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## RUSSELL RETURNS!



**Russell resplendent in the sunshine after her unveiling on Saturday August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014 - P.W. Liddell**

In 1906, the Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway placed an order with Hunslet of Leeds for a new 2-6-2 Tank locomotive. This was perhaps surprising for the P.B. & S.S.R. were focused on the building of a railway using electric traction. This might well have been a 'Plan B' from the P.B. & S.S.R. board, but through their close links with the management of the N.W.N.G.R. this locomotive, given the name 'Russell', when delivered that same year proved a valuable boost to the N.W.N.G.R. locomotive stock.

Between its introduction in 1906 to eventual final closure in 1937, Russell served the N.W.N.G.R. and the W.H.R. continuously, save for a period of repair from September 1929 to June 1931. During that time she underwent many modifications: some slight such as the modification of buffer beam profiles to aid jacking; some less so, such as the removal of the boiler top sand pot and the change from air to vacuum braking; and some dramatic (some might say downright catastrophic) where the shape of the locomotive was changed in a wholesale manner.

Russell survived the closure and, after spending time at Hook Norton and then on the Isle of Purbeck followed by a period at Tywyn under the care of the Tallyllyn Railway, she returned to



**Russell leaves Gelert's Farm for Pen-y-Mount with its first train, the Sponsors' Special, on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014 - P.W. Liddell**





**Russell unveiled to the public by Mark Smith, Vice Chairman of the Heritage Railway Association and Martyn Owen, Chairman of the W.H.H.R. - August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014 - P.W. Liddell**

the W.H.R., specifically the W.H.L.R. (1964) Ltd, in 1965.

Restoration was a long, protracted process which has been well-described elsewhere and the locomotive was eventually steamed for the first time at the end of 1986. She entered service with the W.H.L.R. at Easter 1987, restored nominally to original condition. Whilst rebuilt to the locomotive's original general shape, there were a number of detailed differences, e.g. welded rather than rivetted side tanks.

In this form the locomotive operated on the railway until 2004 when, 'out of ticket', it was withdrawn and subsequently dismantled for refurbishing and update. After carrying out significant work at the railway, the locomotive was later transferred to Alan Keefe Ltd for completion and final rebuilding. It was decided that, at the end of this process, the locomotive would as nearly as possible be in true original condition.

Today, therefore, we see as examples of this policy a newly-installed sand box at the top of the boiler and the reappearance of side tanks built to the original design and processes. The buffer beams are in original condition - hopefully we will not need the cut-outs originally introduced to aid jacking!



**Russell leaves Porthmadog (W.H.R.) for Pen-y-Mount with the 'Brass Ticket' special following her public unveiling - August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014 - P.W. Liddell**

Russell was officially unveiled in front of an invited audience on Saturday August 2<sup>nd</sup> after which she ran sponsor's trips between Porthmadog (W.H.R.) and Pen-y-Mount.

Later that morning, the locomotive was presented at Porthmadog for a public unveiling ceremony. After speeches by Martyn Owen and Mark Smith, Welsh flags were removed to reveal her nameplates.

Following this short ceremony, the locomotive entered service on the railway, starting with the 'Brass Ticket' special to Pen-y-Mount and back.

Hopefully the locomotive will run regularly on the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway for many years to come.

It is also to be hoped that, sooner rather than later, the locomotive will have the opportunity to run on some, or preferably all, of the routes that she operated over both for the N.W.N.G.R. and the W.H.R. up to final closure in 1937.



# WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE GROUP ARCHIVES

**A**t this year's A.G.M., the subject of the Group's archives was briefly discussed, and this short article has been prepared to let all members know the current situation.

The Archive consists of the following;

- i)** Original Material comprising of general paperwork, memos, letters, etc., record books such as the Beddgelert & Dinas Ticket Register and Beddgelert train Book, Tickets and Timetables etc;
- ii)** Photocopied material mainly from the recent XD97 collection at Gwynedd Archives;
- iii)** Hardware items comprising a N.W.N.G.R. enamel sign, Ladies Waiting Room sign, Portmadoc – Dinas carriage destination board, W.H.R. track gauge, Beddgelert & Dinas paper sign on wood, Hadfields enamel sign similar to that affixed to Dinas Goods Shed, BR warning notice (in Welsh) ex Dinas, 2 punch ticket racks and 2 W.H.R. rubber stamps;
- iv)** W.H.H.G. papers relating to the activities and projects of the group since its inception;
- v)** The vast collection of photographs built up over many years by John Keylock.

All the above are currently in my care in robust plastic storage boxes in dry conditions. The original paperwork is being thoroughly sorted and catalogued,

and where possible scanned and stored on a memory stick. When completed, a comprehensive list will be made available to all members on our web site and the originals deposited in Gwynedd Archives for the benefit of future historians. A list of photocopied documents from the XD97 archive held there has been compiled by Richard Maund and is available on our website for accessing for research purposes. The hardware items will be deposited in such a place as the Committee decides upon at a future date.

John's collection of photographs covers the W.H.R. from 1922 – 1936, it's predecessors (N.W.N.G.R., P.B.&S.S.R. etc), the late Bill Rear's views of the track bed taken in 1948, the abandoned track bed, reconstruction and modern day views. As one of John's executors, David Allan took the decision that ownership should be transferred to the Welsh Highland Heritage Group and that after sorting and removal of duplicates and non W.H.R. views, they would be deposited at Gwynedd Archives as the 'John Keylock W.H.R. Photographic Collection'. However, earlier this year a plan was put forward by the F.R. & W.H.R. Heritage Co to digitally scan all the F.R. photographs held in their archive and to place all originals in secure storage. Our Group was approached with a view to including the W.H.R. collection

in this scheme. This was agreed and a sum of £500 toward the project has been allocated by the W.H.H.G. Committee.

