

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association



Newsletter No. 48

November 2009



Severn Bridge Junction Signal Box at Shrewsbury receiving some TLC so it can continue for years to come.

Photo: Gareth Marston

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This is the quarterly newsletter of the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association. Contributions are welcomed from members and non-members about the mid Wales rail scene.

Views expressed in it are those of contributors and not necessarily representative of the Association as a whole. Information provided is published in good faith, but the Association cannot accept responsibility for any loss or damage arising therefrom.

The Editor reserves the right to abridge or amend copy.

Subscription renewal

As the membership year runs from January to December, subscriptions are now due. The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2010) £7.00 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, payable to SARPA, 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.

Secretary and Treasurer

These positions are currently vacant. If you wish to volunteer for either position, please contact the Chairman.

Do you have copies of the following issues of the Newsletter: 1, 3, 4, 5, all as CRUG newsletters? If so, we would like to copy them, to go into the Association archives. Please contact the Editor.

Chairman's Message

A number of members have contacted me worried about budget cuts as we pay for the failings in the world financial sector. My answer to the problem of budget cuts is simple and it's not dusting the Serpell Report off the shelf. It's time to bring Wales on a par with other small Western European nations. A golden opportunity to use the financial squeeze to fundamentally overhaul how we do things is being presented.

Back in the early 1990's, being a Rugby fan (and player until a knee injury) I was painfully aware of accusations that we Welsh lived in the past dwelling on past glory's from the 1970's and hadn't moved on. The same could be said of our economy: King Coal and heavy industry were in terminal decline – were we moving on? Ten years of devolution have moved people's perceptions on for the better (and two Grand Slams). Recently grant culture for manufacturing industry has been declared dead – no more shall we try and base our economy on attracting other country's firms to relocate by waving cash and hidden subsidies at them. We have to grow our own 21st Century Industry. In other words we've moved on. However are we still living in the past with our transport thinking?

My father use to say that the old Welsh Office solely existed to plan and build roads. They were quite good at it too as the countless dual carriageway and bypass schemes across Wales testify. Whilst WAG has shown itself to be more rail conscious the road budget consumes 80% of the Welsh transport pot. The number of suggested road schemes due to start in the next 5 years dwarfs the rail ones in the draft National Transport Plan. Other nations do things differently. The Scots are committed to spending 70% of their transport budget on sustainable projects; the Irish spend 50% of their pot on the railways. Similar statistics can be found in Denmark, Norway, and Austria etc. Even larger countries like Spain spend 49% of their transport budget on rail. Wales is the odd man out amongst small Western European nations in its continued roads based transport agenda. If you listen to the likes of the RAC Foundation then our European neighbors must be committing economic suicide by spending money on railways, trams and the like and not on roads. Far from it – just take a look at these country's respective Gross Domestic Product (GDP). I'm not naïve enough to say that there's a direct correlation between lower spending on roads and higher GDP as a multitude of factors effect wealth creation and the economy. However plot the graph and there does seem to be a trend across Europe towards the better performing economy's spending less on roads.

The reasons are fairly self evident, ranging from reducing carbon emissions and other environmental concerns, dealing with urban congestion, reducing time distance from peripheral regions to the major economic centres and cutting dependency on imported oil which building more road space that attracts more traffic doesn't address. Far from being the primary economic driver these nations realise that mass motor vehicle ownership and use is now something of a mill stone and they're prepared to make a real difference by providing quality alternatives.

When we do invest in rail it's a great success on a number of levels. The Ebbw Vale lines millionth passenger since reopening in Feb 08 was rightly praised by Ministers recently. The ability to repeat and build on this rail success story is being stifled as the transport budget to do so is allocated elsewhere. Many people in my home town Newtown (pop. c11,000) are cock a hoop that a bypass is being consulted on perceiving the short traffic peaks caused predominantly by internal traffic a bypass won't address as being a huge problem. However the price tag – assuming it can be delivered on budget – is nearly £60 million, twice that of reopening the Ebbw Vale line (£28 million; six

new stations serving c100.000 people!). In a small nation like Wales you don't need too many Newtown bypasses to consume the transport budget up. We have to face up to the fact that there will inevitably be some small towns and areas that will not have the road spend that say the old county of Gwent had as the pressing issue at a national level is now reducing road dependency. Were already behind the game even with our fellow Celtic nations - we have to catch up. It's the 21st Century now not the 1970's. The argument that we have to cater for road users because everybody supposedly uses motor vehicles is nonsense as this fails to plan for the future.

When the transport budget is cut we should say the 21st Century starts now and allocate two thirds of the new budget toward public transport and other sustainable schemes, roughly tripling their budget. Twenty years ago I completed my A levels: much has moved on in Wales since then, and it's time for transport to join in.

Gareth Marston
Newtown, Montgomeryshire November 2009

News in Brief

Shrewsbury

Visible progress on the station refurbishment over the summer has been minimal. Severn Bridge Junction Signalbox is receiving replacement windows.

Severn Valley regeneration or regression?

A part funded from Europe scheme to regenerate the Severn Valley has been announced by WAG. Llanidloes, Newtown and Welshpool town centres are to get money to improve the "townscape". There are also plans to dust of the old WDA ideas to expand the Offa's Dyke Business Park in Buttington and build a business park at Abermule. The need to expand on green fields when so many empty industrial units exist already and the impact on carbon emissions as these sites have poor/no public transport links has been criticised.

Newtown

Support for the proposed bypass has proved less universal than many local politicians thought, with WAG's consultants only offering six choices of bypass to solve Newtown's traffic problems drawing heavy criticism as alternatives have not been explored.

Newtown Traffic Solutions have now posted an e-petition (reproduced below) on the NAW website. This calls for any bypass decision to be delayed until traffic engineering and traffic reduction measures in Newtown itself have been trialled. The link to it is

http://www.assemblywales.org/gethome/e-petitions/epetition-list-of-signatories.htm?pet_id=416&prncl_ptnr=Garry%20Saady&clsd_dt=24/11/2009

You have to register with the website first before you can sign the petition.

