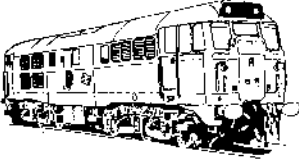
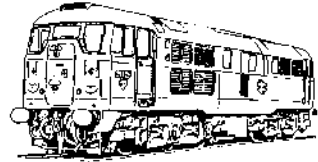


A1A LOCOMOTIVES LIMITED



NEWS



No.63

March 2024

EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 63. This will probably be my final edition as A1A Publicity Director; please see the announcement on page 10. This particular job has become easier since I stepped up to the role in 1994, mainly because we have become better-known in heritage railway circles and our operational locos tend to generate their own publicity. One example of this was the splendid panoramic photo of 31271 at the new Corwen Station on 4th June last year, only two days after its official public opening, which graced the July 2023 *Railway Magazine*. Our newsletter includes the latest update on 271's recent operating season at the re-named Llangollen & Corwen Railway, with thanks once again to Tez Pickthall of the Llangollen Diesel Group. Other news concerns our engineering team's investigation into 31514's long-standing 'misfiring' issues and extensive preparations for 31108 to make an extended summer visit to the Great

Central Railway. This will be another 'first' for us, but **please note that as of mid-March this is still awaiting confirmation**. Until this is received any arrangements must be regarded as provisional – please check to A1A Locos or GCR websites from mid-April onwards.

Steve Harvey

Provisional dates for 31108 at the Great Central Railway – Summer 2024

26th–28th April	Diesel Gala
1st/2nd June	Mountsorrel Branch Weekend
12th July	English Electric Day
6th–8th Sept	Diesel Gala
20th/21st Sept	Beer Festival

Other dates possible too, with 31108 likely to return to Butterley in late September if this visit goes ahead.



FLEET REPORT

31108 – MRB

This loco has been invited to the Great Central Railway at Loughborough, initially to take part in their 26th-28th April Diesel Gala, for which preparatory work has been necessary in addition to ongoing essential maintenance. On 6th March she was hauled outside our shed to be fuelled. The fuel system was bled through and primed, and the engine successfully started for the first time in six years. A new set of batteries was fitted previously, and a thorough exam undertaken with all the usual checks. During subsequent running checks power was taken and a brake created at No. 1 end with no air leaks. Initially no brake could be created at No. 2 end but this was rectified by changing the brake feed cut-off valve (BFCO). Another fault appeared after three hours of running when the battery charge contactor burnt out – this was renewed. All slack adjusters were checked and a full bogie lubrication completed.

In addition to the above, 108 has undergone major bodywork repairs during the past four years and recently been repainted back to into Railfreight Grey, this time as original with a white cantrail stripe instead of the orange one. New bodyside air filters have been fitted, along with a new oil radiator element on 'A' bank. She's now ready for our first visit to the 'GC'! Please note, however that this is subject to final confirmation, still awaited at the time of writing (mid-March).

31162/5580 – MRB

Stored in our shed at Swanwick Jct. We aim to begin major bodywork repairs during 2025 to include:

- complete re-plating of the No. 2 end bodysides, both sides of the loco below the waistband;
- corrosion repairs all over, including cab door overhauls;
- fabricating and fitting new nose-end doors;
- repairs to the 'fan house', mainly the top horizontal plate above the radiators on which the cooling fan is mounted.

31271 – Llangollen & Corwen Railway
Serviceable and currently stored undercover for which

we are extremely grateful. Due to a problem with the commutator on No. 2 end traction motor blower, two spare blowers have been sent away to a specialist for overhaul after which one will be delivered to Llangollen, the other returned to Butterley as a spare. We will continue to monitor 271's existing blower and probably replace it with the overhauled machine during the current year. No. 2 end roof arch also requires renewal which can be done at the same time when the roof section is off. 271's annual 'B' exam will be carried out in April before the 2024 operating season begins.

31514 – MRB

Restoration is continuing in our shed with investigations underway to find and rectify the reasons why two cylinders on 'A' bank weren't firing correctly, despite the timing being re-set, injectors and fuel pumps changed and fuel pump tappets re-set. 'A' bank has therefore been stripped down with (thus far) A2 and A4 con-rods bent and A4 cylinder liner found to be damaged; further investigations continue – thankfully the crankshaft journals are undamaged. All liners and pistons are to be renewed as necessary, together with new liner seals, piston rings etc. Cylinder heads are to be checked and overhauled as required. Once we've got the power unit running smoothly on all 12 cylinders we'll be able to address a few electrical issues.

