

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

Supplement

December 2010

Web : www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk

A Diverse Offering to Tantalise the Tastebuds



At 57 'not out' 'Upnor Castle' is the great unsung hero (or should it be 'heroine') of the Welsh Highland Railway. Its story is charted by Richard Watson on pages 1 - 9. The loco was delivered to Dinas on the 15th August 1997. The photo (left) of 'Upnor' was taken by Peter Johnson at Dinas on 22nd August 1997.

Below is a photograph taken in September this year at Agnita in Transylvania to celebrate 100 years of the Sibiu to Agnita narrow gauge railway. Full story on pages 10 - 12.

Our various researchers, reporters and scribes are both industrious and enthusiastic - a combination of factors which often leads them to stray outside the reasonably elastic definitions of Welsh Highland Heritage. We thought that our supplement this Christmas might contain some of these offerings that might otherwise be difficult to properly include in our main publication, which will always focus on the original W.H.R.

'Modern' heritage is becoming all the rage. The company's General Manager (Paul Lewin) has recently been stressing that *his* heritage are the FR's Formica-panelled coaches of the 1960s, rather than the exquisitely lined coaches of the late 19th century.

So in deference to that more modern definition of 'heritage' Richard Watson has delved into the history of 'Upnor Castle', which played such a pivotal role in the reconstruction of the Welsh Highland and has come up with its quite fascinating history.

In September this year members of the Group and others were invited to attend the centenary of a line in a country not previously associated with narrow gauge preservation. We report on what we found in Romania on the recently closed 2ft 6 inch gauge line that connected the lovely city of Sibiu with the Transylvanian town of Agnita



The 'Upnor Castle' Story



'Upnor Castle' preparing to leave Rhyd Ddu with the first of the Sponsors' special trains on 24th March 2007. Photo - Richard Watson

57 Years Not Out.....!

The Planet Diesel 'Upnor Castle' has been a familiar sight on the Welsh Highland Railway for many years, and represents, I think, one of the best investments made by the post-1954 Festiniog Railway Company. Not only was the engine used on front line FR passenger trains for nearly two decades, but it also went on to handle most of the construction trains on Rheilffordd Eryri between 1997 and its completion.

The locomotive we know today as Upnor Castle was supplied new to the 2 ft 6 in gauge Lodge Hill & Upnor Railway belonging to the Admiralty. Originally called the Chattenden and Upnor Railway, the line was laid in 1873 to 18 in gauge as a training exercise for the Royal School of Military Engineering in Kent, and ran from Pontoon Hard, by the River Medway with a steep gradient rising towards Chattenden. There was a spur from Church Crossing to the Royal Engineers' Upnor Depot, and a short-lived branch between Chattenden and Hoo. The railway was rebuilt to 2 ft 6 in gauge in 1885 by the Engineers who then became responsible for its management, and in 1906 the railway was taken over again, this time by the Navy. It was then renamed the Lodge Hill and Upnor Railway, and an extension built to connect with the private standard gauge

branch from Sharnal Street on the S.E.& C.R. Hundred of Hoo branch.

The locomotive stock was a mix of types from different builders, and the final steam engine was not scrapped until 1956. Today the only steam survivor is the Manning Wardle 0-6-2T 'Chevallier' which was sold out of service to Bowaters Paper Mill in 1950. The L.H. & U.R. was dieselised in stages after 1943 and our engine was the last to be built for the line, being known at Lodge Hill by the romantic-sounding name *Yard No. 44*.

Richard Watson tells the Story of a Welsh Highland Work-horse

The loco was built in 1954 by the firm of F.C. Hibberd as a 126hp Model SCN "Planet" 4wheel diesel mechanical, with the builder's number 3687. It was fitted with a Foden FD6 6-cylinder 2-stroke engine developing full power at 1,800 - 2,000 r.p.m. The final drive was by roller chains and the loco had an original top

speed of 16 m.p.h. F.R. Magazine stated in 1968 that it weighed 13 tons.

The origin of the "Planet" petrol (and later diesel) locomotive can be traced back to the Kent Construction and Engineering Company of Ashford, Kent. After World War I, Kent Construction purchased a large number of Government-surplus petrol locomotives which were reconditioned and offered for sale. These included both Motor Rail "Simplex" and Baldwin Locomotive Works products, thereby forging an historical connection between 'Upnor' and the F.R.'s 'Mary Ann' and 'Moelwyn'. Hibberd acquired the goodwill of James and Frederick Howard Ltd. in 1932, following which the company moved its factory to Park Royal in West London.

