



As They Were Forty Years Ago

Llandoverly (above) and Llanwrtydd Wells (below) stations as they were in May 1975. See page 2 for further details. Photographs © Stephen Miles.



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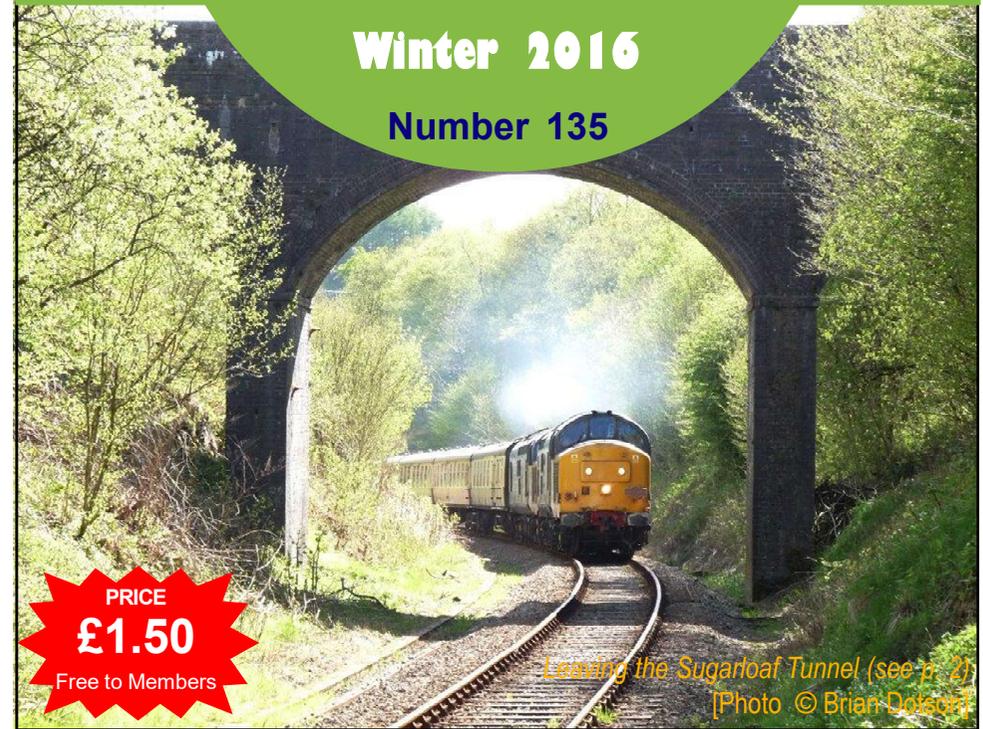
Heart of Wales Line
Travellers'
Association

HOWLTA

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2016

Number 135



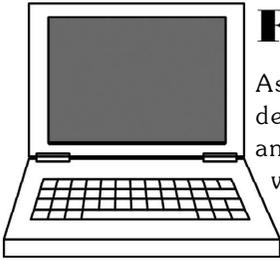
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*Leaving the Sugarloaf Tunnel (see p. 2)
[Photo © Brian Datsun]*

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From the Editor's Desktop

As I sit at my desktop on yet another wet and windy day at the end of January, the balmy weather of spring and summer are still months away. However, when I read the reports and articles in this issue, I become aware of a number of very significant developments which should be taking place in those months, and these cheer me up....

- The order for the Lineside Information Signs (see Newsletter # 127) has been placed, and they should be installed in the near future.

- The first of the specially designed Station

Community Hubs (see pp. 7-8) has received planning permission and will be installed at Llandeilo, possibly as early as next month.

- A series of drop-in meetings is being organised along the line to consider the future of our line - five such meetings are taking place in February alone (see p.17 for details).

- A revised timetable for the line will come into effect on 15th May and HoWLTA is actively seeking to achieve improvements in the service (see pp. 5-7).

- Lastly, and by no means least, it's worth dropping into Llandovery Station, not only for a cuppa and a snack, but to see their latest display of local talent.

It's all happening folks! *Peter Berry*

COVER PICTURES

Front Cover

A pair of Class 37s, numbers 37667 and 37606, in Direct Rail Services livery with 12 coaches on a Pathfinder tour from Tame Bridge Parkway-Bristol leaving Sugar Loaf Tunnel on Saturday 16th May 2015. Photographed by **Brian Dotson**.

Back Cover

Top : Llandovery station basking in evening sunlight in May 1975. Of particular interest is the signal box with its associated crossing gates and the canopy around the station building. Also note the NCL (National Carriers Ltd) lorry in the station forecourt as Llandovery was staffed and had a parcels collection / delivery facility at this time.

When it closed, the wooden top half of the signal box was purchased by the Gwili Railway and is now in use as the booking office and shop at Bronwydd Arms station, near Carmarthen.

Bottom : A general view of Llanwrtyd Wells on the same day looking north showing the ex LNWR signal box and former goods shed. Both photographed by **Stephen Miles**

HoWLTA CONTACT DETAILS

The address for general correspondence and all HoWLTA membership matters is

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

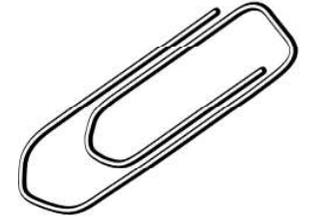
Letters relating to the HoWLTA Newsletter should either be posted to

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. 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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Summer 2016 (pub. mid-August)	Copy by 25th July 2016
Autumn 2016 (pub. mid-November)	Copy by 24th October 2016
Winter 2017 (pub. mid-February)	Copy by 23rd January 2017



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 (Cefnlllys) 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
Llandoverly	Llandoverly Town Council; Friends of Llandoverly Station
Llanwrda	Richard Rees; Hywel Jones
Llangadog	Dennis Harrison; Marion Lomax
Llandeilo	Ros Bellamy
Ffairfach	David Rimmer
Llandybie	Gwyn Irving
Ammanford	Ammanford Lions
Pantyyffnon	Mike Smith, AVRly Society
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

Opening of the Central Wales Railway

The following article is based on one written by the late George Scarfe as part of the preparations to celebrate last year's 150th anniversary of the opening of the line.

