

# THE EARL



News in brief for volunteers and supporters of the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway

No 31 – October 2017

**...Safety First...Safety First...**

## Seasons change, but not safety...

■ *GM Charles Spencer with the latest of our brief and topical safety columns...*

The accident book reveals a few bumps, scrapes and burns, but in general it has been a pretty safe summer. The usual areas continue to need vigilance on the part of staff: loco crews looking out carefully at level crossings, shunters being very aware of their surroundings and positioning to be visible to the driver, and watching for any floods or downed trees caused by the wind and rain of Autumn. On the operating side, staff assisting passengers as they board and alight from trains.

I'm struck as I write this by the importance of this last point; today we had visits from two groups of seniors, one billing themselves as the 'Over 55s' – and they certainly were. It's typical of our Autumn traffic that working folks go back to work, the children to school, and the seniors feel the coast is clear for themselves to have a day out! They love visiting the railway but do sometimes need a little extra assistance which has to be carefully and sensitively given.

The other safety focus around this time of year has to be around slips and trips. The lovely Welsh summer sunshine occasionally turns to showers, and wet surfaces can become slippery. I know we can count on station staff to keep their eyes out for these types of hazards.

## Have your say...

This autumn Members Forum will be held in the Llanfair tearoom at 5pm on Saturday 21st October, a little earlier than usual because of the way the calendar falls.

There will be updates on a number of key areas: the GM will give his 'state of the nation' review of the year to date; there will be an update on the major developments programme, including progress on planning for improved public facilities, and W&L Sales will present on the business plan for the tearoom and shops which contribute so much to the railway's ability to fund its operations.

As an added bonus for members attending the forum, which falls on a Green timetable day, and provided we can roster the duties, there will be a members-only special train which will leave Llanfair Caereinion at 1510 and return in time for the forum at 1700. The GM plans an interesting train – say no more.

## Diesel do nicely...



■ Traditionally at Gala we get out all the toys, and only three weeks alter we did it all again, but for those of a diesel persuasion. The second Diesel Day on 23rd September saw visitor 'Badger' entertaining attendees, appearances from all our non-steam apparatus, and even an appearance in Llanfair yard by 'Scooby'. But perhaps the highlight was the oddest double-header this correspondent has seen on the W&LLR (above).

Photos: Andrew Charman



## End of the season – time to come to Llanfair...

What a Gala that was – this year, as you will read in the Chairman's and the General Manager's columns, we really pulled out the stops for an event that everyone was talking about for days afterwards. No pictures in this issue but there are in the next *Journal*, currently at the printer.

The thing about Gala, is that once it's over the season seems to wind down pretty quickly – as this is being written the last weekday of the regular timetable is underway, before we return to weekend running (apart from during the October half-term). Pretty soon it will be the 5th November and our running season will be over for another year.

Except that's when the hard work really starts. Not running trains gives us a chance to get on with the essential maintenance we need to do, right across the line – there's always

plenty, and after this season, with the twin demands of busier timetables and several months without a workshop, there is even more to do.

In fact there is plenty to do even before we finish running trains. You will see that almost every item in this issue is an appeal for help with some area of the railway, and we can't emphasise enough how important responses to such pleas will be.

If you've never come to the railway in winter, please consider it this year. Llanfair is a relaxing place to be, both within the railway and around the district without the hordes of summer tourists, and there is a real camaraderie amongst those that turn out to work on the line in winter. Whatever you want to do, outside or inside, we'll be able to make good use of you...



■ W&LLR and Friends of the Sierra Leone Railway Museum members with No.85 following its unveiling at the Gala. Now the loco needs some TLC... *Photo: Andrew Charman*

## From the Chairman...

# Gala thanks

■ *Steve Clews writes:* Another Gala over and thus the year is drawing to a close. What a Gala though. It feels like the best yet despite the rain on Sunday. The weather on the other two days compensated and Saturday was extremely busy, Friday pretty good. Running a three-day Gala allows for poor weather somewhat better than just a two-day event.

Over the three days there were a number of things that stood out for me.

