

North Cheshire

Rail Users' Group



Monitoring rail services from Chester & Ellesmere Port via Helsby, Frodsham & Runcorn to Liverpool & Manchester

Newsletter September 2013

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FROM THE CHAIR

The abysmal train service from Helsby to Ellesmere Port usually carries very few passengers and is nothing more than a 'Parliamentary' service. However, on Saturday, 6th July 2013 a four coach train picked up passengers all the way from Liverpool and arrived packed to near capacity at Helsby for the start of a day to celebrate 150 years of the line between Helsby and Hooton.

The event was the culmination of a great deal of hard work by North Cheshire Rail Users' Group, Sally Buttifant from Cheshire West and Chester Council and 'Friends' groups from Ellesmere Port, Little Sutton and Hooton Stations plus three train companies, Merseyrail, Northern Rail and Arriva Trains Wales.

Back in 2005, when ACoRP held their first Gala dinner and awards evening, NCRUG picked up two awards, a second prize for an art project at Frodsham and a third prize for the gardens at Helsby. We have submitted entries in most years since but without success. Our luck seems to have changed this year as our submission for Frodsham station has been shortlisted in the '*new uses for old buildings*' category. Both of the units are now let with the hairdressing business proving to be very popular and dynamic.

The owners of 'Frazar James', hair stylists are absolutely delighted with their new premises at the station and I'm pleased to say that I will be having my hair done at the salon prior to going to the ACoRP gala dinner hosted by Arriva Trains Wales at Llandudno on Friday, 27th September. The following day, Philip and I have been invited to travel on a special train to Bleanau Ffestiniog and then on to Portmadoc on the Ffestiniog Railway. Again, this shows what can be done as a result of partnership working.

It's been a busy summer with all the various events taking place so we were glad to get away on holiday to mark our own personal milestone which was our golden wedding in April. Instead of a party, we took the whole family, including four teenage grandchildren to Switzerland by train. We had organised Swiss passes for everyone, allowing them to do their own thing once we were there using trains, buses, boats, cable cars and chair lifts etc. Not everything is free at the point of use but Swiss passes are flexible and very convenient. They seem expensive at first sight but everyone got good value out of them and did an amazing number of trips. My grandson's tally for eight days was: 18 passenger trains, one bus, and one boat (included in the pass) nine cable cars or lifts and one narrow gauge steam train (reductions with Swiss pass)!

Janet Briggs, Chairman

THE FUTURE FOR NCRUG ??

This has been the subject of much discussion within the committee. We have welcomed two new members to the committee this year - Bob Florence and Martin Patrick. Regrettably we lost one of our founder members, Phil Edwards, last November, who had been a major contributor to the work of NCRUG since its inception.

Illness has, unfortunately, played its part and several valuable members of committee have had to either curtail or, worse still, give up their activities. NCRUG's committee is vulnerable to these unfortunate and unpredictable events and have made us realise that we need more volunteers, of all ages and backgrounds, both for our work on stations and also on the committee. The work is not onerous and can be tailored to suit each individual. Obviously, the more volunteers we have the easier each task becomes because it can be shared.

We appreciate that the pace of life these days militates against taking on additional tasks especially when there is no monetary reward. However, there is no doubt that the degree of satisfaction gained from receiving an award for a station building/garden, (see Stop Press at the end of this Newsletter) or achieving an improvement to the rail service timetable or putting forward comments against a national transport consultation, is extremely high and well worth considering.

There are challenges and frustrations to be met but these only serve to make voluntary service to the local community even more satisfying when success is achieved. Currently the rail industry is enjoying an unprecedented period of growth with many projects coming forward in the next few years. You can play a small, but valuable part, in some of these developments.

Every organisation needs a steady inflow of new ideas, from all ages, and we are particularly keen to meet people who would be prepared to give just an hour or two per month to help our valuable work. Experience of the rail industry is not necessary as tasks are many and varied. New ideas are welcome.

