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Recent Acquisitions



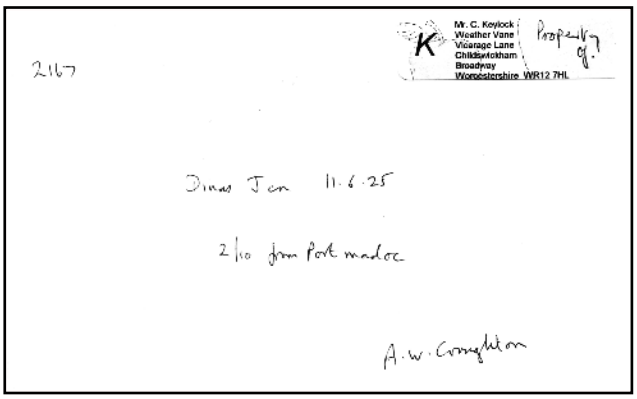
Our recent acquisitions include documents, photographs and tickets. These notes will look in particular at three photographs and two tickets. Of the three photographs, one image shows *Moel Tryfan* and train at Dinas and the other two show *Russell*, at Nantmor and at Portmadoc New (North).

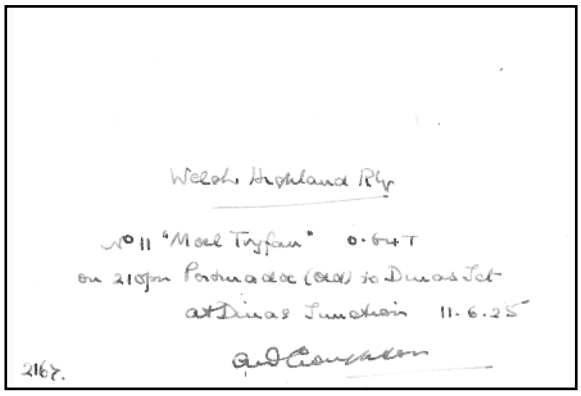
The 4 inch x 3 inch print showing *Moel Tryfan* is, despite its small size, a significant addition to our Archive. The Archive has held an electronic scan of this image for some considerable time as its Archive number of 3920 suggests – we are now well into the mid-5,000s – but we had only one print which sits in one of the late John Keylock's photograph albums. As a matter of policy I have elected to leave these albums – there are 7 of these – untouched, save for scanning any that had evaded David Allan's original electronic archive. This 'new' photo finally gives us a file copy to add to the Archive's print collection.

The Keylock print, whilst larger at 6 x 4 inches, has been cropped slightly and the 'new' photo offers the advantage of a more complete image, for example clearly showing the 4-wheel brake van at the rear of the train, not visible at all in the Keylock print and only partially visible in the electronic scans I 'inherited' from David.

We see a train at Dinas Junction, with various railway employees and others posing around it. Nothing particularly remarkable about this except that this particular print is captioned and signed on the back by the photographer, A W Croughton. Taken on the June 11th 1925, it shows the 2.08 pm (Croughton notes 2.10) train from "Portmadoc (OLD) to Dinas Jct" so must have been taken towards the end of the afternoon at around 4.30 pm. Croughton probably used a long exposure to make this image as one of the group appears as a ghostly apparition.

However, one feature of the Keylock print mentioned above is a hand-written note with an apparent signature on the reverse (see the left-hand image at the top of page 2). The full Croughton annotation, including his signature, can be seen in the right-hand image on page 2. By comparison, this 'new' annotation offers a little more information whilst confirming the date and negative number quoted on our original print. The additional text on the back of the new print has been compressed into only half the area, so whilst there are clear similarities between the two sets of notes, there are also clear differences, notably the signature which has been 'squashed in' at the bottom of the smaller print. Comparing the two scripts with many examples of John





Keylock's handwriting suggests that the notes shown in the left image above were added by John himself, suggesting that the notes on the right are, more likely, 'genuine A.W.C.'

Alfred Walter Croughton (1902 - 1958)

Little has been published on the life of Alfred Croughton despite his being very active as a railway photographer from the early 1920s to the early 1950s.

Michael Whitehouse's book, *Irish Narrow Gauge Album*, published by Lightmoor Press, includes a good number of Croughton's photographs, which is probably not surprising given that Millbrook House, the archive set up by Patrick Whitehouse, Michael's father, acquired a substantial number of Croughton's photographs. The Millbrook archive was later acquired by the National Railway Museum, in 1994, and they along with the Lens of Sutton Association appear to own many of Croughton's negatives. The subject matter ranges across industrial, light and narrow gauge railways of Britain and Ireland, together with standard gauge locomotives of the LNER, GNR, NER and GWR.

Alfred Walter was born on the July 1st 1902 in Battersea. His father Alfred Joseph, an architect, was then 30 years of age, the same age as his mother, Rosetta. At the time of the 1911 Census, the family were living near Clapham Common. In 1921, he was working for the Great Eastern Railway at Liverpool Street as a clerk and he continued working in the railway industry for the rest of his life, including the LNER and later the Eastern Region of British Railways.

In 1929, aged 27 and then living in Margate, he married Emily Millicent Turton in Belper, Derbyshire. She was a distant cousin of Henry Casserley, the well known and prolific railway photographer. Alfred and Emily had one son, Godfrey, born in 1940, who inherited his father's interest in railways, particularly tickets. Another of Alfred's other interests included railway heraldry, one he shared with George Dow the railwayman, historian and author.



Alfred Croughton shares a station bench with a young Richard Casserley, son of Alfred's contemporary Henry Cyril Casserley. The elder Casserley and Emily Turton, Croughton's wife, were cousins. This photograph was taken by Henry Casserley showing Alfred and Richard apparently indifferent to the locomotive in front of them. That loco was ex-G.C.R. Robinson-designed class 9K 4-4-2T number 193, which by the time this photograph was taken had become L.N.E.R. number 5193. There is a peripheral link to the W.H.R. here as this locomotive was built at the Vulcan Foundry for the G.C.R. works at Gorton, Manchester. When this photo was taken, the loco was shedded at Neasden. - Chesham Station, northwest London - 1946. Reproduced here by courtesy of Mary Casserley.