- Unveiling No.85 on Friday and though I wasn't supposed to say anything I got in four words – "Welcome home Eighty Five."
- 'Superb', our visiting loco from the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway ran reliably all weekend and the support crew were absolutely brilliant, obviously enjoying themselves and a pleasure to work with.
- We ran with almost military precision only dropping more than a few minutes towards the end of Saturday – great organisation.
- Very full trains on Saturday – not sure how the guards counted the passengers!
- The tea room and shop coped with huge numbers, especially on the Saturday.
- The clear night skies and chill mornings – especially under canvas.
- A relaxed trip out to Cyfronydd on Superb with the goods train.
- The people from Electrify running the fireworks display – so happy, friendly and professional, a great bunch.
- The fireworks train – driving a steam train at night with fireworks at each station and the finale and what a finale. A never to be forgotten fireworks display to celebrate our 54 years of running our railway.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the event particularly Roger Pattie and his team for making this all possible. And I would like to make special mention of some of the unsung heroes;

The carpark attendants at each end of the line spend a large part of the gala away from the railway action and are always cheery even when there is rain dripping off their clothing. They are the first contact for many visitors and therefore the face of the railway.

The tea room and shop staff are often too busy to take a break, falling over each other in our cramped facilities and also always smiling.

The bar staff who assembled and disassembled the bar, and kept the refreshments going well into the evening.

We must also pay tribute to all those who helped set up the site during the days leading up to gala and then stayed behind to clear up on the Monday.

Now the dust has settled it is back to earth with a bump. Board members and management have had two telephone conversations in the past week on strategy, leading to pushing ahead with the business plan and next year's budget at the October board meeting.

The visit to the Alishan Railway for twinning is approaching and then I will change to my Carriage & wagon hat and start the organisation of the November workshop week. This is 11-19th November and is sure to be as good fun as last year's event.

## Come hug a Hunslet...

With our Hunslet No. 85 safety back and installed on display at Llanfair (complete with appeal leaflets and donations box), it's time to make her feel loved again.

Alas, she was not sent away in the cleanest condition and time has not been kind. Before we store her for the winter, and to preserve her before restoration, she needs a very thorough clean inside and out by some people who are prepared to get dirty doing it.

We're talking clean firebox, ashpan, smokebox, motion, frames and sheets, and oiling across bare metal and a good polish before procuring and installing a quality tarpaulin to protect her.

Are there any volunteers prepared to lead and do this before the end of October? If so please get in touch with the office on the usual number. Why not make a party of it – she is right next to the tearoom, after all.

## Another Workshop Week – in November...

Last year we experimented with an extra Workshop Week in November, and it worked very well, so this year we are doing it again!

The Week will be held on 11-19th November, and the task needing tackling include starting the winter maintenance on our locomotives, carriage and wagon maintenance and new projects, preparing the permanent way vehicles for winter when they will be most needed, and continuing to sort through the many tools and components that were displaced through the required

emptying of the workshop in the spring.

In addition to tackling the backlog of running maintenance, work will be restarting on the rebuilding of 699 'Sir Drefaldwyn'. If you have mechanical engineering skills to offer, please get in touch with Bruce, Richard or Keith and ask how you can help move the loco towards its return to service.

However if you do not have such skills, it doesn't matter. Our refurbished, brighter workshop is awaiting plenty of volunteers to use it, and there will be useful jobs for you to, no matter what your skill level. If you can

join in workshop Week, sign up on the form on the Keyse Cottage noticeboard, or give the office a call.



**We got back in the Workshop in time for it to be part of Gala – now we need lots of volunteers using it in its prime role, for tasks such as completing restoration of loco 699 in the background.**

# A big weekend

■ *Charles Spencer writes:* I must start by adding my thanks to the Chairman's for all the efforts that went into Gala, and I can add to Steve's impressions of the event by giving you some news about results.

Visitors took a total of over 3600 journeys, an increase of about 17 per cent over 2016. Financial results were good as well; while we await a final audit of the figures, we are confident that the event will contribute about the same £15,000 to the railway's bottom line as it did in 2016, and that's after we covered several new expenses including the very impressive fireworks display. That makes it the second biggest special event contributor of the year, after the Santa trains.

Gala is also about promoting the railway, and we did a lot of social media this year. Our Facebook posts on the weekend alone reached over 37,000 people, with many shares and positive comments. And Andrew Charman's photo of 'The Earl' with a sky filled with fireworks was on the front page of the Monday *Shropshire Star*.

Thanks in part to the poor weather on the Sunday, volunteers made an early start on the clean-up – always a big job – and the site was looking very tidy by midday Monday, with rolling stock and other things back in their appointed places.

The main measure for me, however, were the smiles on the faces of visitors and volunteers alike. Everyone seemed to feel it was a genuinely fun event and those who organized and executed it deserve great credit.

