

WELSH HIGHLAND HERITAGE

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PRESERVE, RESTORE



Tryfan Junction - 2014 - L. Esposito



Glanrafon Weigh House - 1965 - M. Bishop



Glanrafon Weigh House - 1997 - D. Allan

When David Allan launched this Journal back in 1997, he included, on pages 1 and 2 of Issue 1, the following short essay explaining the reasoning behind the formation of the Heritage Group.

WELCOME!

This is the first edition of a Newsletter devoted entirely to the heritage aspects of the Welsh Highland Railway. It is the voice of the Welsh Highland Heritage Group and reflects the views of the Group. The W.H.H.G. has the full support of The Welsh Highland Railway Co., The Festiniog Railway and The Welsh Highland Railway Society and it will work closely with all of these organisations to achieve its aims.

It will cover and explore all aspects of the line's history, from its early beginnings to the present day but it will concentrate on 'preserving and restoring' those essential elements which made the line unique amongst narrow gauge railways.

Nor will it forget those isolated communities which the line attempted to serve, together with the industries which prompted its construction in the first place.

The Heritage Group is open to all who support its aims and it will work with everyone who wishes to help to achieve those aims. The Group will be a focus, a forum and a coordinator for all the heritage activity along the line.

It is unthinkable for example, that the superb restoration work at Gelert's Farm, including Ray Ollier's wonderful achievements with the old coaches, Mark Wiggle's efforts to restore the weigh house and Dave Meller's evocative replica of Nantmor station should somehow be isolated from the proposed reconstruction of Waunfawr or the refurbishment of Dinas station building.

THEY ARE ALL WELSH HIGHLAND!

Much has happened since David wrote these words 19 years ago. There have been significant achievements and the Group has played an important role in ensuring that the railway retains its links with the past.

Not unexpectedly, the organisational environment in which we undertake our projects has evolved and changed. As we look to the future the Group faces more complex relationships than might previously have been imagined as the railway company focuses on developing customer service and ensuring sustainability. The juxtaposition of Welsh Highland 'heritage' with an operating railway inevitably introduces potential areas of conflict yet none of these difficulties should be insurmountable given a positive collective will.

However, as David so succinctly wrote, our Group first and foremost is dedicated to understanding and preserving the collective heritage of the Welsh Highland Railway and its predecessors and remains the only forum SOLELY committed to this.

There is much still to do. There are, still, original NWNCR buildings and infrastructure which at least are in need of preservation - to prevent further deterioration - if not full restoration as was undertaken at Tryfan Junction. The Welsh Highland, as an operation, was rather short-lived yet much has been done to represent this heritage through the creation of replica buildings and artefacts. The Welsh Highland story is a complex one and we can do much to aid the explanation of this across the new railway for the benefit of its customers' enjoyment and understanding. Finally, recorded history depends on ephemera and the proper preservation of these ephemera - photographs, documents, artefacts, etc. - for the benefit of future generations is also essential.

The Heritage Group is solely focused on achieving these aims but they cannot be fully achieved unless we are both a strong and a committed Group working with others to achieve our objectives and remaining faithful to the vision of our founding members.

Circumstances may have changed but our *raison d'être* most certainly has not.

Ynysferlas/Hafod Garregog The Continuing Saga.

The thorny question of the halts at Ynysferlas and Hafod Garregog has occupied many a page in past Journals, a subject last dealt with by Richard Maund in *WHH 51*. His conclusion was that they were one and the same – with a simple renaming taking effect

Dick Lystor speculates on the question of the identity and location of these two Welsh Highland Railway halts.

The first of these documents (22914) was written on 23rd June 1923, by David Jones, the Hon. Secretary of the Glaslyn Angling Association, Portmadoc, informing S.E. Tyrwhitt, the railway's general manager, that at their recent AGM, a resolution had been passed that



Map reproduced from *WHH 51*

with the new time table issued on 9th July 1923. However, since this article was published, the vast collection of FR/WHR archives has been catalogued at Gwynedd Archives, and two documents XD97/22914 and XD97/23123, prove beyond doubt that there were two entirely separate halts at different locations.

application be made to the WHR to issue reduced rate angler's tickets to stations between Portmadoc and Beddgelert. More importantly to our story, he went on to say that he was directed to forward a petition signed by anglers and others calling for the halt at Ynysferlas to be re-instated. He added that unless this happened, anglers

would stop using the railway owing to the long distance between "Hafodgaregog" and the river.

The previous month, Owen Jones, a resident of Ynys Ferlas, had drawn up the petition (23123), here given verbatim, carrying the signatures of over 50 residents from the locality. It is date stamped "Received" by the FR on 24th June 1923.

**Re: Stop on Welsh Highland Railway at
Ynys Ferlas.**

We the undersigned beg to draw your attention to the above, and to point out the convenience it would be to the public, and to note that this was included in the Time Table, but are given to understand by the Manager that it is not to be in the new one, and also that the reason why is that complaints of Trespass had been made. Now that a stop is made at Hafodgaregog, this complaint is done away with – but at the same time those wishing to book for Ynys Ferlas are prevented from coming on that account, and it means a loss to the Company.

Some children were coming to school, but now having to walk to Hafodgaregog, they are half way to the village ^(note 1) by the time they get there. Fishermen coming to this spot on the Glaslyn, which is one of the best, valued the stop at Ynys Ferlas, but now having to walk from Hafodgaregog, prefer to

come by road and cross the river by boat. Also Farmers, rather than walk so far, go by the old way.

Many visitors are very fond every summer of spending a day at Ynys Ferlas, and were so pleased of this convenience to get there, but have been sorely disappointed that in future no stop will be made.

