

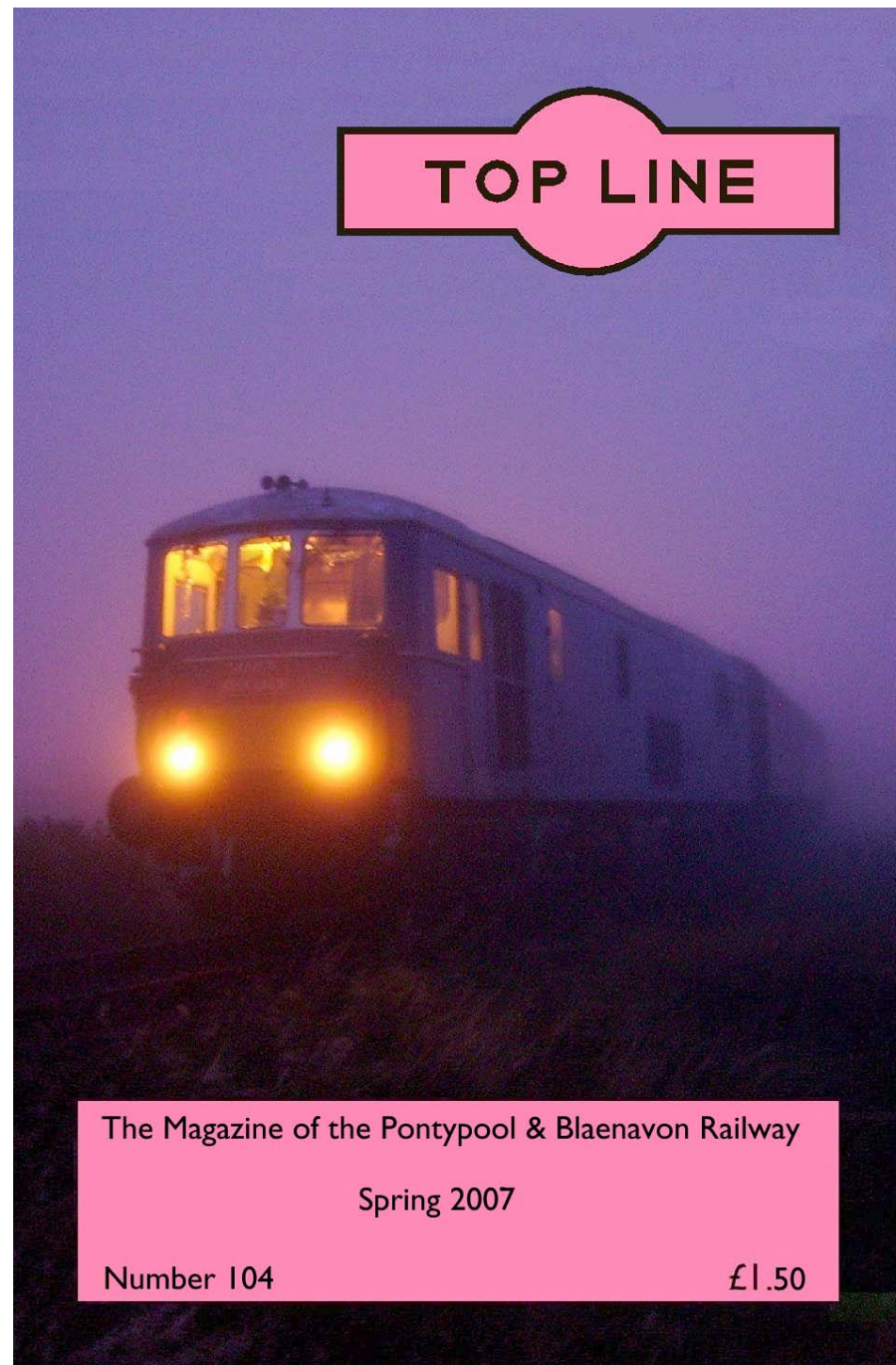
More images from 'Valley Value Voyages'...



The southbound service stands at Ystrad Rhondda waiting to cross a late running northbound service.



This is Merthyr Tydfil, looking south, with its new and rather substantial station building



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EDITORIAL

As pace on the Ponty and Blanner continues to gather, we might imagine that we are we bravely ploughing are lone furrow. We'd be wrong. With the number of operational railways increasing to well above a hundred, and with about half as many railway centres and museums again, there are few railways that are not brimming with expansion plans. Admittedly there are a few which are finished - or rather complete - such as the delightful Keighley and Worth Valley. However, their work is far from complete as they continue to improve and refine. More and more heritage railways are striving to connect to the national network such as the Bluebell at East Grinstead or the Swanage at Wareham. But it is possible to sense something more subtle, and potentially infinitely more far-reaching. Are Heritage Railways on the cusp? Railways such as Dartmoor, Weardale, Wensleydale, or Cockermouth, Keswick & Penrith are springing up with little or no pretensions to being Heritage Railways in the conventional sense, but aspire to serve the community with a modern infrastructure and modern trains. Interestingly they raise funding, not by tin-rattling or church-fete raffles but a straightforward share issue in the old-fashioned way – and, in the main, it seems to be working. Are we on the verge of a second railway mania as hostility to daily gridlock, the soulless eurocar, and the 38-ton juggernaut reaches endemic proportions?

Cover Picture:

Looking more than a little mysterious, 73133 rolls slowly and quietly out of Whistle Inn Halt with the final train of the Santa Specials season – a very foggy 23 December

Photo : Alistair Grieve

FROM THE WOOLSACK - our Chairman, Robin Cornelius writes...

It almost seems traditional these days that the first question posed to friends early in the New Year 'Did you have a good Christmas?' I hope you all did. We *certainly* did with passenger numbers very close to 1600 – the highest for many, many years. The actual figures are described later, but what impressed me greatly was effort made by all our members – even more heart-warming, perhaps, was the whole hearted involvement by both members and non-members who had not been expected to be roped into our affairs. Was it worth it? If the comments from those volunteers was anything to go by, it was, but if we add the kind remarks made by our passengers, then it really was a memorable Christmas. Thank you, one and all.

In an effort to get rid of all the bad news at once, I must report that Roger Mileman has found it necessary to stand down from the board, against a background of increasing health concerns – sadly none of us are getting any younger. Roger has been of great value to the railway – I need not eulogise; the increased passenger figures for our recent events – especially for the Diesel Gala and for the Transport Rally – speak for themselves. Hopefully Roger will continue to be seen on site. He was certainly seen regularly amongst the traincrew on our recent Santa Special trains. Thank you, Roger

Perhaps our members are beginning to spread the word, because the number of membership applications has been most encouraging, during what is, normally, a rather quiet period. We have added a dozen or so names all together – details later in this issue. We continue to attract members of the cloth, but whether we are a place of spiritual solace or in dire need of salvation is not clear, but gentlemen, you are very welcome.