Both cab interiors have been rubbed-down, damaged roof panelling renewed and woodwork repairs made. It is hoped to carry out more repairs to cab floors and fit lino in the cabs later in the spring. The drivers' and secondmans' seats have also been dismantled, rubbed-down and primed, and cab fittings and gauges rubbed-down and painted. Looking beneath, the bogies were recently painted along with the battery box doors, and now look smart in gloss black.

31418 – MRB

Once engine repairs on 514 are complete and its power unit runs correctly we aim to finish mechanical work on 418. Outstanding jobs include:

FLEET REPORT

- big ends nipping-up and pinning, inlet/exhaust valve tappets to set;
- oil sump cleaning out prior to refilling, oil pump pipework to refit and system to be flushed;
- power unit movement shims to be fitted (these are part of the main engine mountings);
- ETS cubicle repairs.

If all goes according to plan we could be aiming for a first 'fire-up' during the summer of 2025. The loco has recently been repainted and other recent work includes:

- air filter boxes and air filters refitted, louvre doors painted and fitted;
- buffer beams repainted, air hoses and valves fitted along with new vacuum hoses;
- secondman's side-buffer at No.1 end requires replacement and is currently being cleaned and

painted ready to fit;

- bogies and battery box doors painted;
- four replacement bodyside 'square' windows fitted;
- both cab interiors fully rubbed-down and repainted, cab fittings, gauges and valves overhauled and painted as necessary;
- cab seats stripped down and primed.

31106 - Component recovery

A visit to Kingsbury enabled various spares to be recovered from this loco which recently arrived there for breaking-up. These components will be of particular help in the restoration of 31418, with some valves and contactors having already been used in recommissioning 31108 to traffic. We are grateful to Hanson & Hall and particularly to Jason Hall for arranging and permitting our visit.

Jon Gibbons

FROM THE ARCHIVES

31418 arrives at Kings Cross with air-conditioned stock, probably during its allocation to Finsbury Park between October 1975 and April 1976 when it moved to Gateshead in exchange for 31411 *Photo: © Rail Image Collections*



50 YEARS AGO – BR LOCO FLEET RENUMBERING

The Brush Type 2s carried fleet numbers D5500-5699 and D5800-5862 from new. The Class 31 designation dates from the end of steam traction on British Railways in 1968 when the D number prefix became superfluous and was gradually abandoned. Plans for renumbering the locomotive fleet date from the early 1970s: starting with 76050 in November 1971, a few electric locomotives were renumbered with five-figure numbers, the first two numbers being the class number. The first diesel locomotives to receive the five-figure numbers were from Class 45 in early 1973. Some Class 45s were being fitted with electric train heating (ETH); locomotives retaining steam heat boilers were renumbered into the 450xx series while locomotives fitted with ETH were renumbered into the 451xx series.

A comprehensive plan to renumber almost all the locomotive fleet was announced in autumn 1973. The Class 31s already had a separate fleet of ETH-fitted locomotives, and there were also the prototype Brush Type 2s that had retained the non-standard electro-magnetic control system, usually known as the 'toffee apples'. Class 31s were therefore initially divided into three sub-classes: the 'toffee apples' became Class 31/1, the standard locomotives were Class 31/2 and the ETH locomotives became Class 31/3.

Each sub-class of Class 31 was assigned new numbers, mostly in the same order as the old numbers: the 'toffee apples' became 31001-31019, the standard

locomotives became 31101-31327, and the ETH locomotives became 31401-31417. There was a small complication for the 'toffee apples' – the original class leader 5500 did not become 31001 but instead became 31018, taking the place of 5518 which had been converted to a 'standard' locomotive. Another small complication, in the ETH locomotives, was that 5812, the locomotive due to become 31413, had still not been called to Doncaster Works for ETH to be fitted.

British Railways quickly realised that having sub-classes and number sequences that did not match was confusing. Within a few weeks 31001-31019 were redesignated Class 31/0, with 31101-31327 becoming Class 31/1 and 31401-31417 Class 31/4.

Applying the new numbers to locomotives began slowly. The first Class 31 to be renumbered was 31416, in September 1973, Old Oak Common Depot simply painting out the old 5842 number and applying the new number on top. In November 1973 Old Oak Common repainted 5803 from green into blue livery, renumbering it to 31273 in the process.

