

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association



Newsletter No. 50

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8F No. 48151 "Gauge O Guild" makes the first visit of this class of locomotive to Aberystwyth, via the Cambrian mainline, on April 22nd 2010. Photograph: Martin Bates.

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This is the quarterly newsletter of the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association. Contributions are welcomed from members and non-members about the mid Wales rail scene.

Views expressed in it are those of contributors and not necessarily representative of the Association as a whole. Information provided is published in good faith, but the Association cannot accept responsibility for any loss or damage arising therefrom.

The Editor reserves the right to abridge or amend copy.

Want to Join SARPA?

The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2010) £7.00 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 subscribe to the Shrewsbury Rail Users Federation and 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 c/o Gareth Marston, 64 Churchill Drive, Barnfields, Newtown, Powys SY16 2LH.

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.

Secretary and Treasurer

These positions are currently vacant. If you wish to volunteer for either position, please contact the Chairman.

Thank you to all those who sent in copies of the early newsletters.
We now have a complete set.

Chairman's Message

A "Daytime hourly service by 2011" between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury is promised in the final version of the WAG National Transport Plan. No one though seems to know or is willing to fill in the blanks, like when in 2011, or provide an explanation as to what daytime hourly actually means. Some 11 years have elapsed since the chimera of the hourly service was first raised, and given the current financial problems I don't think we can blithely assume that it's in the bag (whatever "it" is), especially when the dust settles from the forthcoming general election. I know a lot of members are concerned about the consequences of cuts whoever comes to power in Westminster - the reality is that in Mid Wales a large percentage of journeys on our line also involve travelling outside the core Wales and Border franchise area, and members and other passengers will be effected whichever way the wind blows even if WAG insulates Mid Wales. Another RUG believes that a source had told them that the DfT is planning a 30% cut in the rail budget. That there is not even a consideration of a trial of vertical integration to compare costs in the circumstances is beyond belief.

RUG's like SARPA are not fools and know that cost, efficiency and the correct structure are key to delivering our objectives. As we've have said for a decade or so now, the bloated cost base and inefficiencies of the privatised rail network need addressing. The days when the cracks could be papered over by pouring more money in appear to be gone. Billions that could have transformed our rail network have effectively been lost. For every passenger journey made by BR it needed roughly £4.50 of revenue at 2008 prices; today on a network the same size nearly £9.00 is needed. If you've ever wondered why the fare you pay seems so expensive this is part of the reason why. So what's the answer? There's a belief that the current system can be made to work, and that by tinkering with franchise length we can find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow promised by rail privatisation's architects. The thinking is that we are not far off and some adjustments are needed. We beg to differ. The only country in the world to follow the UK's free market thinking, deregulated approach to public transport - New Zealand - has renationalised its railways. No one else bothered; they just got on with investing in quality public transport networks. We have to put our hands in the air and admit the experiment hasn't worked. Playing the ATOC tune and letting the private sector "get on with the job" will just get more of the current Wales and Border type franchises, where poor performance is not punished and profits put ahead of passengers and the economy for a long time.

There's a golden opportunity post May the 6th to grasp the nettle and ditch the approach of the last twenty five years. The alternative is a new Serpell report at a time when rail should be vastly expanded for environmental and economic sustainability reasons. We could end up distracting ourselves with arguments and protests. That the bustitution argument has been comprehensively knocked down several times won't stop misguided future attempts. At the launch of the Regional Transport Plan TraCC and guests heard the view expressed that a quality long distance coach network- that will have to travel over rural Welsh roads - will attract car users! Sounds familiar? In this context it was the Traws Cambria network filling in gaps that rail currently doesn't provide. But if you think this despite the evidence to the contrary no doubt you'll try applying it elsewhere. The road lobby will temporarily clap its hand with glee but the economy will suffer. I don't believe there's the stomach to try and implement cuts, but they will be inevitable unless we are clever and relearn how to organise public transport efficiently.

News in brief

Aberystwyth

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 273,410, compared to 218,498 in 2002/2003.

A funded regeneration project for the town unlike the so called Masterplan does not include any redevelopment of the station area.

The Student Union at the University has been campaigning for 4 car trains to operate to the town at what it calls predictable times when students will travel.

