



**Blocked In!** The 17.05 Swansea service stuck behind the 17.47 Birmingham train that had to discharge its passengers after it developed a fault in Shrewsbury on 7th September. The HoWL train was a good ten minutes late leaving.

[Photo © G Davies]



Saturday rush hour through the arches at Llandrindod Wells and, perhaps, a continuation of the HOWLTA AGM.

[Photo © Ray Sharratt]

Cymdeithas Teithwyr  
Rheilffordd Canol  
Cymru

Heart of Wales Line  
Travellers'  
Association

HOWLTA

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2013  
Number 126



PRICE  
**£1.50**  
Free to Members

Signal returns to Dolau Station (see page 3).  
[Photo © Stephen Miles]

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## From the Editor's Desktop

An interesting mixed bag of contents in this issue - starting off with three largely nostalgic pieces about Dolau and Bucknell stations and the old Carmarthen branch (not to mention, of course, that wonderful centrefold!). But in fact most of this newsletter is looking to the future - I would like to draw readers' attention particularly to the latest report from the HoWL Forum (p.8), the Minutes of HOWLTA's AGM (pp. 16-19 - and, especially, the addresses by our President, Prof Stuart Cole, and the representative from ATW, Michael Vaughan,

and our Chairman, Gill Wright's Report). Some of the likely forthcoming changes mentioned in the latter are also covered in the Word from the Chairman (p.20).

Changes are clearly in the air - it is up to all of us to ensure that these changes help lead us ever further towards the target identified previously, and repeated (with a slight, but most important, addition) below...

*"We need more trains, faster trains, comfortable trains...to serve the local community"*

Peter Berry



## Coming Along the Line

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

20th November 2013

*Shrewsbury Christmas Cracker*

2nd-3rd December 2013

*Royal Welsh Agricultural Winter Fair,*

Llanelwydd (buses from Builth Road)

25th & 26th December 2013

*Christmas Day & Boxing Day - sorry, no trains on our line ☹*

27th January 2014

*Copy date for Winter HOWLTA newsletter*

30th March 2014

*Last day of free travel on HoWL this year for bus pass holders*

28th April 2014

*Copy date for Spring HOWLTA newsletter*

17th & 18th May 2014

*Royal Welsh Spring Festival,*

Llanelwydd (buses from Builth Road)

20th September 2014

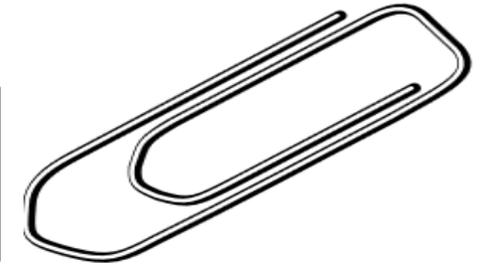
*HOWLTA AGM at Llanwrtyd Wells*

**For new HOWLTA Committee and revised Newsletter copy dates please see page 23**

## 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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QUARTER PAGE (61mm x 90mm) ...	£45	£120
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SIXTEENTH PAGE (61mm x 22mm) ...	£15	£40

### HOWLTA NEWSLETTER

#### Revised Copy Dates

Winter 2014 (pub. mid-February)	Copy by 27th January 2014
Spring 2014 (pub. mid-May)	Copy by 28th April 2014
Summer 2014 (pub. mid-August)	Copy by 28th July 2014
Autumn 2014 (pub. mid-November)	Copy by 27th October 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.

## 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	<i>to be advised</i>
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
Llandovery	Mary Iliff; Maureen Williams; Llandovery Town Council; Friends of Llandovery 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 Coble

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.

## Semaphore Signal Returns to Dolau Station

In July 2013, a semaphore signal was re-erected on the disused upside platform at Dolau Station on the Heart of Wales Line nearly 38 years after it was decommissioned and removed from that station.

The signal was manufactured in 1971 and was a standard lower quadrant semaphore of a type widely in use on the Western Region of British Railways at that time. In February 1972 it was installed in the trackbed of the old up main line adjacent to the signal box at Dolau Station Level Crossing, replacing the former LNWR up starting signal which was on a bracket attached to the box itself. The signal box had ceased to be a block post several years before and the signal's sole function was to protect the level crossing which still had mechanically operated double gates. The new semaphore signal was in use for less than four years because on 1st November 1975 the signal box and all associated signalling equipment were decommissioned and replaced by an automatic open crossing with flashing lights.

The redundant signal box was quickly demolished because of visibility issues and the semaphore signal posts were also taken down. The top six feet of the signal post (including the signal arm and finial) which had formed part of the signal adjacent to the signal box was purchased by Major Hugh Black of The Old Vicarage, Dolau, who put it in his garden. He and his family later moved to Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, and took the signal with them. After some years, Major Black and his family moved again (with the signal) to King's Lynn in Norfolk. There the signal was erected in their garden and remained there until 2012 when the family, owing to the earlier death of Major Black and due also to the deteriorating health of Mrs. Black, put the property up for sale.

