



Network Rail Test Train

Two photos from Tuesday 27th January of the Network Rail Test Train that ran from Llandrindod to Llanelli and back. It departed from Llandrindod on Wednesday 28th as the 0805 to Longsight Carriage Maintenance Depot but appears to have developed a fault at Knighton where it stood for nearly a hour and a half finally departing 75 mins late. Perhaps one of your 'northern correspondent' has the story?

[Photos © Stephen Miles]



DRS 37605 (with DRS 37608 on the rear) growls its way into Llandeilo heading the return working of Network Rail's 0745 Llandrindod Wells-Llanelli-Llandrindod Wells Test Train.

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Cymdeithas Teithwyr
Rheilffordd Canol
Cymru

Heart of Wales Line
Travellers'
Association

HoWLTA

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2015

Number 132

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Free to Members

The Pontarddulais 'Hump'
[Photo © Stephen Miles]

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From the Editor's Desktop

As I implied in the last issue this is an important time for the HoWL. Not only is a new timetable about to be initiated,

with welcome extra services (p.9), but other, as yet modest, improvements are being carried out along the line, and perhaps more significant ones may be on offer for the future (p.19). With continuing determination we could be heading for a brighter future for our line.

At the same time, we are passing through a period of anniversaries of significant events in the line's past.

It's now 50 years since the closure of the southern end of what was then the Central Wales line between Pontarddulais Junction and Swansea Victoria (see pp.13-15). Indeed there

FRONT COVER PICTURE

On 6th March 2015 the 0900 Shrewsbury – Cardiff Central formed by 150253 slows to a stop at the new raised section of platform at Pontarddulais. As the 'hump' is not long enough to accommodate the two doors of a 153, let alone the four doors of a 150, new 'stop boards' have been erected for both up and down trains to inform the driver where to stop so that the relevant doors are adjacent to the raised section. The up (north-bound) 'stop boards' can be seen to the left of the unit. (see also pages 17-18)
Photographed by Stephen Miles

have been repeated attempts to close the rest of the line (notably in 1963 and 1987), but these have been successfully resisted.

In fact this year marks the 150th anniversary of the official opening of the line between Knighton and Llandrindod Wells. The official opening, on Tuesday 10th October 1865, was celebrated by the running of a special train containing the company's directors and other dignitaries from Shrewsbury to Llandrindod followed by a banquet held in Llandrindod. This anniversary is to be marked by two events being planned to take place on Saturday 29th August (during the Llandrindod Wells Victorian Festival Week) and on Saturday 10th October (the actual anniversary date). Full details of these events will appear in the August Newsletter.

So, perhaps we can be forgiven for indulging in a little nostalgia by remembering how the line was in the past (see pp.10-15).

[Continued at foot of p.3]

HoWLTA CONTACT DETAILS

The address for general correspondence and all HoWLTA membership matters is

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

Letters relating to the HoWLTA Newsletter and all items for possible inclusion on the Post Bag pages or elsewhere should either be posted to

The Editor, Twin Oaks, Castle Close, Llangadog SA19 9AH

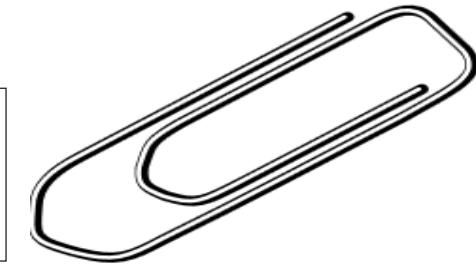
or emailed to psberry@tiscali.co.uk

Contact details for other officers and committee members are given on p. 22

Clippings

Please Note

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



HoWLTA Subscription Rates

Individual membership	...	£8	Overseas membership	...	£15
Family membership	...	£10	Corporate membership	...	£12

The above rates apply from 1st March 2015. Renewal date is 1st March each year.
50% discount if joining after 1st September

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HoWLTA NEWSLETTER Future Copy Dates

Summer 2015 (pub. mid-August)	Copy by 27th July 2015
Autumn 2015 (pub. mid-November)	Copy by 26th October 2015
Winter 2016 (pub. mid-February)	Copy by 25th January 2016
Spring 2016 (pub. mid-May)	Copy by 25th April 2016



Important Notice

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

Line Representatives and Station Adopters

Shrewsbury
Church Stretton
Craven Arms
Broome
Hopton Heath
Bucknell
Knighton
Knucklas
Llangynllo
Llanbister Road
Dolau
Penybont
Llandrindod
Builth Road
Cilmeri
Garth
Llangammarch
Llanwrtyd Wells
Sugar Loaf
Cynghordy
Llandovery
Llanwrda
Llangadog
Llandeilo
Ffairfach
Llandybie
Ammanford
Pantyffynnon
Pontarddulais
Llangennech
Bynea
Llanelli
Gowerton
Swansea

John Creswell
Church Stretton Rail User Group
Richard Watkins
Alan Belcher
Paula Tucker
Beryl Starr; Bucknell WI; Ray Davies
Shauna Davies & Platform Pals
Steve Crump; Jim Penser
Anne Deakins; George Scarfe (unofficial adopters)
John & Lynda Morris
Steve Vipond; Dolau Action Group
Sue & Tony Cooke
Llandrindod Wells (Cefnllyss) CP School
Sara Poulsom
Ann & Stephen Frodsham
Joasephine Lewis; Janet Williams
Ron Birchell; Llangammarch Community Council
John Price; Ainsley Jones; Station Action Group
Peter & Margaret Joyce
Gill Wright
Llandovery Town Council; Friends of Llandovery Station
Richard Rees; Hywel Jones
Eileen Mainwaring; Dennis Harrison
Ros Bellamy
David Rimmer
Gwyn Irving
Ammanford Lions
Mike Smith, Amman Valley Railway
Pontardulais Partnership
Llangennech Community Council; David Edwards
Friends of Bynea Station, Deryk Cundy
Friends of Llanelli Station
_____*

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.

