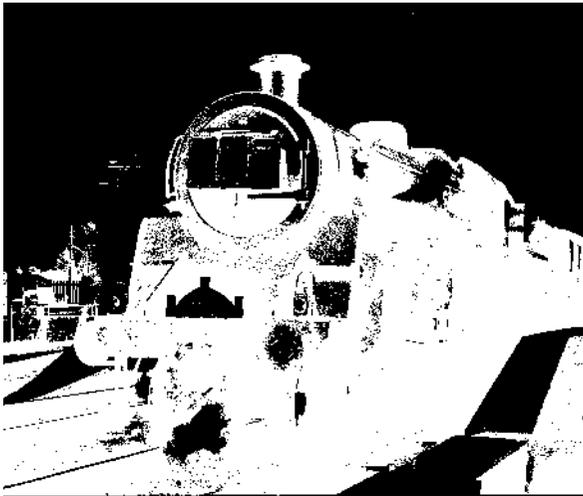


Shrewsbury  
Aberystwyth  
Rail  
Passengers'  
Association



# Newsletter No. 41

November 2007



This year saw the fortieth anniversary of the last Cambrian Coast Express to and from Paddington, on the 4th March 1967. The down train pauses at Newtown.

Photo: Robert Knight.

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## Chairman's Message

I was asked when I was a member of the Rail Passenger Committee for Wales why I did it. The questioner, who's now involved in WAG's Rail unit, was rather surprised someone so young and wearing a suit was interested in the railways as a "hobby". A good grounding in being proved right would be one reason why, as experience in later life repeatedly shows. Turn the clock back thirty years and I can remember as a child standing with my grandfather and father and listening to them comment about some piece of ripped out infrastructure in the Midlands "they'll regret that one day". That piece of infrastructure is now subject to a plan to bring it back into use at a cost probably far greater than any savings that were made by not having it.

Anybody that knows and understands our line could have told you that there is a huge latent demand for usage that's still largely been unrealized, as people have dipped their toes in and been put off by what was on offer. Over the years we've all heard family, friends, neighbours and colleagues tell us their horror stories usually involving a 2 car train and vowing not to go by train again. SARPA has been saying for years: put more carriages on and they'll be a large upshot in usage. Come July 2006 WAG funded some extra carriages – only 4 and somewhat strangely called it a pilot trial. The result, as we heard from the Minister who confirmed that the funding would be made permanent, has been a great success – less overcrowding, help with punctuality and more people using the trains. Well blow me down! You didn't need a pilot trial or a consultants' report to produce a business case to work that one out – it's common sense based on knowledge and experience, something that's sadly doesn't feature much.

Let's take the Wales and Borders franchise as let in December 2003. The underlying assumptions were just plain wrong, and events over the last four years have blown them out the water. The "no growth be thankful you've still got it" attitude now seems like a sick joke, as WAG has had to continually dip its hand into other funds to provide additional resources to cater for growth that the franchise holder cannot provide and paper over the cracks. I was one of plenty of people who said "you've got it wrong" at the time to the powers that be; I was dismissed as "unrealistic" and "not understanding". I haven't received an apology yet, clearly being right doesn't qualify you for one!

I well remember fellow SARPA member John Wildig turning to me at a meeting in the Millennium Stadium in December 2003, having witnessed Arriva's franchise winning team explaining how marvellous things were going to be despite all the concerns. John said "It'll get a lot worse before it gets better". Spot on, John: absolutely spot on. In case anyone in Arriva takes offence we've done the lot worse bit, and are now in a gets better phase. Whether that delivers us to where the service should be remains to be seen.

A plethora of announcements have punctuated the last few months. One of them is known as the Wales Rail Planning Assessment: a commendable document pointing out trends in rail use and growth round the country and pointing to potential solutions. However it predicts that the Cambrian will grow in usage between 2005 and 2026 by 41%. Before the ink was even dry on this document's release in July 2007, usage of the Cambrian had grown by c.15% in 2 years! Yet we are told the planning for the next 20 years is on the basis of the assessment figure. I really would rather not be in the position of saying "I told you so" yet again - I would love for the right decisions to be made first time!

One piece of investment that is happening is the £13 million being spent on our infrastructure in the run up to the introduction of the ERTCS trial in December 2008.

Great news? Well one conundrum that still exists - assuming we've a two hourly service and all trains are still scheduled to cross at Talerddig: what happens when a Aberystwyth bound train leaves Newtown 15 minutes late and the UP train sits at Talerddig having arrived on time? The double track at Welshpool and the loop at Dyfi Junction are of course no use as the UP train will still be delayed by 15 minutes. Now if there was a loop at Caersws the UP train would run to Caersws and cross the late running DOWN train there: instead of a 15 minute knock on delay there would be none.

Still it would be possible to cross trains at Dyfi Junction and Welshpool post December 2008 - but this would require additional rolling stock as more diagrams would be needed to run the service. Network Rail's brief was to make the infrastructure robust enough for a two hourly service, but has anyone let WAG and ATW in on the secret ingredient on the operational side of the bargain?

Meetings between WAG and ATW in early 2009 could be very interesting if punctuality is still c 60% and trains still turn at Wolverhampton! I somehow suspect there will be plenty of people who will wish a Caersws loop was part of the remit. You can pay consultants and produce options and business cases till the cows come home, but to get things right there's no substitute for common sense based on knowledge and experience.

