



BOTTOM LINE

The Electronic Newsletter of The Blaenavon Heritage Railway May 2021



Welcome to the May 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

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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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Diesel Inspector: Matthew Thomas



Cover photo: 'Empress' May 2nd 2021
(photo by Scott Coombes)

Photo above: 'Rosyth' August 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 9NF

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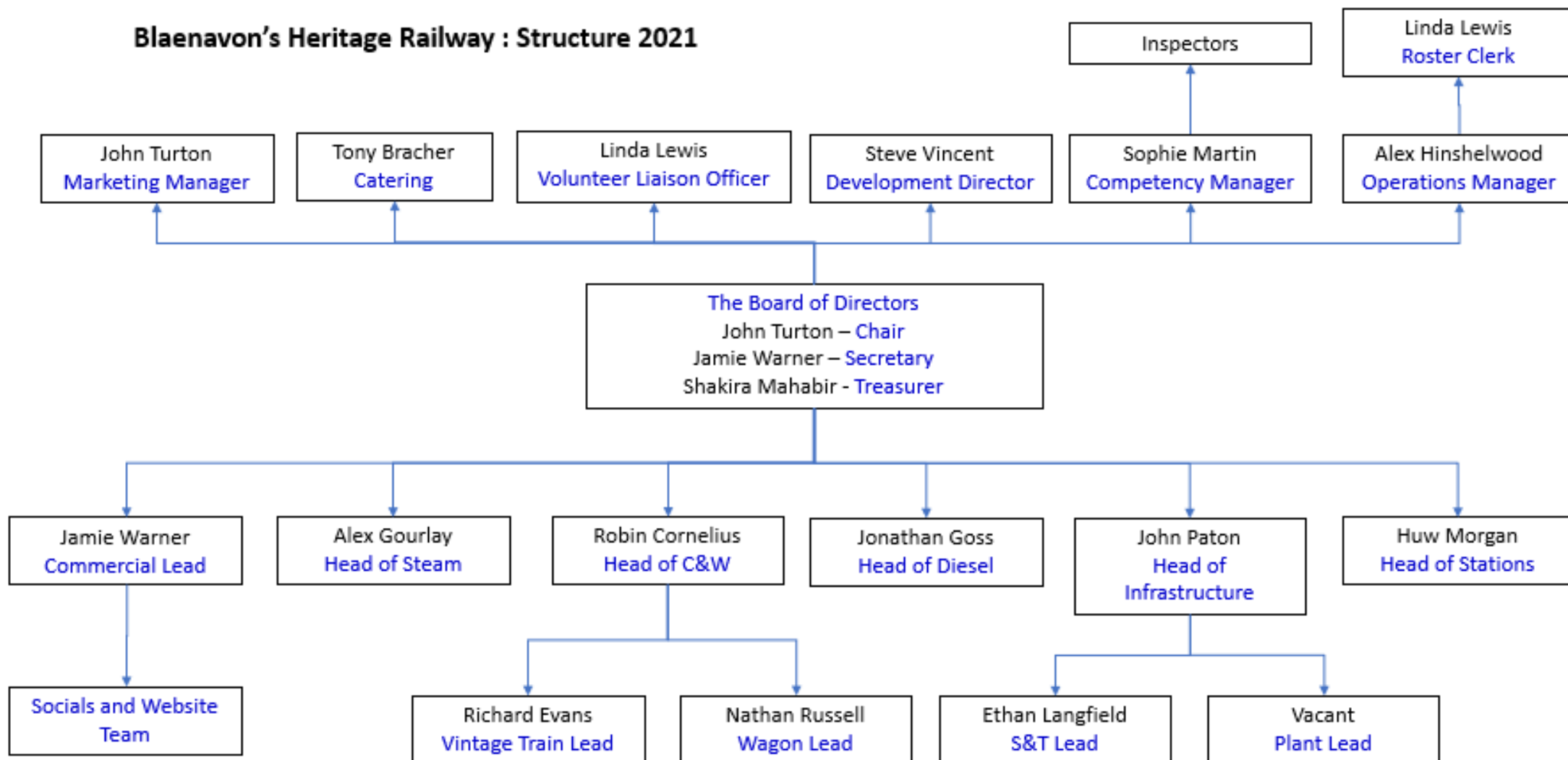
Alternatively, you can take your form to Eric's Emporium or The Railway Shop for processing. Memberships can be paid by both cash and card at both locations.

