

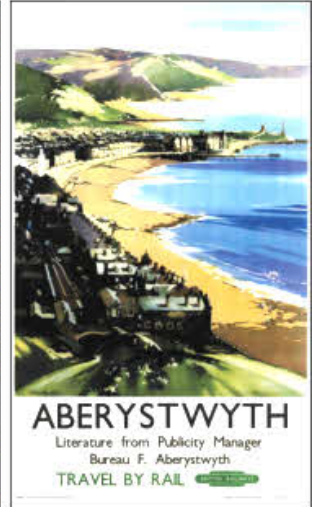
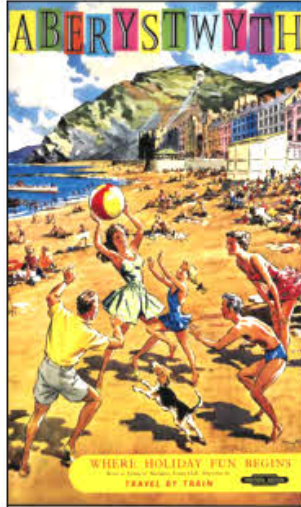
Shrewsbury  
Aberystwyth  
Rail  
Passengers'  
Association



Newsletter  
No. 40

July 2007

## TRAVEL BY TRAIN



## TEITHIWCH AR Y TRÊN

One of the new **Cambrian Postcards**

Chairman's message.....	2
News in brief.....	3
Corrections.....	7
Private owner wagons.....	7
Borth Station community group scoops 2007 award.....	8
'Cambrian Coast-Cards' launched.....	9
Analysis: <i>Mission Impossible</i> how the Cambrian was dealt an impossible to deliver timetable.....	11
From the <i>Cambrian News</i> .....	14
Carno station reopening campaign.....	16
The view from milepost 62 with Brigadier John Faviell.....	17
Longer trains for Cambrian mainline.....	18
Websites.....	19
SARPA meetings.....	19
Useful addresses.....	20
Officers of the Association.....	20

## Chairman's Message

It now seems probable from the many sources I have heard from, that the much talked about hourly service (91 monthly SARPA meetings since first announced in December 1999) will not be introduced following the latest WAG study. However indications are quite strong that the associated infrastructure work could well go ahead - see the use of the phraseology "interim period" in the WAG press release published later in this newsletter. From all accounts the sticking point is not the funding for the infrastructure works, but the additional ongoing operating costs. After all Network Rail want the ERTMS trial to succeed!

I will point out that SARPA's position all along has been to focus on the deficiencies in the current timetable and operations on the line, and to campaign to eliminate them: it just so happens that an hourly service is a mechanism that addresses most of those concerns. An hourly service on its own is not an end in itself, it's a means to an end or rather several of them. This seems to be lost in the current debate - we appear to have lost the trees for the wood. SARPA were here campaigning long before Network Rail, ATW, WAG and the various AM's, MP's and other Stakeholders got hourly fixated.

So what major boxes actually need ticking from a passenger point of view? Respectable punctuality, elimination of overcrowding, more services than eight a day, decent connections from/to the coast line/Aberystwyth, decent connections in all directions at Shrewsbury, the ability to effectively commute into Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth are all in the SARPA files from ten years ago - not we want an hourly service. An hourly service will deliver, but so will a better timetable with 10/11 services a day, especially given that WAG have confirmed the extra funding of units up to the end of the franchise, and if we get the infrastructure upgrade, it's not two hourly or hourly, there's an in-between that has not been properly looked at.

WAG deserve praise for the extra units, but let's not kid ourselves that that is all that needs to be done until such time that hourly is looked at again. With the infrastructure work incremental improvements are easily grasped.

Gareth Marston, Newtown 10<sup>th</sup> July 2007



Track recording vehicle at Barmouth, February 6th, 2007

## News in brief

### Crewe

Network Rail have floated the possibility of the station being relocated about half a mile further south than the current ex LNWR station at Basford Hall. They wish to raise through line speeds through the area and reduce conflicting movements. ATW's Manchester to Cardiff services effectively have to block the West Coast Main line for several minutes each hour at present. Exact details are yet to emerge but a more flexible layout at Crewe could help with timetabling paths for ATW increasing the possibility of improved connections to Manchester at Shrewsbury for Cambrian passengers – a severe weakness of the current SPT.

### Shrewsbury

Official Footfall figures for 2005/2006 show 1,316,852 passengers who bought tickets from/to the station.

Network Rail wish to dispose of Cotton Hill yard (on the Chester line just north of the station) out of rail use claiming there is no foreseeable rail use for it. No doubt the same words were said at Machynlleth when the old lower yard was sold off. Now no room to expand the car park for passengers, nowhere for staff to park, and Network Rail and ATW's depots severely constrained a tale repeated at countless locations across the network - will they ever learn?

Central Trains will disappear in November 2007 and be replaced by GOVIA's London Midland, the winner for the new West Midlands franchise announced in late June. The franchise merry go round continues, "benefits" at Shrewsbury will be another new livery on the same number of trains which will have the same number of seats but with CCTV installed and fare increases as far as can be made out from the press releases.

### Welshpool

Official Footfall figures for 2005/2006 show 72,660 passengers who bought tickets from/to the station.

