

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association



Newsletter No. 51

August 2010



The station with the hump. Aberdovey in the early 1960's, with No.82033 arriving with a down train.

Chairman's Message.....	3
News in Brief.....	4
When the Computer says No.....	8
AUF WIEDERSEHEN Status Quo.....	10
More Cambrian Railways Partnership leaflets.....	12
The view from milepost 61 by the Brigadier.....	13
Network Rail Reports.....	15
Vale of Rheidol Railway upgrade.....	17
SARPA meetings.....	18
Websites.....	19
Useful addresses.....	20
Officers of the Association.....	20

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.

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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.

Chairman's Message

And it's a positive one! No sulking about cuts, in fact the New Westminster government and cuts present new opportunities as do other developments. The takeover of Arriva by Deutsche Bahn should be complete by the end of August, the integration possibilities with Wrexham and Shropshire Railways and Chiltern Railways have long been obvious to us here at SARPA, particularly after the Evergreen 3 project is complete and the end of Virgin Trains Moderation of Competition deal. This of course will not involve any additional public money. Aside from simply having a new corporate master at Penarth House, many are hoping that a new mentality can emerge that doesn't view basics of quality public transport provision as a "stakeholder aspiration" and an opportunity to ask for more public subsidy. I dare any ATW Manager to go to Germany and explain, using the excuses made here the connectational failings at Shrewsbury! Cultural change is desperately needed. Talking of doing things differently down on the Heart of Wales line there is strong lobbying to establish a vertically integrated micro franchise. The Heart of Wales Line Partnership genuinely believes they can show how things can be done better and cheaper with a local focus and integrated approach: things like this must be given a chance. Network Rail has proved itself to be a bloated cost junky and I suspect many will now view the case to do things differently as unanswerable. Likewise the electrification of the Wrexham to Bidston line where Merseyrail believe they can do it for a fraction of Network Rail's costs. Let them try! Tony Burton and Carno Station Action Group could easily supervise a few blokes, a cement mixer and a couple of white vans and Carno would have a station at a tiny fraction of Network Rail's quote. The alternative is nothing and cuts. What is there to be afraid off? Tough choices have been a popular catchphrase in recent years why don't we do things differently to make the right choices!

Mid Wales has one big thing going for it in the chances of some transport improvements in the next five years - it's that the infrastructure works on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth line are nearly complete and mostly paid for or contractually signed up to and will go ahead. It could be seen as wasting taxpayer's money in an age of austerity if the Welshpool double track section and Dovey Junction loop are not utilised and by this we mean by extra trains. In some quarters it has been suggested that the work is to do with improving the punctuality of the existing timetable - this is nonsense as the current ppm figures show! The work is to allow more trains to run and this is where Mid Wales must focus to ensure our line gets an hourly service in 2011, not on orange or brown routes on maps that there's no money to build. We hear that the ERTMS pilot trial is in trouble and badly over budget. Another red herring has been that the loops are to do with the ERTMS trial. If ERTMS fails or is cancelled it doesn't mean that these loops can't be used. The Dovey Junction loop can be integrated into the Absolute Block system controlled by Machynlleth signal box and the Scots have already spent a modest £4.5 million designing RETB version 2. Off the shelf technology is there. No excuses and no unaffordable capital spend. Simple, as the TV Meerkat would say or as Philip Hammond MP the new Transport Secretary has said ***"Were going to have to look at using existing investment, existing assets, more effectively, focusing the spending that is available on maximising the benefits from existing assets"***. To me that makes using the extra capacity on our line a priority rather than an aspiration, and even if a full blown hourly service cannot be funded lets talk sense about laying on 1 or 2 additional trains at times most needed. The glaring gaps are an arrival into Shrewsbury around 0830, a connection to Barmouth from the 1730 from Aberystwyth and a connection to Aberystwyth off the northbound WAG express around 1830.