Owen Jones. Ynys Ferlas

This petition may well have been in response to the decision earlier that month to move the halt at Ynysferlas to a point on the Hafod Garregog road half a mile away, following another petition by other local residents, details of which are given in an articles in *WHH* 41 and 51. Ynysferlas appealed to the anglers and day trippers who wished to enjoy a quiet relaxing time near the river, but Hafod Garregog halt, with its easier access, would have served the general public more conveniently.

In conclusion, it is clear from these two first hand accounts by men living in the area at the time, two different stopping places in this area had been in prospect. The final outcome was settled by the 9 July 1923 working timetable which shows the halt as Hafod Garregog, at 17m 25 ch from Dinas. Whilst the exact site of a stopping place called Ynysferlas is not pin-pointed, it is possible that it was at position B on the map.

Note 1: Can any reader with local knowledge suggest just which 'village' this might have been? Where were the 'children' going to school?

Preserving our Stiles

Lewis Esposito has sent us the following notes on the preservation of NWNCR rail-built stiles in the Salem area.

They say it was Fredrick II of Prussia who in the mid 18th century coined the phrase 'A mans best friend is his dog'. The desire to take pooch for a country walk instigated the Snowdonia National Park, working along side Gwynedd Council to satisfy the requests by members of the public to further improve footpath 12 in Betws Garmon. A good example of original railway rail stiles, circa late 1870's, existed at Salem; although in excellent condition, they are not dog friendly and many visitors arrive with dogs, or themselves suffer from disabilities. The Snowdonia National Park considerably installed an oak three step stile on the western side of the track near Salem, a less demanding piece of apparatus, and uprooted the iron stile and cast it to one side.

This sudden action was a big surprise to me as I have worked before with Peter Rutherford (the Snowdonia National Park Authority Access Officer) over a period of fifteen years or so. I had spent many hours surveying and presenting plans for the new Beddgelert to Rhyd Ddu multi-purpose path as a part of community involvement, although a part of our recommendation, to use the old Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway cutting above Beddgelert, was sadly not incorporated.

However, my objection to the Snowdonia National Park Authority, that the stiles were FR/WHR railway 'Heritage' property, and should be left alone, was not the only complaint that they had received. Gwynedd Council now do not install ladder stiles but rather they use gated stiles as their underlying policy is 'Access For All'. Within a week, the new oak stile was removed and replaced with a metal gate and the original NWNCR stile was put back next to the modern alternative. This procedure was repeated to the east of the track, so 'Heritage' and public choice prevail.

I had brought the matter to the attention of FR/WHR Heritage Company and, as far as I'm aware, they are happy with this very successful outcome. So we are now in a situation where the Snowdonia National Park senior Access Officer accepts that in the future, the original NWNCR rail stiles should not be disturbed and that new gates must be placed along-side. Ironically, most modern stiles only survive for ten years, so the original iron ones are very good value and are fit for another 150 years of use! The ambiance of our 'Heritage' railway would certainly have been diminished with the loss of these iconic Victorian items.

Lewis Esposito

See page 11 for Lewis's photographs of these stiles.

The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways: As Pictorial an History as Possible. By John Keylock (Part 7)

In our last episode of John Keylock's serialized work on the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company, we had progressed the story to the point where the line was finally complete through to the terminus at Rhyd Ddu (Part 6 in *WHH* 69). Of course, this 'complete' railway fell far short of the original grand aspirations of the promoters but for many years Rhyd Ddu formed the 'far-flung' boundary of the system.

John's original draft of this work followed on from this point with a year-by-year account of significant events in the railway's history. I will follow this format as we continue his account in what will be an occasional continued presentation of John's work.

1882

66.0 1882 saw Russell adding further to his railway interests by becoming mortgagee of the statutory section of the Croesor Tramway. In 1879 it had undergone its second metamorphosis into the Portmadoc, Croesor & Beddgelert Tram Railway Company, but despite this long and grandiose title it continued as a horse-drawn tramway. For a second time Hugh Beaver Roberts had failed to persuade the FR to take over or operate the tramway.

In September the twentieth half-yearly meeting of the NWNCR was held at the Inns of Court in London with Chairman Russell reporting 'steadily and slowly increasing traffic receipts'. Future prospects were better than they had ever been. The connection of the Vron quarry to the Drumhead was imminent and considerable traffic was expected from that additional quarry.

In February Hafod-y-Wern Slate Quarry and associated lands were being offered for sale. "The turnpike road from

Carnarvon to Beddgelert and the NWNCR pass through the freehold property. The 'Betws Garmon Railway' Station is on the estate and the quarries are connected therewith by railway thus affording communication to all parts either by LNWR or the Port of Carnarvon". This quarry was the first to take advantage of the coming of the NWNCR the connecting tramway being almost half a mile long.

1882 represented the first full year of operation for the completed railway and the first year that the revenues account showed a modest profit (£168.00) - apart from £4 in 1877! Passenger and freight income remained much as in 1881 despite there being a longer railway from which to generate income. It was correctly forecast that freight traffic would increase and when the line became widely known more tourists would use it as a means of reaching the starting point for the shortest ascent of Snowdon. In the event passenger numbers would not increase until 1893 - the year in which the railway mounted a publicity campaign.

1883

67.0 March 1883 saw the first major accident on the completed railway (see *WHH* 19). Major Marindin - who had carried out the inspections prior to the various openings - was instructed to conduct an investigation on behalf of the Board of Trade. His report is reproduced in full as, like his inspection reports (see Part 3, paragraph 45.0 in *WHH* 66 and Part 6, paragraphs 56.0 and 57.0 in *WHH* 69), it provides us with much detail about the railway. However, in this case it provides a fascinating insight into some of its employees and into how the railway should have been run, but how in these early days this patently was not in fact the case.



