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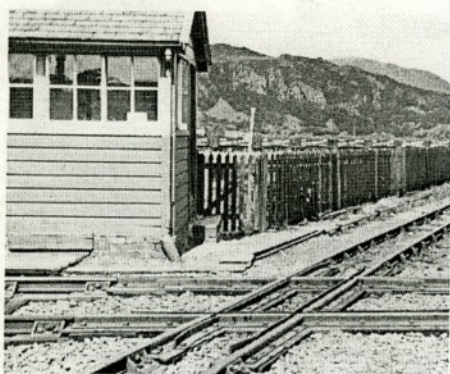
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CAMBRIAN CROSSING CONCERNS

Col. Stephens writes to Robert Evans

Dispute with G.W. Rly



The Heritage Group has obtained a leaked copy of a letter (right) from Col Stephens to Robert Evans at Harbour station, which highlights the serious concerns about the escalating costs of maintaining the crossing of the Cambrian Railway.

Investigative reporter, John Keylock, has been examining the evidence and this is his report.

It is well known that the operational cost of the Cambrian Crossing has been exorbitant and recent poor returns for the WHR has concentrated attention on this aspect. To keep costs down the crossing is now hardly at all used by passenger trains. The 'twice a week' train referred to in the Colonel's letter is most likely to be the slate train, which operates between Croesor and Portmadoc harbour.

Having reviewed his letter Col Stephens instructed Robert Evans to go to Oswestry ("it will not take you more than a day or so"), see Mr Warwick, and sort the matter out - having first checked to see whether or not there was a clock in the crossing box! Before writing to Warwick to arrange an appointment Evans investigated the box and confirmed that there was indeed 'no clock' and he so advised Tonbridge.

In response to Evans' request for a meeting Warwick claimed that "the matter is quite out of his hands, being dealt with by headquarters" (Paddington). A fortnight later Col Stephens drafted a letter for Robert Ev-

Col. H.F. Stephens M.I.C.E.

Dear Sir

25th Jan'y 1930

Account from G.W. Rly Co. re Portmadoc Level Crossing

I am in receipt of your letter of the 23rd instant, together with an account received from the G.W. Railway re expenses of Croesor Crossing for six months ending 31st December 1929.

I consider the account to be excessive, especially the amount of £17.4s.11d. telegraphs. There is only one telephone at the Signal box and I fail to see that such an amount should occur in the maintenance of this telephone especially in view of the fact that it is only used on an average of twice a week and that only for a few minutes each time. I also consider that the wages of the signalman-Porter should not be debited against the Welsh Highland Railway in view of the arrangements made with Mr Warwick in London that the wages paid to the Crossing Keeper prior to the opening of the Welsh Highland railway should be deducted from the amount of wages for a Porter-Signalman.

Stores I cannot account for the amount of 18/3d, for oil. The signals have not been lighted for the convenience of the Welsh Highland Railway as we have had nothing going through the crossing except in daylight and the small item of 1/9d for maintenance of the clock is quite unreasonable. I presume you will remember the remarks made when we passed the signal box with Mr Szlumper and another gentleman, as regards the maintenance of the clock and when we looked into the box we failed to see a clock there.

I return the account as desired.

Yours faithfully

ans to send to J Milne Esq., General Manager of the GWR. (In 1931 he became Sir James Milne and presided over the GWR until nationalisation). Regrettably, there is no record of Mr Milne's response.

OK, so this is a slightly sneaky way of giving a contemporary twist to an old story, but it was felt that with the imminent reinstatement of this crossing it is worth revisiting the events of seventy six years ago.

It is also worth recording the difference in attitude of the somewhat stuffy GWR with the positive response of their successors. Chairman of the Construction Co., Mike Hart, said "that Network Rail could

not have been more helpful" and he went on to praise "their co-operation in all aspects of the design, construction and installation of the crossing".

The crossing is being constructed by Corus Rail at their Scunthorpe works. The Cambrian main line will be closed week commencing 30th October for this and various other work to be undertaken. It is also worth noting, given recent references in the Heritage journal, that the crossing will be constructed in 113lb rail for both the standard and narrow gauges, with the narrow gauge reverting to the normal 60lb weight after the first fish-plate.

More History of the PB&SSR

In January 1905 The Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald was confidently predicting that by the summer there would "be laid a network of electric wires and cables through some of the loveliest districts in North Wales".

It continued:

"the railway to Portmadoc has been pretty well nearly laid, and when the tunnels in the Pass of Aberglaslyn have been finished the line will be practically ready, so that there will be direct communication from Carnarvon via Dinas and Beddgelert to Portmadoc. The NWNCR from Dinas to Rhyd-ddu is being electrified, the overhead wires are now being laid, and the whole of the new rolling stock has been ordered and the power lines have been laid, not only along the route of the railways but through the Nantlle valleys."

There were, it said :-

"quite an army of navvies and a large number of engineers, electrical and otherwise" working on Cwm Dyli power station.

We now know of course that the paper's prediction was some eighteen years premature. But how had this situation arisen? What were the series of events which had brought about this optimistic forecast? In an attempt to further unscramble and elaborate on the affairs of the PB&SSR and its association with both the North Wales Power & Traction Co and Bruce Peebles a century ago the writer has consulted company records, Director's reports, Board of Trade files, newspapers, published accounts, and legal agreements. These have all been deposited in recent years at Gwynedd archives but are not yet catalogued nor are they available for public consultation.

