

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

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Original Dinas - Tryfan Train Staff



The use of Wise's Staff & Ticket system on the NWNGR and latterly the WHR has been the subject of several articles in the Journal, and the existence of the Tryfan Junction - Waenfawr instrument in the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn is well known. Less well recorded is the survival of the Dinas to Tryfan Junction staff, which was found along with the Saxby & Farmer "lollipop" staff in a corner of the British Railways signalbox at Dinas Junction and fortunately has been preserved.

Gareth Williams has been fortunate enough to have been able to photograph this staff (see above), which is now safe in private hands.

During the life of the WHR, Wise's train control system gradually fell out of use, until only this instrument survived. Goods trains bound for the Bryngwyn branch had to be in possession of this staff as it had the key necessary to lock & unlock the branch points attached to it by means of a chain.

The staff is clearly very well worn but this is not surprising given the length of time it was in use!

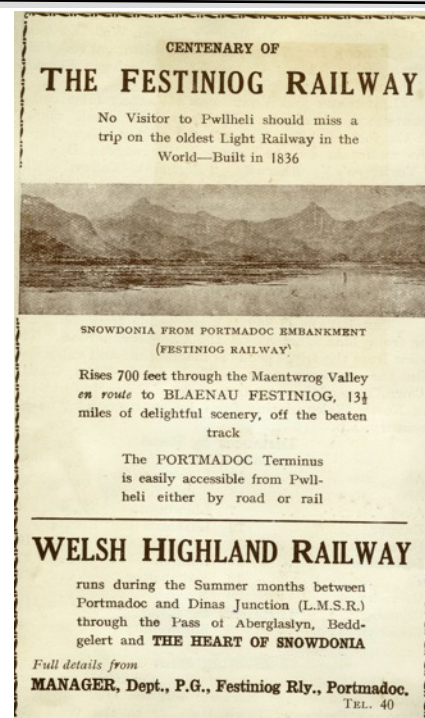
Will the elusive Waenfawr - Rhyd ddu instrument ever come to light one wonders?!

Last Throw of the Dice?

Anniversaries and centenaries always seem to be with us and provide a reason/excuse to celebrate and in so doing hopefully attract travellers to the railways.

It is 30 years since the FR 'returned to Blaenau' – and 180 years since the passing of its incorporating Act of Parliament. Not as commercially significant perhaps are the 76 years since the WHR was forced to capitulate. It will not be long before we recognise that today's WHR – in its entirety – will have operated for as long as its predecessor.

The advertisement (right) from the scrapbook of the late Arthur Rimmer perhaps represents one of the final attempts to attract custom to the WHR. It is taken from a publication produced for distribution in the Pwllheli area.



James Cholmeley Russell

August 2012 is the centenary of the death of James Cholmeley Russell. Heritage Group Member Nick Booker is planning to lay flowers on his grave at the Church of St John the Evangelist, Merrow, Surrey. For info on the date contact Nick at - nick@lickeyincline.co.uk

Nick writes an excellent blog on James Russell which is well worth a visit. jamescholmeleyrussell.blogspot.co.uk/

N.W.N.G.R. Station Masters

We all indulge our interests, knowledge and skills in our involvement with the WHR and its predecessors. One of mine is centred on the people who made the organisations work, researching them through the census and imagining their lives and stories. As this is a journal of record I will leave the last part to you after you have read the results I have found.

Over the last few weeks I have been reminded of the names of three stationmasters who were involved in accidents in the early years of the 20th century :-

J. Hughes of Waenfawr, Idwal Owen of Snowdon and Robert Hughes of Bryngwyn.

The first two gave evidence to Major Druitt about a collision between a runaway coal truck and a following train between their stations on 31st July 1906 whilst the third was tragically killed manoeuvring a truck at the top of the incline above his station in December 1901 as Dr Gwynfor Pierce Jones reported in WHH Issue 54.

James Hughes was probably born in Maenclochog Pembrokeshire in about 1837 although one census records his birthplace elsewhere in Pembrokeshire. I believe I have traced him in the 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses as his father worked at various places in South Wales as a carpenter and James is, latterly, working at the same trade. He does not appear in any 1871 record I can find. In 1881 he is immediately traceable living at Gwastad Faes a property about half a mile east of Waenfawr village with his wife Jane, two children Elizabeth aged 7 (or 9) and Daniel aged 1. Elizabeth was born in America which may explain the 1871 absence of record. The head of the household is Jane Parry, his widowed mother in law, an eighty year old annuitant. The family have a general domestic servant called Mary Parry and the Vicar of Bettws Garmon, Rev Daniel Lewis, is lodging with them. Most importantly James declares his profession as Station Master. This is in accord with his statement to Major Druitt

*Morgan Terrace, Rhyd Ddu - home of NWNG station master Idwal Owen
Photo : D. Allan (2012)*



that in 1906 he had been Station Master at Waenfawr for 29 years, that is since about 1877 at the partial opening of the railway. By 1891 he is still living at Gwastad Faes with his wife and son but no mother in law, no daughter, no servants and no lodger. He still proudly

