

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association



Newsletter
No. 69
March 2016



An up train passing Borth Golf Course on Sunday 14th February 2016. Photograph Denis Bates

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This is the quarterly newsletter of the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association. Contributions are welcomed from members and non-members about the mid Wales rail scene. Views expressed in it are those of contributors and not necessarily representative of the Association 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 2015) £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

Some time back we wrote to the Welsh Government asking what plans they had with regard to eventual replacement of the Class 158 diesel units used on the Cambrian. The trains will become life expired during the lifetime of the next Wales & Borders (or whatever its going to be called) franchise due to begin in 2018.

As many folk are aware, these vehicles have been expensively retro-fitted with ERTMS signalling equipment for the UK trial of this new system and which is taking place on the Cambrian, so we explored several options. These ranged from maintaining indefinitely the current fleet with increasing expense and difficulty, to new build diesel or even Cambrian electrification.

The response we had was garbled and confused. It was clear that those good people in the rail unit at the Welsh Government had not even considered the situation, let alone given thought to the hideous expense of retro-fitting another fleet of diesel trains cascaded to the line. In fact, we could be forgiven for thinking that rolling stock provision is something that not only the Welsh Government but administrations throughout the UK would rather forget about.

During the debates in Parliament for the 1993 Railways Bill, I well remember some Tory bigwig spouting off and saying that privatisation would be good for the taxpayer and good for the passenger. In reality, the 1993 Act destroyed the UK rolling stock industry and by taking out British Rail too, removed the advantages of centralised procurement which had been based on perceived need. In 1992, the government view was that rail was a declining industry, so no thought was put in at privatisation about the need to acquire additional vehicles to cater for growth.

Travelling around the network recently, I was struck by just how crowded trains are becoming. Put quite simply, there are not enough vehicles to cope with the demand. North of the Scottish Border, the new "Borders Railway" has caused something of a difficulty with its opening success. Severe overcrowding caused the operator to move extra trains to the line, resulting in a shortage of capacity elsewhere in Scotland.

On our own line, the absence of an 08.30 westbound departure from Shrewsbury is because there is nothing with which to run the service. This is a situation which threatens to wreck the resurgence of the rail industry. Increased demand without building new trains will only lead to more overcrowding and put people off.

The demise of British Rail has led to the Department for Transport (DfT) taking on some of the role of procurement. Their efforts thus far can only be described as a complete débâcle. The jewel (if it can be called that) in the crown has been the "Intercity Express Project", or IEP. Dubbed the "Incredibly Expensive Project" by some of its critics it has been some eleven years in development from initial concept to its present state without a single passenger being carried. The trains actually exist, being assembled in a Hitachi owned facility in County Durham, though they are not expected to enter service until 2017.

Contrast this with the now ageing "Inter City 125s", which first entered full revenue service in 1976 and were developed from an initial concept put before the British Railways Board only six years previously, in 1970!

A great deal hangs on both the IEP and a wide ranging electrification programme, the latter being thrown into disarray by the Westminster Government's decision to "Pause" several schemes. Some of these have now been "Un-paused" but the result is a delay in completion of around four years. Meanwhile, rail use continues to grow impressively but the number of coaches in which to put passengers has not kept pace and is now barely adequate. The intention was that the electrification programme would release diesel trains for use elsewhere on the network. Of course, this will not now happen, but neither the Westminster government nor any of the regional administrations have done anything other than bury their heads in the sand. The train leasing companies are reluctant to do much about it either, having in the past ten years or so scrapped many perfectly good vehicles, which would have continued to perform well with upgrading and refurbishment.

In the meantime, there's a growing feeling that the infrastructure obsession of the current administration is crowding out other improvements. The hedge fund owners who finance the Tory party also have large stakes in the infrastructure companies bidding for George Osborne's bonanza.

Some sources believe that the growth in rail travel means that UK network will require between 13,000 and 19,000 extra vehicles over the next 30 years, on top of the present fleet. The UK has been acquiring new trains at the rate of about four vehicles per week over the past five years. In reality, to cope with continuing demand, that figure needs to be more like twelve per week for at least the next 25 years.

Here in Wales, the picture is no better with the franchise operator's fleet having remained broadly the same size since 2003, despite vast growth in passenger numbers. One may presume that the Welsh Government believes that on the whole, it is not its responsibility to become embroiled in the provision of railway vehicles and so fails to address the situation. In the absence of any other players in the field this is not a happy state of affairs. Our representatives in Cardiff need to explore imaginative ways to provide new trains for Wales, so that rail use here may continue to grow unfettered. Having them built west of the English border would be a real coup too, and go some way towards offsetting recent job losses in the steel industry.

Angus Eickhoff
Llidiart Wood,
Welshpool.

February 2016

The Chairman would like to thank all those members who showed concern and wished him a speedy recovery after his recent (unplanned!) spell in hospital. He is pleased to say he is back in harness.