Major Black's son, Paul, wrote to Mike Reynolds, the chairman of Dolau Station Action Group, to enquire if the group would like to take possession of the signal. Mike replied that they would and the signal was transported on a trailer from Norfolk all the way to Dolau House Farm immediately adjacent to Dolau Station. On 17th July this year the signal was re-erected in the centre of a flower bed on the disused upside platform under the direction of Mr. Ian Smyth (Network Rail's Infrastructure Maintenance Protection Co-ordinator based in Shrewsbury) working with Mr. Steve Griffiths (Off Track Supervisor based in Hereford), Mr. Adrian Bennett (Assistant Permanent Way Section Manager based in Llandrindod Wells), Mr. John Williams (Technician based in Llandrindod Wells) and five volunteers from the station action group. To give the signal extra height the hollow column of the signal was slid over the top of a section of an old telephone pole which had been previously concreted into the ground. This final operation was undertaken using a tractor with lifting equipment. The signal post was subsequently bolted to the old telephone pole and the whole structure has been given two coats of paint by the station volunteers, the paint being kindly donated by Network Rail.

The signal is a definite focal point of interest at Dolau Station and along the Line generally where there are now no semaphore signals apart from those at Pantyffynnon Station and near the junction with the Marches Line at Craven Arms. One driver of a northbound service train recently remarked that after seeing the signal at Dolau Station he was unsure of "which line to take"! Certainly the signal is a welcome addition to those historic elements of the Line's infrastructure which still remain.

# Recent Developments and Another 50th Anniversary of a Railway Closure

Compiled from information supplied by George Scarfe

## Free Rail Travel

This winter there is again free rail travel between Swansea and Shrewsbury via the Heart of Wales Line for eligible bus pass holders in Powys and Carmarthenshire. This concession runs from Tuesday 1st October 2013 to Sunday 30th March 2014.

## Arriva Club 55

The 'Arriva Club 55' travel concession was re-introduced on 1st October 2013 and continues until 30th November 2013. This permits anyone aged 55 or over to make a return journey to any station on the Arriva Trains Wales network on (i) any day except Friday for £23 and (ii) on any day of the week for £28. Senior and Disabled Persons Railcard holders get a discount of £1 on all Arriva Club 55 tickets. Other train operating companies are permitting concessionary 'add-on' fares to be used within their areas by Arriva Trains Wales' passengers seeking to travel beyond the limits of the ATW network to reach destinations which include London Marylebone, Worcester and many stations in the Manchester and Liverpool areas.

## 50th Anniversary of the closure of the Llandeilo to Carmarthen Branch

On an historical note, September saw the 50th anniversary of the closure of the branch line which used to run between Llandeilo and Carmarthen. The branch left the Heart of Wales Line at Carmarthen Valley Junction, a point about half a mile south-west of Llandeilo Station, and then extended westwards along the Tywi Valley for a distance of just under thirteen and a half miles to Abergwili Junction at a point just north-east of Carmarthen

Station where it joined the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth Line. The Carmarthen Branch, as it became known, opened to freight in 1864 and to passengers in 1865. It had stations at Llandeilo Bridge, Golden Grove, Dryslwyn, Llanarthney, Nantgaredig and Abergwili and was a charming single track rural railway with passing places - but slow, the journey time for passenger trains between Llandeilo and Carmarthen was about three quarters of an hour.

The last day of train services on the Carmarthen Branch was Saturday 7th September 1963, just over five months after the publication of the Beeching Report, *The Reshaping of British Railways*.

## Charter Trains

There are currently no reports of railtour operators planning to run any further charter trains along the Heart of Wales Line this year. It is now unlikely that we shall see any more until the spring of next year.

In fact, the Railway Touring Company of King's Lynn is planning to run a steam hauled charter train southwards along the line on Saturday 12th April 2014. Between Shrewsbury and Cardiff Central, the train will be hauled by two LMS 'Black Five' steam locomotives (Nos 44871 and 45407).

Although the official timings for this train will not be available until a few days before it is due to run, it is anticipated that it will arrive in Llandrindod Wells at approximately 1.00 p.m. and leave for Llanwrtyd Wells and the south at about 2.30 p.m.

[Editor : George has started to compile a new Charter Trains List for 2014]

# News from the Association

## Membership Report

Since the beginning our HOWLTA's new year we have 26 new members. Our figures are now showing 1044 paid up members which do include corporate membership.

## 200 Club

Up to 20th October we have sold 373 tickets for the 200 Club. Recent winners are listed below :

### August 2013

- 017 – John Lewis, Shrewsbury - £20
- 333 – R Welfare, Sutton, Surrey - £15
- 272 – D Harper, Llandrindod Wells - £10
- 049 – B Billingham, Llandovery - £10
- 299 – Mrs A Williams, Ffestiniog - £10

### September 2013

- 003 – Mrs M D Nash, Swansea - £20
- 093 – Mrs M Humble, Craven Arms - £15
- 260 – Mr Stone, Church Stretton - £10
- 151 – P Adams, Ludlow - £10
- 064 – K Lloyd, Carmarthen - £10

### October 2013

- 369 – G Jones, Newport - £20
- 323 – R J Kenby, Woking - £15
- 112 – R Potts, Bristol - £10
- 290 – J Pyper, Llangammarch Wells - £10
- 277 – Mrs A Clarke, Llandovery - £10

Hazel Touch, Membership Secretary

## Committee Meetings 2013/14

- 7th December 2013
  - 11th January 2014
  - 12th April 2014
  - 12th July 2014
  - 11th October 2014
- Committee meetings start at 11.30am at Cammarch Hotel, Llangammarch.

