

## The Maenclochog Railway, Pembrokeshire: A Contribution to its History

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The steeply graded standard gauge railway (maximum gradient 1 in 27) from the Rosebush slate quarries in the Preseli Hills, descending through Maenclochog to the Great Western Railway at Clynderwen station (formerly Narberth Road) was opened in 1876; passengers were carried from 19 September that year. Passenger traffic was encouraged by developing Rosebush village as a miniature holiday resort. In spite of some success in this respect, the line did not pay, one of the largest causes of loss being the high rent paid to the GWR for the use of Clynderwen station. This led to the closure of the line in 1882. Thus far the history of the line is satisfactorily recounted by Morris,<sup>1</sup> although there is a slight discrepancy between Morris's closure date of 31 December and that given by Page,<sup>2</sup> namely 31 September; the latter must obviously be a misprint of some kind, as 1882 was no different from other years in not having 31 days in September! Barrie<sup>3</sup> does not even mention the closure. No author mentions a re-opening two years later.

In researching the slate industry of Pembrokeshire we have discovered a local newspaper report,<sup>4</sup> reproduced below, which makes it quite certain that the line re-opened for passengers and goods on 15 December 1884, with two passenger trains each way each day. The GWR had agreed to forego the crippling rent for facilities at Clynderwen, which, although stated by Morris to have been £500 p.a., is here stated to have been £350 p.a. These facts do not seem to have been previously brought to light. How long the line stayed open we have not been able to discover.

The comments in the report regarding the proposed extension to Fishguard are interesting. It was indeed not until 1895 that the extension was opened, and then only as far as Letterston, but Morris infers quite clearly that work on the extension had started from Rosebush in 1879; this report leaves room for doubt on that point.

### 'RE-OPENING OF THE MAENCLOCHOG RAILWAY

The Maenclochog Railway, owned by Mr. Cropper (of London and Liverpool), and running from the Clynderwen Station on the Great

Western Railway to Rosebush, at the base of the Precelly Mountains, was re-opened for passengers and goods traffic on Monday. The line has been closed for about two years, and now re-starts with every prospect of a very prosperous existence. It is a line of eight and a half miles long, and in that short distance has a rise of no less than 832 feet. The chief traffic is that of carrying slates from the great quarries in the mountains at Rosebush and conveying coal and lime from the Great Western Railway to the country districts lying along its track. Mr. Cropper's quarries have been engaged during the whole time the line has been closed, and there is every prospect that in a month or two the great Bellstone Quarry, owned by Sir Hugh Owen, adjacent to the works already in operation, will be started, several large orders having been given. The Maenclochog Railway has also secured better facilities with the Great Western Company respecting the payment made to the latter. The directors of the Great Western have agreed to forego altogether the rent of £350 per annum formerly charged; and to allow easier terms with regard to mileage over the three-line rails (from the junction to Clynderwen station). These concessions have been given in consideration of the by no means small increase of traffic likely to be brought to the Great Western by the working of the Maenclochog Line. Previously there was no railway outlet for an increasing stone trade in Central Pembrokeshire, and no means of conveying agricultural produce, &c., to and from a large internal district. For the present it is intended to run two passenger trains each day from either end, and goods trains when required. No doubt the traffic will soon necessitate an enlarged service. In connection with this matter, a statement was made by a contemporary last week to the effect that an extension of the line to Fishguard was shortly to be made, and that preliminary steps are going forward to that end. This, at least, is an entirely anticipatory statement. Neither the manager of the Maenclochog Line (Mr. Mills) nor the manager of the Great Western Company, as we are told by the former, knows anything of such an imminent step. There is no doubt that the termination of the present line is one of the most charming scenes in the whole of South Wales, and the railway in the summer months will be an immense boon to tourists, landing them as it does at the base of the famous Precelly Mountains, which stretch out in the distance with great grandeur.'

It is evident that, unless we have missed some important reference, there is scope for further research on the Maenclochog Railway.

### REFERENCES

1. J. P. Morris, *The North Pembrokeshire & Fishguard Railway*, Oakwood Press, 1969.
2. J. Page, *Forgotten Railways: South Wales*, David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1979, p. 185.
3. D. S. M. Barrie, *Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain: Vol. 12, South Wales*, David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1980, p. 243.
4. "Re-opening of the Maenclochog Railway", *Pembrokeshire Herald*, 19 December 1884.