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## BRYNGWYN BRANCH - FOOTPATH OPENS

**O**n Saturday the 21st May a party of about fifty local people and railway enthusiasts gathered in Rhostryfan School for the official opening of the Bryngwyn Branch Footpath by AM Alun Ffred Jones. First, local councillor and WH Society director Elwyn Jones, thanked the many people that had helped to bring the scheme to fruition. Then Alun Ffred Jones cut a ribbon with a flourish and the party set off on a most delightful twenty minute walk to Tryfan Junction.

You were left in no doubt that this had been a railway. The remains of random stone walls bordering the old trackbed were very evocative as was the high bridge over the river and the adjacent bridge that carries the road over the branch. The surface of rolled and flattened slate waste made the going very easy. One minute you were walking between open fields with expansive views and the next in the sylvan setting of a wooded area listening awhile to bird song and the gurgling of streams that passed under the path by means of original culverts.

The platform at Tryfan Junction was crammed as the group awaited the arrival of the 11.35am from Porthmadog to take them on to Dinas where a Real Ale festival was in full swing!

There now can be no excuse for not completing the reconstruction of Tryfan Junction station building, not only will it be a starting point for a delightful walk but it will also provide shelter from the occasional Welsh shower that might just interrupt proceedings as well as displaying information about the branch itself. (See page 5 for a progress report on the Tryfan Junction project).

Work still needs to be done at Rhostryfan. However Llanwnda Community Council, who were responsible for organising the creation of the footpath, have received another grant that will enable them to add a picnic area to the old station site at Rhostryfan and to complete the footpath between the station site and the



village high street, revealing a unique and delightful NWNG-style footbridge in the process.

It is now almost 100 years since the Bryngwyn branch saw rail-borne travellers, perhaps the coming years will see many more on foot.

*Top - Walkers approach Tryfan Junction whilst the line of the branch behind them is defined by the trees.*

*Centre - A.M. Alun Ffred Jones cuts the ribbon!*

*Lower - Examining the information panel at Tryfan Junction*

*Left - Elwyn Jones strides out under the NWNG-style road bridge*

*Photos - David Allan May 2011*



# Five Valleys Circular Tour - Revisited

**A**mongst my collection of FR and WHR memorabilia I have several timetables and handbills extolling the virtues of a circular tour by rail through the mountains of Snowdonia. 'Zig-zagging through glorious Welsh mountain and lake scenery - "magnificent views unobtainable by any other means - enchanting and unrivalled scenery throughout - see the beauties of Wales in safety and comfort wet or fine".

During Colonel Stephens reign from 1925 to 1931 was added:-

*'Travel across country away from the dusty and crowded roads, seeing beautiful scenery not visible from the highways on home-made steel, instead of on imported rubber, by home-produced coal instead of by imported oil, and SUPPORT THE LOCAL LINES*

The circular tour from stations on the North Wales coast could be made in a clockwise direction via Blaenau Ffestiniog, or anti-clockwise via Dinas Junction, and certainly in the lease period, 1934/6, the fare charged as a supplement to an LMS weekly Holiday Runabout ticket was a modest 3/1d over the FR/WHR.

## *Michael Davies records his impressions of a new 'old' narrow gauge adventure*

The last day this tour was a practicality was Friday September 25<sup>th</sup> 1936 (there was a train on 26/9/36 but the LMS connections were unsuitable) and for the next sixty five years any thought of a repeat was definitely in the realms of fantasy.

I failed to see either line in action, my nearest sighting being on a charabanc tour through Snowdonia in September 1940, and it was June 1947 before I reached Pont Croesor, just in time to see the track before lifting. On the FR I walked from Blaenau to Tan -y-Bwlch in August 1948

and thus my love for the Welsh narrow gauge was born.

With the publication of the FR and WHR timetables for the 2011 season it became apparent that the Five Valleys Circular Tour was once more a practicality, apart from the sad loss of the railway between Caernarfon and Bangor, and so my dream of 65 years was about to become a reality.

The first day an FR train connected with a WHR train in Porthmadog was Sunday March 27<sup>th</sup>, but as Sunday trains do not run on the Conwy Valley line until May my first opportunity

was Monday March 28<sup>th</sup>, almost 75 years since that last run in 1936.

The day dawned dark and misty in Cheshire but as I crossed the Welsh border the sun broke through and it was then a most perfect spring day of continuous sunshine and wonderful visibility.

The Conwy Valley train was a single DMU carrying about 35 passengers, a far cry from its 1936 predecessor of LNWR Coal Tank and four bogies, but the views through the Conwy and Lledr valleys were just as magnificent as those promised on the 1930s handbills. Interestingly the departure time of 10.34am from Llandudno Junction was only 20 minutes later than that of 1936, and Blaenau Ffestiniog was reached at 11.34am, just 5 minutes later.

Our FR train was worked by the Double Fairlie 'Merddin Emrys' which could well have been the same loco as in 1936 and this train reached Porthmadog at 1pm as it did then, taking five minutes longer for the journey.

My 1931 'Grand Five Valleys Circular Tour' handbill was prepared in Colonel Stephen's Tonbridge office by my friend

### Welsh Highland and Festiniog Railways

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MAGNIFICENT VIEWS UNOBTAINABLE BY ANY OTHER MEANS  
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## **FIVE VALLEYS CIRCULAR TOUR**

Embracing the Valleys of Conway, Lledr, Maentwrog, Glaslyn and Gwyrfa  
Beautiful Bettws-y-Coed, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Picturesque Port Madoc, The Pass of Aberglaslyn, The Alpine Village of Beddgelert, South Snowdon, Quellyn Lake, Caernarvon and its Castle, Bangor with its Cathedral and Colleges.

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR A DESCRIPTIVE ROUTE OF THE TOUR

From	Times of starting via Festiniog	Third Class Inclusive Fare for the Tour
LLANDUDNO	10-25 a.m.	7/11
COLWYN BAY	10-29 a.m.	8/-
RHYL	10-15 a.m.	9/3
Children under 3 years of age free, between 3 and 14 years of age half-fares		
From	Times of starting	At the same Fares
Llandudno	11-5 a.m.	
Colwyn Bay	11-4 a.m.	
Rhyl	10-44 a.m.	

Passengers must state at time of booking which way they elect to travel

SEE THE BEAUTIES OF WALES IN SAFETY AND COMFORT—WET OR FINE

Further particulars at the Stations or from Welsh Highland & Festiniog Railways, Portmadoc

SEE OVER

the late Arthur Iggulden. He told me of his great delight in its preparation and its distribution throughout the North Wales coastal resorts. It includes a detailed description of the route: -

*'by the World Famous Festiniog (Toy) Railway (1ft 11 1/2" gauge) through the Festiniog Valley..... to Portmadoc Harbour Station and concludes with the imperative in large bold type:-*

### **'TIME FOR LUNCH'**

Indeed one has 75 minutes lunch break today as opposed to 1 hour in 1936 and after a visit to the FR shop and 'Spooners' bar I watched the departure of the 1.35pm train back to Blaenau and the arrival minutes later of the WHR train which had been held at Llyn Bach awaiting acceptance to the FR platform.

