

HOWLTA

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2013
Number 125

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The Welsh Mountaineer approaches Llandovery on 29th June

[Photo © Tony Birdwood]

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From the Editor's Desktop

In the Post Bag in the last issue (No. 124) I was somewhat embarrassed - but much encouraged - by the positive comments from readers, and pointed out that if members hadn't supplied interesting articles and great pictures, there would have been nothing to publish. Well.....when I first started putting this issue together in the middle of July, I found I had virtually nothing to publish!
 Happily you didn't let me down, and the last couple of weeks have produced a

wealth of interesting items and photographs. Although I won't pretend that I set out to give this issue (No. 125 incidentally - as in HST 125!) a theme, that is exactly what it has acquired - the stations along the line and those who keep an eye on them. In addition to the wonderful scenery through which the HoWL passes, these stations and these people are what give the line its character. But, and it's a big but, we mustn't let the line's charm and character cause us to lose sight of our target as pointed out in my introductory piece in No. 124.....

Peter Berry

“We need more trains, faster trains, comfortable trains!”



Coming Along the Line

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

9th-10th August 2013
Shrewsbury Flower Show
 17th to 25th August 2013
Llandrindod Wells Victorian Festival
 25th August 2013
World Bogsnoorkelling Championships
 at Llanwrtyd Wells
 23rd-26th August 2013
Shrewsbury Folk Festival
 21st September 2013
HOWLTA AGM, Llanwrtyd Wells

28th-29th September 2013
Llandoverly Sheep Festival
 21st October 2013
Copy date for Autumn HOWLTA newsletter
 2nd-3rd December 2013
Royal Welsh Agricultural Winter Fair,
 Llanelwydd (buses from Builth Road)
 December 2013
Shrewsbury Christmas Fair

For other copy dates please see page 23

Lampeter Road Station

(a.k.a. Llanwrda)

David Mckie [Reproduced, by kind permission of the author, from his book *McKie's Gazetteer : A Local History of Britain* (Atlantic Books, 2008)*]

"In the early days of the railways, entrepreneurs who wanted to take their new service into a town often found they were unable to do so. Maybe local landowners would not permit the railway to cross their territory; maybe the engineering challenge was beyond their wit to solve; maybe providing a station a mile or two out of town was simply cheaper. For whatever reason, they used to resort to putting the station a little way out and calling it after the road that led into the town...

"The most daring resort to this kind of deception...was Lampeter Road station in Carmarthenshire. The Vale of Towy railway, opened in 1858 to link Llandovery with Llandeilo (as it still does, as part of the Heart of Wales railway, Shrewsbury to Swansea), built a station at Llanwrda, which, presumably because few people outside Llanwrda had ever heard of Llanwrda, they decided to call Lampeter Road.

"And there was indeed a road from Llanwrda which would take you north to Lampeter. But what the unforwarned traveller would discover on alighting at Lampeter Road was that the distance between these two places is 16 miles. True they are mostly enjoyable miles if you're driving, especially when you get north

of the Tafarn Jem pub and a glorious valley opens up to the west. (The view coming back from Lampeter to Llanwrda is if anything even better.) 'Some of the finest valley and mountain scenery in South Wales,' says the *Shell Guide to South-West Wales*. They were punctuated, too, by wayside hostelrys to refresh and reinvigorate those who found themselves having to walk the whole way. They would not, even so, have thanked the railway company for its duplicity.

"There's a kind of shrine to the Vale of Towy railway at Llanwrda, across the main road from the present day station which honestly and unreservedly bears the name of the village. It's kept by a man called Richard Rees, who's devoted part of his house and most of his garden to it. There is a station sign for [Llanwrda], and part of an old station platform, and a wheel from a signal box, and a London and North West Railway notice threatening fines of 40 shillings, BY ORDER, if you don't shut its gates behind you. It was gratifying to know, as I said to Richard Rees, that the railway had repented in time of its naughtiness and ceased to pretend that the station

* See page 16 for a review of this book.

here had anything much to do with Lampeter. But that hadn't been the only factor, he said. A rival company had taken its line - a line that used to run from Carmarthen to Aberystwyth - right into Lampeter, so clearly they had a superior

claim to the name of the town.

"The last passenger train on the Mid Wales line left Lampeter station in 1964, but the Heart of Wales line survives, and Llanwrda station with it..."



Part of Richard Rees's version of Llanwrda station

[Photo © Peter Berry]

By the Way....

Things to look out for along the Heart of Wales Line - 1.

This splendid Victorian post-box, complete with protective roof is sited on the north-bound platform (ie towards Shrewsbury) at Llandrindod Wells Station.



HoW Rail Group Meets Minister

A cross party delegation led by Plaid Cymru AM Simon Thomas met the Welsh Transport Minister on Thursday 11th July to discuss investment for the Heart of Wales railway line.

The Heart of Wales Line Forum met the Minister, Edwina Hart at the Welsh Government Offices in Cathays Park Cardiff.

