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HERITAGE OF THE WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY

Dafydd Gwyn, Chairman, Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways Heritage Limited, has offered his views on the subject of Welsh Highland Heritage.

The WHR has a rich and fascinating heritage, much of which is still being evolving, but it is also true that some NWNGR-era structures are becoming dilapidated and are in danger of being lost. The recreation of the station building at Tryfan Junction shows what can be done given dedication and resources.

Nevertheless, defining what exactly constitutes the heritage of the WHR is an interesting challenge, not least because it is an important first step to establishing priorities for conservation. As part of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid a number of years ago, the Heritage Company drew up and agreed with the Railway Company and the Trust a statement for the WHR, following the basic principles set out by Cadw and other heritage organisations.

The Welsh Highland Railway is of international historic significance for the way in which it:

- Exemplifies influence and application of the Ffestiniog Railway's innovative technologies to provide a cost effective transport system suitable for developing countries
- Makes innovative use of modern steam locomotives
- Represents a significant level of survival of engineering/infrastructure from the 1870s -1920s

It is of international significance as a source of evidence for/knowledge of:

- 19th/early 20th century railway engineering and technology
- 20th/21st century railway engineering and technology

It is of social and community value as:

- A sustainable means of recreation and access to natural and human heritage for millions of visitors and passengers
- A railway with a strong local/regional following
- A provider of training and education for young people
- An exemplar of the possibilities of voluntary action – relaying 40 km (25 miles) of track and complete rebuilding of railway by volunteer effort

This much forms the basis of any application that might be made to a grant-awarding body for funding, but how might this translate into practice?

The FR/WHR Company's policy is that heritage projects on company property (be it real estate, rolling stock, archives, interpretation, etc) or using or affecting company funds, time or business, can only be allowed after Company Board approval; one role of the Heritage Company is to filter these projects and advise the Company Board which ones have heritage merit. The Heritage Company is more likely to identify as a priority projects where assets are in danger of being lost and where conservation or restoration is sustainable – in other words where whatever is being conserved is potentially useful or remunerative. Until final Board approval, no fundraising or work should be carried out, other than for exploratory reasons. A maximum of two projects from a single group can be on the general railway work programme at any time.

Clearly the conservation or preservation of heritage should not necessarily always be driven by the principles of utility or revenue. However, even the Heritage Lottery Fund has had to learn the reality that heritage projects need to be 'sustainable', however that might be determined.

Pen-y-Mount Signal Cabin

I am sure that readers will be well aware of the historical background to the construction of this building - originally intended as a replica crossing box for Cambrian Crossing (now Cae Pawb). Various problems emerged with siting it at the original junction, and so a decision was made to construct it at Pen-y-Mount Junction, which is the point where the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway joins the Ffr/WHR. Edward Dorricott's excellent

Mike Hadley has provided this update of recent developments as we work towards completion of the signal cabin at Pen-y-Mount

faithful copy of the original design, seemed more designed to let water in rather than keep it out – and the false flue was wonky.



Paint 'research' continues on the the Cabin exterior - note the improved access steps and the glimpse of the lever frame nestling within

article in *WHH* 41 details the origins of the original box which was probably a Dutton & Co., Type 4. It would have been made at their premises in Worcester right next to Shrub Hill Station (incidentally, also next to the famous 'Vinegar Branch' crossing where road traffic was brought to a halt by a Great Western lower quadrant signal!).

The intention is that the cabin will house the control equipment for Pen-y-Mount Junction. John Keylock initiated its construction (as a kit), negotiated its current location and oversaw the construction of the basic frame on site, which is the point at which the writer became involved following John's untimely death.

The aim was that once complete the WHHR would take over the building, but on my first meeting on site with their representative it became obvious that there were problems. Its construction quality was described to me by the WHHR in somewhat disparaging, but true, terms: basically the building was too 'lightweight' and a whole host of detailed problems emerged. We had the roof slated, only to reveal further problems – the verge/fascia board treatment, whilst apparently being a

John had kept much of the construction information in his head, including what was actually in the 'kit of parts' supplied by the manufacturer. Although the basic frame was up, there was much left to finish, and so a colleague of mine from the West Midland Group (of the WHRS) and I spent much of a weekend locating the remaining parts (on a wagon in Gelert's Farm) and listing them. The only major items missing were the finials, which I don't think the manufacturer ever supplied. I had never taken much notice of

finials, but I soon realised that the subject is anything but simple, and I am so grateful to Edward Dorricott, who provided photographs of the type plus dimensions so that we were able to instruct a wood turner to produce these 'missing' items.

I live in the Midlands and work full time, so trying to deal with a building 150 miles away is not easy, and matters were moving slowly until Stuart McNair suggested that two local volunteers might be persuaded to work on the cabin. Stuart has given continuous and invaluable help and guidance to the Heritage Group on its buildings. The two volunteers, Lyndon Cooper and Steve Broomfield, were fresh from working on the new signal cabin at Harbour Station and have brought the project forward by leaps and bounds over the last 12 months: the entire inside has now been insulated and dry lined, the fascia boards and finials fitted, the windows glazed and the grossly inadequate steps (fixed to the frame with 6" nails by the manufacturer) remodelled and substantially rebuilt.

I do have to report one conundrum, however, which, if any are still awake by now, a reader of this article may help solve. Are there any paint experts out there? The paint colours were obtained by talking to a number of experts and modern paint codes were found.

The paint was duly ordered from Huws Gray in Porthmadog. It is from the Johnsons 'Professional Trade' range and was horrendously expensive for primer, colour coded undercoat and top coat. Volunteers from the West Midland Group prepared and painted the outside of the building last year, only to have significant areas of it bubble and flake off over the next few months. Some say that the wood was not completely dry, others that the cladding was too thin or that there was something wrong with the primer. Answers on a postcard please! The West Midland Group volunteers returned in the late summer, sanded the loose paint off, applied Ronseal to 'seal' the now bare wood and applied primer. The intention is to see how the paint survives the winter before applying undercoat and top coat again.



The Cabin interior with a view of the lever frame awaiting what hopefully one day will be regular use!

What is left to do? Finish the painting, fix the rainwater goods (O-Gee but black pvc I'm afraid – because of cost) and replace the door (another story!)

