

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association

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Newtown, 2003

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year one and all - unless of course you're reading this while finding out your train's been turned short at Wolverhampton, now a daily or twice daily occurrence, and you're tamping mad; or finding out the your new 0633 from Birmingham is to be terminated at Machynlleth over half an hour late, and Lloyds coaches are waiting to take you forward. Suffice to say that punctuality issues are now top of the agenda as far as the day-to-day operation of the Cambrian is concerned. The last 4 week period up to the new timetable saw a meagre 76.6% punctuality achieved despite all the short turnarounds.

My New Year message to Arriva Trains Wales: is sort it out! You should no longer be distracted by the planning and implementation for your new timetable. At this point many a reader will be jumping up and down and saying "told you so, look what's happened giving Arriva the franchise"; however the reality of the punctuality problem is that it has several underlying causes, many of which pre-date the management geniuses from Leeds' involvement in our railway. To be fair to Arriva Trains Wales staff they have been investigating the problem and drawing up a range of options; however they seem to have put them on the back burner a bit and we're told that the June timetable change will see changes designed to aid punctuality. That means six months more misery for Cambrian users – an unacceptable situation that's likely to drive customers off the railway and negate the improvements that the timetable change has delivered us. Time for an emergency timetable not fare increases?

One of the reasons that small delays turn into big delays and eventual short turnarounds is of course the lack of passing loops on the Cambrian. With all trains scheduled to cross at Talerddig anything but an on time arrival in the loop from both passing trains will result in a reactionary delay to the other one. If the DOWN service is more than 15 late its customary to let the UP train through to Newtown (providing it's on time of course). However with the transit time to Newtown being 16 minutes the DOWN service picks up a bigger delay sitting in Newtown - crossing at Newtown thus makes any DOWN service 32 minutes late at least. There is just no flexibility west of Shrewsbury to ameliorate the effects of late running. This is why additional passing loops are necessary not just to facilitate extra services but as an aid to punctuality which is equally important.

News has filtered through that a reinstated loop at Caersws has been costed for as little as £400,000. At current rates the money saved because of time savings that could be made by crossing late trains at Caersws instead of holding them at Talerddig or Newtown it would soon repay itself.

Will someone show some initiative and leadership and get it done?

Gareth Marston
Newtown, January 2006

NEWS OF THE LINE

Loco hauled trains

News that Arriva are using a locomotive hauled train on the North Wales Coast and are planning on keeping a standby set in Cardiff that could be used on Fishguard or Cardiff to Gloucester services have again highlighted the shortage of rolling stock within the franchise. This followed a number of units including Cambrian regular 158838 being out of action following collision damage. Arriva are also understood to be looking at owning its own fleet of MK2 Coaches to be used on "Millennium Stadium days" and other special occasions. So far there have been no suggestions of a return to loco hauled traction for the Cambrian from Arriva.

There is a strong possibility if the ERTMS trials go ahead (and many sources within the industry are casting doubt on it because of the expense) that rescue locomotives may have to be based at Machynlleth.

On the subject of future loco-hauled trains to Pwllheli, **Trevor Roberts** writes: 'Following recent stories about loco hauled trains being banned north of Porthmadog for the next 18 months, it was confirmed on 4 November at a Cambrian Coast Rail liaison meeting that almost 75% of the planned renewals and other work north of Porthmadog, was carried out during the line closure during the Autumn half-term holiday. Another line closure is planned north of Porthmadog during the school half-term in February 2006, and following this final track work the line will then again be available for loco hauled charters, at least from Easter 2006. This was indeed good news and Network Rail must be congratulated on their efforts with track renewals along the coast.' - 6 November

Westbury

An unknown source has suggested that the station closed in 1960 should be reopened, to serve an estimated 5000 new homes that Shropshire CC Planning Department wish to build in the fields near here according to their Unitary Development Plan.

Pant/Llanymynech

Transferring the A483 bypass scheme to the West Midlands Regional Authority from the Welsh Assembly has seen its progress fare no better as it came out near the bottom of the priority list for funding in the next few years. Its just can't stack up as spiralling road costs squeeze budget allocations. In the meantime Cambrian Railway Society volunteers progress with relaying the track from Llanymynech northward to Oswestry. Heritage DMU's were run over a short stretch of track near Llynclys last summer.

Newtown

Is of course the 1411th busiest station on the national network according to the SRA with 80,768 passengers tickets sold from and to in 2002/2003 (apologies as it was missed out of the last newsletter).

Café Loco is reported to be up for sale on the internet though it remained open over Christmas 2005.

Track work in-between the platforms was re-laid in November.

Welshpool

An additional waiting shelter is being considered by Arriva Trains Wales.

The message beneath is a standard one that can be repeated to save editorial/copyrighting time in future editions based on performance in recent years. Please choose two of the options (one from A, B or C and one from D or E) below to currently describe the state of facilities at this station.

- A. All the lights are working on the ramp (20% chance)
- B. Some of the lights are working on the ramp (60% chance)
- C. None of the lights are working on the ramp. (20% chance)
- D. The passenger information system on the platform is not working (90% chance)
- E. The passenger information system on the platform is working (10% chance)

Those that remember how the Welsh Office promised a new and better station when the bypass was built are still waiting.

Caersws

Reinstating the loop there is reported to have been costed at as little as £400,000, the price of just 20 metres of the so called M4 Relief Road.

Borth

The platform canopy is in such a state that it may have to be demolished.

Aberystwyth

An automatic ticket machine is due to be installed, hopefully helping out when queues form at the booking office.

