

Shrewsbury  
Aberystwyth  
Rail  
Passengers'  
Association



# Newsletter No. 37

NOVEMBER 2006



**Brunel 200**

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## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

A trip to Dublin with work this October brought a new rail experience for me. Disembarking at Dun Laoghaire, a 2 minutes walk off the ferry brought me onto the station and an electrified rail service on the DART line into the centre of Dublin. Clean, well used and obviously better cared for rolling stock than anything Wales has on offer, I reached Dublin Pearse station to see the evening commute home: brand new 4 car DMU's working in multiple to form 8 car units on most of the trains I saw. Logos on the side proclaimed the units were jointly founded by the Irish Government and European Regional Development Fund. I ventured out on these units later in the week and felt decidedly embarrassed by my experiences the week before. Near my hotel I found the terminus of the brand new light rail system at St Stephen's Square. Dublin itself is about 40% larger than Cardiff but its "city region" is smaller, yet here I found electrified commuter services, proper length quality rolling stock, light rail and a funding commitment from central government. As you can probably guess, in Cardiff the week before I bounced around on a decrepit twenty-plus year old 2 coach Pacer rail bus whilst fellow passengers looked dumbstruck at the Western Mail of the 10<sup>th</sup> October that reported that Wales rail network was receiving record investment.

The blindingly obvious conclusion from my trip is that a decent rail system can happen if the political will is there to make it happen. There are in fact no insurmountable barriers to overcome and no sign of excuses why things can't be done in Ireland. The Irish government has decided that high quality commuter links into its capital are in its economy's best interests and has made it happen. Irish Rail also happens to be a State owned vertically integrated railway which I more than suspect made everything a whole lot easier. As readers of the rail press know there is a general programme of investment across the whole of Ireland including rural lines, and even reopening mothballed rural railways. So if the Celtic Tiger economy of Ireland with its impressive economic growth rates so firmly believes in high quality public transport what is there to hold Wales back?

So what can Wales learn from Ireland? There seems to be a genuine belief in railways and what they do in terms of moving people about, linking city regions, regional centres with their hinterlands and cross region movements. It's all linked into the economy and getting the economy moving. Rail has many advantages in environmental terms, reducing traffic congestion and utilising existing transport corridors through built up areas. A clear funding commitment to upgrade and improve has been made. We know what it's for, we know why we want to do it and here's the money is the message to a single organisation to deliver. It's really simple when you get it right.

Applying this logic to our line its purpose in the higher scheme of things is simple. It links Mid Wales to the West Midlands and beyond (Inter regional links), in the West it links Aberystwyth to its hinterland in Northern Ceredigion, Southern Gwynedd and Western Powys, in the East it links Shrewsbury to its hinterland in the Upper Severn Valley and it can take freight off our unsuitable roads. The mechanism to deliver this is simple a few extra passing loops, a handful of Freight Multiple Units and a few more DMUs.

Cost? Decidedly less than a mile of dual carriageway. The headline in the Daily Post on my return revealed that the A55 Expressway across relatively flat easy going undulating Ynys Mon cost a staggering £21 million a mile to construct.

Is the will there? The road solution to Mid Wales transport needs becomes ever more and ever more expensive and unaffordable. A dual carriageway from Shrewsbury to Newtown alone would now £700 million at least (distance times cost per mile based on A55 if any agitated supporters of the road option are reading crying foul). This sort of

money doesn't grow on trees, despite what some councillors in Powys believe. The complete upgrade of our line to an hourly service, reopened stations, freight traffic, improved line speeds, more staff and facilities is still a bargain compared to the road upgrade option. When will the penny drop?

Gareth Marston  
Newtown, October 2006.

## **News in brief**

### **Birmingham**

City officials are still trying to persuade central government of the imperative need to help finance the total redevelopment of New St station, as the current station struggles with overcrowding. Meanwhile the DfT Rail Group have suggested that all Cross Country trains terminate there, forcing thousands more passengers onto the unsuitable station platforms and staircases.

Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail continue to insist communication is better and passengers are being informed about Wolverhampton turnarounds in time. However the passenger information system monitors, with the exception of two large screens on the concourse outside the ticket barriers, only have space for 11 entries and on a busy station like New St it could be well past 20 minutes past the hour before the 33 minutes past the hour departures appear - far too late to get the next train to Wolverhampton.

### **Wolverhampton**

Junior Transport Minister Derek Twigg MP responded to criticism of DfT Rail Groups Cross Country plans by suggesting that cross country passengers could change at Wolverhampton instead of New St. The minister was unable to explain how this would help in a journey from the south west to the north east as none of the cross country services serving these destinations passes through Wolverhampton. Under the plans indeed only 25% of the Cross Country services that use New St pass Wolverhampton.

### **Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton (and Crewe)**

A 10 day closure in Mid October for signalling upgrade work saw Aberystwyth services diverted to Crewe. Despite some irresponsible scaremongering from the local media things worked well with passengers heading for London going via Crewe with relative ease. What else was noticeable was that punctuality improved. The addition of the Aberystwyth services over the Crewe to Shrewsbury line gave it 2 trains per hour: the same as the normal service between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton, yet with a 50 minute plus turnaround at Crewe the benefits were noticeable.

Signal boxes housing the old signalling systems at Codsall, Cosford and Lightmoor closed as part of the project. Operations will transfer to Madeley signal box where the new signalling systems will be installed. The old signal boxes are being donated to Heritage Railway groups to preserve their important part in the history of the railway.

## **Salisbury**

Proving it can be done South West Trains are upgrading their recently acquired Class 158's from Trans Pennine Express. Designed to last 15 years and costing £45,000 per carriage new air conditioning units, new toilets, seats, table carpets, internal décor, bodywork repairs etc etc are all being done. Upgrading the Cambrian based 158 fleet would cost just 10% of the annual profit ATW cream off their £141 million public subsidy.

## **Caerhowell**

NIMBY man made an appearance in a letter to the County Times newspaper in September complaining about the proposed hourly service and how the extra noise would destroy his quality of life. He went on to add that he had bought a house 300 yards from an operational railway line and expected a quite rural life, miscounted the number of trains that ran past his house in daylight hours and claimed that last year's freight trial was unsuccessful and took place overnight, whereas in fact it was highly successful and took place in daylight hours! Mr Mason did not comment on how he would have found Montgomery station in the summer of 1904 with its 40 scheduled train movements a day (see Newsletter 34 An Edwardian lunchtime).

## **Newtown**

The garden bed at the Welshpool end of the DOWN platform has been planted with bulbs by the station adoption group. A profusion of spring colour is promised!

## **Machynlleth**

Work has begun on the depot upgrade which many were cynical would ever happen. Work spotted so far as been the erection of a portacabin complex for contractors Wrekin Construction and the relaying of track on the roads against the cliff face and at the Talerddig end of the engine shed.

The station was nominated in the category of best kept manned small station in this years National Rail awards: not a winner but highly commended. Well done all the staff at Machynlleth!

## **Leaf busting**

Network Rail are running rail head treatment trains over the Cambrian again this leaf fall season in what they say is the biggest effort to date to overcome poor adhesion conditions from wet leaves. Locomotive hauled trains appear to be running overnight this year.

## **Aberystwyth**

Footfall was reported as 256,000 per annum for 2005/2006 an increase of 17.2% on the 2002/2003 figure of 218,500. This gives an average of 700 passengers a day.

## Cardiff Bay

Rhodri Morgan's minority Labour administration again had its budget rejected by the opposition parties ganging up just as last year. Increased rail investment is once again on the list of demands from the opposition, though no details are yet to emerge of what the comprise will be. The extra two WAG funded units on the Cambrian since 24<sup>th</sup> July undoubtedly came as a result of opposition pressure; however currently they're only funded up to the end of December.

## Bus service 775

Recent reports in the media have concerned comment that the penny has finally dropped among the politicians, and they now recognise that bus deregulation has not worked - and some are even proposing that County Councils regain control over bus services in their area. On the 30<sup>th</sup> October Tanat Valley Coaches took over the 75 bus service from Shrewsbury to Llanidloes. Now the 775 service, it promises to be operated by low floor buses.