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.



May 2021 photo by Steve Thomas

DMU Restoration

(words and pictures submitted by Thomas Coombes)



photos by Thomas Coombes

The right front buffer beam has been given a fresh coat of grey oxide primer, and the Solbar has also had one coat.

The next job is to remove the rust and general loose dirt from the underframe and commence putting on a coat of primer on that section prior to painting.

Diesel Department Report

(submitted by Jonathan Goss)

A Strategy has been agreed with the Railway Board that means the diesel department has been allocated Road 1 of the top shed. This will be the complete front end once the new steam shed is completed. This is great and welcome news and work has already started assessing, planning and the tidying up of the shed. This includes anything in and around the newly allocated road and anything diesel related.

The first project will be the reinstatement of the pneumatic system to reduce the quantity of air pipes on the floor, with the second, still in planning stages, drainage or lighting or electrics.

Diesel Loco Update.

Mainliners

- 31203 Work has continued with a cosmetic overhaul internally and externally and this will continue alongside other priorities
- 37216 Work continues investigating challenges with the braking system
- 37023 Work continues off site with the overhauling of the power unit.

Shunters

- 1344 has been a sterling vehicle since the install of the brake upgrade. It has been out on many a non-revenue service supporting all departments with shunts and services.
- 5511 is nearing the end of its Maintenance period ahead of its FTR exam having had extensive works completed on the engine itself.
- 7063 (170) has been on hold due to other priorities
- 22497 (RT1) is progressing once again now restrictions have lifted slightly

If you would like to help out at all please do not hesitate to contact any member of the department.

Why was the train going back and forth on Thursday 29th April?
(submitted by Kim Colebrook, Torfaen Tourist Information)

Did you spot the train steaming through the landscape on a Thursday and wonder why? Well, we had a film crew here.

You'll have seen the opening of the railway on BBC news and also featuring in The Argus, but the first reason that we were steaming was to get footage for inclusion in the Visit Southern Wales Travel Trade film. This film is being created to remind Tour Operators and Group Organisers from across the UK (and internationally) of all the great things that are available for groups across the region, between the Wye Valley and Bridgend and from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff.

The Railway was involved to show what we offer – whether groups join our regular scheduled runs, or book a dedicated experience.



Southern Wales Tourism is an organisation that brings together ten local authority areas to work together, to extend and enhance the tourism marketing for the region. At the moment, Torfaen CBC doesn't have a tourism team, but the Torfaen Tourism Association (TTA) has managed to keep running and decided that putting money into the Visit Southern Wales campaign would help the businesses in the area. Hence the Railway has featured in the Travel Trade video along with the Blaenavon World Heritage as a whole and Parkway Hotel and Spa. Photography was also undertaken at the Railway on the same day, which was quickly followed by a photo session at Greenmeadow Community Farm. In 2020 filming and photography was also undertaken at Llandegfedd Lake (formerly reservoir).

"It has been invaluable having Torfaen Tourism Association as a partner in the Southern Wales campaign over the last 2 years. We are really grateful that Blaenavon Railway steamed up for us to film; it's guaranteed to create a dramatic section within the action-packed film, and we really hope that new business will be generated for the Railway over the coming years."

Nicola Edwards, Chair of Visit Southern Wales.

This project has received funding via the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) and supported through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Welsh Government, the Fund to improve the visitor experience and create stronger destinations by working together.

After arriving home from a busy day working as a Teaching Assistant in a special school, I sat down and contemplated what I would say about my love of all things rail related. After much thought . . . here goes!

