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The completed fencing at Tryfan Junction, organised by the WHR Society and implemented by the Black Hand Gang - photo courtesy of John Ellis Williams.

At the Group's AGM in Porthmadog on April 30th, Nick Booker presented his Chairman's Address which is reproduced below.

My report is both a review of last year and a look into the future

Projects and External Support

Thanks to the good offices of the WHR Society and the Black Hand Gang the station area at Tryfan Junction is now well fenced. Now this is complete we will look at ways of improving interpretation on site including potentially installing a dummy siding or at least some means of indicating the link between the station and the route of the Bryngwyn Branch – now the Slate Trail

We have continued in our efforts to set up a friends Group for TJ to ensure that station can be opened on high days and holidays including Super Power in September and there has been some interest.

The Cambrian Crossing Box at Pen y Mount should be finished later this year thanks to the efforts of members of the

WHR Society Midlands Branch and our thanks should be extended to Mike Hadley who is coordinating the project and who also plays a key role in our other buildings projects. When complete and finished it will have new cladding and a brand new door – it reminds me of the *Flying Scotsman* – exactly which bits have not been replaced and date from 1923?

The Water Tower at Beddgelert is now in use but Cedric Lodge continues to fine tune its operation. I'd like to thank Cedric for his efforts on the water tower, providing an excellent new photo opportunity and a very useful working asset for the railway. It was through the far sightedness and diligent lobbying of the founders of our Group that the original tower was preserved.

Betws Garmon: we have decided with the agreement in principle of the WHR/FR Company to stabilise and conserve the remains. Later this year and using an approved contractor we will commission a project. This means that any further deterioration will be slowed and time can be taken to consider the most appropriate way to make use of the site and what remains of the building.

Glanrafon: we will co-ordinate our activities with the company and make an appropriate financial contribution to its conservation.

During the year, we made a second donation to the Kerr Stuart Fund and we make our third and, for the moment, final donation later this year.

We continue to support the FR/WHR photo scanning project initiative in principle and are looking at ways by which our own photographic archive could be brought within its umbrella.

Annual Accounts

The annual accounts have been available on the web site for some weeks and there are copies in front of you and I would like to thank Peter Roughley for putting these together.

We are in robust financial health currently but must not become complacent - I'm happy to field any questions

Web site

David Tidy our web master has continued to keep our web presence in good order and up to date.

www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk

The inclusion of the Pay Pal facility on the site has proved to be a great advantage for users and for sales of books and subscriptions.

However, this year we have engaged a professional web site designer to provide a redesign and restructure of our site and this is an ongoing project. Some of you will also be aware that we now have an active Facebook page that provides a forum for discussion and the posting of items that might not fit within the constraints of the website - and we have 96 'likes' - if you have not done so already take a look and 'like' us please.

Sales/Publications

Our great success in 2016 has been the history of the PBSSR - *Ghosts of Aberglaslyn*, written by John Manners and Michael Bishop - that has quickly moved into profit - the marketing of the book has opened up one or two new sales outlets for us. We have plans for a follow up in terms of a slim volume of additional information mostly plans and maps plus just a few corrections and amendments!

Adrian Gray has continued his splendid efforts in selling our publications - as I said last year how he manages to do so and run the FR Heritage Group etc and earn a living I've no idea! The inclusion of Pay Pal on the website has both added to his burden but also made it easier

Peter Liddell, our Journal Editor, has continued to produce our well regarded quarterly publication as well as wrestling with the design and printing of our books - having been involved in editing '*Ghosts*' I can safely say that I had the easier job!

Perhaps a word of thanks is due to ZPQ the printers of the journal and of '*Ghosts*' and some of our other books - they manage to combine keen prices with good service and quality which is no bad thing!

Membership and Administration

Our membership has declined slightly although we are attracting new members. We continue to look for ways of

encouraging new members and we now have a new membership leaflet. I thank Dick Lystor for his sterling efforts on membership and looking after our archives, and his contributions to the journal, one of which has been picked by Heritage Railway Magazine.

David Allan has continued to provide wise counsel and he and Michael Davies although no longer on the Committee and others provide our link with the foundations of the Group in the 1990s.

I had hoped to say a little more about becoming a corporate entity. We have made some progress in this regard but not as much as I had hoped. However, we will be moving forward on this over the next few months and will keep you informed.

External Relations

We continue to maintain our links with both the WHR/FR and the Heritage Railway in various ways. One aspect of this which has been picked up by the chairman of the FR Trust, Dr John Prideaux, is how the Group could become more directly involved, in the build of the replicas of NWNGR Nos 1 & 2 built by the Ashbury Railway Carriage & Iron Co. He has specifically mentioned Peter Liddell's forensic skills on photographs that could well reveal information that would otherwise be missed! We have already supplied some photographs from our collection and will of course endeavour to support the project as far as we are able.

I should also highlight that Mike Hadley, one of our committee members, is part of the team involved in the development of the WHR's new station at Caernarfon.

The Future

At our Committee Meetings we have wide ranging discussions on future projects and activities. I have already commented upon our involvement with Betws Garmon, Pen y Mount and Glanrafon.

We are of course more than just about building projects and we are acutely aware of the need to find a home for our archive material and indeed that of others.

Interpretation along the line is an area where we think we can provide a useful resource and support and we will be looking at ways of facilitating the delivery of appropriate historical information and explanation to passengers and visitors alike.

