

# WELSH HIGHLAND

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## The Indian Connection



In the supplement to the December 2009 issue of Welsh Highland Heritage we published a thesis written by a young Indian Engineering student, K.F. Antia, who was getting in some practical work on the FR & WHR during a vacation from his studies at King's College, London. He took several photographs of both lines to illustrate his work, some of which were published in the December supplement and others are printed in the article on page 2-4 of this issue.

Antia went on to become one of India's leading railway engineers, president of the Indian Institution of Civil Engineers and Vice-president of the International Pre-stressed Concrete Federation.

As a result of the connection we were privileged to host a visit to the line in August from two of Mr Antia's granddaughters, Cheryl and Dinaz Stafford with their friend Jane. They were

anxious to see where their grandfather had learned his trade and if possible to replicate the position from where he had taken those photographs in 1924.

Following an inspirational ride in the observation car from Caernarfon to Pont Croesor we were able to drive them back along the route of the line stopping here and there to enable them to re-create their grandfather's pictures.

One has to wonder about the effect of the Welsh Highland on Indian Railways,

particularly given the twinning arrangement with the current Indian Railways!



Top left - Antia's grandchildren study his original thesis at Caernarfon  
Top right - Photographing the road bridge at Nantmor, as pictured by Antia in 1924 (see p3)

Above - Photographing the new WHR shelter at Pont Croesor

### Progress Report

As may be observed from the adjacent photograph the arrival of Antia's granddaughters at Pont Croesor coincided with the completion – more or less - of

the necessary painting of the window frames (corporate cream!) and wooden corner pieces to match the green of the corrugated iron. This latest addition to the railway's building stock has been well received in most quarters and of course the views from the waiting shelter are magnificent – unless it's raining! The

provision of a shelter at Pont Croesor is an excellent example of cooperation with the Society and the Construction Co in both practice and finance. Elsewhere in this issue (p4) are updates on other 'infrastructure' progress.

# Antia - A Question Answered



Since the 1920s the world has become a microcosm of its former self. For example purchasing sleepers from India to build the WHR would have been unthinkable then, but nearly eighty years on that actually happened. It was though in the 1920s that a budding young engineer must have persuaded Col Stephens to allow him a behind-the-scenes look at two of the Welsh narrow gauge railways in his empire. As a result a thesis or treatise was written on the WHR & the FR by that same young engineer, Mr K.F. Antia, as a part of his engineering degree course. Eventually the thesis was sent to Tonbridge where it lay gathering dust before being handed to Michael Davies by the Colonel's successor, J.A. Iggulden. This in turn led to it being published in our December supplement (*WHH No. 46*) as part of an article by Richard Maund who posed the question "Who was K.F. Antia"?

The ink was barely dry when 'ping' - an email arrives on the editorial desk. Intriguingly it is from India and enquired about K.F. Antia. Further reading revealed that even more intriguingly the enquirer is none other than Mr Antia's grand-daughter, Yasmine Stafford, who had stumbled across the Welsh Highland Heritage Group web site where the Antia article is featured. So thanks to the wonders of the Internet and a wealth of information from Yasmine, Richard's question can now be answered!

KHURSHED FRAMROZ ANTIA was born on December 10th 1904 in Navsari in Gujarat, a town noted for being 'the

spiritual capital of Zoroastrianism and the birthplace of men agile both in mind and body'. After four years initial schooling here he attended the English Railway School in Moradabad for two years followed by continued studies at the Jesuit-run St Xavier's High School in Calcutta. Here he excelled both academically and 'athletically' resulting in the Principal persuading Khurshed's father that this brilliant young man should continue his studies abroad - at King's College, London where the Principal himself had studied. Having been accepted arrangements were made for his voyage to - and stay in - England. In London Khurshed lived at India House, Aldwych.

So he would have been just nineteen years of age when he started his BSc (Engineering) degree course at London University. It was during a period of vocational training that he became acquainted with and was introduced to the W.H.R. - almost certainly in 1924. In Edinburgh he learned the practicalities of

traffic working on the LNER where the superintendent overseeing his study commented that "he is of the type so much needed now who will lead and direct men and command their respect". Wales and Scotland having been visited he nevertheless embraced the English way of life and at 5ft 10 inches became "more of a English gentleman than the English". This trait is well illustrated in the accompanying portrait.

Having obtained a Second Class Honours degree his first position was again with the LNER, as a 'premium pupil' based in Edinburgh. (Sept 1926 - Sept 1928). From there he applied for a job with Indian Railways, becoming an assistant engineer on the Bengal Nagpur Railway. In 1928 he returned to India to take up this position. Subsequently a telegram to the chief engineer would read "Antia properly linked 201 pairs of 36' 90 lbs rails today all the latest type of steel sleepers. This is a record!" During his twenty-four years in the railway industry he introduced the first

True Copy

Engineer(Scotland)  
W.A. FRASER

ENGINEER (SCOTLAND),  
LONDON & NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY,  
23, WATERLOO PLACE,  
EDINBURGH.

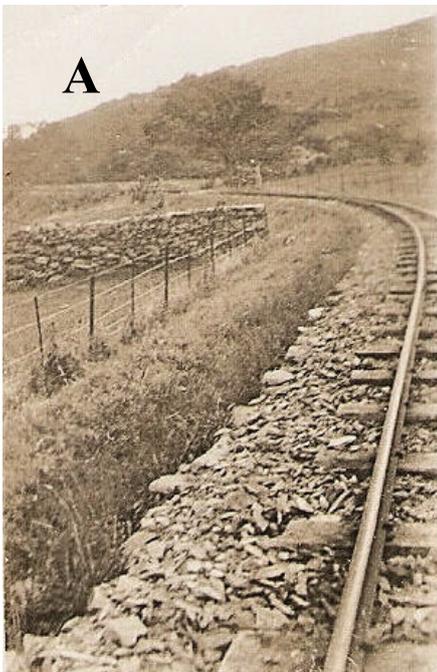
20th September, 1927.

I have pleasure in certifying that Mr. K.F. ANTIA joined my staff as a premium pupil on 21st September, 1926, for one year. During that time, Mr. Antia has had experience in the general work of a Railway Engineer's Office, including the preparation of drawings for the renewal of over and under bridges, as well as the preparation of calculations for the strength of existing bridges. He has also had some experience in the outside work, and has had an opportunity of assisting in the carrying out of works being done under contract.

Mr. Antia is a neat and accurate draughtsman, and has given every satisfaction. He is courteous and willing, and I have no hesitation in recommending him to anyone who may require an assistant of his experience.

