

The story behind the...

‘Railway 200 – FR Platinum Jubilee Weekend’

19th – 22nd of June 2025



The highly anticipated ‘Railway 200 – FR Platinum Jubilee Weekend’ will mark the 70th Anniversary of passenger trains running in the ‘preservation’ era: it’s a chance to reflect back on some of the earliest trains run as the railway reopened and began the arduous task of getting back to Blaenau.

This weekend will also be a celebration of the whole 70 years of operation since 1955, highlighting some of the fantastic things achieved during that time. Finally, the event will also link in with the national 200th anniversary of the modern railway celebrations too..!

Here, we take a look at the story behind the event courtesy of our Operations Manager; Matthew Ellis and our Operating Manager; Michael Baker, who will dive into the detail of the subtle nods to the past that will pop up throughout the weekend.

(Please note that timings and operations are subject change)



TICKETS & SPOTTER GUIDES

Let's start off with the basics... tickets for the event weekend are now available to buy with 3-Day and 1-Day rovers available.

3-Day Rover: £170.00 (valid from 17:30 on Thursday)

1-Day Rover: £70.00 (Friday rover valid from 17:30 on Thursday)

Discounts available for the following:

F.R.S. Member (Year or Life)

W.H.R.S. Member (Year or Life)

W.H.H.R. Member

T.R.S Member

R.S.L. Card Holder

H.R.A Pass Holder

...who will pay 70% of the price.

A Spotters Guide is also available to pre-order for £10.00 (A limited number of copies will be available to buy during the event weekend too)

THURSDAY, 19th of June 2025

Well, for a start, the action actually kicks off during the evening of Thursday 19th June..!

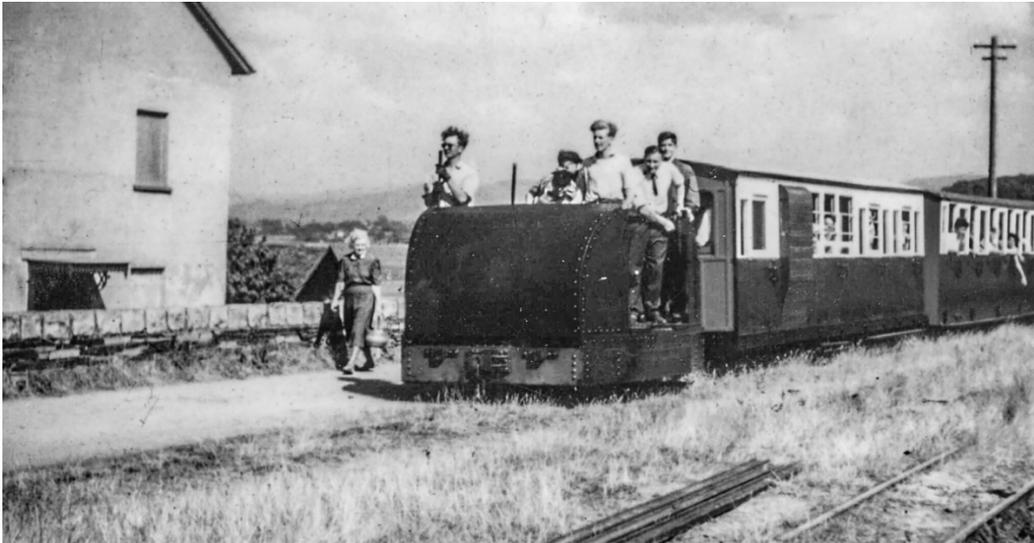
We're conscious that many visitors will be arriving during the day on Thursday and possibly making use of public transport. The Quarryman set needs to work back down to Porthmadog after its normal duties have finished, so it will wait in Blaenau to meet the mainline Transport for Wales arrival, before departing at 17:35 and arriving in Porthmadog at 18:45 – just in time for dinner and a drink in Spooner's!

NOTE: Friday or three-day event tickets will be valid on this train with walk-up tickets available from the Guard on the day.



One of the reasons for holding this event over the summer solstice weekend was to make the most of the longer days. The first of the event's Sunset Specials departs Porthmadog at 19:10, hauled by Prince – perhaps your first opportunity to see the loco in its new green livery? This will be a round trip to Blaenau, getting back to Harbour Station at 22:00 (sunset will be at approx. 21:46). This train will also connect with the mainline Transport for Wales arrival into Blaenau Ffestiniog.

NOTE: Again, Friday or three-day event tickets will be valid on this train.