2015 marked the 150th anniversary of the official opening of the 20 miles of railway between Knighton and Llandrindod Wells by the Central Wales Railway Company. The anniversary encompassed the formal opening in 1865 of Llandrindod Station itself together with five intermediate stations at Knucklas, Llangynllo, Llanbister Road, Dolau and Penybont. Some of these stations were already operating a limited freight only service prior to the official opening.

The opening of the line on Tuesday 10th October 1865 was marked by the running of a special train from Shrewsbury to Llandrindod followed by a banquet attended by 150 people in a marquee in the grounds of The Rock House (later became The Rock Park Hotel), a short walk from Llandrindod Station.

When the train left Craven Arms, it was composed of 18 coaches hauled by two steam locomotives decorated with flags and bunting for the occasion. On arrival at Knighton Station, the train was met by a large crowd of well-wishers. Various dignitaries joined the train, foremost amongst whom were the Lord Lieutenant of Radnorshire, Sir John Walsh (later 1st Baron Ormathwaite), and the local MP, Mr R D (later Sir Richard) Green Price.

The band of the Radnorshire Rifle Volunteers also boarded the train and was to entertain the passengers "with stirring marches and popular tunes of the day" during the journey to Llandrindod. As the train departed from Knighton Station, there was loud cheering

from the townspeople and the air also resounded to the noise of detonators placed on the line. A local newspaper reporter on board the train commented that "the line skirts round the town, commanding a good view of the church with its quaint old tower". Describing the scenery in the Teme Valley between Knighton and Knucklas as "very grand", the reporter also mentioned "the Creig-don rocks (in Craig-y-don Wood), so famed as the pleasant resort of picnic parties" and "the Castle Hill - a very prominent object". Knucklas Viaduct was described as "massive and imposing" and "has at each approach small castellated columns and commands a good view of the little village of Knucklas, lying in the valley beneath. It is built entirely of local stone".

Noting that the line between Knucklas and Llanbister Road was marked by "a succession of deep cuttings and high embankments", the reporter went on to refer to "Llwyncoch (Llangynllo) Tunnel...cut through slate rock", another major engineering achievement on this stretch of the Line. The reporter noted further that there were "some strikingly beautiful combinations of mountain and valley" between Knighton and Llandrindod.

The train continued on its journey, passing Cil-y-byddar, Nantyllan, Dolau, Red Lean, The Rabber and Dolau Jenkin before entering the 404 yard long Penybont Tunnel. The River Ithon was crossed at The Rabber and again beyond Crossgates. It was noted that the first

crossing was “by a substantial stone bridge of three arches” and that the second crossing was “by a cast iron lattice girder bridge of a very pretty design”. After that point, the line traversed “for the most part poor land”, passing near Great Cellws to eventually reach the terminus at Llandrindod where there was “a temporary station on the common”.

Here the passengers were greeted by local people with “heartily cheering” and in spite of heavy rain the passengers formed themselves into a procession and, headed by the band of the Volunteers, proceeded to the reception at The Rock House to the strains of *Men of Harlech*.

Rousing speeches were made by a number of the dignitaries present. It was evident from these speeches that, apart from extending the railway network into central Radnorshire, the line’s promoters were hoping to realise the line’s full potential through the projected further extension of the railway from Llandrindod south-westwards to join up with a railway which already ran from Llandovery into south Wales. In fact work to construct such an extension was now in progress (it was finally completed in 1868). The promoters were clearly attracted by the prospect of through traffic passing from the north-west of England via central Wales to the port of Milford Haven, an outlet for rapidly expanding trade with the newly emerging American continent.

The chairman of the Central Wales Railway Company, Sir Charles Rouse Boughton, proposed a toast first to the Queen (Victoria) and immediately afterwards to “the Bishop and clergy of the Diocese”, an illustration of the importance of the Church in Victorian Britain. Sir Charles said that he “believed it is one of the strongest signs of the popularity of the Church of England that whenever the toast is proposed, no matter in what district,

it is always equally well received, although a large majority of the inhabitants may in some respects differ from her doctrine”.

The Rev T J Thirlwall, Vicar of Nantmel, responding on behalf of at least eleven other clergymen present at the banquet, spoke of “the advantages which will be afforded by the ‘iron horse’ to the clergy of so large a diocese as St David’s, enabling them to visit the Bishop when necessary”.

Several speakers referred to the difficulties (financial and otherwise) encountered during the building of the line between 1860 and 1865 and also to its successful completion.

Mr Brown Westhead (vice chairman of the London and North Western Railway Company) emphasised the health benefits of Llandrindod and that, through the building of the railway, “the weary and toil worn sons of trade and commerce” would be able to travel there “to inhale the delicious and healthy breezes of Llandrindod and... to imbibe its waters”. Not all his comments were complimentary, however. Referring to the large and popular hotel which had once stood overlooking Llandrindod Lake, Mr. Westhead said that “sin had found its way into this most secluded region” and that owing to gamblers and libertines having come there, the (hotel) proprietor had found it consistent with his own conscientious views to raze the establishment. Mr. Westhead added that he was confident that “with the aid of our good friends the clergy who are now so anxious and so active to do all they can to promote the best interests of this country” there was no fear that such behaviour would be repeated in “any future establishment that may be erected in Llandrindod”!

In 2015, the 150th anniversary of the opening of the railway was marked by events during Llandrindod Wells Victorian Festival Week and on the actual anniversary date.

News from the Association

Membership Matters

200 Club : HoWLTA’s Monthly Draw

The latest winners of the monthly draw are:

November 2015:

- £20 Mrs H P Gallani, Billingshurst (W Sussex)
- £15 Mr W Williams, Llandovery
- £10 Mr D J Williams, Gayton, Stafford
- £10 Mr H Heighway, Llandrindod Wells
- £10 Ms L Fairfax, Llandovery

December 2015:

- £20 Mr Graham Lawley, Bicton, Shrewsbury
- £15 Mrs M E Evans, Llandybie
- £10 Mr P Turner, Blunsdon, Swindon
- £10 Mrs Rees, Llanwrda
- £10 Mrs Wilson, Freshwater, Isle of Wight

January 2016:

- £20 Dr N Bolton, Llandaff, Cardiff
- £15 Mr D Harper, Llandrindod Wells
- £10 Mrs Lloyd, Carmarthen
- £10 Mr R Stallard, Llangadog
- £10 Mrs Clugston, Knucklas

Congratulations to our latest winners!

