
Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association

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Above: Class 97/3 No. 97304 *Rheilffordd Talyllyn Railway*, and saloon *Caroline*, is pictured next to 1878-built Hughes 0-4-2T No.3 *Sir Haydn* at Tywyn on 20th May. Photograph: *Network Rail*.

Below: Liz Porrett and Lorraine Simkiss (General Managers, Talyllyn Railway), and David Ventry (Chairman, Talyllyn Railway) receive a replica of the nameplate.

NEGES GAN Y CADEIRYDD

Gyda'r toriadau arfaethedig diweddar i wasanaethau ar y Cambrian, mae SARPA yn bwysicach nag erioed. Wedi ymholiadau eang, canfyddais bod Llywodraeth Cymru wedi gorchymyn Trafnidiaeth Cymru i wneud toriadau heb unrhyw ystyriaeth o bolisiau na dyheadau Llywodraeth Cymru – hynny yw, heb ystyried cymunedau, yr amgylchedd, gallu pobl i gyrraedd eu gwaith, difreintiedigrwydd gwledig, y Gymraeg, Deddf Lles Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol ayyb. Yn dilyn llawer o ymgyrchu gan SARPA ac eraill, mae nifer o'r toriadau arfaethedig ar gyfer y Cambrian wedi'u canslo. Fodd bynnag, mae Trafnidiaeth Cymru yn parhau i ystyried sawl toriad i'r gwasanaethau: peidio â rhedeg gwasanaeth llawn bob awr ar Brif Lein y Cambrian rhwng mis Hydref a mis Chwefror, dileu gwasanaeth cyntaf y diwrnod o Abermaw i Fachynlleth a dileu'r trenau olaf ar lein yr arfordir yn ystod mis Ionawr a mis Chwefror.

Mae SARPA yn gwrthwynebu torri addewidion, ynysu pobl a chymunedau, gorfodi pobl i symud neu ddysgu gyrru a lleihau buddsoddiad mewn rhai o'r ardaloedd tlotaf yn Ewrop. Rydym hefyd wedi codi pryderon am y Gymraeg, effeithiau ar allu Prifysgol Aberystwyth ac Ysbyty Bronglais i recriwtio, effeithiau amgylcheddol ac effaith andwyol ar y nifer o deithwyr fyddai'n defnyddio'r gwasanaethau sy'n weddill. Am hynny, bydd SARPA yn parhau i ddadlau dros ddileu'r toriadau'n llwyr.

Dr Jeff Smith, Cadeirydd SARPA

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

With the recent proposed cuts to services on the Cambrian, SARPA is more important than ever. After extensive enquiries, I found that the Welsh Government ordered Transport for Wales to make cuts without any consideration of the Welsh Government's policies or aspirations - that is, without considering communities, the environment, people's ability to get to work, rural deprivation, the Welsh language, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act etc. Following much campaigning by SARPA and others, a number of the proposed cuts for the Cambrian have been cancelled. However, Transport for Wales continues to consider several cuts to services: not running a full hourly service on the main Cambrian line between October and February, cancelling the first service of the day from Barmouth to Machynlleth and cancelling the last trains on the coast line during January and February.

SARPA opposes breaking promises, isolating people and communities, forcing people to move or learn to drive and reducing investment in some of the poorest areas in Europe. We have also raised concerns about the Welsh language, effects on the ability of Aberystwyth University and Bronglais Hospital to recruit, environmental impacts and an adverse impact on the number of passengers who would use the remaining services. Therefore, SARPA will continue to argue for the complete abolition of the cuts.

