

The Talyllyn Railway

by John Latter

As late as the beginning of the 19th century thatched roofs were the choice of British builders. However, thatch roofs had a variety of disadvantages – vermin from rats to wasps would burrow into the reeds that

Figure B1

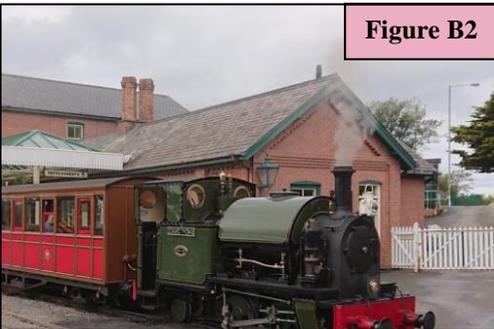


formed the thatch and create nests. Also, in the event of a fire, windblown sparks could settle on adjacent roofs and spread the fire further.

Slate roofs overcame most of these disadvantages and slowly replaced thatch as the roofing material of choice. In fact, slate is still used as a roofing material in some parts of Britain. **Figure B3** shows the souvenir sheet issued to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the start of slate quarry operations.

Slate was quarried in Wales. One such operation was the Bryn Eglwyns quarries near Abergynolwyn. As the popularity of slate increased, improving the method of getting the slate to market had to be considered. The Talyllyn Railway (TR) was one of a number of the ‘narrow gauge’ rail lines constructed in north and middle of Wales for the transport of slate. The track was just 2 feet and 3 inches wide [**Figure B2**].

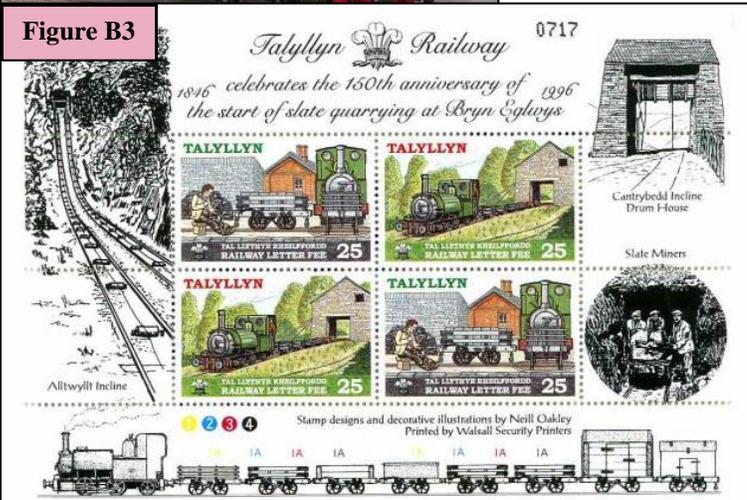
Figure B2



The Talyllyn railway entered service in 1865 and was just 7.5 miles long running along the Fathew Valley from Tywyn Wharf, Cardigan Bay to Nant Gwernol. A number of horse-drawn tramways continued into the mountains to the actual quarry.

On December 26, 1946, a serious rock fall occurred at the quarry when several weakened support columns gave way – as a result rail service was suspended. In 1950 the railway owner, Haydn Jones died, and the end appeared to be in sight for the Talyllyn. The railway had been losing money

Figure B3



for years. With the aid of the previous owner’s widow, Lady Haydn Jones, the TALYLLYN RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY (TRPS) was formed and took ownership of a railway which by that time was in very sorry shape. It is believed that the TRPS was the first such organization of its type in the world. Much hard labor by volunteers was required to get the rail line operating again. The track has been re-laid; engines rebuilt; carriages constructed and a safe and flexible signaling system (powered ironically by solar panels!) has been installed. Today even two of the original locomotives are still in use.

Even so the TR is still very much the railway it always was, with a maximum speed of less than 9 mph. The line was the first narrow gauge railway to be

specifically designed to employ steam locomotives; and despite being created to carry slate, it also carried passengers almost from the start. **Figure B1** shows an example of the “postage stamps” issued to cover the cost of a letter being carried by the railroad.

If you are a train buff and you have the opportunity to visit the UK, you might benefit from a trip to Wales after visiting Bristol to experience the world’s first all iron ship the SS GREAT BRITAIN.