All 200 Club and membership subscriptions are due for renewal on 1st March 2016. Have you renewed or joined us? Just £5 per number, buy as many as you wish!

Committee Meetings 2016

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, 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.

Annual General Meeting 2016

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 #136) will be at Llandovery Station on **Thursday, 12th May 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 psberrv@tiscali.co.uk. Please check these arrangements nearer the date - especially if you will be travelling far.

Please remember our address for correspondence :

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

the completion of the project appear to have been undertaken. Hopefully in the next Newsletter I will be able to report that the signs are in place and a valuable aide to travellers along the line. Members may recall that this project was initially instigated by the late George Scarfe.

Despite the recent very wet weather many of the stations are looking neat and tidy, waiting for Spring to come with its profusion of colour. If you think you can help any of the station adopters with plants or doing a bit of work at the stations then please don't hesitate to contact them. I know they will be very pleased for any help you can provide.

Finally, as we march further on into 2016 please make good use of the concessionary fares scheme which runs to the end of March for any outings that you may be planning. Now is a good time to view the beautiful countryside of our line - and tell your friends as well!

If you are not eligible for concessionary travel then consider Arriva Trains Wales 'Club 55' scheme - another way to get out and about using the HoWL and to destinations further afield at a reduced fare but you will have to be quick as the scheme ends on 27th February - enjoy your journeys! *Brian Dotson, Chairman*

Membership Renewals

As you will probably have already noted from the enclosed address label sheet, it is time for our annual membership renewals.

While your current name, address and membership number are listed on the combined address label/membership form, I would ask that your details are entered again in the appropriate section of the membership renewal form so that we can cross check that our current records are up to date as per the requirements of the UK Data Protection Act.

I would also like to announce that I am working towards reintroducing membership cards for this year. In order to achieve this I need to make some changes to our membership numbering system. At the moment, all membership numbers are simply 4 digit numbers. Under the new system, the four digits will be augmented by a final letter designating the category of membership held. e.g. 1111S will indicate Single membership, 2222F will indicate a Family membership and so on. I will give full details of the changes in an article in the next newsletter.

Renewal payments will be as per last year with a choice of either a cheque through the post or a direct (BACS/Internet) bank transfer. Cards will be issued with the next newsletter for all those who have managed to renew by that time.

If you have any queries regarding your membership, I can be contacted by e-mail on heartofwalesline@gmail.com or via my mobile phone 07469-231175.

Rob Hulme, Membership Secretary

New Membership Applications?

Please use form on p. 21 (or a photocopy)

HoWL Timetable

Arriva Trains Wales' next timetable will come into effect from 15th May 2016. The following are the comments on the draft timetable which HoWLTA has submitted to ATW and the Welsh Government..

1. Given that our aims can be summarised as "more trains - better trains - faster trains", you will appreciate that, while we are grateful to ATW and the Welsh Government for attempting to squeeze some improvements from finite resources, we strongly feel that the latter can be seen only as a step in the right direction, because:

1.1 they provide only a small increase in the number of trains, and that only on Mondays to Fridays. In particular:

1.1.1 the Sunday service remains spectacularly useless for many purposes, especially as it fails to:

> allow local people to have time in Shrewsbury or Swansea (let alone further afield) for shopping and general leisure activities, or to start or complete longer distance journeys

> give day trippers into the area sufficient time for some of the obvious activities (such as hill walking)

1.1.2 the weekday evening service (including on Saturdays and Sundays) is also very poor, in that the last trains leave Shrewsbury at 1801(SO) /1825 (SX) and Swansea at 1821 - and 1618/ 1528 respectively on Sundays! This makes the scope for day trips beyond those places very limited and severely restricts the value of the service for people

making longer distance journeys to and from mid-Wales. Comparison with the Cambrian line (last train from Shrewsbury 2143(SO)/ 2150(SSuX)/2130 (Suns) and the west Wales line (last train Swansea to Carmarthen 2345(SSuX)/2347(SO)/2338(Suns)) makes the problem with the HoWL service only too obvious. As a result there is a lot of "railheading" from places on the HoWL to stations at (eg) Craven Arms, Hereford, Neath, Swansea and Llanelli.

1.2 the quality of the diesel units provided remains poor, especially in the context of a long rural route: comparisons with the Cambrian lines, and especially the Manchester > Cardiff > west Wales route make this only too obvious

1.3 not only is the service no faster than before, but in some cases on Mondays to Fridays it is actually slower, because of lengthy waits at passing loops to allow trains to pass each other: in several cases the result is significantly slower trains than originally proposed by ATW when changing the timetable was first discussed

2. We recognise that 1.1. and 1.2 are largely issues which can be resolved only at the political level, but if ATW has ambitions to win the post-2018 contract, perhaps it should bear such points in mind when preparing its bid

3. However, 1.3 is potentially capable of being addressed by ATW and NR. We suggest below some more minor alterations which would reduce the “hanging around” that is so irritating to passengers – it is one of the most frequent comments we have heard about the Mondays to Fridays timetable since last May

4. Therefore we would be grateful if you could make the following alterations:

4.1 Mondays to Fridays southbound

> 1405 ex-Shrewsbury to leave Llandrindod and stations to Llangammarch up to 10 mins later and thus remove the excessive wait at Llanwrtyd by this train, which a significant number of people join at Llandrindod for stations south of Llanwrtyd

4.2 Mondays to Fridays northbound

> 0603 ex-Swansea to run c10 mins later Llandeilo to Sugar Loaf and thus reduce the lengthy wait at Llanwrtyd to cross the southbound service: this would at least involve less “hanging around” for passengers on the Llandeilo to Sugar Loaf section (this train cannot leave stations south of Llandeilo any later because it has to pass the 0642 ex-Llandovery at Llandeilo)

> 1821 ex-Swansea: thank you for retiming this train earlier from Llandrindod to Broome, so that passengers from south of Llandrindod for stations between Pen-y-bont and Craven Arms will have a shorter journey time. However, we would be grateful if you could continue to seek a way of retiming this train north of Broome, as it is now due to wait at Craven Arms junction for about 15 mins, presumably because of a clash with a freight train path on the Hereford line

