

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

£1.00

Issue No. 31

ISSN 1462-1371

March 2006

SOMETHING OLD - SOMETHING NEW

An astonishing discovery of a complete panel of 'Croesor track', including rail fixed to sleepers, complete with wooden keys has been unearthed by the construction gang. Located in the area generally referred to as Coed Mawr loop, within Beddgelert forest, the track panel was buried well to one side of, and about a foot beneath, the WHR formation. Unfortunately the panel was destroyed by the machines before the importance of the find was appreciated. However the material has been rescued and delivered to Gelert's Farm for reconstruction and display.

It is worth recalling the origins of so-called Croesor Rail and its use on the WHR scene. In Vignes' 1878 treatise featuring – among other narrow gauge railways – the FR, the incomplete NWN-GR, and the Croesor and Gorseddau tramways, he confirms that the last two named were using the same chairs and 'T' section rail – with a bulb on one side – of 20lb section. Both rail and chairs are generally described as 'Croesor' if only perhaps because this system was laid first. Because of the lightness of the rail sleepers were only approximately 5" wide

and 3 1/2" deep and in many cases comparatively 'rough hewn'.

Early in the first decade of the 20th century the PB&SSR appeared on the scene and needed contractor's track during construction. By this time the Gorseddau had been abandoned and it has long since been accepted from photographic evidence and material discoveries in the deep cutting north of Beddgelert that Croesor rail and chairs were utilised by the contractor. Not unreasonably, it is assumed that these chairs and rail lengths came from the Gorseddau. Furthermore it is documented that Parry had use of these materials for the construction of his timber tramway during WW1 (WHH No.19)

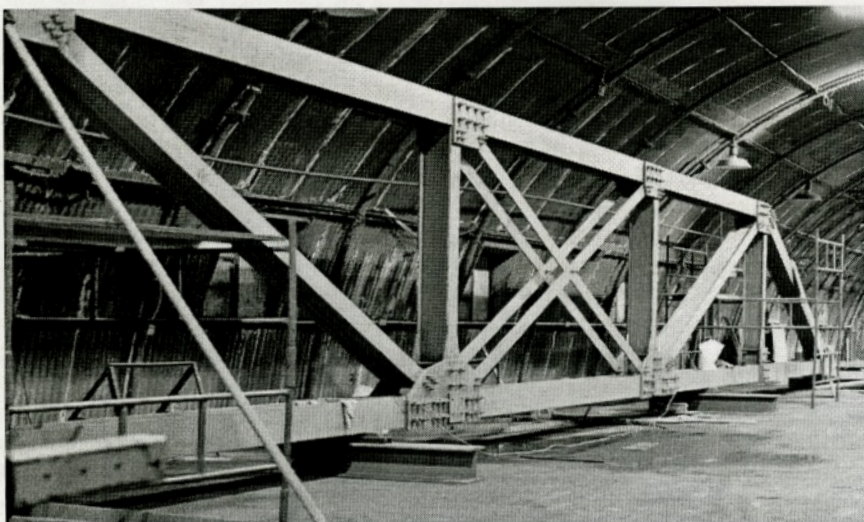
This discovery of the track panel suggests two possible scenarios:-

- 1) that Parry in his timber extraction activities got as far south as Coed Mawr,
- 2) the PB&SSR contractor acquired, from the abandoned Gorseddau Tramway, not only rail and chairs but also sleepers fitted with a pair of chairs and indeed the keys for securing the rail

the chairs. In other words the contractor had access to a complete contractor's tramway virtually on his doorstep. The 1913 OS map indicates that the cutting at the 'bottom' of the Coed Mawr loop was the southern extent of the PB&SSR earthworks. It is possible therefore that this unearthed length of track was being used in connection with the removal of spoil from the cutting when work ceased in 1906.

As current construction progresses south towards Beddgelert, more materials may be unearthed, which will enable us to elaborate on the situation 80 to 100 years ago.

The Heritage Group is extremely grateful to Chris O'Connor, WHR Construction Company Clerk of Works, for alerting us to this find and helping to facilitate removal to Gelert's Farm for preservation. Thanks to Dave Kent for providing the transport; a fine example therefore of co-operation between the Group, the WHR Society, WHR Ltd., and indeed the Construction Company.



in

Bryn y Felin Bridge

That symbolic Welsh Highland landmark, the Bryn y Felin girder bridge is, as we write, semi erected at the Brunswick Foundry in Caernarfon. Looking rather like a giant piece of Meccano it has been trial erected in preparation for transport to site sometime in March. Indeed, it may already be in position by the time you receive this Journal. Nevertheless it is worth recording in its pre-natal state, which certainly demonstrates its closeness to the original.

