The Coast Lines of the Cambrian Railways

C C Green (Cedric Charles Green, MBE [1916-2001]) produced the first two parts of what was intended to be a trilogy covering the lines from Aberyswyth to Pwllheli, but, alas, cut short at Barmouth Junction/Morfa Mawddach. The two volumes which did appear cover not only the lines' history but also give a very detailed physical description, profusely illustrated with photographs and plans from Green's "on the ground" explorations. The volumes contain a number of points which warrant comment or correction despite which they remain an invaluable reference source. The observations below are offered with the intention of re-emphasising the two volumes' value to railway historians.

Each entry is preceded by Green's page number, followed by / , and by 1 to denote left column or 2 to denote right column. The books can usefully be read in conjunction with Track *Layout Diagrams of the Great Western Railway and BR (WR)* – Sections 60 and 62, by R A Cooke (Lightmoor Press, 2017 and 2023).

Richard Maund
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Volume 1 – Machynlleth to Aberystwyth including a general history of the Aberystwyth & Welsh Coast Railway (Wild Swan: 1993)

Title Page and elsewhere: for Aberystwyth (in railway's title) read Aberystwith. *That this was its statutory, legal title is made clear the NOTE on p.3 (it was also the town's name at 1861) so it is not obvious why the later spelling is used for the* **company's name** *elsewhere in the book.*

2/1, 1st para.: the paper (at that date) was the *Aberystwith Observer*

5/2, 4th para.: 3 Jan 1863 was only ceremonial - regular service started 5 Jan (*Shrewsbury Chronicle* 2 Jan)

7/1: line between Machynlleth and Borth opened Wed 1 July 1863 (*Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald* 4 July).

7/2, 3rd para.: opening to Llwyngwril on 24 Oct 1863 was from Aberdovey (company's advert in *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 30 Oct)

9/2, 2nd para.: line between Borth and Aberystwith *(sic)* opened for both passengers and goods on Thu 23 June 1864 (*Carmarthen Journal* 24 June and *Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald* 25 June), having been approved by Capt Tyler the previous (!) day (1 Aug was merely a belated ceremonial event).

10/1, 5th para.: the Denbigh, Ruthin & Corwen's temporary station at Corwen opened 22 Sep 1864 (*Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald* 24 September, and in both *Cambrian News* and *North Wales Chronicle* 1 October)

11/1, penultimate para.: for *opening* of Llwyngwril to Penmaenpool refer to Vol. 2.

12/1, 5th para.: the spelling of Aberystwith was not altered to Aberystyth by the Cambrian until **1 Apr 1891**. The earlier spelling was **not** 'incorrect' but in accord with contemporary usage.

12/1, 8th para.: the 'deviation' from Glandovey Jn to Aberdovey was opened for goods 1 Apr 1867 (RAIL 1089/8 – distance table amendment) and for passengers 14 Aug 1867 (*Birmingham Daily Post* 17 Aug).

12/2: **amalgamation with** (not absorption by) GWR sealed 25 March 1922, back dated to 1 Jan.

12/2, penultimate para.: the miners' strike was from 6 Mar 1984 to 3 Mar 1985, but all stations on the coast line had already been closed for domestic coal traffic from Sep 1983.

13, box: the length of the loop has varied over the years – the dimensions show applied 1932 to post 1965 but *by* 1975; 3 Jan 1863 was ceremonial opening of station (and line) - regular service started 5th (*vide* p.14 – and *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 2 Jan); closed for domestic coal (and any remaining goods) Sep 1983 *(BLN 466)*

19/1: it appears the new 50ft turntable was complete at 12 Dec 1899 but not actually in use until 16 Jan 1900.

29/2: GWR's acquisition of Corris deemed to have been w.e.f. **4** Aug 1930 (when CR's bank account closed and transferred to GWR – see Johnson *Great Western Narrow Gauge* (2011), p. 49).

40/2: the 55ft turntable dates from Jan 1942

68, upper caption: for Aberystwyth (in railway's title) read Aberystwith.

