

## Travel Club Visit to Caernarfon and ride on Welsh Highland Railway

### On Wednesday 26 June 2019

Jenny was disappointed with the unexpected early morning drizzle and murk, but she soon brightened the rest of us up with a £10 refund. A pleasant journey along the A55 promptly brought us to the North Wales coast with its sunshine and blue skies. Our timely arrival at Caernarfon for 11am satisfied our coffee needs and then members made very good use of the time to explore. Palace Street's colourful canopy of umbrellas was much admired, the smallest pub in Wales was noted and excellent fish and chips were consumed at a street café in the sunshine. The sharp eyed saw little egrets, grey herons, sand martins and the swallows collecting mud to repair their nests on the magnificent castle.

Nerys Pritchard recalled a very special previous visit for us – the investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1969 at the castle. She stood again on the spot in the square where she had watched the royal party on a balcony. She had been invited to visit relatives there, where her uncle, a local councillor, was attending the ceremony. In common with the other attendees, he was allowed to keep the chair he sat on. Nerys recalled that the Welsh Nationalists tried to attack the royal train. Bang up to date, Lyn's group had chatted up "a nice young man" involved in renovating the Queen Vic theatre for a local Operatic Society.

At 1pm it was time to say goodbye to Caernarfon as we steamed out on the Welsh Highland Railway, pulled by Engine 138 from South Africa. There was a stunning view of the castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as we left. Cameras were out as we steamed over Rhyd Ddu, through Beddgelert and along the stunning Aberglaslyn Pass and over Pont Croesor into Porthmadog. Tasty refreshments, including Prosecco, at reasonable prices, were once again consumed. The Moels, Foels and Mynydds were wonderfully clear and the Llyns were tranquil. It was one of the best times for wild flowers, with many white blobs of cotton grass blowing, yellow cow-wheat in the woods, pink stonecrop on the rocks and deep purple marsh cinquefoil flowering in the marshes. The ferns were lush and plentiful everywhere. We were all enchanted by the stunning pastoral scene of multi coloured cattle on the saltmarsh in sunshine, which greeted our arrival in Porthmadog.

Then there was time for ice creams, perusal of the Edinburgh Woollen Mill and a walk along The Cob at Porthmadog before a leisurely journey home. We weren't surprised by the usual brooding dark atmosphere around Trawsfynydd and were expecting mist and murk over the mountains above Llyn Celyn and Lake Bala on what we hoped would be the last day of dampness for a while. Tedious roadworks after joining the A5 slightly delayed our journey, but we had all enjoyed a thoroughly beautiful and relaxing day.

Our grateful thanks go to our excellent organiser, Jenny, and our superb driver from Lakeside, Gary.

Ruth Dawes.