

Cymdeithas Teithwyr
Rheilffordd Canol
Cymru

Heart of Wales Line
Travellers'
Association

HOWLTA

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2014

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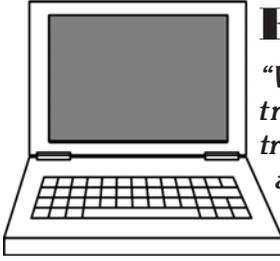
Ascending the Sugar Loaf (see page 2 for details)

[Photo © Peter Joyce]

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From the Editor's Desktop

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

These are the words I've used to introduce the last few issues. Well, following recent announcements from the Welsh Government, it could be said that we've now been promised more trains (albeit not until next summer) - actually it'll be the same number of train units, but by re-jigging the timetable, these will be used to provide an extra service in both directions (see opposite page for more details).

An earlier announcement also looks promising - at least to bus pass holders - free rail travel on the HoWL (and three other lines

in north and central Wales) will continue for the next year, and this will in future be open to *all* bus pass holders (not just those living locally - see opposite page for details).

In neither case though has there been any undertaking to provide faster or more comfortable trains - indeed there has not even been any commitment to provide more carriages (and hence more seats!) to cope with the extra (but nonetheless very welcome!) passengers that can be expected from all those additional bus pass holders. Does that mean more crowding with more passengers left standing? If so, the trains certainly will not be more comfortable!

However, fair dos, these announcements, plus other positive developments noted in this issue (see pp. 12-13) are nevertheless very welcome...but there is still some way to go to achieve our aims! **Peter Berry**

COVER PICTURES

Font cover :

The Heart of Wales steam hauled charter train approaching the south portal of Sugar Loaf Tunnel on 12th April 2014, photographed by Peter Joyce. Peter writes "Margaret and I are adopters of the Sugar Loaf Halt and walked to the southern entrance of the tunnel, knowing of the incline from Llandoverly. It was an incredible few minutes which I will never forget..."

Back cover :

Two rare visitors to our line photographed by Stephen Miles.

Top - Ballast Train. Stephen writes "An exceedingly rare occurrence on 5 March 2014 as DBS 66037 heads the 0542 Westbury to Gwaun Cae Gurwen ballast train at Llwyn-Ifan-ddu (between Pontardulais and Pantyffynnon). The train was dropping ballast from the rear side chutes of the first wagon on to the track at this location [see enlarged inset]."

Bottom - Northern Belle at Gowerton hauled by Class 47 No. 47790 in February 2014 (with No. 47832 at rear). Stephen writes "[This] is what I was waiting for - a Northern Belle luxury luncheon excursion from Cardiff to Fishguard Harbour and back. It did a similar trip the following day. Wouldn't it be good to see this work over HoWL on St. David's Day 2015....?"

Improved Service Next Year

The Welsh Government's Transport Minister, Edwina Hart, has announced that an improved train service will be introduced on the Heart of Wales Line next year.

In addition to the four trains which run each way over the full length of the Line, there will be an early morning train for commuters which will run from Swansea to Llandovery (and return) and a similar train which will run from Shrewsbury to Llandrindod Wells (and return). The service will operate on Mondays to Fridays only.

The four trains which run each way over the full length of the Line on Mondays to Saturdays will be more conveniently timed (I

understand that there will be, for example, a northbound through service which will call at Llandrindod Wells at about 08.40).

The new train timetable will operate over an initial three year trial period from 2015.

Additionally, The Heart of Wales Line Forum will receive funding to explore the possibility of further improvements to the Line.

The above improvements to the service are very welcome. The current service of four through trains each way on Mondays to Saturdays was introduced in 1993 (there were previously five trains each way [Mondays to Saturdays]). *George Scarfe*

Concessionary Rail Schemes

In addition to the very welcome announcement by the Welsh Government at the beginning of April 2014 reported above, the following was issued a week or so earlier :

Popular Concessionary Rail Scheme extended

Transport Minister, Edwina Hart, has announced an extension of the concessionary rail scheme in rural Mid and North Wales until March 2015, and it will now be open to all free bus pass holders in Wales.

The scheme which operates on the Conwy Valley Line between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Llandudno, the Welsh section of the Wrexham – Bidston Line, the Cambrian Coast and Heart of Wales lines, was previously only available to free bus pass holders from the local authorities in which the scheme operated.

There are more than 720,000 concessionary pass holders in Wales, including armed

forces personnel and veterans.

The scheme, which has been funded by the Welsh Government since 2007, complements the concessionary bus fares scheme to provide access to public transport in areas where bus services are limited.

It operates year round on the Borderlands and Conwy Valley Lines and during the autumn and winter months on the Heart of Wales and Cambrian Coast Lines.

Transport Minister, Edwina Hart, said:

“This popular scheme demonstrates our commitment to providing access to sustainable transport in Wales and is an important service for the elderly and disabled in our rural communities.

“I am very pleased that we are now able to extend free travel on these lines to all free bus pass holders in Wales, so they can still get access to public transport wherever they are in the country.”

Welsh Government Announcements

Editorial Comment :

I am pretty confident that the vast majority of readers will, like me, welcome the announcement of the extra train from next summer.

However, the earlier announcement about concessionary travel for bus pass holders seemed rather ambiguous to me. Did it mean that *all four schemes* will operate *all the year* round and be available to *all Welsh bus pass holders*. If so, will there be enough room on our little single coach class 153s to accommodate all those extra potential users of our line?

In order to clarify things for HoWLTA members I emailed the Welsh Government, through David Edwards, as follows :

“(a) Is the concessionary rail travel on the Cambrian and Heart of Wales Lines still going to be restricted to the Autumn and Winter months, or will it be, like the Conwy Valley Line and the Welsh section of the Wrexham – Bidston Line, available all year round?

(b) If concessionary rail travel is now available to *all* Welsh bus pass holders (not just those living in the areas served by the four lines) what provision is being made to cater for the likely extra increase in demand for seats (eg will *all* trains on these lines have a minimum of two carriages)? Remember, to put it bluntly, the majority of users of these same bus passes are no longer in the first flush of youth!

Any help you can give in supplying answers to these queries would be much appreciated.