My moving annual average ppm was 59.75% up to the end of period 7.

Gareth Marston, Newtown, October 2007.

## **News in brief**

### **Birmingham**

More details of the station redevelopment have emerged. The scheme is seen as a way of redeveloping that part of the city centre, not just the appalling 1960's rail station. Whilst facilities upstairs at New St will be vastly improved the badly needed extra tracks on the approaches into the station are not even mentioned.

### **Shrewsbury**

The station has been put forward by ATW and Network Rail as one of the 150 stations that are to be upgraded as part of the DfT's White Paper on the railways - National Station Improvements Programme. With over 2500 stations on the UK rail network a lot miss out, including all 24 stations west of Shrewsbury on the Cambrian. What ever happened to MFAS?

Shropshire County Council hope that the new Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone services will be the precursor to proving the business case that gets electrification and full Intercity services to Shrewsbury. WSMR's successful application to the rail regulator was based around a large suppressed demand for rail services in Shropshire, due to the poor service offered by ATW and Central Trains and lack of direct trains to London.

Despite spending £1.6 million on a firm of consultants there's been an outbreak of cold feet over road user charging from the politicians and local authority officers in Shropshire, which has seen them cry off from applying for the government's Transport Innovation Fund. In return for road user charging in the historic town centre and a package of public transport improvements around the town including a Shrewsbury Parkway station, funding for a "North West Relief Road" would have been provided.

A new depot has been created at Coleham by Network Rail to house the 4 Class 37 locomotives that will run rail headed treatment trains, engineer's trains and pilot

movement by trains unfitted with ERTCS equipment. The four locomotives, all veterans from the early 1960's, will be expected to continue until 2019.

### **Powys**

Officially 352,000 rail journeys were made from/to the county in 2005/2006: a 70% increase on 1995/1996. The bulk of these being on the 5 Cambrian main line stations (275,000) plus the Heart of Wales.

Source: Office of Rail Regulator.

[http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/xls/0607YB-reg\\_use.xls](http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/xls/0607YB-reg_use.xls)

### **Newtown**

The Station Grill has opened as a restaurant in the old Café Loco premises. Open lunchtimes and evenings it's apparently doing well on weekend evenings.

### **Pontdolgoch**

A bridge bash on Friday 12th September caused delay to services. This was one of a spate afflicting services in September.

The old station house is for sale with McCartneys estate agent. Only £249,950.00 for two bedrooms! <http://www.mccartneys.co.uk/residential/property/5975>

### **Carno**

Connecting buses with the trains would be a good alternative to reopening the station, said a Network Rail representative at the Enterprise and Learning Committee hearing in Carno. Clearly the man has never tried to use local bus services in Mid Wales.

Now operated by Lloyd's coaches and renamed the X85 route, Newtown to Machynlleth buses are now 6 a day following the recent shake up. No publicity has been seen anywhere, and times are not even up on bus stops. The route covers several small stations closed in June 1965: Cemmaes Road, Commins Coch, Llanbrymair, Talerddig, Carno and Pontdolgoch.

### **Talerddig**

A small outdoor swimming pool (hopefully heated) attached to the station house has been the main talking point this summer - 693ft above sea level at the summit of the line.

Twitchers (and others) can also look out for Herons and Red Kites at the Carno end of the loop. The Herons appear to nest in the wooded area around the stream (which is the Afon Carno) on the North side of the tracks at the Carno end.

### **Llanwrin**

A large exercise in river control/flood defence can be seen on the opposite bank of the River Dyfi. Some work has also been done to the river's south embankment near to the tracks.

### **Ceredigion**

Officially 291,000 rail journeys were made from/to the county in 2005/2006 a 75% increase on 1995/1996. With only 2 stations it's not the poorest county with access to the rail network in Wales. Blaenau Gwent currently has no stations at all, but this will soon change with reopening of the Ebbw Vale line.

Source: Office of Rail Regulator.

[http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/xls/0607YB-reg\\_use.xls](http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/xls/0607YB-reg_use.xls)

## Borth to Aberystwyth

Borth officially had a footfall of 47,436 in 2005/2006. Regular users of the western end of the line will tell you this is an underestimate of the true usage due to the large numbers of passengers who deliberately or otherwise avoid the conductor. With no ticket checks on arrival at Aberystwyth by station staff, and 13 minutes for the conductor to go through a busy train, some of those that board at Borth can get a free ride on the right train. On departure from Aberystwyth the fact that the conductor has to check all tickets and often issue many including long distance fares, means that the chances of getting away with it in the 12 minutes to Borth increase even further. The 1733 departure each weekday sees Borth "customers" crowd to the front carriage expecting the conductor to start from the rear.

Borth Station Adopters have won second prize in the Community Rail Awards in the Community Art Scheme category.

## Gwynedd

Officially 1,290,000 rail journeys were made from/to the county in 2005/2006 a 49% increase on 1995/1996. This includes not only the coast line but Blaenau Ffestiniog on the Conwy Valley and Bangor on the North Wales Main line.

