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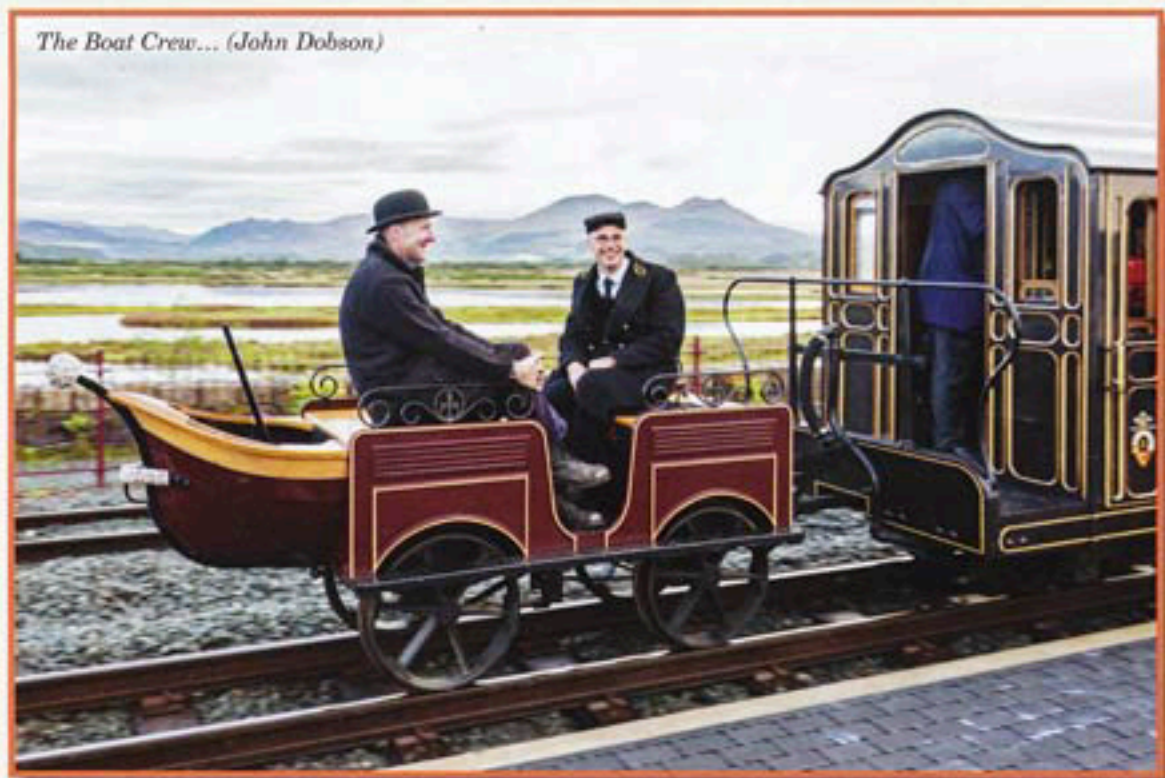
VICTORIAN WEEKEND



The Signalman... (John Dobson)



*The Lady with the Spectacular Hat...
(John Dobson)*



The Boat Crew... (John Dobson)

a large steel storage shed is now in place, wired up and racked out for the storage of engineering and heritage materials. At Boston Lodge, Plas Smart has been saved with help from students from the local Further Education College, and with advice on conservation techniques from our volunteer community.

Moving on to look at what 2015 has in store, certainly no reduction in pace is planned. Whilst we might not have a single project as large as Harbour Station, the scale of our plans is no less ambitious. We start with the basic need to keep the Railway in good order. With help from the FR Society, we will be replacing the turnouts that form the crossover at the bottom end of Minffordd Station and replacing the track – ballast, sleepers and rail – down as far as Weigh House Crossing. Similar work is planned at Dragon Curve near Dduallt and the turnout to the Old Locomotive Shed at Boston Lodge will also be replaced.

We expect progress with building a new workshop and mess facility at Minffordd covering the needs of the Signals & Telegraphs Department, Buildings Department, and Permanent Way: this will replace life-expired wooden buildings. The Waggon Tracks site will be cleared to pave the way for the shed which will, at long last, put our 200-strong heritage waggon fleet under cover. At Boston Lodge, we will move to the detailed planning phase for the new carriage and locomotive sheds. This actually starts with work on renewing and refurbishing drains, cess pits and access roads. At Harbour Station, the Board has approved the extension and refurbishment of the very cramped *Spooner's* kitchen, which is a piece of long-overdue investment. Of course, there are many other activities that arise as a result of these plans but one can at least get a feel for the scale of our plans.

2015 also marks 150 years of passenger services on narrow-gauge railways. As the pioneer in the field, we will be marking the occasion by working on a plan to comprehensively renew the rear six carriages of the FR's 'B' set, thus raising it to the highest standards. The first carriage planned for this set, No.119, is already in service, currently allocated to the 'C' set. We are already building the Observation Car, No.150, and a Service Car will be constructed later in the year. By 2016, we should start the season with at least three if not four of the new

'B' set vehicles in place. Carriages Nos.117, 118 and 120 will in due course be 'converted' to match No.119.