We did come to earth with a bit of a bump, and both loco and operations rosters had some significant gaps in the week after Gala. My thanks to those who stepped up for extra duties and allowed us to run all our timetabled trains plus a full-day Driver Experience on the following Monday. One of the Drex drivers posted a delighted review on TripAdvisor – check it out on the railway's reviews page.

## Diary Dates

9th Oct	London Area Group meet, North Wales Quarries by Andrew Neale, Model Railway Clb, Keen Hse, Calshot St, London N1 (close King's Cross stn), 7pm
10th-19th Oct	Workshop Week (see page 2)
21st Oct	Trustees Meeting & Members Forum
23rd Oct	Welshpool Area Group meet, 'The Oil Man Speaks III' former chairman alan Higgins, Corn Exchange, Welshpool Twn Hall, 7.30pm
28th Oct	Halloween Train
28th-29th Oct	Hedgebash, to take part contact Willy Field at hedgebash@wlir.org.uk
5th Nov	Last day of regular season
25th-26th Nov	Hedgebash, see above

■ Our last caption competition suggestion, featuring the GM's mother-in-law, resulted in a select entry, and strangely nothing from our regular entrant Lizzy Ann Spencer... (Mrs GM!).

Among the entries we did get we liked "His mum told me he started with Hornby Dublo" from Bernard Morgan, and from Michael Denholm, "I know he's got a whistle. If I give you a whistle as well, everyone will want a whistle!"

We suspect we might get a bumper entry for this month's suggestion, printed at the risk of the Editor being permanently banned by the Deputy GM. It's Alan Barnes you should blame Kevin, he took the picture... Entries to the usual email (andrewcharman@macace.net), and as ever please keep them clean...



# A winter of trackwork, buildings and Elves...

Remember, remember, the 6th of November, manpower, trackwork and plate (laying)... *That was nothing to do with me – Ed...*

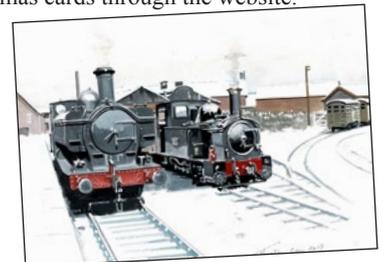
Trains stop running on 5th November and Kevin will be starting the winter trackwork projects straight away, including heavy maintenance at the Welshpool end, more improvements at Mill Curves and reinstatement of the Cyfronydd siding. It's not too early to speak to him about joining this congenial gang for a bit of exercise, fresh air and good company.

The winter is also the time we turn back to building maintenance and improvements, including jobs which can only be done when the line is closed.

And of course it's just three months until the big guy shows up at the railway, his sack bulging with gifts. As usual we'll need lots of help with this important end-of-season activity, from elves through to glamorous car park attendants.

Just as important, however, if you or your friends want to travel on the train to meet Santa, do make sure to book your seats soon. There are 22 trains over five days, but for the last two years the event has sold out, so check out the details soon – timetables and ticket sales are all up on the website.

And as we are mentioning Christmas, don't forget to pick up some of our cards. Full details are on the back of the next *Journal*, which is at the printer and should be with members around the middle of October. You will also soon be able to order Christmas cards through the website.



## Useful information

<b>Railway websites:</b>	www.wlir.org.uk www.89a.org.uk
<b>Railway Facebook:</b>	www.facebook.com/WelshpoolSteamRailway
<b>Members and Supporters Facebook:</b>	www.facebook.com/LlanfairLine
<b>Railway Twitter feed:</b>	@LlanfairLine
<b>Office:</b> For volunteering, general info	01938 810441, info@wlir.org.uk
<b>Vunteer Liaison Officer</b>	Robert Robinson, 01938 811378, volunteerliaison@wlir.org.uk
<b>Loco Crew Officer</b>	Simon Bowden, 07785 715684, simon.bowden@developtraining.co.uk
<b>Loco Crew Admin and Rosters</b>	Roger Pattie 0118 984 2884, biggles823@btinternet.com
<b>Operations Officer:</b>	Martin Rich, 01938 559350, hmsrich@gmail.com
<b>Ops Dept Rosters:</b>	Dick Hewett, 01794 500523, rbhewett@gmail.com
<b>Tearoom/shops rosters:</b>	Sally Lister, 01654 703600 (24hr a/phone), sallylister74@googlemail.com
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