

Issue 54 Spring 2013

# Rail Wales

*Newsletter of the Welsh branches of  
Railfuture*



*Semaphore signals at Llandudno (see page 2)*

## **More re-signalling in prospect**

In the last issue we referred to re-signalling and electrification in south Wales. Since then, Network Rail has announced a plan, spread over 10 years, to tackle those parts of Wales and the borders which are still controlled mainly by semaphore signalling.

First up will be the north Wales line between Flint and Llandudno. The Marches line would follow (2017), and then the rest of the north Wales line (2020). Lines west of Swansea will have to wait until 2023 for modern signalling, but will benefit before then from the re-doubling of the track through Gowerton to Llanelli, and the rebuilding of the Loughor viaduct.

Benefits of investment in modern signalling will include reduced operating costs and higher capacity. The former should, for example, allow Sunday trains to Llandudno all the year instead of only in summer, and the latter could make it easier to accommodate new stations on the main lines, as well as allowing increased service frequency.

As to further electrification, the north Wales coast line (Crewe – Chester – Holyhead) has been receiving considerable political attention lately, the Welsh Government having ordered a ‘business case’ to be developed (which would include Wrexham to Bidston and Chester, also Chester to Warrington). It is reasonable to hope that this possibility will be allowed for in designing the resignalling (gantry heights etc.) for subsequent possible electrification.

Meanwhile, another scheme affecting, but not in, Wales is commencing: re-doubling the track between Swindon and Kemble. This is due to finish by Spring 2014, coinciding with a major signalling renewal, and making the line more capable of acting as a diversionary route during main line electrification works.

The prospect of the electrification of the south Wales main line raises the question of the possible introduction of electrically-hauled freight trains to and from South Wales. The yards at Llanwern, Newport ADJ, Wentloog and Margam Knuckle yard would require full or partial electrification. The future electrification plans will enable all trains to the Freightliner terminal to be electrically-hauled. Trains which use the Great Western main line from Dollands Moor, the London area and Didcot, and even steel trains to and from Corby will become candidates for electric haulage.

## **CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL BLYNYDDOL CANGEN Y DE**

**SADWRN, EBRILL 20, 2013**, Canolfan y Crynwyr, 43 Stryd Charles, Caerdydd (yn agos M&S).

1030 – 12.30: cyfarfod arferol y pwyllgor ond croeso cynnes hefyd aelodau eraill.

13.15 – 15.15: y cyfarfod blynyddol – croeso I bob aelod. D.S.: croesewir aelodau I wneud gais ymuno â'r pwyllgor. Wedi i ni ethol aelodau'r pwyllgor, bydd fforwm agored i drafod pynciau llosg y sîn rheilffordd yng Nghymru.

D.S. I dderbyn gofnodion y cyfarfod blynyddol diwethaf (28-4-2012) naill ai rhwch wybod i mi trwy e-bost neu anfonwch amlen addas gyda stamp.

*Cefnogwch ni trwy fod yn bresennol! Cewch chi siopa cyn neu ar ôl y cyfarfod!*

## **SOUTH BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**SATURDAY APRIL 20, 2013**, The Quaker Meeting House, 43 Charles Street, Cardiff (very near M&S).

1030 – 12.30: branch committee meeting, but other members are most welcome.

13.15 – 15.15: the AGM – all members welcome. N.B.: we invite members to apply to join the committee. After the election of the new committee, there will be an open forum to discuss aspects of the rail scene in Wales.

N.B.: to obtain the minutes of the previous AGM (28-4-2012), please either let me know by email or send me a suitable stamped addressed envelope.

*Support us by coming along! You can go shopping before or after the meeting!*

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## **North branch bulletin**

As most of you will know, there have been continuing problems getting together a functioning committee to run the branch – and we owe a great deal of gratitude to David Mawdsley and Ted Evans for all they have done, both to keep the flag flying and to attempt to recruit a committee.

Ted has health problems and David is having to relinquish his secretaryship – and the result is that, after discussion amongst ourselves and consultation with Railfuture Board members, the North Wales branch funds are being transferred temporarily to the South branch on a ‘care & maintenance’ basis.

