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ASTONISHING DISCOVERY AT TRYFAN JUNCTION

An extraordinary story has emerged as a result of excavation work being carried out at Tryfan Junction by the Heritage Group in preparation for the installation of a new platform. Mini excavator operator Dylan Humphreys was carefully excavating the site when his digger struck a metal object. Careful investigation revealed a nest of rods, wires, tubes and cranks directly opposite the remains of the old signal box. Analysis by Heritage Group 'experts' concluded that these could only be the original mechanism that operated the nearby signal. This unexpected discovery led the Tuesday Gang, who were helping with the Tryfan Junction platform project, to remove the turf and surrounding boscage from the base of the old signal box. This clearly was the original random granite base which had supported the



Above right - Working party examines the Tryfan Junction discovery

Above - Shows the rods, cranks etc in relation to the position of the signal box. Base.

wooden and glass structure. The box itself fell into disuse circa 1916.

Local stories abound of it being used as an aviary by the stationmaster and later as a greenhouse!

Group Secretary John Keylock, who was on site at the time, commented, "This is a staggering discovery which greatly adds to our knowledge of the working of Tryfan Junction in its heyday". It looks like yet another restoration job for the Heritage Group!"

The apparatus must have been that which was originally installed when the line partially opened in 1877. That it has survived, out of use, for about a hundred years is almost beyond belief and adds another twist to the saga of the Welsh Highland Railway

HERITAGE UNDER THREAT

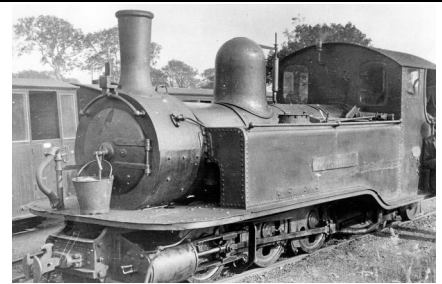
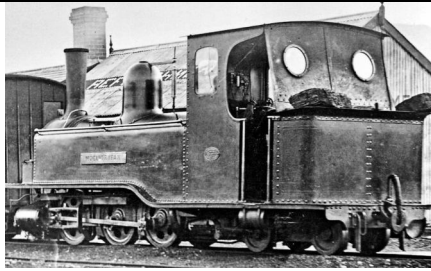
An unauthorised 'repair' to a rotten lintel in the southern elevation of Dinas station building has drawn protests from the WHR Heritage Group.

Some ten years ago a considerable amount of money – mainly from a private source – was spent on restoring Dinas station building. As a result the building received a Railway Heritage Award.

Heritage Group secretary, John Keylock commented, "Our heritage is fragile and it needs to be properly protected and maintained. I am delighted to hear that this unfortunate 'repair' is to be put right, hopefully with a door - albeit a dummy - as in WHR days".



Two Into One Will Go



1 + 1 =

It has long been accepted that the frames of *Snowdon Ranger* were placed under *Moel Tryfan* to provide one good locomotive carrying the latter's name. It was Charles E Lee, who originally suggested that the work was carried out in 1917, but an affidavit of February 1914 suggests that this hybridisation could have taken place earlier; JIC Boyd records *Moel Tryfan* as being re-tubed in 1913.

Moel Tryfan – and *Snowdon Ranger* – having been built at Vulcan Foundry one wonders why the NWNGR was approaching Hunslet's for spares and repairs for these two locomotives, but the firm's records show some 21 spares orders for them between 1908 and 1919 in addition to numerous orders for Hunslet-built *Russell* and *Gowrie*. Giving credence to the suggestion of an earlier than 1917 'amalgamation' is the fact that Hunslet last supplied spares for *Snowdon Ranger* in May 1913. In 1908 they had supplied '1 set of new frame plates' for the engine - the amalgamation would obviously have benefited from these.

In 1899 £1000 appeared in the Balance Sheet labelled "Paymaster General for Investment". The reason has not yet been discovered, but it seems probable that it was ordered by the Court of Chancery, within its powers under clause 4 of the Railways Act 1867 ("all Money received by such Receiver or Manager shall, after due Provision for Working expenses of the Railway and other proper Outgoings in respect of the Undertaking, be applied and distributed under the Direction of the Court . . .") where a Receiver had been appointed as result of a Judgment having been obtained. In 1896 the Judge had ordered the release of the Parliamentary Deposit of £845 for the 1885 Act for Caernarfon Harbour and Bryngwyn extensions (on which the powers had lapsed in 1892) to pay long suffering B and C Debenture Holders towards their arrears of interest (B had only been paid once and C never), and Creditors (mainly the L&NWR who were still owed £1,016 for signals at Dinas from the opening). Whatever the reason, some £3,300 had built up in the Railway's bank account over the previous three or four years. The money

was invested in "New Consols" i.e. Government Stocks. A further £1,200 was added in 1901 and another £1,000 in 1906, but £800 was withdrawn in 1907 to pay for the Pickering Brake Composite Coaches

*"John Keylock and
Michael Bishop
'amalgamate' to
unearth the truth of the
hybridised Moel
Tryfan"*

Nos. 4 & 5 (WHR Nos. 8 & 9) to replace the two carriages supplied for the (partial) opening of the railway in August 1877 of which Atchison writes, "the Engineer of the Company has reported to me . . . that it is impossible to repair the old Carriages any more as they are completely worn out." This statement seems to confirm that it was the two Ashbury Brakes that were replaced, rather than two of the Cleminsons (which didn't arrive until 1878).

Yet another £1,300 was required in 1908 to pay for the locomotive *Gowrie*. £700 was put back on 15th April 1909 "by direction of the Master" making £1,800. From here on the railway's income deteriorated, there being a UK depression (a minor version of the current one) and it was only withdrawals from this £1,800 which kept the Railway going into the 1914-18 War period. Russell's affidavit asking for £500 in May 1911 started: "It has become necessary owing to the great falling off in the receipts from Passenger and Goods Traffic to apply to the Court for leave to raise a sufficient sum to enable the Railway to be carried on and the expenses consequent thereon provided for. . . . The traffic has fallen off so greatly that we have not within the last six months earned sufficient to pay our working expenses. . . . There is an expenditure for fencing posts, Engine Tubes (for *Moel Tryfan*?) and sleepers amounting to £185 which it is absolutely necessary to make." If the £500 was not sanctioned he doubted he could carry on the working of the line for more than two or three months at the very outside. "And as negotiations

are pending with the London + North Western Railway Company for the transfer of the Line to them it would have a disastrous effect on those negotiations if the Line had to be closed before they were concluded." This last statement confirms that the rumour reported in the Times in April 1910 (referred to by Boyd in NGISC) had foundation.