I have already mentioned our support for the Ashbury coaches project. We must not forget that '*Russell*', the sole remaining locomotive of the NWNGR/WHR, the '*Buffet Car*' and the '*Gladstone*' coach quietly trundle up and down on the WHHR at their Gelert's Farm base. I'm sure that I speak for all the members of the Group when I say that we would like to see us, at some time in the near future, sponsoring a train on the 'main line' incorporating these items of rolling stock for our 'pleasure and delectation' and with '*Russell*' really working hard! We know there are significant administrative and technical obstacles to be overcome, for this is to be realised. However, if we can play a part in facilitating the achievement of such a goal, we will do our best to do so.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the Committee for the sterling work they have put in over the year to keep the Group functioning.

Thank you all!

Illness and failed ambitions – James Cholmeley Russell

The literature on illness and its impact upon decision making is mostly focused on politicians rather than businessmen ⁽¹⁾. However, the key point is that how an individual behaves and their judgement can be significantly affected if they are physically and/or mentally ill.

Indeed, the Royal College of Psychiatrists devotes part of its website to the issue and makes the point in the preamble to its advice on the subject that 'Many of us will, at some time, have a serious physical illness. Both the illness, and the treatment for it, can affect the way we think and feel'.

Anyone who has watched 'The Crown' on Netflix and seen Winston Churchill when Prime Minister incapacitated by a series of strokes and Anthony Eden popping amphetamines and injecting himself to relieve the symptoms of an ulcer and a botched operation will be aware of how illness and pain can potentially influence events.

The impact of James Cholmeley Russell's illness on the development of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Company has been previously alluded to both in the Russell biographical blog and more recently in John Manners' book, on the Portmadoc Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway, *Ghosts of Aberglaslyn*.

The indefatigable Michael Bishop has provided a list all the references that he has been able to identify from newspaper reports of NWNGR Company meetings and Directors' Reports mentioning JCR's illness, and some other occasions when he wasn't presiding at meetings and other people chaired them. Putting these together with evidence, such as Russell's will and Gowrie Aitchison's assertion (see later) in 1912 that Russell had been incapacitated since 1905/6, sheds some light on why little progress was made in extending the NWNGR north to Carnarvon or south to Beddgelert and beyond, quite apart from the intransigence of the LNWR and others.

Russell's illnesses began, as far we know in 1882 when he was 41 years old. The following extracts are verbatim and comment is made as appropriate.

North Wales Express 24 March 1882

Ordinary meeting of the shareholders of the NWNGR was held at the Inns of Court Hotel, London, on Tuesday [21st March]. In the absence of chairman (Mr J.C. Russell) who is

Nick Booker, with the help of Michael Bishop, has been looking at J.C. Russell's 'chequered' health history.



J.C. Russell in his bath chair at Longdene, Haslemere, c.1911 - Courtesy Evelyn Pangman

confined to the House by illness, Mr A. Fitzgibbon presided.

The Chairman read a letter he had received from Mr Russell, explaining the cause of his absence from the meeting, and in which Mr Russell remarked that the station expenses at Dinas would always be a great charge

upon them, as the London and North Western Company had hitherto declined to pay their share of the expenses. He thought they might expect an increase in the slate traffic of 25% in the current year when the slate companies completed their connections. The extension to Rhyd-ddu had not answered (*sic*) as well as had been expected. There was a good coal traffic there, but the reason of the deficiency in that branch was that the Glanrafon Quarry Company did not send down much coal at present, and the West Snowdon Quarry

had not yet commenced working, although they professed to be beginning last summer.

Note: The West Snowdon Quarry was at Betws Garmon and was also known as the Bwlch Cwm Llan Quarry.

NWNGR Directors' Report 22 February 1886

The Proprietors will remember that an Act was obtained in the Session 1885 authorising an extension from Dinas to Carnarvon and also an

extension from Bryngwyn. Owing however to the serious illness of your Chairman (J C Russell) during the latter months of 1885 he was unable to give attention to the affairs of the Company, and consequently the construction of these extensions has remained in abeyance.

North Wales Chronicle 20 March 1886

The twenty seventh half yearly ordinary general meeting....Mr J C Russell the chairman presided

....the position of the company was steadily improving and the immediate prospects were better than they had been at any previous time. The decrease in the receipts from passengers and merchandise was mainly due to the fact that the company's railway was not yet extended to Carnarvon. The proprietors would remember that an Act was obtained in the session of 1885 authorising the extension from Dinas to

Carnarvon and also an extension from Bryngwyn. Owing however to the serious illness of the chairman during the latter months of 1885 he was unable to give attention to the affairs of the company, and consequently the consideration of the construction of these extensions had remained in abeyance...

Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald 1 April 1887

Half-yearly meeting of shareholders held at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool on Tuesday [29th March].

Sir Llewelyn Turner of Parkia, Carnarvon, presiding in the unavoidable absence of Mr J. C. Russell, the chairman.



If only some of these were narrow gauge wagons delivering direct to the ships - but for Russell's illness they might well have been! - Carnarvon in the 1890s - John Keylock Collection

NWNGR Directors' Report 20 August 1886

Owing to the continued illness of your Chairman, little has been done with regard to the Extension Lines to Carnarvon and Bryngwyn, for which the Act was obtained last year.

North Wales Chronicle 25 September 1886

Half-yearly ordinary general meeting held at the Adelphi Hotel 23 September. Sir Llewelyn Turner presided, and was supported by Mr Charles Davison and Mr John Lloyd. Owing to illness Mr J.C. Russell was unable to attend, little had been done with regard to the extension of lines to Carnarvon and Bryngwyn for which the Act was obtained last year.

