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LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

The Chairman's Annual Review

For all of us, the last 18 months or so have been difficult and our activities have been curtailed. Both the WHR and the FR have suffered catastrophic revenue losses leading to unfortunate redundancies among staff. However, both railways will be running in 2021 and maybe the restrictions on overseas travel will lead to a mini tourism boom for Wales with a beneficial impact on passenger numbers for all heritage railways. The Group made significant donations to both the WHR and the WHHR during the year to support their Covid 19 sustainability appeals.

The Group employed a contractor to restore and conserve the Spooner graves at Beddgelert and we were encouraged by a member to submit this work for a 2021 National Railway Heritage Award, so we will let you know later this year how we got on. We made our promised contribution to the WHHR's Baldwin 590 fund during the year supplemented with monies from the family of K. F. Antia, for which we thank them. Apart from the regular expenses of printing and circulating the quarterly journal, our other major expense in the year was the reprinting of Part Two of the WHR *Historical Guide*. While a 'reprint', it nevertheless includes some revisions and updates and now incorporates some colour, thanks to new technology. We have plenty in stock, so I encourage members and others to acquire copies for their bookshelves and those of friends and others. Our plans for future books continue to evolve and we have some ideas for a 'title' or 'titles' for publication in 2022.

Our plans for working with the WHR to 'do something' at Glanrafon Slate Quarry are still 'on hold'. Clearly, the focus of the railway in 2021 will be to run trains and to earn much needed revenue. We hope that the undergrowth will be kept in check until more substantial work to conserve the weigh house can be undertaken in 2022. However, we should recognise that footfall at Glanrafon is unlikely ever to be significant and anything done there needs to be sustainable. Perhaps our promotion of the WHR's heritage should be located elsewhere such as Beddgelert or Caernarfon? In terms

of current activities, Group members have participated in meetings and activities in connection with the Railway's National Lottery Heritage Fund Round Two bid for funds for the highly significant Boston Lodge development project.

We have continued to explore opportunities for making our photographic archive more accessible and working with the Railway's Online Data Base project over the year. However, in line with making better use of our website and providing improved benefits to members, we are exploring the potential for developing our own online archive. This neatly leads into the issue of what to do with the other heritage and historical material of which we are custodians including documents, signs etc. It is unlikely that the railway will, in the foreseeable future, be able to provide either an archive building and/or a museum. Storing archived materials costs money and is not a generator of much revenue. Some of our archive is lodged with Gwynedd Archives but significant amounts of material are in the care of our archivist Dick Lystor and others. My article in *WHH* 90 'Where to Now Then' highlighted the need to make use of innovative technology for interpretation and to provide access to historical information. One of our priorities should therefore be to embrace the opportunities that such technology can provide to make our 'hidden assets available to members and the wider public'. A digital approach to heritage could be our next 'big thing' as we run out of bits of the past to restore. Even a virtual Tryfan Junction signal box is a possibility!

It's useful to remind ourselves that the founders of the Group set it up 'To locate, record, categorise and preserve as appropriate buildings, bridges, mineral lines, quarries, infrastructures and other artefacts, including documents and records, associated with the Welsh Highland Railway and its predecessors with a view to their preservation, restoration and, where appropriate, eventual re-incorporation into the rebuilt Welsh Highland Railway'. The caveat to these aims in our constitution lies under the heading 'Activities' where it says, 'In furtherance of the aims of the Group, its

activities shall be arranged by the Committee as from time to time may be deemed most suitable'. So, we have the ability to be flexible in our approach to 'Heritage'.

In this current year we have donated to 'The *Gowrie Project*', which aims to recreate the last locomotive built for the NWNCR. We took the decision to do so on the grounds that, apart from *Russell* and surviving items of infrastructure and rolling stock, there are few links with the age of James C. Russell and Gowrie Aitchison. In addition, locomotives 'pull the crowds, like nothing else' to quote one of our Committee members. With the donation to the Baldwin rebuild as *590*, we took a similar view on its ability to attract attention and the need to encourage completion of the project. In the circumstances of Covid the point was made by a couple of members that we should be doing more financially to support the F&WHR and not throwing money at projects which are 'nice to have' but of no current use. As Chairman I took the view that we had already made donations to both railways but we should also be encouraging the development of a sustainable attraction that celebrates its heritage. The present Covid crisis will not always be with us and the donations to the Baldwin and *Gowrie* funds and the Spooner graves all support that principle of an investment for the future as have our investments in publications.

Way back in 1997, the founders of the Group set it up as an unincorporated organisation and that has worked well for us so far. However, while we have charitable objectives, we cannot claim gift aid relief on donations. In addition, while we make contracts with, for example, publishers and for the provision of our website hosting, any liability lies with the member making the transaction and not the unincorporated group. Thus, if we do set up an independent photographic archive, any liabilities arising from issues of copyright would under current arrangements lie with an individual committee member. This would, to say the least, be very undesirable. We explored setting the Group up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) about three years ago but for various reasons, did not proceed with it. We now feel this is the right time to set one up and we have therefore taken professional advice on the matter. A CIO is a separate legal entity and so it can enter contracts, hold property and employ staff (not that we are planning to do either of the latter two) in its own name. Consequently, any liabilities arising from the entry into such arrangement fall on the organisation itself rather than the trustees or, in our case, committee members. A CIO is automatically given a registered charity number, which facilitates correspondence with HMRC on charitable tax advantages and also serves to reassure potential funders and donors. CIOs are not required to file information at Companies House but instead file information with the Charity Commission, which, in contrast to Companies House, does not charge

for the registration or the filing of information. CIOs are only required to report and file accounts, an annual return and other documents with the Charity Commission. Setting ourselves up as a CIO means that we will have a life as an entity beyond those of the Committee and members and which we hope will encourage others to join us in our endeavours. In the next *WHH* we will provide an update on our progress towards the Group becoming a CIO.

Finally, looking to the future and reflecting on what we bring to our railway, what is the future of heritage and history and thus of the WHRHG? It is something that all heritage attractions, not just our railway, need to address if they are to encourage repeat visits and 'engage with their customers'. Both the WHR and the WHHR have many different audiences, visitors, customers or passengers with varied interests and different motivations. If we are to encourage them to travel and visit again, to give money or to support us in some other way, then there is a need to provide some alternative offers beyond a ride through some excellent scenery. The Boston Lodge project, which I mentioned earlier, will tap into that aspect. As the Group has done in the recent past with sponsorship and volunteer support of the 'Journey into the past' trains, we need to remain alert to the possibilities of explaining how the WHR came to be in the first place and the personalities who were and of course are still involved.

The potential for improving heritage interpretation and exploring the people, connections and organisational aspects of the railway remain to be further explored and developed. As an example, and as illustration of 'modern history', we should not forget how we came to have a railway running from Caernarfon to Porthmadog, something Mr Russell, his friends, colleagues, and business associates aspired to but never realised. Yesterday is today's history and the obituary, in the last *WHH*, of Bob Honychurch, who with others had the dream which became reality, highlighted that very point. Technology now provides the opportunity to give 'Visitors the chance to explore 180 years of social and railway history and travel 40 miles by railway....' Looking to the future, one of our roles should be to help the railway achieve that ambition and we will be working with others so that in 2023 we can all celebrate and tell the 100th anniversary story of the opening of the WHR in 1923.