By 1914, with the country on the brink of war and the NWNGR in dire straits – particularly as far as locomotive availability was concerned – there was only £500 left 'in the kitty' (i.e. in Court). The half-yearly interest on the A Debentures - £379 pa - ceased to be paid after the end of 1913. Outstanding interest on the 3 types of Debentures now stood at £38,000. By this time Russell had died - on 29th August 1912 - and Aitchison had stepped into his shoes officially on the following 15th January 1913 (not 1912 as Boyd has it). Aitchison's affidavit is reproduced in full.

The reference to 'Ernest Neele of North Wales' is interesting. Ernest Neele was at Port Dinorwic (based in the docks), and was the firm which did repairs on Penrhyn Quarry locos. The NWNGR usually ordered its spares from Hunslet direct but on one previous occasion Neele had ordered spares for an NWNGR Engine from them. In 1911 *Russell*'s tyres were turned and journals skimmed via him. It sounds from the affidavit as if on one of these occasions Neele could quote a lower price by doing work locally at Port Dinorwic; Hunslets sending the parts from Leeds.

Most interesting however is the reference to three locomotives. *Russell* and *Moel Tryfan* are specified as being in need of repair with the third presumably being the comparatively new *Gowrie*. Three locomotives being accounted for, *Snowdon Ranger* does not enter the equation, thus giving further provenance to a 1913 'hybridisation', and that *Gowrie* was a replacement for *Snowdon Ranger*. This hypothesis is strengthened by Russell's Affidavit some 6 years earlier to the Court for the release of money to pay for *Gowrie* dated 19th March 1908:

"It has become necessary to expend a sum not exceeding £1300 in the purchase of a new Locomotive in place of one of the original Locomotives which has been running since the Line was opened in August 1877 (to Quellyn). In spite of constant renewals and repairs one of the old Engines is quite worn out and the Engineer of the Company (Mr Aitchison) has informed me that it is impossible to renew it except by rebuilding it which is practically the same as acquiring a new Engine and that it would be less efficient, less powerful, and less economical in working than the proposed new Engine".

Two spares orders for piston rings in quick succession for slightly different sizes - for *Snowdon Ranger* in September 1910 and *Moel Tryfan* in February 1911 - suggest that both engines were still going then, hence the suggestion here that the amalgamation occurred around 1913. It seems likely that the engine referred to in 1908 as being worn out could have been *Moel Tryfan*, if only because H L Hopwood photographed *Snowdon Ranger* (presumably with its new frames) along with *Russell* and *Gowrie* outside Dinas Shed on 23rd June 1909. If this is about the date when one of the two Vulcan Fairlies ceased to exist it seems strange that they would have scrapped both boilers. We know from another order by the Chancery Judge in 1902 that new boilers and fireboxes were planned for 3 engines and £1420 was going to be withdrawn from Court to pay for this. In the event *Snowdon Ranger* was dealt with in 1902 and *Moel Tryfan* the following year, but the money was left in Court and it seems fairly clear that debits of £500 and £508.13.6 against the Renewals Reserve in those years were for the cost. At only 10 years or so old surely these two boilers wouldn't have been life expired - a spare boiler would have been worth keeping for the survivor, but there is no evidence this happened. The third planned new boiler in 1902 must have been intended for *Beddgelert*, but for reasons we can guess at was never ordered; the Fairy Godmother in the form of the North Wales Power & Traction Co. Ltd bought them *Russell* as a replacement in 1906 (see previous issues of WHH).

Most of the foregoing is based on information unearthed in the Chancery Records at the National Archives, Kew, by Michael Bishop. Vic Bradley - of the Industrial Railway Society - has kindly provided an analysis of Hunslet spares orders. More recently, at the NRM in York Michael re-visited the papers of one Selwyn Pierce-Higgins and found some notes written in 1948 by G.E. Hughes - sometime son of the vicar of Llanwnda - and well known to WHR train crews in the 1930s. These notes relate - inter alia - to a conversation with 'an old driver, who began

In the High Court of Justice

Chancery Division

Mr Justice Neville

**In the Matter of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company
And in the Matter of the Railway Companies Act 1867**

I Gowrie Colquhoun Aitchison of South Collingham Newark in the County of Nottingham the Receiver and Manager of the above named Railway appointed by Order dated 15th January 1913 make oath and say as follows:-

1. Owing to the collapse due to age and wear of the two out of the three Locomotives belonging to this Railway it has become necessary to apply to raise a sum of £500 out of the funds in Court to enable the said 2 Locomotives to be put into a proper state of repair and also meet current expenses incurred in connection with the workings of the said Railway.
2. I have applied for and received from The Hunslet Engine Company Limited of Leeds a Tender for the repairs required to be effected to the Locomotive "Russell" such tender amounting to £245 and I have also received a Tender for such repair from Ernest Neele of North Wales such Tender amounting to £198 and this latter Tender is in my opinion the one which should be accepted as apart from it being the lowest one in amount the cost of sending the Engine to Leeds would be saved as the work would be executed locally.
3. I have also received from the above named Companies Tenders for the repairs to the Locomotive "Moel Tryfan" the one from Leeds amounting to £85 and the other from North Wales amounting to £33.12.0 and for the before mentioned reasons I submit that the last mentioned Tender should be accepted. The above mentioned Tenders are now produced and shown to me marked "G.C.A.". There will be various minor expenses incurred before the Locomotives can be placed in every day use beyond those mentioned in the said Tenders.
4. As it is hoped that the traffic with the Iron Ore Mines will shortly recommence it is therefore necessary that the two above mentioned Locomotives should be repaired and put into working order at the earliest possible moment so that the Railway may be in a position to cope with the increased traffic. If however these repairs are not sanctioned I do not see how the Railway can be possibly carried on with only one Locomotive running for it is quite impossible to again temporarily repair these 2 Locomotives as this had been done on many previous occasions.
5. Should the lowest Tender be accepted the total cost of the repairs will amount to £300 or thereabouts but the Court is asked to direct that a sum of £500 be raised and paid to me,
and if this is done there will be sums of about £200 left after providing for the said repairs
and I propose with the sanction of the Court applying such sums in working the said
Railway and meeting the current expenses connected therewith as owing to the strikes +c.,
still continuing in the Slate Quarries there has been and still is a decrease in the Traffic
Receipts.
6. After the Interest on the Debenture Stock (which was payable last month) has been paid
there will not be more than £150 to the Railway Company's credit at my Bank but there is
about £124 due from the Quarries on Traffic and this will be received in due course. There
are outstanding Accounts payable by the Company amounting to about £68 and which can
stand over for a time but I have just had to draw a Cheque for £100 to replenish the Secretary's Account at his Bank so as to enable him to meet current expenses and pay Wages.

