



# BOTTOM LINE

The Electronic Newsletter of The Blaenavon Heritage Railway March 2021





**Welcome** to the March 2021 issue of the electronic version of Bottom Line. It is intended to publish this newsletter bi-monthly. If you wish to receive the newsletter by email then please click the subscribe button on our website at <https://www.bhrailway.co.uk/>

**The Society** manages and staffs the Railway Shop, 33 Broad Street, Blaenavon, NP4 9ND and Eric's Emporium located at the Furnace Sidings Station. All profits from the shop, the emporium and other fundraising activities support the Blaenavon Heritage Railway. Telephone 01495 792263

Email: [shop@pbrly.co.uk](mailto:shop@pbrly.co.uk)

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Bottom Line is published by the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Society.

Edited by; Steve Thomas & Martin Herbert

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**The Company** is responsible for all aspects of the operational side of the railway including locomotives, rolling stock, buildings, stations, track and future developments. The railway is staffed entirely by a loyal band of volunteers and is overseen by a board of directors who are elected and co-opted by the membership.

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Alex Gourlay and Alex Hinshelwood

**Uniform Grades Inspector:** Philip Tiley

**Diesel Inspector:** Matthew Thomas



Cover photo: 'Furnace Sidings'

(photo by Phillip Coombe)

Photo above: 'Rosyth' September 2020

(photo by Steve Thomas)

**The Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway  
Company (1983) Ltd**

is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run charity.

Charity registration number: 514809.

Registered address:

33 Broad Street, Blaenavon, Torfaen, NP4 9ND

**Facebook and website links:**

**Heritage Railway**

<https://www.facebook.com/pbrailway>

<https://www.bhrailway.co.uk/>

**Railway Shop**

<https://www.facebook.com/Railwayshopblaenavon>

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**Model Railway Club**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/PandBMRC>

<https://www.bhrailway.co.uk/model-railway-club>

# Support us by becoming a member.

**Blaenavon's Heritage Railway is supported by approximately 400 members. By paying a small annual subscription they help keep the railway running for future generations to enjoy.**

## Benefits:

In addition to helping to preserve our railway, members enjoy a range of exclusive benefits and opportunities. These include:

- Up 50% off ticket prices on normal (i.e., non-event) running days.
- A 5% discount on purchases from Eric's Emporium and The Railway Shop
- Receiving our Top Line in-house magazine, with the latest news, photographs and articles
- Access to a regular Electronic Bottom Line newsletter. (by download from our website)
- An invite to our exclusive members evenings, with delicious food and drink, entertainment and trains.

Becoming a member is also essential to becoming a volunteer at the railway, and many members go on to undertake a range of voluntary activities with us! However, even if you do not wish to become a volunteer, by becoming a member you will be helping us to preserve and maintain our railway for future generations to enjoy!

## How to join:

Those wishing to become a member may join either the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Company or the supporting Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Society.

Membership of the Company is open to British nationals aged 18 and over and affords the widest range of benefits. This the recommended route for eligible adults to become involved, granting the greatest range of privileges and opportunities. Others, including foreign nationals and young persons under the age of 18, may join the Society.

## Annual membership prices:

Annual membership prices are currently as follows:

- Adult Company membership: **£15.00**
- Adult Society membership: **£15.00**
- Joint adult membership (Company or Society): **£23.00**
- Society membership for under 18s: **£7.50**

## Lifetime membership prices:

We also offer the opportunity to become a lifetime member of the railway for a onetime payment. The current prices are:

- Lifetime individual membership: **£300.00**
- Lifetime joint membership: **£525.00**

## Become a member online!

We are currently finalising a brand-new online membership application process.

[click here to download a membership form.](#)

You will need a PDF reader installed on your device to open the file.

Purchase online membership or renew membership.

<https://www.bhrailway.co.uk/onlinestore>

Please send completed membership forms to the below address, enclosing a cheque for the appropriate fee.

