A little bit of history was made on 26 August 2015 when DBS 66187 hauled the first train of HTAs (bogie hopper wagons) to Gwaun cae Gurwen (GCG) to load coal destined for Aberthaw Power Station. The normal coal flow from GCG is in MEA box wagons to Onllwyn, where it is blended before onward transit to Aberthaw Power Station.

The photo, taken on 26 August 2015 depicts 66187 heading 6G05, the 0833 from Margam Yard, leaving the Heart of Wales Line at Pantyffynnon and onto the GCG branch where it will soon be facing the steeply graded line including one section of 1 in 40 at Garnant.

[Photo © Stephen Miles]

The `Heart of Wales Meanderer`, headed by diesels 37612 and 37611, tackling the Sugar Loaf on 21st April 2014. [Photo © Stephen Miles]

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Cymdeithas Teithwyr Rheilffordd Canol Cymru

Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association

HoWLTA NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2015

Number 134

PRICE £1.50 Free to Members

Loughor Viaduct [Photo © Stephen Miles]

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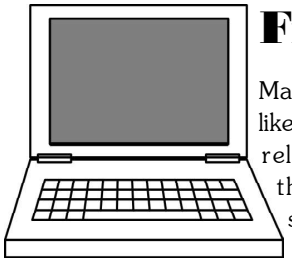


From the Editor's Desktop

Many readers will, like me I suspect, be relieved to know that HoWLTA seems to have weathered the emergency that arose during the summer with the imminent loss of several officers and committee members. As you can read elsewhere in this issue our members rallied at the AGM and since, and we are now well on the way to having a full committee again (although, also as you will read elsewhere, we could still benefit from more volunteers - particularly to fill the still-vacant posts of Secretary and Minutes Secretary).

Of necessity this issue is largely devoted to domestic matters - the AGM Minutes, reports from several individual stations, news of the important work of the HoWLF, our new Chairman's first letter and, several items referring to one of our longest standing members, the late George Scarfe.

But there's still room for drawing attention to some of the joys of our line. Something that I am sure George would share.

Peter Berry

HoWLTA Annual Draw

Thank you to everybody who entered the draw which is an important generator of income for HoWLTA. More than 1,400 tickets were bought and the lucky winners are:

£100	No.2396	Mrs Emma Carmichael, Llandrindod
£75	No.533	Mr. P. Sutton, Llanwrtyd
£50	No.732	D.S. & C.A. Gwynne, Rhandirmwyn
£25	No.3316	Anne Smith, Llanelli
£25	No.2984	Mr. C. Lloyd, London E2
£15	No.255	Mr. J.L. Davies, Deal, Kent
£15	No.1742	Miss J. Price, Knighton
£10	No.14	Mr. William Francis, Llandrindod
£10	No.2365	I. Greaves, Bucknell
£10	No.478	Mr. David Collett, Studley, Warks

FRONT COVER PICTURE

Taken at low tide on 27th June 2015 the photograph shows a Class 150/2 unit forming the 0900 (SO) Shrewsbury to Cardiff Central service (via the Heart of Wales Line) as it crosses the Loughor viaduct between Llanelli and Swansea.

[Photo (c) Stephen Miles]

HoWLTA CONTACT DETAILS

The address for general correspondence and all HoWLTA membership matters is

HoWLTA, c/o Llandovery Station, Llandovery SA20 0BG

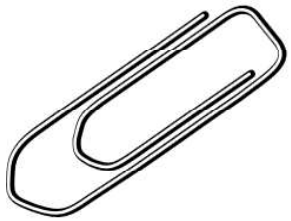
Letters relating to the HoWLTA Newsletter should either be posted to

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. 17

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

HoWLTA NEWSLETTER Advertising Rates

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

	One issue	*1 year (4 issues)*
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 Copy Dates

Winter 2016 (pub. mid-February	Copy by 25th January 2016
Spring 2016 (pub. mid-May)	Copy by 25th April 2016
Summer 2016 (pub. mid-August)	Copy by 25th July 2016
Autumn 2016 (pub. mid-November)	Copy by 24th October 2016

CONFIDENTIALITY OF PERSONAL INFORMATION ON MEMBERS

HoWLTA uses the personal information that members provide to us for internal administration purposes including maintenance of a membership database, sending out the HoWLTA Newsletter through the postal system and to notify details of any other relevant HoWLTA activities. No information is, or ever will be, passed to any person or organisation outside of HoWLTA without your personal and specific permission.

If you wish to place any additional restrictions on the use of your personal information, please contact the Membership Secretary.

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 & 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
Llangynllo	Anne Deakins; George Scarfe (unofficial adopters)
Llanbister Road	John & Lynda Morris
Dolau	Steve Vipond; Dolau Action Group
Penybont	Sue & Tony Cooke
Llandrindod	Llandrindod Wells (Cefnllys) CP School
Builth Road	Sara Poulson
Cilmeri	Ann & Stephen Frodsham
Garth	Joasephine Lewis; Janet Williams
Llangammarch	Ron Birchell; Llangammarch Community Council
Llanwrtyd Wells	John Price; Ainsley Jones; Station Action Group
Sugar Loaf	Peter & Margaret Joyce
Cynghordy	Gill Wright
Llandovery	Llandovery Town Council; Friends of Llandovery Station
Llanwrda	Richard Rees; Hywel Jones
Llangadog	Dennis Harrison; Marion Lomax
Llandeilo	Ros Bellamy
Ffairfach	David Rimmer
Llandybie	Gwyn Irving
Ammanford	Ammanford Lions
Pantyffynnon	Mike Smith, Amman Valley Railway
Pontarddulais	Pontardulais Partnership
Llangennech	Llangennech Community Council; David Edwards
Bynea	Friends of Bynea Station, Deryk Cundy
Llanelli	Friends of Llanelli Station
Gowerton	vacancy
Swansea	Felicity Cobley

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

150 Years from Knighton to Llandrindod

On October 10th, the Mayors of Llandrindod and Knighton opened the curtains on a plaque commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Central Wales Railway reaching Llandrindod. The band played, the crowd gathered, the Town Criers from both Towns shouted and Queen Victoria came out of retirement to celebrate. It was a fitting tribute to our old friend, George Scarfe, whose meticulous attention to detail which made possible the task of taking over from him when he became too ill to carry on, and his many friends who wanted to give something back, turned a quiet celebration into a special occasion.

