

# Llanuwchllyn Express



Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid  
The Journal of the Bala Lake Railway Society

Rhifyn / Number 166

Awst / August 2020

## Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid / Bala Lake Railway Society

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**Membership Secretaries:** Martin & Cathy Houghton (see page 30 for contact details)

**Other Committee Members:** Ben Barnes, Rob Houghton, Dave Fildes, Chris Downing, Bob Newton, Thomas Haynes

For the BLRS Members' Online Area go to: [society.bala-lake-railway.co.uk](http://society.bala-lake-railway.co.uk)

## Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid Cyf / Bala Lake Railway Limited

(Registered in Wales: 01055353)

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## Bala Lake Railway Trust

**Charity Number:** 1151841

**Chairman:** Julian Birley BEM

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## LLANUWCHLLYN EXPRESS

### Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid The Journal of the Bala Lake Railway Society

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**Editor:** Nick Talbot

**Press date for the next issue:** 18th October 2020

**Cover Art:** Hunslet Works No.860 of 1898 - *George B*, ready to depart Bala Pen y Bont station with the 11.40hrs service on 21st July 2020. Photo: Jennifer Smith.

**Inside page:** 11th July 2020: On the second operational day of the resumed 2020 season, Fireman / Trainee Driver Dave Rutt brings *George B* into Llanuwchllyn under the watchful eye of Driver Peter Haywood (unseen). Photo: Thomas Haynes.

**Back page:** A glorious aerial photograph Llanuwchllyn station and village in the evening sun - printed with the kind permission of Cyngor Gwynedd Council. Visit [www.visitsnowdonia.info](http://www.visitsnowdonia.info) for the official tourism website for the Snowdonia Mountains and Coast Area.

- Published by the Bala Lake Railway Society -

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**8th July 2020**

With the Railway set to cast off its CV-19 shackles and re-open the following day, Rob Houghton steamed both *Maio Marian* and intended service engine *George B*, coupling the historic duo together and taking them for a return trip to Bala to get their respective motion and lubricators working, and to confirm the line was clear of obstructions. Tim Williams ascended the Llanuwchllyn home-signal's ladder to photograph the engines prior to their departure.

### **From the Society Chairman...**

I hope you are all keeping safe, managing to enjoy the summer in these uncertain times. It's great to be able to write at a time when our little trains are, once again, running along the shores of Llyn Tegid. You can read about the efforts that led to the BLR being the first Heritage Railway to re-open in Wales elsewhere in this journal, and we all hope for as strong a summer season as possible as people are encouraged to enjoy a UK summer staycation.

The pandemic has shown the strength of the BLR community, with staff and volunteers working closely on a number of initiatives, from the Virtual Gala and development of the BLR's online shop, to helping look after the physical site during lockdown and preparing for the Railway's re-opening. I'm pleased to report that the BLRS has done its bit too, supporting the Railway with volunteer briefings via video-link ahead of re-opening, hosting virtual pub nights and, of course, publishing the excellent *Llanuwchllyn Express* Special Edition. If you've not got a copy, head to page 13 to learn more. The limited edition tea towels are great, though I'm not sure ours will ever go near the draining board! The LE-SE, like the BLRS 2021 calendar and your membership fees, all help raise funds for Society coffers. These are being put to good use as the BLRS is supporting the Railway financially, having agreed to meet some of the costs involved in making the Railway CV-19 secure ahead of its re-opening.

Looking forward, the Society's AGM will be held on 12th September, with an option to attend 'virtually' for the first time. You'll find more information on page 14. We welcome nominations for committee members, and particularly for the role of Hon. Secretary. We also need to think about how the Santa Specials might operate in a socially-distanced world. If you would like to help with this, please join us for a discussion on Sunday 23rd August at 8pm – email me for details, or keep an eye on the BLRS members' pages within the BLR website.

Finally, Chris Downing has decided to step back from his role developing the accommodation at Llanuwchllyn station, and I would like to thank Chris for all his work improving the space with a small team. We need someone to take this work forward, particularly improving the shower and kitchen facilities. Please consider whether this is something you can do. It's a vital role in supporting volunteers at the Railway.

I look forward to seeing many of you on the 12th September. In the meantime, stay safe, and I hope you manage to visit Bala sometime very soon.

**Dave Rutt, BLRS Chairman. Email: [society.chair@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:society.chair@bala-lake-railway.co.uk)**



# GENERAL MANAGER'S UPDATE

Well here we are, back up and running I'm very pleased to say. But it's been one of the strangest few months in the Railway's history!

When last I wrote we were in the middle of lockdown, with all the staff on furlough and the Railway pretty much mothballed and locked up, though not quite abandoned. We really had no choice and we had absolutely no idea when we would be able to open again and to earn an income.

We're very fortunate in that we have some very resourceful and dedicated volunteers, without whom it would have been a struggle to achieve anything, let alone all the things that we did.

The trio of Ben Nelson, Tim Gregson and Tim Williams formed a working group to progress a number of initiatives. The first was to launch our Covid-19 appeal which has raised over £14,000 to date. This is a fantastic sum for a small railway such as ours and it really has helped to keep our heads above water. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank everyone involved and especially our supporters - many of whom are BLRS Members - who gave so generously to the Railway's CV-19 appeal.

The working group then came up with the idea of a Virtual Gala, this it replace the postponed 'Bala Re-Railed' event on the 13th June. Between them the trio planned and executed a wonderful day looking at footage of galas past and much, much more, and again raising the profile of the Railway and adding to the Covid-19 appeal to which the event contributed around £2,500. BLR webmaster Tim Gregson did the Facebook posts and the promotion, Ben Nelson edited all the footage together, and Tim Williams created an online shop to help relieve participants of their hard-earned cash, with real products also being sold alongside virtual products. We're now looking to launch the very low calorie virtual cream tea into the slimming market – we think it will do rather well!



**9th July 2020: Re-opening day.**  
**Left:** The train crew pose moments before the departure of the 11.15am service to Bala, resplendent in necessary PPE. From left: Ben Nelson (Driver), Peter Newhouse (Fireman) and Brian Bennett (Guard). **Photo:** Tim Williams.  
**Above:** Ivo Peters' historic Bentley - now owned by Julian Birley - was on hand to witness the first train's departure. **Photo:** Peter Newhouse.

Meanwhile BLR Director Julian Birley was scouring the country for potential grant-aid, making applications. We are very grateful to the UK and Welsh Governments for support in the form of furlough payments, a Small Business grant and a top-up from the Economic Resilience Fund. We were also successful in our application to the Heritage Lottery's Emergency Fund, which granted us £40,000 to support the Railway and its heritage through lockdown, and a further £8,000 to help pay for the additional costs incurred in preparing the Railway to re-open with all the additional Covid-19 precautions that are required. All these contributions will help get us through the year, but it still doesn't replace all of the income that we have lost and we will have to carefully manage our resources through the winter.

At a board meeting late in June we contemplated the very real prospect that the Railway might not open again in 2020. We thought there might be a chance that restrictions could be lifted in the autumn - but by that time it would not have made economic sense to invest in all the changes that would be needed. Then, less than a week later, the Welsh government announced that outdoor attractions could open in just over a fortnight's time!

To say that we went from zero to Mach 10 in a heartbeat would be an understatement! Staff were recalled from furlough, plans were discussed and actioned for re-opening, reams of risk assessments were produced and materials were ordered. Llanuwchllyn station was a frantic hive of activity! Meanwhile Dave & Ailith Rutt organised online sessions with volunteers to gather a wider input and discuss the developing proposals - the feedback from which was extremely useful, helping us to refine our plans - and Tim Williams produced a completely new online ticketing system from scratch, one capable of handling groups of people in separated compartments. It is a complex system - and it was up and running in less time than it would have taken to get quotes had we put it out to tender. Quite incredible! Back at Llanuwchllyn, information for staff and volunteers was prepared and dispatched, social distancing measures were put in place, and copious signage was installed to explain the changes to our customers. The track was checked and some further track tamping was completed, allowing removal of the last temporary speed restriction. The final carriage service was completed, dividers were fitted between compartments in the open coaches and seats were marked 'out of use' where required, and the locos were re-commissioned, their boilers having been emptied before lockdown. All this achieved in little over two weeks!

