

# Corwen Central News



What contrasts the weather had in store for the Dee Valley over the last month, stretching from pleasant sunshine and “why aren’t we wearing overcoats?” days through to the winds, rain floods brought on as part of the “Ciara” and “Dennis” double act!

“Dennis’s” departure was heralded by tremendous flashes of lightening and an intense hail storm. In between times, the Project Team was still able to do some work, including excavation of the trenches to carry the canopy “wind posts”, closing the gap (finally) in the north face of the Up platform and welcoming some local political representatives.



*Crocus Vernus in sheltered woodland, Flooding at Corwen - Green Lane awash* Photos : PR and Peter Robson

**Councillor Huw Jones**

The Project Team were sad to hear of the death last month of Councillor Huw Jones, who represented

The River Dee was in full flood, covering the fields to the west whilst thundering through the Berwyn Gorge, just millimetres below the bridge decking of the Chain Bridge. “Ciara” managed to take out a small stand of trees on



*Huw Jones celebrates Owain Glyndŵr's Day on September 17th 2017* Photo : GJ



*Stand of trees brought down at Deeside, Dennis's farewell to the Valley* Photos : Robin Matthews and Alan Roberts

the north bank of the river at Deeside, whilst

Corwen for many years on Denbighshire County

## Corwen Central News

Council, Huw had been ill for sometime, but his passing was nevertheless a shock. He was a great supporter of “all things” Corwen, especially the local football team, Corwen FC, where he had been player, manager, secretary and latterly club president. The Corwen Station Project Team were always pleased to welcome Huw to the work site, where he took a great interest in proceedings, some of which he was able to advance in his role as a county councillor. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him, especially those who he was able to help in his elected capacity. The Project Team offer their condolences to Huw's family.

### At the awards

The Corwen Project was nominated for an award at this year's Heritage Railway Association dinner held in Birmingham on February 8<sup>th</sup>. This is a very prestigious event, being the heritage industry's “Oscar” evening, where outstanding achievement is recognised in such areas as engineering, restoration, preservation, education and personal development. The Llangollen Railway/Corwen Station Development Project was nominated for the design, completion and quality of its track



*Dining Room awaiting over 250 HRA guests and award nominees*

*Photo : HRA*

work in and around the island platform loop. Other nominations in this award for “Large Groups” were the Ffestiniog/Welsh Highland Railways for building 25 new carriages plus 4 Pullman observation cars, Talylyn Railway for recruitment and involvement of young people in preservation, the Isle of Wight Steam Railway for Havenstreet – Wootton Telegraph Pole route and the Volk's Electric Railway Association for restoration and development of the railway under the title “Magnus Volk's Legacy”. The winner of this group was the Volk's Electric Railway. Each runner up including LR and the Corwen Project was awarded a participation certificate.



*With a runner's up certificate in the Large Group Category are (L-R) Paul Reynolds, Peter Neve, Richard Dixon-Gough (Project Manager) and LRT Vice President Gordon Heddon*

*Photo : HRA*

The evening was a great success with over 250 members of the HRA sitting down to an excellent dinner, which was addressed by guest speaker, railway author, journalist and commentator, Christian Woolmar who offered the theme “What did the railways ever do for us?” The Corwen Team was represented by Richard and Denise Dixon-Gough, Peter and Jean Neve, Paul and Pat Reynolds, LR Chairman Liz McGuinness and LRT

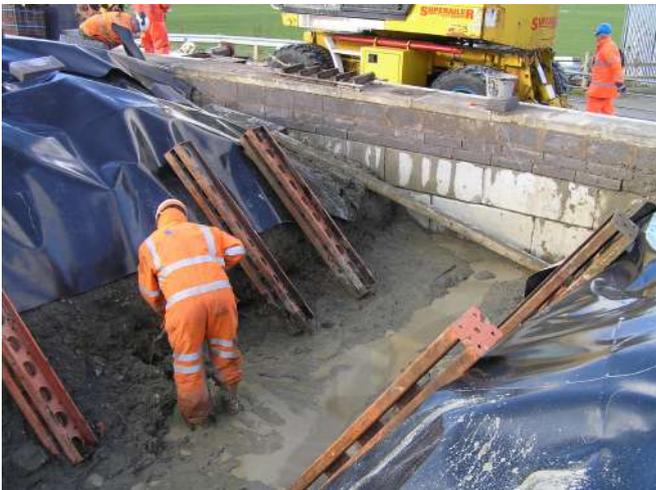
## Corwen Central News

Vice President Gordon Heddon. The return to North Wales became a bit of a lottery as Storm “Ciara” had reduced the railway system to stop-go, but very slowly by early Sunday morning. By mid morning many main line trains had been cancelled or running up to 2 hours late. (WCML)

### **Mind the gap**

At the west end the gap in the Up platform has at last been closed. This gap was left open as long as possible to give access to the platform area from the Ruthin Spur, where the machinery compound is located along with stores and materials.

