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‘An Interesting Suggestion’…the life of Arthur Ernest Rimmer

When Arthur Ernest Rimmer died on the 17th November 1999 in a Hastings nursing home aged 80, he was a largely forgotten figure in the re-birth of the Welsh Highland Railway (***writes Nick Booker***). Yet he played an important part in the development of the idea of restoring the WHR and in using volunteers for running it. Owen Prosser (1922 - 2004), the founder of the Railway Development Association, and who was himself much involved in lobbying to save historic lines from abandonment, in 1987 credited Arthur Rimmer with the original idea of using organised groups of volunteers ‘…to run former loss making railways’.

In a letter in the January 1941 issue of *The Modern Tramway* (the journal of the Light Railway Transport League) headed ‘An Interesting Suggestion’, Arthur Rimmer wrote that the WHR had proved its value during the First World War in carrying timber and slate while a passenger service could be reintroduced to save petrol supplies. If the reinstatement of the Welsh Highland on commercial grounds was found not to be possible, he continued, would it be practicable for clubs and societies supplying free labour to tackle such a scheme? Prosser, in his 1987 article, maintained that in 1949 L T C Rolt had not originally envisaged using voluntary labour to run the Talyllyn Railway.

Born in Wallasey, Cheshire, in December 1918, Arthur was the son of Ernest Joseph Rimmer and his wife Agnes. A sibling, his sister Doreen, was born in 1921. Ernest Rimmer worked for Metal Box, the packaging firm. Home was Noctorum Avenue, Birkenhead where Arthur went to the local grammar school where he enjoyed cross-country running. Nothing is known of his leaving date or early working career until he joined the RAF but by the time of the Munich Crisis in September 1938, he would only have been approaching his 20th birthday.

Rimmer joined the Royal Air Force, to train as a pilot, just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Many years later he told his son Philip that he joined then so he had “some choice on where I served”. On the 2nd of September 1939, one day before war was declared Rimmer became an Acting Pilot Officer (PO) with a ‘…short service commission…on probation for six years on the active list’. He was confirmed as ‘full’ PO in July 1940 and gained rapid promotion to Flight Lieutenant in April 1942 and to Squadron Leader in November 1944.

After qualifying as a pilot, much of his time in the RAF was spent in Scotland flying coastal patrols. He told a story of playing golf at midnight - in the far north of Scotland it’s possible to play after midnight and, certainly, very late in the evening. In June, that brings a whole new meaning to the term ‘the longest day’.

His precise RAF unit history is still to be determined, but the combination of ‘coastal patrols’ and ‘the far north of Scotland’ suggest, as an option, RAF Coastal Command operations out of Sullom Voe, Shetland. If correct, this would suggest Arthur was flying, or flying in, Short Sunderland flying boats.

However, in 1942, it seems, he was taking aerial photographs of north-west Wales, including aerial views of Dinas Junction. This would hardly have involved flights all the way from Shetland. However, we do have one clue in the form of an envelope containing a negative of one of these images that had been posted to Bob Honychurch. On the envelope Bob appears to have written “*Aerial photo of WHR at Llanwnda taken about 1943 showing Dinas Jcn Station. From Blackburn Botha by AE Rimmer.*”

The Blackburn Botha was a singularly unsuccessful design and, after a short period of front line operation, all were relegated to training and support roles. Of



Blackburn Botha W5065 (Courtesy BAe Systems)

This was one of the aircraft allocated to RAF Squires Gate and the General Reconnaissance School

these, by far the largest 'fleet' was operated by the No. 3 School of General Reconnaissance, based at RAF Squires Gate, just to the south of Blackpool. Organisationally, this School was part of RAF Coastal Command, specifically No. 17 (Training) Group.

If Honychurch's note is correct, and we have little doubt that he had the information direct from Arthur Rimmer himself, it seems almost certain that the aerial photos were taken on a reconnaissance training flight from Blackpool. However, what role did Arthur play on that flight? The Botha was designed around a crew of four - was Arthur training or being trained? When we find out we will update these notes. The aerial photos themselves are discussed in the *Journeys on the Narrow Gauge* article elsewhere in this Journal.

Later in the war, he was posted to Sierra Leone in West Africa where Royal Navy ships and RAF aircraft based at Freetown defeated German submarines attacking convoys off the coast of West Africa. Here he became interested in the country's 2 ft 6 in (762 mm) narrow gauge railway system that eventually closed in 1975.

Apropos his personal career, for now we will simply note that one of the squadrons relocated to West Africa was No. 204, which squadron operated Short Sunderland flying boats. They left their base at Sullom Voe in April 1941, were based at Reykjavik until July 1941 when they travelled via Gibraltar to Gambia and then Sierra Leone, arriving in West Africa in August 1941, where they stayed until June 1945. They were based in Gambia (Bathurst) until January 1944 and then Sierra Leone until June 1945.

On his return to the UK in about 1946, Arthur was offered a 5 year commission having originally been recruited as a 'hostilities only' officer. However, by this time he had met his future wife, Betty Spriddle, the daughter of a Royal Navy officer and who lived at Waterlooville near Havant. He therefore declined the offer from the RAF and instead joined a wines & spirits company as a sales representative and started what turned out to be a long career of being 'on the road'. He and Betty were married in September 1948 and settled in Manchester. They went on to have a daughter in 1952. Caroline, who studied languages at Bangor University and then worked for German Railways in London for many years, is now retired. Her brother, Philip, was born in 1955 and he has recently retired from a career with Royal Mail where he was involved with deliveries and Health and Safety.

In the 1950s, Arthur joined the sales team at Houseman & Thompson Ltd, a water treatment company that later became part of Paterson Engineering Company and Paterson Candy International. In his role with Houseman's and their successors, Arthur visited sewage works, water treatment works and many other businesses using water treatment, mainly in London and the South of England. No overnight stays were needed which made it ideal for Philip to accompany him during school holidays to many interesting sites. One was the chalk quarry pits at Swanscombe, now partly occupied by the Bluewater shopping centre. 'There were trips down the steeply graded line with the empties and then after loading a thrash up the gradient where you had to hold on tight on the rough trackwork'. Some of the

fleet of 0-4-0 locos that worked there are now preserved. There were also visits to steam railways in the early days of preservation, including the Bluebell Line in West Sussex.

Arthur remained in the water treatment business for the rest of his career until he retired and was 'on the road' for most of that time apart from the last few months spent in the office. He seems to have had a life long interest in railways, particularly of the narrow gauge variety. In the 1950s and 60s he wrote a number of articles for *The Narrow Gauge*, the NGRS magazine, and other publications, covering railways he had visited since the late 1930s. At various other times, he visited and photographed several narrow gauge railways including the Snailbeach District Railways, the Corris Railway and the Welshpool and Llanfair as well as standard gauge lines such as the Shropshire and Montgomeryshire.

