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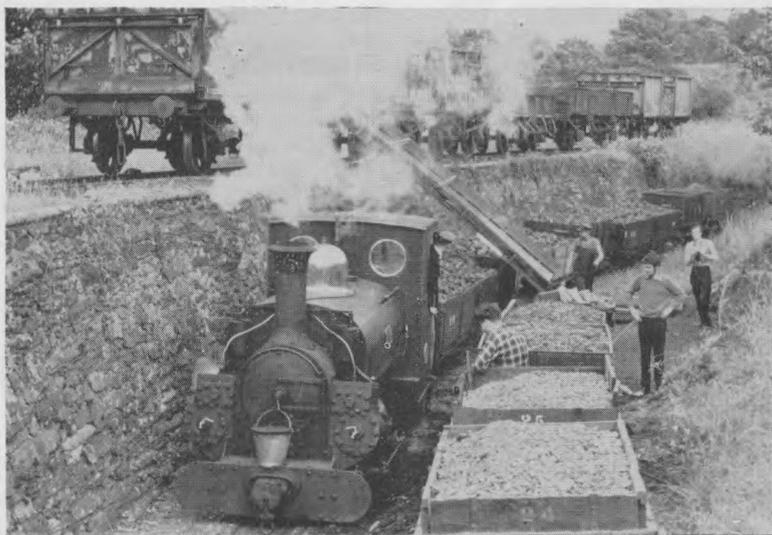


No. 18

# FESTINIOG RAILWAY MAGAZINE

*The Journal of The Festiniog Railway Society*

AUTUMN, 1962



*On trial*

*(N. F. Gurley)*

## THE FESTINIOG RAILWAY MAGAZINE

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## EDITORIAL

"The best way to preserve something is to use it." This resounding and widely-supported aphorism is such a generalization that by the time all the necessary ifs and buts have been dangled from it, it becomes unrecognizable. Priceless vintage tourers collide at rallies; sailing barges develop leaks; half-timbered buildings must constantly be kept in repair. In our own sphere, it is as well for the Talylyn Railway (for example) that its Preservation Society did not see fit to apply its title with literal exactitude. Preservation pure and simple is incompatible with the rough and tumble of daily use.

This problem is further complicated on the Festiniog by the fact that what we are trying to keep alive are not only the tangibles reduced by Lord Justice Harman to "a few little puff-puffs", but also the intangibles, the initiative and independence of mind of its engineers that, whatever other claims may have been made for them, made the Festiniog Railway so highly individual.

This summer we have been reminded that the first of these aims is greatly aided by the second; without a stubborn refusal of its workers to acknowledge that the age of its equipment precludes the efficient running of a railway, and without also an almost continuous stint of hard work and personal sacrifice by the whole of its staff and succeeding shifts of volunteers, the F.R.'s busy summer timetable could have become a grim diagram of promises unfulfilled. A feature of Boston Lodge is that while mouths may loudly consign the most venerated of F.R. equipment to the deeps of Portmadoc Harbour, hands obey contrary, unspoken ideals, and now that the rafters of the shops, pickled by blasphemy, are darker at night and the trains thin out for the autumn, it becomes evident that the permanent staff and their helpers have saved yet another record traffic year.

But, in its repayment, we are sure that they would agree that while a few rhetorical medals are an excellent thing, there is nothing to beat silent, solid and sustained support—from all of us.

## He, She or It

An editorial headache is the gender of engines. It is traditional, and quite natural, to have female locomotives—and, indeed, most other self-propulsive devices. Conflict arises when they start having uncompromisingly masculine names like *Earl of Merioneth* and *Merddin Emrys*; it seems faintly offensive to refer to them as 'she'. *Prince* (when working well) is often referred to by the General Manager as 'The Old Gent', but the Festiniog Railway Company

seems to have no fixed policy; in the new picture book *Prince* is 'he', *Merddin Emrys* is 'she' and the Peckett IT.

Our visitor *Linda* is a lady through and through, albeit somewhat club-footed and pigeon-toed, and of the sleeping beauties, *Princess* and *Welsh Pony* present no problem; but it is sadly true, we feel that the Peckett can never be anything but IT, despite the name *Volunteer* thoughtfully bestowed upon it by a proud Railway Company on its arrival. Also definitely in the IT category is our 'modern power', *Moelwyn* and the Simplex, although the latter has long been known (intriguingly) as *Mary Ann*.

What of you, members? A policy decision is required: feminine the lot, all neuter, or a mixed steam family with hermaphroditic diesel servants?

## Motorway Planned

"The property was in use as a private school for many years . . . owing to its spacious accommodation it could be adapted for any business and it is on the main road to Ffestiniog Railway car park . . .

— Portmadoc auctioneer's advertisement in *Cambrian News*.

## LOCOMOTIVE REPAIR FUND

The Festiniog Railway Company has announced that it expects to spend about £6,000 on repairs to steam locomotives during the next three years. Some £2,000 of this sum is likely to be available from revenue, but the Society has been asked to try to raise the balance, amounting to between £3,500 and £4,000, in addition to its normal annual monetary gifts.

Your Board is carefully considering how best to ensure the successful carrying out of this task, and intends to make a full announcement of its plans, together with estimated details of expenditure, in the Winter issue of the Magazine.

Realising that every member will be most anxious to do whatever he or she can to help, your Board wishes to take into consideration the views of Groups and individuals, and would welcome suggestions. These should be sent to the Secretary of the Society by the end of October. It may not be possible to acknowledge them all if they are too numerous, but all suggestions will be carefully considered, particularly offers of individual help.

