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Vintage train 'run past' - Tryfan Junction - August 12th, 2018.

Nick Booker looks back at 2018 and forward to 2019 and beyond.

The Heritage Group has had an interesting and active year and done at least one new 'thing', thanks to the Committee, volunteers and you the members who pay your subscriptions and support the Group by buying, for example, our books and providing donations. Our new 'thing' was the sponsorship of the Welsh Highland Heritage trains in August. That this was a successful new initiative is shown by their inclusion in the FR/WHR 2019 timetable. So, for those who fancy meeting and talking to passengers and perhaps dressing up in period clothing, look out for the requests for volunteers. Having done two stints as a host last August, I can recommend it as enjoyable, good fun and the opportunity to impart some of that heritage and history of the WHR garnered over the years from reading Boyd, Johnson et al and the Group's excellent journal. It is clear from the feedback received from passengers, that the trains introduced a whole new audience to the heritage of the Welsh Highland Railway and its predecessors.

The trains also identified, once again, the need to develop the linear museum concept and to do something, for example, about Glanrafon weigh house, if only to cut back the vegetation and provide another insight into the railway's history and heritage.

Following a long and protracted process and negotiation with the railway and thanks to the persistence and patience of Mike Hadley, a contractor has now commenced work on conserving the remains of Betws Garmon station building and to protect these from the ravages of the weather. No doubt Mike can be prevailed upon to write something about all this in a future journal, in particular the use of turf for capping the walls. While some members were disappointed that we are not doing a 'Tryfan Junction' here and possibly creating a 'holiday let', we will, for a modest expenditure, have stopped any further deterioration of the remaining structure. Who knows what might follow?

An exciting aspect, I use the words advisedly, about Betws Garmon is that the Group now owns a Parcels Book or ledger from here. Dick Lystor is steadily working his way through the entries and I hope he will be able to tell us more about the comings and goings at this remote station on the NWNGR line in the early part of the twentieth century. Also, thanks to Dick's eagle eye, we have recently acquired a rare North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Third Class Single ticket from Dinas to Bryngwyn, described elsewhere in this Journal. Dick, as the Group's Archivist, has issued an up to date list of all our archive material and if any member would like to see a copy, please get in touch with either Dick or me.

On the more general subject of the future of our archives, including the photographic collection, they continue to be the subject of discussion within the Group and by the Board of the FR/WHR Heritage Company on which I sit with Adrian Gray, who is the FR's Archivist, Secretary of the FR Heritage Group and our Sales Officer. Summarising a recent email from Adrian, the situation on archives is as follows. There can be no plans to add anything else to the Gwynedd Archives XD97 collection at Caernarfon, as there

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Recent Awards

For doing something extra!

The Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Group has won the Welsh Highland Railway Society's 'Francis Blake Award'. The Award, in memory of the late Francis Blake, is for the group or gang that has done 'something extra in the last twelve months' for the WHR and deserves recognition.

The photograph shows Peter Roughley, the Group's Treasurer, accepting the award on behalf of the Group at the Society's AGM.

The Award, a fireman's shovel, was originally presented to Mr Blake some years ago and it was gifted back to the Society by his widow. Rather than just put it on display in a museum, the Society's Board agreed that it would make an appropriate symbol of recognition for work done by a group or gang to enhance and further the restoration, running and interpretation of the heritage of the WHR.

Francis was a keen supporter of the WHR as well as a frequent volunteer with the North Wales/Black Hand Gang.

Following receipt of the shovel from Mrs Blake, it was cleaned, engraved with a suitable inscription and chrome plated.

The award was first made in 2017, the recipients being 'The Tuesday Gang'.

Nick Booker chairman of the Group said 'The Heritage Group follows the illustrious footsteps of last year's winners and we very much appreciate and thank the Society and its Board for this recognition.'

Hadley picks up the Token

Mike Hadley, the Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Group's Projects Manager and a committee member, has won the Welsh Highland Railway Society's Token of Appreciation for 2018.

The award was instigated in 2003 as a symbol of the Society's gratitude to an individual member, or group of members, who had made an outstanding contribution to the Society and/or Railway over the preceding year.

Mike received the award at the Society's recent Annual General Meeting.

The recipient is chosen by the Society's board of directors and can be nominated by any member.

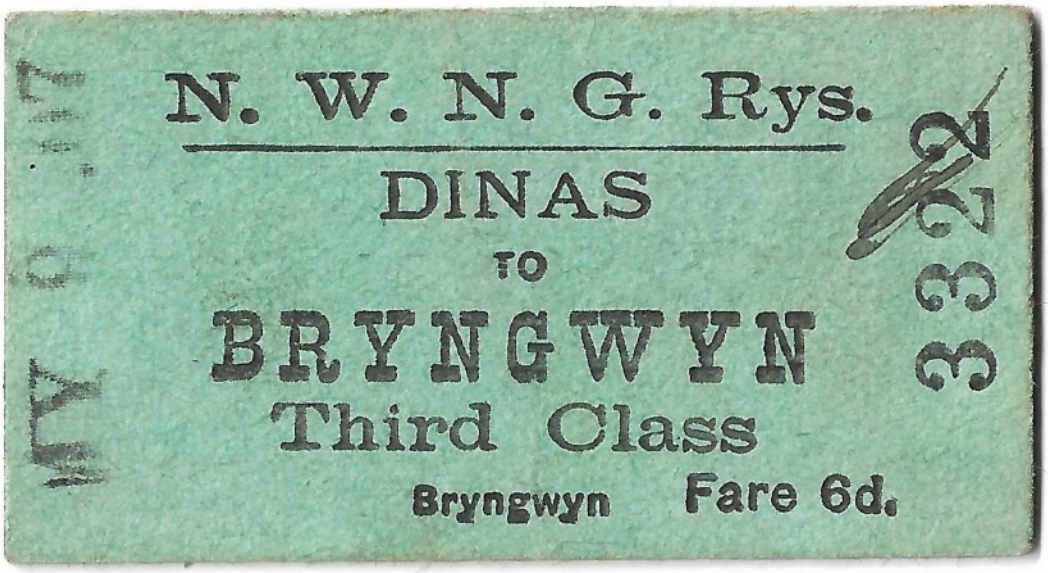
The award is a half size replica of the original Welsh Highland Railway Snowdon Ranger to Rhyd-ddû (South Snowdon) single line token.

