
Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association

Newsletter No. 80

December 2019

NEW FARES FOR THE NEW YEAR

In January 2020 Transport for Wales are launching a wide and varied number of reduced and revised train fares and some exciting new travel products. Overall, this will mean a reduction of more than 1% in the cost of travel throughout the Wales and Borders network on Transport for Wales trains, in comparison to 2019 prices.

This is the result of a major revision of fares delivered as part of the Welsh Government's rail responsibilities that commenced in October 2018. The changes, applying to journeys from 2 January 2020, will provide some substantial, widespread reductions in many existing ticket prices, new opportunities to save and increases in some specific fares. Where ticket prices increase, this will be consistent with changes being made by the UK Government in other parts of the country. By reducing many key fares TfW want to encourage more people to use their services, particularly at times of the day and in parts of our network where there is plenty of space on board for everyone to travel.

This is all part of a 15-year programme to transform rail travel and deliver a service of which everyone can be proud.

A summary of some key fare reductions happening in January is given below:

North Wales fares

A 10% reduction in **all fares** set by TfW Rail for journeys to/from/within many North Wales routes.

Off-Peak Day Return fares

Reductions in the majority of Cheap Day Return fares set by TfW Rail for journeys throughout the TfW network.

Increased Advance ticket coverage

Introduction of even more medium to longer distance journeys where low-cost Advance tickets are applicable.

NEW: Advance tickets 'On the Day'

Advance, our low-cost tickets for medium to longer distance travel, can now be retailed on the day of your journey, in addition to the usual 12 weeks before the day of travel.

NEW: FREE Off-Peak tickets for under 16's

Those aged 15 years old and younger can get a **FREE Off-Peak** ticket when accompanied by a fare paying adult on TfW Rail services (max 2 under-16's per fare paying adult) for journeys within specific areas of the TfW network.

NEW: FREE travel tickets for under 11's

Those aged 10 years old and younger can get a **FREE** travel ticket when accompanied by a fare paying adult on TfW Rail services (max 2 under-11's per fare paying adult) for journeys within a defined area of the TfW network.

Cardiff & Valleys routes fares reductions

33 stations within the current Cardiff & Valleys network will have fares significantly reduced (some by more than 10%) to encourage travel to/from areas most distant from Cardiff.

NEW: Off-Peak ticket discounts for Annual Season ticket holders and a travelling companion

34% discount on **Off-Peak** fares set by TfW Rail for Annual Season ticket holders for themselves AND up to 1 accompanying person, for travel within a defined area of the TfW network.

NEW: TfW Railcard for 18-Year-olds

Those aged 18 get 50% off Standard Class fares set by TfW Rail for journeys in specific areas of the TfW network.

NEW: TfW Railcard for Students

Qualifying students get 34% off Standard Class fares (non-Seasons) set by TfW Rail AND 10% off Standard Class Season ticket fares set by TfW Rail, in specific areas of the TfW network.

WANT TO JOIN SARPA?

The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2020) £10.00 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.
- Members with access to e-mail can be included in our electronic network if they so desire.

The majority of our expenditure goes towards the cost of publishing and distributing our

newsletters. We occasionally pay for room hire. Any surplus is held as an emergency fund for the future. None of the officers gains financially in any way from SARPA.

Please send cheques, payable to SARPA, to:

SARPA Membership Secretary: 23 High Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7JP.

Make sure to include full name, address and telephone number and also e-mail address if you wish to become part of our electronic network.

NEGES GAN Y CADEIRYDD

Mae SARPA wedi bod yn bwysicach nag erioed yn y misoedd diwethaf. Mewn amgylchiadau lle mae diffygion cerbydau, problemau gyda'r gwasanaeth a defnydd o fysiau yn lle trenau'n dal i fod yn broblemau helaeth, mae ein gallu i drafod, cwyno a rhoi adborth wedi bod yn bwysig iawn. Rydym hefyd wedi bod yn cadw llygad barcud ar ddyluniad a niferoedd y trenau newydd. Y mis hwn, dw i eisoes wedi anfon 6 ebost hyd yn hyn yn cwestiynu a rhoi adborth i Drafnidiaeth Cymru.

Yn mwy calonogol, mae'r gwasanaeth bob awr llawn rhwng Aberystwyth a'r Amwythig ar fin dechrau – ond dim ond ar y dydd Sul am y tro. Rydym yn croesawu'r gwelliant a dwi'n edrych ymlaen yn arw at weld gwasanaeth bob awr ar y Cambrian bob dydd, ond mae'n debyg bydd rhaid i ni aros tan ddiwedd 2022 i weld hynny!

Jeff Smith, Cadeirydd SARPA

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

SARPA has been more important than ever over the past few months. In circumstances where carriage shortages, problems with the service and the use of rail replacement buses continue to be widespread, our ability to discuss, complain and give feedback has been very important. We have also kept an eagle eye on the design and numbers of the new trains. This month, I have already sent 6 emails so far asking questions of and giving feedback to Transport for Wales.

More hearteningly, the full hourly service between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury is about to begin – but only on Sundays for the time being. We welcome this improvement and I yearn to see an hourly service on the Cambrian every day, but it's likely that we will have to wait for 2022 to see that!

Jeff Smith, SARPA Chair



37418 on one end of a ballast train at Aberystwyth, on 2nd March 2019. In the foreground the Vale of Rheidol tracks are being lifted, in preparation for erecting the new shed.



Developments at Aberystwyth. The new Vale of Rheidol carriage shed is on the right; in the centre are new platform lights. 7th December 2019.

LNWR “BOFF VANS”

There has been much discussion recently, both within our group and elsewhere in the local community along the Cambrian, regarding the design of the proposed new rolling stock, due to replace the Class 158 units currently in use in 2022. With local climate action groups aiming to increase “active travel”, pressure is growing for more bicycle space on trains. Solutions we have seen thus far from elsewhere on the network could best be described as tentative or even unimaginative. We wondered whether a delve into railway history might prove a fruitful source for new design ideas.