Of course, we couldn't very well celebrate the reintroduction of passenger trains on the Ffestiniog Railway without re-enacting the very first train run on 23rd July 1955 and this seemed an appropriate way to kick-off the event..!

The train will be formed, as it was then, of Mary Ann with carriage 23 & Van 12 and will set off for a gentle trundle across the Cob to Boston Lodge, which was as far as trains operated to begin with. There was no run-round facility at Boston Lodge back then, so the train set back to Pen Cob and performed the 'chain shunt' to get the locomotive to the other end of the carriages.



Ok, in the interests of a slick operation, we're going to cheat here slightly and use one of the roads in our new large carriage shed to run the locomotive round – much easier! There will be two runs so you can ride on one and watch the other – can you recreate a famous photo from the archives?

The first train departs Porthmadog at 19:55 and leaves Boston Lodge at 20:25 (1955 to 2025, as if that happened purely by chance...) and the second departs at 20:50, leaving Boston Lodge at 21:20.

NOTE: Friday or three-day event tickets will be valid on these trains however due to limited capacity (60 seats per train) a small supplement will be required. Back then the fare for this journey was just 5p but fuel prices have increased somewhat since then, so we multiplied that by 70 (notice the theme here..?) and therefore the supplement will be £3.50 per person.

So, there you have it, plenty to keep visitors entertained on the unofficial first day of the event weekend..!

BOSTON LODGE & THE TOP YARD ARMS



Before we dive into the detail of the main 3 days of the weekend, we would like to tell you about Boston Lodge, which will be the focal point of the event..!

Boston Lodge will be open throughout the weekend to ticket holders with exhibits and stalls, locos under restoration, footplate rides and a chance to look at some of the changes that have taken place with thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

There will be plenty to see around the site with a number of stands and stalls, static exhibits plus any loco not out and about.

NOTE: Boston Lodge is a working engineering site with rails and uneven surfaces throughout and is often muddy in places. This is combined with frequent vehicle and train movements. Due to the uneven ground, stout shoes, preferably walking boots, must be worn on site. Anyone wearing sandals or open-toed shoes will not be allowed on site. Your sight must also be sufficient to see potential dangers yourself.

The newly restored Top Yard will be the social hub of the event with award winning local brewery, Purple Moose, running the 'Top Yard Bar', CelEmmabration cakes, a hot food van and ice cream too! Other stalls will include Ben Powell; railway artist, Mike Leaver; local author, Ken Gruffydd; railway theme gifts, Ffestiniog Railway Society, Welsh Highland Railway Society and Samaritans UK.

Joining them in the Top Yard will be Trackside magazine and The 'Oldest, Youngest, Fastest' Roadshow. Staffed by members of the Railwayana Auctions UK team, they also offer an 'Antiques Roadshow' style valuation service to visitors; you can either bring along small relics or pictures on your smartphone... who knows what your items are worth?!

A number of engines will be on display in the Small Loco Shed including Earl of Merioneth, WHHR's Russell and Mountaineer whilst the Carriage Works will play host to Kerr Stuart, the chassis of 2050, the Ashbury brake carriage and Spooners boat amongst others.

A number of engines will also be in steam around the site too allowing for occasional footplate rides.

Boston Lodge site will be open 09:00 – 17:00 on all three days (Friday, Saturday and Sunday).

The Top Yard will be open 09:00 – 22:00 on Friday and Saturday and 09:00 – 17:00 on Sunday.

The Top Yard Arms Bar will be open between 12:00 – 22:00 on Friday and Saturday (last orders at 21:30) and between 12:00 – 17:00 on Sunday (last orders at 16:30). Refreshments will be available throughout.

There will be music from the Travelling Sessions so you can enjoy a leisurely drink and a burger with some gentle tunes in an unusual setting as you watch the sun go down over Porthmadog.

Spooner's Café and Bar and Tan y Bwlch tearooms will be open to keep you fed and watered throughout the event weekend.



A free event Park and Ride will operate throughout the weekend with parking at Porthmadog Football club. The regular bus service will serve Harbour station, Boston Lodge, Minffordd and Porthmadog Football Club from 08:30 onwards on each of the 3 days.

FRIDAY, 20th of June 2025

On Friday (the first official day of the event weekend...!), we will continue to look at the earlier days of the preservation era as the railway pushed on to Tan y Bwlch. The three stalwarts of the early days – Mary Ann, Prince & Merddin Emrys (playing the role of Taliesin, now Livingston Thompson,

are you keeping up?) will gather at Harbour Station for about half an hour just after 10:00, a perfect opportunity for a memorable photo.