Freight Trials

The trail has gone cold. Industry sources are stating that the Freight Multiple Units could well appear in Scotland this year.

Welsh Assembly Government statistics reveal that in 2004 113 million tonnes of freight were moved by HGV in Wales, 17 million tonnes of it heading to the North West of England. Road haulage sources claim there is no market for rail freight in Wales.

Ceredigion a back to front county?

Welsh Assembly Government statistics reveal that 65% of rail use in Wales is for journeys within Wales, however in Ceredigion the picture is reversed with 66% of all journeys to or from destinations outside Wales.

Ceredigion will soon become bottom of the league with the fewest number of railway stations for any unitary authority area in Wales with just 2 once the Ebbw Valley railway into Blaenau Gwent is reopened.

The express coach link southward to Carmarthen from Aberystwyth the X40 service has been revealed to travel at an average speed of 22mph. The slow coach through Ceredigion?

Powys a dangerous county?

The roads in Powys are officially the most dangerous to travel on in Wales with more accidents and deaths per mile of carriageway than anywhere else. There is concern that the growing number of roadside floral tributes may cause more accidents as drivers are distracted by them.

As far as SARPA's research can tell it was way back in 1922 that a passenger was last killed on the railways in Powys.

Welsh Public Transport preferences.

Welsh Assembly Government statistics reveal that between 1998 & 2004, bus use in Wales declined by 5% despite the introduction of free travel for pensioners whilst rail use increased by just under 15%.

704 Traws Cambria Express Bus Link Brecon to Newtown

Due to start operation on the 9th January operated by Stagecoach, timings are on two hourly intervals (six buses a day) and designed to connect with trains in the Shrewsbury direction only. Buses arriving from Brecon miss the Aberystwyth train by 5 minutes. Journey time to Brecon is 113 minutes.

Cambrian Fleet Reliability

Figures in Modern Railways Magazine reveal that Arriva Trains Wales Cambrian Class 158 fleet Moving Annual Average for Period 7 in 2005 was 6948 miles per casualty - an improvement of 49% upwards on the previous year when they managed 4668 miles per casualty. The Miles per Casualty figure for period 7 of 2005/2006 was 9026 or once every 36 return trips from Aberystwyth to Birmingham or two weeks in traffic.

Cardiff Bay

Labour was humiliated and forced to accept amendments to its budget as the opposition ganged up on it and rejected its initial proposals. The compromise when it came in December contained some news for transport relevant to the Cambrian. The Welsh Conservatives press release states that funding is being looked at to secure more rolling stock for the Cambrian and that a cross party committee is to be set up in the Assembly to look at ways of improving the rail network of the whole of Wales. Rhodri Morgan proclaimed the new budget a true Labour one, Andrew Davies chucked his dummy and said there was no need for such a committee as there was already a rail plan for Wales (Anyone seen it?) and the announcement by Sue Essex on whether the extra money has been found for the rolling stock has not yet come at the time of going to print.

Excerpt from e mail from Arriva Trains Wales MD Graeme Bunker to the Chairman.

I can also confirm that we are developing the improved Cambrian timetable with Network Rail to resolve the key performance issues. We will introduce this at the beginning of June and I hope to unveil this timetable shortly.

There are no plans to de-scale our operations on the Cambrian, far from it. We are spending £1.5m on a massively expanded depot at Machynlleth, are recruiting staff and working to improve reliability. We are also upgrading the steam based Cambrian Coast Express this year which brought such important revenue into the area for local businesses. We are also working in detail with the WAG on the plans for additional capacity on the Cambrian announced in the recent WAG Budget.

THE NEW RAIL TIMETABLE - DECEMBER 2005

The availability of rail timetable information on the web is one of the more useful benefits of modern IT. However, I still buy a copy of each National Rail Timetable, as the best way of getting a general picture of train times before checking specific details. I acquired the latest during a visit to Birmingham, and turned first to Table 75. I already had a copy of Arriva's own booklet for the Cambrian lines, and comparing the two pointed me straight at the inevitable supplement to the National book.

There are two pages of corrections to Table 75 (Birmingham to Chester, Aberystwyth & Pwllheli), covering:-

- a) deletion of trolley service,
- b) omission of Wellington stops,
- c) references to through portions to or from the Cambrian Coast line,
- d) a Shrewsbury stop added to the 0732 from Aberystwyth (!),
- e) alteration to Wolverhampton and New St arrival times.

Many entries in essentials appear twice, as there are still separate Monday-Friday and Saturday tables, some a third or fourth time in a further page of amendments to Table 74 (Birmingham to Shrewsbury). As a result, some part of the printed information for practically every train between Birmingham and Aberystwyth has been changed.

The National Rail timetable book ought still to be (in the jargon of today) an important marketing tool for rail services. The latest is, frankly, a pretty poor effort for the Cambrian lines. Oh, and there's the usual "What's New" page 2, on which the word "Arriva" appears nowhere!

Turning to the actual times, specifically Shrewsbury connections, for the record the services tabulated on page 11 of the August Newsletter have been modified:-

1030 Holyhead	1315 - 1318	Cardiff
1120 Cardiff	1315 - 1330	Holyhead
1132 Aberystwyth	1321 - 1324	Birmingham
1233 Birmingham	1324 - 1330	Aberystwyth

to which I add

1234 Manchester*	1346 - 1349	Swansea
1055 Swansea	1352 - 1354	Manchester*

* until 25 March, while the direct Crewe-Manchester line is closed, Manchester services are diverted via Warrington to/from Oxford Road, with extended journey times.

