

SARPA Newsletter No.30

Inside this issue:

Chairman's message	1
Where's the other carriages?	3
From the Press	5
Feedback from meeting with Kim Howells MP	6
Letter to the Editor	11
Newtown Station Bus Service	12
The three lights of Welshpool	14
Mr Bs Marylebone and Midland-bound Marches Buster	14
Meetings	18
Accounts 2003-04	

Chairman's Message

As widely feared New Labour messed up with its Rail Review. Ok there are some good bits, also some bad bits, and the failure to tackle other problems (ROSCO's). If truth were told, passengers lost patience with this government's ability to successfully run the nations rail network some time back. The Review was more about being seen to do something to address a pressing problem rather than actually getting to grips with it. Sadly it seems at least partly driven by HM Treasury who bleat on about cost despite the fact that they are largely responsible for creating the mess in the first place – after all Treasury Civil Servants planned rail privatisation! If history has taught us anything it's that these people should be kept away from decision making as far as possible. After all, if you were an MD of a company whose Accounts Department had promised savings of X following a painful radical restructuring and you found a few years down the line you were spending three times X for roughly the same thing and your reputation was being damaged by it, you wouldn't be going back to them for

more decisions you'd be showing them the door!

Back to the positive things about and there are some! Devolved decision making gives us an opportunity to get our ideas put forward with new people, many of whom will be looking to make their mark with new responsibilities. Our job this next year is to be positive and get our agenda across - enough of reacting to other peoples. "...you have to look at the bigger picture than simple railway economics"- Virgin CrossCounty Managing Director Chris Gibb in RAIL 496. Chris was talking about summer Saturday trains to his native Cornwall, but the same can be applied to all areas of the rail industry. Rail's real value is not to be found in the accountant's figures but in its many positive impacts on the wider economy and this is where we need to educate the decision makers.

Years of being involved in rail campaigning has taught me that those afraid to or unwilling to think rail automatically, dredge up what they see as the high level of subsidy to provide what we already have, as an excuse not invest more and knock the railway. This "auto response" needs to be tackled, and those repeating it made to think about it and see the reality of what investment in rail can achieve, and what the consequences of not doing so are. Another of the "knock them down" comments we are to expect is that "nobody uses rail in Wales". The decimation of the network and under investment are to blame, but locally some flows are very significant: using WAG's own figures maybe as much as 25% of the through traffic between Welshpool and Shrewsbury is already rail borne. Think what can be done if the effort is put in. The people of Scotland receive roughly 50% more rail investment per head than those of Wales, and perhaps not surprisingly four times as many rail journeys are made in Scotland than in Wales. Their largest city, Glasgow, has an electrified suburban commuter network with a Passenger Transport Executive, and significant towns in rural areas such as Inverness are having additional commuter trains from their hinterland put on. Tony Blair has recently urged the unions not to pursue yesterday's agenda; the same can be said for the Assembly Government. Pursuing yesterday's transport agenda is not an option if Wales is to be a successful growing economy.

Kim Howells MP: The article on p6 outlines some feedback we gave to Paul Marsden MP in response to our meeting with Kim Howells this summer picking up on points Kim made. Kim has been reshuffled to Education recently so all the hard work ourselves and other parties have put in to educating him to the reality of rail has been lost to some extent. Whatever you think of him at least he got about and met people and maybe there was some sign of change in his views.

Gareth Marston
Newtown, September 2004

Where's the other carriages?

How often have you heard a fellow passenger cry that, or something similar on a busy platform as the predictably already packed two coach train pulls into the platform? It's pretty high up the priority list of real passengers even if the Government Rail Review took no account of it. Why is there such a shortage? The reasons stretch back nearly 50 years, and involve all the big events of modern railway history plus large doses of involvement from the organisation that should not be let near any sort of decision-making under any circumstances - HM Treasury.

The best thing that can be said about the 1955 Modernisation plan was that it was hasty, ill conceived and poorly planned. BR decided to virtually replace its entire fleet of passenger stock especially in the Regions in little over 10 years whereas naturally the rail industry managed this over a 35 to 40 year time span. They were aided and abetted by a Treasury that wrote a blank cheque! The result was a fleet that was virtually brand new and would need replacing simultaneously at a later date. The Treasury choked on the bill for the 1955 plan, which prompted what became known as the Beeching Report. BR had a surplus of stock post the Beeching closures and the decline in traffic, and with the now hostile Treasury holding the purse strings imposing ridiculous public sector borrowing requirements that even the strongest of business cases struggled to get past, there was no chance that a continuous programme of rolling stock acquisition could be pursued. First generation DMU replacement was a ticking time bomb under BR.