Tory leader David Cameron MP spent some time on patrol with Dyfed Powys police in April and claims to have attended Welshpool station to deal with "yobs on the train" in his press release. We have been unable to find any corroborating evidence to this claim.

The station adoption team are looking for new members there. One of them has retired at the new year on the grounds of age, and they also need help to manage their noticeboard in the station car park. If you are interested, please call Angus Eickhoff on (01938)553572, or contact SARPA by email.

In the meantime, the station adopters have met with the local Assembly Member, Mick Bates to raise issues about passenger facilities there. They have also been campaigning on the matter of the Welshpool town bus service. This facility actually passes the station but its presence there does not coincide with the trains, nor is the station even mentioned in its timetable!

## **Newtown**

Official Footfall figures for 2005/2006 show 90,836 passengers bought tickets from/to the station.

Two groups of adults who were involved in an altercation after returning from a drinking session in Aberystwyth one Saturday last summer have received community service sentences.

Mid Wales Housing Association is to build a new headquarters building in the old station yard.

A bridge bash hit the national news on the 12<sup>th</sup> June when yet another inattentive lorry driver hit the Dolfor Road bridge on the A483.

A proposed new Tesco store on the site of the old Smithfield market (immediately left after passing underneath the A489 bridge on leaving the station) is causing controversy not least because of the impact on traffic around the junction of the A483 Welshpool and A489 Craven Arms roads which will impact people to trying to access the station. A rail freight facility would make more sense.

A SOLD sign has appeared on the board at the former Café Loco. The new lease holder currently runs the fish & chips shop in Caersws and plans to turn the venue into a restaurant and completely rebrand and rename it.

## **Caersws/ Mediolanum**

Official Footfall figures for 2005/2006 show 28,257 passengers who bought tickets from/to the station.

Did you know that the station is built over the south east corner of a Roman fort? Walk down to the main road in the village from the station and you see a raised area of earthwork in the fields on your left- the remains of the southern ramparts. The area has seen frequent archaeological digs over the years; the fort was quite large aligned exactly north-south, measuring 580 feet in this dimension by 590 feet east-west over the rampart-crests, this defensive bank was fronted on all sides by a triple ditch system. The enclosed area is about 7¼ acres and experts believe could have housed a mixed force of cavalry, legionary cohorts and auxiliary regiments numbering some 1,000 troops. The civilian settlement or vicus lies underneath the modern village centre. It was known as Mediolanum ("the central fist") according to the classical geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus.

## **Carno**

The campaign to reopen the village station has stepped a gear recently with the Carno Station Action Group launching its own website [www.carnostation.org.uk/](http://www.carnostation.org.uk/), sending a petition to the Assembly in Cardiff Bay and organising a publicity shoot with over a hundred people present (see article).

## **Machynlleth**

Official Footfall figures for 2005/2006 show 92,024 passengers who bought tickets from/to the station.

Congratulations to three conductors based in Machynlleth who are reported as being expectant mothers at the same time.

Welsh Assembly Government staff currently based in Machynlleth but earmarked to relocate to Aberystwyth have been told not to expect any improvements to the areas transport infrastructure before or even a couple of years after the new office building opens in summer 2009.

To celebrate Bike Week, June 16–24, new cycle parking facilities have been installed at Machynlleth Railway Station. The station has recently seen a steady increase in the number of customers and staff who want to access the station by bike.

Arriva Trains Wales (ATW), the Cambrian Railways Partnership (CRP) and Powys County Council (PCC) have teamed up to provide and install the new stands that can store up to 10 bikes.

Sources within the industry state that the structure of the new shed including frame and roof panels was complete by the end of March 2007. In May an extension was started on at the western end of the shed of a couple of metres in length, which included moving the stop blocks back from their original position. To get machinery in to undertake this remedial work several fully grown trees were felled next to a bus bay on the station drive, as there was no room for the machinery to get past the shed. The modular nature of the construction enabled this to be carried out relatively easily.

### **Dovey Junction**

Official Footfall figures for 2005/2006 show 1,062 passengers who bought tickets from/to the station.

Flower boxes have appeared on the platforms.

### **Borth**

Official Footfall figures for 2005/2006 show 47,436 passengers who bought tickets from/to the station.

### **Aberystwyth**

Official Footfall figures for 2005/2006 show 254,499 passengers who bought tickets from/to the station.

### **Sunday Service**

Arriva Trains Wales has now introduced a new service on Sundays, departing Machynlleth at 16.30 going to Aberystwyth and departing Aberystwyth at 17.15 to run through to Birmingham New Street. This service is scheduled to run throughout the summer timetable, plugging the previous 5 hour gap. Previously summer weekend visitors had to leave at 3.30pm to make London connections: 2 hours earlier than in winter.

Unfortunately it does not appear in printed timetable booklets nor on stations although it is on the National Rail Enquiries website and ran last Sunday (1st day of the new timetable). As Station Adopter of Dovey Junction I have been campaigning to have a service run at this time and am pleased that ATW seem to have seen the logic on this occasion.

From: Rupert Marshall

## Timekeeping on the line

According to sources in the industry, Period 3 of 07/08 came in at 58% ppm for ABR to BNS services.