The southern arm of the route from Caersws to Llanidloes of course traverses the route of the old Mid Wales railway from Moat Lane Junction to Brecon. The populace were of course told that a connecting bus service to the rail network would be laid on. Twenty years of bus deregulation has seen the 75 service not even attempting to connect at Caersws or Newtown, and that's with since December 2003 the same company- Arriva operating bus and rail!

What a breath of fresh air is the new timetable. Still only 7 buses a day to Llanidloes and driven in part by having the contract to get students to Coleg Powys. The 0810 bus from Llanidloes has a tight 5 minute connection at Caersws with the 0833 to Birmingham but after that the 0940, 1140, 1340, 1540 & 1740 departures all reach Newtown bus station 32 minutes later and give a comfortable 28 minutes to reach Newtown station for the 1040, 1240, 1440, 1640 & 1840 departures eastward. What's more the bus travels through Caersws arriving 18 minutes after leaving Llanidloes so westbound trains can be caught in 15 minutes time.

In the opposite direction there are departures from Newtown bus station to Llanidloes at 1025, 1225, 1425, 1625 so passengers have 18 minutes to get there from the railway station. The connections from westbound services at Caersws are 0854 then a tight 6 minutes at 1039, 1239, 1439 & 1639.

By no means perfect but Tanat Valley coaches and Powys County Council who are part funding it should be given a pat on the back. Now all of this has been done with the same resources as the current 75 service. Didn't Arriva promote its bid for the all Wales franchise on the expectation that it would integrate its bus and rail services? Whatever happened to that - after all they had nearly 3 years to do it in the upper Severn valley? Will bus users will be shedding many tears at Arriva disappearance?

## Wrexham and Shropshire News (from the Company Website)

Wrexham & Shropshire is Britain's newest Open Access rail operator. Subject to approval from the Office of Rail Regulation, they will be operating direct services from Wrexham, Shrewsbury, Telford and Wolverhampton to London from summer 2007.

Five trains a day will operate along the route initially, with the possibility of more being introduced in the future. The new services will connect conveniently with other rail services to and from:

- Chester, Buckley, Shotton and The Wirral at Wrexham General
- Aberystwyth, Hereford and Whitchurch at Shrewsbury
- Birmingham and a wide range of national destinations at Wolverhampton
- Oxford, Reading and the South Coast at Banbury

There will be five trains each way on weekdays (four on Saturdays and three on Sundays), enabling both business and leisure trips to London at key times during the day.

Wrexham & Shropshire aims to achieve journey times of around two and a quarter hours to Telford, around two and a half hours to Shrewsbury and three and three and a quarter hours to Wrexham.

The Wrexham & Shropshire trains will be modern, air-conditioned diesel trains operating at 100 mph. Passengers will be able to travel in first or standard class and there will be at-seat catering.

Wrexham & Shropshire will be recruiting staff to manage and operate the new train services in advance of a summer 2007 start, and expect to be commencing recruitment processes during autumn 2006.

Wrexham & Shropshire is a joint venture between Renaissance Trains and Laing Rail. Renaissance Trains were the promoters of Hull Trains, a similar venture to Wrexham & Shropshire, which restored regular direct services between Hull and London in 2000 and which now carries over half a million passengers a year. Laing Rail is the holder of the successful Chiltern Railways franchise, operating regular services from London Marylebone to Aylesbury, Stratford-upon-Avon and Birmingham. Chiltern Railways has invested over £300m in track, stations, trains and depots over 10 years, during which time the number of passengers using its services has doubled. Indications are that services will go via Bescot and Stechford and serve Birmingham International and set down at Banbury in a southerly direction, and pick up at Banbury in a northerly direction to give connections into the Thames Valley and South Coast. They are not looking at the commuter market.

It is hoped to run test trains soon to check the feasibility of the suggested timetable.

