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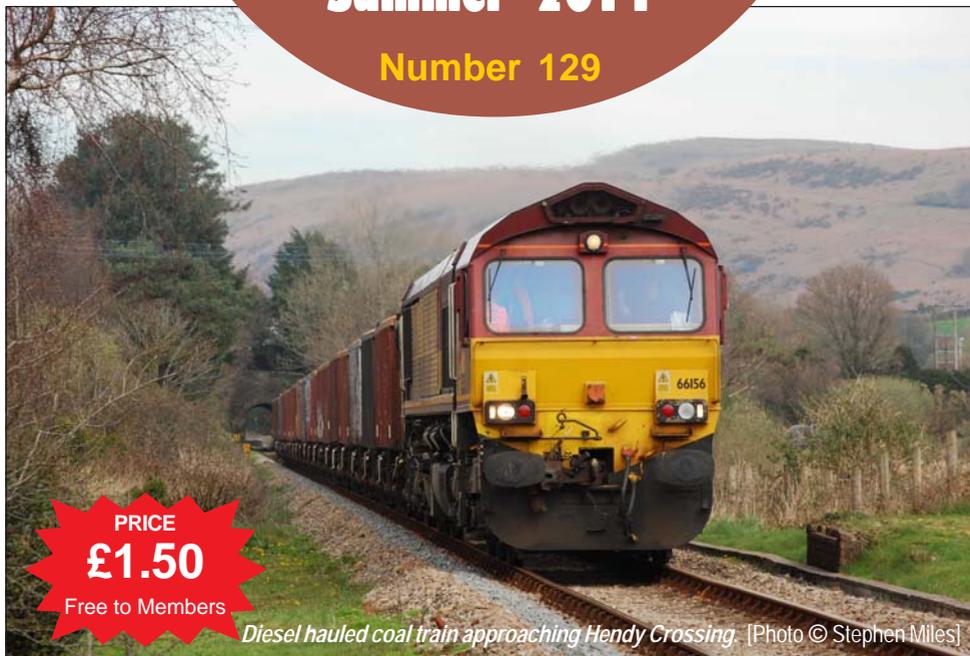
Heart of Wales Line
Travellers'
Association

HOWLTA

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2014

Number 129



In This Issue...

Inspecting the Sites for the Lineside Signs... .. 3	Memories of the HoWL ... 9
Station Gardens on the HoWL 5	Chronicles of Llangadog Station volume 11 10
Charter Train News 7	HoWL Walk No. 6 12
Llanelli Station Revamp? ... 8	Royal Welsh via the HoWL 13
	Bus Connections with HoWL 16
	The Chairman's Last Word 23





From the Editor's Desktop

As indicated in recent issues of this newsletter, we are entering a time of change, not only for our

line, but for our Association as well.

Extra services from next summer, an extension to the concessionary rail scheme this coming winter, recent and forthcoming station improvements and now new lineside signs, will, hopefully, prove to be just a start to even greater improvements along the line. These are all very encouraging.

At the same time HoWLTA will be getting new faces as key officers, including a new chairman, treasurer and membership secretary, as well as a new address (see pp. 24/25).

However, this does not mean HoWLTA will sit back and rest on its laurels. We have come a long way, and there is still

further to go, particularly in connection with the Forum's work described elsewhere by David Edwards (see p. 20), and the plans for station gardens (pp. 5/6). And, of course, there are still our longer term aims...

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

Please continue to support our line and our Association. ***Peter Berry***

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A 1/8th page advert like this costs just £25 for one issue (or £70 for a year).
See page 27 for full advertising rates.

COVER PICTURES

Diesel Locomotive Hauled Trains on the HoWL

Front cover : DBS 66156 is seen approaching Hendy Crossing south of Pontardulais on 1st April 2014 heading 6B05 13.55 Gwaun-cae-Gurwen—Onllwyn coal train. Photographed by Stephen Miles

Back cover :

Top - The diesel-hauled southbound Heart of Wales Scenic Rambler passed a northbound special at Llanwrtyd Wells on 7th May 2014. The special appeared to be a diesel-hauled Network Rail Track Inspection/Weedkiller Train. It must be many years since two loco hauled trains crossed there! Photograph by Mrs Jean Bates.

Bottom - Providing a spectacular view from the top of the Sugar Loaf, the Eastleigh to Llandrindod Wells twin diesel-hauled (DRS 37612 and 37611) Heart of Wales Meanderer climbs up towards the tunnel on 21st April 2014. Photographed by Stephen Miles.

Inspecting the Sites for the Lineside Signs

Just after 08.00 on 31st July, Mike Watson and I (on behalf of HoWLTA) set out from Llandrindod Wells to travel to Knighton to take part in an inspection of the 13 sites on the Line between Knighton and Llandovery where it is proposed to install Lineside Information Signs. Assembling in the forecourt of Knighton Station, we met Mr Ian Smyth of Network Rail who was leading a team of five Network Rail officers together with Mr Bill Plant of Dudley who will be manufacturing the signs.

We set off in three vehicles to the first site situated on a mile long straight stretch of the line ("The Whitterleys Straight") just north-west of Knighton. This is the point where southbound rail travellers cross from England into Wales. The site lies in the centre of the Teme Valley overlooked on the English (Shropshire) side by Weir Cottage, the former home of Sir John Hunt who led the Everest expedition in 1953. At this site, as at all the

others, the correct siting of signs would be crucial to ensure that train drivers' vision in relation to nearby level crossings or railway apparatus or other railway signs would not be impaired. We carried a prototype sign to the site, where on a flattish piece of land the sign was held upright on posts by Mr. Smyth and Mr. Plant, enabling the rest of us to ponder other considerations as well as the visibility issue, such as the angle at which the sign could be seen to best effect from passing trains.