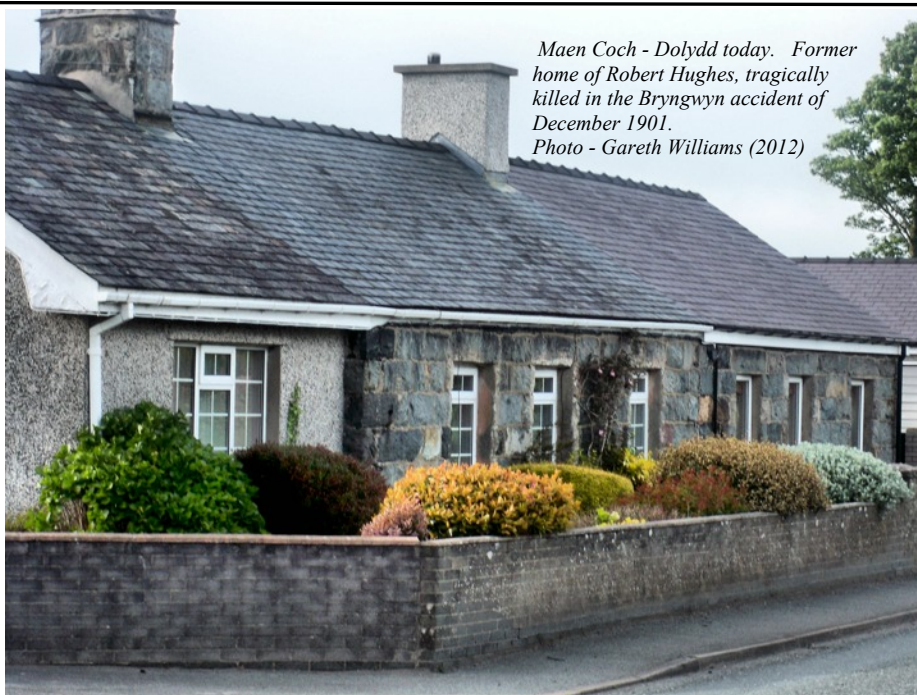
Dave Rogerson traces the family history of three NWNG Station Masters

declares himself to be the Station Master after which another hand at a later date had added the letters 'Rtd' presumably not believing that somewhere as remote as Waenfawr could possibly have a station! In 1901 he is at Gwastad Faes with Jane and Daniel who is a theological student but times seem to be getting harder, he now declares he is a Railway Stationmaster and Farmer. Finally in 1911, five years after the accident report in which he is roundly criticised for sending a following train without receiving the Train Arrived signal from Snowdon he is still, at the age of 74, declaring himself, in Welsh for the first time, to be Gorsaf Feistr NWNGR. His wife and son have gone, he has moved into a cottage called Gwnlfa in the village of Waunfawr but he is still a North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway Station Master.

The second Station Master, who was in the habit of not sending a Train Arrived signal which had presumably conditioned James Hughes into the habit of not expecting such a signal, was a much younger man. Idwal Owen was born in Rhyd Ddu in 1869. He was one of eight children born to a quarry worker and his

wife and continued to live at home after his father's death in 1885 until he was well into his thirties. Within the village the earlier Census Enumerators tend not to identify individual houses but in 1901 the address is given as Morgan Terrace, just down the road from the station, and this seems to fit with the other records. He stated to Major Druitt that in 1906 he had been working for the company for 17 years which implies he was taken on at the age of 20 in 1889. By the 1891 census, at the age of 22, he declares himself to be Station Master and, like everybody else in Rhyd Ddu, a Welsh speaker. In 1901 he is still the Station Master but now declares himself fluent in both English and Welsh as his elder brother but unlike his mother, younger sister and niece who are still speaking only Welsh. By 1911 only mother Ellen, brother John and sister Maggie are left in Rhyd Ddu at a house called Snowdon View, Idwal has left the railway and is living in Pwllheli and working as an Auctioneers Clerk.

On behalf of the third station master, Robert Hughes, I would have to take issue with Dr Gwynfor Pierce Jones when he states that "for reasons of economy the specific position of station master at Bryngwyn was an early casualty". From Hughes's point of view he was in the employ of the company before 1881 as a Station Master and continued to be a Station Master until after 1901 - that is how he described his Occupation in the three relevant censuses. He might have been asked to take on additional duties as a Guard but he remained the Station Master. His address throughout that time



*Maen Coch - Dolydd today. Former home of Robert Hughes, tragically killed in the Bryngwyn accident of December 1901.
Photo - Gareth Williams (2012)*

was 3 Maen Coch, Llanwnda. Maen Coch is about half a mile south of Dinas Station on the old road through Dolydd. More importantly, possibly, it is not much more than a mile up to Bryngwyn. He was born in Nevin in 1837 and I think I have found him in the 1841 census down by the sea

at Morfa Nevin. He is quite hard to trace after this as he was a mariner and probably at sea in 1851. In 1861 there is a definite sighting on the Catherina off Great Ormes Head on census night; in 1871 there are two possible locations as far away as Harwich and Glasgow. In 1873 he married Ellen Jones who was

born in Llanwnda and by 1881 they had six children with a seventh born in 1884. In April 1901 four of the children were still at home. It must have indeed been a terrible time for Ellen and her family when Robert was killed in December of that year. However the family survived and in 1911 Ellen is still in Maen Coch and describes herself as a Grocer and General Dealer and there is at least one other income to support her and the three young adults who remain at home.

Boyd reports that the BOT returns show that there were only four Station Masters in 1898, this contrasts to the eight in 1884 and seven in 1911. I believe I have found out some of the facts about three of them but who is missing and where did he work?

Based on the fact that there were only four station masters in 1898 it is accepted that by this time - 'for reasons of economy' - Robert Hughes was responsible for Rhostryfan and Tryfan Junction as well. The fourth station master would have been the 'agent' at Dinas for whom the station house was built circa 1900. - John Keylock

Col. Stephens' Cranes



Photo by Harold Vickers

It is tempting to assume that both cranes were based on standard gauge 'running gear' when purchased and that the FR example was modified to suit a 2 ft gauge carrier. Although the foregoing mentions FR presumably the Colonel had in mind the crane's potential use on the WHR with its more generous loading gauge. Alas no photographs exist of the crane being used on either railway – if indeed it ever was. It would seem likely that these cranes - and indeed two were acquired by the Southern Railway for use on the Lynton & Barnstaple - came from George Cohens (Scrap Metal and Used Machinery dealers), possibly in 1926.