Many people have given their practical help and assistance so far to this project, and I would like to thank (in no particular order): Stuart McNair, Edward Dorricott, Lyndon Cooper, Steve Broomfield, John Holmes (of the WHHR), the West Midland Group and also the, as yet unknown, reader of this publication who is going to tell me why the paint fell off!

HUGH DAVIES JONES - BEDDGELERT STATIONMASTER

1923 – 1927

Further research at Gwynedd Archives, together with much help from Gwenant Roberts of the Beddgelert Historical Society, has enabled a fuller history of Hugh (Huw) Davies Jones, the stationmaster at Beddgelert to be prepared.

He was born Hugh Davies at Blaenau Ffestiniog in July 1895, one of five children of quarryman William Davies and his wife Laura. Sadly his mother died soon after the birth of her fifth child, and the decision was taken to foster out the youngsters to various relatives in the area. Hugh was taken in by his uncle and aunt, Mr & Mrs Evan Jones, who lived at Creuau Farm, Tanybwllch, whereupon he took the additional surname Jones. (For ease, I will refer to him as HDJ throughout this article).

When he was older, he joined the police force at Wrexham, before returning home to Creuau Farm in 1919, and taking the job as Stationmaster at Tanybwllch, a position he held until 1923. According to FR records, he also spent some time during this period at Penrhyndeudraeth station, maybe acting as a holiday relief.

With the opening of the Welsh Highland Railway due to come into force on June 1st 1923, HDJ was among several Festiniog Railway employees who were moved over to the new line. On May 12th, he was notified by S.E.Tyrwhitt that he was to take charge temporarily of "Beddgelert New Station" from the 19th instant, at a wage of £3-4-5 per week. The word temporary was to prove significant in years to come! Replying to Tyrwhitt two days later, he was keen to ascertain that as the position at Beddgelert was only temporary, his place as Stationmaster

Dick Lystor has been carrying out more research into Welsh Highland employees

at Tanybwllch would be kept open for him. He also wanted to know if he was entitled to privilege tickets. Tyrwhitt promptly replied that his position at Tanybwllch would be kept open for him, reiterating that the move to Beddgelert was only a temporary one. He also had good news regarding the privilege tickets! The word temporary was again stated in Tyrwhitt's letters of May 29th regarding staffing arrangements sent to all concerned.

Once settled down at Beddgelert, HDJ married and went to live at Tai Sygun and the couple had a daughter. At some time he opened a business in the village at Waterloo House, which is now the Bistro. There is no mention of what form the business took, but early OS maps show the building to be the village post office, so this maybe a possible explanation. His running of the station, and that at South Snowdon, is given in some detail in my previous article in *WHH* Issue 66, and nothing further can be added until we reach 1927 - his final year on the WHR.

In March of that year it would seem that running both station and shop were becoming too much for him, and on the 16th he wrote to Robert Evans enquiring into the possibility of getting a transfer back to the FR. He also mentioned that he was going to try and sell the shop as it was affecting his health. He enclosed the letter from Tyrwhitt that he had received when he first went to Beddgelert, and the following day

submitted an application for transfer. Clearly, he had not forgotten Tyrwhitt's promise, or that the job at Beddgelert was temporary!

Evans passed this correspondence on to Col. Stephens, adding at present there were no vacancies on the FR. Over the next few days, memos and letters flew back and forth between Evans and Stephens, with the latter claiming that Tyrwhitt's letter did not apply owing to 'another transaction' which apparently took place. Unfortunately the file does not shed any light on this. Thus HDJ's promise of a return to Tanybwllch, reneged upon by Stephens, was effectively dead and buried.

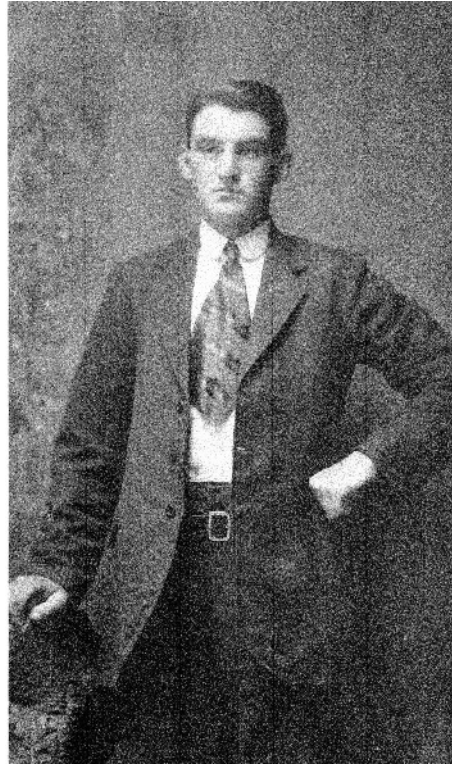
Evans saw HDJ in late May and was told that although he was feeling better in himself (he had been confined to his bed a few days previously), the doctor had strongly advised him to sell his business. He went on to say that as train services were to be increased from June 6th, this would require him to attend the station more frequently, and if the Company were prepared to pay him his old rate of £2-8-5 per week, he would be content to remain at Beddgelert. At this time, his wages had fallen to a mere 30s per week!

Stephens would not agree to this, stating that he did not want to start a full time agent at Beddgelert. It is therefore clear that since being taken on as full time Stationmaster in June 1923, the job had at some stage become part time, with a consequent drop in wages. This may have occurred after he was laid off in December 1924 – not returning until June 1st 1925. Further discussions took place between Evans and Stephens regarding his wages

culminating in a statement that even if HDJ got a transfer back to the FR at Penrhyn or Tanybwllch, he would not get any more than a Porter-in-Charge rate of £2-0-9. Stephens agreed to pay him this rate, and it was down to Evans to put this offer to him on 17th June. In his reply a couple of days later, HDJ expressed his surprise at the offer, saying that after having faithfully served eight years as Stationmaster, this was his reward, bringing him down under the level of a platelayer's ganger. He thought the whole thing absurd to expect a man with a family to bring up, to live on such wages. Stephens, having read his letter, promptly wrote back to Evans saying that it looked likely that he would have to look out for someone else, if "*Jones was unwilling to act as a part time man*". For good measure he added that expenses on the WHR had to come down rather than go up if the line was to be kept open at all! Ultimately, facing the prospect of having no job at all, HDJ reluctantly accepted the offer and carried on during the rest of that Summer, no doubt feeling somewhat let down to put it mildly. After all, he hadn't requested to move to Beddgelert, and did so on the understanding that it was only a temporary posting with the promise of a return to Tanybwllch. Now he was a part time employee on 30s a week, bad health, and a shop he was trying to sell, and little prospect of seeing any improvement in his lot.