The 2.15pm train back to Caernarfon departed right on time hauled by the FR pilot loco (diesel) and the WHR loco was then attached to the front of the train out on the Cob, where incidentally the views of Snowdon, Cnicht, and the Moelwyns were superb. Our train was soon across Britannia Bridge where the traffic signals





flashed for exactly 90 seconds, a short time I thought after all the criticism levelled at the FR over the past year or so. Speed increased after the Snowdon Street crossing and we were quickly across the standard gauge with its familiar rhythm - a bit like Limerick Junction!

Arthur Igguldeon's description of the WHR section extols the beauties of the Aberglaslyn Pass, the Alpine village of Beddgelert (time to visit Gelert's Grave) etc. In fact the WHR train of 1936 stopped in Beddgelert for 40 minutes but one wonders how many missed their onward train, as many of us will have returned to the station somewhat breathless from the village ice-cream shop queue! Gelert's Grave is another ten minutes walk!

The climb from Beddgelert presented no problem to our Garrett on this dry sunny day but how often did 'Russell' or the Baldwin slip to a stand on a greasy rail in those far off days. The LMS connection must have always been in mind on those occasions and all too often we hear how the poor WHR had to provide transport on

to their destination for those stranded at Dinas Junction.

A brief stop at Meillionen and it was onward up the grade to Hafod Ruffydd and Pitt's Head summit with glorious views of Snowdon and Moel Hebog.

There was a partial crew change at Rhyd Ddu where we crossed No 87 on the UP service and there was time for a chat with an old friend travelling on the south bound train. Arthur's route description continues accurately today until Waunfawr is reached but one looks in vain for the 'Marconi Station', a victim of more modern technology.

Passing Tryfan Junction, reopened the previous day after 75 years closure, we were soon into Dinas Junction where arrival at 4.30pm was just five minutes ahead of the 1936 timetable for the tour, but of course it is no longer necessary to change trains here and so Caernarfon was reached at 4.45pm (five minutes early) instead of at 5.17pm by LMS train.

*Top left - Arriva train arrives at Blaenau Ffestiniog from Llandudno Junction.*

*Top right - FR train at Blaenau Ffestiniog.*

*Bottom left - FR train on the Cob.*

*Bottom right - WH train on a horse-shoe curve*

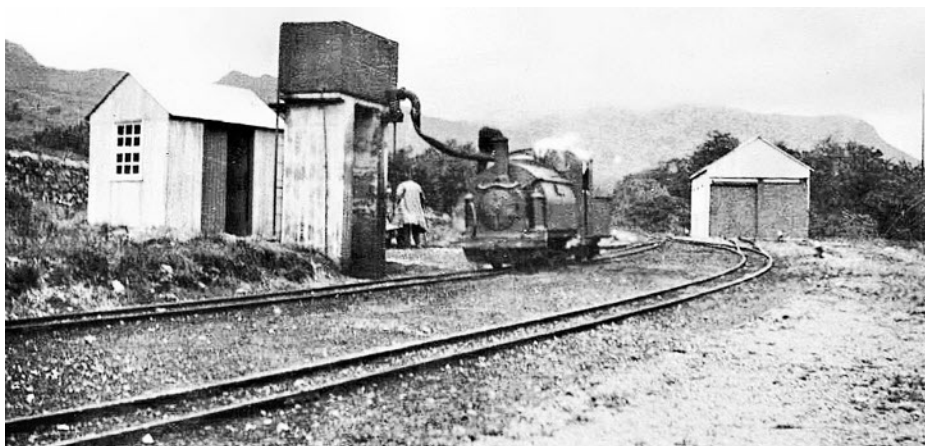
Regrettably there is no alternative at present other than to take the five minute walk to Pool St for the very frequent (six journeys every hour) bus to Bangor Railway station, reached in about 25 minutes.

My final part of the 'Five Valleys' was by a comfortable 'Arriva Wales' Holyhead to Birmingham train, and with lovely views across to Anglesey and Puffin island we were soon back at my starting place of Llandudno Junction arriving at 6.21pm, just 20 minutes later than in 1936.

Perhaps one day in the future the 'missing link' will be replaced, and once more passengers will be able to make the whole tour by train, but this in no way detracted from what was a most memorable and delightful excursion which I had dreamed of for more years than I care to remember.



# A Triple Delight



elevation of the lamp hut – a replica of which has now been installed (centre). However, the greatest delight has been to obtain a cache of thirteen (lucky for some!) photographs taken in August 1935 by Bill Minnion.

To elaborate – many of the photographs taken by H.F. Wheeler in August 1935 are well known but on his visit to the WHR he had one Bill Minnion as a photographer/travelling companion. For some time there has been in preparation a monograph detailing Wheeler's visit. Researching this publication has led from Roger Carpenter to Wheeler's daughter and then Bill Minnion's son who was quickly made aware of the 'treasure' on which he was sitting.



The photograph (below) was taken at a popular location (even today albeit shifted a bit) and may look familiar. However Minnion's photograph shows Wheeler about to photograph the train's progress from the other side. The bicycle is interesting for it is said that our two visitors took theirs with them on their fortnight's railway photography holiday in 1935

Perhaps inevitably both photographers on occasion stood side by side to capture an image (we have other examples of this) but none of the results are identical. Bill Minnion's photographs make a significant contribution to our knowledge base because he took several where Wheeler was either not present or chose not to 'click'. Maybe this was the sort of situation where and when a bicycle showed its worth. Nevertheless such photographs will enable gaps to be filled in the narrative developed in the forthcoming publication

There are many satisfactions associated with an involvement with heritage aspects of our railway but this writer has enjoyed a particularly dominant interest – the acquisition of previously unseen photographs of the original WHR.

## Old Photographs - John Keylock's passion!

Over the past forty years – often with the invaluable help of like-minded colleagues - a substantial photographic archive has been built up and is now held by this Group. It is often asked, "Where do the new photographs come from?" Your scribe is fortunate to have known those who worked on or photographed the railway in the 1930s; other photographs have come from museums, libraries and other sources of archival material. Members living local to the railway have produced photographs provided by relations of those who worked on the railway, whilst others arrive unsolicited often as a result of reading this quarterly journal.

Photos - top - Rev'd H Carson  
Centre - Mike Hadley  
Bottom Bill Minnion

The first quarter of this year has provided three excitements one of which was produced in the Cwm Cloch article in the last journal (WHH No. 51).

Secondly, by way of 'a friend of a friend of a friend' two more new photographs taken by the Rev'd Carson in September 1927. (See book review 'Dairy of an Early Trainspotter 1922-1941'). His Beddgelert photograph (top) shows in its entirety the south west





# Tryfan Junction Update

After a long cold winter the Tryfan junction reconstruction team returned to review the project, and not surprisingly the freezing conditions had damaged some of the new lime masonry work. Using a stronger 2-1 hydraulic lime and washed sand mix, this was rectified in a day and a half and now the central window cill and neighbouring brick quoins are progressing nicely.

