



PEMBROKESHIRE RAIL TRAVELLERS
ASSOCIATION. 1989-2009

*TWO DECADES OF ACTION IN THE WEST
WALES TRANSPORT FIELD.*

Get out of Traffic and Into Training!

www.prta.org.uk

NEWSLETTER 81.

Jan-2009.

Complements of the season & a good 2009!

**It's Subscription Renewal
Time!**

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SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

EDITORIAL

The new fare hikes that will start with the New Year accentuate a worrying trend on the railway – the reduced availability of affordable walk up fares. When your committee meets up there is often talk of the miniscule bargains that members have obtained with advance purchase fares and the advantages that these offer cannot be understated. For many of us, however life isn't like that – a two hourly service through the day becomes one train a day if you are riding with advance purchase. Engaging a fellow passenger from Manchester who had a £10 return from Gatwick Airport on a delayed plane recently I heard that they expected to pay £80+ to get a single as they had missed their slot. The result

is that many people are just priced off back into their cars. As our elected representatives ride on First Class free travel it must be difficult for them to appreciate just how hard the walk up fares hit so don't hold your breath that its going to change. PRTA will be in the lobby on its members behalf.

EDITOR'S NOTES

US technology that will exclude phone signals is being applied to quiet coach windows on some operators rolling stock. This takes the form of film which can be overlaid on the windows and will exclude wi-fi, radio and phone signals whilst still letting in daylight. In Essex the introduction of the quieter coaches has had a very enthusiastic reception.

Geoff Hoon, Minister of Transport announced that some of the new carriages that the DfT has planned would be "bought forward to help stimulate the economy" – Railway Magazine stated that it was later understood it is only the consultation process that is to begin earlier. In any event its hard to see how the economy could benefit – we now only have one train builder in this country and the DfT is apparently keen to involve builders in Korea and China.

New Welsh operator Wrexham and Shropshire Railway has docked 28 minutes off journey times from the start of the Dec timetable – it has also introduced print at home tickets.

Comment on the passage of the North American passenger operator Amtrak's reauthorisation bill through the US senate from the Wall Street Journal: " The Amtrak vote offered a preview of how Senators John McCain and Barack Obama would approach the issue. Senator McCain, the Republican nominee, a consistent critic of the nations money losing long distance rail provider, voted against the measure. Sen Obama, the Democratic candidate voted for it, he routinely advocates an expansion of passenger rail service".

Network Rail is to install 15000 metres of high security fencing in Wales to combat rail crime.

Want to be a rail accident inspector? DfT were advertising positions in Woking and Derby at £65K in November.

The Ebbw Vale branch is now carrying more passengers than its projected target for 2012.

As this edition went to press ATW had introduced their new hot shot North South train – whether this is just a response to the requirements of the AMs from North Wales or whether there is a thrusting growing market for North South travel remains to be seen. In any event perhaps we should have our own hot shot to Cardiff in the morning – Swansea District Line step forward – in any event there's no room for complacency its amazing how quickly one can get to the 7 bridge in a car.

PRTA'S TWENTY YEARS

2009 marks 20 years of Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association – it seems a long time since the inaugural meeting in the hall at Clarbeston Road and for those of us still around, looking back, it does seem we were very much younger then.. Since then the Association has seen good times as well as lean ones and the writer can recall an AGM many years ago when only the Dunkirk spirit kept the group going into the new year. Of course with a voluntary lobby association peripheral support can rise and fall according to the perceived difficulties our rail service is undergoing and a diminution in membership numbers can demonstrate that we have done a good job in terms of the aims of the association. Over the years we have organised walks, done street surveys, run library exhibitions, held meetings on the train as well as a champagne breakfast on the way to Fishguard on one occasion.

When the association started, rail user groups were very new and railway management tended to fall into two camps: those who viewed the new phenomenon as a nuisance and those who thought we might have something to offer. Luckily, in this neck of the woods our piece of the network was looked after by a gentleman called Theo Steele, a thrusting vigorous manager, Maesteg, Swanline and the Waterloo through services were all initiated on his watch. He was obviously able to assess the new privatised railway's shortcomings which became starkly apparent later and must have aired his views a little too openly as he was summarily dismissed in the countdown to the hand over to the private sector. He had been very appreciative of the voluntary sector and we had worked well with him during his watch – his

ability to call a spade a shovel made him some detractors and some members may recall his famous TV interview on the Heart of Wales line when he told the interviewer some home truths whilst stamping his feet.

