

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association



Newsletter
No. 64
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STOP PRESS! The Coast Line reopens.



Double track on the Cambrian main line. The down side of the Welshpool dynamic loop reopened to traffic on the 16th May. 158841 is seen here having crossed the Severn by Cilcewydd Mill on the 20th May leading the 1409 BHM INTL to Aberystwyth & Harlech. Photograph: Gareth Marston.

Chairman's Message.....	2
The Coast Line Re-opens!.....	3
News in Brief.....	4
Luck of the Northern Irish.....	6
Palmerston returns to the Vale of Rheidol.....	7
The Aberystwyth to Carmarthen Line.....	9
Forward thinking with Adrian Bailey.....	13
The Cambrian Railways and the start of World War 1.....	15
The view from Milepost 62 with the Brigadier.....	18
Cemmaes Road Signalbox - reminiscence with Alun Rees.....	20
Improved service on the Heart of Wales Line.....	22
SARPA meetings.....	22
Websites.....	23
Useful addresses.....	24
Officers of the Association.....	24

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 and its Officers 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 2014) £8.00 per annum for individuals and for organisations. Please make any cheques payable to SARPA. Donations are of course welcome.

- SARPA will lobby for better rail services.
- Act as a watchdog to safeguard the lines future.
- Meet in public once a month.
- All members will receive our quarterly Newsletter free of charge.
- Members with access to e-mail can be included in our electronic network if they so desire.

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

Please send cheques, payable to SARPA, to:

SARPA Membership Secretary: 23 High Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7JP. Make sure to include full name, address and telephone number and also e-mail address if you wish to become part of our electronic network.

Chairman's Message

Here at SARPA, we were interested to catch sight recently of a Network Rail (NR) document from April this year, entitled "Welsh Route Study".

Essentially this sets out various ideas and aspirations for the railway within Wales as far ahead as 2043. Whilst it's nice to know that at least somebody is taking the long view, it would appear that others have yet to come around to this way of thinking. Under the heading "Stakeholder Aspirations; Welsh Government" it merely says "To be confirmed"!

This is less than encouraging, and rather indicates that the Welsh Government has yet to get its collective head around the idea of how rail transport will fit into a vision for Wales over the next 30 years.

To be fair to NR, they have done quite a good job examining the potential development of passenger services over the period, and in doing so will hopefully avoid the pitfalls which have beset the Wales and Borders Franchise since 2003, with its mistaken assumption of no growth. The result is quite a bullish forecast on the passenger side. Good news.

The Welsh Route Study then moves on to examine the prospects for freight and rather astonishingly, indicates no growth in the period examined. In this respect it is in danger of suffering from the failings which befell the passenger franchise, the consequences of which we have had to live with since 2003.

Now, any glance at a major road will indicate that there is no shortage of freight transport about, and those involved with rail planning should consider how the railway might grab a slice of this. The mantra we hear from government is "growth" and presumably, those running businesses will think the same, so to expect rail freight to stand still for the next 30 years is just nonsense.

The logistics industry has margins which are as low as 3 per cent, sometimes even less. This is something which the rail industry would do well to contemplate, though to bear fruit, the outcome should be offered more in the spirit of co-operation than competition. Given the low margins, there is plenty that the rail industry could offer the distribution sector if the investment is targeted in the right way, so growth is indeed possible.

Failure to make adequate investment in railway infrastructure for the freight sector on the grounds of no growth has the potential to impact the passenger railway in a negative way. It may already be

doing so. Close to home, we are concerned that the dedicated freight road through Shrewsbury station, currently out of use, will be lifted rather than repaired. This will lead to operational inconvenience and potential delay in a station which is becoming increasingly busy. Also, we understand there have been instances of goods trains along the Marches Route delaying passenger services owing to the lack of sufficiently long freight loops.

If this is already happening now, there will be more pitfalls for the future. If the freight business cannot expand because of insufficient investment, that is an opportunity lost. If it expands anyway without extra money for new infrastructure, the impact will be serious delays for all. Network Rail needs to take a closer look here with a more holistic view of the way the railway will develop. Expecting “no growth” in the freight sector seems quite a good way to repeat past errors with the Welsh passenger franchise. Get it right this time.

Angus Eickhoff
Llidiart Wood,
Welshpool,
August 2014

The Coast Line Reopens!

Monday, 1st September, saw the coast line formally re-opened by Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas, in time for the new school year. The official train was the 0857 from Machynlleth to Pwllheli. In addition to normal passengers, it picked up guests for the event at Machynlleth (Newsletter Editor Denis Bates and Committee Member Robert Knight), and stations and halts along the line. Decorated stations and halts included Llandanwg. The reopening ceremony was performed at the new Llandecwyn Halt, where Lord Thomas unveiled a commemorating the new bridge and the reopening of the line, before the arrival of the train. The platform party here joined the train for the run to Pwllheli, joined by further groups at Penrhyndeudraeth, Porthmadog and Criccieth.

For the autumn, local fares on the line are to be reduced by 30% until December 13th.

Left: Decorations at Llandanwg Halt.



Below: The 0857 after arrival at Pwllheli. Among the guest passengers were a group of local Brownies, and a couple who had clearly been waiting a long time for the train!



Photographs: Denis Bates



News in brief

Forden

Work is drawing to a close in closing the level crossing as the new road has progressed at pace to access the few buildings the level crossing road served. Sources in Network Rail confirm that instead of slowing to 40mph trains will be able to come through at 80 mph, potentially shaving 2 minutes off journey times. It is understood that this is critical to running more frequent trains reliably.

Caersws

Work is progressing on the back packer hostel in the station building.

Machynlleth

The 1950's signal box at the end of UP platform, decommissioned following ETCS, has been demolished. At Machynlleth, SARPA members have commented on the site for the new DDA compliant passenger footbridge being marked out. It appears that the investment, having been made on the back of the DDA, offers the opportunity for the railway to do other things than just carry passengers. All without having to bear the cost of the infrastructure.

Shrewsbury to Chester

The proposed extra trains on the Cambrian have not met with universal acclaim as ATW have confirmed that they are looking at cutting two services on the line to find a spare DMU. The current 0700 Shrewsbury to Wrexham and 0749 Wrexham to BHM INTL would be withdrawn with the unit instead forming the 0625 Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and consequential diagrams. The current Welsh Government funded express which leaves Wrexham @ 0732 would have additional calls at Ruabon, Chirk and Gobowen added but users on the line point out that this will then leave a 6 hour gap between through trains to Birmingham. Users are also up in arms about the Welsh Government proposal to run an hourly service between Cardiff and Holyhead and point out that the spasmodic through traffic usage on the current 9 trains a day demonstrates that it's a thin market and that the overwhelming choice of destinations for through services off their line are for the major cities of the North West, West Midlands and London and not Cardiff.

