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## GROUP'S PLANS FOR SURVIVING WHR STRUCTURES

### No more Waunfawrs - Keylock

**T**he Heritage Group have unveiled details of their action plan to preserve existing NWNG and WHR buildings, quarry branches and other artefacts. A letter has been sent to Michael Whitehouse, FR chairman, outlining the proposals. Group secretary John Keylock stressed the importance of conserving what remains to add to the experience and satisfaction of passengers travelling on the line.

Referring to the loss of the granite blocks from the demolished Waunfawr station he said that such carelessness must be avoided in the future. I am sure that the FR management are fully alert to their responsibilities to history, it is essential that the culture of this fantastic narrow gauge line is preserved for future generations and it is the responsibility of the Heritage Group to see that it happens.

Mr Keylock went on to say that Waunfawr station is obviously an FR obligation, but he acknowledged that any new station building here, whilst based on twenty first century requirements, must still provide a feel of the original. The Group has a modest fund budgeted to help with this project.

Tryfan Junction is already receiving attention to prevent further deterioration, it and it is hoped to lay an unconnected length of track here together with two or three slate wagons to indicate the significance of the branch to Bryngwyn. Similarly it is planned to highlight the quarry branches at both Tan y Ffordd and Betws Garmon.

The Group are suggesting that the water tower once located at Snowdon Ranger could be reconstructed. Glan-



rafon weigh house is unique, and although derelict it should be rebuilt.

*Afon Dylif bridge - 20th August 1997 - D Allan*

The Group welcomes the plans to reconstruct the halt at Plas y Nant but also wishes to see the the WW2 mortar mounting that was located on the track to the north of the river bridge relocated on the proposed new platform. This will complement the two granite built pill boxes adjacent to the halt and will remind passengers of more sombre times.

The Group have suggested that original WHR features at Beddgelert must be preserved such as the water tower and the inspection pit. If possible the bases of the station building and the goods shed should remain undisturbed. The Group have reminded the FR of their commitment to replace the removed girder bridges at Bryn y Felin, Afon Nanmor and Afon Dylif with replicas

Mr Keylock went on to confirm that this list was by no means complete and

other features worthy of preservation and enhancement would be added to it in

due course.

Apart from obvious FR responsibilities it is the Group's intention to fund these activities themselves, so there will be no drain on funds for rebuilding the line itself.

## INSIDE

Major article on the life of James Cholmeley Russell, the man whose long shadow reaches down over the decades to influence the WHR even today.

# IN THE SHADOW OF 'THE ELEPHANT'

A journey on the new Welsh Highland Railway certainly offers the passenger a great contrast in splendid scenery and a variety of industrial heritage. Confident Victorian entrepreneurs, fuelled by the demand for minerals, combined with imaginative engineers; these were the conditions that enabled the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway to be constructed. It existed in a 'Snowdonia' that had dozens of slate quarries, copper and iron ore mines, hammer mills and even charcoal burners. It was a very different world, and large areas were turning rapidly from green to grey.

'Plas y Nant' quarry is surprisingly well concealed in the narrows of the Afon Gwyrfaï valley, approximately two hundred yards south of Pont Cerrig-y-rhyd (the old Nant Mill waterfall) and opposite Tyn-y-Weirglodd farm. Mature pine and oak trees soften the outlines of the spill heaps formed from the strikingly vivid orange-brown slate waste. Many of the farm walls too are constructed from this wonderful lichen covered stone whilst

Plas y Nant estate, and in particular the house, lies discreetly to the north east of the quarry. Constructed in 1671 by John Rowlands of Nant and London, who according to the writings of Owen Williams of Waunfawr was a fortunate survivor of the great plague in London who inherited his wealth, from his not so fortunate, deceased employers. However, investigations by Ms Sophie Pan Jones indicate that he may have already been a successful banker. In 1749 his granddaughter Emma married James, 6th Lord Viscount Bulkeley of Beaumaris. He died in 1752; in 1762 she remarried Sir Hugh Williams, 8th Baronet of Penrhyn. Fortunately their grandson

Richard, the 10th Baronet, re-inherited the Bulkeley title in 1822, and estates in 1827, including Plas y Nant.

He was on the Promotional Committee of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway in 1872, the board of directors in 1873 to 1875, and was succeeded by his son, Sir Richard Lewis Mostyn Williams-Bulkeley who held the position until 1876.