All the carriages were given a thorough deep clean and thanks go to Dave Rutt, Tim Williams and Francis Stapleton for their help. Once clean, the carriages were treated with a long lasting surface sanitiser which continues to kill any new bacterial or viral contamination for up to 30 days. It is highly effective and saves us a great deal of time over having to disinfect the trains between services. In fact, given that we are one of the few railways operating a near normal service where passengers can board at both ends of the line, the alternative of trying to clean and disinfect between each use just wouldn't have worked.

Whilst the carriages were being cleaned, husband and wife team Roger & Christine Kent dashed down to Llanuwchllyn from the Lake District for the day specially to replant the flower displays on the far platform. The display adds a welcome splash of colour, creating a good impression at the station, and we are very grateful for their hard work.

And so, at 11:15am on Thursday 9th July the first post-lockdown train departed from Llanuwchllyn with a few passengers on board. We opted for a soft opening, before people were generally able to stay in Wales, in order to test our new systems with some real people around - but not so many that we might not be able to cope. The feedback was positive and it gave us time to make a few small alterations.

Since then schools have broken up and our trains have become gradually busier each week. We are now open 7 days a week, and entertaining a worthwhile number of people.

Looking ahead, we've had to make the difficult decision to cancel most events for this year. The steam gala at the end of August is one such casualty, although we are still likely to operate a two-train timetable with three of our own engines in steam. We've also missed seeing Pauline Hazelwood this year with the cancellation of the *Alice Day*. At time of writing we are still reviewing the Halloween and Santa events, although it is difficult to see how they might operate under current social distancing requirements. We are also looking at the re-scheduled Volunteers' Day and Bala Model Railway show in September. These are both events that we would like to hold but again subject to working our way through the Covid-19 issues. Watch this space - or better still watch our Facebook page and website for updates.

Finally, we are starting to look ahead to our winter works programme, subject again to working out how we can work together safely under CV-19 restrictions. However the other factor is going to be finance. Railway finances are going to have to be eked out and any spare funds spent very carefully. Over the last few years we have made great progress with re-sleepering the line in hardwood and we really don't want to lose momentum on this project by missing out a year. Accordingly we are now launching our Sleeper Appeal. A good quality standard gauge used azobe sleeper costs us £30. We cut each length in half to suit our gauge - so each single BLR sleeper costs £15. In all we need 200 full size sleepers at a cost of £6,000. Can we appeal to you again for your help by sponsoring a sleeper?

### **BALA LAKE RAILWAY - SLEEPER APPEAL**

**Please help us keep up the momentum on our annual sleeper renewals.**

We are aiming to raise £6,000 to purchase 200 Azobe hardwood sleepers, enough to relay around ¼ mile of track once we have cut them in half to suit our track's gauge.

Sponsor a sleeper: £30 for a whole sleeper or £15 for one half length

**Donations via Paypal through the website or by cheque to Bala Lake Railway**

Only a few lines left for me in this tightly packed issue of *Llanuwchllyn Express* and so I'll close by repeating just two words. Thank You. Thank you for your ongoing support. We're still here, we're open again and, if you can make it to Llanuwchllyn, we'd love to see you!

**David Jones, BLR General Manager. Email: [david.jones@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:david.jones@bala-lake-railway.co.uk)**



Just before lockdown started, window manufacturer Morgans of Oswestry advised that the signal box's new window frames had been constructed. Lockdown delayed matters but soon thereafter Chris Scott collected the frames, applying paint that Thomas Haynes had been able to collect when he happened to pass Llanuwchllyn on business. The painted frames have been returned to Morgans for glazing. They will soon be collected again and then brought to Llanuwchllyn. We are extremely grateful to Chris and Thomas for their help.

We are struggling to obtain hardwood for the corner uprights and the main sills. We are looking ideally at Sapele, though other hardwoods would also be acceptable. For the uprights we require 150mm x 150mm cross-section by 1.8m long. All we seem to be able to find is posts made up of thinner sections, glued and laminated which we would rather avoid. If anyone knows of a supplier of suitable single piece hardwood, could they please get in touch. We can provide dimensions for the sills if any enquiries prove positive.



**LOCOMOTIVE DEPT. NEWS**

Bala Lake Chief Engineer Rob Houghton with his regular round-up detailing the well-being of the Railway's collection of historic steam & diesel locomotives.

**STEAM LOCO FLEET:** *George B* has been the main service engine since the Railway's re-opening as her cab-less footplate is ideally suited to the facilitation of a flow of fresh air, beneficial in the fight against possible CV-19 transmission. The loco has been performing well, although on 28th July some boiler tubes were noted to be showing minor leaks, causing me a late night as I worked to expand the metal and fix the issue. Although this treatment is routinely successful I noted another issue that required attention, and so the next morning saw

*Maid Marian* in service for the first time since CV-19 lockdown ended. *Winifred* is also available for use by those drivers who are passed to drive her.

*Alice* remains out of service awaiting heavy overhaul.

*Holy War's* overhaul still has a way to go. The loco's boiler remains at the Severn Valley Railway's boiler-shop for repair and it will come as no surprise that work has progressed little during lockdown. Of late, when not working with David and Dan to install the BLR's counter-covid measures, I have been able to turn my attention to the loco's axle boxes, each of which requires significant work before return to service. The four axle boxes have had their old bosses machined off and then recessed to take bronze wear plates that can be renewed in the future if required. There remains much work to do but we'll get there and I anticipate seeing the much loved ex-quarry workhorse return to BLR operational service in as good a condition as she's been in many a year.



(NB: Boss: A raised surface on an object that provides a bearing surface to another object.)

**DIESEL FLEET:** *Murphy* has been suffering a problem with her main control system but I have been able to rectify this with the valued assistance of John Moorhouse. Additionally the loco's seat post has been extended so drivers can now see over the bonnet. In the long term we hope to install a cab. Such luxury!



Axle box and lettering photos - Rob Houghton

Elsewhere in the workshop, progress has been made on machining the edges of the metal letters that Barbara Cooper's Tombola Team have provided for the running-in board which, once completed, will be installed at Bala station (see LE No.163).

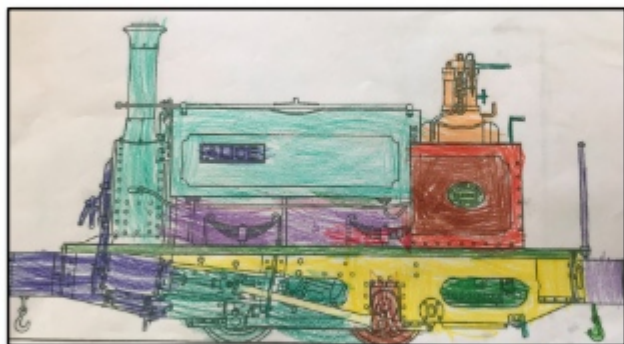
**Rob Houghton,**  
BLR Chief Mechanical Engineer.

## THE RESTORATION OF HUNSLET No.2024 - An Update

When the CV-19 restrictions in Wales were eased Dan Laidlaw was able to devote his spare time to the restoration of his little Hunslet diesel locomotive. He really had the bit between his teeth, making solid progress. The loco is back on her wheels and the cab sides have been repaired and painted in Ashford Olive. Additionally, as Dan's photographs show, there are new dumb buffers fitted - these being fashioned from a lineside tree that was felled a couple of years ago. No.2024 first obtained dumb buffers whilst working at Trefor Granite Quarry during the 1950s. Finally the loco's diesel engine has been stripped and cleaned ready for rebuilding.



## IN RAINBOWS



During the Railway's CV-19 induced period of closure, Tim Gregson (aka the BLR webmaster) sought new and interesting ways to maintain public interest and awareness. A colouring competition led to this imaginative rainbow themed re-design of Quarry Hunslet *Alice* by 6 year old Cadi Alaw, a resident of the Bala area.

Cadi's prize for her colourful (though perhaps controversial) design was a complimentary family ticket. Well done Cadi!

Note to Dan Laidlaw: Is this a livery that could be adapted to suit Hunslet No.2024?



## VIRTUALLY DOES IT

**Virtual. Adjective.** Late Middle English, from medieval latin 'virtualis'.

(In Computing) Not physically existing but made to appear to do so by software.