Arriva Cross Country passengers get cross

An experiment with buyers of advanced purchase tickets being able to make reservations on trains up to 10 minutes before departure has not gone down well with customers. With the Voyager units having electronic reservations a seemingly free seat can be occupied by a passenger at Station A and then in mid journey be reserved unbeknown to the occupant and then when the reserving passenger gets on at Station B looking for their seat confrontation and confusion ensues. This cack system has been defended by Arriva as being in their franchise agreement and the greatest innovation since sliced bread. Furthermore passengers are apparently expected to spend their journey checking to see if their seat suddenly becomes reserved! Arriva of course took over the franchise with no investment in extra carriages planned, meanwhile profits from the UK operations of Deutsche Bahn help fund new and extra carriages for the volk back in the fatherland who don't have to put up with this nonsense.

Subsidy unfairly allocated against rural railways?

That's the conclusion of a PTEG Report published in July. The convoluted railway finances of Network Rail apparently spread the cost of all investment and maintenance spend on the basis of train Km's worked. However it is pointed out that a 2 car lightweight DMU travelling at relatively slow speeds causes a fraction of the wear and tear of a full length InterCity train at high speed or a thousand tonne freight train, but for accounting purposes all trains have the same cost per Km meaning that maintenance costs that should be born by other services are loaded onto Regional services. Furthermore all enhancements – investment to you and me – are allocated by this method nationally despite that fact that in 2011/2012 80% of the expenditure was in London and the South East meaning that the cost of improvements for well heeled London commuters are loaded onto the cost base for Regional users. PTEG calculates that a fairer distribution of costs would see the subsidy allocated against regional train fall by half.

The full report can be seen at <http://pteg.net/>

SARPA has always been sceptical about where the supposed huge sums of subsidy going into the rural railway given the low level of actual activity in terms of infrastructure spend and trains run was actually going. Now it appears it's an accounting sleight of hand and not a real cost. The Office of Rail Regulator suggests that ATW (including Network Rail costs) is 69% dependent on subsidy using the current methodology – this has always caused sucking of teeth about investment but the real figure using a fairer accounting method is much lower.

December 2014 timetable change

The ATW Consultation is out showing no changes on the Cambrian once more. However the 0514 from Aberystwyth will join up at Shrewsbury with a 0640 service from Crewe going forward at 0731 as six coaches to Birmingham on weekdays - a welcome improvement for Shropshire commuters and early morning long distance travellers from Mid Wales. However in order to accommodate this move the train from Aberystwyth will have to occupy Platform 4 for the best part of half an hour: though timetabled to arrive at 0711, in practice it's often there at 0705 most mornings. This adds further to the Chairman's comments regarding capacity through Shrewsbury station!

Sid Docker

With great sadness we report the death of long term member Sid Docker. Sid, who lived in Llanidloes, was 92. He was a lifelong rail supporter and enthusiast. His son, Mike, who lives in Nantwich, has inherited his father's enthusiasm. Living on the Crewe - Shrewsbury line he is a member of our sister association CASPA.

West Coast Railways

West Coast Railways have announced they've given Hitachi a contract to install ETCS in two of their Class 37's, so we could have charters back on the line by next summer.

Vale of Rheidol Railway

The Vale of Rheidol is reporting a big increase in passenger numbers this year. Overall revenue in July was up by one third on last year, and over three quarters up on 2012. The first evening excursion on Wednesday 30th July was the busiest run since privatisation.

The shop at Aberystwyth has seen a large upturn in revenue, with new product ranges, including a wide range of railway books. A new shop has been opened at Devil's Bridge.

LUCK OF THE NORTHERN IRISH

Private Eye (No.1372, 8 August - 21 August 2014)

In its inimitable style, *Private Eye* recently published an article, by a “Dr B Ching”, on the different rail systems of Great Britain and Northern Ireland - comparing the former unfavourably with the latter. That of GB is of course the current franchised system; Northern Ireland Railways is a “normal railway” run by a single board with permanent control of tracks, trains and services, and its first duty is to serve the public rather than the shareholders.

Over the past decade, NI passenger numbers have risen by more than 90% (GB 57%). Even in the last year they rose by 15% (GB 6%). NIR's train fleet, apart from the Dublin-Belfast trains, which are shared with Irish Railways, has been entirely renewed in the last nine years.



The last generation of steam locomotives built for Irish railways. 0-6-4T Lough Erne was built by Beyer Peacock for the Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway. After the closure of that line, it was bought by the Ulster Transport Authority (the predecessor of the present Northern Ireland Railways), and used for shunting at York Road, Belfast. Now at Whitehead in the care of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland, it is currently out of use. Photograph: Denis Bates

PUBLIC MEETING

On

Tuesday 11th November 2014 at 7.30pm

At Gobowen Church Hall, Gobowen, Shropshire

Featuring Guest speaker

Paul Salveson MBE

**Rail Commentator, Passenger Focus, founder of Association of
Community Rail Partnerships, ex Northern Rail and author of
'Railpolitik – bringing railways back to communities'**

Palmerston returns to the Vale of Rheidol

The Vale of Rheidol Railway is set to host the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways' No.4 Palmerston for two weekends during September this year. Palmerston was a regular sight on the Vale of Rheidol during the Great War, and its visit is a poignant reminder of the conflict's centenary. Palmerston will be the star of two unique and unforgettable weekends, 20th and 21st and 27th and 28th September when it will head eight specials workings from Aberystwyth to Devil's Bridge.

Palmerston first visited the Vale of Rheidol in July 1912 and was again hired in 1913 to cater for additional traffic generated by the opening of a large Territorial Army camp at Lovesgrove, near Capel Bangor and other army camps near Devil's Bridge. Palmerston became a regular sight in 1914 and '15 when it was again hired to assist with vast increase of timber traffic over the line, the timber being used as pit props and duck boards to support the war effort.

Palmerston's war service on the VoR has become local legend. However, only four photographs are known to exist. The Vale of Rheidol Railway is working with Cliff Thomas of Railway Magazine to uncover more photos of the diminutive loco working hard on the VoR. We would be grateful if any readers with photographs could get in touch with the Vale of Rheidol via telephone on 01970 625 819 or via email at info@rheidolrailway.co.uk, or contact Cliff Thomas via email at cliffstomas@aol.com.

Palmerston again returned in 1921 and '22 to cover for Vale of Rheidol locos coming out of traffic for overhaul. After being absorbed by the Great Western Railway, the Vale of Rheidol sought to hire Palmerston again in 1923 – however, the request was declined due to loco shortages on the Ffestiniog and newly completed Welsh Highland Railway.