Now is an ideal time to join the railway, it is still a relatively small pond, and with a bit of commitment you could be a big fish in it. If you have, perhaps, picked up this issue in our shop, or an Ian Allan shop, why not consider joining us? If you are unsure what the PBR is all about, just ring our shop on 01497 792263 and have a chat to somebody – we love to talk railways!

Looking back, it has been an extraordinary year. Although 2006 was a year marked by several important formal forward steps, there were a number of outstanding practical matters that finally came to fruition. The most visually impressive was the completion of the car park and information point, and its formal opening with all the associated razzamatazz. A fortnight later the all important Transport and Works Act Order had been granted. The summer then followed with two highly successful events – the Diesel Gala, and the fourth - and best to date - Transport Rally. Our first Jazz Special (and beer) on the train was an event definitely to be repeated. In late November we heard that the car park and information point had been the recipient of an important award – the British Association of Landscape Industries award – more of this in this issue. In the last few weeks of the year the drinking water network was installed on site, and a start made on sewerage facilities. A footbridge arrived, albeit in need of restoration, and Santa Specials reached new heights. Above all, our expanded programme of operations, planned for 64 days, and the subject of serious misgivings when first launched, was executed without a single day lost, and, indeed had a few extra days thrown in. A splendid year, by any standards.

Have no doubt, that the railway is growing fast, and, although 2006 was indeed a splendid year, this will be a mere curtain raiser to 2007, for in 2007 and for the next two or three years the pace of development will, if we remain unprepared, crash over us like a giant wave. Announcements later in this issue will demonstrate that. We have spent several years consolidating and refining our collection of rolling stock, both Company- and privately-owned. Now is the time to turn towards infrastructure, and we will need a massive influx of working membership, especially with artisan skills, if we are not to get overwhelmed by the challenges ahead. Someone put it rather succinctly a few weeks back – 'you've now got all your ducks in a row'. Very soon the railway will be a big pond. You could be a big fish. The time has come!

NEWSLINES**Santa Specials 2006**

Children of all shapes and ages descended upon Santa at the Whistle Inn during the railway's Santa Season this December, eager to chat with the man in the red robe and to receive their presents. Such were their number that poor old Santa was quite overwhelmed. The weather was variable, to put it mildly, and with the proceedings during the last day so blanketed in fog that several passengers had to be given directions from the new car park to the station platform. Sadly, the Santa Season was a victim of its own success with all trains fully booked, well before the booking period had come to an end. Perhaps particularly unlucky, were the 'turn-up-and-ride' passengers, many of whom were local, and who had been coming back year upon year, who were unable to get a

Fri 30 November	16
Sat 1 December	121
Sun 2 December	53
Sat 8 December	224
Sun 9 December	172
Sat 16 December	345
Sun 17 December	355
Sat 23 December	316
Total	1602

place on the train. The railway is planning radical steps to accommodate the overcrowding issue arising from this increasingly popular event in the next year or so. We normally publish chapter and verse on Santa number, so here they are here, on the left. Readers may be puzzled to see an extra train on Friday 30 November. This was a special run in conjunction with the BALI Award made to the railway



Landlord Cliff Herbert looks on as Rose, his wife, receives flowers from General Manager Dave Haylins for their contribution to making Christmas special for our passengers

DEVELOPMENT

There is likely to be something to say on development front for the next three or four years, so it looks very much as if this column will become a regular feature. We hope you find it of interest. We find ourselves in a bit of a quandary, however. Development is now moving so fast that most of the 'news' will be history by the time you read it, since composition of Top Line is essentially complete four to five weeks before it drops onto your mat. We'll do what we can – and even do a bit of guesswork – in the hope that we don't have to retract *too* often.

Transport and Works Act Order

The final cost of securing the order was £14862.70 – within less than 1% below our original central estimate of £15000. And that, we very much hope, is the end of the matter!

RKF reapplication

The re-application is complete and has been accepted. We have now spent all of the £25000 granted, and contributed all but a few hundred pounds of our contribution of £5000. The money purchased the TWAO, brought water onto site, and provided us with sewerage facilities – exactly as agreed.

The drive southwards and funding

It really is beginning to look as if others, and in particular Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) are now putting our ideas forward to secure funding. There is a limit to what we can announce here, in a magazine that has, now, entered the public domain. However TCBC will be making an application to the Heads of the Valley (HoV) Initiative for significant funding, using much of the material we have submitted to them, and it is this money, if it can be secured, which will essentially fund the extension to Blaenavon (High Level). We know in some detail for what amount is asked, in the bid, and the timescales involved. If all goes to plan, and we are quietly confident, as they say, then by the time our next issue comes out we will be able to announce everything. But be warned – the amounts involved are very large, and the timescale allowed for the work is very short. Topline 105 really will be a shock issue.

Water supply

Although, as we noted in our last issue, we hoped that the water would be available to the Tearooms for Santa Specials season, it was not to be. The network was installed, but the connection had not been made to the mains. The contractors chose to install the network were Jim Davies, of Blackwood. They started work on laying the pipe network on Thu 9 November, and the network on site completed by Wed 22 Nov, after some heroic work when contractors (a two man team – Mark and Terry) laid about 80m per day through some exceptionally difficult terrain. At one point there was solid concrete over a run of about five metres to a depth greater than the 1.5metres. By Friday 24 November re-instatement work was completed and the pipe taken to the pavement edge near Bridge 5 (new Pit Road bridge), ready to be taken across the road for connection.

Most of the connection work is now complete, and the final 'switch on' is expected well before the end of January. Fittings and valves for 'our' end are all to hand, and sufficient extra pipe has been bought to enable the supply to reach the lavatory hand basins. Finally our visitors can be assured of a decent cuppa.

Toilets

Arthur Llewellyn has almost completed waterproofing the roof of one of the toilet units, and has fitted some windows. Work remains outstanding on the other, but foul weather is hindering progress. The necessary pipework has now been purchased and is stored on site. The large biodigester tank was delivered on Saturday 16 December, and installation is expected before the end of January. The biodigester is a clever device that separates and cleans the water from sewage and which can safely discharge this water to an open watercourse. The technique is much favoured by the Environment Agency, and a formal and detailed application is being prepared that will permit a 'Consent to Discharge'. The necessary pipes and fittings are all to hand to enable us to connect the lavatory blocks to the digester, when it is installed.

Link Road

In connection with their ongoing environmental improvements programme TCBC have been talking to Big Pit about improving the road that links the far side of our level crossing with Big Pit. A constant irritant and threat to the safety of the railway are the trials bikes and quad bikes that skirt round the flanks of the crossing gates, and ride across the crossing. Big Pit intend to close the road to all motorized traffic, except for special cases, so we look forward to some peace and quiet from the off-road bikers. As a spin-off from this contract, the crossing at Furnace Sidings, and, at present four sixty-foot track panels have been lifted. This will be re-ballasted and laid with concrete sleepers, and a new road surface laid, across the crossing well before we re-start our operations in April. The existing new boom gate and the old lifting barrier are to be replaced with new gates of more sympathetic design, and a 'filter', with lockable wicket gates, will allow pedestrians, wheelchair users and horses to cross the line when the main gates are locked.