Committee member and webmaster Angus Eickhoff has done a sterling job putting back copies of our newsletter on our website – see <http://sarpa.info/archive>. Copies are available back to 2002: a look through them shows that a recurrent theme from SARPA is that we have been long aware of the dysfunctional costs of the rail industry since privatisation and have been in the reform camp. We have banged on about this for a very long time, now the coalition Government in Westminster recognises that infrastructure cost are 40% higher than the European average and operational cost are also higher than average. We as passengers have been saying get your house in order for nearly a decade, as this is the root of the often unacceptably high fares, the increased subsidy (and the whinging that goes with it) and dearth of any real investment providing dividends for passengers and the wider economy. The answer is not to increase fares and penalise passengers further for something they never asked for. I make no apology for saying so yet again. The reality is that on the whole rail privatisation faults have been masked by the previous administration's initial willingness to pour more and more public money in, which passengers unfortunately have seen little additional benefit from, an increase in passenger numbers due to external factors which many mistakenly took as a sign that everything was OK within the industry, and the owners of the fragmented industry unwillingly to rock the boat as profits were being made. This bubble has now burst and genuine thought and reform has to be made if we are to have a quality rail network for the future.

Over to Sir Roy McNulty who's heading the government's rail review. He says the choice is between ***'changing the way we operate or else decreasing the size and quality of the network'***. Welcome aboard Sir Ray. In the past we said if you wanted to spend that much public money on the railways you could unleash a genuine investment programme, or if you didn't you could cut the budget and keep the same size railway. Yet again the local rail user group has got the big issue right. There's no real reason why the railway should shrink despite cuts in public money.

Newtown Montgomeryshire July 2010

News in brief

Shrewsbury

Network Rail commissioned the new semaphore signal at the south end of platform 3 on July 3rd: this allows passenger trains to depart southward towards Sutton Bridge Junction enhancing the operational flexibility of the station. Passenger services have been concentrated on the island platform since the end of the 1960's as well as passenger facilities, the Island's two through and two bay platforms being deemed sufficient for the traffic that remained. Recent increases in frequencies, new services and longer formations combined with abortive attempts to make cross platform connections have exposed the reduced layout's weaknesses and the re-use of Platform 3 is something of a cheap attempt to remedy this.

Platform 3 can only be accessed from the island platforms by traversing the subway and going through the ticket barriers and out of the main entrance, turning left and through a narrow door up a set of stairs. An elevator is also available but you have to go right out of the entrance and through some not very obvious doors. Concerns have been expressed about passengers having to make tight connections. The current ticket office occupies what was the main staircase to the platform. Passengers for Aberystwyth

using Shrewsbury station need to be aware that trains can now (and have been seen to) depart from Shrewsbury using Platforms 3,4,5 & 6. It's also possible to depart toward Aberystwyth from Platform 7 but not if the train has come from the Wellington direction.

Until 1950 Shrewsbury had 9 platforms, and then they were renumbered and reduced to 7. Until 1961 there was an overall roof and a footbridge at the south end of the station connecting Platforms 4/5 to 1/2/3. The south facing bays Nos 1 & 2 were only accessible from the Sutton Bridge Junction direction and were retained as sidings until the mid 1980's, No.3 being used for occasional football and other specials. The now unused bays mainly catered for local services to Welshpool, Minsterly, Hereford and the Severn Valley line.

Caersws

Network Rail's profligate spending seems to be justified on "elf and safety" grounds, the wildly inappropriate and no doubt installed at a lot greater cost than an ordinary builder would do metal stockade has been justified as stopping passengers crossing in front of stationary trains off the platform ramp. Between the station's opening in 1863 and the installation of the fencing in 2009 there have been no recorded incidents of any accidents involving passengers crossing in front of trains coming off the ramp.

Aberystwyth

Ceredigion County Council Environmental Health Department has expressed concern at meals being served on the patio area of the Wetherspoon's pub due to problems with pigeons - the area being the old station circulating area in front of the buffer stops.

Powys

The council has outlined its aspirations for improved bus services in the county. They would like to extend the 704 Stagecoach services from Newtown to Brecon to Cardiff and increase the number of buses between Welshpool and Newtown. The current Tanat Valley operated X75 Shrewsbury to Llanidloes service goes up the main A483 road and stops at the villages of Bermule and Berriew with a roughly two hourly frequency, and the Veolia operated 71 service between Welshpool and Newtown travels via Kerry, Sarn, Montgomery, Churchstoke and Forden around half a dozen times a day. Both timetables are dictated by Coleg Powys hour's in Newtown. The hamlet of Caerhowell where Montgomery station was has no public transport at all.