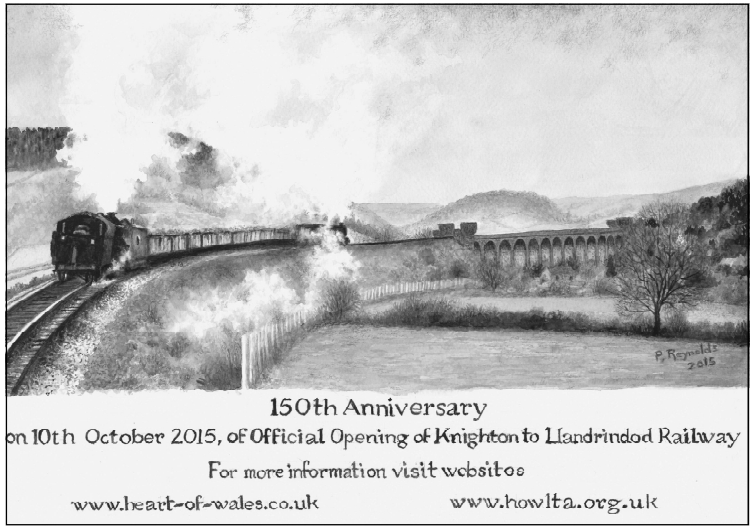
It gave me an insight into what needs to be done to make things like this work. It takes time and effort so now must begin the work for the big one in 2018 when it will be 150 years from the time the whole line came together at Llandovery. There will of course be one big event but the idea is to have things going on throughout the year at all the stations to make it really local to the communities that the Line serves and to do this I will need your help. Bring me your ideas; help me to engage with all the towns and villages and most importantly the people who make your communities tick.

At the same time the new franchise will be nearly due – another opportunity to show the world what a wonderful place is the Heart of Wales as it winds its way through cuttings and along embankments into the borderlands of the Mynd Hills and Shropshire.

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

^ *The plaque unveiled to record the 150th Anniversary.* [Photo © Brian Dotson]

v *A much reduced reproduction of the poster used to publicise the 150th Anniversary.* [Artwork © P Reynolds]



MEMORIES OF GEORGE SCARFE

As many of you will be aware, George passed away on September 22th. A memorial service was held at Holy Trinity Church, Llandrindod, on October 17th, attended by at least 250 people, many of them being HoWLTA members.

George got to know the Central Wales Line (as it was then always known) in the 1950s, largely due to staying with relations at Lloyney, near Knucklas. He moved to Llandrindod in 1978, and when HoWLTA was formed in 1981 he soon became a member. He joined the Committee in 1983 and was part of the membership team from 1983 to 1989.

In 1983 George's interest in practical support for railway activities led him to volunteer to look after Dolau station, and the famed Dolau Station Action Group was formed. George became co-ordinator of the group, a position from which he stepped down a mere 30 years later, having led the volunteers to numerous awards for their gardening and station maintenance activities. It was typical of his self-effacing nature that George wished to be known as co-ordinator rather than chairman – he was interested only in results, not power in any of its forms.

As if that wasn't enough, during the 1980s George played a major part in organising the on-train buffet service which HoWLTA provided at that time, mainly on Saturdays. He was determined to make the line as attractive as possible in order to attract potential passengers.

Even when he stepped down from his co-ordinator role at Dolau, George continued to volunteer at Pen-y-bont and Llangynllo stations helped to co-ordinate station adoption groups at the northern end of the line. He had very high standards, which we must do our best to maintain, not least as a tribute to him.

George re-joined the HoWLTA Committee in 2014 with the express purpose of organising celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the official opening of the Central Wales Railway between Knighton and Llandrindod. The photo exhibition and film show in Llandrindod on August 29th was his brainchild, as was the unveiling of a plaque at Llandrindod station on October 10th, the exact anniversary of the opening of the line. Aeron Hughes and his helpers, Gill Wright and Geraint Morgan of ATW were instrumental in carrying out George's wishes.

George was a quiet, unassuming man who was loved and respected by many different groups of people: his railway enthusiast friends, the railwaymen at all levels with whom he came into contact, the church community in Llandrindod, his former work colleagues and neighbours. In his final days, he was anxious not to make a fuss or to be a burden to others: but he had helped so many people over the years that everybody now wanted to help and support him. We will miss him greatly. ***Mike Watson***

Editor : I wanted to include a suitable photo of George to go with these tributes.The front cover of an earlier Newsletter (#82) seems apt, showing George meeting HRH The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at Dolau. The more recent beautiful colour photos of Dolau Station taken by Mike Evans are also approprate (see pp. 14-15).

News from the Association

Membership Matters

200 Club : HoWLTA's Monthly Draw

The latest winners of the monthly draw are:

August 2015

£20 R G Davies, Bucknell
£15 C B James, Swansea
£10 R Lloyd, Swansea
£10 P Adams, Ludlow
£10 P Lodwick, Lampeter

September 2015

£20 B Glenister, Chesham
£15 K Lloyd, Carmarthen
£10 D Pembridge, Telford
£10 R Palmer, Llandod
£10 D Davies, Ammanford

October 2015

£20 R Deegan, Lancaster
£15 R J Kerby, Woking
£10 A D Thomas, Ammanford
£10 Mrs Ledgard, Ffairfach
£10 A M Richards, Garth

Congratulations to our latest winners!
All 200 Club and membership subscriptions were due for renewal on 1st March 2015. Have *you* renewed or joined us? Just £5 per number, buy as many as you wish!

Nigel Bird, Membership Secretary.

2015/16 Committee Meetings

These will continue to be held just before publication of the HoWLTA Newsletter each quarter. Intermediate meetings (IM), usually at 6 weekly intervals, will be held as required. Meetings will normally be held at Llanwrtyd Wells Station, timed to fit train times (usually starting at 11.15am , and ending at 3pm).
Saturday, 9th January 2016 (QtlyM)
Saturday, 5th March 2016 (IM) *
Saturday, 16th April 2016(QtlyM)
Saturday, 28th May 2016 (IM) *
Saturday, 9th July 2016 (QtlyM)
Saturday, 3rd September 2016 (IM) *
Saturday, 15th October 2016 (QtlyM)

** Dates to be confirmed.*

2016 Annual General Meeting

The next AGM will start at 11.30am on ***Saturday, 17th September 2016*** at the Victoria Hall, Llanwrtyd Wells.

Non-Committee Members

All members are entitled to attend the AGM of course. Non-committee members are also most welcome to attend ordinary quarterly or intermediate committee meetings, but are advised to confirm time, date and venue with the Vice-Chairman, Mike Watson on *alunwatson.hotmail.com* beforehand.

Newsletter Stuffing Session

The next stuffing session (for Newsletter #135) will be at Llandovery Station on ***Thursday, 11th February 2016***. This will start at 11am to suit the arrival time from Swansea (but will be a bit early for the train from Shrewsbury).

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* .

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.