The collection has now been sorted and is packed and boxed ready to go to Dafydd Gwyn (F.R.&W.H.R. Heritage Co.) as and when required. It is assumed that the F.R. collection will be processed first before dealing with that of the W.H.H.G. Before any material is dispatched for scanning, there will be a 'memorandum of understanding' agreed between the Heritage Group and the F.R. & W.H.R. Heritage Co. setting out the terms of the arrangement. Whilst the Group already have full details and scans of all original W.H.R. views, we will also require a full and comprehensive list of all those photographs that have been scanned and / or retained by the F.R. & W.H.R. Heritage Co project.

Duplicate and non-W.H.R. prints are gradually being sold to raise funds for W.H.H.G., and as a result it has been possible to acquire a number of original items to further add to our archive. A record of sales and expenditure is being kept and so far, over £500 has been raised. A small balance is being retained, and I am pleased to announce that £500 has now been transferred over to the Group's account.

**DICK LYSTOR**

## A Russell Returns Postscript

Russell alongside the Cambrian Crossing Signal Box, now located at Pen-y-Mount Junction, on the occasion of her return to service on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014.

The locomotive was leaving its train to run around prior to returning to Porthmadog (W.H.R.).

Note the Gladstone Car immediately behind Russell with the Hudson Toastrack and the Buffet Car to the rear of the Gladstone.

Photo by M. Chapman



# A HISTORY OF THE NORTH WALES NARROW GAUGE RAILWAYS

For the last several years of his life, John Keylock had been working on a history of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways. At the time of his death, this work was incomplete. As a memorial to John and in recognition of his considerable effort in the preparation of his history it has been decided that this work will be completed and published. However, this will take some considerable time properly to accomplish.

John's vision for his history was as an 'Illustrated Chronology'. In the early days of the life of this Journal, a series of annual 'Chronologies' covering

Welsh Highland Railway history were presented (W.H.H. Issues 2 to 27). With the passage of time since their appearance - Issue 2 was published in March 1998 and Issue 27 in March 2005 - much has been learned and it is planned that these original 'Chronologies' be expanded, corrected where necessary and published in future issues of W.H.H.

As a lead-in to the eventual publication of these new Welsh Highland Chronologies, and in anticipation of the eventual publication of John's book, we will abridge and serialize his work in forthcoming issues of this Journal.

John's working title for his book was "The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways - As Pictorial a History as Possible". Whilst we will include some representative illustrations here, this serialization will not be as lavishly illustrated as the final book hopefully will be as we work through John's texts, notes and indications of the illustrations he had in mind when putting his work together.

As we prepare these abridged episodes and organize the completion and publication of his overall work, we will aim to generate a narrative and presentation of which John hopefully would have approved.

## Preface

That prolific writer of narrow gauge books Mr. J. I. C. Boyd will have instilled in many an enthusiasm for the narrow gauge in general and, perhaps, for 'matters Welsh Highland' - including its predecessor railways. Of these predecessors, Boyd expressed a particular fascination for the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways about which he was the first to set down a detailed history. As a railway that survived for so long against all the odds he suggested that the N.W.N.G.R. was a very worthy candidate for further research.

This volume is a modest attempt to set down the results of research during the past forty years with an emphasis on the people involved at all levels rather than the technical detail and specifications. As each individual enters the following chronology he is profiled in a wider context in an attempt to indicate the ramifications -

and indeed intrigue - of the period. Furthermore, despite its involvement particularly with the Portmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway, the writer has tried to portray the N.W.N.G.R. as an entity.

Between 1880 and 1920 photography was not today's popular and technologically advanced pursuit so that most photographs from that period fall into two categories; those taken by the amateur or early railway enthusiast and those from the professional with his plate glass camera mounted on a heavy wooden tripod. Because of this no apology is offered for the lesser quality of some of the photographs, on the contrary, one must be grateful for the fact that photographers sought out the N.W.N.G.R. to provide an archive, most of which is contained herein.

Compiling this book has been far from a solitary pursuit and the writer is most

grateful to those - separately acknowledged - who have contributed the results of their researches at the various sources of archival material. Modern technology, which was not available to Mr. Boyd, has helped considerably.

Compiling this essentially illustrated chronology has also been a pleasure to one who tends to live in the past and it is to be hoped that one has succeeded in conveying the flavour of the periods covered and in bringing the N.W.N.G.R. 'back to life'. The suggestion 'that there is a book in everyone' has also been fulfilled! That said the writer bears full responsibility for any errors that have crept in and is always open to correction and further enhancement of knowledge.

**J. Keylock 2012**

# The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway; As Pictorial an History as Possible.

**1.0** By the 1870s the standard gauge railway mania was well past and that progenitor of narrow gauge railways – the Festiniog Railway – had been serving its main purpose for forty years. However the slate quarries on Moel Tryfan and in the Gwyrfa Valley still had no access to either a main line railway or seaport whereas those at Bethesda and Llanberis had this facility thus giving them a competitive edge in the sale of their products. Likewise for the slate quarries of Blaenau Ffestiniog and more recently the Croesor Valley had access to Portmadoc – either harbour or main line – by way of the Festiniog Railway and horse-drawn Croesor Tramway respectively. Quarries in the Nantlle valley were also already rail served; even those in Cwm Pennant were linked by way of the Gorseddau Tramway.