## Newsletter Stuffing Session

- 19th or 20th February 2014
- Starts at 11.30am at The Level Crossing, near Llandovery Station (see page 11).

## E-Mail Addresses

It would be a great help to HOWLTA's hard-working officers if *all* members with access to the internet would let us know their e-mail address. The simplest way of doing this is to send a short e-mail to one of HOWLTA's officers (see page 15). Alternatively please write to the address below. Rest assured we will not pass your e-mail address on to anyone else.

**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

# A Word from the Chairman

It is after much deliberation and soul searching that I have come to the decision that I will step down as Chairman of HOWLTA, so next year's Annual General Meeting will be last. I have a year to make sure that everything is in order and all those things that mill around in my head, that I do without thinking, can be passed on to my successor.

It has been a long time – 1992 was the year and a lot has happened in that time. British Rail ran the show then, before privatisation and train operating companies and Railtrack. Then came Network Rail and more train companies. It was a huge learning curve for everybody, not least the fact that, given the opportunity, people did actually want to travel by train. This meant that the rail industry as a whole had to have a complete mind change. Instead of contracting as had been the thinking since the 1940's, growth was what was required and huge sums of money had to be found to turn this shuddering leviathan into something fit for purpose. It is not there yet, but is moving in the right direction.

Things can never stay the same and my announcement means that HOWLTA will do things differently. Let's face it. When I first started, email didn't exist! Now we can communicate on a daily basis when necessary. The first change is halving the number of regular committee meetings in the year. The main product for our members is the Newsletter, so the meetings will be quarterly prior to the copy date. This may be more attractive to members to become involved.

The management structure may have to change and though some things may happen while I am still in the chair, more will be for whoever comes after. I have been aware for some time that we are not able to make use

of the help from people who are keen to help and we need to remedy this. Maybe if I focus on that for my last year, the job for the succession will be that much easier.

One 'job' that could be tackled now is that of putting the Newsletters in envelopes. We relied on my daughter Sally for some time now and of course she can no longer do it, but it could be that a small group of members could get together and have a session of envelope stuffing once a quarter. I can imagine it could turn into a little social get together. Let Peter Berry or me know if you would be willing.

And of course, when I do step down next year, I shall go on travelling and I will still be able to 'See you on the Train'!

*Gillian Wright*

## Gwili Railway

Our near neighbours on the Gwili Railway have Christmas special events including 'Santa's Magical Steaming' on a selection of dates from 8th to 24th December. Market stalls, a 50 foot high inflatable snowman and Santa's Grotto will all be featured. Pre booking is essential: call 01267-238213 or visit [www.gwili-railway.co.uk](http://www.gwili-railway.co.uk) DE

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HERE**

A 1/8th page advert like this costs just £25 for one issue (or £70 for a year). See page 23 for full advertising rates.

# Bucknell Memories

## Austin Powell

My father has lived in the Station House and Station House Cottage (the renovated booking office / waiting room) at Bucknell for 56 years, having been Station Master from '57 to closure.

I took these photos from my bedroom window, probably in the 1960s.

The first shows the station yard looking towards Shrewsbury. The equipment to the immediate right of the goods shed is a bucket loader and bagging machine used by the Radnorshire Company which had its local coal distribution base at the station. Note the two sidings to the



[Photo © Austin Powell]

right of the picture, one either side of the tree trunks.

The other photo show the 'local' leaving Bucknell heading towards Knighton. Each day a stopping goods train ran from Craven Arms to Llandrindod Wells from where the crew would make the return journey on the corresponding pick-



[Photo © Austin Powell]

up goods train coming from the south. It would stop daily, around mid-morning time, at Bucknell and the guard was often Jack Summers who was based in Craven Arms and can just be seen on the guards van.

# Chronicles of Llangadog Station - vol 8

Eileen Mainwaring and Dennis Harrison

We are overwhelmed here at the downtown Llangadog station when we avidly read the latest Howling Newsletter. We have two more stations (let us boost our morale a little and call ourselves stations and not halts—the latter means we have to blackmail the drivers to stop) writing in with all the latest news from their little empires. Our platform staff at Llangadog is suitably impressed particularly at the goings on at Dolau ——— which leads us to think that we too can have an open day and invite the Queen and the whole of the Cabinet for tea thus helping to bolster our dwindling cash reserves—if we charged the crowds a fiver a go we should amass enough to buy the whole of Llandoverly station completely and have it moved to Llangadog—loop line included. In the meantime we poor relations at Llangadog are now bankrupt by the acquisition of four Lavender plants for the new flower bed—well hardly a bed just a glorified wooden pot if you like. Anyway, welcome to Dolau and Bucknell—two new stations to join the ranks of the brave who put pen to paper (we include emails in this sweeping generalisation) and put their stations on the line in the Newsletter. Cilmeri may also be a contender but after much scrutiny we failed to spot any mention of the Adopter in charge. Maybe in time we can have more Adopter articles in the Newsletter than those from Howlta and we can change the name to Adoptaletta.

