

# THE EARL



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

## A welcome to Charles, the W&LLR's new GM...

No 09 – March 2015

The happy smiling face at right will be recognised by regular volunteers as that of Charles Spencer, and the trustees are delighted to announce that Charles is to succeed Terry Turner as the railway's general manager.

You will recall from issue 5 of *The Earl* that after Terry announced his intention to retire at the end of the 2014 season the board took the opportunity to undertake a review of the railway's management structure, setting up a sub-committee for the purpose.

The group's conclusions formed the basis of the broad management experience we were seeking when we placed recruitment adverts in relevant outlets in November. These ads produced a keen interest in the position from candidates with a wide range of experience, both within the UK and internationally.

Charles is well known at Llanfair – he first joined the railway in 2008 and became a regular volunteer, often flying in specially from his home in Canada for week-long visits during which he would turn his hand to any work needed. Last season he passed out as a locomotive fireman, while he also volunteers at the Groudle Glen Railway on the Isle of Man.

### Broad experience

What was not generally known, until he was interviewed for the GM post, was Charles's broad background stretching across business, management and leadership in volunteer organisations. In 2012 he retired from a 30-year career with the Bank of Canada, for the second half of which he was a leading member of the Currency Department, which was responsible for Canadian bank notes from design to destruction.

He was jointly responsible for a staff of 250 and gained particular experience in organizational change and in conceiving and building new initiatives. These ranged across public education and communications, ground-breaking technical research approaches, market research, heritage revitalization, organizational reviews and staff training programmes.

Such a wide range of skills will be highly beneficial to the railway going forward, as will Charles's extensive experience of working with volunteers. He has undertaken leadership roles with a number of adult and youth volunteer organizations in music, sports and charities, involving up to 400 volunteers and budgets in excess of a quarter of a million.

Charles tells us he is relishing the challenge ahead. "I am counting on the support of staff



and volunteers to help me get into my new role," he says. "I want to listen carefully to all the expertise we have at the railway, and also to communicate clearly about decisions that we have to make for its continued success."

Chairman Iain McLean tells us the quality of the candidates who applied for the position made the eventual choice of the new general manager an exciting decision. "We are confident that Charles's expertise in management, finance, marketing and railway matters will complement the many skills among our railway's volunteers," he says.

Thanks are also very much due to deputy general manager Kevin Heywood, who stepped up to the role of acting general manager over the winter. Kevin has very effectively guided the railway through the important closed period, overseeing all the essential work that needs completing at this time of year.

Charles is expected to be in post around the time trains start operating for the 2015 season. He'll certainly be open to hearing the ideas no doubt many of you have, but we should at least let him get his feet under the desk – or on the platform – first!

*Photo of Charles taken by Kevin Heywood*



## A clean line is a happy line...

Pictured above are some of the small but enthusiastic team who turned up for the great carriage clean-up on 14th February. Much effort was expended and our essential vehicles are now spick and span, ready for our first passengers at the end of March.

Organiser Rosemary Charman is hoping to attract even more helpers on the weekend of 14th March to give Llanfair station a similar good going over – Rosemary's contact details are below.

Meanwhile loco dept member Tony Cass has joined in the fun, planning a pre-season locomotive springclean over the same March weekend. "The plan is to 'get ahead of the game' and hopefully make it easier for crews to keep up with cleaning during the season by giving everyone a head start," Tony says, adding that the cabs of the locos will be a priority target area.

Tony hopes to be joined by plenty of loco dept members in particular, from 9am Friday to Sunday – those attending the staff meetings on Saturday could hopefully find time to give a hand, even if only for a few hours – all assistance will be welcome!

### Useful information

**Railway websites:**

**Railway Facebook:**

**Members and Supporters Facebook:**

**Railway Twitter feed:**

**Office:** For volunteering, general info

**Loco Crew Officer**

**Loco Crew Admin and Rosters**

**Operations Officer:**

**Ops Dept Rosters:**

**Tearoom/shops rosters:**

**Press Officer:**

[www.wllr.org.uk](http://www.wllr.org.uk) [www.89a.org.uk](http://www.89a.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/WelshpoolSteamRailway](https://www.facebook.com/WelshpoolSteamRailway)

[www.facebook.com/LlanfairLine](https://www.facebook.com/LlanfairLine)

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Rosemary Charman, 01938 810592, [rosemarycharman@macace.net](mailto:rosemarycharman@macace.net)

Dick Hewett, 01794 500523, [rbhewett@gmail.com](mailto:rbhewett@gmail.com)

Steve Page, [steppage@btinternet.com](mailto:steppage@btinternet.com)

Andrew Charman, 01938 810592, [andrewcharman@macace.net](mailto:andrewcharman@macace.net)

