

Issue 50 Spring 2011

Rail Wales

*Newsletter of the Welsh branches
of
Railfuture*



A Wrexham Shropshire & Marylebone Railway train arriving at Wrexham. This service has now ceased, but will this type of train be used on the new north – south service (page 6)?

Ian Murray

Ian passed away just before Christmas. The large number of people attending his funeral service at Gilgal Chapel in Porthcawl on 13th January 2011 reflected the appreciation of Ian's voluntary work in the local community and his dedication and contribution to the improvement of public transport in Wales. Ian taught music in a junior school in Bridgend before retirement and was well respected for his contribution to the education of many young people in the town.

He was active in the development of Wales Transport 2000 and was a member of the Railway Development Society, later *Railfuture*, for over 30 years, serving on the South Wales sub-committee and then becoming the first Chairman of the newly formed RDS South Wales branch, of which he later became President. He served on national RDS committees, playing a major role in organising the 1993 Reopenings Conference in Maesteg, following the reopening of the line from Bridgend in 1992. He campaigned for new stations at Llanharan and Pyle and, when Swanline services commenced, promoted Pyle as a railhead for Porthcawl. He was eventually successful in both achieving a bus link from Porthcawl and additional trains calling at Pyle, including on Sundays. He was also a member of Bus Users UK in which he played an active role. Ian took an active interest in the activities of the two transport consortia in South Wales (SEWTA and SWWITCH), being a regular observer at transport consortia Board meetings where he would use the opportunity to attempt to influence the decision makers.

Ian served on the Bridgend County Shout, an older people's forum, and on the local Porthcawl Shout, giving transport advice to both groups and continued to represent the needs of these groups to the local council. One of his last campaigning actions was for the retention of the bus service from Porthcawl to Swansea in which he was partially successful. Ian was always in attendance at Railfuture meetings in Wales and always contributed words of wisdom and experience to discussions. He was a strong supporter of *Railfuture's* aims and objectives and will be greatly missed in Wales.

It's AGM time!

All members are urged to attend their branch Annual General Meeting. It is an occasion when you can meet your committee, raise your concerns and ideas and help influence future campaigning strategy.

Cambrian branch members will receive separate notification of their AGM. The arrangements for the other branches are as follow. If you have any queries, please contact your branch secretary (*details on back page*).

South Wales branch AGM

Saturday 9th April at Cardiff Quaker Meeting House,
43 Charles Street, Cardiff

1030-1230: branch committee meeting, though (as last year), we invite ALL members to attend if they wish, with a warm welcome to comment and give your own ideas.

1315-1530: AGM, followed by members` forum on any current topical matters. Minutes of last year's AGM are available from John Rogers: john.rogers@railfuturewales.org.uk; 01656 840111.

Charles Street is readily accessible from both Central and Queen Street stations. The Quaker Meeting House is nearly opposite the cathedral and M & S side entrance.

North Wales branch AGM

Saturday 19th March at Flint Town Hall, at 15.30 hrs

*(following a meeting of the North Wales Rail Users Group
at the same venue)*

Electrification? Metro? Light Rail?

Yes, a lot of question marks! But quite a head of steam (!) has built up in the campaign by the many interests (including the business community) pressing for electrification of the GW main line to Swansea. We now know that the line will be electrified from Paddington to Didcot (en route to Oxford) – which at least is a bit further west than Maidenhead! The latter is the western extent (at present) of the London ‘crossrail’ project. It is still a long way to electrify to Swansea though! A further government announcement on this is expected soon.

Meanwhile, the Cardiff Business Partnership (CBP) has issued a report *Connecting Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys – A Metro for Wales’ Capital City Region*. The full document can be viewed at www.cardiffbusinesspartnership.com (click on ‘CDP/IWA Report’). It proposes a large investment in electrified heavy rail, light rail and bus rapid transit. The desired outcomes include a maximum journey time of 40 minutes from the periphery of the Metro region to Cardiff or Newport, and a maximum of five minutes’ wait at network core. It is recognised that all transport modes must be fully integrated re timetables and ticketing, something that is taken for granted in many European cities but is rare in Britain.