**Mon 20 Nov** Presentation about the Wrexham, Shropshire & Marylebone Railway proposals at St Mary's Church Social Club, Regent St, Wrexham at 19:30. Details: [www.scrua.com](http://www.scrua.com)

### **Vandalism at Aberystwyth and Borth**

The *Cambrian News* has in successive weeks reported vandalism. In its issue of the 31st August it reported, as the front page story, an attack on the new footbridge replacing the Plas Crug crossing. Safety struts and a handrail were pulled away from the main fence, leaving pieces of wood sticking out into the bridge and nails visible. In the following week's issue, it quotes a Ceredigion Council spokesman as saying that repairs, costing probably several hundreds of pounds, will have to be funded by taxpayers.

Borth station, now adopted, was attacked by vandals during the weekend of the 1st-3rd September (*Cambrian News* 7th September). A display case was destroyed,

and black paint hurled over a wall. The case contained posters by children from Ysgol Gynradd Craig y Wylfa. British Transport Police are asking for anyone with information about this incident - or about any crime committed on railway property - to call their confidential Freephone number., 0800-405040.

### **The Cambrian Coast Express**

Photos and comments have been placed by Charlie Hulme on his North Wales railway website:

[www.nwrail.org.uk/nw0608i.htm](http://www.nwrail.org.uk/nw0608i.htm)

He reports: Our reporters have had varied experiences and conversations about the financial success of these trains in this second year. Loadings do not appear to have been spectacular, but we hear that the operation has recovered its costs. Certainly there have been no problems with the operation of the train, and no delays to normal traffic. Will it return next year? Well, I guess it depends on the new Managing Director, as the old MD Graeme Bunker who presided over the start of the service is clearly an enthusiast. If it does, we'd suggest a more open approach to the sale of tickets, rather than the postal or phone application which was the only advertised method up to now, and maybe some lower fares for part journeys, and maybe a discount for holders of rover tickets.

76079 is a good loco, but is it really out of the question to see a 'Manor' back on the Cambrian one day?

## **THE VIEW FROM MILEPOST 62**

with Brigadier John Faviell

"Wales receives record investments in its railways" ran a headline in the Western Mail I read full of high expectation, but alas it was more spin from the mouth of Andrew Davies AM Minister for Environment, Innovation and Networks – where transport is buried. I read a lot about schemes in a 25 mile radius of Cardiff but none elsewhere, apart from more through trains from north to south Wales which are political trains put on at the expense of other services by Arriva's standard pattern timetable. Analysing the list of achievements a common theme occurred, which seemed to have some bearing on areas where Labour's political interests lie: the Vale of Glamorgan – marginal seat to be gained from the Conservatives, Ebbw Vale desperately wanting Blaenau Gwent back from the Independents. Up here in Mid Wales there are no votes for Labour anyway so nothing happens. The cross party RIPS committee at the Assembly was no better - matching the schemes suggested up with the constituencies of the committee's membership wasn't too hard. What a parochial lot our AM's are: have they not heard that we live in a country called Wales and that the people of Wales might just want something that's nothing to do with the narrow political interests of certain sections, but something for the whole country instead?

2007 is election year at the Assembly so any aspiring non Labour politicians reading this will do well to remember that the rail system is a free stick to beat the incumbent regime with. However once you're in power sharing – the most likely outcome of Mays ballot - please remember that rail does need investing in and all over Wales as well.

Ironically the national media picked up Arriva's summertime pollen excuse at the beginning of October - a full three months late. Not even Arriva run that late!

## **WAG Feasibility Study into Cambrian Line Hourly Service: Passing Patterns: SARPA submission**

Thank you for your invitation to stakeholders to comment on the proposals for an hourly service on the Cambrian line and on the feasibility study currently being undertaken by Network Rail for the Welsh Assembly Government. As the rail user group for the line, SARPA has, of course, been campaigning vigorously for several years for improved service frequency, particularly in order to enable the railway to be used for commuting to the main centres of Aberystwyth & Shrewsbury and also to the intermediate towns. We therefore warmly welcome the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative in commissioning the present feasibility study.