In the 1950s the Navy began to replace the fleet of locomotives employed to shunt its depots and dockyards. The firm of F.C. Hibberd was awarded the contract, and the Navy specified the Foden FD6 engine instead of the Dorman units normally offered for this type of locomotive. The Foden was a 2-stroke design with an alloy crankcase, and at the time a standard engine used in naval vessels as it had a low magnetic signature. As the engine ran at over 1,800 r.p.m., and the epicyclic gearbox at 1,200 r.p.m. it was necessary to employ a step-down box between the two.

The radiator originally fitted had a sloping front and was similar to those fitted to Foden DG lorries of the period. Additional weights were added to the front and rear of the locomotive, no doubt to improve its stability.

In its original state, *Yard No. 44* was unlikely to win any beauty contests as it had a tall cab out of proportion with the rest of the locomotive. When the loco was being rebuilt at Boston Lodge, clues were found suggesting that the cab had been raised before delivery so perhaps the Royal Navy drivers were taller than usual.

The Lodge Hill Railway featured gradients as steep as 1 in 28, so *Yard No. 44* would have worked hard on its mixed traffic duties. The railway was exceptionally busy throughout both

World Wars, and even after the Second War nine trains ran in each direction carrying munitions and personnel.

However, the railway fell into decline in the fifties and the last train ran on 29th May 1961 following its replacement by a private road. The remaining locomotives were disposed of, and it appears that *Yard No. 44* was the last to leave.

The Welshpool & Llanfair Preservation Company was just beginning its operations in the early sixties, and set its sights on purchasing *Yard No. 85* (a Drewry 0-6-0) from Upnor to supplement its steam motive power. However, No. 85 had been transferred to a Naval Depot near Plymouth so they settled for *Yard No. 44* instead. The Planet was delivered to Welshpool, arriving by road in February 1962 and to begin with it ran with its original number. It was later renumbered No. 4 in the W&L series, and still later given the name '*Upnor Castle*' at the request of its previous owners after the structure of the same name built in 1589 on the orders of Elizabeth I. The Castle was intended as a way to defend Chatham Dockyard and warships anchored in the Medway. *Upnor* served the W&L faithfully for the next six years, but had a reputation for rough riding due

Now numbered W&L No. 4, but still unnamed, the Planet locomotive rests in the siding at Sylfaen, Welshpool & Llanfair Rly circa 1962.
Photo - Ralph Cartwright



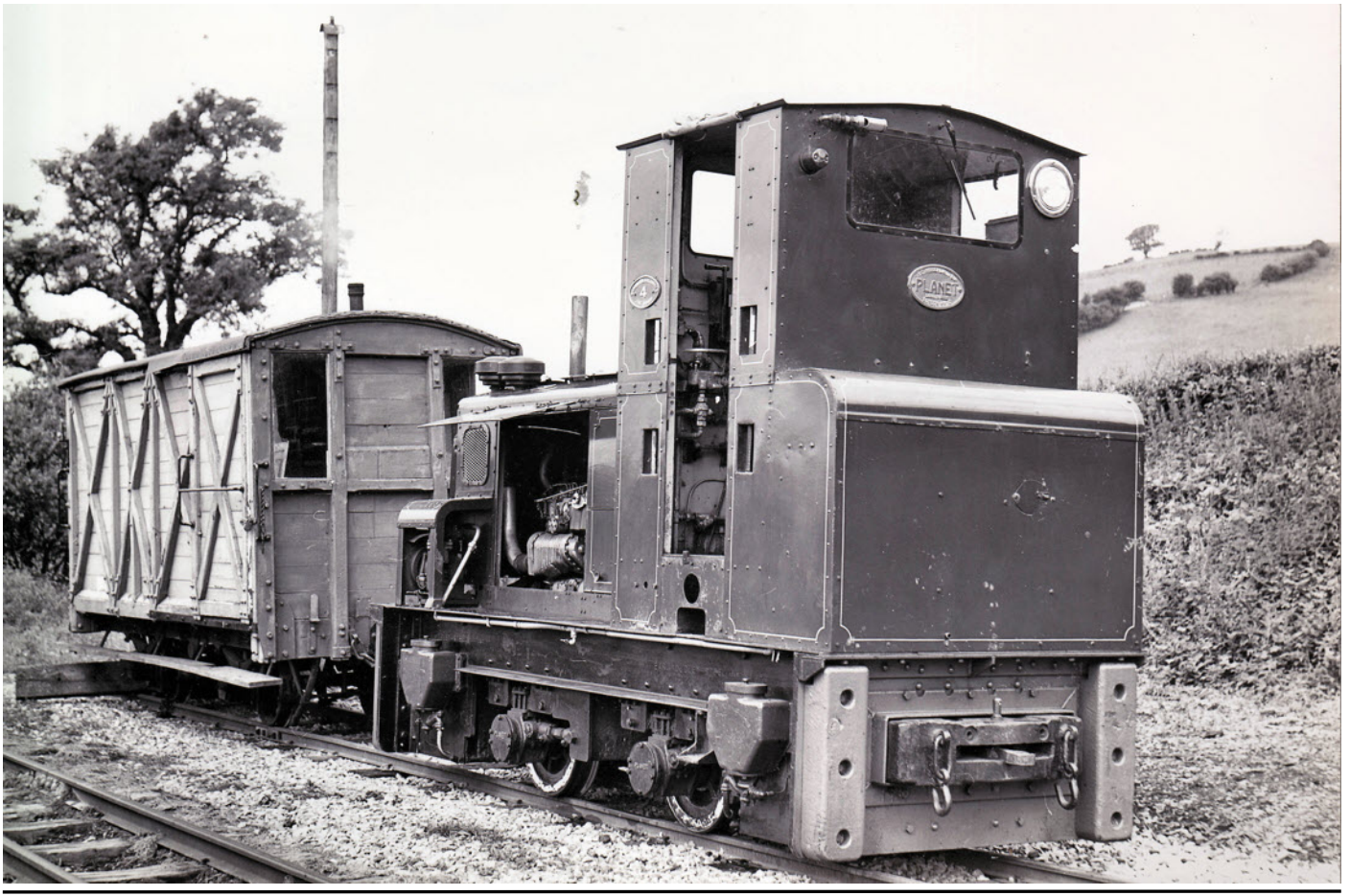
Yard No 44 heading an early W&L revival train across the roundabout at at Raven Square, circa 1962.
Photo - Ralph Cartwright