Peter Roughley, WHRHG Treasurer, accepts The Francis Blake Award from Dafydd Thomas on behalf of the Group at the WHR Society's AGM.

Dafydd Thomas presents Mike Hadley with the Token of Appreciation award at the WHR Society's 2018 Annual General Meeting.

Photos by John Ellis Williams

A trip to Bryngwyn for sixpence



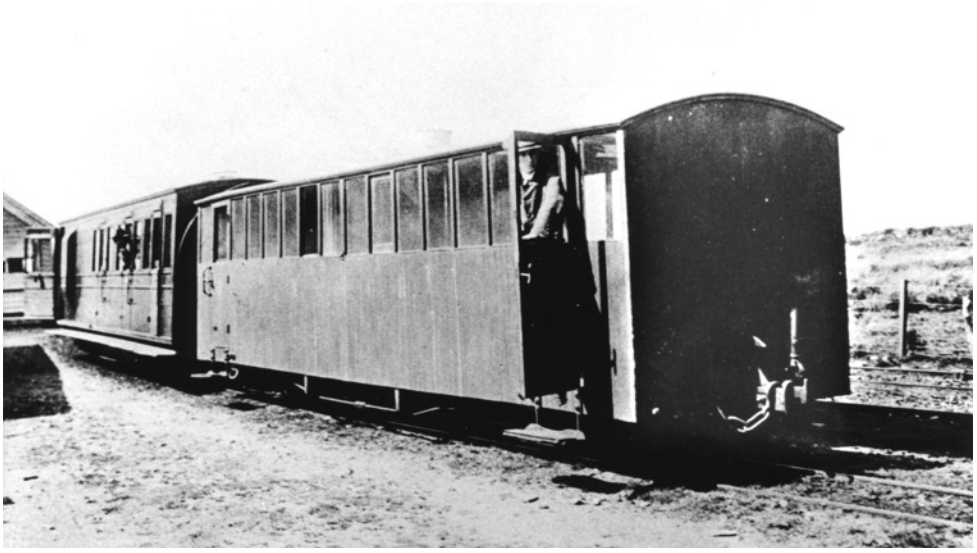
The latest acquisition for the WHRHG from one of the many on-line auction sites now in existence is a North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Third Class Single ticket from Dinas to Bryngwyn, illustrated here.

The ticket, issued on 9th May 1907 has survived in excellent condition and has obviously been well looked after by its previous owner(s). Not surprisingly, NWNGR tickets are comparatively rare and those to Bryngwyn even more so, so this is a welcome addition to our archive.

Records of tickets supplied to the NWNGR were carefully documented in the company's Ticket Stock Book (now deposited with our other material at Gwynedd Archives). Unfortunately some of the pages for Dinas stock are missing, including those for the Bryngwyn branch, so dates and quantities ordered are unknown.

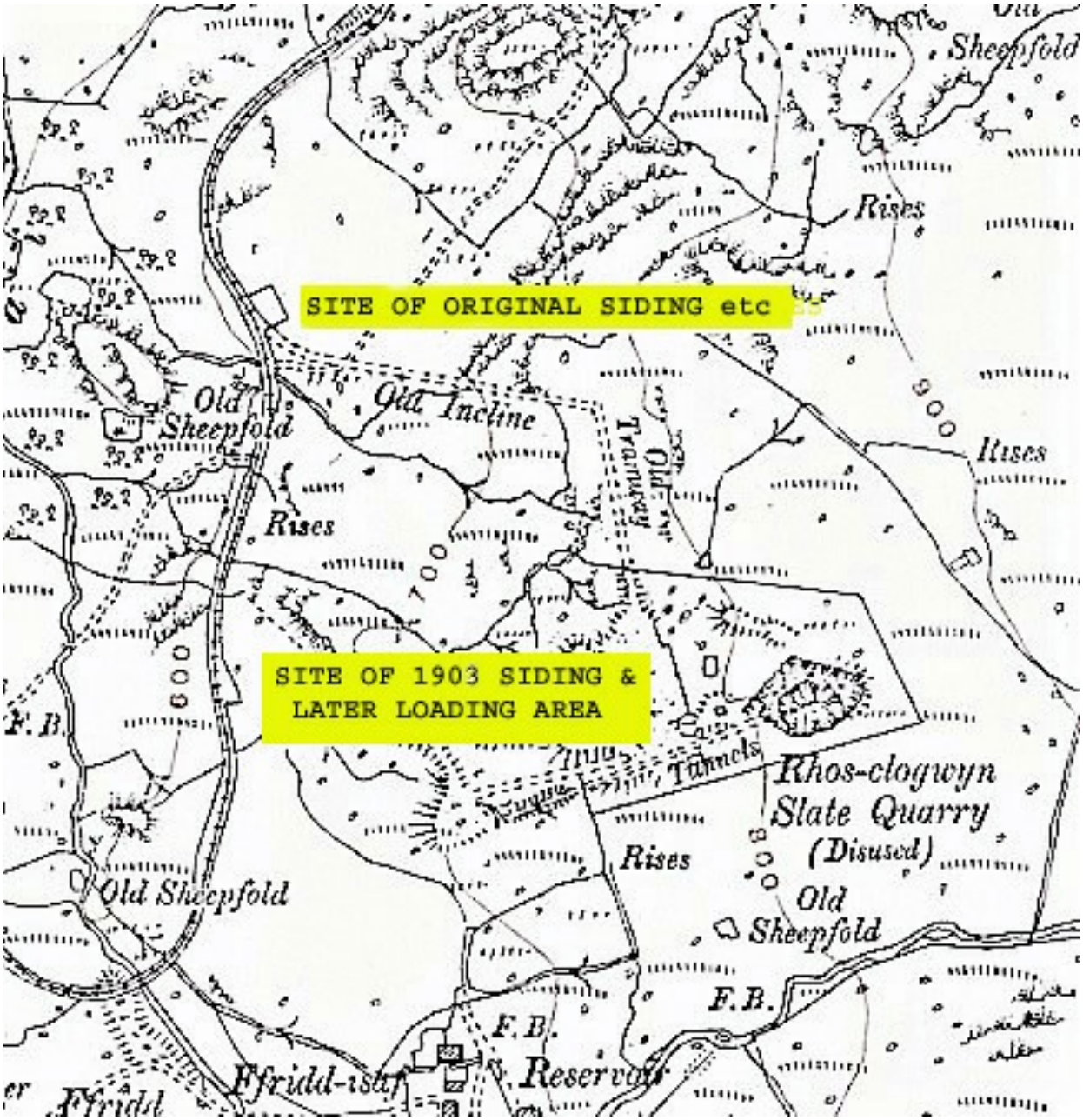
Early tickets were printed by J.B. Edmondson, easily distinguished by their negative block serial numbers, but later issues, including our example, were much neater in appearance, although the printer remains unknown. The miniature repeat of Bryngwyn at the bottom of the ticket was punched out when issued for a child.