5 1358 (SO) ex-Shrewsbury: if there really is no way in which this train can run just c.8 mins later and the connection from the Cardiff direction be reinstated at Craven Arms, then it should not be timed to wait at Broome for an extra 5 mins, but instead should be retimed to run 5 mins earlier from Broome to Llandrindod, where it crosses the northbound train. This would prevent it running early through the request halts at Broome, Hopton Heath and Bucknell, which evidently does happen judging by comments received by our local Committee member. It would also shorten the journey time for passengers heading for Knighton and Llandrindod, who form the majority of those using this train on that section of the route

6 Beyond these relatively minor changes, we think that the following ought to be considered:

> restore the 0900 departure from Shrewsbury on Mondays to Fridays, as the current 0556 to 1009 gap from Shrewsbury is poor from the point of view of people heading into mid-Wales for day trips, and is also perceived as too late for people who want to go shopping in Llandrindod (instead of having an hour there they have to wait until 1659 for a return train!), and for those heading to Swansea or beyond from Llandrindod and stations south thereof

> the above might be achieved on the face of it by separating the HoWL and Shrewsbury to Crewe morning services, cancelling the 0445 Shrewsbury to Llandrindod, running a double unit at 0516 (as on Saturdays) Shrewsbury to Llandrindod and separating it there, with one unit

Chairman's Letter – January 2016

This winter has appeared to be unusual with plenty of mild weather and with more rain than we are accustomed to receiving. The HoWL has coped well with this long and sustained deluge, a tribute to our Victorian forebears who built the line and its continued maintenance. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about the train service. There have been frequent cancellations, often the result of a shortage of a driver, the work to rule by Arriva Trains Wales' drivers which has affected rest day working and the drivers' strikes relating to their terms and conditions.

I can assure members that the Committee is keeping a close eye on the situation and asking why it is the HoWL that appears to be suffering so badly. Again, if you have experienced problems with your journeys on the line and further afield then please contact Arriva Trains Wales and the Committee so we can try to avoid these problems in the future.

There has been consultation with Arriva Trains Wales regarding the timetable coming into operation in May

2016 and as you might expect the Committee is pushing for a significant upgrade in services on the line. Certainly there appears to be a number of tweaking exercises that could be undertaken to remove or at least reduce some of the ‘unnecessarily’ long station stops on some trains. Naturally the Committee is aware that our service must dovetail into other services but we hope that the train planners will see the validity of our case. Initial indications show that the improved services introduced in May 2015 have shown greater use being made of the line although further data and analysis is required but it is an encouraging beginning to ‘more trains, faster trains, better trains’.

Another positive move has been the provision of a wooden shelter on the up platform at Llandrindod Wells which will improve passenger waiting facilities for intending travellers.

The long running saga of promoting the line through the erecting of trackside signs denoting important landmarks appears to be drawing to a successful conclusion thanks to the persistent and hard work of Vice Chairman, Mike Watson, Ian Messner of Network Rail and Bill Plant, the contractor manufacturing the signs. All the various hurdles that have had to be jumped for

ADVERTISE HERE

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See page 27 for full advertising rates.

Membership Matters!

Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association — HoWLTA

Officials

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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

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

HoWLTA is affiliated to Railfuture and Better Transport

returning to Shrewsbury at 0655, then forming the 0900 southbound HWL service (as on Saturdays). This would also be far more convenient for school/ college students heading for Shrewsbury/ Ludlow/ Hereford. The other unit would continue south at 0735 (as now)

> retime the Mondays to Fridays 1821 ex-Swansea to run at about 1735 and cross the 1720 ex-Crewe at Llandrindod instead of Llanwrtyd. This would be a more

convenient return time for commuters (who we are trying to persuade to use the 0642 ex-Llandoverly) and would cut the current 25 min wait at Llanwrtyd to c5 mins. We think that the inconvenience to longer-distance passengers connecting into a 1735 rather than an 1821 ex-Swansea would be felt by fewer people than those who would benefit. Arguably 1735 is also a better return time for shoppers. We would not advocate making the 1821 service any earlier on Saturdays

The Station Community Hub

There was a time when the stations along what was then the Central Wales Railway were centres of activity to the communities they served. They were fully staffed, and the larger stations in particular attracted various local businesses. Today almost all are unstaffed, and many have even had their original buildings removed.

Efforts are now being made to reinvigorate some of these stations. Apart from the long-established and busy terminal stations to our line, some intermediate ones are becoming centres of more activity - Llandrindod Wells, Llandoverly and, more recently, Llanwrtyd Wells.

But what about the others, particularly those which no longer have any of their original buildings? Rachel Francis, project officer for the Forum, outlines the idea of the Station Hub.

In seeking to bring unstaffed stations back to life, we came up with the idea of designing a transportable and sustainable enterprise hub for unmanned stations.

The site identified for installing the first hub was an old Network Rail storage yard next to Llandeilo Station. During September 2015 we consulted with local people about the hub. This consultation closed with a drop-in event and public meeting at Llandeilo Civic Hall on 5th

October. Public response has been very positive.

The design and construction of the first Station Hub has been funded by Welsh Minister for Economy, Science & Transport, Edwina Hart.

The hub is made in Wales using Welsh grown wood. The hub design and construction was carried out by David Bamford and his team. David is also the designer of the highly insulated "New

Welsh House” building panel system which seeks to add value to Welsh wood, whilst providing an ambitiously sustainable building system for affordable housing. The first station hub is now complete, apart from the steel roof and guttering, which will only be attached once the hub is in situ. It is looking fantastic. The design is generating national interest, in particular amongst other community rail partnerships, and if this interest translates into orders for more hubs then it will potentially create new jobs for rural Wales.

