

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY HERITAGE GROUP

Registered Charity 1202400

Grŵp Treftadaeth Rheilffordd Ucheldir Cymru

Adroddiad yr Ymddiriedolwyr ar gyfer 2024 - Treftadaeth - Gorffennol, Presennol a
Dyfodol Y flwyddyn yn gorffen ar 31 Rhagfyr

Trustees' Report for 2024 - Heritage - Past Present and Future

Year ending 31 December

Chairman's Review

Ten years ago, in the first WHH Journal of 2014, I wrote of the sad death of John Keylock, the retirement from the chair of David Allan and a number of other changes in the administration and management of the Group. Looking forward into 2015 and beyond I commented on Tryfan Junction, the Cambrian Crossing box and Beddgelert Water Tower while also covering the subjects of archives including the photographic collection and our small objects collection. A decade on, we can look back on successes and dare I say failures while also congratulating ourselves on the wealth of research that members have conducted on the Welsh Highland Railway and its predecessors and associated activities since the Group was founded in 1997. This is reflected in the 105 editions (as at December 2024) of WHH most of which are available on our website and represent an invaluable resource open to all. In addition, there are the books published by the WHR Heritage Group on specific aspects of the railway's history and of course, the photographic collection of which a growing selection is now available online to members. Physical projects have taken a slight backseat recently although Tryfan Junction continues to be a focus of attention and financial investment! In a recent initiative we have been looking at ways of improving the facilities there including the provision of a lavatory, which of course it possessed in NWNCR days. It would make the location more 'user friendly'! However, there are a number of hurdles to surmount so a rapid result is unlikely. The Glan yr Afon weigh bridge and immediate surroundings remain an undeveloped heritage and interpretive resource. If the site was cleared and the building remains conserved, they would provide excellent added value to the railway's 'offer'. A development proposal and an offer of financial support for the necessary work here has been made in the past. We hope that with the conclusion of the Boston Lodge Project, attention will focus on the untapped heritage assets of the Welsh Highland line!

Apart from the WHH, our only print publication this year has been Stephen Murfitt's 'The Saints' Way', which provides a fascinating insight into the legal aspects of the railway's rebirth. Originally published as an electronic 'book', the decision was made to publish a print edition and these have been well received with good reviews in the enthusiast press. At the end of the year, we took the decision to produce a revised edition of 'Ghosts of Aberglaslyn', the history of the Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway by Messrs Manners and Bishop originally published in 2016. Preparation is now underway with an anticipated publication date of the second half of 2025.

Our foray into the lives of some of the photographers of the Welsh Highland and its predecessors that started in 2022/23 with Alfred Croughton has continued. During the year, the articles on Arthur Rimmer reflect the help afforded to us by his son Philip in finding out more about his life, for which we are grateful. The research has cast fresh light both on the recording of the past history of the 'old' WHR and the birth of the railway restoration and preservation movement.

Much of the Group's document archive has now been moved to storage at Minffordd and is under the care there of one of our newer Trustees, Chris Jones.

We supported both the KS4415 project and the WHHR's Baldwin Restoration Fund financially during the year.

A substantial legacy from a deceased member's estate was received unexpectedly during the year which places us in a relatively healthy financial position. We are considering how best to invest this windfall in a suitable WHR heritage project.

There are separate officer's reports relating to the particular aspects of the Group's activities and I commend these to your attention. Our thanks are due to all those who serve on the Board but particularly those who have functional responsibilities including the Treasurer, Secretary, Journal Editor, Membership Secretary (and Archivist), Journal Editor, Web Master and Sales Officer without whom the Group could not function. I must also thank the printers of our Journal and some of our recent books, ZPQ Designs of Lytham St Annes for their good service.

Succession planning within the Group has been of particular concern to me ever since I took on the role of chairman from David Allan and I'm pleased to say that we are slowly attracting new faces to our board.

In May we welcomed Chris Jones, the FR & WHR Honorary archivist as a Trustee and he has already made his presence felt in the Group. At the AGM at Waunfawr in October, we welcomed Paul Lacey who is taking over from Peter Roughley as the Group's Treasurer. Peter has taken a well deserved retirement from dealing with the numbers and is to be congratulated on his diligence and patience in dealing with our accounts in an exemplary fashion over the past few years. At the meeting, we all agreed that future AGMs should be held on a date in the period mid March to the end of April following the year end and thus more relevant to what happened during those 12 months. This was certainly the case in previous years but somewhere along the line they became later in the year, possibly Covid was to blame!

We will need to seek a successor David Tidy as web master who wishes to stepdown from the role in June 2025 – he will be sorely missed for all his work in developing our website and his general insight into heritage matters on both the WHR and the FR.

Returning to the subject of Tryfan Junction, in three years' time we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the opening of the original NWNCR main line from Dinas Junction to Bryngwyn that opened in 1877. By then, there will have to be new trustees in place including a new chairman, to help organize the festivities and run the Group – we hope! Applications are awaited!

Finally, my thanks to all my fellow trustees for their continuing support during 2024.

Nick Booker
Chairman

Officers' Reports

Sales – Adrian Gray

2024 was another 'steady' year for the Sales Dept, enlivened by the publication of Stephen Murfitt's award winning essay "The Saints' Way" which generated a welcome flurry of activity.

We continue to receive orders for the Heritage Guide Books and our other publications from the F&WHR Shops but almost all other trade with booksellers has dried up.

It is clear from my work for this Group and the FR Heritage Group that themed Christmas cards are no longer an attractive proposition and that reproductions of historic ephemera no longer sell in any quantity. Well produced books publishing original research, however, will sell.

Website – David Tidy

Over the past year there have been approximately 350 visits to the website per month, mostly from the UK. Some 275 new users visit the website each month. Around half of the visitors venture beyond the front page and view some 5 pages each on average. The most popular pages are the Croesor Tramway book, the Journals, the WHR History and Map, and the WHR in Archives.