Arriva Trains Wales news and plans

At a recent meeting for Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) Station Adopters held at Chester, information was on offer about ATW's operations and current plans.

The National Stations Improvement Plan, funded by the Government to improve accessibility of stations, will include work at Machynlleth, Welshpool and Shrewsbury (first phase).

Plans for Aberystwyth Station improvement have been revealed by Arriva Trains Wales at a recent ATW station adopters' meeting in Chester. The station name will appear in large letters within the glass frontage, viewed from inside the station as shown here; from the outside it will be seen from behind.



Regarding train services, there will be hourly daytime train services from Aberystwyth by 2011, and there are plans to introduce additional services on the 'Heart of Wales' line. It is intended to enhance the capacity of the line between Shrewsbury and Chester, with faster line speeds and perhaps more frequencies by 2012.

'Challenges This Year' for ATW are seen to include the introduction of ERTMS on the Cambrian; to continue to improve Customer Service and reduce complaints – focus on staff and innovation; to continue to grow the award-winning North/South premium service; to improve communication to passengers during disruptions; to develop further commercial services to Manchester Airport and re-look at Aberystwyth to London service.

Welsh Assembly Government funding of £7.5m for major refurbishment of the Class 158 (seats, carpets, Passenger Information System, lighting, panels, toilets, luggage racks) is planned to start in October. Work has already started on part of the fleet in Cardiff. The investment will take place over 18 months, with the latest stage of work on the trains due to start in December. It includes new seating, luggage areas and toilets, aiming to bring "as new" interiors to old carriages.

An announcement was made on 2nd August by the transport minister Ieuan Wyn Jones: "We hope these refurbishments will get more people out of their cars and on to our trains. There is strong growth in the number of people travelling on train services in Wales and we are investing in these improvements to make people's journeys more comfortable and more enjoyable." Arriva Trains Wales commercial director Mike Bagshaw said it would help deliver "a step change in quality" and benefit millions of passengers travelling on main line routes. The aim is to provide "as new" interiors on

existing carriages. He told BBC Wales the improvements would include power sockets at some seats on longer routes, enabling people to work on laptops during their journey, and extra luggage room. The announcement will also help improve wheelchair access on services.

Asked why the company was receiving funding from the assembly government for the work, he added: "We are a subsidised business, therefore we do require a subsidy from the Welsh Assembly Government."

The investment will involve the company's 24-strong class 158 Sprinter fleet of trains, including routes from south, mid and north Wales. It will also go towards the class 153 Sprinter fleet, where work has already started at Arriva Trains Wales' depot in Canton, Cardiff. The proposal is illustrated on page 11.

Harlech

Harlech station has recently been transformed by a group of retired ladies from Harlech WI, together with local school and college students. Boards are to be put up, with Wales as a theme on one side of the building, and a mural of Harlech Castle and the local legend of Taleisin on the other. Tubs have been planted up, and an old boat has been obtained, and will be planted up with flowers that attract bees. Unfortunately this was damaged by a fire set deliberately by vandals in late July

Railway Herald 227, 21 June

Pont Briwet Bridge

Pont Briwet Bridge, between Llandecwyn and Penrhyndeudraeth, is to be replaced by a new structure, at a cost of £20 million. The bridge is a wooden structure, and dates from the 1860's. At present it only carries light road traffic, but the new bridge will accommodate heavy vehicles, presumably with two lanes. Work is expected to start in 2012.

From Gwynedd County Council news, Summer 2010.

Barmouth

Barmouth Resort Improvement Group (BRIG) has planted flowers in large 'whiskey' type barrels, palm trees and put in place hanging baskets as well as painting some of the seating to match the colour of the planters. The work of BRIG has quickly transformed the station and provides an attractive welcome to visitors – further enhancements are planned for the future.

Train Service Performance

For rail periods 1011, 1012, 1013 and 1101, Arriva Trains Wales' (ATW) Public Performance Measure (PPM) figures were recorded as 95.2 (95.2%), 95.7% (94.9%), 95.6% (95.4%) and 96.5% (95.6%) respectively, the figures shown in brackets are the PPM figures for the corresponding periods of 2009/10.

Year-to-date, PPM is running at 95.8% compared to 95.3% in 2009 and the moving annual average is recorded at 94.9% (prior year 93.2%). This represents a year-on-year improvement of 1.7%.