SARPA has already made a submission on the Business Case for the Hourly Service, which sets out the benefits the hourly service can offer to commuters, business and leisure travellers along the length of the line. However, the purpose of this letter is to point out that a guiding consideration in the present study should be the need to marry up the infrastructure provided for the new service with centres of passenger demand. By this we mean that train stops for passing purposes should take place either at existing stations or at locations where there is a clear need for a new station.

A major defect of the existing timetable is that trains pass each other every two hours at Talerddig, a remote location at the summit of the line between the Severn and Dyfi watersheds, where there is no railway station. Talerddig was retained as a passing place during track rationalisations in the 70's, because of the need to lock down brakes on individual loose coupled wagons on freight trains before the descent to Cemmaes Road. However, as such freight trains no longer run, the rationale for having a passing loop at Talerddig no longer exists.

The stop at Talerddig adds a time penalty of at least 3 minutes to every journey, but provides no passenger benefit whatsoever. It is particularly frustrating for passengers on a waiting train when the opposing train is delayed, as the stop appears to have no purpose and they are not even able to leave the train to stretch their legs or have a cigarette.

At the hourly service feasibility study stakeholder meeting at Machynlleth on August 4<sup>th</sup>, the Network Rail representative, Mr Mike Gallop, presented six passing pattern options as follows:

1. Pass at Dovey Junction, Talerddig and Welshpool
- 1a. Pass at Dovey Junction, Carno and Welshpool
2. Pass at Machynlleth, Newtown and Redhill (3 miles West of Shrewsbury)
3. Pass at Borth/Ynyslas, Talerddig and Welshpool
4. Pass at Machynlleth, Moat Lane (0.75 m East of Caersws) and Westbury (8 miles West of Shrewsbury)
5. Pass at Glandyfi, Talerddig and Welshpool Dynamic Loop

We are concerned that the revenue raising possibilities of train passing stops appear to have been ignored, as options 1, 3 and 5 perpetuate the wasteful practice of passing trains at Talerddig and option 4 proposes passing at a new passing place at Moat Lane, only  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles from an existing station! Clearly, in the case of options 1, 3 and 5, it would make far more sense to transfer the Talerddig passing place to Carno, a growing community two miles to the East, where there is a strong demand for a new station. In

the case of option 4, Caersws should be selected for passing purposes rather than Moat Lane.

We would therefore urge you to amend the remit of the WAG feasibility study in favour of selecting passing places at either existing stations or locations where there is a clear need for a new station.

### **SARPA Income and Expenditure Account: 1 Sept 2005 to 1 October 2006**

<b>Receipts</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Subscriptions	370.00	345.00	Printing Newsletters	120.00	192.74
Donations	88.50	75.50	Postage	94.08	82.20
Bank interest	2.71	2.09	Stationery	12.30	10.96
			Photocopies	1.00	3.00
			Subscriptions to Transport 2000	20.00	
			London meeting	20.00	
			Room hire	120.11	
			Room hire, Pinewood		
			Tabernacle Machynlleth		35.00
			Website Angus Eichoff		50.27
	461.21	422.59		387.49	374.17
<b>Bank balance</b>					
B/P Account		259.79		262.65	
Community Account		137.56		185.45	
Cash in hand		2.65		1.09	
		400.00		449.19	
Ivor Morris, Treasurer					

### **SARPA Treasurer**

Ivor has been a valuable member of SARPA for many years and has been Treasurer since 1999, in addition he had stepped in to chair meetings in the Chairman's absence and answered media queries for us. We cannot praise Ivor's contribution enough the effort he has put in on behalf of rail users in Mid Wales is very much appreciated.

Ivor Morris indicated his desire to step down as Treasurer at last years AGM. However no one stepped forward at this years AGM to replace him. Ivor has agreed to stay on until the end of 2006 on a temporary basis until successor comes forward.

