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CYFNODOLYN RHEILFFORDD
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RAILWAY MAGAZINE



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FRONT COVER:

*The collected volume of paintings by Edward Paget-Tomlinson should be on sale at FR shops by the time this issue of the Magazine is delivered. This view of Taliesin at Duffws in 1887 is by way of a taster.
(Edward Paget-Tomlinson)*

FRONTISPIECE:

Refurbished Bowsider No. 19 and replica Ashbury No.10 entered service on 22 May as part of the FR175 celebrations. The renovation of No.19 was funded by a grant from the FR Trust. (John Dobson)





Editorial



FR Magazine No.200

The issue of the FR Magazine that drops onto your doormat on or about 1 April 2008 will be No.200, marking 50 years of continuous, regular, publication. This is a considerable landmark in the history of the revived FR, and is something for which we need to plan.

Comparing FRM No.1 of summer 1958 with recent issues, one is struck by both the difference in size (No.1 was a thin 26 pages compared with today's normal 64) and the vast improvement in printing quality. The paper used for No.1 was only slightly better than newsprint and the quality of the photographs was downright poor by modern standards. When, however, as a junior member, I received that first issue, I was mightily impressed by the sophistication of the production and the wealth of information it contained, compared with the duplicated newsletter that had preceded it. Production standards may have risen over the intervening years, but the standard of the reporting and writing in issue No.1 still stands comparison with much of what we publish today.

We will, of course, be marking the 50th anniversary with a suitably special issue. It will, naturally, consist of a 'bumper' 72 pages and will, equally naturally, contain articles comparing the 7.5-mile FR of 1958 with the impending 40-mile FR/WHR of today. However, we will also be looking for reminiscences from people who were volunteers or staff members in 1958 - especially anything that has a period flavour to it. What was it like, for instance, to travel from London, on pre-motorway roads, on a Friday evening after work, in the bubble car shown as LAG transport on page 8 of issue No.1 - and then to do a weekend of hard work on the track before driving back again on the Sunday afternoon?

Alternatively, what memories does anyone have of the splendid FRS Special pictured on page 13, hauled by not one but two Dukedogs? Is Mr Lambe still with us, perhaps, to look back on the journey he so ably described in that first issue, or is there someone else with their own memories?

However, what we would really like to do is something that would have been beyond the wildest dreams of editors Trevor Bailey, Fred Gilbert and 'Blanco' White in 1958 - we would like to illustrate the FR of 1958 *in colour*. Colour film wasn't very widely used until the late 1950s as it was expensive and, in the earlier years, rather slow. Nevertheless, by 1958, 'fast' colour transparency film with an ISO speed equivalent of 32 or even 50 was becoming available, as were relatively cheap cameras capable of exposing it correctly.

It is therefore quite likely that there are members of the Society whose parents, parents' friends - or even they themselves - took colour photographs of the FR in 1958 or thereabouts. If you know of the whereabouts of such photos we would very much like to borrow them so that we can scan them for use in the Magazine. The originals will, of course, be returned in good condition after we have copied them, and the scans will be put into the Railway's archives for the benefit of future generations.

If you think that you may have access to suitable photographs or would like to contribute an article, please contact us on editor@ffestiniograilway.org.uk. A response before the end of November would be greatly appreciated.

John Dobson

There aren't many places on the FR where a Fairlie can be seen working hard on the way down from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Porthmadog. However, the cutting leading up to the summit by the power station at Tanygrisiau is one of the exceptions. (Chris Jones)



News from the Line



COMMERCIAL

FR traffic bookings to the end of April were within 50 passengers of last year, pointing to a steady start to the season. However, life is never quite that simple. The first quarter was excellent, but April was slightly disappointing, with the unseasonal hot weather at Easter sending potential passengers flocking to the beach. The WHR is up on 2006 by around 10% but of course there were very few trains in the first quarter of last year due to the work being done at Rhyd Ddu station so an increase this year is to be expected.

No large events are planned for 2007 and there are very good reasons for this. Our business has grown rapidly over the last three years and all of our staff are being stretched, often to their limits, to cope with the extra work that has resulted. However, the main reason is that this is the year when the imminent arrival of the WHR in Porthmadog will begin to impinge on Harbour Station. Several stages of the Cross Town Rail Link will affect the way the station operates,

including alterations to the Cob Records storage building in the station car park and the construction of the tramway section across the Britannia Bridge. Special events depend heavily on use of the area in front of the station and definitely would not mix with the activities of the WHR civil engineering contractors!

As this is being written, we have just finished our *Interactive and Members Weekend*. Many members visiting Porthmadog for the AGM had the opportunity to watch some unusual train formations, or to join in. Footplate rides and gravity trains proved the most popular. Society free travel was not suspended and thus gave members the opportunity to ride as they pleased. The Saturday evening FR Society *Bangers & Mash* special was a great evening. Both Company managers and Society directors went 'back to the floor', so to speak, with Graham Bond driving, Rod Buchanan guarding and Clare Britton and Colin Burt assisting *Bangers & Mash* king, Simon Fozzard, together with Alison Hobson, Annie Britton and Eurliw Williams.



This has become an important weekend in the railway calendar and one at which we are expected to put on a show. We now feel that we have got the level about right and it is nice to be able to do a weekend that members can enjoy. Ticket sales may not have been high but the shop had an excellent weekend as did *Spooner's*, and we would like to thank everyone for their support.

Things are definitely looking up in Harbour Station shop. Investment in new shelving and display equipment at Porthmadog and a quick makeover for Caernarfon has improved the look of both outlets and the new stock is proving popular. With several new publications due out this year including our own stock book, we are confident that we can turn around last year's disappointing result. If you have not been to Porthmadog for a while and want to see what is available, our webshop at www.festshop.co.uk, will keep you up to date and help you to support the railway from home.

Buffet car No.124 (wasn't it going to be No.121? Suffice it to say that all buffet car numbers now end in 4) finally entered traffic a few days before Easter and has generally been well received by the crews, despite teething troubles with the on-board generator. The additional space is a great asset and an industrial fridge and freezer open up many possibilities for additions to the menu. At the moment, our regular staff are attending basic hygiene courses and in the next few weeks we are going to start experimenting with morning coffee and afternoon teas in observation car No. 100.

The Marketing Department is busy as usual and has been supporting some of the area groups at shows around the country by providing literature, up-to-date photographs and the loaning out of display panels. In fact, we now have to diary the boards' movements, such is the demand on them. If anyone out there would be interested in sponsoring a second set, please let us know. Also, if you have an opportunity in your own area to publicise the Railway, please get in touch with us. We can't be everywhere and are grateful for any help we can get. We can often provide what you need to help get the message out about the Railways. Please get in touch with Roger Dimmick on 01766 516063.

SHOP NEWS: It's been a busy start to the year in the shops, with lots going on since Santa put away his sleigh. By the time you read this, all four railway shops will have had a substantial refitting, with new slat walling and shelving for Porthmadog and Caernarfon and new display cases for Porthmadog, Blaenau and Caernarfon. Tan y Bwlch will have new furniture and there will be a new floor similar to that in Porthmadog shop in the red shed at Blaenau. All of which is very nice, but would count for nothing without lots of lovely new things to display and sell.

There are new clothing lines available from Porthmadog and Caernarfon station shops and from the web shop; these all have the joint railway crest embroidered on them. This looks really nice and allows us to stock a more varied selection of clothing instead of having lots of money tied up by holding identical stock with two types of crest. This does not mean an end to the lines with individual FR or RhE crests as we will carry on with both of them.

There are two new types of jacket to replace the discontinued 'trekker'; they both come in black with the aforementioned crest embroidered on them. One is a weatherproof design and costs £40, the other is shower-proof and has zip-off sleeves for £30. The second will be useful on those Gwynedd days when the weather can't make up its mind what to do, whereas the first will keep you warm and dry when the weather has decided that it definitely wants to be horrible! In addition to these we have three colours of rugby shirts, in black, maroon, and navy blue, all with white collars.

The final new clothing item is a range of joint crest ties. Our previous supplier has retired from the business and this has given us the chance to look for a new source. The result is a top quality tie, available in black, maroon, navy blue, and grey.

It is also a good year for FR books as we are expecting four new books about the Railway. Firstly we have *Festiniog 1946-1955 - The Pioneers' Stories*, from Middleton Press. In addition to an excellent selection of monochrome photographs from the period, this has a number of excellent and entertaining short memoirs written by a selection of the people who began the preservation of the FR. This is a very entertaining book and is certain to become a classic.

Also due to be published about the time that this Magazine appears is Phil Hawkins' compilation of historical FR and WHR water

New service car No.124 is now in service, paired with rebuilt all-first observation car No.100. (John Dobson)

colour paintings by Edward Paget-Tomlinson. This beautifully produced book will allow us a colourful insight into bygone eras of the FR. In a third offering, author Cliff Thomas has gathered together an interesting collection of photos and text for his new FR book. And, finally, we have *An Illustrated History of the Festiniog Railway Company 1832-1954* by Peter Johnson. This book is in the same format as Mr Johnson's very successful *An Illustrated History of the Welsh Highland Railway*, published in 2002 by OPC. It covers the whole history of the FR from the construction of the line through to abandonment and subsequent preservation: being, in a way, the prequel to *Immortal Rails*.

We also have the usual selection of gift and souvenir items to delight you including some very nice new glassware with the crest engraved on it, a full range of Gomms collectors' badges, including several of locomotives never featured before and, of course, all of our old favourites in up-to-date liveries.

There are many other great mementos to remind you of the railways and we hope to see you in person in our shops during the summer, or to host a visit from your virtual self in the online shop at www.festishop.co.uk

CATERING: *Spoooner's* café is now open from 08.30 to 16.30 during busy periods. Breakfast is served from 08.30 to 11.15 and lunch from 11.30 to 15.30. After 15.30 afternoon tea will be offered until 16.30. On Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays evening meals are served from 16.30 to 21.30. Evening meals will also be served on other days during the Summer months.

Spoooner's has a new day chef, Gwen Parry, who brings many years experience with her. She is helping bring the menus up to date and is also keeping a close eye on food stocks so as to ensure that everything is available when required, and waste is avoided. Regular daily specials are being offered, these range from various soups made on the premises, fresh sandwiches and salads to a selection of hot dishes, all of which are prepared on site using local produce. The café also has a new hot pastry cabinet which is proving very popular. People prefer pastries oven-hot rather than micro-waved and our sales are proof of this. *Spoooner's* also has a new range of food labels and, thanks to Roger Dimmick, a fresh menu design, in FR colours, and with a much more modern and professional look.

Easter was a great success with increased trade during the day in both the café and bar. Evening meals and bar sales were also up.

Vicki Knight has started to make her mark in the kitchen with the purchase of a few small items of equipment. Much of the existing equipment is very old and, for some items, repairs are costing more per annum than the price of a replacement.

Tan y Bwlch Café has opened again for the season and, by the time you read this, it will have some very nice new furniture. Do drop in and have a look. The old furniture will be going to the Welsh Highland, but the precise purpose to which it will be put hasn't been specified.

Last, but not least, *Spoooner's* bar has once again won joint first place in the regional CAMRA *Pub of the Year* competition for 2007, the reason being the range of cask beer that is always on sale.

FFESTINIOG TRAVEL

We are very pleased to report that FT broke all previous records and achieved a profit of £107,000 in 2006. This is, of course, entirely due to everyone who supported our efforts by purchasing travel services from us, be it only a cheap UK rail ticket, or the expensive holiday of a lifetime. We extend our sincere thanks to all of our customers. The profit goes, of course, towards maintaining and improving the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railways.

At the moment, our European ticketing department is doing exceptionally well and the Aberystwyth office is dealing with the numerous 'last minute' bookings which seem to have become the norm these days for tailor-made trips to Europe. There is also a trend for people who join an escorted tour to also request add-on arrangements at the end. This sort of request keeps Porthmadog FT staff busy, over and above their normal duties of operating a full, tailor-made service to exotic destinations. Currently the Trans-Siberian and Trans-Mongolian services are firm favourites, but all advance tour bookings are slightly ahead of this time last year.

Travel PR, the company we engaged to handle our publicity in June 2006, is certainly raising our profile. We have had several mentions in *The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Observer* and *Daily Mirror*. It's now quite normal for us to get calls from journalists wanting advice regarding rail journeys, or information about particular destinations and tours we run, and Alan Heywood is currently acting as rail travel specialist for *Times Online*. People can ask specific questions and both questions and answers are shown on their website. If you want to check this out, go to www.timesonline/travel then click on 'Your Say'. There is a link from that page to FT's website.

Our liaison with Railtrail Tours has also been a success. We sold holidays in the UK for Railtrail to nineteen people, spread over four tours, and they produced five people for our *Japan - Steam & Cherry Blossom* tour, making it this year's long-haul 'best seller'.

Our planning for 2008 is well under way with lots of exciting holidays being created. These include tours to Mexico and Cuba, Thailand, Malaysia and Borneo, Sri Lanka and Southern India, a Canadian spectacular with a steam train across the Rockies, *Labrador in the Fall*, Argentina and Chile, and another great Australia and New Zealand tour. In Europe we plan to include all of the usual favourites in Switzerland, Scandinavia, Germany and Austria plus Corsica combined with Sardinia; Vienna and Hungary, Northern Spain and Portugal, and the Isle of Man.

Every year we send a brief description of our proposed new tours to people on our mailing list and they can indicate their interest without commitment. The response is always excellent and helps to guide us in selecting our final programme for the following year.

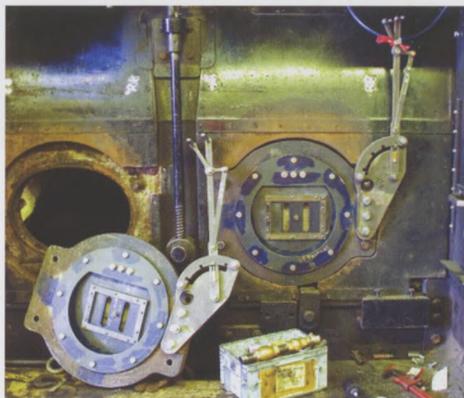
WORKSHOPS

The one obvious statement to make about the past few months at Boston Lodge is that we have been busy! If you were to ask anyone who has visited the Works over the last few months, we are sure they would agree. All available space is being made use of, and we are at, or very near, full capacity. Indeed we would do well at times to take a step back and remind ourselves just how much, despite the obvious limitations of access and work space, this unique collection of 'farm sheds' and now wholly inadequate stone buildings still achieves for the FR 'empire'.

In no particular order, the locomotive situation is as follows: *Blanche* continues in traffic and many of those minor matters that can be so irritating to crews have been addressed. However, in the short term, we will not be able to carry out any work on the knocking axle boxes. *David Lloyd George*, *Palmerston*, and *Prince* are available for traffic and the latter locomotive is due a yearly boiler examination in June. Those who read the various internet sites will be aware that it was a late substitution for *Palmerston* at Gelert's Farm on the occasion of the opening of the new section of track for the WHR(Porthmadog). *Taliesin* has seen frequent use and has at times double-headed with *Prince* to release *DLG* for planned washouts and maintenance. Some modifications have been made to its spark arrestor.

Merddin Emrys has entered traffic as a coal-fired locomotive and initial trials showed that the blast pipe required modification. An original double-engine blast pipe was found in the brass foundry, and copies made and fitted. The results are promising and there is every indication that the locomotive will be very popular with footplate crews. It is intended to make more use of *ME* and less of *Blanche*.

Work on *Linda* has continued, but progress is slow and there is little change since the report in the last Magazine. Many of those that work on this project are also locomotive crew and naturally that means that the time they can give to *Linda* is limited.



The new, inward-opening, firedoors on Merddin Emrys are an interesting and ingenious design. It remains to be seen how the operating mechanism will stand up to the wear and tear of regular service. (John Dobson)

All of the defective stays have been taken out of the *Earl of Merioneth's* boiler and replacements are to hand, as are new tubes. There is a lot of work to be done on this boiler and volunteer assistance would be appreciated. It would provide an ideal task for small groups over a few weekends.

The rear unit from NGG16 Garratt No.87 is ready for fitting of the lubrication system, whilst the front unit has moved into No.2 road of the new erecting shop. Stripping down to component parts has commenced so that its condition can be determined and work planned accordingly. It was recognised from the beginning that the boiler would need some attention. We were therefore not entirely surprised to be advised by our boiler inspector that the backhead and a small section of the boiler barrel would need replacing. At present we are establishing the best way to do this and are

investigating the possibility of sending the boiler to outside contractors. We were fortunate in having the help of a former employee - Clive Gibbard, who has also worked at Pridhams, the boiler makers of Tavistock - whilst we were examining the boiler and cutting off the backhead. His advice was invaluable and we hope that he will visit again. Donald Bateman, a 'retired' pattern maker has been working diligently on patterns for missing ferrous and non-ferrous components and it is probable that we now have more NGG16 patterns than anyone else!

The underframe for the Welshpool carriage should be out of the welding bay and in the carriage shop by the time you are reading this Magazine. This is slightly later than planned as we had to halt work on the frame whilst the condition of No.87's boiler was determined. Unfortunately this is one of the problems caused by lack of space in the Works.

The front power unit from No. 143 has been delivered to Dinas and both WHR NGG16 Garratts are therefore available for traffic. K1 is still subject to modification for coal firing and the intention is that it will be in traffic this season.

There is little further to report regarding our diesel fleet other than the return of *Upnor Castle* to the Construction Company. The change took place at the end of March and allowed us the unusual sight of the two Planets double-heading from Rhyd Ddu to 'almost' Beddgelert, on the WHR Supporters' Day train on 24 March. The final drive gearboxes for *Caernarfon Castle* are still awaited and consequently *Vale of Ffestiniog* still slumbers in No.3 road of the old locomotive shed.

The repaired gearbox for *Criccieth Castle* has been delivered, fitted and the locomotive should soon be available for traffic. This will mean that we will no longer need to have a steam engine on shed as a standby. This will show a substantial saving in fuel costs and manpower.

The Reynolds Gang have made one of their bi-annual visits and as usual have completed almost all that was asked of them. The 'almost' relates to what can best be described as a 'near miss incident'. Gang boss Peter Pardington did intend to paint the lobby pink but, luckily or otherwise, depending on your colour preference, he was stopped!

Construction of the bodywork for the 'Pickering' third class saloon, ordered by the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway, began as soon as floor space became available in the Heritage Shop, following completion of the WHR saloons. (John Dobson)

IN THE CARRIAGE WORKS

By the time you read this, Boston Lodge Carriage Works will have delivered its biggest project to date - three new saloon carriages for the Welsh Highland Railway. These carriages have been built by a small team of people in a little over nine months, which is a great achievement. Along the way, we have had a great deal of help from a lot of volunteers. As well as helping with the WHR carriages many volunteers have also assisted with the more mundane task of maintaining the FR's carriage fleet and other woodworking projects.

As soon as the WHR carriages were complete, work started in earnest on the next contract - the construction of a second replica Pickering saloon for the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway. The underframe for this carriage is already substantially complete in the welding bay and erection of the body framework is going well in the Heritage Shop. This carriage will be an all-third saloon and therefore slightly less complicated to build than the first-third brake composite delivered to the W&L a couple of years ago

No.124, the new service vehicle built to partner observation car No. 100, entered service as planned early in the season. Currently it is experiencing some teething problems, which is to be expected with a radical new design. These mostly involve the on-board generator. Nevertheless, it is now in regular service along with No. 100 and appears to be working well as far as the internal layout is concerned.

As forecast in FRM 196, 'tin saloon' No. 120 duly received its replacement seats, and a moderate amount of intermediate maintenance. After comments were received about the poor ambience





of driving trailer/observation car No.111 compared with Nos.100 and 102 it has also received attention. As a first step towards upgrading this car to a standard approaching that of the newer cars, the floor covering has been renewed and the fixed swivel seats have been replaced with new wooden chairs using the original upholstered seats. On the heritage side, 'bowsider' carriage No. 19 and the four-wheeled Ashbury carriage, both resplendent in Victorian livery, are scheduled to enter traffic at the end of May.

Overall, including the three Welsh Highland carriages, seven new or refurbished carriages will have entered traffic in the year ending May 2007.

The Romanian carriage for the WHR, which is to be fitted out at Boston Lodge, has now arrived and is currently sitting outside the old locomotive shed. It is far too tall to enter the carriage works on its own, converted 760mm gauge, bogies and may have to be worked on in the open.

Another pending job for the Carriage Works is fitting out the interior of the Romanian steel saloon currently sitting outside the old locomotive shed. It was converted from 760mm gauge in Romania. (John Dobson)

All three of the saloons being constructed for the WHR were complete by mid-May. All have extra wide doors at one end and tip-up seating in the saloon to facilitate the carriage of passengers in wheelchairs. (John Dobson)

We are very grateful for all of the help given by volunteers over the past year - please keep coming. If you wish to help in the carriage works contact Norman Bond on 01766-516098 or e-mail: **norjento'deudraeth.net**.



PERMANENT WAY AND CIVIL ENGINEERING

As this report is being written there are trains everywhere, as it's Interactive Weekend with the train graph looking like an excerpt from the Southern Electric timetable (especially to anyone who remembers Table 65!).

We have a departmental involvement in that we are running a gravity train. This is because *Harlech Castle* opted out by developing a fault too late for us to obtain replacement parts. A gravity train is not particularly representative of anything that we do nowadays, but revives memories of days long ago, before the PW department had its own locomotive. Relaying and ballast trains were propelled up the line by a locomotive and driver from Boston Lodge and left on site, and the gang travelled to work on the old Wickham Trolley. On completion of the work, the train would return to Minffordd by gravity, often preceded by the Wickham (always pronounced 'wigwam' by old Evie Roberts, our former colleague and pre-WW2 WHR platelayer!) as far as Penrhyn, where the driver would open the road crossing gates to save the gravity train stopping and getting stuck across the road. Perhaps, one day, Fred will write a bit about real gravity trains but it won't be something for the faint-hearted to read!

It's also raining very slightly as this is being written. This is worth commenting on as the diary only shows three wet days since late March. It has been unseasonably hot too, causing a number of annoying, minor, misalignments of track, including two on the WHR, and Temporary Speed Restrictions are currently in force. However the Plas Private Station curve has kept its alignment, repaying the work done there during the past Winter. The hot dry spell has also seen a lot of fires in the area, two of them affecting the train service and leading to the PW train being 'requisitioned' to convey water tanks to site for the Fire Brigade.

Looking back at the last Magazine there's not a lot to say without being repetitive. Work at Pen Cob was virtually complete by Easter; the old mainline point has been temporarily laid in the space vacated by the old exit point (see the photo on page 206 in FRM 196) to give access to the virgin territory on the seaward side of Nos.13 and 14 roads in the car shed, and a new, No. 16, siding has been partly constructed to serve a coaling point, yet to be built. Part of No.5 road in Porthmadog was generously donated by the

operating department for this as we did not have a sufficient number of sleepers in stock.

The Tyler's Cutting to Penrhediad site has been cleared of all old materials except several long-welded rails which are to go to Penrhyn next winter. The new joints have been repacked after initial traffic; the new rails are fifty nine feet long and replaced mostly thirty-foot rails, so the joints all came in different places requiring the repositioning of sleepers and insertion of additional ones.