Now then. talking about flower beds and pots and things. Llangadog platform aesthetics sub-committee have included a photo of the latest flower pot thing gracing our platform 1. In fact one of three but it is the latest and included in this report of our activities to



inspire other small and struggling stations that you can do things on the cheap Anyway, the two foot square flower container in the photo cost us about £12, and for those who fancy a session with a handsaw, screwdriver and electric drill you will need a few metres of 6" x 1" Tanalised roughsawn planks from Ken Ratcliffe, a couple of metres of 2" x 2" and a few screws. Our other similar containers we made last year cost us £10 each and heaven only knows what they are going to cost next year—we do need a few more.

This is confession time for this assistant subservient Adopter who is being besieged by howling Howling members to join the Association. I am, actually, just a plain old fashioned, dyed in the wool, hands on certified station maintenance operative, but, many years ago I had to draw the line at what I could afford to join, or not, as the case may be. I delve and labour—sometimes too much, at our little Llangadog platform and am content. I am just as content to see our small endeavours here emblazoned in the Newsletter for all the world to see and hope that will be enough. So thank you Howlta for giving us the space.

produce additional traffic for the line: there are problems as well as opportunities here

---why the HoWL Railcard is only sold at Llandrindod station: this is currently being looked at by ATW's Commercial Policy Group following representations from HOWLTA

---whether the Senior Citizens' free travel concession (for Carmarthenshire and Powys bus pass holders) would be returning this autumn: the Welsh Government had yet to announce its decision on this matter. Members were advised to consult the ATW website for the latest information on this and other developments

**11. Address by a representative of Network Rail:** members were disappointed that no-one from NR was present at the meeting. However, an e-mail had been received which referred to personnel changes within the organisation and to several schemes which are due to be completed on the line in the near future, including scour protection work at Stowe (near Knighton) and repairs to Sugar Loaf tunnel and Cynghordy viaduct

**12. Report by the HoWL Forum Joint Line Development Officers (David Edwards & Gill Wright):** Gill and David circulated copies of their report to those present. David then expanded on some of the points in the report and other current issues, including:

---the slight fall reported in use of the line: Michael Vaughan commented that this should be seen in the GB context, where a slight decline had also been seen

---the production of a new leaflet on using the line for days out and short breaks

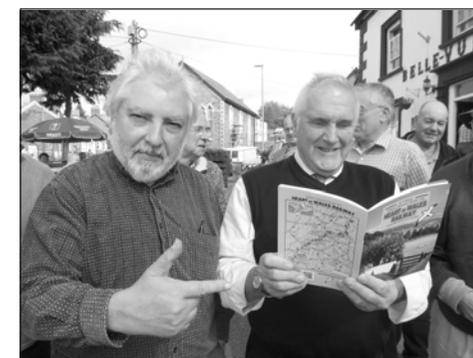
---the work done by the HoWL Forum in conjunction with the other Welsh Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs), such as promoting rail travel to Wales at major stations in Birmingham, London and Manchester, and the production of an all-

Wales map showing rail routes and the Trans Cambria long-distance bus services

---the Local Management Study, which is focussing on improvements which existing and potential passengers would favour. It is anticipated that the consultants' final report will be presented to the Minister in early November. He referred to the survey which is being conducted as part of this exercise and urged members present not only to complete a survey form themselves but also to take packs of forms and try to get people to complete them in their localities

**13. Discussion of motions notified in advance by members:** no motions had been received

**14. Open Forum:** several points were mentioned by members, including the impending completion of repainting of the footbridge at Church Stretton and the perceived need for each station to have at least two "running in " boards, it being pointed out that there is only one at Broome and that Sugar Loaf has no such board at present.



*Tony Bains of Green Dragon Activities, Llanwrtyd, joined some of those attending the AGM to launch the latest revised and updated edition of David Perrott's and Les Lumsdon's Great Walks from the Heart of Wales Railway (pub. Kittiwake, price £5.95). The book includes walks suitable for all abilities.*

(Photo © Peter Berry)

report, in addition to any immediate and medium term improvements

**9. Chairman's Address:** Gill referred to the untimely death of Tom Clift just before last year's AGM, which had been keenly felt over the last twelve months, not least because of his significant input into the Local Management Project (the subject of the current consultants' study). She also referred to the "scenic de-vegging project", which is Committee shorthand for the attempt to get better views for passengers at certain points on the line where the views are potentially the best, but which NR refuses to do anything about because there are no health and safety issues involved, so according to them funding is not available. She also talked about the excellent work being done at a number of stations on the line by local volunteers to maintain flowerbeds, and hoped that Cynghordy would see considerable improvements in this respect in the near future. Finally, Gill mentioned the installation of a "Harrington Hump" at Builth Road, which meant that part of the platform had been raised so that it was easier to get into and out of trains: it is hoped that several other stations will receive these humps over the coming months

**10. Address by a representative of Arriva Trains Wales:** Michael Vaughan said that in general the operating performance on the line has improved, with the Passenger Performance Measure (PPM) for the line itself approaching 90%, compared to a franchise-wide figure of 93.8%. He admitted that recently two trains had failed on the same day, but said that ATW's new Engineering Director had been tasked with doing some work on the class 153 units which should improve matters. He also said that a large proportion of operational issues on the line were down to NR rather than ATW, such as problems with the single-line token system. He noted that the completion of the