Mid and West AM for Plaid Cymru Simon Thomas, whose Llanelli office organised the meeting said: "I'm pleased with the positive meeting with the Minister and her officials. We are looking forward to the possibility of piloting

innovative services on the Heart of Wales railway line."

David Edwards, Line Development Officer, Heart of Wales Forum commented: "We met the Minister to discuss how we can better use the Heart of Wales line. We're gratified by her positive response and look forward to working with the Welsh Government."

Carmarthen East and Dinefwr AM Rhodri Glyn Thomas added: "Plaid Cymru looks forward to discussing with the Welsh Government about the future of Wales and the Borders franchise and the potential for the Heart of Wales rail line."



Picture: Councillor Mansel Williams – Chair, Heart of Wales Line Forum and Shropshire Council Councillor, Keith Davies AM, Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, David Edwards, Line Development Officer, Heart of Wales Line, Simon Thomas AM

Dolau Station Action Group

Dolau Station has been looked after by Dolau Station Action Group for the past 30 years and on 25th June the Group marked this anniversary with an Open Day at Dolau Station and the adjoining Dolau House. The mid Wales railway station is known nationally for its colourful floral displays and over the past thirty years has received more than 30 awards including the UK's Best Kept Station Garden.

Over eighty people came to the Open Day to see the station's garden areas which were

in the first bloom of summer. At Dolau House visitors were able to enjoy morning coffee, lunch and afternoon teas prepared by members of the Group as well as stock their gardens with plants nurtured by the Group to raise funds for its activities.

Arriva Trains Wales Group Station Manager (South), Simon Turton, was a guest at the event and said "It's wonderful to be able to see the magnificent work achieved by the Dolau volunteers over the past thirty years. The work undertaken by Dolau Station Action



The names of the people in the photo taken on 25th June are:

Front Row (L to R) - Mike Reynolds (Station Group Chairman); George Scarfe; Elsbeth Vipond.

Second Row (L to R) - Margaret Crawley; Dawn Power; Colette Gwynne; Sarah Watkins; Barbara Shelton; Bill Smith; Rex Davies.

Back Row (L to R) - Graham George; Rob Shelton; Ray Trend.

Group is an inspiration for other volunteer community groups taking on the care of stations on the railway network”

A major highlight for the Group came in June 2002 when the Queen and Prince Philip made a special visit to Dolau during their Golden Jubilee Tour of the UK. A commemorative plaque was unveiled on the platform and the Queen was provided with a tour of the station.

The affection for the station is shown by the comments made in the station’s visitors’ book on display in the waiting shelter. These comments include: “a delightful surprise” (D Bowen, Cheltenham), “a great pleasure being here” (J Krull, Bad Rappenau, Germany) and “wonderful” (R Murray, Australia).

George Scarfe, who was a founding member of the Group at its inception in 1983, was thanked for his leadership over the past thirty years and was presented with two planted hanging baskets by the new leader, Mike Reynolds. Mike also thanked Richard and Sarah Watkins of Dolau House who had made their home available to serve food for the guests and visitors to the Open Day which helped to raise over £700 towards the work of the Group.

George Scarfe

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A 1/8th page advert like this costs just
£25 for one issue
(or £70 for a year).
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Charter Trains

Occasional charter trains along our line are, of course, very welcome. They are also very photogenic, as shown by the pictures on the front and back cover of this issue.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could actually have a regular tourist special, say once a month in the summer - especially if it was steam hauled!

At the time of writing we still have two charter trains scheduled this year, each hauled by two Class 47 diesel locomotives.

Although they will both have been and gone by the time this issue is published, the latest available details are...

Monday, 29th July : Heart of Wales Express

Compass Tours changed the starting point of this diesel hauled train so that it started from Belper Station in Derbyshire (instead Nottingham Station). The other pick-up points remained unchanged. The train ran south along the HoWL as part of its circular route.

The headboard on this train was also changed and bore the words ‘The Heart of Wales Express’ (instead of ‘The Heart of Wales Scenic Rambler’).

Saturday 3rd August : Heart of Wales Scenic Explorer

Compass Tours also ran this charter train , this time from Peterborough to Cardiff, via the Marches Line (Shrewsbury to Craven Arms) and the Heart of Wales Line (Craven Arms to Hendy Junction) on the outward journey and returned home from Cardiff Central via Newport, Lydney, Gloucester, Ashchurch and Bromsgrove.

Many thanks to George Scarfe for supplying this information.

Chronicles of Llangadog Station - volume 7

Eileen Mainwaring and Dennis Harrison

Welcome to the club Ros. Bellamy from Llandeilo and yes, you are definitely an Adopter as your name appears in the Adopters list in the Howling newsletter. So there. We have been trying for years for other Adopters to pen a few lines as to what they get up to on their little platforms and you are the first to respond to our pleas. Well done and keep on writing. This now makes three of us—we exclude Llandoverly because that mini Paddington has its name emblazoned everywhere—but then that station is looked after by a whole cohort of folk which includes the town council and half of Carmarthenshire. Llandoverly has professionals, us smaller fry are just mere amateurs. Anyway Ros, make the most of what you have down there in Llandeilo because if the Carmarthen roads people have their way you will soon be adopting a whole stretch of six lane motorway as well.