Peter Berry,
Editor, HOWLTA Newsletter”

This is the response received :

“With regards to question (a)... this is covered in the original press release, see: <http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/transport/2014/140326cf/?lang=en>

‘Transport Minister, Edwina Hart, has announced an extension of the concessionary rail scheme It operates year round on the Borderlands and Conwy Valley Lines and during the autumn and winter months on the Heart of Wales and Cambrian Coast Lines.’

Simon Pickering”

So no change there then!...and nothing at all about the need for extra carriages. Keep watching this space, but don't hold your breath...and, in the meantime, expect some crowded trains next summer!

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like this costs just
£45 for one issue (or
£120 for a year).
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Charter Train News Updated

Charter Trains Planned to run along HoWL during the remainder of 2014

Compiled from information provided by George Scarfe

(last updated 7th March 2014)

Saturday 12th July 2014

'The Heart of Wales Rambler'

(originally scheduled for 22nd March)

Train powered by two DRS Class 47 diesel locomotives. Starts from Banbury and travels via Swindon, Newport, Cardiff Central, Swansea District Line, Hendy Junction, Pantyffynnon, Llandoverly, Llandrindod Wells [Anticipated arrival approx.14.10; anticipated departure approx.16.20], Craven Arms, Shrewsbury, Birmingham New Street, Swindon, to terminate at Banbury.

[Organised by Pathfinder Tours of Inchbrook, Stroud, Glos.]

Saturday 16th August 2014

'The Heart of Wales Scenic Rambler'

Details of diesel motive power not yet available (may be one or possibly two Class 47 locomotives). Starts from Grantham, travels via Stoke-on-Trent, Crewe, Shrewsbury, Craven Arms, Llandrindod Wells [anticipated arrival approx.11.25; anticipated departure approx.11.45], Llandoverly, Pantyffynnon, Hendy Junction, Swansea District Line, Cardiff Central, Newport, Hereford, Craven Arms, Shrewsbury, Crewe, Stoke-on-Trent, to terminate at Grantham.

[Organised by Compass Tours by Rail of Liverpool].

Saturday 6th September 2014

'The Heart of Wales Scenic Rambler'

Details of diesel motive power not yet available (may be one or possibly two Class 47 locomotives). Starts from Barrow-in-Furness, travels via Carnforth, Lancaster, , Crewe, Shrewsbury, Craven Arms, Llandrindod Wells [anticipated arrival approx.11.25; anticipated departure approx.11.45.], Llandoverly, Pantyffynnon, Hendy Junction, Swansea District Line, Cardiff Central, Newport, Hereford, Craven Arms, Shrewsbury, Crewe, Lancaster, Carnforth, to terminate at Barrow-in-Furness.

[Organised by Compass Tours by Rail of Liverpool].

Saturday 4th October 2014

'The Heart of Wales Explorer'

(originally scheduled for 15th March)

Train powered by two DRS Class 20 diesel locomotives. Starts from Derby and travels via Leicester, Birmingham New Street, Gloucester, Newport, Cardiff Central, Swansea District Line, Hendy Junction, Pantyffynnon, Llandoverly, Llandrindod Wells [anticipated arrival approx.14.10; anticipated departure approx.16.20], Craven Arms, Shrewsbury, Birmingham New Street, Leicester, Loughborough, to terminate at Derby.

[Organised by Pathfinder Tours of Inchbrook, Stroud, Glos.]

[Editor : Please note only outline routes are listed. For full details contact tour organisers.]

Memories of Garth Station

The coming of the railway to Garth must have made quite a difference to the village and many of our friends and neighbours were employed by the LMS. I can recall two porters, a station master, guard and signalman.

My first memories of trains are of the annual Sunday school outing to Swansea. The Sugarloaf tunnel caused great excitement and we believed that sticking our heads out of the window would cure the whooping cough which many of us had experienced.

In April the steep railway embankments provided us with primroses and later we collected wild strawberries in abundance. The line was not obscured by trees then and the whole village stood in their doorways to wave to those commencing their journeys.

The 10 am train was known as the London train and Commander Wilson, Garth House often used it. The evening train up from Swansea was referred to as the 'Mail' or the 'Fish' train and travelled from Swansea to York. Many sailors who docked in Swansea used this convenient train. There were several other trains during the day.

The railway buildings were a delight to us youngsters in the 1930's. Here we would often sit by the little fireside in the waiting room 'smoking' rolled up brown paper and gazing at the colourful posters of faraway places. The Fry's chocolate machine on the platform was

a great attraction when we had money to spend.

Often the engine drivers would allow us to get up onto the engine to watch the coal being shovelled into the great firebox.

I made the journey up to North Wales several times a year during the 40's. My trunk and bicycle would be sent in advance – a wonderful system which never failed, just as one could safely leave ones suitcase at the end of the platform in Shrewsbury. One never doubted that it would be there when one returned from town two hours later.

During the war of course there were no lamps lit and there was a white line along the edge of the platform. My mother greeted me by torchlight.

Sometimes at the start of a journey we were invited into the Station Master's tiny office where a little fireplace was set into the wall. Tickets really looked like tickets and the fares were affordable. On Saturday afternoons even teenagers travelled to Llandrindod to the Cinema. Workers of course used the trains daily.

Many years passed before I once more made the train journey to Shrewsbury. My cosy waiting room, ticket office and lavatories had all gone. I was shocked to see the bus type shelter and to find that the far line and platform no longer existed – just weeds running riot.



Old Garth Station

[Editor : We would like to acknowledge copyright of this photograph. Any help in identifying it would be appreciated]

I spoke to a young woman with a toddler in a push chair. “Yes”, she was waiting for the train; “No” she did not remember anything about the steam trains and the busy little station with all the work and delights it had provided. She also had

never heard of me although I had lived up in the Schoolhouse for nearly 30 years.

Like the old Garth Station I felt like a ghost from the past, but how vivid are my memories. *Shirley Elliott*

The Heart of Wales Line on Social Media

My first involvement with the Heart of Wales Line – other than as a passenger – was in 2013. I helped the Forum to carry out the passenger survey that was used to support the bid for an improved service.