In the late Victorian period, cycling became something of a craze in the years before the advent of the motor car. This led to a requirement for carrying substantial quantities of cycles by train, not only from passengers wishing to use them as onward transport at the end of their rail journeys, but also for machines being delivered to sales outlets from the manufacturers.

The London and North Western Railway, which incidentally was quite a supporter of the old Cambrian, developed an ingenious system for conveying bicycles en-masse, based on a patented design devised by one of their guards, one William Boff. The resulting vehicles were known as “Boff Vans”.

The LNWR Society have very kindly allowed us to republish this article from their Journal of December 1994 and which describes the method for carrying the cycles in some detail and goes on to discuss the vans themselves.

As the article has been copied and pasted, the drawings are not to any scale.

The LNWR Society was formed in 1973 and since 2005 has been an educational charity whose aims are “To advance the education of the public in all aspects of the London and North Western Railway.....” You can find out more the organisation by visiting their very informative website:

<http://www.lnwrs.org.uk>

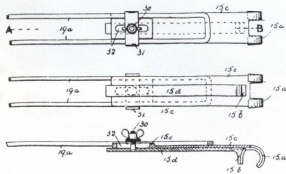
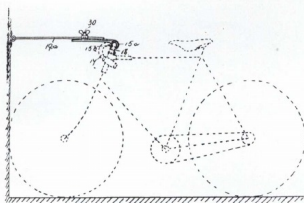
COVENTRY'S BICYCLE TRAFFIC

Geoff Williams

James Starley produced his first sewing machine in 1857, but in 1868 he had turned his attention to the production of bicycles. By this time he had settled in Coventry. His nephew John Kemp Starley later took over the business and is usually regarded as the inventor of the 'safety bicycle'. This was exhibited at the Cycle Club Show in 1885.

Coventry had its share of skilled labour and proved to be an ideal centre for the new industry which eventually displaced watch making and ribbon production both of which were subject to varying degrees of prosperity.

By the turn of the century bicycle production in Coventry had become big business, new factories had been built, many of which were to become household names. The annual production was about 200,000 machines but it was a seasonal trade, the peak of production occurring in the spring, especially around the Easter weekend when one firm is reputed to have turned out 10,000 machines.



Collecting this large number of bicycles from the factories of Coventry required extra horse drawn Railway vehicles accommodating their load in two layers.

Although the Midland Railway shared this traffic, by far the largest proportion was handled by the LNWR. Some of the machines were crated and sent by goods train, their destinations were world-wide, but most went by parcels vans, either attached to passenger trains or marshalled into complete trains for the journey to the larger centres of population.

The cycles were light in weight, bulky and vulnerable. Several ideas were suggested to protect them without impeding the loading and off loading and without the cost of extra packing. The method adopted by the LNWR was the subject of a patent taken out by Mr. William Boff in 1898, an LNWR guard.

It was necessary for the equipment to be strong, capable of handling bicycles of varying design, to be easily handled and capable of being folded out of the way when the vans were used for other traffic: for example I have a photograph of one of these vans at Aylesbury, being loaded with Dominion butter.

The vehicles selected for the job were twenty 45ft clerestory vans of Diagram 430, ten of which were built in 1901, numbered 137-146 and dual braked. Ten more were built in 1902, numbered 147-156 and fitted with the vacuum brake only. In the 1910 renumbering they became 9721-9740. These vehicles had three sliding doors each side, which helped loading and off loading, and although often referred to as 'Boff Vans' it is doubtful whether this title was officially recognised.

The equipment was designed to pack as many cycles into a 45ft van as possible without causing damage. It enabled machines to be supported from the roof and sides, or from the floor and sides. The design was modified at the door openings to make it independent of the doors.

N° 19,513



A.D. 1898

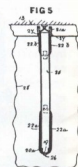
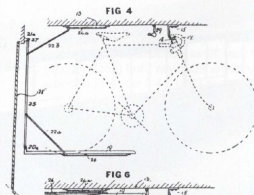
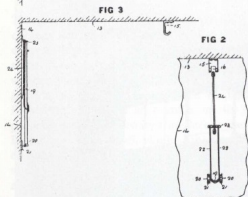
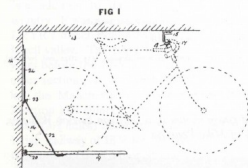
Date of Application, 14th Sept., 1898
Complete Specification Left, 26th May, 1899—Accepted, 8th July, 1899

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION. Improvements in Cycle Supporting Apparatus.

I, WILLIAM BOFF, of 87, Oxford Street, Rugby, in the County of Warwick Railway Guard, do hereby declare the nature of this invention to be as follows: This invention relates to improvements in apparatus for supporting cycles chiefly intended for use during the transit of such machines, while in rail vans or similar places. My invention consists of a forked like hook or bracket, which is used from the roof of the van; in combination with a steadying d-rod having a double hook like means of suspension &c. from the roof. The hook may be hung by means of a wall of the machine. Upon the w-rod being hung, which may be



The interior of Carlisle carriage shed in 1907. Going out of picture to the right is 45ft bicycle van No.139. Next comes 45ft full brake No.94, followed by a 42ft x 8ft 6in lavatory composite to P53 or P57 and 42ft x 8ft lavatory composite to D158 with a coupe at the far end. Notice the light section bridge rail and fine grit ballast almost up to rail level. (Photo LGRP 7998)



[This Drawing is a reproduction of the Original on a reduced scale]

All twenty Boff Vans were used during World War One, for details of which members are referred to Philip Millard's Portfolio on LNWR Ambulance Trains.

My thanks to Messrs J.P. Richards, R.J. and M.R. Williams, the Railway Magazine Jan-June 1905 and H.M. Patents Office.