**2.0** In consequence of this situation and to encourage the Victorian passion for travel a grand scheme of eight narrow gauge railways was devised to festoon North West Wales. The most ambitious element was the proposal to connect Caernarfon with both Portmadoc and Betws-y-Coed via Beddgelert. Ambition didn't stop at Betws-y-Coed – where

the line was to connect with the London and North Western Railway – as it was planned to extend as far east as Corwen to make connection with Great Western Railway, or even with the proposed Ruthin and Cerrig Railway. Because of this there were on the original promotional committee two gentlemen with Denbighshire interests.

As late as November 1871 – according to the North Wales Chronicle – 'there was contemplated the construction of a short line connecting the Moel Tryfan

quarries with the London and North Western Railway via a branch up the Betws Garmon Valley'. In the event, this was all that was ever built.

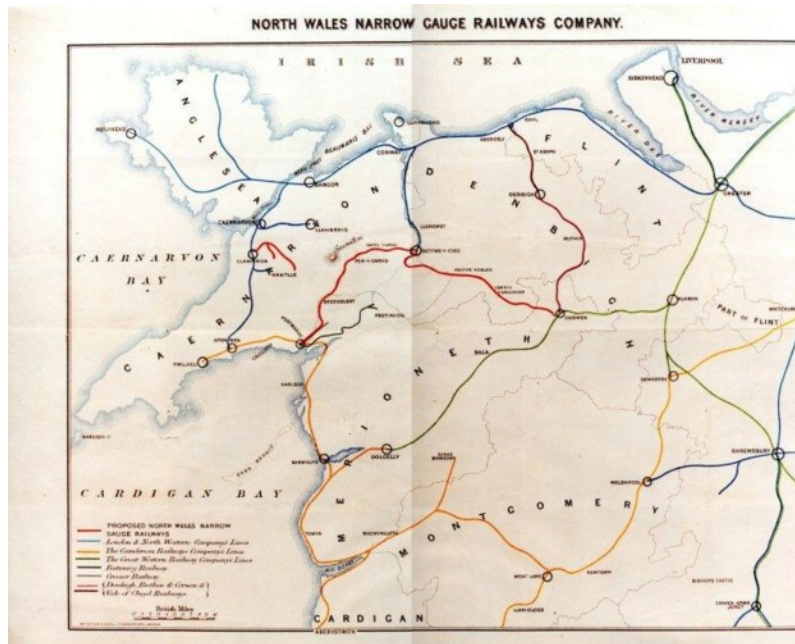
The August 1872 enabling Act of Parliament was in two parts: the 'General Undertaking' providing a railway from the Croesor & Portmadoc Railway (the Croesor Tramway until 1865) to Betws-y-Coed via Beddgelert; and the 'Moel Tryfan Undertaking'. This latter was to provide a line of rail from Llanwnda – three miles south of Caernarfon on the London & North Western Railway line from Bangor to Afon Wen – to Bryngwyn with a

May. The Lords made amendments which the Commons approved at the end of July. Royal Assent was granted on the 6<sup>th</sup> August.

**3.0** In the application to Parliament the line to Bryngwyn is thus recited: 'Railway No. 6 commences in the parish of Llanwnda on the east side of the Carnarvonshire Railway (later to be taken over by the London and North Western Railway) in a field called Caebellaf Alltgoch and belonging or reputed to belong to, George William Duff Assheton-Smith Esquire and in the occupation of the Reverend David Williams. (This suggests that said field

formed part of the nearby vicarage hereditament). The railway to terminate in a field on the Fron Heulog Farm at a point about four chains and fifty links measured in an easterly direction from the south east corner of the farm house. (This point being the top of the Bryngwyn Incline).

**4.0** And Railway No. 7 also commencing in the parish of Llanwnda by a junction with the proposed Railway No. 6 in a field called Waengarth (plans indicate that this was not the field in which the junction between



An early map showing some of the original N.W.N.G.R. Proposals. The map shows Railways No. 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7, but not Railways No. 4 (a short branch in Betws y Coed), 5 (a proposed branch to Penmachno) or 8 (a short line from Pwllheli to Porthdinllaen with the possibility of a connection to Railway No. 1 in Portmadoc).

'branch' leaving this line at Tryfan Junction and terminating at Rhyd Ddu on the western slopes of Snowdon. From Bryngwyn an incline would serve the slate quarries on Moel Tryfan. The significance of this section being designated the 'main line' lay in the potential revenue from the quarries.

The Bill for the 1872 Act was brought into Parliament by Mr. Osborne Morgan, Mr. Holland and Mr. Love-Jones Parry in February of that year. After three readings in the House of Commons the Bill passed to the Lords at the end of

the two railways was actually built) on a farm called Tyddyn Gwydd, again belonging, or reputed to belong, to George W. Duff Assheton-Smith, and terminating in the parish of Beddgelert in a field called Cae Mawr on Ffridd Isaf farm - Rhyd Ddu belonging, or reputed to belong to, William Griffith Esquire and in the occupation of Edward Owen.