NCRUG needs you and your ideas to serve in any capacity and for as little or as much time as you can afford. Why not consider joining us for a few trial meetings, either in committee or as part of a station team, to see how you fit in and whether it is something you want to do for the benefit of the community. We endeavour to make our activities enjoyable to all who participate.

If you need time to 'get your feet under the table', that's fine – just come along and observe. You don't have to wait until you retire – all ages are welcome as are the fresh ideas which you can bring. It is also important that we have a steady inflow of new blood to maintain continuity within our organisation.

So why not have a go – contact any committee member, (see contact details at the end of this newsletter or go to our website) and add a new dimension to your life!

CWG

LLECHWEDD SLATE QUARRY & THE BLAENAU FFESTINIOG CONNECTION

With regard to the 150 year Celebrations of the opening of the Hooton to Helsby railway line on 6th July 2013, it was discovered that the station roof at Helsby had slates that over the years been sourced from Blaenau Ffestiniog. Ian Whitely (NCRUG Committee Member) made contact with J.W.Greaves at Llechwedd and they kindly agreed to donate a slate plaque to commemorate the connection and to celebrate the recently refurbished garden, on the Chester bound platform, at Helsby Station. Arriva Trains Wales (ATW), Blaenau Ffestiniog Chamber of Commerce and the Ffestiniog Railway(FR) joined forces to celebrate the occasion.

ATW kindly made arrangements for a party from the North Cheshire Rail Users Group (NCRUG) and Helsby Parish Council to visit Blaenau Ffestiniog on the 1st July, which coincidentally was the actual 150th anniversary of the opening of the Hooton to Helsby railway line. Reserved seats were allocated on all trains. Larry Davies, Community Rail Officer(ATW) for the Conwy Valley Line met the Group at

Llandudno Junction and advised the participants of the programme which had been arranged by Ben Davies Stakeholder Manager for ATW and Clair Britton of the FR & Blaenau Ffestiniog Chamber of Commerce. He escorted the party on to the next train to Blaenau.

The railway starts by running along the Conwy estuary with fine views across the river to the Carneddau Range of Mountains supported by Oyster Catchers and Little Egrets feeding on the sands of the Conwy. Approaching Bettws-y-Coed the forest starts to encroach and the river ceases to be tidal. The Railway Museum at Bettws was passed; they are also supporting the Celebrations at Helsby by supplying a miniature steam locomotive for display. As we left Bettws the mountains close in as we climbed the steep gradients towards Pont-y-Pant and crossed Gethins Viaduct. At Dolwyddelan the Castle loomed over the valley as we rose higher up the Lledr Valley to Roman Bridge.

The weather on the approach to Blaenau looked unpromising and the mountains across the valley at Roman Bridge were shrouded in clouds. The mountain Moel Siabod could not be seen. However we soon entered Ffestiniog Tunnel the longest single bore Tunnel in the UK at 3726 Yards. Leaving the long, dark and damp tunnel and entering Blaenau we found that the rain was keeping away.

We received an enthusiastic welcome from the Mayor of Blaenau Ffestiniog, Mandy Williams-Davies, Ben Davies of ATW and Clair Britton of the local Chamber of Commerce, who are very keen to promote the town. Clair also represented FR. The opportunity was taken to have photographs taken of the Group and Dignitaries with the locomotive "Merddin Emrys" which arrived at the FR platform from Portmadoc.

We took a mini-bus to Llechwedd Quarry, accompanied by the Mayor, where we were welcomed by the Commercial Director, Michael Bewick. The Group were taken to the reception area where we were presented with the Slate Plaque to commemorate the links between Llechwedd and Helsby. The inscription reads "This Garden was planted to Commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Helsby Junction 1st July 1863-2013. Greaves Welsh Slate, Llechwedd, Blaenau Ffestiniog". Speeches were made by Michael and John Hobbs from the NCRUG to celebrate the occasion. Michael Bewick of Llechwedd was presented with a framed picture of Helsby Station featuring a dramatic incident which took place on 7th December 1906.