Roll forward the clock to the mid 1980's. BR pleaded with an openly anti-rail Conservative government to be allowed to fund a replacement programme. Unless something was done large swathes of the country's rail network would be unusable in but a few years time as the first generation DMU's were life expired. Undoubtedly with one eye on the 1987 general election, central government relented but with a catch. BR could have a new second generation of DMU's to replace first generation DMU's and the loco hauled stock that was still around, but the funding was not enough to replace on a like for like basis. Most commentators estimate that for every three and a half coaches BR had in the regions in 1985, by 1995 just two coaches replaced them. More exhaustive diagramming, cramming in more seats and doing away with luggage space was tried to square the circle. Add to these woes more penny pinching from the Treasury that allowed the abortion called Pacer to appear in a failed attempt to save money, and the failure of the APT project which would have seen a cascade of MK3 coaches some 15 years ago.

Then came privatisation (another bright idea of HM Treasury who worked

out the detail) and the infamous thousand days without a single piece of rolling stock being ordered. Lawyers and consultants brought in to privatise BR were estimated to have been paid the same sum that government refused to allow BR to spend on its IC250 West Coast Modernisation programme, and another cascade opportunity was lost. And so the ROSCO was born: stock already purchased under BR was then leased back to operators at extortionate prices. The wacky men that designed privatisation thought that this would encourage operators to buy new rolling stock, as it would be comparatively cheaper! Unfortunately if a prize cow cost 10 pieces of gold it will still cost 10 pieces of gold even if an ordinary cow costs 6 pieces instead of 4 in an artificial market. These so called financial experts had messed up their sums so much that everybody found that they couldn't afford what BR was doing despite having three times as much Government money pumped in by a bemused Labour administration. Many regional operators found they couldn't afford the 6 pieces on what they had let alone fund new stock.

The feast & famine approach to rolling stock ordering didn't help, as instead of proven and continuously improved designs to order from, each new order brings with it a reinvention of the wheel which bumps up costs and reduces the size of the order. Fragmentation with different TOCs ordering lots of different designs doesn't help either, and then what new rolling stock that has been ordered has suffered from misplaced concepts. Virgin is particularly guilty of ordering expensive all singing and dancing designs that don't have enough passenger capacity for the routes they are being used on. With no grip on the industry as a whole, sensible reallocation of rolling stock within the industry is hard and many feel the ROSCO's are trying to create an artificial shortage of rolling stock to justify high lease charges. A fleet of MK3 coaches twice the size of Arriva's Class 158 fleet are not being reused as government refuses to tackle the problem.

What's the answer to get more rolling stock? The recreation of an integrated and in control railway - vertical integration is key. Costs will tumble and decision making improve. A national plan for rolling stock replacement and cascading is also needed. The nation's transport needs to be put back at the heart of the decision making process: not those of private sector companies and the trying out of pet economy theories and prejudices of civil servants.

Gareth Marston
Newtown

From the Press

The Cambrian News of the 8.7.04: an employee of Arriva Trains has claimed that because of staff cuts, the service at Aberystwyth has been affected. "The ticket office in Aberystwyth during the last two-to-three weeks has shut early at 2.30pm on at least six occasions, but should be open until 5.25pm. This is a direct consequence of staff cuts. The ticket office was shut all day on 11 June, not due to 'unprecedented staff sickness', but due to no sickness or holiday cover.

Arriva Trains customer services director, Ian Bullock, said there has been a reduction of 20 staff members due to restructuring. The company has also restructured the retailing organisation which would improve "service delivery". However, there had been problems with the Aberystwyth ticket office, with times when the booking office window has been closed. They are looking at ways to resolve this issue.

A reader's letter in the Cambrian News (15.7.04) proposed the moving of Aberystwyth Station out away from its present position, to make room for a multi-storey carpark and bus station. The following week's paper carried letters on the station and its staff. One from Cllr. Mark Strong comments on the debate encircling train services out of Aberystwyth. He deprecates the deterioration: "... Aberystwyth is already suffering a second, no third rate train service toilets for passengers are often locked up there is no decent waiting room There are crowded, often grubby, trains" Refuting the reader's suggestion to move the station, he points out that it is a listed building, it is central and better for the disabled, older people and families. "We need a centrally-located railway station in pleasant buildings. You only need look at the new Welshpool station to see what happens when a railway station is moved out of its original buildings – a glorified bus shelter!".