The Chairman, in moving the adoption of the report, said they would join with him in expressing regret at the absence of Mr Russell, the chairman of the company, and equally join in the hope that his health might be so much improved before long that he might be able to give those efficient services which he had hitherto rendered to the company.

With regard to the first cause of diminution – that of competition with the cars – a Bill had been obtained for carrying the railway into Carnarvon, and avoiding the transshipment of passengers and slate at Dinas. If the extension were carried out according to the bill, the passengers would be taken down to Carnarvon, whence they would get to the L&NWR very quickly. The illness of Mr Russell had stopped that, but he hoped they would soon have his valuable services to complete that great undertaking so necessary for the prosperity of the company.

The Chairman (Sir Llewelyn Turner) said he exceedingly regretted the absence of Mr Russell, their chairman, and more especially the cause of it, which arose from a domestic misfortune.

Note: Russell's 'domestic misfortune' was the sudden death from pneumonia of his barrister brother, Robert Bruce Russell on the 18th March 1887 aged 41. They had both been the editors of several editions of a classic of family law "The Rights and Liabilities of Husband and Wife" originally written by John Fraser Macqueen. While grief from losing a friend or relative is not an illness it can nevertheless have symptoms ranging from shock and numbness to tiredness or exhaustion, all of which may affect judgement and decision making.

Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald 30th September 1887

The thirtieth half-yearly ordinary general meeting, and an extraordinary general meeting, of the shareholders in these railways were held at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, at noon on Monday. There was a very sparse attendance, including only Sir Llewelyn Turner (who 'was voted to the chair'), Mr. Charles Davison, of Connah's Quay; Mr. John Lloyd, Rock Ferry, Mr. Dutton, Lymm and Mr. R. H. Livesey, secretary (who held 30 proxies).

Note: At the EGM there was a long discourse on the problems of the railway terminating at Dinas and the benefits of extending to Carnarvon and into the Crown Quarries from Bryngwyn. After much discussion Mr. Davison formally proposed the resolution to extend to Carnarvon, the chairman explaining that this meant a decision to proceed with the

extension from Dinas to Carnarvon only. A meeting of the directors followed. There was no explanation as to Russell's absence.

Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald 23rd March 1888

The 31st half-yearly ordinary meeting of the NWNRR Company was held at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool on Thursday afternoon. Mr Russell, Queens Gate, London, presided, and there was also present Sir Llewelyn Turner, Parkia, Carnarvon, Mr Charles Davidson, Fairfield, Connah's Quay, Mr John Lloyd, Mount Villa, the Dell, Rock Ferry, Mr Slater (a shareholder), and Mr R.H. Livesey (another shareholder and secretary of the company).

With regard to the extension to Carnarvon, mentioned in the report, the chairman again expressed regret that the undertaking had met so little support during the last two years. Owing to his own illness he had been able to do practically nothing. During the last half-year, however, he trusted that he had been exerting himself as much as ever he could, and he thought he might say that there was a prospect of their obtaining a greater share of success. He had gone carefully into the figures, and from the traffic that now went to Carnarvon harbour and the local traffic that went back, those receipts based on present tonnage showed enough to pay 5 per cent. He had strong hopes that he would be able within the time necessary obtain the capital necessary for that extension and he hoped they would see concord (sic) in the town.

The chairman, being the retiring director, vacated the chair. Sir Llewelyn Turner said he had very sincere pleasure in proposing the re-election of Mr Russell as a director. He felt bound to say, having once occupied the post of chairman himself, that they were deeply indebted to him (Mr Russell) for the great exertion which he had made, and he thought that it was due to him to state that but for him the affairs of the company, which at one time got into very low water, would have got into water still lower. He was certain that they would be perfectly unanimous in electing him to the position of director. Mr Russell, in reply, thanked the meeting, and said he would use his best endeavours to carry on everything to a successful termination.

Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald 4th April 1890

THE thirty-fifth half-yearly ordinary meeting of shareholders of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company (Moel

Tryfan Undertaking) was held on Friday, at the North-Western Hotel, Lime-street, Liverpool. Mr. Charles Davison presided, in the absence of Mr. J C Russell, the chairman of the company.

Note: No mention of why Russell was absent.

Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald 31st March 1899

The 53rd half-yearly ordinary meeting of the shareholders of this railway company was held at the Queen Hotel, Chester, on Friday, the vice-chairman (Mr Charles Davison) presiding in the absence of the chairman (Mr J. C. Russell).

Note: No mention of why Russell was not present.

North Wales Express 3 April 1908

Half-year meeting of shareholders held in London on Wednesday (31 March). Sir J.W. Szlumper presided in the absence of the Chairman Mr J C Russell.

Note: No explanation for Russell's absence.

Gowrie Aitchison Affidavit of 23 March 1910

Aitchison signed an affidavit instead of Russell as Receiver & Manager to withdraw £500 to keep the railway going:

'James Cholmeley Russell the Receiver and Manager is at present very seriously ill and quite unable, I am informed, to swear any Affidavit.'

A previous Affidavit in October 1906 to gain authority to spend £780 on the two Pickering coaches (for which 'I have obtained tenders') was sworn at Dunbeg, Onich, County of Inverness, instead of the usual London. This may have happened simply because he was staying at his house there and it was convenient to do so or because he felt too unwell for the journey south.



J.C. Russell at Onich - Courtesy Evelyn Pangman

Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald 25 March 1910

The half-yearly ordinary meeting of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company was held on Monday (21st March) in London, Sir J. W. Szlumper presiding.