Bridges

Early in January a contract was let to Gareth Gregory, one-time director of Big Pit, to secure funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the purpose of reconstructing Bridge 7 (our unique rail-over-rail bridge). Gareth, now retired, has a proven track record in this area – Big Pit is a witness to this. Older members may remember that relations with Big Pit were once not as cordial as they are at present, but much water has flowed since then, and we see National Museum of Wales not only as our landlords and formal partners, but as real friends. TCBC have also awarded a contract for a thorough inspection of Bridge 7 which will prescribe, in detail, the remedial work required, and which is to be completed by the end of March. This information will be used to support the lottery bid. It also seems likely that TCBC will very shortly let a contract for inspection of the remaining bridges down to High Level – and possibly beyond. All this will happen very quickly, and we advise you to keep an eye on our website for up to date information

Diesel loco and DMU report

Class 73/1 electro-diesel 73133

Loco 73133 left us on Friday 19 January for service on the main line at Taunton, though this is unlikely to be the last we'll see of her class, since another, different class-mate is due to turn up rather soon. We are fairly sure which one it will be but suffice it to say that she'll be very different from 73133. The second half of a feature article on the Class 73 appears later in this issue.

English Electric BSC104 'Llanwern' (Works No D1249)

Llanwern, possibly a little miffed at having her services largely unused as a result of the arrival of the upstart 73133, has been a trifle troublesome throughout the Autumn. No sooner had the brakes been repaired, than she suffered a starter motor failure, and the necessary repairs proved expensive and protracted. If that were not enough she suffered a fracture in a fuel delivery pipe, though this was quickly cured. Nevertheless she put in a very good rescue service when 73133 was unexpectedly withdrawn during a Santa Special service due to fuel problems.

Hudswell Clarke D615

D615 has now entered the bottom shed for further painting and for outstanding mechanical work on her clutch.

Hudswell Clarke D1387

D1387 continues has had a busy season, working PWay trains, shunting the yard and in other assorted activities. She will be entering the bottom shed soon, in order that she can be fitted with vacuum braking equipment, which will considerably increase her usefulness.

Sentinel 10083 'Panteg'

'Panteg' was lucky to have found an outside expert, who was able to repair her block with an unconventional technique using solder and epoxy resin. Between Christmas Day and New Year's Day a friend of Norman Clymer soldered the engine block finishing it off with epoxy. The following day the system was wet pressure tested, the engine was then run till engine temp was at 70°C and remained watertight. This loco is still not in service as a few other leaks have been spotted and other problems once these have received attention, 10083 will undergo a load test to get the engine really working and the temperature up to proper working temperature. As long as the load test is successful she will be back in service very soon.

Fowler 22497 RT1.

As we reported in our last issue, a donkey engine used to start the main engine has now been secured, and RT1 is in the bottom shed awaiting installation of the donkey engine, acquired a few months back.

Hunslet BSC170 'Ebbw' (Works No.7063)

Came into the shed on the off-chance a few months ago to have two jammed injectors unstuck. This has been done, but re-assembly must now wait till Summer as she has been returned outside in a rather inaccessible position.

DMU Class 108 – DMCL 52044, DMCL 50632

Since this unit has seen no further use since the summer, car 50632 was the subject of a visit by graffiti merchants, probably on Boxing Day. The area round three windows was significantly sprayed. We had considered entering the result for a Turner prize at Tate Modern but the standard of English used in making the artists' political points was so substandard as to be unrecognisable. We therefore took the easy way out and simply scrubbed the artwork off. There's no doubt that spray cans are not what they used to be. Whether it due to concern for the ozone layer from the manufacturers, or as a result of representations from local authorities and others subject to the activities of these pathetic souls, we don't know – but we like it!

DMU Class 117 – DMBS 51351, TCL 59520, DMS 51397

Car 51351 still needs its door pillar fixing. On 51397 all the parts to effect the repair to the leaking fuel tank are in place – it just needs a dry day and a few spare hours to see this task complete. Although undercoating is complete, repainting of the damaged paintwork must wait till the weather is kinder.



It's the following page for coaching stock, but we felt this portrait of the freshly painted Gangwayed Full Brake illuminated by a low December afternoon sun, deserved printing on one of our colour pages

DEMU Class 205 - DMBS 60117, DTCL60828

Now that we understand more clearly how this unit works, she is regularly started to keep her in a state of operational readiness. The heater problem previously reported was fixed after a few electrical tweaks, which would have given the H&S bandits a serious attack of the vapours. It's a real treat now to work in the cab in a warm dry fug during the winter months. The unit had developed an irritating control fault which prevented it starting at all. The area of the fault took a few sessions to find, but a contactor auxiliary contact hidden away at the bottom of an equipment locker, was the problem, and all is well now. Sealing work on the windows remains outstanding, and some cosmetic work to rectify mildew damage is needed in the DMBS.

Carriage and Wagon Report

Carriage and wagon work now seems to be settling into a sort of well rehearsed routine under the influence of C&W supremo, Paul Gane. It's a fact that our rather narrow two-road shed makes working on coaches rather difficult. Its easy enough working from the centre aisle, but the side of the vehicle next to the wall is almost inaccessible, and this makes work very irksome. Paul's philosophy is simple. Each coach under maintenance makes two entries into the Top Shed – one on the No2 road, the other on No3 road. (No.1 road is outside). On each entry, only half receives attention. This certainly results in a lot of to- and fro-ing, but the works does get done.

Gangwayed Full Brake (BG) M81453

The BG worked during the first few weeks of the Santa Specials in the (loco), BG, RMB, SK lineup that she worked for the latter part of the summer. Later in the Santa season she was replaced by the BSK. Since then she has lain fallow on No.4 siding, and sadly was involved in a recent graffiti attack around Boxing Day. Fortunately she suffered little damage, and most of the damage has been rectified.

Restaurant Miniature Buffet (RMB) E1854

The RMB will probably be in the Top Shed whilst you read this. She will be in the No.2 road so that the eastern half of her roof can be painted. Internally her north end gangway door awaits re-installation, as does the north saloon sliding door. These were left off in the rush to get her ready for the car park opening, but the time has now come to do the job properly.

Brake Composite Corridor (BCK) M21034

Although the BCK has received some limited attention inside, whilst she languishes in the No.5 siding, she is still waiting for a berth in the Top Shed. It seems that it will be autumn before she can be taken under cover.

Brake Second Corridor (BSK) SC35494

As we suggested in our last issue, this vehicle has now entered for attention to its west side. Significant work was directed to the doors and thresholds on this vehicle which have been long overdue for attention. The centre vestibule door, of composite steel-wood construction, and which was showing serious rust problems was replaced by a cast aluminium door recovered from a SR 4-Vep EMU vehicle. The coach was rostered onto the Santa Special formation towards the end of the season.