Many heritage railways sought to maintain interest and raise funds during the CV-19 crisis by holding 'virtual' galas. Of these your editor does not pretend to have visited all (for which, read 'any'), but surely few will have been able to hold a candle to the combined efforts of Tim Gregson, Ben Nelson, Tim Williams and Julian Birley who created and delivered the BLR's Virtual Gala on 13th June 2020. The gala saw a multitude of video presentations broadcast via the BLR's Facebook platform, featuring subjects ranging from narrow gauge movies to standard gauge memories, galas, charters, garden railways and virtual railways, featuring both visiting engines and the home fleet, and boosted with historic images, BLR news, and with a prize draw and photographic competitions to boot.



Gala participants were able to keep abreast of the on-screen action via a detailed 14-page guide, created by Tim Gregson and available to download in return for a £5 donation, an impressive 108 having been sold by the day's end. Meanwhile the BLR's new online shop did a great trade in both virtual and actual goods, with the diet-friendly virtual driver's cake being a popular option at just £3, though brisk trade was done in buckets of virtual coal at an entirely reasonable £50 each. David Jones' report has already covered the virtual gala in depth - including details of the financial boost it provided to the Railway - but surely it can't be said often enough; many congratulations to the organisers and a massive 'thank you' to all who participated in and supported the gala.

All purchasers of the virtual gala's guide were entered into a draw to win a round-trip on the footplate of one of the BLR's engines - the winner being Alfred Hall. Well done Alfred - if you are reading this then I hope you'll send *Llanuwchllyn Express* a report on your big day out! As an aside, your editor noted that just as the BLR was opening its virtual gala, celebrating our fleet of tiny and largely Victorian steam engines, over in the United States, SpaceX was busy launching 58 Starlink satellites into earth orbit via its Falcon9 payload delivery vehicle. Watching the juxtaposed streams on Facebook made for an interesting experience!

If you missed out on - or wish to repeat - any of the gala action, the footage showcased during the day remains available to view on YouTube via <https://bit.ly/BalaGala>

The gala guide remains available to download from the BLR's online shop along with many other virtual items.

## **BRIGHT LIGHT, DARK ROOM**

The winning entries from the virtual gala's two photographic competitions.

The best photograph of the Bala Lake Railway - Winner: Andrew Budd



A cavalcade of locomotives approaches Dolfawr Crossing during the August 2016 BLR steam gala. The judges loved the composition and lighting of Andrew's image. It captures the character of the Railway beautifully, showcasing our annual 'jewel in the crown' event perfectly. Andrew's prize, a year's complimentary membership of the BLRS and a BLR mug.

The best steam loco photograph from another railway - Winner: Sjors van Dongen



Winter in the Netherlands, featuring former NS (Dutch National Railways) No. 8107 - which is nicknamed 'Frog' due to the fact that it's green and supposedly leaps along the track! The judges noted this entry to be a lovely portrait of a very well turned out locomotive, the image capturing the movement of the train and the winter conditions to create a great picture. Sjors' prize is lunch for four at the Llanuwchllyn Station Cafe and a Bala Lake Railway mug.

The photographic competitions had runners-up spots, each runner-up receiving a BLR mug for their efforts. Congratulations to Bob Shell, Nigel Matthews, Tim Gregson, Ben Nelson, Jenny Smith and Rupert Conner. Sadly there is not space to publish all the images, though Jenny's image of her dog 'Mac' resting at Bala sneaks in below under RUFF RIDERS. However room *must* be made for Rupert's image because it is rather fantastic!



So here it is....

Before the first departure of the day, *Winifred* heads away from Llanuwchllyn shed to collect her carriages.

Driver: Peter Heywood  
Fireman: Dave Rutt  
Date: 27th October 2019

Thank you to all who entered the photographic competitions. The judges had a hard job choosing and agreeing on the winners!

## RUFF RIDERS

In the last issue of *Llanuwchllyn Express* there went forth a call to all pet owners : Please do send in photographs of your pets riding on BLR trains. BLRS member Jennifer Smith has submitted these photos of Mac - her little rescue Westie. Like Jenny, Mac loves the BLR's trains, enjoying three rides in a week during the summer of 2019.

Once again, the call goes forth. Dog owners: You know what to do...



## THE SAFETY DANCE

Like all heritage railways, the BLR is well used to developing safe ways of working. The CV-19 crisis has added another very serious layer to the concept of risk management and, naturally, signage abounds, as these photos from BLR volunteers Liz Partridge and Ailith Rutt show...



### Boarding the Train

When the train arrives please stand at least 2 metres from the platform edge and allow passengers to get off the train before attempting to board

Family groups of 5 or 6 people have priority in our compartment coaches.

In our saloon carriages (those with doors at the ends) some seats are marked out of use to facilitate safe social distancing.

Please occupy the seats towards the centre of the carriage first.

Passengers occupying seats near the doors will all need to leave the train if passengers sitting near the centre need to get off.

Please apply sanitiser to your hands before boarding



Meanwhile, new operational procedures have been put in place, with crew wearing masks in order to help protect permanent staff, each other and passengers. Below, images from Ailith Rutt and Tim Williams show physical barriers in place in both the shop and carriages, helping to maintain safety and social distancing in these difficult times.



## THESE ARE SPECIAL EDITION TIMES

If you've not heard about it already...well, where have you been?

Introducing the first ever *Llanuwchllyn Express* Special Edition.

The LE-SE is a purchase-only item, an addition to the quarterly journal. As you might expect, it is packed with content including some fantastic photographs from the the Railway's earliest days that have never been published before and a range of articles covering diverse BLR topics including photo charters, garden railways, the earliest days and historic services, narrow gauge memories and more. Produced on a very limited print-run to tie in with the BLR's Virtual Gala, the edition is almost sold out. If you'd like one of the last copies then hurry to the BLR's new online shop. There are two purchase options:



**Journal only:** £5 incl. UK postage. Bargain, worth every penny!

**Enhanced bundle:** £15 incl. UK postage. The bundle contains the LE-SE journal, a specially created and very limited edition *Llanuwchllyn Express* tea-towel (described by one delighted member as "a work of art in its own right!"), five 6x4" photographs from the BLR archive and a reprint/copy of the very first BLRS newsletter from August 1974. At £15, 'tis a snip!!

If you don't fancy the electronic payment route you can purchase the Special Edition via cheque payment.

Email [Llanuwchllyn.express@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:Llanuwchllyn.express@bala-lake-railway.co.uk) to request further information and reserve your copy.

## BALA LAKE RAILWAY SOCIETY - 2021 CALENDAR

The IDEAL gift for fans of the BLR's locos and people who like calendars!

Yes, the BLRS 2021 calendar is surely the ideal gift for practically everyone! Every A4 sized calendar features high quality images on 13 full colour pages, spiral-bound and printed on heavyweight silk paper, each being finished in a cellophane wrap. Days and months of the year are presented in both English and Welsh. What more could you want?! You can order your very own BLRS calendar for £11, delivery included.

Interested? Here's how to progress a purchase...

### Online Payment (Credit Card / Paypal):

The BLRS 2021 calendar can be purchased via the BLR's new online shop.

### Cheque Payment:

Email [Llanuwchllyn.express@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:Llanuwchllyn.express@bala-lake-railway.co.uk) to request further information.

Just as last year, the 2021 BLRS calendar is on a limited print run (there are only 60 copies, with half of those already sold) - and it will surely sell out. The look on your partner's / friend's / parent's / probation officer's face when you tell them you missed out on buying them a calendar will surely haunt you for life - so act quickly!



## **BALA LAKE RAILWAY SOCIETY - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Notice is hereby given that the 2020 AGM of the Bala Lake Railway Society will take place at the Llanuwchllyn Heritage Centre on 12th September 2020 at 5.30pm.**

The planned May 2020 AGM was postponed due to CV-19 restrictions. Plans to hold a 'Members' Day' incorporating the AGM have been postponed until 2021 (if CV-19 restrictions permit). Due to the ongoing CV-19 crisis the re-scheduled AGM will happen a little differently and, for the first time, it will be possible to attend via Zoom based video-link.