Now the loco is to head the 12:15 and 15:45 services on the weekends of 20th-21st and 27th-28th September. The loco will also appear at two photo charters during the visit, with part of the revenue raised going to support the fund to rebuild sister F&WHR locomotive Welsh Pony in time for its 150th birthday in 2017. These photo charters are scheduled for 10th and 11th of September. Contact the Vale of Rheidol on 01970 62 5 819 or at info@rheidolrailway.co.uk for more details.

The locomotive moved to Aberystwyth in late June, and on the 26th June carried out a light engine test run to Devil's Bridge after the regular service trains had finished for the day. A loaded test run was made on the 1st July, with two coaches and the four-wheel brake van. Coupling adaptors were used, and modifications to enable the engine to operate with the air braking system of the VofR stock.



Palmerston outside the new shed on the 23rd July, while No.8 passes on the 1030 to Devil's Bridge. Photograph: Denis Bates.

A brief description of highlights follows (all departures listed from Aberystwyth, for Devil's Bridge).

Saturday, 20th September:

10:30: Full length Great Western Railway era vintage train hauled by No.8 "Llywelyn".

12:15: Midday excursion train hauled by Palmerston.

14:00: Rheidol Superpower - full length train hauled by No.9 "Prince of Wales" and No.8 "Llywelyn".

15:45: Afternoon excursion train hauled by Palmerston.

Sunday, 21st September:

10:30: Full length service train hauled by No.9 "Prince of Wales".

12:15: Midday excursion train hauled by Palmerston.

14:00: Rheidol Superpower - full length train hauled by No.9 "Prince of Wales" and No.8 "Llywelyn".

15:45: Afternoon excursion train hauled by Palmerston.

Saturday, 27th September:

10:30: Full length Great Western Railway era vintage train hauled by No.8 "Llywelyn".

12:15: Midday excursion train hauled by Palmerston.

14:00: Rheidol Superpower - full length train hauled by No.9 "Prince of Wales" and No.8 "Llywelyn".

15:45: Afternoon excursion train hauled by Palmerston.

Sunday, 28th September:

10:30: Full length service train hauled by No.9 "Prince of Wales".

12:15: Midday excursion train hauled by Palmerston.

14:00: Rheidol Superpower - full length train hauled by No.9 "Prince of Wales" and No.8 "Llywelyn".

15:45: Afternoon excursion train doubleheaded by Palmerston and another mystery loco.

BOOKING:

Three tiers of tickets are available on 20th, 21st, 27th and 28th September:

Tier 1: Palmerston Rover - Adult, £40.00 per person, Child, £12.00 per person.

Tier 1 entitles the holder to travel on one pre-booked Palmerston Excursion and unlimited standard class travel on all other services on the weekend specified at purchase. Palmerston Rovers must be booked in advance.

Tier 2: Weekend Rover - Adult, £30.00 per person, Child, £10.00 per person.

Tier 2 entitled the holder to unlimited standard class travel on all services except Palmerston Excursions on the weekend specified at purchase.

Tier 3: Day Rover - Adult, £20.00 per person, Child, £8.00 per person.

Tier 3 entitles the holder to unlimited standard class travel on all services except Palmerston Excursions on the day specified at purchase.

Book online at www.rheidolrailway.co.uk or telephone 01970 625 819 for further details.



The Aberystwyth to Carmarthen Line

This article is based on the speech made by Simon Thomas, Mid and West AM in a debate led by the Assembly Member in the Senedd Chamber: Build It and They Will Come? and on an article for the Daily Post newspaper.

The Economy, Science and Transport Minister met in March with a number of groups involved with the railways in mid Wales, around the Heart of Wales and the Cambrian lines, to see what we can do to develop our railways in Wales. This is the line that we have left after the Beeching closures, of course, but I want to look at what we can do to re-open what was once a very important line from Carmarthen to Aberystwyth. I do so because it is entirely within my region, but also by putting it in the context of improvements and re-establishing connections that would create a figure of eight of railways across Wales, including re-opening the Afonwen to Bangor railway and improvements around the line in the Swansea area.

The Carmarthen to Aberystwyth line is still in living memory. It was finally closed to freight, namely milk transportation, in 1973, almost a century after it was first opened. For those interested, the track ran from Carmarthen, through Bronwydd and Cynwyl Elfed, to Pencader through a long tunnel, to Llanybydder and Lampeter, and then along the Teifi valley through Tregaron and Strata Florida before crossing to the Ystwyth valley and Trawsgoed and then on to Aberystwyth—following the old Roman way. These days, much of the line from Aberystwyth is the Taith Ystwyth cycle path, which is very pleasant indeed, although I have not cycled its length yet.

Over the years, many have tried to restore the line as a heritage railway, but, since 2000, the debate and the call for re-opening the line between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth have intensified. Recently, a campaign group called Traws Link Cymru was established to work towards the re-opening of this connection, and the auxiliary connection to Bangor. I am no civil engineer and I take no great interest in trains in particular, so my only interest here is to identify the possibilities of opening rural west Wales to modern transportation and to see exciting developments that could strengthen the economy considerably. The same arguments were made for the re-opening of the Ebbw Vale line and for a Metro service for Cardiff and the Valleys.

Therefore, I will not specify a route that this line should take, but it is worth discussing the options. Those promoting Traws Link Cymru suggest using much of the old line, which is still in place, with a new section from Alltwalis to Carmarthen and purposeful re-location in other areas. We could then have stations for Llandysul/Pencader, Llanybydder, Lampeter, Tregaron, Llanilar and Llanfarian, then commuting into Aberystwyth. That would involve a journey of approximately an hour and a half between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen, which compares favourably with the hour and a quarter that it takes by car, and the two hours—as I well know—by bus. Others would favour re-looking at the engineering in its entirety, proposing a light rail system—the kind that allows trains to go off the tracks and run on wheels rather than on a traditional track. That would possibly mean less engineering work. What we now have, certainly, is the technology and engineering that was not available to the Victorians, therefore, actually opening such a line would not create an engineering problem.

The other question, of course is the usage and the cost. I am in no doubt that people would use this line. It would become a crucial link between north and south Wales, and from west Wales to Swansea and Cardiff. 55,000 people live along the proposed route between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth, which compares with the 50,000—a little less—who live on the route from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury. Not only is that line still open, but it is increasing in terms of its usage. With the growth of Carmarthen and Aberystwyth as work and economic centres—and Plaid Cymru wants to see more focus on that—there is no doubt that the line would attract people in their hundreds of thousands. Many people would use it to commute, to go to hospitals, to go shopping and as part of the north-south network. Many others would use it for tourism purposes, I am sure. It would even provide an opportunity to move a few Mansel Davies lorries from our roads to our rails.