4mm scale EM gauge model of a Boff van by Bob Williams, photo courtesy of Mike Peasod.



TRANSPORT FOR WALES'S "NEW" TURBOSTAR STOCK

Transport for Wales took delivery of its first Class 170 Turbostar from Greater Anglia on the 1st September, when No. 170207 arrived at Canton depot, having travelled under its own power from Crown Point, Norwich. Though not actually new vehicles, they are the first part of the fleet changes proposed by TfW over the 2019-2025 period (see the chart in Newsletter 76). Together with the Class 230 units (Vivarail ex-London Underground units) they are described as being "cascaded" from other operators, in this case from Greater Anglia.

The three-car train has 186 seats and will shortly be joined by a further seven three car-units and four two-car units that each provide seating for 110 passengers. Driver training is scheduled to begin on 16 September with the units expected in to service on the Cheltenham to Maesteg line in December 2019. Subject to route clearance, Transport for Wales are also exploring future options to run the trains on the Ebbw Vale line and Heart of Wales.

Speaking about the arrival of the new fleet, Rolling Stock Director Sara Holland said that the delivery of the first Class 170 is an important milestone for Transport for Wales:

"The Class 170s provide a more modern and reliable service with air conditioning and power sockets. These are comfortable trains that will significantly improve capacity and provide a high standard of on-board customer experience."

"With the support of our industry partners, our fleet colleagues are working incredibly hard to introduce new rolling stock, refurbish existing trains and carry out much needed modification works. This is an £800 million programme that will transform the experience for our customers and colleagues alike; the average age of the fleet will drop from 25 years to seven years by 2024 and 95% of journeys will be made on a new fleet of 148 trains by 2023."

James Price, Transport for Wales CEO added:

"It's great that the first class 170 train has arrived at our depot in Canton. Our staff have been working hard in preparation for the Autumn period and in the very near future, this additional rolling stock will provide more capacity for our customers and help create more resilience throughout our network. The Class 170s will all be fitted with power sockets and air conditioning."

"Our focus as always been on improving the customer experience and this is another example on how we are delivering on this."

TRANSPORT FOR WALES - THE FIRST YEAR

One year on from the end of Arriva Trains Wales, underpinning Government policy failure both in London and Cardiff is still holding the Wales and the Borders Rail Network back. We take a look at how Transport for Wales Rail Services (TfWRS) have fared in their first year.

As a Rail User Group that's been going 27 years SARPA is an experienced informed party, and pride ourselves on knowing what the real situation actually is – we correctly called out the Arriva Trains Wales contract as woefully inadequate and wrong from the very start, long before the Johnny-come-lately bandwagon complainers of the later years of the franchise. We were proved entirely right about that Franchise, and correctly predicted that rail use was growing and needed accommodating. SARPA is a non-political organisation funded entirely by its membership, who are concerned regular rail users who want to see an efficient public transport system. We're going to call it as it is and not try and distort things to make comfortable reading for one political party or organisation.

So let's tell the truth about the first year of Transport for Wales Rail Services, and as those of you that experienced the Autumn leaf fall season meltdown of 2018 or have experienced the 2-car overcrowding and cancelled trains Armageddon in Summer 2019 will know, the reality of it is far removed from the happy smiley image that the Welsh Government tried to portray when it told us how great things were going to be now they were in control.....

Overcrowding This was the perennial complaint of the previous franchise: not enough rolling stock; shocking stories of people nearly fainting and of those not able to get on the train; people swearing never to travel by rail again; and many, many others put off from doing so by these tales have continued unabated into the new franchise. Having inherited an inadequate size fleet there wasn't a magic procession of extra trains to run through the Severn Tunnel on the first day of the new franchise: instead we've had to put up with the old inadequate quantity fleet, compounded by units being taken away for modifications/refreshment without any replacements. 7.5% of TfWRS's long distance fleet is currently (September 2019) in the works having repaints/internal refreshes/Retention tanks fitted/Persons with Reduced Mobility modifications. Whilst all very nice and welcome, the consequences of not having enough of something and then having 7.5% less of it have been felt acutely by passengers on a daily basis. Running a 2-car train into a major city like Birmingham or Manchester is a symbol of utter failure in the modern age, and TfWRS have been doing so on a regular basis.

The Welsh Government knew as far back as 2014 of the impending Persons with Reduced Mobility deadline of the end of 2019, and tried to bring in a covering fleet using surplus Thameslink Electric Multiple Units converted to run with diesel engines. Originally planned to enter service in Autumn 2017, back in ATW days, they still haven't appeared. Much of the blame must attach itself to the Rolling Stock Owner Porterbrook for seeing £ signs and promoting something when there wasn't even a prototype. However, given that, questions must be asked about the competence of the those that made the decision to pursue this unproven option. KeolisAmey who run TfWRS have inherited a mess, not of their making, from the Welsh Government.

Compounding the lack of cover for PRM modifications has been the targets in the franchise agreement for completing other refurbishment work by certain dates. The non-appearance of the covering fleet and the subsequent unit shortages for TfWRS were being discussed on web forums prior to the end of the ATW franchise. It's inconceivable that Senior Management at Transport for Wales Rail Services and Transport for Wales/Welsh Government would not have been aware of the impending problems with unit shortages, but have publicly kept their mouths shut and continued to pump out the "Jam Tomorrow" good news titbits planned down the line for the franchise. No one has been honest enough to say it was going to get worse before getting better.

