

TOP LINE

140th Gala
In Pictures



The Magazine of the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway

Number 113

Winter/Spring 2010

£2.00

The railway is due to open to Blaenavon High Level during the early part of the 2010 running season and the below fares and timetable will apply from then on. Until the Blaenavon extension is open services will only operate from Furnace Sidings to Whistle Inn on a half hour frequency with different fares.

Standard Timetable For 2010 –Different Timetables May Apply at Special Events								
Blaenavon High Level		11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00
Furnace Sidings a.		11:10	12:10	13:10	14:10	15:10	16:10	17:10
Furnace Sidings d.		11:15	12:15	13:15	14:15	15:15	16:15	
Whistle Inn a.		11:18	12:18	13:18	14:18	15:18	16:18	
Whistle Inn d.		11:22	12:22	13:22	14:22	15:22	16:22	
Furnace Sidings a.		11:25	12:25	13:25	14:25	15:25	16:25	
Furnace Sidings d.	10:40	11:40	12:40	13:40	14:40	15:40	16:40	
Blaenavon High Level	10:50	11:50	12:50	13:50	14:50	15:50	16:50	

Calendar of Events 2010																																
	S	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su	M	
APR							2	3	4	5	CLOSED FOR ENGINEERING WORK																					
MAY	1	2	3	CLOSED FOR ENGINEERING WORK											15	16	CLOSED FOR TRAINING										29	30	31			
JUN				1	2	3		5	6						12	13						19	20						26	27		
JUL	3	4						10	11						17	18						24	25						31			
AUG		1		3	4	5		7	8		10	11	12		14	15		17	18	19		21	22		24	25	26		28	29	30	
SEP	4	5						11	12						18	19						25	26									
OCT								9	10																				30	31		
NOV																														28		
DEC	4	5						11	12						18	19																
	Steam Days												Diesel Days													DEMU Days						

April 4/5	Easter Bunnies	July 3/4	Model Railway Show	Sept 25/26	Southern Region With Altitude
May 2/3	Teddy Bears Picnic	July 10/11	1940s Weekend and Beer Festival	October 9/10	Class 37 50th Anniversary
May 15/16	Cowboys 'n' Engines	July 17/18	Diesel Gala	October 30/31	Ghost Train
May 29/30/31	Official Opening Blaenavon High Level	August 14/15	Ivor the Engine	November 28	Steam Santa Specials
June 12/13	Taffy the Tank Engine and Friends	August 29/30	Transport rally and 1960s Weekend	December Dates	Steam Santa Specials
June 26	World Heritage Day (Mixed	Sept 4/5	Charities Weekend		
June 27	Garn Lakes day	Sept 18/19	Autumn Gala		

Sample Fares

Day Rover –£4.50 Adult £2.50—Children (aged 3 to 16)

£12.00—Family Ticket (2 adults + 2 children)

Different Prices May Apply at Special Events

TOP LINE—THE MAGAZINE OF THE PONTYPOOL AND BLAENAVON RAILWAY

NUMBER 113 Winter/Spring 2010

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EDITORIAL

As I put this together I can look back at what has been another excellent year with our passenger figures rising yet again, this time passing 9,300 for the year. As Top Line has shown it's been memorable for so many things, namings at the diesel gala, more arrivals, the first visit of a pannier tank, and there has even been the odd surprise, the turnout for the Ghost Train stunned everyone and exceeding our wildest dreams (see page 26). Another surprise has been the Tea Room which since being moved to the front of the compound and now open most running weekends has been incredibly popular, even gaining passing trade from dog walkers, cyclists and hikers. The hot food on offer maybe simple fare but it's proved a big hit.

Looking forward we enter uncharted territory as, all things going to plan, we open the extension to Blaenavon High Level; although the original date of April the 1st has had to be put back due to delays incurred which have been outside of our control. Quite how this is going to change the railway, our public profile, our passenger figures etc we have no idea, everything will be one big surprise, but one we are looking forward to. We even have a proper timetable now—see opposite page.

One thing that has not surprised me though is the hard work and dedication that has been put in by the volunteers, turning out in all weathers to not only run the service and the events but also to work on the extension and rebuilding Blaenavon High Level Station. In the running season this has been going on at the same time and has put a real strain on the volunteers but they have risen to the challenge with a smile (and a constant supply of tea and biscuits). Whatever the future holds and what ever surprises are ahead one thing I am sure of, we will be able to deal with it

Regards Alistair Grieve

Front Cover . The photo charts allow us to do something a little different and this years was no exception. Pannier tank 6435 and some vintage vehicles provide a period scene at the Big Pit road bridge, the refurbished bridge looks the part too. Just a few short years ago who would have ever dreamt we could do this?

