

# WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

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## Tryfan Junction Platform Complete

### Group members on First Train to stop for over 70 Years



The 10.00am departure from Caernarfon on the 1st May was special. This would be the first train to stop at Tryfan Junction, with its newly completed platform, for over 70 years. In the event some 35 members and guests took advantage of this unique opportunity. On arrival at the gaily decorated halt, which was photographed by John Stretton, bacon 'butties' were soon on offer together with welcome tea and coffee in the cool conditions. It was an ideal opportunity for members to get together, to discuss railways in general and the next stage of the reconstruction in particular. Maybe next year will see the completion of the station building itself?



frayed, ashtrays are overflowing and the Mem. Sec. has to take a rest in an easy chair to relieve the stress! The result is brilliant and all 50 are copied to disc and sent post haste to the Chairman for printing and issuing to prospective travellers. Thanks Jo, I owe you one!

It all began with an e-mail from the Chairman. "This Tryfan Junction heritage excursion on May 1st – can we produce a special ticket for the occasion?" "I know someone who can", I replied, "I have a tame graphic designer, leave it to me."

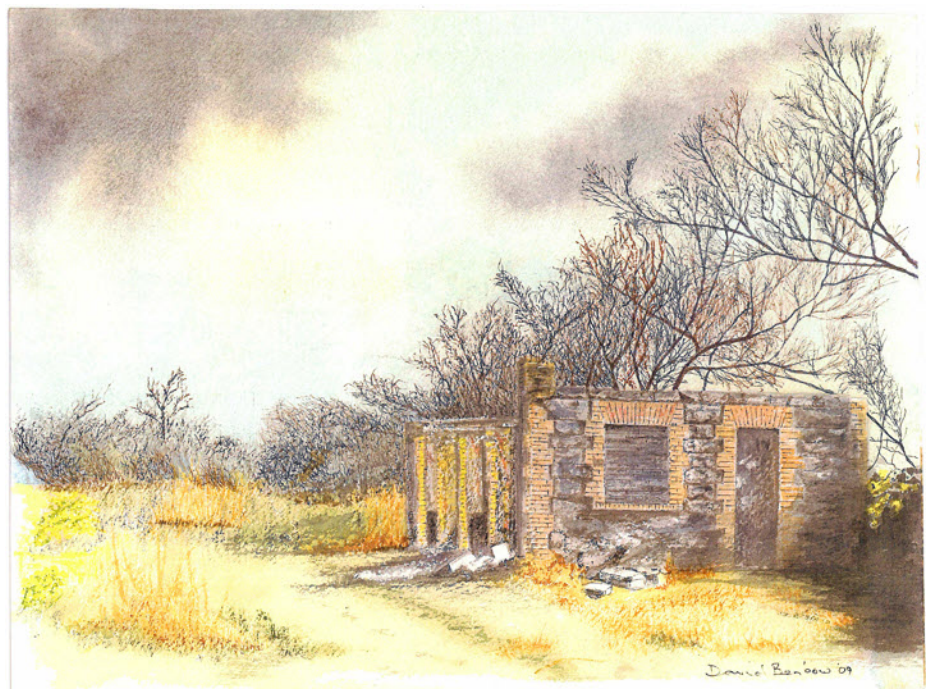
With bribery and the promise of a roast dinner, I enlist the help of my daughter Jodie. There is already a Carnarvon to Tryfan Jct ticket from early WHR days, but it is a boring all brown affair and we want something more original, so two suitable tickets are found and scanned in. Armed with her works computer and Mr Photoshop's graphics programme, Jodie sets to work cutting, transposing, airbrushing and whatever else needs doing. Your scribe looks on in awe at this technical wizardry having yet to master even the simple Windows Paint programme!! I know she's my daughter, but this girl's good!!

An hour (and several pots of tea) later, and it's all done – well one is done. Proper job as we say in these parts, but can you do fifty with serial numbers from 000 – 049 as well? This simple request takes Jo a further 2½ hours. By this time tempers are getting

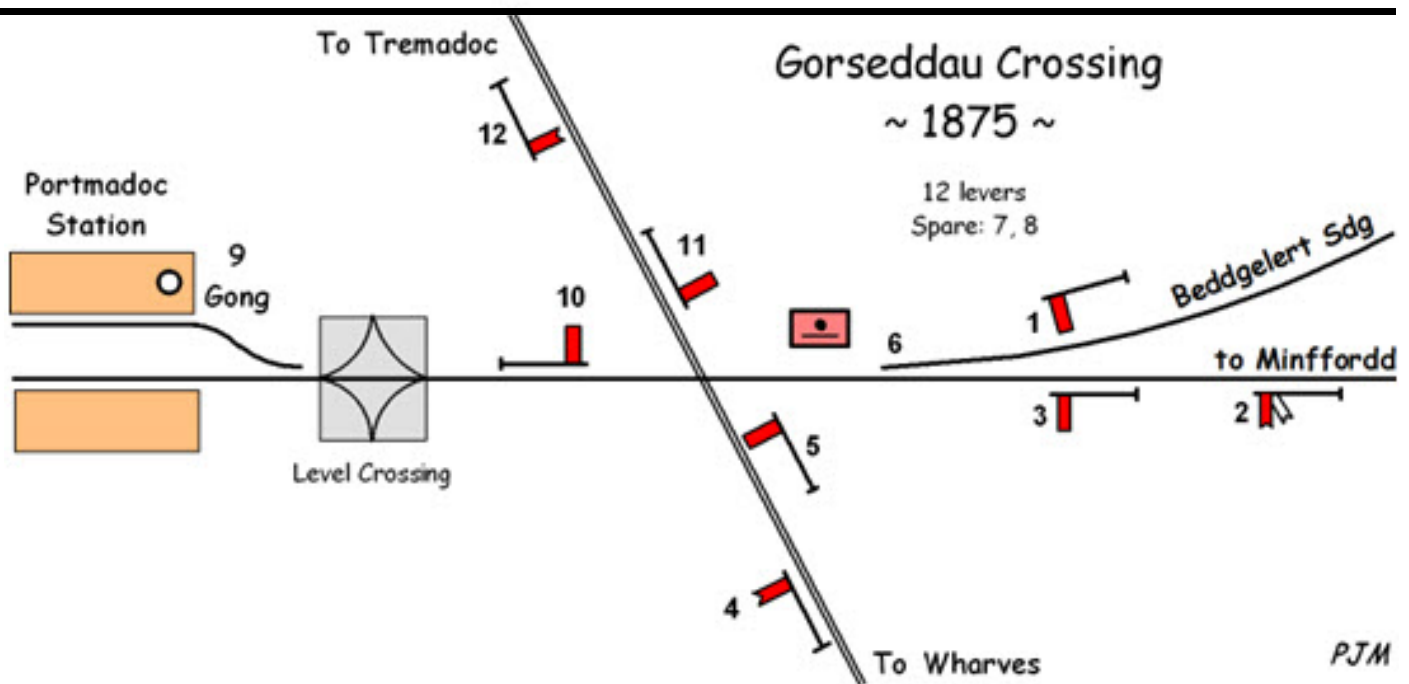
An amusing event took place on the day of travel when the train guard came round inspecting tickets. He remarked how nice it was to clip an Edmondson card ticket as opposed to the paper issues that he was used to!

**Derek Lystor**

The watercolour below is the latest offering from David Benbow which neatly captures the scene at Tryfan Junction during the years of closure



# Not the Croesor Crossing



Much has been published about the Croesor/WHR crossing of the Cambrian Railway, including Richard Maund's highly-recommended "Chronicles of Croesor Crossing". However, this wasn't the only narrow-gauge crossing that the Cambrian Railways had to put up with – at one time they had three mixed-gauge crossings in Porthmadog.