We are hoping to install the hub in February, weather and legal agreements permitting*. We have a number of

expressions of interest for use of the hub, including providing some space for a very exciting local produce scheme, working with a local social enterprise that provides desk and co-work space for freelance workers etc, and a sustainable tourism and travel initiative. Follow news updates on the hub here <https://llandeilostationhub.wordpress.com>

Rachel Francis

*** STOP PRESS**

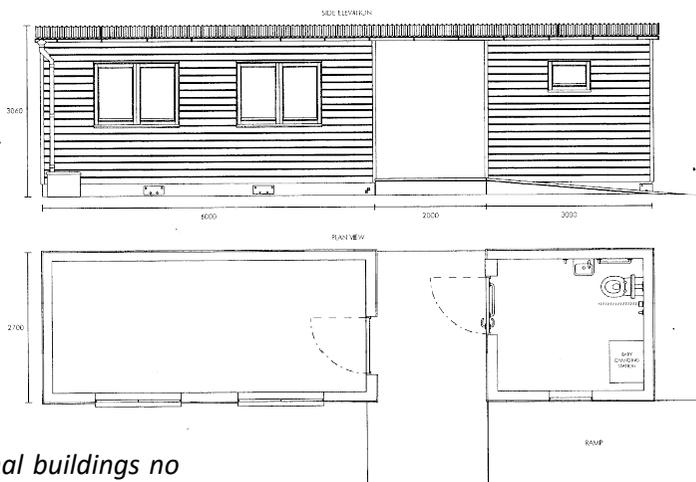
Carmarthenshire County Council have now granted planning permission.

“A Small Space With Great Potential”

This is an early drawing of the design, which is currently being finalised by Bamford Makers of Presteigne.

It has been specially designed for use at rural and unstaffed stations where original buildings no longer exist. New hubs could help open up new opportunities for local business and community use, strengthening the links between the railway and its communities, boosting tourism and rural regeneration.

The Station Hub is a modular, 6m x 2.9m transportable building. It’s



made from sustainably sourced Welsh wood with a covered aisle leading to a modern composting toilet. The design is inspired by railway heritage. The building will be well insulated, robust and secure and will have full access for disabled people.

Brecon would have been virtually surrounded by gathering grounds with Mynydd Eppynt to the north and west, the whole range of Black Mountains to the west, Brecon Beacons to the south and Black Mountain to the south and east, where the Black Mountain conduit would collect water from no fewer than 12 rivers, with reservoirs on five of them. The Beacons Conduit would collect water from 12 rivers with reservoirs on seven of them and the Usk Northern Conduit would collect water from 19 rivers with 6 reservoirs. This makes an astounding total of 43 rivers and streams to be diverted into the Llangorse Reservoir.

In the Towy Valley, the Towy itself would have been diverted through a four mile (6.4km) tunnel to the Irfon near Llanwrtyd. It would then have been a dry channel for two miles (3.2km) before water drawn from a dam at Ystradffin, collected from the Doethie would have partially replaced the flow; a trickle compared to the Towy's former volume.

The Binnie scheme would have annexed 60% of the area of Breconshire and nearly half of Radnorshire. To all intents and purposes this land would have become an officially designated watershed and taken out of agricultural production. The area would have become a Welsh Lake District, a wonderful tourist amenity, but at a terrible cost to the Welsh communities.

Richard organised his research into a lecture which he has since delivered more than 70 times to local history and community groups. By popular demand, and with the help of local writer Rod Burdon, this has been compiled into a book, available in Llandovery at £7.50 from the Red Giraffe, Chaplins Hairdressers and the Llandovery Woolshop. It is also on sale at Llangadog Post Office, the Old Dairy, Llanwrda and in Myddfai Visitor Centre. **RB**

Richard can be contacted on: [mrchanceventures@btconnect.com](https://www.mrchanceventures@btconnect.com)

**Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association
New Membership Application Form**

Tick membership required.

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Family	£10.00	[]
Overseas Resident	£15.00	[]
Corporate (Councils, Associations etc)	£12.00	[]

Membership is renewable on 1st March annually. Half-year membership at half the above fees for those joining between September and March.

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HoWLTA,
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Llandovery SA20 0BG

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If you would like a copy of our 64 page A5 Mile by Mile guide to the line, please tick box and enclose £3.60. []

If you would like to be involved with HOWLTA's work (publicity, committee work, research, social events, etc.) please state your interest here.

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Book Review

Everybody Can Have Their Own Bathwater. The astonishing story of London's bid to capture a Welsh river.

(Mister Chance Ventures 2015) by

Richard R Rees

44pp (21.0cm x 14.5cm) col. and b/w ill.

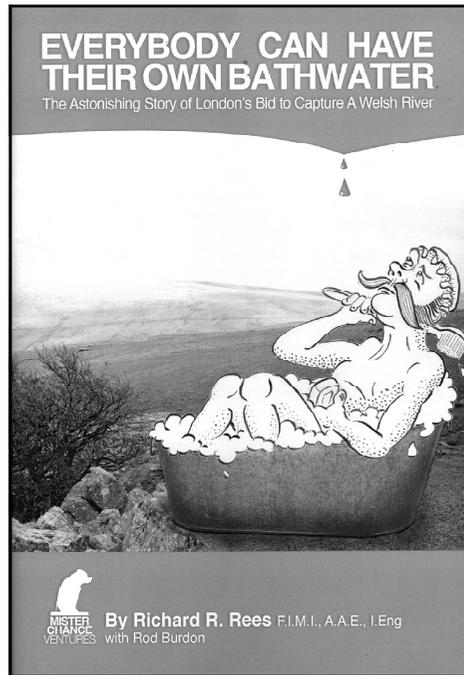
PB £7.50

Ten years or so ago, HoWLTA member Richard Rees of Llanwrda, a confirmed railway enthusiast, was studying some papers from the Ormathwaite Estate in Radnorshire and came across something intriguing: an estimate for diverting the Central Wales Extension Railway, now the Heart of Wales Line, out from the Irfon Valley.

Now, as we know, the railway was completed on its present route in 1868 and has never been altered. Even more oddly, this document was titled "London Water (Welsh Reservoirs and Works)", with the Engineer given as one Alexander Richardson Binnie. Richard found that Mr Binnie had been Chief Engineer for the London County Council. What on earth, he wondered, was the London County Council up to in the Irfon Valley in 1898?

The answer led Richard on a quest involving many trips to London to visit The House of Lords, British Library, Kew records office and especially The Metropolitan Archives. The planned diversion was part of a vast and arrogant scheme which would have changed the face of south-central Wales forever.

London's engineers had hatched a plan to collect water from as far north as the slopes of Plynlimon, tapping all the major rivers and their tributaries in south central Wales. The water would have been piped to two immense reservoirs, one that would have drowned the Irfon Valley from Cilmeri up to Llanwrtyd, and another that would have multiplied the area and depth of the glacial lake at Llangorse.



