

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

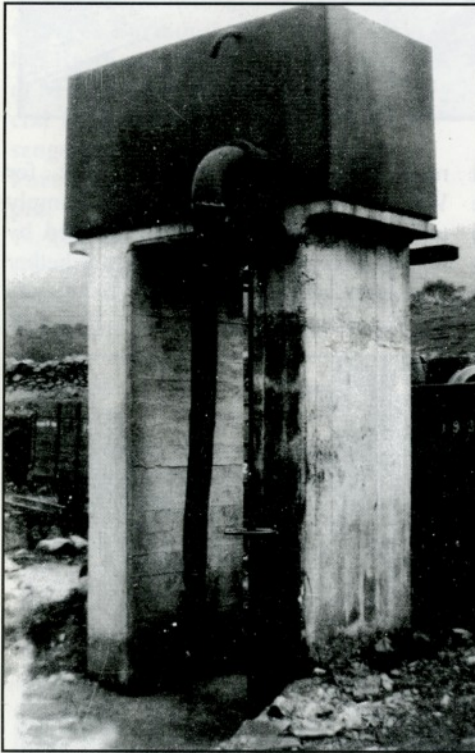
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Beddgelert Heritage WATER TOWER & PIT PRESERVED



FR sources have confirmed that both the Beddgelert water column supports, and the concrete-lined inspection pit, both built by 'Concrete Bob' McAlpine in 1921/22 will be retained for use by the reconstructed railway as suggested by the Heritage Group in their archaeological survey.

Welsh Highland Railway Construction Ltd chairman, Mike Hart, said our engineers have managed to squeeze in a refuge siding on the very restrictive site at Beddgelert in response to a request that we try and provide capacity to hold a train laying over at the station. The siding will terminate over the original pit and be ideal for holding vintage trains laying over at Beddgelert having space for about six

carriages plus loco. The old pit will make oiling up engines such as 'Russell' much easier with the added advantage of water available from the adjacent original tower if it is fitted with an extra outlet facing the siding.

Heritage Group secretary John Keylock commented that these features will be a fitting memorial to 'Concrete Bob' McAlpine and added "how splendid it will be to see that these two original features functional so that once again 'Russell' can take water at Beddgelert and use the inspection pit as necessary".

A prerequisite will be a new tank of original style which the Heritage Group hope to fund. In anticipation it has been established that the original tank was - give or take ½ inch - 8 foot long and 4 foot high and wide. Of riveted construction it is assumed that initially at least - it was fed by hydraulic ram from the Afon Cwm Cloch just upstream from the railway overbridge. The 'brim full' tank, had a capacity of about 800 gallons, which will usefully supplement the new tank being installed at the top end of the extended loop. The anticipated development of the station site may well reveal the original water supply, including any possible subsequent mains supply that is said to be there.

However The Heritage Group's recommendation that the station building at Beddgelert should be reconstructed in its original corrugated iron form has not been accepted. Instead the station, which will be located on the old coal siding, will be in a North Wales Narrow Gauge look-a-like style with traditional yellow brick corners and

window surrounds. The station will be connected to the proposed island platform by means of a simple accommodation crossing. Heritage Group chairman David Allan said that he understood the reasons for rejecting the corrugated iron building, but that the NWNG compromise was in keeping with the spirit of the line.

Bryn y Felin

Progress too has been made with the replacement bridge for the Aberglaslyn Pass. Tenders are awaited for the agreed design, which is virtually a replica in appearance of the original 1922 girder bridge that until its recent removal for safety reasons spanned the Glaslyn at Bryn y Felin. Although no decisions have yet been made it is hoped that similar bridges will be used for both the Afon Nanmor and the Afon Dylif.

Photos - Above : Beddgelert water tower in working condition (circa 1934)
Below : Pit and water tower in 1988



PB&SSR Remains – in 1921

In 1921 C.R. Clinker took two significant photographs of differing PB&SSR trackwork; one near Pont Caergors, and the other just north of Beddgelert. The 1913 Ordnance Survey map shows 'railway' in situ from Rhyd Ddu to a point between the Afon Cwm Ddu and Hafod Ruffydd; it was from here onward that Parry extended for the purpose of his timber extraction. The same edition map shows 'railway' built between the railway bridge over the road just south of Beddgelert to a point just short of Tyn-y-Coed. Furthermore there is a short section of track indicated on the map from the Beddgelert to Porthmadog road, (near the current cemetery entrance), up to the trackbed between the southern end of the 'Goat' tunnel and the embankment approach to the aforementioned bridge. It has been suggested that this short section was put in

– Inspired by George Hearse with added words from John Keylock

for the purposes of timber extraction; however it would seem that initially at least, it was provided to transport construction materials from the road up to trackbed level. The photograph (top) shows PB&SSR construction at the southern end of the Goat tunnel approximately one hundred years ago. The track leading away bottom right took material over the road bridge to be tipped for creating the embankment to carry the projected railway across the Glaslyn flood plain to the unused river crossing. The track going off towards the photographer would, I suggest, have gone down to road level. Had this section been used for timber ex-

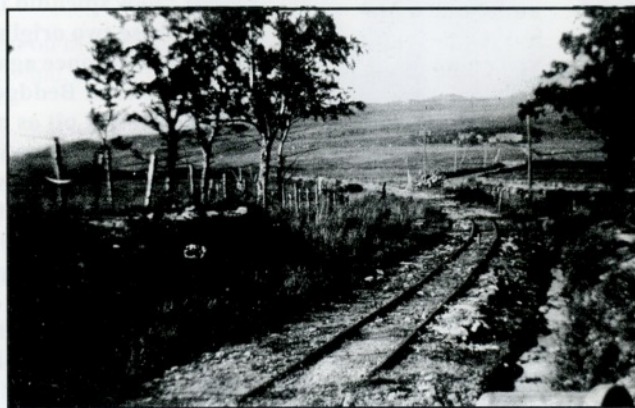
traction during WW1 it is unlikely that the track would have become so quickly overgrown – see 'Croesor chaired rail' photograph (bottom). This – as Mr Boyd tells us – is contractor's track laid on what appears to be an incomplete embankment using 'T' section rail set in cast iron chairs. It has reasonably been suggested that these materials may well have come from the recently abandoned Gorseddau Tramway and even today there are remnants at the northern end of the deepest PB&SSR cutting.

Referring to the Pont Caergors photograph (middle); the 1921 Spring Report maintains that rail of 41¼ lb section had been laid for one mile (sic) from Snowdon station towards Beddgelert. Such rail is often referred to as 'Indian Metre Gauge material' coming in 30 ft lengths to lie on eleven sleepers. To save on

'setting up' costs, steel/rail rolling mills tried to service as many orders as possible at a time. It was their practice to roll an extra percentage to cover mis-rollings and provide samples for potential customers. Furthermore rail could be left on their hands through non-payment or rejection giving smaller railways the opportunity to purchase their rail at bargain prices. It seems possible that the rail south from Rhyd Ddu was obtained in this way. Furthermore, by 1921, the Croesor Tramway had not long since been re-laid from Portmadoc to Croesor Junction and the Spring Report records this too. The late Robert Evans – of the FR – maintained that in the process of



reconditioning/upgrading the track for WH use many of the sleepers were simply turned over – having been damaged by horse's hooves! One wonders whether McAlpine adopted a similar technique using the then fifteen year old PB&SSR



contractor's sleepers on the section south from Rhyd Ddu.