Which poses the question to us simple minded country folk—who needs a bypass anyway. The eccentric amongst us who have driven through Llandeilo at 3am will have noted that they can drive straight through non stop. Why is this we wondered. After much deliberation we came to the conclusion that this phenomena is a result of other drivers not parking their cars on the highway.

Simple. Stop car parking in the high street, traffic then flows right through, no stress, no traffic jams, no pollution. Arriva trains have the same system as well, and local Networm Rail works trains and other passenger trains who are lost are not allowed to park just anywhere and go sightseeing and have to park on the off mainline sidings—in fact Llandoverly and Llandrindod have one each for this very purpose—Shoppers Special Sidings.

We are once more all in awe of the platform flower beds at Llandoverly—we peeked a look when nobody was looking which has made us more determined to get hold of a ten ton lorry with a Hiab hoist to nick a few complete with flowers in the small wee hours of a Sunday morning. And, to complete the demolition job on other stations they are now in the vegetable growing game as well with their well ordered raised beds. We almost give up wot wiv posh cafeterias, posh cycle racks, two platforms, a bevy of staff to give direction as to which platform to use, and those blinkin flower beds. This is definitely a mini Paddington.

Anyway, back here in downtown Llangadog we are still beavering away under the hot June sun—and with a little

stress thrown in for good measure as Arriva sent a little man in the middle of the night to wreak destruction with a huge petrol driven strimmer thing and for the second time we had the heartbreaking task of counting the shrubs and bushes demolished or severely shorn. The thing must have been too heavy to lift off the ground cos he failed completely to decimate the shrubs in the wooden flower boxes we have on the platform itself. However, we have a plan. We have asked Arriva not to send their little man again with his flail like strimmer thing and we will do the job ourselves cos we know the difference between a bit of grass and a *Pyrocantha* or *Pieris*. So we will go grovelling, cap in hand to Glyn The Strym—Llandovery's head cook and bottle washer—to see if we can borrow theirs. This plan was devised entirely by Gill Wright all by herself with no help from us. Other plans were available but these need money.

At this point we have to thank the Editor, Peter Berry, for his help in decoding the purpose of the mysterious gallows thingy on our platform. We were of course totally in ignorance of it's true purpose being mere Adopters of country bumpkin status. Peter has not told the whole story with his little picture though. It talks to you as well as giving visual directions as to why yer puffer is late and we have had many a long hour here on the platform having a somewhat one sided conversation with a very nice lady from

Arriva. Her Welsh is not good however and neither is ours so we progressed very little. We were convulsed with her interpretation of Llandrindod Wells though (and boy you should just listen to her Llangammarch Wells which is blatantly sexy) and she will have to try harder in her Welsh lessons. However, we do note, that on our last furtive visit to Llandovery station that they had not even got one gallows (or two gallows as the case may be being a two platform station of some stature). Never mind, they can borrow ours for a bit if we can borrow their strimmer.

We are also indebted to Networm Rail who spent a day cutting down the bocage growing on the other side of the track and revealing, in all its glory, the old platform two which is still in pretty good nick. Unloved, unwanted, but still there. Should we now start a 'Friends of Llangadog station' society to raise huge amounts of dosh to refurbish the old platform two and re-instate the old loop line through the station or at the very least just have a long siding so that folk could park their trains for a day's shopping in Llangadog village. We also have to add that the NR boys did an excellent job putting new tarmac down around our level crossing which now makes for a perfectly smooth crossing for our local boy racers.

Eileen Mainwaring. Chief Adopter

Dennis Harrison. Assistant Adopter

Wildlife at Bucknell

Beryl Starr

Bucknell station's wildlife friendly garden has been developed according to the original basic principles. It is attractive, low maintenance and cheap to set up and maintain. No weed killers or pesticides have been used. The bed and tubs have been planted with marjoram, lavender, thyme and sage. A



woodpile with beetle tubes has been established and bird feeders were used in winter. We have weeded out some grass and dandelions but on the whole we are encouraging 'weeds'. At present, the garden is looking attractive with a display of coltsfoot, hawkweed, valerian and wild strawberries as well

as the herbs and climbing roses. It is very pleasant working in the garden with the station swifts swooping and screaming overhead. We are still on the look out for a large shallow container suitable for a water feature. There is no rush – part of the plan is to take advantage of opportunities as they

arise and let the garden develop organically.



(Reprinted from Network Rail's Community Schemes Update: Summer 2013)



Pantyffynnon Station

Believed to date from 1857 and built to an Isambard Kingdom Brunel chalet design, the station lies on the Heart of Wales Line at its junction with the branch lines to Brynamman and Abernant.