We retired for lunch to the café where we were able to discuss historic and personal stories relating to the slate industry & Blaenau with the Mayor and Michael Bewick. After lunch we were treated to a tour of the Slate Quarry and learnt all about the difficulties of working slate mines and the resulting injuries and health problems to the miners. At the end of the tour we were given a demonstration of the techniques used to split slate – amazing. Today the slate is worked in quarries which take a great deal of account of the health and welfare of workers in the industry in stark contrast to those of yesteryear. .

We returned to Blaenau Ffestiniog where the pupils of Ysgol Maenofferen School performed, in Welsh, a lovely song which they had composed themselves about the 150th Anniversary of the Hooton to Helsby Railway and its connections with Blaenau. This was enjoyed by our hosts and us in equal measure. Chris Ellams, representing Helsby Parish Council, and Cedric Green, of NCRUG, presented the pupils with framed photographs of Helsby station in steam and diesel days.

All too soon, it was time to catch our train to Llandudno Junction and we departed into the darkness of the tunnel with the sound of the choir still ringing in our ears. Out in the open once again the clouds had lifted and now Moel Siabod could be seen thrusting into the heavens over Devil's Bridge. We enjoyed the lovely passage back through Tal-y-cafn and Glan Conwy to Llandudno Junction where there was ample time for a cup of tea. Larry Davies bade good bye to us and we set off back to Helsby.

At Helsby a reception committee from the Parish Council was waiting to greet us and receive the plaque from Blaenau. It was subsequently unveiled by MP, Graham Evans, on the 6th July 2013 as detailed in the following article.

JH

HOOTON TO HELSBY 150th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Preparations for the Festivities for the Sesquicentennial (150 Years) of the Hooton to Helsby Railway line which was opened by the Birkenhead Joint Railway on the 1st July 1863, began in the early months of 2013, under the auspices of Sally Buttifant the vibrant Senior Transport Officer for Cheshire West and Cheshire(CWAC).

Sally invited the North Cheshire Rail Users Group (NCRUG) and other Station Adopters on the line, such as Ellesmere Port and Little Sutton, to a meeting together with "Northern Rail", "Merseyrail" and "Arriva Trains Wales" (ATW). Mark Barker of Northern Rail was instrumental in obtaining from Northern authority to obtain the resources to run a special train on the day from Liverpool (Lime Street) to Hooton via Warrington and for it to undertake a shuttle to Helsby. Finally it would run via Halton Curve back to Liverpool. Having obtained the authority and steered the idea through the convoluted timetable procedures with Network Rail the detailed planning could proceed.

We were delighted to be advised that a 4 car train (2 x 156) would be made available and that a Special Day Rover would be created for passengers to travel on the services. Merseyrail were willing to provide conductors over the line from Ellesmere Port to Hooton and Arriva Trains Wales, who were not directly involved in the route apart from being the Train Operating Company for Helsby, were kind enough to provide catering services in the form of two trolleys and Managerial support.

ATW also took the lead on sourcing Commemorative Mugs in co-operation with Northern, Merseyrail & itravelsmart and other items for the Festivities at Helsby. Meanwhile Merseyrail produced banners etc. A Commemorative Booklet was produced by one of the Friends of Ellesmere Port Station and attractive posters for stations issued and displayed. Headboards for the trains were devised and produced by Northern and special fitting of them undertaken to ensure that they could be carried by the train on the day.

Meanwhile individual groups were making their own arrangements and the NCRUG, through Committee Member Ian Whitley, were able to resource a half scale narrow gauge steam locomotive for display in steam at Helsby. ATW were able to permit this once Risk Assessment and Insurance details had been approved. Other items were sales stalls and refreshment facilities, and toilet facilities together with the gathering of prizes for a Tombola and Raffle also a Commemorative Birthday Cake. In connection with the anniversary NCRUG had already decided to re-engineer a part of the garden on the Chester bound platform at Helsby. The Group applied for funding from Helsby Parish Council and with additional provisions by ATW to remove waste material removal were able to rebuild the garden as a feature of the Celebrations. This also comprised rebuilding a drain by Network Rail and external professional advice on landscaping.

