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MORE HERITAGE TREASURE! Unique PB&SSR document found

PORTMADOC, BEDDGELEERT AND SOUTH SNOWDON RAILWAY.

All Ledger Accounts with the Company will be rendered Monthly, and must be settled within Ten Days thereafter.
Please remit Payment for this Account to the General Manager of the Company.
Cheques to be payable to "Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway Company," and crossed "& Co."
* That all Goods delivered to the Company will be received and held by them subject to a general lien for money due to them, whether for carriage of such Goods, or for other charges: and in case the general lien is not satisfied within a reasonable time from the day when the Company first received the goods, the same will be sold by the Company by auction or otherwise, and the proceeds of sale applied to the satisfaction of such lien and expenses.
The Company also give Public Notice that all Goods conveyed must be removed from the trucks within forty-eight hours after arrival or they will, after the expiration of that time, make an additional charge beyond the Amount due for carriage of One Shilling per Truck per day for demurrage.

Llanberis, R.S.O., N. Wales, 30th June, 1922. 19

Mr Robert Jonas, Fedw.

To the PORTMADOC, BEDDGELEERT and SOUTH SNOWDON RAILWAY CO.

DATE.	No. of Articles.	DESCRIPTION OF GOODS AND MARKS.	WEIGHT.		RATE.	TO PAY.			SENDER.
			t.	c.		q.	lbs.	£	
1922.									
June 14.	1	Bag Corn.	1	--			8		Co-op.
" 20.	2	Bags Corn.	2	--			10		Co-op.
" 30.	1	Sk Meal.	2	--			10		Co-op.
" 27.	1	Cask Coal Tar.	3	--			1	1	
			8	--			3	5	

*Recd Aug 26. 1922
J. Williams*

PROJECT UPDATE

Tryfan Junction

With secure storage on site we are now in a position to keep tools and materials in the container. As far as 'tools' are concerned we wonder whether any members have the following items surplus to their requirements:- 110v hammer drill, short scaffolding towers, scaffold planks, aluminium ladders, spirit level, trowels & shovels. If so please contact Derek Buckles or Lewis Esposito (01286 650 397) (see also back page)

Cambrian Crossing Box

At the time of going to press it is hoped to install the crossing box during a three week period in June. However the best laid plans of mice and men.....!

It is perhaps not always appreciated that the PB&SSR actually ran a railway! This ill-fated company was responsible for major works in the Aberglaslyn before money ran out and the contact terminated in about 1906. However as a part of the many various schemes to link Cardigan Bay with Caernarfon Bay it purchased and ran the Croesor Tramway, and was therefore able to benefit from goods carried on this line until 1922.

The invoice illustrated here, dated June 1922, must have been one of the last invoices that they issued, prior to the start of the WHR proper the following month.

(Bryn) Fedw is not far up the road from Careg Hyldrem and Tanlan - the nearby hamlet - which was the early name for Croesor Junction. The goods are likely to have been dropped off at the siding and store located at the point where the Croesor crossed the Nantmor road. This document is unique and we are grateful to Mr Hudson of Bryn Fedw for permission to publish it.



Rita Fountain, daughter of Miriam Roberts, Beddgelert's famous 'girl' station mistress from 1934 to 1936, dedicated a seat to her mother's memory in one of the Beddgelert platform waiting shelters on 18th April 2009. Rita is seen here pictured in a replica of her mother's well-known pose on the train at Beddgelert.

See full article on Miriam on page 8

Birth of Project - Walk One

Our mission was to inspect, record and photograph what remained of the old WHR (before reconstruction began) by walking the full length of the trackbed. A report was compiled by David Allan after each such ambulation, meant originally just as a sort of diary for those who had participated. However as clearly these reports are now of historical interest it has been decided to serialise them in the Heritage journal. This was the first of those walks.

It was Wednesday 12th March, 1997 and a small group of four, who were later to become the founder members of the WH Railway Heritage Group, (John Keylock, Michael Davies, Cedric Lodge and David Allan) assembled at Dinas at 9.45 am prompt.

Unexpectedly, we were greeted by Mike Hart and, after a consultation with Mowlem (Caernarfon Extension contractors), and suitably attired in regulation orange high-viz waistcoats and white hard



John Keylock in the leat examines the sluice

hats, we were shown round the Dinas site. An impressive amount of tarmaced roadway had been laid, the old goods exchange platform had been demolished, levelling work had begun on the trackbed and some rather pretty red paving had been laid in front of the goods shed. We were surprised to learn that the new Welsh Highland would not be using the original narrow gauge alignment, but would exit Dinas under the standard gauge overbridge before regaining the original formation just short of the old loco shed.

We also took a look round the adjacent Welsh Water site. A large concrete building stands on the site of the old carriage shed, whilst the former loco shed site is

occupied by an apex-roofed building, not too dissimilar from that original structure.

It proved to be impossible to walk from here onto the trackbed, as a large chain-link fence barred the way and the area was impenetrably overgrown with scrub. We walked up the station approach road, onto the main road and viewed the deep Glan Rhyd cutting from the road bridge. On the Dinas side the cutting was very wet and overgrown with brambles; on the southern side it had been filled in by the landlord of the adjacent Mount Pleasant Hotel and would need to be re-excavated.

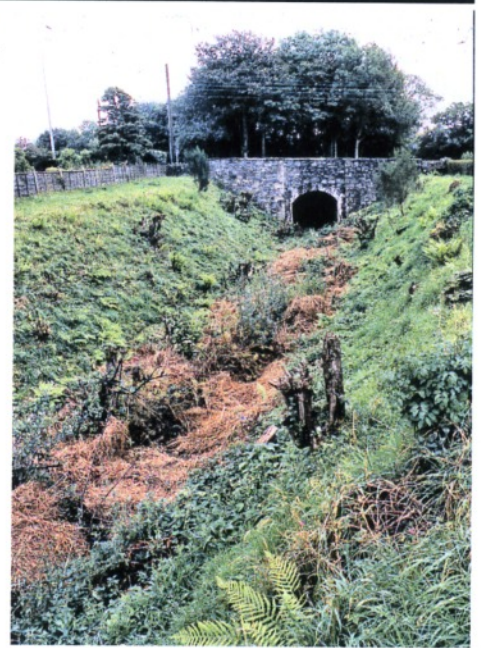
Cedric Lodge had very kindly supplied us with 25 inch to 1 mile scale maps of the route with 36 x A3 pages and Michael Davies was nominated 'surveyor' to note down all points of Welsh Highland heritage interest along the way. Michael commented, "strangely, the NWNG does not appear to have installed mileposts - nor did the W.H.R!"