A private charter operated to Aberystwyth on Thursday 22nd April, hauled by 8F loco 48151. This is thought to be the first ever visit by one of these locos to Aber via the Cambrian main line.

Borth

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 50,508, compared to 37,040 in 2002/2003.

No news on the repair of the station canopy.

Dovey Junction

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 1,494, compared to 804 in 2002/2003.

Surprisingly the Aberystwyth line platform, Numbered 2, has not been split into a & b, given that it will be capable of holding two trains simultaneously.

Machynlleth

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 107,346 compared to 81,219 in 2002/2003.

Talerddig

The high speed points have been constructed on site with concrete sleepers and currently (start of April) await installation.

Caersws

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 33,950 compared to 23,648 in 2002/2003.

Newtown

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 110,034, compared to 80,540 in 2002/2003.

The town's Tesco store was finally opened in late February; it can be clearly seen on the Welshpool side of the station. The associated roadworks and new traffic lights have made life a nightmare according to some locals, including those trying to access the station by car. The towns bypass has been scheduled to start by 2014.

Welshpool

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 95,778, compared to 60,538 in 2002/2003.

No progress has been made on repairing the station footbridge. Work has recommenced on restoring the double track south of Welshpool.

Shrewsbury

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 1,595,812, compared to 1,258,246 in 2002/2003.

Wrexham and Shropshire have benefitted from better pathing and stopping patterns following their merger with Chiltern Trains under the ownership of Deutsche Bahn – the German state railway operator, though connections to the Cambrian remain poor at present. The Evergreen 3 project and line speed improvements between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury could see journey times of just over two and half hours from Marylebone to Shrewsbury – with the prospect of better stock utilisation, more trains per day and potentially better Cambrian connections by May 2011.

Birmingham New St

Footfall for 2008/2009 was 25,191,945.

Franchise changes

The takeover of ATW by Deutsche Bahn was announced on 22nd April. DB is paying £1.59bn for the company. This should have many benefits for Mid Wales, if there is integration of the Wales and Borders services with those of Wrexham and Shropshire and Chiltern, providing a better service between Shrewsbury and Birmingham. The prospect of a Von Cambrian Coast Express has been raised.

Rolling Stock News

A delivery of new rolling stock for use on the West Midlands commuter lines out of Birmingham Snow Hill will trigger a rolling stock cascade with Class 150 DMU's being transferred elsewhere. This will allow First Great Western to give back 4 of this type of unit to ATW which had lent them to FGW in 2007. This means that the Class 158's ATW currently use between Cheltenham and Maesteg will be freed up. ATW planned to use these for their proposed Marylebone service. There are currently no short term plans for their redeployment, however ATW and WAG have confirmed a long due refurbishment programme for the Class 158 and 153 fleets. Details are yet to be released but it seems likely that the extra units released by the cascade will allow refurbishment to take place without affecting current deployments.

The rejuvenation of the Cambrian line

Adrian Bailey

The rejuvenation of the Cambrian line was the title of an article in December 1964's Modern Railways magazine, which outlined BR's plans for 1965. Modest modernisation was fitting to carry traffic diverted from other (closed) routes, proclaimed the author. Following the thinking of the day diverted and concentrated traffic from the Afon Wen – Carnarfon, Barmouth Junction – Ruabon and Aberystwyth – Carmarthen lines would now come over Talerddig. An increase in freight traffic was reported since the freight from

Lampeter and Bala routes were moved earlier that year. Freight had been withdrawn from all the smaller stations with facilities only left at Welshpool, Newtown, Machynlleth and Aberystwyth. Machynlleth was to act as a freight concentration depot with onward Lorries.

Passenger services were to be speeded up by the closure of minor stations and the introduction of a fleet of 12 DMU's on local services between Shrewsbury, Aberystwyth and Pwllheli. A 39 minute journey time saving over the length of the line was claimed. All double track sections west of Hookagate were to be removed as well as a number of intermediate crossing points reducing annual maintenance costs and helping speed up services. The morning and evening mail services with a through coach to York via Manchester plus the UP and DOWN Cambrian Coast Express to London Paddington would remain steam hauled. Summer Saturday traffic was still catered for with the Coast line seeing through trains to Paddington and Birmingham; as well as the CCE Aberystwyth also had through trains to Birmingham and Manchester.

...postscript...

