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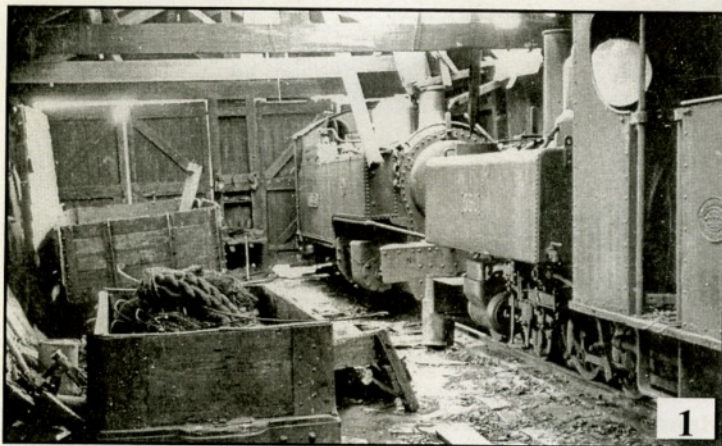
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'Russell' 1906 - 2006 The Life of a Legend

2006 represents the centenary of a most famous narrow gauge steam locomotive. Built by the Hunslet Engine Company of Leeds in 1906, she was given their works number 901. *Russell's* history on the NWNG and the WHR has been well documented in Andrew Neale's booklet and pictures of the locomotive working on the WHR in both original and 'cut down' condition are familiar to most. This appreciation will thus concentrate on '*Russell*' in absentia – away from North Wales.

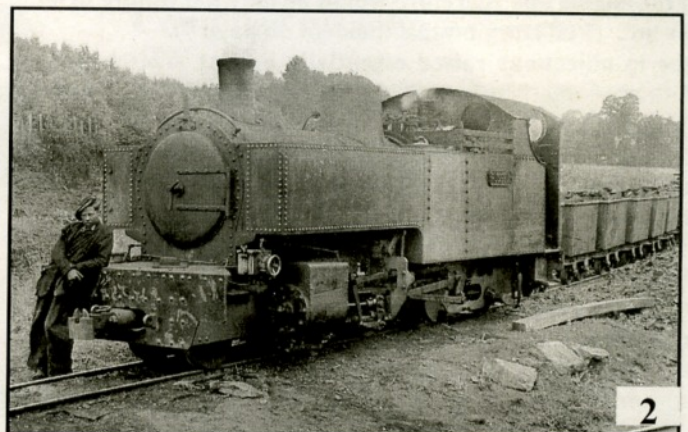
From the cessation of WHR services in 1937, until 1942

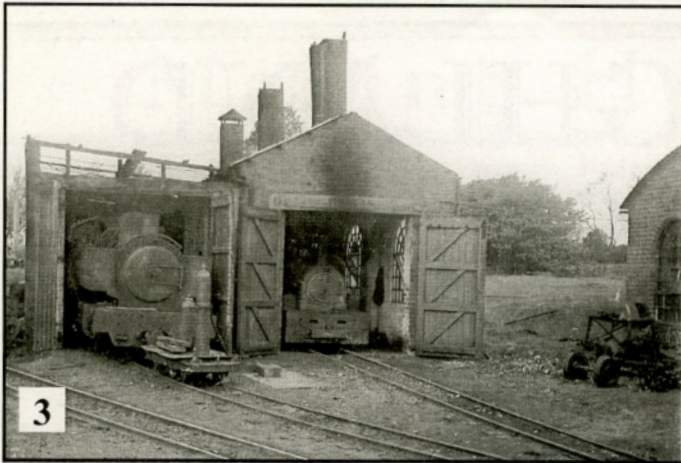


some reason '*Russell's*' front buffer beam re-railing jack brackets were removed during her stay at Hook Norton. (See picture 2 below). However, '*Russell*' soldiered on until the mine's closure in 1946. Two years were to elapse – perhaps in the lean-to engine shed especially built (see picture 3 on page 2) – before '*Russell*' was moved to Weyhill near Andover for inclusion in a Ministry of Supply sale. '*Russell*' was purchased by B. Fayle and Co., Ltd., for use at their Norden ball clay pits on the Isle of Purbeck in Dorset. (See picture 4 on page 2) To accommodate '*Russell*' the necessary track was reduced from 3' 9" to the 'two foot' and perhaps inevitably '*Russell*' suffered derailments as at Hook Norton. Again the 0-6-2T wheel configuration was resorted to in an attempt to reduce 'off the track' time. By 1953 '*Russell*' was in poor mechanical condition and a fractured driving axle enforced withdrawal from service.

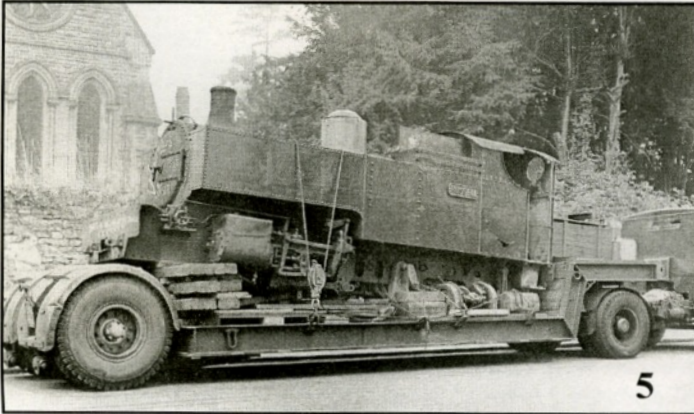
'*Russell*' languished in the Dinas engine shed along with the Baldwin '590'. (See picture 1 above) The latter was cut up on site in August 1942, but *Russell* was acquired, through the Ministry of Supply, by the Brymbo Steel Co. Ltd., near Wrexham. This company owned substantial open-cast iron ore mines based on Hook Norton in Oxfordshire and needed more locomotives to help fulfil wartime demand for iron ore. (The NWNG benefited from a similar demand for iron ore from Bettws Garmon during WW1, when doubtless '*Russell*' was involved with haulage).

Before dispatch to Hook Norton during the first half of 1943 '*Russell*' was overhauled at Brymbo and provided with a new set of nameplates, one of which is on show in the Big Shed at Gelert's Farm. '*Russell*' and the uneven, light and tightly curved track were incompatible and derailments were frequent. In an attempt to alleviate this problem running as an 0-6-2T was tried – certainly in 1945 – and for





In 1954 – for £70 – ‘Russell’ was purchased from Fayles by the Birmingham Locomotive Club and we must ever be grateful for this early preservation initiative. At this time the Tallylyn Railway was already back in business, but the FR wasn't and the BLC well appreciated that ‘Russell’ would have been more ‘at home’ in Portmadoc (as it was spelt then).