DEVELOPMENT – John Down



This project is mainly financed by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Physical Regeneration Fund, Heads of the Valleys Programme & Torfaen County Borough Council

Ariannir y prosiect hwn yn bennaf gan y Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Drwy Gyfrwng Cronfa Adfywio Lleol, Menter Blaenau'r Cymoedd & Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen

There is no doubt that development is an interesting business, even exciting at times. On that basis it is tempting to report with remorseless cheerfulness how well things are going. There is however, no getting away from it that the last six months or so have been what would be described as 'challenging'. A more realistic description would be very difficult indeed. But the root cause of this difficulty was not within our ranks, nor within our power to quickly correct. The weather has been almost uniformly wet, the efforts of the development teams have been often redirected to operations or to special events, and I have even heard speak of 'development fatigue' – whatever that is! But despite all this our volunteer teams have performed near miracles in frequently appalling weather conditions. No – what I described in our last issue as a 'slight hiccup' in the funding turned out to be a wholesale funding stoppage, lasting from mid-June, which only now is beginning to clear. As a result the whole funding package has been re-negotiated, as is described below. The penalty for this lack of funding has been a complete stoppage on the Big Pit project and a very significant loss of time on the Blaenavon extension work, so that opening the extension by 1 April is now going to represent a very tough challenge indeed – but not impossible. *(Since this was written the opening date has been put back until at least the end of May due to the extra time lost by the adverse weather conditions over the winter - Alistair Grieve).*

Funding

As noted above the funding package has been re-negotiated in its entirety with the following important features:

- Funding is routed directly from the Heads of the Valley (HoV) programme to PBRCo – Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) appear in neither the extension project, nor the Big Pit project, they do however continue to 'own' the Br19 (Varteg Road) project.
- Completion of Big Pit branch is deferred till October 2011 (though we aim to improve on that date)
- The amount granted is somewhat less than previously agreed, but since much of the core material, that is, rail, sleepers, and many of the point timbers has been secured and paid for and the Br 12 (Rail over Rail bridge) has been completely rebuilt and paid for, the amount of funding on balance is actually quite a bit more generous than previously agreed
- Whilst the early agreement allowed for some money to be spent on specific Step 1.3 items such as the footbridge at Furnace Sidings, and the station building there, there is now formal provision for a general element which can be spent on wider improvement issues – mainly in Step 1.4. This will allow any 'loose change' to be spent on the station building at Blaenavon (High Level) (BHL), a run round loop, a second platform and even a footbridge there. However this does not in any way dilute the core requirement of getting to Big Pit and building a small station there – complete with trimmings.

These then are the bald features, but there's always a snag. The use of TCBC provided us with a financial buffer, which is now absent, and the agreement was that HoV would only pay nett value on paid invoices. Fortunately they have since agreed to pay on accepted orders, and this seemingly trivial matter makes a huge difference in our capacity to manage the project. Unfortunately, we still have to maintain a deficit budget on the VAT element of our purchases, and on the large amounts of money involved is far from inconsequential.



Bridges

Physically there is nothing further to do on the bridges 12,13,14,16 and 17, and since all the paperwork is now to hand, we need say nothing more, except that what seemed impossible a few years back is now history. No doubt in the months and years to come, the bridges will provide a rich source of locations upon which to shoot images of trains – and from which to shoot images of the surrounding scenery. It was a different story for Bridge 19 (Varteg Road), as the image and caption below tell...

This is the view on the south side of Bridge 19 (Varteg Road) looking north towards BHL in the

distance. This is several yards further south than the current extension is planned to reach, and is not part of the extension project. Nevertheless, TCBC are planning to replace this bridge by a smaller single deck structure in 2010, although it will some years before PBR runs passenger trains over it. However, in order to remove the bridge the track has to be lifted. With their demonstrable capacity to lift (and replace) track, who better than PBR to do the job? Accordingly PBR were contracted by TCBC to do the work in late November – a ‘nice little earner’ for PBR during the funding famine. John Down

Permanent way

The first thing to say is that the massive sleeper replacement program is now complete – including the wood for wood replacement program through BHL and beyond. Of the entire route down to BHL, it was the platform that had suffered most grievously from unconstrained vegetation growth. Cutting down the trees was one thing, but getting the stumps out was long-winded to say the least. Incidentally I must apologise for an inconsistency in my last account in which the text noted correctly that the first train down the line to BHL arrived at 1614 (i.e. 4.16pm), whilst the caption to the image incorrectly suggested 1416. Just before I wrote this the PWay team have been busy clearing out the ‘cribs’ of heavy stumps in the area immediately north of, and immediately south of the Br.19 (Forgeside Road bridge). This was an area already laid with concrete sleepers before PBR arrived on the scene, and although the area had been cleared earlier in the year, we knew that we would have to return to dig out the really big stumps. As I write this though, there has been best part of a month with thick snow and ice on the ground which has made work on the track impossible.



It is difficult to imagine during the gruelling winter months that Blaenavon (High Level) looked like this only a few months back in late September when the photocharter was run. The ‘running-in’ board on the right was knocked up for the benefit of the photographers, though the ‘final’ version will have rather thicker legs, and other detailed improvements. The main purpose of this image is to give a hint of the overgrowth on the left, which, even after being cut back, came close to obliterating the track. John Down



Top— taken on a damp mid-December day contrasts with the previous image and shows progress on the station building. However its main purpose is to display the new, neatly laid, wooden-sleepered track through the station, and which now awaits ballasting. John Down



Middle—The end! The minidigger marks the southern end of the extension, whilst the PWay team start to build a temporary barrow crossing. In turn a permanent foot crossing will be provided as this point provides an access between the road below (under the Varteg Road) and the cycle track on the right. For a railway as small as ours the appearance weekend after weekend of this many volunteers should make bigger railway green with envy! John Down

Bottom—Here is the new track looking in the opposite, that is, southerly direction. The temporary barrow crossing is now in place, whilst on the right the original rotten sleepers lie ready for collection. John Down



Two contracts have been let in quick succession to Messrs KG Price of Cardiff for PWay work. The first contract relates to the rails themselves. In its final years before closure our railway was a mineral railway, and on such lines it was considered sufficient to adjust the lengths of rail by cutting them to length with oxy-acetylene torches.

Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate insist that no such rails are used for passenger trains. We have 43 'burnt' ends. these must be ground off and new holes drilled for the fishplates. At the same time the un-burnt rail must be adjusted so that the fishplates lie essentially opposite one another. You can imagine that this is heavy and frustrating work for volun-

teers, with a great deal of tweaking this and tweaking that. We felt that this was a job better suited to contractors who, with the right equipment, can do the job quickly and recover time for the overall project. The second contract is to replace the crossing timbers, all 255 of them, down the line. We will therefore see all of the deviation turnout, the facing crossover, the diamond crossing and three other points lifted and re-laid in relatively short order. It will then be up to us to lay the four Facing Point Locks (FPLs) that are standing by ready to go in. PWay supremo Alastair Warrington tells me that we are going to need about 1500 tons of new ballast before the line is finally lined and packed for which purpose we are planning to hire a Plasser & Theurer tamper to do the final work. Can we do it in time? Only time (and HMRI) can tell.

Station building at Blaenavon (High Level)

Whilst the completed platform is properly part of Step 1.2, any substantial buildings built there really belong to the unfunded Step 1.4, however there has been some modest 'funding diversion' which has seen Big Pit branch funding (Step 1.5) re-directed. Although this approach had been approved by TCBC, it can only be used in small doses. However, to date, the cost of the building has been well contained. So, with the massive job of emptying the cellars in the station building completed, the floor joists were soon installed and a temporary floor screwed down. It then became possible to return to the walls, and build them up to their full height. Heavy concrete lintels have been fitted to the doors, windows and cellar windows. Thirty three roof joists have been ordered, and twenty two of them have been hoisted up onto the roof. Access to the roof is becoming difficult and we must get some scaffolding in order to complete the roof and to start fitting the gutters. Fortunately our chosen roofer is well satisfied with what we have done so far, and about 900 slates will be ordered shortly. We had hoped to have the roof on by the end of October but lack of scaffolding, and, more importantly the lack of funding to hire some has seriously hindered progress. Without a miracle we will not have the station building completed by the beginning of April. To be fair we never said we would, and it did not form part of our agreement with TCBC, but a year ago, we did say that we'd have a bash. The original plan was to issue tickets from a garden shed or something to start with, but it soon became when the vandals struck last March just how vulnerable such a wooden building would be.

This image shows many of the constructional details of the building. Charles foots the ladder, as Wayne attaches the joist to its steel joist clip. These handy gizmos remove the need to cut 'bird's mouths' in the joist timbers, which, being designed as a geodetic frame, are of minimal thickness. The steel beams which will ultimately support the canopy can be seen. A series of vertical steel straps serve to connect the canopy beams, and the truss bearer timbers to the bulk of the building. The blocks in the window are of the Thermalite type, and will be used to build the 'pine end' walls up to close to the height of the ridge of the roof. John Down



FENCING

Fencing divides neatly into two parts – the lineside fencing, and the station fencing.

Lineside fencing is designed to prevent trespass on the railway. It is, of course, virtually impossible to deter the absolutely committed trespasser, but it is important that there are no 'leaks' through which young children could establish a 'rat-run' leading to unwitting trespass and danger to themselves. It is difficult to know how to describe fencing in an entertaining way, but we actually got into fencing a few years back when two contracts were let. The first one enclosed the Down Exchange Sidings and by so

doing, considerably enlarged the size of the site, and gave us two enclosed sidings for our own use. The two other sidings were each rented to owners of Electrical Multiple Unit (EMU) sets, and it is the income from their rents which will shortly complete the cost of installing the fence. Making an 'end on' connection to this fence was a second fence which enlarged the bottom end of site yet further and then marched off down the hill alongside the cycle track to terminate at the northern abutment of Br13 (Old Pit Road bridge). Sadly, a sizeable proportion of this fence alongside the cycle track was stolen and must be replaced in due course

You might recall from our last issue that we had sufficient creosoted posts and other parts to build the station fence. Unfortunately, the contractor who had accepted an order to mortice the posts has rather let us down, and, since we feel that we could not satisfactorily mortice the posts, we have reluctantly decided to half-lap the posts ourselves. The result will not thus be a fence in true LNWR style, but at least it will be easier to replace damaged panels, rather than having to 'spring' a panel out of its mortices. In fact, we rather suspect that if the LNWR had plated and corrosion resistant screws in their armoury, that they would have done it our way. Again, this was to have been done by the end of November, but what with one thing and another....

In terms of lineside fencing the first of the contracts (called, unsurprisingly, contract A) has been let, and completed. This was a relatively short 200m run on the downside between Bridge 15 (Cycleway) and Bridge 17 (Doncaster's stream), and some odd bits on the up side around the Cycleway bridge.



The northern end of the fence referred to as Contract A where it joins Bridge 16 (Cycle track). TCBC are planning to build a section of cycleway just to the right of the fence, so it looks as if the erection of the fence was rather timely. The building in the background is the abandoned Solitec factory – now up for sale. John Down

Footbridges

We start with the 'Hinckley' footbridge, whose towers stand ready at Furnace Sidings. Despite our hopes of getting the main deck up by late October, distraction from the top shed extension, and awful weather saw things slip again and again. All the same getting

the main deck up by Easter looks entirely possible, and the flight walls on Platform 2 should not be far behind. Installing the treads and deck planking will probably have to wait till the summer- and what a boon it will be to our photographers!