However, the time had come to close the gap after the digging of a trench to contain the footings for the “wind posts”.



*Gap filled and trench dug to receive concrete footings for wind posts* Photo : PR

As reported in earlier issues on CCNL the Project's design engineers have been very concerned that the steel structure supporting the (proposed) canopy would be, not only strong enough to hold the canopy up, but also strong enough to hold the canopy in place, against strong gusts of wind which frequently blow across the site. It must be borne in mind that the railway

embankment is approximately 4 metres above ground level plus the height of the platform, station building and canopy. This produces a high, open and exposed position, with no natural shelter.

### **Marking the spot**

Along with the recently installed lamppost castings, the team also added the supports for the Corwen running in board.



*Posts in place to hold the station name board* Photo : PR

It is only after the addition of these items can attention be turned to finishing the drains and levelling out the platform surface to take the paving blocks.

### **Winter Visitors**

The Project Team were pleased to welcome the newly elected Member of Parliament for Clwyd South, Simon Baynes to the Corwen Site as well as local AM, Mark Isherwood. (North Wales), who was making at least his third visit. Both elected representatives showed a keen interest in the development of the station. Simon Baynes was reminded of the fact that his own local station,

## Corwen Central News

Llanfyllin was closed (1965) at the same time as services were withdrawn from Corwen.

After his first visit to the Corwen Project, Simon Baynes commented

“As a fan of steam railways I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Corwen on Saturday 1st February to meet with the Corwen Central Railway Development Team (part of the Llangollen Steam Railway) who are bringing the old Corwen station and nearby track back to life.



*Shown at the entrance to the underpass are (L-R) Richard Dixon-Gough, Simon Baynes MP, Peter Neve and Phil Rogers  
Photo: GJ*

In 2008, the line from Carrog to Corwen was nothing but an overgrown path after the track had been abandoned in 1968. Now it is nearing completion largely due to huge amounts of voluntary labour. A big thank you to Richard Dixon-Gough, Peter Neve, Phil Rogers and George Jones for showing me around and bringing me up to speed on this amazing project. And to everyone involved in the Corwen extension project which has largely relied on dedicated volunteers rather than large grants for its success.”

After his visit, which was made on the lead up to Storm Dennis, Mark Isherwood commented:



*A rather rain swept day at Corwen with (L) Richard Dixon-Gough and Mark Isherwood AM  
Photo: GJ*

“On each visit I am always astounded by what this group of volunteers, with an average age of 68, working on a part-time basis, are able to achieve. They are doing a sterling job, in often challenging conditions. I was impressed to see that they have managed to erect three pairs of restored heritage columns since my last visit in 2018 and prepare for the installation of the final pair which will provide for an eventual canopy around the subway access stairwell. They have also recently installed heritage style lampposts and columns for the new Corwen name board. Only with a tour of the site does the size and scale of this project become apparent and I hope that all their efforts will be crowned with success this year when a first train arrives at Corwen. The accessibility of the new station to the centre of Corwen and the town's car park will provide the facilities needed to attract more people to the Llangollen Railway and encourage the prospects for local tourism from a wider segment of North Wales. My admiration for the project team members, who have tackled all this work over the past five years, grows following every visit I make. Without their dedication none of this would have happened.”

# Corwen Central News

the next 2 years.

## 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 65</i>									

This month's winner of Lucky Numbers is **George Jones** with **number 65**. George has been an LR and LRT supporter, shareholder and member for many years. He is the Corwen Project's PRO and continues to help the railway service with photos and stories via the local and railway press and the BBC.

Congratulations go to George on his win . A cheque for £50 is making its way to him.

The Project's Treasurer, Paul Bailey writes that the fund raising effort for the Corwen Station Project continues to receive donations, which as always are gratefully received. He would also like to remind supporters that tickets for the Corwen Central Express (CCE) are still available and details can be obtained from the address below. However, he continues "I've joined the Llangollen Railway Great Western Locomotive Group (LRGWLG) to help with their fundraising for small Prairie 5532 to return the loco back to traffic for the first time in preservation hopefully across



5532 awaits the results of the Boiler Appeal in the Llangollen Engineering workshop

Photo : 5532 Restoration Project

They have a Tube Appeal for £20000 and are looking for supporters to sponsor small tubes at £100 each (payment can be by instalments). Interested parties can send cheques payable to LRGWLG and send to my home address shown below."

**For donations to the Corwen Project - Please make cheques payable to CCRD (Corwen Central Railway Development )**

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

Corwen Central News

**End Piece**

With the tentative appearance of crocuses (*crocus vernus*), in some wooded sheltered parts of the Dee Valley, it is worth reflecting on its more famous and valuable cousin – *crocus sativus* or the “Saffron Crocus”, which produces the saffron spice filaments at about \$3000 a kilo! Golden Saffron is the most expensive spice in the world and gram per gram is more expensive than gold. Unfortunately it doesn't quite have the keeping properties of gold. Best not to tie up your family fortune in it and keep it under the bed, where it would be subject to a perfumed decay!