Perhaps the first serious scheme for an extension from Portmadoc to connect

with the NWNCR at Rhyd-Ddu was presented to Parliament in 1891, however it wasn't until 1897 that an application was made for an LRO; this was opposed and subsequently withdrawn. Another application was made in 1898, which included the intended purchase of the Croesor Tramway - but this too was rejected. Later that year the NWNCR applied for a more modest Light Railway Order - a simple extension from Rhyd-ddu to Beddgelert, and this was granted in 1900.

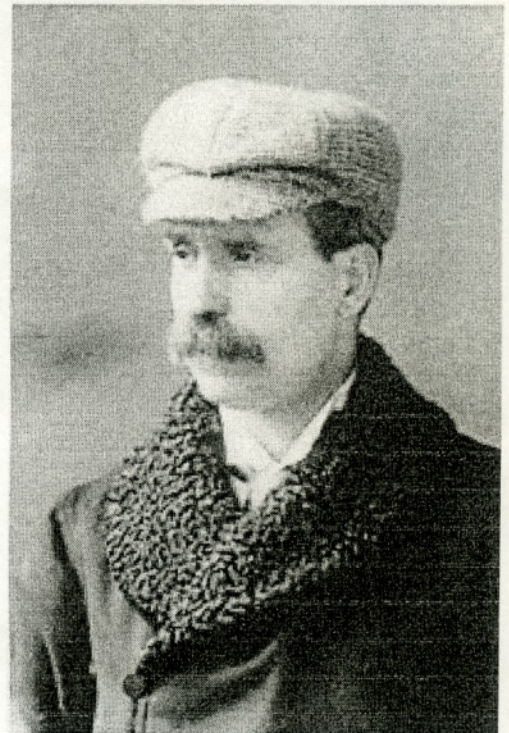
(It should be noted that in 1879 the Croesor & Portmadoc Railway ('Croesor Tramway') promoted an Act to build an extension to Beddgelert. which provided 'groundwork' for the future if nothing else. The same Act proposed a change of name to the Portmadoc, Croesor & Beddgelert Tram Railway Co).

It was shortly after this LRO was granted, in December 1900, that what was to become the PB&SSR got off the ground with the incorporation of a Company called the Northern Counties Traction Co. Ltd. (NCT). The Company was formed to "carry on business of an Electrical Traction and Power Co."

Michael Bishop illuminates the darker recesses of the PB&SSR

by William J Glover, an electric cable manufacturer of St Helens, and George Heyl-Dia an Electrical Engineer of Manchester. Their intention was "along with certain other persons promoting in the present Session of Parliament a Bill for the acquisition of the Undertaking of the Portmadoc Croesor and Beddgelert Tram Railway Company to construct railways and works in the parishes of Treflys Ynscynhaiarn and Beddgelert in the County of Carnarvon and the parish of Llanfrothen in the County of Merioneth and other purposes." An official notice had appeared in newspapers in November 1900.

At this point two of the major players appear on the scene - William Pilkington and Joseph Beecham (later Sir Joseph



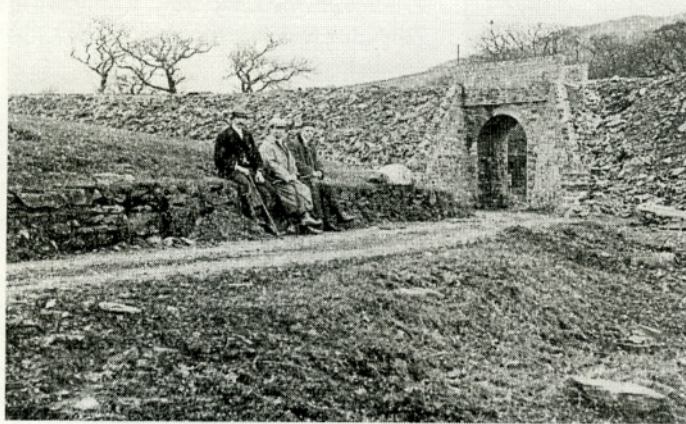
Joseph Beecham "a major player" - courtesy John Keylock

Beecham, Bart), both of St Helens -where William Glover was also based. Glover and Heyl-Dia had borrowed the Parliamentary Deposit of £10,000 plus from a Bank, but the terms of the loan included return of the money before the third reading of the Bill in the House of Lords. Pilkington and Beecham had the funds, Pilkington being of the glassworks, and Beecham the son of the pill manufacturer (and father of the orchestral conductor). At what stage they became involved is uncertain for although they had not been subscribers as businessmen, they were probably attracted by the prospect of cornering the electricity market for the whole of North Wales. Beecham not only had the funds, but was also chairman of the St Helens Electricity Committee. While the Bill was going through Parliament, Pilkington and Beecham, together with one Duncan McKechnie, who had set up the Widnes-based United Alkali Co in 1871, were each allotted one hundred £5 shares in Northern Counties Traction Co. Ltd. This gave them control of the company, and unsurprisingly both Heyl-Dia and Glover were appointed to its board..