Two enormous aqueducts would between them have carried 415 million gallons (1.9 million m³) a day from Wales, part to Borehamwood in north London, and part to Banstead in Surrey to supply south London. In Binnie's plan the Mid Wales and the Brecon and Merthyr Railways would have been moved to the west at Tal-y-Llyn Railway Junction. On the Irfon diversion two tunnels and many viaducts would cross the branches of the new Irfon Reservoir. This would have rejoined the original route at Llanwrtyd Wells and bypassed the massive new dam across the valley in Garth. Two existing stations, Garth and Llangammarch would have been submerged and Llanwrtyd and Cilmeri stations resited.

To prevent pollution, the town of Llanwrtyd would have been destroyed. The villages of Garth, Llangammarch and Beulah would have been hundreds of metres underwater, on the bed of the Irfon Reservoir.

Along the Line....

Llangadog

We waited throughout November for the leaves to finish falling before having a determined attack on sweeping them all up from the platform - a problem probably unknown to the Adopters at Swansea and Llanelli. We do not have a real litter problem at Llangadog but surrounded by trees as we are this constitutes a major event in our lives. Our seventy five beech trees arrived from the nursery nearly a month ago at the beginning of November and are safely heeled in in my vegetable plot. Since their arrival we have had thirty days of non-stop rain and gales which put a full stop to any planting out on the site of the proposed new hedge along the south edge of the platform. We may now have to wait until early spring before conditions improve for moving them to their new home. These trees are ordinary beech and not the copper variety (which we would have preferred) simply because they are about half the cost.

We have had cause to be present and correct at our duties throughout the summer normally once or twice a week and this year our attendance was augmented by an influx of friends and relatives coming to see us by rail and hence departing by the same means. So, we got to know our little platform very well indeed. For the first time we noted that on occasions our car park was full to overflowing - something not seen in living memory. This waiting for trains to come and go concentrated our minds more than usual to the actual timing of these comings and goings and we noted over the summer, as we began to take more interest in the operations, some curious facts. Trains from Swansea were always late. Not a bit late, not a bit behind, not slightly delayed.

But late by many minutes. Consistently. We thought how strange. Then we noticed that trains from Shrewsbury were nearly always early leaving the platform. Our timings were always compared to the clock on the platform. All this odd behaviour was in direct contradiction to the non-Welsh speaking lady announcer who always told us the train was on time. When it wasn't. How very strange it all is - in particular when we watched one day a train disappearing towards Swansea four and a half minutes early with "This train is on time" ringing in our ears. In fact on one day we nearly had a revolution on the platform because, with many people waiting to go to Shrewsbury, the train arrived late as usual - actually destined to go straight through to Crewe - and passengers were told by our non-Welsh lady announcer that its destination was in fact Cynhordy and no further. Passengers destined ultimately for Manchester airport eventually cajoled the guard into releasing the information that buses were laid on from Cynhordy to Shrewsbury. There was no initial volunteering of information from the driver or the guard or our lady announcer likewise who just announced smugly that "this train terminates at Cynhordy". On behalf of our

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member of the Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association

poor passengers we propose that Arriva terminates the lady announcer and contracts someone to programme better information, buys Swiss watches for guards and drivers and then send all Arriva staff to Japan to learn how to run a railway on time. On the other hand, we have to look on the bright side and make a huge allowance 'cos our Central Wales Line motive power is now thirty years old. Believe it or not.

There was also one occasion when we interrupted our efforts to clip our Lawson's hedge to help a lady passenger load a pram, baby and luggage onto the 12.19 to Shrewsbury. All part of the Llangadog Adopters service but which prompted some conversation afterwards about the discrepancy in the heights of the carriage floor and the platform height. Watching documentaries on the telly made us conclude that this anomaly was widespread over the planet. One would have thought that this would have been an easy problem to fix particularly if you're building a railway from scratch in 1850 but

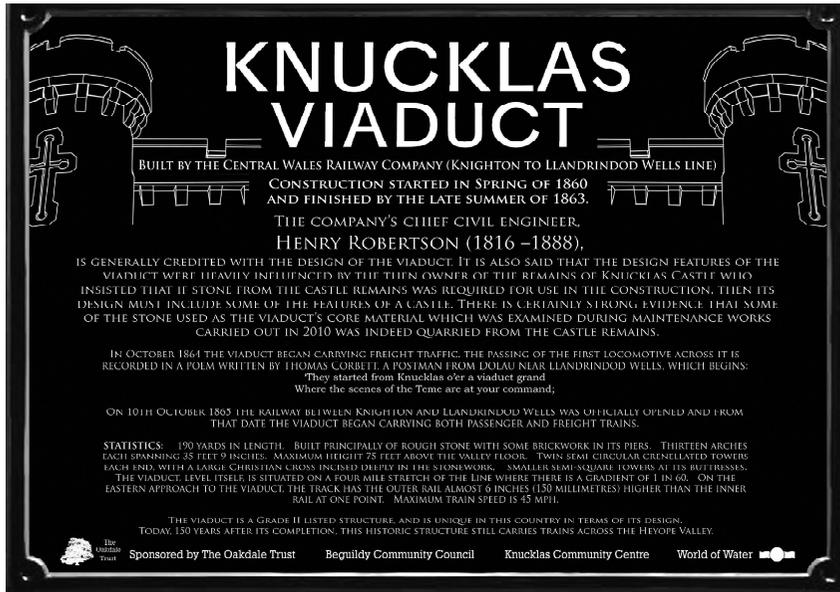
there are probably a million weird reasons why we cannot adjust things today - Arriva's answer must tax the driver's braking skills to the limit.

And, stop press, the heavy rain and galeforce winds have cleaned our platform like magic. Job done by Global Warming Co. Ltd.

*Dennis Harrison and Marion Lomax
Station Adopters.*

Knucklas viaduct 150 years

In Knucklas we have the wonderful and unique viaduct, familiar to many travellers on the line and visitors to the area. People in the village will often see visitors ambling around the viaduct looking for the best shot, and wondering what its history is and its statistics are. The committee of the Knucklas Community Centre decided to provide an interpretation board for our visitors, and after some fund raising we had the board made. Network Rail were very helpful in offering to site it on the structure where visitors could see it and appreciate it more.



