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# The First (?) and the Last.




Elsewhere in this Issue, the Glanrafon Slate Quarry is recorded as the "last" of those whose output supported the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways line up the Gwyrfai valley. However, might it be possible, in some ways, to identify this quarry equally as having been the "first"?

The NWNGR. was, as we know, a grand scheme from which but a small portion eventually saw the light of day - the Moel Tryfan Undertaking. The Moel Tryfan and Alexandra Quarries were the primary 'target' and NWNGR politics were rich in the efforts to improve access for the quarries directly to Carnarvon. As designed, the line to Bryngwyn was the Undertaking's main line while a branch progressed up the Gwyrfai to enable the quarries there similarly to access the sea.

Progress up the Gwyrfai was temporarily stalled by the need to cross the Afon Treweunydd as it fell through its gorge towards Llyn Cwellyn. This geography could have proved a fatal bar to progress beyond Quellyn had the proprietors of the Glanrafon not agreed to support the installation of the "Glanrafon Viaduct".

Without this support, it is not inconceivable that the 'branch' might permanently have terminated below the Treweunydd and the NWNGR might never have reached Rhyd-ddu.

Had this been the outcome, it is reasonable to suppose there might never have been a Welsh Highland Railway - Beddgelert might well have been reached from Portmadoc, but the NWNGR could have soldiered on with its main line terminus at Bryngwyn.

So while not physically the first quarry linked to railway, it seems that Glanrafon potentially played a prime role in ensuring the eventual development of the W.H.R.

# NWNGR - The Last 15 Years

## Dave Rogerson

It has been said many times that slate and the necessary coal to the quarries was the main traffic of the NWNGR and other goods and services had added to the chance of a slight profit in the first twenty seven years. In particular, six quarries provided the vast majority of the slate. James Boyd in his analysis of the company shows that there was a sufficient profit on the working of the railway between 1884 and 1908 to cover outside charges such as Auditors' and Directors' Fees but fails to mention the Interest owed to Debenture Holders and Lloyds Bank which, in later years, caused the Balance Carried Forward to escalate.

The problems started in 1906 when Hafod-y-wern Quarry effectively closed but became more serious in 1909 when Moel Tryfan Quarry suffered a disastrous rock fall from which it never recovered.

At the same time as all this moderate collapse was happening, in 1906 the NWNGR received a new locomotive. *Russell* was named after the long-time Receiver to the railway, James Cholmondeley Russell, who had controlled expenditure since 1878, and was bought by the Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway who had no immediate need of it. In 1908 the NWNGR purchased another loco, *Gowrie*, and named it after the then manager Gowrie C Aitchison.

In the 1911 census the workforce consisted of about twenty nine men; an agent, four station masters, six train crew, four workshop staff, five yard staff and a large track gang of nine men. This was about average throughout the earlier years but there is a movement away from the yard and onto the track gang (or possibly a few men wrote down their hopes but actually worked on the yard temporarily).

1910 and 1911 were difficult years, the slate trade was slowing down and, in 1911, New Braich Quarry effectively closed. The railway continued its pattern of mixed trains running twice a day with extras on Saturday, a slight reduction on the 1892 timetable but sufficient to deal with any passengers. Slight losses were made each year on the working timetable of £10 and £165 and some action was needed.

Michael Bishop in *WHH* 31 (March 2006) shows more detail for 1912 onwards – The Declining Years. He looks at the problem from the Directors' viewpoint. I would like to be nearer the workforce viewpoint which may, I admit, involve a little speculation

In 1912 'Locomotive power', train mileage in effect, was reduced by about 30% and very little was done on carriage and wagon repair. This gave a temporary profit of £220 but a further fall in slate journeys in 1913 and catching up on repairs led to a shortfall of £206 in that year. The decision was made to cease passenger traffic on the branch to Bryngwyn at some point during 1913, probably at the end of the summer season.

J. C. Russell died in 1912 and his role as Receiver was taken over by Gowrie Aitchison who had taken a role in his father in law's firm in Nottinghamshire in 1910 but retained his position as Secretary and Engineer to the NWNGR. George North remained in North Wales to deal with immediate problems.

In 1914 war broke out, passenger journeys were reduced, slate was reduced again, particularly when Alexandria closed, and coal deliveries reduced with the closing of the quarries. The railway had started to convey some timber to make pit props in 1913 and this continued from Rhyd Ddu in 1914 and some stone was carried from Waenfawr. The decision was made to halve the track maintenance bill and no doubt some men volunteered for service in France. I have found no record of men from Llanwnda who went to the war and returned chastened but unaffected physically; there would be some either in 1914 or later in the war.

From the point of view of the railway, disaster followed disaster and Old Braich was liquidated in 1914. This was not crucial but the closing of Alexandria on 15th August 1914 was. Only one of the major quarries, Glanrafon, remained open at the end of 1914.

Despite the fact that every effort was made in 1914 to minimise expense, the loss on the year was £508. This was clearly unacceptable and a further reduction in the service was inevitable. In 1915 there was little slate coming down the incline and so the Bryngwyn service seems to have been reduced to "as needed" and the mainline service to two per day compared to the three plus extras on Saturday which had applied in 1909. Only one locomotive was needed and so it is probable that this was the point at which the two firemen either were made redundant or left to join the forces – maybe both. This made things a little better but still the loss was £382.

Then Glanrafon closed in 1915 and all six major slate producers had collapsed. A little slate might have



**Looking past the weigh-house and up the access incline towards the quarry beyond - Glanrafon - Arch 4842.**

continued to come down the line from clearing the closed quarries, small quarries and tiny illegal workings, but it was very little.

There was sadness in 1915 when James Hughes, the Stationmaster at Waenfawr, died. He was almost eighty and had been with the company from the start, had probably had little work to do for a number of years but still, in the 1911 census, declared he was employed as "Gorsaf Feister, NWNGRy" although in 1909 he was paid the least of all such men.