From the picturesque Teme Valley, we drove along the equally attractive Heyope Valley to a farm crossing near the north portal of Llangynllo (Llangynllo) Tunnel. The land in the cutting on the approach to the tunnel was fairly rocky in nature but we managed to find a suitable site for a sign on the down side of the Line. Leaving this site we drove to the other end of the tunnel where again a suitable site for a sign was found. At the



The proposed lineside sign on the England/Wales border, with "supporters" Bill Plant (sign maker, left) and Ian Smyth (Network Rail's Infrastructure Maintenance Protection Co-ordinator, right). [Photo © Adrian Bennett]

same time we assessed the site for a sign at Llangunllo Summit, about 150 yards south of the southern portal of the tunnel.

From there we travelled back to Knucklas Viaduct. We were permitted to walk across this impressive castellated structure so that we could look at the embankments at close hand. Here two suitable sites for signs were found. As we left the viaduct heavy rain set in but by the time we reached the next site, Penybont Tunnel, about 18 miles by road, the rain had virtually stopped and the weather was dry for the rest of the day.

Unfortunately, plans had to be changed at short notice because just before we reached Penybont, there was a serious traffic collision which closed the A44 road at Greenfield Turn near Penybont Tunnel. We managed to reach the north portal of Penybont Tunnel where a suitable site for a sign was located but because road access to the south portal of the tunnel was difficult owing to the accident, we walked through the tunnel with torches and were then able to examine the land at the southern end. Again we were lucky to find a suitable location for a sign without much difficulty.

We broke off for a buffet lunch in the Permanent Way Manager's office in Llandrindod Wells and then resumed our travels, passing through Newbridge-on-Wye and Llanwrtyd Wells to reach Sugar Loaf Halt. Just south of the halt, we located Sugar Loaf Summit and, after deciding upon the best site for signs there, walked on for a short distance to the north portal of Sugar Loaf Tunnel. Here a suitable place for a sign was found close to the tunnel mouth. Unusually for such a remote and hilly area, Japanese knotweed had started to colonise the opposite bank, a problematic plant which Network Rail is doing its best to contain.

Retracing our steps, we then proceeded down a long uneven forestry track to reach the

south portal of Sugar Loaf Tunnel. Here we had no problem in locating a suitable site for a sign owing to the existence of a sizeable flat area of land close to a radio mast which was situated near the tunnel entrance.

The final task of the day was to examine the approaches to Cynghordy Viaduct, another superb example of Victorian engineering on the Line. At both ends of the viaduct, the ground falls away fairly sharply on each side of the track. However it again proved possible to find suitable sites for signs to be sited close to the northern and southern ends of the viaduct.

The results of this day's surveys will now be considered by the various departments of Network Rail and it is hoped that if there are no unforeseen problems the signs will be erected at the various locations along the Line during the next few months.

George Scarfe

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Station Gardens on the Heart of Wales Line

Introduction

Since our Association (HoWLTA) was established in 1981, we have promoted the adoption of stations by local people. Station action groups as at Dolau and Llanwrtyd, and gardening clubs as at Llandeilo took up the opportunity to provide attractive planting schemes. In many cases the work was done by an enthusiastic individual. However not all stations were looked after. HoWLTA has provided modest financial support to garden groups, on request.

Arriva Trains Wales, as part of their successful franchise bid, backed adoption of stations as a way of providing them with eyes and ears at their many unstaffed stations. This was originally limited to 'tick box' reporting of safety and maintenance issues, but the success of station garden schemes, achieving national public acknowledgement, led them to encourage such activities throughout their network. ATW's involvement is coordinated by Geraint Morgan from their Cardiff HQ. Geraint is far from deskbound, and can often be seen wielding a trowel or paintbrush and is a great source of advice and practical support.

Many stations have Network Rail (NR) owned areas which are not covered by the ATW lease. They nevertheless affect appearance and the traveller experience. NR has acknowledged the need for community involvement by establishing a licensing scheme. This enables volunteer work to be carried out on land to which public access is otherwise forbidden for safety reasons. Stations which have benefited from this include Bucknell, Dolau and Llandoverly.

Joining it all up – 120 miles of garden

Many other UK railway lines have stations that have been developed into individual oases of delight. Our plan is to go one step further! The vision is of the entire 120 mile route having 32 stations each providing a visitor attraction in its own right. Each station will also provide an attractive 'gateway' to its own community.

Where we are now

Currently nearly all 'our' stations have been adopted under Arriva's scheme (see p. 26). Without exception, adopters want to do more than simply report problems to Arriva, important though this is. They can see the benefit to their community of having an attractive station.

Whilst some stations have groups of supporters, in some cases the adopters are enthusiastic individuals. Sometimes they can be overwhelmed by the very size of the task. Or maybe their circumstances change and they can no longer continue. This can mean that very quickly all their good work disappears.



[Photo © Colin Price]

All photos used to illustrate this article were taken at Dolau on 29th July by Colin Price, a HoWLTA station volunteer who lives near Builth Wells.



[Photo © Colin Price]

2. Maintain regular contact with all adopters to ensure their needs are known early;
3. Carry out a gardens 'audit' of the stations so that we can anticipate the need for items such as planters and water supplies;
4. Agree and implement the 'clustering' concept;
5. Ensuring that there is no duplication of

To try to develop ways to manage this and create some sort of (loose) management process, earlier this year a successful and enthusiastic meeting was held in Llanwrtyd with adopters, Arriva staff and NR.