Exposing the earthenware water supply pipe

Having re-gained the trackbed by walking a hundred yards or so through the rubbish-strewn area at the back of the pub the first item of interest was an exposed and broken earthenware drain pipe running along the length of the trackbed on its southern flank. Beyond was the Afon Rhyd, a fast flowing small river. Between the river and the trackbed was a dried up leat, with the remains of a sluice gate on the river bank, which led into the earthenware drain pipes and could well have been an early means of supplying water to Dinas yard.

A few yards further on a raised metal service pipe crossed the trackbed. However the next real point of Welsh Highland interest was the road overbridge at Cae-



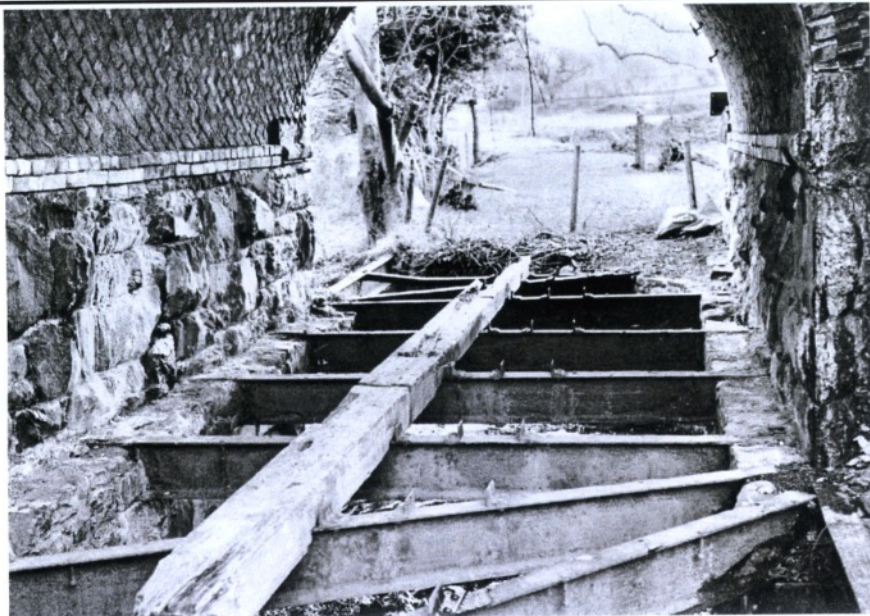
Glan Rhyd cutting on the exit from Dinas

Moel. This unique three-tier bridge not only carried the Rhostryfan road over the railway, but also carried the railway over the river. Walking precariously on the narrow remaining girders for the track, with the road above, one was only too aware of the fast flowing river beneath. The old telephone insulators were extant, still pinned to the underside of the arch.

Many occupation crossings were noted, defined by five foot high slate gateposts, looking like some Neolithic monument to ancient Gods! It was here that we had an insight into an entirely new aspect of railway preservation. Michael Davies was observed scrutinising each gatepost with great precision perhaps giving rise to the generally held view that people who attempt to restore old railways are a couple of sleepers short of a length! But in fact Michael was simply looking for ancient graffiti, whose artistic talents may shed some insight onto those early railway workers.

The way was much clearer now, with the trackbed raised several feet above the meadow which it traversed. Slate gateposts were still very much in evidence, as were fence posts made of sections of old rail, presumably salvaged from the 1922 repairs to the track.

Bodaden farm was the next landmark, where we had the chance to speak to the farmer, an elderly man accompanied by an old and affectionate collie. The railway crossed the road leading to his farm by a



Unique three-tier bridge at Cae Moel

level crossing. He was most concerned about having to open and close the gates every time he wanted access. He recalled in the old days, when the line was open, that it took six men to get cattle across the railway - two on the gates, two on the track to warn trains, and two to drive the

animals. He said then it was all right as there were plenty of servants in the house, but that this wasn't possible today. We suggest that installation of cattle grids are needed here. An extremely interesting feature at Bodaden is a substantial underpass. Although this is filled with debris and scrub its preservation would go some



John Keylock & Michael Davies at Bodaden level crossing

way towards helping the farmer with his crossing difficulties.

On the next section, John Keylock tripped over a piece of metal buried in the trackbed. This was later identified as a tie bar, designed by Robert Livesey to prevent spreading of the gauge. It is a slightly bowed iron bar with the last few inches at both ends bent over to form a loop. Your scribe carried the find for the rest of the walk, almost losing it on one occasion, and hopefully it may eventually come to rest in the Welsh Highland museum.

The trackbed was now raised by about three feet above the surrounding field and



Wernlas Ddu road bridge



Doubtful support for the trackbed as it crosses the Afon Rhydd

was bounded by a damaged slate retaining wall. Could we perhaps hope that walls such as this will be reinstated in their original form by the contractors and that original fences will be rebuilt of suitable materials?

The next point of interest, just before the line reached the Rhostryfan road, was the second crossing of the Afon Rhyd; the river had been both channelled and stepped under the trackbed, which was supported by a couple of rusty RSJs, aided and abetted by a couple of even more rusty lengths of old rail.

The section, which bordered the Rhostryfan road, was overgrown and impassable; again the river was crossed by both road and railway. We therefore joined the road to reach the concrete roadbridge, built in 1933 to replace a standard NWNNG bridge. An undignified scramble down the steep side of the cutting and we were able to examine the bridge portals. The telephone insulators were extant and interestingly, a bench mark had been inscribed in the southern side of the original bridge wall.

To the south of the bridge the trackbed was a sea of cloying mud overgrown with a thicket of willow, the result of a blocked culvert. However a footpath led down one side of the line from the road and, after a struggle, we regained the trackbed by means of an interesting accommodation crossing defined by rail-built stiles with metal steps welded to the rail. Here the



Engraving commemorating the 1933 rebuild of Wernlas Ddu road bridge destroyed by Gwynedd County Council when the parapets were upgraded



David Allan, Cedric Lodge & John Keylock at a featureless Cae-Hen

garden of a fairly new home had encroached onto the trackbed taking in about half its width.

The following section was muddy and clearly well used by cattle. Indeed the unexpected appearance of a Charolais



Ghostly spectre of Tryfan Jct

bull necessitated a rapid, but dignified departure from the line down to the banks of a stream – where a welcome lunch was taken.

