

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY OPERATIONAL CHRONOLOGY: 1922 – 1937

After the initial euphoria implicit in their first timetables had worn off, the Welsh Highland Railway went through the trauma of poor loadings leading to continuing attempts to contain the costs of operation by adjusting the timetable, to such a degree that it can be difficult to grasp just what level of service was applying at any given time. The recognised histories tend to skate a little warily over service details, with even some contradictory statements in places.

Compilation of a complete compendium of each timetable change would have the down-side of tending to obscure the wood for the trees. Meantime, a simple (well, being the WHR, *fairly* simple) look-up table to show for any given date whether (and if so broadly what) service was scheduled to be operating is offered instead – based wherever possible on the evidence of the railway's own timetables. Anything related to railway timetables could not hope to get away without a quota of footnotes, although one hopes they are not Bradshavian in the extreme – I have endeavoured to avoid notes written vertically up the column, or of the “continued on page 94” variety. The colour coding, which is now such a feature of “heritage” railway timetables, will help to identify similar service patterns. However, it is not essential to understanding the table, which would be self-standing in plain black and white – though the page would be more drab!

The comings and goings (and renamings) of individual stopping places have proved something of a trial to chronologers of stations so for an analysis of their comings and goings refer to the webpage <https://www.welshhighlandheritage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/WHR-Station-Chronology.pdf>

WHH denotes references in the Group's magazine, *Welsh Highland Heritage*.

Notes to the following table:

1: one Down train only, no Up trains

2: one Up train only, no Down trains

3: no trains shown in WHR or FR timetables. The one Down train shown in *Bradshaw's Guide* is an error (carried over from previous year, it has no forward connection). However, WHH no. 9, p.6 and no. 18, p.7 contain recollections of Blaenau Ffestiniog trains at New station in 1930 – presumably in connection with the single Up WHR train, for circular tour patrons

4: no trains shown in WHR or FR timetables. However, *Narrow Gauge Railways in South Caernarvonshire* (2nd edn.) Vol. 2, p.108 contains instruction for such connection in 1931 and WHH no.9, p.6 and no. 18, p.7 contain recollections of Blaenau Ffestiniog trains at New station in 1931, while *Ffestiniog Railway* (3rd edn), plate 49H shows such a train in 1933. Presumably connections *were* provided each summer for Five Valleys Tour patrons (even though *Narrow Gauge Railways in South Caernarvonshire* (2nd edn.) Vol. 2, p.107 seems to cast doubt).

5: it is questionable whether the single WHR round trip for this fortnight (always) ran through to/from Harbour – see *Chronicles of Croesor Crossing*, p.24 and WHH no. 32, p.6.

6: After the 1926 General Strike (4 - 13 May 1926) the miners remained on strike and a coal shortage ensued, because of which the WHR did not operate a passenger service (despite the existence of a timetable alteration handbill dated 24 May - 10 July). Traffic figures suggest that the last passenger trains ran on 3 May; services did not resume until Monday 19 July 1926 (*Gwynedd archives file XD97/22742*).

7: final fortnight of the 1934 season *may* have been reduced to a single Dinas ⇔ Portmadoc round trip.

Bradshaw's Guide

This denotes *Bradshaw's Railway Guide* (any date quoted is the cover date), published monthly. The material it carried came, of course, from the railways themselves – although on occasion misunderstandings clearly arose and in some cases (particularly with changes of station names in the station banks of their pages) *Bradshaw's Guide* could be somewhat dilatory – possibly because their attention had not been adequately drawn to the changes by the railways. The non-appearance of the Welsh Highland during summers 1932 and 1933 must be down to Richard Thomas Griffith (the Receiver & Manager of the time) trying to run a railway in the spare time from his various other activities! Generally speaking, information drawn from *Bradshaw's Guide* tallies well with the available surviving company-produced timetable material, although wherever possible the latter have been used for this compilation.