The first outcome from this was to look at the idea of 'clustering' nearby stations into groups. In this way they can help each other when required, if necessary additional help can be provided from from ATW's station maintenance crews, with occasional input from NR as needed.

In the longer run, this approach will also enable initiatives to take place such as competitions, plant sharing, and station-based events like the recent successful Dolau fund raiser (complete with a music group called the Dolau Mixture!)

Geraint Morgan, George Scarfe and Gill Wright are currently taking the 'grouping' idea forward and finding out what is wanted by those actually doing the work. The HoWLTA 'garden grant' scheme is also being reviewed so that it fits in with these other developments.

Next Steps

We are now working to

1. Establish a development plan for the next 12 months;

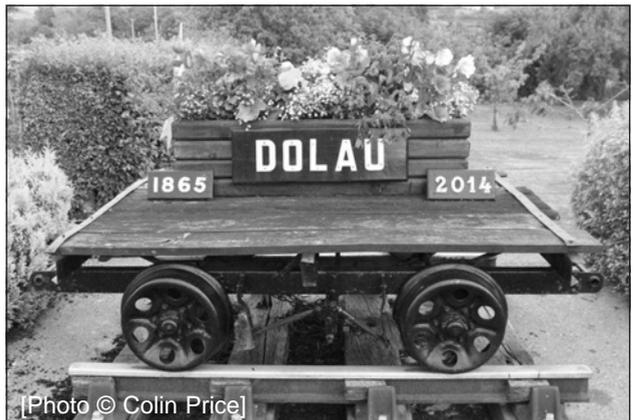
effort between ATW and HoWL;

6. Develop the use of Facebook, Twitter, U Tube and other social media to make sure that community group efforts are well publicised, to the benefit of the line.

A lot has recently happened at our stations – the approach to Cyngordy has been completely revamped, Llandeilo has a proper road surface and even a bus stop, there is a raised platform 'access hump' at Builth Road, with more to come elsewhere.

Enabling local people to work collaboratively with the rail industry and our local authorities brings benefits to all concerned. If you are able to play a part, we hope that this article will encourage you to join in!

Gill Wright & David Edwards



[Photo © Colin Price]

Charter Train News

A Reminder of the remaining Charters on HoWL in 2014

Saturday 16th August 2014

'The Heart of Wales Scenic Rambler'

Diesel hauled. Grantham - Shrewsbury - Llandrindod Wells [arr.11.25; dep. approx.11.45 - Swansea District Line - Newport - Shrewsbury - Grantham. *[Organised by Compass Tours by Rail of Liverpool].*

Saturday 6th September 2014

'The Heart of Wales Scenic Rambler'

Diesel hauled. Barrow-in-Furnes - Crewe - Shrewsbury - Llandrindod Wells [arr.11.25; dep.11.45] - Llandovery - Swansea District - Newport - Shrewsbury - Crewe - 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)

Double DRS Class 20 diesel locomotive hauled. Derby - Birmingham New Street - Newport - Swansea District Line - Llandovery - Llandrindod Wells [arr.14.10; dep.16.20] - Shrewsbury - Birmingham New Street - Derby. *[Organised by Pathfinder Tours of Inchbrook, Stroud, Glos.].*

[Editor : Only outline details are given here. Fuller details were given in earlier newsletters.]

Compiled from information provided by George Scarfe



The Heart of Wales Rambler

was hauled by a Class 66 diesel loco no. 66133 in DB Schenker livery, at Llandrindod Wells on 12th July 2014.

[Photo © Aeron Hughes]

The Heart of Wales being hauled up the Sugar Loaf by two LMS Black Fives, nos. 44871 and 45407 on 12th April 2014

[Photo © Stephen Miles]



Llanelli Station Revamp?

Nia Griffith, Llanelli's MP, has backed calls for the renovation of the town's railway station. As well as aiming to improve the image of Llanelli's station, the MP hopes to tidy up the Heart of Wales Line.

She aims to set up a group that will officially speak up for the station, linking in with Arriva Trains Wales and the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association.

Ms Griffith said because Bynea and Llanelli stations do not have groups speaking up for them they are missing out on help available for their enhancement.

She said Labour AM Keith Davies has been dealing with Carmarthenshire Council about getting funding for a complete revamp of the station in the long term and Cllr Deryk Cundy is looking for similar support for Bynea station.

An initial meeting to set up the group was held early in July at Paddock Street Hall.

[This item is based on a short article that appeared in the South Wales Evening Post on 10th July.]



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Memories of the HoWL

My First Journey North of Pontarddulais on the Heart of Wales Line

I was born and brought up in Pontarddulais. It was while I was attending Gowerton Grammar School that I decided to become a teacher.

In 1953 I applied to Trinity College Carmarthen beginning in September 1955. Once a place was offered and accepted I began the process of early call up to do my National Service as I wasn't 18 until November [there was no exemption for Training College Students].

Thus it was that on 20th August 1953 I stood on Pontarddulais station with my parents and nearly all my relatives, waiting for the 18.45 overnight mail train from Swansea to York to report to Catterick Camp to join the Royal Signals.

I had travelled on the HoWL many times but going *south* either to visit my grandparents in Dunvant or to spend a day on the beach by getting off at Swansea Bay station. I had never travelled north on this line, so I had no idea what sights I would see on the journey. The first part was in daylight and I can still remember the thrill as the train chugged its way up the gradient before entering the Sugar Loaf tunnel and the wonderment as the train crossed the Cynghorby and Knucklas viaducts. Shrewsbury and Crewe became a blur as it got darker. As the journey went on I couldn't sleep because I was apprehensive as to what lay ahead of me. After all, it the first time in my 17¾ years that I had been away from home - and it was the first time I'd been in England.

