

TOP LINE

FUNDING
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The Magazine of the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway

Number 107

Spring 2008

£1.50

Timetable

Trains usually operate a half-hourly service from 11:30 to 16:30. Intensive services run on special events—check our website or call for details.

Fares

Furnace Sidings to Whistle Inn Return—£2.50 Adult

£1.50—Children (aged 3 to 16)

£6.50—Family Ticket (2 adults + 2 children)

TRAINS RUN ON THESE DAYS IN 2008

	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
MAR																						22	23	24					29	30
APR	5	6						12	13						19	20						26	27							
MAY	3	4	5					10	11						17	18						24	25	26					31	
JUN		1						7	8						14	15						21	22						28	29
JUL	5	6						12	13						19	20						26	27							
AUG	2	3		5	6	7		9	10		12	13	14		16	17		19	20	21		23	24	25		27			30	31
SEP	6	7						13	14						20	21						27	28							
OCT	4																													
DEC	6	7						13	14						20	21	22	23				27	28							

SPECIAL EVENTS 2008

March 22nd	25th Season Celebration	June 14th	God Train	August 24/25	Transport Rally
		June 22nd	Fathers Day Specials	September	25th Anniversary
March 23/24	Easter Bunnies	June 22/23	Model Railway Show	13/14	End Of Season Gala
April 19/20	DMU Gala	June 29th	Garn Lakes Day	October 4th	Blues On The Train
May 4/5	Teddy Bears Picnic	July 12/13	Cowboys And Indians	December 6/7,	Santa Specials
May 25/26	Lucky Dips	July 26/27	Diesel Gala	13/14, 20–23	
June 7/8	1960's Weekend	August 9/10	Ivor The Engine	December	New Year DEMU Specials
				27/28	

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Society Shop and Headquarters

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Well behaved dogs are welcome to travel on our trains and you will always find a bowl of water on our stations.

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TOP LINE—THE MAGAZINE OF THE PONTYPOOL AND BLAENAVON RAILWAY

NUMBER 107 SPRING 2008

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue number 107 of Top Line and the first with myself as your new editor. I'd like to thank John Down for all the work he's put in over the last 10 years on Top Line and making the magazine what it is today. As John now focuses on the exciting development of the PBR and its growth into something special I hope I can do the same with Top Line, it's going to be a hard act to follow.

I had written a piece about how I was honoured to take over the magazine, how successful 2007 was and how busy 2008, our 25th year was looking but that had to all be changed after Thursday January the 24th. On that day the railway changed as the official announcement was made that the request for funding for our push to Blaenavon High Level had been granted. As part of a bigger £12m package to stimulate tourism in the Heads of the Valleys Torfean BC have been allocated £526k to get the PBR to BHL. John Down has detailed the ins and outs of this before hand and whilst it only caters for "a basic" railway to BHL it is still the biggest boost imaginable to the railway and something we could not have managed on our own.

Work has started on the bridges and with the target opening date of April 2010 we have a lot to get done in that time but we can achieve that. No longer are we just a half mile journey but finally we're going somewhere and this should be the start of much bigger things. Just speaking for myself I had a huge grin on my face all day at work after it was announced. Here's to 2008 and what promises to be an incredible year.

Regards Alistair Grieve

Front Cover—A stunning night scene taken at our unique rail over rail bridge during the "Compo Club" photo charter on January the 12th. In the background can be seen the lights of Blaenavon as Hudswell Clarke number 615 stands over GWR 813 and crew. For the occasion 615 has been lettered for the Fictitious BC&I Co (Blaenavon Coal & Iron) but retains its Shell Mex fleet number—14.

Final Scores— Membership And Ridership On The Increase

It is very pleasing to report at the end of the year that the figure for both membership and passengers are up on last year. 2007 was a massive 36% increase on 2006 with 7,398 people carried and membership was also up by 22% which is excellent news and shows that all our hard work is worth while. For 2008 we hope to grow this further with more family events and a higher profile in the press.

Of course enthusiasts are not forgotten with events added for them and the possibility of another photo charter towards the end of the year. The January 12th all day photo charter was a first for the railway and the huge team effort put in for 2007 paid dividends as it went even better than we could have hoped. Whilst some railways treat these almost with disdain as they are so common our effort and approach set us apart and is one of the things that make the PBR the railway it is.

Below is a thank you letter from Simon Hopkins who organised the photographers for the charter and its responses like this that make it all worthwhile.

To: The Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway

As a group of railway photographers we are lucky in having visited a fair number of preserved railways up and down the country. These visits are normally on photographic charters where the visited line rosters the required locomotive and stock the railway has at hand on the required date. These days are great fun but are enjoyed by only a few people outside the photographers and the railway staff on the day. The Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway on Saturday 12th January 2008 I think broke this mould.

Over the last four months I have been lucky in organising a photo-charter at the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway. From the initial idea from your resident “snapper” Ali Grieve through to numerous e-mails and phone calls with Alex Hinshelwood who has not only embraced the idea himself but passed on this enthusiasm to others on the railway. This came through to me many times as:- “we’ve found you two wagons and a brake van” through to “you’ve now got three china clays, a mink and an LMS brake, and oh the local lads:- Andy Knock and Dave Parker are repainting them and Mick Parker has taken to sign-writing them too, will that do?”.

With a near perfect Great Western train to sell I was at first in trepidation in returning Alex’s calls with we’ve got “10 bookings, but it’s only November”. 1st December brought “bookings are up to 16, that any good?” A week before Christmas saw: - “Alex you won’t believe it, we’ve got 22!!” 2008 dawned and with just a few days before the big day I was happy to say “Alex, I hope the fields around the railway are big? As we’ve got 34 coming!”

12th January saw the steam paparazzi descend and swarm onto your line-side. All of them enjoyed their day even when it rained during the night-shoot. All of them through the day came up and could not believe all the work that had been done to make the day happen.

So, thank you all again, not just to Ali and Alex on the organisation side, but to all who have done the extras behind the scenes like Mick, Andy and Dave with the repainting of the wagons, also to Angela who kept us all topped up with tea and cakes through the day, and to the whole railway for starting the charter season on such a high.

I hope we can come back again, this time with more sun

Simon Hopkins

For and on behalf of the Compo Club

Meet The Editor

As I'm now going to be looking after your magazine I thought I'd say a few words about myself. When once asked what I did before I got interested in railways the only reply I could give was that there was no "before railways" period. With my father, uncle and grandfather interested in railways I've always been around them in one way or another and through my fathers steam era photography and my uncles large collection of railway books I've always had a passion for photography and finally got my first proper camera in 1983.