Finally on behalf of all members I wish to thank your committee for giving their time to making the WHRHG a continuing success despite the vagaries of the last 18 months or so.

Nick Booker

(The 2020 Accounts are enclosed separately)

Ruthin & Cerrig-y-Druidion Railway

By 1870 the standard gauge Network of North Wales was nearing completion with all the major routes carrying traffic. The London and North Western Railway (LNWR) line from Llandudno Junction had reached Bettws-y-coed in 1868 and Corwen was reached in 1864 by the Denbigh, Ruthin and Corwen Railway. The Aberystwith & Welsh Coast Railway (A&WCR) had been open since 1867 and North Wales was encircled by railways. The Festiniog Railway had been successful in introducing steam locos, including the new more powerful Fairlie type, and at that time was the only railway serving the slate quarries around Blaenau Ffestiniog. The LNWR was seeking to push into Blaenau from Bettws-y-coed albeit by narrow gauge. The GWR was also attempting to tap the lucrative traffic and planned to access Blaenau, by converting the Festiniog and Blaenau Railway to standard gauge, via an extension from its railhead at Bala.

At that same time, Charles Easton Spooner was pushing the idea of a narrow-gauge network across the remaining valleys of North Wales providing access to quarries and communities that would otherwise not be rail-served. The history of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways' initially grandiose plans has been well documented and what was put before Parliament in its Bill of 1872 included railways Nos. 1-3 that are relevant to this account. These were planned to link Portmadoc with Corwen via Beddgelert and Bettws-y-coed. The route was surveyed and well-engineered with use of spirals, side valleys and tunnels to reduce the otherwise fearsome gradients. Railway No. 1 extended the Croesor Tramway to Bettws-y-coed, Railway No. 2 to a point 3 miles from Corwen via Cerrig-y-druidion and Railway No. 3 into Corwen GWR station. Of these, however, only Railway No. 1 made it into law in the 1872-3 session as the LNWR blocked the Portmadoc-Corwen line which Spooner had claimed could take slates to the GWR at Corwen for transshipment to the GWR. Spooner may have been unaware of the LNWR's plans to build a narrow-gauge railway from Bettws-y-coed to Blaenau at this time.

It was in this atmosphere that a committee was formed to promote a narrow-gauge railway to meet the NWNCR Railway No. 2 at Cerrig-y-druidion and form a joint station there. The route was to take a direct line over the Clocaenog Forest uplands between Ruthin and Cerrig-y-druidion, serving sparse agricultural lands, forestry and minor quarries. The line received the support of local estate owners and was promoted by a Ruthin solicitor named Llewellyn Adams who later became the company secretary. The 1873 Bill failed but was brought forward again and gained Royal Assent in the 1876 session as the Ruthin & Cerrig-y-druidion Railway (39/40 Vict. c.81). Ironically, the NWNCR obtained powers in 1876 to abandon its General Undertaking which would have brought it to Bettws-y-coed, being fully committed to

Barrie Hughes has been looking into an erstwhile railway that, had matters turned out differently, would have formed part of a narrow-gauge through-route from Portmadoc to Ruthin.

construction of the Moel Tryfan line at that time.

The R&CR Company were authorised to raise shares to the value £75,000 to build a 16½ miles route over the Denbighshire Hills, starting from a joint station at Ruthin and ending alongside Telford's turnpike at Cerrig-y-druidion. The gradients

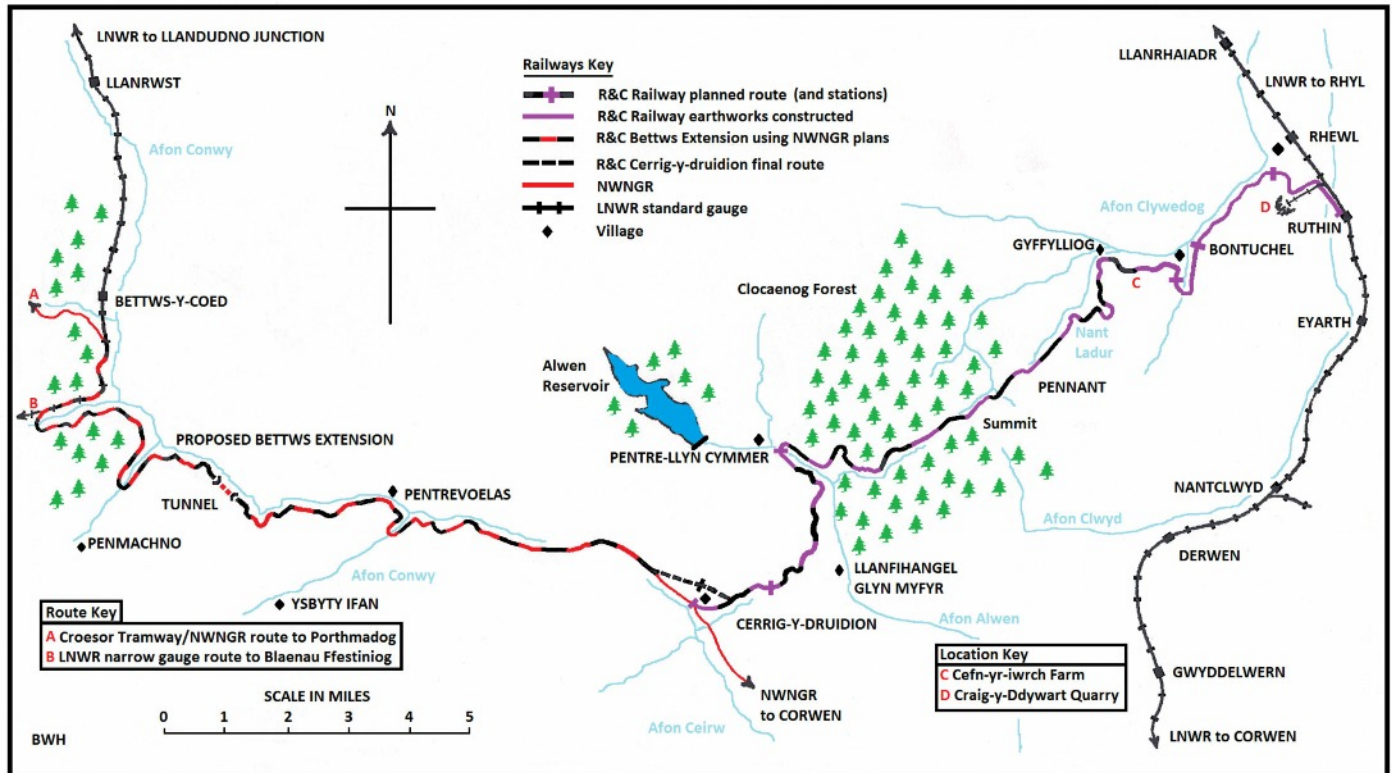
were indeed fearsome with a climb of some 4½ miles at 1 in 30 to the summit at Pennant. No slate traffic was envisaged and straight away it was obvious there were going to be difficulties raising the funds needed. A further complication which increased construction costs was that one of the local promoters had inserted a clause requiring the formation to be wide enough to carry standard gauge trains if future conversion was deemed necessary.