**5.0** Powers to abandon the grandiose General Undertaking were obtained by an Act of parliament in July 1876. This particularly satisfied the London &



North Western railway who regarded the scheme as potentially competitive. In the event therefore, it was only the Moel Tryfan Undertaking (Railways No. 6 and 7) that was built as the North Wales narrow Gauge Railways Company. The plurality in the Company's name was a carryover from the original grand scheme.

**6.0** Inevitably those involved with promoting the Draft Bill were local gentlemen with legal, quarry and land-owning and/or other railway interests and the four listed subscribers, along with others, would be the first directors of the new company. The four concerned were Sir Llewelyn Turner, George Augustus Huddart, J.P. de Winton and Sir Richard Williams Bulkeley.



Sir Llewelyn Turner

**7.0** In 1859, at the comparatively early age of 36, **Llewelyn Turner (1823-1903)**, a solicitor living at 'Parkia' on the northern outskirts of Caernarfon, became mayor of the town and held the office constantly until 1870. In 1866 Caernarfon 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 Caernarfon Town Council to negotiate a £10,000 loan to 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 Caernarfon as mayor, for which he knighted in 1870, and being relieved of Mayoral duties it is not difficult to understand his interest in and involvement with an embryonic N.W.N.G.R. After all his father, a slate entrepreneur from Cumberland, owned Diphwys and Garreg Fawr quarries at various periods and was a partner in Dinorwic. The latter and Diphwys already benefited from railway connections to get their slate production to port or standard gauge railhead. He became founding chairman of the N.W.N.G.R. and remained a director until 1900. It would seem that he and his brother, Thomas inherited their father's interest in Garreg Fawr and by 1882 had acquired a 50% lease in Brynaffferan and Briach slate quarries on Moel Tryfan. In the 1860s he is reputed to have built Tan y Garreg (later to be renamed Plas y Coed) as a fishing lodge between Salem and Nant Mill (Betws Garmon). He died in 1903 aged 80.

**8.0 G. A. Huddart** lived from 1841 on the Brynkir estate in Cwm Pennant which had been the family home since 1809. He was a director of the F.R. and



The Site of Huddart's Crossing whereby the Gorseddau Tramway crossed the standard gauge near Portmadoc Station (looking north)

had interests in several local slate quarries, including Rhosydd of which he was a director. He is best remembered by 'Huddart's Crossing' of the Cambrian by the Gorseddau Tramway on the level adjacent to Y Cyt by the entrance to the

Welsh Highland Heritage railway station. This tramway ran over land belonging to the family estate but was out of use by the mid-1880s. Like his grandfather he saw himself as an inventor and with Spooner was co-patentee of a particular type of fishplate. However many of his inventions were unworkable being centred around perpetual motion machines.

**9.0 Jeffreys Parry de Winton** came to Caernarfon (where his mother had lived) from Brecon in 1854 and entered into a business partnership with Owen Thomas – a local man – at the Union Ironworks in St. Helen's Road. de Winton was about 25 years old at this time and had been trained as an engineering draughtsman in Liverpool. He soon became a member of the Harbour Trust where he is likely to have become acquainted with Llewelyn Turner who



A de Winton vertical boilered locomotive

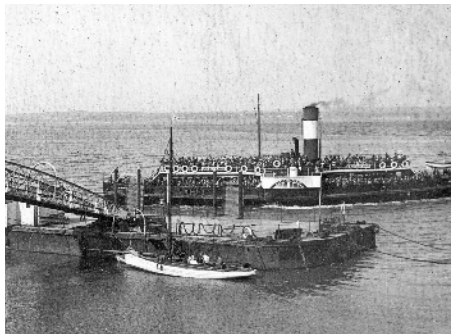


One of de Winton's surviving bridge beams - from the road over bridge near Betws Garmon Station on the N.W.N.G.R.

was of a similar political persuasion and who subsequently favoured him as his successor as town mayor.

In a railway context the company is best known for manufacturing vertical boilered 0-4-0 locomotives which were ideally suited for working the area's many slate quarries. Some of their bridge beams still exist.

**10.0 Sir Richard Williams Bulkeley, Bart. (1801-1875):** By 1572 the Bulkeley family was already settled in Anglesey their seat being Baron Hill, Beaumaris. They were, and remain to this day, substantial landowners and public benefactors. Sir Richard was the tenth baronet. He was twenty two years older than Llewelyn Turner and no stranger to transport. In the 1830s a stage coach carried the family name and in 1832 he married Maria Frances, daughter of Sir Thomas and Lady Stanley of Hooton on the Wirral. Two Eastham ferry steamers had been named 'Maria' after her in 1824 and 1826. In 1835, after their marriage, a further vessel was named 'Lady Bulkeley'.



**A Paddle Steamer at Eastham Ferry - taken from a contemporary lantern slide.**

Bulkeley and Turner first met when the latter was a private pupil at Beaumaris. Turner's early and lasting impression was of 'a gentlemanlike man in face, figure and carriage'. It is hardly surprising therefore, that he persuaded Bulkeley to be part of the N.W.N.G.R. promotional committee, followed by being a director until his death.

Sir Richard must have forgiven Turner for scrumping his walnuts in Beaumaris as a youth! Sir Richard was a J.P. and 'Chairman of the Court' as well as holding office as Carnarvonshire's Lord Lieutenant. Like Turner he was 'a man of the sea' and owned a fine schooner yacht. For a time he was vice commodore of the Royal Welsh Yacht Club which Turner had founded.