A lovely evening scene at Bewdley during a "Compo Club" photo charter

Not content with the usual front 3/4 wedge shot style of railway photography I'm always looking for something different, different angles, different views and hopefully something that grabs the eye and makes people interested in the pictures. I hope this comes across in the pictures that feature in Top Line and elsewhere. As John mentioned in the previous issue of Top Line I also do work for the "glossies" writing on a monthly basis for Railways Illustrated on the preserved diesel and electric scene as well as providing photographs to both them and others. Another way to enjoy my passions of photography and railway preservation.



Diesels gather at Barrow Hill Roundhouse

I've been visiting preserved railways for as long as I can remember, its amazing just how many family days out had a railway contingent somewhere, but I really got involved when in 1989 several friends and I formed the MCTA (Midlands Class 20 Association) and in 1991 successfully tendered for and purchased 20 048 from British rail. Now based at the Great Central Railway Nottingham the ownership of the locomotive has been an interesting and sometimes fraught experience and I can say quite categorically locomotive ownership is not for the faint hearted.

Now before anyone worries about it all seeming diesel I do like steam as well, I know my panniers from my prairies, my black 5's from my Jubilees so I'll be covering both here as best I can. Of course the advantage with most diesels is that they look the same in either direction and one doesn't have to worry about the smoke blowing the wrong way for your picture. I'm excited to be asked to be editor and hope I do you and the railway proud and yes there'll be lots of pictures.

See also www.aligrieve.fotopic.net

End Of Year Report 2007 Report—Alex Hinshelwood

2007 has been very busy and prosperous for our railway. As well as the events and day to day running, behind the scenes we have had many comings and goings, many yards of track re-laid, coaches and wagons painted, stations and level crossings built etc., etc. Of course these are not always seen or noticed but they have made for a very packed and definitely above average year.

Comings and Goings

The first movement on the railway this year was the departure of 73133 after a six-month loan period, the loco left for Taunton in early January. All was quiet for a while, until July, when the arrival of the Llantarnam Abbey Steam Locomotive Group with their locomotive and container workshop started the ball rolling. Later in the month we took delivery of Norman's class 37, 37216, this being the biggest diesel locomotive on our railway since 1983! Shortly after the arrival of the 37 there was a rush of locomotive arrivals with Ivor the Engine from the Battlefield Line, Alex's Ruston and Russell's Self-propelled Steam Crane (she's heavy mind) from the Swansea Vale Railway. The following week after a very successful Ivor event the locomotive left for the South Devon Railway.

The next influx of arrivals and departures happened in October when we gained one coach in the form of the Post Office Tender vehicle owned by a consortium of members and lost two when the Great Western Brake third coaches left for the Gloucester and Warwickshire Railway. The final locomotive arrival for 2007 was GWR 813 in late November to work our Santa Special trains.

The plant side has been busy as well with the acquisition of a new JCB, a mobile compressor by Arthur, which have already proven their worth, and a quirky little 2 ton petrol roller, handy for those paths, roads and the odd cricket pitch.

Restoration Projects

The main project for 2007 has been to cosmetically restore a rake of freight wagons in GW livery for the 813 photographic charter in early 2008, and what a splendid job we have done too.

Other projects include waterproofing of the Inspection Saloon and continued restoration on the BCK. 37216 moved into the Top Shed in early November to begin its bodywork restoration. Also work has continued on RT1, And the little Hudswell D615 had finally lost its primer livery for a bright Shell-Mex & BP light Brunswick green.

Mick Parker puts the finishing touches to one of the china clay wagons

Permanent Way

The year was started with a massive P-way job, probably the biggest for many years, viz. the removing and renewing the track through the level crossing at Furnace Sidings. This work involved liaising with contractors and working to a very strict timescale. Once we had installed new rail and concrete sleepers the contractors began to construct the crossing.

The next big job was to reinstate the track in the cutting. The volunteers worked tirelessly to install over 300 feet of track with new concrete sleepers and ballast, and this was completed in record time and gave us back the access to the rest of the extension. During the year the construction of siding number one, the proposed home for the sleeping coach, was carried out and in late November the track was slewed and the siding loaded.

On the last scheduled running day of the 2007 season the class 37 spread the track on the yard head shunt, sparking the renewal of this track with concrete sleepers and 60 ft rail sections over a 180-foot



section. And all this in just one year, what an achievement!

Development

With the prospect of the grant funding coming much closer, the project team was tasked with the clearance of the vegetation on the extension and as the year progressed the vegetation was diminished until by late October we had access to all the line. Subsequently the whole 1m 70ch of railway has been treated with weed-killer and a plan has been drawn up to repeat this process to keep the line clear.



A major step forward with our infrastructure was achieved with the commencement of the construction of Platform 2 at Furnace Sidings, and the progression of the footbridge restoration. A less visible, but no less key success, which has transformed the way in which we operate the railway, is the addition of fresh running water and sewerage which now support our toilet block

The last tree in the way to BHL is cut down by Dave Perham. Andy Knock

Traffic

In 2007 we ran services on 74 days, a great achievement, we are now running more days than ever before with an increase again planned for 2008. We have increased our trained Drivers and Guards and our workforce is increasing almost by the week. With our first home based mainline diesel, two available DMU's with a third on its way and steam returning we have never had so much variety on our services and this is recognised by our regulars. We have had many very successful events this year, with more added for 2008 it's a hard act to follow, but we must and will rise to the occasion as always.

The isolated siding number 1 has been filled taking the Sleeping Car, CCT, 106 and 170, these are all items which have no use on the operational railway in the near future and items that are awkward to move. Moving them to the siding has freed up valuable yard space whilst 0-6-0T 5668 has also been moved to allow the removal of the Hall by its new owner. This was done in August in some of the worst weather we have experienced this summer. It now resides on the end of siding number 4.

Diversifying Our Railway

Although the railway has been home to the Blaenavon Model Railway Club for a number of years now the club has become well established on its Friday night slot, with increasing membership and enthusiasm. 2007 was the first year the club hosted a Model Railway Event on the railway with visiting layouts as well as their two it proved a popular event which is due to be repeated in 2008. Another slightly different activity has been gained with the introduction of Dave's 5 inch gauge railway which runs down the side of the shed, and terminates by the Emporium, this has also been a popular attraction on Special Events.