Sally, on behalf of CWAC, also set about inviting interested stakeholders along from Local Enterprise Partnerships, (LEPS) local Councils and Members of Parliament. In addition advertising by means of local news coverage was sought and other items such as Commemorative Book Marks produced.

For the NCRUG investigations had revealed that the roofing slates for Helsby station roof had been sourced through Llechwedd Slate Quarry at Blaenau Ffestiniog. Contacts with them had revealed that they would be pleased to donate a "Commemorative Plaque" to celebrate the event and the rebuilding of the garden. So we went to see them as detailed in the previous article. Suffice to say NCRUG were made to feel very welcome in Blaenau and it was a delight to see the efforts made to improve

the town centre and station environment in order to attract visitors to the town. It is now well worth a visit; the slate monuments in the station forecourt are quite stunning.

The aforementioned preparations prior to the events of 6th July, were a curtain raiser for what followed. These began at Helsby with a week of extensive gardening and the general sprucing up of the station area. Contractors working on the station buildings painted all their hoardings and ATW did some housekeeping.

On the 6th we were erecting bunting on the station at 06.30, the steam locomotive arrived at 07.30, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds at 08.30 and the stalls were all set up by 09.30. Visitors were with us from 09.00 and we were all ready for the MP Graham Evans to arrive at 10.29. A "Stationmaster" was on duty to meet the special train, in top hat and tails. On arrival Graham Evans was welcomed to the station and invited to cut the cake, unveil the plaque and tour the station.

Then the train departed for Hooton and NCRUG events proceeded as noted above. At Ellesmere Port and Hooton the "Mersey Morris Men" performed and the station adopters manned station displays.

In the afternoon following departure of the service over Halton Curve a bus shuttle operated with a "Crosville L" and a modern "Stagecoach Enviro" which enabled visitors to return to Ellesmere Port after visiting Helsby.

During the afternoon a display of equipment provided by ATW, to help with the station maintenance, was on view and presentations made to ATW Managers to thank them for their assistance. One of our Senior Volunteers was also presented with a bouquet of flowers followed by the Raffle Prizes draw, (for the names of the winners see page 8 of this Newsletter).

From the foregoing it will be seen that many organizations were involved in the Celebrations and we would like to thank them all - the National and Heritage Railway Operators, the Local Authorities, the stall holders and refreshment providers for their help in achieving a successful day. We are particularly grateful to Sally Buttifant who oversaw it all.

JH - SB

HELSEBY STATION REPORT

Work on renovating the station house is continuing. Externally it appears to be complete with work on the inside still on-going. It is to be hoped an occupant can be found for the building when it is finished.

A ticket machine is shortly to be installed at the station entrance. There are plans to install a 'Harrington Hump' on platform 1 to bring it up to a safe height. Platform 1 is approximately ½ metre below standard and causes difficulty to many passengers when alighting or joining trains. The 'Hump' gets its name from Harrington station in Cumbria where the first one was installed. It is a cut-price method for increasing the height of a short section of platform to give step free access to trains.

The garden on platform 1, which was created to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the Hooton to Helsby line, is complete. A plaque has been erected on the wall above the new garden. The plaque was donated by Llechwed Quarries in Blaneau Ffestiniog using the same type of slate as was used on the original station building at Helsby and was unveiled by local MP, Graham Evans.

Recent gardening work has concentrated on Platforms 1 to 3. Platform 4 requires a lot of work but due to a shortage of volunteers we have been unable to undertake any work on it. On most Fridays between 9.30 am and 12.30 pm we only have 3 or 4 volunteers. New volunteers are needed to enable us to further improve the gardens, (see the article above entitled 'The Future for NCRUG??') Please come along on a Friday morning when you will be made very welcome.

WE

RUNCORN EAST – 30 YEARS OLD – 18TH OCTOBER 2013/ & 5 YEAR PLAN

The station at Runcorn East will have been open on Friday 18th October 2013 for 30 Years. It is planned to celebrate this milestone on that date in an appropriate way, supported by Halton Borough Council (HBC), Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) and the North Cheshire Rail Users Group (NCRUG).