However, far worse was to befall HDJ on October 18th 1927. He was not on duty that day, and an incident at the station ultimately, sadly, led to him being dismissed from the Company. On that fateful afternoon, employees of W.S. Jones – the local carrier – were engaged in shifting empty coal wagons from the coal siding to enable them to remove a full wagon onto the main line. The key to the siding padlock was obtained from HDJ by one of W.S.Jones' employees, the siding was unlocked and a prop inserted to keep the points

open. Once the loaded wagon was out on the main line, the prop securing the points dropped out and the wagon started to roll down the gradient before the siding could be opened. Despite frantic efforts by all concerned, the loaded wagon could



Hugh Davies in the early 1920's.

not be stopped and had gained speed and ran away toward the Goat tunnel, finally becoming derailed at Brynyfelin bridge. W.S. Jones then drove his lorry along the Aberglaslyn Pass road and successfully warned the guard of the 3.10 down train from Portmadoc, Dafydd Lloyd Hughes, and a collision with the derailed wagon was avoided. The four passengers on board this train continued their journey by bus.

An enquiry was held into this incident on the 26th October at Beddgelert and evidence was heard by all concerned. The wagon in question was coal wagon no. 4 which, although being a braked vehicle, the brake handle had recently got broken thus rendering the brakes ineffective. It appeared that this damage had been done before the wagon left Dinas, and should not have been used in traffic.

More worryingly, although there was conflicting evidence as to there being a lock on the coal siding points, all stated that the key on the Beddgelert – Croesor Junction train staff had been missing for some time and had not been reported. Indeed, HDJ in his evidence told the enquiry that he had a spare key in his office which was used to unlock the points, but had not reported the loss of the key on the staff to the Traffic Office.

In his report to Stephens of the enquiry, Evans concluded that there had been very loose working at Beddgelert, and since the mishap new standard locks and keys were being supplied not only to Beddgelert, but on all other points to Portmadoc. All guards were to be instructed to record in their journals when point keys were not attached to the proper staff for their section. To make matters worse, on returning to Beddgelert after the enquiry, Evans had found no lock on the staff cabin at Croesor Junction, a situation which had existed for some time. It was suggested a new lock be put in place and keys attached to both the Portmadoc - Croesor Junction and Croesor Junction - Beddgelert train staffs, and keys given to the ganger of the section and the linesman to enable them to use the telephone in the cabin.

On hearing of the missing key on the Beddgelert - Croesor Junction train staff, Stephens wrote a terse letter to Evans on November 1st, telling him that he could not trust a man who had allowed this to go unreported, and that a new station agent would have to be found. The following day Evans was told to supply office keys to delivery agent W.S.Jones, the ganger and the guard so that they could use the telephone. Stephens also required an explanation from guard Hughes as to why he hadn't reported the absence of the staff key. (The guard's explanation was that he and the engine men had told HDJ about the missing key and presumed

the matter was being dealt with by him). Replying, Evans explained that it was going to be difficult to replace HDJ, especially wages of £1 per week! He also informed Stephens that he himself, in the presence of HDJ and guard Roberts, had put a key on the staff on August 30th. On November 15th a new key was sent to HDJ with strict instructions to fix it to the staff by a chain.

Stephens would not let the matter rest, demanding a clear explanation as to how long the staff was in use without a key, how the guard got on whilst it was missing, why he didn't report it and how did he account for it being missing. Answering these questions, Evans informed Stephens of guard Hughes' explanation and stated that the spare key referred to in the October 18th report was used to lock and unlock the points. No-one was sure how long the original key

had been missing, but he was sure that it was no longer than 3 weeks. Understandably to some extent, Stephens was still not happy over the keys issue – writing on the 22nd November, "*There is great neglect on someone's part*". Ultimately, that 'someone' was Hugh Davies Jones and he was given a week's notice to leave the company's service on December 17th. One can imagine the feeling in the Jones' household that Christmas, especially as HDJ's wife was expecting their second child. Stephens arranged with D.O. Jones of Dinas to start a lad in Hugh's place once the dust had settled and a complete audit of the station's affairs had been carried out by C.H. Rennie the company auditor. It would appear that the majority of the paperwork was in order but the November Returns had not been sent away and Evans wrote to HDJ informing him of the problem.

Replying on the 14th January 1928, HDJ, now living at 2 Buckley Terrace (complete with new baby son) and reverting to his correct name Huw Davies, wrote in no uncertain terms that the returns had been made up and were "*lying at the station waiting for you to come up and audit same as you had promised*". He added that he had told the man in charge "*to send the returns to Mr. Rennie as you had not turned up*". Reading between the lines one can see that he was very angry at the way the company i.e. Stephens and Evans had treated him. However, it is clear from further correspondence in the file that he had let things slip at his station. The November returns had not been completed as he had maintained, letters had remained unanswered and things at the station were generally upside down. Fortunately, the new agent, T.R. Thomas, a young lad employed previously at Dinas as a

Deudraeth Rural District Council

D. SILFANUS WILLIAMS,
Rating & Finance Officer

TELEPHONE 10

Llys Ednyfed,
Penrhyndendraeth,

1st May 1930.

Gentlemen,

It is with very great pleasure that I accede to the request of Mr. Hugh Davies, formerly Station-Master and Agent to the Welsh Highland Railway at Beddgelert that I should testify to his competence to fulfil the duties pertaining to the office of Rating Officer.

I have known Mr. Davies for many years-the efficiency of his work as Station-Master and Agent of the two Railway Companies - by whom he was last employed - are within my own knowledge. He is a very practical and methodical man and will not spare any pains in carrying out any duties imposed on him, nor consider any details too much trouble.

He is most honest, sober and trustworthy, he is always courteous and has a most pleasing manner.

I have no hesitation in saying that I consider him a highly ~~xxx~~ suitable and qualified applicant for the post he seeks.

Yours faithfully,

D. S. Williams

Rating and Finance Officer.

slate loader, soon had the place running smoothly. Peace and harmony had returned to the station, with Rennie saying that Thomas would make a very good lad for the company.