Thanks to David Woodcock's researches, we know that the L&NWR timetable for 1909 records two trains a day from Dinas to Bryngwyn, Monday to Friday, departing Dinas at 09.55 and 15.10, arriving Bryngwyn at 10.25 and 15.35 respectively. With so little habitation surrounding Bryngwyn, it is of little surprise that over a period of thirty years, only 3322 single tickets were sold, an overall average of two a week!



Photographs taken at Bryngwyn when the station was operational are rare - photos showing passenger workings are extremely rare. Here we see the Workmans Car with one of the Pickering Brake Composites beyond, recently arrived at Bryngwyn from Dinas. c.1910. Gwynedd Archives

A little more about Rhos-clogwyn Quarry



Dick Lystor adds to his earlier notes on Rhos-clogwyn Slate Quarry

With great help from the late Dr. Gwynfor Pierce Jones, I was able to write a short account of Rhos-clogwyn (or Clogwyn-y-gwîn) Quarry in *WHH* 17, and Gwynfor himself added an update in the following issue. I should like to dedicate this further article to his memory.

Before his untimely death in 2013, he and I had been pondering over the various ways by which the output from the quarry had been dispatched via the NWNGR and later the WHR. Although this had been covered to some degree in my original article, the following account is based on our further researches, coupled with additional documentation from the Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon record office, and is the best explanation to date of the likely series of events.

Gwynfor was able to ascertain that the quarry did not commence operations until 1876, and it is conjectured that, as there was no rail connection through to Rhyd-ddû at that time, slate output from Rhos-clogwyn was carted either to Quellyn (the NWNGR temporary terminus) from August 1877 or to Snowdon Ranger from June the following year, after the line had been extended to the south. After the NWNGR had completed the link to Rhyd-ddû in May 1881, the quarry owners had obtained rights to cross Vaynol estate land to

Figure 1 - Site of 1890's transhipment wharf. Sleeper marks of wharf siding on left, with those of the main line on the right. D.W. Allan. 2000.

Figure 2 - Original 1890's incline. D.W. Allan. 2000

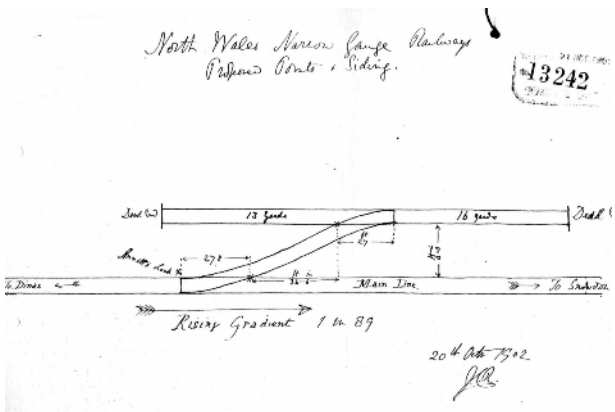
Figure 3 - Remains of 1890's incline drumhouse, D.L. Lystor. 2005

Figure 4 - 1890's exit tramway looking towards the quarry. D.L. Lystor. 2005

allow an exit tramway to the head of an incline down to a wharf and siding on the line.

However, the exact date at which this link was made cannot as yet be determined. It is probable that whilst this tramway, incline and wharf were being constructed, product was carted to Rhyd-ddû station. The incline itself was on Fridd-isaf farm property, and a schedule of the farm's deeds recorded a lease dated 25th June 1895 of *"land and proposed incline, Clogwyn y Gwîn slate quarry"* from Dame Ann Watkin, the vendor. Although the incline with its associated siding and wharf, and quarry connection were not shown on the 1900 edition of the Ordnance Survey map, they must have been made some time after the 1895 lease, because on 20th October 1902 J.C. Russell wrote the following letter to the Board of Trade:-

"I beg to apply for permission to remove an existing siding and points from the main line, to a point about 17 chains distant from the present position. The present points lead out of a short length of straight line between two curves of 3½ and 4 chains radius respectively on a gradient of 1 in 128. The place to which it is proposed to remove the points and siding is in a corresponding length of straight line between two curves of 3½ and 5½ chains radius respectively, on a gradient of 1 in 89. The points will be fastened and opened by an Annetts lock; the key being fastened on to the staff by which the line is worked. The line is a single line: gauge 1ft 11½ins. The object of the points and siding is to afford communication with a Slate quarry to enable that Company to have access to the railway. The necessity for the change of the position has arisen from the circumstance that the land over which the Quarry Company had a wayleave to the existing siding has changed hands and the present owner refuses to grant any wayleave or allow access to the siding. Hence it has become necessary to change its position; and the place chosen is the only point at which the Quarry Company can get access to the railway line. A sketch is enclosed showing measurements of siding."