A quarry lease document suggests that Plas y Nant quarry was in operation as the 'Plas y Nant Slate and Sulphur Ore Co' in 1859, (Brynmanllyn quarry which was a few hundred yards south, may be earlier.) 'Plas' reached its zenith of production in the early 1880's employing 28 men, by 1886 it had closed only to reopen for a few years before the First World War. It resumed operation in 1933 to 1937, then another spell in the late 1960's.



*John Keylock, George Hearse & Lewis Esposito examining artefacts in Plas y Nant Quarry on 3rd May 2004  
Photo Stuart McNair*

My discovery of a length of

Jubilee type quarry rail lying on the ground against the boundary wall between Tyn y Weirglodd and Plas Isaf encouraged me to look further into a rail link to the old North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway.

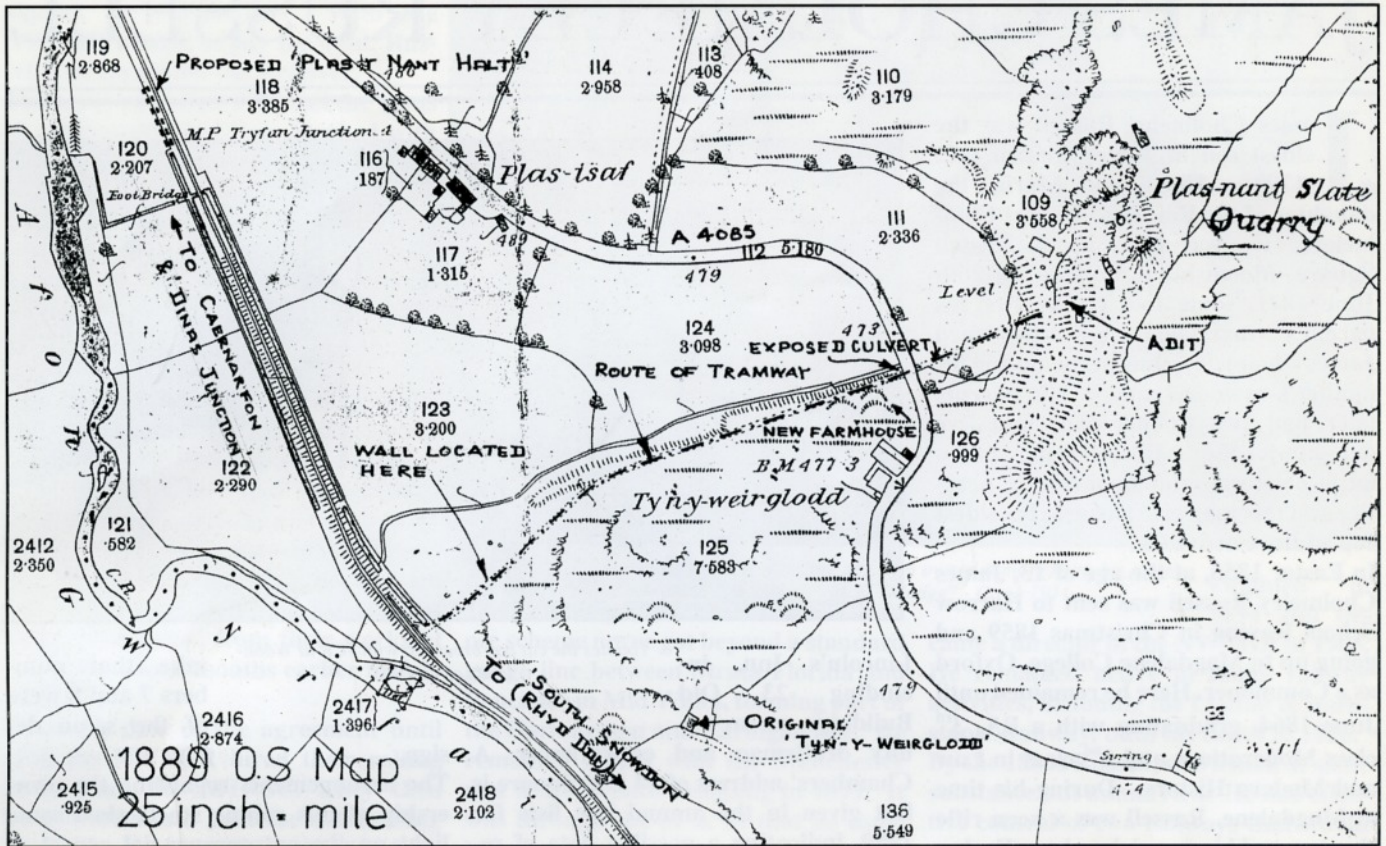
In J.J.C. Boyd's book *Narrow Gauge Railways in South Caernarvonshire*, page 197, he states that on a survey completed between 1940-1954 that there were "traces of a 40 yard siding at the southern end of the Plas y Nant embankment which served Plas y Nant and Brynmalllyn quarries." However he saw no remains of a quarry tramway connection.