Recent clearance on the Pitt's Head curve unearthed several lengths of Croesor rail. It is possible that these could be a relic from the PB&SSR construction of a century ago and simply became buried when McAlpine came along in 1922/3.

Photographs

Top - 1905 picture showing PB&SSR work at the southern end of the Goat Tunnel, Middle - 1921 Clinker picture at Pont Caergors, looking north to Snowdon station (Rhyd Ddu), and showing the PB&SSR track Bottom - 1921 Clinker picture showing PB&SSR track north of Beddgelert. Note 'T' section rail and cast iron chairs.



Sunday School Specials

A number of special trains were laid on by the WHR in its early years, including two organised for local Sunday Schools. Details of these excursions have survived. The first was a trip to Barmouth arranged for Monday 16th June 1924 for the Rhyd Ddu Sunday School, expected to be patronised by at least sixty adults and children. Passengers caught the 7.22am ex Dinas, due out of South Snowdon at 8.18 am which then ran through to Minffordd, and thence by GWR to Barmouth. The return train left Barmouth at 6.05 pm arriving back at Minffordd at 6.53 pm, where a Special Train was laid on to convey passengers back home, timed to leave Portmadoc for South Snowdon at 7.35 pm.

Tickets for the trip were available in Rhyd Ddu village from E.H. Owen, Tanygraig - a somewhat unusual arrangement, but understandable as by this time South Snowdon station was unstaffed and the ticket office shut. 200 Adult and 100 Child tickets were sent to H.D. Jones at Beddgelert on 12th June along with instructions to hand

them to Mr Owen and to arrange payment of fares collected. Any unused tickets were to be handed back to Jones the following morning. The Beddgelert Ticket Register records details of the days outing. The trip actually took place on Wednesday 18th June and was made by 47 adults and 12 children — virtually the number

The Annual Treat - by Derek Lystor

envisaged. With Adult fares at 4/8 and Children half price, Owen handed over £12:7s:4d in takings along with the 241 unsold tickets! It is likely that these were special printings, possibly all green, similar to those used on the FR. The second trip, twelve months later, on Saturday 6th June 1925, was arranged for Nantmor Sunday School and Barmouth was again the chosen destination.

On this occasion, Special Trains ran on both outward and return services on the WHR; the Barmouth connection

being made at Portmadoc. A special with empty coaches was timed to leave Portmadoc at 9.00 am, due Beddgelert at 9.40 am departing five minutes later back to Nantmor where it was due at 10.00 am, arriving back at Portmadoc at 10.40 am. The importance of running to time was stressed in the circular, as the GWR train to Barmouth was timetabled to depart Portmadoc at 11.10 am. The return special over the WHR was booked to leave Portmadoc at 7.00 pm, due Beddgelert at 7.45 pm and returning immediately with empty coaches. One assumes that the passengers were dropped off at Nantmor, the train then continuing to Beddgelert where the loco would have run round before returning to Portmadoc with the empty stock. The Ticket Register again provides details of the patronage. 27 adults at 3/10d each and 21 children at half fare provided a revenue of £7:3s:9d. Perhaps remembering the excessive waste of specially printed tickets on the previous Sunday School outing, the railway this time made do with ordinary blank paper tickets!

Cuttings - Demolition, Renaissance, Denial & Lost Cine Film

Contemporary newspaper cuttings often provide a more accurate version of events than that which may have been warped by the passage of time. Readers are invited to reflect on the happenings reported by these snippets. The subtle letter (right) from Cllr M.E. Nee can usefully be compared with his report, which is reproduced on the back page of this issue

THE CLOGHER VALLEY RAILWAY Co., Tyrone; the WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY, Dinas to Portmadoc; the LEEK-MANIFOLD RAILWAY and others, have been dismantled by us during the past few years. We are always interested to buy Rails and Rolling Stock, either for re-use or scrap. There is a great need for LOCOMOTIVES of all types. Please send particulars of anything not now in use to GEORGE COHEN, SONS & CO., LTD, Wood Lane, London, W.12 Established 1834

These letters & adverts have been transcribed for clarity

"In December 1930 the Wimbledon Model Railway Club held their annual exhibition at the Welcome hall in High Street. At intervals during the exhibition cinematograph scenes on the Welsh Highland railway were shown" - Railway Magazine Feb 1931
If only these might turn up one day!

WELSH HIGHLAND
Sir - An attempt is being made to form a restoration or preservation society for the Welsh Highland Railway, a narrow gauge line which was unrivalled for its scenic beauty.
Complete destruction of the line is inevitable unless an effort is made to preserve for posterity the joy of travelling on the narrow gauge through the famous Aberglaslyn Pass. An appeal is made to all lovers of railways to rally round and give their practical and financial help. Further details may be had by writing to me at 111 Oakfield Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.
R.G. HONYCHURCH. (1961)

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY (The Editor of the Chronicle)

Sir-in the last issue of your paper there is a report of the monthly meeting of the Carnarvon Town Council, in which it is stated, in connection with the Welsh Highland Railway, that I made the following remarks, viz : "The intentions of the promoters are not to allow the contractors, Messrs McAlpine, to complete the extension from Rhyd-ddu to Portmadoc, or from Dinas to Carnarvon at present. They would, however, be carried on in April next, when the railway from Portmadoc to Beddgelert would be completed."

The above is incorrect and is likely to convey a wrong impression. What I stated was that it is the intention of the promoters, if the necessary financial assistance is forthcoming, to require the contractors, Messrs McAlpine, as soon as the extension Rhyd-ddu to Portmadoc, now in hand, is completed, to extend the line from Dinas to Carnarvon, and that this latter work would be commenced about April next after the other portion Rhyd-ddu to Portmadoc is finished etc., etc.

Kindly insert this correction in your paper, and oblige. - Yours etc.,
M.E. NEE

Carnarvon, November 21st 1922.

Watering the Goat

In the course of the recent archaeological survey one was reminded of the existence of the steel aqueduct that bridged the 'Goat' cutting (Beddgelert) to supply water to The Royal Goat Hotel from the reservoir atop the western bank of the cutting. The Goat cutting and tunnel were of PB&SSR construction a century ago and the original aqueduct was a wooden structure, the condition of which did not impress the Railway Inspector in 1923! When this was replaced by the steel structure is not recorded but pre WW2 would seem inevitable. The stone pier supporting the western end of the aqueduct is still in situ and the Heritage Group in its archaeological survey report for Phase 4 has strongly recommended that this feature be re-instated as a heritage feature

John Keylock Explains.....

The aqueduct is approximately 42ft long x 15- $\frac{3}{4}$ inches square. At each end the open trough is braced with a 12-inch plate and there are several intermediate 6-inch plates to give the structure rigidity.

The reservoir was also constructed by the PB&SSR in 1906. This is confirmed in a note to G.C. Aitchison from the Consulting Engineers, W.A. Harper, dated 22nd January 1906. The note which asks for details of some minor items then states, -

"We are informing them (Bruce Peebles & Company) that the Company will carry out these works themselves, and deduct the cost of doing them, as well as the Goat reservoir, from their next certificate."