May I suggest that, with the welcome recent increase in the number of North Wales members, any northern members willing to form a small committee should please contact me? The degree of involvement and activity would be for the committee to decide - but we do need a functioning North branch! David feels that one problem is finding a location for meetings, i.e. one that is central enough and convenient for those attending.

Beth amdano, gyfeillion?

*John Rogers* (chairman, South branch):

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## Wales: one country or two?

Politicians often claim that Wales is one country. However, this assertion is belied by the figures. 50 years ago Wales had a true national network, but the next few years saw a slaughter of lines. In particular, closures made it impossible to travel between north and south Wales except by a long journey through England. The effect can be seen in the tables below.

**Table 1: South Wales train journeys in 2010**

figures in thousands; - = under 0.5 (i.e. under 500 people in the year).

	Pembs	Carms	Swans	N-PT	Brgnd	VoG	Cardiff	Newpt
Pembrokeshire	67	50	31	2	2	2	29	3
Carmarthenshire	50	129	190	9	5	2	62	5
Swansea	31	190	33	216	56	7	278	24
Neath-Pt Talbot	2	9	216	99	53	2	203	7
Bridgend	2	5	56	52	250	72	477	12
Vale of Glam	2	2	6	2	72	196	958	32
Cardiff	29	62	278	203	477	958	2034	559
Rhondda Cynon Taff	1	2	5	2	49	77	1230	15
Merthyr Tydfil	-	-	-	-	3	8	105	1
Caerphilly	-	1	2	1	9	45	928	6
Blaenau Gwent	-	-	1	-	2	3	126	3
Torfaen	-	-	1	1	1	5	102	17
Monmouthshire	1	1	2	-	1	4	120	55
Newport	3	5	24	7	12	32	559	-
Mid Wales	-	5	5	-	-	-	6	1
NW Wales	-	-	2	1	1	1	26	3
NE Wales	-	1	2	-	1	1	24	3
Wales Total	190	462	853	595	1000	1413	7266	746

The areas are the local authority areas; i.e. Bridgend includes Maesteg; Caerphilly includes Rhymney. Mid Wales is Ceredigion and Powys. NW Wales is Anglesey, Gwynedd and Conwy. NE Wales is Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.

The key point in the above table is that most numbers are ludicrously small. Less than 1 person a day makes a trip between over a dozen pairs of areas. The figures show how rail closures distorted travel patterns. Many journeys became impossible or excessively long. Thus

<sup>1</sup> Source: Office of Rail Regulation

57 (road) miles from Fishguard to Aberystwyth will take you 8 hours by train.

North Wales and south Wales are in effect two different countries, both of which rarely visit the other half. Not surprising, as the only link between them is almost wholly in England! The lowest figure is between Blaenau Gwent and Flintshire: just 2 journeys in a year. Most other similar journeys clock up less than 1 journey per day. Blaenau Gwent’s trains go only to Cardiff, adding over an hour to journey times before they can get going from Newport.

If the Carmarthen – Aberystwyth and Bangor – Afon Wen lines were *both* reopened, and used as part of a Swansea – Bangor service every 2 hours, the figures would look very different indeed. The same applies to Mid Wales: travellers are almost all within Mid Wales or to/from England. Only 16 journeys in the year were made between Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion. It also seems nobody wants to go to Merthyr Tydfil! However in 2011 its train service changed from hourly to half-hourly, so the next figures will see a large increase – but again mostly to/from Cardiff.

**Table 2: the big cities**

**Swansea, Cardiff, and Newport:** extracted from above

	Within City	Bgd+VoG	Glam. Valleys	Gwent Valleys
Swansea	33	62	6	2
Cardiff	2034	1435	2263	228
Newport	-	42	16	20
Cardiff % of total	98%	93%	99%	91%

Glam. Valleys are RCT, Merthyr, Caerphilly; Gwent Valleys are Blaenau Gwent & Torfaen; Bgd+VoG are Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan.