Sworn at Carnarvon in the County of Carnarvon

(signed) G C Aitchison

this 2nd day of February 1914 Before me Tho. W Henwood A Commissioner for Oaths

his career on the NWN GR as a cleaner in November, 1876'. (This would have been 'Willie Hugh' Williams). He maintained that 'Moel Tryfan' was fitted with *Snowdon Ranger's* frames as her own were badly cracked'. Alas no date was offered. Furthermore he recalled seeing *Moel Tryfan*

on a standard gauge wagon - either going away or returning - during the period 1918 - 1922. This is a small possibility, bearing in mind the primitive repair facilities available at Dinas, that this was to fit the piston rings ordered from Hunslet for the

General Manager's Half-Yearly Report - 1887

NORTH WALES NARROW GAUGE RAILWAYS CO.

DINAS STATION
NEAR CARNARVON

July 1887

TO J C RUSSELL, Esq.,
CHAIRMAN OF THE NORTH WALES NARROW GAUGE RAILWAYS

SIR,

I beg to report that during the Half-year ending 30th June last, the Permanent Way and Works of this Railway have been satisfactorily maintained together with the Engines, Carriages and Wagons.

During the Half-year 2,000 New Sleepers have been laid on the Line, and about 50 tons of Steel Rails weighing 41¼ lbs to the yard.

The two Fairlie Engines have been thoroughly overhauled. The Wheels of one of them have been fitted with New Tyres, and the Firebox of the other has been restayed and a New Set of Brass Tubes put in the Boiler.

Two Bridges carrying the Railway over the River Gwyrfai near Nant Mill and Bettws Garmon have been re-timbered throughout.

The whole of the Stations and Signal-boxes have been re-painted during the same period.

Note :
Replacement of rail & indeed
sleepers had actually started in
1883
C.J.Keylock

I am Sir,
Your obedient servant

R H LIVESEY
General Manager

Eyewitness Experience

This account by Harold Vickers of a journey on the WHR in 1936 was written shortly after his 'experience'. Previously published by the Stephenson Locomotive Society.

"At Rhosneigr parental authority relaxed sufficiently to allow unaccompanied visits to the Welsh Highland and Festiniog Railways. These were reached via Caernarvon, beneath which the LMS class 4, 0-6-0 dived with its 8-coach excursion train before storming raucously up the stiff grade to Dinas Junction. Here the multi-coloured train on the WHR platform was enveloped in acrid yellow smoke from the 2-6-2 Russell which was to slog its way to South Snowdon. Here a length of clothes line which formed the coupling behind the last coach was untied to release a petrol-driven trolley, which then

chugged its way back down the gradient we had just climbed so laboriously.

The weather had closed in by the time we reached Portmadoc and our trip up the Festiniog was marred by ceaseless rain and low cloud, which caused our double Fairlie *Taliesin* to slip the whole way up to Blaenau Ffestiniog, where we arrived very late. At Minffordd a high spirited camper had entertained the carriage by climbing out of one window, and through an adjacent window, to the justified dis-

may of the elderly guard, and the passage of the Moelwyn tunnel in an open-sided four wheeled coach was made almost intolerable by the hot steam and sulphurous fumes against which there was no defence."

See also WHH No. 42

Help!

Can anyone help with looking after our website - please? The site has been set up by Peter Harrison but we need a volunteer to keep it up to date. Please give David Allan a ring or send an email - contact details at the foot of this page.

Membership Secretary

It is with regret that we have to report that due to ill health Chris Hazlehurst has had to retire from the role of membership secretary. This is a task that he has carried out with great diligence for the last three years., and the Group is most grateful to him. Thanks Chris and keep getting better. Derek Lystor has agreed to step into Chris's shoes adding to his other duties with the Heritage Group. Derek's contact details are at the foot of this page.

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Where Was "Portmadoc"?

Where a railway had more than one station in a town, a distinguishing suffix (or in some cases, such as Croydon, a prefix) would be required. However, it was not until 1924, after the Grouping under the Railways Act 1921, that suffixes were widely added in cases of towns served by two railways with but a station apiece: prior to this, *Bradshaw* muddled the waters a little, by sometimes adding unofficial suffixes of their own, to help their readers, but generally speaking each station was distinguished merely by the name of its owning company. At the outset, Portmadoc had its "Cambrian" station of 1867 and its "Festiniog" station of 1865, which was all simple enough until the revival of the Welsh Highland project in 1921....

In presenting their case both to FR shareholders and locally, the principal protagonists Henry Joseph Jack and Evan Robert Davies explained that they would be building a new, combined narrow-gauge station to be more convenient for interchange with the about-to-become GWR¹. The station would be owned by the Festiniog, although its trains could only reach the station by running powers over some 25 chains of Welsh Highland (originally Croesor Tramway) track. Incidentally, this exercise of running powers was never included in the annual mileage figures submitted by the companies to government. The Welsh Highland would, in effect, be a tenant at the new station. Jack and Davies emphasised that this would enable them to close (for passengers) the old Festiniog station. Indeed, their aspirations for the overall new site also ran to provision of new goods shed, and facilities to take over from Boston Lodge – projects which, of course, never came to fruition². Meantime, incidentally and ominously, bus services between Portmadoc and Blaenau had commenced on 7 February 1923³.

