

# HOWLTA

# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2013  
Number 124

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Free to Members



*Easter Crane Spectacular* (see pages 4, 6-7)  
[ Photo © David Edwards ]

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## From the Editor's Desk

We've got a rather packed issue this time, so I'll try to keep this shorter than last time.

In fact I've received so many articles and letters, and, particularly, so many photographic contributions that, even with four extra pages and a bit more colour, it has proved impossible to include them all in full. Fear not, though, if your contribution isn't here this time, it may well appear in a future issue.

Anyway, many thanks for them all, and I look forward to (and heartily welcome) even more in the future

There have been some encouraging improvements along the line - particularly at the southern end where the HoWL shares its route with the main line to the west.

Hopefully these will have a knock-on effect in time to help improve our own services.

We've also had no fewer than four charter trains - including two on the same day! Another three are scheduled for the next 2/3 months (see issue no. 123 and p. 15 of this issue for up to date details) - sadly the one remaining steam hauled charter has been re-routed.

On the day we had the two 12-coach charters it occurred to me that the two operators had managed, in a few short hours, to shift 24 coach loads (all pretty much full to capacity). Bearing in mind that most of our regular DMU services seem to consist of a single coach - that's the equivalent of about three full days' total operating capacity of Arriva Trains Wales along our line!

As I've said elsewhere in this issue (see pp. 6-7) we are still awaiting an extra train in each direction daily, faster services, regular, more comfortable, 2- or even 3-car trains - *more trains, faster trains, comfortable trains!* Is that really too much to ask? **Peter Berry**

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## Coming Along the Line

Here are just a few dates for your diary of the main events taking place in the next few months that can be reached from the HoWL

**15th-16th June 2013**

*Welsh Game Fair*, Nant-y-Ci, Carmarthen.

**4th-7th July 2013**

*Llandeilo Jazz Festival*

**6th July 2013**

*Town Crier Festival* at Llandovery

**13th-21st July 2013**

*Llandeilo Fawr Music Festival*

**22nd-25th July 2013**

*Royal Welsh Show*, at Llanelwydd (buses

from Builth Road)

**9th-10th August 2013**

*Shrewsbury Flower Show*

**17th to 25th August 2013**

*Llandrindod Wells Victorian Festival*

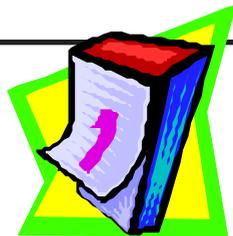
**25th August 2013**

*World Bogsnorkelling Championships*

at Llanwrtyd Wells

**28th-29th September 2013**

*Llandovery Sheep Festival*



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## For copy dates please see page 27

# Big Changes at the Southern End

Compiled from material supplied by Roger Thomas, Stephen Miles, David Edwards and others.

As reported elsewhere (see pp. 6-7) the redoubling of the mainline between Llanelli and Swansea, which also forms part of the HoWL, has meant two major changes over recent months - the rebuilding and re-opening of Gowerton station and the replacement of the bridge over the Loughor estuary.



The first picture (below) of the old Gowerton North station was taken by Roger Thomas back in the bad old days and shows the line being singled and the station being virtually abandoned. In the background (halfway along the train) can be seen the supports which carried the Central Wales line from Swansea Victoria across the West Wales line at Gowerton.

*Redoubling work at Gowerton* [Photo © Roger Thomas]

The second photograph (above) shows the rebuilding work in progress on the old 'up' platform together with relaying of the long gone 'up' line. Once again the supports which carried the Central Wales line from Swansea Victoria across the West Wales line can be seen in the background.



*Singling the track at Gowerton North* [Photo © Roger Thomas]

Finally we have Stephen Miles' photograph (overleaf) of the very first HoWL train to stop at the brand new Gowerton Station on 8th April 2013.

Most Heart of Wales trains will call or stop on request when the new timetable is launched on 19th May 2013.

The remaining photographs (plus front cover) from David Edwards show work in progress replacing the viaduct over the Loughor estuary. This culminated in the great slide operation over the 2013 Easter weekend, when



*The first HoWL train from Shrewsbury to stop at the brand new platform.*  
[Photo © Stephen Milles]

the new bridgework was slid into place by a spectacular array of cranes, thus enabling the re-doubling of the line between Swansea and Llanelli to be finally completed.



The impressive photograph on the back page of this issue, from Network Rail, shows the new bridge in position.



*The Easter Cranes Spectacular at Loughor*  
[Photos © David Edwards]

# Smaller Changes Further North

Information supplied by Chris Pearce, Network Rail

## Structures Work on the line

New work on the line will include installing 'synthetic longitudinal bearers' as part of the New Product Acceptance trial. These will be some of the first in the UK, having been

developed and used in Japan for many years and are made from recycled plastic. The bridge at the River Irfon is one of the sites where this will be deployed.



### < Llanwrtyd Old School Bridge

Softwood longitudinal bridge in troughing - total spend £15,560

[Photos © Network Rail]

### River Irfon Bridge >

Softwood longitudinal bridge, held together by cleats transoms and tie rods - total spend £19,960

[Photos © Network Rail]



## Drainage works

These include a large underground drainage job at Penybont, a site with a high water table that has resulted from heavy rainfall. More basic ditching work carried out at Cilmeri and Raikes.

Also at Cilmeri, David Rowe has reported that the approach road has been resurfaced.

It all helps!



### < Penybont

[Photo © Network Rail]

### Cilmeri >

[Photo © David Rowe]



# News From Arriva Trains Wales

Arriva Trains Wales is pleased to announce extra services and more carriages for train passengers in West Wales from 19 May 2013.

Arriva Trains Wales is making some key changes to its timetable, which has been made possible through the completion of works to replace the Loughor viaduct and re-doubling of the line between Swansea and Llanelli. In addition, we have reviewed the deployment of our fleet of trains and we are pleased to be able to provide additional capacity on the busiest services in West Wales.

Key improvements for passengers in West Wales include:

1. 14 Additional services calling at Gowerton in each direction Monday to Saturday (11 on Sunday) bringing the total number of services calling at the station to 49 in total.
2. A Cardiff to Swansea 'Swanline' service is extended to Llanelli, departing Swansea at 1623. This will provide additional capacity and a new commuter departure from Swansea in the evening peak period.
3. A new commuter 'Swanline' service from Cardiff to Swansea, arriving in Swansea at 0830
4. All single car trains on the Swansea

- Carmarthen - Pembroke Dock route will be replaced with two carriage trains, effectively doubling the train capacity on this busy route.