The PB&SSR Act received its Royal Assent on 17th August 1901. It authorised the construction of generating stations

Handy Guide to Acronyms

PB&SSR Portmadoc Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway
 NWP&T North Wales Power & Traction (The Power Co.)
 NCT Northern Counties Traction Co. Ltd.
 LRO Light Railway Order
 NWNCR North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways
 L&NWR London & North Western Railway



Left - Bridge over the Cwm Cloch road in 1906, just after completion by the PB&SSR.

Right - same bridge 100 years later in January 2006 (David Allan).



and provision of electricity supplies to the Cambrian, North Wales Narrow Gauge, Snowdon Mountain, and Festiniog Railways. During its passage through Parliament the National Trust and others managed to get the tunnels through Aberglaslyn Pass doubled in length, for aesthetic reasons, to a total of 700 yards.

On the 18th March 1901 the NCT obtained agreement with the 'Tram Railway' Co for the sale of the Croesor (horse-worked) Tramway for £10,000. This was to be used as part of the route The PB&SSR Act was for a railway that was to run from near the Queens Hotel in Portmadoc (adjacent to the Cambrian Station), to Llyn Gwynant. Its cost was estimated at £146,000 as an electrified system. In addition a further £37,000 would be needed for a section headed "Electric Lighting of Beddgelert, Portmadoc and Criccieth", which included the power station, three substations, and a feeder line. This feeder line would extend from the power station at one end of Llyn Gwynant to the railway terminus at the other. It is interesting to note that the southern end of this proposed line has been more-or-less replicated in recent years by the route of the Welsh Highland Railway Ltd (Porthmadog).

By 1900 electricity had become the 'must have' asset for any self-respecting town, having previously been limited to country houses and mills, ever since Swan's lamp of 1880. Several schemes for North Wales towns had been proposed but had not been adopted, however it was becoming clear that this scheme was not primarily directed at domestic use.

Little evidence has been found of what happened during the next two years; meanwhile the NWNGR was pressing on with its planned extension to Beddgelert,

been made for nearly all the land required.

Into this jigsaw came one Robert Gethin Jones, an amateur meteorologist, versed in rainfall statistics. Jones had realised the potential for hydro-electric power in Snowdonia and had set up a company, Gwalia Ltd., to exploit the idea. In a chance meeting with Bruce Peebles &

announcing in April 1903 that agreements had

Co. Ltd, an Edinburgh based firm of electrical engineers, and Harper Bros., a firm of consulting engineers, he had persuaded them of the potential. On 30th May 1902 Peebles acquired a licence to the manufacturing rights for the British Empire of three-phase equipment from Ganz & Co of Budapest, who had also been anxious to secure a contract for hydro-electric plant. Peebles, a long established firm, became a public company on 24th June 1903. All the parties would have been very aware that NCT had the powers to

Peeble's Estimate

Power Station		£36,157
Track/Wire/Poles	£16,093	
5 Transformers	£2,500	
4 Locomotives 3 phase	£4,600	
7 Motor cars	£13,650	£36,843
Railway		£57,000
Pipeline (provisional sum)		£10,000
Dam and intake works (provisional sum)		£5,000
Total		£145,000

Extra provisional contract Sum :

Transmission Lines to Blaenau Festiniog, Llanberis, Nantlle, Criccieth or where necessary

Provide necessary substations and telephone services for above lines.

Carry out electric lighting at Portmadoc, Criccieth or elsewhere as may be directed.

Provide extension plans in Power Station or carry out any other works necessary.

The total sum not exceeding £35,000
Grand Total of Peebles work **£180,000**

The three provisional items to be paid for on the basis of cost price plus 10% profit.

Purchase of Croesor Railway and interest £12,000

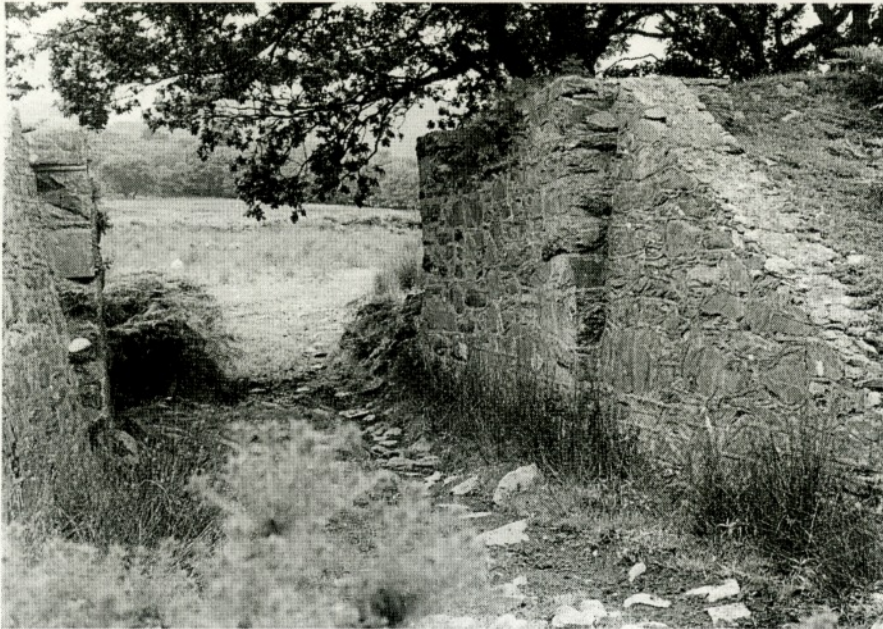
Cash portion of Tomkinson and Platt price for land £3,000 (+ £17000 in shares and £20 debentures)

Price payable to North Counties Traction Co. Ltd referred to above

Preliminary Expenses (incl. Underwriting) and an estimated £25,000 for brokerage, land and other compensation not covered by the tender, general expenses and working capital.