The reservoir, now empty and much overgrown, is of triangular shape (see



map on facing page) and must have looked impressive when functional. The 'dam wall' is of substantial stone construction topped with large slate slabs. An interesting feature is the concrete-lined overflow on each side directing water into the aqueduct. One wonders whether these overflows were incorporated in 1922/3 to prevent surplus water cascading onto the trackbed, which up to until then wouldn't have been used as a railway. But where was the source of water to maintain the reservoir's level? Plans produced for the proposed NWNGR's Beddgelert Extension - the terminus of which was planned to be a field away from the reservoir - and the 1913 O.S. map provide the clues. From the inlet a 60-yard ditch parallels the field wall to a point where three fields meet. Here the 'feed' turns through 90 degrees and one suspects that it is here that the original watercourse was diverted to provide some of the reservoir's water. The stream then crosses a field to a further intersection of fields where

The Goat aqueduct lies forlornly at the side of the Goat Cutting in April 2005 - D.W. Allan

the footpath to Moel Hebog is crossed. At this location another stream, coming from the direction of the WHR horseshoe, meets the main feed. For at least another 100 yards the feed is an open ditch after which it was almost certainly piped to be fed from the Afon Cwm Cloch at a point about halfway between the two subsequent Welsh Highland crossings of said river. Some 100 yards from the river there is evidence as to where the WHR crossed this piped supply. Access and overgrowth makes it difficult to investigate the pipe's starting point on the southern bank of the river. So with feed water sourced from both the river and stream from the 'horseshoe' some form of flow control would presumably have been required; perhaps at the 90 degree point of previous mention. Fascinating!?

The compilation of this piece has been prompted by John Padley.

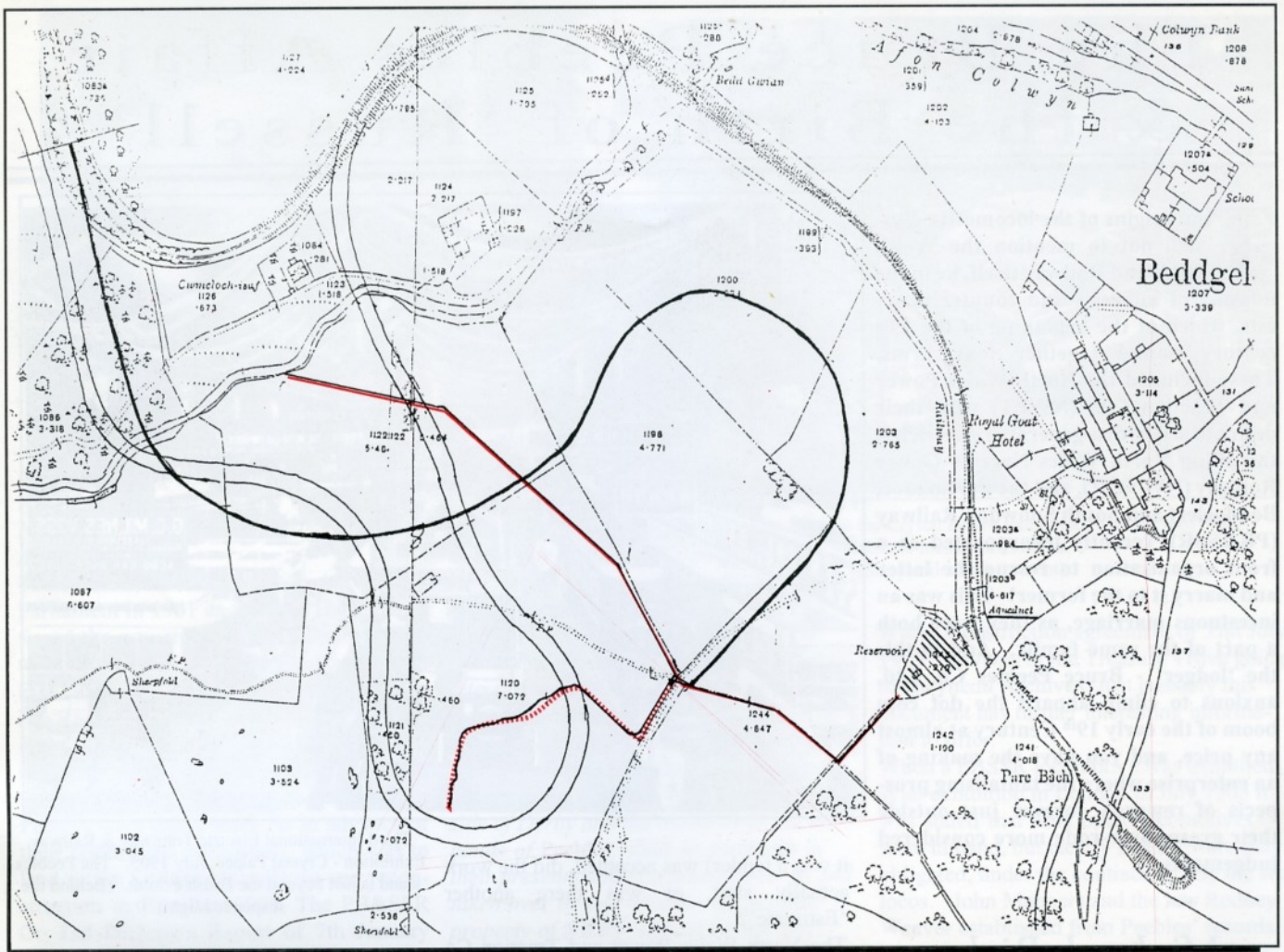
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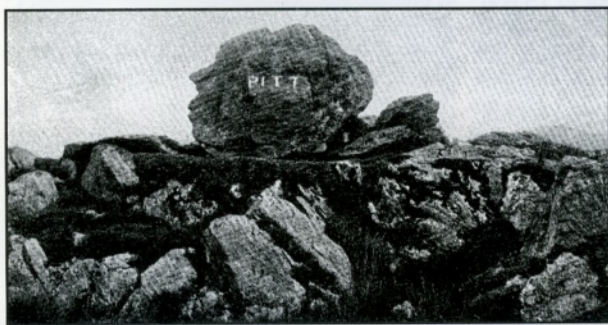
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Based on the 1913 OS which shows the PB&SSR alignment. The double black line is the WHR as built, whilst the single black line is the proposed NWNG Beddgelert Extension. The red line is the presumed feed to the reservoir and the dotted red line is the supplementary feed



A Pitt's Head Postscript written by John Keylock

A century ago at least two postcards were available featuring that well-known Welsh Highland landmark, Pitt's Head rock, which is said to have been inspired by William Pitt The Younger. One card, with a more distant view, had the inscription 'Pitt's Head', whilst that illustrated above declared simply 'PITT'. Produced in colour under the Peacock brand this card was posted in Beddgelert on June 30th 1906, and the message to Mrs Humphrey of Wavertree, Liverpool is of more than passing NWNG interest. "Just ar-

rived here (Beddgelert) with office trip in four brakes. Splendid day". Was this a day excursion for some two-dozen folk? If so, one might speculate about the means of transport for their return to Liverpool. Their outward journey is readily imaginable; LNWR to Dinas, where Russell had been delivered the previous month, May 1906 - NWNG train to Rhyd Ddu where they would have boarded the brakes in the station yard. (See Heritage Journal No 27 p6 for an appropriate photograph). From Rhyd Ddu to Pitt's Head they would have seen

the then recently laid PB&SSR track. A century later an equivalent view will soon be available from this stretch of road - and hopefully full of meaning to the passing motorist in his/her car or (shooting) brake.