The 1889 25 inch to the mile O.S. map distinctly shows this siding as well as a pair of points facing a track leading

## *Louis Esposito delves into Plas y Nant Quarry*

opposite looms Mynydd Mawr, better known as 'Elephant Mountain', the head dipping down into the valley (Castell Cidwm), it's a gem of a location.

It has always been a matter of conjecture as to whether this quarry was ever connected to the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway that was beyond the road and field opposite, and raised on an embankment across a boggy area. I believe that the evidence to support a rail link is now overwhelming.



*Site map showing the location of Plas y Nant Quarry, the course of the tramway that served it, as well as the site of Plas y Nant New (2004)*

straight to the quarry. Obviously the tramway could have been removed shortly after the quarry closed in 1886, hence only the track is shown.

Today a five foot high orange slate wall sits virtually on the tramway trackbed, this certainly would have helped to obliterate any 'on ground' evidence but it is obvious that a great deal of slate rubble had been deposited to create this level trackbed.

After gaining special permission from the current landowner to explore the quarry, on May 3rd 2004, an intrepid team of Heritage members consisting of Mr.J.Keylock, George Hearse, Stuart McNair and myself combed this interesting site for railed activity. We were rewarded by the remnants of an incline, lengths of Jubilee rail and half a point. I was also fortunate to receive a letter from Mr B.Rear of Conwy (formerly of Waunfawr from the 1940's onwards.) He recalls seeing skip wagons on rails in 1944 as well as rails embedded in the tarmac across the road beside Tyn-y-Weirglodd. These had gone by 1946 and the road and walls made good. However, skips and rail were seen on site in 1970 when a Mr Morgan of Bethel helped to clear some sheds, they were in very poor condition but looked like 20th century creations rather than 19th century.

From these sources of evidence I think that it is not unreasonable to conclude that the 'North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway' was assisted by the Bulkeley and Williams families and provided slate waste from Plas y Nant quarry to build the rail embankments in the area. This material was transferred by tramway and no doubt it remained in situ, connected to the N.W.N.G siding until the quarry closed in 1886. Perhaps the quarry also transported its products out on the railway, but there are no records available? Plas y Nant quarry seems to have played a more important role in the history of the 'North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway' than we had imagined.

**Acknowledgements**  
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 Sophie Pari Jones of Penygroes  
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 Dr Gwynfor Pierce-Jones - Talysarn

### In Memoriam

It is with regret that we must record the deaths of Owen Prosser and John Booth. It was Owen, who whilst living in Peel - Isle of Man, wrote to the Ministry of Transport in 1941 suggesting that the Welsh Highland Railway should be re-opened – when at that time it was on the brink of being dismantled. John Booth from Ramsay will be particularly remembered for the production of two splendid WHR videos.

# JAMES CHOLMELEY RUSSELL

**J**ames Cholmeley Russell was the eldest son of James Russell QC. (1790 - 1861), and Maria, the daughter of the Reverend Robert Cholmeley. He was born at 40 Russell Square, Bloomsbury, London on 26th June 1841, some two years after his parent's marriage and christened James Cholmeley, thus perpetuating his mother's maiden name. His parents later had two further sons and five daughters. James Russell senior had a large chancery and bankruptcy practice and this may give a clue to his eldest son's future activities.

In Easter 1855, at the age of 13, James Cholmeley Russell was sent to Harrow School leaving in Christmas 1859 and going up to Magdalene College, Oxford as a Commoner. Here he remained until June 1864, graduating with a BA, 3<sup>rd</sup> class Moderations and 2<sup>nd</sup> class in Law and Modern History. During his time at Magdalene, Russell was a keen rifle shooter, and his grand daughter, Evelyn Pangman still has a number of pewter mugs awarded as prizes in shooting competitions.