After lunch, we circumnavigated the bull,

A splendid example of a NWNG arched bridge at Ta-yr-Alt



and rejoined the trackbed in the vicinity of Cae-Hen. The substantial building shown on the 25 inch map had disappeared - together with the trackbed, and a NWNG bridge. Indeed the landscape was devoid of any sign that a railway had once enhanced the countryside here. However this was soon corrected as a few hundred yards further on Bicall



Arched river bridge at Bicall, north of Tryfan Jct



Surviving upright platform marking slates at Tryfan Jct

bridge hove into view – this was the gateway to Tryfan Junction. Just before the road bridge the track again crossed the river, this time supported by a single arched low bridge, built in typical NWNG style, with its arch outlined in yellow Ruabon brick.

From here to Tryfan Junction the track became a fast running stream, so we took the easy option and walked on the narrow road which paralleled the railway. There, through the leafless trees, loomed the ruined spectre of the roofless Tryfan Junction station building. Upright slates appeared eerily out of the mud; these at one time had marked the platform edge. Evidence remained in the shell of the building of the earth closet which had been a feature of these buildings

and, outlined in mortar, was the position of the slate slab on the wall in the gent's urinal. The fireplace was extant. The grass-covered base of the NWNG signal box was still evident on the far side of the track. A location that is forlorn, remote, isolated and forgotten.

The track of the branch to Bryngwyn swung away at 180 degrees from the junction and in the distance one could discern the arch of the bridge which carried the narrow mountain road over the railway. At this distance the bridge looked almost like a main line affair.

We elected to leave exploration of the branch for another time and followed the route that led to Waunfawr, passing through a gate and onto a lane that ran parallel with the railway. The next rail-



Bricks show through the road surface of the accommodation bridge between Tryfan Jct & Tan-yr-Alt

way feature was a narrow accommodation bridge over a cutting. Built in traditional NWNG style the side wall had been damaged and the brick built arch was showing through the road surface. Later, when repaired, it was to become known as 'The Ugly Bridge'

The road we were following dropped sharply down and turned right under a splendid example of NWNG architecture, an arched bridge which carried the trackbed over the road leading to Tan-yr-allt. We regained the trackbed and set off through a heavily wooded section to Waunfawr station. Within a hundred yards a large badger sett had been constructed in the side of a cutting; large rocks had been placed in and on the newly dug burrows.



Above - Approach to Tryfan Jct. Below - site of demolished bridge that led to Cae Hen. Above right - Sheep creep at Tan-yr-Alt. Below right - Quarry branch to Garreg Fawr



The track appeared to go down hill, but according to the map the formation was now level. This was a very pleasant sylvan section with the Afon Gwryfai gurgling some thirty or forty feet below us; the sun shone and made its contribution to the general feeling of well being. There was little of historical interest here however save for several culverts and an impressive sheep creep at Tan-yr-allt. The numerous slate gateposts continued to be examined and one even contained a date and a set of initials which Michael Davies recognised. The trackbed had

slipped badly here - the result of a collapsed culvert.

Eventually the NWNG bridge which carried the Waunfawr road came into view. A noteworthy feature of this bridge is the encrusted smoke deposited on the line of central bricks running right through the arch. Taking a sighting through the bridge it was difficult to see why the remains of Waunfawr station had to be demolished in order to accommodate the Garratts and we thought that there would be no need for this if the points for the loop could be located adjacent to the old station. We crossed the road and entered

the station 'concourse' from the old approach path via an iron gate which miraculously still opened on its hinges.

An inspection of the station building revealed that the large granite corner stones had recently been removed, and as at Tryfan Junction, we located both the gent's urinal and the earth closet. However there was no sign of the base of the signal box which had once stood on the site. There was evidence of incursion into railway land from the adjoining pub.

On leaving Waunfawr the track crossed some wet ground behind a caravan site associated with the pub. However we found our way blocked by a barbed wire fence across the track - discretion being the better part of valour (there was a problem with the owner) we abandoned the trackbed and took to the adjoining road, regaining the trackbed some half mile further on.

Within a few hundred yards on a long, low embankment the feeder line to the slate quarries at Treflan and Garreg Fawr swung away from the main line, which was ineffectually guarded by the rusty remains of an old iron gate. Sadly, we were too tired to explore this further, and besides a welcome cup of tea was beckoning from Cedric's house, which was now in sight.

Afon Gwryfai & trackbed running parallel on the approach to Waunfawr



Single Line Working over the NWNGR

The basic concept of train staff working over a single line is to ensure that at any one time there is only one train in a section. As long as the regulations are strictly adhered to, the chance of a collision between two trains is eliminated, although the NWNGR certainly enjoyed a fair number of collisions involving errant rolling stock!

At the time of its opening to both Quellyn and Bryngwyn in 1877, the NWNGR ran its services with the only two locomotives that it possessed, the Single Fairlies "Moel Tryfan" and "Snowdon Ranger". As one loco worked the branch, and the other the main line, the need for a complicated train control system was unnecessary, so both portions were worked on the "One Engine in Steam" principal. (ref Marindin's Report 31st July 1877). Boyd suggests that there were through trains between Dinas and Bryngwyn, with the line to the temporary station at Quellyn being worked as a branch. If we accept this, then the line may have been divided into two sections, viz Dinas – Bryngwyn and Tryfan Jct to Quellyn, each equipped with a dedicated Staff, with a key attached used for unlocking the various ground frames and points on the section. The form these early Staffs took is unknown, but may have been by Saxby & Farmer (qv)

By the end of May 1878 the line was extended from Quellyn to Snowdon Ranger – Marindin reporting the latter as the terminus in his report of 28th May 1878 – with services commencing on June 1st. Later that same year, a further locomotive "Beddgelert" was delivered from Hunslets which meant that the use of the "One Engine in Steam" method on the main line (now considered to be Dinas to Snowdon Ranger) was no longer practical and had to be replaced by one that took account of the extra locomotive. It would appear that the company adopted a simple Staff & Ticket system with the following sections: - Dinas – Tryfan Jct; Tryfan Jct – Bettws Garmon; Bettws Garmon – Snowdon Ranger. Again the Staffs were equipped with a key attached for unlocking ground frames and intermediate sidings. The Bryngwyn branch, now worked from Tryfan Jct, remained faithful to the "One Engine in Steam" method right up until the closure of the Welsh Highland in 1936. An additional section, Snowdon Ranger – Rhyd ddu, came into being on and from 14th May 1881; the key on the new Staff not only unlocked the points at Rhyd ddu, but also

those to to Glanrafon Quarry siding. (ref Marindin Report 5th May 1881). Although no known examples exist, it is probable that the tickets were of the paper or card type, with the train details being filled out by the stationmaster. A ticket would be issued to the driver, after he was first shown the relevant Staff, if there were one or more trains to follow before the Staff could be returned. However, if no other train was to follow, then the driver was simply issued with the Staff.