Mystery Picture?

I've come across a large photograph taken (I would guess) in the 1970s. It is of a group of cheery Enid Blyton type young teenage girls on a dmu and features an 'I've Rambled the Heart of Wales Line' badge (a bit out of focus). I wondered if any reader recognises the jolly trio - or even recognises themselves?

David Edwards, Llangennech

[Editor: The original photo is in colour although only reproduced in black and white here. We'd love to hear who these young ladies are, and, perhaps, the story of their day out on the HoWL.]

All Aboard the Maintenance Train!

The enclosed photo was taken on 26th January 2016 of the Network Rail Maintenance Train stopping at Llandeilo station, waiting for the 10.33hrs Arriva Trains Wales departure to

Shrewsbury. The weather was awful with heavy rain and gales. The train was hauled by two Class 37 Locos on hire from Direct Rail Services (DRS) header and tail end.

I understand from the crew that it was heading for Llanelli for fuel to the two locos. Later on that day, at 12.54hrs,

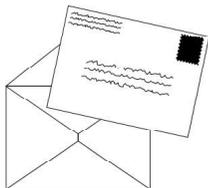


the train was in Llandoverly station waiting for the Arriva Trains Wales departure from Shrewsbury to Swansea. I was made to understand that it was heading to Llandrindod Wells for a few hours stay before continuing on the journey to the Manchester area. I also gathered that the engineers were being accommodated on the train throughout the working week on a 'full board basis'.

*Hywel Jones
Station Adopter, Llanwrda*



Post Bag



Heart of Wales Line Calendar

Firstly, many thanks to all those members who purchased the 2016 calendar and made the joint project a success. We were able to provide a donation to HoWLTA from the sales. As a result, David Edwards, Community Rail Officer, and ourselves consider a 2017 calendar will be worth printing. For this we thought it a good idea to use photographs of the line taken by HoWLTA members. So dig out your photo albums and get out along the line with your camera for new shots. Photos of the whole line from the Shropshire Hills to the Loughor Estuary and all the interesting bits in between will be welcome. We are working to a schedule for production of the calendar in August so you have plenty of time. All photographs used will be acknowledged as copyright to the owner.

Photographs for possible inclusion should be sent as either a photo print to GHAL Productions at 5 Biddulph Way, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2HP or as a good resolution .JPG file to ghal@btinternet.com Please do not forget to include your address and telephone number.

Cheryl & Gareth, GHAL Productions of Ledbury

Bus Replacement Service

The accompanying photo shows the bus replacement at Llandrindod Wells rail station this morning (31st December). Arriva Trains Wales did



not have Shrewsbury based drivers to drive the 09.14 departure from Crewe to Llandrindod Wells. The photograph shows Lloyds Coaches from Machynlleth doing the train service job. Lloyd Coaches also provided a mini bus for serving stations on minor roads from Broome to Llandrindod Wells.

Hywel Jones, Llanwrda Station Adopter.

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

The information used was provided by HoWLTA as part of the viaduct walking event in 2014, and the graphics were designed by a brilliant local graphic artist. The installation was timed to coincide with the 150 year anniversary also.

We frequently see visitors viewing the board and appreciating our wonderful bit of history.

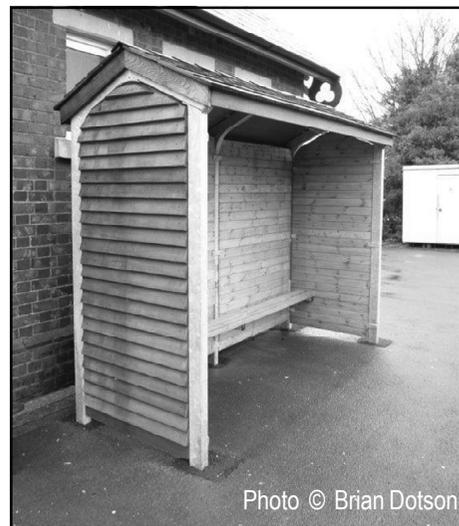
Kevin Jones, Knucklas Community Centre

Llandrindod Wells

The new shelter at Llandrindod Wells is shown below in this photograph taken by Brian Dotson.

Sadly, as you can see from the second photograph (from Hywel Jones), taken on the up platform at Llandrindod Wells at midday on 15th December 2015 it didn't stay in such pristine condition for long. As you can see the litter was disgusting to look at, especially for train travellers visiting Llandrindod Wells. What made it even worse was that the refuse/litter bin is only a few feet away.

[Geraint Morgan, ATW later replied "Thank



you for the photo, the litter will be dealt with by our station maintenance team on their next visit."]

Knucklas

The next Folk Down the Track is on Thursday, 18th February, when The Stoned Cherries will be performing at the Castle Inn, Knucklas. They are an excellent band and went down a storm in Knighton when they played at the Community Market. They have also played at Worcester Music Festival and Bromyard Folk Festival as well as many other prestigious venues. We are delighted to have them at Folk Down the Track so put the date in your new diaries now!

For more details see :

<http://dgand2.wix.com/thestonedcherries>

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See page 27 for full advertising rates.

Unusual places for a Day Out:

No 2 in an occasional series:

Ammanford

With a population of around 5400 Ammanford is the largest town on our route (Llandrindod is slightly smaller), apart from Llanelli and the terminal stations. The station is about 10 minutes walk from the town centre. A map showing one of the possible routes to take is available at www.discovercarmarthenshire.gov.uk. Click on 'walking' and scroll down the page to 'Ammanford'.

Ammanford was once a thriving mining town, producing its wealth from high quality anthracite. There are clues to this in the quality of many of the Victorian buildings in the town centre. Also look out for the magnificent 1932 Miners Theatre (now used by Carmarthenshire CC to stage events) and the charming Arcade, with a selection of small local businesses including a book shop with a great selection of titles, and a pleasant cafe opposite to it, at the entrance. You can find out more about the town centre by downloading a .PDF file from the above site: navigate to 'heritage walks' under Ammanford.