**All BLRS members are encouraged to attend the AGM but we ask that you register your intention to join, be that in person or via video-link.** The Heritage Centre is a large space, but we will limit physical attendee numbers if required to maintain social distancing. If the AGM is oversubscribed we will ask members who would otherwise attend in person to consider attending via video-link. This contingency is not expected to be required.

The video-link facility will be available to all BLRS members who wish to use it. Many other meetings, workshops and other discussions have taken place effectively via video-link in recent times and it is considered the best way to ensure that as many members as possible have the opportunity to attend the AGM. Please confirm your preference for attending a.s.a.p in order that arrangements can be finalised and joining instructions provided.

The AGM agenda and reports will be emailed to all members who register to attend - unless requested otherwise. Guidance explaining how to join via video-link and how to vote remotely will also be emailed before the day of the AGM. The voting system for those attending via video-link will be secure and anonymous, allowing full AGM participation.

This year we are proposing minor changes to the constitution: Principally, para 4(g): Increasing the number of BLRS Vice Presidents from two to four, and amending the AGM date to be 'a Saturday within 13 months of the previous AGM, the date to be published within 6 months of the date of the previous AGM' (changing the current stipulation that the AGM must be held on a Saturday in April or May). A full copy of the text will be available in the BLRS Members' Area of the BLR website or on request from Tim Williams . It will also be circulated to attendees with AGM documentation.

**Election:** If you wish to stand for one of the eight committee seats or one of the four executive roles, you need to be proposed and seconded by BLRS members. Your nomination - with the signatures of your two supporters - must reach the BLRS before the deadline stated below. The role of Hon. Secretary has remained vacant since the last AGM and the committee are particularly keen to see a member come forward to fill this role. If you are interested in the role and wish to know more please email chairman Dave Rutt.

The deadline for notification of attendance at the AGM and to give notice to stand for BLRS election is 11pm on Saturday 29th August 2020. Please confirm via email to [dave.fildes@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:dave.fildes@bala-lake-railway.co.uk) or via post to Tim Williams c/o Llanuwchllyn Station.

### **FROM LLANUWCHLLYN WITH LOVE**

BLRS vice chairman - and all-round tech guru - Tim Williams has created an online BLRS Members' Area, enabling Society members to access out-of-print issues of *Llanuwchllyn Express* and other Society documents including AGM information (when posted). Head to [society.bala-lake-railway.co.uk](http://society.bala-lake-railway.co.uk) to access the login page. You will need your email address and BLRS membership number, and to complete a short registration process.



A big 'thank you' to all draw members who donated their winnings to the COVID-19 appeal. The winners for the past quarter are as follows:

**Results for the May 2020 Draw:** 1st prize: Number 3 - S.Wood

2nd prize: Number 39 - K.Worland 3rd prize: Number 35 - D.Holgate

**Results for the June 2020 Draw** 1st prize: Number 1 - A.McDougall

2nd prize: Number 27 - G.Smith 3rd prize: Number 17 - G.Williams

**Results for the July 2020 Draw** 1st prize: Number 27 - G.Smith

2nd prize: Number 40 - D.Holgate 3rd prize: Number 15 - H Jones

Would you like to join the BLRS Draw Club? The Draw Club year runs from January to December, so if you join now, your first Draw will be in September and the payment for one number for the remainder of the year will be £10.00. If you fancy a small flutter - one that helps support the Bala Lake Railway - please contact membership secretaries Martin & Cathy Houghton via [membership@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:membership@bala-lake-railway.co.uk)

### **BLRS MEMBERS' BENEFITS - AN UPDATE**

BLRS members will be aware that they are ordinarily entitled to travel on BLR services on a complimentary basis up to three times per annum on production of their valid membership card. Members will also appreciate that BLR trains are currently running with restricted capacity due to social distancing requirements, and understandably the Railway aspires to prioritise paying passengers. BLRS members seeking complimentary travel are asked to telephone the Railway in advance - but no more than two hours before the desired departure time - and to speak to David Jones or Dan Laidlaw who will advise on the availability of complimentary seats based on known passenger loadings. Members are advised that the first and last departures from Llanuwchllyn are those more likely to be less busy - though if you've been watching the webcam you will be aware that even these trains have sometimes been close to full. Members are additionally advised that complimentary travel is restricted to a single return journey for the remainder of this operational season, and are thanked in advance for their understanding and support.

The reciprocal free-travel agreement between the BLR and the Talylyn Railway is currently suspended by mutual agreement. *Llanuwchllyn Express* will update members with developments when known.

### **LIFT UP THE RECEIVER...**

Tim Williams has installed a telephone in Llanuwchllyn signal box and plans to add further units across the Railway. Once complete, the network will deliver a significant enhancement over current intra-BLR communication facilities. The developing 'Voice Over IP' system utilises Cisco handsets donated by Richard Sterne and takes advantage of the BLR's recently upgraded sitewide internet.

### **KEEPING BUSY**

Tim has been busy! Just ahead of the Virtual Gala he breathed life into the BLR's online shop - accessible now via [shop.bala-lake-railway.co.uk](http://shop.bala-lake-railway.co.uk)

A number of BLRS items are available for purchase - most notably both the BLRS 2021 calendar and *Llanuwchllyn Express* - Special Edition. It costs nothing to browse and we don't have to quarantine and steam clean any goods you inspect! Why not have a look...?

## BRIGHTENING BALA LAKE BLUES...

Whilst the Railway was closed on account the CV-19 lockdown, BLRS members and BLR volunteers used social media sites with images from happier times, helping to raise spirits and maintain interest. From a selection of the superb images shared, their content covering almost every decade of BLR operation



**Above:** *Holy War* in red at Flag Station with the first ever BLR Santa Special and the day's busy crew and volunteers who are (L-R): Santa, David Peaker, Matt (Teddy) Greenhalgh, Gwen Evans, John Sanderson, Martin Cleaver, Roger Hine, Sarah Corish and Chris Hargreaves.  
**Photo:** John Harrison



unteers and supporters flooded social  
 presented here is but a small selection  
 ns. Thank you everyone!



- 1) The 'Penrhyn Quarry Railway' line-up during June 2018. From left are: *Hugh Napier*, *Marchlyn*, *Gwynedd* and *Winifred*. **Photo:** John Huxley.
- 2) 2nd November 2003. *Alice* arriving at Llanuwchllyn from the Leighton Buzzard Railway. **Photo:** Bob Shell.
- 3) 24th June 2018. *George B*, *Alice* and *Cloister* lead a waggon train at the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's Hunslet 125 festival. **Photo:** Thomas Haynes.
- 4) *Maid Marian* heads a BBQ Special, celebrating the 10th 'Model Engineers' Gala. **Photo:** Chris Jackson.
- 5) 2002: Eric Tarrant (left) and Bob Shell with *Maid Marian* (in black) and *Holy War*. **Photo:** Eric Tarrant.
- 6) Early 1980s. George Barnes re-fills *Holy War's* coal bunker whilst on footplate duties with Howel Jones. Note: Background farm buildings, now gone. **Photo:** Ray Reid.

## MY SECRET GARDEN

**With passenger services set to run for the first time after months of CV-19 induced slumber, BLR GM David Jones sought assistance to help ensure the station gardens looked their best for the first customers of the post-lockdown era. Volunteers Roger and Christine Kent once again stepped forward to lend their green fingered talents to the Bala Lake Railway - and then kindly sent *Llanuwchllyn Express* both an article and photographs...**

Fancy a challenge? Become a gardener! Never mind us always complaining that it is too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry, too windy, always aggrieved as we are with the rabbits, deer, slugs and snails, bugs and beetles, squirrels, pigeons and mice and the neighbour's cat. Believe me, when it comes to the dreaded CV-19, gardening is a great 'de-stresser'.

There we were, the garden just coming back to life after a long, wet and windy winter when total lock down was threatened, cueing a mad dash to the local nursery to stock up with seeds before the country ground to a halt. With CV-19 dominating the news, something akin to the war-time spirit kicked in and we were busy sowing vegetable and bedding plant seeds to see us through the uncertain times, aided by our wonderful village store which had secured some pallets of compost. Roger and I would count our blessing everyday, able as we were to sit on our balcony in the lovely warm sunshine, looking out over the lakeland fells close to our home. We had plenty of things to occupy our time. New vegetable troughs were built, Roger's 16mm garden railway finally received a long planned extension, and his station shed was insulated and lined with the scrap ply which I been threatening to throw out for years. In between times we would dream about returning to Llanuwchllyn...