Dr Jeff Smith, SARPA Chair

Note that articles in this issue have been written and submitted prior to the 4th July General Election.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bow Street station on the up

Bow Street station on the up Transport for Wales recently released figures for passengers using Bow Street Station since its opening in 2021, showing a steady increase in numbers since then. Figures for 2021-2022 were 12,563 (34 passengers per day); for 2022-2023 23,156 (63 ppd) and 2023-2024 more than 29,000 (80 ppd). Usage figures show that 34% of all journeys were made to Aberystwyth (27 per day), 13% to Shrewsbury, 8% to Birmingham (New Street or International) and 7% to London. Station Manager David Crunkhorn said it was "great to see its ongoing success". Observations of the car park bear out the increase in passengers, with a steady increase in the number of cars using the car park. However, it is still the second quietest station, after Dovey Junction, on the Cambrian Mainline. Usage is roughly half that of the other two village stations, Borth and Caersws. It's been pointed out that other reopening's at roughly the same time such as Okehampton (228,000 footfall in 2022/2023), have exceeded expectations in terms of usage. Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular passengers is from/to Aberystwyth, accounting for 45% of the total in 2022/2023. Editor: I have used the station for day trips to Newtown (for a SARPA meeting), for long distance journeys to and from Scotland, and up the coast line. I've also collected visitors from there rather than from Aberystwyth.

Cambrian Coast Line

Fifty years ago on 31st July, the late great Fred Mulley MP, Minister of Transport, reprieved the Cambrian Coast Line from closure. In the mid 1960s the Government had a closure plan for the railways of North and Mid Wales. Afon Wen to Caernarfon went in December 1964, Ruabon to Barmouth in January 1965 and Aberystwyth to Carmarthen in February 1965. Then they came for the Cambrian Coast Line. Through Tywyn based John Rogers and the Cambrian Coast Line Action Group who fought the closure from the outside, the Welsh people told the Government you will not close our railway. Recently, at long last, Network Rail have named one of their locomotives after the Talylyn Railway. It should not be forgotten members of the Talylyn Railway Preservation Society including John Slater, Richard Hope and Reginald Dawson fought the closure from the inside. It really was a close run thing.

Heritage plaque placed on Barmouth Bridge

Lord Hendy, chair of Network Rail, joined Ken Skates MS (Welsh Minister for Transport), Owain Pritchard, the Mayor of Barmouth, and members of the Network Rail project team to unveil a heritage plaque on Barmouth Bridge on 20th May. This follows the completion of the four-year restoration of the bridge. The Railway Heritage Trust were instrumental in funding the new handrails on the viaduct, and they provided the plaque on the walkway that runs along the structure.

Class 97 No.97304 named Rheilffordd Talylyn Railway

Lord Hendy travelled to Tywyn, where Class 97/3 No. 97304 was officially named by him after the narrow gauge line that runs adjacent to the National Network here. The

cast nameplates in the style of the Talylyn Railway logo were unveiled to mark the close relationship between Network Rail and Talylyn Railway. Two mounted replicas cast from the same pattern were presented to David Ventry, Talylyn Railway Chairman, and General Managers, Liz Porrett and Lorraine Simkiss. The other locomotive was 37 418 An Comunn Gaidhealach. This loco, owned by Steve Beniston, is leased to Loram UK, a supplier to Network Rail of infrastructure equipment and operations.

The Talylyn Railway was the first preserved railway in the world, the preservation society being created in 1951 to take over the route that opened in 1865 after the death of the owner Sir Haydn Jones. Today, it conveys passengers from Tywyn Wharf just over seven miles to Nant Gwernol.

Peter, Lord Hendy, Chair of Network Rail, said: "I'm very fond of this railway and our Cambrian lines, and it always seemed to me a great shame that the dedicated locomotives on the Cambrian didn't bear the names of railways with whom we have a very close connection. It's taken time and quite a lot of effort to get to the stage where we could name this Class 97 after the Talylyn Railway, but having taken so long it seems particularly appropriate that it is on the cusp of the Talylyn's 75th anniversary as the first preserved railway in the world.

David Ventry, the Chairman of the Talylyn Railway added that the heritage line was grateful to the infrastructure operator for donations of sleepers and recently with assistance in relocating a standard gauge wagon as part of a display on how slate was transhipped. *Railway Herald*, 22nd May 2024.

Aberystwyth

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Borth accounting for 11.5% of the total.

Borth

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Aberystwyth, accounting for 62% of the total.

