

Glimpses of the Past

by George Toms

No. 19 'Sir Haydn'

In 1878 the Hughes' Locomotive & Tramway Engine Works delivered three small 0-4-0 saddle tank locomotives to the Corris Railway in Wales. They were intended to replace horse traction on this remote narrow gauge railway and to provide the motive power for the start of passenger services.

The locomotives were numbered 1 to 3 and put to work hauling goods and mineral trains. In 1883 a passenger service was started, but the locomotives were found to be too unsteady at the higher speeds and had to be returned to Loughborough for rear pony trucks with tiny wheels to be added. They then gave good service for some years.

Board of Trade regulations required all passenger trains to be fitted with continuous automatic brakes by 1892 and the locomotives then had rear frame extensions added to make room for the vacuum brake. The three locomotives were in turn given major overhauls at Loughborough between 1895 and 1900, including new boilers and tanks. At that time the Corris was a very busy and profitable railway. Trade slumped in the early 1900s and by 1920 the locomotives were in poor shape.

Nos.1 and 2 had done most of the work for years so No.3, which was in better condition, was rebuilt using some parts from the others which were subsequently scrapped. In their place a new locomotive (No.4) was obtained from Kerr Stuart in 1921.

The Corris Railway Company was an early operator of motor buses and in 1930 the railway was sold to the Great Western and the passenger service discontinued. The staple traffic from the slate quarries declined steadily, the line just surviving the war years, but closing in 1948, due to flood damage and expensive repairs to the locomotives becoming necessary.

No.3 was placed in store at Machynlleth and remained so, with No.4. Under normal circumstances that would have been the end of the story for the pair, but fortunately this did not happen.

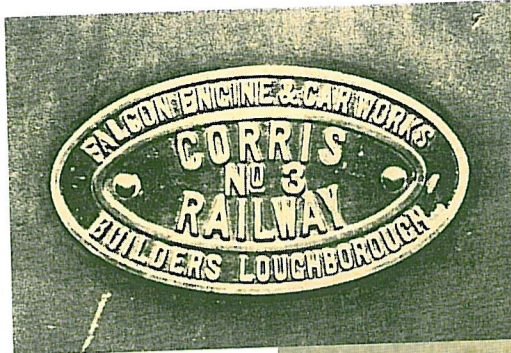
The first railway to be preserved by railway enthusiasts was the Talyllyn Railway, another narrow gauge line only a few miles away from the Corris Railway. Desperate for motive power, this extremely run-down old railway had been kept going on a shoestring by Sir Haydn Jones, local MP and owner of the railway. Following his death, his widow was approached by Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society members to see if she would sell the railway. Happily she agreed to do so when it was discovered that the railway could not be abandoned without an Act of Parliament, the cost of which would have exceeded the value of the entire railway.

Members also approached British Railways, which had inherited the Corris Railway and its locomotives upon nationalisation, with a view to purchasing Nos.3 and 4 for running on the Talyllyn Railway. A sale was agreed and the locomotives were moved to their new home. No.3 was made steamable by June 1951 and entered service. In view of the railway's previous dependence upon its life-expired native locomotives, it came as a disaster when it was discovered that No.3, by this time christened 'Sir Haydn', frequently dropped between the ageing and decrepit rails.

That No.3 was half an inch narrower in the tyre treads had been overlooked. It was well-known however that the track gauge was too great, so No.3 was taken out of service pending modification and track improvements being made.

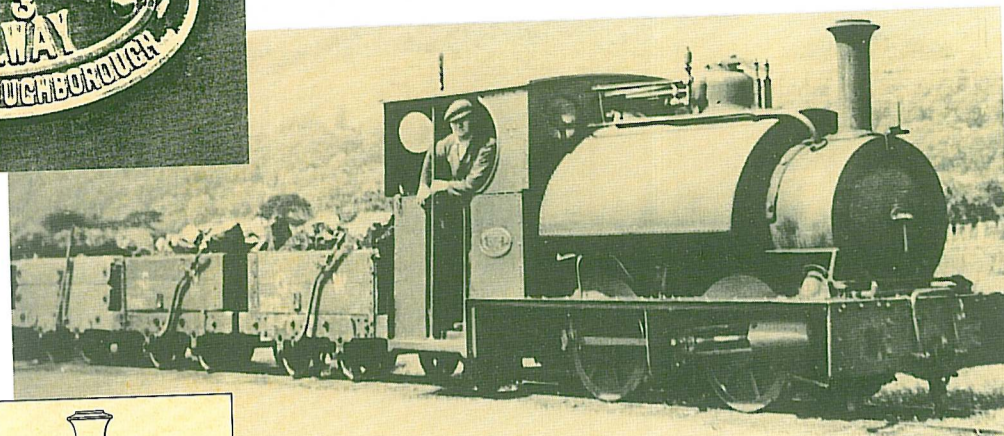
'Sir Haydn' was stored for two years and re-entered service, albeit at reduced boiler pressure due to the discovery of considerable corrosion. Nonetheless, the locomotive served for five years before being withdrawn from service for overhaul and new boiler. Finance was a long time in accumulation and in 1964 a new boiler finally arrived. About this time Brush provided a new cab and bunker section and 'Sir Haydn' re-entered service in 1968 – the rebuilding had taken ten years.