Swansea and Newport each have around half the population of Cardiff; they all had an equally intensive network of lines to the valleys as well as *within the city* (Swansea had 6 rail passenger termini; more than anywhere else in Britain except London). However, Cardiff’s lines stayed open *or were reopened*; but the others lost almost all. Even the reopened Ebbw Vale line takes the Gwent Valleys traffic to *Cardiff!* But this is *Newport’s natural hinterland*; it should also have at least a quarter of the Caerphilly (i.e. Rhymney Valley) traffic. This shows what is possible if the Swansea and Newport rail lines were reopened.

**Table 3: Total Welsh Rail Journeys** (in hundred thousands; e.g. 115 = 11.5 million)

Year	Wales	England	Total	Rise	%W	Headings and comments
1994	92	47	140	--	66%	Year: April to March; thus 2001 = April 2001 to March 2002
1995	94	51	145	5	65%	
1996	96	53	149	4	64%	<b>Wales</b> = Journeys completely in Wales
1997	97	56	153	4	63%	<b>England</b> = Wales to / from England
1998	97	57	154	1	63%	Till 1994, numbers were decreasing steadily.
1999	108	58	166	12	65%	
2000	112	58	170	4	66%	Since, trips within Wales have more than doubled. A major cause: increases in commuting to Cardiff.
2001	121	60	181	11	71%	
2002	124	63	187	6	66%	The biggest jumps: when lines have reopened, e.g. Ebbw Vale & Vale of Glam lines 2006 & 2007. These reopenings also boost the journeys which are wholly in Wales (shown as %W) and reversing the trend shown till 1999.
2003	129	67	195	8	66%	
2004	132	67	199	4	66%	These increased passenger numbers also have the effect of reducing the subsidy ATW Wales receives from the Welsh Government.
2005	135	69	204	5	66%	
2006	146	73	219	15	67%	Keep the figures going up, people!
2007	162	76	239	20	68%	
2008	174	79	253	14	69%	
2009	180	80	260	7	69%	
2010	187	86	273	13	68%	

Overall, it is clear that with some frequency improvements, and a few key reopenings, rail journeys within Wales - and particularly between the three regions of North, South, and Mid Wales – could see an even greater increase in the next 15 years than in the last 15. The future is (potentially) bright!

*D G Watts, November 2012*

## **Cambrian Lines News**

### **Annual General Meeting**

The Cambrian Branch held its annual General Meeting at Machynlleth on Saturday 16th February. Those present reiterated their general satisfaction with the refurbishment of the Class 158 trains, which has now been completed, and also with the punctuality of the services. The Guest Speaker at the meeting was Mr Rhydian Mason, Rail Development Officer, Cambrian Railways Partnership, who has worked

diligently to publicise the line during his period in office and is to be congratulated for his part in projects which recently won ACORP awards. These awards came for a 'Wales on Rails' brochure and a film aimed at school pupils on railway safety. Mr Mason will however shortly be leaving this post as he has been appointed Regional Transport Plan Co-ordinator for TRACC. In thanking Rhydian Mason for his work and his readiness to attend our meetings and share information with us it is to be hoped that this association can continue, although with a somewhat different emphasis perhaps, in his new capacity.

Existing branch officers and committee members were re-elected and were thanked for their work.

## **European Train Control System**

This system is still referred to in some quarters as the European Rail Train Management System (ERTMS) and in other places by the more correct description European Train Control System (ETCS) and you will find both terms used in these notes depending on the source of the information. Contrary to many reports in the railway press and other places, the new ETCS signalling system is working well and this has been so for a very long time now. Network Rail now says that it is as reliable as any other signalling system. Despite the views expressed in some quarters it has been good to see letters in the railway press recently from users of the services (one such letter being from branch member Rhys Jones) putting the record straight. It does however still have one big disadvantage in that only trains fitted with the expensive equipment can be used on Cambrian Lines. Despite capacity problems the trains and locomotives so fitted however are regularly and extensively diagrammed over routes and on services in other parts of the Arriva network and, as far as the Network Rail locomotives are concerned, much farther afield.