*Michael Vaughan from ATW addressing the AGM.*

[Photo © Peter Berry]

redoubling of the line through Gowerton had allowed several extra stops by HWL services to be scheduled there and that ATW was looking at whether the two remaining services could be timetabled to call. He then referred to a number of issues which affected the whole of ATW's network (not just the HoWL), including revenue protection, the Cardiff re-signalling project and various other infrastructure schemes. Finally, he pointed to the need for the Welsh Government and all stakeholders to move forward with the issue of what should replace the current franchise in 2018

In thanking Mr Vaughan, Gill invited questions and comments from members, which included:

--the poor quality of platform announcements of Welsh station names associated with the new Customer Information System (CIS): this would be investigated

--the fact that the additional stops at Gowerton implemented in May this year were not included in the HWL timetable booklet: this was because the stops were decided upon late in the day when booklet 1 had already gone to the printer - the stops would be included in the next edition in December

--whether the impending re-organisation of secondary education in the Tywi valley could

That stupid woman on the DIGITAL INFORMATION INDICATOR still refuses to pronounce our name correctly and us Adopters at places like Llangamarch Wells and Llanwrtyd and all the other 'Llan' stations should be up in arms and writing to our MP. Is Llan just a step too far???? Maybe with just four trains a day we can let it slide!

The big news of the day is that we have acquired a petrol strimmer that cost us naught so that with luck we can at last attack the quarter acre of rough land that has been the bane of our our little lives here at downtown Llangadog for the past umpteen years. All our previous plans came unstuck but then, out of the blue, just like a miracle, came a petrol strimmer. This one is a Japanese make, which for those in the know means OK engineering unlike the Chinese imports which just mean trouble. We are riding high and have great expectations for taming our unruly patch. It had languished in a garden shed for five years but after a good cleaning and a fill of petrol started first pull. In fact an up to the minute update on strimmer operations shows a better than expected outcome—a summer's growth was reduced to zero after an hour's toil and we have high hopes for the future.

Our Lawsons Cypress hedge in the meantime continues to grow and the concrete fence it was designed to hide is now pretty well hidden. T'ank de Good Lord for green things that grow. And grow quickly. But not the weeds --except at Bucknell.

How many Adopters does it take to look after a grand main line terminal station we wonder. According to the records---- just one. Our minds then started musing about what a big station Adopter does. At Swansea for instance if you put out the red carpet treatment for the Central Wales Line passengers on platform one then OK. But,

our train may in fact depart from platform two, or, arrive in platform three next trip. So, do you keep dashing from one platform to the other with the coffee and buns. Commuters on the 125's would have a shock at sampling the delights of all the conveniences and perks that us CWL Adopters throw at its customers---- particularly after having to stand all the way from Paddington--- And to compound the problem we are told that CWL trains depart from platform four on a Sunday. So there. A short resume from Felicity and a nice pic of the hanging baskets on Swansea platform one would put us all out of our misery. Platform one is the one nearest the toilets !

I have been besieged again by a Howling member—but not an Adopter—as to the spelling of certain towns in the Newsletter. From this long standing resident of Pontardulais we learn that the correct spelling of Pontardulais is in fact—er— Pontardulais. He was at pains to explain the Welsh ways of spelling to me at great length. Pantyffynnon—two ff's like in laughing—Pontardulais—one 'd'. His graphic rhetoric included words not printable here or otherwise you would have to read it after the 9pm watershed. We include Pantyffynnon here as an aide memoire to the Editor in case he gets tempted to put just one f in the thing.

We now have a fair workload at our little station and are now looking for a third Adopter to join our ranks. So, if anybody is interested in joining the madness that is Llangadog station and lives within a couple of miles then please contact the editor with your phone number who will be pleased to pass on the offer to us.

**Eileen Mainwaring.** Chief Adopter.

**Dennis Harrison.** Slave Adopter and chief Strimming Person.

# News From the Heart of Wales

## Line Forum

### David Edwards

Since my last HoWLTA update the emphasis of our work has been to progress the Local / Community Management project so I will concentrate on this, though many other things have also been covered. (Not least the handling of queries about whether the 'free travel with a bus pass' scheme is back). And in case you don't know, the answer is 'yes', until 30th March, for holders of Powys and Carmarthenshire cards.

To recap: our work is aimed at coming up with a way of managing and running the line that will provide a more suitable service and at the same time be better value for the money that is already being spent. We are also looking at the feasibility of some form of dedicated tourist train service, on both our line and the Cambrian route.

We have also been assisted to carry out a survey into what passengers and potential passengers think of the line, and this work is in parallel with a similar survey on the Cambrian route.

### The Main Project

Our consultants have given us an interim progress report of their research into market opportunities. The key quote from it is that in their view *'there is a large, existing and untapped market'* for more passenger journeys on the line. In their view if the timetable can be developed to run trains targeted at the markets they have identified, considerably more traffic will be generated.

They are now working to devise suitable timetables and have been in touch with Network Rail (NR) to see what improve-

ments can be made to the infrastructure to (for example) reduce journey times. We have also started discussions with NR about the feasibility of establishing some sort of train stabling point on the route, to eliminate the trains that currently run almost empty because they do not operate when passengers need them.

We have also had helpful guidance on the project from Prof Andrew McNaughton who has been able to give us his views from a national 'industry insider' perspective.