**11.0** The additional directors alluded to in paragraph 6.0 initially were three - they were Livingston Thompson, Hugh Beaver Roberts and J. H. Oliver. It would seem reasonable to suppose that these three gentlemen and the

forementioned directors were acquainted with each other before the formation of the promotional committee.

**12.0 Livingston Thompson (c.1810 – c.1874)** was a Dublin based attorney, who along with G. A. Huddart was on the initial board of the F.R. in 1832. By 1870 he was managing director and the largest shareholder. By virtue of his long service to that railway a double-Fairlie locomotive was named after him. He bowed out of N.W.N.G.R. affairs in 1873.

**13.0 Hugh Beaver Roberts (1820 - 1903)** was born in the village of Cilcain, Flintshire. Educated at Rugby School he quickly became a successful solicitor and in 1849 took over the practice of John Hughes in Bangor. He married Harriet Wyatt of Llandygai and lived at Bryn Menai in Upper Bangor where their five children were born. In 1858 he purchased the Plas Madog estate near Llanrwst.

Roberts' first involvement with railway promotion was in 1853 when he circularized landowners likely to be affected by the proposed Conway & Llanrwst Railway. It seems likely that this involvement caused him to meet McKie. In 1858 he moved to Llanrwst but was back in Bangor by 1861. But perhaps Roberts's main claim to fame was to provide the land necessary to build the Croesor Tramway – without wayleaves – which opened in 1864. This he was able to do having purchased the Croesor Estate in 1860. He granted that a Spooner-designed incline and tramway be built to connect the Rhosydd Slate Co's operations with 'the Croesor' and thus controlled and benefited from the carriage charges thereon. Earlier he had prepared the lease for the Gorseddau Tramway which would have brought him into contact with G. A. Huddart.

In 1872, having failed to persuade the F.R. to purchase, operate or amalgamate with the Croesor and Portmadoc Railway (which evolved from the Croesor Tramway in 1865) he offered to upgrade the relevant section of his tramway for incorporation into the southern end of the N.W.N.G.R. 'grand plan'. Furthermore it seems possible that Roberts persuaded Spooner to incorporate into the Moel Tryfan Undertaking the line from Tryfan

Junction to Bryngwyn for, as the owner of New Briach Quarry, he had a commercial interest in getting his slate by rail at least to Dinas Junction. Besides his railway and quarrying interests Roberts was a Justice of the Peace and variously Deputy Lieutenant for Merioneth, Member of the Bangor Board of Health, and political agent to the Hon. George Sholto Douglas-Pennant during the Parliamentary campaign of 1868.

By the mid 1880s he had disappeared from the scene, his death being registered at Bangor in June 1903.

**14.0 James Hewitt Oliver (1836-1902)** of Bryn Llewelyn, Tan-y-Bwlch and then Brondanw Isa (a tenement of what is now known as Plas Brondanw, Llanfrothen, home of the late Clough Williams Ellis) might not have had any railway connections (see footnote) but he was a major shareholder in and secretary of the Rhosydd Slate Co, where his brother, Richard, was the manager. G. A. Huddart was also a shareholder and it is more than reasonable to suppose that J. H. Oliver knew H. B. Roberts and H. V. McKie who will feature large as this chronology unfolds.

J. H. Oliver was born in County Wicklow in 1823 and was a military man being a Captain in the 3rd Merionethshire Volunteers while living at Brondanw.

When he died in London in 1902 aged 79, he had achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In 1873 the Rhosydd Slate Co. went into voluntary liquidation and J. H. Oliver was responsible for the winding up. He disappeared from the N.W.N.G.R. scene in 1876.

**Footnote:** At the time of the 1871 census he was visiting Stephen Lewin in Poole, Dorset. Could this have been to do with the possibility of Lewin's Poole foundry supplying locomotives for the N.W.N.G.R. or indeed for use at Rhosydd? Lewin supplied the locomotives 'Ant' and 'Bee' to the Laxey Mines Tramway in 1875.

**(To be continued.)**

# N.W.N.G.R. COVERED VANS

In W.H.H. Issue 40 (June 2008) Michael Bishop guided us through an historical account of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways' carriage stock, based on assessments of the Company's Board of Trade Stock Returns and their six-monthly accounts. At that time, he naturally noted the equivalent goods stock information but this was clearly outside the scope of his planned article and these additional notes have subsequently lain dormant.

Other historians when considering the Railway's goods vehicles have noted the same data sources but repeatedly have come across significant discrepancies between these sources, more often than not apparently due to differences in the perceived uses for particular vehicles and therefore in their descriptions by the particular recorders. Indeed, in previous histories these differences have often been described as 'irreconcilable'.

In parallel with John's history of the N.W.N.G.R., it would seem appropriate at least to attempt to shine some light into the murkier corners of the Railway's Goods Stock story. To do this we will look at what we know – in addition to the two sources noted above, our other main source will be photographs – and we will explore what we can deduce where we do not 'know'. Clearly there will be speculation, but if this is supported by reasoning others may wish to pursue the subject and hopefully offer additional clarification. I hope that this occasional series will prove productive!

So, starting with Goods Vans, what do we know?

From 1881 N.W.N.G.R. Accounts made specific reference to 3 "Covered Goods" wagons. In the 1906 Accounts this number reduced to 2 and between 1909 and 1912 it was reported as 1.