The proposed withdrawal of the Traws Cambria bus service (Bangor to Cardiff, via Aberystwyth) was a news item on the Cambrian news of 22.7.04. The same news item also reports concern in Aberystwyth Town Council about both bus and train services. Cllr. Mark Strong told the meeting that "The railway station and rail service is imperative to the town's transport structure. We should question Arriva about both the buses and the train service. We are all aware that the ticket office has been closed at different times, the toilets are sometimes shut, and we know there are staff shortages. It is the passengers who are suffering. Aberystwyth is a main station for Wales, and should be treated as such." Cllr Gerran Thomas said "Arriva should be keeping the facilities to the best possible

standard. It is not the fault of the staff at the station – they are excellent. They are courteous and efficient. If you go on the internet or seek information from the phone lines, it's a shambles." Cllr Owen Jones, who serves on the Aberystwyth – Shrewsbury Railway Line Liaison Committee, said "I have written to the AM, and to the chairperson of our committee. If we don't do something about the situation, the town will be completely cut off." The Council is now to seek a meeting with Arriva.

In the same issue a letter from Alan Ruttley supports the Aberystwyth station staff: "courteous, good –humoured and efficient".

From Nigel Bird, of Tregaron, in the light of the proposed withdrawal of the Traws Cambria bus service, a plea appeared for the reinstatement of the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth line: The Welsh Assembly Government should be urgently doing is looking very closely at the re-opening of the Aberystwyth-Carmarthen railway line, this would enable communities like Lampeter and Tregaron (just about to get £700,000 for improvements to the town to "improve the area's tourism potential") to be more accessible, both for locals travelling in and around the area and for students and tourists wishing to get into the area. If only The Welsh Assembly had been based in Aberystwyth, then members and staff would have realised just how important a rail link from the south is, when they had the daily journey to make by road. I think the people of Ceredigion, and Carmarthenshire, deserve better transport links in the 21st Century and it is The Assembly Government's obligation to ensure they get them.

FEEDBACK FROM SARPA REGARDING MEETING WITH DR. KIM HOWELLS, 20th MAY 2004

1) Connections:-

1.1 It is indeed possible that connections can be improved but there appear to be significant problems which cannot be overcome unless investment is made into improving the infrastructure.

1.2 In our case at Shrewsbury, money would have to be spent to enable platform 3 to be brought back into use. This would increase the capacity of the station to deal with increased workload during short time windows, when trains interchange at Shrewsbury. There are six routes which feed into Shrewsbury and getting optimum connections between all of them is nigh impossible with the present arrangements. There are also the problems of signalling headway and long sections which limit operational flexibility.

1.3 Arriva Trains Wales have noted this problem themselves in other areas. In their proposals for a standard pattern timetable (SPT) they have indicated the difficulty of improving connections in South West Wales. They have indicated particular problems in the areas of Gowerton and Carmarthen where service improvements will not happen without the development of better infrastructure. The problem of single line operation affecting services also exists in North Wales between Saltney Junction and Wrexham.

1.4 With regard to connections from between Cambrian line trains and services operated by Virgin to London Euston, it seems that heed has been taken of our concerns and that efforts to provide better interchange with the improved Virgin service will be undertaken.

1.5 In the case of the interchange between the Cambrian Main Line to Aberystwyth and the Coast Line, it is true that significant improvements could be made which would improve journey opportunities and provide incentive to travel. Whilst Arriva Trains Wales have indicated that are alive to these concerns in their SPT proposals, they have left unclear the exact extent of the improvements which might be offered.

2) Can Rural Lines Pay Their Way?

2.1 At the meeting the Minister expressed the view that he thought that rural lines could be made to pay their way. Given the increasing level of passenger usage on the Cambrian Line we would concur that this may be possible and that development offers good value for money. The current road proposals for West Wales put the cost of upgrading the A40 to dual carriageway at around £6.5m per mile. The investment of just £6.5m would enable the capacity on the Cambrian line to be doubled.

