bryn-y-felin Bridge	Regrade road to old level
Beddgelert Eastern by-pass	Route crosses railway
Nantmor level crossing	Widen road
Bridge over A4085 south of Nantmor	Demolish for widening
Porthmadog by-pass	Probable point where by-pass will cross

There actually seems to be more than one plan for Waunfawr as there is a map showing the road taking a new route on the Dinas side of the existing road.

I find this list quite amazing, almost as though someone had set out to see how many possible ways there were to block the railway. For example, take Tryfan Junction Bridge; how could any expenditure be justified here on such a minor road. To divert the road between Castell Cidwm and Snowdon Ranger does not make a lot of sense either - far more land would be needed than just the trackbed. The Beddgelert by-pass is interesting; as far as I can see it would have started close to Pont

Allen, gone through the station site, through a tunnel or deep cutting, crossed the road just by the PB&SSR bridge and rejoined the old road by Bryn-y-felin bridge. Having gone this far, it is surprising it was not suggested that the trackbed was used all the way from Nantmor to Porthmadog!

Finally, just one quote from the files dated 17/2/67 "Caernarvonshire C.C. are adrift in a sea of indecision over various offers to buy bits & pieces of land".

Bicall bridge at Tryfan Junction - would have been flattened if Caernarfonshire County Council's 1971 road improvement scheme had gone ahead.

Photo - David Allan - 18th October 2000