Mike Bagshaw, Commercial Director for Arriva Trains Wales said; "These changes are good news for passengers in West Wales. We regularly review our services in partnership with the Welsh Government, other key stakeholders and by listening to our customers. Many passengers, including commuters and visitors to the area will see real benefits from this package of changes. These improvements demonstrate Arriva Trains Wales' continued commitment to enhance services across Wales, making full use of Welsh Government's investment in new infrastructure and efficient use of our fleet of trains".

Network Rail is close to completing the £48m project to replace the Loughor railway viaduct between Swansea and Llanelli, with a new structure and re-doubling of 5 miles of single track line through Gowerton. The new viaduct will carry the railway Line across the River Loughor, which sits adjacent to the Loughor road bridge.

Network Rail is re-doubling the five mile section of track between Cockett and Duffryn, which was reduced to single track operation by British Rail in 1986 to save on maintenance costs. With the

re-doubling of the railway tracks between Cockett West Junction and Duffryn West Junction, improvements have also been made to Gowerton station and other structures. They include a new station footbridge at Gowerton, CCTV, new signage and lighting, as well as bringing the redundant east-bound platform back into use. Both projects were commissioned during a 16-day Easter blockade which ended on 8 April 2013. The projects will allow for an increase in the number of trains now using this stretch of line. They are essential to making rail journeys to and from West Wales safer and more reliable and will also provide a much-needed boost to the local economy.

**[Editor :** Since these changes directly effect the part of the HoWL, between Llanelli and Swansea, these improvements will be most welcome to users of our line as well as to those passengers travelling into West Wales. Sadly, though, this Arriva Trains Wales press release has completely ignored our line and any knock-on effects these changes may have on it.

We are still awaiting an extra train in each direction daily, faster services, regular, more comfortable, 2- or even 3-car trains - ***more trains, faster trains, comfortable trains!*** Is that too much to ask?]

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*Pictured below is an Arriva Trains Wales service travelling between Llanelli and Burry Port along the Millennium Coastal Park.* [Photo © Network Rail]



# Death of Roger Manning of Llandrindod Wells

## George Scarfe

Some of you living outside the mid Powys area may be unaware of the recent death of Roger Manning who was a very familiar figure at Llandrindod Wells Station for many years.

Roger had a strong railway background although he himself was never employed in the railway industry. His father was a railwayman who had begun his career with the London and North Western Railway Company. Roger's family lived at various stations in the Welsh Marches and West Midlands areas as he was growing up and Roger maintained a lifelong interest in railways. In more recent years he would give talks locally in which he would fondly recall his childhood days, especially those times spent at Tenbury Wells Station on the former Woofferton Junction to Bewdley line. He said that, as a youngster, he was thrilled to have had the experience on one occasion of riding on the footplate of a steam locomotive travelling at speed along the main line between Craven Arms and Woofferton Junction. During his talks he would display a number of railway artefacts which he had collected over the years.

Roger and his wife Daphne were well known for their enthusiastic participation in the annual Llandrindod Wells Victorian Festival. Every year, during the Festival Week and sometimes when excursion trains passed through Llandrindod Wells Station, Roger would appear on the platform in the uniform of a Victorian stationmaster. With his full beard, he had a commanding presence and one felt that he would have been a great success in the post of stationmaster had he

chosen to follow that path during his working life.

Roger was a talented artist and painted much of the background scenery for the exhibition about the Heart of Wales Line which took place at Holy Trinity Church in Llandrindod Wells during the Victorian Festival Week in 2011.

During the past few years, Roger had become increasingly involved in the Signal Box Museum at Llandrindod Wells Station. Sharing duties with his friends Bryan Whittall of Bucknell and Ted Conway of Knucklas he manned the Signal Box on frequent occasions during the summer months. During the past two years Roger acquired some block instruments for the Signal Box and he even made a replica of a token machine of the type which is in use in the current No Signalman Key Token system on the Heart of Wales Line.

As recently as last September and although in declining health, Roger was still welcoming parties of visitors to the Signal Box. On September 12th, forty members of Worcestershire Archaeological Society and Malvern Spa Association visited the Box during which one of their leaders, Mr. Ernie Kay, said at the time that Roger had given the party a very comprehensive talk about the history of the structure. Roger set the scene for this party which then travelled by train to Knucklas where they inspected the viaduct.

Also in September last year Roger gave a witty and moving address at the funeral of his friend Ted Conway.

Roger Manning was a great ambassador for the Heart of Wales Line and, from this



*What may well have been the very last photograph taken of Roger Manning inside the Signal Box at Llandrindod Wells.*

[Photo (c) Ernie Kay]

railway's point of view alone, he will be sorely missed. It was his wish that his body be given for medical research and there will be no funeral or memorial service for him. Roger had said that no-one was indispensable but his passing has left a large void both as far as the railway and the local community which he served so well are concerned.

[Editor : Apologies for the late inclusion of this item. Unfortunately it was received just too late to include in the Winter 2013 issue]

**LLANDRINDOD WELLS**  
**SIGNAL BOX**  
**MUSEUM**

(Situated on Station Platform)

**Opening Times - 11am – 3pm**  
**Easter 2013**

**Fri 29th Mar, Sat 30th Mar & Mon 1st April**  
**Summer 2013**

**24th May to 26th Aug, Fri & Sat only**  
**Bank Holiday Mondays**  
**Victorian Festival**  
**16th – 25th August**

**Pay us a visit – Admission Free**

**Enquiries to: 01597 823116**



\* \* \* \* *Volunteers wanted to man the museum* \* \* \* \*

## Busy Day on the HoWL

On Saturday morning, 13th April, a 12-coach charter train, hauled by Class 66 diesel locomotive number 66079 travelled northwards from Cardiff to Shrewsbury. Later, another 12-coach train, this time steam hauled and double-headed by LMS Black Fives numbers 44871 and 45407 travelled in the reverse direction - both as part of longer trips. The two lengthy trains



eventually met up (and passed) at Llandrindod Wells.

Thanks to all those who sent in such splendid pictures. Sorry they couldn't all be fitted in.