Please if anybody is interested contact in the first instance the Chairman

**Train Report: Wednesday 6 September 2006**

Roger Goodhew

(1)	Shrewsbury to Machynlleth							
Sch	0725a	0728	0751	0807	0816			0845a
Act	0725a	0729	0753	0808	0817	0827a	0829	0846a
(2)	Machynlleth to Barmouth							
Sch	0905	0911	0923	0930	0948	0956a		
Act	0907					0956a		
(3)	Barmouth to Machynlleth							
Sch	1249	1256	1316a	1323	1329	1341	1352a	awaits ex-Aber then to BNS
Act				1324		1343		
(4)	Machynlleth to Shrewsbury							
Sch	1606			1635	1642	1658		1721a
Act	1607	1620a	1634	1645	1653	1707	1726	1729a

## Comments (1 )

Ex Platform 6 at Shrewsbury; waited at Sutton Bridge for late Cardiff to Holyhead to enter the station ( due in at 0722).

Waited about 2 mins before departing Caersws. For the signal perhaps?

On previous journeys I have noted that the Caersws scheduled times seem to be awry. At Talerddig eastbound train waiting for westbound (as usual).

Is it possible that lightly loaded trains (morning westbound; evening eastbound) could be timetabled more tightly ex Caersws and hence uphill to Talerddig?

Is the order of departure from Talerddig regulated or discretionary as per signalman?

The priority for departure from Talerddig needs to be eastbound first.

## Comments (2)

Departure delay from Mach was due to inexperience of some trainees late on board.

## Comments (3)

Scheduled wait at Tywyn for northbound of 7 min.

Machynlleth arrival in plenty of time for subsequent addition of ex-Aber for Birmingham New Street onward.

## Comments (4)

Machynlleth dep. more or less on time at 1607.

Talerddig arr. 1620 waited for westbound and dep. 1634.

Caersws 10 min late away.

Newtown 11 min. late away.

Welshpool 9 min late away.

Sutton Bridge straight onto mainline but waited on viaduct by Gay Meadow 1726

Shrewsbury stn Platform 5 arr. 1729: 8 min. behind scheduled arrival.

## **ATW'S DRAFT TIMETABLE FOR DECEMBER TO JUNE: SARPA'S OBSERVATIONS**

### **Monday to Saturday**

#### **Journey time Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury**

The proposed timings allow 114 minutes in either direction. Its disappointing to note that the journey times are creeping upwards. A look at my copy of BR's summer 1994 timetable readily confirms that. Times of 107/108 minutes were common and achieved with a mixed fleet of 150/153/156/158 units all with different speed/acceleration characteristics compared to today's entirely 158 based workings. This was done with 7 DOWN and 8 UP workings over the line compared to 8 DOWN & 8 UP today.

#### **Heroic turnaround times**

The proposed 5 minute turnarounds in Aberystwyth will do nothing whatsoever to aid punctuality (xx22 arrival followed by xx27 departures). The only way an on time departure will be achieved is by an on time arrival. Given current punctuality problems, just how achievable will be on time departures from Aberystwyth?

Again 15 minutes at New St is given current experience is cutting it fine.

#### **Connections from Cambrian Coast**

We welcome the continuation of the pattern introduced on the 24/07/06. Connections from/to the Shrewsbury direction are the best they've been for 13 years.

#### **Last train to Shrewsbury**

The departure time for the last through service to Shrewsbury from Aberystwyth creeps ever earlier. Its now proposed for 1927. There are all sorts of reasons why this is sub optimal, yet again this is a product of having a standard pattern service with a low frequency- anomalies and discrepancies are thrown up all over the place which make matching supply to demand impossible.

#### **Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton**

Again we note our dismay at ATW doubling up on certain services as the all stations commuter trains. In particular the 0512 from Aberystwyth. ATW does not have the rolling stock resources to play in this market and it should be left to Central Trains to serve.

Without sight of Table 74 to see what CT are proposing it's hard for us to comment further on this corridor except to say that the chaos predicted with the CT hourly stopper flighted just 15 minutes or so behind ATW's hourly semi fast heading toward Birmingham has materialised and extended station dwell times due to overcrowding are part of the punctuality problems.