The plans include a planting programme, for the extensive grassed areas at the station. This will be focused on the idea of providing a wild flower and poppy meadow to enable reduced maintenance of the current grassed areas and to increase the bio-diversity of the station area. This will compliment the existing bird nesting box installation.

The focus of the flower beds will be in the form of the poppy beds/wild flower beds to commemorate the Centenary of the commencement of the First World War in 2014. This will lead to a five year development programme of community involvement at Runcorn East as the garden areas progressively increase to reflect the commemorative theme.

Halton Borough Council is leading the organization and will endeavour to include local community groups such as the Woodland Trust and Murdishaw Community Centre and utilize help from the Probation Service and others to achieve a better environment at Runcorn East Station.

The assistance of stakeholder organizations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is being sought for advice in taking the plan forward. This will include an overhaul and evaluation of the current nest boxes and the installation of bug boxes to enhance the current facilities.

On Friday 18th October, bunting will be flying from the station, a celebratory Birthday Cake will be cut, the flower garden will be dedicated, seeds distributed, a miniature steam engine will be on display and the RSPB will have a stand in the car park.

From 2014 through to 2018, the flower beds will be an appropriate reminder to the present generation of the futilities of war while reminding them of the history and sacrifice of those who died. The dates fit perfectly being exactly one hundred years from the start and finish of the First World War whilst at the same time improving the environment along the rail corridor as a Commemorative Garden.

The support and assistance of Halton Borough Council and Arriva Trains Wales in all the above events and processes is much appreciated.

JH

CORWEN EXTENSION PROJECT NEWS UPDATE – September 2013

The project made further progress during August when deliveries of recycled ballast brought in 200 tonnes of stone via the access at Bonwm. This allowed the base ballasting of the trackbed to be brought forward towards the access gate and track laying by full time permanent way staff commenced. At long last, by the second week of September, the track is now extended by twelve panels to bring the railhead into the area of the gate at Bonwm.

The stack of concrete sleepers at Bonwm has been cleared thanks to a further period of hire for a JCB Load-all machine and sleepers have been dispersed along the track bed towards Corwen. A calculation of the short fall in sleepers can now be made for a further quantity to be ordered.

Further deliveries of 1,000 tonnes of ballast will provide for the base towards over bridge 28a, with pegging out of this section to be undertaken during September. It is now envisaged that track laying during the autumn will begin at bridge 28a working backwards towards Bonwm, a stretch of approximately 900 metres.

Tenders for the repair of the under arch and abutments to bridge 28a are in hand from contractors who have expressed interest in this work, but, in the meantime, a volunteer team has started repairs to bridge 28, a fisherman's access underpass.

The repairs to the road/railer machine have been completed and, following certification, the machine is now on site at Bonwm as the essential tool for further track laying. Two members of the full-time staff are passed competent to operate this machine and two volunteers will be similarly instructed. A volunteer work force is being assembled to undertake the track laying through to bridge 28a and beyond to the Corwen platform site.

DWYRAIN CORWEN EAST STATION SITE

The complications with the under bridges within the area of the platform appear close to being resolved. We are advised that Denbighshire County Council has let a contract for the installation of the flood relief scheme outfall to the river which will involve the removal of bridge 30. We can expect the contractor to be on site from September with construction work taking place during the next few months.

We are further advised by Denbighshire Countryside Services that the flood relief scheme also has implications for the route of the link foot path to bridge 29. This will provide access to the nature reserve and some grant aid may be in prospect for work on refurbishing this bridge, if it can be completed during September.

Elsewhere, within the wider context of Corwen, discussions are underway with the designated artists for the design of the access pathway from the Corwen car park to the station site. Wide ranging discussions are also taking place with regard to the opportunities to promote the new station at Corwen as a destination in 2014 and initial plans for the train timetable have started.