## NEWS FROM PORTMADOC

Traffic results are always uppermost in our minds at this time of year. By the end of June the fortnight-late start to the season had been made good, and the end of July saw a spectacular increase in traffic over last year which was not far short of the record-breaking 1960 (T.V. year) figures. The August peak was slightly down on

last year, but by the middle of September more passengers had already been booked on the railway than during the whole of 1961.

The new timetable has proved a great improvement; the trains have been much more uniformly loaded and only on the odd occasion has there been any difficulty in accommodating all the intending passengers. Nevertheless, it is impossible to carry much more traffic in August, except at week-ends, unless we get more stock—and more first class. During June the trains were very crowded and a heavier service could be introduced to advantage, providing sufficient staff were available.

The heartening traffic figures, coupled with our prophecy in the last *Magazine* that the Railway would "shortly have three locomotives in service together for the first time for more than twenty years" may have tended to give the impression that the season has gone smoothly and without any operating difficulties. Let us hastily dispel any such notions. It has, without doubt, been the most hectic operating season since the Simplex struggled across the Cob with two coaches back in 1955.

The main, though by no means only, headache has been the locomotive situation. Immediately *Earl of Merioneth* had returned to traffic on June 23rd, *Merddin Emrys* was brought in for attention to a loose eccentric sheave. When that had been dealt with, *Earl* was brought in for a similar defect, and while it was being repaired—a lengthy job involving the removal of the wheels—*Merddin's* firebox began to give cause for concern, leaking badly from the crown stays. On Wednesday, July 4th, it was an effort to keep any water in the boiler at all, and with the peak service due to start in four days time, *Merddin* had to be withdrawn from active service—a bitter and unexpected blow. Due to the method of construction, repair was obviously not going to be easy, and with our Vulcan friends away on holiday, there was no hope of getting the Fairlie back into service for the busy season. *Earl of Merioneth*, intended mainly for spare engine duties this summer, therefore became Top Link engine, literally overnight, as an all-night session was needed to get her back into traffic on the Thursday morning.

Efforts to get *Prince* running again were then redoubled, but it was obvious that *Earl* and *Prince* could not be expected to cope with the heavy summer timetable without assistance. Discussions having previously taken place with the Penrhyn Quarry people regarding the purchase of their main line engines when the line was closed, they were approached again, and *Linda* was hired for the duration of the Summer, being loaded onto B.R. at Port Penrhyn on Friday, July 13th, unloaded by the P.W. staff at Minffordd on the Saturday evening and reaching Boston Lodge on the Sunday morning. That same evening she was steamed and attached to the six-coach main train in order to test her capabilities. Unfortunately, having reached Cei Mawr, she was obliged to return, as remaining water and coal supplies appeared to be insufficient to complete the journey to

Tan-y-Bwlch with an assured safety margin. Nevertheless, it was at once apparent that this locomotive fulfilled high expectations in terms of tractive effort.

Meanwhile, with only one serviceable steam locomotive, there had been no alternative but to defer the introduction of the peak Summer timetable, and, instead, last year's four trains (10-30, 12-30 2-30 and 4-30) had been run, hauled by *Earl of Merioneth*, together with a *Moelwyn*-hauled "Flea" at 3-00 p.m. No complaints were heard from passengers concerning this treatment.

*Prince* was steamed on July 11th, but on his first trial he came to Portmadoc without the regulator being opened; the cause was found to be due to the failure of the joint between the regulator head and the steam pipe inside the boiler. This involved stripping all the dome, with the attendant anxiety of dropping a vital piece inside, and re-machining the joint face. None of the lathes would swing the regulator casting, and finally a Heath Robinson method was adopted, involving the rotation of the casting by hand on the slotter table, with the Myford lathe top slide mounted on the ram, itself locked solid.

On Sunday, July 15th, *Earl*, *Linda* and *Prince* were all in steam, the latter working the advertised train, and the full Summer service was commenced next day. *Prince*, however, was far from perfect, and it was some time before all the bugs were finally sorted out; the ejector, transferred back from *Merddin Emrys*, refused to function properly, and one injector body was found to be cracked and had to be repaired. The sound of the blast has been changed considerably by the rebuilding, as a little lead has been given to the valves. The engine's appearance, too, has been altered, the outer framing being altered so as to take the drawbar pull through it, instead of this being transmitted through the firebox. Instead of stepping up in the centre to support the saddle tank, the outer frame remains level from smokebox to footplate, leaving a space underneath the saddle tank.

With two steam engines in reasonable condition, and both steam and diesel power in reserve, the full service would have appeared to have run smoothly, at least to the casual observer, but nevertheless there have been some very anxious moments in the operating department. Noteworthy is the incident which befell the 10-30 a.m. up train on Wednesday, July 25th, for just after passing Pen-y-Bryn Halt a large rock dislodged itself from a garden wall and fell against the side of the Buffet Car, damaging the footboards, whence it rolled along the side of the vehicle, finally to force itself under the Observation Car, derailing the rear bogie and smashing three axle boxes. The Observation Car passengers were reseated in the rest of the train, which then continued, minus the rear vehicle. The 11-45 a.m. was allowed to proceed from Portmadoc as far as Pen-y-Bryn, and here passengers were 'exchanged' with those from the main train, who had been discharged at Penrhyn, just above the blockage. Most of the passengers seemed to enjoy the novelty of walking along the track,

and the operation was successfully completed without incident. After some energetic work by the P.W. gang, through running was restored just after noon, and by 3-00 p.m. the trains were back on normal schedule, but it was not until the small hours of the morning that repairs were completed to the Observation Car.