A very interesting article appeared in the February 2013 edition of 'The Railway Magazine' centering on the difficult task of finding space and the fitting in steam locomotive cabs of modern equipment required for main line running. The article touches on ERTMS and reports that Hitachi has developed a smaller unit although fitting it to steam locomotives is still exercising the minds of those concerned. However the article also reports that it seems likely that a pair of West Coast Class 37's will be fitted with ERTMS equipment which will potentially ease the situation as far as running excursion trains on Cambrian lines are concerned as all non-fitted trains now have to be hauled or piloted by

one or more of the three Class 97's (ex Class 37's) owned by Network Rail and updated and modified for Cambrian use. Of course as with all developments in the computer and electronic world equipment is becoming smaller by the day and it can only be hoped that a fairly portable piece of apparatus can be developed soon to ease the situation.

## **Train Services**

As already reported, members have expressed general satisfaction with the now completed refurbishment programme carried out on the Class 158 units. We cannot however understand why it is taking such a long time to introduce the much talked about and frequently promised hourly services. We hear from various places reports of progress, even promises, but only if the figures stack up! So much for a service promised for 2011.

This matter has been coming up for years now whenever services on the line are discussed and came to the fore again recently when the Member of Parliament for Ceredigion, Mark Williams, secured a parliamentary debate on the matter and in addition also stressed again the need for through services between Aberystwyth and London. The situation has subsequently been widely reported. The February 20th issue of 'Rail' reports that Network Rail are working hard on the final solution for the hourly timetable and that it will be mid April before it fully understands what (if any) additional work will be required to allow the timetable to be implemented. 'Rail' deduces that the line could be ready for hourly trains by the end of this year. There are rumours locally that both Arriva and Network Rail feel that they are ready and that the ball is in the court of the Welsh Government. It is also said locally that although train speeds were increased over a section of the line some weeks ago they quickly has to be reduced again to former levels as the result of very lively riding of the trains at certain locations. It does seem strange that a scheme designed only a few years ago is not yet considered to be robust enough, without further work, to sustain the hourly service for which it was supposedly intended. We can only wait and see.

The 0930 departure to Birmingham International is now a 4-car formation from Aberystwyth and goes forward (at least on Mondays to Fridays) from Machynlleth as a 6-car train with the joining up of the Pwllheli portion. This involves selective door opening by the conductor at Caersws. It has to be said that this is a much welcomed development.

At the AGM members reaffirmed the need now and for the future of good frequent trains services between west and east, including of course cross-border to Shrewsbury and Birmingham New Street and Birmingham International in order to provide reasonable connections to other destinations within Wales and other parts of Britain, including of course London.

### **Through services between Shrewsbury and London**

Virgin Trains are firming up plans for through services between the above locations which will no doubt be welcomed by those living within easy reach of Shrewsbury. The Member of Parliament for Montgomeryshire, Glyn Davies, spoke of the importance of such through services during the debate referred to above. The timings being mooted however are not such that they can be regarded as good connections from Cambrian Coast trains. Virgin Trains hope that these services can be up and running in December of this year.

*Glyn Jones*

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### **Infrastructure Developments**

There were two minor closures in 2012. The long head-shunt and run-round loop at Treherbert were removed, leaving a short head-shunt and no run-round facilities. At Caldicot Junction the connection to the Dinham (Caerwent) branch has been removed. The remaining dock lines at Swansea remain out of use. However the branch from Briton Ferry to Baglan Bay has been brought back into use.

A new intermodal container terminal was opened on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013 at Barry docks by Associated British Ports. The terminal is adjacent to the main road through the docks and almost opposite the docks entrance gates. It is adjacent to and on the south side of the branch to Dow Corning works immediately east of the junction with the line from Cadoxton. The former contractor-worked terminal on the south side of No. 2 Dock is now out of use. The rail tracks on the south quay of No. 2 Dock are now out of use except for a short section near the entrance gates which is used for stabling wagons while shunting takes place. Trains continued to run round using the existing loop which remains in the docks.