[Editor: Reports and news items from our Station Adopters will be found under "Along the Line" in this and future issues (see pp.5-7)]

Letter to Mrs Edwina Hart MBE CSIJ AM Minister for Economy Science & Transport

The following is a copy of the letter sent to Mrs Edwina Hart, the Minister, by HoWLTA, as a follow-up to that published in the Winter issue of the HoWLTA Newsletter and to the subsequent meeting.

Dear Minister

I am writing to thank you very much for meeting a delegation from the Heart of Wales Line Forum on February 2nd (of which I was a member) to discuss the reports submitted to you by the Forum on the future of the line.

On behalf of the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association (HoWLTA) I have been asked to say that we were very encouraged by the positive response which you gave to the reports. Your comments suggested that you fully support HoWLTA's vision of a train service which will radically improve public transport in the areas which it serves and thus boost economic activity and social cohesion. In particular, we welcome your support for trains running daily at least every two hours in each direction and for the need for high quality diesel rolling stock to make the trains more attractive both to local users and to tourists. We also look forward to further discussions between the Forum and Network Rail concerning ways of cutting journey times.

On February 27th several of our Committee members attended the conference which the Forum organised in Llandrindod to consider ways in which the railway can work with local businesses and other organisations. It was pleasing to see a wide range of interest groups represented at the meeting, from whom a number of potentially useful suggestions were forthcoming. We feel that the conference was a useful step towards the goal of improving accessibility by rail to education, employment opportunities and tourist destinations and we look forward to working as part of the Forum in this process. I understand that the Forum will be sending you a briefing note soon about the conference and its plans to follow up the ideas which emerged during the day.

**Mike Watson,
Vice Chairman, HoWLTA**

[continued]

After all there was a time, not so very long ago really, when our line ran many more services than today, carrying far more passengers as well as many tons of freight. Our line might never again achieve such giddy heights in this age of road transport and

information technology. But we can continue to encourage and support the vital role the line can and must play in the social and economic life of the communities it serves....Why else do we now call it the **Heart of Wales Line?**

Peter Berry

Along the Line....

Folk up The Track

Gill Wright, Mayor of Llandovery and her consort Sally Griffiths welcomed the Mayor and Mayoress of Llanelli, Roger and Ruth Price who brought Folk up the Track to The Level Crossing in Llandovery on Saturday 7th March.

[Photo © Gill Wright]



Llangadog Station

Our little halt is still in the winter doldrums with little to do of any importance except pick up the litter - and little enough of that - and do a little pruning of the bushes that seemed to think that winter never existed and persisted in growing through the last four months. We filled one of the flower boxes to capacity with assorted heathers in October and these have put on several inches since then.

The tulip and daffodil bulbs were all planted out in January and we look forward to their flowering any time now. Many thanks to Geraint Morgan of Arriva.

A recent inspection of our row of decorative trees planted on the waste ground adjacent to the platform have showed a very healthy growth rate through last summer - the Silver Birch and Cherry in particular putting on a couple of feet and nearly all are now budding well which may well indicate another good growing season this coming summer.

I expect that the real work will start in April,

if the weather holds good, as we have to position and fill the new flower box which is ready and waiting and then contemplate putting a fresh coat of paint on our little fence and gate which are starting to look a little dilapidated and unloved. There is also the red carpet to shampoo and clean in readiness for the flood of new passengers we are expecting when Arriva start up their five trains a day service.....!

Eileen Mainwaring, Chief Adopter
Dennis Harrison, Assistant Adopter

If your club or organisation would like to enjoy a talk/slide show about the Heart of Wales Line, then call **Tony Birdwood** on 01550 777344 or 07852 115390 or email anthony.birdwood@btinternet.com
member of the Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association

News from the Association

Membership Matters

A big "thank you" to all those members who have renewed their subscriptions promptly, and in many cases taken out 200 club membership too. All profits from the 200 club go towards HoWLTA's aims of publicising and promoting our line.

There is still time to renew your subs and join our 200 club but be quick to ensure you don't miss out on getting future newsletters.

200 Club : HoWLTA's Monthly Draw

We have 302 numbers, the latest winners are :

February 2015 (the BIG one!)

£100	M Price, Llandd
£50	B Roberts, Swansea
£25	J Greaves, Bucknell
£25	K F Bishop, Abingdon
£25	F D Young, Sutton Coldfield

March 2015

£20	H Jones, Kington
£15	N Morgan, Llandovery
£10	P Rees, Shrewsbury
£10	Rev. A Tweed, Llandovery
£10	E Davies, Llandovery

April 2015

£20	W Hiddlestone, Swansea
£15	R Webb, Llandovery
£10	S Blyton, Ludlow
£10	G Lawley, Shrewsbury
£10	N Andrews, Swansea

Nigel Bird, Membership Secretary.

Note from the Treasurer

Please ensure that all monies for raffle ticket sales, donations, etc are sent to the Treasurer, and any membership matters, for example, change of address or resignation, which do not involve money, should be directed to the Membership Secretary.

Next Committee Meeting

Thursday, 16th July 2015 at the Commodore Hotel, Llandrindod Wells. Starts 12 noon. See next Newsletter for dates of future meetings.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday, 19th September 2015. [Editor : sorry about the wrong date last time!]

Newsletter Stuffing Session

The next stuffing session (for Newsletter #133) will be on Thursday, 13th August 2015. This will start at 11.30am to suit the arrival time from Swansea (but will be a bit early for the train from Shrewsbury!) at The Level Crossing, just opposite Llandovery Station.

Your help would be appreciated if you can spare a couple of hours. We've had a good turnout recently, and it's become a great chance for a chat!

If you can help please email the editor on psberry@tiscali.co.uk.