Lead Mine Curve has had the joints 'squared'. It was laid with new straight BS60A rail in the early 1970s, when our policy was to stagger joints on mainly curved track, in order to maintain an acceptable alignment, but now our policy is to 'square' the joints on straight track and on gentle curves, when the opportunity presents, as it is better both for the train ride and for the life of the track. Indeed, after much discussion, and following the decision to pre-curve the rails to fit the site, the new track from Tan y Bwlch bridge to Tyler's has all been laid with square joints, much of it on 4-chain curves. This is OK for 15mph, but Fred is still convinced that pre-curving and staggering of joints is preferable for 20mph track!

Even though you won't be reading this until the beginning of July, it still won't be too late for you to volunteer to work with our PW gang on its 06.00 shifts. Just give Andy Carey a call on 07919 414877 or e-mail Andy.Carey@festrail.co.uk with a copy to fredtrack@freeuk.com. We'll be pleased to see you and it's a time when a few volunteers can make a big impact.

The Penrhyn Railway Trust recently collected a small lorry load of ex-PQR bullhead rail to return it whence it came, in 1965. This was released thanks to the relaying of much of Minffordd Yard with rail cascaded from the replacement programme on the main line, particularly ex-Barry flat-bottom rails from Gwyndy Bank.

You may have read elsewhere about the 'Asset Register'. During the coming Summer our records of track and structures will be brought up to date, in order to evaluate the health of these assets, and devise a Hundred Year Plan for maintenance and renewal of everything on the impending 40-mile Railway, so that it doesn't all wear out at the same time.

Finally, the Rheilffordd Eryri Report in the last Magazine mentioned the Cambrian Coast crossing, and the belief that it is the only flat crossing of standard and narrow gauge tracks in the UK. This is incorrect; there are a number of such crossings in the MoD East Rigg complex

near Carlisle (and at the former RNAD Trecwn, but this site is out of use). The East Rigg crossings are currently being replaced with units made by KJG Price of Bedwas near Caerphilly. This is the same firm that manufactured our new Pen Cob turnout and they are currently making new turnouts for the development of the Porthmadog Harbour Station throat to receive the WHR. Until the old BR sidings were lifted in Minffordd Yard there was a flat crossing of FR over BR near the Goods Shed, close to two FR diamond crossings over the track to what is now the rail wharf, one of which remains today, but rebuilt in the 1980s with 751b rail.

RHIW GOCH SIGNAL BOX

We've done it! Rhiw Goch signal box has reopened after its six-month rebuild. Sadly we missed the Easter deadline, but Graham Cole and Ian Rudd were able to test the box on the Saturday after Easter - some train crews were a little surprised to find their trains going through the loop instead of the main line, but it all worked.

As with most large jobs on the FR, it is not quite finished yet. The plumbing is still incomplete, there is some decorating to finish, and the exterior would benefit from an additional coat of paint. There is also a new linoleum floor covering to go down, but that will have to wait until after next winter, when we will have replaced the signal cables to the Porthmadog end of the loop.

There is also the thorny problem of the mains electric supply. The present cable does not comply



Rhiw Goch Signal Box is now back in use, having been officially commissioned on Friday May 11, when Society President Alan Pegler cut a ceremonial tape. (John Dobson)

with today's regulations and will have to be upgraded. It's not a big job but, with the price of copper going through the roof, a quote for cable is only valid for *three days!* This makes it rather difficult to produce a reliable estimate. The present estimate is about £5,000. Maybe there is a cable sponsor out there, or even an electrical wholesaler who might be sympathetic. Who knows?

Perhaps the most gratifying part of the Rhiw Goch project was being awarded the *Merddin Emrys Shield* by the Society Board at the recent AGM. As has been said over the months, it's the whole team who deserve credit for the reconstruction. There are many people we would like to name, but won't in fear of missing someone out. The biggest thank you must go to everybody who donated so generously to the project. Without your support we would not have been able to achieve what we have. *Thank You* one and all!

One of the complications in rebuilding Rhiw Goch Signal Box was the need to provide access to the 'bat penthouse' in the roof space. This involved the provision of special landing pads for the creatures, as they find it difficult to grip a smooth painted surface. (John Dobson)



SIGNALS, TELEGRAPHS & LINE SIDE MANAGEMENT

As part of the track alterations at Pen Cob, the ground frame has been moved some fifty five feet towards Porthmadog. It is essentially a new installation, as nothing of the old frame would fit. Although the original fittings were reused, all had to be modified to pass under or connect to the new rail. The clearances of 50lb bullhead rail in chairs and 75lb flat-bottom rail are quite different. Flat-bottom rail, with its wide foot, sits on the sleepers whereas bullhead rail is an inch clear of the sleeper and has the same width at the foot as the head.

We also found, to our dismay, a massive (10 ton?) piece of stone just under the surface where the foundations for the new frame had to go. A slot, some 14 inches long and 10 inches deep, was made in the stone by drilling a series of holes as close together as possible and then spending a day cutting between them with a jack-hammer. Six resharpenings of the breaker chisels were needed during the operation. The rear leg of the frame is now very unlikely to move! We were very grateful to the PW Gang for their help as they must have spent a whole day working on the other frame foundations with Kango hammers as well as drilling holes to screw down cranks and strapping. As the points are new, the nip on the blades is tight but this can be eased after they have settled in traffic.

Up at Rhiw Goch, the second set of independent testing has been done by Martin Duncan. Not having done any of the wiring changes he was able to keep a 'Chinese wall' between himself and the refurbishment team, and so maintain his independence. The functional testing proved that all was correct, though some work to ensure the security of equipment from outside interference had to be completed before the box could be returned to service. This was done and the Weekly Notice advised operators that the box would return to service from 00.01 on Saturday 14 April.

As ever John Maxey, with his band of volunteers, has kept the maintenance routines on schedule. Although it has little glamour, the performance of the same routines every month, every quarter and every year is essential. He is also pushing on with the up-dating of our electric train staff (ETS) remote-operator equipment, vulnerable components being replaced by 'plug & play' modules.

Work is also progressing on the production of a replacement for the generators used with the remote-operator equipment. The present hand-wound generators can produce anything between 50 and 110 volts depending on the enthusiasm, or otherwise, of whoever is doing the winding. Also, there are variations in the distances between stations and hence in the loop-line resistance. These differences give rise to variations in the length of time for which the token release is available. The ideal of a push-button generated supply at a fixed voltage, set to a fixed release-time adjustable for the length of each session, is the goal.

Another area being investigated is the replacement of the track-circuit modules, electronics having moved on considerably since these were first conceived by Damien Poole some 30 years ago.

Martin Duncan's next priority is lineside management, with the herbicide treatment of both railways, and three weeks of student work experience. John Maxey has one of his summer staff arriving early due to a change of universities, but the other lad looks as if he won't be coming.

JASPER

Thankfully, following the serious tree damage at Lead Mine Curve, last December, we have now returned to our main activities. After eighteen months, the project to update and redocument the overhead pole route as completely as possible is now finished, and we have a comprehensive, and above all, accurate, picture of our trunk telecommunications circuits. All documents relating to each Location Cabinet are now dated and version controlled.

The pole route safety inspection, over the final section from Minffordd to Boston Lodge, was also concluded during this period. General maintenance work to the route, coupled with the odd pole change and attention to various menacing trees, has placed the infrastructure in good order ready for the high season. The fire that afflicted the Tan y Bwlch area at the beginning of April seems to have caused only superficial damage, but a detailed inspection was to be undertaken during May.

Much has been written about our ability to find faults using the recently-acquired reflectometer, which is capable of locating problems to the nearest metre. Our problem is that we do not know where everything is to that degree of

accuracy, and this has therefore triggered a new project. We plan to undertake a GPS survey of the pole route to improve our ability to locate faults. Unfortunately, this will not be as easy as it sounds, as our communications route does not follow the railway in a number of places, rendering the various lineside distance markers misleading. There will no doubt be more on this, in future issues of the Magazine.

BUILDINGS AND ELECTRICAL

Finally, after years of faithful service, and even more years of disuse, the old Minffordd hostel building succumbed to demolition in mid-April.

This took place after it had been stripped of asbestos by a specialist team. Arranging for this to be done took almost a month of phone calls and paperwork involving mandatory notification to the Health and Safety Executive. It took about a week to remove the asbestos before demolition could start - this took all of half a day, thanks to the use of forty tons of excavator expertly handled by the Porthmadog Demolition operator who then cleared the site and removed all of the scrap materials during the rest of the day.

The building has, however, not totally disappeared as the entrance porch and the old toilet block has been left standing as it contains the electrical connection and meters for the whole of the yard. These will not be moved until a firm development plan is agreed for the area.

During February the entire B&E departmental staff, (yes, both of us!) attended a training course and took a test to obtain qualifications in plant operation. We came away with licences to operate 'telehandlers' in the Construction Plant Competency Scheme, a national qualification.



*The old hostel in Minffordd Yard was finally demolished during April, although the foyer section is to remain for the time being as it houses some of the main electrical connections for the Yard.
(Brian Coldwell)*

Paul Board has also attended a course on the inspection and maintenance of fire extinguishers. This will enable yet another task to be handled internally rather than it being done by paid contractors.

Meanwhile back on the Railway the usual springtime tasks were being undertaken. More signs needing replacement meant boards to prepare, and toilets which had been little used over winter required attention to wake them up to face the urgent demands of our summer visitors. There were also automatic door-closers to replace and sticking doors needing to be freed off. The time-consuming business of PAT testing every electrical appliance on the Railway was started and gas installation testing was carried out along with boiler servicing.

At Tan y Bwlch the café has been remodelled by demolishing the old counter and building a smaller version, this should get rid of the bottle neck caused by queues and allow a better flow through the serving area; the outdoor area has once again been covered by the erection of the marquee, and a wheelchair ramp has been installed outside the front door.

Porthmadog has also been provided with a ramp outside the booking office. The shop has also been remodelled once more with Slatwall fittings applied to the end wall by the booking hall, this has covered in the rear of the glass display cabinets facing the booking hall and allowed the whole wall to be used for display in the shop.

Caernarfon has also been improved with Slatwall being applied to the wall at the 'castle' end and along the long wall opposite the counter, the ladies toilet has also had a facelift after the roof developed a bad leak and water ran down the inside of the walls.

Work at Rhiw Goch has also continued. The steps, platform and leaning rail have been added by the door, this has completed the outside work and the final effect is very impressive.

The water tank used for Slate Shunt locomotives in Minffordd yard sprang a leak just before the trackwork gave out and the shunts were stopped. This has been taken on as a project by our

three-days-a-week volunteer, Peter Langdale. The support frame has been rubbed down and painted, a tank from Boston Lodge has been 'acquired' and treated in a similar manner, new plumbing has been installed and all is now ready to go back together.

The winter weather left its mark too. As this is being written we are in the middle of replacing the whole of the Boston Lodge drawing office roof which lifted off in the gale force winds earlier in the year and was temporarily repaired until more favourable weather allowed a permanent repair to be made. The old built-up felt roof is to be disposed of and a covering of plastic-coated steel, box-profile sheets is being fitted.

CROSS TOWN RAIL LINK

Railways, we have discovered, are re-built from paper rather than timber, steel and concrete. Whilst a visit to the route of the CTRL through the town may suggest only limited progress, the frantic punching of keyboards is incessant.

Construction of the car park on the gas works site, by local contractor Gelli Civil Engineering of Porthmadog, should be complete by the time this is published. This is an important piece of the jigsaw as it allows the release of other areas of the

Llyn Bach car park for construction of the railway, compensatory landscape areas, etc. The former exit from the car park was on the railway alignment and the creation of a new exit will free up space for the Snowdon Street crossing, for instance. Much of our present work is focussed on the diversion of services to allow the construction of the railway to progress unhindered.

The collapse, in early February, of the training wall at Britannia bridge, has had a significant impact on the programme. The repair carried out by Cyngor Gwynedd is temporary and we have agreed with the Welsh Assembly to intrude the permanent work within the CTRL contract. The Assembly will be making a financial contribution to the project for this work. The need to prepare a design and agree details has programme implications and the start date has been postponed. In addition to this constraint, there is an understandable embargo on working on the trunk road during the main holiday season which will effectively push the start date for any work in this area back to September.

Whilst this delay is unfortunate, the autumn is going to see a lot of activity in Porthmadog.

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY (PORTHMADOG) RHEILFFORDD UCHELDIR CYMRU

Three Reasons To Pay Us A Visit This Summer

- **Extension now open**
Take a ride to Traeth Mawr on the newest section of the Welsh Highland
- **New book titles now in**
"The Narrow Gauge Railways of Bosnia Hercegovina" – Keith Chester, £35.00
"The Great Western in North Wales" – John Hillmer & Paul Shannon, £16.99
- **New model railway range in stock**

We're now main stockists for Bachmann Branchline 00 gauge locomotives, carriages and wagons, plus selections from Peco, Dapol, Metcalfe and others



PARKS & GARDENS

The Parks and Gardens Department has now been in operation for almost 22 years and its volunteers have managed to keep the Railway's gardens looking tidy and attractive for most of that time.

Throughout this period, Eileen Clayton has done most of the organisation but she is now having difficulty finding the time to continue. It is therefore time to review how the gardens are to be looked after. Eileen has already found a small gang to take responsibility for the hanging baskets, tubs, window boxes and flower beds around Harbour Station and another for Penrhyn station gardens. Mary Arnold is also willing to continue at Minffordd at least for the time being.

We are therefore looking for a small group to look after Tan y Bwlch. The responsibility would include the small garden by the water tower, on which P&G did quite a lot of work last year. This is a really special garden, as it contains a number of memorials to volunteers no longer with us and it is therefore very important that the improvements made last year are maintained. Some money is available to be spent on additional plants for this area. There are also about a dozen tubs and three window boxes on the station.



The memorial garden by the water tower at Tan y Bwlch would benefit from adoption by a small dedicated team. (John Dobson)

Eileen is willing to continue being involved for the time being. She will be happy to order bulbs, summer bedding plants and other plants, and also to ensure there are tools, fertilisers and other supplies available. In the meantime, she would be grateful if P&G volunteers would spread the word and provide feedback on the work that others will be prepared to take on. Eileen is hoping that we can organise a gradual

handover which will safeguard the future of all of the Railway's gardens, rather than having to witness them becoming weed infested and unattractive as would happen if there were no-one to take over.

This is the last year during which Eileen is willing to take sole responsibility for all of the Railway's gardens and she would like to think that those who have worked to keep them looking good, for so long, can come up with a plan to ensure that they are still an attractive feature of the FR in twenty years time.

MEGABASH

Nearly seventy people turned out at the end of March for what is now established as the regular early season makeover of Minffordd Station and its environs. The exterior of the 'down' platform shelter was painted, as was the high level, front fascia of the 'up' platform canopy which required the laborious use of the scaffold tower. Paint was also applied to lamp brackets and to the railings along the ramp to the Cambrian Coast Line station. The old porch on the station house was removed and replaced with a new prefabricated unit, left ready for glazing. The render on the outside of the kitchen wall was also painted and weather sealed.

The sandstone platform edge slabs have gradually deteriorated over the years, and a visible sag had developed in the middle on both platforms, to the degree that it was becoming a tripping hazard and a Health and Safety concern. It was discovered that a section of the 'up' platform edge had been laid on old sleepers that have steadily been disintegrating. The edges were realigned and stone brought up from Minffordd Yard on pallets was used to selectively replace broken sections.

A mountain of crushed slate had been delivered and dumped in the car park. The 'down' platform surface had deteriorated over many years; after it had been weeded and prepared, an enthusiastic team spread crushed slate over the surface, having harrowed it over from the car park.

Paul Lewin borrowed *Velinheli* for the day and used it to bring bogie wagons full of wood chips up from the yard and remove bags of rubbish and spoil on the way back. Mary Arnold's team had weeded and prepared the gardens and the wood chips were generously spread around the plants to keep the weeds at bay.

Meanwhile the 50th Electrical Rewiring Working Party was taking place in Boston Lodge,

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

Since the Disability Discrimination Act came into force, it has been a legal requirement to provide the best access to our services that is reasonably possible for people of all abilities. We must also have a written access statement describing our facilities.

Over the winter of 2005/6 Euros Roberts undertook a detailed survey of our stations to determine how well we complied. He was also asked to consider whether our provision is good enough even if it does comply. The results of his survey threw up a lot of issues and we are gradually working our way through them.

It was decided that ramped access to our station buildings was a priority, not just for wheelchair users but for pushchairs and those with walking difficulties. Caernarfon already had a ramp and Blaenau followed last Easter when the new building was erected.

During the winter of 2006/7, the main buildings at Porthmadog and Tan y Bwlch had ramps installed. These ramps are functional and compliant rather than ornate but have been provided with flower tubs on each side to make the entrance look attractive and welcoming. They will be a boon to many people.

A new ramp, designed to improve wheelchair access to the booking office at Harbour Station, was completed in time for the start of the season. (John Dobson)



Hilary Norton and Moragh Bradshaw pose with the famous lemon meringue pie at Tan y Bwlch. (Eileen Clayton)

concentrating on the completion of the outside lighting installations. Other volunteers were assisting in the Carriage Works with the finishing of carriage 106, and varnishing tables and chairs for the new WHR carriages.

On the Saturday evening there was the usual special train to Tan y Bwlch for the traditional evening meal. The new *Lemon Meringue Special* headboard was used for the first time and a totally surprised Hilary Norton was dragged from her kitchen to pose in front of *Taliesin*, with a plate of lemon meringue pie clutched in one hand. The main courses were good, the pie was excellent and the company superb. The volunteers were most grateful for the efforts of Hilary and her team.

The most important other news is advance warning of *Gigabash*, to be held on 20/21 October. Please make a note to ensure that we are guaranteed plenty of support - there will be much to do at the end of the season in a similar vein to that of *Megabash*. To enquire for details, or to register for an enjoyable weekend in North Wales, ring Howard Wilson on 0116 2704992 or e-mail: howard@quarrylane.net



PERSONAL & PERSONNEL

Congratulations are due to **Zoe and Graham Bond** on the birth of their son Richard Elwyn, who weighed in at 10lb 7oz on Thursday 29 March. All three are reported to be thriving.

Best wishes for a long and happy married life go to **Marje Buxton** and **Peter Harrison**, whose wedding was conducted at Tan y Bwlch on Saturday 28 April. This was a thoroughly Railway affair, including a specially decorated train from Porthmadog for the couple and their guests.

Congratulations and very best wishes are also due to **Rebecca Kitchin** and **Jon Whalley** on their engagement. Their wedding is planned for September.

David Laing has regrettably felt the need to return home for personal reasons. However, he is still keen to help the railway by writing articles for us and making contacts with editors about features, all of which he can do from home. We are grateful to him for his contribution during the past few months, especially for the work he has done with the new *Inside Motion*.

David's replacement, for the next few months, is **Tecwyn Hill** who has joined the staff temporarily as Marketing Assistant. Tecwyn has always been interested in the FR and WHR, and is joining the team after returning from a period working in Australia. Before heading for Australia, in November 2005, he worked for two and a half years as a journalist for the *Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald*, operating from both the newspaper's Porthmadog and Caernarfon offices. During that period he worked closely with the FR, writing numerous articles and getting to know members of the FR's staff. He says that he is under no illusion that the task of promoting the FR and WHR is a large and important one.

This is the time of year when our ranks are swelled by the recruitment of seasonal staff. Some are only with us for a few weeks but others are with us for most of the season. Joining the Commercial Department for the season are **Trevor Jones** and **Eve Corbett** at Blaenau booking office, **John Organ**, **John Fozzard** and **Eurliw Williams** in Porthmadog shop, **Dave Barnwell** in Porthmadog booking office, **Malcolm Holloway** in the car park, **Joanna Vincent** on the switchboard and **Patrick Dobson** and **Gareth Hayden** on the buffet cars.

Machinist **Steve Powell** is leaving Boston Lodge and intends to return to Bristol. This is unfortunate as he is a very well liked individual



Marge Buxton and Peter Harrison were blessed with excellent weather for their wedding at Tan y Bwlch on 28 April. (Roger Dimmick)

and a willing worker. Nevertheless we all wish him the very best.

Mark Cook of *Spoooner's* was one of three young players from the Porthmadog Football Club named in the Under-19 squad by the North Wales Coast Football Association earlier this year. They were playing against Knowsley on 15 February at Flint. He remains part of the first team squad at Porthmadog FC.

CONTRIBUTORS: Peter Asquith, Norman Bond, Clare Britton, Eileen Clayton, Brian Coldwell, John Dobson, Martin Duncan, Paul Harris, Fred Houies, Vicki Knight, Ian Rudd, Gina Warren, Tony Williams, Howard Wilson, John Wooden.



John Andrews 1922 -2007

With the passing of John Andrews at the age of 85, the Ffestiniog Railway has lost an enthusiastic, if at times critical, friend, and the Society, a long-term life member - another of that band of dedicated early volunteers who turned the impossible dream into a reality.

John, as grandson to Solomon Andrews, the Cardiff entrepreneur, grew up in the family business, which extended at one time from horse bus building and operation, through house, moving and retail stores to property development and tourism. For him, the most fascinating aspects were those that dealt with transport and engineering, and here he had a rich field.

The period of his boyhood in some indefinable way never seemed to have left him, and it was a time of rare interest, with his grandfather's enthusiasms and the family holidays at the resort they had developed - West End, Pwllheli - which was reached along Solomon's Cardiff Road on the Andrews horse tram. The Pwllheli and Llanbedrog tramway was a family concern, as was the Arthog tramway, precursor of the Fairbourne Railway.

As partial retirement gave him more time he returned to these memories and produced a family history and other books based on his family's business interests, including the well-named *Keep Moving* - the slogan on Solomon's removal vans but also a fair description of this live wire of a man.

John was involved in Ffestiniog matters from the earliest days of the revival, where he met up with Allan Garraway, a contemporary from his days at the Leys School, Cambridge. One published photograph of 1950s FR endeavour shows John in Cutting Gwlyb, along with other stalwarts, clearing tree stumps one evening early in preservation days.

Another early memory of John on the FR, contributed by Fred Boughey, is of him helping to erect the shuttering for the pit in the late lamented Long Shed in the Bottom Yard. John gravitated to carriage restoration work at Boston Lodge however, and this sort of behind-the-scenes craftsman's work appealed to him. He was a hands-on conservationist, and he believed in doing things properly. His workshop in Cardiff also saw a throughput of FR work. Another Boughey recollection is of John turning up in his beloved Bentley with a new set of doors for no 15, made as a home-work project in Cardiff, on the back seat.

He was a real Cardiffian, proud of his city and what his family had contributed, and proud too of what the family had done in the north of Wales. Where he could, he wanted to see things preserved. One way was to ensure that his family archives were sorted and deposited at Cardiff and Caernarfon archives; he sponsored the superb permanent exhibition of the family's Nantgarw and Swansea porcelain at Glyn-y-weddw; and he was to save what he could of the Andrews transport fleet, principally the three London horse buses upon which he lavished resources. One of his last concerns as his health was failing this last winter was to find a suitable permanent home for his three horse buses; two of these are now safely at the Cobham Bus Museum and the other at Beamish, having been presented by the John Andrews Charitable Trust.

John was a private and modest man, fond of conversation and reminiscences, and much of what he did was done quietly and away from public gaze. More than one substantial project passing through Boston Lodge and funded anonymously for external clients was in fact an Andrews endeavour. Latterly it was in these quiet ways, and as a sometimes unrecognised passenger, that he supported the Ffestiniog.

