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BUFFET CAR RE-BUILD GETS GO-AHEAD

The Welsh Highland Railway (Porthmadog) has secured a major grant to help rebuild one of the most important carriages in narrow gauge history. The original Welsh Highland Railway Buffet Car (Number 23) was the first ever refreshment carriage on a narrow gauge railway in Britain. It was converted from a standard Ashbury 1st/3rd class composite coach in the 1920s in an attempt to drum up tourist trade. But when the railway closed, it was sold off, cut in half and ended its days as a summer house.

The WHR(P) has now won a grant from PRISM, a fund run by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, to begin restoring it.

James Hewett, Chairman of the Welsh Highland Railway (Porthmadog), said: "this is superb news. We're delighted the PRISM Fund has recognised the unique and historic status of this carriage by awarding us this grant.

"It means restoration can begin within weeks, and the carriage could be in service in time for the completion of the Welsh Highland Railway in 2009."

The Buffet Car's celebrity status began during its working life. Tom Rolt, who went on to become one of the pioneers of railway restoration, rode in it and commented on how hard it was to keep his coffee in the cup!

He later wrote: "to control a full cup successfully would have taxed the skills of an equilibrist. Most of the coffee soon found its way into the saucer, if not further afield, but I am glad to say I patronised this courageous attempt to provide main-line luxuries on the two foot gauge." James Hewett added: "we'll be faithfully restoring the Buffet Car to its 1927 condition, so passengers will be able to see if they can do any better with the coffee, but as we're aiming to be as faithful as possi-



"Ended its days as a summerhouse" - 1987 photo. Below - the original 'Buffet Car' sign. Both photos - David Allan

ble to the carriage's history, there'll be no polystyrene cups here!"

Members of the WHR(P) re-discovered the Buffet Car in 1987, in a field in Waunfawr not far from the line. The owner had cut it in half and turned it into an L-shape. When re-assembled at Gelert's Farm in Porthmadog, it was found that the wheels still turned on the original bogies, despite over forty years buried in the ground under the coach.

WHR(P) Carriage & Wagon Manager Andy Jones commented: "the Buffet Car is a remarkable survivor. Despite spending over 40 years in direct contact with the ground, the original woodwork is in a remarkably good state. We aim to set a gold standard in restoring this carriage as a working vehicle, but with the care and attention which befits a museum piece."

Andy Jones added: "the history of the Buffet Car is intimately connected with the history of the Welsh Highland Railway. It was cut down, like many other items of stock, shortly after the railway opened (so it could fit the Ffestiniog Railway loading gauge). Converting it to a Buffet Car also shows the desperation of the line's management in 1927, and their hope that the embryonic tourist traffic in

the area could be the Welsh Highland's salvation."

The Buffet Car is an important element in the WHR(P)'s ambitious plans to re-create and operate an original WHR heritage train on the completed line between Porthmadog and Caernarfon. Work is also due to start soon on building a replica of a sister carriage, Number 25, also built by Ashbury in 1893. Members of the WHR(P) and the Ffestiniog Railway have joined forces to re-form the old Ashbury Railway Carriage & Iron Company to raise money for this project to take place.

Work will start on the Buffet Car very soon, and will take place in two stages. The first stage, covered by this PRISM grant will see the original bogies restored, and the carriage become a rolling chassis with working air and vacuum brakes. Work will also begin on analysing and protecting the bodywork. Stage two will see the bulk of the restoration work on the body. This work isn't covered by the PRISM grant, but will be the subject of a second application to the PRISM Fund later in the year.



The Portmadoc, Beddgelert & Rhyd Ddu Light Railway

The draft Order for this railway was presented to the Light Railway Commissioners in November, 1897. Breese & George of Portmadoc were solicitors to the promoters and the 'engineers' were to be Thomas Roberts & Son of Portmadoc. The draft order cites two railways constituting the whole route, whereas the 'Estimate of Cost', dated 18th May 1898 breaks construction down into four railways, two of which were of seven furlongs and incorporated parts of the 'Croesor Railway'. One of these would have been a spur to Portmadoc Harbour.