Useful Telephone Numbers / Web Sites

Llandrindod Station Ticket Office (Kelham 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

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 34th AGM of HOWLTA will be held on Saturday September 19th 2015 at the Victoria Hall, 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, alternating between Thursdays and Saturdays. The location is chosen to suit train times, and so is normally somewhere on the Llandrindod to Llanwrtyd section of the line. Meeting times are usually from about 11.30/12.00 to about 15.00/15.30.

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.

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

Please remember our new address for correspondence :

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

120 Miles of Station Gardens

As I have travelled up and down the line I have been able to see and appreciate the wonders of nature under control at so many places along the line. I have seen glimpses of the small armies with their orange vests at work as I pass in the train. We have had a very dry April which has meant it has been possible to get some of the 'beating back' work done, but it is also a reminder that access to water at stations can be a problem.

I am reminded too how much we depend on the enthusiasm of people, but how do we get to the next stage in the process. In fact process is the word – how do we ensure that all the good work does not go to waste. How do we raise money to make it all sustainable? How do we ensure succession?

At the recent Forum meeting, I set out an action plan which will form the basis of a newsletter for the adopters. As with anything to do with gardens it will always be a draft because everything constantly changes – influences of the weather; changes in personnel – we never know what is round the corner but we can do our best to be prepared.

A couple of things that can be done – feed reports of what is being achieved, with pictures where possible, both to the Newsletter editor (psberry@tiscali.co.uk) and to Rachel Francis (rachelzzzyx@gmail.com) who is a whizz with Facebook and Twitter. You would be amazed how many followers the Line now has. Pictures tell a thousand words. Any problems send them to me and I can then forward the information.

See you from the train! **Gill Wright**

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A 1/16th page advert like this costs just £15 for one issue (or £40 for a year). See page 27 for full advertising rates.

Stations on the Northern Half of the HoWL

These notes are based largely upon observations made during visits to the 17 stations between Craven Arms and Sugar Loaf on 18th, 21st and 23rd April.

1. **Craven Arms** – Although the station now has just two platforms and an engineer's siding, it still has a busy air with frequent passenger and freight trains passing through it. The platforms looked tidy with little litter evident. Although limited in number, the planters were colourful and cared for. The semaphore signalling at this station still reigns supreme but there is a scheme to replace all signalling between Shrewsbury and Pontypool & New Inn with modular signalling controlled from the new Regional Operations Centre in Cardiff by the end of 2017. The inevitable march of progress perhaps but there must be some regret at the passing of the mechanical signal boxes and semaphore signals, much loved links with the age of steam.

2. **Broome** – This station was neat and the platform boasted a 'Harrington Hump'. The Harrington Hump is a specially raised part of the platform to enable passengers, particularly those with mobility problems, to board or alight from trains more easily. They are being installed at stations where platforms are lower than the recommended standard. The appearance of Broome Station would be further improved by the addition of two or three planters placed along the platform.

3. **Hopton Heath** – Although the station is in a picturesque setting, the platform surface is in need of refurbishment and a resurfacing scheme is currently being considered by Arriva Trains Wales (ATW).

The shelter also needs repainting and there is possible scope for station volunteers to improve the station's overall appearance with a planting scheme following recent discussions with Network Rail (NR).

4. Bucknell - The functioning platform and disused platform were both neat and tidy. The shelter was well maintained. A wildlife garden is being created on the disused platform, where two station nameboards in the style of the British Railways 'double sausage' logo were due to be erected before the end of April.

5. Knighton - The station was generally in good order. Agreement is being sought with NR to enable the repainting of the signal token cabinets on both platforms to take place.

6. Knucklas - Only a third of the platform is currently in use. The remainder is cordoned off while a Harrington Hump is being installed. The works are due to be completed in late May and, shortly after the completion, a bench seat is to be placed on the platform in memory of Ted Conway, the Station Adopter at this station for more than 20 years. The columns of the waiting shelter were repainted by volunteers last autumn.

7 Llangynllo / Llangunllo - Bi-lingual signs for this station were erected on the platform during the second half of 2014. The platform is low and a Harrington Hump is being installed here; it is likely to be completed during May. During the past few months, volunteers have been removing excess vegetation from the rear of the platform area and have repainted the columns of the shelter.

8. Llanbister Road - This is a very neatly kept station with a good display of spring

flowers. Due to the low height of the platform, a Harrington Hump has also been installed here. At the time of the visit, the Hump was physically complete but had not yet been 'signed off' by NR. for public use.

9. Dolau - There was an extensive display of colourful spring flowers in the well established flower beds and containers at this station, which is in a picturesque location. At the north end of the station, the wooden paling fence at the adjacent level crossing is being replaced by white palisade type metal fencing which should last for many years with minimal maintenance. Sadly, high winds at the beginning of April brought down a laburnum tree planted by HOWLTA volunteers in the mid 1980s. The awning on the shelter was also damaged but repairs to the awning are in progress.

10. Penybont - The clearance of excess vegetation on both the functioning platform and the disused platform has been continuing during the winter months. This station looks at its best in the spring when there is a colourful display of primroses and daffodils to be seen. Early in April a bench seat was installed on the functioning platform in memory of the late Bill Smith who was a volunteer both here and at Dolau.

11. Llandrindod Wells - This station was adopted by Llandrindod Wells (Cefnllys) CP School in January this year. The children have already carried out initial surveys of the station which is generally in a tidy condition. The area of the southbound platform between the signal box museum and the south ramp is rather overgrown however and permission is being sought from NR to clear excess vegetation.

12. Builth Road - There was a good display of spring flowering plants in a

Chairman's Chat....

Firstly let me take this opportunity to apologise to my colleagues on the committee. Due to an injury to my foot, then illness. I have not been able to attend any meetings since January. So I have very little to report for this newsletter, so I will hand over to the committee members who attend meetings for reports.

