

# Corwen Central News



Once again the Dee Valley has been subject to some sharp changes in the weather, ranging from some all too fleeting glimpses of the sun, through to rain squalls and sharp frost. Despite this, the hedgerows have been clinging on to the seed clusters of “Old Man's beard”, before



*Clematis Vitalba – Old man's beard* Photo : PR

seeing them dispersed across the brooding landscape. Early December also witnessed the opening of the “Santa Season” with ex – GWR Large Prairie Tank 5199 sharing haulage duties with ex- BR Manor Class 7822 “Foxcote Manor”. Many families have been coming to this popular event for quite a number of years and have been introducing a third generation to

an enjoyable encounter with the man in the red suit!



*7822 Foxcote Manor and Large Prairie 5199 on Santa duty at Llangollen* Photo : Mike Williams

At the “west end” the project work force has been undaunted by the changing weather and put in a great deal of time and energy to closing the final physical gap in railway, with the completion of the station loop.

**All that glisters..... but in this case ....**

At a short ceremony held outside “Chicken Dock” on Tuesday December 10<sup>th</sup> ,a “Golden Fishplate” was bolted into place by the Llangollen Railway Trust's President and Vice President, William (Bill) Shakespeare MBE and Gordon Heddon , accompanied by the LRT's Chairman, Liz McGuinness The event was attended principally by the Project's Management Team and Workforce

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as well as a number of friends and supporters from Corwen and beyond. The RRV was driven by machine operator, Peter Robson over the newly laid track, in and out of the loop.

energy and concentration so a good turnout from the work force was required to keep the job moving.



*Bill Shakespeare, Gordon Heddon and Liz McGuinness secure the Golden Fishplate* Photo : GJ

The ceremony featured on BBC Wales' early evening TV news, including interviews with Bill and Richard Dixon-Gough, the Project's Manager as well as on BBC Radio Cymru. Subsequently the feature went on to the BBC website and was later distributed via the Denbighshire Free Press. Fortunately, the rain stayed away on this occasion, at least for the short period of the fishplate tightening. Guests were then invited to the Ticket Office for refreshments “tea and buns”, hosted by the Corwen Stationmaster, Wayne Ronneback and his wife Sue.

### Strapping it all down

The Golden Fishplate ceremony, marked the official “closing of the rail gap”, but a lot of work was left to be completed, namely the drilling of the wooden timbers and the fitting of the remaining rail chair coach bolts. This work needed a lot



*Chair bolt holes being drilled* Photo : PR

A modern impact wrench and sleeper drill were hired in to allow the work to progress at a reasonable rate. Both machines are quite heavy to use so the opportunity to change jobs from time to time was much appreciated.



*Impact wrench ready to tighten chair bolts* Photo : PR

Once the Leyland Freighter and the JCB had departed the site, laying of the track to complete

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the Up siding could start. Enough ballast had already been delivered to the site allowing the placing of the sleepers to move forward quite quickly. The last piece of rail for this siding was dropped into place just before Christmas Eve.



*UP siding under construction*

*Photo : PR*

## Goodbye old friends



*HiAb Leyland ready for the drop*

*Photo : PR*

The time came towards the end of the month to bid a fond farewell to two loyal workers namely the 35 year old Leyland Freighter Flatbed truck, fitted

with a HiAb crane and the JCB Mk2C back hoe digger.



*JCB tidying-up after its exit - Leyland safely landed in the background*

*Photo : PR*

Sadly time and space eventually caught up with this pair of stalwarts and they had to be lowered to safety down the embankment into the water treatment works. Once the platform loop had been completed and attention turned to laying the up siding no more space existed for either machine to manoeuvre, so with the permission of the



*The Leyland Freighter driven by Phil Morrey heads towards the exit from the Wastewater treatment plant*

*Photo : PR*

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treatment work's manager, the Leyland and the JCB exited the site for the last time via a ramp down the north batter and leading through the former entrance gates.

The two vehicles are now resident in the machinery compound on the southern end of the Ruthin Spur.

### And goodbye to another old friend

After many years of leading the fencing gang, local farmer and shepherd, Vic Taylor has retired. An old school craftsman, with the patience and interest to induct others into the art of fencing, Vic will be greatly missed, not least by his trusty band of hatchet men and stake drivers.



*Vic Taylor (R) with Eric (C) and Brian (L) put in fence posts for the Spur crossing*

*Photo : PR*

There was nothing that Vic didn't know about fencing and hedging, having devoted a long life to keeping stock safe either through managing the naturally growing boundaries or by adding stake and rail/wire to make out new ones. Since Vic assembled the gang it has been responsible for

about 15miles of new fencing and hedge maintenance. Having been well instructed by Vic, the gang has agreed to remain together, at least until the opening of the new station at Corwen and can be called upon to do repair work.