Tourist Second Open (TSO) E4677

Although stored in the bottom yard, she is far from abandoned. Roger Lewis is steadily working inside the south saloon, removing all components, refurbishing and re-varnishing components before re-assembly. There is little doubt that this vehicle will require extensive and expensive repairs, especially around the doors. However the political will is there, and we very much hope to see her back in traffic soon.

Tourist Second Open (TSO) S4046

No realistic buyer has been found for this ex-Dart Valley vehicle, but the germ of an idea that this vehicle can be used as a Santa's Grotto seems to have taken root. This will require that the vehicle is re-clad, but no timescale has been determined.

Tourist Second Open (TSO) Sc4256, previously Sc4654

This is the second of the ex-Dart Valley coaches, and was purchased privately by a member at the same time as S4046 in a rather complex deal with the DVR. We are pleased to report, that following attempts to sell this vehicle 'outside', that it was purchased by the Company this year. It is in rather better condition than S4046, and plans are in place to restore it as an operational TSO in due course.

Restaurant Composite (RC) S7832S / LSWR 70

Although the hardware is now in place to permit the body side to be jacked back down onto the bottomside, incessant rain and the need to progress S3193S to serve as a support workshop means that no visible work has been undertaken. Regrettably her sister No.76 has seen no further work, and she continues to suffer from the winter weather.

Brake Third (BTK) LSWR 1357 / S3193S / ADS70133

This vehicle is enjoying a relatively energetic period of work. She was laid aside a quarter of a century ago, and, with no maintenance, the roof covering would have failed shortly afterwards. For the first time in a very long time indeed, her Decolite floors are not only dry, but positively dusty. There is still some dampness seeping in around the windows which are waiting to be re-sealed and some panels still leak, but working inside is now much more pleasant. Electrical work inside has been extended so that there are more, better controlled, internal lights and power sockets have been installed throughout the coach. A lot of the floor has now had its properly rebated floor planking installed, a lavatory wall has been installed, and a lav. door that looked as if it had mouldered completely, has been cleaned up to reveal almost perfect teak stiles. New birch-faced ply panels have been fitted, though it remains to restore the gold-leafed legend 'lavatory', remains of which were found under layers of paint.

GWR Brake First Open (BFO) 231.

We can't always make rain at Blaenavon, though there's seldom any need to so do, however, there is one infallible method of generating wind, and that is to purchase and fit expensive tarpaulins. So it was with GW231 – within a fortnight of fitting new tarps, they were torn to shreds by that worst that Blaenavon can throw up. Since then she has suffered gamely from all the elements can throw at her. She can only hold on for better weather, and shunting into a more suitable position to permit work to proceed.

Sleeper First (SLF) M378M

The 12-wheel sleeper has now been moved into the Top Shed so that her west side can be patched up and painted. It is planned to paint and line her in BR maroon livery, and emblazon her with the legend 'Sleeping Car' before she moves outside. Before Easter it is planned to move her onto the disconnected No.1 siding, where she will serve as volunteer sleeping accommodation. If you were thinking of moving in, it's too late – all of the berths have been 'sold off' to one or other of our regular members.

Restaurant Buffet – Refurbished (RBr) M1954

After several years, agonising over the future of this vehicle, it was finally sold a few months ago, and finally left on 6th November. Our latest information is that it has gone, not to Dartmoor, nor Llangollen, as we were variously told, but to the Weardale Railway in the far north-east. We wish it well. It is unlikely that this column will report on this vehicle again.

An award from the British Association of Landscape Industries

The new car park has certainly raised the tone of the railway. We know that, and so do our visitors, if their comments are anything to go by. We were not aware, though, that there were awards for this sort of thing. When we learnt that, indeed, there were such things we were not altogether surprised to learn that we were in line for an award. We were however delighted to hear that we were to actually receive an award, the more so since the visitors to the presentation were to include some very influential people. It would be easy to get carried away by all this, of course, but the award was not for us, but mainly for contractors Blakedown, and for TCBC in recognition of the work of their landscape architect Andrew Nevill.

.....The award was presented by David Spencer on behalf of the British Institute of Landscape Industries (BALI), in front of an invited audience of local politicians, and representatives of important funding agencies. After the award was received jointly by John Down on behalf of the railway Company and by Cllr Bob Wellington on behalf of Torfaen County Borough Council. The party were then installed on a special train where they enjoyed a buffet lunch, and several rides up and down the line. On one of the downward journeys, Cllr Bob Wellington was joined by Patrick Lewis of the Heads of the Valleys (HoV) initiative to try their hands at a bit of driving – under the watchful eye of our Inspector Bernard Morton, and regular footplate crews. The HoV scheme, which provided a portion of the funding for the car park work, will be providing more funding for further environmental improvement along the link road to Big Pit (see elsewhere in this issue), and with whom an application for funds will be lodged to provide a major fraction of the cost of extending to Blaenavon (High Level)



Leader of Torfaen County Borough Council, Bob Wellington (right) chats with Patrick Lewis of Heads of Valleys Initiative



Right: Your editor, pretending to be his hero, Nye Bevan, doing what he does best – talking! Both he and Bob Wellington gave acceptance speeches on behalf of PBR and TCBC respectively

Below:

Some of the people who count (left to right):

Cllr John Marshall, chairman of the joint TCBC/PBRCo working group, and friend of the railway from its earliest days, Mike Wilding of contractors Blakedown, David Spencer who presented the award on behalf of the BALI, car park designer Andrew Nevill, Cllr Wellington, Mike Smith of Blakedown, and Cllr. Lewis of Blaenavon, executive member for regeneration



Furnace Sidings Station Development Appeal

Over the last few months or so we have been looking in some detail at the need for developments at Furnace Sidings, because, believe us, improvements are well overdue.

We need: three major elements in the improvement scheme:

1. A second platform
2. A footbridge`
3. A new station building

Although we have done remarkably well over the last few years from the statutory funding authorities, both directly and indirectly; for all sorts of reasons we must not allow ourselves to become a permanent and passive sink for statutory funding – it helps if we can generate some of the funds ourselves.

The simplest and cheapest project of the three is the second platform. We need a second platform, both for the operational convenience that it provides, but, perhaps more importantly, so that we can in the early days run, in essence, two railways side by side, without the need for a complex signalling system. Designs are essentially complete, and we can start work almost immediately. The cost of materials for the platform is estimated at a little less than £4000, and we think its work we can do ourselves. In the early days Furnace Sidings will serve as an interchange station between trains up to Whistle Inn and trains down to Blaenavon (High Level).

To serve as an interchange station, passengers will need to change platforms. Since the level crossing will be used by regular trains, it cannot be used by passengers. A footbridge is needed. We have recently secured a footbridge, but it needs considerable restoration work. The restoration work has been costed at about £8000 and much of the work we can do ourselves. We also have to instal the bridge – say another £2000. In round terms, £10,000

The biggie is the station building. Draft plans have been drawn up for a 5m x 25m station building to be installed on the existing Platform 1, and these will be published early in 2007. The cost of this building is very roughly estimated at £80,000. It is planned to include a ticket office, tearooms and kitchen, lavatories, and a shop cum waiting room, together with a small signalling and control centre, utility rooms and storage.