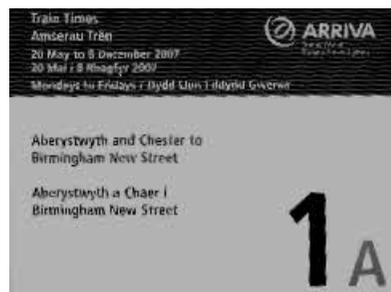
Source: Office of Rail Regulator. [http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/xls/0607YB-reg\\_use.xls](http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/xls/0607YB-reg_use.xls)

## Aberdyfi

The denial of grant funding from the DfT to raise the platform height at Aberdovey station has drawn much adverse comment.

## Pocket timetable

A new innovation is a pocket timetable (very slightly over credit card size), covering Aberystwyth and Chester to Birmingham New Street. However, it lists only Aberystwyth, Machynlleth and Welshpool departure times, and Wolverhampton and Birmingham arrival times. Furthermore, it only covers the Monday to Friday timetable.



## Display cases for Cambrian stations

The Cambrian Railways Partnership and ATW have secured funding to provide display cases at six Cambrian line stations - Borth, Llandanwg, Morfa Mawddach, Criccieth,

Penychain and Tywyn. Local station adoptees can use these to raise awareness of their activities and to promote the use of the railway locally.

[From *Train Times* No.47 - Summer 2007.]

## Fares

Following the withdrawal of SuperSaver fares, ATW has reviewed its Saver prices. Consequently, a number of these have been revised downwards, including Newtown to Cardiff (now £42). These fares have been initially introduced as promotional fares, but ATW has indicated they will be made permanent Saver fares at the next fares round in September.

[From Simon Pickering, Passenger Link Manager, Passenger Focus.]

## Chris Gibb

Chris Gibb is to take over as MD of Virgin West Coast Trains. Chris is currently MD of sister franchise Virgin Cross Country, but will take over the West Coast from Charles Belcher when he retires from the Virgin Group. Chris will then manage both franchises until 11th November, when Arriva takes over Cross Country. From that date, Chris will then manage West Coast only. Chris is 43 and started his railway career at 17 as a junior clerk in south London. After a management training course he took over as traincrew supervisor at Polmadie depot in Glasgow. In this area, we know him best as the MD of Wales and Borders Trains (forerunner to Arriva Trains Wales), a post he held until May 2003 when he left to take up his present post with Virgin. [From *Rail Manager On-Line*.]

## Machynlleth

The new purpose-built Arriva Trains Wales train care facility at Machynlleth was been officially opened by David Martin, chief executive of Arriva Plc on Monday 13 August 2007.

The facility creates 10 new jobs in addition to an existing 14 positions and has been specially built to service ATW's entire fleet of Class 158 Units, which serve the Cambrian routes and other lines across Wales and the English borders.

The dedicated team at Machynlleth is responsible for ensuring that this fleet is maintained to the highest standards of reliability, cleanliness and comfort.

Arriva Trains Wales has invested £3 million in the new facility which has state-of-the-art cleaning and maintenance equipment. These facilities include two full length servicing pits complete with full garage services as well as exterior washing facilities, purpose built cleaning platforms and advanced fuelling facilities.

A key feature of the facility its environmental features which include a water harvester, solar panels, a wind turbine and automatic lighting that dims when there is enough daylight.

David Martin, chief executive of Arriva Plc said: "This is a significant investment by Arriva which demonstrates the company's commitment to further improving the reliability and standards of our rail services throughout Wales and the Border counties.

This investment is over and above the commitments originally made by Arriva when we took over the Wales and Borders Franchise in 2003."

Arriva Trains Wales managing director Bob Holland said. "This is a further major investment by Arriva in Wales. Until now only nightly routine servicing has been carried out at Machynlleth.

This investment will allow full servicing of all units used on the Cambrian lines at Machynlleth by a dedicated team. Previously they had to go to Cardiff.

Construction work was undertaken by Wrekin and began in November 2006. The depot was completed in August 2007.

[From Arriva Trains Wales press release.]

Despite this official opening in mid August of the new depot much work has carried on through to the end of October.

Car parking at the station is the perennial headache, with many passengers for the steam specials in the summer having to park in the town.

## **Rail Users urge Assembly Committee to be positive**

Press release from SARPA 1st September

On Tuesday 4th September the Enterprise and Learning Committee of the National Assembly will hear the positive reasons to reopen Carno station following the ground breaking petition of Carno Station Action Group.

Local rail user group SARPA are supportive of the bid to reopen Carno station which is one of nineteen intermediary stations between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth closed in the 1960's.

Commenting on the hearing SARPA Chairman Gareth Marston said "The world has changed drastically from the 1960's with the assumptions made four decades ago about future transport modes and needs proved incorrect. Who would have thought then that Aberystwyth would have urban traffic problems and that Shrewsbury would be considered for road congestion charging? Tony Burton and CSAG have put forward some sound reasons why external benefits to the local economy, the environment, social exclusion problems and traffic problems on Mid Wales's unsuitable roads would be helped by a reopened station in the village. The Assembly Committee needs to take heed of these wider benefits of the railway and not just blindly follow the narrow agenda of yesterdays failed policies when they look at Carno's case".

SARPA has identified other locations and communities along the line which would benefit from reopened rail facilities these being Hanwood (Shropshire), Abermule (Powys) and Bow St/Llandre (Ceredigion).