News in brief

Aberystwyth

Trawslink Cymru campaigners wishing to reopen the line to Carmarthen were pleased when a scoping report was published by the Welsh Government in December. The physical barriers to reinstatement appear to be mainly at the Aberystwyth end. The political barriers seem much more. Plaid Cymru want Barnett formula consequentials from High Speed 2 to be used as a source of funding, whilst Welsh Labour don't even seem committed to spend the money on rail or public transport at all but throw it in the general pot.

The consultants' initial solution to development at the North end is to construct a tunnel under Penglais Hill from the original alignment in the Ystwyth valley into the Rheidol valley, crossing over the River Rheidol further east than originally' and then crossing over the main road, park and ride site, Vale of Rheidol Railway and Cambrian Mainline on a flyover before descending down in the vicinity of the disused oil storage sidings to gain access to Aberystwyth station where a second platform would need to be reconstructed alongside the run round loop. Certainly this would be an interesting entrance and exit to the line if built!

A further step in the campaign was a workshop of interested parties, convened by Edwina Hart, the Welsh Government Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, held on the 8th February. At the meeting, all parties agreed to allow the consultants and authors of the scoping study, AECOM, to report back at the end of February with a WelTAG appraisal – a formal appraisal framework for infrastructure development in Wales – before consensus can be reached on whether to advise the Minister to commission a full feasibility study. Michael Walker, of Trawslink Cymru, said he hoped the feasibility study could be completed rapidly, before the purdah – the period before elections when there are specific restrictions on the activities of civil servants – comes into force.

Trawslink Cymru's website is

<http://trawslinkcymru.org.uk/language/index.html>

Aberystwyth Town Council is complaining that sometimes the full length of the train is not aligned with the platform canopies and that some people have got wet when boarding/alighting the train.

Photos of Aberystwyth station, including ones from the 1970s-80s, including the Mail train, can be found on the Royal Commission for ancient monuments at:

http://map.coflein.gov.uk/index.php?action=do_images&cache_name=cG5tcnNuYW11LGhhZm9kIGNvcHB1cndvcmtzX3NIYXJjaHR5cGU5YWR2YW5jZWQ=&numlink=34676#tabs-4

Bow St

Sources within Welsh Government suggest it's taking the station reopening proposal seriously as it's been wholeheartedly backed by Ceredigion County Council. The contrast with the lack of progress with Carno Station and Powys CC's lethargic attitude was pointed out. The clear hint is that rail improvements in Mid Wales including those in Ceredigion and Gwynedd have been held back by Powys's failure to enthusiastically support schemes over the years.

Plans are being drawn up for the scheme, to include proposed improvements to the A4159 and A487 junction at the south end of Bow Street. This could well be in the form of a roundabout, with one exit from it being to the station carpark.

Machynlleth

It seems the much delayed DDA complaint footbridge is nearing completion.

The Black Bridge a mile or so east of the station has been causing problems over the winter with the detectors warning of dangerously high levels of flood water on numerous occasions, resulting in services being suspended and bus replacements in operation between Machynlleth and Newtown. Trains are not stopped at Caersws as it's easier for the buses to access Newtown station.

Talerddig to Newtown

A rail relaying programme is taking place lasting till Easter at various locations along this section. The last two trains from Shrewsbury are regularly terminating at Newtown with onward bus connections so that work can take place. Of note has been the running of non etcs fitted Class 66 locomotives from Colas Rail and Freightliner on ballast trains. The ballast train is granted a full line possession between Sutton Bridge Junction and Talerddig, and etcs is switched off to allow this.

Carno

By the back door attempts to progress the station (see above) continue, with a preliminary report on the current timetable indicating that by flexing some trains it may be possible for 5 trains day to stop at Carno. The Welsh Government have cooperated with this, and Network Rail and ATW are in broad agreement that it would be possible, though no firm commitments have been made. The campaign featured on a BBC Wales news item in January; Powys CC were nowhere to be seen, but Russell George AM for Montgomeryshire was.

Caersws

The village is encountering problems as the car parking available at the station has proved inadequate for the increased demand since last May. No immediate resolution appears apparent, with too much railway land having been being sold off in the past, hampering improving facilities today – a lesson new Network Rail boss Sir Peter Hendy appears not to have learnt.

Newtown

Peter Compton who has run Newtown Station Travel since it started in 1995 is to retire at the end of March 2016. Gareth Marston is taking over from the 1st April.

It has been announce by the Welsh Transport Minister Edwina Hart that work on the Newtown bypass is expected to start on Monday 7th March. The contract for the work has been awarded to Alun Griffiths (Contractors) Ltd. It will run south of Newtown, from a roundabout on the A489 Llanidloes Road to another roundabout on the A483 Pool Road to the east of the town. [*Cambrian News* 3rd March]

Powys CC have asked the operator of the town bus, Owens coaches, to plan to serve the new sheltered housing development on the old Boys and Boden site off Canal Road in Newtown. The bus drivers have complained that there is no pull in off the main road which is on a curve at this location and nowhere inside the parking area to turn a bus around. The plans with no provision for buses stopping were of course signed off by Powys CC own Planning Department! Meanwhile the expensively provided infrastructure near the station specially designed to aid bus/rail integration remains unused as Powys CC won't specify buses to stop there.