I remember vividly in 1969, being 5 years old, not being allowed to go into the dining room until John, my train mad brother, came home from school. Lo and behold, set up on the dining table was a Triang Princess Elizabeth train set (his 13th Birthday present). This marked the commencement of my journey that has now spanned over 50 years and still evokes many precious memories.

Due to an eight-year age difference between us (and also being a one parent family), from the age of 16, John quite often got saddled with the 'kid brother.' He never seemed to mind though... well at least I hope he didn't. We travelled everywhere by train, London, Bristol, Bath, Bournemouth . . . the list goes on! John, together with his best friend Norman, had become members of the fledgling Mid Hants Railway Preservation Society and I was regularly taken along to Arlesford on weekends. I remember one occasion when just before the track was lifted between Ropley and Meadstead, they were part of a work party that were going down the line on a 'dilly' to collect any items that were lying about. This was long before the days of 'Health and Safety.' This was great fun going down the gradient, less so, helping to push it back up afterwards (not that I probably did much pushing!) On another occasion, I remember visiting Collectors Corner at Euston Station. I am sure we came home with something! I am guessing that all of this railway exposure rubbed off on me. As a result, as an adult, I found myself volunteering at both the West Somerset and Welshpool and Llanfair railways.

Moving on, it had always been a dream to build my own layout. I have been collecting model railways seriously over the last 10 years, continually adding to my collection at every available opportunity! As it stands, I own stock from Southern, GWR and BR (steam/green diesel). I joined the club in 2019.

The favourite item in my collection is a Lima class 31. This has been renumbered and professionally weathered to resemble, as close as possible, D5627 Steve Organ GM (it now has nameplates). During lockdown 1, I began in earnest to plan and begin building. As is quite common (I am certain), I am now on version 4... hopefully the final version. My layout now has four running lines with a seven-platform station, a single-track branch line with its own station, coach sidings and a small goods yard (or at least it will have once I have laid them)! These photos are from version 3.



I must, at this point, say a great big thank you to my wife, who supports me in everything I do. She never seems to mind being dragged around heritage railways and museums. Also, she is really good at making Metcalfe kits and is never happier than when she has a pot of PVA in front of her!!

To me, railways and modelling are more than a hobby, they are a passion. My journey continues and I have no desire of getting off any time soon! I look forward to a time when we can all meet again safely, with friends both old and new.

Carriage and Wagon Department Report – May 2021

(Submitted by Martin Hope)

The Carriage and Wagon Team prepared the carriage stock ready for their annual fit to run inspection.

Whilst the work focussed on the running gear – brakes, axle boxes, wheel profiles, couplings etc. carriage doors were checked and lubricated.

The inside of the carriages was also subject to inspection and repairs where necessary. On 25 April the Carriage and Wagon Team assisted by several other volunteers cleaned and polished the carriages ready for the commencement of services on 1 May.



Photo by Stephen Brookman



Photo by Martin Hope

Work on the Shark ballast brake van has continued and after much preparation parts of the exterior are now nearly ready to receive top coats of gloss paint.