Arthur's first visit to the WHR was in 1937 by which time any regular activity on the line had ceased but in August 1941, on leave from the RAF, he travelled on one of the demolition trains. As has been noted above, he was also able to take some aerial photographs of the line from an RAF aircraft. Whether he was the pilot or a passenger is not (yet) known!

Following the birth of Carole and Philip, family life provided the opportunity for further railway excursions with holidays spent at Greatstone, near New Romney, when the old British Railways branch was still open, as well as rides on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch miniature railway. Later there were holidays at Towyn and Portmadoc coincident with the early days of Gelert's Farm and the '64 company. Arthur took Philip to the Isle of Man Railway shortly after its reopening in 1967 and before the big truncation. There were other railway trips including one of the last steam services to Bournemouth, headed by one of Bulleid's Pacific locomotives.

In the early 1950s, Arthur did some volunteering on the Talyllyn as a guard. In the early 1960s, he took on a significant role in the Welsh Highland Railway Society and pre '64 Company' activities, managing book and post card sales including the reprints and sale of the Frith postcards and others. Here he became exasperated with Bob Honychurch, the secretary of the Society, over the latter's habit of not doing things he was supposed to do or things he had done without consulting others!

By this time, the family were living at Petts Wood, a town in south-east London, just north of Orpington. He was very friendly with Laurence Brydon, a BR Civil Engineer, who lived at Haywards Heath and who was also involved with the WHR Society. Brydon inspected a lot of the bridges on the WHR in these early years of the reopening history and told a story of taking a taxi from Caernarvon to visit the Glan yr afon bridge. Whether he took it all the way or just to within walking distance is not known. Possibly, it was charged to Brydon's BR expense account.

According to Philip, Arthur was very good at persuading people to give him railwayana, including such things as a Portmadoc/Dinas carriage board, a WHR Track Gauge and an Edmondson ticket machine from the Southern Region. Arthur's involvement with the WHR Society and later the '64 Company gradually faded away, although he continued to take a close interest in the twists and turns of the moves towards the reopening of the line.

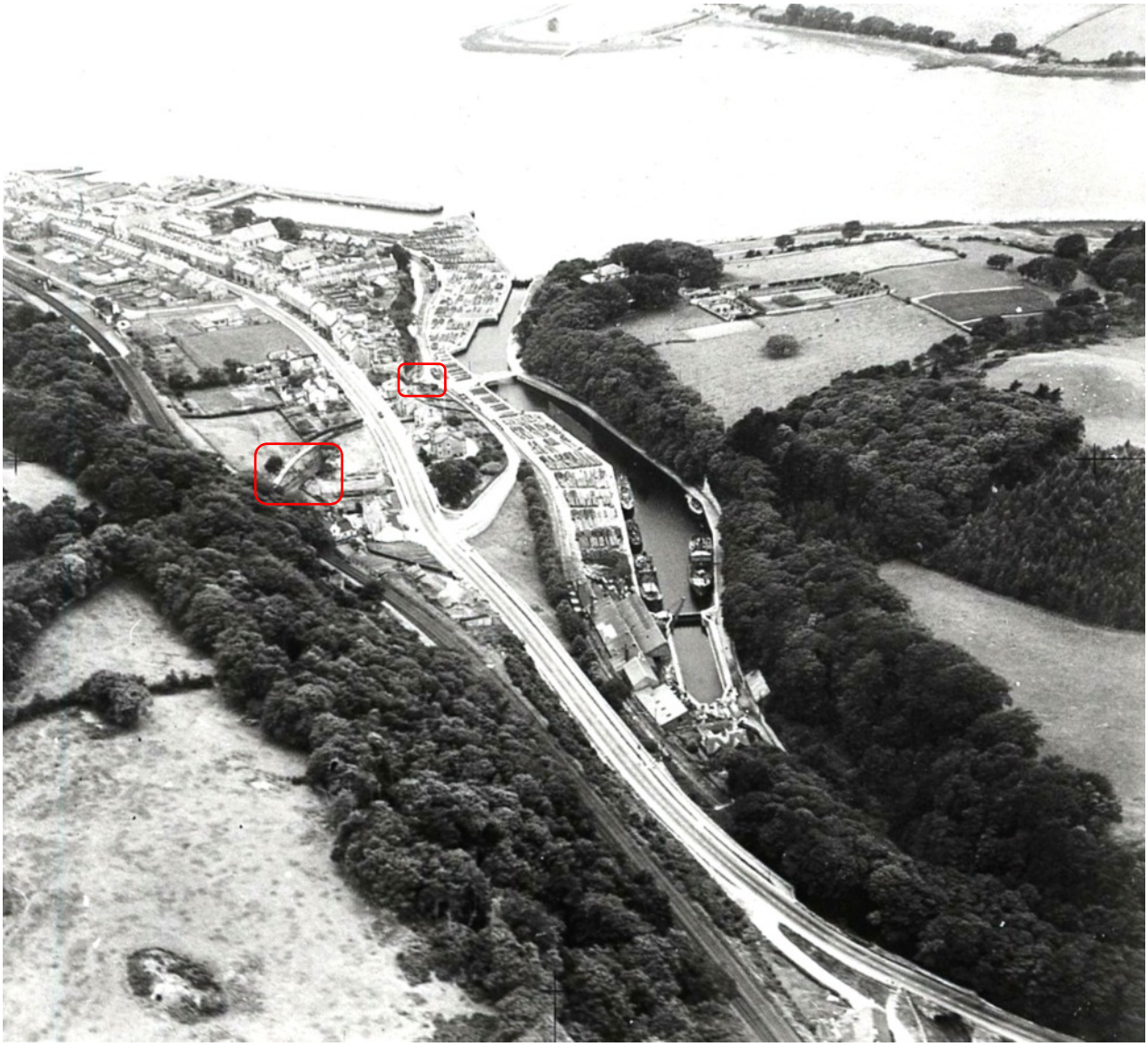
Betty died in 1994 and Arthur moved to Tonbridge to live with his daughter Caroline. Sadly, by this time he was in the early stages of dementia. Later he moved into a care home at Hastings where he died on November 17th 1999.

His last visit to North Wales both to see the reopened railway and the Heritage Railway at Gelert's Farm was, it is believed, in 1995/96.

We hope this brief biography of Arthur Rimmer (A. E. Rimmer on so many photo credits), including the republication of his articles on the WHR and other narrow gauge railways, provides a recognition of his pioneer thinking on the reopening and running of volunteer led railway operations.