1. *The Class 66 entering Llandovery loop.* [Photo © Tony Birdwood]

2. *The Class 66 looking lonely at the end of the siding at Llandrindod Wells.* [Photo

© Roy Palmer]

3/4. *The two charter trains pass at Llandrindod Wells.* [Photos © George Scarfe / Jim Bennett]

5/6. *The two Black Fives at Llandrindod Wells* [Photos © Jim Bennett / Roy Palmer]

7. *The Black Fives reach Llandovery* [Photo © Tony Birdwood]

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## Howl's Only Surviving Branch Line

### From Information Supplied by George Scarfe

The Amman Valley Ranger tour mentioned in the last issue was organised by UK Railtours of Welwyn, Herts, and took place on Saturday 9th March.

Although part of the return route had been changed, every seat on this particular rail outing had been booked. The highlight of this journey was the trip along the freight only Pantyffynnon to Gwaun Cae Gurwen route, the Heart of Wales Line's only surviving branch line, six and three quarter miles in length.

This branch was opened from Pantyffynnon to Garnant in 1840 and from Garnant to Gwaun Cae Gurwen in 1841. In 1842 Garnant became a junction when a line was opened from there to Brynamman. Regular passenger services operated between Pantyffynnon and Garnant / Brynamman for more than a century until they were withdrawn in August 1958.

The original section of line between Garnant and Gwaun Cae Gurwen was officially freight only although it is thought to have also conveyed passengers (unofficially) at one time. Most of this original freight only line between Garnant and Gwaun Cae Gurwen (known latterly as the Cawdor Branch) continued for the purpose of serving two collieries until it was finally closed and the rails lifted in 1950.

A new branch from Garnant to Gwaun Cae Gurwen including intermediate stations was formally opened to freight in 1907 and to passengers in 1908. The passenger service on this section operated until 1926 since when the line has carried freight only.

Regular coal trains still run between Pantyffynnon and Gwaun Cae Gurwen.

*[Editor: My abject apologies to George for giving him two contradictory surnames in the last issue. I hope he's not feeling too schizophrenic about it!]*

# Along the Line

## News and Events along the HoWL

### Dinner at Knighton



*[Photo © Hywel Jones]*

In glorious late winter sunshine on 14th March, a group of 23 senior citizens travelled by rail on the scenic Heart of Wales Line (HOWL) from Llandeilo station for a gastronomic three course lunch at the Knighton Hotel. All the group were holders of the All Wales Free Bus Pass Carms, (Cerdyn Cymru) which allows free concessionary travel on HOWL between Swansea and Shrewsbury from 2nd October 2012 until 30th March 2013. Powys holders, they also qualify free concessionary rail travel. The group

travelled in comfort and on arrival at Knighton rail station which is just in England (Shropshire), they undertook a 7min leisurely walk from the station to the Knighton Hotel which is located in the town centre, crossing the bridge over the river Teme back into Wales (Radnorshire).

Thanks to Hywel Jones, Cwmdu for organising the trip, the hospitality shown by staff at the Knighton hotel and also the Arriva Trains Wales train crew .

### Live Entertainment



*'On The Tracks' on the HOWL between Llandovery and Llanelli on 1st March 2013. Holding the mike is Gilbert John, BBC Radio Wales presenter. It was featured on Radio Wales on 28th March 2013.* [Photo © Hywel Jones]

# Chronicles of Llangadog Station - volume 6½

Eileen Mainwaring and Dennis Harrison

Well, to be perfectly frank the chronicles of Llangadog station this time round are considerably abbreviated compared with previous offerings. However, we can report just a few happenings this year with the most obvious stuck into and right on our platform. We think this is some sort of gallows to hang wayward Arriva staff on. Otherwise we are a loss to explain the appearance of this monolith and the only other clue is that it is all wired up for some sort of electrical experiment and maybe we can show a proper photo of this in the next edition. Anyway, the pundits have it at ten to one that it is some sort of sodium light or somesuch. An intriguing situation but all agreed that it is a considerable hazard to our passengers particularly at night—that is, if it is not a light.

We admit that there has been little done in the greenery department apart from dead heading the one rose bush and the planting of a million daffodil bulbs just after Xmas. We also managed a few more trees—but mostly just cursing the relentless very cold weather and hoping for a rise in temperature so that we can do more.

We have been visited once again by a couple of those Black five loco's but they once again failed to unload their passengers for a guided tour of the station but looking on the bright side they also failed to stop at most of all the other stations on the line. We live in hope.



*Maybe all was revealed a little later?*

[Photo © Peter Berry]

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## Charter Trains Changes

**George Scarfe**

The diesel hauled charter train from Hereford to Carmarthen via the West Midlands and the Heart of Wales Line ('The Welsh Mountaineer'), originally scheduled to run on Saturday 29th June, will now run on **Friday 28th June** instead. This is because engineering works will be taking place on an essential part of the planned route on that particular Saturday. All other details in relation to this excursion remain unchanged.

Other changes...the steam-hauled train along the HOWL on 22nd April left Llandrindod Wells some 2½ hours earlier than originally scheduled, resulting in some watchers further north being disappointed ...and the steam-hauled train planned for 10th May will now travel via Abergavenny and not the HoWL.

# Heart of Wales Line Walk No 2



**Llandovery via Dolauhirion - a short walk to a bridge described as 'the prettiest bridge in the whole of Britain'.**

**2.5 miles Circular. Easy**

Start at the Rail Station at Llandovery<sup>1</sup> (GR 763346) and walk up the Carmarthen Road to the wicket gate on the right hand side just before the chain bridge (GR 762348). Through the gate and five fields on the east/right bank of the Towy to Dolauhirion Bridge<sup>2</sup> (GR 762361). Cross the bridge over the river (below and on the downstream side of the bridge there is a picnic spot on the river rocks). Take care as the rocks maybe slippery and warn children about this. From the bridge turn right across the main road and a stile in the hedge past Dolauhirion Farm<sup>3</sup> (GR 764362) and the path goes right (south) through some woods past Allt Dolauhirion Farm to Allt Dolauhirion where four paths meet. At this junction turn right (South) along woods and Allt y Gilfach. At the next fork (GR 766355) go left to cross the Heart of Wales<sup>4</sup> line with two gates. After the railway on the right in the hollow is the reputed site of a Roman Bath House to serve the Roman Fort<sup>5</sup>. Climb up to the stile and on to the road opposite the Church of Llanfair ar y Bryn<sup>6</sup> (GR 770352). Turn right downhill to join the main Llanwrtyd Road and right back to the start at the station where a cup of tea and cake at the Station Café<sup>7</sup> will be welcome.