to its short wheelbase and the heavy balance weights at each end of the chassis.

The Drewry diesel became available for purchase in late 1967, so the W&L decided to sell '*Upnor*' partly to finance the new acquisition. The F.R. was looking for a powerful diesel, and saw in '*Upnor*' a unit roughly equivalent to Prince in haulage capacity. The total cost to the Festiniog including transport and re-gauging was £600, equivalent to just over £8,000 at today's prices, and to help

pay for the engine, the Festiniog Railway Society set up an "*Upnor Castle Fund*".

'*Upnor*' arrived by road from the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway on 12 February 1968 and was taken to Boston Lodge for re-gauging. The work included a reduction in height of the cab roof, and the cab itself was rebuilt in a more attractive manner. As the locomotive would be required to work vacuum-fitted trains, a rotary exhaust



was located and re-commissioned, together with vacuum equipment obtained from a withdrawn B.R. diesel shunter.

The engine entered trial service on the F.R. in mid-August 1968, at first without vacuum brakes, and was introduced into passenger service in mid-1969 principally on relief services. The Foden FD6 engine was replaced by a more powerful Gardner 6LW in 1970. To address problems with poor riding the wheelbase was increased, with ballast weights placed between the wheels. It was successful in this form and the engine was able to keep time with a load of six coaches.

'Upnor' proved very useful in service but suffered numerous ailments including a broken axle and melted wheel bearings, and suffered a minor derailment at Minffordd top points in 1974. In 1979 a second reconditioned Gardner, a 6LX of 180 b.h.p. was fitted and the loco gave further good service. There followed a period of unreliability including an incident where a stud came loose in the gearbox, badly damaging the gears. A replacement gearbox was sought to no avail, so the F.R. was forced to repair the existing unit.

In the 1970s the peak Summer Service on the F.R. required 13 trains per day between Porthmadog and Dduallt. To cover this there were usually two diesels in service, with 'Moelwyn' powering the Dduallt Diddy, and 'Upnor Castle' the 09:45 and 17:45 off peak services from Porthmadog. Upnor's regular drivers at this time were Arthur Brookes and John Halsall.

Engine noise within the cab proved a problem, and the locomotive gained the

*'Upnor' alongside FR diesel 'Moelwyn' in Minffordd Yard on 30th April 2010.
Photo Richard Watson*



nickname 'Uproar' as a result. Drivers began to wear ear defenders to protect their hearing, so when a similar locomotive was purchased in 1981 it was completely rebuilt to deal with this issue. This engine became 'Conway Castle', but proposals to rebuild 'Upnor' in similar fashion never came to fruition. 'Upnor' was relegated to spare engine and shunter at this time, as 'Conway' was better suited to passenger traffic.

The Festiniog Railway acquired a Baguley 0-6-0 diesel hydraulic locomotive for permanent way duties in 1988, and for a short time it was proposed to name this engine "Upnor Castle". However, the idea was not proceeded with and the Planet locomotive retained its name. More recently, one nameplate appears to have gone missing so the engine is named on one side only.