P-03-261 - Local Solutions to Newtown Traffic Congestion

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to defer a decision on the proposed bypass of Newtown until it has developed and trialed a set of sustainable measures in the town itself to address traffic congestion.

Newtown Traffic Solutions provide Further Information:

Two thirds of the traffic on the A483/A489 corridor in Newtown is local.

The measures to address traffic congestion on the A483/A489 should include those designed to make better use of road space, such as

- traffic management measures to reduce conflicting movements at junctions
- dedicated lanes in Pool Road and Llanidloes Road for traffic turning right to industrial and retail premises
- co-ordination of traffic lights

They should also include measures designed to promote alternatives to car travel, such as:

- a redesigned town bus network serving supermarkets & industrial estates, and avoiding the A483/A489 where possible
- a 15 minute interval town bus service
- a footbridge across the River Severn connecting the Llanllwchaiarn river path to Pool Road
- promotion of cycling and walking

We recognise that there is currently a problem caused by high vehicles diverting through residential areas in order to avoid the low railway bridges on Dolfor Road and Llanidloes Road. This can be solved by the following measures:

- raising the railway bridge on the Llanidloes Road
- construction of a link road from Dolfor Road to Heol Ashley in the Mochdre Industrial Estate

In addition SARPA aims for an hourly service on the main line. Its use for freight and reopened stations at Carno and Abermule would help remove traffic from Newtown's roads. It's noted that many lorries that traverse the area are long distance ones between Carmarthenshire and North East Wales/North West England and their cargoes could easily be transferred to rail using the Heart of Wales line.

Fare dodger found dead in prison.

A fare dodger who was making a nuisance of himself between Welshpool and Newtown in the summer was found hanging in his cell at HMP Brinsford in late October. Adam Rushton (20) of Newtown was imprisoned for a non rail related matter.

Llanidloes Road Level Crossing – road users face delay and chaos.

The new automatic barriers installed in early October have apparently blocked the view of vehicles trying to turn out of Moat Lane according to the Mid Wales Highway's Agency.

The solution is a “temporary” set of 4 way traffic lights around the level crossing. As well as causing road traffic delay the anomalous situation has arisen of a green traffic light on the road signaling road vehicles to proceed when the crossing barriers have been lowered and flashing red lights signaling an approaching train tell them to stop!

Aberystwyth.

The new Welsh Assembly Government and Ceredigion County Council buildings opened in October. Remember to wave at the hard working public servants when you pass on the train!

The so called Masterplan appears to be dead in the water because of the recession.

Arriva

An update trading statement released in late October showed that revenue at their Cross Country franchise grew by just under 2% for the year to date – far short of the 10% assumption needed to pay the premium to DfT. Growth for ATW at the “no growth” Wales and Border franchise was just under 5% despite the recession.

ATOC

The Association of Train Operating Companies is promoting longer length franchises of between 15 & 20 years as the magic formula to bring in stability, planning and private sector investment into the rail industry. Passengers in the Wales and Borders franchise area wait with baited breath as the 6th year of the 15 year franchise draws to an end and wonder what private sector investment is heading their way.

Llanbadarn Crossing

The crossing continues to cause problems. After the near miss of October 2008, another incident occurred on the 25th May, when the barriers were raised after the passage of the 0530 train ex-Aberystwyth. On the 14th July a lorry struck a barrier.

Following the October 2008 incident, ATW have been asked, by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch, to give train drivers more guidance on using the crossing and others like it. The RAIB report says that the immediate cause of the incident was the train driver's failure to brake his train sufficiently early to stop before the crossing, despite a flashing red aspect indicating that the crossing had not operated on the approach of the train. Drivers were becoming accustomed to the light changing to white, after the train had passed the signal. It has recommended that Network Rail change crossing times so that white flashing lights on the crossing are visible to drivers and also to review and assess the crossings.

ATW Services to Birmingham International Rail Station: 'Smethwick Galton Bridge' - What it is and what it does

Roger Goodhew

Background

Punctuality has been the number one topic on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth line. Many west of Offa's Dyke have blamed the Midlands end of the service whilst those to the east have blamed the mid Wales end. SARPA has contributed over a decade to help solve some of the problems.

In practice, the main difficulties have centred around the single line sections west of Shrewsbury, tidal or weather impacts from rivers, problematic overhead wires, the slow loading and travelling characteristics of crowded class 158 diesel units and the congested Stour Valley line between Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

All of these have received some attention. New loops are being installed at Welshpool, Talerddig and Dyfi Junction; the line has been raised there too; four car (two x 158s) units have become established between Machynlleth and Birmingham - which load and travel quicker; whilst improvements to the 'regulation' of train movements between Oxley, Wolverhampton and Birmingham - in conjunction with a more robust timetable - have reduced delays east of Shrewsbury.

This article concentrates on the length of route between Shrewsbury and Birmingham. Most of the stopping trains are run by London Midland between Shrewsbury and New Street and typically are pathed in the wake of the 'semifast' services provided by ATW between Holyhead or Aberystwyth / Pwllheli and Birmingham International. These 'stoppers' call at all eight stations between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton whilst ATW serve only Wellington and Telford Central as intermediate stops. WSMR stops at Telford and sometimes at Wellington - but not at any Birmingham station, except Thame Parkway.

From Wolverhampton to Birmingham New Street there are six intermediate stations. Only the two early morning London Midland services from Shrewsbury (0528, 0558) to New Street stop at all of them. At other times, individual stations are served on a skip stop basis according to the operator concerned. From the Shrewsbury direction the typical pattern is for the London Midland stopper to serve Sandwell & Dudley (where Euston-bound Virgin expresses also stop) whilst ATW trains, en route to Birmingham's New Street and International stations, stop at Smethwick Galton Bridge.

Smethwick Galton Bridge

This is an interchange station located where the Snow Hill to Stourbridge (Jewellery) line crosses the Stour Valley line. The crossing is courtesy of Thomas Telford who built a bridge 150 ft in span and 71 ft above the Main Line Canal which it crosses in a deep cutting. The station was reconstructed by Centro late in the 20th Century in association with re-assignment of part of the former railway line between Snow Hill and Wolverhampton Low Level to the Midland Metro tram service.