John Andrews' funeral was held at his beloved Bethany baptist chapel in Cardiff on the last Tuesday in April 2007. Our sympathies go to his devoted wife, Nancy, who looked after him so well as his health faded. And countless friends will miss the wide-ranging chats that inevitably sprung out of the original subject of a phone call, always ended by John's unmistakable and trademark parting: 'Bye-bye, bye-bye'.

John Alexander; Gareth Williams



John Nicholson Gibbons

1922 - 2007

John Gibbons passed away on Sunday 4 March. Many will remember him in the 1970s, with beret, specs and white hair, always accompanied by his dog, Bilbo Baggins, when he worked primarily for the Permanent Way Department as a supervisor and engine driver, but also with other departments as a guard and signalman. Perhaps he will best be remembered for Bilbo, who wore a high-visibility vest at work on the track and a 'traffic' jacket complete with crest on the trains. Bilbo was a great 'lookout dog'; when he stopped playing and sat to attention on the bank you knew the train was coming!

Working with John was a delight; he had an interesting background as a teacher and a monk! He was always the gentleman, but was able to apply discipline to errant staff by application of school master tactics; when this failed he would send them to see the headmaster - me!

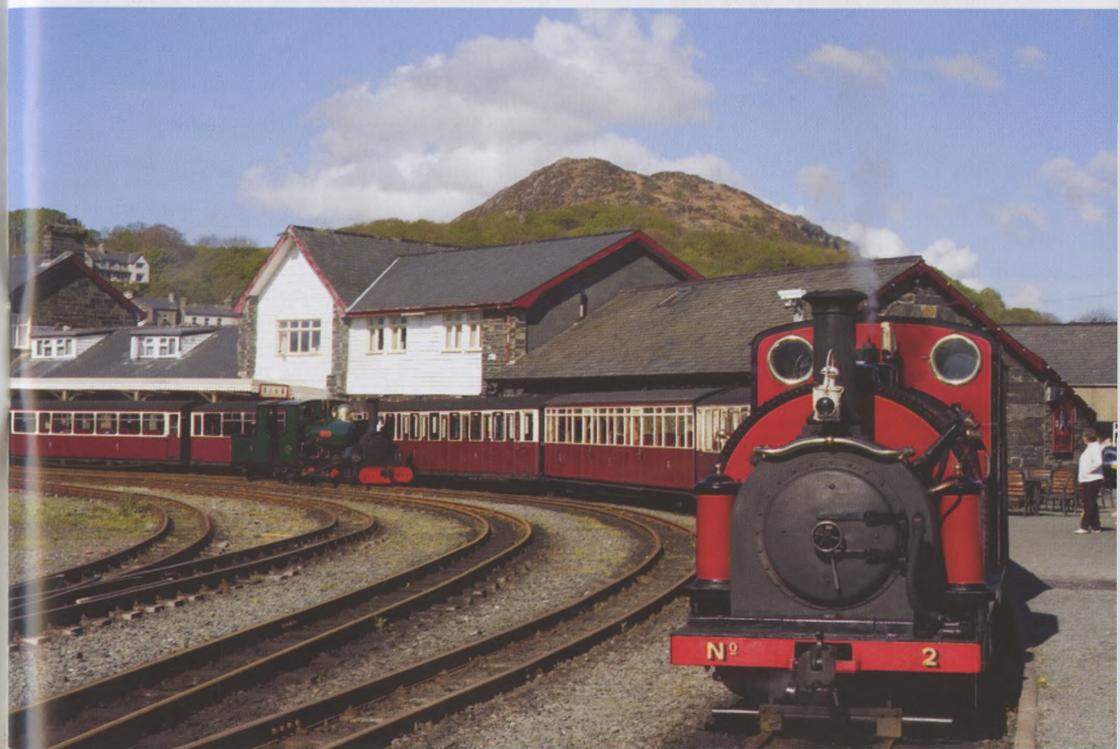
He left the Railway in the late 1970s to run an emporium in Pwllheli. He lived at Garn Fadryn, some way beyond Pwllheli, and I visited him at his cottage many times, but had not seen him for over a year; time flies. Happy memories; rest in peace John. *Fred Howes*

The Society Chairman's Piece

I suppose the regular Society Chairman's Piece ought really to be preceded by one of the editor's italicised disclaimers as it tends to reflect the Society Chairman's personal views in much the same way as an editorial reflects those of an editor. Take this element of discretion a stage further and authors of such articles may decide whether to submit an article at all.

At the last Chairman's Meeting (a forum embracing all of the chairmen in the FR/WHR family), FR Company and Trust Chairman John Prideaux explained that he was not in favour of writing regular articles for the *FR Magazine* just for the sake of it, preferring instead to write an article when there was something important to communicate. To support his view he used the example of a senior figure in the railway industry who apparently issued communications so frequently that the overall message was confusing and inconsistent. It is therefore no

Prince has seen quite a lot of use recently, sometimes on his own, but frequently double-heading with Palmerston. Here he awaits departure from Porthmadog on 26 April. (John Dobson)



surprise that we have seen relatively few articles from the FR Company Chairman since he was appointed. Whilst I suspect John underestimates the level of interest in *anything* he cares to communicate concerning the FR, I respect and understand his stance.

By contrast, I try to find something to communicate in every issue. I will leave it to you, our readers, to decide whether I am falling into the same trap as the individual in John Prideaux's example! Perhaps I should take a leaf out of John's book and write a Society Chairman's Piece less frequently - I'm sure our editor would have no difficulty filling the space.

This brings me to the central point of my musings in this issue. Communication is a two-way process. Whether the FR Company, Trust or Society Chairmen do or do not favour regular articles in the FR Magazine, communication from Magazine readers - and FR supporters in general - is essential if the organisations within the FR family are to serve their wide (and not always easily identifiable) customer bases. It is not my place to encourage you to bombard FR Company or Trust with your views (although I am sure both bodies welcome succinct and relevant input) but I have no qualms in soliciting your input to the Society.

I am seeking your views on anything and everything affecting the FR. Don't restrict your opinions to the *FR Magazine* - although your views are welcome on, for instance, regular 64-page magazines; the quantity and depth of Welsh Highland information; the popularity of the regular Min y Trac column, etc. What about your views on volunteering and fund-raising? For many these two subjects are the *raison d'être* of the Society. Both are wide subjects and, incidentally, your board have arranged two 'workshops' this year at which they will discuss each in fine detail. These are closed sessions for Society directors only, but any input received within the next six weeks would be most useful to feed into our discussions.

I write this article only a few days after chairing my first Society AGM. There is plenty of room for improvement next year of course, but what would you like to see done differently? We must have an AGM, it's a legal requirement as the Society is a limited company. But how could it be made less boring? Could it be linked to some other event? How do you view Bristol Group member Dave Witcomb's suggestion that the 2008 AGM be held at Blaenau Ffestiniog as part of some event centred on the town? We do rather concentrate on

the Porthmadog end of the line, don't we?

Did you travel on the AGM special train this year? Not only did we have Society directors Graham Bond and Rod Buchanan as driver and guard respectively, those who had booked bangers and mash in advance were treated to an excellent meal. I, for one, wondered just how ninety-odd meals (including a vegetarian option) would be served. Would it be tasty? Would it be hot?

I needn't have worried. The meals were superb and the service was incredible. Of course there is only so much one can do with bangers and mash but I can truly say this was the best example of the dish I have ever tasted. The portion size was just right; it was served piping hot and, into the bargain, there was a choice of desserts to follow. Oh, and did I mention the Purple Moose? Well, here's a brewery whose beer is as good as its name is unusual! My congratulations and thanks to all involved with the train and, in particular, to Claire Britton, Colin Burt and their staff who worked so hard serving food and drink throughout the journey.

I make no apology for that digression. Back to the subject in hand. What are your views on AGM special trains? Is a train a good place for a chat? Should we have food and drink served off the train? Should we use a special train as transport to and from the AGM venue? These sample questions merely scratch the surface. Please feel free to communicate with the Society Board so we can better serve you, the Society members. Probably the best way is to contact the Society Secretary by e-mail at:

secretary@ffestiniograilway.org.uk

Alternatively, try myself at:

chairman@ffestiniograilway.org.uk

Or editor John Dobson at:

editor@ffestiniograilway.org.uk.

If you prefer to use Royal Mail then write to the Secretary at his Warrington address (inside the front cover of this magazine). Please do not telephone, as it is almost impossible to record your views accurately.

I look forward to receiving your comments.

Richard Stibbs, Society Chairman

NOTICE BOARD



ERRATA

Mike Davies has pointed out that the photograph of the Robert Evans special on page 238 of FRM 19 was taken by a staff photographer from *Y Cymro* - possibly a Mr Charles. Mike himself is the caped figure on the left of the balcony.

FR COMPANY SHARE OWNERSHIP

As announced at the FR Society AGM, the FR Trust is considering introducing a way of letting supporters have access to a share in the FR Company for their lifetime.

The aim of the project would be to raise around a million pounds to invest in the business, with most of the expenditure being focused on improving the facilities at Blaenau Ffestiniog Station, Boston Lodge and Harbour Station.

The present proposal is that anyone who donates £20 a month, plus gift aid, for five years, or the equivalent lump sum, to the Trust's General or FR funds, would be offered joint legal ownership of a Company share. The other owner of the share would be a nominee company, wholly owned by the FR Trust. The share would be held for the benefit of the Trust, but ownership would be structured so that the donor would be able to exercise the rights of a shareholder during their lifetime; these rights are to receive the annual report, attend the FR Company AGM and question the directors thereat. The donor would also receive a traditional share certificate for the share. On the death of the donor the share ownership would pass to the nominee company, thus ensuring that the Trust's overall control of the business would not be diluted in the long term.

The Trust's current plan is to launch a leaflet explaining the details of the scheme in or around October 2007 - possibly with a launch in the next Magazine. However, if you would like to register an early interest (without any commitment, of course) please e-mail Andy Savage at andy.savage@festrail.co.uk, or write c/o Harbour Station, Porthmadog, Gwynedd, LL49 9NF

Andy Savage

HOSTEL FEES

The FRS board has considered the fees for the use of the Hostels and facilities and has decided to make a slight increase. The Society subsidises hostel costs by roughly 50%. The last rise in fees

was three years ago, and since then costs have risen significantly, particularly for energy.

The new fees, per person, per night will be:

Non-working stay	£9.00
Working stay (FRSoc Members)	£3.50
Working stay (non-members)	£4.50

FRSoc Members,
(working more than 20 nights
annually, October to September) £2.50

Tent on non-serviced pitch £1.50

A caravan or tent on a serviced pitch costs £5.00 per night (irrespective of the number of persons using it).

These fees apply from 1 October 2007, and will be applied to bookings made from 14 July onwards.
Alan Norton

GROUP LIAISON MEETINGS

Regretfully, it has been decided not to hold a Group Liaison Meeting in Autumn 2007. The Society Board has reluctantly reached this conclusion for a number of reasons, particularly the difficulty in selecting a suitable date for all concerned.

The next Group Liaison Meeting will be held on Saturday 9 February 2008 at a venue away from the FR. In response to the views expressed at Kidderminster, the time available will be focussed on the meeting rather than travelling on another preserved railway. Further information will be made available nearer the time.

Roger Schofield, Secretary, FR Society

VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION CARDS

All Volunteers should by now have filled in a Registration Card - a 'Blue Card' - and this should be in the files of the department for which they work.

Eventually there may be a database to encompass blue-card details for all departments, accessible by all managers and supervisors, but it doesn't yet exist. For the time being, therefore, if you work for more than one department, and because the type of work varies so much between departments, you must submit a separate registration card to each department. The same

procedure applies to departmental inductions.

Registration cards provide managers and supervisors with important information. They should, for instance, contain details of any medical condition which may restrict the type of work that may be performed by a particular individual. Details of allergies are also important. In addition, the form should contain contact details for next of kin. These details are essential should it be necessary to contact someone in the event of an accident.

Likewise, it is important that any significant changes in personal information are notified to line managers. There is a note on the registration card asking that it be kept up to date, but very few people have been doing so. Please, therefore, ask for a new card on your next visit if there have been significant changes in your circumstances.

Fred Howes

KIDS' TRAINING WEEK, 2007 (Saturday 28 July to Saturday 4 August)

Currently there are only three vacancies for Kids (to book, contact Tricia Doyle on 01766-516035) and we have enough adult helpers. However, more adults would be very welcome; please contact Eileen Clayton (01766-770860 & 07780-567972) if you are interested. The remaining priority is project funding and, as usual, we need donations. If you, or your Area Group, are able to help in any way please contact Eileen Clayton or Alan Norton (01766-540442). The FR Society supports KTW and donations through the FR Society can take advantage of Gift Aid tax relief. Cheques, payable to FRS, should go to John Powell (21, Madoc Street, Porthmadog, Gwynedd LL49 9BU), stating the intended project.

Our major project this year is the locomotive shed floor. The rails have worn and sunk to the point where they cause problems for locomotives and the whole area is uneven and unsafe to walk across. There is a very real need for an even, non-slip floor, with good track and effective oil traps. A team of Army engineers will get this project started before KTW but there will be concreting to complete and possibly one road of track to lay during KTW

We also intend to repair the floor at the Porthmadog end of No. 11 road in the carriage works. The concrete surface has degraded and cannot be kept sufficiently clean and dust free for it to be used as a second paint shop. With all the work planned over the next couple of years additional paint shop capacity is desperately needed. The ideal, long-term, repair involves



The Livingston Thompson Trophy this year went to the group of volunteers who conceived and built the 'Boat'. They were represented by (second left to right) Glenn Williams, Norman Bond and John Powell. Adrian Gray (extreme left) made the presentation on behalf of the Heritage Group. (John Dobson)

completely replacing the floor but we do not have the resources to do that at present. We hope to include this job as a major project in 2009 or 2010. In the meantime, we will seal and dust proof the floor with a special paint that will cost about £300. We would happily accept a donation; Eileen can supply the specification.

There will also be a lot of other painting of doors, window frames, gutters, etc. Paint, thinners and brushes all cost money, so donations, however small, will be welcome. We spend about £2,000 each year on these basic materials.

The picnic tables at Tan y Bwlch are approaching the end of their economic life so we are starting a programme of replacement. A new, more robust, design has been adopted that provides better access for our less flexible customers and is more wheelchair and pushchair friendly. We aim to build three or four new tables each year for the next few years. The design will also suit the revised arrangements at Porthmadog after 2009. We will use high quality, treated, timber and stainless steel bolts so that the tables will last. Materials are estimated to cost £80-£100 per table, a price that might tempt sponsorship by an individual or family, along the lines of the memorial benches.

Two other projects include a small bench, funded by FR Heritage Group, for Boston Lodge Halt and the refurbishment of a number of the existing memorial benches. This is routine maintenance, often postponed under pressure of time and emergencies. Varnish and stainless steel bolts will cost about £50 per bench. Any extra cash will be banked against work in the future, so the benches will continue to give a good

impression to our passengers.

The General Manager has conceived a stone-built plinth, bearing a pair of Fairlie wheels, as a centrepiece at Boston Lodge for plaques commemorating the lives and service of deceased members of works staff - paid or volunteer. KTW will use this project to teach a variety of skills. Contributions to the cost of materials are invited. Rodney Thorpe will be leading a team working on the drains at Boston Lodge. They will be looking for and repairing defects, and upgrading where appropriate. London Area Group sponsor the lineside drains but this is an additional project and needs a bit of extra help.

Another large project is to replace the lights in 13/14 road carriage shed. When these were installed, 15 years ago, the fittings were hung on chains, so they swung in the wind. This has caused damage to both cables and light fittings so it is urgent that we replace them. Materials will cost £2,000. Finally, if time permits, or the weather decrees, some wooden wagons will be overhauled and repainted. This, too, will be funded by the FR Heritage Group. *Adrian Gray* The Merddin Emrys Shield this year went to the group of volunteers and permanent staff responsible for reconstructing Rhiw Goch Signal Box. The group is far too large to list everyone involved, and not everyone was able to be present at the AGM. They receive our sincere thanks for an excellent job. *(John Dobson)*

FUND RAISING

Readers will note, from references appearing elsewhere in this issue, that we are reopening the carriage appeals. The need to provide a better environment for all of our passengers is a very high priority and the ability of the Society to provide capital for this upgrade will pay dividends with positive, word of mouth, publicity and repeat visits by people who have already travelled.

Those of you with a few pounds to spare should also remember this year's raffle. In the last Magazine you will have received an entry slip and envelope but you do not have to use these. There is no ticket or stub, simply send a cheque and your phone number to Ffestiniog Railway Society, FREEPOST NATE 1232, HALTWHISTLE, NE49 9BR. Each pound will get you a personal number.

The winner will choose what the first prize will be. I've suggested this could be a trip to Paris or Amsterdam, the Vivarais or the HSB, anywhere of similar cost. Other prizes include rail tickets, life membership and meals in Spooner's. I look forward to receiving your entry before Christmas Eve. *Dave Charlton*



SECOND-HAND BOOK SALES

Formal bids for the second-hand books advertised in the last auction list raised £1,010.45 which, as advertised, went into the Rhiw Goch Signal Box Fund. Casual sales of second-hand books, and sales from the stall at Interactive IV over the May Day weekend, raised a further £405.80, which will go into the fund that is supporting the re-creation of a 'pothole' Bug Box. *John Powell*

GIFT AID

Gift Aid Declarations are coming in fairly slowly. John Powell is currently awaiting replies to some 130 letters, with a further 370 or so to go out. He would be very grateful if members would return their paperwork as soon as possible so that the Society's entitlement to Gift Aid can be fully regularised. Due to circumstances beyond his control, the Word-format Gift Aid Declaration form did not appear on the website as promptly as promised, but should be available by the time this Magazine is published.

NECTAR VOUCHERS

We have recently delivered four new kettles to Minffordd hostel to replace some that had expired during the winter. At the same time we took the opportunity to deliver a set of mugs that had been donated. Otherwise we have been through a remarkably quiet spell and continue to steadily accumulate the vouchers that you kindly send us.

We would also like to remind members that we are able to make good use of Morrisons Miles vouchers.

Thank you for your support. Please keep sending vouchers to: David Witcomb, 51 Stonebridge Drive, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2TW Tel: 01373 471103.

RECYCLING OLD MOBILES

Greener Solutions are continuing to receive a small, steady, flow of old mobiles from members which, in turn, converts into a regular cheque for the Society.

Old mobiles, complete with batteries but **WITH THE SIM CARDS REMOVED**, can be sent to Greener Solutions at Freepost LON17592, Mitcham, CR4 3UZ. Please remember to put a note in the envelope stating that the phone is for the credit of the Ffestiniog Railway Society Account, or write this instruction clearly on the outside of the envelope

Alternatively, Greener Solutions generic envelopes are available. Please ring David Witcomb on 01373 471103 and he will be happy to arrange a supply.

RECYCLING INKJET CARTRIDGES

We are greatly encouraged by the number of you asking for envelopes to recycle your inkjet cartridges, and are looking forward to the next report from Greener Solutions because, if the number of requests is anything to go by, our next cheque should be very useful indeed.

Just to clear up some confusion over envelopes, no sooner had the ink dried on the last FRM than Greener Solutions advised us that it is in order for us to use the same envelopes as for the old mobile phones. So, it is not the result of a bout of madness that we send out mobile phone envelopes in all cases!

ACCESS FOR ALL

Those of you who have already visited the Railway this year will have seen the improved access to Porthmadog booking office and Tan y Bwlch café. We are grateful to Paul Board and the Building Department for their hard work in ensuring that this work was carried out before the start of the main season. We have one further task concerning wheelchair access that we are working on but are also now turning our attention to other areas.

We have now found an organisation that seems able to do Braille translations at a realistic cost. We believe the rates we are being quoted make this part of the project suitable for sponsorship by either a group or individual. If you are interested, please get in touch so that we can discuss things in more detail.

We have also been contacted by a member whose family has been involved in access issues with several organisations over a number of years and we will be making good use of this expertise. Our Area Groups continue to offer support on various aspects of the project and are grateful to everyone who has helped to date. Please send donations and offers of help to David Witcomb at 51 Stonebridge Drive, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2TW Tel 01373-471103. Cheques should be made payable to the Ffestiniog Railway Society.

EVERY CLICK WEB SEARCH INCOME

As at 12 May 2007 the cumulative total raised by the 114 members who have registered with *Every Click* was £521.70. The FR Society is now separately registered under its English and Welsh titles and is receiving income from both registrations.

If you would like to help raise funds for the FR using this service, check out *Every Click* on www.everyclick.com The FR gets a payment for every search carried out by registered users.

Remember that it doesn't cost you a penny to raise money for the FR in this way. There's no subscription. *Every Click* receives income from on-page advertising and there are no pop-ups. When you register as a user, make sure that you do so as a supporter of the FR Society to maximise the benefit to the Railway.

Anyone who would like to add *Every Click* links to their website should contact Rod Buchanan at rod@ffestiniograilway.org.uk for details.

FR/WHR EVENTS 2007

28 July to 4 August -

FR Kids' Training Week

31 July and 7, 15, 21 & 28 August -

FR 'Bangers & Mash' Trains

1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 August -

FR 'Food On The Move' Trains

2, 9, 16 & 23 August - FR Jazz Trains

8 & 9 September -

WHR 'Join In' Event & Society AGM

6 October - FR Heritage Group AGM

13 & 14 October - FR Event (to be confirmed)

20 & 21 October - Gigabash

25, 26 & 27 October - FR Halloween Trains

26 October - WHR Halloween Train

(date to be confirmed)

15, 16, 22 & 23 December -

FR & WHR Santa Trains

FR WEBSITES

Rheilffordd Ffestiniog Railway:

<http://www.festrail.co.uk>

Ffestiniog Railway Society:

<http://www.ffestiniograilway.org.uk>

FR Heritage Group:

<http://www.frheritage.org.uk>.

(The FR Wiki is located on this site)

FR Volunteers' Forum:

<http://www.ffestiniogvolunteer.org.uk>

FR On-Line Shop:

<http://www.festshop.co.uk>

FR Boston Lodge Works:

<http://www.bostonlodgeworks.com>

Ffestiniog Travel:

<http://www.festtravel.co.uk>

Heritage Sales

NEW!! 'Fruit of the Loom' sweatshirts and polo shirts embroidered with FRHG logo. Available in Maroon, Navy Blue, Bottle Green and Black and in sizes S,M,L,XL,XXL and XXXL. Sweatshirts £24, Poloshirts £18, including postage.

The shirts are produced to order in small batches, so delivery may take a few weeks.

FR Magazine and Heritage Group Journal Binders are still available at £6.50 each, including postage.

Copies of FR Gravity Trains (£1) and FR Heritage Album (£4) and 1982 Bronze Medals (£7) are all available from Adrian Gray, 25, The Pound, Syresham, Brackley, Northants NN13 5HG

MAGAZINE BACK ISSUES SERVICE. All back issues of the Ffestiniog Railway Magazine, with the exception of issues 1 to 12, 14 and 15 are available from Roy Cunningham, Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Sales, 7 Rowan Close, Binley Woods, COVENTRY, CV3 2JX. Prices, including postage, are £2.50 each for issues 13, 17, 19, 26, 27, 32 and 185 to 193, £1.75 each for issues 177 to 184 and £1.00 each or £10.00 for any twelve for issues 20 to 25, 28 to 31 and 33 to 176. There is an open waiting list for the currently unavailable early issues.