We know that the Railway operated at least two 'ridge top' covered wagons (figure 1) and that one of these wagons carried the markings "N.W.N.G.R. No 1" (figure 2). Photographs show us some detail of these wagons. For example in figure 1 we can see that they were fitted with round-headed 'chopper' couplings.

These wagons have previously been described as 'Gunpowder Wagons', but I prefer, at least for now, to treat that description with caution.

Now some speculation. It has been suggested (e.g. by Boyd in his *Narrow Gauge Rails in South Caernarvonshire*) that the 3 Covered Vans noted

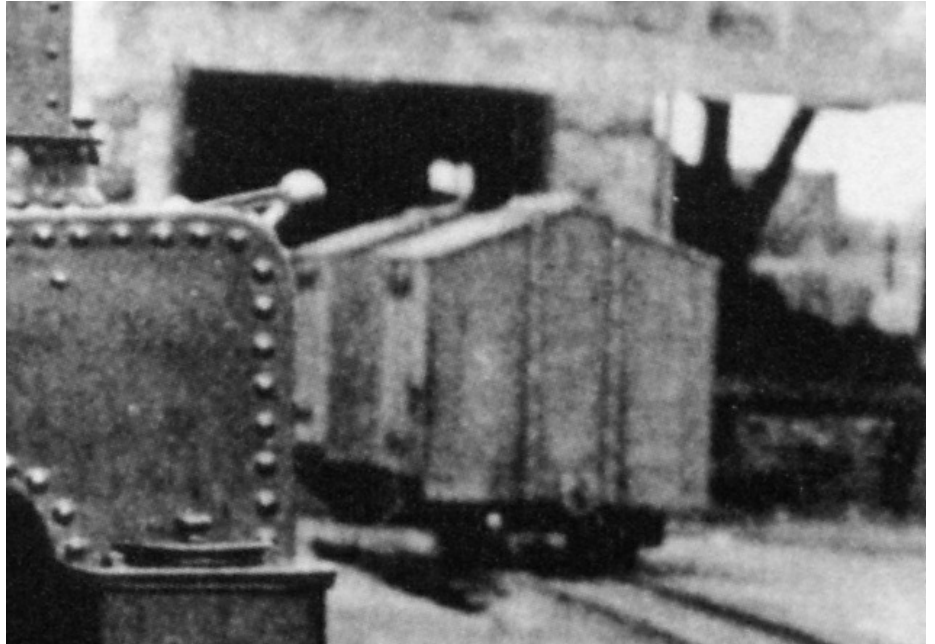


Figure 1 - Two N.W.N.G.R. Covered Vans photographed at Dinas Junction before the introduction of continuous braking (National Library of Wales).

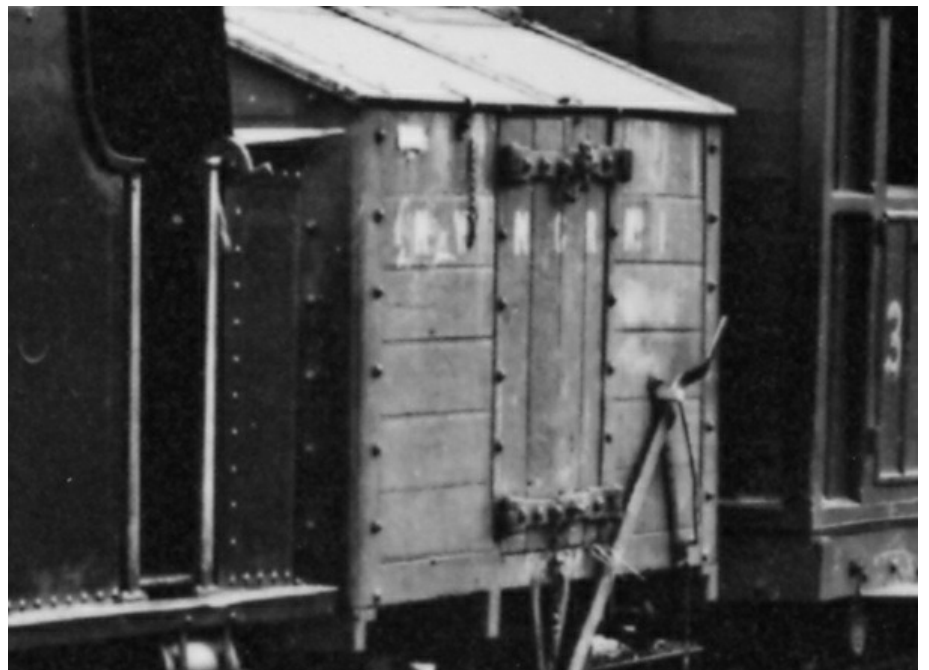


Figure 2 - N.W.N.G.R. Covered Van No. 1 photographed at 'Snowdon' (Rhyd Ddu), date circa 1892 (F.R. Archives)





Figure 3 - W.H.R. Coal Wagon No. 6 and Goods Van No. 2 at Dinas Junction in 1941 - H.C. Casserley

in the accounts comprised 2 of the 'ridge top' vehicles and one of the 'curved top' vehicles seen in much later Welsh Highland photographs. However, it seems far more logical to suppose that the Railway actually acquired 3 vehicles to the same design to handle their anticipated goods traffic.

If we compare figures 1 and 2 we can deduce, contrary to previous published assertions, that these vehicles had access doors on both sides and not just on the side opposite to the brake lever installation, unless, unluckily, the vehicle carrying 'No. 1' was different to the two seen in figure 1. Additionally, note in figure 1 the detail of the end structure on these wagons – we will return to this point later.