Train services arrive at Galton Bridge low level from the Shrewsbury direction at platform 4 typically at about hh.20 before resuming to Birmingham. The first train from Aberystwyth arrives at 0820. Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury bound trains stop at low level platform 3 at about hh.30. The last train to Aberystwyth leaves at 2030.

Up the stairs (or lift) you need to decide whether to go westbound from high level

platform 1 (towards Stourbridge, Kidderminster, Worcester or Great Malvern) or east-bound from high level platform 2 (towards Snow Hill, Moor Street, Shirley, Stratford upon Avon, Dorridge, Leamington Spa or London Marylebone).

Westbound Services

A total of 80 services each weekday depart westbound from high level platform 1. All of these go to Stourbridge Junction (where you may try out the Parry People Mover for Stourbridge Town); 55 of these go on to Kidderminster; beyond Kidderminster there are 30 services of which 20 serve Worcester Foregate Street, 10 Worcester Shrub Hill whilst 4 extend to Great Malvern.

These westbound services all come from Moor Street and Snow Hill: 41 from Shirley, with 17 from Stratford upon Avon; 34 from Dorridge with 8 from Leamington Spa - of which 5 are Chiltern services from London Marylebone via Banbury. First train calls at 0629 for Worcester Foregate Street; last train calls at 2325 for Stourbridge Jn.

Eastbound Services

A total of 85 services each weekday depart eastbound from high level platform 2. All of these go to Snow Hill and Moor Street; 40 go to Shirley with 15 of these to Stratford-upon-Avon; 44 go to Dorridge with 4 to Leamington Spa; 5 Chiltern services also serve Leamington Spa, going on to Banbury and London Marylebone.

These eastbound services all come from Stourbridge Junction: 58 from Kidderminster (of which 5 are Chiltern services) with 21 from Worcester Foregate Street, 12 from Worcester Shrub Hill and 3 from Great Malvern. First train calls at 0618 for Stratford-upon-Avon; last train calls at 2314 for Shirley.

Punctuality and 'Regulation' on the Stour Valley

Between Wolverhampton and New Street there are 5 main junctions: towards Walsall, Wolverhampton steel terminal, Galton junction (which allows services from the Stourbridge direction to access the Stour Valley line between Galton Bridge and Rolfe Street), Soho emu depot and a pair of junctions serving the Soho line to Perry Barr.

Clear passage of trains between Wolverhampton and New Street depends on good signalled management of these junctions and of platform occupation at New Street. In the past, it was a typical experience for trains from Shrewsbury to run well to Oxley only to be held just outside Wolverhampton station whilst the desired connection was allowed in and out before us. This situation has now been much improved.

Here is an example showing the modern way of dealing with this situation.

At Birmingham International the 4-car 0909 departed for Holyhead via Shrewsbury. This train called at New Street 0919/0924, at Smethwick Galton Bridge 0930, arriving at Shrewsbury P4 at 1026 (due 1023) and divides: the front portion (2-car) proceeds forward via Chester (1121/1126) for Holyhead (due 1319).

Meanwhile - and much earlier - at Holyhead the 2-car 0715 departed for Birmingham International via Shrewsbury. This train passed Chester 0915/0930 and arrives at Shrewsbury at 1031. It then joins in platform 4 to the waiting rear portion of the ex 0909 from Birmingham International to form the 1035 ex Shrewsbury for International.

This train passes Wolverhampton 1112/1113, Smethwick Galton Bridge 1124

and New Street 1130/1136 arriving in Birmingham International at 1150. On the alternate hours, 4-car trains from Birmingham International reverse in Shrewsbury station for Machynlleth where they usually divide to give 2-car service to Aberystwyth / Pwllheli. The same for the reverse pattern from the coast to Birmingham International.

Key features of this pattern are that the Birmingham bound train enters Wolverhampton station where the Virgin for Euston awaits 1145 in platform 2, Cross Country Manchester to Bristol TM awaits 1115 in platform 4 and London Midland for Walsall via New Street awaits 1119 in platform 5. The ATW 1113 departure then has a clear run down the Stour valley with its stop at Galton Bridge at 1124 arriving New St 1130.

Three key features have changed from the recent past: firstly, the ATW service runs midway between the 'stoppers' - which no longer terminate in New Street but carry on round via Duddleston, Aston, Perry Barr and Tame Bridge Parkway to terminate in Walsall, e.g. at 1214. Secondly, the ATW typically no longer terminates in New Street, proceeding at 1136 to reach International at 1150.

Thirdly, and lastly, there are now no weekday services reaching the Stour Valley from Hereford, Malvern, Worcester, Kidderminster or Stourbridge Jn via Galton Junction. All these services now proceed either via Smethwick Galton Bridge high level to Snow Hill / Moor Street or via Bromsgrove / University to enter the high platform numbers only at New Street.

The above regulation of paths has significantly reduced the number of conflicting train movements and hence 'signalling delays'. It's a real step forward, as a regular through Wolverhampton to Walsall service is now established - albeit via a roundabout route.

Off Peak fares to London

The advice printed in the last Newsletter is still correct.

There are no restrictions on travelling to London Euston via New Street using the 0530 ex Aberystwyth. Off Peak fares are valid via this route. If you return from London using an Off Peak fare whose outbound portion was bought west of Shrewsbury there are no restrictions including the evening peak.

If you buy your ticket at the London end Off Peaks are only available after 1015. There are restrictions if you route via Trent Valley which is more expensive, and you have to have a via TV route valid ticket.

A flight of imagination

Chris Worker

This relates to an imaginative moment I had a couple of years back -

Co-ordinate the WAG expresses, WSMR and Aber-London into one network, and see if the trains could be run onto the Metropolitan instead of into Marylebone, i.e. through Baker St, King's X/St Pancras, Faringdon, Barbican, Blackfriars etc. Could even use Loughborough Jct to wrap round into Waterloo or Victoria, or to go south & east - pick-n-mix your London destination.