Also available, at £7.00 each, are packs containing four pre-1946 FR card tickets, four Edmondson printed WHR paper tickets and one each of the large commemorative card tickets designed by Michael Seymour to mark the reopenings to Dduallt and Blaenau and the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the Ffestiniog Railway Company.

Please make any remittance payable to Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Group.

CORRESPONDENCE



Opinions expressed in this section are the contributors' own and do not necessarily represent the views of the FR Society, Company, Trust, or the Editor of the FR Magazine.

An Accolade

I write to congratulate everyone who has been involved with the FR and WHR since 1951 - an amazing story of vision, voluntary commitment and sheer hard work that deserves much greater publicity.

One of the great strengths of the organisation has been its power to engage with authorities of all descriptions in overcoming apparently insuperable obstacles to progress over the years - often down to professional expertise and connections no doubt, but also to persistence in refusing to be beaten on key issues.

With this in mind, it occurs to me that maybe someone in the Society has the ear of the BBC or other broadcaster, or knows someone else who has, so could not some pressure be applied for a meaningful documentary running to an hour or so, to publicise these achievements to a much wider audience, in conjunction with editorial privilege to ensure factual correctness?

None of the quite incredible feats to date would have been possible without the huge, enthusiastic inputs of everyone involved in even a minor way. My tiny contribution as a Society member for 45 years has been very limited - occasional small contributions and publicity through local slide presentations, etc., from time to time - but many volunteers and members of staff have given enormous parts of their lives to provide us with the legacy which we enjoy today. We must never take this for granted.

We have also been blessed with a succession of Magazine editors of the highest calibre, generating consistently high-quality issues with tremendous standards of production - another jewel in the crown.

In the current Company Chairman, the General Manager and his staff, we have a dedicated team who seem to me to have just the right balance of judgement concerning the mix of heritage and progress that will keep the special nature of the Railways attracting both paying public and volunteers alike - long may this continue.

Finally, the Heritage groups deserve a considerable accolade for the huge amount of

time which they devote to research to ensure that important aspects of the past are uncovered, documented and used to enhance the appeal and experience now enjoyed by visitors and members alike.

To all involved - well done and thank you for your commitment to our wonderful heritage - what we have today and will have tomorrow is a tribute to you all. It is a privilege to enjoy the benefits of such dedication by so many.

Windermere G A Stocker

Attracting International Tourists

Readers may recall a letter by me in FRM 195 suggesting that FR Travel could entice travellers from overseas to spend their hard-earned dollars in Wales and replace Brits now disporting themselves in sunny Benidorm (and not, therefore, riding the Great Little Trains of Wales).

The idea seemed simple enough: round up a gaggle of Canadian railway enthusiasts, get them to pay their air fares and reserve accommodation and travel for them in Wales, with the help of FR Travel, all under the enticing banner of 'See Wales by Rail'.

So after negotiating with FR Travel to get help, I placed notices and adverts in a number Canadian railway publications. A trickle of answers came in and at the peak I had eight interested parties including myself. In the end, only three confirmed on reception of what seemed to me and various cronies to be a reasonable price.

Well, as Gerry Fiennes would have said, 'I tried to run a railway (tour)'. Whilst I have run many tours in Canada, all with some railway component, I have had no experience marketing to Canadians for an overseas trip, and suspect the lack of glossy colour brochures with a wide circulation may have weakened the draw of the grand tour of Cymru. No matter, a trial trip may still be possible, but at a later date and with a (very) modest-sized group. I am only sorry to have put Gina Warren and Liz Turner to a lot of work for what has turned out to be a will o' the wisp! I do thank them and various parties around Wales for their valued assistance!

Chelsea, Quebec Harry Gow

Heritage Signalling

Having made a donation towards the project, I was pleased to see, on the front cover of *FR Magazine* No. 197, a photograph of the nearly completed Rhiw Goch signal box, rebuilt in a traditional style. I would like to thank everyone who has worked on or contributed to this project as, after the disappointment of the original Tanygrisiau scheme being shelved when it was well on the way to completion, it is nice to have a heritage signalling scheme coming to fruition.

To me the heritage side of the railway is very important, as I feel that many visitors are quite happy to be taken back to experience the best of the past. The heritage aspect of the railway has been well catered for in many ways by locomotive rebuilds, carriage restoration, re-creation of slate trains, restoration of buildings etc., so why not signalling as well?

I know that the Harbour Station resignalling scheme was to be submitted to the authorities in April 2007, so it is a bit late to make suggestions. However, this would be the perfect location to introduce some heritage signalling, where many visitors could see it. A replica could replace the McKenzie and Holland three-armed bracket home signal that was erected on the Cob in 1929, and lasted until the winter of 1966-7. This is significant because the right-hand bracket signal indicated the route set for the WHR line. With some replica M&H starting signals, the scene would be set to run WHR trains! However, I quite understand that, when it comes to deciding whether a signalling scheme is traditional or modern, the cost of installation and, more importantly, maintenance and operation is a big factor.

An article in the December 2006 *WHR Heritage Magazine* suggests that it might be possible to build a replica of the original crossing keeper's box for the control of the mixed-gauge crossing at Porthmadog. After the success at Rhiw Goch, I hope this can be achieved. I wonder if it will be given its original name which I believe was Croesor Crossing, presumably because the Croesor Tramway was there first. Does this mean that the standard-gauge train company will be paying the WHR to use the crossing, and that WHR trains will have priority? Finally could I make a request for some detailed articles on FR signalling, covering both equipment and operation, particularly of the Rhiw Goch signal box, and the forthcoming new works.

Newport Anthony Davis

Jasper

I've been a member of the Society for approximately 40 years and would like to thank you for providing a most interesting quarterly magazine.

The reason that has prompted me to write is the mention of *JASPER* in the last two Magazines. Back in 1968, I went on holiday to South Africa on a tour jointly organised by Ian Allan and the RCTS. During this tour I met and got into conversation with Charles Walker. He invited me to join him on a working party to the railway and over the next few years I used to go with him and David Lyall (*Y Gaffr*) to the railway once or twice a year and worked on the pole route between Tan y Bwlch and Dduallt, also at Boston Lodge and Rhiw Goch.

So I'm pleased that the 'Joint Association of Signal Pole Erectors and Renovators' has been reformed and that they were able to make a valuable contribution so quickly.

By e-mail Jim Cadman

Coed y Bleiddiau

Further to the letter from M.J.Barrow in the last FR Magazine, the following may be of interest. In the winter of 1955, Hamilton (Ham) Bantock, the son of the composer, came to my parents' house in Edgbaston, Birmingham, to attend the first meeting of the FR Midland Area Group, and became the First Chairman. He was a Chief Detective of Police and head of the Police School at Stafford.

Ham told me that, at Coed y Bleiddiau, his mother, Lady Bantock, when she wanted some shopping would write a list, put it with the money in a basket, and hand it to the guard as the up train went by. The guard would buy what was required in Blaenau Ffestiniog and hand it back on the downward journey. On page 69 of *Festiniog Railway Revival* by Pat Whitehouse, there is what is described as a thrilling view of a Double Fairlie emerging from Garnedd Tunnel, taken by Ham. It is not dated but, if the family gave up the lease in 1930, it must have been taken well before WW2.

After giving up Coed y Bleiddiau, the family bought a beach house in the sand dunes at Harlech, which they still had in the 1950s. At one time the family also rented a cottage in the north of Scotland, and each year would hire a family railway coach to travel from Birmingham New Street station (LNWR) to the cottage, which lay on the Great North of Scotland Railway. They

would swap railway companies two or three times during the journey, but would stay in their own coach, with their servants and trunks. The saloon had a kitchen and, of course, a loo, and would sit in a siding until they were ready to come home again. What a wonderful way to travel!

By e-mail Rob Smallman

Winter Traffic

I read with interest the editorial on the WA/Shearings visitors in the Spring edition of the Magazine. I think over the years we have made too many assumptions that the railway is only for railway enthusiasts, when in fact it is for anyone who really likes to get out into fantastic Snowdonia scenery. The area is a walkers' paradise, in fact.

There are many official ramblers' clubs and organisations for walkers who get out for regular walks the year round. What about promoting the railway to these groups and perhaps arranging *Walkers' Specials* (sorry if this sounds like a advertisement for crisps!) where there would be nominated trains to cater for walkers getting out into the local hills?

The AA has published a handy guide called *The Pocket Book of Britain's Walks* which contains a six-mile walk from Tanygrisiau past Llyn Cwmorthin and back around Llyn Stwlan to

Tanygrisiau Reservoir. This makes a handy link with the railway. I am sure that there must be other possible walks that, through clever marketing, the railway could exploit.

I think we do need to try to make partnerships with enthusiasts for other, non-railway-based hobbies.

By e-mail Jim Williams

The FR and the WHR

First, congratulations on the Spring edition of the *Magazine*. In my humble opinion, it is the best yet, and I have been around since we knocked a few keys in on the Cob in 1955!

To return to the question of the FR's involvement in the work of restoring the WHR. As long ago as 1995/6 a meeting was called at the pub in Dinas when the revival of the WHR was the main topic. The point was made then about the usefulness of the railway as a means of alleviating congestion on the roads through Snowdonia, and particularly between Porthmadoc, Beddgelert and Caernarfon. It would have been possible to do what has been done to the A470 in the Lledr Valley and over the

Crimea Pass. Fortunately for the peace of the area around Beddgelert, park and ride was seen to be the way forward, with the WHR providing the ride part. We were living in Borth y Gest at the time and I took part in the deliberations, so can take my share of the blame for what has happened since then.

There was considerable opposition, much of it from a small number of local people, but eventually the Secretary of State for Wales decided in favour of the railway. Once that decision had been made and funds were forthcoming it only made sense, again* in my humble opinion, that the most experienced people on the spot - the FR - should be entrusted with the work.

It has been done with remarkable efficiency. At the end of the day there will be a narrow-gauge network working, to the benefit of the local community and the two railways involved. Railway history is full of examples of what happens when two competing companies meet at the same place. The antipathy between the Great North of Scotland and Highland railways at Aberdeen is one example. At the other extreme is the benefit achieved when three companies sank their differences to form the Cheshire Lines Committee. It is our job to ensure that we emulate the CLC.

There is soon to be a railway through some of Europe's best scenery helping to ensure that local roads remain free from congestion. We will also benefit from being able to see Garratts and Fairlies together at Harbour Station. What more could one want?

Hellfield Donald Bird

Where is the Business Plan?

I have read with great interest the letters in the *Magazine* and items in the national railway press following my resignation as Society Chairman. They have covered the full range of views, from complete support through to indignant opposition. I do not intend repeating here the bulk of my concerns about the WHR's impact on the FR, since my purpose in doing so in my resignation article was to place on record what I knew to be the views of many FR supporters. However, following the pieces by John Prideaux and the Society Chairman in the last issue of the Magazine, I feel that the position with regard to the Business Plan for 2009 and beyond should not be allowed to pass without comment.

In my article last year I stressed, as a key point,

the debilitating effect the failure to produce a credible Business Plan is having on goodwill towards the WHR and morale amongst FR supporters. Indeed in highlighting this I was endorsing the main thrust of the letter from the six Society Vice-Presidents (in FRM 191) which was 'dismissed in such an inadequate, insensitive and demeaning manner' (to quote Brian Butterworth's letter in FRM 195) by Michael Whitehouse. The continuing lack of a Business Plan that can be shared with supporters is the nub of a number of interrelated problems. We have been promised a Business Plan repeatedly, first by Michael Whitehouse in the summer of 2003, when the target date was the autumn of 2004. Revised target dates came and went, but we all tried to keep faith. In his response to the Vice-Presidents in the winter of 2005/6, Michael Whitehouse wrote 'over the next year we will be able to show you figures'. To date all that has appeared has been Paul Lewin's aspirational 'business pillars' article in FRM 192 and a follow up article on station development and an accompanying booklet in the next issue. However, still lacking were any actual figures.

We now have John Prideaux's reassuring article in the last Magazine. However we also have the Society Chairman's rather more pertinent piece, in which he, as tactfully as he could, expresses disappointment that not even the FR Society Board are to see any financial forecasts for the expanded business. The FR Company Board has always tended to keep its financial cards close to its chest, but we had been assured following the debacle of the Ken Allen era that this had changed. Bearing in mind that many supporters consider that both the FR Trust and the FR Company are still on probation after that dire period of stewardship of the FR, this new evidence of a return to a more secretive approach is deeply worrying.

In case these views are just seen as the ex-Chairman sounding off again, I will refer back to an excellent report produced early in 2005 by a highly respected and experienced figure, acting in the role of facilitator and who, at the time, was independent of FR politics. The report was produced at the joint request of the Chairmen of the FR Trust, FR Company, FR Society and WHR Society (Messrs Prideaux, Whitehouse, Hawkins and Kent respectively) to assist in the matter of communication between the various parts of the organisation, which despite declared goodwill all round was actually proving quite

fraught. The report's carefully thought through recommendations remain confidential by mutual agreement, although sadly virtually nothing has been followed up by either the FR Trust or the FR Company, where inevitably any movement has to start in our markedly inflexible and undemocratic organisation. However I think two of the facilitator's observations should be more widely shared. Having made some suggestions for relatively minor and unthreatening structural changes, it was his belief that if implemented 'we have a basic structure of polity and governance in place that will serve us well as we meet the challenges and opportunities of the next few years. How well it works, and if it fails to work we could face unmitigated disaster, depends on the people working it'. He also identified that 'Company, Trust and Societies need to trust one another with the fullest degree of information sharing and involvement in the decision making process that is possible'.

Against this background, the FR Company Board has to date not even seen the need to take the FR Society Board into its confidence with regard to the long promised and absolutely crucial Business Plan. If there was a common ground amongst those who have commented, both for and against, on the reasons for my resignation, it is that making the enlarged venture a financial success is a huge challenge. More than ever the conclusion being reached is that there is no credible plan for how this is to be achieved. We will have the most ambitious heritage railway in the UK and, as ever, the role of volunteers will be absolutely vital. It is therefore deeply worrying that we still have an FR Company Board that just doesn't comprehend how deep is the disquiet over their plans and how crucial engaging properly with supporters has become, despite the unequivocal advice given in the facilitator's report over two years ago.

A missed opportunity and a worrying portent for the future.

By e-mail Phil Hawkins

Twinning Topics

It was a pleasant surprise to read John Organ's article in the spring 2007 Magazine. Just to put the record straight I'm not qualified as a volunteer driver on the HSB system. The nature of the politics of their region means that it would be most unlikely for them ever to employ volunteers in this way. I'm very fortunate in

being given the opportunity to drive or fire under supervision and the crews make me very welcome as their guest. It's extremely satisfying to be able to work alongside these professional crews and this is a personal benefit of having arranged the exchange visits!

I'm sorry to pour cold water on the idea, but there are currently no plans to introduce reduced fare travel on the HSB system for FR Society members. The main aims of the twinning agreement between the FRCo and the HSB are: to exchange information of relevance to each other; promote each other for mutual benefits and to encourage staff exchange visits. Ffestiniog Travel and their customers also benefit from these closer links.

Eppelheim, Germany *John Bell*

European Government

Needless to say, I was delighted to read the review of *Gwynedd: Inheriting a Revolution* written by Dr Buxton in the last magazine. For the record, may I just emphasise that it is Dr Buxton who is of the opinion that the European Union should be replaced by the Holy Roman Empire, and that I am not of this opinion? I side with Voltaire on the matter of the Holy Roman Empire.

By e-mail *Dafydd Gwyn*

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Ffestiniog 1946-1955

The Pioneers' Stories

Michael Davies & Vic Mitchell

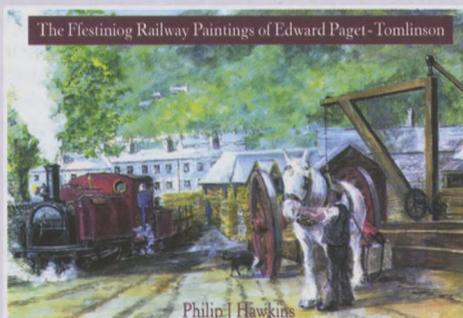
ISBN 978-1-906008-01-7

Middleton Press, 2007, £14.95

Given the large number of picture albums featuring the FR that have appeared over the past fifty years, one might be forgiven for wondering what justification there could possibly be for the production of another. However, one has only to read a little of this latest offering from the Middleton Press production line to realise that, in this instance, Vic Mitchell has indeed found a subject that has been neglected in previous publications.

This book is listed as part of the Middleton Press 'Great Railway Eras' series, and there can be no doubt that the early and mid-1950s was one of the greatest eras in railway preservation history, if not the greatest of all. It is difficult for anyone who was not there to appreciate the scale of the problems that were faced by the pioneers who reopened the FR, or the sang froid with which many of them were overcome. It

Advance Notice

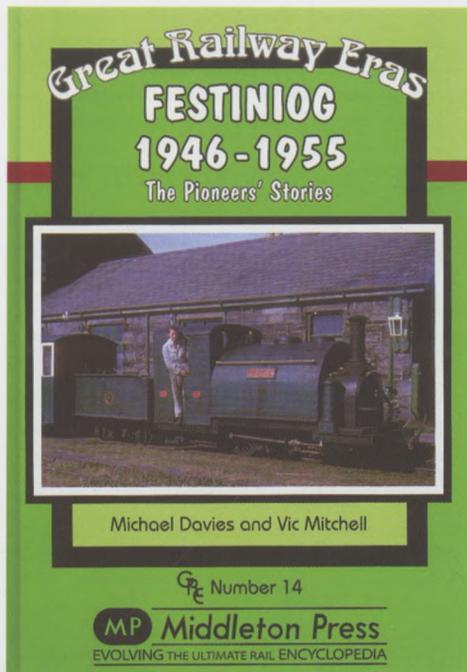


The Ffestiniog Railway Paintings of
Edward Paget-Tomlinson
Philip J Hawkins
Landmark Publications
Landscape format paperback,
172x246mm, 128pp, £14.99

Many members will be aware of the series of paintings of historic FR scenes, also sold as limited-edition prints, that were commissioned from Edward Paget-Tomlinson for the Heritage Paintings Project of the London Area Group of the Ffestiniog Railway Society.

These paintings have now been brought together in a new book containing thirty seven colour prints, of which six show scenes on the WHR, and two Porthmadog ships. There are also eighteen pen and ink drawings, two of which show WHR scenes. The book also includes a chapter describing the history of the Ffestiniog Railway written by Adrian Gray, the FR Co. Honorary Archivist.

Publication is scheduled for July 2007 and copies will be available from Porthmadog Harbour Station Shop and other good bookshops.



must be remembered that, not only was the Railway derelict, but Britain itself had been virtually bankrupt in the late 1940s and restrictions on the supply of materials such as steel, essential for the restoration of the line, remained in place well into the 1950s.

The Railway was therefore extremely lucky that many of the people who became involved in the reopening had spent their youth during WW2 and had become used to overcoming difficulties that might, in normal times, have seemed insuperable. As in wartime, major problems on the FR of the 1950s were met by lateral thinking, work-arounds, make-do expedients and a willingness to take tough decisions. Many volunteers also lived and worked in conditions that would be totally unacceptable nowadays. There can be little doubt that, without the willingness of these early volunteers to accept such conditions, the restoration of the FR would have faltered and failed.

Unlike most Middleton Press books, it is the text of this volume which makes it valuable - the descriptions of how many of the people who became well known on the FR after 1955 first got involved - written in their own words. It is a

fascinating collection and the only regret is that a number of other people who contributed a great deal in the early days of the revival were unable, for various reasons, to make a contribution. Maybe, if enough of these 'missing persons' can be persuaded by the success of this volume, there might, in the not-too-distant future, be a Volume Two, making good some of the omissions.

This being a Middleton Press book there is, of course, a good selection of photographs - well printed and, in the main, exhibiting good contrast. Given the subject, it is no surprise that a number of the photographs have already appeared elsewhere. However, a remarkable proportion are views that this reviewer had not seen before, many of them graphically illustrating the scale of the task which faced the pioneers. It is unfortunate that picture No.4 has been printed back-to-front, but that does not detract from the overall value of the book.

Needless to say, this book is available from Harbour Station shop - buy it! *JLD.*

The Manchester & Milford Railway

J S Holden

ISBN 978-0-85361-658-0

Oakwood Press, 216 pages, 2007, £14.95

Most readers will be familiar with the Oakwood Library of Railway History - a series of monographs which deals with the many small, somewhat obscure and, it has to be said, generally less than successful, railway companies which existed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Manchester and Milford Railway fits well into this group as it was certainly obscure, most definitely impecunious and ultimately an almost complete failure.

However, the original genesis of the M&M was the result of a vision at least as grand as any other scheme in the mania days of the 1840s - nothing less than the provision, at an estimated cost of £2.6 million (around £2 billion in today's money), of a direct line from the thriving cotton manufactories of Manchester to the great natural harbour of Milford Haven, thereby removing the stranglehold that the Port of Liverpool exercised over Manchester's trade with North America.

Needless to say the dream faded rapidly once the promoters tried to raise funds. Years passed

whilst various alternative schemes were proposed and abandoned and it was 1861 before construction actually started north from Pencader - only for it to peter out in the uplands near Devil's Bridge when money ran out. This crisis also caused the abandonment of a section already built south from Penpontbren Junction near Llanidloes, which only ever carried one train... Fortunately a branch from Strata Florida to Aberystwyth was already being built so all was not lost, although there was no further construction after the through route from Pencader to Aberystwyth was opened in 1867. The line then led a hand-to-mouth existence until 1875 when it became bankrupt, remaining in Chancery until 1900. After prolonged negotiations, the GWR leased the line in 1905 and absorbed it in 1911, after which it became a minor rural byway until closure in the 1960s and '70s.

This volume, No.50 in the Railway History series, is actually the second edition of a book originally published in 1979. Unfortunately your reviewer has misplaced his copy of the original edition, but his feeling that the text is little altered from the original is confirmed by the author in his introduction to the second edition. What is different is that modern methods of printing have improved the overall

presentation of the book and allowed the inclusion of a number of photographs that had to be omitted from the earlier edition, thus giving a much more complete picture of the railway's operations and the country through which it ran.