Photos : Left - the postcard described in the article; Below - today's view of The Rock in silhouette



The Bruce Peebles Affair & the Birth of 'Russell'

The origins of the locomotive *Russell*, not to mention the Welsh Highland Railway itself, lie in the miasma of interests and counter interests, which at the beginning of the 19th century bound together four firms. These included the North Wales Power and Traction Co., (NWPT) with their desire to sell hydro-generated electricity, the ailing North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway (NWNGR), and the Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway (PB&SSR), recently incorporated as a front organisation to rescue the latter and marry it to the former! This was an incestuous marriage, as they were both a part of the same family. Add to this the 'lodger' - Bruce Peebles Co. Ltd, anxious to climb aboard the dot com boom of the early 19th Century at almost any price, and you have the making of an enterprise where the tantalising prospects of rewards, forever just outside their grasp, over-rode more considered judgements

Michael Bishop sheds more light on those electric locos

The contributions of the editor and Jim Hewitt in the last two issues on the subject of the Bruce Peebles Estimate have made interesting reading. It is also amazing how documents thought lost and which caused previous writers much speculation, (James Boyd, the late Rodney Weaver, John Manners and Dr Richard Hills among them), are now turning up (or have been in archives waiting to be discovered). It is symptomatic of research that every new document that is unearthed throws new light on this fascinating story. Unfortunately, with quite a complicated situation it can take years of research to get anywhere near the truth, and the present writer does not pretend to have done more than scratch the surface; what follows revisits some of the discoveries of the above gentlemen, with additions of his own.

The editor speculates on whether the Peebles 'Estimate' (which makes it plain



Third International Electric Tramway & Railway Exhibition - Crystal Palace, July 1905. The Peebles stand is just beyond the Brush exhibit. (Behind the suspended light)

it was a tender) was accepted, did the work actually start, or was there another 'Estimate'?

The North Wales Power and Traction Co Ltd was incorporated on 30th July 1903, and the Board Minutes of the following day confirm that it was accepted. The Prospectus that was issued on 4th August stated: - "A Tender dated 31st July 1903 has been accepted from Messrs Bruce Peebles and Co Ltd., of Edinburgh (who are sole manufacturing licensees of Ganz & Co's Patents for the British Empire), whereby the latter offer to construct and equip the portion of the Portmadoc Undertaking (i.e. the PB&SSR) now to be constructed for prices which the Engineers advise the Board should not exceed £145,000 (i.e. the total of Peebles's Estimate). The Tender includes the alteration, extension and electrification of the Railway, the construction of dams and hydraulic works, and erection and equipment of the Power Station"

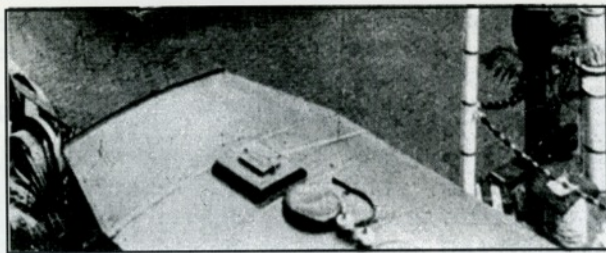
The use of the word 'alteration' presumably referred to the updating of the Croesor Tramway which had been bought for £10,000 from the owners. This was to be the first hydro-electric scheme in Wales.

This Prospectus was for shares of £270,000, of which £167,500 were underwritten, Bruce Peebles & Co Ltd being one of the underwriters, although up to what limit is

not revealed. However, when £170,000 worth of shares was allotted for cash on 8th August 1903, Bruce Peebles & Co Ltd had £51,305 of them. As this could not have been in payment for any work by this stage, it must have been an investment, maybe in whole or part fulfilment of their underwriting obligation. Bruce Peebles & Co had turned itself into a Limited Company only five weeks previously. It is reasonable to speculate that the Company's enthusiasm is likely to have resulted from their wish to exploit their Ganz licence (together with other electrical equipment), and the opportunity was too good to let pass. Electrical Power Stations were burgeoning all over the country - every town of any size in the country had to have one.

There is a document that was in the box, which, with the encouragement of the Heritage Group, recently found its way from the Receiver to Gwynedd Archives.

This is an Indenture (i.e. a sealed agreement) between Peebles and NWPT of 30th July 1907. What this did was to cancel the "Works Contract" of 31st July 1905. This appears to have been the contract that one would have expected to have been dated



two years earlier, being "an Agreement for the construction and supply by (Peebles) of certain works, rolling stock, machinery, plant and materials for the purposes of certain railways which NWPT had agreed or were about to agree to construct on behalf of the PBSSR Company, and also of the Electric Power Undertaking of the NWPT authorised by and vested in the NWPT by the North Wales Electric Power Act of 1904."

The PB&SSR had been set up by Acts of Parliament in 1901 and 1904. These transferred the powers of 'Power Undertaking' to the NWPT and raised the Capital and Borrowing Powers to £392,000. The NWPT had 100% control, contributing capital of £13,535 in 1903, made up to £50,000 in 1905. The evidence seems to confirm the late Rodney Weaver's conclusion that Peebles were doing work far in advance of their contractual obligations, which was to lead to the Company's collapse and reconstruction in February 1908. The PB&SSR Co Ltd Director's Report of 7th January 1905 stated that "the works in connection with the PBSSR from Portmadoc via Beddgelert to South Snowdon (Rhyd Ddu) on the NWNGR had been in progress since February 1904. A considerable amount of earthwork is completed and the tunnelling through Aberglaslyn Pass is also making progress from the south and it is hoped at an early date to commence operations at the northern end of the tunnel (sic). Some of the bridges on these works are completed and others are in an advanced state of construction."

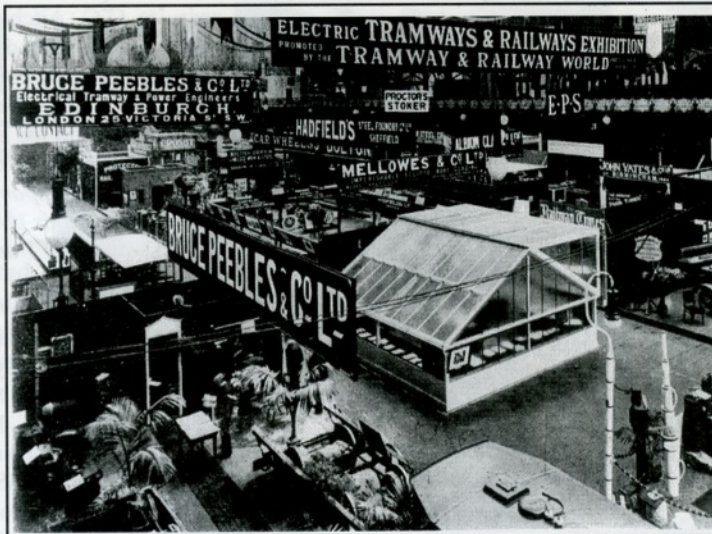
The Bristol contractor mentioned by Mr Boyd working in 1904 was probably August Strauss, as he bought £4,000 of Peebles' shares in NWPT in 1907. They were presumably sub-contractors to Peebles. This 1907 cancellation agreement says "AND WHEREAS certain portions of the said works, rolling stock, machinery, plant and materials have been constructed and with the exception of certain locomotives, transformer house, and transformers, and switch gear after mentioned supplied by Peebles in pursuance of the Works Contract and divers payments have been made by NWPT to Peebles in respect of such works, rolling stock, machinery,