The siding was practically completed at the end of March 1903, and was inspected later that year by Major E. Druitt R.E., who sanctioned its use subject to the condition that, owing to the steep gradient, shunting must be carried out with the engine at the lower end of the train.

The new siding was positioned just below the quarry, where the track formation was at its widest point and was connected to it by an aerial ropeway from the quarry's lower banc. However, by 1906 a wayleave had been obtained from Sir Alfred Watkin, enabling the original exit tramway and incline to be brought back into use. So it would seem that the new siding laid in 1903 was lifted and reinstalled in its original position!

Fortune did not look kindly on Rhos-clogwyn and by 1909 the quarry had shut. It is presumed that the NWNGR lifted the siding yet again as there is no mention of it in a list of facing points on the line compiled by D.O. Jones in July 1922 for S.E. Tyrwhitt, the General Manager. This list did include Treflan, Salem and Glanrafon quarries.

After a long period of inactivity, quarrying was resumed during 1925, and on 21st September the following year the owner, Cadwaladr Humphreys, wrote the following letter to D.O. Jones at Dinas:-

> *"I intend making slates at Rhos Clogwyn Quarry and will require loading for Portmadoc or Dinas. You will perhaps remember that there used to be a small siding* [the 1903 installation] *below the quarry where slates were lowered by means of an aerial ropeway. This is the most convenient spot to get on the Railway. Do you think your Co. would grant me permission to load wagons on your present line of rails? It is hardly worth while at this stage to construct a special siding. Of course the loading would have to be done to suit your convenience and at my risk. Kindly let me hear from you".*

Figure 5 - Site of 1903 siding and later 1925 loading area served by ropeway. Courtesy F&WHR

Jones duly reported this request to Robert Evans in the Traffic Office at Portmadoc, who then passed it on to Col. Stephens, adding that in his opinion he considered the idea unsafe and that there would be no-one in attendance to supervise unless the services of a platelayer were utilised. Stephens replied that loading could be carried out on the main line with proper precautions including scotches for the wagon wheels and a platelayer to supervise. Evans passed these remarks on to D.O. Jones asking him to make all necessary arrangements, including provision of a platelayer. On 7th October, H.D. Jones, station master at Beddgelert, asked Evans for 5 slate wagons to be available at South Snowdon for Humphreys' use as he had traffic for Portmadoc. Evans asked H.E. Jones, station master at Portmadoc, to arrange this.

There is no further correspondence on the matter until July 1928 when Humphreys appears to have had some problem with getting his slates away. He let Evans know that he had had the ropeway built at considerable cost on the back of promises given back in September 1926. He hoped to see 6 wagons at Rhyd-ddû on 12th July, along with arrangements to enable them to be loaded, otherwise there would be a chance of him closing the quarry. The final correspondence in the file is a letter from Stephens to Evans dated 11th July in which he states that he was not prepared to allow loading on the main line during summer traffic, but that September and the winter months was a different matter, and that the agreement made in 1926 did not obtain in 1928. The matter was passed over to D.O. Jones at Dinas!

So to sum it all up, the best explanation we have to date of slate transport from Rhos-clogwyn Quarry on to the railway is as follows. Firstly it was transported via the exit tramway and incline down to the wharf and sidings on the NWNGR. These sidings were then moved to a point a little closer to Rhyd-ddû in 1903 and slate was brought down by aerial ropeway. This arrangement was abandoned in favour of reinstating the original siding and reusing the old exit tramway and incline, which again fell out of use, only to be replaced some years later by a new aerial ropeway, possibly utilising the original bases of the original incline, serving the site of the 1903 siding where slate was loaded on the main line!

Nothing was ever easy on what John Keylock always referred to as "this silly little railway"!

References:-

Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon record office.

XD97/22786 – Rhos Clogwyn Quarry

XD97/23003 – List of Facing Points.

The National Archives, Kew.

MT 6/1188/1 - Russell's letter of 1902 etc.

One Fateful Day

Dave Rogerson muses over similarities between 1883 and 2018.

As I stood at Rhyd Ddu on the first NWNGR Heritage day and saw *Prince*, the Curly Roof Van and the Festiniog carriages awaiting departure I realised that this consist of Loco, Guards van with two lightweight carriages behind was precisely that which was involved in the story told in *WHH* 19 of March 2003.

The incident, which happened on 24th February 1883, was there retold dramatically based on the report made to the Railway Inspectorate by Major Marindin. The Major's full report was reprinted more recently in *WHH* 71.

For some time now I have believed that Marindin became rather confused when interviewing Thomas Morris and John Williams, the only available first hand witnesses, whose sole language as late as the 1901 census was given as Welsh. Two details in particular strike me as strange. Firstly did he really believe that Driver Jones could get sleepy drunk after a couple of pints at Snowdon Ranger and secondly why would Thomas Morris state that he was helping the Rhyd-ddu Stationmaster sort out his books during this drinking bout when everybody would know that Willie Morris never came down on the Saturday train or, because he lived in Rhyd-ddu, on any other train and he was not present on the train later on. Perhaps Major Marindin misunderstood some of what he was told?

Dave Rogerson (in the white trousers) at Rhyd-ddu, 5th August 2018. To use his words "*Fame at last - I've got my picture in the papers!*"

Extract from photo by Dave Booker, published in *WHH* 80, page 2.

What follows is a work of fiction – a fictional re-enactment as was the earlier article. The people are real – they are all in the 1881 census of Llanwnda. The jobs are real – directly from the census. The fictions are that they were all still in post on 24th Feb 1883 and that they worked for NWNGR. I have only used known employees and residents of Church Cottages. This gives me a staff of about 14, the bare minimum to run the railway. There are about seven other railway employees in the village but I have imagined (in some cases possibly wrongly) them as working for the LNWR – some of the track gang and loaders are certainly missing but both of these occupations might be recorded as "labourer" in the census. I am also missing at least a blacksmith and a carpenter from the workshop.