The history of the M&M is as interesting as it is involved and this is a book that can be thoroughly recommended to anyone interested in the history of railways in West Wales. *JLD*

West German Narrow Gauge

John Organ

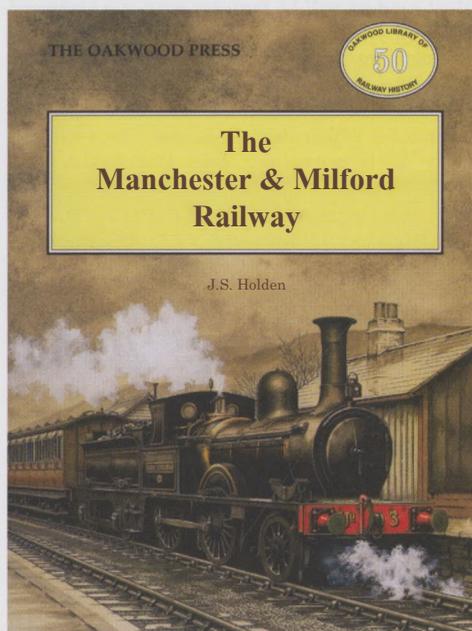
ISBN 1-904474-93-4

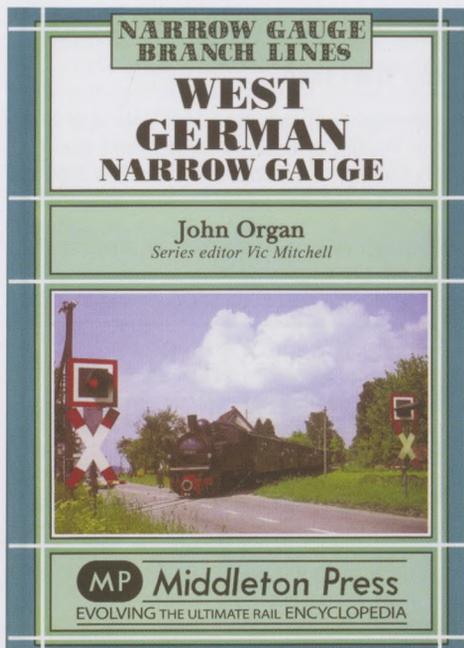
Middleton Press, 2007, £14.95

Readers will be familiar with the Narrow Gauge Branch Lines series of albums produced by this publisher, which has already covered many of the remaining narrow-gauge railways of Europe, looking particularly at their steam locomotives. However, this volume is slightly different in content in that much of the narrow-gauge in West Germany did not survive the rise of road transport in the 1950s and '60s. Much of the description is therefore historical in nature, although many of the lines survived late enough to be visited and photographed by British enthusiasts.

As is normal with this series, the railways are dealt with region by region. In this case there are four sections describing Bremen and the North, the Friesian Islands, the Ruhr and Rhine Valleys, and Baden-Wurtemberg and Bavaria. There is also a fairly active railway preservation movement in Germany and the final section of the book therefore deals with the tourist and museum lines that have sprung up in recent years, and which have served to save for posterity a representative cross-section of narrow-gauge locomotives and other equipment. Inevitably, however, there is a sufficient list of the 'ones that got away' to make the reader grateful that East Germany did not go down the same road, and we still have a system like the Harzer Schmalspurbahn to show us what these railways were like in their heyday.

The layout of the book follows that of the other titles in the series in that it is lavishly illustrated and has extensive captions. However, whilst other recent books in this series have shown a very welcome improvement in the technical quality of the photographs, the review





copy for this title indicates a lapse in the standard of reproduction - a lot of the photographs are muddy and some of them are so lacking in contrast that they appear to be unsharp.

In what is essentially a picture book the result is disappointment and one can only hope that the copy supplied to your reviewer is a rogue sample. With that caveat the book can be recommended for the information that it contains. As is to be expected, given the identity of the author, copies are available from Harbour Station shop. *JLD*

The Essential Guide to Swiss Heritage and Tourist Railways

Mervyn Jones

ISBN 978-0-85361-659-7

Oakwood Press 2007 £15.95

It appears that Oakwood Press may be intending to establish a series of guides covering the heritage and tourist railways of all of the major European countries, as we reviewed a guide to French tourist railways and heritage sites by the same author and publisher about a year ago.

This book is presented in a similar format to

the French guide and, despite Switzerland being a much smaller country, actually contains details of more tourist railways. It is produced to the same high standard as the earlier book and is especially notable for the quantity and quality of its colour photographs.

The presentation of the information about the various railways also follows much the same system as the French guide, in that the country is dealt with region by region. There are, however, a number of idiosyncracies. One of these is that, rather than treating each tourist/heritage railway as an individual system, certain premium trains or routes are described separately. Thus the Glacier Express and the Bernina Express are both accorded individual entries, as are the Golden Pass Panoramic trains, and the Rhaetian Railway is dealt with as a series of individual lines rather than an integrated system.

This can make it difficult to locate information about a particular railway, especially as the book has a peculiarly complicated and inadequate index. This depends on the user knowing more or less where a railway is located in Switzerland and finding it on an outline map, so as to read off a reference number which is then used against a list of entries. A normal alphabetic



The Ffestiniog Magazine Readers Guide to Baiter Books

No.3 Waiting Rooms and Train shed

In the last issue we entered the old station building and wandered about the former concourse. We begin this section standing on the concourse looking at the range of passenger accommodation buildings that was situated on the large single island platform.

The first room we walk into is the third class waiting room. This is another of our cosy rooms where customers can relax, read the day's papers, drink coffee, play chess and browse books they have selected from our stock of close to half a million volumes. We have restored the original features to this room after taking it over in a derelict condition. Note the original wall tiles and woodwork and the NER fireplace with its welcoming coal fire warming customers during the cooler months of the year.

The chandelier was commissioned especially for William Pym. It is a modern wrought iron hanging lamp entitled 'mythical destinations'. The theme of the lamp combines both the railway and the literary motifs. Note the tracks extending out from the hub of the lamp in a classic rose pattern and each one terminating in a mythical destination. In the centre of the hub is the latin phrase 'et in Arcadia ego' or 'I too am in Paradise'.

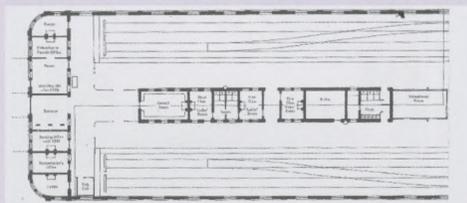
Well, coming to work everyday in a gorgeous railway station filled with books has got to be pretty close to Paradise hasn't it?



This room is also heavily used at evenings for the Barter Books Talk Series, civic events, shop functions, a Book Group (which has a waiting list to join it), and appropriately, the meetings of the Ain Valley Railway Society.

Moving out through the side door of the waiting room (a new door but in the traditional style), we move

out into the main hall, the former train shed of the station. The line between the concrete and stone flags shows the edge of the original platform. The main roof above us is a clerestory shape, the better to exhaust the smoke and steam from locomotives below. The space between the island platform and the train shed wall provided space for an engine release road.



Moving along the island platform, we next come to the usual drinking font with its (replica) brass drinking cups. This modest font was a wonder of the time because of its filtered water supply. The 'Newcastle Journal' said in 1887, "true it is and of verity, that the provision of a free filtered water supply in Alnwick Station may bring about an exodus from Newcastle". Of course, in Victorian Britain people had begun to realise the dangers to health of impure water ... however they were unaware that everyone drinking from the same brass cup was probably a good way to spread tuberculosis....

Just beyond the water font we turn into the alleyway that allowed access across the two faces of the platform, noting its original NER green tiles, and the vintage NER timetables displayed on the wall. This area holds our vinyl records display, and it is odd that the demand these days is for 60's/70's pop and rock music, and is mostly bought by teenagers! This despite our 'worst record sleeve of the week' feature, with some toe-curling embarrassing outfits worn by the artists.

In the next issue we look at the treasures of the 1st class Waiting Rooms - and the loos!

Barter Books

Alnwick Station, Alnwick Northumberland
Tel: 01665 604888. Web: www.barterbooks.co.uk

One of the country's largest
second-hand book shops

index would be much simpler and easy to use.

The guide would also be much more useful if each of the entries contained a reference to the table number in the excellent Swiss national transport timetable - especially as these tables can now be accessed easily over the internet - and even free of charge by wi-fi at major Swiss stations.

These niggles apart, this is a very useful book and one which will certainly accompany your reviewer on his next visit to Switzerland. Recommended. *JLD*

**'Rule of Thumb'
The Life Story of an Engineer**

David Curwen

ISBN 978-0-9554625-0-4

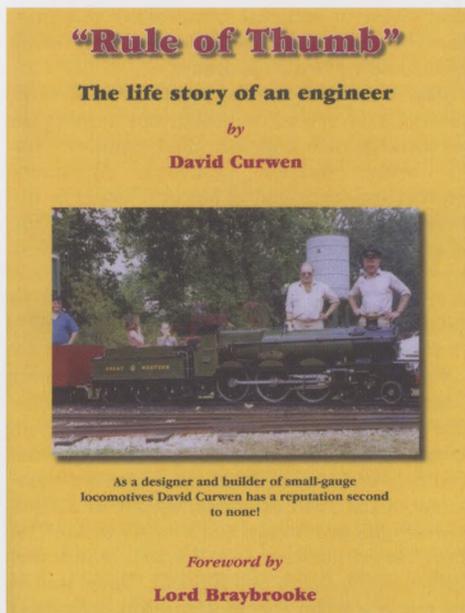
Vintage Reprint Service, 56 pages, 2006, £13.50

This is the life story of one of Britain's foremost miniature-locomotive designers and constructors, who has contributed much to the success of the smaller gauges during the past 60 years. The book is not so much an autobiography, rather a collection of memories from an interesting and active life in engineering.

Born in 1913, David Curwen is a largely self-taught engineer who began his career working for a local garage and agricultural engineer near the family home in Kent. In addition to repairing the rather basic motor vehicles of the 1920s, he was responsible for maintaining the generating plant of many of the large farms and estates in the area. During this period he also became involved with steam power. Some fascinating memories of the working conditions encountered during this period are recalled, a lot of which would cause today's health and safety inspectors to react with horror!

Between 1935 and 1946, David was employed in the aircraft industry, initially with Shorts at Rochester and finally with Vickers at Swindon. The early period at Shorts was mainly concerned with development work on flying boats. However, due to the onset of WW2, David was transferred to the development of the Stirling, the first British four-engined bomber to enter service. The final years of the war saw him deskbound at Vickers, involved with improvements to the Spitfire.

Following the war, he set up a general engineering business near Swindon, which tackled a huge variety of jobs. Due to the



shortage of petrol, experiments were carried out in converting conventional motor vehicles to steam power. These conversions led to an involvement with the Singer Car Company, who were designing a steam-powered car for enthusiasts. Sadly, this enterprising experiment was abandoned when the Singer Company was absorbed by the Rootes Group.

It was during this immediate post-war period that the first miniature locomotives were constructed. The first two were 10Vi" gauge Pacifics based on the LNER Thompson A2/1 design. These were followed by a batch of freelance 4-4-2s, known as the 'Curwen Atlantics'. A total of six were constructed between 1948 and 1960, all of which have survived.

Around 1950, David was introduced to Tom Rolt who was in the early stages of trying to save the Talylyn Railway. For the first two years of the revival, David served as Chief Mechanical Engineer during which time he returned the two Corris locomotives to working order in addition to keeping the ailing *Dolgoch* in service.

Following his tenure at Towyn, 1953 saw the formation of Curwen & Newbery, Agricultural Engineers, based at Devizes. As a sideline to the agricultural business, miniature locomotives were overhauled and constructed, including a

new breed of internal combustion machines based on the diesel locomotives then being introduced by British Railways.

After Curwen & Newbery was taken over in 1966, David set up a design consultancy in partnership with a former chief engineer from the Avon Rubber Company. Miniature locomotives continued to be constructed in the workshop at David's home. Amongst the locomotives he designed and built at this time were the 7¼ gauge 2-8-2s based on the Rio Grande K36, the first of which was supplied to Brian Hollingsworth for the Croesor Junction & Pacific Railroad.

A railway that has benefited more than most from David Curwen's expertise is that at Audley End House near Saffron Walden. Since its inception in 1964, a total of nine Curwen locomotives have operated there. Among these is one of the 1948 Atlantics, rebuilt as a 2-6-2 with lengthened frames and a longer boiler. The most recent addition is a 2-4-2ST, which was influenced by *Linda* and *Blanche*. David was in his mid-80s when this machine was completed in 1997.

At 93 years of age, David Curwen still carries out small jobs in his workshop, where some of the machinery is as old as he is! This is a fascinating book and, despite some minor typographical errors, is highly recommended. Copies can be obtained from the publishers: Vintage Reprint Service, Lodge Wood Farm, Hawkeridge, Westbury, Wilts. BA13 4LA. UK inland postage is included in the cover price. *JFO*

Railways Restored 2007

Alan C Baker (Editor)

ISBN 0-7110-3216-5

Ian Allan £14.99

This is the 28th edition of this useful, annual, reference book. As most readers will know, it lists the facilities available at pretty well every railway preservation site and tourist railway in the British Isles, including the Republic of Ireland. There are also comprehensive lists of the locomotives currently at each location and details of special events planned for the year.

A full review of the 27th, 2006, edition was published in FRM 193 and, as there has been no significant change in the layout or content, the same comments and assessment apply. Recommended. *JLD*

Dinorwic

The Llanberis Slate Quarry 1780-1969

Reg Chambers Jones

ISBN 1-84494-33-0

Bridge Books, 176 pages 2006, £16.99

Not since *Delving in Dinorwic* has there been a book-length study of the Vaynol estate's biggest slate quarry - some would say the biggest slate quarry in Wales, because though Dinorwic was less productive than Penrhyn, it may, at times, have covered a greater area.

Reg Chambers Jones, a native of Port Dinorwic and author of several earlier books on aspects of local history, begins with the story of the Vaynol estate and its owners before moving through the history of the quarry itself and chapters dedicated specifically to transport, to the quarry hospital, to the district as a whole and to the quay and the village at Port Dinorwic.

There is comparatively little here on technical development - the opening of inclines, mills and so forth. Reg's emphasis is a very welcome one - he looks at the human story, putting names to the faces on the photographs, and discussing the ways in which boys and young men were taught their craft. There is an interesting section on engine drivers and firemen, rather a separate category of individuals in the quarry, and information on how steam was raised in the locomotives.

Some of the photographs are reproduced here for the first time, and include some splendid late nineteenth-century views of the quarry. The section on the hospital, rightly, follows Dr Davies' lead in emphasising just how skilled the quarry doctors were, and how they served the men well. The genial Dr Mills Roberts was evidently held in high regard.

A map of the whole area and of the quarry would have been helpful - people from the area may know their way around Clwt y Bont and Cwm y Glo but it is not always easy for anyone else. *DG*

The Sandstone Steam Railroad

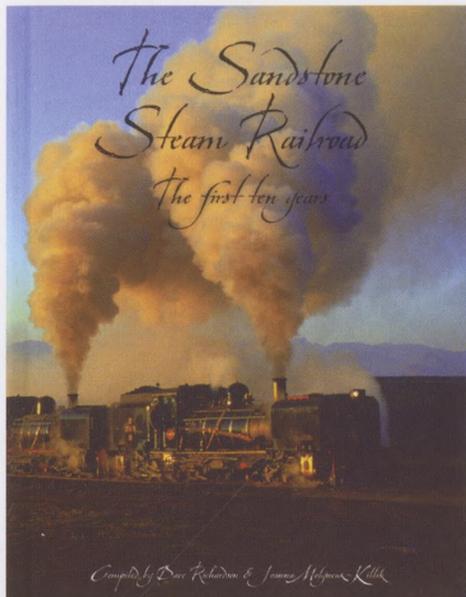
The First 10 Years

Dave Richardson & Joanna Molyneux-Killik

ISBN 0-620-37441-1

Sandstone Heritage Trust, 2006, £12.50

This book tells the story of how and why the Sandstone Estate railway line was built. It



chronicles how Wilfred Mole, the estate's owner and a steam enthusiast, decided to save the rolling stock of the failed Midmar Project in Kwa Zulu Natal from the scrap man.

The Midmar locomotives and carriages were transported to Sandstone's estate in the Eastern Free State. This was initially for safe storage but, before long, a project was hatched whereby the estate would actually be served by a narrow-gauge railway. This would show how a cheaply-constructed railway could actually work for the model farm by transporting goods and harvests across a vast acreage. Before long, a transhipment siding to the 'Cape-gauge' mainline was in place and a depot built close to the main farm complex.

Once the line was up and running, historic 2-foot gauge locomotives and rolling stock from all over the sub-continent appeared in all kinds of condition and were quickly dealt with by Sandstone's expert restoration team in Bloemfontein. The line now has one of the most diverse collections of narrow-gauge equipment and rolling stock in Africa and the aim is to preserve the past as a living, working entity under the umbrella of the Sandstone Heritage Trust.

To quote from their excellent website: 'Over the years the Sandstone Steam Railroad has simply pursued a policy of trying to accumulate

on one site as diverse a cross-section as possible of 2ft narrow gauge items. There appeared to be no single preservation centre that was focused on this activity and as a result it seemed appropriate that Sandstone should take up the mantle and take full responsibility for flying the flag for South Africa... Many other countries around the world are blessed with a wonderful cross-section of small industrial locomotives, particularly in the Sugar Cane application, but very few countries can pride themselves on being the place that created the need for locomotives like (the) NGG13, NG15 and NGG16...'

Sandstone is not however, just 2-foot gauge... The estate also looks after an amazing quantity of 500mm, 750mm, 2'6" and 3'6" (Cape-gauge) equipment too. Indeed, Wilfred Mole's wife, Lindie, has a mainline-certified GMAM Garratt named in her honour!

Your reviewer has been following Sandstone's fortunes on the internet for several years now and, until he received the book, knew only a fraction of what they have achieved. The book, in A5 format, is neat and attractive. Most of the pictures are in colour and reproduce well. Unfortunately, the print is in a small font and might be difficult for someone with poor eyesight to read. It is obvious why this has been done - to pack as much information as possible into a small and relatively inexpensive book. However, for those with normal eyesight it is readable without too much difficulty.

The only real criticism is that the map of the line is from a satellite image and rather small and murky. A much clearer map would have been better so that pictures could be related to locations. Other than that, if you're interested in overseas two-foot gauge railways - those that followed where the FR led - this book is to be recommended.

Copies are available from: The Sandstone Heritage Trust, c/o Joanne West, 33, Searing Way, Tadley, Hants RG26 4HT - e-mail: joannewest@btinternet.com CB

PLEASE NOTE: The inclusion of a book, DVD or video in the above reviews does NOT necessarily imply that it is available from the Harbour Station shop.

If ordering from Harbour Station, please do not forget to add adequate postage.

Early Days At Boston Lodge:

Part 2

Fred Boughey

Due to the birth of our son, David, I was unable to get down for the March 1955 working party, so decided that, given accommodation, the family would spend four weeks in July and August in the vicinity. Friends of AGWG (*Allan Garraway - Ed*) had a cottage, Ty Capel Horeb, up the hill from Prenteg which was very kindly lent to us and so, on 23 July we left Birkenhead (Woodside) on the 07.50 to Pwllheli. This was in Portmadoc about 13.00 so, by the time we got to Harbour Station, the service had started and our first sight of an FR train with fare-paying passengers was the 14.00 ex-Boston Lodge Halt on arrival at Harbour. AGWG asked my wife to act as booking clerk, to relieve Mike Seymour. It was explained that we had no transport to get to or from Ty Capel Horeb, so AGWG offered to collect us (in his 2-seater MG sports car!) and return us at the day's end.

As Alice and Pat (three years old) took up the passenger seat, I myself rode on the folded hood, restraining the carry-cot containing our five-month old son. Climbing from, or descending to, Prenteg was a bit hair-raising - travel on the level was tame by comparison. The system worked well for several days until AGWG took a VIP for a trip, after the day's booked trains were over. Alice's temper was not improved as son's feeding time and bath time came and went. Co-operation with the FR thenceforward ceased, killed by the FR's lack of concern for her family! I had to use my bicycle for the rest of our stay, although I didn't have to

ride the bike up and down the hill. It was left overnight at the farm at the bottom of the hill and I walked the rest.

I had splashed out on a roll of *Ilfocolor*, so I have some interesting colour shots of the period, particularly those which I took after 'Mary Ann' expired part way, I think, to Boston Lodge. The train was pushed back to Portmadoc and the pushers walked back to do a similar trick with the locomotive. The overhaul of *Prince* was accelerated and the frame, with the boiler and saddle tank, was worked round to the water tank, where the tank and boiler were filled and duly brought back to the yard and erecting shop. Here the cab and plumbing was put back, during the course of which it became desirable to cut a small port in the cab back sheet to allow access to the Jubilee clip on the hose under the vacuum cylinder.

Arwyn Morgan did the cutting with an oxy-acetylene torch and, almost immediately, there came a loud shout from inside the cab - the Manager's hand had been on the other side of the plate and he wasn't pleased about it! Space was very confined and there seemed to be a small army of folk, largely getting in each other's way. Somebody therefore suggested that any bystanders should paint the engine. I didn't think that this was a good idea, but presumably there had been comments about not using volunteers when they were available, so they proceeded to cover the old dusty paintwork with Hempalin green undercoat. When the plumbing was completed, the fire was lit and the smoke rose to the apex of the erecting shop roof. It slowly came lower and most people went outside when the underside of the cloud was at about the level of the cab roof. Needless to say, I joined them!

Eventually the tender, then the engine, appeared outside the Shop and I realised that, for the first time, I had seen an FR locomotive moving under steam. But why was the fire being thrown out? Later it transpired that the joint made for the injector water pipe to the tank had been



The earliest steam trains of the revival were very modest affairs. This is the 11.30am departure from Portmadoc to Boston Lodge on 16 August 1955 - Carriages Nos. 12 and 23 hauled (of course) by Prince. (Robert Darlaston)

3 tank and two carriages. This was *The Welshman* which was added to a Pwllheli portion at Afonwen and assumed its final form at, I think, Bangor. We were travelling to my parent's house at Prestatyn which was a request stop.

Working visits for the remainder of the year were

made by the normal process of a piece of jointing gasket being placed on the flange and the outer shape and the holes for the fastenings cut using the ball pein of a hand hammer. The jointing and flange were then offered up and nipped up to be watertight. Unfortunately the hole for the passage of water had *NOT* been cut! With steam up, the injector was tried and did not work. Hence the need to dispose of the fire.

Whilst the reasons for the failure were being worked out and dismantling undertaken to cure the trouble, I went home to my wife and family. After my meal I saw the tiny *Prince* make its way out onto the Cob. From Ty Capel Horeb it wasn't possible to see Harbour Station, although one could see Pont Croesor and the route of the Croesor Tramway way up to Cnicht and, of course, the Moelwyns and the Rhinogs.

There was no shelter at Boston Lodge Halt and, in an effort to remedy this, Mike Seymour and I cleared out the Weigh House, long disused as such and latterly serving as the oils store for the locomotive shed. I don't think any passengers ever sheltered in the place but it did serve as a store for bottled drinks manufactured by R.M Jones Ltd., sold by the guard whilst the chain-shunting procedure was carried out. Our stay in the area came to an end and we departed from Portmadoc (BR) station on a train for London (Euston) which consisted of a class

mainly spent in making a proper paint job of *Prince*, using my father's lining fitches for the picking-out between the green panelling and the black surrounds. John Halsall and I worked to snapped chalk lines, using a bean tin as a template for the reversed corners and a straightedge, with packers, to clear the rivets. I did most of the straights and John the curly corners. This process continued into the following year and was developed with the entry into service of *Taliesin*. Supplies of paint had been donated by the Hempalin company. They were manufacturers of marine paints and the colours available to us were a dark (very



One landmark which disappeared early in the revival period was the wooden shelter on the down platform at Minffordd station. It was completely rotten and deemed to be too close to the track for safety. The replica constructed almost 50 years later shows the building as it might have looked when new in the 19th century. (John Dobson)

blue) green, cream, black and a rather earthy red. The choice of colours had been the Manager's. He wanted the carriage-stock livery to be similar to that of the pre-war LNER tourist stock. This I had seen at Liverpool Central (High Level) and the green was a much more pleasing shade. When, later, Morris & West of Birkenhead were supplying paint, I asked them to increase the amount of chrome yellow in the green in order to lengthen the period before it became blue.