The diagrammatic map in the report shows ‘enhanced and electrified heavy rail’ (coloured black), and ‘new tram/bus rapid transit’ (blue). It does not always distinguish between the latter two modes, but the report’s detail indicates that a new tramline is proposed from Beddau and Creigiau to Cardiff and on to Cardiff Bay (hooray!), with tram links to Penarth, Barry and the airport. An eastward tramline would run ‘alongside the GW main line’ between Cardiff and Severn Tunnel Junction. The southern parts of some Valley Lines would be served by trams (or perhaps tram-trains?), the ideas being that heavy rail trains would omit stops nearer Cardiff and so reduce journey times for longer-distance passengers. Probably the ‘blue’ line shown along the north of the area, from Hirwaun to Ebbw Vale, would be BRT, connecting with Valley Lines trains at both those places plus Merthyr and Rhymney, and at Tredegar with another ‘blue line’ south to Pontllanfraith.

These ideas are not entirely new, but that doesn’t make them any less welcome. The concept of a ‘South Wales Metro’ was

developed by consultants DSW Rail some time ago, and in *Rail Wales* 27 (Autumn 1999) a member put forward his ideas on how a 'Karlsruhe' type system might look if applied to south Wales. Light Rail for both Cardiff and Swansea was advocated in the first edition (2000) of our Development Plan (*On Track for the 21st Century*) and the second edition (2005) included diagrammatic maps of how such networks could develop. The Cardiff one has much in common with that in the CBP report, though the latter is less detailed in this respect.

But this brings us back to the beginning, because electrification of the main line is a key part of the proposed scheme. The breadth and depth of the CBP report must be a significant contribution to the debate, and particularly in showing some of the wider benefits, which could follow (or accompany) main line electrification.

A second north-south Wales express service

The express rail link between north and south Wales is to increase to two return services a day, the Deputy First Minister, Ieuan Wyn Jones announced in January, made possible by £3.5 million support from the Welsh Assembly Government. Arriva Trains Wales is developing plans to lease additional rolling stock to operate the extra service from Holyhead to Cardiff and return. By paying to lease the trains up-front for seven years, as opposed to annually, the Assembly Government claims it will save the tax payer £350,000.

Arriva Trains Wales have secured the timetable slots for the second service and will now develop a procurement process to obtain the rolling stock. Once this process is complete, further announcements will be made on when the service is due to begin.

What are we to make of this? It will be a north Wales to Cardiff service rather than a north to south Wales service; it will not serve the rest of south Wales, and to do so it would have to be extended to Carmarthen or Fishguard. At present there are 35-minute connections at Cardiff for stations west thereof in both directions, into and out off the Holyhead trains (except for the one train which runs through to Maesteg).

Nor will it serve northeast Wales. Much unfavourable comment from interests in that area greeted the press release, because, not only does it not travel via Wrexham, it also omits calls at all Denbighshire and Flintshire stations.

It is assumed that £3.5m is for leasing the stock and does not include the annual operating costs. The £350,000 is divisible by 7 so it is assumed that it is the saving over the 7-year contract compared with an annual renewable contract. It looks like the stock will be Mark 3 and not the Mark 2 stock owned by Arriva (now DB), with a Driving Van Trailer and class 67 owned by DB which is apparently cheaper than the hire costs of a class 57, maybe two, from Virgin. If that mode of operation is adopted, objections to reversing at Chester (one of the official reasons given for not running via Wrexham) will be removed. Mark 3 stock on the route will be a welcome improvement, and we trust that these coaches will have electric points and Wi-Fi, which is also in demand from the politicians.

The train will run on Mondays to Fridays, leaving Holyhead at 7.50, calling only at Bangor, Llandudno Junction, Chester, Crewe, Shrewsbury, Hereford, Newport and arriving Cardiff Central 12.24. The northbound train leaves Cardiff at 18.17, makes the same calls, and arrives Holyhead 22.35. It is believed these paths have already been agreed with Network Rail.

Cambrian Lines news

WSMR and London services

Despite the fact that the Wrexham Shropshire and Marylebone Railway Company objected to the proposal by Arriva Trains Wales to run through services between Aberystwyth and London, we still feel saddened by their sudden demise. They certainly set high standards for themselves and maintained these, as witness the high level of satisfaction shown by their customers. It had been hoped that the links between WSMR and Arriva following the latter's takeover by DB would once again open the possibilities of a through service. However the quality of WSMR trains and services have highlighted the rather poorer quality of some newer trains used on our multiple-unit railway. The proposed refurbishment of

the Class 158s used on the Cambrian Lines may encourage Arriva to look once again at their one-time aspiration to run services to London.