The above photograph is reproduced here for the benefit of readers whose railway vision extends beyond the WHR – or even to another Col Stephen's railway.

It has long been accepted that the Colonel had an eye for a bargain when it came to acquiring railway equipment. However, nothing is a bargain unless it proves its usefulness. This may well not have been

the case with his acquisition of two (known) rail mounted cranes in the 1920s; one for the FR and one for the Kent & East Sussex Railway. The latter is shown above with its match truck out of use in 1937. The FR example features most recently on the back cover of 'Wheeller's Day' or earlier on the front cover of WHH No. 40.

Membership Cards

As members are aware, Royal Mail has recently considerably increased the price of postage. This was discussed at our recent Committee meeting, and as a result, it was agreed that in future, to save costs, those members renewing annually and not enclosing an SAE will get their membership cards posted with their next Journal after renewal date.

Derek Lystor, Mem Sec.

The Gestation of the Welsh Highland Railway in 1921

The schedule of works including the Carnarvon Extension, and a submission to the Ministry of Transport

Two documents seen by the author elaborate on the thinking behind the building of the Welsh Highland Railway (W.H.R.) in 1921, including the proposed Carnarvon extension.

A schedule of works produced by Sir Douglas Fox and Partners¹ on November 1st 1921 details the allocation of expenditure on labour and materials, and an estimate of the labour needed for the construction of the W.H.R. Dealing first with the abortive Carnarvon extension, it is interesting to compare the figures against those of 1904, though it should be remembered that the two schemes intended using different routes, particularly between Beddgelert and Rhyd Ddu.

	1904 proposal	1921-2 proposal
Total expenditure approx	£29,660	£39,000
Labour Cost } Materials Cost }	£22,990 a	£28,000 b £11,000 b
Length of railway	2mls-7flngs 18.5ch c	3mls-0 flngs-7ch

a) Labour and materials costs not given separately and do not include contingencies, land or buildings purchase cost

b) Information uncertain as to whether this included contingencies, or the cost of purchasing land and buildings.

c) "East bank route" only, i.e. terminating under the castle. The 1921 proposal was slightly the longer in route miles.

Sir Douglas Fox & Partners considered the following expenditure and labour would be required for the three proposed sections of the W.H.R. (See table right)

The document describes the railway between Portmadoc and South Snowdon as a 'Railway Partly Constructed', some 12.45 miles in length. The estimate of

materials needed for this included 608 tons of rails, 20,500 sleepers, 104 tons of steel for bridgework, plus cement, timber and fence posts. The total cost for these would have been £28,400 with indirect labour of 300 men for say 3 months. The document mentions the provision of *steel* for bridgework, rather than actual bridges, suggesting that the 75' lattice bridges eventually provided were not being considered at this early stage.

The existing North Wales Narrow Gauge section was 12.34 miles in length, described as *Existing North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway in Operation*. Here the labour numbers and other costs were much lower, since 'materials (are) required only for maintenance work, value about £1000.'

Meanwhile, the abortive extension to Carnarvon, described as *Not yet constructed*, would absorb 300 directly employed men in the narrative against 330 in the table and would require 172 tons of rails, 6000 sleepers, 100 tons of steel for bridges, with costs as described above.

Just over a month later, on 6th December 1921, a letter was sent by Evan R. Davies, Solicitor at the Town Clerk's Office in Pwllheli, to the Secretary of the Ministry of Transport in Whitehall. This was in reply to their letter to him of the 2nd.² In this document Davies outlines the financial and economic circumstances surrounding the proposed building of the Welsh Highland Railway (W.H.R.). The

capital of the North Wales Narrow Gauge (N.W.N.G.) and Portmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon (P.B.S.S.) railways are quoted as follows:

<u>N.W.N.G.R.</u>			
	<u>Authorised</u>	<u>Issued</u>	
Shares & Stock	£106,000	£96,000	£83,390
Debentures	£54,000	£43,563	£43,040
<u>P.B.S.S.R.</u>			
	£318,000	£50,000	
	£106,000	£47,781	£126,430
			£124,870

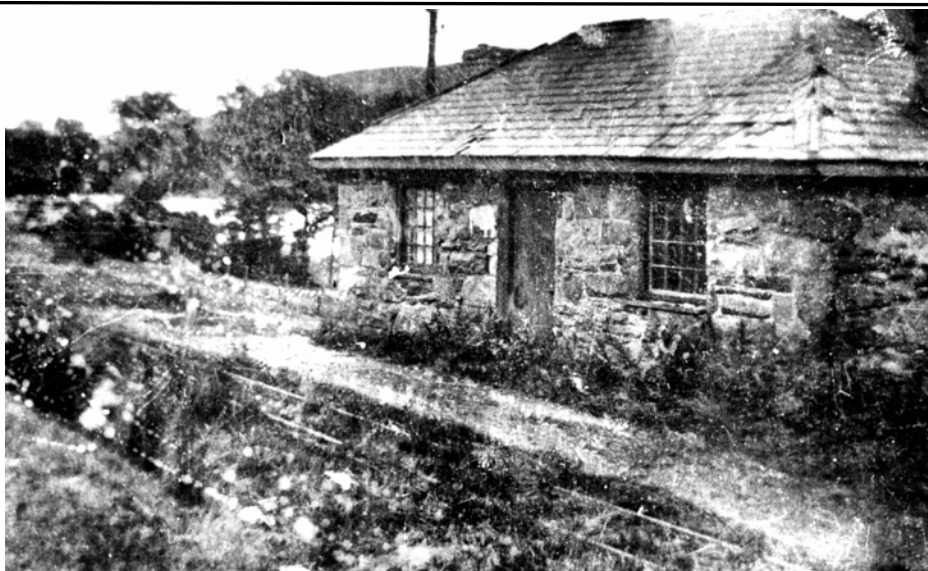
The figures in italics were pencilled on the copy of the original document in the positions shown, and appear to be amendments to the typed information by an unknown person.