Welshpool

The Office of Rail & Road have released the 2014/2015 Estimates of Station usage confirming that Welshpool has overtaken Newtown as the busiest intermediate station on our line with 133,744 entries and exits. Newtown had 130,306 with stations in the Upper Severn Valley growing by 7% on average from 2013/2014 compared to 4.5% across the UK.

Farmers near Welshpool are still campaigning for what they see as safety enhancements at level crossings because of the extra trains running on our line. They're worried about reduced time to cross livestock over the line. To date there have been no known incidents involving livestock near Welshpool since last May. Farmers elsewhere along the line do not even think that this is an issue. One farmer in northern Ceredigion told SARPA that they've had more trains running between Aberystwyth and Machynlleth for years anyway and it's never been a problem.

Montgomeryshire Liberal Democrat Assembly Candidate Jane Dodds tried to drum up some publicity for herself by organising a litter collection photo shoot at the station where apparently she

says it's appalling. The Welshpool Station Adoption group were less than impressed: firstly they were never consulted and secondly they don't share her views on the issue, and point out the big issue to regular users is the paucity of covered accommodation: the single bus shelter proving totally inadequate this wet winter with the increased numbers using the station.

Shrewsbury

Virgin Trains have claimed that the new service between Shrewsbury and London Euston has seen 80,000 passengers join them at Shrewsbury, Wellington and Telford in its first year of operation. This is out of a total of 195,000 passengers to London from these stations, up 19% on the previous year. The service of 2 trains a day with one on Sunday each way therefore appears to have an average loading of London passengers of 60. This is claimed as a big success. The 2007 Wales Rail Planning Assessment stated that in 2005 there were 80,000 passengers per annum travelling from the Cambrian to London and the South East of England. If this number has gone up in proportion to the overall increase in passengers since then, and making allowances for passengers travelling to other parts of the South East not via London, the Cambrian to London market could well be around the 100,000 per annum mark. Which begs the question: if 195,000 can support 2 direct trains day 100,000 could certainly support one?

Track

Two incidents of track damage occurred last November. On Thursday 12th, trains here were brought to a halt from 11:10 until around 15:00 when several broken chairs as well as the joint and several sleepers were discovered between Talerddig and Machynlleth.

Then, on Tuesday 17th, the same happened, though two miles east of Machynlleth in the vicinity of Penegoes. The driver of a train from Birmingham reported a track defect after passing over it in the afternoon. An inspection found two broken chairs, both fishplates off, and a problem with the joints.

On both occasions, trains had to be stopped in order for the track to be repaired. They are both dangerous faults, and as far as we know, it's unprecedented for two such faults to have been found in the space of a week. Both will have been bullhead track – by now ancient.

Oswestry

Cambrian Heritage Railways are busy extending the usable section of track at Oswestry station southward to a point (Weston Wharf) just short of the over bridge that can be seen from the A483 bypass level crossing, they plan to put a temporary platform there near the Stonehouse Brewery site. The breweries two best sellers are Station Bitter and Cambrian Gold.

For their website, see

<http://www.shropshirestar.com/news/2016/01/03/shropshire-heritage-railway-to-start-on-extension/>

Arriva Trains Wales on-line live service

It's never been so easy to check your journey plans before you travel

We thought we'd get in touch to let you know about our new and improved Arriva Trains Wales Journey Check - www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/check

This easy to use, on-line service allows you to access live information on anything that could affect your journey such as unplanned delays or scheduled Network Rail improvement works.

Arriva Trains Wales Journey Check is available on all devices and you can also sign up for the free alert system to receive updates on your regular journeys on the Arriva Trains Wales network.

The view from milepost 62 with the Brigadier

Dusty and I watched a programme on TV over the Christmas holidays entitled “100 Greatest Britons”: at number 2 was a railway builder Isambard Kingdom Brunel and at Number 1 was Sir Winston Churchill. Dusty likes the film Young Winston, especially the armoured train scenes from the Boer War which were actually filmed in Mid Wales! * “Did you ever meet the great man”? She asked. Unfortunately not, but this has got me thinking on what was the great man’s record on transport. He did send the troops in against striking rail workers in Llanelli during his time as Home Secretary in 1911, which has somewhat tarnished his reputation. However in the 1920’s he took against the road lobby by refusing to hypothecate road vehicle tax solely for road schemes. He feared road users would think they owned the public highway!