In May 1993 'Upnor' suffered accident damage to her cab following a collision

*'Upnor' had clearly seen better days when this photograph was taken at Minffordd yard on 30th April 2010, awaiting entry to Boston Lodge Works for attention to her gearbox.
Photo - Richard Watson*

with the ballast chute at Minffordd. Temporary repairs were made, but ripples in the plating could still be seen seventeen years later. She spent a period out of traffic later that year, having donated an axle to keep 'Conway' in service, and by 1994 was confined to shunting duties with only the occasional foray on passenger trains. However, on the 2nd July of that year she came to the rescue of 'Blanche' which had failed near Crossing Bothy.

On August 15th 1997 'Upnor' was transferred to the Welsh Highland Railway Construction Company at Dinas, where she replaced the small Hunslet 'Harold' on engineers' trains. An engine failure during her final days on the F.R. meant a works visit for the installation of a third Gardner power unit, but this proved unsatisfactory and a factory-reconditioned unit was fitted, a 6LXB type of 10.45 litres capacity. 'Upnor' was then employed almost continuously on permanent way construction trains, and in the early days powered the infamous 'Forth Bridge' rail gantry. The arrival of her former stable companion, the ex-Welshpool (and previously Lodge Hill) Combination Car in 1998 allowed the engine to transport volunteers in comparative comfort.

On March 19th 2000, 'Upnor' was joined at Dinas by her close relative 'Conway Castle', and on March 30th was



*W&L No. 4 'Upnor Castle' in the yard at Llanfair Caereinion circa 1963.
Photo - Ralph Cartwright*

moved by road to the Cae Wernlas Ddu construction base, becoming the first locomotive to work on the 'true' W.H.R. trackbed since the demolition trains of the 1940s. 'Upnor' has performed sterling service on construction trains ever since, over virtually the entire route of the RhE and with very few periods spent out of

*'Upnor Castle' was acquired by the Welshpool & Llanfair in February 1962. Here she is in her L.H. & U.R. Guise as 'Yard No. 44' and unnamed, parked under the goods shed canopy at Llanfair.
Photo - John Emery*



service. She even approached the Britannia Bridge on one occasion - from the north - but to date has never crossed it by rail.

Although technically available to haul passenger trains, the locomotive is relatively low-powered so has rarely been called upon to do this on the RhE. Her finest moment in this regard probably occurred on March 24th 2007 when she was used with her sister 'Conway Castle' to haul the Phase 4 Sponsors' Train between Pont Cae'r Gors and Cwm Cloch cutting. It was realised at the time that the track was not capable of taking a Garratt further than Pont Cae'r

Gors cutting, so the two Hibberds 'did the honours' as far as the north end of Cwm Cloch cutting. On the return journey, the Planets propelled the train back uphill with carriage no. 1001 leading in push-pull style - not an easy task on the 1 in 40 even for two locomotives.

'Upnor Castle' was taken out of service in the early months of 2010, in desperate need of overhaul following years of uncompromising hard work on both railways. The main issue was gearbox failure, so the engine was returned to the F.R. for repairs at Boston Lodge. She was seen in Minffordd Yard en route to the Lodge over the May Bank Holiday, looking a little battered and forlorn and still bearing signs of the tussle with the ballast chute many years previously.

The torque converter leaked oil badly, and the battery and other electrics were unreliable. The main problem however was the 4th gear arrangement in the reduction gearbox, which works like a clutch and matches the input and output speeds. The plates had become welded together after years of heavy usage and maintenance 'in the field', meaning that the loco was stuck permanently in 4th gear. The reversing box was also damaged and the sprocket on the final drive shaft had worked itself loose.

Repairs to 'Upnor' included replacement of the transmission with a spare obtained



*The un-named Planet diesel with the Combination Car at Castle Caereinion alongside Ruston diesel 'Raven' circa 1962.
Photo - Ralph Cartwright*

nearly twenty years ago from sisters used in other Navy dockyards. The air compressor was repaired and supplemented by a second, and the radiator and oil cooler repaired including new cores. The cab was repaired at long last, and the opaque side windows replaced with new glass. Seats were fitted for the first time, in deference to the

longer distances now encountered on the W.H.R.

The writer saw the engine looking like her old self again in September 2010, resplendent in a new coat of Festiniog green paint a little simpler in style than its 60s/70s livery. It was fitting that the engine was returned to service in time to enable her to shunt the Platelayers' Special at Porthmadog Harbour Station on 31st October 2010.