We know that in Welsh Highland days the Railway operated two covered Vans – No. 2 and No. 4 – both of which differed from the original N.W.N.G.R. vans and, additionally, which differed from each other. Figure 3, which was taken in 1941, is particularly interesting in that it shows Van No. 2 adjacent to one of the Railway's large open coal wagons. It has previously been suggested that this wagon carried the number '4', but close examination of the photograph shows that it was actually a somewhat smudged '6'. The similarities between the two vehicles are so striking, as is the fairly obvious height exten-

sion at the top of the van, that consideration of the large 'coal' wagons is warranted here.

At the time the N.W.N.G.R. Accounts were recording 3 'Covered Goods', they also noted 12 'Coal' wagons. This number increased to 14 in 1897 and reduced to 13 from 1909.

Boyd reports that "a House of Commons Sessional Paper for 1890 discloses 105 wagons fitted with hook and link couplers and 15 wagons fitted with 'Norwegian' type hooks and fitted with the usual eccentric with ball

so as to draw the chopper hooks close together and prevent buffer 'chatter'...." (N.G.R. in S.C. Vol. 1 p.252). Photographs show that it was common N.W.N.G.R. practice in the early days to couple their large open wagons and the ridge-top covered vans between locomotive and passenger vehicles in mixed trains (see figure 2). It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that the '15 wagons' specified in the Commons Paper were the 3 'Covered Goods' and the 12 'Coal' wagons noted in the Accounts at that time. Whilst we have photographic confirmation that this was indeed so with the Covered Vans, I am unaware of any equivalent photographic proof in the case of the coal wagons. What we do know from photos, however, is that at some stage the chopper couplings must have been removed from the coal wagons and replaced by simple dumb central buffers with hook and link – sometimes with side chains. The introduction of continuous braking to N.W.N.G.R. trains in the early 1890s presumably led to changes in practice which left the need for the choppers obsolete?

It is claimed that when the Welsh Highland took over N.W.N.G.R. goods stock, the inherited stock retained their original N.W.N.G.R. numbers. If we look through our collection of photographs at those which show the large open wagons, where



Figure 4 - N.W.N.G.R. Coal Wagon No. 2 at Bryngwyn (W.H.R. 109)



Figure 5 - W.H.R. Goods Vans Nos. 2 and 4 at Dinas Junction in 1935 (H.F. Wheeler)

the numbers are legible we can see Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 10 and 12. Of these only the photograph showing No. 2 was taken in N.W.N.G.R. days (at Bryngwyn at an undetermined date) (Figure 4).

As we have photographic evidence that one of the ridge top covered vans carried the number '1' and that one of the open coal wagons also carried the number '1', it seems reasonable to conclude that they were numbered in two separate series – Covered Goods Vans Nos. 1 to 3, and Coal Wagons Nos. 1 to 12 (later, presumably to include '13' and '14'?).

Photographic evidence that W.H.R. Vans Nos. 2 and 4 were rebuilt from N.W.N.G.R. Coal Wagons seems incontrovertible and consequently it would seem that specifically these Vans were rebuilt from Coal Wagons Nos. 2 and 4. The striking differences in the design of the two vans suggests that these rebuilds were carried out at different times, perhaps? (Figure 5). Note also the differences in the end detail of the late Vans (see Figure 3 for example) and the original N.W.N.G.R. Covered Vans (Figure 1) suggesting strongly that the later Vans were not rebuilds of these original N.W.N.G.R. vehicles.

According to the Accounts, in December 1906 there were 2 'Covered Goods' and 14 'Coal' Wagons. By December 1909 the Accounts reported only 1 'Covered Goods' and 13 'Coal' Wagons. Again we enter the realm of speculation, but does this suggest that between these two dates both of the surviving original 'Covered Goods' Vans were finally withdrawn and one of the 'Coal' Wagons was converted into a Covered Van, one van perhaps being sufficient to the Railway's perceived needs at that time?

Through the W.W.1 period and up to the transfer of the N.W.N.G.R. to the W.H.R., stock returns are confusing indeed. Even after this change matters remained confused as there was no mention specifically of 'Goods Vans' until 2 were noted in the Return for 1929, a total that remained in the Returns until they ceased in 1933. However, when the line item 'Goods Vans' appeared in 1929, there was a reduction in the number of vehicles reported as 'Open Merchandise and Mineral' from 21 to 19, balancing the overall numbers (an example of individual interpretation perhaps?).

If one of the Coal Wagons was converted into a Goods Van between

1906 and 1909, then which of the eventual 2 was this? It is tempting to suggest, based on its apparently greater level of sophistication (a relative concept with these vehicles!), that this first conversion was No. 4. We cannot know what processes led to the choice of a particular vehicle for conversion and it may be no more than a coincidence that the Railway had had Vans Nos. 1 to 3 and by this conversion they neatly had a Van No. 4. (If No. 2 was indeed a later conversion we significantly widen the valid date range for Figure 4).

It would appear that, at some time between the end of W.W.1 and the establishment of the Welsh Highland, perhaps even later than 1923, N.W.N.G.R. Coal Wagon No. 2 was converted into a Goods Van, retaining its original number, providing the Railway with a second Goods Van.

If so, we would appear to have photographic records of 7 of the original N.W.N.G.R. Coal Wagons and, as a bonus, photographs of one of these taken before and after its conversion into a Goods Van.