## Notes

1. The Town name means 'The church among the waters', ie the Towy, Bran and Gwydderig
2. The finest bridge over the upper Tywi is Pont Dolauhirion. It is first mentioned in 1396-7 in the Minister's Accounts, where it is called 'the bridge of Dolhir'. Various wooden bridges stood at the site until the existing stone bridge was built in the

18th century. J G Wood, in his book *The Principal Rivers of Wales* (1813) describes it as 'an elegant bridge of one arch.' In August 1961, the Field magazine described Dolauhirion as the prettiest bridge in the whole of Britain, and a South American magazine some years ago named it as one of the twelve most beautiful bridges in the world! It was built by Thomas Edwards in the year 1773, at a cost of £800.

3. The route of a Roman Road (Sarn Helen - Helen's road or causeway - named after the wife of the Emperor Maximus) from Neath to Brecon passes the Farm.

4. The Heart of Wales Line opened in stages between 1861 and 1868 and is supported by its own Association

5. This Roman site, thought to be that of an auxiliary fort, is located at a critical point in the mid-Wales road system, where the Roman roads from Trawscoed, Castell Collen, Carmarthen and Brecon meet. The fort is thought to be that of Alabum, established in the 70s AD during the Flavian advance

6. The Llanfair-ar-y-bryn church stands on the Roman auxiliary fort site, and was the parish church until 1883. William Williams Pantycelyn who is generally acknowledged as Wales's most important hymn writer is buried in the Churchyard.

7. Cafe manned by volunteers. Opening hours are 10am-12.30pm; 2pm-4.30pm Monday to Saturday and 11am- 2.30pm Sunday.

*All walks are on Public Rights of Way (PROW), Common Land (CL) or Open Access Land (OAL). Explorer Map Llandovery No 187*

**Walks are designed by the Dinewr Ramblers Group. Contact Geoff Williams (tel. 01558-822960)**

See sketch map on opposite page >>

# Heart of Wales Line Railcard

The Heart of Wales L costs just £5 and offer one third off all individual Standard Class rail fares on the line. The Railcard is valid on any Heart of Wales Line service and make trips for shopping exploring the glorious countryside or delightful market towns much cheaper. Cardholders may also take up to two children (up to 16 years old

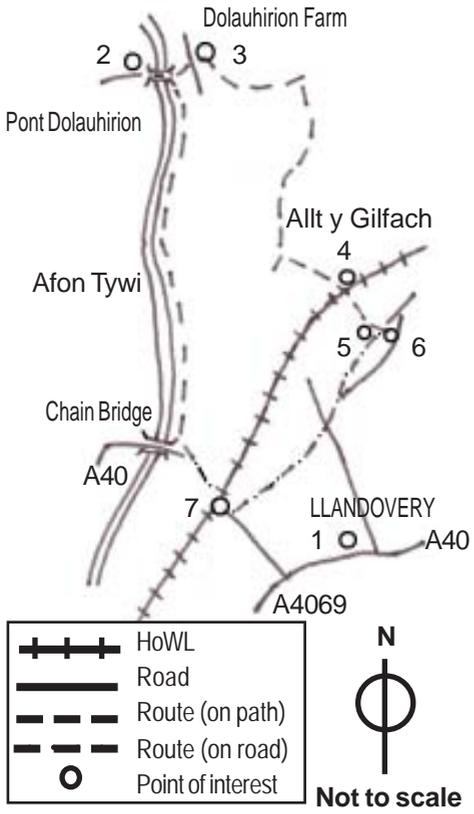


ve) at £2 return per

## How to obtain your HoWL Railcard

To obtain your HoWL Railcard, you must provide the HOWL Travel Centre with the following information:

- Completed application form
- Proof of residence in appropriate area, e.g. council tax, council licence, Council demand or utility bill;
- Payment of £5. The photo-card is no longer available by post.



cards are available by post or in person from the HOWL Travel Centre, Llandrindod Wells Railway Station, Station Crescent, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5BB (tel. 01597-822053).

The Travel Centre is open between 7am to 4pm, Monday to Friday and between 7am to noon, Saturdays.

Please note that the the HOWL Travel Centre no longer accepts cheques. To apply by post please include, with the above, a stamped addressed envelope and a note of your phone number (so that we may call you back to process a card payment) in an envelope marked Heart of Wales Railcard Application.

## Who is eligible?

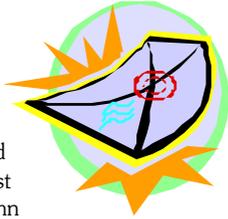
Anyone 16 years of age or over who is resident in the following postal code areas:

- LD1, LD2, LD3, LD4, LD5, LD6, LD7 1, LD8, SA4 1, SA4 4, SA4 6, SA14, SA15 1, SA15 2, SA15 3, SA18, SA19, SA20, SY7 0, SY7 8, SY7 9.

All members of the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association may purchase the Railcard as above (or direct from HOWLTA) irrespective of their post code.

# Post Bag

## Wales in Somerset



I thought you and HoWLF colleagues would like to know that the West Somerset Railways autumn steam gala this year is going to be based on a recreation of the Cambrian (including the Mid Wales line to Builth Road (LL) and Brecon) complete with our Manor hauling the Cambrian Coast Express. Stations on the line will be renamed, so that Minehead becomes Pwllheli, for example, and we would welcome hearing Welsh spoken in the streets of Watchet!

I.....hope that we might welcome some of your members during the weekend which runs from Thursday, 3rd to Sunday, 6th October.

Some information is already on our website ([www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk](http://www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk)) and more will be added when we have the visiting locos confirmed.

**Christopher Austin** (email to David Edwards)

## Reactions to the New Look Newsletter

I was delighted to receive my copy of the newsletter today. I felt that I had to let you know how much I enjoyed the new format and all the good information in it.

**Len Elliot** (by email)

Just a quick 'thumbs up' for the new look Newsletter. Keep up the good work.

**Roger Thomas, Gowerton** (by email)

I was delighted to receive the latest HoWTA Newsletter and to see the bright new front page. Congratulations on the new look Newsletter, which I read from cover to cover this afternoon. As a long-time journalist, I know how long such publications take to assemble and plan.

My association with the Heart of Wales Railway goes back over 30 years, when Joan and I happened on Llandrindod Wells one afternoon and fell in love with it. I have followed the fortunes of the railway with great interest and

have often travelled on the line down to Swansea.