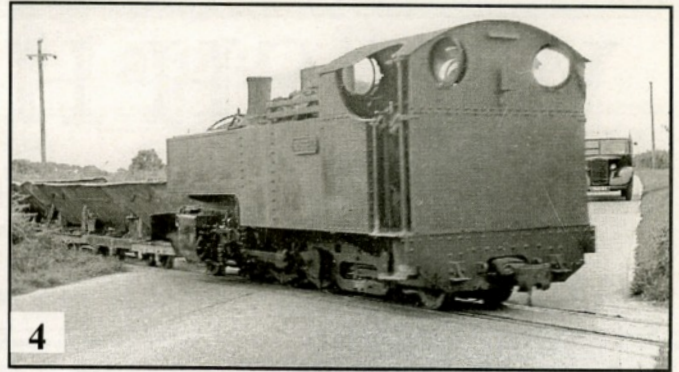
(Picture 5 shows Russell on a low loader at Ludlow en route to Towyn). So 1955 saw ‘Russell’ on a length of track alongside the original museum building and well exposed to the salt-laden air! (See picture & article on page 7).

In 1957 Eric Tonks – secretary of the BLC – wrote to the board of the FR through Trevor Bailey - offering ‘Russell’ “and if they will have her – and maintain her – she will be sent there”. A letter from Trevor Bailey confirmed that “the FR Company has accepted in principle the proposal to return ‘Russell’ to Boston Lodge.....” It then seems as though it was simply a case of ‘sorting out the detail’ particularly in view of ‘the TR having complained about the state of the engine and therefore would be only too willing to let her go’. (Full story on this incident on page 7).

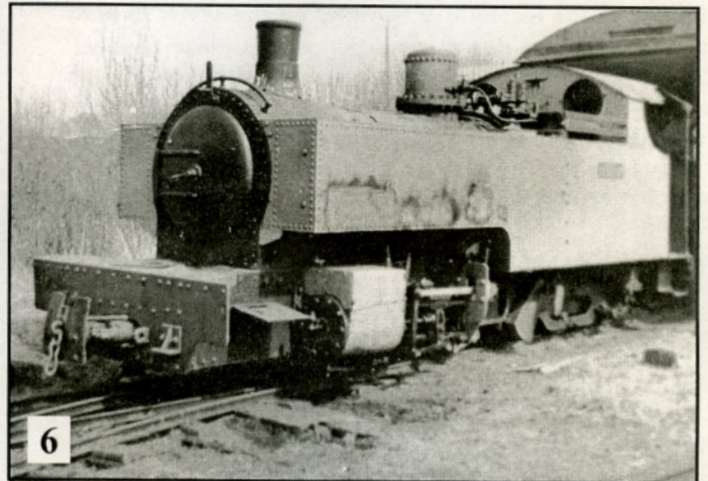
Due to objections raised essentially by Pat Whitehouse (father of one Michael Whitehouse) ‘Russell’ stayed at Towyn.

Moving to 1959 – and two more years of ‘Russell’s’ deteriorating condition’ “the FR board have decided to accept ‘Russell’ on the terms and conditions laid down by the TRPS” – even though she wasn't there property!

Why this second agreement to move ‘Russell’ from Towyn to Porthmadog went pear-shaped is unclear but one can surmise with reasonable accuracy! One aspect is certain; the politics of railway preservation remain much the same 50 years on.

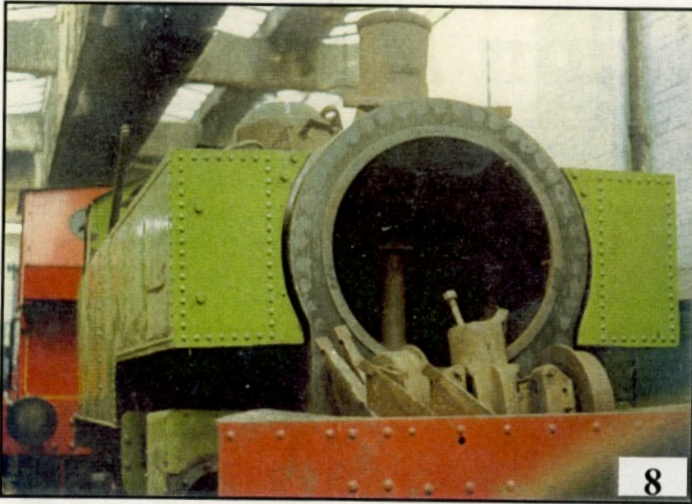


By 1964 the original WH Society had become the ‘64 Coy’ – (now WHR Ltd) - and had established a depot at Kinnerley in Shropshire. Because covered accommodation was available here the Birmingham Locomotive Club agreed to transfer ownership of ‘Russell’ to the fledgling WH organisation. In April 1965 ‘Russell’ moved from Towyn to Kinnerley – the broken axle having been repaired by Hunslet's free of charge in the meantime. (See picture 6 below, while picture 9 shows Russell being unloaded by a BR steam crane at Shrewsbury on 14th April 1965 having arrived there by rail from Towyn; the low loader then took her to Kinnerley).



It was then a case of fund raising and ordering a new boiler from Hunslet's - £3,400 – (prices would appear to have increased 15-fold in the last 40 years!). This was fitted at Hunslet's Works in 1970, but three years were to elapse before payments were complete. Next stop – Steamtown at Carnforth where little work was done and very few photographs were taken. Although the writer has seen one such perhaps this article will induce others into the public domain? (See that one picture 8 by Peter Haworth).





In July 1974 'Russell' moved yet again, via the Mersey Tunnel with an escort, from Carnforth to Hills and Bailey's workshops at Llanberis. (See picture 7 on page 2). It was while here that the full extent of remedial work required was revealed. The '64 Coy' was by now established on



Beddelert Sidings and in August 1977 your compiler achieved his only claim to fame by providing and driving the lorry that transported 'Russell' in two loads from Llanberis to Porthmadog!

Back in 1906 only 3 ½ months elapsed between 'Russell' being ordered and delivered. This was because rarely is a steam locomotive a completely new design. 'Russell' had her origins in locomotives first built for the Sierra Leone Railway (S.L.R.) in 1898 and Leeds No. 1 for Leeds Corporation Waterworks in 1905. (One has only to look at photographs of these two designs to see the similarities).

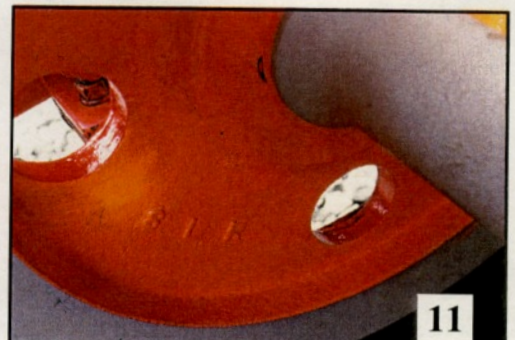


'Russell's' wheel were cast from the same moulds as used for the S.L.R. Locomotives, hence "S.L.R." being cast into the inside of at least one of 'Russell's' driving wheels (picture 11). "Camell Steel 1906" is cast into one of her axles (picture 10). Cammells were at Penistone, not far from Leeds - the name being familiar in later years as Cammell Laird, shipbuilders, of Birkenhead .

Eventually in 1987 - 50 years after the cessation of traffic on the original Welsh Highland and following a journey that took her from Wrexham to Dorset via Oxford - 'Russell' returned to steam on her home metals. 2006 is 'Russell's' centenary year but alas she's 'out of ticket' and reduced once again to her component parts. When rebuilt 'Russell' should look even more as originally built. (See picture 12 above as that dome is removed).