## **Tramforward - launch of a light railway champion**

Campaigning for high-quality urban transport TramForward is the new name of the Light Rail Transit Association's campaigning arm. The new face of urban transport campaigning will be launched at the LRTA's annual general meeting this weekend, when the Association will also celebrate its 70th birthday. The name TramForward will be applied to the LRTA's central campaigning activities, including promotional literature, media communications and a new website. "The TramForward name reflects our commitment to campaigning for a better future for public transport," said LRTA deputy chairman Geoff Lusher. "Trams and light rail bring reduced car use, a better urban environment, economic regeneration and lower carbon dioxide emissions. They are the way forward for our cities."

Website: [www.lrta.org](http://www.lrta.org)

## Passenger Focus

Passenger Focus is currently putting together a database of passengers who would be willing to be mentioned in the media articles we write - just to give a flavour of what real passengers are experiencing. This is very well received, and often the subject of specific requests, from the media.

If you (or your travelling colleagues) are interested in helping us, we would love to hear from you. If so, could you please send me brief answers to the following questions by email:

1. Full name
2. Where you travel to and from
3. What ticket/s you usually buy and how much it costs
4. How long is/are your journey/s
5. What are your joys and bugbears as a rail passenger
6. What do you do on your journey/s

Just to confirm, you will need to be happy to be named and for your details used in the media. We are interesting in all types of passengers - commuters, frequent/infrequent business travellers, leisure passengers etc.

### Simon Pickering

#### Passenger Link Manager/Rheolwr Cyswllt Teithwyr

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website: [www.passengerfocus.org.uk](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk)

PO Box 114/Blwch Post 114, Chepstow/Cas-Gwent, NP16 6WR



Saturday 1st September saw an eleven coach train fit into Aberystwyth's platform - just. The train was run by Pathfinder Tours as the "Cambrian Coast Express", and originated from Swindon, via Birmingham and Shrewsbury - running round the Abbey Foregate curve. It was the first visit to Aber by a Western diesel, No. D1015 *Western Champion*, via the Cambrian line (though it is believed one visited via the Carmarthen line in the 1960's, on a coal train). The train included both a kitchen car and a buffet car.

The Vale of Rheidol Railway laid on a special working to Devil's Bridge, which resulted in the unusual sight of two trains crossing at Capel Bangor.

## From the House of Commons

From oral questions to Ruth Kelly, Transport Secretary, 17th July 2007.

5. Mark Williams (Ceredigion) (LD): What progress has been made in reducing train congestion at Birmingham New Street station. [149831]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Ruth Kelly): Network Rail and Birmingham city council have been developing a scheme for the redevelopment of the station. My Department is assessing whether it addresses future needs and represents value for money.

Mark Williams: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that response. She will be aware that Arriva Trains Wales, which links mid and west Wales and Shropshire with Birmingham, has frequently had to terminate services at Wolverhampton because of lack of platform capacity at Birmingham New Street station. In view of what she has said about the discussions between Birmingham city council and Network Rail, can she confirm whether platform capacity, as opposed to the necessary improvement of surroundings, will be a part of the discussions? There is a great need for that, because many of my constituents think that they receive a lamentable service.

Ruth Kelly: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's constituents. I know that there have been reliability problems with the Arriva Trains Wales service and I urge him to take up those concerns with the Welsh Assembly Government, because ultimately the Aberystwyth line is their responsibility. He mentions capacity at Birmingham New Street station, and that is an issue with which I am familiar. Clearly, capacity will be one of the major priorities of the forthcoming rail White Paper and, given the central importance of Birmingham New Street to the rail network, it will clearly be one of the issues in my mind as I go forward.

## Rail Rambles

Arriva's booklet *Rail Rambles Troeon Trên*, runs until 5th January next. It covers walks from stations in Mid Wales and the Marches - from places as far apart as Nantwich and Fairbourne.

Rail Rambles started in 1989, and have a repertoire of about 250 different walks. Walks are graded from moderately easy (gentle climbs and some level ground) to strenuous and energetic (fast pace due to mileage and/or train return time).

As well as stations, the booklet can be obtained from Ramblers in Wales, Cardiff Office, 3 Coopers Yard, Curran Road, Cardiff CF10 5NB (send a stamped addressed envelope).

## Shrewsbury Railway Heritage Trust

**22<sup>nd</sup> December:** *King Edward I 6024* runs through Shrewsbury on Past Time Rail's annual 'Chester Chuffer' in the evening, Fare from Birmingham £72. Standard.

**For further information please contact Dave Giddins on Shrewsbury 368590.**

## **Carting passengers around the countryside and other statistical revelations**

Heard that old chestnut about carting fresh air round the countryside from clueless ministers and civil servants mumbling excuses about not investing? Fortunately the facts present a different version. Guess where the largest growth rates on the railways are? Yes: that's right, Regional Railways passenger kilometres grew by 5% between 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 and a further whopping 9.6% between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. Source: TAS Rail Industry Monitor 2007. [www.tas.co.uk](http://www.tas.co.uk)

London and South East Passenger KM's grew by 6.8% between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. Now if these growth rates were sustained by 2016 as many people would use Regional services as use London and South East services today, and by 2042 Regional use would be greater than that for the London and South East!

