

Corwen Central News



Once again the Dee Valley has witnessed a variable weather pattern ranging through rain, low cloud, fog, warm sunshine and the first snow of winter over the mountains.



Hazel (Corylus avellana) catkins signs of new life already stirring in the Dee Valley Photo: PR

Throughout all this some little bursts of new life have been observed from snowdrops pushing up in sheltered areas to golden hazel catkins dangling over the Llangollen Canal and the upper reaches of the River Dee. Warm dry periods have offered the Project Team the opportunity to get on with putting the station together, preparing the ground for joining the mainline to the station throat and dismantling the steelwork which once formed the structure of Corwen East.

To the West

The floor of the new platform waiting room has been completed with the laying of the block and beam floor. Having built this building up to platform edge level, to allow for the placing of the



Block and beam waiting room floor nearing completion Photo: PR

paving blocks, the work will now be closed down whilst attention is turned to completion of the UP platform wall.

Lucky Find

Sometime ago a large pack of used fencing complete with support posts was delivered from Network Rail. This fence was originally found on Burnham Station, but was removed to allow for a

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makeover of the station. The fencing is of the “hooped” railing type and is destined to grace the top of the underpass exit onto the island platform, similar to its function at its former location.



Burnham Station – with new railings Photo : Cuzza



Burnham corner post Photo : PR

Volunteers, led by Tony Warren have been steadily bringing this tired fencing back to life to include removal of the old paint, repairing some of the hoops and breaking off the old concrete from the bases of the corner posts. It was whilst engaged in the latter job that Tony Warren found a 2016 weekly ticket. It fell out of the post when the concrete was broken off. How it had managed to get in there is a mystery as the fence in Burnham dates from the 1980s.

Signal Box This has now been secured against the weather. Readers might remember that soon after the operating floor had been placed on top of the locking room many gaps in the bottom of the operating floor could be seen. Thankfully the



Burnham Bucks - ticket recovered from corner post Photo : PR



Guttering and down pipes on the signal box Photo : PR

greater part of this exposure was during dry

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weather, which in its turn allowed for suitable water proofing to be carried out. In recent weeks, Peter Neve has completed the job by adding roof gutters and down pipes to carry rainwater away from the structure. In the locking room a temporary wood working shop has been established so material can be prepared for further restoration work on the signal box and on other parts of the work area.

Ballasting and buffing for the future

Considerable amounts of ballast have now been laid either side of the gap at “Chicken Dock”. The west side is being prepared for the installation of the crossover timbers and rails whilst on the east side in the vicinity of the rapidly disappearing



(Clock wise) Buffer stop on main line, Buffer frame on its way to new position, Buffer board being added to frame, Open end looking west
 Photos : PR

Corwen East Station ballast is being added to facilitate the accommodation of the UP siding and allow for a slight realignment of the main line so that the two sections can be joined together. This work will be completed once the buffer stops have been removed from the main line and put on sleepers on the new ballast. Photographs show the

removal and replacement of the main line buffer stop by a team lead by Paul Whitton.

First goods of the New Year

In the latter half of January the first engineer's train of 2019 reached Corwen East.



Class 08 Diesel Shunter and wagons arrive at Corwen East
 Photo : PR

The train consisted of three open wagons in charge of the 08 shunter, driven by Paul Reynolds and Robin Matthews. The wagons were dropped-off at the east end of the platform scaffold, where they will used to pick up the recovered wooden decking and other materials relevant to the dismantling of the platform.

Diamond Drilling – but not for oil

As mentioned in a previous edition of CCNL a specialist company has been engaged to drill through the reinforced concrete at the top of the underpass to allow for the fixing of the canopy support columns. Overall 48 horizontal and vertical holes are required. Towards the end of January D-Drilling arrived on site to carry out the work. The drill is mounted on a precision jig so

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depth and direction of the bore can be accurately controlled.



Third hole being drilled for saddle top Photo : PR

The accompanying photographs show the saddles and the coring drill with water cooled drill bit preparing the first holes. Note that the drill jig is held in place by a clamp attached to a threaded sleeve inserted into the concrete prior to the beginning of the main work.



Drilling underway showing clamping bolt in centre of jig base Photo : PR

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 **22***

This month's winner of Lucky Numbers is **Nan Williams** with **Number 22**, who with her husband Huw have been generous supporters of the Corwen Project right from the start. Many congratulations go to Nan on her win!! The Project's Treasurer, Paul Bailey would like to thank all those supporters who have already donated £3300 to the "Gap" fund., however as always with Paul, he would like to remind you that donating £100 or more brings with it 4 tickets to travel to/from Corwen in 2019. on normal timetabled services at a time to suit the donors (excluding special events). The sooner the gap can be filled the sooner the main line can be brought into Corwen Central.