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Philip Rimmer and:
Brian Critchley
Graham Farr
Peter Liddell
The late John Keylock



At the bottom of the incline, having passed over the Bangor to Caernarvon railway, the tracks ran for a further short distance in the open air (larger rectangle marked on the photo) then through a tunnel before emerging into the dock area (smaller rectangle). The incline's winding house was just off the left hand edge of the image, above where the thick hedge meets a field wall - Arthur Rimmer - Arch 5355

To wind up this assessment of Arthur's life and interests, I thought I would link what has gone before, and what follows, to on-going work involving David Allan's negative collection. I hope to do this using one of Arthur's aerial photographs, this image showing a location with no obvious links to the Welsh Highland but at the same time not entirely irrelevant to our general interests.

The photo is, of course, of Y Felinheli, or Port Dinorwic, the sea terminus of the line that carried slate from the Dinorwic Quarries at Llanberis. 'Y Felin' indicates 'The Mill' but there appears to be some differences of opinion as to the source of 'heli'. Either this is an archaic reference to salt water, or perhaps derives from the Afon Heulyn that runs through the village, it has been suggested.

Narrow gauge lines originally ran all the way from the quarry, but to improve the flow rate, the line from Llyn Padarn to the Penscoins area was increased to 4ft gauge and narrow gauge slate wagons were 'piggy-backed' on their larger cousins over the 'new' Padarn Railway. From a point near Gareg-y-gwalch, a narrow gauge incline led down to the harbour complex some 70 metres (230 feet) below.

As can be seen in the photograph, after the incline had passed over the Bangor to Caernarvon railway it then tunnelled under the road to gain access to the harbour.

Close examination of the photo will show numbers of narrow gauge wagons dotted around the layout, which stretched from the nearest basin to the docks opening directly into the Menai Straights seen in the distance.

As with Port Penrhyn, the harbour system here was shared by narrow and standard gauge tracks, the latter leading into the port area from the north east. The standard gauge "Port Siding" passed under the Bangor Road via the bridge visible at the bottom right-hand corner of the photograph above.

Hugh Roberts - NWNGR and WHR Driver

Bob Honychurch, via Dick Lystor.

Mr. Hugh Roberts, who was born in 1891, spent most of his working life on the NWNGR and WHR as fireman, driver and stationmaster.

After his retirement he very kindly gave an interview on Friday August 16th 1963 to a member of the WHR Society. On the recent acquisition of Bob Honychurch's we found the notes from that interview and we presume that the "member of the WHR Society" was Bob himself.

Please note that what follows is a transcription of this interview made at the time and is therefore as recalled by Hugh and as written in 1963. Hugh was 72 years of age at the time.

Personal Reminiscences

Hugh Roberts had spent his early years as a fireman on the N.W.N.G.R., to driver William Hugh Williams, his friend E. Davies who was the son of the Llanwnda police constable was also a fireman. This was during 1912 and for three years he continued in the job, but in 1915 he decided to join the Army as so many other young men were doing at that time, and on demobilisation he promptly joined the Navy for a three year term of service. On leaving the Navy at the age of 32 he rejoined the Welsh Highland Railway, just completed, and was promoted to driver in 1923. He had the honour of taking the first train to Beddgelert on the opening of the W.H.R. which was a Saturday evening, although officially the line was open on Friday, 1st June, 1923. Train services had been run prior to the official opening from Dinas Junction to South Snowdon on 31st July, 1922, as this section was complete and had been used by the N.W.N.G.R. up until 1916 until closed by war conditions, but it was not until 4th June, 1923, that Lt. Col. A. H. L. Mount (ex 1st World War Light Ry originator) now of the Ministry of Transport [1] recommended that the section Waen Fawr to South Snowdon could be used for passenger traffic. It was used prior to this date according to the December timetable which showed four trains a day, after [2] reducing to three trains a day until February 1923, thereafter having six trains a day in July, 1923, the first full summer season of the new company. [3]

Hugh Roberts drove all the W.H.R. (and ex N.W.G.R.) locos during his service on the railway and at times worked up to 16 hours a day, obviously trade unions were not very active at that time, although the rates of pay were considered good, for the period when there was still unemployment about and the numbers "signing on" at the local labour exchanges showed a marked increase once the railway had been completed in its entirety so it was considered good that one had a steady job to go to every day. The different W.H.R. locos were considered "good" and "bad" and Hugh's preference was "Moel Tryfan" then "Russell" in that order, "Russell" being the most powerful loco, but "590" came a close second with "Moel Tryfan" third and this is bourne out by the tractive effort figures. "Russell" had a tendency to bite on sharp curves but this was not experienced with the Baldwin as this loco had flangeless centre drivers which overcame the trouble, having found to be necessary on the sharp curves of the First World War army light railway network. "Gowrie" was considered by Hugh to be the downfall of the N.W.N.G.R. as it often suffered fractured steam pipes and these cost the company £80 each time to repair, in today's [4] values probably about £1600 or more, which must have rapidly eaten into the meagre profits which is again confirmed by the 1910 profit and loss account showing expenditure of £2872 and profits of £2862!

When "Gowrie" came to be so Hugh heaved a sigh of relief, but when the manager wanted to re-purchase it, Hugh successfully persuaded him not to do so. He also stated that "Russell" was originally built for India but was purchased by the N.W.N.G.R., for £1400 while "Snowdon Ranger" and "Moel Tryfan" together only cost the company £1800. When new "Russell" was delivered to Dinas by L.M.S.R. [5] and came into the end-on siding and was off loaded by plates being placed over the buffer stop and pulled direct on to the narrow gauge line by one of the other locos in steam. When "590" was delivered on a well wagon it was dealt with in the same way and when in 1934 flange wear became uneven 'Russell" was turned round by jacks on greased steel plates in front of Dinas warehouse. [6]

Derailments were not frequent but in 1915 "Russell" was derailed near Glanrafon siding with John Williams driving and William Hugh Williams firing, the derailment being caused by the points being wedged half open.

The "bad" steamers were both "Gowrie" and "Beddgelert". It was generally supposed that Gowrie C. Aitchison had a say in the design of "Gowrie" at the time when Mr. North was Locomotive Foreman and who eventually became Loco Superintendent on the Snowdon Mountain Railway. Around 1926 the Westinghouse brake was removed from all stock once through running to Blaenau Festiniog became a feature, although not shown in timetables until 1928. [7]

Repairs of a minor nature were usually carried out at Dinas Junction engine shed, but anything major outside the capabilities of the equipment and staff meant the loco's going into Boston Lodge works where "Russell" had a new smokebox fitted which Hugh Roberts considered to be a first class job of work. Coal consumption of "Russell" was 8 cwts for a return journey from Dinas to Portmadoc and back. Water supplies at Dinas were improved greatly after the McAlpine reconstruction and water was also obtained from Lake Quellyn by means of a ram pump, while other supplies were at a water tank in Beddgelert Station and a further supply at Nantmor cutting just north of the station.