[Editor’s note: The history of the Talyllyn Railroad is rich in detail. More information can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talyllyn_Railway]

What Philatelic Fun Can I Have During a Pandemic?

by Phil Fettig

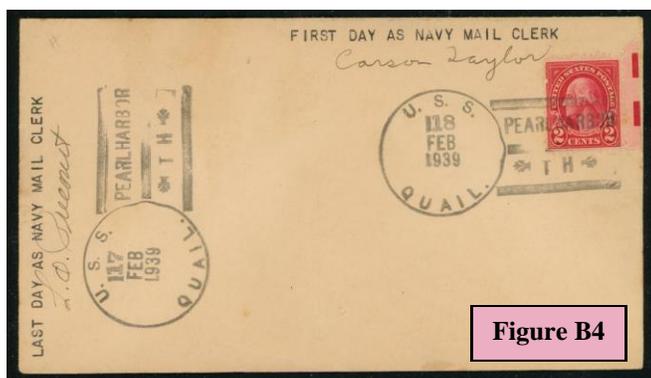


Figure B4

Ok, let me admit right off the top – as a collector/dealer I am not an organized person. Thankfully, there is another collector/dealer in this home that is! Now that that is out of the way I picked one of many boxes of “stuff” out of storage and started to sift through it to see what I could find. (Actually, this is how I have selected subjects for many of my articles – However, in this case I was having my fun searching before the editor emailed to see if I had an article for him.) I found some covers that I either had an idea that would make an article or sell on eBay, or both!

The first cover that caught my interest [Figure B4] was a Naval item that was easy for me to research. The duel cancel that showed a change in mail clerks was interesting. I knew by the name that the ship USS QUAIL (AM-15) was a minesweeper. A search of her history told an amazing story. The ship was damaged beyond repair when the Japanese bombed the Cavite Navy Yards in the Philippines on December 8, 1941. The guns were removed to use in the island’s defense. The crew split up after drawing straws. The Captain and 17 crew members made a daring weeks long escape to Australia in a small boat. The remaining crew members fought to defend the island until they were all captured. All the crew that left for Australia made it. That was not the case for the POWs as some died in captivity. So, I wondered, did Petty Officer Taylor live through either one of the possible outcomes? After failing to shed any light on the answer, I contacted the National Archives and requested help. Figure B5 shows part of one of the documents they provided.

REPORT OF CHANGES				
of U. S. S. QUAIL				
for the month ending <u>31st</u> day of <u>August</u> , 19 <u>40</u> , date of sailing				
from _____ to _____				
1	2	3	4	
NAME	SERVICE NUMBER	Rank of Date of	Date of Discharge	
<small>(Alphabetical except where noted to indicate all transfers to the list and the first name written in full)</small>				
<small>(If the number of the member is not known, the number to which he is assigned)</small>				
10 SHUTE, Charles F.	223 15 46	MM2a	2	Sept 36 Pearl Harbor, T.H.
11 TAYLOR, Carson, Jr.	355 88 14	MM1c	21	June 40 Bellevue, D.C.
12 USN	Trans.	8-12-40	to USS OGLALA for duty.	
13 USN	Trans.	8-12-40	to Rec. Ship, San Diego, Calif.	

Figure B5

And now, the story gets even more bizarre!

It seems Taylor spent a very short time on the QUAIL and was transferred to the USS OGLALA (CM-4), A Minelaying Ship stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. So, he escaped from one ship prior to her destruction and sent to the OGLALA, a ship that was sunk on December 7, 1941 during the

attack on Pearl Harbor! (NOTE: Because of the International Date Line 12/7 in Pearl Harbor and 12/8 in the Philippines were actually the same day).

I did not find Taylor's name on a list of those who lost their lives in the Pearl Harbor attack. Now I needed to find out if he actually had still been assigned to the OGLALA that fateful day. Back to the National Archives I went. In still another amazing turn of events Petty Officer Taylor had been transferred to the USS RAMSEY (DD-124), A Destroyer also homeported in Pearl Harbor. However, in October 1941 he was sent on temporary duty to the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC and was there on December 7th. In the meantime, while his two prior ships were getting sunk on each side of the Pacific, his present vessel was heavily involved in the defense of Pearl Harbor, even sinking a miniature Japanese submarine outside the harbor the day of the attack.

So, as much as I would have liked to find out more about Carson Taylor, Jr.’s life, the story has to end for me. However, at least for a few hours on several days, I did obtain a healthy break away from the world’s problems by trying to unravel this complex chain of events following a sailor I never had the privilege of knowing. It is clear to me that I owe this pleasure to the fact that I was able to expand and combine a love of stamp collecting and the Navy. It also didn’t hurt to marry another stamp collector!

A special thanks to the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md. for the assistance provided. I made two visits here in 2005 & 2007, and it is truly a National treasure.