Class 158 Refurbishment

Whilst this is certainly to be welcomed as the sets are now way behind others of the same class operating elsewhere, concern has been expressed in some quarters that the accommodation will be somewhat more cramped than now. Luggage space has already been lost as the result of fitting ERTMS equipment and quite rightly the trains, as part of the refurbishment, will be modified to comply fully with Disability Access legislation as well as providing replacement luggage space. Even so it is reported that Arriva wish to include the same number of seats as existing. To compensate for this some tables will be removed resulting in more 'airline' type seating and some seats that do not align with windows. This is felt by many to be a retrograde step particularly as the trains are used on lines where the beautiful scenery is often used as a selling point in publicity. Arriva counter the criticism however stating that the designed layout is the best that can be achieved given the parameters set out for the work including the fact that passengers attach a great deal of importance to having a seat. Arriva also say that the proposed new seating will be more comfortable but will nevertheless be less bulky and that this will in fact increase legroom. Other improvements proposed include refurbishment of the toilets, new carpets in the saloons, installation of laminated windows and a safety lighting system, 230v power sockets at tables and a revised livery featuring Welsh Dragons. On the whole this looks very promising and we very much hope that the outcome provides an acceptable and comfortable compromise; certainly passengers look forward to the 'new train' ambience, which is promised. Passengers also hope that attention will be given to the heating systems, as these have in many cases proved inadequate during cold weather. As previously said in *Rail Wales*, the basic design of the Class 158, with end corridor connections, is probably as good as any for these lines, given the joining and splitting of trains at Machynlleth and Shrewsbury. Furthermore, whilst their end-door arrangement is probably not as good for urban and semi-urban work it certainly gives a more comfortable environment for cross-country work and is more in keeping with 'inter-city' design.

European Rail Traffic Management System

All of the Class 158s in use on the Cambrian Lines are now reported to have been fitted with the necessary equipment for ERTMS. The problem with the cab display screens appears to have been resolved. The system has been in use between Harlech and Pwllheli since October 2010 (including use by Welsh Highland Railway trains to cross the main line at Porthmadog) and is said to be working satisfactorily. This is good news given the problems and delays encountered. The arguments continue in the railway press as to whether the Cambrian area is the most suitable for the installation and trialling of this system. With an eye on the future however it must be seen as a welcome investment in the area and we hope that the advantages claimed will be realised as the entire system comes into operation, which is now likely to be sometime in March. The Institution of Railway Signal Engineers has a visit planned for 31st March and 1st April 2011 to have a look at the system.

Hourly service on Cambrian mainline

The latest information on the proposed hourly service is that it is unlikely to commence in May 2011, as the Welsh Assembly Government had not, in December 2010 at least, given ATW the go-ahead to start doing work on the hourly timetable. The increasing numbers of passengers and the even greater usage that an hourly service would undoubtedly generate appear to be sound reasons for its early implementation.

Summer Steam

Towards the end of last season trials relating to ERTMS took place with steam haulage. Things look promising as the West Coast Railway Company's web-site is advertising steam hauled services on the Cambrian again in 2011 running from July to September with dates and prices to be announced. The development of ERTMS equipment for such use brings with it of course the hope that excursions hauled by diesel locomotives other than the dedicated Class 97's, will be able to use the line in future.

Special Trains

The 8th of January saw the first use of Class 67s on the Cambrian lines beyond Machynlleth. There was a great deal of speculation in advance as to whether this would be permitted. The train was double-headed between London and Machynlleth in both directions by Class 67 locomotives but was 'top and tailed' by the same locomotives between Machynlleth and Barmouth each way in order to better distribute the weight on Barmouth Bridge. The running of special trains to destinations on the Cambrian Coast and to Aberystwyth brings great benefits to the local economy. In fact a special train was run on the Talylyn Railway in conjunction with the above-mentioned special.

Publicity

In the previous issue of *Rail Wales* mention was made of the good work undertaken by the line's Rail Development Officer Gerwyn Jones. After 5 years in post Gerwyn is to join Gwynedd County Council, on a one-year secondment, in their new Integrated Transport Unit. His work during his time as Rail Development Officer for the Cambrian lines is much appreciated, as was his readiness to attend our meetings to keep us fully informed and to distribute publicity items. We wish him the very best in his new post and hope that he will still be able to bring his influence to bear on publicity for the Cambrian Lines.

Glyn Jones

Changes to Rail Infrastructure in Wales

Newport: track alterations and resignalling work continue in the Marshfield to Newport East Usk area. A new facing connection, as yet not commissioned, has been laid between the up and down main lines at Gaer Junction, thus improving access to the Ebbw Vale and Machen branches.