This year the railway has also become the home of two more unrelated projects in the form of Blaenavon Mountain Tours and Greenlight training. Blaenavon mountain tours is a cycle hire which operates out of the car park arena, this brings in much needed visitors to the railway, also related to the cycle hire is the Blaenavon Cheese Company who have been running cheese tasting days on our trains. Greenlight Recruitment have been using our railway as a base for the last 6 months to train out of work youngsters in the art of permanent way and track safety with a view to introducing them back into employment on the railways, this has been successful to date with some urgent track work completed by them to a very high standard. We must continue to diversify and offer new experiences for the public as it only helps with the impression and publicity the railway receives.

Locomotive And Rolling Stock Report - Alex Hinshelwood

Locomotives

Steam

813 - 813 arrived from the East Somerset railway in November to run our Santa trains, with trimmings replaced and glands packed along with a replaced brick arch and firebars this loco received a fair amount of attention since its arrival. It left the railway on Jan the 17th for the Severn Valley Railway.

Barry 5 - With the Barry 5 steam locomotives up for sale 0-6-2T 5668 has been moved from its position outside the Top Shed to number 4 siding to allow access to 5967 behind. 5967 left the railway on Jan 28th for the Northampton and Lamport Railway and it is reported another has being sold so we await developments .

Llantarnam Abbey - In between setting up their work area and helping out on the railway the owning group have found time to work on the engine and have replaced the cab roof.

Diesels

37216/D.6916 - After finishing off the season the locomotive entered the top shed for a major body-work overhaul and repaint to BR green.

D.1249/104 - Problems have been identified with a knocking head, this is due to be repaired after Christmas.

10083 'Panteg' - Drained for the winter, awaiting diagnosis on water in the oil.

D.1387/DL16 - The exhaust repaired , this loco is still intensively used for all tasks on the railway.

D.615/No.14 - Repaint progressing well and sign writing and lining begun.

170/D7063 and 106/D1226 - Shunted to the isolated siding

RT1—With plant currently taking up much of Jon's time work on RT1 tucked up in the top shed has slowed down over the last few months.

200793 'Gower Princess' - This loco has been used as test vehicle for newly laid track, and a depot shunter for Ivor. Tappets and brakes have been adjusted by Chris.



The top shed , BCK M21034 on the left, 37216 on the right

DMU/DEMU

The 108 DMU continues to soldier on providing a back up to the Thumper Unit which is becoming a very useful piece of kit. The working interior lights and heaters being a real boon in the colder months.

Work Continues on the 117 DMU to iron out those troublesome final issues.

Carriage and Wagon

Coaches

TSO 4677 - Roger has been pushing on with the interior restoration prior to the vehicle entering the shed for body overhaul, he is now around half way through.

BSK SC35494 RMB E1854, SK M25444 - All have seen a lot of use especially during the Santa Special season. Work ongoing on the running stock, brakes adjusted, Arthur has overhauled the batteries, and Norman has been attending to the doors.

BCK M21034 - With the windows removed this vehicle is now ready to receive the weld repairs. A repaint has also begun into carmine and cream.

Inspection Saloon - All the windows have been sealed and the roof painted, inside the ceilings have been painted white and all plywood and interior fittings removed ready for match boarding. The coach has been moved outside to allow 37216 in the Top shed.

Post Office tender (POT) - Since its arrival the POT consortium have been hard at work preparing this vehicle for its debut as Santas Grotto in a few years time.

Sleeper First M378M and CCT 94300 - Both have been moved to the isolated siding.



The SLF now in its place on No1 Siding

Wagons

The Weltrol, Lowmac and Dogfish have all seen PWay use this year whilst the GWR Mink, 103966, 3 of the China clay wagons and the LMS style Brake Van B950114 have all been cosmetically restored to a pre nationalisation i.e. pre 1948 condition for use with 813 on the January Photo charter.



At the end of the 2007 diesel gala and only a week after arriving at the railway 37216 drifts down hill on a beautiful summers evening with a short engineers train comprising the Lowmac, Weltrol, Dogfish and the LMS style brake van.

Development – John Down

We've been promising it since Topline No.104, and we've had to retract several times, but now, at last, we can give you the outstanding item of development news. The Welsh Assembly formally announced an award of no less the £526,000 on Thursday 24 January 2008, through the Heads of the Valleys programme. Interviews with the South Wales Argus produced some useful copy, but televised interviews the following day with BBCTV and ITV were completely overshadowed by the Peter Hain resignation business, so potentially valuable publicity was lost.

We knew that the award was to be made on 25th October last year but we were asked to keep the lid on it. It is, fortunately, TCBC, who effectively 'own' the Step 1.2 program (and are responsible for its delivery), and they had found a temporary source of money in sufficient quantities to allow work to begin, work starting on Monday 14 January to refurbish the bridges en route to Blaenavon (High Level). Capita Symonds (they of Ebbw Vale branch fame) are the main contractors for the bridge refurbishment work. The first bridge to receive attention is bridge 13 (Old Pit Road bridge), this will be followed within a month by Bridge 14 (New Pit Road bridge), and later by Bridge 16 (Low Cycletrack bridge) and so on.

We've repeated it twice before, and the new editor may be loathe to repeat it a third time, nevertheless (*I don't mind at all – Editor*), its worth repeating the mantra, since although it describes some wonderful opportunities, which will dominate much of what we do over the next two years, there are some serious limitations.

The relaying of existing, but currently unused track, from the station at Furnace Sidings some 2100m southwards, to Blaenavon (High Level), the refurbishment of bridges along the route, the simplification of pointwork immediately south of Furnace Sidings, the erection of fences insofar as is necessary and the refurbishment of the platform at Blaenavon (High Level) station to minimum statutory standards.

Perhaps most serious are the limitations imposed by a single line of track working into a single platform without run round facilities – a mirror image of Whistle Inn if you like. Now whilst the RI permitted "push/pull" operations over the 2/3 mile or so to Whistle Inn, they have made it quite clear that there will be no such concession over the much longer line. A run round loop (and a second platform) are all part of the longer term plan (see Step 1.4 in Topline No. 106 – our last issue), but for a few years DMU and DEMU services will handle the majority of passenger traffic to BHL except perhaps for galas and special events when 'top and tailing' with two locos will be used, although this is expensive and resource intensive. This is one of the reasons why the construction of a second platform has become so important – DMU services Blaenavon High Level to Furnace Sidings platform 2, and with loco hauled trains, operating under 'grandfather rights' from Furnace Sidings platform 1 to Whistle Inn or we may wish to operate DMUs directly from BHL to Whistle Inn, but this is a traffic matter for the future. There will be little to see as a result of the work underway, though the construction of fences, especially at the bottom end of the main site, is likely to demonstrate early evidence that Step 1.2 is finally underway.