So it was that on 1 June 1923 the Festiniog's Portmadoc station master, Henry Jones, and his team decamped from the 1865 station for the newly constructed station⁴ and, according to the railways' draft timetable for the new service (a definitive edition appears not to have survived), only a single narrow-gauge station was recognised in Portmadoc. Nominally, at least, the 1865 station closed for passenger traffic that day –



Portmadoc New Station

leaving it as "executive offices" for the railways' general management and as stabling sidings. However, we may be tempted to wonder whether the early morning quarrymen's train to Blaenau ever actually left from the new facility rather than from its overnight stabling point at the 1865 station, because the first

Richard Maund examines the evidence for the location of "Portmadoc" narrow-gauge passenger station.

appearance in *Bradshaw* of a timetable for the new arrangements is July 1923 and that train is shown (by footnote) as departing from Portmadoc (Old). The old site did not entirely lose its passenger facilities anyway, because Septimus Edward Tyrwhitt, the FR and WHR general manager, issued an instruction on 1 June that all Down trains from Blaenau "must stop opposite the Old station goods shed for passengers to alight", but Up trains were not to stop there⁵. There is no mention in *Bradshaw* of such facility but *Railway Magazine* in December that year⁶ reported: "Instead of using the terminal platform [at the 1865 station] Festiniog Railway trains now make a call at a stopping place adjacent thereto, and thence proceed across the bridge and partially through the streets to Portmadoc (New) station." Even so, it was in the November 1923 issue of *Bradshaw* that Portmadoc (Old) appears as a fully fledged entry with a number of trains booked to start or terminate there, as well as calls by trains (allegedly) working through from the Welsh Highland and waiting time there. Although the October issue of *Bradshaw* mentions only the new station, the timetable allows some excessive times between there and Minffordd which suggest that, in fact, the timetable dated 1 October

1923 actually marked the resumption of publicly advertised use of the 1865 station but that *Bradshaw* failed to re-set the station back in their table until the following month. In the circumstances, one wonders whether the 1923 resignalling intended for the closed 1865 station⁷ was effected (but I had better not stray off my researched territory!).

Of course, for operating purposes it was necessary to distinguish between the two locations, the suffixes New and Old being appended in the working timetables (and, possibly because they were supplied with a copy, *Bradshaw* immediately adopted the "New" suffix). For all other public purposes, however, while the 1865 station acquired the "Old" suffix, the new passenger station was simply "Portmadoc" – with only the suffix "for G.W.R." in the narrow-gauge railways' own external publicity and timetables. Apart from odd lapses (some notes in the summer 1923 Programme of Excursion Arrangements, for example), this continued until about 1929 when the suffix "New" seems to have come into regular use in their public material. It may be coincidence but this year also marked Holman Fred Stephens' withdrawal of *passenger* train movements across the Cambrian crossing⁸ so that there were, in effect, two "halves" of New station: the original 1923 station building and platforms south of the crossing and a new separate platform north of it (with minimalist passenger facilities, to put it mildly – not even a signboard at the outset). Some writers have categorised this as an independent *station*, giving it various fictitious titles – New 1929, New 1931 or New 1933 – which presumably stem from misunderstanding the timing and circumstances of the crossing's closure for passenger trains. However, as

public access was still via the 1923 station and a footpath⁹ on the east side of the narrow-gauge line over the GWR it is properly regarded as a separate *platform* of the 1923 station. The plan accompanying Charles E Lee's *The Welsh Highland Railway* (1962 reprint from his earlier work) labels it "Supplementary Platform" which seems admirably to represent the situation. If the Railway & Canal Historical Society's tome on British passenger stations¹⁰ regards stations with separated platforms, such as at Clapham Junction (Windsor side and both main line sides) and Liskeard (with its Looe branch platform at right angles to the main line), as single entities, and Morecambe Midland can be regarded as a single location despite moving 500 yards in 1907 and again in 1994, the equivalent concept should be good enough for Portmadoc!

These arrangements continued for the remainder of the period while the Welsh Highland operations were in the hands of a Receiver & Manager, i.e. to the end of the 1933 season. The booking office at the 1923 station was closed at (or towards) the end of the 1928 summer season but it is not clear whether Henry Jones (or his successor) resumed occupancy at the 1865 station at that date or earlier – doubtless still managing both stations. From the July 1929 issue of the companies' timetable (eventually also picked up in the July 1930 issue of *Bradshaw*) the 1865 station acquired the suffix "Harbour" (in place of "Old" which had still been used in their May 1929 timetable poster).

Winter connecting workings by the FR between Old and New (the south platforms, obviously) disappeared from the autumn 1929 timetable (when the WHR service to Portmadoc was only a three-days a week southbound-only service) but summer connections continued. The latter was affirmed by James Boyd¹¹ and Roger Kidner¹², even though such workings did not appear in *Bradshaw* after the 1930 season and are not made explicit in WHR publicity.

A curious note appeared in *Bradshaw* from the February 1929 to the September 1930 issues inclusive: "Trains between Portmadoc and Blaenau Festiniog will depart and arrive at Portmadoc High Street Halt on the Town side of Britannia Bridge"; the name of the halt continued to appear in index (only), without explanation, until late 1932. No such location or note seems to have appeared in the com-



Portmadoc New - Supplementary Platform

panies' own timetable at this period, however, so its import is unclear – perhaps this is what Roger Kidner meant about 1930 Bleanau trains¹³.

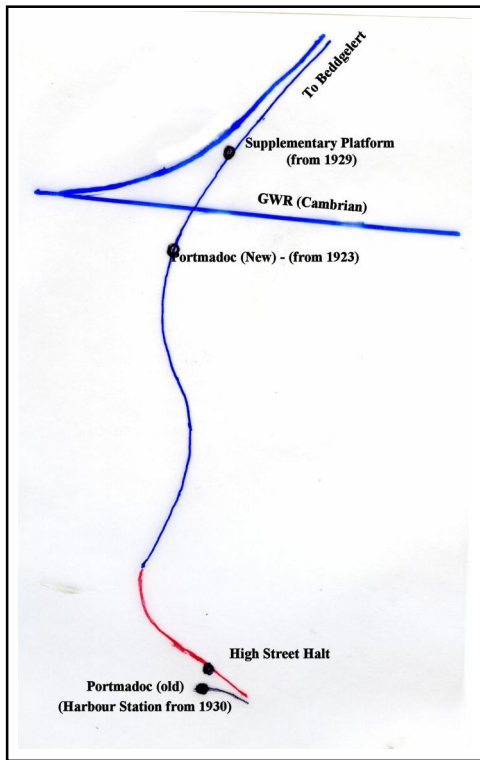
By the time of the FR's lease of the WHR (the trains started 9 July 1934), therefore, the suffixes "Harbour" and "New" were reasonably established but the FR's publicity for the leased line – for each of the three summer seasons they operated it – refers simply to "Portmadoc". The question arises, therefore: which station did this mean – and if it meant "New", was it the platforms south or north of the GWR crossing? Alas, it has not been possible to arrive at a definitive answer – I can only set down the pointers – not in any particular order – and leave readers to ponder their own conclusions, while inviting any facts and evidence that have eluded my analysis.