The Railway's three Ashbury 4-wheel carriages are seen here with all three of their Cleminson 6-wheel carriages. Two of the 4-wheelers and one of the 6-wheelers (one of the two brake composites seen here) made up the train involved in 1884 accident north of Snowdon Ranger - Symons Gems of Wales 1892

Major Marindin's Report into the accident between Snowdon Ranger and Quellyn Bridge

NORTH WALES NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY (*sic*).

Board of Trade, (Railway Department,
1, Whitehall, London, S.W.,

31st March 1883.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in the Order of the 15th instant, the result of my inquiry into the causes of an accident which occurred on the 24th ultimo, near Snowdon Ranger station, on the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway (*sic*).

In this case, soon after the 8.25 p.m. up train from Rhydd-dhu to Dinas – consisting of tank-engine, one six-wheeled composite carriage with break-compartment, and two four-wheeled third-class carriages – had left Snowdon Ranger station, one or both of the two rear carriages left the rails, and, after running for about 420 yards with some of the wheels off the rails, parted from the front portion of the train, and came to a stand at a point 960 yards south-west (*sic*) of Snowdon Ranger station. The guard of the train, who was in the leading carriage, did not find out what had happened until the engine had run for about 580 yards further, and he then signalled to the driver to stop, and ordered him to set back along the line to find the missing carriages. The driver started back, apparently at considerable speed, and drove the leading carriage against the two which were left behind, knocking them over on their sides, one on each side of the line, and damaging them considerably.

There was only one passenger, who was riding in the front carriage, and neither he nor any of the servants of the Company were injured.

There was very little damage to the permanent way, but the carriages suffered considerably. The following is a full return of the damages :-

No. 6, composite. – One door-frame and glass, one corner upright, and one end-board broken, and three side uprights damaged.

No. 3, third-class. – One cross-piece of under-frame, two end-boards, two steps, buffer, and axle-box broken.

No. 5, third-class. – One head-stock, one cross-piece, and one longitudinal piece of under-frame, all boards in one end, one axle-box, two steps, part of top, and window glass broken.

Description.

The North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway is a single line, and the portion of it upon which this accident happened was opened in 1878.

The gauge is 1 ft. 11 ¼ ins., and the permanent way consists of Vignole's rails, in 24-ft. lengths, and weighing 35 lbs. per yard, laid upon transverse sleepers, to which they are secured by means of alternate fang-bolts and dog-spikes. The sleepers, many of which are half round, are of larch, 4 ft. 6 ins. in length and 9 ins. by 4 ½ ins. in section, and they are laid 2 ft. 5 ¼ ins. from centre to centre, except at each side of the joints, where they are 2 ft. apart. The ballast is of gravel mixed with shale, and it is laid to a depth of 7 ins. below the sleepers.

This narrow gauge line follows as far as possible the contours of the hills, and in many parts of it the gradients are steep, and the curves very sharp, but at the place where the accident happened the line is more than ordinarily straight, and upon a falling gradient of 1 in 79.

The first mark of any vehicle having left the rails is about 540 yards from Snowdon Ranger, and here the line is quite straight, and has been straight for about 300 yards; the point where the two rear carriages came to a stand is 960 yards from Snowdon Ranger; and the point where the engine was brought to a stand, before setting back, is 1,540 yards from Snowdon Ranger.

The gradients from Snowdon Ranger westwards (*sic*) to the point where the engine stopped are falling, 1 in 94 for 10 chains, 1 in 79 for 25 chains, and 1 in 96 for 40 chains, and the line is principally upon curves varying from 24 chains to 6 chains radius.

Snowdon Ranger station is about 2 ½ miles from Rhydd-dhu, the terminus, and it is under the charge of the station-master at Rhydd-dhu, who comes down when necessary, the custom being for the guard of the train to issue the tickets when the station-master is not there. Immediately behind the station is a small road-side inn, and there is no other house within three-quarters of a mile, – the country being wild and very thinly populated.

The carriages which left the rails are short four-wheeled carriages, with wheels 18 ins. in diameter, while the leading carriage has six wheels, the centre pair being on a radial axle.

The permanent way was in good order.

Evidence.

Mr. R. H. Livesay (sic) states : I am manager and secretary of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway. On the 24th February guard Morris came to my house at Carnarvon, at about 11.30 p.m., and informed me that two carriages in the 8.25 up train from Rhyd-ddu were off the line near Snowdon Ranger. I at once went out to Dinas to make inquiries. After inquiring for the driver I went to the engine-shed and found driver Jones asleep on his engine. He was drunk, but the fireman was sober. The guard Morris had been drinking, but was not so drunk as the driver. The engine was in steam, and I went out at once to the scene of the accident. I ascertained that the train had run down to Quellyn Bridge before the driver found out that two of the carriages had left the rails and had parted from the front of the train. The train was then set back at considerable speed, and struck the two rear carriages, overthrowing them, one on either side of the line. There was only one passenger in the train, and he was in the front carriage, and was not hurt. The fireman confessed to me at Dinas that all the three men with the train had been drinking at the hotel at Snowdon Ranger, and that they were running fast to make up time. The two rear carriages were the two small light four wheeled carriages. According to the rule, the long six-wheel carriage, with break-compartment, ought to have been put at the rear of the train at Rhyd-ddu. The guard is responsible for this omission. I made a careful examination of the road that night, and again on the following day. I found marks where one or more wheels had left the rails to the right side, and had run for about 420 yards to the place where the two carriages came to a stand. The coupling was not broken, but appeared to have been jerked off. The carriages were upset on both sides of the line. The guard confessed to me that they had been drinking. I examined the wheels of the carriage, and they were in good order and true to gauge.