Less than a quarter-mile down the line from the Croesor Crossing, the Cambrian was crossed by another narrow-gauge railway, the grandly-named Gorseddau Junction and Porthmadog Railways. This 2ft gauge line had taken over the route of the older 3ft gauge Gorseddau Tramway. Although the G.J.&P. Railway was authorised in 1872, it took until 1875 for regauging and reconstruction to be completed.

As a freight-only line, the Gorseddau didn't need to be approved by the BoT's Railway Inspectors before it opened. What the Gorseddau seemed to have over-looked, however, was that their crossing of the Cambrian's passenger line would need to be approved. File MT6/183/11 in the National Archives starts with a letter from the Cambrian to the BoT asking if the Gorseddau had requested an inspection of the crossing. The file continues in similar vein, with the BoT asking the Cambrian if the Gorseddau had done this, the Cambrian asking the BoT if the Gorseddau had done that, and so on. Even correspondence from

the Gorseddau didn't come direct, but from their London solicitors.

The file contains a wonderful tracing of the signalling arrangements. In the days before ammonia printing, let alone photocopyers,

## *New Research by Peter Mathews*

the only way to make a copy of a plan or drawing was to place tracing paper over it, and copy every detail by hand. Drawing offices used to employ "tracers" specifically for this work. Unfortunately 130-year-old tracing paper is very fragile, so the diagram above is transcribed from that tracing.

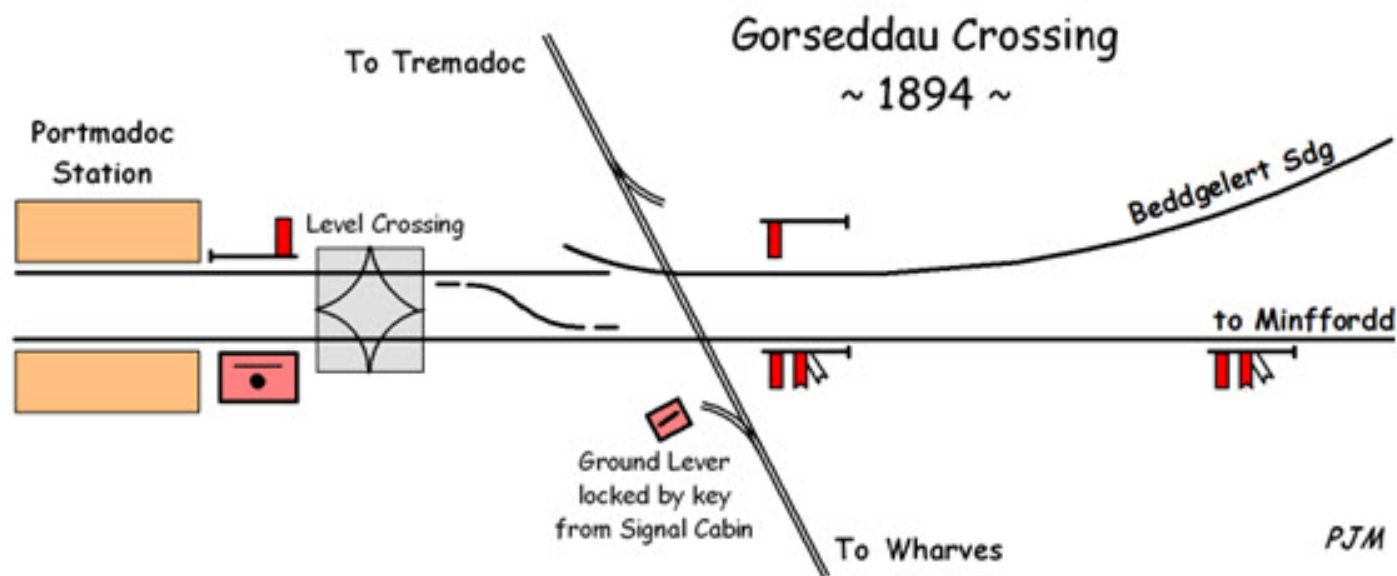
Whilst the Croesor crossing only needed a 6-lever cabin, 12 levers were needed for the Gorseddau crossing. The Gorseddau crossing was much more lavishly equipped with home and distant signals on both narrow-gauge approaches, unlike the Croesor crossing which had no protecting signals at all on the narrow-gauge. The new cabin also seems to have taken over control of the standard-gauge point giving access to the Beddgelert Siding. Boyd states that the cabin was sited on the Beddgelert Siding side of Y Cyt, probably to be close to this point. The cabin not being adjacent to the crossing may explain the provision of the signals on the narrow-gauge. The Gorseddau was worked by

steam (using a De Winton vertical boilded locomotive) whereas the Croesor Tramway was horse-worked, may also explain the signals on the Gorseddau.

Note that there are no catch points shown on the narrow-gauge line, unlike at the Croesor crossing. However, it was a BoT requirement that non-passenger lines should be trapped to protect passenger lines, and so Colonel Rich, when he inspected the crossing, required that trap points be fitted in the Gorseddau line, either side of the Cambrian. Boyd states that the north trap point was later extended into a siding running parallel to the Cambrian, which was then further extended to give an end-on junction with the Croesor Tramway at Beddgelert Siding. However, as the Gorseddau siding was on the north side of the Cambrian, and the Croesor Tramway line ran on the south side of the Beddgelert Siding, was there yet another mixed-gauge crossing here? Or did the Croesor run a connecting line right around the north side of the standard-gauge tracks?

Note also that there is no facing point lock nor trap point shown on the pre-existing Beddgelert Siding. These were only provided when the station was resignalled following the Regulation of Railways Act. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the trap points at the Welsh Highland crossing were never fitted with facing point locks; when the crossing opened the Croesor was a freight-only line, so the trap points did not need facing lock points. By the time





Welsh Highland passenger trains started running over the Croesor crossing trap points, they didn't need FPLs for a different reason: the line had been classified as a "light railway".

Colonel Rich inspected the Gorseddau crossing in August 1875. The Gorseddau's Directors Report at the end of 1875 stated that the line opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. However, an opening special seems to have run on 2<sup>nd</sup> June – over two months before the crossing had been approved! One wonders if the Cambrian allowed the opening special across their line.

Portmadoc was resigalled in 1894 by the Cambrian to comply with the Regulation of Railways Act. According to Boyd, the Gorseddau had more or less ceased running in the mid 1880s, and the crossing had been lifted in 1892. However it is clearly shown on the 1894 signalling plan, so presumably the Cambrian still felt legally obliged to maintain the crossing. By unfortunate coincidence 1894 was probably also the

year that the Gorseddau finally went belly-up, as that was apparently the last year that they filed any returns.

On the 1894 plan, the Gorseddau crossing has been down-graded from a 12-lever cabin, to a solitary, single ground-lever working the two trap points. This ground-lever was unlocked by a key from the new Cambrian signal-cabin. By this time the Cambrian's passing loop had also been extended over the road crossing, with the Beddgelert Siding connection coming off an extension of the up loop. This required the Gorseddau line to cross both the Cambrian main-line and the Beddgelert Siding, which meant that the Cambrian had a third mixed-gauge crossing to maintain!

As a final note, according to Boyd the Cambrian seems to have had about as much success in getting the Gorseddau to pay for the costs of their crossing, as the GWR was later to have in getting the Welsh Highland to pay for the costs of the Croesor crossing.