Revive the spirit of Sir Edward Watkin (a bit!). But gladly we've moved on from my grandfather's anecdotes of riding the Metropolitan in steam-hauled open carriages. A quality customer experience? Well it was an experience, with certain qualities, and customers had it. Some bits of history are better not revived!

Good Citizen Award to Peter Compton

Gerwyn Jones



Peter Compton's years of excellent service to people on the move in Mid Wales has been recognised by Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Town Council. Peter who runs 'Newtown Station Travel' located at Newtown Railway Station was presented with the 'Good Citizen Award, for someone working in paid employment that helps other people over and above what is expected of them in their employment' by the Mayor of Newtown, Joy Jones, at a Civic Service held recently at the town's Hope Church.

On receiving the award Peter commented 'I was very surprised to receive this award, but feel highly honoured to be selected. I hope I can continue to provide a similar service to all the rail users of Mid Wales, without whom I would not be in this position. So I wish to say thank you to the Town Council and all my customers'.

It's fantastic that Peter's hard work over the years has been recognised in this way - the award is well deserved and he is to be heartily congratulated. The Cambrian railway network is fortunate to be served by such dedicated and pleasant staff who strive to enhance the travel experience - which is a view expressed, shared and appreciated by a large number of passengers.

For more information on the Cambrian Railways visit the Cambrian Railways Partnership at www.thecambrianline.co.uk

Arriva Trains Wales Supplemental Agreement 38 – Proposal for Direct Service from Aberystwyth to London Marylebone

The SARPA response

When our organisation was first formed in 1992 it was partly in response to the withdrawal of Intercity services from Aberystwyth the previous year. Our organisation is in support of the proposed service by Arriva Trains Wales to London Marylebone as passed by motion at our AGM on the 10th October 2009, on the following basis:

- There is demand for through trains to London from Mid Wales. Our research over the years has consistently shown that a lack of such a service acts as a demand suppressant on rail services in Mid Wales.
- The trains will help with congestion/health and safety issues at Birmingham New St during its reconstruction by stopping passengers interchanging there.
- ATW's proposal gives our line two much needed additional services each day which will grow the rail market west of Shrewsbury regardless of London traffic. Passengers from Mid Wales will now be able to commute by rail to Shrewsbury and Telford and the timings of the additional trains at Shrewsbury improve connectivity with other services running through that station notably toward Wrexham/Chester/N Wales.
- Whilst we don't want to get into a sterile debate about supposed competition between rail companies and the effects, we feel that the current ATW proposal which is changed from their original one (in Dec 08) and WSMR's recent change of ownership mean that the proposed service is less of a threat to other through trains running between Wrexham, Shrewsbury and London.

Our membership strongly feel that a better all round service to the passenger could be made by WSMR and ATW Co-operating with each other rather than competing and strongly urge the ORR to encourage this.

We see Virgin Trains Moderation of Competition agreement as an impediment to better rail services in North East Wales, Mid Wales and Shropshire which adversely affects passengers and the local economies. Through services from London to these points are easier to provide for if they are extensions of services through to Wolverhampton and Birmingham New St which stop there. We strongly urge the ORR to scrap this agreement ASAP in the interest of passengers and the economies of North East Wales, Mid Wales and Shropshire.

Stop Press - Deputy First Minister follows SARPA Chairman's lead

From Plenary at the Senedd Wednesday 4th November 2009.

Ieuan Wyn Jones - "However, I do not accept the point that this Government has not committed itself to an integrated transport service, because I can tell Mick that, in the next financial year, there is a significant shift to public transport. The balance of spend in my department has now crossed over, with 54 per cent of the budget now being spent on integrated transport, and 46 per cent on roads. That shift will continue".

Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association Annual General Meeting

12.30pm, Saturday 10th October 2009
Monty Club Newtown

14 members present.

Committee: G Marston, I Morris, D Bates, R Goodhew & A Eickhoff

Ordinary: W Redfern, C Williams, A Burton, K Rushen, R Knight, M Williams, A Harvey & 2 others

Representatives from Corporate Members: Welshpool TC & Machynlleth TC (also both individual members)

Apologies Keith Elson, Frank Torrens, Martin Bennet, David Taylor, Peter Gatward, Mark Strong, John Case, Richard Macve.

It was noted that we had picked a date when bus replacements were running on the line which may have effected turn out. The engineering work was not advertised when date was chosen.

Financial Report The report (attached) was presented by the Chairman. Over the year there was a surplus of expenditure over income of £89.82. Income was £30.14 less; there were five fewer members, a £48.00 increase in subscriptions, due to an increase in rate from £6 to £7, and a decrease of £76.50 in donations.

Expenditure increased by £80.22. Room hire was up by £19.25, newsletter costs up £42.75 (but four newsletters were produced during the period, instead of three). The website cost £73.22, but there were no travel or other costs.

Proposed by Michael Williams, seconded by Ken Rushen, that the accounts be approved. Approved nem con.

Chairman's Report Gareth reported on his activities throughout the year. Campaigns included the new timetables, the Caersws barriers, connections at Shrewsbury, especially to Cardiff and to the north. Responses to consultations included to ATW (Marylebone proposal) TraCC (Regional transport Plan) and WAG (National Transport Plan) Fares to London, Welshpool station bridge, waiting room at Caersws, Aberystwyth Masterplan, Cambrian AleWays. Kept in communication with other RUGS and Campaign for Better Transport.

Newsletter Report Robert Knight reported that the distribution was proceeding well. Sending an electronic version is good for savings.

Denis Bates reported that the next newsletter would be produced in November. Newsletters would be dated by month, rather than by season.

Website Report Angus apologised that it was not quite up to date, due to problems with Broadband connection at his new address.

SRUF Report Roger Goodhew reported that the Shrewsbury Rail User Federation now only meet twice a year but continued to be good forum for discussion between RUG's.

Election of Officers The present committee were all prepared to stand for re-election, with the exception of Peter Gatward, who is standing down.

Proposed by Michael Williams, seconded by Robert Knight, that they all be re-elected. Passed nem con.