		Up direction →										← Down direction																	
		Dinas Jn	Tryfan Jn	Waenfawr	Bettws Garmon	Salem	Plas-y-Nant	Queilyn Lake	South Snowdon	Pitt's Head	Hafod Rufflydd	Beddgelert	Nantmor	Hafod-y-Llyn	Ynysferlas	Croesor Jn	Ynysfor	Pont Croesor	Portmadoc (1923)	north platform	Portmadoc (1923)	main platforms	Portmadoc (1865)						
On or from	until end of traffic																												
Mon 31 Jul 1922	Thu 31 May 1923	Monday to Saturday										Line under construction																	
Fri 1 Jun 1923	Sat 12 Jan 1924	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 14 Jan 1924	Sat 29 Mar 1924	Monday to Saturday																				No pass.							
Mon 31 Mar 1924	Sat 20 Sep 1924	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 22 Sep 1924	Sat 13 Dec 1924	Monday to Saturday																				No pass.							
Mon 15 Dec 1924	Thu 29 Jan 1925	No passenger service																											
Fri 30 Jan 1925	Fri 6 Mar 1925	No passenger service										Fridays only						No pass.											
Sat 7 Mar 1925	Sat 30 May 1925	Saturdays only					No pass.					Fridays only												No pass.					
Mon 1 Jun 1925	Sat 19 Sep 1925	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 21 Sep 1925	Mon 3 May 1926	Monday to Saturday										Monday to Saturday																	
Tue 4 May 1926	Sat 17 Jul 1926	Line closed to passenger traffic (General Strike and coal shortage - see note 6)																											
Mon 19 Jul 1926	Sat 18 Sep 1926	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 20 Sep 1926	Mon 28 Feb 1927	Monday to Saturday																				note 1							
Tue 1 Mar 1927	Sat 4 Jun 1927	Monday to Saturday										Monday to Saturday																	
Mon 6 Jun 1927	Sat 24 Sep 1927	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 26 Sep 1927	Sat 29 Oct 1927	Monday to Saturday																				note 2							
Mon 31 Oct 1927	Sat 12 Nov 1927	Monday to Saturday										No pass.		Fridays only						No pass.									
Mon 14 Nov 1927	Sat 26 May 1928	Tues Thurs Saturday only										No pass.		Fridays only						No pass.									
Mon 28 May 1928	Sat 9 Jun 1928	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 11 Jun 1928	Sat 7 Jul 1928	Monday to Saturday										Monday to Saturday																	
Mon 9 Jul 1928	Sat 1 Sep 1928	Monday to Saturday					Monday to Saturday																						
Mon 3 Sep 1928	Sat 29 Sep 1928	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 1 Oct 1928	Fri 17 May 1929	Monday Wednesday Friday only										No passenger service						No pass trains over GWR cross-ing						No pass.					
Mon 20 May 1929	Fri 5 Jul 1929	Monday Wednesday Friday only																						MWF					
Mon 8 Jul 1929	Sat 21 Sep 1929	Monday to Friday																											
Mon 23 Sep 1929	Fri 4 Oct 1929	Monday to Friday										Monday to Friday, <i>Up train only and only on request</i>												No pass. Service					
Mon 7 Oct 1929	Fri 4 Jul 1930	Monday Wednesday Friday only Final winter passenger service										Mon Wed Fri only, <i>Up train only and only on request</i>												note 3					
Mon 7 Jul 1930	Fri 19 Sep 1930	Monday Wednesday Friday only										Mon Wed Fri only, <i>Up train only and only on request</i>												note 3					
Mon 22 Sep 1930	Sat 18 Jul 1931	No passenger service First winter without any passenger service																											
Mon 20 Jul 1931	Fri 2 Oct 1931	Monday to Friday																											
Mon 5 Oct 1931	Sat 10 Oct 1931	No passenger service																											
Mon 12 Oct 1931	Sat 31 Oct 1931	Line closed to all traffic																											
Mon 2 Nov 1931	Sat 16 Jul 1932	No passenger service (but goods & parcels resumed)																											
Mon 18 Jul 1932	Fri 9 Sep 1932	Monday to Friday																											
Mon 12 Sep 1932	Sat 15 Jul 1933	No passenger service																											
Mon 17 Jul 1933	Fri 29 Sep 1933	Monday to Friday																											
Mon 2 Oct 1933	Sat 7 Jul 1934	No passenger service																											
Tue 26 Jun 1934	Welsh Highland Railway leased by Festiniog Railway Company with immediate effect																												
Mon 9 Jul 1934	Sat 13 Oct 1934	Monday to Saturday note 7																											
Mon 15 Oct 1934	Sat 6 Jul 1935	No passenger service																											
Mon 8 Jul 1935	Sat 14 Sep 1935	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 16 Sep 1935	Sat 28 Sep 1935	Monday to Saturday										Monday to Saturday																	
Mon 30 Sep 1935	Sat 4 Jul 1936	No passenger service																											
Mon 6 Jul 1936	Sat 12 Sep 1936	Monday to Saturday																											
Mon 14 Sep 1936	Sat 26 Sep 1936	Monday to Saturday																				note 5							
Mon 28 Sep 1936	No further passenger service operated over the original Welsh Highland Railway route until 2000																												
Mon 31 May 1937	Festiniog company gave notice of withdrawal of goods and parcels services over WHR																												