Dyfi Junction

Incredibly Natural Resources Wales have written a letter to Network Rail complaining that the timber trains (once a week) are disturbing Canada Geese that live on the Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve. The Cambrian News even suggested that the trains will have to stop. Many people have pointed out that hundreds of passenger trains a week, engineering trains and excursions don't seem to bother the Geese and the Ospreys happily nest and have had young close to the line and don't bat an eyelid at the passing trains. Nothing appears to have come from this complaint, which according to local sources has come from people with connections to local road hauliers.

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Aberystwyth accounting for 43% of the total.

Machynlleth

The environment would have been better served by the lower yard being retained and used as a rail freight hub than anything that's been achieved by the so Dyfi Eco Park according to a visiting overseas Professor. It didn't go down well with some of the

businesses on the park. He also described the troubled Centre of Alternative Technology as a dilapidated 1970's theme park!

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Aberystwyth accounting for 24% of the total.

Pwllheli

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Porthmadog accounting for 29% of the total.

Porthmadog

The Purple Moose brewery, in addition to buying the pub on the station, have opened up a small Café as well.

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Pwllheli, accounting for 30.5% of the total.

Harlech

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Penrhyndeudraeth, accounting for 35% of the total.

Barmouth

The second and final phase of work on the Barmouth Bridge – replacing the metal spans was completed in early December. The innovative way the work was undertaken is likely to be nominated for an engineering award.

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Harlech, accounting for 18.5% of the total.

Tywyn

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Barmouth, accounting for 28% of the total.

Caersws

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Shrewsbury, accounting for 29% of the total.

Newtown

Work has progressed with the access for all lift, unfortunately necessitating the closure of the car park for several months. Overnight parking alternatives nearby are very limited and of course being Powys the buses don't connect with the trains.

Late February/ early March has seen all trains use Platform 2 (DOWN side) as Platform 1 (UP side) under the main station building canopy has had its surface dug up to lay power cables to the new lifts.

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Shrewsbury, accounting for 40% of the total.

Welshpool

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Shrewsbury, accounting for 42% of the total.

Shrewsbury

Under diktat from the DfT Avanti West Coast withdrew from serving Shrewsbury at the June timetable change, making Shropshire once again the only county in England with no direct rail service to London. The DfT trotted out its usual nonsense about travel patterns changing post pandemic, but forgot to mention the one train a day left was subject to ridiculous weekday peak pricing and was often cancelled due to the problems AWC suffered after the DfT refused to allow them to recruit new drivers to replace natural wastage. On a brighter note, West Midlands Railway are reintroducing their second train an hour throughout the day, meaning three trains an hour will serve the Shrewsbury to Birmingham corridor, including the TfW service once an hour which will have pressure on it reduced.

An "Open Access" operator has applied to run services from Wrexham to London via Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Walsall and Nuneaton into Euston. Proposed timetables show 5 trains a day that totally fail to connect with Cambrian trains or have some heroic connection times and clash with existing train paths between Shrewsbury and Wrexham!

Shrewsbury has been nominated for a vibrant town centre award.

Data from the Office of Rail and Road indicates that the most popular origin/destination of passengers is from/to Birmingham New St, accounting for 10.5% of the total.

Landslip closes Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton line in March

A landslip between Oakengates and Telford Central related to the very wet winter we have experienced this winter resulted in 5000 tons of material moving, though the track had not been disturbed. The embankment was unstable and needed work. The line was closed until the 28th March. Passengers were allowed to travel via Crewe and a rail replacement bus service was in operation.

Travel to London Changes in West Midlands

Avanti West Coast revamped their West Midlands to London timetable in June, with two fast services per hour that will travel nonstop between Coventry and Euston. A third semi-fast service will run that stops additionally at Rugby, Milton Keynes and Watford Junction. The best connections to/from the Cambrian are made to one of the fast services. For example the 0729 from Aberystwyth arrives at Birmingham New St at 1032 connecting with a 1047 AWC departure for Euston that arrives at 1207. The 1240 AWC service from Euston arrives Birmingham International at 1345 with the Aberystwyth service departing 1408 reaching Aberystwyth at 1721. The earliest you can arrive in Euston from the Cambrian is 1007 and the latest departure with a connection to the Cambrian is 1840 Monday to Saturdays.