We've created two appropriate vintage trains to represent this era – the first being the 'Garraway' set with Vans 11 & 12 and other carriages in the very fetching 'Woolworths' livery of green & cream. The second is the Flying Flea set which was used for the relief service and basically made up of whatever could be pressed into service the quickest: namely some bug boxes and a couple of vintage bogie carriages once they became available. Both of these sets will be on shuttles to Minffordd or Tan y Bwlch with a variety of appropriate motive power including Prince or Merddin Emrys in their fetching new green liveries, or what about Welsh Pony on "unfinished business"...

The action will kick off nice and early with the 07:00 Early Bird to Blaenau Ffestiniog, hauled by Upnor Castle – once a regular sight in the 1970s! Britomart will be hauling Vans 11 & 12 to Blaenau and back at 07:40 to mark 60 years since it arrived on the railway.

There will be regular corridor trains running to Blaenau throughout the day – again, with a variety of motive power and interesting double-headed combinations – culminating in the 19:05 Sunset Special hauled by Taliesin.



Minffordd Shuttles will run into the evening to ensure a regular train service to get people to and from the Top Yard Arms at Boston Lodge.

There would have been regular clearance trains to get the line up to scratch and reopened to Tany Bwlch – and beyond – as soon as possible. These will be recreated on Friday by Moelwyn, back in green and running between Minffordd and Dduallt with some empty wagons and Van10. Why not take the opportunity to compare and contrast with our modern day Infrastructure Train, hauled by Harlech Castle with purpose-built vacuum-braked carriages and wagons in smart matching livery?

What else can you see on Friday?

Well, some years ago the Penrhyn ladies, Linda & Blanche, were crowned ‘Queens of the Hill’ on the Welsh Highland Railway, so they’ll be taking a Ladies Day Out special to Caernarfon and back. There is also a morning ‘Aberglaslyn’ train hauled by K1 as well as a Gelert Explorer from Caernarfon to Beddgelert hauled by one of the Garratt locomotives. Also, just because we can... there will be a special train in the evening, hauled by Prince & Merddin Emrys, departing Harbour Station at 17:40 running non-stop to Blaenau Ffestiniog and then non-stop back to Porthmadog, arriving back at 19:25

SATURDAY, 21st of June 2025

Saturday will focus a bit more on the Deviation – a massive undertaking, without which the railway would probably never have made it back to Blaenau...

Again, the action kicks off early with the 07:00 Early Bird – today hauled by Taliesin, probably still hot from the night before! This train is immediately followed by a heritage goods train which forms part of our contribution to the Rail200 celebrations also taking place this year. Hauled by Merddin Emrys, the wagons in this mammoth train will come to a total of 200 wheels! The train is hauled up to Blaenau Ffestiniog and back to Dduallt, where the loco is shunted into the siding before it’s “brakes off” and the wagons return to Porthmadog by gravity alone.

There will once again be vintage shuttles working to Minffordd and Tanybwlch – again, with shuttles continuing into the evening so that you can visit the social hub in the Top Yard Arms at Boston Lodge.



A great many people will no doubt remember Welsh Pony stood on the plinth in the car park and thought it unlikely they'd ever see it operate. This afternoon, it will take a prototypical 1920s vintage train to Tan y Bwlch and back before embarking on an early evening jaunt to Beddgelert and back.

The main focus will be on the spiral at Dduallt during the afternoon...

A special train of bugboxes, hauled by Palmerston, will get you there in time for the action to kick off. Linda and Blanche will arrive with a train from Blaenau and lock into the Bay Platform, allowing Prince to arrive with a train of wagons representing the works trains that ran while the Deviation was being built. A series of run pasts will take place allowing you to see trains passing 'over and under' Rhoslyn Bridge – a sight not seen regularly since the early 1980s...



As if that wasn't enough excitement, once Prince has headed off towards Blaenau, Merddin Emrys will arrive with a train from Porthmadog. Both trains will then depart in their respective direction at the same time – allowing the rare opportunity to see, or ride on, passenger trains passing 'over and under' the bridge. If you've chosen to witness this rare spectacle then once you've composed yourself, Palmerston will be waiting to take you back to Porthmadog.



On the Welsh Highland Railway, the standard Harbourmaster & Snowdonia Star operate with some interesting combinations of motive power as locomotive gather at Boston Lodge ready for Sunday's shenanigans on the Cob!