Apart from 31416 and 31273 the only locomotives renumbered before the end of 1973 were repaints at Doncaster Works. The first of these was 31326 in October 1973, and the November 1973 Doncaster Works repaints with renumbering included 31418 and 31162 now in the A1A Locomotives fleet. 31418 was not in the original 31/4 list, being the first additional ETH conversion that had been approved just after the renumbering scheme had been announced.

Renumbering at depots began in January 1974 and by April most locomotives had been renumbered. The

Continued on page 10



During the early stages of TOPS renumbering there were variations in the position adopted for loco numbers and, in some cases, a different font was used. 31111, seen here at March Depot in May 1974, shows the main style initially adopted with numbers inboard from the cab door pillars on the driver's side and BR double arrows on all four cabsides Photo: © Rail Image Collections

31271 AT THE LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY 2023

**Tez Pickthall reports on another year of
31271's visit to the Llangollen Railway,
with photographs by Owen Hayward**



31271 AT THE LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY 2023

I am struggling to get my head around it being a year since I last wrote an update for the Newsletter and would like to offer my sincere apologies to both our patient Editor and fellow shareholders for it being March before I pulled my finger out and got it written. Things have been a bit hectic at the railway over the last year, but thankfully for much more positive reasons than back in 2021. Our recovery continues to progress and we enjoyed a successful 2023 season.

The much-awaited opening of our brand new permanent Corwen station was a big highlight and was celebrated with a series of events in June, culminating

in a public gala weekend, 2nd-4th June. 31271 played a big part in all this, as you'll see from the photos on pages 6 and 7. Our new station is well-worth a visit if you didn't get the chance to get over to us in 2023.

271 was a big contributor to the railway's 2023 diesel running, covering all early season operations with both 5310 (liner seal change) and 1566 (failed batteries) unavailable. A team from A1A Locomotives visited on 3rd April 2023 to reactivate her after winter and found no issues. After performing well over Easter, 271 headed to the new Corwen station on Tuesday 18th April with the suburban set on route learning and



31271 AT THE LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY 2023



gauging trials, breaking new ground for the class. Photos taken during this working also saw 271 feature in the Gala poster, which was shared far and wide.

271 provided all diesel loco traction for the Corwen opening gala, performing faultlessly. Although there were some other operational challenges around the timetable and signalling, the event was still a success and blessed with wonderful weather. I was fortunate enough to pick up the Sunday 4th June 2023 turn and had a wonderful day driving 271 to Corwen and back. After everything we'd been through over the last couple of years, drifting into Corwen station to a platform thronged with smiling and waving passengers under a clear blue sky really was a special moment. Opening 271 up once clear of the station's current 5mph TSR on the way back to Llangollen was even better!

The only niggle through the year was an errant traction motor blower, the motor of which will require a swap out and overhaul. A brush change in the summer

allowed the loco to continue to be used but this is only a temporary fix. The blower in question is the one hidden away in a corner, behind both the electrical cubicle and vacuum exhausters, so requires the roof to be removed to lift it out. This work will hopefully be carried out at Llangollen later this year, when an overhauled motor is available to swap-over. The frame of this area of the roof is also a notorious leak and rot spot on 31s, and 271 is no different. Although undercover storage for the last 3 winters has stopped bad water ingress, the opportunity will be taken to renew the corroded roof frame whilst it is removed.

The loco spent a few weeks out of traffic whilst replacement brushes were sourced and fitted, but she was sorted in time to take part in our Diesel Gala in September. With 5310 (just!) and 1566 fit again by this point and Pete Waterman's "Rat" D7659 visiting us, 271 completed a 4-loco line-up, our first for 5 years. It was a great weekend, especially with the reintroduction of a passenger-carrying brake van on the ballast train. Of course, 271 got a good airing on this

31271 AT THE LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY 2023

working, on which she always looks the part, harking back to her BR ballast train workings in Wales, including the last out of Blodwel Quarry.

271 has spent another winter tucked-up safe and dry in Llangollen shed and should see plenty of use again this year, pending passing her annual exam and a tyre condition check. In June she will have been with us at Llangollen for 5 years, a considerably longer period than anyone could have ever envisaged. We're certainly in no hurry to see her go – she's been a dependable, popular performer and feels very much part of the furniture. Our continued thanks go to all who have made this possible. Long may the successful partnership between the Llangollen & Corwen Railway and A1A Locomotives Ltd continue!