The optimism seems to have been short lived, for barely 15 months after the article a bout of further cuts saw the Cambrian Coast Express and steam withdrawn. If losing one through flagship express was bad, at least in 1965 the DMU hauled local services would have connected at Shrewsbury with regular Paddington express services. After March 1967 and the closure of the through Birkenhead- Paddington route, services east of Shrewsbury spent until 1968 terminating at what was left of Wolverhampton Low Level with passengers forced to transfer by foot to High Level station for onward connections. The summer of 1967 saw no through summer Saturday trains. Eventually BR connected the Shrewsbury line to Wolverhampton High Level, and after pressure restored through trains from Euston to Shrewsbury, and summer Saturdays on the Cambrian were served by Birmingham New St and London Euston. Bespoke summer Saturday workings lasted until 1994 - after that any increase in loadings were to be accommodated by existing services or hopefully not turn up in case complaints about overcrowding were made. The CCE made its reappearance in 1986 but was taken off again in 1991. The York mail continued as diesel hauled until the early 1970's (Editor: I think it was still diesel hauled in 1980); after that a DMU connection was laid on to Shrewsbury this lasted until 1988. By the mid 70's there was a once a day freight as far as Machynlleth going forward up the coast or to Aberystwyth on alternate days. This ceased in 1982. A weekly working of oil tanks to Aberystwyth survived to 1993. Further removal of loops at Montgomery (1968), Borth (1970), Cemmaes Road (1982) bear testament to the decline in freight and other traffic. Aberystwyth was reduced to one platform in 1982. Hookagate to Sutton Bridge Junction long been singled. Speed restrictions increased and journey times slowed. Then in late 1985 another rejuvenation plan was announced....

To be continued...

*****STOP PRESS*** Progress on reopened stations**

The Welsh Assembly Government and TraCC have announced that they will fund the next Stage (Stage 2) of the Welsh transport planning appraisal process WEITAG for the reopening of Carno and Bow St stations. The outcome is due in August and dependent on if the computer says No or not the projects could go into the Welsh Rail Forward Plan.

Meanwhile in Cumbria the temporary station at Workington North built to assist flood hit communities has proved so popular that consideration to making it a permanent station is being made. We wonder what WEITAG would say? Those wanting an explanation as to why bureaucratic delay, inertia and cost are valued more highly than common sense perhaps could direct their questions at WAG.

Hot topic - restrictions on travel to London

Many members and non members have contacted us regarding the utter confusion that appears to exist within Virgin Trains, ATW and National Rail Enquiry System as to fare restrictions to Euston. Seemingly a different answer is given on each occasion underpinned by the belief that there must be some draconian restriction that prevents passengers from Mid Wales using the cheaper but available as a walk on fare Off Peak return to London Euston. As we've pointed out in many editions of this newsletter you can legitimately use it on the 1st UP train in the morning catching the official connection from New St to Euston on Virgin Trains.

The extract below is copied directly out of the rail industry fare manual. Off-peak from our line to London are coded as having validity "VJ". This sets out that the restriction is no arrival in London Euston before 1000 and no departure before 0905.

Validity Code	These restrictions apply Monday to Friday . By any train on other days.	
VJ	Outward Travel	Return Travel
	You may travel on any train that is scheduled to ARRIVE:	You may travel on any train that is scheduled to DEPART:
London Euston	At or after 1000	At or after 0905

If any rail employee tells you it's 1130 or something like that and you must buy the full fare Anytime, they're talking complete tosh.



Opposite: The re-introduced Cambrian Coast Express of 1986. The down train arrives at Talerddig behind 37426, *Vale of Rheidol*. Note the tablet exchange apparatus still in place.

DB's acquisition of Arriva

From the *International Rail Journal*:

<http://www.railjournal.com/newsflash/db-confirms-1.6-billion-arriva-takeover.html>

DB confirms £1.6 billion Arriva takeover

Thursday, April 22, 2010

GERMAN Rail (DB) confirmed this morning that it will go ahead with a £1.6 billion takeover of British train and bus operator Arriva. The £7.75-a-share deal, which is the largest acquisition ever made by DB, was approved yesterday by the DB supervisory board and has also been ratified by the German government.

Speaking at a press conference this morning, DB CEO Mr Rüdiger Grube confirmed that under European antitrust law, it will sell Arriva's German rail business to a third party. "We said at the beginning we do not see it as a deal breaker if rail activities need to be sold," he said.