The Directors, Lord Bagot, Colonel Cornwallis-West and C.S. Mainwaring invited Spooner to join them as they had little knowledge of railways. He declined but advised the company as a consultant until October 1879. Many of the shareholders were small local landowners but the share issue did not go well as the Directors had advised that they should not expect dividends to be paid. With the limited take up, it was soon realised that the Company would have to find a contractor to build the railway and operate under a lease arrangement, being paid in shares with the Company responsible for buying the land. They also approached the Fairlie Company to determine if Fairlie locos could work the line after the success of Little Wonder. Deviations were then authorised to reduce the gradients and the expense of the Pennant Tunnel at the summit. The LNWR entered the equation in 1878 as they acquired the Rhyl to Corwen line, and they were asked if they would subscribe to the project. The answer was in the negative! In another subterfuge, C.S. Mainwaring was plotting to promote an alternative route from Cerrig-y-druidion to Denbigh or Derwen.

Things took a turn for the better when a London contractor, James B. Fryer, made an offer to construct the line at the end of 1878. The agreement envisaged the route's completion by September 1880 and the provision of rolling stock to a value of £6083. He was to work the line on lease for 10 years with payment being £10,000 cash in instalments as the work progressed, £52,000 in ordinary shares and £22,000 in debentures. The company now hurriedly managed to raise £13,000 in share subscriptions to purchase the land and other initial expenses and the contract and lease were signed in February 1879. One of the original surveyors, George Smith, was appointed as Resident Engineer and the company received offers of locomotives from Tayleors (the Vulcan Foundry).

(Ref: *Grace's Guide* - <https://tinyurl.com/rfr9ed79>)

Friar had done his homework and realised that the railway would attract more traffic, including the budding tourism trade, if it could extend to Bettws-y-coed. With the NWNCR



out of the running the R&C made a direct approach to the Croesor Tramway and both companies agreed to promote Extension Bills in the 1879 Session to reach Bettws-y-coed and form a through route from Ruthin to Portmadoc. Some preparation was done, and the R&C dusted off the original plans for NWNGR Railway No. 2 which they planned to use from Cerrig-y-druidion to Bettws-y-coed. Additionally, the company planned to move their station from the original location on the south side of Cerrig-y-druidion, where a joint station with Railway No. 2 had been planned next to the Saracen's Head Hotel, to a point north of the village near the school. This would have had the effect of reducing the severe gradients dropping down into the village. The Deviation would have regained the alignment of NWNGR No. 2 about a mile west of Cerrig-y-druidion.

Work started in May 1879 from Ruthin LNWR station and progressed up the Clywedog valley towards Gyffylliog. By June an 80 strong team of navvies was at work but was temporarily laid off in July when the Board of Trade investigated the proposed Deviations designed to reduce gradients, cut out tunnels and generally reduce cost. Adams, the R&C Company Secretary, was busy raising funds and buying land etc. By November some 5.5 miles, about a third of the 16.5-mile route was underway. However, there were clouds on the horizon for the project as the company had concerns about progress. Construction was limited to earthworks and no bridges had been built and no ballast or track laid.

The company found that Smith's progress certificates had been issued and the contractor's work paid 'both for bad work and to a great extent work not done at all'. Fryer was ordered to stop work, legal advice sought on termination the contract and the Resident Engineer dismissed for fraud. This rather mirrored the problems the NWNGR had with their contractor McKie in 1874 which brought delays to the Moel Tryfan Undertaking, where construction was started in 1873 but not

finished until 1877 under a new contractor. 1880 was a bad year for the R&C with money being used in court cases against the contractor and Resident Engineer. Smith was later exonerated and assisted in the search for a replacement contractor. Poor fencing and embankment slips were a problem on the part completed works, Adams was losing faith and the duplicitous director Mainwaring stated 'the sooner this unfortunate company is wound up the better'. The railway was also nearing its Parliamentary time limit for construction.

A little money was raised for the 1881 session where the Ruthin and Cerrig-y-druidion Railway (Amendment) Act was passed extending the time limit until June 1884. However, the company was so impecunious that it could not afford for the plans and sections for the proposed Deviations to be included in the bill. An approach was made to Welsh railway entrepreneur Thomas Savin, but he declined to take an interest despite proposals to extend the line to the Wrexham/Minera area. The GWR's opening of the Bala-Ffestiniog line in 1882 put paid to any chance of carrying slate to Corwen as Spooner had proposed. Shareholders were refusing to answer calls on their shares despite legal action and the final Shareholders Meeting did not elect any officials. It was then up to Company Secretary Adams to apply for Receivership and an abandonment order, the Ruthin and Cerrig-y-Druidion railway (Abandonment) Act of 1884. The receiver sold the land back to adjacent landowners and the railway was finally dead and buried. The 5.5 miles of formation constructed are visible to this day as cuttings and embankments from Ruthin to Cefn-yr-iwrch farm, located between Bont-uchel and Gyffylliog.

Barrie will describe the proposed-railway's route in part 2 of these notes.

NWNGR Fairlies (Part 2)

In Part 1 of these notes (*WHH 87*) I started a review of the histories of *Moel Tryfan* and *Snowdon Ranger* based on analysis of the photographs available to us. This work is based on a survey originally carried out by Chris Jones.

Part 1 covered the period prior to the installation of continuous braking and in Part 2 I will look at the early days of the air-braked period.



Moel Tryfan with a mixed train at Rhyd-ddu shortly after continuous-brakes were fitted - Arch 4933.

Perhaps our earliest-dated image from this period is shown here. From the presence in the train of both the Tourist Car (later to be known as the Gladstone Car) and the Workmans Car, we deduce that the date of the photograph can be no earlier than 1891. Indeed, we can further limit the date window if we note that, according to the Company accounts, these carriages were not delivered until the second half of 1891. As the station building still carried the name RHYD DDU we can further deduce that the photograph pre-dates the January 1893 renaming to SNOWDON. Records indicate (*WHH 47* - the Director's Report for March 1892) that early in 1892 fitting of continuous brakes "was in hand", in line with a deadline previously set by the Board of Trade and that all locomotives and passenger stock "should be fully fitted by the end of 1893". As seen in the photograph, *Moel Tryfan* had been so fitted so it would seem we can safely date this image to 1892.

Points of note regarding the locomotive include: continuing absence of maker's plates (noted in Part 1); the installation of a steam valve on the dome - the actuation rod, on the far side of the loco, is visible between the dome and the cab; the appearance of a repair over the lower part of the smoke box; a new top section fitted to the chimney; rearrangement of drain-cock actuation. The locomotive was apparently freshly painted but appears not to have been lined when the photo was taken.