Please remember our address for correspondence :
HoWLTA, c/o Llandovery Station, Llandovery SA20 0BG

HOWLTA INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE PERIOD 1ST JULY 2014 TO 28TH FEBRUARY 2015

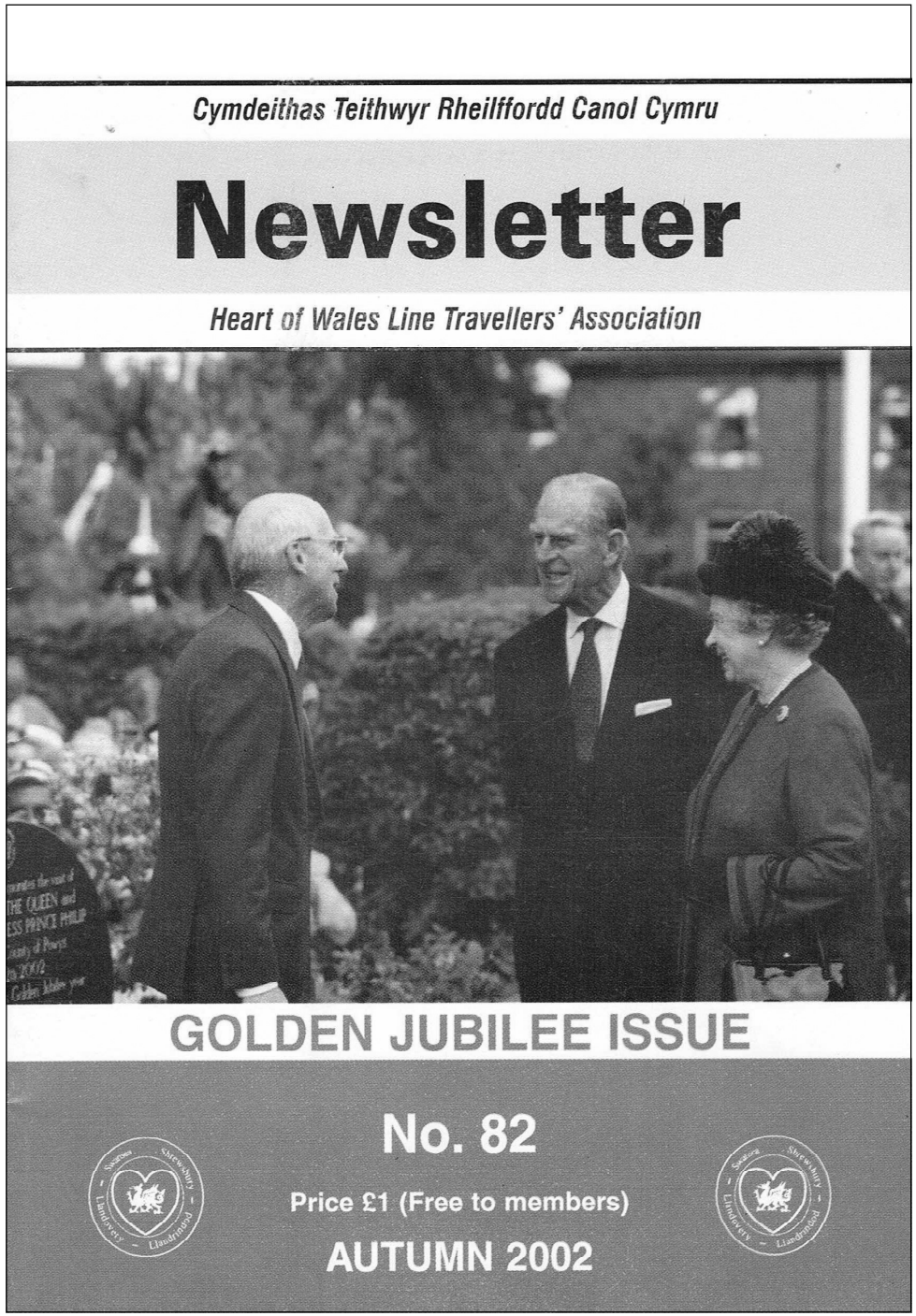
Year ended 30/6/2014			
	INCOME		
3637.50	Subscriptions		953.50
1855.00	200 Club		428.00
1838.00	Raffle		1460.00
2114.20	Donations		480.50
941.30	Sale of goods		233.30
325.00	Railcards		60.00
158.02	Royalties		45.52
1455.00	HOWL Forum		0.00
165.00	Advertisements		0.00
0.00	Old cheques written back		103.77
0.00	HOWTA		1626.67
0.00	Newsletter		233.97
12489.02			**5625.23**
	Less: EXPENDITURE		
5351.42	Newsletter Inc envelopes and postage	3828.90	
990.00	200 club	690.23	
449.00	Raffle	481.00	
92.00	Fees, subs	0.00	
436.69	Insurance	0.00	
100.00	Railcards	55.00	
279.97	Walks booklets	0.00	
3500.00	HOWL Forum	0.00	
1350.00	Surveys	0.00	
40.00	Lottery licence	0.00	
425.80	Timetables and business cards	45.00	
6.30	Travel	0.00	
245.00	Grants to stations	19.94	
118.65	AGM	0.00	
1000.00	HOWLDC donation	0.00	
57.35	Miscellaneous	0.00	
0.00	General postage	200.65	
0.00	Station audit forms	10.88	
0.00	AGM Costs	12.00	
14442.18			**5343.60**
-1953.16	**EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE**		**281.63**

HOWLTA BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 28TH FEBRUARY 2015

30/6/2014	**CURRENT ASSETS**		
38000.00	Investments		33000.00
1677.48	Bank Account		11601.24
39677.48			
	Less: CURRENT LIABILITIES		
0	Receipts in Advance	4377.53	
0	Creditor	264.60	
			4642.13
39677.48			**39959.11**
	Represented By:		
41630.64	Brought forward		39677.48
-1953.16	Excess of Income over Expenditure		281.63
39677.48			**39959.11**

Checked and reviewed K J Morris, 24/6/15



150th Anniversary Celebrations

Civic dignitaries lead railway's 150th anniversary celebrations

Last weekend (10th October) saw the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Central Wales Railway between Knighton and Llandrindod.

Opened in 1865, the line covers 19 miles through the uplands of north Powys and includes the stations of Knighton, Knucklas, Llangynllo, Llanbister Road, Dolau, Pen-y-Bont and Llandrindod.

The Mayor of Knighton, Councillor Chris Branford travelled by train where she was welcomed at Llandrindod by the Town's Mayor, Councillor Chris Rouse.

A commemorative plaque was unveiled at the station while the Llandrindod Town Band entertained guests and passengers on the platform.