The average train on the UK network carried 93.3 people in 2005/2006. Intercity services 145.2, London and South East 106.3 and Regional services 48.6. Source: TAS Rail Industry Monitor 2007. [www.tas.co.uk](http://www.tas.co.uk)

The average Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury service carried:

.....92.8 passengers: smack bang on the UK yes UK average. Footfall (650,000 source Network Rail) divided by trains run (7000 source: WAG) for those in search of methodology. Remember these figures are for pre WAG train strengthening since July 2006. Not bad for a thin rural market.

Remember how that argument goes that passenger numbers are the greatest in the South East so that's why investment should be concentrated there.....

Another old chestnut chucked at rail campaigners is the "fact" that 70% of all journeys start or end in London and the South East. In fact if you take into account the fact that people in the regions travel to London, you could say that 40% of all journeys on the UK rail network start or finish in the regions!

So how about the 1300 extra carriages announced by government spread evenly around the country? 300 of these are for regional services which leaves just 1000 for the South East – 77% of them then! And not a single carriage for Wales.

And finally the DfT spokesman who's been roundly criticised for his Pinocchio type uttering. In response to criticism of the obvious failings of the recent white paper, he retorted that only 6% of the UK population travel by train, so why should the rest of us pay for the rail network. Whoops further off target than a Frank Lampard shot at goal at Germany 2006. Guess what the National Travel Survey says? Yes it's actually 60% of the UK population that travels by train at least once a year. The DfT idiot didn't even read the official government stats!

So remember there's lies, damned lies and DfT statistics.

### **From the AGM**

Personnel changes: Ivor Morris, our long standing Treasurer, stood down, and was succeeded by Peter Gatward. Ivor was unanimously elected as an Honorary Life Member. The post of Secretary is still vacant.

Subscriptions are to rise to £6 for next year.

## From Arriva's website

Create your own personalised timetable on the Arriva Trains Wales website. This service allows you to create, download or print off a timetable tailored to your own information requirements. To create your own timetable simply visit their website now and:

Enter your departure and arrival station

- Select the period of time you wish to receive timetable information for
- Choose whether to download the timetable from the website or have it emailed directly to you
- Submit your request and your timetable will be generated.

There is no need to carry around a big timetable booklet anymore. Simply print off the information YOU need.

## A story of the Wales air link

The chief executive of company with offices in Caernarfon and Cardiff Bay decided to try out the new all singing and dancing North to South air link.

All went well on trip down; however come the late afternoon return the plane was grounded by mechanical problems and the flight cancelled. The passengers were then sent via minibus - yes minibus! There was one more passenger than seats on said minibus so there was a crush up of 3 on space for 2 and to rub salt in wounds the minibus driver knew not the way to Ynys Mon. So on goes the Sat Nav. Arrival at Valley was 6 hrs late via M4, M50, M5, M6 and A55.

The next 20 min wait at Talerddig will not seem so bad!

## Want to Join SARPA?

The membership year runs from January to December. The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2008) £6.00 per annum for individuals and for organisations. Please make any cheques payable to SARPA. Donations are of course welcome.

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

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

Please send cheques to:

**SARPA Membership c/o Gareth Marston, 64 Churchill Drive, Barnfields, Newtown, Powys SY16 2LH.**

Make sure to include full name, address and telephone number and also e-mail address if you wish to become part of our electronic network.

## **From the Cambrian News**

2<sup>nd</sup> August

A letter from Professor Richard Macve about the 17<sup>th</sup> July fire problem, which resulted in the cancellation of the 0512 departure from Aberystwyth – in particular the lack of any information for passenger, or a replacement bus. In a news item in the same issue, an Arriva spokesperson said that a bus had been provided, but that they were investigating whether all travellers had been told about the bus.

9<sup>th</sup> August

Arriva admitted blundering by not telling passengers about the replacement bus, and apologised for not having made the announcement on the station display screens.

16<sup>th</sup> August

A full page was devoted to no less than five railway items.

The main item was a report on the National Assembly minister Ieuan Wyn Jones' announcement of funding of £13.4 million for the Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury line. It was followed by a report of the dismay being felt by the Carno reopening campaigners that removing the Talerddig loop to Carno, together with the reopening of the station there, were not included in the plans. Conservative Assembly Member Nick Bourne has written to the Minister asking for a meeting to discuss transport matters – in particular the reopening of Bow Street and Llandre stations, in order to relieve traffic chaos in Aberystwyth. The final item was on the opening of the new depot in Machynlleth, by David Martin, Chief Executive of Arriva Plc. 10 new jobs are being created, in addition to the 14 existing positions.

23<sup>rd</sup> August

A rather futuristic letter, advocating the reopening of the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth line, as a Maglev monorail, as the first phase of a link to North Wales, with speeds of 300 mph.

30<sup>th</sup> August

Liberal Democrat MP Mark Williams, welcoming the Assembly announcement of new funding for the line, called for it to be followed by the introduction of an hourly service: "We need to be encouraging as many people as we can to choose the train rather than the car. Improved reliability will help, but a more regular service would do even more to encourage people to choose the green option". The Editorial was also on this subject, supporting the MP's proposal.

Councillor Chris Simpson, in the first major response to the Aberystwyth masterplan, suggested that there should be sidings and a goods yard for rail freight.

