

Corwen Central News



Last month closed in a mixture of sun, rain, sleet and snow. Many people awoke to a considerable dusting of snow in the early part of the month with evidence of strong drifting on the mountains. The Dee Valley was not immune from these changes especially where farmers were overseeing the addition of new lambs to their flocks.

formation originally pushed through by Welsh Water to gain access to the pumping station (CCNL passim). To make this happen, the project team spent a lot of time clearing and rearranging the site, chief amongst this being the relocation of the machinery compound.

**A new location**

The reorganisation of the work site continued last month, with the completion of the new machinery and tool compound now relocated to the west end of the site.



*May Blossom - Blackthorn - Prunus Spinoza*

*Photo : PR*

These had to be brought in close to farm buildings to help ward off the bitterest of April wind and snow. As these things change on the turn of a sixpence, the middle weeks coincided with hot sunny weather – (record temperatures for the bank holiday weekend) - which proved ideal for starting to fill in the gap in the



*Fordson Major "Jack" sits in the space that was once the machinery compound*

*Photo: PR*

This new location has made more space available than that at *Chicken Dock* whilst at the same time

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giving additional protection to reclaimed building materials.

rolling/compacting to form a stable surface over which to run heavy trains.

## The Big Move and the Infill

After having spent time moving equipment and material from the eastern end of the site, the day arrived when the much vaunted “Filling the Gap” could actually take place. Many supporters, having donated to the *Gap Appeal* have been anxious to see the results of their giving turn into new embankment where the current main line will meet a set of points (the eastern crossover) leading to the new platforms. Thus on April 15<sup>th</sup>, local ground works contractor, *Arwel Dolben*, was able



*Callum Jones on the mini-digger grading in a delivery. Rolling gang on the right Photo: PR*



*Trailer being filled with the first load from the Spur to the gap Photo: PR*

When complete the new embankment will have risen by at least three metres to meet the sections either side of it, requiring about 9,000 tonnes of material to achieve this.

to bring his equipment onto site to start moving the infill material from the Spur. A period of four days was set aside for the volunteer work gang to come and help with filling the gap. The period was particularly fortuitous as it coincided with some hot dry weather, ideal for transporting and rolling the infill. Like the rest of the embankment before it, the process requires careful layering and



*Phil Morrey (L) and Chris Hind (R) rolling and compacting a layer of infill Photo : PR*

An added complication is that sitting in part of the gap is the Project's mess room/office, *Chicken*

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*Dock* as well as the work shop and tool store. Both of these needed to be move to “higher” ground to allow the infill to be completed.



*Chicken Dock almost surrounded - will need a lift soon!* Photo : PR

Part of the appeal money included the charge of a heavy lift vehicle to come on to site and to move the afore mentioned buildings about 60 metres to the east, but to a site high up on part of the new embankment, and safely out of the way of any running lines.



*Workshop being loaded onto Geriant Jones's flatbed for short eastwards move* Photo : GJ

Facilities for the management of the site will still be required as the new station is steadily fitted-out.

### Not all gap!

Whilst the “*Appeal gap*” is being filled, the space between the platforms cannot yet be filled as it is



*Chicken Dock having moved East, now removing support timbers and getting ready for workshop lift* Photo : GJ



*West end single platform levelled and ready for tamping down* Photo : PR

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offering the only viable route to *Chicken Dock* from the Ruthin Spur and the source of the infill material.

However, the west end single platform between the ramp and the subway has been brought up to the correct level to allow for the first set of pavers to be laid.

### 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

*Lucky Numbers*

*This month's winning number is 26*

This month's winner of Lucky Numbers is **Martin Mccaskie**, a long time member of the Trust and an erstwhile member of the *Friday Gang*, (a regular group of volunteers who meet at Llangollen Loco Yard and do whatever is necessary to support the operational side of the railway) - with **Number 26**. Congratulations go to Martin on his win. Martin has donated his winnings, half back to the Corwen Project and half to the 7754 Pannier Tank Fund.

March Winner and Corwen volunteer Phil Morrey has donated his winnings back to the Project along with a further generous donation.

Project Treasurer Paul Bailey reports that the £10,000 "*Filling the Gap*" appeal has now reached its target, having received a final boost over the

winning line thanks to a *1000 squares raffle* organised by Corwen Townsfolk. 10 sheets of 100 squares each were distributed to various shops in Corwen and the surrounding locality and these were sold at £1 each. There were 3 Prizes of £250, £150, and £100 respectively and these were drawn by Wendy Bailey on behalf of the Railway at the *Royal Oak Pub* in Corwen on 14th April following a special "*Forties Quiz*" held in the evening. A cheque for £500 for the Infill Appeal was presented by the Corwen Business Association (photo attached)



*Tish Aldridge local hairdresser from the Corwen Business Association and Arwel Hughes local Butcher who organised the Raffle present a cheque for £500 to Project Treasurer Paul Bailey*

As for our other Supporters who gave so generously, none were from abroad although they were from all corners of England and Wales. Quite a lot fondly remembered travelling on the Dee Valley line in their younger days on family holidays to Barmouth hence their donation.

