

Inside Motion

November 2015

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

Welsh Pony on track for 2017 return



Sole surviving Large England loco *Welsh Pony* is starting to come together ahead of its 150th birthday in 2017. The boiler, frames and cylinders dating from the loco's 1890 rebuild were life-expired and a new solid foundation for the rebuild was required with new frames, together with cylinders cast using the same patterns used during *Palmerston's* rebuild, bored out to *Pony's* original diameter of 8 3/8".

Work can start on the reassembly of the loco using many original parts including the motion, wheels, rods, cab and tank, ensuring the loco's original character is preserved. Fewer new parts are being used than during the loco's first rebuild in 1890.

All the components for the new welded boiler are on hand, with assembly work due to start in the January. A new tender is also to be designed and built as all surviving examples are already in use.



Top: Works Manager Tony Williams holds an original motion bracket alongside the new frames.

This 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 also available online.

Feel free to print this document in order that people without web access can read it.

All contributions, details of group meetings etc to insidemotion@ffwhr.com

First snows of winter



Welsh Highland passengers caught a glimpse of the first snow of winter on the way to Rhyd Ddu on Saturday 21st November behind Linda and Blanche, with snow extending down from the summit of Cnicht seen from Ynsfor (top) and Snowdon viewed from the platform at Rhyd Ddu (above)

Rain stops play *Phil Nock*

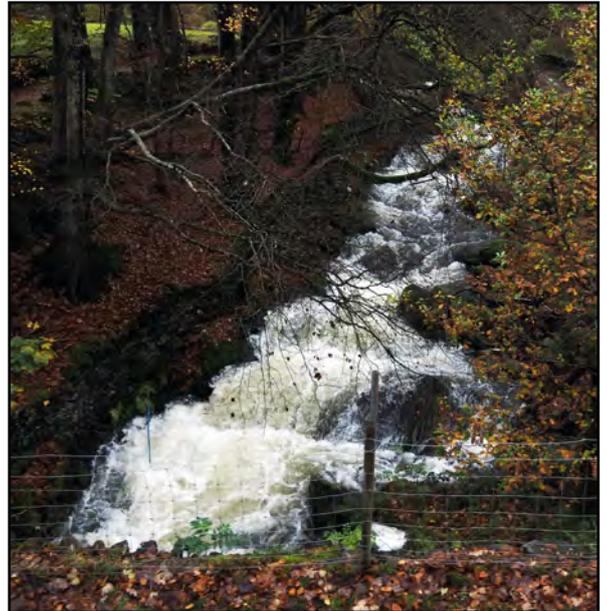
The Rest of the World Gang November working week started on the morning of Saturday 7th, when we filled and delivered a quantity of sandbags to Beddgelert, ostensibly to build a protective wall around the base of the abutments of Pont Cwm Cloch Isaf, (the river bridge by the water tower), in order that bridge engineers could safely examine them.

Alas the Afon Cwm Cloch was having none of it, being majestically in spate after recent heavy rain. *(right)* We spent the afternoon servicing loose and seized South African track clips between Fron Goch and Bontnewydd.

On a Sunday of nearly non-stop torrential rain and gale force winds, we spent the day at Pont Trosgl, UB32.48, just before the site of the former Salem Halt. Here the sleepers of the bridge deck had come a little awry, needing adjusting to square with the bridge girders and wedging firm with an additional sleeper. There was also a matter of closing the gap on the rail joint on the bridge and chasing the gap out towards Salem over a few panels of track.

Come Monday, we delivered a large quantity of base-plates, fish-plates, track screws and fish bolts from Minffordd Yard to Penrhyn Station, along with hand tools for tracklaying. The contractor was working back from the A4085 road crossing towards the station, digging out spent ballast and loading it onto DZ's behind him. As the trackbed immediately down from the road crossing is laced with pipes and cables, fearing the 360 excavator might damage them, we spent the afternoon digging out the spent ballast and black-top here out by hand.