That's good then – your Development Director can put his feet up now – if only! It's now perhaps time to talk about our next big push. It was hinted at in Topline 106, but failed to generate the expected uproar (who noted the little appendix marked Step 1.5 on our 'Underground' map?). The HoV people are, as are others, exerting considerable pressure on PBR to make a connection with Big Pit, since it has the potential to deliver considerable revenue. The board has consistently taken the view that it will not entertain the idea of a branch to Big Pit until the route to BHL was 'safe'. On 24th January, that situation was finally realised, and new plans relating to such a branch will be submitted to HoV. You will not be surprised to hear that plans have been gestating for some time, and are already quite finely detailed and costed. We had hoped to involve the Heritage Lottery Fund in this work, and con-

siderable work has been undertaken on this front. However, things have become difficult, what with the Olympics and so on, but be assured HLF are likely to be heavily involved in the *next* big push!. However, a feature of the branch is to be a little 'collier's train' (possibly consisting of our China Clays, refurbished), that will ferry passengers from Big Pit to Furnace Sidings, Platform 2, where they will cross via the footbridge to Platform 1 for 'main line trains'. Much more of this in our next issue – let's concentrate on getting to Blaenavon (High Level)!

Platform 2 at Furnace Sidings

Furnace Sidings Platform 2 has made very good progress up till Christmas, and before the end of 2007, the main block front wall was completely up. Since then filling work has progressed, with two trees moved at the north end of the platform (the Silver Birch permanently removed and the little Pine transplanted further back from the platform edge. Ian Longworth has fitted up and connected the land drains, and they appear to be functioning well. We have decided not to attempt to lay the front brick skin ourselves, but to hire a bricklayer to lay the 3800 or so bricks required. Work on the front leaf is expected to start in late February early March, weather permitting and shuttering timber has been purchased in order to build two (and possibly three) shutters so that the concrete slabs can be laid.

A new development is the idea of small building on platform 2, intended to serve not only as a shelter and a store for all the bits and pieces we seem to need, but as an isolating switchroom for incoming three phase supplies – since the high tension lines are then only 170m away this seems to make good sense. Western Power Distribution are looking at the situation now.

Out of the blue Senior Railway Inspector Chris Jacquier arrived, to look at the platform, he seemed quite happy and gave lots of useful advice, but one thing he did mention was that the platform must be 'into public use' by August 2008 if we are not to suffer all sorts of difficulties meeting the requirements of the incoming 'ROGS' regulations – a juggernaut piece of legislation, that, as you may have read in the 'glossies', has struck fear into the hearts of heritage railway operators.

Above all, we do need lots of money to complete this task, and we had hoped that Christmas would yield a bumper harvest. As it was the cost of securing steam for Christmas cut profits severely, and it was touch and go as to whether there would be any spare cash at all. Once again we are having to pass the hat around. Please be generous – the platform must be finished by August.

Footbridge

It's all very well having two platforms, but their usefulness cannot be fully exploited without a footbridge. To be honest, financial jitters over Christmas have delayed progress a little, but things are moving forward well enough. The cutting is now complete, but we have yet to weld the feet on tower one, there have been problems with the generator but we should have the job done by the time you read this. Needle gunning has been delayed by diversification of labour into Santa Specials, and rotten weather since but it is important that this work is completed if assembly is to proceed. The necessary bolts have been purchased and are standing by ready to attach the parts of the platform 1 tower. If all this suggests that the work has stalled, then that is far from true. We had hoped, that we would have one tower up before Christmas, but it was an unrealistic hope, nevertheless, a tower ready, in place, for Easter is highly possible. We are currently digging out the hole for the tower foundations on Platform 1, and this should be filled with concrete well before the end of February, again, weather permitting.

Agents Orange

Our two-man defoliation team, Dave Perham and Andy Knock have been at it again. We've had to let them in on the Big Pit plans to get them going, but having cleared the Down Exchange Sidings, since they 'just fancied something to do', they then started on that Welsh Matto Grosso – the Up Exchange Sidings and the impenetrable forest up to Big Pit. All has been lain waste before them, and it has

been quite an historical revelation to see long-lost pointwork re-appear – some of it in remarkably good condition. Of the four sidings that have emerged it looks like the one nearest the main line (UXS1) that will be relaid first in order to carry the collier's train, leaving the remainder to be relaid at a later date.

Going through the proper channels

Apart from defoliation, Agents Orange do a fair business in moving mountains. Ok, I'm exaggerating, moving the odd earth bank or as Andy Knock calls it 'a grassy knoll', is nothing to them. Furnace Sidings is full of odd tumps, but this one is a major nuisance. Our main line dips into a cutting below Furnace Sidings level crossing, and after going down line for just under quarter of a mile disappears under the rail-over-rail bridge. It is accompanied on its travels for most of the distance by the up loop, but which joins the down line (i.e. the main line) about 80 yds north of the bridge. It does so by means of a cross-over, and the spare switch of the cross-over forms a catchpoint to intercept stock rolling down the up line. The catchpoint was followed by a very short panel which may once have terminated in set of buffers. At some point the buffers were removed (perhaps by a run wild!), and replaced by an earth bank.



Running alongside the up loop is a drainage channel which intercepts countless rivulets coming down the side of the cutting. It was once well built, with stone retaining walls alongside its lower reaches. Sadly, when the earth bank was produced a crude tunnel was built to accommodate the channel. Over the years the roof collapsed and the earth bank provided an almost immovable blockage. The result was that about 150yds of track has been almost permanently wet, with rivulets cutting themselves between sleepers, ballast being washed away, and pickled sleepers quietly disintegrating. Action was required were we to go south. In the end, after many months talking about it, Dave and Andy aided by Jon Goss and Alex Hinshelwood, the JCB and more than enough ungentlemanly language for anybody, removed the grassy knoll in under a day. Within seconds of its clearance, and with rogue channels dammed, water was gurgling happily down the new channel and the track was beginning to drain. Great stuff!

Above - Digging out the blocked culvert . Below - Alex Hinshelwood and Jon Goss look on as the water finally resumes its proper course. Both Andy Knock



G.W.R 816 loco - Phil Williams

GWR 813 is no stranger to the railway and it was a pleasure to welcome the locomotive back for the 2007 Santa Specials. Anyone turning up though might have wondered if we'd found another locomotive as she was running as fellow 0-6-0St number 816. This is because 816 has close ties to the area and here Phil Williams relates the story of 816 and the other members of the class.