How did we get involved with the BLR in the first place? My own silly fault! Roger used to travel along the old GWR line as a teenager whilst enroute to summer camp at Pwllheli and two years ago I thought it would be nice to treat him to a Driver Experience day [see L.E. No.163 - Ed]. Whilst he was having the time of his life aboard *George B* on a bitterly cold day, I sat in the car with my knitting, admiring the station and surrounding grounds. Next to the station entrance I espied a large flowerbed. The plants were just coming back into life but the bed still contained the previous year's dead growth and it looked a little forlorn. As an avid gardener I always have my trusty secateurs to hand; the more I looked at the flowerbed, the more the clippers twitched. And so over lunch I plucked up the courage to ask about volunteers who tend the gardens. Would I be stepping on anyone's toes if I cut back the dead stems ready for the summer? Fatal first words! One thing led to another and, before we knew it, Roger had built new planter troughs for the platform and, on one of our subsequent visits, David sent me off to source some bedding plants. I was in seventh heaven, wandering round a nursery spending other people's money!

So that's how it all started. Now we found ourselves concerned with the uncertainty that CV-19 had brought, not knowing how long lockdown would last, if the Railway run again this year or whether we would lose the entire season, both in operational and growing terms. I was beginning to think that the best plan was to write off the entire summer, and to sow seeds late in the year in order to ready some colour for next spring, when the CV-19 situation seemed to improve a little and, in England at least, the nurseries and garden centres were allowed to re-open. I had to think fast - but what miserable looking stock the nurseries held! Perhaps not a great surprise, but I still managed to find some very small plants. I set to work, potting them up, hoping there would be time to grow some sturdy plants in time for the

Railway's anticipated re-opening in August. I was sure there was just enough time - but the Welsh Government was not mindful of my plans and suddenly there came the great news that the Railway's re-opening was set for early July. Panic not - though thank heavens for chicken-poo pellets and compost from the village shop! The plants came on apace and we were ready, just, to head to Llanuwchllyn and to spruce up the tubs ready for the summer.

It is always a challenge to decide which plants are best, giving as much colour as possible whilst relying on little attention. Bedding begonias and geraniums are a good bet because they don't mind dry soil yet can tolerate wet weather and little dead-heading. The existing Gold Crest conifers were outgrowing their tubs and the winter gales had killed or uprooted some. To replace them I chose purple cordylines as they will give a bit of height but, hopefully, will not resist the wind. I'm not sure how they will like the cold Welsh winters but we will just have to see. Nothing ventured, nothing gained!



A platform full of plants / Christine at work. Have you seen the replanted tubs on the webcam? They look great!  
**Photos:** Roger Kent.

And so on 7th July, Roger and I headed to Llanuwchllyn with a car boot full of plants, spending the bulk of that damp, dreary Tuesday under the beady eye of the webcam as we potted up and down the far platform, renovating the horticultural display. Perhaps you saw us? Perhaps you want to join us? If there are any potential gardening partners out there who fancy a challenge and can help tend and expand the Railway's floral offering at Llanuwchllyn, please do get in touch with BLR GM David Jones. Don't forget, in time there will be the extension to Bala and a whole new station environment to tend. Now that is a real challenge!

**Christine Kent, BLRS Member / BLR Volunteer**

## JUST THE TICKET: A RETURN TO BALA

**As the BLR re-opened, stalwart BLR volunteer guard Brian Bennett was back on duty.**

Thursday 9th July 2020. The big day had arrived; passenger train services were resuming at the Bala Lake Railway! And what better way to return to normality in North Wales than by starting the day with a touch of drizzle, though thankfully it soon cleared. Diesel shunter *Trigger* was quickly started and the day's service engine - *George B* - was hauled out of the loco shed. Excepting her run down the line the previous day, the loco not been steamed for service in many months and, once the fire had been cleaned and lit, the day's footplate crew - Ben Nelson and Peter Newhouse - got on with cleaning away the grime that had settled upon every surface, polishing both brass and paintwork so that the engine looked her best. Meanwhile, up in the platform, I completed the cleaning of the day's six carriage train. In previous days the permanent staff and a small team of volunteers had applied signage to the coaches, affixing protective screens in the open carriages and cleaning of the entire set. The guard's compartment contained a wealth of cleaning and sterilising materials and I was soon able to ensure the carriages were cleansed and ready to receive passengers.

After a quick run up to the water column to top up on coal and water, *George B* was coupled to her train and awaited departure. Shortly before 11.15am, Bernard Allman, back on duty in the signalbox, dropped the starter signal and moments later I gave the right away, the loco whistling long and loud as we eased slowly out of the station, on time and with 28 passengers on board. The second train was equally positive with some 20 souls travelling, but the final train let the side down with no passengers at all. That said, day went well until the last leg of that final trip when gremlins struck and we came to a stand at Llangower, the engine crew reporting that the loco's fire was heavily clinkered. There followed a valiant attempt to restore some vigour to the firebox but eventually defeat had to be admitted and *Trigger* was summoned from Llanuwchllyn, adroitly demonstrating that she is still more than capable of hauling a six carriage train and a dead loco up Dolfawr Bank.

And so ended a good day. We had re-opened the Railway and served a fair number of passengers, robustly testing the operational procedures required to conform to the government's CV-19 restrictions. Best of all, it was lovely to be back in North Wales, back at the Bala Lake Railway, and back at my usual post in the guard's van.

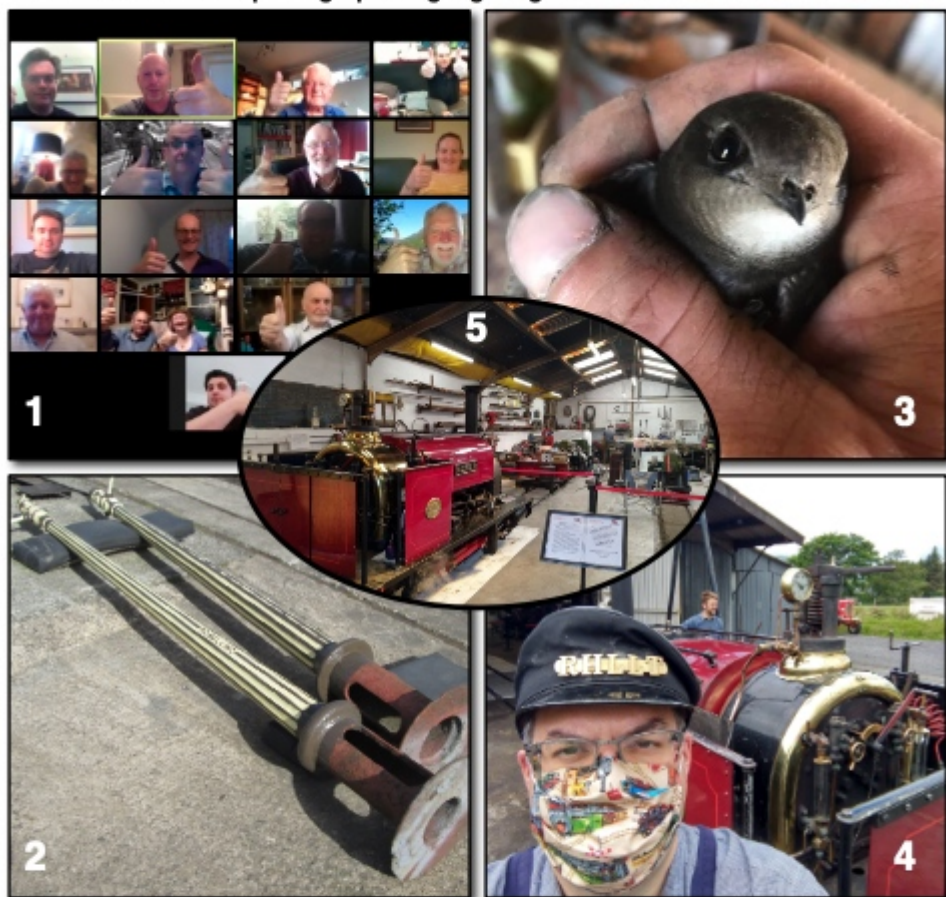
**Brian Bennett,**  
BLR Volunteer Guard



A guard's eye view at Pen y Bont, Bala.  
Photo: Allith Rutt - 11th July 2020.