**Membership Department  
The Railway Shop,  
33 Broad Street,  
Blaenavon,  
Pontypool,  
Torfaen  
NP4 9ND**

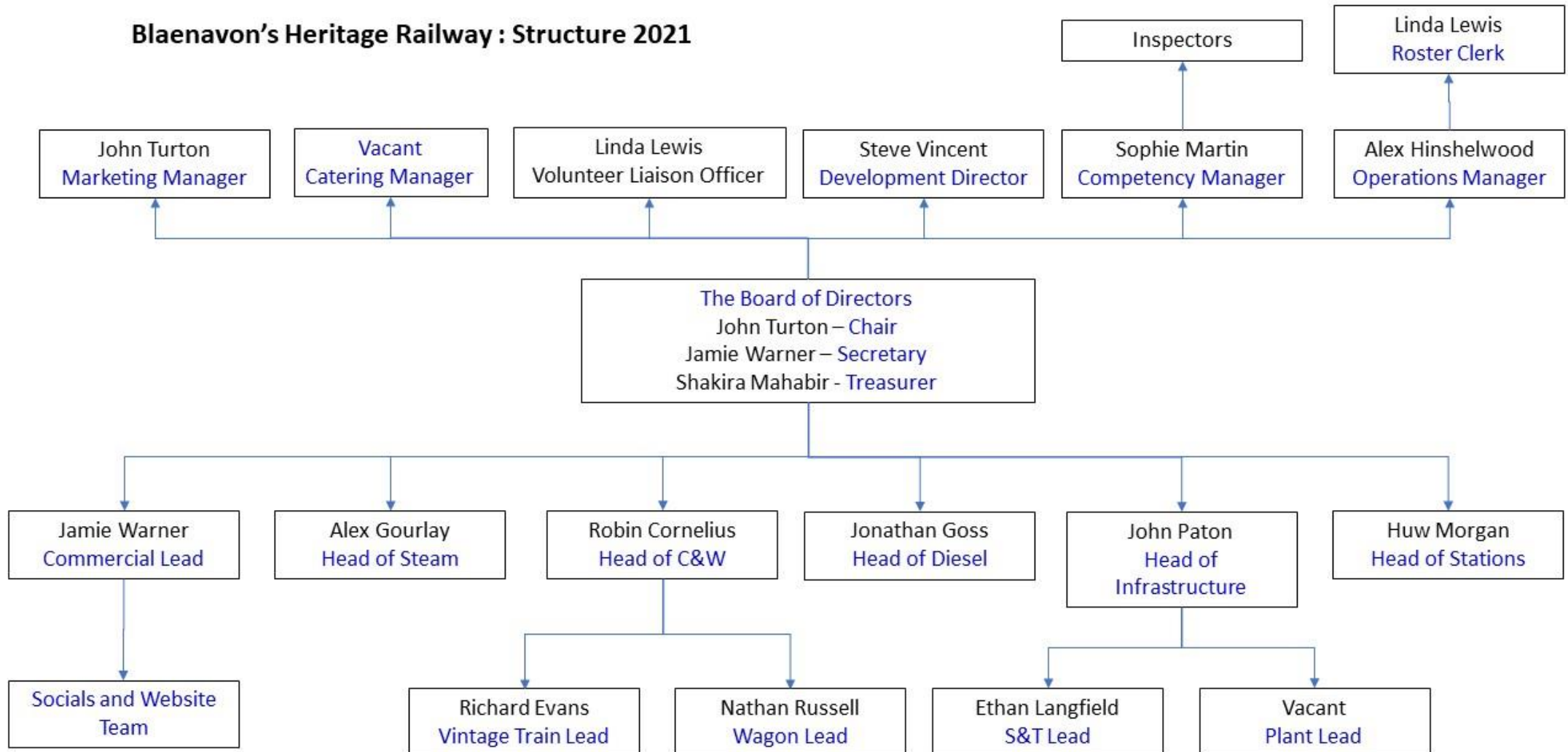
Alternatively, you can take your form to Eric's Emporium or The Railway Shop for processing. Memberships can be paid by both cash and card at both locations.

## Membership terms and conditions:

The terms and conditions of membership are outlined on our website.

<https://www.bhrailway.co.uk/membership>

## Blaenavon's Heritage Railway : Structure 2021



Note: the Safety Management System is the responsibility of the relevant Head/Manager with the Board accountable.

## The Railway Shop (submitted by Martin Herbert)

Given the current situation we are in, it is not easy to keep you updated on what is happening with our Railway Shop in Blaenavon. How we do business has to take into account current government rules and guidelines, we have to reflect on the safety and well-being of our staff and customers and all of these, of course, change week by week.

At the time of writing, you are able to purchase items from the shop on 2 days a week (Wednesdays & Saturdays) using our 'phone and collect' system. You ring the shop (01495 792263) after 10.30am, agree your order, pay by card and then agree a time to collect your items at the door of the shop. Until the guidelines can be relaxed, you cannot enter the shop. For those of you who inhabit the world of social media, all changes to the way we operate are announced on the Railway Shop's Facebook page. Otherwise ring on the days we are open to find out what's happening.



2021 has seen the arrival (finally) of Bachmann's 94XX Class GWR 0-6-0 Pannier Tanks and, whilst it seems to have been a long wait, it does appear that it is an excellent model of this loco. They were, of course, a common sight around South Wales in the British Railways era leading up to dieselisation. My own particular memory of them, however, comes when a number of them took over the banking duties on the Lickey Incline working out from Bromsgrove.



