

# WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

£2.00

Issue No. 51

Web : [www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk](http://www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk)

March 2011

ISSN 1462-1371

## Heritage Grant?

# “A Marketing Opportunity”

A grant for railways' heritage has to be exciting news; it becomes even more exciting when it is appreciated that part of that grant is aimed at the work with which the Welsh Highland Heritage Group is already involved.

Following a sterling effort by FR Heritage Co chairman Gareth Williams a grant has been awarded to the FR Trust by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The grant is in two stages with Stage One (this award) being used to fund consultants to work up the Stage Two application. The total value of the scheme is £531,878.

So what is the scheme all about? The application, if successful, will inter alia enable the company to tell the story of the heritage that we are trying so hard to preserve in a completely new way - and what a story it is!

## “A Living Linear Museum”

The two railways (FR & WHR) are essentially 'living linear museums' – a 40 mile corridor, of dramatic history. There is no need for elaborate museum dioramas with expensive moving automatons; the story unfolds as the train moves through its own unique dynamic corridor of history, heritage and spectacular scenery. The idea is to enhance and develop this concept so that passengers who wish it will receive not just a pleasant train ride but also an explanation of the fascinating history of the line as it passes by and an understanding of the features that are visible. It will make a pleasant journey even more memorable.

The concept will involve coordinated interpretation at sites along the railway, it will highlight the engineering challenges and how they were overcome, it will underline the importance of the slate industry to the region, and it will dramatise

the main features that can be seen from the train.

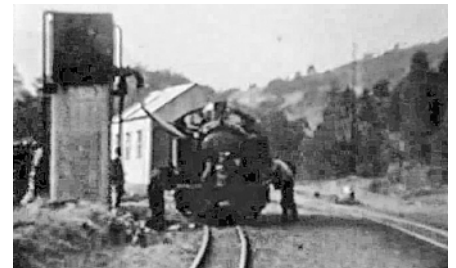
## “Education & Training”

The grant will pay for a dedicated heritage and training officer on a three year contract, whilst the FR Trust will fund the material that will be used by the volunteers.

It is envisaged that plenty of 'Heritage' leaflets will be available, supplemented by more 'in-depth' literature. Passengers may be able to travel in a special 'heritage' coach with a live commentary by an official guide. This more detailed aspect of the scheme will be worked up by the consultants as part of the Stage Two application.

Porthmadog's great gift to the world was steam-hauled, narrow-gauge railways. The international significance of this innovation has never been properly recognised nor its story told. The historical jigsaw that saw the development of the area's natural resources and its evolution into quarrying and mining; the transportation of the finished product to the wharfs and quays of Porthmadog and Caernarfon; the role of the sailing ships that plied their trade from the harbour; the fascination of William Madocks and his magnificent contribution of the Cob. Add to this the culture, scenic beauty and natural wildlife of the area, and binding all together – the railways.

The forerunner of them all was the Ffestiniog with its great pioneers, who in 1832 had the vision to see the benefits of the narrow gauge in winning the mineral wealth from the remote valleys of this beautiful area. This in turn gave birth to the articulated steam locomotive, a vehicle that could follow every twist and turn of the tortuous routes that gave access to those inaccessible valleys. So innovative was this concept that it attracted attention from across



*We couldn't think of a photograph that would adequately illustrate the adjacent 'Heritage Grant' article, so instead our readers may like to see two more recently unearthed 'new' old pictures. Both these images are at Beddgelert circa 1935*

the world and was ultimately exported to every continent. Close on the heels of the Ffestiniog came The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway, ultimately succeeded by the Welsh Highland – now rebuilt - together with a web of smaller lines.

What a marketing opportunity this is!

Yes, the journeys and the scenery currently offered by both the WHR and the FR attract tourists by their thousands, but add to this the opportunity to experience the living history of both lines, in specialist 'heritage' coaches with knowledgeable guides and a whole new market will open up. This concept must surely add an extra dimension to the railway's marketing portfolio.

And what a chance it would be to integrate the wonderful museum at Gelerts Farm into the scheme together with the heritage stock that operates there.

Let's hope the consultants get it right!

# Cwm Cloch Cutting



In the mid 1930's panoramic view of Beddgelert Station the line of rail can be traced to pass in front of Cwm Cloch Isaf farm before reaching the embankment at the start of the 232<sup>nd</sup> loop - still looking 'fresh' – and then disappearing into Cwm Cloch Cutting. Emerging from the cutting at a higher level, 40ft above, the line passes behind the farmhouse. (see photo above - A.W. Hutton)

The northern end of the cutting is four miles from Rhyd Ddu and extends for 120 yards on a falling gradient of 1 in 40. At its highest the cutting is 38 ft deep (Boyd estimates 45 ft). From the northern end of the cutting to a point approximately halfway between Beddgelert station and Bryn y Felin McAlpine estimated that 2280 cubic yards of 'cut' were required (at 4/- per

cubic yard) and 1000 cubic yards of rock cutting at 6/- per cubic yard. The latter would have been from the making of Cwm Cloch cutting with all excavated material used to create the 25 ft high horseshoe embankment and a level area for Beddgelert station buildings.

*Stuart McNair & John  
Keylock Relate the Saga of  
this Engineering  
Accomplishment from 1922 to  
2009*

Alternatively, McAlpine priced a tunnel – 'not exceeding 100 yards in length' – based on cutting through 1000 cubic yards of rock at 30/- per cubic yard.

It is interesting to note that in a report for the benefit of the investing (local) authorities dated 25th April 1923 Mr M.E. Nee expressed the hope that the Portmadoc to Snowdon section would be ready to open at Whitsintide; however "some difficult cuttings through rocks have had to be made..... and these are now nearly all completed". McAlpine was employing 429 men during this final push.

However the main purpose of the foregoing is to introduce what represents only the second known photograph (left) portraying McAlpine's 1922/23 construction activities. Taken by professional photographer Mr Williams of Paternoster Buildings in Caernarfon the detail is pin sharp; let it speak for itself.

*Lurking behind the 'boss men' in the close up (left) is a Simplex.. Does one gather that a Simplex known to have been used on the WHR contract is being restored?*







*Above : Looking south into the cutting with 'Moel Tryfan' approaching. Even by the mid 1930s this would appear to be a soggy environment. (R. Shephard)*

*Top right : 1952 - track lifted looking south (J.I.C. Boyd)*

*Below: Looking north in 1933 - (H Comber courtesy FR Archives)*



with working her way through the contents!