The Snowdon Ranger – Rhyd ddu Staff has survived, having been found lurking in a dark corner of Dinas Jct (BR) signal box in 1960. It is a Saxby & Farmer example, made of brass and approximately 20" long,

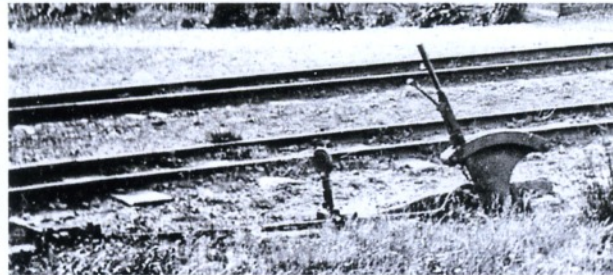
Derek Lystor explains the mysteries of train staff operation on the NWNGR

commonly referred to as a "lollipop", with a retractable Annetts Key for unlocking points. The Staff was inserted into the point lock and turned, and then a slide was drawn across so releasing the point lever.

Saxby & Farmer Staff - photo courtesy of Peter Johnson



Come 1892, Wise's Patent Train Staff and Ticket system was introduced over the main line (ref Boyd; Annual Returns), the Bryngwyn branch staying "One Engine in Steam". The line was now divided into two Staff sections, Dinas – Tryfan Jct and Tryfan Jct – Rhyd ddu. It will be noted that Waenfawr was not a Staff station; according to Boyd the station only became so after



'Lollipop' in position at 'Snowdon' Station. Photo NRM

1895 when a loop was put in and the station fully signalled. The layout came into use on 21st July 1896, necessitating additional Staffs for the sections Tryfan Jct – Waenfawr and Waenfawr – Rhyd ddu.

The Staff consisted of a brass body some 14 inches long engraved with the section to which it applied, having pockets at each end into which brass tickets or "permits" were secured by means of a lock. These permits, which did away with the need for paper tickets, were also engraved with the name of the section to which they applied. Those at one end were for Up trains, those at the other for Down trains; a permit from one end would not fit the other pocket. The locks releasing the permits were released by individual keys which were kept on a chain in the office in the charge of the Stationmaster, at each end of the section.



Wise's Patent Staff. Photo courtesy of NGR Museum

The method of working was much the same as with the previous system. When one or more trains were to follow in succession, the Stationmaster showed the driver the Staff, then unlocked a permit and issued it to him. The Staff was then returned to its secure place and the train proceeded on the permit. On arrival at the next Staff station the permit was given up to the stationmaster who again locked it away securely. The same procedure was followed with subsequent trains until the last train arrived carrying the Staff itself, whereupon the stationmaster was then able to return all the accumulated permits back into the relevant pockets. The Staff, complete with its full compliment of permits, then returned to the

originating station by the last train, and was ready for the next day's services.



Tryfan Jct - Waenfawr Permit. Photo Courtesy of NGR Museum

As with the Saxby & Farmer Staffs, only trains in possession of the Wise's Staff

were able to enter and shunt sidings, the points being opened by a key attached to the Staff for that section. After a train had left a station, no other could follow until it had been ascertained by telephone that the preceding train had left the next staff station. Wise's Staff remained in use right up to the end of the NWNCR and continued to a certain degree with the creation of the WHR.

Punishment was necessarily harsh for those who chose to break the rules over Staff Working. Drivers were liable for dismissal for leaving a station without either a Staff or permit, or without seeing the Staff before accepting a permit. Guards and stationmasters faced a similar fate if they let a train leave without following the correct procedures.

No NWNCR Working Instructions are known to have survived, but the use of Wise's Patent is fully covered in those of the WHR issued in May 1923. Further details are given in the Rules of the Ashover Light Railway, one of the few British lines to have adopted the system. The Tryfan Jct - Waenfawr Staff has survived and is now on display at the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum, Tywyn.

I should like to thank Peter Johnson, Dave Kent and Dave Coxon for their help with this article, and especially Don Newing and Chris White of the NGRM for their kindness and help in supplying the photos of the Wise's Staff & Ticket and for granting permission for them to be used in this Journal.

Tickets Please

With the opening of the WHR through to Portmadoc in 1923 and the consequent link with the Festiniog Railway, both companies introduced printed tickets for passenger travel from one system to the other.

On the WHR a modest range of ordinary 3rd Class singles and returns were available from Dinas, South Snowdon and Beddgelert to both Tan y Bwlch and Blaenau Festiniog. For those wishing to sample the delights of a day trip to the latter, a Day Excursion return from Dinas could be purchased. At a later date, privilege singles and a reduced fare ordinary single, price 3/1, were also available from Dinas to Blaenau.



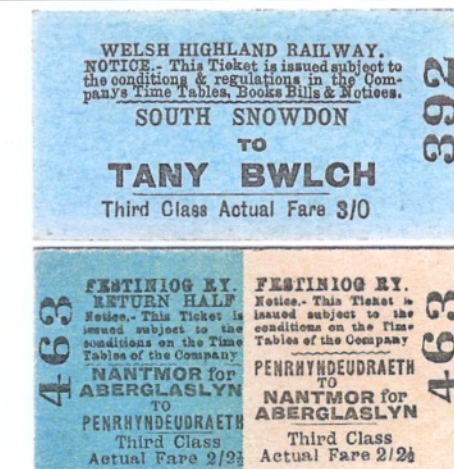
Even though through fares were reduced from March 1st 1924, there is no evidence from surviving records

to suggest that there was any substantial local traffic passing from the WHR onto the FR and indeed, no tickets at all were ever purchased for the journey from Dinas to Tan y Bwlch! At best, up until 1934 fewer than 200 tickets onto the FR were

Derek Lystor again!

issued from each of the booking offices at Dinas and Beddgelert, and whilst no records for South Snowdon survive, it seems safe to assume that little traffic emanated from there neither. Of course, it must be remembered that unlike today, folk tended to remain in their own communities and even a trip from say Beddgelert to Portmadoc tended to be something of a special occasion. It was the previously mentioned 3/1 reduced fare ticket, issued to tourists holding Holiday Contract Tickets with the LM&SR, which was the most popular issue, with over 2500 sold during the FR lease period between 1934 and 1936.

By contrast, the Festiniog appeared to have more faith in the prospect of substantial through traffic developing, and offered a larger selection of through tickets onto the WHR. Whilst most were for ordinary 3rd Class journeys, for those more affluent travellers it was possible to secure 1st Class travel from Blaenau Festiniog to Beddgelert for the princely sum of 5/1 single or 8/6 return. Whether prospective passengers were guaranteed a quality of comfort commensurate with the higher fare is open to question!