Arriva has steadily expanded its portfolio of German operations in recent years to become a major competitor to DB in the regional rail market. Its subsidiaries include Prignitz Railway (PEG), East Hannover Railway (OHE) and Regentalbahn. It also operates Alex services in Bavaria.

Grube predicts that DB-Arriva will become one of just a handful of large companies that will in future dominate the liberalised public transport market in Europe.

The future of Arriva has been the subject of intense speculation in recent months. In February the company confirmed it was in talks with French National Railways (SNCF) regarding a possible merger with Keolis to create a European transport group. When these discussions ended in failure last month, Arriva entered talks with DB which, despite rumours of a counterbid from SNCF, has gone on to secure a deal. Grube says DB was determined to buy Arriva but was not prepared to enter a bidding war.

Arriva operates two passenger franchises in Britain, Arriva Trains Wales, and CrossCountry, and runs regional services around Groningen in the Netherlands. It has operated trains in the Swedish region of Skåne since June 2007 and last year Arriva secured a second eight-year contract to operate regional services in western Denmark, ironically fending off a rival bid from DB Regio.

Footnote: the deal will be completed on Dec. 12th, 2010.

Cambrian Cinematography

Gerwyn Jones

Two great pieces of train cinematography were premiered at an event in Newtown Railway Station when the station's ticket office was converted to a cinema for one night. Shown to an invited audience on the evening of 12 March, the 'Cambrian Country' and 'Coast Gazer' films brought a touch of train tinsel-town to mid Wales. The films showcase and promote the wonderful views from the train window on the fantastic and contrasting Cambrian rail network with the intention of motivating viewers to then sample the train attraction for real!

Featuring their own original musical soundtrack the films have been produced by local company Dimension Studio, who are film-maker Charlotte Durie and composer

Dexter Jones. At the premiere Charlotte commented 'It was a real pleasure working on these projects. We have some of the best coastal scenery in the Kingdom and Dexter's music reflects the emotion of it beautifully.'

The short promotional films, produced for the Cambrian Railways Partnership (CRP), show highlights of the views on the Cambrian Main Line between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth and the Cambrian Coast Line between Machynlleth and Pwllheli.

According to Lembit Öpik, Member of Parliament for Montgomeryshire, 'Train travel has always held the hint of romance and enigma. These films bring out both in a most evocative style ... Anyone who sees these films will want to visit Wales - and by train.'

Following the premiere the films have gone on general release and are available to view at www.thecambrianline.co.uk.

As well as the films, the CRP have recently launched MP3-downloadable audio guides which tell people what they're seeing out of the train window as they travel. These were produced by well-known broadcaster Tim Richards and are already proving very popular and are also available for free to download from the website.

The premiere was kindly hosted by Mr Peter Compton, the proprietor of Newtown Station Travel, who says 'It's great to be able to arrange a fun social event like this which links the railway with the community it serves as well as promoting train travel of course!'

In producing the films and audio guides the CRP received support from Tourism Partnership Mid Wales - the launch of the films was timed to coincide with the build up to Wales Tourism Week which started on 15 March 2010.



Inside of one of the ERTMS equipped Class 97 locomotives.

The View from Milepost 62 with Brigadier John Faviell

Dusty is not a happy cat: our Siamese friend has been poorly – no doubt she's eaten something she shouldn't and has had to go to the vets. She's looking a bit down in the dumps looking at the screen as I type. Like me she's been bewildered by the pace of announcements this March. She was somewhat bemused by the ban on electric shock collars in Wales for cats and dogs. That a cat would lower itself to be treated the same as a dog! Though she does think those humans that don't understand transport should have a session on the collar to mend their ways: I have told her that no matter how stupid a human is they cannot be physically abused. So to March's transport announcements and some stupid humans.