Whilst it is intended that a first train will arrive at the new platform, to be known with a bi-lingual title of Dwyrain Corwen East, on St David's day, 1st March 2014, it is now likely that an official opening occasion will be held some weeks later to obtain maximum publicity, subject to all the work being completed, including the acquisition of the outstanding funding.

A promotional display for the Corwen Extension was provided during the period of the National Eisteddfod held at Denbigh during August with thanks to Denbighshire County Council for providing facilities.

George Jones for Llangollen Railway Trust

MERSEY CONNECT

The projects to re-instate the Halton curve and to have a regular service on the Ellesmere Port, (or even Hooton), to Helsby line are coming closer together. Over the last eighteen months NCRUG has worked with consultants, Gutteridge, Haskins & Davey, (GHD), on these two projects and many interviews have been jointly conducted with all the leading stakeholders including, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Authorities, Politicians and Industries. Most have been extremely supportive and none have been against. One party even suggested 'give me a reason why you wouldn't do it?'

As a result it has become abundantly clear that there is much synergy between these two schemes and also those in North East Wales, (Saltney/Wrexham re-doubling), Wrexham/Bidston, (service improvements and electrification) and Crewe/Chester/Holyhead and Chester/Warrington, (electrification).

In addition we have discovered, JaguarLandRover's desire for a station adjacent to their Halewood factory to accommodate workers commuting from North Wales, (surprisingly from as far away as Bangor), as well as more local areas. They would like to utilise part of the current huge factory car park to expand their manufacturing base. This would be far more productive than its present use as a

car park. Furthermore, all their components come by ROAD from their central logistics location in Birkenhead. They would like these components to come by rail.

The new Incinerator at Runcorn needs more waste to process and local objections are preventing them from bringing it in by road. They would welcome a rail connection in order to tap into waste sources from the west. Guess what needs to be done to make that happen?

The Shell Research & Development facility at Stanlow has been gifted to Chester University and will become their new Engineering Faculty in 2015. Students are extensive users of public transport so there must be a significant role for a decent rail service on the Ellesmere Port/Helsby line.

Consequently a new, all embracing, title needed to be found to combine all these developments. They will not all happen at the same time but Halton curve re-instatement, obviously, has to be one of the first steps as so many of the others depend on this 1¼ miles length of track to assist their business cases. Furthermore, the historical and political barriers do not reflect the interdependence of the whole area and neither does the transport system. The lack of good rail connections within the area militate against expanding the economy consisting of Merseyside, North East Wales, (Wrexham), Deeside Industrial Park and North Wales coast through to Holyhead.

So we have come up with 'Mersey Connect' although 'Dee Mersey Connect' and 'Mersey Dee Connect' were considered. However, 'Dee Mersey' could be construed as a rather unfortunate miss-pronunciation and 'Mersey Dee' has already been adopted by the Mersey Dee Alliance.

In future, therefore, you will see more of 'Mersey Connect' and less of 'Halton Curve'. But remember the new title is there to take in the bigger picture and to highlight the importance of one short section of track to open up the whole area and create a transport system fit for purpose.

CWG

RAFFLE PRIZES - HOOTON TO HELSBY 150 CELEBRATIONS

NCRUG is pleased to advise the results of the raffle held over the course of the "Hooton to Helsby 150 Celebration" on the 6th July 2013. The raffle was drawn at 15.00 at Helsby Station and the results were as follows:-

FIRST PRIZE - 2 X East Lancashire Railway Dining Tickets on a date of your choice.
Mr Mathers of Leeswood near Mold.

SECONDPRIZE - 4 x East Lancashire Railway Day Rover Tickets
Mr Prince of Wrexham

THIRD PRIZE - 2 x Tickets to travel on The Welsh Highland Railway from Caernarvon.
Mr Biggins of Great Sutton

FOURTH PRIZE - Family Ticket for the Bala Lake Railway.
Mr Jenkins of Chester.