Some two weeks later, on Thursday, August 9th, to be exact, the 10-30 a.m. departure was delayed by an event of an entirely different nature. About 8-30 a.m. a lorry driver, with a part load of cement to deliver to Boston Lodge Works, was directed thence along the *top* of the Cob! According to him, all went well until nearly half-way across, when our track slowly slewed him against the wall on the footpath side. He was then unable to go forward or back, and *Moelwyn* found him in this state. A hasty return to Boston Lodge for packing enabled the lorry to get its off-side wheels inside the track, but then its spring shackle got jammed in the rails. However, with stones as packing, progress was made slowly, and so it came to pass that, some time later, passengers for the morning train witnessed a strange procession heading over the Cob towards the station. First came one six-wheeled lorry in reverse, *Moelwyn* followed, and back-marker was *Earl of Merioneth* ready to make a belated start with the train.

Then on Friday, August 17th, came the incident which was to cause concern for the welfare of the remainder of the Summer service. *Prince*, with the 11-45 a.m. train, ground to a halt at Hafod-y-Llyn with faulty valve setting and could not be restarted. Diesel power took over the 'third class only' train and *Prince's* valves were reset over the week-end, but no cause could be found for the trouble. Some trepidation was felt on Monday morning, and *Linda* was steamed as a stand-by; this precaution was soon proved justified, and the events of the following 24 hours are recounted in detail on another page.

Very briefly, a broken piston head was found to be the cause of the trouble, and only a 'bodge' repair could be effected. A new piston and rod are being manufactured, but until the engine can be taken out of service for a few days machining cannot very easily be completed. Meanwhile *Prince* was back at work next day, but at reduced efficiency, finding a full load just a bit too much to handle. To help timekeeping, therefore, particularly with the bus connections at Tan-y-Bwlch in mind, *Linda* has been steamed almost daily, double-heading with *Prince* frequently on the 2-15 p.m. and on two occasions handling a train on her own. She has the edge on *Prince* for haulage capacity, though with her present regulator it is difficult to control her considerable power, and there is a lack of water capacity should any delay or slipping take place. It is hoped that negotiations for her to remain will be successful, and if so, minor alterations will soon gel over these difficulties. 60-100 lbs. per square inch pressure is adequate for anything she has so far been used on. The valve setting, by Festiniog standards, is hopeless, as she runs in full gear; resetting will not be easy, but this will be put right if she remains.

Before leaving the operational side, mention must be made of



Special and service trains at Tan-y-Bwlch 2217/62

(TV. F. Gurley)

the R.C.T.S. special Festiniog Rail Tour on Sunday, July 22nd. A feature of this tour was that approximately 180 passengers were to travel in each direction on the 'third class only' train, the original contingent having split at Llandudno Junction. *Prince* arrived at Tan-y-Bwlch with the empty stock, ready for the scheduled 2-15 p.m. departure, but due to serious delays, culminating in the diesel railcar breaking an axle and becoming derailed at Pont-y-Pant, the party did not arrive at Tan-y-Bwlch until 3-35 p.m. By this time, the ordinary service train was also ready to leave, and to avoid further delay it was decided to combine the trains. The R.C.T.S. party therefore had the unique experience of travelling in a train consisting of the entire passenger-carrying stock of the Festiniog Railway together with both its operational engines. For the record, *Earl of Merioneth* led the procession, proudly displaying the R.C.T.S. headboard. Then came the six bogie coaches of the service train, followed by *Prince*, the two four-wheeled brake vans, the quarrymen's coach, four four-wheelers, No. 22 and the two Welsh Highland coaches, *Prince* being in the middle to overcome coupling difficulties with No. 2 van. Quite a sight on any day of the week!

The Lynton and Barnstaple coach (No. 14) has been completed structurally, and on Friday evening, August 17th, *Earl of Merioneth* ran a train consisting of No. 20, the L. & B. and No. 11 (the formation which will normally be used) through Garnedd Tunnel. There were sighs of relief from the design staff when it passed through without

incident, confirming their calculations and earlier tests. The return journey in the dark demonstrated the superiority of its lighting; No. 20 was given 24 volt bulbs for the occasion and the L. & B. itself was brilliant. The mounting of the dynamo had been something of a problem, due to the restricted clearances underneath, but this also proved satisfactory on test, while the riding of the vehicle was quite superb and there was no spillage from any of the test glasses or cups carried.

Bogie Coach No. 21, built by Ashbury in 1896, the remains of which have been standing in a very dilapidated condition in Glan-y-Mor Yard for some time, has now been dismantled. It was quite unsuitable for rebuilding, but Certain parts have been carefully stored away for future use when other coaches require rebuilding. The bogies from this coach are being used, under the Welsh Highland No. 26.

On the Permanent Way there has been little relaying, though quite a few sleepers have been put in here and there as weak places have developed. Above Tan-y-Bwlch, a little more digging out has been done, and the very wet cutting above Coed-y-Bleiddiau has been dug out and ditched by the Enfield boys, thereby earning the name of "Tadpole Cutting".

At Boston Lodge there have been great and startling changes. The Joiners' Shop started to fall down and had become highly dangerous, so it was systematically demolished. During the process, however, the corrugated portion of the Blacksmith's Shop fell down in sympathy! The repairs to the back wall of the Brass Foundry have been expedited so that much of the spare bits and pieces can be stored therein. The Saw Mill has been cleaned out, and a passage to the top yard made where the old Boiler House once was.