William Roberts states: I am ganger of permanent way, in charge of the whole line. I was on the ground where the accident happened at about 2 p.m. on Sunday. I made an examination of the line on Monday morning. I found the marks where the carriages first left the rails. There was no mark on the top of the rail, but marks on the sleepers as if the carriage had jumped out. There were plain marks where one or more pairs of wheels had been running off the rails for nearly a quarter of a mile. The carriages had stopped there, and had been thrown off on both sides of the line by the collision, I suppose. I tried the gauge all along; it was correct. The sleepers were all right at the place where the carriages first ran off. There was nothing at all the matter with the road. The cant was correct. I had tried the gauge about eight or nine days before the accident, and it was correct. I walk the line occasionally, and Mr. Livesay goes over it every day. There is only one gang of men, five in number, for the whole length, 11 m. 70 ch.

Thomas Morris states : I have been in the service of the Company since the line was opened in May 1877. I was in the service of the London and North Western Railway at Crewe as fireman for two years previous to that date. On the 24th February I was guard of 8.25 p.m. train from Rhyd-ddu. It was made up as follows: engine, six-wheeled composite carriage with break-compartment, and two four wheeled third class carriages. I left Rhyd-ddu at right time, and arrived at Snowdon Ranger at 8.37, a minute before time. We left Snowdon Ranger at about

8.50. I cannot be sure. I did not take the time. I was in the station all the time with the stationmaster from Rhyd-ddu, who had come down with the train. We were doing the accounts and changing the date in the press ready for Monday. As far as I know the driver and fireman were on the engine all the time. The cause of delay in starting was the work which was being done with the station-master, I did not go to the hotel. I had nothing to drink. We started and ran our usual speed all the way, no faster at all. I was in the break-compartment next to the engine. Just as we got to Quellyn bridge I looked behind, and saw that the two rear carriages were missing. I signalled to the driver to stop. We were running at about 10 miles an hour when we stopped. I told him to set back to find the coaches. We went back quite slowly, at not more than 4 miles an hour. It was so dark that we did not see anything until we were into the coaches. We knocked them over on the two sides of the line. There was only one passenger, and he was in the front carriage. He was not hurt. I had not felt anything wrong with the road at all. I had not felt any sudden check to the speed. I had applied my break at the usual place, about 200 yards before getting to Quellyn bridge. I had not felt the driver apply his break suddenly at any point near where the carriages ran off. I came down to Dinas with the engine. I went into Carnarvon for Mr. Livesay. I had two glasses of beer in Carnarvon before going to Mr. Livesay's house. I did not know that the driver and fireman had been to the hotel at Snowdon Ranger. I spoke to the driver at Quellyn bridge. I was too frightened to notice what state he was in. I did not see the driver at Dinas. According to the rule I ought to have put the heavy carriage behind at Rhyd-ddu. I did not do so because I wanted to save time, and it was the last train. I had never omitted to do so before. I know that according to the rules I ought, after pulling up the engine, to have gone back with my hand-lamp to find out what had happened instead of setting back. It was a falling gradient.

John Williams states: I have been about five years in the service of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Company as fireman and cleaner. On the 24th February I was fireman with John Jones. We left Rhyd-ddu at right time, and arrived at Snowdon Ranger at about right time. We were there for about five minutes. I do not think we were more. I went down with my driver to Snowdon Ranger Hotel to get a glass of beer. Guard Morris went there also. I do not think that any of us had more than two glasses. The station-master from Rhyd-ddu was not there. He never does come down by that train on Saturday night. We did not start sharper than usual, or run any faster than usual after leaving Snowdon Ranger, in order to make up the time we had lost. We were running no faster than usual at the place where the carriages left the rails ; not more than 10 miles an hour. We did not know that anything was wrong until the guard stopped us at Quellyn Bridge, and told us that the two rear coaches were missing. The guard told us to set back. We went back at about 6 miles an hour, and struck the two coaches, driving them off the road and upsetting them on the two sides of the line. I had put my break on a little before the place where the carriages first ran off, to slacken speed round the curve. That is the same place where we always put it on. I put it on a little harder than usual that night, as, I must admit, we were running faster than usual.

Conclusion.

This accident cannot be attributed to any defect in the permanent way or the rolling stock ; and it is quite clear that the two short light carriages at the rear of the train were jerked off the rails by the sudden application of the break, when the train was running at a high rate of speed to make up time lost at Snowdon Ranger, the guard having disobeyed the rule that the heavy break-carriage should be placed at the rear of the train at Rhyd-ddu.

The after collision was caused by the carelessness of the driver and the stupidity and disregard of rules shown by the guard in ordering the driver to set back when in total ignorance of the position of the missing carriages, which might, if it had been merely the case of a broken coupling, have been following the train at a high rate of speed on the falling gradient.

It is hardly possible to imagine anything more unsatisfactory than the gross misconduct of all the three servants of the Company who were with the train, and the entire disregard for truth shown by the guard in giving his evidence. His statement as to what occurred at Snowdon Ranger is pure invention, for the station-master from Rhydd-dhu was not there at all, and it hardly needed the confession which was dragged out of the fireman, a very young man, to make it clear that all the three men had been drinking at Snowdon Ranger Hotel, probably for nearly a quarter of an hour, and that the train was then run at a dangerous rate of speed in order to make up time.