The day started as usual. The first job was to get steam pressure up. No firelighter, cleaner or knocker up is recorded although Thomas H Parry, who was later an engine cleaner, defines himself as a "pointsman". Let us assume that the firemen did it. These were John Williams who would have trudged the half mile from Maen Coch and Willie Hugh Williams who would have skipped over the line from Church Cottages to get the job done. Soon after them the rest of the staff would arrive. The keen and wakeful such as Owen B. Thomas coming over the road from Caer Moel would be first, his fellow guard Tom Morris had much further to come from the Llanbeblig end of Bont Newydd and would probably been accompanied by his near neighbour William Roberts the track ganger. The rest of the workers from Church Cottages: Driver Hugh Williams, Platelayer Richard Jones, Loader John Parry, and the Fitter William Evans might be in the habit of gathering together to share the news of the day in Welsh and come across separately from Henry Newham, Dinas Station Master whose first language was English. Mr Livesey, the manager, again coming just over the road, this time from from Garth-y-glo, would arrive to a respectful touching of caps. The last to arrive might have been the other driver, John Jones, who is the only villain in my imagination. He might well have been called in for a brief interview by Mr Livesey along the lines of "Late again Jones, take care boy you are walking a thin line, I hope you are sober enough to drive today".

William Evans would then get on with his first job of the day whether it was routine or emergency maintenance of the spare engine. His job would be to keep two engines fit to run or the drivers would be on his back for making them run the only engine up to Bryngwyn with supplies, empties and parcels before going out on the main line from Tryfan Junction. Mr Livesey would care more about whether they had been able to complete the jobs by the end of the day and less about the difficulties of running a gravity train back down the branch.

As steam was raised the drivers would check round, oil up and then attach rolling stock so as to set out at 6.50am to Rhyd-ddu and the 7.00 to Bryngwyn (assuming the 1882 timetable was still broadly applicable). The 10 min. gap was designed to get the first train to Tryfan Junction before the second left Dinas. Later in the day both Dinas to Tryfan Junction and the reverse journey were with the trains together travelling as one. As this separation of the trains only happened on the first journey it must imply that

somebody, presumably Owen B. Thomas, acted as guard for the whole of this first trip to Bryngwyn.

The branch line train then waited at Bryngwyn before heading down to link up with the returning main line train (which had had a longer journey by about 45 min.) at Tryfan Junction. This pattern repeats for the rest of the day. There would however have probably been considerably more shunting at the foot of the incline than elsewhere and maybe they got on with this before sharing a panad with Robert Hughes, Bryngwyn Station Master, who had already walked up the mile from Maen Coch, been to the top of the incline to check on the day's work and begun to put together the paperwork to indicate which loads from which quarries were destined for which supplier in England. There might also be some loads already down the incline to couple in for the return journey. There may well have been some prearranged signal from the main line to say "We are in Waenfawr, have you reached Rhostryfan yet?" but I speculate.

Both trains would arrive back together at Dinas at about 09:00, shunt a bit if John Parry needed some empties moving away from the transhipment dock and the orders for the day moving in. Trains needed to be assembled and leave on the second trip at about 09:55. The 1882 timetable allows for an additional break at the heads of the lines on this trip before returning to base and then doing another round trip at about 12:20 delivering people to their destinations, parcels to James Hughes at Waenfawr Station and empties to the quarries and the reverse operation collecting wagons, people, parcels and loads for delivery.

On this particular day the trains seem to have been staffed by Hugh Williams driving, his son Willie Hugh Williams firing and Owen B Thomas guarding on the Bryngwyn turn and John Jones driving, John Williams firing and Tom Morris guarding on the Rhyd-ddu line. Driver and fireman might have swapped turns during the day but it is obvious from the other John Williams' narrative that Owen Thomas was permanently on the branch and therefore Tom Morris on the main. I can find no record at Rhostryfan in 1881 of a cobbler/stationmaster and so perhaps Owen had already started to combine the roles of guard, stationmaster at Rhostryfan and stationmaster, signalman and pointsman at Tryfan Junction. It may well be that when the trains were theoretically coupled together only Tom Morris was needed to guard and so Owen stayed around the junction until he was needed again. With the restoration of this building now complete I can imagine him in the newly built station making a brew for William Roberts, Richard Jones and other track gang members who had been fettling a bad cant in the area.

Arriving back from the third trip at about 14:14 a late lunch would be taken then a further run up and down the lines left at 15:00 arriving back at 16:50. The penultimate service left at 17:00 and returned at 19:20. Remembering that the date was 24th Feb this trip would have probably started in the light and returned after dark with the prospect of a final, extra trip to do because it was Saturday. It was on the last trip, leaving at 19:30 that disaster happened. The train went safely up the line loco leading, two carriages following then the guards van on the rear. Returning from Rhyd-ddu at 20:30 in the dark, the main line crew having failed to re-marshal the train before leaving and had simply run the loco round the stock, the two lightweight carriages which should have been safely tucked in between the braked guards van and the engine were at the rear of the train and became uncoupled. A little while later, when the crew realised this, they, rather thoughtlessly, set back up the line to find the missing components of the train. The inevitable happened. The missing carriages had partly derailed; the reversing train did not see them in the pitch black, crashed into them, and turned them over on their sides.

There was now no option but to return to Dinas (fortunately the locomotive was not damaged) so as to contact Mr Livesey and confess all. When the boss got to Dinas yard he found John Jones asleep in the cab. Instant dismissal followed. John Williams and Tom Morris must have feared for their future also and as they were both preparing to get married it would have been a disaster for them. Ganger William Roberts was fetched from Llanbeblig to check the track. The next day was Sunday but no doubt more men were called out maybe including John Limerick and possibly young Jeb Limerick who lived at Church Cottages. Jeb's future workmate on the track gang, Thomas Ore, who was the same age might also have tagged along. The carriages were righted, re-railed and taken back to Dinas for repair.