It appears that Alfred shared a number of photographic excursions with Henry Casserley including to the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway in the 1950s. Thanks to the kindness of Mary Casserley, Henry's granddaughter, we have a photograph of Alfred Croughton sitting on a bench at Chesham station next to her father Richard in 1946. The photo was taken by Henry.

Alfred continued his photographic activities until the early 1950s but sadly died in 1958 at the early age of 56, at which time he was living in Sevenoaks, Kent.

Through a mutual interest in bell ringing, Godfrey met a widow, Janet Stannard on a tour organised by Janet's son Paul and they married in 1996. Janet died in May 2019 and Godfrey now lives with, and is cared for by, his stepson Paul in Suffolk.

Godfrey has been described the UK's leading railway and tram ticket collector and has amassed a collection extending to over 400 albums. He is the author of several books on the subject and he was a co-author, along with R. W. Kidner and A. Young, of the 1982 Oakwood book *Private and Untimetabled Railway Stations*. He continues to be the custodian of many of his father's photographs and other railway related items.

Key Sources:

Our thanks go to Godfrey Croughton and Paul Stannard and to Jonathan and Mary Casserley who were generous with their time and information in support of this appreciation of Alfred. Other sources include:

Ancestry and Find My Past
Census (1911 &1921) / 1939 Register
British Newspaper Archive
East Anglian Times
Lens of Sutton Association
National Railway Museum
Market Harborough Advertiser and Midland Mail

The *Russell* photographs

Two further recent purchases of original Welsh Highland photographs found on the e-bay auction site are views of *Russell* taken, apparently, in 1936. Despite serious competition from another private bidder, we were successful with our bids, and both photos will now be safely added to the Group's archive, which will be available for all members to view in due course.

The first of these photographs is now in the Archive under the reference number 5493. A hand-written annotation to the border surrounding the 5 x 3 inch image reads - *Welsh Highland Railway Sept. 1936*. There is no additional evidence on the reverse of the photo, save for the remains of what appears to have been adhesive mounts, presumably from an album of some sort.

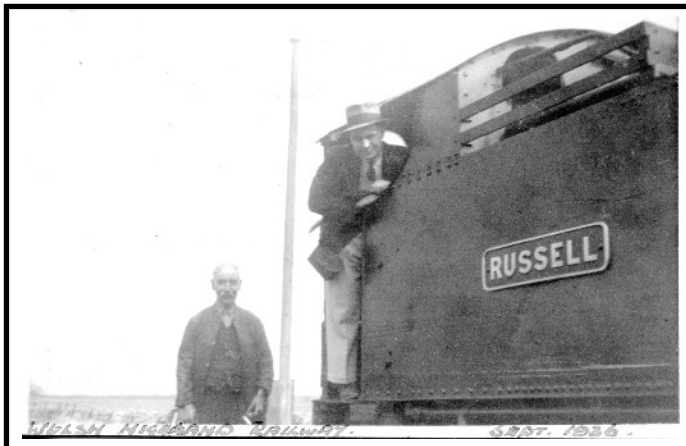
The locomotive was standing at Portmadoc New (North) and presumably was awaiting departure to Dinas Junction. In 1936, there would have been northbound departures from Portmadoc New at 10:50, 14:05 and 16:00 (approximately – timetables show departure times from Harbour). These trains should have passed Aberglaslyn (Nantmor) at 11:09, 14:24 and 16:19 respectively.

After September 12th, 1936, the service reduced to one train a day – departing Portmadoc Harbour at 14:00 hrs, arriving at Dinas at 16:45. The last passenger trains ran on September 26th and, over that final two week period, the one train simply ran from Dinas to Portmadoc and back.

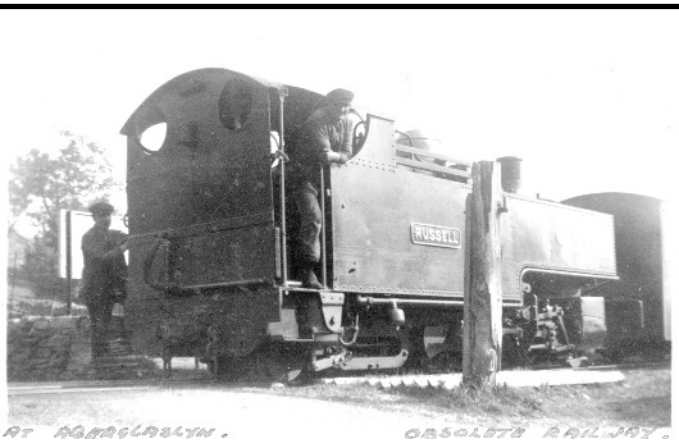
Whilst we see recognisable WHR footplate crew next to the locomotive (Willie Hugh), the 'driver' would appear to be an enthusiastic member of the public enjoying a visit to the footplate. Perhaps this was a relative or companion of the photographer whose name, regrettably, is not recorded.

There is little measurable sunshine data available from Arch 5493, but what indications there are hint at sunlight being more or less directly on the front of the locomotive, or possibly from an angle somewhat to the west of head-on. The track bearing at Portmadoc New, looking towards the south, was (is) 215 deg., which corresponds to the sun azimuth, in early September, at 15:05. At 10:50 the sun would have been shining from an angle some 80 deg. to the left as viewed from the locomotive. By 16:00, the sun would have moved to a point some 15 deg. to the right, again as viewed from the locomotive. What we see in the image seems more appropriate to a 16:00 departure time, rather than either of the other two scheduled times.

