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The Chairman's Mid-Year Roundup

Nick Booker





The replica NWNGR-style name boards recently (13th May) erected at Hafod Garregog and Hafod Ruffydd - see notes on page 2. Installation of the other boards listed will follow and, by the time these notes are read, they should all be in situ. Photographs by Peter Roughley

On March 20th this year your Committee, or (now) your Board of Trustees, sighed with relief when we received an email that said (and I summarise):

> 'Dear Trustee
>
> You have applied to register the above organisation as a charity.
>
> We are satisfied that THE WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY HERITAGE GROUP is a charity and it has been entered onto the Register of Charities with the Registered Charity Number 1202400.
>
> …The decision to register was based on our assessment of the information supplied during the application process and the declarations given in the trustee declaration form and we are satisfied that THE WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY HERITAGE GROUP is established for charitable purposes only for the public benefit.
>
> It is the trustees' duty to operate their charity for the public benefit…'

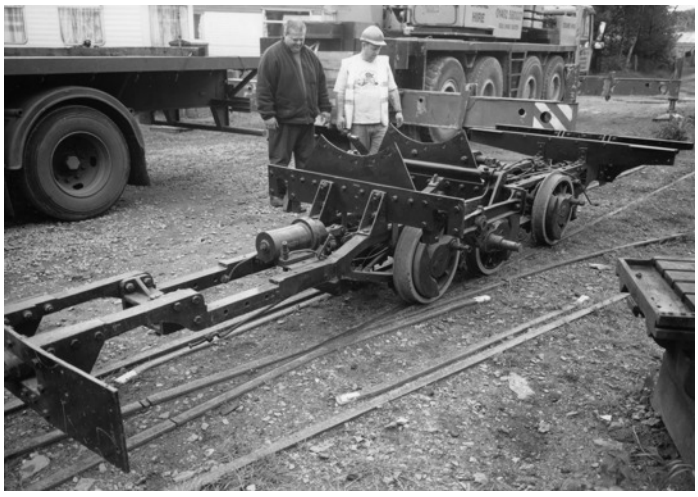
The link to our details on the Charity Commission website is: https://tinyurl.com/2kq4zkga

As I have written before, it's been a long drawn-out process for a variety of reasons and there is still some work to do in terms of setting up Gift Aid etc. However, we are now an incorporated body with the advantages, and indeed responsibilities, that go with that.

My other major WHRHG related pre-occupation this year has been as your representative on the working party that is organising the WHR 100 events over the long weekend 23-25 June celebrating the 100th anniversary of the opening, in 1923, of the complete WHR from Dinas, near Carnarvon to Portmadoc.

It has been (mostly!) a real pleasure to work with The Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, the Welsh Highland Railway Society (Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Eryri), and the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway on developing the various series of activities and events in both 2022 and 2023 for 'WHR 100'. One of our particular contributions has been managing the competition for the best piece of original research on the history of the WHR, NWNGR, its associated activities and personalities that has been sponsored by *Heritage Railway* and its sister Mortons Media Group





By way of both a reminder and a taster, these photographs show 794 arriving at Gelert's Farm in April 2004. The left hand image shows the 'kit of parts' on the lorry as it arrived (Arch 2750) and on the right we see the chassis after unloading (Arch 2770), both photographs taken by David Allan.

title *The Railway Magazine*. At the time of writing I can say that the winner of the £500 prize has been chosen after careful deliberations by the two eminent judges Dr Dafydd Gwyn and Gareth Haulfryn Williams who faced a 'challenge' in reaching their decision due to the high standard of the three entries that made it into the final. The name of the winner will be announced in June.

The events in June will include a number of 'firsts' including:

- *Russell's* first public Welsh Highland train from Harbour station since 1936

- The first public air braked train from Harbour station to Rhyd Ddu since 1920's

- The first time *Russell* has hauled public trains through Beddgelert forest since 1936

- A rare chance to see slate wagons cross Cae pawb and run up WHR line

- A demonstration Construction Train with the only known surviving Simplex locomotive used in the construction of the WHR

What is not a secret is that by the time you are reading this article the project to restore Baldwin locomotive WDLR *794* into the guise of long-scrapped former WHR engine *590* will have been completed. Following fourteen years of hard work and fund raising, it will have been 'launched' at a prestigious event of invited guests and donors on the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway at Gelert's Farm at the end of May.

Most of the WHR 100 events, while memorable, will be ephemeral, although captured in pictures and sound, there will be a physical legacy. With the agreement of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, the WHRHG and the WHRS are jointly funding the installation of replica NWNGR-style name boards at closed historic halts along the route of the WHR. If offers of donations are received, they will be gladly accepted!

The boards will be positioned as close to their historical position, where this is known, as possible and in any event situated to maximise their visibility from passing trains while not impeding the loading gauge or other accesses or sight lines. They will be situated as far as is practically possible to ensure passing walkers, and indeed passengers on the trains, realise that they do not represent official halts or stations! The boards may eventually include 'Site of...' or possibly 'Closed' to reinforce this point.

The name boards are proposed for the following locations:

Bettws Garmon
Croesor Junction
Glan-yr-Afon
Hafod Garregog
Hafod Ruffydd
Pitt's Head
Salem
Ynysfor (for Llanfrothen)

The earlier work and research on WHR/NWNGR font styles by trustee and secretary Cedric Lodge has played a key part in the successful development of this project.

At the time of writing, we do not yet have a date for the Group's Annual General Meeting but given that 2023 is the Centenary Year it will most likely be in North Wales and we are considering Waunfawr station as the location: good rail access and close to a pub! I look forward to seeing some of you there and/or in June at the WHR 100 celebrations.