The most significant updates during the year have been the addition of "The Saints Way" and of course the quarterly issues of the Journal. Two major additions have been the set of historic maps compiled in connection with rebuilding the WHR and the archive of the large website started by Ben Fisher to record the progress of the construction work.

The Group's online photo collection is steadily growing on the PiWiGo website entirely as a result of the efforts of Peter Liddell. At the last count there were 1369 images in 65 albums. Access to the collection continues to be restricted to members only.

Membership – Dick Lystor

Membership at the end of 2024 was 231. We continue to pursue at ways of recruiting new members including the use of social media, principally Facebook currently.

Archives – Dick Lystor

At the end of 2024 the decision was taken to relocate the Group's archives, mostly documents to the archive store at Minffordd and this took place in early January. While a list of the items deposited at Gwynedd Archives exists, the cataloguing of the Group's archives is a matter requiring resolution in 2025.

The Journal – Peter Liddell

Through 2024, we published and distributed 4 issues of *Welsh Highland Heritage* – Issues 102 to 105.

At the 2023 AGM, I highlighted the substantial increases in distribution costs that were then in the offing, suggesting that members should be encouraged to accept

their Journals electronically. A small number accepted this, but these acceptances only increased the total number of members who take their copies of *WHH* in this way to 25. This is just under 11% of our current membership.

Whilst the postage increases implemented recently have not affected the price of 2nd-class large stamps, mailing costs remain high. We avoided the 35% increase in stamp prices by buying in bulk before the last price increase in October 2023. However, the last of those stamps was used when distributing *WHH* 106 at the end of February so we will 'feel' that 35% price increase from now on!

Our Charity would benefit from increasing the proportion of *WHH* distributions using non-postal alternatives, either electronically to individual members or by providing accessible copies of the Journal in a members-only section of our website.

We continue to consider other publication options – late in 2023 we published the winning entry to the Centenary Research Competition, *The Saints' Way: A Failed Mission - Ffordd y Saint* by Stephen Murfitt.

This publication process was in a real way also research as we explored the balance between electronic publication – the document is accessible via our website – and the production of hard copies for sale through our usual outlets.

Work continues towards the similar publication of Michael Bishop's second-place winning contribution to that same composition – *Money Without Trace*.

Towards the end of 2024, we began work to upgrade our earlier publication *Ghosts of Aberglaslyn*, the history of the North Wales Power and Traction Co and of the associated Portmadoc, Beddgelert and South Snowdon Railway. Hopefully, this will proceed to publication shortly – again, as with *The Saints' Way*, we will be looking at the options of possible electronic publishing alongside the production of 'hard-copy' volumes.

Treasurer - Paul Lacey

The style of presentation from that in the past is changed and the 2023 figures have therefor been restated.

The accounts for 2024 show a surplus of £18,539 and we were delighted to benefit from a legacy of £18,505 from the estate of the late Pamela Sybil James. Without this legacy the surplus would have been £24.

The Group receives most of its funds from annual subscriptions and donations and we are grateful to members for supporting the Group.

Support was given to the Baldwin 590 Fund of £2,000, the Kerr Stuart Fund of £1,000 and works at Dinas station of £300. In addition, funds were set aside to support Archiving (£2,000) and Dinas Goods shed Roof (£5,000).

The Balance sheet confirms that the Group had cash funds of £42,944 at the 31st December and identifies funds earmarked for future projects.

I am grateful to Peter Roughley for the smooth transition on becoming Treasurer and for his patience in answering all my initial questions.

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY HERITAGE GROUP CIO

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024

	2024	2023 (Restated)
	£	£
INCOME		
Annual Subscriptions	3,145	2,606
Donations	1,384	753
Legacies	18,515	-
Sales – journal, guidebooks, books etc	1,491	1,385
Sales – artefacts	71	278
Bank Interest	324	213
TOTAL INCOME	24,931	5,235
EXPENDITURE		
Conservation		
Projects		
-Tryfan Junction	-	1,784
-Closed Halt Signs	-	939
-Dinas Station Building	300	-
-Kerr Stuart 4415 Fund	1,000	-
-Baldwin 590 Fund	2,000	-
-Archiving	-	626
Artefacts	148	676
Books, guidebook printing costs	1,022	557
Journal		
-Printing	1,262	1,292
-Distribution	186	2,390
Administration		
AGM/meeting expenses	140	16
Membership Secretary expenses	31	50
Website Maintenance	228	184
Centenary expenses	-	24
PayPal charges	75	46
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	6,392	8,584
EXCESS (REDUCTION) OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	18,539	(3,349)

WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY HERITAGE GROUP CIO

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024

	2024 £	2023 £
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash at bank Current Account	1,667	1,330
Cash at bank Deposit Account	41,277	22,681
Stock	5,655	5,441
Cash float	-	132
	48,599	29,584
CREDITORS		
Subscriptions received in advance	720	244
NET CURRENT ASSETS	47,879	29,340
 REPRESENTED BY FUNDS AVAILABLE		
Funds – Unrestricted and Designated		
-Archiving	2,250	250
-Beddgelert Water Tower	538	538
-Building Maintenance	3,788	7,788
-Closed Halt Signs	561	561
-Digitising Historic Documents	874	874
-Dinas Station Building	700	1,000
-Dinas Goods Shed Roof	6,206	1,206
-Glan yr Afon	1,500	1,500
-Tryfan Junction	1,793	1,733
-Uncommitted	29,669	13,890
NET FUNDS	47,879	29,340

I have checked the Balance Sheet and Income and Expenditure Account

Celia Adams FCA 17th March 2025

Chartered Accountant membership number 6112390