

**Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association****Newsletter No. 81**

April 2020

**CORONAVIRUS AND THE RAILWAY**

As we're all aware, we're living in extraordinary times. The coronavirus has had widespread effects, including a huge fall in transport use. The situation on the railway has, substantially, changed. Here's a summary of the main changes at the time of printing:

The timetable has changed substantially. As expected, the frequency has been reduced more towards a 2-hourly service, although with exceptions where appropriate. TFW have consulted the health service and care homes regarding when key workers will need to begin their shifts; the service pattern has been adjusted accordingly. One of the main aspects of the emergency timetable is a later start time; however the train times still allow a 9 o'clock start in Aberystwyth or Shrewsbury. Whereas normally all trains start from Machynlleth in the morning, run a service to Aberystwyth and then work eastwards towards Birmingham, the first train of the day to Shrewsbury now runs directly from Machynlleth. Through wise use of the hourly service infrastructure, a basically 2-hourly service has been supplemented to provide an 08:21 arrival in Aberystwyth and a 08:16 arrival into Shrewsbury as the first trains of the day. These vital services are amongst those which allow key workers to access key healthcare facilities, particularly in Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury.

The table below gives some statistics as to weekday journeys on the Cambrian main line:

	Aberystwyth	Shrewsbury
Earliest arrival (from Machynlleth)	08:21	08:16
Earliest arrival (from Shrewsbury)	11:15 (bus)	N/A
Earliest arrival (from Aberystwyth)	N/A	10:21
Trains per day (to Machynlleth or 8 beyond)	8	8

The coast line has 5 trains each way each day. The railway's usefulness to transport key workers to their vitally important work cannot be understated; however we must join the railway (and governments) in urging no unnecessary travel. Stay safe!

Jeff Smith  
Chairman

## NEGES GAN Y CADEIRYDD

Croeso i'n cylchlythyr di-brint cyntaf erioed. Oherwydd yr amgylchiadau ynglŷn â'r coronafeirws, roeddem yn teimlo na ddylid anfon copïau papur trwy'r post am y tro, felly dim ond fel PDF caiff y rhifyn hwn ei gyhoeddi.

Ar hyn o bryd, mae llawer llai o deithwyr ar y rheilffyrdd (ac ar y ffyrdd am hynny), ond mae'r rheilffyrdd dal i chwarae rhan bwysig o ran cludo gweithwyr allweddol i'w gwaith. Mae Trafnidiaeth Cymru wedi adrodd wrthym eu bod wedi trafod y gwasanaeth sydd angen ar y Cambrian gyda'r gwasanaeth iechyd a chartrefi gofal er mwyn sicrhau bod gweithwyr allweddol yn gallu chwarae eu rhan yn yr ymateb i'r argyfwng.

Er bod yr amgylchiadau wedi arwain at grebachiad sylweddol yng ngwasanaethau a theithiau ar y lein, rydym dal i gadw llygad ar y dyfodol, gyda'n galwadau am fwy o gerbydau, cyfleusterau teilwng a gwasanaethau gwell. Er mai dim ond swyddogion y Pwyllgor sy'n cwrdd ar hyn o bryd, ac hynny dros y wê, rydym dal i roi pwysau ar Drafnidiaeth Cymru ynglŷn â nifer y toiledau ar y trenau newydd, y nifer o gerbydau a sut mae'r trefniadau bysiau yn lle trenau'n cael eu gweithredu pan fo anhawsterau ar y cledrau, ymysg materion eraill.

Yn olaf, ond yn bwysig iawn, mae ein haelodau yn bwysig iawn i ni, felly cofion gorau a chadw'n saff.

Jeff Smith, Cadeirydd SARPA



### Staff or passengers?

Shot on Platform 3, Shrewsbury Station, by the Editor - but not mounted by him!  
The main building is in mock Tudor style, built in 1849, hence the heads.

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Welcome to our first non-print newsletter ever. Due to the circumstance with the coronavirus, we felt that we should not send out paper copies by post at the moment, so this issue will only be published as a PDF.

At the moment, there are far fewer travellers on the railway (and on the roads for that matter), but the railways are still playing an important role in carrying key workers to their work. Transport for Wales have reported to us that they have discussed the services required on the Cambrian with the health service and care homes in order to ensure that key workers can play their part in tackling the crisis.