One problem was what to paint, with what, on the engines. Cream, obviously, was out of the question, so we had the blueish green, black and the doubtful red. Clearly, the main requirement, apart from protection, was maximum visual impact, combined with a minimum of work in application and maintenance. A black engine would be easier to maintain, so the main colour could be black, with certain areas panelled in green, picked out in red. This was developed from a coloured print of the West Midland Railway's *Will Shakespeare* in an RCTS publication. This was first seen by Martin Lee and caused much excitement when passed around the rest of the Works Gang. I was amused by the

fact that engines would be painted like those of a constituent of the GWR, rather than the LNER; this latter railway being heavily represented on both the Railway and the Board!

All coats of paint were undercoated in suitable colours so that, if the black surround on tanks was damaged, black would still show. The most irritating thing was to find that railway enthusiasts, far from appreciating the need to do less cleaning, by only having to clean a few green surfaces to achieve a satisfactory 'look', positively liked polishing surfaces - particularly polishing brasses! However, they were very reluctant to clean motion and wheels, or anything else that might improve the efficiency of the machine... (*to be continued*)

The decrepit state of the FR's carriage fleet was well illustrated by the disintegration of Bug Box No. 8 in August 1956. The event caused great hilarity to an assembly of early volunteers. Left to right: Allan Garraway, Peter Canning, Mike Elvy, John Stone, John Jebb (rear), ?? Wilson, David Rouse, Fred Boughey (rear), Ann Hatherill, Roy Cunningham (rear), Tom Sayer, Mike Seymour and Jim Maxwell. (W. A. Carter).



INTERNATIONAL INTERACTIVE:

FR & WHR staff visit the HSB

John Bell

From 19 to 23 April, thirty FR and WHR staff made a working visit to the Harzer Schmalspurbahnen (HSB) in former East Germany. This was the fourth in the series of exchange visits which began in 2003 and the first since the twinning arrangements were formalised in September 2006. The group was made up of approximately 50% locomotive crew with the rest split fairly evenly between guards, those interested in infrastructure, and interpreters. Looked at another way the group included representation from the FR Trust, the FR Company board, FR permanent staff, Ffestiniog Travel, WHR Construction, the WHR Society board and volunteers from both lines. We even had Peter Johnson, wearing his FR photographer and *Steam Railway* hats.

Details for the visit had been worked out since October 2006 and the final plans were made in conjunction with the HSB after my visit there in February. The HSB were extremely generous in the way they looked after us. On the Thursday evening we were welcomed by Jörg Bauer (Chief Operating and Engineering Manager) and Rüdiger Simon (Finance Manager), completed the induction forms and over dinner and a few beers old friends quickly became reacquainted!

Friday morning started off with a tour of Westerntor Works. We were particularly impressed by their apprentice training facilities and some of the locomotive crew started to get their hands dirty investigating stripped-down, nylon-bushed valve gear.



We then moved on by road coach to the new carriage storage facility and washing plant. This €2 million shed was completed at the end of 2005 and provides secure storage for over 70 carriages.

The coach then took us to Quedlinburg where a special train was waiting: one of the 2-10-2Ts, three heritage carriages and a four-wheeled van. This last vehicle was provided by the HSB supporting society with volunteer crew to cater for us. The train and loco crew of Katja Lattner, Roger Zilling and Detlef Jänisch were well known to us, all having been to the FR and WHR at least once. The loco was quickly adorned with Welsh flags and we were off! Our route took us over the recently regauged section to Gernrode and then on to Alexisbad, Stiege, Eisfelder Talmühle, Drei Annen Hohne, Brocken and finally Wernigerode: eighty miles in all! This run was used to familiarise the FR and WHR crews with the engine: Roger and Detlef were very patient!



The weather couldn't have been better and we were also treated to some run-pasts along the way. After arriving at the summit of the Brocken we were given a guided tour of the museum which helped many of us understand more fully the historical, natural and socio-political significance of the mountain. The HSB are very fortunate to have it to provide their main source of income. Dinner was served in the 'Witches Den' before the return to Wernigerode where we arrived at around 23:00. Some die-hards then visited the Wernigerode control centre: another special was still out on the Brocken line.

On the Saturday and Sunday our loco crews and guards shadowed their HSB counterparts on the service trains and all the steam engines we used carried Welsh flags. Andie Shaw and Paul Ingham were able to get some useful experience on the HSB Mallets: these saturated compounds are fairly close in principle to our K1 on the WHR. We also had crews on diesel railcars,

The FR 'Sonderzug' at Alexisbad. The rolling stock is from the HSB 'heritage' fleet. Could it be that the crew are tucking into some of the excellent gateaux from the hotels opposite the station? (HSB official photo)

dual-system trams in Nordhausen, and Ian Rudd shunting with a remote-controlled diesel!

Over the weekend our guards were able to distribute about 400 FR and WHR timetable leaflets and a German language flyer to the passengers. Whilst we had some sales stock with us this did not prove easy to sell.

On the Saturday the infrastructure group of Mike Schumann, Dave High, Chris Mace and Rodney Thorp were taken by Jörg Bauer and the appropriate HSB departmental heads to see a number of in-progress or recently completed projects. They looked at retaining walls, culverts, bridges, track with Y-sleepers and station building restorations in Stiege and Eisfelder Talmühle. They even visited a radio tower used for train control between Drei Annen Hohne and Ilfeld.

In the care of Jörg Bauer the Sunday 'special interest' group of Phil Ankers, Derek Evans and Peter Randall were shown the full extent of the dual-system tram operation in Nordhausen and out to Ilfeld and in the afternoon took the railcar service to Hasselfelde and return. All were able to get hands-on driving experience on both types of vehicle.

Most of the group had a free evening on the Saturday whilst a small number were entertained by the HSB senior management in Wernigerode Castle. This proved to be a useful meeting where a number of topics of mutual interest were explored further. During the evening, and as official 'tokens of appreciation' from the FR Co, Nigel Burbidge presented Matthias Wagener, HSB General Manager, with a showcase including four tokens which each had a significant story to tell:

- A Tan y Bwlch - Blaenau token to mark 25 years of the FR returning to Blaenau.
- A Tan y Bwlch - Dduallt token, as it reflects on the former crossing point in the spiral, and that we have the only spiral in the UK.

- A replica Snowdon Ranger token which was the reserve token made for presentation to HRH Prince Charles on the occasion of the opening to Rhyd Ddu.
- The damaged divisible Dinas - Waunfawr token which got caught between the point levers at Dinas on numerous occasions.

We also gave them three framed prints of classic FR and WHR scenes and the twinning ceremony from September 2006, to hang in their HQ building.

By Sunday evening everyone was exhausted(!) and the closing dinner and evening flew by all too quickly. More gifts: we presented the HSB management with a copy of each volume of *Immortal Rails* which included a note signed by everyone in the group. We were each given limited edition wrist watches commemorating the opening of the Gernrode-Quedlinburg section last year and a 2008 HSB calendar to help us retain the memories of our visit longer. Matthias Wagener thanked us all for coming and his staff for their part in making

The obligatory group photograph at the summit station on the Brocken with one of the HSB's signature 2-10-2Ts in the background. (Peter Johnson)





the whole event run so smoothly. Particular thanks were given to Silke Stüber and Jörg Bauer for their detailed planning - something which we could only reiterate.

The press releases issued by the HSB immediately prior to our visit and afterwards generated good publicity for us in the local and regional media and web news reports. Over the weekend there were regular spots on the local radio about us and the high point was a television report on MDR which was broadcast on the Saturday evening including an interview with one of our crews. The report cleverly incorporated shots lifted from the WHR guidebook showing the visit of HRH Prince Charles. The MDR crew expressed an interest in covering a return visit of HSB staff to Wales - obviously something to follow up on!

Tour organiser John Bell, concentrating hard on the job in hand, on the footplate of one of the HSB's 2-10-2Ts (Peter Johnson)



The handing over ceremony for the tokens of appreciation mentioned in the text, by Nigel Burbidge (left) to Matthias Wagener, HSB General Manager.. (Werner Knopf)

Gardening

ON THE FR *Eileen Clayton*

Minffordd garden is over 400 feet long by 15 feet wide, and until the mid-1980s it was an overgrown rubbish dump. Little did we know, when we decided to 'improve' it, what we were letting ourselves in for...

During the summer of '85 we organised evening weed-bashing parties before retiring to a local hostelry. Then, in the autumn we held the first *Megabash* although we didn't call it that at the time. We had 29 people - an army we thought. We also had *Britomart* - dare we tell that we used it to pull up the stumps of the white poplars which a tree-surgeon friend had previously felled for us? Our gang not only found brambles, bracken, horsetails, bindweed and a host of other gardeners' foes, but lumps of concrete, axle boxes, chairs, bricks, an old gate and, and, and...

In all we filled four bogie coal wagons full of debris, unloading it in Minffordd Yard as dusk fell, with the assistance of a group of university students, who it must be said have not been seen since. However, we had exposed soil, light sandy, humus-poor soil, but soil it was. There and then we planted a few daffodil bulbs along the front edge. We were overjoyed the following March when their wonderful yellow flowers waved as flags in the wind to signal our intentions to the world.

We had little money then (and we haven't got a lot more these days!) so we appealed for donations from other people's gardens with the result that *Convention '85* brought not only delegates, but lots of plants. The Sunday morning saw us accepting these gifts and hurriedly planting them.

The donated plants grew well - some too well - this was often why they'd been evicted from their previous gardens! But, they gave colour and covered the bare earth, for which

we were truly grateful. However the purists amongst us wanted something a little more special. By now, people were beginning to take our intentions seriously and we even got a budget off the FR Company, negotiated by Pat MacGregor, who was one of the early activists. Even better, we were attracting donations which showed that people appreciated what we were doing. Thus we were able to afford shrubs and small trees - each carefully chosen for their horticultural interest, their long flowering season, colour at different times of the year, attractive berries, etc. We got flowering cherries, escallonia, viburnum, mahonia, spirea, camellia, potentilla, rowan, and more, which gave a comprehensive mix of flowering times, colours and leaf forms.

As the climate in this area is mild, influenced by the warm air of the Gulf Stream, we could even buy a few species which are not hardy in much of the rest of Britain. These included the Chilean Fire Tree, Chinese Lantern Tree and Enkianthus, which are still thriving and still noted with interest by the gardening enthusiasts among our passengers.

We had created our dream, but then realised that it had to be maintained, which requires a lot of labour for a garden that size. Fortunately, two things then happened. Firstly, our activities had expanded by this time to take in more than gardening - 'detattifying' was the in-word - so we were gathering lots of people together and running large working parties, often with more than 100 volunteers. This provided the labour to ensure that the maintenance took place. Secondly, Mary Arnold turned up on one of these early working parties. Mary is an accomplished gardener and an excellent organiser and she soon took over the running of Minffordd garden maintenance. Without her, it is likely that the garden would have returned to the jungle from whence it came, but minus the concrete and scrap iron.

Mary has gathered around her a group of people who appear two or three times a year



An early P&G working party at Minffordd in October 1985. Clearance operations had just begun when this photograph was taken. (Eileen Clayton)

to help keep the garden in top condition. Some have been with her for the best part of twenty years, others come and go. To this loyal team we owe a deep appreciation. They have worked in fair weather and in foul. We have had some glorious days, but have also had to work when it's been wet, windy, or bitterly cold, and at times all three.

Over the years, we've managed to vastly improve the quality of the soil. We've had large quantities of horse manure from a local stables and have benefited from the activities of the chain saw gangs doing vegetation clearance along the line. On the Sunday afternoon of every autumn *Gigabash*, the manure train draws into Minffordd Station and it's all hands to the pump shovelling the slimy, smelly stuff into barrows and dumping it on the garden. On the spring *Megabash* a similar thing happens, but this job is much more pleasant, as wood chip is lighter, drier and almost odourless. The only drawback to wood chip is that it carries fungal spores and we've lost a number of trees as a result

of using it - members of the rosaceae family are particularly susceptible.

The years have not been without their little dramas. Once, long ago, a helpful FR Society member, hearing that we were appealing for seeds, painstakingly collected calendula seeds and sprinkled them the entire length of the garden. The following spring, the garden was covered with thousands (yes, really) of these plants. They did look colourful - well there was a sea of yellow - but they did over-grow many of the more delicate low growing plants. We removed as many as we could but still some seeded. The following year we still had calendula, not quite as many as the previous year, but more than enough. It has taken us years to eradicate them all from the garden - or very nearly - if you look in the top third of the garden...

We always boast that we can find work for anyone regardless of their abilities, and

Mistress of all she surveys... Mary Arnold takes stock during a weeding session at Minffordd. (Eileen Clayton)

have indeed done so, giving many folks additional skills to add to their CV's. We greatly appreciate the many volunteers who have joined our skilled regulars and helped win the battle against the weeds, whilst saying 'I know nothing about gardening'. It's not such folks who have given us grief, it's those who think themselves to be skilled, but actually are not. We've really only had one shining example of such a person, who is no longer with us (and no, we didn't 'do him in', as he meant well). However, during one autumn working party, he seized a pair of loppers and proceeded to 'prune' many of the trees and shrubs.

Minffordd garden is large, so it took Mary a while to spot what was happening, by which time the damage was done. 'It looks a lot tidier down here' said the perpetrator. I can't report what Mary's response was! Suffice it to say that several of our prized shrubs and trees, including our lovely Chilean fire tree, have never quite looked the same since and there is a name which is never mentioned within hearing of Mary Arnold.

I'd intended to go on to write about how we expanded from Minffordd to transform the gardens on other stations, but I'm running out of my allocated space. However, before I sign off, I'd like to say a little about Minffordd garden in the future. Mary is willing to continue to run the big working parties for the time being. She usually comes up three times a year - for March *Megabash*, Spring Bank Holiday and



October *Gigabash* - and she would welcome help at these times. However, the garden suffers from lack of attention in July and August and we would really appreciate it if a group could be formed of people who would be prepared to spend just a few hours a week on maintenance during these months, each person working at a time to suit themselves. Anyone willing to give us such a helping hand should contact Eileen on 01766 770860 or e-mail: eileen@eileenclayton.net. If we are going to keep the gardens of the FR looking attractive, we really do need this additional help.

What Else Do You Do?

Rebecca Kitchin

Ever since I can remember, I have been good at 'colouring in', so I decided from a young age that I was going to be an artist when I grew up! My dad worked as a graphic designer and copywriter, running his advertising and design business from a studio at home. For a young child, the temptation to borrow his magic markers was just too great to resist, especially when we used to come and stay at our holiday house in Dolwyddelan - when it would rain for the whole two weeks that we were there!

My first memory of the FR is of Dad dropping my train fanatic of a brother and me off at Blaenau Ffestiniog station to catch the train down to Porthmadog, where my parents would meet us. I would take my magic markers with me to doodle in my sketch book as I thought trains were somewhat boring at the time! It's odd, therefore, that it is now me who works for the FR and not my brother! Nowadays I know that steam trains are not boring at all, but rather stunning pieces of engineering. The FR really came into my life when I started work as a member of the summer staff in the booking office at Porthmadog Harbour Station in 2005. How better, therefore, to combine my love of art with my work - and earn some extra cash at the same time? Why not draw and paint steam engines, I asked myself?

I had graduated two years previously with a first-class honours degree in illustration and was trying to sell my paintings in local galleries. Meanwhile, I needed a more dependable income to pay the mortgage. The inspiration came when I was selling a couple of paintings and one client said to me: 'Why don't you sell greetings cards of your art work?' That idea stayed with me and was further reinforced when Dad and I were looking for a good quality, Welsh,

greetings card for my Mum - we simply couldn't find one. The obvious answer was to make our own, and the Welsh Greetings Cards business featuring paintings by Dad and myself took off immediately! This gave me the essential extra income needed to see me through the winter so that I could come back to work on the Railway the following year.

As of now, April 2007, I have become a full-time FR employee as a supervisor in the booking office, working as Sam Hughes' assistant. In the meantime my greetings cards business has gone from strength to strength. I also work regularly with the Welsh Books Council as an illustrator and already have three published books to my name. Recently I designed and produced Christmas cards for the Welsh Assembly and the FR (the *Lyd* card featuring Paul Lewin and my husband-to-be, Jon Whalley - and the Bessie Jones card which was sold in the shop). I have also managed to complete



Rebecca at work in her studio. (Rebecca Kitchin)



some work for fashion designers in London plus hundreds of private commissions. These range from illustrations of pet dogs and cats to wedding stationery that is shipped all over the world, but especially to the Welsh-speaking communities in North and South America, Australia and New Zealand.

I can draw just about anything from steam trains to wolves, taking in portraits of people and horses on the way. I also work in just about any media and in pretty well any style you can think of! My cards are printed on 1401b Bockingford watercolour paper to create the handmade watercolour feel that is now unique to Wales. Recently I have developed more additions to the range, including mounted and framed prints of our work, and book marks and notelets that sell to more than 20 retailers all over North Wales - including the FR and WHR Shops.

The wonderful thing about being an artist and working on the FR is that I get the best

An example of the kind of artwork which Rebecca produces for the FR. (Rebecca Kitchen)

of both worlds. I work with fantastic people on the Railway and I get to go home and do some 'colouring in' after work! For anyone who might be interested in taking a closer look at my work, my father and I are having an exhibition in the library in Blaenau Ffestiniog during August.

Further information is available on:
01766 762693 or www.celtic-l.org.uk
By special arrangement you can also visit my studios in Madoc Street
Tel: 07875384766 or 01766 512518.

FR FOUR-WHEELED CARRIAGES

Part I - The Brown, Marshalls 'Bug Boxes'

Martyn Knight

The FR was the first British narrow-gauge railway authorised to carry passengers and almost certainly the first narrow-gauge railway anywhere to build carriages specifically for the purpose. The survivors of this group of vehicles are therefore the oldest narrow-gauge carriages in the world. Ordered from Brown, Marshalls and Company of Birmingham in the summer of 1863, they were delivered early the following year. Although C.E.Spooner stipulated the broad parameters required, Brown, Marshalls undertook the detailed design work.

With the running gear buried under longitudinal back-to-back seats, the design ensured a low centre of gravity with the weight concentrated between the rails and made them very stable vehicles. The very low floor height also meant that platforms were not required at stations.

A total of eight vehicles were delivered; Nos.1 and 2 were first class carriages, Nos.3 to 6 were third class and the remaining pair, believed to have been initially unnumbered,

were completely open vehicles (the survivor is now often called 'the flying bench'). By the 1880s this last pair had become Nos. 12 and 13. It is not known whether they were supplied with awnings and leather aprons or if these were added after delivery in a bid to combat the effects of Welsh weather.

All of these vehicles were 10 feet long and 6 feet 3 inches wide over the body. The enclosed vehicles were 6 feet 6 inches high over the roof. Externally, the main difference between the first and third-class vehicles was that the first-class carriages had two droplights either side of the door, whilst the third-class vehicles had one droplight flanked by two wooden panels (these were later replaced by fixed windows). It is believed that, when second-class accommodation was required, third-class vehicles were upgraded - probably by the addition of a carpet runner on the seats and not much else!

Before long some vehicles were rebuilt as a result of changing requirements. It is probable that the six bogie tri-composite vehicles built between 1872 and 1879 met all of the requirement for first-class accommodation. As a result, by the time *Frammed by Brake Van No.6 and Quarry men's Carriage No.8, Bug Boxes Nos.1, 4 and 3 formed a short test train for Merddin Emrys on 7 April.* (John Dobson)



Bleasdale was commissioned to take his series of photographs in 1887, the two closed first-class vehicles had been rebuilt as semi-opens. All droplights and upper side panels had been removed, the waistline had also been lowered and elegantly curved top corner pieces with scimitar fretting added to the resulting large openings. The full-length doors had also been replaced by half-doors.

By the late 1880s or early 1890s the two completely open carriages had undergone more drastic rebuilds, emerging with fully enclosed bodies of the same overall dimensions as the other carriages. They took some of their styling cues from the new semi-open Nos.1 and 2, sharing the same low waistline, but instead of being semi-open they were given huge, fixed, glazed windows, one either side of a full-height door. It has been suggested that they were converted for a proposed visit by Queen Victoria, although in the event it was only her daughter, Beatrice, who actually travelled. With only one droplight per side (compared with three in the closed third-class carriages, and five in the first-class carriages as originally built), additional ventilation was provided by a series of three circular ventilators high up on the vehicle ends (giving rise to the 'porthole' description). There was also a further ventilator mounted prominently on the roof.

The 'porthole' carriages were still fully enclosed in the early 1900s but had lost their large glazed windows and the droplights in the doors before WW1. In appearance they were then similar to the previously converted semi-opens Nos.1 and 2, but could be distinguished by the square upper corners to their side openings and the full-length doors. In addition, the circular openings on the ends made them very distinctive. Photographs of these two vehicles during the Colonel Stephens era show that they had been renumbered again, to Nos.11 and 12.

Further changes to these four-wheelers took place over the years. It must be remembered that by the time the WHR



'Flying Bench' No.7 has languished in the Maenofferen Shed in Minffordd Yard in recent years, but is now in the Heritage Shop awaiting repainting into 19th century livery, and possible reinstatement of its protective skirts and awning. (John Dobson)

opened in 1923, these vehicles were already almost 60 years old. Two of the thirds, Nos.4 and 5, acquired match boarding sides during repairs around this time, although they retained panelled ends. Semi-open No.1 and closed third No.6 were less fortunate, being withdrawn from service in 1929 and 1931 respectively.

When the present administration took over, six of the original eight four-wheelers were therefore still in existence, three enclosed thirds and three semi-opens, in varying states of decrepitude! In early revival days some of them were renumbered to allow the brake vans to be included in the same series as the other carriages. Closed thirds Nos.3 - 5 retained their old numbers, whilst the semi-open carriage No.2 became No.6. 'Porthole' carriage No. 11 became No.7 and No. 12 was scheduled to become No.8. However, the condition of this vehicle was so poor that, when it was being shunted one day in August 1956, half of one side literally fell out. It was scrapped in 1958 and the number it had been allocated was given to the restored quarrymen's carriage.

The four-wheelers were not on the priority list for restoration. However, with the extension of services to Tan y Bwlch in 1958 and an explosion in passenger numbers, the longer journey time resulted in a desperate



Bug Box, Bug Box, burning bright...! The rebuilt 'Flying Bench' allocated No.8 in the 1955 number series didn't survive the incident in which most of one side fell out (see page 306). It met a fiery end during 1958. (Rob Smallman)

shortage of seats. The four-wheelers were therefore examined and the three in best condition (closed carriages Nos.4 and 5 and semi-open No.6,) were hastily repaired, given a quick repaint with green sides and red ends and rushed into traffic. They ran with a four-wheeled brake van as a separate relief train, known as the *Flying Flea*. It was at this time that they acquired the nickname 'Bug Boxes'.