When the Computer says No

One of the excuses trotted out by ATW why our trains do not connect at Shrewsbury with the trains over the Shrewsbury to Chester line to Holyhead is that they've analyzed the ticket data and there is no demand. However, one only has to look at the fare structure to see why when they press the button on the computer it shows no one buying through tickets from say Chester to Newtown or Wrexham to Aberystwyth.

At £33.20 the only available return ticket from Wrexham to Aberystwyth and vice-versa is a bit on the steep side, and when you consider a 59 minute wait in Shrewsbury is thrown in free in the northbound direction, you could see why people might make alternative arrangements. However, we can exclusively recount the tale of a collaboration project between Aberystwyth University and Glyndwr University in Wrexham. Staff from the two learning establishments regularly travel between the two campuses. Professor Rhys ap Iffridd at Glyndwr buys a North Wales All Zone ticket for £22.00 and has his bus ride up Penglais Hill thrown in as well; he arranges his day so he leaves Aberystwyth at 1730 and catches the Wrexham and Shropshire train with only a 15 minute wait at Shrewsbury. Professor Iffridd ap Rhys from Aberystwyth uses his Cambrian Railcard to reduce the cost of his Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury ticket from £15.00 to £10.00, and then buys an £8.20 return from Shrewsbury to Wrexham. He gets to Wrexham early on the first train from Aberystwyth, which does have a connection and returns earlier than his Wrexham counterpart does. After all who in their right minds will pay £13-£15 more than they need to and wait an hour for a connection?

The industry's LENNON system just counts these journeys at face value, and as ever with rover tickets it just counts the station the ticket was bought from, not destination or route. There must be countless other journeys that don't show on LENNON all over the UK as more and more savvy experienced travellers beat the fares farce system. Many company's including government departments - whom I'm sure you'd agree is very ironic given the DfT's policy of making the customer pay more - all advise staff travelling on business to split tickets to save money.

Whilst onboard ticket inspection and collection is better than it has been in the past, and the barriers at Shrewsbury have helped our line, a fair bit of revenue still leaks, both by deliberate actions and inadvertently. It's a given that the footfall between Aberystwyth and Borth is actually much higher than it is officially, due to the "Borth fare dodger" - with the relatively short journey between the two meaning the conductor can't always get round to everyone, especially when busy, and having to do a full ticket check on departure from Aberystwyth. There are some who deliberately try and avoid paying, plus innocents who have a free ride as well. Whether this is factored in to TraCC's proposal for having an additional stop at Bow St is unknown as the conductor will have even less time to check tickets due to door operation and more passengers - a new station could cause official use to decline! There has been the practice on the coast line of double manning, especially in the high summer months, in an attempt to collect fares. Putting this practice into operation between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth on certain services could well produce dividends. Other fare black holes on our line include the short run from Caersws to Newtown and between Welshpool and Newtown, where days when the Magistrates Court sits bring out people who have "not been sent my travel warrant" when challenged.

Do modern day rail managers have a real knowledge of their product and customers? The endless spreadsheets and printouts at management meetings don't tell the true story. Nor do going on seminars about yield management and health and safety

courses. Maybe if they experienced their product as passengers do they'd understand better- that would be market testing in management speak.



No.44871 and the stock for the Cambrian crosses an up train at Newtown. July 23rd. Photo Gareth Marston.

The Dean Forest Railway: GWR Auto tank No.1450 on a driver experience train, coupled to an LMS goods brake van. Photo Denis Bates.



AUF WIEDERSEHEN Status Quo

Adrian Bailey looks at what we can expect from the brave new world of Deutsche Bahn ownership

Firstly, we must look eastward and southwards towards London to see where the wind is blowing. The existing Head of DB UK happens to be one Andy Hamilton, formerly of Chiltern Trains and founder of Wrexham and Shropshire. It's clear that though the Arriva brand will be retained, the head office for the DB UK directing Sunderland and in turn Cardiff is already in situ and is well documented not to do things the "Arriva way". This has to be good news I'm sure you'd agree. It's not going to be DB Germany, but the course steered looks likely to be different from that of Arriva. Arriva's current crop of senior managers seem unlikely to be chosen leaders.