Although circumstances have led to a significant reduction in services and journeys on the line, we are still keeping a keen eye on the future, with our calls for more carriages, worthy facilities and better services. Although only the Committee officers are meeting at the moment, online, we are still putting pressure on Transport for Wales concerning the number of toilets on the new trains, the number of carriages and how rail replacement buses are being run when there is trouble on the tracks, amongst other matters.

Lastly, but certainly not least, our members are very important to us, so best wishes and stay safe.

Jeff Smith  
SARPA Chairman



### **Newtown Station from the temporary footbridge**

A view taken on on Thursday 19th March. 158819 is on the very quiet 1029 Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth. The background is dominated by the former Pryce Jones buildings. Photograph: Gareth Marston

## NEWS OF THE LINE

### **Cambrian Footfall**

For well over a decade once a year the SARPA Newsletter has had an article on the latest station footfall figures released by the Office of Rail and Road. We charted annually rising passenger numbers despite the “no growth” Arriva Trains Wales franchise. We used this to point out how wrong the powers that be had got things, and to help justify the arguments we made for greater investment on our line.

Now this growth has come to an end: the figures released for 2018/2019 show Welshpool and Newtown as static and the stations further west going into decline. Nationally this was against the trend of a continued rise in Regional rail usage. Why? Well we all know the franchise changed in October 2018, and immediately there were problems with cancelled services and short forming. This has deterred and driven away custom on the railway in Mid Wales. These problems then continued up until December 2019 – we’ve documented the direct/indirect causes in previous newsletters. January 2020’s service was back to pre-Transport for Wales Rail Services levels, and as we looked forward to the railways reputation slowly going back to “Arriva levels” the flooding crisis of February 2020 struck, immediately followed by the Coronavirus crisis. Suffice to say the 2019/2020 figures will show a severe drop in numbers when they come out.

As a campaigning tool the footfall figures are probably best parked for a couple of years now. However, rail users need to be aware of them and the reasons for the patterns they show, in case someone tries to use them in a negative way against our line.

### **Newtown**

The old station footbridge was finally removed over the weekend of the 20/21 March for total refurbishment, after a number of postponements because of the weather. A temporary footbridge at the Caersws end has been put in place. This opens a number of views of the station not previously possible unless you had a drone. It’s expected to take around two months for the work to be done.

The budget on the 11th March had an announcement that another £50 million would be available for Accessibility Improvements at UK mainline stations. A “Newtown” was listed but no one seems to have any details on this as we go to press.

## FROM THE EDITOR

Looking through my archive of newsletters, I’ve discovered that this will be the 75th edition of the newsletter that I’ve edited - something of a milestone (that really should be a milestone). So, a little of the history of publication.

The Association was started at a meeting in May 1992, as the Cambrian Railways Users Group (CRUG), and the first newsletter (reprinted on pages 5 -6) appeared in the Autumn of that year. I joined the Group, as it then was, in the summer of 1994, and became the newsletter Editor almost immediately; and published my first issue, CRUG 6, in the Summer of 1995.

I have no record of the publication of CRUG 11, so it is probable that the numbering skipped from CRUG 10 to CRUG 12. So, with that absence, this issue is my 75th. In terms of years, I am approaching a Silver Anniversary!

## CAMBRIAN RAILWAYS USERS GROUP

NEWSLETTER No.1

AUTUMN 1992

Welcome to the first edition of CRUG's Newsletter. Since our inaugural meeting last May members have heard little from us either through the press or the post and might have concluded that nothing was happening. That is not the case. Throughout the Summer the committee has been meeting regularly and corresponding with Regional Railways and other bodies in order to prepare the ground for the campaigns to come.

We have addressed ourselves to a number of issues, but of course the one that overshadows everything else is the publication of the government's white paper 'New Opportunities for the Railways'. The story so far on this and other issues is set out below.

During the Autumn we will be holding a series of public meetings to widen the debate and to hear the views of those who are users of the Cambrian Railways. The first of these meetings is to be held in the OWAIN GLYNDWR INSTITUTE, MACHYNLLETH on SATURDAY 12th SEPTEMBER at 10.30 am. We are hoping to have a guest speaker from Regional Railways to address the meeting.

The second meeting will be at CAERSWS VILLAGE CLUB on SATURDAY 17th OCTOBER at 12.00 noon. This time the speaker will be Mr Alex Carlisle, QC MP.