The railway's starting point would have been on the bed of the recently abandoned 'Gorseddau Railway', some 89ft from the front door of the Queen's Hotel. Running along the course of Beddgelert Sidings it would have joined the Croesor at Pen y Mount some seven furlongs from its starting point. Before reaching Pont Croesor the line would have deviated from the Croesor alignment to cross the Prenteg to Llanfrothen road some 320 yards north

west of the 'Croesor Bridge' and having utilised the earthworks of the earlier

abortive standard gauge Portmadoc and Beddgelert Railway made a separate crossing of the Glaslyn. Having gained the river's eastern bank and heading north the rivers Dylif and Nanmor would be crossed. The Pont Aberglaslyn to Llanfrothen road would have been crossed on its original alignment and on the level and then the road leading into Nantmor village near Gelli'r yn Isaf farmhouse. The draft order makes no mention of tunnels in the Aberglaslyn Pass, but they were to total 280 yards, costing £80.0.0 per linear yard to excavate. The Glaslyn river and Beddgelert to Portmadoc road would be crossed south of Bryn y Felin, the road crossing being some 200 yards from the dis-used copper mine buildings on the adjacent hillside. The course would then have followed that of the subsequent WHR – north from Bryn y Felin farmhouse to terminate at a point near 'the Goat reservoir' similar to that pro-



"The railway's starting point would have been on the bed of the recently abandoned 'Gorseddau Railway', some 89ft from the front door of the Queen's Hotel" This photo shows the Gorseddau trackbed (to the right of the square stones) & the Queens Hotel in 1999 - David Allan

jected by the Beddgelert Extension of the NWNGR. For

stations at Portmadoc and Beddgelert £300.0.0 was estimated; 15 acres and 1 rod of land required purchasing at £630.0.0. The cost of permanent way and fencing between a point near 'Croesor Junction' and Beddgelert was costed at £3787.11s.2d;

sidings for farms £240.0.0 and other sidings, signals and points at junctions at £400.0.0. Such was the proposal for railway No1. Total cost £15520:0:0, including £1200 for river bridges.

Railway No 2 is quoted in its entirety from the Act

A railway (No. 2) 4 miles 3 furlongs and 52 chains or thereabouts in length commencing in the said parish of Beddgelert by a junction with Railway (No. 1) at the said terminus (then) passing in a north westerly direction through lands belonging to the said George Banner Esq. Charles Dorman Esq. and Major L Sefton Parry, crossing a public road leading to Dolbenmaen from the high road between Beddgelert and Rhyd Ddu at a point 110 feet or thereabouts measured in a north westerly direction from the north west corner of Pont Caergors thence through lands belonging to the said Major L.S. Parry, William Priestley Esquire and Mrs.

Margaret Roberts crossing the public road leading from Beddgelert to Rhyd Ddu at a point 480 feet or thereabouts measured in a south easterly direction from the South Corner of Rhyd—Ddu station buildings thence through lands belonging to Sir Edward William Watkin, Baronet and terminating by a junction with the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway at Rhyd—Ddu station.

The total cost of Railway No 2 was estimated at £7820.0.0. This included moving 23,700 cubic yards of 'soft soil and marl' – at 1/- per cubic yard – for the creation of cuttings and embankments. To gain height between Tyn y Coed and Hafod Ruffydd there would have been four 180 degree curves. 17 acres of land would need acquiring and the projected cost of the railways' own station facilities at Rhyd Ddu was a mere £200.0.0.

This was the second proposal under this name and was proposed by Portmadoc businessmen Messrs Wyatt, Davies, Isaac and Jones. The first in 1891 was likewise a scheme to link the FR at Portmadoc Harbour with Rhyd Ddu. Both were stillborn. But not to be put off Davies with two others submitted an application for a Portmadoc, Beddgelert and Snowdon Light Railway.....

John Keylock examines two of the WHR's ephemeral proposed predecessors

A Potential Standard Gauge Interloper

Of the many schemes to join Caernarfon with Porthmadog, or Porthmadog, Beddgelert and Rhyd Ddu, the majority were projected narrow gauge railways and most of these proposals were put forward between about 1880 and 1910. There were however two earlier standard gauge contenders; the Beddgelert Railway – well documented elsewhere by Geoff Jenkins – and the Caernarfon, Beddgelert and Portmadoc Railway. Let us consider the latter.