Linda & Blanche get to try their hand at a non-stop run to Blaenau, then back to Porthmadog this evening while the Sunset Special falls into the hands of Taliesin once again.

SUNDAY, 22nd of June 2025

Sunday is the grand finale to the weekend and features the spectacular '200 Wheels on the Cob' cavalcade..!



There is a flurry of activity in the morning, kicking off once again with an Early Bird, in the capable hands of Lyd. Prince & Merddin Emrys also double-head a service train to Blaenau Ffestiniog, while Blanche and Welsh Pony each take a vintage train to Tan y Bwlch.

The entire Ffestiniog Railway & Welsh Highland Railway fleet (whether 'in steam' or not) has been invited to the grand Cavalcade finale so there is some diesel action while this takes place.

Castell Caernarfon will haul a Harbourmaster service from Porthmadog to Caernarfon and return. Meanwhile, Vale of Ffestiniog takes a service train to Blaenau Ffestiniog, while Criccieth Castle hauls a short rake up to Tan y Bwlch – use this as your last chance to get across to Boston Lodge to witness THE railway event of the year... we promise it will be iconic..!



Once the grand finale has taken place there will be a couple more service trains to Blaenau in the capable hands of some of our double Fairlie engines. Meanwhile, to wrap up the event, Linda will take the final vintage train of the weekend: a recreation of 'Y Cymro', the non-stop train that ran during the 1960s. If you'd rather see this train than ride on it, take a trip on the special working to Rhiw Goch where you'll be given the rare chance to disembark and watch Linda thunder through, and across Cei Mawr before you return to Porthmadog.

SPECIAL OPTIONAL EXTRAS

In addition to our main timetable and activities for the weekend, there is also a limited number of special optional extras for the event weekend which are being sold on a first come, first served basis.

These special optional extras can only be booked by those with a valid Day Rover or 3 Day Rover ticket:

Thursday 19:55 – Mary Ann recreation train to Boston Lodge Holt and return (£3.50 supplement)

Thursday 20:50 – Mary Ann recreation train to Boston Lodge Halt and return (£3.50 supplement)

Friday 13:20 – Harlech Castle Infrastructure train, Minffordd Yard to Dduallt and return (SOLD OUT)

Friday 16:55 – Moelwyn Inspection Train, Minffordd to Dduallt and return (£3.50 supplement)

Saturday 09:10 – Deviation Walking Tour, Porthmadog to Tanygrisiau, walk to Dduallt and return train (£25 supplement)



Please note: spaces are very limited for these extras. The Deviation Walking Tour and the Harlech Castle Infrastructure train are restricted to over 16s only.

Cavalcade Viewing Area: Sunday 11:30 – 13:30 – Tickets for our special Cavalcade viewing area at Boston Lodge on Sunday of the event weekend are now on sale for £20.00 to those with a Sunday Day Rover or 3-Day Rover ticket.

The Cavalcade viewing area will be a fenced off section outside the carriage shed and there will be space for up to 50 people, sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Your position outside the

carriage shed will allow for the perfect view of each locomotive as they pass around Boston Lodge Curve and out onto the Cob. There will be special commentary of each locomotive provided by Anthony Coulls and Tim Dunn – along with some fascinating general history of the Cob too!

Not only will you be able to watch the locomotives pass you on the mainline but you will also be able to watch everything come back on shed once the Cavalcade is completed – something that few people get to do from this unique location. The commentary will be done from the high-level platform of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's new Lineside Vehicle.

The viewing area will be open from 11:30 - 13:30 and valid tickets holders are free to come and go as they please. Water will be available in the Cavalcade viewing area however no food will be served so please feel free to bring your own food and drink.

NOTE: The Cavalcade viewing area will have rails and uneven surfaces throughout, therefore stout shoes, preferably walking boots, must be worn on the site. Anyone wearing sandals or open-toed shoes will not be allowed entry. Your sight must also be sufficient to see potential dangers yourself. There will also be limited seating in the viewing area, so please bear this in mind before booking.

Please call our Booking Office (01766 516024) if you wish to purchase a Day Rover / 3 Day Rover along with any of these special optional extras or if you wish to add them to your existing Day Rover / 3 Day Rover ticket booking.

So, there you have it... we hope this has given a useful insight into some of the many things to see over the weekend and got your tastebuds tingling! There is lots going on, an intensive service of trains and other activities as well – join us for what promises to be an unforgettable celebration..!



Matthew Ellis (FFWHR Operations Manager) and Michael Baker (FFWHR Operating Manager)