The letter proposed that the capital of the Welsh Highland Railway Co. (sic), which would acquire all of the above assets, would be £150,000 in ordinary shares with a debenture issue of an equivalent sum. The two existing companies would sell their assets to the formative W.H.R. in exchange for £10,000 in Debentures and £90,000 in Ordinary shares.

Davies estimated the cost of construction to be £75,000, a little above the figure quoted by Sir Douglas Fox but covering the costs of providing a railway 'in an

Richard Watson examines the optimism for a still-born scheme

Section	Total Expenditure Approx.	Labour directly employed		Materials	
		Cost	No of men for 6 months	Cost	Labour indirectly employed on materials for 3 months
Portmadoc to South Snowdon	£70,000	£42,000	500	£28,000	300
South Snowdon to Dinas	£3,000	£2,000	20	£1,000	10
Dinas to Carnarvon	£39,000	£28,000	330	£11,000	120



This 'not very good' photograph taken in 1921 by C.R. Clinker of work at Snowdon Ranger station is as near as we can get for an illustration for this article.

efficient state for an immediate opening'. The projected labour cost would be £44,000. Nothing was to be allowed for in terms of locomotives or rolling stock as the promoters (who also controlled the Festiniog) 'have sufficient rolling stock of all kinds already available as part of the.... North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway or....the Festiniog Railway'. This statement of course was to handicap a chronically undercapitalised W.H.R. in later years, as it struggled to run the line on a shoestring with worn out and inadequate locomotives and rolling stock.

Traffic projections were to be based on the combined experiences of the Festiniog and N.W.N.G. Railways, and for reasons unknown the year 1911 was taken as the yardstick. For an average journey of 8 miles the F.R. carried 140,349 passengers that year, and the N.W.N.G. 40,643, a total of some 180,992. With unbridled optimism, the promoters believed that judicious advertising, the advantage of a through route from Blaenau Festiniog to Dinas, and five interchange stations with main lines would result in an estimated 250,000 passengers travelling an average of twelve miles. It was estimated that each passenger would pay an average 2/- per journey, realising an income of £25,000 per annum.

Goods traffic projections were estimated as, annually: slates 11,000 tons, stone and setts 2,500 tons, coal 6,000 tons, agricultural products 500 tons and general goods 1,000 tons, totalling 25,000 tons each year and originating from Blaenau Festiniog, Croesor, Beddgelert, Rhyd-ddu,

Bryngwyn, Wrexham and Ruabon.

The letter states that N.W.N.G. goods traffic carried in the year 1912 was 15,000 tons; optimism again comes to the fore as Davies says that the disparity would be accounted for by the 'development of existing quarries and the opening up of new ones'. At a quoted rate per ton of 4/- this tonnage would realise £5,000 in income each year.

The estimated costs of running the proposed railway were based upon the N.W.N.G. figure of £240 per mile in 1911; the 'safe estimate' put forward by Davies was £500 per mile with a projected annual cost of £11,500. The letter considered future maintenance by stating that annual provision for this would be £200 per mile, to be included in the figure of £500. Flat bottomed rails weighing about 38 pounds per lineal yard would be used. We also learn that the average weekly wage was, at that time, approximately £2 8s 0d per man.

Davies estimated that the works would occupy 50 skilled men for 6 months in construction, with another 60 for 3 months in unexplained 'manufactured materials'. Similarly, unskilled labour for the same period would be 470 and 250 respectively.

He averred that work on construction and refurbishment could start as early as 14 days following Ministerial confirmation that the loans asked for would be advanced. 'Practically all' of the land required had been purchased; expenditure already incurred included £6,150 for land, the purchase of the Croesor Railway

£11,518, legal and engineering expenses £12,000 and the construction of railway

between Portmadoc and Rhyd Ddu at £73,000. It should be noted that some of these figures refer to works undertaken years previously by the P.B.S.S.R. £3,000 had been spent on purchasing land at Carnarvon, though Davies acknowledged that this did not relate to the present application.

The Ministry could be assured that labour could be obtained from districts 'certified by the Ministry of Labour', presumably surrounding areas having high unemployment in the post World War 1 period.

The promoters, we are told, did not consider it prudent to apply to the relevant local authorities for a reduction in rates, nor to ask them to guarantee interest or dividends on capital. They were, after all, not only supporting the scheme but were advancing monies to the railway anyway! In this connection Carnarvonshire County Council was to advance £15,000, Portmadoc Urban District Council £5,000 and Gwyrfa Rural District Council £3,000. Carnarvon Town Council would advance £5,000 and Gwyrfa would increase its contribution to £5,000 if the extension to Carnarvon were to place. However, as we know the extension was never built.

Davies concluded the letter by saying that the Promoters were prepared to find 'any necessary balance over and above the contributions of the Government and the Local Authorities.'