Our next photograph can also be dated to 1892, this time reasonably precisely as the train was reportedly waiting to transport Sir W. E. Gladstone to Rhyd-ddu for onward travel to a planned visit to Sir Edward Watkin at his Hafod-y-Ilan chalet in Nantgwynant. Records of this visit fix the date of his passing through Dinas at September 12th. The following



Moel Tryfan and train awaiting the arrival of Sir William Gladstone, Dinas, 12th September 1892 - Arch 3622

day, as recorded on the commemorative plaque to be found at Gladstone Rock, he officially opened the Watkin Path to the summit of Snowdon.

The locomotive configuration had not changed between the two images, save for the fact that the paint-scheme now included lining. The photograph offers a clear view of the dome-mounted steam valve.



All of the NWNGR locomotive and passenger stock are seen here assembled to form a special excursion train - WHR 98

Our next image from the post-continuous brake period does not allow examination of our subject in great detail. However, analysis carried out by Chris Jones has confirmed that the locomotive seen immediately to the rear of *Beddgelert* was *Moel Tryfan*. From this, we can deduce by elimination that the third locomotive, discernible at the rear of the train, was *Snowdon Ranger*. We cannot see the locomotive's smoke box or chimney, but we can see that it was not fitted with its maker's plates when the photograph was taken. A lined paint scheme is just about discernible.

The train waiting to depart Dinas comprised all 10 of the Railway's carriages and all 3 of their locomotives. The presence of the Workmans and the Gladstone, seen between the Cleminson 6-wheel carriages and the Ashbury brake composites beyond, indicate a date no earlier than mid-1891. Our records actually suggest 1893 but, if this were so, this was probably earlier in the year than the delivery of the

Railway's next carriages, the Ashbury 'Corridors', later in that year.



Moel Tryfan and train 'posed' at Plas-y-nant - WHR 4a

Here, later in 1893 we suppose, we see one of the Fairlies, we believe this to be *Moel Tryfan*, and train posed on the bridge over the Gwyrfaï at Plas-y-nant. The train comprised both apparently newly-delivered Ashbury 'Corridors' with no. 9 next to the locomotive and no. 10 nearer to the camera. The rear carriage was one of the Ashbury brake-composites and the open door with guard prominent in the opening and the passenger in the middle carriage gazing directly at the camera appear to confirm that this photograph was indeed posed. Again, we learn little of the locomotive, this time due to its distance and location in the image.



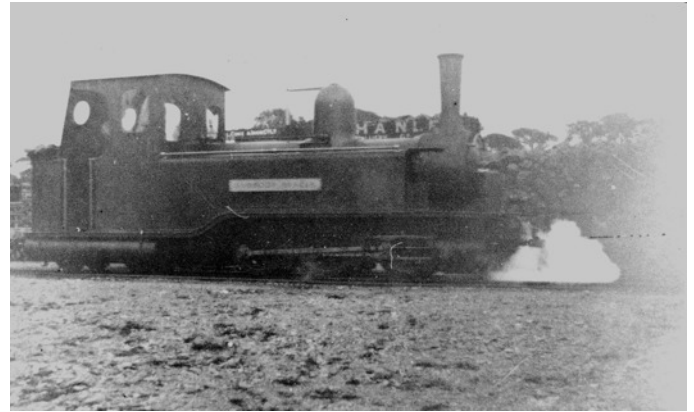
Snowdon Ranger with a long train at Dinas - WHR 3a

Now we see *Snowdon Ranger* with a recently-arrived long train at Dinas. The train's make-up includes both the 'Corridor' carriages and one of the semi-glazed Ashbury 'Summer' carriages, seen immediately behind the second 'Corridor'. The 'Summers' arrived in the second-half of 1894. This is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, photograph of *Snowdon Ranger* we have in the collection following the maker's photograph reproduced in Part 1 of these notes.

At first glance there might be a temptation to identify the locomotive as *Moel Tryfan* due to the low-mounted sand boxes. However, there is a distinct difference between the mountings for the long air cylinder below the right-hand footplate on the two locos and here they show clearly that this was *Snowdon Ranger*. At some stage prior to 1894 - we do not, I believe, know when - the characteristic high sand box installation was, for some reason, removed, leaving this locomotive to run for a period in a similar configuration to *Moel Tryfan*.

This photo confirms the same type of steam valve on the dome as seen in the earlier *Moel Tryfan* photos and there is a quite

distinct new section at the top of the chimney. Additionally, as we have seen with *Moel Tryfan*, the locomotive appears to have 'lost' its maker's plates and there is evidence of there being, or having been, the same painted crest as shown on *Moel Tryfan* in Part 1.



Snowdon Ranger at Dinas - WHHG 29

The next picture of *Snowdon Ranger* is, unfortunately, of poor quality but as such photos are rare it is nevertheless included here. In all discernible respects, the configuration seems similar to, if not the same as, that seen in WHR 3a.

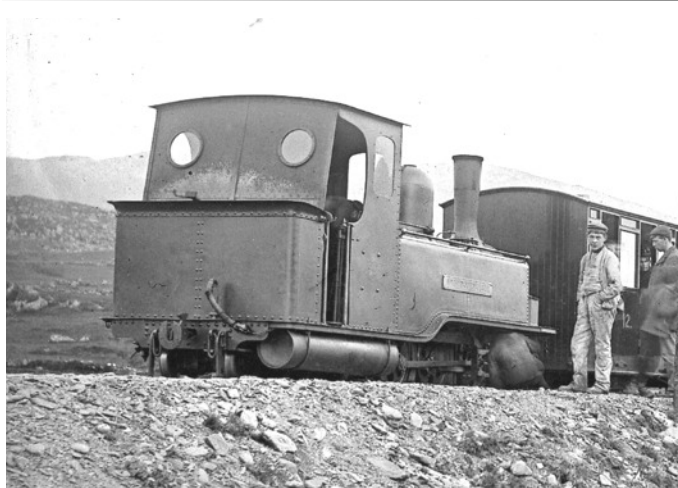


Moel Tryfan with a recently-arrived train at Snowdon - Arch 3710

To return to *Moel Tryfan*, Arch 3710 above shows the locomotive, coupled to the Workmans car, at Snowdon Station. Our records suggest a specific date for this photograph (October 1894). The locomotive configuration is largely as seen in Arch 3622 earlier. However, one obvious difference is that the extension to the top of the chimney has been lengthened with the extension piece here making up approximately 32% of the chimney's length as opposed to less than 27% in the earlier photo. If the date of this photo is correct, then at some point between September 1892 and October 1894, *Moel Tryfan* was fitted with a new, longer, chimney extension.

The paint scheme appears not to have changed over that period as the same lining close to the panel edges seems to be visible in both images.

Our final three photographs in this section of the notes were discussed recently in WHH 80 and 86 and are of particular interest. The first two show *Snowdon Ranger* at Snowdon Station and the third is another photograph showing *Moel Tryfan* at Plas-y-nant, this time heading a train back towards Dinas.