72: Derwenlas Crossing: mid-point of location was 77m65ch

75, box: Signal box pre 1890 *might* have been at 78m78ch but thereafter was at 79m1ch; opening date refers to passenger station – the location had functioned as a junction from 1 Apr 1867 on opening for goods of the 'deviation' to Aberdovey. "Cyffordd Dyfi" is the Welsh translation of Dovey Junction but has never been the station's *formal* name.

75/1: there is (and always has been) a public footpath, alongside the line – see top photo p.91 – giving access from Glandovey (as well as the dubious footpath to Pont Llyfnant of lower photo, p.79)

76 and 77: the plan appears to represent the layout between 1923 and 1964

77, caption: the 'non-existent post' seems simply to be a line or fault on the negative or print

86/2: threatened Jan 1902 closure of station was approved (Cambrian Rlys Traffic & Works Committee Minutes 8983 and 9013 (at least) at RAIL 92/12 [these minutes do not seem to have been rescinded!]). Renaming from Glandovey Junction to Dovey Junction was from 1 Jul 1904 (Cambrian Rlys General Manager's Report dated 9 Jun 1904 to Traffic & Works Committee, at RAIL 92/74 folio 114)

88/2: 'Sprinters' = classes 150 upwards diesel multiple units

93, box: Signal box distance is that of original box; closed for goods 19 Aug 1963

97/2: the renaming was effected 1 July 1904.

111, box: add: Opened 1 July 1863; closed for goods 24 June 1963 and for passengers 14 June 1965

115: the plan appears to represent the layout between 1896 and 1927

115/2: the loop extension was brought into use 17 Aug 1941

118: upper caption: the view is looking northwards, across the estuary towards Aberdovey (otherwise the railway bridge would be in view!)

119, box: The branch would have ceased to be used for goods traffic with the opening of the 'deviation' line between Glandovey Jn and Aberdovey from 1 Apr 1867 (RAIL 1089/8 – distance table amendment).

122, plan: Cerig-y-Penrhyn to read Cerrig-y-Penrhyn

124/2: the 'deviation' from Glandovey Jn to Aberdovey was opened for goods 1 Apr 1867 (RAIL 1089/8 – distance table amendment) and for passengers from 14 August 1867. Passengers were **not** involved in conveyance by road around the tunnels, for those were **not** rejected by Capt. Tyler (*vide* Johnson, *The Cambrian Railways* (OPC, 2013), p. 88). The Cambrian were particularly obtuse in not immediately taking up Tyler's hint (in his report of 27 March) that their narrowness could be overcome by fitting window bars: as soon as the company undertook - in early August - to do that, BoT approval was given on 12 Aug, and the deviation opened on 14 Aug 1867. In any event, the Cambrian would not have conveyed passengers round the tunnels by road but would have continued to ferry passengers via Ynyslas by the ferry *Elizabeth* which did not leave Aberdovey for Portmadoc until 1868 (perhaps Green was thinking of a later episode when just that did happen for a short period); the mistaken assertion is **not** repeated in vol. 2.

124, West Wharf Siding, box: private siding agreement terminated Dec 1909 and track truncated just before the road bridge and timber yards by date of 1923 GWR survey; remainder had been removed by OS 1930 revision.

129, box: station at 87.27 (2022 Sectional Appendix); closed for goods 1 June 1964

130, upper caption: Savin's hotel might better be described as being at the left-hand end of the row of buildings (part, at least, survives as apartments)

130/1: 2nd para.: the Directors will, no doubt, have repaired to Savin's hotel, to take refreshment…

153, box: renamed from Llanfihangel to Llandre 1 Aug 1916 (*Hand-book of Stations* amendment leaflet); closed for goods 1 June 1964

155/2 and 156/1: The Plynlimon & Hafan opened for goods *probably* by the time of a report in *Montgomery County Times*, 3 July 1897, p.5, and for passengers 28 March 1898 (*Aberystwyth Observer* of 31 March 1898, p.2). It closed from 15 Aug 1898 (*Cambrian News* 19 Aug and 19 Aug and *Y Negesydd* 26 Aug). *Cambrian News* 2 Dec 1898, p.5, reports the railway "has been suspended for a few months." This, coupled with a note in the *Montgomery County Times* of the following day (p.5) that "The cost of producing setts *(at Hafan)* has been so great as to prevent any decent profit being made on the business", all gives credence to cessation of mining leading to the complete closure of the line – if not from 15 August 1898, then at least very soon

after. It did not operate in 1899 (*Montgomery County Times* 19 Aug 1899, p.8), and at a shareholders' EGM on 20 Dec 1899 the company decided to go into voluntary liquidation (*London Gazette,* 5 December 1899).