The team split in two from Tuesday onwards. A number stayed on with Ian Andrew, helping in the Penrhyn relaying, whilst the majority drifted off onto the Dark Side. On Tuesday we dug out a blocked culvert at Bronydd Crossing, LC22.09, between Hendy and Bontnewydd. Wednesday we spent around Snowdon Ranger, kango-packing sleeper voids, doing the same thing around Waunfawr Station the day after.



Meanwhile, the Black Hand Bridge Cleaning Gang is captured at Betws Garmon

New Building Developments *Ian Hartill*

Minffordd Yard

Progress on the two new buildings at Minffordd yard has been dramatic.

The shell of the workshop building has been completed and minor snagging jobs have been addressed. Externally, the front and rear of the building still need to be landscaped to make access easier. On the front elevation this will involve building a suitable ramp that will reach the various doors.

The buildings department have made good progress on the internal space during the summer and autumn. Elsewhere in this magazine Anthony Brierley gives a more detailed account of what has been achieved.

The plan is have the building in use during 2016, but now that the winter period is here, thoughts and efforts have to turn to the public areas of the railway which can't easily be worked on while trains are running. This means that the buildings department has to concentrate on these areas. However, working parties are continuing with the internal fitting out, particularly with the painting and electrics. Any offers of additional help would be much appreciated.

The Waggon Tracks shed project is also making rapid progress, and by the time these words appear the shell of the building will be essentially complete.

During the final two weeks of September, the majority of the materials for the shed arrived on site and the framework was assembled very quickly. By the time of the Trustee and Society meetings at the start of October the framework was largely complete, so that those who have contributed to the project were able to see for themselves the scale of the undertaking. The project even came to the attention of the Daily Post who reported on progress on 4th November.

The building is now fully sheeted and work is underway fitting all the rainwater gutters and downpipes. Spent ballast from the winter track renewal at Penrhyn is being spread across the floor of the new shed in advance of tracklaying.

Steady progress is being made with reworking the second hand turnouts which will form the entrance to the shed from the east. This was given a boost over the 17th & 18th October, when Adrian Strachan arranged another visit by staff from Bombardier Transportation taking part in a team-building exercise. We are hoping that they can help us again next year.

The new main power cable from the yard sub-station to the building has also been installed. The next job is



Students from Coleg Meirion Dwyfor plastering inside the new workshop



The Waggon Tracks shed awaits its doors

for the electrical department to fix the distribution board and make the necessary connections. This can then be followed by the lighting equipment.

The final push to complete the shed will come in 2016 with the tracklaying (all bullhead rail recovered from other areas on the railway), and making and fitting the large doors at each end of the building.

Boston Lodge

The Consultant Engineers have prepared various options for a new access road to Boston Lodge. These have been extensively discussed both by the Boston Lodge Steering Group and also with independent civil engineers to narrow down suitable options for the difficult location. Finding an ideal solution is made more difficult because of the need to ensure that access to the works for deliveries and day-to-day business ►

◀ can be maintained as far as possible, as well as the need to improve safety around the Boston Lodge level crossing. It is hoped to arrive at a final decision in the next few weeks so that construction work can start at the earliest opportunity. Planning of the proposed new carriage shed also continues. A design for a suitable embankment to support the planned building has been produced, but further work is needed to ensure that the land required is within the railway's ownership and so covered by the existing development powers.

As previously reported the Boston Lodge memorial was dismantled during Kids Week. This is currently being rebuilt on the high ground overlooking the top yard with a view of trains approaching from the Cob.

Following removal of the old tunnel mess building, a second phase of archaeological digs has been carried out, both on this site and on the site of the old gunpowder sheds at the far end of Boston Lodge. The work was co-ordinated by John Alexander and Dafydd Gwyn, and led by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

Now that the surveys of the gunpowder sheds have been completed work on a new storage shed in Glan-y-Mor yard can move ahead. The next step will be to clear this area for further investigation. Usable building stone from the old gunpowder shed will be collected and stored for use in future heritage building projects, while it is hoped that the remainder can be re-used in either the new access ramp or as part of the carriage shed embankment widening.

Following a revision of ideas for the erecting shop rebuild, concept drawings were displayed at the Company AGM showing the complete redevelopment of the present 'new' erecting shop and the old carriage paint shop as an area dedicated to major workshop projects.