The Bill proposing this railway was put to the 1864/5 Parliamentary Session – along with a petition of objections, which has only recently come to light. This was two years before the establishment of the Carnarvonshire Railway – from Caernarfon to Afon Wen, which was taken over by the L.N.W.R. in 1870. In their turn these railways utilised much of the Nantlle 'Railway' trackbed.

Starting in Caernarfon – where it did not make a junction with the Chester and Holyhead line from Bangor – it followed a

course very similar to the subsequent L.N.W.R. until just north of Bontnewydd. Here the alignment turned east to cross a minor road and the main road between Bontnewydd and Caernarfon. Thereafter

More from Keylock

the line would have kept close company with the Afon Gwyrfaï – involving three diversions of said river – until the 5-½ mile point (from Caernarfon) near Waunfawr. The line proposed then paralleled the Caernarfon to Beddgelert road with three crossings of the Afon Gwyrfaï at Nant Mill, before following a similar alignment to the subsequent N.W.N.G. as far as Rhyd Ddu. Just south of Rhyd Ddu the main road was crossed bringing the line to the west of Pitt's Head. Beddgelert at 14m 18.5 chains was the end of railway No 1. The route would have continued as Railway No 2 crossing to the eastern bank of the Afon Glaslyn between Beddgelert and Bryn y Felin.

Just south of Pont Aberglaslyn at 1 mile 6 furlongs from Beddgelert the line would have recrossed the river staying on its western bank before taking up the course of the Croesor Tramway. Not only would this course avoid having to bridge the Afon Nanmor and Afon Dylif but no tunnels were envisaged in the Aberglaslyn Pass.!

The descent from Rhyd Ddu to Pitt's Head would have been on a gradient of 1 in 51, then after ¾ mile 1 in 30 for 1-½ miles. The engineers for the line were to have been H.J. & J.W. Girdlestone.

The Bill for this railway did not comply with Parliamentary Standing Orders and for the same reasons as the Portmadoc and Beddgelert Railway (1881 successor to the Beddgelert Railway) and the Caernarfon, Pen-y-Groes and Pwllheli Railway was thrown out. Because of this the Beddgelert Railway has at least left some legacy in the earthworks towards Beddgelert from near Pont Croesor, together with Beddgelert Sidings.

See File No Z/CD/114 in the Dollgelau Record Office for further details

W.H.R. Chronology 1943/44

1943

August

Portmadoc Slate Works asked for a train service to their private siding.

12th August

Surrender of lease formalised by agreement with the Receiver

13th October

Meeting between representatives of WHR & LMS to discuss the Joint arrangements at Dinas

30th June

Balance due to Welsh Highland from Ffestiniog Railway at surrender of lease for the years 1938 to 1943 - £5-5s-5d

1944

26th Jan

Caernarfon CC petitioned for Winding-up Order.

7th Feb

Compulsory Winding-up Order made by Mr Justice Uthwatt

March

Ramblers Association interested in purchasing trackbed.

17th March

A.A. Thomas of Llandudno appointed Liquidator

20th March

Thomas received letter from Official Receiver enclosing a copy of a summons issued on behalf of Caernarvon CC for leave to proceed with Debenture action

11th April

Notice of Thomas' appointment as Liquidator published in 'The Times'.

14th April

First meeting of Committee of Inspection held at County Offices, Caernarfon

11th May

Statement of Affairs produced by company secretary Ninian R Davies, with total debts standing at £196089

June

Committee informed that liquidation could not be proceeded with until the Winding-up order was sealed and the WHR property vested in Thomas as Liquidator.

23rd June

Official Receiver declared that after costs and expenses had been paid, there was no prospect of any funds being available for unsecured creditors. He confirmed that the original share capital of £90000 had been 'irretrievably lost'.

July

After further approaches by the Ramblers Association, it was shown that it would cost over £12000 to convert the trackbed into a footpath and the council was against the expenditure of public monies on the project

September/October

J.D. Bolton's photos of abandoned W.H.R. & demolition train published in 'Railway Magazine'.