In 1978 'Sir Haydn' was the centrepiece of two centenaries, that of the locomotive itself and that of the Brush companies. It ran special trains for the season, notably 'The Falcon Centenarian', and returned to

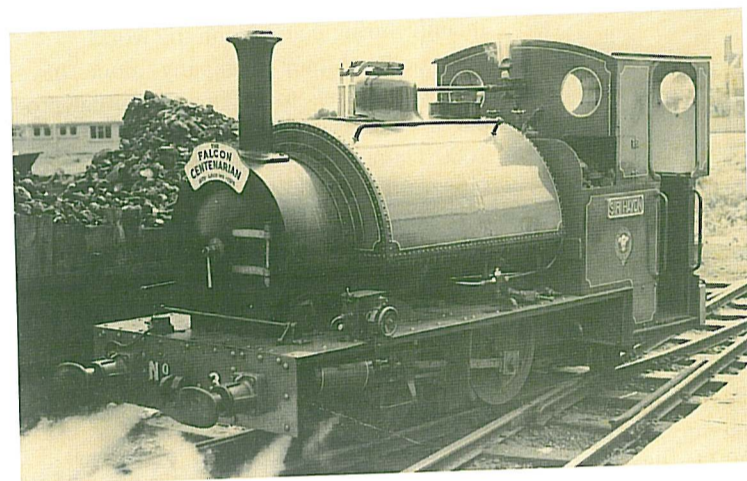
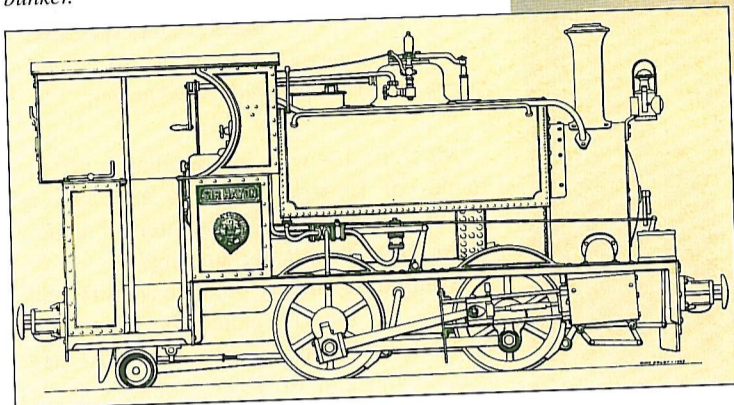


The works plate fitted to No.3 upon rebuilding at the turn of the century.

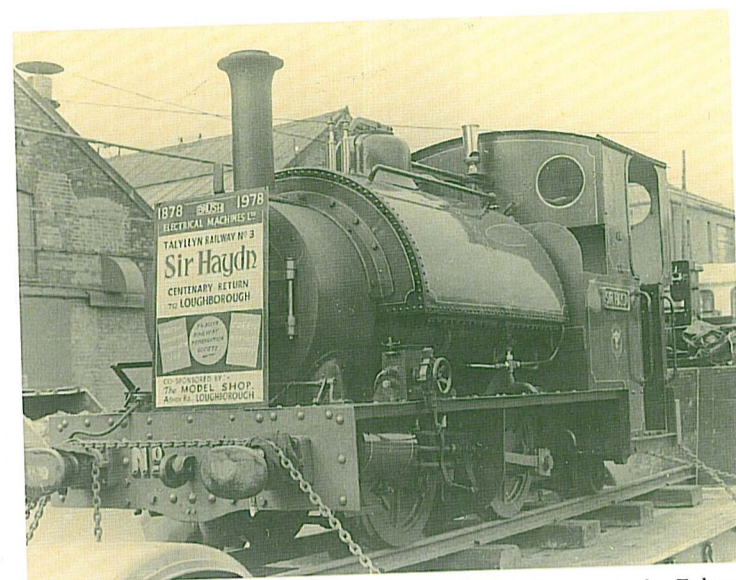
No.3 in service at Machynlleth on the Corris Railway during Great Western days.
Courtesy – Corris Railway Society



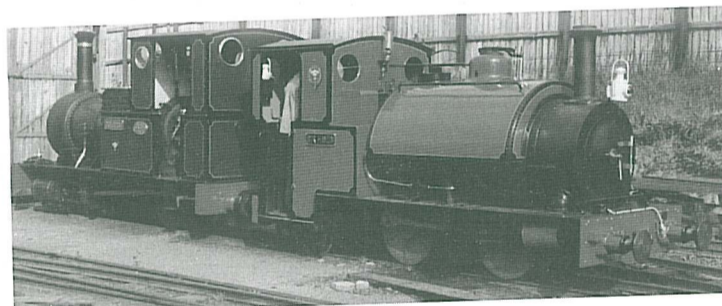
Drawing of 'Sir Haydn' dating from the mid-1960s when Brush provided a new cab and bunker.