The story now moves on to July 1929 with Hugh and family now living in the village of Rhyd. He had written a letter to Stephens, but unfortunately a copy has not survived. It must have been an enquiry into the possibility of him finding employment on the FR and caused yet another flurry of correspondence between Stephens and Evans. His reluctance to leave Tanybwllch and Tyrwhitt's promise of a return there were discussed again, and it was clearly stated that the reason for his dismissal was due to the runaway wagon incident in 1927, which Stephens cited as negating Tyrwhitt's promise of reinstatement. Hugh called in to see Evans on the 19th July and was told of this, but he argued that it was very unfair as he had not been given the chance to defend himself over the matter. He also pointed out that the wagon in question with the defective brake should not have been sent to Beddgelert and added a few other home truths for good measure! He begged for a job of any kind – even in the permanent way department of the FR.

Evans reported this meeting to Stephens, but he was unimpressed asking why hadn't HDJ raised these points at the time – and virtually dismissed them all. In one paragraph he stated *"I do not know where to put him, and if we do take him on, we shall only have a discontented man in the company's service. We still have a few of these men left, and the less we have the better"*. Harsh words indeed!

As Hugh's hopes for a job on the FR were out of the question, he wrote to Evans explaining that he would like to get a job as conductor on the LMS



Hugh Davies (right) on his retirement - 1960

buses and asked for the company's help to see what could be done. Stephens wrote to the LMS, but there was nothing suitable at that time. There appears to be further correspondence from the LMS which has not survived, and in the final document in the file dated the 4th September 1929, Evans tells Stephens that *"I will not bring this to Jones's notice, I will keep turning him off"*. It would certainly seem that both Evans and Stephens wanted nothing more to do with Hugh – a man who seems to have given his best for the WHR only to be harshly treated.

During the early part of 1930, Hugh applied for the post of Rating Officer with Deudraeth Rural District Council, and although unsuccessful, he must have impressed as can be seen from the letter above from D.S. Williams, the Rating and Finance Officer, dated 1st May.

My sincere thanks are especially due to Gwenant Roberts of the Beddgelert Historical Society and Llysfoel Davies, Hugh's son, who provided all the photographs. The Gwynedd Archive files consulted from the XD97 deposit are 22733 and 22951.

The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways: As Pictorial an History as Possible. By John Keylock (Part 6)

55.0 In 1877 – the first year of partial opening – 18,877 1st and 3rd class passengers were carried. 2nd class was not available until 1878 when three Cleminson 6-wheelers were put into traffic. It is interesting to note that at 1712 tickets sold in 1878 there was never to be any greater use of 2nd class until it was abandoned in 1893. Initial novelty perhaps?

Furthermore, in 1878 49604 passengers were carried; this figure would not be exceeded until 1893.

Between 1877 and 1880 freight traffic doubled from 5416 tons to 10,809 tons even though the slate trade had endured one of its periodic depressions. The bulk of this would have been on the Bryngwyn to Dinas section as Glanrafon was at that time not yet connected.

56.0 On 5th May 1881 Major Marindin (*WHH* 66 pp 7 and 8) inspected the final section and his report – reproduced in full below – indicates a state of incompleteness relative to the imminent opening. His main concern was the lack of guard rails on Glanrafon ‘viaduct’. The reference to this bridge using the descriptor ‘viaduct’ in his report would seem to suggest that he was responsible for this lasting misnomer for the Dingle Bridge.

The Secretary
Railway Department
Board of Trade
Manchester
May 5th 1881

Sir,

I have the honour to report for the information of the Board of Trade that in compliance with the instructions contained in your Minute of the 25th ultimo., I have inspected the extension of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway from Snowdon Ranger to Rhyd-Dhu [*sic*], having postponed my visit until this date in accordance with the request of the Chairman of the Railway Company.

The length of the extension, which is single throughout, is 2m 1ch, the width of the line at formation level is 10 feet, the gauge is 1 ft 11-1/4 in, and the width between lines at sidings is 6ft. Land has not been purchased nor have any of the works been constructed for a double line.

The permanent way consists of iron rails, Vignoles pattern, weighing 35lbs and 40lbs per yard, in 24ft lengths. The rails are

secured to transverse sleepers by 2 fang bolts at the joints and a fang bolt and 1 spike at the intermediate sleepers, the joints being fished. The sleepers are of larch, 4ft 6in long, and 9" x 4½" being rectangular and some half round. They are laid 2' 3/4" from centre to centre, except at the joints, where they are 2ft. apart.

The ballast is of sharp gravel and it is laid 7" below the sleepers.

The fencing is partly of post and wire and partly of dry stone walling with coping in mortar and two wires on the top.

There are stations at
Snowdon Ranger 5m 13ch to 5m 31 ch
Rhyd Dhu 7 16 “ 7 24
and one siding junction at Glanrafon.
[Distances are from Tryfan Junction]

The line follows the surface of the side of the hills and the cuttings & embankments are few and of little importance.

The gradient is a falling one throughout the whole distance from Rhyd Dhu to Snowdon Ranger, varying from 1 in 332 to 1 in 74.

The curves are very numerous the sharpest having a radius of 3 ½ chains

There are no overbridges, Tunnels or Level Crossings of public roads.

There are 4 under bridges or cattle creeps with masonry abutments and flat tops with stone girders and six [?] large culverts of similar construction-

The only work of any importance is a ‘viaduct’ carrying the Railway across a ravine at a height of 56ft [*confirmed by measurement in 1995*] which has stone abutments and wrought iron girders, with a span of 94 feet. [*100ft 4 ½ inches in 1995*]

The whole of the works are standing well, with the exception of a culvert at 6m 15ch which requires alteration. The girders of the viaduct are exceedingly strong and showed very small deflection under test.

The following are the requirements which I observed:-

1 At Snowdon Ranger a Buffer stop should be erected at the end of the sidings.

2 Upon the viaduct timber guards should be fixed outside the Rails.

3. At Rhyd Dhu - The station buildings are incomplete, and the points of a siding require to be secured by means of a key attached to the staff (as at Glanrafon) or to be interlocked with the signals. Name board is necessary.

4. The fencing throughout is incomplete. The wires at the top of the walling remain unfixed; the walling requires to be raised in several places and the wire fencing at Rhyd dhu station yard is not yet finished.