November

Liquidator advised of Public Inquiry to be held regarding the acquisition of land for a burial ground at Beddgelert

The Bruce Peebles' Estimate

On the Thirty First of July Nineteen Hundred and Three Bruce Peebles submitted an Estimate to the North Wales Power & Traction Company. The schedule included not only a Powerhouse, turbo-generators, switchboard, buildings and accessories, but also 'Rolling Stock', 'Line Equipment' and finally a 'Railway'. This Estimate has survived and it provides a fascinating insight into the thinking of the Power Company and their legendary subsidiary - The Porthmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway. The document reveals their clear ambitions for the extension of the NWNG to Porthmadog, as well as its conversion to electric traction.

We reproduce the relevant sections of the Peebles Estimate in full so that our erudite readers can judge for themselves the full impact of the contemplated proposals.

Under the heading **'Rolling Stock and Overhead Wire'** Peebles stated:

The total length of the route will be as follows: -
 Croesor and Festiniog Railway Siding - 5 miles 5.7 chains.
 Railway Siding from Queen's Hotel to join Croesor Railway - 5 furlongs 1 chain.
 Railway No. 2 - 7 miles 1 furlong 3 chains, including tunnel 700 yards long.
 Making a total distance of: - 13 miles

A Rare Contribution from David Allan!

The next section dealt with the **'Trolley Line'** and under the sub heading **'Wiring'** it states: -
 The wiring for the total route will consist of .324 hard drawn copper wires suspended over the track at a suitable height by means of our standard tramway ambroin insulators with double petticoated insulation and complete with the necessary frogs, crossings, etc., for the bow collector system, and suitable for a working pressure up to 600 volts. Creosoted wooden poles would be planted every 120 feet or closer where necessary. At Beddgelert will be provided half a mile of standard street railway construction, that is to say, steel poles with ornamental bases and brackets and special brackets for carrying the high-tension wires. The trolley wires will be divided into half-mile sections and connected through



Paget-Tomlinson's wonderful depiction of an electric loco crossing the Beddgelert road bridge - courtesy FR Heritage

double pole switches fixed in cast iron boxes clamped to the poles. These boxes will also contain suitable lightning arresters. The line will be fed at five points, each point by a 100 kilovolt ampere transformer, and at each of the feeding outlets will

be feeder boxes provided with locks, waterproof doors of substantial and approved design and each panel will be fitted

with approved triple pole switches, lightning arresters etc., ready for connection from the transformers.

In the tunnel, 700 yards long, trolley wires will be arranged in double troughing, suspended from the roof and fitted with suitable bronze insulators.

Three Phase Line

This will consist of three hard drawn copper wires carried throughout the total length of the line, excepting in the tunnel, fixed on porcelain insulators bolted to oak cross arms on the trolley poles, excepting through the half mile of street construction, where the wires would be carried on special brackets clamped to the steel poles. The three-phase line will be arranged for a pressure of 6000 volts.

As regards the tunnel, which will be 700 yards long, the cable will be of three core type terminating in joint boxes from

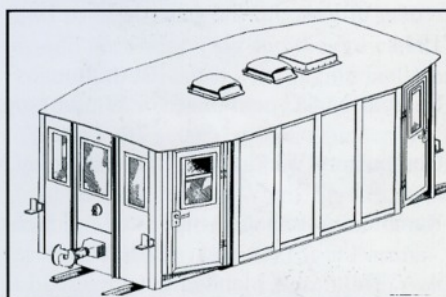
which connections would be carried to the overhead

high tension wires. The cable would be carried in wooden troughing filled with bitumen on the solid system and protected from risk of injury.

Bonding

The whole of the track will be bonded with one flexible bond at each joint and cross bonds every 120 feet, special bonds being provided for points and crossings. Our total price for the above, comprising laying & erecting the line and poles, delivery of material on site, and handing over same in finished condition for the sum of £16,093

Locomotives



Might they have looked like this? Drawing by J.M. Lloyd - courtesy James Boyd

4 - 3-phase locomotives will be provided. When running on the level the locomotives will be capable of drawing a train weighing 50 tons at a speed of 10 miles



PB&SSR cutting (left) - compare with final WHR alignment to the right.
Photo D.W. Allan January 2005

Below - stump of metal telephone pole in the Aberglaslyn - 1997

per hour and when running up a maximum gradient of 1 in 44, the motors will be put in cascade working at a speed of 5 miles per hour when drawing a maximum weight of 50 tons.