The driver was quite drunk and has been discharged, and the guard is certainly unfit for any position of trust.

The traffic on this line is very small, and, if the guards could be trusted, there is no reason why they should not be allowed to issue the tickets at Snowdon Ranger, where there is not sufficient work for a station-master; but it is probable that if there had been one there in charge this accident would not have happened, and I think therefore that it is incumbent upon the Company either to employ a better class of men as servants or to put a man at Snowdon Ranger as station-master.

The conduct of the landlord of the Snowdon Ranger Hotel is also deserving of the attention of the licensing authorities of the county, for it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that this is not a solitary instance of men leaving their trains to drink at the hotel; and it is certain that the fact of their doing so on this occasion cannot have been unknown to whoever may have been in charge of the premises on the night in question. If this person were the landlord himself it is most discreditable to him to have countenanced such misconduct on the part of the servants of the Company, and to have allowed the driver to get so drunk upon his premises that serious risk was caused to the public.

The Secretary,
(Railway Department,) Board of Trade.

I have, &c.,
F. A. MARINDIN,
Major.

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 27th April.

Note: the alternative spellings of ‘Rhyd Ddu’ are presented here as they appear in the original report.

68.0 The good major concludes his description of the track relative to the accident with “The permanent way was in good order”. However even at this early stage in the railway’s history the 35lb/yard iron rail with which it was originally laid was showing its inadequacy for the purpose and consequently Mr. Livesey started a programme of replacement using 41¼

lb/yard steel rail. This task, along with the installation of new sleepers, would continue for at least the next 12 years. Since his arrival in 1881 Livesey was obviously getting to grips with his railway tasks. This would no doubt have impressed his superiors who, in January 1884, gave him the additional responsibilities of Engineer and Locomotive Superintendent.



There is evidence of Livesey’s re-sleepering exercise to be seen in this photograph taken by Frith in 1895. Note J Keylock’s observation that the re-railing and re-sleepering exercise lasted 12 years from its initiation in 1883-4 (Frith 36551)

NWNG? / WHR Covered Vans - Another View

Stuart Baker has been giving thought to the possible derivation of the WHR Covered Vans (*WHH 70*) and has sent me the following letter. After his letter, I have assembled a few images to amplify the points he raises.

Dear Peter,

It is always a pleasure when the *Welsh Highland Heritage* journal drops through my letter box and issue No. 70 was no exception; providing yet another excellent read. This time made particularly interesting by the article on the two covered vans, as I have recently completed 16mm scale models for which I decided to paint them in NWNG livery - on reflection this probably being an error.

It is a great shame that there is so little firm evidence for their lineage, and having read the article I started to carry out some rivet counting time-line logic of my own, which I submit below for consideration.

That both vans 2 and 4 were derived from open coal wagons looks very obvious, as both exhibit the same corner ironwork extensions, with the best photograph of the vans probably being that on page 50 of the Wheeler album (photo Wheeler 14/18). What is also noticeable in that picture is the difference in brake-gear, the brake-gear on van 2 being rather spindly compared to that on van 4. Could that assist in determining which open wagon is used for each van?

Then there are the doors. Having pored over photos of the pent roof vans some years back in order to draw them, it appears to me that the doors on van 2 originate from one of those vehicles, the rivet arrangement appearing as identical as can be determined from old photos. Assuming this is true it also suggests that the pent roof vans were somewhat shorter than the coal wagons as the doors on van 2 are less than a third of the overall van length,

which appears not to be the case on the pent roof vans. Assuming I am correct then van 2 could be a direct replacement for one of the pent roof vans and could have been converted in pre-WHR days.

Van 4 is a very different matter, however, for which we must consider the ancestry of the curved top doors.

Why have curved tops when straight would be the only sensible cheap solution if constructed from new? The answer must surely be that the doors were taken from something that had curved top doors that were constructed with a strong well formed framework with the frame being formed around the curved tops. The Festiniog Railway had a number of end door wagons both with tightly curved roof lines and with doors formed to suit a shallower roof line. FR vans are generally in the order of 4'-10" overall width, so allowing for the thickness of the sides and clearances this would mean the doors are in the order of 4'-7" overall width. Sketching these doors for the shallow roof line vehicle on to a side view of an open coal wagon shows that this logic could work, the joiner simply forming the top plank to match the FR roof line on the old door tops, and hey presto, a side door wagon with curved door top. This logic would place van 4 firmly in the period of the WHR as the van would surely have been constructed at Boston Lodge: FR/WHR era make do and mend at its best.

Short and sweet and possibly a bit simplistic, but that is how I find many things are.