Following on from that, David Edwards and Gill Wright invited me to set up Facebook and Twitter pages for The Heart of Wales Line, as they knew that I had experience of working with other local organisations in the same way.

Social-networking services and websites like Twitter and Facebook are changing the way the world communicates. These sites are no

longer just used for social purposes but by businesses too, because of their potential to connect all kinds of people, involve them, or link them together. At the broad end of the spectrum, social media facilitates global networking; at the local end of the spectrum, social media can be a great communications tool for people like us.

In setting up social media for the Heart of Wales, I have been thinking of the Heart of Wales Line as a 120-mile long community or network of communities, which is also connected to the wider world.

On Twitter you can now follow @HeartofWales1 or you can “Like” Heart of Wales on Face book and these new outlets all link back to the original Heart of Wales Line website. By using Twitter and Facebook, it is very easy to pass on and share real time and regular updates ... the survey results, events along the line, service updates, news, views, the 120 mile garden, the steam trains. We used it to pass on the great news from the Welsh Government’s Edwina Hart concerning future enhanced services. We now have (at the time of writing), 271 followers on Twitter and approaching 200 on Facebook. These are spread across two separate accounts, one of which was originally established by Tony Bain of Llanwrtyd. Thank you Tony.

Working with social media is not like traditional media, in which you put out a message and that’s that. In social media people can reply, they can ask you questions, they can share posts and all of this helps to boost views to new and more people. In setting up and administering social media for Heart of Wales, I’ve had online conversations with people about timetables, planting flowering cherry trees at Dolau Station, how to get to the Dylan Thomas exhibition in Swansea from the station and where to get an application form for the HoWL Rail card. The administrator can allow others to post updates too and of course local tourism interests will also gain from linking with HoWL and sharing information about steam trains etc.

As the first administrator, I’ve also established online links with some great organisations along the line ... Visit Wales, The Cycling Museum in Llandrindod Wells, a craft society in Knighton, the World Alternative Games in Llanwrtyd, Carmarthenshire Museums and Shrewsbury

Hive, to name but a few.

The work I’ve begun is part of the Forum’s ongoing plan to use Facebook and Twitter to create active and engaged links between Heart of Wales Line and existing customers, local businesses, Wales tourism, community organisations etc. This will be increasingly important as the Forum launches the enhanced timetable, and works to develop a closer relationships with local communities and groups in the run up to the 2018 rail franchise renewal.

We very much want to connect with all the community councils along the Heart of Wales Line. If you belong to a council please get involved. Follow us on Twitter @HeartofWales1 and find us on Facebook at the Heart of Wales Line. Invite other members to do the same. In fact we invite *everyone* to do the same. All this will help HoWL develop better and regular communication. You can then share your own updates, photos and local links with us, to help build the network.

For me this is pretty exciting and I’m so pleased to have been part of the team, working for the wonderful Heart of Wales Line.

Rachel Francis



Rachel is a copywriter for sustainable business at www.sharpeningpencils.co.uk. She lives in Presteigne, Powys.

Book Reviews

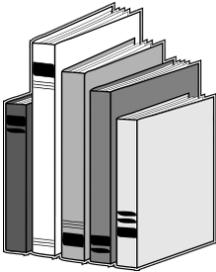
Fifty Years within Station Limits

(published by Y Lolfa Cyf, February 2014) by John M. Morgan
ISBN 978-1-84771-8297. 160pp.
Illustrated with b/w photos.
Paperback £7.95

The late John M. Morgan served on the railways for more than half a century. This is his detailed account of the impact of the railways on a south Wales village community and its surroundings, from the beginning of the 20th century until its end. The book also covers the period

the author spent doing his National Service in Egypt.

JM



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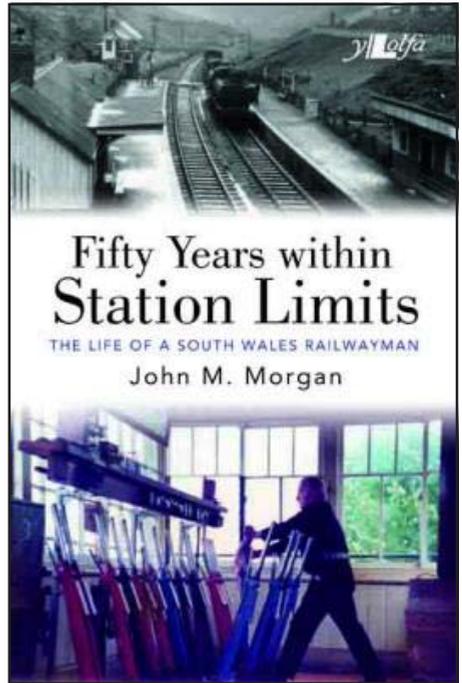
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Heart of Wales Line Walk No 5

A Walk from Llanwrtyd Wells Railway Station

Circular walk of 7.5km (4.5 miles). Explorer Map Sheet No. 187. All walks are on public Rights of Way or open access land.

At Llanwrtyd Station follow the road to the left into town ¹ and at the square with the Red Kite statue turn left, cross a river bridge (over the Irfon) and after 20 metres turn into Victoria Road. Walk straight along the lane as far as the now disused Victoria Wells Motel. Take the access gate left of the cattle grid and left again on to the tarmac lane through the chalet site passing reception on your left

The track becomes a small path through forestry through a small gate where a blue pipe discharges in to the stream and follow the path with the fence on your left, eventually becoming a forest track, where you turn right. This is the old 'County Road' ². Follow the track to a small lane with a bungalow on the right.

Turn right past the bungalow and sheep sheds to an information board for Dinas. Cross a river bridge (over the Henog) passing Dinas Mill on your left.

Ahead is the lovely old church of Llanwrtyd ³. Turn right on the main road, cross the Irfon bridge and right

again, southwards. Go on to take the footpath signed at lay-by on the right. Follow the track with the river on your right (do not cross the bridge). Go through a kissing gate into Dol y Coed Park ⁴. You will pass the sites of the archery butts, the bowling green and the bandstand.

If you want to see the Sulphur Spring ⁵ turn left when you reach a way-marked post by a bridge. Pass between two buildings on a stony path and the well will be found behind the house on your right.