1923 (from the photo Archives)

The Welsh Highland Railway reinstated services along the original North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways route from Dinas Junction to Rhyd-ddu in 1922, with services formally commencing on July 31st. Extension work, partly involving uncompleted Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway works, was in hand to complete the route to Portmadoc, making junction with the Croesor Tramway for the final stages of the route. The work was completed, inspected and, where necessary, rectified, ahead of formal opening from June 1st, 1923.

The early years of WHR operation saw demonstrably the Railway's busiest period of operation, but even that fell short of expectations. Despite the levels of activity, photographs from this period are comparatively rare, due in no small part to the photographic technologies available at the time. The following vignettes, comprising photographs taken during the early months of operations, hopefully will give a flavour of the scenes that were visited (and enjoyed?) 100 years ago.

PWL

1





In 1923, the Topical Press Agency photographed a train of Festiniog stock on a journey from Portmadoc to Dinas - the stock, under the control of *Palmerston*, is seen here at Tryfan Junction heading 'north' (Topical 2475 - Arch 0164).

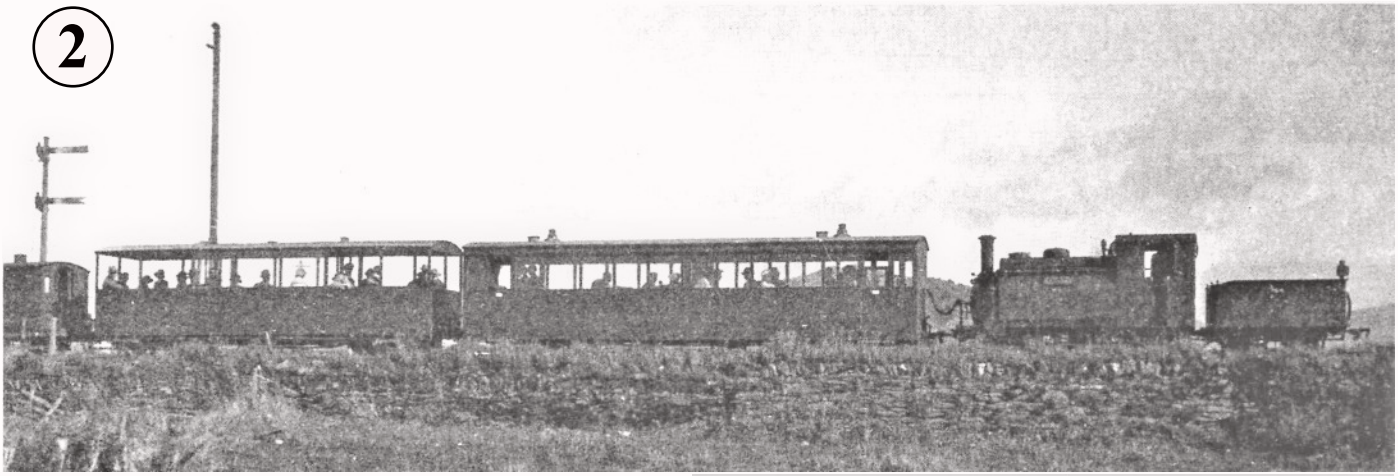
At about the same time, Topical photographed two trains passing each other at Snowdon station - although the station had been re-named as South Snowdon by the Welsh Highland, it clearly took time until the name board was finally changed - Rhyd-ddu had been renamed Snowdon at the beginning of 1893. (Topical 2477 - Arch 0285).

Note that the Tryfan Junction photo shows a train comprising, from the loco, a Gloucester Bowsider, a Brown Marshall Bowsider and a Curly-roofed brake van.

The van was FR no. 3 which, by 1923, was the only such van surviving in its original form. The only visible section of the northbound train at Snowdon comprises Van 3 and one of the Brown Marshall Bowsiders, leading to the obvious conclusion that this train was headed by *Palmerston*.

The southbound train at Snowdon comprised Ashbury Corridor no. 10 (later renumbered by the WHR as no. 23) and the Gladstone Car, hauled by *Prince*. That these two items of WHR stock were coupled at this time to *Prince* indicates they had to be dual-braked, hence their 'confident' identification This train's brake vehicle appears to have been one of the 4-wheel converted Quarrymen's Type 3 coaches. Note the large lamp fitted to *Prince's* tender and the chopper coupling.

2

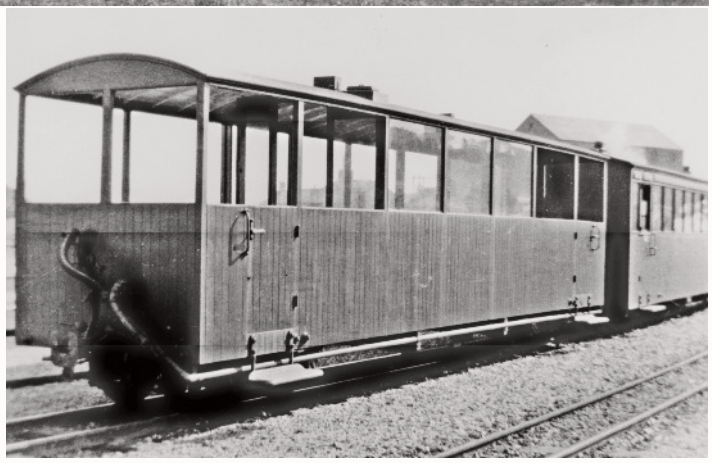


In 1923, C.C. Green photographed *Prince* heading south over the Cambrian Crossing into Portmadoc New station. The train behind Prince comprised Ashbury Corridor No. 10, the Gladstone and a dual-braked 4-wheel brake van. This van appears to have an end-balcony, which indicates it to be what then was FR Van 5, rather than WHR Van 4, which had no balconies (Arch 5398). Note that *Prince* was fitted with a large lamp on the tender's outer end and the locomotive clearly had been fitted with chopper couplings.