The line between Maindee North and Maindee East junction was singled in November and access from the north is via the upgraded down passenger loop. The Maindee engineer's sidings have been taken out of use, as has the Hereford siding adjacent to

the Maindee West to North junction lines which could have been used as a turn back facility for trains from Ebbw Vales terminating at Newport.

The number of crossovers between the main and relief lines between East Usk and Newport station has been reduced.

Newport station: the improved facilities of a lift connection to and a toilet on platform 4 have been counterbalanced by a reduction in booking office space and greater walking distances between platforms. This makes it more difficult and requires more time when making connections at the station. The western location of the new facilities was expected to be in conjunction with a new bus interchange facility, which has not materialised. First class passengers have the longest distances to walk at the station. Platform 4 has still not been completed and there is no covered walkway from the new terminal facilities to platform 1.

Rhymney: at Rhymney the connection and associated ground from to Reeds siding was removed in January. This was the last industrial connection remaining in the Cardiff Valleys, with the exception of the coal loading facilities at Tower and Cwmbargoed.

Chirk: the upgrading of the siding facilities for unloading timber is almost complete and has been assisted by freight grant. 21-wagon trains have already replaced the 14-wagon trains that operate from Carlisle.

Britannia Bridge: the combined rail and road bridge which spans the Menai Straits is having a £4m investment for remedial and improvement work. The funding is from Network Rail, Welsh Assembly Government and the Highways Agency.

Holyhead: the connection to Anglesey Aluminium has been out of use since traffic ceased. At the port the walkway connection to the HSS ferry has not been used this winter as a high speed ferry has been operating the service to Dun Laoghaire. This has resulted in all transfers for foot passengers between rail and ferry being by bus.

Rowland Pittard

South East report

Despite the general economic gloom, passenger numbers continue to grow at many stations in south-east Wales. This is encouraging but there is an urgent need to further improve train service provision and facilities at stations. Recent passenger surveys at Severn Tunnel Junction, Caldicot, Chepstow and Lydney show that a lack of car parking space and the 2-hour gaps at certain times in the Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) service between Cardiff and Cheltenham are inhibiting further growth.

The Wales Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) said that the projected 1.75% annual growth would deliver 13% growth over six years, but the official ORR statistics for stations between Newport and Gloucester show that the latter figure was actually 95% over those six years! While that low projected growth rate was challenged during the RUS consultation and subsequently adjusted upwards, evaluation of the need for improved services remained unchallenged. Monmouthshire County Council (through SEWTA) is repeating the evaluation exercise to determine the benefit of filling the present 2-hour gaps in the ATW service throughout the day.

Some good news is that from May 2011, for one year (as a trial) many more Arriva Cross Country (AXC) trains will be calling at Chepstow, something we have advocated for a long time. Some additional calls will also be made at Lydney, but not by the trains which call at Chepstow. This reflects much hard work put in by BTFC (Better Transport for Chepstow). Furthermore, after much campaigning effort, a greater number of First Great Western (FGW) trains on the Cardiff – Bristol service now calls at Severn Tunnel Junction. A timetable comparison between December 2006 and May 2011 demonstrates the effects of these improvements:

No. of additional (or fewer) daily trains calling				
Severn Tunnel Junction			Chepstow	
FGW	ATW	AXC	ATW	AXC
+18	-2	+4	-2	+17
Net change: +20			Net change: +15	

The Chepstow (and Lydney) improvement is for one year only so the message is very much 'use it or lose it'. Already, meetings have been set up involving local organisations, tourist bodies etc. to develop ways of promoting the new service (more news on this in the next issue).



Cheltenham to Cardiff train at Severn Tunnel Junction

The improved Severn Tunnel Junction FGW service includes stopping the 9.30 Cardiff – Portsmouth Harbour there, but news is still awaited on other developments such as extending some of the Cardiff – Taunton trains westwards into the south-west peninsula on summer Saturdays.

Of the 35 additional FGW and AXC trains which will be calling additionally at the east Monmouthshire stations, all except a couple of AXC services are over and above the service level commitments written into the respective franchise specifications by the dept. for transport.

