

Corwen Central News



Contrasting Winter colours across the Horseshoe Pass Photo : PR

The Dee Valley has enjoyed some very pleasant days, with a mixture of sunshine and some light showers. Sharp early morning frosts have also been part of the scene, but thankfully the snow has stayed away. In such conditions, all the track work at Corwen has been completed, including the Up siding.

Elsewhere on the platform the lampposts have been installed along with their associated electrical supply whilst the ramp up to “Chicken Dock” has been made safe with a BoMag path, safety fencing and a crossing over the running line and siding.

All points east and west

All the track work has now been completed, with



Clipping up the Up siding Photo: Phil Hebson

The Up siding has also been completed, offering the opportunity for wagons connected



Corwen ground frame in S&T Workshop Photo: Andy Maxwell

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with the construction of the station to be shunted and stored over night.



Looking west long the main line and Up siding

Photo: GJ

Measurements have also taken place to allow for the siting of the ground frame at the eastern end of the loop along with its associated point rodding. The ground frame will need to be mounted on a concrete base to secure its position and will be locked/unlocked by the use of the section token.

Ballasting away

With the completion of the track, attention has had to turn to the prospect of bringing in “top ballast” to allow the track to be correctly levelled and aligned. Currently all the track work is sitting on a heavy ballast base which offers an initial building platform for the track but does not permit it to keep its form. This is where “top ballast” comes in. This is a finer granite chip which gets in between the coarser base to help level it, but then goes on to partially bury the sleepers, thus holding them in place whilst allowing the track to flex as trains pass over them.

Supporters and visitors may remember that a ballast stack is next to the level crossing at Bonwm Farm, having been brought to the site during track laying to Corwen. This stack is made up of “top ballast” and will be brought down to Corwen to complete the track work there. It is proposed that the Road-Railer will be brought up to Bonwm and used to fill the ballast wagons.



RRV on the Ballast stack

Photo: Phil Hebson

As this will be rather new to the two R-R operators, Peter Jump and Peter Robson a trial outing to Bonwm was undertaken at the beginning of last month, resulting in the longest distance travelled by the R-R since it has been on site. The main point of concern was the ability to get the machine off the track at Bonwm and drive it up onto the ballast stack ready for loading. The outing was successful and the two operators are confident they will be able to do the work.

Lighting the way

Having taken delivery of the lamppost castings last month, the work gang wasted no time in getting them into place along the platform. Each one has been cemented into position along with

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cablings for the power supply - another job required before paving can be laid on the platform. **Ramping it up**



Site electrician Phil Coles cabling up a lamp post at the east end Photo : PR

At the moment the lampposts are in undercoat and lack any fittings. These will be added when the lamps are required for service.

With the completion of the track, the work gang have installed a BoMag crossing over the main line and Up siding. A fenced BoMg path has also been added down the side of the south batter, to give safe access for railway staff.



Post and railed walkway up the ramp Photo : PR



West end also gain a lamp post in undercoat Photo: PR

It is expected that when the signal box is commissioned the new path will afford a safe walking route for a rostered signalman. (Very much future planning!!)

Funding and Lucky Numbers

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
<i>Lucky Numbers</i>									
<i>This month's winning number is 28</i>									

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This month's winner of Lucky Numbers is **Wayne Ronneback**, with number **28**. Wayne has recently retired from the Guards' Department, but continues in his role as Corwen Stationmaster.

Congratulations goes to Wayne – his first ever win since joining the raffle 4 years ago!! A cheque for £50 is making its way to him.

The Project's Treasurer, Paul Bailey, writes “ A **BIG THANK YOU** to everyone who has renewed their Corwen Raffle numbers for 2020. With a few new joiners this year we are fully subscribed again. Good luck to you all!!

Finally if anyone wants to donate to our Corwen "On Platform "Waiting Room and Toilets” build project then cheques can be forwarded to the address below”.

For donations to the Corwen Project - including cheques for Lucky Numbers - Please make cheques payable to CCRD (Corwen Central Railway Development) and send to

Mr Paul Bailey, Dolwen, Bryneglwys, Corwen, Denbighshire LL21 9LY

You can Telephone Paul on 01490 450271 if you wish to pay other than by Cheque.

Offers of materials for the Corwen Project can be made via the LRT by phoning 01978 860979 or via e-mail at info@llangollen-railway.co.uk

End Piece

Over the last 5years, the Project Team/Work Gang has contributed over 69,174 volunteer hours towards bringing the station into service. In terms of the “matched funding” accounting procedure

this amounts to £944,400 of unpaid volunteer effort.



Gang led by John Mason complete the block work on the east end
Photo: GJ

The team have gone out in all weathers, including getting soaked twice before lunch time on many occasions, before drying out for the afternoon shift - quite impressive for an average age of 68 years!



Navy Gang near Haddenham, Bucks on the GCR
Photo: SAW Newton Leicester County Record Office Archive

Much of the work has involved good old fashioned manual labour, using pick and shovel and any range of tools which would be recognised by

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railway labourers down the ages.



Tipping soil to widen the embankment Photo : PR

The work was hard and demanding, usually based



Break for bread and cheese at Wilton on the GCR
Photo: SWA Newton Leicester County Record Office Archive



Leaders and horse boys move soil near Rugby
Photo : SWA Newton – Leicester County Record Office Archive

on “piece” rates, so stopping for rain was not really an option – even then!!

Major railway contractors such as Thomas Brassey, who built the Corwen line could command a loyal following of labourers (or navvies). Brassey in particular knew that if his

One hundred and sixty years years ago the Project Team's predecessors were busy excavating cuttings and building embankments to help carry the railway from Ruabon to Barmouth. Long planks of wood were used to carry heavy wooden wheel barrows across ditches or from one side of a cutting to the other, mounted on wooden trestles.



Corwen Gang break for lunch/dinner at Chicken Dock
Photo : PR

men and their families were well treated then the

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contract could be brought in on time and on budget. Brassey ensured that the labourers were never kept waiting for their pay which included £1 direct to the family of each labourer and £1 16 shillings (£1.80) to the navvy himself on site. The work force were provided with 2 pounds (approx 1kg) of beef per head per day, along with the rest of their food, tobacco, shelter, lamps and fuel. Also included in the ration was their clothing. The Corwen Gang settle for a cuppa and a biscuit!

When Brassey came to build the Ruabon to Barmouth line, he had in excess of 80,000 men working on various contracts around the country.

known as “Navvies”, introduced by Joseph Ruston on the Midland Line construction in 1880.



*Trans-shipping track ballast at Charwelton depot
Photo: SWA Newton Leicester County Record Office Archive*



*"Grub up!" - Near Nottingham on the GCR Photo :
SWA Newton Leicester County Record Office Archive*

Muscle power alone cost the contractors just over 1s3d (7p) a cubic yard, but with the addition of steam navvies costs fell to as little as three ha'pence a cubic yard!! (2p) Nothing similar was seen again until the beginning of the 1960s and the building of the motorways.

By the time the last main line to be built in the UK, The Great Central, was underway the vast army of navvies had moved on to other projects such as the Manchester Ship Canal and the underground railways London. This said, many hundreds of men were employed, but the major development for “the last main line” was the extensive use of steam excavators, themselves



Ballast arrives at Corwen Photo: PR