

# May 2001

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## The Last 'Thoughts of Chairman Dell'

At last my three-year term as chairman is coming to a close. When I was elected the Club needed someone who was a born leader, positive, thoughtful and full of good ideas as well as being very good looking. As they could not find anyone to fit the bill they accepted me. I have given the Club three years of dynamic inertia which I am very good at as I've had years of practise. Seriously, I would like to thank everyone, the Council and its officers and Section Leaders for all the hard work they have put in.

Several Societies are putting forward new rules regarding holding positions of office. Some limit holding office to two years and not being able to reapply for at least a year. This has long been a hobbyhorse of mine. I feel that two years is quite long enough for anyone. Any member no matter what his position does himself and the Club no service by continuing in office for longer. After two years ideas run out, enthusiasm wanes and the rest of the Society sit back and do nothing, as they feel old Fred or Harry will continue for years to come. We need new blood to keep up the impetus. Having said this I myself am not a good example. I stayed one year too long – some people might say three years too long! However the end is nigh. I wish everyone the very best and thank you all for putting up with me for the last three years.

*Frank Dell*

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## Clan Line Farewell

This is an account by several Society members of a steam railtour which took place on Saturday 24th March.

Grahame Ainge starts off the story:

The worst part of a steam railtour these days is the unearthly hour at which the day starts. 0800hrs was the advertised departure time and Mike Collingwood, Roy Hall, Bernard Lambert, Ian and Robert Murray and myself gradually met up on the concourse at Waterloo. By 7.30 am only Mike Foreman was missing.

Imagine 400, eager enthusiasts, motionless with heads thrown back on shoulders transfixed by the clicking of the platform indicator boards above us waiting for news of our train. Then the bad news clicked up, "Steam charter - train delayed" and no

information on which of the 19 platforms to go to! Conversation started to break out – rumours started to circulate. Mike Collingwood was the first enthusiast to lose his enthusiasm and recalled his last disastrous trip behind a Bulleid Pacific, to York and since not everyone could hear the depressing tale above the station hub-bub he repeated it several times. We soon became convinced we were off to a bad start and things could only get worse. Plans were discussed of how to cope with being dumped back at Victoria in the early hours of Sunday morning with no means of getting home.

Every few minutes our indicator board clicked to a blank and immediately clicked again to reveal exactly the same message. At 8.00am there was still no platform allocation, the train was somehow locked into a siding at Clapham Junction and the station announcer was still sorry about the delay. By this time Mike Foreman had arrived so we tried to blame him because he had got us our tickets!

Suddenly the endless clicking stopped. Platform 19! There was a mass surge and the stewards were asking everyone to board quickly for a fast get-away. No time to view the engine. No sooner had we seated ourselves, platform whistles were urgently blown and we heard that long and haunting chime. A Merchant Navy was departing from Waterloo! Although it was 2001, not 1961, it felt the same! There were 11 coaches and all except the support coach were Mark 1s in immaculate Southern Region green just as The Atlantic Coast Express had been then.

Now it was my time to start moaning, “Not a very authentic start – not a trace of a slip. They used to slip like hell in the old days.” No one seemed to take any notice.

It was 8.25 and we slowly increased our speed past Big Ben and the spires of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Clouds of exhaust, now quite grey, billowed over the few bits of overnight washing hanging limply in the damp morning air. We threw open all the windows to take in more of the atmosphere. Unlike a GW or LMS loco the exhaust sound of a Merchant Navy is soft even when working hard and the acceleration was deceptively gentle but so constant that we were soon up to 70mph.

Ian takes up the story:

I had a window seat facing forward and good views were obtained as Clan Line swung sharply left over a number of points and crossings as she picked her way through the complex trackwork forming the approaches to Waterloo. The mesmeric rising and falling of the highly polished dust cap on the big end of the eccentric was something destined to be seen often during the day.

The morning was grey, cold and misty and as Clan Line got into her stride numerous sliding windows were opened to savour the full sounds from the engine. The coach at the very end of the train contained the generator for the heating and this was obviously running at full chat as the underseat heating, even at this early stage of the journey, was threatening to wreak havoc on piles!

Grahame continues:

Mike F had thoughtfully and kindly provided us all with a photocopy of the gradient profile for the whole day (essential information for such occasions). Roy cracked open his whisky and offered it round: Soon everyone was in good spirits.