A field trip was made recently with ATW and Gloucestershire CC officers to look at these stations, and using our footfall survey results we were able to discuss issues in a practical way. Some of the main issues were:

- INTEGRATION: what can be done to improve bus/train connections? At Chepstow a change in bus times will give better connections with the town service to the railway station, and likewise at Severn Tunnel Junction with a revamped Newport – Redwick – Magor and Caldicot bus service;

- CAR PARKING: a major issue at every station, and not easy to solve, with land ownership issues;
- CONNECTIVITY: e.g. between trains at Severn Tunnel Junction, to facilitate journeys between the Chepstow and Bristol lines. This is not just a 'commuter' issue; weekend visitors, tourists etc. also need such connections;
- EXTRA SERVICES MAY 2011: it is important that these changes are seen as an 'all line' service improvement and, hopefully, the beginning of further developments in the future. Combined promotion would seem to be a way forward; the views expressed by the ATW officers were positive in this respect.

In my opinion the structure of the north – midlands – south Wales service needs to be re-thought. Long gone are the days when one could travel on through trains to places such as Sheffield, Leeds, York, the northeast and Scotland. If the ATW Cardiff- Cheltenham service could be combined with a Cheltenham – Worcester - west midlands service, greater travel opportunities would result, and would also give the relatively new Ashchurch station a much-needed boost in service level.

Finally, while there is much positive news in this report, we do also face some difficult times ahead. The full McNulty report on Value for Money is due soon and it seems certain that it will recommend changes to the way railways are financed and run.

Colin James (Severn Tunnel Action Group)

National rail timetable – a better effort?

I wrote in *Rail Wales* 49 about the poor quality of the May 2010 issue of the National Rail Timetable. Hopefully this has not put people off buying copies, as the current (December 2010) issue is a definite improvement. For most tables, the font size has thankfully been doubled, making reading without a magnifying glass now a practical proposition. Unfortunately, one of the exceptions to the rule is Table 130 covering the Valley Lines, which retains the half-size font, and with a station bank running to 78 rows this is still very difficult to use. It also suffers from a repeat of the error in the May issue whereby almost all trains on the

Coryton branch, in both up and down directions, are simply omitted, giving the impression that the first train of the day is not until 18.45. In reality, of course, the branch enjoys a half-hourly weekday service.

A welcome feature of the December book is the return of a mileage column on each table, and it is also good to see that a means has been found of restoring an indication of trains splitting en route, such as the 05.26 departure from Cardiff Central, which divides at Pontypridd into Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare portions. In other regards, however, the new book still omits much vital information. There is hardly any use made of the once familiar italic type for connecting services. Table 123, for example, shows the one daily Cardiff Central to Brighton through train, but gives no information as to connections for Brighton from the standard hourly Cardiff Central to Portsmouth Harbour services. This is not good enough.

There is also once again no Timetable Supplement available to flag up late amendments; as before, the only way to tell that a table has been updated is by accessing the Network Rail website, scanning the list of current tables, and taking a print of those with a date later than 12 December. These include, by the way, the FGW main line on Table 125.

One inevitable consequence of the increased legibility has been a 60% increase in the size of the book, up from 2048 pages to 3264, and it is therefore remarkable that the price has been held at £16. For all its faults it still remains, for anyone wanting a comprehensive overview of Great Britain's passenger rail services, a far better option than trying to collect dozens of pocket size TOC-specific publications. My hope is that the improvement evidenced in the latest issue is just a start, and that eventually we shall again be able to buy a publication of the quality that BR and its successor Railtrack used to be able to provide.

Paul Jeffries

One national branch for Wales?

As most of you know, the north branch has been unable to muster a working committee for some time. There are scattered members north of the Cambrian area branch based near Machynlleth - but we have failed in all our attempts to find enough willing people to meet from time to time to transact business. Our thanks must go to the two stalwarts, Ted Evans of Flint and David Mawdsley of Bodfari, for their hard work in trying to keep the flag flying.

A number of people believe that the answer is to emulate Scotland and have a single national branch, but with autonomous sections covering the three areas of the country. This was the first important item on the agenda at the national meeting held (for rail network reasons) in Shrewsbury on October 9th last year, with all three branch areas represented. We were pleased that the UK Chairman, Mike Crowhurst (of Leeds), could also be present as an observer.

Finding myself elected chairman, I outlined what I saw as the three options: retain the status quo, living in hope (& dying in Caergwrle, as they say up near Mold); to amalgamate the north and Cambrian/midland branches; to go for a national Railfuture Cymru/Wales branch but with sub-branches or sections meeting in each region and campaigning as they see fit, liaising with the other sections.

The amalgamation of the north and Cambrian branches did not meet with the approval of the Cambrian committee; I had been informed before the meeting. Mike Crowhurst stated that the London & South-East branch is run with sub-divisions. He recognised that with our own parliament, we needed an all-Wales view, but he was concerned by the low membership.