Arriva Trains Wales has upgraded their fuelling facility at Holyhead with the provision of covered accommodation.

New intermediate block signals were commissioned between Abergavenny and Pontrilas on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2012 to improved track capacity on the up line.

The second phase of the Newport Area signalling renewal was introduced on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012 between Newnham Tunnel and Severn Tunnel Junction. Newport panel signal box and the crossing boxes at Caldicot Junction and Lydney were taken out of use. The new signalling is controlled from the South Wales control centre at Cardiff.

The first phase of the Cardiff Area signalling renewal covering the line between Barry and Bridgend was commissioned on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and resulted in the closure of the signal boxes at Aberthaw and Cowbridge Road (Bridgend), with control being transferred to the South Wales signalling centre.

Extensive track renewal has taken place on the Wrexham to Bidston line between Wrexham and Penyffordd with sections of jointed track being replaced by continuous welded rail on steel sleepers.

The redoubling of the track between Cockett West and Dyffryn Junction (Llanelli) has continued throughout the winter. At the end of February one span of the new river bridge over the Loughor was ready to be moved into place at Easter 2013. By 2<sup>nd</sup> March 90% of the new track that is required had been laid and ballasted with components and ballast to complete the project in place. A up new platform and ramped footbridge has been completed at Gowerton. The line is to close completely from 24<sup>th</sup> March to 7<sup>th</sup> April to allow for the new Loughor viaduct to be slid into position and for the trackwork to be completed. The scheme has cost £40m of which £15.6m was for the new 7-arch viaduct.

It is anticipated that the Wrexham to Saltney Junction, Chester redoubling will start in later in 2013.

Work has commenced on the Cardiff Valleys network which will improve the reliability and capacity on the rail network. The £220 million project is jointly funded by Network Rail and the Welsh Government. It includes a new platform and a new south-side entrance at Cardiff Central with lifts to the new platform, a new platform and a new southward-facing bay platform and entrance at Cardiff Queen Street station, an additional

platform at Barry station for trains to and from Barry Island, improved infrastructure on the Rhymney Valley line at Caerphilly (new bay platform) and Tir-Phil (new platform and crossing loop), improved infrastructure at Cogan Junction, line-speed improvements on the City Line including reinstatement of double track between Cardiff Central and Ninian Park, and a new bay platform at Pontypridd.

The installation of digital information screens at all stations in Wales is almost complete and has included the least used station in Wales Sugar Loaf Halt.

Station improvements continue. A major scheme has been completed at Swansea and another has commenced at Llandudno Junction. Prestatyn has improved platform facilities and a new disability compliant footbridge. A new footbridge with lifts has been brought into use at Bridgend. The car park at Aberdare has been extended and a new park and ride facility is being constructed at Pengam.

*Rowland Pittard*

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## **Welsh Fares update**

The maximum Arriva trains fare is based on Pontyclun to Prestatyn and Carmarthen to Manchester and this year is £89.10 compared with £84.70 last year.

In the Cardiff area the maximum Valley Lines day return fare to all Valley Lines destinations including Cardiff (except Wildmill to Maesteg) is £7.40 (up from £7 last year). This applies from Treherbert, Aberdare, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney and Ebbw Vale Parkway but not from Maesteg where the overpriced fare has remained at £8 thus reducing the fare differential between the other branches. The Cardiff Valleys railcard which gives half fares for persons over 60 is still available.

Holyhead to Euston has an anytime fare of £299 and an off-peak fare of £89.80. Aberystwyth to Euston has an anytime fare of £265.00 and an off-peak fare of £77.50. Fishguard Harbour to Paddington has an anytime fare at £263.00, an off-peak fare at £102.50 and a super off-peak fare of £77.50; these reduce for Cardiff to Paddington to £207.00, £88.00 and £70.50 respectively. These reflect the higher fares per mile on the First Great Western route which are still higher than those to

Waterloo via Salisbury. Advance purchase tickets can sometimes produce substantial savings.

The all-Wales Rover (4 days rail and 8 days bus, in 8 days) is £94 and the North Wales and South Wales versions are £64. Normal railcard discounts apply to these fares.