Mr Livesey had no option but to report such a serious incident to The Railway Inspectorate. A few days later Major Marindin arrived to investigate. His conclusion was that the whole situation was deplorable and that the NWNGR should engage a better class of employee. Mr Livesey took a different view. He had sacked Driver Jones, he then promoted Fireman Williams to take his place and had no hesitation in continuing to trust Guard Morris. In view of the long and faithful service John Williams and Tom Morris (see *WHH* 63 and 73) gave to the company his judgement was sound.

Let me retell the journey in a way which makes a more consistent story, possibly quite like the one told to Mr Livesey. John Jones had been drinking all day – again. John Williams and Tom Morris had had a long day at the end of a difficult week working with John Jones. They reached Rhyd-ddu a little early, drink made Jones drive a little recklessly. Tom Morris went to see William Morris, the Rhyd-ddu Stationmaster (no relation), to do a final check on the paper work. Tom was probably a bit of a worrier and was under some pressure at this time. In the preceding year his wife had died and he had three young children to provide for. Although young William had been doing things right for some time, Tom may have remembered the early days after his appointment when things got a bit chaotic and William had made a mess of documentation for some parcels. John Williams meticulously prepared the engine for the return trip taking on water and checking round because he was aware that John Jones had not. John Jones headed for the pub. The leaving time approached and they fetched him from the

pub. They had found that the best way to get him out was to share a final drink with him but John Williams was a near teetotaller so that duty usually fell to Tom Morris. Williams and Morris had been busy and so had not been able to re-marshal the train in his absence and Jones refused to do so. Because a job had been saved they left on time, got to Snowdon Ranger early and Jones disappeared again. The only way to get him out was to share yet another a final pint with him, possibly even John Williams had to sacrifice his principles in the attempt to get home as soon as possible after a long day. They were now behind time so Jones set off with a jerk and continued at furious pace and it was at this point the carriages came loose. There was one passenger, travelling in the Guards Van, and so Tom Morris was probably having a chat with him, deploring Jones driving, holding on for dear life when he realised after a mile or so that the train had separated. He then stopped the train and put the footplate crew in the picture. John Jones then insisted that they go back up the line, the others might have argued but he got back on the footplate and they had to follow suit. The rest is known – in particular Tom Morris acknowledged that he had failed to fulfil his responsibilities to re-marshal the train and also to proceed back up the falling gradient with a hand lamp.

In my first article I said that I liked to imagine the lives of the men but in a journal of record this would not be allowable. Thank you for your indulgence in my fantasy by allowing me to break the rules so as to try to rescue the reputations of two good men.

Continued from page 1

is no more space! Dick Lystor has had to 'weed' the Group's own collection here. Potentially there may be an opportunity for the WHRHG's archive collection to be located alongside the paper archives generated by the FR Co. since 1954, (the 'modern archive'), the records of the FR Society and its various Area Groups. The emphasis is 'alongside' because there is no intention to merge the various collections, only to give them a secure and appropriate home: in other words, not in the attics and bedrooms of volunteer custodians but in a purpose-built facility, designed as a repository for these important records. The archivists responsible for each collection would remain responsible for their respective collections and would work as a management team. The building is of course yet to be identified, as is the budget for setting it up and running it. The Group's photographic collection continues to be the subject of discussion for posting on the F&WHR Online Photo Archive, subject to appropriate safeguards and involvement of WHRHG members.

The current journal contains a flyer for our new book, *The Croesor Tramway, a History of the Tramway and Quarries of Cwm Croesor*, by Dave Southern with Adrian Barrell. I have no intention of repeating the contents of the sales leaflet or indeed the Acknowledgements within the book itself, but it is worth pointing out that this book, as are several of the others in our back catalogue, is a collaborative effort. Dave Southern submitted the original manuscript of just under 9,500 words and has provided some photographs from his exploration in and around Croesor. The book as it now is, runs to some 25,000 words and 120 pages and contains a significant contribution from Adrian Barrell's research on the Croesor Quarry, a contribution by me, photographs from a variety of photographers, including many from the Group's archive and all put together by Peter Liddell with a Foreword by Dr David Gwyn. Before Peter finally drew the line on any further amendments, and having got a more or less complete manuscript, it was then subjected to fact checking and proof reading by five readers. However, even as Peter was closing the door on any further amendments, more history was being revealed, but paraphrasing Robert Watson-Watt, 'Give me the third best script. The best will never be ready and the second best will not be ready in time'. Incidentally, we managed to track down one of Adrian Barrell's contributors, Edgar Parry Williams and the book now includes two photographs of horses on trains thanks to Mr and Mrs Williams.

Looking to the future, as I have explored in previous Journal articles on heritage and the direction of the Group, we and others involved in railway heritage seem to be moving towards a 'top down' rather than a 'bottom up' approach. Much has been written over the years on locomotives and rolling stock and buildings but perhaps less on why the railways came to be built in the first place and for example how they were financed and by whom. Boyd's books touch on this to an extent but shadowy personalities appear and disappear; James Cholmeley Russell is just one example where, prompted my own research, we now have a more rounded and complete view of him and his associates. Peter Johnson in his researches has provided some insights into the many different characters who inhabit the FR's and WHR's historical record.

David Gwyn's magisterial book on the Welsh slate industry (*Welsh Slate: Archaeology and History of an Industry*), charts its history from Roman times through to its decline in the last century, placing the constituent elements such as the railways into context. Part of this trend has of course been facilitated by the advent of online data and websites such as Ancestry, which has taken at least some of the initial hard work out of genealogy research.

However, just as the FR and the WHR have evolved into, and been reborn as, major parts of the Welsh tourism industry, special interest heritage groups such as ours must evolve also and remain relevant to the interests of our current and potential members.