Sd/- W.A. Fraser

M. Inst. C.E.



pre-stressed concrete bridges in India, prepared a blueprint for an underground (railway) in Bombay and initiated the proposal to change to the metric system. Besides all this, he was in demand to serve on numerous committees. During and after the war he served as an officer with the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway. For ten years from 1952 he was technical controller of the Cement Marketing Co Ltd. He represented India and Asia in the World Federation of Engineering Organisations thereafter establishing the Bombay office of M.N. Dastur & Co Pvt Ltd consultants to the Ministry of Steel and Mines, the Atomic Energy Department and other industries in the public and private sectors. He was one of only fifteen engineers to hold the coveted honour of being a Fellow

of the National Institute of Sciences in India and in 1968 was appointed President of the Institution of Engineers. Internationally he was vice-president of the International Federation for pre-stressed concrete. It was this position that led to his tragic death at the zenith of his career. The DC9 aircraft in which he was flying to a conference of this organisation in Madrid crashed having just taken off from Bombay. It was the 28<sup>th</sup> May 1968.

He contributed twenty four years to the Institution of Engineers (India) and their premises in Bombay – the land for which was acquired on his initiative – contains the K.F. Antia Memorial Library. Each year,

on the anniversary of both his birth and death a garland is hung on his portrait.

It is sobering to think that this illustrious career may well have been influenced by his treatise on the Welsh Highland and Festiniog Railways, the field work for which would have necessitated both the cooperation and agreement of Col H.F. Stephens.

We published his photographs of the project in the supplement to our December issue. Today we are privileged to publish more of those photographs (courtesy of Yasmine) that didn't quite make it to the original treatise.

This treatise was given to Michael Davies, in 1970 by J.A. Iggulden who was involved with the running and winding down of Col Stephen's light railway 'empire' after his death. Within this treatise lies the final twist to the story. However, before recounting that ultimate event it may be worthwhile to consider the significance of the photographs that are published here for the first time.

Conceding that the WHR (Rhyd Ddu to Croesor Junction) was new at the time photos 'A' & 'B' emphasise the different approach to ballasting and the provision and maintenance of an adequate ballast shoulder.

Judging by subsequent photographs that he took of Indian Railway bridges the use of concrete in their construction was an early interest; witness photos 'C' & 'D'. 'C' shows the mass concrete bridge support and wing wall carrying the line over the Nantmor to Llanfrothen road. (When a similar bridge carrying the road over the railway at Bryn y Felin was demolished prior to replacement the contractors were made aware of just how substantial McAlpine's concrete was!). 'D' shows the seating on its pier of one of the three Warren truss bridges.

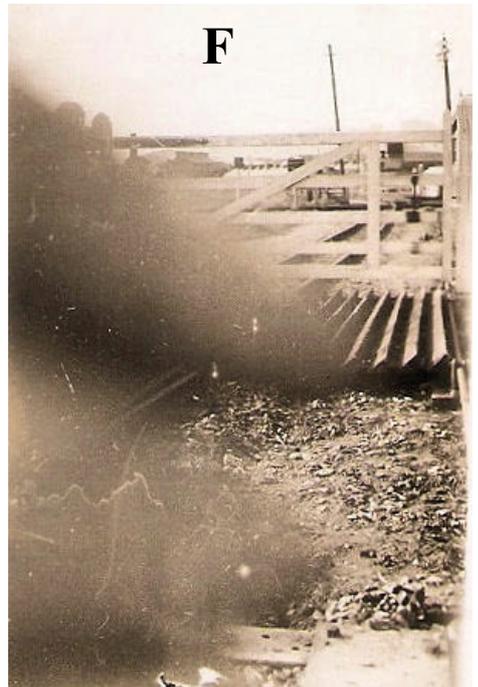
India had been one of many countries to embrace the narrow gauge concept so that interchange facilities with broader gauges would have been of interest. Such facilities at Minffordd were recorded in photo 'E'. Of similar interest would have been rail crossings on the level.

Unfortunately when Antia took photo F he had his fingers over the lens! Nevertheless a wealth of detail can be seen in the unobscured part of the image. The experts will decide the significance of the steel plate bottom right.

Mention has been made of Antia's time spent with the LNER and photo 'G' would seem to be during this period with Antia part of a bridge reconstruction project; the location of this bridge is being investigated. Antia is in all probability the gentleman in a raincoat with his back to the photographer and camera slung over one



E



F



G



H

shoulder with his left hand holding a parapet support. He appears as an 'English gentleman'; trilby hat, mackintosh and doubtless a suit underneath. So to the final astonishing conclusion. Readers may recall that in *WHH No 48* Michael Davies recorded his meeting with two Indian ladies in March 2009 and persuaded them to travel on today's WHR. Before parting company at Hafod y Llyn Michael took a photograph of the train guard (member Nigel Casteldine) with the two ladies (photo 'H' and just for interest a

print was sent to Yasmine in India along with the *Antia* supplement and *WHH No 48*. 'Ping' and another email from India lands on the editorial desk which is reproduced below:-  
*Dear David*  
*The postman dropped it off just now - oh thank you so very much. My mother (K F Antia's daughter) wants to treat all the relatives to a meal just so that they can have a read. We are all thrilled. I have all the original photographs of the ones in his paper. Just didn't know until this minute*

*that they were of his time in Wales ! But the most hilarious coincidence is that one of the girls in the Michael Davies photo is a very good friend of ours ! Pallavi Dalal. The one with short hair in a navy/black T-shirt. She is coming round as soon as she can just to have a look ! How small our world is !*  
 Yasmine

As Yasmine says how small our world has become since KHURSHED FRAMROZ ANTIA wrote that 1924 treatise; it is sobering to contemplate that it was written just after the completion of the original Welsh Highland Railway.

## Work in Progress

### Beddgelert - Lamp Hut

At Beddgelert the West Midland Group of the Society have cast the new base for the replica 'lamp hut, which has been put into production for October availability

### Beddgelert - Water Tank

The replica water tank is ready for painting prior to installation.

### Tryfan Junction

Up at Tryfan Junction the door thresholds have been cast to integrate with the basic concrete floor slab and wooden formers have been made for all three doors. These will allow for the upward rebuilding in brick and stone to the correct alignment for the subsequent door frames. It is planned to start the

reconstruction of the station building the first weekend in October.

### Working Parties

It is appropriate to remind members that working parties are held on the first weekend of every month. With the departure of Derek Buckles to 'pastures new' Lewis Esposito has taken on the role of Tryfan Junction working party coordinator, so when you can offer your services please contact him on 01286 650397 or by email on g.yorath@btinternet.com

# Nantmor Re-opening



Photo A.W. Hutton - collection Peter Johnson

It is now over sixty years since I first walked through Nantmor village, and even longer since I studied photographs of our station there. In August 1926 my grandparents and their young family holidayed in Portmadoc, one day journeying by train to Beddgelert. The story was often related to me by my mother of her return, with her brother, through the Aberglaslyn Pass to Nantmor Station on foot, whilst my grandparents no doubt enjoyed afternoon tea in Beddgelert.