The cost, it is true to say, would be a challenge. Campaigners turn for inspiration to Scotland, where a new line is being built for the Borders region which is 31 miles long and will cost something

like £11 million per mile. That would mean that the cost of constructing a similar line from Carmarthen to Aberystwyth would be £650 million at most. That is, of course, a significant amount of money, but different engineering proposals could bring the cost down. If you look at this in the context of closing the gap between Criccieth and Bangor, the now announced hourly service on the Cambrian line, improvements to the Heart of Wales line, and innovations such as Bwcabus for rural bus links, what you have is a truly national network that would offer real options to travel without a car across most of Wales.

In addition to that, you would have a scheme that will create jobs and skills in west Wales, in one of the most economically disadvantaged areas in Europe. It would provide opportunities for local apprenticeships, skills in colleges and local procurement for businesses over a long period. Therefore, investment of more than £0.5 billion to link these two important towns would do more to keep the Welsh language alive in the counties of Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion than any language strategy or any taskforce, however excellent they may be.

As my colleague Ceredigion AM Elin Jones pointed out during the debate, this railway line, if developed, will bring together three university towns. Public transport is important in the context of students and university development. It is a big scheme and it is exciting as well. It is a plan for the twenty-first century for the rural west. We often discuss links from south to north Wales in the context of the corridor to the east by rail or by the A470. It is important that we discuss the links from north to south Wales in the context of west Wales. This debate relates to the realistic idea that we must look seriously at the feasibility of the infrastructure and the funding for this rail link.

We should also fight for this money. At present, according to Network Rail's projections, Wales will have 3% of Network Rail's infrastructure expenditure over the ensuing period, which is far less than our allocation through the Barnett formula that decides on the money that comes to Wales from the UK Treasury. If we had 5%, in line with the Barnett formula this would give us an additional £135 million a year.

If we had a Barnett consequential for HS2 expenditure, that would give us an additional £1.9 billion, which would be more than enough to not only build this line, but to address the issue in terms of Bangor. Even with the electrification of the line to Swansea and the Metro, we would still be spending less than our fair share of railway expenditure here in Wales. It is about time that this changed, and what better scheme than a railway that opens up the west of Wales.

My west Wales colleague Carmarthen East and Dinefwr MP Jonathan Edwards launched a campaign at the beginning of August to secure a fair share for Wales from spending on the England-only High Speed Rail (HS2) project. More details are here <http://www.getwalesontrack.org/>

Plaid Cymru's consultation paper on transport post 2016 highlights the need for a real feasibility study on re-opening the line.

What I am looking for is a sense of imagination and vision that west Wales could again have a proper rail service. The first task of any Government that takes public transport seriously must be to ensure that the route between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth is treated as a transport corridor of national importance, with regular coach services. However, for the medium term, it means committing to a proper feasibility study on the reinstatement of a rail link between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen, which is a piece of work that is well suited to the next round of EU structural funds

When the line was taken up the Teifi valley and across Cors Caron, or Tregaron bog, it was a kind of echo of the folk stories of the devil pulling down overnight new churches being built. The navvies found that they could not get across the bog without their day's work sinking and disappearing. Some bright spark had an idea, inspired perhaps by the landscape around and some considerable native ingenuity. The line was built, resting on tons and tons of sheep fleeces, packed tightly together. It floats, if you will, across the bog. It certainly trod more lightly than any road. It is that kind of ingenuity, vision, character and determination that we will need if we are ever to see a rail link between these two vital Welsh towns again. I believe that we have that vision and capability. I believe that we have the determination to see it through. What we need now is for the Minister to at least take seriously the work on building a feasibility study and case for funding.

Speaking against the closure of this line in 1966, Lord Elystan Morgan said that reversing the closure would be 'an opportunity to indulge in a bold social, and Socialist experiment'.

I am sure that that vision appeals to the present Transport Minister.

I live in Aberystwyth. I represent a region in the National Assembly that stretches from Aberdaron to St David's. I am a Plaid Cymru elected politician: when we were in government we chose the name "Cymru'n Un" (One Wales) for our programme of government. So I have always striven for politics and policies that unite the nation and lessen divisions.

I have always thought that the best interests of the region are served by strong economic policies for the nation as a whole and a fair share of infrastructure and investment.

These principles are not always very welcome, but they have got even more difficult to articulate and advocate with the astonishing decision by the Labour Welsh Government to push on with a £1 billion new motorway around Newport. This announcement will tie up the majority of the government's capital investment for the best part of a decade. It will plunge the Welsh government into debt before it even gets the tax levying powers to pay off that debt and leaves daily expenditure on public services such as health and education vulnerable to escalating construction costs.

There is no doubt that efficient transport in and out of the south across the M4 corridor is vital not only for the regional economy there but also for the nation as a whole.

A new motorway should not be ruled out simply because it means expenditure in the south of the country.

It must be ruled out however if, as I and my party believe, it is the wrong road in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We in Plaid Cymru believe that the decision is a costly mistake. For one thing, it will not deliver a solution to the congestion on the M4 for some 15 years. For another, traffic is not growing and another, cheaper, more sustainable option exists. This is known as the "blue route", using existing roads which can be upgraded to provide the necessary extra capacity to relieve congestion.

As a result, we in Plaid Cymru have announced that we've withdrawn from negotiations on the Welsh Government's Budget to make our opposition clear.

Wales needs a fundamental re-appraisal of transport. This must include re-opening railways such as the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth and Bangor to Afonwen lines. It means careful road improvements to relieve communities or improve transport links such as occurred at Porthmadog and Ganllwyd under Ieuan Wyn Jones as Plaid Cymru's Transport Minister.

What it cannot mean is blowing most of our infrastructure money on a new motorway designed to help a limited amount of businesses to the detriment of the nation as a whole. Fighting for a cheaper, better alternative is a fight for all of us, north, mid, west and south.

I am very grateful for the huge amount of support and encouragement that I had in preparing for the debate in the Senedd.

Ahead of the debate in less than a week, I received scores of supportive e-mails, tweets and Facebook messages - all of them individual; none produced by a computer or bots. I want to end by quoting just one, from Mr Clive Thomas, which, for me, sums up the huge potential of this innovative project:

'I fully endorse the campaign to re-open the railway line from Aberystwyth to Carmarthen. My reasons are personal; when they closed the line my dad lost his work and we all had to relocate to England. Luckily I never lost my roots and came home to Wales. I want to see that mistake put right.'

Build it, and they will come home.

A full transcript of the debate in the Senedd is available here:

http://www.assemblywales.org/docs/rop_xml/140312_plenary_bilingual.xml#135413



Palmerston at Aberffwd on test train to Devil's Bridge.

Photograph: Geraint Roberts, Vale of Rheidol Railway.



Above: 13 /14 Cwm Harry Land Trust setting up their vegetable boxes on the DOWN platform at Newtown as the 1404 ATW service to Aberystwyth & Harlech pulls out and a Network Rail Class 97 with Seacows pulls away from the UP platform with a driver training run.