It is not clear when *Gowrie* was sold; it may have been as early as 1915, certainly by 1917 it had gone. Maintenance of the track was neglected, the locos were neglected, carriages were hardly maintained, wagons were not repaired and there was some improvement in income with the result that in 1916 they got the loss down to £70. I suspect that the amalgamation of *Moel Tryfan* and *Snowdon Ranger* into one locomotive might have happened late in 1916 rather than 1917 as is usually reported; there was an excessive expenditure on Maintenance of Locomotives in the 1916 figures. I suspect also that sometime during this year George North returned to England leaving Daniel Owen Jones in charge.

It is possible that at this point he had only eleven or twelve men at his disposal, these being: John Williams, Willie Hugh Williams and Tom Morris on the locos; Thomas Richard Thomas, Caradoc Jones, Thomas Ore and John Williams in the yard; Jeb Limerick and Samuel Williams doing track maintenance with Tom Beaumont and Richard Williams in the workshop. All these men, except Tom Beaumont, were working for the company in both 1911 and 1921. At some point, probably after the war, Tom Beaumont retired after about 25 years' service and was replaced by Albert Edward Bailey. The train crew had worked since near to the opening of the line and were getting elderly, many of the others were as old or nearly so. There may have been one or two more employed but not many and all were badly paid and possibly on reduced hours.

Even less was spent in 1917, a minimum was reached at £1830 but the income was also a minimum at £1665 as the Merchandise only brought in £399 compared to £630 in 1916. The loss had crept back up to £165 despite all their efforts.

The contrast with 1909 illustrates the changes.

| | Income | Exp. | Profit | Men | Locos | Mileage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1909 | 2,744 | 2,567 | 177 | Abt 30 | 4 | 31,907 |
| 1917 | 1,665 | 1,830 | -165 | Abt 12 | 2 | 11,252 |

Somehow Daniel Owen Jones kept his team together and began to see hopes for the future in 1918. There was no passenger income but Alexandria, Moel Tryfan and Cilgwyn Quarries had joined forces and were beginning to get the incline working again. Cilgwyn was not yet connected but rumours said it would happen. Merchandise leapt to £894 and mileage reduced to 9687. In response more work was done on the track, the wagons were overhauled and a moderate amount of work was done on the locos. Unfortunately they overdid it slightly and the loss in 1918 was £236.

The initial post war boom in demand for slate continued in 1919 but not much was being produced in the environs of the railway. However by reducing the mileage to 7987 the team got closer to breaking even, losing only £125. By then rumours would have been around that, if the money could be found, a big scheme to expand the railway was being planned to make it an important part of the Carnarvon to Portmadoc railway. The crew remained unchanged and ploughed on.

There are few figures for 1920 and 1921 except the Profit/(Loss) on working. 1920 was looking rough at a loss of £303 and train mileage was down again to 7054. It is an accepted fact that the boom in demand for slate was short lived and anyway they brought little down the line, the demand for pit props and the general timber trade were both poor and the stone had pretty well dried up. The crew were simply keeping the line alive, probably by now on short time and hoping that the renovation would come quickly. By this stage they were mainly running branch line trains with the occasional main line foray.

Frm the 1921 Census the eleven men who I have supposed were employed during 1916 are all found by the simple request for men with railway jobs in Llanwnda. The only additional man is David Lloyd Hughes, the Bryngwyn Stationmaster, whose line was virtually derelict in 1916. Two other additions are a seventeen year old, W Lloyd Thomas (the son of Thomas Richard Thomas), who is apprenticed as a Blacksmith's Striker and Myfanwy Williams who has taken on the role of clerk at Rhyd Ddu. Myfanwy is of course notable as the first woman to be involved in the working of the railway, as opposed to Mrs North who briefly ran a café at Dinas.

By May 24th 1922 the staff may have been expanded again to include an extra loader, an extra plate layer and Daniel Owen Jones's daughter, Margaret Owen Jones, to help him in the office. The Welsh Highland had taken over the firm but NWNGR was still running the services according to this pay sheet. Even this last hold would be broken when passenger services started again in July 1922.

However the role of the railway had changed. I said at the start that slate was the main traffic but now slate for all roofs was old fashioned, tiles were cheaper, easier to fix and more accessible in all localities. Local passengers were more likely to take a Whiteways bus into Carnarvon, lorries and other vehicles delivered throughout the valleys. By 1922 the only possible reason for a railway was for the tourists.

**Cover Photograph.**

Dave Sallery's website (*The Slate Industry of North and Mid Wales* - http://www.penmorfa.com/Slate/index.htm) provides an excellent photographic resource, a number of which images found their way, with permission, into our book on the Croesor Tramway.

I was looking for a good general view of Glanrafon and Dave agreed to the publication of the photo on Page 1.

# Past, Present and Future

## Nick Booker reminisces and speculates.

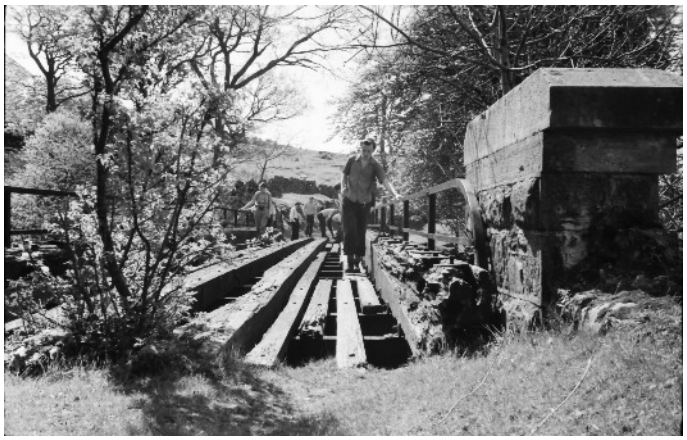
The reproduction of the NGRS articles of Arthur Rimmer's reminiscences of the WHR in this current edition of *WHH* has caused me to reflect on the passage of time, life's priorities and the future.