The war was, well, the war, but on taking office again in 1951 he found a newly nationalised British Railways. His premiership oversaw the draft of the Modernisation plan in December 1954. The policy direction and intent from his Government was clear: the railways were to form a key component of future national transport policy; passenger services would be modernised with diesel and electric haulage; freight and parcels would still be carried en masse by rail and the money from Government was there to make it happen! OK, forget the well-worn arguments about the details of the modernisation plan, the policy intent was clear: rail was a key to future national transport needs for the whole country and was to be invested in. There was not a sniff of motorway construction under Churchill: perhaps he remembered his wilderness years warning against Hitler. When we finally got round to re-arming almost too late, the road lobby tried to argue the money to build Spitfires and Hurricanes should be spent on motorways - fifth column scum that they were. He stepped down in April 1955 due to ill health.

The Modernisation Plan was announced afterwards, but his successors as Conservative PM’s in the late 1950’s/early 1960’s, Eden and Macmillan, took a different policy direction funded by road lobby cash. The consequences of this we all know about. Recently the current Secretary of State for Transport Patrick McLoughlin has declared that previous Governments failed to invest in the railways. Well I think we can all agree that Eden, MacMillan, Wilson, Heath, Callaghan, Thatcher, Major, Blair and Brown are guilty as charged, but what about Cameron?

Let’s leave Dave for now in Assembly election year, and focus here in Wales. Do we have anything that can compare to the great man’s (Churchill not Cameron) vision on a national scale for our nations transport needs? Dusty has got very excited about the South Wales Metro plan: indeed there is much to commend the concept. Integrated very frequent heavy rail, light rail and bus rapid transit corridors connecting all of the population centres of Cardiff’s travel work area to the capital and with each other, and with smart ticketing. All seemingly backed by the Welsh Government: exactly what’s needed for our capital city region. However the cracks soon appear when looked at in detail. For a starter the implementation timescale is wishy-washy, and with Welsh Labour still hell bent on its archaic road capacity construction agenda which will make travel worse not better, it’s clear to see it’s not funded properly and is little more than a publicity map in election year. Secondly what’s the plan at all for public transport beyond the Cardiff travel work area? 1.5 million people live in the 10 Unitary Authorities in South East Wales, 1.6 million of us live in the rest of Wales where there is no plan at all from Welsh Labour. The memsahib and I recently visited relations in Swansea, Wales second city, that’s desperately in need of a vision to boost it economically. Like most UK cities it’s over dependent on the motor vehicle, and while a suburban rail network survived around Cardiff, Swansea’s was decimated. The South Wales Metro does not stop here. Up in Wild West Wales there’s much excitement about the campaign to reopen the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth line and prominent in support for this is Plaid Cymru. So Plaid has a policy of re-opening rural railway lines and stations then? We searched the internet in vain looking for this policy but alas could not find it. It seemed confined to between Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. There’s a theme here isn’t there? – Localism.

Perhaps the other parties have an all Wales policy? Russell George the Conservative AM for Montgomeryshire has a lot to say about roads..... in his constituency. The hunt for the Welsh national transport policy is a vain one it seems, not one of the three main parties in Wales has one. One of the reasons Churchill is so well regarded is that in many respects he transcended party politics

and looked upon his career as being in the national interest: something sadly lacking in our parochial little country. Can Labour ever plan for the whole of Wales and not just South Wales? Is Plaid capable of showing itself more than a fringe party demanding huge spending in Welsh speaking areas? Can the Conservatives progress beyond the roads shopping list that John Redwood's Welsh Office didn't get round to, and local issues?

My small cat Dusty has suggested that we need to take a leaf out of Sir Winston Churchill's book and send the troops in and bang some heads down in Cardiff Bay after the May election! She says that the Welsh Government must be on strike over transport as nothing has happened much since 1999, and many Labour members have links with the unions! Indeed we can all acknowledge the sentiment: after all there's nothing actually complicated about having a public transport system that works in the national interest even in rural areas. Whilst the benchmark for the metro is four services per hour at the fringes and even greater closer in to Cardiff, in rural Mid Wales the benchmark should be one service per hour, and of course the buses would be integrated with the rail service. The cost would be substantially less than one mile of the so called M4 Relief Road.

Three Cocks Cottage January 2016.

* The southern section of the old Neath & Brecon Railway is still open for freight traffic up to the Onllwyn Washery. Beyond that a section was kept open till the early 1980's and used intermittently for traffic from a quarry near Craig y Nos high on the hillside above the Upper Tawe valley and the Abercraf show caves inside the Brecon Beacons National park in the old county of Breconnockshire. Filming took place on this section in 1971.

Cambrian Coast WCR ERTMS tests 10-21/9/15

True to its word, West Coast Rail is attempting to bring back excursions to the once lucrative Cambrian Coast Express railtour market, which has benefitted the F&WHR in the past. In 2014, after problems in previous years with DB's staff failing to turn up to drive the NR 37/9s at Shrewsbury, the company decided to go it alone and fit Nos.37668/9 with the Hitachi ERTMS equipment. A revised fuel tank has been fitted with a notch for the ERTMS balise detector rather than reduce the loco's range by removing one of the fuel tanks. No.37668 was bought by West Coast back in 2007 and stored until selected for the ERTMS project in 2014. The loco was in traffic from 10/14 No.37669 is also to be fitted with the ERTMS equipment and should appear in due course as a reserve loco. It was in traffic from 3/15.