Significant consideration will be given as to how material coming into the works can be unloaded from road vehicles and subsequently stored, the aim being to reduce the amount of manual handling while maximising the amount of covered storage space.

FRS News *Howard Wilson*

Heritage Disc Signals

The FR Society entered the Disc Signal Project for a National Railway Heritage Award and has been notified that the project has now been shortlisted. The award ceremony is to be held in London at Merchant Taylors' Hall, near the Bank of England early in December. Presentations will be made by Lord Faulkner of Worcester and the result will be notified in the next issue of *Inside Motion*.

BOGOF

If only it was buy one get one free! But it isn't. But it is a great time to buy what is needed while the price is at rock bottom. The Company needed a quantity of rail to be able to do all the relaying of track on the FR this winter and managed to buy at least two lorry loads of rail and a quantity of sleepers and fixings. But a third load was really needed if the whole of the job was to be completed in the allotted time. So the FR Society has stepped in and authorised a payment of £21,780 which will provide the 44 rails needed. Whilst this will ensure the volunteer track gangs can be kept busy this winter it will leave a few rails left over for some of next winter's relaying too!

Gigabash

The new workshop in Minffordd Yard was the main target of our attention this time. The Building Department team had worked to complete the upper floor and staircase allowing us to install the upper internal wall insulation while the electricians fixed the hardware and cabling runs for the lighting. Downstairs, the blockwork walls in five workshop areas required three coats of white emulsion while wooden frames were constructed to enclose the steelwork in the ceilings which would then be clad with plasterboard. In all there were 36 volunteers plus the electricians working on site so one of the workshops provided the catering space for tea, coffee, lunch and a moments relaxation. Others decimated the undergrowth that had grown up behind the hostel, while in the Gweithdy at Minffordd Station the signwriters were busy and the gardeners worked on the long station garden, with some visiting Porthmadog to clear out and replant the tubs and window boxes. Meanwhile the Drains Gang worked to drive their rods through the drains above Penrhyn.

A total of 88 volunteers enjoyed themselves despite some rain on the Saturday. Perhaps you might have enjoyed being with us helping to improve the physical image of the railway or to update the facilities for staff and volunteers? To register or find out more about the companion event, Megabash, which is scheduled for the weekend of 19th & 20th March 2016 email howard@quarrylane.net

Wanderer returns

We are delighted to announce that Phil Brown is returning to the F&WHR in the expanded role of Locomotive Manager. Phil has been Operations Manager at the Severn Valley Railway in England since 2011, having previously been Deputy Operations Manager at the F&WHR.

Phil will be responsible for the safe operation of all steam and diesel locomotives; the assessing of loco crew competence; and for all non-passenger trains on the 40 mile railway - in particular the growing number of such movements for the Infrastructure Department. He will also supervise locomotive crew rostering, which will remain the responsibility of Tesni Jones.

Since leaving the F&WHR, Phil has continued as a regular volunteer on the railways and is a qualified driver on both the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland routes.

He will be based at Boston Lodge, reporting to Works Manager Tony Williams, and takes up his post on January 11th. He can be contacted on 07919 414872 or at pbrown@fwhr.com



New kitchen for Spooner's *Martin Batcock*

Spooner's is undergoing a major refurbishment with the construction of a brand new kitchen which will allow us to offer an improved service to customers and better working conditions for staff. The building work is well under way and is scheduled to be completed before Easter. In the interim, a temporary kitchen will be in use providing breakfasts, lunch and evening meals.

We are also pleased to announce that Tim Coakley has been promoted to senior catering assistant with immediate effect and he will be in charge of his shift in the absence of Joel, Leann, or myself. Our congratulations to Tim, who will also receive formal supervisory training to help further his career with the company.



On-train staff rewarded *John Ditchburn*

Saturday 21st November saw all the OTS staff and volunteers get together to mark the end of the season. Twenty two of the team enjoyed a meal at Aberdunant Hall. We were looked after by our old colleague Claire Podmore, who is now the manager there.

After the meal there was a short reward and recognition interlude. Recognising the team who forgot carriage 123 was on the train, a knotted hanky was presented to aid memory; the team who forgot the water were rewarded with bottles of water; and the team who forgot the float received three bags of chocolate money to help their memory in future.