Note: Once again, mention of why Russell was absent.

Russell's Will

In a codicil dated 20th December 1911 to his will of the 13th January 1897, Russell makes a number of bequests to several named nurses including two who '...nursed me through an almost fatal illness'

Gowrie Aitchison Affidavit of 23 October 1912 offering to take over as Receiver and Manager

Gowrie Aitchison made an offer to the High Court, Chancery Division to become Receiver and General Manager of the NWNCR Company following Russell's death in 1912.

Paragraph 2 says he had been Secretary and Traffic Manager from March 1898 to September 1910, then only Secretary, "and during the illness and incapacity of the late Mr Russell which extended over 6 or 7 years I have done most of the work for him only troubling him when absolutely necessary."

This suggests that Russell was ill as far back as the time when he was negotiating with North Wales Power & Traction Co. Ltd in 1906 over the NWNCR electrification and its link with the Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway.

Nevertheless, Russell did sign the calendar year Receiver's Accounts in March 1911 and April 1912.

Russell had a busy life. He was appointed Receiver and Chairman of the NWNCR Company in 1878 and Manager in 1889, while in 1880 he had become Manager and Receiver of the Manchester & Milford Railway, roles which overlapped for a considerable number of years. In addition, he was active in property development and in his role as a barrister and in his other railway interests, including those with his friend and colleague James Weeks Szlumper, such as the proposed Royal Exchange and Waterloo railway. He also managed to find time to be chairman of the Barking Gas Company.

As far as the NWNCR is concerned, Russell was unable to progress the powers given by the 1885 Act to extend to Carnarvon Harbour and at Bryngwyn. Michael Bishop has commented that it must have been difficult to raise funds for an overcapitalised railway not paying dividends, let alone producing sufficient income to pay, very occasionally, interest on the B and C Debenture Stock. Despite the fact that the powers were extended until July 1892, no monies were raised for the extension scheme. He would have had enough trouble raising about £3,500 on the A Debenture Stock 1891-95 to pay for Block Signalling, Continuous Brakes and Carriages but at least the interest on the debentures was being paid! A planned new engine in 1894 may not have been ordered because of the failure to issue the remaining £523 of these Debentures.

Russell died aged 71 on the 29th August 1912 at his house in Surrey, from Arteriosclerosis, the thickening and hardening of the walls of the arteries, occurring typically in old age and a cerebral haemorrhage i.e. a stroke. Whether his earlier illnesses were related to these causes is not known.

The degree to which Russell's ill health contributed to the collapse of the NWNCR's ambitions to get to Carnarvon and the failure to achieve a connection with Portmadoc, we will never be able to ascertain. However, looking back over his life, one can see that lack of progress on activities in North Wales coincided with substantial bouts of ill health both in the 1880s and in the 1900s including during the saga of the Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway.

In the Merrow Church Parish Magazine in September 1912, following Russell's funeral, the Rector, the Rev. G H Aitken, wrote 'Two years and a half have gone by since Mr Russell was struck down by the seizure which has at last proved fatal. For a while he made progress and seemed on the road to

recovery...' This suggests that Russell was taken ill in 1909 and would certainly explain his absences from any NWNCR company meetings that year and later ones. Taken with Aitchison's affidavit of October 1912, it's possible to understand why the NWNCR Company had little strategic direction during this period.

Some of Russell's earlier absences may be explained for other reasons, (for example, it's believed he met his future wife on a steamer travelling back from South Africa in 1891 or 1892) but chairmen are usually expected to attend board meetings if they are able to do so! Russell was clearly a man of substantial energy, intellect and ambition and one might draw the conclusion that he would have achieved even more in his life if his health had not let him down.

Sources and Notes:

As listed / referenced in the text and:

(1) *'In Sickness and in Power'* David Owen 2008 and *'When Illness Strikes the Leader - the dilemma of the captive king'* Jerrold M Post and Robert S Robins 1993

National Library of Wales Newspaper Archive including (abbreviated in the text):

- North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality
- Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent

National Archives - Petitions and Affidavits presented to the High Court, Chancery Division

J C Russell's Probated Will 1 October 2012

Farnham, Haslemere & Hindhead Herald September 7, 1912
jamescholmeleyrussell.blogspot.co.uk

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/coping withphysicalillness

'Ghosts of Aberglaslyn' - History of the Portmadoc Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway –John Manners with Michael Bishop

Festipedia

Caernarfon Online

Wilkinson's Gazetteer and Bibliography of the Mines and Quarries of North Wales ©Jeremy Wilkinson 2004

Michael Bishop and Nick Booker – various notes and emails exchanged in the preparation of this article

Note:

Sir Llewelyn Turner (1823-1903) was a Welsh politician and Deputy Constable of Carnarvon Castle and was Chairman of the Board of the NWNCR at the time of the prospectus in January 1873. He remained a Director when he passed the Chairmanship to James C. Russell in 1879. He was still a Director when he died in September 1903.