All W.H.R. locos were normally based at Dinas although when an early train was required from Beddgelert to Portmadoc it was left overnight over the ash pit in Beddgelert Station.

During the times when any W.H.R. loco was being overhauled at Boston Lodge, Festiniog locos worked right through to Dinas Junction and "Prince" was based at Dinas for a period of 3 months and Hugh considered it a good

engine to drive.

"590"' had a derailment at Pitts Head while Hugh Roberts was driving and a message was sent from South Snowdon to Beddgelert for the breakdown gang to come, but with the assistance from others (passengers?) Hugh had the loco re-railed before the gang arrived. No doubt a contributory factor being the built in jacks specified by the Army for just such occasions. [8] "Russell" being rather high even before being cut down necessitated the keystone bricks in the railway bridge carrying the road at Dinas being chipped to allow it through without damage.

The now famous incident at Moelwyn tunnel occurred when Hugh Roberts was driving "Moel Tryfan" at approximately 2 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon on a down train from Blaenau Festiniog and which was piloted by a Festiniog loco [9], and which had just stoked up before the tunnel. "Moel Tryfan" was followed by the brake van [10] and apparently the couplings were not properly engaged, with the result that when the brakes were applied the connection severed and the loco and coaches parted company by a few yards. Due to the reduced loading gauge of the F.R. tunnel Hugh Roberts was unable to leave his loco in the normal way so he had to force an exit via the front window of "Moel Tryfan" and then crawl around the loco to recouple to the coaches. Apparently the passengers were far from pleased by the smoke in the tunnel and Hugh was very black when the job was completed. At the Board of Trade enquiry held about a month later it was considered that Hugh Roberts action was commendable and he was awarded £10 in recognition, and continued driving to Blaenau each season over a four year period.

Many sheep were killed on the railway which the company had to pay for and they were always "the best sheep in the field". The most prevalent period for sheep getting on the line was during the lambing time.

The fastest trip made by Hugh was 25 minutes from South Snowdon to Dinas which was exactly half the booked time of 50 minutes on the 1928 timetable. The pay in those days was low, a fireman only receiving 16/- a week with a driver very little more while a clerk only earned 9/- a week.

The longest train consisted of eight coaches which was usually every Thursday when booked by the Llandudno Polytechnic party at a cost of 15/- a trip. There was a total of 14 F.R. and N.W.N.G.R. coaches working on the W.H.R., eight of these belonging to the latter two companies. About 1935 all the W.H.R. coaches were painted by a contractor Gregory of Caernarvon and Hugh believed a photo showing this being done was published in the newspaper "Cymro".

The refreshment room at Dinas was staffed by 2 girls and in N.W.N.G.R. days a refreshment room existed at South Snowdon station. At one period a bookstall existed at Beddgelert Station and the lady in Welsh costume on page 28 of the blue book [11] was the person running it.

A normal passenger train could as stated be run with up to eight coaches but it was more normal for four coaches to be used. The "Gladstone" car, the 1891 Metropolitan coach No. 8 (later No. 29) was built specially for Mr Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister to travel on the railway on his visit to the North Wales area where he inspected conditions prevailing at that time.

The Kerr Stuart diesel loco took eight wagons or one coach to Bryngwyn while it was on its trial which lasted approximately 12 months, and Hugh acted as pilotman on Sundays when trials were conducted, but it was found to be too slow on the Welsh Highland. It took half an hour longer on the trip Dinas-Rhyd-ddu. An apprentice from the works was months assisting with the running of the diesel, L.T.C. Rolt. After trials on the Welsh Highland, the Kerr Stuart went to Portmadoc for further trials.

During Col. Stephens time on the W.H.R. a mobile crane was purchased for the railway but was never used and Hugh considered similar useless things were purchased using money the company could ill afford.

The most interesting part of the railway route he considered to be the section between Waen Fawr and Beddgelert. When the F.R. and W.H.R. were combined Mr Williams of Portmadoc was in charge of the W.H.R. The Loco Superintendent for 1927-28 was Mr. Nevitt of Llandudno Junction (ex L.M.S.R.). Permanent way staff were given the sections Dinas to Bryngwyn, Tryfan to South Snowdon, South Snowdon to Nantmor, Nantmor to Portmadoc. The drainage of the long tunnel in the Aberglaslyn Pass was good although seepage occurred, this was overcome by sanding the track on trains to Portmadoc to aid the return journey to Beddgelert which was climbing at 1 in 40 through the tunnels.,

Mixed trains were very rare, iron ore was carried from Bettws Garmon during the First World War. Large quantities of coal and slate were carried in addition to groceries etc for local shopkeepers. Royal Mail was not carried. W.H.R. trains were timed to connect with L.M.S. trains at Dinas, while at Portmadoc trains would sometimes have to wait up to half an hour to get across the Cambrian (G.W.R.) line at the diamond crossing.

The cost of cutting "Russell" down at Boston Lodge was £80 although in the end it never ran through to Blaenau Festiniog.

At the auction in 1942 the coaches were sold for £20 each and Hugh Roberts stated that if the Preservation Society had been in existence when the railway closed it could have been purchased lock stock and barrel for £5000 as a going concern.

Comments

[1] Strictly this should have said 'later' Ministry of Transport - Mount died in 1955.

[2] This 'after' should have read 'thereafter' as later in the paragraph.

[3] This paragraph is somewhat jumbled, however these were Hugh's memories as recorded.

[4] This was 1963, remember.

[5] This would, when the loco was delivered, have been the L.N.W.R.

[6] Was *Russell* ever turned? A handwritten note on the typescript suggests this should have been removed?

[7] As noted at [3], this account records memories, not necessarily facts.

[8] WDLR Baldwin specifications make no mention of built-in jacks.

[9] *Palmerston*

[10] The two W.H.R. Ashbury *Corridors* were coupled between the locomotive and the "van" - Pickering Brake/Composite number 9. The van, which had been shunted to the top end of the train at Blaenau separated, applying the brakes leaving a gap of just less than 20 feet between the two rear carriages.

[11] *The Welsh Highland Railway*, Charles E. Lee, 1962. However, Miriam Roberts, seen in this photo, only worked at Beddgelert between 1934 and 1936, by which time the Bookstall was long gone.

Journeys on the Narrow Gauge

We continue our review of Arthur Rimmer's series of narrow-gauge articles submitted to the Narrow Gauge Railway Society's Journal, *The Narrow Gauge* (TNG), in the late 1950's and early 1960's. This time, we look specifically at his short note on the Welsh Highland Railway.