The pros and cons (these observations refer to years 1934 to 1936 only)

- 1) *Bradshaw* is equivocal: two separate tables appeared, with the Festiniog's station labelled "Harbour" but the Welsh Highland station suffix-less – this could be interpreted either way: indicating the same or different stations.
- 2) FR's timetables for its own line at this period show "FR Portmadoc" for Up trains, and "Portmadoc (for Black Rock)" for Down trains; the timetables they produced for the Welsh Highland service ("...operated by the Festiniog Railway") just show "Portmadoc".
- 3) The WHR timetable for 1934¹⁴ shows Festiniog Railway connections no differently from GWR connections and implies they all use different stations; a tight (10 min) evening connection with the GWR could only be achieved from New station. Hence it does not follow that WHR trains' departure point was the same as that for FR trains – there may simply have been connecting shuttles between the two when through passen-

gers for the Five Valleys' tours were due.

- 4) James Boyd¹⁵ sets out a combined timetable dated July 1936 which – in view of the FR trains shown starting/terminating – could tend to imply Harbour as the single Portmadoc station. However, in most cases, the timings indicate long waits at "Portmadoc" which might not necessarily imply arrivals and departures at the same station.
- 5) Quarrymens' services (and FR operations generally) would still be geared to Harbour and Boston Lodge.
- 6) WHR workings based at Portmadoc (as opposed to Dinas) were berthed overnight at Harbour – at least one photograph exists – but this does not prove that the advertised Portmadoc departure time was from Harbour for such workings may have left there earlier, in order to depart from New "on time". Likewise, well known photographs and reports¹⁶ exist of loaded passenger trains on the street section of the Junction Railways but the same counter argument applies.
- 7) Ticket issue statistics at Portmadoc for WHR destinations resumed, which might suggest they were issued at the Harbour booking office. However, this is inconclusive for no Edmondson *card* tickets are known from Portmadoc for WHR destinations during the lease period – all issues seem to have been "on train" – so the statistics could merely refer to guards' issues and may or may not have any bearing on the station used.
- 8) The terms negotiated by the FR with the GWR for use of the crossing during their lease contained an inducement to reduce unnecessary crossings – favouring the north platform at New.
- 9) With an advertised terminus at the New north platform, timings would not be susceptible to delay by conflict with GWR trains.



- 10) In the absence of anything to the contrary, seasonal visitors would expect repetition of previous years' practice (why did 1934 publicity not make altered terminal arrangements explicit if there had been a change?).
- 11) On 1 August 1934 on the 4 pm from Portmadoc Roger Kidner¹⁷ left from High Street Halt for Beddgelert (without stopping at either 'New' platform) but terminated at the New north platform on return (presumably the 4.55 pm back) – which could imply that the next Down train started from there, too.
- 12) On two journeys to Portmadoc in the final week of service in 1936 Geoffrey Hughes¹⁸ shows his trains as turning back at New north platform: it is most unlikely that he would have made what he suspected would be his last trip and not ridden the whole line! Also, he was careful in showing booked (not actual) times for the places where he joined (hence no times in his log at stations that weren't in the timetable) – he records the 2 pm "Portmadoc" to Dinas Jn as starting (and hence *intended* to start) from the north side at New. That being *its* booked start point, it is reasonable to assume that all other WHR Down departure *times* from "Portmadoc" were from there (regardless of whether the train came through from Harbour). The fact that, during this last fortnight of the season, the only WHR round trip was being worked from Dinas should surely be immaterial: surely

"Portmadoc" did not move about during the course of the season?

- 13) That the FR erected a waiting shelter at the north platform at New in 1934¹⁹ shows they expected passengers to wait for trains there, as their "Portmadoc" departure point. That would not be incompatible with connecting shuttles to or from Harbour when through passengers for the Five Valleys Circular tours were due, and with trains going to or from Harbour for operational convenience (at beginning and end of day, for example).
- 14) Accelerated timings between "Portmadoc" and Aberglaslyn suggest "Portmadoc" was New station. The 1934-6 running time between Aberglaslyn (the renamed Nantmor) and "Portmadoc" was a distinctly ungenerous 24 mins (even assuming no stop at Croesor Junction to change staffs) when compared with 38 or 39 mins (with stops) in 1926 between Nantmor and Portmadoc Old – a very significant reduction in running if the 1934 "Portmadoc" really was Harbour.
- 15) In 1934 and 1935 the tight turn round at "Portmadoc" for the Up train due Portmadoc 1.30 pm to form the 1.40 pm Down was also the meeting of the clockwise and anti-clockwise Five Valleys tours; it looks a likely candidate for doing a meet in the loop at New as it would be distinctly "tight" operationally and in time terms at Harbour.
- 16) Perhaps slightly fanciful: the "directing mind" behind the lease was none other than Evan Robert Davies – he who had conceived the original scheme in 1914 and had (as we've seen above) "sold" the scheme to the locals in 1922 on the basis that the 1923 station would be "the" one and only narrow gauge station... So the 1923 station would, to him, forever be "Portmadoc".

While there is no doubt that prospective Festiniog travellers should have made for Harbour station, the best advice for Welsh Highland travellers would seem to have been to try Harbour – but to allow plenty of time to walk to the New north platform, just in case! All in all, one wonders how many travellers from Portmadoc missed a Welsh Highland train through presenting themselves at the right time but at the wrong station.

I'm grateful to those Group members who have – unwittingly – contributed to this article through our debates. Perhaps

someone may be able to deliver the "killer punch" to settle this conundrum....

NOTES

- 1 Johnson {A}, *An Illustrated History of the Festiniog Railway*, 2007, p.114; Johnson {B}, *An Illustrated History of the Welsh Highland Railway*, 2009, p.59
- 2 Johnson {B}, p.58; Boyd {A}, *The Festiniog Railway*, 1975, pp.196/7 Plans of alternative layouts for the site appeared in Johnson, *An Illustrated History of the Welsh Highland Railway*, 2002, pp.48/9 (note that these items do *not* appear in the 2009 edition)
- 3 Boyd {A}, p. 201
- 4 *Cambrian News*, 8 June 1923
- 5 Boyd {B}, *Narrow Gauge Railways in South Caernarvonshire*, vol. 2, 1989, p.76
- 6 pages 441-9
- 7 Boyd {A}, pp. 393 and 397
- 8 See "*Chronicles of Croesor Crossing*" by Richard Maund
- 9 This pathway was not included in the initial draft for definitive footpath plans prepared by local councils in 1954 and is not a current public right of way
- 10 Quick, *Railway Passenger Stations in Great Britain – A Chronology*, 2009
- 11 Boyd {B}, pp.108 and 109 rather contradict the impression given at the foot of p.107 and suggest that a connection with the single WHR round trip *did* normally run throughout this period – as, indeed, is illustrated for 1933 at Boyd {A}, plate 49H
- 12 *Welsh Highland Heritage Heritage* no. 9, p. 6 and no. 18, p.7 – letters (although we may beg leave to suggest that the reference in the latter to Blaenau trains using New station as a terminus really only applied to those carrying Five Valleys Circular Tour passengers, not every train).
- 13 see note 12, above
- 14 Johnson, *An Illustrated History of the Welsh Highland Railway*, 2002 (note that this item does *not* appear in the 2009 edition)
- 15 Boyd {A}, p.606; Boyd {B}, p. 104
- 16 Boyd {B}, third para. p.106 and and foot of p.108 are the only references relevant to the lease period
- 17 *Welsh Highland Heritage Heritage* no. 9, p. 6 – letter
- 18 *Welsh Highland Heritage Heritage* no. 32, p. 6
- 19 It wasn't in the lease documentation so it would not have been there before the FR took over