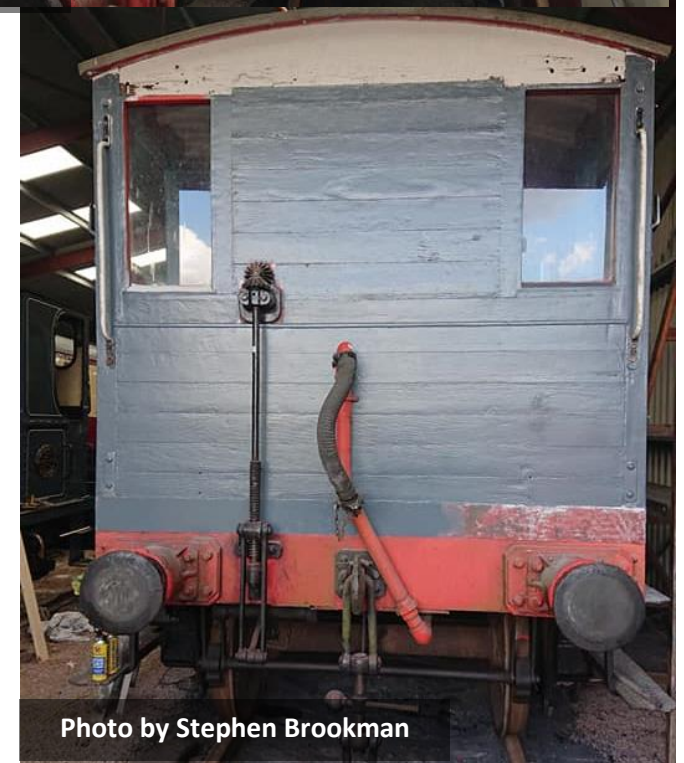


Photo by Stephen Brookman

S&T Department (submitted by Ethan Langfield)

So this month the S&T team have been focusing on making sure that all our point work and ground frames are up to spec ready for the start of the first services in 2021. Myself and Adam Stephens have been hard at work greasing and oiling all the point work motion on the railway, and tightening and adjusting any fittings that had become loose over time. In the process we changed several grease nipples that had been refusing to take grease, and so these have now been replaced with brand new fittings to ensure ease of operation when the Ground Frames are in use.



Work has also been continuing a home to restore the Ground Signal components in my garage, and Adam has been tackling some of our signal and point indicator gauges, which are very useful bits of equipment that we hope to make use of in the not-too-distant future.



Work has also been continuing a pace on several projects that are currently under wraps, so on the surface things may seem to be a little slow to those on the outside. But make no mistake the team have been working incredibly hard over the last few weeks, I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their sterling efforts over the last few weeks!

If you'd be interested in joining the team, feel free to come and have a chat to me, or sent me an email at pbrsignals@gmail.com. We always welcome new members, and of course the more members we have, the more exciting things we can achieve on the railway



1873 'Jessie' departs for The Dean Forest Railway and 1219 'Caledonia Works' arrives. (photo by Steve Thomas)

Steam Department Report (submitted by Alex Gourlay)

Andrew Barclay 'Rosyth No. 1'

Some additional repairs were identified during the loco's cold boiler exam which involved removing the right-hand steam and exhaust pipes. Once removed these were sent away to Cast Iron Welding Services in Coalville for repair. These have now been refitted and the loco is being reassembled ready for the visit of our boiler inspector to carry out an in-steam boiler exam towards the end of May. Providing all goes well Rosyth will operate the majority of our trains throughout June.

Hunslet 1873 'Jessie'

Jessie passed its in steam boiler exam with our boiler inspector on 16th March. Shortly after the new piston rings arrived these were fitted and the locos front end reassembled. The loco was then steamed to test the repairs to the front end. Following successful testing Jessie left us on 14th April for a period of hire at the Dean Forest Railway and will be returning to us by early July where it should work a lot of the summer trains alongside Empress



Photos by Alex Gourlay

Bagnall 3061 'Empress'

As with Jessie, Empress passed its in steam boiler exam with our boiler inspector on 16th March. A few small jobs were then completed and the loco undertook some test running on 19th April in readiness to operate our reopening trains in May.

Andrew Barclay 1219 'Caledonia Works'

Arrived with us on 14th April for its second stint on the railway and will stay with us till the end of its boiler ticket in around 5 years' time. The loco will also be available for short hires to other railways during this time much like Jessie.

Andrew Barclay 2074 'Llantarnam Abbey'

The overhaul of the chassis is progressing well at Williton with the grinding flat of the horn guides now complete, new liners for the axle boxes have also been made and fitted. Currently the new axle box bearings are being machined to size which will in turn hopefully see the loco back on its wheels in the next few of weeks.



Photo by Alex Gourlay

RSH Austerity 71515 'Mech Navvies'

The frames were moved to the restoration workshop AKA the Cathedral on 4th March. Some dismantling has taken place between other jobs ready for the commencement of its bottom end overhaul.

