

Transformation at Furnace Sidings crossing....



Left: Immediately after Christmas, our volunteers ripped out the old crossing ready for contractors to start work, in mid-January.

Below: With snow on the Coity, and a week into the contract, main contractors Blakedown had laid the sub-ballast and the first the concrete sleepers were in position.



Below: By mid-March sub-contractors REL Engineering of Llanhillith wrestle the heavy steel frames, which define the tarmac, into position



Below: By the end of March the job was all but completed, save for a few details, allowing test trains to run a few days later, just in time for Easter services.



TOP LINE



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The Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway Company (1983) Limited
President: Mr. Paul Murphy, MP for Torfaen

COMPANY BOARD

Chairman: Robin Cornelius, 18 Bryn Heulog, Griffithstown, Pontypool, Torfaen NP44 2XB (01495.756919)
 Secretary: Norman Clymer, 22 Erw Bant, Llangynidr, Powys NP8 1LX (01874 730 775 skip@erwbant.freeserve.co.uk),

Committee Members:

Robin Cornelius	01495 756919	Paul Gane	01179 608349
John Down (co-opted)	01495 760242	Bernard Morton	01495 753638
Dave Haylins	...01633 483244	Simon Richards	02476 361902
Alex Hinshelwood	07980 595818	Mark Vrettos	01746 761387

MANAGEMENT TEAM

General Manager: David Haylins, 236 Llantarnam Road, Llantarnam, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3BL (01633 483244)
 Railway Inspector: Bernard Morton, 27 Jerusalem Lane, New Inn, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 0NP (01495 753638)
 Health and Safety: Simon Richards, 202 Masser Road, Holbrooks, Coventry CV6 4JT (02476 361902)
 (smellywelly2003@yahoo.co.uk)

Heads of Department: (reporting to General Manager):

Traffic Manager: Alex Hinshelwood, 07980 595818 (hudswell@btinternet.com)
 Site Manager: Arthur Llewellyn, 01495.790074 (arthur.llewellyn@btinternet.com)

Steam Locomotives	Mark Vrettos	01746 761387
Diesel Locomotives	Jonathan Goss	0798 911 6297 (gossie@carmods.fsnet.co.uk)
Carriage & Wagon	Paul Gane	01179 608349
Permanent Way	Mark Vrettos	01746 761387
Civil Engineering	Robin Cornelius	01495 756919
Engineering Services	Arthur Llewellyn	01495 790074 (arthur.llewellyn@btinternet.com)
Publicity	Mark Henderson	02920 484642 (mark@standardblue.org.uk)
Training	David Haylins	01633 483244
Development	John Down	01495 760242 (yogidown@aol.com)

Registered Office: 'The Railway Shop' 13a Broad Street, Blaenavon, Torfaen. NP4 9ND (01495 792263)

The Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway Society
OFFICERS & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman: Dave Haylins, 236 Llantarnam Road, Llantarnam, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3BL (01633 483244)
 Secretary: Norman Clymer, 22 Erw Bant, Llangynidr, Powys NP8 1LX (01874 730775, skip@erwbant.freeserve.co.uk)
 Treasurer: Peter Hunt, 5 Poplar Avenue, New Inn, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 0EX (01495 757166, peter@floridahouse.co.uk)

Committee Members:

Colin Boor	01495 772533	Eric Edwards	01495 762662
Warwick Davis	01384 892442	Charles James	01495.790599
John Down	01495 760242	Ian Longworth	01495. 312445

Society Shop and Headquarters: 'The Railway Shop', 13a Broad Street, Blaenavon, Torfaen. NP4 9ND (01495 792263)

Pontypool & Blaenavon Locomotive Group

Chairman: Peter Drummond 02920.793486

Editor: John Down, 3 Brynhyfryd Terrace, Pentwyn, Abersychan, Torfaen NP4 7TB (01495 760242)
 e-mail - yogidown@aol.com

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CONTENTS

From the Woolsack.....	2
Newslines.....	3
Development.....	4
Diesel and DMU report.....	11
Carriage and Wagon report.....	13
Centrefold.....	14
Feature: Everybody has heroes – Ian Smith.....	18
Feature: The breath of change – Bernard P Morton.....	20
Feature: The Crawshays of Merthyr – John Down.....	21
O&S Department.....	25

EDITORIAL

It's a pity that the term 'all things to all men' is bestowed on the recipient in a rather condescending way, or even as a perjorative dismissal. On the other other hand, if we are to attract passengers of every type, then we must appeal to a very wide audience. We are out and out anoraks, and proud of it. We know exactly how many rivets there are to the gallon in a pannier tank. We only go the very best preserved railways – and regale them with our expert criticism when we do. But our passengers are different, they come from all walks of life. Few of them are anoraks (the current thinking is between 5 and 10% our railway visitors across the industry). Their aspirations and expectations differ from ours. Many just want a pleasant ride in magnificent scenery, and someone to talk to about it. Many want a cuppa and a bite to eat. Most have come to Big Pit, and having 'done' it, are simply wondering what else they can do in Blaenavon – the more so if the weather is indifferent or simply miserable. What is certain is that we must be 'all things to all men'.

As you probably know, Topsy kept on growing. Topline, like Topsy, is doing much the same. There was so much to say in this issue, especially about development, that we have had to go cap in hands to Peter 'Moneybags' Hunt of the Society, who, in an uncharacteristic splurge of generosity has allowed us an extra four sides. We hope you find the additional material of interest – and thanks Peter.

Cover Picture:

On the warm and sticky evening of Sunday 10 June, Thumper, unit number 205 018 (now restored to its original 1118) drifts slowly over the rebuilt level crossing, on a return journey to the yard, its day's work over.

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

I guess that amongst the other heritage railways we are quite lucky – we are a small railway, but we are going to get larger.

Spare a thought for those railways that, whilst probably much larger than ourselves, have now completed their geographical expansion plans. I was thinking perhaps of the second division Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, or perhaps the third division Cholsey and Wallingford, which although very similar to ourselves in overall size, is now complete and incapable of further expansion. Both of the above are fortunate in that they both have at least cross-platform access to the national network. Even the mighty division one Severn Valley Railway has reached its end (there are pipedreams about reaching Ironbridge, but they are likely to remain that way for many a year), and like the other two, has connections to the 'big railway'. It seems however, that all railways, big or small, have this innate desire to expand.

But we are lucky, we are still a pioneering railway, and the attraction of cutting down trees and shrubs, digging out several generations of vegetation, replacing ballast, sleepers and rail, and so on is a powerful one.

How fast can we expand? That is a vexed question. We are fortunate to be in the right place, at about the right time, and to have a local authority not only looking to see us expand but positively assisting us in that aim. For those railways that have the capacity to expand or improve there are three intertwined parameters - time, money, and manpower.

For ourselves, work is being undertaken to secure substantial funds towards our expansion, and that leaves the critical question of manpower. Primarily, manpower must be directed to operations – either by directing volunteers to be there on the day, or by undertaking the immediate, but easily overlooked support work such as making sure that carriages are clean and tidy and that loo rolls and soap have been purchased, or making sure that sufficient tickets are in the ticket office. Without operations, passengers cannot be carried, revenue falls, and funders are less likely to view us as having investment potential. Nobody is going to give us money simply to play trains; we are, after all, fully-functioning, credible, members of the tourism industry.

