

## 4. The Bridge

Construction of Barmouth Bridge began in 1864 and was completed in 1867. The bridge opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> June of that year to horse drawn carriages and on 10<sup>th</sup> October to locomotives. It was designed and constructed for the Aberystwyth and Welsh Coast Railway to make an Aberystwyth to Pwllheli line. The bridge was originally built with 113 wooden spans and 8 iron spans. There was a “cock and draw” section close to the Barmouth side. The purpose of this draw bridge section was to let vessels pass in and out of the Estuary. Thomas Savin, a Welsh entrepreneur was the mastermind behind the bridge. The construction was difficult due to the strong currents of the Mawddach and two men drowned during its build.



Building the viaduct 1866



Cock and Draw 1880

After the discovery that the underwater iron sections were severely corroded in 1899 the drawbridge section was replaced with two steel spans. One of the spans used to be a swing bridge so ships could continue to pass through.



Open Span 1957



Cadwaladr Williams 1987, safety boat, last time the bridge was opened.

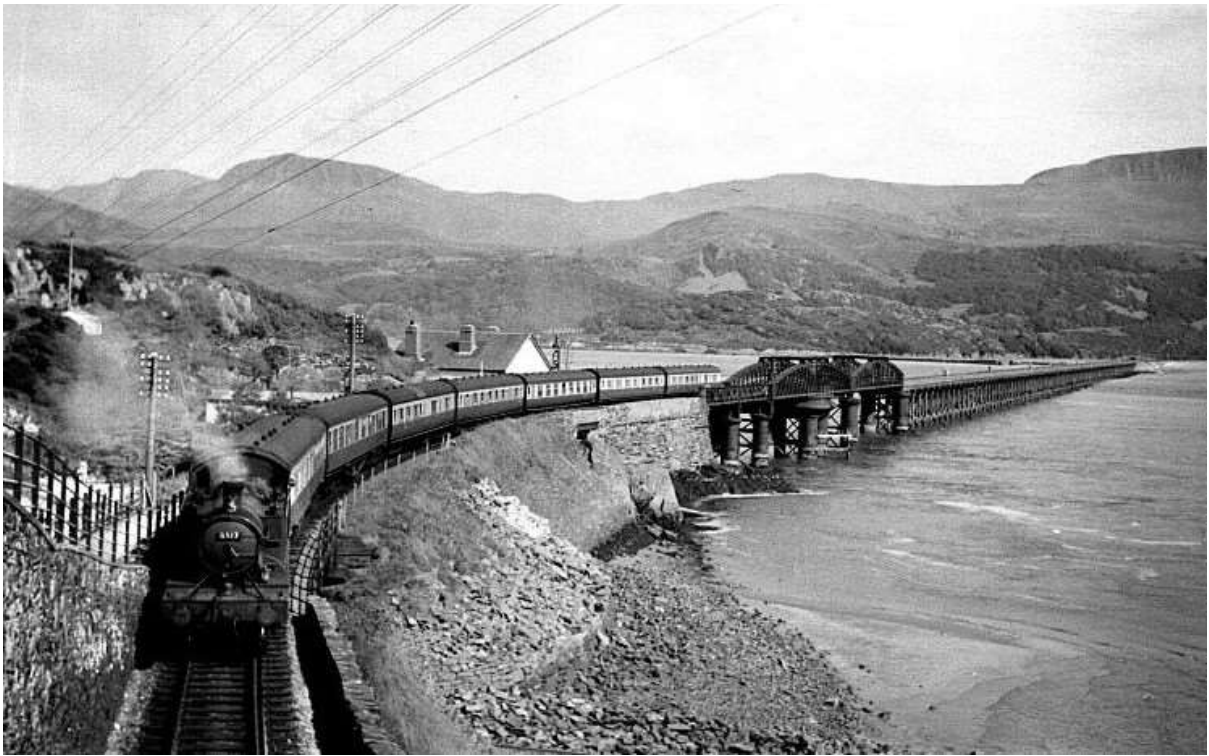
A film was shot on the bridge in 1941 called Ghost Train. It starred Arthur Askey and was set in Fal, Cornwall. The story involved a phantom train that would run through the station and over the bridge. The train turned out to be a group of gun smugglers taking guns for the Nazis, the climax being the train running off the swing bridge part of the bridge and in to the sea. A scale model of the bridge was built for this scene by a local butcher's father.

In 1980 divers found Teredo worms had bored into the timbers of the bridge, the holes they had created were large and required repair. This project would take five and a half years and stop all trains crossing the bridge for this period. The bridge reopened to trains in April 1986 and then in 1987 the steel span swing bridge was opened for the last time. Barmouth Bridge is still one of the longest timber viaducts in Britain.



Bridge in 1889

The building of the bridge saw the decline of ship building but a vast increase in tourism. In 1865 Barmouth Junction was built, which is now known as Morfa Mawddach. Barmouth Junction allowed trains from Barmouth to either branch to Machynlleth / Shrewsbury / Aberystwyth or Ruabon via Dolgellau, Bala and Llangollen. Beechings cuts in the 1960s saw the closure of the Ruabon line and now the old railway embankment to Dolgellau is called the Mawddach Way and is popular with walkers and cyclists who wish to enjoy the Estuary. Up until the 1960s there was a summer service from London Paddington to Pwllheli via Birmingham and Shrewsbury.



The bridge as we know it now, taken 1958