161/2 General Notes: The Plynlimon & Hafan Tramway's passenger service was not limited to Mondays (market day) but ran Sundays excepted – to Hafan Foot - from 4 July 1898 – albeit only for six weeks (*R&CHS Railway Chronology Group Co-ordinating Newsletter* 108, p.18).

165, Box: Closed for goods 1 June 1964; reopened for passengers 14 Feb 2021.

165/2: The first siding was authorised 24 Jan 1872.

167/1: Platform extensions authorised 31 March 1886.

172/2: All remaining sidings put out of use 28 Sep 964.

186: The Llanbadarn signalling diagram represents the situation from 1924 to 1965.

191, Box: Aberystwyth closed for domestic coal (and any remaining goods, apart from private siding) traffic Sep 1983 *(BLN 466)*. Siding traffic has been on and off over the years, oil traffic eventually ceasing but timber traffic passing in 2023.

191: Until the mid/latter 19thC, the town was spelled Aberystwith – for example, the *Aberystwith Observer* changed its spelling from 16 Sep 1865. The new *Aberystwith Times* used that spelling for its very first issue (2 Oct 1868) but from its second issue switched to the more modern spelling! The Cambrian did not make the change until 1 Apr 1891: Cambrian notices for year 1891 at Kidderminster Railway Museum (item 2003/000826) show that until the last day of March 1891 Aberyst**with** was used and that from 1 April Aberyst**wyth** was substituted.

191 *et seq.*: for details of other minor layout changes see *Track Layout Diagrams of the Great Western Railway and BR (WR) – Section 60*, cited above.

193/2: 2nd para.: The M&M opened to Strata Florida (then known as Ystradmeurig) 20 Aug 1866 (*Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald* 25 Aug 1866)

198/2: add reference to the spelling change from Aberystwith to Aberystwyth from 1 April 1891

200/2 – 201/1: The un-named dismissed Aberystwyth station master was Tom Kilvington (born ca.1850, died 1910).

214-215: Signalling diagram must date from ca.1907 to ca.1924.

229/1, final para.: the date (and method) of demolition do not tally with photo caption on p.280.

229/2, 2nd para.: domestic coal traffic ceased Sep 1983 (*BLN 466*), pre-dating the miners' strike (which was from 6 Mar 1984 to 3 Mar 1985).

229/2: That part of the station buildings (including refreshment rooms), behind the stop blocks of what had been platforms 1 and 2, and fronting Alexandra Road, became a J D Wetherspoons public house, Yr Hen Orsaf (*The Old Station*) in July 2001. http://aberpubs.blogspot.com/2007/10/yr-hen-orsaf-old-station.html The *Aberystwyth Byegones* exhibition has gone.

243: the area of former platforms 4 and 5 was initially given over as Vale of Rheidol passenger terminal but has subsequently been given over to their carriage shed.

269/2: The ownership of the Vale of Rheidol Railway is with the Phyllis Rampton Narrow Gauge Railway Trust, which also owns/controls the Brecon Mountain Railway. The operators of the railway have continued to alter their loco and station facilities.