## Catch the Big Train for the Great Little Trains of Wales, with discount too!

An initiative by the Cambrian Railways Partnership is to launch a discount scheme for travel on the Great Little Trains of Wales served by the Cambrian routes. The partnership has teamed up with the heritage lines to offer a 20% discount on production of a "Valid ATOC Cambrian Rail Ticket":- that's a normal train ticket for the standard gauge network in plain English. This allows passengers to use Arriva's services to access the narrow gauge steam lines in North Wales.

Participating railways are:- Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway, Corris Railway & Museum, Vale of Rheidol Railway, Talylyn, Fairbourne Railway, Ffestiniog Railway, Welsh Highland Railway Ltd (Porthmadog)

## Summer - Winter Timetables

With the new timetable booklet of 20th May, there are changes from previous issues. It is now booklet No. 1, and covers the Cambrian Coast/Chester to Birmingham, and also the Heart of Wales line, and It now runs until the 8th December.

A train not included is the Sunday departure from Aberystwyth at 1715 for Birmingham New Street - presumably a reinstatement of the 1715 in the previous timetable, arriving in New Street at 2033 (the train from Shrewsbury, a stopper, is shown in the new timetable). Although not shown on the new timetable, this gives a connection to London from New Street (2100 - 2300). However, this train is shown on the Sunday timetable from the 16th September.

## Arriva profits

From "Investor Relations" on ATW's parent companies – Arriva's website. ([www.arriva.co.uk](http://www.arriva.co.uk)):

Our UK Trains division achieved an operating profit in 2005 of £14.9 million on revenue of £239.4 million. Operating profit includes some residual income from the Arriva Trains Northern franchise that ceased in December 2004. Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) was our only UK Trains business operating in 2005.

In 2006 UK Trains achieved an operating profit of £12.3 on revenue of £253.9 million.

From the Welsh Assembly Governments website:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/PublicTransport/Rail/?lang=en>

...to driving forward the Welsh Assembly Government's agenda for improving rail services in Wales involving a budget currently running at around £140 million per annum\*.

\*This is the subsidy paid to ATW, and is clearly the largest component of Arriva UK Rail's revenue.

## ATW's aspirations for the future

ATW has notified the Rail Regulator's office of some increased track access rights. Including

- Extension of Aberystwyth and Chester services to Birmingham International.
- Doubling of service frequency on Shrewsbury - Aberystwyth line.
- Provide service to Manchester Airport from the south.

[From *Rail Wales* No.40, Spring 2007]

## CORRECTIONS

SARPA has been asked to correct two points in Newsletter No 39 (April 2007)

We have been asked by Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) to correct two factual inaccuracies in SARPA newsletter No.39 (April 2007):

On page 2, we suggested that a new two road shed at the western end of Machynlleth station complex has been built to the wrong dimensions. ATW advise that this is not correct. The new shed will comfortably accommodate Class 158 units.

On page 4, we state that around 10% of Welsh Assembly Government's annual subsidy to ATW is "creamed off as profit". ATW advise that is not correct."



## Private Owner Wagons

Private owner wagons - most actually leased by the coal merchant from the railway company - were a common feature up to nationalisation. At least two companies, Charles Meehan and Thomas & Jones, had wagons at Aberystwyth. The West Wales Wagon Works has already produced a 4mm scale (00) model of the Charles Meehan wagon, and in July will issue the Thomas & Jones wagon. In August they will issue a Hubbard of Aberaeron wagon, numbered 200, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Aberaeron. This wagon will be released at the Aeron Valley Railway Society's Model Railway Exhibition, held in Aberaeron Primary School on Sunday 12th August.

West Wales Wagon Works: Valentine House, Brynderi Close, Adpar, Newcastle Emlyn, Ceredigion SA38 9NP. Telephone: 01239 712730.

E-Mail: [westwaleswagonworks@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:westwaleswagonworks@yahoo.co.uk)

## Borth Station community group scoops 2007 award

Tessa Briggs

Network Rail states on its website 'The safety, reliability and efficiency of the railway always come first but we have an obligation to look after the environment as well.' In fact, they say, that looking after the environment is so important to them that, since 2000, they have held annual Environment Awards for suppliers, stakeholders, contractors, community groups and train operating companies who demonstrate best environmental practice and performance.

Readers of this newsletter may recall the article 'Bodge gives Borth a facelift' (No. 36, p. 13) which described how a group from the local community, including local artist Carol Gibbens (or Bodge, as she is known), was contributing towards the adoption of Borth station. Now the work of this team, led by George Romary, has scooped the 2007 Network Rail Environment Award for 'Community Partnership'.

At the awards ceremony at London's Natural History Museum, Network Rail Chairman, Ian McAllister, particularly commended the efforts of the group in working with pupils from Ysgol Craig yr Wylfa, and the four painted murals, which depict the elements of earth, wind, fire and water, interwoven with views of different locations around Borth. One passenger was overheard to say recently 'These pictures do cheer the place up, don't they?', and the station is, indeed, a much pleasanter environment nowadays.

Those who participated in the Borth Station adoption scheme, and those who continue to monitor the station, are to be congratulated. They are in good company as other Network Rail Environment Awards this year include Eurostar's Environment Group for its initiative to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 25% per traveller journey by 2012, and Lawnmuir Primary School in Scotland for its introduction of Rail Safety Representatives in Belshill, which is one of the areas in Scotland which is worst affected by rail crime.