It's a bit of a jig-saw puzzle, selecting a decent shaped brick, levelling up and matching the original design but it is

enjoyable and satisfying.

So if you feel like having a hand in this excellent project do contact Lewis Esposito on 01286 650397 for working parties, which are now almost weekly and when the sun is shining!



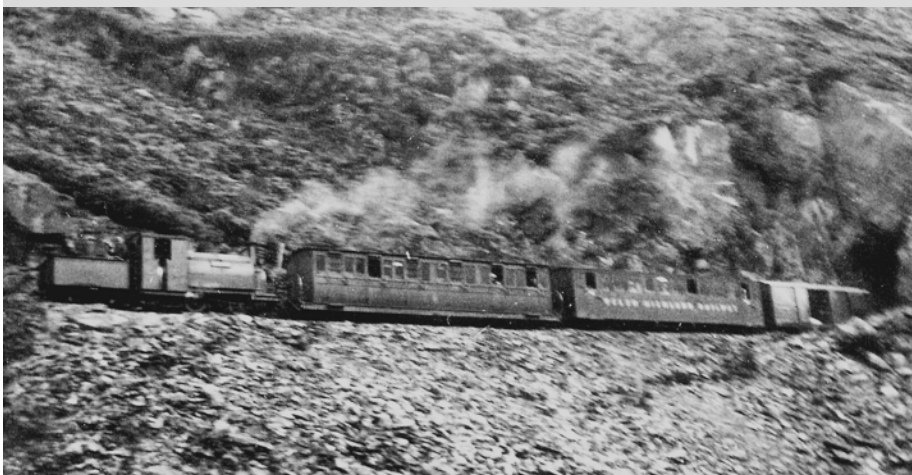
*Pictures show progress as at  
21st May 2011  
Photos : David Allan*



## New Postcards

On the initiative of Euros in the Caernarfon booking office/shop the Group has produced ten different post cards of scenes on the original WHR. The majority are familiar images but Nos. 7(below) & 8

(bottom of page 4) have not previously seen the light of day. They are priced individually at 50p each while a complete set is £4.50. All prices include P&P and are available from John Keylock - address on page 12. These are an ideal way to promote the railway and indeed the Heritage Group.



## AGM Report

The fourteenth AGM passed uncontentionously on 1<sup>st</sup> May. Attendance was perhaps determined by the fact that the weather was rather more conducive to being on the beach rather than in Beddgelert Community Centre! However this note is just to advise members as to how the meeting agreed that the Group's 2010 surplus of £3,325 will be spent in accordance with its aims and objectives.

£1,250.00 for water inlet and discharge fittings to be provided when the replica Beddgelert Water Tank is in situ

£250 – towards the cost of traditional rain-water goods for Dinas goods shed. This project is being led by the WHR Society.

£500 for information panels at Tryfan Junction relative to the Bryngwyn Branch Slate Trail permissive footpath which has been provided by Llanwnda Community Council.

£500 – WHHG's contribution towards the cost of a consultant to work up the railways' HLF grant application.

These total £2,500 with the balance being held for contingencies.

## LETTER

Sir,  
What a pity the anonymous contributor didn't tell us what file reference he consulted at Caernarfon archives office - presumably in the XC2/33/ series - but which one? (See article 'Dismantling of the WHR' p10 in WHH No. 51)

It may seem a pedantic point, of course, but it ought to be noted that David Griffith Jones was the Clerk to the Caernarvonshire County Council and also acted as secretary to the Representatives of the Investing Authorities; it was in this role that he got involved. However, at no time was he the company's Receiver & Manager.

Following Lt-Col H F Stephens' death, that post was held from 12 April 1932 by Richard Thomas Griffith, clerk to the Gwyrfa district council, a county councillor and Chairman of the county council for 1934/5. He in turn was succeeded by George Gregory Williams, the treasurer to the County Council, from 8 February 1939.

It's bad enough having to "correct" the errors of "earlier authors" without adding our own!

*Richard Maund*

# Behind the Looking Glass

There are few things more rewarding than reflecting on how hard done by our lot in life is. Some people also relish reinforcing social stereotypes. I am such a person and inevitably, being from Barrow in Furness it should be no surprise to find that I lived (for a short period) in a terraced house with an outside toilet, and the sole water supply was a single cold tap in the scullery. To wash you needed to boil the kettle. Electricity was the only luxury. Shaving took place in the scullery with the aid of a small oval mirror left behind by the previous occupants. The silvering was failing, - but times were hard.

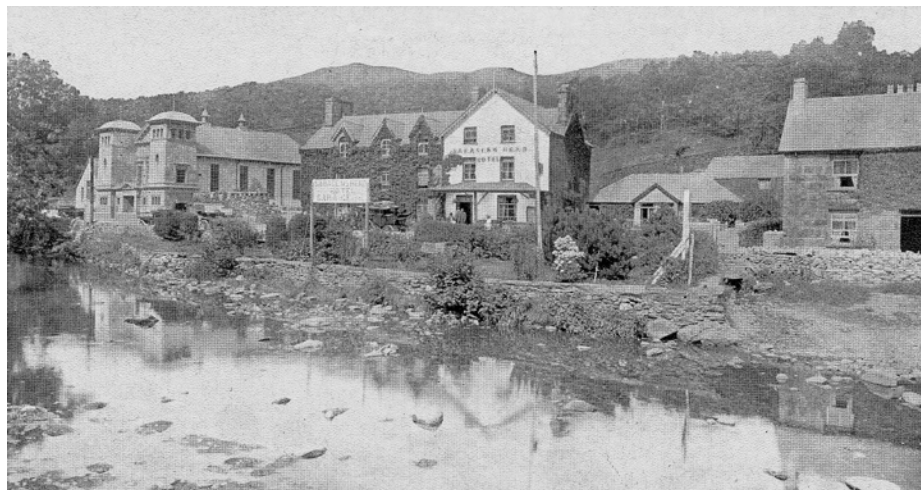
After moving on into the twentieth century I thought nothing more of the mirror, my former landlord however considered it an interesting vintage piece and decided to restore it. When the backing was removed he discovered that the glass was packed out by old newspaper. Very old newspaper, the Cambrian News from Friday February 17th 1905 to be precise, torn into very regular 4" squares.

## Dave High reflects.....!

The resultant jigsaw puzzle (with the inevitable few bits missing) is of course a wonderful snapshot of the period. The stock in trade of newspapers appears to have changed little in the past 105 years. There are complaints about 'vandalism to street lights' - 'why doesn't the council do something about the drains' - 'news from the golf club' and reports on 'cycling accidents'. 'Earl Spencer writes to Mps' - 'the value of the Prince of Wales to the principality' is debated, there is even an article which starts 'even in protected France agriculture is not very prosperous.....!'