Should be sufficient £80,000

Total - **£272,000**



Never used bridge on the PB&SSR route north of Beddgelert on the 16th July 1997 Photo : David Allan

create a hydro electric power scheme and that the 3-phase system would be particularly suitable for mountainous areas.

The North Wales Power & Electric Traction Co. Ltd (The Power Co) was registered on 31st July 1903 with the object to "enter and carry into effect, with or without notification, certain contracts already prepared". These 'contracts' were with the PB&SSR, NCT, James Tomkinson, (a Director of Lloyds Bank and the Wirral Railway) and Col. Henry Platt (a JP of Llanfairfechan) and were for lands recently purchased from Gethin Jones. The final 'already prepared' contract was with Bruce Peebles & Co. Ltd, who would build the whole thing.

The Company had a £270,000 authorised capital (the same as the PB&SSR), plus borrowing powers. They had received an estimate/tender from Peebles dated 16th June, which, re-dated 31st July, became the basis of an agreement. NCT, which had "born the cost of preparing, obtaining, and passing the PB&SSR Act" had agreed to "transfer plans, surveys, and drawings" and offer assistance.

NCT had an option to subscribe for the authorised share capital of the PB&SSR, or any part thereof, and the PB&SSR Co. undertook to repay the £500 which the NCT had paid towards the interest accrued since 1901, in respect of the Croesor purchase. As consideration for the transfer to the Power Co. of the option to subscribe, and all surveys, engineering reports, plans, sections &c. NCT were to receive £36,000 in cash, or debentures, at the option of the Power Co., or partly of

one and partly the other. The agreement was signed, as Directors of NCT, by Glover and Oppenheim. The latter was a Solicitor, who also happened to act for Pilkington, Beecham and the Power Co.

The first confession that the Company's real interest was not the running of a railway, but rather the generation of electricity was extracted from James Rawlins, chairman of both the Power Co and the PB&SSR, during questioning in the House of Lords in March 1904. In connection with the Act that would transfer electrical powers from the PB&SSR to the Power Co he was asked:-

"But you bought a railway when it ran nowhere at all?"

He answered

"But the reason we did that was because we had to; having done that we wish to make it a success. As part of the scheme we had to take over this line."

Other Directors of the companies included Pilkington, Beecham, Tomkinson, Platt and Alfred Deedes, from Bristol, who was Chairman of P & A Campbell Ltd operators of the paddle steamer services in the Bristol Channel (and the former owners of the preserved "Waverley.")

The Peeble's estimate/tender was accepted by the Power Co. Board at their first meeting on 31st July 1903. There was a condition that if the land cost more or less than £5,000 the price paid would be adjusted accordingly. In the General Conditions the contractor was required, provided price and quality compared favourably with those of other reputable firms, to give preference to the St Helens Cable Co. (Glover) for the supply of all necessary electric cables. This clause

was probably inserted at the insistence of Pilkington and Beecham, who were both Directors and shareholders of the Cable Company!

Bogie motor cars with steel trigger trucks and route indicators suggest something similar to the up and running Manx Electric Railway, whilst the locomotives would be used for goods trains.

Funding was the key to the whole scheme. The Power Co issued a prospectus in early August 1903 for £270,000 in £5 shares, the full amount of its authorised capital. Underwriters had been obtained by NCT to cover a minimum subscription of £167,500, the Directors' qualification (contribution) making this up to £170,000. These underwriters included Bruce Peebles & Co Ltd, Pilkington, Beecham and McKechnie.

The issue was a disaster, with only £170,000 being subscribed.

The amount that Peebles underwrote is unknown; the tender states that the firm had applied for £50,000 in shares (in a section describing how the calls would be recovered from payments for the work). They were allotted two blocks of shares of £49,570 and £1,735.

Beecham's contract was for £26,770, and he was allotted only £330 short of this.

Pilkington's was probably the same as he was allotted the same number of shares as Beecham.

Platt and Tomkinson underwrote £5,500 and were allotted £4,460.

These Underwriters ended up with 75% of the issue. The Company's brokers were allotted a further 10%.

Peeble's allocation was 27% but this was nowhere near to a controlling interest.

The issue cost over £16,000, including £10,500 in underwriting fees.

There was a subsequent later issue of shares representing £20,500, which mostly went towards the amount due to Platt and Tomkinson for land and for £46,000 in Preference Shares. Later the Company was forced to raise more debentures and loans to cover the overspending on the power scheme. The NCT promoters, Glover and Heyl-Dia had only contributed subscribers shares, and seem to have dropped out completely (maybe they were discarded having served their usefulness, as Gethin Jones felt he had been).