There were no proposals for the election of a new Treasurer, and the Chairman agreed to act as Acting Treasurer. Similarly there were no proposals for the position of Secretary: it was agreed that current activities did not need a dedicated officer.

Subscription levels It was agreed that these remain unchanged for the coming year.

Meeting programme This would broadly follow the pattern of this year's, with meetings planned for Aberystwyth, Borth, Machynlleth, Caersws, Newtown (2), Welshpool, Shrewsbury and Tywyn, and no August meeting. The AGM would be held in Aberystwyth and a summer trip. Venues and date to be announced in the November newsletter.

Representation to other organisations Agreed that representatives remain as this year's.

ATW Marylebone Plan The Chairman tabled a number of options (attached) for our response to the plans, ranging from full support (Option 1) to outright rejection (Option 2). He reported that he had had 10 responses from members by email: eight supporting Option 1, and two Option 2. A lively discussion followed.

Proposed by Charles Williams, seconded by Ken Rushen, that we accept Option 1, with slight amendments:

- As we've been arguing for the restoration of a through service since 1991.
- Strong demand amongst many current non/frequent rail users for through service.
- Provides 2 extra trains each way at busiest time of day between Aber & Salop.

Members expressed their concerns about the retention of unrestricted travel to Euston via Virgin trains if ATW service goes ahead. Agreed this would be priority action if ATW proposal approved.

Presentation at TraCC Rail Partnership Meeting The Chairman showed his Power-Point presentation (which was running on a continuous loop on a laptop throughout the meeting) intended for presentation to the forthcoming meeting on 14th October.

Welsh Liberal Democrats Conference It was decided not to send a representative to this.

AOB

SARPA E mail group – A number of members have complained about the volume and use of "reply all" by other members and some had opted to leave the group. It was agreed in future for the Chair to send info to all members on network using blind copy and to set up a separate SARPA Chat group for those that wanted to discuss issues. Angus is to investigate what form it might take, and report back to the next meeting.

Other items pre-notified were not discussed as members who proposed them had left early or were not present and the Chair took a vote on whether to continue due to time getting on & bus replacements to catch.

The meeting closed at 3.05pm.

SARPA Accounts 2008-2009

1st October 2008 – 30th September 2009

INCOME

Subscriptions	£546.00 (78 members)	
Donations	£72.50	
Bank Interest	<u>£1.09</u>	
Total:		£619.59

EXPENDITURE

Room Hire	£70.75	
Newsletters (4)	£385.80	
Website	<u>£73.22</u>	
Total:		£529.77

Surplus of Income over Expenditure	£89.82
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BALANCE SHEET

Opening Bank Balances 1st October 2008

Community Account	£357.05	
Business Premium Account	£274.18	
		£631.23
Surplus Income		£89.82
Total		£721.05

Closing Balances 30th September 2009

Community Account	£445.79	
Business Premium Account	£275.27	
Total		£721.05

2007/2008 Comparison with 2008/2009

INCOME

- £30.14 less this year
- 5 fewer members
- £48.00 increase in subscriptions (subs up from £6.00 to £7/00)
- £76.50 decrease in donations (subs up or recession?)

EXPENDITURE

- £80.22 more this year.
- Room Hire up £19.25
- Newsletters up £42.75 but with 4 produced instead of 3.
- Website costs this year but no Travel or other categories.

Overall Balance

- Increase of £89.82

The View from Milepost 62 with Brigadier John Faviell

The memsahib and I have just returned from our summer holidays – we of course went to a former colony – the Republic of Ireland, and what an eye opener it was. We stayed in Dublin for a few days and then explored inland reaching Cork, Galway and Waterford. All by public transport of course, and very good it was too - a far cry from the hours wait at Shrewsbury for the undersized Arriva Holyhead train on the way there. Irish Rail is of course still state owned and vertically integrated to boot. The trains run at 90% ppm and connect with each other with little overcrowding!

We were staying at my wife's cousins in the country near Waterford and one evening one of their children returned home from Dublin, now an adult and a manager with Irish Rail no less. A blessed opportunity to talk about the railways and give the genealogy and what cousin Agnes's did on her missionary trip to the Balearic Islands and something called clubland a rest. He explained Ireland's Transport 21 plans and what part rail was playing. I was gob smacked at the scale of the investment plans. Rail is to get 11 Billion Euros between 2006 and 2015. Lord Adonis's electrification announcement amounts to 1.25 Billion Euro in comparison. On my return there was an article in September's Modern Railways on Irish plans, so I fired up the accursed internet and did some more research comparing Ireland with Wales.

In terms of area and population the area of the Wales and Borders franchise managed stations and the Republic are similar in size, also the footfalls were surprisingly similar at approximately 45 million - though we have to be careful noting the differing geography of the population centres, and remember that many rail services in Wales extend through to major cities in England and other operators apart from ATW run.

IR runs an Intercity network as well as the Enterprise service northward to Belfast every hour; its second city Cork benefits from an hourly service from Dublin formed of loco hauled stock with first class and catering facilities in 8 car formations. Other long distance destinations and extra services on the Cork line have a fleet of no fewer than 180 Intercity DMU's purchased from Korea. These head for Rosslare, Tralee, Westport, Sligo, Waterford, Limerick and Galway. Generally the larger towns have hourly peak and two hourly off peak services, the smaller two hourly. Whilst these frequencies may not sound impressive the Republic's geography dictates that 10 different routes need to be served with only the last few miles into Dublin seeing them join up. What is impressive is that the entire fleet is brand new, the levels of passenger facilities are good and that most formations at peak times are six car plus. ATW's long distance fleet of 10 year old 2 car (30) and 3 car (36) Class 175's and 17 year old unrefurbished 2 car Class 158's (48) are not only half the size of IR's long distance DMU fleet but older and in poorer condition. IR is buying another 51 units for outer suburban work. In contrast Welsh commuters from Abergavenny are expected to join small 2 and 3 car long distance services to get to Cardiff.