Other instances where we were ahead of the game were the Real Ale Rail Trail where your association started the very first one in the country – this has since been copied up and down the land and our music trains which we ran about 12 years ago. The Milford Jazzer and The Pembroke Folk Train were highly innovative and during a period of frequent management changes at Carmarthen it was frustrating to find that a new incumbent might have absolutely no enthusiasm for our efforts whereas the previous manager had boarded the train at Carmarthen and stuck our Milford Jazzer window stickers down the carriages before joining us in The Lord Nelson Hotel for some Hot Jazz. Both these initiatives had bands on the train every month – a third addition with classical music trio and dinner at Clarboston Road failed to get off the ground. Our requests for discounted fares were defeated by railway bureaucracy and our small but loyal clientele were serially put off when, during a strike, the railway failed to provide any transportation to replace the last Eastbound from Milford. It was probably another PRTA action that was ahead of its time- the Vagrant's Crew folk band parading on Pembroke Dock station and through the carriages to see the last train off singing with Horses head, diggerydoo and various other folk type instruments is a fond memory.

During the early years we were great gardeners and former committee member and chairman Des Brown with his pupils from Greenhill School Tenby, spent a fair bit of time on the P&T getting various stations into shape. The writer spent some afternoons at Clarboston Road doing the garden [we even had some bedding plants from management] before Railtrack suddenly gave it a substantial dose of ballast one day – I think there are still some shrubs growing that we planted.

When Arriva took over their appointment of a stakeholder manager to engage with us was real step forward and we have managed to continue our close relationship with this company despite the initial incumbents retirement and there being no direct replacement.

So PRTA continues - long may it do so – we approach the next 20 with enthusiasm.

2008/9 4TH RAIL USER SURVEY

Please take a few moments to take part in our Annual Rail User Survey.

Where there are alternatives please ring your answer

1. I use the train:

Weekly	14days	monthly	¼ ley	6/m/ly	yearly	rarely	never
--------	--------	---------	----------	--------	--------	--------	-------

2. I get to the station:

On foot	By car	By Bus	By taxi	On bike
---------	--------	--------	---------	---------

3. I consider station parking:

Good	OK	A problem	Insecure
------	----	-----------	----------

If you have ringed A problem your station is.....

If you have ringed insecure your station is.....[write in]

4. If the bus picked up near your house and stopped at your station coordinating with the rail service would you use it to catch the trains?

YES	NO
-----	----

5. I use local buses:

Frequently	Rarely	Occasionally	Never
------------	--------	--------------	-------

5A I use National Express

Frequently	Rarely	Occasionally	Never
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6. Considering 2008 Arriva Trains Wales to have served me:

A lot better	Better	The Same	Worse	A lot worse
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Than they did in 2007

7. I rate Arriva Trains out of ten [1rubbish 10 excellent].....

8.I rate First Great Western Trains out of ten [same criteria].....

9. Briefly note the top item in your public transport wish list:

.....

.....

10. I expect public transport to get:

BETTER	WORSE
--------	-------

Over the next 5 years

11. Where do you get timetable information?:

station	PRTA	Library	NRES	timetable	internet	phone	Travel agent	German rail website	ATW
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12. Where do you get fares information?

PRTA	Station	Travel agent	NRES	Internet	Phone	Great Western
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13. Where do you usually buy advance purchase tickets?

Station	Travel Agent	Internet	Phone	Great Western
---------	--------------	----------	-------	---------------

14. I consider the government's policy of raising fares above inflation misguided

YESNO
-----	---------

I am concerned that if the present policy continues I am likely to do more journeys by road.

YESNO
-----	---------

15. Obtaining advance purchase tickets when you want to travel has been:

Easy	Difficult	Impossible
------	-----------	------------

In 2008.

16. I consider walk up fares:

AS FAR AS CARDIFF

Economically friendly	Expensive	A rip off
-----------------------	-----------	-----------

BEYOND CARDIFF TO ENGLISH AND NORTH WALES DESTINATIONS

Economically friendly	Expensive	A rip off
-----------------------	-----------	-----------

17. I consider advance purchase fares:

About Right	Too cheap	Expensive
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18. I rate the PRTA Newsletter out of 10 [1 rubbish/10 excellent].....