Full details of all the awards and Network Rail's Environment Policy can be found on the website: [www.networkrail.co.uk](http://www.networkrail.co.uk).





## **'Cambrian Coast-Cards' Launched**

The Cambrian Railways Partnership has recently launched its '**Cambrian Coast-Cards**'. These are A5 sized postcards that feature three designs each from railway posters of yesteryear to promote travel to resorts on the Cambrian Coast by train.

Initially two '**Cambrian Coast-Cards**' will be produced featuring images of Aberystwyth, Barmouth, Harlech and Criccieth on the cover. These will be distributed, for free, via a variety of local outlets including Tourist Information Centres, manned Railway Stations, tourist attractions and accommodation providers on the Cambrian Lines. In a joint initiative with Ceredigion Museum in Aberystwyth – the cards will also be available there.

The reverse of the '**Cambrian Coast-Cards**' contain contact information for National Rail Enquiries, and the website addresses for Arriva Trains Wales and the Cambrian Railways Partnership.

Similar designs for railway posters will be reproduced and on display at railway stations across the Cambrian network.

The '**Cambrian Coast-Cards**' and Posters, as originally, are intended to promote tourist travel into the area by train as well as encouraging local residents and tourists, while in the area, to use the train to visit some of the fantastic resorts and attractions on the Coast. Indeed the rail journey on the Cambrian Coast line is widely regarded to be one of the most stunningly beautiful and contrasting rail journeys anywhere in the UK and as such is a major attraction in its own right!

The '**Cambrian Coast-Cards**' were officially launched by Cllr. Trevor Roberts, Chairman of the Cambrian Coast Line Liaison Conference at its meeting held in Y Ganolfan, Porthmadog on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2007. Cllr. Roberts commented "*These cards show images from bygone times that have encouraged tourists to travel to the area by train since early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our resorts retain many of the positive characteristics conveyed including good clean beaches, a warm, friendly and safe welcome that remain to this day – hopefully the Coast-Cards will remind people that they don't have to travel by car to access the area and that there are good opportunities to travel here on the trains*".

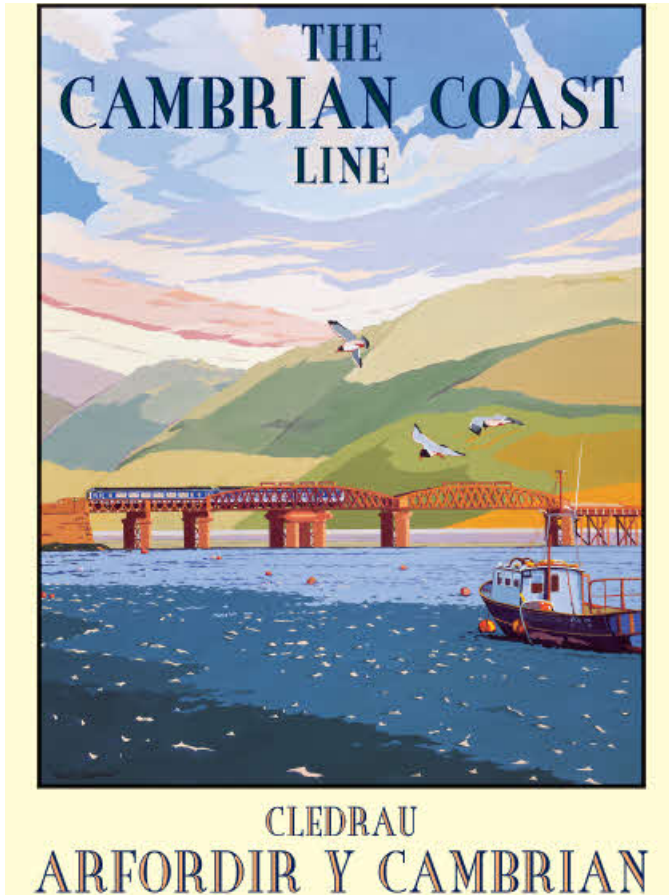
Following the popularity of the Cambrian Coastcards – a new card has been published to add to the collection.

The cover of the new A5 sized coastcard shows a painting of a train crossing Barmouth viaduct - originally painted by artist David Grovesnor as one of a series of posters produced to promote some of the scenic railways of Wales in the 1990's.

The reverse of the coastcards shows the names of some of the popular resorts on the Cambrian Coast that are accessible by train - with daily Rover tickets from £6 adults (£3 children) the train is a great way to visit them. Also on the reverse are the contact details of 'traveline cymru' whom provide public transport information including train times.

Councillor Trevor Roberts the Chairman of North Wales Transport Consortium TAITH in launching the new cards said – "*The Cambrian Coast railway line is so much more than a way of getting from A to B – it's a mobile tourist attraction in its own right!. I hope that this addition to the coastcard collection will prove popular in raising awareness of the line with locals and tourists alike and will support an increase in passenger growth*".