In later years my wife and I spent many happy holidays on a hill farm near Croesor, returning home via Beddgelert and Caernarfon, the nearest place with public transport on a Sunday. These walks always took us to the former level crossing at Nantmor, from where we

would walk through the tunnels to Beddgelert.

With such a special affection for Nantmor I determined that I should be present for the first trains to call since that fateful Saturday, September 26th 1936, nearly

## *A Personal View from Michael Davies*

seventy four years ago. I used my usual route through Llandudno Junction and the Conwy Valley branch train to Betws-y-Coed where I took the Sherpa bus to Pen-y-Pass and the connection to Beddgelert. I had a good blow on the front seat of the open topper through Dyffryn Mymbyr! Walking the Fisherman's Path through the Pass, I began to realise I had left very little time to reach Nantmor before the returning Opening Special from Pont



Croesor was due, and indeed I arrived there in a very hot sweat just as the train appeared in sight. The situation wasn't helped as our Hon Secretary alighted just in front of me and introduced me to the FR Co Chairman - rather embarrassing as my shirt was very sweat stained!

Dr Dafydd Gwyn performed the opening ceremony, aided by Mrs Ellen Jones who had travelled on the line pre 1937, and I then watched the train re-start up the 1 in 40, a truly memorable sight.

The half hour interval between the first train departing and the arrival of the second special for local residents was indeed a time I shall never forget. The day was one of early summer glory, an unseen cuckoo began calling very closely as if to welcome back the trains, and in the waiting shelter six locals chattered away in Welsh. Yes, Nantmor reopening day will for ever remain in my memory.

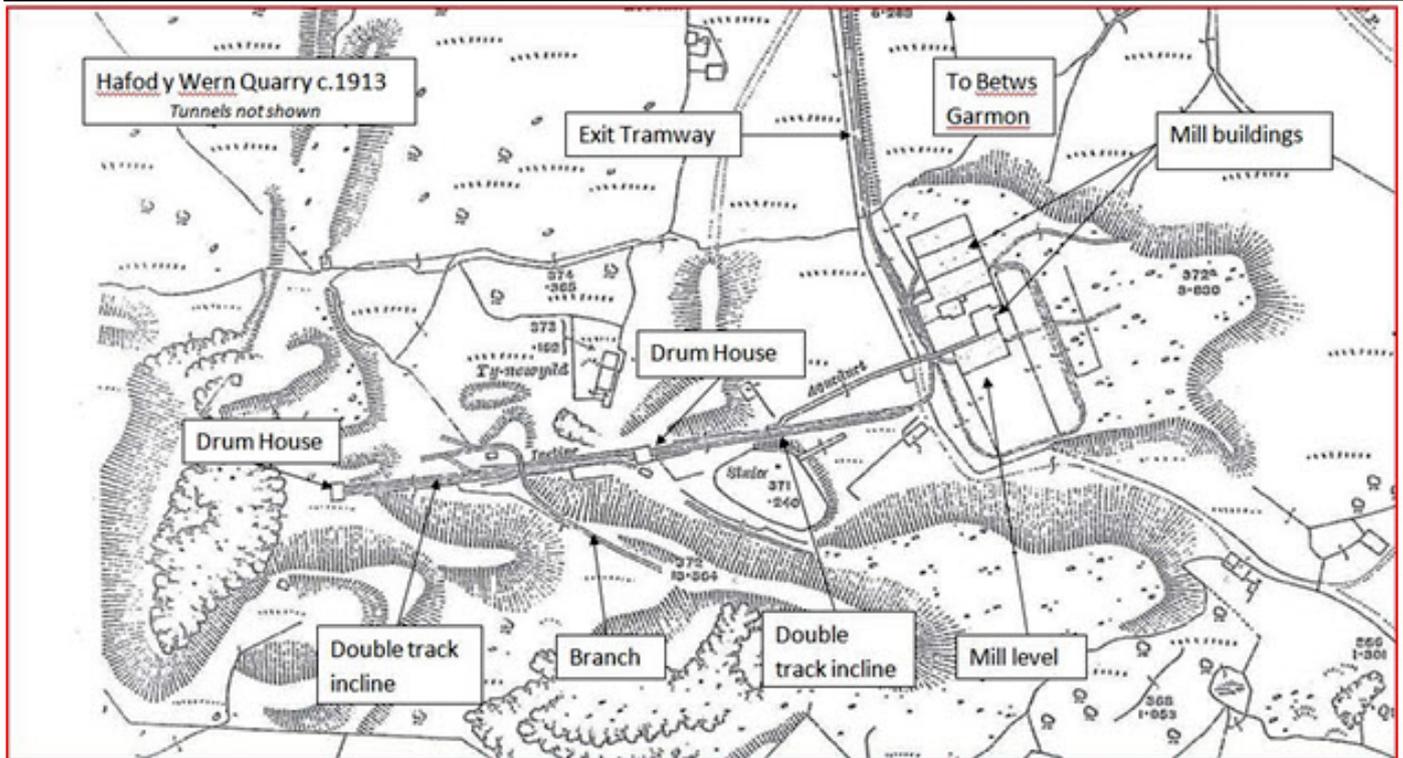
## What Happened in 1910?

In April 'The Times' newspaper declared that the LNWR were shortly to acquire the NWNCR and that extending the line from the foot of Snowdon (Rhyd Ddu) to Beddgelert had already begun. Another scheme to connect Beddgelert with Portmadoc - and the FR - was currently in abeyance (and had been for three years!).

Also in April Mr James Tomkinson MP died in a riding accident while representing Crewe for the Liberals. Being a director of Lloyd's Bank and the Wirral Railway, he was much involved with the PB&SSR and the North Wales Power and Traction Co., being a director of the former from 1904 to 1911.

Owing to the death of King Edward VII, whose funeral took place on May 20<sup>th</sup>, the AGM of the Snowdon Mountain Tramroad and Hotels Co., was cancelled. Mr Aitchison, Secretary, wrote to shareholders to this effect stating that the meeting would be re-arranged for a later date. At this time Aitchison was also Secretary and Manager of the NWNCR.

# Hafod y Wern Slate Quarry



The Hafod y Wern Slate Quarry (from 1897 the year of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee known as the Victoria Slate Quarry) was served by a tramway which branched westwards from the loop at Betws Garmon station. It crossed the Waunfawr-Beddelert road on the level, and proceeded to the quarry via a low rubble-built embankment.