The second photograph, the same size and general characteristics as the first, is now in the Archive as number 5494. As before, there is a hand-written annotation in the



Arch 5493



Arch 5494

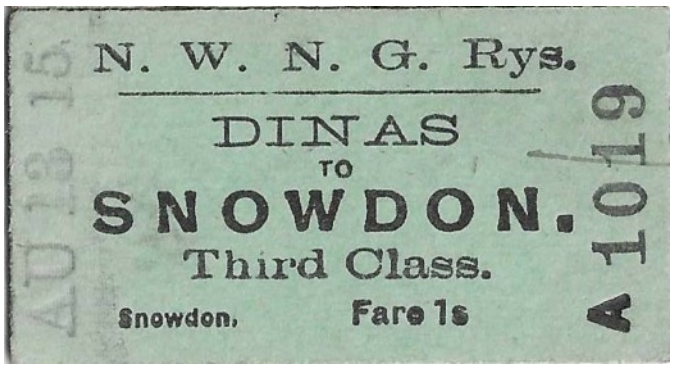
border, this time reading - *At Aberglaslyn Obsolete Railway*. As before, there are no additional clues on the back. In this second image, *Russell* was standing at the north end of the Nantmor Station enclosure, slightly overhanging the road to the village that crosses the line on the level at this point.

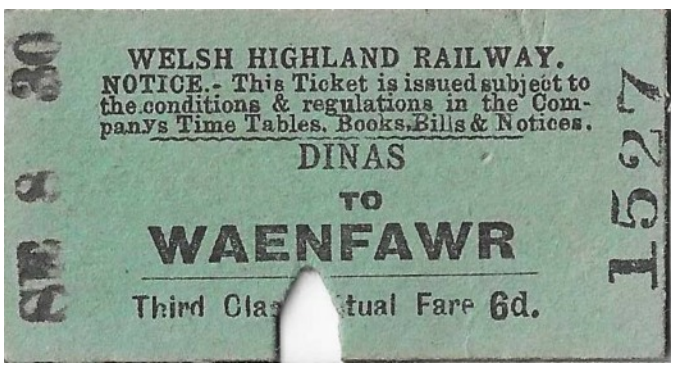
This time, however, we can see rather more distinct shadow detail. The shadow cast by the gatepost appears directed more or less at right angles to the locomotive yet, as the rear of the locomotive appears clearly to be in shadow, the sun must have been at a little less than 90 deg. to the track centre line. The track centre line here has a heading of 157.6 deg. when looking south so, if the sun were at 90 deg. to the locomotive, its azimuth angle would have been 157.6 + 90 or 247.6 deg. If both photographs show the same train service, as noted above the 16:00 departure from Portmadoc New should have been at Nantmor at 16:19, at which time the sun's azimuth would have been 235.2 deg, somewhat less than at a right angle to the locomotive, as suggested by the evidence in the photograph.

As it would seem we are seeing the 16:00 service from Portmadoc to Dinas, we note that that service did not operate after September 12th 1936. As a first pass analysis, I have used sun data for that date in that year, recognising, if the notes on Arch 5493 were correct and if the two images were effectively contemporary, this date could have been up to two weeks earlier.

Ticket Acquisitions

Two more tickets have also been acquired to add to our growing collection. The first, an N.W.N.G.R. 3rd Class Single is for the full trip from Dinas to Snowdon, issued on the August 13th 1915, the penultimate year of passenger services on the line. The printer is unknown, and a curious feature is the capital A which prefixes the serial number, suggesting that it may point to a final print run.





When this section was re-opened in 1922 by the WHR, the price had risen substantially, but was later reduced back down to 1s 1d (13d or 5½p) when the line opened fully to Portmadoc.

The second ticket is a standard Waterlow WHR 3rd Class single from Dinas to Waenfawr, issued on the September 8th 1930. This particular journey appears to have been little patronised by this time, as only 12 similar tickets were issued by the end of August 1934, not surprising as the train service from 1930 to 1933 consisted of a single out and back service. Under the FR lease, the service was increased by an extra 2 through trains, but this had little effect on journeys to Waenfawr, with ticket number 1544 being the last known issue, being one of two recorded in the register for August 1935.

Final Thoughts

The search for 'new', that is 'new' in the sense that we do not have copies in our Archive, continues. Indeed, while writing these notes a further addition arrived which I shall be looking at, perhaps in our next issue. Of course, should any members have photographs that they feel might fall into this 'new' category, be they commercial or personal, we would be only too pleased to hear of these.

Ultimately, this Group's primary objective is to ensure that, as far as we are able, we have fully documented the history of the Welsh Highland and its precursors, including peripheral undertakings, such as slate quarries. An essential constituent of this record will be as fully complete a photographic record as possible.

MEMBERSHIP 2023.

Due to a technical hitch, membership reminder forms for 2023 were not sent out with the last edition of *WHH*.

For those members without email addresses, a renewal form is included with this issue.

For those who do have email addresses and received a renewal message via the internet from me and have yet to respond, another form is included. I fully understand that with the present economic situation facing us all, some members may not wish to renew, and I would ask if they could contact me to let me know their decision so that I can keep my records up to date.

My contact details are:

membership@welshhighlandheritage.co.uk

Dick Lystor (Mem Sec)

Wolf's Castle

Chris Padley



The painting illustrated above recently appeared for sale on eBay. It is neither signed nor dated, but there is a title, *The Wolf's Castle, Bettws Garmon*. The view is easily recognisable as Llyn Cwellyn from the northwest, with the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway in the foreground, although the artist has shown it looking as if it is standard gauge, if not broader. The location is close to Castell Cidwm, which can be translated into English as the Wolf's Castle.

Castell Cidwm is possibly an iron age fort located above the 1000 ft. contour, overlooking the access to Nant-y-betws, just below the line of cliffs that surround the summit of Mynydd Mawr (right foreground). However, there is some controversy as to whether this really was a fort or is simply a natural rock formation.