In Dublin of course you can already find 33 miles of electrified suburban commuter line – the DART with some 150 EMU cars on it. Other Dublin suburban lines and local services elsewhere have a fleet of 180 DMU's nearly all under 10 years old. Local services around Cardiff have a fleet of 25 year old Pacers (52) and Class 150's (50) with a dozen or so single car Class 153's for rural lines and not a mile of electrified track in site yet. Transport 21 envisages boosting Greater Dublin's annual rail footfall from 33 million to 100 million! Compare that with the pessimistic Wales Rail Planning Assessment. Plans involve creating a second DART line including a substantial underground section, reopening a 1960's closed line some 30 miles to Navan in stages and

four tracking the Kildare line westward from Heuston station. No fewer than 430 EMU cars may be ordered. The plan is that all services will be 8 car lengths. Wales has no plans at all beyond some vague hopes of acquiring cascaded stock from England. Yes I know the Great Western main line to Swansea will be electrified by 2017 but apart from a like for like replacement of HST's and swapping cascaded Class 165/166 stock onto Portsmouth services and locals to Bristol there are no firm plans for any new rolling stock.

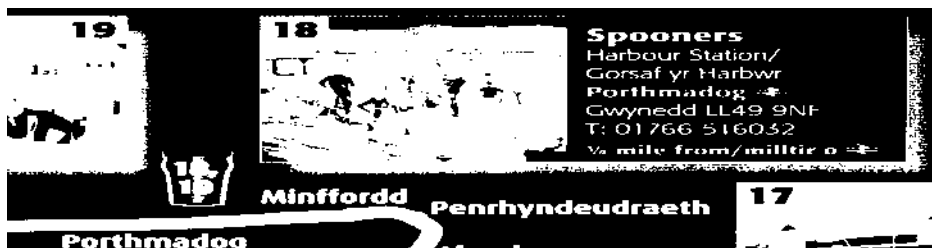
Dublin has its own light rail system - LUAS. Its two lines have 30 million journeys per annum and there are plans for a number of further lines. Of the 430 Cities and towns in the world with light rail of course not one is in Wales, where we sit in traffic jams in our cars that are advertised as driving on open roads.

So what of away from the Capital City regions? There's been much angst in Wales that what little rail investment there has been in recent years is Cardiff centric: the reopened Vale of Glamorgan, Ebbw Vale and half hourly Merthyr trains all run to Cardiff. Transport 21 of course is chucking a lot into the Dublin area but there's more than crumbs from the table for elsewhere as well. The completely modernised Intercity fleet with greater frequencies than before, Cork has had a commuter line built to Midleton on a line mothballed for some time, and of course the much publicised western corridor with 60 odd miles of reopened line in the offing. There's even talk of a light rail system in Galway. The Cambrian line may have increased frequency from 2011 and of course there was the somewhat disjointed Standard Pattern Timetable in 2005. What of the rural lines? In Wales we've had the misnamed Ministerial Advice Group again questioning the value of rural lines. Ireland is somewhat fortunate that due to its geography many of its internal lines running through areas of low population are part of the Intercity network connecting larger towns/cities on the south and west coasts to the capital. It doesn't have its equivalents of the Heart of Wales or Cambrian Coast with lower mileage and lines feeding the Intercity network. The Western Corridor reopening will directly connect towns the size of Shrewsbury and Chester. There appears to be none of the hysteria about loss making rural lines.

Can Wales **AND THE BORDERS** have their equivalent of Transport 21? The total was 34 Billion Euro over ten years on transport, 50% on public transport. Contrary to popular myth Transport 21 is not funded from Europe but out of the national budget of a Celtic nation so there's no real reason why Wales **AND THE BORDERS** can't have something approaching Transport 21 if the will is there. Surely this must be a source of embarrassment to our politicians? Wales and the Borders are stuck in the slow lane again. So much for pretending our infrastructure is world class when we'd struggle to win the Celtic League!

Great fun was had with one of the grandsons creating a £15 Billion Wales and Borders public transport network in Lego. However we had to go and have tea. Whilst we were gone Dusty the Siamese cat decided to rearrange the Lego. The Memsahib has banned her from the Kitchen as more food was being stolen than at anytime since we had the Chinese houseboy with worms when in Singapore. Overcoming our initial irritation on our return I soon realised Dusty in her wisdom had redeployed some Lego Light Rail cars from Cardiff to Swansea. With this degree of natural intuition I am thinking of hiring her out to our political parties as a transport consultant. She surely couldn't come up with anything worse than the Ministerial Advice Group.

Cambrian ALEways



The Cambrian Railways Partnership (CRP) has teamed up with the Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA) to promote travel by train to pubs on the Cambrian network through the new **Cambrian ALEways** initiative.

Launched at the Llanbedr Beer Festival, held over the last weekend in September at the Ty Mawr Hotel, the ALEways leaflet features 20 hosteleries that appear in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide that are easily accessible via the Cambrian lines. Also included are some ideas of rail related things to do that combine to make a great day out for locals and visitors as well as of course rail and real ale enthusiasts!

As you can see from the photo above, Cambrian ALEways has reached the parts of Wales that other beers cannot reach! And Spooners is a pub with a real steam engine in the bar - at the Ffestiniog Railway Harbour Station at Porthmadog.

CARNO STATION CAMPAIGN

The major milestones so far in Carno Station Action Group's campaign for the re-opening Carno Station have been

- The submission of an 800 signature petition to the National Assembly in June 2007
- The subsequent hearing by the NAW Enterprise & Learning Committee in Carno in September
- The Committee's call for the development of a formal business case, endorsed by the Minister
- CSAG's submission of the 60 page draft Carno Transport Appraisal to TraCC in July 2008

CSAG were encouraged to prepare the draft Carno Transport Appraisal by the then WAG Head of Rail, Tim James, who, in evidence to the Committee at its scrutiny of the Minister in November 2007, said:

"We told TraCC that it should lead the process, and that the people of Carno should help to provide evidence for that business case, along the lines of the Welsh transport appraisal guidance (WelTAG), which sets a clear framework for appraising projects."