In the summer of 1963, my parents rented a cottage in Nant Gwynant, overlooking Snowdon and the Watkin Path and I went with them as a skinny teenager. Over the two weeks and in between the rain and the sunshine, we explored Snowdonia and in doing so spotted the WHR Society's Morris Commercial lorry and later bumped into some



**The lorry, as later photographed by Nick at Beddgelert July 1963 - Arch 3531**

members of the Society on the FR at Harbour Station who told us about the station site at Beddgelert and that's where it all started. One of my photographs from this time features in one of John Stretton's '*Then and Now*' books.



**One of four of Nick's photos used by John Stretton in the second of his WHR *Then and Now* books - *Halfway to Paradise* - Whitsun 1964 - not yet added to our Archive**

Shortly afterwards, I joined the Society and met fellow members Brian Critchley and Barry Gray at an early



**Nick's photo showing an exploration party examining the bow bridge at Plas-y-nant - Whitsun 1964 - Arch 3551.**

WHR working party in 1964 and we have remained firm friends ever since. The rest of much of my story is in *WHH*77! Suffice to say although I was aware of Arthur Rimmer, I never met him although he had a significant role in the Society and pre 1964 Company activities looking after books and post cards – including the reprints and sale of the Frith cards and others. Recently when sorting through the Honychurch correspondence archive that is now in the care of the WHHR at Porthmadog, I found a number of letters from Arthur Rimmer expressing exasperation with Bob Honychurch about things he hadn't done or things he had done with out consulting others! Even after 60 years or so, the irritations jumped off the page.

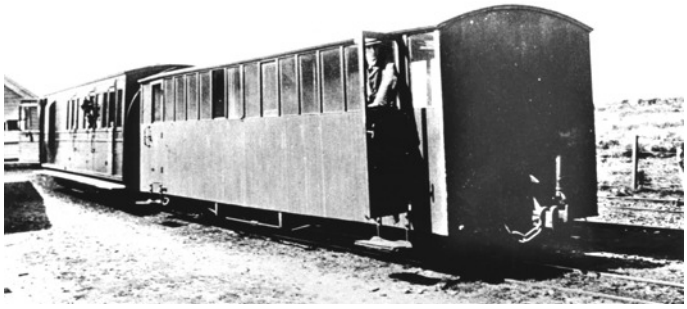
As long ago as 1941, Arthur had recognised the potential of the then closed and about to be lifted WHR. In a letter to *The Modern Tramway*, the magazine of the Light Railway Transport League, he suggested that if the reinstatement of the railway on commercial grounds was found not to be possible it might be practicable for clubs and societies supplying free labour to tackle such a scheme. However, it took ten years and Tom Rolt with the Talyllyn to crystallise that concept, by which time the WHR was just a stripped trackbed with some derelict buildings and rusty bridges.

Bob Honychurch had his letter advocating the rebuilding of the WHR, published in the *Model Engineer* magazine of April 27th, 1961, and this event generated sufficient interest for the original Welsh Highland Railway Society to be set up with Honychurch as secretary. The first Newsletter, circulated to members in September 1961, set out the

Society's plans and the progress, such as it was, of negotiations with the liquidator of the WHR company. Around this time, Arthur became involved along with other characters such as Bill Brown, the owner and director of a ceramics company, who became Chairman, Richard Hilton, Don Amos, Lawrence Brydon and Brian Evans. Some are remembered, others are not and are just names on faded old newsletters or duplicate correspondence. Even authors such as J I C Boyd, Gordon Rushton and Peter Johnson have not, I think, sufficiently recognised their contribution to the early years of the rebirth of the WHR. Indeed, without the securing of the Honychurch correspondence at the auction in 2021, much of this early history would have been lost. Graham Farr (of the WHHR) and I never understood why it was never just given to either the WHHR or ourselves when it was patently WHR Society/'64 Company records and of little monetary value. However, let us not dwell on that but I use it as an example of what can happen if at the end of people's lives there are no clear instructions on what should happen to personally held records such as these and indeed photographs and other historically valuable items.

I have very current experience of the complications of what can happen when someone either dies intestate or without any clear guidance as to what should happen to their estate and indeed close relatives who for whatever reason were dependant upon them. Even when the deceased may have had what might be regarded as "not much to leave" it can create a myriad of problems in sorting out and administering relatively simple or low value estates and obtaining required probate. Even when there is a will to guide the process and which covers the 'money' and the key valuables, the will may not provide guidance on the detail things like correspondence (eg the Honychurch archives etc), books, photographs, etc. There are any number of stories of historically valuable books, documents, photographs and artefacts being thrown in skips and sometimes being retrieved by some curious passer-by. The way round this problem is to have a list of 'other items of interest' with the will providing instructions and /or for example labelling photograph albums and indicating where they should go. While 'Uncle Harry' may know the significance and historic and monetary value of his collection of NWNGR photographs, documentation, Dinky Toys, railwayana, toys, etc., his nephews and nieces, for example, probably will not!

To bring the discussion closer to home, the WHR Heritage Group trustees are all either Baby Boomers or pre-Boomers (aka The Silent Generation); the membership less so although that is anecdotal. Some of us have been involved with the Group for many years, some since 1967 when it was set up. We all have a legacy to leave that probably stretches way back in terms of memories at least and, maybe more broadly, relevant items of WHR interest that will need to find a home. However, not everything can end up in an archive or a museum and for many of our possessions we are merely custodians and they can be passed on to others who can appreciate them perhaps as a gift or via auction or sale. Many of the books in my collection for example were owned by others and bought second hand and this applies equally to many of our household items such as paintings, clocks and furniture. My wife Jill and I both know that at some point in the future they will be owned by someone else, although Jill's children seem (at the moment) not very interested in for example our 'brown furniture' or clocks or indeed my 1950s toys! However we both know that they will find a home somewhere and that our executors when the time comes will have reasonably clear guidance on what needs to be done, assuming we have not already sold or given 'stuff' away.