The North Wales Rover combined bus-rail tickets are still available at the same fares as in 2012 and give substantial savings for many day return journeys. An all-zones ticket costs £25.00 and covers rail travel on the following routes: Pwllheli to Machynlleth, Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury to Chester, Wrexham to Bidston, Chester to Holyhead and Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog. Zonal fares are £9.00 for 2 zones and £14.00 for 3 zones. The only reduction is half fare for children.

The Rail–Sail tickets are still available between Great Britain and Ireland using the Holyhead and Fishguard routes.

*Rowland Pittard*

*Compiler's footnote: A member has kindly pointed out that the brief reference to ATW's 'Club 55' fares scheme (which ran until 24<sup>th</sup> March) in the last Rail Wales was incomplete, in that the offer was much more complicated this time.*

*In fact there were three offers. Firstly buy from the ATW website and get return travel throughout the entire ATW network any day of the week. Cost £17 (£16 with a senior/disabled railcard). From stations or other rail outlets you could only get either an Arriva Club 55 Not Friday (£19:£18) or an Arriva Club 55 Anyday costing £24 (£23). And on top of all this the return journey was permitted only within eight days of the outward travel. A far cry from the offer of last year, and our lack of mention of these details was simply because, when the previous issue closed for press, we had not seen the leaflet with the 'small print'!*

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## **Wales Freight Update (March 2013)**

This update records freight developments in Wales since August 2012.

### **Aggregates**

**Moreton on Lugg:** there are usually two trains each week to Hayes and occasional trains to and Hothfield. The weekly train to Leeds Hunslet has ceased, after running on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

**Machen** continues to dispatch gritstone from the Hanson-Heidelberg Cement's quarry at Craig yr Hesg near Pontypridd in occasional trains to West Drayton, and these depart as required on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. There have also been a few trains conveying limestone from Machen quarry to Whatley.

**Cardiff CELSA:** there have been occasional trains of blast furnace slag from CELSA Cardiff. DBS operated the first two on 21<sup>st</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2012 and subsequent trains, usually every fortnight, have been worked by Devon and Cornwall Railways.

**Margam Grange siding:** there continue to be occasional trains of crushed basic slag from Margam Grange siding to a variety of destinations including Acton yard, Brentford and Hothfield.

**Neath Abbey Wharf** continues to dispatch trains, Freightliner-worked, usually weekly, to Angerstein Wharf and Theale. There has also been a train to Thorney Mill.

**Penmaenmawr:** there have been no trains since early 2012.

## **Car Components and Chemicals**

The daily wagon load service between the Ford plants at Dagenham and Bridgend continues to run. There is also some traffic from Bridgend for Valencia in Spain.

The Dow Corning plant at Barry receives silica sand from two locations in France (Amberieu and Notre Dame-de-Briancon) each fortnight by block train forward from Dolland's Moor. The containers are now unloaded at the new Barry Docks intermodal terminal.

## **Coal**

There are five coal loading points for South Wales-produced coal, and imported coal is also loaded at Newport Docks.

**Cwmbargoed disposal point:** the disposal point dispatches up to three trains each day to Aberthaw power station. The weekly train to Drax

power station last ran on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012 but the twice-weekly trains on Mondays and Fridays to the cement works at Earles siding continue to run, as does the Saturday train to TATA at Margam. The last train to run to TATA Scunthorpe was on 28<sup>th</sup> October.

***Tower disposal point:*** there has been an increase to two trains daily to Aberthaw power station since February 2013.

***Cwmgwrach:*** there was a pause in dispatches from the Unity mine to Aberthaw after the last train of 2012 ran on 8<sup>th</sup> December and the first train of 2013 on 1<sup>st</sup> March. The Aberpergwm drift mine, on the west side of the valley, which had used recently the Cwmgwrach disposal point, has been mothballed and the associated opencast site Nant y Mynnydd has ceased to operate.