2.2 We would qualify this by saying that there needs to be new investment in fixed infrastructure and rolling stock in order to allow business development. The Cambrian line has experienced year on year growth of around 7% since about 1995 and in order to encourage this trend to continue, new investment is needed.

2.3 Arriva Trains Wales have taken note of the local desire for the Main Line service to be made hourly but say there will need to be infrastructure and funding enhancements for this to become a reality.

2.4 A key ingredient to better financial performance is of course reduction in costs. The peculiar feature of rolling stock provision here in the UK is that the trains are by and large leased by the operators from Rolling Stock Companies, themselves owned by big banks. The class 158 diesel units used on the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth line are owned by Porterbrook Leasing, itself owned by the Royal Bank of Scotland. These companies make huge profits at the expense of the taxpayer, who subsidises the train

services. The cost of hiring a 158 unit of 2 carriages is around £250,000 per annum, which includes maintenance. British Rail built these units in the early 1990s at a cost to the taxpayer of around £1.5 million each, so the unfortunate UK taxpayer is having to pay for these trains twice. This unusual and rather unjustifiable state of affairs has attracted adverse comment far and wide right across the political and railway spectrum. Initiating better control of this situation is surely a key to better financial performance from rural railways.

2.5 The current safety situation on rail does not help to achieve better financial results. On the Cambrian line from Shrewsbury we have the same safety standards (at huge expense) as the main trunk routes. Lately there has been the installation on Train Protection Warning System (TPWS) on the Cambrian, despite the last major accident which caused fatalities being in 1921 (Abermule). It is true to say that much of this has been a knee jerk reaction to the Ladbroke Grove and Hatfield derailments but without proper thought given to local needs. and whether the expenditure required will bring the desired benefits.

2.6 We are also given to understand that there is also a degree of cross subsidy from rural lines to main trunk routes. We are informed that this is because the track access charges are the same for rural lines as for more important parts of the network, where the bulk of new investment is taking currently place. Conversely, there has not been the level of new money being spent on the rural railway to justify the same high access charges.

3) The Railway Should Be Customer Driven.

3.1 We would agree with this wholeheartedly but would qualify the Minister's opinion that the engineers should shoulder blame for this not hitherto being the case. In extremis, this was indeed an error of judgement made by Railtrack plc which eventually gave the company such problems and contributed to its eventual demise.

3.2 Railways themselves are a solution to the problem of transport provided by engineering technology and we should never lose sight of that. It is true that over time railway engineers have tended to be conservative in their outlook. We must encourage and nurture new and innovative engineering solutions to the problems faced by a developing modern railway, on both the passenger and freight sides of the coin.

3.3 We think that over the years, operational convenience has taken precedence above customer satisfaction but the key to developing the railway business lies in being able to deliver what customers want and when they want

it. The job of the engineers is to develop the technology to enable this to be brought to fruition.

3.4 Since 1960 there has been a general trend of the railway divesting itself of the traffic that it did not want or did not fit in with its plans for the future. Obviously this has not been good for customer relations in the longer term as people found to their dismay that the railway would no longer provide for them. The railway currently has the job of reversing that trend with imaginative new solutions.

4) The Legacy of Beeching

4.1 At the meeting the view was expressed that by and large, Beeching got things right. Naturally at SARPA we would disagree with this view because a 1965 map of projected railways for 1984 shown no lines at all West of Shrewsbury, although the Heart of Wales line still features! Moreover, the same map shows no direct railway between Newcastle and Edinburgh, a section which is now a key part of the East Coast Main Line.

4.2 It would be fair to consider the positive aspects of Beeching, like the Inter-City network we have today and things like containerised railfreight and "Merry-Go-Round" mineral trains. However, Beeching was operating in a very different world to the one we have today and many of the railways which closed were not really given a fair chance to prove themselves. Most were still steam worked, with fully staffed stations and manually signalled with extensive track layouts. Many branch lines and rural routes were indeed poor performers but little effort was made to allow them to fulfil any potential. That being said, the removal of intermediate stations with poor patronage on lines like the Cambrian has brought great benefit in the form of reduced journey times.

4.3 Although Beeching tried to take a long term view, looking twenty years ahead, inevitably this attempt was unlikely to succeed. There was no way he could have seen the way the nation has developed economically since 1963 and the model for the remaining railway system seems to have been one of static or negative growth. The result is that the system now has built in bottlenecks at strategic points which came about as a result of his rationalisation. Indeed, Birmingham New Street gives rise to such problems in connection with services from Shrewsbury towards the South East of England.