280, caption: does not tally with text at 229/1 final para. *(one suspects the caption date should read 6 Feb 1984).*

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Volume 2 – Dovey Jn to Dolgelley (Wild Swan: 1996)

1/2: Llwyngwril – Penmaenpool did open 3 July 1865 – but only via the curve avoiding the yet-to-be opened Barmouth Junction station (*Merionethshire Standard & Mid Wales Herald* 1 and 8 Jul 1865)

5/2: the 'deviation' from Glandovey Jn to Aberdovey was opened for goods 1 Apr 1867 (RAIL 1089/8 – distance table amendment)

5/2: The "opening" from Barmouth Jn to Barmouth on 3 Jun 1867, across the bridge, was - so far as passengers were concerned - only *either* by foot *or* by horse drawn carriage. The only section opened for passenger *trains* was from the East Jn into Barmouth Jn station (Dolgelly line platforms) (*Merionethshire Standard & Mid Wales Herald* 8 Jun 1867). However, Cambrian Traffic Manager Elias's report to the Cambrian board of 8 Jul 1867 (RAIL 92/32) strongly suggests that, by then, goods traffic was passing – certainly to Barmouth, and beyond by Savin's hired loco (which he had but recently given up); alas, it is not clear from the minutes

whether the Cambrian continued to work goods north of Barmouth Junction, prior to the 'official' opening from 10 Oct 1867.

6/1: the 'deviation' from Glandovey Jn to Aberdovey was opened for goods 1 Apr 1867 (RAIL 1089/8 – distance table amendment). *Note that there is in this Vol. 2 no mention of going round by road – as had been claimed in Vol. 1, p.124 – because there is no evidence to support that mistaken assertion.*

6/1: the Carnarvonshire opened only between Carnarvon and Chwilog (not affecting the Cambrian's lines) on 2 Sep 1867. They extended service via Afon Wen to both **Penrhyn(deudraeth)** and Pwllheli from 20 Sep 1867 – the timetable is to be found in *Carnarvon & Denbigh Herald* 28 Sep 1867 p. 1.

6/2 and 8/1: the opening from Barmouth Jn to Barmouth – and on to Pwllheli – on 10 Oct 1867 was for passengers, in that the prior 'service' for passengers between Barmouth Jn and Barmouth had not involved *trains*. However – as explained above – it is not clear whether or not regular or *ad hoc* goods service had already been in operation prior to then.

8/1: the Corwen & Bala's opening on 1 Apr 1868 was to their (initial) Bala station – it was only later that a halt – Bala Lake Halt – was erected on the site. The opening on 4 Aug 1868 was only for passengers, and only to a temporary station at Dolgelly; it extended to the permanent station on18 Aug 1868, and opened for goods 1 Oct 1868. *See also 255/1.*

8/1: in penultimate para., 1968 to read 1868

8/2: The Cambrian extended to their temporary Dolgelly station (Frondirion) on 21 June 1869 and to the permanent joint station on 1 Aug 1869. *See also 255/1.*

9/2: penultimate paragraph explains why there was a need to replace Barmouth's station building in 1873!

10/2: in last para., 1973 to read 1873

15/2 (and 310, Appendix IV): the name of the line the Northern Counties Electric Traction Co of Dolgarrog were also proposing to electrify was the narrow gauge Portmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway (MT6/1351/1).

19/2: first para.: alas, Green died before Volume III was written.

19/2: final para.: the miners' strike was from 6 Mar 1984 to 3 Mar 1985.

22/2: confirms that the refusal to sanction the opening of the deviation was 1866, **not** 1867 as had wrongly been stated in vol. 1, p. 124. "Inspector Tyler" was Capt. H W Tyler, RE, a Board of Trade's Inspecting Officer of Railways since 1853.

26/1: "Cyffordd Dyfi" is the Welsh translation of Dovey Junction but has never been the station's *formal* name.

44: Abertafol was at 82m **29**ch.

63/1: amend boxed details:

Closed for goods: 1 April 1885 [RCH distance book amendment no. 174 (30 Mar 1885 – RAIL 1089/18) elaborates: "A new Goods station will be opened at Aberdovey Harbour on 1st April 1885, from which date the old Aberdovey Station *[i.e. the 1867 and present day station]* will be used for Passenger and Parcel traffic only". *This also confirms that the passenger station has always been at its present site.*]

Green's 3rd para. confirms that passenger traffic from the Cambrian main line commenced 14 Aug 1867 with *no suggestion* of use of road to avoid the tunnels (as had wrongly been suggested in Vol. 1, p. 124).