## THE WHITE PAPER

There isn't space in this short newsletter to review the 100 paragraphs that make up the white paper and assess the likely consequences for the Cambrian Railways but two points need to be made. Firstly it is not the government's intention that all railways shall run 'at a profit'. There is provision for public service subsidies and local authorities will continue to have powers to make additional contributions to cover the cost of enhancements to rail services or infrastructure in their areas.

Secondly it will be the responsibility of BR to restructure operations and services on the line to enable privatisation to take place. This means that a lot will happen before privatisation and indeed some of the changes are already under way. CRUG must start making its voice heard NOW to ensure that the future of our railway accords with the needs of those who use it.

The former Carmarthen line platforms at Aberystwyth are now occupied by the new carriage shed for the Vale of Rheidol Railway. Photograph: Denis Bates.



#### SHREWSBURY TO ABERYSTWYTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The £1.3m project to upgrade the line and infrastructure between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth. Whilst there is much to be applauded in this scheme there are aspects of it that are causing us concern, particularly the objective of introducing a two hourly 'clock-face' timetable. (Trains will leave Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth at the same number of minutes after alternate hours). Whilst there are undoubted marketing and operational advantages in this we are concerned that it will impose too rigid a framework on the line to allow recovery of lost time and future development of services. We have been taking up some of these issues with Regional Railways and the sponsoring bodies.

#### UNLIT STATIONS ON THE COAST LINE

Regional Railways have been informed by the Railway Inspectorate that they consider it unsafe for trains to stop after dark at any of the eleven unlit stations on the Coast Line. These stations have a significant proportion of 'social need' use; shopping trips to nearby towns etc. This kind of use will be severely jeopardised in winter timetables. We have been assured that the problem is actively under consideration by RR and local authorities. We were particularly encouraged by Gwynedd County Council's positive response to our representations.

#### ROLLING STOCK SHORTAGES

Services continue to be seriously affected by BRs national shortage of rolling stock. This has led to intolerable overcrowding on some trains, the 1400 Birmingham to Aberystwyth in particular. The problem has also led to the loss of one of the most heavily used services on the Coast Line from the Autumn timetable. The origin of this problem lies with government policy rather than with decisions taken by BR. We must campaign for adequate rolling stock to be provided to allow our railways to meet existing demand and to allow new services to be developed. We believe that there is potential for considerable development of passenger, and maybe also freight, services on the Cambrian Railways.



#### Inn Sign of Lord Beechings

This inn sign features an LNER B1 Class 4-6-0 engine, No. 1306, at Aberystwyth Station. The painting is a good representation of the locomotive, but an unlikely one of the station. In any case, I doubt that the locomotive in question ever got to Aber. Did any LNER locomotives ever reach the Cambrian lines?

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

It is the nature of railway people to use many abbreviations and terms, the full meaning of which can sometimes be obscure, and it is natural for some of these to find their way into the SARPA Newsletter. This is the first instalment of a possibly never-ending work to add clarity to these terms. If there are abbreviations or definitions that you think should be added please send an email to [bill\\_sarpa@outlook.com](mailto:bill_sarpa@outlook.com) and we will try to include it in a future addition.

Term or Abbreviation	Meaning
158	The class of DMUs that currently operate Cambrian services.
197	197 Civity is a new class of diesel multiple unit passenger train manufactured by CAF for Transport for Wales. Some of these trains will form the new Cambrian fleet.
2+2 2+3 3+3	Seating arrangements in carriages giving the number of seats each side of the aisle.
AoCRP	Association of Community Rail Partnerships.
APfare	Advance Purchase rail ticket. Tickets providing cheaper rail fares but which must be purchased in advance and are usually are restricted to specific trains.
ATW	Arriva Trains Wales. The former train operating company for the Wales and Borders franchise.
BR	British Rail. This was the state-owned company that operated most of the overground rail transport in Great Britain between 1948 and 1997, when the railways were privatised.
CAF	Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles ("Construction & Other Railway Services") is a Spanish company which manufactures railway vehicles and equipment. CAF have opened a new factory at Newport for the new class 197 DMUs.
CP6	Control Period 6. The sixth, and current, 5 year funding cycle of Network Rail which started 1st April 2019. The government specify what they want and how much they can afford to contribute, the ORR then sets the level of fixed income Network Rail are allowed to charge.
CSAG	Carno Station Action Group. Campaign group for the reopening of Carno station.
DfT	The Department for Transport is the government