Other pieces provide a flavour of the times. One headline reads, 'Dreadful Accident at Llechwedd Quarry. One Killed and Others Injured. Gallant Rescue!'. We also have the Portmadoc Mutual Ship Insurance Society having a special meeting at the Newsrooms, Cornhill. In an advert Moses Kellow is flogging coal 'it is not the cheapest, but it is the BEST'.

News of the religious revival is described as being 'the strongest, swaying force in Portmadoc and district'. An editorial on the matter is very forthright - 'The almost frantic desire on the part of certain literary nobodies to obtain publicity for their compositions about the Welsh Revival and its real and imaginary manifestations has resulted in the publication of a great deal of reprehensible rubbish. If the revival can outlive the notori-



*Saracens Head - Beddgelert in the 1920s. Licence problems in 1905!*

ety hunters, it may bring about a much-needed religious revolution in Wales'. Say no more!

Partisanship is of course de rigueur. A report on the Portmadoc Brewster sessions records that of the 83 people convicted of drunkenness (and 4 cases dismissed) 43 of the arrests 'where to strangers working in the division'. The link to the Welsh Highland Railway (or more precisely the PB&SSR) is that in 1905 there was some serious construction work in the vicinity of Beddgelert. As will become apparent I am not the only person to revel in the stereotype reinforcement, especially when there are navvies in the district!

The Saracens Head in Beddgelert gets a special mention. Mr Wm George, (of that

## "...a rough element in the area....."

well known firm of local solicitors and acting on behalf of the police), laid a formal objection to the renewal of their license, on account of a conviction against the licensee during the past year. While Mr George did not ask the Bench to levy the most extreme penalty, he considered - 'it was most important that the licensee should understand that it was not a mere matter of form and the Bench should take a serious view of it'. The poor licensee of the Saracens was unable to defend himself, as he was too ill to attend (and sent his wife with a doctor's note to prove it). The Chairman of Bench warned her of the serious position her husband would be placed in if the house was not properly conducted during the ensuing year. He did however note the mitigating circumstances as he behaved all Beddgelert licensees to be careful as 'there was a rough element in the area just now'. That this element where associated with the railway construction is reinforced later in the same passage.

'Two young men named William Jones and Hugh Hughes, employed on the Beddgelert Railway, were charged with having been drunk and disorderly on Sunday afternoon, January 22nd. Mr George (again) - 'PC16 had found them about 3 o'clock on the Tremadog road. They were both very drunk and using bad language'. Jones and Hughes were both locked up and admitted being drunk, Jones however denied being disorderly. This was to no benefit as both were fined 2s 6d with 8s 6d costs.

Mr George got into his stride, when Rachel Ball, the licensee of the Madocks Arms Hotel was charged with permitting drunkenness. Two paragraphs then unfold, the gents had only had a pint with bread and pickle. Her brief concluded that 'there is not a tittle of evidence' to support the charge and the case against her was dismissed. How they became so 'slaughtered' in not revealed.

If we are getting a picture then the next paragraph comes as no surprise. It covers a similar incident in Beddgelert. 'PC Pugh charged Joseph Leach and William Parker with being drunk and disorderly; and John Lewis with having been drunk. The three are employed on the Beddgelert Railway. Lewis was fined 1/- with 8s-6d costs and the others 5/- with 8s 6d costs.

It is not all bad news for the drinking man in Eifionydd, as William Georges' request 'on behalf of the Lleyn and Eifionydd Temperance Society' for 10 o'clock closing was turned down. His brother got more than his own back with the Defence of the Realm Act in 1914!

A few snippets of life from 1905. How those snippets got from the coast of Cardigan Bay to the coast of Morecambe Bay I will never know.



# A Note on Place Names

I was very interested to read Richard Maund's article "Where was Ynysferlas?" (*WHH* No. 51 p 5-6) and am totally convinced by the conclusion he draws, but it does prompt me to write this note about place names.

First *Ynysferlas*. *Ynys* means *island*, and is a feminine noun, and so causes soft mutation in adjectives, which normally follow the noun they qualify in Welsh. *fer* is the soft mutation of *ber*, the feminine singular of *byr*, *short*. *las* is the soft mutation of *glas*, which in older Welsh could mean either *blue* or *green*, or anything in between! In modern usage it means *blue*, with *gwyrd* (fem. sing. *gwerdd*) for *green*. Hence *Ynysferlas* means *short green island*, or possibly *short blue island*. Incidentally some Welsh adjectives have separate plural forms used in conjunction with the plurals of both masculine and feminine nouns, though these tend to be used only in formal and literary language. *Byr* and *glas* are two of these, so if I wanted to write *short blue islands* I would write *ynysoedd byrion gleision*.

The spelling of *Hafod Garregog*. *Hafod* means *summer dwelling* and is also feminine, so it has caused soft mutation of *caregog*, meaning *stony*, to *garegog*, which nowadays is spelt with one "r". However its root word, *carreg*, meaning *stone* or *rock*, is spelt with two. Now "n" and "r"

are the only two consonants in the Welsh alphabet which are ever doubled in a word (remember "dd", "ff" and "ll" are each one letter in Welsh), and circumstances in which they should be used singly or doubled is one of the most esoteric and arcane aspects of Welsh grammar with, it seems to me, plenty of room for discussion and variation. So I think it could be argued on historical grounds that *garregog* is to be preferred in the station place name, even though modern Welsh dictionaries spell it with one "r", *caregog*. I am sure that this is a matter of theoretical interest only, since I cannot imagine our ever wanting to reopen the halt. However, were we to want to put up an information board there,

## Richard Buxton 'Sermonises' on the Spelling of WHR Halts

explaining that it was once the site of a halt, there would be an extremely strong case for using the spelling that was used in the 1920s and 1930s, namely *Hafod Garregog*.

Finally, some thoughts on *Ynysfor*. The *for* could be a soft mutation of *môr*, *sea*, so *sea island*, implying it was the island in the *Traeth Mawr* nearest to the estuary mouth, or a corruption of *fawr* for *mawr*, *large* or *great*, implying it was a large island. But my dictionary gives the meaning of *ynysfor* as *archipelago*, so perhaps the name implies that this is the place where the islands in the *Traeth* start as you come in from the sea. I think that this last is the most plausible explanation, but see what you think when you next go past *Ynysfor* level crossing on the train.



Shows the 'Islands' of *Ynysfor* & *Ynysferlas* and the location of *Hafod Garregog* itself (not the halt)

## BOOK REVIEWS

### "Diary of an Early Trainspotter 1922 - 1941"

By the Rev'd Harold Carson  
Review - John Keylock

Compiled by the son of the late Rev Harold Carson this diary records a visit to the WHR on Wednesday, 7th September 1927. More exciting is that he photographed a northbound England hauled train in the Pass and the same locomotive taking water at Beddgelert. Furthermore, this latter photograph proved that there was indeed a window in the south west gable end of the lamp hut!

It may be considered that £10.50 (incl P&P) is rather much to pay for two pages (out of a total of 90) of WHR, but this book is not without other North Wales interest. Bangor, Rhuddlan, Betws y Coed, Barmouth, Caernarfon, Llanberis

and Llandudno Junction all feature. Many of the locomotives featured are pre-grouping. Other delights covered are the North Sunderland and Sheppy Light Railways.