*Crocus sativus* Photo : Safa Daneshavar

It is believed that saffron originated in Iran. However, Greece and Mesopotamia have also been suggested as the possible region of origin of this plant.

The high retail value of saffron is maintained on world markets because of labour-intensive harvesting methods, which require some 200,000 saffron stigmas to be hand-picked from 70,000 crocus flowers for each 1 pound (0.45kg) of saffron product. Forty hours of labour are needed to pick 150,000 flowers.



High quality red threads from Austrian Saffron Photo: Hubrtl

Saffron was detailed in a 7th-century BC Assyrian botanical reference compiled under Ashurbanipal. Documentation of saffron's use over the span of 3,500 years has been uncovered. Saffron-based pigments have indeed been found in 50,000-year-old depictions of prehistoric places in northwest Iran.

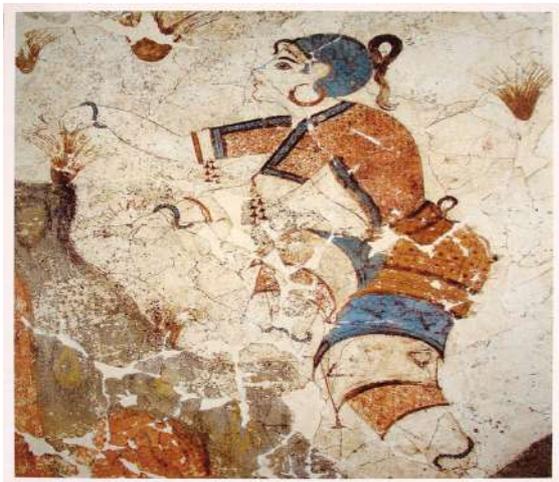


Buddhist adepts wearing saffron-coloured robes, pray in the Hundred Dragons Hall, Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum, Singapore. Photo : William Cho

The Sumerians later used wild-growing saffron in their remedies and magical potions. Saffron was

## Corwen Central News

an article of long-distance trade before the Minoan palace culture's 2nd millennium BC peak. Ancient Persians cultivated Persian saffron (*Crocus sativus* 'Hausknechtii') in Derbent, Isfahan, and Khorasan by the 10th century BC. At such sites, saffron threads were woven into textiles, ritually offered to divinities, and used in dyes, perfumes, medicines, and body washes. Saffron threads would thus be scattered across beds and mixed into hot teas as a curative for bouts of melancholy. Non-Persians also feared the Persians' usage of saffron as a drugging agent and aphrodisiac. During his Asian campaigns, Alexander the Great used Persian saffron in his infusions, rice, and baths as a curative for battle wounds. Alexander's troops imitated the practice from the Persians and brought saffron-bathing to Greece.



A detail from the "Saffron Gatherers" fresco of the "Xeste 3" building. It is one of many depicting saffron; they were found at the Bronze Age settlement of Akrotiri, on the Aegean island of Santorini. Illustration Source Unknown

Saffron was a notable ingredient in certain Roman recipes such as *jusselle* and *conditum*. Such was the Romans' love of saffron that Roman colonists took it with them when they settled in southern

Gaul, where it was extensively cultivated until Rome's fall. With this fall, European saffron cultivation plummeted. Competing theories state that saffron only returned to France with 8th-century AD Moors or with the Avignon papacy in the 14th century AD. Similarly, the spread of Islamic civilisation may have helped reintroduce the crop to Spain and Italy.

The 14th-century Black Death caused demand for saffron-based medicaments to peak, and Europe imported large quantities of threads via Venetian and Genoan ships from southern and Mediterranean lands such as Rhodes. The theft of one such shipment by noblemen sparked the fourteen-week-long *Saffron War*. The conflict and resulting fear of rampant saffron piracy spurred corm cultivation in Basel; it thereby grew prosperous. The crop then spread to Nuremberg, where endemic and insalubrious adulteration brought on the *Safranschou code*—whereby culprits were variously fined, imprisoned, and executed. Meanwhile, cultivation continued in southern France, Italy, and Spain.

The Essex town of Saffron Walden, (originally *Chepyn* or *Market Walden*) named after its new speciality crop, emerged as a prime saffron growing and trading centre in the 16th and 17th centuries due its favourable soils and climate. The town was the centre of East Anglian wool production and trading and saffron provided an expensive and distinctive yellow dye for finished woollen cloth. The changes in industrial processes eventually saw end of both saffron and wool production in the town. However, saffron was reintroduced to Saffron Walden in 2013 as well as other parts of the UK - especially Cuddington in Cheshire.