## AROUND THE RAILWAY

A small selection of photographs highlighting some recent activities at the BLR.



1) During the CV-19 crisis (has it ended yet...?!), members of the the Bala Lake Railway team have kept in touch via Skype and Zoom, with regular 'Virtual Eagles' meetings held featuring round-table chit-chat and pub quizzes. Featured in this image are some of the attendees of the chat held 9th May 2020. 'The Eagles' is, of course, the pub in Llanuwchllyn.

2) Francis Stapleton has been busy restoring two Victorian lamp-posts. Dan Laidlaw has the funding for two new lanterns courtesy of Barbara Cooper's tombola fund and spare funds remaining after the creation of Birley's crossing. The lamps will grace platform 2 at Llanuwchllyn when all is ready. Photo: Tim Williams - 22nd July 2020.

3) Rob Houghton to the rescue, helping a grounded Swift to take to the air again - after a selfie.

4) The new normal. With the footplate of a Quarry Hunslet too narrow to facilitate social distancing, the crews must wear face masks to comply with CV-19 regulations. Pictured before departing the loco shed for the day's footplate duties is BLR Fireman / BLRS Chairman Dave Rutt, looking snazzy.

5) *George B* - back on shed at the conclusion of a successful day's running. The loco shed has been tidied and is looking very bright and smart, new signage and flexi-ropes deployed to protect the permanent staff in their workplace. Photos 4&5: Dave Rutt, 11th July 2020.

## SIGNALLING LOUD AND CLEAR

**Seeking an outlet for his energies, long time Bala resident and BLRS member Bernard Allman approached the Bala Lake Railway as a prospective volunteer in 2017. After completing training as a volunteer signaller, Bernard has become an established member of the BLR team, seen regularly in Llanuwchllyn station's historic GWR signal box, always impeccably attired. The days are busy and often long - but Bernard loves it! He writes to describe his average day...**

On days when the Railway is running regular passenger services, and I am booked for duty, I arrive at Llanuwchllyn at around 9.30am, though on busy gala days I have to be up extra early, making the short drive from my Bala home to book on at 7.45am. Upon arrival I collect the keys and ascend the steps to unlock the signal box and, if it is cold or wet, I clean out swiftly the ash pan in box's cast-iron Romesse stove, lighting a new fire before heading back down the steps to the BLR's shop/cafe to make a hot drink and to enjoy a convivial chat with other volunteers whilst the signal box warms. Of course in the summer no hot coals are required and instead I can slide open the windows and enjoy the gentle flow of fresh Welsh air. The first train is not booked to depart until 11am (or an hour earlier on gala days) so I have plenty of time to check the signal box, giving the floor a good clean and ensuring the signal levers are operational, giving them a wipe down. You may have seen old pictures of signal men operating the levers of their signal frame with a cloth in hand - and I do exactly the same. The tops of the signal lever handles are polished, unpainted steel, and operating the levers with a cloth prevents rust forming from contact with the sweat on the operator's hands. In quiet moments I will work to keep the lever tops sparkling bright with an iron scrubber which looks much like a piece of chain-mail and fits in the palm of the hand.

My next important task is to prepare the Train Register Book. In the heyday of standard gauge operations through Llanuwchllyn the register would have had various functions but most importantly it was - and still is - a document of record and an aide-memoire to the signal man. Provided the book is kept up-to-date, the signal man can refer to it at any time to remind himself of the current situation, reducing the chance of a train being forgotten. Some signal men were assiduous in entering each event as it occurred - others would rely upon their memory to remember the timings for a number of trains before entering those timings in 'The Book'. At very busy boxes, a separate 'Booking Lad' would be responsible for maintaining the train register, usually dealing with telephone calls as well. I have no such luxury and complete the register myself in the same way as my predecessors, noting the train



movements into and out of Llanuwchllyn station and, during galas when multiple trains are running, using it to record my contact with the signal man on duty at Llangower signal box. In comparison to ordinary operational days, gala events are hectic affairs with many more passenger train movements for me to oversee - sometimes with additional demonstration slate waggon trains that make the half-line journey to Llangower and back. When the Railway is offering either 'Driver for a fiver' experiences or rides in the Dinorwic carriage there is the added requirement to signal the movements of an engine around Llanuwchllyn station's track loop. I have to keep one eye on these proceedings and the other looking down the line towards Dolfawr Bank for any sign of approaching trains, ensuring that the station engine has been safely signalled over to the loop line in good time such as to allow me to signal the arriving passenger train's entry into the station platform. It's not hard work but it keeps me on my toes and gala days can be especially tiring.

The signal box was closed to visitors earlier this year due to the need to renovate and repair the structure - which resulted in the signal box's steps not being deemed appropriate for public use. Once the new steps are in place we will again be open for public visits. We get a real mix of people ascending the steps, from those who have never seen the inside of a signal box before to old signal men keen to remember their glory days. All are welcome and I always look to make time to explain the workings of the box and the history of some of the railwayana on display, and to allow children to have a go at pulling some of the disconnected levers - with a cloth in their hands of course!

When services have ended for the day I can start the process of 'closing out' the signal box - though on gala days I must first wait for the signal man at Llangower to confirm his\* box is closed. I set the signals so that the engines and coaches can be returned to their respective sheds at Llanuwchllyn then, once all running line movements have concluded, I can close up, securing the windows and/or extinguishing the fire as necessary, returning all signals to the 'danger' position to ensure no further engine movements can occur, before finally closing and locking the signal box. With my working day finished there's still time for a chat with the footplate volunteers as they head back to the station from the loco shed, then it's time to go home for dinner, another day done.



**Bernard Allman, BLR Volunteer Signalman, Llanuwchllyn Station**

\* **Editor's note:** Only required during multi-train running, the Llangower signaller is generally a 'he' in the form of Tim Williams, Howard Bowling or Dan Laidlaw, however the BLR would be pleased to hear from prospective volunteer signallers of any gender. Bernard had never worked in signalling before and look at him now! Full training is given. Interested? You'll find initial contact information on page 30.

**Point of interest:** Search 'Inside Meldon Junction Signal Box In 1961' on YouTube to hear sounds recorded inside a working signal box during BR steam days. Meldon Junction was a Southern signal box, the highest and most remote in the Southern region, being situated high on the slopes of Dartmoor. (With editor's acknowledgement's to Jan Ford's online blog for insights concerning the Train Register Book.)

## **RAILS & TRAILS – WALKING FROM THE BALA LAKE RAILWAY**

**What better way to start or finish a day of walking than a train ride? Actually, there are probably plenty - however, for those looking to combine the two, the Bala Lake Railway and the stunning Snowdonian lakeside landscape through which its trains trundle are perfect partners. BLRS member David Bailey has made best use of the area's trails and has summarised a number of routes, sharing the first here so that we might follow in his footsteps.**

I visited Bala and the surrounding area in June 2019. The area is perfect for recreational walkers; there are beautiful vistas at every turn, and you can guarantee that wherever there's scenery of this magnitude, a wealth of good quality public footpaths is never far away.

During my stay I undertook a number of walks, all centred around the Bala Lake Railway which is well-placed to take advantage of the scenic cauldron through which it runs. All of my walks were suited to an average walker with a reasonable level of fitness, generally traversing clear and well way-marked footpaths. Anyone contemplating any of the walks around Llyn Tegid would be well advised to obtain a copy of the excellent Kittiwake Guide by David Berry entitled 'Walks Around Y Bala and Penllyn' and OS Land Ranger Map No. 23 (Cadair Idris & Llyn Tegid). Both are available from Llanuwchllyn Station shop.

### **Y Bala to Llanuwchllyn / Llanuwchllyn to Y Bala - Circular Route**

These two walks can be done in linear style, walking from either Bala or Llanuwchllyn before taking a train back, or, for the more adventurous, there is the option of completing the entire circuit. It's seven miles one way, fourteen if you go the whole hog, and combines excellent and varied walking with great views of the Lake, with some history thrown in to boot.