Eventually, at about 04.00 I reached York and had to catch a train to Richmond. There, along with other young men, I was shepherded into an army truck by a sergeant and soon arrived at our training squadron at Vimy Lines. As most of the early arrivals had travelled overnight from Scotland I found myself the only Welshman in a barrack of Scotsmen. And so my first day in the army began...but that's another story.

Since then I have travelled on the line many times. My mother joined my wife and I whilst holidaying in North Wales by travelling to Shrewsbury from Pontarddulais where we would meet her and drive her to wherever we were staying. Every time we visit relatives my wife and I try to fit in a trip on the line. We have even travelled on a Rail Fair special train from Paddington on a round trip which included the whole length of the HoWL - some of my relatives waited at Pontarddulais station to wave to us as we passed through. The highlight of that trip however, was being met at Llandrindod Wells by the Mayor!!!

Although it is over 60 years since I travelled on the HoWL to begin my National Service, it is a journey I shall never forget.

Hugh Garnsworthy
or 22910203
Signalman Garnsworthy C. H.

[Editor : We'd love to hear from other readers who have particular memories of the HoWL in times past that they would like to share.]

Chronicles of Llangadog Station

Volume 11

This has been a busy spring/summer for the two aged adopters at Llangadog as we beavered away demolishing the old flower boxes at the centre of the platform, and replacing the half rotten timbers with a couple of brand new home made ones, plus, I might add, a new seat linking the two. All of this in brand new tanalised timber which should last longer than the old and which was mostly funded by kind donations from Arriva and HoWLTA. We were in a bit of a pickle about the construction of the new boxes as we are of course banned from using power tools on the Arriva platform so we had to assemble them on the entrance road owned by NR using our power screwdriver and then drag them into position. These are heavy boxes and the operation taxed our efforts to the limit but success came after many stops to draw breath. The slats for the seat were then screwed into position using a non powered, hand operated, old fashioned, bog standard, No.2 pozidrive, dead reliable screwdriver.

The trellice work to the back which tries to hide the NR store shed still remains untouched and our next job will be to cover the old green stain (we have come to dislike forest green stain with some passion) with a light brown stain to match the seat and boxes. A variety of climbing plants are now installed and doing well

so we must get on and get this painting job done as quickly as possible.

We now await a directive from the management to paint the whole caboodle in that awful stomach churning Arriva blue colour but nothing has arrived in the inbox so far. But, we did have a directive from one of the Arriva managers that we should screw all our flower boxes securely to the platform in an attempt to safeguard their considerable (£50) investment in the enterprise. The poor chap had obviously not read the adopters rules and regulations manual which expressively forbids us from using power tools on Arriva property so this job remains undone. We show, with some pride I might add, two before and after pictures of the new arrangement.

Our little plot of waste ground still remains unloved, uncared for, and a total eyesore so our two aged adopters having failed in their mission to obtain any help in this direction have simply given up. However, and on a more positive note, in the last four years we have planted the hedge which borders the platform and which hides the awful concrete fence, and also planted a long row of trees parallel to this which will go some way to screen the platform from the madding crowds on the entrance road. These are doing well and we can do no more.

We now have new road barriers on our level crossing at the end of the platform which provide us with endless hours of entertainment while working hard on our little platform and which will surely provide a rich source of new thrills and adventures for the local boy racers trying to beat the train. We have also noted the wary and immaculate way our lady train drivers approach this new obstacle to progress, proceeding very slowly, horns going and peering a trifle anxiously up and down the road as they negotiate the crossing at one mph. We feel like giving them a standing ovation and a bunch of flowers.

The Horsetails are back on the line along with all the other weeds—a green jungle stretching the length of the platform plus a little bit more at either end and after observing a few more Central Wales stations adorned in a similar fashion we deduce that it (ie. the NR weedkilling machine) must be

switched off when passing all the CWL stations and other signs of human habitation with apparently no other method of keeping the weeds under control. The job may be a bit much for a little man from NR and a knapsack sprayer but the effect on passengers must be a bit fraught as uncared for permanent way is the first thing that catches the eye and we understand the reluctance of our fare paying friends to entrust themselves to what appears to be a semi derelict and moribund transportation system.

We did have cause the other day to meet relatives at Swansea station. They travelled from China in a highspeed 747 to Heathrow and then on a thirty five year old highspeed 125 from Paddington to Swansea which most definitely showed its lineage in it's dirty bent and battered profile and obnoxious emissions—how the First Great Western staff must pray for the sleek, silent, clean rolling stock enjoyed by those on the east coast main line.



*Eileen Mainwaring &
Dennis Harrison*

Heart of Wales Line Walk No 6



A Walk from Garth Rail Station to Llanwrtyd Wells station

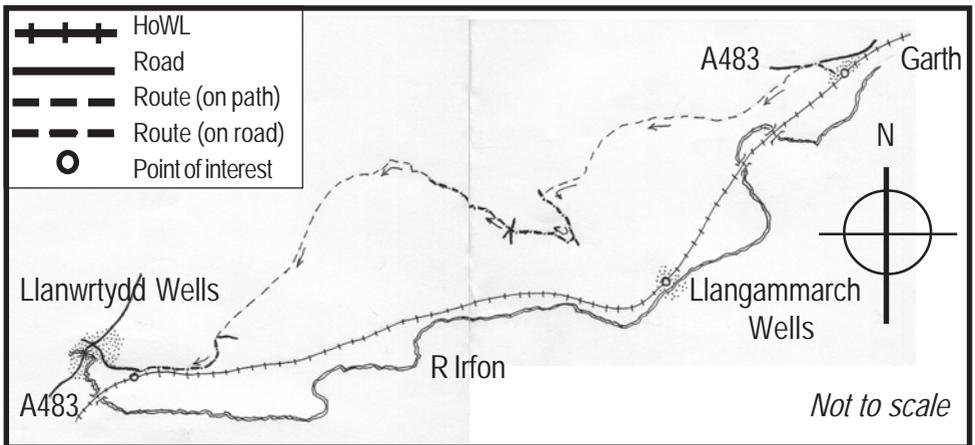
A linear walk of 8 miles (11 km). All walks are on public Rights of Way or on open access land. Explorer Maps sheets 188/187