The London North Western Railway also run two trains per hour to Euston via Northampton, stopping at major stations, and Chiltern Railways still run two trains an

hour from Birmingham Moor St to London Marylebone for those with more time on their hands or wanting to find a cheaper fare.

Cambrian Steam

Excitement followed the announcement that A1 Steam Locomotive 60163 Tornado is to conduct testing on ETCS equipment on the Cambrian this spring/early summer. The loco is a new build 4-6-2 express tender locomotive completed in 2008 to a 1940's London North Eastern Railway design, and will be the first steam locomotive on the Cambrian since 2010 and the first ever of LNER design. That ETCS would be installed in a steam locomotive was promised back in 2011 when ETCS was installed on our line, only 13 years late!

However, the trial will only go as far as Newtown and will take place at night after regular passenger services have finished. The loco is too heavy to go over the wooden bridge across the Severn at Caersws and test runs can't be the accommodated in daylight hours due to high line occupancy.

Wrong end of stick

Mid Wales politicians displayed their lack of knowledge about the rail industry when the Office of Rail and Road announced an investigation into the performance of Network Rail's Wales and West region. Brecon and Radnor MP Fay Jones, Ceredigion MP Ben Lake and Montgomeryshire MS Russell George all jumped on the bash Transport for Wales bandwagon issuing statements how they were all behind it due to how appalling TfW were etc etc blah blah blah.

What our esteemed representatives failed to realise was the investigation was actually into the infrastructure provider – the big clue was of course with ORR saying it was into Network Rail - and then mainly associated with the stretch of track between Reading and London Paddington, which of course has knock on effects on all GWR services to the South West, South Wales Cotswolds etc. Egg on the face award for Russell George as Network Rail is nationalised and directly controlled by the Westminster Government which of course was Conservative controlled! And double egg on face award for Fay Jones who is a junior member of said Government being the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales

The brought in private sector Director from a North East port authority has left Network Rail to "pursue other opportunities" and a £138 million remedial programme of works has been announced. As it turns out NR didn't upgrade any of the infrastructure in preparation for the already very busy stretch handling more traffic when Elizabeth line trains were introduced in 2023 between Paddington and Reading.

RAIL USAGE COMPARED FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS

Some figures have recently been released showing the increase in railway usage over two periods: October to December for 2022 and 2023. Transport for Wales usage over the two quarters has increased from 5.9 million to 7 million, an increase of 19%.

Percentage increases for other operators vary from 5% for Heathrow Express to 40% for the Elizabeth Line ; Scotrail increased by 34% and Avanti WestCoast by 38%.

Overall, the figures for the whole of Great Britain showed a rise of 20%, from 348 million to 417 million. However, they have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels of 461 million.

BUS/RAIL INTEGRATION - AT LAST?

The accompanying picture is of Newtown bus station on Friday 2nd February 2024 at 1457. The two green buses are Celtic Travel X75 services; one going to Shrewsbury the other to Llanidloes. The arrival from Llanidloes timetabled @ 1455 is some 14 minutes after the train to Birmingham International departed leaving travellers with the best part of nearly two hours till the next train to negotiate the 5-10 minute walk to the railway station. In the opposite direction the bus departing to Llanidloes @ 1505 is an equally as handy 58 minutes since a train arrived from Birmingham International. It's of course been a long standing aggravation for communities in Powys that the buses and trains don't connect.

Thankfully the Welsh Government is at long last going to introduce legislation later this year to repeal the 1986 Bus Deregulation Act and will then get TfW to instruct local authorities to align bus timetables with rail ones. Deputy Minister for Climate Change Lee Waters said in a speech to TfW officials on Tuesday 6th February. Mr Waters blamed bus companies putting profit before passengers but in Powys the subsidised bus services that don't connect with the railway are specified by Powys County Council. Officials in county hall have a long track record of bellyaching and making excuses up why integration cannot happen - they may need the proverbial kick up their rear end as well as legislation and instruction to reach the correct outcome.