And therein lies the dilemma. Like all railways, we struggle for volunteers. Perhaps our situation is not as bad as some, but it's not as good as others. There does seem to be an increase in volunteer numbers as the opportunity for expansion beckons, but it still falls far short of what we are going to need if we are to make satisfactory headway. If the situation becomes critical, there is a solution - buy in the labour. For certain specialist operations this is unavoidable. We should not however see contract labour as an easy way out. Volunteers on the PBR are a highly adaptable and resourceful bunch, and even if they don't know how, few are afraid of giving things a try.

We can buy in contract labour, but for the most part, they can only do what we can, sometimes quicker, but rarely better. The cost of contract labour will severely hamper the amount of development we can secure for fixed funding. If you are sitting there, wondering, then volunteer! We now have everything we need to develop - except you!

NEWSLINES

The 2007 Annual General Meeting

It does seem that a reasonable sense of calm has descended upon the railway in recent years if the AGMs of Company, Society and Loco Group are anything to go by. Apart from an administrative misunderstanding which John Down not re-elected, he was promptly co-opted back on. After the AGM was rapidly dismissed, the apres-ski was rather more interesting. In particular, a letter from Ian Smith which proposed working Santa Special trains the other way round was read-out, and provoked some genuinely interesting exchanges, otherwise it was very much the recipe as before. Perhaps this is no bad thing. In a situation of rapid external change, with the railway seemingly, at last, moving rapidly forward, internal rancour and upheavals are the last thing we need.

Easter Bunny Specials

Easter this year largely followed the formula that has already been successfully demonstrated in previous years – lots of eggs, and that Easter Bunny again, intent on upsetting adults and children alike (he certainly upsets us). A slight difference this year was that we were able to help the Cash4Kids charity appeal this year. The appeal, in the form of a charity auction, was hosted by local radio stations Swansea Sound and The Wave. PBR contributed in the form of tickets and with 'Emma and Badge', a pair of suitably attired bears. Roger Mileman set this one up, which made a small contribution to a total of £25000 which was raised over the weekend. The good news is, that despite that pesky bunny, passenger numbers were up by 32.9%



Here he is again, giving out eggs to unsuspecting passengers



'Emma and Badge' (apparently named after radio presenters) travel up to the Whistle in the BSK

Teddy Bear's Picnic

Having enjoyed an unseasonably warm April, early May took its revenge by producing a typical bank holiday – lashing rain and gale force winds on Sunday, though Monday was very much better and even quite warm. Three of our number, over at the Abergavenny Steam Fayre trying both to promote the railway and to sell a few models, reported an

absolute washout. Despite this 326 passengers braved the weather, though, unbelievably Furnace Sidings was less hostile than Abergavenny. Once again it was Trevor Richards who bravely donned the bear costume, whilst the remainder of his entourage delighted the children. Meanwhile in the Tearooms Sue Richards, and her helpers, were able, for the first time to make tea with *real* water. If the Easter Bunny event was successful, then the Teddy Bear's Picnic was even more so. Compared with last year, passenger numbers were 38.7% up. Our General manager, Dave Haylins, is reporting that numbers are up around 35% across the board this year, with virtually every weekend showing improved passenger figures. Whether this is due to the much better appearance at Furnace Sidings these days or even our much improved tea we could not say, though it has been the 'Special Events' that have seen the biggest increases. 'The Management' have cottoned on to this and the appearance of more special events in the 2008 timetable is very likely – with possibly a few ad hoc events this year too.

DEVELOPMENT

Although it is just over four months since our last issue was published we have seen the pace of development accelerate enormously. 'Accelerate frighteningly' might be a better term, because the rate at which things that are happening now demand seven days a week, 52 weeks a year attention if things are not to get out of hand or slip away from us. Although we've all worked long and hard for times like these, their arrival is by no means time to relax.

Funding – the major factor

Although we have managed a comfortable rate of development over recent years, both as a result of local authority involvement, and the generosity of our members in answering appeals, our major development plans need underpinning by really big money. Currently two big providers now sit squarely on the stage – the Heads of the Valleys scheme (HoV), and, more recently, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). We'll have much to say about these two agencies in the next few years.

Heads of the Valleys scheme

Step 1.2 is the plan that envisages '*extension of the line southwards, some 1.25 miles to reach the site Blaenavon (High Level) station, and the rebuilding of a station there to minimum standards*'. This plan calls for the repair of bridges between Furnace Sidings and Blaenavon (High Level), the relaying of a single line of track to Blaenavon, without a run round loop there, and the construction of fences en route. The estimated cost of this exercise was £394,000. The plan was sufficient to convince TCBC and we are eternally grateful to their Economic Development Department for producing a formal submission to HoV with a document called a Programme Initiation Document (PID). This document essentially encapsulates the Step 1.2 plan, but recognises that the appropriate tranche of HoV funds is only available from August 2007 till August 2009 – an impossibly tight timescale for volunteer effort, and has thus made a significant allowance for the cost of contract labour. Another important issue is that the cost of repairing the rail-over-bridge has been removed from the PID. There are other minor

complexities in the PID, but from our standpoint, the important thing is that the application has been made. At present the PID is still under scrutiny within TCBC, and there remain a few battles to be fought before the application finally goes to HoV. We had very much hoped to announce that the HoV bid had been accepted, but like so many things, the devil remains in the detail, all we can do is remain confident.

Heritage Lottery Fund application

We announced in our last issue that TCBC had contracted Gareth Gregory to consider an application to HLF. We have now worked with Gareth and have completed sufficient documentation to enable him to complete and submit an application for a so-called Programme Planning Grant (PPG). The PPG, the application for which is likely to be submitted before our next issue, is a necessary first step in making a substantive application, and is for £55,000. The PPG allows for scrutiny and blessing of our plans by consultants and other experts in their field, before a Full Grant Application (FGA – our acronym) is made. This will be for up to £750,000, and will use the HoV money as a 'lever' – and possibly as a matching element. Before we go much further it is perhaps worth briefly discussing our next development step – the so-called Step 1.3, since it is planned to direct significant HLF funding to parts of this step.

Step 1.3 - 'Infrastructure improvements at Furnace Sidings'

This step plans for the following work:

- Step 1.3.1 Construction of second platform at Furnace Sidings
- Step 1.3.2 Erection of footbridge between platforms 1 and 2 at Furnace Sdgs
- Step 1.3.3 Construction of a comprehensive station building on platform 1 with electricity, water and sewerage utilities.
- Step 1.3.4 Provision of extra utilities, such as three phase electricity, and broadband enabled telephone lines
- Step 1.3.5 Detailed improvements, such as fencing, crossing keepers hut and other minor works

The first three of these sub-steps have been planned in considerable detail, (our centre spread tells more), the remainder are established mainly as 'placeholders' in order to assist in subsequent project management efforts.

Why an HLF application?

Why are we looking for an HLF grant? The answer is to make the railway a more attractive place for passengers and visitors to come to, by giving passengers and visitors more than 'a ride on the train' by providing them with the means by which they can examine the railway and its place in industrial South Wales.

How? Firstly, by improving access from areas where there is already a large and essentially captive audience (ie Big Pit) and secondly by providing facilities to 'get close' to trains and railway equipment, by means of static displays of artefacts, by means of written and photographic information, but most powerfully of all, by allowing visitors to establish relationships with, and to talk in detail to our expert volunteers whilst they maintain and restore rolling stock and railway equipment.