**One of the last passenger trains at Bryngwyn (?)**
**ca 1916 - Arch 3501**

The 150th anniversary of the opening of the NWNGR's original main line from Dinas Junction to Bryngwyn is just three years away in 2027. Given our experience with the WHR Centenary celebrations, planning or at least strategic planning will need to start next year in 2025. When it comes to the legacy and ongoing work of the WHRHG, I'm hoping that this can continue in the care and custodianship of those with the enthusiasm for all things WHR that the current trustees share. Some of the current board have been involved since David Allan and others set up the Group, 27 years ago. We have yet to find the solution to everlasting life. Thus we need new people to pick up the baton and run the Group for the next generation as we all gradually step off the train, for whatever reason.

So should you be interested in getting involved please drop me a line – it will be a gentle introduction!

# NWNGR and Welsh Highland personalities - an occasional series (3)

A pivotal figure in the development of the Welsh Highland, whose motivation was more altruistic than perhaps some others of his era, and yet one who seems to get less attention than others –

## Evan Robert Davies

**by Richard Maund**

Davies arose from a strong Calvinistic background and was an early and active proponent for the welfare of his community – particularly a driving force in the movement to improve education of the Welsh and in Welsh. Unfortunately, too much of what has been written about him – at least as background to his railway involvements – is of questionable accuracy, and to retail the facts without provenance would not assist in putting the record straight. Thus the presentation below is unashamedly heavy with supporting footnotes.

Davies's desire to promote the improvement of Carnarvonshire's (as it then was) economic state –also seen in his active involvement in the development of Pwllheli's infrastructure – led to his early and active political role in the town and the county. His introduction to light railway development seems to stem from this, when he acted as secretary to a movement – in 1895 – to develop light railways in Lleyn. Although this did not produce any rail mileage, he clearly felt that improved transport would aid the area's economic health, and this belief was clearly a driving force behind his involvement in promotion of light railway schemes in 1900 (but not 1903), 1914 and 1922 – the latter representing the post-War revival driven by the Aluminium Corporation. The opaque process by which he became the holder of stock in the Festiniog and the companies that segued into the Welsh Highland need not concern us: he can hardly have had any illusions about this being a route to riches (no matter the motivation of the other directors of the 'Dolgarrog party'). *Quid pro quo*s undoubtedly there would have been and legal work will not have been *pro bono*. He was not above using the Downing Street address and his role at Lloyd George's right hand to further the railways' cause – witness the pressure brought on the Board of Trade not to impede the WHR's opening – but it can only have been driven by a continuing belief that this would aid the economic recovery of the area's mineral extraction industry and, hence, of the county. Davies was 'co-opted' on to the boards of both the Festiniog and Welsh Highland in 1921/2.

He became (certainly after Nicholls' departure, if not before) the *de facto* 'commercial director' of the two railways – at least for the passenger side of the business – even though no such formal designation is seen in the directors' minutes. Alas, he conducted such matters from his London solicitor's practice so that the *real* files which would show the granular detail of his activities are lost to us. Nevertheless, it is possible to see, from his letters to local management in Portmadoc in the XD97 files, that (for example) he was making use of his weekly journeys between London and Pwllheli for maintaining relations with the adjacent companies' superintendents and negotiating to shape the train service connections and fares for the summer circular tours. Another clear example of his hand was the withdrawal of the Festiniog's public winter service from 24 March 1930 (XD97/17020 and minute at XD97/5). Although Stephens was, from 1925, Chairman and Managing Director of the two companies (after 1927 Receiver & Manager of the WHR), he deferred to Davies on such matters.

And, of course, were it not for ERD it seems highly unlikely that the Festiniog would have taken the 1934 lease of the Welsh Highland - I have hypothesised elsewhere that he resented what he saw as Griffith's (the then Receiver & Manager) lack-lustre management, and wanted to give the WHR the chance to show that it really had been worth building it…..

### Evan Robert Davies: a timeline summary

A detailed summary of Evans' personal and professional life has been prepared by Richard however, for publication reason, this has been prepared as an additional 4-page insert to this issue of *WHH*.

This list of events is fully cited with, in many cases, additional expansion material.

# Journeys on the Narrow Gauge

Arthur (A.E.) Rimmer is a name perhaps well-known, or at least known, to many of our readers. Arthur was involved in the debates and actions triggered by the belief that the Welsh Highland, then of very recent memory, should be 'reinstated'.

There are, in our Archive, a number of photographs credited to Rimmer but of the man himself we seem to know very little. Hopefully we will be able to change that as this series of notes is developed.

Around the turn of the 1950s/60s, Arthur submitted a series of short articles under the common heading *Journeys on the Narrow Gauge* for publication in the Narrow Gauge Railway Society's then embryonic journal *The Narrow Gauge*.

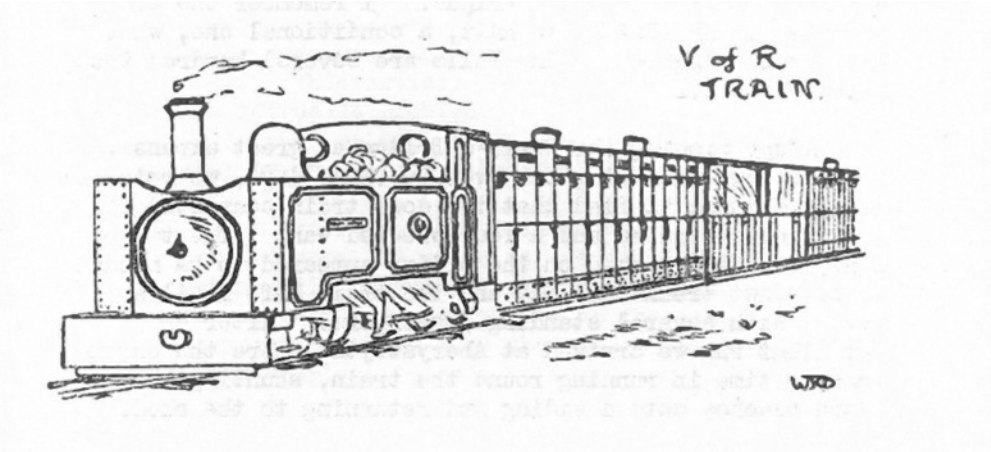
There were seven such articles covering, in turn, the Vale of Rheidol, the Corris, the Glyn Valley, the Welsh Highland, the Welshpool and Llanfair, the Festiniog and,finally, the Tal-y-llyn. The first of these appeared in *TNG* issue 22 (1958/1), the last in issue 29 (Summer 1961).