The station was originally fairly large and built adjacent to the Dynevor tinplate works, and included station buildings, a signal box, freight yard and from 1931 a small railway locomotive shed.

The signal box is the only surviving example on the Heart of Wales route and, since 1986 it has supervised the entire line north of here to Craven Arms using a system of working known as No Signalman Token Remote.

We're calling on the local community to help restore Pantyffynnon station, Carmarthenshire

We'd like the support of the local community to pinpoint the finer detailing of the building in times past. We're particularly interested in any photographs of the north end of the building, as that would assist us in determining the original form.

We're hoping to restore the Grade 2 listed former station building over the next year with a funding contribution from the Railway Heritage Trust, however we don't have the historical information on its design as some records have been lost over the passage of time.

Appeal

We're appealing to any former railway workers, local historians, rail users or enthusiasts to provide any old photographs, engravings or records of the building. This will help us piece together the history of this unique building so that we can faithfully restore this important local building.

Items dating from its early life between 1860 and 1920 are of particular interest but any information that the community can give will be of great assistance.

Please send relevant information to:

Adam Checkley
Network Rail
5 Callaghan Square
Cardiff, CF10 5BT
or email

Adam.Checkley@networkrail.co.uk

Any documents sent to us will be returned to its owner by recorded delivery within 14 days of receipt.



Heart of Wales Line Walk No 3



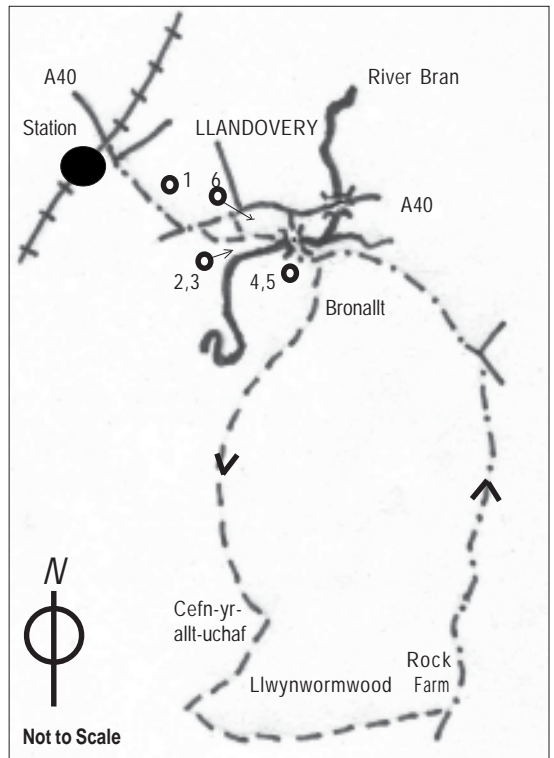
All walks are on Public Rights of Way (PROW). Map references all refer to the appropriate Ordnance Survey Map Explorer 187 Llandovery. Circular, length five miles. Dogs on leads please

The start is from the Llandovery rail station (GR 763346) (on your way out check at the Station Café for the opening times so that you can time your walk to call in when you return). Turn right past the entrance to Llandovery College ¹ (GR 765344) and left into the main street, and immediately right into the car park to walk below the castle (GR 348342), passing the splendid statue of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd Fychan ² above you and, below the castle ³, take the lane alongside, keeping the castle to your right and follow the river Bran ⁴ to the Waterloo river bridge ⁵ (GR 770342). Up the steps to the road and right over the bridge and the first footpath sign on the right through the farmyard of Bronallt (GR 770341). Ascend through woodland over a stile, then right 100 metres to a second stile. Through open fields traversing the hill (on a diverted route) to below the ruined farm of Cefn yr Uchaf (the higher ridge) (GR 768332). At the top of the hill sharp right down, traversing down the slope to a stile and into an old lane between trees. Take the next left and up the hill through woodland with Allt Llwynwormwood on your left (alternative spellings are Llwynywormod, Llwynwermwd, or Llwynwermood) going north east to join the

road south of Rock Farm (GR 775327).

The road is then followed back to Llandovery downhill and rejoins the outward route at the Waterloo bridge. Pass below the castle but then vary the route by taking the lane to the right to join the main street across the car park, passing the Tourist Information Centre (the display there is well worth a visit) and the impressive, rugged statue of the Drover ⁶. Turn left into the main street and back to the station.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk and the tea and cakes at the Station café are excellent.