G.H.W. Clifford's 1923 photo showing the Gladstone and Corridor No. 10 standing on the loop at Portmadoc New usefully shows the dual-brakes (air and vacuum) fitted to the visible end of the Gladstone (Arch 0302). However, the brake van visible in Green's photo is not visible as, presumably, it was in process of being shunted to the rear of the two carriages ahead of northbound departure.

Dual brakes were fitted to Corridor No. 10, Pickering Brake Compo No. 4, and the Gladstone, but the Pickering suffered de-railing problems and had to be withdrawn, hence the need for the dual-braked 4-wheel brake vans.

That the set seen in these two photographs and in the photograph taken at Snowdon were the same is compelling.



Another photograph showing *Prince* heading south across the standard gauge is of interest. The loco had been fitted with chopper couplings, but this time the lamp visible in previous photographs can be seen to be mounted on the front of the loco and not on the tender as previously. Additionally, the train here includes Pickering No. 4 (later renumbered 8 by the WHR). Presumably this carriage's propensity to derail had yet to manifest itself.

This photo was published in the October 26th, 1923, issue of *The Railway Gazette* (on page 518) confirming this as a 1923 image (Arch 0273).





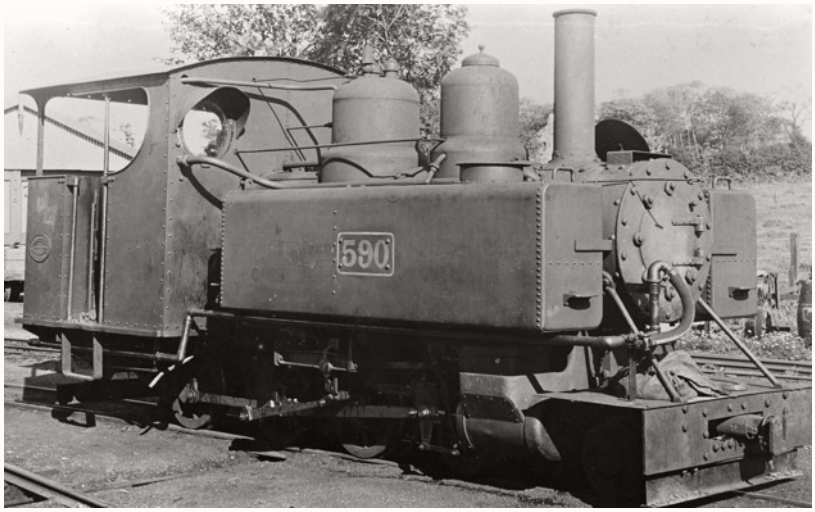
Thus far, our photos have shown a mixture of WHR and FR rolling stock, but exclusively FR locomotives. However, WHR locos did operate on trains over this early period.

Two NWNGR locomotives survived into WHR service, the Hunslet 2-6-2 tank engine *Russell* and the Vulcan Foundry 0-6-4 single-Fairlie *Moel Tryfan*, this latter surviving as an amalgamation with the NWNGR's other single-Fairlie *Snowdon Ranger*.

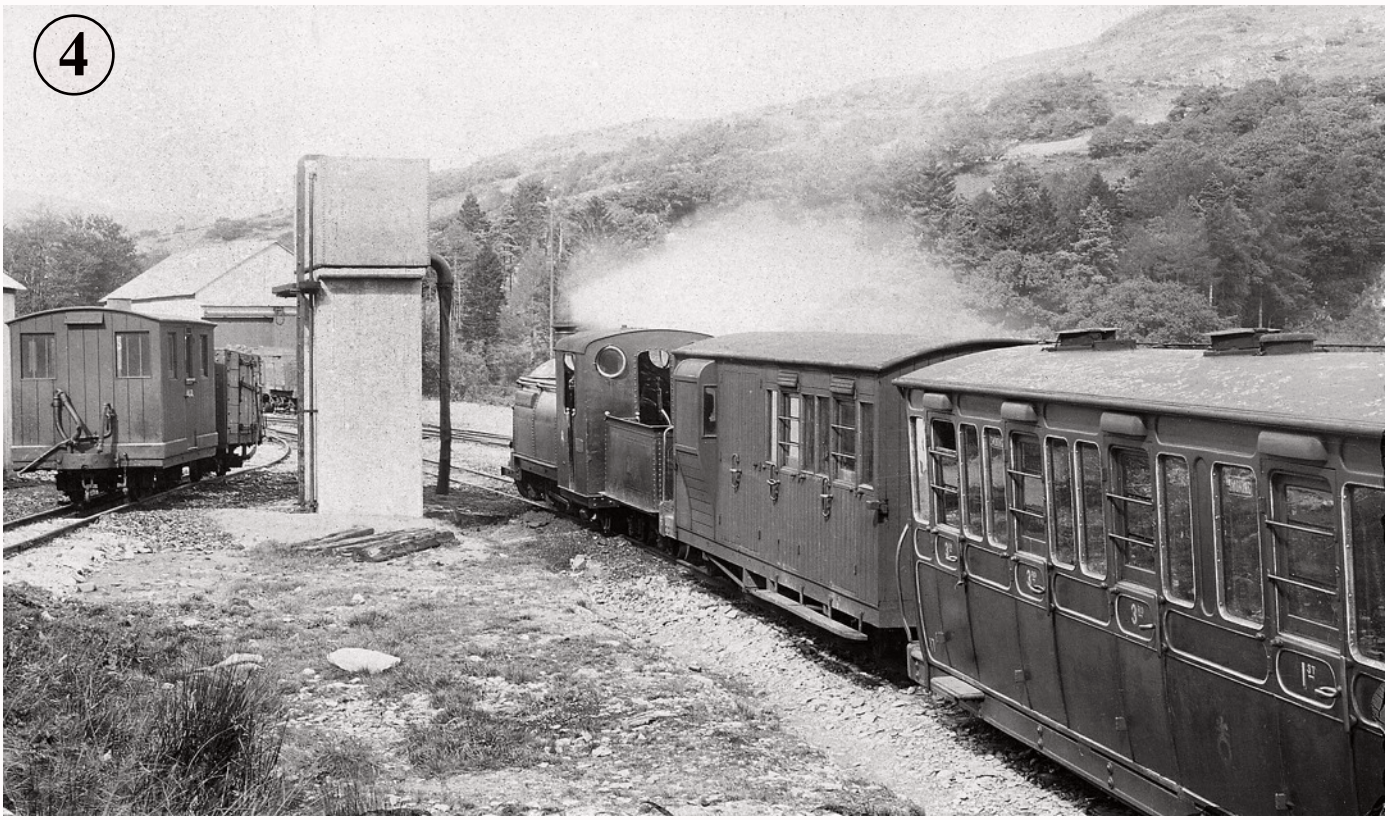
Moel Tryfan was not in the best condition so additional options were required and the Railway acquired an ex-WDLR (War Department Light Railways) Baldwin 10-12 D locomotive, specifically D 396 (w/n 45172) to which the WDLR had allocated the number *1040*, later renumbered by them to become *590*. After the end of WWI, *590* was one of a batch of locomotives overhauled by Bagnalls and was purchased for the WHR, arriving there on July 4th 1923, a date of dual significance, perhaps, given that this was an American locomotive!