Happy centenary 'Russell', albeit in a state of undress!

Compiled by John Keylock



Russell Restoration Report

The scene inside the loco shed at Gelert's Farm could be Leeds in 1906 or Porthmadog a hundred years later. The frames of a steam engine are being prepared for riveting, while the freshly painted wheels stand alongside.

It's a precision job, with an attention to detail which would make 'Russell's' original builders proud. The restoration of the frames, which has formed most of the work so far, includes putting back bits that 'Russell' hasn't had since around 1910.

The whole project began back in June last year, when we started by taking 'Russell' apart.

It was quite a poignant day for many of us at Gelert's Farm – after several years of seeing 'Russell'

Mark Herbert, who is co-ordinating the Restoration Appeal, provides an update on progress

around the works, we had to start getting used to the sight of a pile of bits in the shed, and the maroon cab and tanks looking forlorn behind the shed.

The good news was that 'Russell's' boiler is in good condition. All the boiler tubes have been removed, and are now sitting in a pile alongside the shed. If you

know anyone who has any use for 97 used tubes, do get in touch. It's actually been suggested we sell them to raise money – who knows!

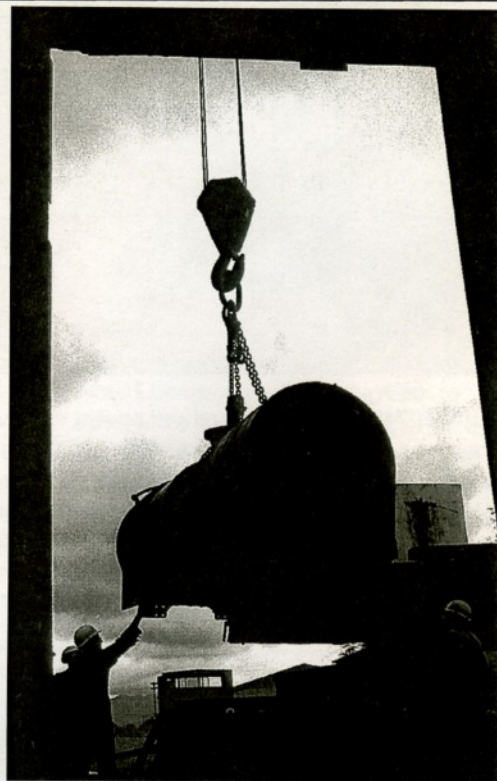
Since then, our mechanical engineer David Pritchard (known around the works as Daffy) has concentrated on the frames. They've been welded to the rails inside the locomotive shed, where the front buffer beam, drag box and the badly worn frame stretchers have been removed.

Work on the frames so far has included building up the top of drag box plates with weld, and preparing new buffer beams for the front and back of the locomotive. The buffer beams are one of the places where Daffy's attention to detail is very much in evidence. Have a look at very old photos of 'Russell' in 1909, and

you'll see that he had rounded corners to the front buffer beams. Now look at later photos, during the WHR period, and you'll see that a hexagonal section has been removed, probably for jacking up the locomotive if it derailed. As part of our attempts to get 'Russell' as close as possible to original condition, the buffer beams are being restored to their 1906 shape.

At the time of writing, the front buffer beam is sitting ready to be riveted to the frames. The driving wheels are now pristine after many hours were spent scraping and painting them. Sadly the driving wheels have also thrown up the only bad news so far – one of them has a crack and will need replacing. This is an expensive job, as it means paying someone to make a pattern first.

'Russell' is 100 years old this year, and we'll be celebrating his birthday with a special gala in his honour on 29th and 30th July. It's called "100 not out!", and there'll be a rare chance to see inside the shed where 'Russell' is being restored, and get an update on progress. 'Russell' himself won't be in service, but we will be assembling 100 different models, miniature replicas and pictures of him, and even a tapes-

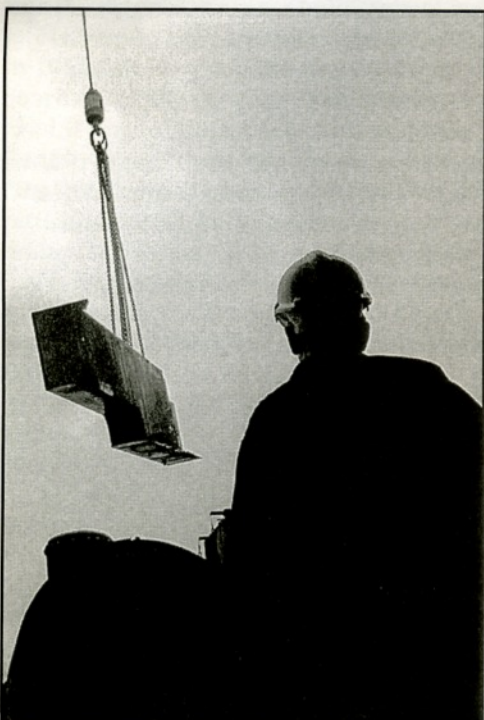


Dramatic silhouettes highlight Russell's dismantling in 2005 - photos David Allan

try for the weekend. There'll also be chance to see the Leighton Buzzard Railway's two steam engines 'Chaloner' and 'Rishra' in action, at the start of their visit to the WHR(P) this Summer. Chaloner is a fascinating piece of Welsh narrow gauge heritage in its own right, having been built in Caernarfon for the quarries in the Nantlle Valley.

'Russell' won't be back with us for some years yet. This is partly because we need to do a thorough job on the frames and motion so the loco is in top condition for when it has to run to Beddgelert and beyond, a run which will allow 'Russell' to show what he's really capable of, but which will certainly test him a lot more than our short stretch to Pen-y-Mount.

Finally, there's one thing that I must mention, and that's the continuing need for money to get 'Russell' steaming again. In this issue, there's a leaflet for the "Russell Restoration Fund", and your help would be much appreciated. WHHG members have been extremely generous towards the WHR's flagship locomotive already, let's all look forward to the day when we can see him steaming again!



The Very Last Passenger Train

As a result of one of those serendipitous quirks of fate with which the railway abounds, an eyewitness account of the make up of the very last passenger train on the Welsh Highland has survived. Not just the last train either, but also that of several of the trains that ran during those fateful dog days of the line in the summer of 1936.

We have to thank for this remarkable record that youthful chronicler and photographer of Welsh Highland affairs – Geoffrey Hughes. As has been recorded previously in these pages, Geoffrey was the son of the vicar of Llanwnda and lived in the then vicarage at the top of the lane that leads today (and then) to Dinas station. Not only do we have to thank him for his many photographs of the railway's operation in its declining years, but also for his handwritten record of the consist of those last trains on which he (presumably) travelled.

Geoffrey's hand written notes have been transcribed and tabulated in the table opposite. For the sake of consistency the carriages have been 'named' as well as those numbers, that he supplied in his notes. There are inevitably some anomalies that have also been corrected.