Whether or not all Peebles' shares were the result of their underwriting contract, they were critical to getting the scheme off the ground. However, it is worth mentioning that Bruce Peebles' Directors' reports and accounts make it clear that it



The PB&SSR opens up the Goat cutting in 1905

was their standard practice to take shares in payment for contract work. This practice was to lead to their bankruptcy and financial reorganisation five years later.

Meanwhile, the NWPT promoters had second thoughts about their proposed route. They decided that connecting with the NWNGR's extension at Beddgelert, involving a junction line and an extension of their line from Dinas to Carnarvon at the northern end, was more sensible than the original scheme (up Nant Gwynant).

Electrical power was to have been supplied by feeder from the north of Llyn Gwynant to the southern end of the railway (in the middle of no-where). They decided that it could best be supplied by an electrification of the NWNGR line from the feeder going to the Nantlle Quarries. This news was revealed to the Committee examining the Dinas to Carnarvon aspect of the PB&SSR Bill in March 1904. Mr Rawlins said, "*the line to Gwynant was on hold, but not abandoned (it would need further capital) and the line would be swung round to Beddgelert*".

In November 1903 the NWNGR applied for an LRO to give extra time for its Beddgelert extension and for the short connecting junction line with the PB&SSR at Beddgelert. Nothing more was heard about the Portmadoc to Borth-y-Gest line, which had been included in the 1901 Act.

The PB&SSR Act was passed in 1901 with Pilkington and Beecham as backers. The Power Company was formed two years later, by which time Platt and Tomkinson had acquired lands, most of it around Dolgarrog, from Gethin Jones'

Gwalia Ltd, (which had gone into receivership in 1901). Pilkington and Beecham then put a substantial amount into the Power Company, but a major financial backer was also needed to help with such an expensive project. Bruce Peebles & Co. Ltd were prepared to invest in order to secure the construction contract. Their policy, as mentioned earlier, was to take shares, (as had many railway contractors before them), in order to obtain contracts in a situation where investors, prepared to provide substantial sums to new and risky ventures, were few and far between.

Pilkington and Beecham would have been encouraged by the prospect of business for the Cable Co. They and McKecnie were each due to receive £12,000 from the sale of the "right to subscribe" to the PB&SSR, sold to Power Co. - this was by virtue of their equal ownership of the shares in the NCT, (a typical business idea in those days).

In May 1904, G.C. Aitchison, secretary and manager of the NWNGR became general manager of the PB&SSR. His salary was to be £400 for the Moel Tryfan undertaking (ie the NWNGR), and £200 for the Portmadoc-Rhyd-ddu section. There was to be a further £100 for the Dinas - Carnarvon section when that came into operation. Quite a substantial package including guarantees of tenure.

In October the NWPT took over, and paid, a £992 debt owed by the NWNGR to the L & NWR for "work at Dinas Station".

The PB&SSR Directors report of January 1905 said that work on three sections, Portmadoc - Beddgelert, the Junction railway at Beddgelert, and the Beddgelert

extension railway from Rhyd Ddu, had started in February 1904.

In November 1904 an agreement was signed by the three companies. The Power Co. would construct and equip by electricity the Beddgelert - Rhyd-ddu section; they would electrify the existing NWNG line, and the capital under the two LRO's would be issued to them. In return they would receive £12,000 NWNGR debentures. The PB&SSR was to work the system. (JIC Boyd gives 26th August for this agreement, but, according to the LRO this was the date the PB&SSR Co. approved the arrangement).

The earnings would be split on a mileage basis, but with a guaranteed minimum of £1,000 pa to the NWNGR. Electricity would be supplied to the NWNGR at a maximum of one & one eighth of a penny per unit. Until the earnings came in the PB&SSR was to pay a rent of £1,000 per annum from 1st January 1905. A supplementary agreement transferred the benefit of the two LROs, including the one yet to be made, to the PB&SSR.

An entry in the NWNGR's Balance Sheet of £506 marked "*Beddgelert Extension expenses*" had been building up since 1899. This disappeared in the second half of 1904, without doubt, passed over to the Power Co. under clause 3 of the 1904 agreement. The smallness of this sum suggests that the NWNGR had spent most, if not all, of this on obtaining the LRO and agreements to acquire the various parcels of land, rather than on actual construction work.

In spite of the optimistic predictions of the Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald quoted at the beginning of this article it is clear that the LROs were still awaited. At the enquiry in Carnarvon in April 1905 Aitchison was attempting to get the length of the tunnel reduced to 364 yards with two approach tunnels of 22 yards and 38 yards, - but without sympathy; the aesthetic lobby was becoming more organised.

But for all that it is becoming increasingly clear that however ephemeral the PB&SSR might have been, it nevertheless played a pivotal role in both the ultimate route and the construction of the 1923 WHR, and of course, that influence reaches across the years to today's railway - a sobering thought.