TICKETING DEVELOPMENTS WITH GARETH MARSTON

This article was written and submitted prior to the 4th July General Election

UK Ministers received a bloody nose last year when the consultation on closing all ticket offices in England controlled by the DfT produced the largest ever response to a Government consultation in the UK. Some 750,000 respondents overwhelming told the Government where to go, with opposition to the plans being nearly universal. Though supposedly an industry proposal, it was clear from the start that it was Government who were driving it and passengers have rightly rejected the dystopian future of unstaffed stations offered by Ministers. Despite promises of more staff on platforms, consultation documents from individual TOC's showed that manned booking offices would in many locations be replaced by a roving customer service team who would spend just a few minutes at each location a day, before moving on at random times. The reality is that passengers value a manned presence for the obvious reasons: of not just having someone selling tickets but also for help with people with mobility issues, customer service and security. There is a proper debate to be had on the future of ticketing and station staffing, but this blunt force trauma dumb cost cutting proposal was not it. The UK Government has now backed down on this issue with Ministers reported to be "furious" - though whether they will learn from their mistakes is highly doubtful.

If there is a war on a particular type of traveller, then it is by the current Westminster Government on rail passengers. Since 2010 there has been year upon year of ticket price increases (regulated fares up 65% since 2010) and no reform of the overcomplicated fare system. The cost of rail travel has been going up faster than wage growth, whilst motorists have in contrast been given £100 Billion in tax breaks.

This has been followed post-pandemic by direct Government control insisting on cut services with less rolling stock, to go on top of cancelled or curtailed infrastructure improvements schemes along with deliberately engineered and prolonged disruptive industrial disputes. Their latest wheeze is the so-called fare simplification trial on the East Coast Mainline, where walk on fares at sort of reasonable prices at quieter times have been abolished, with only dynamic pricing book-ahead tickets available which have turned out to be more expensive than the previous flexible walk on fares.

The Williams review made the eminently sensible recommendation of the industry having just one (publicly owned) website for ticket sales and service information, ending the utter confusion that the public suffer from with over 40 different websites all claiming to offer "cheap tickets" (which they don't). The third party internet retailers have cried and screamed and Ministers have back tracked on this common sense recommendation saying that the so called innovative private sector was to stay. Innovations have included being called out in public by the Competition Authority for drip pricing. Third party ticket retailers needlessly sucked c£200 million out of the industry in commission payments last year, as well as charging passengers more money for tickets than traditional booking offices.

Meanwhile on the continent in complete contrast heavily discounted travel schemes are now becoming a permanent fixture. Germany has extended funding for a second year for its Deutschland ticket, the monthly 49 EURO ticket giving unlimited access to all regional and local public transport except long distance InterCity services

across the entire nation. Take up has been 11 Million people – roughly one in six adults, with 60% of non-InterCity mainline rail journeys last year being ticket holders. In addition, many cities have kept their previous (cheaper) local schemes, and non-regular and long distance travellers still have the option of buying Bahn Cards that give users discounts better than UK railcards without all the myriad of types or terms and conditions we suffer from in the UK. Deutsche Bahn are also in the middle of a huge investment programme, partly funded by autobahn tolls on HGV's, with a target of rail having a 25% market share of both passenger and freight movement by 2030. In Austria the ambition is even greater with an investment programme to 2040 announced and the intention to get rail's market share to 40%. Austrians also have the benefit of an annual nationwide public transport pass for 1,095 EURO or one just valid within one of their nine federal states for just 370-500 EURO per year – the Klimaticket. Some 22% of all adults have a version with take-up rates being about 62% of all adults in Vienna (about the size of Birmingham) and 11% in the rest of the country which is largely mountainous and rural with few towns of any size. France is apparently going to do something similar to the German scheme.