James Russell followed his father into the legal profession and he was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1867. He practiced at the Chancery Bar and was for several years an Examiner at the High Court. An Examiner examined on oath, the witnesses of both parties involved in civil proceedings. The annual law lists for the period show him to have practised from various chambers in



*Toddles the cat has breakfast with JCR at Woodlands circa 1908*

Lincoln's Inn, including 23 Old Buildings, as an equity draftsman and conveyancer. A Chambers' address of 14 Old Square is last given in the annual law lists for 1899, indicating a possible date of retirement from the law.

Russell had three elements to his career,

mise that numbers 7 and 8 were of the same de-

sign.

The arrangements regarding the ownership of this rolling stock, shed some light on the entrepreneurial aspect of Russell's personality that is also reflected in his property dealings, of which more later.

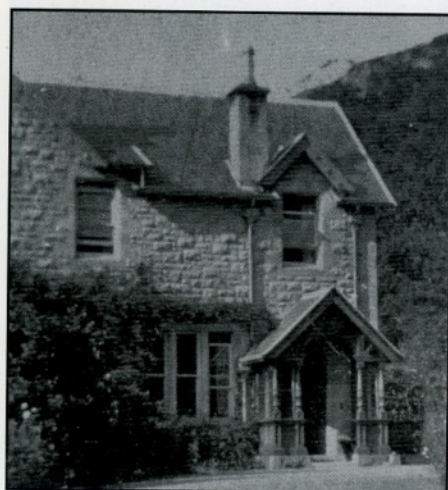
On the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1878, The Moel Tryfan Rolling Stock Company Limited was incorporated "to purchase or otherwise acquire the Locomotives, Engines, Carriages, Wagons, Trucks and Rolling Stock now in use by the

N.W.N.G.Railways Co...". The capital was £10,000 and the shareholders included Russell and Ernest E Lake, a solicitor. Lake was a friend of Russell's and later an executor of his estate. The shareholders also included two other barristers in addition to Russell. The directors were Chaloner W Chute a director of the NWNGR and also a shareholder in the MTRSC Ltd, Lake and Russell himself.

In an agreement dated 7<sup>th</sup> December 1878, Russell sold the rolling stock he had hired out, to the MTRSC for £3,630, of which £3,000 was in shares and the balance of £630 cash, but with an option to take shares instead. Russell also assigned to the company a judgement debt for £882 and costs

*Original research by Nick Booker provides a fascinating insight into the man who had so much influence on the WHR*

law, property development and railways, with law being the corner stone. The precise details of Russell's career following his call to the bar in 1867 are currently not known, but by November 1876 he was involved with hiring locomotives to the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company. These were the single Fairlies "Snowdon Ranger" and "Moel Tryfan" and the Hunslet engine "Beddgelert". He also financed certain coaches and wagons including 'three passenger carriages, numbered respectively 6,7 & 8, and the four coal wagons numbered 9,10,11 & 12. From an 1883 accident report, we know that coach number 6 was a Gloucester built Cleminson 6-wheeler and we can sur-



*Creag Mohr - Russell's house at Ballachulish circa 1911*

which had been obtained by him against the NWNCR. With the NWNCR unable to pay the debt, Russell was appointed the Receiver. The agreement stated that all the items of equipment listed "are marked with the plate of the vendor affixed thereon and are in the possession of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company and in use by them (except as to the engine "Beddgelert") under a certain lease and agreements for hire dated respectively the Eighteenth day of November 1876, the twenty seventh day of April 1878 and the eighteenth day of October 1878". Thus the agreement is slightly ambiguous on the question of whether the locomotive, Beddgelert was actually on the railway at the time of the agreement. We know that the locomotive had been "sent away" from the builders, the Hunslet Engine Company, from their works at Leeds some four months earlier in July 1878.

From the date of the agreement until 1880 the NWNCR hired their rolling stock from the MTRSC. They then bought them and paid the outstanding hire fee by the issue of £6,000 of Debentures.. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1889 the MTRSC filed a company return showing a final redemption of shares that stated "...the supply of rolling stock to a small railway company paid for by instalments...was fulfilled" .The company was dissolved in 1894.

Russell, as a mortgagee, also had effective control of the Croesor and Portmadoc Railway and was involved with other railway schemes. He became manager of the Manchester and Mil-



JCR with 'the dog who owned a master' on his steam yacht "Madge" - Circa 1911

ford Railway in 1880. This grandiose scheme never got beyond a standard gauge line between Strata Florida and Pencader in Mid Wales, forming part of the Carmarthen and Cardigan line. He remained linked with the Manchester and Milford until resigning in 1899. It was through the M & M that he came into contact with James Weeks Szlumper.