*Huddart's Crossing of the Cambrian Rly by the Gorseddau. Named after J.A.Huddart who owned the Brynkir Estate in Cwm Pennant and who provided much of the land on which the Gorseddau was built*

## West Midlands's 'Time Team'

The West Midlands branch of the WHR Society have committed to providing a replica of the 'lamp room', which, along with the inspection pit and water tower will create a 1920's Beddgelert cameo.

As will be noted from the adjacent photograph the original base has deteriorated since the 'lamp room' was dismantled some sixty years ago and a new (and level!) concrete floor will need to be cast atop the old. In the process of stripping the surface of vegetation a channel running most of the length and

ending in a drain or sump at the northern end was revealed. It also became apparent that the base consisted of two layers of concrete with the channel cast in the top layer. So what was the purpose of the drain/gutter with its terminal drain? The best suggestion to date is that the lamp room had a second life as a slaughter house for sheep with the channel used to drain away the blood. Any further suggestions?

Concrete base of the Beddgelert lamp room clearly showing the central drain channel  
Photo by John Hine



# Treflan Quarry Siding

A brief history of iron ore mining in the Bettws Garmon area was covered in an article by Dr Gwynfor Pierce-Jones in *WHH No 39* in which mention was made concerning linking the workings of the Garreg Fawr Ironstone Mine to the NWNCR by tramway.

Late in 1901 plans were afoot by the NWNCR to construct a siding, a short distance east of Bettws Garmon station, to link up with this concern's tramway. On December 2nd that year J.C. Russell, the railway's Chairman and Managing Director, wrote to the Board of Trade requesting "sanction to the insertion of points and crossings from the Company's line to a siding" and stating that "no land can be acquired nor can the Ironstone Co desiring to form the connection obtain even a right of way over any of the land belonging to the Rev. Parry adjoining the line". It was proposed to work the points by Annetts Lock & Key attached to the staff. The position of the two sets of points was left open, being dependant on the arrangements for working the traffic and delivery and reception of wagons.

Sanction was obviously given and work carried out swiftly, both on siding and tramway, for on 7th May 1902 Major E Druitt R.E. had issued his Inspection Re-

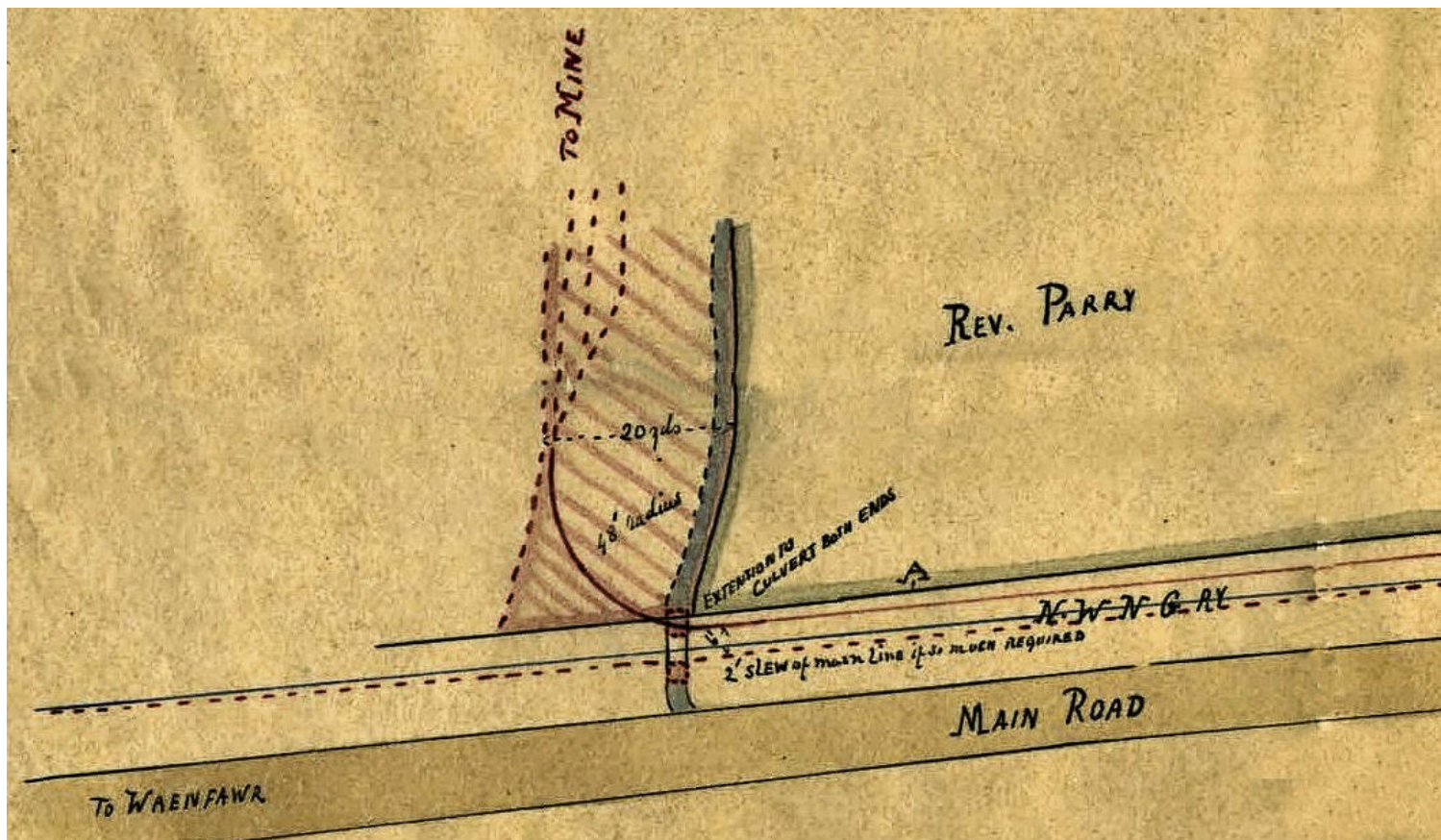
port to the Board of Trade recommending the use of the new works. He noted that the points were worked from separate ground frames containing one lever, controlled by a key which must be fixed to the train staff for the section Waenfawr – Snowdon. The points needed to be fitted with facing point locks, each with a second coupling rod, and the stock rails needed ties to be fitted. Recommendation was given subject to those requirements being carried out and duly reported.

## *Derek Lystor researches the quarry branch to the Garreg Fawr Ironstone Mine*

As can be seen from the official plan dated December 2nd 1901 (only part shown), a stabling loop was constructed off which the connecting siding left by a very sharp right hand curve. The position of the points mentioned in Russell's letter was to be between points A & B. A slight slewing of the main line was allowed for if necessary and an extension to an existing culvert was needed along with repositioning of a signal half way down the loop. The plan suggests that the NWNCR rails finished at the end of

the curve, the remainder of the connecting line being the responsibility of the Garreg Fawr mine. After the curve the line ran straight across the open field on a low embankment and crossed the Afon Gwyrfaï by a simple girder bridge (see photo in Journal 39, page 3). Curving sharply right and now on a more substantial rubble embankment the tramway roughly paralleled the Afon Gwyrfaï for approximately 700 yards, passing on its way, but not connected to, the workings of Garreg Fawr Slate Quarry before seemingly ending somewhat short of an old incline leading up to the ironstone workings. There is therefore some doubt as to whether a connection was ever made to the incline and consequently just how much if indeed any iron ore traffic actually passed over the tramway. As Gwynfor notes, the mine went into liquidation in February 1904 and was abandoned by 1906. When Sir Alfred Hickman took over in the following year, product went to Llanberis via a newly constructed aerial ropeway, so at best the tramway connection to the NWNCR could only have seen 4 years use.