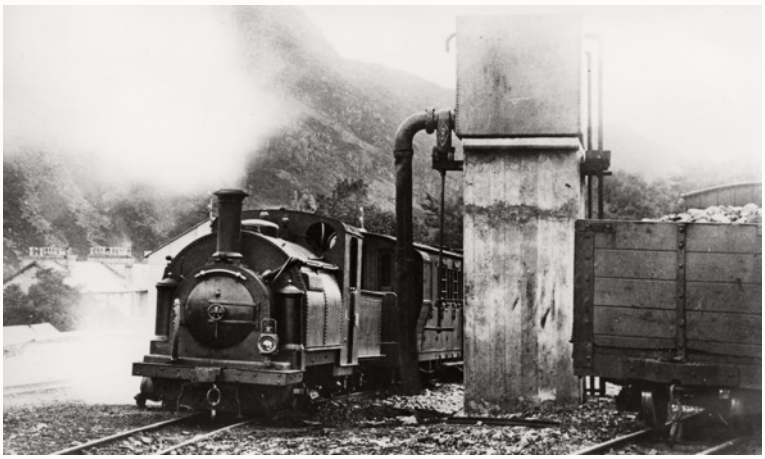
The photograph of *Russell* above (Locomotive Publishing Company 70203 - Arch 0020) was taken at a very new-looking Beddgelert. Points worthy of note are that Beddgelert had acquired its bookstall but the coal siding had not yet been laid in. Had it been, the siding's point lever would have been visible close to the 'front' of the bookstall. The locomotive was still air-braked - this was not replaced by vacuum until the winter of 1923/24 - and the Pickering to which the locomotive was coupled (presumably NWNGR No. 5 as this was not dual-braked) had not been cut-down. This coach had its roof lowered in May 1924 but was not renumbered, as WHR No. 9, until re-painted in July 1924.

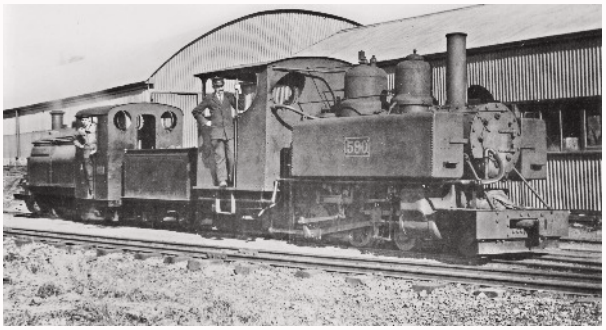
The rather nice sign on the rock face beyond the locomotive was still pristine - photographs indicate that this somewhat fragile structure did not survive its first winter. It would seem the stones were simply washed away by heavy rain. The surrounding frame can be seen in 1924 photographs, but that too soon vanished altogether.

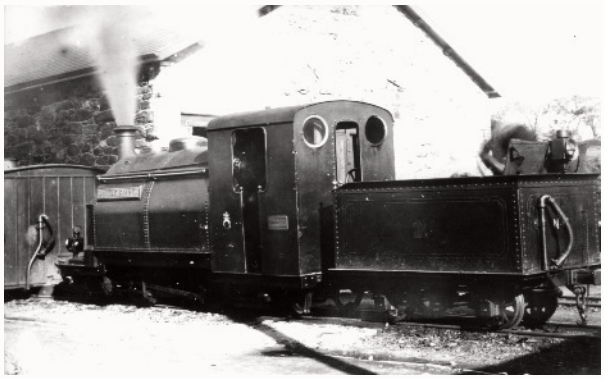


The photograph of *590* was by the Locomotive Publishing Company, their 6501 (Arch 0101) and shows the locomotive shortly after delivery. Vacuum brakes had already been fitted but other modifications applied shortly after the locomotive arrived had not been implemented when this photo was taken. Three obviously visible changes were to be: rotation of the buffer to place the slot at the bottom; the rectangular plate below the buffer beam, larger than those fitted when locos were in service, had the outer lower edges chamfered to give a curved appearance; the locomotive had the extended cab, installed by Bagnall, but lacked the rear cab sheet that photographs show was fitted during the loco's early years with the railway - it was certainly installed by 1925.