One of the meetings I was unable to attend was the one on tourism for the region. At this meeting we launched a leaflet which I was asked to design on 5 destinations that you could visit by train or bus from Llandrindod Wells. I have not seen the final version which was produced and printed by the Forum, but I am hoping that we can reproduce a copy in the newsletter in the future.

I have received a very interesting letter from Professor G.L. Huxley who has written to the Department of Transport asking what is likely to happen when the current TransPennine Express, the Northern franchise and the current lease of the Class 170 run out. By the time this newsletter is printed, there may be some answers, but the Department Of Transport are not giving away anything at this time. However it will be interesting to see what they come up with and that may give us some ideas for our future plans.

Just a reminder for the members who live in the North of the Heart of Wales that we have a direct service to London,



[Photo © Peter Berry]

from Shrewsbury. Recently I had the opportunity to use the service. Although I did not travel the whole journey. I must say that the on board service was excellent, although I did find it unusual to have cold croissant for lunch.

May I take this opportunity to welcome two new station adopters, John and Lynda, at Llanbister Road whose busy work can be seen from the train.

Also, Llandrindod Wells Cefnllys CP school. The school children have had their railway safety talk and are now busy visiting the station carrying out audits.

We will be producing a leaflet very soon with information about the new timetable which starts on 17th May. This will accompany the more detailed Arriva Trains timetable which is now available. A lot has been written about the long awaited additional services and the hard work to achieve these. But if we don't use them, then all the hard work will have been for nothing. We must all do whatever we can to promote and use the Heart of Wales Line.

Kevin Knell

Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association — HoWLTA

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Vice-Presidents Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth
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George Scarfe, Llandrindod Wells (01597-822524; georgescarfe357@btinternet.com)
Gill Wright, Cyngorhyd (01550-750261; gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com)

NEW ADDRESS for Correspondence :

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

HoWLTA is affiliated to Railfuture and Better Transport

number of containers placed along the platform. The station, which already has a Harrington Hump, looked neat and well kept. A bench seat was placed there in early April. Although more than half a century has passed since it ceased to be a busy junction station, Builth Road still retains many reminders of its heyday.

13. Cilmeri – This station is in an attractive setting overlooking the Irfon Valley with the Mynydd Epynt range beyond. The station looked in good order with a well maintained shelter and a display of spring flowers in large and impressive wooden containers along the platform. The whole length of the approach road from the A483 trunk road to the station itself is much improved.

14. Garth – There were spring flowers in containers on the platform and the grass on the approach to the platform was neatly mown. A line of various small shrubs have been planted recently along the rear of the northern half of the platform.

15. Llangammarch – Another tidy station with a neatly kept shelter and a display of spring flowers in containers along the platform. It seems a pity however that the vegetation on the bank opposite the platform is tending to obscure the view of the village and the river below.

16. Llanwrtyd Wells – One of the line's principal stations, Llanwrtyd was well maintained generally. The station building on the northbound platform is being re-occupied by a community enterprise and some internal redecoration of the building was already apparent. The very attractive raised flower beds of stone construction sited on both platforms were well filled with plants.

17. Sugar Loaf – It may seem a remote wayside halt but Sugar Loaf has virtually all the facilities enjoyed by the larger unmanned stations (eg a shelter, seating, lighting and a Customer Information Screen). It was good to see the small display of spring flowers in containers on the short platform there.

The Heart of Wales Line has long been noted for its beauty in springtime and this year the flowers and blossom at many of the stations and on the verges along the Line have been particularly eye-catching.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Geraint Morgan and Martyn Tudor of ATW for all their good work in arranging the purchase and installation of the bench seats at Penybont and Builth Road (and, soon to be, at Knucklas).

George Scarfe

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News from Arriva Trains Wales

Consultation on our May timetables improvements has been underway for some time.

The new May 2015 timetable will come into force on Sunday, 17th May 2015 [Editor : roughly when members will be receiving this newsletter], and has been developed in partnership with Welsh Government and Network Rail. It includes some important changes which will result in service improvements for many of our passengers.

The key changes include:

— Enhanced week day and weekend services on the Cambrian line (these include four additional Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury return journeys Monday to

Saturday and two additional return journeys on Sundays)

— Additional week day services on the Heart of Wales line which result in significant changes to the current timetable

— The one minute earlier departure of the 05:32 Shrewsbury to Crewe service link in with the 6:27 Crewe to Manchester service

— The 17:04 Cardiff to Tenby service will now call additionally at Llanharan. A summary of the new service on the HoWL can be found on the opposite page, and a copy of the full timetable is enclosed with this issue.

platforms (making access to trains easier) have already been installed at Builth Road, Pontarddulais and Llangennech, with others planned or in course of installation at Llandovery, Llanbister Road, Llangunllo and Knucklas. New benches have been provided by ATW at Builth and Pen y bont.

CCTV is to go in at Pontarddulais. New shelters are to be provided at Llandrindod (Northbound platform) and Llangennech. Each of these is a modest change in its own right, but taken together they help to improve the journey experience.

Funding was also provided for further 'devegging' work to improve the views at Cyngordy, but the work was not able to commence before the 2015 nesting season and so will be deferred until October.

Social media, website, events and activities

Our website www.heart-of-wales.co.uk continues to do good work for us with nearly 60,000 visitors and 327,000 page views last year. Google is by far the largest source of referrals. The majority of visitors are from the UK, with the US and Australia in 2nd and 3rd place.

Rachel Frances continues to come up with ways to increase Twitter and Facebook supporters and at Easter she set up an empty 'Favourite places and Easter events' diary, inviting suggestions to help fill it. The idea worked well and attracted contributions ranging from farmers markets, through Easter egg decorating events to calving time at Dinefwr Park.