The total cost is a massive £94,000. We realise that this is a huge mountain, and we might yet obtain some of the investment capital from statutory funders. However this appeal is directed at people – people like you. Whether you are a member or not, whether you live close to Blaenavon or not, whether you are a regular visitor or not, we need your help. We are also looking for sponsorship from business - both local and corporate. For businesses, local and corporate, we are more than happy to look at advertising deals on our trains - we have an essentially captive audience. The necessary paperwork for donations is included with this issue

Don't delay. Do something now! You can make a real difference. Just imagine coming up to Furnace Sidings and viewing progress – and being able to say to yourself and your friends 'that bit's down to me!'

Valley Value Voyages – by Alistair Grieve

As many of you are aware Blaenavon occupies the Eastern most of the Welsh valleys and we are all getting very familiar with it and its surroundings. But what about the other valleys, what is left of the railway and colliery infrastructure within them? One of the best ways to do this is by train using the excellent Valleys Day Ranger ticket, £7 for Adults valid after 9am weekdays and any times weekends. This covers the Cardiff valleys plus Maesteg, Barry Island, Penarth and Bute Road (now known as Cardiff Bay). Which is why I found myself getting up at 05:30 on a dark and damp November morning to collect my friend Simon from Stratford upon Avon before heading across to Rhymney to begin our Valleys voyages with the 09:29 departure.

Rhymney station does have a nice solid building but this is for traincrew and taxis, travellers are demoted to the ubiquitous bus shelter. There are still several sidings present at Rhymney and these are used for the stabling of rolling stock overnight including the last class 37 loco hauled service in the country. From Rhymney to Bargoed the line is single track and passes through quite a narrow scenic valley. South of Pontlottyn across the reclaimed landscape the trackbed of a branch of the Brecon and Merthyr can be seen on the other side of the valley. This ran to a colliery near here with the passenger service terminating at New Tredegar just a short walk across the valley from the current Tir Phil station. Whilst services from Rhymney run to Cardiff those from New Tredegar ran to Newport and although the platforms are still extant it is now a children's play ground.

At several locations between the two railways can be seen the sites of former collieries although like many former colliery locations all remains of the surface buildings have been swept away and now just waste land and scrub land mark the site. At Bargoed the single track gives way to double track for the remainder of the journey and the station itself is quite substantial with a relatively modern and somewhat austere signal box contrasting with the rugged stone station building and the GWR signals.

South of Bargoed the land becomes more built up and at Hengoed we encounter evidence that the railways also ran across as well as along the valleys. Here a huge stone viaduct strides majestically across the valley and it is now a cycle path with access from the station allowing one to walk from onside to the other. The platform of the old Hengoed High Level Station can be seen with a re-creation of the GWR station sign positioned on it. At Ystrad Mynach there are more semaphore signals controlling the currently mothballed branch to Cwmbargoed and a huge stone Signal box of Rhymney railway origin.

As the railway approaches Aber on the outskirts of Caerphilly the castle can be seen on the left but there is little evidence here of the sidings and junction that used to exist until the early 1980's. This was for the junction of the line direct to Taff Wells and the marshalling yard at Radyr allowing coal trains to avoid Cardiff, alas no longer needed. Caerphilly station is the largest station on the line outside Cardiff and still has the station buildings and canopies present. South of the station, visible through the trees just before the tunnel can be seen the old workshops of the Caerphilly Railway.

At Heath High Level we left the train for the short walk to Heath Low Level, this was to catch the train to Coryton. Originally planned and built as a through route, railway rivalry somewhat squashed this and passenger services have only run as far as Coryton



Coryton station, the bridge in the background shows the former route the line took when it was a through route

From Queen Street we headed back North but took a sharp left as we headed to Treherbert via Pontypridd. Just past Cathays station is the old Cathays shed, once the home of a substantial fleet of steam locomotives and latterly a wagon works the building



Treherbert station, at the top of the Rhondda valley, looking north

almost from the outset although the trackbed is still visible beyond the station. The branch is a very basic railway, single track with bus shelter station buildings but it is well kept and each station has a digital display giving advice on train running and time keeping. Returning to Cardiff Queen Street there was enough time to grab a tea from the station buffet and admire the pure 1980's red plastic furniture.

is no longer rail served but still remains in industrial use and is a superb example of a GWR engine shed and would look so good at Furnace sidings. As we join the direct route from Cardiff the site of the old Radyr marshalling yard can be seen. Closed in the early 1990's the site has lain waste for a few years but is now being used to build houses and flats, someone will get a room with a view.

Shortly after leaving Radyr runs alongside the Taff River and Simon and I quickly note the very scenic Radyr weir as a potential photographic location for a future visit. As we head north through Taff's Well the old line to Aber on the Rhymney branch (see above) is now a footpath and this area once a busy junction for three lines and dominated by a huge steel viaduct now shows little of this. Just north of here and high up the valley side is the Castell Coch, a fairy tale castle very popular with tourists. Actually built in the 1870's but on the site of previous castles this has provided the backdrop to many railway pictures but today it is covered in scaffolding although Simon and I do note this down for a future visit.

Pontypridd Station sits on a curve in the railway overlooking the town and has a long twisting platform although recent developments mean that northbound trains now use a new platform. With some old Great Western fencing still in place Simon and I will investigate this on our return as we have ten minutes here when changing trains. Leaving for Treherbert our train takes the left hand fork of the junction whilst the Merthyr/Aberdare line departs to the right. In the vee of the junction is an ex GWR signal box although now boarded up. A bit further on we finally see signs of the regions coal mining past with the headstocks and winding house of Great Western Colliery standing silent by the line. Closed many years ago there is a proposal to make the building a museum to all the mines and miners of the Rhondda Valley but as yet that has come to a little further north and the twin headstocks of the Rhondda Heritage Park come into view. This can be accessed from Trehafod station although unlike Big Pit one has to pay to go round. This turned out to be the last colliery or rather, the remains of, that we would see all day which came as a bit of a surprise. At Porth the line becomes single throughout (apart from a passing point at Ystrad Rhondda) for the remainder of the journey to Treherbert and the remains of the Rhondda Fach branch to Maerdy and its colliery can be seen leaving to the right. The stations from here to Treherbert are quite close together and the train is well used with people travelling between stations. As we arrive at Treherbert we realise that for the majority of the journey from Pontypridd we have been accompanied by houses all the way although behind the houses the valley sides in all their autumnal colour are evident.

Like Rhymney, Treherbert station is now just a single platform with the very basic of passenger facilities i.e. a bus shelter and a digital display although there several sidings here for the stabling of rolling stock overnight. The railway used to continue beyond here through the hills to Neath although this is now reduced to a headshunt. The hills themselves overlook the station and provide an impressive backdrop to a less than impressive station. Returning to Pontypridd we have to spend some time at Ystrad Rhondda waiting to cross a late running Northbound. The sun pops out allowing a couple of pictures of our train and it is also interesting to note the steam era token equipment locked up in a very modern metal cabinet at the end of each platform.