The seller, an art dealer and no doubt experienced in judging the age of paintings, suggests that it is nineteenth century, which also seems most likely from what we know of the location.

To my eye it is not a bad painting. It could be by a minor professional artist but more likely a competent amateur. There are several artistic conventions to be seen: the proportions of the distant mountains have been altered, probably to fit into the composition better. Placing figures in the middle foreground of a painting is also a convention used to give scale and life to a scene, while including a spot of bright colour in the foreground like the red coat of one of the workmen, relieves a scene otherwise all greens and blues. I like to think that there probably was a team of platelayers at work on the day (maybe even construction workers, finishing off the line?) or the artist would have used more conventional country figures? The foreground perspective isn't perfect, so it is tempting to blame a lack of skill by the artist for the over-wide gauge of the track. On the other hand, he or she might have deliberately painted the kind of railway people would expect to see, rather than one which a general viewer might think, wrongly, was a mistake?

Since these notes were written, eBay now list this painting as 'out of stock'.

Editor's Note: As to date, I would be tempted towards the earliest NWNGR days, perhaps even in the final run-up to the original opening to Snowdon Ranger in 1878. I base this on the apparent inclusion of workmen in the image and the relatively 'unspoiled' appearance of the river's exit from Llyn Cwellyn. The oldest map I have seen showing this area in some detail is the O.S. Carnarvonshire Sheet XXI.NE Surveyed: 1887, Published: 1888, ten years after the initial opening. By then, there was some sort of road giving access to the quarry at the base of Mynydd Mawr (Chwarel Goch slate quarry which this map shows as closed), a road or path of which there is no sign in the painting. G.P. Jones and A.J. Richards, in *Cwm Gwyrfai*, simply note Castell Cidwm Quarry, SH552552, as "output ceased before NWNGR opened".

Accident at Dinas
April 1903

Herewith another of Dick Lystor's accident summaries

The June 17th 1904 edition of *The Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald* (and separately *The North Wales Express*) report a compensation claim laid before the Carnarvon County Court, two days previously, on behalf of John Jones - His Honour Judge Horatio Lloyd presiding.

On the April, 20th 1903, whilst Jones was unloading trucks, a cask fell and fractured his leg, and as a result, he was involved in a petition against the NWNGR. At the hearing held in June, it was heard that he had been employed by the company for several months as a loader, receiving 18s per week. He was totally incapacitated for seven weeks after the accident, during which he received half his wages. He returned to work in June, and received full pay, but lighter work, which may have been on the track gang.

Mr R. A. Griffith appeared for Jones and explained the above events adding that he had suffered a great deal of pain, and that the accident had caused a swelling in his leg. He then read letters which had passed between Mr Gowrie C. Aitchison (General Manager) and Jones' solicitor repudiating liability on the grounds that Jones had been in receipt of full pay. Griffith was not content with that argument, saying that Jones was still suffering from the result of the injury and asked for judgement for one penny and a declaration of liability.

John Jones gave his account of the accident, stating that he was still in the company's employ, but was not able to follow the same occupation. Cross examined by Mr Carter, who appeared for the Company, Jones said that he was a labourer by occupation, but had been loading slates before the accident, and had been employed by the NWNGR for nine months.

Dr Williams, of Tryfan Hall, who had treated Jones in the first instance, said that he attended him from six to eight weeks regularly. The last time he examined him, his foot was swollen and was in pain, which could continue for some time. He found that Jones was not as capable as he used to be.

Mr Carter showed that the whole weight of the evidence went to show that Jones had been in receipt of his full wages, and had been able to follow his employment.

His Honour stated that the question was whether he was at the moment suffering from the result of the accident – it was purely a medical question. Mr Carter said that he did not think that to write a solicitor's letter to his employers was the proper course to have taken. His Honour made an order of one penny per week, and also granted a declaration order.

The NWNGR employed a number of men called John Jones, at least six that we know of! This particular Jones is believed to have been born at Llanllyfni in 1849, joining the railway in 1902 as loader. By 1911 the census gives his occupation as platelayer.



When Mary Casserley offered the photograph of her father with Alfred Croughton (page 2 above) she also sent us a scan of her painting based on that photograph. The image is so charming we cannot resist reproducing it here!

The Unequal Struggle

Among the Bob Honychurch papers we bought at auction in November 2021, there was an undated handwritten preliminary draft of an article on the impact of bus services on the Welsh Highland Railway. Fortunately, Bob had very legible handwriting, so as a homage to his memory I've taken his words and included some additional material, but retaining, I hope, his 'voice'. For those wishing to undertake some further reading, there is a brief list of sources at the end of the article. We will be looking at his other papers in future *WHH* issues.

Nick Booker

In February 1924 the Ffestiniog-Portmadoc bus route was opened by Crosville and dealt a serious blow to the old established Festiniog Railway, which had run so delightfully down the mountains for many years. This was only one year after the opening of the Welsh Highland Railway through the Aberglaslyn Pass and bus competition was the writing on the wall for that ill-fated railway. The family business, the Crosville Motor Company Limited, in 1925 established itself at Carnarvon by the purchase of the Busy Bee bus services that served that area. The businesses of A & R Motors of Criccieth, J Lewis Owens of Carnarvon, and Cynfi Motors of Deiniolen were taken over shortly afterwards.



Portmadoc Standard Gauge station in 1926, showing the pick-up area adjacent to the platform with sign-posted motor services to Beddgelert and, specifically, to the Saracen's Head - C.L. Mowat - Arch 4934

By 1926 there were eleven Crosville buses operating from Blaenau Ffestiniog and five years later the company was well entrenched in the North Wales area. Quite apart from the impact on both the FR and the WHR's passenger services of the convenience of the bus services, the mainline railway companies such as the London Midland Scottish (LMS) were also losing passengers to road traffic, and they began a programme of joining the road passenger business by purchasing existing large companies. After lengthy negotiations, the LMS purchased Crosville for some £400,000 (equivalent to £25 million currently) and Claude Crosland Taylor, son of the founder, became the Manager of the new business. The Crosville name was retained and the logo 'LMS-Crosville' was used.