**Michel Hooper-Immins, Weymouth** (by email)

Congratulations on your first Newsletter! Oh what a welcome change – clear photographs, due acknowledgements, copy dates, good use of all available space and eye catching items – something for everyone. A really good mixture – some of the things I have been banging on about for a while! – with card covers it is a publication for an organisation that looks as though it is going places. I'm delighted!

**Brian Dotson** (by email)

Many thanks for your Newsletter, do please put us on your mailing list.

Our next issue will have an article by Professor Paul Salveson on the proposed Wales co-operative franchise, which I am sure will be of interest to your members.

All the best with the Newsletter,

**Paul Abell**, Editor, Today's Railways UK

WOW what a transformation.

May I congratulate you on your first newsletter for HOWLTA.

I think Roy Palmer (who has done a fantastic job over the years) would agree that it needed a 21st century makeover.

Nice modern layout, interesting informative mix of contents, and a bright colourful covers, all in all a real triumph.

I think having the walks from stations included is an excellent idea, as is input from station adopters.

Book reviews that are relevant to our line are also an excellent idea (then again I would say that as a railway bookseller wouldn't I!). I would be happy to supply copies of any that you review!

My only slightly negative comments are:- whilst it is great to have a listing of special trains over our line (thank you George Scarfe) does it really need to fill 2 pages?

**Nigel Bird**, Tregaron.

You have done a good job and set yourself a high standard.

Roy did a good job too over the years but you have taken things to new heights. Wish you well in future editions as the current one will be hard to beat!

**Chris Magner** (by e-mail)

[*Editor* : Many thanks for all your encouraging comments - but I'm certainly not going to claim all the credit. Roy prepared the foundations, and if members hadn't supplied interesting articles and great pictures, there would have been nothing to publish!]

## Death of Roger Manning

We are indeed sorry to hear of this; we much appreciated Roger's comprehensive guidance to our party. We will keep this note amongst the records of our very happy day exploring the spas of Mid Wales.

**Ernie Kay** (by e-mail to George Scarfe)

## Strange Sights at Llandrindod Wells

I took this photo today at Llandrindod Wells featuring the 1108hrs Swansea to Shrewsbury made up of a single 153 single unit coupled to 2 car unit 150. This also formed the return journey the 1618hrs service Shrewsbury to Cardiff Central.

**Hywel Jones**, Llanwrda



Last night, 17th. April at 9.20pm, I happened to be passing Llandrindod station and saw this combination of a class 158 and single car 153 set in the down platform, with about 6-7 passengers

in the 153. I had time to go home, get my camera and take the attached photos as the train was still in the platform, by now at 9.35pm, still with its passengers and still waiting to leave. Does anyone know what was occurring?

**Roy Palmer**, Llandrindod Wells



## Station Adopters

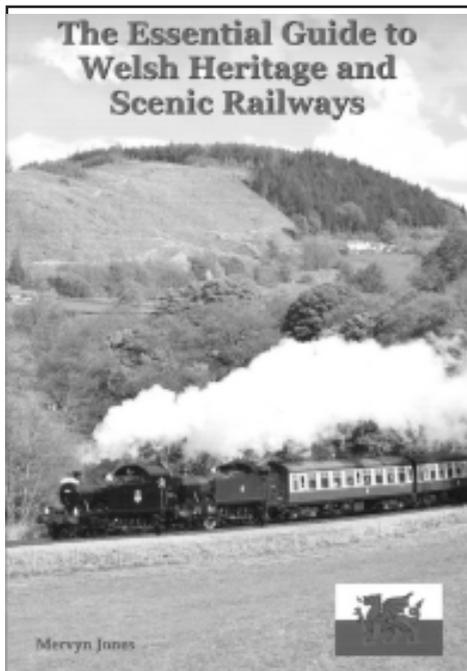
Dennis Harrison asked Station Adopters to write a few lines. Well, I'm not sure that I am an official Station Adopter, but my name has just appeared on the list in the HOWLTA newsletter for Llandeilo station. How did that come about?

Last Spring I took on the task of improving Llandeilo station's flower tubs, to make it more attractive and welcoming to visitors before the Queen's Jubilee. With help from a few friends we renewed the compost, bought and begged some bedding plants and perennials, and produced a reasonable effect. In the autumn we planted up free daffodil bulbs to make a pretty Spring display.

It's not an easy task and I give full credit to the helpers who've done this in previous years. The planters are large, unattractive cement tubs, with gravel at the bottom for drainage. There are very high and it's hard to dig out the soil. There's no water available at the station, to help get plants started. Some of the daffodils were cut off before flowering, maybe stolen or just vandalism.

At the moment I don't know what we'll do for this summer. I personally can't afford to buy new plants every year, so I'll have to start scrounging them from friends and neighbours as the weather

# Book Reviews



## ***The Essential Guide to Welsh Heritage and Scenic Railways***

(The Oakwood Press, 2010) by Mervyn Jones. ISBN 978-0-85361-702-0. 192pp (21cm x 14.9cm), colour ill. £16.95

This book does what it says on the tin, or rather in the title. It looks at 62 locations, mainly in Wales, but occasionally straying across the border into nearby bits of England, where heritage and tourist railways and related activities are to be found.

It is abundantly illustrated with no fewer than 163 colour photographs and just one rather inadequate map.

The book starts with short chapters on the geography and history of Wales, followed by another on the history of railways in Wales. The bulk of the book, though, looks at the many and varied railways, large and small. Brief background details are given for each on locations, operators and routes (these include up to date GPS and website data). These are followed by a little more detail on the line's history, construction details and other things to see nearby.

Appendices include a glossary of Welsh railway-related terms and Welsh station names, a list of useful websites and addresses, and a detailed list of TICs.

Visitors to Wales should find the book helpful, but, overall, it's just a bit lacking in details...and, oh, how it could do with some more maps!

**PB**

## ***The Heart of Wales Line Travellers Companion***

(HoWLF & HoWLTA, 2013) compiled by David Edwards & GHAL Productions. ISBN 978-0-9536691-1-0. 68pp (21cm x 14.8cm), col and b/w ill. £3.50

This new publication consists of a series of articles on the HoWL, the landscape and wildlife along the route. Articles also look at the historical background to the line and some of the towns it links, and at the development of its signalling system.

The book includes a foreword by HRH The Prince of Wales (who has a farm just outside

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Llandoverly), and an insert to help keep younger members of the family amused on the journey.