Conference of Stationmasters, October 1923

Despite the high hopes that the WHR would be a success once the through route to Portmadoc was up and running in the summer of 1923, these were unfortunately not realised, and it soon became apparent to the Directors and management of both the Welsh Highland and Festiniog Railways that economies were going to have to be made to stem the heavy losses. As a result, on Tuesday 23rd October 1923, the Board met with Capt. John May (Superintendent, Festiniog and Welsh Highland Railways - Sept 1923 to May 1924) and Col. H.F. Stephens (Engineer and Loco. Superintendent - Festiniog and Welsh Highland Railways) to discuss the situation. Two days later Evan R Davies (WHR and FR Board Member) wrote to May to record the decisions made, and those relevant to the WHR are here given verbatim: -

Dear Sir,

I beg to advert to the Conference which the Board had with you and Col. Stephens on Tuesday and to record the following decisions arrived at, namely:

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY

DINAS JUNCTION

(1) The existing arrangements for loading and unloading to be abandoned and an offer to be made to the present Foreman of the loading gang to take on the job as piece-work and to be paid one shilling per ton for Slates and fourpence per ton for Coal, lime and other goods. This arrangement to be made at once and if and when made, notice to be served on all the present loaders to determine their engagement.

(2) The Station staff at Dinas to include the Station Master, boy porter and Clerk.

SOUTH SNOWDON

You explained that in view of the Coal and other heavy traffic to be handled at this Station it is desirable to employ a man instead of the present woman Station Master, the man who was employed as Guard to be taken on temporarily as Porter in Charge (under Beddgelert) at a wage of 39/-. Miss Williams, the present Station Master to be informed that the Company are sorry not to be able to continue her services during the winter months but would be glad to give her the offer to take charge of the Refreshment Room either at South Snowdon or Dinas next year at her present salary.

BEDDGELERT

This Station to be run solely by the Station Master without assistance, South Snowdon to be also under his control to avoid the necessity of appointing anyone of the grade of Station Master at South Snowdon.

It is understood that you will require to employ two Drivers, two Firemen and a cleaner on the Highland Railway (sic) and that consideration will be given to the

Dick Lystor continues his examination of the companies' historical employment records.

suggestion made by Col. Stephens that the present Carpenter employed at Dinas might take on the job of Wagon Fetter.

It is also understood that twelve men will be employed for the time being on the permanent Way, four at 44/10 and eight at 41/-, but that we may look for a reduction in this connection when the heavy work which will be involved in maintaining the line during the present winter, is over-come.

May was also busy on the typewriter (or his typist Miss E. Davies was) sending the following memo to all Station Masters (with one exception) on both the WHR and FR on 26th October.

CONFERENCE OF STATIONMASTERS

I shall be glad if you will arrange to attend a conference in this Office at 2.15 pm on Monday next, the 29th instant, to discuss certain matters dealing with traffic, and to consider the best means of reducing the heavy expenses incurred in working both railways at present.

The conference is to be an informal one, and I have called it with a view of obtaining your assistance in dealing with the urgent matters, which I have been instructed by the Board to carry out.

You will please arrange for the station duties to be attended to during your absence.

Taking each of these station recommendations in more detail, at Dinas Junction the arrangement for loading and unloading was indeed abandoned, and the Foreman, Thomas R Thomas (age 57, 30 years' service) took on the job as piecework at the suggested rate. The loaders (also acting as Goods Porters) were as follows, and, with the exception of Thomas Ore, were all laid off some time after October 1923: -

George Evans (age 26) – started in 1920 (with FR?).

Caradoc Jones (age 42) – 15 years' service on NWN GR & WHR.

Thomas Ore (age 52) – Ganger until final closure, with a total of 43 years' service with NWN GR & WHR.

R.J. Roberts (age 55) – 8 years' service with NWN GR & WHR.

J.O. Williams (age 67) – 6 years' service with NWN GR & WHR

The Station Staff were as follows: -

Station Master – D.O. Jones (age 50, 28 years' service)

Boy Porter – William Limerick (age 17), son of Jeff Limerick, ganger for NWN GR & WHR Bryngwyn branch. (qv)

Clerk – John William Jones (possibly D.O. Jones son). Left some time in 1924.

At South Snowdon, the present Station Master was Myfanwy Williams (age 22 with 5 years' service). She was the one exception not included in the list of Station Masters sent memos on 26th October regarding the conference (see above), but she received the following letter from John May the day after: -

Dear Madam,

Owing to the traffic on the Welsh Highland Railway being so small during the winter months, and the absolute necessity of curtailing the expenditure, I am to inform you that the Company are sorry not to be able to continue your services during the winter months, and I regret having to give you a week's notice to terminate your service on the 3rd November.

The train service between Dinas and Beddgelert will be further reduced to two trains each way next month and as the work at Beddgelert will not be heavy, it has been decided to place South Snowdon under the Beddgelert Stationmaster, who will be able to do both stations with the assistance of a Porter.

If you will be available during the summer months, the Company will, I am sure, be very anxious to find you something to do at South Snowdon Station.

Yours truly, John May.

The reasons for her termination given to her by May were somewhat different than those given by E.R. Davies, with no mention of "heavy traffic" requiring a man instead of a woman! Despite the whole exercise being about cutting costs, Myfanwy was paid 38/- per week and her replacement, 39/-! It transpires that her replacement and temporary Porter in Charge was ex Guard, Lewis Jones, who was subsequently transferred to Minffordd in February 1924. There is no evidence to suggest that she worked for the WHR again. The station came under the control of H.D. Jones, who also ran Beddgelert with no additional help.

The two Drivers required were Willie Hugh Williams (age 60, 40 years' service) and Hugh Roberts (Age 31, 6 months' service). He became Fireman by 1st Jan 1924.

The two Firemen were W.G. Jones (age 20, 6 years' service) and William Llewellyn Thomas (age 19, 4 years' service) who appears to have either left or been laid off sometime in late 1923.

