



THIS IS OUR RAILWAY



This could be your Railway !



Introduction

You are probably reading this as a result of riding on a Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways train. Firstly then, we would like to say thank you for travelling with us and supporting the world's oldest independent railway.

If you have a curious mind your time with us will have prompted quite a number of questions, as well as providing you with some entertainment. You wouldn't be the first to ask, 'What kind of organisation is this and what makes it tick?' In this booklet we hope to explain a little more about our railways and the people involved. Within these pages you will find something of our history, the story of saving the railways after they closed, and the work we do today to conserve our historic lines for future generations.

Our railways are of national historic importance, we have 67 historic buildings, more than 20 steam locomotives and over 70 carriages, not to mention 40 miles of running line. All this takes an immense amount of looking after, and thanks to the way we are funded this is all achieved without any subsidies.

How do we do that you may ask? Our commercial tourist train service aims to generate enough income to ensure all the day to day maintenance of the railway is funded, but we can only balance the books with input from hundreds of volunteers. In broad terms half of our work is done by paid staff and half by volunteers.

Our members support us in many ways. We are backed by donors, sponsors and patrons who have made great things possible. The railway has also helped many people to get a start in their careers, learn new skills, and find positive ways to contribute to something special.

If you want to know more, and we hope you do, then read on through the next few pages. We sincerely hope that you will find a way to make our very special railway your railway too.

This is a great time to get involved, our railway and the slate industry of North Wales have just been inscribed as a World Heritage Site and we are working on a linked £4million project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and our supporting charities, The Ffestiniog Railway Society and The Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways Trust, to better tell our story, rebuild our historic workshops and teach new volunteers heritage skills.

Paul Lewin

Director and General Manager



Timeline

Almost 200 years ago, the Ffestiniog Railway Company came into being and this same company, the oldest independent railway company in the World, founded by an Act of Parliament in 1832, still operates the Festiniog Railway today.

1863 - 160 years ago the first 2ft gauge steam engines were built. Today we still have the first one, several others and the shed that was built to house them.

1870 - Articulated engines and bogie carriages debuted on the railway and went on to be used around the world.

1923 - 100 years ago the Welsh Highland Railway was completed but lasted just 14 years.

1946 - The Ffestiniog Railway closed. No one imagined it would return to life.

1954 - Volunteers took the first steps towards saving and reopening the railway.

1958 - A hydro-electric power station was built at Tanygrisiau with a man-made lake which flooded the railway.

1982 - Volunteers amazingly completed a 2.5-mile deviation route around the lake so the railway could reopen completely.

1997 – 2011 - The Welsh Highland Railway was rebuilt in four stages, commencing from Caernarfon and reaching Porthmadog in 2009. This added 25 miles of new railway to the 13.5 miles of the Ffestiniog Railway. Both railways connect in Porthmadog.

This project required thousands of volunteer days and more than £30m of funding to complete.

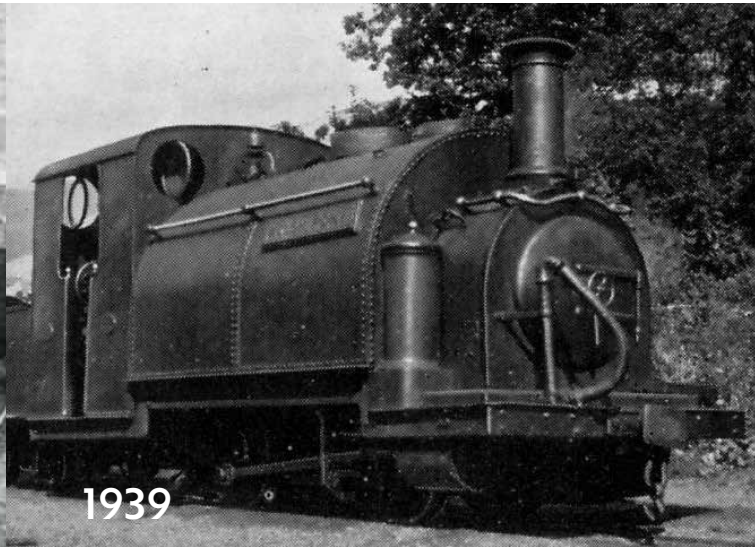
In the past decade a further £17million has been raised to build stations, trains and save the all-important heritage buildings, infrastructure and rolling stock.

2022 - The Ffestiniog Railway celebrated the vital role it plays in The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site.