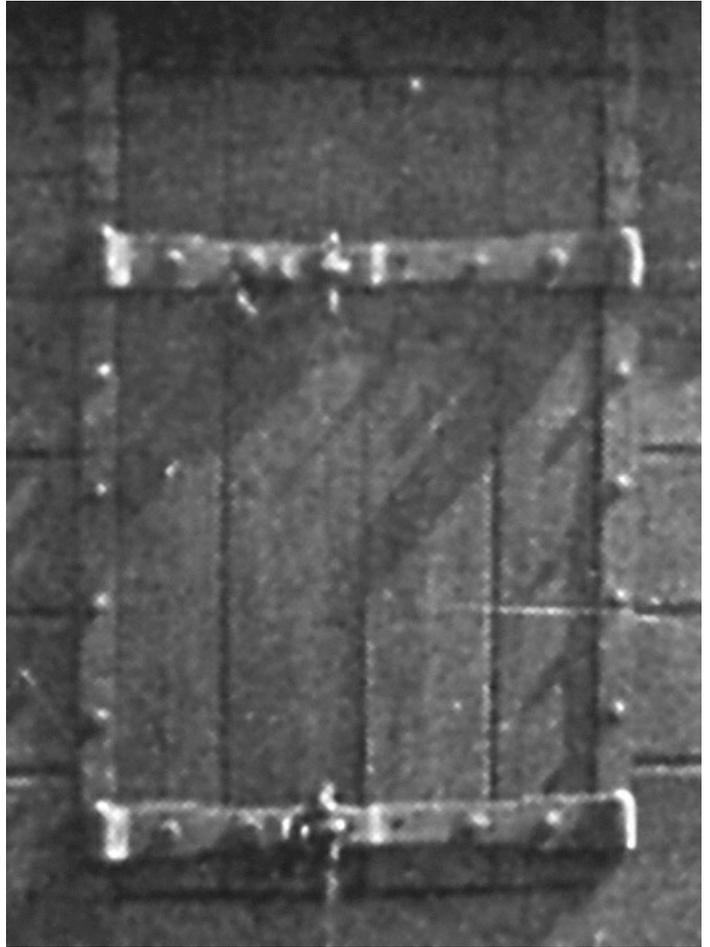
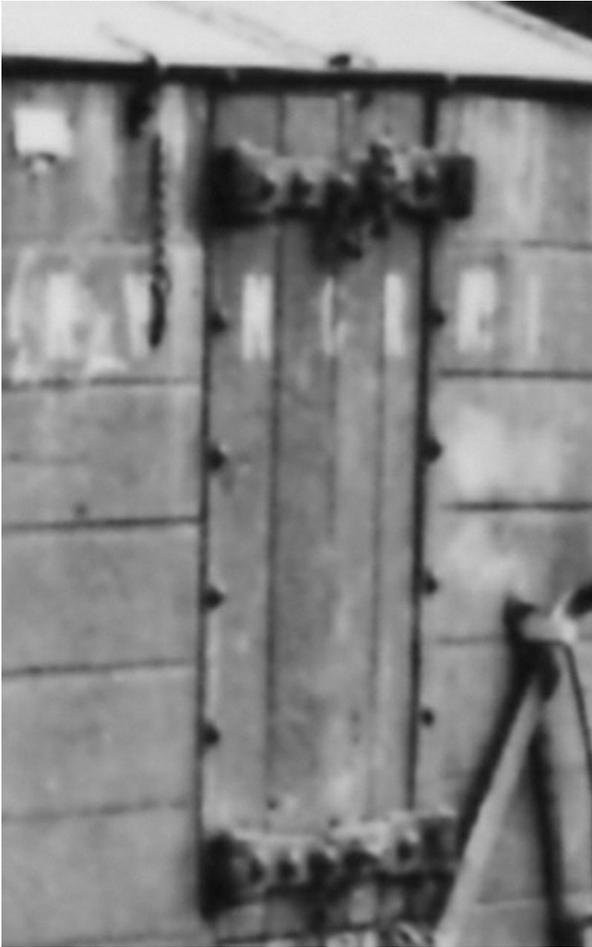
As to whether the vans originally had tar sheeting for roofs rather than corrugated steel I will let others worry about.....

Keep up the excellent work with the journal, kind regards,

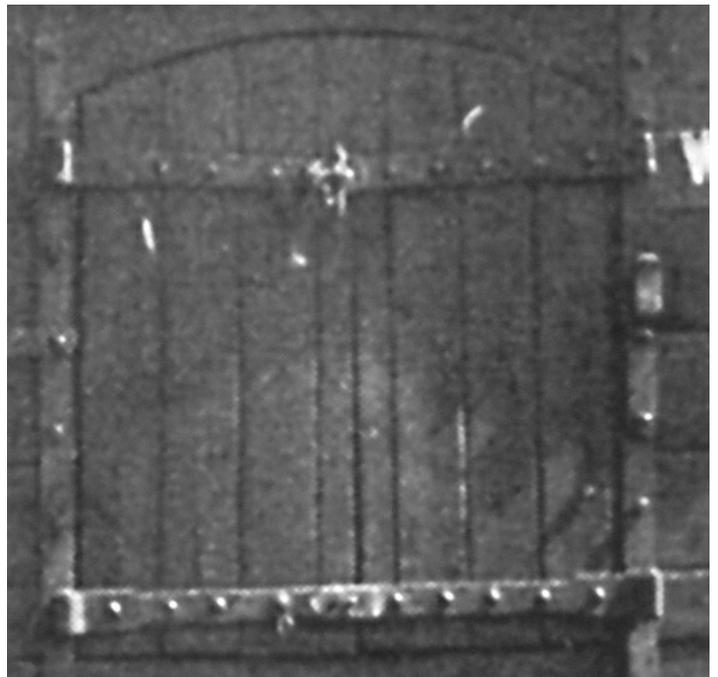
Stuart Baker.



Both of the Welsh Highland Covered Vans photographed at Dinas Junction by Hubert Wheeler on August 8th 1935. Note the completely different approaches to door design adopted for No 2 and No 4 as discussed by Stuart in his letter above. Note also the differences in brake mechanism design to which he refers and how the wheels and brakes on No. 2 appear 'lighter' than those on No. 4



Above left we see the east-side doors on one of the original NWNGR 'ridge-top' covered vans (their No. 1) and, above right, for comparison, the west-side doors fitted to WHR Covered Van No. 2 (photographed by H.F. Wheeler in 1935). Stuart has highlighted the similarities (I suggest that readers carry out their own 'bolt counting' exercises). Note how the hinges on one side overlap onto the hinges on the other to allow the doors to be secured by pins. The doors seen in these two images are of opposite hand with No. 1 closing left over right and No. 2 vice versa. However, Stuart's thesis that the doors for No. 2 might have been recovered from the last surviving NWNGR ridge-top van seems compelling. We know that the NWNGR ridge-top vans had doors fitted to both sides and, as noted in *WHH 70*, we know from photographs that WHR Van No. 2 also had doors on both sides.