Across the line, the Carriage Shed—erstwhile Engine Shed—has been cleaned out, the back pit filled in, and ordinary track is being relaid on top, ready for slewing when this portion of the shed is eventually rebuilt.

In the Erecting Shop, the concreting of the floor has continued from the Machine Shop end through to the first pit, and track has been laid in the concrete so that wagons of materials can be run across the shop. The hacksaw has been motorised and moved, and the drilling machine removed, whilst the large one that was once by the wheel lathe has been rehabilitated and is installed near the main motor, where the Myford lathe was, which, in turn, has been moved behind the planer. The shaper has been installed and motorised at the top end of the shop, opposite the wheel lathe, so that a fairly comprehensive collection of machines is now available and working, ready for tackling the heavy repair jobs ahead.

During the alterations it has been necessary to ask visitors to keep out of the Erecting Shop, but when the work is complete a great change will be seen. As it was, much time was wasted on one occasion due to some thoughtless person walking over the work prepared for concreting and thereby upsetting the levels.

A good amount of work has been done by volunteers recently, particularly towards the end of August when there were several large organised parties present. Unfortunately, however, the response to the appeal for specialised help in the Building and Fencing spheres has been rather disappointing, with the result that the Forestry Commission had to be contracted to do considerable repairs to the fences at the top end. This has helped to prevent sheep getting on to the line, but, on the other hand, when they do get on the line they find it more difficult to get off again. This aspect is receiving attention.

## NOTICES

By the time this Magazine is published another financial year will have started, and we must therefore begin by reminding members that subscriptions will soon become due again. We know that most members prefer to pay their subscriptions in January, and we shall therefore be enclosing the necessary form with the Winter issue of the Magazine, but there is no need to wait until then; our Assistant Membership Secretaries have their allocations of 1963 membership cards ready, and will be pleased to handle your subscription as soon as you care to send it. Their addresses are:

For surname initials A-K : G. Oates, A.C.A., 12 Norborough Road,  
Doncaster, Yorks.

For surname initials L-Z : A. J. Ward, 88 Cheyne Way, Cove,  
Farnborough, Hants.

Mr. Ward's new address takes effect from October 23rd, on which date he returns from his honeymoon. Another marriage brought to our notice recently is that of Joe Rivett, a popular figure at Boston Lodge, and Barbara Spice, who, as minute-taker, is well known to members who attend the Society's Annual General Meeting. We know that all members will join us in extending best wishes to both couples, and also to Life Member Peter Westray, from Preston, who spent his honeymoon working on the Festiniog Railway—and to Mike Elvy, Vice-Chairman of the London Area Group, who left the church with his bride on his traction engine.

We should like to express our thanks to the Officers of the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society (West Riding Branch), who organised the excellent rail tour from Leeds and Bradford to Portmadoc on Sunday, 22nd July. This enabled many members and their friends to visit and travel on the Festiniog Railway and introduced the line to new friends. We welcome our new member, Mr. K. H. Sunderland of Bradford, who joined the Society as the first prize in a raffle.

Plans are in hand to form a new Group, in the South West Midlands, probably based on Gloucester. Any members who would like to assist with the early work in connection with the Group's formation and inaugural meeting are invited to contact Mr. D. J.

Power, Manor Farm House, Kinsham, Tewkesbury, Glos. All members in the area will be circularized when details of the inaugural meeting are finalized.

## CENTENARY OF STEAM

During 1963, we shall be celebrating the centenary of the introduction of steam traction on the Festiniog Railway. On some lines, of course, such an event would not call for much celebration—the Middleton Railway is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year—but there are two particular reasons why the event is one of very special importance on the Festiniog Railway.

The first is, quite simply, the fact that, in *Prince*, we have one of the original locomotives in good working order. The second stems from the Festiniog's very narrow' gauge, for steam locomotives were introduced despite the adverse opinions of most prominent railway engineers of the period. It was the success of the England engines, followed by the even greater success of the double Fairlies, on the Festiniog Railway, that led to the building of narrow gauge railways in the mountainous districts of all the world's major continents.

The Boards of Directors of the Railway Company and the Society both feel that the occasion is worthy of special celebration, and are discussing the best ways of achieving this. Already, the Society has decided upon two things. Firstly, we are determined to give the Festiniog Railway more support than ever before during the centenary year, both in terms of financial contribution and voluntary labour. Secondly, we have decided to make the Spring issue of the Magazine a special Centenary issue—just how special will depend on what contributions we receive.