5. An undertaking in the usual form is required that this line shall be worked with one engine in steam and also with a train staff

6. The Culverts have been made for 7 years and with one exception show no signs of having proved insufficient for carrying off the water from the hill sides, but they strike me as being rather small, and should be carefully watched. [*This indicates that McKie did some work in this section in 1874 proving the fact that drains (and sewers) were his specialty.*]

7. The centre pier of a double culvert at 6m 75ch requires to be strengthened at the base.

8. The line at two points passes over mossy ground, and will require watching.

9. The side drains and small culverts require to be cleaned out.

I have in conclusion to report that by reason of the incompleteness of the works, this extension cannot be opened for passenger traffic without danger to the public using the same.

I have the honour to be &c
(Sd) F. A. Marindin
Major R.E.

57.0 For completeness it is appropriate to continue the guard rail saga beyond opening day. The inspector returned on the 14th September only to find that they had been fixed inside instead of outside! He wrote again to the Board of Trade, as follows:

Railway Department
Board of Trade
36 Spring Gardens
Manchester
September 14th 1881

Sir,

I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, that, in compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 12th inst I have re-inspected the North Wales Narrow Gauge Extension from Snowdon Ranger to Rhyd-Dhu

I find that the whole of the requirements made by me at my previous inspection have been satisfied, with the exception of the provision of the outside guards upon the viaduct.

I submit that the Company should be requested to state by what date they can undertake that the outside guards shall be fixed, failing which the final sanction for the opening of this extension should be withheld.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant
(sd) F. A. Marindin
Major R.E.

The following day he wrote to Livesey instructing the necessary alteration. As a result James Cleminson as 'Engineer-in-chief' wrote to the Board of Trade (over two months later!) enclosing a drawing 'showing how we propose to apply the guards that the officer [Inspector] requires'. Cleminson's letter is reproduced here.

58.0 In time for the opening – for which it is hardly surprising there is no record of celebrations – Mr Livesey produced a very neat listing of rates for the

carriage of all manner of goods from Dinas to every station on the line. In this listing, Drumhead is variously described as 'Top of incline' or 'Moeltryfan (for slate quarries)'. Snowdon Ranger was listed simply as 'Snowdon' – it became 'Snowdon Ranger' officially in July. Rates relative to Glanrafon are superimposed as is the rate for 'powder' used for blasting in the quarries. Curiously coal for Bontnewydd (between Dinas and Caernarfon) is quoted at 1/- per ton with the suggestion that it was taken to Tryfan Junction and then carted down the lane to the village!

'Willie Hugh' Williams, having joined the company in the beginning and doubtless having benefited from working alongside his father, was 'made up' to 'apprentice engine fitter and stoker' in 1881. No doubt this was all to do with having sufficient footplate staff in readiness for the complete opening of the Moel Tryfan Undertaking on 14th May. A construction project that was planned to be open in eighteen months had taken eight years and cost almost three times the original estimate!

59.0 But even before the last section of the line was open for business it would

seem that disaster struck according to the following item from *The North Wales Chronicle and Liverpool Mercury* of May 4th:

Last Wednesday, Mr. J.H. Roberts, the Coroner, held an inquest at Bontnewydd on the body of Benjamin Owen a weaver by trade, but who had worked recently as a 'striker' in a smithy who had been killed the previous day on the Narrow Gauge Railway near Rhyd Ddu, about nine miles from Caernarfon. Capt. G.T. Thomas was the jury foreman.

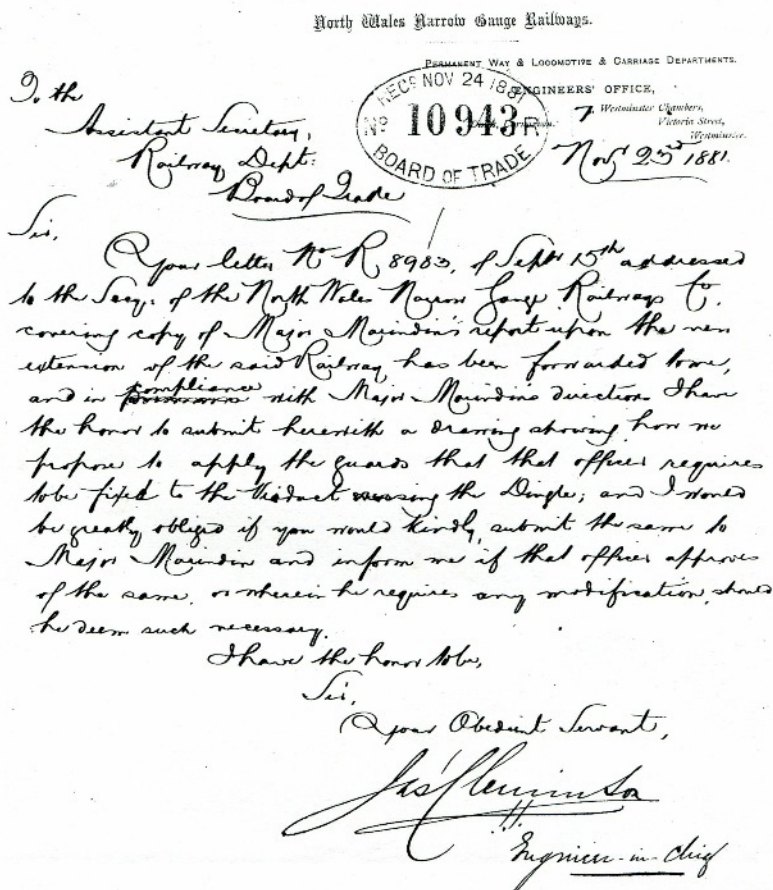
John Roberts, blacksmith, Brynmelyn, Rhostryfan stated he knew the deceased. On Tuesday they were called to assist in moving a wooden booking hut that stood near the Snowdon Ranger station. The hut was used as a station and it was necessary to move it to Rhyd Ddu to serve the same purpose. The hut was roofed with slates. It was placed on two trolleys that were hauled by a steam locomotive. After travelling a considerable distance, somebody shouted that the hut was falling. This happened and it fell over a wall into a nearby field. It appeared that the deceased tried to move out of the way, but he was overtaken by the hut, that fell on him. When he was reached he was 'quite dead'; the hut only rested on him for a few minutes. This testimony was confirmed by Richard Jones, labourer, Dinas Junction.