Szlumper was appointed Engineer to the NWNCR in the summer of 1891, replacing R H Livesey, who had gone to the Finn Valley Railway in County Donegal. Gowrie Aitchison subsequently took over from Szlumper in March 1898.

Both Russell and Szlumper became promoters of a Vale of Rheidol Light Railway scheme. This particular initiative failed to materialise and Russell resigned from the project in 1899, by which time he was 58. The Vale of Rheidol Railway eventually opened in 1902 and is still operating. Szlumper, was

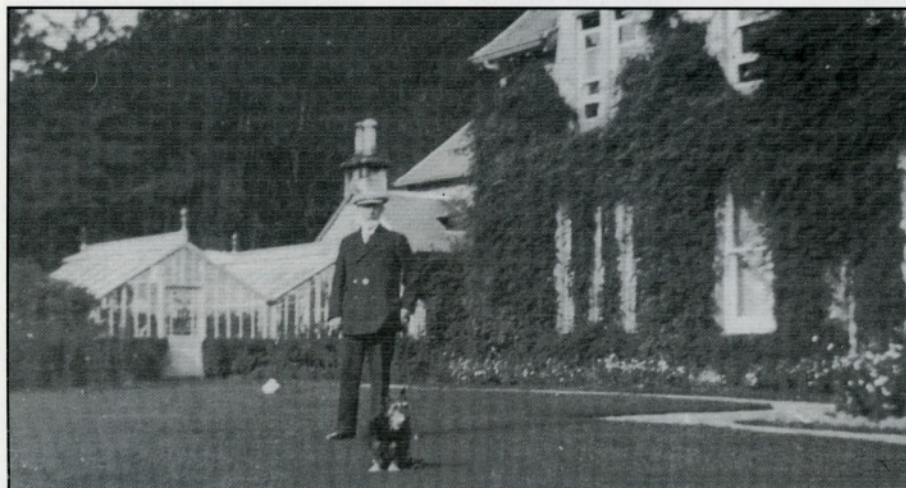
knighted in 1894 and be-

came a director of the NWNCR in 1905. He remained active in many railway activities, including the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, until his death in 1926. By the 1880s Russell, was a man of some substance but unmarried. He had effective control of two railways that would eventually be connected to form the WHR, the NWNCR and the Croesor and Portmadoc Railway. Russell's many activities continued to prosper during the 1890s and at the time of his marriage on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1893, to Eleanor Catherine Broome he was able to make a marriage settlement on his bride. Eleanor was 37 and the daughter of the late Rev Frederick Broome, formerly rector of Kenley, Shropshire and Catherine Elizabeth Broome. The ceremony was at Widcombe parish church in Bath and conducted by the Reverend Canon C H Cholmeley, rector of Beaconsfield church from 1885 until his death in 1895. Russell thus continued the tradition of being married by a cleric from his mother's side of the family.

Their only child was a daughter, Margaret, born in 1894. In 1919, Margaret married Sydney Gordon Saunders and they had two daughters, Elizabeth, born in 1922, who never married and died at Oxted in Surrey in the 1990s and Evelyn, born in 1926, who married a Mr Pangman and now lives in Canada.

Russell lived in a number of different houses during his life. By the time of the 1881 Census, he was living at 86, Queens Gate, London. The Census for that year lists him as head of the household and sharing the house with three of his sisters, Francis Penelope (38) who

JCR on the lawn at Creag Mohr with his dog 'Mr Blackie' Circa 1911



was married and two unmarried sisters Lucy Janet (33) and Jessie (27). Befitting his status he had a living-in staff of a cook, underservant and manservant. There was also a nursemaid, quite why is unclear as no children are listed. It's assumed the married sister was visiting at the time of the Census.

In 1897, when Russell made his will, he was living at 10 Astwood Road London. By the time of 1901 Census, Russell aged 60 remained active in business and the Census describes him as 'Barrister at Law and Railway Manager' and living at The Woodlands, Merrow near Guildford. He is also listed as living here in the 1903 Directory of Directors. Russell was involved in property development and the will, refers to the development of the Aldershot Lodge Estate and other property in the area, including the Manor Estates.

At the time of the first codicil to the will in 1906 he was living at 'Longdene', Haslemere, Surrey. The house still exists and is used as offices. The family photographs show a substantial property in extensive grounds. Haslemere was once described as the 'Switzerland of England' attracting the 'wealthy and exotic of the time'.