Snowdon Ranger at the head of a long train awaiting departure to Dinas - Arch 4397

This photograph, heavily cropped, appeared in *WHH 86* and the notes therein focused on the train. However here, also cropped, I will focus on the locomotive. Features of note include: the low-mounted sand boxes, the lack of maker's plates and evidence of lining towards the edge of the painted surfaces. In addition, not shown here but discussed in *WHH 86*, the train included both Ashbury 'Corridor' and two of the Ashbury 'Summer' carriages, placing the date no earlier than mid-1894.



An enlargement from image WHHG 19 (Arch 0288) published in full on page 10 of WHH 86.

In a similar vein, the main subject of my article in *WHH 86* was another long train awaiting departure from Snowdon. The full image, seen in *WHH 86*, shows that the train included both 'Corridors' and three of the 'Summers' - one semi-glazed (no. 12) and both un-glazed vehicles (nos. 13 and 14). In that article, due mainly to the presence of Bron-y-gader (the house seen above) we concluded that the date was unlikely to have been earlier than 1895. It is of key significance that this photo shows that 'Corridor' no. 10 had not, at that time, been converted into a composite carriage.

The identity of the locomotive was not specifically determined in the article, but subsequent analysis has, I believe, allowed this identification. The additional letters in the name *Snowdon Ranger* led to the need for longer nameplates than those fitted to *Moel Tryfan*. Careful measurement and analysis allow the identification of the apparent size of the plates relative to each locomotive so that, if all else fails and if reasonably accurate

measurements of the name plates can be made, the locomotive can be identified. This process applied to the locomotive in this image confirms its identity as *Snowdon Ranger*.

Despite the clarity of the original image, the locomotive occupies such a small percentage of the full area that substantial enlargement is difficult. There is not much that can be added to the locomotive description, save that it was fitted with low-mounted sand boxes. The possibility that WHHG 19 and Arch 4397 were taken in the same year seems high, in which case it is reasonable to suppose that the locomotive in WHHG 19 was not fitted with maker's plates.



An enlargement from Valentine's 24343.JV, showing a long Dinas-bound train at Plas-y-nant - Arch 3320.

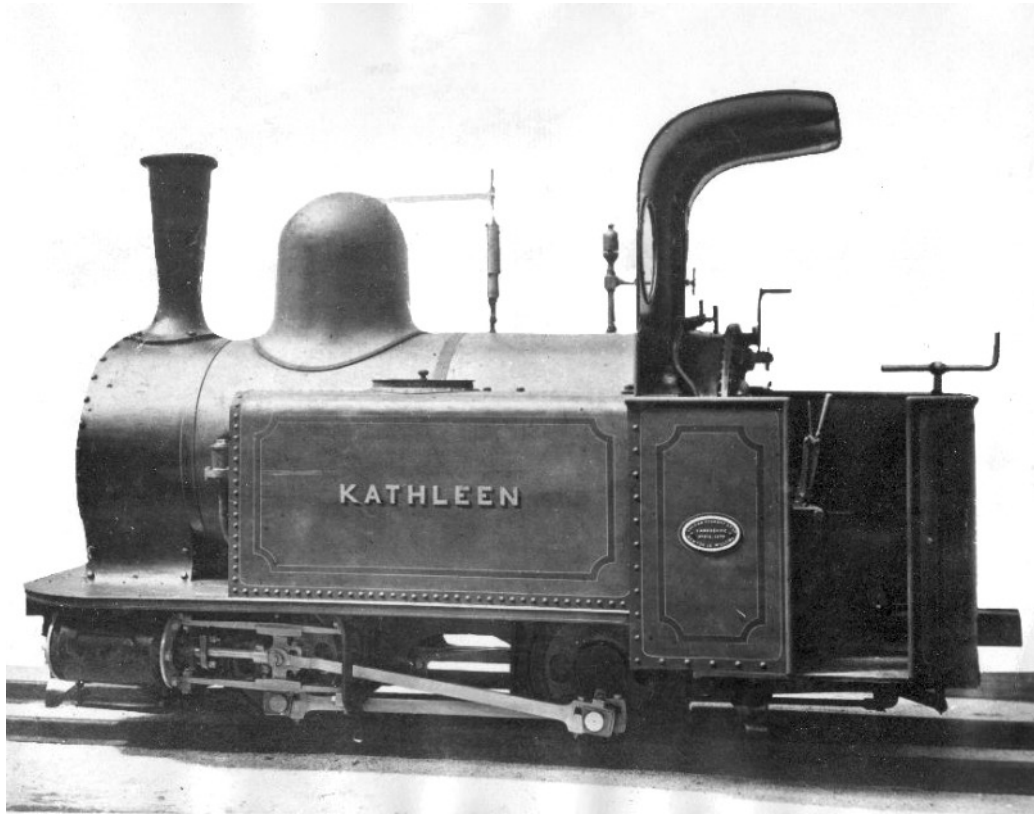
This next image was discussed at some length in *WHH 80* and its content can best be described as 'highly informative'. The Valentine reference number suggests that the photograph was taken in 1896 (see also my notes on page 12), however the train does not contain any of the Ashbury 'Summer' carriages and only one of the 'Corridors'. However, that 'Corridor', at the rear of the train, is identifiable as no. 10 and, further, when this photo was taken the lack of its central roof-light holder tells us that it had been converted into a composite (1st/3rd) carriage. Therefore, this image was taken after WHHG 19 and, coupled with dating based on Valentine records, almost certainly in 1896. Several factors emerge from this dating: the locomotive in the Valentine image is clearly *Moel Tryfan* - the nameplate can easily be read in the original image - and its maker's plates had been fitted. This would appear to confirm that plates were returned, at least to this locomotive but quite probably to both, over the winter of 1895/6.

The photograph also appears to give us a clear date for the conversion of 'Corridor' no. 10 to its composite configuration, again, as with the fitting of the locomotives' plates, over the winter of 1895/6.

It is also worth noting that, between them, the first and the last photographs in these notes, Arch 4933 and 3320, throw light on the 'numbering manoeuvres' adopted by the NWNCR to ensure a logical numbering sequence as new carriages were acquired through the early 1890s. The first image shows one of the Gloucester Brake composites bearing the number 10 whilst the second, taken 4 years later, shows one carrying the number 5. I believe, but cannot prove, that these were the same carriage. This subject was explored at length in *WHH 80*.

In Part 3 of this occasional series I will look at the period up to the re-boiling exercise undertaken in the early 1900s. I will consider evidence that appears to indicate that, when re-fitted, the maker's plates were applied to the wrong locomotives.

Kathleen and Richard Cunnah



In Issue No 54 of this journal Dr Gwynfor Pierce Jones wrote about the death of Robert Hughes at Drumhead in 1901. The report of the inquest included the passage:

Inquest witness Richard Cunnah was the long-standing driver of the Vulcan/Spooner locomotive 'Kathleen' (of 1877) that operated the C. E. Spooner-designed private railway that connected the Bryngwyn Drumhouse sidings with the Alexandra Slate Quarry.