Below: 19/05/14 Work has started on the Aberystwyth station refurbishment. The toilets will be closed till September and a sign is up advising the use of the facilities in Wetherspoons.

Photographs: Gareth Marston.



Forward Thinking with Adrian Bailey

Rolling stock or lack of it is the perennial headache for rail users and campaigners: it seems we have plenty of work for construction companies contracted to Network Rail to carry out enhancements, but where the rolling stock is to run on these improvements or indeed on existing services that are poorly served remains a mystery. The DfT says that “the market should decide” and then specifies and procures hundreds of InterCity and South East Commuter carriages. It also suggests there’s no need for any DMU orders in the next Control Period (CP5 from 2019-2024), and hints that cascades from electrification will be more than adequate. The market clearly isn’t deciding but there’s no published cascade masterplan from Marsham Street. It’s blatantly obvious that electrification cascades are not going to release sufficient quantities of usable rolling stock to replace Pacers and increase formation lengths in the regions – the numbers just don’t stack up. This has led to the bizarre suggestion of Pacer refurbishment. Once the DDA compliant toilet is fitted there’s no room left for passengers, resulting in a sort of self powered portalo, or using redundant London Underground stock in Yorkshire towed around by some unspecified power source. Down in Cardiff Welsh Labour has seemingly been more interested in playing party politics with the Conservatives in Westminster over Valleys electrification rather than sorting out the investment and developing a plan for the Wales and Border franchise replacement in 2018. ATW told the Station Adopters’ Conference in Portmerion this year that no one builds DMU’s anymore – all to do with EU emission regulations apparently. It’s also said that the TOC owning groups are frightened to include new or extra carriages in their franchise bids in case they get undercut by a competitor promising to run more of the same. This policy vacuum all adds up to some sort of nihilistic vision of we’ve got a railway until the current DMU’s fall apart and then no more! This is clearly not acceptable and needs addressing.

On the Cambrian our Class 158’s were built in 1991/1992 back in BR days. They’re already over 20 years old, and despite the recent-ish refurbishment they are not going to last forever. They’re going to be dog eared come the start of the new franchise come what may, and celebrate their 30th birthday probably before the rebranding is complete. By 2025 they will be life expired assuming the mechanical side of things on them lasts that long. So what are the options? Well anyone who thinks they can go on forever with another refurbishment is on the funny cigarettes, though no doubt someone in DfT or Welsh Government is planning this. Assuming the Valleys do get wired, the 35 year old Pacer and Class 150 DMU’s freed up are only going to be fit for the scrap yard. Electrification elsewhere in the UK may free up some newer DMU’s like the Class 170’s that once came down on our line in 2000/2001. However to operate on the Cambrian you’ll need ETCS fitted and the Class 170’s don’t have it. It’s a well known fact that the result of the ETCS trial on our line is that it’s not worth the hassle of trying to retrofit ETCS equipment into old trains, and by 2025 the Class 170’s will themselves be nearly 25 years old. Maybe we should put the wires up on the Cambrian? This is unlikely to be a priority on our line or other rural routes, as we’re still playing catch up on our Main Line and City Region networks that should have been completed in the 1980’s and 1990’s. In fact the only emerging option is in fact an order of new DMU’s which come with ETCS as standard.

Ah but didn’t the Arriva man tell us no one makes DMU’s anymore? Ten and half years of ATW has taught us to take things with a pinch of salt and lo and behold if you look you can find new DMU’s being built in fleet strength today. Whatever your view of the DfT’s pet project – the InterCity Express Project – it’s an undeniable fact that hundreds of these carriages will be bi mode, and when the pantograph comes down the diesel engines under the floor will start up to take them onward to non wired destinations. The Hitachi Bimode IEP is an electric train that turns itself into a DMU and they will be with us until the 2050’s. Over in Germany the Federal government has just ordered 97 Coradia Lint 2 car DMU’s for regional services in non wired areas at a cost of 420 Million. EURO from Alstom. Stadler the Swiss manufacturer is still offering its modular concept GTW with a central non floor mounted diesel powerpack for sale. Funny thing these EC regulations, as they’re not stopping DMU’s being built despite what the Arriva man said.

So what’s wrong with a new order of DMU’s for the Cambrian? Cost wise ATW and who ever take on the next franchise will spend £ 2million a year leasing the 8 units that will run the Cambrian services, if they were self contained and went no further than Shrewsbury. 12 units is a more realistic number for an hourly service on our line and maybe summer extras up the coast. Using the German example

above the purchase cost would be around 50 million EURO and they would last 35 years. Ideally they should have been ordered years ago. Perhaps there are other lines (Heart of Wales) or the reopened line from Aberystwyth to Carmarthen that would need DMU traction in the long term also. Forward Thinking says we need to actively get a plan together and an order placed.

A Stadler GTW.



New book: 'Wrexham & Shropshire – Open Access the one that got away'

We all still miss the wonderful train service that ran for those few short years between 2008 and 2011 and the fantastic staff that they employed. A book on the venture is to be published shortly. We are currently in discussion to see if this can be retailed at Severn Dee Travel at Gobowen station.

The book contains information fascinating to professional and enthusiasts alike, to take you through all the stages in the life of Wrexham & Shropshire, from setting up the service, the loss of the Class 170 diesel multiple units, the search for alternative rolling stock before deciding upon Class 67 locomotives, dealing with the bureaucrats, and battling with competitors. It describes the successes and failures of Wrexham & Shropshire, eventually relating how and why the service ceased, and what its assets were used for. The problems of the agreement that prohibited the train from picking up passengers southbound from Wolverhampton, and the puzzle this caused the public is properly explained.

In addition the book will offer an analysis of Open Access operation, and how and why this can be difficult for government policy. People have forgotten about how the failure of the 1955 Modernisation Plan led to the Beeching Report and the determination that the railway was no longer relevant: that roads and motorways could do all the work. There is a clear description of this and its effect on the scene leading up to privatisation that explains how the one led to the other and the effect of political thinking on railway investment, making the book an important record for all those interested in railways professionals and enthusiasts alike.

A feature of the book is the high quality photographs, many by celebrated photographer Geoff Plumb. There are many, many interesting, unpublished pictures, diagrams, and some specially drawn maps, to show the junctions governing the routes around Birmingham that the train was forced to negotiate, along with the effect that this had on journey time and its market competitiveness.

Authors: Richard Harper & Gordon **Pages:** 256 **Publisher:** Adlestrop Press **Date Published:** August 2014

The book is available for £33 +post and packing.

From **Severn Dee News**, the newsletter of the Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users Association.

The Cambrian Railways and the start of World War 1

The Brigadier looks at the role the Cambrian Railways played in 1914.