After much discussion, Mike Watson (of Swansea) proposed, seconded by Phil Rogers (north branch), that:

‘In principle there should be one branch of Railfuture covering the whole of Wales. There should be established a sub-committee representing all three branches to consider the practicalities and to take the process forward.’

11 voted in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions.

It was also agreed that, in the light of this, the proposal should be put to branch members at each branch AGM in 2011 (see page 3). If any one branch voted against forming a single, national Welsh branch, the whole proposal would fall and the status quo would remain. Members could be informed of the proposed change and the details of the AGMs via *Rail Wales*.

If the three branches voted in favour, each former branch would operate as before, meeting, campaigning and so on, but operating as a sub-branch or section and without individual branch funds. As now, the south branch would be the `lead sub-branch` and would liaise closely with the other sub-branches. (We could continue to do our best to set up a small, working committee in the north).

There would have to be, of course, an annual general meeting to which all members would be invited. This would elect a national committee whose job it would be to ensure we took a strategic, overall/national view, ensuring that the sub-branches liaised and sang from the same song sheet, so to speak. E-mailing and conference calls could facilitate communication amongst national committee members and it could hold meetings if it deemed appropriate. If a committee member was also on the committee of a sub-branch, so much the better.

If anyone has any more effective ideas for how such a single branch could operate, please let us know. But in the meantime, this is the situation. I stress that the financial situation, e.g. the subventions from Railfuture UK, would not be affected - the sum would reflect the membership figure and would be paid to the account of the national committee.

John Rogers (Chairman, south branch)

Where To? Anywhere you like as long as it's Birmingham!

Announced by the Labour administration and supported by the coalition, the new high speed London – Birmingham (HS2) line was flaunted as the nearest thing to sliced bread. But is it?

The Taxpayer's Alliance, a voluntary body, which acts as a watchdog to over see what the government is doing with our money, doesn't think so and claims to have exposed the flaws in the business case outlined by the government. The line between London and Birmingham will cost £17billion and will reduce journey times by only 30 minutes. HS2 will never produce a financial return – the net operating profit only covers 42% of the cost over 60 years. The project will not cut carbon emissions – the promoters claim it will be carbon neutral. The business case relies on a 267% increase in demand, and TPA claim that this is wildly optimistic. The Alliance further states that nearly half of all long distance rail trips (47%) are made by high earners, so HS2 is a railway for the rich but is paid for by everyone.

We can recall the previous high speed investment for Eurostar trains across the south east; the remainder of the network was starved of investment and the capital amounts were promulgated so many times by the Labour administration that one had to check all announcements to ascertain whether the sums involved were really new money or the same old expenditure getting a further airing! With the present financial constraints it looks pretty likely that HS2 investment would again put the brakes on any wider spending across the network.

We can all imagine how the project will run: over engineered the whole way. I can recall a previous line built for high speed running to continental loading gauge and closed down in the 1960s: the Great Central! Why isn't HS2 using the abandoned road bed of this railway which lies disused over part of the route the new proposed railway will take? Previously great advances have been made by beefing up and adding tracks on existing routes and buying brand new locomotives and rolling stock. In the USA in 1935 the Milwaukee Road introduced a brand new train with a new name - The Hiawatha – billed as “Nothing Faster on Rails” it was scheduled to run at over 100mph for part of its journey between Minneapolis & Chicago – this was behind steam – and was phenomenally successful using existing improved tracks. Improving conventional lines with new kit has further advantages: the equipment can be cascaded to other parts of the network when more new improved rolling stock comes in. This isn't possible if the equipment is specialised to the new line.

In Wales we could do with plenty of improvement – a by no means all-inclusive list might include electrification, Pacer replacement, additional rolling stock all round and a Western “WAG” running from Pembrokeshire to the capital at high speed via the Swansea District Line. If the HS2 goes ahead, although we’ll no doubt get some finance from the Assembly, for the money that’s needed for the really big improvements in public transport we all might as well go out and whistle Dixie! – it’s all going into London – Birmingham!

Guy Hardy

Public Transport Users’ Committee for Wales

Mrs Adele Baumgardt has been appointed Chairperson of the Wales Public Transport Users’ Committee (*see Rail Wales 49*). She was Director of Policy at the Equal Opportunities Commission for Wales 1999-2007. She had been working with both Westminster and Welsh Assembly Governments on the implementation of the Equalities Act 2010.