Arthur's notes on the Welsh Highland were reproduced in *WHH*17 (September 2002), but it seems appropriate to set the notes in context by including the other six both to add to our understanding of Rimmer and his work and in recognition of of the fact that is now 65 years since their first appearance.

(These articles are reprinted with permission from *The Narrow Gauge,* the historical journal of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society. To contact the NGRS please visit the web site at www.ngrs.org; for membership details please email Jill Everitt at membership@ngrs.org)

## JOURNEYS ON THE NARROW GAUGE by A. E. Rimmer.

No. l. The Vale of Rheidol light railway (1' 11½" gauge). (From *TNG* Issue 22.)




The Vale of Rheidol is one of the finest examples of the narrow-gauge railway in use now, being maintained in first class condition and with the double advantage of having a superb route and of possessing one terminus at a busy seaside resort.

My trip over the line in 1934 was made behind G.W.R. No. 1213 (now No. 9), one of the original Davies and Metcalfe locos. She was hauling four closed compartment coaches and two open observation cars. The saloon coaches which are used now had not then been built and consequently the open coaches were far more popular as the others gave a rather restricted view. The journey itself, as is usual on this line, was uneventful. Water was taken at Aberffrwd - and, of course, cameras were much in evidence. I always remember the well-kept stations on the line - at Aberffrwd the slogan "The Best Way - G.W.R." appeared on the bank beside the down platform. The train arrived and departed from the line next to the booking office at Devil's Bridge as it was the second afternoon train (2.30 p.m. from Aberystwyth) and the last.

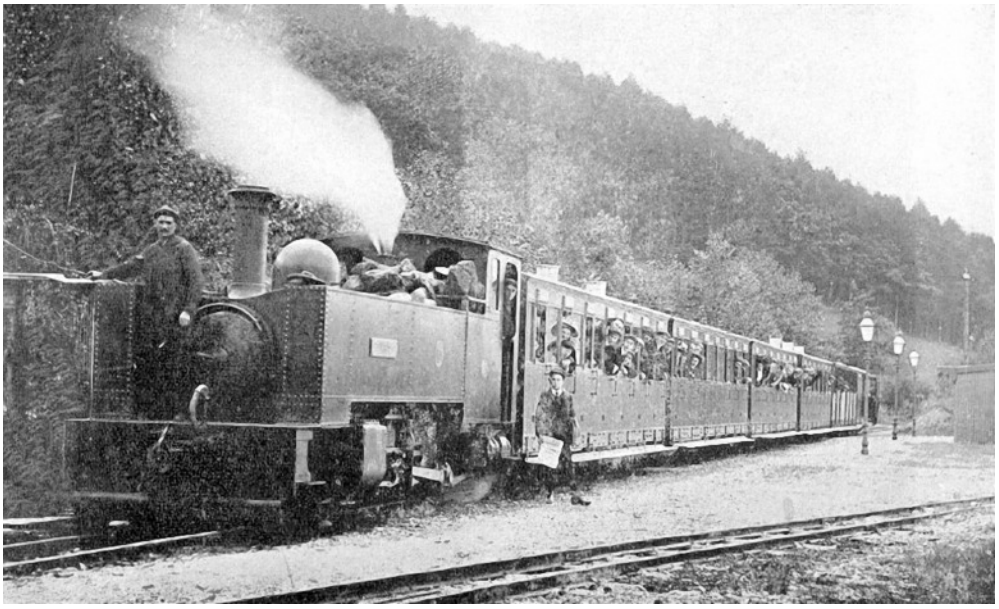
As always the scenery on the line was superb. The whole of the Rheidol Valley came into view from the train as it rounded the long succession of reverse curves before reaching Devil's Bridge terminus. I remember the train stopping at Rheidol Falls halt, a conditional one, where two people alighted. The Falls are several hundred feet below the halt. After viewing the Devil's Bridge at great expense, there being two toll gates even in those days, we returned to the station to find that the down train consisted of eight bogie coaches and a four-wheeled van. The two or three vehicles parked on the siding appeared to be needed on the last train that day and the train left Devil's Bridge with several standing passengers. After an excellent run we arrived at Aberystwyth; where the engine lost no time in running round the train, shunting the extra coaches onto a siding and returning to the shed.

VALE OF RHEIDOL BRANCH - TIME-TABLE 1958
24th May - 13th September.

| | | WEEKDAYS | | | | | SUNDAYS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | A | | B | A | E | C |
| ABERYSTWYTH | | 10.00 | 1SX45 | | 2.00 | 2.30 | 5.45 | 2.15 |
| LLANBADARN | 10.07 | 1SX52 | 2.07 | 2.37 | 5.52 | 2.22 | | |
| DEVIL'S BRIDGE arr. | 11.00 | 2SX45 | 3.00 | 3.30 | 6.45 | 3.15 | | |

| | | WEEKDAYS | | | SUNDAYS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | D | A | E | C |
| DEVIL'S BRIDGE dep. | 11.42 | 4.00 | 5.50 | 8.00 | 4.30 | |
| LLANBADARN dep. | 12.32 | 4.54 | 6.45 | 8.55 | 5.24 | |
| ABERYSTWYTH arr. | 12.45 | 5.00 | 6.50 | 9.00 | 5.30 | |

A - commences 14th July. B - will not run after 12th July.
C - runs Sundays 25th May and 20th July to 7th September.
D - will not run on Saturdays after 12th July.
E - runs Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays commencing 15th July.
SX - Saturdays excepted.