The appearance of the Severn Valley Railway loco G.W.R. 813 masquerading as G.W.R. 816

at the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway for the Christmas period recreates a once familiar resident of the Eastern Valley.



816 stands at Furnace Sidings

Built by Robert Stephenson Locomotive Builders in 1898, works No 2901 for the Port Talbot Railway, becoming loco No 15. At the Grouping of the railways in 1922, it became G.W.R. 816, who sold it to Partridge Jones and John Paton & Co Ltd, Abersychan in June 1929. It was based at the Big Arch loco shed, Talywain for the period 1929 – 1960 when it was scrapped. It was brought from Canton Locomotive depot and arrived under its own steam at the Big Arch in July 1929, Mr Will Pugh and Mr Crad Smith, engineer at Llanerch and Blaenserchan travelling with 816 from Canton.

The loco was unique in beginning life working passenger trains for the Port Talbot Railway and later Great Western Railway. Under colliery ownership it worked coal traffic from the collieries at Blaenserchan, and Llanerch to Talywain, as well as working the miners 'paddy' train. After Nationalisation, it occasionally found use over the former John Vipond line to Vipond's Top Pits from Talywain yard.

It was one of four locos under daily use on the Big Arch – Llanerch & Blaenserchan Colliery railway system. Its tasks are recorded as working coal trains from Blaenserchan Colliery to Talywain yard, the miners train from Castle Pond sidings at The British to Blaenserchan Pit head baths, and latterly land sale coal from Llanerch Colliery sidings to the Land sale yard at the British.

Mr Keith Harris, of East View, the British is a former boiler maker at the Big Arch who worked on the loco in the 1940 – 1941 periods together with Mr Edwin Jones who was a Swindon trained boiler maker. He joined the Navy in 1941 and became a Chief Petty Officer on submarines. The day he left in 1941 816 was test steamed after having a new firebox fitted.

Its claim to fame occurred in the winter of 1945/46, when 816 ran through the short road of the lower shed and out the end. Len Giles, with Jim Sharples moved the loco under the Big Arch, and thinking the points were changed to go to the British, moved the engine forward. Not looking out, the loco moved with increasing speed to the shed, with Len Giles lying the left, not the right, seeing the

shed doors still open, and the lights of the shed getting nearer. The engine impacted the end wall, causing a bent chimney to arise, but with no other damage. The chimney from 812, at Vipond's Top Yard was used as a replacement. Keith was informed of this incident, in a letter from Len Giles, whilst he was in the Navy, and travelling through the Suez Canal. The hole in the end of the shed was repaired using Pentwyn red bricks, and was visible until the shed remains were demolished in February 1999.

The cleaners opened the shed doors thinking the loco was coming back inside. It was customary for shed and office staff to hitch a ride on the loco. Len Giles lived on the British and was cadging a ride. Passengers often changed the points so the same points were possibly reset back to the shed.

The loco ended its life due to its leaking tank. Keith recalls being asked to fetch any parts needed off 812 at Viponds. The 812 had a nearly new tank, and a new smokebox door. Keith went there with Russ Cook and Len Giles, only to find it was too late - the Blaenavon gang had already scrapped it, along with Togo. The loco ended its life due to its leaking tank. Mr Keith Harris, and Mr Len Giles, who later became the Mechanical Engineer at Big Pit mining museum, cut the loco up in 1960 at the Big Arch.

Locos 808 812, 813

Mr Terry Jones, of Gwehelog, Usk has strong family connections with all 4 of these locos. Terry as a lad would ride on 808 at Blaendare and 812 at Viponds with his grandfather.

His Grandfather, Mr William Jones worked for John Vipond Collieries. He worked on the locos from 1898 – 1947. He was a regular driver of 812 which was bought in 1936. In 1939 it was involved in a runaway at Rock Villa End, on the Varteg.

His father, former Big Arch employee Mr Austin Jones became the Mechanical Engineer at Blaendare Collieries in 1925, and purchased 808 in 1934, after inspecting 813 also. The loco carried the initial HMB after the colliery owner Mr Bythway. In 1938 Mr Jones became the engineer at Vipond's Lower Varteg and Top Pits after Mr Bythway, the owner of Blaendare Colliery, became the owner of Vipond's. Mr W.A.Jones became the Unit Mechanical Engineer at Blaenserchan colliery on 4th October 1948. He therefore had contact with all 4 locos.

808 (Blaendare Colliery 808 HMB)

Built by Hudswell Clarke as works no HC551/01, the 0-6-OST loco was used by the Port Talbot Railway as PTR . It possessed the shorter version of the G.W. safety valve bonnet.

Mr Austin Jones was the Engineer at Blaendare Collieries in this period and fitted new cylinders to the loco. Steam condensate corrosion in the steam chests were a source of weakness.

In 1944 the loco arrived at Viponds for repairs. In 1947 the loco was under repair at Viponds Top Yard.

2113/ 808

Terry Jones recalls the start of a blizzard, and travelling with his father Austin , one morning with 2113 and a snowplough (in front of the engine), from Vipond's Top Yard shed to Vipond's Top Pits. Travelling with them were Ken Harding and a few fitters. Upon leaving the shed, and passing the air pits, they encountered a 16 feet deep snow drift (snow from the north), covering the track which was built on an embankment. Austin drove the loco into it, reversed and had another try.

The loco was left in steam, and abandoned (the following day, 2113 was covered in snow - only the chimney was visible). Austin returned to the Top Yard shed, and ordered 808 to be fired up for the next day, (The loco was under repair, and required the side rods to be replaced and minor work to be undertaken).

The following day, a Saturday, 808 was in steam, and run up to 2113. 2113, being snowbound, was dug out, and snow/ice had packed the motion solid.

Terry recalls being stood tight against the bunker of the 808, with Austin, and the cab full of men. Austin, being of short stature, stood on the reversing rack, and couldn't reach the regulator. 'Who's driving this bloody engine?'. 2113 was released, and taken back to the shed attached to 808.

It later transferred to Viponds at Varteg Hill, and then back to Blaendare and finally Hafodrynys New Mine. Ex Blaendare railways after 8/1951, by 1/52; to Tredegar Central workshops after 10/1952, by 3/11/1952; ex Blaendare Railways, /1959 (by 3/9/1959).

812 – John Vipond loco

Built by Hudswell Clarke as works no HC554/01, the 0-6-0ST loco was used by the Port Talbot Railway as PTR 25. It was sold to John Vipond on 6/34.

