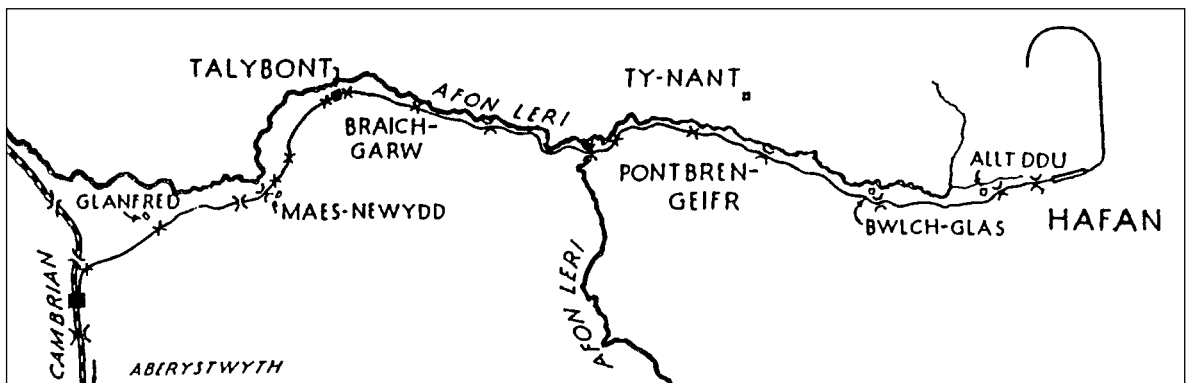


Cyfle a Gollwyd: Lein Fach yr Hafan

A Lost Opportunity: The Hafan Tramway



Papur Pawb, Mai 1997

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Mae hanes Lein Fach yr Hafan yn dangos menter ar diwedd yr 1800au a methiant y prosiect ar ddechrau'r 1900au. Hanes byr iawn oedd iddo yn erbyn cefndir o frwdfrydedd mawr dros reilffyrdd a welwyd yn ystod y cyfnod. Mae'r creithiau ar y tirlun rhwng Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn drwy Dal-y-bont i Bwll yr Hafan i'w gweld hyd heddiw.

Mae hanes cychwyn y fenter yn sgîl partneriaeth triphlyg rhwng ariannwr o Swydd Gaerhirfryn, peiriannwr mwyngloddio o Gymru a'r tiffeddianwyr, sef teulu Pryse, a'i gyfnod byr o ddwy flynedd mewn bodolaeth, yn hanes diddorol a llawn drama.

Gan gychwyn o Fferm Maesnewydd, cartref y teulu Morgan am 300 mlynedd, mae'n bosibl cerdded ar hyd rhannau o'r trac a nodi olion yr hen lein fach. Er bod amheuaeth ynglŷn â bodolaeth gorsaf yn Nhal-y-bont, mae'n bosibl fod arhosfa yn bodoli - 'Gorsaf' Pen y Rhiw a oedd yn cynnwys sied ar gyfer yr injan, twll archwilio, tŵr dŵr a swyddfa'r cwmni.

Pwrpas y lein fach oedd ei gwneud hi'n haws i gludo mwyn o'r gwaith plwm a cherrig a gloddiwyd o Lethr yr Hafan ar ddiwedd cwm Cyneiniog, pellter o oddeutu saith milltir. Roedd yna hefyd bwll yn Hafan a weithiwyd ers 1698. Roedd y rhan fwyaf o fwyngloddio yn yr ardal wedi crebachu i lefelau aneconomaidd; felly cerrig oedd ar werth yn bennaf.

Roedd y cymhelliad masnachol yn denu.

The history of the Hafan Tramway is one of entrepreneurship in the late 1800s and the collapse of the project in the early 1900s. It was a very brief history against a background of the railway mania of the period. The scars to the landscape from Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn through Tal-y-bont to the Hafan Mine are still visible today.

Its initiation by a triple alliance of a Lancashire financier, a Welsh mining engineer and the land-owning Pryse family of Gogerddan and its short life of two years are full of interest and drama.

Setting off from Maesnewydd Farm, home of the Morgan family for 300 years, it is still possible to walk along sections of the track and identify traces of the old tramway. Although there is doubt concerning the existence of an actual station having been built in Tal-y-bont, the existence of a Halt is likely - the Pen y Rhiw 'Station' comprised of an engine shed, inspection pit, water tower and company office.

The purpose of the tramway was to facilitate the transportation of ore from the Bwlch-glas lead mine and quarried stone from the Hafan Incline at the end of the Cyneiniog valley, a distance of seven miles. There was also a mine at Hafan which had been worked since 1698. Most of the mining in the area had shrunk to uneconomic levels, so the main market was for stone.