A number of the team were picked out for special mention: Colin Hicks for fantastic guide book sales, Allison Jones for consistent effort and enthusiasm around the new food offer on the WHR, Andrew Perkins and Lisa Peters for excellent appearance on duty, Iwan Jones for his success in his new role as part time cook on the WHR and Doris Bee for her caring customer service, displayed on a number of occasions where we had passengers who became ill whilst travelling with us. Special thanks went to Ollie Bennett for his enthusiasm and commitment to back of house organisation, keeping everyone in the right place at the right time.

The whole team was thanked for the tremendous effort they put in which has resulted in not only beating the sales budget, but increasing sales over 2014 by a whopping 15%.

David Pollock

Gordon Rushton & Andy Savage

David Pollock, who died in September, was the General Manager of the Ffestiniog Railway from 1983 to 1991.

It was quite clear after Getting Back to Blaenau that the management team had struggled hard through an era of 'Bodge and Mend', and that the most pressing matters to attend to were the basic finances of the day to day business, and the engineering, motive power in particular.

David Pollock was a find of Chairman Routly, and as an excellently qualified mechanical engineer with a good track record in running Westinghouse, he was a real 'catch' for the Ffestiniog. Outwardly austere, but clearly accomplished and highly intelligent, he steadily improved the Ffestiniog's finances and engineering, which was exactly what was needed at the time.

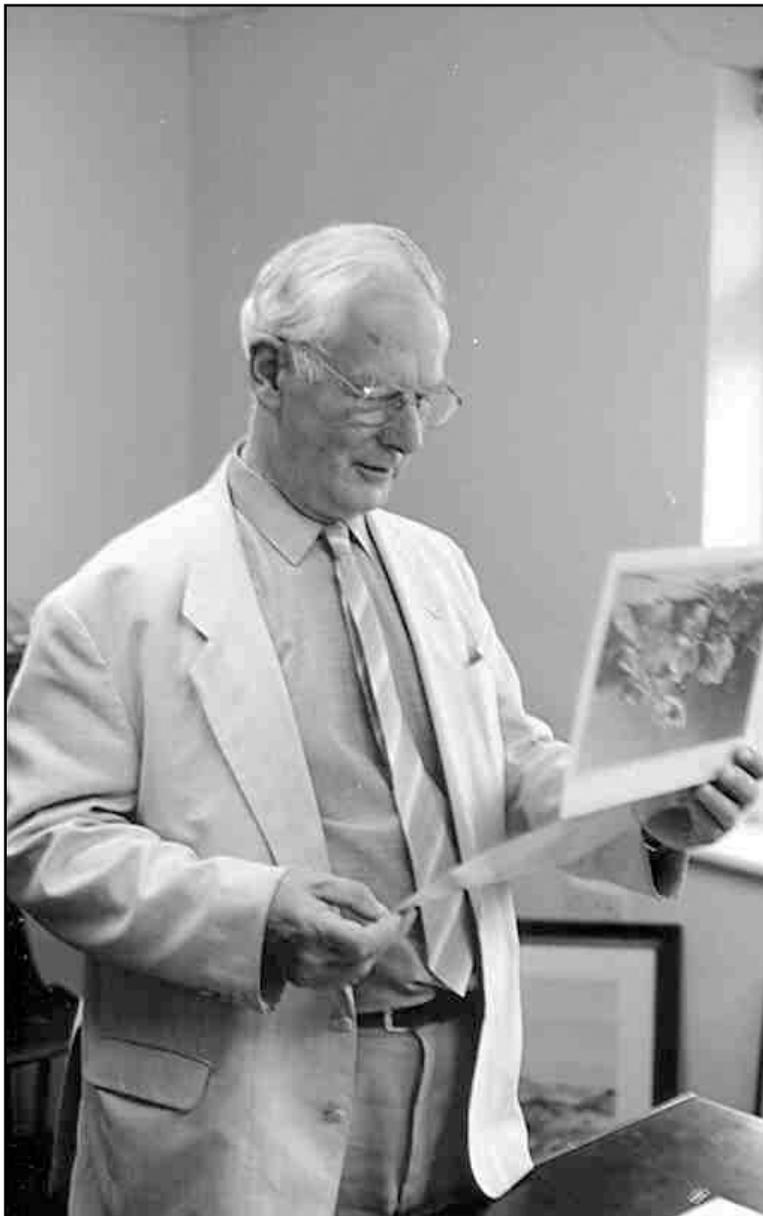
He wasn't a man for theatricals; he was determined, focussed and worked steadily with the Board and the staff to improve the Railway. It was he who worked with the Welsh Office and local councils to originate the INCA scheme, an EU funding vehicle that brought a new set of sorely needed carriages, the push-pull mode diesel train, the *David Lloyd George* double engine, Boston Lodge carriage shed and many other urgently needed innovations.