The pattern appears to repeat during the day - I haven't had time to check them all! Hence there are Cambrian connections:-

xx21-xx30 / xx15-xx30 to/from Chester & Holyhead
 xx21-xx54 / xx46-xx30 to/from Manchester
 xx21-xx49 / xx15-xx30 to/from Cardiff & Swansea

Although not perhaps all up to Swiss standards (but then neither probably is our record of maintaining connections), these are better than before, not least because they occur systematically in each 2-hour cycle.

Roger Whitehouse

THE IMPORTANCE OF CAMBRIAN LINE STATIONS

Now available on the Web is a listing of stations in Great Britain, ranked in order of importance, based on the number of people using them (figures for 2002-3). This was compiled for the Strategic Rail Authority for its *Railways for All* consultation. These figures exclude journeys made using Travel Passes, Rover tickets bought off the line, as well as staff travel passes.

For the Cambrian lines, the figures make interesting reading. Firstly, it is no surprise that Aberystwyth is the busiest station. But it is not followed by Machynlleth and Newtown, but by Barmouth, Harlech and Tywyn - presumably reflecting the use of the train for school journeys. Welshpool has only three-quarters of the numbers of Newtown users. Is this because it is nearer to Shrewsbury, or is it due to population size?

The table lists 2496 stations and halts: the range is from Barry Links, with a total of eight arrivals/departures in the year, to London Bridge, with over 80 million. Aberystwyth is ranked 879th in the list. Within Wales, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno Junction are slightly further up the list at 877th and 874th respectively. The next stations in Wales below Aberystwyth include Treherbert at 884th, Pengam at 995th and Cardiff Bute Road at 1004th. As a branch terminus, Pwllheli, at 1564th, is comparable with Mallaig, Ardrossan Harbour and Bishop Auckland. Within Wales, it ranks slightly below Abergele.

The School children on the coast are of course commuters. What would the figures from Caersws, Newtown and Welshpool look like if commuting to Shrewsbury by rail be viable?

Station	Rank	Entries	Exits	Totals	Psrs/day
Aberystwyth	879	111,482	107,016	218,498	599
Barmouth	1005	88,540	85,664	174,204	477
Harlech	1144	66,843	67,069	133,912	367
Tywyn	1278	51,937	52,305	104,242	286
Machynlleth	1401	40,664	40,555	81,219	223
Newtown Powys	1410	40,017	40,751	80,768	221
Penrhyndeudraeth	1548	29,495	29,290	58,785	161
Welshpool	1551	29,281	31,257	60,538	166
Pwllheli	1564	28,375	27,936	56,311	154
Porthmadog	1690	21,028	20,557	41,585	114
Fairbourne	1729	19,402	19,521	38,923	107
Borth	1767	17,503	19,537	37,040	101
Llwyngwril	1828	14,866	15,257	30,123	83
Caersws	1912	11,641	11,959	23,600	65
Aberdovey	1942	10,356	10,946	21,302	58
Llanaber	1983	9,222	9,176	18,398	50
Dyffryn Ardudwy	2051	7,328	8,141	15,469	42
Talybont	2067	6,929	7,740	14,669	40
Criccieth	2094	6,203	6,138	12,341	34
Penhelig	2117	5,509	5,642	11,151	31
Llanbedr	2137	5,142	5,615	10,757	29
Minffordd	2140	5,122	5,113	10,235	28
Morfa Mawddach	2244	2,990	3,408	6,398	18
Talsarnau	2280	2,326	2,480	4,806	13
Llandanwg	2320	1,515	1,622	3,137	9
Butlins Penychain	2332	1,336	1,447	2,783	8
Pensarn	2369	928	906	1,834	5
Tonfanau	2398	624	587	1,211	3
Dovey Junction	2430	372	432	804	2
Llandecwyn	2431	351	407	758	2
Tygywn	2441	271	322	593	2
Abererch	2449	221	277	498	1
Totals		637,819	639,073	1,276,892	

BUSES AND SCAPEGOATS

Many members have contacted me over recent weeks deeply concerned about the widespread talk of “bustitution” in the rail and other press, especially members from east of Offa’s Dyke. I believe we need to understand the rationale and the thinking behind the calls to close lines and stations and replace them with buses, and come up with answers to those questions rather than solely focus on bus vs. rail.

Cast your minds back to that May morning in 1992 when John Major woke up and had to pinch himself that he was still Prime Minister, the Conservatives had unexpectedly won another general election. There had been a vague manifesto commitment to privatise BR but no details had been fleshed out - after all no one in the Conservative party expected to have to implement it. Into this vacuum steps our panto villains the Treasury officials who cooked up the privatisation process. They thought they had a cunning wheeze that would wash the government’s hands of paying for the railway. Funny how most of us believe that we pay taxes so that the government provides public services: after all the roads are funded via general taxation – maybe a debate for another occasion. So back to our story: wind the clock forward to 2006 and according to the Treasury master plan instead of the railways costing the nation c.£6.5 billion a year we should be near the point where the premium payments from the better performing TOC’s should compensate for the reduced subsidy still required by the regional TOC’s and the bill should only be a few hundred million at most.

As the character in Little Britain would say “the computer says no” and therein is the crux of the problem: the bill to pay for the dysfunctional railway is a lot higher than anybody in government is willing to pay (by the way it’s about 4% of the combined Health and Education budget and still works out at less than the European average spend in GDP terms). At the moment there’s a strong rumour knocking around that the Treasury is willing to fund a £3 to £3.5 Billion bill for the railways from 2008 onward. This is the underlying cause behind the bus replacement debate.