Gerwyn Jones on behalf of the Cambrian Railways Partnership, who publish the cards, commented "*The original coastcards have proven not only to be popular as*



Reproduction of postcards by courtesy of Cambrian Railways Partnership

*postcards but also as items of memorabilia that people like to keep and put up as adornments in their homes and offices'.*

The new coastcards will be available from manned railway stations, at Tourist Information Centres and other outlets along the Cambrian Coast. However should you wish to receive a card in the post, please send a pre paid self addressed envelope (at least A5 in size) to:

Gerwyn Jones  
Rail Development Officer  
Cambrian Railways Partnership  
c/o Arriva Trains Wales  
Machynlleth Railway Station  
Doll Street  
Machynlleth  
Powys SY20 8BL

## **Analysis: *Mission Impossible* how the Cambrian was dealt an impossible to deliver timetable**

Chairman Gareth Marston outlines how a combination of poor specification, lack of thought about consequences, lack of resources and adherence in trying to achieve those specifications compounded by other errors has led to unacceptable performance on Aberystwyth to Birmingham services.

*\*Ersatz is a [German](#) word literally meaning substitute or replacement.... the English term often implies that the substitution is of unsatisfactory or inferior quality,*

There are plenty of things that can cause delay minutes to a train: you can argue till your blue in the face as to where the initial responsibility lies, but at the end of the day delays can and will occur - it's a simple fact of life. For a timetable to be successful there must be some degree of flexibility in its operation to counter these eventualities. The timetable currently on offer for the Cambrian has no such flexibility – everything must go right for it to work, and with long single track sections knock on delays are the norm.

Lets go back to the early/ mid 90's and look at how BR were delivering services between Birmingham and Aberystwyth. Things were not standard pattern, but services were roughly spaced around the two hour mark, sometimes a little less sometimes up to two and half hours apart. Of more note you'll find that these services were not self contained Aberystwyth to Birmingham and return runs, but formed part of a wider Regional Railways Central network of services that stretched across to the East Midlands and East Anglia.

Trains could and did run late of course; however there was one aspect of today's service that never happened - a Wolverhampton turnaround. This was simply because Aberystwyth bound services were not dependent on an incoming service arriving on time from Aberystwyth for an on time departure back to Aberystwyth, as they came through from the East Midlands/East Anglia instead. As Birmingham bound services were travelling beyond New St passengers were not turfed out at Wolverhampton on late running trains; they just arrived later on the same train into Birmingham. There was an inbuilt degree of insulation from knock on delays west of Birmingham, due to the nature of the operation. Central Trains continued with this mode of operation for its tenure over the Cambrian. Then came the creation of the Wales and Borders franchise in the autumn of 2001.

Services between Aberystwyth and Birmingham then became self contained and funnelled into roughly every two hours. Turnaround times at Aberystwyth were reduced and a 15 minute turnaround of the same unit was introduced at Birmingham New St. We are all familiar with the problems caused by the lack of passing loops west of Shrewsbury and the incredibly congested two track section between Wolverhampton and Birmingham New St, and the impact this has on operations which was present before, but what soon became apparent in the new mode of operation was that there was no way to recover from late running in the timetable now being operated. This meant that turning a late running service at Wolverhampton was the only means to get things back on course. If anyone doubts the validity of turnaround times then they should look at what happened in October 2006 when Aberystwyth services temporarily went to Crewe for a week due to engineering works: a 50 minute layover at Crewe was operated with, punctuality improved no end. The current Sunday timetable has long layovers and seems to run a lot better than the Monday to Saturday service.

It was suggested that a way out was to have units layover at Birmingham rather than head straight back and then swap between Chester and Aberystwyth turns. This was a non starter as the Wales and Border franchise had not been allocated sufficient rolling stock resources from the split with Central Trains. Whereas in the summer of 2001, 3, 4 and even 5 coach formations were seen on the Cambrian the vast majority of services in the new franchise were only 2 car in length until WAG funded extra units from July 2006 onwards. The 11 2 car 158's allocated were spread very thinly and the rest of franchise did not have the resources to make up numbers, so the assets had to be sweated and luxuries like long layovers to ensure punctuality could not be done.

Why did we have to have a roughly two hourly service anyway? Why not if the resources could not reliably deliver it was a different more workable timetable not tried?

Back in the early 90's rail privatisation was not exactly popular- it was dubbed the poll tax on wheels, many people were concerned that private operators would cut services back. In a series of "concessions" the Tory government promised that franchise applicants would have to operate to a minimum acceptable level of service which would be specified by the quango – OPRAF that had been set up to oversee the franchising process. Whilst publicly presented as a minimum acceptable level of service it soon became apparent that OPRAF had simply in many cases just copied the existing BR timetable – warts and all - as the basis for the minimum.

Little thought appears to have been given to what was an acceptable minimum standard or other considerations. Which is why such nonsenses appear in the Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury PSR or Passenger Service Requirement as "*Shrewsbury Departures: An early departure no later than 0945*" or "*For the purposes of this service only "two-hourly" shall mean intervals not exceeding 2 hours 20 minutes provided that four services are provided in any 8 hour 25 minute interval. One interval between Saturday departures from Aberystwyth may be extended to 2 hours 45 minutes*". It was simply a copy of the then BR timetable 75 which as we have seen above was part of a wider Cardigan Bay to the Wash railway.

OPRAF broke its PSR's down into sections like Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury based on timetables related to BR operating practices that were part of a larger picture, and stored up future trouble. The PSR is what the franchise bidders were asked to bid against to operate services. Central Trains' franchise area was the same as Regional Railways Central and they employed the same operating practices, and ran long distance regional services across Birmingham so there was no problem. Then came the decision to create the Wales and Border franchise.