***Onllwyn Washery:*** this continues to receive coal from opencast sites at Sarn Helen and Stella and also by rail from Gwaun Cae Gurwen. Recently there have been seven weekly trains to Aberthaw power station and twice weekly trains (Tuesdays and Thursdays) to Immingham CPL. Coal trains to TATA Margam have ceased to run. The regular Saturday train to TATA Scunthorpe which commenced on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2012 (after trial runs in June) continues to run and from 9<sup>th</sup> January 2013 there has been a second train on Wednesdays. There is still wagon load containerised coal for Mossend.

***Gwaun Cae Gurwen*** disposal point despatches on most days a train of coal for blending to Onllwyn washery.

***Newport Docks:*** there have been infrequent coal trains to Aberthaw power station - two in January and three in February 2013. The daily train often including Saturdays and Sundays continues to run to Uskmouth power station using Freightliner.

Coal has been discharged at four coal locations in Wales excluding Onllwyn washery:

***Penyffordd cement works*** near Wrexham continues to receive occasional trains of coal from New Cumnock in Scotland.

***Uskmouth:*** coal trains are worked by Freightliner from Portbury and Newport docks to Uskmouth power station (daily services).

**Aberthaw:** DBS works coal trains from Avonmouth to Aberthaw power station, the number of trains varying according to the requirements of the power station. These are in addition to trains from the four South Wales loading points. The long-distance flow from New Cumnock to Aberthaw power station is now worked by DBS and consists of three weekly trains.

**Margam TATA:** there has been a regular weekly train from Cwmbargoed on Saturdays from November 2012.

## **Coke**

The flow of coke from Redcar and Scunthorpe to Margam Grange siding recommenced on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013.



*Freightliner train crossing the River Usk at Newport*

## **Container traffic**

This continues to increase although there has been no traffic in recent months on behalf of the Ministry of Defence to Wentloog. The daily Freightliner-worked Southampton to Wentloog liner continues to run additionally on Saturdays and there is an 'as required' service from Millbrook to Wentloog which usually runs at least twice a week. The Freightliner-worked Saturday Garston Dock to Wentloog service continues to operate. A new intermodal service now operates from

Daventry to Wentloog for Tesco. This train commenced on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012 and runs daily except Saturdays and is worked by DRS. DBS continues to work containerised wagon-load flour traffic from Tilbury to Wentloog which arrives on Mondays and Thursdays.

### **Nuclear traffic**

Occasional trains run from Valley which serves the power stations at Wylfa.

### **Petroleum**

This traffic has increased this year with additional trains running from Robeston with two weekly to Bedworth, four weekly to Theale and six weekly to Westerleigh. There is wagon load traffic from Fawley to Cardiff Canton via Didcot and the tanks are delivered and collected from ATW Cardiff Canton on Fridays. DBS works an occasional train of fuel oil from Lindsey to Aberthaw power station but the DBS-worked weekly train from Immingham to Cardiff docks ceased after the last train arrived on 21st December. GBRf work two trains weekly from Lindsey to Cardiff docks.

### **Scrap metal**

The movement of scrap metal into South Wales by four different operators continues to add interest to railway operations in South Wales. Scrap metal is unloaded at Sims Newport Docks, CELSA Cardiff and TATA at Margam Grange siding.

**Sims Newport Docks** has received scrap from Handsworth Queens Head worked by GBRf and from Exeter and Handsworth Queens Head worked by DBS.

**CELSA Cardiff:** DBS has continued to work scrap metal trains to CELSA Cardiff but from a more limited range of points of origin including from Exeter, Handsworth Queen's Head (formerly worked by GBRf), Kingsbury, Rotherham and St Blazey (trainload). New operator Devon and Cornwall Railways (BARS) has continued to work trains from Shipley, Stockton and Tyne Dock. Freightliner Heavy Haul works three weekly scrap trains from Dagenham Dock but has ceased serving other locations. GBRf continues to work trains of scrap from Beeston but ceased working from Handsworth Queen's Head after 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012 following a change of contract to DBS.