Secondly, things are improving from London toward Shrewsbury and Mid Wales. Chiltern's not publicly funded Evergreen 3 project will see journey times slashed between Marylebone and Birmingham Moor St by the May 2011 timetable, and this will also benefit Wrexham and Shropshire. If the Network Rail line speed improvements between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury survive the cull they too will shave time off, but the real date to look for is May 2012. Virgin's Moderation of Competition agreement expires at the end of April 2012, and this means that new operators can stop and pick up passengers for London from Wolverhampton, Birmingham New St, International, Coventry etc. Wrexham and Shropshire will no longer have to go round the houses through the West Midlands, but with journey times of around 2hrs 40mins between Marylebone and Shrewsbury possible, will be able to really grow their business. It also makes it more practical for them to run more than the current 4 trains a day. I would be very surprised if they do not aim for a train every 2 hours between Shrewsbury and Marylebone. DB UK will want to see these services prosper, so expect the connecting services operated by ATW into Shrewsbury and Wrexham to be tweaked about. No more missing connections by a few minutes. No more creaking along to New St in a 158 to go Virgin. Wales and the Borders will feed into Wrexham and Shropshire. For the last few decades passengers from the Marches line have changed at Newport for London: maybe they will head north to Shrewsbury soon. After all the financial incentive is to have 100% of the London flow within the group, not shared with Virgin or First Great Western.

It may be that some Wrexham and Shropshire services could run in the paths of existing off peak Wales and Border trains: after all the franchise agreement calls for a roughly hourly service between Shrewsbury and Birmingham. Units saved could be redeployed to strengthen peak hour trains into the midlands or provide resource elsewhere. How this will pan out for through trains from the Cambrian to Birmingham remains to be seen. That both the May 2011 and May 2012 changes of timetable will go past without change seems inconceivable.

Obviously there is a London focus in the above, but WAG is responsible for the Wales and Border franchise. The current relationship with Arriva was likened to a Mexican stand off by a source in the industry. WAG found very shortly after assuming responsibility that the franchise agreement as brokered by the Strategic Rail Authority in London was hopeless in providing the desperately needed improvements for the Welsh rail network. Everyone in Wales was less than impressed, and complaints about Arriva soon flooded in. The trouble was the franchise agreement gave no levers for WAG to pull - first of all to ensure what Arriva was doing was up to standard or provide any improvements. The only way forward was to let Arriva "quote" for improvements. Sources within the industry state that ATW made sure that nothing above the franchise agreement was done without extra WAG money at a level substantially above what it cost ATW to provide. ATW's Standard Pattern Timetable proved not to be a panacea to

all ills that its bid team gave the impression it would be, with many concerns about poor connections that a genuine *Taktfahrplan* would not countenance. ATW's answer is of course that the franchise agreement doesn't actually specify connections. Enough said. Then when infrastructure work was looked at WAG found it was Network Rail and its fantasy book of rail costs that were being quoted. Where is this going? Well suffice to say WAG must be looking forward to a new partner!

Like any new owner DB will go through its new acquisition and look in detail at what it does. Class 150's that can keep time on Cardiff to Holyhead trains and 100mph Class 175 units not properly used may raise an eyebrow. After all DB will want to say to WAG, look we can do it much better than these Arriva people giving you a poor deal. Look how great we are. Speeding up some long distance services and improving connections will not actually cost anything to do. It's widely thought that ATW went overboard in its timetable padding to produce its headline PPM figures. So there's not much risk for DB to unpick the slack schedules a bit. Showing some improvements to rail services without having to splash out public money will no doubt be welcomed by WAG and its reduced budget. Another trick would be to get the regional transport consortia on side through positive thought and action. They too must be sick of hearing – "it will need extra carriages and therefore extra subsidy".

No student of railway matters will be unaware that DB itself and Chiltern/Wrexham and Shropshire have reputations for investing in their business and services without asking the government for more subsidy. How much of a payback time with 8 years left on the franchise they feel they have is another matter. However a clever trick would be to persuade WAG to re let the Wales and Border franchise over a longer length in return for private sector investment, and then hope you're better placed than the competition to win it. Likewise with Chiltern's experience of dabbling in infrastructure and Network Rail fantasy costs it could be an integrated package or scheme specific. Extensions beyond 2018 in return for improvements may be on the cards.