Our arrival at Pontypridd is thus delayed and so our chance to explore the station is missed as we have to dash for the service to Merthyr Tydfil, it arriving as we did. Catching our breath (we're getting too old for this) our trains skirts over the roof tops of Pontypridd and past the disused and rather overgrown Stormsdown sidings (once used for marshalling traffic



from Abercynon pit and Lady Windsor Colliery) before entering Abercynon South Station. Abercynon is the junction for the Aberdare branch, recently reopened to passengers) and with the junction being South of the station the platform for Aberdare is located at Abercynon North a short walk away and visible from Abercynon South. Whilst being a bare platform with the most austere of brick waiting shelters the place is brightened up by the presence of a wonderful Great Western signal box on the end of the platform and a nice array of great western lower quadrant signals.

Taken from the platform at Abercynon South a service leaves Abercynon North (just visible at the back of the train) on the Aberdare branch and heads for Cardiff past a GWR lower quadrant signal. The line on the right is the line to Merthyr.

The run from Abercynon to Merthyr has a much more branchline feel to it as it twists and turns up the valley. Unlike the Treherbert branch the railway has plenty of countryside to run through and at this time of year the ferns and trees have a lovely autumnal hue to them. At Merthyr Vale the site of the old colliery can be seen at a lower level to the railway although as elsewhere this is now just flat empty land. With a fast run we arrived at Merthyr Tydfil eight minutes early which gave us enough time to get some photographs and dash into the Tesco Superstore (built on some of the old station site) for snacks. Merthyr is unique amongst the stations we have visited today as it is the only one that was originally a terminus and not a through station. The new station here sits on one side of the Tesco carpark and has a substantial station building with waiting room instead of the ubiquitous bus shelter.

To gain the Aberdare branch we change trains at Abercynon rather than Pontypridd, this allows a better look at the signalling and the chance for a couple of pictures including a service coming off the Aberdare line and past one of the semaphore signals. A quick two minute walk takes us to Abercynon North for our train to Aberdare. This valley unlike the others we have travelled is quite a surprise as the valley floor is wide and flat and not the normal narrow defile the one expects in South Wales. Along the branch is Mountain Ash, which became famous as the centre of complex of colliery lines and one of the last stands of industrial steam in the UK with steam lasting here until

the

very early 1980's. It was also the home of our very own number 8 but now sadly there is nothing to remind one of this heritage. New houses and development cover the area once filled with endless miles of sidings, steam engines and wagons full of King Coal.

At Aberdare the line carries on to Tower Colliery, the last deep mine in South Wales although slated to close in 2007/8 and just north of the station the line drops sharply to runs through the remains of the old GWR station which still boasts a station building and the remains of the canopy supports. Yet again we mark this location down for a future visit and with the light fading fast we board the train to return to Cardiff. With time to spare before our planned train back to Rhymney we decide to squeeze in two more branches (greedy or what) and so change trains at Queen Street (with enough time to grab a cup of tea) for a Penarth service. This service takes us through Cardiff Central and past Cardiff Canton Shed where we finally see our first locomotives of the day, a freightliner 66 at Central, and 37410 and 50049 on Canton, a far cry from when the valleys used to be full of locomotives.

On our journey to Penarth we are joined by an excited young man clutching a red rose, he's off to ask a young lady out on a date and then walk to Cogan to catch the train. We discuss life and love with him and wish him luck at Penarth as heads off on his adventure, I wonder if she said yes.

It's getting dark so with no chance for photographs we stay on the train for the journey back to Queen Street and our final branch of the day, the short stump of a branch to Cardiff Bay (once Cardiff Bute Road). The return journey is completed in a matter of minutes but it takes almost as long to exit the train as the doors have failed! Thankfully one is opened and we can alight in time for our train home and definitely the high point of the day. It's the 17:01 Cardiff Central – Rhymney, booked for a class 37 and the last one to be so in the UK. Even before it arrives we can hear that distinctive growl as it climbs the short distance from Central and arrives right on time with 37410 at the helm.

We climb on board and bag the front vestibule of the first coach preferring to stand all the way and listen to the music coming from the engine. Simon is even happier as the last time he had this engine was a long long time ago out of Glasgow Queen Street and along the magnificent West Highland to Fort William and Oban. It's uphill all the way to Rhymney and this certainly shows as the driver works 37410 hard, thrashing out the stations, sparks coming from the exhausts and the sounds echoing off the valley sides. There's something special about rail travel at night and this is no different as Simon and I savour every moment. This service is living on borrowed time and indeed less than a month later (December 11th) the last 37 hauled service ran and 37410 was sent North to Scotland leaving Wales devoid of operable 37's (except preserved) for the first time since introduction in the 1960's.

All too soon we arrive at Rhymney and detrain, we stay to watch the shunting of the train, grab a few time exposure shots and bid our farewell. It's been a brilliant end to a brilliant day, the services were almost all on the time, the trains clean, the staff helpful but what was surprising was the way almost all trace of the collieries had vanished and indeed how much of the railway heritage had gone as well. Apart from one or two outposts the valleys are now a very modern railway and the day rover ticket an excellent way to explore them.

There are more colour images for this article overleaf and on the outside rear cover



The same train as shown on page 16 catches the sun as it heads South past the signal box and gantry signal at Abercynon South towards Merthyr.

All photos by the author

There are more colour images for this article on the outside rear cover

THE CLASS 73 ELECTRO-DIESEL - Part 2 - by John Down

I wrote in our last issue about the development of electrification on the Southern Region, and on the circumstances that led to the development of the electro-diesel. Space prevented me saying anything about the class 73 in preservation, which was to be deferred to this issue. I'll get to that in a minute, but before I'd like to say something about the extraordinary story that led to the Southern Railway being electrified in the manner it was

At the end of the nineteenth century the suburban traffic on many railways centred on London was being seriously reduced by the rise of the electric tramcar in the London streets. Today we might welcome this as a useful step in providing an integrated transport system, in those days the railway companies saw it as a very real threat to their profits. The companies south of the Thames, with remarkable prescience, saw electrification as the answer. The crooked path of electrification starts with a very young Winston Churchill, recovering from his exploits in the Boer War. As MP for Oldham he proposed in parliament the setting up of the London & Brighton Electric Railway Company in 1901, which, shortly afterwards sought and obtained powers in 1903 to electrify its entire system, which it started in 1909 using the 6,600 volt 25Hz AC overhead system. The system used German control equipment from AEG and German traction motors from Winter Eichberg. As electrification spread, it soon proved an outstanding success. Not to be outdone the nearby London and South Western Railway announced in 1913 that it intended to electrify, using British Westinghouse Equipment for both electrical and control equipment, but this time using the cheaper 600volt DC third rail system.