	<p>department responsible for the English transport network. In Wales DfT only has influence on the few non-devolved matters.</p> <p>The department is run by the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps.</p>
DMU	<p>Diesel Multiple Unit. A train, like our 158s, consisting of carriages powered by on-board diesel engines and which have driving cabs. Generally multiple units can make up longer trains by joining them together.</p> <p>Contrast this with a locomotive hauled train or electric multiple unit (EMU).</p>
EMU	<p>Electric Multiple Unit. A train consisting of carriages powered by on-board electric motors and which have driving cabs. Electric trains require a source of electricity, generally from overhead wires or occasionally a third rail. Generally multiple units can make up longer trains by joining them together.</p> <p>Contrast with a locomotive hauled train or diesel multiple unit (DMU).</p>
ERTMS	<p>European Rail Traffic Management System. The specified in-cab control system for the railways of Europe incorporating Euroradio and ETCS.</p>
ETCS	<p>European Train Control System. The specified in-cab signalling system for the railways of Europe, part of ERTMS.</p>
GLTW	<p>Great Little Trains of Wales. Joint marketing body representing heritage railways in Wales.</p>
HS2	<p>High Speed 2. This is a new high speed railway in the United Kingdom, with its first phase in the early stages of construction and future stages awaiting approval.</p>
LNER	<p>London North Eastern Railway. TOC which operates the InterCity East Coast franchise providing long-distance inter-city services on the East Coast Main Line from London King's Cross to North East England and Scotland, owned by the Department for Transport.</p>
Network Rail	<p>Network Rail is the owner and infrastructure manager of most of the railway network in Great Britain. It is an arm's length public body of the Department for Transport with no shareholders, which reinvests its income in the railways.</p>
ORR	<p>Office for Rail and Road. The railway regulator.</p>
PRMS	<p>Persons with Reduced Mobility. European legislation requires railways to make specific</p>



	provision for PRMS via a TSI.
Railway Infrastructure	Railway Infrastructure: the physical parts of the railway including track, bridges, power supply and signalling.
TfW	Transport for Wales (Trafnidiaeth Cymru). A not-for-profit company owned by the Welsh Government. TfW oversees the Wales and Borders rail franchise.
TfWRS	Transport for Wales Rail Services. Trading name for the train operating company KeolisAmey Wales who hold the Wales and Borders franchise.
TOCs	Train Operating Companies. A train operating company is a business operating passenger trains. Most TOCs hold franchises let by a tendering system, to operate services on certain routes for a specified duration, while a small number of open access operators hold licences to provide supplementary services on chosen routes.
TSI	Technical Specification(s) for Interoperability. Set of standards implementing European law.
TVM	Ticket Vending Machine.



### Footfall!

Platform markings have recently been placed on a number of stations, to show where passengers should stand to enter and leave trains. Their spacing is designed to fit the door spacings on the 158 DMUs. They are laid out to cater for two or four coach units. Photograph: Denis Bates

## NEW TRAINS: CLASS 197

The SARPA committee was able to meet at the planned time for our normal meeting on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April. This was owing to our committee member Bill Redfern being able to organise a video conference via Google. As an agenda item we discussed the new "Civity" type units proposed for the Cambrian Lines. This has arisen as a result of a "Tweet" which appeared on the TFW Twitter Feed on 12th Feb last showing a Class 197 bodyshell in production:-

<https://twitter.com/fwrail/status/1227593919476772865?s=19>

Of course, this gives the impression that the trains are actually being built, and there were concerns expressed at our Shrewsbury meeting in March that we had been promised consultation but none had materialised. The main points raised in discussion were as follows:-