Another new release that has taken our eye, is another for the GWR aficionado, the Hornby model of the Star Class 4-6-0 'Lode Star'. This is a model of the engine currently residing in the National Railway Museum in York. This design of loco went on to be developed further to include the better known 'Castle' and 'King' classes. 'Lode Star' was one of the first batch of the Star class, some of the later built members continued to see use until 1957. This is currently in stock. The Shop has also recently received some coaches from Hornby. These include some Mk1 RB and RBR and at the other end of the scale, there is also a Victorian 4 wheeled GWR coach which carries a lot of livery detail.

An interesting area to look out for with model trains, into the future, is the proliferation of manufacturers and also the collaboration there has been between companies. We have seen Hattons enter the market with a range of models and their Andrew Barclay 0-4-0 tank has sold well in our Shop. Rails of Sheffield have also been taking a lead in the production of collaborative models. An interesting one to look out for (we certainly will be) is the 'OO' gauge model of a GWR 'Manor' class being developed by Accurascale. I understand that this is their first steam model and the first impressions look impressive.

Hopefully, it won't be too long before we can restart opening the shop again as things used to be and welcoming you all back to see the wide range of models we have in stock.

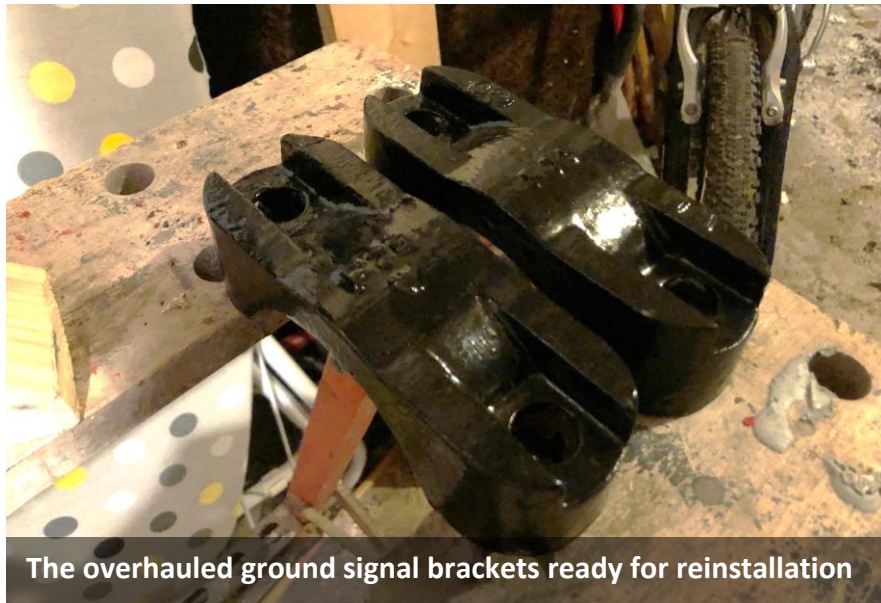
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## S&T Department report and photos submitted by Ethan Langfield.

Well, another year has begun for the S&T team, unfortunately, as a result of the current lockdowns in both England and Wales none of the team have been able to travel up to the railway. But I've been keeping myself busy whilst being on furlough, and have managed to push several projects forward in the right direction.

The first of these is the two token machines currently being worked on in my garage. The case of the No.9 Machine has been slowly overhauled over the last few weeks, and is starting to take shape nicely. Once this is completed, work will turn to finishing off the No.12 machine, which I've had to put on hold as I await more paint to be delivered (I've been going through the stuff at quite a rate!). I've also spent some time finishing the final components for our first Ground Signal. The last two brackets have now been complete, and all we need to do now is reassemble the signal once we are able to return properly to the site.



The overhauled ground signal brackets ready for reinstallation



The top case of the No.9 token machine edging closer to completion.

Some heritage telecoms equipment, and a BR WR Signal Post lamp were recently acquired for the department. Whilst some work is required on the telephones, these particular models are getting incredibly rarer to find at good prices, and will prove invaluable for the future telecoms system, that we are currently developing plans for.

The lamp however is in excellent condition, and hopefully by the time you read this, will have been safely delivered to the railway for future use.

So, things may be slow at the moment, but progress is always still ongoing with regards to our future development plans, and some other currently secret projects that we hope to share with you shortly!

If you'd like to join the team, drop us an email at [pbrsignals@gmail.com](mailto:pbrsignals@gmail.com), we're always looking for new members to help us push forward our projects, and restore signalling to Blaenavon once more.

## **P&B 9629 Pannier Locomotive Group report and photo submitted by Martin Herbert.**

The lockdown allows us a moment to look back at some of the history of our GWR 0-6-0PT no. 9629 prior to coming to Blaenavon. After withdrawal by British Railway in 1965 it joined the many locos languishing in Barry Docks until it was purchased by the Holiday Inns Company at the behest of one of their directors, Robert Adley (MP for Bournemouth at that time).

