

Inside Motion

April 2015

News and information for staff, volunteers and supporters of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways

Snowdonian on tour



From 15th to 20th April a group of thirty of us made a "working" visit to the Harz Narrow Gauge Railways (HSB). Since the timing coincided with the running of "The Snowdonian" what better motto to adopt than "The Snowdonian on tour" and talk about the significance of the real thing back home?

As ever the HSB were very generous towards us. At the welcome evening we were joined by a number of active HSB staff and some of our old friends now retired. CEO Matthias Wagener gave a welcome address directly in English (fault-free, and greatly appreciated considering he doesn't speak our language!) Bernd Seiler, works manager, carried out our safety briefing: "Use your common sense...", and Tobias Kascha explained the programme details.

Thursday was spent on a works tour and visit to the carriage sheds with Andreas Krause and then on to Wernigerode terminus for our familiarisation run.

The next surprise: transport around Wernigerode was by 1950s-vintage Swiss alpine post bus! Cue liberal use of the air horns in the underpass near our hotel.

Before leaving Wernigerode for Nordhausen "The Snowdonian" headboard and Welsh flags were fitted to the loco and a group photo was taken with some of our hosts. Missing from the picture are Nick Pinder, Adrian Strachan and Jon Walsh: they were off buying coffee. .

Our train took the route Wernigerode – Nordhausen – Drei-Annen-Hohne – Brocken – Wernigerode (total 160km) and our loco crews exchanged every 15km or so to give them all a chance to get used to the HSB loco. In Nordhausen we were provided with lunch and a chance to visit the signalbox from where the line to Eisfelder Talmühle and the whole of the Selketalbahn is controlled. After arriving on the Brocken we were served an evening meal from the enclosed observation platform in the hotel.

This monthly newsletter is distributed to those who request it by email and is also accessible from the main website at www.festrail.co.uk along with previous issues. Diary and event information is available on the online site. Feel free to print this document in order that people without web access can read it.

Contributions, details of group meetings etc to athomas@fwhr.com



On Friday and Saturday our crews were divided up between all the service trains from Wernigerode; Nordhausen and Gernrode. All the loco's carried Welsh flags. Whilst carrying out their duties with the HSB guards our staff were able to distribute almost 500 "Dragons of Snowdonia" leaflets (including German text) and 120 FR DVD postcards to the passengers. The Snowdonian headboard was also carried over the Selketalbahn including the branches to Hasselfelde and Harzgerode so that by Saturday midday "The Snowdonian" had covered the whole 140km network and been carried for 358km in total! Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves, the evenings were spent comparing experiences.

Sunday morning we were able to relax, many walked up to the castle overlooking Wernigerode. In the afternoon we were treated by the HSB to a performance of the rock opera version of Goethe's "Faust" up on the Brocken. This is really quite spectacular, the entertainment by witches and devils begins in the train on the way up the mountain. Our contingent of thirty represented a significant portion of

the audience of just over 200. Before the encore we presented "The Snowdonian" headboard to Jörg Bauer and Katrin Peters as our "Thank you" to the HSB and the chance was used to tell the audience about our partnership and the significance of the headboard. Next highlight: the encore songs were sung in English, specially rehearsed for us!

Thanks to Michael Wilkinson and Norman Bond for letting us have a Snowdonian headboard for the trip. From a collection amongst our participants 140% of the cost price of the headboard is being paid into the Diamond Jubilee Appeal. Thanks are also due to the tireless interpreters without whom these exchange visits couldn't happen. I must also thank those who used their cars for staff transfers to Nordhausen and Gernrode: this unloaded the HSB staff significantly at a very busy time.

Our group was made up of 14 steam crew, 4 railcar drivers, 4 guards and 8 interpreters. Approximately half of the participants had taken part in previous visits. Since these exchange visits began in 2003, 41 individual HSB staff have visited us in Wales (59 counting repeat visits) and in the other direction 85 of us have visited the HSB (134 counting repeat visits). Interest on both sides remains strong but due to our large proportion of volunteer staff it's easier for us to get a group together than for the HSB with their solely permanent staff.

A press release sent out by the HSB on Thursday 16th about our visit generated some reports in the online magazine "Lokreport" as well as in a Nordhausen online newspaper, more may follow. Our travels, of course, have also been reported on Facebook.

Time to start planning the next HSB visit to us: how about April 2017?

John Bell



Minffordd Yard progress *Ian Hartill*



In last month's Inside Motion the team from Whitehouse Construction arrived on site, and following mandatory safety briefings on Good Friday they set to work creating the new workshop foundations.