Above left we see the end doors fitted to FR Covered Van No. 132, photographed by Ken Hartley as it stood on the Flour Mill Loop, Portmadoc, in July 1931. On the right, by comparison, we see the west-side doors of WHR Covered Van No. 4. Evidence that Van No. 4 had doors on the east side is less strong than with Van No. 2, however Wheeler's photograph 14/19 (the Ashbury 'Summer' parked at Dinas), where the east side of No. 4 can be seen through two of the carriage's un-glazed door panels, thus avoiding confusing reflections, suggests that this van also had doors on both sides. Whilst the match between the doors in the two photographs above is not exact there are strong similarities between these two specific examples, including, e.g., that both sets of doors closed 'right-over-left'. If this type of FR van was the source of doors for Van 4 then, it would seem, the east-side doors would also have closed 'right-over-left'.

The Amalgamated Slate Association

In *WHH 47*, John Keylock briefly addressed the history of the ASA and noted that we were in possession of a number of ASA Consignment Notes. These Notes covered the despatch of slate from the quarries on Moel Tryfan via the NWNCR/WHR to Dinas for transshipment to the LNWR/LMS.

He showed as an example one of these Notes and explained the information contained thereon. He noted, in particular, the documented identification numbers of the wagons in which individual loads of slate were despatched. He wrote;

In the extreme left hand column [of the Consignment Note] the wagon number into which the slates were loaded is noted. In NWNCR days there would seem to have been a maximum of 120 slate wagons available and in the period 1926/27 wagon numbers noted are between 3 and 131. There is no record of the WHR having acquired additional slate wagons so perhaps numbers above 120 were the result of making one 'runner' out of two decrepit ones.

Furthermore in the 'Wagon No.' column is another range of figures generally in the series 300 – 1000. Whose wagons were these? The quarry owners' own?

In a letter in the subsequent Issue of *WHH*, Jim Hewett suggested that wagons in the range 300 - 1000 might have been FR wagons on loan.

To the best of my knowledge this thought was not followed up, but I recently had the opportunity to examine all 34 of the

Consignment Notes we have and it seems appropriate now to amplify John's original notes in the light of this examination.

The Notes cover the period from 10th December 1923 to 14th April 1925. Up to April 1st 1925 (10 Notes), the highest wagon number recorded was 120 – over that same period 26 individual wagon numbers appeared on these 10 Notes. This record would seem entirely consistent with our understanding of the wagon stock inherited by the WHR from the NWNCR. The highest WHR slate wagon number that I have seen in photographs so far is 127.

From April 4th, 1925 (24 Notes) we see the appearance of the higher numbers originally noted by John. After this date we see 15 specific wagons with numbers higher than or equal to 127 in the record whilst the individual wagons noted with numbers less than 127 increases to 48. The numbers higher than 127 are consistent with these being FR slate wagon stock, i.e. the highest number is within the range of FR slate wagon numbers.

Of course, whilst we might be able to assert that wagons with numbers higher than 127 most probably were FR stock, we cannot as a corollary assert that wagons with numbers less than this definitely were NWNCR/WHR stock as the FR slate wagon number series ran from 1 to 1079, so any of the 48 numbers less than 127 shown in the Notes could also have been recorded from FR wagons.

Let us look at the particular wagons identified on the admittedly limited selection of Consignment Notes in our possession. The columns in the table below show: wagon numbers recorded over the period up to and including 1st April 1925; wagon numbers equal to or higher than 127 recorded after 1st April 1925; and additional numbers in the range 0 – 126 recorded after April 1st.

Nos. Recorded up to 1/4/1925	Nos. Recorded after 1/4/1925	
	Numbers 127 and higher	Numbers lower than 127
3	127	2
5	131	14
6	393	15
9	402	20
10	558	21
12	725	22
16	826	23
18	836	25
28	861	27
33	905	29
34	909	31
38	919	35
41	983	36
44	986	37
46	1034	51
48		56
52		57
53		58
62		63
65		80
70		88
71		112
109		
114		
116		
120		

Notes to table

Assuming that ASA wouldn't have shipped slates in 4-t coal wagons it follows that all of these numbers less than or equal to 12 refer to 'slate' wagons, either ex-NWNCR 2-plank box wagons or to 'iron crates', indicating that 'slate wagons' were numbered in a separate series.

Of course, in each case the numbered wagon referred to on an Assignment Note might be ex-NWNCR or FR. Higher numbers, i.e. greater than 127 would seem clearly to be FR, but strictly numbers 127 or lower could be from either sets of stock.



WHR slate wagon No. 127 photographed at Dinas in 1928 - Locomotive Publishing Company No. 1662 - REAL 77879

From the Editor

Your editor has maintained a keen interest in the history of the Welsh Highland Railway for many years now - I joined the '64 Co.' not long after 1964!

However, my interest in the WHR stemmed from a more fundamental interest in narrow gauge railways of nominal 2 foot gauge that had been kindled many years previously. In fact, I trace this initial 'baptism' to the late 1940s when our family summer holidays were traditionally spent with my maternal grandparents who, as luck would have it, lived in Bangor. Their house, No.3 Gambier Terrace, Garth Road, offered from its front upstairs windows a wonderful view of Port Penrhyn with the mass of Penmaenmawr beyond.