At some time in the mid 1890s, Russell acquired Creag Mhor at Onich, near Fort William, Invernesshire, a substantial country house, on the North side of the entrance to Loch Leven. This had originally been built in 1890 for the wife of the Episcopalian Bishop of Argyll. Family photographs show Russell, his family and friends relaxing in the

*James Cholmeley Russell at Creag Mohr  
Circa 1911*



*JCR's elegant automobile being loaded rather precariously on the Ballachulish ferry  
Circa 1911*

grounds. It was at Onich that he kept his steam yacht "Madge"

JCR seems to have been a pioneer motorist, as two of the family "snap shots" show a large open car, of a make not identified, perilously balanced on planks on the Ballachulish ferry.

Russell's human side is revealed in the family photographs. In one photograph, his wife Eleanor and daughter Margaret, are shown playing with Rolls, a very large mastiff, next to the summer house at Longdene in the 1900s. Another photograph shows a balding Russell with a moustache but no beard, at the breakfast table of Woodlands the house at Merrow, with Toddles the cat draped round one shoulder. But his real companion seems to have been a short legged mongrel terrier Mr Blackie. He features in several photographs, including one with Russell on his steam yacht, with the caption "The dog who owned his master". Mr Blackie also appears in another family picture with JCR at Onich. and a rather grizzled Mr Blackie is shown lying next to Russell, in his bath chair, in 1911, presumably at Longdene.

From 1900 onwards, Russell was winding down and the family photographs show a bearded and rather impressive looking man enjoying the fruits of his prolific life, with family and friends at Onich, where he spent a considerable amount of his time. During this time, Russell suffered a near fatal illness, and in a codicil to his will he made a number of

bequests to the nurses who saw him through

this traumatic period of his life.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1912, Russell died of a stroke at Longdene aged 71. He remained Receiver of the NWNCR until a few months before he died. At the time he was chairman of the Barking Gas Company.

The funeral was a rather grand affair, and was fully reported in the Farnham, Haslemere and Hindhead Herald of September 7, 1912. "The funeral party left Haslemere at half past one, a special coach being attached to the ordinary train and the carriage in which the coffin was conveyed was very tastefully draped with purple hangings..."

A perusal of a contemporary Bradshaw, shows that the train was the 1.28 pm from Petersfield, arriving at Guildford at 1.58pm and going forward to Waterloo.

Many family members were present together with friends and representatives of the people Russell had met through his business dealings and socially as well as the indoor and outdoor staff from Longdene. The coffin was carried by "Mr Russell's own men" including the captain and engineer of his yacht.

Russell is buried in the church yard of St. John the Evangelist, Merrow, next to his mother in law, Catherine Elizabeth Broome.

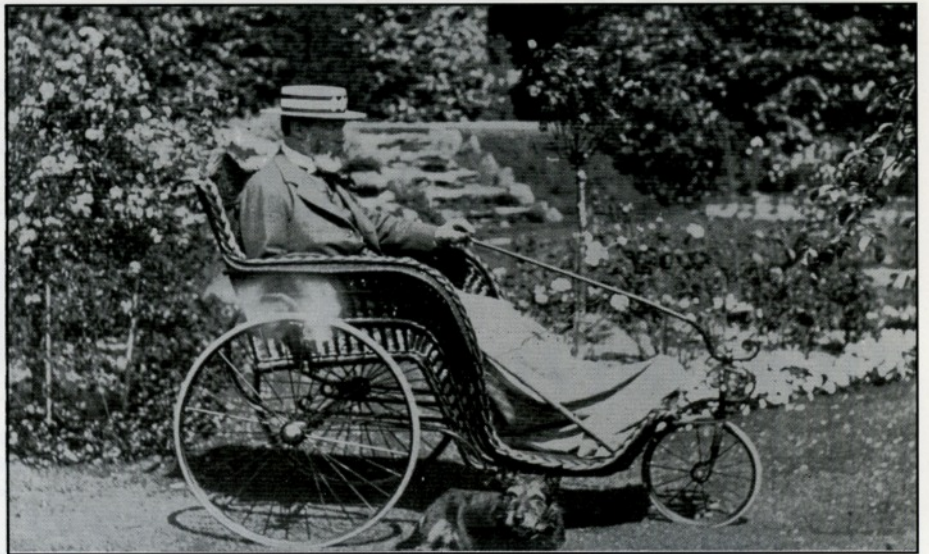
At probate, Russell's estate was valued at £166,000, which in 2004 terms would be worth in excess of £11 million.