Owing to the line being of so small a gauge as 1' 11 1/2" the motors will require to drive by means of chain gearing outside the truck.

Price of each locomotive, as above, complete with controllers, fixed and delivered £1150 each or for the 4.....£4600.

Motor Cars

7 double motor cars will be supplied, each motor car being designed to carry 34 passengers. The cars will run at a speed of about 16 miles per hour on the level and 8 miles per hour on a maximum gradient of 1 in 44 when fully loaded.

Price of each truck, complete with the necessary brake gear and motors, the motors being arranged for cascade running, with switches complete for the sum of £1950 each, or for the 7 cars.....

.....
£13650.
Each car will be mounted on steel trigger trucks and our price is for complete car, including



electric lighting, bells and route indicators.

It should be noted that

this speed of 16 miles per hour is a high speed for a narrow gauge with standard truck centres & it may be necessary to mount the car on double bogies should the curves be too great for this speed.

Should it be found necessary to make an alteration of this nature after the trial of the first car, a deviation may require to be made in the price of same, subject of course to the satisfaction of the Engineer that such alteration was necessitated by the circumstances of the case.

Railway

We are prepared to construct the railway exclusive of chairs, for the sum of £57,000. Further, should more than 1200 cubic yards of ballast be required, the price will be increased at the rate of 4/- per cubic yard for labour and material for each cubic yard per mile increases over and above this figure. Further, it is on the assumption that the line and Station ground should be obtained for the sum of £100 per acre, the cost of the said land not exceeding £5000.

If this price be exceeded, the Company will require to pay us any difference, and, if we obtain the ground for a less price than this, we shall allow such sum to the Company.

The gauge of rail to be standard 1' 11 1/2"

In the summary of the costs at the end of Peebles' Estimate it states that the 700-yard tunnel is included in the cost of building the railway

The Estimate also includes costs for the turbine house, five transformers, the pipe line (for carrying the water for the turbines) and the intake works and a dam.

A further document exists in the form of a letter signed by the consulting Engineers to the line - Douglas Fox & Partners. The letter concludes that Fox & Partners are "satisfied that the amount of this Tender and the prices to be paid thereunder are fair and reasonable". It also confirms, with hindsight most unrealistically, that "The Works to be completed 12 months after breaking ground".

This letter giving the green light to Peebles' proposals is oddly dated a couple of days before the date on the Estimate document, which may lead to speculation about possible collusion.

This fascinating document, while answering some questions, inevitably poses some new ones. It throws light on those poles that have been the subject of much speculation as to their fate. Where they ever delivered? Did they

carry the telephone wires of the later railway? Certainly the stumps of metal telephone poles are still extant. It gives details of the locomotives that were to have been used. It confirms the intention to use powered carriages, a hitherto unknown fact.

It is well known that Bruce Peebles, or their subcontractors, started the work. Some of their structures will be incorporated into today's rebuilt line, examples include the Cwm Cloch road bridge to the north of Beddgelert, the 700 yard long Aberglaslyn tunnel, the accommodation bridge through the Nantmor embankment as well as the Pitt's Head road bridge. Other structures remain as monuments to the esoteric PB&SSR and to the grand designs of the directors of the Power Company. These include the wonderful road bridge that stands guard at the entrance to Beddgelert village, the strangely isolated stone-built accommodation crossing in the field to the south of the road bridge and the abutments of the river bridge which would have carried the line over the Glaslyn. However perhaps their most dramatic, and difficult-to-view work is the deep cutting in the Beddgelert Forest that would have carried the line on its very steep descent to Beddgelert. And was the gradient 1 in 28 as is generally accepted or the 1 in 44, to which the Estimate refers? Was the tender accepted - did the work actually start or was there another 'Estimate'?

Refer also to Jim Hewett's article in WHH No. 17

What the Guide Books Said (Part 3)

A recently acquired Abel Heywood & Sons 'Snowdon & Beddgelert Guide', published some time after 1923, has an interesting description of the journey from Dinas to Beddgelert by way of the NWNGR. The text is therefore pre 1916, which must have been a little confusing for the readers of the day!