The main photograph above (LPC 6504 - Arch 0029) shows *Little Giant* heading a train from Portmadoc to Dinas. The locomotive has paused alongside the Beddgelert water tower and the first two vehicles in its train are visible - an FR small bogie brake, a rebuild of "curly-roofed" Van 2, followed by FR bogie carriage No. 17, one of the two Bowsiders from Brown Marshall. On the inspection siding behind the water tower we see a dual-braked 4-wheel brake van - the lack of balconies identifies this as WHR No. 4, which can be confirmed by enlarging the image. Beyond the van stands an 'odd' 4-wheel coal wagon. It is not a Festiniog wagon but does not match what appears to have been an otherwise 'standard' NWNGR design (see notes in *WHH* 80).

The smaller photograph at lower left shows the same scene from the other direction (LPC 6505 - Arch 0030). From this image we learn more of the design of the coal wagon and, beyond *Little Giant* we can see that the station building had not yet had barge boards fitted to its north end. Barge boards were never, it would seem, fitted to south end of the building.

Whilst running around at Dinas, *Little Giant* appears to have been tasked with drawing a 'dead' *590* out of the engine shed for the benefit of the photographer (LPC 6506 - Arch 0038).

As discussed earlier, *590* at this time showed no signs of a number of modifications made shortly after arrival on the Welsh Highland. For example, shortly after arrival the front coupler was modified - the buffer was rotated to place the visible slot at the bottom and two small plates were installed over each end of the slot in the buffer beam, reducing the range of lateral swing available.

At some later stage, the re-railing plate fitted below the buffer beam was modified to introduce an upward curve at the outer ends of the lower edge. The wooden cab back-sheet that was also fitted soon after delivery had not yet appeared when this photograph was taken.

Finally, having satisfied the photographer, *Little Giant* was readied for return to Portmadoc (Arch 3244)

5



On completion, the Welsh Highland met the Festiniog at an interchange station, Portmadoc New, adjacent and to the south of the level crossing over the Cambrian/G.W.R. The Festiniog transferred their active terminus from Portmadoc Harbour to Portmadoc New.

The main picture above shows the scene in 1923 with narrow gauge tracks running along an embankment towards the standard-gauge in the distance. The signal box controlling the 'Cambrian Crossing' can be seen to right of the right-hand train (LGRP 2469 - Arch 3770(2)). There had been plans for extensive facilities here, but in the event the simple passing loop was the extent of the development. The relatively short loop seen here was later extended to the south but the essentials remained as shown. The station building was set at a lower level and was a 'modification' of the Beddgelert design the better to suit this specific geography. A refreshment hut was provided by the Snowdon Mountain Tramroad and Hotels Co., similar to the equivalent building at Dinas.

The photograph shows a Festiniog train to the left, headed by the single-Fairlie *Taliesin* with a Welsh Highland train to the right. The visible carriages in the WHR train are, nearest to the camera, a Pickering brake composite with, beyond that, one of the Ashbury 'Summer' carriages, neither of which had yet been cut down. Further, examination of the visible end of the Pickering shows that it was still air-braked and therefore, by elimination, was NWNGR no. 5, later to be renumbered as 9. As the Welsh Highland train was air-braked we can deduce that its locomotive, of which we see nothing, was also air-braked and therefore either *Russell* or *Moel Tryfan*.

The second photograph shows *Prince* entering Portmadoc New loop from the north with a train of Festiniog stock when, judging by the pristine nature of the ballast, Portmadoc New really was 'New' (Arch 3213). The locomotive is passing one of the FR bogie brake vans standing on the 'main' line.

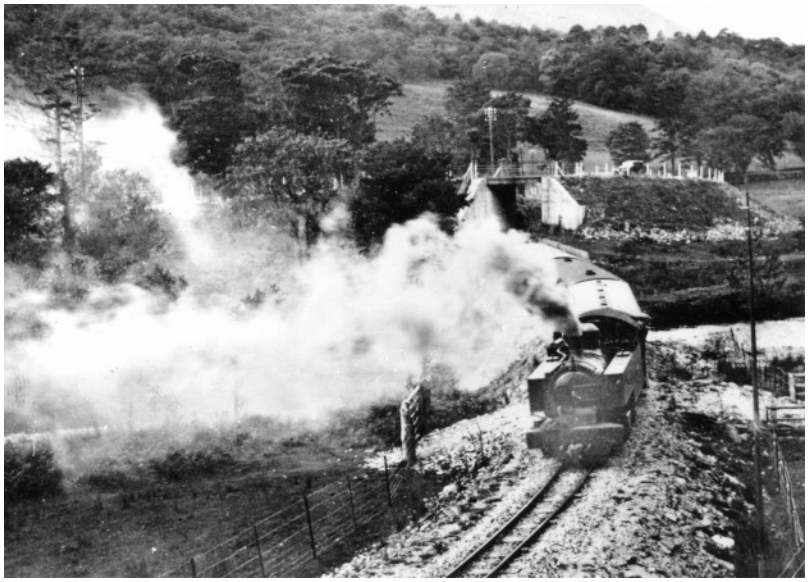




The final image shows *Palmerston* with a short train at the main passenger platform. A couple of FR goods wagons, one open the other covered, stand on the loop line. It is possible that this image was contemporary with the several we have showing *Palmerston* and train at several locations between Portmadoc and Dinas over the early days of WHR operations (Arch 0071).

W. H. R. Heritage Group On-line Photograph Archive

Peter Liddell



The first image in the 'Official Series', indeed the first image in the Archive - Arch 0001 (WHR 001)

For some time now we have been considering the best means by which we might open up access to the Group's photograph archive to our members.

By way of background, we have a physical photograph Archive, loosely described as *The Keylock Collection*. This is built around the late John Keylock's collection of seven albums of photographs and post cards and many wallet folders together containing a large number of photographic prints.