Departures

Andrew Barclay 2201 'Victory' left us on 4th March for its new home at the Avon Valley Railway, Sentinel 9622 'Swansea Vale No 1' followed in its footsteps the following week to its new home at the East Kent Railway. We wish both owners good luck with the restoration

P&B 9629 Locomotive Group (submitted by Martin Herbert)

As I write these notes the rules surrounding the pandemic are starting to ease and trains will be running at Blaenavon again. These last few months have not been kind to those of us trying to progress the restoration of GWR 0-6-0 Pannier Tank no. 9629. So now is the time to look ahead and start the planning of the time ahead and get the project back on track, so to speak.

The Locomotive Group Committee has tentatively arranged a meeting for June when the plans for the months ahead will be firmed up.

As a part of this focus will be 2 areas of work on our Loco. Firstly, the refurbishment of the axle boxes will restart. This is part of the wider target of getting the wheels back under the frames of the engine.

Before 9629 can become a rolling chassis again, then as well as the work on the axle boxes, we will need to sort out the springs and manufacture some crankpins to go on the wheels. The wheels will then need a trip away to one of the groups in the country with the equipment to skim the wheels.

Secondly work can continue on the locomotive's superstructure. When you look at the cab and the bunker of a GWR Pannier, indeed the tanks as well, you can see that they are quite a complex shape.

Back in days gone by with the heavy machinery available in Swindon for pressing out heavy metal shapes it would have been a relatively easy task to produce the pieces required.

Nowadays, without that machinery fabricating these shapes can be described as a challenging task. We are engaged in this and are looking forward to when the distinctive shape of this engine starts to emerge above the footplate of this engine.

There are, of course, many other things that we could be and will be doing and that includes the on-going task of sorting out and then organising storage of all the parts of the locomotive that we have acquired over the years.

If you'd like to have some involvement or give some support then feel free to catch up with us on site or by e-mailing pandblocomotivegroup@googlemail.com.



It's 1995 and 9629 has arrived at a snowy Blaenavon. You could almost imagine it undertaking a bit of shunting here, but look at that dome. Definitely a post GWR modification.

Railway Shop and Emporium (article submitted by Martin Herbert)

The big news from the shop (as long as there hasn't been any change between writing this and publication) is that it is now open again. You can visit us and spend time with us in the shop, just so long as not too many of you want to do it at the same time. We all need to remember the rules on distancing and face masks. We are most grateful to all of you who have found ways of supporting us during the lockdown and to those of you who have visited us since re-opening. It is great to see you again. The added good news sees the Railway itself re-opening to services and with that the opportunity to visit the Emporium within Furnace Sidings Station. Any money raised there and in the shop is ploughed back into the Heritage Railway.

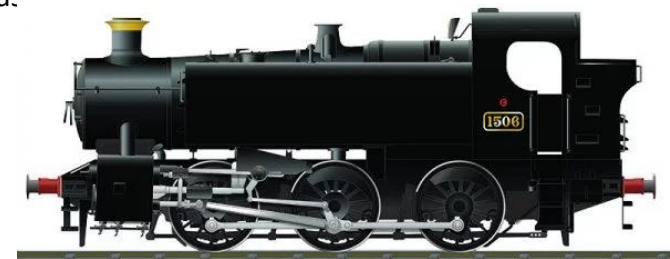


As mentioned last time and of local interest, we have taken delivery of Bachmann's new model of the GWR 0-6-0PT 94XX Class. Only 2 of these survived into preservation. 9400 which is in the museum in Swindon and 9466 whose activities around Britain in recent years has included a few days on the Blaenavon Heritage Railway. In the shop we have available examples of this class in GWR green livery, BR Black with an early emblem and black again with the late emblem.

A further interesting new 'OO' steam locomotive model we have from Hornby is their A2/2 4-6-2 'Thane of Fife'. These engines were the rebuilds from the P2 class of 2-8-2s, which is currently the focus of a new build project. All of the P2s and the subsequent A2/2s had fabulous names.