19. I am a member of Pembs Rail Travellers Assoc:

YES.....NO

20. I am an electronic member: my experience of this form of membership during 2007 has been:

GOOD	OK	PROBLEMATIC
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If problematical please specify.....

21. I would attend an annual PRTA Dinner if one was held.....YES.....NO

*22. In previous years PRTA has held historical walks in the area covered by the Association – would you be interested in taking part in a walk in 2009? Previously they have covered Historic Pembroke Dock, Historic Haverfordwest, The Maenclochog Railway and Brunel's lost line in Treffgarne Gorge amongst others.
YES.....NO*

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in our survey.

PLEASE RETURN THIS SURVEY ALONG WITH YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2009. Thanks.

REAL ALE RAIL TRAIL

PRTA's Real Ale Rail Trails have now appeared on our website. Members wishing to take some light libation by train can access the documents by clicking on the Real Ale Trail tab and printing them off – there are two trails – one for the P&T and one for the main line – each can be accommodated on a single sheet of A4 printed both sides. PRTA recommend sensible drinking.

TIME FOR GLOVES?![!]

"When we began our research" Dr Val Curtis of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medecine told reporters, "we had no clear idea of what to expect. But we were flabbergasted to find that more than one in four British commuters have faecal bacteria on their hands. We swabbed and tested the hands of 409 people at bus and train stations in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Cardiff

and Newcastle, and the further North we went, the more often we found faecal bacteria. Men in Newcastle were the worst offenders with 53% harbouring bacteria. But in London, Cardiff and Birmingham, the women had dirtier hands than the men. At Euston only 6% of men were contaminated.

Surprisingly manual workers were less likely to have contaminated hands than other groups, such as professionals, students, retired people or the unemployed. And people who used the bus had a higher rate of contamination than those who used the train. If any of these people had been suffering from diarrhoea, the potential for it to be passed around would be greatly increased by their failure to wash their hands after using the toilet. These results should be enough to make anyone reach for the soap”.

- Nursing Times.

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD.

The government had a sharp reality check from the voters of Greater Manchester when the result of the referendum on a proposal to introduce road pricing was announced in mid December. The numbers were so definite that no government spin-doctor could gainsay them.

% of electorate taking part	53.2%
Total votes	1.03 million
% Against the proposal	79%

The government had promised 1.5billion£ of government money for public transport creating 10,000 extra jobs with the construction of new tram lines and better buses and trains. Voters, however were more concerned with the potential extra £1200 that the charge might cost them and it was widely regarded as an extra tax. Under the scheme motorists would have paid top cross two charging rings during morning and evening rush hours – the outer ring roughly on the orbital M60 and the inner one surrounding the city centre. Graham Stringer, a Manchester MP who opposed the charge said: "I am delighted with the result, It's a brave politician who goes forward with such a scheme, unless it is an extraordinarily good scheme that virtually everybody benefits from. You have to come up with an extremely good scheme whereby you reduce other road taxes if you ever want road pricing by consent in this country."

This result is no doubt a strong reality check for Whitehall redolent of the fuel protest some years ago – road pricing is no doubt a

vote loser and car owners/users certainly command plenty of power at the ballot box.

FARES TAKE ANOTHER HIT!

The government's policy that fare payers should shoulder more of the cost of running the railways will again hit in January when fares across the board are increased. David Watt's excellent analysis of the new realities should accompany this Newsletter so members will be able to see what the damage is. Regulated fares were scheduled to rise by 6% in January with unregulated going up by an average of 7%. ATOC spokesman said that 15% of all fares will be frozen or will actually fall and that, since 1996, overall fares had only risen 5% "in real terms". Train companies defended the rises saying the revenue will be reinvested in new rolling stock, but such comments were dismissed by many passengers and rail watchdogs as patronising "red herrings".

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive of Passenger Focus said: "Rises way above inflation are unjustified and unfair. We cannot go on dumping costs on to the passenger in this way".

Some operators are already seeing a reduction in ridership because of the economic downturn and the fare rises will be another deterrent to potential passengers.