Bold type denotes multiple journeys (at least two round trips most days); light type denotes only a single round trip a day – usually a simple out and back working from Dinas Junction. There was no regular Sunday service on the line, so Sunday is regarded as a *dies non* in the table above.

Goods and parcels

Apart from three weeks in October 1931 (see *WHH* no.52 page 12) the railway was open for goods and parcels traffic throughout the period under notice (except in consequence of the 1926 strikes). Where practicable, this would have been undertaken by mixed train (the Bryngwyn branch, however, is a subject which requires its own article), otherwise by goods train – sometimes down to only twice, or even once, a week (see *WHH* no.48 p.9). The section south of Beddgelert must have been a somewhat “nominal” goods service at times: we know, for example, that in 1928 goods trains ran between Dinas and Croesor Junction to exchange traffic for the lower end of the line, a similar function being performed by the “on request” Up mixed train advertised three days a week during 1929 and until September 1930 (it was advertised in only one direction so that if there was no need to go beyond Croesor Junction or Beddgelert, the train could save unnecessary mileage). And when it did run, the mixed train went only to the north side of the Great Western crossing at Portmadoc. However, traffic statistics (*Gwynedd archives files XC2/33/37 and /58*) show that by the beginning of 1930 all the Croesor valley traffic was being worked by horse through to Gelert/Beddgelert Siding at Portmadoc, for transshipment – which suggests the “on request” train would then rarely (if ever) have run south of Beddgelert, and must have left the Beddgelert ⇔ Croesor Junction section out of use during the following winter. From the end of 1930 the Croesor quarries closed so traffic (if any) at that end of the line would have been limited to coal and other goods *inwards* to the valley – and, of course, any movements between Gelert Siding and Snowdon Mill or beyond. By early 1930, movements over the Great Western crossing – freight only, of course – were down to an average of two a week (*WHH* no. 33 p.1). Even in the FR lease period the line was officially open for goods traffic, until that company gave notice of its withdrawal on 31 May 1937.

Acknowledgements

Particular thanks are due to Michael Davies for access to his collection of WHR timetables, to David Woodcock for sight of his research on WHR timetable matters and to other Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Group members for snippets of information.

© **Richard Maund - 23 November 2017**

An earlier version of this article previously appeared in Welsh Highland Heritage no. 57 (September 2012) and the Railway & Canal Historical Society's Railway Chronology Group Coordinating Newsletter no. 74 (April 2013)