By the following Thursday all the base foundations had been laid, including the fixing points for the main steel columns and the workshop crane. A total of 91 cubic metres of concrete was poured in two days. The new sewage treatment tank was installed in its hole, and the connecting pipes for foul and surface water, and an incoming water supply pipe were run under the tracks. To complete the job, parts of the caravan field have been re-landscaped to create more usable level space, using the some of the soil scraped off the building site.

The next stage will be the delivery of the building's steel framework, due to arrive in late May. On-site erecting work is scheduled for early June, followed by external cladding of the roof and sides. A start will be made on the internal block walls before the floor slab is cast. This should be underway during early July.



The Waggon Tracks project is gaining momentum following the work to demolish the old buildings workshop and Terrapin shed. While the large 13 ton excavator was on site digging foundations for the workshop we borrowed it for an extra day to dig out the stone base of the old yard crane. It quickly became obvious that the crane was held down by two additional very large stone blocks, but the machine with its expert driver was able to remove these and backfill the resulting deep hole. (See pictures.)

The design of the Waggon Tracks building has progressed well,(see plan) to a point where an order for the building has been placed with John Lloyd & Son of Corwen, the same supplier as for the workshop building. The following timings have been agreed for construction of the new shed:

- Foundation ground plan and structural calculations completed – mid May
- Completion of structural drawings – early August
- Delivery of steel work to site – early September
- Erecting skeleton of building – mid September
- Sheeting and other finishing off to follow on – timing for this to be agreed once the frame work is complete.

From this it is possible to determine that the building foundations can be laid during July or August, which requires some sustained work to clear the remainder of the site. Any offers of help contact either me ihartill@ffwhr.com or Iain Wilkinson iwilkinson@ffwhr.com

We are also preparing to lay track to the new shed. A derelict area of land beside the Goods Shed has been cleared of old vegetation and rubbish, and the ground level reduced to allow the first set of points to be installed (top left). This set of points was the Welsh Highland connection from the old Harbour Station layout but needs some significant adjustments before being put into its new position. This part of the project is being led by Dave High, who is also looking for help. All track used in the new shed will be recycled track from the old Harbour Station layout.

Finally, there is rapid progress to report on yet another building in Minffordd Yard. When Harbour Station was redeveloped the 'Bobby Box' by the old ground frame became surplus to requirements and was taken to Minffordd Yard for safe keeping while a future use for this fairly new building could be considered. Then Iain Wilkinson discovered a photograph from the turn of the 19th Century (see picture on next page) of a view across Minffordd Yard with a cabin clearly in view.

After a number of discussions a plan emerged to recreate another 'lost' piece of company heritage.

So far, a new base has been cast using surplus concrete from the new workshop foundations. The Buildings Dept laid the perimeter foundations in a day and it is hoped that the 'Bobby Box' will be planted on its new base in time for the '150 Years of Passenger

Trains' Gala and the FR Society AGM weekend. There will be some finishing off work required, namely, laying a new floor and connecting the electrics.

So if anyone has some woodworking or electrical skills, and is interested in helping to complete this latest re-creation of the railway's earlier history I would really love to hear from you.



Minffordd Yard from the air earlier in April. The foundations for the new workshop are clearly visible.

Calling all F&WHR Guards!

Fancy spending the next six months doing what you do best – guarding on the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways?

We have a vacancy for a paid Guard / Porthmadog Signalman. You must be a qualified guard on both railways and a qualified signalman. This is a full time position with immediate start until the end of October 2015. Wage meets National Minimum Wage. Come and spend the summer on two of the Great Little Trains of Wales!

Not a qualified Guard? Don't worry. We are also looking for a carriage cleaner to come and work with the small team looking after our carriages on the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways. Usually based in Porthmadog you will work 40 hours a week on a variety of cleaning tasks including carriages (inside and out) and general station duties (yes, this does include toilets – sorry!). No experience necessary, just lots of enthusiasm and a willingness to work hard. A driving licence would be an advantage as occasionally you may be asked to work at Dinas Station. Immediate start until the end of October 2015, wage meets National Minimum Wage.

Full details for either position are available from Sean Britton sbritton@fwhr.com, Stephen Greig sgreig@fwhr.com or Hazel Prent hprent@fwhr.com



60 years of the London Area Group

On 19th June the London Area Group of the Ffestiniog Railway Society will celebrate 60 years with the running of a special train over both the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways.

Members of the Group have been given priority in booking seats but there are still some places left which are being offered to anyone who would care to join us. The price is £65 and there is an optional buffet lunch at £10.50 at The Snowdonia Parc at Waunfawr. There will be a long stop here so that there is no rush.