Although no more than tentative at this stage, the following elements may be included in the substantive application:

- rebuild bridge 12 (which you will have noted, was excluded from the HoV application, since HLF assistance seemed more appropriate for this unique heritage structure)
- establish a branch rail route to a small platform close to Big Pit (perhaps close to the lone abutment) to Furnace Sidings. Whether this route will cross the rail over rail bridge is uncertain
- the building of rolling stock restoration and maintenance sheds, with integrated public interpretation facilities on the site of either or both of the Outside Sidings (East) and Outside Sidings (West)
- partial funding towards the erection of Furnace Sidings overbridge, if required (step 1.3.2)
- almost complete funding for the construction of station buildings at Furnace Sidings (step 1.3.3)

Water

They said it wasn't possible, they said we were daft – but it was possible and we aren't. We finally have drinking water on site. We reported in our last issue that we expected the supplies on by the end of January, but it was not to be. After all the legal, administrative, design and engineering considerations, and after heroic work by contractors and sub-contractors, we were left with two pipes simply needing to be joined with a meter between them., work which we confidently expected to be complete by the end of January. However we had reckoned without Dwr Cymru's diversification into other activities – namely theatre, particularly farce, and it was not until 1 May that drinking water was finally run from its connection point 700m away and 23m below our taps. Admittedly, Dwr Cymru partly acknowledged their guilt by supplying a bowser of water over Easter and compensation of £100 – but then compounded the farce by saying that they should have charged us more for the job. Oh! for a return to public utilities and an end to this 'customer choice' nonsense.

All that said, over a cubic metre of water was used over the early May bank holiday, and Teddy Bear's Picnic – and in my book that's over 2000 cups of tea! It's not true of course, but the luxury of washing up with clean water – and washing hands in clean water after days work is luxury indeed. Fresh water is now available in the tearoom, mens' and ladies' toilets, machine workshop, the woodworking shop 'Hotel Malcolm' and a supply is standing by for when the Sleeping Car is shunted into its final position.



The long route of the water pipe, extended to the toilets since this image was made

Toilets and sewerage

Arguably, toilets and sewerage are not the things that provide particularly interesting reading, but with water finally on site, it seemed reasonable to complete the story. It all started over a year ago, when Norman Clymer obtained a pair of redundant 'container-loos', from a site in the nearby Clydach Gorge. The trouble with things are that are 'free' is that the cost of getting them serviceable is often expensive in both cash and time terms. Fortunately we had Arthur Llewellyn, who eschewed a number of high profile jobs in favour of the absolutely critical job of getting the loos working. Of course you cannot have loos without a sewerage system. Advice from the Environment Agency suggested that a Package Sewage Treatment Plant was the best option, since it discharged clean effluent which could be discharged directly into nearby water courses without risk of contamination or infection. The plant was installed in mid-January, a little ahead of schedule, in order to avoid further damage from storms (as reported elsewhere in this issue), and since then we have been busy laying sewage and water pipes

At an early stage the decision was made to supply the loo tanks with 'raw' water direct from the NCB reservoir which sits on the flanks of the Coity mountain, and from which we have obtained water for engines since we began operations. This will not only save on our water bill, but attract brownie points for our environmental credentials. The handbasins and (believe it or not, showers!) are fed with drinking water, as, of course, is our tearoom. Whilst Arthur Llewellyn was working inside the loos, Ken Perkins, aided by new member and spade-meister George Pope, was doing battle with large diameter alkathene pipe, and extending supplies from the original hydrant at the south end of Furnace Sidings platform to a new hydrant a carriage length south of the Top Shed. This will allow carriage lavatory tanks to be filled on site, and serve as an aid to carriage washing.



A few days after the storms of 16 January, and with storm clouds still glowering, the Biodigester is buried, safe from threats imposed by the weather

Someone recently remarked that this has been the largest civil engineering task that we have



ever attempted essentially alone on the railway. The construction of Furnace Sidings platform might well take this honour, but their has been no doubting the complexity of the task, as the view of part of the trench containing raw water, drinking water, sewerage and repositioned electricity supply cables shows. Even digging the trench proved troublesome with Alex Hinshelwood having to dig through rock-strewn ground and once even stumbling on a lump of concrete about the size of a double-bed, which had to be removed before progress could be made.

Underground spaghetti – water and sewerage pipes, looking south to the tearoom

Link Road

The improvements to the link road upon which we reported in our previous issue are now generally complete, and the link road was formally re-opened on 14 June (see report elsewhere in this issue) Although these improvements were primarily intended to grace the area around Big Pit, particularly Coity Tip, we have secured an exceptionally high-class level crossing to replace our previous completely run-down affair, and which complements last year's car park improvements perfectly. The pictures on the rear cover tell far more effectively than words, just how attractive the works are. They have drawn widespread approval from the local population. Even official visitors from the European 'Boundless Parks - Naturally' organisation (a joint initiative involving Britain, Belgium, and Holland) who provided the Inter-Reg III funding for the original car-park work, were moved to comment on what a shining example of 'joined up thinking', the programme was.

Although the Link Road programme was funded through Heads of the Valley (HoV) scheme for funding environmental improvements (which came to end at the end of the 2006 financial year), PBR was successful in securing some limited funds for track improvement. This permitted the purchase of several hundred tons of ballast (some of which still graces the compound), and allowed contractors to dig out and lay a ballast sub-base and concrete sleepers to replace the 336 feet of track that had been somewhat prematurely removed a few years back. Some sustained physical work by our own teams saw the additional sleepers laid, sleepers aligned, and rail fitted. There is still levelling and packing work to do on this stretch, but it nevertheless permitted the first train in best part of a decade to run down to Blaenavon (High Level) for the purpose of weedkilling, and other duties.

Bridges

The report from Cambrianco concerning the rail over rail bridge has been received by TCBC. The condition of the bridge was slightly worse (but not much worse) than expected, with a subsequent slight increase in the expected repair costs. The bridge report on the remaining bridges down to Blaenavon (High Level) has been received by TCBC from contractors Capita Symonds. They have proposed some rather radical solutions which are not entirely in line with our heritage ideals, and further meetings are expected soon. Further examinations have been made of the Hinckley footbridge, and we hope to announce plans and start work de-rivetting as soon as funds permit



A professional engineer examines the infamous 'rail-over-rail' bridge in late February. If the HLF bid is secured then this unique bridge will not only be saved, but will be used operationally for carrying trains both over and under.

Down in the cutting

We were fortunate, by means devious and cunning, in securing a few thousand pounds from TCBC which allowed us both to buy in several hundred tons of ballast, and to have contractors lay the ballast sub-base, as well as some sleepers in the 336ft gap prepared south of Furnace Sidings a few years ago. Since then, some vigorous efforts have seen the missing section completely relaid with concrete sleepers, though still needing alignment and final ballasting. Of course, with the missing link re-established, and the thought of extension just round the corner, nothing could stop our intrepid pioneers, travelling down the line for a spot

of de-afforestation just north of Forgeside Road bridge. Meanwhile, Charles James has taken to the laborious job of weeding in the cutting. If no one tells him to stop soon, he's going to be through the rail-over-rail bridge and into unknown territory – and what then!



First train down the line for many a year. Llanwern and GBV prepare for battle with several year's growth of willow sapling.

photo: Alistair Grieve

Furnace Sidings Platform 2

Thank you, thank you, thank you, all you generous people who subscribed so generously – and so quickly – to our station appeal. We now have sufficient funds to get the 55m of footings laid for platform 2. The work area has been marked out, digging is imminent, and we hope to be pouring concrete within a week of delivery to you of this magazine. Please keep giving, and we can start on the block wall – the team is standing by. The aim is to get the front wall complete this year, with the deck on towards the end (or even during) the 2008 season. The good news is that the Railway Inspectorate are happy for us to start, and we intend to lose no time.