**TATA Margam:** There is a weekly train from Trostre using 4-wheel SSA box wagons.

## **Steel**

**TATA steel works at Port Talbot** continues to provide the main traffic flows in Wales. The reopening of the hot mill at Llanwern in December saw the resumption of slab steel traffic between Port Talbot and Llanwern from 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The re-commissioning of number four blast furnace at Margam on 12<sup>th</sup> February saw a further increase to four trains a day in the movement of slab traffic from Margam to Llanwern. The covered wagons fleet has seen a partial change with the silver-sided JSA coil carrying wagons being replaced by blue curtain sided IHA wagons.

The inward movement of steel slab has continued but the daily train from Scunthorpe was diverted to Llanwern from November 29<sup>th</sup> 2012. Imports of steel slab including from the Netherlands and the USA have continued via Cardiff docks and occasionally Bird Port (Newport) to Margam and occasionally to Llanwern.

There continues to be a substantial amount of inter-works traffic. There is a daily (sometime two) including Sundays, train to Trostre tinplate works at Llanelli. There are two daily trains, using covered vans, to Dee Marsh coating plant at Shotton in north Wales. There are one/two daily trains to the pipe works at Corby and one to the pipe works at Hartlepool. These trains use open bogie wagons.

The flows to Europe using the Channel Tunnel have increased with up to four departures each week from Margam two to the TATA galvanising plant at Maugbeuge and two to Rotterdam Botilek in the Netherlands.

The finished products are distributed from the various plants by road and rail. There is a twice weekly service (Sundays and Wednesdays) from Trostre to Tilbury conveying tinplate. There are up to three daily trains, using covered vans, from Margam picking up at Llanwern for TATA's distribution centre at Round Oak in the Midlands. There is wagon load traffic to Middlesbrough and Immingham using overnight trunk services. There is export coil traffic via Bird Port at Newport. A twice-weekly train (Tuesdays and Thursdays) runs from Llanwern to Swindon stores with steel for the car industry.

Direct services from Margam to Wolverhampton steel terminal recommenced on 11<sup>th</sup> February. Steel coil is moved, as required, from Margam and Llanwern to Bird Port and Cardiff Docks for export. About 80% of this is inter-works traffic to the Netherlands but the remainder is exported to a range of countries including Algeria and Turkey.

Margam receives containerised limestone from Hardendale (three trains per week) and containerised dolomite from Thrislington which is attached to the Hartlepool to Margam service.

***The Spanish-owned CELSA steel works in Cardiff:*** at present the outward movements are limited. The conveyance of steel billets to Scunthorpe has ceased, with the last train running on 17<sup>th</sup> September being that to Rotherham conveying steel bar. There have been two trains of steel wire coils to Rotherham using the small SPA wagons which ran on 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February. There was a one-off train of steel bar to Mossend on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

***Steel stock holders W E Dowds*** dispatch steel from their warehouse on Newport Docks to Swindon and Wolverhampton steel terminals 'as required', and receive inward steel coil from Margam and other sources.

## **Timber**

There are now eight weekly services to Kronospan Ltd at Chirk. The weekly service from Teigngrace in Devon continues to run while the new service from Baglan Bay which commenced on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012 usually runs on Tuesdays. The daily train from Carlisle to Chirk continues to run except on Fridays (except in winter) when it originates at Ribbleshead.

## **Network Rail Departmental**

Departmental trains for Wales, worked by DBS, originate at Crewe Basford Hall, Bescot and Westbury. An interesting feature had been the working of convoys of up to ten class 66 from South Wales to Westbury/Eastleigh on Saturday mornings and returning, but not always the same locomotives, late on Sunday evenings. Freightliner worked a series of trains during the winter from Crewe Basford Hall to South Wales with materials for redoubling the line between Cockett West and Llandeilo Junction.

*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](mailto:peter.clark@railfuturewales.org.uk) , to arrive by 15<sup>th</sup> AUGUST for the Autumn 2013 issue.

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*Railfuture* is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society, a UK-wide voluntary body for rail users. It receives no funding from political parties or rail companies. Annual subscription is £21 (£14 for students and unwaged). Enquiries should be addressed to Peter Clark (address above).

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