The loco undertook trials on the Cambrian Coast Line from Machynlleth depot from 10/9/15 when it ran from Machynlleth to Tywyn. On 15/9/15 it ran to Porthmadog and was dragged back by NR's Class 37/9 No.97304. The loco was stabled at Welshpool on 21/9/15 having worked there in the early hours from Machynlleth. Hitachi worked on the software to replicate the behaviour of the existing 24 Class 158s and 3 Class 97/9s running on the Cambrian ERTMS area with Ansaldo equipment. An issue connected with switching between kph and mph displays at the ERTMS boundary near Shrewsbury was identified and dealt with. The equipment was successfully trialled in No.97301. See RSSB website.

WCR must be hoping that, if the current running trials are successful, excursions to the Cambrian Coast can resume next year using these two Class 37s. Whether steam can ever return to the Cambrian is another matter. Although the Class 37s could pilot a steam excursion, some travellers would want the steam loco on the front and, unless NR relaxes its ERTMS rules that the first vehicle must have the ERTMS detector, operating a train with the Class 37 double headed inside or top and tailed must remain unlikely.

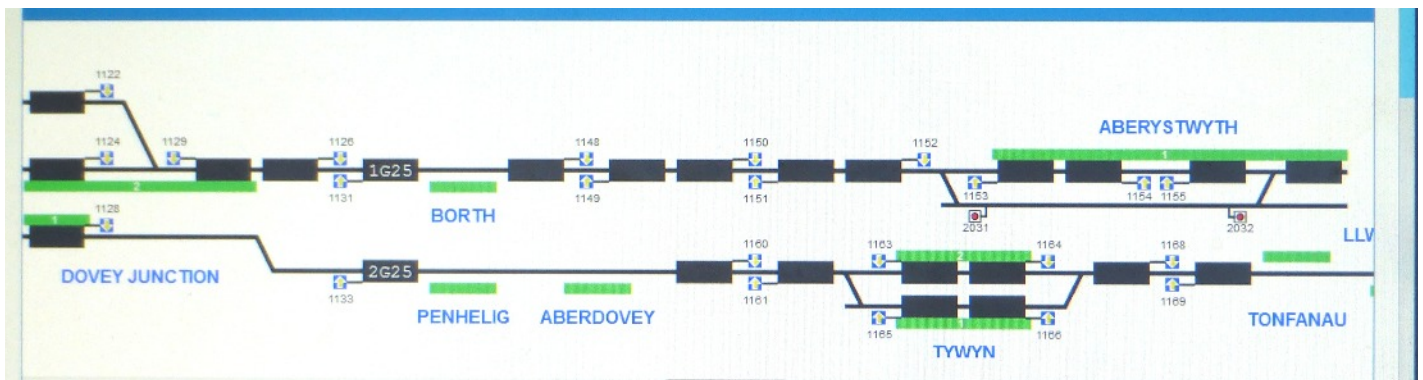
With the current ban on West Coast, it may be some time before we see their locos appearing on the Cambrian Lines. One can only hope that their safety procedures are quickly resolved.

Follow the trains

<http://www.opentraintimes.com/maps/signalling/cambrian>

This is a useful and interesting website, which shows the live progress of Cambrian Line trains, on a diagrammatic map of the system. Each train is shown by its reporting number. If the number is white, clicking on it brings up the individual train, showing all both the public and working timetable schedule, and also, if it has already started its journey, its actual progress. Clicking on MAPS in the upper right hand corner brings up other parts of the country.

Below is a screen shot showing the style of the map, with trains at or near Borth and Penhelig.



Friends of Chirk Station

It's not often that a station adoption group gets a mention during a debate in Parliament, but Clwyd South MP, Susan Elan Jones, stood up and praised the efforts of FoCS in campaigning for a new disabled-friendly footbridge for Chirk station. She said that the Welsh Government had awarded a grant for the project so that, by the end of November, the footbridge will be open. Susan went on to explain that "The friends of Chirk Station are an outstanding group of people who have done so much to beautify Chirk station through art work, lovely floral displays and keeping the station neat and tidy."

- from an article in the Wrexham Leader spotted by George Jones

George tells us that the footbridge is already open. He also says: "A further local development due to reach completion late in November will be the opening of the re-doubled line section between Saltney and Rossett which should attract a lot of attention. 90 mph running and improved line capacity is something we all look forward to, coupled with 90 mph running south of Gobowen."