The familiar and widely available facsimile

## *An In-depth Look by Richard Watson*

of the 25" to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map of 1913 includes the branch tramway but, frustratingly, not the quarry itself which is "off the map". However, I recently came across another copy of this edition which includes just this detail and thought it worth reproducing in these pages.

I am indebted to Dr Gwynfor Pierce Jones for permission to reproduce information from his excellent book, co-authored with Alun John Richards, *Cwm Gwyrfaï: The Quarries of the North Wales Narrow Gauge and The Welsh Highland Railways*. I have supplemented this information with further details of land ownership supplied by The Crown Estate, Rural Estates Department

### **A brief chronology**

Hafod y Wern was the oldest, and eventually the largest slate working in this part of the Gwyrfaï valley, and was the source of fair quality Cambrian blue-grey

slate. It had a long and chequered history with many lessees, which may be summarised as follows:

#### **1784:**

A 21-year lease was granted by Hugh Griffith and his son John, of Brynoddol, Caerns. to Wm. Jackson of Borth, Bangor and J Cowdall, of Treborth, permitting them to work the site as a quarry

#### **1790:**

The lease was surrendered

#### **1800s:**

The land was owned by John Griffith (formerly Watkin) and later inherited by

John Griffith W Griffith (sic) □

#### **From 1805 onwards:**

There followed many leases or sub leases interspersed with fallow periods. The lessees enjoyed varying degrees of success in winning slate from the Quarry

#### **1872, 10<sup>th</sup> September:**

Sold to James Somerville, John Lane and Thomas Field □

#### **1874, 5<sup>th</sup> March:**

Sold to Moel Tryfan Crown Slate Company Ltd. □

#### **1888, 11<sup>th</sup> June:**

The whole area of the quarry, amounting to 353 acres, was sold at auction to the Crown Estate Commissioners

#### **18xx:**

Crown Estate leased the quarry back to Moel Tryfan Crown Slate Company Ltd. Adjacent farms were let to various tenants □

#### **1897:**

The Victoria Slate Quarries Company restarted quarrying work. At this period an early example of a "Steam Navvy", built by Chaplin, was at work on the site.

#### **1905:**

At this time the quarry employed its largest number of men, with sixty two people on the payroll. The following workings were in existence:

- A tunnel on No.3 floor
- Gallery No.2, 38 feet above the foot of the incline and mills level
- Gallery No.3, together with a tunnel entrance, a further 54 feet up
- Gallery No.4, 74 feet above gallery No.3, with a tunnel at 69 feet
- Gallery No.5, plus a weighbridge some 39 feet above Gallery No.4
- Gallery No.6, with a "new cutting" 49 feet above Gallery No.5

#### **1908:**

Fortunes at a low ebb with only one man in employment

#### **1908:**

New lessees in place

#### **1912:**

The degree of underground work at this time led to the workings being regarded as a mine under the 1872 Act

#### **1917-22:**

Closure and liquidation

#### **1923:**



NWNGR to check the rates, and to keep the quarry accounts accurate.

- An upper incline comprising 147 yards of double track , complete with winding drum – but this was not workable

- A lower incline comprising 115 yards of double track, but the rope was not safe

- A water wheel 40' x 4', which again was not safe.

The water wheel was attached to, and was the power source of the original mill. The launder (aqueduct) is visible in the photograph. The inclines were gravity operated however. Although the existence of quarry tunnels was mentioned, these are not apparent on the map of 1913 as the track into the tunnels had been removed. One such ran from the mill level towards the reservoir, and went straight into the old quarry pit to the south of the inclines. The newer last-worked

portion lay to the north-west of the inclines.

With regard to the quarry tramway, in Dr. Pierce-Jones' opinion the track would have been lightly laid, so N.W.N.G. locomotives are unlikely to have worked from Bettws Garmon to the quarry. The Industrial Railway Society, and its predecessor the Birmingham Locomotive Club, briefly talk about the quarry in one of their earlier North Wales "Pocketbooks" □ but not in a later edition □ . There are however, no references to locomotives being employed on the internal network at any time in the quarry's history, so it is assumed that horsepower (or man-power) would have been used to move wagons around the site, and to the main line.

References:

□ *Industrial and Independent Locomotives and Railways of North Wales*; Eds. V.J. Bradley and P. Hindley. The Birmingham Locomotive Club, Industrial Locomotive Information Section. 1968

□ *Industrial Locomotives of North Wales*; Compiled by V.J. Bradley. Industrial Railway Society, 1992. ISBN: 0 901096 73 3

□ Private letter from The Crown Estate, Rural Estates Department, dated 12<sup>th</sup> December 2001, kindly supplied by Mrs Glenys Walters.

*The only known photo of work in progress at the quarry. Photo - Dafydd Walter Dafis collection & with thanks to Dr Gwynfor Pierce Jones*



*Playtime at Hafod y Wern in the 1930s! Freeman family collection*

Sold to Hugh, William & John Jones, Tyddyn Bach Farm □

1962: Part of the land was sold to the Forestry Commission

**1980s to the present day:**

The mill tip is being recycled for aggregate production. More recently, Hafod y Wern was the source of the crushed slate waste laid on the WHR track bed just prior to ballasting.

**The 1913 Map: an interpretation based on the situation in 1915**

W Bowen Jones CE of Carnarvon, the Crown Mines and Quarry Inspector, visited the site in 1915 only two years after the map was published. As quarrying activities had been scaled back by this time, his description is probably highly relevant as little would have changed. Of the railways, he recorded:

- The tramway stretched for 820 yards between the quarry and the N.W.N.G.R.
- A tramway existed on the quarry bank, and through a tunnel to the Old Quarry
- A branch tunnel existed on the centre of the upper incline
- There were branches on the office/mill floor
- A weighing machine existed on this floor. The quarry needed to weigh the slates leaving the quarry for the