Inevitably, there is much coverage of South East England where the diarist/photographer lived but with ninety photographs this compilation is very much a trip down memory lane.

Copies are available (£10.50 incl P&P) from John Keylock (address on p12)

**McKenzie & Holland – Railway Signal, Signal Box & Inter-locking Engineers**  
By Gareth Calan Davies.

Review - Edward Dorricott

To fit within the scope of a small booklet, one of an appealing local history series by GHAL, this portrayal of McKenzie & Holland is of necessity a condensed overview. Nevertheless in 20 pages the

reader is given a feel for the background and global importance of this renowned manufacturing organisation. One is taken, by the illustrated and imaginatively written text, to some fascinating corners of Worcester and to a sample of the firm's products. A few of the photographs seem a little less clear than the majority, but otherwise this is an attractively presented tribute to Worcester enterprise. The account concludes with a couple of useful sketch maps.

For a very modest outlay (£3.50 + 60p postage) this may be of interest to students of WHR history, as it was McK&H who provided the signalling for the opening of the NWNGR in the late 1870s.

Orders to GHAL Publications, 5 Biddulph Way, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 2HP  
Cheques payable to Cheryl Davies. E-mail: ghal@btinternet.com  
Website: www.ghal.co.uk

# Salem Halt Revisited

Richard Maund's article in *WHH No. 50* addressed the location of the erstwhile N.W.N.G.R. and W.H.R. halt at "Salem". As the article shows, the railway passed along the opposite side of the valley to the village of Salem and the trackbed was reachable only via a series of footpaths which headed across the river and then ran to the house at Bryn Afon and two points further to the north, towards the buildings at Cae Hywel.

The article identifies the location of the actual halt, about which there has been some discussion, but one or two points raised in the article beg some further comment or clarification.

When studying Salem Halt, be it through the use of photographs or large scale maps, certain features offer considerable assistance in confirming locations. For example, to west of the track bed as it headed south from the halt was a prominent sheepfold built into a complex series of dry stone walls that crossed the hillside in that location.

This sheepfold is shown clearly in a photograph of a mixed N.W.N.G.R. train heading south towards Plas-y-Nant **Fig 1**.

This photograph correlates well with the large-scale maps referenced in Richard's article. Note the telegraph pole situated slightly beyond – from the photographer's viewpoint, that is – the sheepfold. Note also the further telegraph poles visible in the distance as indicative of the gap between successive poles. The photographer had obviously positioned himself at the top of the rocky outcrop left by ballast quarrying in this area.

In his article, Richard made reference to, but did not show, a photograph taken by F.M. Gates which shows a stationary north-bound train at Salem. That image is reproduced here **Fig 2**.

Prominent in this image are the obvious telegraph pole and what appear to be stone structures of some sort at the right of the image. It is tempting to believe these to be the pole and sheepfold visible in Figure 1. However, this assumption rapidly leads to major confusion as the relativities of the pole and sheepfold in each photograph are clearly very different.



**Fig 1**

The photograph shown on page 14 of *WHH No. 50* is reproduced here as **Fig 3**.

In his caption to this photograph, Richard wrote, "*The middle of the rear carriage is passing the telegraph pole mentioned in the text*". Specifically, the pole "*mentioned in the text*" was that shown here in Fig 2. However, a close

examination of Fig 3 shows no sign of any pole in line with the second carriage. In the reproduction here, I have indicated the two

telegraph poles which are visible. The pole further to the left is that seen in Fig 1, as can be confirmed by close examination of the pole's relativity to the sheepfold. The pole visible to the right is situated some 150 feet distant from its neighbour, a spacing that appears fully consistent with the gaps between poles seen in Fig 1. This second pole would therefore appear to be that visible prominently in Fig 2; that is if this latter photograph were indeed taken at the location shown in Fig 3! However, a close examination of Fig 2, in particular the relativities of the pole, the wire fence and the stone "structure" to the right of the image, confirms that the telegraph pole that dominates the image can be neither of those seen in Fig 3. So, accepting for now that the train in Fig 2 was indeed at "Salem", where then was this photograph actually taken?

Firstly, let us consider the locations of all the telegraph poles in the Bryn Afon –

Salem Halt area. Other photographs, one of which was shown on page 15 of *WHH No. 50*, show that the next two poles towards Waunfawr were located first just to the north of the Bryn Afon outbuildings and then just to the north of the point where the footpath crossed the railway in front of Bryn Afon itself. Telegraph pole positions derived from Fig 1, Fig 2, Fig 3, and the above referenced figure in *WHH No. 50* are shown in Fig 4 (bottom of page 9).

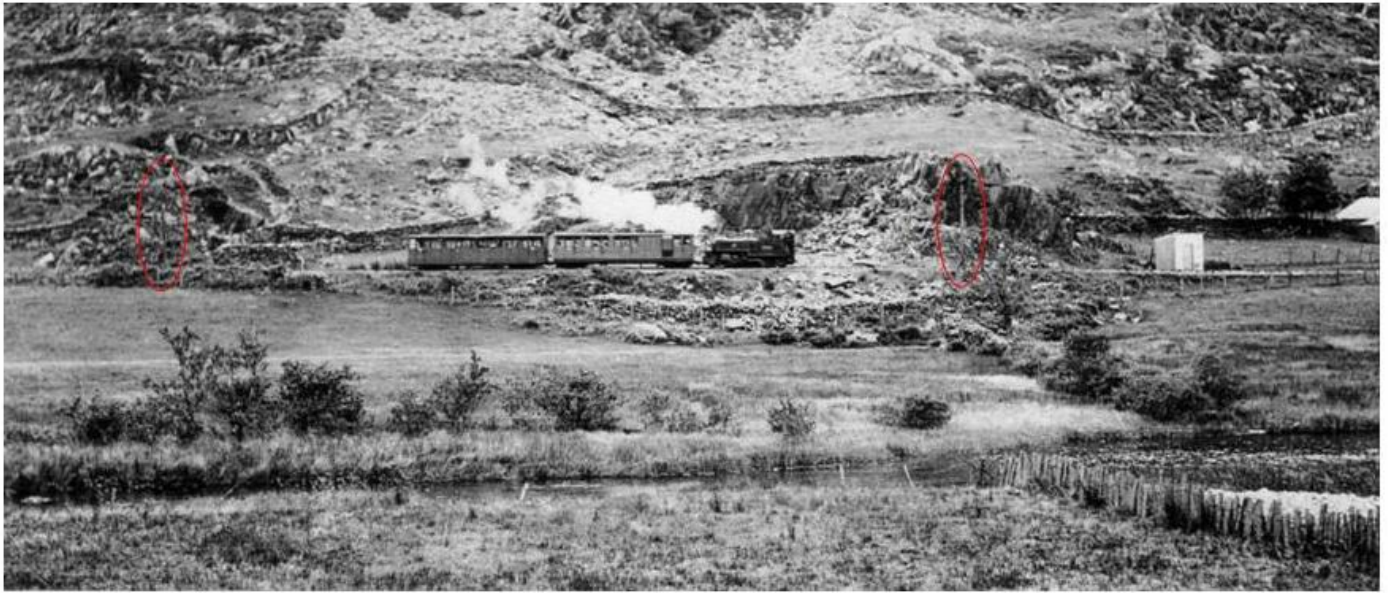
Secondly, what does Fig 2 actually tell us? If we look at the background visible in the photograph it would seem that we are seeing the dip in the hillside that runs down to Cerig-y-Rhyd with, beyond this, the ridge that carries the edge of Coed Plas-y-Nant, in other words a view entirely consistent with that of a train standing on the curve that ran round the old ballast quarry to the south east of Bryn Afon. However, we know from the photograph that this was not where the train was standing so what further conclusions might be drawn?