The new business continued its campaign of take-overs in 1929, increasing the network of routes. The businesses of Mona Maroon (Holyhead Motors Limited) and William Webster who traded as UNU ('U Need Us') of Llangefni and Caernarvon were purchased. These were significant purchases. Both firms had a wide network of routes in Anglesey and Caernarvonshire with 19 vehicles transferring. UNU's purchase added another 22 vehicles and that company's express services to the Merseyside area became the forerunner of Crosville's coastal express services.



A Carnarvon registered Chevrolet bus, CC 8048, at Beddgelert in 1934. The bus comprises a complete chassis produced by Chevrolet, their Model LO, coupled with London Lorries 14-seat coach work. Crosville lists indicate this vehicle, dating from 1928, was acquired, along with the Tocia Motor Omnibus Company, Aberdaron, in February 1934. It was given Crosville number 94 and withdrawn later that same year - J.T. Suffield - Arch 3226

In May 1930 after only a year of operating as 'LMS – Crosville', a complex agreement was made between the mainline railways and the two major UK bus holding companies. This resulted in a new company being formed, Crosville Motor Services Limited and this was the company that was to the run the business for a further 60 years. Claude Crosland Taylor was retained as General Manager thus the family connection remained. The business of William Lloyd



Unidentified Lancia belonging to O.R. Williams & Sons of Waenfawr - then trading as Caernarvon & Waenfawr District Motors, but later to become better known as Whiteway. (C Carter via Peter Harden)

of Beddgelert, servicing the Beddgelert to Portmadoc route, was purchased by Crosville in June 1936, adding another service to their timetable.

The proliferation of bus routes and the consolidation of ownership providing an integrated timetable undoubtedly led to the movement of passengers from the WHR to road transport. The railway's service left a lot to be desired. Passengers faced delays, hard seats and occasional breakdowns, derailments and long walks to and from their homes and destinations to the stations, which encouraged travellers to opt for door-to-door transport on more comfortable seats and more reliable services. The WHR was thus striving to cover its operating costs with dwindling passenger revenues and with little help from mineral and goods traffic. Thus, the inevitable was hastened, with the last passenger service running in the summer of 1936 and the last goods service in 1937 when the WHR and its lessee, the Festiniog Railway, gave up the unequal struggle.

A memory of the bus service in part of the Welsh Highland's territory can be found on the Frith postcard website which suggests that bus travel in the 1920s and 1930s was hardly 'luxury travel'. The author John Owen was writing in 2009:

"Castle Square in the 1930s was the terminal point for a bus service to Beddgelert run by the Brown Bus Service. Memory has it that the bus ran every two hours or so and (the company) had a garage - now a mountain-climbing gear retailers - on the right-hand side of the main road entering Beddgelert.

"The bus…(was)…a brown and cream Daimler of early 1920s vintage, … ramshackle and dilapidated by the late 1930s, a 'local lad' of the time says that he could crack walnuts in the gap which opened up between the interior panels when the bus ran over a bump in the road.

"There was a 'civilised understanding' between the Brown Bus's owners (William Samuel Jones) and O R Williams's Whiteway Buses and their co-ordinated service ensured a minimum frequency of at least an hourly bus from Waunfawr and Caernarfon. Of course, there was the alternative means of travel into town by the narrow-gauge railway, but that ran indirectly and involved a change of train at Dinas Junction, which made it an expensive alternative to the buses. A local banker and his wife always used the train into Caernarfon as they 'had a position in society' to maintain. Hmmm ..."

Sources / more information

www.crosville.org/crosville-timeline

Brown Bus To Beddgelert – A Memory of Caernarfon – Frith Collection website

Crosville: The Sowing and the Harvest – W. J. Crosland-Taylor, Transport Publishing Co Ltd 1987

Independent Buses in North Wales, Neville Mercer, Venture Publications Ltd, 2012

Whiteway of Waunfawr Paperback – W. G. Rear – Gwynedd Archives Service 2001

NWNGR Fairlies (Part 6)

In this episode of the NWNGR Fairlie saga, we will look at the period covering the run-up to the full opening of the Welsh Highland at the beginning of June 1923. We have four photographs from this period following from the final image in Part 5 of these notes (in *WHH* 96). However, a little scene-setting first would seem appropriate.

It is a matter of record that the WHR was opened on June 1st, 1923 and trains ran from Portmadoc New - FR Trains thence to Duffws and WHR trains to Dinas Junction. From this it follows that the Cross-Town link between Harbour and New was also open (see Richard Maund's analysis in *WHH* 47 - https://tinyurl.com/2g4w9z4f).

However, prior to this formal opening, Lt. Col. A.H.L. Mount inspected the railway on May 24th, submitting his written report to the Ministry of Transport on May 29th. Ahead of this inspection, a number of test outings were held – Boyd suggests dates between May 12th and 22nd for these runs, some of which included the involvement of F.R. double-Fairlie locomotives. Thus, although the Cross Town link had not formally been opened, or indeed even inspected, it nevertheless was apparently 'available' for special traffic. However, from when was this new route actually available?