Pre War- 1908 Army Reforms

The ancient Yeomanry and Volunteer Militia Reserve Forces were professionally and ably reformed by the Liberal Administration under Haldane into what was known as the Territorial Force – equipping them with the similar weapons and equipment as the regular army and forming them into fully formed combat formations incorporating many of the lessons of the Boer War. There was a two week summer camp each year and Mid Wales soon became a favourite area for not only local units but those further afield for their summer manoeuvres. Troop trains were as much a part of the summer high season as holiday makers in the years leading up to the War. The Army was not mechanised and movement over any distance was done by train, summer camps near Oswestry, Aberystwyth, Builth Wells, Rhayader, Llanidloes, Llandre, Tywyn, Harlech and Portmadoc are all recorded. This brought much needed extra revenue to the Cambrian Railways. The regular army also held summer camps. A wooden platform was built at Peniarth between Newtown and Abermule where the main road runs alongside the line so that a shooting range could be accessed by the Territorial Force. The TF in Wales was organised initially by the County Associations (12) and these were grouped together into larger areas so as to assemble enough troops to form larger fighting formations. The 12 ancient Welsh Counties were grouped with the 4 bordering English Counties (Cheshire, Shropshire, Hereford and Monmouthshire) to form “Wales and Borders”, 95 years before the same area was grouped for railway purposes. There were 18 Battalions of Infantry (18,000 men), 6 Regiments of Yeomanry (3000 horse and men) 11 Batteries of Royal Field Artillery (3200 men and 66 guns) and 2 Batteries of Royal Horse Artillery (450 men and 12 Guns) with Engineer companies, RAMC and other supply staff, some 27,000 men in all. These were grouped into 2 Mounted Brigades, 4 Infantry Brigades, 3 of these in an Infantry Division. In addition there were coastal Batteries of the Royal Garrison Artillery to defend ports, most notably at Milford Haven and Holyhead. 30,000 is the current size of the Reserve army forces for the entire UK, yet the British volunteer forces in 1914 were tiny compared to the vast Conscript Armies of the major mainland European powers. Most defence spend and indeed Government expenditure at the time was on the Royal Navy.

July 1914

As the crisis following the killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28th grew, the normal summer routine for the British Army continued. 2000 regular troops from Tyneside descended on Llanidloes and 500 Artillerymen on Rhayader for their summer camps - all by pre-planned special train movements. It was decided toward the end of July that they needed to be back at their normal bases very quickly! The Cambrian Railways had to organise no fewer than 7 special trains from Llanidloes at very short notice. Fortunately there was more stock on hand than the handful of 2 car DMU's in the current franchise agreement! It wasn't just men but their equipment and horses that had to be moved as well. Finding the resources was no mean feat as with the country still not officially at war, normal services had to be run as well and paths found along the single lines along with all the other traffic. Fortunately when war was declared the railways mobilised the BEF to get to the Channel ports and France and help stop the German Schlieffen plan. One can only speculate at what the Kaiser and the German High Command would think of so much of the modern day British railway being run by a company owned by the German State Railway!

August 1914

Units attached to the Welsh TF Division were already deployed for their summer camp when war was declared on the 4th, 5000 near Aberystwyth and 4000 near Portmadoc. These men had to be sent back to their mobilisation locations and then concentrated in their formations at deployment locations. The **Welsh Border Mounted Brigade** was concentrated at **Oswestry**, the **Welsh Infantry Division** at **Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Wellington**, the **South Wales Mounted Brigade** at **Hereford** and

the independent **South Wales Infantry Brigade at Milford Haven**. The Cambrian Railways helped in this mobilisation to a large degree. Whilst half the men were from the more populous counties of Cheshire, Monmouthshire and Glamorgan, that the Cambrian Railways didn't have lines in, it did run into seven other Welsh and one English counties. I have listed the sub units (Companies, Batteries and Squadrons) and units and where they were based by county served by the Cambrian Railways along with an estimate of how many men there would be. Roughly an Infantry Battalion was 1000 strong and a Yeomanry Regiment 500. There would be drill halls in every town and larger villages as well, and I have listed the troops based in the entire county as well as in Cambrian Railways territory.

Brecknockshire	c775	
HQ &, A Coy	1st Battalion Brecknockshire Regiment	Brecon
B Coy	1st Battalion Brecknockshire Regiment	Ystradgynlais
C Coy	1st Battalion Brecknockshire Regiment	Builth Wells
Cardiganshire	c555	
D Squadron	Pembrokeshire Yeomanry	Lampeter
D Company	4th Battalion Welsh Regiment	Aberystwyth
Cardiganshire Bty	2nd Welsh Brigade Royal Field Artillery	Aberystwyth
Caernarvonshire	c900	
A Squadron	Denbighshire Hussars	Bangor
HQ & C Coy	6th Battalion (Caernarvonshire and Anglesey) Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Caernarvon
D Coy	6th Battalion (Caernarvonshire and Anglesey) Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Bangor
Caernarvonshire Bty	Royal Garrison Artillery	Caernarvon
Flintshire	c1120	
HQ, A, & B Coys	5th Battalion (Flintshire) Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Wrexham
C Squadron	Denbighshire Hussars	Wrexham
C Coy	5th Battalion (Flintshire) Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Mold
D Coy	5th Battalion (Flintshire) Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Flint
Merioneth	c450	
C Coy	7th (Merioneth and Montgomery) Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Tywyn
D Coy	7th (Merioneth and Montgomery) Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Dolgelly
Montgomeryshire	c950	
A Squadron	Montgomeryshire Yeomanry	Llanfyllin
C Squadron	Montgomeryshire Yeomanry	Newtown
HQ & B Coy	7th (Merioneth and Montgomery) Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Newtown
HQ & B Squadron	Montgomeryshire Yeomanry	Welshpool
A Coy	7th (Merioneth and Montgomery) Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Welshpool
Radnor	c345	
D Squadron	Montgomeryshire Yeomanry	Llandrindod Wells
D Coy	1st Battalion Brecknockshire Regiment	Llandrindod Wells
Shropshire	c1725	
B Squadron	Shropshire Yeomanry	Oswestry
C Company	4th Battalion King Shropshire Light Infantry	Oswestry

D Squadron	Shropshire Yeomanry	Wellington
B Company	4th Battalion King Shropshire Light Infantry	Wellington
C Squadron*	Shropshire Yeomanry	Ludlow
D Company	4th Battalion King Shropshire Light Infantry	Ludlow
HQ & A Squadron	Shropshire Yeomanry	Shrewsbury
HQ & A Company	4th Battalion King Shropshire Light Infantry	Shrewsbury
Shropshire Battery	Royal Horse Artillery	Shrewsbury