Re-opened for re-cycling of waste material into slate dust

**1930:**

Quarry lease expired following closure □

**1933-34:**

Some quarry working but employing just 7 men

**19XX:**

Let to Hugh, William & John Jones,

Tyddyn Bach Farm □

**1939-45:**

Mill area destroyed during military exercises

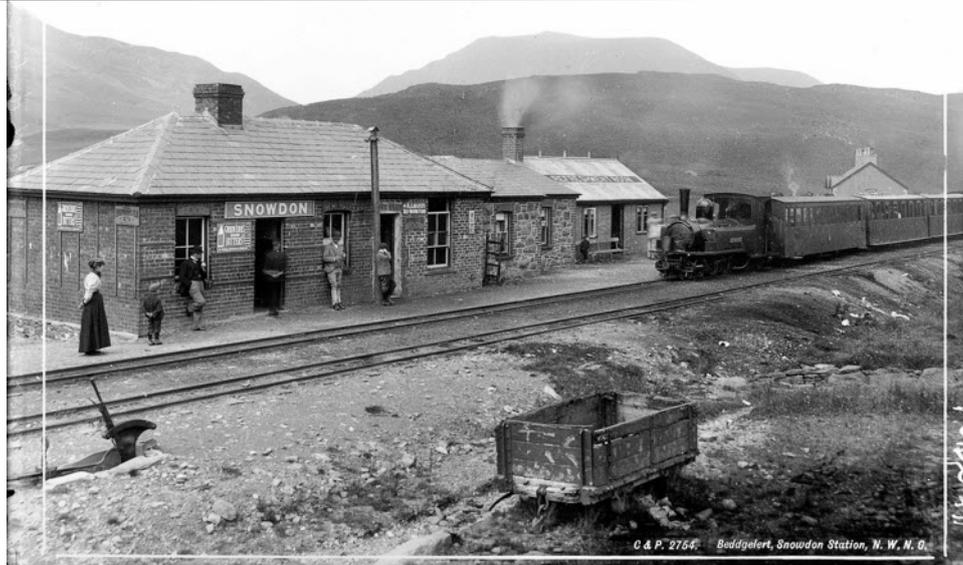
**1950s on:**

Tip workings in operation and remainder of buildings demolished

**1958, 18<sup>th</sup> April:**

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# Francis Bedford



that the picture cannot have been taken earlier than the summer of 1894.

It is apparent that the Snowdon station building had been extended by the time this picture was taken.

Comparison with earlier images of Rhyd Ddu/Snowdon will show that, as built, there was a gap between the station building and the "station master's cottage" beyond (there is some uncertainty as to the actual use to which this smaller building was originally put). The ground frame originally sat in this open space. However, at some point the station building was extended by 9 feet to join the adjacent cottage, covering the site of the ground frame in the process

(note the much lower sill in the window beyond the second door), creating the L-shaped building seen in the photograph.

**F**rancis Bedford (1816 - 1894) was an extremely respected photographer of the mid 19th century whose landscape images were highly acclaimed. Born in London, the eldest son of a church architect, he probably received his early training in his father's practice. He became a skilled lithographer and was commissioned by Digby Wyatt to produce 158 coloured lithographs for the monumental "Industrial Arts of the 19th Century" at the Great Exhibition of 1851.

It is suggested that the introduction of the collodian wet-plate process in 1851 prompted Bedford into photography - the new art form with a potentially bright future. He was an original member of the Photographic Society and contributed images to their first exhibition in 1853-54.

It is significant that all the places he visited were noted for their scenic beauty and/or had become established tourist attractions - due in part to the coming of the railways. Bedford had a great affection for Wales, particularly the north of the country. He photographed around Beddgelert and the Aberglaslyn Pass but reputedly only took one photograph of a N.W.N.G. train, posed at Snowdon - as Rhyd Ddu had been renamed in 1893.

This picture has been published in at least six different references, and in each of these cases the photograph is differently attributed, and to add to the confusion, the several authors involved appear to suggest two distinct dating periods this photograph.

What can we see in the picture that might help to resolve the date issue?

The N.W.N.G.R station at Rhyd Ddu was opened to traffic in 1881, three years after the initial opening of the Railway, first only as far as "Quellyn" and then extended to Snowdon Ranger. Initially,

## *Peter Liddell & John Keylock relate the story of a photograph*

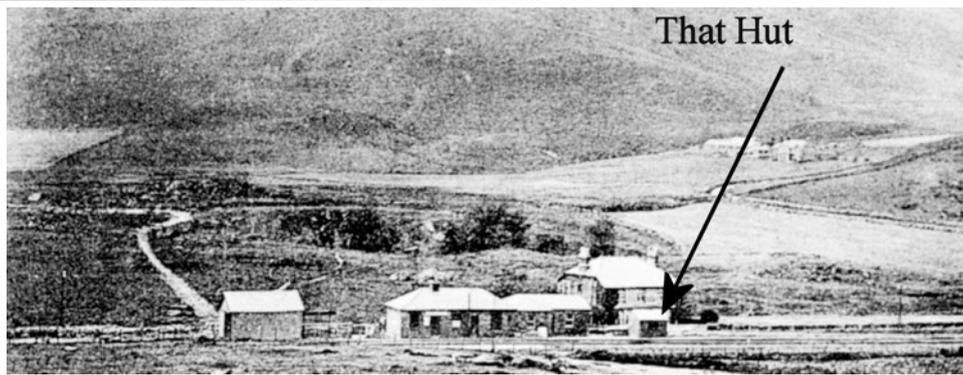
the layout comprised only a single line passing the station buildings and giving on to a series of facing sidings which must have set quite a challenge when it came to train reversal! Later, the track was modified to incorporate a passing loop in front of the station buildings and later still this loop was extended towards Dinas such that double track actually crossed the footpath to Snowdon.

In the photograph we see that the layout comprised a passing loop and that Moel Tryfan's train comprised an Ashbury "Corridor" and at least two Ashbury semi-glazed "Summer" carriages. There would have been a brake vehicle in the train - if the photograph was taken before 1907, this would have been one of the Railway's original Ashbury Brake Composites, otherwise it is more likely to have been one of the by then newly-acquired Pickering Brake Compos. Unfortunately, this vehicle is not to be seen! The "Summer" carriages were delivered to the N.W.N.G.R. in time for the 1894 operating season, so we know

There are photographs showing this building work in progress, in one of which (published by C.N & Co.) a plume of steam can clearly be seen at the summit of Snowdon. The S.M.T. did open at Easter 1896 but more or less immediately closed after the accident in which the locomotive L.A.D.A.S. was lost, not to reopen to the public until the early summer of 1897. The Rhyd Ddu building-extension photographs appear to have been taken during the summer, not unsurprising given the roof works involved, and therefore could not have been taken before 1896, suggesting that the building was extended no earlier than that year. One author has suggested that the Bedford photograph was taken before the opening of the S.M.T., however it would seem that it was, in fact, taken at some point after this event. By way of possible confirmation of this conclusion, the Francis Bedford Archive at Birmingham Central Library catalogues the posed N.W.N.G.R. image as B/2754, later in their sequence than a number of images of the fully operational Snowdon Mountain Tramroad (B/2729 to 2741). Thus, it would appear, the "Bedford" photo could not have been taken before the summer of 1897.

However, by 1880 Francis Bedford would seem to have given up active photography in favour of his son William whose work is almost indistinguishable from that of his father. William predeceased his father in January 1893 and this mortal blow probably hastened

# Slapped Wrist with a Silver Lining!



do find it a pity that such significant errors can appear in what should be a "learned" study journal, particularly as there are at least two members of the group who have made fine studies of all the available photographs, and, while not infallible, would usually be able to prevent the more glaring errors occurring.