Derek Lystor writes: -

Mr Hughes' notes are quite fascinating. Assuming that they represent the actual journeys he made then the workings on 13th August are most interesting. He



got on at Dinas, taking the 11.25am to South Snowdon, hauled by '590', and there changed to a Portmadoc bound train with 'Welsh Pony', and got off at Nantmor just after 1.05pm. He may have been visiting or on business or just gricing before reaching Beddgelert in time to catch the 4.50pm (3.55pm ex Portmadoc New) back to South Snowdon. Here he changed onto the Dinas train, arriving there at 6.15pm.

There were three daily trains in each direction during the summer season that year and we can safely deduce that the first and last trains (depart Dinas -11.25am & 4.50pm) were hauled by '590', and the first and last from Portmadoc New (10.45am & 3.55pm) were hauled by 'Welsh Pony', each service

running to South Snowdon and back. Unfortunately for us, Mr Hughes was otherwise engaged at Nantmor during the time the other trains (Dinas depart 1.30pm & Portmadoc New depart 2.00pm) were running. These in all probability would have been hauled by the same locos, but Beddgelert was the changeover point. It is interesting to note that some shuffling of coaches took place, with '590' losing the Gladstone Car, but picking up No. 28 (Ashbury Open) as a possible replacement, and No. 27 (Ashbury Open) from the Portmadoc rake.

How poignant it is to see an actual eyewitness account of 'Russell' hauling the last train and what a tribute it would be to the Welsh Highland, both old and new, to see that same locomotive hauling the very first passenger train over the reconstructed line when the link to Porthmadog is opened. Quite a unique event - the loco that hauled the final train hauling the first on the same line, but over eighty years later!!



The Photographs

Both of these photographs were taken at Beddgelert on the 8th July 1936 by S.W. Baker. The consist is exactly as Geoffrey Hughes notes in his log on the 10th July, just two days later. The coaches are the Buffet Car, the Picking and the Gladstone.

Recording Yesterday for Tomorrow

DATE	LOCOMOTIVE	DEP. TIME	FROM	TO	TRAIN
10 th July	Russell	4.50pm 5.35pm (ret)	Dinas Junction South Snowdon	South Snowdon Dinas Junction	Saloon No. 34 (Buffet) No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) Observation Car (Gladstone)
11 th July	Russell	4.50pm 5.35pm (ret)	Dinas Junction South Snowdon	South Snowdon Dinas Junction	Saloon No. 34 (Buffet) No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) Observation Car (Gladstone)
17 th July	Russell	1.30pm 3.15pm (ret)	Dinas Junction Beddgelert	Beddgelert Dinas Junction	Third Class Open No. 28 No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering)
1 st August	Russell	4.50pm 5.35pm	Dinas Junction South Snowdon	South Snowdon Dinas Junction	No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) No. 34 (Buffet)
8 th August	Russell	4.50pm 5.35pm (ret)	Dinas Junction South Snowdon	South Snowdon Dinas Junction	No. 28 (Ashbury 3 rd class open) No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) No. 34 (Buffet)
13 th August	Baldwin	11.25am	Dinas Junction	South Snowdon	No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) No. 34 (Buffet) Observation Car (Gladstone)
13 th August	Welsh Pony	12.15pm	South Snowdon	Aberglaslyn	No. 26 (Ashbury Summer) No. 9 (Pickering) No. 25 (Ashbury Corridor) No. 27 (Ashbury Open)
13 th August	Welsh Pony	4.50pm	Beddgelert	South Snowdon	No. 26 (Ashbury Summer) No. 9 (Pickering) No. 25 (Ashbury Corridor) No. 27 (Ashbury Open)
13 th August	Baldwin	5.35pm	South Snowdon	Dinas Junction	No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) No. 28 (Ashbury 3 rd Class Open) No. 27 (Ashbury Open) No. 34 (Buffet)
15 th August	Baldwin	4.50pm 5.35pm	Dinas Junction South Snowdon	South Snowdon Dinas Junction	No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) No. 34 (Buffet) Observation Car (Gladstone)
18 th August	Baldwin	4.50pm 5.35pm (ret)	Dinas Junction South Snowdon	South Snowdon Dinas Junction	No. 27 (Ashbury Open) No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) No. 34 (Buffet) Observation Car (Gladstone)
31 st August	Russell	4.50pm 5.35pm (ret)	Dinas Junction South Snowdon	South Snowdon Dinas Junction	No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) No. 34 (Buffet) Observation Car (Gladstone)
1 st September	Russell		Waunfawr	Dinas Junction (Arr. 6.15pm)	Observation Car (Gladstone) No. 34 (Buffet) No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering)
12 th September	Russell	4.50pm 5.35pm (ret)	Dinas Junction South Snowdon	South Snowdon Dinas Junction	No. 8 Brake Compo (Pickering) No. 34 (Buffet)
19 th September	Russell		Bettws Garmon	Dinas Junction (arr 4.35pm)	No. 34 (Buffet) No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering)
21 st September	Russell	11.25am	Dinas Junction	Portmadoc New (1931)	No. 8 Compo Brake (Pickering) No. 34 (Buffet)
26 th September	Russell	11.25am	Dinas Junction	Portmadoc New (1931)	No. 9 (Pickering) No. 25 (Ashbury Corridor) Wagon No. 9 (4-wheeled coal wagon) to Beddgelert Wagon No. 6 (4-wheeled coal wagon) to South Snowdon FR Wagon No. 128 (4-wheeled coal) wagon to South Snowdon
26 th September	Russell	2.00pm	Portmadoc New (1931)	Dinas Junction	No. 9 (Pickering) No. 25 (Ashbury Corridor)

How 'Russell' was Rejected by the FR

Things could have been so different..... May we turn the clock back some fifty years to Boston Lodge - 1956? That inconvenient WHR loco, 'Moel Tryfan', had been cut up and sold for scrap in 1954, but now, just two years later, having disposed of one WHR loco, the FR were considering the acquisition of another, and this time it was 'Russell'. The situation was mired in confusion; pragmatism versus altruism, probability versus possibility, Garraway versus the members.

The main players were one Basil Millar for the FR (who was transport manager for the Southern Gas Board in the Portsmouth area) and Eric Tonks, secretary of the Birmingham Locomotive Club.

What follows is a synopsis of their correspondence and the events that would lead to the FR finally rejecting the possibility of acquiring 'Russell'.

August 1956 - Millar to Tonks :

"May I suggest that you write to Mr Pegler asking for his help in allowing the engine to be moved (from Towyn) and put in the back of the shed at Boston Lodge. Whatever Mr Garraway says it is ridiculous to suggest that there is no room.....!"

By the end of 1956 Tonks still hadn't written to Pegler because the loco couldn't be moved until the repaired axle had been returned from Hunslets.