The draft Carno Transport Appraisal contains the draft business case for the station. The traffic demand forecast is based on existing usage of Caersws station and research at the Institute of Transport Studies into the way propensity to travel by rail declines with the distance of people's homes from the station. It estimates that there would be in excess of 10,000 journeys per year in the year after opening, 36% of which would be additional ones – i.e. not abstracted from Caersws.

The cost of station would be critically dependent on platform length. Network Rail's cost breakdown for the recently opened Mitcham Eastfields station indicates that the Carno station cost estimate of £1 million adopted in the Appraisal would be realistic for a station with a platform long enough for 4 carriages. The Appraisal concludes that a station costing £1 m would yield a benefit cost ratio in the range 1.6 to 1.9.

CSAG have been concerned for some time at the lack of progress to the completion of the formal business case. However, this work is now in hand, following TraCC's commissioning of a Rail Feasibility Study for the Cambrian Line as part of its RTP Preparatory Works. The Feasibility Study, which is being carried out by Capita Symonds, will look at Carno Station re-opening alongside a range of other possible improvements to the Cambrian Line. The various schemes identified will be subjected to Stage 1 WelTAG Appraisals to enable priorities to be selected by the end of this year.

Assuming Carno is selected as a priority, it will be for WAG to take the scheme forward for delivery. If it is not, then WAG will complete the business case itself, in order to fulfil the recommendation of the Enterprise and Learning Committee.

There is strong support in Carno for the re-opening of the railway station. The Community Council sees it as a driver for the sustainable regeneration of Carno, following the Laura Ashley factory closure, as it would

- open up job opportunities as far away as Telford and Aberystwyth
- dramatically improve the prospects of redevelopment of the moribund Laura Ashley factory site
- enable the provision of new housing close to sustainable transport
- open up opportunities for green tourism
- expand the client base of existing tourist enterprises

- enhance Carno Community Centre's rôle as a conference centre for all-Wales organisations

There has also been a suggestion that the former station building would be the ideal location for a permanent exhibition celebrating Laura Ashley and her achievement. Local AM Mick Bates has written to the Laura Ashley Company, who own the building, to seek their co-operation.

For further information about the station campaign go to www.carnostation.org.uk. The draft Carno Transport Appraisal can be downloaded from the link on the Campaign for Better Transport website - <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/carno-station-action-group>

Club 55 - a treat for the middle-aged

With the Arriva Trains Wales 'Club 55' offer you can travel anywhere on the Arriva Trains Wales Network for just £15 return. To get this great deal all you need is proof that you're 55 or over. Senior Railcard holders and Disabled Persons Railcard holders, over the age of 55, can get an additional £2.00 off the fare. You can travel between 6 September and 12 December inclusive.

A supplement may be paid to upgrade onto the First Class service running between Holyhead and Cardiff.

Tickets can be bought at any station booking office, by calling 0870 9000 773, or an ATW train when boarding at a station where no booking facilities are available. *Club 55 tickets are not available to purchase online.* You are required to carry proof of age when you travel to validate your ticket.

Travel anytime at the weekend and on any train Monday to Friday apart from those arriving into Cardiff Central, Bristol Temple Meads, Birmingham New St, Manchester Piccadilly or Liverpool Lime St / Central before 9.30am. (There are add-on fares to some points off the ATW network). You cannot travel on: 7, 13, 21 or 28 November to Cardiff.

The [Network map](#) shows the lines beyond the normal ATW routes which can be used for a small add-on, including anywhere Greater Manchester (for an extra £1) and Merseyside. [See information](#). These are not Rover tickets though, you have to give destination. Rather a complicated affair, but worth exploring if you are 'of a certain age.' There's even [a TV advert](#). Note also also that other companies, [Scotrail](#), and [TransPennine Express](#), have their own similar offers.

We'd be interested to hear of anyone's journey experiences with these tickets.



The Dyfi Bridge, from a painting by Michael Huber. This is taken from a postcard for the Cambrian Railways "The Train Attraction" - available from stations along the line.

Marylebone handbags- or how not to run a railway

Adrian Bailey

If you thought the railway was run for the travelling public or for wider macro economic and social considerations given the public funding it receives then think again. Attempts to restore through links from Shropshire, Wrexham and Mid Wales to London have descended into high farce as ATW submitted its application to the Office of the Rail Regulator. Apparently it's not about providing a needed service to the public and serving the economies of the areas concerned. It's about private sector organisations that are to varying degrees dependent on public money to pay their shareholders' profits squabbling with each other like little children. But to be fair they are to a degree only playing the game devised by the incompetent rail privatisation of the last Conservative administration and perpetuated by New Labour.

Common sense dictates that a national rail network should radiate out from the capital city and provide direct links to major population centres and remote regions. The criminal accomplice of the road lobby- Beeching - decided that the former Great Western Railway main line from Paddington to Birkenhead was a "duplicate route" and express services over it should be withdrawn in 1967 despite a New Town called Telford being built on its route. BR saw sense and by the early 70's had restored services to Shrewsbury via the LNWR Wolverhampton route and for a few years to Aberystwyth. With budgetary pressures in a recession and an edict to be more profitable in preparation for privatisation these services were lost as economy measures in the early 90's. Passengers were told that the private sector was far more efficient than the public and it was hinted that the entrepreneurial private sector would open up these lost markets. Geography and common sense dictate that through services from our area to London have to pass through the West Midlands conurbation and can best be provided by extending services that stop at Birmingham. Entrepreneurial Virgin signed a legal agreement preventing anyone else competing with it from New St to London in return for the upgrade of the West Coast mainline, and showed no interest west of Oxley sidings. Until 2007 a succession of operators delivered poor service into connections with increasingly unreliable Virgin services disrupted by the botched West Coast upgrade, reaching an all time low point in the summer of 2006 when pollen maliciously attacked Class 158 units run by ATW.

