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From: "George Pritchard" <George@penhalvean.freemove.co.uk>

Subject: Cornwalls Railways part two

Date: Wed, 9 Jun 2004 03:35:13 +0100

Here is part two of our continuing story.

GeorgeP

In 1804 Richard convinced Samuel Homfray, the owner of the Pen-y-Darren ironworks near Dowlais, South Wales, to let him build another steam locomotive. Homfray gave the go ahead and even had a wager with neighbouring ironmaster, Anthony Hill, for 500 guineas (£525) that Richards locomotive would haul 10 tons of iron over the 9 miles of the Pen-y-Darren tramway to Abercynon. Richards engine design, had a single vertical cylinder, 8 foot flywheel and long piston-rod, and was completed and ready for its first run on February the 14th.

People came from far and wide to witness the first running of this the second railway engine. The wagons were loaded with iron, and 70 men also climbed on board and in this air of great excitement, the engine started on it's journey. Unfortunately, like both Richards steam car and first locomotive, disaster soon struck. The chimney of the locomotive struck a low bridge and both were destroyed. Now as part of the wager Samuel Homfray had given an undertaking that in the event of any mishap or breakdown, Richard would repair the engine unaided, and in a short time Richard had cleared the debris, repaired the chimney, and was back on board and underway reaching a speed of five miles an hour to his destination at Abercynon.

Samuel Homfray had won the wager and the world had its first Railway. Unfortunately the weight of the Locomotive, which had no form of suspension, proved too much for the plate-way as it continuously broke the iron rails and so could not be put to permanent use, and like the first engine is believed to have been converted into a stationary engine.

News of Richard's success at Pen-y-Darren reached Christopher Blackett the owner Wylam Colliery (Newcastle), who ordered a locomotive from Richard to run on a five-mile wooden wagon way had been built by the mine in 1748 to take the coal from Wylam to the River Tyne. The engine was built at Whinfield's Foundry, Gateshead owned by Trevithick's agent for the North East John Whinfield. It is believed that other Trevithick engines may have been built at this foundry and Trevithick himself mentions in January 1805 that he expected to visit Newcastle to see some of his 'travelling engines'. There is also a report that a William Chapman had such a locomotive, fitted with roughened wheels as stated in the Trevithick and Vivian Patent of 1802, stored at his ropeworks in Tyneside.

Richard sent John Steele who had worked with him on the building of the locomotive at Pen-y-Darren to supervise the construction of the Wylam engine. When completed it weighed five tons and proved to be too heavy for the wooden wagon way and was left to rust.

Richard seems to have become disillusioned with this further set back and ceased to work on locomotives. However, Davis Giddy of Trendrea in St. Erth. For many years the Member of Parliament for Helston, persuaded him to have another go in 1808. It is believed that Davis Giddy arranged for a piece of land known as Bedford Nursery Grounds, now Euston Square to be used to demonstrate the device. This locomotive was built to try and get the general public interest in this new form of transport. It was run on a purpose built circular track pulling an open four-wheeled carriage. This took place between 8th July and 18th September 1808 with tickets costing two shillings (10 pence). On the 3rd of August, Richard won a large bet when he raced it against a racehorse and won. A letter in the London Times dated October 16th 1829, says that "public expectation rose to a high pitch : nothing less was talked of, nor thought of." However nothing came of this design and Trevithick was later to accuse Watt and his partner, Matthew Boulton, of using their influence to persuade Parliament to pass a bill banning his experiments with steam locomotives.

But in 1813 Blackett, again contacted Richard and asked him to supply another locomotive as he had been working on replacing the wooden track with a 5 foot gauge iron one. Richard Trevithick told Blackett that he was too busy to build it, however, the Science Museum in London has a plan showing a Trevithick style locomotive similar to the design of his first Wylam Engine but with a shorter boiler and larger wheels. The gearing is 3:2 instead of 2:1 used on the built locomotive. As the gauge of this locomotive is 5 feet, it would imply that it was designed for use at Wylam.

Blackett then instructed William Hedley the superintendent of Wylam Colliery, to construct one. Was this based on or used parts from the

locomotive supplied by Trevithick? This was not a complete success and in Hedley's own words 'It went badly, the obvious defect being want of steam'.

It was probably this machine that was seen by George Stephenson and after inspecting it declared he could make a better one himself! But that is for part three of the Cornwalls Railways.

This thread:

- [Cornwalls Railways part two](#) by "George Pritchard" <George@penhalvean.freemove.co.uk>
 - [Re: Cornwalls Railways part two](#) by "Jan Davis" <jandavis3@cox.net>

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