1870's



1939



1950's



1958-2002



2013



2020

WELSH PONY

Our History

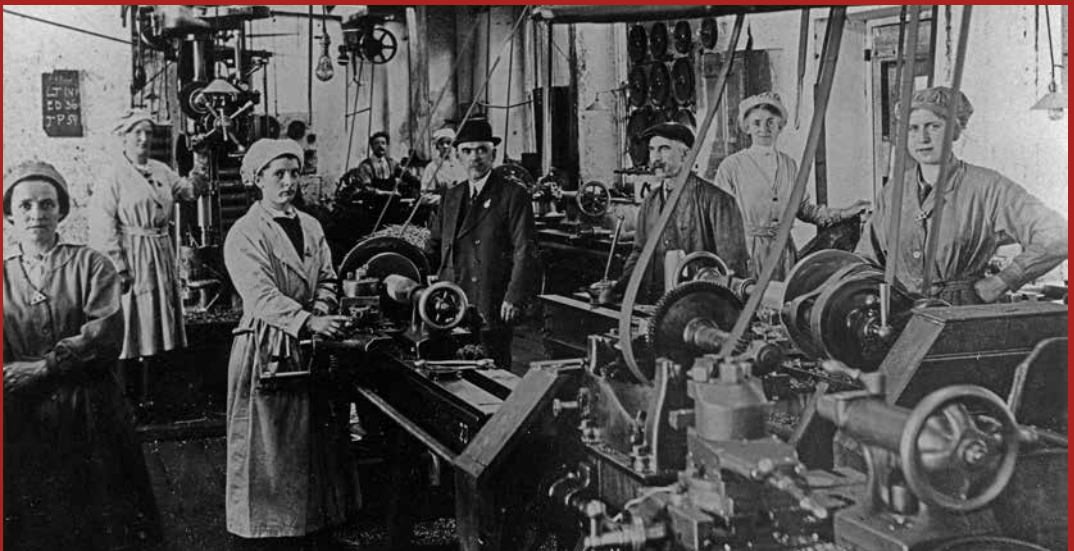
Our railway is of significant historic importance. There have been numerous books which cover the railway's history in detail. For now, we thought you might like a very simple explanation of why it is so important and why UNESCO included the Ffestiniog Railway as part of The Wales Slate World Heritage Site.

The Ffestiniog Railway is an impressive example of civil engineering. It linked the quarries of Blaenau Ffestiniog with Porthmadog. It is 13.5 miles long and built on a continuous gradient. This meant that waggons full of slate could be transported to the port by gravity. Horses would then take the empty waggons back up to Blaenau for refilling. Think for a moment how, in 1830, they managed to survey and build a line over ten miles long on a steady gradient?

In 1863 the first narrow-gauge steam engines arrived. The Ffestiniog Railway was first to use them. We still have some of these engines and the engine shed that was built to house them.

We were the first narrow-gauge railway to use articulated locomotives, a design which made it possible to haul much greater loads. These went on to be a huge success and influenced locomotive design the world over. Only a small number of those original 'Fairlie' type locos survive and the Ffestiniog Railway is the only place where you can see them still in working order.

We were also the first railway in the UK to use bogie carriages. Before that carriages were short 4 or 6-wheeled things. We have examples of nearly all the carriages built for the railway over the past 160 years and still have the first two bogie carriages in use. They are so important that they would be in a National Museum if we weren't able to conserve and make regular use of them.



War time in Boston Lodge Works - 1915. Women make artillery shells.

The Ffestiniog Railway was an inspiration for railways around the world making use of the narrow gauge to bring cheap and effective railways to places where larger standard gauge lines would not make economic sense. This includes places like the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, narrow gauge lines in Africa and closer to home, The Welsh Highland Railway.

The Welsh Highland Railway closed in 1937 and the Ffestiniog in 1946. Whilst much of the Welsh Highland was dismantled the Ffestiniog was not. Fortunately, several early railway preservation volunteers succeeded in saving the Ffestiniog line starting in 1954 and gradually rebuilt and reopened the line mile by mile over a period of thirty years.

When the railway was flooded by a lake for a power station, volunteers built a new line over two miles long to bridge the gap, this part of the line is referred to as 'the deviation'.

From the 1990s to 2010 the Welsh Highland Railway was also reinstated. This was an even bigger undertaking and resulted in the creation of a new 25-mile tourist line that passes through the heart of Snowdonia.