After closure in 1937 the cutting was left to stagnate; literally. The track bed from Cwm Cloch upper crossing into Beddgelert forest became a popular footpath, whilst the 'S' bend including both cutting and embankment were little frequented. An initial survey found that the drainage system, such as it was, had failed and a pond around a foot deep had developed the full length of the cutting. Rotting vegetation and dead animals ensured this became an uninviting cocktail. Among the debris there was a 1920's petrol pump - the ultimate destination of this is unknown. This latter object may have been in use at Cwm Cloch farm for it was quite usual for farms to have their own measured fuel supply.

Datrys Consulting of Caernarfon were engaged as consulting engineers to work up a scheme and do drawings for the reconstruction work. These were prepared after an initial survey had been completed. However contours on such surveys are computer generated and give little detail of the actual rock faces forming the cutting sides. Visual inspection showed that in places the jagged edges of the rock intruded considerably into the central corridor. Also there was evidence of rock falls, at these locations some bolting and or netting might be required. The Wrexham office of Arup duly reported that this would be the case. 'Colin Jones Rock Engineering of Porthmadog' was subsequently engaged to do this work.





*Above - looking north, 2009 - Stuart McNair*

*Below left, 'Keep your head in!' - 2009 - Alastair Stuart*



have been 'man made', almost certainly part of the scheme to provide water for the Goat Hotel's reservoir. There is some indication that this might have crossed over the line by an aqueduct as per the 'Goat Cutting'. In support of this theory it is interesting to note that the ancillary reservoir feeder, the source of which is within the horseshoe, would have been piped through the embankment by McAlpines. Prior to McAlpines' involvement water from the higher ground would have drained to this source naturally. With the creation of Cwm Cloch cutting much of this water would have gravitated into the cutting, as drainage obviously proved to be inadequate - perhaps the overhead 'aqueduct' was the solution. All drainage water at this location is now piped under the railway.

In order to ensure that the cutting drained properly new drainage channels were dug at the foot of the side walls as necessary. At the south end there was a stream flowing down the uphill cutting wall. On closer inspection this would appear to

Once the cutting had been cleared out and prior to laying ballast, the outline of the ends of WHR coaching stock was set out at one of the recognised tight spots. This only proved how difficult it would be to provide a suitable transitioned alignment

for the modern WHR loading gauge. This alignment work was done by the Construction Company office at Dinas. The biggest problem was that the shape and alignment of the cutting was anything but regular, possibly due to the nature of the rock being excavated. However the embankment beyond the cutting has similar geometrical problems giving rise to the assumption that the initial setting out in the twenties was not all that good. The thing to notice when travelling through the cutting is that the side closest to the train varies from side to side and in places is extremely close. Putting ones head out of the window is not recommended!

### **CORRECTION**

Thanks to the many eagle-eyed readers who spotted the 'deliberate' mistake in the last issue.

The locomotive in the 'new' old picture on page 16 was of course 'Snowdon Ranger' and not 'Moel Tryfan'

We shall refrain from publishing the name of the proof reader!



# Where was Ynysferlas?

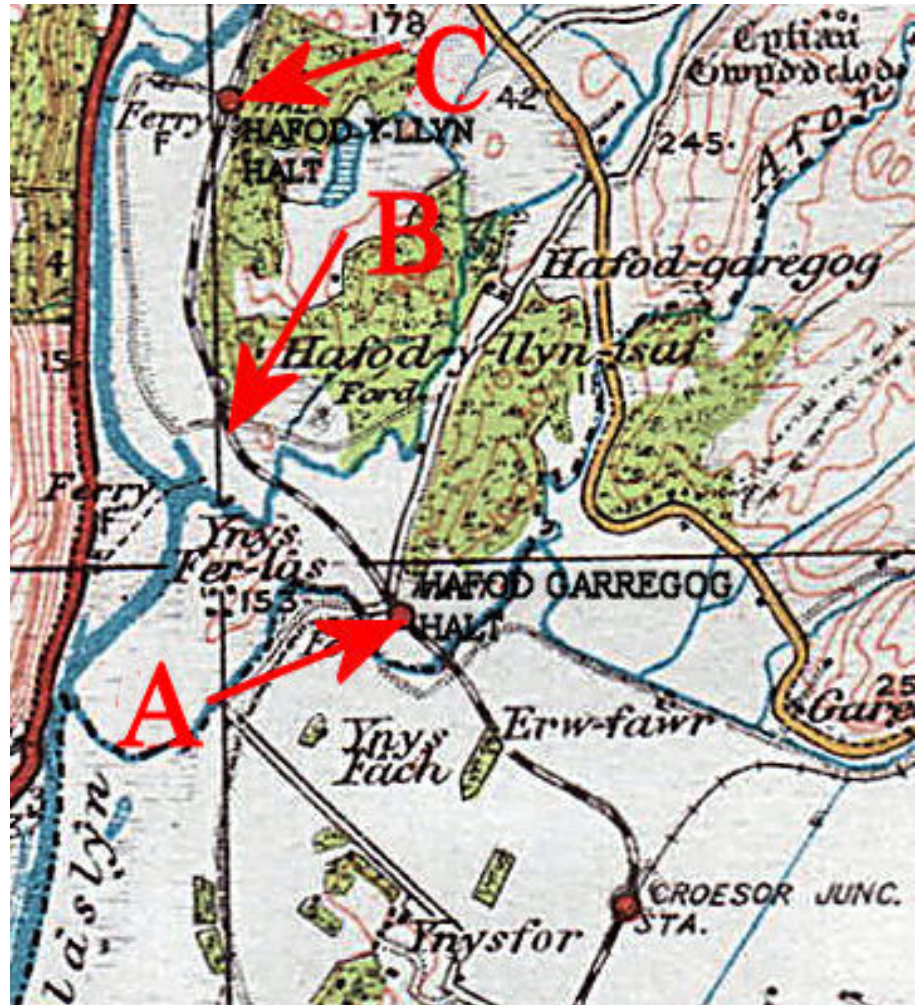
This short-lived entry in the Welsh Highland list of stopping places has proved a perennial enigma. Richard Maund has been sifting through the evidence. Unfortunately, that from primary sources is limited (and slightly confusing), with the result that that from secondary sources is positively misleading. Only a “considered” view of what happened can be arrived at.

Ynys Fer-lâs, as the Ordnance Survey has it, is a small wooded hillock and farmstead in the Glaslyn valley at grid ref 596436, between the Glaslyn, Dylif and Nanmor rivers, an island before the drainage of the Glaslyn estuary; the current occupier avers that the name derives from the Welsh for “green island”. Although currently reached by a farm-track alongside the relaid Welsh Highland, this route only became available after the Welsh Highland had been lifted during World War 2 - the farm-track was initially on the WHR trackbed, from which it had to be removed and reconstructed to one side of the reinstated line. No such access to Ynys Ferlas existed before the railway came and while it was operating: access then was by ford and bridge across the Dylif on the south-east side of the “island”, by private ferry across the Glaslyn, or by footbridge across the Nanmor and through the Hafod-y-Llyn river meadows. Nor did the present footpath right of way alongside the railway come into being until after the track had been lifted. Hafod Garregog – the form

## Richard Maund Sifts the Evidence

used by the original WHR – is a variant of Hafod Garegog, the version used by the National Trust, owners of the eponymous 420 acre estate. The Festiniog Railway Company has declared that, if a halt be re-opened here, it will be spelled Hafod Garegog (WHH 3 page 3) but for the original stopping place I will stick with the 1923 company’s double “r”.

So far as the railway is concerned, the popular perception – originating from the late James Boyd’s Narrow Gauge Railways in South Caernarvonshire – is that there were three small halts, “no more than two existing at one time”: Hafod-y-Llyn (7m 10ch), Hafod Garregog (7m 50ch) and Ynysferlas (8m 7ch). This speculation (for such it is, in the absence of definitive information) has been copied by others, or modified by altering the order of



the three stopping places.... Alas, previous references in WHH (3/3, 6/3, 12/3, 41/6) have not entirely helped. The mileages are from the start point of the 1923 “new” railway at South Snowdon/Rhyd Ddu and the locations are identified below as **C**, **B** and **A**, at grid refs 597448, 596440 and 601435, respectively.

So let us turn to what we can derive from definitive primary sources.

The McAlpine contract of 30th April 1922 carried no mention (neither in plans nor in specifications (XC2/33/47 or MT6/3007)) of any stopping place or siding between Nantmor and Croesor Junction, nor did the deposited plans for the Welsh Highland Railway (Light Railway) (Amendment Order 1922) dated June 1922 (MT54/616). The first mention comes in General Manager Septimus Edward Tyrwhitt’s draft timetable supplied on 10th May 1923 to the Ministry of Transport which includes request stops at Hafod-y-Llyn and Ynys Ferlas, followed by his letter of 28th May 1923 to the Ministry with a list of stations and halts including: Hafod-t-Llyn (sic) Halt 7m 10ch and Ynys Ferlas Halt 8m 7ch (both with “Siding 40 ft.”), while a

plan of the intermediate point locking arrangements (for the safe working of the single line) provided for Lt.-Col. Mount’s 1926 re-inspection includes both Hafod-y-Llyn and Hafod Garregog, with north facing sidings. (MT6/3286). From this, one concludes that the company had no alternative than location A for Ynys Ferlas in mind at the end of May 1923.

[References beginning MT are at The National Archives and those beginning XC2 are at Gwynedd Archives at Caernarfon].

Comparison with the engineers’ drawings puts Hafod-y-Llyn (**C**) and Ynys Ferlas (**A**) at the points where the by-roads maintained at public expense leading from the A4085 meet the railway (and there expire to become footpaths or private farm tracks). It has not proved possible (neither from county nor National Trust sources) to establish when the two sections of road were taken over by the local authority but in that they expire at locations which had no function other than to access the railway, and would otherwise have served only private interests, we must surely infer that the local authority loan financing (with a concomitant wish to help generate





*The rail posts that supported the nameboard still in situ at Hafod Garregog during reconstruction*

traffic!) for the new railway prompted the provision of public road access and of these stopping places on the railway.

Hafod-y-Llyn stopping place never moved from **C** (and was where the current-day Welsh Highland provided a temporary halt from 1st September 2009 until 26th May 2010). **B** was where the then access to Hafod-y-Llyn Isaf (now the Parrys' farm) crossed the line, having come circuitously from a level crossing at the Hafod-y-Llyn halt three sides round a square (closer to the river than the more direct current access which dates from after the lifting of the line); this access was not then (and is not now) a public road - although there is now a public footpath along it.

From the Beddgelert ticket register, held by the Group, we know that Beddgelert was selling tickets to Ynys Ferlas in June 1923 (but not thereafter) but to Hafod Garregog, instead, from week commencing 9th July 1923 (but not before) (WHH 12 page 3). Therefore, those two names were not co-terminous.

Thus far, there is no evidence of relocation of the stopping place – nothing to support the “third” location.

Unfortunately, Boyd provided no evidence to support his claim that Ynys Ferlas (at **A**) closed, nor does he explain why there remained no evidence of a replacement regular stopping place and siding at **B** – his Hafod Garregog which, he would have us believe, remained in use until the line's

closure. Incidentally, **B** is the spot illustrated in The Welsh Highland Railway – An Historical Guide – part two, page 20, with no evidence of any formal “halt”. Nor is it obvious why such a location would have been called “Hafod Garregog”, when Hafod-y-Llyn would have been entirely appropriate –

but for the fact that the locality was already served by its eponymous stopping place at **C**! Nor is it explained why **A** (rather than **B**) was the location where later Ordnance Survey maps (see above) showed a red blob for an open station or halt. And, of course, no such re-location was noted when the Ministry of Transport's inspector, Lt.-Col. Mount, re-examined the line in 1926. Nothing, in fact, to support the theory of any halt or other facility at **B**, nothing which discounts Ynys Ferlas and Hafod Garregog being one and the same, at **A**.

There is, however, one fly in this ointment. The North Wales Observer of Thursday 21st June 1923 page 8 carried this note: "Highland Railway (sic): The "halt" at Ynys Ferlas is being removed to the road at Hafodgarregog in response to a petition from the residents in that locality.", while the Cambrian News & Welsh Farmers Gazette the next day page 9 carried the slightly longer piece: "Highland Railway (sic): In deference to representations made by the inhabitants of the district the company has decided to move the halt at Ynys Ferlas to a point on the Hafodgarregog road, half a mile away." These may simply have been from the same correspondent, differently sub-edited.

What the reports clearly indicate is that a stopping place named Hafod Garregog would be on the Hafod Garegog road - which can only mean at **A**, the very opposite of Boyd's “narrative”. The confusion arises about where or what preceded Hafod Garregog. Here, we were a little over-hasty in drawing the conclusion in

WHH 41 page 6 that Ynys Ferlas was “somewhere else”, for Tyrwhitt's statement four days before the line opened had unequivocally put that halt and siding at **A** too. The press reports, therefore, seem simply to have misunderstood that the halt was being renamed (not moved), wrongly believing Ynys Ferlas, the halt, to have been at Ynys Ferlas, the island. Just possibly they may indicate that some other location had been in mind at an earlier stage, before work was undertaken by McAlpines: however, with no public road anywhere on this section of line other than **A** and **C**, nor any other public point of access to the line than **B**, such scenario is highly implausible.

The question may be asked: why rename? Vehicular access to Ynys Ferlas crossed the line and local belief (I have not endeavoured to verify this) has it that the site at **A** was on Ynys Ferlas land – which might seem as good a name as any other to describe a site in the middle of nowhere: “I could not observe any reason for having a stop there” said the late Roger Kidner of a visit in 1926 (WHH 4 page 7). And it's no different today – apart, possibly, from viewing the ospreys on the birders' webcam when the footpath south is (in effect) “not available” during the birds' breeding season from late March to early summer each year. The farm stead at Ynys Ferlas would have been roughly equidistant from **A** and **B**. Hafod Garregog, on the other hand, was a significant estate, of which people might have heard, to which there might be passengers, and which was at least in the general direction of the wider world, unlike the geographical dead-end that was Ynys Ferlas. Alas, while there are photographs aplenty of intrepid explorers alongside the nameboard supports at **A** after closure and lifting (e.g. WHH 41 page 6), there seems to be no photograph from the operational period of the WHR.

The weight of evidence, therefore, is that Ynys Ferlas and Hafod Garregog stopping places were both at 8m 7ch (location **A**), at the end of the Hafod Garegog public by-road, and that a simple renaming took effect with the new timetable on 9th July 1923. In other words, there were only two, not three, official stopping locations between Nantmor and Croesor Junction.

## TRYFAN JUNCTION - PLANS FOR THE YEAR

- Working parties will continue to be held on the first Saturday of every month.
- It is planned to complete the stone & brickwork by late summer, which will be done by professional volunteers.
- When the walls are up to original height a local builder will install the complete roof.
- The use of lime mortar is very much weather dependant; our two local volunteers would hope to work whenever the Welsh climate allows!
- Please contact Lewis Esposito to add your name to the Tryfan Junction volunteers list. - Phone : 01286 650681.



# Single Line Working over the NWNCR & WHR

## Part 2. Welsh Highland Railway.

On 31st July 1922, the old NWNCR section of the new Welsh Highland Railway (Light Railway) re-opened to passenger traffic. In his report, dated 25th July 1922, Col. J. W. Pringle recorded that it was proposed to work the line in two sections, Dinas to Tryfan Jct with the original Wise's Staff and Ticket and Tryfan Jct to South Snowdon 'One Engine in Steam with staff'. No mention is made of the type of staff envisaged or of tickets, so it is assumed that a new staff, possibly of wood, may have been contemplated or perhaps more likely, the Snowdon Ranger to Rhyd Ddu Annett's Key, suitably re-inscribed, which is known from photographs to have been still been in use during the summer of 1922; it is quite possible that this perpetuated an arrangement that had been in use since the withdrawal of the NWNCR passenger service at the end of 1916. All sidings on the line, including the Bryngwyn branch, with hand worked points and weighted levers, were to be chained and padlocked by the key on the staff; existing ground frames and rodding would no longer be used. Provision was also to be made as soon as possible for all padlocks to be operated by one and the same key, instead of a number as used previously. Although Tryfan Jct. was a staff exchange point, photographs suggest that the loop was not used initially (and indeed probably did not come into use until 1924), access to the Bryngwyn branch being made via the crossover with the points controlled by a key on the Dinas - Tryfan Jct. staff.

On June 1st 1923, the new section of line through to Portmadoc Old (Harbour Station) was opened, the proposed working of which was reported by Lt. Col. A. H. L. Mount on 29th May. Two sections were proposed, South Snowdon to Beddgelert and Beddgelert to Portmadoc New, using the Staff & Ticket system. Another staff post was contemplated at Portruddyn, where the old Croesor Tramway loop had been reconditioned and left in situ, but for the time being Mount required the loop points to be spiked for the single line. He led himself to understand that passenger working over the section from Portmadoc New to Old (the Junction Railway) was not proposed, but this may simply have been a misunderstanding that the section was to be worked not by the WHR, but by the FR (1); nevertheless, Mount deemed a staff and tickets necessary for goods traffic. (It has since been ascertained that passenger traffic did begin on this date, not a week later as has been

suggested in the past (2)). All points were to be hand operated, padlocked with the key on the staff, which also locked the staff boxes, (although the boxes for the Junction Railway were not provided until 1927 - q.v.).

### *More History from Derek Lystor*

A comprehensive set of Working Instructions were introduced in May 1923 giving full details of the staff sections. Somewhat confusingly, Part I states that "The Railway is divided into Six Staff Sections":- Dinas to Tryfan Junction, Tryfan Junction to Waenfawr, Waenfawr to South Snowdon, South Snowdon to Beddgelert and Beddgelert to Portmadoc New - a total of only five. The last section, Portmadoc New to Portmadoc Old was covered in a separate appendix, also dated May 1923, but this was not made clear in the main document. The new line from South Snowdon to Portmadoc Old was worked on the Staff & Ticket system, each section having a dedicated wooden staff and associated card tickets (for both up and down trains) coloured as follows:- South Snowdon to Beddgelert - Red, Beddgelert to Portmadoc New - Green and Portmadoc New to Old - Blue. However it is clear from surviving Staff tickets that the colours for both South Snowdon to Beddgelert and Beddgelert to Portmadoc were switched, perhaps as a last minute decision by Tyrwhitt before the line opened. A Beddgelert to Portmadoc ticket bearing his name on the reverse clearly states the colour of the Staff as Red with the ticket itself being pink! It is interesting to also note that this particular ticket refers simply to Portmadoc, with no reference to "New".

Working the Staff and Ticket system was very similar to that described for Wise's Patent Staff & Ticket, outlined in previous Journals (3), the main difference of course being that the tickets were not an integral part of the staff. When a train was ready to leave a station and no second train was to follow before the staff was required for a train in the opposite direction, the staff itself was issued to the driver. However, if successive trains were intended to follow before the staff could be returned, authority to enter the section was covered by the issue of a ticket. Entering the section thus was only permitted if the



driver had first been shown the relevant staff at the entering end of the section, and had been issued the ticket signed by the Station Master or person in charge. The last train had to be in possession of the staff itself, and no other train was permitted to follow until the staff had been returned. On arrival at the end of a particular section the driver had to immediately hand the staff or ticket to the station Master or person in charge who then cancelled the ticket. Both staffs and tickets were deposited in staff boxes at each station, accessed by a key on the staff, and only one ticket could be removed at a time. These boxes were found in the Telephone Room at unmanned stations which was locked and unlocked by the guard. At all other locations, both staff and tickets were the responsibility of the Station Master. The appendix covering the Junction Railway additionally added that points on the main line were locked by the key attached to the staff, and trains desiring to use the sidings had to be in the possession of the staff - not a ticket, for obvious reasons!

The padlocks and keys of the section points at all stations on the new section of railway were to standard pattern. At stations (Beddgelert principally but not exclusively) where trains met and the locos (and usually



coaches) returned to their point of origin (despite appearing to be advertised as running through), the loco of the first train to arrive would run round its train immediately – not to do so until the arrival of the second train would not preclude both trains then doing so, but it would certainly have made the task more convoluted and time consuming. The implication of this was that any train approaching a crossing station had to assume that the line was only clear as far as a loco's length short of the section points, as it might find a loco running round. Not only was there no signal or warning board (in one direction) / limit of shunt board (in the other) provided, but the situation does not seem to have been reflected in the Working Instructions. Did Mount and Tyrwhitt – who drew up the initial instructions – recognize the risk, and, if so, why was there no "suitable form of words" for the guidance of drivers?

The remainder of the line from Dinas to South Snowdon continued to be controlled as it had in NWNCR days, with the sections Dinas to Tryfan Jct., Tryfan Jct. to Waenfawr and Waenfawr to South Snowdon using the existing Wises Staff and tickets. Section 14 of the Working Instructions stated that the Bryngwyn goods must be in possession of the Dinas to Tryfan Jct. staff itself, the key attached required to open and lock the branch points. The section gave clear instruction as to how the branch was to be worked. On arrival at Tryfan Jct. the guard took the staff from the driver and with the attached key unlocked the points. The train was called over, the points relocked and the staff deposited in the Telephone Room. These actions were then reported to Dinas and the train then allowed to continue to Bryngwyn. Down trains from Bryngwyn had to stop 50 yards from the branch points and the guard had to report its arrival to Dinas. If the staff was in the Telephone Room the guard unlocked the points, called the train forward, re-set and locked the points and took the train onto Dinas. If the staff wasn't there, the goods had to wait until its arrival from Dinas on the next up train. As the goods train travelled with no staff to and from Bryngwyn it must be assumed that all branch points both at Bryngwyn and Rhostryfan were unlocked.

Expenditure paid to the FR for train staffs for the year ending 31 December 1923 amounted to £9.18.4, although the number of staffs is not stated (4).

By March 1924 it was found that the Beddgelert to Portmadoc New Section was too long, so it was divided at Croesor Jct. The two new sections were each controlled by staff and ticket; Beddgelert to Croesor Jct. coloured red and Croesor Jct. to Portmadoc New, blue. This necessitated the

provision of at least one new staff – a subject that has caused much discussion amongst Heritage members in the past! The FR are reputed to have supplied two iron crucifix staffs to replace the single wooden Beddgelert to Portmadoc New one which, by necessity was then redundant. However, all available evidence suggests that these did not come into use until the FR lease period. WHR accounts for 1924 list an amount of £2.14.5 for a single staff and two staff boxes (5), so it would seem more likely that this new staff supplemented the existing Beddgelert – Portmadoc New staff which was simply renamed Beddgelert – Croesor Jct. A memo from John May to H.D. Jones at Beddgelert dated 31st May 1924 (6) concerns the Beddgelert to Croesor Jct. section the staff of which "will be left on the box in the hut at Croesor Jct by me today, so as to be ready for the 6.50a.m. Special on Monday". Additionally Mount's report in October 1926 specifically states that the coal siding point at Beddgelert was unlocked by the key on the Beddgelert to Croesor Jct. staff, and a Plummer photo' taken in 1928 clearly shows a wooden staff being used. It seems certain that Pringle's recommendations concerning identical point keys was adopted and that the staff shown in the photo' was indeed the Beddgelert to Croesor Junction staff.

Although initially the regulations required all loop points normally to be kept locked in the position which facilitated entry into the left hand road of each loop, the process of relocking these points after leaving each loop, while the train necessarily waited, clearly became tedious, and (perhaps during the very restricted services of winter 1924/25) all the loop points were changed to unlocked weighted working which allowed trains to pass through each loop without having to physically work any

point levers or locks; sidings continued to be locked. A memo dated 18th June 1925 from Robert Evans reads "the points at the loops at Portmadoc (New) Station, Beddgelert, South Snowdon, Waenfawr and Tryfan Junction have now been converted from throw-over to hold-up levers, and the locks have been taken off" (7). Note that Croesor Junction does not feature in the list – does this imply an oversight by Evans or that points there continued to be locked to prevent any unprotected (by train staff) incursion from the Croesor tramway? The loops at South Snowdon and Beddgelert were to remain in use throughout the lifetime of the completed WHR, both for crossing and for turning back trains.

Assuming that the FR provided all the wooden staffs, the description given in Boyd's FR Volume II may be of some interest (8). They were some 15 inches long and 2 inches in diameter and had a brass cap at each end on one of which there was a short chain to which the key, used to unlock points (other than loop points) and staff boxes was attached. On the side of the staff there was a brass plate with the names of the stations on that particular section. Each staff was painted a distinct colour, as described earlier.

The working arrangements were reissued by Col.H.F.Stephens from 1st October 1925 (9) reflecting the situation from May 1924, and carried on through to 1927 when further alterations took place. New instructions were issued in that year for working the Dinas to South Snowdon section (10). Unfortunately the document is incomplete, but it does tell us that Wise's equipment was retained for the Dinas to Tryfan Jct. section, having the Bryngwyn branch key attached, but the other staffs were replaced by a single wooden staff coloured blue for the Tryfan Jct. to South





Snowdon section. The loop at Tryfan Jct. had only been used for scheduled crossings of passenger trains between March 1924 and September 1925, and that at Waenfawr between June 1923 and July 1925. It is possible that re-use was made of the original Beddgelert to Portmadoc New staff, withdrawn in 1924, unless of course this had already been reused as discussed earlier, in which case a new staff would have been necessary. On 5th April 1927, Col.H.F.Stephens wrote to the Board of Trade informing them that new boxes for staff and tickets, supplied by Messrs Tyer & Co, were soon to be installed and put into operation on the Portmadoc New – Old section. (11). Mount, in his 1926 inspection, had noted that these had never been provided as required in his 1923 report!