May 1957 - Millar to Tonks :

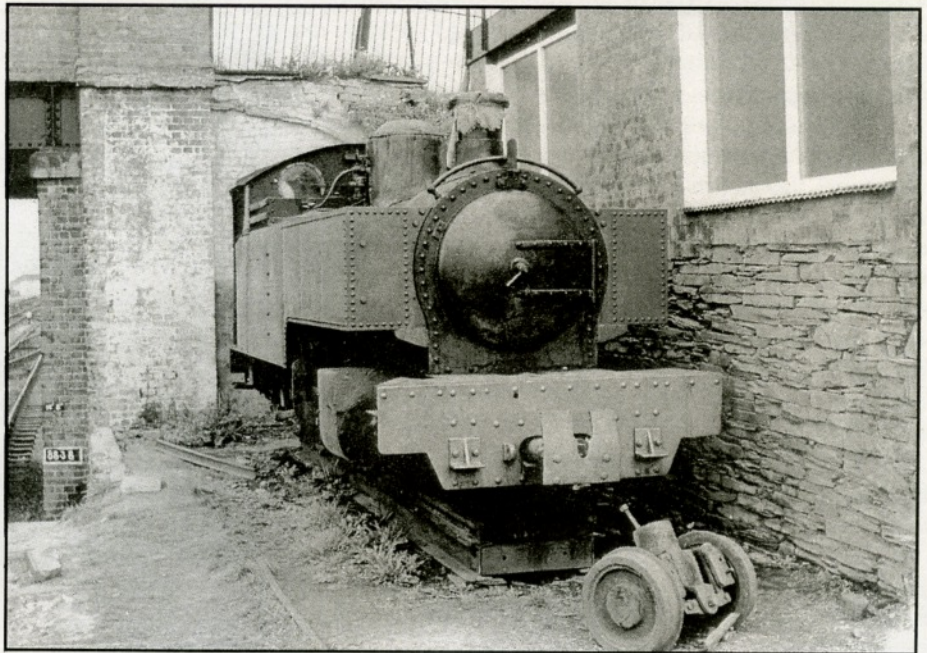
(Millar having met Trevor Bailey (the Festiniog's PR man at the time at Towyn).

"At a recent meeting of the FR Society 'there was a strong expression of opinion that accommodation for 'Russell' should be offered at Boston Lodge.....!"

Mr Garraway contended that *"they (the FR) had enough engines of their own and they wanted (to use) FR and not 'foreign' engines."*

May 1957 - Tonks to Millar :

(Millar, along with Arthur Rimmer who was also keen to see 'Russell' at 'Port', and who were both FR Society members).



"the committee of the Birmingham Loco Club felt a moral obligation to the Talylyn and would therefore not offer 'Russell' to the FR".

May 1957 - Tonks to Millar :

"The best thing you, Arthur Rimmer, et al can do is convince the FR of 'Russell's' asset value and get them to write to the Birmingham Loco Club requesting movement to Port".

August 1957 Millar to Tonks :

(By this time the FR had purchased the Peckett ex Harrogate Gas Works, inadvisably with hindsight, and without any Garraway enthusiasm).

"I suggest that Birmingham Loco Club write to the FR board suggesting that 'Russell' be moved to Boston Lodge; being exposed to the sea air at Towyn she is fast deteriorating. I will help fund the transport costs".

August 1957 Tonks to Millar :

"At the next committee meeting (next week) I will propose that the FR be written to and if they will have her - and maintain her - she be sent there". (It would seem that a copy of the letter was sent to Trevor Bailey).

September 1957 - Millar to Tonks :

"I had a letter from Mr Bailey in which he said that the FR Coy has accepted in principle the proposals to return

'Russell' languishing forlornly outside the museum building at Towyn after having been moved there from Hook Norton

'Russell' to Boston Lodge and that he had written to your club to that effect....."

October 1957 :

By now it is 'Eric' (Tonks) to 'Basil' (Millar).

"It is now merely a matter of details....." (regarding 'Russell's' move from Towyn to 'Port') "The Talylyn have complained many times about the state of the engine so I expect they will be only too willing to let her go!"

17th October 1957 - Tonks to Millar :

(In which Tonks hits a snag)
"I am so sorry to report a very serious snag...I wrote to the TRPS ..setting out all the past history and explaining that we had been driven to seek help from the FR as we had little hope of doing repair work ourselves. They were not at all pleased as apparently they regard 'Russell' as the star exhibit of the museum.

I had a long chat with Pat Whitehouse and the upshot is that the loco should remain at Towyn unless the FR take her on the definite understanding that she is to be put in running order.

....if she is to become a museum piece she will stay at Towyn....if however Mr Pegler is willing to guarantee that the

engine will be restored to working order in reasonable time then TRPS will consider letting her go.....”

20th October 1957 - Millar to Tonks :

(In which Millar was not happy).
 “It is utter rubbish to claim that ‘Russell’ is regarded as a ‘star exhibit’ by the TR Society..... The engine is the subject of continued uncomplimentary remarks..... The whole thing savours of a ‘dog with bone’ attitude, and only when there was talk of the locomotive being returned to its home territory, has there been shown the slightest concern over it....It is surprising to learn that funds are available.....one wonders where the new shed to house ‘Russell’ will come from.

.....I seem to have spent an awful lot of time at the typewriter all to no good purpose!

By now Millar is disgusted, and Tonks is wishing that ‘Russell’ had stayed in Birmingham!

By April 1958 the promised covering for ‘Russell’ had not been provided by the TRPS and Tonks assumes that they will expect the FR to take the initiative regarding the movement of ‘Russell’ to ‘Port’.

5th July 1958 - Millar to Tonks :

(In which Millar picks up the baton again).

“after further discussion with Arthur Rimmer I eventually wrote to Pat Whitehouse..... I enclose a copy of the reply that I had from Pat and this confirms the suspicion that Arthur Rimmer and I have had for some time. I will not comment on what I think of this action, beyond stating that we were all, - I think including yourself, given to understand that the offer was being made by the TRPS Committee to the Festiniog. In effect what has happened was that the matter was conveniently shelved, in the hope that nothing further would be done..... In any case the dubious advantage of the Peckett may be giving rise to second thoughts, and ‘Russell’ would undoubtedly be of great use to the Festiniog Railway for trains up to Tan y Bwlch on occasions when it is not necessary to use the Fairlie..... I am convinced that it a sensible proposition and it is simply tragic to see the locomotive standing derelict and getting steadily worse in conditions out in the open at Wharf station.”

27th January 1959 - Millar to Tonks :

“The FR Board have decided to accept Russell on the terms and conditions laid down by the TRPS committee.....but at present cannot give the actual date when the locomotive can be steamed and returned to active service. I gather that they (FR) have now written to Pat Whitehouse (TR) to this effect”

4th February 1959 - Tonks to Millar :

“pleased to hear that the FR have decided to put ‘Russell’ into active service.....joint meeting of representatives of the FR, the TRPS and ourselves (BLC) to discuss the matter.....Cash – we have offered the TRPS £50 this sum can go towards her rehabilitation”!!!

And here the correspondence trail ends. But observations by the late Bill Broadbent, who read the letters, are relevant. Despite Allan Garraway’s cool attitude towards ‘Russell’, Bill was nevertheless, - **“encouraging the good work of Arthur Rimmer as much as possible and the really helpful attitude of Eric Tonks”**. However, with the then motive power crisis on the FR it would have been, - **“unacceptable to undertake putting ‘Russell’ in working order knowing that it could never go beyond Tan-y-Bwlch”**. Store it, yes!

We are most grateful to Mr R.D. Smith of Havant for having passed us this correspondence in 1999. He had been given it by Basil Millar and perhaps ‘Russell’s’ centenary year has brought it to the fore.

Article compiled by
 John Keylock

Tryfan Junction Update

Stuart McNair has agreed to lead the project. Addressing the AGM Stuart advised that a comprehensive structural survey had been prepared by John Sreeves.