We are currently working on the conservation of the buildings, infrastructure and trains that make up the Festiniog railway. Saving the old and renewing as we go. We have a new ten-year strategy document 'The Regenerative Railway' which details our plans for the next ten years or more. We hope to develop the railway sustainably without losing that which is excellent and which we have inherited from previous generations.

We are also making every effort to interpret and tell the fascinating story of the slate industry of North Wales and how the railway played such a significant role in that industry.

Interested? Then why not join us, find out more and help us tell our story?

Fun Facts

- A whole tin of Brasso is used every day to make our engines shine.
- The railway generates 50 Kwh of solar energy to power our workshops at Boston Lodge Works.
- Our passenger railway is 40 miles long.
- Our oldest engine was built in 1863 and our newest in 2023.
- Blaenau Ffestiniog is famously known as the 'Slate capital of Wales' and the 'town that roofed the world'.
- Yr Wyddfa, (Snowdon) is the highest peak in Wales, with an elevation of 3,560 feet (1,085 metres).
- The F&WHR runs through the largest National Park in Wales.
- For the first three decades of operation Ffestiniog Railway trains were powered by gravity and horses.

Our Circle of Support



Become a Volunteer

Half of all the work we do to maintain our railway is completed by volunteers. Whilst some of the roles are obvious, like our engine drivers, train crews and hosting teams, you will be amazed by the variety of work going on behind the scenes. From our Directors and Trustees to our technical and legal advisers. A large proportion of our team members are volunteers. We welcome a diverse range of people to our railway from all walks of life. Some of whom use the skills of their profession to support and improve the day to day running of the railway and others choose to do something completely different. We all work together as a united team.

So, what is the big attraction you might ask?

Volunteering is a wonderful way to share your skills and passions as well as offering you the opportunity to learn new skills and make new friends whilst surrounded by some of the most beautiful scenery in the world.

These are some of the things volunteers say:

'When I come to the railway for a few days, I leave the world of work and all that goes with it behind.

I return refreshed, relaxed; if a little tired, and can think more clearly...'

'What a privilege to have learnt from a deeply passionate team how to drive a steam engine. It takes some time and commitment to get to the point, but the end result is a deep sense of satisfaction what will last a lifetime.'

'It was here at the Welsh Highland Railway that I finally met like-minded people and found the missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle that is my life.'

'I am not just looking at Snowdonia, I am working in it and feel part of it. Those mountains are in my mind every day and the thought of being here keeps me going day-in-day-out.'

If you would like to explore the possibility of working with us as a volunteer then please contact us via email at: volunteer@ffwhr.com. Please include your telephone number so we can get in touch and start a conversation that could be the beginning of something very special.

volunteer@ffwhr.com

Get on board! There are many volunteering roles you can sign up for and family groups are very welcome . . .



- Controller
- Driver
- Fireman
- Administrator
- Permanent Way/
Track Engineer
- On train hosts
- Aboriculturist and line side
- Guard or controller
- Retail
- Machinists and fitter
- Welder
- Interpretation
- Horticulture
- Builder
- Catering
- Professional Skills
- Medical & First Aid Services
- Directors and Trustees



Every great achievement in human history began with a single step...



Become a Member



Over 6,000 people are members of our supporting societies. There are two societies, The Ffestiniog Railway Society and The Welsh Highland Railway Society (Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Eryri). One to represent each of the two lines and many people are members of both. Becoming a member brings a sense of belonging and the satisfaction that you are contributing to something that is genuinely worthwhile. Over the years, subscription from members and support have allowed us to protect and preserve an important part of our Nation's heritage. Without our members this would not have been possible.

Membership is an essential part of preserving the whole railway for future generations.

This is a working heritage railway that means so much more than a few artefacts and posters in a museum.

A working railway supported by our membership keeps the place alive and allows new generations to experience it first-hand.

In return for a commitment to membership our members:

Have a voice in the future direction of the railway.

Become part of a really friendly community and a part of something very special.

Receive regular comprehensive news updates through our magazines and online content.

Receive invitations to behind the scenes tours and special events.

Have access to accommodation in railway properties such as Minffordd hostel, Penrhyn Station hostel and, looking into the future, Tan y Bwlch Station House.

Both societies offer low-cost accommodation in their hostels when working on the railway both as a member of staff and as a volunteer.

Travel privileges.

A gift that lasts a lifetime...

Membership is a great way to start your connection with the railway and is convenient for those who don't have time to volunteer right now but can help in other ways. Many of our life members have been given life membership as a mark of appreciation.

If you would like to join us then send an email to joinup@ffwhr.com or, if you prefer, write to us at Harbour station marking the envelope 'Membership - The GM's Office' and we will get in touch with you.