From Barry it went to Carnforth where it was put into the condition seen in this 1995 photo. It was exhibited on a short length of track in front of the Holiday Inn Hotel in Mill Street in Cardiff as a reminder of the area's industrial past. However, of lasting interest to us, whilst the loco was in Carnforth, its boiler was sold to Didcot as a spare for their Pannier Tanks, it acquired some coupling rods from an Austerity 0-6-0T and what can only be called an 'interesting' dome cover as a part of its restoration there. No. 9629 then spent a number of years outside the hotel, where it began to look less than pristine and not the sort of image the hotel wanted to portray. It was against this background, that the hotel management agreed for the engine to move to Blaenavon.



As can be deduced from the above, the initial task for the Pontypool & Blaenavon Locomotive Group, which had taken on the locomotive's restoration, was the acquisition of the many parts of the loco that were lost during its time at Barry and at Carnforth. A job that has taken a lot of dedicated work and effort.

It has resulted in the Group purchasing the boiler that was in the loco when it was withdrawn, from our colleagues at Didcot and this is now at Blaenavon. Bit by bit we have also acquired the parts for the locomotive's motion. No. 9629 has been stripped down and a significant crack in its cylinder block has been repaired. Now all that needs to be done is to restore all the parts of the loco and rebuild the engine for use again at Blaenavon (hmm!!). We are always looking for people who would like to help with this, most especially to help with the rebuild and the restoration when things free up after lockdown, so do please feel free to get in contact if you're interested in getting involved.

We can be reached at the following e-mail address: - [pandblocomotivegroup@googlemail.com](mailto:pandblocomotivegroup@googlemail.com) or just have a chat with one of our team.



## Notes from the Board, submitted by Jamie Warner.

Hello and welcome to the second **Notes from the Board** column. Whilst the Railway has been closed to all but those volunteers performing designated essential maintenance and restoration tasks, behind the scenes the Board of Directors has continued working to safeguard the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway's during the current crisis, and prepare for the better days that lie ahead.

First and foremost, we have been busy planning for the year ahead. At the time of writing the overall COVID-19 situation is thankfully improving, and with the Welsh Government raising the possibility of the tourism sector in Wales reopening at Easter, we have started finalising our planned timetable and events schedule for 2021. It is hoped that this will be made publicly available at around the time of publication. However, as with so much of our lives at present, we must be conscious of the fact that our best laid plans could change at little to no notice. Nevertheless, we're very optimistic. 2020 showed just how well our volunteers, members, visitors, and general supporters alike overcame the challenges thrown at them. We have no doubt that 2021 will be the same.

Secondly, the Board is currently looking to recruit a new Catering Manager. Catering, both in the form of The Fireman's Shovel Tearoom and British Railways Mark One Restaurant Miniature Buffet 1854, is a highly valuable part of our operation, bringing in essential additional income that helps fund ongoing maintenance and development activities. To that end, not only are we looking for someone who can maintain the success of our existing catering offering, we are equally seeking someone who is able to play an active role in its ongoing development. Notably, on-train catering (even in lighter forms such as afternoon cream teas) forms an immensely popular and successful offering at many heritage railways, and we are keen to work with the successful person to develop this at our own. Visit our website for further information and to express your interest in the position.

To conclude this segment, the Board would like to offer their warmest thanks to the outgoing Catering Manager Julie Edwards for her countless hours of hard work and dedication in the position. Although stepping back from her managerial duties, we are delighted to report that she has stated her intention to remain an active volunteer when time permits.

Finally, behind the scenes the Board has continued with its efforts to plan ahead for the Railway's future. In the coming years running a successful heritage railway will become a far more difficult challenge than the already demanding task that it is today. As its Trustees, we are responsible for ensuring that the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Company can continue to pursue its charitable objectives in a self-sustainable way, allowing us all to continue enjoying it for many years to come. Whilst the majority of this work is currently in the brainstorming phases, we hope to begin sharing our plans with you as soon as we are able to do so.

That's all for this edition of **Notes from the Board**. When I write to you in the spring hopefully, we'll be back up and running. Until next time, take care, stay safe, and, hopefully, all being well, we will welcome you back to Blaenavon!

### Vacancy at the Railway (March 2021)

Interested parties please email [secretary@pbrly.co.uk](mailto:secretary@pbrly.co.uk)  
to register your interest

#### Catering Manager

This post will be responsible for the management of the tearoom, catering volunteers and future catering activity (such as on train catering).

The Catering Manager would be expected to maintain the current 5\* food hygiene rating and develop the catering offerings across all aspects of the railway.





## Carriage and Wagon Department Report and Photos – February 2021

Submitted by Martin Hope

The first few months are normally spent by the team carrying out routine maintenance and repairs to the rolling stock and this is in hand ready for the start of the running season. Repairs have been undertaken to the steam heating pipes underneath the SK carriage together with the inspection of the brakes, axle boxes and vacuum cylinders underneath all the carriages.