Mrs Baumgardt has worked with a number of organisations including Bridgend College and the Welsh Consumer Council on projects looking at accessibility and public transport. She has a Masters Degree in Equality and Diversity from Cardiff University, holds a public appointment to Sport Wales and is Wales Commissioner for Women’s National Commission.

The interviews for committee members will take place in February with the appointments announced later. It is anticipated that the first meeting of the committee will be in late March/ early April. A request has been published for the public to submit topics for consideration by the committee.

Rowland Pittard

Wales rail freight update (*January 2011*)

Aggregates

Moreton-on-Lugg: The regular twice weekly working to Hayes continues. There was an increase of trains in September and October with additional trains to Elstow and Harlow Mill.

Machen: Twice-weekly trains continue to run to West Drayton

Margam Grange siding: Trains of crushed basic slag continued to run to Lea Interchange until 20th July, when Lea Bridge Interchange closed permanently. An intermittent flow of slag commenced to Bow Olympic, usually on Tuesdays, commencing on 3rd August. Freightliner worked two trains of basic slag to Chichester in October.

Neath Abbey Wharf: Regular trains continue to run weekly operated by Freightliner to Angerstein Wharf and Theale. Freightliner also worked trains to CEMEX at Washwood Heath, Birmingham between 20th July and 15th September. There have also been one-offs to Thorney Mill. The DBS-worked trains to Stourton CEMEX have been discontinued but one was operated Freightliner on 19th January.

Penmaenmawr: Train have run to Guide Bridge, Manchester with stone for Network Rail.

Car Components and Chemicals

A daily flow of component traffic continues between Fords Dagenham and Bridgend. There is regular traffic between Barry Dow Corning and Southampton and Tilbury. Occasional direct trains have run on Fridays from Dolland's Moor to Barry with imported silica sand from France.

Cement

The Freightliner trains conveying fly ash from Drax to Aberthaw cement works ceased after 15th November.

Coal

Cwmbargoed continues to serve Aberthaw Power station with usually two daily trains of coal. It also dispatches weekly trains to Drax Power station and Tata at Margam Grange siding. An occasional train runs on Saturdays to Barry Docks with domestic coal. The trains to Immingham and Newport Docks have ceased.

There is usually a daily train from Onllwyn to Aberthaw Power station, twice weekly trains to Immingham CPL, and a daily train of inward coal from Gwaun Cae Gurwen with coal for blending. There is regular containerised wagon load traffic from Onllwyn to Mossend. Onllwyn also sends coal by road to Tata at Margam.

A weekly train usually runs from Tower colliery to Aberthaw power station with coal from Aberpergwm but this is expected to transfer later in the year to a new loading facility at Cwmgwrach. The Unity mine at Cwmgwrach has commenced producing coal and the commencement of trains to Aberthaw is expected shortly.

Uskmouth power station received coal from nearby Newport Docks until 27th June. The contract for hauling coal to the power station transferred to Freightliner and the first train from Portbury arrived on 13th October.

Aberthaw power station, in addition to receiving Welsh coal from Cwmbargoed, Onllwyn and Tower, continues to receive imported coal. This was sourced from Avonmouth between 6th September and 29th October and from Portbury since 1st November. Coal from Newport Docks restarted on 22nd December. A resumption of trains from Killoch, worked by Freightliner, is anticipated later in the year.

Tata Steel at Margam has stated that it will use more locally sourced coal in the future and is already receiving coal by rail from Cwmbargoed and road from Onllwyn. A new flow started on 12th January from Maltby colliery.

Penyffordd cement works continues to receive the occasional train of coal from Malby colliery and New Cumnock.

Coke

Sea-borne coke from Redcar to Margam was gradually transferred to rail haulage from 12th May .Two daily 31-wagon trains have continued to run with one on Saturdays and Sundays. These have been recently supplemented by a thrice-weekly train of 21 wagons.

Containers

There is a daily, including Saturdays, container train worked by Freightliner from Southampton to Wentloog. The Saturday-only service from Garston Docks Liverpool to Wentloog continues to run. Also at Wentloog there is occasional MOD traffic, and recently introduced container traffic to Tilbury, both worked by DBS.

The Enterprise service, conveying traffic from the continent, via Newport to Avonmouth ceased after the last train on 24th June with the empties returning on 1st July

Nuclear

Trains worked by DRS run regularly with spent fuel from Valley to Cumbria.

Petroleum

The present pattern from Robeston is 5 or 6 trains weekly to Westerleigh, 3 trains weekly to Theale and 1 train weekly to Bedworth. Trains occasionally operate to Kingsbury.