N.W.N.G.Rly

The Declining Years

The impression gained of the final years of the NWNGR is of a somewhat depressing decline into dereliction and bankruptcy.

To a great extent this seems to have been true, but while slate and passenger traffic disappeared the facts suggest it was not all doom and gloom, although it is abundantly clear that things would have not continued without the fairy godmother of the Welsh Highland. The NWNGR had clearly given up on the extension and electrification promised by the PB&SSR. In March of 1908 the Directors had reported to Shareholders that that North Wales Power & Traction Co. Ltd and the PB&SSR had been "unable to carry out the proposed agreements between them and this Company and that consequently the matters contemplated thereby are an end." However, the Company had got a free locomotive out of the attempt in the form of 'Russell' which must have helped to cope with the inadequacies of the worn-out 'Beddgelert'. Having realised they were on their own, the NWNGR clearly decided to get a new locomotive with their own funds. Hence the ordering of 'Gowrie', appropriately named after the first name of the Manager, Mr Aitchison. One presumes one or both of the Vulcans, 'Moel Tryfan' or 'Snowdon Ranger', were ailing. 'Gowrie' was paid for by withdrawing £1,300 from an item in the balance sheet called "moneys in court" and using the renewals reserve rather than capital (which was already overdrawn by £2,200), putting it £300 overdrawn in the process. The moneys in court involved the Chancery Court - what this was all about has yet to be discovered - presumably some pending legal dispute. In 1910 Mr Aitchison resigned as Manager (but was not replaced) but accepted an offer on the Board, and continued as Secretary.

We move on to 1913, when the new Chairman E E Lake presented the Directors report - "The Directors in submitting their report desire to place on record the great loss which the Company has sustained by the death on 29th August 1912 of their late Chairman and Managing Director Mr J Cholmeley Russell." At the previous half-year meeting in September a resolution had been passed to this effect alluding to over 30 years of his Chairmanship during which period he "had used his best efforts and devoted a large portion of his time to pro-

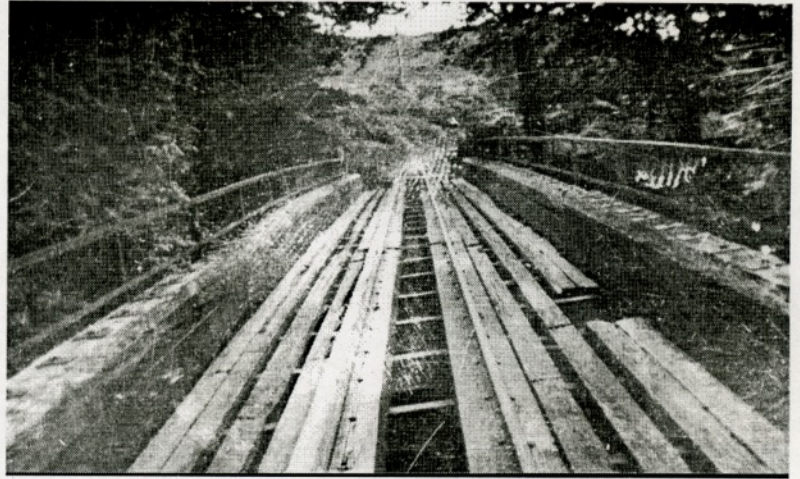
moting (the Company's) interests and that with only nominal remuneration."

Now we could look at the financial results on the right hand page. In February 1914 the Directors referred to the unsatisfactory result for 1913, showing a deficit of £206, before paying the Debenture Interest. The Debenture Holders had always done badly - of the £43,000 raised interest had only been paid on the "A" Debentures of £9,477, and even that stopped in 1912. No interest was ever paid on the "B" and "C" Debentures. Around £35,000 was owed in unpaid interest. Then there was a Lloyds Bond of £1,750 on which the interest payments stopped after 1911. The Balance Sheet had what were described as "old Liabilities" of £8,662, which sounds extremely insecure. And, of course the Shareholders, who had contributed £81,830, never got a dividend, and ultimately lost all of their investment.

Michael Bishop sheds light on the NWNNG's 'Dark Ages'

The amount of money subscribed in good faith by the original investors and frittered away, is worthy of a Charles Dickens novel. At the end of 1913 passenger trains on the Bryngwyn branch were abandoned.

The Directors regretted the unsatisfactory results of the 1913 working, "for although the Excursion Traffic was satisfactory, the Local Traffic has been very much depressed owing to the competition of Motor Char-a-bancs. At the same time the Slate Trade continues in a state of depression, for some part of the year the largest quarry sending traffic to the Railway being closed down."