plant and materials; it was agreed that the Works Contract was cancelled, and:-

" All Works, rolling stock, machinery, plant and materials already constructed

for and supplied to NWPT by Peebles or any subcontractors to Peebles shall be deemed to be absolute property of NWPT and the six three-phase locomotives mentioned in the Brief Schedule Specification annexed to the Works Contract, the eight transformer houses in the hands of Messieurs Handyside of Derby and the transformers in the hands of Peebles, shall be forthwith in their present condition handed over to and taken over by and become the absolute property of NWPT without further payment. Delivery of said locomotives will take place by NWPT at Peeble's Works at East Pilton Edinburgh and delivery of the said transformer houses will be taken by NWPT at Messieurs Handysides's works at the stores near the Snowdon Ranger Hotel, Carnarvonshire, but Peebles will, if NWPT desires, but at NWPT's risk, store the said six locomotives at their said Works and the said transformers at the said store at a charge of ten shillings per locomotive per week from the date hereof, and that for such time as NWPT may require, but not exceeding six calendar months from the date hereof. Peebles will forthwith provide and supply NWPT at the works of Ferranti Limited, Hollinwood, Lancashire, with switch-gear as already manufactured for them and lying there."

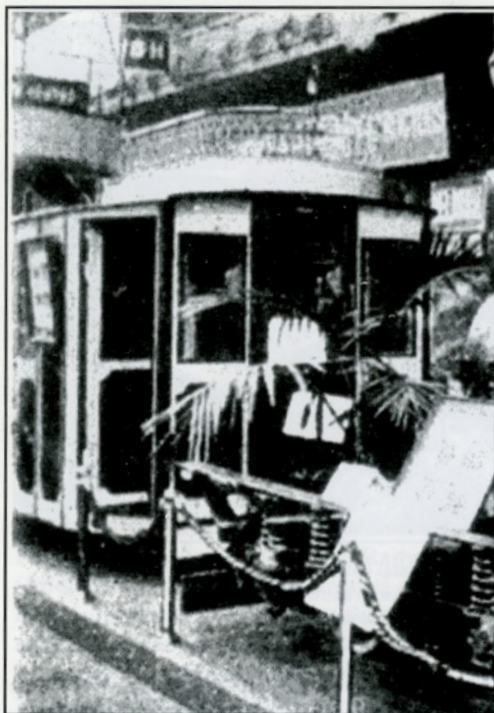
NWPT was to issue Peebles with £60,000 of 7% Second Debentures in discharge of all liabilities. This non-cash payment when added to the £51,305 worth of NWPT shares still in Peebles' Balance Sheet must have contributed to Peebles' inability to raise funds to get themselves out of the financial problems this contract was causing. Issue No 18 of this Journal suggested the "Sealed Specification of



Bruce Peebles stand at the Crystal Palace Exhibition, with the roof of the electric loco centre bottom. (See detailed enlargement).

Works Construction agreement of 31st July 1905" survives in the Treasure Trove going to Gwynedd Archives. Just possibly this document has further interesting information to offer.

When a PBSSR locomotive was exhibited at an exhibition in London in July 1905 it was stated that nine other locomotives were in hand, but clearly NWPT were only obligated, under the contract, to buy the six locos. John Manners and the late Rodney Weaver established from Peebles' records evidence for five locomotives, apparently built by Ganz and imported from Budapest. Presumably the other one - or five - were built by Peebles to Ganz drawings. However, we now have the explanation for why NWPT started advertising six locomotives in "Machinery Market" from August 1908. Similar adverts appeared in various magazines until at least May 1910, one mentioning that they were fitted with two trolley grooves for overhead wire. In a Board of Trade file at the National Archives, a March 1905 report explains that two phases of these locomotives are formed by two overhead wires placed 27½ inches apart and 16' 10" high above the top of the rails, the third phase being formed by the rails. No mention is made in this report of motorised carriages; it says that each 8½ ton (4-wheel per the correspondence) locomotive was to be equipped with four incandescent lamps, and an air compressor powered by a three HP Three-Phase motor, compressed air being stored in two inter-communicating reservoirs mounted on the roof of the locomotive. The photographs of the locomotive exhibited in 1905 show that at that stage it did not have these reservoirs or trolley poles, but none of the other tram-



PB&SSR Electric Loco on the Peebles' stand at the Crystal Palace Exhibition

cars exhibited on other stands seem to have been fitted with trolley poles either. The Peebles' history (referred to in Mr Boyd's "Narrow Gauge in South Carnarvonshire", 2nd edition 1988) suggests that ten locomotives stayed in a line at Peebles works until scrapped in about 1916, but all that we can be certain of, on the strength of the above evidence, is that six were at least partially completed.

Drawings of the locomotive had been sent to the Board of Trade; but in May 1905 they requested drawings of the passenger carriages as well. However their request was denied, they were informed that no decision on carriages had been made and that no drawings had been prepared.

Drawings of the locomotives have appeared in "The Narrow Gauge" No 94, but reproduced more recently with a correction of the width in "Narrow Gauge & Industrial Railway Modelling" No 57, January 2004, describing the late David Newham's model. Another version, apparently based on a similar source drawing, has appeared in J.I.C. Boyd's book.

The Power Station at Cwm Dyli came into operation in August 1906, but it seems likely that J.C. Russell as Chairman of the NWNCR was pressing for progress on the updating and electrification of his railway (which is presumably what the agreement of November 1904 provided for). The NWPT were trying to delay things. A letter from J.E. Rawlins, Chairman of the Power Com-

pany, to G.C. Aitchison of 17th June 1906 suggests why, describing: -

"frankly the position - viz that the Power part of the scheme having cost so much more than the estimate there are not sufficient funds to complete the Railway - that the Company has no intention of abandoning this portion of the work, however and that I am at present conducting negotiations with a view to completion of the whole undertaking".

It should be explained that G.C. Aitchison was not only Locomotive Superintendent of the NWNCR, but he was also General Manager of the NWPT, as well as being manager of its subsidiary, the PB&SSR, so he had feet in all camps.

The NWNCR had considered themselves compelled to ask the contractors to discontinue work on the transmission lines where they crossed their line - one of the three transmission lines, (which would have fed an electrified NWNCR), was due to go over the NWNCR

just south of Quellyn Lake, on its way to the Nantlle Quarries. Russell appears to have taken full advantage of the situation, and wrote to the NWPT on 29th January 1906, setting out his terms for the two-year postponement of electrification of the NWNCR, which were accepted without quibble by the NWPT. The six terms included an agreement *"to postpone the construction for two years but the Portmadoc Company is to undertake to recommence construction on or before March 1908."* There was also to be an annual sum payable to the NWNCR in the meantime. If the Carnarvon-Dinas line was not commenced by March 1908 any of the three companies had the right to nullify existing agreements, whereupon the NWPT was to pay liquidated damages of £5,000 to the NWNCR in cash or debentures.