Connected *(i.e.to what is now Dovey Jn)*: Goods 1 April 1867, passengers 14 Aug 1867

64 to 70: at Aberdovey: for Tomlin read Tomlins and for Tomlin's read Tomlins's (or Tomlins') [as given elsewhere and at p.314]

66/1: But was there not a carriage loading dock at the Harbour, as authorised in Jan 1872? – see p. 85/1.

69: the curvature of the Carriage Landing (plan at top of page) is misleading – see middle photo same page and top of p.71, and plan p.75.

81/1: box: "together with junction on Deviation line" means that passenger use of the Harbour branch ceased coterminously with the passenger opening of the Deviation line

82/1: box: "Designated as a goods station" simply means it replaced the original goods depot at "high level" station

93/1: designation of 'Aberdovey Harbour station' (and consequent closure of the 1867 site to goods): see amplified comments above for p. 63/1

96/2: in last para, 1986 to read 1896

105/1: in first para. for Humphrey-Owen read Humphreys-Owen [as correctly rendered lower down that column and as given on p. 314]

106/1: for Waterford & Aberdovey read Cambrian [as given at p.314]

113/1 (and throughout book): for Soloman Andrews read **Solomon** Andrews (obituaray: *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald,* 13 Nov 1906)

117/1: Box: and 139/1: Station distance nowadays given as 88m **56c**. Goods yard last used 20 May 1984 (delivery of TR loco. no. 3 returning from national tour); general merchandise and coal *probably* saw little use after cessation of freight services on the Cambrian coast line after the embargo on locos. imposed on Barmouth bridge in May 1980; connections to yard removed 8 June 1985.

119/1: for Aberystwyth (in railway's title) read Aberystwith

154/1: Box: and 155/1: Tonfanau Goods siding *(i.e. public goods siding)* closed 4 Nov 1963 and controlling ground frame taken away (as South GF) 19 Jan 1964.

155/1: Box: Private siding agreement terminated 24 July 1956; controlling ground frame taken away (as North GF) 29 June 1958

157/1: Box: Opened 9 March 1896 *(Wrexham Advertiser* 14 Mar 1896, p. 2) for single unadvertised pair of trains (advertised on unauthorised basis July to Sep 1896); fully advertised from July 1903. (TNA MT6/1185/6)

163/1: Box: although the quarry itself opened ca. 1864, the siding was not until considerably later.

166/2: Box: and 167/2: closed "as from Saturday 26 Oct 1991 – last train 25th" *(Branch Line News* nos. 680 and 682) – for reason explained on p.167/2.

170/1: Box: Closed for goods 4 May 1964. Llwyngwril is "Gwril's grove" (Gwril having been a mythical giant).

184/2: for Aberystwyth (in railway's title) read Aberystwith

211/1: Barmouth Ferry closed w.e.f. **5** Jun 1867. Ynys-faig Siding appeared as new entry in RCH Distance Table amendments (RAIL 1089/8) of 20 Apr 1865 and deleted again in amendments dated 4 Sep 1865. Fairbourne opened for goods 1 Aug 1896, passengers 1 July 1897 (*Cambrian News,* 2 Jul 1897).

211/1: The Barmouth bridge was opened for passenger traffic on 3 June 18677 – but not by train – see comment under page 5/2, above.

215/1: the reference to the report of 1 Feb 1899, about the passenger station being well used, should be read in conjunction with its opening date of 1 July 1897 (see above under p. 211)

219/2: A brief mention of the Fairbourne Model Railway *(sic)* appeared in *The Railway News*, 12 Aug 1916, p. 226, by which date it was running – but only for 300 yards; the gauge is there given as 16½ *(sic)* inches.

225/1: Box: Opened: Main, as terminus: **5** June 1867 (Cambrian advert. in *Merionethshire Standard & Mid Wales Herald* Sat 8 Jun 1867, p. 1)
Opened: Main and Branch opened to passengers and goods on **10 Oct** 1867 *(the Branch curve was not in use for passengers prior to this)*
Closed: Loop: Passengers: 10 Oct 1867 *(from that date Penmaenpool was served by a shuttle with Barmouth over the Branch curve – see schedule at RAIL 923/1; the loop was thereafter used solely for specials)*

227 *et seq.*: for Soloman Andrews read **Solomon** Andrews (as p. 113/1)

244/2: date of authority for closure of East Box: Green says 9 Oct **1930** but Williams *The Ruabon to Barmouth Line*, p.255 has 9 Oct **1929**. As box did not close until 12 Dec 1931, Green's date seems the more plausible.