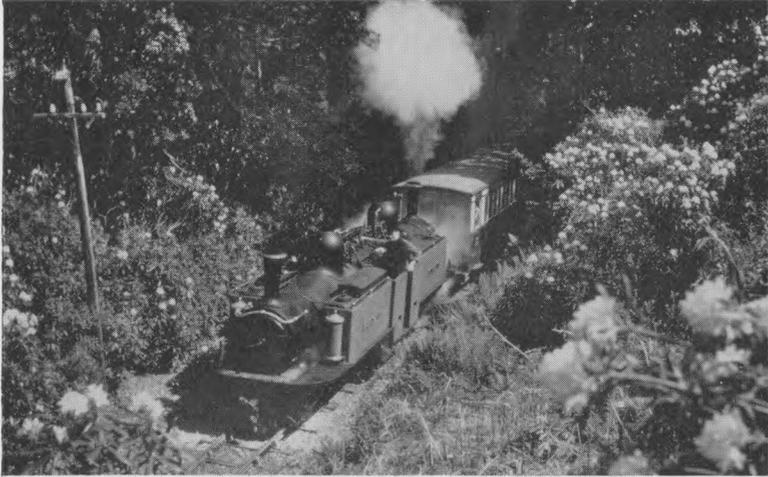


*Prince back at work—August, 1962*

(N. F. Gurley)

## SALES ITEMS

### Christmas Cards



We confidently forecast that this year's J. Arthur Dixon coloured Christmas Card is going to prove by far our most popular one to date. The photograph, reproduced above, was taken at Whitsun, when the rhododendrons in the Plas Estate were putting on their best show for several years, and *Merddin Emrys's* temporary "brown oxide" livery added to the colourful scene. The message inside reads: *With every best Wish for Christmas and the coming Year.* We feel that this card will be appreciated by all who receive it, whether or not they have any interest in railways. In spite of increased printing costs the price remains at 1/- each, or 11/6d. per dozen, but we are having to make an extra charge for postage and packing on orders by post.

Also available is a limited number of last year's black and white Christmas Card, based on an attractive and unusual pen and ink drawing of a train hauled by a double Fairlie. We were disappointed that more members did not order this card last year; many of those who did sent in repeat orders. Being very well printed, it offers excellent value at 6d. each, or 5/- per dozen, plus postage.

### 1963 Calendar

Our Centenary of Steam year Calendar is of similar format to the last two years, with six sheets, each with a different Festiniog Railway photograph, and each with two months' dates. Six attractive new photographs have been selected, with some unusual subjects, such as *Linda* and *Prince* double-heading a passenger train, and *The Cob by Moonlight*. The price is 3/6d. plus postage.

Orders for Christmas Cards and Calendars should be sent to Mr. N. F. Gurley, 105 Hempstead Road, Watford, Herts, utilising the enclosed order form if possible. Orders will be dealt with as early as possible, but a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if immediate acknowledgment is required. Please add the following amounts for postage, and packing (minimum 6d. maximum 2/6):

Christmas Cards: Id. per card.

Calendars: 6d. for first one  
3d. for each additional one.

## **Festiniog Railway Tie**

There are two versions of this attractive green and gold tie: in silk at 22s. 6d. post free, or in rayon at 10s. 6d.

## **Magazine Binder**

If you can never lay your hands on your copies of the Magazine when you want to refer to them, it's time you invested 12s. 6d. in this well-made and smart-looking binder, available with or without the dates 1961-63.

## **Society Car Badge**

Members who own cars but not Society car badges must now be in a minority. Supplies are still available, the price being 27s. 6d. post free.

Ties, Binders and Car Badges should be ordered from Mr. J. C. V. Mitchell, Middleton Lodge, Easebourne Lane, Midhurst, Sussex.

## **Society Crest Badge**

This attractive little badge is obtainable in the following forms: Lapel Badge, 3s., Brooch Badge, 3s., Tie Clip, 4s. Cuff Links, 7s. 6d. pair. All prices post free, from Mr. R. Smallman, Yieldingtree, Clent, Near Stourbridge, Worcestershire.

When ordering all the above items by post, please make cheques and postal orders payable to *Festiniog Railway Society Limited*.

## GROUP NOTES

(Very abbreviated. We apologise to the Group Secretaries for having to prune their contributions this time.)

### East Midlands

At the third Group A.G.M. on June 8th, Mr. R. Kirby retired the Chair and was succeeded by Mr. B. J. Littler. The subscription was raised to 5/- (juniors 3/-).

We have recently attended three traction engine rallies with a fair measure of success, despite inclement weather and a shortage of stewards.

Group meetings are to be held at the Coal Utilisation Council Information Centre, St. Peter's Gate, Nottingham on October 13th, at 2-30 p.m., and November 16th, at 7-30 p.m. In addition, joint meetings with the T.R.P.S. and W. & L.L.R.P.C. have been arranged at the Clarendon Hotel, Midland Road, Derby, on October 11th and November 29th, at 7-30 p.m. All members and friends are welcome.

### Hants, and Sussex

A most unusual exhibition of Festiniog Railway publicity material took place one day in June on board an ocean liner sailing towards New York. Group member Rodney Archer, who was going to attend an international Scout Camporee in America, was one of the thousand students from all the major countries of the world, and when the different Scout contingents were called upon to furnish a stand at an International Gala Day with material representative of their country, Rodney thought it a wonderful opportunity to publicise the Railway.

Once again the highlight of our summer activities has been our day on Mr. Alexander's 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge Meadow End Railway, in the New Forest, on August 18th. The event was publicised for us the day before on the B.B.C.'s regional "What's On?" programme and was also mentioned in local papers; it was a great success, and we most sincerely thank Mr. Alexander for his kindness to us, and also those who helped on the day.

The next Group meeting will be at 7-00 p.m. on October 20th, at the Pompey Hotel, Frogmore Road, Portsmouth, when Rodney Archer will give a talk on his visit to the U.S.A. and a report on the October inter-Group Conference will also be made.

### London Area

The next meeting will be on November 28th, on which date Mr. A. G. W. Garraway has kindly agreed to visit us. The Group A.G.M. will be on January 9th. Both meetings will start at 7-15 p.m. at the Abbey Community Centre, Marsham Street, Westminster.