A variety of tickets were available to Beddgelert and Nantmor with ordinary issues available from Blaenau, Tan y Bwlch, Penrhyn and Minffordd. Excursion tickets were also available to the same WHR stations from both Blaenau and Minffordd, but it would appear that one could only purchase a similar ticket to Dinas from the Great Western Exchange station in Blaenau. As might be expected, privilege tickets were issued from Blaenau through to Dinas, most probably for the benefit of company employees. Whilst the WHR managed to survive with one set of 3/1 singles from Dinas to Blaenau, (albeit with the second batch being headed Festiniog Railway by mistake), the FR found it necessary to have three different versions from which to choose!

How Beddgelert Got its Station Mistress



In the mid 1970's Miriam Jones (nee Roberts) gave a talk with this title to a local Darby and Joan club. Fortunately, Miriam recorded her talk in the form of notes which we have been able to borrow from her daughter and Group member, Rita Fountain. What follows is Miriam's verbatim recollection of events surrounding her employment in 1934 as Beddgelert's Station Mistress and it is very much as she would have delivered it herself:

Thank you for asking me here to your Darby and Joan Club. I shall try in my humble sort of way to explain how I became the Girl Station Mistress at Beddgelert Station between 1934 and 1936. And, believe it or not, maybe some of you here today may remember an occasion when I came to the Junction (Llandudno) in 1934. I'll explain my appearance there a little later on.

As some of you must be ex railway employees, (many in the Junction), you will remember the re-opening of the Welsh Highland narrow gauge railway in 1934, under a lease from the Ffestiniog Railway. One of the directors was a Mr Evan R. Davies, a solicitor from Pwllheli. He was in partnership with his brother Mr Caradoc Davies, and they had an office in London as well.

Mr Evan R. Davies was also a director with Ffestiniog Railway and the Snowdon Mountain Railway as well as the Victoria Hotel in Llanberis. As some of you will remember they already had a lady station mistress at the Tan y Bwlch station between Portmadoc and Blaenau Ffestiniog – her name was Bessie Jones. So Mr Evan R. Davies decided that he must have one at Beddgelert on the Welsh Highland narrow

gauge. The WHR ran from Portmadoc to Dinas Junction.

In March 1934 I was reading an article in the 'Welsh Herald' – 'Yr Herald Cymaeg. Carneddog', a well known writer and Welsh bard, living on a farm called Carneddi above Nantmor, a village in the parish of Beddgelert, had his own page in this well known North Wales weekly paper. And believe me it's still being published today by the Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald offices at Caernarfon and still worth buying at 12p for local news.

Well, that week there was an article in the Herald written by Mr Evan R Davies about the re-opening of the WHR at Whitsun 1934 and inviting applications from girls between 17 and 20 years of age, Welsh and English speaking, to be interviewed for the post for being a girl station mistress at Beddgelert Station. The work expected was selling railway tickets, postcards, chocs and pop. The girl who would be chosen for the post had to be dressed in a Welsh costume.

Well, I thought, this would be just the work I would enjoy doing so I applied for an interview, and as I was a member of the well known Cor Telyn Eryri (Eryri Harp Choir) I already had a Welsh costume. I went to see 'Telynnores Eryri' - Edith Evans at Cwm Cloch, and told her that I had applied for an interview as regards the Lady Station mistress. She told me when you have your interview go dressed in your Welsh costume and surprise them. And I'll bet you they'll say 'well, that is what we want at Beddgelert station'.

Believe me I was scared stiff and wondering whether somebody else would have thought the same as myself, but when the interview day came there was only myself dressed in Welsh costume.

Eleven girls turned up for the interview, all locals from Porthmadoc, Penrhyn, Nantmor, Rhyd Ddu and Beddgelert. It took place at the Parish Church Hall at Beddgelert. We all seemed very nervous, and believe me as I was waiting there my knees started knocking, although I was well known and had appeared at hundreds

of concerts and Eisteddfodau, I had never felt so nervous.

Well my name was called so I pulled myself together and entered the room. What I saw delighted me and gave me confidence. There behind a long table sat two ladies and four gentlemen. They were all smiling at each other and seemed rather shocked. As I told you I was dressed in my Welsh costume and thinking of Telymores Eryri's words – "give them a shock and the job will be yours". Mr Davies told me after that I'd shaken them.

After getting over their surprise they started asking questions. What was I doing for my living and other questions? I replied that I hadn't really got an occupation, as I was a member of a well known concert party called Cor Telyn Eryri and that we were so busy in the winter months on engagements and in the summer months we had to spend time practising and learning new programmes ready for the following winter months. Well, they really showed

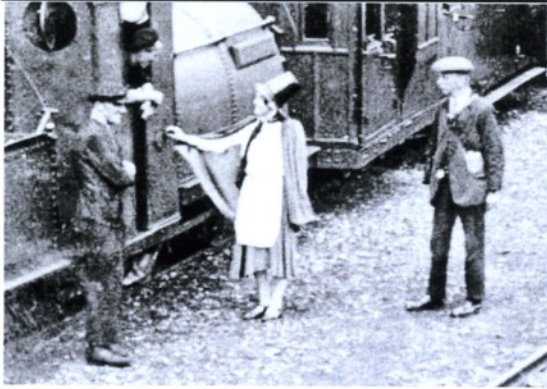


Miriam (left) as the 'Glaslyn Linnet' in the Eryri Harp Choir

much interest, at least I thought so, and they said 'pity you didn't bring your harp with you'. After other questions the chairman told me that I would be notified by post whether I was appointed for the position.

Miriam posing for the camera on the station seat at Beddgelert





I was all thumbs trying to open it. My mother was as excited as I was. I shouted 'I've got it mam', and with that I got my coat and rushed out, shouting to mam 'I'm going to Cwm Cloch to tell Edith', (Telynores Eryri) who told me to go for interview dressed in my Welsh costume.