Fig 2 clearly shows a north-bound train, indicated by the orientation of the Pickering (*WHH No. 9*), standing on, when viewed in the direction of travel, a



**Fig 2**



**Fig 3**

left-hand bend, i.e. the same track layout as seen in the vicinity of the old ballast quarry. Further, the background view suggests that the train's orientation here is broadly the same as if it were standing towards the exit of the ballast quarry curve, i.e. close to the right hand telegraph pole in **Fig 3**.

Note in Fig 2 the presence of a very substantial pillar in the line of the wire fence just beyond the telegraph pole. Note also the nature of the ground just beyond the train guard (Dafydd Lloyd Hughes) broadly in line with the open door to the Pickering's Guard's compartment in comparison with that seen nearer to the camera. Finally, note what appears to be a fence pole leaning against the stone "structure" and that the fence can be seen to continue along the line of the curving track to disappear behind the "structure", where a further, obviously distant, telegraph pole can be seen. It is the continuation of the fence, the presence of the large pillar and what appears to be a stone wall beyond the telegraph pole which tell us that this photo cannot have been taken within the area covered by Fig 3.

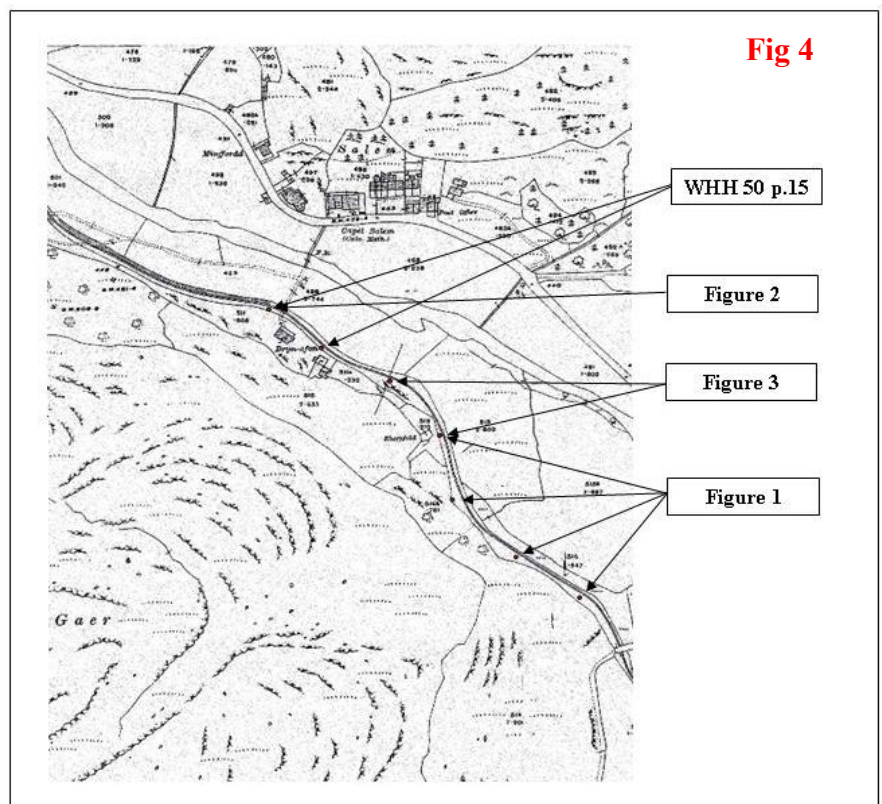
The obvious location which matches all the details seen in Fig 2 would appear to be at Bryn Afon, with the Pickering stopped astride the footpath crossing, hence the appearance of the ground beneath the near end of the carriage. The "large pillar" can be seen to be one of the gateposts anchoring the post and wire fence – the other gatepost lying behind this and therefore invisible to the camera. The photograph on page 15 of *WHH No. 50* shows that Bryn Afon was indeed fronted by a dry stone wall and the maps will confirm that this was set back from the railway somewhat whilst the wire fence did indeed continue alongside the

railway in front of the building and its garden (?) wall.

If we accept this location it would then seem that the telegraph pole visible in the distance was probably the right-hand pole in Fig 3 as the intermediate pole near the Bryn Afon outbuildings was probably too far to the right to be visible.

We know that the shelter provided by the railway lay well to the south of the Bryn Afon outbuildings and remained there at least until 1936 (see *WHH No.5* page 2) and therefore would have been there when Gates took his picture in 1934. We can sensibly assume, therefore, that the railway intended the halt to be located at,

or near, the site of the old ballast quarry. However, the Gates photograph clearly indicates that "Salem Halt" was perhaps more a conceptual than an actual location and that, at least on occasions, trains stopped where it best suited them and their passengers. There seems little doubt that a stop outside Bryn Afon, whilst perhaps less desirable to the occupants, would have been in many ways more practical to passengers boarding or alighting there. Of course, it is not inconceivable that the occupants of Bryn Afon may have been the main users of the service!!

**Fig 4**

WHH 50 p.15

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 1



# A Crack in the Crossing

In *WHH* No.42, p.3, Richard Watson speculated that Cambrian Crossing “was renewed to a standard GWR design before the WHR opened in 1923”. Research for *Chronicles of Croesor Crossing* (anyone who still hasn’t purchased one should hurry to obtain one of the few remaining copies for £6 from John Keylock, address on page 12) showed that this was not the case – that Cambrian fitment remained *in situ*. An interesting aside on this subsequently came to light among County Council papers at Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon, under reference XC2/33/64. This was actually the *Welsh Highland’s* own file – presumably called for at some stage by the County Clerk for the Investing Authorities but (fortunately for us!) never returned.

## More fascinating detail from Richard Maund

A request (on behalf of the contractors) in spring 1923 for the GWR to slew the crossing - presumably to straighten the narrow gauge alignment during re-fettling for passenger service - produced the response from the GWR on 2nd May 1923 that they would charge the WHR an estimated £200 for so doing; to this the WHR never responded, simply endorsing the letter “contractor’s liability” (i.e. McAlpines). Two days later, WHR General Manager Septimus E. Tyrwhitt wrote to his Chairman, Henry J. Jack, commenting on the high cost of the slew

*“...there is a slight crack in the crossing casting and perhaps they are providing for a new crossing altogether.”*

There is no evidence that the request was pursued, so the existing Cambrian-provided manganese crossing fitment – crack and all – remained in place until November 1928.