Recovery of the Barry Town footbridge is now underway, with collection of the small component from the old EWS shed underway. It seems that some cutting of the main structures will be inevitable before all the parts are finally delivered to DB Engineering Services at Barry for restoration.

As we reported last time, we had hoped to pick up the Merton footbridge from the Bluebell Railway at Horsted Keynes when the summer foliage had died back, and we had hoped to make a start before Christmas. Four different contractors have been looking at the job, and it has to be said that all of them have been remarkably slow in taking up our invitation to quote, but our favoured contractor will be looking at the job in the next week, and will hopefully be able to provide a sensible price then.



Derek, the senior partner in the two-man welding and fabrication team is pretending not to look cold, and is seen at the northern end of the main deck, which will be the western end when it is attached to the tower on Furnace Sidings platform 2. Four of the 'sandwich' plates can be seen. Each plate sandwiches the rotten original steelwork, and by these means it is possible to 'spot through' and drill the new plates so that the original position of the tread cleat bolts is perfectly preserved, though these are almost impossible to see in this image. The odd shapes of the plates demanded that paper patterns were made – from old rolls of wallpa-

per. On the central level section, the sandwich technique has not been used. Instead single plates replace the original rotten plate. Inside a new bottom angle has also been fitted, and new bolts fitted.
John Down

The Railway Inspector

A full report of our development activities to date, and those in progress was sent to HMRI in mid-December, and a reply received. The plan is for him to have an initial inspection, to give us a chance to put things right before his before his final inspection. He has said that he will want to look at infrastructure, our Safety Management System and proposed operations – all of which should concentrate our minds.

Whistle Inn Land Lease Signed. Norman Clymer

The land lease for the railway was incorrectly drawn up (c. 1982) and our boundary line was placed short of where it should have been at the Whistle Inn Bridge. The effect of this was to limit our track to Cliff Herbert's field boundary fence, which means about one third of the Whistle Inn platform lies on our land and the remainder right up to the buffer stops lies on Cliff's land.

Fortunately Cliff and Rose Herbert have been very accommodating towards the railway and allowed us to build our platform and track over their land and to run trains on their land too. However as we look to expand northwards the situation needed to be resolved and the arrangement put on a proper legal footing. We are now pleased to say that this has been achieved and we now have a long term lease for all the land, again thanks to Cliff and Rose. Yes, we do have to pay for the lease but we now have the right to run trains all the way to the Whistle Inn Road Bridge.

Even better, in the new lease is a small area of land on which to build a small station building, to replace the van body we now use. It may only be a small parcel of land but it is key to the future of the railway and thanks to Cliff and Rose we can move forward with confidence.

Features and articles wanted

I'm always on the look out for contributions , either articles or pictures so if you wish to contribute please email me at TOPLINE@PBrly.co.uk or write c/o the Railway Shop. If you just have an idea let me know and we can work something out.

Diesel Locomotive & Plant Report . Jon Goss & Team

With a hard year past and an even harder one to come, 2009 brought some new challenges and losses but still we look forward to the even more exciting future.

Whilst we seem to have lost our working shed to the steamy kind of locomotives we battle on but we very sadly seem to have to say goodbye to a very valued working member and company, head of department Rob Mckean. We have however gained a fitter, great respect and thanks, to Mark Jenkins who has so far brought the JCB back from near death. He has not finished but is still looking for his next challenge.

If you have any experience in electrics or mechanics or just want to help with the maintenance and repairs of the Diesel loco's and plant then why not help the railway out and get in touch. Its cheaper and friendlier than a gym!

PLANT



JCB 3CX has proved to be a very valuable tool, digging out and ploughing the road to the site, rescuing Roger Radcliff (who was stuck in the dip in the snow) It has had its electrics partially repaired and has undergone a heavy inspection and massage (greasing).

Manitou (All-terrain Fork Lift Truck).

After proving once again that it's the best thing since sliced bread; the mast has been overhauled with new rollers and chains.

Jon Goss and the JCB 3CX on snow clearing duties

Mainliners

73128

After having the auxiliary electric circuit partially repaired the loco went back into service. Shortly after this it suffered a major oil leak, which has proven to be the current back pain of the loco. It has been repaired twice and is still an issue. The auxiliary circuit still need to be finished and the thermostat valve reinstalled.

37216,37421 & 31203 have been winterised and are still currently hibernating.

Industrials

03141/ D2141

One of the spare engines has left site to be worked on and the front of the loco has been re-assembled with the spare parts.

D1249 / 104 "Llanwern"

Has proved to be the most valuable asset the railway owns, reliably helping out with the passenger service but mainly being the brute force for the loco hauled rail infrastructure train (P-Way Train) .

D1387/ DL16

After having the engine successfully repaired and the clutch air cylinder overhauled it has moved under its own power!! A few electrical problems to iron out and the vacuum system to finish off before it goes back into service.

D615

The gear selection box went away to be overhauled; I've been informed this is near completion. It will be a case of re-installing it to see if the loco will finally change gear before commencement of the rest of the restoration.

Bill Caddick & Vanguard

Have been inspected and partially worked on to help pin point the main problematic areas. The air valves were refitted to the Vanguard and it now takes power but several pipes have to be replaced before it can move under its own power. Bill currently comes in 4th on the departments priority list, work will hopefully commence on both in the first half of this year.