Well, I wish I could run today as I did that morning as from my home to Cwmcloch was about 2 ½ miles. Cwm Cloch is a farm



Miriam at Gelert's Farm in 1987 recreating the 1934 scene (top) at Beddgelert with old WHR driver Gornowy Roberts

where Telynores Eryri was born and brought up. I'm sure you've heard of Moel Hebog - well the Aberglaslyn Pass and Rhyd Ddu are on this side, and on the other side are Cwmystadrlllyn and the well known beauty spot Cwm Pennant. Well Cwm Cloch, where I wanted to go, was at the foot of Moel Hebog. On my way I had to turn left to Cwm Cloch about ½ mile on the Caernarfon road of Beddgelert going through the fields and forests which the Welsh Highland Railway went through. As a short cut I went along the track for a while and then it just struck me that I would be Station Mistress of that railway in a week's time. I could not believe it. At last I arrived at the farm and Elin (Edith's sister) was churning butter - I shouted "where's Edith". Then I flew past her to the little parlour which Edith called 'my little room'. She was sitting there composing some penillion for our new programme - I didn't have to tell her the news - she could tell by my approach what my news was. She was delighted and said "what did I tell you once? They'd seen you at that interview, you must have impressed them."

Well now I had to start work a week before Whitsun 1934. I reported at the station at Beddgelert about 9 o'clock and there waiting for me were the same two ladies and four gentlemen who had interviewed me. One of these men I understood later to be the editor of the London Morning and Evening Star. I don't know if these papers are still for sale. Well there were quite a few press photographers there - I spent nearly all that day posing for photographs. My photograph appeared in all the Daily Newspapers, many of them out of press now and it appeared even in the Sunday's News of the World and I still have these photographs.

Mr Evan R Davies, as I found out later, was a great organiser. He'd arranged a special train, as a special offer for the re-opening of the WHR and I am sure some of you will remember the advertisement at the Junction and all the other coastal stations, a big poster with my photograph on it with the words in big letters 'Take a ride Through the fairyland of Wales'. I wish I had kept one these posters - but no.

It officially started from Llandudno Junction then on to Blaenau Ffestiniog, then change to the Ffestiniog Railway to Portmadoc, then change there for Beddgelert, on to Dinas Junction where the passengers changed back onto the LMS through to the Llandudno Junction stopping at Caernarfon, Bangor and all the coast stations. Can you imagine the trip, through such beautiful scenery, and so romantic as this? I'm sure you couldn't find a better trip in the whole world.

On a few occasions I travelled on this trip as a courier, joining the train at Blaenau Ffestiniog and entertaining the passengers back to Beddgelert. We had a great time with photographs taken and autographs signed.

As I had quite a few well known persons who signed inside my Welsh hat when I was on my concert engagements I thought I'd ask a few well known persons that I met on my railway tasks. I had such names as Aneurin Bevan and Jenny Lee, his wife; George Bernard Shaw - he happened to be staying with Nansi Richards (*Telynores Maldwyn*) - she was chief harpist in the Cor Telyn at her farm Hafod y Porth, Beddgelert. He travelled on the Welsh Highland one day to Portmadoc with Elsie Thomas (*Telynores Tawe*) who was staying there too, after returning from Australia where she'd been on tour. She was alive at a good old age about two years ago and she had appeared on TV. I remember GBS's words when he returned to Beddgelert - "I must write about this." I don't know whether he did as he was a good old age then. Also in my hat was Sean O'Cassey - the one and only Irish writer - in concert at Penmaenmawr. De Valera - we had dinner with him after he'd been broadcasting on Radio Erin - Nansi Richards recalls this occasion in her book 'Cupwrdd Nansi'.

Really it should have been called 'The Royal Cor Telyn Eryri' as we had appeared by now at the Coronation visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to Caernarfon Castle as King and Queen of England. Unfortunately I did not get their autographs! We were often in demand for occasions when Lloyd George was present.

Well after a successful summer season all good things had to come to an end, this was about the middle of September, I thought "roll on next summer" as I had so much enjoyed my first year. - all for 5/- a week. Mr Evan R Davies called on me to thank for all I had done to help him with his venture, and to invite me to appear at his Welsh shop that was thriving in London to advertise Wales. They sold Welsh quilts from the woollen mill at Trefriw

Welsh Highland & Festiniog Management 1922 - 1925

The first part of this article, published in *WHH 43*, noted the transfer of managerial responsibility for the NWNGR and Festiniog from long-established post holders to an officer seconded by the Great Western Railway.

This was only ever intended to be a short term appointment and Septimus Edward Tyrwhitt was

clearly keen to return to the GWR so as not to miss out in the wholesale "musical chairs" from 1 January 1924 consequent upon the retirement of their Chief Engineer. Into the void thus left steps the second of three relatively short-tenured occupants of the managerial seat at Portmadoc, but one who is - in view of his other narrow gauge appointments - better known than the other two.



Captain John May, R.E. was born in Llanybyther in 1867 and by the age of 14 was already a clerk on the Manchester & Milford Railway; he transferred to the Pembroke & Tenby as an audit clerk in 1889 (living in Pembroke Dock), to the Donegal in 1893, and in 1902 was appointed Audit Accountant of the Londonderry & Lough Swilly, becoming Traffic Superintendent of that railway in 1911. Following a reorganisation on the Swilly, in 1916 he obtained a Commission in the Royal Engineers and, during the war period, was associated with military railway operations in Salonica. Following the armistice, he was engaged on special duties connected with railway matters in Bulgaria, Constantinople (Istanbul), on the Anatolian railway, and in Egypt and Palestine. He left Army service in May 1923, aged 56, on completion of work for the Disposals Board - and was obviously on the look-out for a job. *Railway Gazette* and *Cambrian News* of 5 October 1923 both record that Tyrwhitt was succeeded by him - but with the title of Superintendent of the Festiniog and Welsh Highland Railways. It is not clear whether this re-designation was because both men had originally been expected to overlap - although in view of the date of the reports a hand-over date of 1st October for May seems much more likely than the 1st September that James Boyd quotes [*Festiniog Railway* Vol. I, p. 221]. Peter Johnson [*An Illustrated His-*

tory of the Festiniog Railway, p. 118] notes (apparently on the strength of Board minutes) that May was appointed - at £5 per week - "until a successor was found". One of his first tasks was to seek further savings - the swingeing service reductions on the WHR effective from 1 November 1923 were presumably his handiwork - although his cards had been marked (as John-

son records) by director Evan R Davies writing that there is "little use curtailing the service unless there is a corresponding reduction in the staff we employ". With Nicholls' appointment the following year, May was out of a job by the end of summer 1924 (the last memo over his signature at Portmadoc of which the Group is aware was 11 August 1924). Robert Gratton and Stuart R Band [*The Ashover Light Railway*, Wild Swan, 1989] record that he became Secretary and Manager of that railway in October, but left there in June or July 1927. Thereafter, he ran a shop in Pembroke Dock and died in the town's hospital on 15th January 1942.

