

Penrhyn Quarry Railway

To this day, Penrhyn quarry is home to the remains of one of the oldest narrow gauge railways in the world. The distance from the quarry to the port was just over 6 miles. Slate was originally moved from the quarry by pack horses brought down from the quarry by women, a rare instance of women working in the slate industry. By 1790, Penrhyn estate had improved the condition of the roads. This made the journey to the port much easier, lowering the cost of transport by allowing a fleet of broad wheeled wagons to carry heavier loads.

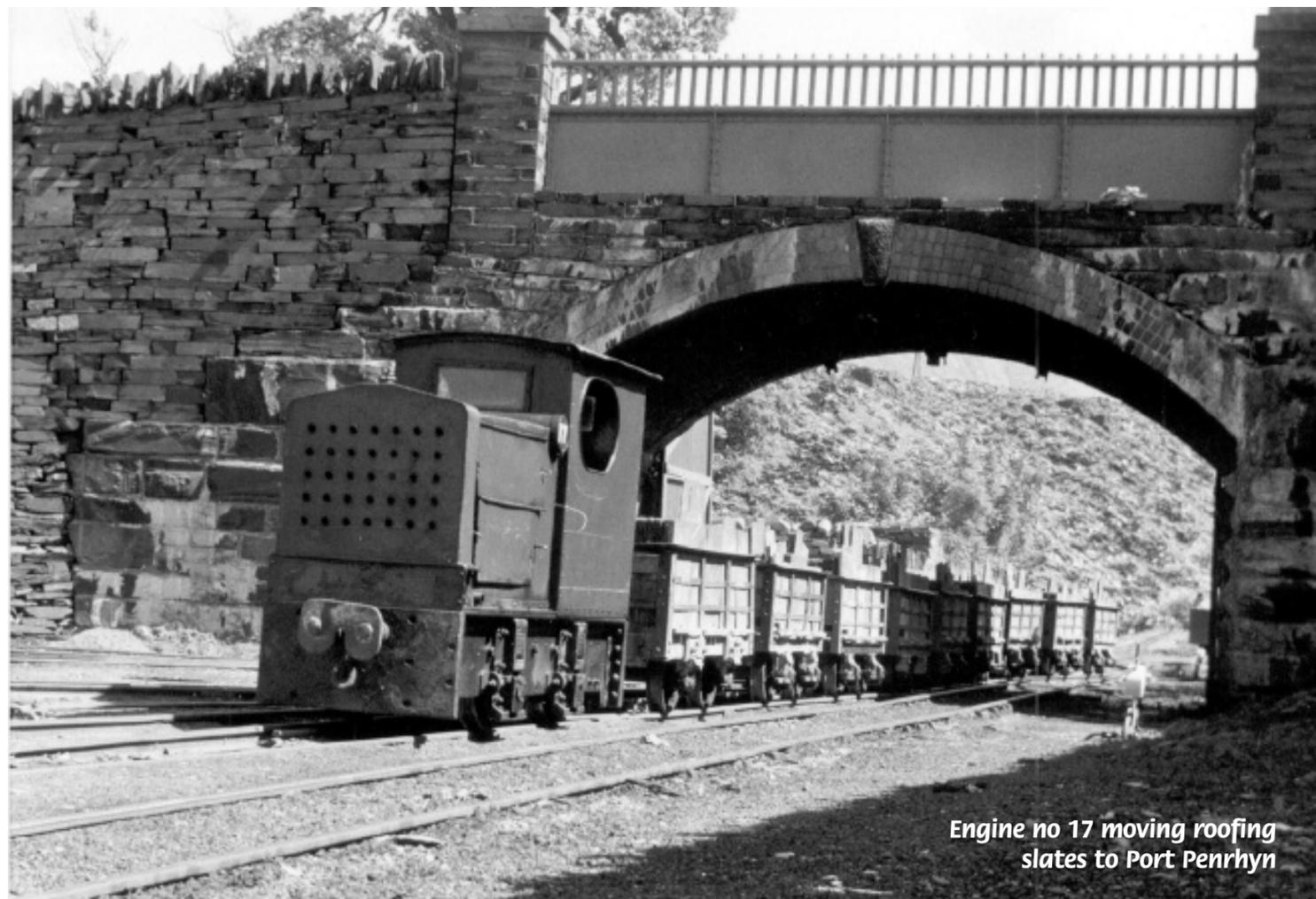


Felin Fawr slate works, 1960s

The Estate also looked at the possibility of transporting slate by constructing a canal from the quarry to the port, which would have required 40 to 50 locks. Instead they built a tramway, which was completed in 1801 (they re-laid the initial oval rail in 1820 with edge rails). They built three inclines to deal with the 600ft fall. Up to 24 wagons could now be pulled by 2 or 3 horses up and down the track between the inclines, each wagon carrying up to a ton. The new tramway could be operated

by 16 horses and 12 men as opposed to the 300 horses and 160 drivers who had previously been required. By improving the dock at Port Penrhyn to take larger ships, the quarry was able to export its goods and larger amounts of slate could be quarried.

In 1852, Port Penrhyn was joined to the main railway line. A one and a half mile branch from the Chester to Holyhead line ran down to the port. Slate from the quarry still came down the tramway to the ports, but from then on, it could be loaded not onto ships, but into railway wagons.



Engine no 17 moving roofing slates to Port Penrhyn

THE SLATE TRAIL

Dilynwch Daith y Llechen ar hyd llwybr Lôn Las Ogwen lle ceir amryw o baneli gwybodaeth sy'n adrodd stori unigryw llechi Ogwen, Chwarel y Penrhyn a'r bobl fu'n rhan o'r diwydiant llechi.