From Rail User Express 20 Nov 2015

SARPA Meetings 2016

April	Saturday 16th	11.45	Wharf Station, Tywyn
May	Saturday 14th	11.00	Shrewsbury Railway Station
June	Tuesday 7th	18.50	Sportsman, Severn St, Newtown
July	Saturday 9th	11.45	White Lion, Machynlleth
August	Saturday 13th	12.15	Railway Hotel, Borth
September	Saturday 10th	11.30	Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool
October	Saturday 8th	11.00	AGM. Machynlleth, White Lion.
November	Tuesday 1st	18.50	The Sportsman, Severn Street, Newtown
December	Saturday 10th	11.45	Aberystwyth Venue to be announced

Where do rail passengers in Wales travel to?

Often wondered where your fellow traveller is going? I want a through train too...XYZ but there isn't one, wonder why? One of the improvements in recent years is the availability of Official statistics. Using such sources as the 2007 *Wales Rail Planning Assessment*, the *Rail passenger Journeys within Wales 2011/2012* and ORR's *Annual Station Estimates and Regional Rail use* we can deduce that:

An overall general statement for Wales is meaningless:- there is significant regional variation between South East Wales and the rest of Wales and between South West, Mid and North Wales and the individual unitary authorities within them.

However one general trend is along the border with England all the Unitary Authorities along the border, Flintshire, Wrexham, Powys and Monmouthshire see over 50% of their journeys into England. However two westerly UA's, Ceredigion and Anglesey, also see 50% of users going cross border. This is explained by the foot passengers from the Irish Ferries at Holyhead and the rail geography and poor connections in Mid Wales, leaving Ceredigion only really connected to Powys at the time the statistics were collated. Indeed the Mid Wales region sees 54% of its rail traffic going cross border. North Wales has 42%, South West Wales 21% and South East Wales just 17%. However the sheer volume of Cardiff commuter traffic in the South East masks the fact that on a rail journeys per head of population basis SE Wales has the highest number of cross border journeys in Wales. Indeed the Cardiff commuter traffic has a general dominating effect on all statistics.

So where do people go to in England? A break down by UA is not available but regional variation is again to the fore. People in SE Wales tend to go equally to the South West and London and the South East of England with around 40% of the market each. In the South West of Wales 55% is to London and the South East of England with the South West accounting for 15%. Up in North Wales 60% is to the North West of England, 20% to London and the South East. In Mid Wales 55% is to the West Midlands, 20% to London and the South East. A general rule is starting to shine through the adjacent region plus London and the South East dominates – the South West of Wales is not directly adjacent to anywhere in England but closer to the South West than anywhere else. These primary markets see the bulk of traffic with other regions seeing small percentages (and numbers).

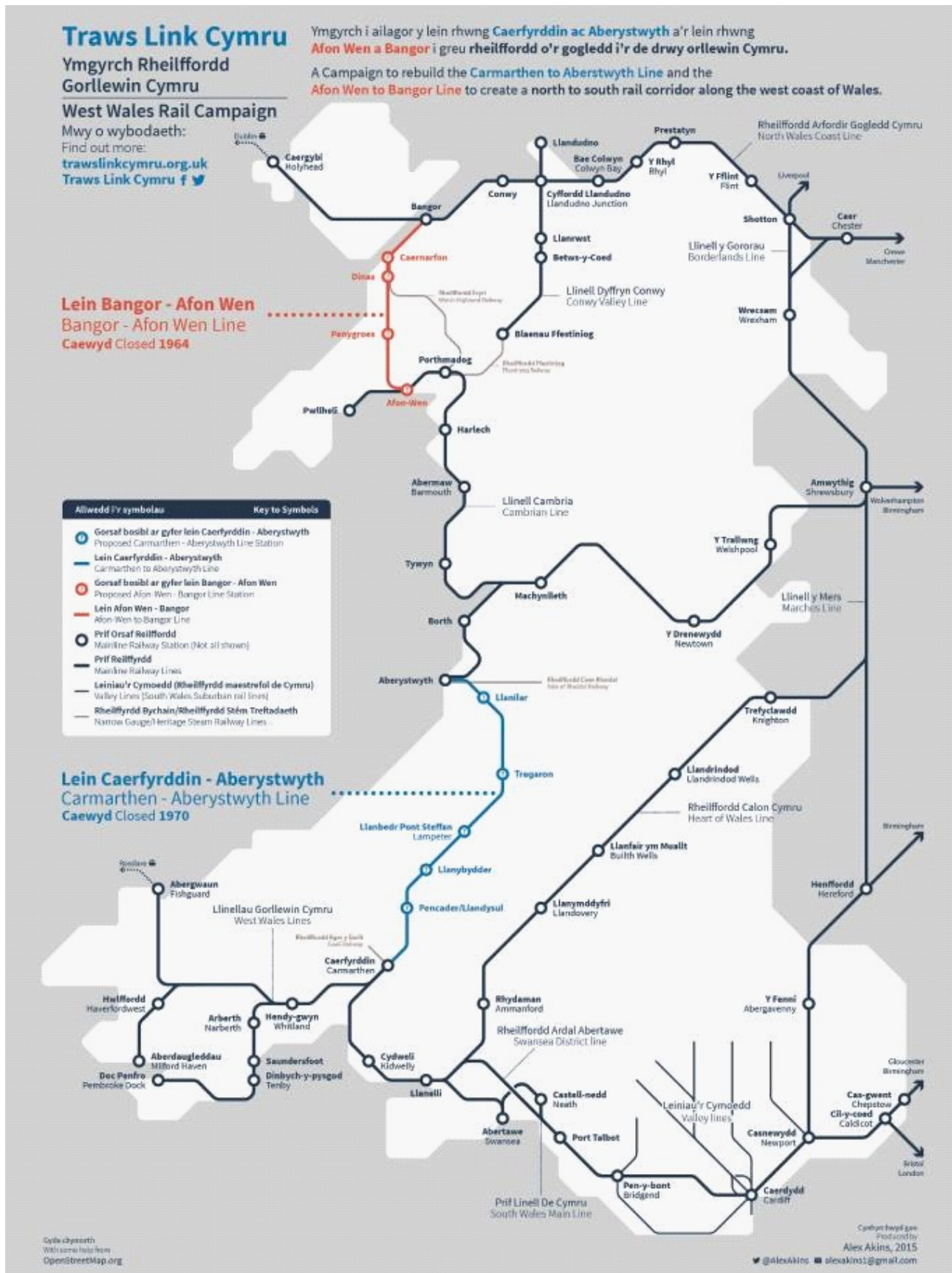
When we look at journeys within Wales by Unitary Authority to each other again our rule of adjacency emerges strongly. In North Wales 20% of journeys are to a neighbouring UA, in Mid Wales 25%, South West Wales 27% and South East Wales 28%. There are some regional differences: the key is that the neighbouring authority(s) are actually joined directly by rail to it, some small SE Wales UA's are not and have very low percentages. We can spot the commuting hot spots with 47% of Cardiff journeys coming from neighbouring UA's with 35% in Swansea.