'Upnor Castle' was the first diesel on the FR able to haul anything like a normal length passenger train, and has proved its worth time and time again. The initial £600 was surely a bargain price and it is good to see her back in harness. Dare one hope that she will find pride of place in the Welsh Highland Railway Museum one day?

*'Upnor Castle' double heading with her sister, 'Conwy Castle', on the Sponsors' train approaching Pont Cae'r Gors on 24th March 2007.
Photo - David Allan*





'Upnor' & 'Conwy' pause for a breather with the Sponsors' train at Pont Cae'r Gors on 24th March 2007. Photo - David Allan

Upnor Castle – Some Stories and Anecdotes

'Upnor Castle' has enjoyed a long and distinguished history, and to try to bring her story to life I have collected anecdotes from people who remember her in service on her four railways.

'Upnor' & Lodge Hill Railway

Ronald knew the locomotive as a child, as his mother hailed from the village of Wainscott, close to the U. & L.H.R. When visiting, they would often go to Upnor and in 1961 the young Ronald had the misfortune to be restrained by military police even though he was on public land. However they relented and took him to the loco shed where he was shown *Yard No.85*, which eventually replaced 'Upnor' on the Welshpool & Llanfair. A short time later *Yard No.44*, our 'Upnor Castle', arrived from Lodge Hill with the Combination Car and Ronald managed a short ride along the platform. At the tender age of 13 he dared

not risk the offer of a ride to 'Upnor' itself, in case he missed the bus back home! Ronald says "The story of the military police shows the attitude of those days when I was told not to talk about the railway, as it was covered by the Official Secrets Act. Once they were sure I was just a kid with no camera but interested in the railway, they showed me round. This attitude of mind may mean photographs are rare of 'Chattenden'. Certainly my parents and locals were unwilling to admit the line was there even though it crossed the road on a high girder bridge."

Ronald recalled an earlier visit... "when very young a storm forced us to take shelter in the bike sheds outside 'Upnor Castle' that were adjacent to the line. The gates suddenly opened and a steam locomotive zipped by followed by very quick closing of the gates. This could have been 1953."

Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway

Malcolm Peakman

Malcolm volunteered on the W&L in the early 1960s and drove 'Upnor Castle' many times. He thought it "a nice loco to drive". It was used on works trains in

preference to the smaller diesel loco, 'Raven', and also on passenger trains when the traffic was light or when one of the steam locos was unavailable. For heavy loads on the Golfa Bank it was not a success, however as the long grass and the steep gradient needed the power of one of the steam locos.

Clive Briscoe

Clive remembers travelling behind 'Upnor Castle' at Welshpool around 1965, when the loco double headed with 'Countess'. In those days 'Upnor' sported multi-tone Maserati air horns, and Clive recalls the two engines playing "Colonel Bogey" between Llanfair and Castle Caereinion. (Author's note: an intriguing photograph exists depicting the loco at Sylfaen on the Welshpool line. It had been renumbered *No.4*, but not yet named, and was at that time fitted with a steam locomotive-type organ pipe whistle located on the rear cab sheet. It has been reported, though not confirmed, that a whistle will be reinstated following her recent overhaul)



'Upnor Castle' passing Simplex loco 'Dolgarrog' during the construction of the station at Beddgelert on 10th September 2007. Photo - Richard Watson

Ffestiniog Railway

Its passenger days on the FR are well remembered as drivers would curse the fact that they had to drive, but even so it was, apparently, "great fun" to drive when double heading.

"3717"

says that "Ear defenders obligatory as that gearbox screamed at you from under your feet."

Andy Elms

"Heard a story – might have been from Fred (Howes), or was it in Ffestiniog Adventure – that to finish the P-way on the Deev they needed to take a 100t train up the line, so triple headed it with Moelwyn, Hedgehog and Uproar". (For the uninitiated, Pway = Permanent Way, Deev = the FR Deviation, Hedgehog = 'Moel Hebog', Uproar = 'Upnor Castle' – Author)

Welsh Highland Railway Construction

Adrian Strachan

"Some might remember the week between Christmas 2000 and the New Year, when there were some very low temperatures and snow in North Wales. It wasn't easy to move about the area at all, let alone run train services. The services to Waunfawr were rostered for steam traction, but the only 'serviceable' Garratt was out of action so the Funkey was used on the 28th. Following further snow and ice overnight, the Funkey refused to start. It remained outside at Dinas in sub-zero

temperatures, so there was only one option which was a certain green locomotive. Permission to use it was obtained from the

Construction Company, and it started on the button.

'Upnor' shunted the Funkey out of the way, coupled onto the stock in the shed, and to the annoyance of local residents the loco began the time-honoured task of creating vacuum.