- 1.1) Insufficient quantity of toilets for the number of passengers carried. This has been advised to us as a level of one per 2 car train(120 pax). This is a reduction from the two at present on board a Class 158 and is significantly less than provision on BR Mk1 and Mk2 stock which was at a level of 2 per vehicle of 64 seats. The Cambrian Line trains operate on quite lengthy sectors and so adequate and reliable provision is of the utmost importance.
- 1.2) To put this in perspective, the journey from Birmingham International to Pwllheli is a leg which takes over 5 hours - a slightly longer time than it takes to go from Euston to Glasgow. The Cambrian user demographic (weighted to both the old and young families) increases the requirement for toilets. Also, with few station facilities now available what would be the plan if the single high-tech toilet becomes unavailable mid route? In the circumstances outlined in this paragraph, just a single toilet for a 2 car train carrying over 100 people is totally unacceptable.
- 2) Concern that the number of table bays will be reduced from the present quantity on the Class 158. Whilst we would accept that some people do in fact like the "aviation" style seating arrangements, the possibility of increasing the number of table bays should not be discounted. The seating plan for the units currently in use by Chiltern trains makes a good example. Seat comfort is not being left unquestioned either, and would hope this could be improved. This is likewise of the utmost importance and our comments at (1) above regarding length of journeys apply equally.
- 3) We were astonished to learn of the lack of ability for the new trains to couple with anything else. This is rather a retrograde step and something which goes back to the dawn of railways, when commonality of coupling was discovered to be essential for smooth and trouble-free operation. Moreover, the lack of ability to couple with other units rather limits the effectiveness of what we propose under paragraphs 4.1 & 4.2 below.

- 4.1) The Group is keen to propose for discussion, the retention of a number of Class

158 Units after their official withdrawal date. These trains are the only passenger vehicles (apart from the projected new trains) which are ETCS fitted and thus able to operate on the Cambrian lines. As everyone is probably only too aware, there are problems with overcrowding on the Coast Line during the summer months, and having a pool of extra trains which could be used to strengthen services would be sensible and useful for the operator. A strategic reserve could provide for unexpected or special events and give a cushion against overcrowding. Whilst one would not expect the trains to cover anything like the mileage they do at the present, we have a strong suspicion they would still have quite frequent use on the TfW network.

4.2) Of course, to a very great extent this comes down to cost, and an ideal situation would be one where the units became the property of TfW or the Welsh Government, rather than a train leasing company owned by a bank. There would then be just the capital cost of acquiring the units and their maintenance, rather than an ongoing revenue stream paid to a third party. It may be that the rolling stock company (ROSCO) would prefer to scrap them, complete with all the ETCS gear rather than sell them on to a future user for the benefit of the travelling public.

5) We would be pleased to see provision for carriage of merchandise or an increased number of bicycles on the new trains. The Class 150 units had this provision when they were first introduced and had a bay which could be cordoned off for the purpose. We say this being mindful of the increasing level of disquiet on account of Climate Emergency which would mandate a modal shift in the carriage of goods. We are aware that one firm is examining possibilities:-  
<https://www.intercityrailfreight.com/>

6) We hope that sufficient thought is being given to the possibility of alternative traction for the units, as diesel propulsion may become environmentally unacceptable during the lifetime of this rolling stock. Moreover, sufficient power must be provided to enable improved acceleration in the light of the Bow Street station reopening, this location being at the foot of a 1 in 75 climb in both directions.

As a group we are somewhat nervous that in the event the proposed new trains may fall short of expectations. As we understand it, the onus of specification and ultimate ownership rests with the Welsh Government, so we have been in touch with our elected representatives to apply pressure. If the trains provide sub-standard accommodation for the passenger then we will be stuck with them for the next 30 years or so, and is important for the Welsh Government to get this right.

We have raised these concerns with Transport for Wales and await a full response. This is a version of our communication with them, edited for tense and syntax.

Angus Eickhoff

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## **Gareth Marston from Newtown Station Travel Limited argues that once the Coronavirus crisis is over it's time to move past the economic development fallacy of "road development"**

Lee Waters, the Welsh Government's newly appointed Deputy Minister Economy and Transport, was refreshingly honest and truthful back in June 2019 when he said:

"For 20 years we've pretended we know what we're doing on the economy - and the truth is we don't really know what we're doing on the economy.

Nobody knows what they're doing on the economy.

Everybody is making it up as we go along - and let's just be honest about that. We've thrown all the orthodox tools we can think of at growing the economy in the conventional way, and we've achieved static GDP over 20 years."