Those that thought the end of Arriva Trains Wales would bring an instant improvement to rail services in Wales have been very disappointed. The private operator did its job in more ways than one: it delivered what its **Government contract** set out for it to do for 15 years, and the unpublished narrative was achieved as well, as Arriva took the blame for government policy failures from a largely ignorant public. Looking through some comments on the BBC Website on overcrowding this August, members of the public blamed "incompetent" Arriva Trains Wales Managers still in post for TfWRS problems. The public confuse "rail privatisation" and the shouting of the rail unions with the reality that rail services have been specified by Government under tight contracts for many years now, with little or no scope to make improvements once the initial changes after franchise changeover time are made. This cyclical nature of managing the rail network through franchise deals means improvements like getting hold of new/extra rolling stock only ever happen sometime after a new franchise has been let, as rolling stock has to be procured and manufactured, or cascaded stock released by its previous operator only after franchise start dates. There is no magic siding with rolling stock waiting to roll out if rail managers were competent as many of Joe Public seem to believe. TfWRS's rolling stock shortage in its first year of operation was written in stone long before anyone bid for the franchise. This is the crux with franchising: it's woefully inflexible – as anyone who scratched their heads in disbelief that ATW's "no growth" franchise was allowed to run its course from 2003 to 2018 will testify. We fundamentally don't know anything new that we couldn't have told you 10 years ago – the franchise was not fit for purpose then and waiting for it to run its course and then wait some time afterwards for the cyclical improvements to happen was always going to result in the scenes we all dread of 2-car trains at busy times, unit swaps at Shrewsbury, heated temperatures on board due to overcrowding etc, etc. Blame lies with Westminster for designing such an inept system to run our railways and with Westminster and Cardiff Bay for refusing to do anything about it. During this time we've had all the major political parties in the UK and Wales holding office in Westminster and Cardiff Bay: it's a stain on all of them be it Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats or Plaid Cymru. The time to sort ATW's rolling stock shortage was 2009 or 2014, not putting plans in place in 2019 to deliver change by 2023.....

SARPA flagged the overcrowding issue to Welsh Government over a decade ago, as did many others looking for something to be done which wasn't. Did Welsh Government not understand? not care? Were just incompetent over it? A combination of all the above? An analogy would be that a householder has a small leak in April

and calls a plumber who says, "I'll be round to look at it in August" and then brings his tools round to do the job in October.

Punctuality Anyone who's been anywhere near a 2-car unit at Birmingham New St knows what wonders overcrowding does for punctual running. In August a jammed 2-car unit was halted at Welshpool as a woman nearly fainted; the doors were opened and the passengers spilt out onto the platform for some relief. After 10 minutes the women said she was OK to continue; however when everyone got back on the doors wouldn't lock. The train terminated at Machynlleth and made a Birmingham service nearly 30 minutes late as well. Suffice to say worsening overcrowding has had a hand in performance declining on the Cambrian.

Whilst most late running trains are a knock-on effect of an earlier delay on our single track line without enough passing places, many original causes of delay lie with problems in the West Midlands. Faults caused by the bespoke signalling system we have on the Cambrian have been at record levels this year. The super-duper digital signalling system (ETCS) behaves much like other computers do and has glitches, freezes and the need to re boot occasionally. There's a recurring issue with trains departing Shrewsbury station failing to be recognised by the system at entry to the Cambrian line at Sutton Bridge Junction, causing 20-minute delays that then permeate through the whole day. Sometimes the only way to restore the normal timetable is to turn around trains short at Machynlleth. On August Bank Holiday Monday the whole thing decided to give up and fail completely for several hours when not a train could move. Whilst not directly under TfWRS control, the ETCS system on the Cambrian does seem very flaky – it's unclear what TfWRS are doing in conjunction with Network Rail about it.

Cancellations This was a minor part of the gripes about ATW, at least on the Cambrian. The problems last autumn were not on the Cambrian. However, we had our trains pinched to cover for shortages elsewhere leading to 25% of the trains being cancelled each day between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury for about 6 weeks. "More trains than usual needing repair" became the daily norm. No convincing statement has ever been made public as to the exact cause(s). Whether or not it's a one off aberration or something else we don't know yet. Subsequently the first train of the day from Machynlleth to Barmouth and back has been cancelled on a frequent basis.

It would appear that TfWRS are still reliant on rest day working to run the full service, and as in years gone by there are periods, usually in the school holidays, when the weather's nice and unsurprisingly staff don't want to volunteer to work on their day off. Again, this August trains were being cancelled due to "shortage of traincrew", especially around the bank holiday weekend.

Fares Did you know that control over regulated fares within the franchise has been devolved to the Welsh Government for some time? Just after the Autumn 2018 leaf fall season melt down Cardiff Bay didn't shout this from the roof tops, as they put fares in Wales and the Borders up by the same as Westminster in January 2019. You would have thought that whilst hundreds of trains across Wales and the Borders were being cancelled on a daily basis just weeks after being handed over to Welsh Government control, with Ministers and Officials failing to come up with any plausible explanation or resolution, that a bit of concern to the long suffering travelling public would have

been shown with a fares freeze. But no, the Welsh Government choose to stick the fares up in January 2019 whilst keeping its decision hidden. Sneaky.