Retrace your steps to the path by the river and turn left, continuing to a wicket gate passing the old Dol y Coed house on your left. Turn right on the main road to the square and back to the start at the rail station.

Notes :

1. The smallest town in Britain!
2. The County Road was originally the main access to the small settlement of Llanwrtyd before the wells were discovered in 1732
3. The church is dedicated to St David and was the site of the original settlement.
4. Dol y coed House was built in 1535 and had, in its grounds, what the local



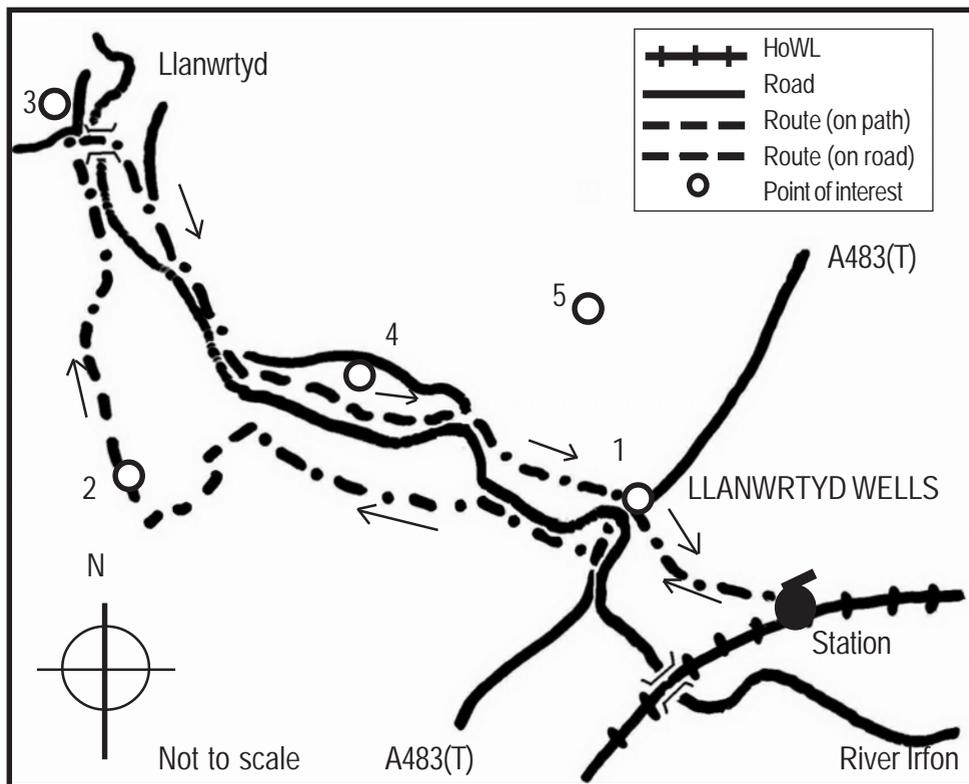
people referred to as ‘The Stinking Well’ or ‘Ffynonon Drewllyd’ which was said to have strange healing powers although most of them thought the waters to be ‘venomous’.

In 1732 the many complaints of a local vicar named Theophilus Evan were apparently cured when he drank and bathed daily in the waters. The news of the ‘cures’ became known and the story of Victoria and Llanwrtyd Wells spread and established a hundred years of prosperity. The ill, aged and infirm flocked to ‘take the waters’ through every conceivable orifice!!

Hundreds flocked from as far afield as London to take the cures and to be amused with concerts and games.

5. Analysis of the waters showed them to contain Calcium, Magnesium, Sodium, Soda, Magnesia, Lime and Silica and in 1897 a local landowner investigated the original well and employed diviners who located three other wells all containing different minerals.

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



News Along the Line

New Level Crossings

In an effort to improve the level of safety for both railway passengers and road users alike, Network Rail have been installing half barriers at six major or significant level crossings on the Heart of Wales Line this year. They are:

1. Brynmarlais Level Crossing

Just over a mile north of Ammanford Station and about three quarters of a mile south of Llandybie Station, this level crossing lies on McKays/Waunfarlais Road, a short distance west of its junction with the main Ammanford to Llandeilo road (A483).

2. Llandybie Station Level Crossing

The level crossing is situated where the line crosses Kings Road, Llandybie, immediately north of the platform at Llandybie Station.

3. Ffairfach Station Level Crossing

The level crossing is situated where the line crosses Heol Cennen, Ffairfach, on the Ammanford to Llandeilo road (A483), just south-west of Ffairfach Station.

4. Llangadog Station Level Crossing

Situated where the line crosses the A4069 Llangadog to Bryn-amman/Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen road, immediately north-east of the platform at Llangadog Station.

5. Dolau Station Level Crossing

The level crossing is situated at a point where the line crosses the minor road from Dolau to Llanddewi immediately north-east of the platform at Dolau Station.

6. Bucknell Station Level Crossing

The crossing is situated at a point where the line crosses the Bucknell to Long Meadowend, Craven Arms road (B4367) immediately north-east of the platform at Bucknell Station.

At the time of going to press the commissioning of the half barriers at Bucknell, Dolau and Brynmarlais are scheduled to take place on the nights of 28th/29th April, 29th/30th April and 1st/2nd May respectively.

The new half barriers are intended to improve safety for both rail and road users. The level crossings at Dolau and Bucknell have been open crossings protected by red and amber flashing lights since November 1975 and February 1978 respectively when the level crossing gates and controlling signal boxes at each location were abolished. It is believed that Brynmarlais Level Crossing was converted to a similar open crossing between 1971 and 1977, having previously been equipped with miniature red /green lights following the abolition of level crossing gates there in about 1967.

Since the changes introduced at these crossings in the 1970s, road traffic has more than doubled. At Bucknell Station there have been many instances in past years of motorists and pedestrians failing to stop at the red lights protecting the open crossing because they believed that they could 'outrun' approaching trains which were travelling albeit at a low speed. These potentially dangerous practices resulted in the introduction of closed circuit TV cameras at that location several years ago. At Dolau Station Level Crossing too unsafe practices by some road users have been noted over the years.