Gardens

Liaison with the Arriva station adopters is continuing, and Gill Wright has worked to support the development of a new group at Llanelli station. They now have a Network

Rail community licence and are undertaking an ambitious revamp of the walled area at the front of the station. More news on gardens appears elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Free travel

Welsh Government has announced that the 'free travel with a bus pass' scheme on our line and others will return from October 1st 2015 – March 31st 2016 (and will also operate in 2016-17)

Finally, readers will want to know that Forum Chairman Cllr Mansel Williams was recently taken seriously ill and is currently receiving treatment for a brain tumour. Cllr Williams is active on many rail and arts projects in mid Wales and Shrewsbury and we are all anxiously awaiting news of his recovery. In the meantime Forum vice chairman Cllr Paul Lloyd is deputising.

David Edwards

Welsh Government News

Transport Minister, Edwina Hart, has announced the concessionary rail scheme in rural Mid and North Wales will be extended for a further two years. 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, is available to all free bus pass holders in Wales.

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: "I am pleased to announce the extension of this scheme, which provides vital access to transport for the elderly and disabled in our rural communities, until the end of March 2017. This demonstrates the Welsh Government's commitment to providing access to sustainable transport across Wales."

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Attendees at the February 27th Meeting

[Photo © Rachel Frances]

carried out so that HoWLEN can approach potential networking partners, and it has already been agreed that Llanwrtyd Community Transport will collaborate with us. They have recently taken over the lease of Llanwrtyd station and we plan to work closely with them.

We are also seeking to build links with interested parties in England and understand that our approach is similar to that being adopted by Shropshire County Council, a member of the Forum. We plan to meet them soon.

More trains, and infrastructure developments

The modest service improvements from May 2015 have now been announced and will start on May 17th. Welsh Government was only able to afford them by making more cost effective use of the existing fleet of trains. The new timetable will operate Mondays-

Fridays: the existing Saturday and Sunday timetables will remain.

Key features Mondays-Fridays include

- An extra train at each end of the line
- The ability to get to Swansea by 08.08 from stations south of Llandovery (for commuting and early shopping)
- Some trains through to and from Crewe
- Better connections
- More convenient tourist day trip timings

The Forum is aware that there are some disadvantages to the new times - there is a limit to the potential flows of traffic that can be satisfied with a small number of trains – hence the content of the 2018 report already referred to. We hope however that overall, passengers will benefit from, and use, the new services.

Welsh Government has also funded other improvements along the line. Raised

NEW TIMETABLE

Summary of Services *

17th May 2015 to 12th December 2015

		<i>Mon-Fri</i>		<i>Sat.</i>		<i>Sun.</i>
Swansea	D	—	0603	0933	1435	1821
Llanelli	D	—	0520	0625	0954	1453
Llandovery	A	—	0621	0726	10.52	1552
Llandovery	D	—	0728	1055	1554	1943
Llandrindod W	A	—	0838	1151	1654	2102
Llandrindod W	D	0618	—	0845	1201	1659
Shrewsbury	A	0757	—	1014	1332	1828
Shrewsbury	D	—	0445	0542	1009	1405
Llandrindod W	A	—	0610	0734	1139	1536
Llandrindod W	D	—	0735	1200	1541	1956
Llandovery	A	—	0832	1254	1646	2053
Llandovery	D	0642	—	0834	1256	1648
Llandelli	D	0745	—	0939	1404	1752
Swansea	A	0808	—	1003	1425	1818
				2221	0922	1301
					1807	2206
					2206	1603
						2020

* Only times for main stations are shown. Please consult full timetable to confirm times and for other stations.

Charter Train News Updates for 2015

Sadly the steam hauled charter train, 'The Heart of Wales', which was due to run along the Heart of Wales Line on Saturday, 25th April was cancelled by the tour operator, The Railway Touring Company of King's Lynn.

They were using the train operating company, The West Coast Railway Company, to provide the locomotives, rolling stock and train crew for the excursion but Network Rail recently banned The West Coast Railway Company from using the national rail network.

The ban followed an incident on Saturday 7th March at Wootton Bassett Junction, about six miles southwest of Swindon Station, when a steam hauled charter train returning from Bristol Temple Meads to Southend overran a red signal on the junction approach and came to a stand about 700 yards further on at a point on the junction itself, barely a minute after a Swansea to London Paddington High Speed Train (HST) had passed over the junction.

On a more cheerful note, The Railway Touring Company has indicated that it still hopes to run 'The Heart of Wales' charter train at some point later this year.

There is otherwise very little change from the charters

announced in the Winter issue of the Newsletter, ie Saturday 16th May - *The HoW Explorer* (DRS Class 57/3 diesel) returning northwards via the Heart of Wales Line (arr. Llandrindod Wells 16.48, dep. 16.49). Organised by Pathfinder Tours.

Sunday 7th June - *HoW Scenic Rambler* (two Class 47/57 diesels) returning northwards via the Heart of Wales Line (times not available). Organised by Compass by West Coast Railways.

Saturday 20th June - *HoW Rambler* (possibly DB Schenker Class 66 diesel) returning southwards via the Heart of Wales Line (times not available). Organised by Pathfinder Tours.

Wednesday 24th June - *HoW Scenic Rambler* (possibly two Class 47/57 diesels) running southwards via the Heart of Wales Line (times not available). Organised by Compass by West Coast Railways.

Wednesday 2nd September - *HoW Scenic Rambler* (possibly two Class 47/57 diesels) running southwards via the Heart of Wales Line (times not available). Organised by Compass by West Coast Railways.

Friday 16th October - *HoW Scenic Rambler* (possibly two Class 47/57 diesels from Watford Junction running southwards via the Heart of Wales Line (times not available). Organised by Compass by West Coast Railways.

[Compiled from information provided by George Scarfe]

Memories of the Central Wales Line

Evacuation to Llandybie in Wartime

When, as an eight-year-old evacuee from South-East London, I travelled up the Central Wales Line (now more familiarly known as the Heart of Wales) to Llandybie on Sunday, 23 June 1940, I had probably not, until then, even heard of Wales!

Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, my parents and I learnt that I had passed the junior entrance exam for the Roan School for Boys, situated at the edge of Blackheath and adjacent to Greenwich Park, just three miles from home. But as the school had already been evacuated to Ticehurst, near Tunbridge Wells, and there were already plans to relocate, we would be informed in due course what to do. So, in the meantime I attended a small private school just a half-mile walk from home. Then, on 8 March 1940, we received a postcard from the Roan School instructing my parents to take me to Rye, on the Sussex coast, the following Monday, 11 March. As our nearest station, Grove Park, was on the main line from London to Tonbridge/Ashford/Hastings, that would be a straightforward journey, and my mother took me. We were met at Rye station by one of the masters and taken to my digs.

The school was only at Rye until Sunday 23 June when we made our journey to Wales. When one considers that the Low Countries had already fallen to the Germans, there had been bombing just

a few miles away in mid Kent on 10 May, and the planned German invasion of SE England, 'Operation Sealion', was already known about, why on earth did we go to Rye in the first place?

The only part of the long train journey that I really remember, apart from our gas masks in their cardboard boxes over our shoulders, is when we were eventually told we were now in Wales. But what I do remember from then on that day was people cheering us from the ends of their gardens and waving all manner of objects, like frying pans and saucepans. And we boys were leaning out of the train windows shouting and singing.

En route to Llandybie, the train dropped off the seniors at Ammanford. When we reached Llandybie we were taken in various directions. The master heading my group would stop at houses and one or more boys would be taken in. When we reached Pontbrenlwyd, just beyond the now-realigned road bridge, the home of Mr and Mrs James and their son Gareth, Mrs James had requested 'one boy', so the master picked me. The next day I wrote home to inform my parents where I was. On Saturday, 29 June, my mother came down on the 11.55 from Paddington, and her diary records that Mr James and I met her at Llandybie station at 6.05 pm. We boys had already started school in Llandybie Memorial Hall, one class in each of the four corners.

NEWS FROM THE HEART OF WALES LINE FORUM

Continuing Welsh Government support

Last time I wrote was at the start of February, when in the Stop Press item I reported that Welsh Government Minister Mrs Edwina Hart had accepted the 'Unlocking Mid Wales' reports that we had submitted to her.

The reports set out the significantly enhanced level of service on our line to be specified in the 'Invitation To Tender' (ITT) document that will be provided to bidders for the new rail franchise. That the Minister has agreed to our proposals is a significant and very positive achievement and the Forum looks forward to discussions with bidders when the ITT is launched at the end of 2015.

One of the key arguments in our Ministerial submission was that an enhanced service will enable the railway to play a significant part in the regeneration of the area it serves – hence the report title 'Unlocking Mid Wales'. This approach – involving the development of social enterprises – was set out in the last Newsletter.

Mrs Hart was impressed by our argument and offered us a 12-month revenue grant for preliminary work to be done, so that when the new franchise is launched we will have a rail-related development structure already in place. We moved swiftly and called a meeting of interested parties in Llandrindod on February 27th, to explore development opportunities and exchange ideas.

The keynote speaker was Prof Paul Salveson, who spoke of similar successful initiatives in the UK and elsewhere. He envisaged the establishment of a coordinated network of businesses and other social enterprise-based

organisations along the route. The first steps in setting this up have now been taken and on April 17th the Forum agreed in principle that it would support the creation of the 'Heart of Wales Line Enterprise Network' (HoWLEN). A small Forum based project team has been set up to develop the concept



Prof Paul Salveson [Photo © Rachel Frances]

for submission to the Forum AGM in September.

The Wales Cooperative Centre is providing advice on what corporate form HoWLEN should take. Glenn Bowen, Director of Enterprise for the WCC, recently spoke to a group of HoWLEN representatives and the directors of the existing Heart of Wales Line Development Company. An audit is being

to be corrected) so that one door would be on the raised section and the other door on the 'normal' section presenting a potential 'elf and safety' issue and hardly overcoming the reason for the 'hump' in the first place. I think the 150/2s are fitted with selective door opening and as any two doors are closer together than the two on a



[Photo © Stephen Miles]

153, would be less of a problem.

I also thought that it odd that the raised section on Llangennech station (to Swansea platform) was at the north end away from the passenger access and shelter but probably too many services in the platform to contend with in the correct location? By the way when the Llangennech 'humps' are commisioned are HoWLTA going to preserve the remaining set of wooden steps currently kept in the 'to Swansea' shelter?

Stephen Miles (by email)

Re the preservation of said steps I must confess to not having thought of doing this. Probably best to leave them for the local anglers who use them as firewood on a chilly night.... :)

David Edwards (by email)

[Editor: Readers can see the final (so far) result, at Pontarddulais at any rate, on the front cover of this issue.]

Unfair Fares?

[Editor: The following response has been received via Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM to Hywel Jones' letter]

Thank you for your letter of 7 January on behalf of your constituent regarding rail fares on services operating on the Heart of Wales line.

I introduced the concessionary rail scheme on a number of lines in Wales to provide access to rail services where bus services are limited. While the scheme can be used as part of longer distance journeys, this is not its primary purpose.

The rail fares quoted by your constituent appear to be Advance Purchase tickets, which are commercial products priced by individual train operators and are not always available. You may wish to contact Arriva Trains Wales (www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/contact_us/) about how they price and allocate these tickets.

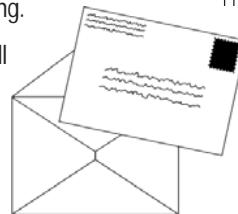
Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC/AM

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



HoWLTA Newsletter

My mother returned home on 12 July. My parents made several visits to Llandybie and on one occasion we all went down the local coal mine in which Mr James worked. The pit ponies fascinated me and we still have in the family a discarded horseshoe and a lump of anthracite.