Good value, particularly if you're a visitor or new to the line! **PB**



### The Heart of Wales Line Travellers Companion

With a Foreword by HRH The Prince of Wales



## Great Walks from the Heart of Wales Railway

(Kittiwake Books, 2013) by **David Perrott and Les Lumsdon**. ISBN 978 1 908748 08 9. 44 pages + cover (21cm x 14.8cm). paperback Maps and illustrations . £5.95.

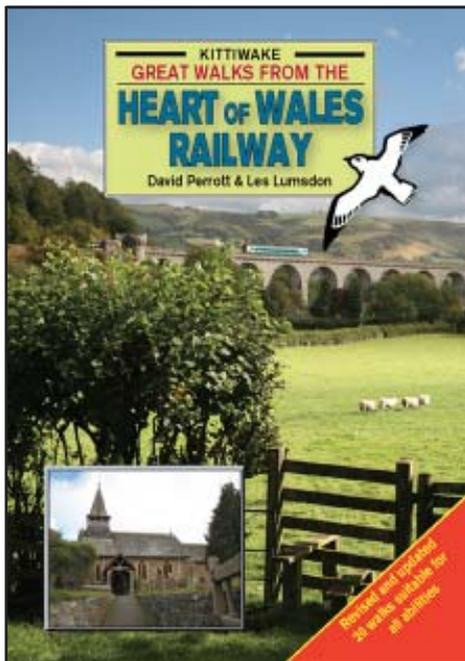
Available direct from Kittiwake and at many TICs, a range of bookshops, and post free from HOWLTA, Llandoverly Station, Llandoverly SA20 0BG: please make cheques payable to HOWLTA

This attractive publication is part of the extensive range of Kittiwake walks guides.

A first edition was published some years ago and has been very successful.

In developing this revised and updated edition all the walks have been checked for access. All can be undertaken by a reasonably fit person, and an estimated duration is given for each.

The 20 walks cover town and country: some start and finish at the same station; others link up two stations. No need for a car to get you to the start or finish of your walk – use the Heart of Wales Line! **DE**



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improves. It would be great to hear from other station helpers and gardeners with their ideas and advice!

**Ros Bellamy**, Llandeilo

[*Editor* : Keep up the good work! I see that work appears to have started at Llandeilo station - presumably this is the long overdue improvements to the approach road and car park.]

### **New Book on the Line**

I recently bought a book published by Jane Griffiths, of Howey, Nr. Llandrindod. It is entitled Days out on the Heart of Wales Railway Line 'Over 400 things to see and do on days out via this scenic railway line'.

Priced at £5.95, it is packed with information to make for an interesting day or days out at almost every station on the line, with contact addresses for businesses, and descriptions of sites worth visiting.

Jane worked very, very hard to gather all this information over many months, and will update it from time to time to keep the information current. Jane is currently looking to find outlets along the line where the publication could be bought.

It is a must for anybody interested in areas through which our line travels and will, she hopes, encourage more people to use the line for leisure days out.

**Roy Palmer**, Llandrindod Wells

Letters for possible inclusion on the Post Bag pages can either be posted to me at Twin Oaks, Castle Close, Llangadog SA19 9AH or emailed to [psberry@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:psberry@tiscali.co.uk) Your letter, if selected for publication, may be subject to editing or abridgment.

Please include your full address, although this will not usually be published.

**Peter Berry**



## **Notes From the Heart of Wales Line Forum**

### **David Edwards**

Peter tells me that this edition of the Newsletter is fast filling up so I will make this contribution briefer than usual.

### **Community Management Project**

Previous editions of the Newsletter have described Stage 1 of this project, which is attempting to secure a better service on the line – at an affordable price. The stage 1 report – a pre feasibility study - can be downloaded from [www.heart-of-wales.co.uk](http://www.heart-of-wales.co.uk). Stage 2 started on April 19th with a brainstorming meeting in Cardiff at which representatives of ATW, Network Rail, the Office of Rail Regulation, Tracis, Welsh Government and a range of specialist experts took part, chaired by Prof Stuart Cole.

The meeting was very positive. But what we are trying to do is not easy. The good news was that a number of potentially useful and innovative ideas were put forward. It also became clear that we are very short of information about such basic issues as *who* currently uses the line and *why*, and the extent to which there are untapped sources of business from both on and off the route.

The group was particularly pleased that Arriva had provided a revised timetable, which uses the same number of trains as now, but offers more journey opportunities. The bad news about this was that it would require more staff and would cost significantly more – money which has to be found from somewhere.

At the time of writing a report of the meeting has not been produced but when it is

available further details will be posted on the Forum website.

**[www.heart-of-wales.co.uk](http://www.heart-of-wales.co.uk)**

Speaking of which, one of the current Forum activities is the updating of our website. It's already popular. Typically over 14,000 visitors come to us each month, and they stay to look around – we get over 28,000 hits. But the appearance of the site needs to be refreshed and we are working with our webmaster to do this. He is also going to suggest how we can make better use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

### **Minibus connections**

Work is proceeding on the 2013 version of 'The Bus That meets The train' – a bus connection between Llandeilo and the garden attractions of Carmarthenshire. We are also looking at the feasibility of a pre booked minibus service from Llandovery to Llynn Brianne and some form of link to the revamped visitor centre at Elan valley – now open all year round. More details of these in the next newsletter, and also on the website.

### **Scenic Wales by Train and Bus**

Our collaborative work with the other Community Rail Partnerships of Wales is continuing. We are about to produce an extensively revised and updated version of our public transport map. This encourages visitors to and around Wales to walk, cycle and use buses and trains. It's been rebranded 'No car? No problem' and we will be using at events and promotions as well as distributing via Arriva stations.

### **Loughor viaduct**

Elsewhere in this newsletter I am sure there will be references to the successful redoubling of the line between Llanelli and Gowerton, with a new viaduct at Loughor. Installing it was a major project, involving more cranes

than one would have thought feasible! The second platform at Gowerton station has also been reopened, and Heart of Wales line trains will now be calling there **on request**.

Some ATW's timetables do not show our trains calling there in the service starting on May 19th . This was an oversight. You **are** able to join or leave – but do ask, or use a hand signal from the platform.