C&W “Young Apprentice”  
Ron Shackell restoring the  
TSO Light Boxes in the BG  
Maintenance Hub.

With all the running stock now being housed in the carriage shed the opportunity has been taken to create a small maintenance hub in the BG carriage which is stored there. We have started to use this facility to repair and restore parts which will be required when the TSO carriage, presently at Williton, Somerset, is returned to Blaenavon. The seating which has been recovered and wooden panels which have been restored for the TSO are now in dry storage in the BG – these tasks are ongoing.

Recently we were asked to repaint and repair the shark ballast brake van and “Team Shark” was formed with Rich, Steve and Daniel joining us. The wagon was last painted ten years ago and work is quickly progressing to scrape the old paint off ready for any repairs to the wood and then repainting.



“Team Shark” busy scraping the old paint off the Shark.

## Meet our Membership Secretary – Linda Lewis.

My name is Linda and I have been volunteering for the last 6 years (Some may think it has been longer!!!).

I have trained as a guard and Station Master and during this time have met many passengers who enjoy coming to the railway.

We welcome people from many parts of this country as well as locals and people from further afield who are touring around. We have had people from as far as America, Canada, Japan and India who find the railway fascinating. It is always a pleasure to talk to visitors and make them feel welcome.



I am the roster clerk organising crew for the footplate and staffing for the station on running days so anyone wanting to volunteer please contact me.

I have recently taken over membership Secretary and I am working hard to ensure you receive your membership cards.

We hope that this year will be a better year for us all. Keep safe and look forward to meeting you when it is safe to do so.

## Want to help run the highest standard gauge railway in Wales? Become a volunteer with us!

Blaenavon's Heritage Railway is very proud to be an entirely volunteer-run organisation! Whether it be the engine driver, ticket inspector, catering staff or track worker, everybody that you see during your visit is giving up their free time to keep our railway running for future generations to enjoy.

### Opportunities:

We are always looking for new people to volunteer with us! Our railway is home to various departments that all play a key role in supporting our railway. These include:

- Carriage and Wagon – restore and maintain carriages and wagons dating from the 1890s through to the 1970s!
- Catering – manage the Fireman's Shovel tearoom and onboard refreshments
- Civil Engineering – maintain and develop structures on and around our railway.
- Diesel Traction – restore, maintain and operate our heritage diesel locomotives
- Operations – responsible operating services during running days and events.
- Permanent Way – maintain, relay and expand our track in all weather!
- Stations: Meet and greet our passengers and help us recreate the golden days of rail travel.
- Steam Locomotive – restore, maintain and overhaul our steam locomotives.

**Make new friends, have fun and learn some fantastic new skills.**

[VOLUNTEERING | Blaenavon Railway \(bhrrailway.co.uk\)](http://bhrrailway.co.uk)



**Meet a member of the model railway club.**  
**Report and photos submitted by Anthony Jones.**

I have been a member of the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway since 2007 and started attending the model railway club in 2018. I live in Caerphilly County District with my wife Rebecca and 10-year-old son, Oliver (who is also a member and has his own small layout). I am employed as a lorry driver for Aldi and we attend model railway club as often as we are able.

My original layout, from 1999 to about 2007, was in the spare bedroom and put together on a sheet of 8ft by 4ft plyboard, on an old table. This was operated using a Hornby HM2000 controller. After a few years, we needed the bedroom so the layout had to be moved. My late father-in-law, my brother-in-law and myself boarded out the attic, constructed a baseboard and installed electrics. I used the plyboard, cut it to 6 foot and added 2ft 6ins to both sides, the one side is where the station is, the other side used as storage sidings. I have 2 loops, the station and sidings line meeting at the top on the outer loop. On the inner loop, I have a branch coming off forming sidings where I stable locos. I used Hornby track from the old layout on the new layout. I purchased this from Lendon's of Llanishen around about the year 2000.

For the first 3 years the attic layout was analogue until I converted it to DCC. This is when I started buying locos with sound. My first was Bachmann's class 25, 25245. Lord and Butler supplied and fitted sound to my class 50, 50035. Some locos I have purchased are factory sound fitted, others I have sent away and to Legomanbiffo, Olivia's, South West Digital or Howes,

I originally painted a backscene of the Brecon Beacons on the backwall but recently changed this to a Peco photographic backscene that gives a much better effect. The layout is not based on any particular area and it could be Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall or even West Wales.

I have been interested in railways for 40 years, since I was aged 8. Originally my interest was Diesel and Electrics. My interest in steam came about 10 years ago when I used to go to a lot of different galas. I've collected steam locos from mostly the Great Western region although I also like the Somerset and Dorset Railway, so I have a couple of related locos to depict this area. The oldest steam loco I have is an LMS patriot.