Extension to Brynmawr

If there was ever any question of us not being taken seriously, then an entire afternoon spent, alone, in a special meeting with Trish Law and Dai Davies, Assembly Member and Member of Parliament respectively for Blaenau-Gwent, should leave us in no doubt that our reputation has crossed county boundaries. Though we made it clear that the road ahead will be extraordinarily difficult, not to mention expensive, their enthusiasm was undiminished. The all-important first step – getting details and documentation for the scheme embedded in their Local Development Plan - is expected to be completed by the end of July

English Electric BSC104 'Llanwern' (Works No D1249)

'Llanwern' has suffered a succession of inconvenient and very expensive starter motor problems in recent months. Quite why this has happened is not altogether certain, but appreciation of the problem and how it can be avoided is slowly dawning, and despite its problems Llanwern is reliably working the regular Sunday services – as well as the occasional Saturday services when DMMUs or DEMUs (or their crews) are unavailable

Hudswell Clarke D1387

D1387 continues to scurry hither and thither on a variety of tasks around the site. In particular, she has been heavily involved in PWay work in the cutting, she is still waiting to enter the bottom shed, so that she can be fitted with vacuum braking equipment, but is is difficult to spare her time from her duties.

Sentinel 10083 'Panteg'

'Panteg' is definitely having a run of bad luck. Following apparently successful repairs to her cracked block, and a nominal return to service, coolant was found in the sump and there is a suspicion that she has blown a cylinder liner – or worse. Investigation of this will require a substantial amount of engine dismantling, and with Panteg not on the priority list, it may be some time before the truth emerges

Fowler 22497 RT1.

This loco is still taking prime position in the bottom shed, whilst the tricky problem of matching the 'new' donkey engine to the existing mechanics is solved. Meanwhile she is receiving some considerable cosmetic attention.

DMU Class 108 – DMCL 52044, DMCL 50632

This unit made a useful contribution to the start of the season, albeit plagued by engines that were smoky and slow to start. However, early in the season, one engine stopped and was found to be impossible to re-start. Despite a complete service on two engines, including the replacement of several filters which were blocked virtually solid by an 'orrible black mass, there is a suspicion that fuel is leaking into the sump with the potential for dire results. So, with only one engine able to start reliably, the unit has been withdrawn until the problem is investigated, a solution formulated, and the necessary work undertaken.

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

With the Class 108 out of commission the Traffic Manager Alex Hinshelwood's beady eyes have descended upon the Class 117. Although work has been pottering along on this unit, it has been of insufficient priority to attract major effort. To an extent, the lack of effort was due to the fact that there is no lavatory in either driving car (though trailer TCL 59520 has two), and without toilets on site, it seemed entirely inappropriate to roster trains without

lavatories when there were none on site. In the new situation however, there has been a considerable focussing of effort and several extra pairs of hands are now applying themselves to getting the two driving cars up and running. The first job was to complete the job of joining the two engines in the DMS to one fuel tank. The remaining leaky tank is now standing idle, and due to be repaired as and when circumstances permit it to be dropped. With new fuel lines installed, considerable bleeding of fuel lines (with language to match) was required before both engines burst into life. Engines which had not run since last year promptly indicated their displeasure by showering water over those involved – rain which had fallen down the two vertical exhaust stacks.

The situation on 51351 was more expensive. Elderly batteries that failed to hold charge several years ago, certainly failed to turn either engine recently, so several hundred pounds worth of new batteries were installed in their place. In due course the old batteries will be subject to the secret PBR process which was meted out to the Thumper batteries last year. This process is known to work – but does tend to burn quite a few holes in trousers! The No.1 engine cranked well enough, fired, but wouldn't run. Further investigation (and further bad language) revealed something quite simple – no oil. Once this had been resolved the engine started easily – and once again, showers for all concerned. An hour later attention turned to the No.2 engine. There is still an unsolved control problem with this engine, but when steps were taken to bypass the controls to start the engine, the response was an ominous clunk. Almost certainly the engine was full of rainwater. Bit by bit, attempts to start the engine drove rainwater either into the sump or back into the exhaust systems, nevertheless, the engine eventually fired, spluttered and ran more or less smoothly – and, believe it or not – showered everyone in water. Bearing in mind that it has been five years since the engines last ran, the reason for popularity of the Leyland 680 engine with BR is easy to see.

Members of the C&W team have set to work on the outside to repaint the outside of both cars, since despite an earlier paint job, it is ripe for a repaint. The door in DMBS 51351 still needs its pillar fixing. On 51397 vacuum hoses have been replaced and the internal gangway door is to be reclad and refitted and there is quite a bit of internal cosmetic work to be done or re-done. Fifty metres of window rubber seal are on order, and a program to reseal leaking windows will be undertaken. The target date for 'public viewing' is the Diesel Gala at the end of July, and the 'into service' is planned DMU week in the last full week in August. Fingers crossed!

DEMU Unit 1118 - DMBS 60117, DTCL60828

Go up to Furnace Sidings on any quiet Friday evening and the sight of smoke rings drifting heavenwards is a sign that Unit 1118 is having its pre-Saturday run-up. As reported above, and subject to crew availability, the Thumper fills every Saturday turn. Winter wreaked considerable damage to both her saloons, particularly that on the DMBS, and only a concerted effort by C&W volunteers – and substitution of parts previously recovered from 4-VEP units at Caerwent was sufficient to retrieve the saloon from ravages of mildew damage. Despite one case of flat batteries (almost certainly due to an improper disposal), this unit is turning into a solid performer, and initial antipathy to this uniquely Southern unit is turning to one of sneaking admiration.

Carriage and Wagon report

Sleeper First (SLF) M378M

The 12-wheel sleeper, which entered the Top Shed when loco 73119 went on 19 January has now seen repairs to each end, and the doors plated over with temporary plywood structures. The nominally west side of our coaching stock actually faces near enough south-west, so that it faces straight into the prevailing sou'westerlies which are prone to bring horizontal rain. For that reason a rapid program of sealing the west side was undertaken, with a session of painting and lining immediately following. It was removed from the shed in early March to sit temporarily outside the top shed in the No.2 siding, and, viewed from the cutting or the Big Pit road, its imperious bulk looks quite stunning in the sunlight. Closer examination reveals that the cosmetic work, especially around the windows, is decidedly temporary, and it must wait its turn, not only for the east side to be treated, and the ends to be completed before this detail work gets under way. She is currently at the end of No.4 siding waiting for a chink in our busy schedule to slew the rails and plant her on No.1 siding.



The east side of the sleeper first, waterproofed and freshly painted, looks a picture

Restaurant Miniature Buffet (RMB) E1854

M1854 came into the shed for vital work during the early part of March. It was a bit of a battle to get it out in time for Easter, but the majority of the work was completed, including the important matter of replacement of the north end gangway door and the replacement of the sliding door into the north saloon, which had proved more than a little chilly during the previous Santa season

GWR Brake First Open (BFO) 231.

It's a great shame that an historically unique vehicle, over 110 years old cannot be found suitable accommodation at Blaenavon. In its current exposed position its future is far from certain, and after a long fight, and some significant, though largely unseen restoration, disposal to a more sympathetic home, is likely to become the only realistic option. This option has become more attractive as expressions of interest in this vehicle appear.