Ian:

The chatter from the wide chimney on Clan Line was immensely satisfying as she accelerated her train and the steam hung in the cold and damp air. Numerous brake applications spoke volumes about the fact that we were out of our allotted path and the

late start was now half an hour behind by the time we reached Salisbury. Here we paused for our first water stop. Everyone decamped onto the platform and went forward to inspect our steed which sat blowing off from the centre of her three safety valves. It was hard to take in the fact that this was her farewell run prior to a "heavy general" so immaculate was her external condition. All brass and copperwork shone and there was a practised efficiency about her support crew which was impressive. Hoses ran across the platform (fountaining water from several leaks in the way that only hoses can) connected to her tender and coal was brought forward by the support team which emerged from the support coach. This was a Mark 1 painted in Pullman colours, presumably to match the VSOE pullmans with which she has earned her living for so long, and carrying the fascinating name "Mercator"

Grahame:

We agreed we could all see the Britannia influence in Clan Line's rebuild. Would someone in the Club please build a Bulleid ? We've all fallen for Clan Line. (Perhaps we can persuade Ron Price to build a Merchant Navy as a Spam Can and then at some future date persuade him to rebuild it! Sorry, my imagination is running away). That long haunting chime rang out. We had by now learnt that this would be the signal for all to reboard the train. It happened at the end of every stop and never failed to raise the level of excitement. The clearness of the notes never faltered, due no doubt to the fact that the whistle valve always showed a leak – I'm sure it was purposely kept like that. We were now on the section that had been singled and occasionally we had to stop in a passing loop. But this was engineered as a main line and in between stops there was fast running mostly in the 70s along the endless ups and downs of the route. Food, alcohol and good humour flowed in the coaches. Mike F had brought along his goggles and wooly hat so we were all able to stick our heads out. Roy was first to try it and reported back that all he could see was an Ali G look-alike at every window! Fortunately we were in the front end of the third coach so we got a full measure of sound and exhaust to create the right atmosphere.

Ian:

Clan Line was fully into her stride and she was treating her eleven coach load with some contempt. Welded track had given way to 60 foot lengths and the familiar rhythm of the wheels added to the overall period feel. The rolling English countryside passed the windows in steady procession and it was impossible, watching the sheep and cattle flee from the smoke and noise, not to think of the dreadful time currently being experienced by our farming communities in the wake of the Foot and Mouth crisis - shades of 1967 indeed! It was also noticeable that Railtrack had been busy on some of the embankments where many years of vegetation had been cut back to reveal the original line of the embankments and cuttings. In many places the crowds were out to see us pass: On stations as we swept through, on overbridges, at crossings, in gardens, workplaces, hanging from windows and waving from patio doors. Various video cameramen could be seen in fields and on vantage points and at least one fox watched our approach before turning and loping away over the fields as we passed. The feeling of participating in something just that little bit special was growing.

Grahame:

Eventually we were approaching Honiton Bank which in the westbound direction is a seven mile climb, much of it at 1:80 up with a tunnel at the top, still on the incline. Normally a steam locomotive could take a run at it because there's a downhill section from just after Crewkerne to just before Seaton Junction but we were checked to a crawl by a 20mph restriction for engineering work at the bottom of the bank. Now this was to be a real test of the loco because Bulleid Pacifics are not noted for their hill climbing abilities and 11 packed coaches, one of which was a heavy generator car, is no mean

load. As soon as she was on the bank she slipped. To add to the interest it was now drizzling with rain. But the slip was quickly corrected and Clan Line plodded on up, mile after mile, without any further slipping and at one point even increased speed. Climbing with a long cut-off gave the exhaust a deafening deep and throaty voice – much more like an LMS loco now. The speed over the top was not recorded by us but the performance from such a slow start was most impressive and she then treated us all to a fast run to Exeter Central where we arrived only about five minutes down on booked time.

We were informed over the train PA system that we could alight here, explore the cathedral city and walk down to St Davids Station to rejoin the train which would be leaving after a 2hr break. We decided to stay on to experience the steep decent to St Davids and get off there.

After another look at the immaculate loco (even its front coupling hook was burnished) we agreed that it didn't look as if it needed an overhaul taking three years. Along with many local people we watched it pull out of the GW station to go to be serviced and as Mike Foreman knew a good local pub, The Jolly Porter, we decided to retire there. On the chalk board was Directors, Bombardier and Pitchfork. Directors you can get anywhere, Bombardier is all but a local brew in Hertfordshire, so it had to be the Pitchfork. What a delightful pint (or, more truthfully, several!) – We stayed and enjoyed each others company and this liquid lunch so much until we dared not stay any longer for fear of not getting back in time before the call of Clan Line's whistle. I'm sure Exeter was a lovely city!!