Whether the Strategic Rail Authority knew it was asking the impossible for the bidders for the franchise to run reliable self contained services between Aberystwyth and Birmingham based on a PSR that was derived from long distance services that ran across Birmingham is unknown. National Express Group who had taken over the former Regional Railways South Wales and West franchise was asked to provide a management contract whilst the services from other TOC's were split and bids invited. So whilst the bidding process got underway the problem of the Wolverhampton turnaround became well known, and formed part of process from groups such as SARPA when the franchise bidders consulted on their plans. As the temporary franchise started in October 2001 and the final franchise winner not appointed till December 2003, it should not have been a surprise to the winner that something was amiss with the Cambrian timetable. The discussion that SARPA had with all 9 bidders included what would be done to improve reliability.

The eventual winner's - Arriva's - winning bid was based around the implementation of a Standard Pattern Timetable. There appears to have been a catch all response to all the glitches and concerns across the rail network when they took over - the SPT was on its way! One of the benefits of an SPT we were told was that it would improve punctuality as everybody would be familiar with the repeating patterns! The current Senior Management Team at ATW has inherited the promise of the franchise bidding team. Many stakeholders had been left with the impression that Arriva's franchise bid team were offering Swiss style connecting and reliable services. The SPT was a panacea to all ills or was it?

One thing was obvious about Arriva's SPT it was not a Swiss *Taktfahrplan* ("regular interval schedule"), though outwardly appearing as such in the published timetables. Those In the know could point out that the Swiss made sure that resources were available to invest to make sure the *Taktfahrplan* worked at all levels, including infrastructure investment. The SPT had no investment whatsoever attached let alone on the infrastructure side of things - it was what was theoretically achievable with the resources within the existing franchise over unaltered infrastructure. You can see the thought process for the Cambrian - if we can jiggle the timetable by a few minutes here and there we can have a 2 hourly interval SPT using the same resources! In theory anyway. The already tight turnaround times were squeezed even further to allow for the regular interval service to be introduced in December 2005. So the same operating practice which had been shown to be flawed since 2001 was applied again for the SPT - tight turnarounds over long single track sections and with route congestion at the Birmingham end there was no margin for error or recovery possible.

Beside a couple of weeks around Easter 2007 Aberystwyth to Birmingham services have bumbled along at roughly 66% ppm since the introduction of the SPT. No one has come out with any credit from the process. More evidence of the botched privatisation, no consideration of the consequences of creating the Wales and Borders franchise and the allocation of resources to it compounded by the franchise agreement specification that was never attainable, combined with an operator who signed up to delivering the undeliverable with no plan B apart from its ersatz\* *Taktfahrplan* has left passengers cruelly exposed on the Cambrian.

The moral of the story here is that if you want to run a clock face timetable reliably between Aberystwyth and Birmingham you actually have to invest to make it happen, because it can't be done with the resources/ infrastructure that exists. ATW and others have tried to chip away at individual causes of delay but at the end of the day there has been nothing done to overcome the basic problem of the lack of flexibility in the timetable to recover if things go wrong.

A priority for WAG combined with ATW and Network Rail must be to rethink from the top down what they're trying to achieve and whether they have the right resources to do it. Binning the SPT and the PSR should be the first action until such time as investment is forthcoming to improve things.

## **STOP PRESS - Arriva win Cross Country Franchise. 10<sup>th</sup> July 2007**

Arriva have displaced Virgin for running cross country services from November 2007 the Department for Transport have announced.

A key commitment is additional Arriva platform staff to help passengers with connections at Birmingham New St and to manage crowds. A roundabout way of improving customer care for Arriva's Mid Wales passengers? We'll see.

## From the Cambrian News

19th April. R. Marshall, of Glandyfi, wrote to point out that the Sunday 1715 departure from Aberystwyth would be cancelled from 20th May, and urging anyone concerned to write to ATW, to urge him to reinstate it.

The paper reported on a meeting of Llandre residents, who are protesting against the siting of a radio mast in the centre of the village.

26th April. Ceredigion's MP Mark Williams met ATW's managing director Bob Holland to discuss concerns about the Aberystwyth to Birmingham service. These included Wolverhampton turn rounds, train cleanliness, and punctuality. He noted that service on the line is slowly improving; complaint rates have reduced, and looked forward to working with Arriva to put pressure on Network Rail and the governments in Westminster and Cardiff to ensure rail passengers in west Wales get a regular, reliable clean service.

5th May. At a further meeting of Llandre residents it was reported that Network Rail had delayed the erection of the mast for one month. They had taken some comfort in the news that at Glantwymyn near Machynlleth similar objections had been taken on board by NR, who had agreed to erect two masts, one on each side of the village.

17th May. Ceredigion's AM Elin Jones criticised the forthcoming 23% rise in train fares between Aberystwyth and Cardiff.

24th May. R. Marshall again wrote, to give the good news that the 1715 Sunday train would be reinstated. [It is not shown in the timetable leaflets, but is on station posters, and is in the train times website.

31st May. Mike Bagshaw, Commercial Director of ATW, wrote, in reply to our Chairman's letter (CN ) on performance of the Aberystwyth to Birmingham service. He stated that ATW had made it very clear time and time again that overall punctuality across Wales has improved, despite the unsatisfactory punctuality of the Cambrian main line. The underlying problems were a combination of infrastructure and congestion restraints, which have been in place for many years. Nevertheless, he stated that current punctuality is far better than the Cambrian has seen in recent years.