The subjects of John's vast collection include the WHR from 1922 to 1936, its predecessors (NWNGR, PBSSR etc), Bill Rear's collection of track bed photographs taken in 1948, further Welsh Highland 'post-closure' images, reconstruction and modern day views.

As one of John's executors, David Allan took the decision that ownership should be transferred to the WHR Heritage Group but that ultimately, after sorting and removal of duplicates and non theme subjects, they would be deposited at Gwynedd Archives as the *John Keylock WHR Photographic Collection*.

When I became the custodian of this collection after John's death, I reorganised his file structure but I declined to make any changes to his albums as these were highly personal, iconic and strongly reminiscent of John. I rearranged his filed prints primarily, but not exclusively, geographically and the print collection has continued to expand over the years.

Meanwhile, we had access to a separate Archive comprising electronic scans of photographs, many of which images were generated in the first instance as copy negatives. This Archive was created by David Allan, using the Cardbox program. The collection also contained his own photographs which provide a comprehensive historical record covering his involvement with 'the 64 Company' and the development of the Gelert's Farm operation, includin the images which formed the basis of the post card reprints published by the original WHR Society in the early 1960s. In addition there are photographs from his expeditions, with Messrs Keylock, Lodge, Davies, Lystor and others, to survey what remained of the Welsh Highland before the contractors moved in and photographs taken subsequently as he followed the rebuilding works. When I acquired a copy of this Archive, I first removed all of David's personal images and then set about comparing the two Archives.

There were many images in the Keylock Collection which did not appear in David's Cardbox Archive and, as I was focused on generating a 'complete' electronic Archive, I first scanned all the 'missing' Keylock images into Cardbox. The resulting Archive numbering system, which I use today, started with, and followed on from, David's archive reference numbers. This growth continues and I have a modest backlog of images waiting to be added. As I write these notes the total number of Archive entries is 5,107 and Archive numbers run up to 5,525, the difference primarily being due to the removal of David's personal images.

To give some idea of the size of the Keylock Collection, the box of the material originally sorted by Dick Lystor weighed over 25 kg, or 55 lbs in 'old money'!

In addition to the foregoing, we have been continuing to acquire relevant photographs via auctions and other sources.

Quite how we make this Archive accessible to our members via our website has been under discussion for some time. Obvious hurdles have to be overcome, for example Cardbox cannot simply be 'attached' to our site - the technologies are incompatible. Further, Cardbox is no longer adequately supported. Consequently, we have been considering a range of alternative hosts through which we would be able to provide the required access.

In 2014, a plan was put forward by Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways Heritage Limited digitally to scan all the FR photographs held in their archives and the WHRHG was approached with a view to including our WHR photos in this scheme. This was agreed and a major donation was made by the Group towards the project known originally as iBase, now with the more user friendly name of the *F&WHR Online Photo Archive*. Since early 2016, this has made many pictures from the FR Archives, from the 1870s to the present day, available for public viewing.

However for a variety of reasons, the Group's involvement in this project has not resulted in much scanning of our images, although we have contributed to the 'captioning' of the WHR images that have been loaded. We remain in close contact with the team working on the project.

Following much discussion within the Group and careful consideration of how best to deliver benefits to our Group members and the wider public we have, for now at least, settled on Piwigo and we are using this to develop Archive structures and the generation of access portal(s) that our members might use, should they wish to visit the Archive.

I started working through the existing electronic Archive in simple numerical order and, thus far, some 650 to 700 photos have been uploaded, clearly well short of the eventual total, but these are being added to what will be an on-line accessible collection. Every effort is being made now to ensure that each image is correctly described and dated (where possible) and that images are all (again, where possible) correctly credited to their source, originator etc.

However, rather than achieve this standard for every image before launching the Archive, it seemed to us more sensible to 'open' sections when they are ready. Feedback from members would be constructive as we move forward with this exercise. Any help from members would be much appreciated and, hopefully, would speed up the development of the accessible archive.

As the photographs were uploaded in Archive number order, the first Albums to be completed were the *WHR-series* (WHR 1 to 225), the *WHRa-series* (WHR1a to 44a) and the *WHHG-series* (WHHG 1 to 60), our three so-called *Official* image series. This sequence runs from Arch 0001 to Arch 0309 (WHHG 40) with, for reasons lost in the mists of time, WHHG 41 to 60 having higher, sometimes much higher, Archive numbers.

As the Archive builds up, we will make use of numbers of further Albums as any image uploaded once can be tagged to any number of Albums, depending on its particular content. Thus far, I have established a family of Albums based on the Keylock photo-print collection, essentially creating an Album for each of the wallet files in that system. This, put simply, will tell us exactly where any particular print can be found. This currently comprises 12 sub-Albums, but there will be more. Separately, I have set up a set of Albums to contain locomotive images. This covers both NWNGR and WHR locos, with additional Albums to cover FR locos that appear in WHR images and locomotives that operate, or have operated, on the WHHR, currently 18 sub-Albums, but, again, this will increase further. This will be repeated for Carriages, etc.

There is a growing Album of David Allan's reconstruction photos (currently Arch 0633 to 0674). I have yet to establish a set of Albums for the WHHR ('Gelert's Farm') photographs; however the master Album is there, but currently empty.

The Group's current plan is, as a first step, to enable Members' access to the *Official-series* Albums. The address of the collection is:

https://welshhighlandrailwayheritagegroup.piwigo.com

To gain access to the collection you will need to register as a member. The home page has a "Login" link - when 'clicked', new users can "Register" initially as guests. A message then goes to the Administrators who will confirm your Group membership status and transfer you to Members level. This may take a day or two, but thereafter when you log in you will be able to see all the currently completed albums and, of course, any further albums as they progressively become available.