Whilst actually laid in for the benefit of the Garreg Fawr mine, the siding is commonly referred to as Treflan Quarry siding, and indeed this concern did make use of it for a number of years. The quarry output was







predominately slate, but there was also a small deposit of hardstone which was also worked. Although the precise date is unknown, connection was made with the Garreg Fawr tramway possibly as early as 1902 and traffic continued until the quarry closed in 1928. The exit line from the quarry was a double track incline at the foot of which it crossed the access road to Garreg Fawr Slate Quarry. The line then continued toward the ironstone tramway passing on its way a stone crushing plant, the foundations of which remain today, before making its way across the fields and linking up with the ironstone tramway just before the girder bridge crossing of the

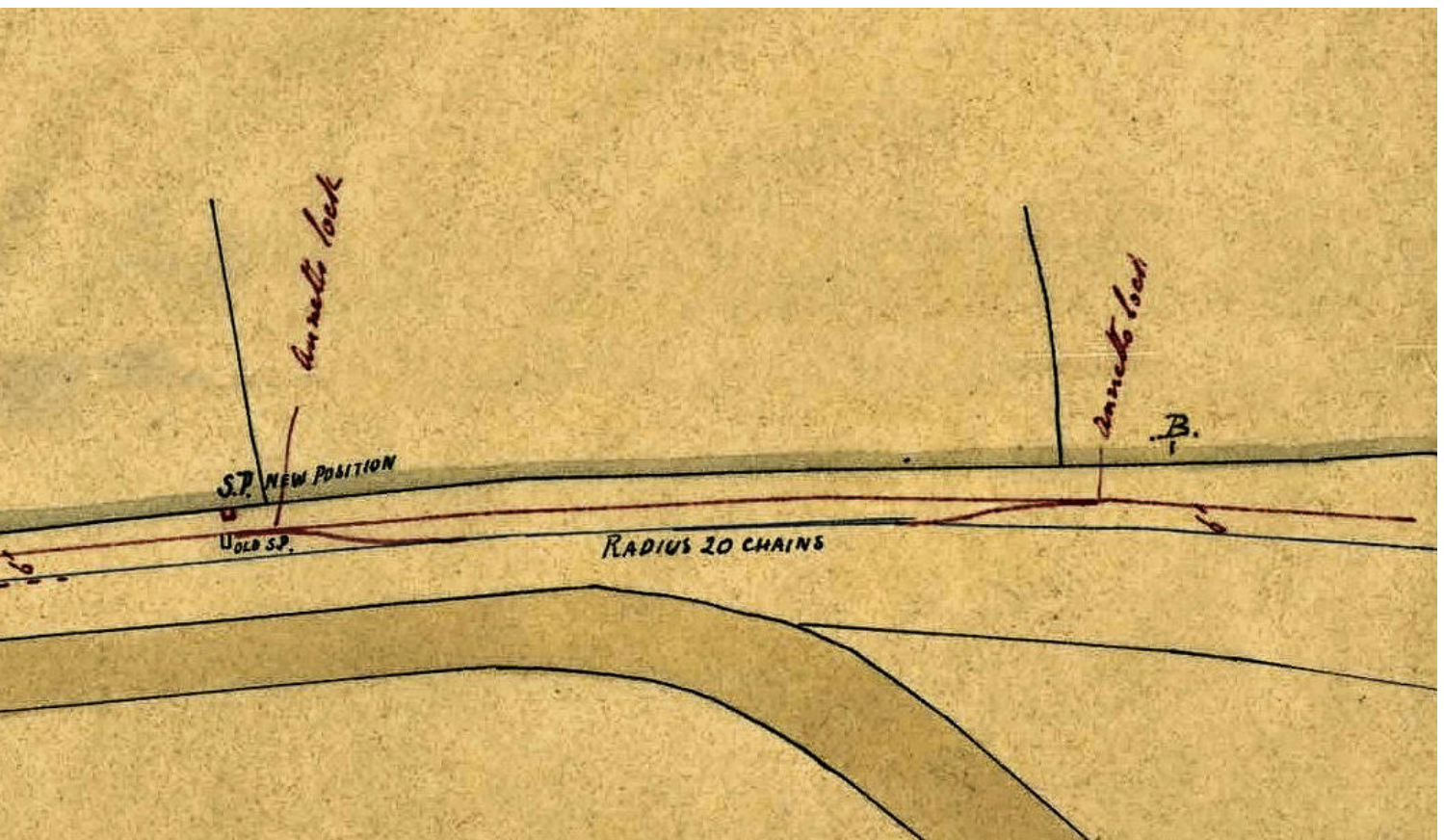
Afon Gwyrfai as shown in the photo above.

By the time the WHR opened through to South Snowdon in 1922, the layout had been very much simplified, due no doubt to the demise of ironstone traffic. Gone was the loop and associated ground frames, being replaced at some unknown date by a simple trapped siding connection off the main line. This had been spiked shut by the time Col. J.W. Pringle made his report on 25th July of that year and he considered that should it be retained then it should be worked by a balanced weighted lever, locked and controlled by the key on the

*Girder bridge over Afon Gwyrfai, showing junction of Treflan Quarry branch straight ahead and Garreg Fawr tramway curving to the right. Photo David Allan*

staff. Whilst Treflan Quarry had stopped using the connection by 1928, it was left in situ and survived to be included in the FR Lease, where it was described as Treflan Quarry Halt (sic), complete with one stabling siding.

My thanks are due to Peter Johnson for giving me access to both the Siding Plan and Russell's letter to the Board of Trade, and Richard Maund for Major Druitt's Report.



# Birth of A Project - Walk Three (Continued)

**D**avid Allan continues his unedited 1997 account, from *WHH No 47*, of the trackbed survey. We had left the survey part having a trackside lunch.....

Lunch and the business meeting finished, the survey party resumed their walk, firstly passing through a short and very tranquil pine forest, where we observed at two places, lengths of rail protruding vertically about 6 inches above the ground. It was suggested that these might have been designed to prevent the sleepers from moving outwards.

The next section was very damp underfoot with the trackbed in places becoming almost a stream. It was difficult to follow in this area and it was with some relief that we intersected a forest road and we were able to observe the trackbed coming out of a dank and gloomy cutting and then almost immediately the road fell away leaving the track on a steeply elevated embankment. The next feature was a stone built cattle creep (? PB & SSR) with winged walls and characterised by the metal straining posts which had become such a familiar feature of the line. Two hundred yards further on the track crossed a small stream which had been culverted by means of dual concrete pipes. Fifty yards further on the line emerged onto an open field, crossing a road way to a dwelling (Beudy y Weirglodd-isaf) whose garden abutted directly onto the line

Following a pleasant conversation with the owner the party moved on, first however observing that two hundred yards below us, as the crow flies, was the trackbed, having reached this position after following a very tight curve to the right. Had the afore mentioned avian been following the trackbed instead of its own straight-line instincts the distance travelled would have been more like six hundred yards! As Cedric (rather sadly) observed it will be some sight to stand here in a few years to witness a fully laden train beating its way up this particular section.