References

¹ A schedule of works produced by Sir Douglas Fox and Partners on November 1st 1921 detailing the allocation of expenditure on labour and materials, and an estimate of the labour needed.

² Copy of letter reference F.S. 1042, headed *Portmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Light Railway* written by Evan R. Davies, from the Town Clerk's Office address in Pwllheli on 6th December 1921, and addressed to The Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, 7 Whitehall Gardens, London S.W.1. Both the documents were made available to the author by kindness of David Allan.

Sir Llewelyn Turner



Sir Llewelyn Turner's appearance in North Wales is yet another example of an entrepreneurial Englishman coming to the area in the 19th century to seek their fortune – or in many cases lose a lot of money down holes in the ground!

Llewelyn's father – William Turner (1766-1853) – grew up at Seathwaite near Broughton-in-Furness (then Lancashire) and his father was lessor of the Walmascar Slate Quarries. Hearing of slate beds in North Wales he hit upon a splendid vein at Diphwys and persuaded two Lancashire friends – the Casson brothers – to join him in working the quarry. Based on the success of this venture he was offered a partnership by Thomas Asseton Smith in the Llanberis Quarry (Dinorwic) on condition that he came to live at 'Parkia' on the northern outskirts of Caernarfon. This he had done by 1812 and here Llewelyn was born in 1823.

In 1859, at the comparatively early age of 36, Llewelyn Turner – by now a local solicitor – became Mayor of Carnarvon and was to remain in continuous office until 1870. In 1866 Carnarvon suffered the cholera epidemic that he had predicted as a result of the town's inadequate water supply and unsanitary living conditions.

Following the epidemic the town was visited by a government medical officer from London whose adverse report regarding the town's water supply enabled Carnarvon Town Council to negotiate a £10,000 loan to help finance a new water supply scheme. This was completed in April 1868 and the then Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) was invited to an official opening ceremony marked by a fountain in Castle Square.

Having been much involved with the affairs of Carnarvon town as Mayor – for which he was knighted in 1870 – it is not difficult to appreciate his involvement with an embryonic NWNGR. Along with such luminaries as Sir Richard Bulkeley Williams Bulkeley, Huddart and de Winton they formed the original promotional committee. He became one of the four initial directors along with Livingston Thompson, H.B. Roberts and J.H. Oliver – all of these gentlemen had interests in slate quarries or railways or both.

In the early years Sir Llewelyn Turner was also chairman of the NWNGR board and remained a director until 1900. With the NWNGR going into early receivership (1878) Turner was replaced by Russell as chairman, as the latter was also the Receiver! His 'Memories' mention friend-

ships with lawyers and yachtsmen; Russell would fall into both these categories.

He founded the Royal Welsh Yacht Club and as deputy constable of Carnarvon Castle did much to restore its fabric. Like his father before he served as Sheriff of Carnarvonshire and for many years was a volunteer on the lifeboat. By 1882 Turner had acquired a 50% lease in Brynaffram and Briach slate quarries on Moel Tryfan, which had no rail connection or mechanisation. Production was intermittent and by 1900 Turner was the sole owner but in 1901 he took the Bishop of Bangor and two others into partnership. It would seem that he inherited – along with his brother Thomas – an interest in Carreg Fawr slate quarry. Turner died in 1903 aged 80 – as a result of which the lease was surrendered and the Carreg Fawr company wound up.

It is further suggested that in the 1860s he had built as a fishing lodge Tan-y-Garreg (now called Plas-y-Coed) near Nant Mill at Betws Garmon. It was here that McKie lived whilst involved with building the Moel Tryfan Undertaking.

Refs

Memories of Llewelyn Turner – J.C. Vincent 1903

CLIPPINGS

North Wales Observer

Thursday 21 June 1923 page 8
"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."

North Wales Guardian

Friday 15 June 1923 page 3
"GWR Summer trains" includes: "The through service to and from Aberystwyth via Oswestry and to and from the Lleyn Peninsula via Dolgelly will form connections at Portmadoc with the newly opened Welsh Highland Railway serving Snowdonia." [GWR press release on their new timetable effective from 9 July 1923]

Research - Richard Maund

Parkia - home of Sir Llewelyn Turner



Picnic at Plas y Nant

By 1996 it was obvious that the FR would be rebuilding the WHR. The trackbed had lain fallow since the passing of the demolition train 54 years earlier and any remaining buildings had become progressively dilapidated. Nevertheless it seemed sensible to walk the whole trackbed from Dinas and record any remains from NWNG and WHR days. This was to be organised in several stages giving plenty of time for thorough examination.

Eventually, in the summer of 1997, the Trackbed Survey Party – which varied in personnel on each occasion – reached the Plas y Nant bow bridge one lunchtime.

How the Welsh Highland Heritage Group was Born

This provided the ideal spot for a picnic with the Afon Gwyrfaï's music gurgling in the background. It was against this idyllic backdrop and from idle lunchtime chatter that the concept of a WHR



*L- R Michael Davies, Cedric Lodge, John Keylock & David Allan
Photo Alan Donaldson*

heritage group was borne. After all, the FR had one, so why shouldn't we! David Allan – whose idea the trackbed surveys had been – was volunteered as chairman; Michael Davies agreed to be treasurer and John Keylock both secretary and membership secretary.

Subsequently Cedric Lodge was invited to join the committee as representing the

WHR Society. The first journal appeared in November of the same year. So the group came into being, independent, feisty yet constructive, and with the initial objective of saving as much as possible from the inevitable destructive element of reconstruction.