The fuel train from Lindsey to Aberthaw power station continues to run as required.

A new service, worked by DBS, commenced on 4th November from Immingham to Cardiff Docks HCB. At first the service ran weekly but from 6th December it was increased to two or three trains each week. This again was formerly conveyed by sea.

Scrap metal

There continues to be a diversified pattern of workings with wagons frequently used on complex diagrams such as Cardiff Tidal to Swindon, Swindon to Liverpool Alexandra Dock, Alexandra

Dock to Handsworth Queen's Head then to Cardiff Tidal. Other diagrams have involved Thames Steel at Sheerness.

The only remaining wagon load traffic is from St Blazey to CELSA Cardiff (see also Margam Grange siding)

Sims, Newport Docks received two trains of scrap from Exeter in January.

CELSA Cardiff: major flows of scrap are required to supply the works and so recently scrap has been sourced from Barry Dunns, Beeston, Brierley Hill, Exeter, Handsworth Queen's Head, Kingsbury, Newport Docks, Rotherham and Shipley and wagonload from St Blazey all worked by DBS. Flows from Attercliffe (8th June), Handsworth (10th September), Hitchin, Lincoln (27th September), Mossend (19th August) and Tyne Dock (22nd April) have ceased after the dates shown in brackets. A new service commenced from Seaton on Tees on 6th January. In addition there have been trains from Stockton and Tyne Dock worked by DRS. However there have been no Tyne Dock trains since 10th September.

Barry Dock Dunns: no recent inwards traffic but a few loaded trains have been dispatched to CELSA including one on 10th January

Margam Tata Steel: scrap traffic is unloaded at the far end of the Grange siding branch. Block trains but mostly wagonload scrap is received from Lackenby. The last train from Handsworth was on 3rd July.

Steel traffic

Margam Tata Steel: export of coil in block loads worked by DBS to Mauberge Tata Steel/Sous le Bois Mryiad SA in north-east France commenced on 16th March 2009 and trains subsequently ran up to thrice weekly from Margam, picking up traffic at Llanwern, to Dollands Moor. The last loaded train operated by DBS was worked on 14th December, with Colas taking over from 2nd January, with DBS transferring wagons as required between Margam and Llanwern.

Cardiff Docks: occasional movements of coil for export have continued from Margam and Llanwern, but during December there

was imported coil for Margam. The import of slab from the Netherlands recommenced on 13th January to Llanwern and this is anticipated to increase when No. 4 blast furnace reconstruction commences at Margam.

Birdport Uskmouth branch: traffic from Llanwern has recently increased with a daily train including Saturdays sometimes supplemented by a second train in the afternoon. For a short period steel coil was imported for use at Trostre.

CELSA Cardiff: the thrice-weekly train conveying rods and bars continues to Rotherham and there is wagonload traffic to Mossend. GBRf carried out loading trials at CELSA on 10th November with the possibility of hauling steel products to Tilbury.

Tata Steel Margam and Llanwern: daily block trains operate from South Wales to Corby 1 or 2 per day, Dee Marsh (Shotton) 1 or 2 per day, Hartlepool 1 per day, Round Oak 3 per day, Swindon 2 per week and Trostre 1 or 2 per day with occasional trains to Wolverhampton. Wagonload traffic is conveyed to Immingham, Middlesbrough and Swindon.

Tata Steel Trostre: traffic is conveyed by rail to Birdport, Round Oak, Tilbury and Worcester.

Newport Docks: imported coil through Newport Docks is being sent to Middlesbrough (Dawsons), Swindon and Wolverhampton.

Timber

Facilities at Chirk are being improved, assisted by freight grants and will shortly be completed. Trains continue to be operated by Colas from Carlisle to Chirk and these will be increased in size from 14 to 21 wagons following the improvements at Carlisle and Chirk. The loaded timber trains ran from Ribbleshead instead of Carlisle from 13th August to 9th November with 66842 hauling the last train.

Rowland Pittard

Compiler's notes

Your compiler extends his thanks to those members who contributed material for this issue. In all cases, any opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent *Railfuture* policy

Our aim is to cover *Railfuture's* actions and views on developments throughout Wales and the Borders. This can be done *only* if members contribute, so please share your experiences and views with other members.

Material for the next issue - be it a letter, a comment or article – should be sent the compiler at 84 North Street, Abergavenny NP7 7ED; email: peter.clark@railfuturewales.org.uk to arrive by 31st JULY for the Autumn 2011 issue.

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