## HRA ANNUAL AWARDS 2020

As the last edition of CCNL 2019 was being readied for publication, the nominees for the HRA's Awards for 2020 were announced. Amongst those nominated for the Annual Award for Large Groups are Volk's Electric Railway Association (*Magnus Volk's Legacy*), Tallylyn Railway (*Involving Young People in the World's Oldest Preserved Railway*), Isle of Wight Steam Railway (*Havenstreet - Wootton Telegraph Pole Route*), Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways (*Building 25 new carriages including 4 Pullman Observation Cars*) and **Llangollen Railway** (***Completion of track to new permanent Corwen Station***).

The winners of each category award will be announced at the Annual Awards dinner to be held at the Burlington Hotel, Birmingham on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2020. Congratulations go to the Project Team for getting the nomination and the best of good fortune is offered for the Awards Evening. If the Team is successful in Birmingham then this would be a just reward for undertaking one of the most complex, volunteer lead, civil engineering schemes in the Heritage Rail Industry.

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## 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 13*

This month's winner of Lucky Numbers is Russ Weaver, with number **13**, a Railway supporter who has given generously to the various Corwen Appeals. Congratulations and a Happy New Year goes Russ along with a cheque for £50.

The Project's Treasurer, Paul Bailey, writes "I am running the Raffle again in 2020 to raise funds for the on Platform Waiting Room and Toilets. Of the 80 spaces available over three quarters of current participants have already renewed for next year so a **BIG THANKYOU TO YOU**". Paul would like anyone not wanting to renew to please let him know so that the numbers can be reissued to new applicants. A few spaces are available and if you would like to join please contact Paul at the usual address.

Subscription prices are as follows £36 Annual subscription or £18 half yearly (£3pm). Monthly prize £50 Finally in response to the Appeal last month for lamposts and lanterns Paul is pleased to announce that all Four Lamposts and Lanterns

have now been sponsored and the Lamposts duly arrived on site on 12th December. The castings are to an authentic Great Western pattern and have been sourced via the Gloucester Warwickshire Railway from a foundry in the Cotswolds.



*Newly arrived lampost casting on the platform at Corwen*  
Photo : PR

Thanks go to Dave Smith for collecting them from Winchcombe Station on the Gloucester



*Dave Smith arrives at the Ruthin Spur crossing with the GWR lamposts*  
Photo : WB

Warwickshire Railway with his trailer and delivering them to Corwen.

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**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](mailto:info@llangollen-railway.co.uk)***

### End Piece



*Ariel view of the Corwen Wastewater Treatment Works  
Photo : Ron Jones*

The Corwen station site has sat cheek by jowl for over 40 years with the Corwen Sewage Treatment Works, currently managed by Welsh Water. Readers may recall that access to the Works was originally via a small roadway under (the now removed) Bridge 31 (See CCNL passim). However, the growth of Corwen Town led to a

redevelopment of the site and an increase in treatment capacity, which required a new entrance cut through the old railway embankment.

The history of water supply and sanitation is one of a logistical challenge to provide clean water and sanitation systems. Where water resources, infrastructure or sanitation systems were insufficient, diseases spread and people fell sick or died prematurely.

Major human settlements could initially develop only where fresh surface water was plentiful, such as near rivers or natural springs. Throughout history, people have devised systems to make getting water into their communities and households and disposing (and later also treating) wastewater more conveniently.

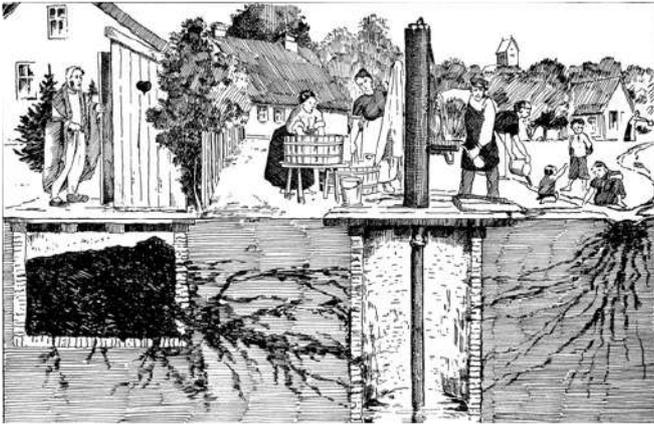


*Skara Brae, a Neolithic village in Orkney, Scotland with home furnishings including water-flushing toilets 3180 BC–2500 BC  
Photo : W Knight*

The historical focus of sewage treatment was on the conveyance of raw sewage to a natural body of water, e.g. a river or ocean, where it would be diluted and dissipated. Early human habitations were often built next to water sources. Rivers would often serve as a crude form of natural sewage disposal. Over the millennia, technology has dramatically increased the distances across

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which water can be relocated. Furthermore, treatment processes to purify drinking water and to treat wastewater have been improved.