Business with Pleasure

Forty years ago Dinas – to this writer – meant Caernarvonshire County Council, Gwynedd Rivers Authority & Eryri Water Board, all of whom had depots there. On behalf of the Manchester based company that I represented, business was done with all three organisations.

John Keylock Combined Both

The Water Board utilised the engine shed for road vehicle maintenance, thus finding a continuing use for the inspection pit with its still embracing line of rails.

I provided the Water Board with equipment for their favourite occupation – digging holes in the road – and an hydraulic crane for one of their lorries. Gwynedd Rivers Authority occupied the building recently acquired by the railway and it was here that they maintained and repaired their Priestman dragline

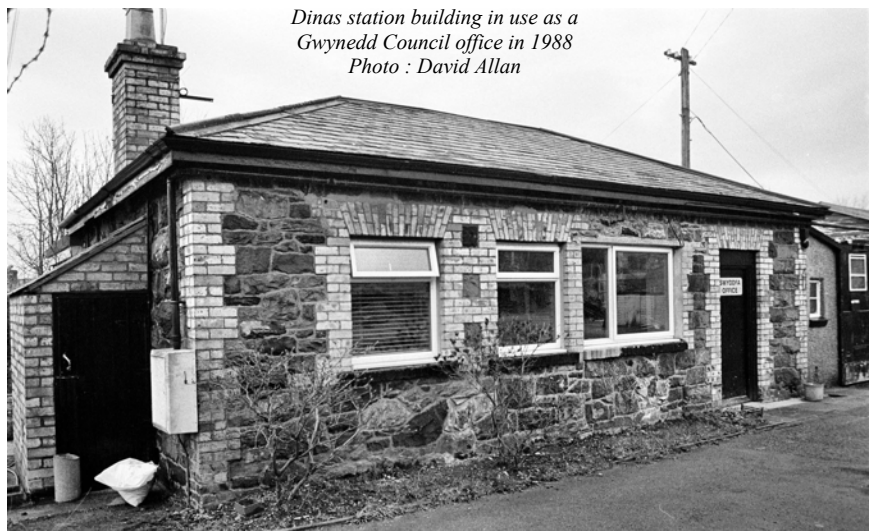
excavators brought in by low-loader.

A Mr Askew was the plant manager and he had a primitive little office immediately on the right as one entered from the 'station' end. Business here was mainly Dorman diesel engine spare parts for the Priestman excavators.

The County Council occupied the 'station building' for their local area office. Entering by the door on the original platform side one was confronted by a

five foot square 'reception area' with a hatch to knock on for enquiries.. The Council purchased equipment to use with their compressors; air hose and couplings, drill rods rip bits and pneumatic breaker steels. More digging holes in the road!. There was a smaller depot at Pwllhelli, but the main location – with a plant manager was at Llandegai.

And so it was that I was able to integrate '64 Coy business with four to six weekly visits on business in North Wales



*Dinas station building in use as Gwynedd Council office in 1988
Photo : David Allan*

REGULATIONS FOR CROSSING THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY AT PORTMADOC.

Regulations for Welsh Highland trains to cross the Cambrian were understandably both implicit and pointed. The General Manager issued these instructions to drivers on 28th May 1923



(1). All trains approaching the Great Western Railway Level Crossing must stop at the Stop Board and whistle as follows:-

Up Trains	-	1 long, 2 short.
Down Trains	-	2 long, 1 short.

A driver failing to comply with this regulation will render himself liable to dismissal.

(2). When a train may cross the Great Western Railway, the Great Western Signalman will display a green flag by day and a green light by night as an "all clear" signal.

(3). On receiving the "all clear" signal from the Great Western signalman, the driver, after seeing that the points are set for his train to pass, will take his train over the crossing without delay.

(4). Drivers must exercise the greatest caution in approaching and crossing the Great Western Railway line.

(5). The Stationmaster, or person in charge, of Portmadoc New Station must personally see each train in both directions over the crossing and report any irregularity in working.

(6). The Stationmaster or person in charge must see that the lamps on the stop boards are lighted while trains are running during the hours of darkness.

S.E.TYRWHITT.

PORTMADOC

28th May, 1923.



Tyrwhitt's letter of instruction was further amplified by the following additional set of instructions on how the operation to cross the Cambrian was to be implemented

The Croesor Railway Level Crossing will be in the charge of a Porter Signalman, who will hand-signal all the Welsh Highland Railway trains and engines over the crossing.

Permission must be obtained from the Signalman at Portmadoc East Box by means of the telephone, before any of the Welsh Highland Railway trains of engines are allowed to pass over the crossing, and the Porter Signalman at Croesor Crossing must send the following message:

"May Welsh Highland Railway Train (or Engine) pass over the Crossing?";
and if permission can be given the Signalman at Portmadoc East Box will reply:-

"Yes, Train (or Engine) may pass over the Crossing."

If permission cannot be given, the reply must be "No", and the man in charge of Croesor Crossing must exhibit a red flag or light to the Driver of the Welsh Highland Railway Train or Engine.

The telephone messages must in all cases be repeated by an exact repetition, and the time sent and received recorded in the Train Register Books.

When permission is received, the Porter Signalman must place the Main Line Signals to danger, and after the Welsh Highland Railway Up or Down Train or Light Engine, as the case may be, has come to a stand at the Stop Board fixed near the Catch Points, he will – provided the line is clear – close the Catch Points fixed on the Welsh Highland Railway, and exhibit a green flag or light for the passage of the Welsh Highland Train or Engine.

As soon as the Welsh Highland Railway Train or Engine has passed over the Crossing clear of the Catch Points, the Catch Points must be opened, the Main Line Signals placed in the "All right" position, and the Signalman at Portmadoc East Box advised accordingly.