"Beddgelert may be reached in the tourist season by coach from Portmadoc or Bettws y Coed, but is accessible throughout the year by the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway from Dinas, which is the next station beyond Carnarvon on the London & North Western Railway's route to Afonwen. The Narrow Gauge Railway's terminus is at Rhyd-ddu, which is four miles from Beddgelert and only two and a half miles from the summit of Snowdon. A conveyance from Beddgelert meets every train for the convenience of passengers.

After leaving Dinas by this route the scenery, as viewed from the line of railway, is very imposing, the track being one of gradual ascent. The greater part of the Isle of Anglesey is displayed like a map. The towers of Carnarvon Castle, and the Twt Hill, which overlooks that ancient town, show conspicuously. Soon the vast bulk of Moel Tryfan is in front of us, rising to a height of 1400 feet. After passing Tryfan Junction (whence a branch line runs to a height of 500 feet up the mountain side, and is further carried forward on the ascent from its terminus by a drum and wire ropes by the Alexandra Slate Mining Co., whose quarry is within five minutes' walk of the summit), the line runs along the bank of a small stream, called Gwrfai (sic), which is for awhile both boisterous and rapid, over its well-bouldered bed, till we come to Bettws Garmon, a considerable village, the birthplace of the celebrated bard Dafydd Ddu, or Black David of Snowdon, and also of the distinguished Welsh antiquary, Owens. Next comes in view Mynydd Mawr (the Big Mountain), called by tourists the *elephant mountain*, for its resemblance to the head and back of that animal. Higher up the valley the mountain stream loses its boisterous character, and winds along under the shade of closely-planted trees, and on our left is the lofty Moel Eilio (Hill of Frost), which frowns, cliff-like, rugged and sheer as the side of Snowdon itself. Here we pass a pretty cascade, which dashes down the side of Moel Eilio, and then catch a glimpse of the



"A conveyance from Beddgelert meets every train for the convenience of passengers."
Date & Photographer unknown

old Nant Mill, which, with its accessions of bridge and waterfall, forms one of Cox's most pleasing landscapes.

Crossing the Gwrfai (sic) we now come to Llyn Cwellyn, on our right, a lake about a mile and a half in length and half a mile broad, sheltered its whole length by Mynydd Mawr, one of its cliffs, Carn Cwm Bychan, rising perpendicularly from the water to the height of several hundred feet, like a titanic rampart. The crown of this cliff goes by the name of Castell Cidwm (Wolf's Castle), the origin of the term being doubtful. Whilst skirting Llyn Cwellyn, the peak of Snowdon, from perhaps one of its wildest points of view, stands sharply in front of us, and whilst gazing on its well-defined figure we come upon a delightful surprise. Suddenly a cleft appears in the hill on our left, which broadening out, shows us a series of picturesque cascades dashing down a well-wooded dingle amidst a profusion of wild flowers and ferns. As we cross this dingle by the bridge we obtain an instantaneous but beautiful glimpse of the whole. The railway now in its curves shows us the full breadth of the Llyn from a height considerably above it, and shortly afterwards on our right we obtain a beautiful glimpse of the Vale of Nantlle, with its picturesque lakes, and beyond it the sea. The Vale is easily reached from Rhyd-ddu or Snowdon Ranger Station, frequent conveyances passing to these points from Beddgelert. After a serpentine course the train then stops at the terminus, Rhyd-ddu, from

whence the ascent to Snowdon may be easily made, the

route only being two miles and a half from the station, and two-thirds of that distance is along a cart track which leads to a disused slate quarry.

A conveyance here waits to convey us to Beddgelert, the road being entirely down hill. About a mile from the station is a land-mark to Snowdon climbers known as the Pitt's Head, an isolated mass of rock bearing a fancied resemblance to the profile of William Pitt, and lest the tourist should fail to recognise the fact, there is painted or whitewashed on each side of the stone the name of that statesman. Llyn-y-Gader, half a mile further on the right, is a circular tarn with gloomy surroundings. The river Colwyn accompanies the road all the way to Beddgelert, and Moel Hebog (2578 feet) is before us on the right also for the whole distance.