At a leisurely pace and allowing for a picnic lunch this walk can be done easily between trains. It follows the route of the old road from Garth to Llanwrtyd and is along bridleways and fields. Its attraction lies in the views to the south and the lovely ancient bridle paths, so there are no footnotes.

Leave Garth station (GR954495) north to the village and main road. Turn left for 100 metres to a side road and take the signposted bridleway between the two roads (GR949496). The ridge is followed along the bridleway for two miles to the tarmac road (GR923483). Turn left along the road

and after 250 metres turn right at the fork (GR926478) for 250 metres to a junction of three roads (GR921479). One of these is the route of a Roman Road (you can see it stretching to your right at the junction) and two tracks at Cefn Glancamddwr. Cross the Roman Road and take the track (a white road on the map) North North West past the Farm Park (GR912482) and Prysiau-fawr to where the white lane bends right (GR911485). However you go straight on along a footpath. Follow the faint path, waymarked, which gradually bends round to go south west (from Map 188 to 187) for 2.6 km. You should see Llanwrtyd ahead of you down on the left. You join a road at a bend (GR891468). Go right and at the next fork left alongside the railway to Llanwrtydd Wells station (GR878468)

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



Royal Welsh via the HoWL

As in previous years an extra service in both directions was provided by Arriva Trains Wales on the HoWL for the duration of the Royal Welsh Show at Llandelwydd, from 21st to 24th July. These two photos from Arriva Trains Wales give some indication of the number of visitors to the show who took advantage of the glorious sunny conditions to travel there (and back again!) by train....



Passengers enjoying a refreshment break at Llandovery while awaiting the delayed north-bound working of the Royal Welsh Show special on Monday, 21st July.

The local station cafe and pub were reported as doing a roaring trade.

[Photo © Arriva Trains Wales]

Thursday, 24th July was the last day of the show and everyone seemed to be going home from nearby Builth International (aka Builth Wells).

[Photo © Arriva Trains Wales]





1

Everyday scenes on the HoWL. Can you identify them? (see p.16 for details).



3

4



2



Bus Connection between HoWL and Carmarthen

The 280 Morris Travel 3.45pm departure from Llandovery meets the 13.58hrs Heart of Wales Line (HoWL) departure from Shrewsbury (arrival time 16.55hrs) at Llandeilo station at 4.55pm. The 280 bus leaves the station at 5.03pm, allowing some margin for late arrival of HoWL train, also alighting (train) passengers with luggage.

Although this has been operative since 18th May 2014, Arriva Trains Wales conductors seem to be completely unaware of this bus integration service. Alighting train passengers can board the bus to

Carmarthen, thus saving a change of train at Llanelli. Llandeilo townsfolk as well as passengers from villages along the 280 bus route A40 corridor (eg Court Henry, Dryslwyn, Pontargothi and White Mill) can also benefit.

As well as informing Arriva Trains HoWL conductors of this connecting bus service it would be a good idea to announce on board the train as it approaches Llandeilo station that this bus facility exists for HoWL passengers wishing to continue their journey towards Carmarthen.

Hywel Jones

Everyday Scenes on the HoWL

(see pages 14-15)

1. **Pontarddulais I.** On 1 April 2014, 153323 forming the 13.15 Swansea – Shrewsbury service arrives at Pontarddulais having just passed through the 88yds tunnel and crossed the River Loughor in quick succession. The tunnel is the oldest in Wales having been opened in 1839. [Photo © Stephen Miles]
2. **Llanwrtyd Wells.** 150208 providing the 0.900 Shrewsbury - Cardiff Central train at Llanwrtydd Wells, where the refreshments trolley is being transferred from the northbound service being crossed here. [Photo © Derek Savage]
3. **Pontarddulais II.** On 8 April 2014 153362 emerges from Pontarddulais tunnel and crosses the Afon Llŵchwr as it approaches the station forming the 09.14 Swansea – Shrewsbury service. The old goods shed which dates from 1912 was closed to rail traffic in 1965 but still survives. It is still in fine condition and is now used as a garage workshop. [Photo © Stephen Miles]
4. **Llandovery.** The view south from Llandovery station on 6th March 2014, showing part of the passing loop and one of the few sidings left on the HoWL. The rather unsightly (and dangerous?) derelict buildings are all too obvious in the background. [Photo © Stephen Miles]

Post Bag



Garth Station Photo

You may have been inundated with replies about the photo of Garth station! But the photo appears in the Middleton Press, Country Railway Routes book, Craven Arms to Llandeilo, along with a 1904 map of the station.

The photo was taken by R Patterson on 15th June 1963

Mike Maltby, *Cilmeri*

[*Editor* : Thanks to Mike and others for supplying this missing information]

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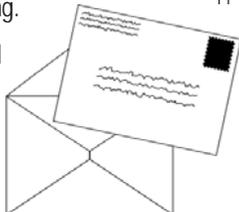
Just to let you know that the latest issue fell foul of Royal Mail's Revenue Protection Unit. It was not delivered to me last week but held pending payment of the short fall in postage 20p + £1 handling charge.