ATW's proposal for Class 158 refurbishment.

More Cambrian Railways Partnership leaflets

Mr. Urdd has reinforced his 'green' principles by helping the Cambrian Railways Partnership (CRP) launch new linear walking guides that are easily accessible by train and bus in Mid and North Wales. The launch of the Cambrian Railways Seaside Strolls and TrawsCambrian Trailways took place at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Llanerchaeron on 1 June when Mr. Urdd commented 'After a busy week at the 'Steddffod this is a fantastic way to keep fit and healthy while enjoying some of the best scenery in Wales without having to use the car.'

The *Cambrian Railways Seaside Strolls* promote travel by train to the best beaches on the Cambrian Coast Line and in particular three linear walks along the shoreline between railway stations:

1. Aberdyfi – Tywyn
2. Llanaber – Talybont
3. Abererch – Pwllheli

Working with the Welsh Assembly Government and the TrawsCambria network the CRP have developed the TrawsCambrian Trailways to promote travel by bus and train to two of the area's best known walking routes – The Mawddach Trail between Dolgellau and Barmouth and a section of the Ceredigion Coastal Path between Blaenplwyf and Aberystwyth.

Included on the leaflets is a map of each route, produced by well known author Laurence Main, along with sources of public transport information and details of other initiatives developed by the CRP to promote public transport use and links to local attractions and activities. The new leaflets, including the existing Cambrian Trailways, are available for free download from www.thecambrianline.co.uk and from local Tourist Information Centres and Staffed Railway Stations.



[The Urdd](#) is a movement established in 1922 to give children and young people the chance to learn and socialise through the medium of Welsh. Sixteen development officers work all over Wales to ensure that the Urdd offers a full programme of activities for children and young people.

Also recently published are two leaflets in a new series, *TrawsCambrian Trailways*. This time the link is with the TrawsCambria and other bus services. Ironically No.1 is along the former Cambrian line between Morfa Mawddach (formerly Barmouth Junction) and Dolgellau. No.2 covers the Ceredigion coastal path between Aberystwyth and Blaenplwyf.

TrawsCambrian Trailways

No.1 Dolgellau - Barmouth

THE MAWDDACH TRAIL

Distance: 9.25 miles Type: Easy Time: 4-6 hours

The TrawsCambrian Trailways are a series of linear walks along well known and established walking routes in the Mid Wales area that are easily accessible via the Cambrian rail and TrawsCambria bus networks. The Trailways promote car free days out that really make the most of the wonderful, varied scenery and wildlife this unique part of the world has to offer.

The view from Milepost 61 with the Brigadier

A few days in the big smoke visiting one's cousin and looking up old chums in the regimental club brought home some realities about our nation's failings. London and the area immediately around it have, in comparison with the rest of the UK, something like a decent public transport network, though "Londoners" - and more of these later - desperately complain about it, mainly as the system is swamped by sheer numbers. Try a bus once a week on market day or a 2 car Pacer DMU in the morning peak – you don't know you're born! However my observations of the population: their skin colour, language and customs soon confirmed that most of these "Londoners" were not born in the UK of indigenous stock. I have a smattering of many languages. It's amazing in how many tongues I can use the phrase "disperse to your homes immediately or we will shoot". Many of these tongues were heard and more. There were all sorts, even more than the shades of stain on an ATW Class 158's carpet! How ironic it is that we provide public transport for Johnny Foreigner so he can work in our capital city yet stick two fingers up at our own people all over the rest of the country. This will probably come as a shock to many, but only 1 in 9 of the UK's population actually lives in London; indeed 70% of us live outside of London and the dear Home Counties. Yet it is always assumed that no one lives anywhere else in any numbers to justify that old chestnut the business case for investment.