Source: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/we-dont-know-what-were-16483471>

Part of that orthodox conventional thinking was building new roads and expanding capacity on existing ones in the belief that they would stimulate economic development. In today's money the Welsh Government has spent c. £5 Billion plus on road schemes, and have got themselves 20 years of real-life examples all over Wales that show they don't stimulate economic development! All other considerations, whether they've been on environmental grounds or the right sort of transport project, have been cast aside as the supposed trump card "good for the economy" has been played time and time again. Other transport areas have suffered from underfunding as a result, as rail users well know. Wishful thinking has triumphed over hard evidence for far too long: the most galling aspect is that the hard evidence has been there the whole time being ignored, because of the fallacy that road improvements bring economic development.

The truth strikes hard and contradicts the core beliefs and values of Neo Liberalism (the predominant political theory since the mid 1970's) and the very basic building blocks of Cost Benefit Analysis (the model used to appraise transport schemes). Go out and look for the hard evidence that road schemes boost the economy such as empirical studies – you won't find any, but you'll hear an awful lot from people who think it will. The debate over the Newtown bypass was a prime example of this fervent belief; it was repeated time and time again, but no evidence was supplied. The economic development fallacy is deeply ingrained. Nonetheless, it was a key part of the Conservative manifesto (that less than 3 in 10 adults voted for) but they did vote for parties with different transport policies in greater numbers; over 4 out of 10 adults ticked the more public transport/fight climate change box. The 2020 budget has announced the funding for a massive road program, even if there are huge doubts about whether it complies with climate change targets after the rejection of Heathrow's 3rd runway. Whether we will have the money to do this, post the Coronavirus crisis, remains to be seen. However, in the meantime we have to slay the myth to prevent the wrong choices being made (again) as some saviour to help us recover from today's economic crisis.

It looks like the air industry is going to get a massive bailout, and a golden chance to fundamentally change things is being lost. Whilst no one is advocating individuals being put on the scrap heap and left to fend for themselves due to the change. This is in contrast to when literally hundreds of thousands of railway workers and hundreds of communities up and down the country were abandoned by the Beeching era cuts.

As to why road schemes don't help economic development here's some broad-brush headlines.

- Let's start here - The Bank of England lists three main phases that have delivered economic growth since 1750: see <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/knowledgebank/how-has-growth-changed-over-time>

### ***“Which inventions have driven GDP growth since 1750?”***

*History suggests there have been three main phases of innovation that have lifted economic fortunes.*

*The Industrial Revolution, which started in the middle of the 18th century, saw the invention of the steam engine, cotton spinning and railways. Next, around a century later, was the era of mass industrialisation, with rising use of electricity and indoor water supply. Then we had the IT revolution – starting in the second half of the 20th century. This gave us, among other things, personal computers and the internet”.*

The motor vehicle (and therefore road construction) does not feature as a historic driver of economic growth!

- The concept that small-time savings are beneficial to the economy (the basis of Cost Benefit Analysis) grew out of 1940's American theory on heavy industry and manufacturing costs relating to the movement cost of raw materials and finished products. Today we have a global economy, based on the service sector and the digital age, which responds to completely different stimuli.
- The UK is already saturated with motor vehicles – 35 million of them. We've been a motor vehicle-based society since the mid 1970's – they can provide nothing new or changing (and therefore able to give the economy a big bang stimulus) as we already use them en- masse.
- We've spent the last 30-40 years building roads away from where the main economic activity is. We can't expand them in cities because of the built-up urban landscape and we've already built the motorway network to join up all the big important dots on the map. Instead we've mainly built them in peripheral areas either in rural or deprived areas, where economic activity tends to be weaker and harder to stimulate anyway.
- We haven't addressed road congestion on a national scale so any potential gain because of one scheme is lost as the areas around it where traffic must come and go from continue to suffer worsening congestion.

The legacy of this economic development fallacy has been hard wired into the current Wales and Border franchise. Firstly, by distorting investment priorities it led to the no-growth 2003 Arriva franchise running its depressing 15-year course despite its well-known deficiencies; which means were now woefully behind the curve in creating a transport system fit for the 21st Century economy and society. Secondly, with any examination of the new franchise commitments you can clearly see they've been set within the confined parameters of sharing funding with road schemes being built on the basis that they would be generating economic development. Signed off by Welsh Government in June 2018 the wonderful journey and vision that Transport for Wales Rail Services is embarking on was in fact the 3rd cab off the priority rank after the M4 Relief Road and dualling of A465 Heads of the Valleys road. Whilst the M4 Relief Road has now been cancelled, supposedly for environmental reasons, the recent revelation that the latest phase of the A465 is massively over budget was defended by the Welsh Government using the economic development fallacy argument. Serious questions remain whether the Welsh Government have bothered to look at actual evidence or are they carrying on pretending? Thirdly, by being constrained and having a lower priority, it's been overtaken by events at an alarming rate and now looks woefully inadequate. Climate Emergency/change, decarbonisation, congestion charging in Cardiff, flood resilience, the banning of diesels on UK railways etc, etc, all seem to have been factors the Welsh Government did not factor for with its planning. We can forgive them for not factoring in the impact of the Coronavirus crisis, but all those other factors were in the open in plain view.