Glanrafon Viaduct in 1921, with track in place, looking south. Photo C.R. Clinker

One of the results of the declining profitability was the lack of resources available to maintain the railway - Mr Aitchison in signing the Certificate as to the maintenance in working order of the "Company's Plant, and those Engines and Carriages" added the words "actually in use" and "owing to age, wear and tear several defects have recently developed in some of the engines which will require considerable expense. It is however necessary that the Engines should be repaired and tenders have been let for the purpose." Presumably this refers to the two Vulcan Fairlies.

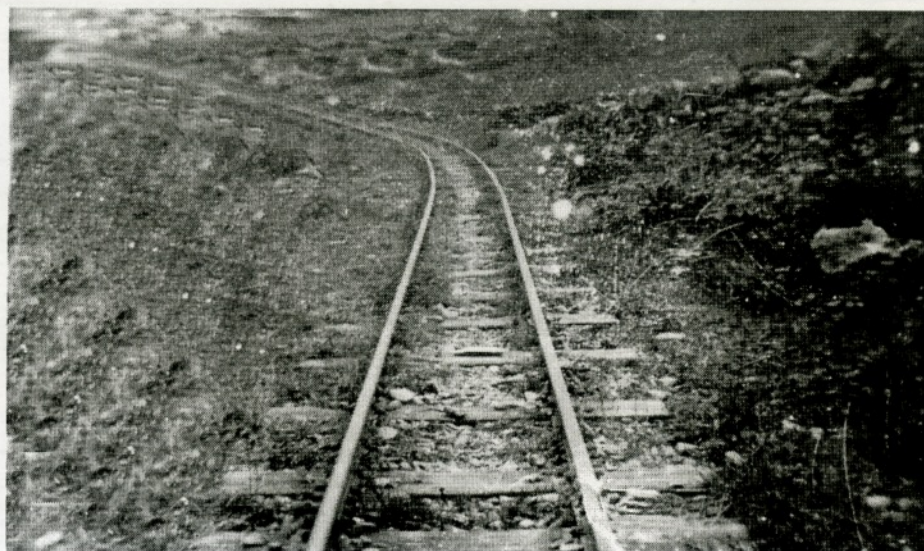
In 1914, there was bad news all round. All excursion bookings from other Companies were cancelled in August as a result of the outbreak of war, "and the most profitable part of the Passenger Traffic for the year was lost. The Local Traffic has also further decreased owing to the competition of Motor Char-a-bancs etc. The Slate Trade has also very much diminished, the tonnage showing a decrease of over 20% as compared with 1913 which again was over 22% less than in 1912."

Of course, this situation affected other railways, but with the onset of war, the Government took control of virtually the whole railway system through the Railways Executive Committee under powers put in place in 1871. This included the Festiniog Railway, but the NWNGR fell into the category of an isolated light railway which was regarded as being of no military significance. When the Government got to grips with how to deal with the Railway Compa-

nies it had effectively taken over and which were carrying war materials and servicemen for nothing, it was decided to guarantee their net receipts at those of 1913. This left the odd small companies like the NWNCR out in the cold and unprotected; what had been anticipated to be a short campaign dragged on till nearly the end of 1918. Prices escalated during the 4 years of war and by November 1918 were 122% above pre-war level (133% on food). In 1920 the NWNCR responded to a questionnaire as to how their wages and conditions compared with the connecting main line (ie the LNWR) with the answer "very far below; wages are governed by the amount of money available". The staff on "controlled" railways by comparison, (at least the main line ones like the LNWR) had had a war bonus which was gradually increased as prices went up.

In 1915 the slate trade diminished further "the tonnage showing a decrease of 60% as compared with 1914. On the other hand the traffic in Iron Ore and Timber has been quite satisfactory." There had always been a stock of 4 or 5 timber trucks, which went up to 11 in 1912, but the bar on imports as a result of the war situation, and probably exacerbated by the need for coal to produce munitions, caused a shortage of pit props. Vast areas of the country's woods were de-nuded to provide the timber required. In previous years this traffic was not separated from other merchandise, but in 1913 it was 1273 tons; unfortunately the tonnage figures for timber and iron stone are buried within others for other years. But we do know the 1919 figures for timber of 4213 tons and iron stone 3464 tons. It would be plausible if Iron Stone was in demand for the production of war materials. This stone came from the Ystrad-Isaf mine near Bettws Garmon, which Mr Boyd says closed in 1919.

The NWNCR abandoned the remaining 3 passenger trains officially at the end of October 1916, although the accounts summarised here suggest passenger fares were charged into 1917 (although it could be the result of late payments by quarries for workmen's trains). By this time "practically no passenger traffic was available." The Directors' Report continued: "The Slate Trade has still further decreased owing to the stoppage of building, and the stoppage of loading facilities has diminished the traffic in iron ore." Glanrafon Slate Quarry closed in 1916. The Chairman, Mr Lake had died but "it has not been thought necessary at the present time to appoint another Director".