DEMU 205115

The thumper is still awaiting the completion of the interior overhaul. It is mechanically sound but alas an electrical fault has thwarted attempts to start the engine.

Steam News. Alex Gourlay



No. 19 performed faultlessly throughout 2009 and thanks to the Bodmin and Wenford Railway it will be remaining with us until at least October 2010. No. 19 has proved more than capable of handling everything that has been asked of it, only needing assistance on the Santa Specials when the sub zero temperatures caused problems with the brakes on the coaches and 104 was called up to help. For the extension to BHL however No. 19 will not be alone as we have a new steam locomotive arriving on a permanent basis, which we are all looking forward to (see page 16 for more details).

No. 19 in action on the last day of the Santa Specials

I'd like to thank everyone who has helped out in my department over the past few months. A special thanks to Russell Lark, Alex Hinshelwood, Arthur Llewellyn and Mark Vrettos for helping with the maintenance and repairs on No. 19.

More volunteers are needed to help clean wheels and frames of the steam locos when not in use.

Training on steam:- if anybody is interested in training as fireman/driver please come and see me. For 2010 when we have larger steam locos running the services there will be a chance for people to go out on the loco for training, this has not been possible in 2009 as the cab of 19 is too small.

9629 Pontypool and Blaenavon Locomotive Group. Peter Drummond.

Over the summer not much work has been carried out on the pannier because we have all been too busy helping on the extension to the railway. However over December the weather was too bad to work outdoors and so we managed to find some time do some work at last.

This involved drilling the two new buffer beams, which will enable the rebuilding of the chassis to begin in earnest. We also received from GOS Engineering some of the parts to build the new cab, the remainder are on order with them. The fitting of the rear bufferbeam will allow the rebuilding of the rear dragbox to be completed, which will be a major step forward in the restoration of the chassis.



Above Left—Mark Vrettos carefully drills one of the buffer beams and above right old and new beams side by side. Both Peter Drummond

The next major step will be to get the springs manufactured, these will cost in the region of £4000 for the four of them, so we need to try and sell some more shares so we can place the order as soon as possible, so please consider helping by purchasing a share or two. The machine shop is now operational and we have much machining to do, so if you are able to help in any way please come and see us. We hope to soon get the chassis undercover when the new shed extension is complete and this will help things considerably.

If you are interested in becoming a shareholder in 9629 then please contact: Martin Herbert,

1 Fosterville Crescent, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 5HG,

e-mail: Martin.Herbert3@btopenworld.com

or

Mark Vrettos, 7 Hollybush Road, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV16 4AX,

e-mail: mark@mvrettos.freeseve.co.uk

RUNNING LINE NEWS. Andy May

At the close of the running season not much in the way of track maintenance was achieved. As reported in the last issue of Top Line the additional help the railway was receiving from Greenlight Rail and Training had dried up due to lack of practical courses. However during November and December some courses were run and I am glad to report that three of the worst and critical sleepers on the Furnace siding north loop point have been replaced, some alignment work on running line access from the compound was also done. Hopefully work will pick up in the New Year, as there is still a lot to do at the north end of the running line.

Rolling Stock News



*TSO 4300 in the Top Shed showing the new livery and windows.
Thomas Edwards.*

As detailed in TL112 the TSO 4300 was moved into the top shed for some major attention when it was found that the corridor vestibule floor and vestibule end connection needed urgent repair. Since then it was also found that a lot of the window surrounds were corroded and needed replacing so this has also had to be addressed. At the same time the coach is being painted the “blood and custard” livery of British Rail. The majority of this work is being carried out by Roger Radcliffe of Alycidon Engineering and when finished this will be a show piece vehicle for the railway.

3CIG 1399 Save The Cigs

Coach 76818 was taken to the Arlington Fleet Services workshop at Eastleigh Works on October the 21st where it will undergo a lot of the restoration work. Initial inspections have revealed that at least four of the crash pillars will need renewing at the bottoms which will require both gangways to be removed. Bodyside welding has been completed and a faulty BR repair on the cab end gangway door is being rectified.

3CEP 1198 Electric Multiple Unit Preservation Society

Current work has focused on converting the standard class compartment in the TBC for disabled access. A working week in January had to be cancelled due to the adverse weather conditions.

3CEP 1198 A request from the Electric Multiple Unit Preservation Society

In 2010, 1198 will be celebrating 50 years service and EMUPS are looking for volunteers to help make her look her best. 1198 has been used regularly throughout 2008 and 2009 with the main service and with the opening of Blaenavon High Level in 2010 will see even more use.

Our membership secretary can send you the necessary application forms:

Simply write to: EMUPS c/o Hilary Press, 75 Church Road, Hendon, LONDON NW4 4DP

or
tel: 07961 990344

Over the past 50 years, 1198 was previously 2314, 2304 and 7175. Maybe you travelled in her?
We would like to hear more.

also, please visit
<http://www.facebook.com/l/d3503>; www.emups.org.uk

Funding the developments

When talking about the funding for the railways developments e.g. Big Pit Branch, Blaenavon extension we have always referred to the Heads of the Valley Initiative (HoVI) as the source of the money but the funding in fact comes from further afield, the European Union and the Welsh Assembly.

Wales has been allocated £1.4 Billion by the European Union, from the European Structural Funds, for the period 2007–2013. This is administered by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) of the Welsh Assembly Government and has been channelled through the Convergence programmes for West Wales and the Valleys and the Regional Competitiveness and Employment programmes for East Wales.