When practicable, permission for the use of the Crossing should be obtained when a Welsh Highland Railway Train or Engine is seen approaching from the direction of Beddgelert, or as soon as a Train or Engine whistles to cross from the direction of the Harbour; the Catch Points however must not be closed until the Train or Engine has been brought to a stand at the Stop Board near the Catch Points.

The Signalman at Portmadoc East Box must not give permission for a Welsh Highland Railway Train or Engine to pass over the crossing if a Down Passenger Train has been accepted from Penrhyndeudraeth, or the Signals have been lowered for an Up Train to leave the platform or yard for the direction of Minffordd. The crossing may also be used for five minutes after a Down Goods train has left Penrhyndeudraeth.

Except during foggy weather or falling snow, if it is found necessary for a Welsh Highland Railway Train or Engine to pass over the crossing before a Workmen's Train proceeding from Portmadoc to Minffordd only, has returned to Portmadoc East Box, or before a Goods Train or Light Engine proceeding from Portmadoc Granite Siding or Minffordd only, has returned to Portmadoc East Box, this may be permitted up to the time such Train or Engine is observed leaving or passing Granite Siding on the return journey.

Drivers of Trains, or Light Engines, proceeding from Portmadoc East Box to Granite Siding, or Minffordd only, and returning without going through to Penrhyndeudraeth, must when the Electric Train Tablet for the Portmadoc and Penrhyndeudraeth Section is handed them, be verbally instructed by the Signalman that on the return journey they must regard the line as clear to Traethmawr Railway Level Crossing Down Home Signal only.

The Welsh Highland Railway Trains and Engines, when approaching, or waiting to use the Crossing, will give the following whistles:-

Up Trains or Engines: 1 long : 2 short.

Down Trains or Engines: 2 long : 1 short.

Photographs

Opposite page

This well known picture appears to be carefully posed to highlight the diligent staff with one flagman, a high and low level lookout and a watchful engine driver!

Bottom left : 'Russell' with her train on the crossing -the flagman has disappeared but at least the main line signal is set to danger.

Bottom right : '590' & train successfully negotiating the crossing.
(Courtesy FR archives)

This page right : Crossing gates closed , three 'Beware of trains' notices in evidence - all seems to be neat and tidy and in order.



A Tenuous Connection!

The Pwllheli, Nevin and Porthdinllyn Light Railway Order became effective in 1900 as a scheme to link Pwllheli with the North coast of the Llyn Peninsula. The Pwllheli terminus would have been near the town terminus of the municipal Horse-drawn tramway to South Beach. Even though the gauge was to be 4' 8" ½ inches there is no suggestion of a direct connection with the Cambrian although they would be given the option to construct and operate it. Steam or electric traction could be used. Solicitor to the scheme was the ubiquitous Evan R Davies of Pwllheli Town Hall.

Engineers to and promoters of the scheme were the North Wales and District Light Railway and Electric Power Syndicate Limited a company incorporated in May 1900 to carry on the business of an electric

John Keylock on the complex politics of the PB&SSR

traction and power syndicate as electricians & electrical & mechanical engineers & construct tramways and railways. The company's Memorandum of Association authorised the selling of all or part of the syndicate for such a consideration as it may think fit. By August 1900 Evan R Davies, Frederick Francis Bennett & Aubery Ward Thomas – both electrical engineers of Manchester had each taken up a single share. By October 1902 Bennett had been replaced as a functionary by John Wylie Donaldson – of the same firm as Ward Thomas who then took up a single share. By 1905 Bennett had sold his share and by the end of 1908 the syndicate's liabilities exceeded the estimated expenditure on this abortive railway where Davies was the biggest creditor and being a solicitor he probably got paid.

In December 1900 the Northern Counties Traction Company Limited was incorporated with the main objectives worded similarly to those of the aforementioned syndicate but with no mention of constructing tramways or railways. The company could however supply electricity to provide motive power. Most importantly the individuals involved had many noteworthies among the seven initial promoters W.D Glover,



Terminus of the horse-drawn Pwllheli tramway to South Beach

cable manufacturer of St Helens, G.E Heyl-Dia with a cable company in Warrington, two Oppenheim solicitors from St Helens and three accountants.

The company's registered office was at Oppenheim's Bank Chambers in St Helens. By April 1901 four of the 'heavyweights' were involved taking up 100 shares each – as opposed to single shares taken up by the original subscribers. Those with the money were Joseph Beecham, William Pilkington, (both of St Helens and still familiar household names), Duncan McKechnie (of McKechnies Chemicals in Widnes) and AWS Pearson, gentleman of London. By July Beecham, Pilkington and McKechnie had invested in a further 100 shares each, By March 1903 there were three electrical engineers 'on board', they having seemingly persuaded two of his cable colleagues to take up a share each. In May Heyl-Dia resigned and Pearson had died.

So it was that the Northern Counties Traction (N.C.T. Co.) got the PB&SSR scheme off the ground in 1900 with Davies being solicitor to the embryonic railway (see WHH No. 42 p 7) and Bennett and Ward Thomas engineers along with A.M. Fowler M.I.C.E. F.S.I. of Westminster. As far as Bennett and Ward Thomas were concerned they would have been able to survey for two railways while in North Wales and pure speculation suggests that Davies may have recommended their services to the Northern Counties Traction Co. Initial steps were the acquisition of the Croesor Tramway (currently styled the Portmadoc, Croesor, & Beddgelert Tram Railway Co.) and paying for the Bill's passage through

Parliament, to which end the necessary money, loaned by Parr's Bank, was deposited with the Paymaster General. Speaking in favour of the PB&SSR Bill in 1901 Lloyd George – seemingly not wholly conversant with the facts of the matter said 'it would be good for the tourists to ascend Snowdon by a nice electric tram instead of by a shaky char-a-banc as at present'!