The same file also contains Tyrwhitt’s carbon copy of his (infamous?) letter of 30th May 1923 to the GWR (not found in any other archived material). In view of the speculation its contents have caused among historians and commentators – some accusing Tyrwhitt of having incurred the Welsh Highland in the cost of replacing the crossing fitment – I quote from it:

*“I ... note that, for the time being, you agree to the existing signalling arrangements remaining and the provision of a new signal box being deferred subject to an independent telephone circuit being provided between Portmadoc East and Penrhyndeudraeth with connections, as stated.*

*“I note also that you agree to cattle guards being used in lieu of gates at the crossing and that you will not press for heavy permanent way material being provided up to the boundary.*

*“It is understood that the cost of the necessary alterations at Portmadoc Crossing and that of the staff will be borne by this Company. I take it that the cost of staff that will be debited to this Company is the wages of the signalmen now employed less the cost of the woman crossing keeper employed formerly.”*

Clearly therefore the “alterations” to which he agreed did not include trackwork.

Upon reporting the exchange, Tyrwhitt got a rocket from Evan R Davies (a WHR Director and their legal adviser) who wrote that, during the line’s inspection on 24th May, the GWR’s representative had been told that

*“terms for manning the signal box would be reserved for discussion at Paddington”.*

Tyrwhitt was admonished:

*“... it is unfortunate that you conveyed the impression ... that the [WHR] is prepared to pay the wages.”*

Clearly, Tyrwhitt had not been informed what his Directors had said – a surprising omission for so small an organisation, which doesn’t reflect well on them. However, as shown at page 11 of *Chronicles of Croesor Crossing* it turned out not to be the “smoking gun” so many have since alleged, for the GWR in 1930 acknowledged that they did not regard it as constituting a binding agreement anyway.

## Corrections

### WHH No. 50 page 5

In the report from the Cambrian News, the parenthetical note should have read “... that the Council should advance £3,000 (three thousand pounds) by loan...”

The transcription error was entirely mine - your Editor is innocent!

Richard Maund

### WHH No 51 page 2 Cwm Cloch Cutting

The estimates of cubic yards of cut were made in the schedules prepared by Sir Douglas Fox & Partners in March 1922 - McAlpines simply put their unit prices to them.

Note that the the figure for the cutting (in the middle column of page 2) should read 22,800 (not 2,280) cu.yds.

Richard Maund



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

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Superb views of the W.H.R.

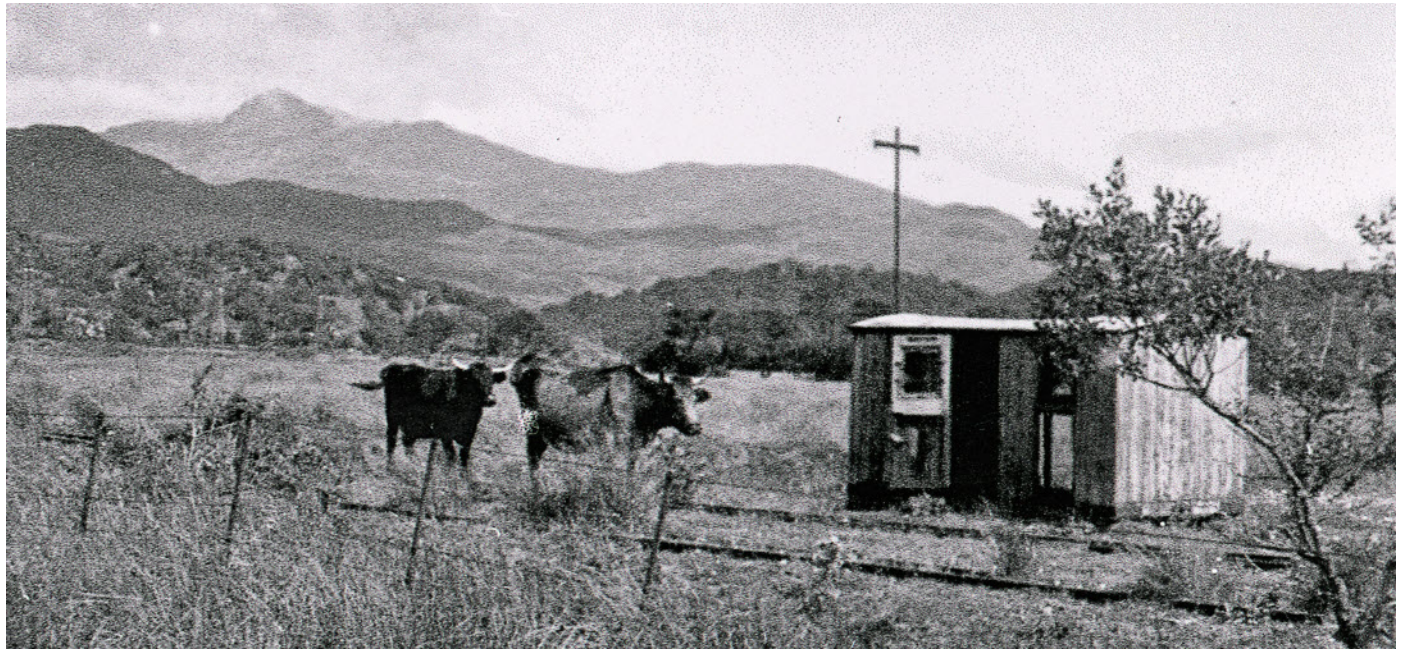
Two acre private nature reserve on the Afon Gwyrfaï offering great photographic opportunities for wildlife and rail enthusiasts. Active otter, heron, dipper and kingfisher populations and occasional water voles. Large comfortable en-suite twin/double rooms from £28.00 - £38.00 p.p.n

A non-smoking establishment.

