

# Corwen Central News



The Dee Valley saw the welcome sight of sunshine during the latter part of March, bringing warmth and much needed new growth to what has been a rather cool and dull

tidied the rather battered nests and prepared to welcome another generation.



Lungwort (*pulmonaria*) making a show for early Spring  
Photo : PR

*The Rooks Have Returned (1871) by Alexei Savrasov, the arrival of the rooks is an early portent of the coming spring*

period. Mist and low cloud tended to shroud the hills and mountains on more days than not.

Elsewhere on the railway the bridge timbers were replaced at Pentre Dee Bridge and the running rails put back on top and bolted down.

The familiar yelps and sqwarks from the rookery in Llangollen Loco Yard marked the passage of another year as the incumbents



"Careful of the trains children!" Passengers waiting on the Ruthin Branch  
Photo : PM

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**This was all completed during the last week, before the Plc finally closed and went into receivership.**

**Some rail joints remain to be welded after which the guard rails can be returned to their rightful place, inside the running rails. All further developments are on hold awaiting the outcome of the sale of company assets and the transfer of all operations to the Llangollen Railway Trust.**

**Throughout all this some work, on a care and essential maintenance basis, has continued at Corwen, the Project being under the control of the Trust. However, a few limiting factors have been the potential loss of the CASE/Rexquote RRV, which is a Plc asset, the inability to complete rail welding on the UP platform loop and the lack of any ballasting facilities because motive power could not get across the river. Until operating licences and responsibilities have been sorted it is unlikely that there will be any movement of rail vehicles between Llangollen and Corwen.**

**Back to base**



*CASE/Rexquote RRV crosses the Dee on the newly relaid bridge timbers and rails* Photo : PR

Having made a successful excursion to the Dee Bridge at Pentre the CASE/Rexquote RRV became the first powered rail vehicle to cross the newly relaid rail link on its way further east to Pentre dock to unload recovered materials.

The RRV, driven by Peter Robson then returned to Corwen for what was to become its last week's work before becoming part of the Plc's receivership auction

### **Signals still at caution**

Further progress has been made on restoring the ex Weston Rhyn Signal box. Repairs to this box have been an essential part of the limited operation at Corwen, mainly due to CoVid regulations in Wales. However careful examination on the



*Wastage in the corner post by the staircase* Photo : PR

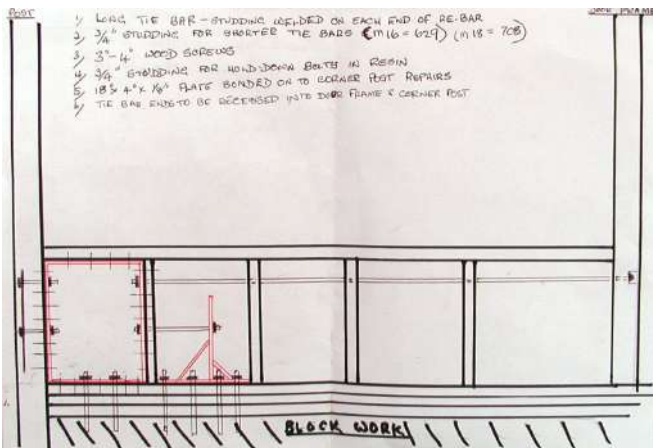
operating floor showed considerable wastage in the main corner posts and woodwork supporting the signal box's porch, as reported in the last issue of CCNL.

Timber has been replaced, but steel frames with tie bars are to be inserted behind panels to bind the front, back and stairs timbers together.

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Thankfully, the use of the signal box as a “grounded” workshop with a new slate roof – saved it, but 20 years of being mostly ignored with some of those years in a field, took its toll on some

Project carpenter Ron Stansbie, bringing a very smart appearance to that part of the signal box.



Proposed repair plan designed by John Mason



Glazed traditional arched frame windows at the back of the signal box  
Photo : PR

of the heavier timbers.

By the side of the signal box, ground works have been on going to support the embankment and to level some of the lower lying parts of the point rod run.



Steel frame to support the woodwork (see photos above – page 2)  
Photo : PR

Whilst the treatment of the wooden timbers has been underway, the walk way around the back of the signal box has been completed with the traditional coat of Western Region chocolate paint.



Concrete sleepers provide support for the track on top of the north batter Photo : PR

The rear facing arched metal framed windows of the locking room have also been completed by

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## Draining Away

Peter Neve reports that he has managed to get all the legal proceedings between the necessary fourparties (Denbighshire County Council, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water and Llangollen Railway) to



*The railway's inspection chamber and the orange/brown adopted sewer pipe awaiting connection - a distance of barely half a metre! The gravel path visible in the background is where the connection chamber is on Betsi Cadwaladr's property*

Photo : PN

sign up to the *Section 104 Sewer Adoption Agreement*. Peter describes it as a “landmark achievement” which in itself and has only taken two and a half years to reach this stage! Peter is now engaged with Dwr Cymru regarding the *Section 106* application, which is required before the Project can physically connect its lateral drain into the adopted Betsi Cadwaladr system which the allow the waters to flow to and from the on-platform waiting room and toilets.