RUSSELL

However, of great interest to us is term number two stating that the NWPT was *"to expend in restoring the NWNCR for present steam working and in providing one steam locomotive a sum up to but not exceeding £2,500"* This explains the background to the order for the locomotive *Russell*. On the 29th January 1906 James Cholmeley Russell (MD of the NWNCR) obtained a specification for a two-foot gauge locomotive from the Hunslet Engine Co. Some two weeks later, on the 13th February, the order was confirmed by Gowrie. C. Aitchison in the name of the PB&SSR. This sequence of events makes it clear why *Russell* was ordered by the PB&SSR, but regarded by the NWNCR as their property,

as the two Companies were independent (until the 1920's) but with a legal agreement between them.

The published accounts of the NWNCR and PB&SSR demonstrate that the locomotive was not purchased by either of those two Companies. It must therefore have been paid for by the NWPT. The NWPT Balance Sheet at 30th June 1908 included £155,670 spent on the Electrical Undertaking. It also showed £112,591 had been spent on "Portmadoc Undertaking including purchase of land and expenses in connection with Bills, Light Railway Orders etc." This latter figure included the £50,000 contributed to the PB&SSR, all of which had been spent by 1905. So the cost of *Russell* delivered in 1906 must be buried in the remaining £62,591.

The 'free' locomotive to the NWNCR also puts a new perspective on why that company ought two replacement coaches from Pickering in 1907, plus the Hunslet-built engine *Gowrie* in 1908, all of which went through the NWNCR's books - in receivership!

By 1914 this figure had reduced by £1,300 due to sales of materials, so the total of PB&SSR expenses "c 1915" quoted by Mr Boyd from the Joint Committee report would appear to be incomplete, even ignoring the amount within the £60,000 settlement to Peebles; that figure of £102,668 is broken down in Mr Boyd's book.

By 1909, GC Aitchison had fallen out with the PB&SSR. A figure in that Company's Balance sheet labelled "Cash paid to GC Aitchison in action v. PBSS Rly Co" started this year (1909), reaching £768 by 1913.

This is where things stagnated. In 1907 Bruce Peebles & Co Ltd were jointly tendering with Messrs Bott and Stennett £175,854 for hydraulic, electrical and other works for the Aluminium Corporation who were putting up a works and power station at Dolgarrog. However Peebles went into voluntary liquidation the following February followed by the Aluminium Corporation in December and both Companies had to be reconstructed.

This complicated, interwoven 'spider's web' of overlapping and contradictory interests meant it was to take another fifteen years - until the early 1920's, before a railway from Portmadoc to nearly Caernarfon, in the form of the Welsh Highland, became a reality.

Articles

The editor welcomes articles of Welsh Highland heritage interest, which can be sent by e-mail, disc or type written.

Rubbish Wagon

A recent Group acquisition – for a very modest sum of money – is the wooden-framed wagon pictured in the accompanying photograph. Of particular interest are its form of construction and possible origins. These remains were discovered at a Hafod y Llyn farm when group member David Ben-

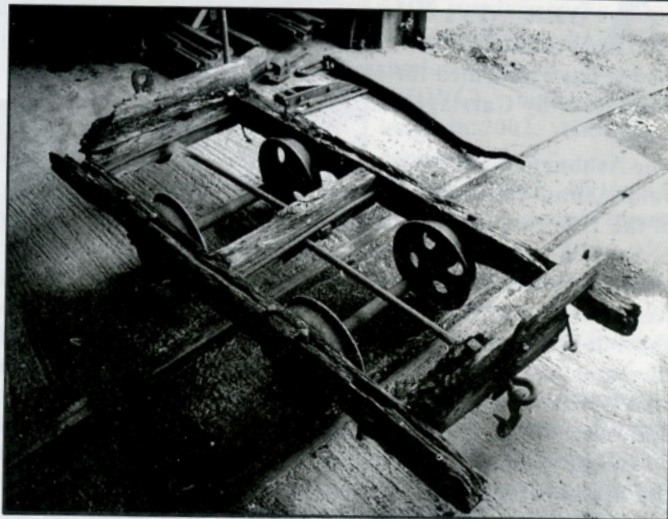
John Keylock Explains an Unusual Purchase

now literally fell over them. They had lain there, unrecognised, for over thirty years. The farmer had purchased the wagon at a farm sale mainly because mounted on it was a turnip/swede slicer. The mental picture of a two-foot

gauge turnip slicer is in itself well worth the £35 asking price!

The wagon is fitted with non-original Hudson wheel sets and would almost certainly seem to have been a side tipping rubbish wagon. To date the best suggestion is that it probably worked in a quarry on the north coast of the Lleyn Peninsula. Have readers any thoughts on the matter? In the process of being preserved (with Cuprinol) and repaired, it can be seen at Gelert's Farm.

It is the method of construction that particularly intrigues. Rather than having a single longitudinal tie bar between the couplings, it has two that are slightly offset and originate from a central cross-timber. At each end a substantial centrally fitted vertical plate with a 1 5/8 inch diameter hole would seem to have held the bar attached to the bottom of the side tipping body. The coupling hooks without any links are not plain but incorporate what one might describe as a dragon's tail feature – in confirmation of Welsh origin!



Above - Rubbish Wagon awaiting repair at Gelert's Farm
Below left - the unusual coupling arrangements
Photos : David Allan, August 2005



Similar wagons were once used on the three-foot gauge Penmaenmawr systems as well as the Porth-y-Nant quarries on the Lleyn Peninsula. It is possible that 'our' specimen, not having original wheelsets, which would have aided identification, may have started life similarly. At these quarries the tipping body pivot was offset from the centre line but one similarity is that the coupling hooks were outwards facing. Compared with drawings available 'ours' would seem to be of very early construction.

100 Year Old Graffiti



The large rock at Rhyd Ddu station throat has this 100 year old inscription carved into it:-

John. O. Parry.
June 4th '05

Rowland. A. Williams.
Post Office
Rhyd Ddu

Photo - Dave Kent

JOIN US!

.....and help to preserve the heritage of the historic Welsh Highland Railway.
£10 a year brings four issues of this Journal and your chance to be involved in a unique slice of Narrow Gauge railway history.
Details:-John Keylock, Weathervane Cottage, Childswickham, Broadway, Worcestershire.
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Tel : 01386 852428

The Ashbury Railway Carriage & Iron Co.

A group of volunteers from the WHR (P)'s Gelert's Farm Works and the FfR's Boston Lodge have reformed the Historic Ashbury Railway Carriage and Iron Company.

The Ashbury Company was founded by John Ashbury around about the middle of the 19th century; the business didn't become a limited liability company, however, until 1862. The company were builders of rolling stock at Openshaw in Manchester, and iron manufacturers at Ardwick, also in Manchester. The works were extremely well known and were fully employed until 1902 when the business was transferred to the Metropolitan works in Saltley, under the large scale rationalisations of the industry at the time.

Ashbury were the makers of the Buffet

In which David Seale subtly combines an appeal for funds with some historical facts

car, in its original uncut-down, all third class guise. It was not the only Ashbury to run on the WHR, in fact most WHR carriages were built by Ashbury albeit bought by the NWNGR. Sadly the most impressive ones never saw it through to Welsh Highland days.

The first carriages to be ordered by the NWNGR in 1872 were two eight-wheeled, steel framed, bogie compos-

ites, - 3rd class, 2nd class, and Guard compartment. Although the Guard's accommodation was small it had a beautiful exterior design and a quality look to it that I have not seen in an Ashbury since. At the same time the company ordered two 4-wheeled carriages similar to the Ashbury 4-wheelers used on the Ffestiniog Railway. These were unsuccessful and short lived as they could not be fitted with the Westinghouse air brake system due to their inadequate size.