But hasn’t New Labour tinkered and fiddled with the railways for the last nine years, creating and then abolishing new organisations and structures? Surely the “we’re never wrong” party couldn’t have got its rail policy wrong over a decade in power? Well they have. For tough decisions substitute “we’ve screwed up and somebody’s going to get hurt” and you get the picture.

Everybody agrees the size of railway we’ve currently got should not be as expensive as it is. Shouldn’t have the ROSCO’s been a prime candidate for the Rail Review of 2004? Well, Darling bottled out of doing anything here. On the Cambrian the leasing of 14 year old Class 158’s is currently costing c. £1.5 million per annum before anything else is paid for. BR used to write off the cost of new assets after 7 years so can anybody see where £1.5 million of maintenance on our units has been spent this year? Of course not! Abolishing a leasing system for old stock based on differential pricing is a gift horse with wrapping paper on it in the fight to reduce rail costs, but alas it’s beyond the wit of the DfT and New Labour. Instead we’re told how bus replacements will save money and provide a better service.

The reality of the bustitution debate is that rural and local lines outside the London commuter belt are trying to be used as a scapegoat for government’s failure to sort out the inherent cost and efficiency weaknesses of rail privatisation. Now if I had a pound for every time I’ve gone over the many failings of the bustitution concept I’d be a rich man. The concept is very weak with many big holes in it. You could drive a double decker bus through them!

The latest spin is that the modern high quality bus is an attractive product that can provide a better ride than rolling stock like Pacers and can do so much more like access town centres, stop where passengers want, be more frequent than trains and crucially cost a lot less to provide and of course because the modern high quality bus is so great we'll all flock to use them, Hurrah!

Now there's a huge flaw in the quality argument. Yes modern road coaches can be quite high spec., but in the context of using them to replace rural lines they have to travel over rural roads and as we all know rural roads even "A" ones are pretty twisty, torturous things that are no joy to travel on and there's no guarantee that a bus replacement service would be able to travel by "A" roads anyway. Our whole office had to go down to Cardiff in October, so they thoughtfully laid a coach on for us. Nearly everyone including regular car travellers felt sick and had aches and pains, and it took over four hours from Machynlleth down the A470. In May I and some colleagues used the X32 Express coach service between Porthmadog and Bangor; we spurned a quicker bus connection to Llandudno to wait for a train; after an hour on the bus we wanted off. I'm told by friends who went to Aberystwyth and then down to Carmarthen on the X40 that the best bit of the bus leg was the feeling of relief when they got off. A couple of years ago a German firm turned up demonstrating their new "wunder coach" articulated with cycle space, toilets and drinks facilities - the answer to rural long distance transport solutions? Some Highways types from the county councils seemed to think so; however the Germans refused to take it beyond Newtown "in case it got stuck" on the narrow roads.

Here in Wales we have a template for the wonderful new bus services that the people who refuse to admit they've got it wrong pine for – the Traws Cambria express coach network. Express is hardly the word, with average speeds in the low and mid twenty mph's, frequencies similar to current UK rural train operating practices, and ridership of these buses usually in the single figure mark. I'm told from within the industry that the X32 service between Caernarfon and Bangor only carries c. 8% of the passengers that a reopened railway line to Caernarfon was predicted to carry, as many of the Wales and Border franchise bidders wanted to do but weren't allowed (and most of these were going to Ysbyty Gwynedd anyway). We all know that replacing trains with buses is a load of stuff and nonsense in terms of quality public transport provision, fighting congestion, bringing in tourists and social exclusion. The real answer is to have an efficient cost-effective structure for the rail industry: then these half baked theories would not raise their head. Buses are short distance creatures where they play a very important role, but for anything over 10 miles they become a sub optimal solution.

It's very unlikely that we would be having this debate if the railway had not been privatized in the way it was, followed by eight and a half years of a government that refuses to listen. Government has to grow up and admit where it's gone wrong and rectify it rather than looking for scapegoats. Sorry to go back to the structural debate but it underpins everything.

Community Rail was supposedly going to find out the answers to how much running rural branch lines actually cost. It's strange how this has gone very quiet, now. I'm sure the bustitution brigade would be screaming from the rooftops if the answer fitted their theory. However they're not. I suspect the DfT is keeping a lid on the answer because it bears out the fact that's it's elsewhere the railway is costing too much - not in the rural areas. To misquote ex President Clinton –it's the structure stupid!

Llanidloes station, looking towards Moat Lane, April 1962

AN EDWARDIAN LUNCHTIME

Take a trip between Newtown and Welshpool, and if you're sharp enough (the train will be doing 80mph plus at this point) you'll notice about 6 miles south of Welshpool and 7 miles north of Newtown what looks like an old station building on the UP side with a small cluster of houses beneath it and on the DOWN side there appears to be an old goods shed with some industrial activity going on. Those that know the area well will tell you it's the hamlet of Caerhowell and Brakes Brothers frozen food distribution depot. Those of you more in the know will be able to think "alas poor Montgomery station". Closed in June 1965, wasn't it one of those rural stations that were nowhere near the place they purported to serve?

Take a trip back in time to the summer of 1904, and more accurately a Tuesday lunchtime and the station staff at Montgomery would not have the time spare to discuss such a proposition. Maybe the porter would have time to shout that Montgomery station of the Cambrian Railways was the station for no fewer than 36 towns, village and hamlets. The Cambrian Railways Working timetable of the summer of 1904 shows that number ranging from the town of Montgomery itself to the village of Churchstoke and perhaps optimistically Bishops Castle. Most were within a 5 mile radius and many on the English side of the border; motor vehicles were very few and far between in those days. You must also bear in mind that the population of the countryside was much greater in those days.