All in all, on the major things that matter most to passengers, fares, cancellations, overcrowding and punctuality, TfWRS's first year has seen things worse than the last year of Arriva Trains Wales. Having Delay Repay after 15 minutes entirely misses the point, passengers don't want the hassle of getting compensation for being an hour late because their trains cancelled due to a "shortage of traincrew" or 20 minutes late due "to a problem with the signalling system": they shouldn't be getting these types of delays anyway. TfWRS should be on top of its staff resourcing and should be pressurising Network Rail about the ETCS performance. No wonder we hear fellow passengers say that they're **"worse than Arriva"**, or should be called **"No Transport for Wales"** and also **"what do you expect when you put the Welsh Government in charge"**. While many people automatically assume discrimination against Mid Wales from Cardiff Bay, the problems outlined above have been felt all over Wales and the Borders. We're all paying the price for the failure to sort out a very bad decision (the terms of the Arriva Trains Wales franchise). It's not gone unnoticed that while Rail users were shown disrespect as the ATW franchise was allowed to run its course till October 2018, that ex-First Minister Carwyn Jones was throwing money with gay abandon on his pet transport projects. £55 million was spent on buying a failing Cardiff airport and further "loans" that will probably never be repaid as it's still failing, and a reported £144 million on a road project that's now been abandoned – the so called M4 Relief Road. Moaning and crying that they didn't have the powers and funding from Westminster is a smokescreen: you don't have to own a failing commercial airport, and no one held a gun to the Welsh Government's head telling them to try build a duplicate motorway around Newport and then get cold feet and cancel it with nothing to show. That wasted £200 million plus could have sorted out the bulk of the overcrowding problems on the Wales and Borders network by now, and the Welsh Government would have had something positive to show for its spending that benefits its people. Prior to 2011 the Welsh Government had acquired/helped to acquire small quantities of extra rolling stock for the franchise, so the precedent was set – there was nothing to stop them doing so between 2011 & 2018 except their own poor priorities and poor decision making.

Over the years SARPA members have championed rail travel and fought to dispel the myths some members of the public hold about it. However, it has been hard with the quality of service that Transport for Wales Rail Services has had on offer at times to do this. We don't want to hear about exciting plans for the future, journeys starting or visions; we need basic things sorting out ASAP. TfRWS have published an apology however, and repeated the "Jam tomorrow" promises. The poor service on our line has been raised by Montgomeryshire AM Russell George. First Minister Mark Drakeford point blank failed to answer a single valid point in the Senedd, and gave a display of immature political posturing of the type that has so alienated the people of this country and made them highly cynical and critical of career politicians. With Nirvana apparently due in December 2022, it would seem that the Welsh Government has shown less urgency in sorting out the Wales and Border rail network than Gladstone's government did in organising the relief of Khartoum and General Gordon.

ALL TICKETS PLEASE WITH NEWTOWN STATION TRAVEL

Single Leg Pricing: what's it all about?

One of the more unfathomable aspects of ticketing that the privatised industry inherited from BR were single fares that were just about the same price as returns. I won't go into the logic or reasoning/history behind this however, suffice to say that with these fares being unregulated the go-getting private sector TOC's could have at any time since 1993 chosen to do something about it – but haven't* – Rail Delivery Group take note. The DfT has announced that state owned LNER will be introducing a trial of single leg fares on its longer distance flows. With fares 50% of the return price these are much fairer on one-way travellers and those that travel out in the peak and come back at off peak times, who can mix and match ticket types instead of being penalised by having to buy a full price Anytime Return. One of the more bonkers aspects about the current system is that someone can travel from Newtown to Birmingham New St on the first train of the morning, arriving 0829, and return the same day on the 1725 on packed peak commuter trains for the Anytime Day Return price of £21.30, but someone who goes on the quiet 1340 one day arriving 1530 and returns on the quiet 1025 the next day from Birmingham pays £27.90 for the Off Peak Return! Single leg pricing sorts this unfairness out too.

As we've mentioned before we've analysed our sales to Birmingham New St of all types of tickets. Advance's, Anytime Day Singles, Anytime Day Returns and Off-Peak Returns dividing the total farebox income by the number of single leg journeys, and found that the average is c.57.5% of the SDR (Anytime Day Return) fare or c.45% of the SVR (Off Peak Return) fare. So in theory you could vastly simplify the fare structure and abolish everything except the Anytime Day Single (SDS) pitched at 55% of the current SDR rate and not adversely affect the overall revenue. With a single @ £11.70 it renders Advance Purchase fares almost superfluous, with only minimal savings on the lower tier: hardly worth the time and effort of pre-booking them, and the fare is cheaper than the current higher tiers. With an easily understandable guaranteed price one way you then don't have to play pin the tail on the donkey, messing around on websites that promise "cheap tickets" – there's one fare only to choose from. This simplification would be great news for customers and help cut through the complexities and myths of rail ticketing, encouraging rail use and increasing overall revenue. Train operators are still wedded to TOC only fares like Advance Purchase so they don't have to share revenue with other operators. However, with an easier to understand and use fare system generating more custom their share of a bigger pie should surely compensate for any lost revenue by abolishing Advance Purchase and make everyone's life easier, customers and staff alike.

* in fact GWR already have them on fares between Bristol Parkway/Bristol Temple Meads/ Bath and London Paddington only (and a far less draconian "peak" definition than Virgins). We have a business client in this area and it's a pleasure to deal with their journeys going out in the peak and coming back super off peak or off peak compared to Virgin's appalling restrictions & fares from Shrewsbury – if in doubt look how much using their weekday early morning direct train to London costs with a return around 1500 same day and how empty the train is! Transport for London use single leg pricing and the South Wales Metro area will be similarly enabled as will other urban areas.

From Simplification to yet more complexity – fancy a Railcard? – there's so many to choose from!

At the behest of Government we have had a 26-30 Railcard and now a 16-17 Railcard, when there was already a 16-25 Railcard! Given that hardly anyone aged 16-18 works full time anymore, would it have not made more sense in today's world to extend half price fares until 18th birthday and then have an 18-30 Railcard? Click on any half decent online rail ticket booking site and then let your mind boggle at the myriad of local railcard types you can have. Railcards have become an out of control monster, and ripe for simplification. Bizarrely there's no national railcard for anyone able bodied between 30 and 60, nor any discount/loyalty scheme for regular travellers (not season ticket commuters) who can spend into the £1,000's each year – mad.