"The track had degenerated into a poor state" - south of Glanrafon, looking north, photographed by C.R. Clinker in 1921

The 1918 results were no better, although "the traffic has been larger for some years, mainly owing to the Timber traffic, the expenses having increased in a greater ratio, the chief among them being on wages and repairs. . . ."

It is estimated that a sum of £75,000 will be required. . . . "

An interesting note appeared in the May 1919 issue of a short-lived magazine called Locomotive News and Railway Notes: "We have heard it on the highest authority that last year the locomotive "Gowrie" was sold to the Government and that the two locomotives "Moel Tryfan" and "Snowdon Ranger" have been dismantled and rebuilt into one locomotive with dimensions etc about the same as the separate locomotives before rebuilding."

The NWNCR struggled on, incurring, as the figures show, a sudden and substantial loss in 1921. Reading the report, commissioned in the summer by the new management from Major Spring, this is not surprising. The only regular traffic was a single train on 4 days a week from Dinas to Bryngwyn and back. "Owing to the weak rope on the (Bryngwyn) incline it is possible to lower three wagons only at a time, so that 3 to 4 hours are occupied in handling a train of 20 wagons over this incline." The only other traffic was a trip to Snowdon Station run when necessary "with coals and smalls".

In a letter of October 1919, it was stated that the share capital of the NWPT and hence the PB&SSR had been acquired by "a group in which the Aluminium Corporation Limited is largely interested" and "an arrangement has been made with the NWNCR . . . by which this line will be sold to the Portmadoc railway company for a total purchase of £26,000, payable as £20,000 in shares of the Portmadoc Company, and £6,000 in cash. . . . The Railway is in working order and is being used daily for goods, but passenger traffic was given up during the War, and has not yet been resumed, though the Company has a certain amount of passenger rolling stock. . . . Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons are engaged at present as contractors to the Aluminium Corporation Limited in building concrete dams for the conservation of water as part of the development scheme for the provision of cheap and abundant supply of electric power throughout Carnarvonshire and parts of Merionethshire and other portions of North Wales, . . . and they have prepared an estimate amounting to £68,559 as the cost of completing the Railway (ie to Portmadoc).

The track had degenerated into a poor state except the southern end - "every curve requires packing and lifting and a lot of ballast especially under joints is required." "The two permanent way men cannot of course keep the Permanent Way even weeded and the track is in a very poor state of maintenance."

He recorded mineral tonnage in July and August 1921 as:

Slates from Bryngwyn	411 and 663 tons
Coal	178 and 353 tons
Forwarded Goods	10 and 24 tons
Timber	6 tons

It is fortunate that by then the WHR was well on the way to becoming a reality, and the NWNCR section reopened for passengers on 31 July 1922, and the WHR main line to Portmadoc 10 months later.

NORTH WALES NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY - RESULTS 1912-1921

	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
PASSENGER NUMBERS										
First	174	226	130	151	75	-	-			
Third	23419	23399	14229	9516	4013	211	-			
Third Season	1	2	2	2	-	-	-			
	23594	23627	14361	9669	4088	211	0			
GOODS TONNAGE										
* Other Minerals (all originating on the line)	9059	7017	5588	8976	11455	8974	9679	7297	7588	7320
+ General Merchandise	827	1784	1700	2560	3777	2006	4456	4763	2550	?
o Coal + Coke (None originating)	5364	4353	3535	2701	2973	2764	2248	3754	see below	
	15250	13154	10823	14237	18205	13744	16383	15814	10138	?
* Other Minerals were shown as Slate in 1912 and 1913; Later it includes Iron Stone, but the breakdown is only available for 1919: 3833 tons of Slate and 3464 Iron Stone.										
+ Merchandise includes Timber, 1273 tons in 1913 (with nil comparative, but this may have been because a breakdown was not available)										
The only other year for which a breakdown is available is 1919 showing Timber 4213 tons and and this figure was not included in the returns, but has been added to the 1919 figure for Merchandise above. The figure for 1920 of 2550 tons therefore probably excludes any Timber but undoubtedly includes Coal (see note below and also Spring report)										
Round Timber carried was recorded in 1919 as 315 tons forwarded from Rhostryfan Station, 3651 tons Pit Props from Snowdon Station and 460 tons received at Waenfawr.										
4 Timber trucks appeared in the analysis by 1881, increasing to 11 at the end of 1912, but this figure was revised in the 1913 comparatives to 14 Rail & Timber Trucks, increasing to 29 in 1915, 34 in 1919 and 39 in 1920, but 18 in 1921.										
Merchandise originating:	84	1386	1374	2387	3480	2005	4220	?	?	185
o Coal and Patent Fuels was shown as nil in the returns 1919-21, but in 1919 it is clear that this commodity was included in the figure for Merchandise in the return. This figure has been excluded from Merchandise above, but in 1920 Coal is probably therefore included in the figure of 2550, which as suggested above, may not record any Timber carried.										
FINANCIAL RESULTS										
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
PASSENGER RECEIPTS										
Passengers 1st	12	13	7	9	4					
Passengers 3rd	569	567	322	218	101	11				
Third Seasons	1	7	7	8						
	582	587	336	235	105	11	0			