Another interesting model that is in development comes from Rapido Trains who are to release a model of the 15XX GWR 0-6-0 Pannier Tanks. This small class of locos gained some fame in their role hauling passenger stock into and out of Paddington Station, however it should not be forgotten that one of the class worked out of Newport. Rapido Trains are making a relatively short run of locos and so you'll need to get in touch with us to order a loco if you would like one (01495 792263 during opening hours). There is one preserved example of this class based on the Severn Valley Railway, but, of course, one of its trips away from home saw it star in a Gala Weekend at the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway. Many of you may remember this. It does seem a good time for GWR pannier tanks as we also have available models of the 57XX and 64XX cla:



BR 15xx Pannier Tank - No.1506 Plain Black

Meet a Volunteer – Alastair Warrington

My name is Alastair Warrington. I was born in 1943 and started work with British Railways in 1961 as a student civil engineer, and after the completion of a 4½-year training scheme, initially at Euston, and latterly at Northampton, I was appointed as a junior draughtsman at the District Engineer's office at Bangor. A succession of moves and promotions via Crewe and Bristol Divisional Engineers' offices brought me to Newport in April 1973, and, apart from a short spell with Railtrack at Swindon between 2001-2002, I spent the rest of my railway career in South Wales, finishing full time employment as Structures Maintenance Engineer for Network Rail in Cardiff in early 2005. I then did another ten years part-time, working either for Network Rail direct, or for their contractors, so completing a total of 54 years on the "big railway".



I am also very interested in railway history and industrial archaeology, and have studied and carried out much research into the history of railways throughout Wales, but with particular reference to Monmouthshire. I have an extensive knowledge of the railways of South Wales, a large part of which is due to the fact that I worked on what was left of the system for such a long time.

I became involved with the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway from day one when I attended the inaugural meeting called by Mark Vrettos at the Hanbury Hotel in Griffithstown in 1980, where the proposal of forming a society to preserve the line from Big Pit to Llantarnam Junction was first mooted, and immediately volunteered to serve on the Committee.

Together with the late Dave Rees, the first company chairman, and Dave Griffiths, I attended the early meetings with British Railways to discuss the possibility of purchasing the line from BR after the closure of Big Pit.

There are a couple of dates in the very early days of the railway that I claim as unique. On Saturday 30 October 1982 a special train, the "Big Pit Special", conveying two carriages and a number of wagons for the railway, ran from Newport Alexandra Dock Junction to Furnace Sidings, and was the last commercial train to use the line. I travelled on this train as a representative of BR's Civil Engineering Dept, and, travelling in the brake van on the return journey, am the last person to travel from Blaenavon all the way to Newport!

On Wednesday 08 December 1982 a BR engineering department train ran as far as the Shop Road bridge just above Varteg station, to pick up approximately half a mile of comparatively new long welded rail which was recovered for further use elsewhere. Again, I travelled on this train from Newport Alexandra Dock Junction, and on the return journey, I was in the rear cab of 37281 at the back of the train, with only the tail light behind me, and am therefore able to say confidently that I am the last person ever to travel over the Garndiffaith viaduct by train!

When the Limited Company was launched with a cheese and wine party at the Arundel Club in Blaenavon in 1983, I was the first get up and pay my subscription, and thus have membership No 1. In my early days with the company, I became involved in most of the early activities including permanent way work, as well as taking initial steps as a trainee fireman on NORA, although regrettably I never completed the latter course. In those early days, the locomotive had to take water from a column located just north of where the present gate across the carriage sidings is. Before the water could be put in the locomotive's tank, it was necessary to walk part of the way up the mountain to turn on a valve at Coity Pond reservoir from whence the water came. The locomotive was coaled by hand (literally) from a wagon parked on the adjacent Up loop line. Services at this time (and for the next 25 years) only ran from Furnace Sidings to Whistle Inn.