*Cycle of waste, water and disease Drawing : Anon*

In Medieval times, sewage from towns was taken in pails and on carts to “sewage farms” where the waste was scattered over a field. The material broke down naturally in the air and was used to fertilise crops. In later years the farms were allied to reed beds, where the liquid run off was filtered and purified by the microbes living in the beds. This filtered water would then find its way harmlessly into streams and rivers and be used for irrigation further downstream.

In Wales, it was the common means of sewage treatment when cess-pits became unusable as the population grew in towns during the industrial revolution. The initial response to overloaded local disposal was often a trunk sewer conveying sewage to the nearest river but as populations increased further, sewage farms were established. In Merthyr Tydfil, most houses discharged their sewage to individual cess-pits which persistently overflowed causing the pavements to be awash with foul sewage (*Report of the Principal Officer of Health, Glamorgan County Council, 1889*)

Some of these farms remained in use until the end of the 20th century, at which point it became apparent that as it was usually contaminated with infectious pathogens and sometimes with industrial waste, sewage was not always suitable for use as a fertiliser. Therefore, sewage plants began to replace sewage farms. Modern sewage farms are usually combined with such plant, so that they irrigate the land with reclaimed water. Some types of untreated sewage can be used on a sewage farm, or filtered through a constructed wetland (e.g. reed beds)



*Morestead Sewage Farm, located between Chilcomb and Winchester College in Hampshire . Note the reed beds leading out to the lake and then through the chalk to the aquifer*

*Photo : Peter Facey*

As recently as the late 19th-century sewerage systems in some parts of the rapidly industrializing United Kingdom were so inadequate that water-borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid remained a risk.

From as early as 1535 there were efforts to stop polluting the River Thames in London. Beginning with an Act passed that year that was to prohibit the dumping of excrement into the river. Leading up to the Industrial Revolution the River Thames was identified as being thick and black due to sewage, and it was even said that the river “smells like death.” As Britain was the first country to

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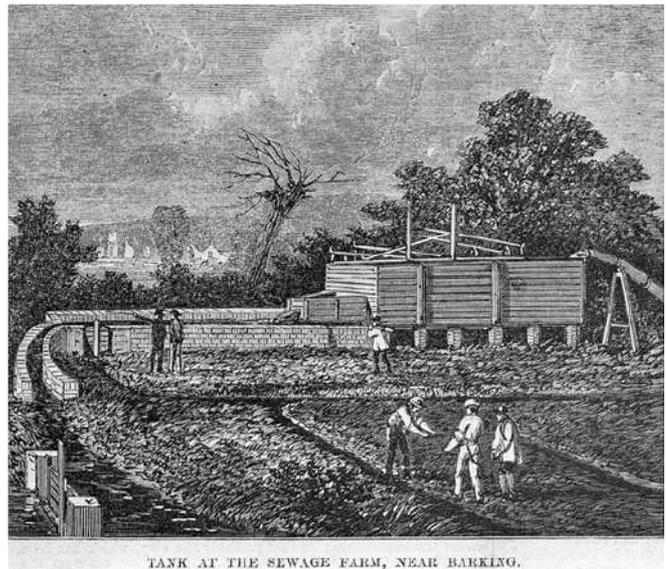
industrialise, it was also the first to experience the disastrous consequences of major urbanisation and was the first to construct a modern sewerage system to mitigate the resultant unsanitary conditions. During the early 19th century, the River Thames was effectively an open sewer, leading to frequent outbreaks of cholera epidemics. Proposals to modernize the sewerage system had been made during 1856 but were neglected due to lack of funds. However, after *the Great Stink of 1858*, Parliament realized the urgency of the problem and resolved to create a modern sewerage system.

However, 10 years earlier James Newlands, a Scottish Engineer, was one of a celebrated trio of pioneering officers appointed under a private Act, the Liverpool Sanitary Act by the Borough of Liverpool Health of Towns Committee.

Newlands made a careful and exact survey of Liverpool and its surroundings, involving approximately 3,000 geographical observations, resulting in the construction of a contour map of the town and its neighbourhood, on a scale of one inch to 20 feet (6.1 m). From this elaborate survey Newlands proceeded to lay down a comprehensive system of outlet and contributory sewers, and main and subsidiary drains, to an aggregate extent of nearly 300 miles (480km).

In July 1848 Newlands' sewer construction programme began, and over the next 11 years 86 miles (138 km) of new sewers were built. Between 1856 and 1862 another 58 miles (93km) were added. This programme was completed in 1869. Before the sewers were built, life expectancy in Liverpool was 19 years, and by the time Newlands retired it had more than doubled.

At the end of the 19th century, since primary



TANK AT THE SEWAGE FARM, NEAR BARKING.  
*19 century Sewage Farm near Barking Engraving from the Wellcome Collection*

treatment still left odour problems, it was discovered that bad odours could be prevented by introducing oxygen into the decomposing sewage. This was the beginning of the biological aerobic



*Elegance in muck - Abbey Mills Pumping Station on Bazalgette's London Sewage System* Photo : Velela

and anaerobic treatments which are fundamental to modern wastewater processes.