JOURNEYS ON THE NARROW GAUGE NO. 4 : The Welsh Highland Railway

A.E.Rimmer

From TNG Issue 25

I had intended 'doing' the Welsh Highland in 1937 but when I arrived at Dinas Junction, the northern terminus of the line, I found that the last train had run just over a month earlier. The rails were still a bluish-yellow, as little rain had fallen.

It was exactly four years later, in August 1941, that I was able to travel over the line on Cohen's demolition train. The train consisted of a petrol tractor, a bogie flat wagon, and two four-wheeled wagons. We left Dinas at about 11 a.m. and proceeded slowly through a maze of overhanging bushes to Tryfan Junction.

After a brief examination of the station buildings we continued to Waenfawr. The track was in good conditions but overgrown, though by no means impassable. We had to dig out all level crossings and several Home Guard barricades had to be demolished en-route to enable us to proceed. We eventually reached Quellyn Lake Station and then climbed up to South Snowdon. The scenery so far had been rather flat but now opened up to provide views of Snowdon and the surrounding mountains.



"A quantity of tools were left…" - A.E. Rimmer - 1941 - WHR 21a - Arch 0246

A quantity of tools etc. were left at South Snowdon Station and we then proceeded to Pitts Head where the summit of the line was crossed and the valley opened out before us. The line followed the side of the hills and completed several formidable and tortuous curves in the long descent of three miles at 1 in 40 to Beddgelert. After a short wait here for inspection, we carried on through a short tunnel under the grounds of the Royal Great [*sic*] Hotel and over the Glaslyn on the Brynyfelin bridge into the Aberglaslyn Pass. The scenery here was unsurpassed, with the river rushing along below and, on the other side, the sheer rock wall.



Cohen's 'recce' train runs from Bryn-y-felin towards the Aberglaslyn Tunnels - A.E. Rimmer - 1941 WHR 43a - Arch 0268

The line ran along this shelf climbing steadily through a series of short tunnels to the Aberglaslyn Tunnel of 300 yards, to emerge at Aberglaslyn Halt. The line now dropped, again at 1 in 40, through cuttings and embankments and round several sharp curves to reach the



Arthur Rimmer's photograph of the track lifting gang following the demolition train from Bryngwyn down to Tryfan Junction - February 1942 - WHR 41a - Arch 266



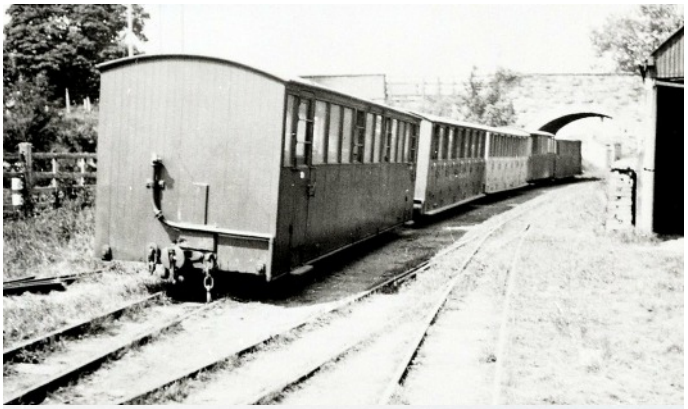
The demolition train exits the Bryngwyn Branch with the day's scrap - Rimmer - February 1942 WHR 42a - Arch 267

floor of the valley after crossing over the Aberglaslyn – Llanfrothen road. Two tributaries of the Glaslyn were crossed on girder bridges and we then crossed the Glaslyn itself at Pont Croesor on a combined road-rail bridge on which stood a water tank. Eventually, Portmadoc New (1933) station was reached, the journey having taken over six hours!

A few months later, I traversed the Bryngwyn branch on a similar train and the branch was then dismantled down to Tryfan Junction. The main line was cut at South Snowdon and worked as two halves, being dismantled towards Dinas and Portmadoc simultaneously. The crossing with the GWR, incidentally, had been taken out in late 1937.

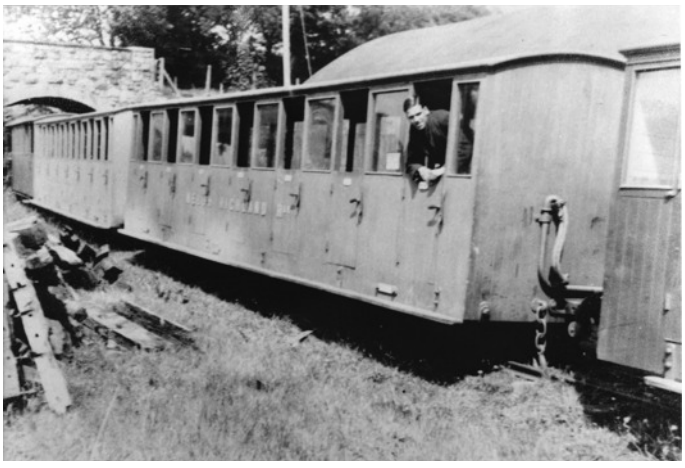
Arthur noted, and was witness to, further developments over the 1941-2 period which he did not mention in this original article, probably because he was primarily concerned with describing the railway. He visited the sites physically - e.g. see his notes re Bryngwyn demolition - and by air, combining his Royal Air Force responsibilities with his personal interests.

At ground level he photographed the carriages after they were removed from their shed and parked on the main running line. It is perhaps worthy of note that his visits





Two Rimmer photographs showing passenger stock shunted onto the main running line at Dinas - nos 24, 26, 27, 29 and 25:
Above - WHR 25a (Arch 250) Below - WHR 22a (Arch 247)



G.E. Hughes leans out of the first compartment in Ashbury semi-glazed 'Summer' no.26 - Rimmer - WHR 073
All three of these images from the Summer of 1942





Rimmer's two photographs that show the end of *590*
Above - WHR 24a (Arch 249) Below - WHR 44a (Arch 269)
June 1942





These two photographs, also from 1942, show no signs of any carriage stock as seen on the running line in the photos above.
Upper image - Arch 3677 Lower image - Arch 3678

aligned occasionally with another photographer active at that time, G.E. Hughes.

Perhaps the more poignant moments (in our opinion perhaps) was his presence when *590* was being cut up?