Cleaner – H.E. Jones – formerly blacksmith's striker, and replaced by W.G. Jones (above), by 1st January 1924.

Carpenter – David Daniels. Age 56, he started with the NWNCR in 1921. It is not known if he became wagon fettler.

In July 1923, there was one ganger and four platelayers.

Ganger – Jeff Limerick (age 53, 35 years' service) died later that year. He was possibly replaced by John B. Williams (age 30)

Platelayers – S. Williams (age 57, 12 years' service), Henry Ore (age 28, 6 months' service, son of Thomas Ore), John B.

Williams (age 30, 6 months' service) and R.P. Jones (age 29 and gone sometime after July 1923).

By the time of the Conference the number had increased to twelve, but those in italics had gone by 31st December leaving three gangers and three undermen.

Ganger: W.H. Parry. Undermen: John E. Williams and *W. Griffith*

Ganger: *John O Jones*. Undermen: *E.O. Davies* and *W.R. Jones*.

Ganger: John B Williams. Undermen: William H. Rees and *Owen G. Morris*

Ganger: Thomas Ore. Undermen: S. Williams & *Henry Ore*

Gwynedd Archive Services References.

XD97/785b, 7450c, 7451bb, 15107.



Willie Hugh Williams - one of the two longest-serving NWNCR/WHR employees

The Track Gang

Tracing platelayers who worked on the NWNCR through the census is a much more ephemeral task than finding Station Masters, Drivers, Guards or families such as the Limericks. This is because few of them stayed with the company for long. There would be a basic maintenance team employed but when a bigger project was undertaken such as putting in a new siding or renewing a length of track a number of local labourers would be employed who would, for census purposes possibly for some time afterwards, declare their profession as platelayer

More from Dave Rogerson as he continues his trawl through census records, this time in an attempt to identify members of the NWNCR track gangs.

In the accident report of Feb 1883, it is stated that William Roberts, the ganger, was called to inspect the damage to the line after the drunken escapade of Driver Jones, Fireman Williams and Guard Morris. In 1881 William Roberts, born 1831 on Anglesey, was living with his wife Catherine and his family in Bontnewydd and is the

only platelayer of that name in the area. It appears that he was born in the Newborough area and worked as an agricultural labourer before taking up railway work. In 1871 he has moved from the island to Llanbeblig to work



A glimpse of Church Cottages beyond the western (Up) standard-gauge platform at Dinas Junction. These buildings are noted on several occasions in David's census analysis.

because it sounded grand. A further complication is that the records before 1911 did not tend to reveal the company for which they were working and in addition the LNWR and the many slate quarries also used the services of platelayers and labourers in both temporary and permanent employment. Hence, I have assumed that three groups of men who declare themselves to be platelayers were probably working for the company. The first group is men who are known through the company records, inspections, accident reports etc. The second is those who happen to mention the company in the census record whilst the third is men living in the immediate vicinity of Dinas yard particularly those living around St Gwyndaf's Church.

on a farm. The assumption must be that he was one of the team who built the NWNCR, was discovered to have a hidden talent, and continued to be employed by the operating railway. He was still around doing the same job in 1891 then disappears from the record.

In 1881 William's son, also William, aged 18, also declared himself to be a plate layer and may well have been working for the company. He was not around in 1891.

Searching for other possibilities in 1881 identifies Richard Jones, platelayer, living at Church Cottages born 1843 in Denbighshire. He is very difficult to find either before or after 1881 as Richard Jones is not an uncommon name in

Denbighshire and he left our area before 1891. His wife Margaret from Llanystumdwy was still around living with their children in Llanrug but Richard was working elsewhere, possibly to a foundry in Salford. By 1901 Margaret was a widow. There are others to consider but none who come near to satisfying my conditions.

This seems to be the size of the permanent track gang – I shall assume up to four men keeping the line tidy and safe. Boyd's lists of staff give a ganger and four platelayers in 1884, six permanent way in 1898 but only two on the 1922 list so I might be being a little conservative in the early years.

In 1891 we already have William Roberts and it is easy to allocate John Limerick to his team. John (Senior) is the Irishman who had platelaying experience with LNWR, settled in Llanwnda, only claimed to be a labourer in 1881 but had regained his platelayer status in 1891. He and his growing family lived by the church and his son, Jeb, features in later years. In 1891 Jeb was a loader, probably in Dinas yard. Another local boy, Thomas Ore, who was the same age as Jeb was recorded as being a platelayer. His father, also Thomas Ore, was another Irishman but his trade was as a stonemason. Thomas, the son, and Jeb were born in Llanwnda in 1870. I speculate that both fathers came to the area during the building of the Carnarvonshire Railway. In 1881 the Ores lived at Maen Coch next door to Bryn Gwyn Stationmaster Robert Hughes. It wouldn't surprise me if Ore senior did a bit of occasional work for the railway and I suspect the Thomas Ore, Loader on the 1922 list could have been the third generation with the same name working for the company but it may, of course, have been his father.

The final member of the 1891 team might well have been John Williams who was certainly working for the company in 1911, declared himself to be a platelayer in 1891 and 1901 and could well be the Williams on the 1922 list. During all this time the Williams family lived about two miles out of Llanwnda on the edge of Y Foryd, the huge wetland off the Menai Straight which forms the estuary of the Gwyrfa. This John Williams was born in 1854 in Llaniestyn towards the tip of the Llyn peninsula. He married at the age of 34 which was quite late and, since I can find no record of him by name, age and birthplace in 1881, I wonder whether he was the John Williams from Carnarvonshire who went to be a soldier and was posted to York.