George Scarfe

Winter Interruptions

The particularly stormy winter this year has resulted in a number of interruptions to services on the HoWL. These disruptions were



shire Hills! They provide easy access for walking, shopping, sight-seeing, pub lunches, picnics and more and you can hop on and off along the route.

You can visit the Shropshire Hills Shuttles website for full timetables, ticket prices and for ideas of places to visit and walks along the route :

www.travelshropshire.co.uk/bus/shuttle-buses.

Flooding between Llangynllo and Knighton on HoWL.

[Photo © Hywel Jones]

caused at different times by flooding along the northern and southern sections, fallen trees, and leaves - especially on the line north of Llandovery - as well as some train failures.

Shropshire Hills Shuttles are back!

The new Shropshire Hills Shuttles season started on 19th April 2014.

The shuttles run every weekend and Bank Holiday Monday until 28th September 2014.

There are two routes:

Castle Connect (Ludlow-Knighton-Clun-Bishop's Castle)

Long Mynd and Stiperstones (Church Stretton-Bridges-Stiperstones-Pontesbury)

The shuttle buses are a great way to explore the Shrop-

Station Improvements

Several stations along the HoWL have benefitted from improvements to approaches, lighting, etc in recent months. Amongst these are Cyngordy and Llandeilo (see photo).



Llandeilo station approach and car park.

[Photo © Gill Wright]



Views
Explor
2014,
Wales
[For d

STEAMING ALONG THE HEART OF WALES LINE

of the Central Wales
er Charter Train on 5th April
and the returning Heart of
s a week later.

[Details see page 16]



STEAMING ALONG THE HEART OF WALES LINE

[see pages 14-15]

1. **The Railway Touring Company's 'Central Wales Explorer' railtour** from Manchester Victoria to Cardiff on 5th April 2014 was booked to operate double – headed with ex LMS 4-6-0 'Black 5s' 45407 and 44871. Unfortunately 45407 was declared a failure at Warrington and 44871 carried on alone (now 126 mins late) to Crewe where West Coast Railways diesel 47245 was added to act as banker for the 12 coach train on the Heart of Wales Line. With legendary driver Ray Churchill at the controls and now only 70 minutes late 44871 storms away from the Knighton water stop and starts the climb to Llangunllo. [Photo © Stephen Miles]
2. **44871 reaches Llanwrtyd Wells**, where it passed the waiting 15.03 service to Shrewsbury. [Photo © Mrs Jean Bates]. Following excellent work from the locomotive crew and curtailed water stops at Knighton and Llandrindod the train was now pretty much back on time following the earlier locomotive failure at Warrington.
- 3/4. **The Railway Touring Company's 'The Heart of Wales'** was effectively the return steam service a week later with No. 44871 being again joined by 45407 ('The Lancashire Fusillier' now fully restored to action). Here the charter train stops at Llandeilo before tackling the hillier central part of the HoWL. [Photos © Peter Berry]
5. **Heart of Wales Line Grandeur**. In superb Central Wales scenery ex LMS Black 5s 44871 and 45407 cross Cynghordy viaduct and settle in for the 1 in 60 climb to Sugar Loaf summit heading the Railway Touring Company's 1Z89 0541 Slough to Llandrindod Wells 'The Heart of Wales' on 12th April 2014. [Photo © Stephen Miles]

Chronicles of Llangadog Station - Volume 10

We have our serious hat on for this shorter than usual missive and the first of our photos shows the main reason for our present concern. This awful concrete and wire fence surrounds our little nature reserve of unkempt grass which is strimmed once a year by Arriva at about this time along with all the other bushes and shrubs we endeavour to plant in the hope that we can improve the general look of the place. We have met with no real response from Arriva over the winter period and just hope that we can talk to someone from Arriva at the forthcoming Adopters/Arriva meeting. We



feel that, to date, trying to deal with Arriva is similar to dealing with any other large corporate organisation inasmuch as you are butting your head against a huge pile of non absorbent cotton wool with no sensible

response. Which leads us to the question of just who do we deal with anyway as we tried Geraint Morgan with no positive results so may be we should try Stewart Keay who has been appointed Stations Manager for our end of the line.

We would dearly love to get out our little motor strimmer and cut the grass ourselves but apparently we have been banned from so doing and we now have to depend on someone else to do the job for us. Such is life and political expediency.

Our own solution to our little problem and which would minimise the adverse comments from the locals, and at minimal cost, would be to tear down the concrete posts and wire, and just cut the grass about every month or six weeks. Simple. If you think about it then there are two reasons for having a fence. The first is to keep things out. The second is to keep things in. Our fence does neither and is a total eyesore and waste of time.

We have a general meeting of Adopters and Arriva in May so perhaps we can have a discussion with Geraint Morgan/Stewart Keay then and formulate a comprehensive plan of action — such as a pair of wire cutters and the loan of a JCB for half an hour.



Flowers at Llangadog

[Photo © Peter Berry]



On a less serious note we also show in the second photo some small flower planting tubs which were knocked up from rough sawn tantalised timber obtained from Ken Ratcliffe in Llandovery. These are about 14" square and are ideal for domestic use but probably too easily purloined for platform use. However, it shows just what can be done for about a fiver each — these are about £20 in the garden centres. Our platform planting tubs are much larger and need a whole rugby team to lift them, but even so the cost for these works out a very reasonable £20.

We are also well on the way to completing the replacement of the two large planting boxes adjacent to the station shelter. These

were deteriorating quickly and thanks to a kindly donation from Arriva we were able to purchase sufficient timber (and pressure treated this time round) to fabricate the replacements. We are mulling over just what sort of grand ceremony to have on the big replacement day and which celebrity to cut the ribbon — maybe the next mayor of Llandovery?

Eileen Mainwaring & Dennis Harrison

Post Bag



A Fifth Train?