In the 1940s and 1950s Port Penrhyn was a hive of activity with both narrow and standard gauge locomotives going about their varied businesses. I suspect that it was this direct juxtaposition of traffic on the two gauges that highlighted the 'charm' and perhaps even the 'eccentricity' of the narrow gauge, cementing my lifelong interest.

Even when I was aged less than ten I would wander off on my own and make my way from my grandparents' house to the Port and, to my delight, I was soon to discover that it did not take long to befriend the footplate crews and to become an enthusiastic footplate passenger as the business of sorting the newly-arrived slate trains was discharged. Most of my footplate rides at that time were on board *Winifred*, one of the Penrhyn Quarry Railway's three Port-class Hunslet 0-4-0 saddle tank engines.

It was a sad day when the railway closed and its, and much of the quarry's, equipment was sold, the locomotives being dispersed to various owners. Several, including *Winifred*, left for new homes overseas, in her case to the USA.

My work took us to the US in 1995 and we lived there until the end of 2000 spending the first two years in St Louis which, in their terms, is only a short drive from Indianapolis but the opportunity to visit *Winifred* never came up. In any event, for much of her time there, she was never properly on show anyway and I doubt that we could have seen her even had we been able.

Imagine how pleased I was a couple of years ago when I was able to visit the repatriated loco at Llanuwchllyn and see the start of her restoration process. I have not had the chance to visit the locomotive since then but I note that she is scheduled to visit Felin Fawr this coming September (the 17th and 18th).

Can I manage Super Power AND Felin Fawr on successive weekends?? Which will take priority??

Watch this space!!



For the benefit of those who might wish to put a face to the name, here is your Editor on *Winifred's* footplate at Port Penrhyn in August 1948.

Continued from Page 3



The two stiles at Salem described by Lewis Esposito in his notes on Page 3. The photographs show the new 'gate' stiles installed by Gwynedd County Council and the National Park with the reinstated NWNRR rail-built stiles alongside.

Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis



To those readers suffering a sense of déjà vu, apologies! This photograph did appear in this column on the back page of *WHH 61* but at that time discussion centred on the oft-repeated assertion that the standard gauge train in the photograph was apparently standing 'wrong line' at Dinas, therefore implying that the photograph was 'posed'.

However, this is the WHHG Journal and, as John Padley pointed out to me recently, the narrow gauge content in the image is not without interest. The train comprises both of the Railway's Ashbury 'Corridor' carriages (No. 23 next to the loco and No. 25 beyond) and one of their two Pickering brake composites, all under the control of Moel Tryfan. The train, it would seem, was recently arrived at Dinas when the photograph was taken. The photograph is generally accepted as being taken during 1925.

Students of the Moelwyn Tunnel incident (August 23rd 1924 – *WHH41* pp.2/3) will recognise the train formation in this photograph as identical to that that experienced the incident the previous year. John suggested in his note to me that, based on the train formation, this photograph quite possibly shows a train recently arrived from Blaenau. Does this suggestion stand examination?

I love it when a photograph was taken in bright sunshine as we can learn so much from detailed examination of visible shadows. Regrettably, perhaps, when this photograph was taken there appeared to be a degree of overcast that prevents such analysis – or does it? Whilst there are no obvious shadows there is nevertheless apparently a predominance of light from the right of the image – from the west in the 'real world'. Indeed, if one looks closely at the rear of the standard gauge train it would seem that there perhaps was somewhat stronger sunlight at that end of the station. The lighting of the station building and the highlights on the signal post in front of the bridge would appear to confirm this. The break between shadow and light at the rear of the standard gauge train appears to suggest that the sun light, such as it was, was more or less at 90 degrees to the train.

The timetables for 1925 were broadly similar to those in force in 1924 when, thanks to recorded incidents such as that at Moelwyn, we know that trains ran through from Dinas to Blaenau and back. The 1925 timetables for the period June 1st to September 19th showed the same path followed by the through trains in 1924 still to be available with scheduled arrival times back at Dinas of 18:13 up to July 11th and 18:20 from July 13th.

The information to be derived from lighting in the image is limited, but it appears that the picture certainly was taken in the evening but probably at a time somewhat later than the scheduled arrival times laid down in the timetable. The difference between the apparent actual and the scheduled times would appear to be of the order of 30 minutes or so if the picture had been taken at the beginning of the season. Had the picture been taken at the end of the season the sun would have set before it would have reached the position suggested by the lighting in the image. At mid-season, say late July, a 'best-guess' from the image would be that it was taken about 60 minutes after the scheduled arrival time. Over the period 13 to 31 July 1925, evening northbound departures from Dinas were scheduled at 17:00, 18:28 and 19:55, none of these crossing southbound trains. It would appear that the WHR intended connection with the 18:28?

Schedule delays of the order of 30 to 60 minutes might well be considered unsurprising for the Welsh Highland so the photograph certainly could show an arrival from Blaenau. However, does it?

In a future edition of *WHH* we may well discuss in more detail the operation of through services between the Welsh Highland and Festiniog Railways, ideally to understand for just how long true through services actually ran. By 'true' I mean that whereas trains might have run through their locomotives quite possibly did not. We showed in this column in our last issue how in 1926 trains ran through from Dinas to Portmadoc but swapped their locomotives at Croesor Junction. I would invite anyone who has information on these apparently short-lived long-distance operations, or who might simply have thoughts to offer, to contact me - contact details below.

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