GWR Engineer's Saloon 6479

This vehicle was rather abruptly ejected from the Top Shed in order to make space for visiting 73133, and in the months that it was outside has suffered significant damage from the weather. It has now changed hands, and is owned by a consortium of owners,

(continued on page 16)



Above: This is a computer generated impression of the improvements planned in Step 1.3. It is from original 2D Autocad drawings submitted to the board, redrawn in 3D in Autocad by member Alun Down and rendered into a JPEG for presentation here. The second platform can be seen, and the platforms joined by the 'Hinckley' footbridge. The platform is staggered since a watercourse lies to the north of the platform, which must be bridged if the platform is to be ultimately lengthened. The station building is intended to have something of a 'tin chapel' feel about it and is a little over 25m x 5m. (actually 82ft 8ins x 17ft 1in). It features a central hall usually accessed from the rear. All windows are shuttered. The north end contains a ticket office, toilets and a shop, the south end contains a cafe, kitchen, utilities room and control room. The internal framing, which is of wood, is of modular design, in order to permit jig building on site.



Left: Although we have many image files 'in the office', it was necessary to resist the temptation to show too many of them, but in the case of this one – a view to the north east from the bridge at midnight – we just had to give in, although the view had to be slightly 'lightened' to accommodate uncertainties in the printing process. Note the multiple shadows from the lamp, which is itself illuminated by others nearby.

PC Geeks we should note that there was some heavyweight computing involved in the 3D work, which was undertaken on a 2GHz dual core AMD processor with 2GB of memory, even so each image took up to 40mins of solid processor time to 'cook'. The images were prepared using Autocad 2007, which Alun says was working very close to its limit. It is worth noting that the building is not stored as a collection of images, but is truly modelled in a single 3D fully scaleable engineering 'drawing' which, in due course, can be used to aid manufacture various piece parts. For the web enabled, a realtime video walkaround is in an advanced state of preparation, but since these need in excess of 24 hours 'cooking' time, it may be a week or two before they are uploaded to the web.

Below: Just to fill the space – an impression of Furnace Sidings station at midnight



(continued from page 13)

rather than by a non-member owner. It has now returned to the inside of the Top Shed, where attempts are being made to repair the damage and return it to service.

Brake Composite Corridor (BCK) M21034

Since this vehicle has languished outside since arrival from the ESR in February 2005, and was not due into the shed till Autumn 2007, it was rather a surprise to see her in the shed immediately after the RMB went out. The initial presumption was that this vehicle was a bit of a colander, however a quick initial clean up by C&W supremo Paul Gane has revealed that the east side has a remarkably good surface. More importantly Paul has noted that the BCK is in fact a complete train in one coach. Viewed from the south end it has a ten foot luggage area, a guard's compartment, a passenger vestibule, a lavatory, two first class compartments separated in the corridor by a swinging door, to reveal a further three third class compartments, a further lavatory and a final transverse vestibule. Due largely to indecision on our part, our specimen was cannibalised in the weeks before it was acquired, and has lost many of its seats and backs, and the swinging door. Raiding parties to Caerwent have produced more seats, backs and fittings than we need, and the possibility of converting the end two compartments to a buffet area are under consideration. If this is the case then one of the two lavatories will become a store as likely as not.

There are several unique features of 23104. Firstly, being built in 1954, it is our oldest Mk.1 coach. Coaches of this age were first painted in carmine and cream (or Blood'n'Custard), and Paul has already confirmed this by rubbing down. Repainting 23104 into this original livery is already underway with one or two of our TSOs planned to follow, in this livery, in order to produce a complete formation. The actual colour is already a matter of fierce and continuing debate amongst railway historians, and we have our own ideas, so watch this space. Secondly, being of such age, like one or two of our Dart Valley TSOs, it has the internal frame type windows, and thirdly it was built with third class compartments which were not abandoned on BR until 3 June 1956.

As an aside, second class had been abandoned by British Railways way back in the nineteenth century, though a few – a very few - BR(S) coaches retained second class designation in order to through work on continental boat train services during the interim, they all became a universally second class in 1956. Since then, in our politically correct society, the term second class has become slightly non-U, so any number of other designations have since been used.

New specially shaped parts are to be acquired in order to weld in under the windows, and there are other areas of the coach that are best repaired by welding in new sheet. Its potential utility and innate interest, together with Paul's apparent desire to make 21034 the railway's magnum opus, mean that time, effort and hard cash will need to be spent on this vehicle. The end result is sure to be a worthwhile vehicle.

Second Corridor (SK) M25444

There has been no requirement to use this coach so far in 2007, though it is expected to take part in several of our major summer events as a strengthening coach. At present it has

been sidelined with a suspected brake fault involving both brake cylinders, and we must get to the bottom of this problem before she re-appears on the main line.

Brake Second Corridor (BSK) SC35494

Despite an external freshening up on the west side, this vehicle is looking increasingly careworn with threadbare seats, and damaged internal panels to external doors. Things have not been improved by a failure in the lavatory roof tank at the north end. Although the tank has been repaired, the subsequent flooding damaged the north vestibule flooring and as a result, it has been necessary to lift the lino there.

Brake Third (BTK) LSWR 1357 / S3193S / ADS70133

With the arrival of winter, with the cold, the wet, and early darkness, external work on coaches comes largely to a standstill as more important (and less uncomfortable) indoor work takes precedence. Work was limited during this year's dry and sunny April, due to pressures elsewhere, but at least one side of the underframe has been scraped down and bitumen painted. As a bonus, the long overdue bolelection mouldings (the bits that hold the window glass in from the outside) were finally completed by the joiner, and no time was wasted before they were picked up. A few fine days will see most of these fitted, and their companion windows rendered waterproof.



It's not just carriages - wagons sometimes get a look in. Here's our Dogfish painted and decorated in 'as new' condition. The legend reads: 'To be returned when empty to Golynos Junction, Talywain (WR)'

EVERYBODY HAS HEROES – Ian Smith

Everybody has heroes; whether they admit it or not, everybody has someone they look up to; usually the person has aspirational qualities, such as sportsmen or women. You might wish you were Bobby Charlton or Pele, an absolute wizard with a football, and a quick witted ambassador for the sport, when not playing it. You might wish you were Helen Mirren or Judi Dench, consummate actresses who command attention. Writers, politicians, sportsmen, philanthropists, musicians- we all have a hero somewhere.

I had heroes, I also had mentors. People whom I could talk to, relate to, and interact with. I had one such person here, on the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway. He wasn't much of a person to look at; small, elderly (much older than me). But, he had a soft twinkle in his eye, and a steady smile. When I first came to the P&B, he bade me welcome, and took time to show me around the railway. Despite my somewhat unflattering description of the man, he had a sharp mind (a very, very sharp mind) and a somewhat different humour. He had a particular knack of going off on a tangent when talking. You had to keep up, or you were lost!

This person sometimes occupied the machine shop; he was a highly skilled person, who had spent almost his entire life surrounded by machines. When he built his own house (I said he was skilled), he also built his own workshop into the house. Railway members with longer service than me will recall manhandling lathes and millers into his workshop, with him cossetting said machine like a new-born child.

I'm not musical - I can't carry a tune in a bucket! However, he was quite the musician, quite capable with the saxophone, some of which he rebuilt himself. He seemed to have as many friends in the musical scene, as on the P&B. Visits to his home were equally taken up with the latest tune, and whatever he was reading in the latest copy of 'Model Engineer'. His cat, Jack, would curl up on my lap, and I was surprised to know that I was the only one outside his family to whom the cat would come - a rare honour indeed. There was always a friendly greeting, and a cup of tea going on. In time, I came to know other members of his family, and I found that the good natured side of him had rubbed off on to other people as well.