### The Survey

We had to set this up at very short notice but have been able to seek the views of the public at a good number of locations and have also surveyed on trains and had an on line presence. At the time of writing I do not have the results to hand but I do know that – even before the survey closing date – we have comfortably exceeded the number of responses specified by our consultants as being needed to make the work statistically valid.

### The Tourist Train

Work on this is being led for us by Prof Paul Salvesson, and we are aware that Arriva Trains Wales have also been asked to come up with their own proposals. Paul has been researching the availability of suitable rolling stock and defining an outline programme of trips. We've also taken advice from Paul Lewin, General Manager of the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways and from Dee Reynolds of the tourist sector.

It's clear that this isn't going to be easy to set up. Rolling stock is in short supply. There is currently no portable ERTMS equipment available to enable a tourist train to run on the Cambrian lines. However we have also

meeting. It was then proposed by Eileen Mainwaring and seconded by Catherine Berry that the Income & Expenditure statement should be accepted, and this was agreed

**5.2 Membership Secretary:** no report was presented to the meeting, but subsequently information was received that currently there are 1037 members and that membership of the "200 Club" stands at 373

**5.3 Newsletter Editor:** Peter Berry reported on the three editions of the newsletter for which he had been responsible and the changes that he had made to the format. He said that these seemed to have been well received, but that he was always open to suggestions for further possible improvements. In addition, he encouraged all members to submit material for publication. There was a discussion about whether local members could be used to cut the cost of distributing the newsletter and it was stated that the Committee would look at this in more detail. It was noted that a cover price is shown, but that efforts are needed to find sales outlets. Adoption of Peter's report was proposed by Eileen Mainwaring, seconded by Geoff Williams and carried unanimously

**6. Appointment of President & Vice-Presidents:** the meeting noted that the Committee, exercising its powers under section 5(f)(2) of the Constitution, had reappointed the President and Vice-Presidents whose names were listed in the agenda and which would be published in the newsletter as usual

### 7(1). Election of Committee members for 2013-14

It was proposed by Alan Belcher, seconded by Patrick Tilley and carried unanimously that the following be elected:

Chairman: Gillian Wright

Vice-Chairman (vacancy)

Secretary & Membership Secretary: Hazel Touch

Treasurer (vacancy)

Publicity Co-ordinator: David Edwards/  
Newsletter Editor: Peter Berry

Committee Members: Ray Davies, Brian Dotson, Len Elliott, Chris Horrocks, Gwyn Irving, Kevin Knell, Roger Price, Bruce Roberts and Mike Watson

Gill informed the meeting that she had decided to stand down at the next AGM and that she understood that Hazel would follow suit. Mike Watson added that he and David Edwards also were minded to stand down at that time

**7(2). Election of auditor:** no formal proposal was put to the meeting, so in effect the Committee was left to decide who should audit the 2013-14 accounts, the implication being that Robert Christie would be approached in view of his offer to check the accounts for 2012-13 (see 5.1 above)

**8. President's Address:** Prof. Cole referred to the preliminary findings by consultants working for the HoWL Forum that there was potential to increase the current passenger figures (198k per annum) to 900k, provided that a more suitable timetable, better rolling stock and faster trains were provided. He felt that this might need significant infrastructure improvements. In addition, a different way of managing the line might be needed, which could be implemented when the present ATW franchise ends in 2018. At one extreme the management could stay as it is, that is with most power being centred in Cardiff in the case of both ATW and Network Rail, while at the other extreme there could be a separate company to run the line under its own "mini-franchise" from the Welsh Government, though that might have risks attached to it if major problems arose. He noted that the Forum had had quite a positive meeting with the Minister (Edwina Hart AM) and said that the long term development of the line must be the focus of the consultants'

## Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association

# Draft Minutes of the 32nd AGM

held at the Belle Vue Hotel, Llanwrtyd Wells on Saturday September 21st 2013

### 1. Introduction and welcome by the Chairman:

Gill Wright welcomed about 25 members to the meeting, together with Michael Vaughan of Arriva Trains Wales.

**2. Apologies for absence:** were received from Brian Dotson, Len Elliott, Chris Horrocks, Mary Iliff, Ainsley Jones, Kevin Knell, Wyn Mainwaring, Bruce Roberts, George Scarfe and Hazel Touch.

### 3. Adoption of the minutes of the 31st AGM, held on September 15th 2012:

the minutes were adopted unanimously (proposed by John Norris, seconded by Rob Christie).

**4. Constitutional amendments:** it was reported that no proposals to amend the Constitution & Rules had been received.

### 5. Officers' reports

**5.1 Treasurer:** Gill presented the Income & Expenditure statement, copies of which were distributed to members present. This showed a net loss for the year of £2561.33.

However, the accumulated net assets stood at £42333.20. Members asked why, in the light of the loss for the year, the Committee had not proposed to increase the membership subscription: it was explained that as the net assets are substantial and at present there is no costed business plan, it had not been felt appropriate to suggest an increase. A member also asked why charitable status had not been sought: Gill replied that this had been considered on several occasions over the years, but there were disadvantages as well as advantages and on balance on each occasion the Committee had decided not to apply. She apologised for the fact that the accounts had not been audited. Our long-standing auditor, John Bateman, had stood down at the 2012 AGM and the Committee had been tasked by that meeting with finding a replacement. Robert Christie had recently agreed to take on that role and he told the meeting that he would check the accounts in the near future: this was accepted by the



David Edwards, Prof. Stuart Cole, Gill Wright and Mike Watson at the AGM. [Photo © Peter Berry]

found that there is a great potential support for what would be a very innovative tourism initiative. (The survey results are echoing this). Further work will be done so that we can put forward a proposal for Ministerial consideration.