Dwelling on that maybe, the signalman could tell you about the traffic that stopped at the station or maybe not, as at 1300 he had to deal with the arrival simultaneously of 2 pick up goods trains. The 0510 Machynlleth to Welshpool goods had finally arrived having spent 4 hours shunting the goods yards at Newtown en route, the 1210 Welshpool to Machynlleth pick up goods was also due, having dropped off wagons at

Kilkewydd siding if required and a further 10 minutes at Forden. The layout at Montgomery consisted of a loop with a platform on each side, a small siding on the UP side and more extensive sidings on the DOWN side including a goods shed. Hopefully the wagons to be dropped off would be marshalled sensibly and the wagons and goods to be collected placed with care - the station master wanted a smooth operation. The DOWN goods was booked for 32 minutes and the UP for 45: plenty of time, maybe the trains or parts of them could be held in the loop to ease operations? No chance, there is a rush to clear the DOWN loop and at 1305 the empty carriages that form a Tuesdays only working from Welshpool (1250) to Newtown appear and soon disappear. The next few minutes sees frenetic activity and shunting, while some horses and carts are waiting to take goods up into the town and the surrounding villages. Then a few ponies and traps appear carrying well dressed ladies and gents.

Perhaps the booking clerk can help explain what's going on? No, he's busy with an elderly lady enquiring about her through coach to Liverpool. At 1324 the 1105 Aberystwyth to Welshpool passenger working arrives. The elderly lady is safely deposited in the through London & North Western Railway carriage for Liverpool Lime St along with a travelling sales man. A through carriage for Manchester London Rd is also seen in the formation. However time is short before another train appears in the DOWN direction. The station master is strutting his stuff on the DOWN side where the small throng of people awaiting suggests this is one of the main events of the day. At 1325 the "North Express" pulls in: the 1217 from Whitchurch to Aberystwyth. The eye is drawn to the LNWR coaches as seen on the UP train: 3 of them, one from Liverpool Lime St, one from Manchester London Rd and one which has come from Leeds via Huddersfield and Stockport. The North Express is promptly away at 1325 followed by the UP passenger to Welshpool at 1327. The goods trains are reassembled out of the sidings and soon depart at 1332 DOWN and 1345 UP.

Back to a rural slumber then? The signalman has started to boil a kettle and other station staff exchange banter, news and jokes, but there's the goods unloaded from the goods trains and the guards van of the North Express to be sorted and handed over for collection to be seen to. The signalmen gets the out of section from Forden signal box about 1355 and he can now rest a bit: it was over an hour ago that Forden box offered him the DOWN pick up goods. At 1411 a bell rings in the signal box - Abermule box offering the UP North Express which is non-stop through Montgomery passing through at 1416. When this train reaches Forden the main event of the day is heralded as Forden box offers the DOWN "London Express" due at 1426. Having started at 1415 from Welshpool, this train will be a request stop only if there are passengers from the through carriages wishing to disembark. There are through carriages from two other railway companies: from the LNWR with coaches from Birmingham New St and London Euston, and the Great Western Railway with carriages from Birmingham Snow Hill and London Paddington. Once this train has passed Abermule the Tuesdays only Newtown (1420) to Welshpool stopping passenger train will be offered arriving at 1442. From this will alight local people having been into Newtown for market day carrying goods purchased.

Montgomery was hardly a rural backwater and there would be a further 17 goods, passenger and mail trains passing through before the day's work was done. In all on a Tuesday in the summer of 1904 there were 40 scheduled train movements through Montgomery, 12 of which crossed here (see table). Today 16 passenger trains a day pass through non-stop.

DOWN Train movements through Montgomery station Tuesdays July, August and September 1904.

*Source: Cambrian Railways Working Timetable 1904.
Oxford Publishing Co. Reprint 1977.*

Arrive	Depart	Type of train	From	To	Comments
0422	0424	Mail and Passenger	Whitchurch Dep. 0225	Aberystwyth Arr. 0620	
	0535	Goods	Welshpool Dep. 0500	Machynlleth Arr. 0900	Stops for perishables or dropping off timber
	0635	Goods	Welshpool Dep. 0600	Machynlleth Arr. 0955	Stops when required
	0740	Goods	Whitchurch Dep. 0400	Aberystwyth Arr. 1335	Stops when required
	0810	Passenger	Welshpool Dep. 0755	Newtown Arr. 0830	3rd class only
	0904	Passenger	Oswestry Dep. 0805	Aberystwyth Arr. 1125	
	1141	Passenger	Whitchurch Dep. 1007	Aberystwyth Arr. 1410	GWR through carriage from Birmingham Snow Hill LNWR through carriage from Shrewsbury LNWR through carriages from Liverpool Lime St. And Manchester London Road
1300	1332	Goods	Welshpool Dep. 1210	Machynlleth Arr. 1815	
	1305	Empty carriages	Welshpool Dep. 1250	Newtown Arr. 1325	
	1325	North Express	Whitchurch Dep. 1217	Aberystwyth Arr. 1535	LNWR through carriages from Liverpool Lime St., Manchester London Rd. And Leeds via Huddersfield and Stockport
	1426	London Express	Welshpool Dep. 1415	Aberystwyth Arr. 1620	LNWR through carriages from Birmingham New St. And London Euston GWR through carriages from Birmingham Snow Hill and London Paddington
	1520	Passenger	Whitchurch Dep. 1350	Aberystwyth Arr. 1720	Stops for passengers from through carriages only LNWR through carriages from Liverpool Lime St. And Manchester London Rd. GCR through carriage from Manchester London Rd., Sheffield, Nottingham and Leicester
	1551	Passenger	Whitchurch Dep. 1400	Aberystwyth Arr. 1745	LNWR through carriages from Shrewsbury, Birmingham New St. And London Euston
	1632	Passenger	Welshpool Dep. 1620	Aberystwyth Arr. 1845	GWR through carriages from Birmingham Snow Hill and London Paddington
	1725	Goods	Oswestry Dep. 1500	Aberystwyth Arr. 2040	
	1923	Passenger	Whitchurch Dep. 1720	Aberystwyth Arr. 2135	LNWR through carriages from Liverpool Lime St., Shrewsbury and London Euston
2005	2015	Goods	Oswestry Dep. 1710	Moat Lane Arr. 2125	Special arrangements to be made for urgent goods to S. Wales
2040	2045	Passenger	Whitchurch Dep. 1840	Llanidloes Arr. 2140	