Illustrations - both illustration shown here have been taken from the original *TNG* Issue 22, pages 9 and 10.

The heading illustration was a drawing by W.J.K. Davies, then the editor of *TNG*, showing a short passenger train on the VoR.

The photo above shows a long passenger train at Nantyronen en-route to Devil's Bridge - TNG 22 credited the loan of the photo block to J.I.C. Boyd. Boyd has this image facing page 206 in the 1986 edition of *Narrow Gauge Railways in Mid-Wales*. His caption there identifies the locomotive as *Edward VII* and credits the photo to his own collection.

Following on from Rimmer's first article, I thought it appropriate to cover both his 2nd (the Corris) and his 3rd (the Glyn Valley Tramway) clearing the decks, as it were, to address the 4th (the Welsh Highland) in our next issue, along with (hopefully) a more complete appreciation of the man himself.

Meanwhile, I show to the right one of the known photos showing Arthur (on the left with the flag) enjoying the pursuit of his obvious enthusiasm, this one taken on the Talyllyn.



By way of introduction to Rimmer's notes on the Corris Railway, I should reproduce a couple of comments from the Editorial to *TNG* Issue 23:

"In this, the second issue of the magazine under my [W.J.K. Davies] editorship, certain changes have been made as an experiment and I hope that they will meet with your approval. In any case your comments will be appreciated. Firstly, we have once again started using electronic stencil reproduction for photographs, this time as an integral part of articles. This is, frankly, to economise on blocks and to give you a fair-sized, reasonably illustrated, magazine in spite of the depleted state of the Society's funds. (One new block costs about the same as two thirds of the sketches and e-s photos in this issue)

"*(Compilers note : whilst the above method was clearly justified at the time, on the grounds of expense, unfortunately the consequent very poor reproduction has made it impossible to reproduce the results in this re-issue.).*

"The other change was inspired by several letters thanking us for printing the big VoR photo. We have, therefore, printed a similar photo to illustrate the Corris article (once again by kind courtesy of J.I.C. Boyd) but have left the other side of the page blank so members may, if they wish, remove the photo without otherwise damaging the magazine. *(This photograph missing from original file copy).*"

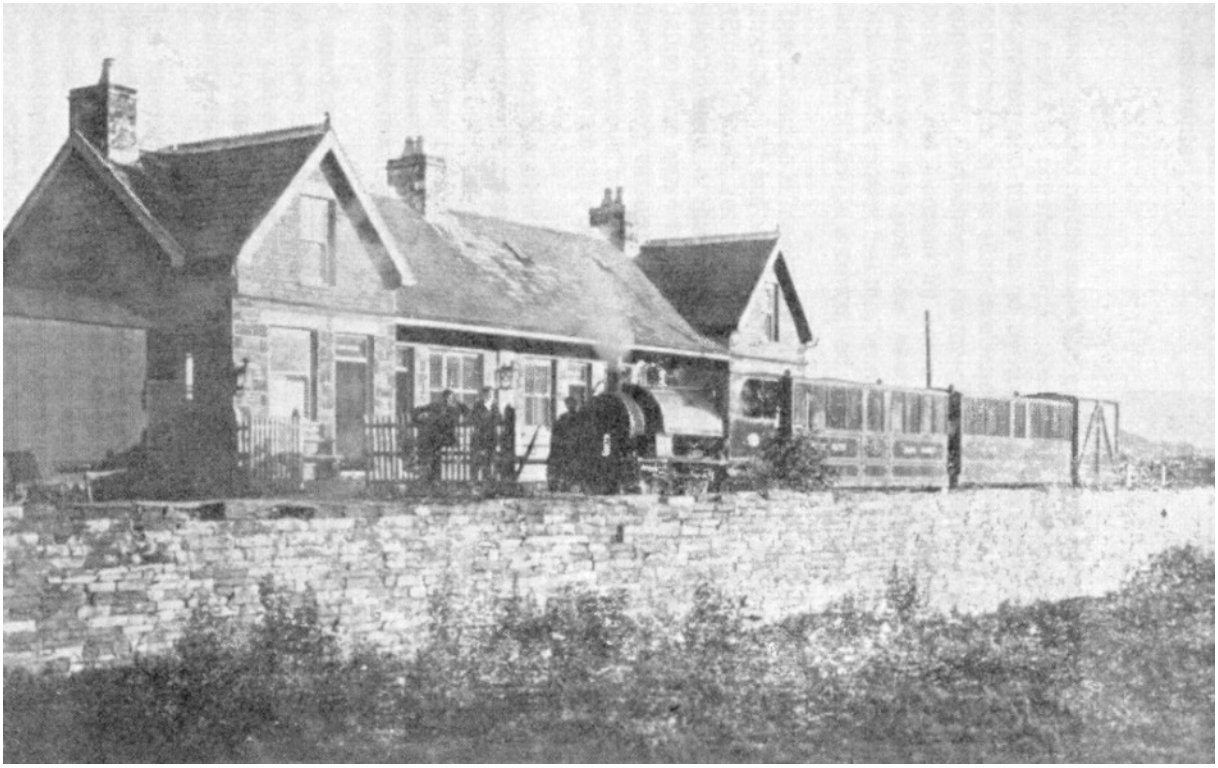
I will include here that photograph as reproduced in the TNG 23 article. This image, as with the VoR image in the previous section, appears, unsurprisingly, in Boyd's Narrow Gauge Railways in Mid-Wales (my copy is a 1986 first reprint, 2nd edition) as the 4th photograph between pages 32 and 33, captioned as follows:

*Machynlleth station after rebuilding, about 1910. Up train about to depart: note rear sides of stock without doors. Carriage shed on extreme left.*

## Journeys on the Narrow Gauge No.2 : The Corris Railway

2'3" gauge A.E.Rimmer

From TNG Issue 23



I first travelled on this line in June 1939 and on arrival at Machynlleth about noon, found No. 3 quietly simmering alongside the former passenger station. The train consisted of two open wagons and the brake van. Several boxes and parcels were loaded into the van and, after the guard and I had climbed aboard, we departed, shortly after 1 p.m.