Mike C:

We arrived at Exeter on time and with a two-hour turn-round decided to migrate to the pub for what turned out to be a liquid lunch. Numerous folk have expressed some surprise that we didn't visit the Cathedral which has beckoned visitors for the past few hundred years, but as I explained - it's only bricks & mortar and I can see that anytime at Wicks, whereas the chance to spend two hours in an Exeter pub with such splendid company was a rare privilege. Sufficient to say that our lunch soon took on a rugby club flavour and I returned to the train with very pleasantly aching sides.

Mike F:

We cannot repeat the jokes but I can tell you we had a great liquid lunch.

Bernard:

Great liquid lunch.

Roy:

The liquid lunch was great.

Robert:

Not enough liquid with the lunch.

Ian:

The stop at Exeter was scheduled for two hours and our party of intrepid travelers repaired to a local hostelry where several pints of the local Pitchfork ale were sunk amongst much telling of stories and general laughter. Suitably refreshed some two hours later the party returned to Exeter St Davids having seen no more of the City than the inside of the hostelry but with big grins and a warm glow of fellow feeling. One of the party had decided that he was going to take possession of a droplight in the nearest entrance door and in actual fact both doors at the end of the carriage were

commandeered as the train left Exeter and headed up the old GWR main line, destination Weston-super-Mare. The next bit of excitement was to be the climb to Whiteball up Wellington Bank. Mike F felt that “a proper engine would show the Great Western how to climb their famous bank!” And so it was. Clan Line got quickly into her stride and soon speed was up in the 70s again. Heads were out and much use made of the goggles. Clan line had now settled down to some fast running and as the track curved first left then right that flashing brass dust cap on the eccentric rod revealed just how fast Clan Line was whirling her wheels round. The noise from the loco chimney increased as she began the climb to Whiteball but speed only began to fall off slightly and she went over the summit in grand style, accelerating hard down the other side. This run was quite electric and it was good to experience a pacific running so fast and so effortlessly.

Weston-super-Mare was a water stop and whilst this was taking place we questioned the driver, Paul Barns, who had driven from Exeter, about the climb to Whiteball and how Clan Line was running. He said that the loco had topped the climb at 58mph on 40% cut off, three-quarters regulator and with 230psi on the clock and 2/3rds regulator. Grahame asked him how come the Southern pacifics slipped so much in the old days but hardly ever slipped today. He replied, “You have to drive them carefully.” This was exactly the same reply given by Donald Beale, many years ago, who drove them on the S&D in the 1950s. Paul Burns (who incidentally is chairman of the Clan Project – 702010 Hengeist) seemed very satisfied with his steed but did say that she was a bit heavy on water as her valves were worn.

Another loud blast on the loco's whistle sent everyone scurrying back to their seats once again and we set off for Bristol and Salisbury. After a glimpse of Brunel's Clifton Suspension Bridge in the distance, the passage through the centre roads of Temple Meads Station was sedate and graceful, the crew not missing the opportunity to sound Clan Line's whistle a few times and savour the sensation of a distinctive Southern whistle echoing around what used to be one of the centres of Great Western steam. Bath was the next main centre on the trip and again, as Clan Line rounded the long curve of the platform, high above the town, she whistled her farewell then settled down for the run to Salisbury where the final water stop was scheduled.

The run back to London's Victoria promised to be fast but there was a recognition that, given her imminent withdrawal, there would be an air of sadness also. Passengers milled around her on the platform at Salisbury but there was no feeling of having to fight through a crowd to get a good view. Close examination of the loco now revealed dirt and oil streaks on the motion, cracked and flaking paint on the side of the smokebox and a patina of dirt over paintwork that had been highly polished at the start of the day: Not surprising given that 300 miles had already been covered, with about 80 still to go. The donkey engine hidden in the rear of the tender was started to charge the brake reservoirs and the rhythmic exhausting of steam into the evening air added to the whole atmosphere. People stood back on the wide platform and watched with some amusement as a coaling operation took place which would not have disgraced a Heath Robinson cartoon. Plastic bags of what was labeled as house coal were wheeled up to Clan Line's tender in a wheelbarrow and then handballed up into the coal space where they were emptied. Enquiries revealed that the contents were not in fact house coal, but the whole procedure had an air of comedy. Nonetheless, sufficient coal was loaded to cater for our needs on the run home and for the last time Clan Line's whistle sent her admirers back into the train and she set off for the final leg.