**Please make cheques payable to CCRD
(Corwen Central Railway Development) and
send to**

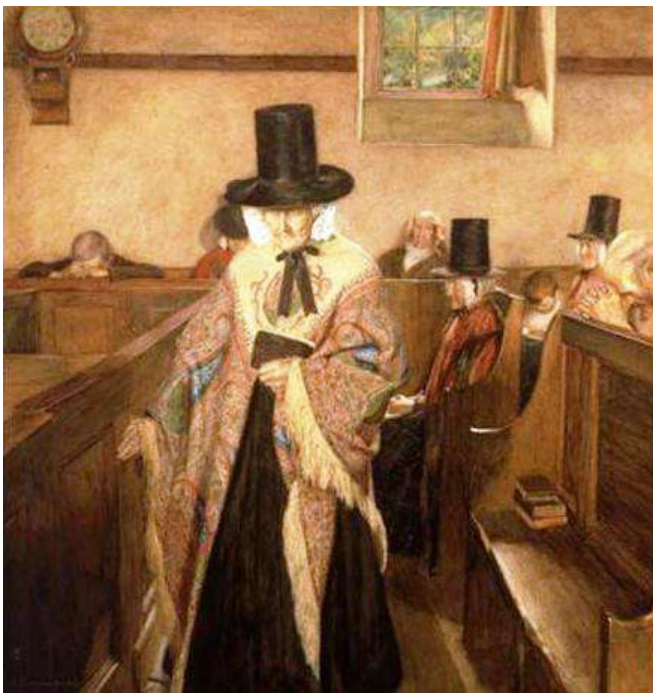
**Mr Paul Bailey, Dolwen, Bryneglwys, Corwen,
Denbighshire LL21 9LY**

Offers of materials can be made via the LRT by phoning 01978 860979 or via e-mail at info@llangollen-railway.co.uk

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End Piece

2019 marks a hundred and ten years since the first public exhibition at the Royal Academy in London of the iconic Welsh painting “*Salem*”, by Sydney Curnow Vosper (1866 – 1942) depicting a scene within Capel Salem, a Baptist Chapel in Pentre Gwynfryn, North Wales. It is noteworthy because it shows Welsh piety, the traditional Welsh national costume, and for the contentious belief that the devil can somehow be seen within it.



Salem (1908) by Sydney Curnow Vosper - Lady Lever Collection

Only one of the figures was actually a member of the chapel, Robert Williams of Caer Meddyg, a carpenter, farmer and deacon at Capel Salem, can be seen on the far left beneath the clock. Next to him, and slightly obscured is Laura Williams of Ty'n-y-Buarth, Llanfair. Left of her, with his back

against the wall is Owen Jones (commonly called Owen Siôn) of Carleg Coch. The small boy is Evan Edward Lloyd and by his side is Mary Rowland. On the extreme right with his head bowed, is William Jones (William Siôn), brother of Owen. Vosper paid each model 6d. (2.5p) an hour for sitting.

The main figure is Siân Owen (born in Maesygarneidd in 1837), at the time of painting she was 71 and lived in Ty'n y Fanog on the back roads from Llanbedr. She was a widow having lost her husband George in the 1880s. They had one son (William) and Siân raised both William's sons in her tiny cottage. Both her grandsons were killed in the First World War.

Siân herself lived until 1927, and is buried in Llanfair churchyard, Harlech.

The eighth figure (second right of Siân wearing a Welsh hat) was actually a borrowed tailor's dummy which Vosper named "*Leusa Jones*". The chapel elders, uncomfortable with the dummy in a place of worship, insisted that it was to be removed each Saturday night before the "*seiat*" (weekly church meeting) the following morning.

Why Vosper chose Siân as the main figure is unclear, though there is a Welsh cultural image of a strong maternal figure considered iconic to 19th century Welsh family life (*Mam Cymru*) and highly symbolic of the Celtic Romantic Revival so beloved of the Victorians.

Siân Owen would have had to stand for many hours wearing the shawl so that Vosper could paint its intricate detail and folds, Vosper later complained that she twitched and moved so much that it became very difficult to accurately paint the pattern and colour of the shawl, so he eventually

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gave up, pinning the shawl to the dummy for the final stages! Despite this difficulty, he painted Siân again in *Market Day in Old Wales* (1908) where she is wearing more everyday checks and Welsh tapestry patterns.



Market Day in Old Wales (1908) by Sydney Curnow Vosper
- National Library of Wales Collection

The Welsh hat was a fashion which was current in the 1830s and 1840s. By the time of painting (1908) the hats were no longer worn by women in Wales, and the wearing of hats inside a chapel would have been considered unacceptable, especially for women. Vosper, however, wanted the women to wear traditional tall stove pipe hats but could find only one remaining hat in the area.

He had the hat shared amongst the models, painting the same hat into the composition four times. Siân's fancy shawl was likewise uncommon

and was borrowed from the wife of the vicar of Harlech.