# From the Editor

## W.H.H. Distribution

As I put together Issue 63 of this Journal and prepared it for despatch, I couldn't help but muse over the costs incurred by printing and distribution. I also noted that I was, in parallel, sending out two copies of the Journal electronically - as I prepared the hi-res PDF file for the Printers I was also producing a lower-res, but in my view quite acceptable, file for electronic publication. For the technically-minded, the PDF file for the printer was sized at 14.7 MB whereas the 'electronic' version was only 1.53 MB, these days eminently 'e-mailable'.

Should any member wish to avail him or her self of an electronic rather than paper copy of W.H.H., would they please let me know (e-mail address on the back page) and I will amend my distribution lists accordingly.

Members taking up this option would practically, if indirectly, be providing additional support for the Group's Heritage endeavours.

I appreciate that not everyone would wish to pursue the electronic route. Perhaps like our late lamented Secretary some members might wish to remain 'technology free'. Perhaps some members might simply prefer a 'real' publication to read and keep.

However, every little helps!

## E-Mail Address Records

Whilst on the subject of 'electronic technologies', our Assistant Secretary writes;

Dear Members,

We have never asked for your email addresses but on a number of occasions a list would have been helpful. If you are willing to let the Group have your email address please send an email to

Mike Hadley:

mike@mandhahadley.co.uk

We give the following undertakings:

- 1) We will not sell, give away or otherwise dispose of your email address to anyone outside of the Group.
- 2) If we do send out emails to more than a few of you at any one time, we will send them 'blind copy' to reduce the likelihood of spam.

## Super Power 2014

Mike has also asked me to pass on a plea for assistance at this year's Super Power event. He writes;

Dear Members,

The Heritage Group is planning to have a small stand at Super Power 2014 which is being held at Dinas on Friday,

Saturday and Sunday 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> September. The purpose of the stand will be fourfold, to encourage an interest in heritage matters, to gain new members, to sell some of the Group's publications and to sell a few more of John Keylock's collection of railway books given to the Group.

Help will be needed to staff the stand. If you think that you may be able to help (even for only a short period), please contact Mike Hadley (on 01386 792877, on 07860 828876 or by e-mail at

mike@mandhahadley.co.uk)

Thank you!

## W.H.H. Issue 61

Reading through back issues of the Journal I now realise that the article "More than just a Trident" published on pages 8 to 13 of Issue 61 appears not to have been credited.

The author of this excellent article was MRFS - the same MRFS who WAS credited with producing Figure 11 in the "Chronicles of Beddgelert Siding (II)" on page 11 of the same Journal Issue. Hawk eyed readers may well have noted MRFS's logo on figures 12, 13 and 14 in the 'Trident' article.

With apologies to MRFS for the delay, I hope that this note finally sets the record straight.



Tryfan Junction station building is looking especially resplendent now that it is complete with its new name board, fitted by Cedric Lodge and Lewis Esposito on 13<sup>th</sup> July.

A decision on the day resulted in the board being mounted somewhat higher than the original and, of course, there is no longer that telephone pole that obscured the right-hand end of the sign in photographs of the original building.

Cedric has adopted slightly different materials and methods for this sign compared to his earlier examples hopefully to bring the result closer to original N.W.N.G.R. standards.

# Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis



Figure 1 (LGRP 2469)



Figure 2 (WHR 71)

Over the past several years I spent many an hour on the phone talking to our much-missed Secretary, John Keylock. More often than not, these conversations would gravitate to photographs and to discussing just what they were actually telling us. One of the last of these conversations,

sadly never to be brought to a conclusion, concerned the layout at the first Portmadoc 'New' station, for convenience often referred to as Portmadoc New (1923).

Figures 1 and 2 are well-known photographs of the station taken early in the life of the new Welsh Highland. Both photographs are dated to 1923 and have been published many times – the first is usually credited to L&G.R.P., and the second has been variously accredited, but in ways that hide the true identity of the photographer(s).

Note that when both these photographs were taken the station building lacked barge boards, but apparently was fully kitted out - interestingly (if that sort of



Figure 3 (WHR 209)

thing is of interest!) the soil pipe and waste vent associated with the toilets at the near end of the building is clearly visible in both images.

However, when these images are compared with one of the photographs taken by C. L. Mowat in 1926 (Figure 3), striking differences appear to emerge. The building now had had barge boards fitted but, more importantly, it appears that there had been a major change in the trackwork, extending the loop towards Portmadoc.

First, consider the detail at the near end of the left-hand platform. Whilst occulted by the double-Fairlie in the first image, the second shows the lamp at the end of the platform, presumably

lighting for the foot-crossing. The third image shows these same features in the same relationship to other elements of the station layout. On the right-hand side of both the first two images we can see that the end of the platform on that side of the layout was aligned with the foot-crossing and hence with the end

of the left-hand platform. However, there the similarities end.

Observe in Figure 1 the proximity of the turnout to the angle in the wire fence on the right hand side. This, coupled with a simple 'sleeper-count' in Figure 3 indicates that the turnout had been moved some considerable distance towards Portmadoc. The dark diagonal 'stripe' across the ballast between the two lines of track is suggestive of the former layout.

When last we spoke, John was not aware that the layout at Portmadoc (New) had been modified during the life of the W.H.R., and, I have to say, neither was I. Regrettably, we were never able jointly to clarify this little piece of history!