Finally, Paul says "Although the "*Filling the Gap*" target has been reached funds are still required to complete the Platform Waiting Room and Toilets and donations towards these would be gratefully received. Once these and the Platform Canopy have been built, 5 Great Western Style Lamposts

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and lanterns will be added to the remainder of the Platform ( as per those at Glyndyfrdwy Station). These cost approx £750 each and sponsors are now invited for these either individually or from groups”.

**For sponsorship details and any other funding matters please contact Paul Bailey at the address below**

***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 can be made via the LRT by phoning 01978 860979 or via e-mail at [info@llangollen-railway.co.uk](mailto:info@llangollen-railway.co.uk)***

### **End Piece**

May Day is here!! The earliest known May celebrations appeared with the *Floralia*, festival of *Flora*, the Roman goddess of flowers, held on 27<sup>th</sup> April during the Roman Republic era, and the *Maiouma* or *Maiuma*, a festival celebrating *Dionysus* and *Aphrodite* on an unknown date in May every three years. The *Floralia* opened with theatrical performances. In the *Floralia*, **Ovid** says that hares and goats were released as part of the festivities. Persius writes that crowds were pelted with vetches, beans, and lupins. A ritual called the *Florifertum* was performed on either April 27 or May 3<sup>th</sup> during which a bundle of wheat ears was carried into a shrine, though it is not clear if this devotion was made to *Flora* or *Ceres*. *Floralia*

concluded with competitive events and spectacles, and a sacrifice to *Flora*.



*Triumph of Flora* by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (ca. 1743), a scene based on Ovid's description of the Floralia from the collection of the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco

According to the 6th century chronicles of *John Malalas*, the *Maiouma* was a "nocturnal dramatic festival, held every three years and known as Orgies, that is, the Mysteries of Dionysus and Aphrodite" and that it was "known as the *Maioumas* because it is celebrated in the month of *May-Artemisios*". During this time, enough money was set aside by the government for torches, lights, and other expenses to cover a thirty-day festival of "all-night revels." *The Maiouma* was celebrated with splendid banquets and offerings. Its reputation for licentiousness caused it to be suppressed during the reign of *Emperor Constantine*, though a less debauched version of it was briefly restored during the reigns of *Arcadius* and *Honorius*, only to be suppressed again.

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A later May festival celebrated in Germanic countries, *Walpurgis Night*, commemorates the official canonization of *Saint Walpurga* on May 1st, 870. In Gaelic culture, the evening of April 30th was the celebration of *Beltane* (which translates to "lucky fire"), the start of the summer season.



*The bonfire lit to welcome Beltane morning.  
Edinburgh 2008*                      Photo : Roger Griffin

First attested in 900 AD, the celebration mainly focused on the symbolic use of fire to bless cattle and other livestock as they were moved to summer pastures. This custom continued into the early 19th century, during which time cattle would be made to jump over fires to protect their milk from being stolen by fairies. People would also leap over the fires for luck!

**In Wales**, the first day of May is known as *Calan Mai* or *Calan Haf*, and parallels the festival of *Beltane* and other May Day traditions in Europe. Traditions would start the night before (*Nos Galan Haf*) with bonfires, and is considered a *Ysbrydnos* or spirit night when people would gather hawthorn (*draenen wen*) and flowers to decorate their houses, celebrating new growth and fertility.

Being the time between Summer and Winter, *Calan Haf* would be the time to stage a mock fight between the two seasons. The man representing Winter carried a stick of *draenen ddu* "black-thorn" and a shield that had pieces of wool stuck on it to represent snow. The man representing Summer was decorated with garlands of flowers and ribbons and carried a willow-wand which had spring flowers tied on it with ribbons. A mock battle took place in which the forces of Winter threw straw and dry underbrush at the forces of Summer who retaliated with birch branches, willow (*helygen*) rods, and young ferns (*rhedyn*). Eventually the forces of Summer would win and a May King and Queen were chosen and crowned, after which there was feasting, dancing, games and drinking until the next morning.



*Enjoying the May Fair at Bala on May 25th 1952  
Photo : the Geoff Charles Collection - National Library of Wales*

On May Day celebrations would include summer dancing (*dawnsio haf*) and May carols (*carolau mai* or *carolau haf*) other times referred to as "singing under the wall" (*canu dan y pared*), May Day was also a time for officially opening a kind

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of village green (*twmpath chwarae*). Through the summer months in some villages the people would gather on the *twmpath chwarae* in the evenings to dance and play various sports. The green was usually situated on the top of a hill and a mound was made where the fiddler or harpist sat. Sometimes branches of oak decorated the mound and the people would dance in a circle around it.

In Anglesey and Caernarfonshire it would be common on May Eve to have *gware gwr gwyllt* "playing straw man" or *crogi gwr gwellt* "hanging a straw man". A man who had lost his sweetheart to another man would make a man out of straw and put it somewhere in the vicinity of where the girl lived. The straw man represented her new sweetheart and had a note pinned to it. Often the situation led to a fight between the two men at the May Fair!



*Queen Guinivere's Maying by John Maler Collier (1850-1934)*

