

CARDALL'S CORNER

July 2016

By Val Brodie



A Victorian Summer Holiday in Rhyl

The Journal of Annie Eliza Bull - July 1874

In Annie Bull's day, the journey time from Marton to Rhyl was six hours. Travelling with friends in a group including children, her train trip (change at Rugby, Crewe and Chester) was an adventure for a young single woman, in her early twenties. She wrote a journal each day and a copy has come into the Southam Heritage Collection, courtesy of Gill Flower, and from it we have learned a lot about Victorian holidays.

Annie said *'we all felt tired when we got in, it was a very nice day and we had a pleasant journey only it was so dusty the dust seemed to blow in through the carriage windows all the time'*. They were met at Rhyl station with a carriage by their landlord, whom they knew, and then on arrival they went upstairs to wash and brush their clothes free of dust before having tea. First they wrote home then *'went out onto the Parade and heard the band'*.

All meals were taken at their lodgings and special items of food such as salmon or a fowl were bought at the market. The children played on the sands whilst the adults walked along the sea front to see the crowds and watch the dancing in the evenings.

Some mornings they went onto the beach before breakfast and bathed. Bathing featured most days and a bathing machine was hired from the old woman in charge. Annie's friend Emmie had her ears pierced and they had their photographs taken – a lengthy activity! Not only the children but the young women enjoyed donkey rides. The party hired a piano which was delivered to the lodgings on their first evening and happy times were spent *'with music'*.

The surroundings were very different from landlocked Warwickshire. When the steamer was due to land from Llandudno they went to watch it dock at the pier. Built in 1867 at a cost of £15,000, the pier stretched nearly half a mile out into the sea. (It was demolished in 1973.)

There were expeditions into the hills to see the wonders of the waterfall at Dyserth and the castle at Elmdean. They travelled by donkey cart with extra donkeys for the youngsters. They passed a National School for the poor, so in they went! Imagine a modern head teacher admitting rubber-necking tourists! The pupils spoke Welch (Annie's spelling) but were being taught English. They sang to the visitors who also admired their handwriting.

The homeward trip again was tiring and they almost missed their connection for Marton at Rugby – but *'the guard held the train'*. Times were different then!



POST SCRIPT

Following publication of this article in July 2016, we received an email from Robert Sherriff (another of our contributors) who had decided to see how long it would take to travel from Marton to Rhyll on today's public transport. The following information adds an interesting postscript to the article:

"I found your article on Annie Eliza Bull of particular interest partly as my first job on leaving school was at K.C.Jeavons Ltd., which was right by the Leamington to Rugby railway line on the Birdingbury Road.

The trains alas are no more so Annie would have today caught the 08.06 bus from outside the Black Horse in Marton. This would have deposited her in Clifton Road, Rugby at 08.40 and after walking the length of Railway Terrace she would have caught the 09.42 train to Crewe with a change into a Chester train followed by a further change into a final train which would have deposited her at Rhyll station at 12.56, almost 5 hours. A slightly quicker time could be achieved by catching the 10.01 bus from Marton but this has the downside of having to make 3 train changes to reach Rhyll. So although the train journey is a little quicker than in 1874 many things stay about the same and some have deteriorated, particularly the route march down Railway Terrace and a bus journey twice as long as the train in reaching Rugby from Marton. This little exercise just shows the backward steps that rural public transport services have taken over the years.

The word Welch for Welsh was once commonly used; as in The Royal Welch Fusiliers a senior regiment of foot that carried this title for over 300 years. The regimental museum is housed in 2 towers of Caernarfon Castle and is well worth a visit as is the castle generally.

Regards
Robert Sherriff"