4.4 One unfortunate effect of Beeching's legacy has been to denigrate the contribution of rural lines to the community. They are seen as a second class mode of transport, often of little importance and which cannot provide a proper alternative to the motor car. Here on the Cambrian, this is far from the case with the line currently carrying more than half a million passengers

a year and with good potential for further development.

5) Commuter Trains

5.1 We note from the proposals that Arriva Trains Wales has outlined for its Standard Pattern Timetable (STP) that there are apparently no plans to improve commuter services to and from Shrewsbury. We think that this is a missed opportunity to do extra business with little outlay. Taking many people to the same place at the same time is something the railway can do particularly well. In this instance it could be achieved without extra rolling stock either being brought in or sitting around all day waiting to take people home again.

5.2 The additional benefit would be to offer some relief to the A458/A483 main roads in the area which now become very crowded at peak times. We would hope that pressure is brought to bear on Arriva Trains Wales to consider modifications to the STP at peak hours.

6) Transport Links Within Wales

6.1 We have raised this issue because we feel that at some point in the future it will become "live". Transport links within Wales are not up to the same standard as elsewhere in the U.K. or Europe. We believe that as Wales now has a modicum of self government, it is only a matter of time before there is a demand for transport links within Wales, to and from Cardiff. We note from the draft Transport (Wales) Bill that there are proposals to establish subsidised internal air transport services within the principality. Whilst these will undoubtedly cater for business people and government officials on expense accounts, they will do little to provide essential transport links for ordinary people.

6.2 We have outlined above that we also feel that rural railways could be made to pay their way. As an extension of this we believe that a revived rail link between Mid-Wales and Cardiff, running via Llanidloes, Builth and Brecon (as before) would offer a realistic and competitive link to the Welsh capital.

6.3 Such a line should be modelled on current Cambrian line practice where this rural link has a line speed of 80 miles per hour and over. With a journey time of just under two hours from Newtown to Cardiff, it would offer commuting job opportunities in the Welsh capital, for people living in Mid-Wales and also journey opportunities to and from the South and West of England. Major UK airports would be within easy reach too, at Cardiff, Bristol and Heathrow.

6.4 We would like to take this opportunity therefore to place on the

agenda, a requirement for a proper examination of a rail link as an alternative to any proposed North-South road scheme. To guarantee similar journey times with road transport would require the building of a dual carriageway as opposed to a single line of railway.

6.5 Using the A40 upgrade scheme as a benchmark, a dual carriageway between Merthyr Tydfil and Newtown would cost around £500m. Conversely, a restored railway would probably cost around £200 million less.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I have, as always, enjoyed my read of the SARPA Newsletter. Number 29 I found particularly positive. I do feel maybe, just maybe, a slightly more positive attitude is starting to penetrate the "powers that be" both in Cardiff and London. I am very interested to note two things in particular:

a) "That an oft quoted figure of 20-25% of rural passengers are travelling from/to London". I can well believe this from my limited train travel to/from the South of England. IF this is hard fact surely it will re-inforce the need for a regular (hourly) service from Shrewsbury through to London and should be something we drive home when fighting our corner.

b) I am most interested to note that The Welsh Assembly Government is to establish its Mid Wales office in Aberystwyth in 2007 (good forward planning that!) and redistribute some public sector jobs from Cardiff. NOW maybe it will dawn on those travelling regularly to Aber. just how difficult access from South Wales to Mid Wales really is and strengthen the need for better public transport links to Ceredigion. In particular the Carmarthen to Aber. line needs an urgent study with a view to re-opening at an early date.

No doubt WAG are looking to make their mark, and prove to the Welsh population that all the costs are worthwhile. May I suggest that reopening that line would be a major coup: yes it will be costly, but not £10 million a mile as is being quoted for the Llanymynech/Pant bypass. Come on WAG do the right thing for the people of Wales and the environment, sooner rather than later!

Nigel Bird

Brynhir, Llwynygroes, Tregaron

Newtown station bus service

In the table I have listed all the buses indicating which way they run and indicating in bold which I think are useful to the train passengers. In my opinion, to be useful a bus going to the station must arrive approximately 10 minutes before a train thus leaving time to walk onto the station and obtain tickets. On the other hand a bus leaving the station should reach the station maybe 5 minutes after a train so allowing both for a slightly late train and time for passengers to walk across the bridge to the bus stop. Of course the bus stop must be in full sight of the passengers so that they know that there a bus service.