His successor (and nemesis) at Portmadoc was **Eric Harry Raymond Nicholls** who was born in London in the summer of 1895 and took up employment with the Great Western Railway. In the early years of the Great War he was on the salaried staff of the GWR's Divisional Superintendent, Paddington, whence he obtained a commission as a 2nd. Lieutenant in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, serving in Egypt from 1916. It is not clear whether or not he returned to the GWR: in reporting his appointment to Portmadoc, *Railway Gazette* [30th May 1924] stated - on the strength, no doubt, of an advice either from him or from the Festiniog - that he was formerly of the Egyptian State Railways. Although he is not listed among the nine senior officials shown in the 1921 edition of the *Railway Year Book* for that administration this is no surprise, in view of his relative youth. He was appointed Managing Director of the Festiniog and General Manager (although using the title "Manager") of the Welsh Highland at a salary of £500 p.a. with effect from 17th May 1924 - at the age of 29 - with the task, *inter alia*, of dispensing with May's services before the autumn. In consequence of Nicholls' appointment, early in the summer of 1924 Stephens tendered his resignation as Engineer (a position which he had taken up in the spring of 1923 - sources disagree on the actual date), although Nicholls proved unable to provide an alternative: see Peter Johnson [*An Illustrated History of the Festiniog Railway*, p. 118] for a rather more cogent explanation of why the GWR's attitude was unacceptable to the FR than James Boyd's version [*Festiniog Railway* Vol. I, p. 221]. In the end, Stephens resumed his engineering responsibilities, and

he also became an FR director on 20th October 1924. As May had done a year earlier, Nicholls had to address the problem of the costs of winter operation: his memo to the Board dated 14 November 1924 (for the Board meeting a week later) appeared in *Welsh Highland Heritage* no. 26. It resulted in the winter passenger closure of the WHR - the local press carried the following advertisement:

**THE
WELSH HIGHLAND
RAILWAY**
- - -
SUSPENSION OF PASSENGER TRAIN
SERVICE
- - -

On and from December 15th 1924 and until further notice the passenger train service on the Welsh Highland Railway shown in the Company's Time Tables dated September 1924 will be discontinued.

Goods and Parcels Traffic (Perishables excepted) will continue to be dealt with. Perishable Traffic will NOT in future, be accepted for conveyance.

E H R NICOLLS
Manager
Portmadoc
2nd December 1924

But he did not "fit" - or, perhaps more likely, had other aspirations - for at the board meeting on 20th November 1924 (at which Jack tendered his resignation as chairman - for the reasons see *Welsh Highland Heritage* no. 26), Nicholls' resignation was also noted, to take effect from 22nd April 1925 (according to *Illustrated History of the Festiniog Railway*, p. 119; the same author's earlier *Illustrated History of the Welsh Highland Railway* (2002 edition), p. 52, has the date as 22nd May 1925 but the earlier date seems the more likely, being six months' notice given shortly prior to that November Board meeting). By spring 1925, however, Nicholls had already been edited out of the *Railway Year Book* and correspondence rather suggests that that he had left the company by early February 1925. On 22nd April 1925 Stephens wrote that he "took the company over" - i.e. assumed Nicholls's role - "about ten weeks ago", i.e. mid March 1925, although possibly this was only formally ratified at the next board meeting. When the Festiniog Railway archive (XD/97) at Gwynedd's Caernarfon Record Office again becomes available (it is presently closed to public access for re-cataloguing) there may be some clues for some other genealogist to explore.

Nicholls married Olwen May Bonner-Morgan of Cardiff on 18th September 1925 in

London - the notice in *The Times* carries the footnote "Egyptian papers please copy" so his connection with that country was clearly not transient. Indeed, did he return there? He does not immediately feature in *Railway Gazette's* appointments pages nor in the *Railway Year Book* over subsequent decades so his subsequent career - presently unknown - was either not in the railway industry, or failed to reach even the middle echelons. He died on 24th April 1957 at The General Hospital, Weston-super-Mare, survived by his wife; his estate was £846 16s 10d.

Nicholls was certainly "ex-GWR" but what is equally certain is that he was *not* a retired Superintendent of the Line of that company, as James Boyd [*Festiniog Railway* Vol. I, p. 221 and Vol. II, p.568] would have us believe. Indeed, in a letter written in 1928 (in which he was mistaken about May's previous career so we cannot place absolute trust in his recollection), Stephens stated that E H

R Nicholls was the nephew of the GWR's Superintendent of the Line, R H Nicholls. Richard Howell Nicholls, C.B.E., M.Inst.T., who was born in Grays, Essex on 16th June 1868, started on the GWR in 1884 and was appointed Superintendent of the Line in April 1919; he did not retire from that onerous post until 31st December 1932 and certainly did not take a year's sabbatical in Portmadoc! It is interesting to speculate, however, what his role in the secondment of Tyrwhitt and in his nephew's appointment to Portmadoc might have been.

With Nicholls' departure, the stage was set for Lieut.-Col. Holman Fred Stephens, R.E. to take centre stage and for locals to take over the day to day superintendence of the two railways - but that's another story. The following table is an extract of entries from the *Railway Year Book* for the years mentioned. Each edition of the Year Book was dated April of the year in question - thus



presumably actually representing the position as about February or March. The notes were compiled by the present author and did not form part of the details as published in *Railway Year Book*.

Rly	Secretary	Gen. Manager	Engineer	Loco Supt.
1 9 2 1				
FR	A.G. Crick Portmadoc	F. Vaughan Managing Director	Rowland Jones (Acting) (1)	R. Williams
NWNGR (2)	G.C. Aitchison 14 Dale St Liverpool (3)	G.C. Aitchison (3)	G.C. Aitchison (3)	G.C. Aitchison (3)
PB&SSR (4)	C.E. Hemmings Clark St Dolgarrog (5)	H.J. Jack (Managing Director)	G.K. Paton Dolgarrog (5)	(none shown)
1 9 2 2				
FR	A.G. Crick Portmadoc (6)	F. Vaughan (7)	J. Williamson (8)	R. Williams
NWNGR (2)	E.J. Deane 14 Dale St., Liverpool (9)	S.G. (sic) Tyrwhitt (10)	(none shown)	(none shown)
PB&SSR (4)	C.E. Hemmings Clark St Dolgarrog (5)	H.J. Jack (Managing director)	G.K. Paton Dolgarrog (5)	(none shown)
1 9 2 3				
FR	W.R. Huson 7 Victoria St., London SW1 (11) (12)	S.E. Tyrwhitt (10)	J. Williamson Oswestry (8)	R. Williams, Portmadoc
WHR	W.R. Huson 7 Victoria St., London SW1 (12)	S.E. Tyrwhitt (10)	(none shown)	(none shown)
1 9 2 4				
FR	W.R. Huson 7 Victoria St., London SW1 (12)	Capt J. May Portmadoc (Superintendent) (13)	Lt Col H.F. Stephens (14)	R. Williams, Portmadoc (15)
WHR	W.R. Huson 7 Victoria St., London SW1 (12)	Capt J. May Portmadoc (Superintendent) (13)	Lt Col H.F. Stephens (14)	(none shown)
1 9 2 5				
FR	W.R. Huson Wellington Ho, Buckingham Gate, London SW1 (12)	Lt Col H.F. Stephens Tonbridge (Managing Director) (14)	Lt Col H.F. Stephens Tonbridge (14)	Lt Col H.F. Stephens Tonbridge (14)
WHR	Same as for FR			

