

# Inside Motion

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



## Here we go again...

**And they're off!** After what seems no time at all, public services resume this weekend for February half term.

Trains will run from Porthmadog to Beddgelert and Rhyd Ddu, leaving Port at 1010 and 1335 - yes, you read that correctly, we're running an FR headline timetable, but on the Welsh Highland, to give our permanent way team the time needed to complete the extensive winter track renewal programme on the Ffestiniog.

These trains will continue to run on Saturdays, Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays until the start of a full service on both lines on March 19th.

And with the amount of rainfall we've had, the rivers are at their best, especially in the Aberglaslyn Pass, so it's a great time for a trip - make sure you tell all your friends!

At the time of writing, the Welsh Highland is having a brand new point installed at Pont Croesor (more details inside). There can't be many railways that have the confidence to start such a task just ten days before the start of public services, but then there aren't many railways like the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland...



This newsletter is distributed to those who request it by email and is also accessible from the main website at [www.festrail.co.uk](http://www.festrail.co.uk) along with previous issues. Diary and event information is also available online.

To be added to the email distribution list, please fill in the form at <http://tinyurl.com/pmjl6ue>

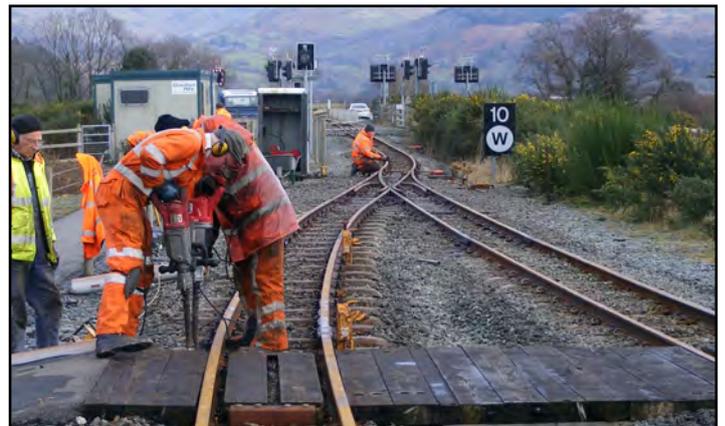
All contributions, details of group meetings etc to [insidemotion@ffwhr.com](mailto:insidemotion@ffwhr.com)

# Pont Croesor upgraded



As part of the Winter Works Programme, the point at the Caernarfon end of Pont Croesor is being replaced - just a week before the start of February half-term services.

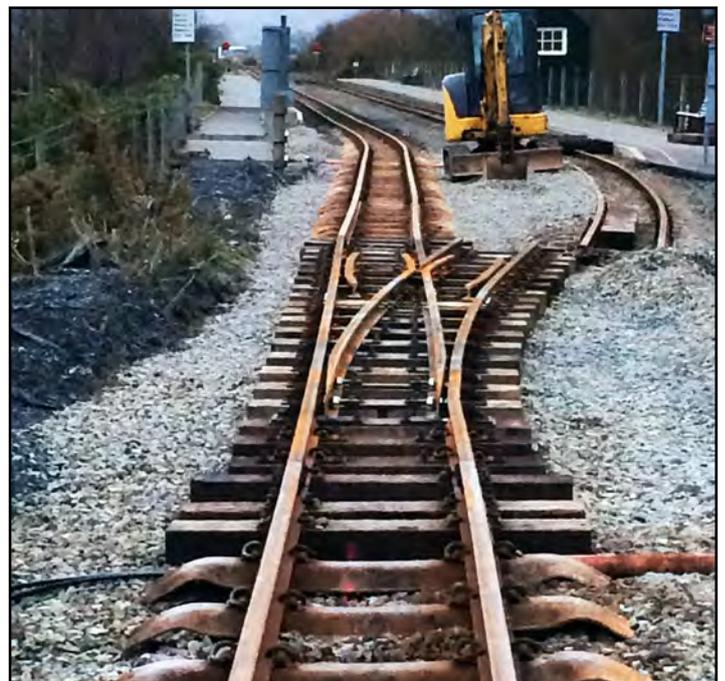
Although a new left hand point was installed at this location 12 months ago, the alignment had never been one of the most elegant on the 40 mile railway and the chance was taken to replace it with a new right hand point, funded by the WHRS, allowing the removal of the Pont Croesor 'kink' which can be seen in the photo on the right, by the 10mph board.