This loco was purchased for Viponds, based on a visit by Mr Austin Jones & his father William Jones to look at 808 at Blaendare. It was available for sale at Port Talbot, Austin Jones criticised the loco for high mileage and a poor firebox, but it was bought anyway.

813 was inspected on the same visit but overlooked. It was later seen travelling dead in a train down the Glyn Valley on the Vale of Neath line, on its way north after private purchase. Painted black 812 was used at Viponds but suffered steam chest condensate problems like 808 but was never repaired. In 1939 or 1940 it was removed from traffic and 20xx locos hired. It was cut up in 1948

Post Script

The line to Blaenserchan shut in 1970 when output was diverted underground to Hafodrynys Colliery, the only section remaining being that at Talywain for the landsale yard. That closed in June 1974 with the failure of the last steam locomotive Islwyn and landsale traffic diverted to the yard at Furnace Sidings. Blaenserchan itself closed in 1986, it's coal by then being brought out at Marine Colliery Ebbw Vale, making Blaenserchan the last working pit i.e. none drift in Torfean.

Pontypool & Blaenavon Locomotive Group Update - Martin Herbert

As mentioned in the last magazine, we are looking to get some work done on the rear end of the frames of 9629 soon. This involves cutting out a rotten part and replacing it by welding on a new piece of metal. We have made some enquiries in recent weeks looking for a business to do this work, but with no success as yet. Ideally we would like to use a local firm if at all possible. Once again if any of you have any ideas on this do get in touch with us.

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@PBry.co.uk or write c/o the Railway Shop. If you just have an idea let me know and we can work something out

At the moment features, notes, anecdotes, pictures etc on the early years of the railway would be much appreciated.



Pictures from an amazing 2007—all Alistair Grieve





Whispers From The Buffet - Angela Porter

All too soon, it seems, we'll be entering our 25th running season. What a busy one it's going to be! I hope I don't have nightmares about running out of water or, worse still, tea bags. One thing's for sure though, visitors and members are always assured of a warm 'Croeso' at the PBR, and plenty of hwyl too! That's something we do really, really well. This aspect of the PBR has been put into the spotlight by some recent happenings ...

I don't think I really need to mention the Santas, but I will anyway. I only heard very positive things from our passengers on every day of them. Everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves, including the spontaneous on-train entertainment. Ali mentioned it was fantastic to hear such loud, enthusiastic sing-a-longs in the RMB. From my point of view, it was fab to see smiling faces, to hear the excited chatter and the joyous laughter that often filled the carriage. That's how it should be!

During the Santas, my arrival at the PBR was always special. Each morning, I crested the road from Brynmawr and saw the smoke drifting from 813 (or was it 816 – I'm useless with numbers!). That was a big thrill – steam at Furnace Sidings! I could feel the excitement mounting, a child-like sense of fun beginning to swell inside me. Then, as I parked and clambered out of my ickle car, there was the wonderful smell of smoke and steam and oil, the sounds of hissing valves, the tooting of the whistle, and the chuffing of the loco!

Steam just does it for this girly! Heaven in train-land! And I make absolutely no apologies to those who love diesels! It was a fab moment when I blagged a cab-ride at the end of one day – absolutely brilliant! I won't ever forget the 'stair-rods' at dusk! Cab-rides are always very precious and special experiences for me - being so close to that heat and power, experiencing it through all my senses. I always feel that the loco is somehow alive, some strange fiery behemoth that we've managed to semi-tame and harness to a wheeled chassis. I'll never, ever lose that childlike sense of wonder that goes with steam locos - I'm already looking forward to more steamy experiences in the year ahead!

The slideshow given by Geoff Silcock in the Workman's Hall on the 11th Jan was an absolute treat! It was interesting, informative, and a brilliant social experience too. If you missed it, you missed a fab evening. His photos were very interesting, aesthetically pleasing, and they catalogued a bygone age of steam shunters around South Wales. There was a buzz in the committee room, the kind of buzz you only get when there's a critical mass of socially orientated rail enthusiasts in one place, collectively indulging in one aspect of their passion. And it just goes to show we're not the socially inept bunch that the general public think we are.

The morning after the night before (I'm referring to the slide-show!) was the photo-charter – 813/816 with some freight wagons. I heard that one person described it as 'the prettiest little train I've seen in years'. And it did look lovely. And I'm sure lots of 'fots' of it will appear in the various rail mags. I know a lot of hard work went into getting the wagons painted and sign-written, as well as in organising the day, and it was brilliant that the day went so very well. Huge thanks must go to all who helped in getting things sorted.

I was a tad worried when I arrived at 8 am to open the café for the day. Gloomy, grumpy 'fotters' were gathering, like storm clouds do over the Coity, casting a shadow over all. As it happens, the Sun was shining and they went out to get some photos. When they came back in for a cuppa and Welsh cakes, they brought the Sun with them in their now happy and smiling faces. I breathed a bit sigh of relief, I can tell you.

It was such a fun day. So many people to chat to about railways. So many people going away with such a positive image of the PBR. So many saying they WILL be back on the next photo charter. I think we've made some pals! I must say that it was so well organised, and the tireless enthusiasm of Alistair, Simon, Alex, Alex and so many others I'm sure kept everyone's spirits high – they certainly kept me smiling and laughing throughout the long day! I don't think I've ever had such fun providing tea and cakes – and I gather they were a Godsend to all.



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During the slideshow and photo-charter, I was often asked variations on “What does a girl see in trains?” “How did you get involved in the railway” or “Why did you get involved in trains?”

Well perhaps it's time for me to put in writing my answers to these questions, and though they may now be written down, I reserve my rights to change them!

I don't know why I like locos and trains. I just do. Maybe it goes back to early childhood and all the visits to traction engine rallies and the smells and sounds there. It maybe the memories of pictures on those cards in boxes of tea or cigarettes. Or, maybe it's just an innate love of travelling from A to B and back again for no other reason than I enjoy train travel. Perhaps it's the nostalgia for a bygone age. It could be the social and industrial history of railways and the important role they've played in the development of our country. Mayhaps it's because I consider our heritage worth saving, in all its forms, and helping to preserve a little of the railway heritage of the Eastern Valleys is something I can actively contribute to. It's very likely to have a lot to do with the aesthetic pleasures of the smells, sounds, rhythms, shapes, colours of the locos and the landscape they travel through, and that panders to my artistic side. My enthusiasm never wanes, I always get a thrill when train travel is involved, whether it be a 6:30am train to commute to work when my lil car is misbehaving, or whether it's a manically busy day at a steam gala, or just a quiet day trolling up and down a line behind whatever is hauling the carriages just watching the world go by. I enjoy the social aspects too - the tales people have to tell, and the laughs and buzz you get with a number of like-minded people together.