The commercial incentive was enticing. During the early 1900s many large towns

Ar ddechrau'r ganrif roedd nifer o drefi mawr a dinasoedd yn palmantu eu strydoedd â 'setiau' (blociau sgwâr o garreg sy'n awr yn ddefnydd 'treftadaeth' eithaf drud gyda galw mawr amdano oddi wrth arddwyr, penseiri a chynllunwyr trefi). Roedd yna hefyd angen cerrig chwarel ar gyfer argaeau Cwm Elan a glan-y-môr yn Aberystwyth. Roedd y cwsmeriaid am y cerrig yn cynnwys Corfforaeth Birmingham, Cwmni Llechi Warrington, Cyngor Sir Aberteifi, Corfforaeth Aberystwyth a Mr Pryse o Gogerddan.

Pan dorwyd y dywarchen gyntaf gan Mr Pryse mewn seremoni a gynhaliwyd ym mis Ionawr 1896 roedd yn rhagweld ymestyn y lein fach hyd at fryniau Pumlumon fel y gallai twristiaid ac ymwelwyr ddod â chyllid ychwanegol yn ei sgîl. Gellir ond dychmygu sut fyddai Tal-y-bont heddiw pe bai'r lein fach wedi goroesi a dod yn rhan o'r diwydiant 'treftadaeth' presennol. Byddai twristiaid yn heidio i Dal-y-bont er mwyn teithio drwy rai o olygfeydd godidocaf Cymru a byddai gwirfoddolwyr brwdfrydig y rheilffyrdd yn gweithio ar gynnal a chadw'r rheilffordd a'r cerbydau.

Gydag 8 milltir o'r lein fach wedi ei chwblhau erbyn Gwanwyn 1897, dechreuodd y cyfarwyddwyr – Saeson i gyd o ogledd orllewin Lloegr – ddechrau dod ar draws problemau. Roedd y locomotif Victoria, ar ffurf cynllun anghyffredin ac wedi ei gwneud gan gwmni nad oedd ganddynt yr wybodaeth dechnegol angenrheidiol. Achosodd dŵr budr yn y system boeler iddi aros yn stond wedi teithio ond ychydig bellter a hynny ar ei thaith gyntaf. Amheuwyd bod hyn wedi ei wneud yn fwriadol. Ategwyd y farn hon pan yn fuan wedi hynny gosodwyd pren ar draws y rheilffordd mewn ymgais i ddireilio'r locomotif.

Digwyddodd trychineb y diwrnod canlynol pan sylwyd bod pren ar y rheilffordd. Roedd Richard Roberts, Jim Jones a Thomas Edwards o Dal-y-bont yn reidio ar flaen troli a oedd yn cael ei wthio o flaen y locomotif ger Fferm Glanfrêd. Estynnodd Richard Roberts ymlaen i symud y pren tra bo'r locomotif yn parhau i symud. Roedd y darn pren wedi ei folltio i'r llinell gan achosi Roberts i lithro a chael ei wasgu i farwolaeth wrth i'r locomotif gael ei ddireilio. Tafwyd ei gymdeithion yn glir. Mae'n rhaid fod marwolaeth Richard Roberts yn 35 oed wedi bod yn sioc i'r

and cities were paving their streets with 'setts' (square blocks of stone which are now quite expensive 'heritage' material in great demand from gardeners, architects and town planners). Also there was a need for quarried stone for the Elan Valley dams and the waterfront at Aberystwyth. Clients for the stone included the Birmingham Corporation, the Warrington Slate Company, Cardigan County Council, the Corporation of Aberystwyth and Mr Pryse of Gogerddan.

When Mr Pryse cut the first sod at a ceremony in January 1896 he had a vision of extending the tramway into the Pumlumon hills so that tourists and visitors would bring in additional revenue. One wonders what Tal-y-bont would look like today if the tramway had survived to become part of the current 'heritage' industry. Tourists would be flocking to Tal-y-bont to experience a trip through some of the most beautiful scenery in Wales and volunteer railway enthusiasts would be working on maintaining track and rolling stock.

With 8 miles of the tramway completed by the Spring of 1897 the directors – all Englishmen from the north west of England – started to encounter problems. The locomotive, Victoria, was of an unusual design and manufactured by a company lacking the necessary technical knowledge. Muddy water in its boiler system caused it to stop after a short distance on its inaugural trip. Sabotage was suspected. This view was strengthened when shortly afterwards some wood was placed across the track in an attempt to derail the locomotive.