No more is this us and them attitude seen than in the overcrowding crisis on rails. First they pretended it didn't exist, and then when they begrudgingly acknowledged its existence they failed to do anything about it. Despite the announcements from the previous administration, when the new transport minister wielded the axe on the new carriages promised it was soon discovered that only London and South East had actually had anything in any quantity ordered and whilst these will be delivered the rest of us lose out. There's even the sickening sight of Pendolino carriages being put in store. Even my Siamese cat Dusty would have trouble squeezing onto a Northern Rail Pacer in the Manchester peak, but this matters not as it is believed you can travel around by motor vehicle quite comfortably in the provinces. Back in 1830 when after being shocked at the death of William Huskisson MP, the rest of the Tory southern dignitaries including the Duke of Wellington arrived in Manchester for the grand opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway, the locals greeted them with a hail of bricks and stones. Perhaps a 170 year old grudge underpins the discrimination. Still from the new government came a London size fits all answer. With growth stalled on Network South East lines into London during the recession – note not gone into decline - the clever people in the big smoke have decided that a return to growth will not happen in the short term and have in their usual style predicted a date in the future when this will occur safely justifying doing nothing today. Have they forgotten that rail use elsewhere in the UK has continued to grow through the recession or did they simply not realise anyway? Just as England are never going to win the football World Cup with Premiership clubs acting against the wider interest of International footballing success, our nation's economy will continue to slip as long as we wear our London goggles and fail to get the economy of our regions moving by having a quality public transport and rail network for all. The new government in Westminster believes that the private sector will lead us out of recession with new job creation. Where will they be and how will people get to work? They're unlikely to be in new out of town developments that can only be accessed by car. Regional City Centres? With petrol prices on an ever upward curve and road congestion severe will a 30 plus year old 2 car Pacer be able to lead us out of recession?

Readers will be glad to hear that the war on the motorist is not over - at least not in our little village. Our neighbours the Wilshaw's are the devil's representatives on earth: he is an Area Sales Director with company car, she drives a Chelsea tractor and there now grown up children both have their own older smaller cars, even though the daughter is at University and will privately admit it's an encumbrance not a help in a inner city. He is forever complaining about the cost of motoring and doesn't have a new car as often as he used to. The company he works for is struggling and its fortunes seem linked to his driving habits - the more he drives the less success it has. Things have become so bad with a daughter at university that Mrs W has had to take part time job at the village tea rooms. Despite it being a mere 500 yards away she of course drives the Chelsea Tractor there and parks it so badly I've seen tourists drive on as they can't park. I am immensely proud of the village school's walking train led by Mrs Trellis granddaughter - they can take cover in the ditch next to the hedge as professionally as any soldier when Mrs W drives past, the only thing missing is returning small arms fire! However Mrs W leaves her kitchen window open - there being no crime in our small village, well not until recently. Dusty has perfected the technique of infiltrating the Wilshaw's house in pursuit of food whilst they are away. I always wait for the scream when Mrs W returns: the highlight of the day. Of course the reason why Dusty would struggle to squeeze onto a Northern Rail Pacer is that she is a very fat cat. The Wilshaw's are none the wiser and Dusty sits on the fence licking her paws and wiping her chops looking on with disdain at the 4 cars clogging the drive and road outside waiting on the takeaway delivery van with the replacement food. Ahmed is also in the habit of leaving the van door open.....



West Somerset Railway, Minehead. June 2010: the ex-Pwllheli turntable restored and in shiny condition in its own viewing area. Demonstrations are done during high summer. Photo: Gareth Marston.

Network Rail reports

ERTMS

The European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) was tested on the Cambrian line (between Pwllheli and Harlech) in late February. The test run was vital to determine the readiness of the new system and enabled the required testing, driver familiarisation and safety case information to be gathered prior to full commissioning.

Network Rail does not compromise on safety and it is paramount that we achieve an optimum level of reliability before launching the system for passenger use.

During the course of the test run, we were concerned over the Driver-Machine Interface (DMI) panel. Specifically, the DMI panel washes out in bright sunlight. This has been identified as a unique problem as the type of trains used on this line – Class 158 – is comparatively smaller than the type used in Continental Europe.

We are now working with our manufacturer to explore a long-term solution that will prevent the driver-machine interface panel from washing out under direct sunlight.