6<sup>th</sup> September

Transport 2000 surveyed Dovey Junction station, describing it as one of Wales' weakest links: with overgrown paths, poor lighting, and no details of taxi firms, or a phone box.

13<sup>th</sup> September

Ceredigion MP Mark Williams welcomed the WSMR direct trains to London, with passengers changing at Shrewsbury direct for London.

20th September

A letter from R. Marshall of Glandyfi, criticising the Sunday timetables. He asks that Arriva run at least one up train on a Sunday morning; points out that the first down train from Birmingham doesn't arrive until 5pm, and asks for more information for weekend engineering works.

4th October

A report based on our proposals to reopen Bow Street station, as well as Carno, and Hanwood.

18th and 25th October

The concern of some Bow Street and Llandre residents about the siting of new radio masts.



### **The Cambrian Coast Express of the 1980s**

Above: 37426 at Aberystwyth, when it was named *Y Lein Fach - Vale of Rheidol* by the Cambrian Railways Queen, Stephanie Bates.

Below: a Bachmann 00 model of 37426, with etched nameplates, produced for the Hereford Model Centre.



## **“The cheapest ticket”**

A recent survey by Which? found that customers in railway station ticket offices, and those calling the National Rail Enquiries line, were given the cheapest ticket for their journey only half the time. This will come as little surprise to many, since the complexity of the ticketing system causes most rail consumer complaints. But if you know how to play the system, there are various loopholes to be exploited.

### **Buy two singles**

Cheap return tickets often sell out more quickly than two singles for the same trip. So always make sure anyone selling you a ticket has checked this option. The cheapest return from London to Edinburgh, travelling on trains around 7.30am and bought three weeks in advance, cost £154, but the two cheapest singles cost just £67 in total.

### **Split your journey**

It seems sensible that buying a single ticket from Cardiff to Aberdeen, for instance, should be cheaper than a single from Cardiff to Crewe, then Crewe to Aberdeen. Not so. The cheapest 7.50am single from Cardiff to Aberdeen came in at £123. A single from Cardiff to Crewe on the same train was £10 and a single from Crewe to Aberdeen £21.

### **Cut out peak time**

The cheapest ticket from London to Penzance, travelling at 7.30am, cost £82. But a ticket from London to Bristol Temple Meads, and another from Temple Meads to Penzance - staying on the same train - cost just £55. That's because the train companies charge more per mile for journeys beginning before 9am than after 9am.

### **Travel short**

This is the only tip that is in a legal grey area: it can actually be cheaper to buy a ticket beyond the station you want to get off at. Station staff may get a bit shirty about you leaving the train before you are meant to and can officially demand the money you have saved but, in reality, they are unlikely to bother. If I take the 1.30pm from London to Berwick-upon-Tweed, I'll have to fork out £96.40. Next stop on the line is Edinburgh - at £35.50 from London.

### **Check the websites - then ask a human**

The [National Rail](#) website, and [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com), run by Virgin Trains, are convenient to use but it is a good idea to then speak to a human being, who may come up with an alternative route, or a nearby station which is cheaper to get to.

### **Use short-term promotions**

Many companies offer promotional fares on specific routes. Go to the National Rail website 'Promotions' page ([www.nationalrail.co.uk/promotions](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/promotions)), which lets you search by region.

### **Upgrade free to first class**

Some train companies allow standard-class travellers to buy dinner in first class. After you have eaten, they are unlikely to throw you out (especially if you buy a few coffees).

## **The £13M investment in the Cambrian Line**

£13 million is to be invested in improvements to the Cambrian Line between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury to achieve new levels of service reliability and punctuality.

Ieuan Wyn Jones, Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport announced on Wednesday 8th August that the Assembly Government will spend £8 million on capital improvements. This funding will be matched by £5 million from Network Rail.

The investment will enable the installation of new or improved passing loops - to ensure trains from opposite directions can pass without being held up - and the raising of the track at Dovey Junction to reduce the risk of flooding from the Dovey Estuary interrupting services.

Mr Jones said: "I am taking this opportunity to achieve a major improvement to services on this vital rail route between the west coast, mid-Wales, Shrewsbury and the West Midlands. It's an extremely important communications link for many communities across a wide part of Wales - who will benefit significantly from the results of this project."

Works to be carried out between Autumn 2007 and December 2008 will install additional passing provision at Dovey Junction, Talerddig and Welshpool and the removal or improvement of a little used former farm level crossing at Weig lane near Caersws. The track at Dovey Junction, prone to estuarial tidal flooding, will also be raised some 0.6 metres, which should guarantee train services in nearly all cases of flooding.

The contract for detailed Design and Works will commence autumn 2007 and be completed in December 2008.

The Project will be undertaken in parallel with, and by the same contractors working on the installation of the £60 million plus European Rail Traffic Management System national resignalling project. Synchronising the two schemes will result in cost and practical savings.

## **Barry Doe's Directory of bus and rail timetables**

[www.barrydoe.co.uk](http://www.barrydoe.co.uk)

Barry Doe's website has been in operation for 6 years, and it now averages 925 visits a week. It is sponsored by: Transdev Blazefield, First, FWT, JourneyPlan, National Rail Enquiries, pb bus marketing, réseaulutions, Stagecoach, TAS, Walkden Software and Wilts & Dorset.

His 'Best Timetables' section now has 35 entries each with a full critique and whilst many authorities are giving up publicity, others are greatly improving it and the gulf is now enormous.