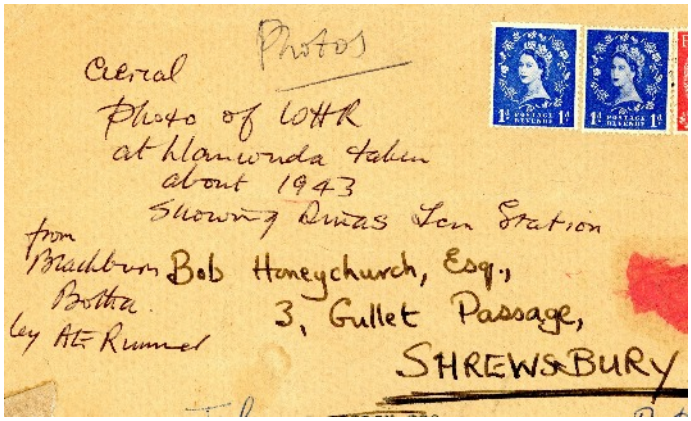
As a bit of a Baldwin flange nerd, I was pleased to note that, even after its long post-WW1 life, *590* still was fitted with flange-less centre drivers. Of course, whether these were original is quite another matter.



WHR 39a (Arch 264) - specifically dated in the Archive to June 2nd 1942

By comparison, this third aerial photograph does show carriages arranged close to the carriage shed, but by no means in the locations seen in Rimmer's ground-based images.

It is this photograph that Bob Honychurch specifically noted as having been taken from a "Blackburn Botha", prompting the speculation in Rimmer's biography that these photos were taken during training flights from RAF Squires Gate, near Blackpool, almost 70 miles away, 'as the crow flies'.

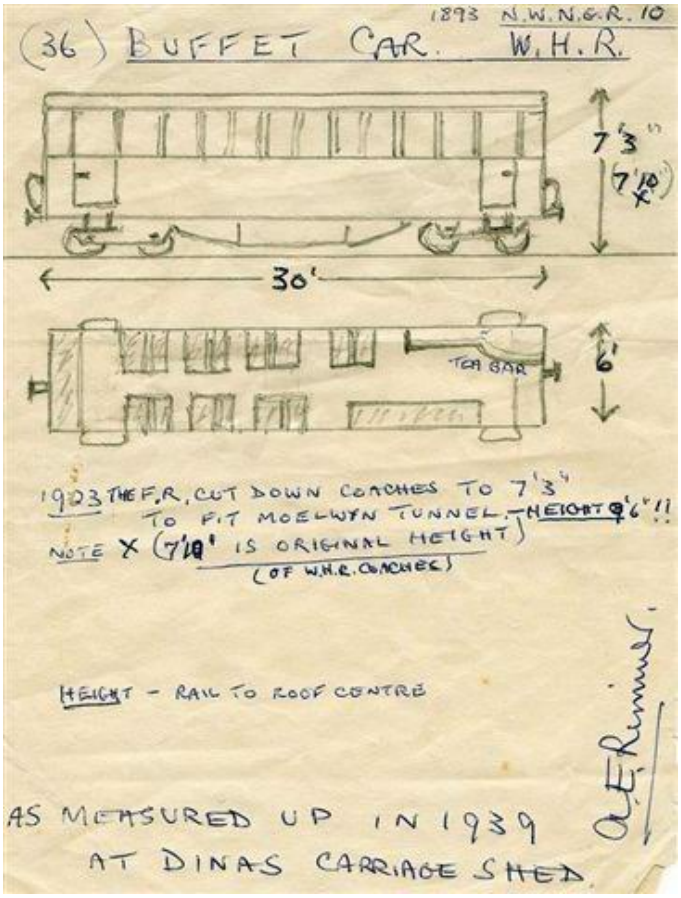


Part of the envelope on which we find Bob Honychurch's note re the provenance of the photograph that had been delivered therein.

If our Archive dates are accurate, then WHR 73, dated 11th June, was taken after WHR 39a, suggesting that we see above interim shunting that moved the carriages from the shed to their final position on the running line. WHR 39a is dated in the Archive to 2nd June, consistent with the presumed shunting sequence.

If we do manage to retrieve Arthur's flight logs, perhaps we will be able to offer a more precise dates for Arch 3677 and 3678 than simply '1942'.

However, despite photographic evidence of the carriage's presence in June, receipts indicate that Harry Parry of Arfon House, Waenfawr, paid £30 for Corridor No. 24 on the 20th May 1942. It is believed that the carriage did not leave Dinas until late August or early September 1942 and Arthur's photographs do not rule out this belief.



Reference to No. 24, which had in the 1920s been configured briefly as a Buffet Car, leads to another of Arthur's contributions. We have positive evidence that all traces of the Buffet provisions had been removed by the mid 1930's, notably perhaps through photographs taken by Wheeller, specifically his 14/23 in our archive a Arch 3286. However, as shown in the accompanying sketch, according to his note made from measurements in the shed in 1939, he saw a "tea bar" at what had been the first-class end of the carriage - the opposite end to the original Buffet installation.

I have no doubt that this is what he saw, but his decision to draw this as the "Buffet Car" did lead to some subsequent confusion. However, if there was in his opinion a "tea bar" installed in the carriage, what had triggered this specific definition for what appears to have been a shelf? If by 1939 the carriage had had a shelf fitted, why and by whom was this installation carried out?

Rimmer's notes indicate a first visit to the railway in 1937 and then no mention of a visit until 1941.

He joined the RAF at the beginning of September 1939 but there is photographic evidence to indicate he walked the line in that year, presumably before he 'joined up', however this visit was not mentioned in his TNG notes.

Next time we will continue with his notes on the Welshpool and Llanfair Railway.

What is "Ch."?

Richard Maund offers some notes to explain TWA 'chainages'.

Newer readers may be perplexed by the editorial convention used (for example, in *WHH* 103 page 12) for pin-pointing locations along the line of route, where locations are described as being at "Ch." followed by a four digit number.

"Ch." represents the **chainage** used in the plans prepared for the TWA (Transport & Works Act) application for rebuilding the line. These are measured from a zero point established at the northern abutment of the A4871 (it was A487 then) road over bridge at Dinas, as shown on the plan on the WHRS website.

The overall map summary 'Portfolio' is at:

https://tinyurl.com/4vvsbvvj

and the "Large TWA" maps can be accessed at:

https://tinyurl.com/2c2e53dh.

The sheet that contains the "zero point" can be found by going directly to:

https://tinyurl.com/y5keyn87.

The "zero point" was the start point of Phase 2 of the reconstruction and is the point from which the line is measured southwards, through phases 2 to 4 of the project (the late Ben Fisher's website, continued by Barrie Hughes at:

http://www.isengard.co.uk/index.htm

will be helpful in following these phases).

Note that Phase 1 of the construction, from Dinas to Caernarfon had already been completed so this really was the point where Phase 2 commenced.

On the TWA plans, accessed using the web addresses noted above, measurements are given in increments of 100 metres, denoted by green hashes, with each 500 and 1000 increment given its cumulative number.