The bottom picture, taken on Monday February 8th, shows the improved alignment. Note that the closure rail beyond the point remains unclipped, allowing final positioning of the point to be made.

Work on the Up Line (Blaenau direction) side of the loop had not started when this picture was taken.

Below, members of the Black Hand Gang put their backs into the task on Saturday morning.



# What the papers say

Each year, we produce a spreadsheet containing details of every piece of media coverage we generate. This contains details of the perceived value (a necessarily objective measure); the number of photographs; running time of TV or radio; and whether it is of interest to railway enthusiasts or to less technical members of the general public (the legendary Mrs Miggins).

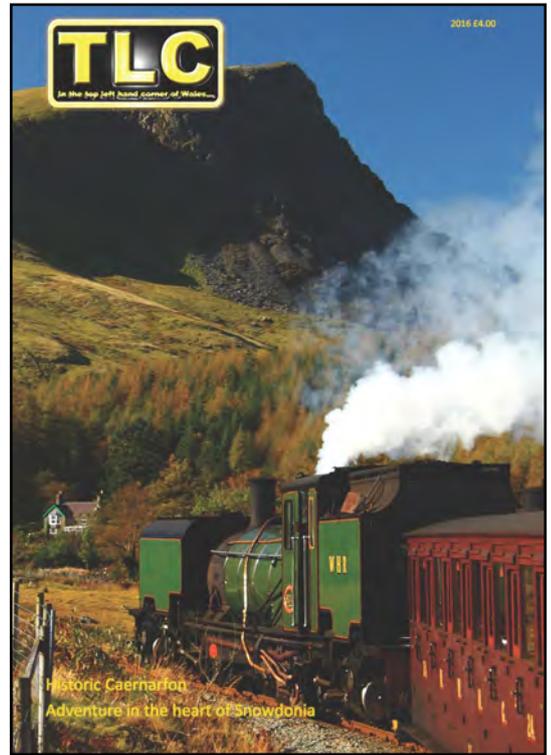
The spreadsheet is incomplete, as it only includes coverage of which we are aware. We may miss repeats of TV shows on satellite channels and in print media outside the UK, but it still provides a very useful indicator of how we are doing.

In 2015, we managed a total of 462 pieces of coverage involving 668 photographs, 16 radio shows and 17 TV appearances. 38 per cent of this coverage was rated as being of interest to the general public. The average value of the coverage, on a scale of one to ten, was 7.48. That's 1.3 pieces of coverage a day, seven days a week.

It was also interesting to compare the 2015 results with the previous year. This revealed that the numbers were almost identical, with the total number of media hits being just seven fewer than in 2014 and the perceived value being identical to two decimal places.

One of the items not included on the spreadsheet is our own glossy magazine, TLC. The sixth issue has just been produced in time to be handed out at King's Cross during *Princess'* visit to London starting this week.

As always, we hope you can take a few copies to leave in doctor's waiting rooms, coffee shops and so on to help sell us to the world at large. To avoid a large postage bill, we encourage you to collect copies when you visit the railway. Drop us a line on [tlc@ffwhr.com](mailto:tlc@ffwhr.com) to let us know how many copies you need. There should be plenty to go around - this year we've increased the print run to 12,000.



*Princess' journey to King's Cross started at the weekend when Moel Hebog moved the loco and its two carriages to Minfordd Yard in preparation for loading onto a road vehicle later in the week for the trip to London. The loco will be on display at the terminus from Friday February 12th to Sunday 21st.*

# Ride the Tea Train



With this year's Snowdonian special almost a sell-out, there's a unique chance to experience the luxury of the Carrabasset Parlor Car on Friday April 15th, hauled by Darjeeling Tank loco 19B.