Russell's widow Eleanor, continued to live at Longdene until sometime in 1913. She died in 1932 at the Tower House,

Bletchingley, Surrey. According to a Welsh Highland Railway Company return of the time, she held 965 £1 ordinary Welsh Highland shares. These almost certainly arose from the Russell family holdings in the NWNCR and the exchange of shares when the WHR absorbed that company in 1922. The estate at probate was valued at £7,368. In today's money this would be worth some £300,000. It is not all clear what happened to James Cholmeley Russell's wealth in the twenty years following his death. His widow seems to have bequeathed most of her estate to her nieces rather than her daughter Margaret.

Russell's lasting memorial is of course the locomotive that carries his name. Ironically this was not ordered by the NWNCR, but by Gowrie Aitchison of the PB&SSR who followed Russell as Receiver to the NWNCR, and who, incidentally, also had a locomotive, 'Gowrie', named after him. By 1906 there was close liaison between the NWNCR with its ageing locomotives, and the PB&SSR, which had no railway, but plenty of trackbed. So in May 1906, 'Russell' was delivered from Hunslet's to the NWNCR at Dinas.

I wrote the original article on JCR with the research help of Dewi Thomas in 1996. It was published in the FR Heritage Journal of Winter 1996/97. At the end of 2003, prompted by the researches of Michael Bishop and John Keylock, I re-opened my files and



*James Cholmeley Russell in his bathchair, with faithful companion 'Mr Blackie' at his feet  
Circa 1911*

through a piece of serendipity finally managed to

track down the surviving granddaughter of JCR, Evelyn Pangman, who now lives in Canada. We are indebted to her for the loan of the family photographs of JCR. Thanks must also go to David Allan who has done a magnificent job of copying Evelyn Pangman's photographs including the wonderful hand coloured vignette reproduced on the front page of the last WHRH Journal. Together with these photographs, Evelyn's family anecdotes, the efforts of Michael Bishop in the National Archives and elsewhere and the encouragement and contributions of John

Keylock, we have for the first time a more rounded

view of Russell the man and his business dealings. Quite why and how Russell ever became involved with a slightly obscure Welsh railway may never be known, but he was clearly a man of some business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit. His legacy continues nearly 100 years after his death. The story is of course not yet complete and there is no doubt further information to discover.

### In Memoriam

It is with regret that we must

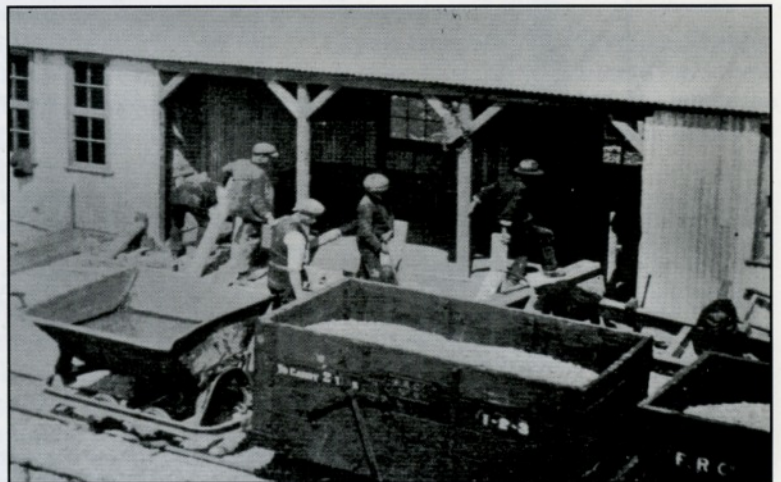
## Beddgelert Station - 1923 John Keylock

The article in WHH No. 23 about ganger's trolleys made mention of two other photographs deposited with Gwynedd Archives by Ellen Jones of Criccieth. One of these is reproduced here and shows the final construction phase of Beddgelert station building not long before the opening of the railway in 1923. So far this is the only known photograph showing railway or infrastructure work in 1922/3.