Moving on to 1901 William Roberts was no longer around, John Limerick had died but John Williams and Thomas Ore still stated they were platelayers so I assume they were still with the company. Jeb Limerick had taken his father's place on the track gang and they were probably joined by Thomas Jones. Thomas Jones is a bit of an enigma. In both 1901 and 1911 he claimed he was single and was born in Llanwnda either in 1842 or 1845. Amongst the many Thomas Jones's I can find no record of a bachelor born in the area who had anything remotely to do with the railways until he appeared. I suspect he might be the small farmer at Cefn just off the Rhostryfan Road who in 1881 was

living with his two sisters. The younger sister, Apolonia, married in 1885 at the age of 40; the elder sister and Thomas were still at Cefn in 1891 but not in 1901. He might have found the farm too much so he was looking for work at a moment where the railway needed labour. In 1901 he was living at the LNWR Crossing Cottage so may have been employed by them but by 1911 he declared he was Platelayer (Rtd) NWNGR so must have spent some time with our company.

And finally 1911. Either my estimate of the track gang size is not sustainable or something was happening in 1911. Jeb Limerick, Thomas Ore and John Williams were all still around. Thomas Jones had retired but instead of the expected one or even two turning up in the census we have three extra platelayers and a lengthsmen all stating that they were employed by NWNGR. One of them, John Jones may have been employed in 1901 where he states his job as railway labourer. He claimed to have been born in Llangybi in 1849 but I can find no record that fits until 1871 when he had married a widow with children and was in Llanwnda. He did various labouring jobs around the area including a stint as sexton and moved house as often as he changed jobs, finishing up at Church Cottages (as recorded in 1901 and 1911). In 1911 he was a widower with no dependent children and was boarding with another platelayer, Owen Jones. Owen was born in Talysarn near Llanllyfni in 1877. He followed his father into the slate quarries when he finished school and was married about 1903. That he was able to declare himself as a platelayer NWNGR by 1911 indicates yet again the flexibility of these labouring jobs. Almost next door in Church Cottages was another member of the track gang, John Owens born 1872 in Llanrug. He is impossible to trace earlier. There are at least ten John Owen(s) from Llanrug of an appropriate age in the 1901 census and he is one of the three who are not yet married. Finally we have a lengthman or in Welsh as he gives it *fforddoliwr* n.g.r., another John Jones, born in 1863 in Nevin. He had been around Bontnewydd since before 1901. In that census he was an Assistant Brewer.

As I said at the beginning the footplate crew, loco maintenance men, guards and stationmasters I have looked at before have been much more permanent than the track gang. I hope that what I have been able to find out in the snapshots provided by the census might be of use in interpreting company records and any local memories which come to light.

Dave Rogerson

Correction: When talking about the Limericks (*WHH* 68) I said that Jeb's son Thomas was working as a Porthwr in Waenfawr. This is true but the implication that he was a railway porter is unfounded as I have found more references to this job in its fuller form – *porthwr ar fferm* – which imply that he was an agricultural worker.

From the Editor

This Issue of WHH has turned out as very much a focus on people, from the very top of the railway's organisation in the shape of J.C. Russell down to the workers on whom the railways ultimately depended.

Nick Booker's assessment of the impact of Russell's illness on his performance in his senior management roles indicate a number of distinctly possible 'might-have-beens' that were consequently missed. Dick Lystor and Dave Rogerson have given us insights into the more mundane aspects of the railways' operation.

Meanwhile, I have received the following notes from David Woodcock in response to my article on slate wagons in WHH 74. With his agreement I am reproducing his notes here as they make interesting reading.

A most useful article on the slate wagons in WHH 74. I have used a different approach to checking the size, which as you will see, agrees well with your drawing.

My reasoning - open, of course, to discussion - is that the wagons were filled with dressed slates for transport, with little more spare space than was necessary to actually get the slates in and out. The most common size of roofing slate was the Countess at 10" by 20" and photos show them stacked on their short end

coming just about level with the top of the top angle iron. A ton of virgin slate typically occupies a space of some 13.5 ft³ and a ton of stacked dressed slates won't be very different, occupying, say, 15 ft³ (Slate chippings, whose density is usually the one quoted, are obviously very much less dense.)

There was good reason for stacking slates tightly, so it would have made good sense for all the internal dimensions of the iron crate to be multiples of, say, 11" with the extra inch providing the handling margin. Photos suggest that the normal method of placing the stacks of on-end slates was transversely across the wagon, so the width wouldn't in fact have had to be a multiple of 11", and the slates weren't quite vertical so several inches would have been "lost" in this dimension anyway (no doubt wooden wedges were used to prevent the load moving).

Your quoted wagon length suggests that the longitudinal dimension within the crate was just under 78" - 7 stacks with 1" margins - and the width was around 52" (providing, say, a useable tight stacking width of 48").

This would give a dressed slate volume of;

$$70" \times 48" \times 20" = 67,200 \text{ ins}^3 = 39 \text{ ft}^3 \text{ (approx)}$$

which would weigh just over 2.5 tons, giving a small margin (for a 3 ton wagon) for tighter packing or taller slates.

I haven't yet done the same exercise for the smaller wagons.

David

(Continued from page 12)

The shadows cast on the station building floor certainly suggest that the sun was at quite a high elevation, but determining precisely the position of the shadow cast by the bottom of the name board on the concrete floor is difficult. My measurements suggest an elevation of only 41.9°, not the value suggested by the timetable.