No.3 had been used as a mess vehicle for the extension from Penrhyn to Tan y Bwlch, but its condition was too poor for it to be returned to passenger service without a major rebuild. The only surviving carriage to retain its original appearance, it had to wait its turn for repairs until 1960 when it reappeared in green and ivory livery. Nos.4 and 5 also lost their match boarding in 1962,



regaining original-style panelling whilst No.6 had its half doors replaced by full-length specimens (one from each of the two 'porthole' carriages) at the same time. All three were also repainted in green and cream with red ends. No.7, (ex. No. 11) the surviving 'porthole' bug box remained in store until the Midland group of the Society took it away for a full rebuild in 1967. During dismantling, evidence of its original low ends were discovered and a decision was taken to restore it to fully-open condition, although without its awning. It was returned to the railway in 1970. Whilst not suitable for regular service, it has seen occasional use in trains on special occasions. Despite efforts to keep the use of these venerable vehicles to a minimum, ever-increasing passenger numbers throughout the 1960s meant that they had to be used far more than was desirable. The condition of Nos.5 and 6 deteriorated to the extent that, at the end of the 1970 season, both had to be withdrawn and stripped for complete rebuilds. Mr. Ron Jarvis, who had previously almost single-handedly restored the iron-framed bogie carriage No. 16, took on this project. Four sets of steel underframe inserts were built at Boston Lodge, whilst Ron commenced the task of virtually renewing the bodies in his workshop at Llanbedr. Ron mass-produced many of the components for all four carriages and the first, No.5, was returned to service in 1984. Unfortunately, it was not possible to run it with the other two bug boxes, Nos.3 and 4, as these too had been taken out of traffic at the end of 1983 in need of complete rebuilding. Ron then started work on No.6. which it had been decided

Bug Boxes Nos.2 and 5 look particularly good in the fully lined 19th century dark purple lake livery. (John Dobson)

would be returned to its original condition as an enclosed first-class carriage. Unfortunately his health deteriorated and he was unable to finish the task. No.6 was therefore transferred to Boston Lodge in 1991 where it was completed, returning to traffic in 1992 complete with leather upholstery.

Those components not required for the rebuilt first-class carriage had been put to one side with a view to incorporating them into a replica semi-open at a later date. Team X, who had restored bogie brake No. 10 and then helped finish No.6, took on the task of building the replacement 'zoo' car. One of the sets of steel underframe inserts was utilised and a new body was built around them. The ornate top corners from the original were reused, together with the wire mesh panels and new half-length doors were built for authenticity. Initially running as No.9, it entered service in 1996. This carriage subsequently became No.1 (an historically accurate number), whilst the first-class four-wheeler regained its original number, No.2, at the same time.

Whilst Team X members were working on the 'zoo' car, they also worked on bug box No.3. In this case, instead of using the remaining set of steel underframe inserts, a different form of steel underframe was used, strengthening the wooden frame in a way that enabled the original draw gear to be retained. This carriage went back into service in 1996, alongside the 'zoo' car. Attention then turned to the last remaining carriage, No.4. Its underframe was strengthened in the same way as that for No.3 and it returned to traffic in 2000.

FR 175

On Tuesday 22 May Dr John Prideaux, the FR Company Chairman, hosted a special train to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the signing of the Act of Parliament establishing the Festiniog Railway Company, which took place on 23 May 1832. The guest list was far too extensive to be quoted in full, but comprised many prominent members of the local community as well as guests from the narrow-gauge railway world. Prominent amongst them was the Lord Lieutenant of Gwynedd, Huw Morgan Daniel, who unveiled a commemorative plaque at Tan y Bwlch station, installed as a replacement for the original foundation stone which was laid nearby at Creuau but is now in safe storage.

Other guests included Councillor Meinir Owen, the Gwynedd Council Chairman, who cut a ceremonial 175th birthday cake after an excellent buffet lunch provided by the FR Catering Department in the Tan y Bwlch café - a spread generally agreed to be quite the best to have graced an FR event in recent years.

Dr John Prideaux, Chairman of the FR Company Board (left) shaking hands with the Lord Lieutenant of Gwynedd, Huw Morgan Daniel, after the latter had unveiled the commemorative plaque at Tan y Bwlch on 22 May. (John Dobson)



The prize for the most impressive appearance, had there been one, would have gone to Archmandrite Deiniol, from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Blaenau Ffestiniog. He arrived in full regalia - robes, mitre, staff and flowing beard. Like many gentlemen of the cloth, he has an enthusiastic interest in railways. He promotes the Conwy Valley line and is fascinated by the reconstruction of the WHR.

The special train included two carriages newly introduced to traffic. No. 10, the replica, 1867, 4-wheeled Ashbury and newly-restored Bowsider No.19 in original 1879 livery. They both looked superb. One description of No. 19 is that it looks like an enormous, sumptuous dark chocolate cake, with gilded piping around the extremities and Cadbury's Buttons along the roof.

A stop was made on the return trip so that guests could visit Boston Lodge Works and many declared that this was the most

fascinating part of the day. They were shown the old engine shed, the erecting shop and the carriage works. In the carriage works, the body framing for the new Welshpool & Llanfair Pickering carriage was being erected onto the underframe and the carriage team were there to talk to the visitors.

The day generated a lot of extremely valuable publicity, including two or three live TV interviews.



The Lord Lieutenant of Gwynedd, Huw Morgan Daniel, Mrs P Daniel, Dr John Prideaux, Chairman of the FR Company Board, and Archmandrite Deiniol of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Blaenau Ffestiniog, at Tan y Bulch for the 175th Anniversary celebrations on 22 May. Newly restored Bowsider No. 19 is in the background. (John Dobson)





Over the Fence

Min y Trac

Porthmadog experienced major disruption during the late winter and early spring caused by road works between the *Kerfoots* and *Tesco* roundabouts. The work ran over by three weeks and although it was suspended during the Easter fortnight, traders have complained that it has badly affected their business. Certainly local people avoided the town if they possibly could and now everyone is hoping that the forthcoming work at Britannia Bridge for the WHR link will be less disruptive.

The company carrying out the road repairs used the car park at the Coliseum Cinema as an equipment compound for the duration of the work and it is said that they had promised to resurface the car park with tarmac after the work ended, as a 'thank you' to the cinema. However they now appear to have reneged on this promise as all equipment has left the site, but there are still large areas of bare earth where one would have expected to see a proper tarmac surface.

Conversion of the Gasworks site into a car park is the first serious manifestation of the WHR within Porthmadog town. Major work to the river bank beside Britannia Bridge caused much excitement in mid-February, but turned out to be a temporary repair to a collapsed retaining wall caused by flooding. The remedial work looks pretty makeshift and flimsy and will no doubt be consolidated when work on the railway does indeed start. The general view is that this will cause quite a fuss, if adverse public and media reaction to the felling of a line of trees alongside Llyn Bach in preparation is anything to go by. Significantly the local papers have shown little of the enthusiasm and interest to be found in the national rail press about the impressive feats of engineering as the WHR heads south.

Otters are the latest environmental complication for the WHR, with the Countryside Council for Wales checking whether there are breeding grounds in the Britannia Bridge and Llyn Bach area that might be disturbed.

Snowdon Mill, the gallery and souvenir shop right beside the WHR route soon after it leaves the site of Portmadoc New (1923) station, is closing and is to be extended and converted into apartments. Presumably the Cross Town Rail Link will be in place, and perhaps in use as an added attraction, before the first show apartment is opened.

Parking Charges in Gwynedd have been in the news. Increases in April have almost doubled the charges in car parks, including those in Porthmadog, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Caernarfon. It is reported that motorists are now seeking free street parking, thus causing problems for residents. It is to be hoped that the increase from £2.50 to £5.30 for a four-hour stay in Porthmadog car parks will not deter would-be FR passengers. Perhaps time for another reminder that Gwynedd now has Traffic Wardens and that they patrol regularly.

Tesco in Porthmadog has been the cause of Min y Trac receiving his first rebuke from a reader, who felt that picking on the store in the last issue was unfair, 'when all they want to do is make an honest bob - well **OK**, all the honest bobs in the Western World. Still an organisation which provides free parking for visitors and residents not to mention an overflow for our friends at WHR(P) can't be all bad'. Min y Trac was briefly chastened, but then on his next visit to the store found them selling apples from China... in North Wales! All sympathy lost, a complaint to the duty manager produced the admission that this was indefensible. The conversation went on to discuss the Porthmadog store's invariable descent into chaos at peak times and also its unreliable stocking of organic lines, local produce and other healthier foods, with the manager admitting that they struggle to be both a year-round 'corner shop' for local people and a big supermarket for visitors at holiday times. He feels that they do neither satisfactorily. The limited size of the store and the fact that it is twice as busy as expected are linked problems. Really they need to expand, but...

Aldi has announced that it has bought the former *Somerfield* store in Penamser Road and state that they were in competition with *Tesco* for the site. The existing building will be demolished and the site will be redeveloped with a planned opening in Spring 2008.

Smaller shops in the area offer an excellent alternative to the supermarkets and fortunately

most have survived the arrival of *Tesco*.

Min y Trac's particular recommendations include *Vegonia Wholefoods* in Porthmadog (not just for Vegans, but offering a great range of health foods), *E.D Jones* the butcher in Penrhyndeudraeth, *Tudor Bakery* (well known to FR travelers for the *Vitbe* sign on their bakery at Penrhyn) and the village shop in Llanfrothen. The last one offers a good selection of food, still retains a Post Office (we hope!) and has just celebrated its 10th anniversary as a local community co-operative company, with five businesses sharing the premises.

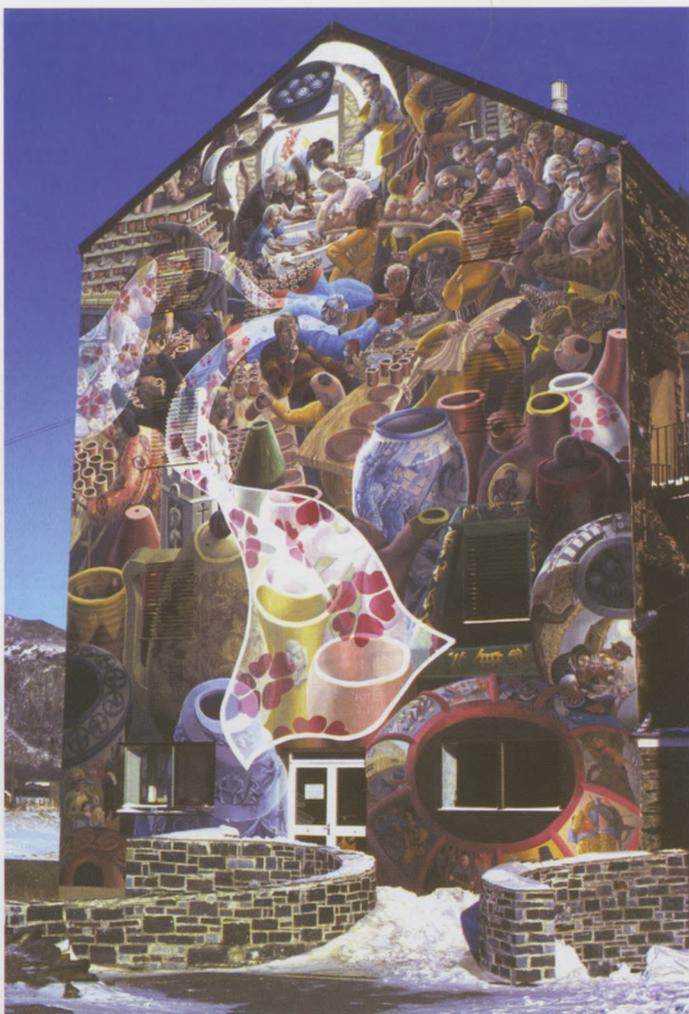
The former Co-op

building is now confirmed as having been bought by *Wilkinson Hardware*, with November 2007 as the likely opening date. The building is to be extended to increase the total floor area.

Other retail news from Porthmadog

includes the opening of *Twls*, offering handmade jewelry in the former Pound Shop, while in Bank Place the former *Charmaines* is now *Swyn*, selling designer gifts, the former *Rockerbox* is now an 'antiques and bric-à-brac' shop, and the former *Yr Enfys* became the local, *Dwyfor Meirionydd, Plaid Cymru* headquarters just before the recent elections. A sad piece of news just as we went to press is the death of Bill Pike who ran *Pikes* newsagents (and former barbershop) in the High Street. His grandfather started the shop in 1902 and Bill, who had worked there for nearly 60 years, will be well known to generations of FR volunteers.

The Coliseum Cinema's successful appeal for funds means that apart from having money to keep this local gem open though the winter, the



Snowdon Mill has seen many changes since it ceased to be the major flour supplier for the Porthmadog area. By far its most colourful era was during the 1980s, when it sported this striking mural. We wonder if the new developers might be persuaded to reinstate it.
(John Dobson)

trust which runs it has also been able to purchase 200 'nearly-new' seats from a cinema that had closed elsewhere in North Wales. A full exterior redecoration has been sponsored by *Kaleidoscope*, the decorating materials shop in Madog Street, and the cinema now looks much more cared for. A visit is recommended.

St Mary's Church Tremadog, now looking magnificent after a £1m-plus restoration, is occupied by *Cartrefi Cymru*, a charity that supports people with disabilities living in the community in Wales. Project funding came from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Cadw, the Welsh Development Agency, Gwynedd Council and the Architectural Heritage Fund. This information is thanks to a correspondent asking for more information on this excellent scheme. £1m very well spent.

It also seems that we were a little over-hasty in assuming that the castellations on the gate arch were not to be replaced, as each pillar now sports a full complement. Unfortunately, it has been decided not to replace the trunks on the rows of elephant heads which also form part of the decoration - apparently they are thought to be too much of a temptation as targets for local vandals...

Purple Moose Brewery in Madog Street, run by the FR's own Lawrence Washington, still goes from strength to strength and you seem to find its excellent products wherever you go in the area. Min y Trac continues to be much amused by their choice of names, most recently 'Merry X-Moose' for the special Christmas brew.

Blaen Cefn Caravan Site on the main road just outside Penrhyndeudraeth has been looking rather like a contractors yard in recent years, as anyone passing by will have noticed. The Snowdonia National Park Authority thought the same and the owner has been fined £5,000 for unauthorised use of land and ordered to remove all the plant, machinery and materials.

The **Ospreys** have returned to their usual nesting site near Pont Croesor and the RSPB viewing centre is busier than ever. The male bird arrived on 26 March, followed two days later by the female. They have really got the hang of things now and by 15 April three eggs had been laid, all hatched and doing well at the time of writing.

The ferocity and extent of the fires above Tan y Bwlch, fueled by extensive deposits of dry, dead, vegetation, are well illustrated by this photograph. (Roger Dimmick)

Choughs, rarest member of the Crow family, are creating similar interest in Blaenau, with the RSPB launching a new *Aren't Birds Brilliant!* viewing scheme at their nesting site in Llechwedd Slate Caverns, using the Miners' Tramway as access. The birds have nested in the caverns since Victorian times, with the name Choughs' Cavern dating back to then.

Llechwedd Quarry has been in the news for a less positive reason, with production in the mill stopped at the end of March when the valves on their two reservoirs, Llyn Bowydd and Llyn Newydd, were sabotaged and the lakes drained. **News from Welsh Slate**, owned by Alfred McAlpine, is even more serious. 'Extensive and systematic' fraud by local senior managers has led to overstatement on the production volumes and sales leading to a loss for the parent company of £23m. The fraud was not for personal gain, but the effect has been dramatic for the North Wales slate industry. A total of 108 jobs has been lost, fewer than at first feared, but 21 are going from Cwt y Bugail and 17 at Gloddfa Ganol in Blaenau. Penrhyn Quarry at Bethesda is also affected and is losing 70 jobs.

Radio Blaenau made its last broadcast on 4 April. The station was originally started as a month-long event in 2003, but continued because of popular demand and could be heard on BBC Radio Cymru every Wednesday evening. It had a studio in a shop unit in the main street. Its main claim to fame is having given Big Brother's Glyn Wise his first broadcasting experience when he introduced a





show at the age of 15. Radio Wales has a policy of moving its local broadcasts around, with Colwyn Bay, Newtown and Dolgellau in the queue for 2007. So Blaenau did well to hang on for so long, but it is a loss for the town nevertheless.

Gorse and heather fires have been particularly bad in North Wales this year thanks to the exceptionally fine, dry weather and the FR has not escaped. Easter Weekend was marked by two lineside fires at Tafarntrip just above Tan y Bwlch. The first started on Saturday just below the line and was fairly easily extinguished by the Fire Brigade, but not before the last Down train of the day had to be terminated at Tanygrisiau and its passengers bussed back.

The second, on the Sunday afternoon, was on the hillside above the railway, which is heather and gorse moorland, but recently planted with broadleaf saplings. This fire took a serious hold and is reported to have engulfed 50 acres, with fire engines from as far afield as Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Caernarfon, Bala, Betws y Coed and Llanwrst called out. FR services were again disrupted a few days later by a fire started beside the line at Rhiw Goch, immediately opposite the signal box. This did significant damage to a new broadleaf plantation before being brought under control by firefighters using eight appliances.

The Railway received the official thanks of the local Fire Brigade for its action in keeping Tan y Bulch cafe open overnight to serve fire crews during the recent fires. (Roger Dimmick)

The Welsh Assembly election in May saw the FR/WHR and their regeneration potential being used for campaigning purposes by a number of politicians. Most prominent was *Plaid Cymru* which ran half page adverts in the local papers featuring Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas at various locations on the FR. Earlier in the year Lord Elis-Thomas had opened the Welsh Highland Company's Traeth Mawr extension, which was a pleasing and well organized affair, shared by the FR and WHR Companies, with old enmities set aside and *Gelert* and *Prince* looking splendid double-heading the inaugural train. A ride on the extension is thoroughly recommended, since although quite short in length, it offers great views across Traeth Mawr to Cnicht and the Moelwyns and is a good taster of things to come.

The Welsh Highland Railway Ltd continues to show its skill at getting positive and eye-catching items in the local press. A recent article about the appeal to restore *Russell* in time for 2009 was introduced under the headline '*Russell* the rust bucket gets a revamp. Engine escapes the scrap heap once again'. The same article reported that WHR Ltd was about to enter 'some tough negotiating' with the FR about how it will fit into the overall running of

the railway when the main WHR opens through to Porthmadog.

The FR seems to have to work harder to get good news items in the local papers, but an unsolicited letter of praise, headed 'Rail Kindness', in the Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald in April made pleasing reading. Passengers who had missed the last up train at Porthmadog, and therefore their connection on the Conwy Valley Line, were taken to Blaenau by road and given a refund 'because you didn't use your return ticket and to encourage you to come back again'. Gwaith Powdwr Nature Reserve run by the North Wales Wildlife Trust on the site of the former Cookes Explosives Works in Penrhyndeudraeth which closed in 1997 is well worth exploring. It is particularly good for bats, owls, snakes and plantlife. Many of the buildings at this once busy factory, which employed 600 people during WW2, have been demolished, but there is still much of interest for industrial archaeologists. Nature is taking over, but dotted around are to be found a number of intact explosives stores, some still with the remains of 2ft 6in gauge track used to transfer explosives to and from road vehicles. An FR connection is that the PW Gang used to pay occasional visits to check and maintain these tracks. Perhaps most intriguing is the Pendulum Shed at the top of the site. Here, carefully preserved, is an enormous cannon-like device, suspended from arms attached to the ceiling, which was used to test the efficacy of explosives. Access to the nature reserve is from the road to the Briwet toll bridge

Ty Glaslyn, the former Glaslyn public house in Prenteg, has been the subject of a change of use application to Dwyfor Council to provide offices for Ffestiniog Travel.

Railwaywomen: Exploitation, Betrayal & Triumph in the Workplace, described by our reviewer (FRM 192) as 'one of the most fascinating volumes on railway history to be published in recent years' has won the Writers' News prize for best self-published book in the non-fiction section. Sincere congratulations are due to railwaywoman Helena Wojtczak for this recognition of her excellent book.

The Cambrian Coast Line continues to improve. The summer timetable has extra trains on Sundays and four-car units are to be used on Saturdays during school holidays to ease overcrowding. There is the promise of steam

again this summer, although details are vague at the time of going to press. There is also a new promotional leaflet offering Cambrian Coast ticket holders 20% discount on all seven of the Great Little Trains of Wales.

The Conwy Valley Line has struggled in recent years with two major closures due to flooding. It has also had to cope with competition from subsidised bus services, offering the usual free travel for over-60s. This has naturally affected the numbers travelling by rail. This has now been recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government and, from 20 May, they are permitting a 12-month trial of free travel on the branch for bus pass holders living in Gwynedd and Conwy. If successful, this arrangement may be extended to other rural railways in Wales such as the Cambrian Coast Line.

The Snowdon Mountain Railway is reporting healthy bookings despite only running to Clogwyn in 2007 while the new summit building is erected. A significant number of passengers buy a single ticket, walking up to the summit and then all the way down.

At Trawsfynydd Power Station work is nearing completion on an intermediate level nuclear waste store. This building, roughly the size of a football pitch and one of the largest new buildings in North Wales in recent years, will house waste from the site until the government makes up its mind about the longer-term storage of the UK's nuclear waste. The site still employs about 550 people, but after decommissioning is completed in 2015 there will be just three or four people working there.

Min y Tafod notes one rather unfortunate feature of the Welsh Highland Railway's push south. A large tract of Beddgelert Forest, once popular with walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders, is now much harder to access because construction of the railway has closed off a number of non-Statutory but time-honoured and way-marked tracks and footpaths. Now a once well-used area at holiday times is largely deserted, which is fine if you like solitude, but is an unfortunate by-product of a project promoted as being environmentally and amenity friendly. It is understood that plans are afoot to accommodate a couple of footpath crossings on the WHR in this area, but implementation awaits action by the local land owners as well as the Railway.

RHEILFFORDD ERYRI REPORT

Y Fforestur Eryri

Civil engineering, track laying and public relations have gone well during the last quarter. The most entertaining moment was the opening, on Friday 23 March, of the 800-metre extension, onto our metals, of the Welsh Highland Railway (Porthmadog). There were short speeches - it was windy - by James Hewett of the WHR(P), Dr John Prideaux of the FR and Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, nowadays the Presiding Officer of the Welsh Assembly but once MP for Meirionnydd and Nant Conwy. The splendid reception would have been notable for the opening of a railway a hundred miles long, and we doubt if our show intended in 2009 is likely to be as good. We are indeed grateful to WHR(P) for their hospitality.

Another enjoyable occasion was the arrival, on 26 April, of the first steam engine to run into



Beddgelert station for almost seventy years. *Dolgarrog* with its works train, *Upnor Castle* and the support train (i.e No. 1001 and the SAR brake van) were followed into the station site by visiting Quarry Hunslet *Velinheli*. This took place before an audience of children from Ysgol Beddgelert, who asked searching and intelligent questions. 'What is the railway for?' 'How much will it cost?' 'How fast will the engine go?' 'When will the big train come?' 'Why hasn't it come today?' The questions were fielded in Welsh by Alun Tomlinson and in English by Paul Lewin; and pictures were taken with the children. The great surprise was the presence of Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, plainly a railway enthusiast, taking time with us despite the demands of campaigning for the General Election the following week.