Mike C:

At Salisbury the support crew manhandled 60 bags (1.5 tonnes) of coal in a

wheelbarrow from outside the station to the tender where it was manhandled via a trestle table up to the bunker - what dedication! Hertfordshire Railtours, the organisers, arranged a raffle on the return trip in aid of Clan Line's restoration which gave rise amongst our group to an imaginary prize - suppose one was fortunate enough to win first prize - EITHER a night out with Claudia Schiffer all expenses paid and a Ferrari Testarosa thrown in, OR the return trip on the footplate of Clan Line. To a man we chose the latter! No apologies - most of us are old men and who's Claudia Schiffer anyway - she probably wouldn't even know who LBSC was! Ian:

In the train, passengers (NOT customers!!) settled down for a fast run back to London on, largely, falling grades. Clan Line quickly got speed up into the 70s and mile after mile was covered with little noise from the loco. Most people had by now eaten all their food and the effects of a hot carriage, a long day and several pints now conspired to drag down eyelids. Basingstoke, Woking and Wimbledon all flashed by and as the outskirts of the Capital appeared your intrepid scribe once more stuck his head out of a droplight into the freezing night air. Holding onto glasses and squinting brought the reward of Clan Line speeding through Surbiton and Raynes Park on the centre road. The whistle was opened on the approach to each station and to watch the easy buoyant ride of the loco as she was briefly illuminated by the station lights, that brass eccentric dust cap once more dancing its frantic jig, was sheer joy. The blackness after each station swallowed the train completely, particularly in cuttings where the roar of the wheels bounced back. Once eyes became accustomed to the dark the lights from the carriage windows could be seen illuminating the passing lineside and looking forward revealed the burnished rail tops of the slow line and the side of Clan Line reflecting a series of brilliant greens changing constantly to red as we swept onwards. Imminent frostbite of the cranium forced a reluctant return to dozing companions. Sleeping beauties they were not!

Soon the brakes came on to slow us down so that we could take the junction which would route us into Victoria via Brixton. The time was now around 10.00pm and this part of the journey proved most interesting. The track is carried on embankments, bridges and viaducts through the heart of residential south London and as we passed close to the back of houses and flats and crossed numerous roads it was interesting to watch the reactions of people. Clan Line was climbing now and making sufficient noise to tell the world she was coming. What was particularly interesting was what little effect her passing had, the locals either ignoring her or only glancing up briefly. One young man studying a timetable on one of the stations did not even turn around as Clan Line stamped past just a few feet behind him. Perhaps the regular running of steam out of Waterloo has once again made the passing of a steam loco a normal everyday event and therefore unremarkable. That in itself would be no small achievement.

The lights of central London were now all around and the wheels rumbling onto a metal bridge heralded our crossing of the Thames, the dark waters throwing up constantly shifting reflections and patterns. The overall roof of Victoria threw a welcoming blanket over Clan Line as she eased her train down the platform where she then stood to be admired for the final time, passengers shaking hands with the crew and expressing appreciation for a faultless day. Arrival was 34 minutes ahead of booked time, a splendid feat considering that the start to the day had been delayed by 25 minutes. The steam from Clan Line rose slowly towards the high glazed roof as she sat there, bathed in the pitiless harsh modern light, awaiting the call to reverse out into the night and into what is estimated will be a three year overhaul. Grateful thanks are due to all who worked so hard to ensure that the day went off without a hitch, something which is not easily achieved on the modern railway.

One final observation. A member of our party was seen, at each water stop, with his

head and shoulders thrust into Clan Line's cab, looking about in an animated manner. Could the fact that there had been a malicious rumour to the effect that Claudia Schiffer had been spotted, complete with knotted handkerchief, taking a turn on the shovel, be the explanation for this curious behaviour? Surely not!

Postscript from Mike C:

I've enjoyed numerous steam trips over the years including Mallard's maiden trip after restoration. Whilst all these trips have offered much interest and enjoyment this trip to Exeter with Clan Line performing 387 miles of faultless steam magic was undoubtedly the best. It was my first encounter with a rebuilt Bullied Merchant Navy and although I've always had a sneaking regard for the Class, I now find myself having to admit that in spite of my indifferent feelings for the Southern it is probably my favourite engine. Finally our thanks to Mike Foreman and the Lloyds Railway Society who offered us the chance to tag along on a splendid day out with steam.

*Name*

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## Marine Mutterings

We say goodbye to Winter Meetings at H.Q. and to Winter Working Parties at Colney Heath. The Boating Lake area is now tidy and ready for the Season's activities.