But whatever it is, I love trains! My role at the PBR seems to mostly be serving tea and snacks with a smile. But more importantly is the chatting with all the people who frequent the buffet, and sharing my enthusiasm, interest and fun with them... Well need I say more? Long may it all continue!

The Human Touch

The railways are an amazing creation, they united continents, moved mountains, made possible the industrial revolution, taxed man's ingenuity to the limits and at one stage would have been the centre of community life with the trains often being the only way for most people to get around and to get their goods delivered. However such is the price of progress that no longer are the railways central to life, the automobile, the bus, the lorry, the plane have all freed people up allowing them to come and go as they please. The railways have been displaced in the public consciousness, or so some people would have you believe.

Yet whenever you travel by train people will stop and wave, a steam engine in full flight is a sight to behold and has the power to capture the

imagination, a ride on a train is still a great day out and all over

the world people are giving up their spare time and money to save trains for future generations. Despite what you may hear railways still have the power to touch people.



Even for such a small railway as ours the draw on people is amazing, after all the 1,000 or so people who turned up for Ivor the Engine can't all be wrong, can they? People are the life blood of so many railways and ours is no exception and with membership increasing there has to be something in it. Without the people the railway would not exist, come down midweek and it's an empty quiet place but come down on a weekend when the trains are running and what a difference, the place is alive.

From the volunteers, to the passengers and the passing walkers there is a buzz that is difficult to describe but it shows what the human touch can do. Dead locomotives are brought to life, an empty passenger train is suddenly filled with excited travellers, faces are pressed up against the window, the platform is filled with expectant passengers and in the background there's the sound of volunteers hard at work, the whistle from the guard, the cutting of trees, the sounds of machinery, the interesting words (!) from inside the shed as something goes wrong again. It's a busy place, the trains are one thing but it's the people that make the difference.



All pictures Alistair Grieve except above left Andy Knock



Andrew Barclay 2074 'Llantarnam Abbey' – Alex Gourlay



Llantarnam Abbey rests on shed at Mountain Ash during the latter stages of its working career— Llantarnam Abbey Steam Locomotive Group collection

In 2007 one of many arrivals at Furnace Sidings was the O-6-OST Llantarnam Abbey from the Swansea Vale Railway, partway under restoration and another locomotive with a good Welsh pedigree. Alex Gourlay of the owning group takes up the story for us.

Andrew Barclay works number 2074 was built in 1939 by Andrew Barclay & sons at their Caledonia works in Kilmarnock and it is believed the locomotive was delivered new to Corey Brothers & Company Ltd at their Penrikyber Colliery. With the nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947 the engine passed into National Coal Board (NCB) ownership but continued to work at Penrikyber until 1957 when she moved up the valley to Mountain Ash. Apart from spending some 5 years from 1959 to 1964 at Merthyr Vale Colliery the loco spent the rest of her NCB days at Mountain Ash.

The locomotive could still be found working until October 1979 when it was stopped for heavy repairs the following November, unfortunately these were never completed and Llantarnam Abbey was yet another steamer to fall victim to the ensuing virtual collapse of the NCB system. It was then placed on loan to the Swansea Vale Railway moving there in 1982 and subsequently purchased by a private owner in the late 90's with a view to restoring the locomotive, but this never got off the ground. The locomotive was due to leave the Swansea Vale Railway in December 2002 for a new home as a static exhibit and this is when we stepped in and managed to purchase it. In the process forming the Llantarnam Abbey Steam Locomotive Group with the aim of restoring the locomotive to full working order.

So why was it named Llantarnam Abbey? The locomotive was simply named after the home of Sir Clifford Corey head of Corey Brothers & Company Ltd, who were the owners of Penrikyber Colliery at the time. He and his family lived at Llantarnam Abbey until 1946 when it passed to the Sisters of St. Joseph Ancey who still occupy it today. Some of you may have noticed that the spelling on the tanks are incorrect, this is because during a major overhaul and repaint the locomotive lost the R and so appeared as Llantanam Abbey.

Restoration began in September 2004 with the stripping of the locomotive down to component parts. Early the next year after much cleaning and de-greasing the frames were shot blasted and painted as well as building the back area up with weld. A new rear buffer beam was made, drawbars and buffers overhauled and fitted, then in 2006/07 new running plates, cab and bunker were made and fitted. At this time the group were unhappy with their current home at the Swansea Vale railway due to lack of help and commitment by the railway and its uncertain future. So a visit to the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway was made and negotiations started to move Llantarnam Abbey. Agreement was reached with the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway Company to restore and operate the locomotive at the railway in May 2007 and on the 16th August 2007 Llantarnam Abbey arrived after much preparation of our work area.



The next steps are to complete the cab roof and then get the wheels sent away for re profiling, skimming of the journals and re placement of our missing crank pin. Once this is complete work can then begin on the horn guides and axle boxes which will allow us to then re wheel the engine and open up many more avenues of work on the frames. Hopefully the boiler is also soon to be looked at and a plan of the work required drawn up.

Llantarnam Abbey under restoration at Furnace Sidings

Completion date? Well that's a big question, and will depend on the amount of help and funding available, there is a possibility we will be looking for other share holders to join the group, to help complete the locomotive in a reasonable time frame. It would be nice to aim for 2010 to give the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway a working home based steam locomotive of their own for use on the newly opened extension of the line to Blaenavon High Level, the site and sound of Llantarnam Abbey climbing up the bank will be fantastic. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank every one who has given us help and assistance so far.

Check out our fotopic site at <http://llantarnamabbey.fotopic.net> to see pictures of restoration and the move to the PBR.

Looking forward to many happy steaming days at the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway, Llantarnam Abbey Steam Loco Group.

Fact panel	
Length of stroke	22"
Diameter of cylinders	14"
Diameter of wheels	3 ft 5"
Wheel base	10 ft 3"
Fire Grate area	9 ½ sq ft
Heating surface	618 sq ft
Working Pressure	160 psi
Capacity of tank	700 gallons
Capacity of bunker	1 t 15 cwts
Weight empty	25 tons
Weight in working order	30 tons
Tractive effort	14198 lbs
Load hauled on level	686 tones
Load hauled on 1 in 200	394 tones
Load hauled on 1 in 150	344 tones
Load Hauled on 1 in 100	273 tones
Load hauled on 1 in 50	164 tones



Llantarnam Abbey hard at work at Mountain Ash—Andy Kirkham



Boiler and saddle tank at Furnace Sidings—notice incorrect spelling of the name on the saddle tank

Members Evening 2007

Rounding off an excellent regular season was the first (we hope of many) members evening which gave members the chance to sit back relax, meet everyone, see how things have progressed this year and to generally have a good time. Held on October 27th the evening kicked off at the Whistle Inn with trips on the Thumper Unit and a visit down to Blaenavon High Level just to see how much work Dave Perham and Andy Knock have put in clearing the line. It also showed what a difference it will make when the line is open to BHL, finally you can't see from station to station and the ride will not be over almost before its begun.