With the closure of the Cambrian Crossing to passenger traffic after the summer service ceased from 1st October 1928, (12) the railway effectively became a one engine in steam line south of Tryfan Jct. It wouldn't have taken the men working the line long to realise that changing staffs at South Snowdon, Beddgelert, and Croesor Jct. was totally unnecessary and it would have quickly become apparent that using the new Tryfan Jct. to South Snowdon staff for the whole line was a simple solution. However, the existing wooden Croesor Jct – Portmadoc New staff must have remained in use until at least the end of 1930 as it would have been required by goods trains working Croesor slate traffic until the closure of the quarries in December. Thus it would seem reasonable to assume that the use of the Portmadoc New to Croesor Jct. and the Croesor Jct. to Beddgelert staffs and associated tickets was discontinued at this time, being replaced by the Tryfan Jct – South Snowdon staff suitably renamed. No associated tickets were needed as the advertised train service did not require them. The loop at Croesor

Junction was used for crossing passenger trains between July 1924 and September 1928. In the summer of 1925 Ken Nunn photographed 'Moel Tryfan' having arrived light from Beddgelert and 'Princess' with a single coach from Portmadoc. Engines were exchanged and 'Moel Tryfan' took the coach north rather than return to 'Port' light. 'Princess' may well have returned with some slate traffic from the Croesor quarry.

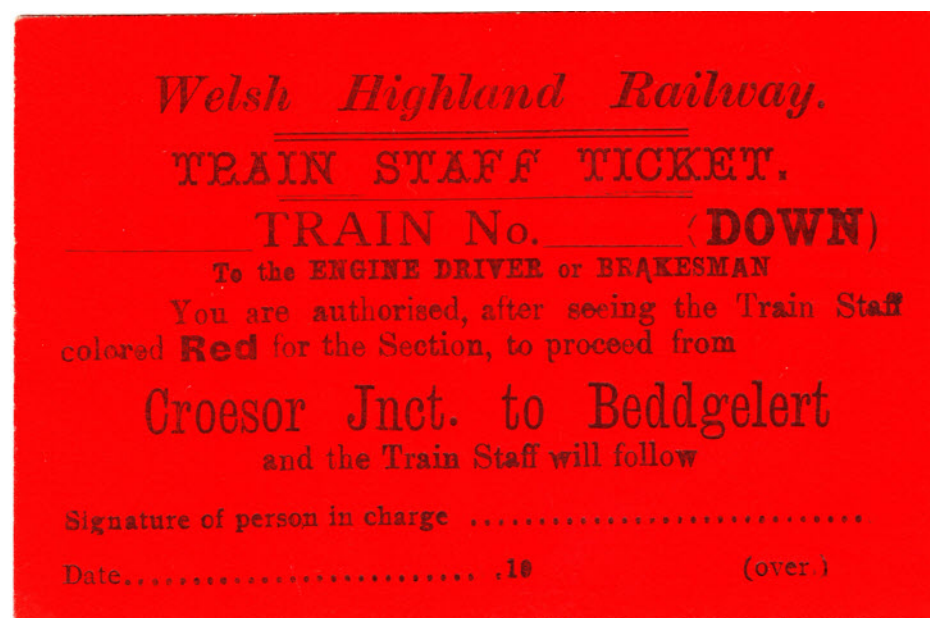
Under the FR lease, from 9th July 1934 train services were greatly improved and the Cambrian Crossing was re-opened, thus requiring the re-introduction of staff and ticket working over the South Snowdon to Portmadoc New section. Staff boxes at South Snowdon, Beddgelert (2) and Portmadoc New were brought back into use, and two iron crucifix staffs, each incorporating a shaped end acting as a key to unlock staff boxes and points, were provided by Boston Lodge for the sections South Snowdon – Beddgelert, and Beddgelert – Portmadoc New, suggesting that the two wooden staffs controlling the Portmadoc to Beddgelert sections were

subsequently lost after their use was discontinued. The South Snowdon to Beddgelert crucifix is now on display at the NGR Museum at Tywyn and the photograph reproduced here is by kind courtesy of Don Newing and Chris White. With no evidence to the contrary, it is assumed that the Portmadoc New – Old section retained its original staff as supplied in 1923, still needed for its facility to lock/unlock intermediate siding points, such as Snowdon Mill, although there had been no apparent need for crossing of trains at New since October 1928. The lease period timetables generally avoided the need for ticket working, the only regular requirement being between South Snowdon and Beddgelert in 1936. Given the resources at the Portmadoc end, duplicate trains could have been operated as required over the Beddgelert – Portmadoc New section using ticket working, but it is unlikely that they were used on the junction line. Any goods workings on this section would probably have been run in the hours before WHR passenger services began.

My special thanks to both Richard Maund and David Woodcock for their invaluable help in compiling this account.

### References.

1. WHHG Journal 47, page 11.
2. WHHG Journal 47, page 10.
3. WHHG Journal 44, page 6; Journal 45, page 10.
4. Welsh Highland Accounts 1923. WHHG Archives.
5. Welsh Highland Accounts 1924. WHHG Archives.
6. WHHG Archives.
7. WHHG Archives.
8. J.I.C.Boyd; Festiniog Railway Vol II pages 391 & 395.
9. National Archives [TNA] RAIL 1057/2846/7
10. WHHG Archives,
11. TNA MT6/3286.
12. R.Maund; Chronicles of Croesor





# Dismantling of the WHR

It was of course George Cohen and Sons who eventually dismantled the WHR but from October 1937 – only a few months after the railway finally closed – a procession of interested parties were snapping at the heels of D. G. Jones the railway's Receiver and Caernarvonshire County Council solicitor.

First into the fray appears to have been T.W. Ward, the well-known machinery and scrap metal merchants of Sheffield whose magnificent offices this writer visited on many occasions in the late 1960s. The lack of urgency to get dismantling started was brought rapidly to an end with the imminence of WWII and the need for scrap metal to fuel the war effort.

In June 1939 Fred Watkins, manufacturers and engineering contractors of Coleford in the Forest of Dean expressed their interest to D.G. Jones. The same month Mr Boyd-Carpenter was installed at the Manchester end of the Ministry of Supply and was also in contact with D.G. Jones. A case perhaps of officialdom getting in on the act.

In February 1940 Cohens contacted D.G. Jones and offered to pay for the WHR

assets before any dismantling started if a price could be agreed. At this stage a Mr Madoc-Jones who lived on the outskirts of Denbigh and may be described as a sub-agent of Cohens – visited Mr Jones personally to discuss valuation. (25 years on and Mr Madoc-Jones was one of your writer's North Wales customers.!) Other companies expressing an interest in the dismantling contract were North Wales Demolition of Rhyl, Maden and McKee, scrap metal merchants from Liverpool and R. White and Sons of Widnes. The latter company had been the main sub contractor on the building of the Snowdon Mountain Railway and provider of the aerial ropeway in Cwm Bychan for the Nantmor Copper Mining enterprise. Last on the list of interested parties was comparatively local and smaller merchant W.O. Williams of Harlech – 'Will Scrap'.