Recording Yesterday for Tomorrow

	12	13									
Parcels	42	62	25	15	6	3	3				
Merchandise	199	317	308	438	630	399	894				
Coal + Coke	496	412	337	265	314	331	283				
Other Minerals	877	688	539	614	919	921	972				
	1572	1417	1184	1317	1863	1651	2149				
TOTAL INCOME	£2,196	£2,066	£1,545	£1,567	£1,974	£1,665	£2,152	2,609			
Timber is recorded at £162 in 1913 (included above with Merchandise) with a nil comparative.											
Other Minerals is Slate in 1912 and 1913.											
EXPENDITURE											
Maint of way and works	329	333	173	167	260	265	354	313			
locomotives	194	165	151	144	246	139	191	177			
carriages	13	73	80	35	40	30	4	0			
Wagons	73	152	103	67	117	83	250	337			
Loco running expenses	496	570	491	467	457	404	488	625			
Traffic expenses	722	675	647	672	670	643	795	939			
General charges*	288	274	277	287	154	156	207	220			
Law charges	43	27	43		12			?			
Compensation		1	1		1	1	1	?			
Rates, Taxes, Govt Duty	37	124	87	110	87	109	98	?			
	£2,195	£2,394	£2,053	£1,949	£2,044	£1,830	£2,388	2734			
*Mainly salary of Secretary and assistant, but also Directors' and Auditors' Fees, and Insurance											
Profit/(Loss) on working	1	-328	-508	-382	-70	-165	-236	-125	-303	-1253	
Rents receivable	92	106	104	86	58	55	57	63	57	44	
Sundry income	127	16	16	13	10	21	1			1	
Net Income	220	-206	-388	-283	-2	-89	-178	-62	-246	-1,208	
Interest on Debentures	-1757	-1757	-1757	-1757	-1757	-1757	-1757	-1757	-1757	-1757	
Interest on Lloyds Bonds	-156	-156	-156	-156	-156	-156	-156	-156	-156	-156	
	-1,693	-2,119	-2,301	-2,196	-1,915	-2,002	-2,091	-1,975	-2,159	-3,121	
Balance brought forward	-37347	-39,040	-41,159	-43,460	-45,656	-47,571	-49,573	-51,664	-53,639	-55,798	
Balance carried forward	-£39,040	-£41,159	-£43,460	-£45,656	-£47,571	-£49,573	-£51,664	-£53,639	-£55,798	-£58,919	
Train Mileage	18517	* 19300	17026	13805	13432	11252	9687	7987	7054	5330	
		*	(incl 500 shunting miles)								



*Loading pit props (on which the man is standing) into a wagon at Rhyd Ddu in 1921.
Photo C.R. Clinker*

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“Progress”



placed an order on Bagnalls for the supply of a locomotive. Costing £350 No 1731, named ‘Progress’ – was delivered to Dinnis (sic) Junction on 14th July 1904. Being delivered a fortnight after the order date proves that when 1731 was laid down to stock it was effectively complete and ready for sale. Several photographs of PB&SSR construction work exist and even though none feature a locomotive one has perhaps always assumed that the contractor employed one.

help and guidance, and Vic Bradley for additional ‘snippets’. Allan was most surprised that we were unaware of the foregoing, particularly as it had become common knowledge in 1992 with the publication of the Industrial Railway Society’s North Wales handbook. Perhaps therefore those of us interested in the WHR and its predecessors do not always read the right books, let alone the small print!

Top picture shows ‘Progress’ at the Ronez Quarry in Jersey in 1913.

The lower picture is the standard design of this class of Bagnall locomotive. Allan C. Baker collection.

In May 1903 W.G. Bagnall Ltd of the Castle Engineering Works – Stafford laid down to stock a locomotive bearing their works No. 1731. Being of the most popular 2ft gauge it is likely to have been complete – or virtually so – and ready for sale.