Unlike the crow we elected to follow the track. This was a particularly verdant section with deciduous trees, ferns and bracken and some quite lush pasture. The remains of a gated occupation crossing occupied our attention for a few seconds after which the trackbed entered a shallow cutting which became ever deeper and wetter, eventually leading to a stream



crossing the line - a sort of railway ford! However it became obvious that the stream had become dammed just under the shallow bridge which carried the line over it, causing the water to rise to trackbed level.

In the way of the Welsh Highland the now deep cutting suddenly evolved into a high embankment with the small river being led under it by means of a concrete pipe culvert. As level ground was regained some orchids were observed by Michael in the adjoining marshy ground. The full semi-circle had now been achieved, as away to our right was the farm we had left some six hundred yards earlier. We crossed the farm road again and into some pleasant open woodland.

The trackbed here had been commandeered as a forestry road and this crossed a substantial stone bridge over the Afon Meillionen, a tributary of the Afon Colwyn, before leading through a caravan park. The road/line ran straight here with some of the original angle iron post and thick wire fencing still in position. An original footpath crossed the line giving access to Tyn y Coed. Three of the original sleepers had been left in the track at this point, no doubt for the benefit of the users of the footpath and there was also evidence of the remains of cast iron poles on the East side of the trackbed. The line then crossed the Afon Glochig, but there was no sign of the timber tramway crossing.

Out into the open again with some pine woods to our left concealing the start (or end) of the 1904 - 1906 abortive works of the Porthmadog, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway Company (successors

*Trackbed curving north as it runs adjacent to the garden of Beudy y Weirglodd-isaf  
Photo David Allan - 1997*

to the Portmadoc, Croesor and Beddgelert Tram Railway Company of 1879). This was an extremely deep cutting, the bottom of which was littered with dead sheep no doubt responsible for the claims of irate farmers to the Welsh Highland Company in later years. We had to marvel at the huge amount of wasted effort which had gone to providing this engineering work, designed to take electric locomotives not only up a staggering one in twenty eight grade, but also around three chain curves!

Having crossed a gate, we were again in woodland. An occupation crossing leading to a stone barn was observed with stone steps cut into the railway embankment. The next obstacle was a bridge across the Afon Cwm Cloch, a fast flowing brook. As the central span of the bridge was no longer in place members of the party elected to ford the brook by various means depending on their athletic ability!

So, doggedly, we continued to pursue the route of the Welsh Highland proper which now led through an extraordinary rock cutting - a thin, deep, and tightly curved slice out of the side of a steeply banked field, rather like a segment of orange and then emerging equally dramatically onto yet another high embankment. The cutting was estimated to be about 45 feet deep at its maximum point and a good 100 yards long however it was impassable because of waterlogging so we had to walk up the steep path which followed the line at the top of the cutting. The walls were sheer and little vegetation grew on them except



the odd fern. However mature trees were growing along the top of the cutting and at either end. It was a truly remarkable piece of engineering.

The whole sequence was part of another tight horseshoe bend, with the old PB & SS formation going across the mouth of the horseshoe, at an even steeper gradient, and therefore without the necessity of the massive cutting.

The track now crossed the Afon Cwm Cloch for the second time, by means of a low flat bridge and over a road adjacent to a farm (Cwmcloch - isaf). The trackbed here was blocked by a brick wall which had been built across it and so we took the easy option and followed the road to where it crossed under the trackbed. The bridge was identified by a 1904 photo as part of the works built at that time for the PB & SS route, however the bridge had its original arch removed and a flat crossing used in its place presumably as part of lessening the gradient for the 'new' Welsh Highland. The track also crossed the Afon Cwm Cloch for the third time a hundred yards on from this road bridge by means of an arched river bridge which had presumably also been built in 1904-06.

At this point we diverted North back up the formation to where the PB & SS forked away from the WHR and on to a road under-bridge, which like the one outside Beddgelert, was never used for the purpose for which it had been built, this former bridge however was over a little used farm track.

Back now to the start of this small diversion and on scrambling up the embankment your scribe decided to conduct an experiment into the hardness of Welsh slate. This consisted of pitching forward and bringing the mouth into firm contact with the aforementioned rock. The experiment was a success, Welsh slate is hard - by the time Nantmor was reached the bleeding had stopped!

The track here originally bridged (deck now removed) a farm track before opening out onto the site of Beddgelert station. We noted the existing water tower supports and the pit under the siding which had run behind it and also the concrete slabs which were the sites of the goods shed and the station building. **(Two types of rail remain cast in the water tower supports - at the front, flat bottomed rail supporting the outlet pipe mechanism, and at the rear Croesor type T-bulb which supported the wooden planking - DL)**



The cutting which runs behind the Royal Goat Hotel was impassable so we followed the path which exited from the station area and on to the footpath beside some houses which then crossed the line by means of a footbridge. This led to the remains of the old reservoir whose walls were constructed of mighty slabs of slate and from which had run the aqueduct which had crossed the line to feed the Royal Goat Hotel. The remains of this aqueduct had fallen into the cutting below. It was also speculated that this reservoir had probably fed the water tower in the station area.

The Goat cutting finally became the first tunnel on the line and we scrambled down the side of it to rejoin the track as it exited the tunnel. Michael walked through the tunnel to look at the rails laid in the cutting by '64 Company members circa 1965

It was from this point that the line had originally been planned to cross the main road by the arched bridged which still stands to this day, having successfully impeded traffic entering Beddgelert for over ninety years to no purpose whatsoever!

The final formation had been built to the right of the road and would cross under the same road half a mile further on by means of the ferro concrete underbridge just north of the Bryn y Felin river bridge. This was effectively the end of the days walk but not before we had noted a base of slate just outside the southerly entrance to the Goat tunnel which Cedric wondered had been for a signal. Michael had pointed out that the Welsh Highland wasn't signalled. The mystery was solved a few minutes later when a similar base of slate was found a little further on, which supported the remains of a metal pole. Could this have been one of the poles that was dumped at

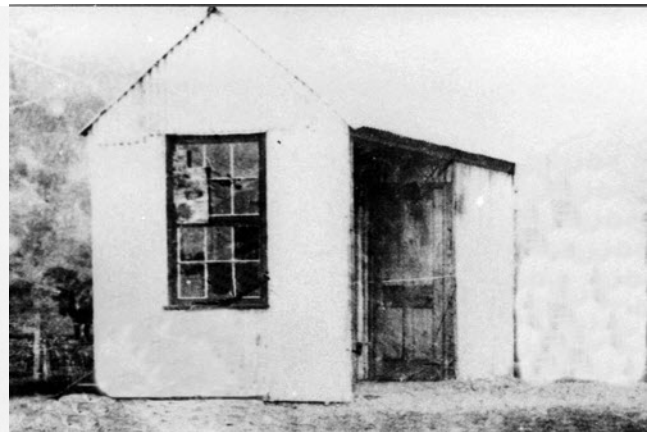
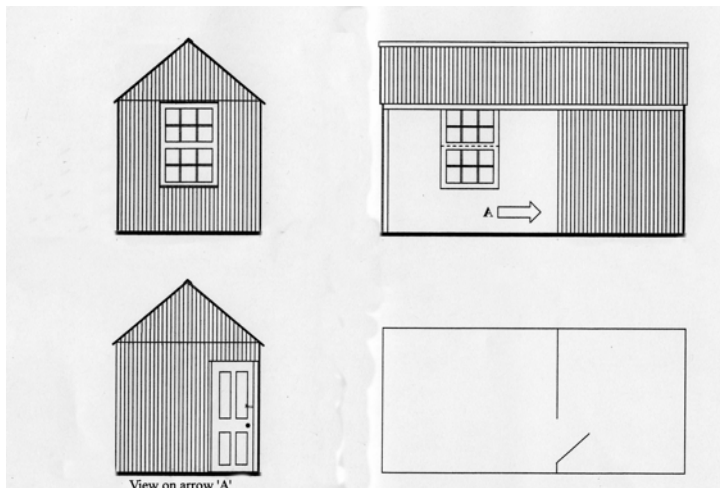
*The survey party pause just to the north of Cwm Cloch cutting to examine their options!  
L-R Derek Lystor, Cedric Lodge & Michael Davies  
Photo David Allan 1997*

Beddgelert station site at the turn of the century and which would have been used to carry the catenary wire when it was proposed to run the line by electric traction? Was it these same poles which were eventually used to carry the telephone wires for the 1923 Welsh Highland?