Alternatively, you can join on-line by following the links for:

Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Eryri / The Welsh Highland Railway Society -

<https://www.whrsoc.org.uk/>

The Ffestiniog Railway Society - <http://www.ffestiniograilway.org.uk/>

Our Patrons

Our patrons are a collection of individuals who share with us a deep passion for our railway and its heritage. They play a vital role in allowing the railway to function as an independent charitable organisation. Furthermore, their generosity help us to fund special projects, to maintain our historic buildings, rolling stock, our fleet of historic locomotives and so much more...

Patronage also enables us to invest in educating young people through apprenticeships, heritage training programmes and to additionally offer a range of educational opportunities to people from all walks of life. We recognise the importance of investing in people and teaching them the skills that will ensure the sustainability of many heritage organisations into the future.

Patrons are equally motivated to engage in our efforts to preserve and promote the railway. For many the opportunity to influence our direction and to be part of a highly skilled and deeply committed team is motivation enough but there are also occasions when patrons get the chance to go behind the scenes at the railway and enjoy an exclusive insight into the railway's many projects. No matter how our patrons find themselves connected they all enjoy a profound sense of satisfaction from the support they bring and are pivotal in safeguarding our precious National heritage. Their contributions make the world of difference, last a lifetime, and are deeply appreciated by us all.

If you would like to talk to one of our Senior Management team about becoming a patron of the railway, please get in touch by emailing:
patrons@ffwhr.com



M... WYN TUNNEL

1975 - 1977

Mining Engineer
Tunnel Miner
Tunnel Miner
Shotcreter
Site Agent
Project Engineer

Work experience and placements

Many young people have trained with us through work experience, apprenticeships, training programs and as volunteers and staff. We believe that training people and educating them in new skills and investing in their future builds upon the sustainability of the railway.

Many of the people we have trained are now permanent members of staff.

If you are interested in working for the FfWHR we advertise all our permanent and seasonal job vacancies on our website: www.festrail.co.uk or contact us directly via our HR Officer at: applications@ffwhr.com

Benefits:

- We can offer low-cost accommodation at a number of our subsidised hostels. The hostels are available to both staff and volunteers.
- Discounted meals and refreshments are available with a Staff Pass in our many food and retail outlets.
- We offer skills workshops, work placements, apprenticeships and grant funded training to people of all ages and abilities.
- We can help you with onward employment and references.





FIRE EXIT

FIRE EXTINGUISHER
ADIFFODDYDUD





Leave an amazing legacy

Our connection to special places is important, whether it be as a visitor, a volunteer or a member of staff.

Do you have a happy memory of the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways?

Do you appreciate the effort that has been put into preserving the F&WHR?

A gift in your will, can help look after things that matter to you. The generations before us cared for our Railway and now it is our turn to look after it for the next generation.

Thank you for choosing to protect this special place that has made life special for so many people...

Legacy is more than what you leave behind it is what lives on after you. Your Legacy should live on...

Do you want to ensure your legacy makes a difference and provides enjoyment for generations to come? You can help us in our efforts to exist into the future.

Would you like to fund a young person to learn a trade or skills via an apprenticeship? You can set up a separate fund for this to provide grants for people to learn and train alongside us.

Many projects have been funded by legacies including:

- Many of our fleet of carriages.
- Many of our buildings, including the Wagon Shed, the Heritage Carriage Shed, the Long Carriage Shed and Minffordd mess room, workshops, and pattern loft.
- Some of the stars of our loco fleet continue to be enjoyed thanks to generous legacies.

If you would like to make contact and talk to someone, we have people who can discuss this on a personal level with you.

Email: legacies@ffwhr.com

You could be part of the Picture . . ?



CONTACT US

VOLUNTEERING – volunteer@ffwhr.com

JOB ENQUIRIES – applications@ffwhr.com
(Or apply via our website -www.festrail.co.uk)

LEGACY ENQUIRIES - legacies@ffwhr.com

PATRON ENQUIRIES - patrons@ffwhr.com

SOCIETIES

Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Eryri / The Welsh Highland Railway Society -
<https://www.whrsoc.org.uk>

The Ffestiniog Railway Society - <http://www.ffestiniograilway.org.uk>

GENERAL ENQUIRIES – enquiries@ffwhr.com

MAIN RAILWAY WEBSITE – festrail.co.uk

**Get in touch
and make it happen!**



**volunteer@ffwhr.com
enquiries@ffwhr.com**