The town centre is partly pedestrianised, with a Friday produce market, and branches of many of the multiples, and a large Tesco on the far side of a railway level crossing. This line is still in use once a week or so for coal traffic from Gwaun

Cae Gurwen (known locally as GCG). The line used to have its own town centre passenger station. There is a junction with our own line south of Ammanford, at Pantyffynnon, where Network Rail is renovating the original Brunel - style station building.

You can easily while away a pleasant hour or two in the town centre. If you feel more energetic the town has many enjoyable walks to offer. They're described on the website mentioned above, which sets out a number of short, easy, town centre strolls, including parks in the town centre and at nearby Betws.

Why not make a day of it and venture further afield by consulting www.mapmywalk.com/gb/ammanford-wls. This lists a number of longer walks including a riverside trail (which also parallels the GCG railway). Take High Street from the town centre and head for the riverside path. Route 10 on the website map shows a 6 mile walk, and with easy gradients. You might want to call in at the Red Kite pub before or after your walk - it's just a little further out of town on the main road to Brynamman. Both locals and TripAdvisor rate it highly.

David Edwards

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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.

by local people, and hosts support sessions for people with learning disabilities. There is a thriving model railway club (one enthusiast comes to it all the way from Swansea). Plans are now afoot for a celebration of the 90th birthday of HRH the Queen.....

Our plan is to establish more 'hubs'. Each will be different; being responsive to the needs and ideas of local volunteers. Llanwrtyd Community Transport has taken over the lease of Llanwrtyd station building (HoWLTA now holds its committee meetings there). Our innovative prefabricated wooden building is soon to be installed at Llandeilo and we have a number of local businesses with ideas that will make good use of it whilst covering the cost of operation.

There are also opportunities to be explored at Knighton, where the station building is owned by a local company but is currently empty. And at Pantyffynnon, Network Rail is nearing the end of a lengthy restoration of the Brunel inspired building. Representatives of the Amman Valley Railway Society are watching it closely!

Community Consultation

All of the above activity is being carried out by the Forum, with support from HoWLTA. We're keen to ensure that we know what local people and businesses want from the line. And we need to recruit people who want to work with us.

A Community Engagement meeting in Llandeilo last October yielded many ideas

and offers of support. It also provided feedback about how the timetable could be improved, which we have passed to WG as the specifiers of the service.

We are planning further meetings as follows, and hope that you will be able to come and chat to us - there's a free cuppa available at each drop-in venue. Each session will run from 12.30 to 18.00

Ammanford: Public Library, Wind Street Fri 12th Feb

Llandoverly: Castle Hotel Tues 16th Feb

Llandrindod: Commodore Hotel Fri 19th Feb

Knighton: Knighton Hotel Wed 24th Feb

Llanwrtyd: Neuadd Arms Fri 26th Feb

David Edwards

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A quarter page advert like this costs just £45 for one issue (or £120 for a year).

See page 27 for full advertising rates.

HoWL Forum update

'Prospects looking hopeful, but this is no time to slacken our efforts'

This episode of our story sees the Forum still awaiting decisions on a bid to Welsh Government for funding that will enable us to develop our Community Rail 'Hub' concept along the route. Another set of proposals has been submitted, covering interim arrangements for the structure and funding of Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) in Wales. Again, a decision is awaited.

Guidance from the North?

Arriva Trains Wales' parent company has been awarded the franchise for the Northern rail network. The agreement specifies considerable support for the Northern CRPs, and Prof Paul Salvesson - now, you may recall, a part time resident of Knighton, is advising on the implementation of this work.

ATW is watching Northern developments closely and is believed to be engaged in discussion with Welsh Government about the implications for Wales. We also understand that if, as is rumoured, the implementation of the 2018 franchise is delayed, it may be possible for interim improvement arrangements to be made. However this

will be subject to funding being available and Welsh Government (WG) is not flush with money. Problems with the steel sector don't help, either! And WG has announced a significant piece of work, which will take up much of their transport planning resource, in the form of the Cardiff Metro. If you live along our route, now might be a good time for a dialogue with your Assembly Member....

An important visit

On February 4th, at about the time this Newsletter is being posted out, Ian Bullock, Managing Director of ATW, is paying a day long visit to the line. He will visit a number of 'Hub' sites and will meet a cross section of local people. He's already indicated that he is excited about what we are doing and we hope that by then his discussions with WG will have led to some useful outcomes for us. We'll report to you in the next Newsletter but before then there will be an update on www.heart-of-wales.co.uk

Hub progress

Whilst producing detailed plans will need to wait until we know the outcome of funding bids, our outline plans are clear: more 'hubs'. We already have a successful one in operation at Llandovery. The community-run cafe there is universally applauded by visitors from far and wide. It supports regular exhibitions of paintings and craft work

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Centre Spread

Mid-January near the Southern End of Our Line

The weather so far in this wet and windy winter hasn't really been conducive to being out and about, let alone taking photographs. Nevertheless our intrepid Stephen Miles was out on Friday, 15th January at Pantyffynnon to photograph the GCG coal train and also on the following Saturday at Bynea to photograph the diversions over the Swansea District Line as Swansea to Port Talbot was closed for engineering works.

Some of Stephen's photos are reproduced on our centre pages (see pp.14/15)

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1. On 15th January 2016 DBS 66131 waits at Garnant Branch Crossing, Pantyffynnon with the afternoon coal train from Gwaun Cae Gurwen (GCG) to Onllwyn. Although its booked time is at 13.55 from GCG this train invariably operates early and follows the 09.14 Crewe - Swansea passenger train which is due at Pantyffynnon at 13.35.

2. A plethora of bilingual signs at Garnant Branch Crossing, Pantyffynnon. Note that a steam locomotive is still used as a symbol for a railway level crossing.

3. Steady progress is being made by Network Rail on the 'listed' station building at Pantyffynnon. The roof has been re-clad and includes two rather splendid brick chimneys. 153320 calls whilst working 2V08 09.14 (SX) Crewe - Swansea on 15th January 2016

4. Bynea on 16th January 2016 sees 153353 working 2M51, what would normally be the 09.15 (SO) Swansea - Shrewsbury. However due to engineering work in the Swansea area the train had commenced from Carmarthen at 09.12 with a rail replacement coach connection from Swansea.

ADVERTISE HERE

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

See page 27 for full advertising rates.



Mid-January towards the Southern End of Our Line. See p.13 for details.
All photos © Stephen Miles