NEW TICKET NEWS

Gwynedd County Council have issued their Winter edition of their excellent Bus / Rail Timetable Booklet valid from 31 October 2005 to 8 April 2006. The booklet is widely available not only in Gwynedd but also surrounding counties . The booklet carries details of major timetable changes to Arriva Trains Wales services from 11 December 2005 on North Wales and Cambrian lines as well as changes to local bus services since the last edition of the timetable. The booklet also contains details of example fares and Rover Tickets available on buses and trains in the area.

The booklet also carries details of a new Zonal Bus / Rail Rover Ticket is to be launched during Winter 2005 / 2006 incorporating the whole of North Wales. This ticket will be called **Tocyn Taith** and will allow travel on all local bus services and rail services in the area.

There will be seven zones in total across North Wales:

- A: Isle of Anglesey
- B: Gwynedd + Llangefni / Amlwch & Machynlleth / Aberystwyth
- C: Conwy
- D: Denbighshire
- F: Flintshire
- W: Wrexham & Gobowen
- Z: Chester Stn / City Centre / Business Park

Any 2 adjacent zones will cost £6; Any 3 adjacent zones will cost £10; Any 4 adjacent zones will cost £15; All Zones will cost £20

Copies of the new Gwynedd timetable are available on buses in the area, along with Tourist Information Centres and tourist attractions in the area or from Gwynedd County Council.



Newtown, 25th March 2003

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU? A QUICK REVIEW OF THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF THE NEW TIMETABLE

Thank god it's arrived no more speculation, rumour and panic!

Plus points:

- The 0807 from Machynlleth to Birmingham is now 4-car including through portions from Barmouth (0657) and Aberystwyth (0732).
- The 1731 off Shrewsbury is now 4-car.
- The 0633 from Birmingham to Aberystwyth (arrives 0918), connecting with the 0908 from Machynlleth to Pwllhelli (arrives 1112) and also meaning the Chairman of SARPA can now get to work by train!
- The 0435 from Machynlleth to Aberystwyth (strictly for the early bird).
- The last two trains now not waiting c. 30 minutes at Shrewsbury after arriving from Birmingham.
- Good connections at Shrewsbury to Cardiff (28 minutes outbound, 15 minutes on return) and Wrexham/Chester/North Wales Coast (9 minutes outbound, 15 minutes on return).

Measured in terms of seats per mile travelled, statistically the new timetable equates to a 22% increase westbound and an 8% eastbound! Queue howls of protest from readers whose regular train is still 2-car.

Minus points:

- The 0633 from Birmingham is seemingly always late, negating the benefits it should bring and making the Chairman of SARPA late for work.
- The last train from Shrewsbury being half an hour earlier (dep 2134).
- The last through train from Aberystwyth (1932) to Shrewsbury being half an hour earlier and only going through as far as Shrewsbury (arrives 2121).
- Waits in both directions at Shrewsbury of 50 minutes to Manchester.

One of the promised benefits of a standard pattern timetable was supposed to be improved punctuality but if anything it's now worse.

Measured strictly against what we did have then, if you take the punctuality issues out of the equation the effects have been positive; however everybody measures the service against where it should be and in that respect it's a minor shift to the better.

An idea for a day out.

The new timetable improves connections at Shrewsbury in some directions but not all; one direction to benefit is from/to Cardiff. However the trains do stop at other places en route.

Described as one of the finest market towns in England, Ludlow lies approximately 30 minutes south of Shrewsbury. The town is outwardly very affluent - take a look in the estate agents' windows and wince - and has a wide variety of shops that cater not only for local trade but also a year round tourist one. It benefits from its Castle in the

town centre which though a bit crumbly is still intact enough to be a tourist attraction of some note, with imaginative use of the castle grounds for festivals and fairs throughout the year (a charge is levied). The castle square holds regular markets at least twice weekly including Saturdays and benefits from being the near the market garden area of Herefordshire. There are specialist delicatessens and cheese shops making a food enthusiast's mouth salivate. There is a wide choice of tea rooms, public houses and hotels serving food and drink. The Campaign for Real Ale recommends the Church Inn on The Buttercross.

The trip there by train is interesting in its own right. Approaching Craven Arms you can look out for the remains of the branches to Much Wenlock and Bishop Castle. Craven Arms station itself has not had its railway land encroached on yet and you gain a good impression of how extensive facilities once were when the railways handled freight. The Heart of Wales line curves away on a right angle close by after leaving the station. However the highlight is undoubtedly passing the fortified manor house at Stokesay Castle on the left after leaving Craven Arms, now a National Trust property; rail travellers get a stunning view no motorist ever will. Watch out for Ludlow race course c. 5 minutes after Craven Arms on the left and Bromfield cricket ground on the right (summer Saturdays). The town centre is a 10 minute uphill walk from Ludlow station either past Tesco or cutting up through the car parks.