The 1918 (1936 print) Ordnance Survey Map

One of life's minor pleasures is to find a cardboard box full of old Ordnance Survey (O.S.) maps in a second-hand bookshop, and to browse through it in search of a "gem". Quite recently I came across a pre-war 1" O.S. Contoured Road Map covering Portmadoc and Criccieth, which was quite an interesting find as it shows the Welsh Highland Railway south of Plas y Nant, Bryngwyn station, and the quarry incline and feeder branches.

The map itself is the revised edition of 1918-19, with roads amended to the year 1929. There were "minor corrections" in the year 1933, and it was reprinted in 1936.

Richard Watson's 'Minor Pleasures'

I am uncertain as to when the W.H.R. was added to the map, but suspect that it was during the 1933 revision. The reason for thinking this is that the circles indicating W.H.R. stations and halts are not coloured red, that is to say the stations are closed to passengers. Contour lines can be seen within the circles in some instances, suggesting that they probably never were coloured. Before one blames the cartographer, it should be remembered that by 1931 passenger trains ran only on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and goods trains on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so the mapmakers may have believed the line was closed at the time.

A "virtual journey" along the map starts from a point just north of Plas y Nant, but no halt is shown at this location. Travelling south, we pass the station at Quellyn Lake, but as the circle on the map is uncoloured the station is 'closed'.

At Glanrafon the slate quarry is 'disused' and the incline has been lifted. Glanrafon quarry ceased full scale production in 1915 and it seems the incline was removed, though the quarry itself worked sporadically for a number of years afterwards.

Approaching Rhos Clogwyn (Clogwyn y Gwin), an apparent incline with rails is shown on the map leading to the quarry, which is unnamed on this map. Although the incline was lifted many years before the date of publication, a ropeway was installed around 1925 and was used until the

quarry's final closure in 1934. I believe what is shown is actually the ropeway rather than a railway incline. ① ②

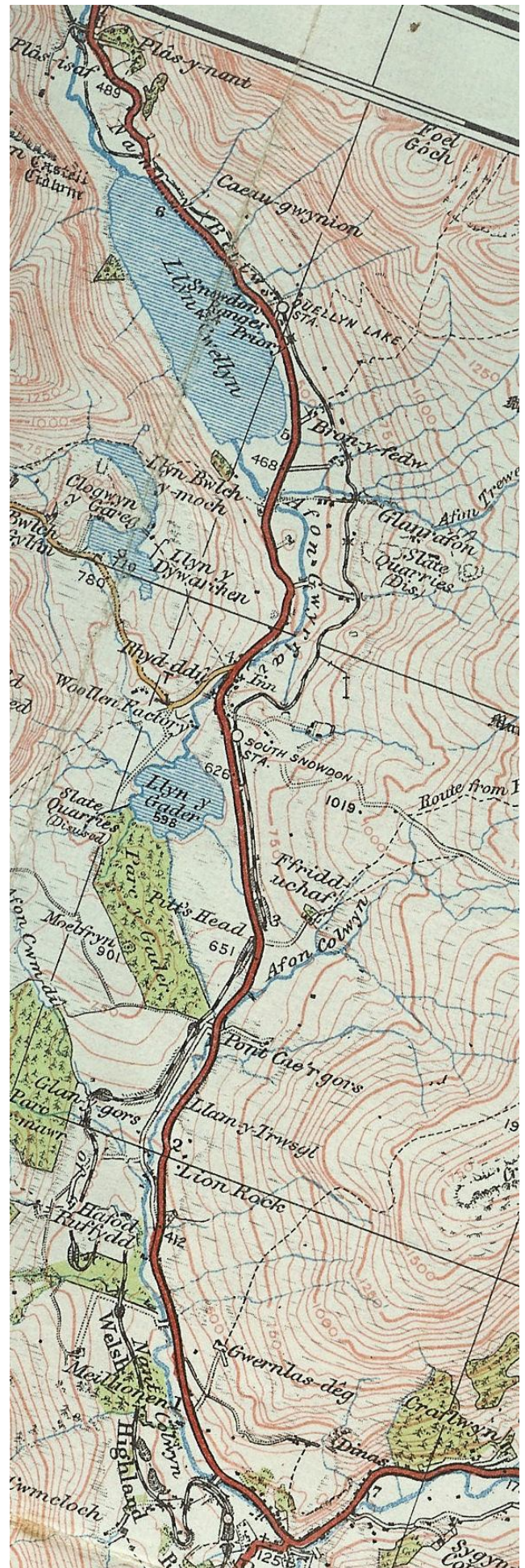
We pass South Snowdon station, and travel further south around the 'S' bends. The map shows the aborted P.B.S.S.R. route to the north of the W.H.R., between Meillionen and Cwm Cloch but other works further round the curves towards Beddgelert are not shown. This may be due to limitations of scale rather than mapping errors.

The line entering Beddgelert station appears to cross the river on a viaduct rather than on separate bridges, and beyond the station and tunnel, the P.B.S.S.R. "line to nowhere" bridge is shown. However we are unable to see the isolated bridge abutments in the field adjacent, or the old P.B.S.S.R. route on the right hand river bank near Brynyfelin.

From Brynyfelin the railway embankment follows the Aberglaslyn Pass through the tunnels and across the level crossing, but the halt at Nantmor does not seem to exist.

The line crosses the road to Llanfrothen and down the "ski slope" to the Traeth, but the rather ephemeral halts at Hafod y Llyn, Hafod Garregog or Ynysferlas are not shown. However, importantly, two ferry crossings of the Glaslyn in the Hafod y Llyn area are shown even though by 1936 they had probably ceased to operate.