In WHH 85 Dick Lystor recorded that in 1907 *Kathleen* suffered a burst tube, the workmen who had hitched a lift jumped off (which unfortunately led to the death of one of them under the wheels) but Richard Cunnah was complimented for staying on the engine despite being scalded.

Dave Southern and John Keylock in their book *The Bryngwyn Branch* include Goronwy Robert's memories of shunting the bottom of the inclined plane in WHR days – the late twenties and early thirties. Even at that later date, at the top of the incline there were Richard Cunnah and *Kathleen* exchanging whistled signals with him about load size.

Kathleen was a 0-4-0 ST, designed by Spooner and built by Vulcan, ordered by Alexandra Quarry in 1876 and delivered very soon after the incline was completed in 1878. Other than some bad boiler maintenance in the early 20th century which led to the accident in 1907 and a new boiler in 1911 it performed the role for which it had been designed admirably.

This task was to bring trains of full slate wagons down the "Alpine Curve" then cooperate with the NWNCR/ WHR drum man to work the incline. This would involve shunting her load of trucks, and probably other companies wagons, and whistling to signal the required load to be attached at the bottom. There seems to have been usually another quarry man in attendance to attach the loads to the cable. At the point

where the wagons were ready to go and the brake was released they became the sole responsibility of the railway. At the 1901 inquest Dr Pierce Jones reports that:

NWNCR general manager Aitcheson said it was "...a custom not duty" for the victim (Robert Hughes) to do this working outside the NWNCR's boundary as a 'give and take' with the various quarries' labourers, who in return helped with the operations inside the railway company's boundary at the drumhead. Jones, the Alexandra labourer, confirmed this state of affairs in his statement when he indicated that it was impossible for the victim to bring the wagons alone to the drumhead, implying that the quid pro quo was the only pragmatic means of working the operation.

Then *Kathleen* would gather up her train of empty slate wagons, full coal wagons and anything else which needed to go up the hill back to Alexandra.

In *The Bryngwyn Branch* it is also noted that John Hughes records another instance of co-operation when *Kathleen* delivered a new locomotive to "Foel" [Moel Tryfan] Quarry from the top of the incline. It would seem he was referring to the delivery of either *Tryfan* or *Cadfan* from Hunslet, so probably ca. 1902-04. It seems likely that *Kathleen's* end came in the sale of scrap from Alexandra and Moel Tryfan Quarries in 1937.

But who was Richard Cunnah, what sort of man was he and for how long did he work this shift? I believe there are hints which allow us to get some idea of the man. He was always called Richard, never Dick or another nickname which, to me, indicates a man who was respected by his colleagues but not a bosom pal. He was trusted by both the quarries and the railway for many years to do a very responsible job. He stayed

on his locomotive when a boiler tube burst and he was scalded. He was, in other words, an ideal employee but maybe a bit of a loner.

He was born in late 1867 in Bethel, which is in the parish of Llanddeiniolen between Bangor and Caernarfon. The 1871 census reveals his parents as Benjamin, a 40 year old joiner, and Dorothy, aged 34. At this point he had two older sisters and one younger than him.

By 1881 they were at Siop Hen Gapel in the parish of Llandwrog. The baby in the earlier census, now aged 11, was working on a farm in Llanrug, and two further younger sisters had been born. It took me a long time to identify where they lived in Llandwrog because I had forgotten that Llanwnda parish included Rhostryfan but everything west of the village was over the border and in the next parish. The cluster of houses in which they lived was then called Moel Tryfan and they are still there on the mountainside between Drumhead and the quarry. These houses had been built before 1871 as they appear in that year's census. The Cunnahs moved in after 1875 because their youngest daughter was born in that year in Llanllyfni. I wonder if one of the excitements of ten year old Richard's young life was the arrival of *Kathleen* just after their move; certainly he would have frequently heard and seen her on her daily journeys. It is possible that the track passed through his backyard.

If you look at the Ordinance Survey of this area it is obvious that Spooner routed the railway above Drumhead through existing boundary patterns, no more so than with the properties at the base of the final climb where the quite generous plots were cut in half. The infrequent service would have meant that almost all day they would have had full use of both parts of their land, so that they could keep chickens, pigs etc., but had to make sure they did not stray onto the line; they could grow vegetables and fruit and would soon learn the best timing for putting the washing out.

Richard lived here for the rest of his life. By 1891 he was an engine driver, but I suspect not yet with *Kathleen* because it is in 1901 that he declares he is a Railway Engine Driver, implying that he does more than shunt around the quarry. Consequently we can put his start with *Kathleen* in the mid-1890s with him probably in his late twenties. It is noticeable that the 1901 inquest describes him as *Kathleen's* "long standing" driver. This young age again indicates the trust management put in him.

His father, a quarry joiner, died before 1901, one sister had married and moved away, another had married and moved in, two sisters were working in service in Liverpool and the youngest had joined her mother's family in Clynog and married soon after. Change all around him but Richard and his mother remained at Moel Tryfan. I am sure that each day he methodically inspected and oiled *Kathleen* before starting to collect his loads at the top quarry, making sure the braked wagons were where he needed them, the empty coals were where he would want them, and carefully checking the couplings before setting off on the one and a half mile journey down the mountain. As he rounded the top curve he could probably see all the way to Bryngwyn on a normal day. If there was no activity there he might have stopped for a panad at home or to check on his ailing mum before taking on the tight reverse curves which took him to Drumhead.

We don't know if he was responsible for getting *Kathleen* up to pressure in the morning but with three De Wintons in

addition to the Vulcan it would make sense to employ a firelighter. So, assuming he did not, and that the timetable demanded the operation of the incline for an hour each morning and another hour in the afternoon we can begin to reconstruct his day. Up to the top by 8 am, load organised by 10 am, arrive Drumhead 10.30 am. Work incline to 11.30, back to quarry by noon. Shunt load just brought up till 12.30, lunch till 1 pm. Get next load organised by 2.30 pm, arrive Drumhead 3 pm. Work incline till 4 pm, arrive quarry 4.30 pm, shunt load, do jobs the little locos had not been able to tackle, put *Kathleen* to bed, finish work by 6 pm. This, or some such timing, would vary in detail over the years but the essential framework must have remained constant.

Dorothy, his mother, died in 1914; I am guessing that Martha, the sister who had moved in with her husband, eventually moved out leaving Richard alone in the house.

During WW1, production at Alexandra had ceased and the assets were only saved from liquidation by an imaginative scheme to combine the best Crown quarries after hostilities ceased. I suspect that it had been put on a care and maintenance regime and the owners were able to find the money to employ a couple of men in the quarry and Richard to bring the materials they needed up to them. After the war, production started up again under new management. The inventory at the time shows two locos on site. The descriptions "Loco shed with old coffee pot loco" and "Loco shed attached to mill, with Vulcan loco *Kathleen* (new boiler in 1911)" (G.P. Jones et al - *Cwm Gwyrfaï - The Quarries of the NWNCR and WHR* p. 311) indicate clearly how valued the two resources were to the new management.