Here I must thank Derek Perham both for turning up regularly to work (and keeping me at it as well!) and for his activities raising funds for the Marine Section. Without Derek the Marine Section would be in a poor old way. I must also thank John Morgan for turning up regularly to work in the latter part of the Winter season and for his offer of the use of his 'Harbour' which will make boating at Colney Heath more interesting. Thanks also to those who just turned up occasionally to work.

At the same time we say hello to Summer Meetings on Sunday afternoons and the third Friday evening each month at Colney Heath and, unfortunately, to Summer Working Parties on Sunday mornings at Colney Heath. The Working Parties are to complete the unfinished work i.e. to build the 'Shelter' and to set up a lighting system ready for the Autumn evenings.

Please try to support our two Summer Open Events – Sunday 22nd July and Sunday 16th September. Any further ideas for other Summer events and/or visits would still be very welcome. Also remember the May Meeting at Colney Heath. We look forward to some good turnouts on the Lake.

Don't forget on Sat. 5th. Sun. 6th. Mon. 7th May The Beale Park Model Boat Show. At Beale Park, Lower Basildon, Reading, RG8 9NH. This is a fine boating venue with good trade support. Entry £4.50 Adults, £3.50 Seniors. More details available.

Sorry, got the dates wrong last month.

Radio Control Equipment – Possible Changes to 27MHz. Band Frequencies.

I am reluctant to go into print on this subject as the information that has been published in Model Boats and in Propwash so far is less than definitive. However, I think it better to draw your attention to the fact that changes are being discussed.

It appears that the Joint Radio Control Users Committee are proposing to recommend the use 10kHz channel spacing on the 27MHz. Band and the use of black channel numbers on white flags to replace the current colour flag system.

I understand that the use of existing sets with the wider channel spacing and coloured flags will continue to be acceptable. I also understand that sets and crystals that will function on the 10kHz. spacing will soon be available. But I am not certain!

It would seem that if you are thinking of buying 27MHz. equipment you should delay until the situation is clarified. Alternatively you might choose to move to the 40MHz. band. This band is also more likely to be free from interference by other radio users.

My apologies for the vagueness – I will write again when more positive information comes to hand.

Happy boating

*From Bernard Lambert*

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## [Welsh Narrow Gauge Railways](#)

Which is the finest of them all?  
asks Bernard Lambert

The Welsh narrow gauge railways are the subject and I expect lots of flack from all you narrow gauge fans that don't agree with my opinions!

From past visits I have considered it a close run thing between the Ffestiniog and the Talylyn in spite of, or maybe because of, the fact that they are so dissimilar. My most recent visit to the Principality enabled me to renew acquaintance with these lines. Both, incidentally, have a refreshing feature - the trains appear to run on time!

Let's also be realistic when comparing the Ffestiniog and the Talylyn - the former is now run by professionals with assistance from enthusiastic amateurs and the latter is run by enthusiastic amateurs. Both are very well run and present a most enjoyable experience.

### **The Ffestiniog**

The Ffestiniog is the bigger of the two and has the longer track mileage at nearly 14 miles from Porthmadoc to Blaenau Ffestiniog. It also used to enjoy almost cult status among the many volunteers who carried out the original restoration work.

Possibly its most interesting feature was that the original slate trains were run under gravity. Horses pulled the empty slate wagons up the very uniform alignment from the wharf at Porthmadoc to the quarries at Blaenau Ffestiniog. The laden trains then descended under gravity with many brakemen to control the speed of descent. The horses enjoyed a ride back in Horse Dandy wagons attached to the rear of the train. The surveying and building of such a track must have been quite a civil engineering achievement in those days as the terrain was hardly helpful.

Nearly all the track is still on the original gravity bed but the construction of a power station reservoir near Blaenau Ffestiniog flooded part of the line which included a tunnel so a height gaining loop and a new tunnel had to be constructed to reach the original track bed nearer the town. Consequently there is now a small section of rising track on the steady falling incline of the old gravity alignment. There will never be a gravity train from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Porthmadoc again!

This arrangement carried on for many years before the introduction of steam traction in the form of small 0-4-0 tender locomotives. Passenger carrying was also introduced at around this time. As the loads increased the famous Double Fairlies were introduced to handle the heavier trains. These rather unusual locomotives consisted of a pair of 0-4-0 driving units mounted back to back and articulated on a frame which carried two boilers and fireboxes also mounted back to back with a driving cab between them. The driver stood on one side of the fireboxes and the fireman on the other. These engines appeared to be a great success and now almost a trademark of the Ffestiniog railway.