Despite his advancing years, he had 'itchy fingers' - he always had a project or four on the go. I can well remember him rebuilding a wall at the rear of his house. He set himself a target, of so much finished wall, per week or month. I was once amazed to see large rocks firmly dressed and cemented in place, some four or five feet up the wall. When I enquired about the sheer physics involved, his response would normally be "Well, I had a cup of tea, and then I set to with a bar and a plank, only took an hour or so".

His outgoing personality rubbed off on quite a few people - some more than others. He would typically greet people on the railway in a friendly manner. More often than not, they would in turn become full members of the railway, a usual trick of his, which he carried off with his own style. At Christmas, he would dress up as Father Christmas, and do several days in the grotto. It was tiring work, as many subsequent F.C.'s will testify. He himself often said "that's my last year - no more". But the eyes told a different story, and next year,

true to form, he was back in the game. The children loved him, and I am sure he in turn loved them.

In time, I moved to the Isle of Wight. But the long arm of the P&B reached out to me, and I had a phone call, at least once a week. I couldn't match his detective skills, as he knew if I had been back in the locality - I still can't work out how he did it! A trip back to the area was not complete without a visit, and to catch up on the latest news and gossip. Latterly, we would meet at the AGM's of the railway, and catch up then. He was an absolute master of the railway's history, and would ask the most pertinent questions, often to the embarrassment of the person concerned.

In later years, he found that some of the other railway members were of a musical leaning, and without further ado, would show up on railway running days with his saxophone. Railway customers were serenaded as they were conveyed to and from the Whistle Inn, as he, and others, would form an impromptu 'orchestra' and music workshop.

I had great pleasure in introducing him to the late Malcolm Rowe, another of my mentors. They hit it off, and became good friends. I only wish they had met earlier, as they complemented each other perfectly, with an absolute wealth of experience between them. Had they met when they were younger, I don't think the P&B would have known what hit it! As it was, they were positive influence on each other, as Malcolm found when he was in charge of the extension to the station platform.

Sir Christopher Wren once said (I think it's his epitaph) "If you need evidence of my work, look around you". There is evidence aplenty as you look around the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway.

My mentors name? I will remember it with gratitude - Gwynfa Tudor.



Gwynfa Tudor (nearest the camera) chatting with friends at last year's Diesel Gala

THE BREATH OF CHANGE - Bernard P Morton

We do seem to experience many changes - none more so than in the Motive Power Department. The drivers had just got used to our Mainline 73 class Electro-Diesel when it was whisked away by its owners to the West Country. With DMU units misbehaving, we faced a problem for Saturday motive power. Our DEMU class 205 was of course to hand, but this was not exactly available owing to the ingress of water into the passenger saloon, and attendant mildew attack – not to mention a driver shortage! A blitz by the Loco and C&W departments had no option but to bring this ex SR unit up to scratch.

So, as I write, DMBS 60117 and DTCL 60828 is now engaged on Saturday duties. If you have not had the pleasure of riding in this unit I would recommend such a trip as it is surely something different. To those used to South of England travel it will bring back memories of commuter days, and for those whose first time in the last of the 'slam door stock' will feel the almost silent progress of this fine unit.

Dare I say that steam could also show its hand later in the year (see timetable for details). There are also some behind the scenes 'secret' discussions on bringing steam back to Blaenavon – don't miss our future 'Top Line' issues, and probably Steam Railway magazine.

With all these changes, it has thrown an extra burden on our Training Department and Roster Clerk. So, in spite of 'here we go again' we do need more staff to qualify for driving duties. For the clean collar brigade, the aforementioned unit is a breeze to drive, with preparation at a minimum, no crawling underneath with torches and an oilcan, and disposal virtually the throw of a switch!

But for the men of steel, steam is on the horizon and with the passing of time our passed steam crews have dwindled. We need to have some crews trained up ready for action. There is no experience in the world like the footplate of steam engine. All necessary training will be given, so contact our training officer, Dave Haylins, either directly or through our shop in Blaenavon or at the railway on a weekend and we will take it from there.

If you over ninety and don't care for waking up at dawn on a weekend then there is always the Model Railway which boast both 0- and 00-gauge layouts. For this relaxed side of the 'Railway Experience' contact Peter Drummond on site on a Friday evening or, once again, details through the Railway Shop, Broad Street, Blaenavon.



Dont forget -
Ivor the Engine is visiting
11th and 12th of August

THE CRAWSHAYS OF MERTHYR – John Down

Members will have been long aware that the Society produces models of Private Owner Wagons as limited edition runs of between 200 and 300. They also sell rather quickly. We try to add value to these models with an inlay sheet, which gives a potted history of the wagon, and of the works from which it travelled. We hope members have purchased at least one of our wagons and that they can confirm that the inlay sheet is of interest.

Our most recent offering was 'Crawshay, Cyfartha, Merthyr Tydfil'. We were a little nervous about producing this model since, comparatively speaking, it was rather a long way from home. Before we write the inlay sheet research has to be undertaken. For many wagons, quite some effort is expended before very much comes to light, and we often have to rely on local knowledge to add to the sparse published material we have uncovered. 'Crawshay' should have been even more difficult – it was a long way from home, and we had absolutely no local knowledge. Odd though, isn't it, how modern technology yields rich pickings in the strangest of places. A brief search on the internet, immediately brought forth copious material, in particular from Alan George's site at:

http://www.alangeorge.co.uk/cyfarthfa_ironworks.htm

Some friendly email correspondence followed and in a flurry of enthusiasm, I suddenly realised that I had written two and a half pages – excluding illustrations! Thus followed the painful process of reducing and editing the material to fit into less than an A5 page.

However I realised that I had the germ of an article at my fingertips, and Top Line, with its capacity to provide illustrations, seemed the ideal medium in which to present such an article, here it is....

The Crawshay dynasty, (along with the arch-rival Guest, of Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds) completely dominated iron and later steel production in Merthyr Tydfil from the 1786 till closure in 1919. Anthony Bacon started Iron production at Cyfarthfa in 1765. Richard Crawshay leased the works from Bacon's family in 1786, and in 1794 became the sole owner, Cyfarthfa's ironworks grew rapidly, producing iron that was made into weapons of war such as cannon, which were in great demand during the late 18th Century. The manufacture of weapons was sufficiently strongly linked to the success of the works that the Crawshays included a pile of cannon balls in their family crest. So important was the works that in 1802 Nelson made a surprise visit to Cyfarthfa. It is said that Richard Crawshay cried with joy, and announced to the workmen, 'This is Nelson, shout you Beggars!'. In 1803 he employed 1,500 people and Cyfarthfa Ironworks was said to be the biggest in the world.

The early success of the Cyfarthfa works was consolidated by the building of the Glamorganshire Canal, which had its northern terminus at the works. Opened in 1794, the canal enabled the works to export its products by sea (via the canal to Cardiff) much more cheaply and quicker than had been possible.

Richard Crawshay died in 1810, and the works passed to his son William Crawshay. He directed operation from his London office, while he delegated the day to day including the great expansion of the works to his son, William Crawshay II.

Between 1825 and 1830, William the son, built the impressive Cyfarthfa Castle, this imposing pile, to the north of Merthyr Tydfil still stands complete as a significant tourist destination, attracting 65,000 visitors a year. Robert Thompson Crawshay was perhaps the



A view of part of the works showing 'Crawshay' wagons but in a different livery from 'ours'

most notorious of the Crawshays, control of the works passed to him in 1847. At first he was popular with his workforce, and he founded the Cyfarthfa Band, but his refusal to change to steel production, when the demand for steel was beginning to outstrip that for iron, eventually brought about the works closure in April 1874. However Robert recognised that the ironworks had a voracious appetite for coal and coke, and he turned his attention to mining coal. The most important was Castle Colliery down the valley at Troedyrhiw, and close to the infamous tips of Aberfan. It was sunk in 1869, and was later taken over by Powell Duffryn before final closure in 1935. At its peak it employed 1355 men.