Then in 1920 Richard Cunnah got married. Would anyone join me in suspecting his sister as matchmaker? It has proved very difficult to obtain any information about his wife except her name – Maggie Williams. No doubt more will become obvious when the 1921 Census is published next year.

In 1923 a new dawn gave hope to the workers. The WHR would operate just as the NWNCR had worked but with improved infrastructure. Any slates produced would be sent on their way efficiently. But it proved a false dawn because the slates were getting harder to extract. Things started quite well, but by 1935 production ceased. Richard Cunnah was 68 years of age in 1935 so maybe he retired just before the end. He was a careful man, I guess a prudent spender, he had his pension, a house to live in, probably under some sort of rent control, some savings and so was assured of a comfortable life.

In summary he started his Alpine runs about 1895 and finished about 1935; 40 years of daily working with *Kathleen*. I just wonder if occasionally in the interim between retirement and scrapping he went for a walk up the mountain, found his old workmate and topped up her oils just in case they were needed again. He did not work for the NWNCR or the WHR but his efforts contributed in no small way to the success of the Bryngwyn Branch.

Richard Pace Cunnah died in 1947. Probate records reveal that he was "of Hen Gapel, Rhosgadfan" although he died in Penygroes, presumably at his sister's house.

Dave Rogerson

14/4/21

Misdemeanours on the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways.

By Dick Lystor

Trawling through the Welsh Newspapers Online web site, I find various snippets of information on incidents on the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways reported therein. There are gaps in the archive and many newspaper issues are missing, but enough have survived to give us plenty of stories.

This article deals with three separate incidents, one of which occurred on the Bryngwyn branch line, and the other two at Waenfawr station, of which latter two, one involved trespass and minor vandalism and the other theft. In all three cases I have omitted the names of the persons involved which I think is the right thing to do, and have modified the original newspaper reports to make them more easily readable.

The Bryngwyn Incident 5th March 1884.

At Carnarvon County Magistrates Court, a young lad aged 9 from Rhostryfan was charged with having committed felony on 5th March 1884 by placing stones on the rails of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway, between Rhostryfan and Bryngwyn. Mr George Thomas prosecuted on behalf of the police.

John Williams, engine-driver on the narrow gauge railway, said he remembered driving down the line on the afternoon of that day, and all was quite clear. When returning from Dinas to Bryngwyn on a passenger train, he noticed stones on the line between Rhostryfan and Bryngwyn. The stones had been placed on top of the rails, and extended over the length of three rails. At this particular point of the line, which ran on an embankment, there was an ascent and a curve, and the stones were laid on the outer side of the curve. The train was going at the rate of about ten miles an hour, and being on an upward gradient, he was able to stop before quite reaching the stones, bringing the train to a standstill within an engine's length of them. Had he not been able to stop the train, a serious accident would have taken place.

A local youth aged 14 years from Llandwrog said he remembered seeing the train going towards Bryngwyn that day. He noticed nothing on the railway, neither did he notice the train stop. He saw the defendant on the railway a few minutes walk from the place in question, going in the direction of the embankment. He also said that the defendant had been seen by several persons on the line on that day.

PC T. Jones of Bontnewydd, who had received notification of the incident, went to the house of the previous witness, and was told that the defendant had been seen near the spot where the stones had been laid. The officer then went to the house of the defendant's father, and found his son there. He charged the boy with the offence, which he denied, stating that two boys from Hafod Talog had done it, and that he had only put on one stone, having been persuaded by the other two to do so.

The Chairman in stating that this was a very serious offence, asked the defendant's father if he had anyone in court to give the boy a good character. The father replied no, and that his son had lately taken to playing truant. The bench considered

the offence was a very serious one, and such as might have ended in a serious loss of life. They ordered the boy to receive six strokes of the birch by a policeman, adding that had the defendant been a little older the sentence would have been much more severe.

Trespass at Waenfawr, 29th May 1893.

At the Carnarvon County Police Court, on Saturday 24th June, 1893, six youths were charged with trespassing on the narrow gauge railway at Waenfawr. Mr Mostyn Roberts, prosecuting, said the defendants and others had entertained an idea that the railway was a public highway. The youths of the neighbourhood converted it into a sort of playground, and on 29th May the defendants were found throwing stones at the telegraph wires. The bench severely cautioned the six as to their future conduct, and dismissed the case on the payment of costs.

Burglary at Waenfawr 21st October 1905.

At the Carnarvon and Anglesey Assizes, held at Carnarvon on Tuesday 13th October 1908, an eighteen year old youth originally from Carnarvon, was charged with having broken into a counting-house belonging to the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Company at Waenfawr, and having stolen the sum of £1 10s 7½d.

Mr T.E. Morris prosecuted, while the prisoner, who pleaded guilty to the charge, was undefended. It was stated that the offence was committed on the 21st October, 1905; but the defendant was not arrested until September of this year at Shrewsbury, having disappeared for two years after the offence. He explained that there was another charge entered against the prisoner in Montgomeryshire, and asked his Lordship to grant his committal to that county.

His Lordship granted the committal, but asked for evidence of character. Superintendent Griffith, of Carnarvon, stated that he had known the prisoner for the last two or three years, and he was only 15 when he committed the offence. His father was in a good position under the Corporation. A witness stated that the prisoner had been led astray by an older man.

The Judge regretted that the prisoner had been led astray, otherwise he thought that he would have had a good character. He sentenced him to a month's imprisonment with hard labour.

References:-

Welsh Newspapers Online - <https://newspapers.library.wales> (only covers the period 1804 to 1919)

Bryngwyn Incident – *North Wales Express*, 21st March 1884 edition.

Trespass at Waenfawr – *Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald*, 30th June 1893 edition.

Burglary at Waenfawr – *North Wales Express* and *Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald*, 16th October 1908 editions.

Bob MacGregor - An Appreciation



Gordon Rushton, in his book *I tried to run a little railway*, said this of our friend Bob – the full quote, on page 123, runs:

Bob MacGregor was lost rather too early, alas. He did the Railway great service, and he was an invaluable helper to the 64 Co. Perhaps he was in an unassuming way the saviour of the WHR. It was through his urgings that Ffestiniog became involved and unleashed its full energy to 'restore the lot'. Examining cause and effect it may have been without Bob MacGregor, none of these things would have happened.

Having followed with great interest the rebuilding, I now enjoy riding the WHR all the way. So I am very glad *the lot was restored*. When the WHR first arrived in Harbour station it was with a warm feeling I watched the reversing operations taking place inside station limits. The reason this was possible was that the 'somersault' UP Advance Signal out on the Cob, with its protecting DOWN Home signal beyond, allowed a full length train to reverse on the mainline with a train in section between Harbour and Minffordd. Whether the train in section was an Up train heading towards Minffordd, or a Down train approaching Harbour, the WHR train could do its reversing. I watched this with some pride as I had been the co-designer of the somersault signal scheme and had overseen its installation. In truth, the signal layout was planned for FR shunting movements, not WHR trains! Whatever, it was good to see the layout being used to its full capacity, and facilitating that final push to Harbour.