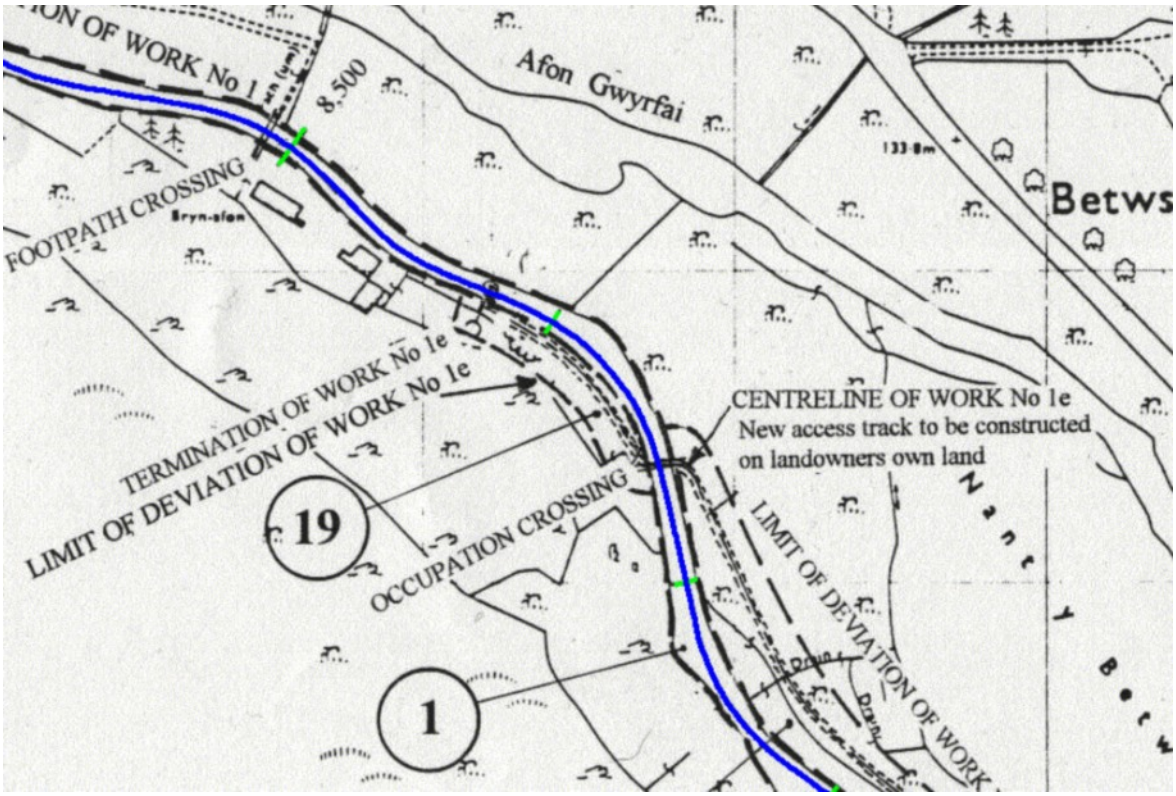
By using the WHRS website's portfolio of TWA plans, 'drilling down' to the detailed map sections, it is possible to relate a location on the map (and hence on the ground) to its closest chainage (Ch.) measurement.

For example, both Ch. 8490 and the crossing at Ch. 8660 (mentioned in *WHH* 103, p. 12) can be found by going directly to Large TWA sheet 6 using:

https://tinyurl.com/ye2xvcfb

The occupation crossing is near the large figure 19 (note that it is not a public right of way footpath) and the Bryn Afon crossing is just left of the 8,500 marker at the top right of the image (see below).

These chainages, used in effect as an 'index' to the TWA plans, should not be confused with the 'milepost mileages', actually in kilometres, used by the Ff&WHR for operational purposes which are measured from a notional zero some 20 km north of Caernarvon (it pays to think ahead….!).



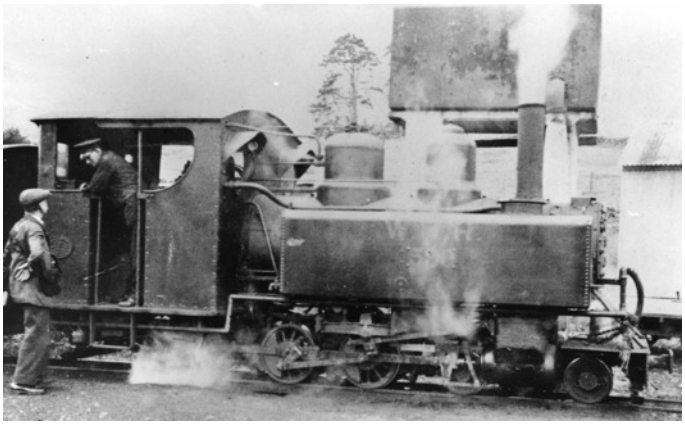
Continued from Page 12.

photographs. Willie Hugh seems focused on brewing tea - nothing could happen until after *590*'s departure.

Here we see, on the face of it, a similar situation as shown in WHR 093 but with clear detailed differences. Firstly, there is no train visible on the 'main' line and *Russell* is coupled to Ashbury 'Corridor' No. 24 - the ex-Buffet Car.

At first glance, the lack of a second train might suggest that this was an occasion on which there was no 'passing' train. We have noted earlier in this article that trains crossed either at South Snowdon (2 occasions) or here at Beddgelert (1 occasion) each day - perhaps this one of the '2 occasions'? However, this alternative does appear to be ruled out by *Russell's* presence. Had this been a South Snowdon crossing, *Russell* would have reversed there and headed back north.

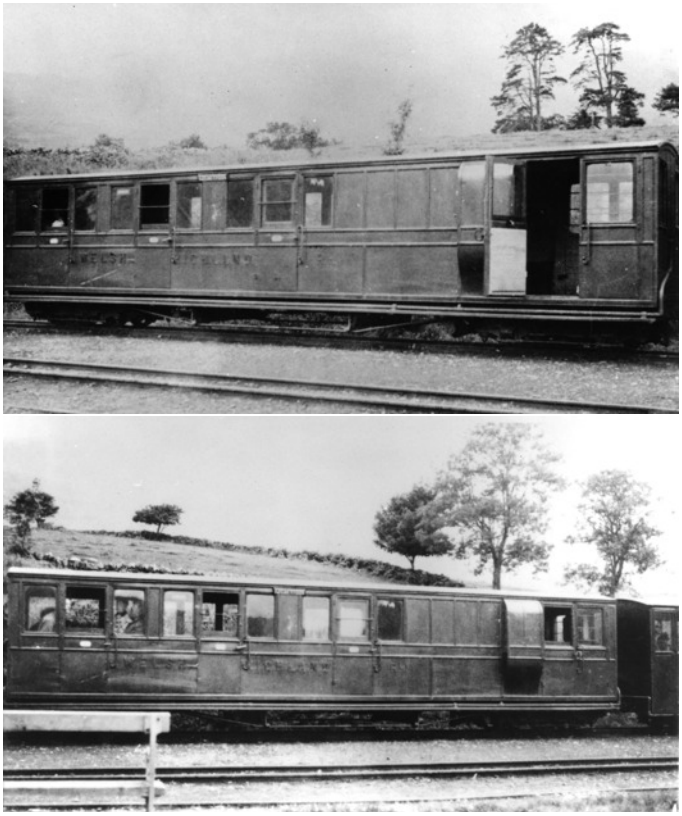
That the loco was at Beddgelert rather suggests that this was a crossing event therefore also suggesting that the Portmadoc train had departed before this photo was taken. If so, the loco either was, or was about to be, uncoupled from its train to embark on the run around and re-watering manoeuvre ahead of departure back to Dinas. Therefore, although broadly contemporary, this could not have ben the same day as the previous photo was taken.