However, when the driver attempted to move the stock from the shed something appeared to be wrong, as the train would not move. An examination revealed that snow around the carriage brake blocks had melted, run down around the wheels and rails and then frozen solid. Sand was applied under 'Upnor's' wheels and after a struggle the icebound wheels broke free.

A busy day on the line followed, with unfamiliar motive power running through the snow in clear and bright weather. Although visibility was much better than a Garratt, the driver and second man couldn't see the track at all in the higher open sections of line due to the fall of snow. 'Upnor' noisily crossed what looked like open white fields as they held on, and trusted that she knew where she was going (having built the line and all that..)"

"Coming down was a bit trickier than they expected, as the undulating grades on some sections meant that power was sometimes needed, requiring 4th gear to be engaged. However the crew could not quite maintain vacuum on tick-over during the steeper downhill grades. This meant lots of 'rev-matching' in and out of gear on the grades... who said that diesels

are easier to drive! Their feet were kept nice and warm on the gearbox, whilst everything else was a bit chilly due to the wind over the half-doors. 'Upnor's' only real failing on this occasion was that it was not equipped to defrost frozen points."

One correspondent said that driving it "was great", and that even when double heading with 'Conwy' on the WHR(C) it was "the more pleasurable to drive of the two".

Paul Bradshaw

Paul Bradshaw, leader of the railways' track gangs recalls "Having been able to drive 'Upnor' quite a bit, mainly for the construction of Phase 4 but also to a lesser extent on other sections of the W.H.R. for P-Way purposes I have a considerable affection for the loco. For our purposes I think it is much superior to 'Conway Castle' as the driving position of 'Conway' is not suited to the type of work for which we needed 'Upnor'. True that 'Conway's' cab provides a seat for the driver and protection from the elements but these are benefits one do without if they get in the way of operating convenience for the type of jobs for which we used 'Upnor'. For all the time I have driven 'Upnor' it has never been in 100% condition. Its gear selection was unpredictable at times, particularly before it was sent to Boston Lodge to have the gear box seen to. It had compressor problems all the time I have known it. Slow to make enough air to operate and because of leaks quick to lose air if the motor was stopped. At the end before its recent visit to Boston Lodge one had to stop the motor to



'Upnor Castle' approaching the site of the new station at Beddgelert with a construction train on 10th September 2007.
Photo - Richard Watson

change direction; only one gear (4th) would work and if you did not get it into neutral before closing down the motor it was impossible to get it started again".

Peter Jarvis

Peter recalls some great "battles" with 'Upnor' trying to haul heavy Railmovers on long treks from Dinas to the head of steel on cold wet nights or mornings, with the loco threatening to stall on the 1 in 37 to Tryfan Junction or on the curves at Glanyrafon.

He also remembers her final days before her recent visit to Boston Lodge; ".....'Upnor Castle' with Ben Rosen driving, Godfrey Solomon as second and myself as third man (to hold the lamp, open crossings and so on), set off from Hafod y Llyn to fetch another load of rails from Dinas. The loco was in a lamentable condition. The cab floor was oily from a leak in the torque converter, which did not improve the traction – it became hotter with half-burnt oil as we went up the hill; the side windows were all but opaque, the lights didn't work, some of the gears didn't work reliably,

the battery had failed so we had a generator occupying most of the cab floor in case we needed it (we did). The only things that worked were the splendid slogging Gardner engine and, praise be, the brakes."

Model Making

Ronald Wallman

Ronald, who lives in France, says "I have been forced to retire and I am....building a model based on 'Upnor Castle' using..... 7 mm Narrow Gauge Society drawing"... I decided to build something that would look like 'Upnor Castle', failing accurate drawings and information. What I am attempting is more of a toy version that is meant to be used, hence its chunky appearance. The model is based on a scale of two feet divided by five inches This matches a DZ wagon I also made."

"My observations (of the real 'Upnor') are that hardly anything is the same. The axle boxes are handed. The bonnet grills left and right are quite different. One running plate box has a sloping top, the other two flat and rounded. The box nearest the cab on the left hand side has a gap that is shielded by a plate but the grill here uniquely has gauze and sports an embossing. I pressed the top vents that are probably air intakes but again, why three, and the middle one is quite different. The strap across the back of the cab above the louvres, that are three different sizes and none are the same as the right hand bonnet door, has two bosses to accept screws."

"The model is five inch gauge. Due to lack of information I intend calling the model "Upnor Down". I used available channel section for the frames and cut

the pilot beams from 10 mm steel plate. Two ex Sinclair C5 250 watt motors are fitted using bicycle chain to produce a theoretical top speed of 11 KPH. This is somewhat fast for our little circle that has 7 metre curves and is just 82 metres lap. There is space for two batteries, and I might well fit the maximum of four if I go visiting. Control is by 4QD. Most of the metal is salvaged hence the colours. I do my own foundry work. The model is made so that the body will dismantle for transport."