Two years on – 1903 – the North Wales Power & Traction Co Ltd was floated as a result of the involvement of Messrs Tomlinson and Platt. Beecham was a 'key' player and the company set about acquiring the assets of the N.C.T. Co; the PB&SSR Act 'Croesor Tramway' (£12,000) and all relevant plans, sections, estimates and drawings'.

It has already been recorded (WHH No. 42 p 7-8) that Bennett and Ward Thomas were eased out in favour of the higher profile Sir Douglas Fox, Alfred Mountain Fowler was a similar casualty and in July 1904 took legal issue with Oppenheim with regard to his fees for work on behalf of the N.C.T Co which had started before Oppenheim claimed. Nevertheless Fowler was claiming a 5% fee which was the norm under similar circumstances. By this time Harper Bros had entered the scene and Fowler, based on his considerable experience, disputed the estimates provided by Walter Andrew Harper.

Whether Fowler – or indeed Bennett and Ward Thomas – ever obtained their just deserts will probably never be known, but at least they will have been alerted to steer clear of Oppenheim!

Croesor Picture Page

The Croesor Tramway is perhaps a somewhat neglected aspect of the Welsh Highland's history yet it preceded the completion of the WH by some 60 years. As readers of this journal will know its trackbed was used for the final three miles or so of today's railway between Croesor Junction and Porthmadog. Indeed it was responsible for establishing the right to cross the Cambrian Railway on the level at Porthmadog.

These pictures from Dave Southern's extensive collection show some of the dramatic structures necessary to bring down the slates won from the Croesor quarries to the slate exchange sidings known as Beddgelert Sidings which today form a part of the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway's Porthmadog operation. The Parc & Croesor wagon photograph is a part of the Heritage Railway's wagon collection



The Heritage Company Explained

The FR Heritage Co was effectively established in its current form in 2004. Its aim is to monitor heritage activity on both railways on behalf of the FR Board. Since its establishment the WHR has been completely re-instated so that colloquially the company is known as the 'F & WH Heritage Co'.

Currently the Heritage Board is chaired by Dr Dafydd Gwyn. Andrew Scott, late of the National Railway Museum is vice-chairman. Other directors are Robert Riddick (FR Trustee), Adrian Gray (FR Heritage Group secretary and Archivist), Paul Lewin (FR General Manager) and David Allan (Chairman WH Heritage Group).

Understandably, given the large amount of FR built-in heritage, the majority of members are FR orientated. Nevertheless they pay considerable attention to WHR heritage matters when they arise. The numbers and makeup of the board is currently under review and it is hoped that WHR representation will be increased.

So how do WHR Heritage Group activities relate to the 'Heritage Board'? Most significantly all heritage-oriented



'building work' - e.g. reinstatement of Beddgelert water tank and provision of replica waiting shelter at Pont Croesor has to be approved by the Heritage Company Board whose minutes in turn are agreed by the FR company board. A report on progress of each project is then made at subsequent meetings..

The Board has recently retrospectively approved a far-reaching application to CADW (Welsh equivalent of English

Left - right : Robert Riddick, John Alexander (secretary), Andrew Scott, Dafydd Gwyn (new chairman), Adrian Gray, Stephen Murfitt (out going chairman), Paul Lewin, & David Allan

Heritage) for a grant towards the maintenance of the historic Boston Lodge Top Yard and the creation of a visitor centre. It is now turning its attention to a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant Application which, if approved, will highlight the heritage of both the FR and the WHR to improve the passenger experience.

QUARRY POWER

Some members will receive – and read – 'The Snowdon Ranger'. In the current issue (No 76) there appears on p25 a programme of events for Sunday, 16th September. The third noted event is 'Tryfan Junction Station Opening – with a Special Train from Caernarfon'. The 'opening' will not take place until the building is complete and most certainly this won't be by September 2012!

However, the station will be staffed all day on the Saturday and Sunday of Quarry Power while trains are running.

The weekend is seen as an opportunity to promote Tryfan Junction as a destination – particularly for walkers – being the start of the recently completed slate trail footpath to Moel Tryfan and beyond.

PLANNING AHEAD

Accounts presented to the recent AGM showed a trading profit of £4,500 of which £4000 was approved as expenditure for the continuing restoration of the building at Tryfan Junction. Additionally it is planned to extend the platform by approximately 18 metres and based on our previous platform construction experience this will cost between £1500 and £2000.

Over 50% of our profit is generated by sales so we make no apologies for reminding members about some desirable items currently available at the quoted - delivered-by-post – price despite the recent increase in postal charges.

Wheeler's Day £19.00

The W.H. Story DVD £18.50

Journal Binders £9.50

10 new 'old' photographs 50p each

Orders to John Keylock - address on page 5

WEB SITE

Following the sad and untimely death of our web master, Keith Bradbury, last September we asked for volunteers. David Tidy was the first to respond and we are delighted to welcome him 'on board'.

David has made a cracking good job of re vamping the site following on from Keith's good pioneering work.

A look at the site is strongly recommended where there is always news of the latest Welsh Highland Heritage developments.

A feature to be added in the near future is information and pictures of that much neglected precursor on the route of the NWNG proposed extension to Caernarfon – the Nantlle Railway. You will find this under the 'features' section.

You will find the site at:-
www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk