

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association



Newsletter No. 45

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The Heart of the Coast Line. An up train crosses the Barmouth Viaduct on the 6th February 2007.

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Chairman's Message

2009 is a year of anniversaries on our line. It's 150 years old. Well part of it. The Llanidloes & Newtown Railway was running freight by the 30 April 1859 and the line was officially opened on the 31 August 1859, the opening ceremony train allegedly carrying 3,000 people. Having travelled back on the overcrowded 4 car 1727 from Shrewsbury on Monday 29th December I wondered if there was a re-enactment going on! Only about 5 miles of the original line remain, from where the curve at the Newtown side of Moat Lane starts, to roughly level with Newtown High Schools Sixth Form block.

15 years ago a bout of rare investment brought some line speed improvements between Shrewsbury and Talerddig using European and various local authority monies. Journey times from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth were slashed to 105 minutes. There's an interesting debate whether the privatised rail operators have deliberately dumbed down schedules in order to achieve ppm targets instead of actually achieving the schedules inherited from BR. All I will say at this stage about the 119 minutes ATW now allow themselves to get to Aberystwyth is that there is plenty of slack in it- including 7 "charter minutes" between Borth and Aberystwyth. We've always said that adding in 2 or 3 reinstated stations and an end to end journey time of just less than 2 hours are possible. Let's not hear anymore nonsense about reopened stations causing adverse performance with so many spare minutes about.

In December 1999 I went to a meeting in Newtown when we were told we were to get an hourly service. 9 years on were still waiting. I've heard all sorts of excuses why this hasn't happened. The bottom line of course is the financial profligacy of the post BR rail industry. I've seen research which shows that between them ATW and Network Rail in the ATW area are earmarked to get government subsidy of c£340 million in 2009/2010. In 1987/1988 the subsidy in this part of BR was estimated at just over £200 million in 2008 prices. There's 30% more services than in 1988 and about 20% more than at privatisation. So a 30% larger railway requires 70% more subsidy in the private sector. Effectively a comparatively large investment budget per annum has not found its way into improving the railways of Wales and the Borders but been lost in reduced efficiency.

The phrase "botched privatisation" was brought out to play by the Deputy First Minister at our meeting with him last March. Thanks to Ieuan Wyn Jones AM for showing empathy but what's the answer? It has been to just chuck more money at it. The long period of economic growth has made possible the £5.1 Billion a year that the industry consumes from government. Now official UK government policy is to shift the cost to the fare paying passenger to reduce this subsidy. This is why fares are going up by sums greater than inflation year on year. One reason why fare levels have (so far) never been a big issue with the Committee of SARPA has been that we are aware of the real cost of motoring, and the relatively low fares obtainable on our line. Travel on our line or to stations served by ATW in the West Midlands and on to London Euston - then the value for money is still good, even more so if you have a railcard. However try doing something different and the real problems start.

Why must the passenger pay yet more and more for someone else's mistake? Surely addressing ways of cost reduction without cutting services must be a priority. BR was not perfect but it should be a starting point of getting the railway working properly again.

Which brings me on to the proposal by ATW to go to Marylebone. Essentially the 2 extra units required to make Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth an hourly service are being sent to London instead. Albeit in the off peak as quite cleverly ATW propose that they provide extra peak hour accommodation between Shrewsbury and Birmingham.

There is pressure on both ATW and London Midland in this corridor, however is this the right use of scarce resources especially with WSMR running? WSMR send 15 carriages a day each way between Shrewsbury to Marylebone yet not one seat is any help between Birmingham and Shrewsbury. WSMR are prevented from using New St by moderation of competition rules so that Virgin Rail's profits can be protected. So in effect you could say that we can't have an hourly service because Branson's profits mean the railway is not efficient in the Shrewsbury to Birmingham corridor!

The phrase how can the railway be made to work properly is again to the fore. Will the penny drop somewhere, please?

Gareth Marston

Newtown, 1st January 2009.

News in Brief

Aberystwyth

Three trains in Aberystwyth together: Class 31 31105 on a Railtrack testing train was in Aberystwyth on Friday 29th November. Together with the 0840 arrival, it was stabled in the loop, while the 0927 departure was at the platform.

Plans to improve Aberystwyth station have been "given the go ahead" by the Welsh Transport Minister (*Cambrian News*, 18 December 2008).

Shrewsbury

ATW and the Welsh Assembly Government were successful in a funding bid to improve facilities for Platform 3. This includes reinstating a lift, to allow disabled passengers' access from the station front. It is hoped that the project should be completed by March 2009.

The Cambrian 2009

The *Cambrian* steam train next summer is to run from the 27th July to the 28th August. It will run to Pwllheli every weekday, calling at Dovey Junction, Aberdyfi, Barmouth, Harlech, Minffordd and Porthmadog. There will be no Tywyn stop.

Wrexham and Shropshire

Wrexham and Shropshire have reduced the price of their Advance tickets to start from just £10 one way from any of their stations to or from London. They have also held the price of Off-Peak tickets at their 2008 levels and improved their flexibility: they can now be used as an Off-Peak ticket on any train from London, and on any train to London EXCEPT the 08.57 arrival on Mondays to Fridays.

Arriva acquires LNWR

No, it's not the main line from Euston to Carlisle. Arriva has acquired the train maintenance company LNWR. LNWR, founded in 1996 by Pete Waterman, has grown into a leading service company for modern motive power – they work for Bombardier, Siemens, Freightliner and Arriva Trains Wales.

Aberdyfi Station

The platforms at Aberdyfi station - or at least parts of them - are to be raised for easier access. The intention is to raise those parts which will be opposite the doors of a 158, provided it stops correctly.

Gerwyn Jones from the CRP commented *"This is great news for all those who currently use the station as well as those who previously could not due to the stepping height. A wide range of users will benefit including those with disabilities, families with pushchairs and even the golfers who use the train to visit the nearby golf course!* The £30,000 made available by the WAG to fund this project is yet another positive example of the ongoing investment in the Cambrian network.

Infrastructure Work.

The snail's pace continuation of the work along the line continues. It is now hoped that all work will be complete by the autumn of 2009. The work restoring a section of double track between Welshpool and Fron should be done in daylight with workers fenced off from the running line alongside now all preparatory work is done. Apparently the set of points that have been rusting on an embankment for nearly 12 months cannot be installed as if they are out of use for 6 months they would have to be replaced. We are unsure of the reason why but its in the rules apparently.

We don't have enough trains or carriages.

Said Arriva Trains Wales MD Tim Bell to the Welsh Select Committee of MP's before Christmas.

..but can find some to run to Marylebone.

A couple of weeks later ATW announced their intention to run services to London Marylebone. Allegedly the extra units will come from the 158 unit loaned for the ERTMS trial and a unit of action at the unit following collision damage.

The proposal is a mix of providing additional peak hour capacity to/from Birmingham New St and catering for a no frills, lower fare leisure market to London.

Getting a little better

ATW Class 158's were managing an average of 6,141 miles between delay inducing breakdowns according to Modern Railways NFRIP up to period 7 of 2008/2009. Last year they managed 5,467 for the same period. South West Trains 158 fleet manages 10,939.

TraCC

Mid Wales transport Consortia Chairman Councillor Ray Quant attended our meeting in Caersws on the 6th January to talk about the TraCC Regional Transport Plan. He explained that TraCC have no powers over rail services at all- this must come from WAG/DfT. They can lobby, and he promised that he would seek to arrange a joint meeting with us and the Deputy First Minister to lobby for the hourly service on our line.

Their bid includes a potential £300,000 to conduct a study on the future of our line and £94 million for road maintenance schemes out of a total of £120 million they hope to get. SARPA Members and guests from Carno Station Action Group asked a number of questions, and frustration at the contradictory statements from WAG and TraCC where they point at each other left a bad taste in the mouth. Many members felt that SEWTA didn't seem to have a problem specifying and even funding rail improvements.

Launch of the new timetable

With the start of the new timetable, and the through service to Birmingham International, a launch took place at Aberystwyth station on Monday 15th December last. Special Arriva 'air hostesses' greeted passengers boarding the service with complimentary travel packs and refreshments, offering a new 'airline' service to mark the new rail link.



Celebrating the introduction of direct train services to Birmingham International from the Cambrian network are (l-r) Cllr. Goronwy Edwards (Ceredigion County Council and Aberystwyth Town Council), Gerwyn Jones (Cambrian Railways Partnership), Nigel Owen (Aberystwyth University), Mick Bates (Assembly Member for Montgomeryshire), and Angus Eickhoff (Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association).

The view from Milepost 62 with Brigadier John Faviell

Recessions are dangerous places to be, as rational decision making can go out the window. Back in the early 1980's we were having a more traditional recession than the greed-filled double dealing fantasy financial deals gone wrong one were having now. I well remember my cousin the Vice Admiral choking over the 1981 Defence Review. No longer did the clever people in Whitehall believe we needed Aircraft Carriers, Amphibious Warfare ships or a presence in the Antarctic anymore - just the sort of stuff that would be handy if a foreign nation invaded some Islands still belonging to you and you wanted to capture them back or more sensibly deter them from doing it in the first place. Do I hear the reader say Falkland Islands 1982?

To cut a long story short, the cuts had not taken place by mid 1982 and the armed forces just about won the war. The deeply unpopular Thatcherite government wrapped the Union Jack around itself and pretended this was a great triumph for them. The reality was if the Argentinean junta had waited 12 months national humiliation would have ensued: Michael Foot would have been Prime Minister and the SDP the official opposition. No restructuring of the economy – decimation of heavy and manufacturing industry to you and me, No Major, no rail privatisation and no New Labour or Blair. How different things would be today! The real lessons were swept under the carpet in the cult of Thatcherism.

It just goes to show that predicting the future to match what the budget might be is a false economy. Our old friends the Strategic Rail Authority tried this approach when letting the Wales and Borders franchise. Desperate to try and save money as the cost of subsidising the privatised rail companies had spiralled out of control, it decided that to save money there would be no money for investment as, wait for it - there would be no growth! Just as the Whitehall mandarins go it wrong in 1981 the quango people got it wrong in 2003.

Another brain dead clanger from 1981 was the Serpell report. Serpell was of course the anti-rail senior civil servant who had with Ernest “roads mean profit for the family firm” Marples as Transport Minister hired in Dr Beeching as their axeman. Serpell tried to finish off what he started in the 1960's by proposing even more rail closures. Hoping the recession would help justify his cuts he set out several options – the worst being just leaving three main lines to London intact. However the Chairman of BR at the time, Sir Peter Parker was far too good for him. Whereas in the 60's Beeching was Chairman, now there was someone who stood up for the railways. Backbench Tory MP's in marginal constituencies were fully briefed on how there would no longer be a railway line nor station for their constituents. The smell of electoral meltdown rapidly put Serpell in its place. Of course in his heart Serpell wanted the draconian option, but thought giving the politicians lesser options would succeed in closing many miles. Parker outfoxed him by playing on the worst option to the MP's.

It's often said that when the Ministry came looking for cuts BR would draw up a list of services and stations in marginal constituencies that would be cut, and always ensured the local MP knew before the Minister and danger was averted. How the Sir Humphrey's wailed, gnashed their teeth and stamped their feet!

The point I'm making is that BR was mature and smart enough to stand up for the railway despite the machinations of the Whitehall Mandarins and their political chain of command. BR even got the ministry to agree in principle to a rolling programme of electrification that year- the Joint Review. What will happen today if some recession induced stupidity is dreamt up in the corridors of power? Of course it will be dressed up as taking “tough decisions”!

Recessions have been the death knell of services. In the early 90's we lost our Inter City service and an earlier than 0930 departure from Shrewsbury – only restored 3 years ago. Shrewsbury, Telford, Blackpool, Lincoln, Grimsby, Cleethorpes, Milford Haven and Haverfordwest all lost Inter City services. The Heart of Wales was cut back to 4 trains a day; the Conwy branch also saw reductions. The early 80's saw the Woodhead route and March to Spalding closed.

Whitehall has told WAG to save money and transport looks like it will take a hit. The bloated subsidy the privatised railway takes is an obvious target. How they would like BR's cost base now!

Still I know a sure-fire way to reduce public subsidy to the railway without endangering services- recreate a publicly owned vertically integrated railway run by professional railwaymen! Will there be an outbreak of common sense, or will groups like SARPA have to lead protest movements against "tough decisions"?

December 2008 Timetable Changes

Ersatz Taktfahrplan abandoned.....

Remember how Arriva's franchise bid team went around various "stakeholders" wooing them with the promise of a Swiss style regular interval interconnecting timetable? Shrewsbury was to be a hub of interconnecting services or so some local authority types believed. December 2005's Standard Pattern timetable didn't quite live up to that promise. Now Decembers 2008's timetable change abandons any pretence.

All services from Aberystwyth arrive at xx25 past the odd hours from 0725 till 2125. Mondays to Saturdays.

Connections depart at:

xx44 to Cardiff (from Manchester ATW- 19 mins)

xx47 all stations to Wolverhampton & Birmingham New St (London Midland – 22 mins)

xx53 to Manchester (ATW -28 mins) *

1405 & 1805 to Heart of Wales (ATW -40 mins from 1130 & 1530 ex Aberystwyth)

0813 Y Gerallt Gymro Express to Cardiff (ATW- 48 mins from 0530 ex Aberystwyth)

xx25 past next even hour to Wrexham, Chester & N Wales coast (ATW- 60 mins) ^ & +

xx26 past next even hour all stations to Crewe (ATW- 61 mins) *

* some Manchester trains have extra stops between Shrewsbury & Crewe.

^ Joining the 0953 to Manchester from 0730 ex Aberystwyth allows connection at Crewe to Virgin Trains service to Holyhead.

+ Northbound Y Gerallt Gymro Express departs 1809 (44 mins from 1530 ex Aberystwyth).

Departures to Aberystwyth are at xx27 past odd hours from 0727 till 1927 then at 2143.

Connections arrive at:

- xx17 from Wrexham, Chester & N Wales Coast (ATW- 10 mins)
- xx15 from Birmingham New St and all stations from Wolverhampton (London Midland – 12 mins)
- xx15 from Cardiff (ATW Holyhead service -12 mins)
- 1710 from Heart of Wales (ATW- 17 mins to 1727 departure)
- 1307 from Heart of Wales (ATW- 20 mins to 1327 departure)
- xx51 preceding even hour from Cardiff (ATW Manchester service -36 mins)
- xx41 preceding even hour from Manchester (ATW – 46 mins) *
- xx17 preceding even hour all stations from Crewe (ATW- 70 mins) *
- 1807 Northbound Y Gerallt Gymro Express (ATW- 80 mins to 1927 departure)

Let's hope the station refurbishment programme is finished soon for all those waiting passengers.

...a full day out...

Major Destination	Arrival time using 0530 ex Aberystwyth	Latest departure that Connects to 2143 to Aberystwyth	
Birmingham New St	0827	2024	Cardiff
Central	0953	1934	London Euston 1014
		1843	Manchester Piccadilly
	0915	1930	

You can still have a full 8 hours and return the same day from these four major destinations.

.....and it's still a dogs dinner between Shrewsbury & Birmingham New St.

One result of the SRA inspired cuts in October 2006 was to bunch up the all stations service between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton behind the scheduled ATW departures. With the slower journey time because of the extra stops this has effectively encouraged passengers from Shrewsbury, Wellington and Telford to use the ATW service into Birmingham as opposed to the London Midland service.

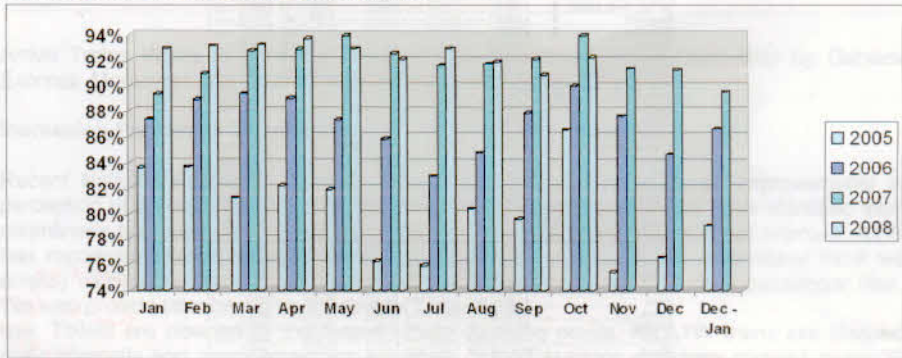
ATW depart to Birmingham International at xx31 past each hour arriving at Birmingham New St at xx26 past the next hour. The London Midland stopper to New St leaves Shrewsbury at xx47 just 16 minutes behind. Arriving at New St at xx55 past the next hour the time differential is now 29 minutes. In the other direction ATW depart New St at xx24 arriving Shrewsbury at xx20 past the next hour. London Midland go at xx05 arriving Shrewsbury at xx15 past the next hour. So despite leaving 19 minutes before it only gets to Shrewsbury 5 minutes ahead of ATW. Unless you're a savvy traveller and are happy to trade off a slower journey for less chance of overcrowding and a higher quality train (London Midland use Class 170's on this route) this effectively means 1 train per hour between Shrewsbury and Birmingham.

Wrexham and Shropshire's 5 trains a day don't help the situation either as due to "Moderation of Competition" until 2012 Virgin Trains right to run to London from Wolverhampton and New St is protected meaning WSMR can't stop at New St.

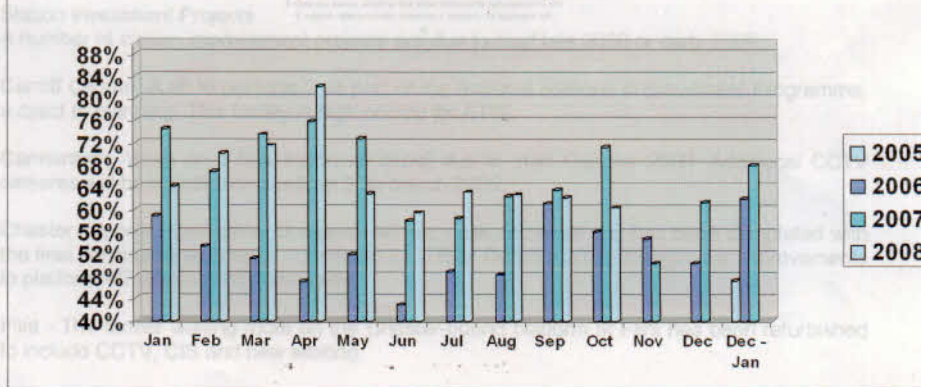
Surely something for a sensible fat controller to look at to give the best service between Shrewsbury and Birmingham?

ATW performance data January - October 2008

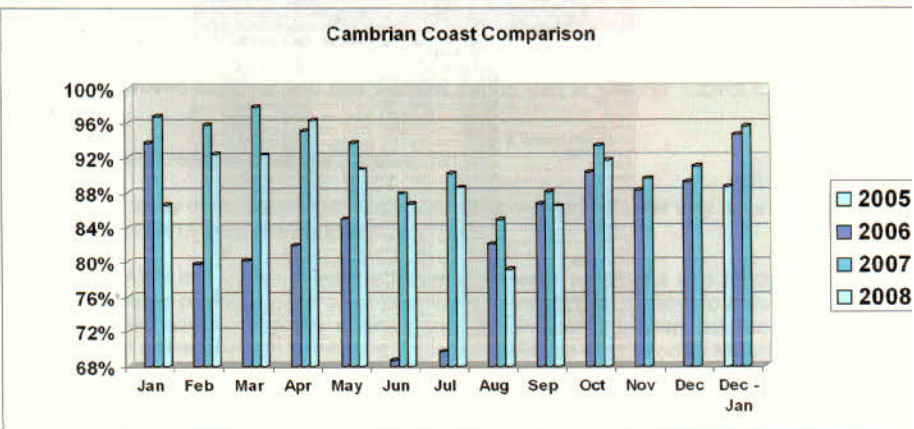
MOVING ANNUAL AVERAGE BAR CHART



Cambrian Mainline Comparison



Cambrian Coast Comparison



The punctuality charts shown come from the Arriva Trains Wales' Cambrian Rail Report of November 2008. The report states that the "challenging Cambrian route falls behind the rest of the network but infrastructure investment by the Welsh Assembly Government and Network Rail should result in improved performance on this line".

It will interesting to see how the Cambrian Mainline figures change with the introduction of the new timetable.



An interesting bogie locomotive on the Talyllyn Railway. 31st July 2008.



6th Jan 09. 158820 & 158827 arrive at Machynlleth on the 1009 BHM INTL to Aberystwyth & Pwllhelli. To the right 158829 can be seen on depot. This unit is the pilot unit for the ERTMS trial. Photograph: Gareth Marston.

TraCC Action Plan for rail on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth line for the next 10 years 2009-2019

Compiled by SARPA for consultation of TraCC Draft Regional Transport plan October 2008.

1) Immediate Action required.

A. Hourly Service on Cambrian Main line – the only strategic project in Mid Wales

Whilst noting that revenue funding will probably not be available for TraCC, TraCC must ensure that WAG is made aware in the strongest terms that the only strategic project in the TraCC area that derives benefit to all three unitary authority areas is the introduction of an hourly rail service on the Cambrian main line.

- It will allow decent connections between the Cambrian Coast line (southern Gwynedd) and its nearest regional centre Aberystwyth.
- It will improve connectivity to the increasingly important regional centre of Aberystwyth (Ceredigion) from its northern and eastern hinterland in southern Gwynedd and Montgomeryshire and to the rest of the UK via Shrewsbury.
- It will improve connectivity from Upper Severn Valley (Montgomeryshire) to its nearest regional centre – Shrewsbury and rest of UK.

Other schemes because of the wide area and sparse population of Mid Wales inevitably fall in the category of local in nature or effect. The Cambrian Main line links the largest two population centres in Mid Wales, Aberystwyth and Newtown, to the important regional centre of Shrewsbury only a few miles over the border in England. It should be noted that if Shrewsbury was in Wales it would be the 4th largest settlement and that east-west links will always remain more important to the economy of Mid Wales due to the proximity of the West Midlands.

B. A phased approach

Whilst the immediate stumbling block if funding was made available is the availability of rolling stock of which there is national shortage, it should be noted that an hourly service from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury can be phased in as and when additional rolling stock becomes available. A first step would be to extend the existing Crewe to Shrewsbury all stations service to Newtown. The service runs from/to Shrewsbury in the hours not currently served by Cambrian trains and with the use of only one additional unit can be extended to Newtown without any infrastructure works. It need not be operated by Class 158 units. Alternatively 2 or 3 additional trains a day could be operated the whole length of the line.

C. Use of realistic assessment tools

There is now widespread recognition that passenger forecast figures used in current appraisal tools grossly underestimate rail usage as the recent rail reopening schemes i.e. Ebbw Vale, Alloa have demonstrated. A realistic assessment must be made using appraisal tools that factor in the reality of booming rail usage in the early 21st Century.

D. Additional rolling stock for the Wales and Border franchise

The 1300 extra or new carriages announced many times and so far not delivered by the Department for Transport are for English based franchises only. TraCC needs to lobby WAG hard to ensure that a pro rata amount is made available to the Wales and Border franchise.

E. Support for national rolling programme of electrification

As noted above there is a national shortage of rolling stock. In order to address this and provide sufficient rolling stock at affordable prices to make rail improvements a reality in the TraCC region the proposed national rolling programme of electrification must be supported vociferously.

Whilst electrification of lines in the TraCC region are not a realistic possibility it is the rolling stock cascade that such a national programme will trigger which is of prime importance. The current unit type on the Cambrian the Class 158 DMU is used in large numbers on services (such as Cardiff - Portsmouth, Norwich - Liverpool) that could receive displaced Voyager and Meridian units from an electrification programme on the Midland Main Line and Cross Country routes. Displaced Class 158's can be used to strengthen services and help introduce new ones such as the Cambrian hourly service or extra trains on the Heart of Wales line.

F. Refurbishment of rolling stock

The ATW Class 158 fleet is well known to be overdue a mid life refurbishment. If it is to last until the end of the current Wales and Borders franchise it must be updated. TraCC must help facilitate this.

G. Cambrian mainline infrastructure - reinstatement of Caersws loop

The current infrastructure works on the Cambrian mainline will actually do little to improve punctuality and service robustness. Reinstated passing loops at Dovey Junction and from Welshpool to Fron do nothing due to the remaining long section between Newtown and Talerddig. This 15 mile section to the east of the current crossing point of all trains at Talerddig effectively holds the line ransom to knock on delays as there is no margin to recover from late running. Incredibly the reinstatement of Caersws loop which would reduce the section length allowing for recovery from late running was left out the current infrastructure programme. As a matter of priority this loop must be restored. TraCC must fund this essential reinstatement.

H. Shrewsbury and beyond

The current proposed reinstatement of platform and signalling capacity at Shrewsbury must be vigorously supported if rail services are to be flexible enough to support improvements west of Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury is the gateway to Mid Wales and TraCC must have an active involvement in its development.

2) Short/medium term Action

A vision for rail in Mid Wales for the second decade of the 21st Century.

A. Integrated transport - passenger

The creation of genuine Integrated transport facilities across the region. This includes car parking as well as bus services. All stations must have real time information for both bus and train running. Station staff at Welshpool, Newtown, Machynlleth and Aberystwyth should all be able to sell bus tickets and provide information on bus services.

- Welshpool - the realignment of the railway to its original formation and the expansion of the station car park alongside bus bays.
 - Connecting bus services with integrated ticketing should be available to *Welshpool Town Services, Oswestry, Shrewsbury, Montgomery/Churchstoke, Newtown.*
- Newtown - keeping the bus bay clear of parked cars is the priority.
 - Connecting bus services with integrated ticketing should be available to *Welshpool, Montgomery/Churchstoke, Newtown Town Services, Brecon via Landrindod Wells, Builth Wells via Llanidloes, Machynlleth.*
- Caersws - signposting to the village bus stop (the road layout precludes diversion of bus services) real time information must be made available at the village bus stop in addition to the station. Tarmacing of the station car park.
 - Connecting bus services with integrated ticketing should be available to *Newtown, Builth Wells via Llanidloes, Machynlleth.*
- Machynlleth - bus bays are required on the A487 road and acquisition of land to construct an adequate station car park.
 - Connecting bus services with integrated ticketing should be available to *Dolgellau, Tywyn, Aberystwyth and Newtown.*
- Borth - signposting to the village bus stop.
 - Connecting bus services with integrated ticketing should be available to *Aberystwyth.*
- Aberystwyth - signposting and information are the priority. The nearby bus station should not be a secret. The relocation of nearby retail units should be considered to create adequate car parking.
 - Connecting bus services with integrated ticketing should be available to *Machynlleth, Aberareon, Lampeter/ Carmarthen, Cardigan, Borth, Llanidloes and Aberystwyth Town Services.*

B. Station Facility works in addition to those mentioned above

- Welshpool - the realignment of the railway should include the building of adequate passenger facilities including provision for ticket retailing, toilets and adequate shelter for the number of passengers that use the station.
- Caersws - a refurbishment of the waiting room should be undertaken.
- Borth - replacement/refurbishment of the platform canopy.

C. Integrated transport - freight

If you have a resource why not use it? The absence of freight on the Cambrian lines is nothing short of a scandal. The Freight Multiple Unit trial in 2006 showed that costs can be competitive with road and this was before the first in a series of oil price hikes.

The FMU can offer loading/unloading on current passenger platforms depending on the type of goods carried, this can mean that loads of less than wagon full become viable. The opportunity is there for TraCC to be pioneers in the operation of modern rural rail freight operations. An exemplar service should be created using modern FMU's. The current signalling works mean that the line can be truly 24 hr in operation.

D. Rail Infrastructure works

The aim should be that the line has its capacity and capability restored to its post 1965 state so that an hourly passenger service, freight, charter and station reopenings can comfortably be accommodated without compromising other services and/or route performance. The current infrastructure works should be seen as Phase 1 of this process.

Phase 2	Restoration of Caersws loop, possible second platform at Caersws. Station reopening at Carno. Restoration of passing loop at Llwyngwriol with possible second platform.
Phase 3	Restoration of one passing loop between Dyfi Junction and Aberystwyth. Station reopening at Bow St/Llandre. Station reopening at Abermule. Creation of freight Interchanges at Porthmadog, Aberystwyth, Machynlleth, Newtown.
Phase 4-	Restoration of double track between Welshpool and Buttington Junction. Restoration of passing loop at Westbury (Shropshire). Station reopening at Hanwood (Shropshire). Reopening of second operational platform at Aberystwyth.

3) Medium/Long Term Action

A. Rolling Stock Issues

By the end of the Wales and Borders franchise in 2018 even if a refurbishment programme has been carried out the current Class 158 DMU rolling stock will be 26 years old and in need of replacing. TraCC must start the planning on the replacement process.

What should rolling stock on the Cambrian be like?

The current Class 158 have a number of sub optimal features that any replacement stock must rectify. Namely:

- Poorly functioning air conditioning system.
- Poor toilets.
- Legroom poor especially at air line seats.
- Narrow end doors that are known to lead to extended station dwell times.
- Not at best serving closely spaced station stops I.e. Coast line.
- Prone to mechanical failure in certain high temperature/high pollen conditions unless a high degree of preventative maintenance care is possible.

On the plus side they do have a number of good features that not must be lost:

- High mph capability (90 mph) to take advantage of higher line speed east of Talerddig and on mainlines. I.e. through working beyond Shrewsbury.
- Corridor connections particularly useful for combining portions.
- Luggage space that is better than any post privatisation DMU.
- Relatively high percentage of table seats with good views out of windows.

Ideally any replacement stock should have:

- End corridor connections.
- 1/3 2/3 wide door layout.
- Sufficient table seats with good legroom and views out of windows.
- Sufficient luggage space.
- Room for carrying cycles/ storage of catering trolleys when not in use. This suggest a dedicated space for Conductors and storage.
- Must be 90 mph capable if running beyond Shrewsbury.
- Good acceleration for use on Coast line.
- Couplers capable of mating with other types of rolling stock.

Cascaded rolling stock? Class 170 rolling stock is cleared for use on the main line between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury, however it must be born in mind that these units will be 20 years old by 2018 assuming any are available of course.

Tram Trains? We would suggest that these types of units assuming the current trial in the North of England is successful are likely to be unsuitable for the Cambrian because of:

- The length of journeys, Machynlleth to Pwllheli is 2 hrs. Aberystwyth to Birmingham is close to 3 hours. Higher quality stock is needed especially on main line and any running beyond Shrewsbury.
- The expensive infrastructure programme of lowering platform heights and possibly having to lay all continuously welded track. Why not just acquire rolling stock suitable for existing infrastructure?

B. Long term line re openings

The focus of any suggestions so far have been on the route of line south of Aberystwyth, the former line to Carmarthen. Out of all the connecting lines to the Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury line this ran through the least populous area and had the most sparse traffic. Is this really the correct route to begin with?

We would point out that the natural direction of the need for movement and travel options in the area North of the Mawddach estuary is to the North toward the Menai Straits, Caernarfon and Bangor and the links along the North Wales Coast towards England/Eire. Though out of the TraCC area it should acknowledge the importance to the towns of Pwllheli and Porthmadog of restoring the line to Bangor (whose trackbed is remarkably intact) and the impact that would have on the Cambrian Coast line.

Likewise the original Cambrian mainline north of Buttington Junction was towards Oswestry and on to Whitchurch. The Trackbed south of Oswestry is in situ as far as Llanymynech and is currently being restored by the heritage sector to allow through running to Gobowen on the Chester to Shrewsbury line. The gap between Llanymynech and Buttington Junction is 7 miles. Restoring the northern rail link on the Eastern side of the TraCC area may prove to be a lot easier to achieve than any other scheme.

The line south from Moat Lane Junction to Brecon (which then connected with 3 different routes) runs through a number of small towns Llanidloes, Rhayader, Newbridge on Wye, Builth Wells and Talgarth and ended in the TraCC areas 3rd largest town- Brecon. This town once had rail links in four directions. Due to its location in the south its focus is towards South Wales being only 35 mile or so from Cardiff. Any reopening effort should concentrate on Brecon southward as its priority.

Rail Development Officer: Cambrian Railways Partnership (CRP)

Gerwyn Jones, the Rail Development Officer for the Cambrian lines, has been busy on behalf of the region.

The most striking production is the new **Cambrian Coast Gazer**, which was launched at a Senedd event on the 6th November, and publicized in the regional press. It covers both the coast line, and the Aberystwyth to Dovey Junction section of the main line. This is a free A2 sized leaflet, obtainable from staffed stations. The research and design of the Coast Gazer was undertaken by local company Timeline and is beautifully illustrated by Borth artist Gabrielle Adamson.

A second Gazer, covering the whole of the main line, is to be launched by Easter 2009.

A2 posters, featuring old Cambrian artwork, have been launched. The posters are on display on 158 trains, and are available for £5 each, or the set of four for £15. Proceeds from their sale are

going to the Wales Air Ambulance, and the Machynlleth Town Clock appeal. The first payment, from Barmouth Tourist Information Centre to the Wales Air Ambulance was of £390, in late August; the next, to Machynlleth, of £240. It is hoped to develop the collection in future years, as it generates good publicity and also supports good causes.

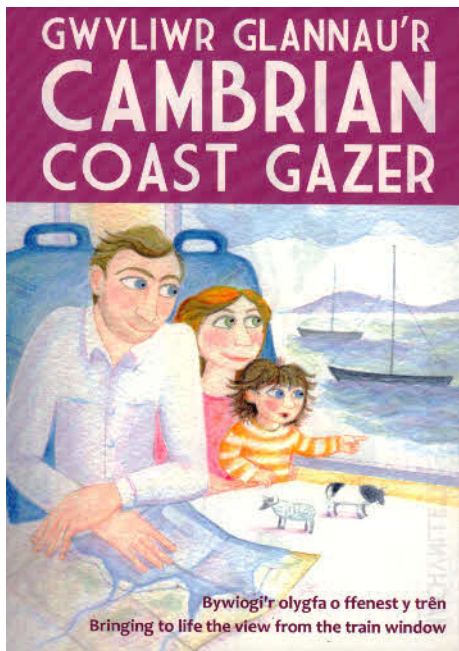
The CRP website (www.thecambrianline.co.uk/) has been updated. It provides information to a wide range of passenger markets, and includes an archive of all CRP press releases.

The new "2 4 1 - 2 am 1" initiative (included with the last newsletter) has been launched, and has been publicised by promotional banners, radio adverts and doorstep distribution.

CRP Year Planners for 2009 have been produced and are available free at local railway stations and tourist information centres.

Gerwyn has worked closely with West Coast Railways on the steam specials in 2008. He had a stall of promotional material on display at Machynlleth station, and reports that he found the trains encouragingly busy, especially on the days of the Pwllheli runs.

- A bid has been made for funding for additional marketing initiatives, including
- Four new Cambrian Trailways.
- Cambrian Aleways.
- Countrygazer for the main line.
- Ffestrail Circular promotion.



ATW proposes Aberystwyth - London trains

This is edited from ATW's application to the Rail Regulator to run through trains from Aberystwyth to London Marylebone, commencing on the 13th December 2009. The full document is available at

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/track%20access/1%20current%20consultations/2008.12.20%20arriva%20trains%20wales%2034th%20supplemental%20agreement%20-%20closing%20date%20for%20responses%2023%20january%202009/form%2022a%20aberystwyth-marylebone.pdf>

The proposal is for two services each way each day, with 3 each way on Summer Saturdays (May to September). The proposed routing is via Banbury, West Ruislip and Wembley. The rolling-stock for the London extension service will initially be refurbished Class 158 diesel multiple units.

These units will be compatible with the ERTMS signalling on the Cambrian line and may run in two or four car formations to Marylebone according to the demand of each service.

To avoid using additional capacity between Shrewsbury and Birmingham International, portionworking will be used for the service extensions, where the front unit or units will detach at Birmingham International and continue to Marylebone. Returning from London, the London portion will couple with other units at Birmingham International before continuing to Aberystwyth. One of the services will attach to a Holyhead train at Birmingham International, and detach at Shrewsbury for Aberystwyth. This will create a new journey opportunity between Birmingham and Aberystwyth.

It is the intention that the through London portions provide incremental additional capacity between Aberystwyth and Birmingham International. Therefore any unfilled capacity on the London-bound portion of the train would be utilised to relieve overcrowding on existing services, particularly on the Shrewsbury – Birmingham corridor. The main focus of the service extension is on unlocking the potential of the Mid Wales rail market which has no direct service to London, unlike North Wales and South Wales. ATW strongly believe that the best business case will be achieved by providing the small number of return service extensions outlined above, served by economical but comfortable refurbished 2-car Class 158 units, which will initially come from the existing fleet. It is

envisaged that longer trains will be introduced once the service has developed.

These services will be timed to complement the WSMR operation between Shropshire and London Marylebone, giving passengers a wider choice of journey times than are currently available. ATW believe this will build the market to the benefit of both operators and encourage much greater use of rail services throughout this corridor. The proposals put additional capacity, in the form of longer trains, on to the congested Shrewsbury -Birmingham corridor that is available for passengers making local journeys – without using additional paths. They believe that this local market can also be enlarged as a result of this initiative.

In addition, the proposal makes a first step towards creating an hourly frequency on the Cambrian line, without additional subsidy. A new journey opportunity would be created between Birmingham International and Aberystwyth at 1709, thereby creating an hourly interval service between 1609 and 1809, which is the busiest time of day for return travel. The existing 1709 departure from Birmingham, which currently runs to Chester, would run to Aberystwyth and be extended from 4 to 6 cars between Birmingham International and Shrewsbury, enabling some capacity on the through London –

Aberystwyth. This additional service will make a visit to Birmingham City centre or the NEC by rail from mid Wales a more flexible and feasible option. It will also provide better access to mid Wales from Birmingham airport.

Arriva Trains Wales is seeking the fastest possible paths available between Birmingham International and Marylebone. However if the best available paths contain slack time is it proposed that this is used to make stops at a small number of intermediate at locations where new journey/connectional opportunities can be created. Bicester and Leamington spa are possible calling points on the new service and both would provide connections for passengers, in some cases eliminating the need for passengers to change stations in Birmingham. Also envisaged are additional calls at Wembley on event days in order to provide direct access to the national stadium. Through trains to and from Pwllheli will be provided on Summer Saturdays, which will provide a direct London service for the many holiday resorts on the Cambrian Coast.

Arriva Trains Wales will comply with the Moderation of Competition Clause in West Coast Trains Limited's Track Access Contract. They will not carry passengers making journeys from Wolverhampton, Birmingham New Street or Birmingham International to Marylebone while this clause applies. Returning from London, they will not carry passengers making journeys from London to Birmingham International, Birmingham New Street or Wolverhampton. The focus of the Marylebone operation is on passengers



6th Jan Machynlleth. DRS 37605 is at the rear of a Network Rail test train returning from Pwllheli DRS 37258 at the front. 158827 waits at the other platform with the 1009 ex BHM INTL for Pwllheli. Photograph: Gareth Marston.

		1	2
Aberystwyth	Dep	05.24	07.22
Shrewsbury	Dep	07.28	09.26
Birmingham NewSt	Dep	08.36	10.34
Birmingham Intl	Dep	08.54	10.50
Leamington Spa	Dep	09.17	11.13
Bicester North	Dep	09.50	11.44
London Marylebone	Arr	10.55	12.49

		3	4
London Marylebone	Dep	12.15	15.15
Bicester North	Dep		16.12
Leamington Spa	Dep	13.40	16.46
Birmingham Intl	Dep	14.09	17.09
Birmingham NewSt	Dep	14.24	17.24
Shrewsbury	Dep	15.24	18.24
Aberystwyth	Arr	17.20	20.20

Saturday (High Summer)

		1	2	3
Pwllheli	Dep.			09:36
Aberystwyth	Dep		09:30	11:30
Shrewsbury	Dep	05:24	11:31	13:31
Birmingham NewSt	Dep	06:36	12:36	14:36
Birmingham Intl	Dep	06:54	12:56	14:56
Leamington Spa	Dep	07:18	13:34	15:34
Bicester North	Dep	07:54	14:08	16:08
London Marylebone	Arr	08:51	15:22	17:16

		4	5	6
London Marylebone	Dep	09:55	16:15	18:15
Bicester North	Dep	10:53	17:13	19:13
Leamington Spa	Dep	11:33	17:53	19:53
Birmingham Intl	Dep	12:09	18:09	20:09
Birmingham NewSt	Dep	12:24	18:24	20:24
Shrewsbury	Dep	13:24	19:24	21:24
Aberystwyth	Arr	15:26	21:26	23:26
Pwllheli	Arr	17:09		

Sunday

		1	2
Aberystwyth	Dep		11:30
Shrewsbury	Dep	11:40	13:31
Birmingham NewSt	Dep	12:38	14:39
Birmingham Intl	Dep	12:56	14:56
Leamington Spa	Dep	13:27	15:33
Bicester North	Dep	14:01	16:09
London Marylebone	Arr	15.07	17:24

		3	4
London Marylebone	Dep	15:15	18:20
Bicester North	Dep	16:11	19:17
Leamington Spa	Dep	16:46	19:33
Birmingham Intl	Dep	18.07	20.08
Birmingham NewSt	Dep	18.24	20.24
Shrewsbury	Dep	19.24	21.25
Aberystwyth	Arr	21.25	23.22

Business case**A north-south railway for Wales?**

The Guardian of 30th December last carried an article by George Monbiot: **Dr Beeching turned the country I have come to love into an outpost of empire**, part of which is reprinted here.

“Before Beeching, a handful of minor routes existed that could have enabled a determined passenger who was prepared to make a few changes to travel from north to south, but there was no line either conceived or used as a long-distance railway connecting the nation. Could such a railway be built? Thanks to the efforts of a remarkable man, the idea is beginning to seep into the national consciousness.

Archimandrite Deiniol is the only Orthodox priest serving in north Wales. Bull-headed, magnificently bearded, he is the spokesman for Yn Ein Blaenau, a group set up to lobby for the regeneration of Blaenau Ffestiniog, one of the country's poorest communities. Unlike many other depressed Welsh towns, Blaenau has a way out: but it is blocked. It is surrounded - hideously - by the waste from its slate workings. The British government has a policy of replacing virgin building stone with mining spoil and rubble. The slate waste around Blaenau would supply Britain with roadstone for years, but it's stuck there until the Conwy Valley railway line is upgraded. Deiniol has been negotiating with the byzantine network of railway companies, authorities and regulators, and has so far been frustrated.

But in doing so, he has learned a good deal about how the railways of the UK work - or don't. He has also discovered that a railway can be critical to a region's regeneration, and that the north-south roads in Wales are close to gridlock. There are plenty of lobbyists calling for new roads, but Deiniol's plan is likely to be cheaper and more sustainable. His survey of the disused railway lines of Wales shows that there is one route - from Rhyl through Denbigh, Rhuthun, Corwen, Newtown, Llanidloes, Rhaeadr and Builth Road to Dowlais - that would require only two miles of new formation to link Holyhead to Cardiff. The rest of the way makes use of current and former railways. He proposes that short feeder lines also be built, connecting this trunk route to Mold, Llangollen, Oswestry, Bala, Hay-on-Wye and Brecon.

The One-Wales Line could not only offer a much faster journey than the current long detour through England, but it would also knit the other railways of Wales into a coherent network, as it crosses the north coast railway, the Cambrian line and the Shrewsbury-to-Swansea line. It would help to regenerate a desperately poor region in the south called the Heads of the Valleys. The project would look rather like the Western Railway Corridor in Ireland, which is reopening 184km of disused lines between Limerick and Sligo."

Looking at the [former] railway map of Wales, it is not obvious where the missing 2 miles of new formation are. Yes, the route from Rhyl to Corwen is obviously there, but beyond Corwen, to get to Newtown, one has either to reinstate the line to Morfa Mawd-dach (then use the Coast line and the Cambrian main line), or reinstate the line to Ruabon (and then go by Shrewsbury and the Cambrian main line. Neither prospect would achieve a faster journey than the existing Borders route.

To produce a route faster than the Borders route, a new line would surely have to be built between Corwen and Newtown - difficult country with the Berwyn Mountains south of Corwen. It would rival the abortive Manchester and Milford Haven route between Llangurig and Strata Florida!

The proposal also featured in the *Western Mail* of 28 June last. Here the route is again described, but it is noted that there would have to be a new three-mile tunnel to connect two valleys either side of the Berwyns.

Denis Bates

The photograph, published in the last issue, of the Deltic on Barmouth Viaduct, was by Nigel Bird.

The Editor apologises for failing to remember that he supplied it!



The last summer of the Ruabon to Barmouth Junction line. A standard Class 4 pauses at Drwsynant station. Photograph Denis Bates.



This is a page from a pre-First World War Alphabet featuring the London underground. The original is in colour.

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/
National Rail Enquiries	www.nationalrail.co.uk/
Train and Bus Information Midlands	www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp
LondonMidland	www.londonmidland.com/index.html
Virgin Trains	www.virgintrains.co.uk/default.aspx
Chiltern Railways	www.chilternrailways.co.uk/
Network Rail	www.networkrail.co.uk/
Railfuture/Railway Development Society	www.railfuture.org.uk/
Cambrian Rail Partnership	www.thecambrianline.co.uk/
The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)	www.acorp.uk.com
Website of the new Wrexham to London company	www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk/index.html
North Wales Coast Railway	http://www.nwrail.org.uk/

SARPA Meeting dates and venues 2009

The programme for the early part of 2009 is as follows:

February	Tuesday 3rd	1815	Machynlleth	Tabernacle
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David Crunkhorn, ATW Station Manager Cambrian has been invited to discuss station doption issues.

March	Tuesday 3rd	1900	Welshpool	Pinewood Tavern
April	Saturday 4th	Social trip to Severn Valley Railway		

Depart Aberystwyth 0730, changing at Smethwick Galton Bridge. Steam engines and real ale- the Chairman can't wait!

May	Tuesday 5th	1830	Newtown	Bell Hotel
June	Saturday 6th	1200	Borth	Sea Horse Inn

Mark Williams MP for Ceredigion will attend this meeting.

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

Wrexham and Shropshire: Great Central House, Marylebone Station, Melcombe Place, London NW1 1JJ. Tel. 0845 260 5233

London Midland

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

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

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

Virgin Trains

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

Traveline Cymru for all public transport information

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

Rail Franchise Manager Dept is Undergoing reorganisation next edition will carry update.

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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