Studying the National Rail timetable recently, as you do, I wondered whether it might be possible to create our much sought after “fifth train” by simply “borrowing” a Carmarthen to Manchester train. For instance, the 11.03 ex-Carmarthen, due into Manchester Piccadilly at 16.15 could run via the HoWL and still arrive at Shrewsbury at a similar time. If the existing HoWL trains maintained the current timetable then a slightly earlier departure from Carmarthen would be necessary in order to make use of the newly restored passing loop at Llandeilo. Perhaps the new train could call at only principal stations thereby decreasing the overall time between Llanelli and Craven Arms. Obviously, I am suggesting a train that doesn’t call at Swansea and would miss the intermediate stops between Llanelli and Shrewsbury via Cardiff. But these lines are already generously served by existing services. Similarly the 15.30 ex-

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 editing.

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

Peter Berry



Manchester Piccadilly could be routed via the HoWL arriving at Llanelli at 20.28. My point is that we could gain an extra train by seeing the HoWL as the through route it once was and perhaps fulfil the dreams of the long abandoned Manchester and Milford railway!

SR

Garth Station (email to David Edwards)

We are starting to put together an archive of Garth Village and would like any information you may be able to provide regarding the station.

We know that the station was considerably larger years ago, do you have any photographs or postcards of it please, we would be happy to copy them and return them to you. Many thanks for your assistance.

Jan Williams Bizsupport1@aol.com

HoWL Journeys

My friend Steve and I have been “bagging” all the railway lines of Wales and the South West of England. One winter’s day we headed off to Builth Road, my nearest station, to tackle the lines of West Wales. Catching the first train south we got as far as Gowerton before alighting for a brief pause until our Milford Haven bound Corradia (Class 175) unit arrived. We stayed with that train until we eventually arrived at the Pembrokeshire port. After a full five minutes there we travelled back as far as Whitland to await our next train which took us to Fishguard Harbour. This was a particularly interesting line and one which could be much better utilised if plans to reopen Goodwick station materialise. After fully 15 minutes by the quayside we left, climbing steeply to the summit before going east as far as Carmarthen. Here we met our train to Pembroke Dock. We ended up sitting next to a couple who were travelling to the Dock specifically to buy

drugs and didn't seem too worried to let the carriage know about it!. After another brief sojourn besides the Haven, we were off again to Carmarthen but here it got tricky! We would arrive in Llanelli around 15 minutes after the last HoWL departed. However we would not be so easily defeated. We had arranged to jump in a taxi at Carmarthen which took us up the Tywi valley and left us at the totally benighted station of Ffairfach, on the outskirts of Llanelli [Llandeilo? - *Ed.*]. As we shivered in the dark, we heard the sound of the 153 chugging in from Llandybie. The train was bright, warm and welcoming and took us back to Builth with the knowledge that we had seen another slice of our beautiful country.

SR

3 Coaches!

This was the southbound 18.07 at Cilmeri (photographed adjacent to milepost board 39.5); destination Cardiff on the Sunday evening, 13th April 2014. Unfortunately I only saw seven passengers on board. I spoke to the delightful young lady who was boarding the train, she told me that she was meeting her friend on the train and had just received a text message to confirm it was bang on time. The station announcements worked fine as did the display boards.

The train I photographed comprised a Class 150 with a Class 153 at the rear. The departure was very slow even though all three power units were running and on-load.

David Rowe

[Photo ©
David Rowe]



Steam on the HoWL

The prospect of steam on the HoWL yesterday [5th April] was too good to miss so with a friend I ventured to the northern (hilly) part of the line where noise and smoke could be guaranteed! As you will probably know, following a failure of the leading Black 5 locomotive (45407) at Warrington, the train continued with the remaining Black 5 (44871) to Crewe where a West Coast Railways Class 47 (47245) was added to the rear of the train to act as a banker on the steep gradients that lay ahead - the most severe being the the 1 in 60 climb from near Knighton to Llangunllo and the 1 in 70/80 climb from Llanwrtyd Wells to Sugar Loaf. In steam days a single Black 5 was allowed a trailing load of 5/6 coaches and so would not have managed the 12 coaches of the excursion on its own.

Here's hoping 45407 will be repaired in time for next Saturday's northbound trip over the line.

Stephen Miles

[*Editor* : This is only part of Stephen's e-mail. The rest, including photos has been used in compiling the feature on pages 14-16. As readers will know 45407 was indeed repaired in time.]

Great News From the Heart of Wales Line Forum

SUCCESS AT LAST!

For years I have been writing this column and making reference to the work we have been doing to seek better use of our line. Cost benefit analyses, lobbying of AMs and MPs, on-train surveys, bidding for funds to be used on external consultancy.....at times we have thought the process would never end. Or at least, that we would never achieve anything positive.

But we have! Mrs Edwina Hart, Welsh Government Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, has announced that as from May 2015 an enhanced service will be run on the line (and also on the Cambrian route). The Forum is very grateful to her, and to the Welsh Government officials who have provided us with support in making the case.

Indeed, and without wanting to sound like an award winner at a BAFTA ceremony, there are very many people who have supported us over the years – you know who you are, and thanks! The process is by no means totally ended, however (see below) so please stick with us.

The improved service will run on a three year trial basis up to 2018, when the new rail franchise is due to start. As well as providing the extra money needed for more trains, Mrs Hart has provided resources for the Forum to carry out work on ‘local management’ of the line.

Our success is even more gratifying when seen in the context of very tight budget settlements. We had to provide the Minister with arguments that would satisfy her that improving the service would help in the economic regeneration of the area served.

How was it done?

When previous improvement proposals had been considered, the cost of providing extra rolling stock was the main prohibitive factor. The solution was provided by Arriva Trains Wales, who juggled their fleet to make better use of the existing rolling stock resource allocated to the line, to devise a more useful timetable. While no more trains were needed, there are extra, more useful ‘journey opportunities’.

Details of the new timetable are still being agreed and validated with Network Rail. We’ll provide the actual timetable in a future newsletter: for now the key features of the May 2015 timetable are:

- 5 train services in each direction Mon- Fri except for the middle section of the route (Llandovery – Llandrindod) which retains four services
- A more usable timetable with at least two trains in each direction suitable for day trips
- Three of the five trains will work through to and from Crewe, to improve onward connections

— A commuter service into both Shrewsbury and Swansea in both morning and evening peaks.

— Journey times will remain the same as now.

What next?