Nick Booker

A Contemporary view of the Welsh Highland Railway in August 1927

The following short article is an account of a visit to the Welsh Highland Railway in August 1927 by Mr H. Carson. It is reproduced, as near as possible in its original format, with permission from his son via Simon Banbury.

Harold Carson (1905 – 1993) was a keen railway enthusiast and many of his leisure hours were devoted to his hobby. He kept notes detailing where he went and what he recorded, and this article was first published in his book "Diary of an Early Trainspotter" and later as an extract in his son's book "Appointments with Steam".

Dick Lystor

THE WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY

H. CARSON.

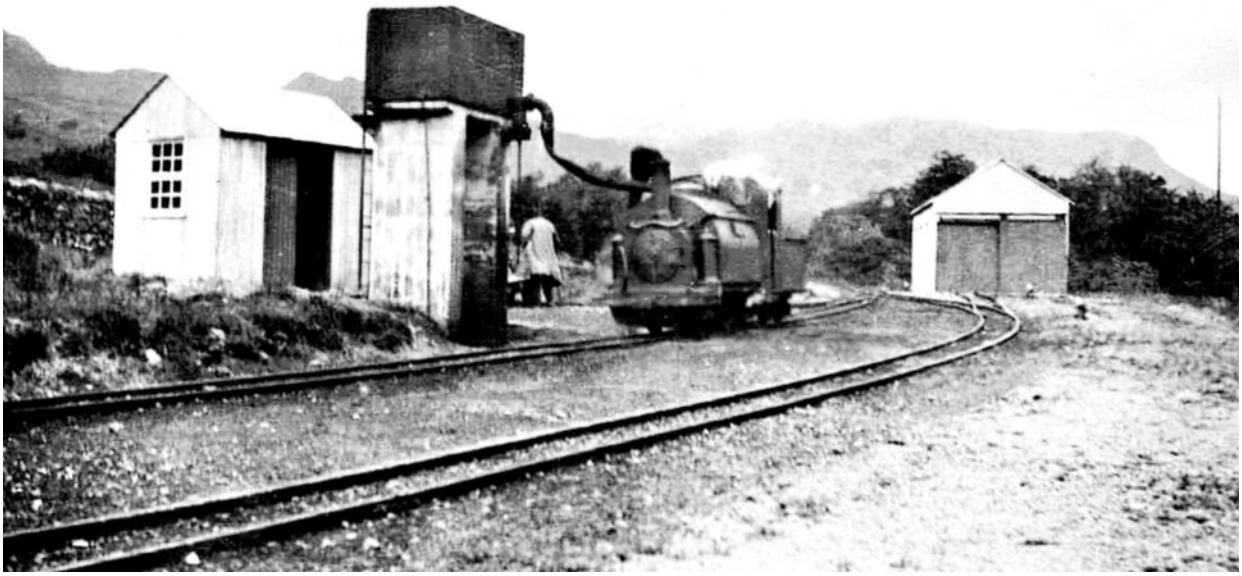
The accompanying photograph depicts the Beddgelert station on the Welsh Highland Narrow Gauge Railway. This railway opened in 1923, has a gauge of 1ft. 11½ins., and runs from Portmadoc to Dinas Junction on the London, Midland & Scottish Railway. At Portmadoc the line connects with the Festiniog Railway which is of the same gauge. The two railways are in fact operated under the same management and the rolling stock is used in common.

The Welsh Highland station at Portmadoc is close to that of the Great Western, and the trains on the narrow gauge line connect with those of the G.W.R.

Beddgelert is an important station on the Welsh Highland for it is here that the locomotives are changed. The engine shown in the picture is an 0-4-0 saddle tank with a small tender attached. This locomotive belongs to the Festiniog Railway, and works the line between Portmadoc and Beddgelert, while a larger tank engine operates the trains beyond. In the illustration the engine is seen taking in water while awaiting the arrival of the train for Portmadoc. The driver can be seen behind the funnel adjusting the pipe from the water-tank. The shed to the right is for goods traffic purposes, while just behind the water-tank there is a small engine road with pit for cleaning the locomotives. In the distance can be seen a portion of the Snowdon Range conveying a very good idea of the kind of country through which this little railway runs.

Trains appear to consist of two bogie carriages and a luggage van with generally several slate trucks on the rear. These trucks are small open wagons in which the slates are stacked.

On the occasion of my visit the return train for Portmadoc was late in arriving at Beddgelert and I began to have fears concerning the connection with the last Great Western train for Barmouth. On arrival at Portmadoc, however, I found that the Great Western train had been held for us.



The photograph referred to by Harold Carson. Prince is seen taking water at Beddgelert, although if this was August 1927 it is a little difficult to reconcile his description with the time-tabled sequence of events at this station. In addition, a close examination of the photo shows a separate trap point lever on the goods shed siding - by all accounts the trap points had been interlocked before the end of 1926. Perhaps we should look at this more closely in a future issue?

From the Editor

As the Festive Season and the New year bear down upon us, it is appropriate to note that this Issue includes our annual Christmas 'flyer'. Adrian is waiting for your orders to flood in, especially, perhaps, for our new book on the Croesor Tramway.

New Year, apart from celebrations, first-footing, lumps of coal etc also means it is again time for membership renewal. Life Members and those who pay by Standing Order can relax, but everybody else should find a renewal reminder tucked into this issue and Dick Lystor would be most appreciative of a prompt response to this renewal request.

Once shopping and office work are out of the way it will be time for us all to relax, however briefly. Your Editor together with the rest of the Committee and Group Officers wish you all the best for a peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

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Figure 5 (left) - Train from Beddgelert to Dinas paused at Salem (WHR 55)
Figure 6 (right) - A view from the road over bridge at Dinas looking north after arrival of Beddgelert train (WHR 63)

Figure 7 - Looking south towards the engine and carriage sheds at Dinas (WHR 3)

photographers to be limited in the number of photos they were able to take. This is one reason for the relative scarcity of photos of our railway. Wheeller's work the following year was a significant exception to this 'rule' as he was able to make as many as 40 images on a single role of film.