## Workshop ads out

■ The railway's efforts to find a new workshop foreman to fill the gap left by the departure of Simon Durant in January have seen adverts placed in suitable media outlets in the past couple of weeks. If anyone knows of a potential candidate who might be interested, the advertisement can be found on the W&LLR website at [www.wllr.org.uk](http://www.wllr.org.uk)

## 2014 was a good year

■ The 2014 season ended on a high for the railway, with a highly successful Santa Specials programme. Reporting to members attending the first staff meeting, acting GM Kevin Heywood said that overall in 2014, bookings ended six per cent up, and receipts three per cent to the good. Considering we've been told by our county councillor trustee David Jones that tourism in Powys is suffering compared to the rest of Wales, these are excellent figures and a tribute to skilled use of incentives such as 2for1 vouchers.

## Anyone got a pic of Geoff?

■ If anyone has a good picture of former W&LLR driver Geoff Ikin during his time on the footplate could they contact *The Earl* editor Andrew Charman? Many thanks.

### STAFF MEETINGS

Loco or ops dept member? Missed the staff meeting on 15th February? If you did please don't forget that you must attend the second meeting on 14th March – your roster clerk would have supplied details.

## Diary Dates

7th-8th March	Hedgebash – contact Willy Field at <a href="mailto:willy.field@yahoo.com">willy.field@yahoo.com</a> or on 07814 143707
12th March	L&SE Group meet, Nick Lera: 'Narrow Gauge across the Balkans' 16mm film 1965-1970. Venue info at <a href="http://www.uklocos.com/ngrs/groups.htm">www.uklocos.com/ngrs/groups.htm</a>
13th-15th March	Loco dept Loco Clean-up
14th March	Staff Meeting
14th/15th March	Llanfair Station Clean-up
19th March	WAG Group meeting, Gavin Watson 'The Fighting Shrewsbury's' – GWR and LNWR rivalries, Welshpool Corn Exchange, 7.30pm
22nd March	Trustees Meeting
28th March	2015 season starts

This newsletter is published on an approximately monthly basis as a supplementary resource to *The Journal*, and distributed to those who request it as a PDF by email. It is also accessible from the [www.89a.org.uk](http://www.89a.org.uk) website.

Feel free to print this document so those without web access can read it. News for future editions? Want to go on the mailing list? Contact Andrew Charman - [andrewcharman@macace.net](mailto:andrewcharman@macace.net)

On Friday 20th February the W&LLR welcomed representatives of the Office of Rail Regulation who were visiting us to inspect Castle Crossing. The good news is that subject to a minor amendment the new red lights have been given the green light, and the crossing will be in operation for the start of the season. Photo: Kevin Heywood



## A job with great appeal?

This month we again need to find someone to fill a vital volunteer role, and again it is one of those behind-the-scenes jobs that can be done without constant visits to the railway.

For personal reasons Patrick McCormack is stepping down from his twin roles as appeals officer and membership database & website administrator, and finding a suitable replacement is a priority.

The appeals officer is responsible for implementing the appeals that we organise, as agreed with the appeals director Iain McLean. This includes promoting the appeal and communicating with donors past and present, recording donor and donation details and reporting progress of each appeal to the Trustees and membership.

As members will know, our appeals are crucial to making possible the various projects we either want to do or need to do – the latest have raised more than £46,000 for Castle Crossing, and at the time of writing

more than £60,000 to restore Sir Drefaldwyn.

This second role focuses on maintaining the in-house online database of members and donors, and [www.89a.org.uk](http://www.89a.org.uk), the public website for membership joining and renewal, donations and volunteering. Note that it has nothing to do with our main website [www.wllr.org.uk](http://www.wllr.org.uk) – that is separately administered.

The 89a website is made up using the highly popular and easy-to-use Wordpress content management system, and while it is currently managed by one person, putting it in the hands of a small team would be equally possible and perhaps preferable.

As we stated at the start, both these roles are virtually invisible to many involved with the line but absolutely crucial to our future progress, and anyone undertaking them will be contributing a great deal to the W&LLR. If you think that might be you, please in the first instance contact Iain McLean on 01865 278646 or [iain.mclean@nuffield.ox.ac.uk](mailto:iain.mclean@nuffield.ox.ac.uk)



■ The happy band above are just some of the volunteers who turned out in numbers for the railway's annual Workshop Week in February. Organiser Keith Bide hasn't yet been able to collate exactly how many hours were contributed, but they were plenty and much useful work was carried out. Highlights included making a new chimney for 'The Earl' and a new ashpan for 'Joan', as well as continuing with the restoration of 'Sir Drefaldwyn'. Some members had their first experience of workshop duties, and it is hoped they – and you? – will come back on a regular basis. If you do want to get involved, in the first instance contact Kevin Heywood at Llanfair. Photo: Alan Regan