The train will leave Porthmadog at 9am, traverse the Welsh Highland first passing through Porthmadog on the return (non-stop we hope) about 15:30 on the way to Blaenau Ffestiniog and finishing at Porthmadog about 18:30. The usual drinks & light refreshments will be available on the train at normal prices.

Anyone interested in joining us on this memorable trip should contact Kim Winter, 223, Camp Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 5NE 01727 762343 k.winter@imperial.ac.uk

On the following day, Saturday 20th June, a celebration dinner has been arranged at the Royal Sportsman, Porthmadog. Any former members wishing to join us should also contact Kim.

The L.A.G. has supported the FR in many ways over 60 years. The group was originally formed to organise bringing volunteers to the railway and did this very successfully for many years until members became more affluent and could nearly all afford to travel on their own. This developed into the very successful Drains gang which upgrades and maintains the FR's drains.

There was also a very active sales stand which travelled around rallies & exhibitions raising money for the Railway. This continued until a few years ago when there was no one left fit enough to continue. In addition the group has supported the annual "Steampipes" film show in London which has proved very successful and produced a good profit each year. A recent audit of our activities produced figures showing that the sales stand produced (at today's values) a total of well over £100,000. The working parties, even considering an hourly rate at the minimum wage, have produced a value to the FR several times that figure. Over the 60 years the group must therefore have helped the railway finances to a sum approaching £500,000.

It is with great sadness we announce that the group will disband after our AGM next February.

Jim Hewett

150 years of passengers, 1st to 4th May

Some extra information about things taking place over the weekend

Clare Britton

Saturday

Meet The Oakeleys

Plas Tan y Bwlch was the summer home of the Oakeley family, quarry owners and people with great powers in those early Victorian years, the Oakeleys were significant players in the building and early years of the Ffestiniog Railway. They were also among the first travellers, with their own carriages.

This is your chance to learn more about the Oakeleys and how they lived. Andrew Oughton, Head of Operations at Plas will meet the 1010 train at Tan y Bwlch station for a walk down through the woodland, past the lake to the house. There will be chance to see the new hydro power station, replacing one from over 100 years ago. Take a guided walk around the house and gardens too. There will be time for lunch in the cafe or bring your sandwiches with you. Depart Tan y Bwlch station at 1050 and return to catch the 1535 back to Porthmadog. Adults £7, Children £5. Bookings in advance from Porthmadog booking office 01766 516024.

Unveiling of NRHA Harbour Station Signalling Award

This will take place on the platform (if wet, in Spooner's) at 1015.

Unveiling of NRHA Tryfan Junction Award

This will take place at 1215 at Tryfan Junction.

Sunday

Memorial Service for Allan Garraway

A memorial service for former General Manager and Vice President of the Ffestiniog Railway Society, Allan Garraway will take place at Tan y Bwlch station on the morning of Sunday 3rd May.

A special train, hauled by locomotives *Prince* and *Linda* will depart from Porthmadog Harbour Station at 1030 for a non-stop trip to Tan y Bwlch. The service will take place in front of the cafe in a marquee and will commence at 1130. The train is free of charge for those wishing to pay their respects but it is necessary to reserve your place on the train and a special ticket & order of service will be provided for those who book in advance. Return to Porthmadog is by any train. Tan y Bwlch cafe will be closed before the service but will be open as usual after it has finished.



To reserve your place, phone the booking office on 01766 516024 or email bookingoffice@fwhr.com

Boston Lodge Carriage Works

The carriage works will be open in the afternoon so you can view the current state of major projects Carriage 150 and Glasgow Tram 488. There will also be a display of *Welsh Pony* 'bits' and *Hugh Napier* will be giving footplate rides.

An Evening with the Del Sharrons

Take a ride back to the 1950s and 60s on Sunday 3rd May for an evening of rock n roll with 1950's style group The Del Sharrons. A special train leaves Porthmadog for Tan y Bwlch at 1900 for a fun evening of music and nostalgia. Licensed bar throughout. Fill your plate barbeque & salad or cheese platters to share available to order in advance. Tickets; Adults £19.50, Children £10.00. discount for working staff and volunteers. Food extra. Bookings in advance from Porthmadog booking office 01766 516024

Plas Tan y Bwlch Gardens tour

Depart from Tan y Bwlch station at 1215 for a guided tour of Plas Tan y Bwlch gardens. Return to station in time for the 1535 service. Adults £5, Children £3. Bookings in advance from Porthmadog booking office 01766 516024.