No sign of a reduction in bus fares yet which were increased because of the escalating price of fuel! "Like all road users Arriva is feeling the impact of increasing fuel costs" - Don't hold your breath.

FIRST GREAT WESTERN & the DfT

The Guardian Newspaper successfully obtained documents from the DfT under the Freedom of Information Act in October that stated starkly the background to the train operator's troubled take over of the "Greater Western" franchise in 2006. In some difficulty with passengers after it took on the franchise with passenger strikes at the end of 2006 and with the DfT after under reporting cancellations last year and exceeding the threshold for cancelled trains in the second half of 2007 the operator made a presentation to former minister Tom Harries in May. It said that the government department had put substantial service cuts into the reviewed franchise in 2006 - "FGW is the only franchise to have been specified with substantial service level cuts - when will it be

the right time to review?" it further claimed that cuts on the X Country franchise operated by Arriva were putting pressure on 1GW services and service reductions on South West Trains were leaving "substantial gaps" in the timetable. Anthony Smith, head of Passenger Focus thought that the government has been too prescriptive in setting franchise terms that slashed services while demanding ever higher premium payments. " The railways are having their own liquidity crisis. They don't have enough trains and carriages are the industry's currency. In future franchises should take on a much greater level of passenger input". FGW said: "We meet regularly with DfT and continue to discuss options to improve services."

NR'S ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY

In November Network Rail produced their Route Utilisation Strategy for Wales – a 192 page document.

Reading the Executive Summary there was no mention of the lines West of Swansea at all and , to be fair, this largely reflects the content of the strategy.

Commenting on aspirations there is considerable comment on redoubling on the section through Gowerton but NR rightly say that this can only be achieved with outside funding as no economic case for it can currently stand up. Cost of the enhancement is put at £20-£30million. West of Carmarthen additional capacity can be obtained by strengthening the PD trains and similarly the HOW trains – it doubts whether there will be sufficient increase in ridership to justify hourly provision down to Milford.

The strategy is disappointingly downbeat on the Swansea District Line and this largely reflects SWWITCH's approach to this valuable asset up to date: ".....there is little/no interest in diversion of existing services because of the significance of Swansea as a destination for West Wales passengers. There is no identified settlement to the North of Swansea which might usefully justify the economic provision of a new station on the route and housing is relatively dispersed." [no-one at NR apparently can see the potential for a North of Swansea commuter network based on the South end of the HOW/ rebuild of the chord to Gowerton]. We shall have to try harder to get our fast through trains to Cardiff then!

Members can view the Strategy at www.networkrail.co.uk

PRTA COMMITTEE –notes from Pete Absolom

Your committee met again in September.

Loadings on the 09-10 from Milford Haven and the 17-05 from Swansea seem high. Passengers are often standing for part of the time. We would like all Milford trains to be 3 car rather than two in the immediate future, and an hourly service to Milford in the longer term. Arriva respond that the 09-10 will certainly be 2 car until next May. While there appear to be loading spikes there is no discernable general overcrowding trend on that train.

We have also contacted Arriva regarding the information box on Pembroke Dock station, which appears to be unable to give details of arriving trains – only departures.

We had already commented on Network Rails Route Utilisation Strategy for Wales. Other campaigners have sent us copies of their submissions. We decided to send them a copy of ours – Railway Development Society, North Pembro Transport Forum, Passenger Focus and so on. We also agreed that the secretary would read the latest SWWITCH transport plan and prepare and submit comments. We completed this and sent them a copy of our RUS submission.

We discussed a launch of the Real Ale Trail Guides. Subsequent to the meeting we found that some of the information [gathered 18 months ago] had now been superseded. This has now been reinvestigated and revised but not in time for the suggested launch date, and since then more information has come to light from ACORP which may help us make the leaflets more attractive to the public.

The Real Ale Guide launch became a round Pembrokeshire trip by train, Milford to Whitland, Fishguard, Whitland, Penally and Pembroke Dock, meeting Hatti Woakes of the North Pembro Transport Forum at Fishguard, calling at the station house in Whitland for lunch and then at the Cross Inn in Penally and the Station Inn at Pembroke Dock. The West WEales Day Ranger proved invaluable permitting travel right round the county for £7-80.

SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT!

A SAFE TRIP IS A GREAT TRIP!

Arrive at your station early to avoid rushing for your train

Think about parking logistics before setting out

Watch your step when boarding and leaving the train

Use handholds/handrails when boarding and moving through the train

Walk don't run on stations and in trains

Read safety info on board.

IT COULD BE WORSE-2



Converted box car passenger carriage on Cuba Railways - below interior of small railcar - Dec 2008



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Advertisement. – The Taberna is in the Good Beer Guide for 2007

AIMS of PEMBROKESHIRE RAIL

TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATION:

- 1. To Press for improvements to rail and associated bus services in
The area West of Carmarthen.*
- 2. To encourage greater use of the current services*
- 3. To assist in the improvement of the railway environment in particular at stations*
- 4. To liase with other pro – rail organizations.*

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www.bahn.de timetable planner pan Europe German railways but
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 Milford Station Office [open mornings] 01646 693460
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 Transport for London 02072221234
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 Great Western On Line Ticket Sales www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk
 Great Western group travel 0845 7413777
 Great Western Plus Bus www.plusbus.org.uk check add -on fares
 Virgin Trains www.virgintrains.co.uk
 National Rail Information www.nationalrail.co.uk
www.transport-direct.org.uk public transport info
 Europacar – UK car rental 01133882429
 Pembrokeshire County Council – for bus timetable info 01437
 764551
 National Express 0870 5808080
 Richards Bros 01239 613756 www.gobybus.net
www.richardsbros.co.uk
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 North Pembrokeshire transport Forum hatti@woakes.demon.co.uk
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greenways@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

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 Freedom of Wales Flexipass 0870 9000777
www.walesflexipass.com
 Great Western Customer Relations
customer.relations@gwt.firstgroup.com
 Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association www.prta.org.uk
 Bus users UK www.bususers.org
 Acorn Travel 01348 74728 www.acorntravel.com
 Trans Wales Bus – www.trawscambria.info
 South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium: SWWITCH
www.swwitch.org.uk
www.Seat61.com – a useful site for overseas rail travel
 Llandrindod Wells Booking Office – Kelsham Hannah 01597822053
 Ludlow Station Travel – Railway Station, Ludlow 01584877090
 Arriva Cross country [www. Crosscountrytrains.co.uk](http://www.Crosscountrytrains.co.uk) [Cardiff –
 Nottingham
 East Midlands Trains www.eastmidlandstrains.co.uk 08457125678
 Swiss Timetable: www.ch.co

CALL TO ACTION

Seen any vandalism lately? – seen any graffiti
 operators? – people behaving suspiciously around the
 railway?

DIAL 0800 405040 –

**HELP THE RAILWAY TO TAKE CARE OF
ITSELF**

###This is especially important now: the price of scrap metal has reached enormous heights and cable and other thefts are plaguing the track maintainers daily.

JOIN US

Fees are: £4 electronic [all communication electronically] £7 standard[MAIL]/Corporate and Group: £5 electronic[all communication electronically] £10 standard [mail] [50% AFTER July 1st] No joining fee.

NAME

ADDRESS.....

.....

.

POST CODE.....

EMAIL.....

TELEPHONE.....

MOBILE.....

*Membership Type [circle] Individual – Electronic/Standard
Corporate –Electronic/Standard*

*Make cheques payable to PEMBROKESHIRE RAIL TRAVELLERS
ASSOCIATION*

SEND PRTA INFO to my friend.....

.....

.....
Cut or Xerox this and send to the membership sec[above] with the appropriate fee.



West Wales is Getting in to Training!

PRTA: A voluntary lobby for public transport since 1989.

PLEASE RENEW MY
MEMBERSHIP OF PRTA
FOR 2009

NAME

.....

.....

.....

.....

ADDRESS

.....

.....

.....

.....

...*Post Code*.....

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Hard Copy£10.

Make cheques payable to Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association and send to Robert Best, 11, Warwick Road, Milford Haven – Thanks.

TO REPLICATE AND PRINT THIS A 5 NEWSLETTER
 SET MARGINS AT 2CMS ALL ROUND/PRINT 2
 PAGES/SHEET -PAGE NOS 20,1 THEN 2,19 AND SO
 ON.