*A rather fuzzy photograph of the demolition train near Waunfawr. This was the first train to complete the inspection run over the whole line prior to demolition starting.*

*Photo : Arthur Rimmer 13th August 1941*

Although unsuccessful at this stage he subsequently benefitted from 'the crumbs of the rich man's table' – the lifting of the Croesor Tramway section of the WHR. Most of the foregoing is gleaned from a file at Gwynedd Archives brought to your writer's attention by having requested the wrong file reference number!

## WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY NEW PASSENGER LINE OPENED ASSISTING DEVELOPMENT OF SNOWDONIA

The Welsh Highland Railway, a line of twenty-two miles between Portmadoc and Dinas Junction, through Snowdonia, was opened for passenger traffic yesterday.

The first passenger trains, consisting of a tank engine, two coaches and a brake van, left Portmadoc at the scheduled time of 8-10am, and its departure was witnessed by a big crowd who cheered heartily as it pulled out, whilst the engines of the adjoining Festiniog Railway and Great Western Railway whistled a "send off" which the Highland train engine, "Princess", acknowledged.

There were numerous passengers from Portmadoc, the first to book being an angler, Mr George Brown, Portmadoc, bound for the first stopping place, Pont Croesor, a famous rendezvous of anglers on the River Glaslyn.

The train next passed through a tunnel, 300 yards long, in the famous Aberglaslyn Pass, and shortly afterwards entered Beddgelert, the capital of Snowdonia, where a crowd gave the train a great reception.

The first trains out of Dinas at 9-50am, bound for Portmadoc, and appropriately drawn by the engine "Prince" met the train drawn by the "Princess", from Portmadoc, at Waenfawr, the Carnarvonshire site of the well-known Marconi long-range wireless station. The Portmadoc bound train was boarded by several tourists and anglers at Beddgelert. Both the "up" and "down" trains kept well to scheduled time, the whole arrangements working smoothly and without hitch.

### Assistance to industry

The railway is expected to assist incalculably in developing the district agriculturally and in the reopening of the numerous copper and zinc mines and slate quarries closed down all over Snowdonia owing to transport difficulties. The line has a physical connection at Portmadoc with the famous Festiniog "toy" railway, the pioneer of narrow gauge railways of the world, thereby bringing the total length of the mountain railway to thirty-five miles. At Dinas the line connects with the London Midland and Scottish Railway and at Portmadoc with the Great Western Railway, whilst the Festiniog Railway connects with both these railways at its terminus, Blaenau Festiniog.

The total authorised share capital of the Highland Railway Company (*sic*) is £120,000. Loan advances have been made to them of £29,000 by local authorities, and a like sum by The Government. The construction contract was let to Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons at £60,000. The extension of the railway from Dinas to Carnarvon is now contemplated.

**Liverpool Daily Post & Mercury Saturday 2nd June 1923 page 11**

*Research - Richard Maund*



# Gorseddau & Portmadoc Junction Railways Company

The thoughtfulness of a member has recently brought me a copy of a share issue prospectus – ‘for private circulation only’ – soliciting subscriptions for 200 shares of £10 each in this new venture.

The Company was incorporated by a ‘special’ Act of Parliament in 1872 having purchased the 3 ft gauge Gorseddau Tramway ‘on very advantageous terms’. The intention was to convert to 2 ft gauge and initially abandon the section from Braich-y-bib to Gorseddau Quarry, while building an ‘extension line’ from Braich-y-Bib up the western side of Cwm Pennant to serve the Cwm Dwyfor mine and the Prince of Wales quarry. ‘Railway accommodation is much needed in this district of North Wales – upon the narrow gauge principle, inaugurated and carried out by the FR Coy with such marked success’.

By 1874 construction was underway and the prospectus is an epitome of Victorian optimism and exaggeration. ‘The district traversed by the railways abounds in slate and mineral deposits, the whole of the traffic from which most naturally came upon these lines. Overtures have already been received from quarry owners near the route for the transit of their produce down, and supplies from the port upwards. In addition to such undoubted advantages the mills and agricultural necessities of the district will contribute largely to the receipts of the company’.



*Elevated trackbed giving access to the Ynys Pandry Slate Mill on the Gorseddau. May 1989 - D. Allan*

Construction of the line would involve ‘mere surface works’ and therefore be singularly inexpensive at probably no more than £1500 per mile. The FR presents a striking example of commercial success and pays its shareholders about 12 ½ % upon a capital of £86,000. Traffic was estimated at a quarter of the FR i.e. £9 per mile per week giving a net receipt of £2,830 per annum and thus a return on share capital of over 12%. Under the Act (of 1872) traffic arrangements were sanctioned with the Cambrian and Croesor & Portmadoc Railway Companies whose lines intersect at Portmadoc. The Gorseddau already crossed the Cambrian on the level at ‘Huddarts Crossing’ adjacent to and parallel

with Y Cyt – and formed a junction with the Croesor near the Flour mill to give it access to the slate wharves,

In italics for emphasis the prospectus eventually concludes; ‘The exceedingly small amount of capital necessary for the completion of these lines, the low percentages of working expenses and the huge amount of traffic of all descriptions which they must undoubtedly appropriate – leave no room for question as to the profit on the working being probably greater than upon any railway yet constructed in the United Kingdom’!

## What happened to those poles for the PB&SSR?

**E**dward Naish from Cwm Pennant recalls a fascinating story that his father related to him a few years ago that may shed new light on the fate of the catenary columns that were destined for the proposed electrification of the PB&SSR

Edward writes – “In the early 1930's my father was attending the Royal Naval College, Greenwich where some of the instructors were civilians. During a conversation he explained to one of the instructors that he was newly married and was renting a property near Pont Croseor called Tyn Llwyd Bach and hence he was familiar with the WHR. The instructor said that he used to work for Bruce Peebles, who was the contractor responsible for constructing the abortive works of the PB&SSR, and that he had been involved in the electrification work

on the project in the early years of the century. He explained that when the scheme collapsed, the catenary support columns were sold to Holyhead Urban District Council who used them as street lamp standards. I recall my father also saying that they were used at the end of the A5 (London Road?) and that they had a quite distinctive shape; as the family home was in Four Mile Bridge in Anglesey my father was familiar with the street lamps in Holyhead. The instructor also said that Bruce Peebles had set up a section of test track, complete with catenaries, during the time of development, presumably at their works”.