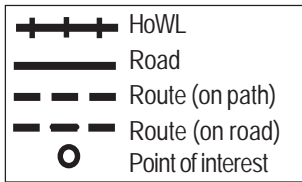
Notes

1. In the autumn of 1847, the small building known as the Depot was being prepared for its new function as the home of the Thomas Phillips Foundation. It was located near Llandingat Church and prior to its use as a National School it had served as an armoury for the Royal Carmarthenshire Fusiliers. In January 1848, it was announced that the school would open on St David's Day 1848 as Llandovery College

2. The statue of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd Fychan was unveiled in 2001 on the north side of Llandovery Castle, overlooking the place of his execution six hundred years earlier. He had led the army of King Henry IV on 'a wild goose chase' under the pretence of leading them to a secret rebel camp and an ambush of Glyndwr's forces. King Henry lost patience with him, exposed the charade and had him half hanged, disemboweled in front of his own eyes, beheaded and quartered - the quarters salted and dispatched to other Welsh towns for public display. The statue was selected in a national competition to choose a suitable design, the winners being Toby and Gideon Petersen, funding was from the Arts Council of Wales.

After the destruction of Llandovery castle and much of the town by Owain Glyndwr's army in 1402, Llandovery went into decline. However, its fortunes recovered as the trade in livestock from Wales to London developed, as the town was on the main drovers' route to the capital.

3. The Normans began construction of the castle in 1116, and shortly thereafter stopped. It was attacked and partially



destroyed by Welsh forces under Gruffydd ap Rhys. The castle remained in Norman hands until 1158, when Rhys ap Gruffydd, youngest son of Gruffydd ap Rhys, seized the castle from its owner. The castle changed hands over the next several years, finally falling to the English under Edward I in 1277. It was briefly retaken by Welsh forces under Llywelyn the Last in 1282. It was attacked during the Owain Glyndwr rebellion in 1403 and left a partial ruin. The castle fell into decline beginning in the 14th century and was never rebuilt.

4. Brân (Bran) was the king of Wales, the son of Llyr, and Penarddun, daughter of Beli had a sister named Branwen (Bronwen); a brother named Manawyddan and two half-brothers - Nissyen and Evnissyen. Bran was more of a king than a god in the Welsh myths. Bran seemed to rule from London. Bran was a giant that no buildings were larger enough to shelter him. An elaborate, giant tent or pavilion was erected to shelter Bran. Bran was taller than the tallest tree, and could wade through the sea, like the Greek hunter Orion, with only his head above the water surface.

5. Waterloo Bridge is a Grade II listed bridge

6. The Drovers gathered huge herds of livestock to be walked all the way to the markets of southeast England. To be a Drover was a prestigious position but as they were often robbed on their return journey the London meat buyers set up a scheme of notes for money. This was the origin of the promissory note. The Drovers established some of Wales' oldest banking institutions, such as Lloyds. The oldest bank in Wales, The Bank of The Black Ox, can still be seen in Llandovery and was a drovers' bank.

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

Post Bag

Extra Capacity Trains?

It looks that the HOWL network has been left out again from extra capacity trains, in which there are vast choices of tourist attractions along the line. See link below

<http://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/180713SummerServices/>

Hywel Jones (by email).

[*Editor* : The link quoted above leads to the following Arriva Trains Wales press release.....]

ATW steps up capacity to tourist hot spots over summer

As temperatures continue to sky rocket, the number of additional seats on services across the Arriva Trains Wales network has grown in response to seasonal travel needs. With thousands of people flocking to popular destinations along the North Wales Coast, as well as Cardiff Bay and Barry Island, up to a total of 21,000 extra seats will be made available over the summer holidays to address increasing demand. This strengthening of services is the result of forward planning by Arriva Train Wales and the efficient use of a fixed fleet capacity throughout the peak tourism season.

A spokesperson for Arriva Trains Wales commented: "With people making the most of this good weather, traveling by train has become more popular than ever. Since the start of the current fine weather we have been adding extra carriages to key "tourist hot-spot" routes throughout our network in response to passenger needs. In addition, from Saturday 20th July our planned extra



capacity over the forthcoming holiday period will help meet demand for these top tourist destinations. We hope that this will also help to support regional tourism, giving local businesses a well-deserved boost in their efforts to grow the Welsh economy".

Additional carriages will be added to trains serving the North Wales Coast, the South Wales coast and valleys.

Inspectors will be carrying out random ticket checks over the summer and passengers are kindly reminded that they must purchase the correct ticket for their journey at the earliest opportunity, prior to boarding the train where facilities exist. Self Service ticket machines have now been installed at selected stations across the Arriva Trains Wales rail network providing passengers with more time and opportunity to buy tickets, making their journey even easier.

Arriva Train Wales expects many rail services to be very busy over the forthcoming hot and sunny holiday period and would advise passengers to check details of their journey before they leave home via our website or by calling National Rail Enquiries on 08457-484950.

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

Your letter, if selected for publication, may be subject to editor abridgment.

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

Peter Berry



Cilmeri Station

Recent cutting back of vegetation on the eastern side of the embankment north of Cilmeri platform has now made it possible to take photographs of the station and trains from the public footpath. The picture (right) shows the first Sunday northbound train leaving Cilmeri today (21st July) at 13:11pm, two minutes earlier than the published time.



The other photograph shows the customer information display on Saturday morning (20th July) showing details of the second southbound train from Cilmeri, destination Newport.