My diesel and electric collection is based on my favourite locos, regardless of era or region. I run what I enjoy as usually it's only me who operates them, although Oliver sometimes comes for a look. In the last couple of years, I have made what I feel are many improvements, wired in a power bus, soldered feed wires to many places around the layout and changed the foam



underlay to cork. I am gradually adding Cobalt point motors which although quite expensive are great to use. When I started DCC I was using the E to Z Dynamis controller that I have since given to my son. I had the opportunity to buy a

Gaugemaster Prodigy from a friend, Kevin Hooper, so I have upgraded my controller. Apart from the locos I have an assortment of different rakes of coaches and wagons.

In the late 80s to late 90s my interest included model buses, some of which I have put on the layout, along with some classic cars such as old Volvos. At the moment I am building a hillside with a rockface which will hopefully tie the corners in to the backscenes and improve the overall appearance. Eventually I would like to ballast the track and paint the rails.

I hope you've found this article of interest and many thanks for reading.

## Steam Department Report (report and photos submitted by Alex Gourlay)

### Andrew Barclay Rosyth No. 1

The boiler has been washed out and, stripped and prepared ready for annual boiler exams, there is little other work currently required with the loco. It operated on a total of 12 days last year which included two days of crew refreshers.

### Hunslet 1873 Jessie

The boiler has been washed out and, stripped and prepared ready for annual boiler exams. Additionally, we have carried out a piston and valve exam, as we have found recently the loco was not steaming as well as expected and was using a lot of water. This has resulted in a decision to replace the piston rings and we are currently awaiting delivery of these before reassembling the loco. There is a possibility the loco will spend some time away from the PBR the first half of 2021 on hire. Jessie operated a total of 6 days last year.



### Bagnall 3061 Empress

As with Rosyth and Jessie the boiler has been washed out and, stripped and prepared ready for annual boiler exams. There are also some bits of painting left to finish when the weather gets a little milder in readiness for the 2021 season. Empress did not operate at all last year.

## RSH Austerity 71515 Mech Navvies

The boiler was removed from the frames on 13<sup>th</sup> January, as with Llantarnam Abbey an NDT survey of the boiler has been undertaken to access what will be required for its next 10-year overhaul.

The early signs on the boiler are looking promising and is now awaiting inspection by our insurance examiner.

The chassis is due to move into the Cathedral imminent where the chassis will be overhauled over the coming months.







Frazer Nash undertaking a full NDT boiler survey.



Llantarnam Abbey's chassis being loaded.

### Andrew Barclay 2074 Llantarnam Abbey

The chassis left Blaenavon for West Somerset Restoration at Williton on 14<sup>th</sup> January for overhaul, we look forward to keeping you updated on its progress over the coming months.

Additionally, the boiler has been moved to a more accessible place, this has allowed the first phase on accessing what will be required to for its overhaul. Frazer Nash undertook a full NDT survey of the boiler on 8<sup>th</sup> February, the early signs are looking good with no major nasties being found. The next step will be for our insurance inspector to visit and examine the boiler and between us get a plan of work drawn up for its 10-yearly overhaul.

### Departures

Privately owned Barclays Harry and Tom Parry left for pastures new on 18<sup>th</sup> February, Barclay Victory and Sentinel Swansea Vale No. 1 should be soon to follow



### **Stock Review and Disposal Leads report submitted by Jamie Warner, Alex Hinshelwood.**

In January 2020 the Company Board published the first phase of a Development Plan to support the continued success and growth of the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway. Within this document (publicly available on our website), for the first time, the Board set out precisely what items of rolling stock are required to meet its operational, maintenance, and educational needs; both now and in the future.

A radical review of the items on site was undertaken, and after much consideration and deliberation, the Board agreed to the following rolling stock strategy. Firstly, the Railway requires an operational fleet of two to three (excluding under overhaul) steam and diesel locomotives at any time. Secondly, three passenger carriage rakes are necessary: two made up of BR Mark 1 vehicles, and the third a 'vintage train' set of pre-nationalisation vehicles. Thirdly, the Railway will have three defined rakes of wagons: one made up of mineral wagons and a brake van to recreate the South Wales coal traffic; a second BR 'mixed' set representing post-1948 freight operations; and finally, an infrastructure train comprised of ballast, spoil and rail vehicles, together with the 'Shark' brake van. Several service and storage vehicles will also be retained for practical purposes.

When applied to the full stock list, some 36 vehicles (both Company and privately owned) were identified as surplus to requirements, and efforts to dispose of them began. A year later, new homes have been found for all but three of the vehicles identified in the stock review. 25 of these have already departed, with a further eight due to leave soon.

The Board would like to thank everyone involved for the co-operation and hard work involved in this process. Focussing efforts on fewer items will ensure that we have sufficient vehicles to operate successfully, both now and in the future, inclusive of extensions. Those items remaining can now be maintained or restored to an operational condition (many of these under cover for the first time), and the 'scrap yard' remark that has occasionally been charged at us will become a thing of the past.