271's 2024 provisional running dates so far are 20th April, 6th May and 25th/26th May and will be confirmed on the usual Llangollen Railway's social media sites. We look forward to welcoming you all to North Wales again in 2024 and really appreciate your kind support.

Tez Pickthall



RETURN TO CORWEN – A SHAREHOLDER’S VIEW

Having not visited the Llangollen & Corwen Railway (its new name) since 5580 was there in 2012 I was determined to visit again in 2023, both to sample 31271 and to ride over the Railway’s new extension from Carrog to Corwen. I chose the weekend of 16th/17th September, being the Diesel Weekend. There was a good line-up of motive power – D7659 (its last weekend on the Railway having been on loan for the summer), Class 47 no.1566, our own 31271 and Class 26 no.5310, the 26 not advertised to be working but it had passed a ‘fitness to run’ exam the previous day following a period out of traffic during engine overhaul.

The route from Carrog to Corwen is very scenic, just like the remainder of the line. It continues to skirt the River Dee until, approaching Corwen, the line deviates

slightly from the original route for the short run to the new station. On arrival I found the signal box (which came from Weston Rhyn, between Chirk and Gobowen) not yet operational; externally complete but as yet with no lever frame, with operations controlled by a ground frame.

Several A1A members were present, including Gerard Fletcher whom I’d arranged to meet whilst he was on holiday locally. By late afternoon, having returned to Llangollen with 271, we went into town for a meal and managed to find somewhere despite it being a Saturday with the popular Corn Mill fully booked. We rounded off with a final early-evening trip with the 25 to Corwen and the 47 (attached to the rear) back to Llangollen. All in all a most enjoyable day well worth the journey from my home in Suffolk.

Michael Bryant



On Saturday 16th September 2023 31271 has arrived at Llangollen with the 15.15 ex-Corwen hauling a very ‘mixed’ rake comprising suburban brake coach, four ballast wagons and GWR brake van. *Photo: Michael Bryant*

'AND IT'S "GOODNIGHT" FROM ...'

Dear Shareholder

This edition will be my final one as A1A Publicity Director. After 63 issues and almost 30 years I have eventually decided we need some new blood – someone able to cope with digital communications – and my intention is to resign at the end of 2024.

I currently do not own a PC or other similar device, nor do I have the patience, temperament or interest for learning how to use them and cannot see this situation changing in the foreseeable future. This of course puts me – and A1A Locos – at a disadvantage now that email and on-line methods have become the norm for communications, particularly with the mainstream railway press, and 'social media' enables news to be disseminated very quickly. I'm also finding it increasingly difficult to compile the newsletter, even in its existing basic form which has remained largely unchanged since it began. In short, the time is long overdue for someone with the essential computer and digital know-how to take over. In particular, knowledge of desktop publishing would be an advantage, however a number of small businesses now offer a

'design and print' service for club/society magazines and newsletters. I will be pleased to offer all reasonable help to my successor, including 'ghost-writing' articles provided of course the basic notes/rough copy are sent to me by post in good time for any deadlines to be met. Access via secure password to update our website can also be provided.

Any shareholder interested in the role should in the first instance contact the Secretary, John Hardy (address below) and in the event of there being more than one 'candidate' a ballot of the membership will be needed. Alternatively, should you wish to discuss the role please contact me via my landline (01935 411008).

Grateful thanks to my fellow Directors and everyone who have supplied articles and photographs or assisted me in any way through almost 30 years, particularly Jon Gibbons for his technical expertise and Ric Rogers for kindly deciphering my handwriting, enabling him to typeset every edition.

Steve Harvey

50 YEARS AGO – BR LOCO FLEET RENUMBERING

Continued from page 4

other three locomotives in A1A Loco's fleet were all officially reported as renumbered 'on depot' in February 1974. Stratford was particularly tardy at renumbering its locomotives, various 'toffee apples' still running with old numbers in April 1974. 5848 was also a Stratford locomotive and is thought to have only been renumbered after it was transferred to March in May 1974. Official records have 5617 as the last Class 31 to be renumbered but this is thought to be an example of 'late recording', casting doubt on the accuracy of depot repaint dates more generally.

Doncaster Works renumbering dates are more reliable, but these are when locomotives departed the works not when they arrived. 5818, which became 31286, was the last to be renumbered at Doncaster Works and illustrates the importance of this distinction. 5818 was officially renumbered on 15th May 1974, the date its

classified repair was completed, but it had been on works since 20th March.