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



No doubt it was the thickness of the envelope that pushed it into the large letter category.

Whilst I am not bothered myself, if the Royal Mail has been consistent in its approach, a lot of people will have been inconvenienced.

Well done with your campaigning work.

Alan Head, *Member 1781*

{*Editor* : Very sorry to hear this. However the mailing was checked for weight and size before posting and the correct postage stamps affixed. Maybe this was over-zealousness on behalf of the Royal Mail. Did any other members suffer similarly?}

We live in interesting times!

Great news that our line is to get an improved train service, with times set to be far more use to passengers both for commuting and pleasure trips. Bad luck if you live between Llandoverly and Llandrindod though, I assume this section has been omitted for the new early morning train for good reason, shame it now splits the line in two. "SR's" letter in newsletter 128 makes an excellent suggestion about rerouteing the Carmarthen to Manchester (and return) train via our line, maybe as he says on a limited stop basis. The Settle & Carlisle line has one train a day that has limited stops, when I travelled on it in April it was well loaded despite not an all stations train. The extension of the free travel to all bus pass holders is great news too (especially as I now have one!) but I do share Peter Berry's worries about

overcrowding. I fear that new passengers will be put off if our service continues to be a single coach 153 packed to the gunnels. Our line needs much better stock *now*, more capacity and comfort are essential before problems occur, and the "new" passengers who use our line do so only once and utter to their friends "never again, I had to stand all the way"

Looking ahead to 2018, when the new franchise is let on our line it occurs to me that lots needs to be done before then by HoWLTA and its members to influence and enhance the future of our line.

I have been a member of Friends of The Settle Carlisle Line for many years and although they are a much bigger group much of what they have achieved can be used as a template, such as...

(a) Station enhancement and use of old buildings for community or even commercial use (holiday lets, businesses etc.)

(b) A *well advertised* regular steam hauled services (and also the odd diesel locomotive hauled service) say once a week in peak season, over the whole line, with connections from the national network, ample space at Shrewsbury and Swansea for the loco to be stabled when not in use.

(c) Freight, regular flows would make use of the lines capacity and cement the belief to many that the line really is useful and viable in the 21st Century.

(d) Better rolling stock, why do lines like ours (The Cambrian etc) not have

dedicated units with panoramic windows like in Switzerland, does anyone really want to sit by a blank wall on their journey along one of Briton's most scenic lines?

(e) HoWLTA needs to be much more pro active with the general public at large with talks, shows, etc. delivered to interested parties along or near the line (and further afield) anywhere that potential passengers may be found. We also need to have stewards on some trains just talking about the line and what you can see, selling promo items etc.

(f) More liaison with other line support groups - SARPA, Fishguard Trains, Traws Link Cymru* etc. - to enable a joint approach to The Welsh Government prior to 2018. [* A new campaign group, set up in late 2013 to push for the reopening of the Carmarthen-Aberystwyth Line (and Afon Wen to Bangor - see www.trawslinkcymru.org.uk or search Traws Link Cymru on Facebook]

(g) A blitz of timetables around homes in the catchment area just prior to May 2015.

I am sure there are many other ideas members will have that would help promote and secure our line for future generations.

Let's all do what we can.

Nigel Bird, Tregaron

[Editor : We'd be delighted to hear any other ideas from members.]

View from the Tracks

I have received my copy of Newsletter #128...If there is one sentence in the whole of it that should be highlighted, it is in the third paragraph of the article on page 6 : “The line was not obscured by trees then.....”

About half of the HoWL and of other similar lines (eg Glasgow to Oban) which are supposed to have a high scenic value are now lined with trees, which started life as hedges, and which in summer time shut out what otherwise would be far-reaching views across our glorious countryside (windfarms included!). Half the journeys are through a tunnel of trees.

Given that many passengers on these lines travel for the scenery and not (just) to get from one place to another - which they might do in their cars - these trees could have a negative effect on revenue as well as on enjoyment of the ride.

Can HoWLTA lean on Network Rail, through the train operating company,

to do something about the scourge of vegetation, which previously was kept at bay by sparks from the fire box?

C A Price, Bucknell

That 3-Car Unit...

I was a passenger on that day (see Post Bag, page 19, Newsletter #128), taking the single-car unit from Llandeilo to Shrewsbury. The driver was having great problems in maintaining brake vacuum all the way. At each stop he had to rev the engine to get the brakes ‘off’

At Knighton, for example, we were just slowly entering the station when the brakes went on hard just under the road bridge. After a lot of revving, we crawled into the platform.

I returned on the same unit at 14.05, but the trakes had not been fixed, so the two-car unit was attached to boost the vacuum for the return trip. So that is why we had the unusual event of a 3-car formation on ‘our’ line?

Brian Vince, Llangunnon, Carmarthen

...And Then a 4-Car Train?

Yep! A 4-car train on the HoWL. The photo (left) was taken of a northbound train at Llanwrda at midday on Sunday, 25th May. Does anyone know where it came from?

Wyn Mainwaring, Llangadog



The Heart of Wales Line Forum

An Update

What Is It?

The Forum is the line's Community Rail Partnership. Its members include Shropshire, Powys, Carmarthenshire and Swansea Councils, the rail industry, tourism bodies, and the 1,000-member Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association (HoWLTA).

What Are Its Aims?

To improve the current minimal and hard to use service on our line so it can make a significant contribution to the sustainable regeneration of the deprived communities it serves.