Of course, during my period at Llandybie the Battle of Britain was taking place and I know my parents were concerned about the safety of our house when they were away. Even so, there were plenty of air raid warnings and we often watched the overhead dogfights between British and German aircraft when there were attacks on Swansea and Neath. When my mother came down on one occasion, on Monday, 24 March 1941, Mrs James, my mother, Gareth and I went to the Palace cinema in Ammanford to see Charlie Chaplin in 'The Great Dictator'. Following the end of the Battle of Britain, moves were afoot for some, at least, of the pupils and masters to return to London, and my parents chose for me to return. So, on 23 July 1941, both my parents came by train to Llandybie and two days later we returned home. My mother's diary records that we arrived home at 5.30 pm. and I went out on my bike!

The school was not yet returning to London, but those of us that did spent the next two years (during which there was still bombing) at an 'Emergency Secondary School' in Lewisham, just under three miles from home. And interestingly, at that school, Colfe's, the headmaster was a Mr Rees and two boys

HoWLTA Newsletter

in my class were Welsh twins called Hughes.

Up until then the army had occupied the Roan School, but they moved out after filling in the trenches they had dug in the front lawn. We moved back in for the start of the autumn term on 14 September 1943. Very little bomb damage repairs had been done; the hall ceiling was still down and there were brick blast walls outside the ground floor windows.

Looking back, I wouldn't have missed the evacuation for anything, despite the obvious tragedy and futility of war. It certainly was an education that the present generations hopefully will not experience.

I do remember the long goods trains with their loose couplings and friendly footplate crews and guards as they rumbled up and down the line. Sometimes it was coal trains, sometimes armaments, tanks etc., and sometimes troops. And we lads would place ha'pennies on the lines to see them flattened. We also watched the local Home Guard and LDV (Local Defence Volunteers, which later merged with the HG) having mock battles. And Nicholas the Milk with his bicycle and sidecar and churns of bulk milk, proper milk, not this skimmed and semi-skimmed apology for milk, which he would ladle into his customers' pots. And the loose coal left on the roadside at the miners' houses for was it, 7/6 a ton?

Keith H Hyatt, Rhandir-mwyn

Old Diesel Multiple Units

I've been a member of HoWLTA for many years but it's also, unfortunately, been a very long time since I rode the Central Wales Line. I used to make the trip to the friendly city of Swansea about three times per year but then two things happened which made me change my ways. Firstly I got a new hobby - the Wife! This took up much of my time (it still does) although we've both used the line and have retained our love of Wales, mostly visited now by car (North Wales is on our doorstep, of course).

The other reason is the disastrous change of rolling stock on our line. I'd always loved the old DMU trains— the Diesel Multiple Units with wide windows, low-back bus seats from which you could enjoy the scenery on both sides of the track and a Guard's Van section for large luggage. On these trains one could also see out of the front and watch the driver changing gear as the conveyance tackled the many hills in Central Wales. Now, virtually nothing can be seen because of the high seats.

It was always a thrill as we left Shrewsbury in clouds of black fumes as the train picked up speed after sitting for a while in the station waiting to go. In those days only one carriage would be fitted with engines, the other a trailer and this did slow the train down a bit but, who cared?

It was great at Knucklas as the train slowly crossed the viaduct before turning left and chugging on and on in low gear for mile after mile, clouds of filthy black

smoke pouring out of the exhausts to roll into the fields as we passed - heaven!

Even railwaymen admit that these old DMUs were the best trains of all and, luckily, some have been preserved on such heritage railways as Llangollen.

Mention of Knucklas reminds me of a funny incident. On a lovely sunny day, I'd left the train there, looking in vain for a taxi rank (don't they have them in Wales?). Nevertheless, I walked down the hill, intending to stroll as far as Knighton where I'd re-board the train.

Knucklas is a pretty place, and I spotted an antique shop with its door wide open, with all sorts of treasures glistening inside. I ambled in and began to explore. "Who are you?" a man suddenly asked. "Oh, I'm just looking at the antiques in case there's anything that I might want" I said. "But this is my house" the man gasped. "I'm awfully sorry, but the front door was open" I replied very apologetically.

I think that he saw the funny side but fancy leaving your front door open - we have a 70 pound steel security gate over ours and it takes six keys to open the house so, Mr Knucklas, perhaps it's best if you remain amongst the innocence of the countryside but keep your front door closed!

© Andrew Richardson, Liverpool

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Christmas and will be missed by professionals in the industry, including his customers, for his tireless efforts to keep the railway running over many years, in the face of adversity. Robin appeared on TV to represent his company, having got involved with what was clearly a big impact on the travelling public.

The publicly available reports and the coverage in Modern Railways provides a more balanced analysis. Finsbury Park is the recognised turn back location in the tried and tested contingency plans when Kings Cross is closed. The station handles high volumes of football fans on many weekends. Unfortunately, local staff decided to ignore the published plan and turned back the services in the platform on which they had arrived, leading to passenger congestion and the collapse of the plan. The "wrong" equipment sent to the engineering site was actually brand new equipment, obtained in the belief that it would be reliable – but it had not been fully tested.

Andy Scott

One Hump or Two

Inspired by David Edward's photo on page 7 of the Winter 2015 Newsletter of the new raised platform works at Pontarddulais your intrepid photographer paid a visit on 17th February hoping to find the 'hump' in use, only to discover it still in the throes of construction a month after David's photo. Undeterred I also visited Llangennech to find that

work had just started for the hump on the 'down' (to Llanelli) platform (see page 18).

Stephen Miles (by email)

Apparently the intrepid engineers, tempted to do some work rather than sitting in their rather posh cabin at Llangennech, found that there was 'a design issue' 2-3 weeks ago and decamped.

Since then, the expensively hired kit has stood empty and unused.

Yesterday I asked Adrian Carrington of ATW who is overseeing the whole shebang, for an update....