The carriage, built at Boston Lodge for Adrian Shooter's Beeches Light Railway, will form *The Tea Train*, offering afternoon tea and champagne, which departs Porthmadog for Rhyd Ddu at 1300 with photo run pasts.

Just 10 seats are available for this unique experience by bidding £500 or more by post to Diamond Jubilee Appeal, Harbour Station or by phoning 01766 515835.

The winning ten bids will be selected on 29th February.

The carriage will remain at the F&WHR during the spring and will be available for private hire.

The Diamond Jubilee Appeal has passed £1.5 million and has a new website at [www.adventurefrwhr.co.uk](http://www.adventurefrwhr.co.uk)



## Heritage Railway Association Inter-Rail Pass

The Heritage Rail Association Inter-Rail Pass scheme is open to directors, managers, paid staff and volunteers currently working on a railway participating in the Inter-Rail Pass scheme.

For £25 you get a pass allowing you and one other person to travel free or at reduced rates on railways participating in the scheme subject to travel restrictions set by each railway. The passes generally cannot be used on Santa specials, some gala days and other special occasions. A list of participating railways and the restrictions is provided with the pass.

The 2016/2017 pass is now available. It will be valid from 1st March 2016 to 28th February 2017.

If you would like to purchase a 2016/2017 pass please send a cheque for £25 per pass, made payable to 'Heritage Railway Association', together with a stamped addressed envelope, to Joanna Vincent, Ffestiniog Railway, Harbour Station, Porthmadog, Gwynedd, LL49 9NF.

If you prefer to pay by cash or credit card please telephone me on 01766 516073 to arrange payment.

Jo Vincent

# Boston Lodge work starts



**The first stage** of the Boston Lodge access road project has been completed with the felling of trees to enable construction of the new ramp to begin.

The existing access driveway is narrow and subsidence means it is in urgent need of replacement. The old roadway has survived remarkably well over the years, but storm damage a few years ago uprooted some large trees disturbing the stability of the embankment, road and drains in the area.

Since then, retaining walls have also failed in places and other large trees were in danger of falling. The recent heavy rains have not helped the situation.

Working with Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy, a new access ramp, parallel to the old one, is being constructed over four weeks in February and March.

The planned works include a replanting scheme which will see numerous new oak trees planted and in a few years' time, it will be difficult to see where the new works have taken place. The level crossing into the works will be moved to the end of the halt platform, improving access for large vehicles..

The original access ramp will remain in use as part of the Wales Coast Path.



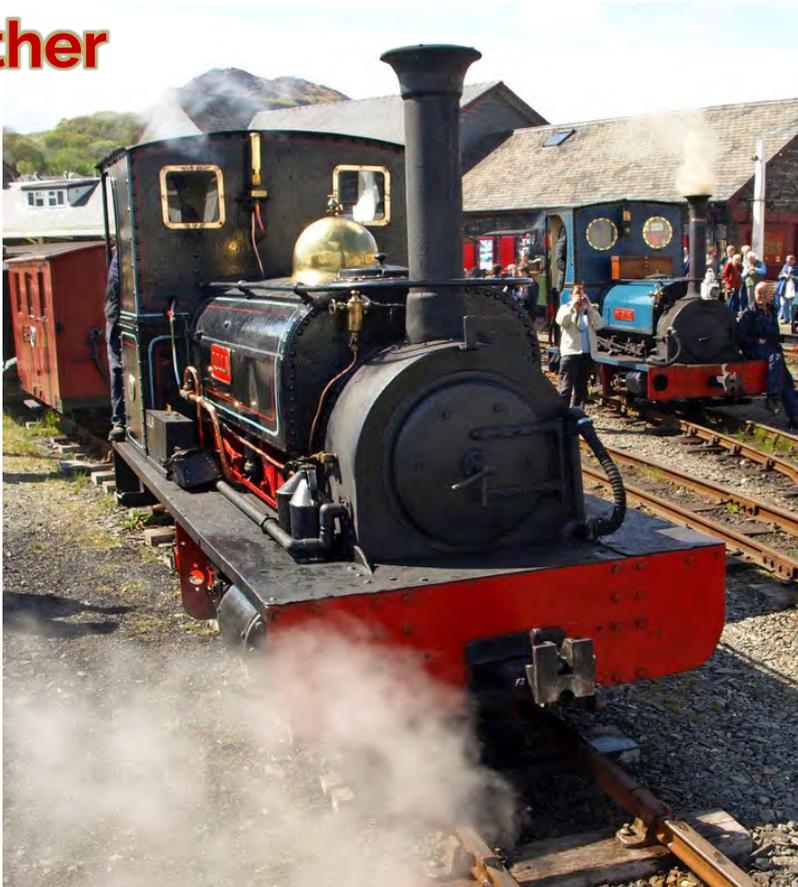
# Slate Shunts and other little engine duties