Whilst no one is suggesting as a counter argument that railways provide an economic magic bullet, they are certainly aligned more closely with the realities of the 21st Century economy and combating climate change than roads are. Rail usage renaissance over the last 30 years is largely down to the resurrection of city centres as centres of economic activity in the post-industrial world. City Regions have a central business district and shoppers/workers/leisure seekers who need to access it are often willing to travel 90 minutes to do so on a regular basis. Saturated urban roadways that can't be expanded have seen rail corridors used as viable alternatives even for infrequent visitors from peripheral areas. Railways, by being a means of moving people and goods en-masse, are inherently more efficient in energy consumption than individual transport, both in manufacture/building and in day to day consumption, and produce a lot less pollution.

The two great hopes of the motor industry still have huge hurdles to overcome, which they probably never will. Electric vehicles; yes the technology is there, and they are viable up to the point when you consider that the national grid will never cope with 35 million of them all needing recharging! When you replace all that oil you need an alternate fuel source to power them, you will need many more power stations and what will fuel them? It's a conversation that's not even occurring. An American car executive let the cat out the bag on driverless cars when he said that urban areas would need to "gate pedestrians in and ban cycling". Basically the driverless car will grind to a halt if a Deliveroo delivery is taking place by bike, or someone is on the edge of the boardwalk: and this is in the USA, the land of the car; in Europe and its ancient streets forget it! Driverless electric cars are not coming over the hill to rescue the status quo; we have to bite the bullet and create a transport system that works for the

whole country. Common sense dictates that we will have to get by with far fewer self-powered road vehicles than now, and that public transport and rail freight will have a much wider role.

As the centre piece of this we need to emulate the Swiss and introduce a **Taktfahrplan**: if you haven't come across it before it's very simple. It is a regular-interval, patterned and symmetrical timetable in which trains connect systematically with one another and with buses on a node and pulse model. By law public transport is provided that is at least hourly in frequency from 0600 to midnight every day in every settlement, right down to small mountain villages of 350 people. Larger settlements have higher frequencies. Gone is all the nonsense whining about individual business cases and evaluation studies – having the whole country covered is the aim. It's a statement of intent that says we have a usable public transport system for everyone that's not constrained by silo financial mentality and appeasing fallacies, it's for the whole nation. The Swiss have one of the highest usage rates of public transport on the planet and some of the least congested roads in Europe.

Someone came up with this idea for the Cardiff travel to work area on a regional level and called it the South Wales Metro. The Welsh Government then took up the idea but lobbed huge chunks off it, so it fitted with the budget after their road fallacy schemes were prioritised. Ministers keep talking about it as something they're doing rather than half doing, and bandy about that they're doing one for North East Wales as well, which is only some lines on a map. This goes to show that Government knows what's needed, know what the public want and how to get there, but have held themselves back through poor decisions linked to the fallacy. It's time to stop it.

What will 2021 bring? Common sense or pretending that roads are going to lead the recovery?

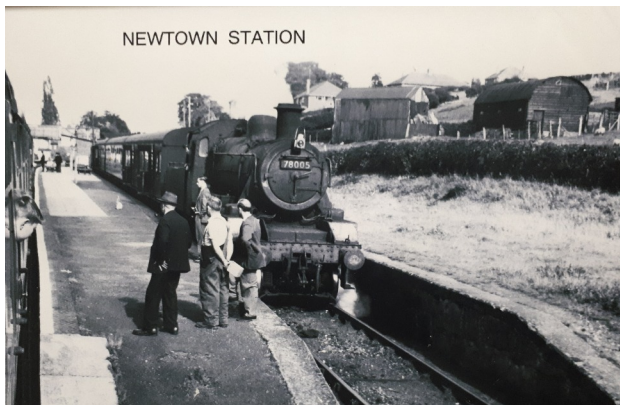
### **Newtown March 2020**



Previous page: The view from the temporary footbridge at Newtown, on Thursday 19th March. 158819 is on the very quiet 1029 Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth. The platform on the left is the former bay for trains from the west to terminate.