Here TfW Rail Services are committed next year to add another layer of complexity as part of their franchise agreement. Traditionally on the railway you're free until your 5th birthday and half price until your 16th birthday. From 2020 you're free until your 11th birthday if accompanied by a fare paying adult on TfW Rail Services only, and 11-16 year olds will be free if accompanied by a fare paying adult on TfW Rail Services only at off peak times only (Monday to Friday 0930-1559 and after 1829, all day weekends and Bank Holidays). There will also be an 16-18 railcard you can purchase for use until your 19th birthday that will give you half price travel **in Wales only, not cross border or on TfW Rail Services in England**. Whilst well-meaning you don't need much imagination to think of the problems this will cause as people either don't understand or try and see if they can break the rules. There are also concerns about the effect on overcrowding with no substantial increases in capacity planned across the network until 2022. Just what will the effect on weekends and school holidays on existing under stress services of lots of potential free extra travellers be?

The T problem and more free travel issues

For the last few years during the winter months (1st October till 31st March) holders of Welsh concessionary travel bus passes have been able to use them to travel for free on the Heart of Wales line and on the Cambrian Coast line between Machynlleth and Pwllheli, except on the weekday school trains. These are:

- 0746 Barmouth to Tywyn
- 0755 Penrhyndeudraeth to Harlech
- 1420 Harlech to Penrhyndeudraeth
- 1525 Tywyn to Barmouth.

The scheme is now a permanent feature. This scheme, in part due to poor publicity in the past, has caused problems with many people arriving at Newtown expecting a free train ride from Newtown – some can get quite tetchy at being told they have to pay to Machynlleth or Aberystwyth and in a couple of cases last year Cardiff! “But we were told”: on investigation the teller turned out to be someone they met in the isle at Morrisons! Listening to gossip and believing it is a recipe for mistakes and confusion to happen. So's believing what's on Facebook – we could really have a rant about that!

So remember it's the coast line only, not the Cambrian Mainline please!

Concessionary Passes

This autumn the Welsh Government through Transport for Wales has taken over the issuing of free concessionary bus passes from the local authorities. To start with they expected everyone (including the very elderly, disabled etc) to do it online, but have relented and allowed old fashioned paper applications for now. So far so good. As we all know Transport for Wales is the overarching body set up by Welsh Government for transport matters, and Transport for Wales Rail Services is the trading name for KeolisAmey, who run the Wales and Borders Rail franchise which reports to Transport for Wales, but are nothing to do with buses and free concessionary passes don't we? Good I don't need to go on.....

Here's the what the new passes look like: note the Transport for Wales logo.....



.....which is exactly the same as what's plastered on the trains, literature, signage on the railway etc. The card itself has no description for what its valid on.

The obvious has of course been pointed out and we're told concessionary pass holders will get a letter with their new cards pointing out that they can't use rail services with it (apart from the above concessionary schemes!). All OK then? Well reports are coming in that pensioners are turning up at railway stations expecting to renew their bus passes at them and those that have got their new cards are asking for discount/free train rides with them. After all it's the same logo! We're all for genuine integrated public transport and ticketing at Newtown Station Travel: however the phrase "dogs' breakfast" is leaping to mind.

Third Party Internet Ticket Retail Sites -sucking investment money out the system?

When Trenitalia the Italian state operator took over the London Tilbury and Southend route from National Express the new (Italian) MD had a fit – he couldn't fathom out the logic of why third party booking was allowed on his train services. Why, when you have invested in retail channels of your own that cost you money, would you want to let someone else be paid commission for selling tickets for your trains, thus reducing your revenue? Financially it just doesn't stack up – all over the network there are booking offices, conductors with ticket machines on board, increasing numbers of Ticket Vending Machines and the Train Operators all have their own websites that sell tickets. We're not exactly short of somewhere to buy a rail ticket.

The biggest of all are the third-party internet retailers – Trainline announced their latest figures in September. They had a turnover of £129 million last year. Not all of it was commission from UK main line rail sales, but the vast bulk was. Not a single penny of this gets invested back into the UK rail network – it goes on their running costs and their profits and in Trainline's case they made a pre-tax profit of £39 million, and their

American pension fund owners found a way of not paying a single penny in corporation tax! Consider that there's around a dozen or so more "we sell cheap tickets" purveyors all doing the same, then a big sum, maybe between £125 million and £150 million a year, is being taken out of the network. Recently Transport for Wales announced it's investing £194 million in station facilities across the lifetime of the franchise – 15 years. That's £13 million a year, a fraction of what the third party internet retailers take out the system each year. The widely criticized Train Operating Companies make around £200 to £250 million in profit each year, so you can see the scale of the problem.

Perceived wisdom is perhaps the biggest problem we face as human beings – many people naively believe that buying off the internet in advance is cheaper, so they just blindly do it. As we keep repeatedly pointing out to people 96% of all UK rail journeys are made on tickets that are the same price purchased on the day of travel as buying in advance. The only type of ticket you can possibly save money on by buying in advance are Booked-Train-only ones and even then, there are caveats and restrictions to be aware of. When people come in the booking office to collect their internet tickets we get to see what they buy – overwhelmingly it's one of the 96% of tickets that there is no possible way they could have saved money on, and invariably they have paid a booking fee or charge for the privilege. We have one business in town who are told by their head office to use a Trainline corporate account: their employees come up with pages of e mail printouts and I've seen that they're charged a £5.00 booking fee per ticket! All the time we see people who've spent time on the internet printing out pages of confirmation on their home printer, make a special 20 mile round trip to the station just to collect tickets they could have bought without booking fees just by walking in and buying a few minutes before their train went. Madness – we point this out daily. Some people listen others make excuses. The most common we're told are its "more convenient" or "we didn't know what time you would be open" – quite how they were going to collect their tickets if we weren't open or how making an additional unnecessary 20 mile round trip is more convenient remains unclear. There's plenty of legitimate valid reasons to buy ahead, but strangely none of these is ever mentioned.