**David Woodcock**

David Woodcock – and others – rightly chastised the editorial team for illustrating the article on p9 of WHH No. 48 with an inaccurate photograph. Rather than being of 1890's vintage the photograph is from a 1923 view and the indicated 'hut' is the bookstall which had but a brief existence at Rhyd Ddu. Other features are indicative of WHR (1922 onwards) provenance – notably the absence of the refreshment room. More positively David suggests that the building, which was the subject of the accident in the story, could have been the goods shed which was in fact slate-roofed. Alternatively said building could have served an initial temporary function at Rhyd Ddu but there is no photograph evidence to support this theory. However – a little bonus for our error – Peter Liddell writes "The photograph is not without interest in that it represents the first time I have seen a published photograph which shows the short-lived bookstall (at Rhyd Ddu)!" A silver lining?

**John Keylock**

## By Email WHH No 48

Sir  
As Peter Liddell has doubtless already informed you, the photograph of South Snowdon (the former Rhyd Ddu) on page 9 dates from 1923, not the 1890s. The hut visible, and referred to in the caption, is the infamous bookstall which was only present at this location for a few months during the summer and autumn of 1923. I hadn't seen reference to the inquest covered in the article before and I wonder whether the wooden hut referred to could have been the goods shed, which was wooden and slate-roofed. I believe that this goods shed, like the signalling, was provided by the Gloucester Wagon Company as its dimensions (such as can be estimated from photographs) appear to precisely match the most common of the standard size signalboxes of that company. Other features, notably the sliding door on the road side, closely match the style of GWCo supplied buildings on the Severn & Wye Joint (cf the restored goods shed at Parkend on the

Dean Forest Railway). The goods shed was probably delivered by rail via Dinas Junction in sections; perhaps a test erection had been made in the yard at Snowdon Ranger whilst awaiting the completion of a line of rails through to Rhyd Ddu in order to facilitate transportation thence. There are several obvious features which date the page 9 photo to the WHR period, notably:

- the goods shed is clad in corrugated iron (probably white leaded),
- the "WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY" sign on the approach road is visible,
- the station nameboard is present in its extended (SOUTH SNOWDON) form,
- the brick station building is present in its extended form,
- the refreshment room is missing (present c1891-WWI),
- there is no abandoned open wagon,
- the tall steel telegraph poles can just be made out (installed 1923),
- and, of course, the bookstall is present.

While I realise the difficulties involved, I

## Francis Bedford continued

Francis's death in May 1894. Assuming the accuracy of the foregoing facts one must conclude that the accompanying photograph was not taken by either Francis or his son, but by one of their successors who ran the family-named business from a house at 326, Camden Road, London!

So who might have taken this photograph? There are two possible candidates; Robert Hayward, who had worked for Bedford for many years and George Harris who continued the business at Camden Road for about seven years after Francis's death. Harris seems to be the most likely as it is probably he

who cooperated with Catherall & Pritchard of Chester (note the C & P reference bottom right of the photograph) with the commercial production and sale of Bedford's photographs as illustrations or postcards. Additionally this appears to suggest 1901 as the latest possible date for the image.

Bedford was an early manipulator of negatives in order to produce an enhanced image particularly in the context of cloud effects. Even the attached photograph suggests that the nearer hills and distant mountains have been 'doctored' to provide contrast.

Of Francis Bedford's private life little is known but it would appear that he was of a very modest and retiring disposition, if

not positively reclusive. He seems to have left the family home as early as 1833 and lived an almost peripatetic life until buying the Camden Road house.

Well over one hundred years on it is perhaps irrelevant as to who actually took the photograph. Although posed, the detail is superb – for example, showing that alternative refreshment for Snowdon mountain climbers was available from Glasfryn! (see the sign visible above the second carriage). Alas the framing (cropping) for post card production passes through the Snowdon Ranger/Rhyd Ddu 'lollipop' train staff.

# Not The Cambrian Crossing II

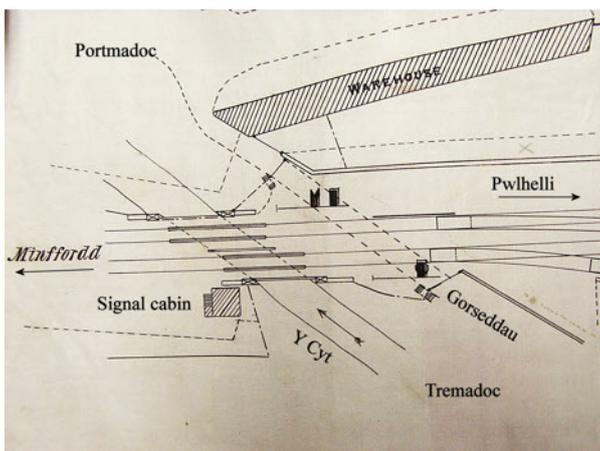
I thoroughly enjoyed reading Peter Mathews' fascinating and well-researched article about that other mixed gauge level crossing in Portmadoc, where the Gorseddau line intersected the Cambrian, yet another element in the complexity of the area's rich railway history. The signal box controlling this location was indeed on the Beddgelert Siding side of Y Cyt (beside the present-day entrance to the 'Russell Tearoom') and so would have had, I think, a clear view along both standard and narrow gauge routes before later tree growth. Its position is marked not only on the tracing in MT6/183/11 described by Peter, but also on a Cambrian Engineer's plan, dated 1899, in

## *Edward Dorricott takes a Second Look*

RAIL92/126, which even plots the access steps. The box features on the 25" OS maps of 1889 and 1901, but has disappeared by the 1918 edition.

The MT6 document of 1875 states that the crossing box was of timber, 11ft square with the operating floor 5ft above rail level. In all probability this was a McKenzie & Holland cabin, from the famous Worcester firm who supplied signalling to the Cambrian (prior to the establishment of Dutton & Co) and also to the Festiniog and NWNGR. The plan also shows, without being specific, another small square structure next to the Cambrian's level crossing over High Street, in the SE angle, probably the rudimentary forerunner of Dutton's Portmadoc East signal box of 1894 on the opposite side of the road.