#### **Trial and error west of Shrewsbury?**

Again there are variations minute here and minutes there, the 9 minutes westward from Newtown to Caersws is now abandoned but tinkering elsewhere have appeared. Is this to be the norm until the magic formula is found? If a standard pattern it is to be then constant tinkering defeats the objective.

### **Issues to be parked in the WAG sponsored Network Rail study**

We have not forgotten about the beneath but with the Network Rail study ongoing these are issues best taken forward through that medium.

- Connections form Aberystwyth to the Coast line.
- Effective commuter services at both end of the line.
- Increased frequency.

### **Connections at Shrewsbury**

No doubt ATW have access to the correct information but has the prioritisation of connection at Shrewsbury to Holyhead/Chester/Wrexham/Cardiff led to any significant increase in traffic?

It was our contention that better connections to/from Manchester were more of a priority for Cambrian passengers. Have numbers travelling been effected by the de prioritising of this link?

### **Commuter trains into Aberystwyth**

We welcome the retention of the 0810 departure from Machynlleth and the 0633 from Birmingham New St. Given the comments made above about low frequency standard pattern this example again bears out this point. Rigid two hour patterns deliver sub optimal solutions.

### **Is the Standard Pattern right for the Cambrian?**

Given the lack of passing loops west of Shrewsbury, problems between Oxley & New St, increased station dwell times due to overcrowding, lack of robust turnaround times is trying to pursue a two hourly standard pattern realistic for the operator?

I need not go on about the punctuality problems on this line but pose that question. Until the inherent problems listed above are addressed would not a more traditional railway timetable be more appropriate given the circumstances the Cambrian finds itself in?

Gareth Marston  
Chairman, SARPA

## STATION ADOPTIONS

### Betws-y-Coed

The 100<sup>th</sup> Arriva unstaffed station to be adopted is Betws-y-coed, on the beautiful Conwy Valley Line, and is being taken on by Marion Bettenev and other members of Betws-y-coed Community Council and Colin Cartwright and the Conwy Valley Railway Museum team.

Betws-y-coed joins a long list of adopted stations ranging from Rhosneigr, on the Isle of Anglesey, the northern tip of the Arriva Trains Wales network, to Llantwit Major in South Wales and from Pembroke Dock in West Wales to as far east as Leominster.

Since the Adopt a Station scheme was created by Arriva station adoption teams have used their creative energies to improve station environments for local people:

- In **Dolau**, on the Heart of Wales Line, and **Criccieth**, on the Cambrian Coast, rural stations have been transformed by green fingered station adopters. Floral displays at the stations have won Wales in Bloom Awards
- Three stations in the South Wales valleys have benefited from a splash of colour thanks to artwork produced by adoption teams. At **Tonypandy**, in the **Rhondda Valley**, station murals produced by teenage artists have improved the station for local commuters and visitors
- Community projects carried out at **Chirk** Station, in North Wales, in partnership with local adopters, brownies, girl guides and members of the Chirk Fire Service scooped a major Network Rail Environment Award. The national award recognised efforts to improve the station appearance and place the station at the heart of the community.

At a number of Arriva's adopted stations British Transport Police have reported a drop in crime and anti-social behaviour. **Gowerton** Station, near Swansea, has seen a 40 per cent reduction in incidents of trespass and vandalism.

### Borth

#### Bodge gives Borth a Facelift

Local artist Carol Gibbens, or Bodge as she is known, has been appointed as one of the project leaders who will be giving that most anachronistic of train stations, Borth, a facelift. This project, part of a community partnership with Arriva Trains Wales, is designed for citizens to take responsibility for their local, unmanned stations under the scheme entitled 'Adopt A Station'.

Stepping on to the platform at Borth is like stepping back in time and those of us who know the station may have mixed feelings about any 'improvements' being made to it. True, the Grade II listed building is Victorian, dim and gloomy and, yet, there is something rather appealing about its faded shabbiness. Not a ticket barrier, guard nor any other of today's officialdom in sight, you can, if you like, press a button on a small speaker which tells you where the train is, but most simply wait on the platform. You are, however, assured of getting on the right train as the signpost opposite the entrance indicates that Machynlleth and Shrewsbury are to the left and Aberystwyth to the right, in case you should be confused.