Reaching Croesor Junction, the station or halt



here is shown as an open circle within which one can see part of the Croesor line, suggesting the WHR was added to the revised edition of the map. The Croesor Tramway branches off and extends way up into the Croesor Valley.

Following the old Croesor route towards Portmadoc, we see no halt at Ynysfor but Pont Croesor exists, though 'closed to passengers'. At Portmadoc itself, the 1923 station is there but not the 1929 version to the north of the crossing. The standard gauge Beddgelert Siding curves in from the direction of Portmadoc (G.W.R.) station.

We end our "virtual journey" over the W.H.R. main line, and move once more to the top of the map. Here, the southerly stub of the Bryngwyn branch is in place but the station of the same name is disused. However the incline is intact, and quarry branches fan out from the top.

Points of non-W.H.R. interest include parts of the L.M.S. lines from Caernarvon to Afon Wen, open to passengers, and Penygroes to Nantlle, a goods only branch at this time. The stub of the Nantlle Railway can be seen with its feeder branches and inclines to the quarries at Cilgwyn and Penyrsedd. The Festiniog is prominent, and in contrast with the lines of the W.H.R. its stations are open to passenger traffic. The Snowdon Mountain Railway is operational and its track can be seen between Clogwyn and the Summit, while much further west on the Llyn peninsula, the line of the 2' gauge quarry system at Yr Eifl (Trevor) can be seen.

References

- ① *The Quarries of the North Wales Narrow Gauge and Welsh Highland Railways*. Gwynfor Pierce-Jones and Alun John Richards, Gwas Carreg Gwalch, 2004
- ② *The Slate Regions of North and Mid Wales and Their Railways*. Alun John Richards, Gwas Carreg Gwalch, 1999.



The 'points of non - WHR interest' mentioned in the last paragraph are not visible on the extracts of the map.

Maps are Crown Copyright

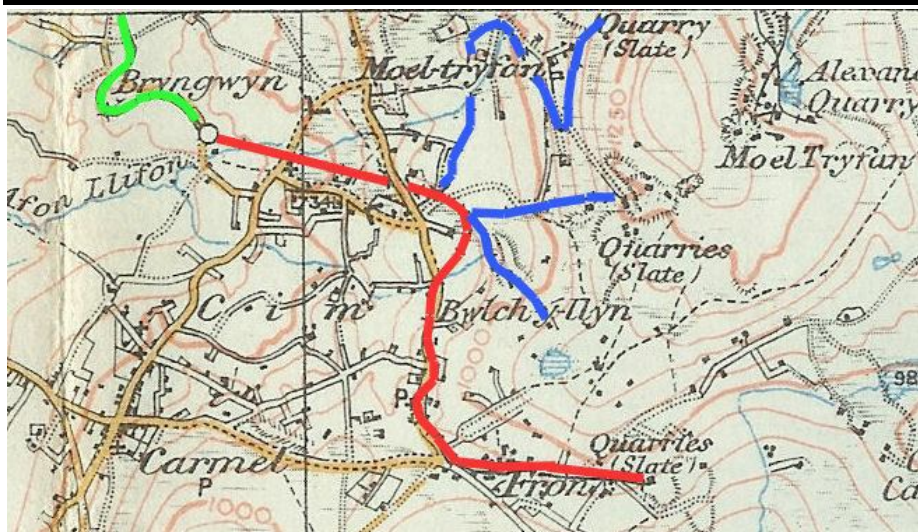
Bill Rear

Life long Welsh Highland enthusiast and Welsh Highland Heritage Group member Bill Rear died in Llandudno Hospital on the 13th November 2009. Bill will be remembered not only for his excellent books on the railways of North Wales, but also for nearly 100 photographs that he took on the Welsh Highland in 1948 when he cycled with a friend along the trackbed from Dinas to Rhyd Ddu. He was always very proud of his superb 7mm scale models of Russell (in green livery) and Moel Tryfan which were prominently displayed along with other railway memorabilia in his home in Conwy.

Bill was an early advocate of the re-opening of the railway and an early director of the WHR (1964) Co as it was then known, (now Welsh Highland Heritage Railway). Bill was brought up in Waunfawr and started his career by driving steam locos for BR out of Bangor Shed.. With the demise of steam Bill became a teacher in Wrexham. Bill's wife, Kate, predeceased him about nearly two years ago.



The Fron Tramway



Fron Tramway - red ; other lines - blue; Bryngwyn branch - green



Photographs of the Bryngwyn branch are few, and photographs of the network of railways which radiated from the summit of the Bryngwyn incline are fewer still, at least when they were still operational. This one is preserved in the Caernarfon archives (XS/2001/5) and is evidently taken at Bwlch y Llyn from SH 5057 5506, looking northwards. It is undated, but does not show the chapel erected here in 1907.

The photograph brings out well the distinc-

tive landscape through which these railways ran, with its many short terraced rows and, in the distance, smallholdings set in geometrically laid-out fields. Until the very late eighteenth century, this whole area - Mynydd Cilgwyn, Moel Tryfan and Moel Smytho - was an uninhabited sheepwalk for the neighbouring lowlands, though there had been quarrying here at Cilgwyn, in the south-western corner for hundreds of years. In 1800 a partnership which included the egregious lawyer, John Evans of Caernar-

fon, secured a crown lease on part of the Cilgwyn workings, beginning a long battle

with the established gangs of independent quarrymen. It was probably Evans' Cilgwyn partnership which built, or improved, the road shown on the photograph, to give access to their landing-place on the Foryd cove. In about 1810, a branch road was laid from it to give access to the newly-opened workings at Ceunant y Glaw, the origins of the Pen yr Orsedd quarry, and it is this road which forms the main thoroughfare of the village of Fron today.

Dafydd Gwyn explores a little known tramway

The history of the various tramways from the drumhead is set out in Vic Bradley's magisterial *'Industrial Locomotives of North Wales'*. The branch line from Bryngwyn to Fron was first used from the autumn of 1882, replacing, and using the rails of, the earlier 3' 6" John Robinson line which had connected with the Nantlle Railway by a route running to Cilgwyn quarry then dropping to the valley floor in a series of inclines. From 1919 the 1882 route was also used by Cilgwyn quarry, a traffic which lasted only ten years, until the closure of Cilgwyn. It was open again for a while in the thirties - precise details are elusive - until the Caernarvonshire Crown Slate Company worked out that getting slate to the LMS at Dinas by narrow gauge railway took several days whereas by lorry to Penygroes it took half an hour. Strange to reflect that not many years after this photograph was taken, with the completion of Welsh Highland, this railway was to form part of what was surely the lengthiest narrow gauge system in Britain, which would take you from Fron to Blaenau Ffestiniog and the quarries above Cwm Penmachno.