Speaking at the station, Councillor Rouse said; "The railway has always played a key role in the history of Llandrindod and it's important to recognise this historic milestone. Each year we welcome many visitors to the area who come and explore our magnificent scenery while the train is also important for commuters and students."

Civic parties after unveiling of commemorative plaque, including the town criers, Jan Swindale and Derrick Price; the Mayor of Knighton, Chris Bamford and the Mayor of Llandrindod, Chris Rouse. On the far right is Gill Wright of HoWLTA and next to her is Queen Victoria (aka Sue Spoonley) [Photos © Brian Dotson]

Gill Wright, committee member from the Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association said; "It's been wonderful to see so many people come along to celebrate the anniversary, which helps raise public awareness of the line. On a personal note, I'm pleased to have been involved in helping deliver today's successful event, which had originally been planned by our colleague George Scarfe, who sadly passed away recently."

Further events are planned in 2018 when the Heart of Wales Line, which runs between Llanelli and Craven Arms, will celebrate 150 years since completion in its entirety

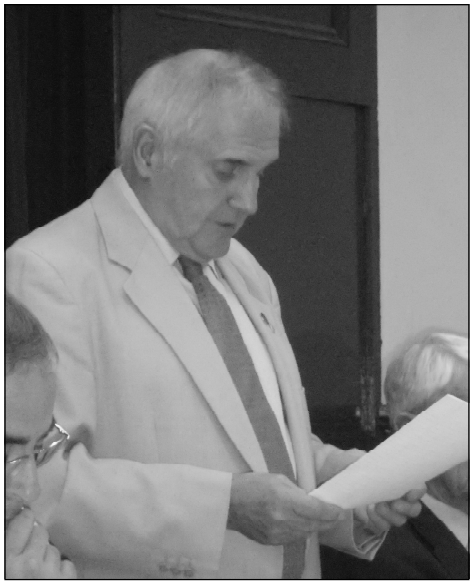
Geraint Morgan

Community Affairs Manager, ATW

Regular reports from station representatives/ adopters, even if only annually, would also be very welcome. Adoption of the report was proposed by Gill Wright, seconded by Richard Watkins and carried unanimously

10. Appointment of President and Vice-Presidents

The Committee gave notice that, in accordance with its powers under section 5(f)(2) of the Constitution, it had appointed the following to serve from today's meeting until the 2016 AGM:



HoWLTA President Prof Stuart Cole

[Photo © Peter Berry]

President: Prof Stuart Cole

Vice-Presidents: Lord Berkeley of Knighton, Peter Black AM, Byron Davies MP, Geraint Davies MP, Keith Davies AM, Suzy Davies AM, Philip Dunne MP, Jonathan Edwards MP, Nia Griffith MP, Mike Hedges AM, Julie James AM, Bethan Jenkins AM, Daniel Kawczynski MP, William Powell AM, Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, Simon Jenkins AM, Joyce Watson AM and Kirsty Williams AM

[NB: (1) Chris Davies MP accepted our invitation to be a Vice-President after the AGM and so has been added to the above list

(2) Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth has had to stand down as a Vice-President as he has become a Minister in the Wales Office

(3) Altaf Hussain AM and Carolyn Harris MP did not reply to our invitations to them: the Committee will approach them again as soon as possible.]

11. Election of Committee for 2015-16

The meeting expressed its thanks to Nigel Bird, Len Elliott, Gwyn Irving, Kevin Knell, George Scarfe, who had had to stand down from the Committee for a variety of reasons, for their work on behalf of the Association

The following valid nominations for 2015-16 had been received and those concerned were declared elected, on the proposal of Catherine Berry, seconded by Christopher Price and carried unanimously:

Chairman: Brian Dotson;Vice-Chairman: Mike Watson; Treasurer: Andrew Cook; Publicity Co-ordinator: David Edwards; Newsletter Editor: Peter Berry; Committee members: Ray Davies, Chris Horrocks, Rex Lloyd, Roger Price and Gill Wright.

Mike Watson pointed out that that left Committee vacancies for Secretary, and Membership Secretary, and that we also definitely needed a Minutes Secretary, an Assistant Membership Secretary and Assistant Treasurer, as well as a variety of other volunteers for various tasks. He said that following the recent appeal letter to members, Rob Hulme had offered his services as Membership Secretary and that a further ten members had said they would help if needed. It was planned that after the next Committee meeting, these people would be contacted with a list of specific roles remaining to be filled

12. Election of Auditor

The meeting noted that the accounts presented today had been audited by Mr K J Morris and that he was willing to perform this task again in the current financial year. There being no other candidates from the floor, Mr Morris was elected, on the proposal of Rob Christie, seconded by Gill Wright and carried unanimously

13. Discussion of motions notified in advance by members: none had been received

14. Open Forum: no items

15. Any Other Business: no items

> the need to work with the business community to develop the line for the economic benefit of the areas which it serves

> that it is essential that full electrification reaches Swansea, and not stop short at Cardiff or elsewhere, such that the new bi-modal IEP trains run under diesel power for the remainder of the journey

8. Constitutional amendments

The Committee proposed the following amendments to the Constitution and Rules of the Association:

Section 5:

> Amend (c) to (c) (1)

> Add new clause (c) (2): "elected and co-opted members of the Committee, but not the President or Vice-Presidents, must be fully paid-up members of the Association"

Mike Watson explained that the purpose was to close a loophole which had come to light during the year. There were no questions or comments, and adoption was proposed by Tim Record, seconded by Tom Taylor and agreed unanimously

9. Officers' reports

9.1 Treasurer

1. In the unavoidable absence of the Treasurer (Ray Trend), copies of his report were distributed, together with the audited income and expenditure account covering the period July 1st 2014 to February 28th 2015 (the latter taking account of the decision at last year's AGM to change the end date of the Association's financial year)

2. A member asked about the difference between the £40k figure for the investment in the report compared to the income and expenditure account figures of £38k for 30/06/14 and £33k for 28/02/15. It was explained that this was because of transfers made at our request from the investment account to the current account since July 2012, to cover day to day running costs

3. A member who had not been present at the 2014 AGM asked why the investment had been made in the first place. It was stated that this was done in order to try to improve on the interest received on members' funds, but that the original investment was made into a diversified, mainly UK-based fund, whereas at some unspecified date it apparently became an investment into a single property company based in South Africa. The Committee is adamant that it has never been given a written or verbal explanation for this change, still less that its approval was ever sought. Because of this we feel that members' funds are at a significantly increased risk and so have been trying to get the entire remaining balance returned, to be placed in a standard building society account (as was the case before the investment was made)