Even though the waiting area seating appears to be in situ the task in hand would seem to be concreting the floor. The works train visible is made up of a Hudson skip containing water and two FR 2T capacity open wagons loaded with aggregate.

gate. Perhaps the bagged(?) cement was in another covered(?) wagon? Concrete mixing seems to be going on between the

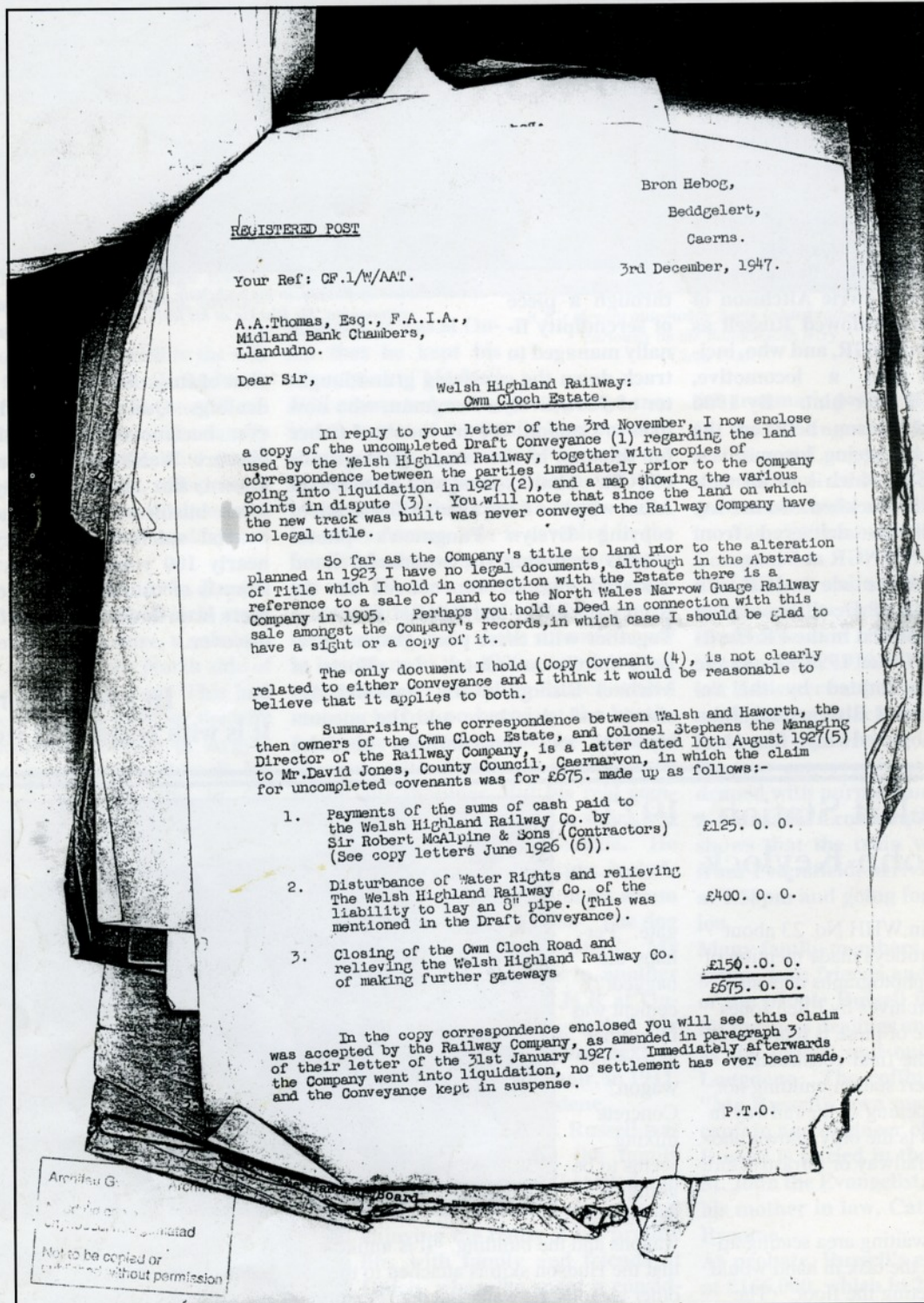
wagons and the building. It is unlikely that the Hudson skip is attached to the other wagons, its water having been obtained locally.



If the complete wagon is correctly identifiable as No. 9 this was scrapped in 1943 according to information recorded in 1955 by Michael Davies from Robert Evans.

# The Cwmcloch Saga - 25 Years on!

Readers blessed with a retentive memory will recall the increasingly acerbic correspondence, started in 1925, between Messrs Walsh & Howarth of the Cwmcloch estate, Beddgelert and the proprietors of the WHR. (WHH 14, 16). In WHH 17 Sharples joins the fray on behalf of the estate. The last twist in the tale comes in 1947 when Twiston-Davies, the then owner of the estate has his say. We reproduce the main part of his 1947 letter to the liquidator below



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