Part Two of this history will appear in the December Issue (No. 34)

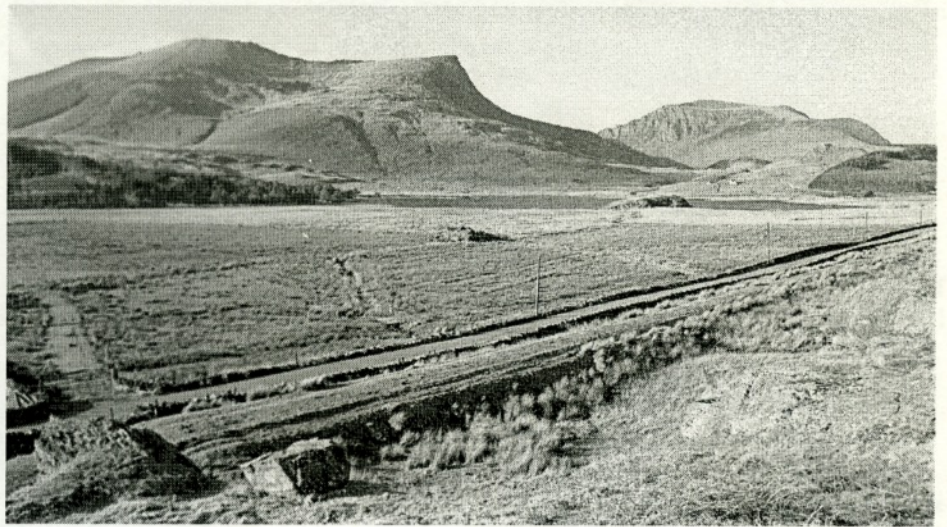
A Relic Recalls Another Relic

I was born in London in 1915 and was evacuated in 1916 to my Nain (Grandmother) in Waunfawr when my mother took over my Father's job during World War 1. The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway has been part of the background of my life ever since. The disused track traverses the land at the bottom of my drive.

During the last quarter of the 19th Century, my great Uncle Eben Jones lived at Capel bach, Pentre'r Waun. As a young man he worked, variously, at Glanrafon and South Snowdon slate quarry and at the Haematite mine in Betws Garmon, travelling from Waunfawr to work and back on the 'lein Bach', the Welsh Highland Railway, as we knew it. In common with all teen age lads, he was a sluggish riser and local tradition has it that Eben frequently ran down 'gerddi fawr' footpath and across the river bridge to Waunfawr Station in his socks, his hob-nailed boots in hand. One day, the guard, exasperated by Eben's continual lateness, decided to teach him a lesson, flagging off the train and leaving Eben to run the last 100 yards or so along the rough ballast of the track. Eben was a popular lad and, after a few such occasions, his friends penned the station master's billy goat in the guards van. The enraged animal took its revenge on the guard by expelling him forcibly from his quarters in the van, or so the story goes.

Another anecdote relates to the 1920's, when the part-time Station Master at Waunfawr, John Humphries Jones, was also a coal merchant, using a small wooden shed at the rear of the booking office-cum-waiting room as an office and weighbridge. His horse cropped the grass about the station yard. Some years later, his widow kept goats, maybe descendants of the billy goat who figured in my last story. These goats were to be found along the line towards Coed Cymant and were useful in weeding the permanent way which was lush in vegetation. Their reluctance to move from the path of the train caused the train crew to throw knobs of coal at them which the widow retrieved as free fuel.

I rode on the railway from Waunfawr to Beddgelert and back in about 1923. I dimly recall that Beddgelert Station was little more than a corrugated iron shed standing on a clinker platform defined by narrow



*"The watershed of Pitt's Head" on 14th January 1989, perhaps 60 years after Bob Freeman's journey
Photo : David Allan*

strips of slate placed on edge to retain the loose material. The first two or three miles up from Beddgelert meandered up among the oak trees of Meillionen and past the farmsteads of Hafod Ruffydd to emerge on the flat watershed of Pitt's Head. Here, and down to South Snowdon, there were views on the one side of the Nantlle Hills and on the oth-

The late Bob Freeman shares his WHR Memories

er side of Snowdon itself. Beddgelert Forest was as yet not planted.

From Rhyd Ddu Station it was downhill all the way past Cwellyn and along Nant-y-Betws to Cerrig-y-Rhyd where road, river and railway crowd into the narrow pass before emerging into the flood plain of Dyffryn Gwyrfa. Along this stretch the main line was joined at intervals by mineral lines from 'gwaith hearn' (haematite mine), and Hafod-y-Wern, Garreg Fawr and Treflan slate quarries, all of which were, and still remain, substantial constructions in their own rights.

At Betws Garmon station, on the occasion I recall, the young fireman operating the points released the weighted lever while the carriages were traversing it and I enjoyed watching the guard and the driver dealing with the consequent derailment by using a long, iron-shod pole to lift the wheels back on the track. The lever, specially made for the job, was carried in the guard's van for

such emergencies.

Later, and probably about 1927-1930, and just before operations finally ceased, my uncle, John Bayley Williams, was foreman platelayer. He and his three assistants travelled the line on a manually-propelled truck, operated by a two-ended lever connected to a cranked axle. Presuming on my relationship, a friend and I were allowed to borrow this velocipede for a trip along the line from Waunfawr to Pompran Gwerdog (sic). The infrequent service precluded our meeting a train.. At this time too the quarries were closing and goods traffic was vanishing. With local children I explored the pits and tunnels in the quarries and played on the abandoned slate trucks on the mineral lines leading from, in particular, Hafod y Wern and Treflan quarries. One game involved pushing a truck as far up the incline as possible, scotching a wheel, and after climbing aboard, withdrawing the scotch and enjoying the ride.