If you start from Bala town, don't be put off by the busy A494. You soon veer off, heading sharp right, up through Bala Caravan Park and then across heathland to join a road. Shortly you'll join grassy footpaths taking you across fields, through meadowland and past farmsteads, eventually emerging onto a track. This leads past Weirglodd Wen, former home of Rev. Michael Jones, the independent minister and principal of Bala College whose name is closely linked with the establishment of a Welsh settlement in Patagonia in the 1860s. Shortly after you'll pass an attractive and imposing non-conformist chapel before, at the entrance to Llanuwchllyn village, passing statues of local Welshmen Sir Owen Morgan Edwards and his son. Sir Owen, the first Chief Inspector of Schools for Wales, took the first steps towards ensuring the Welsh language was taught in Welsh schools. Once in the village you might head to the excellent Eagles Inn (though booking ahead is often advisable), or stroll on to the café at Llanuwchllyn Station with its tempting range of well-priced fare. You can choose to finish your walk here, perhaps taking in the Heritage Centre before catching the train to Bala, or continue on, into the second half of the circuit.





Thanks to the BLR, a permissive path takes the walker past the loco yard and then across the track to a path leading up to the B4403 back road. Shortly, an uphill path takes the walker through farmsteads, along paths and tracks before reaching a road just above the village of Llangower. If your legs are tiring you can descend this road, heading to Llangower Station (more on this idyllic spot in a future article), letting the train take the strain for the journey back to Bala. For those continuing, head along the road and then track through forestation and up to a great viewpoint, before descending through open country towards the former Bala Lake Hotel (now a staff day centre for the John Lewis Partnership).



Soon thereafter you'll arrive at the BLR's Bala terminus at Pen-y-Bont. If not catching a train back to Llanuwchllyn, continue on and head back to Bala Town via the pleasant road / footpath which follows closely the route of the BLR's extension, with fantastic views down the lake. In all, the circuit provides a lovely day's walking and is recommended to any who want to see the lake and the line from a different point of view.

**David Bailey, BLRS Member**



**Photographs: Previous Page: Top:** The impressive non-conformist chapel on the outskirts of Llanuwchllyn. **Bottom:** The statue of Sir Owen Morgan Edwards with his son, seen at the entrance to Llanuwchllyn. **This page: Top:** The footpath crosses the BLR track at the start of the scenic route from Llanuwchllyn station to Bala. **Bottom:** On the footpath from Bala to Llanuwchllyn, looking towards the western end of Llyn Tegid. All photos: David Bailey.

**Editor's note:** Thank you David. That does sound like a hugely satisfying walk - and I say that as someone who doesn't often undertake such adventures. I did once walk the short stretch from the station yard up to the back road, the highlight of which was hauling 24kg of unco-operative, muddy lurcher over a fixed farm gate. Strangely, never repeated. I understand that the next instalment will feature a circular walk from Llanuwchllyn station that goes off the beaten track and I look forward to receiving it.

## **BLAST FROM THE PAST: TWO-TRAIN TROUBLES**

**Two, or even three train-running has become a relatively frequent occurrence at the Bala Lake Railway, commonly seen during special events and galas with multiple engines hauling passenger services and demonstration slate wagon trains, crossing at all main stations on the line. However this was not always the case. Pete Briddon recalls the very first day of two-train working...**

The Bala Lake Railway first ran two-train operations in May 1979. Despite it being late spring the weather decided that it would make a special effort to mark the day - and so it snowed.

Back in 1979 there were two platforms at Llangower Station. To the east of the foot-crossing was a platform constructed in 1972 with GWR precast concrete sections recovered from Penmaenpool which, at only 5ft wide, could get a bit tight at the height of the peak season. To the west of the crossing was the current platform, built earlier in 1979.

George Barnes (bless him) was in charge of the day's locomotive operations. The key to the day's potential success was the development of a workable operational methodology for the passing of the two trains at Llangower. After much consideration, George decreed that the first train to arrive at the station would always stop at the east platform, irrespective of the direction from which it had travelled. Here passengers could alight, if required, whilst the service waited for the other train to arrive and occupy the western platform, passing the train stopped at the east-platform via the adjacent loop-line. Perhaps it seems complicated when written down, but the theory was simple and essentially workable apart from one key detail, being that prospective passengers seeking to join a train at Llangower would not know which platform they needed to stand on until after the first arrival had come to a rest. We tried to explain this fly in the operational ointment to George, but he could not - or would not - see it. In the end a senior colleague - I think it was probably Bob Davies - made robust representations and George relented, agreeing to revise the plan. So at the last minute, and not long before the day's first service was set to leave Llanuwchllyn, George announced that all trains were to leave Bala Station three minutes *later* than timetabled, this being intended to result in the down-train from Llanuwchllyn always being the first to arrive at Llangower, thus always able to occupy the east platform and await the arrival and passing of the later-running up-train from Bala. In theory, a sound plan, but there was a hitch; the message was misunderstood by *both* train crews - each of whom thought that the instruction was that trains from each end of the line were to depart three minutes later than scheduled. In the end it didn't matter anyway as there were continual loading delays at Llanuwchllyn meaning the 'down' trains never departed on time anyway!

At that time the full-time staff (Ieuan Jones and Howel Jones) drove all trains so Howel drove *Holy War* with John MacDougall firing, and Ieuan drove *Meirionnydd*. Today's BLR-built brake-van was not then finished so there were two Wrexhams as guard's/brake carriages, one on each set. The frame of the signal arm at the Bala end of the Llangower loop was up but the arms were not. A sign on the post said 'Stop Until Called Forward' and the train proceeded on a green flag from the Llangower blockman. Dave Dancer was blockman at Llangower that day and Rev. Alan Cliff, who still owned *Holy War* at that time, was also present. As for me, also I spent much of the day at Llangower, recording the day's operations for history and noting that almost every Llanuwchllyn-bound 'up' train had to be held at home signal by the Llangower river bridge, there to await the Bala-bound 'down' train's eventual arrival!

*Pete Briddon*



**Such great images - how will they all fit in?!**

- 1) *Meirionnydd* purrs into Llangower's eastern platform hauling the day's second 'down' service.
- 2) The very first passing trains: Colin Bie (left) and Ieuan Jones watch as Howel Jones and *Holy War* pass *Meirionnydd* with the up-train.
- 3) *Holy War* rolls towards the western platform at Llangower. Featuring Ian Mason (guard, *Holy War*) and, from right, Robin Edwards & Rev. Alan Cliff.
- 4) The second passing operation of the day. Note the armless signal frame at the top of the loop, with 'Stop Until Called Forward' sign in place.



All photos - Pete Briddon

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**A big 'Thank You' to all BLRS members who take the time to write to the editor. One recently received email stands out and has led to some changes to the Welsh language presented in this journal. By way of explanation, the email is here printed with the kind permission of Prof. Martin Ball.**

Dear Editor,

First, I'd like to say how much I enjoy the magazine, and the high standard it has reached in recent issues. The following point may seem somewhat less than important in current times, but I believe it is something that should be corrected and can be done so with little effort. This concerns the Welsh version of the journal name that occurs on the front cover and in one or two places within the magazine.

In Welsh, and other Celtic languages, the genitive (possessive) is constructed somewhat differently to that in English, especially as concerns the inclusion or otherwise of the definite article ('the' = 'y'). So, if you want to say the 'Journal of the Society', then 'Cylchgrawn y Gymdeithas' is perfectly correct. However, if you add definiteness by specifying the name of the Society, then you can no longer use the 'y': 'Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid'. Because the 'y' has been removed it no longer causes mutation on the C of 'cymdeithas', thus it does not change to 'gymdeithas' in this version. The current version is, unfortunately, not grammatical, even though the difference is slight.

It's the same as the difference between 'Coleg y Brifysgol' ('University College'), and 'Coleg Prifysgol Gogledd Cymru' ('University College of North Wales'), that used to be seen around Bangor until they changed the name some years ago.

It might also be preferable to use 'rhifyn' rather than 'argraffiad' for the Welsh for 'number' on the front cover; argraffiad means more like 'printing' or 'edition'; but this is not a major difference!

With best wishes for the future of the railway and the journal.

Martin J. Ball, DLitt, PhD, HonFRCSLT, FLSW.