No through train to London then. Hardly surprising given the inept way we organise transport in this country. For the record all regions should have direct links to the capital. Ian "Wrexham's all right Jack" Lucas MP, Owen "North Shropshire's all right Jack" Patterson and Mark "Telford and the Wrekin's all right Jack" Pritchard MP all win an award for selfish behaviour. The Office of the Rail Regulator viewed it as a profit/loss exercise rather than considering the wider network and economic benefits. In their view it wouldn't have made money and abstracted money from other operators due to the crazy way we organise rail finance. They also thought Wrexham and Shropshire were crying Wolf a bit too loudly. Another triumph for regulation, franchising and byzantine administration over common sense. That nobody outside of Mid Wales – who had to give what was on offer – wanted to support Arriva surely tells us something about Arriva. Let's hope their takeover by the Germans comes soon. ATW may have been disappointed but nothing like my disappointment in the reaction of Plaid Cymru in Ceredigion. I winced at their lack of understanding of how things work and basic geography. How on earth can devolving more power over railways to Wales restore through links to London from Mid Wales? The 82 miles from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury are predominantly in Wales but the next 170 or so miles are all in England! Currently those 170 or so miles have to be accessed using English rules. You could have a High Speed line from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury and Hedd Wyn could write prose from beyond the grave but it would go no further unless London co-operated. Dogma doesn't make things work: please learn.

Of course the evil English left Wales out of their High Speed plans, opting instead to plan a line in stages North of London to the large centres of population, industry and commerce in the West Midlands, North West and Yorkshire. Decades late of course, but the plan if built follows what all our more intelligent competitor nations have done. Due to the large capital investment needed they've gone in stages from the most important regional cities to the national capital, not chosen one of the smaller ones first! Still we will have to build a full UK high speed network eventually even if the Treasury doesn't want it, as inevitable oil price rises force a re assessment of transport. I did chuckle as the Tories, the road and air lobbies all chucked their dummies out their prams at Lord Adonis's announcement. And then the High Court ruling on the third runway at Heathrow and climate change targets – what will the DfT do with no airport expansion to plan? Perhaps they could actually produce a rolling stock plan and, heaven forbid, deliver it! The big news from DfT land was that they've found an extra 8 carriages for Northern Rail and 8 for East Midlands Trains. Wow! A single train was that size when I was a lad. At the same time the French regions – where apparently it's appalling according to some – got a fleet of fifty 6 car double deck trains.

Still perhaps we could have a rolling stock plan in Wales as the Enterprise and Learning Committee recommended. No said WAG and the big Plaid Chief, in a response

which was a curious mix of blaming London for the Wales Borders franchise, saying nothing could be done till the end of the franchise term and proclaiming the greatness of the "One Wales" agreement as a panacea to all ills. Still the lack of any progress was soon explained – the Assembly had a debate on road infrastructure improvement finance. That a Western European nation can even have such a debate in 2010 is incomprehensible. Wales's tag as the sick man of European transport continues.

The National Transport Plan was never going to live up to Irelands Transport 21 given the lack of understanding of transport, environmental and economic issues we have. Not only do we not have the understanding of our fellow European nations, we do not have the transport budget they provide either. The headline may have been that only 46% of the budget was to be spent on roads and that a majority was now spent on other modes. However Wales's total national transport budget is roughly £200 per head of population per year of which around a quarter is spent on rail. The Republic of Ireland Transport 21 plan spends roughly £185 per head of population per year on heavy and light rail alone. Three and a half times as much as Wales! Thank heavens our internal air link is reliable! Still we're to have a daytime hourly service next year. Dusty assumes that they've found some extra rolling stock which don't have lights – timetabling with the seasons and the clocks going forward and back could be challenging!

Three Cocks Cottage Easter 2010

Inquest on level crossing tragedy

An inquest has been held in Caernarfon into the death of an 83-year-old lady at a user-worked level crossing Penrhyndeudraeth back in September 2009.

Sally Hudson, who used to run the Saltings Pottery, had lived at the house for nearly 40 years. It was accessible only across the private level crossing, which has a telephone with which users with vehicles are expected to ask permission to cross. However, it became clear at the inquest that the Mrs Hudson never used it. Her daughter told the coroner: 'She would open both gates, check the line, and get back in the car and drive across, and then close the gates. She never used the telephone and had the (train) timetable written on the windscreens.'

Tragically, she did not allow for the possible arrival of a Network Rail Class 97/3 loco carrying staff on a familiarisation for the ERTMS project. A large buddleia bush may have reduced her visibility of the line towards Harlech and this has now been cut back. We are pleased to see that instead of the recriminations which sometimes characterise the events, after giving evidence her daughter apologised to the train crew. She said: 'My mother would have been absolutely devastated by the hurt she caused you, more so than what she has caused us.'