This engine was a standard Bagnall product being a small 0-4-0 saddle tank with 1’ 6 7/8” diameter wheels, 3’ 0” wheelbase and outside cylinders of 6” bore and 9” stroke. E.E. Baguley having left Bagnalls in 1901 No 1731 was one of the first engines to be fitted with Bagnall-Price

valve gear as patented by W.S. Bagnall himself and his work’s manager S.T. Price

John Keylock Reveals Details of a Little Known Welsh Highland Locomotive

in 1903. A circular firebox was incorporated and boiler pressure was 140 psi. It is well known that in July 1903 Bruce Peebles of Edinburgh produced an estimate for the construction of the Porthmadog, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway and its electrical supply system. Peebles sub-contractor for building the PB&SSR was Augustus Krauss & Son of Bristol who on 30th June, 1904 –

It is rather disconcerting that it has taken one hundred years for this information to be put together, but on the other hand one must never expect to know – and understand – fully the involvements of the PB&SSR with Bruce Peebles and the North Wales Power & Traction Co.

It is easy to envisage ‘Progress’ – an appropriate name considering the optimistic circumstances of the time – being taken from Dinas to Rhyd Ddu along the NWNG but one can only speculate about the first work site to which she was taken from there.

An indication that PB&SS construction was not proceeding as planned is given by the fact that Krauss was advertising for sale

what must have been this locomotive in the Contract Journal for 2nd May 1906. She had been utilised for barely two years on the PB&SSR and is next heard of working at the Ronez granite quarry on Jersey. The only known photograph of her appears in the Oakwood Press book ‘The Jersey Eastern Railway’. The photograph was taken at the quarry in 1913, but spare parts had already been ordered from Bagnalls in 1909. A new boiler was ordered for the loco in 1921 and further spares in 1925; ‘deliver to Ronez

In ‘The Narrow Gauge’ No 89 for autumn 1980 an article about small Bagnalls by Allan C. Baker lists the Krauss order but even at that date Krauss had not been positively identified as the PB&SSR contractor.

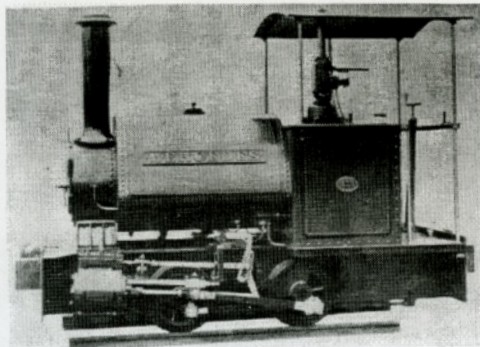
In compiling this article the writer is much indebted to Allan Baker for his

Special Slates - A Winter's Tale

A slate quarry served by the FR produced writing slates. Some of these, having been brought down to Porthmadog, were collected by the WHR for delivery to a small manufactory where wooden frames were fitted for use in schools

It was a Friday in winter and Goronwy Roberts was driving such a train load of special slates with Wilf Jones as stoker and Dafydd Lloyd-Hughes as the almost inevitable guard. Having arrived at Rhyd Ddu after mid-day it was snowing and they were told it was falling heavier further up the line and so to be on the alert. Having crossed Glanrafon bridge they could see that indeed the snow was falling heavily. In anticipation of being snowed up it was decided to detach their load of special slates and make a light engine dash for Snowdon Ranger. This they did and pulled up besides the water tower at 2.00pm.

At this period – early 1930s – Snowdon Ranger was an hotel run by a Mrs Hughes who had two daughters and kept a bit of a shop for the benefit of visitors and local people. So the train crew were ‘holed-up’ there for Friday night and most of Saturday. As Goronwy recalled in 1988 – “Believe me it was the best snowdrift I ever had in my life because we were doing nothing all day; only talking to the girls. Happy memories!”



August Krauss

In constructing the PB&SSR Mr Boyd tells us of 'a Bristol Contractor' employed by Bruce Peebles. Said contractor – or perhaps more correctly, sub contractor – was one August Krauss, or more precisely, Johann Bernard Ignatz August Krauss. The son of a farmer, he was born in 1842 at Schwalbach, near Frankfurt-on-Maine, in Germany where he was privately educated. He came to live in Bristol about 1870 and on the 28th June 1871 married Alice Eliza Elliott 'of London'. His first employment is described as 'carpenter and builder. By 1881 he was obviously well established as a 'master contractor' employing '65 hands'. He would also seem to have been successful judging from his household - four daughters, an older son (August William, born 1874), three servants, a nurse, his wife's elder sister and his wife. His first contribution to the streets of Bristol was the provision of cabman's kiosks to provide shelter during inclement weather. In 1876 he graduated to tramway construction for which task he became best known. Not only did he build tramways in Bristol but also in Bath, Newport, Darlaston and York. He was also responsible for seafront improvements at Weston-Super-Mare, and other developments in Bridgwater, Frome, and Pontypridd, as well as the construction of High-bridge waterworks and the Atlantic low water cable beacon. Furthermore he built Bristol Constitutional Club premises and Carlton Chambers.