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## **Moving the Heart of Wales Line Development Company Forward**

In order to take secure funds and to take over the lease of Llandovery station's interior we needed to set up a new organisation – the Heart of Wales Line Development Company Ltd. We call it 'DevCo' for short. The Articles of Association of DevCo are wide ranging and allow the Company to undertake a wide range of improvement projects along the line.

So far, Llandovery station has been DevCo's only project – and a very successful one too. DevCo is now giving thought to what it should tackle next, and as part of the process is keen to hear from people who would like to be actively involved. For example, there is scope for volunteers with public relations, fundraising, project management and other skills. We would also like to include representatives covering the entire length of the route – at present all the Directors are from the South end of the line. We are also wondering whether to seek funds by offering some form of shares.

If any readers would like to become involved or simply to know more, please contact David Edwards: [david.edwards5@which.net](mailto:david.edwards5@which.net).

# Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association — HOWLTA

## Officials

President	Professor Stuart Cole CBE	
Vice-Presidents	Peter Black AM	Prof Nick Bourne AM
	Alun Cairns AM	Davies AM
	Suzy Davies AM	Martin Caton MP
	Daniel Kawczynski MP	Andrew Davies AM
	Eluned Morgan AM	Alun Davies AM
	Philip Dunne MP	Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
	Nia Griffith MP	Geraint Davies MP
	Kirsty Williams AM	Sian James MP
	Roger Williams MP	Joyce Watson AM
	Byron Davies AM	Julie James AM
	Mike Hedges AM	Jonathan Edwards MP

## Committee Members

Chairman :	Gill Wright, Cynghordy (01550-750261; <a href="mailto:gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com">gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com</a> )
Vice-Chairman :	———
Secretary &	
Treasurer :	Hazel Touch, Cynghordy (01550-750257; <a href="mailto:hazel51cynghordy@yahoo.co.uk">hazel51cynghordy@yahoo.co.uk</a> )
Membership Sec :	Mike Watson, Swansea ( <a href="mailto:alunwatson@hotmail.com">alunwatson@hotmail.com</a> )
Newsletter Editor :	Peter Berry, Llangadog (01550-777980; <a href="mailto:psberry@tiscali.co.uk">psberry@tiscali.co.uk</a> )
Publicity Co-ordinator :	David Edwards, Llangennech ( <a href="mailto:david.edwards5@which.net">david.edwards5@which.net</a> )
Committee Members :	Chris Horrocks, Church Stretton ( <a href="mailto:chris@jhorrocks.go-plus.net">chris@jhorrocks.go-plus.net</a> )
	Ray Davies, Bucknell (01547-530443)
	Roy Palmer, Llandrindod Wells ( <a href="mailto:roypalmer.standrews@talktalk.net">roypalmer.standrews@talktalk.net</a> )
	Brian Dotson, Llandrindod (01597-824408; <a href="mailto:brian@dotson.fsnet.co.uk">brian@dotson.fsnet.co.uk</a> )
	Roger Price, Llanelli (01554-750045)
	Len Elliot, Beulah ( <a href="mailto:maesywawr@btopenworld.com">maesywawr@btopenworld.com</a> )

## Address for Correspondence :

HOWLTA, Llandoverly Station, Llandoverly SA20 0BG

HOWLTA is affiliated to Railfuture and Better Transport

# A Word from the Chairman

After about 30 years with HOWLTA, it is inevitable that a number of different organisations have crossed my path. Whenever I think they may be of use I grab them with both hands. Trouble is sometimes obligations come in crowds. Let me give you an example of a week in the life of your Chairman.

On Monday I made my way to Carmarthen to meet with colleagues to go to Ireland for meetings with the Irish Partners in a project to find innovative ways to help communities. The ferry from Fishguard duly got us to Rosslare and a minibus took us to Cahir in Co. Tipperary where we arrived at about 8 pm. The damp conditions of Monday cleared to



*Part of the RHS display at Cardiff* [Photo © Simon Turton]

a beautiful day on Tuesday, but we were in a hall all day with some of the movers and shakers in that part of Ireland, including the Minister with charge for communities, doing presentations.

Next day we woke to a wet and windy day which got wetter and windier as the day progressed. Another meeting in the morning then the ferry back to Fishguard, only that ferry had been cancelled and we had to go to Pembroke Dock. It was rough. At one point a colleague and I found ourselves on the floor with chairs moving round us. Seven hours later we docked, were bussed to

Fishguard. I got home at 8 in the morning, in time to get ready for a meeting at 10!

The same evening I was heading for Cardiff, leaving Llandoverly at 4.37pm on the train. The next morning I was supporting the exhibit at the Royal Horticultural Show which had been created by students of Bridgend College, sponsored by Arriva Trains with the

theme of the Heart of Wales. They were awarded a Silver. Mike Watson was with me on the Friday and our President joined me on Saturday afternoon to tell people about the Line, which was tiring but rewarding and made easier because so many people stopped to admire the garden. David Edwards was there on the Sunday and he had been here there and everywhere too.

Next after two nights in my own bed, I am off to a two day tourism conference in Margham Park.

See you on the train!

Gill Wright

# **NOTICE OF** **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Notice is hereby given that the 32<sup>nd</sup> AGM of HOWLTA will be held on Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at The Belle Vue Hotel, Llanwrtyd Wells, starting at 11.30.

The Constitution states that the entire Committee, excluding the President and Vice-Presidents, shall retire and seek re-election at each AGM. Any member wishing to stand for election to the Committee must give at least fourteen days notice in advance of the date of the AGM in writing to the Secretary. However, this aspect of the arrangements has been delegated to the Minutes Secretary (see below), who will be pleased to receive nominations either by letter or e.mail. It may be helpful to any member thinking of seeking election to know that Committee meetings are normally held approximately every six weeks on Saturdays in Llangam-march Wells and (inclusive of a lunch break) last from 11.30 to 15.00.

Any member wishing to propose a motion for discussion at the AGM must also give at least 14 days notice in writing. Such motions should be sent to the Minutes Secretary. Matters which have not been notified in this way may only be discussed at the Chairman's discretion under "Any Other Business".



**Mike Watson** (Minutes Secretary)

99 Ridgeway, Killay, Swansea, SA2 7A

*alunwatson@hotmail.com*

## **HOWLTA Journey Questionnaire**

Enclosed with this issue (and the next) are copies of our new questionnaire. You are invited to complete one these after future journeys along our line. Your responses will be analysed, and

the results will be used in our on-going discussions with Arriva Trains Wales to improve facilities and services.

Many thanks for your assistance.