Information from Barry Doe FCILT, MIMA, 25 Newmorton Road, Moordown, Bournemouth, Dorset BH9 3NU. Tel/Fax: 01202 528707. Email: [info@barrydoe.co.uk](mailto:info@barrydoe.co.uk)

## Staffing crisis looms across Arriva

News is filtering through that current Virgin Cross Country employees are voting with their feet and getting out before Arriva take over. Staff at all levels are taking advantage of the fact the TOC operates in areas of the country with other TOC's, and transferring to them. There is now deep concern that the lack of experienced managers/ senior staff will impact on service delivery on Cross Country. Arriva apparently wanted Virgin MD Chris Gibb to stay but he said no, instead taking over as MD of Virgin West Coast. An advert for Managing Director has now appeared in the railway press.

The new Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone service based out of Wrexham is rumoured to have been inundated by applications from ATW staff wanting to get away from Arriva in the Shrewsbury, Crewe and Chester areas.

ATW Managing Director Bob Holland has been promoted to MD of Arriva's UK Rail Group. No news on who will be ATW's 4th MD in four years is out yet.

## Wales Rail Planning Assessment

Published in July 2007 in the brief tenure of Dr Gibbons as Minister for DE & T, the document presents itself as a demand based study. Using data collected in 2004/2005 it's already out of date in many respects, given the growth rates on all Welsh railways since.

The prediction of a 41% growth in use of the Cambrian as a whole by 2026 seems widely pessimistic given that a third of that predicted growth had already been secured before it was published! It was also published before the recent population projection statistics were released and seemingly fails to take these into account.

However some useful information is gleaned, such as the analysis of LENNON data as to who travels where. Unfortunately the Cambrian is lumped together as a whole both coast and main line so any analysis of what goes on in between Pwllheli, Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury is somewhat impossible. 67% (883,550 or 2420 journeys a day) of all journeys were on line, though whether these were internal to the coast trips like the school traffic, trips to Aberystwyth at the western end or journeys to Shrewsbury from Welshpool etc we don't know.

It does tell us where off-Cambrian journeys go to/from by geographical destination. As everything must go through Shrewsbury we get a clearer picture. Where that third (414,391 or 1135 a day) went is shown beneath.

Area	Total tickets from/to	Journeys per day	Journeys per train*
West Midlands	231485	634	42.25
London & SE	80712	221	14.75
S Wales	10834	30	2
N Wales	1817	5	0.33
Marches Line	2756	8	0.5
NW England	35907	98	6.5
E/NE England	36876	101	6.75
S W England	13875	38	2.5

\* journeys per day divided by the then 15 trains a day Monday to Saturdays running to/from Shrewsbury.

A clear picture of usage emerges, skewed heavily towards onward travel into the West Midlands for journeys there and beyond such as London & South East, E/NE England and S W England which can be accessed via Birmingham. With c 900 journeys a day using the Shrewsbury to Birmingham part of our service this gives those that want to stop our service at Shrewsbury some food for thought. Can Shrewsbury cope with that many extra interchange passengers?

Arriva's Standard Pattern timetable introduced that December prioritised links to N Wales and S Wales yet neglected NW England a pre existing link with far greater usage. What do the figures look like now? Has the SPT changed this?

## **Direct rail link to London backed**

Plans for a direct rail service between Wrexham and London have been approved by the rail regulator.

A rail watchdog called the five services each way on weekdays and a reduced service at weekends "good news" for passengers. The service, which could begin running from spring 2008, will create 50 jobs at an operating depot in Wrexham. Objections from rival train operators and worries over congestion on the rail network had delayed the plans.

Arriva, Virgin West Coast Trains and Central Trains voiced objections when the Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway Company (WSMR) submitted its application to run the services to the regulator in December. At that time, the Welsh Assembly Government had already offered funding for the depot to be built at Wrexham General station.

In the past, passengers from Wrexham wanting to travel to London would have had to use an indirect service via Chester and Crewe. The new trains will stop at stations including Shrewsbury, Telford, Wolverhampton and Banbury en route to London's Marylebone station.

As well as the weekday services, there will be three each way on Saturdays and three north bound and two south bound trains on Sunday.

Andy Hamilton, managing director of WSMR said staff recruitment was already underway but that the decision would enable them to start training their team and refurbishing trains. A launch date for the new services is expected in the new year. Simon Pickering from rail watchdog Passenger Focus said they were confident that the rail regulator would have looked into any potential issues before giving their approval. "This is good news for passengers," he said. "The key now is that this new service is competitive in areas where passengers would like to see benefits including the level of service, journey times and punctuality."

Transport Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones called it "extremely good news for north east Wales".

[From BBC News website.]

## **Concessionary Fares**

During Community Rail Week earlier in the year, the Conwy Valley Rail Initiative and ATW launched new rolling stock and concessionary fares for the Conwy Valley Line. This is a 12 month pilot scheme funded by the WAG, allowing free travel for all eligible pass holders resident in Conwy and Gwynedd. A class 150 sprinter has been allocated to the service, doubling seating capacity on all journeys.

[From *Train Times* No.47 - Summer 2007.]