Another letter in the same issue, from Ken Jones, of Cwmrheidol, also in reply to the Chairman's letter, claimed that Arriva was moving the goalposts by failing to offer a complete service, because of Wolverhampton turn rounds.

14th June. Mike Bagshaw wrote in reply to Elin Jones. He pointed out that ATW has introduced its cheapest fares ever on the Aberystwyth to Cardiff route, starting from as little as £13.50 for a single ticket (£9 with a Railcard). These can be booked up to 6pm the night before travel, and collected at the ticket office on the day of travel. "Arriva is also reviewing its prices for tickets bought on the day of travel, and hope to announce some more good news on this issue very soon."

Coincidentally, Elin Jones also wrote in the same issue, on the subject of punctuality. She had hoped to use the train to travel to Cardiff, but on arriving at the station had discovered that the 1127 train would be half an hour late. With knock on effects, her journey time would have been close to six hours, and so reluctantly she decided to drive. She asked for constituents to send her details of problems they had experienced.

The same issue carried a report of a meeting between Llandre residents, Network Rail, and Mark Williams MP. It was described as a constructive meeting, and a further meeting is scheduled in a month's time.

28th June. A report was carried on the Partnership Award to Borth Station adopters (see the article in this issue).

A letter from David Morgan of Cellan, in reply to Elin Jones' letter of the 14th June, urged people to contact their local AMs, MPs and councillors about reopening the Aberystwyth to Carmarthen line.



Carno Station re-opening campaign - a train load of supporters at the station. Visit [www.carnostation.org.uk](http://www.carnostation.org.uk) for information on the campaign.

**Steam on the Coast:  
This year's timings**

Mondays to Fridays, 30th July to 31st August.

	Morning	Afternoon
Machynlleth	10:00	1900 arr.
Dovey Junction	10:08	1853
Tywyn	10:29	1826
Barmouth	11:02	1753
Harlech	11:23	1720
Minffordd	11:41	1659
Porthmadog	11:48 arr.	1650

## **Carno station reopening campaign**

The campaign to reopen the village station (closed in June 1965) reached TV (Wales Tonight on ITV) on the 14th January with Mick Bates AM doing a supporting piece to camera in front of the station building.

A further photo shoot was organised for supporters of the campaign on 15th April. Well over a hundred prospective passengers gathered at Carno station to demonstrate the growing support for the station re-opening campaign. Nearly all trains currently stop at Talerddig to pass each other, but the Carno Station Action Group wants to see the passing place moved from Talerddig to Carno as part of the infrastructure changes for the new hourly service. This would enable the trains to serve the needs of the expanding local community when they stop to pass. Carno Station Action Group have also just launched their own [website](#).

The Action Group has submitted a detailed case for the station re-opening to [TraCC](#), the Mid Wales Transport Consortium, which has forwarded it to the Welsh Assembly Government Rail Unit. The report concludes:

1. A re-opened Carno station would be a major benefit for a large, relatively remote village, which has seen and will continue to see significant population growth.
2. The station would facilitate commuting to jobs further afield, including the new Welsh Assembly Government jobs in Aberystwyth, following the Laura Ashley factory closure.
3. The station would promote social inclusion, by providing transport for the old, the young and others without their own car. This would reduce the need for "chauffeuring".
4. The station would encourage green tourism and expanded use of the community centre as a conference centre.
5. The station would provide crucial environmental benefits by reducing car journeys for work, shopping and leisure purposes.
6. There would be spin-off benefits from reduced congestion in Newtown.
7. Re-opening of the station would be fully consistent with the Wales Spatial Plan.
8. The envisaged implementation of infrastructure improvements for the hourly service in conjunction with the installation of the ERTMS signalling system provides a vital opportunity to establish a passing loop at Carno in 2008. This in turn would enable trains to stop at a re-opened Carno station without imposing any time delay on the train service.



## **The view from Milepost 62 with Brigadier John Faviell**

Solutions have to be workable and practical as well as inventive, as one young subaltern found out during the early stages of the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya in the 1950's. Having got a Bofors gun mounted on a freight wagon with some rudimentary armour protection, he was jolly pleased with himself that an "armoured train" could be formed. "Where will the spare ammo be kept man?" piped up an up to now disinterested Geordie national service Gunner. Fortunately it was never found out if the Mau Mau would be so kind to stop shooting whilst someone got off the train and back past the locomotive to get more ammunition from the unprotected carriages.

Which bring us to our sticky punctuality problem: 58% ppm for period 3 up to the 23<sup>rd</sup> June I'm told from sources in the industry. The long term answer is of course longer turnaround times, more passing loops west of Shrewsbury, shorter signal headways between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton and having another pair of running lines into Birmingham from Wolverhampton. However there is a crying need for a short term solution with many people putting forward suggestions. No one buys the incremental attempts to eliminate individual causes of delay – the ability to recover from delay is what's really needed.