Honorary Professor of Linguistics, Bangor University.

**Editor's note: I am very pleased to have received Martin's learned letter and have put his suggested corrections into immediate effect. I am also very pleased to have received the following words concerning a visit made to the Bala Lake Railway in these post-lockdown times.**

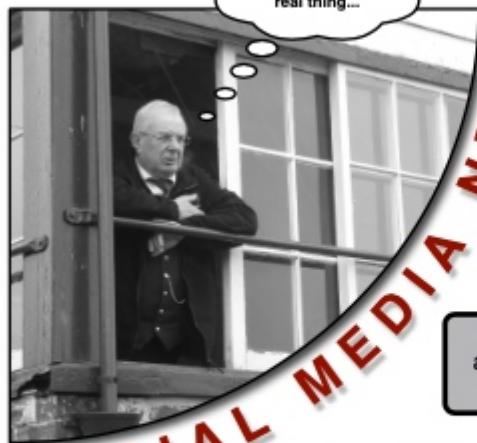
Dear Editor,

We've loved our recent visit to BLR - and we loved the virtual steam gala. It was such a great day. We were thrilled to see the Railway was able to open to the public again soon after the gala and watched the first train departure after lockdown on the webcam, cheering over here in Manchester. We couldn't wait to actually get on the train on Sunday 19th July and we booked again for the following Tuesday. We had a brilliant few days and all of the Railway's Covid-19 protocols were really impressive. You can tell so much effort and thought had gone into making everything as safe as possible but it's not intrusive into your visit. Please do pass on our thanks to all the BLR team. We had an amazing couple of days, though sadly now we're back home in rainy Manchester.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer & Gordon Smith

I like virtual galas almost as much as the real thing...



## SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS

### If it's on the **INTERWEB**

it **MUST** be true, mustn't it? Here is a selection of comments posted by Virtual Gala supporters...

I found [watching the gala footage] very addictive! A lot of work gone into it, a very professional presentation!

What a triumph!  
Thank you so much to everyone at the BLR for such an entertaining day. The love you all have for the Railway is clear to see. See you as soon as we can!

Thank you to everyone involved in the virtual gala. An excellent day, the closest thing to being there. Cheers to everyone at Llanuwchllyn; hope to be able to visit soon.

Well done to everyone. I had to skip between the virtual gala and my wife's birthday but seem to have managed to avoid a divorce, so a win-win! What a great day; hope it was a success in all regards.

We've thoroughly enjoyed [the virtual gala] and fully intend to visit in the future. It's been fun, inspiring and I admire you all for your hard work and creativity.



All comments from Facebook. Edited for publication.  
Right: "A fantastic day" - Happy young passengers at Bala on 18th July 2020. Photo: Stuart Morton.

## COME AND JOIN US!

The Bala Lake Railway depends on volunteers for very many of its operations. The majority of our footplate crews, guards, signallers, gardeners and track/general maintenance workers are volunteers. Comprising a diverse group of all ages and from all walks of life, we work together in a beautiful location and against a dramatic backdrop to deliver a fantastic Welsh narrow-gauge experience for our passengers (see page 29!). The Railway is going from strength to strength; why not come and join in the fun? A warm welcome and plenty of tea will be provided. Flapjacks too if you are lucky! Recently refurbished accommodation, provided by the BLRS, is available to volunteers for a donation of £4 per night. All new volunteer enquiries should be sent by email to [volunteering@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:volunteering@bala-lake-railway.co.uk)

All accommodation enquiries should be emailed to BLR General Manager David Jones. Why not visit the BLR website to learn more about the Volunteers' Open Day on 13th September via the website's 'Support Us' tab? There are a few spaces left but not many...

## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Please send all membership enquiries and renewals to:

Martin and Cathy Houghton, Plas Bach, 20 St Peters Way, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3RZ.

**Email:** [membership@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:membership@bala-lake-railway.co.uk) **Telephone:** 01359 233 300

Inclusion of an A5 S.A.E is always welcome. Please advise Martin and Cathy if you change address as otherwise you will miss out on your copy of *Llanuwchllyn Express*.

Membership information can also be found within the Bala Lake Railway's website.

**Important update concerning renewals or other payments to the BLRS via internet banking:** The process of making payments via internet banking has recently changed. Payees must now give the name of the recipient account as well as the recipient's sort code and account number when making a payment. If making a payment to the BLRS via internet banking please use the account name **Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid** (rather than the Society's English translation) otherwise the banking system will reject the payment.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The regular notice board is having a break this issue. With CV-19 an ongoing problem, and government advice and regulations in seemingly perpetual flux, it seems quite impossible to confidently trail events that are up to five months distant. Please check the BLR website for up to date event information.

## IN THE CLUB

**Welcoming the following new members of the Bala Lake Railway Society:**

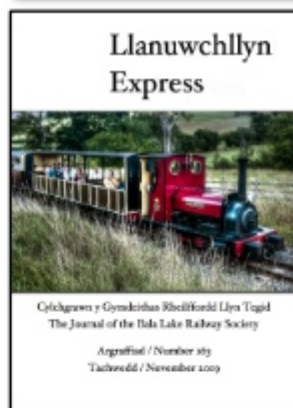
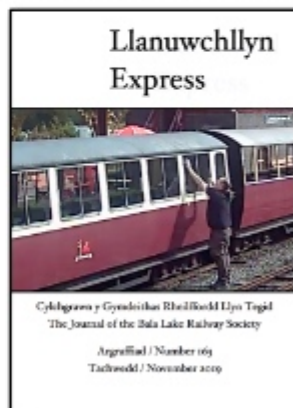
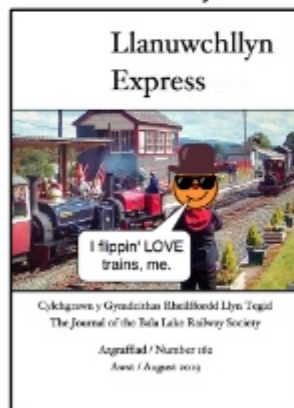
Mr A.Harris (London), Mr J.Kinley (Isle of Man), Mr D.Harris (Shipley), Mr J.Potter (Didcot), Mr P.Ashby (Staplehurst), Mr S.van Dongen (London), Mr A.Simmonds (Towcester), Mr I. & Mrs H.Thomas and family (Norwich), Mr F. & Mrs A.Byott and family (Llangollen), Mr A Budd (Cardiff), Mr R. & Mrs D.Harris (Devizes), Master J.Axcell (Leamington Spa), Mr M.Belham (Worcester), Mr D.Stiff (Chirk), Mr D. & Mrs K. Farmer and family (Crewe), Mr A. Williams (Macclesfield), Mr G.Balding (Norwich).

A very impressive intake of new members this quarter - our membership secretaries will have been busy!

**Croeso! Welcome to one and all; thank you for your support.**

## COVER VERSIONS

It takes much time to construct an issue of *Llanuwchllyn Express*. Indeed, as this edition heads to press in early August, the next two issues are in the early stages of development. Of course, the front cover is one of the most important elements to consider when planning an issue of *Llanuwchllyn Express*; it is important to chose a strong and positive image that defines the Railway. For one reason or another these versions did not make the final cut...



**Top line L-R:** 1) June 2019: Steam Gala 2) "You appearz to be eatin' me san'wich..." 3) Tim Williams scrubs up. **Bottom Line L-R:** 1) Rob has drained the loco shed inspection pit. 2) CV-19 'Working From Home Special' 3) *Maid Marian* on Dolfawr Bank. This was set to be the cover of *Llanuwchllyn Express* No.163 until the image was switched for Cameron Holden-Adams' *Alice* image at the last moment.

*Maid Marian* was set to be the cover star this month with a photo from February, however the image was switched to *George B* at the last minute. *Llanuwchllyn Express* covers have been a little *Maid Marian* centric of late - it was time for a change. The *Maid Marian* image was moved to page 7.

Have you taken any high quality photographs featuring scenes and volunteer activities from around the Railway? Has your family visited? Or your dog?! Have you just snapped our next cover image? Please do share high-resolution copies of your best images with this journals' editor - via email to [llanuwchllyn.express@bala-lake-railway.co.uk](mailto:llanuwchllyn.express@bala-lake-railway.co.uk)