During this very dry weather it might be worth reminding station gardeners to water their plants at adopted stations. There are three plant boxes on Cilmeri platform and all were parched at the weekend. I took 12 gallons to water them on Saturday evening and another 13 gallons today Sunday. Unfortunately they may not get more water until next weekend. Some plants might not recover.

David Rowe (by email)

HOWLTA Journey Questionnaire

A further copy of our new questionnaire. is enclosed with this newsletter You are invited to complete one of 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.

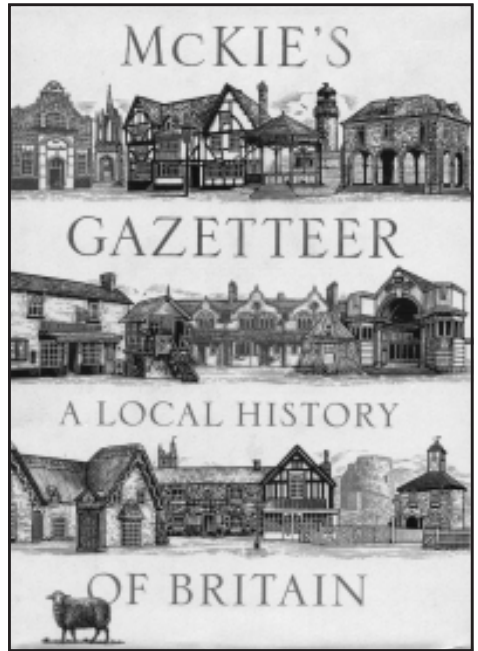
Book Reviews

McKie's Gazetteer : A Local History of Britain

(Atlantic Books, 2008) by David McKie . ISBN 978 1 84353 654 2. 668 + xx pp (24 cm x 18 cm), line drawings. Hardback £30

Inspired by an old copy of John Bartholomew's *Gazetteer of the British Isles* (9th ed., 1943), David McKie has compiled a fascinating treasure trove of both familiar and bizarre stories drawn from all parts of Britain. The places chosen range from Aan (a river in the Grampians) to Zoze Point - or is it Zone Point? - (in Cornwall). Despite that, don't expect a comprehensive A to Z of the country. Indeed many major places, like Birmingham, Glasgow and Cardiff for instance, seem to have no entry at all, but there *is* an entry for Nowheresville! In fact there is little correlation between the size and/or importance of a place, and the extent of its entry (if any) - Swansea and Wolverhampton merit just half a page each, while Bishop's Castle boasts no fewer than 7 pages. In short the choice of entries is highly idiosyncratic - and none the worse for that.

Each entry begins with a very short quote from the old Batholomew, and, as you might



expect, is arranged alphabetically. I read them all in just that order - but readers can easily dip in and out of the book as the mood dictates - there are, literally, plenty of signposts throughout the book to encourage the reader to jump for one place to another.

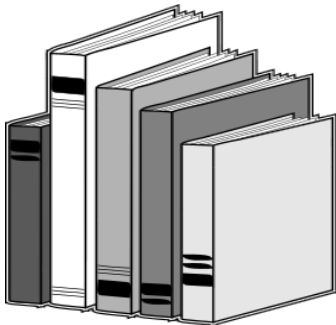
You won't learn much to add to your knowledge of Britain's formal history, but you will certainly get to appreciate the sheer variety of its local and hidden history.

Great stuff and well worthwhile!

PB

Correction

Please note the £3.50 price for *The Heart of Wales Line Travellers Companion*, reviewed in newsletter no. 125, was for members only. The normal price is £5.



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Notes From the Heart of Wales Line Forum

David Edwards

As ever, there have been many developments since the last edition : I will mainly focus on two – our community management activities, and promoting the line in London.

Community Management

On 11th July Forum Chairman Cllr Mansel Williams and I met Mrs Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, together with AMs Keith Davies, Simon Thomas and Rhodri Glyn Thomas, to discuss our activities aimed at securing a better service. We received a very positive response, and on 18th July Mrs Hart issued a written statement to the Senedd on ‘rail infrastructure and other priorities, writing:

“In addition to capital budgets being increasingly constrained following UK Government budget decisions, revenue budgets are under considerable pressure. The Welsh Government prioritised a series of rail service enhancements in 2011 on the basis of the revenue budgets being available. A consequence of the challenging economic climate and in-year revenue reductions from the UK Government is that I must be realistic about our ability to provide the funding for new or additional services.

“In response I am considering whether there are more cost effective opportunities to work with local community groups to deliver new and additional services. For example I met members of the Heart of Wales Line Forum and a number of Assembly Members recently to discuss plans they are exploring for different management arrangements and a better

alignment of services with the needs of people and communities. I shall continue to work with them on that.....

“.....I have been clear that [work on the Marches Line] should complement the work of the Local Growth Zones and be consistent with the tourism strategy. Accordingly, initially for the Cambrian Line and the Heart of Wales Line, my tourism sector panel will provide a view on the feasibility of proposals for summer tourist trains on a trial basis. I will make an announcement for summer 2014 in due course.”