One of these was the cream upper band on the carriages: he said, quite rightly, that with the all red livery you could not see the trains against the hillside. His intense reworking of the Ffestiniog 'system' brought him into conflict later with the volunteers and Society, but he achieved a major step forward with an ailing Railway at a time of great need. Indeed, it was David who, when approached by his managers, realised that having the WHR developed in competition to the Ffestiniog could have been a real threat to the recovering business, and who first warned the Board that it should take note of, and react to, the risk.

David was a shy man although, on the rare occasions that he did let his hair down, he knew how to relax and enjoy himself, sometimes to the astonishment of his staff. If he didn't understand what motivated volunteers, or how to get the best from them, he was open to logical persuasion, no matter where it came from.

Typical of him was his attitude to the locomotive *Taliesin*. Whilst the Chairman was suspicious of the Society's ideas for such a project, almost looking a gift horse in the mouth, David understood the subtleties at once. He saw that the elements of funding, the volunteers and staff working together, and the standard parts that such a locomotive would bring were all beneficial, and he backed the project in the boardroom, despite disapproval from on high. His support won round the Board and even, eventually, the Chairman, and we gained a useful addition to our motive power.

David's management was just what the Ffestiniog needed at the time, and effectively set the railway back on its feet. Whether it is financial stability, smart visible trains, robust engineering or the restored Welsh Highland, David's legacy is with us to this day.



Winter draws on *Dafydd Thomas*

The winter works programme on the Ffestiniog line has now commenced and the full time staff as well as our contractors have got stuck in. We have also had considerable assistance from some of our regular volunteers, notably the Dee and Mersey Group who started the first job at Penrhyn.

On the Penrhyn Crossing to Highgate Crossing relaying we still need a gang on the weekend of the 5th and 6th December to keep the momentum going. We really need to continue the work over the weekends so that we have the new track in place ready for the Santa Trains on 12th, 13th, 19th and 20th December.

After Christmas there is a change to the plans as we no longer have the Network Rail Apprentices coming as originally thought. They have had their funding cut so will not be able to send their usual batch of 15 or 16 fit young and keen lads (also there have been a few lasses as well) for five weeks. This has knocked a bit of a hole in our human resources to do the planned after Christmas jobs. However with a bit of help from yourselves I and the Permanent Way Manager, Alun Tomlinson, are confident that we can with a bit of rescheduling meet the challenge.

From January we are relaying the track from where we left off at the beginning of 2015 at the end of the Long Siding at Minffordd through Minffordd (Lottie's) Crossing to Lloc Meurig. We are also installing a new turnout to access the Old Loco Shed at Boston Lodge and refurbishing the track work at Boston Lodge Crossing; also if time permits we would like to improve the track at Lead Mine Curve. So as you can see a whole variety of jobs are just waiting for you to come along and help us.

These are the dates we could do with having some additional hands to finish the job:

23rd - 24th January, 30th - 31st January, 20th - 21st February and 27th - 28th February.

So what are you waiting for? Contact me or Alun and set yourself up for a weekend of very satisfying work out in the fresh air. If you've not tried it before come and learn some new skills and make new friends.

We've also got a variety of jobs happening on the Welsh Highland line and if you don't particularly fancy track work our Lineside Management team could always do with an extra pair of hands in their battle to stop Mother Nature reclaiming the track beds.