If you don't believe us here's what Money Saving Expert Martyn Lewis's website says **"DON'T buy tickets via the Trainline"**

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/travel/cheap-train-tickets/>

Trainline are the first site to pop up on the internet if you search for train tickets. Many believe this is the "official way to do it", not realising that the internet is not a magic fount of all that is right, and that Trainline have instead paid substantial amounts to Google for what are known as "Google ad words" so that their site pops up ahead of others in searches. And whilst it looks fancy there are no magic cheap fares on it, just the same that can be found anywhere else, and no information/functionality on it that is not found elsewhere either. If the third-party internet retailers disappeared tomorrow no one except their shareholders and employees would be affected.

So not only does buying from a third-party internet retailer cost you more money in unnecessary booking fees, but those that do so also help facilitate a triple whammy of reduced investment in the network and less money for the NHS in tax returns etc.

SARPA FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1, 2018 to AUGUST 31, 2019

1. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

INCOME	2017-2018	2018-2019	EXPENDITURE	2017-2018	2018-2019
	£	£		£	£
Subscriptions ⁽¹⁾	625.50	751.50	Newsletter ⁽²⁾	757.97	511.02
Bank interest	-----	-----	Administration ⁽³⁾	18.99	149.50
			Venue hire	-----	-----
			Web hosting & domain renewal ⁽⁴⁾	144.00	91.99
			Travel	-----	-----
TOTAL (31st Aug)	625.50	751.50	TOTAL	920.96	752.51
Subscription	10.00	10.00	Newsletter ⁽²⁾		215.21
			Logo Competition (outstanding liability)		100.00
TOTAL (31st Sept)		761.50			1067.72

The excess of expenditure over income in 2018-2019 to 31st August is £1.01 (2017-2018 was £295.46)

The excess of expenditure over income in 2018-2019 to 31st September is £306.22 (incl £100 liability)

Notes:

1. Includes both subscription payments for the current year, back years and payments in advance and donations. Subscription was increased to £10. A number of members add a generous donation.
2. Includes the cost of printing, distribution, &c.
3. Includes miscellaneous secretarial expenses including ink and taxi fares.
4. Last year's (2018) figure for web hosting was for 2 years.

2. BANK ACCOUNT MOVEMENTS

2.1 Account number 20148148

OPENING AND CLOSING STATEMENTS

Bank statement September 1, 2018 **£ 980.29**
 Deduct excess of expenditure over income **£ 1.01**
Total £ 979.28

CLOSING STATEMENT

Statement sheet 01-31 July 2019

2019: August 31: **£979.28**

Estimate September 31st 2019: £773.06 (excl. £100 liability for logo competition)

2.2 Account number 90334545

Opening balance: September 1st 2018: **£276.17**

Interest added **£ 00.89**

Closing balance: August 31, 2019: **£277.06**

4. MEMBERSHIP

As of September 31st 2019 there were 70 paid up members (54 in September 2018).

Bill Redfern (Treasurer), September 29, 2019

FIRST TRENITALIA: THE NEW OPERATORS FOR THE WEST COAST MAIN LINE

By

Michael Holden

14th August 2019

First Trenitalia has been announced as the new operator of the West Coast Main Line, bringing new trains, more seats, simpler fares and more services on the West Coast.

Both the Transport Secretary Grant Shapps and Keith Williams, chair of the Rail Review, have heralded the Partnership as vital to deliver the swift introduction of significant benefits for passengers.

It also reflects a significant move away from the previous flawed franchising system to tackle issues already highlighted by the Williams Review.

Today's award confirms that, from December 2022, passengers will benefit from 263 extra train services every week, with Motherwell set to become a major calling point for most West Coast Partnership services.

Destinations including Llandudno and Gobowen will now be served by direct trains to and from London, and Walsall will receive its first direct intercity services.

Subject to approval from the Office of Rail and Road, 2 trains per hour will run between Liverpool and London.

First Trenitalia will also oversee the introduction of new environmentally-friendly trains, entirely replacing the diesel-only fleet. It will also invest £117 million in a major refurbishment of the current Pendolino fleet, providing more comfortable seats and additional luggage space.

First Trenitalia will also oversee the introduction of:

- more flexible and convenient smart ticketing options
- free wifi and high quality mobile connectivity on board services
- improved delay repay compensation for all passengers
- £32 million of investment into developing and delivering infrastructure capacity and capability improvements
- 10 new secure cycle storage facilities; improved bus facilities; 900 new car parking spaces, and 100 new Electric Vehicle charging points
- new ticket machines at stations, removal of the administration fee and enabling on-the-day changes to both advance tickets and seat reservations
- new initiatives to increase diversity, inclusion and skills retention in the rail industry

First Trenitalia will also act as the Shadow Operator responsible for HS2. The government will shortly launch a review into HS2 and the Partnership has been designed in order to ensure that it can implement the review's outcomes.

RICHARD HOPE

The railway journalist, Richard Hope, died recently at the age of 85. He was editor of the *Railway Gazette* for over twenty years, and also contributed to its sister publication, *Rail Business Intelligence*. He was also a volunteer on the Tallylyn Railway.

In 1972 the office of the *Railway Gazette* were raided by the police. They were trying to identify the leaker - a civil servant - of a government "Railway Policy Review" document. He had lent a copy to Hope, who in turn passed it to *The Sunday Times*. The document proposed the closure of every railway in Wales, apart from the lines to Holyhead and Fishguard.

The leaker eventually was identified as Reg Dawson, also a volunteer on the Tallylyn Railway. In the 1960's he had prevented closure of the Cambrian Coast Line, by arranging a grant so that BR could operate a Sunday Service.

[From an Obituary in *The Daily Telegraph* on 19th October, 2019.]