The next step will be a review of the non-railway vehicles and items (again both Company and privately owned) on site. An evaluation of all buildings, portacabins and storage containers (including contents) is currently underway, together with plans for new 'Container City' area to better order and secure our premises. The Board are also reviewing and formalising agreements for all the privately owned items that will remain.

We thank all for their continued co-operation and hard work. Together you are ensuring that we can continue to develop the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway into a heritage railway that we can all be proud of and enjoy for many years to come.



## Brake Van B950114 report submitted by Nathan Russell

I would have hoped by now to really be bringing the brake van project to a close however as clearly visible things haven't turned out that way. From my own first-hand experience my visits to the railway have been very limited and have only been undertaken when safe to do so. Taking into account there is only a small team of us working on the brake van, it means progress soon grinds to a halt when we can't attend.

The work that has been undertaken on the brake van is purely chassis work. Many hours have already been spent by myself and Dylan Marchment needle gunning all the old paint off. The aim now is to get the whole chassis needle gunned, wire wheeled and finished in Chassis Gloss Black. There is then some structural work to attend to on the ends as angle irons are very badly rotten. Then the ends and all the other framework will be painted BR grey. Following that we will then look at the bodywork



Photo submitted by Nathan Russell

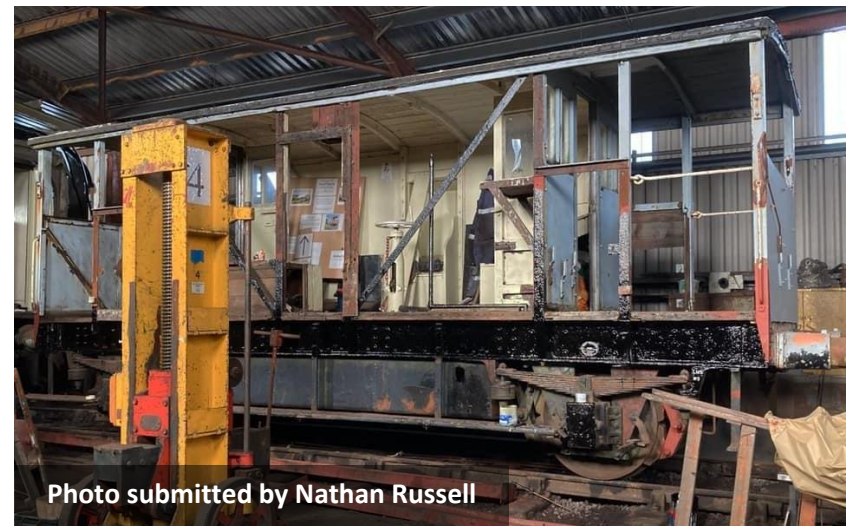


Photo submitted by Nathan Russell

Restoring something that is seventy years old is never easy, there is always that extra issue you will have to address. I'm trying to ensure we get everything 100% while we have the chance and take that extra time to ensure that everything is done to a high standard. It will ensure we see many future years of service out of this vehicle with less maintenance.



Photos submitted by Nathan Russell

If anyone fancies volunteering on the brake van please do let me know, new faces would be very welcome.



## China clay wagon report submitted by Nathan Russell

Another subject I would like to mention in this episode of bottom line is regarding the large sort out of stock within the Furnace Sidings site that has departed for new ventures elsewhere. It has been brilliant to see stock that had been out of service for years suddenly getting a new lease of life and being taken into the hands of new individuals.

A good example being the china clay project down at the Bodmin & Wenford railway. They have had our four China clays and have begun restoring them with the aim of making a large rake. I have been speaking with them and I am hoping to take a trip down and meet with them when we are allowed.



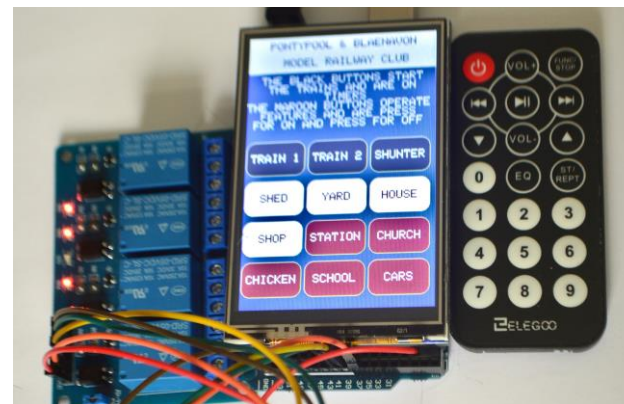
Photo reproduced by kind permission of the Bodmin & Wenford Railway

## Model Railway Club report submitted by Steve Thomas.

Whilst the club has now been temporarily closed for 12 months members have kept in touch with each other via social media with the result being a couple of interesting items being developed.