Time	Service No.	Route
M-Sa		
08-50	G8	Llandrindod – Newtown
10-48	542	Newtown Town Service
11-55	542	Newtown Town Service
12-50	528	Newtown - Montgomery
13-22	543	Newtown Town Service
14-22		Newtown - Caersws
16-00	528	Newtown - Montgomery
16-28	543	Newtown Town Service

Times taken from the “Powys Travel Guide” issued in October 2003.

Mr Bemment

The above is hardly a good advert for integrated transport. If you look at the bus services from/to Newtown has a whole then you realise that these are just a fraction of what actually serves the town. Powys County Council have built an expensive bus route round the back of where the goods shed use to be, but it has remained unused for 12 months or so. What are they doing? Integrated transport has to be more than a token effort and an unfinished scheme. Come on Powys get it together! Perhaps we can see the reason why the Transport Bill (Wales) wants to take transport decisions away from Unitary Authorities.

Gareth Marston

Train Times	Newtown Town Service				Llandrindod - Newtown		Newtown-Montgomery - Newtown Cross Gates		Newtown-Caerws	
	Aberystwyth - B'ham		B'ham - Aberystwyth		Coaches		Coaches			
	06-21									
	08-38		8-14							
10-13	10-46			10-48						
				11-55						
12-12	12-45						12-50			
		13-22								13-45
14-12	14-44		14-34							14-22
					15-02					
16-12	16-45	16-28	16-03							
18-11	18-43									
20-31	20-49									
22-39										

Note – All bus times are the times the bus arrives or leaves the Railway station
The times were taken from the Powys Travel Guide issue valid from October 2003

THE THREE LIGHTS OF WELSHPOOL

The mayor asked the railway and the railway asked the County 'Could we have three light bulbs for the bridge at Welshpool station?' The railway asked the county and the County said 'certainly, We'll go and tell the Network now before renationalization;

The Network they discussed it and went and told the linesman 'Don't forget the light bulbs for the re-furbishization' The Network said, sleepily, 'You'd better tell His Worship That many people nowadays have lights on their own traction The Council said 'Fancy' and went to the SRA. They drew up a petition and started consultation 'Excuse me, dear Powys, for taking of the liberty. But cars are now quite speedy if there's no congestion'

The Chairman said 'Oh' and wrote to the Land Registry 'Talking of the light bulbs for the bridge at Welshpool station, Would you like to say whose land's in registration ?' The Registry said 'Bother' and then they said 'Oh deary me!', The land has been in some transaction. It now belongs to our dear nation. So it's the National Assembly for Wales' they said (with some elation).

The knitting's now been three years in execution. One for each bright bulb of illumination. The Chairman is pleased; the passengers can see. So can the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association!

[With thanks to A.A. Milne 'The King's Breakfast 'from 'When We Were Very Young]

MR. Bs MARYLEBONE & MIDLANDS-BOUND MARCHES BUSTER

Roger Goodhew

The MB train may be coming your way.

Background

Direct train services between London and Wales and the Marches have mainly relied on the two 'established' services from Holyhead/ North Wales to Euston via Crewe and from Fishguard/South Wales to Paddington via Swindon. These services are subject to some changes: the former arising from new timetables following the West Coast Main Line upgrade; the latter from a new Greater Western franchise due in 2006.

The rest of Wales - and the adjacent parts of England (the Marches) - have no frequent direct train services to London. Occasional services run through to the capital from Hereford/Malvern/Worcester to Paddington via Oxford; from Stratford on Avon to Paddington via Leamington Spa and from Cheltenham/Gloucester to Paddington via Swindon. These services will mostly fall under the new Greater Western franchise.

Following the withdrawal of the direct Manchester/Shrewsbury/ Hereford/Bristol train to Waterloo; the withdrawal of the Carmarthen/ Swansea/Cardiff/Newport/Bristol train to Waterloo and the segregation of West Wales services west of Carmarthen from the future Carmarthen/ Swansea/Cardiff/Newport/Hereford/Shrewsbury/Crewe/Manchester standard pattern timetable service proposed by Arriva Trains Wales from December 2005, regional services no longer provide direct trains to London.