The following works have been consulted, and grateful acknowledgment is made:

Barker, Oswald J. *The Chattenden & Upnor Railway – Narrow Gauge in Kent.* Railway Bylines, June 1998, pp 166-173

Boyd, J.I.C., *Narrow Gauge Railways in Mid-Wales.* Lingfield: The Oakwood Press, 1965. No ISBN number.

Bradley, V.J. (Compiler). *Industrial Locomotives of North Wales.* Industrial Railway Society, 1992. ISBN: 0 901096 73 3

Cartwright, Ralph, and Russell, R.T. *The Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway.* Newton Abbot: David & Charles Publishers plc. Revised and updated edition, 1989. ISBN: 0-7153-9226-3

Festiniog Railway Chronology – section on Upnor Castle

Festiniog Railway Magazine, various references

Hayton, J. Ronald. *The Chattenden & Upnor Narrow-Gauge Railway.* The Railway Magazine, May 1941, pp 207-211

Smith, D.J., *The Welshpool & Llanfair Railway.* Teddington: Branch Line Handbooks and Bracknell: West Country Handbooks, 1966. No ISBN number.

Snowdon Ranger Magazine, various references

"Taliesin", Festiniog Railway Locomotives, AB Publishing, 1988.

Web Sites

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._C._Hibberd_%26_Co_Ltd;

<http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/historic-inflation-calculator>; The official website of the Welsh Highland Railway Project,

<http://www.whrsoc.org.uk/WHRProject/diesels.htm>; Festipedia,

http://www.festipedia.org.uk/wiki/Upnor_Castle

Yeatman, D. Lodge Hill & Upnor Railway.

Industrial Railway Society, in *Industrial Railway Record*. No.12 pp. 277-292

December 1966. Available online at http://www.irsociety.co.uk/Archives/12/lodge_hill.htm

My thanks also to Paul Bradshaw, Clive Briscoe, Andy Elms, Peter Jarvis, Malcolm Peakman, Ronald Wallman and "3717", for sharing their recollections of working with or modelling Upnor Castle, and to the following who contributed photographs: Messrs. Alan Barnes, John Emery, Richard Greenwood, Ralph Cartwright (collection of the late R.T. Russell) and Ronald Wallman.



Welsh Highland Heritage Visits Romania

An unlikely headline you may think! Yet in September 2010 a party of some eleven enthusiasts including several Welsh Highland Heritage Group members visited the Sibiu to Agnita narrow gauge railway in Romania to help celebrate its centenary - well that's the excuse for this particular 'jolly'. The expedition was organised under the paternal eye of the New Europe Heritage Railway Trust (NEHRT)

This 2ft 6 inch gauge line had connected the Transylvanian cities of Sibiu with Sighisoara via the delightful Hartibaciu valley and included a logging line from Cornatel to Varpur. By 1898 some 30 miles had been constructed from Sighisoara to Agnita; this was extended by a further 38 miles to reach Sibiu in 1910 and included the 8 mile logging branch. After 91 hectic years declining trade and

declining funds forced the twice daily mixed train to be withdrawn and the line closed on the 1st September 2001. The ownership is complex. In 1998 the state owned railway system was split up pending privatisation. The SAR (Sibiu-Agnita Railway) became the property of the SAAF (Railway Assets Administering Company). However in 2003 the rolling stock and some of the buildings were in turn acquired by SFT (the Railway Tourism Company). The purpose of this company was to exploit the tourism potential of railways. How the subsequent scrapping of nearly all the freight wagons and most of the carriages equate with the objective of 'promoting tourism' only the mind of a bureaucrat can explain. However in spite of this desecration six carriages and two locomotives were saved. In 2008 financial incompetence brought the SFT (the Railway Tourism Company)

to the brink of bankruptcy. All but one of the diesel engines were scrapped as were two of the previously saved carriages and it was planned to lift and sell the rails. Fortunately a Consortium for Sibiu-Agnita Inter-regional Development was formed and took over the task of railway tourism. It succeeded in saving the last four passenger carriages and in getting the whole of the track and associated railway buildings declared as historical monuments. Although the Consortium is actively seeking funding to help to restore the line they have not yet been successful. The breathing space that has been bought allowed for a group of local volunteers to form the Friends of the Mocanita Association. It is this group that will create the springboard to re-invigorate this wonderful narrow gauge railway and it is also this group who have provided the impetus that will ensure the projects success and who sponsored the centenary celebrations.