**(Michael Davies comments “- yes, I have been looking at photos of WHR and cannot find any real evidence of normal wooden telegraph poles between Croesor Junction (or even Porthmadog) and Rhyd ddu. I think they used the steel (or iron) posts intended for the overhead wires. We should check for more signs of the old slate bases.”)**

**Michael Davies - How very different was the PB & SS Rly to the NWNG. The latter was so solidly built - typical Spooner 1870's. With the 'new' line construction costs were obviously kept to a minimum. However there is nothing else in these Islands to compare with that remarkable three and a half miles from Pont Cae'r- Gors to Beddgelert with its three 'horseshoe' curves and descent of over 450 feet. My own lasting impression is of looking down from that first right hand curve, and seeing the same line some 120 feet below us down the 1 in 40 at Hafod Ruffydd, a view which has only just re-appeared due to deforestation. Let us hope that our trains will be running over this section before replanting again obscures the view for another 30 years!**

# WHR Replica Shelter for Pont Croesor



Above left left is Peter Liddell's drawing and right is a mirror image of the Ynysfor shelter

In mid May orders were placed for two replica buildings; a lamp hut for Beddgelert (see page 3) and a waiting shelter for Pont Croesor. Both buildings will be timber framed, clad in coated corrugated iron with green walls (sides). Dimensioned drawings of both have been made by Peter Liddell based on photographs of the original. The building for Pont Croesor will be a mirror image of the one that served

Ynysfor Halt and of which only one photograph is known to exist. Installation is expected by mid June. The waiting area will be approximately 12' 6" long with a window in the 8' 6" wide end gable, with seating included. The enclosed area at the Caernarfon end will incorporate door access from the waiting area and measure 5' 6" x 8' 6", again with a window in the gable end. It will

provide facilities for the operating railway - as did the original.

Members may wonder why no mention was made of this building at the AGM on 2<sup>nd</sup> May! Approval was only given at the Heritage Co board meeting the following day 'for erection when Pont Croesor ceased to be a terminal station'. However, in the way of things, this was immediately amended by the Construction Co. to 'erect now please'!

## LETTERS

Sir

In *WHH* No. 44, page 10, I adduced - from a letter of his dated 22 April 1925 in the National Library of Wales papers - that Lt-Col. Stephens had taken over from Eric Nicholls as managing director of the WHR in mid-March 1925. This was a silly miscalculation on my part: ten weeks prior to that letter would, of course, have been mid-February. However, Stephens himself was subsequently rather less sure: in an affidavit sworn on 27 October 1927 he declares that he had been "Chairman and Managing Director of [the WHR] from 20 December 1924" while in another affidavit sworn on 21 July 1928 he asserts that "...since 1 January 1925 I have been Managing Director of [the WHR]." Copies of these two affidavits can be found in the Caernarfon archives under reference XC2/33/18. More traps for the unwary in WHR history!

**Richard Maund**

Sir

In Michael Bishop's article in *WHH* No. 47 (p8) reference is made to the demise of an errant pony and the owner's claim

for £8 compensation in 1897. It would seem that ponies straying onto the Bryngwyn Branch were a problem in the 1880s and perhaps even from the opening of the railway.

In the translation of his grandfather's autobiography member E. Pennant Jones he records the journeys by gravity down the branch using a (ganger's) trolley. In the 1880s Owen Thomas ('OT') was in charge on the branch and the trolley 'driver'. He was often accompanied by local children on such gravitational excursions, and sometimes, between Rhostryfan and Tyddyn y Gwŷdd, mountain ponies had wandered onto the track. If he had any boys with him 'OT' - who was a great fantasiser (storyteller?) - would yell, "lions, lions; bears, bears - what shall we do".

It is recorded that one of the Hafod y Wernlas dogs would chase the trolley only to be pelted with stones already stored on the trolley for this purpose! A sequence on 1930s cin  film shows a sheep dog racing the train.

Reverting to Mr Paul's drowned pony it is difficult to speculate where this mishap might have occurred, the country between Rhostryfan and Bryngwyn would seem to be the most likely environment for ponies but the branch only crosses one stream -

near the 'waterworks'. The more substantial river crossing was just before the 180 degree curve into Tryfan Junction.

**John Keylock**

Sir

I was interested in the article headed "Observations from the Beddgelert Train Book" in *WHH* No 47.

You may have read my articles in FR HGJ on FR/WHR employees extracted from census records. The person in this article who interested me was young Elfed Ellis. I have already come across him in my researches. He was born in 1908 so would have been 16 in 1924. Someone has been looking at records of the NUR for me and Elfed is recorded as being a member of that union from 1925-31 but working for the FR. It looks as though when the WHR had finished with him in 1924 he managed to get a job with the FR. His father was Lewis Ellis who was Foreman Passenger Guard on the FR in 1911 although I have no information after that. A point on another article, "The Amalgated Slate Association" refers to wagons in the range 300-1000. Could these not be FR wagons on loan?

**Jim Hewett**



## A Fatal Accident on the Narrow Gauge Railway Near Rhyd Ddu



**A** fortnight before the NWNGR opened to Rhyd Ddu on the 14th May 1881 tragedy struck. This fatal accident was reported in the *North Wales Chronicle* for 4th May and confirms the Inspecting Officer's (Major Marindin) report based on his visit of 25th April; "the station buildings at Rhyd Ddu are incomplete" - hence the necessity for this temporary accommodation.

"Last Wednesday, Mr. J.H. Roberts, the Coroner, held an inquest at Bontnewydd on the body of Benjamin Owen, a weaver by trade - but who had worked recently as a 'striker' in a smithy - who had been killed the previous day on the Narrow Gauge Railway near Rhyd Ddu, about nine miles from Caernarfon. Capt G.T. Thomas was the jury foreman. John Roberts, blacksmith, Bryn-melyn, Rhostryfan stated he knew the deceased. On Tuesday they were called to assist in

*This greatly enlarged 1890's photograph of the station buildings at Rhyd Ddu was the nearest we could get to one that might illustrate the still incomplete set of structures. Could the hut, which can be clearly seen to the far right of the building complex, have been the one involved in this accident?*

moving a wooden 'hut' that stood near the Snowdon Ranger station. The hut was used as a station and it was necessary to move it to Rhyd Ddu to serve the same purpose there. The hut was roofed with slates. It was placed on two trolleys that

*Translated from the Welsh  
by Brian Paul*

were hauled by a steam locomotive. After travelling a considerable distance, somebody shouted that the hut was falling. This happened and it fell over a wall into a nearby field. It appeared that the deceased tried to move out of the way, but he was overtaken by the hut, that fell on him. When he was reached he was

'quite dead'; the hut only rested on him for a few minutes. This testimony was confirmed by Richard Jones, labourer, Dinas Junction.