Meet a Volunteer – Alastair Warrington (contd.)

There was a period when I was not very active at Blaenavon, due to the pressure of work on the “big” railway. However, after I retired from full-time work, I became more active at Blaenavon again, and assisted the railway’s Development Director at the time, the late Dr John Down, to acquire the ex-London & North Western Railway footbridge from Hinckley (at that time at Rushden, Northamptonshire). This was brought to Blaenavon and refurbished on site, before being erected at Furnace Sidings station in 2007.

John Down asked me if I would take charge of the re-sleepering works which were necessary in connection with the reopening and extension of the railway down to Blaenavon High Level. I was co-opted on to the Board on 03 September 2008 to take charge of the Civil Engineering Dept, and as well as to look after the examination and maintenance of the permanent way. I had much involvement in the repairs to the intersection bridge (believed to be unique in standard-gauge preserved railways).

Other jobs included assisting with the renewal of all the switch and crossing timbers at Furnace Sidings, pulling back all the rails between Furnace Sidings and Blaenavon High level to adjust the rail joints to their correct gaps and the re-instatement of the Big Pit Branch during 2010-2011. All this latter work was carried out by contractors KGJ Price from Caerphilly.

Following the opening of the line to Blaenavon High Level in 2010, I was instrumental in setting up a small museum in the waiting room and whilst we only had a comparatively small number of exhibits on show, it was probably the photographic display that caught the attention of most visitors, as this illustrated the history of the line from its inception to the present day.

Unfortunately following a change of ownership of the Whistle Inn at Garn-yr-Erw, Santa’s Grotto was transferred from there to Blaenavon High Level so the museum exhibits had to be removed. It is hoped that another museum may be established in due course in a future development.

Regrettably, by the end of the 2012 operating season, I was finding that carrying out the weekly inspection of the line was becoming too arduous, due to the onset of arthritis, as a result of which I tendered my resignation from the Board as I felt that I was unable to carry out the job properly. I am of course still available for the railway to use my experience of civil engineering matters should they require it. After 2012, I went on to lighter duties, such as manning the booking office at Furnace Sidings, or being ticket inspector on the train. I find that the latter is a particularly satisfying job, as it involves interaction with the customers, for example, answering their questions, or telling them about the history of the line. Since the introduction of Covid restrictions, my services as ticket inspector are currently not required, but hopefully I may be able to resume such duties in the future.

One advantage of working in the Civil Engineer’s offices at Newport, and Swindon was that I managed to acquire a large number of old drawings, maps, plans and other documents that would have otherwise been thrown out or destroyed in the successive reorganisations and moves that took place over the years. This includes the acquisition of the original contract drawings for the construction of both the Brynmawr & Blaenavon Line and the Abersychan Extension. In addition, I have also amassed a very large collection of photos of the Welsh railways, and have thus become the railway’s unofficial archivist and historian! I currently keep a record of all the major events and developments on the railway, and am in the process of compiling a book on the history of the line, and I hope to be of service to the P&BR for many years to come.



Alistair Warrington

Head of Stations (Submitted by Huw Morgan)

March and April saw a small group of volunteers transform the booking hall at Furnace Sidings into now what looks more period to what we are trying to represent as a railway, gone are the green walls and kitchen worktop at the ticket hatch and replaced with something more appropriate.

The colour scheme is the L&NWR/LMS colour with light biscuit (cream) on the top and gulf red (maroon) on the bottom. I am in the process of making period notice boards which will hopefully at to it as well.

All the platform edges are now complete, the fence at BHL has been wood stained and half the spear fencing is in gulf red.

Much more work is to be done on all the stations but slowly but surely it is all starting to come together now, a big thank must go to Philip Coombe, Sue, Kevin, Heather, Ffion and many more that have help and without whom we would not have got as far as we have.



photo by Huw Morgan



'The Booking Hall' photo by Jamie Warner

Notes from the Board (submitted by Jamie Warner, Company Secretary)

At long last we have reopened.