Here in the UK we do have some good aspects: contactless Pay as YouGo (PAYG) facilities, such as found on Transport for London, are starting to be rolled out in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, and South Wales, and the TfL scheme is now being extended into the South East England/East of England with towns c.35 miles from the city included. The advantages are many: no time consuming messing around on the internet looking for the mythical “cheap tickets”, or deciding oneself which one of the many type of tickets is the correct one for your journey; no booking fees and other hidden charges; no queues at ticket offices or trying to fathom out how the ticket machine on the platform works etc. This type of system with zones and daily price caps works really well for journeys within city regions including all types of public transport. If implemented in all our city regions they are going to cover in terms of percentage of public transport journeys the vast bulk of them. However they don't address travel that's not within a city region nor cost/value for money. I was in London one Sunday in February and did several journeys in Zone 1 and interchanged in Zone 2 to get back to Zone 1 for £5.40 for the day. Though that's incredibly cheap by UK standards, a resident of Vienna where I was last April would have been able to use their state Klimaticket, equivalent to about a EURO a day, to do the whole City out to the furthest zones even in the peak on weekdays! Other ticketing developments have seen Scotland conducting a six month trial on abolishing peak fares, whilst Transport for London have frozen fares and have also abolished peak pricing on Fridays for a trial period.

There is a real danger that rural areas like the Cambrian could be left behind by PAYG schemes, stuck with the current system as politicians and decision makers suck their teeth and decide it's too hard to extend PAYG beyond city region boundaries - which it probably is. The first bit of blue seen in the sky are the changes we've seen in ticketing on the continent that have been driven by the policy drivers of tacking climate change and the cost of living: they can be studied and copied. Here in Wales we already have a target for the percentage of journeys being done by active travel and public transport of 45% by 2040; discounted public transport user passes are an intervention aligned with that policy. The second is in Westminster where a change

of regime will happen at some point this year: The significance that the Conservatives, who are on course to lose big having chosen as one of their big plays a culture war about motorists cannot be underestimated. Since 1958 there has almost been policy paralysis over fear of electoral backlash from motorists: this ball and chain is set to be broken. Devolved administrations in London and Cardiff Bay have pursued transport policies different to the orthodoxy of the last 65 years and the ruling party in these places look set not to suffer any negative electoral consequences, despite all the noise and hysteria about ULEZ and 20 mph limits. This should embolden national politicians as it will show them and advisors that they can react to and do things differently on transport without the same level of fear from motorist ballot box backlash. ULEZ implementing incumbent Labour's Mayor Khan had a 25% poll lead over the self-proclaimed motorist's friend the Conservatives Councillor Suzie with just 9 weeks left to the May 2nd London Mayoral elections: it will be a significant milestone in changing attitudes to transport policy.

We can follow the example set on the continent of discounted public transport passes if the will is there. To help policy makers it's perhaps worth reflecting on the fact that if current trends continue by the end of the decade there will be a smaller percentage of each age cohort under 60 holding a driving license than in 2020. Also motorised baby boomers will not be the electoral force they were in the 2010's: things will have changed. Politicians will have to address the needs of the people who will be voting into the 2030's. The real debate should be around the details of a discounted ticketing scheme, not whether it should happen. Should it be local only like the Austrian States with an option for a country wide one? Or like the German one with all local transport covered on a nationwide basis, but you pay separately to use longer distance express services? At what monetary level should a pass be pitched? Should everyone pay the same, given the large regional variation in average earnings in the UK? Long distance rail services in the UK are often the only service between many smaller and medium size places, how do we organise around that? There's a really good debate to be had also involving the UK's geography and governing structures: however, that's not for this article.,

You may ask what about making public transport free? This is an option often promoted from the left of the political spectrum, often aimed at special interest groups, or as a panacea for everyone by Green groups, who then campaign to oppose building the infrastructure needed to have enough capacity! Around the world there have been a handful of small cities that have tried making all public transport free: and the results are surprising, with car usage recorded as increasing and active travel going down! The drivers for this aren't fully understood but the real world evidence fails to match what the ideology says would happen as is so often the case whether on the right or left of the political spectrum. We still have to be sensible, rational and use evidence even if the motoring ball is no longer attached to the chain.

TRAVELLER'S TALES

Roger Whitehouse

Five return journeys without incident (except for one missing coast portion) were followed by ...