At the ironworks, he also refused to enter into any kind of negotiations with the rising Trade Unions, which led Robert to announce, 'the Cyfarthfa Ironworks will never open up again in my life-time', and caused great hardship there. There are many interpretations of the

simple inscription on his grave in Vaynor Churchyard, 'May God Forgive Me'. The people of Merthyr Tydfil certainly have not forgotten or forgiven him, although there is probably little truth in some of the gossip about the Crawshays. Following Robert's death in 1879, the works was converted to steel production, by his son William Thompson Crawshay, at a cost of £150,000, and reopened in 1882. Unfortunately for the Crawshays their arch-rivals, the Guests (of Guest Keen and Nettlefold) up the road at the Dowlais works had, by that time taken the major share of the steel market. It again closed in 1910. In 1915 it was reopened to produce pig iron and shell steel during the Great War. It finally closed forever in 1919. Dismantling was commenced in 1928.



The massive extent of the works, probably in the early thirties viewed looking west with the River Taff, in the lower part of the picture flowing down to the bottom left corner



The PBR model of the Crawshaw wagon (left) is emblazoned with a castle on its doors, it would be tempting to assume that this refers to the colliery of that name, but it is

equally likely that this refers to Cyfarthfa Castle. However we can find no evidence that an Upper Four Feet seam (as noted on the wagon side) was ever worked by Castle Colliery (though on the other hand, there is no evidence to refute it). Records show that Castle worked the Six Foot, Seven Foot, Nine Foot and Upper Yard seams. There were a few Crawshaw levels called Mountain No.1 Level and Mountain No.2 Level employing at best, fifty men between them, and records show that these certainly did work the Upper Four Feet seam. The Upper Four Feet was extensively worked in the Rhondda Valley and certainly extends east under the Dare and Taff Valley.

Merthyr Tydfil was richly served with railways - the GWR and LNWR, together with the indigenous Taff Vale, Rhymney (jointly with the GWR) and Brecon & Merthyr. Local geography suggests that whilst GKN's Dowlais Works had influence over the LNWR, so Crawshays had influence over the GWR and the Taff. Neither would have had much interest in the B&M with its tortuous route northwards. For Crawshaw the GWR provided a route to the west and down the Vale of Neath line to Neath and Swansea. To the south the GWR/ RR Joint line went down to Quakers Yard (High Level) for the Vale of Neath (Taff Vale Extension) line for the Rhymney, Sirhowy, Ebbw and Eastern Valleys, with any number of possible routes to Newport. Crawshaw's most direct route to the coast was down the Taff via Quaker's Yard (Low Level) via Queen Street Cardiff to the docks there, and this is the route on which the wagon illustrated above would most likely be seen.



Another picture of the works with Midland Railway (MR) wagons in the foreground

O&S DEPARTMENT

Gales of 16th January

For anybody who thought that a by-product of global warming meant milder winters, they may well be right, but the gales of the night of 16/17th January certainly were not included as part of the deal. As a result Furnace Sidings suffered more than somewhat. Damage to the exposed vehicles GW RC 9605 and GW Brake Third 5539 was not altogether unexpected, nor was further deterioration to the roof of Charles James' LSWR 76. There were various degrees of lesser damage to other stock – both passenger and goods. In the yard, one post of the main gate was worked loose and five or six of the translucent roof panels were torn off the top shed, though all but one of these have been replaced by Derek Bounds, by means of some rather deft aerial work. Most worrying was that our brand new Package Sewage Treatment Plant in the shape of a Biodigester had been torn from its temporary moorings thrown about and damaged both internally and externally. As a result plans to install the Biodigester were rapidly brought forward, the damage put right and, (with the aid of a bit of horse trading with contractors Blakedown, who were re-building the link road and level-crossing), the main apparatus was buried post haste – we could not risk further damage. At the station about three-quarters of the admittedly ramshackle fence was blown down and scattered hither and thither. Some desultory attempts to effect a repair were made, but finally discretion was admitted to be the better part of valour and the whole fence was removed.

All of this diverted carefully planned and scheduled effort elsewhere, so that the business of putting things right is out of all proportion – the more so when efforts were being made concentrate on 'new works' ready for the summer season



Our 'indestructible' steel ticket lies forlornly on its roof – victim to the notorious winds at Furnace Sidings

Events at the Swansea Vale Railway

If ever a sense of 'there but for the grace of God....' were to fall upon us, events at the Swansea Vale Railway would surely provide it. As was related in the national railway press (and even the national newspaper press), some 140 coach windows were smashed in what appeared to be a concerted series of attacks. The total damage was estimated to approach £80,000. It seems however that Swansea Vale had a modicum of insurance cover, and we trust that it may go some way to effecting window repairs. However, nothing can compensate for the loss of time and effort, and with it, morale. I think it's true to say that within the heritage railway movement, we are all in this together. To that end, and in response to a national appeal from them, Roger Mileman was able to deliver a pair of large tarpaulins we had on site to cover their DMUs. The tarps actually belonged to Paul Gane and he was most gracious in donating them - as soon as we had broken his arm! Seriously though, thanks Paul; Swansea Vale were very pleased, and noted that our modest assistance was the first tangible help that they had received. Come on you big players - where are you!

STOP PRESS: Sadly, we have just heard as this issue goes to press (14 June) that a DMU car was also fired last night. Surely not simply the work of mindless yobbos.

Insurance matters

In contrast to Swansea vale, PBR has no insurance for its stock, nor, so far as is known, do any of our private owners. It's a fact that if Swansea Vale were able to recover even half of the losses incurred from their insurers, they would have secured a good deal - even if their insurers refused ever to cover them again. Furnace Sidings is not Swansea, and our vandalism problem is perhaps different in both scale and motivation. Notwithstanding, a glance at our attitude to insurance may not be amiss.

Cheddar Cheese

That heavyweight in the English cheese armoury, the Cheddar, is now made in - of all places - Blaenavon. The grande fromage in this operation is Susan Fiander-Woodhouse of the Blaenavon Cheddar Company who has a place further up from our shop in Broad Street. As part of our commitment to supporting the town, the railway played host to a presentation by Sue of 'cheeses on the train'. This ad hoc addition to our programme was enacted on 20th May, when Sue, suitably dressed in Welsh national costume, presented a wide variety of delicious cheeses, from cheddars in near-infinite variety to Caws Gafr (Goat's Cheese), and managed to sell more than enough to cover her costs. Definitely one for a repeat performance next year, we think! See the 'links' page on our website for more details.

On yer' bike!

What with the cycletrack and everything, you might just think we might be anti-bike - perish the thought! We are more than happy to carry any cyclist as a passenger over steeper parts of the route, together with their steeds. Quite apart from the near-universal and vociferous support we get from the local bike fraternity, cyclists provide us with passing trade for which we are more than grateful. To further cement our relationships with local traders, an

agreement has been reached for a local bicycle hire outlet 'Mountain Tours' to operate out of Furnace Sidings, from a large container. It's a fact that most, if not all BR Mk1 brake coaches were originally fitted with bicycle hooks (and dog tethering rings for that matter). Under the circumstances a return to heritage hooks is definitely on the cards. We wish them well!