The red hot favourite is to terminate at Shrewsbury which is actually readily achievable. ATW could combine very easily their Crewe stopper services with the current Aberystwyth semi fast paths to New St and maintain the SPT between Shrewsbury and Birmingham. The Cambrian could then go non SPT and some sense of trying to fit a timetable around demand such as commuting into Shrewsbury could be attempted with proper layover times. However is Shrewsbury station geared up to handle 300,000 plus extra interchange passengers per annum assuming the extra change of trains and extended journey times don't put off the existing passengers? Are we running around the train to get more ammo here? Changing at Shrewsbury onto another regional service only as far as Birmingham will cause a whole load of problems and complaints. However if the wires were extended to and regular say hourly Intercity trains came back to Shrewsbury it could be an option for the long term.

I understand a nationalist wrote to the Cambrian News saying that Wrexham should be the end destination, adding to the confusion at Shrewsbury passengers arriving off the Chester line and having to change. It wouldn't win Plaid any votes. Wolverhampton has the problem that passengers from Shrewsbury and Telford want to go to Birmingham. The one passable option short term in the "lets go somewhere else than Birmingham" line of thought is the railway junction of Crewe. Connections to London would be maintained with one change (and quicker than via the West Midlands) with longer layover times. The downside is how to timetable it around the current stopper and Manchester trains and keeping resources for the Wellington corridor timetable.

More units would do the trick as well. If ATW had enough resources to make the Chester to Birmingham trains 4 car plus a spare 4 car set, an arrival at New St could go off and wait say at Washwood Heath and then come back to form the next hourly slot departure in an hour fifteen minutes. An arrival from Chester would go to Aberystwyth after its long layover (and vice versa) and everything would leave Birmingham right time.

Do we have to be standard pattern anyway? Its not escaped people's notice that the current Sunday non SPT service of 6 trains a day does a lot better than the 8 trains a day SPT one during the rest of the week. As the Chairman rightly points out running an SPT without the proper resources is a major part of the problem. We don't have to have an SPT until we can have a proper one - it's not written in stone that there

has to be a train every two hours, which is a pretty stupid concept anyway as timetables don't fit around demand for commuting.

There are solutions there: we don't have to continue to wring our hands and point fingers.

## **Longer trains for Cambrian Mainline**

Additional funding to continue running four car trains on the Cambrian Mainline following the successful pilot scheme carried out over the past year has this morning (Thursday 05 July 2007) been announced by Dr Brian Gibbons, Minister for the Economy and Transport. Dr Gibbons said:

The success over the past year of these strengthened train services has relieved overcrowding and enhanced performance along these routes and passenger numbers are substantially up. I am pleased to be able to commit further funding to continue the strengthening along this important cross border route.

The additional units will continue to ensure there is available capacity on the busy Mid Wales and English Border commuter and tourist routes, as well as assisting in the drive to increase performance on the line. This investment along with recent Assembly Government announcements on Concessionary Fares and extra rolling stock in South and North Wales is further evidence of our commitment to improving rail services across all parts of Wales.

The continuation of funding for extra rolling stock from the Welsh Assembly Government means that the operator Arriva Trains Wales can provide four coach trains between Machynlleth and Birmingham on nearly all services relieving overcrowding and providing much needed extra capacity.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the importance of the Cambrian lines and as well as this latest investment in rolling stock, continues to work with local stakeholders on making improvements to the route.

Dr Gibbons referred to his predecessors announcements for the route: Andrew Davies announced in his tenure that Network Rail have undertaken an initial feasibility study on improving the Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury Cambrian mainline train service from two-hourly to hourly and there are a number of viable options.

The viable options include improved passing loops and a workable regular hourly pattern timetable on the mainline between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury, which would benefit current performance levels and also improve journey times between the south and north sections of the Cambrian Coast railway through improved connections. Journey opportunities east of Shrewsbury would also be considerably improved.

The infrastructure improvements, which would facilitate the hourly service, would also be of considerable benefit to performance under the current two hourly service, if there were to be an interim period between their provision and the eventual introduction of an hourly service.

Arriva Trains Wales commercial director, Mike Bagshaw said: This is excellent news. The four-coach trains have provided much needed additional seating capacity on this popular route. We are delighted that this investment by the Welsh Assembly Government will continue, unlocking the potential for further growth on this important line.

## Websites

**Our website** <http://sarpa.info> **Webmaster Angus Eichoff**

**Website host is object4.net**

**Other sites of interest:**

Arriva Trains Wales

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

Arriva Trains CrossCountry

[www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/](http://www.crosscountrytrains.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

August	Tuesday 7th 1900	Bell Hotel, Newtown
September	Tuesday 4th 1845	Tabernacle Arts Centre, Machynlleth
October	Saturday 6th 1145	AGM. RAFA Club, Bridge St, Aberystwyth
November	Tuesday 6th 1915	Pinewood Tavern, Welshpool
December	Tuesday 4th 1900	Bell Hotel, Newtown

## SARPA Treasurer

Ivor Morris after many years dedicated service has asked that members be reminded he is stepping down at this year,s AGM, and a replacement will be needed from October 2007. Can anyone, whether a current member or not, interested in filling this vital but rewarding post please notify the Chairman.

## 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

### **Newtown Station Travel**

The Railway Station, Old Kerry Road, Newtown, Powys SY16 1BP. Tel. 01686 621966  
E-mail [info@newtownstation.co.uk](mailto:info@newtownstation.co.uk)

### **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, CF10 3NQ. 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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