Beddgelert is situated at the junction of three beautiful valleys, and is one of the most romantic spots in Wales. The bridge, in the centre of the village, was destroyed by storm and flood, August 3rd, 1906, and rebuilt that same year. The valleys are, first the vale of the Colwyn, through which we have passed on our way from Llyn Cwellyn, next the valley through which the Glaslyn runs down from Snowdon, and the pass of Aberglaslyn, which the same stream traverses after its junction with the Colwyn at Beddgelert, between the most beautiful mountain woods imaginable, nestling among mountains which may be numbered with the "giants" of Wales.

More history from Dick Lystor

James Weeks Szlumper



James Weeks Szlumper was involved with the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway for over twenty years - this is his story.

J.W. Szlumper was the son of Albert Szlumper - a naturalized Pole - who had married Eliza Weeks in 1832. He was the first born of four from this marriage, on the 29th January 1834. After the death of Eliza in 1849 he married again in London in 1851, to Sally Harris Weeks, Eliza's sister. There were four more children all of whom had the second Christian name of Weeks. The last two children were born in Haverford West - which brings us to Wales. By this time J.W.S would have been in his mid twen-

ties and had been appointed an associate resident engineer - 1857-8 - on the Manchester and Milford Railway. (M&MR)

Between 1863 and '67 he was back at the M&MR as engineer-in-chief, by which time he had become a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers. In 1867 he married Mary Gulliford of Lampeter and was living in Aberystwyth and between 1868 and 1874 they had four children.

By 1880 J.C. Russell had become involved with the M&MR and undoubtedly became acquainted with Szlumper, who by this time was manager of the M&MR. He subsequently became traffic manager as well, and by 1904 had been appointed Receiver.

In August 1891 Szlumper was appointed engineer for the NWNGR, almost a year after Samuel Tanner came as 'superintendent' - also from the M&MR. In 1894 he was knighted (why?) and in 1898 served as High Clerk for Cardiganshire. By October 1898 Szlumper was consulting engineer to the NWNG and

involved with Russell in a failed promotion of the Vale of Rheidol Light Railway. A photograph of Sir James appears in C.C. Green's definitive book on the Vale of Rheidol Railway, the Act for its building having succeeded at the second attempt. It is significant that with Russell as Chairman and Managing Director the NWNG had Sir James Szlumper as a board member from 1906 - 1911.

By 1911 Sir James would have been seventy-seven years old and by this time may well have moved from Aberystwyth to live in Surrey. He was thrice Mayor of Richmond. His wife died in 1914 and he on 26th October 1926 at the ripe old age of ninety-two.

Thanks are due to Michael Bishop in compiling this short biography.

John Keylock provides a biography of another NWNG personality

Heritage Sales

Firstly, thank you to those members who ordered journal binders and copies of 'Cwm Gwyrfa'. Single binders remain at £10.00 each posted to your address, but should two be required then £17.50 is the price. Binders will be available at the AGM at these prices - less postage.

Newly available for this year are ten more photographs of the original Welsh Highland Railway, numbered 31 - 40. The majority are 'images' that have appeared in books - six taken by G.H.W. Clifford, three of which feature the Baldwin '590' - but now we provide you with the opportunity to have your own postcard-sized, glossy print - 50p each plus 50p post and packing for any quantity. A descriptive list of all ten is available from John Keylock.

Also available again are copies of the 'Festiniog (sic) & W.H. (Light) Rlws Working Instructions' brought into force by Col Stephens on 1st October, 1925. The original was slightly larger than the current offering, which takes the form of an 8-page A5 size booklet. Available from John Keylock for 30/- or £1.50 if you prefer it that way!

The Times They (Aint) A' Changing

Having recently acquired an old postcard of the Snowdon Mountain Tramroad posted on July 24th, 1905, it was interesting to read what had been written on the reverse, especially in the light of what has occurred 100 years later.

"If you climb Snowdon don't encourage this beastly railway. I don't think it ought to be there at all."

Obviously the writer considered the SMT to be a blight on the landscape and had bought the card and posted it from Birkenhead to a friend in Cricieth to make the point.