WHR 95 (above)

In WHR 95 we see *590* stopped at the water tower, still at the uphill end of its train, suggesting, but not proving, that the time delays hinted at by WHR 91 and 92 had not, or were not, occurring here. It is, of course, possible given what we see here that this was not the occasion of a Beddgelert reversal but rather *590* with train were stopped here to take water before heading up to South Snowdon to reverse there. That *590* appears still to be coupled to its train would seem to support this latter suggestion.

Finally, in this batch of 7 images we have two photographs of Pickering Brake/Composite No. 9 (ex-NWNGR No. 5), again taken at Beddgelert. The carriage was standing on the main line, suggesting that it was part of the Portmadoc train. We can see from the photographs that there was no carriage or locomotive coupled at the downhill (Portmadoc)



WHR 096 (above) and WHR 097 (below)

end and one photograph shows there to have been one of the Ashbury *Corridors* coupled at the uphill end. Visible details indicate that this was No. 25 (ex-NWNGR No. 9). This carriage appears to have been a 'regular' on the Portmadoc to Beddgelert trains.

There is insufficient evidence to determine absolutely whether or not this train was reversing here.

The carriage appears to have seen better days. It was devoid of 'roof furniture' which would appear to confirm that this was 1936, at the start of which season stock was given various degrees of 'paint job' depending on their overall condition. This carriages appears to have been painted all over, including over the embossed 'WELSH HIGHLAND R^{LY}' lettering.

Whatever date these photos were taken, according to Rimmer's own account, they could not have been taken by him - he did not make his first visit until 1937 and never saw the WHR in operation. However, some of the notes attached to our archive entries suggest that his father may have been the photographer, at least for some of these. Thus far we have been unable to determine whether this true, or even likely.

Whether or not this family link is confirmed, that he collected such photographs, perhaps over years, stands testament to Arthur's enthusiasm for this, and other, railways.

Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis

In this issue, cognisant of material elsewhere herein, I will look at what might simply be described as "the Arthur Rimmer Collection". In particular I will assess a batch of seven images that appear in one of our 'official' collections, specifically WHR 091 to 097, all of which were taken at Beddgelert in, according to Archive records, 1936.

The Archive notes all of these images as being from "the Arthur Rimmer collection". One, WHR 093, definitely shows crossing trains and two others, WHR 091 and 092 imply crossing trains.

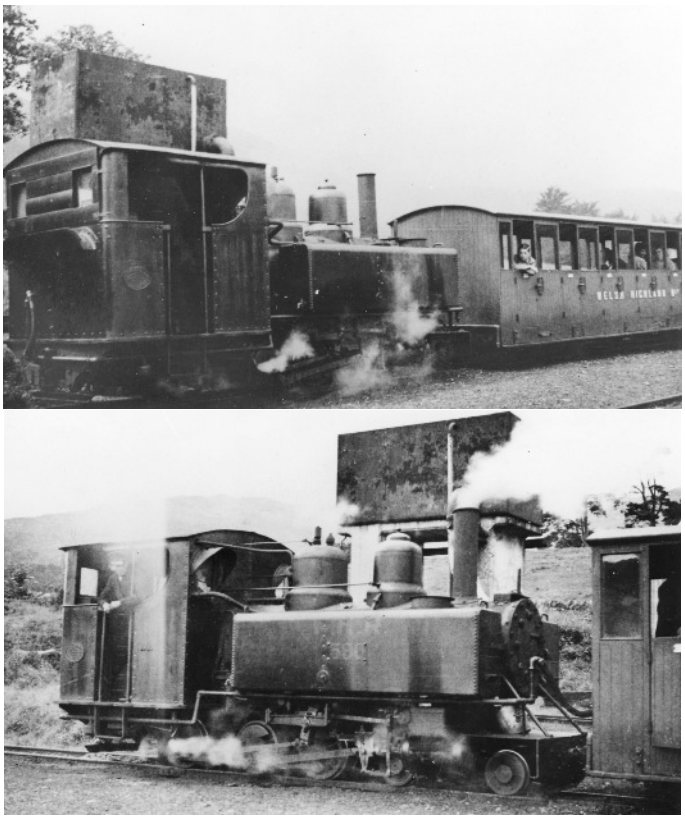
The 1936 Timetable (6th July to 12th September) shows just one crossing manoeuvre at Beddgelert each day (the other two were at South Snowdon). The sequence of events implied by the published timings were:

1) Train arrives from Portmadoc (at 14:35)
2) Train arrives from Dinas (at 14:45)
3) Train departs to Portmadoc (at 14:55)
4) Train departs to Dinas (at 15:15)

The timetable allows time for the locomotive from Portmadoc to take water and then to run around its train so as to be ready for departure back to Port. The Dinas train cannot commence this same process until after the Portmadoc train departs. The Port locomotive was allowed 10 minutes and the Dinas loco 20 minutes.

However, WHH 091 and 092 show a Portmadoc-bound train with the locomotive at the Portmadoc end but adjacent to the water tower, suggesting that, on arrival, it was judged to have insufficient time to take water before the arrival of the Dinas train?

In both images, Baldwin *590* is coupled to the Welsh Highland semi-glazed Ashbury 'Summer' no 26. We do not see the rest of the train, but with the loco in this position, a train of three carriages should not have impaired the Dinas train's access to the loop.



WHR 091 (above) and WHR 092 (below)



WHR 093 (above)

WHR 093 shows *Russell* recently arrived from Dinas, already uncoupled from its train - we see the south end of Pickering Brake Composite No. 8 and, through the gap, Ashbury No. 26 behind the Baldwin. That train was somewhat below the water tower relative to the previous



WHR 094 (above)

Continued on Page 11.

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