Passengers served by regional stations to the west of the West Coast Main Line will have to rely on connecting trains to reach London from all parts* of this region, *excepting N and S Wales and the Hereford /Oxford service* as follows:-

Connections to and from Virgin services to Euston from Crewe via Stafford and from Wolverhampton via Birmingham and Coventry; also occasional Cross Country services from Crewe and/or Wolverhampton which serve Kensington Olympia and East Croydon before Gatwick Airport and Brighton.

Connections to and from other direct services from Birmingham to London:

Silverlink Country to Euston via Northampton, also Chiltern Railways service from Kidderminster/Stourbridge Jn/Birmingham Snow Hill/Birmingham Moor Street to London Marylebone via Leamington Spa and Banbury.

So What's New?

Firstly, the need for a whole new set of good quality connections between regional services and London-bound trains at Chester, Crewe, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Leamington, Hereford, Worcester and Newport (S. Wales). These are the places to which the large and increasing populations of central Wales, mid Wales and the English Marches will have to go to catch their London train.*

*the stations from which such connecting services come and back to which connecting services need to return are:

Pwllheli to Dyfi Junction 25 stations

Aberystwyth and Machynlleth to Shrewsbury 7 stations

Ludlow / Craven Arms to Shrewsbury / Crewe 10 stations

Llandrindod Wells to Craven Arms	10	stations
Shotton to Wrexham Central	9	stations
Gobowen to Chester or Wrexham General to Shrewsbury	4	stations
Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton	9	stations
Total	74	stations

Note that the following 'regional' stations are reckoned to already be served by connecting trains into direct trains to London from N Wales, from Hereford/Worcester and from S Wales :

Conwy Valley line from Blaenau to Llandudno	12	stations
North Wales line from Holyhead to Chester	17	stations
Marches line from Leominster to Cwmbran	5	stations
Heart of Wales line south of Llandrindod Wells to Llanelli / Gowerton	18	stations
West Wales lines to the west of Swansea	22	stations
Total	74	stations

This means that there are as many stations not served by properly connecting trains to/from direct services to London as there are so served by the three direct services from Holyhead to Euston, and from Hereford and Swansea to Paddington.

Do our MPs realize that we only have half a joined-up rail service to the capital?

A major programme of connections into the London-bound services which are getting completely new timetables in 2004/5/6 is required. This means connections into Virgin West Coast, Virgin Cross Country, Chiltern, Greater Western and South West Trains.

So What Else is New?

Campaigns to reinstate through rail services to London from Shrewsbury and Telford have received much press coverage. Most of the coverage has related to discussions with Virgin/SRA about the viability of extending overhead electrification westwards from Oxley near Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury. These discussions may now be augmented by the inclusion of a second option. This is the so-called MB train featured in the title of this note.

The new proposal is for Marylebone Bound trains to start from Shrewsbury

and to run via Wellington and Telford through Wolverhampton and Birmingham New Street and then on via St Andrews Junction, Bordesley Junction and Bordesley South Junction to join the line through Tyseley. This then allows stops at Olton/Solihull/Warwick/Leamington Spa and Banbury before running fast to London Marylebone.

A key feature of the proposal is to link existing services which run from Marylebone to the Birmingham area (by Chiltern Railways) with existing services which run from the Birmingham area to Telford, Wellington and Shrewsbury (by Central Trains). The future of the Central Trains franchise is not yet clear so these paths may be available.

This plan includes no changes to services run by Arriva Trains Wales from Pwllheli/Aberystwyth/Chester via Shrewsbury, Wellington and Telford into Wolverhampton and Birmingham New Street. The plan does, however, provide some scope for badly-needed improvements to the stopping service between Shrewsbury/Wellington/Telford and Wolverhampton/Walsall. Details of this are not given here.

Integration and Choice

One possibility of this MB plan is for the Stratford on Avon direct service to London to be re-routed to Marylebone and then for Midlands Bound services to alternate between Stratford on Avon/ Shrewsbury and the existing terminals at Kidderminster/Stourbridge Jn and Birmingham Snow Hill (Moor Street terminus is not yet in use).

Franchise-related decisions yet to be made about the Greater Western franchise, the Central Trains franchise and implementation of the Chiltern franchise are awaited.

A choice awaits the passenger between a reliable connecting train into the fast services from Crewe/Stafford/Wolverhampton/Birmingham and Hereford/Newport to Euston and Paddington, respectively, and the possibility of a direct service from Shrewsbury/Wellington/Telford to London Marylebone.