Photograph: Gareth Marston.

Below is the "school train", which ran up until 1965, ready to depart from this bay. This was a Monday to Friday all stations Machynlleth to Newtown that arrived at 0840 and returned at 1620 from the bay platform. The loco shunted Newtown and Moat Lane all day. Photographer unknown.



## MONTHLY MEETINGS

**For the period of the Coronavirus lockdown, monthly meetings have been cancelled. If the lockdown is cancelled, meetings as below will be held.**

May	Saturday 16th	1215	Royal Naval Club, Market Street, Aberystwyth
June	Saturday 6th	1115	White Lion, Machynlleth
July	Tuesday 7th	1900	Newtown Council Chambers, The Cross, Broad St, Newtown
August	Tuesday 4th	1915	Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool
September	Saturday 5th	1200	Railway Hotel, Borth
October	Saturday 3rd	1115	White Lion, Machynlleth <b>AGM</b>
November	Tuesday 10th	1900	Newtown Council Chambers, The Cross, Broad St, Newtown
December	Saturday 5th	1145	Royal Naval Club, Market Street, Aberystwyth



## USEFUL ADDRESSES

**Transport for Wales:** Customer Relations, Transport for Wales Rail Services, St. Mary's House , 47 Penarth Road, Cardiff . CF10 5DJ Tel. 0333 3211 202

**Network Rail:**

Community Relations, Kings Place, 99, York Way, London. N1 9AG

**Newtown Station Travel**

The Railway Station, Old Kerry Road, Newtown, Powys SY16 1BP. Fax. 01686 621966

E-mail [newtownstation@btclick.com](mailto:newtownstation@btclick.com)

**The Association of Train Operating Companies:**

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

**London Midland**

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

**Association of Community Rail Partnerships**

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

**Virgin Trains**

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

**Traveline Cymru for all public transport information**

[www.traveline-cymru.org.uk](http://www.traveline-cymru.org.uk) Tel.0870-6082608

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

**Public Transport Users' Committee for Wales Secretariat**

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ. E-mail [ptucwales@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ptucwales@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

**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

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

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## WANT TO JOIN SARPA?

The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2020) £10.00 per annum for individuals and for organisations. Please make any cheques payable to SARPA. Donations are of course welcome.

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

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

You can pay by sending a cheque made out to SARPA (and sent to the address below) or directly to our bank: Barclays sort code 20-61-08, account 20148148 (please email your details to [bill\\_sarpa@outlook.com](mailto:bill_sarpa@outlook.com)).

SARPA Treasurer and Membership Officer: Bill Redfern, 8 Plas Edwards, Tywyn, Gwynedd, LL36 0AS.

## WEBSITES

Our website <http://sarpa.info>

Webmaster Angus Eickhoff. Website host is <http://www.redboxinternet.com/>

### Other sites of interest:

Newtown Station Travel

<https://www.newtownstationtravel.co.uk/>

A useful alternative to the National Rail Enquiries site:

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

Transport for Wales

[www.tfwrail.wales/](http://www.tfwrail.wales/)

National Rail Enquiries

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

London Northwestern Railway

[www.journevcheck.com/londonnorthwesternrailway/](http://www.journevcheck.com/londonnorthwesternrailway/)

West Midlands Railway

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

Virgin Trains

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

Chiltern Railways

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

Network Rail

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

Railfuture/Railway Development Society

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

Cambrian Rail Partnership

[www.walesonrails.com](http://www.walesonrails.com)

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)

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

Passenger Focus

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

North Wales Coast Railway

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

Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways

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

Vale of Rheidol Railway

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

Talylyn Railway

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

Welshpool and Llanfair Railway

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

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway

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

Fairbourne Railway

[www.fairbournerrailway.com/](http://www.fairbournerrailway.com/)

Borth Station Museum

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

Rail Photographs by Richard Jones including many of the modern Cambrian scene

[www.mylordz.com](http://www.mylordz.com)

**Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020**