Monday

Boston Lodge Carriage Works

The carriage works will be open in the afternoon so you can view the current state of major projects Carriage 150 and Glasgow Tram 488. There will also be a display of *Welsh Pony* 'bits' and *Hugh Napier* footplate rides.



The Diamond Jubilee Appeal currently stands at £766,899. This figure includes The *Snowdonian* headboard raffle which raised £6,919. Simon Hill, the winning bidder, is pictured at Caernarfon being presented with his trophy by Lord Faulkener of Worcester, the President of the Heritage Railway Association and General Manager Paul Lewin. This segment of the journey was headed by *Prince, Blanche* and *Linda*.

Below, the train is pictured leaving Porthmadog on the FR segment of the trip., headed by *Taliesin* and *Lyd*.





Hotel and Arriva staff visit TyB

On the 20th April, a familiarisation visit for Llandudno hotel and Arriva Trains staff was organised by Larry Davies, the Conwy Valley Rail Officer who, sadly, is retiring in September. Larry has been a very good friend and supporter of the F&WHR and has joined us at many shows and promoted us at others.

This type of visit is priceless as showing someone just how great the railways are, and the hospitable welcome at Tan y Bwlch too, is better than any advert or leaflet. We have already had people travelling as a result.

We continue to work closely with Arriva and they also take our relationship very seriously. Stakeholder Manager Ben Davies joined us for the visit, seen here second left of the signal post. *Clare Britton*

News in brief

Help needed. We still need volunteer help at the beer festival. This year promises to be the busiest ever and all offers of help will be gratefully received. We also need people to supervise kid's activities at Tan y Bwlch and Beddgelert Monday to Thursday of Whitsun week.

If you can help, please contact Clare Britton cbritton@fwhr.com

Book Auction. The next auction of selected books starts on 1st May 2015. There's a growing selection of books at bargain basement prices. Donations always welcome. www.frsbookauction.co.uk

Hostel usage. Just a reminder to all guests. The cleaning of the Modules is *your* responsibility. That includes the showers and vacuuming bedroom floors. Also not leaving plates in the lounge. Some of you seem to have forgotten this. Please note that the Hostel is full from August 3rd to 8th. Camping spaces are still available but going fast. Spaces are available all other times but we're very busy during August so book dates fast!

A date for the diary. A memorial train for the late Alan Skellern will run from Porthmadog to Tan y Bwlch on Sunday 28th of June. Travel will be by ticket only. More info in the next Inside Motion.

Classical Night at Tan y Bwlch

On Saturday 4th July, the Ffestiniog Railway is delighted to welcome Carla Maney (right) and Gary Branch for a night of classical songs from the operas in the beautiful location of Tan y Bwlch station, set in the heart of the National Park Woodland.

Carla and Gary both studied at Trinity College of Music, London and recently have started working together now that they are both based near Cardiff. They will be playing a programme based around composers such as Purcell, Arne, Handel and Mozart with one or two interesting additions, which we hope will provide the audience with lots of familiar or fairly familiar music.



A special train will leave Porthmadog at 1830 for Tan y Bwlch. A welcome drink & nibbles are included in your ticket price of £25. Carla and Gary will play two sets with food served in the intermission. The train returns in time for last orders in Spooner's bar to complete your evening. A hot buffet is bookable in advance.

Discount available for working staff and volunteers. Please phone 01766 516024 to book your tickets and food.

Garratt parts arrive at Dinas



A new bunker and the refurbished water tank from NG/G16 140 have been delivered to Dinas.

The water tank is the original which was shipped from South Africa with the loco and originally painted maroon. The bunker is a new Boston Lodge build.

Both were sent away for sandblasting, the bunker to take off mill scale and slight rusting and the water tank so that its condition could be fully evaluated prior to its refurbishment for future use, possibly on 140 or Pete Waterman's 109, currently stored at Dinas.

Leaflet distribution pays off *David Witcomb*

Passing through Radstock about my business today, I realised it was just about opening time for the Museum so stopped off to deliver F&WHR timetables. One of the folk in reception was Nick the Curator who has been very helpful over the years. He guessed rightly why I was there and produced a batch of their leaflets both for Port and for local use. I of course handed ours over. He told me that since opening for the Season two groups of visitors had said they had found the museum leaflet in an unexpected place, the Ffestiniog! And all the ones we supplied them with last year had been taken.

To all those who get out and distribute, good job. To Jo who gets a welter of leaflets every year but gives them all a go at some space, good job. This is the original low cost marketing and it works. Is there somewhere near you that could use some timetables?



A sunny Porthmadog Harbour Station pictured from the air on Thursday April 23rd with a WHR train in the platform.