## **The view from Milepost 62 with Brigadier John Faviell**

As I child I can remember going on a train journey with my elder sister and nanny, and being petrified by a shifty looking character in spectacles wearing a scruffy suit. He wasn't in uniform like most men his age were, and I was convinced he was a fifth columnist! This being the early part of war the country was awash with rumours of Nazi paratroopers who dressed up as nuns and policeman, and then committed sabotage. The Nazi fifth column turned out to largely have been a figment of the imagination – a mass hysteria somewhat like that that gripped the country when the Princess of Wales died. However having read the recent White Paper on rail and the Wales Rail Planning Assessment – the modern day equivalent of the fifth columnist appears to be alive and well in the civil service.

Both documents bear the hallmarks of a struggle between pro transport, economy and environment supporters, and those that wish to peddle the status quo of Britain's failed transport policies of the last 50 years. Whilst there's good parts there is an all too often trend of coming up with utter tosh to try and argue against investment in the railways. Take the let's sit on the fence and hope for a miracle non carbon fuel source to try and dismiss electrification, or pretend that the growth seen on the railway is a blip that won't continue. The Wales Rail Planning Assessment had shot itself in the foot before the ink was dry, with its prediction of passenger growth between 2005 & 2025 being outstripped many times over in the first two years. You can't plan successfully for the future when your basic premises are utterly wrong.

Some of these people really need to get into the real world. The psychological barrier of £1.00 per litre for petrol is now upon us. If higher petrol prices don't damage the economy as we have no real alternative but to move freight by road; then the increase in consumption in India and China will hasten the decline in the world's oil reserves and our economy. An old forces chum of mine argues that the great failure and legacy of the Blair years was Iraq – quite understandably - but I pointed out it was really transport. The doing nothing years when we should have been investing like mad for the future with a growing economy have been a huge waste, and scores of billions have been wasted propping up the illogical structure of rail privatisation.

We're now starting to win some small local victories, like a couple of reinstated passing places on our line, but momentum must be built up and the people who peddle failure moved on. There is at long last a debate going on about road user charging as a way of funding improved public transport or is it more roads? The road lobby is trying to hijack the debate for its own ends.

If anyone doubts who the fifth columnists really are, then look no further than the British Road Federation delegation to Germany in 1937 which included 58 MP's. Having posed with Nazi officials and salivated at autobahns they returned home and spent 1938 arguing that the defence budget should be cut and motorways constructed instead. If the pre war road lobby had succeeded there would have been no RAF fighters to fight the Luftwaffe to a standstill over the skies of southern Britain in 1940.

A couple of passing loops reinstated do not win the war, greater effort is needed!

## Websites

**Our website** <http://sarpa.info> **Webmaster Angus Eichoff**

**Website host is object4.net**

### Other sites of interest:

Arriva Trains Wales

[www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/](http://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/)

National Rail Enquiries

[www.nationalrail.co.uk/](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/)

Train and Bus Information Midlands

[www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp](http://www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp)

LondonMidland

[www.londonmidland.com/index.html](http://www.londonmidland.com/index.html)

Virgin Trains

[www.virgintrains.co.uk/default.aspx](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk/default.aspx)

Chiltern Railways

[www.chilternrailways.co.uk/](http://www.chilternrailways.co.uk/)

Network Rail

[www.networkrail.co.uk/](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/)

Railfuture/Railway Development Society

[www.railfuture.org.uk/](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/)

Cambrian Rail Partnership

[www.thecambrianline.co.uk/](http://www.thecambrianline.co.uk/)

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)

[www.acorp.uk.com](http://www.acorp.uk.com)

Website of the new Wrexham to London company

[www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk/index.html](http://www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk/index.html)

## SARPA Meeting dates and venues 2007-08

December	Tues 4th	1900	Newtown	Bell Hotel
January 8 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	1930	Shrewsbury	Library Hobbs Room
February 5 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	1840	Caersws	Red Lion
March 4 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	1830	Machynlleth	Tabernacle
April 5 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	1145	Aberystwyth	RAFA Club
May 6 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	1900	Newtown	Bell Hotel
June 7 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	1200	Borth	Victoria Inn
July 5 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	1200	Tywyn	Talylynn Railway
August 5 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	Summer trip please join 0633 ex Birmingham New St & 0905 ex Machynlleth for mystery trip on Cambrian Coast.		
September 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Tuesday	1915	Welshpool	Pinewood Tavern
October 7 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	1115	Machynlleth	Tabernacle
			Annual General Meeting	
November 4 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	1900	Newtown	Bell Hotel
December 6 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	1145	Aberystwyth	RAFA Club

## Useful addresses

### **Arriva Trains Wales:**

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

### **Network Rail:**

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

### **Newtown Station Travel**

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

### **The Association of Train Operating Companies:**

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

### **Customer Services London Midland**

PO Box 4323, Birmingham B2 4JB. Tel. 08456 024 277

### **Association of Community Rail Partnerships**

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

### **Virgin Trains**

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

### **Traveline Cymru for all public transport information**

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

### **Rail Franchise Performance Manager**

Rail and New Roads Division, Transport Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ. Direct Line (029) 2082 6561

### **For Train Times and Fares Call:**

08457 48 49 50 (24hrs)  
0845 60 40 500 (Welsh Language Service)  
0845 60 50 600 (Textphone)

**For ticket reservations please call:** 0870 9000 773

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