Robert Henry Livesey, manager of the Narrow Gauge Railway, stated that he was with the men from start to finish. He stated that every due care had been taken as they started to make the hut transfer as safe as possible. Some changes were made in the transfer half way.

The deceased lived at Yr Ynys, Bontnewydd and he was known as 'Ben Bach Bontnewydd', although a native of Llandiloës. He leaves a widow and ten children in dire circumstances. Robert Jones suffered severe injuries and Robert Lloyd of Henwaliau, Caernarvon received head injuries.

The events described here tie in well with the Inspector's report from his 25th April visit in which he found the station buildings at Rhyd Ddu to be incomplete.

60.0 In Part 3 of this work (WHH 66), we described the railway's infrastructure between Dinas Junction and Bryngwyn, the Railway's original 'main line', after



covering the initial opening to Bryngwyn and Old Quellyn in 1877. It is now appropriate to look at their original 'branch' in two sections; first from Tryfan Junction to Old Quellyn and then to the final section from Old Quellyn to Rhyd Ddu. This latter section was somewhat different in nature from the earlier sections of railway and this is indicative perhaps of an enforced necessity to economise when carrying out this later work.

61.0 Because the then route to Bryngwyn was originally designated as the main line, the station building at Tryfan Junction was on the 'platform' serving that destination. Trains to and from the Rhyd Ddu direction used the adjacent line beside which was the signal box.

Leaving Tryfan Junction the line, having passed Gwredog-Isaf, soon parallels the Afon Gwyrfa in a cutting where McKie widened the 'limit of deviation' (see paragraphs 32 and 33 in Part 2 of this serialization – *WHH* 65) and modified the access to Tan yr alt. River and railway keep company all the way from here to Waunfawr with the railway cut into the hillside above the water which flows the opposite way down to the left.

Immediately before reaching Waunfawr at 3 miles 70 chains from Dinas the line passes under the Caernarfon to Beddgelert road before reaching the station master's house which was not provided initially. Both bridge and station building were of standard NWNG design. Waunfawr also boasted a siding with goods shed and it was only in 1896 that a passing loop was installed making it the largest station between Dinas and Rhyd Ddu. It



The De Winton beams from the original Bettws Garmon road bridge preserved in today's rebuilt bridge. The original makers name and the date of 1873 have been highlighted during reconstruction. (David Allan - 2003)

must be presumed that it was the anticipation of this facility that necessitated the original installation of the 8-lever signal box.

Beyond Waunfawr the railway is just above the river's flood plain with the road hard by on the right. The road veers to the right in front of Gwyrfa Terrace and the railway enters Bettws Garmon station at 4 miles 65 chains from Dinas with another characteristic station building. Behind it was a loop from which a tramway branched and crossing the main road on the level served Hafod-y-Wern (Victoria) slate quarries about ½ mile distant. This was the first quarry to be connected to the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways.

South of Bettws Garmon station, the line runs on an embankment above the flood plain before the first crossing of the Afon Gwyrfa on a bridge characteristic of the NWNGR. These wrought iron bow plate bridges, each 52' long, were almost certainly acquired second hand possibly from the Cambrian Railways. Immediately after the river crossing the line crossed a series of stone and slab flood relief culverts before plunging under the main road through a bridge incorporating cast iron beams supplied by De Winton's Carnarvon Foundry (dated 1873). From the open aspect since leaving Waunfawr the line now enters a narrowing valley and runs almost straight to the second crossing of the Afon Gwyrfa at Cae Hywel. With the river back on the eastern side it along with the road and railway are forced closer together for their entry into the delightful vale of Bettws Garmon.

From the hamlet of Salem, on the left, a footbridge crossed the river giving access to Bryn Afon, the one house to the west of the railway, to the railway and to the footpath network. Just beyond Bryn Afon a small quarry served as a source of ballast. Hugging the hillside by a series of curves, having passed under a bridge giving access to Pen y Gaer the railway is on a stone embankment with the river immediately below feeding a reservoir originally for Caernarfon Corporation Waterworks. The railway here is in the middle of a reverse curve before crossing the Gwyrfa on a 'standard' bridge for the third and last time, now at Plas y Nant



Rail, river and road in close proximity as the Vale of Bettws Garmon closes in on the approach to Nant Mill before opening out towards the site of today's Halt at Plas-y-Nant.

5 miles 75 chains from Dinas and 486' above sea level. Having passed over a marshy area the railway quits the river which flows out of Llyn Quellyn at Castell Cidwm. Passing - on the skew - under the last bridge on the route one is immediately at the temporary 1877 terminus referred to as (Old) Quellyn (6 miles 45 chains from Dinas)

62.0 The first permanent station encountered after Bettws Garmon was at "Snowdon" later (July 1881) to be called "Snowdon Ranger, and still later (January 1893) re-named Quellyn Lake. This station, although permanent, became the second 'temporary terminus' when opened in 1878. Although the station building here is of similar style to the others encountered earlier on the route there is no decorative yellow brick around the doors and windows. At the time building bricks would have been relatively expensive needing transport from Ruabon whereas the cost of dressing stone would have been cheap - an example of financial stringency?

Locomotive watering facilities were provided and the tank atop stone supports was almost certainly filled by hydraulic ram using water from an adjacent mountain stream. At 7 miles 35 chains from Dinas (70 chains beyond the temporary 1877 terminus) there was a small signal cabin adjacent to the station building's northern elevation; there was a siding with a head shunt and four signals.

Just south of "Snowdon" station the railway reaches the bridge over the Afon Treweunydd of previous mention followed immediately by Glanrafon Sidings serving the slate quarry of that name. Here the weigh house was built incorporating decorative yellow brick either at the cost to the quarry company or at the behest of the railway company. The incline to the quarry levels started upwards almost immediately.

The line from here to Rhyd Ddu was circuitous to gain height and on reaching the station (620 ft) it had climbed some 440 ft from Dinas Junction. The main station building was built entirely of brick with a slate hipped roof, but being the terminus was larger. However just beyond its northern elevation was a separate building with a lower roof profile and vertical gable ends, built essentially with random stone - like the other stations - it did have red brick quoins and door and window surrounds. This building, it is suggested, was the station master's dwelling and is described as 'Station

master's house' in the 1920s. The refreshment room, with its corrugated iron roof and the aforementioned were added c.1894 (see J.C. Russell's affidavit of 1893 discussed by Michael Bishop in *WHH* Issue 47).