Leaving the terminus behind, we made our way slowly across the low embankment and over the Dovey Bridge where the loco was opened up for the climb ahead. We were soon amongst the hedges and trees, and after a short distance we stopped at Fridd Gate, whilst the guard operated the crossing gates. This operation also had to be performed at Llwyngwern and Pont Evans. Most of the intermediate halts on the line were very similar, comprising a simple slate-built waiting shelter and, in one or two cases, a siding.

The scenery now became very impressive as the valley closed in, and the road, railway and river were never very far apart. The climb continued and the train negotiated the sharp curves with which the line abounded as it twisted and turned alongside the road, passing Llwyngwern, Escairgeiliog and Pont Evans before reaching Maespoeth Junction at 1.50 p.m. There were still a few signals in position at various places along the line, and I remember a particularly lofty specimen at Pont Evans and a double-arm semaphore at Maespoeth Junction.

Water was taken at Maespoeth, where the only tank on the line was situated in the engine shed. A pipe protruded over the running line alongside the shed and all trains had to stop here to take water. Inside the shed was No.4, looking extremely dirty.

The tank being full again, we proceeded, leaving the Upper Corris Branch and the road to the left and climbing again until we reached Corris, at 2 p.m. The contents of the van were unloaded here. Corris Station was quite a grand affair, having an all-over roof and a low slate platform. There was a signal box at the south end and a loop line at one time ran behind the station past the carriage shed.

The driver and guard, who had temporarily vanished, returned and with a shrill whistle we started across a minor road, through cuttings, behind houses, and out across fields again, climbing steadily all the time. At Garnedd-wen the guard alighted once more to open the crossing gates, and then we proceeded through a wooded area to Aberllefenni, which was reached at 2.20 p.m.

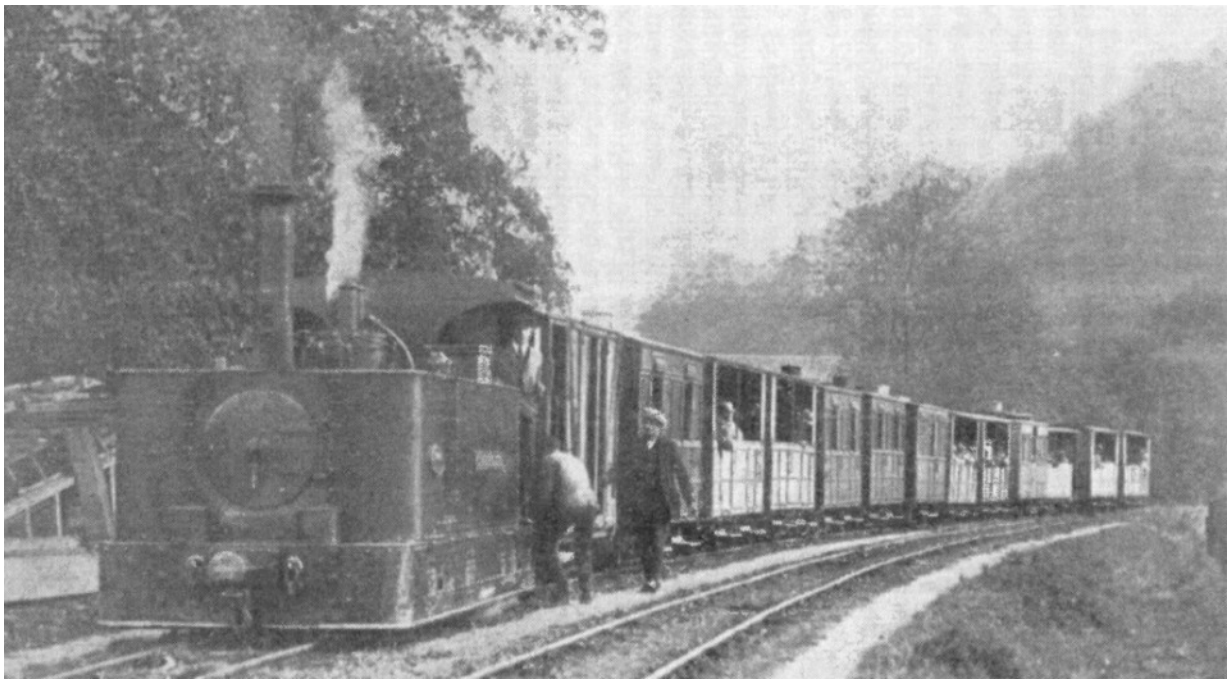
The two empty wagons were soon shunted, and twelve slate wagons coupled up; the van was marshalled at the end of the rake and at 2.45 p.m. we departed on the return journey. A short stop was made at Corris and more parcels loaded into the van, then we were off again. After a relatively slow run we reached Machynlleth at 4.15 p.m. The engine ran round the train and shunted the wagons over the weighbridge to the slate wharf alongside the standard-gauge siding. In next to no time, the loco was steaming back to Maespoeth, the van was locked and another day's work on the Corris was completed.