The next Ashbury carriages to arrive were the 'Corridor's' in 1893 - No's 9 & 10 which became 23 and 25 in WHR days. They were cut down, but with drop-lights added to make up for the loss of the ventilators above the windows.

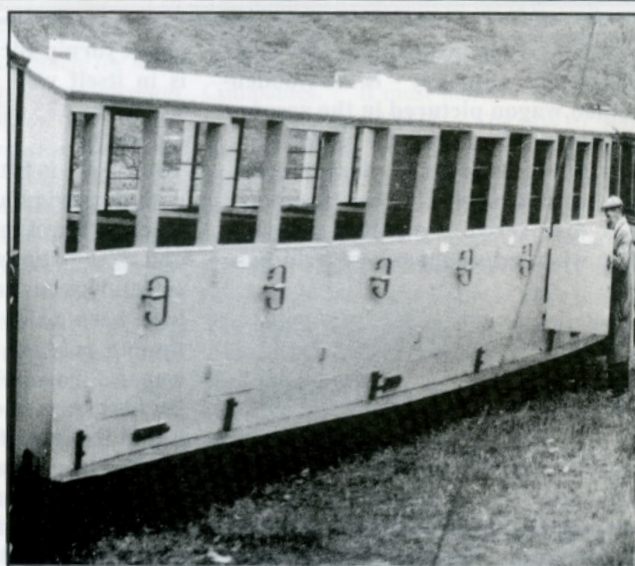
After this were the 'Summer' carriages in 1896, - two open, No's 11 & 12, and two semi-open, No's 13 & 14. These became No's 24 & 26 (semi-open) and No's 27 & 28 (open). Although No 24 became No 23 when the WHR closed so that it followed on in the FR series (all the others were sold at auction). No 24

(23) had been previously swapped for two coal wagons.

The FR also had two Ashbury's similar in design to the 'Summer' carriages; No's 21 & 22 which were lower on their bogies and fully enclosed but otherwise identical. They even shared the same oak-beamed chassis design that was common to both the 'Corridor' carriages and the 'Summer' carriages.

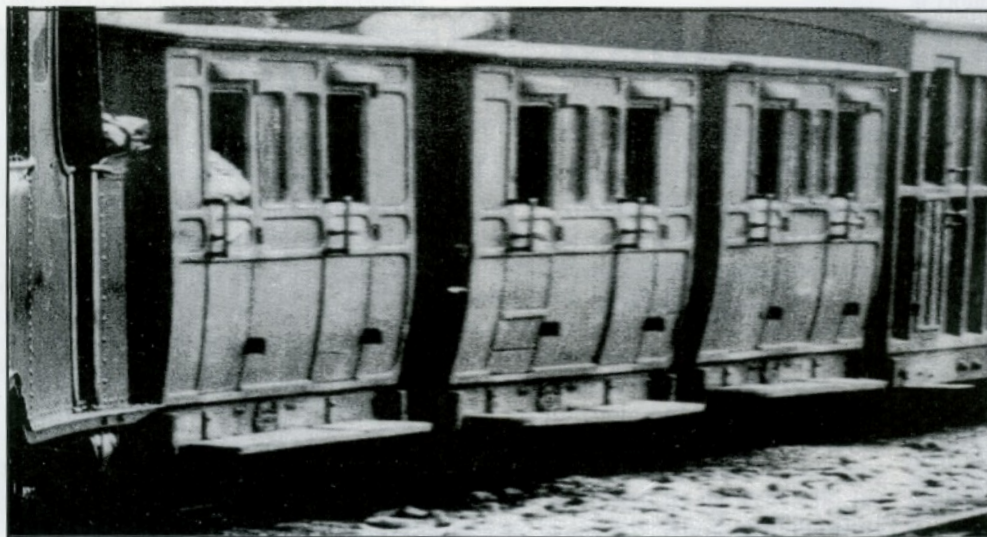
The Lost Ashbury

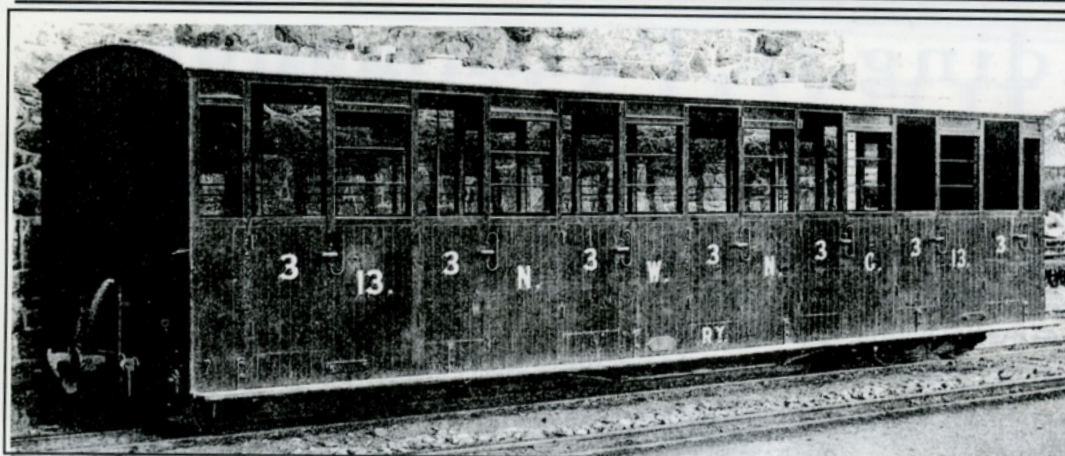
Evidence has been discovered of another Ashbury ordered by the NWNGR in 1894 - No 3, which sadly did not see WHR service and was left at Boston Lodge to have its doors and other parts taken for use on other carriages. There is documentary evidence for its existence plus photographic evidence, and a lot of circumstantial evidence, not to mention an axle box with the year 1894 cast in it. Unfortunately, David Newham, a dedicated Heritage Group member, passed away last year and he had been the one to convince others of this carriage's existence; he even modelled it. Hopefully his work will surface again through his friends and fellow heritage devotees.



Above - Ashbury No 28 (WHR) (NWNG No 14) at Salem Halt in 1934 pictured by F.M. Gates

Below left - Ashbury 4-wheelers at Dinas in 1893. Photo Symons of Llanberis.





NWNG No 13 - Ashbury-built, known as the 'summer car' - Photo 1894 at Dinas

So why reform the company? Apart from an obsession with the Buffet car, there is a desire to create more carriages in the future. There is also the opportunity to take advantage of the similarity of designs; we can ensure costs are kept to a minimum by constructing No 25 at the same time as the Buffet Car as most major components are common between them. The Buffet Car has attracted grant aid so we can concentrate on raising funds for the materials needed for No 25. After this, we have the opportunity to use the skills and knowledge acquired at Gelert's Farm and Boston Lodge to further develop the heritage train set. It is not just the WHR either, provided the appeal is successful enough to see the Buffet Car and No 25 completed we would like to fund one of the last historic Ffestiniog Railway carriages yet to be rebuilt - the Ashbury bogie carriage No 21.