The photograph below is the only one we know that clearly shows the original station name and by virtue of the train incorporating the 'Workmans' and 'Gladstone' coaches cannot have been taken earlier than 1891. Rhyd Ddu was renamed Snowdon in January 1893. Even ten years after opening there appeared still to be but a single line through the station - running a locomotive round its train would have been a complicated procedure using the sidings to the south of station. Rope haulage was probably the 'order of the day' until an initial short passing loop was installed in 1892 before being extended into its final form in 1896.



Moel Tryfan at 'Rhyd Ddu' - the train includes the Gladstone and Workmans Cars acquired in 1891 - note single line through the station. (F.R. Archives)

63.0 When the railway opened every station had a station-master, but it was not long before economies became necessary. An early casualty was at Rhostryfan - between Tryfan Junction and Bryngwyn - where the incumbent was also the village cobbler. With two passenger trains and one goods on weekdays he will have had plenty of time to ensure that the villagers were well shod! In 1881 one Benjamin Owen Thomas, although born in Llanwnda, was boarding (lodging) at Cae Moel farm which is adjacent to a bridge that was unique to the railway; the road to Rhos Isaf crossed over the railway whilst the river ran beneath the tracks which were supported on girders. He described himself as 'a guard on the narrow railway' but was in charge of most activities at Rhostryfan and Tryfan Junction - known locally as Tyddyn-y-Gwydd. He had to be at Rhostryfan before the train arrived from Bryngwyn so that he could issue tickets to

intending passengers. Likewise he had to be at Tryfan Junction before the train, so taking advantage of a falling gradient, he travelled by 'trolley'. Perhaps a more demanding duty at Tryfan Junction would have been changing points. It is recalled that local children often accompanied 'O. T.' - for as such he was known - on these necessary journeys by gravity. The trolley was returned to Rhostryfan attached behind a Bryngwyn branch train. Perhaps 'O.T.' is best remembered for having used the Tryfan Junction signal box as an aviary! With the introduction of further economies 'O.T.' covered the whole branch which necessitated two daily excursions by gravity.

64.0 The opening of the completed railway in 1881 saw a 2500 tons increase in freight traffic. Some of this increase will no doubt have been attributable to Glanrafon Quarry at last being able to ship out its production.

In the same year three of the Moel Tryfan quarry owners entered into a working agreement with the Railway Company. The three concerned were the Alexandra Slate Co., Ltd., the Braich Slate Co and the Moeltryfan (*sic*) Slate and Slab Quarry Co., Ltd., and they agreed to pay the Railway Company for the use of the latter's 'trucks and wagons' on their 'feeders' to the drumhead and thence to Dinas - and vice-versa. For three years from 1st June payment would be 2/- per ton carried. In consideration of this payment the Railway Company 'would make available no less than eighty wagons in good working condition and will use all reasonable dispatch in their transit to and from and transhipment of the said traffic at Dinas'. This assumed that the quarries would send traffic on a regular basis. If business increased the railway company would be approached to provide further wagons; should they not be able to oblige the quarry companies would acquire their own in which case the rate payable to the railway Company would be reduced.

65.0 At last the company could promote the railway as providing the shortest - and quickest - means by which to gain Snowdon's summit. The 2 ½ mile path from Rhyd Ddu to the summit was half of the distance of that from Llanberis. Beddgelert - 'centre of the Welsh Trail' - was accessible from Rhyd Ddu by horse-drawn coach.

From the Editor

Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway.

Readers will, I hope, have been following our serialisation of John Keylock's North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways history. We have been serialising John's 'raw' script as this was very much still a 'work in hand' when he died in 2013. We will be producing his history in book form but we still have much work to do to develop his notes into a form suitable for publication. Just as one example we will need to rationalise the railway's distance measurements as there are conflicting standards in hitherto published sources. When this work is complete we believe John's efforts will have led to the publication of a significant history of that Railway.

Alongside this and the several histories of the Welsh Highland available to us we are aware that there could well be a 'gap' until the history of the PB&SSR is suitably recorded. Many people have contributed already to documenting this story, for example Michael Bishop, Jim Hewett and David Allan in earlier issues of this Journal

and, most recently, John Manners has produced a detailed account focusing on the PB&SSR's electrical equipment, looking at the general development of electric locomotive traction and the history of Bruce Peebles (yet to be published).

Given our commitments to regular production of the Journal, to the publication and updating of books such as Wheeler's Day and The Buffet Car and forthcoming work on the NWNGR History, it seems unlikely that the 'regular suspects' would be able to give the PB&SSR the attention it deserves. On the basis that 'a volunteer is worth ten pressed men', should any member be able to help with this undertaking, in particular a member who might have an interest in and knowledge of the PB&SSR, would they please let me know and hopefully we will be able to see a way forward in this subject area.

This Month's Anniversaries

In our last edition we noted the 80th Anniversary of Hubert Wheeler's visit to the Railway - fully recorded in our book *'Wheeler's Day'*. As an occasional, or perhaps even regular, contribution to *WHH*

we will look at anniversaries appropriate to each future issue. As I noted when we began the serialisation of John Keylock's NWNGR history we will, when the time is right, review and update the Chronologies published in early editions of *WHH*. Hopefully, these 'jottings' might prompt contributions to that effort.

92 years ago the December 1923 issue of the Railway Magazine carried a very interesting and quite detailed 9 page article describing the 'new' Welsh Highland Railway. The article included 7 photographs and a map showing the route from Dinas to Portmadoc (*RM* Vol 53 pp 441 to 449)

91 years ago, on December 3rd 1924 the Welsh Highland accepted a quotation from Hunslet and ordered the new parts that would be required to complete the cutting down of *Russell* in their vain attempt to allow its operation over the Festiniog Railway.

74 years ago (1941) Cohen's demolition teams were at this time working between Bettws Garmon and Waenfawr recovering rail and other materials.

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that is at an azimuth of 253.5 degrees, at 15:48 GMT, or at 16:48 BST (British Summer Time had been enacted in various forms since 1916). Thus WHR100 was taken at some time before 16:48 BST and WHR9a was taken at some time after 16:48. On May 29th the sun would have been in same position some 30 seconds earlier so even over a small range of dates this time would sensibly have been the same.