It is reasonable to assume that Krauss became involved with Bruce Peebles through his tramway connection. By virtue of the reference in Peebles' estimate to a section of the PB&SSR that was to be of 'street tramway' type perhaps he was even consulted in its formulation? At this period he was in his early sixties and his younger wife had died in 1887, aged 39. Maybe the loss of his wife and his Germanic nature were the stimuli that kept him going in the contracting business.

However, his PB&SSR involvement was not to prove as successful as his many previous contracts. By this time he had taken his son into the business to form

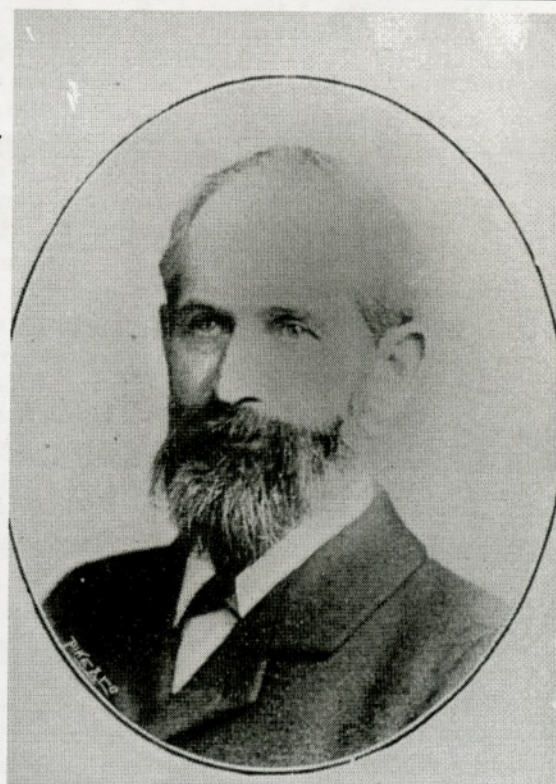
Augustus Krauss and Son. There are several photographs showing PB&SSR construction circa 1905 and one wonders whether Krauss junior is one of those featured – along with the NWNGR Secretary & General Manager and North Wales Power & Traction Manager, Gowrie Aitchison? It would seem that Krauss stopped work early in 1906.

The only surviving reference to August Krauss in the Heritage Group archives comes in a letter to Aitchison written in January 1906 by one John Thomas of Cwm Cloch Isaf. He said that he had shown a letter written by Aitchison to the 'people of Bruce Peebles and Krauss & Son about a bridge'. Representatives of the latter companies retorted that they had 'nothing to do with it' (the bridge). The letter continues, 'they told me (John Thomas) that they won't be working the railway for about three months and that's a long time to leave that bridge as it is'. We know that this cessation of work was the re-

John Keylock continues his look at significant figures in the line's history

sult of difficulties having arisen between the contractors (Peebles) and the sub contractors (Krauss). Even in October 'the matter is still in dispute and the Directors of the PB&SSR (to whom the powers of the NWNG Beddgelert Extension had been transferred), unfortunately are not in a position to state at which date the line will be completed'. John Thomas was not alone with his bridge problem; landowners Dorman and Colonel Parry were threatening litigation over walls and fences not erected!

So the job was running out of money, but no one was prepared to admit it even though in February 1906 Russell had clearly seen the 'writing on the



wall'! In December 1907 Krauss & Son received from Peebles eight hundred NWP&T £5 shares being almost certainly the only way that Krauss could be paid his outstanding dues – or at least part thereof.

August Krauss became President of the Bristol Master Builders Federation, founded – and became President of – the West of England Federation of Builders and hardly surprising, was a Freemason. Being a keen sportsman – of the hunting, fishing and fishing type – he enjoyed those pursuits from a retreat on Dartmoor. Having remained a German citizen he died aged 68 on 21st May 1910 at his substantial Tyndall's Park, Bristol residence and was buried in Arnos Vale Cemetery on 25th. Among the many mourners was the Lord Mayor of Bristol, indicative of the esteem in which he was held in the community.

This article has been inspired by Michael Bishop, whose continued delving into matters PB&SSR and NWNG Rlys is much appreciated.

Constructive Comment Column!