We recently had a stand at an excellent exhibition at the Chace School, Enfield (home of the "Tadpoles") and also at Traction Engine

Rallies held at Appleford and Guildford. Future engagements are at Model Railway Exhibitions at Ilford, Orpington and Biggleswade. Stewards are now supplied with a lapel badge, prominently lettered 'Official', which has been found most helpful for getting service in a crowded bar.

Support would be welcomed for week-end working parties planned for October 20-21st, November 17-18th, and December 15-16th. Participation is not restricted to London members; we have recently picked up members from Bletchley and Rugby en route, and should be quite willing to extend this arrangement. Details may be obtained from Mr. N. F. Gurley, 105 Hempstead Road, Watford, Herts.

## **Midland**

The Group has had stands at the Traction Engine Rally held at Church Stretton on August 6th, at the Birmingham Model Railway Club Exhibition held in the Midland Institute from August 23rd to 25th, and at the Open Day of the British Railway Works at Derby, also on August 25th, which necessitated the construction of an additional stand. On each occasion there was a good response for stewards and the results in terms of sales and publicity were most satisfactory.

Work on the new brake van slowed down during the holiday period, but the brake gear is nearly completed and work will soon be started on the superstructure.

The Group Annual Outing to the Welshpool and Llanfair Light Railway on June 17th was attended by 57 members and their families. The hospitality extended to us by the W. & L. R. Preservation Society was most generous and everyone had a very enjoyable time. A small party, limited by the capacity of the Directors' Saloon, visited the private railways of Bass, Ratcliff and Gretton at Burton-on-Trent on September 5th, where the local brew was also well sampled.

An interesting programme of meetings is being organised for the winter, together with working parties in Portmadoc and Birmingham. The Group Secretary will be pleased to supply details.

## **White Rose**

It is hoped that the Group will be able to provide a useful addition to the motive power at Portmadoc by the acquisition of a Hudson-Hunslet diesel for use by the P.W. Department.

The programme arranged by the Group started with a visit to the Middleton Railway, Leeds. Future meetings will take place on October 18th (a talk on the Crich Tramway Museum), November 15th (a talk on the Talylyn Railway) and December 20th (members' slides), at 7-30 p.m. in St. John's Church Rooms, Mark Lane, Leeds (behind Lewis's store).

## MIDNIGHT OIL

(A vignette concerning engines and men, permanent staff and volunteers.)

On a Monday morning in mid-August, *Moelwyn* was standing on the mineral line at Minffordd with a rake of empty slate wagons, waiting for the 11.45 a.m. from Portmadoc to cross the 11.30 a.m. from Tan-y-Bwlch. The latter, hauled by *Earl of Merioneth*, had already arrived, and those listening could hear *Prince's* even beat approaching the level crossing. Suddenly, the engine was heard to slip badly, following which the tune changed, giving an unanticipated pause between individual exhausts, followed by two more almost together; obviously, for some reason, the valve events had altered alarmingly. As soon as the train had limped into the station a phone call was put through to Boston Lodge, where *Linda* was in steam, and assistance was soon on its way. Immediately the newcomer had arrived, the down train resumed its journey, followed later by *Moelwyn*. A further delay followed; *Linda* was coupled up to *Prince*, but had come up with only fifty pounds of steam and the fire was green, so that departure from Minffordd was finally twenty five minutes late.

Some efficient operating followed, and all went smoothly until as the 3.35 p.m. from the top approached Boston Lodge, *Linda's* whistle crowed for assistance. "Hot box!" her driver yelled to on-lookers as the train passed the cottages. Simultaneously, *Moelwyn*, standing in the yard, was started up, and the ensuing engine change would even have knocked time off Salisbury's performances during the Maunsell era. *Linda* was driven straight on to the wheel-drop to cool off.

Diesel and steam took the 4.30 p.m. up to Minffordd, where a further engine change took place, the Fairlie going back again to Tan-y-Bwlch, while *Prince* and *Moelwyn* brought the down train to Portmadoc. Then both ran light back to Boston Lodge, where *Prince* was put in the shed behind the other casualty, and the staff went off to tea.

By 7 o'clock, all the workshop's permanent staff was assembled, also a member of the p.w. gang with previous experience of wheel dropping, together with several volunteers, some with engineering experience and some without. During the afternoon a clue to *Prince's* trouble had been found on top of the saddle tank, in the form of a broken cast iron segment, the radius of which assisted identification. Sure enough, the removal of the left hand cylinder cover revealed some 135° of front flange missing from the piston, whilst extraction also brought to light the lack of half a front ring. All of this wreckage had been blown out through the ports; miraculously the cylinder and port faces escaped damage, but some of the pieces had been caught by the valve and were the cause of the valve gear being strained. The valve spindles are normally removed backwards, necessitating

the removal of the leading wheels, but in this case the front valve nut had seized on the thread. No spare spindle was available and the engine had to be returned to traffic next morning, so there was no alternative but laboriously to cut the eye off the spindle, punch it out frontwards, and then make a new eye and screw it onto the rod, a job done on the bench along with repairing the other pieces.

Meanwhile, *Linda's* motion had been stripped, her brake rodding and cylinder drain cock linkage removed, and, by use of a cradle with four screw jacks, the driving axle lowered until the recalcitrant axle box could be split. By this time it was well after midnight, but another frustrating hour passed before the box allowed itself to be divided. Fortunately, the damage was found not to be great, though the big end brasses had unexpectedly suffered more, so the work of reassembling was soon begun. As the night wore on, the number of non-workshop volunteers dwindled, but some stayed on right through the night. Their services were only required at intervals, mainly for the thorough cleaning of various parts which are normally inaccessible.