Portacabin City continues to grow

Quite apart from the arrival of a new ISO container for the bike outlet, another Portacabin is due to arrive in the next few weeks., and will be placed behind the new loos on the piece of ground that is neither easily accessible to the public, nor within the compound. This is connection with an exciting new training development - the railway is going to become a training ground for potential Network Rail employers. They will come from an outfit called Working Links, who have networks with a number of training organisations. Although they will receive their training from professional training tutors, not from us, though heavens knows, most of our working members have been well trained - and have the scars to prove it. The best bit is that, quite apart from the cachet of respectability that such things carry, the PBR stands to gain some extra labour out on the PWay down to Blaenavon. On the face of it, it's a win-win deal.

Ivor's Permanent Home

We are delighted that, all being well, Ivor the Engine will be paying us a visit on 11th and 12th July. This will be his first foray back to his spiritual home - Wales. But what if Wales became his permanent *real* home, and in particular, what if it were Blaenavon? All we can say, is that there have been whispers. Shorn of all the fantasy element, we must decide, whether there a commercial case for having Ivor in Blaenavon. Storing him on site may be difficult with our lack of accommodation, but he's such a little fellow that overwintering him down on the industrial estate seems far from impractical. But is it a sound commercial venture? In terms of customer draw, Ivor is still a learner compared with Thomas the Tank Engine. Of course HIT entertainments withdrew our agreement in mid-2003, quoting as a reason, our lack of facilities. We believe our vastly improved infrastructure might impress them in a year or two. Which way should we jump? Much will depend on the outcome of the August event. All the same, we must start cutting out the letters L-L-A-N-T-I-S-I-L-L-Y in readiness for the station nameboard!

Llantarnam Abbey

We are pleased to announce that the Company has agreed to accommodate the 1939 Barclay 0-6-0ST 'Llantarnam Abbey', which is owned by a consortium based at the Swansea Vale Railway. This loco has seen a period of continuous restoration activity, and is said to only require firebox repairs before she is fit for duty. At present this loco appears the most cost-effective way of securing steam power on the railway, so she will be assured of a warm welcome. There are however dark mutterings that the group may also be bringing a small 0-4-0DM Ruston - I suppose we might as well, we only need North British, Yorkshire and Drewry-Baguley (and we've already had one of those), and we'll have representatives of every major manufacturer in the UK!

More EDs

Electro-diesel 73133, which left as in January to take up duty in Taunton shunting High Output Ballast Cleaners, has a new stablemate. Owner John Buxton, who already owns 73133 and 73210, has recently acquired 73118, a loco previously engaged on CTRL construction duties and armed at each end with a giant pivoting Sharfenburg coupling. This, we hear, will be removed before delivery. Sister CTRL loco 73130 is bound for a preservation site near London. Loco 73118 is to be named 'Pride in Barry' – one thing's certain – she won't be coming here wearing *those* plates!

New Railway Inspector

We have a new railway inspector. Craig Richman recently took up residence in Cardiff following Wayne Miles' retirement. We wish them both well. Craig comes from the 'big' railway, so we'd better watch out! His new patch is all heritage railways in the South-west – and that includes the Severn Valley Railway.

Coach comings and goings

There's about to be a bit of an exodus on the GWR coach front, with three vehicles off to new homes in the next month or so. The order of departure is not exactly known, things will depend very much on positioning and logistics. The vehicles involved are

- 1934 built GWR Brake Third 5500. This is the black 'District Civil Engineer, Newport Docks' vehicle. Unsubstantiated reports are that it is going to the Gloucester and Warwickshire railway. It is currently in the bottom yard, in position ready for transport via the south gate.
- 1928 built GWR 5-compartment Brake Third 5539. This is the unique diagram D101 vehicle and is in – or rather on – the top yard, and positioned ready to go. Again we believe that the Gloucs and Warks is its destination.
- 1930 built GWR Restaurant Composite 9605. We are delighted to hear that the tragic remains of this vehicle are going to the West Somerset Railway where there are plans to re-build her to her former splendour, and to incorporate her in a complete GWR train.

All three vehicles are to be carried by Andrew Goodman of Moveright International, but the state of each of the vehicles means that considerable preparation will be needed if their journeys are not to be accompanied by bits dropping off en route.

To go some way to balancing the fearful denudation that faces the PBR, agreement has been reached with a consortium, largely drawn from the Society committee, to accommodate a 1939 SR Post Office Tender, which will be arriving from the mid-Hants Railway shortly. This almost windowless vehicle, S4958S, is intended to stay at Furnace Sidings only temporarily, whilst roof repairs, general tittivation, and painting are undertaken. After that it's off up to the Whistle Inn to serve as, essentially, a mobile shed, in support of the Society's Santa activities.

Lime Kilns Siding Signal Box

Despite negotiating long and hard to save this little box, we failed. It with some regret therefore that we report that it planned for unconditional demolition on 19 June.

Super Thumper Repair Man!

The PBR is enjoying some reflected glory, arising from the exploits of Arthur Llewellyn, who has a clear understanding of what makes a Thumper clutch work, and what's more, knows how to build bits to repair those that don't. We have been able to provide useful advice to the Kent and East Sussex Railway who own 205 001. We are also in extended correspondence with no less than the mighty North Yorkshire Moors Railway who are anxious for their 205 205, the unique gangwayed Thumper, to turn its first wheel for them in revenue-earning service. We are reliably informed (by the Chairman himself) that they have no objections to us calling 205 205 the 'Ecky Thumper'.

Locomotive departures

Most of you will have seen in the glossy railway press that all of the five ex-Barry 'Rippingale' engines are for sale. We have known of this for a while, but the news was embargoed till just after our last deadline, so, sadly you were unable to 'read it here first'. Although, as a policy, we do not normally divulge the identities of rolling stock owners, the fact that this information is already in the public domain makes such a policy superfluous in this case. The locos are privately owned by member Terry Rippingale. It is not necessary for all five to go, and it is likely that one or two – most likely the tank locos - will stay. The locos involved are 2874, 3855, 4253, 5967 'Bickmarsh Hall' and 5668. One reason for seeking the locomotives departure was to permit a northward extension to the Top Shed in order to provide some desperately needed covered accommodation. Work is expected to start late this year to prepare concrete footings to accommodate the new shed extension, which is currently stored, ready, on site, by about 80 feet. It is planned that one of the Rippingale engines will go into the top shed, so that restoration can start in more comfortable environment.

Welcome, welcome, welcome...

The trickle becomes a flood as we welcome another wave of new members – and one prodigal. A very warm welcome indeed to you all...

Howard Grocutt of Ebbw Vale	648	Michael Williams of Blaina	662
John Bell of Llanelli Hill	649	George Pope of Cardiff	663
Paul Rees of Blaenavon	650	David Perham of Pontypool	664
Freddie Cox of Crosskeys	651	Gerry Woodhouse of Blaenavon	665
Alistair Grieve of Birmingham	652	Barry Foster of Pontypool	666
Philip Hobbs of Dover	653	Raymond Hall of Tredegar	667
Adrian Moses of Aberdare	654	Hilary Herbert of Abergavenny	A093
David J Harris of Abergavenny	655	Wendy Taylor of Coventry	A096
Christopher Williams of Swansea	656	Andrew May of Newport	348
Robert Jones of Monmouthshire	657		
M Hancocks of Matlock	658	- and with the Society	
Gordon Allan of Raglan	659	Ryan Lark of Rhoose	s96
Ralph Melhuish of Glamorgan	660	Aled Williams of Croesyceiliog	s97
John Melhuish of Glamorgan	661		