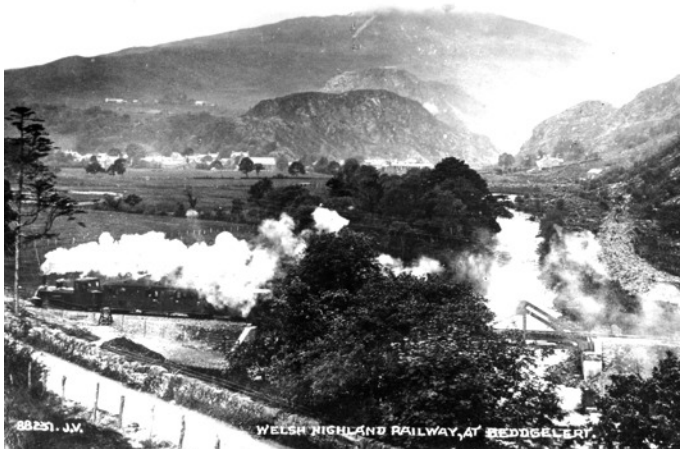
This date, it turns out, while interesting, is possibly highly relevant to assessment of the four photographs that follow as, in all of these, the locomotive had been turned at some time after Ken Nunn took his photographs on May 15th 1923. At the end of Part 5, I did note the possibility that Nunn was photographing a train that actually went all the way to Boston Lodge to allow the locomotive to be turned, a sensible precursor to possible operation over the steeper gradients to the south of Pitt's Head.

We can presume that the link was available for use at least from mid-May, possibly sooner.

One further issue that will bear upon assessment of the following photographs stems from paragraph 11(b) in Mount's 1923 Report:

> (b) Beddgelert. The clear length of the loop is 320 ft. A rail level platform edged by an old rail for 300 ft. is provided on the east side where a station building of corrugated iron is in course of erection. The proper surfacing of the platform has to be finished off and the space between tracks filled in with ballast to rail level. The formation is in deep cutting on the west side, with the result that a platform on that side for down traffic has not been provided. At the same time, the tracks have been laid only 8' 6" centres and in spite of the Company's proposals to bring down trains to a stand at the south end of the loop and up trains at the north end, I consider that danger to passengers of down trains is liable to arise owing to lack of view of an approaching up train, with the result that pinching between trains might take place. The loop line should therefore be slewed towards the station building for a distance of about 4' 6", making the tracks then 13ft. centre to centre.

These notes are taken verbatim from the May 29th report but Mount might well have passed over his main concerns verbally as early as May 24th. However, the notes do tell us that on May 24th the east side track was only 8½ feet from the western, main, line. Further, they tell us that on that date the station building was "in course of erection".



Moel Tryfan **heads a short train across the bridge at Bryn-y-felin en-route to Beddgelert. The earlier PBSSR works are visible up the right-hand side of the image.**
Valentine 88231.JV - Arch 0235

The first image, Arch 0235 (WHR 10a) shows *Moel Tryfan* running chimney-first towards Beddgelert, clearly having been turned since May 15th. Other than its orientation, there is little that this photograph tells us, even when enlarged, about the locomotive.



Moel Tryfan **on the 'down' line at Beddgelert. The crew seem diligently to be assessing the state of the front tube plate.**
Valentine 88229.JV - Arch 0100 (WHR 100)

In Arch 0100 we see *Moel Tryfan* recently arrived at Beddgelert. The carriage immediately behind the locomotive was one of the Pickerings and there is a glimpse of a second carriage behind that. This tallies with Arch 0235, where we also see a Pickering immediately behind

the locomotive with, this time, a somewhat larger glimpse of a second carriage.

It is also worthy of note that the Beddgelert Station scene looks decidedly 'un-finished', with piles of ballast, lengths of rail, etc., lying about. The loop (up) line is very obviously close to the main (down) line (Beddgelert was set up for left-hand running, as evidenced, for example, by the location of the water tower, positioned to service locomotives heading up the hill towards South Snowdon).

The station building was, largely, complete but detailed items were clearly missing, for example barge boards. These were eventually fitted, but only to the north end of the building – the other end never had barge boards fitted. The telegraph connectors were fitted to both ends of the building but there was not, as yet, any sign of the flue that characterised the south end of the building over the early WHR years.

The locomotive obscures the view of the open waiting area at the centre of the building, so we cannot see whether or not the concrete floor had been finally laid.



***Moel Tryfan* running downhill through Beddgelert with, this time, the elusive second carriage clearly visible - Ashbury *Corridor* NWNGR No. 9 (later WHR No. 25). Valentine 88230.JV - Arch 0234 (WHR 9a)**

In this next photograph, Arch 0234, *Moel Tryfan* is heading a down-hill train, two carriages as before, but is standing on the 'main', northbound, line. If this and the previous photographs are compared there is a significant message to be derived from their shadow details. In Arch 0100, when viewed from the station building, the sun was clearly somewhat to the left of being 'head-on'. In Arch 0234 the sun had moved such that it was now to the right of being 'head-on'. Simplistically, this tells us that Arch 0234 was the later of the two photographs. But how much later?

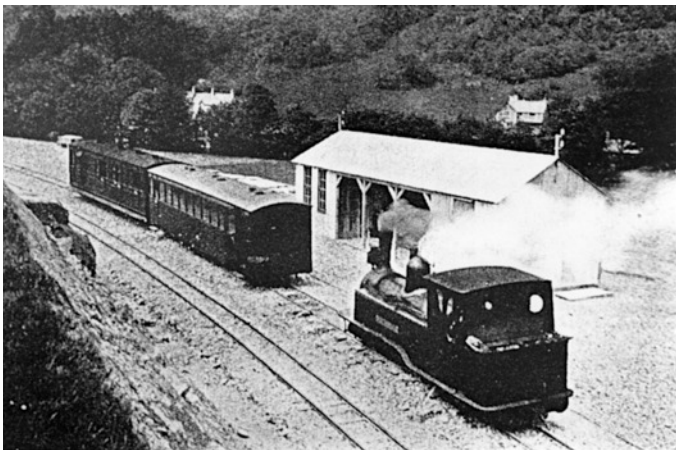
My first analysis, carried out some years ago now, suggested a time gap of 90 minutes which, given the visible sun angles, suggests a time of 15:46, or thereabouts, for Arch 0100 and 17:16, again or thereabouts, for Arch 0234.