Tony Brooks (ably interrupted by myself) has developed two electronic systems using Arduino microprocessor hardware and C++ computer programming language.

The first system uses an ordinary tv style remote control that will control up to twelve servo motors and four relays. The servos can operate semaphore signals (with a realistic 'bounce' effect), moving models and our own club designed uncoupling ramps. This also incorporates an LCD screen that shows the state of the item selected.



The second system uses a colour touch screen that operates up to 12 relays. This is intended for use on a future exhibition layout whereby members of the public can operate various aspects of the layout by touching buttons on the display.

We are sure that both these devices will generate a lot of interest from other modellers when we utilise them on our layouts at exhibitions.



## Diesel department report submitted by Richard Arthur & Jonathan Goss

Great progress was made on the Class 37, **37023**, on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020 when the roof panel was finally lifted away from the loco. A big thank you goes to our friends at Goss Engineering for providing the skill and lifting power. The only remaining parts inside the loco that needed attention by our volunteers were the removal of a few more cooling pipes, a small header tank and the final part of the puzzle, a floor panel. This work was carried out in February, which now means that that power plant is ready for lifting. Once removed, the engine bay can be cleaned and tidied in preparation for the reconditioned V12 engine and generator to be fitted. There does not appear to be any indication at present on when this lifting might happen but we are certainly ready and waiting for the call.

Our Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0 shunter, **1344**, has had a busy couple of months. Regular on-going maintenance of topping up the oil levels and anti-freeze, along with weekly battery charging sessions, has ensured that the shunter has always fired up and has carried out its duty without fail. These duties have included a trip to BHL to assist with the lineside clearance, a day on the Big Pit line shunting the chipper on the Lowmac for the Network Rail volunteer day, moving the GOS Engineering wagon into the carriage shed for safe keeping over the Christmas shutdown and a slow, careful shunt removing the CCT, POT and Sleeper from the side of the Deviation. At the end of February, 1344 received a shiny new set of modified brake blocks. These are now formed from mild steel carriers fitted with standard size composite blocks. This will be a long-term cost saving as only the standard blocks will need replacing during future maintenance.

**37216** has undergone light touch exams and has been run up, a few faults have been rectified ready for a full FTR exam.

**5511** has been moved undercover allowing for critical engine work to be undertaken, we are having discussions on the next phase, does it come out or does it get lifted.

Unfortunately, **DMU 117418** has been trapped at the rear of the carriage shed on the road next to the newly restored coaches. Firing up the two smoking diesel engines right next to the shiny paintwork would not have been a good idea! No further work has been carried out to test the mechanical and pneumatic operations of the cars but this will hopefully resume after a reshuffle of the stock in the shed.

Electrical and Hydraulic work is being undertaken on **7063** following installation of the Torque Convertor.



Photos by Richard Arthur



**Station report submitted by Huw Morgan, with Phillip Coombe**

We have managed to reinstall the south end fence on platform 1 at Blaenavon High Level Station damaged due to the storm just after Christmas and have also erected a short fence at the north end of the platform ramp.



We have made a start on painting the platform edges at Blaenavon High Level and Furnace Sidings.

We managed to finish the first coat at both stations, And, depending on the weather, Big Pit and hopefully the Whistle Inn station will also have their first coats of paint







Trackside clearance, photo by Phillip Coombe



## Trackside Clearance article and pictures submitted by Alex Hinshelwood

Over the winter months we have been extremely fortunate to have the support of the Hereford Off-Track team. Aided by members of my Network Rail team and a few of our own volunteers what we have achieved is incredible.

The October day concentrated on Bridge 14 south through Tyre Mill, Glantorfaen, High level and onto Coed Avon.

The January day focussed on the Big Pit Branch where we got almost to the junction with the loop.

The final day of the winter season was in the middle of March where three teams finished the cutting as far as Furnace Sidings, another tackled the FS to Whistle section and the cutting down to bridge 12 was also dealt with.

A huge thanks to our volunteers and Network Rail for supplying the staff and the equipment to make this happen. Special thanks to Huw Morgan for keeping us all fed and watered, the Chicken Curry has become famous in Network Rail.







"Empress" March 2021 photograph by Hugh Rees

If you have any PBR related stories or anecdotes you would like to have included in the next issue of 'Bottom Line' then please forward them to: [steve.thomas@pbrlyco.uk](mailto:steve.thomas@pbrlyco.uk) by no later than April 30th 2021. Thanks to all those who contributed reports for this issue. Items submitted may be edited to fit in available space. The views expressed in the articles in this issue are those of the contributors. All aspects of this newsletter, including photographs are subject to copyright ©The Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway Company (1983) Ltd. 2021