### Next Steps

Early in November – before you read this but after the Newsletter copy deadline – there will be a meeting to consider the final draft report and to consider what recommendations are to be submitted to the Minister. It is not yet clear what these will be, and even if we knew, political protocol means that the Minister needs to have first sight of them!

We're confident that we will have produced a robust piece of work. We already know that the demand for more use of the line exists, and there are a number of practical ideas for changes to the status quo, both in the short term and also after the 2018 franchise change. I look forward to sharing them with you in the next issue!

### The Bookshop in Ammanford Arcade

A happy discovery, made when spending time at Ammanford Co-op doing our passenger survey, was College Street Books in Ammanford. Tim Savage runs the shop, which offers a wide range of new and second hand publications with a distinct bias to local titles, transport, and history. As a result of my visit it now also has copies of the Heart of Wales Travellers Companion! If you want to check opening hours or stock availability Tim's contact details are:

[collegestreetbooks@btconnect.com](mailto:collegestreetbooks@btconnect.com)  
tel. 01269-592140

The shop is definitely worth a visit, as is the arcade itself. (The sentence 'what a little gem' passed through my mind as I walked up it.) A fuller report will be submitted for inclusion in the next Newsletter. College Street is a 10 minute walk from our Ammanford station and is next to the bus station. DE

## News from Arriva Trains Wales

### Revenue Protection Campaign

Arriva Trains Wales has just launched a new bilingual advertising campaign to warn passengers that they are putting themselves at risk of being prosecuted and fined up to £1,000 if caught without the correct ticket to cover their train journey.

The quirky advertising campaign aims to remind passengers of the consequences of not having a ticket and advises on the range of methods available to purchase their ticket.

Arriva Trains Wales employs experienced Revenue Protection Teams to patrol trains and stations at random to check that passengers have the correct ticket for their journey. In recent months, over 1,400 cases have been taken to court, recovering over £10,000 in avoided fares.

### Awards Success

Swansea Station, operated by Arriva Trains Wales - and the southern end of our line - was awarded the 'Medium Station of the Year' at the prestigious National Rail Awards, at Grosvenor House in London on 19th September. This follows on from the station development project, delivered by Arriva Trains Wales, which resulted in a leap from 50% to 93% customer satisfaction with the station according to the Passenger Focus National Passenger Survey.

## Post Bag



### Two Reminders

A reminder that the free travel on Arriva trains has re-started for OAP's until next March.

Also I have taken the liberty of asking Geraint Morgan - who is the Arriva manager responsible for looking after the Adopters - to pen a few words of comfort for the Adopters in the HOWLTA news letter. So, you may, or may not, receive a few lines from him. Interesting to see how he reacts as not many Adopters have a clue who he is. I think his proper and official title is 'Community Affairs Manager'.

**Dennis Harrison** (by e-mail)

[*Editor* : Nothing had arrived from Mr Morgan at the time of going to press. In the next issue perhaps...?]

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 editor abridgment.

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

Peter Berry



### Greater Connectivity?

The Association emphasizes the need for more trains, faster trains, and comfortable trains on the Heart of Wales Line. It is to be hoped that the Officials will also insist upon the need for greater connectivity and flexibility in railway operations beyond the extremities of the line.

Over the years I have often travelled from Banbury to Dublin by way of Shrewsbury and Holyhead. The single line between Wrexham and Saltney Junction near Chester is a serious constraint upon operations, and the Heart of Wales Line is one of several routes certain to receive benefit from a redoubling, if not throughout (short-sightedly, a new overbridge left room for but one track), then in part. A long 'dynamic' loop would much increase capacity.

The Welsh Government's National Transport Plan of 2010 included a proposal to double parts of the line between Wrexham and Saltney. However, the undertaking has been put on hold, and there have been serious delays. There is no doubt that redoubling would yield good value.

I beg the Officials of HOWLTA to urge the Welsh Transport Minister to recognise the need for greater track capacity between Wrexham and Saltney and to take prompt and appropriate action.

**(Prof) George Huxley**, Oxon.

## Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association — HOWLTA

### Officials

<b>President</b>	Professor Stuart Cole CBE	
<b>Vice-Presidents</b>	Peter Black AM	Alun Cairns AM
	Martin Caton MP	Alun Davies AM
	Byron Davies AM	Geraint Davies MP
	Keith Davies AM	Suzy Davies AM
	Philip Dunne MP	Rebecca Evans AM
	Nia Griffith MP	Mike Hedges AM
	Julie James AM	Sian James MP
	Daniel Kawczynski MP	Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
	Simon Thomas AM	Joyce Watson AM
	Kirsty Williams AM	Roger Williams MP

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HOWLTA is affiliated to Railfuture and Better Transport

# Book Reviews

## The Next Station Stop

(distributed by Orca Book Services, 2013) by Peter Caton

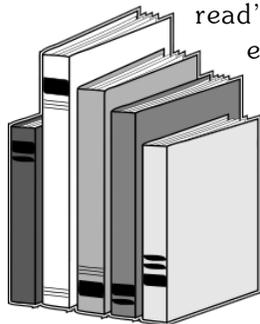
ISBN 9781783060504. 288pp (234mm x 156mm), illustrated, 60 colour photographs.