This connection has to be made by a contractor who is S.S.I.P accredited (Safety Scheme In Procurement), and who will have to provide Dwr Cymru with Risk Assessments and a Method Statement. A suitably qualified local contractor has provided the Management Team with a verbal quote. Peter is now waiting to receive written confirmation of the estimate and details of the RAMS. “Still some way to go, but we are getting there”, concludes Peter.

## 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 <b>33</b></i>									

The March Corwen Raffle winner is **no.33 held by Matt Davies**, LRT member, member of the Loco and Diesel departments and organiser for a number of years of the popular “*Classic Transport Weekend*”. Congratulations and a cheque for £50 go to Matt, with thanks for supporting the Project.

The Project's treasurer, Paul Bailey writes : “ The Corwen Project's finances are in a steady state and are able to support the work at the station site. In the meantime the coming days will give us an indication of what we might be able to acquire from the Administrator and Selling Agents after

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the demise of the Plc and how much we need to raise. All on hold for the time being. With regards to the *Small Prairie 5532*, only 10 out of 195 small tubes at £50 remain to be sponsored. Shares are also available in the *Llangollen Railway Great Western Locomotive Group* can be purchased in blocks of £25. I am also looking for people to join our “5532 Club” subscribing £10 per month towards our Boiler Fund. Further details can be obtained by contacting me at the address below.”

Due to administrative advice, received during the winding up of the Plc and the added prominence of the Trust, all donations to Trust managed schemes (including CCRD – The Station Project) and appeals, even if they are fronted by Paul Bailey **must be sent directly to the Trust's Office at The Station, Abbey Road, Llangollen LL20 8NS**. You can mark your envelope for the attention of Paul Bailey. Paul is still willing to take phone calls and e-mails regarding appeals. Independent groups, that Paul supports can still receive cheques and enquiries at Paul's usual address.

***For donations to the Corwen Project especially the Canopy Appeal - Please make cheques payable to CCRD (Corwen Central Railway Development) and forward to the Llangollen Railway Trust, The Station, Abbey Road, Llangollen, LL20 8NS***

***For donations to LRGWLG Tube Appeal - Please make cheques payable to LRGWLG***

***For details and payment method for the “5532 Club” please contact Paul below***

***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.***

### **End Piece**

From the Llangollen Junction south of Ruabon on the Chester to Shrewsbury Line to Barmouth (Abermaw (formal); Y Bermo (colloquial) ) is 52.5miles (84km), thereafter the Cambrian coast opens up to the would be traveller. Barmouth was the Llangollen line's exit to the sea and an opportunity to convey the growing Victorian middle class to holiday destinations around Cardigan Bay.



*Barmouth harbour 1795 by John Baptiste Malchair*

The railway arrived in the town in October 1867 via the wooden trestle Barmouth Bridge which was designed by and constructed for the Aberystwyth and Welsh Coast Railway on its line between Aberystwyth and Pwllheli.

Barmouth itself gets a few mentions in documents of the 16th century. In the 1550's there was some fishing activity as the 'herring fisheries of Abermowe' form part of lease in 1549. The parish of Llanaber within which Barmouth falls had over

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100 taxpayers listed in the *Lay Subsidy Roll* of 1292 and no doubt the ancient '*passage of the fferrie*' (ferry) granted by the Crown down the centuries and these fisheries suggests some form of habitation even back to this date.

The earliest building remaining in Barmouth, is a first floor hall house which dates to around the third quarter of the 15th century. *Ty Gwyn* (White House) was built to provide a safe meeting place for those supporting Henry Tudor's claim to the throne during the Wars of the Roses. It now houses a museum on the quayside.

In 1587, Robert Edwards, of *Llwyndu*, is recorded as the merchant receiving a consignment of goods from the Barmouth registered *Le Angel* and in 1615 a barque unloaded, amongst other goods, thirty '*tonnes of Ffrench wines*' - early evidence of cultured tastes?



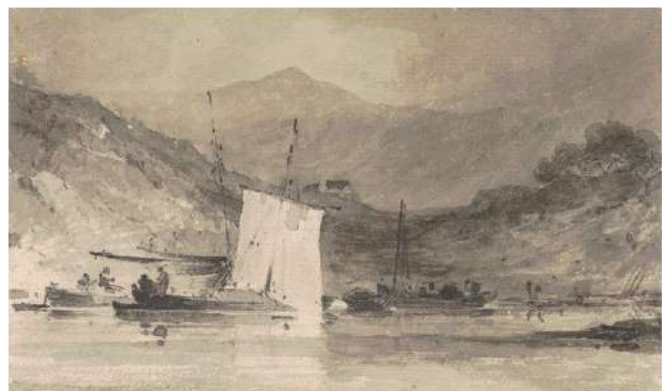
*Barmouth Harbour about 1790 from an engraving by James Walker*

It was in the 1700's that Barmouth and the Mawddach estuary began to expand rapidly into a major boat-building centre, driven partly by the boom in coastal shipping. In just 20 years from

1770 records show that a total of 138 vessels were built on the river. This was helped by the growth of Merioneth as one of the major centres for the wool industry.