'Sir Haydn' in 1978, with 'The Falcon Centenarian' headboard in position.
Courtesy – Talyllyn Railway



'Sir Haydn' during its brief return to the Falcon Works in 1978.

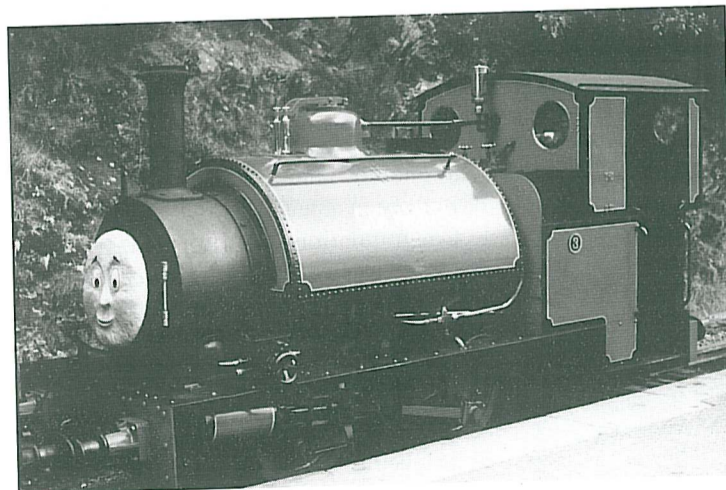


'Sir Handel' with 'Dolgoch', an original Talyllyn Railway locomotive.

Courtesy – Talyllyn Railway

No.3 disguised as 'Sir Handel' on the Talyllyn Railway.

Courtesy – Talyllyn Railway

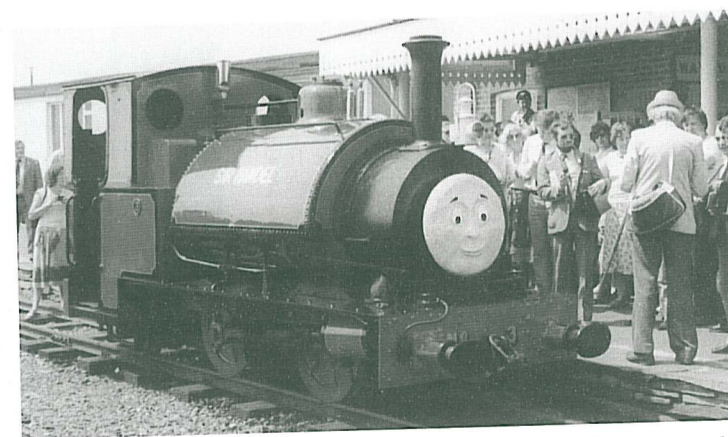


Loughborough for exhibition at the Falcon Works on 1st and 2nd September in conjunction with the Centenary Open Day celebrations. Brush provided a low loader as transport and the driver was treated by the Talyllyn Railway as if royalty. It was a weekend he would never forget.

While at the Falcon Works 'Sir Haydn' was parked just outside what was until recently 11 Shop, opposite the Control Centre, and many Brush employees took the opportunity to inspect the locomotive. Following the celebrations 'Sir Haydn' returned to Wales and resumed duties on the Talyllyn Railway.

'Sir Handel' stealing the show during a naming ceremony of a BR electric locomotive at Euston station, London, in April 1984. No.3 was mounted on a well wagon for this occasion.

Courtesy – Talyllyn Railway



'Sir Handel' at Tywyn Wharf Station on the Talyllyn Railway.

Courtesy – Talyllyn Railway

In 1982 'Sir Haydn' was overhauled and re-appeared in a new guise as 'Sir Handel'. Gone was the green livery, replaced by red. Now No.3 was posing as one of the locomotive characters of the 'Thomas the Tank Engine' series of children's books written by the Reverend Wilbert Awdry. As Rev. Awdry had based his characterised locomotive 'Sir Handel' on No.3 it was fitting tribute – in both directions. Not all railway enthusiasts agreed, but the new guise (complete with happy smokebox face) attracted many more passengers to the railway over the next two years. It was a wonderful ploy.

A new saddle tank was fitted in 1987 and then 'Sir Haydn' underwent a further overhaul, to return to traffic once again at Easter 1992. Of the original locomotive it is said that the frames, cylinders, wheels and motion remain. Certainly, 'Sir Haydn' still looks every inch a Falcon Works product and both he and the railway are worthy of a visit in their country setting.

The co-operation of Messrs. John Smallwood and John Bate of the Talyllyn Railway Company is gratefully acknowledged.