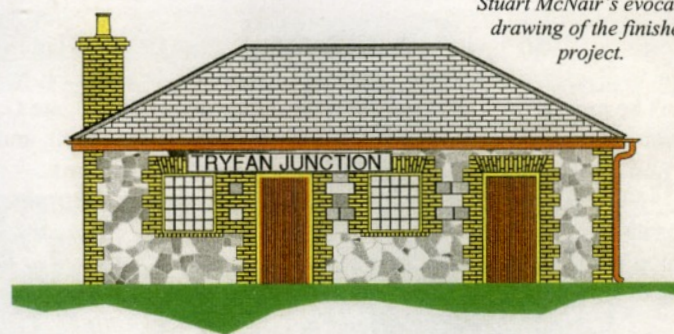
The report had concluded :-

“The parts of the building that remain are in a sound structural condition, with no signs of differential settlement or movement. All walls are true to plumb, with the exception of the south-west corner, which although slightly out of plumb does not show signs of instability. There is no reason why new walls cannot be built directly on top of

the existing remains, once measures have been taken to provide a suitable key and remove any weather damaged surfaces.”

However the report goes on to warn that **“the rear wall is dangerous and that a high priority should be given to making it safe.”**

The next step will be to apply for planning permission. This would be done



Stuart McNair’s evocative drawing of the finished project.

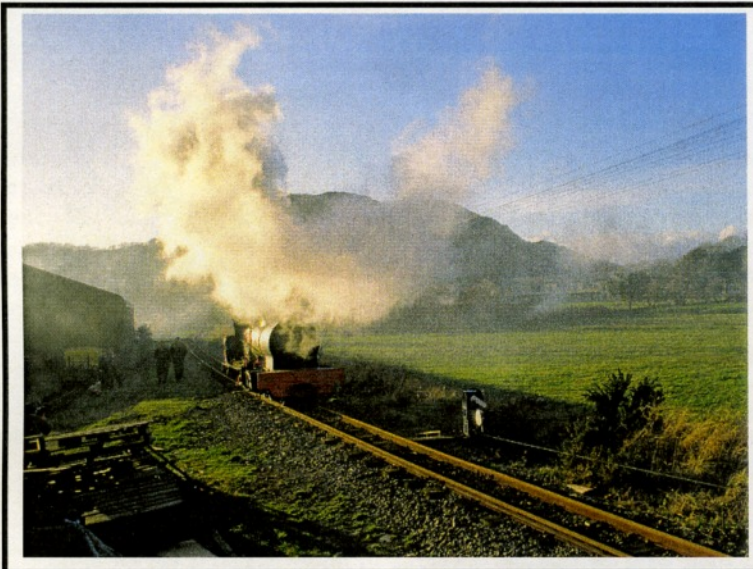
FRONT ELEVATION
 (FACING RAILWAY)

through the FR’s Heritage Coy (or the Trust) after consultation with Peter Marston, the WHR Construction Coy’s planning consultant.

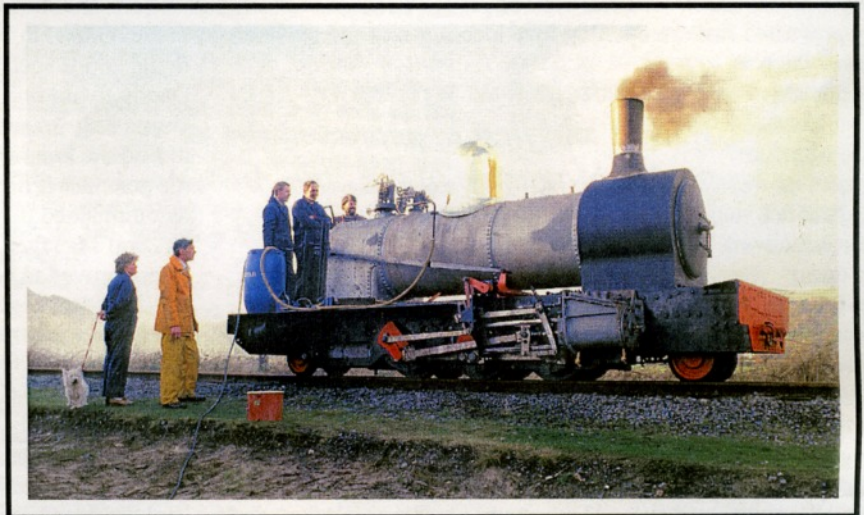
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The editor welcomes articles on any topics that may be concerned with the heritage of the Welsh Highland Railway

Russell's 1986 Steam Trials

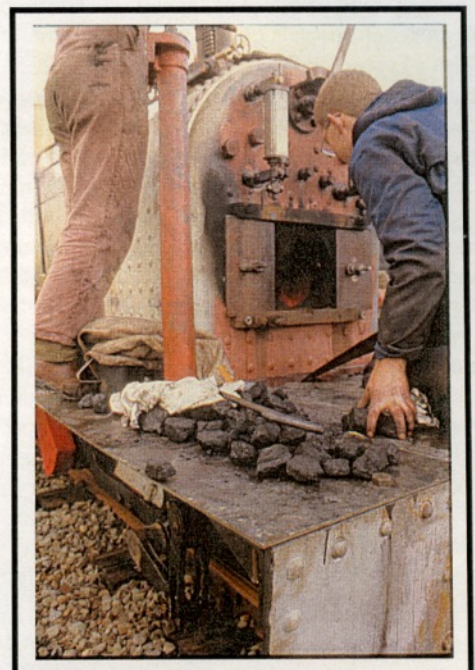


The pictures on this page illustrate the extraordinary events of 6th December 1986, the date of 'Russell's' steam trials on the 'new' Welsh Highland in Porthmadog. The fire had been lit once again in her firebox, the pressure gauge moved slowly upwards and watched nervously by a small group of Gelert's Farm engineers, CME Mike Fairburn cracked open the regulator. After a heart-stopping moment as the steam explored areas that hadn't been troubled by this element for some fifty years she crept forward from the shed door. Under the expert supervision of the late Ken Dicks, colourfully clad in vivid orange 'high viz', she negotiated the pointwork like a thoroughbred. Inelegantly naked she might have been, and bizarrely adorned with a large blue, water-filled barrel boldly marked 'litter', deputising for her side tanks, but 'Russell' was back on her native metals, and back with a vengeance.



Top - Angel's wings!
Left - Ken Dicks fills the 'side tanks' from a mop bucket!
Right - On the main line & ready to go.
Bottom left - Fitting the dome
Bottom right - Coal firing - carefully!

Pictures - David Allan, December 1986



Of Bugs and Russell

We once wrote a shade teasingly of the Welsh Highland Railway in these pages, arousing storms of assent and dissent whose conflicting pressure made our own position seem milk-neutral – to us at any rate. The storms still mutter, but pros or cons, we observe that the Welsh Highland Railway Society has very understandably refused to melt obligingly away and, in the shape of the Welsh Highland Light Railway (1964) Ltd., is pursuing its so far frustrated aims with a tenacity we admire the more warmly the further they get from Portmadoc. So alive and kicking is the W.H.L.R., in fact that at the Festiniog AGM it cheekily posted a bill on our Minffordd station showing a train which included two coaches owned by the FR being hauled on a length of line the W.H.R. has been physically prevented from re-opening by a locomotive which for a decade has represented the ultimate in unrevivability. And fair is fair, actually to undertake the restoration of 'Russell' as the W.H.L.R. is now doing is something no other organisation has been man enough to even consider. We should bow.