The funding is to generate investment and economic growth and as has been shown elsewhere heritage railways are an excellent way to do this. Drawing in people from far and wide and providing an economic boost to many areas. When the development is complete we should be a first class destination and this will be money well spent.



In the last issue of Top Line I featured 37421 in action on the mainline so this time it's the turn of 37216. Seen here at Charlemont south of Bescot at the head of the 10:48 Holyhead–Birmingham on the 25/05/09. Picture Courtesy of Bill Pizer



5643 Early Days in Preservation.

Due to the delay in progress on the BHL extension caused by the winter weather we have had to postpone our planned grand opening on April the 1st. This has also meant that we have had to cancel the visit of 5643.

5643 was an ideal guest engine as the locomotive was originally acquired in 1971 by a group called the Eastern Valley Railway Company to operate steam in the Eastern Valley. Sadly, like so many early schemes this did not take off and 5643 moved onto pastures new and the EVRC? Well many of them became founder members of the PBR.

The top picture is courtesy of Wayne Perham and shows 5643 arriving at Pontynewydd on the back of a Wynns Lorry.

The bottom two show 5643 sat in the yard at Pontynewydd and are courtesy of Nigel Jones and the WWW.CWMBRAN.INFO website.

Maybe one day 5643 will return after all.



Coming Soon RSH 7169



RSH 7169 stands at the Swalwell Disposal Point of Mechanical Navvies Limited on a snowy march day in 1969. Photo courtesy of Geoff Plumb— www.geoff-plumb.fotopic.net

Industrial steam locomotives came in all shapes and sizes, large and small, but if there is one design that can be said to epitomise them, then it has to be the “Austerity” 0-6-OST. A shape familiar to rail enthusiasts the length and breadth of the country, the staple motive power for many fledging preserved railways and borne out of necessity during the dark days of the second world war. Needing a simple, robust and powerful steam locomotive for shunting and light weight duties supporting the military campaigns at home and abroad the Ministry of Supply in 1943 announced they had placed orders with a several locomotive firms for a number of 0-6-OSTs based on an existing design.

The design in question was the 50550 “18 inch” 0-6-OST originally built by the Hunslet Engine Co in 1937 although slightly changed. Primary design differences were larger wheels, extended saddle tank and a larger bunker. Hunslet rolled out the first of the new design in 1943 and they are still known as Hunslet Austeries although they were eventually built by a variety of companies with the last being built in 1954. The initial locomotives were turned out in Khaki but subsequent deliveries saw them carry dark green with 6 inch numbers in yellow. The War Department number scheme started at 5000 but as many were to be found working side by side with mainline engines, 70,000 was added to the numbers to distinguish them.

Following the cessation of hostilities the locomotives were to be found spread far and wide across Europe, many now surplus to requirements and subsequently put up for sale. Some ended up in service for the Dutch State railways and mines, some went work for French Railways even ending up in

North Africa, some were stored abroad never to be seen again but the majority returned home to the UK. The army kept quite a few, the L.N.E.R (London North Eastern Railway) purchased 75 of them classifying them Class J94 whilst the majority ended up being sold into Industry with the newly formed National Coal Board purchasing 100s of them and making them the standard motive power for many systems throughout the country. They outlived the end of steam on the mainline and could still be found hard at work into the 70s and 80s. Many of the last outposts of industrial coal field steam, Graig Merthyr, Maesteg, Bickershaw, Mountain Ash, Wheldale, all resounded to the sounds of Austerities hard at work.

The Austerity 0-6-OSTs are no stranger to the Eastern Valley either. Examples worked at Talywain, Hafodyrynys, The Upper Blaenavon Disposal Point (which joined the mainline at Blaenavon High Level) and at Waunavon (later to become the Black Lion Disposal Point). Indeed we already have an example of the class onsite in the form of Mountain Ash No. 8 built in 1944, although this is undergoing a lengthy restoration.

They have also proved exceedingly popular in preservation being a strong but simple locomotive and more than capable of meeting the needs of all but the biggest railways. Quite a few railways today still rely on the Austerities for their prime motive power. And the PBR is to join them as 7169 has been purchased by a member for use at the PBR! That's right we'll have our very own steam locomotive.

7169 was built by Robert Stephenson and Hawthorn (Newcastle) for the War Department (WD 71515) and sold to the Opencast Executive in 1944 going to work in the North East of England, initially at Ashington Disposal Point before moving to Horton Grange DP. From there it went to Swalwell DP in 1967 after which it was sold for preservation in 1973 and moved to the East Somerset Railway. There it was converted for use in passenger service and repainted into the livery of a British Rail owned Austerity 68005 (although the British Rail ones started at 68006), a livery it has worn ever since. Purchased by a member for use at the PBR in September 2009 the locomotive is now at the Flour Mill workshop in the Forest of Dean for a thorough overhaul and should arrive in time for opening weekend and in a more accurate livery.

In April 1967 at the tender age of 10 months old I was taken to the last day of steam on the Cromford and High Peak Railway which featured two of the BR owned "Austerities", 68006 and 68012, working on the fearsome Hopton Incline (1 in 14—1 in 20). Whilst I don't recall this, it must have left its mark, as to this day I think they are one of the best looking steam locomotives ever built.

Now all we need is some coal wagons to go behind it.