Catching the 0732 from Aberystwyth (0657 from Barmouth) arriving Shrewsbury at 0921, there's a comfortable wait to the 0949 to Milford Haven (from Manchester Oxford Road) arriving Ludlow 1020. Returning get the 1449 to Holyhead (from Cardiff Central) arriving Shrewsbury 1515 in time for the 1532 to Aberystwyth arriving 1722, which connects with the 1706 to Pwllheli at Machynlleth. NB: timings are for Saturdays only.

FROM THE PRESS

Western Mail Dec 21st 2005:

From item by Rhodri Clark:

Gareth Marston of Newtown, Powys, said he could now travel to work in Machynlleth by train, because Arriva had introduced an earlier service. "Previously you couldn't go west from Newtown by train till gone 10am," he said.

"The punctuality hasn't been that good. I went in on the train three times last week, and twice it was over half-an-hour late."

A PEMBROKESHIRE RAMBLE

Following Roger Goodhew's recent report of a journey on the North and Mid-Wales "Circle", I partook of a similar but shorter journey in South Wales.

Beginning in Whitland on the former South Wales Railway mainline, I boarded the 1108 to Pembroke Dock, formed of a two-car 150 Class outwardly repainted in Arriva's two-tone livery and internally reasonably clean and in good condition, except for the one and only loo. The seat to window line-up in 150's does not make for the best "viewing platform" – our own 158's are superior in this respect – but the run was reasonably quiet and smooth, at least as far as Tenby, with several stretches of welded track. After Whitland the signalling is radio-controlled on the same system as the Heart of Wales line, so at Tenby with its spring-loaded passing loop, the driver enters a small cabin to obtain permission to release an actual token for the next section.

I had never travelled beyond Tenby before, so, with OS map handy, it appeared to be potentially highly scenic with sea views. Regrettably, due to the lie of the coastal land, these were never forthcoming although tantalizingly close. The track of this section of the branch was noticeably inferior to the rest, and there were several dead-stops for ungated level-crossings. Loadings were fair as far as Tenby, but poor thereafter; however, most request stops were used.

Arrival at Pembroke Dock was on time, but the state of the station, which retains its original building, now a Bar, and rusting awning, was very depressing. Indeed, the impression gained of the branch, with the exception of a spruce Tenby station, is of a very basic railway, much of which is woebegone and in need of a cosmetic overhaul at the very least. There is evidently no freight at present using the branch, although a large mobile ramp positioned at the track-end at Pembroke Dock suggested car transporters had been that way in the recent past.

A return as far as Pembroke was made by the 1216 service. The station here again was basic – a modern bus shelter sufficing for a station building – but the surroundings had been planted out and were well kept. A brisk walk into the town followed by a look at the impressive castle and lunch, thence by bus to Milford Haven (Silcox service 356 at 38 minutes past the hour from outside the castle entrance) via the impressive Cleddau Bridge and the old Great Western Packet Quay of New Milford, later Neyland.

Milford Haven is a most impressive anchorage on the largest of scales; the views on such a clear day just breathtaking. I struck up an interesting conversation with the officer in the local Tourist Information Centre, who turned out to be heavily involved with a similar organisation to SARPA – the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers' Association. He bemoaned the state of their services and stations; the under-use of the Fishguard line in particular where a small investment on a limited local service together with the re-opening of Goodwick Station, which is more convenient to Fishguard town than the harbour station, and where the platform still exists, found us in total agreement.

His comments were brought home when I found Milford Haven "station". It was quite a shock to discover this tatty halt apparently amid a sea of new roads and a Tesco complex. Like so much else on the Pembrokeshire rail system, it is unstaffed and uncared for. But the train was on time: at 1634 a single 153 unit in Heart of Wales "orange" pulled away, climbing the single track alongside a creek reminiscent of the Looe branch. Soon, however, the route, still single though noticeably smoother, is joined by the Robeston-Amoco and then the Waterston-Gulf Oil freight lines. A halt at Johnston, where the Neyland "main-line" once joined, was followed by a dash to Haverfordwest set on a long loop with several freight sidings, some obviously in use. This station bucks the

trend of the others on this line; while being of traditional GW appearance it is kept in immaculate condition and, of course, staffed. Back onto single track the 153 pushed ahead, riding smoothly on excellent track to Clarboston Road, where the Fishguard line, also single, comes in, and the signal box appears to control all the signalling on both routes. The line becomes double here, spaced to Brunellian broad gauge standards as opposed to the usual six-foot way! Before the halt at Clynderwen the trackbed of the long-abandoned North Pembrokeshire line could be detected approaching from the north. The remains of the once lengthy branch line to Cardigan could also be seen shortly before journey's end at Whitland. All in all an enjoyable and educational trip on a system probably less secure than our own. Certainly none of our stations or those on the Coast line, are in such poor condition as many seen on this trip.

The cost of the trip (at July 2005 prices) without a railcard:

Whitland – Pembroke Dock – Pembroke “Greenways” day rover ticket £4; bus from Pembroke to Milford Haven £2.25; Milford Haven – Whitland single £5.

Robert D. Knight

BUS SUBSTITUTION - 2005 VERSION

The current timetable includes a rail connection for the Cambrian Coast [1905 Mach-Barmouth] off the 1633 from Birmingham on Fridays only. There is also, on every weekday, a bus, which now works through to Dolgellau, of which the current Gwynedd public transport booklet states "Arrives Machynlleth Rail station at 1857, departing 1907 after connecting with the train from Birmingham." Admirable in theory, but what happens in practice?