4. A member asked how the Association could continue, given that £32k of its funds are tied up in South Africa: it was stated that we have had to cut expenditure to a minimum, but that we have enough income from subscriptions, the 200 Club and donations to cope with normal running costs. However, a consequence has been that we have been unable to afford more than £500 towards publicity for the new Mondays to Fridays timetable

5. Adoption of the report and accounts was then proposed by Tom Taylor, seconded by Nicola Coulson and carried, with one abstention

9.2 Membership Secretary

In the unavoidable absence of Nigel Bird, Mike Watson read his report to the meeting. As at September 7th, there were 805 members (with corporate members counted as one, rather than as ten as in the past, and joint memberships counted as two). There were also 363 members of the "200 Club". Adoption of the report was proposed by Rob Christie, seconded by Brian Maund and carried unanimously

9.3 Newsletter Editor

The Editor, Peter Berry, said that four quarterly editions of the newsletter had been published, as usual. The next copy date was to be October 26th. The number of copies produced was declining, largely due to the decline in the number of members, particularly due to removal of non-payers from the list: Peter felt that it was very important that we should try to reverse this trend. As far as content of the newsletter is concerned, he would like to publish a series of "along the line" articles, particularly because he receives little copy specific to the northern and southern extremities of the route.

Along the Line....

Llangadog

Our adopters team of three is now an adopters team of two as Eileen has departed for pastures new in Bristol. However, we shall endure and march ever onward as we have always done in the past. And, marching forward this autumn we have our new hedge to be planted in November. This will be a Green Beech hedge (we cannot afford the high cost of Copper beech) of about 20 metres to screen Arriva's awful concrete and wire fence bordering the platform edge. This will partly screen the side yard of Station House which has been used for commercial purposes in the past. Also, and conversely of course it will screen the platform from Station House property. We have high hopes.

Our bushes and flowers in their wooden boxes are looking very presentable and we have had the good fortune to receive a small supply of Tanalised timber----enough to complete yet another standard box. Eileen donated another bush for it before her departure and we hope to have it installed before September is out. Our line of bush boxes grows ever longer and we may well write to Arriva asking if they can extend our platform by a few metres to accommodate them all.

Finally ---- a message all other Adopters. We have just received an email from the Woodland Trust offering bundles of trees for a variety of different objectives---hedging---pretty colourful trees-----hardy trees and trees for wetlands etc. So, if you need trees have a look at the Woodland Trust website. Sadly, their offer does not include Copper Beech.

Dennis Harrison, Marion Lomax

Knucklas

Folk Down the Track has been going now for 5 years. Every third Thursday of the month there is Folk Music played in the bar at the Castle Inn, Knucklas - it is an open session so anyone can sing or play. We always start just after 7pm so train travelers can come and join us.

In February, April, June, August, October and December we also have a band playing in the function room and these evenings are advertised as Folk Down the Track.

I tend to send out the reminders to all our supporters only a few days beforehand and this seems to work well. If you have any questions please ring 01547-528223

Siggy Haynes

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

Penybont

We are passionate about Penybont Station. There used to be six of us - George, Bill and Rex who came over from Dolau to join us at the station about 2½ years ago. Unfortunately we have lost three stalwart companions within the last year, two have died and the third has health problems. We are now down to three, these being Polly, Margaret and Carole.

We have made great strides with areas after 30 years of neglect. The 'boys' uncovered the disused platform which was covered in grass and restored four original flower beds which have now been planted.

Last Autumn a retired Forestry Commission friend of George came and chain-sawed the 12 foot hedge on Platform 1 to a manageable height. We now have a lovely view of the fields and woodland beyond. This platform is really like a long flower border. Last year George and we three 'girls' worked on a 50 foot long ivy covered bed with snowberry. Margaret laying unearthed rocks for the back of the border by the hedge and George with crowbar and pick axe digging out the aforementioned culprits. Polly and I did the digging and planting. The soil was good and the plants have flourished with a colourful array of flowers.

We are now beginning on the next portion of the border and are just finishing a bed in the car park which is to be planted with daffodils and lady's mantle for a low maintenance eye catching corner.

Polly and I had a great surprise in mid-September when a film crew with Paul Merton turned up at the station. Curiosity overcame us and we took some distant photos while they were filming on Platform 1. Then they asked us if we would like to chat to Paul Merton. This we did and within about 10 minutes he motioned the approaching train to stop, as he was catching the train to Knucklas. This episode was part of a documentary series about Request Stops across Britain's Railways. So Penybont will be famous!

Dedication of seat to Bill Smith at Penybont. The ladies are the gardeners.

Any volunteers keen to join us?!

Carole Taylor

for use on the HWL and elsewhere. Michael Vaughan said that this was a matter for the Welsh Government to decide. A bigger issue in his view was the need for an overall rolling stock strategy by the WG/ Dept for Transport, given that in 2020 most of ATW's fleet would be obsolete in terms of new DDA regulations

> why the first northbound train through Bucknell on Mondays to Fridays was now much earlier and so less convenient for (for example) school students: it was stated that the timetable had been accepted by the WG on the basis that it was the best that could be achieved by re-organising the use made of a finite number of trains

> whether connections at Craven Arms could be improved, especially on Sundays: ATW replied that the timetable was market-driven

> how passengers could have greater influence over WG and ATW, in particular by seeking membership of ATW's Passenger Forum: it was stated that the method of choosing the members of the Forum was under review

> whether connections between buses and trains at Llandrindod could be improved: while it was agreed that improvement was desirable, the bus services subsidised by Powys CC were themselves under review due to financial constraints

5. Report by a representative of Network Rail

1. Ian Messner of NR had sent his apologies, but had supplied a report on NR issues relevant to the line, copies of which were distributed by David Edwards (HoWLTA Publicity Co-ordinator), who then took members through the contents. These included:

> the lack of progress on wider use of the fibre-optic cable which exists along the route of the line, because of negotiations taking place at GB level

> the pilot scheme near to Cynghordy viaduct to remove lineside vegetation to improve views for passengers

> plans for a community hub on NR land at Llandeilo

>gradual progress with the restoration of Pantyffynnon station building to its original condition

> some safety-related work and further proposals at a few of the level crossings on the route

2. Members noted that the report did not refer to the issues which, according to ATW (see above), are NR's responsibility and have caused about two-thirds of the operational problems on the line

6. Report by the Heart of Wales Line Forum Joint Line Development Officers

1. Copies of their report were circulated by David Edwards and Gill Wright. It referred to:

> publicity for the new Mondays to Fridays timetable, including a new "Five Great Days Out" leaflet

> the Heart of Wales Line Enterprise Network project, especially the on-going work to provide a community hub at Llandeilo station