The ability to view the photographic collection will, initially, be restricted to members of the WHRHG. It is our intention to 'watermark' all the images, both for reasons of copyright and to dissuade anyone from making illicit copies of our Archived images.



The last of the 329 images that make up the 'Official Series' - Arch 4292 (WHHG 60)

Roy I. G. West (1929 - 2023)
An Obituary by Derek Lystor



It is with very great sadness that I have to report the passing of Roy West on 30th March 2023, one of the Welsh Highland's most ardent supporters. He was a member and sometime Director of the then Welsh Highland Light Railway (1964) Ltd, and later an Honorary Life member of the present day Welsh Highland Railway Society (CRE). His interest in the railway began when his father was posted to *HMS Glendower*, at Pen-y-chain, in April 1941 and the family lived for a period in Pwllheli where he attended the local school until January 1945. Living close to the station, he also became a devotee of the Cambrian Railways even though, by 1922, they had become part of the GWR.

He was instrumental in forming a group of like-minded people who were able to acquire the WHR Debenture Stock held by the Ministry of Transport. These debentures were subsequently passed to the Festiniog to help in their acquisition of the old Welsh Highland. It was always his dream to see the line reopened and, despite the many setbacks, he was delighted when John Prescott gave the green light for things to start rolling.

Roy was a true gent, well-loved with a great sense of humour and friendly nature, and will be sadly missed by all that knew him. As his nephew, my thoughts go out to Roy's daughters, my cousins Heather and Gillian and her husband Rob.

Roy was a frequent visitor to North Wales and, before the line was reinstated, was always attracted to the Welsh Highland trackbed. These following accounts of his from 1968 show his strong belief and hope that one day the line would be re-opened to the public, and he was ecstatic some 30-odd years later when this dream came to fruition.

In March 1968, we had a chance to visit the gorge of the Afon Treweunydd. As we drove into the car park at Rhyd-ddu, the surrounding mountains were capped with snow, and a keen wind soon cleared our heads of the previous evening's junketing at Bryn Eglwys, our Beddgelert hostelry. We exchanged a greeting with two hard characters just starting the walk up the short route to Snowdon's summit. Perhaps they were the owners of the solitary white tent pitched on the shore of Llyn-y-gadair. We set off along the track-bed, passing the two stacks of rail patiently waiting, it seemed, to fulfil their destined role, and on towards Glanrafon and Llyn Cwellyn. As we traversed the reverse curve, the last of the early morning cloud lifted from the upper slopes of Snowdon, revealing the mountain in its entire sunlit snow-capped majesty.

Underfoot the grass on the track-bed was short and springy, having been close-grazed by the mountain sheep; but this could not disguise the imprints of the sleepers that used to occupy the ground on which we were walking. Here and there we came upon blocked drains, which had caused reed grasses to establish themselves, reminding us of a job which would need attention in the not too distant future. At one point the track-bed was bounded on both sides by dry-stone walls with only one break, obviously caused by wandering sheep, and surmountable by an original stile still in position, made of short lengths of rail and timber. It was heartening to see that the sheep escapes and stream culverts were in a good state of repair, as was the dry-stone embankment at Glanrafon sidings. Although not quite comparable with Cei Mawr of Festiniog fame, it is mute testament to the builder's skill of the last century.

The old weighbridge building at Glanrafon, minus windows, doors, and part of the roof, stood undaunted by the ravages of time, awaiting the restorer's hand to serve the railway once again. Away to the west, Llyn Cwellyn's wind ruffled surface distorted on its surface the reflection of Mynydd Mawr. Some 100 yards farther on, the trees that enhance the slopes of the Afon Treweunydd gorge came into view, and within seconds we were confronted with the stone abutments of the 100-ft. steel bridge which carried the WHR over the gorge some 58 ft. below. The abutments seemed quite sound, and the bridge, with its black paint now dull and the timbers on which the track rested now rotting, appeared otherwise as sound as the day it was built.

The Afon Treweunydd, which starts from Llyn Ffynnon-y-gwas on the upper slopes of Snowdon, appears as a waterfall up the gorge and forms a rock-pooled gurgling river as it makes its way under the bridge. A small stream cascading down the north-west side of the gorge joins it on its meandering way to Llyn Cwellyn. The ash and birch saplings lining the gorge were bare, but is is not difficult to picture them at the height of summer softening the rugged beauty of these surroundings. Sitting in the winter sun on the parapet of the bridge it was easy to conjure up the sound of a steam train coasting down the line from Glanrafon, rumbling and vibrating over the bridge and disappearing round the bend in the cutting beyond towards Snowdon Ranger Station.

This is a memory of the things as they were – and something that in the not too distant future may make a reality.

Later in the year I was again able to visit the railway and on an early June evening I was able to explore and fully appreciate the beauty of the stretch of trackbed between the original Cwellyn terminus and Plas-y-nant where dry stone walling and the running water of mountain born streams, features of the scenery of the Welsh highlands,

were particularly evident. I drove up from Beddgelert, passing Rhyd-ddu, where the landlord of the Cwellyn Arms patiently awaits the return of the Welsh Highland railway to help boost his income, and thence alongside Llyn Cwellyn, where the inevitable angler was fishing in the lake's breeze-ruffled waters. From the site of the old terminus [but see notes in *WHH* 97 - Ed.] I started along the trackbed, on the north side of the A487 Beddgelert to Caernarfon road bridge. The site is shaped like an oval bowl, the sides of which are lined with dry stone walling which was showing signs of wear caused by the weather over the years. Emerging from under the bridge, the line passed through a cutting towards the stark majesty of Mynydd Mawr, before swinging gently right on to an embankment bordered by stunted willow trees.