247/2: remaining Morfa Mawddach box (erstwhile North box) closed **9** June 1968. Embargo placed on locomotives using Barmouth bridge May 1980, resulting in effective closure of line to Pwllheli to goods traffic.

249/1: remaining Morfa Mawddach box (erstwhile North box) closed **9 June 1968** (c.f. p.247).

253/2: reversal of direction Barmouth Jn ⇔ Dolgelley: various service books (wtts) are available at RAIL 923 to pin this direction change down more precisely: 1888 = /11; 1889-90 = /13; 1891-2 = /14; 1892-3 = /16; 1893-4 = /17; Summer 1898 = RAIL 922/68 folio 193; 1898-9 = /19; 1899-1900 = /21

255/1: Box: The Bala & Dolgelly*(sic)* (GWR) opening on 4 Aug 1868 was only for passengers, and only to a temporary station at Dolgelly; it extended to the permanent station on18 Aug 1868, and opened for goods 1 Oct 1868.
That section of line between Bala Jn and Dolgellau reopened the following week after the Dec 1964 flooding but closed from 18 Jan 1965 (as had been planned)

255/1: Name changed from original Dolgelly to Dolgelley 24 June 1896 (amendment to RCH distance tables) and to Dolgellau 12 Sep 1960

257/1: 1st para. re running powers: the Traffic & Works Committee actually met on 19 June 1874; while the minute (RAIL 92/9, page 356) does say: "… the proposal [by the Bala & Dolgelley co's lawyers] … cannot be accepted in its integrity …" it seems very likely that 'integrity' should have read 'entirety'.

277/1: for Aberystwyth (in railway's title) read Aberystwith

293/1: Box: Delete first and second lines. Capt Tyler's report (29 June 1865) for the Board of Trade (MT6/34/13) is clear that there was no intermediate crossing station between Llwyngwril and Penmaenpool at the 1865 opening.

293/1: Capt Tyler's report (29 June 1865) for the Board of Trade (MT6/34/13) makes no mention of an "obstruction" in the form of a flat crossing with a tramway (an underbridge with low clearance seems more likely). So far as provision of standard gauge siding is concerned, see comment below for p. 294/2, final para.

294/2, first para.: there is no suggestion of any passing loop (or other siding) in Capt Tyler's report (29 June 1865) for the Board of Trade (MT6/34/13).

294/2, final para.: for 1879 read 1869. The construction of the siding was authorised on 14 May 1869 (see p. 297/2) - but there was to be no signal box. A further minute, of 22 Dec 1869, urged expedition in completion of the siding. (All this is, of course, commensurate with Green's other two correct references to 1869 in this para.). The siding had been removed again by the Ordnance Survey dated 1887.

297/1: Box: While goods would *appear* to have opened at the same time as passenger station in 1870 (from the evidence of the RCH Distance Tables amendment no. 5 of July 1870 (RAIL 1089/16)), a siding was not authorised until 1881 so the traffic before then may have been that from Garth, under the supervision of Arthog.

297/2: the reference to D Davies & Sons' requirements seems to refer to Garth Siding, not Arthog (how would a siding at Arthog itself be of use to the quarry at Ty'n-y-Coed with its tramway to Garth?)

299/2: the March 1881 'additional' siding appears to be the *first* siding here at Arthog itself (being additional to that at Garth).

300/2: it is questionable that there was ever a second siding at Arthog itself.

310/Appendix IV: the name of the line the Northern Counties Electric Traction Co of Dolgarrog were also proposing to electrify was the narrow gauge Portmadoc, Beddgelert & South Snowdon Railway (MT6/1351/1).

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Extracts of Working Instructions appear through the books. The October 1960 Sectional Appendix for the Shrewsbury Traffic District (BR 30013) is available for download by members of the Signalling Record Society at https://www.s-r-s.org.uk/archiveappendix.php#rtwrsectional

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