Bruce Peebles

Michael Bishop (WHH No 29) analyses Bruce Peebles' involvement in the PBSSR with the benefit of access to documents that have recently become available. Unfortunately he repeats the canard that Peebles' railway-building activities were instigated without contractual authority whilst presenting evidence that contradicts this claim. Firstly, however, I must state that when I was compiling *Portrait of the Welsh Highland Railway* (published 1999) I also formed the opinion that Peebles had proceeded in advance of contract. This was in ignorance of a similar claim by Rodney Weaver cited in the article. However, by the time I came to *An Illustrated History of the Welsh Highland Railway* (published 2002) I had concluded that this view was erroneous. In the latter I referred to Eric Jones and David Gwyn's *Dolgarrog: An Industrial History* (Gwynedd Archives, 1989), where they showed that Bruce Peebles had been part of a group that had taken over the PBSSR in 1903 and was thereby involved in the activities of both the PBSSR and the North Wales Power & Traction Co at the highest level.

The WHH article had earlier quoted the NWPT minute recording the acceptance of Peebles' estimate/tender. It is reasonable to assume that if the tender was accepted and the work started then a contract must have been awarded, especially when we can see that the parties were so careful to regulate their affairs by contract subsequently.

The evidence presented in the article clearly shows that Bruce Peebles' collapse was not directly brought about by its PBSSR activities but by the NWPT's financial problems. I would advocate that the 1907 'cancellation contract' arose not because Peebles was in trouble but because NWPT was unable to pay for the work carried out. Why else would NWPT have allocated £60,000 in debentures to Peebles? 'If you can't pay, issue debentures' seem to have been a regular, if not particularly sound, business maxim — we've seen it put into practice with the NWNGR, the WHR and the FR. Peebles had invested £51,305 in NWPT, a third of the issued capital, which would have given it influence at board level — it certainly

would not have hindered the award of the contract to build and equip the PBSSR. It obviously expected to be paid for the PBSSR work and to see the value of the shares increase when the project was completed. With £4,000 shares offloaded to August Strauss, Peebles had an investment of £47,305 in NWPT capital and £60,000 in debentures at risk, a considerable sum, especially if all or some of it represented borrowed money, and the last is pure speculation! Whilst electricity generation is a very profitable business, Cwm Dylif, the only success of the PBSSR saga, is still generating 100 years on, the start-up is very capital intensive and any weakness will quickly become apparent.

Peter Johnson

Harbour Station Coaling stage — corrections and further thoughts.

I must, first, take issue with the headline/title under which this article was printed. The second line was not included in the title I gave my piece and it gives a misleading impression; if the truth be told the various photographs have raised far more questions than they answered!

Secondly, I need to correct an error that has crept into this article. The second complete sentence in column 2, p.7, left me reading "In the two enlargements (Detail 2 & 3) it can be seen that the platform has been extended." Somewhere between it leaving my computer (I still have the original file) and appearing in print the final word, "upwards", has been added, but that is not the case.

In fact I was referring to the lateral extension of the platform that is most obvious when Figs. 1 & 2, and their respective detail enlargements, are compared.

David Woodcock took me to task and I'm grateful to him for causing me to read the article again. David also wondered how the stage was supported, while by the water tank, whether it was still on its wheels and whether it was ever used.

Dealing with the last question first. Having looked closely at all available photographs I am certain that the stage has lost its wheels and is sitting on its axleboxes on the ground, which is slightly raised beneath it.

I agree with David that, in the photographs in WHH 30, there is no evidence of coal on the stage and suggest that it had fallen out of use by this time.

Having prepared the article for WHH 30 I found myself looking again at other photographs, with the result that I believe I have found evidence in a very grainy postcard of the mobile stage being used to coal a double Fairlie, before the Great War, at the same position shown in Fig.1. I have also found an old plan (date uncertain) that shows a 'coal siding' in just the right place. As we are now moving into the history of Festiniog, rather than Welsh Highland, operations the fruits of any further research are likely to appear in the FRHG Journal.

Adrian Gray

Crossing the Cambrian - More Thoughts

(see Richard's article in WHH No 30)

1. In the "1924" photograph, the point rods emerge from the signalbox base to pass either side of a standard gauge sleeper. By 1932 they all passed under the standard gauge rails, between two sleepers.
2. The standard gauge chairs in the "1932" photograph appear to be standard G.W.R. two bolt pattern, whereas the narrow gauge ones look much older, and are possibly of Cambrian Railways origin. These have a vertical rib from foot to apex and appear to be fixed to the sleepers by means of 3 dome-headed spikes as opposed to the through bolts apparent on the standard gauge.
3. Because of the lower height of the bridge rail against that of the adjacent bullhead, the former has been raised by means of (timber?) packing pieces.
4. The length of the narrow gauge portion of the bridge rail is evidently shorter than that on the standard.
5. The WHR is evidently seeing very light traffic at this period: witness the shrub apparently growing very close to the rails just this side of the gate! The standard of weedkilling isn't as good from the point where the flat bottom rails begin. Perhaps that marked the boundary of the GWR's jurisdiction.
6. Is anything known as to who owned the land, and the crossing metals, at this point?

Richard Watson