Now, it's a fact that undergraduate students are notoriously callow concerning the deeper things in life, and thus it was that a student who, without thought for railway electrification in Britain, assassinated Archduke Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo, and so precipitated the First World War. Not surprisingly the import of German electrical equipment came to a rather abrupt end, which must have caused the LBSCR some considerable hand-wringing. The First World War came and went, and in the economically dismal years following it, the grouping intervened, so that the LBSCR, LSWR and several more in south eastern England were grouped to become the Southern Railway in 1923. However, re-enter a still young Mr. Churchill, who in a failed attempt to bribe the electorate by abolishing the passenger rate duty, finished up by having to stump up two million pounds to the Southern Railway in support of capital schemes. Despite the growing development of overhead electrification elsewhere, particularly under Sir Vincent Raven of the LNER and its pre-grouping predecessors, the Southern, no doubt with war-time problems still in the minds of its ex-Brighton directors, and with the ex-LSWR Herbert Walker as its new chairman, elected for the less efficient, but probably more robust, and very much cheaper, third -rail system.

And so it was that through nationalization to the present day, that the southern half of Britain has stuck resolutely to its basic third rail system, albeit at increasing voltages from 600 to 660, 750 and finally 850VDC, whilst the remainder of the country, whilst remaining on the overhead, has gone through any number of fundamental electrical and

mechanical changes, finally settling, so it seems, on 25Kv 50Hz AC, for no other reason than to satisfy the French. Ex-LBSCR directors would have been gratified to see electrification reach Brighton, albeit by third rail, in 1933, with forays to the west at intervals till the Second World War, which, once again, brought proceedings to a halt, but with much of the Southern now electrified. Notwithstanding, routes to much of Kent, the lines to Bournemouth and to Weymouth remained unconnected. Our previous issue described the timetable for this later electrification.

The Southern Railway was very much a passenger railway, deriving little of its income from freight or goods, but it did build three rather capable electric locomotives, the 1942 Bulleid Raworth Co-Cos, originally numbered CC1-CC3 (later to become Class 70s) were a case in point. The engineering excellence in these units is undoubtedly down to Raworth, but it must have been the irrepressible Bulleid who convinced both board and government to deliver them during the war years. There were also three diesel electric locomotives, again by the Bulleid Raworth team, the impressive 1-Co-Co-1 diesel electrics, Nos. 10201-3. This class penetrated non-electrified areas quite effectively but all were scrapped by 1963. The Class 70s went some way in the search for maintaining electrical drive - albeit only over short gaps in the third rail - by the use of flywheels, hence the term electric "booster" locomotives for them. Notwithstanding, it was the Class 73, as history has now demonstrated, they were the apotheosis of the breed.

Preservation

Like the Bulleid Pacifics, Class 50s and sisters of our own Thumper Class 205, the Class 73 has fared very well in preservation. This seems to be a growing trend, perhaps due to the fewer differing classes on the national network, and the growing demands by the heritage sector for affordable traction.

The list below shows those preserved, with their original TOPS number, and even earlier 'E' number following. Several of the TOPS numbers have now changed as sub-classes have emerged, particularly in the 732xx and 739xx series, also 73101 was uniquely finished in Pullman livery, named *Brighton Evening Argus*, and renumbered 73100 to celebrate the centenary of that newspaper. With its growing use on Royal Trains it was subsequently named *The Royal Alex*.

73001	E6001	Dean Forest	73128	E6035	Chasewater Light Rly.
73002	E6002	Dean Forest	73129	E6036	Gloucs and Warcs
73003	E6003	Great Central	73133	E6040	Network Rail, Taunton
73005	E6005	Severn Valley	73136	E6043	Kent and E Sussex
73006	E6006	Severn Valley	73138	E6045	Barrow Hill
73101	E6007	Dean Forest	73140	E6047	Spa Valley Rly
73110	E6016	Churnet Valley	73210	E6022	VSOE Stewarts Lane
73119	E6024	Barrow Hill Roundhouse	73211	E6019	VSOE Stewarts Lane
73126	E6032	MoD Morton in Marsh			

With a number still in main line service it seems highly likely that the list will lengthen in the months and years to come.

As for 73133, it was once named *The Bluebell Railway* and carried that railway's coat of arms. That said, it never ran on the aforesaid railway, which had steadfastly refused diesels in any form until June of last year when 350hp shunter 08 016 / D3023 / 13023 was drafted in to help with the heavy Imberhorne Tip spoil trains. Feathers are still flying! It seems probable that 73133 will stay with us till early 2007. Loco 73133 has been very popular with crews and we are told that she will be replaced by another of her sisters. At present we are not at liberty which loco is to replace her, but we know it is one of two – keep an eye on our website! Loco 73133's last appearance in main line service was in Mainline blue livery, and its new blue closely mimics this colour, however, there have been murmurings that it may see a repaint into its original loco green and pale grey green band low on the bodywork.

The EDLs were criticised initially for their indifference to the stylistic whims of the time, being admittedly rather slab sided and boxy, however, despite their complexity, they have proved very reliable 'go-anywhere' locos. In recent years they have been drafted anywhere from Merseyside to the Channel Tunnel (admittedly disfigured by the huge pivoted Scharfenberg couplers as Eurostar rescue vehicles), but if the criterion by which they are judged is 'beauty is as beauty does' they are beautiful locos indeed.



Beautiful? No. 73133 drifts down the bank with a PWay train one evening in June 2006

O&S DEPARTMENT

Passenger numbers 2006

No sooner had Santa Specials come and gone, than our actuaries, hidden away in drafty garrets lifted up their quill pens, and in no time had produce 'the figures', and what figures they were! Whilst it scarcely seems like news to post our endlessly improving figures, 2006 left even us a little breathless. So here they are, in a nutshell:

Summer Season	3832	10.4% up on 2005
Santa Season	1602	42.5% up on 2005
Overall	5434	18.3% up on 2005

The Railway Shop

The shop continues to go from strength to strength. Sales, no doubt boosted by the capacity to take credit cards – both over the phone and from personal customers, has helped. The increase in sales of 2006 against those of 2005 was 19.7% - against an increase in sales of 2005 over 2004 of 11.2%. So not only is the shop getting better, the rate at which it is getting better is getting better!

Our Private Owner Wagon range continue to sell well. We promised that our wagons (other than *Blaenavon*) would be limited edition – and we intend to keep to that promise. All the same customers keep coming in seeking titles that are now sold out. A particularly popular title was the local *Tirpenthwys*, which colliery was closed as late as



1969. In order to satisfy them, we have produced a newer pattern of *Tirpenthwys*, illustrated alongside, and bearing the simple sub-lettering *Pontypool* (rather than the original, and in our view, more attractive *Newport*

Cardiff & Barry). We hope that collectors will forgive us this little subterfuge. However we are now facing demands for repeats of models for which there is no modern equivalent. The only way we could manage to reproduce a model would be to change the running number. On balance we are not keen on this solution – why don't you tell us what you think? The first deliveries of *Tirpenthwys* have been delivered in the last two days.

Model Railways – and the Rhondda Show

The model railway group continues to meet on a Friday nights, despite what the winter storms are doing. The 0-gauge Blaen-Rhondda has moved from its previous portacabin to the new 32ft x 10ft model, just in time it seems, since the roof of its previous home has since sprung a rather large leak, though this has since been sealed. On the DCC controlled 00-gauge Newport layout, track laying has made it round the layout. Locomotives, many fitted with sound, are now able to make complete circuits of the layout, and are an impressive sight when hauling a long train. Give Pete Drummond or Norman Clymer a call if you are interested. With model railways very much on its mind the Society made its annual selling pilgrimage to the Rhondda Show over the weekend 6 and 7 January. A well attended Saturday saw sales up by 46.8%, on last year, but horrendous weather on Sunday saw both visitor numbers and sales down by 26.4%. Overall though a useful increase overall of 18.6%, and with total takings well on the way to £3000. Peter Hunt is smiling, and he has ordered 50% more space for next year.

The Society will be sallying forth over the late May weekend to the Abergavenny Steam, Veteran & Vintage Rally on the late May Bank Holiday on Sunday 27th and Monday 28th May 2007 Bailey Park, Abergavenny. If that were not enough, it's also off to the big city where it will be peddling its wares at the 22nd Cardiff Model Railway exhibition at The Assembly Hall, UWIC, Colchester Avenue, Cardiff on 20th and 21st October 2007. Keep an eye on the website for late changes of plan.

Bottom Line

Bottom Line has become rather a casualty to the increased workload suffered by its authors, with the timing of its appearance becoming a bit of a lottery. With that in mind, a new editor has been sought. Ace photographer Alistair Grieve has agreed to improve timekeeping on this important organ of communication.

The mysterious No.1 Siding.

No.1 Siding is a bit of a Willow the Wisp, since until now, it's never been seen! So what's it all about? Site regulars will know that from the three-way point in the upper yard the layout spreads out northwards in a fan of lines, which from west to east are:

- down the 'deviation' or exit road to the main line.
- No.2 siding which becomes the west road of the Top Shed
- No.3 siding which becomes the east road of the Top Shed
- No.4 siding which is the long siding the runs past outside the east wall of the shed, right up to the fence, and which usually serves as the loading/unloading point
- No.5 siding, which snakes round the old drift and usually holds the P-way train.

However, for many years, there have been plans to instal a siding between the exit road and the west side. It was originally to have held the RBr as a static restaurant, but is now to be used, mainly, to provide space for the volunteer sleeping quarters, that is sleeper M378M, plus a few other little used vehicles. Now in true GWR (and we suspect other railways) fashion. sidings are increased in number as they are ranked further away from the main line, so, knowing that one day we would have an extra siding, the first real siding was, until now No.2 – keeping No.1 in reserve



After days of incessant December rain, this gloomy and rather inadequate image shows the new No1 siding extending south, to the left is the top shed containing No2 and 3 roads, whilst on the right is the 'deviation' the exit down to the main line. There is no intention at this stage to fit any points at the far end – the rails will be temporarily slewed to permit entry of stock – and there it will stay

A LNWR footbridge arrives

It's a rare thing indeed to see a genuine London North Western Railway (LNWR) footbridge, it's even more unusual when, out of the blue, one becomes available for sale, the more so when the PBR's line was, indeed, built by the LNWR.



It's twenty past nine on a dark and dismal Wednesday, 15th November and the main span of the footbridge arrives. The main span sits on a pair of towers, access to each of which is by means of a single flight of stairs. Within minutes of arrival the heavens opened and it didn't really stop all day. A complex session of manoeuvrings and craning in limited space and increasing mud saw the seven components of the bridge all on terra firma four hours later. Thanks are due to the boys (and dog) of Penry Morgan Transport who laboured cheerfully in quite atrocious weather

The bridge was recovered from Hinckley (Leics) over fifteen years ago, and has lain in the yard of a preservation group in Rushden (Northants) since then. Its condition, as one might expect from a bridge at least eighty years old, is not particularly good, and things have been made worse by lack of maintenance during its period in storage. The PBR intends to embark on a two year restoration program, which will need the removal and replacement of a large number of rivets. Restoration is expected to cost around £8000. As it is, the chance opportunity to secure such an important artefact has already stretched the railway's funds. The appearance of the footbridge came, coincidentally, at just the time when the railway was seriously planning the construction of a second platform at Furnace Sidings. Although a single platform is sufficient for normal running days, special events are seriously taxing a single platform, especially when several trains are operating. Although there is no doubt that the footbridge will come as the answer to a maiden's prayer, the platform and footbridge work are expected to put our already overstretched volunteers at Blaenavon under further pressure. Accordingly, if you live more or less locally and are employed in the building or construction industry - or just fancy 'having a go', please turn up any Saturday or Sunday afternoon, and make yourself known - you'll be sure of a very warm welcome.

Hello to our new members!

Our chairman spoke of the useful and unseasonal influx of new members – here they are:

Rev David King of Blackwood	638	Rev Stuart Holmes of Leeds	645
Godfrey Watkins of Abergavenny	639	Laurence Williams of Sidcup	646
Alex Drummond of Crosskeys	640	Clive Noyes of Caerphilly	647
Allan Bisgrove of Rassau	641	- also Associate Member	
Howard Booth of Blaenavon	642	Christine Booth of Blaenavon	A092
Alex Gourlay of Morriston	643	- and with the Society	
Russel Lark of Rhoose	644	William MacKenzie of Blaenavon	Soc95
Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, we hope you enjoy your time with us, and get involved			

Gwynfa Tudor

It is with great sadness amongst us all that we report the death of our dearest member Gwynfa Tudor, who succumbed to pneumonia at Nevill Hall Hospital, Abergavenny during the morning of Monday 15 January 2007. He would have been 87 in June. Gwynfa was born in the upland hamlet of Pantygasseg, in sight of Tirpentwys colliery, and enjoyed a rich and varied lifestyle as a fitter-turner. Apart from a few years overseas service in the middle east with the military, he spent his entire life in engineering. He started work at the Gwent Wagon Works. This site, which now serves as a scrapyard, still bears the scars of his occupation, where he had punched a hole through the wall in order to accommodate a rather long workpiece that he had to fit in his lathe. He then served as an apprentice in the Midlands and with British Thomson Houston at Rugby., latterly he continued as a skilled machinist at Girling in Cwmbran. He was one of the



Gwyn enjoys a cuppa in the Restaurant Car this summer, and chats to a friend

railway's earliest members, and worked much time both as a shunter and as a passenger guard. He preferred however to be in the workshop on his machines, where he worked making special parts for locomotives. Most of all he enjoyed meeting passengers, and did many stints, both as Thomas' Fat Controller and Father Christmas (suitably reprofiled with several large cushions). He ceaselessly regaled passengers with endless jokes, some more than a little risqué. These jokes provoked chuckles from our passengers, but groans from our members, who'd heard them many times before. Children on the train loved him for his handkerchief mouse, and his apparently severed thumb. Dear Gwynfa, who wept openly when his cat Jack died, and who put down cheese and biscuits for the mice in the workshop. We'll truly miss you.