> meeting NR to discuss what might be done to speed up journeys on the line

> representing the Forum (and therefore HOWLTA, which is a funding member thereof) at a large number of meetings relating to promotion of the line and to the future of Community Rail Partnerships, including the Forum, in the next Wales & Borders rail franchise

> supporting ATW by acting as a "minder" at media events relating to the line

> promotion of the line via the Forum and HOWLTA websites, and on social media

2. There were no questions or comments from members arising from the report

7. President's Address

Prof Stuart Cole referred in his address to a range of matters, including:

> the inadequacies of the Welsh language version of the customer information system at stations

> that additional rolling stock was unlikely to be available to the Wales & Borders franchise for at least four years

> the need for improvements to the revised Mondays to Fridays timetable

> problems at (for example) Swansea Loop East Junction, where the layout was too restricted to allow optimum timetabling of connections with main line services

HEART OF WALES LINE TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATION

Draft Minutes of the 34th Annual General Meeting

The Victoria Hall, Llanwrtyd Wells

Saturday September 19th 2015

1.Introductions and welcome: as the Chairman, Kevin Knell, was unable to be present due to family illness, Mike Watson (Vice-Chairman) chaired the meeting. He welcomed members and stated that, although the Mayor of Llanwrtyd Wells had been invited to be present, he was not and had not sent an apology

[L to R] Publicity Co-ordinator David Edwards; Vice-Chairman Mike Watson; President Stuart Cole; and Committee Member Rex Lloyd. [Photo © Peter Berry]

2. Apologies for absence: were received from Alan Belcher, Peter Black AM, Inez Bond, Angela Bridges, Byron Davies MP, Brian Dotson, Philip Dunne MP, Jonathan Edwards MP, Len Elliott, Tim Haines, Jan Herraty, Chris Horrocks, Julie James AM, Margaret Joyce, Peter Joyce, Daniel Kawczynski MP, Kevin Knell, Roy Palmer, William Powell AM, George Scarfe, Ray Trend, John Turney, Joyce Watson AM and Kirsty Williams AM

3. Adoption of the minutes of the 33rd AGM, held at Llanwrtyd Wells on Saturday September 20th 2014: adoption of the minutes was proposed by Catherine Berry, seconded by Rob Christie and agreed unanimously

4. Report by a representative of Arriva Trains Wales

1. Ben Davies and Michael Vaughan represented ATW. Ben's report included reference to:

> PPM (performance) statistics – on its network, ATW had achieved PPM figures placing it fifth out of 26 train operating companies. On the HWL, over 10 reporting periods an average PPM of about 90% had been achieved. Roughly 66% of operational problems were the responsibility of Network Rail and the remainder of ATW. He acknowledged that on a line like the HWL with long gaps between trains, nothing less than 100% performance was acceptable

> the new Mondays to Fridays timetable, which Ben felt makes Llandovery to Swansea and Llandrindod to Shrewsbury commutable: this market should be developed. Some limited tweaking of the timetable was planned in December to reduce some of the lengthy waits at passing loops

> the Welsh language version of the customer information screens at stations needing improvement, but this was subject to money being found

> some halts having received humps on their platforms to improve accessibility, and that it was hoped to take the programme further, again subject to funding being available

> funds for an additional shelter on the northbound platform at Llandrindod and replacement shelters at Llangennech having been provided by the Welsh Government, but the shelters had yet to be erected

> the return of the senior citizens' free travel concession from October 1st to March 31st, funded by the Welsh Government. Ben said that ATW was unable to provide additional coaches to take account of this, particularly during the period of the Rugby World Cup

2. Questions and comments from members concerning this report included:

> whether the withdrawn London Transport D78 trains being refurbished by Viva Rail could be used on short routes in Wales such as Wrexham to Bidston, thereby releasing some conventional units

Builth Wells

Arriva provided a relief service at Builth Road - in the form of a high quality loo for use by visitors to the Royal Welsh Show.

This was favourably commented on by passengers - thanks Arriva!

[Photo © David Edwards]

David Edwards

Llangennerch

On 6th May 2015, the 0900 Shrewsbury – Cardiff Central formed by 150264 slows for the Llangennech stop and passes the new, but, at that time, not yet in use (hence the barrier in the left foreground), raised platforms at the north end of the station. There is a new yellow fence to protect passengers from the drop at the rear as the raised section does not cover the full width of the existing platform. ***Stephen Miles***

[Photo © Stephen Miles]

HoWL Forum update

People, organisational matters, money, and more

People.

Our Chairman for many years has been Cllr Mansel Williams: sadly, he has been unwell for some time. He has now resigned both as a Shropshire County Councillor and our Chairman. We send sincere thanks for his unstinting support over the years, and wish him and his family well. Our new Chairman is Cllr Paul Lloyd of Swansea, and we are grateful for his support.

Many of you will know of Phil Jackson, who has acted as our key Powys CC contact ever since the Forum was set up. Phil has just taken early retirement after 38 years with Powys: we thank him for his help and don't know how Powys will manage without him! Marc Lewis will take over as our link: an important role especially as all Forum finances are channelled via Powys CC. Phil's departure is symptomatic of the cutbacks being experienced in all of the Forum's Local Authority members – more about this below.

We've added to our stock of Professors: Prof Paul Salveson, founder of the UK wide Association of Community Rail Partnerships, has bought a house at Knighton and intends to share his time between there and Slaithwaite, his existing home. He's already very involved with our developing Enterprise Network. Arriva plc have also just signed him up as their Community Rail specialist so we look forward to ideas and support from him (and them!).

Finally, we were saddened by the recent passing of George Scarfe, and impressed by the wonderful turnout for his memorial service in Llandrindod. Truly, he, and his quiet but effective work will be missed.

The new timetable

We've not yet had official statistics about passenger numbers since May. A recent mini- survey, mainly of HoWLTA members, showed that there has been a broadly positive reaction to it. Of the survey respondents, which numbered over 100, 55% said they thought it was an improvement, 33% said no, and 12% saw both advantages and disadvantages. We plan further survey work and have already provided ATW with suggestions for improvements.

The Enterprise Network

Recent weeks have seen a good deal of work on getting approval for the siting of our new community 'hub' building at Llandeilo. Network Rail and Carmarthenshire CC are both behind the project, but each of them has processes and procedures to follow to grant approval. It's painfully slow but we're getitng there. I won't tempt Providence by estimating when the building will open, but we want it to be soon.....