As most of you will be aware, the FR is home (both permanent & temporary) to many "little engines", some of which are privately owned.

As their presence has both cost and benefit implications, the FRCO has adopted a policy, fully supported by the FRS, that sees them earning their keep in appropriate roles.

In return for accommodation, maintenance and, in some cases, overhaul, they undertake duties such as PR and revenue earning.

In the case of the former much valuable PR is derived from high visibility presence at such places as London railway termini, appearances at public events such as Tyseley open day, NRM "steam ups", significant public Flower Shows, transport extravaganzas, etc., where demonstration track is often laid and the public offered rides.



Revenue is obtained from selling the experience of shunting slate waggons in the FR/WHR yards as well as from private charter trains and photographic charters.

With these duties in mind, help is needed both to sell the experiences - particularly the slate shunts currently advertised for Spring 2016 - and to provide support crew.

In the first instance the Lilla Locomotive Group is your point of contact, namely Tim Oulton & Brian Butterworth, contactable via Harbour Station or the FRCO e-mail site.

We are particularly interested in hearing from anybody who would like to become support team members, with full training being given to get you onto the footplate as soon as possible. It's a particularly good way of getting youngsters onto the mainline fireman/driver ladder.

*Brian Butterworth & Tim Oulton,  
LILLA support team*

## Safety

**The Railway** is a busy place in the winter, with lots of large projects in hand. Track relaying projects, refurbishment of level crossing control equipment, Tan Y Bwlch bridge, building works and, come the Spring, gardening.

These projects are worksites, with lots of activity, vehicle movements and noisy machinery.

Please, for your own safety and the safety of others, DO NOT walk into or around these sites uninvited or unannounced.

- If possible, arrange your visit with the relevant manager in advance
- Report to the person in charge of the work
- Make sure you are wearing the correct clothing and footwear
- Follow all instructions

The same applies for the Boston Lodge, Dinas and Minffordd sites.

Nick Griffiths -- Safety & Development Manager -- [ngriffiths@ffwhr.com](mailto:ngriffiths@ffwhr.com) 07919 414884

# Shortening the Welsh Highland

*Phil Nock*

The first task of our Rest of the World Gang working week was to reinstate the panel of track taken up by the BHG the previous weekend to install a new drainage culvert under the track at Coed Bryn Siriol, LC29.43.

This done, we moved 100m down the line to do a realignment on the reverse curves at Cae Bryn Siriol, between, approximately, 29.18 and 29.30. We marked up offsets from Alasdair's centre line, as this was soon lost with the ground-works. Eight panels of track were then lifted.

From the offsets we marked the boundaries of the new alignment and employed a 360 mini-digger to dig out the excess ballast, of which there was quite a lot.

A new centre line was then marked and the eight panels of SA track reinstated to the new alignment. This included installing a half-rail stagger to ease the pressure on the rail joints, on what is quite a tight radius pair of curves. It was to ease these two tight radii that the work was being done, as the previous alignment made for rough running at the line speed of 20mph.

As a result of the realignment, the Welsh Highland is now two metres shorter than it was...