*Detail from a Cambrian Railways Engineer's plan of 1899 (40ft to 1inch). Note that the drawing is orientated with south at the top. The pair of diagonals on the left show Y Cyt, with the former Gorseddau Crossing to its right. [Courtesy of The National Archive: RAIL92/126]. Names in 'Roman' type are additions to clarify the details.*



The accompanying photograph taken in 1926 (loaned to me by my friend, Cambrian historian Glyn Williams) shows a building of square plan placed behind the up platform at Portmadoc. I have a strong suspicion this may have been the old McKenzie & Holland box, relocated and put to a new use. Surmounting the apex of the roof is a typical McK&H finial of the pattern usually fixed atop their signal posts, and dubbed an 'umbrella and spike'. However, in this instance the rather fragile zinc pinnacle has been lost. Chester No.5 signal box was still adorned with a pair of these finials well into the modern era. The cabin in the photo also bears a compelling resemblance to the style of the legendary, never-used McK&H box at Penpontbren Junction, south of Llanidloes (LGRP photo 3745), which was of the same size in plan. Another similar structure lasted at Llanymynech until the mid-20th century, possibly the pre-Dutton cabin to which reference is made in Cambrian records (in RAIL92/39). I should be most interested in further comment from readers.

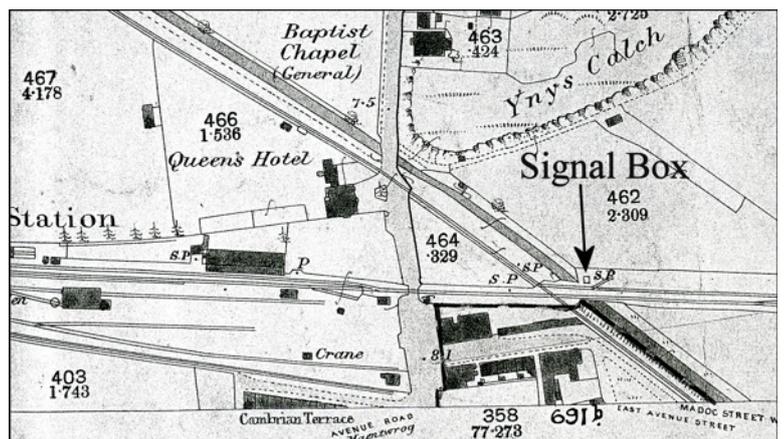
Peter in his article remarks that despite the narrow gauge rails at Gorseddau Crossing having been lifted in 1892, they were drawn in on the 1894 plan (MT6/685/12). I would agree, but add that Col. Yorke's written report in that file states that the tramway is "disused and the rails across the railway have been taken up." The interlocked key was provided "in case it should be ever brought into use again." As we know, that



*Cambrian 0-6-0 No. 48 (as GWR No. 908) at Portmadoc down platform on 5th April 1926. The structure referred to is on the left of the locomotive's smokebox with an enlargement above. Photo: Courtesy LCGB Ken Nunn Collection*

never happened, but treading the boards of the present-day footpath crossing here does bring the vagaries of history wistfully to mind.

*Although the signal box is identified by the letters S.P, this clearly should read S.B, and is corrected thus on the 1901 edition (as shown on map XVII in the recent Middleton Press 'Barmouth to Pwllheli' book). OS 25" map (1889) Caernarvonshire XLII.11 (Porthmadog)*



# Nantmor Water Supply

The 1934 lease of the WHR by the FR records 'tank only' i.e. no 'sock' - at Nantmor. To aid construction of the WHR in 1922/23 McAlpines used an 0-4-0 Bagnall saddle tank – as well as several Simplexes. In 1922 Mr Owen Cadwaladr Owen – father of Heritage Group member, Ellen Jones – sold land to McAlpines to facilitate diverting the village road thus creating better visibility at the level crossing. It was not until 1927 that Nantmor village benefited from a mains water supply of sorts provided by Glaslyn RDC. Its source was Gors Goch which fed the Cwmcaeth stream whence it was piped to a large holding tank in the village on land belonging to Mr Owen. With the Cwm Bychan stream close by Mr Owen established his own supply from this source several years before 1927, - but after abandonment of the PB&SSR. About ¼ mile upstream from Pont Cwm Bychan he built a leat from the river and this fed water into aslate tank situated at the northern end of Nantmor cutting, which had been cut - conveniently as it happened – by the PB&SSR earlier in the century. The family house was not far

below and gravity can be an asset! Having had dealings with McAlpines it is reasonable to suppose that they approached Mr Owen for permission to use this surplus water as a source for their (railway) tank and for their locomotive as suggested in *WHH No. 47*. In the same issue it was suggested that this tank provided a temporary source of water while Sharples and Walsh were at odds with the WHR in 1927. With the arrival of the WHR Mr Owen's tank was not on railway property but he retained the right to use the water for the



The tank was located at the northern end of the Nantmor cutting approx half way up the rock face shown in this 'construction' photo. D.W. Allan

benefit of the Nantmor Copper Co and the Snowdon Mountain Tramroad Co. The latter Company was by then in the same ownership as the WHR. Thanks are due to Ellen Jones - with her considerable local knowledge – for help in compiling this piece.  
**John Keylock**

## Relics of the P.B.&S.S.R.

It is recorded in "Boyd", Vol. 2, that in 1909-10 the Festiniog Railway purchased 3,000 sleepers from the abandoned Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway project. When Hafod-y-Llyn (FR) curves were being relaid in 1965, it was noticed that some of the old sleepers had unmistakable flat bottom rail grooves underneath, and it was assumed that these were of P.B.S.S.R. origin. Many were still in excellent condition, and being thinner than today's standard size, and therefore ideal for "patching" purposes, they were used in November, 1965, when the Tan-y-Bwlch-Dduallt section was being hurriedly and temporarily strengthened to permit deviation works trains to reach Dduallt safely. Now that the Dduallt section has been totally relaid with "new" materials and the pile of firewood sleepers at Minffordd has grown to record proportions, some of these original flat bottom specimens have still survived, being stacked with other old but usable sleepers for patching purposes. They

**PORTMADOC, BEDDGELEERT AND SOUTH SNOWDON RAILWAY.**

All Ledger Accounts with the Company will be rendered Monthly, and must be settled within Ten Days thereafter.  
Please remit Payment for this Account to the General Manager of the Company.

*Cheques to be payable to "Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway Company," and crossed " & Co."*

\* That all Goods delivered to the Company will be received and held by them subject to a general lien for money due to them, whether for carriage of such Goods, or for other charges; and in case the general lien is not satisfied within a reasonable time from the day when the Company first received the goods, the same will be sold by the Company by auction or otherwise, and the proceeds of sale applied to the satisfaction of such lien and expenses.  
The Company also give Public Notice that all Goods conveyed must be removed from the trucks within forty-eight hours after arrival or they will, after the expiration of that time, make an additional charge beyond the Amount due for carriage of One Shilling per Truck per day for demurrage.

Llanberis, R.S.O., N. Wales, *September 27*, 1911.