Floods to start with

A high tide had prevented trains running through Dovey Junction: The 0906 Mach-Shrewsbury was confirmed as running soon after we arrived by road, but left 17 mins late (from platform 2). The 0808 International-Aberystwyth was not, as expected, waiting at Fron: it was cancelled. There followed a prolonged wait at Welshpool, with a police inspection, "waiting for a Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth train" which arrived at 1116 (26 late). We departed at 1125 (90 late) and then waited at Shrewsbury for the following train from the Cambrian to couple: it left at 1202 (32 late). Further delays at Wolverhampton led to termination at New St at 1313, to form the 1322 to Holyhead. Our anticipated arrival time had been 1130

The 1822 from New St was on the main indicator as front 2 Machynlleth, rear 2 Shrewsbury. The Shrewsbury portion continues to Holyhead (as usual, not advertised as such, in my opinion for no good reason). On reaching the platform the order had been reversed, so was it now correct? No: a 2-car train arrived, which left full & standing. Sandwell & Dudley displayed 2 cars to Machynlleth. Wellington at one point showed the train as simultaneously Arrived and Cancelled! Then came an announcement that the train, arriving at Platform 3, would continue to Holyhead, and that a train for Aberystwyth would follow in the same platform (it did). We alighted under an indicator reading 2030 to Aberystwyth.

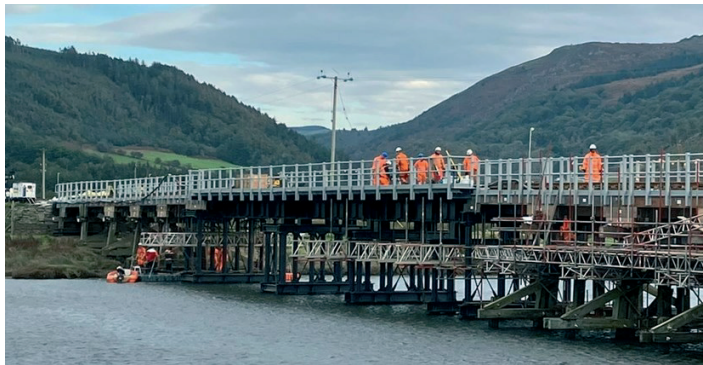
That made five indicators, those I was able to see, all displaying wrong information.

Two more journeys followed without incident, except most recently when, after the usual (useless) front/rear announcement of two portions at Shrewsbury, we saw a train to the Cambrian arrive with 2 cars. Will TfW ever get their passenger information right?

STATION USAGE FIGURES 2022-23

Figures from Network Rail

	Full price	Reduced	Season		Entries and	Inter-	Main origin/	Numbers
	tickets	ce tickets	tickets	All tickets	Exits	changes	destination	
Aberdyfi	24,642	9,586	0	34,208	2,071	0	Tywyn	7,318
Abererch	1,564	476	0	2,040	2,468	0	Pwllheli	790
Aberystwyth	103,522	136,146	1,898	241,566	1,143	0	Borth	27,624
Barmouth	100,876	39,022	30,460	170,358	1,345	0	Barmouth	3,472
Borth	32,372	12,022	508	44,902	1,982	0	Aberystwyth	27,624
Bow Street	14,764	7,246	1,272	23,282	2,182	0	Aberystwyth	10,482
Caersws	19,592	21,184	1,724	42,500	1,999	0	Shrewsbury	12,286
Criccieth	17,998	7,450	770	26,218	2,143	0	Pwllheli	6,478
Dovey Junction	8,406	784	0	aa	2,341	4,370	Aberystwyth	3,954
Dyffryn Ardudwy	11,050	3,184	1,522	15,756	2,252	0	Barmouth	6,364
Fairbourne	20,036	7,052	2,300	29,388	2,120	0	Barmouth	14,802
Harlech	29,040	6,786	84,504	120,330	1,526	0	Penrhyndeudra	42,536
Llanbedr	7,096	2,686	0	9,782	2,332	0	Barmouth	2,950
Llandanwg	3,022	828	10	3,860	2,425	0	Barmouth	1,134
Llandecwyn	660	234	116	1,010	2,508	0	Pwllheli	164
Llwyngwrl	11,828	4,604	13,312	29,744	2,117	0	Tywyn	15,544
Machynlleth	53,442	44,626	2,070	100,138	1,633	10,738	Aberystwyth	23,792
Minffordd	4,610	1,222	9,100	14,932	2,259	0	Harlech	9,132
Minffordd	4,610	1,222	9,100	14,932	2,259	0	Harlech	9,132
Morfa Mawddach	6,058	2,064	52	8,174	2,355	0	Barmouth	3,472
Newtown	78,226	35,750	10,436	124,412	1,508	0	Shrewsbury	50,032
Penhelg	4,066	1,984	0	6,050	2,381	0	Aberystwyth	10,482
Penrhyndeudraeth	11,230	4,040	41,182	56,452	1,897	0	Harlech	42,536
Pensarn	972	432	10	1,414	2,487	0	Tywyn	1,584
Penychain	2,502	1,812	0	4,314	2,413	0	Pwllheli	1,280
Porthmadog	38,430	16,878	13,716	69,024	1,804	0	Pwllheli	21,002
Pwllheli	29,152	25,776	18,404	73,332	1,771	0	Porthmadog	21,002
Talybont	16,914	5,908	3,224	26,046	2,145	0	Barmouth	13,896
Tywyn	834	218	0	1,052	2,506	0	Harlech	280
Tywyn	49,450	18,930	21,526	89,906	1,690	0	Barmouth	25,344
Welshpool	82,714	50,360	7,480	140,554	1,455	0	Shrewsbury	58,976