*Does anyone have any postcards of this area of Holyhead in the twenties and thirties which just might show these columns?*

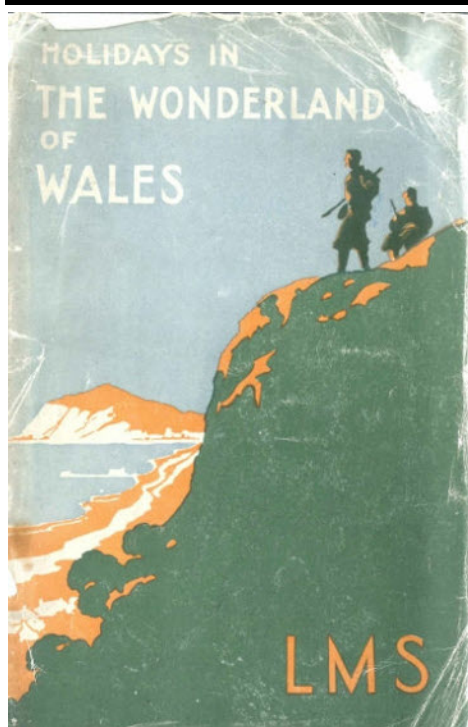
## The Kindly Engine

The Welsh Highland Railway has exasperated many, but it shall not disappear without one kind word. It was a bitterly cold January morning in Beddgelert, with a solitary lady passenger going to Dinas. The carriages were not warmed, and it was only common prudence to pay the extra coppers for travelling first-class in the hope that some warmth might come from the upholstery. Just before the train started she opened her suitcase and produced a hot water bottle, walked to the engine driver and blandly asked him to fill it for her, as if it were part of his daily functions. He dived underneath the engine, tuned a tap, handed back the rubber bottle filled with really hot water, and asked her to give it to him to refill when it became cold. She travelled in comfort. Now which of you real railways would do that!

**The Guardian 25th March 1927**  
*Research - Peter Johnson*



# What the Guide Books Say



*From "Holiday Wonderland in Wales" by W.T Palmer F.R.G.S. The London Midland and Scottish Railway, 1930.*

Head Pass is also convenient for a southern approach to Snowdon, then the line loops steeply down to Beddgelert. This village of 1,200 inhabitants stands at the junction of three vales (Colwyn, Gwynant and Glaslyn), and is therefore in the heart of the mountains. There is good hotel and private accommodation. There is fine fishing for salmon and trout in rivers and llyns.

The legend of Gelert's Grave in the churchyard is no longer accepted despite the Hon. W. Spencer's sentimental lines. The church is a fragment of the priory which of old was a halting place on the great Pilgrim's Route across Wales to Bardsey. The Pass of Aberglaslyn, 1½ miles, partly across fields, is the favourite short walk; it can be made into a round of 9 miles by following the old Ffestiniog road from the bridge to Bwlch Gwernog, then turning left up the Nant-y-Mor lane. This rises to a pass (512 feet) with a magnificent view of the cwms and ridges of Snowdon, and descends to the Gwynant road north of Llyn Ddinas, 3 miles from Beddgelert.

Beyond Beddgelert the Welsh Highland Railway crosses the river and tunnels into the rocks at the north end of the famous Aberglaslyn defile. The nearest station to the bridge is on the old Ffestiniog road about a mile to the east. From this halt the track is carried along the reclaimed flat of Traeth Mawr to Portmadoc where it connects with the older Ffestiniog railway.

**T**he Welsh Highland Railway from Dinas Junction (south of Caernarvon) by way of Beddgelert to Portmadoc gives access to some almost unknown nooks of Wales. The narrow-gauge line, built primarily for the slate industry but adapted to passenger service, climbs the valley of the Gwyfrai to Bettws Garmon (another resort of artists with its Mill, etc.), and to Quellyn Lake station, a pretty llyn with the shaggy and steep Craig Cwm mirrored in its waters.

At Rhyd-ddu or South Snowdon there is a good route to the peak, but the station is also a starting point for rambles over Mynydd Mawr, 2,290 feet, Y Garn, 2,084 feet, Trum-y-Ddysgl, 2,392 feet, and other peaks to the south; for the Llyns, y Gader, Bwlch-y-mock, Dywarchen, etc.; and for passes to Nantlle and over to the Dwyfor and Criccieth (the latter a long march away). A railway halt at the Pitt's

The 1931 edition of 'Holidays by L.M.S.' recommends 'Holidays in the Wonderland of Wales' as further reading. Although the former makes mention of the WHR it is not suggested as a means of travel. In it are two advertisements for accommodation in Nantmor, one of these is for Mrs E. Owen, mother of member Ellen Jones – 'apartments or board' – and the nearest station for access is quoted as 'Portmadoc – 6 miles'. The entry for Beddgelert quotes 'The WHR runs through the beautiful district of Snowdon. Beddgelert is one of the most romantic villages in North Wales, built at the confluence of the rivers Glaslyn and Colwyn at the head of the famous pass of Aberglaslyn'. Inevitably there follows mention of the legend of Gelert. The article is accompanied by photographs of Llyn Quellyn and northern end of the Aberglaslyn Pass.

Thanks to the generosity of member Mike Hodges a copy of the 1938 (?) official guide to 'Conway (& Deganwy & Llandudno Junction) has come our way. It is interesting to read that even after the demise of the WHR the Five Valleys Tour is still being promoted. 'By the LMS to Blaenau Ffestiniog and then by the Festiniog narrow gauge railway through Maentwrog Valley to Portmadoc; thence, in conjunction with Crosville Motor Services, to Aberglaslyn, Beddgelert and Caernarvon. This tour covers some of the most interesting and beautiful mountain scenery in Snowdonia'.

## SALEM CHAPEL B&B



**Gill & Lewis Esposito welcome you to their new B&B in Betws Garmon.**

**Superb views of the W.H.R.**

**Two acre private nature reserve on the Afon Gwyrfai offering great photographic opportunities for wildlife and rail enthusiasts. Active otter, heron, dipper and kingfisher populations and occasional water voles.**

**Large comfortable en-suite twin/double rooms from £28.00 - £38.00 p.p.n**

**A non-smoking establishment.**

**Tel: 01286 650397**

## North Wales Observer

Thursday 21st June 1923 page 5  
Portmadoc Urban Council: *report of meeting held Tuesday 19 June - in part:*

It was decided to urge the Welsh Highland Railway Co. the advisability of having a direction sign to their new station in High Street, and that permission be given to fix sign plates on the lamp bracket at the corner of High Street and Chapel Street