*Messrs. The Festiniog Ry. Co.*  
To the PORTMADOC, BEDDGELEERT and SOUTH SNOWDON RAILWAY CO.

DATE.	No. of Articles.	DESCRIPTION OF GOODS AND MARKS.	WEIGHT.				RATE.	TO PAY.			SENDER.
			r.	c.	q.	lbs.		£	s.	d.	
<i>July 1.</i>		<i>To 2000 Sleepers on the account rendered.</i>					<i>£ 90</i>				<i>RM.</i>

may well find their way back into the main line, on a section that needs to be nursed pending relaying. At 1s. a time, they have given good value for money; we wonder if any of today's 5s. sleepers will be fit for further service in 2029.

*FR Magazine (winter 1967/68). Reproduced here with kind permission of editor John Dobson*

**Are the 2000 sleepers detailed in the above 1911 invoice additional to the 3000 of the 1909/10 supply as Boyd suggests?. Mathematically-inclined members will no doubt be able to calculate how many sleepers would have been required for the proposed PB&SSR formation**

# Assume Nothing!

A recent Railwayana Auction offered a Croesor Quarry wagon plate for sale. Suspicious, I contacted the auction house who confirmed its provenance. Still suspicious by virtue of assuming (always a dangerous stance!) that the Croesor Quarries had no wagons of their own and most likely 'borrowed' from the FR I contacted member, Adrian Barrell in deepest Devon. As hoped he was able to put the record straight. In 1882 when only Parc quarry was under the control of Moses Kellow there was obviously

## A Personal Philosophy from John Keylock

a shortage of (slate) wagons for the Portmadoc 'run' with not always sufficient available for one daily run.

*"I have borrowed a few trucks to help matters on a little and I have to go down to Portmadoc every few days to see about getting the empties back".*

A week later (in February 1882) two 'ballast' wagons were borrowed from the Gorseddau "in return for their borrowing one of our Parc trucks".

A June 1894 inventory of Parc quarry plant and machinery lists "13 iron slate wagons for Portmadoc traffic, some with wrought iron tyres", valued at £205-0-0. Additionally there were two wooden bodied slate wagons, rubbish wagons – some in

disrepair – 'trolleys' and two cars for workman. These would have been used for carrying quarrymen from Pont Carreg Hyldrem - or even Portmadoc.

By 1900 Croesor Quarry was also working and in August Kellow wrote to Owen, Isaac & Owens in Portmadoc thus

*"I find the last new wagon sent out has no brakes fitted to it whereas it was arranged that they should all be fitted with brakes on the four wheels. The Croesor Railway people are constantly complaining of the insecurity and worthlessness of our brakes. Please deliver the remainder of the wagons on order without delay as they are most urgently wanted."*

28th August 1900 to: J. Williams (Glaslyn Foundry?)

*"I was very much surprised to hear from you last Friday that you have none of the wagon bodies yet made. Surely there is no need to await the delivery of the wheels before proceeding with this part of the work?"*

28th August 1900 to Robert Isaac. (of Owen, Isaac & Owens)

*"The progress you are making with the delivery of the Slate Wagons on order is so slow that we are put to extreme inconvenience and loss. In fact we cannot get on at all as things are at the moment. If you cannot do it at a very much quicker rate than you have been doing it I must make other arrangements."*



Croesor tramway wagon plate, found near Croesor Quarries in the early 1950s. Plate measures 4 -1/2" x 2 -1/2"

Furthermore the Croesor Quarry waybills covering the period March – August 1898 are also available. These detail the number and size of slates per wagon and its destination. The bulk were destined for 'Croesor Siding Stock' – i.e., Beddgelert Siding, but some went to the North Wales Slate Co's wharf or South Snowdon wharf at 'Harbour' necessitating using the Cambrian/Croesor Crossing. Slates from Rhosydd were also stacked at 'Croesor Siding'. In some cases both morning and afternoon 'runs' are detailed with the maximum number of wagons per 'run' being eight, but three or six tended to be the norm. As one might expect the waybills detail wagon numbers between 1 & 56! So there we have it 'assume nothing'!

### 'A Silly Little Railway'

*Alas Clough Williams Ellis (of Port Merion fame) was not a railway buff. His less than enthusiastic comments about the Welsh Highland were aired in his book 'On Trust for the Nation' published by the National Trust in 1948 and reproduced below.*

### Letter

#### Carnarvon /Caernarvon.

Sir

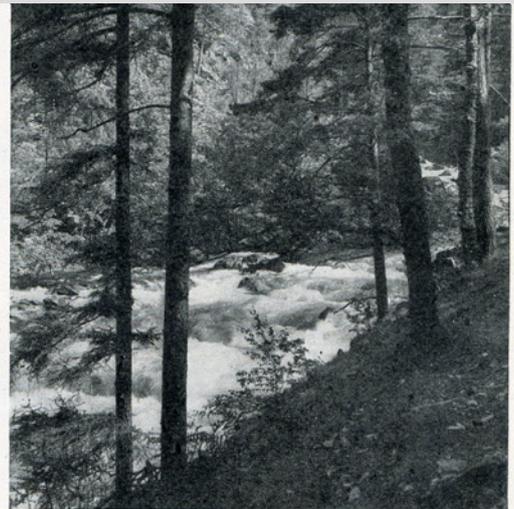
It may be helpful to record that the official spelling of the borough and county was revised in 1926 from Carnarvon to Caernarvon. The borough adopted the spelling in February - the first minutes bearing the new spelling were those of the meeting on 2 February 1926, which contained minute 5: "It was reported that the County Council had agreed to the application to substitute "Caernarvon" for Carnarvon as the name of the Borough, Urban District and Town." The LMS renamed their station from the 27 March 1926. The county council followed suit, being formally renamed with the new spelling from 1 July 1926.

The adoption of Caernarvon followed in the early 1970s and was thus adopted by the "new" Welsh Highland Railway.

**Richard Maund**

Though it may seem necessary to de-bunk the Aberglaslyn Pass as pictured by the more immoderate of the romanticists, there is no denying that it is none the less a very memorable place – obviously enhanced by the trees that have grown up in and around it during the past century or so, which is something to set against the banking back of the sea that once made the foot of the Pass a little harbour complete with ship-yard.

And now to the Pass itself has been added a long strip of land through which one can walk up-river to Beddgelert, a rather too scattered and too popular village in a lovely situation. After the last War a somewhat silly little railway was enterprised through the place on its way from Portmadoc towards Caernarvon, but it very soon died a bankrupt, and the Ramblers are now hoping to secure its dismantled track as an agreeable addition to their list of Snowdonian public foot-paths.



The Pass of Aberglaslyn, Beddgelert, Caernarvon.

BRITISH COUNCIL