

5.

Caernarfon branch

The eight mile branch for Caernarfon left the mainline at Menai Bridge. It was basically the remains of the line that ran through to the Cambrian line at Afon Wen which was closed past Caernarfon in December 1964. Class 40's were employed relatively frequently on the route, mainly on summer dated holiday trains from the Manchester and Liverpool areas, many of which conveyed passengers for the Butlins camp at Pwllheli. From 1964 onwards they were conveyed the remaining distance by bus! A number of class 40 hauled Royal Trains traversed the line, the most notable being on July 1st 1969 in association with the Prince of Wales Investiture, see below.

The line was closed to freight in August 1969 followed by complete closure on January 5th 1970. However, following the disastrous fire within the Britannia Bridge on May 23rd of the same year, the line was reopened to freight between June 15th 1970 and the 5th of February 1972 during which a regular Freightliner working was implemented for unloading at Caernarfon to allow final transport of the containers to Holyhead by road. Class 40's were rarely provided for these or the other occasional freight workings seen during this temporary reprieve for the line.



Above

The most significant class 40 passenger working in North Wales took place on July 1st 1969 when 233 (40033) "Empress of England" and 216 (40016) "Campania" worked the Prince of Wales Investiture Royal Train throughout between Euston and Caernarfon. In this view the inbound working is seen approaching a temporary platform at Griffiths Crossing just outside Caernarfon at 2pm having spent the previous night stabled in Menai Bridge yard. In the foreground the Household Cavalry is seen waiting to act as two separate escorts to Caernarfon Castle, one for the Prince and one as a Sovereign escort to the Queen. Interestingly the horses and men concerned had been transported from London to Bangor by train hauled by class 47 number 1719 (47811) before being ridden to Caernarfon prior to the event. This was the last occasion that the Household Cavalry was transported by rail.

On the day of the Investiture, class 47 locomotives 1718 (47539) in tandem with 1692 (47104) worked another service in from Crewe along with 1723 (47540) and 1719 (47811) taking over from electric traction on two other departures from Euston. Also, 1591 (47557), 1592 (47544) and 1593 (47467) covered workings from Cardiff. Last but not least, class 40's 207 (40007) and 242 (40042) were also used as Royal Train pilot locomotives during the proceedings!

Photo E N Kneale/S Morris collection.