## 2015 operating statistics *Seán Britton*

### Ffestiniog Railway

Passenger trains run	987
Average number of coaches per train	9.11
Total Passenger miles	26,728
Total carriage mileage	243,559
Coach with highest mileage 108, 121	12,660
Loco with highest mileage <i>Merddin Emrys</i>	8,331

### Welsh Highland Railway

Passenger trains run	628
Average number of coaches per train	8.03
Total passenger miles	30,455
Total carriage mileage	255,905
Coach with highest mileage 2011	13,763
Loco with highest mileage 138	13,127

### Timekeeping

Ffestiniog Railway	90% of trains within 5 minutes of booked time.
Welsh Highland	91% of trains within 5 minutes of booked time.

### Volunteer Man Days

<b>FfR</b>	841	37% of total
<b>WHR</b>	807	43% of total
<b>Total</b>	1648	40% of total

# Building Development Projects *Ian Hartill*

## **Minfordd Yard - New Workshop Building & Waggon Tracks Projects**

Before winter began the outside contractors had finished working on both new buildings, bringing to an end Phase 1 of each project.

During winter, the Buildings Department have paused in their fitting out of the new Workshop to turn their hands to the long list of work in the public areas of the railway, which are off limits while trains are running. They also have to build and fit out the new Spooner's kitchen in time for the start of the new season.

However, progress has not completely halted; there are regular working parties planned throughout the year to install electrical circuits and lighting, and once again the railway has benefited from the work of the buildings students from College Meirion Dwyfor, Dolgellau, who are building internal block walls and making a start on the plastering, beginning with what will be the mess room.

In addition, budgets are being finalised to be ready once the trains start running again and the backlog of other work has been reduced.

You can help speed up the completion by getting involved with the internal fitting out work, particularly over the March Megabash weekend, although you are very welcome at other times if you can't make the megabash. Please contact either Anthony Brierley ([abrierley@ffwhr.com](mailto:abrierley@ffwhr.com)) or myself ([ihartill@ffwhr.com](mailto:ihartill@ffwhr.com)).

In the Waggon Tracks Shed, the next milestone is the installation of the lighting. As the shed will have five sidings there are four complete sets of light fittings (one set between each track) to be sub-assembled, cables pulled in and suspension chains fixed to the roof girders. This needs to be completed before the tracks can be laid. Meanwhile working parties led by Dave High are continuing with modification and installation of the turnouts leading to the east, or Maenofferen end, of the WTS. If there is sufficient labour available a start can also be made on the extra siding to be laid between the building and the coal-hole.

Thoughts are turning to fabricating the new main doors as soon as funds for materials and labour become available. Again if you would like to contribute or help, contact Iain Wilkinson ([iwilkinson@ffwhr.com](mailto:iwilkinson@ffwhr.com)) or me.

## **Boston Lodge Developments**

The first visible signs of the Boston Lodge redevelopment will be construction of the new work access ramp. During the first two weeks of February tree clearance will take place, followed by construction of the new ramp over the subsequent four weeks. The design of the new ramp has had to take into account the creation of an open level crossing instead of having to continually open and close the gates. Changing to an open crossing has its own difficulties, and to achieve this the crossing position is moving towards Porthmadog by around 5m. This will bring the roadway entirely onto land owned by the railway company. An access route has been provided for our neighbour who owns the farm above Boston Lodge, so there will still be a gate to be seen, but this is private. The public footpath that forms part of the Wales Coast path will not be affected by these changes. Once the ramp has been completed, the new embankment area will be replanted with suitable native tree species to replace those lost during the work.

Following an archaeological study of the old gunpowder sheds the next stage is to clear the area beyond the Glan-y-Mor shed and carriage works. This will involve the removal and storage of a useful quantity of old building block stones. A digger and rock breaker will clear the area and reduce ground level height to create a new level area for the new storage shed. A bonus of this work will be creation of a pile of fill material, which will eventually be used to widen the foreshore embankment to accommodate the new carriage shed.

As previously mentioned, much thought is being put into planning the waste water and sewage facilities for the entire site. The many issues include the confined nature of the site, pressure on all available space and preservation of heritage features, particularly around the Top Yard. I am very grateful for the help from David Power from Australia (see last FR magazine about distant volunteering), who, since emigrating, has had a lifetime career in civil engineering and specifically in design of waste water and sewage systems. As expected this is a very complex problem but ideas are developing to a workable solution, so watch this space.