Recording a verdict of accidental death, perhaps the only reasonable one in the circumstances, North West Wales Coroner Dewi Pritchard Jones said: 'She was well aware of scheduled rail traffic and I believe her familiarity with the crossing was a contributory factor to this incident.' He added the important lesson was that users of this type of crossing should always check with signallers that the line is clear.

From Charlie Hulme's North Wales Coast website on 5th April:

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

Wales' First Minister interviewed

Wales' First Minister Carwyn Jones recently visited the *Cambrian News* as part of the newspaper's 150th birthday celebrations. Reporter James Nicholas interviewed him on various local issues affecting people in Ceredigion. These questions and answers are extracted from the *Cambrian News* of 8th April 2010.

JAMES NICHOLAS: How will the new transport plan help towns in Ceredigion and do you think it will ease traffic problems on the main trunk roads?

CARVYN JONES: I think what we have to do is move forward with the hourly service on the railway - signal problems are currently being dealt with.

Secondly, we need to look at TrawsCambria, not just to make the service more frequent but also more comfortable.

Obviously the Llandysul bypass has been built and that's very useful in getting into the middle of Ceredigion.

We will examine what can be done in the future to improve traffic flow.

JN: Travelling by train from Aberystwyth to Cardiff takes on average about four hours 20 minutes, while to London is four hours 40 minutes. How do you improve links to the Welsh capital?

CJ: Well one of the most stupid decisions ever made by governments in Wales over the last 30 years was to take up the rail lines between here and Carmarthen, which were still there until 1975.

What I'd like to do is get an idea of the cost of reinstating the line.

It would be a long-term project for the future and money in the public sector is going to be tight.

In the meantime we need to work on the TrawsCambria service and improve the quality of the vehicles.

Carmarthen line reopening?

From the *Cambrian News* 25th March 2010

Conservative AM Nick Bourne has questioned First Minister Carwyn Jones on the possibility of re-opening the Aberystwyth to Carmarthen railway line: "I wish to press you on the reopening of the Aberystwyth to Carmarthen railway line, and the practicality of that. I wonder whether it is to be progressed, bearing in mind that the Ystwyth Trail follows 15 miles of that line?"

In reply the First Minister said: "It would have a major cost, which is clearly uppermost in our minds at the moment. However, work to see whether it can be done can certainly be taken forward."

Mr. Bourne said: "I welcome the First Minister's commitment to a feasibility study into the possibility of reopening the Aberystwyth to Carmarthen railway line, which has the potential of delivering great economic benefits to west Wales."

Will High Speed Rail benefit Mid Wales?

with Gareth Marston

I took a trip to the Birmingham Think Tank on the 1st April with my daughter Zoe. As you can see from the picture the London and Birmingham Railway 1838 Curzon St building is in the background with a London Midland EMU on the mainline behind.

The area to the left is due for redevelopment as the Birmingham terminus for the proposed High Speed 2 line. Journey times of 45 minutes are being trailed to a redeveloped London Euston. However none of the proposals have shown how it links with the existing network. It was close to 20 minutes from our train arriving at New St to reaching this spot by foot in the rain, wiping out most of any benefit over existing links. It's also unclear whether HS2 will pretend to be an airline like Eurostar with all its delays and advance only booking. Getting the wires to Shrewsbury and connections to an hourly Shrewsbury to Euston express running down a less congested WCML may be a better solution to the London question.

Zoe will be in her mid 20's by the time it's built.



Above right: Friday 16th April: This signal appeared yesterday at the south end of platform 3 Shrewsbury!

New parts, too, not recovered . . .

The signal will allow trains to depart from Platform 3 to the south and east vastly improving the station layout's flexibility and raising the possibility of improved connections. However, transferring between Platform 3 and the island platform will have to be via the subway ticket barriers!

Farewell to Arriva?

A personal view from Gareth Marston

As this Newsletter goes to print the news that the Arriva board has accepted a takeover bid from German State Rail Operator Deutsche Bahn has been announced. The news is seen as a positive one including by many who have worked with or within ATW. Before we all open the bottle of bubbly it's perhaps best to reflect. The key expectation is that now a company who has a reputation for providing quality public transport in a country that's noted for its quality public transport runs our services they will improve. Even the official spokesperson from WAG hinted at the reputational element. I well remember the collective groan when it was announced that Arriva had won the Wales and Border franchise: they came with a reputation for poor quality and it's fair to say that most people would say they maintained it in Mid Wales and Shropshire.