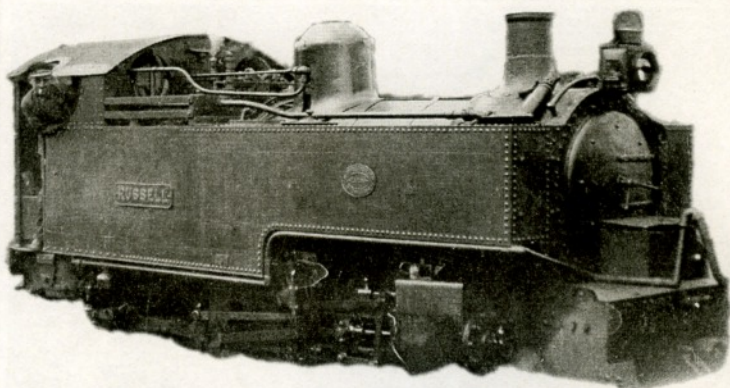
'Russell' rejuvenated will add, no doubt, to her already long pedigree of legend – the fifteen coach specials over Pitt's Head, the fables of speed on the Croesor Junction straight and the single abortive trip up (or rather three-quarter way up) the FR., after modifications to her chimney and dome that exasperate railway aesthetes to this day. But surely we all know what happened to 'Russell's' dome: don't we? Well the members of the Hants & Sussex Area Group do, for their chairman until last April, Reg Crick, was the Boston Lodge apprentice who modified it, and his tale is a touching one which takes us back to a world as lost as 'Gowrie'. When the Welsh Highland Railway was brand new, one of the initial workings, was an evening goods to Beddgelert from Portmadoc, worked of course by a Festiniog engine and crew. On one of the early trips the locomotive was 'Little Giant',

the driver, veteran 'Daddy' Evans and the fireman Reginald Crick, a skinny lad from a long serving FR family, slightly scared on this his first night away from home – for, marvel of planning, the eight mile trip rated a lodging turn, an exercise which the thirteen mile Festiniog indulged in as a matter of course with its barracks at Glan-y-Pwll. But the W.H.R. had fewer pretensions and no barracks and so, having put the 'Giant' to bed in the goods shed, Daddy Evans and young Reg set out to find the lodgings the postmaster had recommended to the General Manager. These proved to be an ill start to Reg's introduction to the wide world. Both

beds and landlady looked sour. "What do you want?", she asked incredulously; "wash? Well, straight down the garden, it is". Straight down the garden was the River Glaslyn, and no such fancy as soap. The pair made the best they could of this facility and retired unhappily to bed, a position they were forced to abandon before long with shouts of dismay. They burnt the bedbugs off with lighted matches until their box ran dry and then hunted them brutally with shoes, until the light and with it their morale, failed. The only course left seemed to be a midnight flit, and this they took, finally putting up in the drafty but hygienic garage of the Goat Hotel.

In the morning they taxed the postmaster with their complaints. "Oh, is it no good?", he asked curiously. "Funny that. The men building the railway all spoke very highly of it."

And Russell's dome? Well, young Reginald was in no state to work any more lodging turns for the time being, so they led him to the erstwhile North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway's pride and joy at Boston Lodge. "This engine's got to go



Russell with 'cut out' cab roof, plus truncated dome & chimney.
Photo G.E. Hughes - 1936.

through the Moelwyn tunnel," they said. "Make the dome lower". And

Reg, itching from bugs and smarting with a sense of injustice that is the lot of all younger generations, took a hammer and chisel and made the dome lower. The W.H.L.R. will probably be justified if it restores 'Russell' to her former appearance. But in one way it will be a shame, for 'Russell' brutalised was the Welsh Highland, in a way that very little else was, and a tiny but characteristic piece of narrow-gauge oddity will disappear. After all, in the circumstances, did Reg Crick do so badly?



Jill Rowbotham, who together with her husband, organised the restoration of Reg Crick's handiwork. The brass was matched exactly & you can't even see the join! The size of the dome is very apparent compared to Jill's height.
Photo - David Allan - 1986

Vandalism in Snowdonia

In the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways grand scheme of 1872 eight railways were proposed but what we accept as the NWNGR – the Moel Tryfan ‘Undertaking’ – was the only one built. (Railways Nos. 6 and 7). Railway No 1, the General Undertaking – for a line commencing from what became Croesor Junction to Betws y Coed via Beddgelert was the only other railway to receive authorisation.

The July 1903 estimate for the construction of the PB&SSR from Portmadoc to Beddgelert and the southern shore of Llyn Gwynant in conjunction with the hydro-electric scheme at Cwm Dyli makes no suggestion that the line be extended from Llyn Gwynant to Betws y Coed. However in November 1903 the NWP&T Coy submitted an LRO application for the Snowdonia & Betws-y-Coed Light Railway. This section would have gained Pen y Gwryd by a series of tight radius spirals and steep gradients thereafter falling to Capel Curig and Betws-y-Coed. In the event this line was not proceeded with but according to ‘The Times’ during the first half of 1904 it was high on the agenda.

First to pen letters to ‘The Thunderer’ objecting to this potential overhead electric railway were Professor Ker of University College, London and Nigel Bond, secretary of the recently formed National Trust. Snowdon had already been ‘invaded’ by a railway from Llanberis to the summit and there was no economic necessity for this scheme – unlike the flooding of Welsh valleys to provide water for the citizens of Birmingham! The route of the proposed line was appreciated for its natural beauty – by those from our cities – and should not be defiled by a railway with its

attendant overhead wires. Both Beddgelert and Betws-y-Coed were opposed to the scheme – according to the National Trust.

Two days after Professor Kers’ outburst ‘The Times’ published a letter of rebuttal from A Krauss & Son who were Bruce Peebles’ main sub contractor on the part-built section of the PB&SSR. That letter is reproduced in full below

VANDALISM IN SNOWDONIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As the contractors of the light railway scheme on which Professor Ker makes some deprecatory comments in your columns of to-day, we trust you will allow us to make a few explanatory remarks.

We beg leave to reassure Professor Ker and the public generally that his fears as to the spoiling of Snowdonia’s scenery are really quite unjustified. Of course, as you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs, so you cannot naturally run an electric railway through a rural district without temporarily, but only temporarily in this case, knocking a few, if any, odds and ends off the beauties of nature. But we can conscientiously assure Professor Ker and the public that no pains have been spared, or will be spared, on behalf of the engineers and those concerned in constructing the line with the view to accommodating the tourist public at the very least cost of scenic effect.