Journeys within a UA show greatest variation and depend on stations within a UA and whether they link to a major centre in that area. Just 3% of Swansea journeys are within UA reflecting its decimated local network, whereas Gwynedd has 47% of journeys taking place within the UA aka the Cambrian Coast line. 0% was recorded for Newport – overall in Wales 20% was an average.

Now to Cardiff: from North Wales just 2% of journeys are to/from Cardiff, in Mid Wales it's 1.5%, in South West Wales it's 22% - 12% from Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. In South East Wales it's 37%.

On a journeys per head basis by UA some strong themes emerge. The sheer numbers around Cardiff of course dominate with an average of 24 journeys per head in the South East. North Wales and South West Wales have 8 journeys per head and Mid Wales drops to 4 journeys per head. Variation within region is apparent. Cardiff has 50 journeys per head, Newport, Bridgend, Vale of Glamorgan have over 20 journeys per head, Caerphilly over 15 journeys per head dropping down to around 10 per head for areas within an hour's travel of Cardiff. However Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent have 5 & 4 respectively. The Beeching factor comes into play here, with a number of large communities in the valleys not having a rail link, including some in Caerphilly County. Indeed the former commuter lines into Newport were all closed and the poorer performing UA's are on this side of South East Wales. Swansea has 9 journeys per head: for Wales's second city that's poor but as alluded to earlier its commuter network was all but closed down as were feeder lines in Neath Port Talbot. Gwynedd manages a respectable 13 journeys per head despite not being joined up by rail, and a large number

of its towns not being connected. Conwy and Denbighshire also have double figures perhaps reflecting the tourist nature of these areas. Powys has the lowest figure just below 4 but with the joke service on the Heart of Wales and Beeching closures, effectively over half the county has no rail service at all. Surprisingly Ceredigion with just 2 stations has just over 5 journeys per head compared to Pembrokeshire's non decimated networks 4.



Arriva Trains Wales service alterations

In the winter timetable which started on 13 December, a number of changes have been made, and Arriva Trains Wales have prepared a resumé of the most important ones, of which an extract follows:

Timetable 1 Swansea – Shrewsbury - Cambrian Coast - Chester - Birmingham

On the Cambrian line, the current 17:46 (Mon-Fri) Pwllheli to Machynlleth service has been retimed to start earlier at 17:42 due to operational reasons.

Due to essential Network Rail improvement work over the winter, the current 8:30 (Sun) Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth will be replaced by a bus service and a new service 09:47 (Sun) Machynlleth to Aberystwyth has been added.

The 09:51 (Sun) Birmingham New Street to Shrewsbury is extended to Aberystwyth (11:28 from Shrewsbury)

On the Heart of Wales line, the current 05:40 (Mon – Fri) Shrewsbury to Cardiff Central service now starts at 05:56 for operational reasons.