A series of radial holes was drilled through *Prince's* piston, into which studs were inserted to hold in position the two remaining rings. A little before 8 o'clock in the morning the job was finished. Those who could went off for breakfast and an hour or two's sleep, while the others set about their daily tasks. Both fires having been cleaned the evening before, the two engines were lit up, and *Prince* was prepared for normal duty. The urgency having passed, it was mid-day before *Linda* was fully put together and ready for the road.

The new day brought the season's record number of passenger bookings. Without the ingenuity of the staff and the assistance of the amateurs, together with the enthusiasm and devotion of all, several hundred of these bookings must have been lost, to the detriment of improvements planned for next year.

## SOME NOTES ON THE FESTINIOG AND BLAENAU RAILWAY

by M. J. T. Lewis

The Festiniog and Blaenau Railway, in death as in life, has always been overshadowed by the fame of its neighbour; but, although it survived in narrow-gauge form for only 15 years, its role as an appendage of the Festiniog Railway was by no means unimportant, and deserves fuller chronicling. Boyd's *Narrow Gauge Rails to Portmadoc* and the numerous references in his *Festiniog Railway* give a good general picture, with some detail, of the F. & B.R.'s history and working, and these notes are only intended to add a number of points culled mainly from the Statutory Returns to the Board of Trade and from surviving F. & B.R. and Bala & Festiniog

Railway records preserved in the B.T.C. Archives. I am grateful to the B.T.C. Archivist for permission to use the latter.

The chief landmarks in the history of the railway are: Act obtained by the efforts of the Hollands and Cassons, Blaenau quarry owners, 7/8/1862. Opened (length 3½ miles) 30/5/1868. Bought for £20,000 by Bala & Festiniog Railway (in effect part of the G.W.R.) 1/8/1876. B. & F.R. opened to Ffestiniog 1/11/1882. F. & B.R. converted without delay, and re-opened on standard gauge 10/9/1883. Apart from the first three months of its life it was never worked by the F.R.

Passengers were the mainstay of its traffic: in 1879, an average year, passenger receipts totalled £1,406 against £416 for goods. Quarrymen commuting from Ffestiniog to Blaenau provided most of the traffic—there were comparatively few first- and second-class travellers—the total number of passengers in 1879 being 52,099, excluding 10,890 season ticket holders. When the B. & F.R. stepped in, improvements sent traffic soaring to the 1877 record of 86,012 passengers, excluding 17,413 seasons; although the boom did not last, figures stayed well above those of independent days.

Goods Traffic followed much the same pattern, a steady rise after the take-over to a peak of 20,122 tons in 1881; but only half the total tonnage, and sometimes much less, was slate, the rest consisting mainly of coal for Ffestiniog. The slate traffic varied markedly between the limits of 1,820 and 9,393 tons, depending on the state of the quarries and of the slate trade. The only quarry directly served by the F. & B.R. was the Craig Ddu, connecting at Tan-y-manod—an old concern, but incapable of high production before it obtained rail access. After 1868 its output soared, and it provided at least half of the F. & B.R. slate traffic. The rest of the slate was collected at Ffestiniog by road from various smaller scattered quarries—Drum and Gamallt in the hills to the north-east, Foelgron and Croesyddwyafon on the Pentrefoelas road, and Braich Ddu towards Trawsfynydd. Purely goods trains were very rarely run, as waggons were normally attached to passenger trains. The annual train mileage was usually about 14,000. The working balance was healthy enough, except only in 1878 when substantial permanent way renewals caused a loss.

The railway staff was small. In 1877 it consisted of manager, secretary, two stationmasters (the halts being unstaffed), porter, guard, fitter, driver, stoker and four gangers. By 1881 there were three fitters and two drivers, but the Diphwys stationmaster had vanished. (The F. & B.R. station at Blaenau was always known simply as Diphwys.)

Mishaps were rare enough. There was the usual ill-treatment of waggons, and coaches were apt to be dented by rocks falling down cuttings. A passenger once claimed £110 for unspecified bodily injury, and in 1878 a bill was sent in by the F.R. "to cost of damage done to our locomotive engine *Little Wonder* by a collision at the

F. & B.R. junction, £4 13s. 9d." (This was before Dolgarregddu Junction was resignalled.)

The two locos have been fully described by Boyd. In B. & F.R. days they were sent, when heavy repairs were needed (one loco twice, the other once), via Minffordd and Dolgellau to the G.W.R. Wolverhampton works. Lighter repairs were carried out at Ffestiniog by G.W.R. men. On two occasions only, presumably when both locos were out of action at once, it is recorded that an engine was hired from the F.R. The original passenger stock consisted of three third-class coaches, one composite first/second, and a guards' van, to which another third and another composite were added in 1878, built by the G.W.R. for £65 and £90 respectively. The original 19 quarrymen's carriages dwindled to 17 by 1882, but some had acquired doors and windows. The railway never owned many slate waggons. A system whereby the F.R. loaned up to four waggons for every one the F. & B.R. possessed broke down in 1878, because the F. & B.R. were not playing the game (they only had six waggons of their own in that year), and thereafter the F.R. hired waggons out at a cost of 4d. per ton carried.