Clearly, the new service does not meet everyone's needs: there is a limit to the service that two trains can provide. They are all that can currently be afforded for now, and extra staff will be needed for the new timetable.

For the future, the overall frequency of trains still needs to be improved, the last train from each end of the route will still be too early, and there are many other ways in which we want to see better use made of the line, but at least we have been successful in making a start on improvements.

The funding made available for work on 'local management' is intended to enable us to commission further work on the following topics, and for the results to feed in to the specification for the 2018 Invitation to Tender for those bidding for the franchise:

— whether some form of local management - a 'community business unit' on the line might increase value for money in providing additional services. The aim would be to reduce the net cost to the taxpayer, subject to the generation of additional passenger income;

— the potential for such a company to establish a simple operating base on the route, from which Welsh Government

funded rolling stock would be used to operate a more frequent service;

— work with Network Rail on the reduction of end to end journey times on the route and on other aspects of the management of the line including :

— methods of securing improvements in vegetation clearance to better exploit the lineside scenery along the route

— the use of existing and new station buildings as community and business 'hubs' and gateways to the area for visitors.

We will need your help

It is very important that the new service is well publicised and used. The Forum has only limited resources and we'll need all the help we can get in passing the word around about the new service.

We'll certainly make as much use as we can of social media - see elsewhere in this newsletter (pp. 7-8). But if you have ideas and opportunities to help spread the word then don't hold back. We're already starting to plan for the launch next May and would love to hear from you.

David Edwards

E-Mail Addresses

If you have recently advised HoWLTA of your e-mail address - very many thanks. If not, please let us know now. It's 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 22). Alternatively please write to HoWLTA, c/o Llandoverly Railway Station, Llandoverly SA20 0BG. Rest assured we will not pass your e-mail address on to anyone else.

Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association — HoWLTA

Officials

President	Professor Stuart Cole CBE	
Vice-Presidents	Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Lord Berkeley of Knighton
	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	Jonathan Edwards MP
	Rebecca Evans AM	Nia Griffith MP
	Mike Hedges AM	Julie James AM
	Sian James MP	Daniel Kawczynski MP
	Eluned Morgan MEP	William Powell AM
	Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM	Simon Thomas AM
	Joyce Watson AM	Kirsty Williams AM
	Roger Williams MP	

Committee Members

Chairman :	Gill Wright, Cyngordy (01550-750261; gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com)
Secretary :	Hazel Touch, Cyngordy (01550-750257; hazel51cyng@yahoo.co.uk) Nigel Bird (nigelbird.books@virgin.net)
Treasurer :	Ray Trend (rtrend@btinternet.com)
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; roger@cambro-norman.com) Len Elliot, Beulah (maesywawr@btopenworld.com) Gwyn Irvine, Llandybie (moira.hamm@btinternet.com) Kevin Knell, Llandrindod Wells (kcknell53@talktalk.net)

Address for Correspondence :

HoWLTA, Llandoverly Station, Llandoverly SA20 0BG

HoWLTA is affiliated to Railfuture and Better Transport

Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 33rd AGM of HoWLTA will be held on Saturday September 20th 2014 at **the Belle Vue Hotel**, Llanwrtyd Wells, starting at 11.30.

The Constitution states that the entire Committee, excluding the President and Vice-Presidents, shall retire and seek re-election at each AGM. Any member wishing to stand for election to the Committee must give at least 14 days notice in advance of the AGM in writing to the Secretary. However, this aspect of the arrangements has been delegated to the Minutes Secretary (see below), who will be pleased to receive nominations either by letter or e.mail. It may be helpful to any member thinking of seeking election to the Committee to know that at present Committee meetings are held quarterly (a reduction from previous arrangements, to take account of the fact that a lot of business these days is done electronically between meetings). They are normally held in Llangammarch Wells to suit train times as far as possible and (inclusive of a lunch break) last from 11.30 to 15.00.

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

In accordance with section 3 (b) of the Constitution, the Committee gives notice that it intends to propose to the AGM that the current membership rates should be increased with effect from March 1st 2015, to eight pounds per annum for individual members, ten pounds for families and twelve pounds for corporate membership.

Mike Watson
Minutes Secretary
99 Ridgeway, Killay
Swansea
SA2 7AP
alunwatson@hotmail.com

A Word from the Chairman

Gardens have been a prominent feature recently with the very successful gathering of representatives of Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail with Station Adopters in Llanwrtyd (see photo). The idea of working more together was the main outcome of the meeting and work is in progress to create groups that can collaborate from time to time as the need arises. In addition, on these days, ATW could supply extra help too.

It was apparent that our discussions were echoed at the Adopters' Conferences hosted by Arriva. I had the opportunity to do a short presentation to those at the Shrewsbury venue and David Edwards did same in Swansea. A further development to this end is a Facebook site available only to those interested in enhancing the stations. Email addresses have to be sent to Geraint Morgan (geraint.morgan@arrivatw.co.uk) in order to be included and will make communication amongst station adopters so much easier. I must stress that this is not an open site for loads of so called 'friends'. It is just for us to keep in touch with each other and know a little bit more about who is at the next station up the line so to speak.

Now that the work at Llandeilo and Cynghordy stations has been more or less completed, the challenge of making them something special begins. I visited Llandeilo with Stations Manager, Stewart Keay, and it was agreed that ATW needed to have a blitz on the station platform; getting rid of the weeds and painting the lamp posts were the most obvious, their poor neglected condition being so apparent now that the work has been done to the car park and approach road. Cynghordy is a different story. Everything is new – a smooth surface from road to platform with space to park cars; lights - the timing is not right yet but they work. We had a quick look at the meter to see how



[Photo © Gill Wright]

much electricity had been used and it was almost nothing because the lights are LED. More people who live in the village seem to be making use of the station to catch the train. No longer are they intimidated by the unmade, neglected, overgrown state it had previously. Of course, now we have a large blank canvas and we have to take the opportunity to turn the place into an exemplar for low maintenance station gardening. Lessons learnt here can be retold over the country in different ways, not least the idea of working more together.