Tel: 01286 650397 or visit our website : [www.salemchapelbb.co.uk](http://www.salemchapelbb.co.uk)



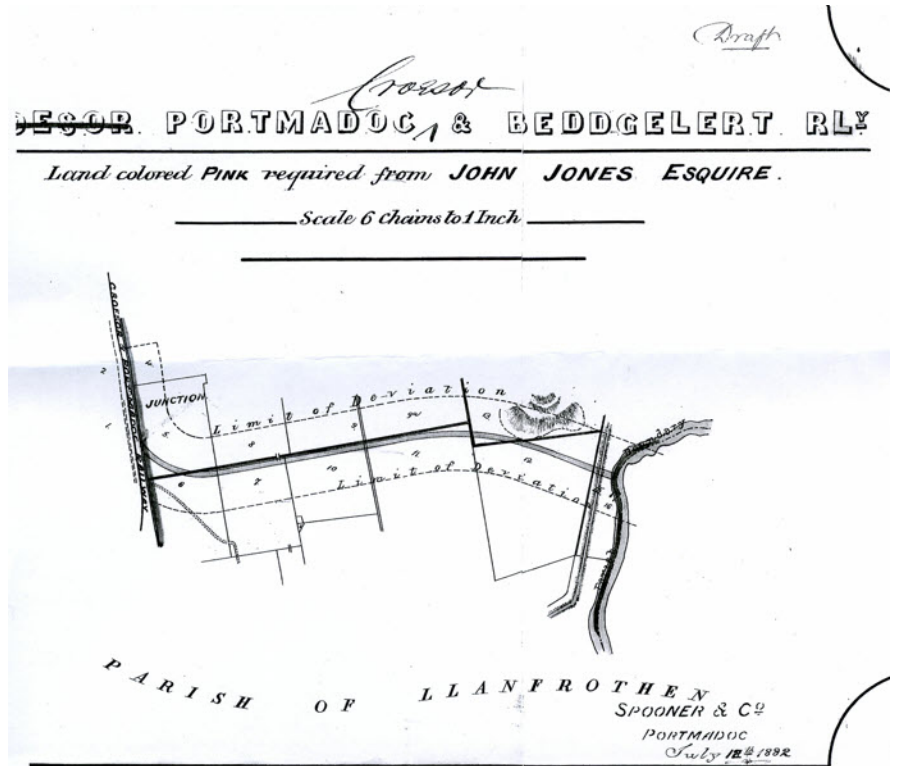
# The Evolution of Croesor Junction



Part of Spooner & Co's July 1882 draft plan (right) shows the route of the proposed Portmadoc, Croesor, & Beddgelert Railway between 'the junction' and Afon Dylif. This section (along with many others) was subsequently purchased by the PB&SSR who constructed the alignment and, according to Boyd, left contractors track 'in situ'.

The meeting of the WHR with the long standing Croesor Tramway in 1923 provided the obvious name for this comparatively bleak location on flat land reclaimed from the sea over a century before. Unlike Tryfan Junction there was no road access and the only footpath led to Erw-fawr farm. The nearest concentration of habitation was the hamlet of Tanlan standing at a right angle in the road between Pont Caregghyldrem and Carreg/Llanfrothen. For this reason initial conductor/guard's record sheets of tickets sold referred to 'Croesor Junction' as 'Tanlan' – a good half mile away. Initially the WHR simply trailed in to join the tramway section but in 1924 the layout was enhanced to provide a 140 yard loop using pointwork from the old sand siding at Portreuddyn.

Ken Nunn was at Croesor Junction in 1925 to photograph 'Moel Tryfan' waiting to take forward a single coach train brought from Portmadoc by 'Princess'. The WHR approach embankment had already been built on land acquired for PB&SSR construction



circa 1905/06. Interestingly McAlpine's contract specified a 300ft passing loop and 40 ft spur at Croesor Junction – but no waiting shelter. Furthermore, the contract stated that all halts and stations should have a 10 ft wide approach road – except for 16 ft at Beddgelert. The fact that this was not provided at Croesor Junction suggests that despite the provision of a passing loop the location was not envisaged as an official halt. However the loop could have provided stabling for Croesor Quarry traffic awaiting haulage to Portmadoc.

Initially there was a train staff section Portmadoc New/Beddgelert but because this was considered to be too long a section Croesor Junction became an intermediate one. Perhaps it was at this time that 'accommodation' was provided in the form of a redundant FR 4-wheeled coach. (See photo above) It is reputed that when the train arrived at Croesor Junction the guard would shout out the name of the station and add "Change here for Beddgelert, Dinas, Caernarfon and all stations to Liverpool Lime Street!"



# “Suspend Operations!”



In “Narrow Gauge Railways in South Caernarvonshire Vol. 2” (1989), p.2, James Boyd states that goods ceased from 3rd December 1931 but re-started at an unknown date, while at p.102 he states: “The daily goods train was next to be hit – from 2nd November [1931] this ran only twice a week (a circular of 2nd November says, ‘...Railway is to be re-opened for parcels, goods, etc....’) and from 3rd December goods traffic apparently ceased altogether.” Boyd provides no provenance for this latter assertion (which, alas, was repeated in WHH No. 13, p.6 and No.26, p.6), nor offers any clue as to when the cessation was rescinded.

To the meeting on 1st October of the Representatives of the Investing Authorities (that’s the local authorities who were now, in effect, in control of the railway), the Receiver & Manager (presumably Arthur Iggulden, on the ailing Stephens’ behalf) reported that the seasonal passenger service was ceasing - it last ran the following day, Friday 2nd October - and, further, “...in view of the fact that there was no traffic from the Bryngwyn Quarries at the Dinas end of the line nor from the Park and Croesor and Rhosydd Quarries at the Portmadoc end, he was anxious to know the wishes of the Investing Authorities as regards the running of the railway after the above mentioned date.”

## Richard Maund investigates.....

as Peter Johnson (*An Illustrated History of the WHR* (2009), p.76) would have us believe - for on 22nd October they resolved to retain goods traffic on two days a week to 31st December “as an experiment”. This service resumed from Monday 2nd November, according to a memo in the Group’s archive, from Robert Evans at Portmadoc which is of poor quality and will not scan - the following is a transcription : -

### Traffic office, Portmadoc, November 2nd 1931. Welsh Highland Railway.

Commencing today, the Welsh Highland Railway is to be re-opened for parcels, goods, mineral and coal traffic. The engine will run between Dinas and Portmadoc once or twice a week according to the traffic that there will be to be conveyed between the points referred to above. Therefore any traffic for the W.H. Railway can now be accepted and sent in the usual way.

Note.

Advise all concerned and acknowledge.

R. Evans.

The meeting resolved “that operations be suspended as from [Monday] 5th October 1931...” In fact, however, this was deferred a week, according to a notice (left) produced by Tonbridge.

The committee subsequently had second thoughts - perhaps freight traffic wasn’t quite as dead as Peter Johnson (*An Illustrated History of the WHR* (2009), p.76) would have us believe - for on 22nd October they resolved to retain goods traffic on two days a week to 31st December “as an experiment”. This service resumed from Monday 2nd November, according to a memo in the Group’s

From a letter of 23rd February 1933 from Iggulden (in Gwynedd archives at XC2/33/34) we learn that the County Council advanced sums of £50 on 11th November 1931 and again on 9th April 1932 to meet the wages for operation over the winter of 1931/2.

The Representatives faced no further suggestion of reduction in freight services until autumn 1933, and at WHH No. 48, p. 9, I disposed of the myth that WHR freight services were “suspended” that winter. In fact, therefore, the railway was operational right through from November 1931 to the beginning of its lease by the Festiniog.

My thanks to Derek Lystor and John Keylock for the items from the unplumbed depths of the Group’s archive...

Both the notices are courtesy of the Michael Davies Collection

It is interesting to note that the top notice is ‘signed’ by H.F. Stephens, whilst the notice below, just three weeks later, is unsigned - Col Stephens having died in the interim