Then came along an Open Access operator WSMR proposing through trains from Wrexham to Marylebone: everyone howled in protest. The operator would be unreliable, increase network congestion, and undermine other operators by reallocation of revenue under the ORCATS system causing abstraction. They were allowed to start operations. Everyone soon compared the quality of service on offer with the alternatives – though WSMR could not stop at New St its loadings and therefore finances were precarious. Then Virgin expressed an interest in running to Shrewsbury and Wrexham; again everyone howled in protest. The operator would be unreliable, increase network congestion, and undermine other operators by reallocation of revenue under the ORCATS system causing abstraction. WSMR would be driven out of business, and then Virgin would withdraw leaving no through trains. Virgin withdrew their bid. Then ATW expressed an interest, everyone howled in protest. The operator would be unreliable, increase network congestion, and undermine other operators by reallocation of revenue under the ORCATS system causing abstraction. WSMR would be driven out of business then ATW would withdraw leaving no through trains. At the time of writing (26 October 2009) the outcome is not known.

So what's the truth? It was said to me by a local authority officer that to date ATW's entrepreneurial activity has been confined to an impression of Oliver Twist holding up the bowl for more to the Welsh Assembly Government and that it seethes at the comparison between the quality of WSMR and the reputation its gained for poor service on it's ex Regional Railways Central routes. Is ATW's bid sour grapes aimed at destroying WSMR? Are WSMR just crying Wolf? After all it's just been acquired by Deutsche Bahn – would your due diligence process not clock a life threatening competitor? And it's not as though DB/Chiltern couldn't provide life support until Virgin's anti-competitive agreement expires in April 2012 and New St can be stopped at?

There are all sorts of arcane arguments flowing back and forth about use of franchise paid for rolling stock being used outside the franchise area and revenue abstraction. Reading the consultation replies on the Regulator's website one thing is for certain - the passenger seems to be the last consideration in all this. Arriva talk of the business case. Others howl how money will be taken from them. Me, me, me they all scream. Everyone knows in their heart that the way we organise our rail system is broke. The man that will be given credit for putting back electrification on the UK rail agenda – Modern Railways Technical Editor Roger Ford – has put forward his proposal to mend humpty. He wants InterCity to be recreated –a national long distance express operator that will restore pride in Britain's railways instead of a hotch potch of different standards and services concerned with their tiny patch and paying tax to the Treasury in franchise agreements. Hear, hear! The East Cost mainline will soon be back in state hands as the first building block.

National network, national standards - Telford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham are all large enough population centres to justify through services to London, Aberystwyth ticks the connecting a remote region box. No arguing amongst providers as a proper level of service is specified to the whole country: required an OS map a copy of the last census and common sense. The nonsense stops and the nation get's the service it deserves. The Wales and Border franchise holder need not worry itself – it will operate its services around the Intercity ones.



Why the railway was closed on the day of the AGM. Llanidloes Road crossing in the process of being equipped with half barriers and flashing lights, taken by the Editor from the replacement bus on 10th October.

December timetable change

The first up train in the morning will depart earlier from Monday 14 December.

The 0530 departure from Aberystwyth will be retimed to depart at 0514 and also departures from points further east to Shrewsbury will be up to 20 minutes earlier. The train will go forward from Shrewsbury at the same time as now.

This will allow connections into Cardiff to Holyhead and Holyhead to Cardiff trains that are currently missed, allowing significantly earlier arrivals. If you're on the ball there's also a London Midland train to New St you could transfer to, getting into New St at 0818. Please note if you then try and get to Euston earlier, Off Peak fares from west of Salop are not valid on the 0830 Virgin Trains service.

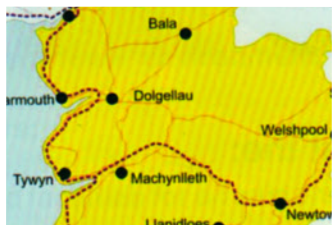
SARPA Meeting dates and venues 2009

December	Tuesday 1st	1845	Newtown	Bell Hotel
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Provisional SARPA Meeting dates and venues 2010

Please note that venues and dates may be subject to change. Engineering possessions disrupted travel to our 2009 programme quite badly. Any alterations will appear in subsequent Newsletters and our website.

January	5th	Tuesday 1900	Welshpool	Pinewood Tavern
February	2 nd	Tuesday 1800	Shrewsbury	Library Hobbs Room
March	2 nd	Tuesday 1830	Newtown	Bell Inn
April	3 rd	Saturday 1115	Machynlleth	White Lion
May	4 th	Tuesday 1800	Aberystwyth	RAFA Club
June	5 th	Saturday SARPA	Summer trip depart Aberystwyth on 0514 train.	
July	3 rd	Saturday 1200	Borth	Sea Horse Inn
August	NO MEETING			
September	4 th	Saturday 1200	Tywyn	Tallylyn Railway
October	9 th	Saturday 1145	Aberystwyth	RAFA Club
			Annual General Meeting	
November	2 nd	Tuesday 1840	Caersws	Unicorn Hotel
December	7 th	Tuesday 1830	Newtown	Bell Hotel



Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru - TraCC - is the Regional Transport Consortium for the Mid Wales Region. They have recently issued a Regional Transport Plan for the region, whose cover is illustrated by a map of Wales, part of which is illustrated here. Do they envisage a realignment of the track between Fairbourne and Barmouth - via Penmaenpool Bridge?

Websites

Our website <http://sarpa.info> **Webmaster Angus Eickhoff**
Website host is mid-wales.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
Wrexham and Shropshire company	www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk/index.html
North Wales Coast Railway	http://www.nwrail.org.uk/
Circular tour of North Wales by rail	http://www.penmorfa.com/Cambrian/
Ffestiniog Railway timetable	http://www.ffestiniograilway.co.uk/timetable.htm
Vale of Rheidol Railway timetable	http://www.rheidolrailway.co.uk/timetable.htm
Talylyn Railway timetable	http://www.talylyn.co.uk/timetable/2009
Welshpool and Llanfair Railway timetable	http://www.wllr.org.uk/timetable.htm
Welsh Highland Heritage Railway	http://www.whr.co.uk/index.php?pid=51
Fairbourne Railway	http://www.fairbournerrailway.com/index.htm

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 newtownstation@btclick.com

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

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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