Treflan was the best, since the line crossed the road (Lon Isaf) and the river before reaching the main line by Cae Ysgubor, and the bent gate at the junction is evidence that we were able to travel the whole way in (comparative) safety. No Health and Safety at Work Act to spoil the fun then! I hope to see the Welsh Highland Railway running past my gate before the century ends.

Yet More W.H.R. Memories

In mid 1958 a series of articles appeared in the house journal of the Transport Ticket Society concerning the tickets of both the Festiniog and the Welsh Highland railways. There was some discussion on the subject after the series concluded, and the following extract is taken from the October edition of the journal. My thanks are due to the Society Editor for his permission to quote the relevant paragraph headed 'General Practice' reproduced below

General Practice.

"Mr.J.H.Roberts recalls the days when both railways were in operation. He travelled twice on the round tour Llandudno Junction – Blaenau Festiniog – Portmadoc – Dinas – Llandudno Jc. Tickets of the bell-punch series were being issued by the guard to passengers boarding at the halts. The guard was very fussy about the carriage doors, lest an open door be smashed by the train going in the opposite direction on a passing loop. On one trip from Portmadoc (New) the FR engine "Welsh Pony" was in charge to Beddgelert, where one filled in a long wait by taking tea in the village. Then "Russell" in green livery took the train on to Dinas. Another time "Russell" was on from Dinas to South Snowdon, the red Baldwin tank thence to Beddgelert, with "Welsh Pony" completing the trip to Portmadoc. Mr.Roberts remembers the guard opening the ticket office at Dinas, issuing tickets thence, and locking up again, although most tickets were issued at the LMSR booking office. There were no staff at WHR stations on the occasions of his journeys."

Derek Lystor comments:-

Mr. Roberts's reminiscences provide some fascinating details of what were in effect the Welsh Highland portions of the "Five Valleys Tours". No date is given for his journeys, but from his description of the liveries of both Russell & 590 we can narrow it down to the last three seasons of operation. Russell was repainted light green in 1934 when the FR leased the WHR, and the Baldwin received a coat of

Welsh Highland and Festiniog Railways

Zig-zagging through Glorious Welsh Mountain and Lake Scenery

MAGNIFICENT VIEWS UNOBTAINABLE BY ANY OTHER MEANS
ENCHANTING AND UNRIVALLED SCENERY THROUGHOUT
In conjunction with the L. M. & S. Rly. one of the Best & Cheapest Day Tours in Great Britain can be made every week-day (except Saturdays) from July 20th to September 11th, 1931

FIVE VALLEYS CIRCULAR TOUR

Embracing the Valleys of Conway, Lledr, Maentwrog, Glaslyn and Gwyrfa
Beautiful Bettws-y-Coed, Blaenau Festiniog,
Picturesque Port Madoc, The Pass of Aberglaslyn,
The Alpine Village of Beddgelert,
South Snowdon, Quellyn Lake,
Caernarvon and its Castle,
Bangor with its Cathedral and Colleges.

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR A DESCRIPTIVE ROUTE OF THE TOUR

From	Times of starting via Festiniog	Third Class Inclusive Fare for the Tour
LLANDUDNO ...	10-25 a.m.	7/11
COLWYN BAY ...	10-29 a.m.	8/-
RHYL ...	10-15 a.m.	9/3

Children under 3 years of age free, between 3 and 14 years of age half-fares

The Tour can, also, be made in the reverse direction, (via Caernarvon)

From	Times of starting	At the same Fares
Llandudno ...	11-5 a.m.	
Colwyn Bay ...	11-4 a.m.	
Rhyl ...	10-44 a.m.	

Passengers must state at time of booking which way they elect to travel

SEE THE BEAUTIES OF WALES IN SAFETY AND COMFORT—WET OR FINE

Further particulars at the Stations or from Welsh Highland & Festiniog Railways, Portmadoc

USE OVER

"FR red" during a refit at Boston Lodge in the same year, both being dealt with before the start of that year's summer season. The reference to the long wait at Beddgelert, relieved by taking tea in the village, suggests that Mr.Roberts took the 1.40 or 1.45 departure from Portmadoc, which in all three years gave a generous 2½ hours wait at Beddgelert before departing at 4.05, arriving Dinas at 6.05.

It can be seen that Mr.Roberts did the round trip in both directions, the anti-clockwise tour involving no less than two changes of locomotive during the journey. Russell is noted as working the northern end of the line on both occasions, so our time period may be further refined to 1935 or 1936. Boyd notes that an FR England

loco shared the Portmadoc – Beddgelert run with Moel Tryfan from the start of the 1935 season, with Russell taking over the latter's duties at the northern end, an arrangement which was repeated in 1936.