Robert Henry Livesey, manager of the Narrow Gauge Railway, stated that he was with the men from start to finish. He stated that every due care had been taken as they started to make the hut transfer as safe as possible. Some changes were made in the transfer half way.

The deceased lived at Yr Ynys, Bontnewydd and he was known as 'Ben Bach Bontnewydd', and a native of Llandilo. He leaves a widow and ten children in dire circumstances. Robert Jones suffered severe injuries and Robert Lloyd of Henwaliau, Caernarfon received head injuries."

## Suspension of Services

**I**t seems to be "accepted history" that the railway suspended its services from 31 December 1933 or 1 January 1934 - this statement is made in WHH 15/7; "Narrow Gauge Railways in

*Richard Maund*

*South Caernarvonshire* Vol. 2 (1989), page 41; and "An Illustrated History of the WHR" (2009), page 77. Passenger service had, since September 1930, been summer only anyway, so this presumably refers solely to goods services. How-

ever, the minutes (to be found in Gwynedd archives at Caernarfon) of the committee of representatives of the investing authorities - those local authorities, including the county, who had been cajoled into loaning money to the venture - tell a different story.

Richard Thomas Griffith, then the Receiver & Manager, asked the committee at their meeting on 27 October 1933 for authority to reduce services to one goods train a week, which was agreed there and then; it was not specified where the train should serve. In due course, this was approved by the full County Council, with

Griffith being so advised by letter of 12 January 1934. He did bring forward the suggestion of complete closure at the committee's meeting on 13 March but a decision was deferred, and by the time of the next meeting, on 15 May 1934, all discussion was about the Festiniog's proposal to lease the line so the question of closure did not arise.

It can, therefore, be stated that the local authorities did not, at this period, give approval to complete closure of the railway: the change effected from the turn of the year 1933/4 was simply to reduce goods operation to one train a week.

# To the W.H.R. By Public Transport

Living in Cheshire, I am fortunate to be able to enjoy a day out on the railway without the necessity of overnight stays and tedious motorway travel. Indeed, consulting 'Bradshaw' right back to 1923, it was always possible to make a full day round trip, both clockwise and anti-clockwise, over the FR/WHR from Chester, Liverpool and Manchester as long as the WHR operated its daily train.

In 2009, despite the last link to Porthmadog being incomplete, I made several very enjoyable journeys between Hafod-y-Llyn and Caernarfon, and by judicious checking of the weather forecast I met with hardly any rain. Arriva Trains Wales operates a frequent and very reliable service along the North Wales coast and my journey always involves the 11.33am train from Llandudno Junction to Blaenau Ffestiniog. I have known this branch since 1948 and never tire of the delightful views along both the Conwy and Lledr valleys. Passing Dolgarrog, one reflects on such personalities as Henry Joseph Jack of the North Wales Power & Traction Co, without whom we might never had a Welsh Highland Railway.

From Betws-y-Coed one has the opportunity to travel by the Snowdon Sherpa Bus service to Pen-y-Pass where a

connecting bus goes down the lovely Nant Gwynant to Beddgelert, arriving at 12.03pm. Alternatively, if the weather is fine and one is feeling in good shape, I stay on the train for the very scenic stretch through Dolwyddelen and Roman Bridge to Blaenau, where the 11.45am FR train awaits its arrival. I then go down through the Ddualt spiral, still marveling at the work of the 'deviationists', the volunteers who built it between 1965 and 1977, and remembering my first walk over the derelict line in 1948. What a wonderful change in sixty years. Alighting at Tan-y-Bwlch I usually patronise the station cafe before heading off on the five mile walk over the 'Roman' road through Croesor to Bwlch Gwernog. From here one can walk through Nantmor and along the Fisherman's path to Beddgelert, another four miles, or shorten the walk by following the Afon Nanmor via Hafod Garegog to Hafod-y-Llyn Halt, always remembering that the last train to Caernarfon is at 4.30pm.



Another option will be to join the train at Nantmor station when it is opened. A frequent bus service operates from Caernarfon to Bangor station, and here I take the train to Llandudno Junction and Chester, having completed the 'Five Valleys' circular tour of 1930s FR/WHR publicity. My friends tend to shy away from accompanying me when I

A rare picture - probably the only bus ever to call at Hafod y Llyn! 27th March 2010. Photo Michael Davies

## *In which Michael Davies shares his passion for Public Transport!*

mention tight bus connections and long walks over rough terrain, but to date I have never been benighted in the wilds despite a few anxious moments waiting at remote bus stops. My daughter joined me on our first Hafod-y-Llyn walk in August and her only complaint was that she envisaged Tan-y-Bwlch to Hafod-y-Llyn as mainly footpath, whereas in fact most of the walk is by gated mountain tracks which are harder on the feet. We must have been among the first passengers to join a train at H-y-L and the guard was suitably impressed by our walking from the FR at Tan-y-Bwlch. Sadly, only a handful of passengers are usually to be found on the 'Sherpa'buses and funding has been cut resulting in a much reduced frequency since 2007. On a recent journey I alighted from the train at Betws-y-Coed to find two young ladies studying the bus timetable at the adjacent bus stop. They told me it was their first visit to Wales and they were

trying to plan an interesting outing with a return to Betws that evening. They mentioned the Swallow Falls, Snowdon and Llanberis and asked for my opinion. I explained that I was catching a connecting bus from the foot of Snowdon to the charming village of Beddgelert and they asked if they could accompany me. Approaching Beddgelert I had to explain that I was going up to the railway station for a trip on the new narrow gauge railway and they immediately expressed great interest, and insisted on treating me to an ice cream before catching the train. We rode up to Rhyd Ddu where I was able to point out a train on the Mountain Railway, and then we returned through the Aberglaslyn Pass to Hafod-y-Llyn. They told me it was very like their own narrow gauge railway near Bombay, the 2' gauge line up to the hill station of Matheran. In the Pass everyone waved to the train of course, and they were absolutely delighted and told me it was just like India! I last saw them walking back from the train at Hafod-y-Llyn as they decided it would be good to walk back through the Pass and visit Gelert's grave. My own journey took me north again, and after the usual welcome at Ty Mawr cafe in Rhyd Ddu, where I enjoyed one of Menno's delicious Dutch pancakes, I concluded my day by travelling on the NWNG section in the dark, probably the first scheduled WHR service to do so since the winter of 1925/6.

**BOOBS** The letter on page 9 of *WHH No 47* on the subject of maps was penned by David Rogerson and not by Peter Mathews to whom it was attributed. Apologies to both. Likewise responsibility for setting up the Heritage Group web site (page 1) was that of Peter Harrison and not Richard Harrison - our thanks to Peter, and apologies to Richard.

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# Welsh Highland Memories

**M**emories play a very important part in our lives, and as we get older, reflecting on the past can bring a richness to our lives. I was very fortunate as a youngster to be taken by my parents for a fortnight's holiday each year to Beddgelert from 1938 to 1941 where we stayed in a guest house in the main street. Our activities revolved around walking and climbing in the area. My impression was that public transport was very restricted, as to the best of my knowledge we never visited Caernarfon or Porthmadog, except on the outward or return journey.