But, we don't want to finish with just these either. If we are successful then there is a long list of missing heritage carriages just waiting for someone to fund their reconstruction such as the WHR Pickering Brake, to name but one. So this all sounds marvellous doesn't it? But we can't fund all of this out of our own pockets; a conservative estimate of the overall cost of the project suggests that about £110,000 is ideally required. If we can raise £10 a month from 250 people then, with gift aid, we can arrive at that figure in three years, and have a fully authentic Welsh Highland Railway train assembled in time for the reopening of the entire line from Caernarfon to Porthmadog.

We have already got off to a start; money has been coming in, but faster and in greater volume would be nice.

The chassis for the Buffet Car and No 25 (see WHHH Journal No 28) have been made and are just waiting for us to raise the money for the rest.

Ashbury has been set up as a subsidiary to the Welsh Highland Railway Ltd. However, all carriages built will be owned and operated by whichever railway is historically appropriate; therefore, the ownership of No 21 would remain with the FfR and the Buffet Car and No 25 with the WHR Ltd.

So all that we are asking is for £10 a month for three years. If, at the end of those three years, donors wish to continue with their funding, then we will move on and begin the construction of further carriages, and we will give everyone the chance to have their say in what we go for next.

Carriages built by Ashbury for the NWNGR/WHR/FR:

NWNGR No's 1 & 2, brake composites ordered from Ashbury's Openshaw works in 1872.

NWNGR No's 3, 4 & 5 (4-wheelers) plus several similar designs on the FR 1865-1872 (FfR No's 9 & 10 planned for reconstruction)

NWNGR No 3, all-third, 7-compartment carriage (probably for workman's trains). Little evidence of its appearance exists, built 1894.

NWNGR No's 9 & 10, identical all-third 'corridor' carriages later No's 23 & 25 of WHR (No 23, later converted to Buffet Car), built 1893.

NWNGR No's 11 & 12, all-third, 7-compartment carriage, semi-glazed 56 seaters with half height doors. Known

as the 'summer' cars; later No's 24 & 26 of WHR, built 1894 (11/24 survives as No 23 on WHR(C), 12/26 survives as No 26 on FR, although re-built (to a modern design). No 24 on WHR(C) built Boston lodge in 2002, stands as a replica of No 12 NWNGR No's 13 & 14, all-third, 7-compartment, un-glazed 56 seaters with half height doors. Also known as the

'summer' cars; later No's 27 & 28 of WHR, built 1894.

FfR No's 21 & 22, all-third, 7-compartment, fully-glazed 56 seaters with full height doors (No 22 survives on FR, although re-built to a modern design like No 26), built 1896.

If you would like to donate to the Ashbury Appeal, not only will you have the pleasure of knowing you are contributing to a wonderful piece of heritage, you will also receive a token of our appreciation:

Benefits to Covenanters and Donors

COVENANTERS OF LESS THAN £20 A MONTH:

Special limited-edition print by *David Perrin* of the three carriages with WHR locomotive 'Russell' (*exclusive to covenanters*)

COVENANTERS OF £20 A MONTH OR MORE:

As above with invitation to inaugural train, where you will be served heritage style refreshments in the WHR Buffet car (*exclusive to covenanters*)

SINGLE DONATIONS:

Commemorative key ring

SINGLE DONATIONS over £50:....Plus print by *David Perrin* of Buffet Car with Baldwin '590'

SINGLE DONATIONS over £100:....Plus 2 tickets to travel on carriage of your choice (Buffet car, No 25 or No 21) when complete

SINGLE DONATIONS over £500:....Plus life-time free travel on Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Trains

Just fill in the enclosed form, and return to: 'Ashbury Appeal', Gelert's Farm Works, Madoc St. West, Porthmadog,

Rebuilding to Porthmadog – the First Time Around!

With work about to commence on Phase 4 through to Porthmadog, the following document, produced by Cllr M.E.Nee, a County Councillor and WHR Director, gives a direct comparison of events eighty years ago. References to this report have appeared in various books on the WHR, but is here given in full, with some minor adaptations - DEREK LYSTOR

Welsh Highland Railway. Report of the Investing Authorities Director

The Welsh Highland Railway (Light Railway) Company obtained their Order in March 1922. The Contract for constructing the line from Dinas to Portmadoc was let to Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons on the 30th April 1922 for £59,985. On the 15th day of July 1922 I was requested to act as the Investing Authorities Director (provisionally) under sections 7 and 11 of the order.

At that time the line Dinas to South Snowdon was not in working condition, but considerable progress had already been made by the contractors on the route, particularly on the portion South Snowdon to Croesor. The Aberglaslyn Tunnel was receiving attention, the total length driven being 48 feet of top heading and 32 feet at bottom bench. The number of men then employed by the contractors was about 250.

The line Dinas to South Snowdon was completed and reopened in July last and the receipts received for the week ending 5th August were £94 .4.10d. The wages to 22 men were £69 .3.3d and the Weekly proportion of Expenses & Rents etc were £22.0.0d, giving a profit of £3.1.7d. This was considered to be a satisfactory start.

Every week I received Returns showing:

1. The number of men employed by the Company as distinct from the Contractors.
2. A Progress report from the Railway Manager.
3. A progress report from the engineers and
4. A statement of the men and their various grades employed on the contract.

The Directors meet about every six weeks. I receive due notice and attend the meetings and since my appointment I have received every assistance and information I have asked for.

As the work has progressed the Engineers have issued certification and the Investing Authorities have paid as follows:-

| | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|
| Carnarvonshire C.C. | £10348. | Balance now due | 4652. |
| Portmadoc U.D.C. | 3448 | -- | 1552 |
| Gwyrfai R.D.C. | 2068 | -- | 932 |
| Glaslyn R.D.C. | 2068 | -- | 932 |
| Deudraeth R.D.C. | <u>2068</u> | -- | <u>932</u> |
| | £20,000 | | £9,000 |

In July last the Company applied to the Ministry for leave to amend their order, and an Enquiry was held at Portmadoc on the 8th September last. I attended a Conference of the Investing Authorities on the 7th September, and was requested at such meeting to take exception at the Enquiry to certain sections of the proposed order. This I did on the following day, and was supported by the Clerk to the County Council, and several other gentlemen representing the various local bodies.

The Accounts of the Company to the 31st December have been audited, and show a loss of £571.7.9d for the year.

The line Snowdon to Portmadoc is still unfinished. Several difficult cuttings through rocks have had to be made, and three bridges constructed over the Glaslyn river, and these are nearly all completed. It is hoped that the line, 27 miles in length, will be ready for passenger traffic by Whitsuntide. The number of men now employed by the contractors is 429. The Company have been endeavouring to obtain a further grant from the Ministry, to enable them to complete the line from Dinas to Carnarvon which was part of and included in the original scheme. So far nothing definite has been arranged. The contractors have signified their willingness to undertake this additional length of railway for the sum of £25,000.

From time to time I have conferred with the Clerk to the County Council on different points as they arise, and we have at all times endeavoured to safeguard the investing Authorities. On my advice it has been decided to require the Company to enter into an agreement setting out the terms upon which the capital secured by the debentures will be repaid, before making them any further contributions. An agreement will be submitted for your approval at this meeting.

I may add that the Company in conjunction with the Snowdon Mountain Tramway Company are issuing a Guide –showing the beauty spots through which the line runs – and copies will be circulated in America and the Colonies. It is anticipated that in a few years time the Railway will be as popular as any mountain Railway in Europe.

M.E.Nee. 25/4/1923