No record survives of the permanent way, but a chair found at Ffestiniog by the writer may well be of F. & B.R. origin. If so, the track was of unfinished T-rail, about 20 lb. per yard, very similar to that of the Croesor and the Gorsedda. This track, very light for a loco-worked line, was laid at a time when the F.R. was changing from 42 lb. T-rail to 46 lb. double-head.

In June 1882, before the standard gauge reached Ffestiniog, a contract was signed with J. P. Edwards of Chester to convert the F. & B.R. at an estimated cost of £11,131, and work began at once. Traffic was not interrupted, for as the standard-gauge metals advanced, the narrow gauge was maintained by an inside third rail, the only deviation from the original line was at about three furlongs out of Blaenau Ffestiniog Central, where the new line cut off a curve by a viaduct. Despite bad weather the new Blaenau sidings were ready by April 1883, although the new Blaenau and Manod stations were not completed until after the standard gauge was opened. Colonel Rich inspected the line on July 31, but postponed opening for a month as some of the works were incomplete. He gave the all-clear on September 1st, narrow-gauge traffic ceased on the 5th, the third rail was lifted to be relaid as check rail on the numerous curves, and on the 10th the standard-gauge line was opened to the accompaniment of the usual junketings and tiresome speeches.

Some of the old rails had been sold on the sly by the contractor, and the G.W.R. disposed of 153 tons more to the Patent Nut and Bolt Co. Ltd., but no home could be found for the stock. In August 1884 it was still cluttering up the slate wharves at Blaenau, so it was despatched to Swindon, where locos, coaches and all were scrapped in November, the B. & F.R. receiving its value, £178 19s. 8d. from Mr. Dean.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

### *The F.R. and the W.H.R.*

I beg space to comment on your unfortunate, vitriolic editorial (Summer Magazine). When I mentioned the Welsh Highland Railway at the Society A.G.M., it was an attempt to alleviate the bad feeling which the projected rebuilding of a section of the Welsh Highland Railway has rather surprisingly caused. Little did I realise how deep this feeling went.

The Festiniog Railway has behind it a number of years of successful activity, culminating in the re-opening of half the track and the conveyance of hoards of passengers. How is it that a concern of such stability can be shaken by the threat of a much smaller, different project in a neighbouring valley?

The fear is perhaps on two grounds:—"The W.H.R.S. will pinch our volunteers", or "The W.H.R.S. will pinch our passengers". For the first, how many F.R. "regulars" will be inveigled onto the W.H.R.? For the second, each railway will help the other, each will attract some w'ho will then go on the other to sample yet another "railway experience". The W.H.R.S. does not intend to "pinch" anyone—or anything.

The W.H.R. Society has about 250 members, and the initial project is to lay just under 2 miles of track through the Aberglaslyn Pass between Beddgelert and Nantmor. There are *no* plans to rebuild *Russell* in the near future. A number of W.H.R.S. members are also members of the F.R.S., and many more F.R.S. members have wished the W.H.R. well. May we ask that the more belligerent F.R.S. members leave the W.H.R.S. alone—in print, anyway? Such comments as yours can be put in their proper perspective by members well versed in narrow-gauge matters, but they mislead the general public. Blatant or underhand schemes or methods to sabotage a project like the W.H.R. do not stand by any code of decency. Whether it is welcomed or not, the Welsh Highland Railway is a fact.

Finally, I assume that members will not be taking this controversy too seriously. Nothing is to be gained by reciprocal mud-slinging—some of it may become adhesive.

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP S. CLARK

Dear Sir,

### *The Bwlch-y-Plwm Mystery*

With reference to Mr. Duckett's letter in the last issue, Bwlch-y-Plwm was opened before 1810, and, like many small mines in the area, has been worked only intermittently. It had several shafts, and one adit extended 600 yards underground. Its output, however, was

not high—between 1849 and 1875 it yielded only 355 tons of lead ore and a little silver. In 1877 the eight miners employed produced but 121 tons of lead in the whole year, and in 1878 the mine closed down. During the first World War it was reopened, but enjoyed only a brief period of relative prosperity before being abandoned for good.

Some years ago I had the same thought as Mr. Duckett, that a tramway might have extended up to the mine, but on investigation I decided against it. On the many miles of old tramways that I have walked, some disused long before 1878, I have never seen decayed earthworks produce the effect of this path, and there is no trace of the incline a railway would need to climb the 100 feet between path and mine. The meagre output of lead was doubtless carried by horse or mule down this path, to be loaded on wagons standing in the short siding by Cei Mawr. This siding was removed before 1887.

Mr. Duckett's anxiety over the fate of the people who disappeared in the vicinity will not be relieved by the fact that in 1901 the owner of Bwlch-y-Plwm was prosecuted for causing a public danger by not fencing off his abandoned shafts.

Yours faithfully,

M. J. T. LEWIS.

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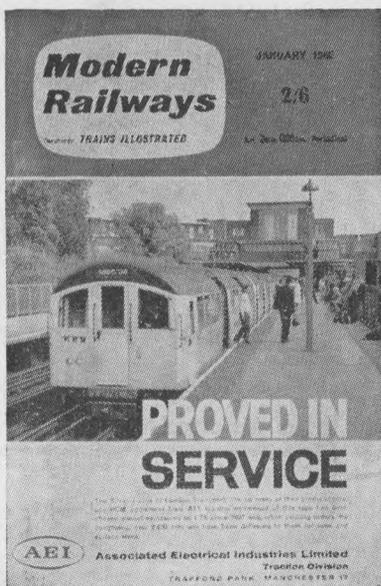
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