Paperback £9.99

This very readable book possesses a key feature guaranteeing it a mention in our newsletter: one chapter features the Heart of Wales line! This original journey with us was in the '70's and the other trip was in the last year or so.

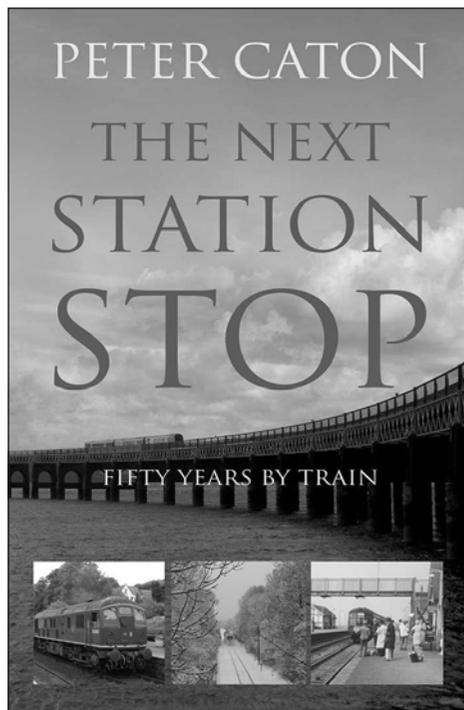
The overall premise of the book is that, inspired by finding a childhood notebook, the author revisits the locations of family holidays, looking at how the journeys and places have changed, and wondering why his parents chose such unlikely destinations.

In the main 'a good read', the book also enables Peter to describe his frustrations with missed connections, inflexible computers, annoying



### ADVERTISE HERE

A 1/16th page advert like this costs just £15 for one issue (or £40 for a year). See page 23 for full advertising rates.



passengers (and some nice ones), and of an encounter with a machine-gun carrying policeman (not on our line!).

With Christmas on its way, this book is worth bearing in mind as a gift that will keep its recipient happily engaged for a pleasant few hours. DE

### THE NEXT STATION STOP Fifty Years by Train PETER CATON

A 10,000 mile tour of Britain's railways  
(Includes Heart of Wales Line)

£9.99 250 pages 60 photos  
[www.petercatonbooks.co.uk](http://www.petercatonbooks.co.uk)

## New Books on the Heart of Wales Line

GHAL Publications of Ledbury produce illustrated books deal with the interesting and more unusual aspects of local transport and industry. New books on the Heart of Wales Line look at the Victorian architecture of stations, crossing keeper cottages and the impressive viaducts on the line together with a fascinating history of the signalling and operation of the line from early days to the present no signaller required system. A third book examines the unique history of Builth Road, a community the railway created in the middle of Wales where the lines of two Victorian railway companies crossed. We hope to review these books in future issues of the Newsletter.

Another of their books examines Great Western Railway architecture in South Wales, from the original Brunel buildings at Chepstow and Bridgend through to the 1930's rebuilding of stations at Newport, Swansea and the superb art deco styling of

## Members' Help Wanted

We will be holding a "stuffing" session at The Level Crossing, near Llandovery Station from 11.30am on either 19th or 20th February 2014. This is neither as festive nor as fearsome as it may sound - it is simply to undertake the time consuming task of inserting the next issue of the HOWLTA Newsletter (plus any accompanying inserts) into envelopes before posting them off to our members.

If you are prepared to give 3 or 4 hours of your time to help please let Peter Berry or Mike Watson know beforehand (see page 15). It really is a case of "Many hands make light work" ....!

Cardiff Central. All books are illustrated with photographs.

GHAL has also been closely involved with the Heart of Wales Line Forum in the compilation of our new book *The Heart of Wales Line Travellers Companion* which draws together a series of articles on history, landscape, wildlife, folklore, place names and other fascinating aspects of this unique railway line. Further details can be obtained from the Heart of Wales Line Forum and the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association \*.

Book can be obtained direct from GHAL and generally retail at £3.50 to £4.50 (plus postage). Discounted terms are offered for orders of ten or more. Further information from :

GHAL, 5 Biddulph Way, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2HP  
Tel. 01532-633594 or 07980-273764  
or email: [ghal@btinternet.com](mailto:ghal@btinternet.com)

[\* Editor : Copies of this useful stocking-filler can be obtained direct from HoWLTA, price £5 plus postage.]

## HOWLTA Journey Questionnaire

Many thanks for completing and sending in your questionnaires (but don't stop if you still have unused copies!). These will now be analysed and, hopefully, used to help improve everyone's travelling experience on the HoWL. Thanks for your assistance.

## RAILWAY BOOKS

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Over 4000 listed on my website  
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telephone 01974 821281



*The Magic of Steam - an atmospheric view of the LMS Black Five steam hauled charter train on Cyngordy Viaduct on 22nd April 2013.*  
[Photo © Charles Jenkin-Jones]