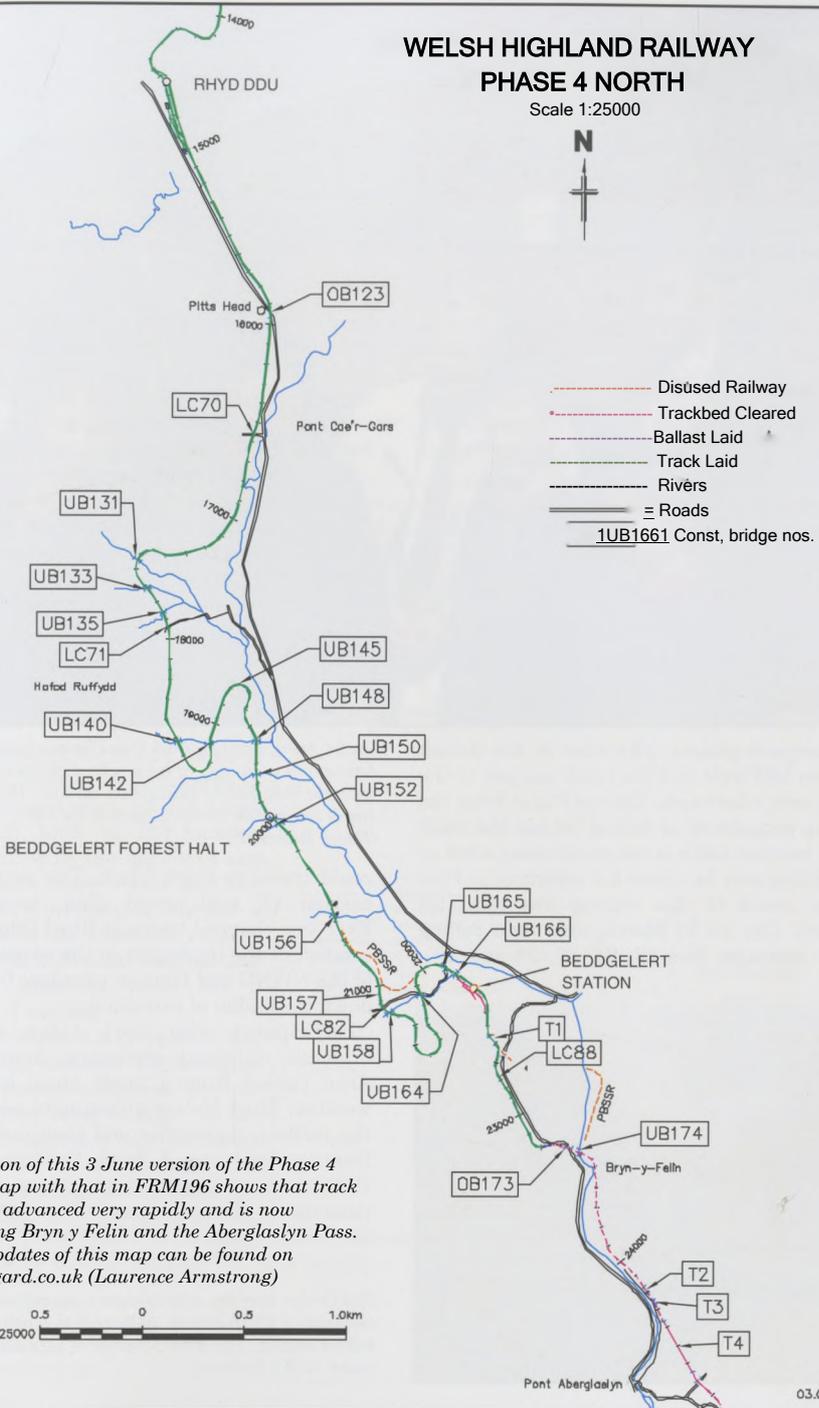
Since our last report, two more kilometres of track have been laid, bringing us to chainage 23000 (this is actually the length in metres) from Dinas, leaving a further 12km to be laid to Porthmadog. The North Wales Gang and the Tuesday Gang have worked hard and, as well as their week-end efforts, the Rest of the World Gang had a track-laying week, with workers from as far away as Oregon. During the week, about half a mile of track was laid, from Cwm Cloch middle crossing to the Goat Tunnel below Beddgelert Station.

From Cwm Cloch bridge (UB165) downhill we have used wooden sleepers. Drilling and screwing these is slower than using steel sleepers with Pandrols, but they make the transition from normal gauge to the gauge-widened sections on the sharp curves much easier. Wooden sleepers are also to be used in the Aberglaslyn tunnels. It is reputed that they last better than steel ones in tunnels - we shall see. The devotion of the track gang should be noted, soaked to the skin for three days of constant downpour - the nearby Afon Colwyn rose two feet in spate. The civil engineering contractors have, commendably, kept just in front of the track-laying gang. Longer evenings enable us to lay more track.

In Phase One, under Plan A, ballast was laid and rolled to the correct cant for the track but, *The route of the WHR around Beddgelert will offer photographers a number of attractive viewpoints. This is the railway seen from a point just above the southern portal of the Goat Tunnel. The unused PB&SSR traekbed over the 'bridge to nowhere' is at top left. (John Dobson)*

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY PHASE 4 NORTH

Scale 1:25000



A comparison of this 3 June version of the Phase 4 progress map with that in FRM196 shows that track laying has advanced very rapidly and is now approaching Bryn y Felin and the Aberglaslyn Pass. Regular updates of this map can be found on www.isengard.co.uk (Laurence Armstrong)



in subsequent phases, with Plan B, the ballast has been laid level and the track tamped to the correct cant afterwards. During Phase Four, the tamping programme is falling behind the track laying, because there is too much other work to do, so there may be a case for reverting to Plan A. One result of this regime was that, for Sponsors' Day on 24 March, only light rolling stock - carriages Nos 23, 24, 37, 38 and 39 -



On 26 April, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas joined Paul Lewin and a number of local school children to welcome Velinheli to Beddgelert station - the first steam locomotive to reach there since 1937. (Roger Dimmick)

could travel to Cwm Cloch. The occasion was carried off with great élan, nevertheless. Everyone changed trains at Rhyd Ddu from the comfort of the big bogies to the cosier quarters of the NWNG and Hudson carriages for the trip down the 6.3km of extension.

Participants were very taken with the dramatic unfolding landscape; Snowdon and Aran viewed from a novel angle in glorious weather, Moel Hebog a dominant peak which the railway approaches and then dodges away from in the Upper S-Bend. Beddgelert Forest Halt needs only its waiting room and some passengers. Cwitting Mawr above Cwm Cloch has been compared to Hades with its Stygian gloom; it is the deepest cutting on either line

The bridge over the Afon Nanmor, placed over the weekend of 17118 March, is located in a delightfully sylvan setting. The Afon Nanmor is very deep at this point. (John Dobson)

and securing its top edges, after seventy years of unrestrained attack from tree roots, has been expensive. On the return journey, Garratt No. 138 was coupled to the train in Cwtting Cae'r Gors and set off up the 1 in 40 in grand style - for once it actually chuffed. Encouragingly, several Sponsors made exceedingly generous gifts on this joyful occasion.

Further toward Porthmadog, contractors are now working in the pass of Aberglasyn, re-topping culverts, reinstating the trackbed and replacing ballast in time for a large Army party to build track during the summer - the Army has become interested in railways again. We shall be pleased to see them back and our track-laying groups will enjoy teaching them the art.

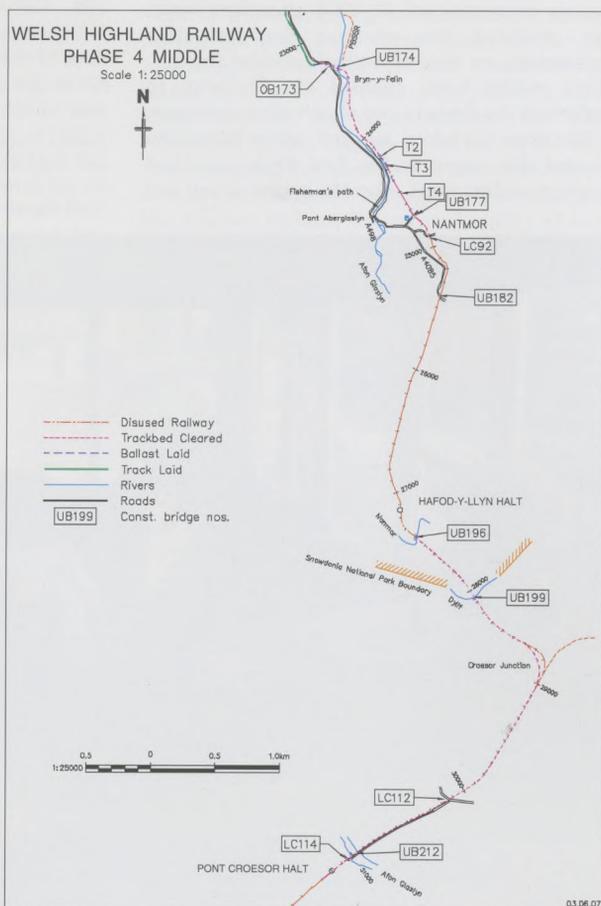
The A4085 road bridge and the Afon Dylif and Afon Nanmor bridges are built - the last only a week before the ospreys returned from West Africa to their nest near the line. The ospreys draw many tourists to the observation post at Pont Croesor. Recently, the FR Archivist was lucky, driving across the Cob, to see the male osprey drop into the river beside him and rise again, a fish in his claws.

The metalwork for Pont Croesor is in hand at Brunswick Ironworks at Caernarfon and work on the Cross Town Rail Link at Porthmadog began well, with the gasworks site buried under slate waste and the trackbed slowly emerging. We plan a siding there, to tranship railway rolling stock from road vehicles, and there is probably room for a turntable if needed.

Unfortunately, in a more worrying development down in Porthmadog, there has been a collapse of the river wall into the Afon Glaslyn at the north-west corner of the Britannia Bridge, where the new railway is to cross onto the river bank. The river has scoured the 1870s retaining

wall, which fell into the river by the bridge. Piles were driven into the fill behind the collapse, but these too are moving towards the river. It looks nasty and reconstruction may be expensive. The currents will next scour the foundations of the bridge - probably built for William Madocks about 1810 - so rebuilding is urgent, before storms make matters worse.

Work may involve a cofferdam and construction well below water level. It is therefore unlikely that we shall be able to build our tramway across the Britannia Bridge this summer. We have also deferred widening the Cob at Harbour Station. Providentially, the collapse occurred before we started work, so the Highways Authority has accepted responsibility for the repair. Our consultant engineers have been asked to help.



Track laying has now advanced to the point where a trace of green is beginning to appear at the top edge of the middle Phase 4 map. This was the position on 3 June.

(Laurence Armstrong)

CARRIAGE INTERIORS

Improving Standards of Comfort *Dave Charlton*

The appeal for funds to improve the seating in first-class carriages proved to be a great success, but with a sting in the tail. Why? Let's start at the beginning...

Alan Pegler and the FR Society has appealed to Society life members for donations on a couple of occasions in recent years. When we were building the hostel, an appeal raised about £7,000 which was used to fund construction of the main hall and staircase area, including the rather dramatic roof. In 2004, therefore, when we repeated the exercise for first-class upholstery, we were expecting a similar amount. This would have enabled the Railway to refurbish the firsts in two observation carriages.

We were therefore amazed when donations passed this target in the first three days and kept on coming until, after the appeal closed and

we had claimed gift aid, the total was about £40,000! The life members' generosity was beyond our greatest expectation and for this we are very, very grateful. We were even more gratified when, the following year, we made a similar appeal to annual members and again a respectable sum was donated.

The money raised by the Life Member appeal was used to provide the spectacular seating in the two new observation carriages, Nos.100 and 102 but was also sufficient to cover refurbishment of old No. 11 observation car, most of the 'bowsiders', No.116 and the 'barns'. No longer did No.104, for instance, have rubber seat squabs that resembled a commode, but *Society President Alan Pegler appreciated the comfort and elegance of the observation saloon in carriage No. 102 during his recent visit to open the new Rhiw Goch Signal Box. (John Dobson)*



properly sprung and smartly upholstered seats suitable for those who had paid a premium fare. As a result, when the first-class premium was increased to reflect the greater comfort, life membership became an even better bargain than before.

And the sting in the tail? Well, there were a few carriages that we thought were OK; driving-trailer-observation-car No.111 for example. Some passengers who went up the line in 102 and came back in No.111 complained that it just wasn't good enough. What we had thought more than good enough a couple of years ago now needs raising to the standard that the carriage team has been achieving with recent new construction. We have therefore replaced the swivel seats in No.111 with individual chairs similar to those in Nos. 100 and 102. However, with a replacement body planned for observation car No.101, currently on the Welsh Highland, and a need for spare backrests and squabs to allow us to quickly swap out units which have been damaged or are showing signs of wear, we find that we could use several thousand pounds more than has already been subscribed!

Running alongside the improvements to first class have been improvements to third (aka. 'standard') class. The last remaining second-hand bus seats were replaced last winter, but this is just a part of the steady improvement that is taking place in all of our carriages. We cannot rest on our laurels, as our clientele has developed an expectation for steadily increasing standards of comfort and appearance.

Fortunately there appears to be a way of raising the necessary money because, over the past year or so, a number of members have told us that they had intended to subscribe to one or other of the appeals but didn't get around to writing the cheque in time. With a continuing need to bring all of our carriage seating up to the highest standards we are therefore reopening both of the appeals.

This time we are particularly targeting members who did not contribute last time around. However, if there are existing donors who would like to increase their contribution, we will not refuse them! Please send donations to Dave Charlton, FRS, Freepost NATE 1232, HALTWHISTLE. NE49 9BR. Cheques should be made payable to the Ffestiniog Railway Society.

Lili

We have been somewhat remiss in not previously mentioning a most important addition to the Railway's staff who arrived during 2006 and rapidly made her presence felt.

Lili, a young, haughty, jet-black feline is officially the 'property' of Roger Dimmick, living with him in the South Snowdon Wharf complex, known somewhat deprecatingly to FR staff as 'Legoland'. Lili herself would no doubt disagree with the 'ownership' statement, seeing Harbour Station as her fiefdom and its inhabitants as her natural subjects. In true feline fashion she exacts adoration from a wide range of admirers amongst station staff and the travelling public and has even been discovered trying out the General Manager's chair for size.

She is active in trying to extend her empire, having made at least three forays as far as Minffordd by train and a fourth, inadvertently, caused by curiosity, by road in the back of a van. Fortunately on the latter occasion she was recognised by Sam Hughes as the concerned van owners carried her from door to door in an effort to find out where she belonged... Nevertheless, she appears to have the natural ability of her species to keep out of trouble - despite causing distress to some young humans when she disappears under a train at the platform to escape their attentions.

However, she has recently begun to exhibit a disturbing penchant for the more extreme forms of cat athletics, having had to be rescued from the roof of a carriage just before a service train left the station. No doubt further adventures await - after all, there's a new signal box at Rhiw Goch, and signal boxes are natural territory for cats - aren't they?





Diary of Meetings, Events & Activities

- 7/8 July: White Rose Group**
Working Weekend
- 14 July: Hants & Sussex Group**
Docklands Light Railway, Croydon Tramway
Stephen Bigley
- 21/22 July: Gloucestershire Group**
Working Weekend
- 25/26 August: Gloucestershire Group**
Working Weekend
- 8 September: Hants & Sussex Group**
Steam in Colombia and Ecuador
Don Mitchell
- 8/9 September: White Rose Group**
Working Weekend
- 22/23 September: Gloucestershire Group**
Working Weekend
- 26 September: London Area Group (b)**
Rails in the Isle of Purbeck
Gordon Hatherill
- 27 September: Gwynedd Area Group**
John Wilkins Collection
Andy Price
- 13 October: Hants & Sussex Group**
British trams, monuments & trams of Europe
Ken Middleton
- 24 October: London Area Group (a)**
1st World War Dept archive film
Kim Winter
- 25 October: Gwynedd Area Group**
Irish Narrow Gauge
John Powell
- 27/28 October: Gloucestershire Group**
Working Weekend

Diary entries for inclusion in the autumn 2007 issue of the Ffestiniog Railway Magazine should be sent to: Tony Smare, 4 Greenhills, Rawdon, Leeds LS19 6NP to arrive by 10 August 2007 at the latest.

In his departmental report, Fred Howes mentions the narrow I standard gauge crossing that used to exist in Minffordd yard. Until the early 1960s there was another one in the GWR station yard at Blaenau Ffestiniog. It was swept away when the Trawsfynydd Nuclear Power Station link was put in. (John Dobson)

GRUOR TEAM & VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION

- Bristol Area Group**
Secretary: D T Brown, Hill View Cottage, Beech Rd, Box Hill, Corsham, Wilts SN13 8EY
MTP: 19.45 BAWA Centre, Southmead Rd, Filton, Bristol
- Dee & Mersey Group**
Secretary: G Lake, Wood Farm, Tattenhall Lanes, Chester CH3 9NH
MTP: 19.40 The Bear & Billet, Lower Bridge St, Chester
Working Party Organiser: Mike Chinery - 01745 560442
- East Anglian Group**
Secretary: R A Elliott, 'Linden Lea', 61 Church St, Northborough, Peterborough PE6 9B
MTP: 19.30 Oddfellows Hall, 131 Newmarket Road, CAMBRIDGE
Working Party Organiser: Raymond Elliott - 01733 252925
- East Midlands Group**
Secretary: E Skinner, The Clock Inn, 107 Market St, South Normanton, D'shire DE55 2
- Gwynedd Area Group**
Secretary: J Organ, 21, South Snowdon Wharf, Porthmadog LL49 9ND
MTP: 19.30 Madog Yacht Club, The Com Hill, Porthmadog
- Gloucestershire Group**
Secretary: Mrs V Ward, 39 Whittington Rd, Cheltenham GL51 6DB
MTP: 19.30 Parmoor House, Lypiatt Tree, Lypiatt Rd, Cheltenham
Working Party Organiser: Ian Ward - 01452 526802
- Hants & Sussex Group**
Secretary: N Langridge, 32 Blakehurst Way, Littlehampton, Sussex BN17 6HE
MTP: 19.30 Petersfield Physic Garden, back of 16 High St, Petersfield
Working Party Organiser: Ian Harden - 023 8032 1923
- London Area Group**
Secretary: R Pyatt, 74 Foxearth Road, Selsdon, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8EE
MTP: (a) 19.00 Model Railway Club, Keene House, Calshot St, Nr Kings Cross
MTP: (b) 19.00 Friends Meeting House, Park Lane, Croydon, Surrey
Working Party Organiser: Rodney Thorp - 01442 253412
- Lancashire & Cheshire Group**
Secretary: A Turner, 1 Atherstone Close, Bury, Lancashire BL8 1DT
MTP: 19.45 Britain's Protection Hotel, 50 Great Bridgewater St, Manchester
Working Party Organiser: Peter Stephens - 01204 699293
- Midland Group**
Secretary: H R L Wilson, 17 Stoughton Rd, Leicester LE2 2EE
- Milton Keynes Group**
Secretary: C Asquith, 36 Sunningdale, Luton LU2 7TE
MTP: 19.45 Rectory Cottages, Bletchley
Working Party Organiser: Clive Asquith - 01582 611630
- North Staffordshire Group**
Secretary: M Ritchie, 22 Rising Brook, Stafford ST17 9DB
MTP: 19.30 Newcastle Conservative Club, Merrial St, Newcastle under Lyme
- Northumbria Group**
Secretary: D Charlton, Stanegate North Rd, Haltwhistle, Northumberland NE49 9ND
- Sheffield & District Group**
Secretary: J E Towler, 27 Willow Close, Brinsworth, Rotherham S60 5JU
- Upper Thames Group**
Secretary: T J Warren, 2 Cook Close, Aldboune, Marlborough SN8 2EQ
MTP: 20.00 The Catherine Wheel, Station Road, Goring on Thames
Working Party Organiser: Trevor Warren - 01672 540570
- White Rose Group**
Secretary: D Nelson, 7 Dale View, Lkley, West Yorkshire LS29 9BP
MTP: 19.30 Oxford Place Centre, by the Town Hall, Leeds
Working Party Organiser: Joe Tarver - 01274 551012
- Heritage Group**
Secretary: A Gray, 25 The Pound, Syresham, Brackley, Northants NN13 5HG
Working Party Organiser: D High - 01766 771275
- Permanent Way Operations Team**
Leader: David Quayle - 01277 229829
- F Team (Permanent Way)**
Leader: A Strachan - 01332 676006
- Team X (Carriage Restoration)**
Leader: Norman Bond - 01766 771116
- Signals & Telecommunications**
JASPER Martin Duncan, Boston Lodge Works, Minffordd LL49 9BU - 01766 771099
- Parks & Gardens Department**
Organiser: Eileen Clayton, Gwyndy, Penrhyndeudraeth LL48 6RY - 01766 770860
- Individual Volunteering**
Volunteer Resources Manager: Tricia Doyle - 01766 516035 - tricia.doyle@festrail.co.uk

Members' Advertisements



ACCOMMODATION

PORTHMADOG Comfortable detached bungalow on quiet estate on "far side" of town - very convenient to Cambrian Coast station. Sleeps 4/5 in two bedrooms - excellent facilities include colour Ty fully equipped kitchen, washing machine and tumble drier, gch. Enclosed paved garden. One or two small, well-behaved dogs welcome. Available for weekly or short term lets; reduced rates for active FR volunteers. Illustrated details available from Richard and Jenny Ogden on 01494 793017. E-mail richard.ogden@btinternet.com

(1970gd)

BRON VIEW! Featured in the remake of the "Quarryman" Film, you too can rent this interesting cottage, by the day all the year round. Sleeps up to eight adults in four bedrooms, kitchen being modernised winter 2006/7 - it already has a dishwasher etc. Bron View has satellite TV for all the Free channels together with DVD and VHS players. The bookshelves contain, railway books, local maps and guidebooks. Shops and both railways stations are in easy walking distance. Situated near the hospital in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Come and celebrate the FR's 25th year of running back into Blaenau Ffestiniog by staying in the town. Details from Ron Walker 020 8954 7677 or 020 8954 1864 or e-mail:

ron@lowerprioryfarm.demon.co.uk

(198Wal)

TY CAMBRIAN B&B Penrhyndeudraeth. Overlooking the Dwyryd estuary. 2 mins from Cambrian Coast Mainline station and near to 2 FR stations. Central to all village amenities. En-suites/family room available. A no-smoking house. Private off-street car park. Special rates for working FR volunteers. Open all year. For details and bookings phone/fax Glenys & Phil Ankers
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E-mail Philafes@lineone.net (199Ank)

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E-mail: i.hartill@btinternet.com

Website: www.wenalltguesthouse.co.uk

(199Har)

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ACCOMMODATION Large house on the Garth overlooking the town, panoramic views over the Cob and estuary. Sleeps 2-11, colour TV / Video, dishwasher etc. Excellent facilities at reasonable rates, short breaks available. Available all year round. Brochure from J A Mitchell, Silverdale, Highfield Road, Grange over Sands, Cumbria LA11 7JB.
Phone 01539535664.

E-mail: ecm.gos@telinco.co.uk. (199Mit)

PENRHYNDEUDRAETH - self catering end-terrace cottage with mountain views and FR running past front door. Sleeps 4/5, gch, colour Ty secluded garden. Available on a weekly or short break basis; reduced rates for active FR volunteers.

Phone Andrew Morris, 01684593510. (199Mor)

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Tel: 01766770740.

E-mail: alanpye@alanpye.fsnet.co.uk

(199Pye)

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E-mail: robgaye@tiscali.co.uk (199Sma)

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