{1} = died 10 May 1921

{2} = at this stage operating only Dinas - Bryngwyn, for freight; entry did not appear in later editions, having been subsumed within Welsh Highland Railway (Light Railway) Co from 1 April 1922

{3} = the Liverpool address is that of Peats, the auditing firm; Aitchison was replaced as Receiver by H J Jack 9 April 1921

{4} = at this stage operating only Portmadoc - Carreg-hyllidrem (former Croesor Tramway), for freight; entry did not appear in later editions, having been subsumed within Welsh Highland Railway (Light Railway) Co from 1 April 1922

{5} = Clark Street, Dolgarrog were the local offices of the Aluminium Corporation Ltd. and of its subsidiary, North Wales Power & Traction Co Ltd

{6} = resigned as Secretary 13 June 1922

{7} = resigned as Managing Director 16 July 1921 but remained as General Manager to 31 March 1922

{8} = James Williamson of the Cambrian Railways: appointed 1 October 1921; engagement terminated 31 March 1923 (but appointed again, some years after Stephens' demise)

Tryfan Junction Report

Update on progress from Derek Buckles

We met for the third of our monthly working parties on Saturday the 2nd May under glorious blue skies.

Present were Lewis Esposito, Tym Crowther and myself.

The tasks we set ourselves to complete were;

1 – Remove all loose stone and associated vegetation from the top of the Station Building walls ready for re-building.

2 – Stake out the levels for the internal concrete base to conform to original levels. (Subject to final inspection by Stuart McNair).

3 – Reduce height of internal walls to allow for damp proof course insertion (Visiscreen).

4 – Wave in a friendly fashion to passengers on the passing trains! (essential activity for ALL Working Parties!).

I am pleased to report that we achieved all of the above without incident.

Our next objectives are;

1 - Shutter and concrete the central internal wall to prepare it for the application of the Visiscreen covering.

2 – Apply weedkiller to the site including the tops of the walls.

3 – Arrange for delivery of the slate – waste to form the sub-base.

4 – Transfer of yellow bricks from Dinas to site.

5 – Source additional stone for wall re-building.

Working Parties will continue on the first Saturday of the Month starting at 10am



and finishing around 4pm. All are very welcome.

Please contact me in advance if you can so that I have an idea of numbers.

If you would like to help rebuild Tryfan Junction please contact Derek on :

Tel : 01286 650540 or email derek.buckles@btinternet.com.

'What's In A Name'.....a Postscript

Richard Watson's article in WHH 43 provoked some interesting theories. Richard offers a P.S.

David Woodcock has suggested that the NWNNG station building name boards - used from around 1881 – may well have used standard cast iron letters as used by the London & North Western Railway at its own stations. He mentions that the letter shapes closely match those used on the NWNNG, citing the letters "R" and "G" which have particularly distinctive shapes.

I have so far been unable to find a clear photo of an LNWR nameboard containing the letter "R", but have located a good picture of the board at Pant Glâs on the LNWR line to Afon Wen. This shows the letter "G" having the same shape as the one on the surviving board at Bryngwyn, that is to say with the down-stroke taking the

form of a block with the bottom curved to join the remainder of the letter.

Having seen the evidence it does seem a compelling theory!

Why the LNWR would have supplied letters to a small narrow gauge railway isn't known, but it is suggested that their railway would have benefited from both through passengers and slate transference to and from their line. It would therefore have been to their advantage to supply these letters to the NWNNG.

In the article I speculated that the blank space left on the Dinas Junction sign might have been for the word "Caernarvon", as an extension to that place had been mooted in 1921. However, my correspondents have pointed out that the LNWR/LMS would hardly have countenanced this on a sign

facing their property, as the extension would have been in competition with their own services. An alternative might be that the space was left for the word "Bryngwyn", as a revival of services to that place had been put forward but never actually took place.

Does anyone have information on the different, and again very distinctive, typeface used not only on the lower portion of the "Dinas Junction Change For" sign, but also on the fingerboard at the top of the approach road?

Dinas



Pant Glas



Bryngwyn



Cont. From page 11 {9} = Deane was an employee (or partner) of Peats, the auditing firm, and acted as auditor for the FR for a number of years

{10} = should read S E Tyrwhitt; appointed to NWNNG post early 1922 and to FR and WHR posts from 1st April 1922 (under secondment from GWR), resigned (at end of secondment) 30th September 1923

{11} = appointed Secretary of FR 24th June 1922

{12} = the address is that of the offices of Evan Davies & Co. (the London practice of Evan R Davies, a solicitor and FR board member); Huson was an employee of that firm

{13} = appointed 1st October 1923 (on a temporary basis); employment ceased summer 1924. Replaced by E H R Nicholls (Managing Director FR and General Manager WHR, 17th May 1924 - 22nd April 1925 (see text), having tendered his resignation the previous November). His de-

parture has been anticipated by the company's submission for the 1925 edition.

{14} = appointed Engineer 1st May 1923; resigned briefly during Nicholls' tenure; re-appointed Engineer and appointed Loco Superintendent 16th December 1924; appointed Managing Director (while retaining existing posts) 22nd April 1925; died in office 23rd October 1931

{15} = Boyd's *Festiniog Railway* vol. 1 p. 196 and *Narrow Gauge Railways in South Caernarvonshire* vol. 2 p.26 have Williams replaced by Stephens 1st April 1923 whereas Johnson's *Illustrated History of the Festiniog Railway* p.116 gives 1st May 1923 and Boyd's *Festiniog Railway* vol. 2 p. 569 gives May 1924. Only the latter tallies with Williams' continued appearance in this post in *Cambrian News* at the time of the WHR opening in 1923 and in the 1924 edition of *Railway Year Book*, for which data would have been supplied by the company in that spring.