There will be change but it will not be immediately apparent. DB have so far in this country left the existing management in situ when they've taken over, and initially the Arriva brand and current structure within the UK will be maintained. There's not a regiment of efficient public service minded railway managers waiting to parachute into place at a moments notice. Unfortunately when I go down to Newtown station next I won't find it magically transformed overnight into a fully staffed Integrated Transport Hub, with smart new red paint with trains of appropriate length, frequency, quality and that connect at junctions.

DB's reasons for buying Arriva are rooted in the so called liberalisation of the European rail market and maintaining their own size and importance when they start to lose lines to other companies. I suspect that they will impose a different corporate attitude on their subsidiary company than hitherto has been in place, though transforming UK public transport to the efficient German model is not the primary objective. The relationship with WAG will be interesting: there's a strong rumour doing the rounds that WAG are not that happy with the extra £'s ATW have always quoted for any enhancements above the franchise agreement. Arriva started life as a car hire firm that decided there was money to be made from bus deregulation and rail privatisation. DB comes from a different angle, it may not be revolution but evolution. Some managers at ATW may have to learn a different tune, though past experience shows that a turnover at the top is a likely outcome before long - All Change but not immediately.

Provisional SARPA Meeting dates and venues 2010

Please note that venues and dates may be subject to change. Engineering possessions disrupted travel to our 2009 programme quite badly. Any alterations will appear in subsequent Newsletters and our website.

June	5 th	Saturday SARPA	Summer trip depart	Aberystwyth
			on 0514 train.	
July	3 rd	Saturday 1200	Borth	Sea Horse Inn
August	NO MEETING			
September	4 th	Saturday 1200	Tywyn	Tallylyn Railway
October	9 th	Saturday 1145	Aberystwyth	RAFA Club
			Annual General Meeting	
November	2 nd	Tuesday 1840	Caersws	Unicorn Hotel
December	7 th	Tuesday 1900	Welshpool	Pinewood Tavern

Websites

Our website <http://sarpa.info>

Webmaster Angus Eickhoff. **Website host** is mid-wales.net

Other sites of interest:

Arriva Trains Wales

www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/

National Rail Enquiries

www.nationalrail.co.uk/

Train and Bus Information Midlands

www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp

LondonMidland

www.londonmidland.com/index.html

Virgin Trains

www.virgintrains.co.uk/default.aspx

Chiltern Railways

www.chilternrailways.co.uk/

Network Rail

www.networkrail.co.uk/

Railfuture/Railway Development Society

www.railfuture.org.uk/

Cambrian Rail Partnership

www.thecambrianline.co.uk/

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)

www.acorp.uk.com

Wrexham and Shropshire company

www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk/index.html

North Wales Coast Railway

www.nwrail.org.uk/

Circular tour of North Wales by rail

www.penmorfa.com/Cambrian/

Ffestiniog Railway timetable

www.ffestiniograilway.co.uk/timetable.htm

Vale of Rheidol Railway timetable

www.rheidolrailway.co.uk/timetable.htm

Tallylyn Railway timetable

www.tallylyn.co.uk/timetable/2009

Welshpool and Llanfair Railway timetable

www.wlfr.org.uk/timetable.htm

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway

www.whr.co.uk/index.php?pid=51

Fairbourne Railway

www.fairbournerrailway.com/index.htm

Rail Photographs by Richard Jones including many of the modern Cambrian scene
railphotos.demeseo.com/

Useful addresses

Arriva Trains Wales:

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

Network Rail:

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

Newtown Station Travel

The Railway Station, Old Kerry Road, Newtown, Powys SY16 1BP. Tel. 01686 621966
E-mail newtownstation@btclick.com

The Association of Train Operating Companies:

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

Wrexham and Shropshire: Great Central House, Marylebone Station, Melcombe Place, London NW1 1JJ. Tel. 0845 260 5233

London Midland

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

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

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

Virgin Trains

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

Traveline Cymru for all public transport information

www.traveline-cymru.org.uk 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

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

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