We hope that Observation Car No.150 will be a real talking point. In order to run effectively in service, it needs to be paired with a service car. As the service car will not be ready until later in the year, we expect No.150 to be available for six months before it is needed in service, and during this time we plan to take it on tour to high-profile events in much the same way that we did with *Princess* during *Steam 150*. We are looking for events which attract tens of thousands of people like county shows, etc. Suggestions for venues will be warmly welcomed.

Of course, there is much going on in many other areas of the Railway. I was particularly pleased to learn that *Gigabash* this year attracted more than 10% new volunteers and that a new team has been formed to look after Tanygrisiau station and our major structures. So, as we look forward to some great projects and activities in 2015, I hope that you will join us in whatever way you can as we continue the Ffestiniog Adventure, with 'our foot hard down on the gas', as ever.

I feel I cannot conclude my piece without mentioning Steve Coulson. As mentioned elsewhere in this *Magazine* Steve passed away in late October and his funeral saw an incredibly large gathering of the FR family. Steve was an inspiration to so many of us. As young volunteers we looked on in awe at the chaps at Boston Lodge and how much they achieved with so little. Steve's *Stefcomatic* tamper seemed to be the ultimate achievement at the time. His legacy is not only things like the tamper, *Vale of Ffestiniog* and carriage No.122, but also that he inspired another generation to aim high with ambitious engineering projects. He always encouraged others in their efforts and was always helpful with suggestions as to how things could be done. We will miss him, he made an enormous contribution to our Railway and was an FR man through and through.

Paul Lewin





The second reason is that work is due to start on giving the portals at the 'new' Moelwyn Tunnel the stone façades that have been promised for many years. As part of this work, we are going to reroute the overhead cabling so that the catenary anchor points are above the stonework, and the cables will also be routed into ducts so that future maintenance or replacement is made easier.

After the New Year, the major focus of our work will move back down the line to Minffordd and Boston Lodge. At Minffordd, the bottom end crossover is being renewed, and the opportunity is being taken to change the current arrangement of one machine driving both sets of points to having a point machine for each set. This has become possible because the style of point machine used at Harbour Station is of lower profile, and will fit within the loading gauge.

The reason for using two motors is that the rodding runs alongside the wall by the road, and the alignment means that at various times of year, only half of it gets sunlight for most of the day. This causes differential expansion in the rodding, and the points will not lock properly. If you adjust things so that they work at that time, then at 16:00, when the sun pops over the wall, the 'cold' half of the rodding suddenly heats up and expands, and pushes the adjustment out the other way! The yard-exit trap point is also being renewed as part of these works, but we will be retaining the existing point machine for this. It is the only motorised, trailable point that we are aware of!

Boston Lodge Old Locomotive Shed is also getting a new point from the mainline, as the current pointwork is made of very ancient bullhead rail. In theory, the new point will just drop into place. However, even if this is the case, a new lock stretcher will be needed. Also the rodding run to the trap point needs attention, as a number of the castings are shattered.

Routine maintenance elsewhere on the Railway has continued, and we should express our gratitude to the stalwarts who tirelessly clean, oil, and grease the points to keep everything running smoothly. We appear to have

The new trident signal out on the Cob was commissioned on 4 November, and the temporary colour light signal (see FRM.226, page 652) was removed. (John Dobson)

got through the spate of trees being blown over. However, in case we were getting complacent, we had a huge electrical storm instead on 9/10 October. The storm lasted all night, and was still going the following morning! The good news was that Boston Lodge wasn't damaged – the bad news was that every other installation on the FR suffered lightning damage to a greater or lesser extent. Fortunately we have been slowly building our stock of spare parts back up to a satisfactory level, so we had the Railway up and running for the next scheduled passenger trains.

We are currently investigating Mains Surge Protectors, as much of the lightning damage appears to have been caused by mains surges. Four of our signalling-grade battery chargers were damaged, for instance. As a measure of how powerful the thunderstorms were we can report that all of the local mobile telephone networks were off, the BT lines into Blaenau Shop took two weeks to be repaired, and the *Magazine* editor's internet connection was off for 16 days... *Tim Prent*

TRACKSIDE DRAINS

Over August Bank Holiday weekend the team continued with its work on the Spiral cutting at Dduallt, where the drains on both sides of the track needed extending uphill, requiring more access chambers to be built. Using Kango hammers, we removed the last of the rock forming the new channel and installed the pipe, which was then weighted down to await covering with ballast.

The ballasting was partially completed over the weekend of 20 and 21 September, when we also started work down in Minffordd yard to link up two sections of the drainage system, now that the large oil-storage tank has gone. It was hard going, digging up the compacted ground, and much of it had to be loosened using Kango hammers.

Work at Minffordd continued over the weekend of 18 and 19 October, when we also built two access chambers. We were also asked to move our stock of pipes and other stores into the Goods Shed, which was a surprise as we'd been told we could leave our stock where it was for many months to come. On the Sunday we took our ballast train up to Dduallt Spiral to top up