However, of more interest to us is an additional comment which would appear to have been added as an after-thought.

"I believe they are making a line from Beddgelert district. I think it is such a shame."

With both the Beddgelert Extension of the NWNGR and the proposed PB&SSR, to which this comment surely refers, in the pipeline, the writer of the card, having got wind of the schemes, was not a happy man. No doubt he breathed a long sigh of relief when all powers eventually lapsed and Beddgelert remained without a railway. It is not hard to imagine what his thoughts must have been on 1st June 1923.

Dick Lystor

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National Trust & The PB&SSR Embankment

Readers will recall the considerable feather-ruffling caused by the National Trust when they created an 'access-for-all' path on the eastern bank of the Afon Glaslyn between Bryn y Felin and the abortive river bridge abutments just south of Beddgelert Village. This was reported in Journal No.21 p7. The work was done without the benefit of planning permission, due to a 'misunderstanding', between the planning authority (Snowdonia National Park) and the Trust. Subsequently the northern curved section, approaching the unused bridge abutments, was reinstated albeit to only half of the original embankment width (and not the complete original length) thus exposing rather more of the substantial slate-built flood relief feature which penetrates the embankment. The



majority of the old contractor's trackbed remains in its altered state.

Above - slate built flood relief features now re-instated by Nat Trust. Below PB&SSR bridge abutments topped by a water monitoring station

In late January John Keylock and David Allan had a meeting with the local National Trust manager, the local warden, and the Trust's archaeologist. The latter had deemed the meeting to be of sufficient importance to warrant a special journey from Aberystwyth. Meeting at Bryn y Felin we walked the concrete path atop the PB&SSR embankment. The Trust could not have been more contrite

for their actions. They confirmed that the exercise had taught them a lot of lessons, particularly in the field of consultation and communication. This new stance is evidenced by their approach to the upgrading of the Fisherman's Path. They agreed that in their area of concern in the Aberglaslyn Pass that steel kissing gates and fencing would be less obtrusive, and more durable, than the timber used elsewhere for fencing the alignment. In conclusion we have to report that the meeting was a most worthwhile exercise and despite the embankment saga we were left firmly with the impression that the Trust's heritage concepts were generally in line with our own - as we would very much have liked to expect.



Letters

Dear Dave

H.J. Jack

In the Dec 2004 issue of WH Heritage, it is recorded on page 2, right hand column, last paragraph:

"Twelve months later occurred the Dolgarrog Dam disaster. Patently he was not to blame for this....."

I'm not so sure. When I was a kid in Colwyn Bay, I was told that Jack had stolen the concrete intended for the dams and used it for his house at Plas Maenan. If you go to look at the broken Eigiau dam, you can see that it is set into the moraine only eighteen inches instead of six feet, and that the mass concrete is of ah, indif-ferent quality. The Clerk of Works who supervised the construction in 1911 had, I

understood, died by 1925 so no questions could be asked. The excellent quality of concrete at Plas Maenan is available for you to inspect at the hotel which now occupies the place.

I am also told that engineers then went and looked at the Cowlyd Dam, which was as bad, and which had to be replaced. You can see the differing shapes of the two Cowlyd dams on successive Ordnance Survey map editions.

So far as I know, no bones of local damsels were discovered in the remains of either dam. But the esteem in which Jack was held locally was such that any round-eyed boy such as myself would believe anything he was told.

Pedr (Peter Jarvis)

Dear John

'Russell'

I found the picture of 'Russell' on p4 of the last issue very interesting. I believe

the vehicle next to the loco is the quarryman's coach, which was converted to a brake van with both air and vacuum brakes. The only other photograph of this I recall is the one that appears amongst places, on p45 of Peter Johnson's book, 'An Illustrated History of the Welsh Highland Railway'. Of greater interest, the photograph shows, to the best of my knowledge, the only view of 'Russell' prior to being cut down but having been converted to vacuum brake. The Westinghouse pump has been removed and the additional piping for the vacuum brake can be seen running along the bottom of the side tank.

Please keep up the good work with the journal, I find it fascinating that there are still matters to write about so long after the railway closed.

Brent Higham
Wigan