The shadows in WHR9a indicate that the sun had moved approximately 8.5 degrees beyond normal to the building, i.e. to an azimuth of 253.5+8.5, or 262.0 degrees. This angle would equate to 16:26 GMT or 17:26 BST. The shadows in WHR100, both cast by the station building and onto the roof of the Royal Goat in the background, suggest that the sun was a little less than 8 degrees from normal when the photo was taken, i.e. at an azimuth of approximately 253.5-7.8, or 244.7 degrees equating to a time of 15:12 GMT or 16:12 BST. Thus the time difference between the two photographs was about 1 hour 14 minutes.

So why was this train running in this area before the railway was opened? One obvious suggestion would be crew route-learning. Interestingly, in the Ken Nunn photographs, often described as showing a scheduled train, the only passengers visible appear to be Welsh Highland footplate crew and the train comprises a single Pickering and a flat bogie bolster, perhaps the same vehicle seen in photographs of the demolition trains nearly 20 years later? The section of Welsh Highland to the south of South Snowdon was characterized by significantly steeper gradients than encountered to the north. No doubt turning Moel Tryfan to place her fire box at the 'downhill' end of the locomotive was considered prudent.

At the time these photographs were taken, Moel Tryfan was reportedly in a parlous state and it is a moot point whether it would have been risked on a scheduled passenger train. In WHR100 the footplate crew certainly seem to be paying careful attention to the front tube plate - a number of the tubes were allegedly plugged at that time.

As both WHR100 and WHR9a show the train on the main line at Beddgelert, it is

tempting to postulate that the train reversed there. However, if route-learning really was the objective, is it not more likely that the train actually reversed at South Snowdon? There would appear to have been approximately 74 mins elapsed time between the photos and the time tabled runs from Beddgelert to South Snowdon ranged from 30 to 32 minutes when services had 'settled down' by July. The return times varied from 24 to 26 minutes, giving a range of return times from 54 to 58 minutes, to which has to be added, of course, the time taken to run around at South Snowdon. The timings derived from the Valentine photographs indicate that it would have been quite practical for the train to have carried out a full route-learning run to 'the top of the hill'.

However, if this did happen, why was the train in WHR9a standing on the main line if it were indeed running down from South Snowdon? Under normal circumstances it should have passed through Beddgelert on the loop line. Do these photographs suggest that when they were taken work to slew the loop towards the station building had already commenced and the loop was in fact out of action?

Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis



88229.JV (WHR 100) Showing Moel Tryfan paused at Beddgelert with a north-bound train.



88230.JV (WHR 9a) The same train heading back towards Portmadoc.

In this Issue we will look at a series of postcards published by Valentine which show a short train comprising Moel Tryfan with two carriages, one of the Pickering Brake Composites and one of the Ashbury 'Corridors'. In the latter case we can positively identify the carriage as No.9. In the case of the Pickering, we can speculate that this was NWNGR No.5, later WHR No.9, as its sister carriage, No.4, was one of the WHR carriages converted to dual-braking to allow operation behind FR locomotives. If we see a Pickering in an obviously air-braked train, as in this instance, we can speculate – this distinction is not necessarily proof however – that the carriage was probably No.5.

Two of the photographs were taken at Beddgelert and the third at Bryn-y-Felin. The Beddgelert images show that the photographs were taken in 1923, probably before the railway was officially opened, i.e. before the beginning of June. The Bryn-y-Felin photo (WHR10a – 88231.JV) shows, none too clearly thanks to steam and foliage, the train discussed above heading towards Beddgelert having crossed the bridge over the Glaslyn and passed under the Beddgelert to Tremadoc road. For these notes we will concentrate on the two 'Beddgelert' photographs (WHR100 – 88229.JV and WHR9a – 88230.JV) reproduced above.

A few comments on both pictures quickly suggest themselves. Firstly, Beddgelert station was very new when they were taken – there is clear evidence of 'work-in-progress' visible in the images, pieces of

rail, building materials, building equipment, etc. It is also apparent that the loop line was still laid in its original as-built position with its centre aligned only 8ft 6ins from the main line's centre. Following his inspection of the line on May 24th 1923, Colonel Mount's Report, received by the Railway on May 29th, included a critical condemnation of the closeness of the loop and main lines (as paraphrased by Boyd):

At Beddgelert the corrugated-iron buildings were incomplete. (They were later to be blown away in a freak gale of 1927). Ballasting was unfinished and platform areas not marked off. There was no platform on the west side as the approach line was in deep cutting and such a platform was considered unsafe; with this in mind the Company proposed to halt Down trains at the south end of the loop but the Colonel considered this did not safeguard passengers who might not see one approaching. The distance between the loop lines was only 8 ft 6 in. and 'pinching between trains might take place'. To make the tracks 13 ft centre to centre, 'the loop should be slewed towards the station building for about 4 ft 6 in.'

Both pictures appear to confirm that the ballasting was indeed incomplete, the platform edge had not been clearly marked out and the loop most certainly had not been slewed. However, Moel Tryfan had been turned at some time after Ken Nunn took his pictures at Tryfan Junction (WHH7) and Waenfawr (not in the

official WHR lists) on 15th May 1923. We do appear to have a very 'tight' dating window for the Valentine images. They were taken after 15th May but before the results of Mount's May 24th inspection were acted upon and almost certainly before the railway was officially opened. The cross-town link had been available before May 15th – the first 'rehearsal' for the planned inspection trains ran on May 12th – enabling locomotive access to the Boston Lodge turntable. As an aside, these images allow us to qualify Boyd's assertion that Moel Tryfan was turned and cut down at the same time.

If we now compare the images with each other, there is more to learn and surmise. The photographs were taken, it would seem, on a clear summer's day and the shadows tell us that 88229 (WHR100) was taken at an earlier time than 88230 (WHR9a). The long axis of the Beddgelert station building was aligned 16.5 degrees anti-clockwise to true north-south, thus the azimuth angle looking south along the building was 163.5 degrees. If we look at the shadows in WHR100 we will see that the north end of the building was in shadow, but only just. In other words if looking 'west' at right angles to the building the sun would have appeared slightly to the viewer's left. In contrast, in WHR9a it is the south end of the building that is in shadow and thus our viewer would see the sun somewhat to his right. If we assume that the photographs were taken on May 28th 1923, the sun would have been at right angles to the building,

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