LETTERS

There could be another explanation to the mystery of that Dinas station sign.

There might not have been another destination previous to "Aberglaslyn". There is a possibility that the fourth line of the enlarged board originally read "Portmadoc" or perhaps "Portmadoc &" commencing beneath the "W" of "Snowdon", where there is the hint of the start of a patch in the paintwork in the photo with the Pickering in the background.

If this was the case the photographer has captured the board after the lettering has been moved over to the right, but before "Aberglaslyn" has been painted in. There may have been a delay while they tried to obtain cast letters ?.

I prefer this explanation to it having been "Nantmor". Nantmor is

just too insignificant as a place, and was not known by its name as a tourist attraction.

"Snowdon", "Beddgelert", & "Aberglaslyn" all mean something to the tourist, and "Portmadoc" & "Blaenau Ffestiniog" are significant places.

John Padley

Where was the mill at Bryn y Felin? – (Pennant Jones article in WHH 45)

Just downstream of Bryn y Felin bridge the river fed a leat which powered a stamps mill in conjunction with Bryn y Felin copper mine a little further down stream

John Keylock

Bridging the Glaslyn at Pont Croesor

In WHH No. 40 Derek Lystor quotes Bob Owen 'Croesor' as writing that 'around 1872' a road was built from Carreg Llanfrothen to Glaslyn Bridge (Pont Traeth/Croesor) and thence to join the Tremadoc to Beddgelert road not far from the Glaslyn Inn.

On July 16th 1864 the North Wales Chronicle reported that:-

"the Croesor Railway" has just been fully completed the last touch to the large bridge (across the Glaslyn) having been given to it on Thursday week last. The bridge 220' long and 30' wide is a very good and solid structure and was built by Mr Robt Jones, mason, Criccieth under the superintendence of Messrs Pritchard & Gregory, Contractors, Bangor and it reflects much credit on all parties concerned"

The report continues:-

"In addition to the line of rails over the Glaslyn river, there is likewise a public road, which will be of much advantage to the inhabitants of Llanfrothen and the neighbourhood. It is to be hoped that the parish authorities will now do their part and make the (access) road(s) as quickly as possible. Llanfrothen now is practically isolated and can only be approached by going round to Penrhyn(deudraeth), or by Pont Aberglaslyn, or by fording the river, which



Earliest known photo of Pont Croesor, showing the planked bridge with wooden hand rails

during heavy floods is by no means a very safe undertaking".

Based therefore on Bob Owens's recollection it could well have been five or more years before the 'parish authorities' provided the necessary access roads. Note also that there is no mention of available ferry crossings.

Furthermore it is recorded that the Glaslyn (tramway) bridge needed repairs in 1876; is this a reflection on Mr Robt Jones' workmanship?!!

In 1865 a Bill was presented to Parliament to convert the Croesor Tramway into the Croesor & Portmadoc Railway, extend it to Borth y Gest ('the waterside

at Penclogwyn') and adapt the whole line for passenger traffic.

Based on the North Wales Chronicle report the tramway promoter had already provided the facility for a parallel roadway at Glaslyn Bridge. Nevertheless para 30 of the said Bill recites that 'The (Croesor & Portmadoc Railway) Company may construct the bridge for carrying the turnpike road so that the clear width of roadway between the parapets shall not be less than 21 ft'. This would allow 9ft for the tramway/railway.

Is this an example of Victorian retrospective planning permission!?

Tickets Please Derek Lystor

In previous articles I have described various tickets issued to the travelling public, so I thought it high time to spare a thought for man's best friend!

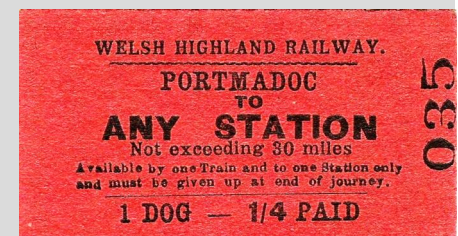
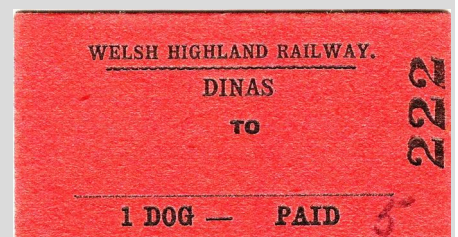
In total, the railway had stocks of six different varieties catering for canine travellers all printed by Waterlow & Sons. Dinas issued an open ticket on which the fare and destination were entered by hand. Many unused tickets have 5d handwritten, and there are known examples of issues in 1936 to Blaenau Festiniog at 2/0d and Portmadoc at 1/3d. (The more canny passenger travelling from Dinas to Blaenau with accompanying mutt, could have purchased a Portmadoc bound ticket from Dinas and a Festiniog issue thence to Blaenau price 6d, thus saving himself 3d, a not inconsiderable sum in those days.) It seems unlikely that any more than 140 tickets were issued before closure. It is highly probable that a similar ticket was available from South Snowdon, but no exam-

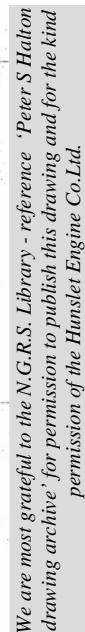
ples are known to have survived. The author would welcome any information to the contrary.

Beddgelert had stocks of two varieties available to "ANY STATION not exceeding 10 miles" at 5d and 20 miles at 11d. The 5d was used for travel southward to Portmadoc or northward to Waenfawr, whilst the 11d catered for Tryfan and Dinas. Issues of dog tickets appear not to have been recorded in the Beddgelert Ticket Register but do appear in surviving Weekly Traffic Returns from 1924. As an example, one 5d ticket was issued in March, and five 5d's and two 11d's in May. By May 1928 a total of forty two 5d tickets and four 11d had been sold.

Like Beddgelert, Portmadoc issued similar printed tickets but also had a 1/4d issue covering a maximum journey of 30 miles. The 5d covered journeys to Beddgelert, 11d to Tryfan and 1/4d to Dinas. Although no accurate figures can be given, no more than twenty eight 5d, sixteen 11d and thirty five 1/4d were ever issued. The 11d issue was used in the early days of the Festiniog Railway revival.

All in all, it seems that not very many passengers took their dogs for a ride on the Welsh Highland!





TH. 6133.