The plans for the facelift include four large murals and early ideas for themes are the four seasons linked to the elements earth, wind, fire and water. Other projects already in hand are re-painting and repairing the wood and ironwork and planting flowerbeds in large, square boxes made of de-commissioned railway sleepers. Local schools are running a painting competition with the winning entries to be displayed on the station noticeboards and a Borth seniors' group is creating a mosaic which will also go on display soon.

Local project co-ordinator, George Romary, is proud of the improvements which have been made to the station since the inception of the project in March and stresses that he would like as many local individuals or groups to get involved in the project as possible.

The existing team of committed volunteers, encouraged by Arriva, submits weekly reports relating to various aspects of the station, such as litter or vandalism and, consequently, it is hoped that the community will regain its sense of ownership and pride in this historic landmark. Furthermore, Borth has, proportionately, more than its fair share of social problems and some of the more troublesome youngsters are being encouraged to participate in the project.

Tessa Briggs

From an article first published in Holy Trinity Church, Aberystwyth, newsletter, September 2006.

If you would like more information on the 'Adopt A Station' scheme please call Arriva Trains Wales on 0845 6061 660 or visit their website:

[www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk](http://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk)



## Websites

**Our website, hosted by Angus Eickhoff: <http://sarpa.info>**

**Other sites of interest:**

Arriva Trains Wales

[www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/](http://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/)

National Rail Enquiries

[www.nationalrail.co.uk/](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/)

Train and Bus Information Midlands

[www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp](http://www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp)

Central Trains

[www.centraltrains.co.uk/](http://www.centraltrains.co.uk/)

Virgin Trains

[www.virgintrains.co.uk/default.aspx](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk/default.aspx)

Chiltern Railways

[www.chilternrailways.co.uk/](http://www.chilternrailways.co.uk/)

Network Rail

[www.networkrail.co.uk/](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/)

Railfuture/Railway Development Society

[www.railfuture.org.uk/](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/)

Cambrian Rail Partnership

[www.thecambrianline.co.uk/](http://www.thecambrianline.co.uk/)

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)

[www.acorp.uk.com](http://www.acorp.uk.com)

Website of the new Wrexham to London company

[www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk/index.html](http://www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk/index.html)

### SARPA Meeting dates and venues 2006-07

December	Tues 5th	1900	Newtown Bell Hotel
January	Sat 6th	1145	Royal Air Force Club Bridge St Aberystwyth
February	Tues 6th	1845	Caersws Red Lion
March	Tues 6th	1900	Newtown Bell Hotel
April	to be confirmed		
May	Tues 1st	1915	Welshpool Pinewood Tavern
June	Tues 5th	1930	Shrewsbury Hobbs Room Library
July	Sat 7th	1130	Borth Victoria Inn
August	Tues 7th	1900	Newtown Bell Hotel
September	Tues 4th	1845	Machynlleth Railway Station
October	AGM: to be confirmed		
November	Tues 6th	1915	Welshpool Pinewood Tavern
December	Tues 4th	1900	Newtown Bell Hotel

## Useful addresses

### **Arriva Trains Wales:**

St Mary's House, 47 Penarth Road, Cardiff CF10 5DJ. Tel 0845 6061 660  
Email: [customer.services@arrivatrainswales.co.uk](mailto:customer.services@arrivatrainswales.co.uk)

### **Network Rail:**

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

### **Association of Community Rail Partnerships**

Rail & River Centre, Canal Side, Civic Hall, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield HD7 5AB

### **Virgin Trains**

Virgin Trains, Customer Relations, PO Box 713, Birmingham, B5 4HH

Tel. 0870 789 1234

### **Traveline Cymru for all public transport information**

[www.traveline-cymru.org.uk](http://www.traveline-cymru.org.uk) Tel.0870-6082608

### **Ceri Davies, Rail Franchise Performance Manager**

Rail and New Roads Division, Transport Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Direct Line (029) 2082 6561

### **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

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