Finally, for now, we turn to Rimmer's 3rd contribution to *TNG*, this time with notes on the Glyn Valley Tramway, published in *TNG* Issue 24. Again the Editorial highlights problems with Davies' electronic stencil reproduction and, again, the reprints we now see in the NGRS Archive revert to the original J.I.C. Boyd blocks. Boyd used the one image that accompanied this article in his *NGR in Mid-Wales* book - in my First reprint of the 2nd Edition this is to be found as the 15th photo between pages 142 and 143. The photographer was H.C. Casserley and, according to Boyd's caption,

*Excursion train (too long for passenger station) about to leave Glyn goods yard, August 1926. The engine is working chimney first and the train contains examples of every type of passenger stock. (All six open coaches, the two "odd" saloons. The small open carriage and the brake van next to the engine, are included)*

This photograph appears to be the last of the 72 pictures Casserley took on the 28th August - this final image was (his only Glyn Valley shot) his negative reference 3582. On that particular visit to Wales, he photographed the WHR and FR three days later, on the 31st. Casserley's catalogue notes the locomotive in the photograph as as *Sir Theodore*, a detail not seen in Boyd's book but that was added to the caption in *TNG* 24.

**Journeys on the Narrow Gauge : No. 3 - Glyn Valley Tramway**
(2' 4½" gauge) A.E.Rimmer
From TNG Issue 24



The poster invited one to "Take a trip down the beautiful Ceiriog Valley on the toy train" and the G.W.R. ran special trips with through bookings to Glyn from the surrounding area. We were staying at Llangollen and had walked over the Berwyn Range to Glyn Ceiriog.

This was my first journey on, and indeed my first glimpse of, the narrow gauge. In due course the train arrived, with a long string of empty slate trucks in the rear. The locomotive, 0-4-2T No. 3 "Glyn", took some empty wagons up to the quarry at Pandy and was away for some time. Eventually she returned with

a string of loaded slate wagons for Chirk, and, after some shunting to get the wagons at the rear of the train, we left at about 5 p.m., nearly thirty minutes late. This train, the 4.30 p.m. from Glyn, was the regular daily 'slate run'.

The journey normally took 40 minutes, and despite the fact that all stock was four-wheeled, the riding was quite good, as the track was laid with heavy flat-bottom rail of 501b. to the yard.

The line descended gradually with varying grades to Pontfaen, crossing the River Ceiriog between Glyn and Dolywern and again just outside Dolywern Station. The booking office/brake van was used by passengers joining the train at intermediate stations. Although it was August, the train was only half full, and we were travelling in a compartment coach which was upholstered and quite comfortable. The open coaches were always popular, but on this particular day they were empty as it had started to rain before we left Glyn.

The last part of the journey involved a climb of 1 in 40 from Pontfaen towards Chirk, and the locomotive was involved in a cinder-throwing display as she mounted the grade, which eased slightly near the top. We finally ran into Chirk Station at about 5.45 p.m. We had planned to travel back to Llangollen by canal barge but as the train was late, we had missed the boat and had to return by main line train via Ruabon. The circular trip was very popular and a special train was often run by the GVT for parties of over ten persons.

Next time - Rimmer's Part 4 - Welsh Highland Railway.

**Continued from Page 12.**




within the environs of what had been the ballast quarry, where there was space to the west of the railway for passengers to wait safely. This location is some 55 yards north of this crossing and therefore probably some 60 yards north of the newly-installed sign.

I think it is clear from this second image, a close-up photograph of the sign, that here there is precious little room to allow safely the establishment of a waiting area - the halt was never physically anything other than an informal space, save for a small shed that was installed at the north end of the area.



This last image shows a northbound train, behind *Russell*, alongside the ballast quarry with the 'shed' visible to the north. The train is situated where, in the *WHH* 51 notes, we deduced Salem Halt officially to have been located. The lack of obstructions immediately beyond the train is clearly evident. (Photo - Arch 5413) In this area, the path, having crossed the track at Ch. 8660, runs left to right beyond the railway towards Bryn-afon. No such path is seen in the large image above, which therefore lies south of Ch. 8660.

# Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis




*WHH* Issues 50 and 51 contain lengthy discussions as to the actual location of "Salem" Halt. The final paragraph from the notes in *WHH* 51 read:

> We can sensibly assume, therefore, that the railway intended the halt to be located at, or near, the site of the old ballast quarry. However, the Gates photograph clearly indicates that "Salem Halt" was perhaps more a conceptual than an actual location and that, at least on occasions, trains stopped where it best suited them and their passengers. There seems little doubt that a stop outside Bryn Afon, whilst perhaps less desirable to the occupants, would have been in many ways more practical to passengers boarding or alighting there. Of course, it is not inconceivable that the occupants of Bryn Afon may have been the main users of the service!!

Now that the replica running board has been installed at "Salem" it is perhaps of interest to consider its chosen location in the context of the earlier analyses.

The photograph above shows a short permanent way train under the control of WHR's Baguley Drewery 0-6-0DM No 9, originally built for the South Johnstone sugar mill in Queensland, Australia. We thank Dafydd Thomas and colleagues for both of the main images accompanying these notes.

The train is posed adjacent to an 'obvious' footpath crossing and the relationship of the running board to that crossing seems fairly clear.

There are two such crossings in this area, the first, at Ch. 8490, just to the north of the house Bryn-afon. This crossing was the spot where, according to contemporary photographs, WHR trains actually, at least on occasions, stopped.

The other crossing stands further down the line towards Plas-y-nant, at Ch. 8660. The TWA Plans indicate the intention to reconstruct the access paths to this crossing as part of the rebuilding.

As we see no sign of any Bryn-afon buildings in the photo above, and as elements of the path's protection appear 'new', it seems safe to conclude that this is the latter crossing and therefore that the running board has been positioned closer to the original, if occasionally judged inconvenient, Salem Halt.

However, if I am correlating locations and detail correctly, this crossing lies to the south, the Plas-y-nant end, of the sheepfold discussed in the earlier *WHH* notes. Those notes concluded that the halt lay

**Continued on Page 11.**


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