A successful community engagement meeting was held in Llandeilo at which both Swansea to Crewe. The latter may well be a good choice for northbound journeys as a way of avoiding overcrowding on the 09.33 ex-Swansea, especially as it might allow you to return on the 14.05 from Shrewsbury, thereby possibly avoiding overcrowding on the 1825

At the time of writing this piece I am aware of a number of issues concerning the reliability of the service. These problems have caused much frustration and annoyance to passengers and your Committee. On a line like ours its very nature causes problems when things go wrong. However the responses from the various rail bodies to these difficulties have been less than acceptable at times and the Association is working hard to bring about better outcomes when problems arise. Please make sure that if you do experience significant delays and/or cancellation of your train, you make your travel difficulties known to ATW and send a copy of your complaint to HoWLTA. The Committee appreciates that this can be a time consuming task but the more you make ATW and your Committee aware of your travel difficulties, the more we can do to try to improve the service on the line and avoid these problems.

Finally, another long standing supporter of our line has taken the retirement path. I am referring to Phil Jackson of Powys County Council. For many years Phil has dealt with the finances of the Heart of Wales Line Forum. During this time he has greatly assisted the development of the Forum as a link body between local government and its representatives, the Welsh Government and various railway organisations associated with the line. More recently he has garnered resources against the difficult times being faced by these bodies, in order to publicise our railway line. We are extremely grateful for all his work over many years and wish him a long and fulfilling retirement.

Although it is only October as I write this piece there will not be another newsletter until the New Year, so may I take this opportunity to send Christmas greetings to all members and their families for the approaching season.

Brian Dotson, Chairman

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New Chairman's Letter – October 2015

It was very good to hear that the immediate difficulties regarding the shortage of volunteers to run the Association has been averted. A big thank you to all those members who offered their services. However, despite filling the main offices there are plenty of other roles for members to play their part in maintaining and improving the rail service provided on our line. If you think you can help then don't hesitate to contact one of the Officers shown on the contact page of this newsletter (p.18) – we would be very pleased to hear from you.

Nevertheless I am delighted to welcome Rob Hulme as Membership Secretary and Andrew Cook as Treasurer, together with Peter Joyce, who has volunteered to be Assistant Membership Secretary. However, we still need a Secretary, Minutes Secretary and volunteers to help with publicity, both for the Association itself and for the Line: is there anyone else out there who feels that they can help with these tasks?

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the Annual General Meeting but I am looking forward to working with the Committee to improve the rail services on our line.

However my task now is a very sad one, to offer the Association's deepest condolences to the family of the late George Scarfe. George was known to many of you for his sterling work over many years for the Association, whether helping at Dolau or Pen-y-bont stations or keeping members informed of any special trains using the line. His dedication was an example to all of us and carried out in his quiet, unassuming manner. He will be much missed by many, especially in the Llandrindod area.

It was through his endeavours, along with others, that on October 10th we were able to celebrate the exact 150th anniversary of the opening of the Central Wales Railway from Knighton to Llandrindod Wells. A goodly gathering of dignitaries and townsfolk in both towns came along to see a plaque unveiled on the down platform at Llandrindod to commemorate this milestone in the line's history. Our thanks go to Gill Wright, who took over the preparations begun by George Scarfe, the Llandrindod Silver Band and Geraint Morgan of Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) for all their help on this occasion.

We are now in the period of the Welsh concessionary bus passes providing free travel on the line's trains. This will continue until March 2016, so please take every opportunity to use the line for destinations on the line and further afield! Please remember that on Mondays to Fridays there are new trains which might help your journey plans, at 06.42 Llandovery to Swansea and 06.03

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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.

HoWLEN and the 'hub' were discussed. Many ideas and offers of help were forthcoming. Further HoWLEN events are to be held along the line in the next few weeks.

Organisationally, HoWLEN is moving ahead and we have worked with Wales Cooperative Centre to discuss what organisational form the Network should take. It seems likely that we will simply build on the existing Heart of Wales Line Development Company Ltd.

At its September meeting, the Forum received a report on HoWLEN's progress and approved future development work, which is being carried out by a steering group which is in effect part of the Forum. News about HoWLEN is to be found at *www.howlenterprise.co.uk*

Working with HoWLTA

HoWLTA is a key member of the Forum. The work that Mike Watson and colleagues have done to revitalise its committee is very welcome and they are to be congratulated! The Forum will need all the practical support it can get, to work effectively in the runup to the new Wales and Borders franchise (due in 2018 but likely, sources advise, to be later than that). We look forward to collaborating with them and are also grateful for their financial contribution.

Finances and the Future

Local Authority changes already referred to mean that their funding of the Forum is much lower than in the past. Whilst Arriva has pledged to increase its own input until the franchise end. Visit Wales - a previous funder – has reorganised itself and so far not contributed. All of which means a budget already less than half it was 10 years ago, and anticipated to lessen year by year.

This was just one of the issues discussed when representatives of all five Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) in Wales recenlty met Minister Mrs Edwina Hart to discuss their future role and funding – now and after the introduction of the new franchise. She agreed on the need to take action and has asked her officials to collaborate with us in producing a report and recommendations on the matter by the end of November. We will do this, taking particular account of the way in which recent and forthcoming franchises have built CRPs in to their structure.

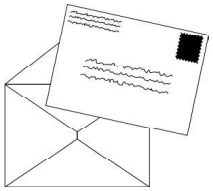
120 mile stations gardens

HoWLTA gardeners will have the opportunity on 21st November to meet and discuss needs for next year and how we take forward the 120 mile stations gardens ideas. To have a string of connected but individual stations is a challenge, but to achieve maximum impact it is the connections that make the whole stronger.

Already a number have indicated their wish to be there and as usual the date does not suit everybody, but I hope the venue, Llanwrtyd Station, will. It is a chance to see what is happening with another building on the line. Time will be to suit the arrival of the morning trains. It is also an opportunity to swap plants that being a bit too much of a good thing in one place but would be wonderful in another. There are a few spare places but it will now be first come first served .

David Edwards / Gill Wright

Post Bag



Emergency Letter

Many thanks to those members who responded to the Committee's emergency letter sent out at the beginning of September.

We now have an Assistant Treasurer (Rob Hulme having offered to do this in addition to being Membership Secretary - which makes logistical sense). In addition, Peter Joyce has offered to be Assistant Membership Secretary, for which we are very grateful - Rob will contact him shortly. However, the Committee decided that we still need to fill the following posts if HoWLTA is to be as effective as possible in its support for the line:

Secretary [Committee post]

Minutes Secretary [Committee post]

(these two could be the same person if a suitable volunteer was to come forward)

Assistant Publicity Officers (to publicise the line and the Association, helping David Edwards) - or there could be a publicity sub-group - these people need not be Committee members

Campaigning sub-group - to lobby politicians and the rail industry for improvements, with particular focus on the Assembly elections next May.