Timetable 2 South Wales - North Wales - Manchester

In response to a request from local stakeholders the 16:50 (Mon-Fri) Holyhead to Cardiff Central service calls additionally at Church Stretton and Craven Arms.

The following Sunday services stop additionally at Alderley Edge in Cheshire

09:28 (Sun) Crewe to Manchester Piccadilly

15:13 (Sun) Milford Haven to Manchester Piccadilly

09:30 (Sun) Manchester Piccadilly to Cardiff Central

22:35 (Sun) Manchester Piccadilly to Crewe

Due to Network Rail improvement work, the current 13:01 (Mon-Fri) Bangor to Manchester service starts later at 13:07.

Timetable 4 North Wales – Chester – Crewe – Warrington -Manchester

Following feedback from stakeholders, the following additional Llandudno – Llandudno Junction service has been added in order to enhance day time services.

12:46 (Mon-Sat) Llandudno – Llandudno Jn

12:57 (Mon-Sat) Llandudno Jn – Llandudno

The current 11:46 (Mon-Fri) Blaenau Ffestiniog to Llandudno service has been re-timed earlier at 11:35 to facilitate this additional Llandudno service.

The current 16:16 (Mon-Fri) Llandudno to Manchester Piccadilly leaves Llandudno earlier at 16:07 in order to connect to the Holyhead service at Llandudno Junction.

The current 12:44 (Sat) Llandudno to Manchester Piccadilly will leave Llandudno earlier at 12:36 in order to connect with the Bangor service at Llandudno Junction.

Arriva to Float Again?

No, this has nothing to do with the recent inclement weather! Arriva's parent company, Deutsche Bahn (DB) has felt itself somewhat strapped for cash owing to repeated strikes over the past 12 months and the inroads that foreign operators like National Express are making into the company's domestic business. Thoughts are therefore being given over to the possibility of floating some of DB's overseas operations on the stock market once again, although the main problems are those affecting the domestic business, rather than the foreign companies. This could mean that Arriva and the UK Schenker operations may be either wholly or partially sold off. Whether this would mean the whole UK Arriva group or individual subsidiaries like Chiltern and Arriva Trains Wales is not clear. All the same, the reduction in profits is only around 6% to 2.1 Billion Euros!

From Rail News

Sell off of stations?

Citigroup bankers have been brought in to advise Network Rail on how to privatise the 18 railway stations that it manages directly. (These include Birmingham New Street, Bristol Temple Meads, Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Central, Leeds, Liverpool Lime Street, Manchester Piccadilly and Reading, as well as ten major stations in London.)

Network Rail has recently been brought back onto the public balance sheet and is feeling the pressure to sell off stations for a quick fix to reduce its debt. This debt is partly caused by Network Rail giving a 'massive indirect subsidy' to the train companies for years. If the railways were brought into public ownership, £1.2 billion a year could be saved. We're already wasting money on privatisation, but if we sell off assets we'll waste more in the long term. We'll lose public control over those assets, and we'll lose the revenue stream and profits they would generate in the future.

That's not how Network Rail or the government sees it. They are asking Citigroup (which became insolvent and had to be bailed out by the US government in 2008) to 'test the market' and explore selling off your stations. This raises the question, are train stations simply there to generate the maximum revenue? Or are they public places and part of communities? No one asked you whether you wanted your stations to be handed over to private investors. You might have other ideas for how to create the better railway stations of the future. For example, stations could offer:

- Art and architecture
- A place to meet and chat with friends and family
- Indoor (or outdoor) gardening and greenery
- Information about train services and help with your journey
- Shopping
- Eating and drinking
- A place for community groups to meet or advertise themselves
- Places for children to play
- Trainspotting
- Flashmobs
- Water features

Selling off stations won't save money in the long term. But it's just as important to ask - what's happened to the voice of passengers and communities in this debate? Network Rail needs to hear from you, not just from Citigroup.

From:

<http://weownit.org.uk/blog/dont-let-citigroup-decide-future-your-stations>



Above: a glimpse of the past on the Bala to Blaenau Ffestiniog line, in 1959. A train from Bala has just arrived at Blaenau Ffestiniog Central. After closure of the branch, the section from Trawsfynydd to here was linked to the ex-LNWR line from Llandudno Junction, for the transport of nuclear material from Trawsfynydd Power Station. It is now out of use, following the closure of the station. However, there are ongoing plans to use the track for self-propelled velocipedes.

Below: the raison d'être of the line was primarily the transport of slate. Also in 1959, here is a self-acting incline in operation, above the Festiniog Railway's Duffys station. Photographs: Denis Bates



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
www.mylordz.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, Kings Place, 99, York Way, London. N1 9AG

Newtown Station Travel

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

The Association of Train Operating Companies:

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

London Midland

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

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

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

Virgin Trains

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

Traveline Cymru for all public transport information

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

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

Public Transport Users' Committee for Wales Secretariat

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

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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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