My father had an interest in railways but would not have been called an enthusiast. He was conversant with the WHR, but I don't think he travelled on the line when passenger trains were operating. Bearing in mind that I was only five years old on our first visit, the majority of our walks were not arduous and many of the days I think were spent in the vicinity of the

## *Brian Hayes Remembers his Halcyon Days!*

WHR where the track was still intact with most of the infrastructure in good condition. I have memories of Beddgelert station with either slate or bolster wagons being stabled in the sidings which I used to try and push. Similarly, I remember trying to move point levers. Our walks were frequently along the track and I have good recollections of Beddgelert station buildings, goods shed, water tower, loco



*Derelict station buildings at Beddgelert in 1947. Track now lifted unlike the period which Brian Hayes remembered. Left to right - Station building, water tower supports, pit & lamp room  
Photo J.I.C. Boyd*

shed and engine pit. On occasions we walked to the Aberglaslyn Pass and I recall that the water supply aqueduct to the Royal Goat Hotel was always overflowing and the surrounding area was very wet. Memories of the 'Goat' tunnel, together with those in the Aberglaslyn Pass and Bryn-y-Felin bridge are vivid, particularly as we walked one day to Nantmor Station and returned via Pont Aberglaslyn. Post cards were collected by myself at this time showing scenes on the WHR, all of which I think have been published in the various books which have been written.

The reason for these thoughts has been a request from a fellow member for the fact that in either 1940 or 1941 my parents and I had a valuable experience in the area. We had walked to Hafod Ruffydd, and possibly further, and on our return we decided to walk along the line with the 'S' bends to Beddgelert. Our plan was interrupted at a very early stage by a gentleman who had possession of either a bolster wagon or platelayer's trolley. We were offered a lift, and I remember with relish the enjoyment of travelling around the 'S' bends to Beddgelert station with the gentleman controlling the wagon with the hand brake as

would have been normal with a gravity train on the FR. The reason for his presence is unknown, but I don't think it had any connection with the line to be used by the military for target practice. It is possible that an FR PW or WHR employee was undertaking some work, but the more I think about the incident, I think it may been the occupant of the cottage at Hafod Ruffydd. Walking along the track at this time was not difficult, as vegetation had not taken over. My memory is of grass covered ballast and wet sleepers; all rails being in position and the line in a mothballed state. The war precluded any further visits and I have not stayed in Beddgelert since that time. I never thought I would have the opportunity of travelling to Beddgelert and through the Aberglaslyn Pass by train.

### Footnote

**It has always been stated that by May 1937 all rolling stock had been taken back to Dinas. Had 1941 been the year in question might the bolster wagons at Beddgelert and the man on the trolley have represented Cohen's early occupation of the line prior to demolition**

John Keylock

## THAT CROSSING!

A significant discovery concerning the antiquity of Croesor Crossing signal box has been made by Richard Maund while researching at Gwynedd Archives. Correspondence (in file XC2/33/64) from the General Manager of the GWR to the Festiniog Railway on 2nd May 1923 considers that, with the imminent start of WHR passenger services over the flat crossing, the current signalling arrangements would be inadequate and that "it will be necessary to erect a signal box, make Croesor Crossing

a staff post and employ signalmen thereat." However, Paddington wrote again on 28th May 1923, just four days after Colonel Mount's well-known visit, with a revised assessment in the light of discussion at the official inspection: "for the time being I am prepared to agree to the existing signal arrangements standing, and to the provision of a signal box being deferred." This was on condition that independent telephone circuits were installed in the vicinity. And thus it apparently remained during the life span of the old WHR. These documents fully support Edward Dorricott's contention in WHH No.41

that Croesor Crossing cabin was not of GWR. Moreover, since Richard's find, an old postcard of Porthmadog has come into Edward's possession, showing St. John's Church, with the town and traeth in the background. It was published by Photochrom (no.30816) and its postage stamp (Geo.V, ½d) date it at the latest by 1918. Clearly visible in the distance is Croesor Crossing with its signal box, bungalow and signal posts. Edward says "I am by now fully convinced that the box familiar in old WHR photographs, was the Dutton-built Cambrian cabin of 1894".

# PORTMADOC, BEDDGELERT & DINAS JCT.

Imagine the scene. It is a comparatively chilly May evening in Betws Garmon, but we are snugly sat in the living room of Lew & Gill's (Group

## The WH Heritage Group in Operation - an Insight by Derek Lystor

members Lewis & Gill Esposito) beautifully renovated old chapel, in front of a roaring coal fire. Enjoying a front row

seat is Ollie, the resident moggie, who we are told, turned up one day, liked what he saw and has stayed ever since! He gradually moves back as he warms up, eventually finding that the membership secretary's lap is the ideal resting place on which to continue his feline nap.

John Keylock suddenly interrupts this tranquil scene by appearing with a long parcel, wrapped in pages from March 25<sup>th</sup> issue of the Evesham Journal, securely held by two red

elastic bands courtesy, we are told, of the Royal Mail.

The membership secretary gingerly removes the wrapping to discover just exactly what goodies Keylock has come up with this time. He is not disappointed. Within the parcel are two gems of Welsh Highland memorabilia. One is a carriage destination board, Portmadoc/Dinas, examples of which once adorned the Pickering's and the Buffet Car's sister coach. John informs us that it is worth over £600, so we carefully wrap it up again and lay it to one side!

## L. N. W. RAILWAY GUARD WRITES AGAIN

ABOUT



MR. SAMUEL REEVES, L.N.W. Railway Guard, Stafford Station, wrote:—

"For the last few years I have not been able to take any breakfast first thing in the morning, so I commenced taking a basin of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa before going out on a journey. I had not done so many mornings before I wanted something to eat with it, and now I want a couple of rashers of good fat bacon every morning when I am out early. I am a L. and N. W. Railway Passenger Guard, and exposed to cold a great deal. I can honestly and heartily recommend it to anyone—especially my fellow railwaymen—as a grand thing to take." Not only the working man, but the tired student, the exhausted professional man, the teacher, are revived, restored and strengthened by Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, mainly through the action of that beneficent ingredient, Kola, which brightens the eye and stores up reserve power in the nervous system. Bear in mind, the nervous system controls and directs all the powers of a vigorous life. It is the man or woman with the strongest nervous system who wins in the battle of life. Therefore, the duty of all is to strengthen this controlling power, and it has been proved that nothing has been so effective in doing this as Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, which is not in any sense a medicine. It is simply a nourishing beverage, and in that respect it plays a most important part in the prevention of functional disorders. In these important organs, and others, Kola has a wonderful faculty of giving power to the involuntary muscles of the body.



## AFTER TWO YEARS

MR. REEVES WRITES:—

"It is some time since I wrote you. I hope the firm is still prospering and progressing favourably. I daily get asked about Vi-Cocoa, and my wife still considers it a great help in her household, and we use on an average 1½ large tins per week."

Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, 6d., 9d., and 1s. 6d. Can be obtained from all Chemists, Grocers and Stores, or from Dr. Tibbles' (Limited), 60, 61 and 62, Bunhill Row, London, E.C.

As an unparalleled test of merit, a dainty sample tin of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa will be sent free on application to any address, if when writing (a postcard will do), the reader will name the *Liverpool Mercury*.

The other item is far more intriguing and is illustrated above. It is some 20 inches long and comprises a paper notice glued to a very thin wood backing. On careful examination, remains of small nails are discovered on the rear of the sign suggesting that it may have been attached to something else. The nature of the materials and its condition suggest that it must have been used inside a building or carriage in some way and some discussion took place as to where this may have been. It was Lew who comes up with the most obvious answer in that it was attached to an internal time-table board. We all nod approval and get back to enjoying Lew & Jill's hospitality.

*No, your Welsh Highland Heritage has not started to take adverts. However we wonder if the LNWR guard might have passed on his words of wisdom in this 19th century advert to his counterpart on the NWNG as they met briefly at Dinas Junction?*