What Has It Been Doing?

From 2012 The Forum developed and, in 2013, submitted proposals to Welsh Government Minister Mrs Edwina Hart AM. They set out how and why improvements could be made, both short term and when the new 2018 Wales and Borders rail franchise is implemented. She agreed to further discussions with WG officials, and asked for more investigative work and a passenger survey into attitudes and needs. Having completed these, the Forum had further meetings with Mrs Hart.

In April 2014 Mrs Hart announced that Welsh Government will

—fund changes that will enable Arriva Trains Wales to deliver useful improved journey opportunities from May 2015, on a trial basis that will run to 2018;

—provide the Forum with funding, enabling it to carry out and commission further work on 'local management' – ie an alternative, locally led, way of managing and operating the Heart of Wales line in collaboration with its communities and - where possible - using local resources. If successful, the approach will have application elsewhere in the UK.

A report – with recommendations - is required by December 2014.

More recently Forum representatives met with the Department for Transport (DfT) Franchising Director.

It was clear from the meeting that the DfT is keen on the use of what they term 'Community Business Units' to manage and perhaps even operate lines like ours. The Forum work will help them to clarify how the concept might operate. Our findings will form part of the Franchise Prospectus - to be issued in the consultative and bidding process for the new franchise.

The Forum has produced and issued a commissioning brief, setting out the work to be done by selected external transport and rural regeneration specialists. It has also drawn up a project plan for its own community consultation process.

What Happens Next?

Consultants will be selected and will start work. The Forum will project-manage developments, engage with local authorities, communities, businesses, MPs, AMs, and other interested bodies. The results of the work will form the basis of the report that is to be delivered to Mrs Hart and the DfT by Christmas 2014. Arrangements are also being developed to launch the already agreed improved service in May 2015 – we need to make sure it is well used!.

In parallel with the above, other development projects such as our '**120 mile station garden**' initiative are being taken forward to enhance the route and engage with our communities.

David Edwards,

Forum Line Development Officer

(tel. 01554-820586)

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)

NEW ADDRESS for Correspondence :

HoWLTA, c/o The Crossing House, Dolau, Llandrindod Wells LD1 5TG

HoWLTA is affiliated to Railfuture and Better Transport

HEART OF WALES LINE TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2013

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Subscriptions	4,658.50	Diversified investments	40,000.00
200 Club	2,320.00	Newsletter inc envelopes & postage	5,794.44
Raffle	2,850.00	200 Club	980.00
Donations	495.50	Raffle	455.00
Sale of Goods	113.40	Fees, subs	61.00
Advertisements	40.00	Insurance	353.91
Royalties	32.58	Railcards	270.00
Total	10,509.98	Audit fee	145.00
		Promotion & marketing	1,713.15
		Lottery licence	20.00
		HOWL Forum	3,500.00
		Stationery	28.64
		Sales	64.19
		Grants to stations	100.00
		UP cheque	10.50
		AGM	157.40
		Travel expenses	45.60
		Postage	110.04
		Total	53,808.87
Excess of Expenditure over Income			43,298.89

[Editor : Please note that these accounts refer to the year 2012/13 and were not available at last year's AGM]

REMINDER

Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Members are reminded 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 (see HoWLTA Newsletter #128 p.23 for full notice).

Members wishing to propose a motion for discussion at the AGM must give at least 14 days notice in writing. Such motions should be sent to the Minutes Secretary (see p. 21)

Mike Watson, Minutes Secretary

The Last Word from the Chairman

Writing this feels like an epilogue – the last chapter as Chairman of this wonderful Association that has done so much over the years to improve things for the rail user. I am so lucky to have had the opportunity to meet some wonderful people – movers and shakers in the rail industry; politicians who on the whole are sympathetic to our desires even if they do not necessarily have the power to effect the change we desire, but most of all you. Though I have not of course met you all, as I glance through the membership lists year on year, as I open your post to us, I get the feeling that I am amongst friends and such a privilege does not fall to everybody.

HoWLTA meant that I was able to be a representative on the Committee of the Rail Users' Consultative Council, later the Rail Passenger Committee for Wales. The rail industry were summoned to attend and answer our questions and very revealing it could be too. Some of those people are my friends still.

The Heart of Wales Line Forum brought together the County Councils, Welsh Government, tourism and of course the railway industry. It is an international line so English and Welsh Councils sat side by side. We even became an exemplar for collaborative working across borders, and borders are something that passengers on railways want to be invisible.

As I sit here I try to recall all the things that have happened. It was British Rail in those early days. I remember for instance when we had no Sunday trains and then there was the Rambler which gave people the chance to have a day out somewhere in the middle of the Line. Now we have two each way –

not enough of course but first steps. There was the buffet on the train. A fantastic commitment by volunteers for a number of years. There were award winning station gardens which set us all an example to follow. Now we are pushing that all stations are attractive to the eye to give a destination experience to the whole line.

Then came privatisation. It was a bit of nightmare to start with not least because nobody knew whether the railway nationally was in good order or not. No real investment had been put into the system for 40 years and politicians had always thought that road transport would always win out. Even the franchise for Welsh rail services won by Arriva a dozen years ago was based on no growth. We know different now as the railways grow year on year. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Next was the need to do something with Llandoverly station building before it fell down. The Heart of Wales Line Development Company was created and the results are there for all to see. After six years of negotiations, planning, funding and building, it was officially opened by Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall on that lovely June day. There is a desire to revisit the idea of a canopy over the platform. Let's see what we can do.