The original double Fairlie locomotives have been rebuilt and a brand new copy constructed. Some of the other earlier locomotives still exist, an additional steam loco - Mountaineer - was acquired and modified to suit the loading gauge and some respectable looking diesels have been added to the stud. Unfortunately, the steam engines are now all oil fired but, apart from operating economies, this may be essential for summer running in heavily wooded country.

The station at Porthmadoc looks like a miniaturised version of a mainline station from the steam age and includes the inevitable restaurant and shop. The old engineering base at nearby Boston Lodge has also been brought up to date and is a sizeable facility capable of major locomotive overhauls.

In addition to many request stop halts the line goes through major stations at Minffordd, Penrhyn and Tan-y-Bwlch which all offer walks in superb countryside. It has to be said the scenery on this line is magnificent, even the last mile or two through the austere slate country is aweinspiring.

The Ffestiniog is unusual in that it has a main line connection a short walk from Porthmadoc and direct mainline interchanges at Minffordd and Blaenau Ffestiniog so that the ride can be incorporated in round trips on main line trains.

Now, the trains themselves are a bit remarkable on a two foot gauge line. Part of each train consists of corridor coaches with a buffet service to your seat. There is also a bar, and the inevitable toilet facility, for those who care to leave their seats. There is also a First Class compartment on each coach if you are prepared to pay extra for a bit of peace and quiet. Not much to compare with the original passenger service here! To be fair there are some older style vehicles available for those who prefer a more authentic ride and I understand that some of the very early vehicles used to take the slate miners up on Mondays and down on Saturdays (it seems that they lived in the quarries during the week) in minimal comfort are still preserved and in useable condition.

All in all a remarkable little railway, though one that has unashamedly kept up with the times in many areas (the ticketing is computerised and the output makes this obvious) at the expense of old fashioned authentic preservation. Who is to make a judgement on these complicated issues? If preserved lines are not a commercial success we will cease to have preserved lines to enjoy. The Ffestiniog has handled preservation in a controversial manner but it is, never the less, one of my two favourites.

## **The Tallyllyn**

The Tallyllyn, which claims to be the first of the preserved lines to operate, is based in the town of Towyn and runs about seven miles into the hilly hinterland from which it used to transport slate from quarries to the main railway line at Towyn Wharf. Like so many mineral lines it also carried passengers and was popular transport until the bus and, later, the motor car overtook it.

The Wharf station still has some sidings which were, presumably, used to transfer slate to the main line trains. It also has a fascinating Narrow Gauge Museum containing a fine collection of engines and artefacts from the many lines of long ago.

The first stop is Pendre for Towyn town which is also the engineering base for the line. The quite scenic ride then takes one six miles through Rhyderonen and Dolgoch Falls to Abergynolyn where the well maintained station has buffet facilities and offers a walk to the town. This could be considered to be the upper terminus of the line unless one fancies a walk in the rather wild countryside.

For those that do fancy a walk the line finally terminates a mile further on at Nant Gwernol which was the site of the inclined planes that once served the Quarries. Here there are pleasant, if steepish, walks available and some remains of the original inclined planes and equipment can be seen. Not much is left to view today and, apart from the walks, the extra trip is probably not worthwhile.

The Tallyllyn trains appear (I may stand to be corrected here) to be original rolling stock hauled by the two original engines - 0-4-2 Tal-y-llyn and 0-4-0 Dolgoth - both immaculate and both still coal fired. The passenger cars are also immaculate and owe little to the twentieth century apart, perhaps, from more comfortable upholstery on some of the seating and a wheelchair access on one carriage of each train.

The whole scene is redolent of the past and I suspect that the only lack of realism here is the super condition in which the trains and stations are kept. It seems likely that the real past was likely to be a bit run down and penny pinching.

Everything about the line is immaculate, if rather twee. The staff are all in appropriate attire and represented the epitome of helpful politeness. This is a genuine preserved line feeling and one can almost imagine that you are in a pre-World War II scene - or even earlier?

In spite of the obvious superiority of the Ffestiniog in many areas the Tallyllyn is, perhaps, on balance the best of the Welsh narrow gauge lines.

### **Finally:**

That was what I think about my two favourite lines but what do all you readers think? There are few other contenders for the title and I will be pleased to hear from their fans - maybe we could get a debate going in the News Sheet. I am an optimist, aren't I?

*Bernard Lambert*

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