David Edwards (by email)

Funny you should say that..... When I was at Pontarddulais I thought it rather strange (but perhaps not, knowing NR) that the raised section was only a one coach length when 150/2s are regularly diagrammed over the line (eg 0900 Shrewsbury - Cardiff). Hardly future proofing; more like the usual down to a cost and not up to a standard.

If you look again at my photo, I think it may reveal the 'design issue'. It would appear the raised section is not long enough to accommodate both the passenger doors



[Photo © Stephen Miles]

on a 153 so that only one door could be used. However I believe the 153s are not fitted with selective door opening (I stand

Post Bag



Overcrowding on the HoWL !

The attached photo taken with 18 standees on a packed 153 single unit travelling between Llandovery and Llanwrda at 1644 hrs on 26th March. I had travelled between Llandeilo and Llandrindod that week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and the situation was the same at some point between these two stations. The Wednesday was an 'adventure' on the HoWL with one engine hauling two units to Llandeilo at a max speed of 25mph (according to driver), there must have been over 200 passengers on board. Most of the 24 passengers intending to board at Llandeilo (some had travelled as far as Gwernog) decided not to travel and left for home after seeing the number of standees on the train already. After repairing a water pipe on the disabled engine, and taking more passengers on at Llandovery the water pipe failed again on leaving the Sugar Loaf Tunnel with all passengers transferred to a waiting 150 unit (two carriages) bound for Swansea. This ensured that the transferred Shrewsbury-bound passengers were able to continue their journey in a more reliable manner. I travelled back on the disabled train to Swansea taking 1½ hours to reach Swansea from Llandeilo - a journey normally taking 1 hour.

The overcrowding is due to the fact that Cerdyn Cymru Bus Pass holders travelled free on the HoWL from the beginning of

October until 31st March, breakdowns are inevitable, the units that are over 30 years old are probably working 20 hours daily. These units are working hard when overcrowded to travel up inclines on HoWL, especially over the Sugar Loaf Summit and around the Llangunllo stretches, thus leading to unnecessary breakdowns.

Many passengers expressed their opinions to me that week for WAG/ATW to



introduce a one-day rover ticket, costing say £7, for Cerdyn Cymru Bus Pass holders to travel throughout the year between Swansea and Shrewsbury, thus resulting in a better constant flow of rail travellers, (excluding the RWAS week in July of course!).

Hywel Jones, Cwmdu

Station Adopter at Llanwrda since 2004 (soon after ATW took over the Franchise).

Chairman's (Back) Chat

As a life-long railwayman, whose early career involved HoWLTA (adopt-a-station scheme in 1985-6) I must say I was disappointed at the cheap tabloid-style sniping at Network Rail's Robin Gisby in Chairman's Chat (Winter 2015) about the Christmas overrun at Finsbury Park. Robin had announced his retirement well before

The Southern End of Our Line

Then & Now

A Photo Montage compiled by Stephen Miles

(See photos on pp.14-15)

Swansea Victoria Station

1a. Then (1964) - With closure less than a week away, Black 5 45145 makes a spirited departure from Swansea Victoria heading the 6.25pm up York Mails on 8th June 1964. The 1 in 45 gradient out of the station was noteworthy as being the steepest gradient on the whole of the Central Wales Line.

Swansea Victoria station was opened on 14th December 1867 by the Llanelly Railway & Dock Company. Subsequently the whole section of line between Pontardulais and Swansea was purchased by the London & North Western Railway in 1873 for £310,000, the station being rebuilt in 1882.

1b. Now (2014) - The site is now occupied by Swansea Leisure Centre (LC2) with virtually nothing remaining to show a railway ever existed. The photo was taken on 31st October.

Swansea (Paxton Street) Engine Shed

2a. Then (1938) - A photograph of Paxton Street in its LMS heyday in June 1938 showing the variety of LNWR and LMS motive power that it retained to its closure in August 1959. Prominent in the centre is an LMS Class 5MT 4-6-0 paralleled by two ex LNWR freight locomotives – a D Class 0-8-0 on left and a 'Cauliflower' 0-6-0 on right.

Paxton Street, sometimes known as Victoria, was the main shed at the south end of the Central Wales Line and opened in 1882 concurrent with the rebuilding of Swansea Victoria Station. It was coded 4B in LMS

days ending in Western Region administration as 87K. Upon closure of the shed in 1959 its allocation was distributed to a number of sheds in the Swansea area – Landore and East Dock, whilst its stud of Stanier Class 8F 2-8-0s were transferred to Llanelly where they continued to be employed on freight duties over the line until the demise of steam on the route. However as Swansea East Dock shed did not have a turntable for turning tender locomotives, that at Paxton Street survived, along with watering facilities, until the closure of the Swansea Victoria to Pontardulais section of route in June 1964.

2a. Now (2014) - The site, pictured on 19 December 2014, is now occupied by Swansea Civic Centre (formerly West Glamorgan County Hall), where 'Wedding Cars' now occupy the former tracks.

Swansea Beach Sidings

3a. Then (1963) - In addition to the 'main line' Central Wales Line trains, the section of double track between Swansea No.2 and Swansea No.1 Signal Boxes carried transfer freight trains between the main docks complex east of the River Tawe and the smaller complex of lines serving the South Dock area on the west side, adjacent to Victoria Station. Swansea No.1 Signal Box can be seen behind the train of open wagons from which ex Powesland & Mason 0-4-0ST 1151 has just uncoupled, having brought the train via the high level lines from Danygraig as an '8 Target' transfer freight.

Beach Sidings to the right of the locomotive form the entrance to the South Dock low level lines which included the fish quay and Gregor Bros' timber yard, which had always been a source of considerable rail traffic.

3b. Now (2014) - The former double track main line and Beach Sidings now form the west car park of Swansea Civic Centre as this photo taken on 19 December 2014 shows.

Then



2b



&

Now