*Including troops from Herefordshire

When war was declared Territorial Force Units were ordered to assemble at their Battalion and Regimental HQ's and then split into 3 cadres - no doubt with much cursing all round with many having just assembled there and gone to the Welsh Coast! Territorial Force members were enlisted on the basis of home service only and could only go overseas i.e. France if they volunteered. The First line unit would be available for deployment anywhere and with the bulk of the men who did volunteer, the second line unit would contain the men for home service only and would train up as a duplicate unit and were used as security and guard troops for ports and other important targets such as railway bridges, whilst the third line unit was set as a depot/training unit to train the volunteers and supply reinforcements to the first line unit and bring the second line unit up to strength. Thus the Cambrian Railways would initially have had to help get the 1st Brecknockshire concentrated at Brecon, 7th RWF at Newtown, Montgomeryshire Yeomanry at Welshpool and parts of the 6th RWF from Pwllheli and Portmadoc to Caernarvon. The now 1/7 RWF deployed from Newtown by rail on the 22nd and joined the **North Wales Infantry Brigade** which had been detached from the main Welsh Division to Conway. 1/1 Brecknockshire were moved up to Shrewsbury from Brecon as a reserve. 1/1 Montgomeryshire Yeomanry were moved to Hereford as part of the **South Wales Mounted Brigade**. The Cardiganshire Battery of the RFA moved from Aberystwyth to Conway. Oswestry was a well used TF site and its facilities were turned into a permanent camp with its own station at Tinkers Green halt on the line between Oswestry and Whitchurch. The **Welsh Border Mounted Brigade** was concentrated there and made up of the Denbighshire Hussars, Cheshire Yeomanry, Shropshire Yeomanry and Shropshire Battery RHA. Amongst the Cheshire Yeomanry was the Duke of Westminster who had purchased at his own expense a prototype Rolls Royce Armoured Car. The units in the Welsh Division and the two mounted brigades were ordered to East Anglia to cover against a possible German invasion over the winter of 1914/1915 and in 1915/1916 all were sent overseas to the Middle East. Thus the men the Cambrian Railways helped mobilise ended up at Gallipoli and then in Palestine fighting the Turks.

Initially men from the Cambrian Railways who were reservists or part of the Territorial Force joined up along with some volunteers in the first couple of weeks; however with the railways under state control further volunteering was banned unless authorised. 135 Cambrian Railways employees are recorded as joining up in August 1914, this was out of nearly 1400 men or close on 10% of the workforce.

In Cardiff a new yeomanry unit, the Welsh Horse, was formed from volunteers in the first weeks of August. This was ordered to Newtown in October and split into the 3 elements. The Cambrian's focus then became on bringing in civilian volunteers for training in the 3rd line TF units at Brecon, Newtown and Welshpool. Once trained these men were initially posted to the second line units in the same towns. As well as the Territorial Force two regular line infantry regiments had their home depots in Cambrian territory - the Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Hightown barracks in Wrexham, and the South Wales Borderers at Dering Lines, Brecon. Each line regiment had two active battalions and a third depot/training battalion. The home depots were used to accept the influx of volunteers to the colours in 1914 and 1915; many new service battalions of each regiment were formed for what was known as Kitchener's new armies, and received their basic training in the old barracks and new camps set up for the war. Sites used by the pre-war Territorial Force for their summer camps seem to have been favoured. The flat fields next to Builth Wells station at Llanellwedd, now the Royal Welsh Showground in summer, and the camp at Oswestry were main sites with Oswestry seeing many English regiments use its facilities. As the men became trained and equipped, which was sometimes painfully slow, they

moved on, the second line territorial units taking over guard duties elsewhere in the UK, and the new service battalions mainly heading for France.

The View from milepost 62 with the Brigadier

The other day Mrs Trellis was visiting the Memsahib when there was an almighty commotion coming from my cat Dusty by the front door: Mrs Trellis's newspaper was being torn to shreds and growled at! Unfortunately for the newspaper Dusty had come across the story whereby the Rail Delivery Group - the latest name for our less than beloved Train Operating Company's trade association - were preposterously claiming that average fares are the same as they were 20 years ago! No wonder she was upset! In the UK since 1993 we have had imposed the world's most unnecessary and complex way of running a railway ever invented, which has high unit costs which leads to higher than need be fares and higher than need be for what it buys Government subsidy. We poor passengers then have to pay twice for this incompetence through our taxes and when we travel. Alas there is little sign of reform as those in charge in government have a lack of moral fibre and will not admit that Peter the Politician and Cyril the Civil Servant make mistakes. Instead they blunder along pretending all is well and use the Train Operating Companies as a front to dodge responsibility. The TOC's of course get handsomely compensated and acquiesce in this farce. Rail fares are a big concern, whether it's the constant increases, the ridiculous complexity or just the % of your disposable income that goes on them. Government and the RDG's attitude is patronising and gets passengers backs up. So as to calm Dusty down and let everyone else in on some money saving advice Dusty and I have been compiling some fares information to help travellers again. After all you should not have to pay more than you have to. As a general rule of thumb you need to put a bit of research in and have some basic knowledge of the system in order to get the most out of it, and thwart the TOC's and Government's bizarre policies. As Corporal Jones use to say "they don't like it up 'em".

First of all let's know how to get **compensation** when things go wrong, £ Millions are never claimed that should be, and the industry is rather shy in telling its customers about it. Coined "delay repay" the details are quite simple and all TOC's should adhere to it. Generally, if your train is 30 minutes late you can get compensated 50% of the value of one leg of your journey, 60 minutes late the full value of one leg of your journey and over 120 minutes the full amount of both legs. You'll need proof you travelled, i.e. used ticket and must provide full details such as date and time of train etc. Most operators will accept scanned copies of tickets sent via their websites or emailed. ATW says you need a special form available from stations but an email will usually suffice. Contact details are usually provided at the back of SARPA newsletters. The TOC's will give you vouchers to be redeemed within 12 months against future ticket purchases.

Let's tackle the hyperbole around the great **advance purchase** deals the TOC's shout about. Advance Purchase was designed to sell seats on empty/quite long distance trains by providing a hefty discount providing the traveller uses the quiet trains in the middle of the day and mid week. It's therefore very logical that you can't get them travelling to busy destinations at peak times: don't even waste time trying! If you can commit well in advance and can travel at off peak hours and are sure you don't need to be flexible then do try and remember there are unpublished quotas and don't try and go through a major city at peak times on a weekday. Less than 3% of all ticket sales are advanced purchase because they are so limiting, and remember they are not available for short journeys. **Avoid using websites** with silly names like choo choo line claiming magic savings, they charge to purchase and offer nothing you can't buy at a ticket office or onboard on the day. Recently a woman tried to force myself out my seat on a busy train claiming her £2 booking fee receipt from one such organisation guaranteed her a seat! "Sorry madam you got done", at least that's what I thought Dusty hissed at her! I best not mention anymore as there may be a court case, dangerous animal my a....