The following is an account of that visit in September 2010:

The morning dawned refreshingly bright and sunny; the mini bus arrived promptly for our trip to the lovely city of Sibiu or to be more precise Sibiu station and the museum of steam locomotives that nestled alongside.

Sibiu station was attractive, but the museum was breathtaking. There were steam locomotives everywhere. The focus was a turntable surrounded on one arc by a roundhouse, and on the opposite arc by the working railway. Locomotives were arranged at random on the tracks radiating from the turntable, which interestingly was still in use. There were locomotives parked and plinthed on the path that led to the turntable; there were locomotives arranged in lines in the long grass; there were locomotives in sidings and on tracks that were still in use and there were locomotives away from the museum area that were rapidly being overtaken by nature's verdant task force. The size and scope of the scene was quite awe-inspiring. It made Dai Woodham's Barry graveyard look like a tiny rural cemetery. Mixed up with this wealth of steam were multiple diesel units that were parked up or being moved as they prepared for work. There was no demarcation, no official to tell us where we couldn't go; it was an odyssey of exploration, fascination and disintegration!



*Above - Agnita station in the 1920s and
below a redesigned Agnita station in
2010 closed & boarded up*



Nothing could top that experience, or so we thought. From this standard gauge cornucopia we crossed several tracks to find the remains of the narrow-gauge 2 ft 6 inch line which incestuously entwined itself with the standard gauge to form a mixed gauge track for part of its length. The narrow gauge track, over grown and barely visible through the tangle of foliage, led us to the semi derelict loco shed. This contained two narrow gauge steamers, one of which had operated recently for a BBC film. To the side of the shed, over a small turntable another steamer lay undisturbed in the long grass, whilst alongside it, on another siding, was a covered van, the interior of which was now a narrow-gauge dog kennel. Outside the shed were three tracks over pits two of which led into the shed. An old rusty coach seemed to be acting as some sort of store shed, whilst miscellaneous bits of railway equipment



hung about everywhere in various stages of decay, although knowing narrow gauge perhaps this is what they were like when the line was operational!

It would be no exaggeration to say that the party was lost for words. How could this narrow gauge preservationist's dream just lie here with no one to care for it? This was the Romanian equivalent of Boston Lodge in the late 1940s. And like that early Festiniog scene its future looks much brighter thanks to the enthusiasm of the young Romanian preservationists. They need all the help and support that they can get – particularly cash! A visit to their lovely line set amidst the rolling hills of Transylvania would certainly encourage them and provide you with a narrow gauge gricing experience that could have been North Wales 60 years ago.

Nevertheless the challenge facing their fragile, embryonic preservation society is even more daunting than that which the Tallylyn Railway inherited in 1950. They have plenty of overgrown track and buildings; even signals with wires still in situ – but no safe storage facilities or even a train set to call their own.

We came away enthused by the Romanian preservationists enthusiasm and with a feeling that we could do something to help a scheme in far less rich country than that in which we are privileged to live.

Therefore we have decided to establish a UK branch of the 'Friends of the Sibiu to Agnita Railway' the aims and objectives of which are set out in the panel on page 12.

Top - a plinthed narrow gauge loco ; middle - narrow gauge loco and guard's van being overtaken by nature; bottom - John Keylock (WHHG) right & Alasdair Stuart (WH Construction) & Radu Popu (SAR) seem dismayed by what they see! All taken at Sibiu in September 2010



UK Branch of the Friends of the Sibiu to Agnita Railway

Aims & Objectives

Aims

Establish a (small) group of UK supporters of the SAR

Objectives

1. Raise funds to help the 'Friends of the SAR' in their aim of re-establishing the Sibiu to Agnita Railway as a tourist/enthusiast attraction and source of volunteer skills.
2. Provide advice and expertise to help them attain their objectives.
3. Add to their authority when dealing with the Romanian authorities (bureaucrats)
4. Publicise their efforts in the UK via press releases. (Narrow Gauge Railway Society – Heritage Railway – Continental Railway Circle)
5. Distribute a twice yearly newsletter to members and the press
6. Provide advice for those intending to travel to Sibiu.
7. Open a UK bank account to deal with the group's funds and appoint a treasurer.

We had in mind an annual membership subscription of £15 with the majority thus raised going to help the line.

If you would like to join and support this Romanian adventure please email David Allan (david.allan132@ntlworld.com) or telephone John Keylock (01386 852428) and tell them!

*Photos. Top - narrow gauge steamer 764062 rests in the shed;
middle - mixed gauge track and points divert the narrow gauge away
from the standard gauge main line; bottom Sibiu shed and yard.
All taken September 2010*