Vosper exhibited '*Salem*' in 1909 at the Royal Academy in London where it came to the attention of the industrialist William Hesketh Lever. Lever bought the painting for £105 and the original can be seen in the art gallery he established (*The Lady Lever Gallery*) at Port Sunlight.

The painting may have remained obscure in his private collection had Lever not decided to use the painting in a promotion of the Lever Brothers' popular product *Sunlight* soap.

The soap bars came with collectable tokens, and buying seven pounds of soap would acquire enough tokens to exchange for a print of the painting (an early example of canny marketing !!).

This promotion resulted in *Salem* appearing in many homes across Britain. At that time many homes owned no form of visual art and the innovative 'free gift' offer ensured prints of *Salem* became widely, and uniquely popular amongst working class communities, especially in Wales.

By 1933 the painting was famous enough to be the subject of a notable article in the Welsh language magazine *Y Ford Gron* (The Round Table) and by 1937, *Salem* gained yet more popularity when Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards sold thousands of prints to supporters of the *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* for 6d.

By 1942 it was described by *Yr Aelwyd* as "One of the most beautiful pictures of the religious life of Wales in old times" and in 1950, 1956 and 1957 many more Welsh households obtained copies when the picture was used in the *Cymru Fydd* calendar.

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As reproductions became popular, so did the notion that it contained a hidden figure. Aside from pious interpretations, there was much speculation that the painting had a more disapproving meaning. Some suggested the painting was a comment on the sin of vanity.

The Chapel clock suggests Siân Owen is arriving belatedly at a few minutes after ten (during the traditional Welsh silence before the morning service), possibly to ensure her presence is noted as she appears to be wearing a very fancy outfit.

The interpretation was often synonymous with a popular belief that Vosper had hidden an image of the devil in the folds of Siân Owen's shawl. The postulated image can be seen in the section of shawl around her left arm. The paisley pattern forms a horn, the folds his eye and nose and the shawl's trim his beard.



Salem - Shawl detail – is the Devil visible in the folds?

When questioned on this, Vosper always denied any such detail had been intentionally painted into the shawl. The enigmatic painter did confirm,

however, an intended ghostly face painted into the verdant window scene.

The partial knowledge of a hidden face somewhere within the painting is a likely starting point for the popular theory of a devil within the shawl.

The painting's variable interpretations (especially as an admonishing lesson on pride) are now considered valuable examples of how the Welsh viewed themselves, and their rural nonconformist past in the twentieth century.

The devil in the shawl is now most commonly considered an example of *pareidolia*. (a psychological phenomenon in which the mind responds to a stimulus, usually an image or a sound, by perceiving a familiar pattern where none exists).



Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, Wirral

Photo: Liverpool Museums and Art Galleries

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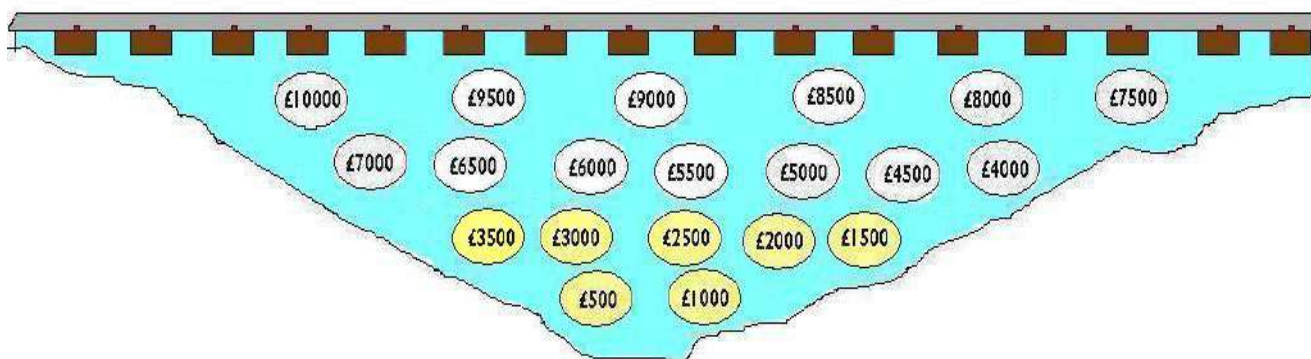
Filling the Gap - "The Missing Link"



To Corwen Central



To Llangollen



YES, I want to help Infill the Gap with the sum of £25/£50/£100, or my own choice of £.....and enclose my cheque payable to CCRD (Corwen Central Railway Development) in support of the Appeal. Donations of £100 and over will receive four tickets for free travel on normal timetable service trains in 2019, not available on special events.

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code.....

Email (for acknowledgement only).....

Cash is equally acceptable if handed in to the Project's Site Office at Corwen during working hours

Mr Paul Bailey, Dolwen, Bryneglwys, Corwen, Denbighshire LL21 9LY

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