The Buildings and Estates Department also has a long lists of jobs.

Dafydd Thomas

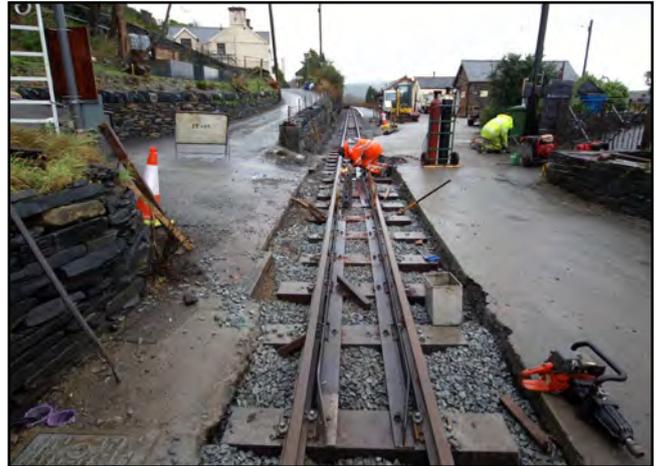
Alun Tomlinson

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07919 414883



Above: track renewal at Penrhyn.

FR plans winter 2015 to 2016 *Eileen Clayton*

There's lots of interesting projects already happening and planned in both the Buildings Department and in P&G in addition to the inevitable maintenance. This has been brought about by a change in emphasis on the part of the railway itself whilst in addition we have received various donations and legacies.

You may have seen the new workshops in Minffordd Yard or the major restoration work already carried out at Plas Smart, but there's lots more in the pipeline. Here's a list of the principal ones with a brief description.

P&G

Memorial Garden at Minffordd – a small paved area with a central raised bed which will contain small shrubs and a low stone wall which will provide seating. On the railway side, there will be a Lavender hedge.

Cafe garden at TYB - this garden had become badly overgrown. The large laurel bushes have been removed, revealing an ugly septic tank. We cannot start work until the septic tank is renewed and unfortunately the work on this will not be carried out this winter. Once it is done, we will then rebuild the dry stone walls, replace some soil then plant shrubs and low perennials to an exciting design drawn up by a horticultural student.



Platform seats - we have more than 35 platform seats. Unfortunately many of these have not had sufficient maintenance and water has got under the coating turning the wood grey. When this has happened, the only answer is to pull the seats apart plane off a few mm, then re-coat. We

have already got a small team who have renovated around a dozen, but we need a 2 or 3 more people to help with this. A satisfying indoor job for this winter.

Porthmadog new long bed - this was built at the seaward side of the station, opposite the main building. Unfortunately when last year's project ended it had not been completed. This winter top stones will be fitted and it will be filled with soil, so that next spring we can plant it with small shrubs tolerant of sea breezes.

Buildings

Infrastructure Department workshops - this will provide much-needed workshop space for the Buildings, S&T and PW departments. It will also give much-needed storage space for both the Commercial Department and for all our wooden patterns, which are truly heritage. Lots of help is needed this winter to complete the painting, install electrics and the facilities in the mess room.

Penrhyn Improvements - it is almost 25 years since we finished the renovation of Penrhyn station. We now need to revisit, to do repair work and some repainting. We would like to try a different kind of paint, it is linseed oil based and reputedly lasts 2 to 3 times as long. If it does, we would revolutionise our painting maintenance work. Unfortunately this means that some of the old gloss paint will have to be stripped off. We also have barge boards and planking to replace and guttering to repair. We intend to launch a new Penrhyn project and estimate that 3 to 4 working parties of around 6 to 10 people will achieve our plans.



Waggon tracks shed - many of you will have seen the frame of this, already erected in Minffordd yard. It is being built to house our heritage wagons. The shell is being done commercially, but we will need volunteer help to lay the trackwork and to fit the electrical installation. We will need a large number of folks to do this work and for the most part no electrical experience is needed – it's fitting cable tray, pulling new cable through and fastening socket boxes to the walls.

Harbour station kitchen - this winter we intend to build a new kitchen as the old one is tiny and totally inadequate. The bulk of this work will be done by contractors. Work started in November.