With land routes still difficult the wool was shipped out of the port of Barmouth, feeding further ship building. In reality the port ought to be described as *Barmouth-Dolgellau*, although the two commercial centres were separate they were linked by the river Mawddach and in the late 18th century by a navigation, sometimes called the '*cut*', linking the Mawddach to the river Wnion. The main exports were also mostly derived from the Mawddach valley; wood, (mostly oak timber and bark, used for pit props and poles), paving stones, slate and cloth from the mills in Dolgellau.

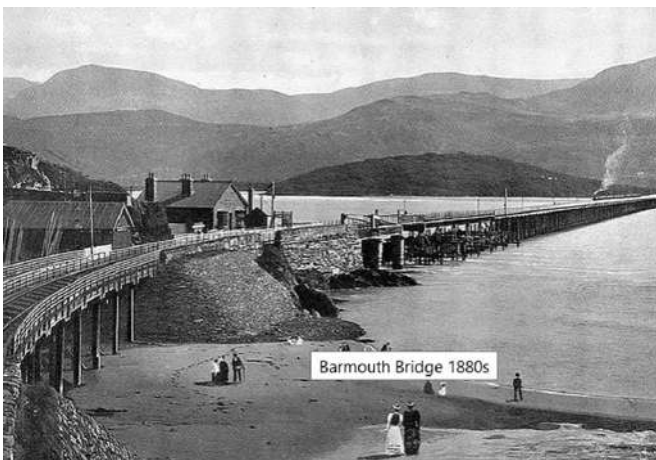
On a visit to Barmouth in 1805, William Wordsworth described Barmouth as " .... a fine sea view in front, the mountains behind, the glorious estuary running eight miles [13km] inland, and Cadair Idris within compass of a day's walk, Barmouth can always hold its own against any rival".



*Calder Idris from the Mawddach Estuary above Barmouth (1802) by John Sell Cotman*

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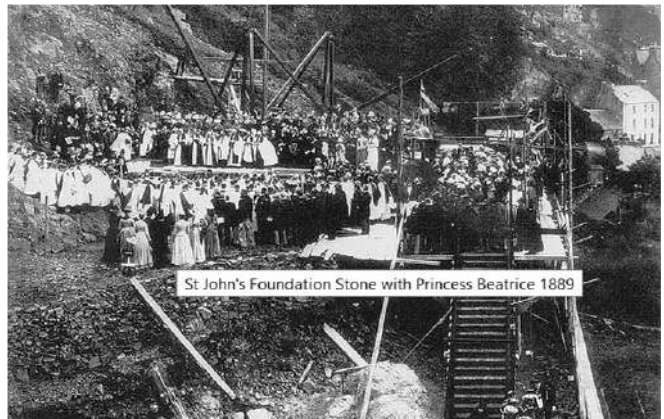
The ship building interests both around Barmouth and across the bay in Pwllheli may well have driven the slate trade with London that developed in the mid-1800s, but as Porthmadog blossomed as a slate port it also became the major ship-building location and Barmouth's industry declined.



*Barmouth Bridge 1880s. Note that the lifting "drawbridge" was still in place and had not yet been replaced by the swing bridge* Photo : Barmouth Heritage-trail-history

The arrival of the railway was the trigger for a significant boom in building in Barmouth and many of the buildings in what is now the town centre date from this time. The influx of visitors brought problems as well as benefits and the small round lock-up, Ty Crwn, was built during this period to deal with drunkards. The two large churches, St David's and St. Johns, were both built to accommodate the growing number of visitors, as were the majority of the guest houses and hotels that still offer accommodation today, the latter having its foundation stone laid by Princess Beatrice of Battenburg, daughter of Queen Victoria in 1889. The Queen and the Princess were making a tour of North Wales which also included

a visit to Palé Hall near Llandderfel, the home of Henry Robertson, latterly sponsoring engineer of the Llangollen to Corwen Railway.



*St. John's foundation is laid by Princess Beatrice in 1889* Photo : Barmouth Heritage-trail-history

Together with accommodation the town began to provide other facilities to enhance the visitor's stay such as the Sailor's Institute and reading room, and the Bath House. Many of the elegant buildings from this era survive today and give Barmouth its distinctive character.



*Barmouth High Street 1910 - early colour tint* Photo : National Library of Wales