Anyhow **Railcards** are the best way to get discounts with a third off for Young Persons, Family, Disabled, Two Together and Senior Citizens. These have to be purchased annually, and remember the Young Persons and Two Together are not available for use before 0930. We are fortunate on the Cambrian of having in addition a local Railcard which gives one third discounts between Shrewsbury,

Aberystwyth and Pwllheli with no time restrictions for local residents on the Welsh side of the border all for just £5! Dusty says remember you must have the card with you when you travel, otherwise you can be charged the full fare or worse. **Small Group Discounts** are also something that's rather hidden, but small groups of up to around 10 can get a c25% discount on many fares if they travel together after 0930. **Season Tickets** can be purchased either weekly, monthly or annually, and can give regular commuters a reasonable discount. However on our line please be aware that buying separately with a Cambrian Railcard each day will work out cheaper than the season ticket!

Split tickets are a good way of farming the system, as there is no consistency in fare levels per mile travelled across the country, meaning that two intermediate journeys can add up to less than one longer one - and vice versa be aware! Well known splits for travel to Scotland are at Preston and to South Wales at Cwmbran. Splitting at Shrewsbury is sometimes helpful as well, especially if you have a Cambrian Railcard, i.e. going to Wrexham or Chester. **Rover and Ranger tickets** are often useful if you're making multiple journeys, and don't forget **Plus Bus** - you can get a bus add on to a rail ticket often cheaper than buying the bus ticket separately. Dusty and I thoroughly recommend this website: <http://www.brfares.com/#home>. The entire fare data across the UK is accessible free of charge and you can conduct research on how to save. **Special Offers** occasionally appear, like discounted entrance to attractions and events or Club 55.

Dusty is absolutely dying to tell you about this and is getting very excited and agitated and has unfortunately started biting great uncle Zephaniah's Zulu shield again. On the one hand it shows how you can save, and on the other demonstrates the absurdity of the current system. Shropshire is currently the only English county with no direct service to London, but bizarrely it seems to have the most competition on fares to London with Virgin Trains, Chiltern Railways, London Midland and South West Trains all providing fares from Shrewsbury to London! Virgin will charge you £212.00 to arrive at Euston on their services in the peak but if you're happy to walk across to Moor St in Birmingham then Chiltern Railways will do it for £99.50! If a leisurely off peak cross country journey is your bag then it's South West Trains £59.80 to Waterloo via Warminster and Salisbury. Virgin's off peak fare is £69.00. In fact there are no fewer than 12 different walk on off peak standard fares available culminating in London Midland's Super Off Peak ticket - see detail below.

Super Offpeak: Route ATW and London Midland only.

Outward: valid arriving London Terminals after 1259 Monday-Saturday

Return: valid departing London after 1029 but not 1630-1930 Monday to Saturday

Adult fare £25.00. **Children's fare** £12.50.

If you have a non time critical journey from say Newtown to London and have a Railcard, then you can buy on the day the above with singles between Newtown to Shrewsbury for a grand total of £27.10 and remember to travel London Midland to Euston from New St but you can travel ATW east of Birmingham. The fare using Virgin would be £64.60. Isn't it mad!

Dusty and I will share our thoughts on how the railway should be organised in the next issue.

Three Cocks Cottage July 2014



An industrial diesel locomotive at Erwood Station cafe and craft centre, on the Mid Wales line.

Photograph: Denis Bates

Cemmaes Road signalbox - reminiscence by Aled Rees

March marked the 30th anniversary of the closure of Cemmaes Road signalbox and passing loop on the Cambrian main line between Shrewsbury and Machynlleth. I knew this box well and spent many hours as a child in the company of the two signalmen, Ronnie Thomas and Wil Breese. The lengths that they allowed me and a friend to work the box at the ages of 10 onwards beggar belief these days. This was in the seventies when railway traditions were still very strong and before the age of stringent health and safety rules. Indeed what I learnt with these two I now put to good use as a signalman on the Llangollen Railway. The photo below shows the two signalmen on the closing day - 10 March 1984.

Opposite above: September 1979 and a 'down' DMU (probably from Birmingham New Street) crossing the 10:10 Aberystwyth to Euston hauled by a pair of Class 25 diesels.

Opposite below: A general view taken in August 1978: the signalman is fitting the single-line token, in its hooped bag, into the holder from which the driver of an approaching train can collect it.

Photos Aled Rees



Gareth Marston writes: I can remember being told as child when I started hanging around Caersws Box in the early 80's that the signalmen at Cemmas Road kept sleeping blankets and tinned food in the box in case of severe snowfall, as both of them lived some way from the hamlet. The proximity of the Dovey Valley hotel was more for its liquid refreshment opportunities than comfy beds.

Looking at my working timetables for summer 76 and summer 78, the 1010 Aberystwyth to Euston should have crossed the 0750 Birmingham New St to Pwllheli and Aberystwyth at Machynlleth. The DMU could well have been running late and the crossing took place at Cemmaes Road: the driver of the DMU waits anxiously outside his cab for the onward token once the Euston train had passed.



Picture © Aled Rees



Improved Service on the Heart of Wales Line

Next year, in addition to the four trains that run each way over the full length of the Line, there will be an early morning train for commuters that will run from Swansea to Llandoverly (and return) and a similar train that will run from Shrewsbury to Llandrindod Wells (and return). The service will operate on Mondays to Fridays only.

The four trains that run each way over the full length of the Line on Mondays to Saturdays will be more conveniently timed (it is understood that there will be, for example, a northbound through service that will call at Llandrindod Wells at about 0840).

The new train timetable will operate over an initial three-year trial period from 2015. Additionally, the Heart of Wales Line Forum will receive funding to explore the possibility of further improvements to the Line.

The current service of four through trains each way on Mondays to Saturdays was introduced in 1993 (there were previously five trains each way [Mondays to Saturdays]).

A coaster advertising a Coaster!



This is a coaster - a drinks mat - produced by Arriva Trains Wales and Taith (which has now ceased to exist) advertising the North Wales Rover ticket.

SARPA Meetings in 2014

September	Saturday 13th	1145	Cambrian Hotel, Aberystwyth
October	Saturday 11th	1100	AGM, White Lion, Machynlleth
November	Tuesday 4th	1845	Sportsman 18.30.Newtown
December	Saturday 13th	1100	White Lion, Machynlleth

Websites

Our website <http://sarpa.info>

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

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

Passenger Focus
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/>

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
www.talyllyn.co.uk/

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

Borth Station Museum
www.borthstationmuseum.co.uk

Rail Photographs by Richard Jones including many of the modern Cambrian scene
<http://railphotos.fourecord.com/index.php>

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

London Midland

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

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

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

Virgin Trains

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

Traveline Cymru for all public transport information

www.traveline-cymru.org.uk Tel.0870-6082608

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

Public Transport Users' Committee for Wales Secretariat

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

For Train Times and Fares Call:

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