A tragedy occurred the following day when timber was noticed on the line. Richard Roberts, Jim Jones and Thomas Edwards of Tal-y-bont were riding on the front of a trolley being pushed in front of the locomotive near Glanfrêd Farm. Richard Roberts stretched forward to remove the timber whilst the locomotive was still moving. The log had been bolted to the line causing Roberts to slip and be crushed as the derailment occurred. His companions were thrown clear. The death of Richard Roberts at the age of 35 must have shocked the village. He was a popular member of Bethel Chapel and a member of various choirs.

A second tragedy a few months later involved the eight months old child of Mr

pentref. Roedd yn aelod poblogaidd o Gapel Bethel ac yn aelod o amryw o gorau.

Cafwyd ail drychineb ychydig fisoedd yn ddiweddarach gyda phlentyn wyth mis oed Mr a Mrs Jones Pen-rhiw, Tal-y-bont. Roedd pobl yn teithio ar ffrâm troli heb blatfform pren ar ei ben drwy ei wthio gyda'u traed o'r ochr. Daliodd siôl a lapiwyd o gwmpas y plentyn mewn echel gan daflu'r plentyn o gwmpas yn erbyn y ffrâm a thrawstiau'r lein fach. Gan nad oedd y llinell ar agor ar gyfer teithwyr ac na roddwyd caniatâd i deithio ar y troliau cafodd ei gofnodi fel 'Marwolaeth Ddamweiniol'

Er gwaethaf y difrod bwriadol a'r ddwy drasiedi, mewn ymgais i wneud y lein fach yn brosiect masnachol ymarferol, prynwyd injan newydd, y 'Tal-y-bont' a cherbyd gorchuddedig ar gyfer teithwyr. Cafwyd adroddiad canmoliaethus yn y 'Cambrian News' ar ôl taith arbrofol i droed y llechwedd yn Hafan. Evan Davies a David Jones oedd criw'r injan newydd ac aeth 30 o bobl ar y daith gyntaf.

Gellir dychmygu'r adroddiad canlynol yn y papur newydd fel broliant mewn taflen ar gyfer ymwelwyr heddiw:

and Mrs Jones of Pen-Rhiw, Tal-y-bont. People were riding a trolley frame with no wooden platform on top by pushing it along with their feet from the side. The shawl wrapped around the child caught in an axle swinging the child around against the frame and the tramway sleepers. As the line was not open for passenger traffic and no permission was given to ride the trollies it was recorded as 'Accidental Death'.

Despite the sabotage and the two tragedies the attempt to make the tramway a viable commercial project resulted in the purchase of a new engine, the 'Tal-y-bont' and a covered passenger carriage. The 'Cambrian News' reported the event in glowing terms after the trial run to the foot of the incline at Hafan. Evan Davies and David Jones of Tal-y-bont were the crew of the new engine and 30 people took the inaugural trip.

One can imagine the following report in the newspaper as the blurb in a tourist leaflet today:

The railway will also be the means of bringing the varied and picturesque scenery lying



Y 'Tal-y-bont' a'r cerbyd wrth droed y llechwedd (Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru, Aberystwyth).

The 'Tal-y-bont' and the carriage at the foot of the incline (National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth).

The railway will also be the means of bringing the varied and picturesque scenery lying between Tal-y-bont and Hafan more before the public.

The varied scenery along the river Leri was much admired, the sharp, rugged and majestic mountains being a strong contrast to the grassy plots and green slopes. The party was taken past cots, through woods, along rivulets and streams.

The scenery at the top of the steep path was simply glorious. On the one side were little hills, valleys and rapid brooks wending their course to the far-looming Cardigan Bay. On the other side stood Pumlumon like a giant over the lesser mountains, its crown hidden from view by a steel grey mist. The railway will afford visitors to Aberystwyth an opportunity of investigating the comparatively unknown but truly beautiful scenery in the neighbourhood.

The opening of the narrow gauge railway from Llanfihangel to Tal-y-bont and Hafan for passenger traffic will make accessible for visitors in Aberystwyth a large extent of country interesting for its wild and romantic character.

Ond ni orosodd y lein fach. Caewyd hi mor gyflym ag yr adeiladwyd hi wedi mwynhau rhyw ychydig lewyrch. Mae cerrig o Hafan yn diogelu glan y môr Aberystwyth rhag erydiad ac mae nifer o strydoedd yn Lloegr yn parhau i fod â thrysor cudd ar ffurf 'setiau' o dan haen o darnac.

Jim Hammonds

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But the tramway did not survive. It closed as swiftly as it was built having enjoyed some small measure of prosperity. Stones from Hafan protect the sea-front at Aberystwyth from erosion and many a street in England still has a treasure-trove of 'setts' hidden under a layer of tarmac.

Jim Hammonds