It behoves passengers to consider the merits of travel to various London termini and to choose the service best suited to their needs - both on arrival in the capital and on their well-connected return to the towns and pastures of mid Wales and the Marches.

SARPA MONTHLY MEETINGS. 2003-4

Meetings for 2004

Please double check. Dates, venues, times correct as of going to print (September 2004).

May be subject to change.

Month	Day	Time	Venue
October	Tuesday 5 th	1915	Pinewood Tavern, Welshpool.
November	Tuesday 2 nd	1930	Hobbs Room, Library, Shrewsbury
December	Tuesday 7 th	1900	Bell Hotel, Newtown.

Contributions from people who can't attend are more than welcome.

Accounts 2003-04

Receipts

Subscriptions	364.00
Donations	48.50
AGM Donation	10.00
T. Burton	25.00
Bank Interest	00.89
Total	448.39

Balances

Community A/C	19.01
Business A/C	307.08

Expenditure

Printing four newsletters	148.00
Postage	101.00
Stationery	17.47
Photocopying	3.15
Subscription Transport 2000	10.00
Transport Research Infm.	25.00
Rail tickets to London mtg.	19.30
Room Hire Wynnstay Arms	75.00
Room Hire Pinewood mtgs.	20.00
Room Hire Shrewsbury	12.00
Credit in Hand	17.47
Total	448.39

WANT TO JOIN SARPA?

Please complete the form beneath and send with cheques to Treasurer Ivor Morris at the address beneath. The membership year runs from January to December. The membership fee is £5.00 per annum for individuals and for organisations. Please make any cheques payable to SARPA. Donations are of course welcome.

- SARPA will lobby for better rail services.
- Act as a watchdog to safeguard the lines future.
- Meet in public once a month.

All members will receive our quarterly Newsletter free of charge.

The majority of our expenditure goes towards the cost of publishing and distributing our newsletters. We subscribe to the Shrewsbury Rail Users Federation (£10 for 2003/2004), Transport 2000's Platform campaign and occasionally pay for room hire. Any surplus is held as an emer-

Name(s)
Address:

gency fund for the future. None of the officers gain financially in any way from SARPA.

I / we would like to join SARPA.
Please delete as appropriate.

SARPA: www.paradox-it.co.uk/sarpa

Useful Addresses

Arriva Trains Wales:

WB4, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Road, Cardiff CF24 0SU
Tel 0845 6061 660
Email: customer.services@arrivatrainswales.co.uk

RPC Wales:

Secretary, St. David's House, Wood Street, Cardiff CF10 1ES
Tel 029 2022 7247
Email: info.wales@railpassengers.org.uk

Networkrail:

Community Relations, Railtrack House, Euston Square, London NW1 2EE

The Association of Train Operating Companies:

ATOC, 3rd Floor, 40 Bernard Street, London WC1N 1BY

Central Trains Limited

Central Trains Limited, PO Box 4323, Birmingham B2 4JB
Tel. 0121 654 1200

Virgin Trains

Virgin Trains, Customer Relations, PO Box 713, Birmingham, B5 4HH
Tel. 0870 789 1234

For Train Times and Fares Call:

08457 48 49 50 (24hrs)
0845 60 40 500 (Welsh Language Service)
0845 60 50 600 (Textphone)

For ticket reservations please call:

0870 9000 773

OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Chairman: Gareth Marston: 64 Churchill Drive, Barnfields, Newtown, Powys. SY16 2LH. 01686-625716. E-mail: gareth.marston@btopenworld.com

Treasurer: Ivor Morris: 2 Dingle Rd, Welshpool, Powys. SY21 7QB. 01938-554463

Newsletter Editor: Denis Bates, 86 Maesceinion, Waun Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 3QQ. Tel. 01970-617667. E-mail deb@aber.ac.uk

Shrewsbury Rail Users Federation Representative: Roger Goodhew: 12 Granville St, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY3 8NE. Tel. 01743 358873.

Committee Member: Angus Eichoff: The Forge, Whitehouse Bridge, Welshpool, Powys. Tel. 01938-553572. E-mail angus.metal@telco4u.net

The position of secretary is currently vacant,

if anyone wishes to fulfil that role or become active within the committee please contact Gareth Marston.