# News from the Association

## Membership Report

At the moment we have 800 fully paid up members and payments have now gone a lot slower but are still coming in. It's too early to say whether we have more members this current year than last year.

Many thanks to those members who have paid their membership promptly.

The 200 Club is doing really well with 320 tickets already sold at £5 per ticket. Don't forget the 200 club has five winners each month of £20/£15/3 x £10.

## Hazel Touch, Membership Secretary

### 200 Club Winners

#### February 2013

019 – Ms L Fairfax, Llandovery	£100
471 – Mr Morris, Betws	£50
437 – Mr V Richards, Swansea	£25
303 – Mrs A Williams, Ffestiniog	£25
051 – Mr Adams, Port Talbot	£25

#### March 2013

220 – Mr B Wilson, Isle of Wight	£20
123 – Mrs J A Jones, Llandovery	£15
266 – Mrs C Breeze, Knighton	£10
044 – Dr Davies, Llandeilo	£10
269 – Mr Worthington, Stalybridge	£10

#### April 2013

136 – Mr C Brotherington, Llanymynch	£20
214 – Mrs Hartland, Ammanford	£15
076 – Mr K Morgan, Swansea	£10
007 – Miss E A Maund, Llandrindod	£10
248 – Mr A Scott, Mawery	£10

## Heart of Wales Line Railcard

All members (regardless of where they live) are reminded that they can purchase the HoWL railcard for £5.00 from Llandrindod Station Ticket Office (tel. 01597-822053) or direct from HOWLTA at the address below. This railcard give 33% discount of any standard fares for any journey between all stations on the route Swansea - Shrewsbury via Llandrindod. Note that photographs are no longer required.

## Committee Meetings 2013

1st June 2013  
13th July 2013  
31st August 2013  
19th October 2013  
7th December 2013  
Committee meetings start at 11.30am at Cammarch Hotel, Llangamarch

### Address for Correspondence :

HOWLTA, Llandovery Station,  
Llandovery SA20 0BG

## Useful Telephone Numbers / Web Sites

Llandrindod Station Ticket Office (Kelsham Hanna) ... ..	01597-822053
National Rail Enquiries ... ..	08457-484950
Arriva Trains Wales (Customer Services) ... ..	08456-061660
HOWLTA web site ... ..	<a href="http://www.howlta.org.uk">www.howlta.org.uk</a>
HOWL Forum web site ... ..	<a href="http://www.heart-of-wales.co.uk">www.heart-of-wales.co.uk</a>
British Transport Police (24 hours National Freephone No.) ...	0800-405040
Network Rail National Helpline ... ..	08457-114141

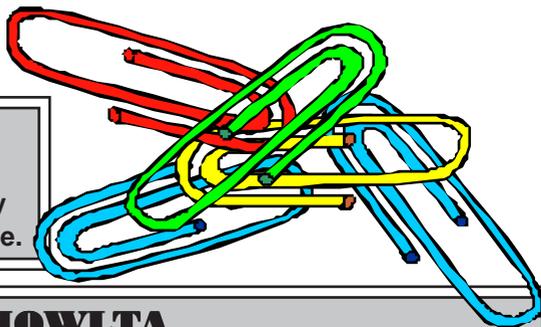
# Line Representatives and Station Adopters

Shrewsbury	John Creswell
Church Stretton	John Woolmer; Church Stretton Rail User Group
Craven Arms	Richard Watkins
Broome	Alan Belcher
Hopton Heath	Paula Tucker
Bucknell	Beryl Starr; Bucknell WI; Ray Davies
Knighton	Shauna Davies
Knucklas	_____*
Llangunllo	_____*
Llanbister Road	_____*
Dolau	Steve Vipond; Dolau Action Group
Penybont	Sue Cooke
Llandrindod	_____*
Builth Road	<i>to be advised</i>
Cilmeri	Ann & Stephen Frodsham
Garth	<i>to be advised</i>
Llangammarch	Ron Birchell - Llangammarch Community Council
Llanwrtyd	John Price; Ainsley Jones; Station Action Group
Sugar Loaf	Peter & Margaret Joyce
Cynghordy	Gill Wright
Llandoverly	Mary Liff; Maureen Williams; Llandoverly Town Council; Friends of Llandoverly Station
Llanwrda	Richard Rees; Hywel Jones
Llangadog	Eileen Mainwaring; Dennis Harrison
Llandeilo	Ros Bellamy
Ffairfach	_____*
Llandybie	Gwyn Irving
Ammanford	_____*
Pantyffynnon	Mike Smith, Amman Valley Railway
Pontarddulais	Mike Smith, Amman Valley Railway
Llangennech	Llangennech Community Council; David Edwards
Bynea	Rex Lloyd
Llanelli	_____*
Gowerton	_____*
Swansea	Felicity Cobley

Anyone who would like to help at their local station is invited to contact Gill Wright (tel. 01550-750261; email : [gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com](mailto:gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com))

At the time of going to press there are vacancies at those stations marked \* above. Gill would particularly like to hear from potential volunteers for these.

# Clippings



## **Please Note**

The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the HOWLTA committee.

## **HOWLTA** **Subscription Rates**

Individual membership ...	£5	Overseas membership ...	£15
Family membership ...	£6	Corporate membership...	£10

Renewal date is 1st March each year.  
50% discount if joining after 1st September

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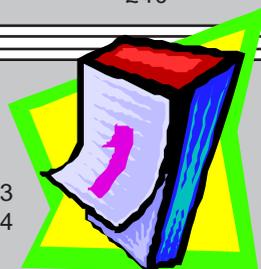
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## **HOWLTA NEWSLETTER**

### **Final Copy Dates**

<b>Summer 2013</b> (pub. mid-August)	Copy by 22nd July 2013
<b>Autumn 2013</b> (pub. mid-November)	Copy by 21st October 2013
<b>Winter 2014</b> (pub. mid-February)	Copy by 20th January 2014
<b>Spring 2014</b> (pub. mid-May)	Copy by 21st April 2014



## **Important Notice**

HOWLTA members are reminded that under *no circumstances* should they write or speak on behalf of HOWLTA unless they have specific authorisation from the committee to do so. Any deviation from this ruling will be acted on immediately, as it is important that all matters which carry the HOWLTA tag should have the approval of the committee.



**Loughor bridge.** *A view of the bridge following the slide operation over Easter 2013 (see also pages 4, 6-7). [Photo © Network Rail]*