NCRUG would like to thank the sponsors of the Raffle & Tombola for their support; they are:-
Arriva Trains Wales (ATW)
The Bala Lake Railway
The East Lancashire Railway
The Welsh Highland Railway
Tesco Ltd

JH

NEWS IN BRIEF

- **Website:** Ian Hulme (John Hulme's son) is currently working on our new website. Ian has already designed sites for a number of Rail organisations including the Mid-Cheshire Rail Partnership so is well aware of what is wanted.
- **Revenue protection:** ATW carried out a full scale exercise at Runcorn East on 11th September..
- **Ticket vending machines:** The TVMs should be appearing at Runcorn East, Frodsham and Helsby stations quite soon. Preliminary electrical work and foundation preparation has already been completed.
- **New business:** Haas Kitchens have now moved into part of the re-furbished station house at Frodsham.
- **Car park at Frodsham:** The top end of the car park adjacent to the station house is currently being improved and re-surfaced to provide parking spaces for the new businesses.
- **New seat:** We have now provided a seat on platform 1 at Frodsham, near to the tree planted in memory of the late Phil Edwards. The seat, which was made at the 'Will to Work workshop' in Frodsham using two recycled metal ends and new wood cross-pieces blends in so well that many passengers wouldn't notice the addition.
- **Letter boxes:** Network Rail have installed two Victorian style letter boxes at the station house at Frodsham to allow the two businesses to receive their own post.
- **Helsby station house:** The scaffolding was taken down in time for the 150th anniversary celebrations in July. Work on the booking office has been delayed until the start of the next financial year.
- **Clock:** Preliminary work has started to replace the clock on the platform side of the house at Frodsham. The face of the original remained in position for many years but suddenly disappeared one night before the restoration, leaving the circular aperture open to the elements!
- **Speed restriction:** A member has reported a speed restriction on the line to Chester which, we presume, also applies to the Warrington line although we cannot confirm this.
- **New ballast:** The same member also reports that there is new ballast just after the Frodsham viaduct progressing toward the old Halton station and up the branch.
- **Halton curve turnout:** Appears to have been replaced. Sounds encouraging.

STOP PRESS

At the ACoRP Community Rail Awards Ceremony in Llandudno on 27th September, the first prize in the Best Use for Station Buildings category was awarded to NCRUG and partners, for the restoration and innovative use of Frodsham station building. It was a good night for community rail across Cheshire – Ellesmere Port & Little Sutton Stations came joint first in the Best Station Volunteer's Project Small and the set of three Mid Cheshire Line Rail Walks booklets came third in the Best Innovative Use of Traditional Methods in the Promotion of Community Rail.

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Note: The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the North Cheshire Rail Users' Group (NCRUG).

Visit our website: www.NCRUG.ORG.UK to leave your comments, favourable or otherwise!

Just to remind you that your annual subscription becomes due on 1st October 2013.

Please complete the form below and send it to the membership secretary together with your cheque to the address given below. Alternatively, please bring it with you to the AGM on 23rd October.

If you have joined the group within in the last three months or have already paid for the coming year, please ignore this notice as your subscription runs until October 2014.

A combined Membership will be sent to you on receipt of your subscription.

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group Application / renewal form

I / We wish to apply for ordinary family membership of NCRUG at the annual subscription rate of £6.00.

I / we enclose a cheque payable to NCRUG for:- Subscription: £ 6.00

Donation: £.....

Total: £.....

Number of persons covered by this family membership

Name..... Telephone No.....

Address.....

Post code..... E-mail address.....

Date..... Signature.....

Please forward cheque and form, or hand in at AGM to Philip Briggs, 10 Hillfield, Frodsham, Cheshire. WA6 6DA

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group

monitoring rail services and the travelling environment

from Chester & Ellesmere Port

via Helsby, Frodsham & Runcorn

to Liverpool & Manchester



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at

Frodsham Community Centre

Fluin Lane, Frodsham

on

Wednesday, 23rd October at 19.30 hrs

Guest Speaker:

Mr Chris Dawson

who will talk about the

'Restoration of listed Railway Buildings'

Followed by 2013 AGM business meeting

Non members are welcome to attend

Thank you for your continued support.