Another shot of 7169 at work at Swalwell Disposal Point. This one courtesy of Ernie Brack—www.erniesphotos.fotopic.net.

140th Anniversary Gala



The gala of September the 12/13th celebrated 140 years since the opening of the line from Brynmawr to Blaenavon to goods traffic in 1869 with special guest engine 0-6-0PT 6435. Like 2008 services were top and tail but this time with steam and as an addition Ivor the engine on brake van rides and 'driver for a fiver'.

After a damp summer the weather turned out to be better than we could have hoped for with not a cloud in the sky on Saturday. Of course this did mean that a lot of people went down the beach instead and with no BBC coverage figures were down on 2008 although we did have the Hoover Ham Radio Club broadcasting live across the globe from Furnace Sidings over the weekend. But for those who did visit us they had a great time and some great pictures.

Top—Friday morning and the usual suspects prepare the locomotive ready for the weekend.

Middle—Friday afternoon and 6435 works a short PWay train to Blaenavon for some station work.

Bottom—Friday afternoon and 6435 heads up a short PWay as the station site at Blaenavon High Level is tidied up ready for the Saturday evenings members special.



Above and below—6435 and No. 19 blast up the hill in the shadow of the Coity Mountain on a lovely cloudless Saturday 12th September.





6435 and No. 19 put on a memorable show as they blasted up the hill, both crews working hard against the grade. At Furnace Sidings Ivor the engine and crews were kept busy with the brake van rides and 'driver for a fiver' from platform 2. Quite often there were queues of people waiting to have a go on the regulator.

On the Saturday evening we ran another set of members specials to BHL with a superb on train buffet laid on by Brigitte Thomas and Jackie Gittins. The noise that 6435 and No. 19 made as they attacked the grade out of BHL was awesome.



On Saturday night I got off at BHL with Les and Sue Emery to walk down to the B&B. We stood on the platform as 6435 and 19 headed off into the night under a clear sky, regulators wide open. Looking up, Jupiter could be seen, then, as the eyes became accustomed, more and more stars appeared and all the while 6435 and 19 could be heard working hard. Then an owl started hooting, followed by another, more stars were becoming visible and in the background 6435 and 19 could still be heard climbing up to the Whistle Inn, both engines now sounding as one, pure magic.





Opposite Page Top—6435 and No. 19 approach the Whistle Inn on Saturday the 12th September.

Opposite Page Middle—6435 and No. 19 make a vigorous departure from Furnace Sidings on Saturday afternoon.

Opposite Page Bottom—Ivor the Engine works back into Furnace Sidings on a Driver for a Fiver train.

This Page Top—6435 stands at Blaenavon High Level with one of the members specials on the Saturday night. Thankfully after I finished taking my pictures there was still some food left in the buffet.

This Page Middle—bathed in cracking evening light 6435 brings up the rear of a Furnace Sidings bound service.

This page Bottom—following completion of the days services, and with the stock put away, the event was brought to a conclusion with a working members brake van trip to BHL with all 3 locos. From BHL a none stop run was then undertaken to the Whistle Inn, the cab of Ivor was a somewhat bouncy place but we arrived in one piece and the cavalcade is seen here at the Whistle Inn.

Whilst the passenger figures were somewhat down on last year, we still enjoyed ourselves, we had plenty of positive feedback and for our first ever gala with 3 locos in steam it was a great success.





On the Monday we played host to the Compo Club and another Photo charter, this time with 6435. The morning featured a 2 coach passenger train and some rather dull weather, whilst the afternoon used our BR freight train and was accompanied by some lovely spells of sunshine. Vintage road vehicles were also used to add that little bit extra to the scenes.

After the previous photo charters where sunshine was a rare commodity it was a blessing to get the sunshine we did. After the lovely sunshine of the two days of the gala the morning of the charter was dull and gloomy, thankfully it greatly improved for the afternoon.

In the evening a short night shoot was held on the crossing posing the pannier tank and Ian Smith's externally restored brake van (compare this with how it looked in TL 108) with some vintage vehicles.

A big thanks goes to all the volunteers who gave up their time to get things ready, run the event and the charter. Special mention must go to Ian Smith for getting the brake van ready time and Mary Mahabir and the tea room staff for their tireless work in keeping volunteers, visitors and photographers all fed and watered (the home made soup was superb).





Opposite Page Top—6435 bursts out from under Forgeside road bridge as a vintage lorry and its crew pause on the bridge.

Opposite Page Middle—Not your usual PBR shot but a taste of things to come, as 6435 departs from Blaenavon High Level Station. Photo Courtesy of Jon Goss and Sam Edmonds, taken from their home in Blaenavon.

Opposite Page Bottom—a period scene as the branch goods head up the valley and the local merchant goes about his business.

This Page Top — 6435 brings the goods up the valley towards Furnace Sidings leaving Blaenavon in its wake.

This Page Middle and Bottom—Night Time at Furnace sidings and two simple cameo scenes on the crossing.

Thankfully this is a limited access crossing so we can do this and not have to worry about road vehicles continually crossing and getting in the shot, (dog walkers are another matter).

The photographers had a great time and went home very happy. Planning has already started for 2010!





And of course it goes without saying, where would we be without the volunteers who make this all worthwhile, as usual thanks everyone.