However the shadows cast by the roof support pillars, but also those cast by the people and the locomotives, suggest that the sun was shining more or less directly onto the front face of the building when the photograph was taken.

From my surveys carried out in the 1970s, my notes show that the long axis of the station building was oriented 16.5° off the north-south direction, rotated anti-clockwise in plan view. Thus the perpendicular to the platform face of the building was oriented 16.5° south of due west - i.e. at an azimuth of 253.5°

For the sun to have shone directly onto the face of the building on this particular date, the time would have had to have been between 16:49 and 16:57, allowing 1° of tolerance either way. To satisfy the timings suggested by the timetable, the sun would have had to have been 36.2° off this axis casting shadows noticeably pointing towards the north end of the building - not at all what appears to be suggested by the photograph.

However, the sun's elevation would have been only 39.7° which does seem to be at slight variance with what we see in the image, but I would apply some tolerance to my ability to measure exactly where the shadow lies relative to the overall building geometry.

In combination, I am happy that the sun data tells us that this photograph was certainly not taken when the timetable would indicate but rather some 2 hours later than this. This one photograph indicates quite clearly that, for some reason, the timetable was not operating as planned on this particular day.

In WHH32 Dick Lystor discussed the notes we inherited from Geoffrey Hughes who was a prolific photographer of the WHR over its last years. In particular, he looked at his notes covering train formations and times over the days between July 10th and September 26th 1936, this latter being the Last Day, when passenger traffic finally ceased. The photograph discussed here was included as an illustration, but at the time it was dated to July 8th, so its relevance was argued as approximate and not precise.

However, had this been correctly dated to the 10th, Geoffrey's notes on train make up would have been entirely relevant. His notes confirm the formation we see in the Baker's photo.

Unfortunately, his notes on train timings do not appear to agree at all with what we see in Baker's photo. They show Russell and train, made up exactly as we see in the Baker photo, departing Dinas at 4:50 for South Snowdon with a return departure from there at 5:35. These timings agree precisely with the timetable, but unfortunately, perhaps, not with what the photographs appear to indicate actually happened.

Clearly more analysis is required!

We will return to Baker's photographs in a future issue where first I will discuss the photos he took on July 8th 1936.

Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis



A train from Dinas headed by Russell has arrived at Beddgelert alongside the service to Portmadoc awaiting departure behind Baldwin 590 - 10th July 1936 (WHR 119 - S.W. Baker - negative no. 567)

Followers of my rambles on photography may well be aware of my enthusiasm for photographic 'sets' - collections of photographs taken by one person at one time - from which much can be learned if these sets can be assembled in the correct sequence. I have discussed here the photos of Ken Nunn (WHH70) and H. C. Casserley (WHH73) and, separately, the considerable set bequeathed to us by Hubert Wheeler. I would like to start another, occasional, series looking at the photographs taken by Stanhope W. Baker.

S.W. Baker visited and photographed the Festiniog and Welsh Highland Railways in July 1936, specifically on the 8th, 9th and 10th of that month. He made later visits but I would like to focus primarily on the operational WHR so I will concentrate on his 1936 images. A trawl through our (the WHR and the FR) collections show 32 images taken over this 3-day period. Regrettably, unlike H. F. Wheeler, Baker has not left a detailed record of his images (so far as I am aware) but many of his images have been annotated with various levels of detail, including, but not always, description of content, date and negative number. Given the information we have from these annotations it is possible to assemble these images into a sequence and to make intelligent guesses as to the detail in those cases where the annotations are either missing or incomplete. This process is complicated somewhat as Baker appears to have used at least two different cameras each with its own negative numbering sequence.

Nevertheless a picture of Baker's 'comings and goings' over this period emerges from this analysis. I would like to visit sections of this sequence in future articles, but for now, by way of a 'taster' as it were, I will look at just one of these images which appears rich in analytical challenge.

First let us review the structure of the 1936 high season timetable. Three trains were scheduled to depart Portmadoc Harbour Station each week day. The first departure was at 10:45, scheduled to arrive at South Snowdon at 12:00. There the train reversed to depart southwards at 12:15, arriving back at Portmadoc Harbour at 13:30. This train reversed in turn for departure at 14:00 to run to Beddgelert where arrival was scheduled for 14:35. After reversing at Beddgelert, this train departed at 14:55, arriving at Portmadoc Harbour at 15:30. Finally, this train departed Harbour at 15:55 to arrive at South Snowdon at 17:20. After one last reversal, the train departed South Snowdon at 17:35 to arrive back at Harbour at 18:40.

The scheduled services from Dinas in 1936 were as follows: the first departure was at 11:25, arriving at South Snowdon at 12:12. After reversal, this train departed at 12:25 to arrive back at Dinas at 13:15. The next Dinas departure was at 13:30, arriving Beddgelert at 14:45. After reversing, this train departed Beddgelert at 15:15, to arrive at Dinas at 16:35. The final scheduled train of the day left Dinas at 16:50 to arrive at South Snowdon at 17:33. The final northbound departure from South Snowdon was at 17:35 with arrival at Dinas at 18:15.

These timings show that the only occasion when there should have been two trains at Beddgelert was between 14:45 (the arrival of the train from Dinas) and 14:55 (the departure of the train to Portmadoc). In fact, I have seen this timing applied to a description of the photograph reproduced above, presumably based on the assumption that the timetable information was a valid basis for analysis. At the mid-point of this period, the sun's azimuth would have been 217.3° and its elevation 54.9°

(Continued on page 11)

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