Now we look forward. Immediately we have a moderately improved service – not enough of course. For the future we have to get a more frequent service with better rolling stock. We need more influence on the service provided which could be the local management that my colleague David Edwards has been working on for some time.

The door is ajar as consultants look at the possibilities.

For collaboration to work, there has to be an element of trust between all sides and I hope I have played a small part in developing that from our perspective. Round me on the committee I have had an enormous amount

of knowledge and commitment and that goes on whether I am there or not.

I bid you au revoir, but I am not fading away completely. I will still go on pushing for the improvements that we all look forward to. Life goes on. See you on the train!

Gill Wright

Introducing HoWLTA's New Membership Secretary

I have been a HoWLTA member for many years (member no. 1319) and thought it was about time I offered to help with the running of our group. I have been membership secretary and treasurer of several railway groups over the last 25+ years so have had some experience. I used to work in high street banking until 1985, then left to set up my own railway book selling business (mail order) which I am still doing.

This is the first time I have had to deal with such a large database of members so

please be gentle with me, as I am sure to make some errors as I get used to the system.

Can I ask one thing? Please check the address sheet that came with this newsletter (it's probably in the bin) is the address 100% correct? If not please advise me of the correct details, with your membership number, preferably by email to

nigelbird.books@virgin.net

or by post to

Nigel Bird (HoWLTA)
Bryn Hir, Llwynygroes
TREGARON
Ceredigion SY25 6PY



Nigel Bird

NEW ADDRESS

for Correspondence :

HoWLTA, c/o The Crossing House,
Dolau, Llandrindod Wells LD1 5TG

ADDRESS

for 2014 Raffle only :

HoWLTA, Llandovery Station,
Llandovery SA20 0BG

News from the Association

Membership Report

Nigel Bird has recently taken over the duties of Membership Secretary and has made a start on updating the membership database (see his request for help on the opposite page). There appears currently to be some 557 paid up memberships (allowing for the many joint members these represent 929 individuals). A further 200 subscriptions have yet to be renewed at the time of writing. The covering sheet rgar came with this newsletter indicates the state of the addressee's subscription.

200 Club

HoWLTA's Monthly Draw

So far this year 329 members have joined HoWLTA's monthly draw. Recent winners are listed below :

May 2014

176	Mrs Shaw, Knighton ...	... £20
007	Mr P Lodwick, Lampeter ...	... £15
147	Mr Stone, Church Stretton ...	... £10
225	Mr G S Blackledge, Brecon ...	... £10
195	Mr J A Evans, Hereford ...	... £10

June 2014

155	C G Salmon, Stoke-on-T ...	... £20
274	D Bates, Llanwrtyd Wells ...	... £15
249	Mrs I Davies, Llandovery ...	... £10
168	M Maltby, Cilmeri ...	... £10
293	Dr G D Housam, Llan'dod ...	... £10

July 2014

113	Mrs. M Price, Llan'dod ...	£20
263	Mrs.A J West, Llan'dod ...	£15
84	Mr. W A Francis, Llan'dod ...	£10
229	Mr. R C Griffiths-Swansea ...	£10
240	Mr. D Moisson, Builth Wells ...	£10

Congratulations to you all!

Nigel Bird, Membership Secretary

Remaining Meetings in 2014

Committee meeting

Saturday, 11th October 2014. Starts at 11.30am at Cammarch Hotel, Llangammarch.

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 #130) will be on Thursday, 13th November 2014. This starts at about 11am (to suit the train arrival times) at The Level Crossing, just opposite Llandovery Station.

Your help would be appreciated if you can spare about 2/3 hours - it's a great chance for a chat!

Please email the editor on psberry@tiscali.co.uk if you can help.

NEW ADDRESS

for Correspondence :

HoWLTA, c/o The Crossing House,
Dolau, Llandrindod Wells LD1 5TG

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

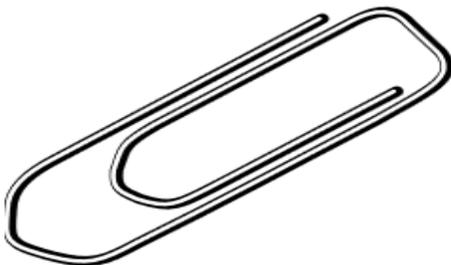
Shrewsbury	John Creswell
Church Stretton	Church Stretton Rail User Group
Craven Arms	Richard Watkins
Broome	Alan Belcher
Hopton Heath	Paula Tucker
Bucknell	Beryl Starr; Bucknell WI; Ray Davies
Knighton	Shauna Davies & Platform Pals
Knucklas	Steve Crump; Jim Penser
Llangunllo	_____*
Llanbister Road	_____*
Dolau	Steve Vipond; Dolau Action Group
Penybont	Sue Cooke
Llandrindod	_____*
Builth Road	Sara Poulson
Cilmeri	Ann & Stephen Frodsham
Garth	_____*
Llangammarch	Ron Birchell - Llangammarch Community Council
Llanwrtyd	John Price; Ainsley Jones; Station Action Group
Sugar Loaf	Peter & Margaret Joyce
Cynghordy	Gill Wright
Llandoverly	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	_____*
Llangennech	Llangennech Community Council; David Edwards
Bynea	_____*
Llanelli	_____*
Gowerton	_____*
Swansea	Felicity Cobley

At the time of going to press there are vacancies at those stations marked * above. HoWLTA 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

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
Summer 2015 (pub. mid-August)	Copy by 27th July 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 loco-hauled trains pass at Llanwrtyd Wells (see p.2).

[Photo © Mrs Jean Bates]



Diesel-hauled charter train seen from the Sugar Loaf (see p.2).

[Photo © Stephen Miles]