JOIN BY FACEBOOK

Well, it had to happen - a Facebook page for a volunteer organisation without any requests for funding might seem just too good to be true! The day has dawned (And I've just missed Halloween ;)) when we are going to ask people actually to join SARPA and part with some cash. If you sign up now you won't need to renew until December 31st 2020 - so that's not a bad deal. We are working on a scheme whereby you can join by Paypal, which makes things easier in the Modern Technological World. However, that hasn't happened yet so until then we can offer you the "Heritage Experience" of writing a cheque and putting a stamp on an envelope. See the form attached..... Print it out, write the cheque and send it off....Today!"

MONTHLY MEETINGS

2020

January	Tuesday 7th	1915	Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool
February	Tuesday 4th	1845	The Unicorn, Caersws
March	Tuesday 3rd	1745	Railway Station, Shrewsbury
April	Saturday 4th	1145	Wharf Station, Tallylyn Railway, Tywyn
May	Saturday 16th	1215	Royal Naval Club, Market Street, Aberystwyth
June	Saturday 6th	1115	White Lion, Machynlleth
July	Tuesday 7th	1900	Newtown Council Chambers, The Cross, Broad St, Newtown
August	Tuesday 4th	1915	Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool
September	Saturday 5th	1200	Railway Hotel, Borth
October	Saturday 3rd	1115	White Lion, Machynlleth AGM
November	Tuesday 10th	1900	Newtown Council Chambers, The Cross, Broad St, Newtown
December	Saturday 5th	1145	Royal Naval Club, Market Street, Aberystwyth

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Transport for Wales: Customer Relations, Transport for Wales Rail Services, St. Mary's House , 47 Penarth Road, Cardiff . CF10 5DJ Tel. 0333 3211 202

Network Rail:

Community Relations, Kings Place, 99, York Way, London. N1 9AG

Newtown Station Travel

The Railway Station, Old Kerry Road, Newtown, Powys SY16 1BP. Fax. 01686 621966

E-mail newtownstation@btclick.com

The Association of Train Operating Companies:

ATOC, 2nd Floor, 200, Aldersgate Street,, London. EC14 4HD

London Midland

London Midland, PO Box 4323, Birmingham B2 4JB. Tel. 0121 6342040

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

The Old Water Tower, Huddersfield Railway Station, St George's Square, Huddersfield HD1 1JF

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 Tel.0870-6082608

Rail Franchise Performance Manager Rail and New Roads Division, Transport Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ. Direct Line (029) 2082 6849

Public Transport Users' Committee for Wales Secretariat

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ. E-mail ptucwales@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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 AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Chairman: Jeff Smith, 17 Marine Terrace, Aberystwyth, SY23 2AZ. Tel. 07964 179 799. Email abergogledd@gmail.com

Vice-Chairman: Ivor Morris, 2 Dingle Road, Welshpool, SY21 7QB. Tel. 01938 554463.

Treasurer and Membership Officer: Bill Redfern, 8 Plas Edwards, Tywyn, LL36 0AS. Tel. 077669696517. 111 Grange Drive, Blackley, Manchester, M9 7AJ. E-mail:

bill_sarpa@outlook.com

Secretary: Sarah Harvey. Tel. 07534385644. E-mail: sarahharvey52@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor: Denis Bates, 86 Maesceinion, Waun Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3QQ. Tel. 01970 617667. Email: denisebbates@gmail.com

Webmaster: Angus Eickhoff. Contact by email angus@anguseickhoff.co.uk

Distribution Officer: Robert Knight, 8 Tanrallt Street, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8BE.

Committee Members

Roger Goodhew: 12 Granville St., Shrewsbury, SY3 8NE.

Tony Harvey: 23 High Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7JP. Tel. 01938 559087. Email: tony@montgomeryshire.eu

ASSOCIATION CONTACT POINTS

Contact by post: c/o Newtown Station Travel, The Railway Station, Old Kerry Road, Newtown, Powys, SY16 1BP. **Email:** sarpa@sarpa.info

WANT TO JOIN SARPA?

The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2019) £10.00 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.
- Members with access to e-mail can be included in our electronic network if they so desire.

The majority of our expenditure goes towards the cost of publishing and distributing our newsletters. We occasionally pay for room hire. Any surplus is held as an emergency fund for the future. None of the officers gains financially in any way from SARPA.

Please send cheques, payable to SARPA, to:

SARPA Membership Secretary: Bill Redfern, 8 Plas Edwards, Tywyn, LL36 0AS. Make sure to include full name, address and telephone number and also e-mail address if you wish to become part of our electronic network.

WEBSITES

Our website <http://sarpa.info>

Webmaster Angus Eickhoff. Website host is <http://www.redboxinternet.com/>

Other sites of interest:

Newtown Station Travel	https://www.newtownstationtravel.co.uk/
A useful alternative to the National Rail Enquiries site:	www.traintimes.org.uk/
Transport for Wales	www.tfwrail.wales/
National Rail Enquiries	www.nationalrail.co.uk/
London Northwestern Railway	www.journeycheck.com/londonnorthwesternrailway/
West Midlands Railway	www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk
Virgin Trains	www.virgintrains.co.uk
Chiltern Railways	www.chilternrailways.co.uk/
Network Rail	www.networkrail.co.uk/
Railfuture/Railway Development Society	www.railfuture.org.uk/
Cambrian Rail Partnership	www.walesonrails.com
The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)	www.acorp.uk.com
Passenger Focus	www.passengerfocus.org.uk/
North Wales Coast Railway	www.nwrail.org.uk/
Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways	www.festrail.co.uk/
Vale of Rheidol Railway	www.rheidolrailway.co.uk
Talyllyn Railway	www.talyllyn.co.uk/
Welshpool and Llanfair Railway	www.wllr.org.uk/
Welsh Highland Heritage Railway	www.whr.co.uk/
Fairbourne Railway	www.fairbournerrailway.com/
Borth Station Museum	www.borthstationmuseum.co.uk
Rail Photographs by Richard Jones including many of the modern Cambrian scene	www.mylordz.com

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22nd March 2020