This development is very exciting: not to say challenging. It coincides with the start of the second stage of our ‘Community Management’ project and we recently held the ‘inception’ meeting for this work with the selected consultants ‘The Tourism Company’.

Their work is being funded by Powys based rural development initiative GLASU, with top up funding from HoWLTA.

The main topics being examined are directly relevant to the Minister’s needs:

- market research to define who currently uses the service, and the potential for growth if a better one is provided
- alternative and more cost effective ways of providing such an enhanced service
- the potential for a tourist train service

The work is due to be completed by October, and, together with the supportive approach being demonstrated by Mrs Hart, is very exciting. As Cllr Williams commented recently “this is potentially a game changer: we have the opportunity to explore a wide range of innovative options – let’s make sure we fully exploit the chance.”



A Bit of Wales in Paddington [Photo © David Edwards]

Promoting Tourism by Public Transport – the Great Paddington Adventure

One of the key activities we're involved with is promoting tourism to, and within Wales, using public transport. We recently took the opportunity provided by the annual 'Community Rail in the City' event organised by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, ATOC and Network Rail, to be at Paddington for the day. We took with us a dozen or so people from the Carmarthenshire Tourist Association and Swansea Bay Tourism. Welsh fancy dress costumes were worn and welshcakes were distributed. A good but tiring day was had by all: many contact details were collected and the virtues of Wales as an easily access destination were advertised to many.

The Bus That Meets The Train

Regrettably, this service has not run for 2013. Together with our funding partners (Tourism South West Wales), and Carmarthen CC, we examined different delivery options but could not find one that provided a good service whilst at the same time at least breaking even financially. We decided to use some of the resources potentially available in order to plan

a more sustainable service for 2014 and will update you when this work is complete.

Dim Car, Dim Problem

Working with the other Community Rail Partnerships in Wales we have now produced an extensively revised version of our already successful Scenic Wales map, retitled as above. It is about to go to print and now that the design has been revised we will also update the associated website

www.scenicwales.co.uk.

STOP PRESS

Our stage 2 Community Management work has now started. If members have views about the future of the line that they would like to pass on to our consultants - The Tourism Company they can do so by emailing their lead consultant cevans@thetourismcompany.co.uk. We are working to tight deadlines so 'the sooner the better'.

Having met Mrs Hart and been given her support we have also had a meeting with some of the Welsh Government officials who help her to develop and implement policy. It is likely that they will be able to provide us with extra resources for survey work and its interpretation. An interim progress meeting will be held at the end of August and we anticipate having a lot to pass on to you in the next issue of the Newsletter. (Though because of political protocol any juicy policy developments will have to wait until the Minister has approved and announced them in October).

David Edwards

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; gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com)
Vice-Chairman :	——
Secretary & Treasurer :	Hazel Touch, Cynghordy (01550-750257; hazel51cyng@yahoo.co.uk)
Minutes Sec :	Mike Watson, Swansea (alunwatson@hotmail.com)
Newsletter Editor :	Peter Berry, Llangadog (01550-777980; psberry@tiscali.co.uk)
Publicity Co-ordinator :	David Edwards, Llangennech (david.edwards5@which.net)
Committee Members :	Chris Horrocks, Church Stretton (chris@jhorrocks.go-plus.net) Ray Davies, Bucknell (01547-530443) Brian Dotson, Llandrindod (01597-824408; brian@dotson.fsnet.co.uk) Roger Price, Llanelli (01554-750045) Len Elliot, Beulah (maesywawr@btoopenworld.com) Bruce Roberts, Swansea (brucer@swanseabiz.net) David Rowe (drrowe@btinternet.com) Gwyn Irvine, Llandybie (moira.hamm@btinternet.com) Kevin Knell, Llandrindod Wells

Address for Correspondence :

HOWLTA, Llandoverly Station, Llandoverly SA20 0BG

HOWLTA is affiliated to Railfuture and Better Transport

A Word from the Chairman

The Royal Welsh Agricultural show opens. Many sensible people travel by train to Bulth Road where buses take them to the showground, but many also travel by road. They are coming home hot and tired and they are confronted by yet another malfunction of the level crossing gates at Llandovery. One gate refuses to go back up out of the way.

It is not as though it is an isolated incident. It is almost a full time job for a Network Rail gang to keep the creaking mechanism working. It may be due to the length of the gates making them heavier than other similar crossings and though I am no engineer, my logical mind says that relying on a machine to pull heavy lumps of metal into the air constantly and reliably is a big ask. Would it not be possible to have gates that open and shut horizontally? Apart from the fact that the strain would be far less, it would mean that it would be possible for the train crew to push them out of the way – something they were struggling to do but getting it to the tipping point and ensuring the gate stayed up was a challenge.