The plan has been approved by the authorities, and not hastily approved. The line, when made, will give cheap access to the regions of beauty to thousands, whereas until now it has been quite inaccessible to thousands who cannot afford the luxuries of a coach drive. As we have already stated, every care has been taken not to mar the beauties of the locality. The line will not in the end materially interfere with the glorious views obtainable on the left hand side of the old coach road from Beddgelert to Bettws-y-Coed; and we feel quite sure that those who believe in the doctrine of the greatest good for the greatest number will have no cause to grumble when the line is completed and has had time to tone to the surroundings of the locality. We may remind Professor Ker that when the cliff railway was made at Lynton every one said it would completely spoil the loveliness of the place; now any one passing the little town by boat can barely distinguish where the line lies.

Apologizing for so long a letter, and trusting that in justice to ourselves you will admit the same,

We are yours truly,

A. KRAUSS AND SON.

4, Unity-street, College-green, Bristol, Feb. 25.

We may mention that the proposed extension to Bettws-y-Coed has the fervid support of Lord Ancaster, Lord Penrhyn, and the district authorities generally.

John Keylock & Michael Bishop uncover more opposition to Narrow Gauge lines in Snowdonia - in 1904!

Professor Ker was obviously a campaigner for it was not long before he had produced an 1800 signature petition against the proposed ‘overhead tramway’ to be sent to the Board of Trade. The petition proved, he claimed, that opposition to the scheme was countrywide; “the degradation of Gwynant and LLugwy valley is not approved by many people besides the local proprietors”. “The beauty of the Snowdon District is so exceptional, and its attraction for a large number of visitors so great, as to deserve protection from interference and degradation. The present scheme, if carried out, would entirely alter the character of the place as a holiday resort and would seriously impair the beauty of the landscape by drawing unnecessary and unsightly lines across it”.

The last correspondent to have a say on this contentious matter was “a Welsh Magistrate from the district involved with no knowledge of any of the promoters”. “The proposed tramway”, he contended, “would make the area accessible to all classes and particularly jaded workers from Birmingham and Lancashire and the brawny sons of old England! The suggestion that a narrow line of rails, with wire overhead, running through the district can in any way interfere with the scenery is too unreasonable to discuss”. Recalling a more recent Public Inquiry the situation has not altered a great deal; only the style of language.

Yet more vandalism in Snowdonia. This cutting from from ‘The Times’ of 20th March 1909 shows that the problem is not a new one. Thanks to Michael Bishop for finding this snippet.

ATTEMPT TO WRECK A TRAIN.—As the last train was leaving Dinas Junction, near Carnarvon, on the North Wales narrow gauge railway, a few days ago the last carriage of the train was derailed. It was found that several large stones had been wedged between the double rails at a crossing. There were about 40 passengers in the train, but fortunately no one was hurt.

Making Heritage Pay

WHR Ltd. Chairman James Hewett argues that the essence of the WHR's past is essential to its future.

History is big business in the UK. Just ask yourself – have you ever been to a National Trust property? Or watched the latest historical costume drama on TV? Or have you ever researched your family tree?

The fact is that huge numbers of people in the UK spend hours of their leisure time in activities involving the past. Twelve million people paid for entry to a National Trust historic house or gardens in 2004 – over four times the population of Wales. And they're not alone. Millions of pounds are ploughed into the economy of Britain each year by foreign tourists attracted by our image as a country with a strong link to its history.

Look at the top ten paid visitor attractions here in Wales; the top four (Portmeirion; Caernarfon, Conwy & Penrhyn Castles), all have a strong heritage theme. Those that plan the future of tourism in our part of Wales are keen to build on the country's image as a special place with its own identity, its own culture and its own fascinating history. "Strengthen the unique sense of place" is one of the three key aims in the master plan for the future of tourism in North Wales.

Narrow gauge steam railways are a key part of that identity, but not as some sort of sanitised fairground ride; nor as a scaled down version of the trains that our visitors might use to travel to work each day. The history of North Wales is the history of narrow gauge railways; their small size reflects the heritage of the slate mines, and their development. These lines are as important as landmarks in the country's history as Caernarfon and Conwy Castles.

A heritage train uses the twin attraction of a steam locomotive and its distinctive carriages to bring some of this unique history alive. The pairing of the two together means that, you can step into the past for yourself, and become part of the way things once were. Let us take you to a bygone age when life moved more slowly, and railwaymen had time to talk to you.

The Welsh Highland is undoubtedly a railway which can and will be sold on the

scenery. However, the public is undoubtedly becoming more discerning. Recent research by Mori concluded: "the lifestyle which many of us now lead engenders high stress levels and pressure on our time. (A consequence) is that expectations are enhanced and people demand better value." Heritage will become an important way to provide that element, and enhance the image of a quality visitor attraction.

An example of this is the Great Orme tramway in Llandudno. For over a century, its primary function has been as a people mover, taking visitors to the summit. But it also has a large amount of its own original heritage still in situ, particularly the four original tramcars still in service and the attractive Victorian terminus at the lower end.

Recently, the tramway has undergone a £4.5m refurbishment, including a new Halfway station. This has been built to a historically sensitive design, and includes a

"the Welsh Highland without Russell would be like eggs without bacon."

display on the history of the tramway. The end result may not be an increase in passengers, but an increased perception of quality, value for money, and increased awareness of the heritage of the tramway, and the whole town. In the words of Conwy Council: "the tramway provides a working example of Llandudno's cultural heritage as a Victorian seaside resort and is an integral element of the town's visitor experience. It makes it possible for visitors to experience Llandudno's Victorian heritage - not just hear about it - and to take the same trip to the Great Orme summit as the visitors all those years ago."

The same could easily be true of the completed Welsh Highland Railway. The key ingredients are there – Russell, a Baldwin and the England engines, along with the Gladstone car, the Buffet car, a Hudson toastrack coach and the two heritage carriages currently being used on the WHR(C). We at the WHR(P) have a few other plans up our sleeves to make sure that any future WHR heritage train can be as authentic as possible.



But the future success of heritage trains won't just depend on authenticity. It lies in making sure our visitors know that a heritage train is something special, and why. It lies in using "Russell", the Baldwin, the England engines and the original WHR coaches to tell the story of Wales's past, and the people who made the area what it is. In short, it lies in using heritage to give future visitors more than just a train ride. But the most important consideration has to be: "can it make money?" My answer is a firm yes. Look at the list of top visitor attractions in Wales again, and you'll see that the market is already there. The fact that heritage is one of the key pillars in the Ffestiniog's future business plan for the WHR shows that it already has an important role on the completed railway. In the end it probably comes down to marketing. And here, the key to our success lies in selling the same blend of stunning scenery and a unique atmosphere which so impressed Pat Whitehouse in his book "On The Narrow Gauge". He said: "The WHR never achieved an hourly service, but made up for it with some of the most spectacular railway mountaineering ever seen in these islands, as 'Russell', 'Moel Tryfan' the Baldwin and the sixty year old Ffestiniog 0-4-0s laboured up the double horse shoes on the frightful climb from Beddgelert to South Snowdon."

Perhaps this shows that heritage is a key part of the WHR's attraction, not to be relegated to a sideline as an afterthought, but a central part of the finished product. As one eminent figure said recently, "the Welsh Highland without Russell would be like eggs without bacon."

The WHR will be a fantastic train ride whatever happens; our challenge is to add the inspiration and to ensure that the memories of the 1920s remain as precious for future generations as they do for the current one.