The train we see in Figure 1 comprises, from the locomotive, Ashbury un-glazed 'Summer' No. 27, Ashbury semi-glazed 'Summer' No. 26 and FR Rebuilt Large Bogie Brake No. 4. This is the same loco and carriage combination seen in the Topical Press photos in *WHH* 59. In figure 2 we see carriages 27 and 26, but the brake is hidden around the bend in the track - however, the end of the brake vehicle can be seen behind the locomotive in figure 3. None of the photographs taken at Beddgelert show the make up of the Dinas train.

We get our first view of the Dinas train in figure 5, during a stop at Salem Halt, or more specifically, across the Bryn Afon access road, 150 yards north of the site of the original halt. We can deduce that this was a 3-coach train comprising, from the rear, Pickering Brake Composite No. 9, Ashbury un-glazed 'Summer' No. 28 and the Gladstone Car. Although this cannot be guaranteed, as the Gladstone was more often than not marshalled at the north end of the train, we might conclude that these were all the carriages. The Guard's Compartment of No. 9 was more or less directly above the Bryn Afon road.

In figure 6, as might be expected after figure 5, we see just 3 carriages with *Russell* visible beyond on the release cross-over. The brake pipe arrangement on the near-end of the Pickering confirms this to have been no. 9, the same vehicle seen at Salem.

Figure 7 is a view from the over bridge looking south, a quiet scene with just Ashbury 'Corridor' No. 24, the ex-Buffet Car, sitting on the carriage shed access road. Confirmation that this was no. 24 can be gleaned from figure 6 where the other Ashbury 'Corridor', no. 25, will be seen sitting on the goods line towards the right-hand side of the Goods Shed.

Other features of interest in figure 6 include the presence of both covered vans on the goods shed access road, just as seen by Wheeller a year later although in his photos their positions were reversed. Wheeller's photos also indicate the railway's apparent practice of keeping a spare carriage available to add to later trains. On his visit, this carriage was semi-glazed 'Summer' no 26 while here it was 'Corridor' no 25 which, on *Wheeller's Day,* he photographed in the Portmadoc to Beddgelert train, notably filled with Boy Scouts on the last train to Portmadoc.

Peter Liddell's Photo Analysis

Figure 1 (left) - *Welsh Pony* waits for departure at Portmadoc New's north platform with a 3-coach train (WHR 60)
Figure 2 (right) - A train waits on the main line at Beddgelert ahead of departure to Portmadoc - John Marks (Station Master) waits while Miriam, in her Welsh costume, takes shelter in the building (WHR 65)

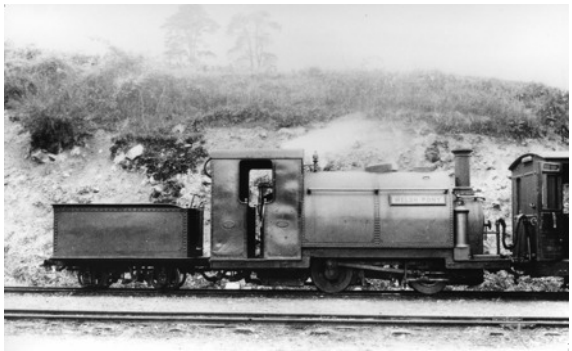

Figure 3 (left) - *Welsh Pony* at the head of a Portmadoc-bound train at Beddgelert (WHR 51)
Figure 4 (right) - *Russell* at Beddgelert, apparently in process of running around prior to departure to Dinas (WHR 13)

Readers may recall that I am quite partial to looking at images that were made in series, e.g. by Wheeller, Baker, etc. We have in this column looked previously at groups of photos by Ken Nunn (*WHH* 70), Henry Casserley (*WHH* 73) and Stanhope Baker (*WHH* 78). This time, I would like to look at a series of photographs credited to F.M. Gates and dated 20 July 1934.

The 1934 season had started on 9 July and the 20th was a Friday. If the dating of these images is correct, this tells us that Gates visited the railway three days after the Press Event described in *WHH* 59. There are 12 of his photographs in our collection, 11 of which have been given this one date.

The 1934 timetable shows there to have been four out-and-back services from Portmadoc to Beddgelert but only three from Dinas. In fact, on the apparent date of Gates' visit, being a Friday, there were only two services from Dinas.

I like it when photos were taken on sunny days as there is much to learn from shadows. Unfortunately, Gates was not apparently blessed in this regard so timing of the photos is problematic. However, we see in the photos *Welsh Pony* with a train awaiting departure at Portmadoc New north platform, the same train apparently ready to depart southwards from Beddgelert, some evidence that perhaps a train from Dinas was late arriving at Beddgelert, photographs of *Russell* at Beddgelert and finally photos taken near Salem and at Dinas.

Beddgelert was clearly in 'Frontier Post' mode at this time and the two crossing train reversals were scheduled for circa 12:50 and 16:40. In the first case the northbound train was scheduled to arrive first, at 11:20, with the southbound train arriving much later, at 12:45. The reverse working to Portmadoc left Beddgelert at 12:55 with the Dinas train departing at 13:15. The later crossing involved the arrival of the train from Dinas before the Portmadoc train with the Dinas service leaving before the Portmadoc loco was able to run round its train.

The photographs we see here with a Portmadoc service apparently waiting for the arrival of a train from Dinas appear consistent with the first of the two schedules. Far from the Dinas train being late, the scene in figure 2 perhaps conveys the long time gap between the scheduled arrivals of the first two trains of the day? It is tempting to suggest from seeing these photos that Gates travelled from Portmadoc to Beddgelert and on to Dinas later in the day. He would have arrived at Dinas at about 14:30 - his photos offer no clue as to his subsequent travels. We (I) do not know what type of camera Gates used, but it was not unusual at that time for

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