At 6 O'clock everyone moved into the Whistle Inn which had opened early for the occasion and it was pleasing to see the 40 or so members there enjoying themselves chatting and comparing notes. The usual excellent food was provided and several members attempted the massive mix grill with only one (who shall not be named for the shame he feels) failing to complete theirs. With the news announced only two days before that the money had been granted for the BHL extension it made the evening that bit sweeter.

Everyone agreed that it was an excellent evening and were already looking forward to next years. Thanks have to go to Alex Hinshelwood for organising the event, Roger Lewis for driving the Thumper, the staff at the Whistle Inn for putting up with and feeding us (as always) and everyone who attended for making it a great night.

See you all next year.



1st Thumper unit to Blaenavon High Level—above. Adam Gane and Rhys Davies and the magnificent Whistle Inn mixed grill—below



A packed Whistle Inn full of PBR members

Steam At The PBR

After an absence of 4 years it was good to welcome back steam to the Pontypool and Blaenavon in 2007 and even more so when we had two different locomotives to use. In July we had Ivor the Engine and what a weekend that turned out to be, glorious weather in a damp squib of a summer, crowds like we'd never seen and the little engine that captured everyone's hearts and put a smile on everyone's faces. Our Gradients certainly made it work but despite its diminutive size the little engine put on a great show for everyone. And who can forget the run up from Forgeside Bridge in the evening on the goods, the little 0-4-0 sounding like something far bigger and certainly waking up Blaenavon.

Then at Christmas we had 813 back again, this wonderful engine masquerading as 816 (see page 13) proved once again what a capable performer it is, this time handling 3 carriages with no problem and just making light work in less than ideal conditions of our trains. The noise as it attacked the gradient was something else and there were no end of people queuing up to take a look at the foot plate.

The season rounded off with a photo charter on Saturday Jan the 12th, the first time the railway has hosted an all day one. The rake of wagons looked magnificent behind 816 and all the photographers that took part appreciated the amount of work that went into getting the railway and wagons ready for them. This was a real team effort and it shows just what a superb railway and magnificent bunch of volunteers we have.

This year we have taken big steps forward, the general public and the railway world are beginning to sit up and take notice and the steam has just been the icing on the cake.



Not long after arrival Ivor basks in the sun outside the Bottom Shed



Ivor working hard out of Furnace Sidings, the train may not be pretty but it worked



Looking quite at home Ivor shuts the yard at Furnace Sidings



Well we couldn't resist it, Ivor leaves the loop at Furnace Sidings on the goods train, compare this with the wagons as they look behind 816



The day after arrival and before renumbering 813 stands outside the bottom shed



Bottom left—Santa called in to check that the crew were getting everything ready

Below—A break in between the storms sees a shaft of light catch 816 as she storms the hill to the Whistle Inn on the final day of the Santa Specials





Left - It's a cold frosty morning in the valleys as 816 shunts the stock at Furnace Sidings prior to the first train of the day. 23/12/07

Below - With Blaenavon in the background 816 works away from High Level station with a short goods train during the "Compo Club" photo charter on January the 12th.





Above - 816 accelerates away from Furnace Sidings with the local pick up goods catching the driver of an Austin 20 by surprise. Below—the pick up goods climbs away from Forgeside .



The Christmas Crew



The 2007 Santa season was even better than that of 2006 but it wouldn't have been possible without the large number of volunteers who turned out in all weathers to staff the trains and look after the public. As always though a major thank you must also go to Cliff and Rose and the staff of the Whistle Inn who look after our passengers, play host to the grotto and support us throughout the year.



A presentation bouquet of flowers and a framed picture of 813 at the Whistle for Cliff presented by Alex Hinselwood as a thank you for all their help and support. - above

The volunteers pose for the camera before the first train of the day 23/12/07 - below



Off The Rails

Caption competition

No prizes, just a bit of fun and the knowledge that if you're picked you're funnier than everyone else. Please send entries to Topline@pbrly.co.uk or via letter c/o the railway shop. So what's being said here? Results next issue.



Follow that train

Trying to get 813 to the railway was quite fraught as the lorry delivering it was delayed trying to deliver a class 08 diesel shunter to Machen quarry near Newport before hand. Due to problems at the site i.e. the approach road was in bits the Saturday delivery was postponed to Monday morning. Following which another shunter then had to be taken to Westbury before 813 could be collected from the East Somerset Railway.

To help with the loading several members set off on Monday afternoon to Cranmore on the ESR and imagine their surprise when they rolled onto the site as the lorry with 813 on the back passed them heading for the PBR. Without stopping they made a U turn and set off back home to await their arrival! 813 arrived safely on the Monday evening and was unloaded on Tuesday the 26th to a lot of happy and relieved faces.

OOPS

Due to one or two errors in proof reading the timetable in the leaflet continues one or two inaccuracies. The timetable at the front of this magazine is however accurate.

Left—Angela Porters' view of the photographers at the photo charter acting and behaving like a group of Meerkats. Editors note - As I was one of them I am saying nothing.



Back Cover— A quiet moment during our excellent 2007 transport gala as a dog walker watches the goings on through a gap in the trees.

Welcome New Members

Philip J Tiley, Risca	Wayne Macleod, Caerleon	Tony Edwards, Cross Keys
Dawn Pritchard, Cross Keys	Malcolm Cleaver, Cross Keys	Michael Eva, Cross Keys
Paul Watkins, Cross Keys	Andrew Goodman, Walmey	Larry J Duncan, Gloucester
Paul Redman, Hollybush	Martin Walden, Blaina	Eric Maddicks, Newport
Mike King, Talyllyn	David Meredith, Garndiffaith	Steve Haybes, Axminster
Hedley B Pitchford, Chepstow	Vivian Gittins, Pontlloftyn	Gillian Gittins, Ponymlloftyn
Colin A Pearce, Blaenavon	Wayne Perham, Upper Llanover	Neil Pudson, Clydach
Anthony Davies, Abergavenny		

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