While this work is carried out, we have also achieved 98.2% against the scope of work we set out to do for this scheme. We have achieved –

1. 22 out of a total of 24 Class 158 trains fitted with ERTMS
2. 3 Class 97 locomotives fitted with ERTMS to provide a piloting service
3. Completed installation of all on-track equipment, including:
 - a. 386 balises
 - b. 114 axle counter heads
 - c. 13 REBs
 - d. 15 LOCs
 - e. Upgrade of 4 Level Crossings
 - f. Migration of 100+ lineside telephones to the new FTN
 - g. Training simulators for drivers and signallers
 - h. Installation and commissioning of the GSM-R network for Voice and Data communication with the trains
 - i. Installation of the Fixed Telecom Network (FTN) which links lineside equipment to the signalling centre via fibre optic link
4. 2 out of 16 trains operating under Level 0
5. Signalling centre at Machynlleth completed and ready for operation
6. Eight signallers qualified with ERTMS certification
7. Five train drivers qualified with ERTMS certification

Cambrian Line Enhancements

The One Train per Hour Project works are complete, with the exception of the installations, which will be undertaken in conjunction with ERTMS commissioning.

Talerddig: The plain line renewal and recanting work is complete. The new switches and crossings(S&C) have been delivered to site ready for installation during ERTMS commissioning.

Welshpool: The new loop has been installed except for the S&C which will be installed during ERTMS commissioning.

Dovey Jcn: All the station works and the loop are complete.

Track Work items

Track Renewals on the area as follows: A steel sleeper relay is currently being delivered on the 80 mph section of line between Newtown and Caersws.

Signalling Works

A project has recently been completed on Shrewsbury Platform 3 to enable signalled moves onto the Hereford and Cambrian Routes. This has involved the installation of a “new” semaphore signal, controlled by Severn Bridge Signalbox. The benefits of these works are to offer greater capacity and operational movement to the station area.

Structures work

Significant works on Barmouth Bridge are planned for next year. These works are currently being scoped and designed. The opportunity will be made to replace any baulk timbers and strengthen track assets where applicable.

Aberdovey Walls

Work to repair the walls has started – the work is being delivered by Gwynedd CC and is funded by Network Rail.

National Helpline

Our National Helpline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. We are here to answer your questions or help with any problems caused by the railway.

Contacting the National Helpline:

The easiest way to contact us is by telephone on 08457 11 41 41. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, please dial 18001 followed by 08457 11 41 41 from your textphone to activate the Typetalk facility.

Or you can use the email form from our website.



The Editor spent some time in May as a commuter into Warsaw. The pioneer Class 66 was observed on a couple of occasions with a train of open wagons.

Vale of Rheidol Railway upgrade

The Vale of Rheidol Railway is about to embark on a £1.1 million investment programme, which will start this summer. The funding includes £300,000 from the Welsh Assembly Government. This enables the railway to access £600,000 from the Phyllis Rampton Narrow Gauge Railway Trust*, with the remaining money coming from the railway itself.

The plans include the construction of a 1,800 sq.metre workshop for the restoration of its historical collection of rolling stock (40 engines and 14 carriages). It will provide training and skills development, with the aim of becoming a training centre for apprentices. Eight existing jobs will be safeguarded, and four more engineering posts, and four other jobs on the railway, will be provided. It is hoped that a range of facilities including a museum, shops and a café will also be provided.

The site, which is on a former carpark on the south side of the line, near the existing engine and carriage shed (the old standard gauge steam shed), has been partly provided by Ceredigion County Council.

From *Cambrian News*, 1st July 2010

* The Trust is described online at Wikipedia as:

The Phyllis Rampton Narrow Gauge Railway Trust is a British charity collecting rare narrow gauge locomotives from around the world. It is registered with the British Charity Commission as 292240 under the classification of "Education/Training Environment/Conservation/Heritage". The Trust is also the 100% shareholder of the Vale of Rheidol Railway in Wales.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phyllis_Rampton_Trust



One of the engines currently at Aberystwyth, W.G. Bagnall's 1928 0-4-4T OC 2 ft (610 mm) 18BG, ex Sha Tau Kok Railway and Victorias Milling Co., Negros Occidental. Photo to Denis Bates.



Signals from the past.
The up starter at Aberdovey
(as it then was) in the 1960's.
The signal dates from Cambrian
Railways days. Photo Denis
Bates.

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.

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:

A useful alternative to the National Rail Enquiries site
traintimes.org.uk/

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

Talyllyn Railway timetable

www.talyllyn.co.uk/timetable/2009

Welshpool and Llanfair Railway timetable

www.wllr.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. Fax. 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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