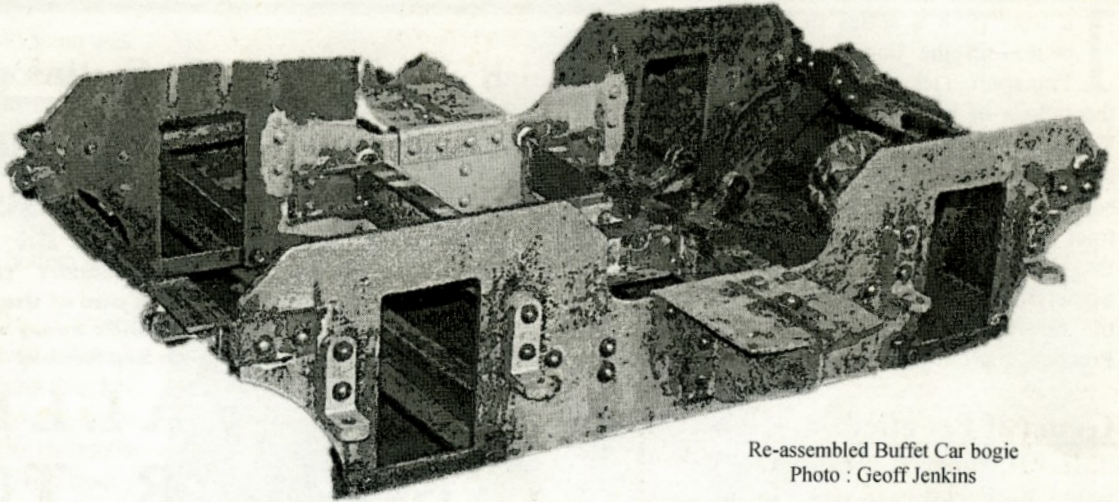
It is also interesting to note the lack of staff and the use of both LMS and WHR ticket offices at Dinas. This is confirmed by specimens of used WHR Edmondsons which show the different type layouts of the individual date stamping machines. The bell-punch paper tickets described as being issued to passengers boarding at the halts were the Edmondson series of singles and returns brought into use at the commencement of the FR lease period.

*Derek Lystor
interprets a 1930s
WHR journey*

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Buffet Car - Latest

The WHR Ltd's project to restore the original WHR Buffet Car (Ashbury Carriage Number 23) has received a high level of support from the Heritage Group. Now progress is about to reach a major milestone, restoration to rolling chassis stage. Gelert's Farm Carriage & Wagon Manager Andy Jones has the latest.....



Re-assembled Buffet Car bogie
Photo : Geoff Jenkins

If there's one thing you can always be sure of when you're in the thick of a restoration project, it's that there'll be a few surprises, and a few mysteries. With the Buffet Car, the biggest one of these has been the brake rigging. No-one is quite sure what happened to the original mechanism – when the Buffet Car arrived back on Welsh Highland metals in 1987, it was completely missing.

No-one has so far been able to shed any light on what happened to the brake gear. There is, of course, the possibility that it was removed for re-use elsewhere, though it is difficult to imagine why the WHR, in its twilight years, would cannibalise a working carriage to keep a broken one in service. Removal by the Ffestiniog is a more likely possibility, though it would have meant the subsequent transfer of a crippled carriage back to Dinas, where it certainly finished its days.

Could the brake gear have been removed for scrap before the coach was sold off in 1942? Again, unlikely, as the amount of metal is not great; removal by the new owner in Waunfawr would also seem an unusual step because he left the wheels and bogies behind underneath the coach!

Whatever the reasons, the missing brake gear had to be replaced. Our first thoughts turned to copying the brake gear on the recent Ashbury replica, Number 24, now at the Welsh Highland (Caernarfon). But a specially arranged trip to grovel in the dirt underneath it at Dinas threw up yet an-

other surprise – the brake rigging is completely different.

So it was – literally – back to the drawing board. No makers drawings survive of the brake gear, so my colleague David Pritchard spent several days in the mess at Gelert's Farm scribbling all sorts of mathematical calculations on the back of bits of paper, eventually emerging with a design which we believe is as close to the original as possible.

Andy Jones Reports.....

Thankfully, other parts of the project have been relatively straightforward. The bogies frames have now been reassembled, following a mammoth rivetting session, and are ready to be reunited with the wheels and axleboxes once these are also complete.

The original wheels have also received attention; these are cast as a single unit, rather than having metal tyres on the outside. A layer of weld was added to build up the running surfaces before they were turned in a lathe to get the right profile. This work was done at Boston Lodge, where staff joked on more than one occasion that the wheels where in such good condition that they could easily find a use for them if we didn't want them back!

A further surprise was in store when it came to the journals. These are the polished metal surfaces on the very

ends of the axles, which fit into the axleboxes. This time, the surprise was a nice one – they required very little attention. One, in fact, was almost ready to roll, despite not having seen use since the railway closed.

The remarkable condition of the bogies is another of the mysteries surrounding the Buffet Car. The fact that they rolled freely into the Big Shed at Gelert's Farm in 1987, after nearly half a century of inactivity, is already part of restoration folklore, as well as standing the carriage in good stead for a future on the completed WHR.

At the time of writing, thoughts are now turning to final assembly, which will be happening over the coming weeks. This will give us a completed rolling chassis on which to start building the bodywork.

In some ways, this second stage is the more glamorous; the stage when the Buffet Car will once again start to look like a carriage and progress will be more obvious to the casual observer. We are most indebted to the Welsh Highland Heritage Group for its support during this first stage, providing much needed match funding to the grant from the PRISM Fund, and thus enabling the project to proceed. I'm also grateful to individual members of the Heritage Group for their kind words of support in the last 18 months while this first stage of the restoration has been taking place – hopefully it won't be too much longer before I can say thank you with a cup of tea on the move!