As a result of our 'help' letter with the last newsletter, I am pleased to say that we now have two new officers of the association to fill the posts of Treasurer, Ray Trend, and Membership Secretary, Nigel Bird. There will now be a period of transition to learn the ropes so that everything is in place by the AGM in September. I now feel much happier that progress is being made in what is bound to be a time of upheaval for the Association. Thank you to all of you who answered our appeal towards the cost of the trackside signs and towards which you donated so generously – some of you extremely so. Inroads have been made into the total required, but we still have a way to go to reach our target nonetheless – so we will be pleased to continue to receive any further donations.

See you on the train.

Gill Wright

News from the Association

Membership Report

The new year for HoWLTA members beginning 1st March has been very positive with 745 paid up members so far.

200 Club

The 200 club for the year 2014-2014 has sold 271 tickets so far. Recent winners are listed below :

November 2013

364	J P Hughes, Haywards Heath	£20
198	Mr Hartland, Ammanford	£15
029	T Elliott, East Horsley ...	£10
-	A N Other ...	£10
-	A N Other ...	£10

December 2013

152	Mr J Horrocks, London ...	£20
092	S Blyton, Ludlow ...	£15
351	D Trigg, Fenton ...	£10
066	A G Power, Chesham ...	£10
105	Mrs Adams, Port Talbot ...	£10

January 2014

001	G Atherton, Gower ...	£20
309	G B Scarfe, Llandrindod Wells	£15
161	A Deakins, Wellington ...	£10
356	J Roberts, Wanstrow ...	£10
359	A Birdwood, Llanwrda ...	£10

February 2014 (Annual Big 200 Club Draw)

066	A G Power, Chesham ...	£100
144	D T Davies, Ammanford	£50
227	J Anderson, Llanelli ...	£25
157	L R Teague, Redditch ...	£25
275	J R Wildsmith, Prestigne	£25

March 2014

067	Mr R Williams, Minehead	£20
215	Mr M W Broad, Solihull ...	£15
097	Mr G Blackburn, Isle of Wight	£10
160	J Woods, Norwich ...	£10
032	Mr P Joyce, Hay-on-Wye	£10

April 2014

300	Rev A Tweed, Llandrindod Wells	£20
240	D I Phillips, Ammanford	£15
104	Ms K Lomax, Kington ...	£10
184	Mr D Llewellyn, Neath ...	£10
178	Mrs W Shearman, Craven Arms	£10

Hazel Touch, Membership Secretary

Committee Meetings in 2014

Thursday, 10th July 2014

Saturday, 11th October 2014 (to be confirmed)

Committee meetings start at 11.30am at Cammarch Hotel, Llangamarch.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday, 20th September 2014. Starts 11.30am at Belle Vue Hotel, Llanwrtyd Wells.

Newsletter Stuffing Session

The next stuffing session (for Newsletter #129) will be on Thursday, 14th August 2014. This will start at about 11am (to suit the train arrival times) at The Level Crossing, near Llandovery Station. It takes about 2/3 hours and is a great chance for a chat!

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	<i>to be advised</i>
Builth Road	<i>to be advised</i>
Cilmeri	Ann & Stephen Frodsham
Garth	Josephine Lewis
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	_____*
Llanelli	_____*
Gowerton	_____*
Swansea	Felicity Cobley

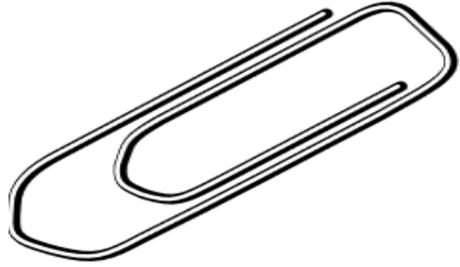
Anyone who would like to help at their local station is invited to contact Gill Wright (tel. 01550-750261; email : gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com)

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

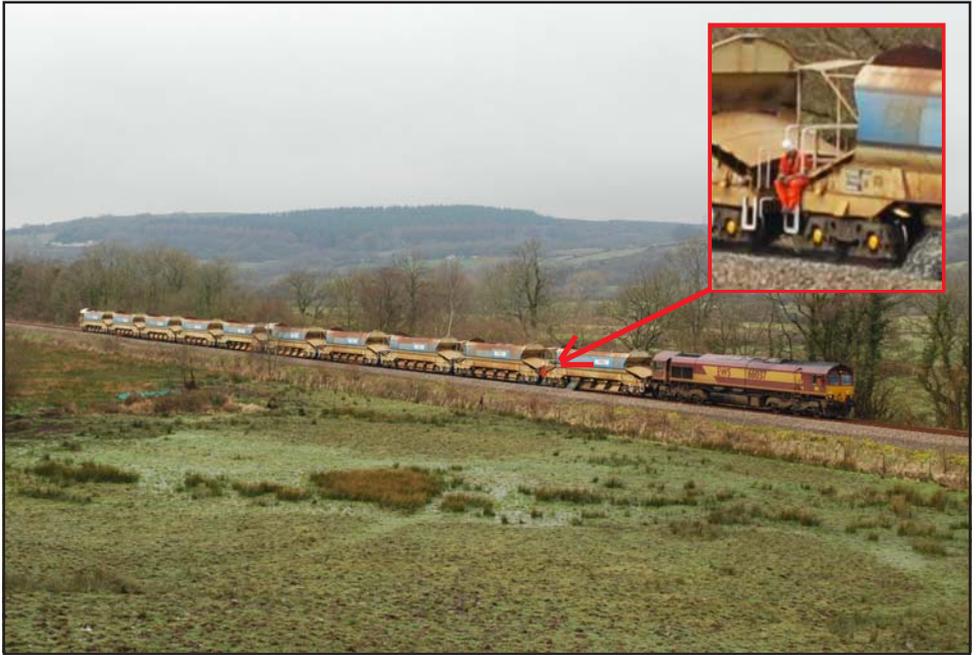
Future Copy Dates

Summer 2014 (pub. mid-August)	Copy by 28th July 2014
Autumn 2014 (pub. mid-November)	Copy by 27th October 2014
Winter 2015 (pub. mid-February)	Copy by 26th January 2015
Spring 2015 (pub. mid-May)	Copy by 27th April 2015



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.



Two rare visitors to our line (see page 2 for details)

[Photo © Stephen Miles]