## How to waterproof a bridge

One of the major tasks of the Winter Maintenance Programme on the Ffestiniog Railway was the waterproofing of the road bridge on the approach to Tan y Bwlch station.

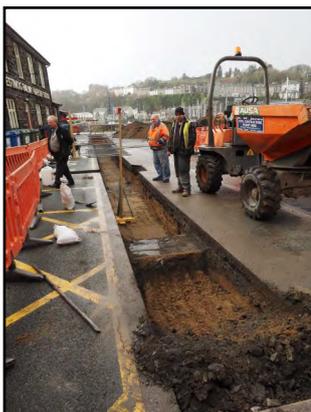
The bridge, originally cast at Boston Lodge Works, had the track removed and ballast cleared away exposing the concrete deck which was then coated with a waterproof membrane painted over the concrete to protect it from the water and oily residues that will inevitably leach through the ballast.

The next job was to prepare a ballast bed before reinstating the track. The base layer of the ballast bed was formed of a slighter smaller stone than usual to afford greater protection to the waterproofing membrane.



## An unexpected find

Whilst excavating the trench for the drains for Spooner's new kitchen, contractors unearthed a length of track in the Harbour Station car park, on the site of the original Oakeley Slate Wharf. The flat-bottomed, wrought iron rail had been secured on wooden sleepers. The section exposed by the trench was removed and stored for examination and conservation.





## Lottie's facelift

**Another key task** in the Winter Maintenance Programme has been completed. The road surface at Quarry Lane Crossing, better known as Lottie's Crossing, had deteriorated badly and was in urgent need of replacement.

A five day road closure was arranged with Gwynedd Council, allowing time for the crossing to be excavated, track lifted and replaced.

New rail was installed with a steel tray to hold the tarmac in place and prevent the edges from crumbling and the road reopened on schedule.

The new rail now extends towards Minffordd, joining up with the track laid last Winter by the Network Rail Apprentices and will be renewed towards Boston Lodge as far as Minffordd cemetery.



# VOLUNTEERING

ON THE F&WHR



- **JOIN THE RAILWAY VOLUNTEERS** •
- 16th April 2016 • 17th April 2016 •

**Grab the opportunity to visit the railway for a day to take a 'behind the scenes' look at volunteering.**

Enjoy a guided tour of Boston Lodge Engineering Works to see locomotives being readied for service - plus the various jobs undertaken in the Erecting Shop and Carriage Works.

Be among the first to see developments in Minffordd Yard - the busy headquarters of the Infrastructure Department.

Find out about working as a Guard or On-Train Steward - take a train ride to see Operating and Buffet staff at work.

For further details and to register an early interest - please email Howard Wilson at [hwilson@ffwhr.com](mailto:hwilson@ffwhr.com)

**FFESTINIOG & WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAYS**

Harbour Station, Porthmadog, Gwynedd, LL49 9NF

## Coming down the track...

- February 12-21, Princess at King's Cross
- 26 - 28 March Family events around the railways
- 16 April The Snowdonian 80 mile round trip
- 30 April-2 May FRS Members' Weekend
- 30 April Launch of new FR train
- May 6-8, *Moelwyn* at Froissy, France
- May 6-8 Liverpool, launch of *Daniel Adamson*
- 20 - 22 May WHR Cwrw ar y Cledrau/Rail Ale
- 25 July - 29 Aug Summer of Fun
- 28 July, 4, 11, 18, 25 Aug FR Jazz Trains
- 21 Aug Classic Car & Family Day at Dinas
- 9-11 Sept WHR Super Power
- 18 Sept Ras y Cob
- 24 Sept Trailfest
- 7-9 Oct FR Victorian Weekend.
- 27, 28, 29 Oct FR Halloween trains
- 27 Oct WHR Halloween Train
- 10, 11, 17, 18, 22 Dec WHR Santa trains
- 10, 11, 17, 18, 22 Dec FR Santa Trains

The sun breaks through the clouds as seen from Porthmadog Harbour Station on January 14th this year