Two options remain. First, the locomotive might simply have run around its train at Beddgelert or, second, the train continued up the hill to South Snowdon, the locomotive running round the train there. The latter seems more likely if the objective was route learning, combined no doubt with checking the locomotive's robustness on the steeper gradients. If this were so, in Arch 0234 we see the train standing 'wrong-line' at Beddgelert, begging the question why? One logical interpretation is that, whilst the loop line had yet to be moved, that work had in fact started and consequently the loop was out of action. If so, these Valentine images would logically be dated after the Mount inspection on May 24th.

Returning to Arch 0100, the 'unfinished' appearance noted earlier could well be explained by efforts to dismantle and relocate the loop line.

Further, if the photographs were taken between May 24th and June 1st, the station building might well have completed its "course of erection" by the time Valentine's photographer (E. H. Harrison?) arrived to take his pictures.

We do have a photograph in one of John Keylock's Albums that shows the concrete floor being laid in the Beddgelert station building (Arch 3916, see *WHH* 25, page 7 - https://tinyurl.com/ysyrcpwf). Analysis of this image is difficult as there is so little measurable floor-level detail visible, but a preliminary assessment suggests that the loop in this photo had not been slewed. If so, this work could well have been in hand on May 24th, thus explaining Mount's observation noted in the previous paragraph.



***Moel Tryfan* on the loop line at Beddgelert, detached from a 2 carriage train - J.K. Prendergast (Douglas Fox's man on site 1922/23) - Published in *Railway Magazine* 26th October 1923. Arch 3441**

In this final image, we see the same locomotive and carriages, this time standing on the loop at Beddgelert, indicating that this was, at the time, open. If the layout was operating as designed, this train would have arrived from the north and a detached locomotive suggest either a plan to return back north or the need for additional water before continuing on to Portmadoc - watering facilities here were designed to benefit trains heading up the hill. Note that in this image, the locomotive was carrying a prominent head lamp, missing from the previous images.

If the preceding logic is correct, it follows that Arch 3441 would have been taken before Arch 0100 and 0234. However, all of these images must lie in the tight time window between 15th May 1923 and the start of work to slew the loop line following Mount's visit on May 24th.

The scene is now set for the imminent formal opening of the Welsh Highland on June 1st.

Press Account of the Opening of the Welsh Highland Railway

By way of a 'scene-setter' for forthcoming celebrations and reminiscences, Dick Lystor has suggested that I include the following newspaper report from June 1923. The additional references are his.

Cambrian News & Welsh Farmers Gazette,
Friday 8th June 1923

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY

PASSENGER TRAFFIC SUCCESSFULLY INAUGURATED.

EXCELLENT ARRANGEMENTS: PUNCTUAL TRAINS

The Welsh Highland Railway, a narrow gauge railway of a gauge of 1 foot 11¾ inches, constructed between Portmadoc and Dinas Junction, with stations at Beddgelert and South Snowdon (Rhyd-ddu), and halts at Pont Croesor (for Prenteg), Ynysfor (for Llanfrothen), Ynys Ferlas, Hafod-y-llyn, Nantmor (for Aberglasyn Pass), Hafod Ruffudd, Pitt's Head, Quellyn Lake, Bettws Garmon, Waenfawr, and Tryfan, was opened for passenger traffic on Friday. The arrangements were excellent and the trains kept good time. The weather was fine and there were many passengers.

The length of the railway is 21¼ miles from Portmadoc to Dinas Junction, a station three miles from Carnarvon on the Carnarvon and Afonwen branch of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway. At Portmadoc the Highland Railway connects with the Cambrian section of the GWR, giving connections for Pwllheli and Criccieth and Barmouth, Dolgelley and Aberystwyth. Connection has been made at Portmadoc with the famous Festiniog Railway, which connects with the Bettwsycoed and Llandudno Junction branch of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, and also with the Festiniog and Bala branch of the GWR.

The total authorised share capital of the Highland Railway Company is £120,000. The engineers are Sir Douglas Fox and Partners, and the contractors are Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons, to whom the contract was let at £60,000 just over twelve months ago. The length of the railway from Portmadoc to South Snowdon or Rhyd-ddu, a distance of twelve miles is entirely new; but a passenger service was run at one period between South Snowdon and Dinas, a distance of 9¼ miles. This service was discontinued in 1916. The contractors tackled this section first and were able to complete it by July 31st of last year when it was re-opened for passenger traffic.

Loan advances totalling £20,000 have been made to the company by Carnarvon County Council, Portmadoc Urban Council, and Gwyrfai, Glaslyn and Deudraeth Rural Councils and a like loan advance has been made by the Government. The company are endeavouring to obtain a further grant from the Government to enable it to complete the line from Dinas to Carnarvon, which is part of the original scheme. The contractors have signified their willingness to undertake this additional length of railway for £25,000. So far nothing definite has been arranged.

On the new section from Portmadoc as far as Nantmor a distance of about 6½ miles, the railway is level and then for a length of about 4 miles it has a rising gradient of 1 in 40. Under the old Beddgelert Light Railway scheme the gradient would have been still worse when it was proposed to have it 1 in 28, but as the result of wonderful curves the gradient has been reduced to 1 in 40. The railway winds from Nantmor up to South Snowdon to a point 700 feet above sea level. Thence it falls by easy gradient to Dinas Junction which is only a few feet above sea level.

The Festiniog Railway rises to the same elevation of 700 feet at the terminus of that railway at Blaenau Festiniog.

The line between Beddgelert and South Snowdon is an ingenious device of the engineer's skill in negotiating difficult country, the winding curves adding greatly to the attractive and spectacular effect. At several points the curves form a letter 'S' in fairly open expanses on mountain slopes in the most romantic part of the district between Nantmor and Pitt's Head in the very heart of Snowdonia which enables the traveller to have glorious views, not only of mountains, rivers and lakes, but up and down the valley whichever way he is sitting.