What a pity John Wagstaff, my co-designer, and Bob MacGregor, who had helped with the installation, could not have watched this too! John Wagstaff was a friend and colleague who died in the late 1990s, and whom I had known from about 1967. Bob went back even further to our REC days.

I first met Bob when I joined the REC – Railway Enthusiasts Club – at Farnborough, Hampshire in about

David Josey has sent me the following appreciation of Bob, both general and apropos his role in the rebuilding of the Welsh Highland.

1960. Christmas 1963 saw Bob and myself join Bill Young and Brian Ruffle – then of the FR Western Signal Gang – on a trip to FR-land, staying in Lottie's cottage, Minffordd level crossing. Later, when I became involved

with the FR signalling from late 1968, Bob joined this 'new' signal gang. By this time he was living in a boat yard at Oxford, where he was fitting out a narrow boat hull. Being Bob, the propulsion was a stern wheel. Also, being Bob, the boat was named the 'Jethro Tull' (after the barrister and agriculturist who lived from 1674 to 1741). The boat now resides on the River Wey and is owned by a friend of Bob's.

Most of us in those far off days stayed at the Abbey Arms, Llan Ffestiniog, but to reduce his accommodation costs, Bob bought a redundant roadside workers mobile bothy. This was located in Minffordd yard and Bob renovated it and put in two bunk beds. Quite cosy I remember as I stayed there once.

When it was decided to have a 'signal technician' on the permanent staff of the Company, and funding was available, John Wagstaff and I were pleased to recommend Bob to Allan Garraway.

Thus John and myself could claim a bit of the glory for Bob being in the right place, at the right time, saying the right things, for the WHR. Maybe! But who brought us to the railway? – Norman Pearce did, with probably Brian Chicken in the background pulling strings!

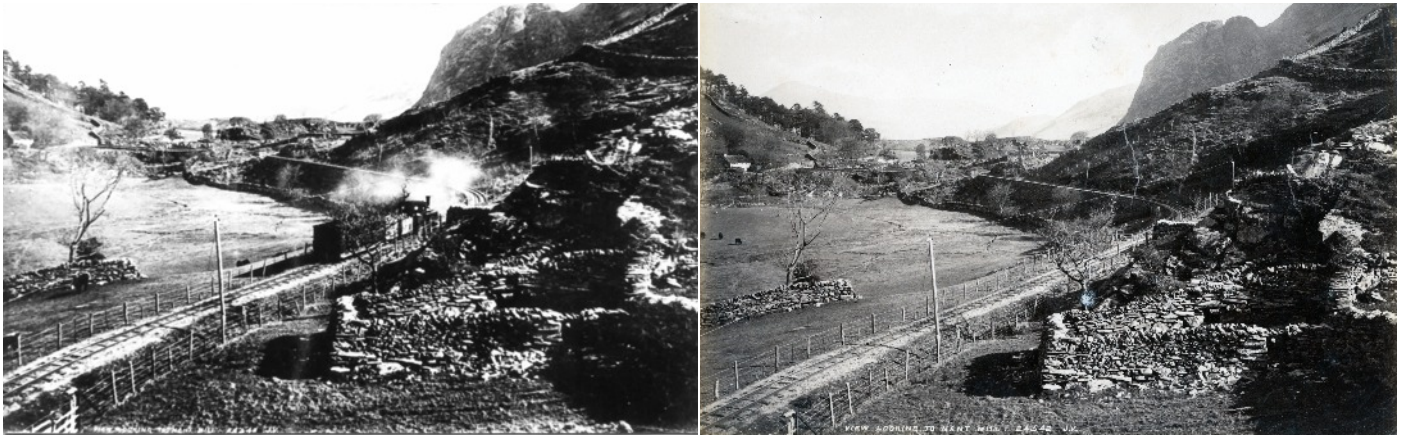
Doubtless we could all work our heritage back to William Madocks.

Read more about Bob at:

https://www.festipedia.org.uk/wiki/Bob_MacGregor and Brian Chicken at:

https://www.festipedia.org.uk/wiki/Bryan_Chicken

Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis



Two images from Valentine of Dundee, each carrying the same reference number - 23432.JV (Arch 3319)

This page, including all *WHH* issues and supplements, would have been number 1000 had we, from the outset, been listing all pages serially. In recognition of this being the end of our 'first millennium', I thought I might look at a possibly quirky photographic issue - double accounting in Dundee.

James Valentine (1815 - 1879) founded his printing company in Dundee in 1851. The company was to become the largest printer of postcards in Scotland. After James died, the company was run by his sons William Dobson Valentine and George Valentine. William had been trained in landscape photography at the Francis Frith studios in Reigate prior to joining the Dundee company in the 1860s.

The Valentine range of postcards is well-known. There are a number covering NWNGR and WHR subjects which have been subjected to varying degrees of analysis. One in particular has been discussed in our notes on the Vulcan Fairlies elsewhere in this Issue - Arch 3320 (24343.JV). Adjacent to this reference we also have in our collection 23432.JV, taken near Nant Mill, and it is certain peculiarities surrounding this image that I would like to address here.

There are a number of websites that consider Valentine's cards, often sites with particular local interests. For example, Historic Coventry (at <https://tinyurl.com/etm8vdkx>) offer a convenient card dating tool while the Hertfordshire Genealogy site (at <https://tinyurl.com/3n763vcc>) present a convenient dating table. Additionally, on their Dating Problems page (<https://tinyurl.com/t3c5vnn2>) the Hertford site highlights examples of Valentine's 'double-accounting' with examples of conflicting scenes carrying the same reference number.

Both dating tools indicate 1896 as our image's first registration date. As their images might subsequently have been re-issued as different postcard versions, later dates could easily become linked to particular images. However, it would seem that their base registration system points us fairly positively to 1896 as the most probable original image date.

Both of the images at the head of this page carry the same Valentine reference number (23432.JV) although the detail within each image is clearly different. The Hertfordshire examples include distinctly different scenes, for example the same general area seen from two different camera positions, and instances where the same basic picture has been modified by the addition of extra content of interest, in each case presenting two different images with the same reference number.

The two Nant Mill images carry the same reference - in the right hand image above this is clearly visible whilst on the left the caption is clipping the lower edge of the image but is nevertheless discernible. Both images carry the title "View Looking to Nant Mill", neither making any reference to the railway nor, in the case of the left-hand image, to the train thereon.

Whilst in both images the camera is in almost exactly the same position, the differing quality between the two makes it difficult by simple examination to conclude absolutely that the basic image is actually the same. However, I believe that there is sufficient difference in the discernible shadows, notably that cast by the telegraph pole to the left of centre in the foreground, to indicate that the photograph on the right was taken somewhat later than that on the left.

The livestock has certainly moved between the two images, however caution is needed in this respect. Frith, and no doubt other card producers, are known on occasion to have 'enriched' certain images by adding additional detail, such as livestock. I am not suggesting that Valentine followed this practice in this case, but I do find myself pondering the shadows cast by the 'cows' in the right-hand image.

For now, I assume that we have a simple example of double-accounting at Valentine's. Our Archive simply holds these two different images under the common Archive reference of 3319.

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