Refurbishment of the Dyfi Bridge was completed last November. Parts of the wooden structure were replaced with Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) resin. About 77 tonnes of timber removed from the structure have been recycled, and around 90 metres of track panels donated to the Gwili Railway. Photograph: Network Rail.

WANT TO JOIN SARPA?

The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2024) £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 line's 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.

To join please send your details, making sure to include full name, address and telephone number (and also email address if you wish to become part of our electronic network) to:

Bill Redfern, SARPA Membership Secretary, 8 Plas Edwards, Tywyn, Gwynedd, LL36 0AS, along with cheque for the membership fee, or, and preferably, you can pay directly into our bank account: Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers Association: Barclays Bank: sort code 20-61-08: account 20148148, and send your details to

Bill_sarpa@outlook.com

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Transport for Wales: Customer Relations, Transport for Wales Rail Services, St. Mary's House, 7 Penarth Road, Cardiff . CF10 5DJ Tel. 0333 3211 202

Network Rail:

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

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

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

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

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WEBSITES

Our website <https://sarpa.info>

Webmaster Angus Eickhoff: angus@anguseickhoff.co.uk

Website host is Hostinger: <https://www.hostinger.co.uk/>

Find us on Facebook - Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1506868396111739>

Other sites of interest:

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
Avanti West Coast	www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk
Chiltern Railways	www.chilternrailways.co.uk/
Network Rail	www.networkrail.co.uk/
Railfuture/Railway Development Society	www.railfuture.org.uk/
Railwatch: the quarterly magazine of Railfuture	www.railwatch.org.uk
The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)	communityrail.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
Talylyn Railway	www.talylyn.co.uk/
Welshpool and Llanfair Railway	www.wlfr.org.uk/
Welsh Highland Heritage Railway	www.whr.co.uk/
Fairbourne Railway	www.fairbournerailway.com/
Borth Station Museum	www.borthstationmuseum.co.uk
Real Time Trains	realtimetrains.co.uk
Live Rail Record	https://live.rail-record.co.uk

MONTHLY MEETINGS

August	Tuesday 20 th	19.00	Monty Club, Newtown
September	Saturday 21 st	11.15	Wynstay Hotel, Machynlleth
October	Saturday 19 th	11.30	Green Room, Criccieth Memorial Hall
November	Saturday 16 th	11.30	Railway Station, Shrewsbury
December	Saturday 7 th	11.45	Town Council Offices, Baker St, Aberystwyth

Articles in the Newsletter contain the views of the contributors, not those of the Association.

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22nd October 2024