Between us, my wife and I have known the train to arrive, only a few minutes late, to find the bus waiting outside the station entrance. Fine! We have also found the bus waiting outside the Depot at the bottom of the station drive, which is not visible from the station entrance. (The grapevine says that whether the bus goes up the drive is determined by the size of vehicle operating the journey.) We have also known the bus leave Machynlleth Clock late and drive straight past the Depot. So, if the train arrives and the bus isn't at the station, what does a passenger for (say) Tywyn, possibly with luggage, do?

A few years ago I complained to Gwynedd County Council (who presumably still support bus services financially) about the bus not waiting when the train was late. The bus company would only agree to wait for up to five minutes.

Hence it is hardly surprising that we, and some other rail travellers from Tywyn we know, will only entrust ourselves to this service as a last resort.

Until transport operators, civil servants, and politicians realise that competition lies between private and public transport, and not within public transport, this sort of nonsense will continue and make passengers highly sceptical of any moves towards substituting buses for trains. The Swiss, incidentally, provide an object lesson in coordinating a public transport system involving a multiplicity of operating companies.

Roger Whitehouse

P.S. Who operates the rail service? Arriva. Who operates the bus service? Arriva!

CLIVE WILLIAMS: THE END OF THE WALES RPC

As you will probably be aware, on December 23rd I will be ending a fulfilling 12 year association with the Rail Passengers Council and the various organisations that preceded it, and I just wanted to send all those with whom I have worked, a personal note to thank you all for your support and contributions during this time.

Working with the Rail Passengers Committee in Wales is an experience that I will certainly remember with nothing but fondness.

Much has happened on the railways since I took up the reins as Secretary of what was then the Transport Users Consultative Committee for Wales in 1993. Not least British Rail was running things then, and it was a much simpler task!

The experience of working during the period of privatisation was a huge challenge, as the network was broken up into numerous new operators, and the nature of governance changed dramatically too, with the creation and subsequent dissolution of various bodies from the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (OPRAF) and the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) to the shadow Strategic Rail Authority (SSRA) and the SRA all having considerable influence.

Let's not forget the successes of the Committee and the many things we have pressed hard for and achieved. Thanks to the support of the Welsh Assembly Government, Network Rail and Arriva Trains Wales (formerly Wales and Borders) we recently saw the re-opening of the Vale of Glamorgan line. North Wales now has better connections everywhere, but not least to London thanks to the investment by Virgin Trains, and we made huge strides towards more integrated transport across Wales. The First Great Western half hourly service in South Wales has become well established now, and it feels like we were never without it.

I believe that the Welsh Committee acted as a true champion for Welsh rail users, who all too often found themselves at the bottom of any list of priorities, well behind more lucrative operations to the east of Offa's Dyke. I salute and admire the dedication and indefatigability of the many who have served on the committee, whose uncompromising determination to make it work in Wales have influenced government and rail operators alike.

And that brings me on to the many people I have really enjoyed working with over the years. The list is extensive but not exhaustive – it includes: committee members and secretariat, local authority officers, members of parliament, colleagues in the Welsh Assembly, the many journalists on whose contact lists I've appeared, transport and rail user groups and colleagues in other regions.

It is with great sadness, and an inevitable feeling that there is still so much more to be done, that I end my involvement with Wales' rail network. I thank you all for your help, support and co-operation over the years, and hope that at least some of you will remain in touch in the future.

Looking forward I see this as an opportunity and believe that there are still dragons, not necessarily Welsh ones, out there that need slaying and I believe that I can continue to make a contribution representing the public on various boards and committees.

Clive Williams
Secretary
Wales Rail Passengers' Council

WEBSITES

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP)

their new website (www.acorp.uk.com) has recently gone live. It gives information on ACoRP activities, and PDFs of various ACoRP publications and policy documents can be downloaded.

The SARPA AGM, in the Cambrian Hotel, Aberystwyth, on Saturday October 8th 2005.

SARPA MEETIG DATES AND VENUES 2006

February	7 th	Tuesday	1900	Machynlleth	Railway Station
March	7 th	Tuesday	1900	Newtown	Bell Hotel
April	1 st	Saturday	1200	Aberystwyth	TBC
May	2 nd	Tuesday	1900	Welshpool	Pinewood Tavern
June	6 th	Tuesday	1930	Shrewsbury	Library Hobbs room
July	1 st	Saturday	1200	Aberystwyth	TBC
August	1 st	Tuesday	1845	Caersws	Red Lion
September	5 th	Tuesday	1900	Newtown	Bell Hotel
October	7 th	Saturday	1130	Welshpool	Raven Inn

Note: AGM till 1400 followed by trip on Welshpool & Llanfair Railway.

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

The Association of Train Operating Companies:

ATOC, 3rd Floor, 40 Bernard Street, London [WC1N 1BY](#)

Central Trains Limited

Central Trains Limited, PO Box 4323, Birmingham B2 4JB

Tel. 0121 654 1200

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

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

Virgin Trains

Virgin Trains, Customer Relations, PO Box 713, Birmingham, B5 4HH

Tel. 0870 789 1234

Traveline Cymru for all public transport information

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

For Train Times and Fares Call:

08457 48 49 50 (24hrs)

0845 60 40 500 (Welsh Language Service)

0845 60 50 600 (Textphone)

Newtown Station Travel

The Railway Station, Old Kerry Road, Newtown, SY16 1BP

Tel./Fax 01686 621966

E-mail newtownstation@btclick.com

For ticket reservations please call: 0870 9000 773

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