If any members would like to take on one (or more!) of these roles, please contact me.

Mike Watson (Vice-Chairman)

Cynghordy Repairs Update

The defects were far more extensive than originally thought, the contractors were told to stand down and new methodology designed. This is now complete but we have to reapply for listed buildings which is a 3 month process.

We are in the process of trialling a few layers to demonstrate to CADW and NRW the type of fixing in the hope of speeding up the consents.

Ian Messner, Customer Mngr NW

Appreciation

As a member of HoWLTA who lives some distance from the Heart of Wales Line, I rely entirely on the newsletter for information about the railway. I must say that since you have taken over editorship you have transformed its appearance which must be up there amongst the best of newsletters for voluntary organisations. With that in mind I wondered if you have ever considered including an article on how you transformed the layout. I too have started a quite modest friends type of newsletter and would enjoy tips on how to improve the appearance. The quality which you produce ensures that I remain a member even though I rarely am

[cont. on page 13]

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

Membership Matters!

Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association —— HoWLTA

Officials

President Professor Stuart Cole CBE

Vice-Presidents

Lord Berkeley of Knighton
Byron Davies MP
Geraint Davies MP
Suzy Davies AM
Jonathan Edwards MP
Mike Hedges AM
Bethan Jenkins AM
William Powell AM
Simon Thomas AM
Kirsty Williams AM
Peter Black AM
Chris Davis MP
Keith Davies AM
Philip Dunne MP
Nia Griffith MP
Julie James AM
Daniel Kawczynski MP
Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
Joyce Watson AM

Committee Members

Chairman : Brian Dotson, Llandrindod (01597-824408; brian@dotson.fsnet.co.uk)

Vice Chairman : Mike Watson, Swansea (alunwatson@hotmail.com)

Secretary : vacancy

Membership Secretary : Rob Hulme, Swansea (heartofwalesline@gmail.com)

Treasurer : Andrew Cook, Llangammarch Wells (andrew.cook@andrewc.net)

Minutes Sec : vacancy

Newsletter Editor : Peter Berry, Llangadog (01550-777980; psberry@tiscali.co.uk)

Publicity Co-ordinator : David Edwards, Llangennech (david.edwards5@which.net)

Committee Members :
Ray Davies, Bucknell (01547-530443)
Chris Horrocks, Church Stretton (chris@jhorrocks.go-plus.net)
Rex Lloyd, Swansea (01792-580324; stephanielafferty@hotmail.com)
Roger Price, Llanelli (01554-750045; roger@cambro-norman.com)
Gill Wright, Cynghordy (01550-750261; gillwright.glandwr@gmail.com)

PLEASE NOTE NEW ADDRESS for Correspondence :
HoWLTA, c/o Llandovery Station, Llandovery SA20 0BG

HoWLTA is affiliated to Railfuture and Better Transport

Unusual places for a Day Out:

No 1 in an occasional series:

Llangennech.

Now part of the ribbon development between Llanelli and Pontarddulais, Llangennech was once a completely separate rural village with its own hiring fair, 'stately home' (Llangennech Park), smithy, church and many shops.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries it was renowned for the quality of steam coal produced from the many mines in the locality, and also had two tinplate works, all rail connected. Most of the remains of these have now gone, though rail trackbeds, part of an early canal, and other artefacts can be spied if you look carefully enough. Look out for rails embedded in the surface of one of the roads to the village centre.

The village has much to offer the casual visitor. The station is on the edge of the Loughor Estuary (see p.1). There is a rudimentary beach (to which in 1927 large groups of up to 1000 visitors came on day trips from Landore and Morriston). Naturalists can still find much that is of interest amongst these wetlands, which are also popular with fishermen. The wetlands are easily accessed from the level crossing next to the station – do wear waterproof footwear! Spare a thought for Flt-Lt J T Wallace, pilot of a Canberra jet bomber that crashed into the marsh 120 yards from the station, exploding on impact. The accident occurred on January 13th 1958, leaving a 40 foot deep crater: the pilot's body was never found.

Inland, there is the enjoyable Troserch Community Woodland within 20 minutes walk, the other side of the village centre. You can find out more about it at *www.troserchwoodlands.co.uk*. There are footpaths and river banks to explore, and it's a great place to simply relax and meditate. Maybe you'll see the kingfisher……

The village also has a wonderful new community centre: Google 'Llangennech' for event details and other facts about the village. There are a number of good pubs: the Bridge Inn is popular for its excellent value for money carvery while at the other end of the village is Tafarn Morlais. There are others – and takeaways including a chippie!

Enjoy a trip to Llangennech. You can plan for your visit by visiting the sources above, and by getting hold of a copy of 'History of Llangennech', by Alwyn Charles, published in 1997. There are copies in Llangennech library….in the community centre. ***David Edwards***

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See page 27 for full advertising rates.

A Grand Day Out

I drove to Dolau station yesterday and a lovely lady, Sarah who lives opposite the station let me park in the drive to her farm.
While waiting for the train - and chatting with an Arriva chap - she brought out a tray of coffee for us. What hospitality!
I caught the train and got off at Sugar Loaf. What an extraordinary station that is! (Interestingly, the Conductor/Guard who took over at Llandrindod had never heard of Dolau!}
Using my Brompton folding bike I rode up to the car park, then walked to the top. What a fabulous view! Sadly, the railway is barely visible. It's not much good for steam train photos like it used to be.
Cycling back down via Llanwrtyd Wells and Llangamarch Wells, the road to Builth becomes pretty hilly.
A long soft drink in Builth revived me and I had a pleasant ride around the park, along with lots of other folk.
On to Builth Road for a stronger drink at the Cambrian Arms and I caught the train back to Dolau.
Sadly, the area around Builth Road is a bit of a mess. I gather there's a new owner in the station building now so, hopefully, things may improve.
I expect you have a lot of photos of the delightful Dolau station.
Here are a few more taken yesterday (31st July 2015.

Mike Evans
Leominster, Herefordshire

[Editor : we're always pleased to see photos of our line - see centre spread, pp 14-15)]

able to travel on this wonderfully scenic railway.
Just an idea for a possible article in future newsletters - could one station feature in the magazine in each edition, perhaps penned by a station adopter? With just a few lines and a photograph would help people like me to build up a picture of the railway. I do intend to travel the full length of the railway as soon as the opportunity arises. ***Paul Scott***

[*Editor :* Thanks for your generous comments. I'll give the first suggestion some thought, but, meanwhile, I have no hesitation in enthusiastically encouraging station adopters (and others) to submit news and/or photos of their local station for inclusion in our new Along the Line feature. (see pp.7-9)

A colourful welcome to Dolau. [Photos © Mike Evans]