As the railway leaves Portmadoc it passes Tanyrallt, near Tremadoc, where the poet Shelley lived in 1812, and where it is believed "Queen Mab" was written. On the right of the railway stands the picturesque peak Cynicht, known as Sugar Loaf Mountain. The first view of Snowdon itself is obtained in approaching Pont Croesor, a noted station for anglers in the Glaslyn, where salmon up to 20 lbs. and yellow trout up to 4 lbs. have been caught with rod and line. When Nantmor is reached Snowdon is lost for a space as the train passes through a tunnel of 300 yards in the famous Pass of Aberglaslyn. As the train leaves the tunnel, Snowdon with the other peaks of the Snowdonia range come into view in all their majesty, but even when Eryri is hidden as approaching Nantmor, the lesser peaks which buttress it on the South West, including Moel Hebog, Arran Garn, Moel Siabod,(1) Mynydd Mawr, and other famous peaks are in full view; and just as the train enters South Snowdon the yawning precipices guarding the famous Drwsycoed Pass leading down to Nantlle come into the picture as does the noted trout lake Llyn Gadair, near the village of Rhyd-ddu. South Snowdon is a favourite haunt of mountaineers, being generally regarded as giving the easiest footpath to the summit of Snowdon.

The railway, which passes through the Vale of Madoc and the noted Nant Colwyn Valley up to South Snowdon, afterward traverses along the picturesque shores of Quellyn Lake through the villages of Bettws-Garmon and Waenfawr, the latter being the site of the well known Carnarvonshire long-range Marconi wireless station. Tryfan is the next stop and shortly after Dinas is reached.

The first train consisted of a tank engine with two passenger coaches and a brake van, left Portmadoc to scheduled time at 8-10 a.m. [2] Great interest was taken in the inauguration and a considerable crowd assembled who gave a hearty cheer as the train steamed out.

The first passenger to book his ticket on the Highland Railway was Mr. George Brown, Portmadoc, who was going to fish the Glaslyn River at Pont Croesor, other passengers included one for Ynys Ferlas, the third stopping place, five passengers for Beddgelert, the "capital" of Snowdonia, two for South Snowdon, and one for Waenfawr. At Beddgelert four passengers joined the train, two for South Snowdon and two Irish ladies from Dublin, who were proceeding to Bangor via Dinas on their way home to Ireland, and who had delayed their return from Beddgelert to travel on the new railway. Passengers who made the return journey on the first trains included our North Wales representative.

The train reached South Snowdon punctually to scheduled time, the service working perfectly smoothly.

It has been a great performance to complete the railway by June 1st, and the Directors, the railway contractors and engineers, and the General Manager of the Company, Mr S. E. Tyrwhitt, are to be heartily congratulated.

The officials on the first train included Mr S. E. Tyrwhitt, the General Manager, Mr Robert Williams, the Locomotive Superintendent, and Mr A. G. Crick, the Company's outside representative, with Mr Ellis Lewis, Portmadoc, as guard, Mr H. T. Jones, Portmadoc, as engine driver and Mr R. Evans, Minffordd, as stoker. The honour of being the first guard on the new railway was bestowed on Mr Ellis Lewis by virtue of his thirty-two years' faithful and efficient service on the sister line, the Festiniog Narrow Gauge railway. Mr Lewis combines the duties of guard and conductor, and performed his duties with characteristic efficiency and courtesy.

The Company has been singularly fortunate in their general manager, Mr Tyrwhitt, who has been "lent" to them by the Great Western Company. No one outside the railway has a conception of the difficulties to be overcome in successfully opening a railway. Mr Tyrwhitt had organised everything to the last detail and left not a stone unturned to ensure smooth working and the successful inauguration which was achieved.

At Waunfawr, the Portmadoc train met the first train for Portmadoc which left Dinas at 9-50 a.m. [3] and was due at Portmadoc at 12-13. This train carried several passengers for Portmadoc, their baskets indicating that they were bound for Portmadoc market. In this connection there can be no doubt that the railway will be of incalculable help and there is every reason for believing that the transport facilities will lead to the re-opening of numerous copper and zinc mines and slate quarries which have been closed down in Snowdonia owing to transport difficulties.

Altogether about 30 passengers disembarked at Portmadoc when the first train from Dinas and Beddgelert way arrived at 12-15 or two minutes after scheduled time. Another crowd had assembled and gave the officials and passengers a cordial reception.

Attractive as the Festiniog Toy Railway is, the Highland Railway is still more so. It gives a sense of greater freedom to enjoy the incomparable scenery of Cambria for the train never goes at more than about 12 to 15 miles an hour.

The route is a considerable improvement on that proposed in the old scheme. The original route would have run almost over Gelert's Grave, the scene of the world-famed legend, "Llewelyn and his dog Gelert", but the new route keeps wide of that notable resort and the promoters have, in other ways, done all that could reasonably be expected to preserve scenic beauty.

During the war, railways of similar gauge to the Highland Railway or 60 centimetre *(sic)*, as it is known in French, were laid for hundreds of miles all over the war theatres of France, Egypt, and the Balkans, and curiously, Lieut. Col. Mount, the Ministry of Transport inspector, who inspected the Highland Railway last week, was the originator of the narrow gauge railways in France during the war.

There is now a joint station at Portmadoc for the Highland Railway and the Festiniog Railway on a site at the back of Madoc-street West. The Festiniog Railway trains made use of the joint station for the first time on Friday morning. [4]

The stationmaster at the joint station at Portmadoc is Mr Henry Jones, the former stationmaster on the Festiniog Railway at Portmadoc, and Mr Hugh Jones, formerly stationmaster of Tanybwlch is the stationmaster at Beddgelert. At South Snowdon there is a woman stationmaster, Miss Myfanwy Williams of Rhyd-ddu.

Footnotes.

1 Geography location of Moel Siabod?

2 Hauled by FR England loco *Princess*, arriving Dinas at 10-35 a.m.

3 Hauled by FR England loco *Prince*.

4 i.e., June 1st 1923

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