In the meantime, as I happened to be on the scene (and at least this time it was dry, I have done it before in the pouring rain) I kept the traffic moving round the obstacle in both directions. The queues of cars, horseboxes, vans, lorries that come to that junction where the A483 meets the A40 would have been back to Cynghordy, 6 miles away, within minutes.

I have just looked up the National Rail Enquiries website – it does not show the Special Train. No wonder so many people have been asking me if the train is running this year.

My hats off to the station adopters who have been doing wonders as gardeners, despite the lack of rain over the last few weeks. The

challenges posed by the difficulty to easily access water is a challenge we need to address if we are going to achieve success at all the stations along the Line. Water is heavy and lugging watering cans any distance is a real problem. Each station is individual so the solution is not a one size fits all. This prolonged dry spell is a timely reminder. A meeting of minds I think is required.

The Newsletter takes a lot of dedication to get together. The Editor, the printer, the postman - it would be obvious that these are essential components to the delivery, but there is another person without whom nothing would get to you and that is the person who puts everything in envelopes, puts the stamps on, takes them to the post office in sacks. That person for the last few years has been my daughter, Sally, and I just want to publicly thank her for doing such a splendid job. Her place is being taken by a group of committee members.

Sally now has a more than full time job managing 'The Level Crossing' bar, bistro and beds. Some of you will remember it as the North Western Hotel, but it is has been completely refurbished and provides accommodation for 35 people. It is aimed at groups but there are a few bedrooms as well. The food is good too – I know because my husband actually eats there from time to time.

See you on the train.

*Our chairman
at Paddington*
[Photo © David
Edwards]



News from the Association

Membership Report

At the moment we have 1,002 fully paid up members which is more than last year but this includes 22 corporates at £10 membership. It's too early to say that this is our membership for the year as there will still be a few people that are late payers! We have also had 16 new members since 1st March.

200 Club

The 200 Club has sold 368 tickets so far compared to last year when we sold 450 tickets. There may still be a few more coming in from late payments but not many. Recent winners are listed below :

May 2013

139	Mrs S Seal, Kent	...	...	£20
082	B G D Vince, Carmarthen	...	...	£15
11	Mr Ledgard, Ffairfach	...	...	£10
252	Mr G MDavies, Cardiff	...	...	£10
304	Mr E Hayward, Llanbister	...	...	£10

June 2013

173	Mr A M Watson, Swansea	...	...	£20
025	Mrs J Stevens, Presteigne	...	...	£15
331	Mrs J Bates, Llanwrtyd Wells	...	...	£10
243	Mr G F B Park, Kidderminster	...	...	£10
190	Mr E J Wright, Cynghordy	...	...	£10

July 2013

283	K Harris, Knighton	...	...	£20
237	Mr J Cleaver, Leominster	...	...	£15
037	Mrs W M Thompson, Builth Wells	...	...	£10

234	Mr Hughes, Port Talbot	...	...	£10
023	Mr R A Chambers, Bucknel	...	...	£10

Hazel Touch, Membership Secretary

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

31st August 2013

19th October 2013

7th December 2013

Committee meetings start at 11.30am at Cammarch Hotel, Llangammarch

Annual General Meeting

HOWLTA's 2013 AGM is on Saturday, September 21st at The Belle Vue Hotel, Llanwrtyd Wells, starting at 11.30 am.

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	...	...	www.howlta.org.uk
HOWL Forum web site	...	...	www.heart-of-wales.co.uk
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	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	to be advised
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 Iliff; Maureen Williams; Llandoverly Town Council; Friends of Llandoverly Station
Llanwrda	Richard Rees; Hywel Jones
Llangadog	Eileen Mainwaring; Dennis Harrison
Llandeilo	Ros Bellamy
Ffairfach	David Rimmer
Llandybie	Gwyn Irving
Ammanford	Ammanford Lions
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

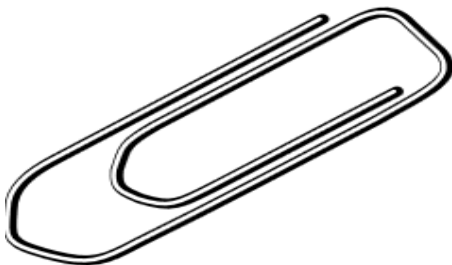
Anyone who would like to help at their local station is invited to contact Gill Wright (tel. 01550-750261; email : gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com)

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

HOWLTA NEWSLETTER

Advertising Rates

(Black & white adverts only - colour rates on request)

			<i>One issue</i>	<i>1 year (4 issues)</i>
HALF PAGE (128mm x 90mm) ...	...	...	£80	£200
QUARTER PAGE (61mm x 90mm) ...	...	...	£45	£120
EIGHTH PAGE (61mm x 43mm) ...	...	...	£25	£70
SIXTEENTH PAGE (61mm x 22mm) ...	...	...	£15	£40

HOWLTA NEWSLETTER

Final Copy Dates

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



Recent Charter Trains passing Llanwrda Station

[Photo © Richard Rees]