Plas Smart Boston Lodge - this was the Loco Superintendent's Office on the old FR. It had had little work done on it for decades, until a couple of years ago when extensive restoration work was started - it was re-roofed and the back wall was stabilised; new windows and porch are being produced. There is more outside work to be done and all the interior - including the floor, walls and electrics. ►



◀ **Tan y Bwlch Station House** - the tenant who lived here for many years has recently moved out. The house needs extensive repair and renovation; we are hoping to draw up plans for this next year – potentially an exciting and challenging project.

Gweithdy, Minffordd Station - our P&G/Signwriting workshop needs major repair – a new corrugated exterior, replacement of rotten boarding and more. We are hoping to get an estimate for this in order to launch an appeal for funds this winter.

Volunteer recruitment *Stephen Greig*

This month Tricia Doyle and myself have been at each of our four local sixth form colleges participating in volunteering fairs. Many students are required to volunteer or attend work placements as part of their course so we thought it a great opportunity to gain some new, local and young volunteers.

The events themselves have been well patronised by students with numbers being well over 50 per two hour session. We also made links with other local organisations that we did not previously know that were also in attendance.

Many students were there as they simply wish to add volunteering work onto their CV and so Tricia and I were helping to diversify their ideas for volunteering to broaden their individual skills sets.

A particular link with the 1st year BTEC Travel & Tourism students at Coleg Menai has been formed and they will be visiting us early next season to be introduced to the railway and will then volunteer for us on work placements thereafter.



Safety *Paul Lewin*

It seems only a short while ago that we were having things stolen from Minffordd yard including the event where the man in the van containing cable stolen from us bashed through the gate out in to the road works on the road outside and almost ran over the chaps resurfacing the road. We had the police chasing the perpetrators and we lost several batches of stuff. When I sit at ORR meetings one of the hot topics is always crossings and how the general public have little understanding of how to use a crossing safely and as result they present a high risk. We of course being good railway folk understand crossings and the importance of using gated crossings properly.

I notice it has become a habit to leave Minffordd crossing gate open. After all, there is always someone else just behind isn't there? Well clearly there is *not* always someone just behind as the gate is frequently open with no one around. We also seem to be propelling works train from the yard to Penrhyn almost every day. The last person out in the evening should also close the gate by the Weigh House that blocks entry down into the yard.

First moves over Gasworks Siding



The newly completed Gasworks Siding at Llyn Bach has seen its first movements. Bala Lake Railway Quarry Hunslet *Winifred* and Carriage 117 were loaded onto a lorry for transhipment to Bala and the Mosedale Railway Trust at Apedale respectively

New look for Facebook

With well over 10,000 regular followers and an average of 30,000 unique views a week, the F&WHR Facebook page goes from strength to strength. Faced with the challenge of how to introduce more content of a general nature for the non-enthusiast, the decision was taken to split our Facebook presence into two separate pages.

Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Insider www.facebook.com/festrailinsider will concentrate on all aspects of railway operations, history and behind the scenes activity, while the original page, **Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways** www.facebook.com/festrail will cover upcoming events, special offers etc. There will sometimes be overlaps, with the same stories appearing on both pages, but generally speaking, if you are interested in the nuts and bolts detail of the railway, *Insider* is for you. If you're looking for less technical information, the original page will probably suit you best.

Both pages are updated several times a day, so if you want to be kept informed of the latest news, Facebook is the place to go. You don't have to sign up for Facebook to read either page, but you won't be able to post photographs or join in conversations.

We look forward to seeing you online.



Coming down the track...

- December 12, 13, 19, 20, 22, 23 WHR Santa trains
- December 12, 13, 19, 20, 22 FR Santa trains
- February 6, Group Liaison Meeting, Grappenhall
- 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 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 Trailffest
- 7-9 Oct FR Victorian Weekend.
- 27, 28, 29 Oct FR Halloween trains
- 27 Oct Welsh Highland Railway Halloween Train
- 10, 11, 17, 18, 22, 23 Dec WHR Santa trains
- 10, 11, 17, 18, 22 Dec FR Santa Trains