Here the Afon Gwyrfai, at the start of its meanderings to the sea at Foryd Bay just below Caernarfon, runs parallel with the line, some ten yards of pasture between; the waters are a favourite haunt of the heron. The line now straightens and the river curves in beside it. Here is a boggy patch, and stout boots or agility are necessary to negotiate it. The cause is a blocked drainage ditch, which would take very little effort to clear and repair. As is evident elsewhere, so here the grass-covered indentations of the sleepers are clearly visible. A gate, with part of an old point system as a weight, opens on to the pastures on both sides, above which the line is carried on an embankment, the river now wending away to the left. A mystery, still unsolved, presented itself in the form of a short length of double track shown by the sleeper indentations. Was this a siding, possibly for loading cattle, or an exceptionally short passing loop? [Actually Plas-y-nant Quarry siding - Ed.]

The mountains are now closing in on both sides, narrowing the valley, as the line continues on to Plas-y-nant Halt (alight here for Nant Mill Falls and Church of England Holiday Home). Now the road from the right and the river from the left converge on the line, and, as if to acknowledge the presence of the road, it crosses the river on a 50ft. single-span girder bridge onto a ledge cut out of the rock. The river widens into the area known as the Caernarvon Water Works. Supported by dry stone walling the line curves gently to the left, bounded on one side by heather-covered rock faces and on the other by running water.

A curve to the right on to an embankment carries the trackbed some 12ft above the waterfalls of the waterworks, and here again is a picturesque setting with rowan trees, heather and gorse softening the rugged outline of the rocks – more beautiful still in September when the trees are laden with berries and the heather is in bloom. A 12ft. dry stone wall protects the embankment from the river as it hastens on its way to the Nant Mills Falls. The line now passes through a short rock cutting bridged by the road to Pen-y-gaer and Cwm-bychan farm. Emerging from this it bears left and straightens for a considerable distance as it heads for Salem Halt and Bettws Garmon, with a branch to the Hafod-y-wern slate quarries, supported on the left by yet another example of the craft of dry stone walling.

With thoughts of river crossings and yet two more occasions at Bettws Garmon before reaching Waunfawr and another scenic valley, we are reminded of another of the beauty spots which the WHR will reach again in days to come, with passengers booking to "Plas y Nant for Nant Falls"

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the photographs can be corrected to respect that geometry. The right-hand upper photograph on page 12 shows the centre image adjusted to satisfy the relative measurements provided. It may seem paradoxical to carry out this transformation on the more highly distorted centre image, but achieving a complete corrected panel is really only possible with sufficient space on the image into which the area of interest can be expanded.

It is certainly the case that this window could have come from Beddgelert Station, but did it? The provenance offered by the window's current owner is undoubtedly compelling, but a proper comparison with such a window, or windows, as originally installed needs also to be carried out. An analysis of the station building's geometry, and within that the individual window geometries, suggests that the movable upper panel of the 3 x 4 pane windows should display a width to height ratio of 1.315. An alternative photographic 'adjustment' that satisfies this ratio has been prepared.

The upper 'squared' image ad the head of these notes respects the dimensions received from Bwlch-y-moch whereas the lower 'squared' image respects the measured Beddgelert window panel ratio, derived from photographic analysis. I have requested a double-check on the declared measured window depth - the quoted width seems correct - but as I write these notes I still await a response.

If it transpires that the dimensions really are as originally declared by the window's owner, it would appear that the panel is not, after all, from a Beddgelert building, or indeed so far I can see, from any building on the NWNGR/WHR system.

As well as declaring a width and depth for the window frame, the owner also quoted a width and depth for the glass panes - 28 cm and 41 cm respectively, a width to depth ratio of 0.683.

The owner's quoted depths of the panel (93 cm) and of the glass pane (41 cm) are consistent with each other, so if there were an 'error' in the depth measurement then the same 'error' would have had to have been committed when measuring the glass. The possibility of a single error might not be insignificant, but the probability of two similar errors in just two of the measurements begins to sound unlikely.

So, whilst an interesting artefact, this window, based on what we currently know and can therefore deduce, appears not to be a survivor from Beddgelert Station.

Investigations will nevertheless continue!

Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis

BEDDGELERT STATION WINDOWS (?)





We were recently advised of a (possibly) original Beddgelert Station window, recently removed from the 'Cowshed' at Bwlch-y-moch east of Tremadog. The window was fitted to the original 'Cowshed' structure but had been replaced by the installation of a new window. We received a couple of photographs of the window panel and, in response to a query, this was followed up by provision of some overall dimensions. These were the height and width of the complete window panel and the height and width of one of the surviving glass panes. Clearly this item is potentially of great significance to us, so what do the photographs actually tell us?

The photographs supplied are reproduced above (left and centre). A simple examination of the photos tells us that this item apparently is one half of one of the three different types of window fitted to the Beddgelert Station building. There were also windows fitted to the Lamp Hut and the Goods Shed, but the layout of this panel is inconsistent with either of these other buildings.

The windows in question were three panes wide by four panes deep, divided along the horizontal centre line into a fixed lower panel and an upper panel hinged along its top edge and arranged to open outwards. Each of these panels were three panes wide by two deep and there were five windows to this design fitted to the Station Building - three on the back, and one each on the south and west sides of the Booking Office. It should be said that the same type of window was also fitted to the station buildings at Portmadoc New and Ynysfor.



Window 'squared' 1) - 96 x 93 cm - ratio = 1.032



Window 'squared' 2) - 96 x 73 cm - ratio = 1.315

Notable in the photographs of this window is the catch at the centre of the bottom rail which indicates that, if this were from Beddgelert, we are looking at the inside of the upper hinged panel from one of these windows.

Interpreting the sizes and proportions of the window in the photos supplied is, thanks to perspective effects, problematic. However, given the panel's overall geometry

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