5818 was also the final Class 31 in green livery. Another Western Region example is 5827, which became 31294, the only Class 31 to carry a five-figure number while still in green livery. 5827 was renumbered at Old Oak Common on 15th February 1974 and emerged from Doncaster Works in blue livery on 7th April, but it only ran as 31294 in green from 15th February until 6th March when it entered Doncaster Works for classified repair. It was outlasted in green livery by 5818.

Should anyone know the whereabouts of a photo showing 31294 in green with its new TOPS number clearly visible during that brief 20-day period in 1974, please contact the editor urgently.

by D5597

FINANCIAL REPORT

Company Accounts - Year ended 30th September 2023

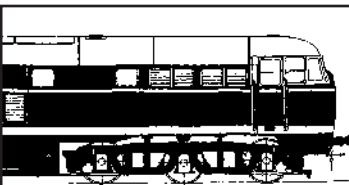
Profit and loss account	£	2023	£	2022
Turnover				
Locomotive hire		5,775	3,000	
Sales		<u>-</u>	<u>1,105</u>	
		5,775		4,105
Cost of sales				
Purchases		<u>-</u>		<u>149</u>
				3,956
GROSS PROFIT				
		5,775		3,956
Other income				
Donations received	200		563	
Bank interest received	<u>10</u>		<u>-</u>	
		<u>210</u>		<u>563</u>
		5,985		4,519
Expenditure				
Rent and storage charges	150		-	
Light and heat	411		-	
Licences and insurance	3,334		3,007	
Locomotive maintenance	899		14,519	
Sundry expenses	96		15	
Subscriptions	<u>450</u>		<u>-</u>	
		<u>5,340</u>		<u>17,541</u>
		645		(13,022)
Finance costs				
Bank charges		<u>91</u>		<u>90</u>
		554		(13,112)
Depreciation				
Long leasehold		<u>2,860</u>		<u>2,860</u>
NET LOSS		<u>(2,306)</u>		<u>(15,972)</u>

Shown left and overleaf are extracts from our latest set of accounts which show increased income from 31271's continuing use at the Llangollen & Corwen Railway, whereas our other four locos remained at Butterley in store/receiving essential maintenance or undergoing long-term restoration.

The Profit and Loss Account includes revisions agreed with the Midland Railway Trust in respect of rent, electricity and our Trust subscription whilst locomotive maintenance has reduced markedly from the previous year's figure which included considerable welding repairs besides two new sets of batteries. As previous, share purchases have continued at almost £1,000 per month and the Board is extremely grateful to everyone who supports us in this way.

Our 2022/23 accounts have been approved by the Board and submitted to HMRC at Companies House as required by law. Anyone requesting a full copy of the accounts should please send a stamped, addressed A5 envelope to the Publicity Director, whose address is on page 12.

Steve Clark



To find out more, please visit our website

www.a1alocomotives.co.uk

FINANCIAL REPORT CONTINUED

Balance Sheet	£	2023	£	2022
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets		272,758		275,618
Current assets				
Stocks	20,000		20,000	
Debtors	3,349		2,921	
Cash at bank	45,550		35,582	
	<u>68,899</u>		<u>58,503</u>	
Creditors				
Amounts falling due within one year		<u>1,551</u>		<u>3,169</u>
Net current assets		<u>67,348</u>		<u>55,334</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>340,106</u>		<u>330,952</u>
Capital and reserves				
Called up share capital		351,760		340,300
Share premium		781		781
Retained earnings		<u>(12,435)</u>		<u>(10,129)</u>
Shareholders' funds		<u>340,106</u>		<u>330,952</u>

A1A LOCOMOTIVES LTD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman	Julian Mandeville, 2 Atlas Grove, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 9EB
Secretary	John Hardy, 35 Hopton Close, Ripley, Derbyshire DE5 3TQ
Traction Director	Jon Gibbons, 35 Pearson Road, Cleethorpes, North East Lincs DN35 0DR
Financial Director	Steve Clark, 50 Thrunscoe Road, Cleethorpes, North East Lincs DN35 8TA
Publicity Director and Newsletter Editor	Steve Harvey, Hill Crest, 17 Higher Bullen, Stoford, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9TZ
Non-executive Director	Daniel Cross, Sharmer, Headleys Lane, Witcham, Ely, Cambs CB6 2LH
Registered in England and Wales	Registered number 3101954
Registered office	50 Thrunscoe Road, Cleethorpes, North East Lincs DN35 8TA
Website	www.a1alocomotives.co.uk

Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the editor, A1A Locomotives Ltd or its Board.