Oakfield B&B



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Ghost Train



For the first time the railway decided to try a Ghost Train, something different, a chance for all the family to get involved and yes, another excuse for us to get dressed up. A lot of effort was put into setting things up with Mary Mahabir and Sam Edmonds especially working hard to make things as ghoulish as possible. The tea room offered such delights as Black Bile and Witches Brew, whilst the witches on the train encouraged the children to hunt for bugs in a bowl of worms or maybe sample lovely delicacies like devils eyes or bats pooh!

Whilst Angela Porter kept the children entertained and scared in equal measure with spooky stories and songs in the buffet, a werewolf stalked the train and devilish apparitions kept appearing and disappearing, the ghost of the station master watched over the whole affair, wreathed in ghostly mist. With all the effort put in we were unsure just how many people would turn up, 50 we thought would have been a good start,

so you can image our surprise when almost 600 people turned up to enjoy the fun.

To say we were taken aback is an understatement and what was even more enjoyable was the fact that so many people, parents as well as children had taken the effort to get dressed up. We quickly abandoned our half hour timetable and went to the 20 minute frequency to cope with the crowds, so many people staying on for ride after ride and scare after scare.

This evening proved to be one of the railways most successful events and really captured everyone's imagination, Buoyed by the success of this event we have now added a Wizard Weekend and Ghost Train event for 2010 so start planning your fancy dress now.

I'll leave the last word on this event to our traffic manager "Our trains were frighteningly busy"!



The Landslide



Whilst the heavy November rains were devastating large parts of Cumbria the PBR didn't escape either. Over the 29th/30th of the month a large landslide occurred just north of the rail over rail bridge. This blocked the culvert causing the water to flood down the track bed towards bridge 13 resulting in further slips just before the bridge (an area of known weakness).

The cause was a blocked culvert on the far side of the Up Exchange sidings which forced the water to soak across ground rather than drain away as planned. As the land is a clay base with an ash cover the upper layer became sodden and eventually too heavy for its own weight, sliding over the clay and blocking the culvert.

Remedial work by the volunteers saw temporary dams built to divert the water away from the track bed and down the culvert on the far side until contractors with specialist equipment could clear the site. The main sub-structure is still intact and untouched, so operations to BHL are thankfully unaffected. However this will require proper stabilisation work to ensure this does not go any further. and secure this for the future.

Top—The primary landslide with Dave Perham for scale. J Goss

Middle—The secondary landslide site just north of bridge 13.

Bottom—The culvert that caused all the problems, now free of blockages and free flowing.



Santa Specials



As usual, December was time for the annual visit of Santa Claus to the railway, making his grotto in the Whistle Inn. Despite the economic conditions the passenger counts held up well, although adverse weather conditions did result in a reduction in the number of people who turned up on the day, meaning we were 6% down on last year with only 2093 passengers carried.

However those who did turn up were assured of a warm welcome and as in previous years we had really good compliments about the quality of the experience and the excellent presents.

The final few days were enhanced by snow falls which especially on the Monday and Tuesday made the railway a real winter wonderland. With the sun coming out on the Tuesday as well it provided an excellent way to round off the year and showed just how magnificent the scenery at Blaenavon is.



Top—Santa and his helper confirm the Christmas lists from some very good children (that's what they all say).

Middle—The Cwmbran Salvation Army Band paid a visit on the 12th. Courtesy M. Boor.



Bottom—Tuesday the 22nd Dec and what a magnificent day. No. 19 blasts up the hill in a scene that belongs on a Christmas card.

It takes a lot of time and effort to organise and operate the Santa Specials, so a big thank you goes to all the volunteers and the staff at the Whistle Inn who worked flat out to ensure yet again we had another very successful end to the season.

Thank you one and all, and here's to 2010.



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Torfaen

NP4 9ND

Back Cover— Some days it all just falls into place. Sun, snow and steam, what more could you ask for. Tuesday the 22nd December was a great day for photography and here No. 19 powers another Santa Special up the Hill to the Whistle Inn as a Coity pony goes about her business.

Welcome New Members

John Cleaves	Abersychan	Eileen Evans	Redhill
Mark Jenkins	Nantyglo	Gareth Lloyd	Llanharen
Mike Miles	Gilwern	Jane Morris	Blaenavon
Alan Musker	Wydney	Maria Mutton	Chatam
Alan Parker	Ebbw Vale	Roger Radcliffe	Bargoed
Peter R Simons	Griffithstown	Anne Simons	Griffithstown
Adam Stephens	Abertillery	Gwyn Taylor	Maesycloed
Richard Wood	Monkwood		

Membership

Membership of the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Company costs £12 per year for adults and £6 per year for associate members (second member at same address) at the time of writing. Junior members (under 18) become members of the supporting Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Society.

Each member receives a copy of our regular magazine "Top Line" (published three times a year) and "Bottom Line" (our bi-monthly news-sheet) and full Company members receive six free rides on the passenger service. Membership is essential if you are interested in becoming a volunteer on the Railway as this gives you full insurance cover in case of any accidents. We tend to ignore train rides made by regular working volunteers - especially if they buy tea on the train!

The Railway is managed and operated exclusively by volunteers who are all members of either the Railway Company or Railway Society

Volunteers on the Railway are split broadly into the following categories:

- Operations
- Permanent Way
- Locomotive Department
- Carriage & Wagon Department.
- Civil Engineering Department

For more details ask anyone of the volunteers or write to the address at the front of the magazine. All are welcome and we can no doubt find a job for you to do if you wish to become a working member.



Parting Shot