As I write this in mid-May, we're halfway between the second and third running weekends of 2021. To say that the reopening has been a success is an understatement. After a near sell-out first day the momentum has been sustained, with May's passenger figures already 45% on their 2019 equivalent. Feedback suggests that our visitors are overwhelmingly enjoying their time with us, and we have attracted new customers from far and wide.

That we have reopened so successfully is a huge testament to all those who were involved.

On behalf of the Board, I'd like to thank everyone who has played a part in making it happen. The last few months, indeed the last year, have been a tough time for the railway. After a year of being necessarily focused on the present, we can now begin to look towards the future once again.

Since my last column most of the Board's efforts have been spent on reopening preparations. As those volunteers who've been involved on the ground will know only too well, it takes much planning, effort, and time to resume running trains again. Behind the scenes Board members have been busy making best – and thankfully correct – guestimates as to when reopening would even be possible, meticulously reviewing legislation and operating standards, taking decisions as to what aspects of our operations can go ahead in line with current restrictions, and planning and executing an effective communications and marketing campaign to engage potential customers. To say that this took over many of our lives is no exaggeration.

Going forward we can begin to return to the other matters that we wish to make progress on. We've already established a Diesel Strategy with the Head of the Diesel Department to enable the diesel fleet to play an active role in our operations and are supporting the Head of Stations in his work to improve the visitor experience. There are more things that we have in the pipeline, and I look forward to telling you more about them in the coming months.



Jamie Warner being interviewed for the South Wales Tourism promotional film. (April 2021)
photo by Steve Thomas

Membership (submitted by Linda Lewis)

As membership Secretary I would like to thank all the members who have sent in their renewals.

I hope you have received your new membership cards. If you have not renewed as yet I look forward to hearing from you in the near future. Every membership counts.

We are always pleased to welcome new and not so new volunteers. We are very short on volunteers to help in the tea room. If you could spare a few hours once a month we would be very grateful for your help. We are only serving hot and cold drinks, crisps, chocolate and cakes. Very straight forward.

Look forward to seeing you all soon at the railway.

Kind regards Linda



Re-opening Report (submitted by Alex Hinshelwood Operations Manager)

After a second extended winter closure, we finally welcomed passengers back to Furnace Sidings on the 1st May. The railway has never looked so good, with the yard tidy up obvious from the train, car park and station, it sets the first impression we have all aspired to since the departure of the 'Barry locos' well over ten years ago.

The positive impression continues as the passengers are welcomed into the fabulously renovated Booking Hall, a result of the work by Huw Morgan and his team.

The train looks immaculate as it pulls into the platform with Empress at the helm, resplendent in her new Oxford Blue livery followed by the three carmine and cream carriages, gleaming and ready to welcome passengers again.

While these are the obvious improvements, the detail are just as important, painted fences and benches, and clean paving all add to the bright, fresh look of our railway ready to embrace the new season.

As the time of writing, the passenger numbers were up 45% compared with the same dates in 2019, a remarkable achievement, A huge thank you goes out to our Website and Social Media team. Our pages have more followers and engagements than ever and this really helps get the message out that we are open for business.

It has been great to see so many new volunteers joining our railway family and of course we welcome back many returning volunteers to the Tea Room, Ticket Office, Station and train.

Our railway is a credit to you all.



Channel 5 filming

(submitted by Alex Hinshelwood)

A drone accompanied us most of the day on Tuesday May 18th. when we had a visit from the Channel 5 tv production 'The World's Most Scenic Railway Journeys' Empress and the Mk1s didn't disappoint, we don't know when the programme will be aired yet so keep looking at our Facebook pages for further information.

New Qualified Volunteer (submitted by Alex Hinshelwood)



Congratulations to Jack Ataou for passing out as a locomotive cleaner yesterday. This means Jack can now fire a loco when a fireman is not available.

Congratulations and well-done Jack.





One from the archives 26th March 1989 (photo submitted by Martin Herbert)

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 by no later than June 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.

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